DREAD

DUNGEONONOMICON

SYSTEM
NEUTRAL

Raging Swan Press

Our Quest

We believe games set in a richly detailed, immersive world are better than games that are not. **We publish** richly detailed, easy-to-use material designed to help you, the busy GM, prepare quicker and prepare better. **We help** you have more fun with your friends.

Vocab For Your Game

01	**Saurian**: of or resembling a lizard	**11**	**Noisome**: offensive, harmful or noxious (especially of smells)
02	**Vainglory**: boastfulness or vanity	**12**	**Legerdemain**: sleight of hand
03	**Aleberry**: ale boiled with spices, sugar and sops of bread	**13**	**Paggle**: to bulge or hang loosely
04	**Bombast**: pretentious inflated speech or writing	**14**	**Chthonic**: of or relating to the underworld; infernal
05	**Fonkin**: a little fool	**15**	**Irrefragable**: impossible to refute, break or alter
06	**Hoary**: having grey or white hair; ancient or venerable	**16**	**Palfrey**: a small horse fit for a lady
07	**Mystagogue**: one who instructs in mystical or arcane lore	**17**	**Necrophagous**: that which eats dead or decaying flesh
08	**Waghalter**: a rogue likely to swing from the gallows	**18**	**Mulwine**: a drinking bout
09	**Jabber**: speak rapidly, incoherently and without sense	**19**	**Lupine**: having the characteristics of a wolf
10	**Lucubration**: labourious intellectual effort	**20**	**Cache**: a hidden store of provisions, weapons, treasure etc.

Cult Names For Your Game

01	The Saved	**11**	Those Who Wait
02	Children of It Who Watches	**12**	The Shadow's Faithful
03	Adherents of the Death Rune	**13**	Followers of the Dripping Dagger
04	Cabal of the Burning Eye	**14**	Sons/Daughters of the Cleansing Fire
05	The Nine	**15**	Witnesses of Eron-Gal
06	Adherents of the Merciless One	**16**	Sect of the Ebon Portal
07	Purple Flame Cultists	**17**	The Found
08	Elder Sigil Cultists	**18**	Horde of the Hairless One
09	They Who Follow	**19**	The Brethren
10	League of the Secret Sign	**20**	Followers of the One Truth

Tell Us About Your Game

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DREAD

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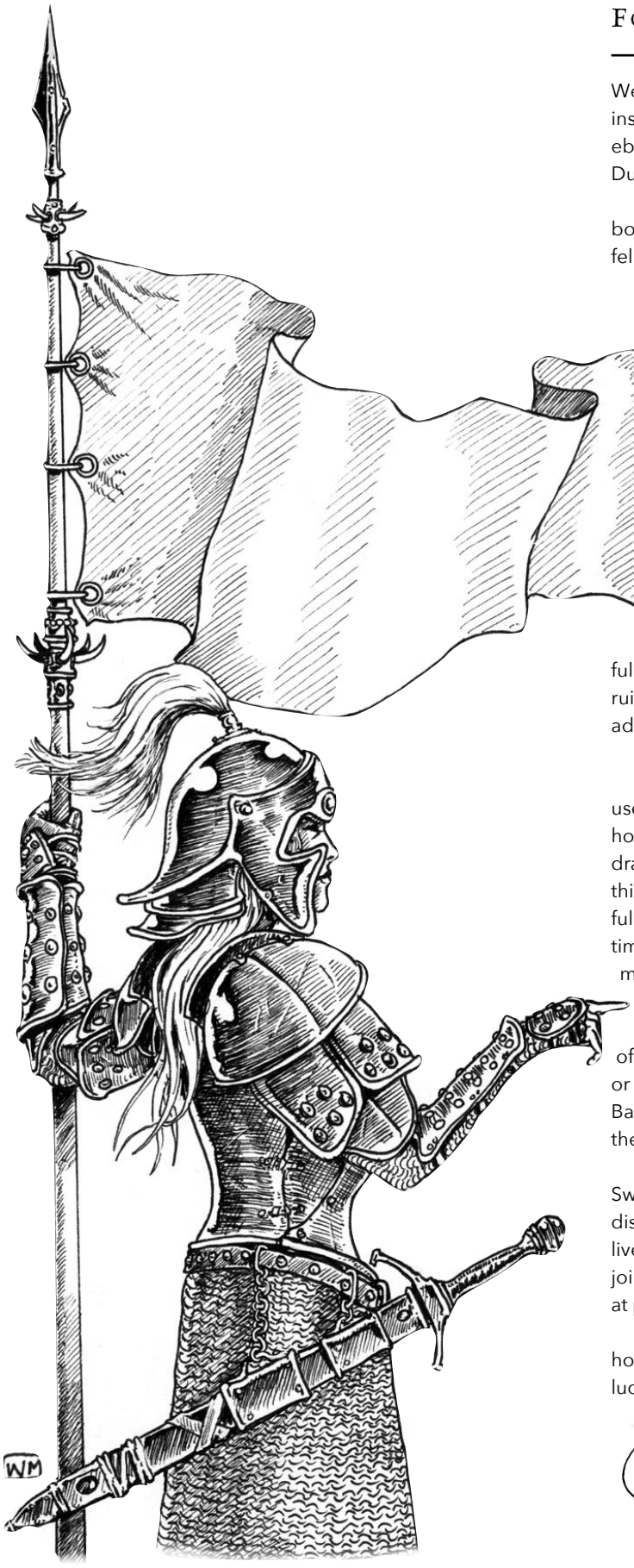
"Here are the bones of the adventure. You must breathe life into the framework after you flesh it out."

Gary Gygax



Foreword

Welcome to the *Dread Dungeononomicon*—the third instalment in the "Dread" series. Within the covers of this ebon tome of fell aspect, you'll find over 30 System Neutral Dungeon Backdrops ready to drop into your campaign.

The germ of the idea for the Dungeon Backdrop line was born in a conversation I had with a chum back in 2019. He's a fellow GM—and an inveterate tinkerer and worldbuilder—and he commented that he never ran a published adventure as written; often, he'd do a wholesale re-write so that it better suited his campaign's setting and overall plot. Sometimes, he'd use little more than the map. Of course, that's fair enough—I've been "guilty" of the same practice on many occasions—but it got me thinking.

Assuming he wasn't an outlier (and I don't think he is, given the popularity of the Dungeon Backdrop line and the fact that you are reading this), it stood to reason other GMs also don't want or need a fully detailed module—they just want a ready-to-go dungeon/ruined tower/whatever to serve as the setting for their own adventures.

Thus, the Dungeon Backdrop line was born.

Since we started publishing Dungeon Backdrops, I've used more than a few in my own campaigns. As a GM, I love how customisable and flexible they are. I don't have to bother drawing the map (my most hated part of any design) or thinking about the place's physicality—all I have to do is stuff it full of monsters and treasure! That cuts down on my prep time and lets me be more creative in the wider campaign. For me, that's a double bonus!

In any event, I ramble; I hope you enjoy the *Dread Dungeononomicon* and that it becomes a permanent part of your GM's toolkit. I also hope you can find a place for one or more of the dungeons herein in your campaign. (Dungeon Backdrops are also jolly handy for one-shots or solo play, by the way!)

Finally, if you've enjoyed this book, please join Raging Swan Press on Patreon for bonus and exclusive material, discounts on print books, free PDFs and more. We also have a lively Discord server exclusively for our patrons—come and join the chat with like-minded GMs! Learn more—and signup—at patreon/ragingswanpress.

As always, thank you for using our books in your games. I hope they help you have more fun with your friends. Good luck with your game,

Torquay, March 2025
creighton@ragingswan.com

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Urban, Ashlar (Languard), Sacred Blood

The greatest warrior of the Knights of the Black Swan, Talis Ritari, lies in glory and peace in the notoriously haunted and all but abandoned Redfern Cemetary. Hero of Languard's Haunted Years—a time when the city's dead rose to haunt the living—his final resting place has long been lost. Now, though, portentous events are in motion, and parties both fair and foul seek to recover relics linked to the heroic knight—for who knows what fell purpose….

Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves **23**

Hills & Mountains

For decades, the Erdukr dwarves have been a dwindling folk. But now, all contact with their ancient hold has ceased. What doom has befallen the dwarves? Did they dig too deep, did their ancient enemies, the Orcs of the Flayed Skull, finally triumph, or did some other doom befall them? Whatever the cause of their fall, the answer lies in the Blasted Donjon!

Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest **33**

Forests & Woodlands, Ashlar, Lonely Coast, Picaroon Peninsula

In his remote woodland lair, the cannibal druid and his pets grew ever-hungry and creep forth to prey upon the hapless travellers and peasants using an isolated woodland track. The increasing number of disappearances on the road have been noticed, however, and the story of a hunter who saw an old, hideously ugly man chewing on what looked like a human arm has begun to circulate through the nearby settlements—something must be done!

Craghollow Mine **43**

Forests & Woodlands, Lonely Coast, Secret Name

The old lead mine of Craghollow lies somewhere deep in the Tangled Woods. Long has humanity toiled here to bring its iridescent black ore to the surface, and long has it suffered for the privilege. The last owners, the Red Rubric society, were cultists of Braal who fell foul of marauding goblins. Now, several parties seek Craghollow Mine and the foul secrets the cultists may have hidden in its cursed depths.

