

1ST LEVEL



THE DM TOOL CHEST

# THE ALCHEMIST'S MENAGERIE



FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE

A local alchemist's basement holds a deadly secret hidden in its depths

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits .....	2
Adventure Primer .....	3
Adventure Hook .....	3
Keyed Locations .....	5
Secret Laboratory Map .....	5
Aftermath .....	6
Open Gaming License .....	6

### ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

This is a one-shot or side-trek adventure that is setting agnostic. It can be adapted to any campaign setting that includes a an abandoned alchemy shop in a city or town. It is designed to be as plug and play as possible so feel free to use it as is or adapt it to your setting of choice!



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## CREDITS

This adventure module was created with the help of all of these talented people:

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**Interior Illustrations:** Dreamstime

**Thank You!** To all of the awesome patrons who supported this work!

## RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

In order to run this adventure, you will need the Fifth Edition core rulebooks.

Boxed text like this present descriptions meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. These are just prompts and may be used or not at the DM's discretion.

In this adventure you will come across references that point to information that is presented outside of this module.

*Magic Items, Spells, and Equipment* will be italicized and will be found described in either the core DM guidebook or the core player's rulebook.

**Monster** names will be in bold and the appropriate stat block will be found in the core fifth edition monster guidebook if not already presented in an attached Appendix.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Common abbreviations used in this adventure:

pp - Platinum Piece(s)	LG Lawful good
gp - Gold Piece(s)	CG Chaotic good
ep - Electrum Piece(s)	NG Neutral good
sp - Silver Piece(s)	LN Lawful neutral
cp - Copper Piece(s)	N Neutral
NPC - Nonplayer Character	CN Chaotic neutral
DC - Difficulty Class	LE Lawful evil
AC - Armor Class	NE Neutral evil
xp - Experience Points	CE - Chaotic evil
hp - Hit Points	



## ADVENTURE PRIMER

The Alchemist's Menagerie is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to six characters of 1st to 2nd level** and is optimized for a party of **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 1**. Characters who complete this adventure should earn enough experience to reach level 2. A local

baker has mysteriously turned to stone while inspecting her new basement. A secret laboratory hidden in the basement holds a cockatrice that killed the alchemist who previously owned the building and its now on the loose along with the rest of the menagerie. This adventure is setting agnostic and can fit into any campaign.

## BACKGROUND

After a local alchemist goes missing, his building is leased to a baker who wants to use it for her new bakery. It turns out that the missing alchemist had a secret laboratory where he kept exotic animals and plants. A cockatrice was among them until it managed to kill its captor. It's now prowling the laboratory along with the other escapees and managed to turn the baker to stone while trying to escape.

