

# DUNGEONS & LAIRS • 3

A FIFTH EDITION SUPPLEMENT  
**DUNGEONS & LAIRS**  
**CURSED LOCATIONS**  
**A HORROR-THEMED CAMPAIGN SETTING  
FOR FIFTH EDITION**

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# How to Use This Book

*Cursed Locations* is a horror-themed campaign setting book designed for Fifth Edition gamemasters looking to challenge their players with terrifying and unspeakable adventures in the perilous region of Dreadmourn Vale. This book contains a range of content that can be used as it is detailed in the book or separately in your own campaign.

Below is a breakdown of the chapters.

**Chapter 1. Dreadmourn Vale.** This chapter details the sandbox region featured in this book, Dreadmourn Vale, and all of its keyed locations. It also includes new rules for horror-themed gameplay.

**Chapter 2. Towns and Villages.** This chapter details four different settlements in Dreadmourn Vale which can be used as part of the sandbox or used separately in a campaign of your own. Two of the settlements also have adventures set within.

**Chapter 3. Dungeons & Lairs.** This chapter offers four scalable, flexible adventures for you to use in your own campaign or as part of the sandbox adventure series included in this campaign book.

## Two Ways to Use the Content

There is no limit to the ways you can use the content featured in this book. However, we've found that there are two popular ways to use the content.

### As a Campaign Setting

If you're looking for a fully-realized campaign setting that's ready to play straight out of the book, *Cursed Locations* has everything you need. With enough settlements, NPCs, and adventure hooks to take characters through

multiple levels, this book can serve as the foundation of an entire campaign.

If you wish to use the book this way, follow the steps on this page.

## 1. Establish a Base

The first step in using Dreadmourn Vale as a campaign setting is to establish a base of operations for the characters. Chapter 2 details four different settlements found in the Dreadmourn Vale region: Ravenhollow, Gloomspire, Whispermire, and Shadowreach. Alternatively, the characters could start in a village, fortress, trading post, castle, or some other location of your own design.

Once the players have a home base, they will be able to explore the surrounding terrain and engage in a variety of adventures.

## 2. Introduce the First Hook

Once the base of operations has been established, you can introduce an adventure hook for one of the adventures included in Chapter 3 of this book. All of the adventures are scalable, so the GM can adjust them to fit the level of the party. Each adventure provides a unique challenge and a chance for the players to gain experience and treasure.

## 3. Award Milestone Levels

After completing an adventure from Chapter 3, or the Werewolf Village adventure in Chapter 2, you can use the progression details below to determine how many levels the characters gain as they complete the adventures.

- **1st-level characters** will earn the 2nd level after they complete the first half of any of the adventures.
- **2nd-level characters** will earn the 3rd level after they complete half of any of the adventures.



- **Characters of 3rd level or higher** gain one level every time they complete one of the adventures featured in this book.

## 4. Add More Adventures

Finally, you can use additional *Dungeons & Lairs* supplements from DMDave Publishing to create additional hooks and adventures set in Dreadmourn Vale. These supplements provide additional creatures, NPCs, and adventure ideas that can be easily integrated into the existing campaign setting.

## As Individual Parts

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If you're a GM looking to integrate the Dreadmourn Vale into your own campaign, the book provides a wealth of resources for you to draw from. You can use the settlements, NPCs, and random encounter tables to create a living and breathing world for your players to explore. The adventures included in the book can also be easily adapted to fit into your existing campaign, providing exciting and challenging encounters for your players to face.



## Chapter 1. Dreadmourn Vale

*Cursed Locations* is a campaign setting designed for Fifth Edition, set within Dreadmourn Vale, a dark, perilous area filled with sucking, black swamps, ominous forests, treacherous mountains, and bitter cold conditions year around. Four settlements in the area hide dark secrets, each location detailed in this book. Within this diabolical realm, characters will face a range of threats, from hungry undead to fearsome lycanthropes to mindless prolific oozes.

### General Features

Dreadmourn Vale, covering 2,700 square miles, is a sinister and mysterious region primarily dominated by the ancient Grimwood forest. Gnarled trees and a dense canopy cast twisted shadows upon the forest floor, creating a perpetual twilight. The

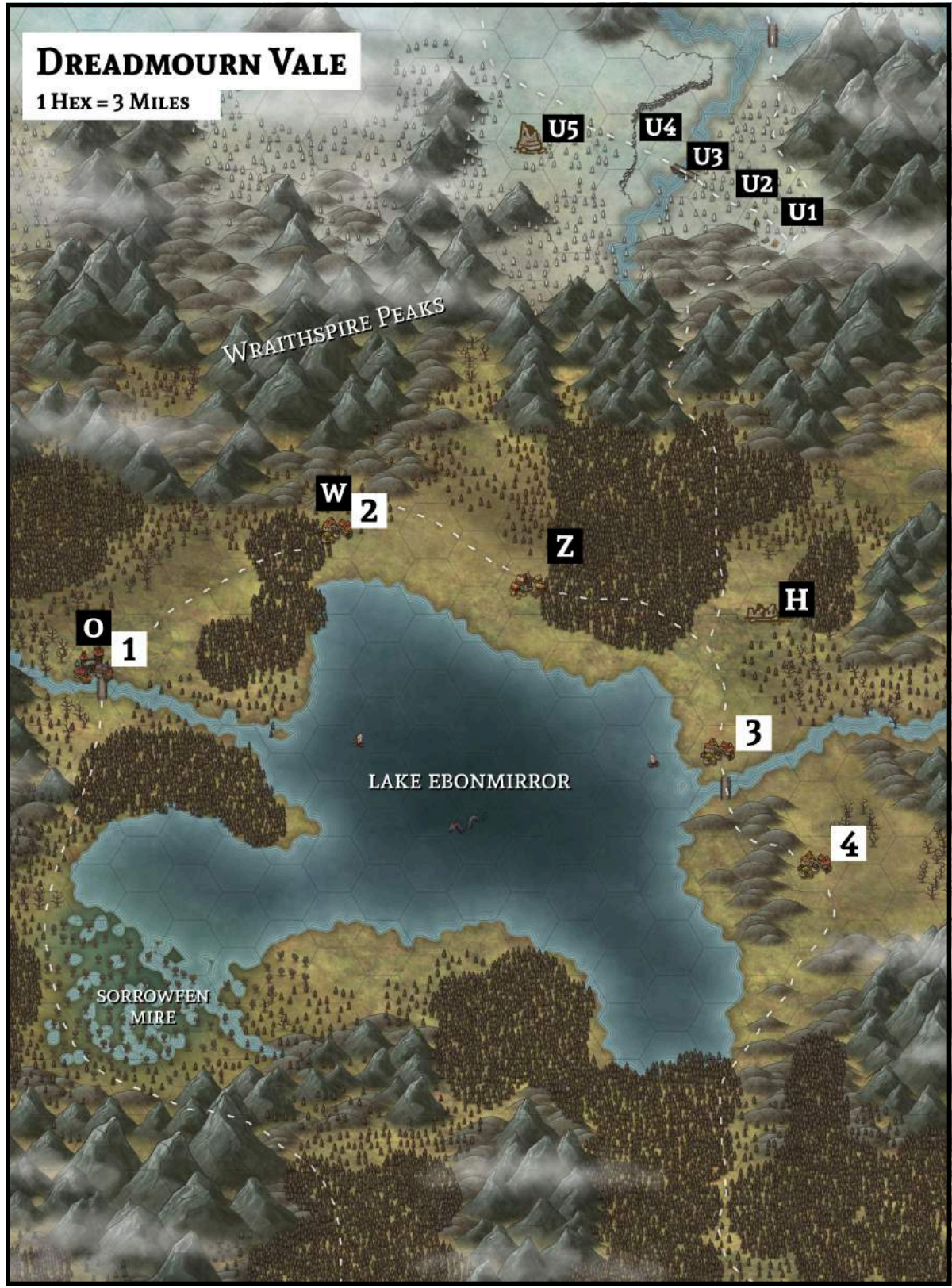
Wraithspine Peaks, an imposing mountain range, stretch across the vale, their jagged summits perpetually cloaked in mist and dark clouds. The damp, cold air is heavy with the scent of decay, and eerie whispers haunt those who dare to venture within.

In addition to the haunting forest and ominous mountains, the region is home to the Sorrowfen Mire, a gloomy, fog-choked swamp filled with twisted trees and mournful cries. Dreadmourn Vale is a perilous place where danger lurks around every corner, inhabited by an array of dark creatures and ancient secrets that lie in wait for the unwary. The region's foreboding atmosphere and haunting landscape make it a place where few dare to tread, and even fewer return to tell their tales.



# DREAMMOURN VALE

1 HEX = 3 MILES



## ON-ROAD TRAVEL TIMES

Location	1. Ravenshollow	2. Gloomspire	3. Whispermire	4. Shadowreach
1. Ravenshollow	—	5 hours	1 ½ days	2 days
2. Gloomspire	5 hours	—	1 ¼ days	1 ½ days
3. Whispermire	1 ½ days	1 ¼ days	—	3 hours
4. Shadowreach	2 days	1 ½ days	3 hours	—
H. Haunted Castle	1 ½ days	1 day	3 hours	6 hours
O. Ooze Caverns	—	5 hours	1 ½ days	2 days
U. Undead Wastes	3 days	2 days	1 ½ days	2 days
W. Werewolf Village	5 hours	—	1 ¼ days	1 ½ days
Z. Zombie Farmhouse	1 day	4 hours	6 hours	1 day

## Travel Times

There are two main ways to travel in Dreadmourn Vale: on-road and offroad.

### On Road Travel Times

The table above shows the typical time it takes to reach one location in Dreadmourn Vale by foot or horseback along the roads (the dashed lines shown on the map on page 6. All times assume that the characters travel for no more than 8 hours per day at a normal pace and that they stick to the roads.

If the characters wish to move at a faster pace, reduce the travel times by half. And if the characters wish to move at a slower pace, double the travel times.

### Offroad Travel Times

If the characters choose to forgo the road, the off-road travel times on the right shows the time, in hours and minutes, it takes to cross one hex of a particular terrain type to its other end. River travel times assume that the characters are using a boat.

## OFF-ROAD TRAVEL TIMES

Terrain	Fast	Normal	Slow
Arctic	1 hour and 20 minutes	2 hours	2 hours and 40 minutes
Forest	1 hour and 20 minutes	2 hours	2 hours and 40 minutes
Grassland	40 minutes	1 hour	1 hour and 20 minutes
Hills	1 hour and 20 minutes	2 hours	2 hours and 40 minutes
Mountains	2 hours and 10 minutes	3 ½ hours	4 hours and 40 minutes
River	40 minutes	1 hour	1 hour and 20 minutes
Road	40 minutes	1 hour	1 hour and 20 minutes
Swamp	2 hours and 10 minutes	3 ½ hours	4 hours and 40 minutes

When traveling at a slow pace, characters are able to use Stealth while traveling and are less likely to be surprised by enemies. When traveling at a fast pace, character have a disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks, and a -5 to passive Wisdom (Perception) checks

# Navigation

Many of the adventures have their own methods for navigating their respective areas due to the strange or mysterious conditions that beset that particular section of Dreadmourn Vale. As an option, you can employ the following rules for navigating the off-road areas.

At the start of each day of traveling offroad, the players should designate a navigator. The navigator makes a Wisdom (Survival) check. The DC for the check is 15 for arctic, forests, mountains, and swamps, and 10 for other types of terrain. If the check succeeds, the party travels in the desired direction without becoming lost. You can show the party where they are on the Dreadmourn Vale map.

If the check fails, the party becomes lost for the day. Roll a d6 to determine the random hex that the characters enter, the results referencing the side of the hex the characters enter. The party remains lost until the next morning, when they can make another Wisdom (Survival) check to find their bearings.

# Foraging

Dreadmourn Vale has abundant food and water sources for the characters. Each day, one or more characters that aren't navigating or keeping watch can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check (or DC 15 in the arctic regions) to find food and water. On a successful check, roll 1d6 + the forager's Wisdom modifier to determine how much food (in pounds) the character finds, then repeat the roll for water (in gallons). The DC for this check increases by 5 in the winter.

# Weather

Dreadmourn Vale is, for the most part, often cold and gloomy, subject to snow even during the spring and summer months. You can pick whatever weather best fits your campaign, or roll on the Weather tables to determine the weather for a given day. Add 5 to checks made in the arctic region shown on the map on page 6

The different types of weather and temperatures are detailed on the next page.

## WEATHER TEMPERATURES

d20	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
1–5	Warm	Extreme Heat	Warm	Temperate
6–16	Cold	Temperate	Cold	Extreme Cold
17+	Extreme Cold	Cold	Extreme Cold	Extreme Cold

## WEATHER PRECIPITATION

d20	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
1–5	None	None	None	None
6–16	Light rain	Light rain	Light snowfall	Light snowfall
17+	Heavy rain	Heavy rain	Light snowfall	Heavy snowfall



**Cold:** Temperatures ranging from 0° to 40° F (-17° to 4° C).

**Extreme Cold:** Temperatures ranging from -20° to 0° F (-29° to -17° C). Creatures exposed to extreme cold must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures wearing cold weather gear (thick coats, gloves, and the like) and creatures naturally adapted to cold climates.

**Extreme Heat:** Temperatures ranging from 100° to 120° F (37° to 48° C). Creatures exposed to extreme heat that do not have access to drinkable water must succeed on a Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour or gain one level of exhaustion. The DC is 5 for the first hour and increases by 1 for each additional hour. Creatures wearing medium or heavy armor or who are clad in heavy clothing have disadvantage on the saving throw. Creatures with resistance or immunity to fire damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures naturally adapted to hot climates.

**Heavy Precipitation:** Everything within an area of heavy rain or heavy snowfall is lightly obscured, and creatures in the area have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight. Heavy rain also extinguishes open flames and imposes disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

**Temperate:** Temperatures ranging from 40° to 80° F (4° to 27° C).

**Warm:** Temperatures ranging from 80° to 100° F (27° to 37° C).



## Random Encounters

Roll a d20 three times each day that the characters are traveling in Dreadmourn Vale, once in the morning, once in the afternoon, and once in the evening (or when the characters are camping). The characters happen upon a random encounter on a result of 16-20 if they are offroad, or 18-20 if they are on the road. Roll percentile dice on the appropriate tables on the next two pages to determine the encounter that the characters experience. Creatures marked with an asterisk are featured in the appendix.

Some of the adventures in this book have different rules for random encounters, which may supersede these, even if they use the same tables.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS LEVEL 1–4

d20	Arctic	Forest	Grassland	Hill and Mountains	Swamp
1	1d4 commoners	1d4 awakened shrubs	1d4 commoners	1d6 kobolds	1 swarm of ravens
2	1d4 + 2 bloodhawks	1d6 deer	2d4 poisonous snakes	1d4 swarms of bats	1d4 + 1 stirges
3	1d6 ice mephits	1d4 + 2 bloodhawks	1d4 + 2 bloodhawks	1d4 + 2 bloodhawks	1 giant constrictor snake
4	1d2 scouts	1d2 scouts	1d2 scouts	1d2 scouts	1d2 scouts
5	1 brown bear	1 brown bear	1 giant eagle	1 giant eagle	1d4 swarms of diseased rats
6	1d3 griffons	2d4 poisonous snakes	1d3 worgs	1d3 saber-toothed tigers	1d3 giant lizards
7	1d6 + 1 orcs	2d4 bandits	1d6 + 1 orcs	1d6 + 1 orcs	1d6 + 1 orcs
8	1 ogre	1 ogre	1 ogre	1 ogre	1 ogre
9	1 saber-toothed tiger	1 ankheg	1 ankheg	1 basilisk	1d3 ghouls
10	1 mantichore	1d2 giant spiders	1d2 tigers	1d2 lions	1d2 will-o'-wisps
11	1 polar bear	1 werewolf	1d3 gnolls	1 ettin	1 giant crocodile
12	1d2 winter wolves	1 green hag	1d2 giant hyenas	1 bulette	1 green hag
13	1 bandit captain and 1d6 bandits	1d6 shadows	1 bandit captain and 1d6 bandits	1d6 shadows	1d6 shadows
14	1d2 specters	1d2 specters	1d2 specters	1d2 specters	1d2 specters
15	1 druid and 1 polar bear or 1 saber-toothed tiger	1 druid and 1 brown bear or 1 swarm of poisonous snakes	1 druid and 1 giant poisonous snake or 1 giant boar	1 druid and 1 brown bear or 1 saber-toothed tiger	1 druid and 1 giant crocodile or 2d4 giant lizards
16	1 berserker and 2d4 tribal warriors	1 berserker and 2d4 tribal warriors	1 berserker and 2d4 tribal warriors	1 berserker and 2d4 tribal warriors	1d6 + 1 lizardfolk
17	1 troll	1 shambling mound	1 bulette	1 wyvern	1 shambling mound
18	1d6 + 1 zombies	1d6 + 1 zombies	1d6 + 1 zombies	1d6 + 1 zombies	1d6 + 1 zombies
19	1 wight	1 wight	1 wight	1 wight	1 wight
20	2d4 skeletons	2d4 skeletons	2d4 skeletons	2d4 skeletons	A patch of sorrowbloom (see page 39 for details).

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS LEVEL 5 – 10

d20	Arctic	Forest	Grassland	Hill and Mountains	Swamp
1	1d4 commoners	1 treant	1d4 commoners	1d2 hill giants	2d4 swarms of ravens
2	2d4 + 2 bloodhawks	1d6 deer	1d4 + 1 swarms of poisonous snakes	2d4 + 1 giant bats	2d10 stirges
3	1d4 saber-toothed tigers	2d4 + 2 bloodhawks	2d4 + 2 bloodhawks	2d4 + 2 bloodhawks	1d4 giant constrictor snakes
4	1d6 scouts	1d6 scouts	1d6 scouts	1d6 scouts	1d6 scouts
5	1d3 brown bears	1d3 brown bears	1d3 manticores	1d3 manticores	2d4 giant rats
6	1d6 griffons	1d4 + 1 swarms of poisonous snakes	2d4 + 1 worgs	2d4 saber-toothed tigers	1 hydra
7	2d6 + 1 orcs	1 veteran and 2d4 thugs	2d6 + 1 orcs	2d6 + 1 orcs	2d6 + 1 orcs
8	1d2 ogres	1d2 ogres	1d2 ogres	1d2 ogres	1d2 ogres
9	1d4 manticores	1d2 ankhegs	1d2 ankhegs	1 medusa	1 ghastr and 1d6 ghouls
10	1d3 polar bears	1d4 + 1 giant spiders	1d6 lions	1d6 lions	1d6 will-o'-wisps
11	1d4 + 1 winter wolves	1d3 werewolves	2d4 + 1 gnolls and 1d10 hyenas	1d2 ettins	3 green hags
12	1 bandit captain and 2d4 thugs	3 green hags	1 bandit captain and 2d4 thugs	1d2 bulletes	1d2 giant crocodiles
13	1 wraith and 1d3 specters	1 wraith and 1d3 specters	1 wraith and 1d3 specters	1 wraith and 1d3 specters	1 wraith and 1d3 specters
14	1d2 druids and 1 polar bear or 1d2 saber-toothed tigers	1d2 druids and 1d2 browns bear or 1d2 swarms of poisonous snakes	1d2 druids and 1d2 giant poisonous snakes or 1d2 giant boars	1d2 druids and 1d2 browns bear or 1d2 saber-toothed tigers	1d2 druids, 1 giant crocodile, and 1d4 crocodiles
15	1d4 berserkers and 2d6 + 1 tribal warriors	1d4 berserkers and 2d6 + 1 tribal warriors	1d4 berserkers and 2d6 + 1 tribal warriors	1d4 berserkers and 2d6 + 1 tribal warriors	2d6 + 2 lizardfolk and 1d4 giant lizards
16	1d3 trolls	1 shambling mound and 1d3 will-o'-wisps	1d2 bulettes	1d2 wyverns	1d2 shambling mounds
17	1d2 zombie mobs*	1d2 zombie mobs*	1d2 zombies mobs*	1d2 zombies mobs*	1d2 zombies mobs*
18	1 wight and 2d4 zombies	1 wight and 2d4 zombies	1 wight and 2d4 zombies	1 wight and 2d4 zombies	1 wight and 2d4 zombies
19	1d2 shadow swarms*	1d2 shadow swarms*	1d2 shadow swarms*	1d2 shadow swarms*	1d2 shadow swarms*
20	1d2 vampire spawn	1d2 vampire spawn	1d2 vampire spawn	1d2 vampire spawn	A patch of sorrowbloom (see page 39 for details).



## Chapter 2. Towns & Villages

This chapter details two of the villages and one town featured on the map of Dreadmourn Vale on page 6. Each of these settlements offers notable NPCs, locations, and adventure hooks to keep your players busy while they're traveling through this area. You are also free to use these settlements in your own campaign, changing the names and features as it befits the setting.

Here is a rundown of each section and how to use it. If you need additional villages and towns, be sure to check out the *Just Passing Through* series from DMDave Publishing.

**Read-Aloud Text.** The read-aloud text block section of the listing (in yellow) provides a scripted passage that the GM can read to the players when their characters first arrive in the settlement. This helps set the mood and establish the atmosphere of the

settlement, as well as give the players an initial impression of the place.

**Basic Information.** The basic information section of the settlement listing provides an overview of the settlement, including its population, government, defense, commerce, and important organizations. This section gives you a quick idea of what the settlement is like and what its people are focused on.

**Important NPCs.** The important NPCs section lists six to twelve notable personalities the characters may encounter while they are in the settlement. Each NPC is described briefly along with any important information you may need to know about them.

**Settlement Map.** The map of the settlement provides a detailed visual representation of the settlement's layout, including important locations and special features.

**Notable Locations.** The notable locations



section lists six or more locations that are more prominent than the rest of the settlement. These places can be used to direct the characters toward interesting encounters or events.

**Adventure Hooks.** The hooks section provides ways in which the character can get involved with the adventures in Chapter 3. Each hook includes a quest giver, reasons for venturing to the location, and any potential rewards that the party may earn for successfully completing the adventure on behalf of the quest giver.

**Adventures.** Two of the locations, Gloomspire and Whispermire, are the sites of adventures.

**Random Encounters.** Finally, the random encounters section provides 12 events or encounters that are intended to introduce the characters to the settlement and its people. These encounters can be used to help flesh out the atmosphere of the settlement and give the characters a sense of what life is like there. You can use these tables to help shake things up, too.



## SETTLEMENTS LIST

Settlement	Page	Population	Theme
Ravenhollow	14	7,500	A towering fortress built atop a cold cliff, perpetually battered by chilling winds and haunted by the echoes of tormented souls.
Gloomspire	20	17	A secluded hamlet shrouded in perpetual fog where fearsome lycanthropes terrorize the locals.
Whispermire	28	200	A gloomy harbor town shunned by sailors, plagued by supernatural occurrences, and beset by the undead.
Shadowreach	36	420	A fog-shrouded marshland settlement where twisted trees and eerie whispers lead travelers astray, and ancient curses lurk beneath the murky waters.

# 1 – Ravenhollow

As you enter the town, a chilling wind bites at your skin and an overwhelming feeling of unease washes over you. Perched atop a desolate cliff, the ancient structures loom against a dark sky, casting ominous shadows on the uneven cobblestone streets below. The town is battered by relentless gusts, and the air is thick with the haunting echoes of tormented souls. A sinuous river snakes along the town's eastern side, its murky waters rushing into the abyss below. The locals eye you with suspicion, their faces etched with weariness and caution. You can't help but feel that there is more to this town than meets the eye, and that the darkness here is not just an absence of light, but something far more sinister lurking within the shadows.

Perched atop a desolate cliff, Ravenhollow is a town haunted by chilling winds and echoes of tormented souls. The ancient, dark stone structures cast ominous shadows on the cobblestone streets below. The sinuous river that snakes along the town's eastern side adds to the eerie atmosphere.

Residents have adapted to their haunted environment, forging intricate amulets and recounting eerie tales of the town's past to protect themselves from the darkness. Local gatherings often take place in candlelit inns and hushed taverns, where the townsfolk share their stories and seek solace.

Outsiders are rare and treated with suspicion, as the people of Ravenhollow remain fiercely protective of their secrets. This perpetuates the town's enigmatic and isolated reputation, making it a place shrouded in mystery and darkness.