The Crumbled Tower **53**

Forests & Woodland, Ashlar

Hidden deep in the forest stands the Crumbled Tower. Pressed close by hoary, gnarled trees and wreathed in moss and lichens, the tower is a forlorn remnant of an earlier time. Once, a wizard lived here, but now the tower is nothing more than a brooding ruin standing amid the forest's gloom. Sometimes, bandits lair within or adventurers wandering the surrounds use the ruin as a base. However, unknown to all, a hidden crypt yet lurks under the tower undisturbed these long ages past.

Cursed Refuge of the Valley of Tears **63**

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar

Once the last friendly place in the so-called Valley of Tears the Hall of Nuraduum is now known by a name of far more sinister demeanour—the Cursed Refuge. Some travellers who pass through its stone door do not emerge again, while others tell terrifying stories of the nameless horrors they encounter in the enduring dark of the old dwarven fastness. Persistent rumours tell of old treasures hidden in the place, and a few old dwarves dream of reclaiming the refuge—so that at least a fragment of long-fallen Vongyth may again be held by dwarves.

Cursed Tower of the Astromancer **73**

Urban, Ashlar (Dunstone)

Strange things have started to happen at the Tower of the Astromancer. Its mistress, the half-elven wizard Tuulitar Vihas, has not been seen for weeks, and the locals whisper that the tower is cursed. Odd lights and sounds emanate from the place, and calls that something must be done grow louder and more insistent.

The Death King's Forlorn Isle **83**

Coastal, Ashlar (Bitter Sea)

Every year, when the Blood Moon casts its baleful glow upon the world, the Death King's Forlorn Isle rises from the Bitter Sea's stormy waters like an elder monstrosity shaking off its slumber. Many brave souls have sought the isle, drawn like moths to a flame by legends of lost ancient treasure. At dawn, the bleak island sinks into the deep, drowning all who linger amid the fetid, flooded ruins of an ancient king.

Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock **97**

Swamps & Marshes, Ashlar (Salt Mire)

Lost to time and battered by the foulness of its surrounds, the decrepit and mouldering Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock slowly sinks into the Salt Mire. Wreathed in lurid tales of legendry and foul doings, the lonely citadel is now little more than a crumbling shell, yet peasants tell of its mistress's great power and great wealth. Atavistic lizardfolk haunt the surrounding fens and bogs and keep casual explorers away, but the legend of the Fated Warlock refuses to die. What yet lurks in her ruined castle? Are unfound treasures lurking therein waiting for those brave and clever enough to find them? And what befell the Fated Warlock herself?

Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage **107**

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

Far below the sunlit surface lie places and things undreamt of by decent commonfolk. Some such things have never seen the light of day, while others have escaped into the Underlands to escape the hated sun. Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands, and its crumbling remnants yet linger in the endless dark below the town. A wealthy merchant, carrying out repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, has made a curious discovery—a rubble-choked set of stairs leading to who knows what subterranean depth—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies below…

Delthur's Folly **117**

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Mottled Spire)

Hidden in the wild uplands beyond the Selka River, the sinkhole-mine of Delthur's Folly is a byword among locals for a fool's errand doomed to fail. The only survivor of the fated expedition—mad and raving of "the water's sibilant whispers"—died shortly after staggering into Dunstone a year or more after Delthur and his miners disappeared into the wilderness. And yet, every year, adventurers search for the mine—gold and silver are said to lie within. Some return empty-handed, and some do not return at all—local legend has it that something terrible dwells in the mine.

Deszraul's Hold **129**

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Ochels)

Hidden deep in the Ochels Hills, Deszraul's Hold has a sinister reputation. The medusa Dezraul claims the caves and evidence of her fell powers—a bewildering array of uncannily lifelike stone statues—stand about her gloomy subterranean domain. All that remains of adventurers daring to face the cave's snake-headed mistress, the statues are a salutary warning on the dangers of facing a medusa in her lair. But does Deszraul still lair within? Has a band of merciless bandits fallen under her sway? Or does something else dwell in the deep dark of her former home?

Drowned Fane of the Elder God **139**

Swamps & Marshes, Ashlar (Salt Mire)

The aeons-old Drowned Fane of the Elder God has been sacred to many dark-hearted races and peoples over its long existence. Long has is squatted on the dismal fringes of the Salt Mire, and long have dark rumours of the most terrible sort hung over the place. The elves called the place the Dead God's Water-Temple, and within its rune-scarred halls dwells an ancient primaeval horror—a timeless guardian that now stirs and begins to prepare for its master's return…

Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage **149**

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

The past rarely stays buried forever, and forgotten and forbidden things have a way of finding their way back into the light. Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands, and its crumbling remnants yet linger in the endless dark below the town. A wealthy merchant, carrying out repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, has made a curious discovery—a rubble-choked set of stairs leading to who knows what subterranean depth—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies below…

Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser **159**

Coastal

Hidden for long years and wreathed in legendry, the Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser ever looms large in treasure-seeker's dreams. Variously described as a pirate or adventurer in myths and folklore, Gilak Urser is universally thought to have been fabulously wealthy. His hidden lair—and his treasure hoard—has never been found…until now…

Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage **169**

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

Everyone—even the powerful—has enemies, and the Nameless Mage was no exception. In a hedge against future calamity, the Nameless Mage created the Hidden Sanctum—a bolthole of last resort—buried deep below present-day Dulwich. Never used, at least for its intended purpose, the Hidden Sanctum has mouldered and decayed, forgotten and abandoned, through long centuries of darkness and neglect. Now, a wealthy merchant, carrying out repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, has made a curious discovery—a rubble-choked set of stairs and a seemingly endless array of dungeons and caverns—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies within…

House of Yspher **179**

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Carmine Hills)

The lonely house on the hill is no place to spend the night. Many a weary traveller on the road to Dunstone has sought shelter there, only to find dark terrors lurking inside the crumbling house. Those who find death beyond the shadowed threshold are considered fortunate, for the few who escape the house's harrowing halls are cursed to endure a life of madness; their bodies and souls scarred beyond mortal comprehension. Few know the truth. The dreaded manor once belonged to Yspher, a reclusive wizard with an evil reputation who mysteriously vanished many years ago. Whispers of sinister experiments involving black magic and forbidden lore surrounded Yspher's disappearance, which would prove only the first of many tragedies linked to the house…

Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage **191**

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands, but much of the area's ancient history has been forgotten—lost to time's remorseless advance and the fading memories of even the longest-lived folk. However, buried or lost fragments of the past yet remain and wait patiently to be found again. A wealthy merchant, carrying out long-needed repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, makes a curious discovery—an ancient stone trapdoor hidden in a sealed-up room—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies below.

Lost Eyrie of the Demon King **201**

Hills & Mountains

Harpies once dwelt in the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King. Here they worshipped their demonic lord and engaged in certain terrible rituals before they were driven away. Now, an otherworldly evil festers in the bowels of their abandoned lair. And now that evil has attracted a powerful servant—a servant wreaking death and destruction on the surrounding countryside and villages. The local villagers need adventurers to eradicate this terrible threat, but just getting to its lair is dangerous! And once they have reached their goal will the heroes realise that something even worse lurks in the eternal dark of the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King?

Martryn Manor 211

Urban, Ashlar (Languard), Sacred Blood

Martryn Manor lies in Languard's Shambles district. Home to the eccentric recluse Rahvu Rantanen, on the outside the rambling manor appears dilapidated and rundown. Inside, however, it is an opulent place—as befits one of Languard's most dangerous and successful criminals. Now, the manor stands at the nexus of portentous events that might shake Ashlar to its core or at the least finally spell Rahvu's doom.

Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger 221

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Ochels)

Mired in madness and delusion, the Insane Armiger watches over his tiny domain and demands tribute from all who pass through. The broken corpses of those failing to offer the proper respect and tax warning all those who would use his road: pay or die.

Onyx Prison of the Demon King 231

Forests & Woodlands, Ashlar (Forest of Gray Spires)

Legends tell of Blackshard Hold—a dwarven redoubt nested far to the south, in the all but impenetrable Forest of Gray Spires. The dwarves of clan Kildare built the hold around a vast monolith of glimmering black onyx. For years, they dwelled there, mining the precious stone and accruing wealth from trading with Dulwich, Wellswood, and even the city of Languard, far to the north. Then, Kildare and his kin suddenly abandoned Blackshard Hold, claiming some eldritch horror lay imprisoned therein. Tales of captive demons imprisoned in the hold are thought of as nothing but tales told to dissuade the faint of heart from exploring the place. Many believe there's still precious onyx to be found in the dwarves' old mine!

Pit of Unquiet Souls 241

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Mottled Spire), Vile Star

Saare's Pit has another, more lurid, name—and for good reason. The Pit of Unquiet Souls squats at the centre of a nest of macabre tales of madness, horror and death. It is said, those who spend too much time in the abandoned mine often go mad or disappear entirely, and old miners' tales tell of the pit's very rocks whispering horrible secrets to those toiling in its bowels. Still, there are those who think treasure yet lurks in the mine and will brave its terrors to retrieve them.

Ruin of Bleak Hill 253

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Mottled Spire), Vile Star

The Mottled Spire's wild, rugged uplands lie beyond the Selka River. Crumbling ruins and abandoned mines—the leavings of civilisation's ebbing tide—dot the hills. One such place is the isolated wind-blasted ruin of Bleak Hill Manor. Here once dwelled the wizard-sage Ilmatar Tiera before her untimely death at unknown hands. The centuried ruin—decayed and crumbled—has alternately lain abandoned or served as the lair of marauders, bandits and worse. Now, however, events conspire to focus certain interested parties upon the ruin, and all such folk are in need of adventurers brave enough to dare the terrors of the Mottled Spire.