## ABOUT THE SECRET LABORATORY

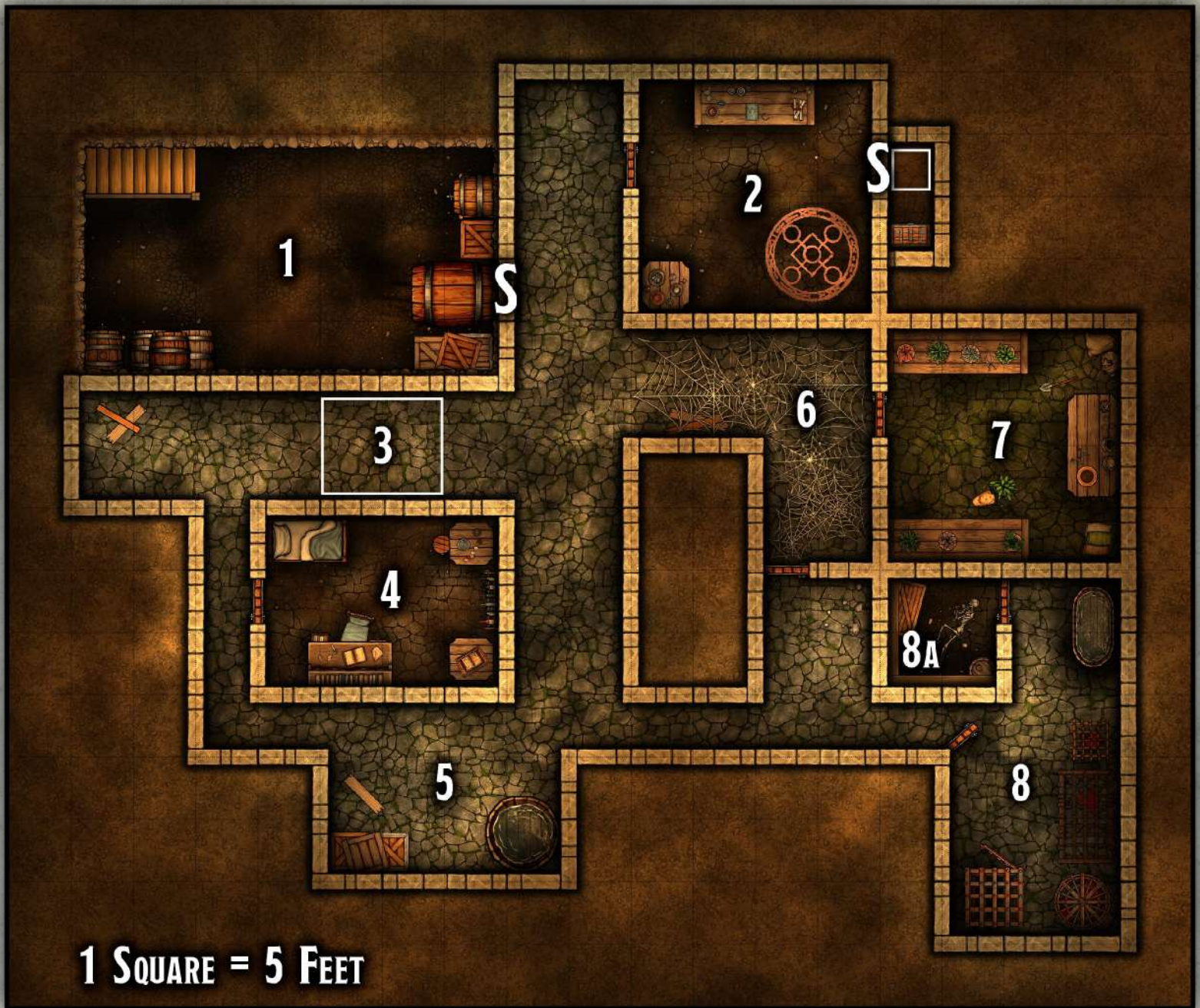
Alard Gysby was a local alchemist who dabbled in some of the more exotic and highly illegal potions and narcotics. To facilitate this, he built an underground laboratory in secret where he kept a collection of plants and animals on hand. His latest addition was a cockatrice and he was not prepared in handling it, falling victim to its petrifying bite soon after obtaining it. Almost a year after his "disappearance", the building was leased to Wynne Jenson, a local baker who wanted a bigger space for her bakery.

She was looking around the basement when she was surprised by the cockatrice. It poked its head out of the secret door leading to the laboratory and was startled by Wynne's presence and her screech of surprise. It struck, turning her to stone, and then scampered back to its nest.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

***A Shout From Below.*** The adventurers are walking through town and passing a boarded-up building when suddenly a muffled shout can be heard coming through the open front door. Rushing into the building, they find a young man who is white as a sheet and shaking with fear who stammers out "My wife... she.. she's turned to stone!" Tomas Jenson fearfully explains how he heard his wife Wynne shout while she was in the basement and then he found her like that.





## BENEATH THE BAKERY

The bakery is a small, nondescript building near the commercial district in town. The sign above the front door of the building shows a boiling cauldron and reads “Potents Arcana”. The front windows have been boarded up and the front room holds only a dusty countertop and empty shelves. A short flight of creaky wooden steps leads down to the earthen walled basement.