## Basic Information

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**Population:** 7,500

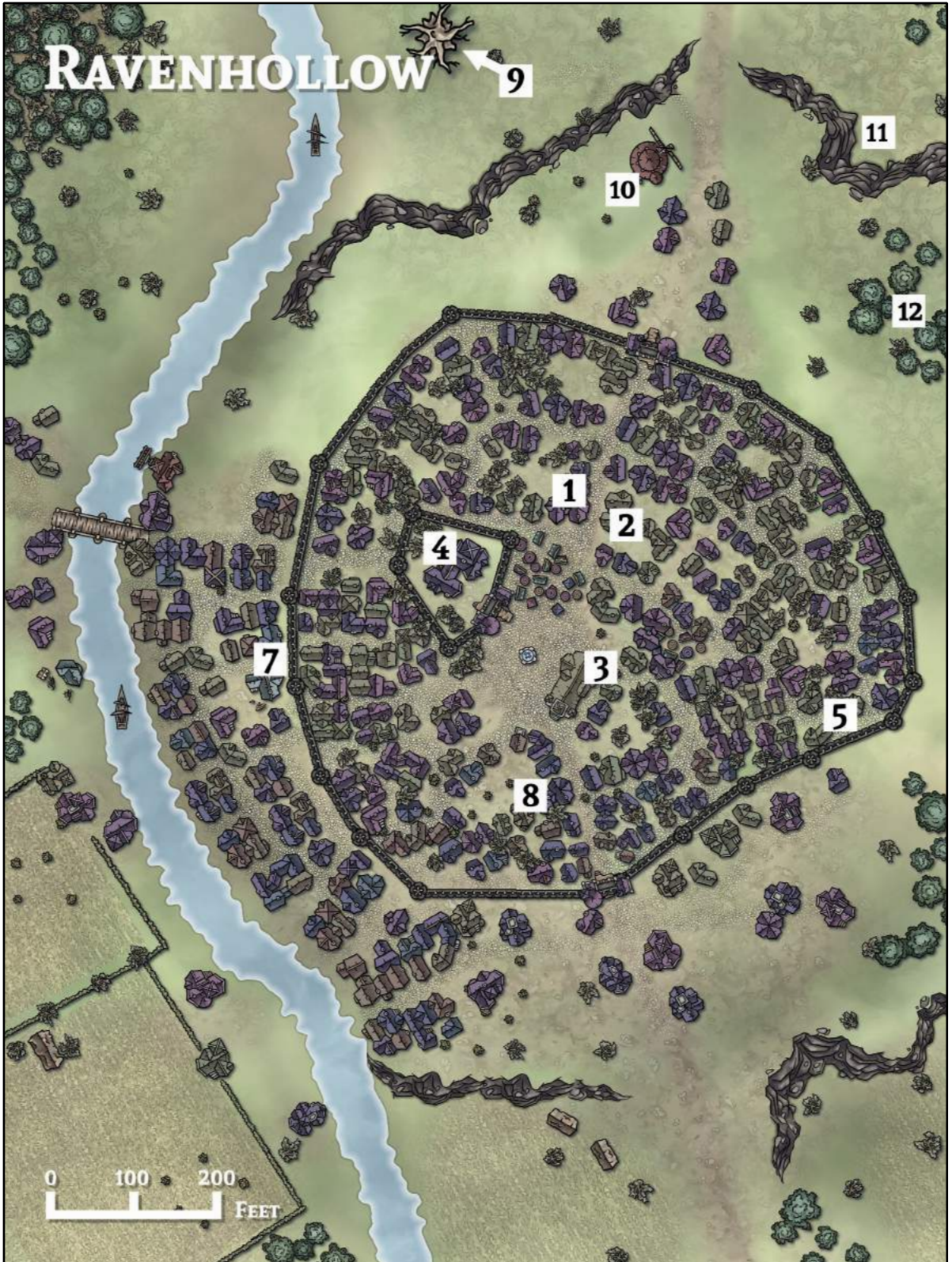
**Government:** Ravenhollow is governed by a council of elders, composed of respected citizens who have demonstrated wisdom and leadership throughout their lives. The most important political figure in Ravenhollow is the High Elder, Sorin Vasilache, who presides over the council and makes the final decisions on matters concerning the town's safety and well-being.

**Defense:** Ravenhollow's defense is primarily composed of a skilled militia known as the "Shadow Wardens," who are trained in both traditional combat and techniques for warding off supernatural threats. The militia is led by the seasoned and resourceful Commander Iskra Marčeta, who is responsible for organizing patrols, overseeing training, and ensuring the town's safety against any potential dangers. A large wall made of black stone also surrounds the town and

**Commerce:** The commerce of Ravenhollow is relatively modest, reflecting the town's isolated location and the somber nature of its surroundings. The local economy primarily revolves around subsistence agriculture, livestock farming, and small-scale craftsmanship. Ravenhollow is known for its talented silversmiths, who create intricate amulets and ornate jewelry that are both aesthetically pleasing and believed to possess protective properties. Additionally, the town boasts skilled leatherworkers, woodworkers, and blacksmiths who produce essential goods for the community.



# RAVENHOLLOW



Inkarnate

## Notable Locations

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The following locations are keyed to the map of Ravenhollow as seen on page 15.

**1 – The Wandering Raven Inn.** This cozy, candlelit inn offers warm food and shelter to weary travelers and locals alike. Its proprietor, Livia Dragan, is a kind-hearted woman who enjoys sharing stories and local legends with her guests.

**2 – Vasile's Emporium.** This well-stocked supply store caters to adventurers, offering a variety of weapons, armor, and essential equipment. The owner, Vasile Mateescu, is a shrewd businessman with extensive knowledge of the region and its dangers.

**3 – Sanctuary of the Guiding Light.** The modest temple dedicated to the worship of benevolent deities provides spiritual guidance and solace to the townsfolk. The wise and compassionate High Priestess, Esmeralda Petran, leads the temple and offers counsel to those in need.

**4 – The Council Hall.** This imposing fortress is where the council of elders convenes to make decisions regarding the town's affairs. High Elder Sorin Vasilache presides over the council, ensuring the safety and well-being of the community.

**5 – Blackwood Apothecary.** This small shop is filled with herbs, potions, and remedies for various ailments and afflictions. Its skilled herbalist, Anca Stănescu, is known for her vast knowledge of healing arts and her uncanny ability to cure even the most obscure maladies.

**6 – The Howling Gargoyle Tavern.** Here at this lively establishment locals gather to drink, share stories, and unwind after a long day. The charismatic bartender, Radu Zănescu, is always ready to lend an ear or share a tale of his own.

**7 – The Iron Bellows.** A bustling blacksmith's workshop, the clang of hammers and the hiss of cooling metal fills the air. Master Blacksmith Goran Bogdan, renowned for his exceptional craftsmanship, creates weaponry and armor for the town's militia and discerning customers.

**8 – The Whispering Archives.** This dimly lit library is filled with dusty tomes and scrolls detailing the history, folklore, and secrets of Ravenhollow. The reclusive librarian, Lavinia Moise, is the guardian of these texts and an invaluable source of information.

**9 – The Broken Oak.** This towering, ancient tree at the edge of town was split down the middle by a long-ago lightning strike, now considered a landmark and meeting place.

**10 – The Creaking Windmill.** An old, weathered windmill stands at the outskirts of town, its sails groaning and creaking as they turn in the wind. The dedicated miller, Alina Popescu, diligently maintains the windmill, producing flour for the town's bakers and providing a recognizable landmark for travelers.

**11 – The Serpent's Coil.** This eerie, winding path snakes along the cliffside, offering breathtaking views of the river below and the surrounding landscape. The mysterious guardian, Nicu Lazăr, patrols the area, ensuring that no malevolent forces approach the town from this vantage point.

**12 – The Moonlit Grove.** This peaceful, secluded glade on the outskirts of Ravenhollow is where locals go to find solace and commune with nature. The enigmatic seer, Mirela Ionescu, often frequents this location, offering guidance and cryptic prophecies to those who seek her counsel.



## Notable Organizations

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The three most important organizations in Ravenhollow are detailed below.

**Council of Elders.** The Council of Elders is the governing body of Ravenhollow, responsible for making decisions that impact the safety, well-being, and prosperity of the town. Led by High Elder Sorin Vasilache, the council is composed of respected citizens who bring their wisdom and experience to the decision-making process. Sorin's primary agenda is to preserve the town's traditions and protect its citizens from the ever-present supernatural threats, while maintaining a cautious balance between isolation and necessary interaction with the outside world.

**Shadow Wardens.** Under the leadership of Commander Iskra Marčeta (LG **veteran**), the Shadow Wardens are responsible for organizing patrols, overseeing training, and ensuring the town's safety against any potential dangers. Commander Marčeta is focused on strengthening the town's defenses, recruiting and training new members, and maintaining a constant vigilance against the dark forces that surround Ravenhollow.

**Order of the Guiding Light.** The Order of the Guiding Light is a religious organization dedicated to the worship of benevolent deities, providing spiritual guidance and support to the citizens of Ravenhollow. Led by High Priestess Esmeralda Petran, the Order seeks to instill hope and resilience within the community, offering counsel and organizing rituals and ceremonies to keep the darkness at bay. High Priestess Petran's wishes to nurture the town's spiritual well-being, foster unity among the townsfolk, and help them maintain their faith in the face of the ever-present darkness.

## Notable NPCs

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The following NPCs are important and influential people in Ravenhollow.

**Livia Dragan, the innkeeper.** Livia (NG **commoner**) is always ready to provide a warm meal and a friendly ear to weary travelers. Secretly, she's a member of the Order of the Guiding Light and uses her inn to discreetly aid those in need of spiritual support.

**Vasile Mateescu, the business owner.** The shrewd and knowledgeable owner of Vasile's Emporium, Vasile (LE **acolyte**) is a seasoned merchant with extensive experience in the region. Unbeknownst to many, he is also a talented alchemist and secretly creates powerful potions for those who can afford his services.

**Esmeralda Petran the high priestess.** As the leader of the Sanctuary of the Guiding Light, Esmeralda (NG **priest**) is known for offering counsel and support to those who seek her guidance. She has the rare gift of prophetic dreams, which she keeps secret to avoid drawing unwanted attention to herself and the Order.

**Sorin Vasilache, the high elder.** Sorin (LN **noble**) is deeply committed to the protection and well-being of Ravenhollow. His commitment to the town is driven by a personal tragedy in which he lost his family to dark forces, a secret he rarely shares.

**Anca Stănescu, the herbalist.** The owner of Blackwood Apothecary, Anca (**green hag**) is renowned for her healing abilities and vast knowledge of herbs and remedies. In truth, Anca is also a talented witch, a secret she guards carefully to avoid arousing suspicion among the townsfolk.

**Mirela Ionescu, the seer.** Mirela (N **druid**) is known for her cryptic prophecies and guidance. She is the last descendant of a

powerful bloodline of seers, a fact she keeps hidden to protect herself from those who would exploit her abilities.

**Radu Zănescu, the bartender.** Always working at The Howling Gargoyle Tavern, Radu (N **scout**) is always ready to share a tale or lend an ear to patrons. Unknown to most, Radu is a former adventurer with a hidden stash of powerful relics he acquired during his travels, which he keeps hidden for emergencies.

**Goran Bogdan, the master blacksmith.** Owner of The Iron Bellows, Goran (N **gladiator**) is renowned for his exceptional craftsmanship in forging weaponry and armor. He is secretly working on a set of enchanted weapons, designed specifically to combat supernatural threats that plague the region.

**Lavinia Moise, the librarian.** The reclusive librarian (N **commoner**) of The Whispering Archives, Lavinia is a valuable source of information and the guardian of the town's historical texts. She is also an adept in ancient languages, and has secretly deciphered a series of ancient runes that point to a hidden treasure buried somewhere in the caverns below Ravenhollow.

**Ileana Neagu, the headmistress.** The stern yet caring headmistress of The Silver Crescent School, Ileana (LG **scout**) is dedicated to preparing her students for life in Ravenhollow.

**Nicu Lazăr, the ranger.** The mysterious guardian who patrols the Serpent's Coil, Nicu is responsible for ensuring that no malevolent forces approach Ravenhollow from this vantage point. Unknown to the people of Ravenhollow, Nicu is a **werebear**.

## Adventure Hooks

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Below is a list of adventure hooks for the characters to partake in while they are in Ravenhollow. Each is tied to one of the adventures detailed later in this book.

### What Do Spiders Fear?

While the characters are traveling through the north part of town, they hear screams. Terrified villagers point in the direction of the nearby forest—giant spiders, the size of horse carts, bolt from the treeline toward the town. The number of **giant spiders** coming out of the forest is equal to the party's average level, plus one for each character beyond five (for example, a party of six 3rd-level heroes will face four giant spiders). Curiously, the spiders don't attack the characters or the villagers; any character with proficiency in Animal Handling notices this immediately.

Characters who examine the spiders notice that some of them are covered in ropey burns. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that they were harmed by something with a corrosive touch. If the characters choose to follow up on this mystery, they soon learn that the spiders were cleared from their nearby nest by voracious oozes. See page 68 Ooze Caverns for more information.

### Naked and Dead

A group of hunters returns from the forest fearful and arguing among themselves. If the characters get close enough to hear the discussion, they learn that the hunters encounters a pack of wolves midway between Ravenhollow and the hamlet of Gloomspire. One of the hunters shot the wolves with his luck silver-tipped arrow, getting it right through the heart. Much to his surprise, the

creature transformed into a naked humanoid. The hunters fear that the man and the other wolves were probably lycanthropes. If the townsfolk already recognize the characters as heroes, many will suggest that the characters travel to Gloomspire to learn more about a potential lycanthrope invasion. See Gloomspire on page 20 for details.

## Dead of Winter

Travelers coming from the west report that the a fearsome blizzard is rolling down from the north into the western part of the Vale. But the cold and ice isn't the only thing this storm brings. They whisper that the dead walks with the storm, shambling in droves. Already, these monstrosities have claimed the lives of farmers living on the road between Gloomspire and Whispermire. And supposedly their bites can cause a horrible illness capable of transforming a living man into the hungry dead.

When the rumors get bad enough and merchants stop coming from the east, Ravenhollow's High Elder, Sorin Vasilach, approaches the characters and asks them to investigate the eastern part of the region, hoping that they can learn whether or not the rumors of the dead are true. He offers to send two members of the Shadow Warrens (both **spies**) with the characters. See Whispermire (page 28) for details.

## Random Encounters

Every eight hours the characters are wandering through Ravenhollow, roll a d20. On a result of 18 or higher, an encounter occurs. Roll on or choose from the table on the right to determine the nature of the encounter.

d12	Encounter
1	A lost child approaches the players, seeking help to find their way home.
2	A captivating street performer's ( <b>noble</b> ) show draws the players' attention.
3	A sudden downpour forces the players to seek shelter nearby.
4	The characters come across a heated dispute between two merchants ( <b>nobles</b> ).
5	Beggars ( <b>commoners</b> ) approach the players, asking for alms or assistance.
6	The players overhear a whispered rumor about a secret meeting of the Order of the Guiding Light.
7	A runaway cart barrels towards the characters, forcing them to react quickly.
8	The players are invited to participate in a local game or contest.
9	A stray dog ( <b>mastiff</b> ) follows the players, seemingly drawn to one of them.
10	An old woman ( <b>acolyte</b> ) offers to tell the players' fortunes for a small fee.
11	The players witness a public argument between members of the Shadow Warrens ( <b>spies</b> ) and the Order of the Guiding Light ( <b>acolytes</b> ).
12	The characters encounter Baron Leo Wilson (see page 42).

## 2 – Gloomspire

As you approach the tiny hamlet, you notice an eerie, perpetual fog clings to the surroundings, obscuring the details of the buildings within. The hamlet is nestled within a dense forest, and the air grows colder as a sinister silence envelops the area. The shadows cast by the trees seem to dance and flicker in the gloom, creating an unsettling atmosphere that chills you to the bone.

The people of Gloomspire don't know it yet, but there's a deadly menace lurking among them—a vicious werewolf disguised as one of their own. And to make matters worse, the first time the characters enter Gloomspire, a deadly blizzard descends upon the hamlet, trapping them within its confines. The howling winds and heavy snowfall make it nearly impossible to leave, forcing the characters to face the growing danger and confront the terrifying werewolves both in and out of the village.

### Basic Information

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**Population:** 17

**Government:** Gloomspire is governed by Mayor Giovanni, who also serves as the foreman for the hamlet's lumber operation.

**Defense:** Gloomspire does not have a formal defense, and must rely solely on the defensive skills of the towns people plus any additional help granted by neighboring settlements.

**Commerce:** Nearly all of Gloomspire's adults are lumberjacks who sell their resources to Ravenhollow. They also openly share food, textiles, and other goods made in the village among themselves.

### A Village... and an Adventure

Gloomspire is more than an interesting road stop for the characters. Its also the site an adventure called Werewolf Village. Werewolf Village is played in three parts that take place over the course of a single 24-hour period of game time. Below is a brief description of each part of the adventure. Further details are provided later in this section.

#### Part 1 – Welcome to the Village

The characters travel to the village and meet with one or more of the villagers, as determined by the adventure's hook. The characters catch a brief glimpse into the inner workings of the village and villagers' interpersonal relationships.

#### Part 2 – Bad Moon Rising

A mighty storm sweeps the village the night of a full moon. At some point in the early evening, there's a murder. The characters quickly learn that it was perpetrated by a werewolf.

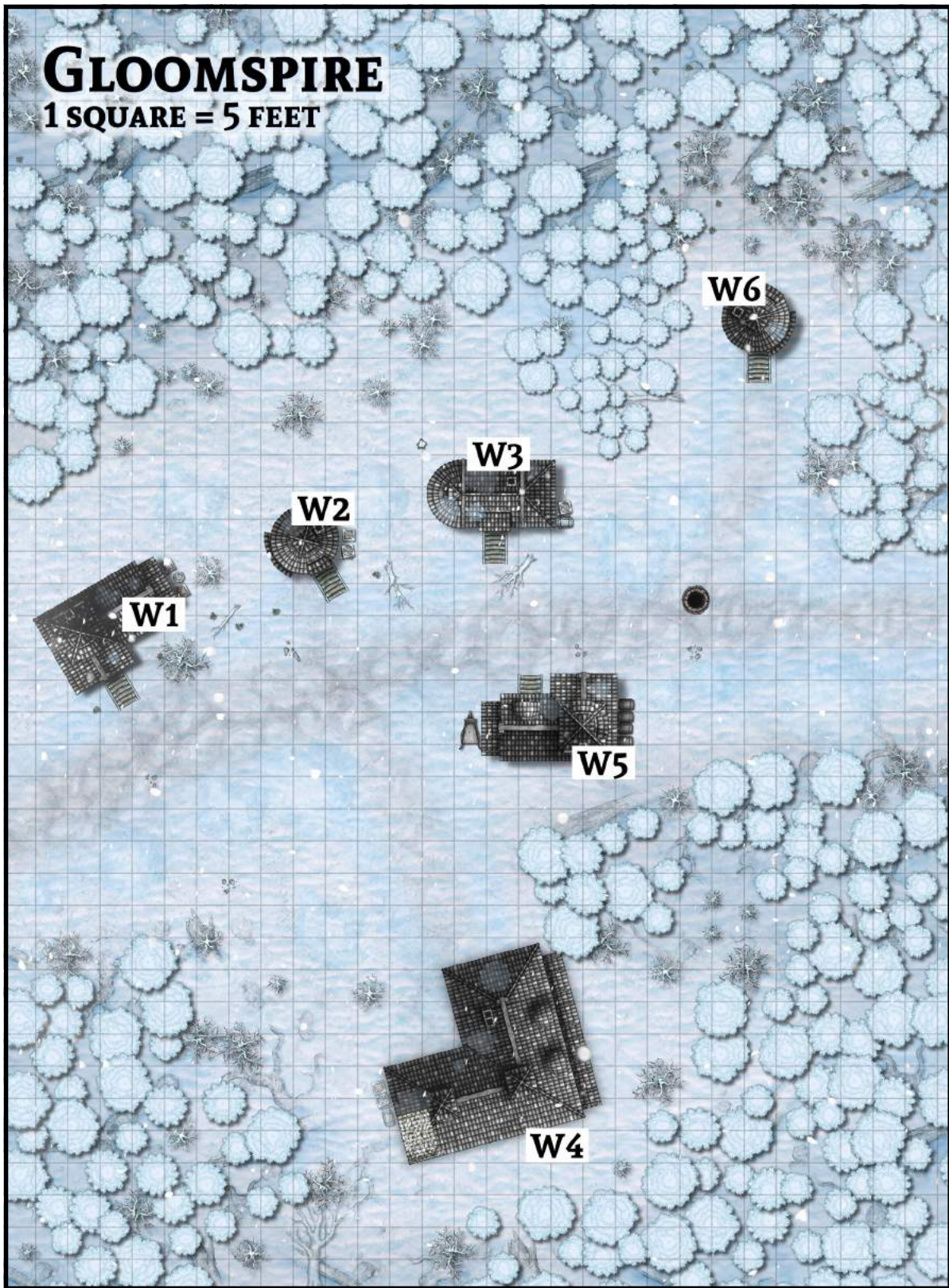
#### Part 3 – The Pack Attacks

A pack of evil werewolves, the ones responsible for turning the villager into a werewolf, attacks the village. The characters must keep the villagers safe.



# GLOOMSPIRE

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



## Notable NPCs and Locations

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Basic descriptions for each of the villagers is provided below in order of location. Each description includes one or two details about the villager, the location in which they live (keyed to the map of Gloomspire on page 3), a secret that they have, and how to roleplay them if they are the werewolf (see Part 2).

### W1 – Giovanni, Lauryn, and Stanly

Giovanni, the town's leader, lives with his wife Lauryn, and teenage son, Stanly, in a modest house near the edge of the hamlet.

**Giovanni.** A huge, perpetually happy man, Giovanni is one of the most beloved figures in the village.

- He serves as the nearby lumber mill's foreman.
- Giovanni is terrified of dogs and wolves, particularly Ayla's pet **wolf**, Randolph, who always barks at Giovanni.
- Unless Giovanni is a werewolf, he is a lawful good human **guard**.
- If Giovanni is the **werewolf**, he kills Ayla's pet wolf, Randolph.

**Lauryn.** Lauryn is Giovanni's kind wife. Their son is Stanly.

- Lauryn is a tiefling, although her devilish features are subtle.
- She wears hoods to hide her small horns and orange eyes. She never smiles, fearful of showing her fangs. She also wears mittens to mask the six fingers she has on each hand.
- Lauryn's mother was a paladin devoted to a god of vengeance who mated with an incubus. Lauryn's mother died during childbirth.
- Unless she is the werewolf, Lauryn is a lawful good tiefling **commoner**.

- If Lauryn is the **werewolf**, the first person she kills is Giovanni, by accident.

**Stanly.** Rebellious to the extreme, Stanly usually says whatever is on his mind, even if it's rude.

- Stanly saw Mats' silver dagger. He hopes to break into Mats' home and steal it.
- Unless he is the werewolf, Stanley is a chaotic good human **commoner**.
- If Stanly is the **werewolf**, he changes in the middle of town and kills three random villagers (roll on the table on page 27) before Mats or the characters put him down.

### W2 – Breanna and Her Children

Breanna lives with her three children, Chianna, Fontaine, and Prescott, in a small round house near the western entrance to the hamlet.

**Breanna.** A woman in her late fifties, Breanna is rather wily, prone to bursts of singing and dancing in the street. Like many of the folks in the village, she is a lumberjack by trade.

- Breanna's oldest son, Fontaine, is actually adopted. She discovered him alone in the forest when he was a baby. Not even Fontaine knows this.
- Unless Breanna is a werewolf, she is a neutral good human **commoner**.
- If Breanna is the **werewolf**, she won't attack her children, but will sate her deadly hunger with the villagers she sees as rude, particularly the lumberjacks who live in area W5.

**Chianna.** Chianna is the adult child of Breanna and sister to Fontaine and Prescott.

- Chianna is envious of her mother's close relationship with her brother Fontaine.



Chianna suspects that Fontaine isn't her true brother, but doesn't have proof.