Scarlock Hill 265

Forests & Woodlands, Lonely Coast (Tangled Wood), Secret Name

Half-remembered legends speaking of powerful lightning storms and of ancient battles cluster thickly around Scarlock Hill and the Standing Stones set at its zenith. Long has the place loomed in the local's consciousness and long have they avoided the place. Now, though, the interest of a local noble and the long-dead leavings of an evil cult conspire to bring Scarlock Hill back to prominence on the Lonely Coast.

Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords 275

Coastal, Ashlar

Foul rumours of smuggling and piracy have ever-hung over the dismal village of Coldwater and its folk. But recently, lone travellers have been going missing in the village's environs, and some whisper that the Slaver Lords' scarlet-sailed ships have been seen in the region. Who but the characters can uncover the truth of the matter, discover the slavers' secret hold and rescue their doomed, helpless victims?

The Shadow Fane 285

Urban, Ashlar (Languard)

Evil is everywhere and humanity must be ever vigilant against its slow encroachment into all that is great and good. Small cults—dedicated to ancient, blasphemous powers—lurk throughout the world ready to carry out their dark patron's bidding. One such small cult dedicated to Braal, god of hate, malice and revenge, dwells in the Shadow Fane below Languard's High City. The cultists kidnap and murder in their dark god's name, but recently they made a mistake that threatens their very existence. Instead of kidnaping a beggar the cultists accidentally kidnapped the daughter of a wealthy merchant, and he is offering a handsome reward for his daughter's safe return.

The Shard Isles 295

Coastal, Lonely Coast, Secret Name

Skygrave Tower, the highest point on a barren archipelago—the Shard Isles—claimed by bandits, wreckers and other ne'er-do-wells, looms over the grey, wind-lashed waves of Drowned Bay. Beneath its waters once lay the town of Brochanmore, but a catastrophic flood destroyed the town centuries ago. A tidal wave struck the isles a century ago drowning the remnants of an evil cult intent on their unspeakable scheme, and now, through fate or happenstance, the Shards Isles once again find themselves at the centre of portentous events.

Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles 305

Hills & Mountains

For centuries, the adherents of a strange cult have harvested the skulls of learned folk and interred them in the so-called Halls of the Undying Oracles. Thus, their knowledge is safeguarded for future generations. Now an earthquake has severely damaged the Halls. Was it a natural event, divine punishment for the cult's blasphemous works, or is something more sinister going on?

The Splintered Crypt **315**

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Carmine Hills)

Famed for his unswerving devotion to his celestial lord and his magical sword, Demon Bane, Kal Voren was a paladin-hero of old. For five decades he stood between Ashlar's commonfolk and the darkness ever-pressing in on the small, isolated domain. Death is an implacable foe, however, and eventually old age caught up with the redoubtable paladin. Laid to rest not in the scared sepulchre below Tor Abbey but among the hills of his youth Kal Voren's legend—and stories of his legendary blade—live on long after his death.

Starfall Chantry **323**

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Carmine Hills), Vile Star

Lurking twixt the crag-jagged hills south of Dunstone sit the ruined remains of an old dwarven fortress-temple. Rusted helms and broken blades jut from the surrounding soil like cast-off husks of iron grain, betraying the area's violent history. Over the centuries, thousands have fought and died to possess this land, staining the earth with the blood of the slain. Three centuries ago, it took the very sky to fall to put an end to this ceaseless bloodshed. Today, however, the scars of that cataclysm may be enough to rekindle the old flames of war.

Undercity Chapel **333**

Urban, Ashlar (Languard), Sacred Blood

The Knights of the Black Swan were founded centuries ago to end a plague of the undead assailed Languard, capital city of Ashlar. In this they were successful, discovering and sealing the source of the infestation—a shadow gate buried deep below the city. When the Knights of the Black Swan were disbanded, the location of the gate and the chapel they built around it was forgotten. For nearly 200 years, the Undercity Chapel has remained hidden and untouched. Until now...

Wreck of the Sea Sprite **343**

Coastal, Ashlar (Hard Bay)

Thought lost after a year at sea the merchant ship Sea Sprite lies wrecked not five miles from home. Driven onto jagged rocks, the ship will not survive the next storm. Her mistress, the wealthy merchant Vilutar Pakkanen, needs stout heroes to board the wreck and recover the ship's charts and logbook. The only problem, beyond the ship's condition and the surrounding unpredictable waters, is the wreck lies but a scant bowshot from Gloamhold's benighted, doom-drenched halls.

The Secret Name Storyline **353**

Lonely Coast

To know a being's true name is to hold power over it. The arcane fetters binding a summoned creature to a conjurer's command are tied to its name. Celestials, fiends and even gods must yield to the sovereignty of their one, true name. Hence, these mighty beings often go by many epithets, ever jealously guarding the word which could shackle them to another's will. But what if the secret name of a god were to become known? Such power was never meant for mortal men to wield…

The Sacred Blood Storyline **359**

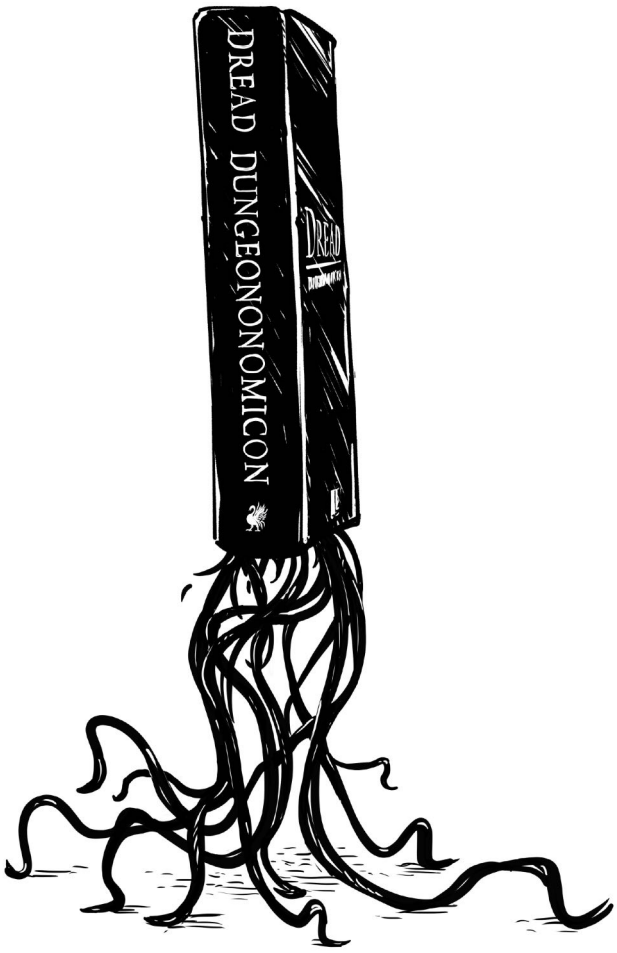
Ashlar

Stone and secrets form the foundations of storied Languard, jewel of Ashlar. In spite of its strong walls and numerous allies, the ancient city is poised to fall. Deep within the bowels of Languard's labyrinthine undercity, a half-forgotten chapel is the only thing keeping the coming darkness at bay. When a failed attempt at ransacking the old chapel weakens its power, a chain of fateful events is set into motion, threatening to drown Languard in a tide of restless dead. Only one person can avert this disaster...but who are they?

The Vile Star Storyline **369**

Ashlar

Death comes from the sky in many forms—the rarest and most valuable of these are Vile Stars—fragments of meteorites, comets and other celestial objects plunging to the ground in fiery ruin. But with death comes opportunity—for many Vile Stars are comprised of mithral, adamantine and other fabulously rare starmetals such as tordel. For some reason, the Mottled Spire—a great tangle of wooded hills and valleys north of Ashlar—has always attracted more than its fair share of Vile Stars and thus miners, adventurers, wizards, artificers and more come to Dunstone—the Town on the Borderlands—in search of their great bounty.



Using Dungeon Backdrops

You are a GM, but you are busy. You want to write your own modules, but you just don't have the time. And you don't want to use commercial modules. You want to make your campaign your own. That's where the Dungeon Backdrop line comes in! Each Dungeon Backdrop presents a fully fleshed-out and lovingly detailed self-contained adventure site. Stock the dungeon with your own monsters (and—perhaps—their treasure), decide their back story and you are good to go.

Make It Your Own: Tweak and modify each Dungeon Backdrop to make it your own. Use the GM's Notes columns to make the Dungeon Backdrop your owns. Include notes on skill checks and ability rolls to be made, NPCs to be encountered, traps to be triggered (or found), monsters to be fought, and treasures to be found.

Location Descriptions: The various location descriptions provided in each Dungeon Backdrop only describe the basic appearance of the dungeon's rooms, chambers and corridors. They do not include descriptions of any monsters lurking therein. Remember, when describing the dungeon to your players, the snarling orcs (or whatever) are probably more noticeable than the room's features. Also, remember that creatures in the dungeon will modify their home to better suit their needs.

Treasure: The text of each Dungeon Backdrop only presents the details of minor treasures the characters could discover in the course of their adventure. Most are of little value but serve to underline the flavour of the dungeon. Remember to add level-appropriate treasure when designing your dungeon.