### GENERAL FEATURES

The general features of the secret alchemy lab are as follows unless otherwise noted:

**Ceilings.** Ceilings throughout are 10 feet high and flat.

**Floors and Walls.** The walls are made of stone masonry and the floors are dirt covered cobblestone.

**Doors.** Doors are made of wood on iron hinges inset into stone door frames. Locked doors require a successful DC 15 Dexterity check by someone proficient with thieves’ tools. Stuck doors can be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength check. A door has an AC of 15, has 18 hp, and is immune to psychic and poison damage.

**Lights.** There are no light sources in the underground laboratory. Characters will need to bring their own sources of light or rely on enhanced sight.

**Unusual Smells.** There are several acrid smells that fill the air. Every so often a whiff of sulfur or other bitter scents come drifting down the hallways.

# KEYED LOCATIONS

The following locations are keyed to the map of the secret laboratory.

## 1 - BASEMENT

Once the characters reach the basement, read the following aloud:

A set creaking wooden steps lead down into a dark basement. A small light flickers in a lantern at the far end of the room, casting shadows over stacks of crates and barrels. A closer look shows the lantern is being held by an extremely life-like statue of a young woman with a very surprised look on her face.

The statue is Wynne Jenson, turned into stone when the cockatrice in Area 8 peeked its head out from the secret door. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal a series of scratch marks in the dirt leading to the large barrel backed against the wall.

**Secret Door.** The hidden catch that swings open the lid of the barrel can be found with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The lid is treated the same as a stuck door (see General Features) otherwise.

## 2 - LABORATORY

The door to this room is locked (see General Features) and the key can be found on the skeletal remains of Alard Gysby in Area 8a.

Tables full of alchemical equipment line the walls of this room. Stacks of dried ingredients and empty potion bottles are scattered everywhere with a thick coating of dust covering every inch. A series of mystical sigils are set up in a ritualistic pattern in one corner.

**Encounter: Blood Suckers.** Four **stirges** have been living off whatever insects that happened to crawl in here and are starving for blood.

**Treasure.** A character who searches the alchemy equipment will find that a few of the potions can still be used. There is a *potion of healing*, a vial of *Antitoxin*, and a *potion of poison*.

## VAULT

**Secret Door.** The characters can find the secret door to Alard Gysby's treasure vault with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. By pressing the correct stone, the section of the wall will swing open, revealing a small room holding a battered iron-bound wooden chest.

**Trap.** As outlined on the provided map, there is a pressure plate that triggers a spear trap when more than 5 lbs. of pressure is applied to it. The pressure plate and the niche hiding the spear can be discovered with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Wedging an iron spike or other object under the pressure plate prevents the trap from activating. Triggering the trap results in a short spear shooting out from the wall dealing 3 (1d6) piercing damage to the victim. The trap automatically resets after the weight is removed from the pressure plate.

**Treasure.** The chest holds a pouch containing 44 gp, 76 sp, 98 cp, a small ruby (10 gp), and a silvered dagger with intricate elven etching on the blade (100 gp).

## 3 - SPORE HALLWAY

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal the walls and ceiling of this hallway are covered in a thick layer of black and purple mold and tiny spores fill the air.

**Hazard: Spores.** The mold in this hallway covers a 10 ft. by 10 ft. section as outlined on the provided map. Any creature stepping into an area for the first time must succeed a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become infected. An infected individual gains one level of exhaustion. This condition can only be removed by a long rest or by a potion or spell that cures diseases. The mold is flammable and a 5 ft. section of mold exposed to fire burns away in 1 round.

## 4 - ALCHEMIST'S ABODE

The door to this room is stuck (see General Features). A thick layer of dust covers what used to be Alard Gysby's living quarters. A plate with long rotten food sits on a table in the corner while a moth-eaten blanket lays across a filthy bed in the other. A rack holding a collection of dusty wine bottles sits along one wall next to a stand holding a large open book. Gysby's desk holds alchemical scrolls and books that have begun to fall apart from time and disuse.