- Chianna suffers from tremors and night terrors. She claims she sees the faces of wolves in her dreams.
- Chianna is having an affair with the village's preacher, Devante. Many of the villagers know about the relationship, including Devante's wife, Ayla.
- Unless Chianna is a werewolf, she is a neutral human **commoner**.
- If Chianna is a **werewolf**, she kills Ayla, then Fontaine.

**Fontaine.** Breanna's oldest son. Fontaine doesn't say much, content to help his mother and siblings with chores. He's even friendly towards strangers.

- A lot of the folks around the village call him "Sniffles" since his nose is usually runny.
- Fontaine was left alone in the forest by his true parents. Breanna adopted him.
- Unless he is a werewolf, Fontaine is a lawful good **commoner**.
- If Fontaine is the **werewolf**, the first person he kills is Stanly. Stanly was rude to Fontaine's mother the day before.

**Prescott.** Prescott is Breanna's five-year-old, making him Fontaine and Chianna's youngest sibling.

- Like Chianna, Prescott suffers from tremors. However, his are much more severe; at times leaving him bed-ridden. Fontaine spends a lot of his time caring for Prescott.
- Unless he is the werewolf, Prescott is a non-combatant human child.
- If Prescott is the werewolf, his family is able to secure him in his room before he can harm anyone. They are terrified that

someone will learn about his condition.

## W3 – Mats and His Daughters

The retired bard and his twin daughters live in a small home near the center of town.

**Mats.** Mats is a retired bard who lives with his twin daughters Jaylene and Jaylin. The girls' mother, a half-elf named Lucy, died giving birth to the pair.

- Mats mostly keeps to himself, but encourages his daughters to interact with the other villagers.
- Mats hides a silver dagger in his home. He is afraid that lycanthropes rule the forests around the village.
- Unless he is the werewolf, Mats is a neutral good **noble**.
- If Mats is the **werewolf**, he accidentally kills the girl Kimby when he changes.

**Jaylene.** Unlike her silly twin sister, Jaylene says very little.

- When spoken to, she turns bright red and runs away.
- Jaylene has a beautiful singing voice but she's afraid to perform in front of others.
- Unless she is the werewolf, Jaylene is a non-combatant child.
- If Jaylene is the **werewolf**, she accidentally kills her sister when she changes.

**Jaylin.** Less serious than her sister, Jaylin is a self-proclaimed silly goose who enjoys making jokes and singing.

- Jaylin has a doll named Mr Growly she's overprotective of. Mr. Growly has the body of a normal doll but the fuzzy head of a wolf.
- Unless she is the werewolf, Jaylin is a noncombatant child.
- If Jaylin is the **werewolf**, she accidentally kills her father Mats when she changes.

## W4 – Ayla and Devante

Ayla and Devante live in the largest home in the hamlet.

**Ayla.** Ayla is a large lady who tends to use big words in sentences so the other villagers think she's more intelligent than she is.

- Ayla is always accompanied by her pet wolf, Randolph.
- Ayla's husband, Devante, is having an affair with Chianna and Ayla knows about it. She wants nothing more than to see something bad happen to Chianna.
- If Ayla isn't the werewolf, she is a neutral human **commoner**.
- If Ayla is the **werewolf**, the first person she kills is Chianna. She then goes after Devante.

**Devante.** Devante is the village's preacher and Ayla's husband.

- When it isn't snowing, he holds service at the center of the village with the faithful.
- He spends most of his nights reading by one of the two fireplaces in his lavish home.
- Unless Devante is the werewolf, he is a lawful neutral human **acolyte**.
- If Devante is the **werewolf**, he does everything in his power to hide his true nature. The night of the full moon, Ayla follows Devante into the forest and sees him change. He then kills her.

## W5 – Kimby, Normand, Terrance, and Yvonne

Four young adults share a small home near the eastern edge of the hamlet.

**Kimby.** Although Kimby works in the forest with the other lumberjacks, she spends a lot of her time capturing bugs and researching them in the entomological books she keeps in her cabin.

- Kimby is terrified of the preacher, Devante. She believes he harbors a dark secret.
- Unless she is the werewolf, Kimby is a neutral human **commoner**.
- If Kimby is the **werewolf**, the night she changes, she kills her roommates Terrance and Yvonne. She then claims that Normand killed them. Normand actually ran away after seeing Kimby kill the others.

**Normand.** Normand suffers from gout, which makes him unable to stand.

- The other three he lives with are helping him save enough money to pay for a greater restoration spell.
- Normand is secretly in love with Giovanni's wife Lauryn.
- Unless Normand is the werewolf, he is a neutral **commoner**. His gout makes his movement speed 15 and gives him disadvantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws and ability checks, as well as attack rolls.
- If Normand is the **werewolf**, after becoming infected with lycanthropy, Normand's legs healed. He kept the change a secret, hiding his condition. In a fit of jealousy, he kills Giovanni when he changes.

**Terrance.** Terrance is a lumberjack who says little and rarely shows emotions.

- Many of the villagers dislike him.
- Unbeknownst to anyone else, Terrance loves Kimby. A year ago, Kimby was engaged to an abusive woodsman who lived in their home. Terrance killed the man and hid his body. Kimby believes her ex simply ran away.
- Unless he is the werewolf, Terrance is a



neutral evil human **spy**.

- If Terrence is the **werewolf**, he kills Normand. Yvonne and Kimby flee their house after this happens.

**Yvonne.** Although she's relatively friendly, Yvonne rarely bathes, so her smell is usually the first thing people notice about her.

- Yvonne used to be in a relationship with Stanly, but Stanly broke her heart. Now she despises him.
- Unless she is the werewolf, Yvonne is a neutral human **commoner**.
- If Yvonne is the **werewolf**, she kills Stanly, then turns on her roommates.

## W6 – Darcel

The house at the edge of the settlement is home to Darcel, the hermit.

**Darcel.** A year ago, Darcel lost his wife and daughter to an animal attack in the forest.

- Recently, he lost his job as a lumberjack.
- Darcel is an alcoholic and spends most of his days drunk. He rarely leaves his home.
- Unless he is the werewolf, Darcel is a chaotic neutral **commoner**. Because he is perpetually drunk, treat him as if he suffers from the poisoned condition.
- If Darcel is the **werewolf**, the first person he kills is Giovanni.

## Werewolf Village Part 1: Welcome to the Village

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Gloomspire is a six-home community built alongside a major road used for timber transport. Almost everyone in this village works in the forest, or supports those who do.

### Running This Part

This part of the adventure introduces the characters to the village and its unique

characters. They should get to know a handful of the villagers right away. This is especially important since this will help them form early suspicions.

Once you feel comfortable that the players and their characters have a good sense of the village and its goings-on, proceed to Part 2.

## Village General Features

Unless stated otherwise, Gloomspire's buildings have the following features.

**Architecture.** These small, cramped houses are made from mortar and timber. The ceilings inside rise 8 feet above the hardwood floors.

**Doors.** All of the houses are equipped with simple wooden doors set on iron hinges. The doors are all equipped with basic barrel locks. When locked, a door requires a DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to pick, or a DC 14

Strength (Athletics) check to break open. These doors have AC 15, 15 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

**Windows.** When the homes' leaded windows are opened outward, they're latched shut with a simple iron clasp. A locked window requires a successful DC Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to unlock, or a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to break open. The windows have AC 13, 5 hp, vulnerability to bludgeoning damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

**Illumination.** It's assumed that most of this adventure takes place at night. The homes all have burning hearths or fireplace to provide warmth and illumination. Most of the bedrooms have lit candles.

**Belongings.** All of the villagers are relatively poor, even Devante and Ayla who live in the village's nicest home (area W4). Inside each of the homes, characters will find

simple belongings, enough food and water supplies to survive for one month, and 7 (2d6) sp usually hidden somewhere out of sight—a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check is required to find the money

## The Blizzard

A blizzard clutches the small village, cursing it with extreme cold, high precipitation, and powerful winds. See page 8 for details on how these conditions affect the characters.

## Werewolf Village Part 2: Bad Moon Rising

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Shortly after the characters get a sense of the village and its inhabitants, the sun sets, a blizzard moves in, and a full moon takes to the sky. The werewolf—who you’ll determine using the rules below—kills one or more of the villagers. Who the werewolf kills depends on the true identity of the werewolf.

### Running This Part

To run this part, you’ll need to first determine the werewolf’s true identity below. Cross reference the werewolf with the information on the villagers provided in the previous part. This will help you build clues and leads that the characters can follow when attempting to solve the murder.

After you’ve determined the werewolf’s identity, the characters are alerted to a murder in the village. They will need to stop the werewolf from hurting the other villagers by either capturing it or killing it.

### Who is the Werewolf?

Use the Werewolf Identity table on the right to determine the true identity of the adventure’s werewolf. Regardless of the werewolf’s identity, they were bitten by one of the werewolves in the forest. The villager might

not even be aware that they are a werewolf—in fact, this is the first time they’ve ever changed.

## The Murder

After the **werewolf** changes, it goes on a murder spree. Immediately, one or more of the villagers discover the mangled and bloody corpse (or potentially corpses) of one of their neighbors. From there, the werewolf continues to stalk the villagers, slinking between buildings and the forested outskirts. It might be immediately obvious who the killer was, or the characters might have to uncover clues.

Some of the potential werewolves have close friends and family who might protect the werewolf, despite their chaotic evil nature.

## Silvered Weapons

If the characters lack silvered weapons, the villager Mats keeps a silver dagger in his home. If his daughters are alive, he hands the knife over to the characters and keeps the pair inside his home. If his daughters are killed, he joins the characters in their fight against the werewolf.

## Werewolf Village Part 3: The Pack Attacks

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The werewolf of this adventure isn’t the only werewolf in the village. In fact, the forest is filled with them. Once the characters have stopped the villager-werewolf from attacking the other villagers, the pack descends on the village and attacks. The number of werewolves who attack the village depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

The werewolves are relentless in their attack, especially if the characters killed the villager-werewolf. Some of the villagers might help the characters, but most aren’t trained



### WEREWOLF IDENTITY

d100	Villager	Area
01–06	Ayla	W4
07–12	Breanna	W2
13–18	Chianna	W2
19–24	Darcel	W6
25–30	Devante	W4
31–36	Fontaine	W2
37–42	Giovanni	W1
43–48	Kimby	W5
49–54	Jaylene	W3
55–60	Jaylin	W3
61–66	Lauryn	W1
67–72	Mats	W3
73–78	Normand	W5
79–84	Prescott	W2
85–90	Stanly	W1
91–95	Terrance	W5
96–00	Yvonne	W5

fighters, and prefer to stay inside where they can protect their friends and family members.

### Werewolf Village Aftermath

The werewolf pack continues their attack throughout the night. If the characters don't defeat them all, they eventually run back to the forest. To ensure that the villagers stay safe, the characters will need to enter the woods and clear the werewolves from their lair.

If the villager who transformed into a werewolf survived the attack, the characters can attempt to cure them of lycanthropy with a remove curse spell. If they don't, the villager eventually runs away to be with the rest of the wolf pack. If the wolf pack is destroyed, the villager might run off to start their own pack.

### WEREWOLF ATTACK

Adventure Level	Number of Werewolves
1st	2
3rd	4
5th	8
8th	12

## 3 – Whispermire

As you enter the gloomy harbor village, the foreboding sight of dark, decrepit buildings and narrow, twisting streets greets you. Situated on the shores of a mysterious lake, the village seems shrouded in a perpetual mist that casts an eerie pallor over the area. The mournful cries of gulls mix with the distant sound of clanging chains, and the icy water laps at the desolate, abandoned docks, making the entire setting feel unsettling and unwelcoming.

Whispermire is a gloomy harbor village on Lake Ebonmirror. Shunned by sailors, the town is plagued by supernatural occurrences, and regularly beset by undead from the north. Lake Ebonmirror, which once offered Whispermire an abundance of fish, is mostly frozen over.

### Basic Information

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**Population:** 200

**Government:** The town is governed by Elder Magistrate Emil Constantinescu, who, with the help of a small group of trusted advisors, oversees the welfare of the residents and makes decisions regarding local affairs.

**Defense:** The defense of the town is primarily managed by a few able-bodied individuals, led by the resourceful and steadfast Captain Anghel Dobre, who are tasked with protecting the small community from any threats that may arise.

**Commerce:** The town's commerce primarily consists of local fishermen and a handful of small shops, all struggling to maintain a semblance of trade in the face of the town's grim reputation and supernatural challenges.

### A Village... and an Adventure

Gloomspire is more than an interesting road stop for the characters. It's also the site of an adventure called Undead Wastes. Undead Wastes is played in three parts. Below is a brief description of each part of the adventure. Further details are provided later in this section.

#### Part 1 – Welcome to Whispermire

The characters enter the village of Whispermire where they immediately get a sense that there is something wrong in the village. This part ends once the characters investigate the empty barn at the edge of town.

#### Part 2 – Undead Attack

During a supernatural fog, throngs of undead attack the village of Whispermire. The characters manage to survive, but many of the villagers are killed during the assault.

#### Part 3 – Undead Wastes

After the attack, the undead march north, drawn to a place of great evil. If the characters choose to follow the undead, the adventure continues on page 73.



# WHISPERMIRE



Watabou

## Supernatural Occurrences

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The first time that the characters enter Whispermire, the village is under some unusual supernatural effects, detailed below.

**Gnawing Hunger.** When the party first arrives, any character that requires food notices a painful hunger that seems insatiable.

**Necrosis Poison.** The attacks of all undead in this region carry an infectious disease known as necrosis poison. Many of the residents are already infected.

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or take 1d4 necrotic damage and become poisoned. The poisoned creature must repeat the saving throw every 24 hours, taking another 1d4 necrotic damage on a failed save. Whenever the creature takes damage from this effect, its hit point maximum is reduced by the same amount.

The creature dies if its hit point maximum is reduced to 0. A humanoid slain by this effect rises 24 hours later as a zombie unless the humanoid is restored to life or its body is destroyed.

After a successful saving throw, the effect ends, and the creature's hit point maximum is restored to normal. If the creature successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to necrosis poison for the next 24 hours.

## Undead Wastes Part 1: Welcome to Whispermire

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During the first part of the Whispermire/Undead Wastes adventure, the characters get to explore the village of Whispermire. Have them get a sense of the plague that's beset the town. Eventually, rumors and clues point them to investigate the barn at the edge of town (see area 1).

## Rumors

While the locals are cranky and miserable, they will answer questions. If the characters spend time asking around, roll on the Rumors table as shown in the table below.

### WHISPMIRE RUMORS

d8	Information
1	Izak, the innkeeper, recently sent some hunters into the woods to find food. Only one of them returned.
2	If the snows continue, the town will be cut off. If that happens, the townsfolk won't have enough food to last the week.
3	Brenda, the trading post's owner, has been raising her prices again, but even she's nearly out of food.
4	The characters overhear a group of villagers talking about "the bodies in the barn."
5	Strange creatures have been seen on the roads.
6	One of the villagers beat up another villager just for a joint of pork.
7	The town has no medicine or potions to help the sick.
8	Monsters killed the last of the livestock. Brenda, the owner of the trading post, is selling it, though, and she's charging four times the normal price.

## Notable Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of Whispermire as seen on page 29.

**1 – Last Hearth.** The most prominent building is an inn called Last Hearth. Its owner, Izak Koil (CG male dwarf guard). Izak is also the sheriff and the person the party will most likely need to speak to first. Two commoners resting at the bar have eaten infected meat and fallen ill. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal the signs of necrosis poison.

Izak will provide the following information:

- The winter's gotten so bad that there was no thaw, and the townsfolk have been unable to hunt or fish.
- It's gotten so that no one leaves their home except to buy goods.
- There's little food left in town, and some people have packed up and left.
- If the snows worsen, the passes will seal, and the people will be cut off. Without the traders bringing food, the town will starve.
- In desperation, hunters went out. Only one returned to the inn, but shortly after, she went berserk and murdered two bystanders. All three bodies have been placed in an empty barn at the edge of town while they wait for a priest from Ravenhollow to arrive.
- If he's asked to, Izak will take the characters to the barn.

**2 – Constant Blaze.** Faladan runs this smithy (LN male dragonborn **thug**). The dragonborn's brass-colored scales are pale and worn, denoting his extreme age, but he is still strong and capable. He sells only a handful of tools and simple weapons. Faladan's sister, Kelxix, was the only hunter to

return. If asked, Faladan will admit that Kelxix came to her shop. She was angry at having failed, taking a swipe at Faladan before he sent her to the inn to get something to eat. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal that Faladan is wounded, and a subsequent DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check will reveal the wound is infected with some necrosis.

**3 – General Traders.** Brenda Steinaltap (CG female dwarf **commoner**) runs this small trading post. Brenda still journeys to her trading partners four times a year. She also gets weekly shipments from traders who brave the snowy passes, but they are more than two weeks overdue, and Brenda's shelves are nearly bare.

She has five days' worth of rations, but they cost 2 gp each. Having been made from local livestock, these rations are infected with necrosis poison. Any creature eating one of these rations must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become infected.

**4 – Empty Barn.** On the edge of town stands a stout, wellconstructed barn. It was, until recently, used to hold livestock, but all the animals were slaughtered. If the characters enter, read or paraphrase the following:

The building is simple, with four walls, a peaked roof, and a hayloft. Stepping into the dark space, you shiver. The biting winds outside suddenly feel like a summer breeze compared to the numbing cold you feel upon entering.

Lying beneath a tarpaulin are three humanoid-shaped lumps.

**Investigation: Bodies.** Under the tarpaulin are the bodies of a brass dragonborn named Kelxix and two



## Undead Wastes Part 2: Undead Attack

The worsening conditions have made the locals selfish, unforgiving, and aggressive. They have stopped caring for one another, and those who cannot help themselves have died.

The necrosis poison has turned these victims into monstrous undead. When the characters exit the barn, the undead attack.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The chill wind snaps at your clothing, and you snatch it back to wrap yourself up, but the same wind brings something else. The hollow and chilling groan of the undead echoes through the square, followed seconds later by more and more lifeless voices.

humans—a man and a woman named Jack and Sarah. All three bodies are covered in wounds from the fight at the inn, but a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check made on the body of Kelxix reveals that one of her wounds predates this.

This wound shows signs of necrosis.

**Encounter: Dead Rising.** Whenever it feels the most dramatic, all three bodies animate. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table above. If Izak (see area 1) is present, he will help the characters fight.

**Encounter: Undead Swarm.** Undead attack the party from all sides. The fog makes the entire area lightly obscured out to a range of 15 feet and heavily obscured beyond that, making it impossible for the characters to see what’s happening elsewhere. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below.

The purpose of this encounter is to create a sense of unease amongst the party. Each round at initiative 20, roll on the Grisly Death table below and then read the description. The characters don’t see these deaths, they only hear them.

### DEAD RISING ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	2 zombies
3rd	3 ghouls
5th	3 ghosts
8th	3 wights

### UNDEAD SWARM ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	2 zombies
3rd	3 ghouls
5th	3 ghosts
8th	3 wights



## GRISLY DEATHS

d6	Information
1	An audible crack is followed by a choked scream.
2	A man's voice begs for mercy from somewhere nearby, only to be cut off suddenly.
3	A blood-curdling scream cuts through the fog but quickly becomes nothing more than a gurgle.
4	A whispered prayer is carried to you on the icy wind. It's quickly accompanied by the sharp tang of urine assaulting your nostrils.
5	The crunch of frantic footfalls sounds in the distance, only to be silenced by a fleshy thud.
6	The sound of a crying and whimpering ceases after the whip of a claw.

## LOST AND ALONE ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 <b>zombie</b>
3rd	1 <b>ghoul</b>
5th	1 <b>ghast</b>
8th	1 <b>wight</b>

## Lost and Alone

Once the encounter is over, the fog thickens further, making the entire area heavily obscured, and any characters not actively holding onto one another loses track of their comrades. Calling out to one another doesn't help. Lost and alone, the characters experience a short but harrowing encounter.

Keep the characters in the same initiative order, and on each of their turns, roll a d6:

- On a 1–2, roll on the Grisly Deaths table, reading the text aloud.
- On a 3–4, a single undead steps into the character's path and attacks. The undead acts before the character and then disappears into the fog unless the character deals enough damage to kill the creature in a single reaction. The nature of the undead depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Lost and Alone Encounter table on the left.
- On a 5–6, roll on the Special Events on page 34. Each event can only happen once, so reroll any you've already used. If none are left, treat the original d6 roll as a 1.

This part of the encounter should last no more than 1 round. Once it's over, read or paraphrase the following:

The wind's howling takes on a vicious wail, and the sounds of death subside, replaced by the moans of the undead and dying.

Regardless of how many undead the characters have slain, a horde exits the town, leaving tracks that are easy to follow. As the mists clear, the characters can make out the horde marching away

## LOST AND ALONE SPECIAL EVENTS

d4	Special Event
1	Stumbling out of the fog, a man falls at your feet; he grabs at you and pulls himself up. From his neck, blood sprays from an arterial wound, drenching your face and filling your mouth with the coppery taste of blood. Collapsing, he dies
2	A woman's voice begs for her life, and as the fog clears, you see a dwarven woman kneeling before one of the monsters. With a wail, the monster launches forward on all fours. Watching helplessly, you see it tear into her belly before the mists obscure everything but her screams.
3	From ahead, you hear the commanding voice of Izak directing people toward the inn. For a moment, you catch sight of him, only to watch in horror as a monster grabs him and tears his head clear of his body.
4	All the sounds around you are drowned out by a fierce and biting wind that buffets you. You must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion.

## Undead Wastes Interlude

Whispermire has been laid to ruin. Between those killed and those turned, the town's population has been more than halved. The survivors are in a state of shock. They are leaderless, grieving, and despondent. In this aftermath, the characters can do whatever seems best. There are injured to care for, survivors to console, and dead to be buried.

The characters also have the opportunity to investigate. Checking the bodies of any undead reveals that while some were beasts, many more were locals. Izak will beg the characters to discover what is creating the undead and destroy any more undead they encounter. If Izak is dead, Brenda Steinaltap will take his place. If the characters wish to follow the undead, they will quickly find

### AFTERMATH REWARD

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	2 <i>potions of healing</i>
3rd	1 <i>potion of healing</i> and 1 <i>potion of greater healing</i>
5th	2 <i>potions of greater healing</i>
8th	1 <i>potion of greater healing</i> and 1 <i>potion of superior healing</i>

dozens of tracks leading into the Frozen Wastes. No ability check is required to follow them. The adventure continues on page 73.

**Reward.** The Elder Magistrate rewards the party's efforts thus far. The nature of the reward depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table above. Ω



Dan Smedley

## 4. Shadowreach

As you enter the village, you find yourself surrounded by a fog-shrouded marshland blanketed in ice and snow. Twisted, frost-covered trees loom over the narrow paths, and eerie whispers seem to lead travelers astray. The dark, weathered buildings are built on stilts to keep them above the frozen, murky waters. An unsettling sense of dread envelops the area, as the damp fog mingles with the biting cold, casting a chill upon your very soul.

Like many of the other homes and settlements this side of the Vale, Shadowreach is having trouble coping with the fierce cold and ravenous dead. Banshees, ghouls, and will-o'-wisps frequently plague the marshes that surround the village.

### Basic Information

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**Population:** 420

**Government:** Shadowreach is governed by the enigmatic and secretive High Priestess Sorina Drăghici, who wields considerable influence over the village through her mastery of ancient rites and rituals.

**Defense:** The defense of Shadowreach is maintained by a group of marshland scouts, adept at navigating the treacherous terrain, under the command of the skilled and resourceful Warden Bogdan Vasile.

**Commerce:** Shadowreach's commerce revolves around the harvest of rare marshland plants and the trade of unique, mystical items, with the village's few merchants eking out a living amidst the challenging environment and eerie atmosphere.

### Notable Locations

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Below are six notable locations in Shadowreach, keyed to the map on page 37.

**1 – The Weeping Willow Inn.** This creaky, wooden structure built on stilts above the marsh offers travelers a place to rest and escape the bitter cold. The owner, Madalina Gheorghe, has a wealth of knowledge about the surrounding marshland.

**2 – Temple of the Whispering Fog.** This ancient, moss-covered temple is dedicated to the worship of enigmatic and elusive marshland spirits. High Priestess Sorina Drăghici leads the congregation, performing rituals that keep the village's ancient curses at bay.