Compatibility: Every Dungeon Backdrop is carefully designed to be easily inserted into almost any fantasy campaign and is compatible with virtually any fantasy roleplaying game.

Dungeon Backdrops by Name

- Aninas Family Crypt
- Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves
- Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest
- Craghollow Mine
- Crumbled Tower, the
- Cursed Refuge of the Valley of Tears
- Cursed Tower of the Astromancer
- Death-King's Forlorn Isle, the
- Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock
- Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage
- Delthur's Folly
- Deszraul's Hold
- Drowned Fane of the Elder Gods
- Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage
- Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser
- Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage
- House of Yspher
- Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage
- Lost Eyrie of the Demon King
- Martryn Manor
- Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger
- Onyx Prison of the Demon King
- Pit of Unquiet Souls
- Ruin of Bleak Hill
- Scarlock Hill
- Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords
- Shadow Fane, the
- Shard Isles, the
- Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles
- Splintered Crypt, the
- Starfall Chantry
- Undercity Chapel
- Wreck of the Sea Sprite

Dungeon Backdrops by Setting

Setting Agnostic

- Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves
- Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser
- Lost Eyrie of the Demon King
- Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles

The Duchy of Ashlar

- Aninas Family Crypt (Languard)
- Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest
- Crumbled Tower, the
- Cursed Refuge of the Valley of Tears
- Cursed Tower of the Astromancer (Dunstone)
- The Death King's Forlorn Isle (the Bitter Sea)
- Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock (the Salt Mire)
- Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- Delthur's Folly (the Mottled Spire)
- Deszraul's Hold (the Ochel hill range)
- Drowned Fane of the Elder God (Salt Mire)
- Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- House of Yspher (Carmine Hills)
- Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- Martryn Manor (Languard)
- Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger (The Ochels)
- Onyx Prison of the Demon King (Forest of Gray Spires)
- Pit of Unquiet Souls (The Mottled Spire)
- Ruin of Bleak Hill (The Mottled Spire)
- Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords (Coldwater)
- Shadow Fane, the (Languard)
- Splintered Crypt, the (Carmine Hills)
- Starfall Chantry (Carmine Hills)
- Undercity Chapel (Languard)
- Wreck of the Sea Sprite (Hard Bay)

The Lonely Coast

- Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest
- Craghollow Mine
- Scarlock Hlll
- Shard Isles, the

The Picaroon Peninsula

- Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest

Dungeon Backdrops by Terrain

Coastal

- The Death King's Forlorn Isle
- Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser
- Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords
- Shard Isles, the
- Wreck of the Sea Sprite

Hills & Mountains

- Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves
- Cursed Refuge of the Valley of Tears
- Delthur's Folly
- Deszraul's Hold
- House of Yspher
- Lost Eyrie of the Demon King
- Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger
- Pit of Unquiet Souls
- Ruin of Bleak Hill
- Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles
- Splintered Crypt, the
- Starfall Chantry

Forests &Woodlands

- Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest
- Craghollow Mine
- Crumbled Tower, the
- Onyx Prison of the Demon King
- Scarlock Hlll

Swamps & Marshes

- Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock
- Drowned Fane of the Elder God

Urban

- Aninas Family Crypt (Languard)
- Cursed Tower of the Astromancer (Dunstone)
- Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage (Dulwich)
- Martryn Manor (Languard)
- Shadow Fane, the
- Undercity Chapel (Languard)

Dungeon Backdrop by Storyline

A Storyline is an interconnected series of Dungeon Backdrops that form a mini-campaign. Some of the Dungeon Backdrops in the *Dread Dungeononomicon* are part of a storyline.

Sacred Blood

- Aninas Family Crypt
- Martryn Manor
- Undercity Chapel

The Nameless Mage

- Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage
- Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage
- Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage
- Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage

The Secret Name

- Craghollow Mine
- Scarlock Hlll
- Shard Isles, the

The Vile Star

- Cursed Tower of the Astromancer (tangental link)
- Pit of Unquiet Souls
- Ruin of Bleak Hill
- Starfall Chantry

Aninas Family Crypt

Urban, Ashlar (Languard), Sacred Blood

The greatest warrior of the Knights of the Black Swan, Talis Ritari, lies in glory and peace in the notoriously haunted and all but abandoned Redfern Cemetary. Hero of Languard's Haunted Years—a time when the city's dead rose to haunt the living—his final resting place has long been lost. Now, though, portentous events are in motion, and parties both fair and foul seek to recover relics linked to the heroic knight—for who knows what fell purpose….

Dungeon Background

Nearly two centuries ago Languard's dead rose from their dismal graves to haunt the living. The first recorded incident describes the ghost of Arndul Nenonen appearing in the castle gardens during the Night of the Masks. By all accounts, the spirit of Ashlar's first duke seemed confused and unaware of his own demise, centuries ago. Thousands of similar sightings followed. Spectral soldiers felled in battle suddenly came home. Phantom parents returned to visit their children. In the catacombs beneath the Father's Hall, the bodies of the dead knitted themselves together and rose up to wander the undercroft. These risen dead were not all malicious, however, and Conn's clerics soon learned something was drawing the spirits of the dead back from the underworld.

To resolve the situation, the High Priestess of Conn (god of community, family, and rulership) established a new knightly order to safeguard Languard's blessed dead and finding the source of the undead plague. Conn's daughter, Tuonetar, was chosen as its patroness. As the Father's angelic servitor, the sullen-eyed Maiden of Death guides the souls of the departed into the underworld. The black swan—Tuonetar's sacred animal—became the order's namesake.

Since the effects of the undead plague seemed contained to Languard, the Knights of the Black Swan began emptying the city's catacombs and graveyards, burying the remains in newly consecrated ground beyond the city walls. At the same time, small groups of knights explored the vast network of tunnels underneath the city in an attempt to locate the plague's source. Almost two years later, an expedition led by Talis Ritari discovered a Stygian hollow beneath the city's sewers, overflowing with lost spirits. The knights sealed this underworld passage and built a shrine to their patroness over it, ending what became known as the Haunted Years.

Their mission complete, the Knights of the Black Swan were honourably disbanded. The cemeteries built by the order gradually fell into disrepair, and its overgrown tombs and forlorn vaults gained dark reputations. None more so than those of once-majestic Redfern Cemetery, where Talis Ritari himself was interred. His knightly tomb was later expanded to include several wealthy families' crypts. The most recent of these belonged to the Aninas family, and it soon gained notoriety as Ashlar's most haunted crypt. Each time the crypt was opened to inter another family member, its heavy, leaden coffins were found thrown about the vault. One coffin seemed immune to the chaos: the simple pine casket of 12-year-old Maila Aninas always remained untouched. Because Languard's clerics were unable to solve the mystery of the moving coffins, the duke ordered the flagstones strewn with fine, white sand to hold the footprints of flesh-and-blood intruders. Twenty years ago, the crypt was opened for the last time to accept the body of Nikander Aninas, last of his name. Again, the heavy coffins were found in disarray. The sand betrayed no prints. Clerics of Conn sealed and consecrated the troubled crypt for the final time, never to return.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on Redfern Cemetery by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the Aninas Family Crypt:

A Helping Hand: The characters find a mysterious note slipped underneath the door to their room: "*Meet me at The Scythe three days from now. Bring the hand of Talis Ritari, and you will be richly rewarded.*" Certainly, the quality of both parchment and penmanship suggests an affluent author. Asking around, the characters quickly learn Talis Ritari is a long-dead Knight of the Black Swan who lies entombed in Redfern Cemetery, inside the Aninas Family Crypt.

They Belong in a Museum: Leander Talvi (N male human) is a sage in need of the characters' services. He explains he's establishing a small museum of Languard's history, but one key exhibit is still missing: the golden death mask of Talis Ritari, Knight of the Black Swan. Brandishing a document signed by the High Priestess of Conn, Leander clarifies he's got permission to display the mask. Now all he needs are some brave adventurers to retrieve Talis' death mask from his sarcophagus in Redfern Cemetery. In return, Leander offers them 80 gp and lifetime access to the museum.

Mixed Blessings: Nursing a tankard of tepid ale, glum-faced Tanno Hotari (NG male human cleric [Conn]) sits alone loudly bemoaning his fate. The young acolyte broke his vows and was tasked with re-consecrating the Aninas Family Crypt as penance. The notoriously haunted vault lies hidden in the old, overgrown cemetery to the east. Tanno tearfully begs them to help him.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use Diplomacy to gather information about the Aninas Family Crypt. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp. Use the list below to determine which rumour(s) the character learns.

1. Redfern Cemetery was built during the Haunted Years, almost 200 years ago, when many of Languard's dead were re-buried outside the city walls to prevent them from rising.
2. The moving coffins crypt? Every time they interred someone new, the older coffins were found violently thrown about!
3. The Aninas crypt is part of a larger complex. A famous knight is buried there; look for a black swan statue!
4. You're not the first to ask about the cursed crypt. Some unsavoury types were asking about it just a few days ago.
5. The extinct Knights of the Black Swan built Redfern Cemetery. Their icons and statues mark important graves
6. Great swarms of blood-drinking bats infest the old cemetery. It wouldn't surprise me if a vampire lairs there...