**Treasure.** Anyone searching the desk will find Gysby's inventory sitting open next to an inkwell as if he was interrupted while writing in it. It lists out shipments of ingredients and orders of basic alchemical potions, salves, and ointments. A character can find another inventory hidden under a false bottom of a drawer in the desk with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. This inventory lists out shipments of exotic animals including a giant spider egg, a small ochre jelly, poisonous snakes, and a cockatrice. There is also a list of illegal potions and narcotics that Gysby had sold through the black market.

The rack of wine holds a rare vintage called *Black Dragon Crush* worth 100 gp to a collector. Drinking a glass of this wine will give the imbiber resistance to acid damage for 1 hour and there are four glasses in the bottle.

## 5 - SUPPLY NOOK

Old crates and barrels are stacked in the corners of this little nook along with broken boards and a large tub brimming with a filthy sludge.

**Encounter: Bowl full of Jelly.** The tub is actually filled with an **ochre jelly** that will attempt to ambush the party once they are in reach.

## 6 - SPIDER NEST

**Hazard: Webs.** This hallway is completely covered in thick webs and 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 restrained by the webs. A restrained creature can use its action to try and escape, doing so with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

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

**Encounter: Charlotte's Corner.** A **giant spider** is hiding up in the corner of the hallway. Once a character touches one of its webs, it will rush out to defend its lair.

## 7 - NURSERY

Bright light fills this room coming from a mystical sigil that covers the ceiling. The air in this room is heavy with the earthy scent of soil and plant life. Tables holding potted plants and flowers of all types and sizes line the walls and fungus is growing in every crack and crevasse. Sacks filled with fertilizer and potting soil are stacked in the corners.

**Sunlight Sigil** The painted sigil on the ceiling has been enchanted to give off magical sunlight similar to the *sunbeam* spell. This effect will be removed if any part of the sigil is altered or moved.

**Encounter: Violent Violets.** There are two **violet fungi** in this room. They will use their false appearance ability to try to ambush the adventurers.

**Treasure.** There is an *herbalist's kit* on the table. A character who is proficient with this kit and succeeds a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check can harvest enough plants to produce a *potion of healing* and three vials of *Antitoxin*. A failure results in the character creating a *potion of poison*.

## 8 - KENNEL

Rows of heavy metal cages ranging from small to massive are stacked against the walls of this room. Most of the doors are open and they are all empty. Patches of long dried blood are splashed everywhere. A large tub sits in one corner of the room with a few inches of dirty water at the bottom.

**Encounter: Escaped Livestock.** There is a **cockatrice** and a **giant poisonous snake** nesting here inside what was once their prisons. Being cornered in their lair, they fight to the death.

## 8A - STORAGE CLOSET

The skeletal remains of Alard Gysby can be found amongst the remains of empty shelves and crates that once held food for the animals kept here. The cockatrice and snake have been feeding off his corpse and the stores for the past year.

**Treasure.** Searching Gysby's remains will uncover a *ring of animal influence* still attached to its finger as well as a pouch containing a small iron key that unlocks the door to Area 2.

## AFTERMATH

If the adventurers cleared out the menagerie and learn the truth about Alard Gysby, they return to the basement to deal with the petrified Wynne Jenson and her frantic husband Tomas. The stone effects of the cockatrice wear off after 24 hours and she will express deep gratitude for saving her and clearing the hidden laboratory. She promises to have it bricked in completely and offers them a life long discount on any of her baked goods. The local authorities might be interested in the information contained in the secret ledger if the adventurers were able to find it.

If the adventurers fail to clear out the hidden laboratory, eventually the menagerie manages to escape their confines and make it out into the town above. They wreak havoc on the townsfolk, killing and eating many of them before another brave band of heroes manages to put them down. Ω

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