**3 – Bogdan's Emporium.** A small, cluttered shop filled with gear, supplies, and curiosities from the surrounding marsh, Bogdan's caters to travelers and locals alike. The proprietor, Bogdan Vasile, is also the village's Warden and can offer valuable advice on surviving the treacherous marshland.

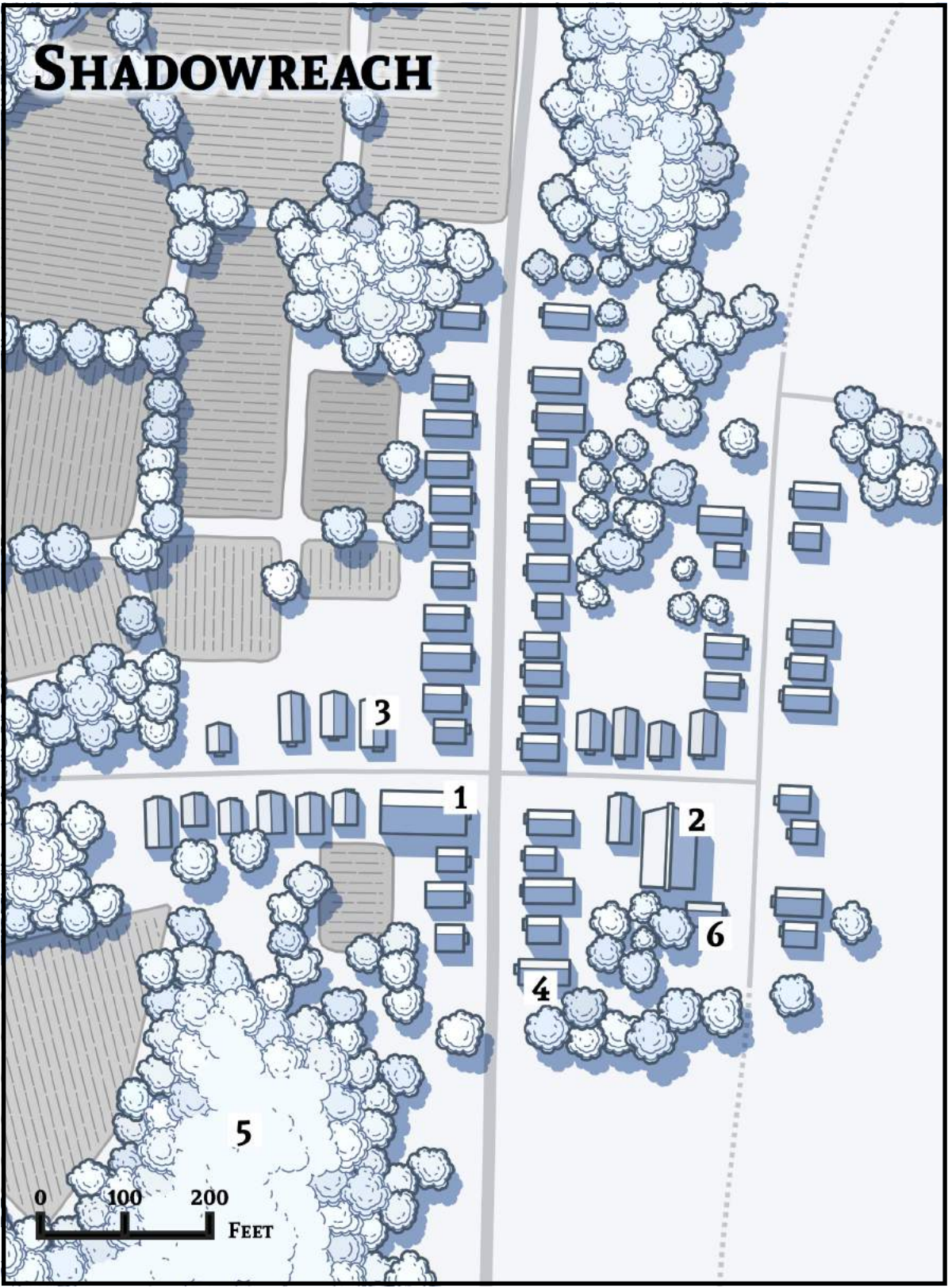
**4 – The Mirewalker's Lodge.** The lodge is a gathering place for the skilled marshland scouts, who serve as the village's primary defense against threats lurking in the shadows. Veteran scout Isabela Popescu leads the scouts.

**5 – The Shadowgrove.** This dense thicket of twisted trees is where villagers harvest rare plants used for their medicinal and mystical properties. Florin Marin, a skilled herbalist, can be found here, tending to the plants and crafting potent remedies from their extracts.

**6 – The Sunken Crypt.** A partially submerged mausoleum, the crypt is rumored to hold the remains of ancient village leaders and arcane artifacts. It's not uncommon for the dead to rise from their sarcophagi to harrow the living residents of Shadowreach.



# SHADOWREACH



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## Notable NPCs

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Below are some of Shadowreach most notable non-player characters.

**Madalina Gheorghe, the inkeeper.** The wise and experienced owner of the Weeping Willow Inn, Madalina (NG **acolyte**) has a warm and welcoming demeanor. However, unbeknownst to most, she possesses the power of foresight and can see into the future.

**Sorina Drăghici, the high priestess.** A charismatic and enigmatic leader, Sorina (LE **priest**) guides her congregation in the worship of the marshland spirits. In secret, she has struck a pact with an ancient entity that dwells beneath the marsh, granting her otherworldly powers in exchange for unknown sacrifices.

**Bogdan Vasile, the warren.** The resourceful proprietor of Bogdan's Emporium and Warden of Shadowreach, Bogdan (N **scout**) is well-versed in the perils of the marsh. He was once a notorious smuggler, using his knowledge of the marsh to elude capture and hide his ill-gotten gains.

**Isabela Popescu, the scout.** A brave and skilled **scout**, Isabela leads the Mirewalker's Lodge and defends the village against supernatural threats. Unbeknownst to her comrades, she is haunted by the restless spirit of a deceased sibling, who perished under mysterious circumstances in the marsh.

**Florin Marin, the herbalist.** A talented herbalist, Florin (N **druid**) dedicates his life to tending the plants of the Shadowgrove and creating potent remedies.

**Radu Ionescu, the guardian.** Radu (CG **veteran**) diligently guards the entrance to the Sunken Crypt, warding off intruders. He has recently discovered a hidden passage within the crypt, leading to a chamber containing an ancient and powerful artifact, which he has kept hidden from the village.

## Adventure Hooks

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Here are a few adventure hooks related to the adventures detailed in this book and the village of Shadowreach itself.

### The Lurker in the Mire

Many of the problems that Shadowreach experiences comes from a malevolent presence that lives within the mire itself. This is the same entity that High Priestess Sorina Drăghici made a pact with. If the characters hope at ending Shadowreach's troubles, they will need to enter the marsh and destroy the creature.

Treat the Lurker as a **spirit naga**. The high priestess will fight the characters to protect the Lurker, employing **cultists** and **cult fanatics** to help her if necessary.

### Trouble in the North

Travelers claim that the way north is too dangerous due to a violent storm and swarms of undead. Those who've made it to Whispermire have heard that the villagers there are in bad need of food and medical supplies. Having heard rumor of a deadly virus that spreads through the bites of the undead, the scouts of the Mirewalker's Lodge are too afraid to assist. Isabela Popescu asks the characters if they will help Whispermire. She offers to accompany them with one of her trusted lieutenants (another **scout**).

### Stolen Book

Radu Ionescu, the guardian of the Sunken Crypt, approaches the characters, asking for assistance. Hoping that they will be discreet, Ionescu tells the characters that recently, someone snuck into the Sunken Crypt and robbed it of a valuable book that was in there. Radu knew of the book, but kept it a secret, fearing what would happen if it fell

into the wrong hands. Although he doesn't have much to go on, he suspects that it was stolen by a group of ranchers who recently came through the village to purchase supplies at Bogdan's Emporium.

If the characters speak with Bogdan, he recalls that the ranchers were named the Hofsteders. They have a ranch along the road between Gloomspire and Whispermire north of the Lake. Bogdan notes that they were acting strange and seemed eager to leave. He can give the characters directions to the Hofsteder Ranch. If the characters follow this lead, refer to the adventure *Zombie Farmhouse* on page 77.

## Sorrowbloom

The herbalist, Florin, needs the characters help. She's trying to create a powerful potion capable of protecting the drinker from all diseases. However, she needs one last ingredient—sorrowbloom. Florin suspects that the sorrowbloom, also known as the weeping vine, can only be found in the Sorrowfen marshlands south of Ravenhollow. She offers to pay the characters 1,000 gp for every clump of Sorrowbloom they bring back to her.

## The Baron's Debts

The characters witness a downtrodden noble being harrassed by a group of thugs. See page 42 for details of this adventure hook.

## Random Encounters

Every eight hours the characters are wandering through Shadowreach, roll a d20. On a result of 18 or higher, an encounter occurs. Roll on or choose from the table on the right to determine the nature of the encounter.

d12	Encounter
1	The characters hear eerie whispers carried by a sudden gust of wind through the trees.
2	The characters stumble upon a half-sunken, rotting boat, its purpose and origin unknown.
3	A <b>ghost</b> drifts past the characters before vanishing into the mist.
4	The party encounters a group of villagers harvesting plants in the marsh.
5	The characters discover an ancient, moss-covered stone monument, engraved with indecipherable runes.
6	The characters find a small, strange trinket made from animal bones and dried reeds.
7	The characters come across a group of villagers huddled around a small fire, sharing ghost stories about the marsh.
8	The characters encounter Baron Leo Wilson (see page 42).
9	The party finds an eerie, but beautiful, clearing filled with bioluminescent fungi, casting an otherworldly glow.
10	A group of 1d4 + 1 <b>zombies</b> clambers out of the icy marshes and attacks.
11	A <b>specter</b> emerges from the fog, intent on draining the characters' life essence.
12	The characters are attacked by a vicious, cursed marshland <b>dire wolf</b> , its eyes glowing red.





## Chapter 3. Dungeons & Lairs

The adventures in this chapter are all designed for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 1, 3, 5, or 8. This section offers general guidelines on scaling the adventures to better fit your party's level. You are free to run these adventures individually or part of a larger campaign, in any order that you like.

### Running the Adventures

To run the adventures, you need the three Fifth Edition core rulebooks. You can access a free basic ruleset from the official source if you don't have a copy. You can also find many of the monsters for free on open source websites like 5thsrd.org.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters arrive at a location or under specific circumstances, as described in the text.

When a creature's name appears in bold type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block to say, "Hey, gamemaster, make sure you get this creature's stat block ready—there's going to be an encounter!" If the stat block appears in the appendix of this adventure, the text tells you so; otherwise, you can find the stat block in the core rulebook.

*Spells* and non-magical equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core manual for players. *Magic items* are described in the core manual for gamemasters.



## Level Selection

Before playing, know the level at which you wish to run the adventure. Overall, the adventure's locations and descriptions remain unchanged throughout the levels. However, most encounters, hazards, traps, and treasures scale with each level of the adventure. The keyed locations will present the differences between each level.

Also, the adventure works for more than just the listed levels. If you wish to run this adventure for levels other than 1, 3, 5, or 8, the chart below shows you which version of the adventure you should select for each level.

## Adventure Hooks

The towns and villages listed in Chapter 2 offer adventure hooks, many of which lead directly to the adventures listed in this chapter. While most of the hooks offer rewards, if you need to motivate the party with a monetary reward, the quest giver offers 500 gp per level of the adventure.

### SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Average Party Level	Recommended Adventure Version	Relative Difficulty
1	1st-level	Hard
2	1st-level	Medium
3	3rd-level	Hard
4	3rd-level	Medium
5	5th-level	Hard
6	5th-level	Medium
7	5th-level	Easy
8	8th-level	Hard
9	8th-level	Medium
10	8th-level	Easy

### ADVENTURE LIST

Adventure Name	Page	Theme
Haunted Castle	42	A family of cursed undead lurk within the remains of an ancient, snowbound castle.
Ooze Caverns	68	Voracious oozes have just claimed a spider's den as their new home.
Undead Wastes (Part 3)	73	After nearly destroying the village of Whispire, a hoard of undead marches north toward a site of great power. This adventure follows the events detailed in Whispire on page 29.
Zombie Farmhouse	77	A ravenous horde of undead encircles a ranch, drawn by a mysterious artifact hidden somewhere in the building.



## H – Haunted Castle

While hunting for a long-lost treasure hoard, the characters enter a wintery keep with a dark history.

### Adventure Hook: Meet Baron

While the characters are in one of the settlements or traveling on the road, they witness a young man wearing filthy noble livery engage in a fight with four bandits. He begs the characters to intervene. If they do, the bandits fight until at least one of them is killed or knocked unconscious, then they flee.

The young man introduces himself as Baron Leo Wilson. A gambler and heavy drinker, Wilson's fallen on hard times as of late. The bandits were rolling him, hoping to collect debts owed. He fears that if his debts aren't paid off, they'll surely kill him next time.

Wilson shares that his family was once one of the wealthiest families in the region. Then, ten years ago, his uncle, Lord Brycen Merritt, went insane and poisoned everyone in his estate—including the servants, guards, his three children, and even the horses. The controversy ruined the reputation of all related to him.

Then, just last year, Leo heard a rumor that Lord Brycen and his father, Ferim, both had access to an insane fortune—millions, if not billions, in gold coins. If this fortune did exist, it was never recovered from the castle.

Although Wilson doesn't have two copper coins to rub together, he makes the characters an offer: they explore the old Merritt castle and find the treasure. If they do, he'll pay each one of them 1,000 gp for their trouble.

## Adventure Summary

The adventure should play out as follows:

1. The characters meet Baron Leo Wilson and agree to help him recover his family's lost wealth. This can happen in any of the settlements (see chapter 2).
2. Entering the castle, the characters learn immediately that there's something strange about the castle. It doesn't take long for them to meet one of the castle's many ghosts.
3. Eventually, the characters get through to one or more of the Merritt family ghosts. The ghosts explain that their uncle Ferim knows where the vault is located.
4. The characters use speak with dead to communicate with Ferim's skull. Ferim reveals the location of the portal mirror and how to enter it.
5. Once into the secret vault, the characters must convince Lord Brycen to end the curse. This can be done by handing Brycen the ghostly letter that they find in the dungeon.

Once they agree, he gives them directions to the castle. It's approximately fifteen miles north of the village of Whispiremire, just northeast of the fork in the road marked H on the map).

Wilson refuses to go with the characters. He's already been to the castle once and claims he saw the ghosts of his nieces and nephew lurking around the old walls.

He tells the characters to meet him at a spot called the Wandering Raven in the town of Ravenhollow once they have completed their mission.

## Background

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Twenty years ago, Brycen Merritt, a tailor of some skill, lived within a modest house in the village of Whispiremire. He lived there with his wife, Noell, his three children, Radella, Farant, and Jalyn, and his brother, Ferim.

A would-be adventurer, Ferim had just returned from a trip exploring ruins in a far off land (potentially one of the ruins in the Desert of Dread book). Within those ruins he discovered a strange iron cube. After studying the cube for some time, Ferim discovered that it contained an efreeti who'd been imprisoned by a lich for ninety years. Bound to the cube by a powerful enchantment, the efreeti could only become free after granting whoever held its cube three wishes.

Brycen and Ferim's first wish was for wealth beyond their wildest dreams, which the efreeti immediately granted in the form of billions of gold coins. Unsure where to put this newfound wealth, Brycen asked the efreeti to create a hidden vault for the wealth. The efreeti granted the wish, creating a pocket dimension that could only be accessed via a mirror portal. Brycen placed the mirror in his bedchambers.

Fearful that the third wish would free the efreeti and invoke its wrath, the brothers decided to hide the cube. Angered, the efreeti swore vengeance upon the brothers, cursing them for their reluctance to free it.

Ignoring the efreeti's threats, the Merritt brothers enjoyed their wealth for the next few years. Brycen built a grand castle atop a hilltop near the village Whispiremire, where he lived with his family and brother. However, the land was cursed. A thousand years before the manor was built, a great battle between the humans and the dark elves

of the north occurred on that very hill. During this battle, one of the elven necromancers dropped a special dagger, the Dreadmourn, one made from material pulled from a realm of true evil. While building the castle, Brycen discovered the dagger and decided to keep it.

Although the magic within the dagger was dormant, its evil still seeped into the castle. The evil amplified dark emotions. It turned frustration into rage, happiness into ecstasy, and sadness into prolonged depression.

The first one affected by the dagger's evil was Ferim. During a fit of rage regarding the hidden treasure, he tried to kill Brycen. Before he could, Brycen's guards killed him.

Spiteful of this confrontation, Brycen claimed his brother's skull and stored it inside a fishbowl in the keep's southeastern tower.

Next, Brycen's wife, Noell, felt the effects of the dagger's evil. The dagger turned her boredom into ennui which grew into a period of depression from which she could not arise. After a few months, Brycen found her dead, poisoned. When local priests tried to raise her from the dead, her spirit refused to return.

Brycen descended into madness. Believing that the keep hid assassins, he poisoned the keep's water and wine supply.

He then held an event commemorating his wife. Brycen watched with glee as everyone who worked and lived in the keep drank the poison, including his children. Even after their deaths, Brycen was not reassured. He started to question himself—what if he was the assassin? Brycen took the last poisoned bottle of wine and hid himself in the vault. He cackled madly, cursing himself as he drank the poison.

From that day forward, Merritt Castle became cursed. Ten years later, locals still steer clear of the location, citing that abandoned manors near Whispiremire are prone to hauntings.

## Merritt Castle

Merritt Castle stands atop a hill surrounded by a snowdraped forest. Despite being abandoned for a decade, the grounds are still relatively well-kept—even under the snowfall—and the inside is clean and organized. The castle wants people to come inside.

### General Features

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Unless stated otherwise, the haunted castle has the following features.

**Ceilings, Floors, and Walls.** The keep and its curtain walls are made from dressed stone. Sturdy timbers brace the keep's walls and ceilings. The curtain walls are 15 feet high. Ceilings are 15 feet high on the ground floor, 12 feet high on the first level and tower (area H26), and 8 feet high in the dungeon.

**Doors.** Normal doors are constructed of thick oak planks bound by iron and hung on iron hinges. These doors have AC 15, 20 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A locked door requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to unlock, or a successful DC 18 Strength check to break open.

**Illumination.** At night, fires burn throughout the castle in the form of torches, braziers, or fireplaces. The fires are nonmagical, but there doesn't appear to be anyone who's lighting them. If the characters extinguish a flame and exit the chamber in which it was burning, it's relit the next time they enter the chamber.

**Portcullises.** Portcullises throughout the castle are made from sturdy iron bars. Winches using chains set into the walls allow the portcullises to rise 90 degrees flush with the ceiling. A portcullis has AC 19, 40 hp, resistance to piercing damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A character



can lift the portcullis or bend its bars with a successful DC 21 Strength check.

**Slippery Ice.** Many of the outdoor surfaces are covered in slippery ice. The ice is nearly invisible. Spotting the ice requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. A creature with proficiency in Nature makes this check with advantage. A creature moving across the ice must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. A creature moving through the area at half speed doesn't need to make the saving throw.

## Ghosts

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Various spectral undead haunt the old castle. Four of the undead were once members of the Merritt Family. The rest of the spirits were servants at the castle.

- The castle's master is a dangerous wraith, **Lord Brycen Merritt**. Driven insane by the death of his wife at the hands of assassins, he poisoned his three children and all of his servants. Although his taint is felt throughout the entire castle, he is only encountered in area 36.
- His oldest child was **Radella**. Now a **ghost**, Radella is obsessed with ridding the castle of intruders.
- Next is Brycen's son, **Farant**. Although Farant doesn't completely understand that he's now a **ghost**, he recognizes that something is horribly wrong at the castle. He helps the characters in any way he can.
- Finally, the youngest, **Jalyn**, was only 10 years old when Brycen killed her. Jalyn knows many of the castle's secrets and even understands that she and her family members are undead. However, she's terribly afraid of the characters, thinking they wish to destroy her and her family. Jalyn is a **ghost**.

**Optional Encounters.** Throughout the adventure, the characters will have multiple opportunities to interact with the manor's spirits. Most of the spectral servants and guards are deranged and attack on sight. However, Brycen's three children can be coaxed to help the party put their father's angry spirit to rest, thereby lifting the curse on the castle's undead.

When an **optional encounter** is listed in a keyed location, you are free to run the encounter with the ghost at any time you feel is appropriate, or completely avoid it. Use discretion when running these encounters. Too many encounters with the ghosts will water down their effectiveness. These optional encounters are best used when things slow down or the players lack leads or direction.

**Rejuvenation.** Until the curse is lifted from the keep, the spirits of the four Merritt family members—Lord Brycen, Radella, Farant, and Jalyn—cannot be permanently destroyed. If their hit points are reduced to 0, they disincorporate. An hour later, they reappear in another part of the castle, with all of their hit points intact, with no memory of who or what destroyed them.

## What the Ghosts Know

The three Merritt children hold the secrets to solving the mysteries of this adventure. However, to get them to speak openly about these secrets, the characters must bring them something in the castle that helps them reconnect to their past.

**Radella.** In life, Radella loved her fluffy, orange cat Hobart. If the characters catch Hobart (see area H21) and bring him to her ghost, she tells them what she knows.

- Shortly before her mother died, her father and her uncle got into a mortal brawl.

Her father's guards killed Ferim. Her father had Ferim's skull removed and stored in a jar at the top of the southwestern tower.

- Radella knows that there's a vault hidden somewhere on the grounds, but she's not sure where it's located. She suggests that the characters find a way to communicate with Ferim's spirit.
- Radella suggests that they speak with Farant for more clues. Farant loved to read. Perhaps if they bring him his favorite book, he will talk to them.

**Farant.** Farant's ghost refuses to believe that he's a ghost. But if he's brought his favorite old book, *Kings of the Dusk*, from his bedroom (area H23), he snaps out of his stupor long enough to help the characters. Here's what he can share:

- Farant knows all of the things Radella knows (see above).
- Farant knows that there is a strange black dagger hidden in the dungeon's vault. He believes that this dagger is the cause for the curse on the manor.
- An ice mephit periodically sneaks around the grounds. Farant believes that this mephit is searching for the dagger. The mephit can usually be found on the northwestern tower (area H17d).
- Farant doesn't believe that his mother was killed by assassins. He thinks that if the characters can find proof and present that proof to his father, it might lift the curse.
- The youngest Merritt child, Jalyn, probably knows more secrets than he and Radella combined.

**Jalyn.** Of the three, Jalyn knows the most about the castle and its secrets. However, she's the hardest one to catch. If she's given a lollipop from her father's library (area H20),

she will cooperate with the characters, sharing the following information.

- Jalyn knows everything that Radella and Farant know.
- The old guard room (area H05) contains a hidden jar with something awful inside of it. It's hidden below the floor.
- There is a ghostly messenger imprisoned in the dungeon below the keep. Whatever the messenger was carrying frightened her father enough to imprison the man there. She suspects the messenger knows something about her mother's death.
- The dungeon is one of the most dangerous places in the house. Not only does it contain the traps her father created, but the evil that permeates the grounds is at its strongest down there.
- The command word "Compunction" opens the door to the vault in the dungeon.
- Lord Brycen's ghost is hidden in his vault. The vault is hidden through a portal accessible through their bedroom (area H22). Unfortunately, she doesn't know the right word to access the portal.

## Keyed Locations

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The following locations are keyed to the maps of the haunted castle, as shown on pages 47, 54, 60, and 66.

### H01 – Eastern Face

Thick snow covers the grounds of the castle's eastern face. A ramshackle path made of broad timbers climbs up to the keep's drawbridge (area 1b), which is currently down. However, both portcullises leading past the barbican (area H1c) are shut. The levers in area H2 open these portcullises.

**Encounter: Hungry Wolves.** Two



**wolves** hide amid the trees to the north. In the 5th- and 8th-level versions of this adventure, the wolves are **dire wolves**. The wolves are hungry, but will run if the characters pose too much of a challenge.

**Hazard: Slippery ice.** The ice over the drawbridge (area H01b) is extremely slippery.

**Investigation: Dummy.** A character who searches the area around the drawbridge and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers an abandoned target dummy made of linen and stuffed with straw. There are two arrows sticking out of it.