The Surrounding Locality

The rusted gates of Redfern Cemetery lie three miles east of Languard, lurking in the shade of a low hill. They are easily reached by following the old corpse road—the so-called Dead Road—leading from the city; the same path trodden by the Knights of the Black Swan to move the city's dead to the new cemetery. Redfern's hastily-built tombs and mausolea are overgrown with scarlet bracken; a red-leafed fern which lent the burial ground its name. The meandering cemetery paths form the stylised image of a swan, Tuonetar's sacred animal. They were designed to be deliberately confusing to spirits, who are commonly thought to travel in straight lines.

1. **Lych-Gate**: At the cemetery gates, six oaken posts support a moss-eaten roof sheltering a stone catafalque. A broken chain dangles from a hook near the gate, and a dented brass bell lies on the flagstones beneath it.
2. **Pools of Thought and Memory**: A thick slurry of duckweed covers these reeking pools. Insects and toads breed in their stagnant waters, and the murky sludge at the bottom acts like quicksand. After dark, 1d3 will-o'-wisps hover over each pool.
3. **Sundered Vault**: A shallow crater filled with old bones and debris sits between the blackened, crumbling walls of a destroyed mausoleum. A character searching the vault spots a tunnel entrance hidden beneath a coffin lid. This location leads to location 7 in the crypt.
4. **Swan Mausoleum**: The main entrance to Ashlar's most haunted vault is crowned with the statue of a rampant swan, artfully hewn from black basalt. A concrete seal bearing the mark of Conn's High Priestess secures the heavy stone door, which must be forced open. This location leads to location 1 in the crypt.

Cemetery Dressing

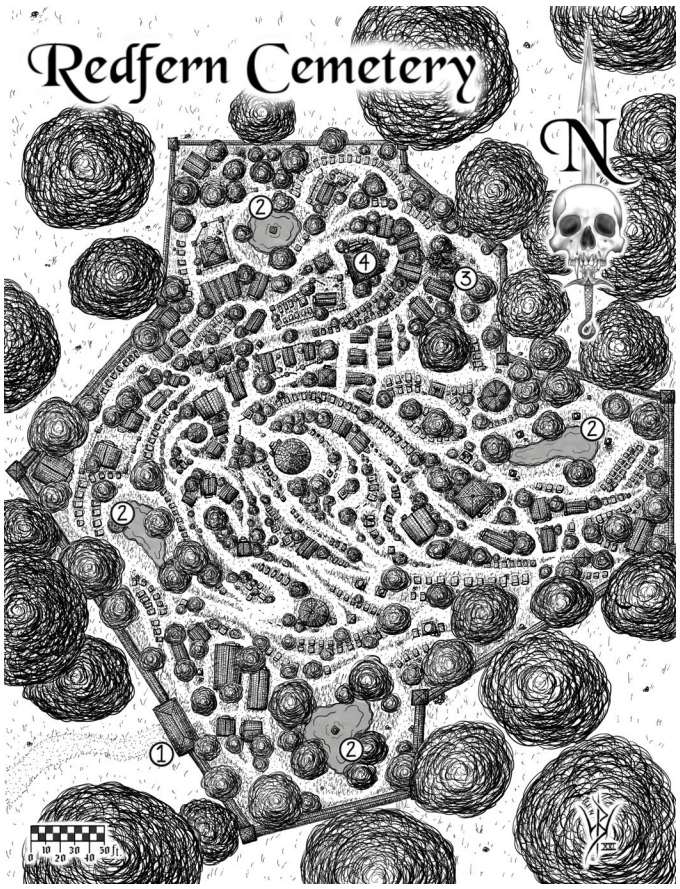
Use this list, to add life and detail to the crypt's surrounds:

1. Growling and baying, 2d6 mangy dogs fight over a broken yellowed femur. The pack scatters when the characters approach, leaving their grisly prize behind.
2. As the characters pass by, a ghastly scream resounds from an open vault where large amber eyes smoulder in the dark. They belong to a startled grey screech owl nesting within.
3. A patch of ivy conceals an open grave. Unless spotted, a random character stumbles into the pit, where 1d3 rotting corpses float in six feet of fouled rainwater.
4. Broken tombstones surround the charred trunk of a massive weeping willow felled by lightning.
5. The marble effigy of a swan-winged maiden, weeping with grief, wards a nearby tomb. When the characters briefly look away, it appears as if the statue has crept slightly closer...
6. A rusty spade sticks from a mound of earth, surrounded by 2d4 open graves. The coffins have been violently split open, and the skeletons inside are missing several teeth.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search the surrounds. Modify the value of any found items to suit your campaign.

1. An uncorked bottle of old brandy sits on a briar-bound tombstone. Two crystal glasses lie amidst thorny vines.
2. A silvered crossbow bolt sits deeply embedded in an oaken mausoleum door. Scraps of ruby-red velvet are snagged on its barbed head.
3. A score of black silken mourner's armbands flutter from the gnarled branches of a dead alder tree.
4. A dirt-encrusted porcelain doll atop a tiny wooden tricycle creakingly rolls along the path towards the characters despite a lack of wind.
5. A bouquet of freshly picked flowers lies on the threshold to a crumbling mausoleum. A character wise in nature's ways recognises the flowers as aconite, hemlock, foxglove and nightshade; all are deadly poisonous herbs.
6. A half-decayed human corpse clad in rotting leathers and clutching rusty pliers lies slumped over a nearby tombstone. A purse containing 5d6 golden teeth (worth 1 sp each) is attached to its belt.



Notable Locations at a Glance

The crypt has several notable locations:

1. **Serpent's Stairway**: This ceremonial stairway leads down to the tombs.
2. **Liminum**: This chamber symbolises the realm of the dead's threshold.
3. **Aninas Tomb Chamber**: This tomb chamber is famed for its mysterious moving coffins.
4. **Hedelmatar Passage**: Ceremonial frescoes cover this corridor's walls.
5. **Avopari Tomb Chamber**: The graves of a married couple rest beneath a starry sky.
6. **Southeast Gallery**: Hidden tombs line this long corridor.
7. **Secret Tunnel**: This tunnel is a secondary access route into the crypt.
8. **Valtias Tomb Chamber**: The mould-infested sarcophagus here is best left alone.
9. **Northwest Gallery**: Four tombs are hidden behind a thin layer of plaster, here.
10. **Vuori's Tomb**: The perfectly preserved corpse in this chamber is an illusion.
11. **Vine-choked Passage**: An intricate web of roots and vines blocks this stairway.
12. **Ritari Tomb Chamber**: Here lies Talis Ritari, Knight of the Black Swan.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Unnatural Aura: Animals do not willingly enter the crypt, unless their owner can convince them.

Bad Air: An invisible, 1d4-foot-deep layer of carbon dioxide fills parts of the crypt, marked on the map with a grey haze. The gas snuffs out all non-magical fires and suffocates living creatures.

Illumination: Iron sconces holding pairs of unlit torches are set into the walls at the entrance to locations 1, 3, 5, 8, 10 and 12.

Ceilings: The barrel-vaulted ceilings create strange and confusing echoes. All sounds carry twice as far, but it is difficult to make out individual sounds.

Walls: Faded frescoes depicting local myths dealing with the afterlife deck the smooth, plastered walls.

Floors: A thin layer of fine white sand covers the fitted flagstone floors. It counts as soft ground for the purpose of tracking a creature's footprints.

Internal Doors: Doors inside the crypt are sturdy, ornate gates wrought of black iron. Each bears a copper plaque, engraved with the name of the tomb's occupant. The gates have no locks and can be opened or closed with a simple iron latch. Unless oil is applied to their hinges, the gates make a ghastly metallic screeching sound when opened or closed.

Dungeon Dressing

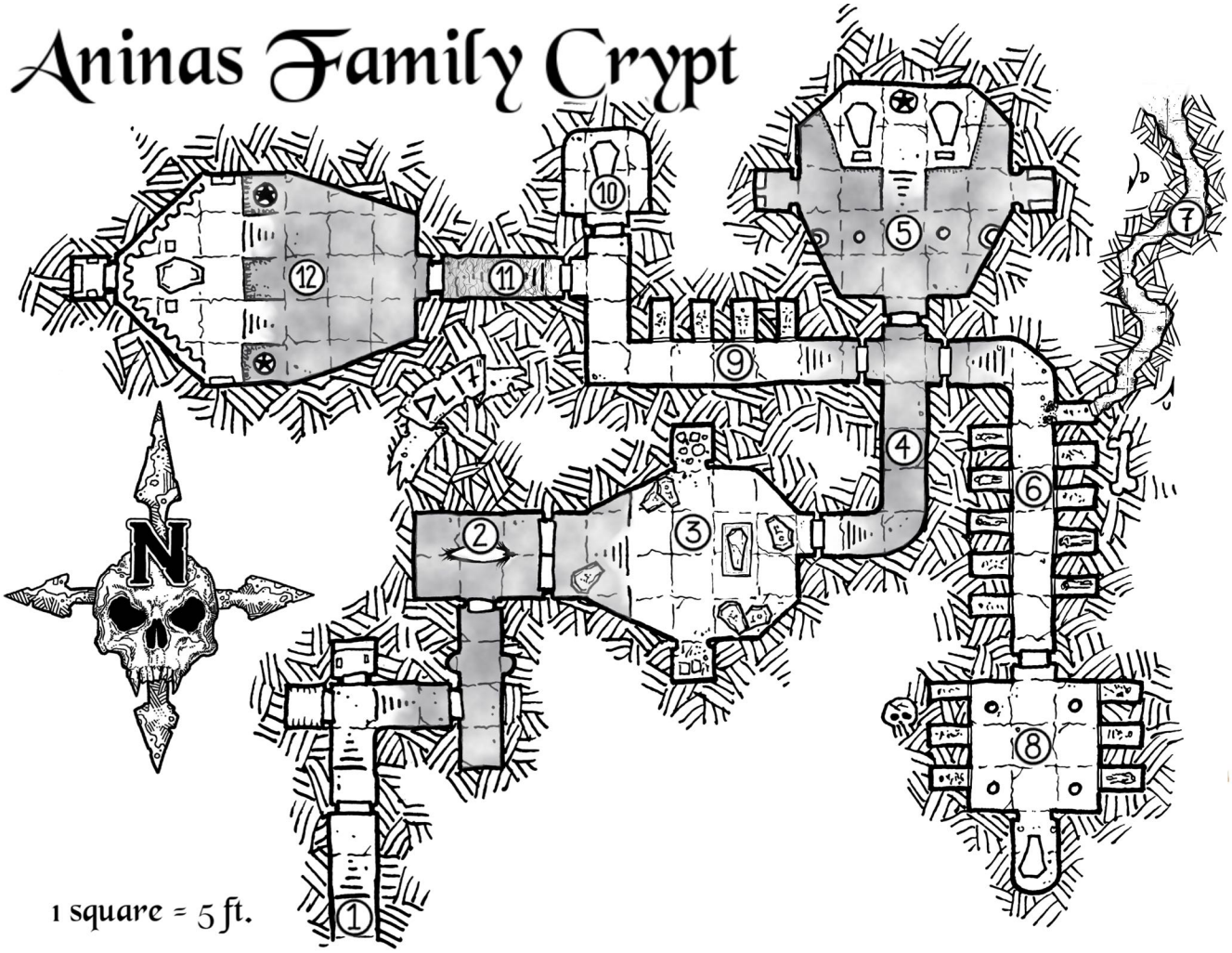
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Bare footprints form a near-perfect circle in the fine white sand. No tracks are visible outside the ring.
2. Ghostly cobwebs hang from the ceiling, obscuring vision like a pall of fog. A mere spark burns them away.
3. The shrivelled husks of 2d4 tiny lizards cling to the walls.
4. A nameless warrior's fresco has been purposely defaced with deep gouges carved across her eyes.
5. A sudden gust of wind rushes over the characters and has a 50% chance of extinguishing any open flames.
6. The white "sand" in this area cracks beneath the characters' boots (making moving quietly difficult). Investigation reveals the sand is crematory ash, strewn with tiny fragments of bone.
7. Vibrations caused by the character's movements dislodge a slab of stucco, revealing the masonry beneath.
8. A leafless white tree grows from an open urn filled with ashes. The brittle branches crumble at the slightest touch.
9. Sorrowful wailing echoes throughout the crypt for 1d6 minutes, degenerating into a low cackle towards the end.
10. A plain brass knocker juts from a nearby wall. Knocks made by the characters are mystically repeated 1d6 rounds later from a different random location in the crypt.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search. Modify the value of any items found to suit your campaign.

1. A simple flute carved from a human shin bone. Its hauntingly beautiful notes are audible only at night.
2. A black iron flail comprising a spiked censer attached to a long chain. Soot and acrid incense cling to its head.
3. A cracked porcelain doll resembling a human child dressed in yesteryear's clothing. If left behind, it appears at the dungeon exit (location 1 or 7).
4. A golden pendant resembling half a human skull and half an apple. This is Tuonetar's holy symbol. It is worth 25 gp.
5. A worn leather pouch contains 4d6 fingernail clippings.
6. A split femur bearing tell-tale scratches of sharp teeth.
7. An unopened dusty bottle of centuries-old ceremonial wine. Although it's still drinkable, the sealed bottle might fetch a good price from a collector (2d6 x 10 gp).
8. A glazed ceramic jug containing 1d100 needles dipped in a pungent orange liquid. A healer or herbalist recalls needles dipped in urine are an old folk charm used to trap evil spirits.
9. A fine lace handkerchief, still moist with mourner's tears.
10. A tarnished silver locket engraved with"*Forever in loving memory*". It contains a single lock of pure white hair. When touched, the hair melts into the character's skin, mystically growing from their scalp 1d3 days later.


Aninas Family Crypt
N
1 square = 5 ft.

GM Notes

***Reconsecration**: If Tanno Hotari (see "Mixed Blessings" in "The Adventure Begins") is with the characters, he can explain the meaning of any frescoes the group encounters.*

Tanno's reconsecration ceremony of the Aninas Tomb Chamber (location 3) takes 20 minutes and seems to have no noticeable effect. However, Tanno's actions might anger the spirits of the tomb, resulting in violent poltergeist activity, which could drive the characters deeper into the crypt.

1: Serpent's Stairway

This ceremonial stairway leads down to the tombs.

Bright yellow venom drips from the fangs of the frighteningly lifelike fresco of a gargantuan viper decorating the east wall. The viper's long, sinewy body coils down the stairs.

Fresco: An inscription beneath the viper's head reads "Misteli". A character steeped in religious knowledge recalls the myth of how Conn had every animal swear they would not harm his daughter, Tuonetar, but overlooked the viper Misteli. The snake bit the maiden by accident, sending her to the realm of the dead.

Stairs: A perceptive character notices the final step on each flight of stairs is lined with a different material, representing the descent into the underworld. The first is lined with petrified wood (worth 5 gp), the second is banded with silver (worth 20 gp), and the third studded with sardonyx (worth 50 gp). Each treasure takes ten minutes to pry loose.

Side Chambers: An assortment of religious and funerary paraphernalia fills these rooms. With a ten-minute search a character finds 1d12 sp and one trinket (see "Things to Find").

2: Liminum

This chamber symbolises the realm of the dead's threshold.

Cobwebs cling to a polished brass censer hanging from an iron chain in the centre of this chamber. A black marble catafalque shaped like a swan-headed boat rests directly beneath it.

Censer: The censer contains holy incense. When lit, it burns for 1d6 x 10 minutes, exuding a fragrant blue smoke which blinds undead creatures.

Catafalque: If at least 100 lbs. is placed on the catafalque, it triggers a *silent illusion,* which turns the floor into a murky subterranean river, flowing east. The effect lasts 10 minutes. A perceptive character may see through the illusion.

3: Aninas Tomb Chamber

This tomb chamber is famed for its mysterious moving coffins.

Six heavily battered leaden caskets lie strewn about this sombre tomb. Despite falling apart with age, an old wooden coffin resting on a dais seems untouched.

Leaden Caskets: Each of these lead-lined coffins weighs 400 lbs. Numerous dents and scrapes mar the outside, and the occupants' bones poke from underneath the bent and twisted lids. Searching the room takes 2d10 minutes and yields 12 sp and 1d3-1 trinkets (see "Things to Find").

Wooden Coffin: Yellowed bones wrapped in rotting velvet are plainly visible through the warped and split planks of this simple wooden coffin. A character searching the coffin finds a worn wooden pendant carved in the image of a lion devouring the sun. This sigil is likely a (un)holy symbol dedicated to an unknown deity, but it defies identification.

4: Hedelmatar Passage

Ceremonial frescoes cover this corridor's walls.

Images of lush, green vines decorate the crumbling plastered walls of this corridor. Half-hidden twixt the painted leaves, five dozen golden discs gleam and glitter in the wan light.

Golden Discs: Closer inspection reveals these discs are golden apples hanging from painted vines. A priest or similar character recalls Tuonetar was appointed keeper of the holy orchard of Hedelmatar, where the golden apples of eternal life are found. If the thin layer of gold is peeled away (worth 1 gp per "apple"), a human skull is revealed embedded within.

5: Avopari Tomb Chamber

The graves of a married couple rest beneath a starry sky.

A myriad of brilliant gems shine like bright stars set into the domed ceiling. The statue of a bearded man stands beneath the sky, hands extended towards two limestone sarcophagi.

Starry Sky: A character steeped in star-lore recognises the Sankari constellation. Named after the heroic twins from ancient mythology, it represents the concept of union or an unbreakable bond.

Gems: The gems are rough-cut quartz. While there are over 1,000 of them, each is worth only 1d4 sp, and prying them all from the ceiling would take several days of work.

Statue: Up close, the imposing statue is readily recognised as Conn, god of community, family and rulership.

Sarcophagi: The soft limestone lids are easy to crack open. Inside are the skeletal remains of a couple, as evidenced by their identical golden wedding bands. Each ring is worth 50 gp.

6: Southeast Gallery

Hidden tombs line this long corridor.

A gaping hole in the east wall reveals a shadowed alcove. Painted guardians lurk on the walls of the corridor beyond, their gleaming eyes watching your every move.

Hole in the Wall: An upright sarcophagus leans against the east wall of the northernmost alcove. Its heavy lid bears the carven image of a robed skeleton holding a pair of balancing scales. The sarcophagus conceals the entrance to location 7.

Painted Guardians: The frescoes depict heavily armed guards with mirror shards set into their eyes; they symbolise eternal watchfulness. A character investigating the frescoes may realise the space behind each guardian is hollow—covered only with a thin layer of plaster. It is easy to punch a hole in the wall; this reveals a small hidden tomb.

Hidden Tombs (9): Each tomb contains a desiccated corpse resting atop a simple granite bier. The bodies are clad in rusted chainmail and clutch tarnished longswords. Broken mirror shards are wedged into their eye sockets.