**Optional Encounter: Murder Holes.**

Characters who enter the barbican might come under attack from the ghost Radella. Standing in area 17b, she pours scalding water through the murder holes above. When this

happens, each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. As she pours the water, she shouts, "Long live House Merritt!" She then turns ethereal and flees. If Farant helped the characters enter the castle (see area H02), he screams, "No, Radella! They are our allies! They will find Mother's assassin!"

**Optional Encounter: Ghostly Help.**

The ghost Farant might help the characters open the portcullises here. See area H02 for details.

**H02 – Gate House**

This cold room offers a few handaxes, bows, and loose arrows. Two levers on the wall



operate the portcullises in area H01. The portcullis that connects this area to area H07 is closed. The levers on the other side of the portcullis in area H07 opens it.

**Optional Encounter: Ghostly Help.**

The first time the characters approach this area and before they've entered it, a voice from within calls, "Please, allow me to get the gate for you." Whatever portcullis is currently preventing the characters from entering the area then raises. When the characters go to look for whoever helped them, there's no one there. The portcullis was raised by Farant's ghost, who then turned ethereal and vanished.

**Optional Encounter: Radella's Tricks.**

While passing through an open gate, the ghost Radella, in her ethereal state, triggers the portcullis to close. Any character standing in the portcullis' spot must make a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (the character's choice). On a successful saving throw, the character avoids the gate, and steps into the area where they wish to be. Otherwise, the character is hit with the portcullis; they take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and are pushed 10 feet back into the room from which they came. Radella then shouts, "Out, damn you, out!"

### H03 – Southeast Tower

Thick magical mist heavily obscures this area. Treat the entire area as if it was under the effects of fog cloud. The mist can be dispelled or dispersed as normal. Until the mist is removed, its own aura of conjuration obscures the magic shield's aura of abjuration (see below).

**Investigation: Shields.** Four shields rest against the stone staircase at the south end of the room. One of the shields looks particularly decrepit. However, it exudes an aura of abjuration magic. Despite its

crumbling and frail appearance, it is actually a +1 *shield*. The shield's frail appearance has no effect on its properties.

**Obstacle: Locked Door.** Although the door that leads to area H04 is locked and trapped from the other side, the door can be opened from this side without any issue.

### H04 – South Entrance

This simple entranceway is lit by a warm brazier. An empty weapon rack stands against the western wall. A single arrow lies on the ground.

**Obstacle: Locked Door.** The door that connects this area to the outside is locked.

**Trap: Locked and Trapped Door.** The door that connects this area to area H03 is both locked and trapped. It also appears to lack any sort of door handle. The door has been carved to look like a team of six mounted hunters surrounding a rabbit. Each hunter carries a shortbow. A character who inspects the rabbit sees that it has a tiny slot at its center. If the tip of an arrow is placed into the slot and turned, the door opens and the trap is disarmed.

If the trap isn't disarmed before the door is opened, the hunters fire tiny arrows from their bows at the character trying to open the door. The hunters attack with a +5 to hit.

On a hit, the tiny arrows deal 1 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw, or become poisoned for 1 hour. If the target fails its saving throw by 5 or more, the target falls unconscious for as long as they remain poisoned in this way or until another creature uses its action to shake or slap the sleeper awake.

Spotting this trap requires a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Once spotted, a character also knows how to



unlock the door using an arrow. Alternatively, the trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. This check is separate from the one needed to unlock the door.

## H05 – Guard Room

A broad, wooden table dominates the east end of this room. Maps depicting nearby cities lie unrolled on the table's surface. Two martial arts training dummies stand near the eastern wall. Stuffed weapon racks adorn the south and eastern walls.

A dartboard hangs on the western wall. A dagger sticks out of the board's 1's double ring.

**Encounter: Specters.** The first time the characters enter this room, specters materialize and attack. The number and types of specters that appear depend on the level of the adventure as shown in the table below. The specters were all guards of the old castle until Brycen poisoned them all. They now serve him in undeath.

**Investigation: Training Dummy.** A character who observes the northernmost training dummy and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices that one of its handles can be pulled downward. However, the effect it causes is not immediately obvious—it actually unlocks and

opens the secret door hidden in area H33. The door only remains open as long as the handle is being pulled down. Hanging an object weighing 30 pounds or more from the handle—such as the training dummy discovered in area H01b—keeps it in the down position.

A character who has observed the secret door in area H34 and this handle understands their connection with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

**Investigation: Hidden Jar.** A character who searches the area and succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a loose stone on the floor. This check is made with advantage if the characters learn of its location from the ghost Jalyn. The stone masks the presence of a hidden compartment, within which a small, opaque glass jar is hidden. The jar contains a *spell scroll* of *speak with dead* made from human skin.

## H06 – Northwest Tower

This old tower is used for storage.

**Investigation: Crates.** Old crates are stuffed under the stairs leading up to the ramparts. The crates contain religious iconography—stone statues, vestments, hymnals, and other paraphernalia—all dedicated to a benevolent sun god. Lord Brycen removed all of these objects from the keep after his wife died. If characters look through the items, they find the following letter addressed to him.

"My dear Lord Brycen,  
 Again, we express our deepest condolences for the loss of fair Lady Noell. As I explained in my previous letter, and at the altar the day of your wife's death, there was no issue with the magic or our goddess' might. But the invocation we attempted

### AREA H05 ENCOUNTERS

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 <b>specter</b>
3rd	2 <b>specters</b>
5th	6 <b>specters</b>
8th	1 <b>wraith</b> leading 4 <b>specters</b>

only works if the spirit is free and willing. Therefore, it was the decision of Lady Noell's spirit not to return to life. I understand that this news is difficult for you to hear. As a consolation, I've included in this letter the 1,500 gold pieces paid to us to revive your wife. And again, we offer our humblest apologies and well wishes for you and your family. Please, Lord Brycen, think of your children: Radella, Farant, and Jalyn. They need you now more than ever.

High Priestess Esmeralda Petran, Temple of the Guiding Light, Ravenhollow

**Hazard: Slippery Steps.** The stairs that lead up to the ramparts are covered in slick ice (see General Features).

## H07 – Courtyard

Most of this courtyard is dedicated to archery and martial arts training, as telegraphed by the targets and dummies at the northwest end of the courtyard. A throng of wooden buildings clutters the south end of the courtyard.

**Hazard: Slippery Ice.** All of the stonework out here is covered in slick ice (see General Features).

**Optional Encounter: Ghostly Help.** The ghost Farant might help the characters open the portcullises here. See area 2 for details.

**Optional Encounter: Jalyn.** When the characters enter this area, any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or better spots the ghost Jalyn running over the ramparts. Before they can target her with a spell or ranged weapon, she vanishes into the keep's area 19.

**Obstacle: Locked Gate.** Unless the characters already found a way to open it, the

gate that leads to area H02 is locked. A lever by the wall opens the portcullis. See area H02 for further details.

**Obstacle: Locked Doors.** The double doors leading to area 13 are barred from inside. The doors' locks can't be picked, but can be broken open with a successful DC 21 Strength check. The doors can also be destroyed; they have AC 17, 50 hp, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Spectral guards might be standing above this door. See area H18 for details.

## H08 – Tool Shed

This small shed contains all of the servants' and guards' old tools.

**Encounter: The Armorer.** The spirit of the keep's old armorer lurks in this area. It is aggressive and attacks the characters on sight. In the 1st- and 3rd-level versions of this adventure, the armorer is a **specter**. And in the 5th- and 8th-level versions of this adventure, the armorer is a **wraith**.

## H09 – Stables

This old structure was once the keep's stables. The main area (H09a) serves as a place to store saddles, bridles, and other riding tools. The building includes three seemingly empty stalls (areas H09b).

**Encounter: Farant.** If the characters haven't yet encountered him, the ghost Farant can be found here brushing one of the spectral horses. Farant is the friendliest of the three ghosts but does not yet realize he's dead. He suspects that there's something strange happening around his old home. If the characters question Farant, he refuses to believe that he or his siblings are dead, regardless of any proof the characters show him. He doesn't remember the events that led to his death, or why the keep seems to be empty. However, he does remember that his

mother was supposedly poisoned by assassins and that his father has had trouble coping with her death.

If the characters attack Farant, he uses his Horrifying Visage feature, then flees through the floor. The next time the characters encounter him, he has no memory of ever meeting them.

**Encounter: Spectral Horses.** The servants and guards weren't the only ones Brycen poisoned; he killed the horses, too. Each of the stalls (H9a) holds a spectral horse (see the appendix). The horses only attack if their stalls are opened. Otherwise, they remain docile.

**Investigation: Riding Equipment.** A character who examines the riding equipment in the area discovers a particularly expensive saddle (worth 100 gp). A plaque on the saddle reads "Sky Blossom." The northernmost stall's door also reads "Sky Blossom." This was the name of Lord Brycen's own prized horse.

## H10 – Privy

This outhouse offers two privy stalls.

**Treasure: Valuable Crap.** A character who looks into the leftmost privy stall's chamber pot and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a small coin purse decorated with a symbol of the Temple of the Guiding Light in Ravenhollow. The purse contains 150 pp.

## H11 – Well

An old well stands at the end of the courtyard.

**Trap and Encounter: Swarm of Maggots.** A character who looks into the well sees only darkness. But before they can pull their head away, a swarm of maggots (use the **swarm of insects** statblock) rises out of the well and attacks. The number of

swarms that attack are equal to the level of the adventure (1 swarm for 1st level, 3 for 3rd, and so forth). After the maggots attack, the well vanishes.

Spells and abilities that detect evil, such as the *detect good and evil spell* or a paladin's Divine Sense, reveal an aura of desecration around the well. A character who inspects the well recognizes that it's an illusion with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

An effect that turns undead or the casting of a *dispel evil and good* spell eliminates the spectral well.

## H12 – Wood Shed

Stacks of chopped logs crowd this small shed. Multiple sharpened axes sit in an iron holder at the south end of the area.

**Investigation: Floors.** A character who searches the area and succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a trap door hidden under the shed's floorboards. The trapdoor hides a treasure, the nature of which is determined by the level of the adventure as shown in the table below.

### AREA H12 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	1 bag of tricks (rust)
3rd	1 boots of striding and springing
5th	1 medallion of thoughts
8th	1 suit of adamantite scale armor sized for a Small creature

## H13 – Antechamber

The doors connecting this area to area H07 are barred from the inside, but can easily be lifted from this side. This area offers two couches and serves as the antechamber to area H14.

**Encounter: Radella.** Unless she's already been encountered elsewhere, the ghost Radella stands guard here. Driven insane by the death of her mother—and herself—she fights any humanoid who enters this area. At the start of combat, she attempts to divide the party by shutting one or both of the doors leading into this area with spectral telekinesis. The doors remain shut until she is destroyed, flees, or a character uses its action to break open the door with a successful DC 13 Strength check. If Radella is destroyed, she rejuvenates 1 hour later in her bedroom (area H21), regaining all of her hit points. She has no memory of encountering the characters.

A character with a passive Wisdom (Insight) score of 13 or higher can tell that Radella is deeply troubled. Her spectral face is stricken with tears and she continually references the death of her mother at the hands of assassins. She refers to the characters as assassins, and warns, "You may have killed my mother, assassins, but you won't get the rest of us!"

## H14 – Audience Chamber

The lambent flames of a broad stone fireplace (H14a) illuminate this colossal audience chamber. Two gargantuan tables dominate the floor; a 22-foot-long, rectangular table along the eastern wall (H14b), and a 12-foot-diameter, round table atop a stone dais in the chamber's southeastern corner (14c).

**Trick: Spectral Diplomats.** When the characters first enter the room, they hear the voices of three nobles speaking to each other.

It seems that they're sitting in the chairs by the fire. When the characters go to examine the chairs, they find only empty seats.

**Encounter (5th- or 8th-Level Only).** One round after the characters examine the chairs, the spirits attack. The spirits are **specters**, except they are *invisible*, and they can throw tangible objects at the characters. They gain the following action:

**Throw Object.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one creature. Hit: 1d4 + 2 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (GM's discretion depending on the object thrown).

In the 8th-level version of the adventure, the specters are joined by a flame spirit that leaps from the fireplace and joins the fight. The flame spirit uses the **fire elemental** stat block except its type is undead and it is neutral evil.

**Hazard: Smoke.** The spirits aren't the only thing the characters have to worry about. At the start of combat, the candelabras and torches around the room begin to emit hazardous smoke. The entire area becomes heavily obscured (the spirits and fire elemental can see through the smoke without issue). Each time a creature starts its turn in the smoke, it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 1 necrotic damage and starts coughing; it is incapacitated until the start of its next turn. Creatures with resistance or immunity to fire or necrotic damage automatically pass their saving throws.

**Optional Encounter: Hidden Under the Table.** The **ghost** Jalyn is hiding under the large, round table (14c). A character can spot her with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. She refuses to come out from under the table, but if the characters



talk to her, she might be persuaded to chat. A character who spends at least a minute questioning her and succeeds on a DC 11 Wisdom (Insight) check recognizes her grief and knows it's the best way to get through to her. The character can then convince her to answer questions with a successful DC 11 Charisma 7 (Persuasion) check. If either of these checks fails or if the characters try to attack her, she turns ethereal and floats into the ceiling.

**Treasure: Signet Ring.** A character who searches the fireplace and succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers one of the diplomats' old signet rings hidden near the stonework. The ring is worth 50 gp. However, if it's returned to the diplomat's family, they pay a 500 gp reward for its return.

## H15 – Pantry

The food in this well-stocked pantry appears to be in perfect condition, despite having not been touched in a decade.

**Optional Encounter: Vegetables.** Unless he's been encountered elsewhere, the **ghost** Farant can be found here searching for carrots. He hopes to bring them back to the horses (area 9). Although Farant isn't aware that he's dead, he does recognize something is unusual about the keep. He tells the characters that he hopes to feed his father's favorite horse carrots. Farant remarks that his father's been in a terrible mood since his mother was poisoned by assassins. Strangely, he doesn't remember the name of his father's horse. If asked about the gaps in his memory, he comments that he's been "a little out of it" since his mother's death.

If the characters attack Farant or continue to ask him questions he is unable to answer, he uses his Horrifying Visage action, then flees through one of the walls or floors.

**Investigation: Painting.** Characters who search the pantry and succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spot a painting tucked behind one of the shelves. The painting depicts the young girl Jalyn holding a green lollipop.

## H16 – Kitchen

As the characters approach this area, they hear the sounds of servants working and cooking in the kitchen. Once they open the door, however, they discover a room devoid of people. A pot filled with stew burns in a cauldron in the large hearth at the south end of the room. Sharp knives lie strewn about the counters amid piles of freshly diced vegetables.

**Encounter: Spectral Staff.** If the characters touch any of the cooking utensils or food in this kitchen, the spectral staff appears and attacks. The nature of these apparitions depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

These spirits won't leave the room, but will fight until destroyed.

### AREA H16 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 <b>specter</b> chef
3rd	1 <b>specter</b> chef and 2 <b>shadow</b> servants
5th	1 <b>wraith</b> chef and 2 <b>specter</b> servants
8th	1 <b>wraith</b> chef and 3 <b>specter</b> servants



## H17 – Ramparts

These icy ramparts offer a clear view of the wintery hill and forest surrounding the keep. Ice-encased ballistae stand at three of the ramparts' four corners. The weapons are unusable so long as they remain covered in ice.

**Hazard: Slippery Ice.** All of the ramparts' stonework is covered in slippery ice (see General Features).

**Encounter: Radella and Spectral Guards.** Unless she's already been encountered elsewhere, the **ghost** Radella stands atop the castle's gatehouse (area H17b). Perpetually weeping, she claims that she's keeping the castle safe from assassins. When she sees the characters, she calls for guards to take them out. The nature of these

guards depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table on page 55. They fight until they are destroyed, but will not leave the ramparts.

Radella does not enter combat but instead commands the spectral guards from her post. If she's attacked, she turns ethereal and flees.

**Encounter: Larry the Ice Mephit.** A curious creature stands near the brazier in the northwestern corner of the castle (H17d). The creature is an **ice mephit** and its name is Larry (or at least that's what it claims its name is). Despite his frosty nature, Larry is infatuated with the flames, which causes him to sweat profusely. Of course, due to his vulnerability to heat, he keeps plenty of distance. Larry has lived on the hill for over 1,000 years. Whenever it snows, he reappears

### AREA H17 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	3 <b>shadows</b>
3rd	4 <b>specters</b>
5th	8 <b>specters</b>
8th	12 <b>specters</b>

and walks the grounds. Therefore, he remembers everything that's ever happened in the area. This includes the events that led to the castle's haunting.

Larry is willing to share what he knows about the castle, but only if the characters bring him a special item. The weapon is a dagger made from stone taken from a realm called The Nether. The dagger looks like a jagged, black icicle. He's not sure where it's stored, but he knows it's somewhere in the castle. The castle's perpetual warmth prevents him from entering. He shares that a deep chill radiates from the dagger and it burns mortals to the touch.

The dagger is on display in area H30.

Once Larry has the dagger, he tells the characters what he knows.

- Larry was at the hill long before the castle was built. It was the site of a great battle between humans and elves who were joined by dangerous creatures from The Nether.
- A human—Lord Brycen—built the castle atop the hill. While excavating the area, he discovered the dagger and kept it hidden.
- As the years passed, Lord Brycen started to develop a dark attitude. He mostly kept to himself working in his study in the southwestern tower.

- Eventually, assassins found their way into the castle and poisoned Lord Brycen's wife, Lady Noell.
- Driven mad by her death, Lord Brycen poisoned the keep's water supply.
- At a dinner commemorating his wife, Lord Brycen made sure everyone—including his children—drank the poison. Everyone died. Brycen then vanished.

That's all the mephit knows about the keep. Once Larry is finished fulfilling his end of the bargain, he takes the dagger and vanishes back to his home realm. The Nether will be detailed in another DMDave Publishing book.

### H18 – Guard Post

This small guard post overlooks the main entrance to the keep.

**Hazard: Slippery Ice.** The stonework here is covered in slippery ice (see General Features).

**Encounter: Spectral Guards.** Spectral guards might be standing in this roost, depending on the level of the adventure as shown on the table below. These guards only appear when a creature approaches the doors leading to areas H13 or H19.

### AREA H18 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	No encounter
3rd	1 <b>shadow</b>
5th	1 <b>specter</b>
8th	2 <b>specters</b>

## H19 – Upstairs Passage

This well-lit hallway connects all the upstairs rooms.

**Investigation: Paintings.** Five paintings hang in the hallway. From the largest painting near the door to area H18 going clockwise these paintings depict:

- The entire Merritt family gathered together.
- Radella Merritt holding a fluffy orange cat.
- Farant Merritt reading a book titled *Kings of Dusk*.
- Uncle Ferim standing beside an empty fishbowl.
- Lady Noell Merritt sitting at a desk writing a letter.

A plaque bearing the name of each paintings' subject is pinned to the wall just below its respective painting. There appears to be a missing painting at the end of the hall, directly in front of the stairs that lead down to area 14. The plaque below it reads "Jalyn Merritt." Jalyn removed the painting and hid it in the pantry behind the shelves.

**Obstacle: Locked Doors.** The doors to rooms H20 and H22 are locked.

## H20 – Library

The door to this room is locked.

Hundreds of books fill tall mahogany shelves in this portion of the tower. The room also features a semicircular desk covered in papers and ledgers.

**Investigation: Ledgers.** A character who spends 30 minutes reading the ledgers can make a DC 15 Intelligence using proficiency in forgery kits. On a success, the character recognizes that the Merritts were laundering money through a series of small businesses around Dreadmourn Vale.

**Investigation: Green Lollipops.** A glass jar on one of the shelves close to the desk holds a variety of green lollipops. Giving these lollipops to Jalyn will convince her to speak with the party.

**Treasure: Brycen's Collection.** Lord Brycen's library contains an impressive collection of books on history, nature, and warfare. A character who spends their downtime researching these subjects in this library gains advantage to related checks. The books remain even after the castle's curse ends.

**Optional Adventure Hook.** If you wish to continue this adventure, use this hook. The book on Lord Brycen's desk is titled *Famous Haunted Locations* by Arrow Diamond. Currently, the book is turned to a page that references a tower haunted by a banshee. Supposedly, there is a substantial treasure cache hidden somewhere within the ruins of the keep. This adventure is described in greater detail in the book *Dungeons & Lairs: Forest of Peril* by DMDave Publishing.

## H21 – Radella's Chambers

The window at the north end of the room allows in the cold. It's also a way for Hobart (see below) to escape.

This lavish bedroom is in perfect condition. The wardrobe against the eastern wall holds an assortment of adult women's clothing.

**Encounter: Hobart.** A fluffy orange cat hides in the room. He wears a name tag that reads "Hobart." This cat was Radella's. He has lived alone in the castle for ten long years, kept alive by eating food prepared by the spectral staff and hunting mice. Skittish, Hobart runs from the characters as soon as they try to grab him. Hobart won't leave the castle grounds, but knows plenty of good hiding places. To determine which area he



flees to, roll a d20. The result is the area in which he hides. Eventually, he returns to Radella's chambers.

Capturing Hobart and presenting him to Radella's ghost gets her to calm down and speak with the characters.

**Optional Encounter: Radella.** If the characters encounter Radella somewhere in the castle and she is destroyed or chased away, she rejuvenates here. When the characters enter the room, the **ghost** Radella is trying to pet Hobart with her incorporeal hand. Hobart continually hisses at her, which causes her to weep. Hobart flees when the characters enter the room. Radella, angered by Hobart's absence, calls the characters assassins and attacks. If destroyed, she returns here an hour later with all her hit points intact and no memory of the encounter.

**Investigation: Radella's Flamberge.** If the characters look under the bed, they discover a long, narrow, black wooden case. Inside the case are a sword and a note. "To my beloved daughter, Radella. Happy birthday. Please don't tell your mother about this. Love, your father." The sword is a flamberge, a unique weapon with the same properties as a longsword except it deals piercing damage instead of slashing. In all versions of the adventure except for 1st, the sword is a *+1 weapon*.

## H22 – Lord and Lady Brycen's Chambers

The door to this room is locked.

These comfortable chambers were Lord and Lady Brycen's. An ornate mirror stands against the western wall.

**Obstacle: Mirror Portal.** The mirror is a two-way portal connecting these chambers to the castle's secret vault (area H36). The only way to open the portal is to speak aloud the phrase "Sky Blossom." The portal stays open

for 1 minute and then closes again. As part of the wish used to create the mirror, the efreeti's magic protects the mirror from all divination spells that would reveal its true nature.

## H23 – Farant's Chambers

This lavish bedroom includes a shelf choked with romance novels and books on poetry. The wardrobe against the western wall holds an assortment of adult men's livery.

**Investigation: Missing Book.** A character who examines the bookshelf along the southern wall notices with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check that there is a book missing. Any character who looks under the bed or succeeds on a follow-up DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the book under Farant's bed. The book's title reads *Kings of Dusk*, a book of gossip regarding the love affairs of regional nobles. If this book is given to Farant, he realizes that he's a ghost and decides to help the characters.

**Treasure: Farant's Clothing.** The clothing inside Farant's wardrobe are impressive pieces hand sewn by his father. There are sixteen outfits in all, each one worth 50 gp.

## H24 – Ferim's Chambers

A fine layer of dust covers everything in this bedroom. Brycen's brother, Ferim, once lived in this room. After Ferim died, they kept the door shut and never used the chambers again.

**Investigation: Ferim's Chest.** The chest at the foot of Ferim's bed is locked. Once opened, the chest seems to contain nothing more than blankets and pillows. However, a character who uses their action to thoroughly examine the chest discovers a false bottom with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Within the hidden

compartment, the characters find an iron cube measuring no more than 3 inches on a side. The cube exudes powerful magic from all schools, particularly conjuration and transmutation.

If the word "Ignoble" is spoken in the presence of the cube, the cube glows red hot. Whoever is holding the cube when this happens takes 1 fire damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or drop the cube. The cube then vanishes and an **efreeti** appears. The efreeti introduces itself as Vure and demands to know what the characters wish of it. Vure will grant the characters a single wish (as the spell). However, this is the third of three wishes Vure has granted (Ferim used the other two). Once the third wish is fulfilled, Vure is free from his captivity. When he senses that Ferim is dead, he turns his wrath on the characters. He will spare them, but only if they agree to serve him for one hundred years each on the Elemental Plane of Fire. Speaking the command phrase "Ignoble" before Vure grants the wish restores the cube in which he's held.