GM Notes

***Skulls**: The skulls embedded in the walls of location 4 were placed here for symbolic reasons, representing life and death as two sides of the same coin. At your option, however, they might be entire skeletons buried in the walls who tear themselves free from the plasterwork to attack those defiling the crypt.*

***Undead Ambush**: The hidden tombs in location 6 are a perfect spot for an ambush; have undead creatures crash through the thin plaster walls to attack the characters!*

GM Notes

***Undead Ambush**: The hidden tombs in locations 8 and 9 are a perfect spot for an ambush (particularly if you have not already used this idea in location 6; have undead creatures crash through the thin plaster walls to attack the characters!*

7: Secret Tunnel

This tunnel is a secondary access route into the crypt.

Murky water drips from the ceiling of this narrow, sloping tunnel, turning the floor into a mudslide. Broken caskets and splintered bones jut from the tunnel's dark earthen walls.

Slippery Slope: Characters traversing the slippery tunnel might slip, fall over and slide 1d4 x 5 ft. towards location 6.

Door to Southeast Gallery: The stone "door" at the bottom of the slope is the heavy lid of a sarcophagus in the northernmost alcove of location 6.

8: Valtias Tomb Chamber

The mould-infested sarcophagus here is best left alone.

Mould and toadstools cling to the crumbling walls of this cold, damp chamber. The air smells of old leather and ground pepper.

Crumbling Walls: Decades of water seepage have all but erased the frescoes of this chamber. A character investigating the chamber spots six hollow spaces behind layers of moss, fungi and rotting plaster. A character smashing a hole in the wall finds a small tomb.

Hidden Tombs (6): Each tomb holds the fungus-infested corpse of a long-dead warrior lying atop a stone bier. The fungi is amanita fatalis. If disturbed, it releases a cloud of poisonous, cloying spores in a five-foot radius that makes breathing difficult. The cloud lingers for 1d6 rounds.

Valtias' Sarcophagus: A thin layer of ice coats this ornate blue granite sarcophagus. The cracked lid is stingingly cold to the touch and is frozen shut. Brown mould growing within rapidly expands towards any source of fire brought near the sarcophagus. Amidst the mouldy remains, the characters can find 2d6 x 10 gp worth of jewellery.

9: Northwest Gallery

Four tombs are hidden behind a thin layer of plaster.

Faded frescoes along the north wall depict a raven-haired maiden pouring liquid from a jug into the cups of four seated warriors, each bearing a mortal wound.

Faded Frescoes: With character steeped in religious lore, recognises the maiden as Tuonetar, pouring out the mead of oblivion for fallen heroes as they enter the underworld. A search reveals the space behind each of the four warriors is hollow, covered only with a thin layer of plaster. A character smashing a hole in the wall finds a small tomb.

Hidden Tombs (4): Each tomb contains the skeletal remains of some ancient champion resting atop a marble bier. Their broken bones, cloven skulls and maimed limbs mirror the various injuries depicted on the frescoes.

10: Vuori's Tomb

The perfectly preserved corpse in this chamber is an illusion.

Ivory-white lilies cradle the still body of a young woman lying atop a simple stone bier. Her ivory skin is unblemished by decay, and the sound of her gentle breathing echoes softly through the tomb.

Body: A copper plaque on the bier identifies the woman as Alma Vuori. A permanent *minor illusion* masks her decayed remains, making her sound and appear as if gently sleeping on a bed of flowers.

11: Vine-choked Passage

An intricate web of roots and vines blocks this stairway.

A thousand pale, twisted tendrils, each gently throbbing to the slow rhythm of an invisible heart, fill this narrow stairway.

Roots: A character wise in nature lore identifies the tendrils as roots of scarlet bracken—a type of fern drawing nourishment from dead bodies. The plant is harmless but "bleeds" a sticky red sap when cut, which stains clothes and flesh for days. The vine-choked passage is difficult terrain. If the roots are cut, their scarlet sap rains down on the characters. The bloody stains fade after 6d6 days.

12: Ritari Tomb Chamber

Here lies Talis Ritari, Knight of the Black Swan.

Black marble statues of rampant swans with lambent red eyes stand vigil on either side of this crypt. An ornate sarcophagus rests upon a raised dais against the backdrop of a 40-foot long tapestry.

Swan Statues: Both statues exude a faint aura of evocation magic. Once per day, each can unleash a fiery blast of magic at any undead creatures in the chamber.

Talis's Sarcophagus: The heavy stone lid sits slightly ajar, revealing the skeletal remains of an armoured knight within. A close investigation reveals flecks of gold leaf clinging to Talis' skull. His rusted iron gauntlets hide a peculiar hereditary trait: both hands have six fingers.

Tapestry: The exquisitely embroidered tapestry depicts the founding of the Knights of the Black Swan and the actions they took to end the Haunted Years (refer to the "Dungeon Background" section for details). The tapestry is worth 500 gp.

Secret Room: Hidden behind the tapestry is a small, sombre shrine dedicated to the Maiden of Death. A broken sword hilt rests on the black marble altar.

Broken Sword: The missing blade of this ornate longsword has snapped off four inches above the hilt. The winged cross-guard and swan-necked pommel make it easy to identify the sword as *Valcorim*, the legendary gleaming blade of Talis Ritari used by the knight to wedge seal the underworld's gates. The tapestry depicts this act.

GM Notes

She's Alive? *The rotted corpse of Alma Vuori in location 10 provides the opportunity for a nasty scare if you have her suddenly pounce from the illusion. Should you be able to convince the players Alma is merely asleep and might be awakened like in a certain fairy tale, so much the better!*

Six Fingers*: If you are playing the Sacred Blood storyline, and you have chosen Neah Tuomela (see the Undercity Chapel Dungeon Backdrop) as the true heir of the Ritari bloodline, Talis Ritari has five fingers on each hand instead of six. Do not forget to modify the Aftermath section as well in this case.*

A Magic Blade*: Valcorim, the broken sword found in location 12, may yet possess one or two minor powers.*

Aftermath

The characters' discoveries in the cursed crypt are certain to haunt their dreams long after they have left its benighted vaults. Use the suggestions below to expand the story and continue the characters' adventures.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used one of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins" use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

A Helping Hand: Arriving at The Scythe at the appointed time, the characters have little trouble finding their mysterious contact, whose six-fingered hand mirrors the one they recovered from the crypt. Doffing his hood, hawk-nosed Varis Karna (N male human) apologises for the secrecy, but insists it was necessary. He explains everything revolves around the inheritance of Sofonias Ritari, a wealthy merchant from Languard who recently died heirless. Varis believes Talis Ritari is their common ancestor. If he can prove his descent from the old knight, Varis could claim Sofonias' considerable inheritance. True to his word, Varis pays the characters the princely sum of 200 gp if they turn over Talis Ritari's six-fingered hand and sign a declaration stating they recovered it from his sarcophagus.

If the characters can track down Talis Ritari's golden death mask, and the knight's features resemble Varis' aquiline visage, the additional proof would strengthen Varis' claim and the characters might share in the new heir's wealth.

They Belong in a Museum: Leander Talvi is visibly disappointed to hear Talis Ritari's golden death mask is missing. Nevertheless, he is willing to pay the characters half the agreed amount in exchange for a detailed description of Talis's knightly crypt. If the characters mention the tapestry or the fragment of *Valcorim*, he insists on buying both. Unfortunately, Leander only has 3d10 x 10 gp. Unless the parties can come to an agreement, Leander grows obsessed with acquiring the objects and hires local thieves and thugs to steal them.

Mixed Blessings: If Tanno Hotari survived his ordeal, he earns his absolution. Nevertheless, the events witnessed in the cursed crypt cause the young acolyte to suffer horrible nightmares. Two days after the adventure, the characters are approached by Nuluani Sehiateir (LN female half-elf priest [Conn]), a well-known priestess at the Father's Hall who explains Tanno was cursed by some evil entity in the old crypt. She asks the characters to accompany her to Redfern Cemetery so she can investigate the sinister vault herself and put to rest the spirits of the dead. In return, Nuluani offers a reward of 50 gp per character. If the characters show Nuluani the strange unidentifiable pendant found inside the wooden coffin of the Aninas Tomb, she doesn't recognise it but suspects it may be connected to the curse.

If poor Tanno didn't make it out alive, Nuluani approaches the characters out of guilt instead, since it was she who sent the acolyte to the crypt…

Further Adventures

Several important questions remain to be answered: all involve Tuonetar's Knights of the Black Swan, and their legacy. Consider the following story hooks, if the characters wish to delve deeper into the order's history.

The Curious Case of the Missing Mask: Talis Ritari's sarcophagus was open when the characters found it, and the gold leaf clinging to the knight's scalp suggests a golden death mask once lay there. Besides the destruction of a nearby vault, the thieves were careful enough to leave no trace. If the characters ask around, a few generous bribes eventually reveal one possible lead: rumour has it Rahvu Rantanen, a notorious figure from Languard's criminal underworld, recently obtained a knight's golden death-mask. A paranoid recluse with an evil reputation, Rahvu resides in Martryn Manor, a dilapidated, but heavily protected, mansion in the Shambles.