**Optional Adventure Hook: Lich Tower.**

If the characters awaken Vure and use the last wish, Vure offers them one alternative to enslavement. The creature who actually trapped Vure in the iron cube was a powerful lich he fought centuries ago. The lich lives on a mysterious island in the sea. Vure will give the characters one year to destroy the lich. If they are successful, not only will he waive the enslavement penalty, but he will offer the characters three new *wish* spells with no strings attached. If they fail, he doubles their sentence to two hundred years. If you wish the characters to become involved with this hook, be sure to read the DMDave adventure *Dungeons & Lairs #20: Lich Tower* available on DMDave's Patreon.

## H25 – Jalyn's Chambers

This room features two small beds and it is decorated for children.

**Optional Encounter: Jalyn.** The characters might encounter ghost Jalyn in this room. Unless they are particularly quiet approaching the door, Jalyn hides under the northernmost bed. If cornered, she screams and flies through the window into the courtyard beyond.

**Encounter: Toy Chest.** The chest at the foot of Jalyn's bed is unlocked but contains a dangerous creature inside—a possessed marionette (use the statistics of a **homonculus**).

## H26 – Study/Aviary

This open-air study is extraordinarily cold. A large desk stands near the stair railing. A bookshelf cluttered with random knick-knacks adorns the south end of the room. Birdcages—all empty—stand against the northeastern wall.

**Encounter: Shadows.** Dangerous shadows lurk in this section of the castle. They hide in the dark corners of the room and attack any living creature that enters the area. The number of shadows here depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below. The shadows fight until they are destroyed but will not leave the area.

**Investigation: Goldfish Skull.** While most of the items in this part of the castle are fairly weather-worn, there is something curious on the bookshelf. Crammed between a number of heavy volumes detailing the gnoll skirmishes in the desert of dread is a goldfish bowl that holds a human skull. The skull belonged to Lord Brycen's brother, Ferim. Ferim and Brycen discovered the genie box in area H26. The genie offered three wishes. The brothers used their first wish to

## AREA H26 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	1 shadow
3rd	2 shadows
5th	5 shadows
8th	8 shadows

create the incredible fortune hidden in area H36. They then used the second wish to create the pocket dimension and connecting portal mirror into which it was stored.

If the characters use a *Speak with Dead* spell to speak with Ferim, he will answer what he knows about the castle.

**The Lost Treasure.** Ferim reveals that the vault is hidden behind the mirror in Lord Brycen's room (area 22). He isn't entirely certain what's the most recent password used to protect the mirror portal, but assumes that Brycen named it after something he loved dearly—if not his wife and children, then possibly one of the horses in the stables. Ferim doesn't remember the horses' names.

**The Genie.** Ferim warns that there's a genie box in his room that contains a vicious efreeti named Vure. The efreeti still has one wish remaining, but Ferim and his brother were afraid to use the last wish, thinking (correctly) the genie would be freed and attack the pair. He openly shares that the password used to open the box is the word "Ignoble."

**Ghosts.** Ferim died before Noell was poisoned; therefore, he doesn't know anything about the ghosts in the castle or why they are cursed. However, as a student

of the occult, he suggests the characters learn what they can from the other ghosts in the castle. The best way to get a ghost to help is to give it something that reminds it of its former life, whatever that may be.

**Afterlife.** Ferim currently enjoys his time as a petitioner in The Prism and has no interest in returning to life. None of his family members are with him there.

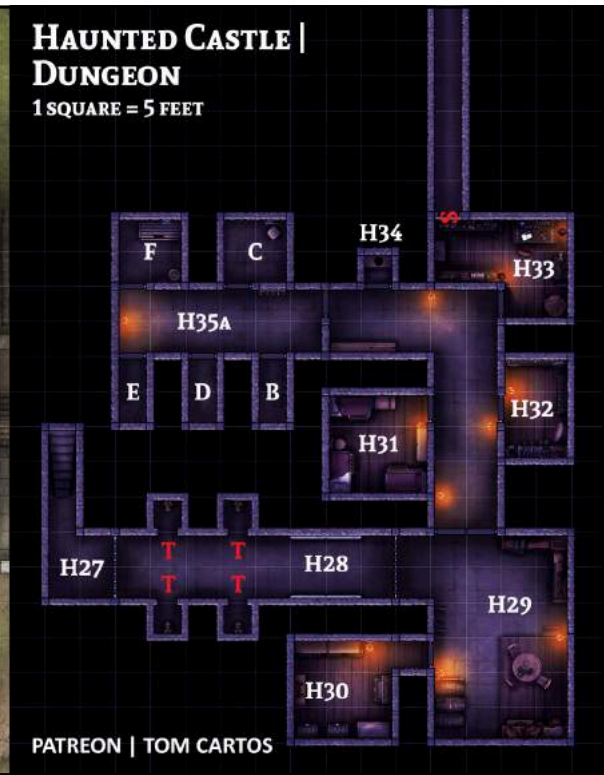
**Optional Adventure Hook.** If you wish to have the players learn more about Ferim and his unusual life, when asked about who he is, Ferim shares that he was once the assistant to a dangerous archmage named Idamonar the Lude. Idamonar lives in a pocket dimension. The only portal to this dimension is hidden in the ruins of an old city. If any of the characters truly wish to learn about magic and its power, he suggests they seek out Idamonar. If you wish to use this adventure hook, check out the *DMDave Adventure Dungeons & Lairs #3: Archmage Stronghold* available on DMDave's Patreon.

## H27 – Dungeon Entry

The stairs south of area 6 lead down to the castle's dungeon. It's extremely cold in this area, supernaturally so. Even characters wearing protection against warm clothing will be subject to the extreme cold effects described in the General Features section on page 3.

**Obstacle: Locked Portcullis.** The portcullis that connects this area to area 28 is locked.

**Trick: Warning.** When the characters first approach the portcullis, a huge, glowing skull appears over the door and screams at them. Then, as it fades away, it warns, "Turn back. Lest ye find death." The skull is only an illusion and cannot harm the characters. If it is attacked, it immediately vanishes.



## H28 – Trapped Corridor

Both ends of this long hallway are blocked by locked portcullises.

**Trap: Hallway of Death.** Various traps line this hallway, as detailed below. Speaking the phrase "Sky Blossom" aloud in the hallway stops all of the traps from working for 10 minutes or until the phrase is spoken again.

**Firebreathing Gargoyles.** There are two alcoves in the north side of the hallway and two alcoves to the south. All four alcoves' far walls contain brass gargoyle heads. There are four pressure plates on the floor that trigger the gargoyles (as shown on the map). When 50 pounds or more of pressure is placed on a plate, the plate's respective gargoyle head is triggered and it breathes fire in a 10-foot line that's 5 feet wide. Each creature in the line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10

(3d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire stops as soon as the weight is removed from the plate. Finding the pressure plates requires a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. A single pressure plate can be disarmed with a successful DC 13 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Each gargoyle head can also be destroyed (AC 18, 10 hp, immunity to fire, poison, and psychic damage).

**Concealed Pit Trap.** A 5-foot-long, 10-foot-wide, 20-foot-deep pit hides on the floor between the pressure plates for the gargoyles and the pressure plate for the stone wall trap. A trapdoor disguised to look like the floor conceals the pit. The trapdoor breaks open whenever 50 pounds of weight or more is set atop it. It then snaps back into place. Any creature standing on the trapdoor when it opens



falls 20 feet into the pit and takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall. The pit's trapdoor can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A character that spends an action jamming a piton or similar wedge into the trapdoor keeps it from opening with a successful DC 12 Strength check.

### **Crushing Walls (5th- or 8th-Level**

**Adventures Only).** The final trap in this hallway of death is a crushing wall trap at the east end of the corridor. The trap is motion activated by an invisible glyph. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check spots the glyph, as does a detect magic spell. If a living creature steps between the walls, the walls immediately slam together; any creature in the 10-foot-square area must make a DC 15 Dexterity or DC 20 Strength saving throw (target's choice). On a successful Dexterity saving throw, the creature moves to the nearest unoccupied space. If it can't or won't move to a space, it suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a successful Strength saving throw, the target catches the walls and holds them open. So long as the creature continues to hold the walls open, creatures can treat the space and the creature as difficult terrain as they shimmy around it to reach the other side. The creature holding the walls open can't move and must use its action on each of its turns to keep the wall in place. If the creature cannot or will not hold the walls open on its turn, it suffers the effects of a failed saving throw. The creature can use its action on its turn to make a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to move to an unoccupied space within its movement range before the wall closes on it. If the check fails, the creature suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On

a failed saving throw, regardless of the ability used, the target takes 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage from the crushing walls. The wall can be disarmed by dispelling the glyph. Alternatively, a character can use their action to hammer a piton or similar wedge into the floor by the wall followed by a successful DC 16 Strength check.

**Optional Encounter: Jalyn's Run.** As the characters approach this hallway, the **ghost** of Jalyn appears in the middle of the hallway. As an incorporeal spirit, she cannot set off any of the traps. As soon as she sees the characters, she flees across the hall and through the portcullis at the eastern end.

### **H29 – Storage**

A wooden deck dominates the outtheastern corner of this large storage room. Huge casks of wine stand against the eastern wall.

Three levers jut from the wall just by the portcullis that leads back to area 28 (the southern lever controls the gargoyles and pit trap, the center lever controls the crushing wall, and the northernmost lever opens or closes both of the portcullises in area 28. Up means activated or closed, and down means deactivated or opened. All three levers are currently in the down position. Once moved up or down, a given lever remains in that position until it is shifted again.

This secret storage area was used as a place for Brycen and his brother to meet, drink wine, and chat.

**Hazard: Poisoned Wine.** The wine in the casks is poisoned with midnight tears. A creature that ingests this poison suffers no effect until the stroke of midnight. If the poison has not been neutralized before then, the creature must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 31 (9d6)

poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The poison is tasteless, but it darkens the wine to the point where it looks almost black.

**Obstacle: Locked Door.** The door to area 30 is made from solid iron and locked with an impressive lock and arcane lock spell. A character with proficiency in thieves' tools can pick the lock with a successful DC 28 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Alternatively, the door can be broken down with a successful DC 31 Strength check. Otherwise, the door is impenetrable. The room beyond is protected by a permanent private sanctum and a forbiddance spell with all options included for both spells. The command word "Compunction" releases the arcane lock on the door. The only person in the entire castle that knows this secret command word is Jalyn.

### H30 – Vault

This small room is a vault, but not the vault. Still, it contains an impressive collection of valuables, the nature of which depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the table below.

**Dreadmourn Dagger.** Regardless of the adventure's level, a shelf standing against the eastern wall displays a strange weapon that looks like a dagger carved from black ice. The dagger exudes an aura of necromantic magic, but doesn't appear to have any benefits aside from being magical. This is the dagger Larry the ice mephit seeks (see area H17d). The true purpose of this weapon is detailed in a future adventure from DMDave Publishing.

### H31 – Barracks

This cold room hosts three bunk beds. A wardrobe against the eastern wall contains tunics emblazoned with the Merritt family crest (two ravens facing opposite directions).

A chest on the north wall holds blankets and books written on the subject of battle tactics.

**Trap: Ethereal Arm.** Any character with a passive Perception score of 13 or higher catches a whiff of freshly dug dirt emanating from the room's western wall. When a humanoid that can smell the earth comes near, an ethereal arm reaches out of the wall and tries to grab the creature. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (target's choice). On a failed saving throw, the target takes 2 (1d4) necrotic damage and the hand grapples the target (escape DC 13). Until the grapple ends, the target takes 2 (1d4) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns and the ethereal arm can't attack another target. The arm can be attacked (AC 13, 3 hit points, immunity to all damage except radiant damage and damage from magical weapons). It can also be turned with an effect that turns undead, with a +3 to its Wisdom saving throw. If the arm's hit points are reduced to 0, or the creature escapes the grapple, it retreats back into the wall.

This haunted trap can be detected with a *detect evil and good* spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the *dispel evil and good* spell.

#### AREA H30 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	10,000 sp and 500 gp
3rd	20,000 sp, 1,000 gp, and 50 pp
5th	35,000 sp, 3,000 gp, and 100 pp
8th	55,000 sp, 5,000 gp, and 150 pp

## H32 – Armory

The door to this room is locked.

Weapon-filled racks and suits of armor crowd this small armory. A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the leather straps binding the armor have been eaten away by something.

**Encounter: Leather Eaters.** A swarm of leather eaters lurks in the armory, hiding among the armor and weapons.

When a creature wearing leather armor or carrying leather goods enters the area, the insects emerge from hiding and attack.

The swarm of leather eaters uses the **swarm of insects** stat block, except when it hits a creature wearing nonmagical leather armor with their bite attack, the armor takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. Armor reduced to an AC of 10 is destroyed.

**Treasure: Arms and Armor.** This room contains a wide variety of arms and armor, although all of the leather armor and any weapons or armor that incorporate leather have been heavily damaged or completely destroyed by the swarm.

## H33 – Workshop

A sign over the door reads: "Dangerous! Flammable Contents Inside."

Tools, beakers, baubles, spell components, and arcane books filled with schematics jam-pack the shelves and tables of this small space.

**Hazard: Flammable Contents.** The contents of this room are highly flammable. The first round an open flame enters the room, it flickers wildly and expands. The second round, it glows green and expands again, filling the room with light. In the fourth round, it explodes. Every creature in

the room must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. A target takes 17 (5d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw or half as much damage on a successful one. The explosion destroys most of the room's contents.

If a spell that deals fire damage is cast in the room, the room immediately explodes.

**Trick: Magic Lights.** A character who inspects the two hanging lamps and succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes that the lights from the lantern are not created by flames, but by permanent instances of the *light* cantrip. If a character capable of casting the *continual flame* spell spends 30 minutes observing these lights, then succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check, they can alter the *continual flame* spell to use non-burning light instead of flames.

**Secret Passage.** A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a secret door in the north wall. This passage is a way to escape via a hidden entrance in the side of the hill (not pictured on the map). The door is locked, but it opens if the secret lever in area H05 is held down. A character who saw the lever in area H05 understands how the secret door opens with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

The door can be forced open with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools, or a successful DC 22 Strength check.

**Treasure: Kits and Components.** This room contains enough contents to cast every wizard spell of 3rd-level or lower exactly once. It also contains at least one complete set of each of the following tools: alchemist's supplies, carpenter's tool, jeweler's tools, leather worker's tools, and tinker's tools.

## H34 – Privy

This toilet is haunted.

**Trap: The Worm Bride.** When a character opens the door to this privy, an eyeless ethereal worm wearing a bridal veil leaps out from the toilet and attacks with a +6 to hit. On a hit, the target takes 3 (1d6) necrotic damage and is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and blinded as the ghost worm's toothless maw wraps around the target's head, and the worm can't target another creature. At the start of each of the target's turns, the worm tries to pull the target into the chamber pot from which it emerged. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw, or take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. A creature whose hit points are reduced to 0 by this attack is gruesomely shredded to pieces as its body is dragged into the chamber pot. Any character witnessing this must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw, or gain a form of short term insanity.

The worm can be destroyed by an effect that turns undead (it adds a +6 to its saving throw), or through the casting of a dispel evil and good spell. The worm itself is immune to all damage, but if the chamber pot from which it emerged is destroyed (AC 13, 6 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage), the worm vanishes. If the creature escapes the worm's grapple, the worm hisses and retreats back into the chamber pot, whining, "But I loved you..."

This haunted trap can be detected with a detect evil and good spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the *dispel evil and good* spell.

## H35. Prison

The door to this prison, as well as all of the doors inside, are locked. All of the doors here are made from iron, with AC 18, 25 hit points

(damage threshold 5), and immunity to poison and psychic damage (same checks to pick locks or break open). A small, barred window near the top of each door allows a character to see what's inside a given room.

**Trap #1: The Banshee (Area H35a).** The first time the characters enter 35a, a spectral woman appears at the center of the passage. Her face contorts into one of horror and she emits an ear splitting howl. Each creature within 60 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a creature's hit points are reduced to 0. On a successful saving throw, a creature takes 3 (1d6) psychic damage. The banshee then disappears.

This haunted trap can be detected with a detect evil and good spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the dispel evil and good spell.

**Encounter #1: Jalyn (Area H35b).** Despite having a room upstairs, the ghost Jalyn likes to hide in this small dungeon cell. She's a little more willing to parley with the characters here, recognizing that they might be powerful, especially if they've made it this far. Still, unless the characters give her one of the green lollipops from her father's library (area 20), she flies through the ceiling and escapes. Having greater awareness than her siblings and the other creatures that haunt the castle, she knows most of its secrets. See the section "What the Ghosts Know" on page 45 to learn more about Jalyn.

**Encounter #2: The Messenger (Area H35c).** Shortly before Brycen killed everyone in the castle, he imprisoned a messenger in this jail cell. Although the messenger wasn't poisoned like the other inhabitants of the castle, he eventually wasted away from lack of food and water. His bones still litter the floor of the cell. When the characters enter the



area, the messenger appears as a **ghost**. Although angry at its fate, it shares its frustration instead of attacking. Holding up a translucent letter, it tells the characters that all it wanted to do was deliver the message it's holding. Brycen refused to read it and instead imprisoned the messenger. The messenger asks that the characters deliver the message to Brycen. The characters can take the letter, but they can't open it. Giving this letter to Lord Brycen ends the curse on Merritt Keep.

### **Trap #2: Weeping Man (Area H35d).**

As the characters approach the door to area 35d, they hear a man weeping from within. If any character glances inside the area or opens the door, they discover nothing within. However, they must immediately make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a successful saving throw, a creature openly weeps for 1 minute. On a failed saving throw, not only does the creature weep, but its eyes begin to bleed profusely, too. Until the creature receives magical healing, it takes 1 necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns. If this reduces the creature's hit points to 0, the creature is stable, but permanently blinded. Only a regeneration spell returns the creature's eyes and its sight.

This haunted trap can be detected with a detect evil and good spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the dispel evil and good spell.

**Encounter #3: Vengeful Spirit (Area H35d).** A lone shadow haunts this cell. It attacks any creature that enters the area.

**Trap #3: Room Askew (Area H35e).** At a glance, this cell appears to be unaffected by the evil that pervades the house. However, when a creature enters the area, the door immediately shuts behind them. The only way to open the door is to dispel the haunted trap as detailed below, or to force it open with a

successful DC 16 Strength check. The room's gravity changes, making it seem like the entire cell is rolling on its side. Creatures viewing the room from outside of it don't see the room move; however, they see that characters inside are being affected. A creature inside the cell must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw at the start of each of its turns. On a failed saving throw, the target is flung against whatever the cell's current "floor" is and takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. On a successful saving throw, the target stops itself before it is flung away, but must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become dizzy until the start of its next turn. A dizzy target has disadvantage on Dexterity ability checks and saving throws as well as Dexterity-based attacks. A creature without a flying or climbing speed that tries to move in the room must first succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check in order to do so. Otherwise, the target falls prone against whatever surface it is currently up against.

This haunted trap can be detected with a detect evil and good spell or a paladin's Divine Sense, and disarmed by an effect that turns undead or the dispel evil and good spell.

## **H36 – Secret Vault**

This hidden room can only be accessed by speaking the phrase "Sky Blossom" before the two-way portal mirror in area 22.

This 45-foot-diameter room is filled to the brim with gold coins, gems, and other treasures. Treat the ground in this area as difficult terrain. But that's not all—there are also undead creatures lurking here.

**Encounter: Lord Brycen Merritt.** Lord Brycen is found here in this area, where he continues to mourn the loss of his beloved wife, Noell. Having killed himself along with

## LORD BRYCEN'S STATBLOCK

Adventure Level	Statblock
1st	<b>specter</b> with 40 hp
3rd	<b>wraith</b> with 99 hp
5th	<b>greater wraith</b> (no legendary actions)
8th	<b>greater wraith</b>

the rest of his family, servants, and pets, Brycen is now an undead creature himself, the nature of which is determined by the table below (the greater wraith is detailed in the appendix).

Lord Brycen viciously attacks any creature that enters the chamber. Like his children, destruction is not the end for Lord Brycen; he rejuvenates 1 hour after he's destroyed, reappearing in the vault with all his hit points returned.

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

- A number of skeletons equal to up to twice the adventure's level rise from the pile of treasure. The skeletons take their turns on Lord Brycen's initiative count, follow his commands (no action required), and remain until they or Lord Brycen is destroyed. Lord Brycen can have a maximum number of skeletons equal to twice the adventure's level.
- Lord Brycen creates a telekinetic whirlwind of gold coins in the vault which lasts until the next initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). Until the whirlwind stops, the area is lightly



obscured and ranged weapon attacks are made with disadvantage. If a creature moves through the area, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the coins. Lord Brycen and his skeletal servants are unaffected by the whirlwind.

- Lord Brycen targets one creature or unattended object that he can see in the vault with a telekinetic thrust. The creature must be Medium or smaller to be affected by this magic, and an object can weigh up to 150 pounds. If the target is a creature, the target must make DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 30 feet in any direction, including upward (the ceilings here are 15 feet high). If the target then comes into contact with a hard surface or heavy object, the target takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet moved. If the target is an object that isn't being worn or carried, Lord Brycen hurls it up to 30 feet in any direction. Lord Brycen can use the object as a ranged weapon, attacking one creature along the object's path using his normal attack bonus for his Life Drain feature. The object deals 2 (1d4)

bludgeoning damage per level of the adventure.

**Stopping Lord Brycen's Attack.** Lord Brycen is designed to be very difficult to fight in combat. The characters' best bet is to convince him to stop his tirade or to flee before he kills them.

If he's presented with the messenger's letter from area H35c, he stops his attack and reverts to a less frightening state. When this happens, read the following:

The apparition blinks, staring in disbelief at the ethereal letter in his hands. "This handwriting," he says. "It's Noell's." The apparition floats gently over the coins at his feet, quietly reading the note to himself. When he's finished, he looks back up at you with tears in his hollow eyes.

"By the Goddess—I made a terrible mistake. She did it to he—" he can't bring himself to say the words.

"I'm so sorry for what I've done. Will you please forgive me?"

With that, the ghost slowly starts to fade away. Suddenly, the chill surrounding this room lifts. It feels as if some of the color and warmth have returned to the world.

Brycen never shares the contents of the letter. Whatever it was, it was enough to allow Brycen to depart to the afterlife, thereby lifting the curse from the Keep. When the characters return to the manor, they discover

that all of the lights have gone out. Dust and cobwebs cover everything in the manor. There are no ghosts, specters, or any other undead anywhere to be seen. The sun finally breaks through the clouds and shines its rays on Merritt Castle for what feels like the first time in a decade.

**Treasure: The Merritt Fortune.** The vault holds an impossible amount of treasure. If the characters avoid telling Baron Wilson that they've discovered the vault and keep it for themselves, the characters suddenly find themselves rich beyond reason. But just as a certain notorious bard once sang, "Mo' money. Mo' problems."

## Aftermath

Even if the characters manage to find the vault, removing it without drawing to themselves will be extremely difficult.

If you need an actual value for the coins other than just a handwave solution, let's assume that the gold pile averages 6 inches off the floor throughout the entire room. The room is 50 feet in diameter. This creates 1,696,460 cubic feet of gold coins. Assuming a cubic foot holds 25,000 gold coins (an estimate based on the number of silver dollars it takes to fill a similar volume), that's a total of 42,411,500,000 gold coins. Give or take a few, of course. This means the treasure in this area would weigh approximately 42,411.5 tons. Ω



## O – Ooze Cavern

A clutter of spiders flees its den, startling the citizens of Ravenhollow. The character soon learn that a deadly, amorphous creature has made its home in the spiders' old cavern.

### Ooze Cavern

The spiders' old caverns are a treacherous lair filled with steep vertical passages, clinging fungus, and other hazards. Creatures with climbing speeds—such as spiders and oozes—thrive in this environment. But the characters might find it difficult.

### General Features

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Unless stated otherwise, the following features are common in the Ooze Cavern.

**Natural Cavern.** The ooze's new lair is a natural formed cavern made from granite and limestone. The warmth of the underground keeps it free from the snow and ice common

in Dreadmourn Vale, creating a moist, humid atmosphere. Ceilings are typically as high as an area as wide.

**Slippery Fungus.** Foul fungus clings to many of the floors in the cavern. While harmless, it does make the area slick, creating difficult terrain. A creature that takes the Dash action through an area covered in fungus must first succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity check, falling prone on a failed check.

**Acrid Smell.** The corrosive nature of the oozes and the rotting remains of their victims imbue the caverns with a horrible stench.

**Spider Webs.** Much of the cavern is still covered in the old inhabitants' webs. A web-filled area is considered difficult terrain. A creature entering a webbed area for the first time on a turn or starting its turn there must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw,



or become resetarined by the webs. A restrained creature can use its action to try to escape, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. The oozes here automatically dissolve any webbing they touch, as such, they are unaffected.

Each 10-foot cube of giant webs has AC 10, 15 hit points, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and psychic damage.

## Finding the Cavern

It won't immediately be obvious where the spiders came from. The characters will need to follow their tracks back to the source, doing so with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check. Reduce the DC by 5 in the winter, as the spider's prints in the snow are easier to follow.

The cavern's entrance is built into the side of a hill in the nearby forest. It's relatively squat, no more than 3 feet high. Medium-sized creatures will need to crawl to enter the area.



Alec Adams

## Keyed Areas

The following areas are keyed to the map of the Ooze Cavern as shown on page 70.

### O1 – Cavern Entrance

The first time the characters enter this area, read or paraphrase the following:

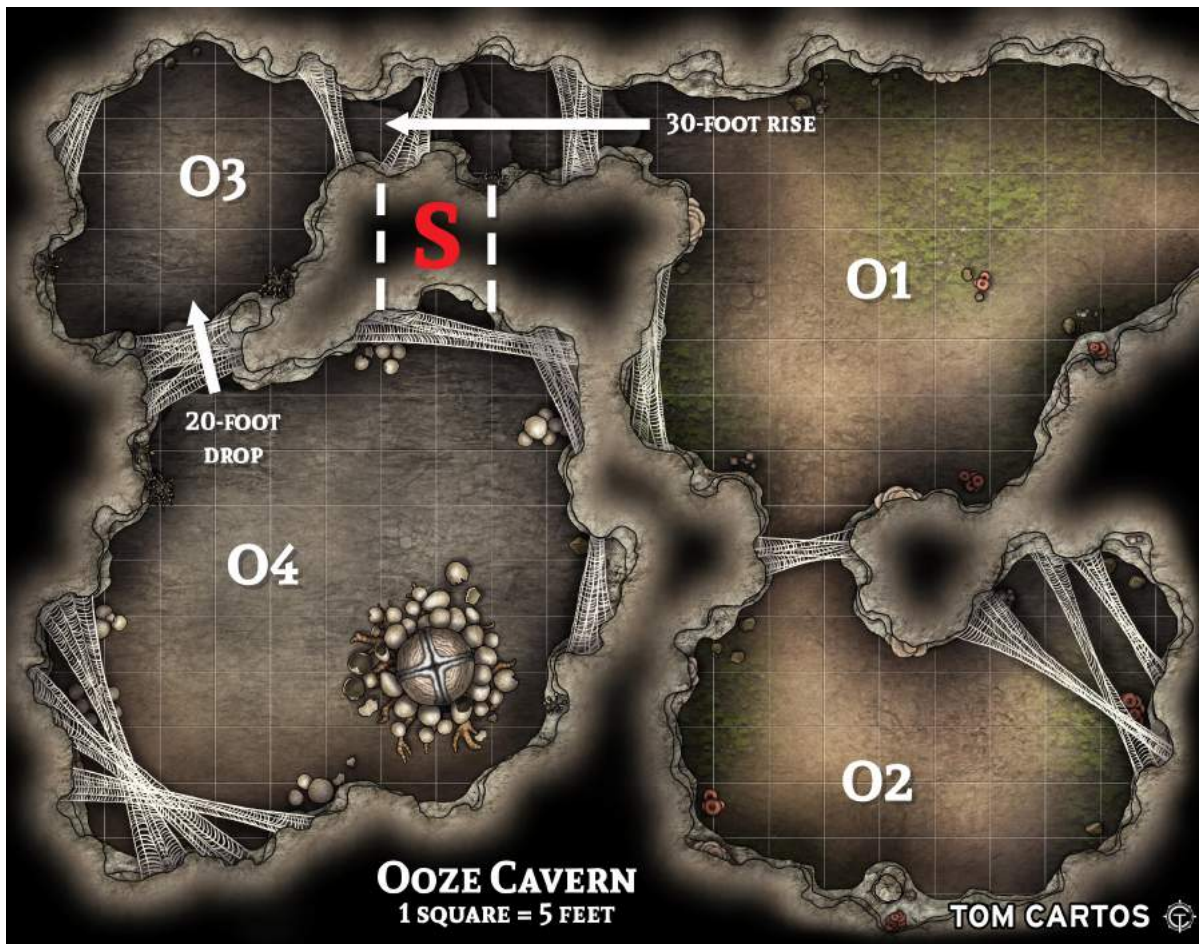
As you descend deeper into the cavern, the atmosphere begins to change. The first area is characterized by towering ceilings, reaching up to 30 feet high, and thick fungus clinging to the walls and floor. The air is thick and humid, and with every breath, you can feel the moisture seeping into your lungs.

But it's not just the dampness that hits you. There's an acrid smell that permeates the space, a combination of burning animal hair and acid. It's a scent that makes you want to recoil, to take a step back and turn around. But something compels you to press on.

Characters who investigate this area notice strange burn patterns in the fungus. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that these patterns were left by oozes. The trails head northwest toward area O3.

**Hazard: Spider Webs.** While much of the webbing that was once here has been eaten away by the slimes' corrosive nature, there are some that still hang on the walls. See General Features for a description of the webs.

**Encounter: Injured Spider.** One of the original residents of the caverns, a **giant spider**, limps weakly along the cavern ceiling. It only has three of its eight legs intact, reducing its movement speed by half. It has 5 hit points remaining. It won't attack the characters unless the characters attack it first.



**Treasure: Hidden Goodies.** Items once belonging to the spiders' victims are stuck in the spider webs along the western wall. Removing these items without getting stuck in the webs requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. The value of the items found depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area O1 Treasure table on the right.

**Obstacle: Rise.** The western passage gradually rises 30 feet up to area O3.

#### AREA O1 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	A <i>potion of healing</i> , an ordinary longsword, and a rotting coin pouch containing 10 pp,
3rd	Same as 1st-level, but +10 pp (20 pp)
5th	Same as 3rd-level, but the longsword is +1 and +30 pp (50 pp)
8th	Same as 5th-level, but +50 pp (100 pp)

## O2 – Spider Victims

Dessicated animal and humanoid corpses cover the floors of this web-strewn cavern, their skeletal faces twisted in eternal screams of terror.

A character who examines the bodies and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) checks recognizes that the corpses were victims of the spiders.

**Encounter: Hatchlings.** After the characters have had a chance to explore this area some, the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score notices that one of the corpses seems to be moving. If the characters observe the corpse, thinking it's an undead, they get to watch in horror as a **swarm of spiders** bursts out of the victim's chest and crawls across the floor. Unless the characters are standing directly over the corpse, the spider swarm doesn't attack. It breaks apart as the hatchlings look for easy prey their own size.

## O3 – Natural Landing

The eastern passage gradually rises 30 feet up to this area from area O1.

This cavern seems curiously clean, swept of rocks, debris, fungus, and most of the webs. The putrid smell that permeates the cavern is getting stronger.

**Obstacle: Vertical Shaft.** A 20-foot-high vertical shaft connects this area to area O4. Climbing the shaft without ropes or gear requires a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. Thick webbing still covers the top of the shaft (see General Features).

**Secret: Passage.** The passage connecting this area to area O1 to area O4 hides a secret

passage that is 20 feet above the ground level. Spotting this passage requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. Climbing up to it from the eastern passage requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. If the characters made a lot of noise in area O1 or within the passage, the oozes from O4 might use this secret tunnel to ambush the characters.

## O4 – Ooze Lair

Reaching this area requires the characters to climb from O3 or via the secret tunnel (see the map).

The first time the characters enter this area, read or paraphrase the following:

You enter a large chamber deep within the cavern, and your footsteps echo off the walls. It's a vast space, and you can't see the far end of it. The air feels thick and heavy, and you notice a pungent odor that makes your nose wrinkle.

As you look around, you notice something strange in the southeastern corner of the room. It's a large, fleshy pod, pulsating and throbbing. As you watch, a viscous liquid oozes out of the pod, and you realize that this is the source of the oozes lurking around the chamber.

The oozes are of different sizes and shapes, ranging from small, gelatinous blobs to large, sticky masses. They move slowly, oozing along the ground, their surface rippling and pulsing as they go. The sight is both fascinating and repulsive, and you can't help but feel a sense of unease.

The giant spiders that lived here discovered the pod while exploring another series of caverns. Curious, they dragged it back to their lair, believing it a potential source of food. From this pod, the oozes emerged, quickly

## AREA O1 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Encounter	Pod Spawn
1st	6 gray oozes	1 gray ooze
3rd	5 ochre jellies	1 ochre jelly
5th	6 black puddings	1 black pudding
8th	10 black puddings	1 black pudding

killing many of the elder spiders. Those who survived the initial attack escaped. The pod continues to produce oozes, filling this cavern with their slithering kind.

**Encounter: Oozes.** The number and type of oozes in this cavern depend on the level of the adventure, as shown in the Area O4 encounter table above. The oozes' perception is somewhat poor, and they won't immediately notice the characters. However, if the characters make considerable sound or come within reach of the oozes, the oozes slither toward the characters, eager to turn them into primordial soup.

**Development: The Pod.** The pod responds to the presence of living matter. At the start of each round, if there is a non-ooze creature within 15 feet of the pod, roll a d6. On a result of 6, a new ooze emerges. The type of ooze that emerges depends on the level of the adventure, as shown on the Pod Spawn column of the Area O4 Encounter table. The only way to stop the oozes is to destroy the pod. The pod has AC 13, 100 hit points, and is immune to acid and psychic damage.

## Aftermath

If the characters are successful in destroying the oozes and the pulsating pod, there is a sense of relief and accomplishment. The spiders that had been driven out by the oozes will start to move back in and begin to build their webs once again, making the area safer for travelers. The people of Ravenhollow will be grateful for their bravery, and the adventurers will be hailed as heroes.

However, if the characters fail to destroy the pulsating pod, the problem only gets worse. The oozes will continue to multiply and spread, making the area around the cavern increasingly dangerous for anyone who passes through. The people of Ravenhollow will be in danger, and they will likely send for help from the nearest town or city to deal with the problem. If left unchecked, the oozes could eventually spread to other areas, causing even more harm and destruction. Ω



# U – Undead Wastes (Part 3)

This adventure follows the events of the undead attack in Whispermire (see page 28). The undead are being drawn towards an ancient site of necromantic magic.

## Background

This year, a cruel winter grips Dreadmourn Vale, and a heavy and numbing cold blankets the region that even the warmth of raging hearths and thick furs seem unable to thaw.

Although the people of Dreadmourn Vale don't know it, this strange phenomenon is caused by the presence of an ancient and vicious evil. Once kept shackled within a timeless prison, a powerful monster has escaped. The presence of this vile creature corrupts the land, and icy death flows from it. Worse still, all those who die in this cold will become a monster of unlife.

## Following the Horde

After the attack on Whispermire, the characters follow the undead horde as they march north past the mountains and into a realm of frozen death.

Before you start this leg of the adventure, review the rules for Gnawing Hunger on page 30. Additionally, the frozen area is beset by extreme cold, heavy winds, and precipitation. See page 8 for a description of these weather conditions.

The undead follow the path shown on the map of Dreadmourn Vale on page 6.

It will take a little over two days for the characters to journey from Whispermire to the mountain pass (area U1). From there, the undead turn west. It then takes another day of travel for the characters to go from U1 to U5, assuming that they don't stop along the way.

## Encounters in the Wastes

The map of Dreadmourn Vale shows five encounter locations along the undead's path (areas U1–5).

### U1 – Merchant Camp

The party finds a small campsite that was being used by a caravan of merchants who had braved the snowy passes to reach southern Dreadmourn Vale. On their way through, however, the undead slaughtered the merchants and added them to their horde.

**Encounter: Scavenging Beasts.** Hungry beasts have followed their noses to the camp. Some scatter when the party arrives, but others are gorging themselves on the supplies the merchants brought. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in Area U1 Encounter table.

**Treasure: Supplies.** The remaining supplies are enough to sustain the remaining survivors of Whispermire for another week.

### AREA U1 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 <b>brown bear</b>
3rd	1 <b>polar bear</b>
5th	1 <b>mammoth</b>
8th	2 <b>mammoths</b>

## U2 – Pack of Wolves

When the characters reach this area on the map, read or paraphrase the following:

Heard long before they're seen, wolfish howls pierce through the churning snow. Moments later, a pack of emaciated wolves streaks into view.

**Encounter: Wolves.** A pack of hungry and desperate wolves attacks the party and fights until utterly destroyed. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below.

## U3 – River Crossing

When the characters reach this area on the map, read or paraphrase the following:

The road leads to an old wooden bridge that spans a vast, frozen river. Through the blizzard, you can just make out the far side where the road continues.  
The bridge has seen better days, with gaps and broken planks.

**Hazard: Ricketty Bridge.** Crossing the Bridge. The bridge is dilapidated. Any creature attempting to cross it must make a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the creature steps on a weak plank and falls through the bridge, hitting the ice below with enough force to break through it and fall into the freezing water.

Any creature attempting to cross the ice on foot must make a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the creature steps on a patch of weak ice and falls into the freezing water below.

If a creature falls into the freezing water, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, suffering one level of exhaustion on a

### AREA U2 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	2 <b>wolves</b>
3rd	4 <b>wolves</b>
5th	3 <b>dire wolves</b>
8th	2 <b>dire wolves</b>

failure. Each additional minute spent in the frigid water or wet clothing requires the creature to succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer another level of exhaustion. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage automatically succeed on the saving throw, as do creatures naturally adapted to freezing water.

## U4 – Cliffhanger

When the characters reach this area on the map, read or paraphrase the following:

The tracks you have been following stop at a dead end. A sheer cliff face stands before you, blocking any further steps forward. The only way is up.

**Hazard: The Cliff.** Climbing the cliff face is possible but difficult. Each character must make a successful Strength (Athletics) check to climb the cliff. Have the characters decide upon a marching order and then roll their checks in that order. On a failure, a character falls and takes bludgeoning damage. The DC for the check and the amount of damage taken on a failure are detailed below.

If a character that falls is attached to another character, that character must make a Strength saving throw against the same DC. On a success, the character keeps their grip

## AREA U4 CLIFFHANGER HAZARD

Adventure Level	Check/Save DC	Falling Damage
1st	12	7 (2d6)
3rd	13	10 (3d6)
5th	15	21 (6d6)
8th	16	35 (10d6)

and stops the other character from falling.

On a failure, however, both characters fall.

## U5 – Eternal Prison

The undead have been drawn to the ruins of an ancient prison built to contain a monster of great power. When they arrive, the undead are feverishly digging through the snow and stone, attempting to release this monster.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Through the thick snowfall, you see groups of the undead, each digging through an area of frozen rock. They're struggling to unearth something, but you cannot see what it is; what is clear is the number of undead are more than you can handle.

**Encounter: Undead Horde.** While the characters can choose a direct assault, there are too many undead to be sure of victory. The party may be able to bypass the undead or find ways to separate them and reduce their numbers.

However, they must do so through a skill challenge. A skill challenge simulates a task requiring more time and effort than a single ability check. In its simplest form, the characters make a series of ability checks to earn a required number of successes before accumulating a maximum number of failed

checks— similar to how death saving throws work.

This skill challenge consists of the following elements:

- **Goal and Context.** That characters are trying to reduce the number of undead they must fight.
- **Difficulty.** Primary skill checks related to this skill challenge are made against a DC of 10. Secondary and repeat checks are made against a DC of 15.
- **Complexity.** The party can collectively make up to five ability checks related to this skill challenge. Each success reduces the number of undead they encounter.
- **Primary Checks.** When the characters partake in a skill challenge, they may commit any ability check they like to the skill challenge. Certain ability checks however, lend themselves better to a successful outcome than others. These ability checks are primary checks and usually have a lower DC than their secondary checks. The primary checks for this skill challenge are Dexterity (Stealth) to sneak closer to or past the undead, Intelligence (Arcana) to use a spell to draw away or trap the undead, and Wisdom (Survival) to use the terrain to lead the undead away.
- **Secondary Checks.** Secondary checks represent all the skills the characters may use to participate in a skill challenge that aren't considered primary checks. The main reason for the disparity between primary and secondary is that primary checks are a little more "obvious" in their function.
- **Other Conditions.** The characters must spend at least 1 hour and can't make a second attempt in a 24-hour period. All previous successes count as a success in

### AREA U4 CLIFFHANGER HAZARD

Adventure Level	Encounter	For each successful check, reduce the encounter by...
1st	1 <b>ghoul</b> and 10 <b>zombies</b>	2 <b>zombies</b>
3rd	1 <b>wight</b> and 20 <b>zombies</b>	4 <b>zombies</b>
5th	1 <b>wraith</b> and 10 <b>ghouls</b>	2 <b>ghouls</b>
8th	1 <b>greater wraith</b> and 10 <b>ghouls</b>	2 <b>ghouls</b>

subsequent attempts.

- **Consequences.** For each success the characters earn toward this skill challenge, reduce the number of undead they must face in the final encounter, noted in the table below.

As the characters approach, the monster is released from its ancient prison. The party must then choose whether they will flee or stand and fight. If they fight, the monster summons any remaining undead and attacks the party. The nature of the encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new monsters detailed in the appendix.

**Treasure: Discarded Goods.** The characters can find treasure in the ruined prison. The nature of the treasure depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table above.

## Aftermath

If the characters succeed in destroying the monstrous prisoner, the blizzards cease almost immediately, and, for the first time in days, sunshine bursts through the clouds above. Furthermore, the magic animating the undead is broken, and within a few days, those creatures collapse and are lost beneath the snow. Ω

### AREA U5 TREASURE

Adventure Level	Treasure
1st	A <i>potion of healing</i> , a +1 <i>longsword</i> , and assorted coins with a combined value of 112 gp.
3rd	A <i>potion of healing</i> , a <i>potion of fire resistance</i> , a +1 <i>longsword</i> , a chain shirt, and assorted coins with a combined value of 312 gp.
5th	A <i>potion of greater healing</i> , a <i>potion of hill giant strength</i> , a +1 <i>greatsword</i> , a suit of scale mail, and assorted coins with a combined value of 512 gp.
8th	A <i>potion of greater healing</i> , a <i>potion of frost giant strength</i> , a +1 <i>greatsword</i> , a suit of +1 <i>scale mail</i> , and assorted coins with a combined value of 812 gp.





## Z – Zombie Farmhouse

Following a strong lead, the characters investigate a recently abandoned farmhouse in a region overrun by the undead. Soon, they find themselves surrounded by ravenous zombies with no way to escape.

### Background

Years ago, the Hofsteder family emigrated to Dreadmourn Vale after evacuating a neighboring empire. Life was hard at first, but they quickly learned the best ways to use the available resources. Eventually, what started out as a small wooden house with a couple of sheds grew into the extensive ranch that stands on the same site today. The Hofsteder clan successfully converted dozens of acres around the ranchable land. In short time, the farm successfully supplied most of the local settlements with grain, cattle, milk, horses, and meat.

Little did the Hofsteder's neighbors know the Hofsteders were more than just simple farmers. They were imperial nobles fleeing old enemies and carrying considerable wealth, much of it stolen from the emperor's vaults. Those who know the Hofsteders' secret identity theorize they may have over 100,000 gp hidden somewhere on the farm. Additionally, the treasure hoard contains a deadly artifact—the *Grimorium Maleficarum*—a book dedicated to the undead. The book contains dark necromantic rituals and heretical passages, opening a doorway to the dead. Once the book is freed of its protections, it draws undead to it like a candle's flame draws moths. The Hofsteders stole this book from the Sunken Crypt in Shadowreach (see page 38 for details).

At first, the undead attacks were sporadic. But after a local adventuring group unearthed a nearby mine filled with malicious shadows,

the creatures swarmed the farmstead. But the undead haven't stopped. Now, hundreds of zombies surround the area, driven by the Grimorium Maleficarum. The only way to remove the curse is to pull the book from its hidden location in the farm and either return it to its original location or destroy it, if possible.

## Zombie Farmhouse

The Hofsteder Ranch is a 130-acre piece of land. Most of the land is dedicated to the Hofsteders' crops. However, a handful of buildings are close to a well-traveled dirt road. The tallest of these buildings are a pair of loft barns and a 30-foot-tall grain silo. A one-story home featuring a wraparound porch stands at the forefront, surrounded by smaller gardens.

There are zombies everywhere.

### General Features

Unless stated otherwise, the Hofsteder Ranch has the following features.

**Architecture.** The ranch consists of one homestead, two barns, a silo, and a couple of smaller outbuildings. All of these buildings are made from wood. Ceilings in the homestead rise 8 feet, while ceilings in the barn are 10 feet high to their respective lofts and another 10 feet to the highest point of the ceiling. The silo stands 30 feet high.

**Doors and Windows.** All of the doors around the farm are made from wood and hung on iron hinges. Most of the doors were left unlocked but could be barred or locked. A locked door requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to unlock it or a DC 18 Strength check to break it open. Barred doors can only be broken open. A door has AC 15, 15 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

### REINFORCING DOORS

Break DC	Reinforcement Check DC
10 or lower	10
11–15	15
16–20	20
21+	25

Windows are unlocked but can be locked. A locked window requires a successful DC 13 Strength check to break open. A window has AC 13, 5 hit points, vulnerability to bludgeoning and thunder damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

**Reinforcing Doors.** A character can use their action to reinforce a door or window further. Doing so requires a successful Strength check using whatever tools the GM deems appropriate. The DC for the reinforcement check depends on the portal's DC to break open. A successful reinforcement check increases the door's break-open DC by 2 to a maximum of 21. Creatures cannot open reinforced doors and windows by picking locks.

**Optional: Zombies and Passive Break Checks.** To simplify things, zombies that end their turn next to a door or window automatically break the door open so long as their passive Strength score is equal to or greater than the DC required to break the door open. Individual zombies have a passive Strength score of 11. If two or more zombies start their turn within 5 feet of the same door, they gain a +5 bonus to their passive Strength score for a total of 16. Zombie mobs have a passive Strength score of 19.

**Fences.** The fences surrounding the farm are approximately 3 feet tall. A character can

move past the fences without a check, treating them like difficult terrain.

**Illumination.** No lights or fires are lit throughout the home beyond what the characters bring themselves. Besides, characters would be wise to travel during the day before the shadows rise.

**Zombies Appear.** During the day, the zombies that infest the land linger in and around the Hofsteder Ranch. If the characters aren't careful—and quiet—they may soon find themselves mobbed. Every 15 minutes, roll a d20 and refer to the Zombies Appear table below, referencing the appropriate column depending on the adventure's level. Whenever the characters do something loud—break down a door, cast an explosive spell, cry out, etc.—roll another d20.

Creatures marked with an asterisk are new monsters appearing in the appendix.

If the characters spend 8 hours without making a sound or taking any actions, you may halve the zombies present on the board.

New zombies appear from a random side of the board. Roll a d4 to determine which side—1 for the north, 2 for the east, 3 for the south, and 4 for the west. Zombies always move toward any living creature that they can

see. If they can't see any living creatures, they move toward the last loud sound they hear. If there are no living creatures in sight and no recent sounds, the zombies move in the direction of other zombies, becoming mobs when appropriate (see below).

**The Shadows Return.** The zombies are the least of the characters' worries. When night falls over the lands surrounding the farm, shadows rise from the dark recesses of the land, hungry for fresh victims.

In addition to the zombies that appear (which roam day and night), shadows arrive, too. When you roll for Zombies Appear, if the result is 15 or higher, 1d4 shadows appear, too. The shadows are only interested in draining strength from good- and neutral-aligned creatures. They ignore evil-aligned creatures.

**Optional: Zombie Mobs.** When six or more zombies start a round within 10 feet of each other, you can replace them with a zombie mob. Using the zombie mob will help you streamline the adventure a bit.

Additionally, an individual zombie within 5 feet of a zombie mob can use half of its movement to join an existing zombie mob. When it does, the individual zombie disappears, and the zombie mob regains 10 hit points. The **zombie mob** is a new

## ZOMBIES APPEAR

Zombies Appearing	1st	3rd	5th	8th
None	1–15	1–12	1–10	1–7
1d4 zombies	16–17	13–16	11–14	8–11
2d4 zombies	18–19	17–18	15–17	12–15
1 zombie mob*	20	19–20	18–19	16–18
1d4 zombie mobs*	—	—	20	19–20

creature included in the appendix.

**Optional: Zombie Horde.** When there are six or more zombie mobs on the board at the end of a turn, you no longer need to roll for Zombies Appear.

Instead, all zombie mobs regain 10 hit points at the start of each of their turns so long as the mob has at least 1 hit point remaining; this regeneration-like effect represents new zombies joining the mob.

**Optional: Necrosis Poison.** If you wish to tie this adventure into the other adventures and settlements a little more, you may incorporate the Gnawing Hunger and Necrosis Poison rules detailed on page 30.

## Shaking Things Up

If you find that the characters are having an easy go of stealing the treasure at the farm and dealing with the undead hordes, introduce some of the complications below. Roll a d4 to determine the complication, or choose the one you like.

### 1. Cloudy Day

A storm rolls in, blotting out the sun. The shadows lingering in the dark corners of the farm start to rise from their hidey-holes, ready to find fresh victims. This complication works best with parties that aren't evil-aligned.

### 2. Competition

Another group of treasure hunters—possibly another posse sent by Gus, the farmhand—arrive at the farm. The nature of this group depends on the level, as shown in the table below. The competition is evil-aligned and able to avoid the shadows. This gives them a decided advantage over neutral- or good-aligned groups. It also means they aren't up for negotiating.

#### COMPETITION

Adventure Level	Competition
1st	1 <b>thug</b> , 1 <b>acolyte</b> , 1 <b>spy</b> , and 1 <b>druid</b>
3rd	1 <b>veteran</b> , 1 <b>priest</b> , 1 <b>spy</b> , and 1 <b>druid</b>
5th	1 <b>gladiator</b> , 1 <b>priest</b> , 1 <b>spy</b> , and 1 <b>mage</b>
8th	1 <b>gladiator</b> , 1 <b>priest</b> , 1 <b>assassin</b> , and 1 <b>mage</b>

#### FIRE STARTING LOCATION

d6	Starting Location
1	Area Z01
2	Area Z03
3	Area Z09
4	Area Z10
5	Area Z13
6	Area Z15

### 3. Giant Problem

A **hill giant** stumbles onto the farm, smashing through fences and even walls. Three **zombies** cling to the giant's feet, trying desperately to down the hulk.

This ruckus causes two **zombie mobs** (see the appendix) to investigate the farm.

### 4. Fire

A fire breaks out in one of the barns. Roll on the table below to determine where the fire starts. If the characters don't deal with the fire, it could spread across the farm and make finding the treasure impossible. Plus, it could



attract even more undead.

Treat the fire as a Medium object with AC 12 and 50 hit points. It is immune to all forms of damage except cold. It also has the following traits.

**Regeneration.** The fire regains 5 hit points at the start of each of its turns so long as it has at least 1 hit point remaining. If the fire starts its turn with 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

**Snuff It Out.** A creature within 5 feet of the fire can use its action to cover the fire with a blanket, bucket of sand, or another object capable of completely covering it. The creature makes a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. The check is made with advantage if the fire has only half its hit points or fewer. On a successful check, the fire is destroyed.

**Spread.** There is a chance that the fire will spread. Roll a d20. Make this check with advantage if the fire is within 5 feet of flammable objects, such as cloth, dry hay, lantern oil, etc. On a result of 15 or higher, the fire spreads. A new fire appears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the fire.

**Water Susceptibility.** For every gallon of water splashed on the fire, it takes 10 cold damage.

## Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the maps of the Hofsteder Ranch on pages 82 and 86.

### Z01 – Grain Silo

This 30-foot structure holds the farm’s grain stores.

### Z02 – Corral

This corral was used for grazing cows, horses, and sheep and training young horses.

**Encounter: Zombie Bulls.** A few zombie bulls are “trapped” within the corral’s

### AREA Z02 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Competition
1st	1 zombie bull
3rd	2 zombie bulls
5th	3 zombie bulls
8th	4 zombie bulls

fence. Although the bulls seem trapped, inevitably, they discover that they can leap over the fence. The number of zombie bulls depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below. Zombie bulls are a new creature featured in the appendix.

### Z03 – Cow Shed

This large barn boasts eight wide stalls. Bones, bloodied leather, and glistening hay are all that remain of the cows that the Hofsteders once stored here.

### Z04 – Dung Burner

The Hofsteders used this sizable outdoor oven to burn dung.

**Investigation: Furnace Key.** A character who spends at least 15 minutes investigating the dung burner and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers that one of the four silver keys needed to access the Hofsteder treasure is buried under a stone right in front of the furnace. If the characters have the embroidered cloth clue from area 25, they make this check with advantage.

### Z05 – Chicken Coops

These three chicken houses are empty.

**Encounter: Engorged Zombie.** A



zombie with a grotesquely extended stomach sits against the barn wall. Chicken feathers and blood cover its face and chest, clues to its most recent meal. The zombie’s speed is reduced by half. Two rounds after the zombie notices the characters, its stomach bursts open, and its guts tumble onto the filthy soil. An undead chicken leaps out and attacks. The chicken use the same statistics as a giant rat except its type is undead, and it is immune to poison damage and the poisoned condition.

### Z06 – Bee Hives

The bees that live in this hive pay no mind to the existence of the undead.

### AREA Z09 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	1 shadow
3rd	2 shadows
5th	5 shadows
8th	1 shadow swarm

## Z07 – Water Pump Mill

This wind-powered pump pulls water from the ground. A creature can quickly climb to the platform surrounding the windmill via the mill's wooden base.

## Z08 – Water Tank (Base)

This small water tower holds approximately 50 gallons of water. A character must succeed on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check in order to climb the tank's post to the platform surrounding the tank.

## Z09 – Horse Stables

A horrible stench comes from this large horse barn. All eight stalls hold desiccated horses drained of their strength. A ladder near the western door leads up to area H24.

**Hazard: Stench.** The first time a creature enters the barn or starts its turn inside the barn, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the start of its next turn. A creature that succeeds on its saving throw becomes immune to this stench for 1 hour.

**Encounter: Shadows.** The shadows use this barn to hide from the daylight. The number of shadows present depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new monsters featured in the appendix.

## Z10 – Workshed

Shelves choked with tools, nails, and kits for making repairs around the farm cover the walls of this dark, dusty shed.

**Treasure: Tools.** The shed contains carpenter's tools, leatherworker's tools, mason's tools, painter's supplies, potter's tools, smith's tools, tinker's tools, and woodcarver's tools.

**Investigation: Hammer Key.** A character

who spends at least 15 minutes searching the shelves and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers one of the four silver keys needed to access the Hofsteder treasure hidden in a bucket of nails. The characters make this check with advantage if they have the embroidered cloth clue from area Z25.

## Z11 – Wheat Farm

Larger crops like corn and wheat grow here, likely for household use.

**Trap: Hunting Traps.** To deter gophers, the farmers set up a few hunting traps here (marked with an "T" on the map). A creature that steps on a trap must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage and stop moving. After that, until the creature breaks free of the trap, its movement is limited by the length of the 3-footlong chain attached. A creature can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach on a success. Each failed check deals 1 piercing damage to the trapped creature. A character can spot one of the traps in advance with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check.

## Z12 – Vegetable Farm

Already starting to turn to rot from neglect, this garden seems to hold vegetables used as animal fodder.

A scarecrow stands proudly at the garden's center.

**Investigation: Scarecrow Key.** A character who spends 15 minutes searching the ground near the scarecrow's post and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers one of the four silver keys needed to access the Hofsteder treasure. The characters make this

check with advantage if they have the embroidered cloth clue from area 25.

## Z13 – Porch

This massive outdoor area wraps around the western and southern sides of the house. Planters on the south side offer more herbs and small vegetables, while crates contain extra flour and grain. A small doghouse leans against the western railing.

**Investigation: Dead Dog.** A character who looks inside the doghouse discovers the broken remains of the family’s household dog.

## Z14 – Herb and Vegetable Garden

This small plot against the southern fence offers simple root vegetables and herbs.

**Encounter: Skeletons.** A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 13 or higher who comes within 20 feet of this area notices that there are two skeletons half buried in the garden. The skeletons animate whenever a target comes within 5 feet of them. The skeletons are armed with gardening tools (+2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target; 1d6 bludgeoning damage) and don’t wear armor (AC 12). They have a CR of 1/8 (25 XP).

## Z15 – Dining Area

The dining area features a table big enough for six people and a couple of shelves to hold plateware and utensils.

**Encounter: The Hofstedeers.** The deceased Hofstedeers lurk in this area. They attack anyone who comes into the room. Any noise here summons the crawling arm from area 16 (see below).

The nature of this encounter depends on the level of the adventure, as shown in the table below. Creatures marked with an asterisk are new creatures featured in the appendix.

### AREA Z15 ENCOUNTER

Adventure Level	Encounter
1st	3 <b>zombies</b>
3rd	2 <b>zombies</b> and 1 <b>poisoned one*</b>
5th	3 <b>poisoned ones*</b>
8th	2 <b>poisoned ones</b> , 1 <b>evil entrails*</b> , and 1 <b>floating head*</b>

**Investigation: Bad Dates.** A strange aroma rises from a bowl of dates on the table. A character who inspects the bowl and succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom check using proficiency in the poisoner’s kit recognizes that the dates were laced with assassin’s blood, a deadly poison.

## Z16 – Living Room

This living area features comfortable furniture, a fireplace, and an upright piano.

**Encounter: Crawling Arm.** One of the Hofstedeers’ severed arms hides under the coffee table at the center of the room. It attacks any creature entering this area or joins any combats in area 15, using the crawling arm stat block featured in the appendix.

## Z17 – Kitchen

The door to this room is stuck shut. The door won’t open because a zombie is pressed against it (see below). To shove it open, a creature must succeed on a DC 13 Strength check.

This large kitchen features a large stove area, a sizable pantry, and plenty of counter space for food preparation.



**Encounter: Tangled Zombie.** The zombie here is tangled in the rope that used to hold the pots and pans above the stove. The rope doesn't affect the zombie's movement or actions but does cause a considerable racket every time it moves or takes an action, potentially drawing other zombies near.

**Investigation: Claw Marks.** A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices scrape marks on the floor near the piano, made from constantly moving it. If the characters move the piano out of the way, they discover a hidden compartment masked by a removable floor section. The compartment contains a large floor safe with four keyholes.

**Obstacle: The Safe.** An effect similar to an immovable rod keeps the safe stuck in place; the lead lining prevents *dispel magic* from disabling it. Picking the locks requires four successful DC 25 Dexterity checks using proficiency in thieves' tools made within 1 round of each other. If a lock picker fails on one of the checks while trying to open it, all of the checks fail, and the safe won't open for 1 hour. The safe is made from magically treated adamantine; it has AC 21, 100 hit points (damage threshold 10), and immunity to acid, cold, fire, lightning, necrotic, poison, psychic, and thunder damage.

The best way to open the safe is to use the four silver keys hidden around the farmstead. The keys are located in areas Z04, Z10, Z12, and Z18.

**Treasure: Hofsteder Treasure.** The safe contains a single bag of holding. However, the bag of holding is stuffed with the Hofsteder's impressive fortune:

- 50,000 gp
- 25,000 pp
- 125 gems worth 100 gp each

- 10 art objects worth 2,500 gp each
- 10 pieces of jewelry worth 1,000 gp each
- 1 *armor of invulnerability*
- 1 +2 *longsword*
- 1 *helm of brilliance*
- 1 *rod of rulership*
- *Grimorium Maleficarum* (substitute the statistics for any appropriately evil book artifact from the 5e guide for gamemasters)

## Z18 – Bathroom

This impressive bathroom features a large clawfoot tub, vanity, and full-length mirror. An ornate wooden privacy screen divides the bathroom into two sections.

A bloodied handaxe lies on the floor a few feet from the tub. Blood splatters cover the nearby walls and the wooden privacy screen.

**Horror: Tub Corpse.** A headless, one-armed female corpse “rests” in the tub, the water darkened by its blood. It is a terrifying sight to behold. A character who sees this must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of it for 1 minute. If the character fails the saving throw by 5 or more, they scream or otherwise cry out, drawing attention to themselves.

**Investigation: Bathtub Key.** A character who searches the bottom of the bathtub (yes, it's gross) and succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers one of the four silver keys needed to access the Hofsteder treasure hidden in the tub's drain. The characters make this check with advantage if they have the embroidered cloth clue from area H25.

## Z19 – Master Bedroom

This comfortable-looking room features a large, fourpost bed, desk, and ornate armoire.

**Encounter: Shadow.** A shadow lurks



here. It attacks any non-evil creature that enters the room. Otherwise, it remains hidden.

## Z20 – Second Bedroom

Two small beds, toys, and other clues hint that this room once belonged to children.

## Z21 – Outhouse

These two privies haven't been cleaned since the invasion; they reek.

**Investigation: Bad Dates.** A strange aroma rises from a bowl of dates on the table. A character who inspects the bowl and succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom check using proficiency in the poisoner's kit recognizes that the dates were laced with assassin's blood, a deadly poison.

**Encounter: Giant Rat.** A diseased giant rat is sniffing around the seat of the westernmost stall. It attempts to bite whoever comes through the door, then flees.

## Z22 – Farmhands Break Area

The trapdoor leading up to this area is barred shut (see "General Features").

This loft section boasts a small table covered in playing cards, a tankard of mead, and a few tools crammed onto a shelf. The farmhands used to gather here on their breaks.

## Z23 – Additional Household Stores

Nonperishable food items and general homewares the farmers couldn't store in the main house are kept here.

**Encounter: Eli.** A local farmboy named Eli hides here; a character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 14 or better spots him. Eli's family was killed by the undead. Eli managed to survive thanks to his evil streak—he is a neutral evil **spy** armed with only a dagger. When the characters find him, he pretends to be terrified and mute, driven mad by the undead. He will follow the characters and use them to keep himself safe from the zombies. However, as soon as he learns about the treasure hidden on the farm, he will do whatever he can to dispose of the characters and take the treasure for himself.

## Z24 – General Supply Storage

Sacks of flour, bales of hay, unweathered lumber, barrels of mead, and several other general supplies are stored here, hoisted up via the winch.

**Encounter: Ravens.** A swarm of ravens gathers here. When a character comes within 10 feet of the ravens, the birds shriek and flutter, creating considerable noise.

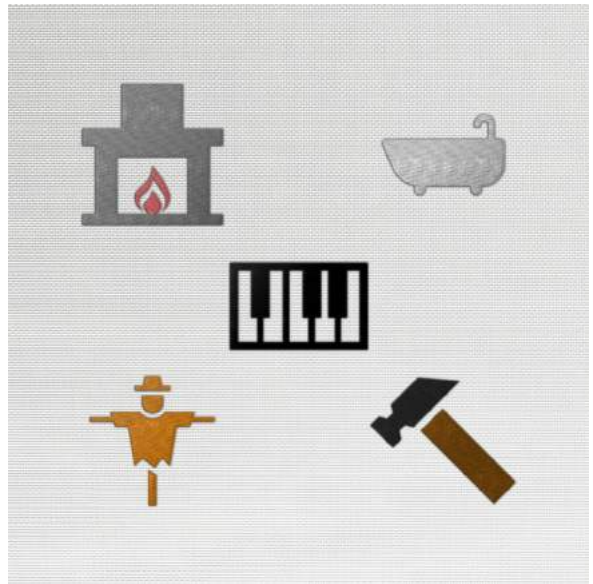
## Z25 – Lead Farm Hands Lodging

Extra supplies, tools, and other resources crowd this section of the loft. The small, uncomfortable-looking bed where the farmhand Gus slept stands in the corner, still unmade.

**Encounter: Zombie.** A female zombie stumbles around this section of the loft. A sickle sticks out of her neck. She holds an embroidered piece of cloth in her hand.

**Treasure: Embroidered Cloth.** The cloth in the zombie's hand is the same one Gus described. Show the players the "Gus' Clue" handout as shown on the top right. The cloth shows the location of the four keys needed to access the Hofsteder treasure.

## Gus' CLUE (AREA Z25)



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## Aftermath

If the characters manage to secure the Hofsteders' impressive wealth and escape before the shadows return, they could almost retire. Of course, things never go that well. The characters aren't the only ones who know about the Hofsteders' fortune.

Soon, they will find themselves hunted by other treasure hunters and rogues who know that killing a handful of adventurers is much easier than dealing with the undead.

Additionally, the *Grimorium Maleficarum* is an artifact of great evil. The characters will have to contend with undead forces the likes of which they've never seen. Ω

# Appendix: New Monsters

New monsters featured in this book are listed here in alphabetical order.

## Crawling Arm

*Small undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 6 (1d6 + 3)

**Speed** 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

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

**Saving Throws** Wis +0

**Skills** Stealth +0

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, poisoned, prone, unconscious

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

### Special Features

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**Turn Immunity.** The arm is immune to effects that turn undead.

**Unusual Nature.** The arm doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### Actions

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**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., One creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, the arm attaches to the target. If the arm had advantage on the attack roll, it strangles the target; the target is unable to breathe while the arm is attached. While attached, the arm can make this attack only against the target, and it has advantage on the attack roll. The arm can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the arm by succeeding on a DC 13 Strength check.

## Evil Entrails

*Small undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 13 (2d6 + 6)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

**Skills** Stealth +4

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, poisoned, prone

**Senses** blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

### Special Features

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**Unusual Nature.** The entrails don't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### Actions

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**Multiattack.** The entrails make two lash attacks.

**Lash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, the entrails attach to it. If the entrails had advantage on the attack roll, they attach to the target's head; the target is unable to breathe while the entrails are attached. While attached, the entrails can make this attack only against the target, and they have advantage on the attack roll. The entrails can detach themselves by spending 5 feet of their movement. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the entrails by succeeding on a DC 12 Strength check.

**Acid Spray (Recharge 6).** The entrails spray acid in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the cone's area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 7 (2d6) acid damage on a failed saving throw or half as much damage on a successful one.



## Floating Head

*Tiny undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 45 (10d4 + 20)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	14 (+2)	6 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +4

**Skills** Stealth +4

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** the languages it knew in life

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

### Special Features

**Eyes of Hate.** When a creature that can see the floating head's eyes starts its turn within 30 feet of the floating head, the floating head can force it to make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw if the floating head isn't incapacitated and can see the creature. A creature that fails its saving throw is charmed by the floating head for 1 minute. The charmed creature's speed drops to 0 and it is incapacitated and visibly dazed. The effect ends if the floating head moves more than 30 feet away from the creature, the creature can neither see nor hear the floating head, or if the creature takes damage from any source other than the floating head. Once the effect ends, or if the creature succeeds on its initial saving throw against this effect, the creature is immune to the floating head's Eyes of Hate for 24 hours.

**Magic Resistance.** The floating head has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Unusual Nature.** The floating head doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The floating head makes two necrobolt attacks.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 1 piercing damage. Necrobolt. Ranged Spell Attack: +4 to hit, range 60 ft., One target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) necrotic damage.

**Voice of Fear (Recharge 4–6).** The floating head chants dark words. Each creature of the floating head's choice within 30 feet of the floating head that can hear it must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. A creature takes 14 (4d6) psychic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Spellcasting.** The floating head casts one of the following spells, requiring no components and using Wisdom as its spellcasting modifier (spell save DC 12).

At will: *bane*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

2/day each: *enthrall*, *hold person*

1/day: *confusion*

## Poisoned One

*Medium undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 51 (6d8 + 24)

**Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	6 (-2)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +0

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

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

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

### Special Features

**Poison Splash.** A creature that touches the poisoned one or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) poison damage.

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

**Unusual Nature.** The poisoned one doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### Actions

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

*Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

**Spew Poison (Recharge 6).** The poisoned one spews poison in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 7 (2d6) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. A creature poisoned in this way can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

## Shadow Swarm

*Huge swarm of Medium undead, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 82 (11d12 + 11)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

**Skills** Stealth +5

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** acid, bludgeoning, cold, fire, lightning, piercing, slashing, thunder

**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +3

### Special Features

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

**Disband.** If the shadow swarm is reduced to 0 hit points, two shadows rise from its remains.

**Shadow Stealth.** While in dim light or darkness, the swarm can take the Hide action as a bonus action, and its Dexterity (Stealth) modifier is +8.

**Sunlight Weakness.** While in sunlight, the swarm has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

**Unusual Nature.** The swarm doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The swarm makes two Strength Drain attacks. If the swarm starts its turn with half its hit points or fewer, it can't use this action.

**Strength Drain.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 16 (4d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

## Spectral Horse

*Large undead, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 22 (4d10)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

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

**Damage Immunities** cold, necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +2

### Special Features

**Ethereal Sight.** The horse can see 60 ft. into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

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

**Confer Incorporeality.** The spectral horse can grant its Incorporeal Movement feature to anyone riding it.

### Actions

**Spectral Hooves.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) necrotic damage.

**Etherealness.** The horse and any creature of its choice that is riding it enter the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.



## Wraith, Greater

*Large undead, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 19

**Hit Points** 153 (18d8 + 72)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Int +7, Wis +8, Cha +10

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder

**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

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

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** the languages it knew in life

**Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +5

### Special Features

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

**Magic Resistance.** The wraith has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Psychic Defense.** The greater wraith gains a bonus to its AC equal to its Charisma modifier (included).

### Actions

**Chill Touch (Cantrip).** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +10 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) necrotic damage. The target can't regain hit points until the start of its next turn. Undead creatures hit by this attack have disadvantage on attack rolls until the start of their next turn.

**Life Drain.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 49 (10d8 + 4) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

**Spellcasting.** The wraith's innate spellcasting ability Charisma (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It can cast the following spells, requiring no material components when it does:

At will: *bold person*

3/day: *dominate person, telekinesis*

1/day each: *banishment, feeblemind, finger of death*

**Create Specter.** The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

### Legendary Actions

The greater wraith can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Greater Wraith regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Necrotic Blast.** The wraith casts chill touch.

**Drain Life (Costs 2 Actions).** The wraith makes one life drain attack.



## Zombie Bull

*Large undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 11 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 38 (4d10 + 16)

**Speed** 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	10 (+0)	19 (+4)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Skills** Wis +0

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +3

### Special Features

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

**Unusual Nature.** The bull doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### Actions

**Gore.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage. If the bull moved at least 20 feet straight toward the target immediately before the hit, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone if it is a creature.

## Zombie Mob

*Gargantuan swarm of Medium undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 150 (20d8 + 60)

**Speed** 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Saving Throws** Wis +1

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

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

**Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus** +3

### Special Features

**Mob.** The mob takes up its entire space. Other creatures can enter the space, but a creature that does so is subjected to the mob's Engulf and has disadvantage on the saving throw. Creatures inside the mob have three-quarters cover against attacks made from outside the mob. A creature within 5 feet of the mob can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the mob. Doing so requires a successful DC 20 Strength check. If the target fails the check by 5 or more, it is pulled into the mob's space and is subjected to the mob's Engulf. The mob can hold only one Large creature or up to four Medium or smaller creatures inside it at a time. The mob can move through any opening large enough for a Medium zombie. The mob can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

**Disband.** If the mob is reduced to 0 hit points, four **zombies** rise from its remains.

**Unusual Nature.** The mob doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

### Actions

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., One target. *Hit:* 23 (4d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage.

**Engulf.** The mob moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the mob enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 20 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (the target's choice). On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the mob. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed save, the mob enters the creature's space, and the creature takes 23 (4d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature is restrained and takes 37 (8d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of the mob's turns. An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 20 Strength or Dexterity check (the target's choice). On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the mob.



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