Good as New: Can the legendary sword, *Valcorim*, be made whole again? The tapestry found in Talis Ritari's tomb chamber suggests the broken blade rests somewhere beneath Languard, firmly lodged between the gates to the underworld. While the priests at the Father's Hall can corroborate the legend of the broken sword, the location of the stygian hollow containing a passageway to the underworld has been lost; the knowledge died with the last of Tuonetar's knights. Hannele Auvuenen (LN middle-aged female human priest [Conn]), high priestess of Conn, is willing to sanction an expedition into Languard's undercity to search for the relic.

A Land Down Under: It's not every day you discover a gate to the underworld exists somewhere beneath the city. If some villain were to discover its exact location, who knows what havoc they would wreak if the gate were opened? Was the theft of Talis Ritari's death mask a mere coincidence? Or does it form a part of some diabolical plot already in motion? Perhaps the characters should find out before it's too late...

The Sacred Blood Storyline

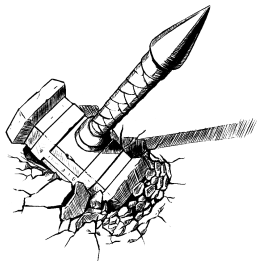
While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone adventure, it has been designed for use with the *Sacred Blood* storyline. *Sacred Blood* presents antagonists, agendas, agents, and assets to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following Dungeon Backdrops:

- *Aninas Family Crypt*
- *Martryn Manor*
- *Undercity Chapel*

Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves

Hills & Mountains

For decades, the Erdukr dwarves have been a dwindling folk. But now, all contact with their ancient hold has ceased. What doom has befallen the dwarves? Did they dig too deep, did their ancient enemies, the Orcs of the Flayed Skull, finally triumph, or did some other doom befall them? Whatever the cause of their fall, the answer lies in the Blasted Donjon!



Dungeon Background

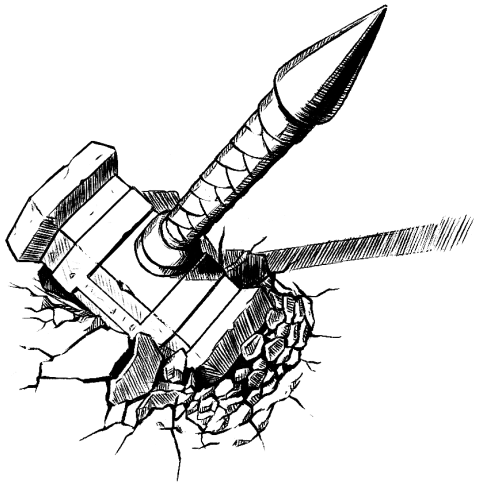
The Erdukr clan have never been a numerous people. Like so many of their dwarven brethren, the clan is cursed with a low birth, and so they feel each death among their own more intensely than would humans. For decades, the Erdukr have been a dwindling people locked in a death struggle with their hereditary enemies—the Orcs of the Flayed Skull—who grow ever more numerous and rapacious.

Desperate for help, the dwarves believed the honeyed words of Ninazu Urusilim—a self-proclaimed "puissant worker of the mystic arts". Ninazu promised the dwarves he could help them defeat the orcs and bring peace to the clan. Ninazu Urusilim is a necromancer and demonologist steeped in the blackest of the arcane arts and used the dwarves as unwitting assistants to help him summon a powerful otherworldly creature into the world. Instead, his magical doings—which reached a climax a few days ago—brought disaster, death, and destruction to the Erdukr clan when he lost control of the summoned entity.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Dead Dwarf**: Travelling through the hills, the characters stumble upon the body of a dead dwarf. A cursory investigation reveals the dwarf has been savagely attacked before being eviscerated. The dwarf's tracks are easy to follow and lead back to the Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves. Dependent on your design for the dungeon, you could place a clue as to the dwarf's killer—perhaps ichor of a sinister nature or a hewn demonic body part near the dwarf's body. Any good-aligned adventurer should be keen to determine what killed the dwarf and the level of threat to any nearby settlements.



- **Missing Dwarves**: No members of the Erdukr clan have been seen in the surrounding settlements for some time. Normally, this would not elicit any concern, but several merchants were expecting to do business with them, and, in turn, their customers are getting annoyed. A merchant, Aleksandra Ikitiera (NG female human), approaches the characters and offers them each 50 gp to go to the Erdukr's home to see what is wrong. If they can, they could also bring back the cases of dwarven brandy she has already paid for.
- **Searching for Ninazu**: The necromancer and demonologist Ninazu Urusilim is a reviled and hated worker of magic wanted in several kingdoms for his blasphemous doings. The characters have been hired to investigate a recent sighting of the man. Their search brings them into the adventure when they arrive at a nearby village. The locals provide the party with rumour #6. Alternatively, if you have a suitable reoccurring villain in your campaign, you could use them instead of Ninazu.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use Diplomacy to gather information about the Blasted Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves. This takes 1d4 hours and 1d4 gp. The character gains one more rumour for every additional 1d4 hours and 1d4 gp they spend.

1. The Erdukr clan are in decline. The dwarves are skilled artificers and miners, but their numbers have been dwindling for decades—perhaps centuries. They are the implacable enemies of the (far more numerous) Orcs of the Flayed Skull tribe.
2. The Erdukr clan of dwarves are fabulously wealthy. Deep mines below their clan hold yet hold much gold and silver for the industrious dwarves to extract.
3. The Orcs of the Flayed Skull tribe are foul even by orcish standards They use the skulls of their enemies as decorations and eat the flesh of their slain foes.
4. A stranger was seen climbing in the hills near the Erdukr clan hold months ago. The man spoke in a strange fashion and wore clothes of exotic cut. He had the air of a magician about him. He has not been seen since; perhaps he is staying with the dwarves.
5. When the Erdukr were more numerous, they delved deep and built themselves a vast underground hold. As their numbers declined, they retreated from the hold's deeper reaches. Who knows what could lie forgotten in the dark, waiting to the found?
6. The Erdukr dwarves are desperate—they fear eventual defeat at the hands of their hereditary foes, the Orcs of the Flayed Skull. To swing the balance in their favour, they sought out a wizard to work great magics on their behalf.

The Surrounding Locality

The Erdukr can dwell in a range of rugged hills or mountains. The descriptions below have been designed to work with either location.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. The trail passes a lofty, rocky crag of grey, slick rock. Moss and lichens grow on the crag's stone, and this section of trail is muddy.
2. Deep footprints mar the ground. A character skilled in tracking can tell they were made by a running dwarf. The footsteps lead out of the hills. (These are the footsteps of the dwarf detailed in the "Dead Dwarf" adventure hook.)
3. The surrounding terrain is rugged and steep; only scrub grass and a few bushes find purchase in the thin soil.
4. A large bird of prey soars high above the characters' heads, hunting for its next meal. Suddenly and silently, it plunges out of sight behind a ridge.
5. The wind whips over the party, chilling the air and plucking at their cloaks. The temperature drops as dark clouds glide across the sky. Gloom cloaks the surrounds.
6. The entrance to an abandoned mine pierces a cliff. The mine's upper level is dry and could serve as a good campsite, but the lower levels are hopelessly flooded.
7. A ray of sunlight bursts through the clouds to glint off something metallic. If the characters investigate, and you have not used the Dead Dwarf adventure hook, refer to "The Adventure Begins".
8. Dark clouds scud across the sky, plunging the area into deep gloom. Sensitive characters feel a profound sense of doom and foreboding that only grows as they draw closer to the Erdukr's home.
9. The howling of a distant wolf echoes through the air. The wolf is some distance away and (probably) poses no danger to the party.
10. The wind picks up, and the temperature drops. Gathering dark clouds threaten rain; if the characters do not find shelter, they are likely to get wet and cold.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surroundings. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. Old tracks show the path taken by many booted humanoids. A skilled tracker can determine the type of creatures who left the tracks. (This depends on your setup, but the tracks were likely left by dwarves or orcs.)
2. Slain orcs, their bodies mouldering and equipment rusting, lie where they fell. There is no sign of any dwarven bodies amid the carnage. A skilled healer determines the skirmish likely took place several weeks ago).
3. An old campsite fills the space under an overhang. Two part-collapsed tents face each other over an ash-filled fire surrounded by a ring of blackened rocks.
4. The clan mark of the Erdukr—two axes crossed over a hammer—has been chiselled into the face of a gigantic boulder overlooking the thin trail. Lichen and moss grow over the boulder, partially obscuring the sigil.
5. A heavy, crudely crafted arrow lies splintered and broken in front of a rock. A character examining the arrow can determine it was not dwarf-made.
6. Scuff marks on the rock show where someone has scrambled upwards recently.
7. An oddly-shaped outcrop of rock looks like a frozen tentacle emerging from the surrounding stone. It is wreathed with lichen and moss.
8. A small hut of dry-stone walls topped by a slate roof stands hard in the shelter of a craggy ridge. Built long ago as a shelter from harsh weather, the hut has seen better days. The hut is well stocked with firewood.
9. A narrow opening in the rock leads into a large, dry cave. Piles of bat guano cover the floor, and hundreds of bats hang from the ceiling. At night, they emerge to range through the surroundings in search of food.
10. The clan mark of the Erdukr—two axes crossed over a hammer—is carved into the stone ground. The sigil is worn and easy to miss. An arrow next to the sigil points toward the clan's hold.

Orcs of the Flayed Skull

The characters may encounter roving bands of Flayed Skull orcs as they explore the hills. Such encounters could be nothing more than a nuisance or the characters could stumble into a large war band of the foul creatures.

The characters may want to learn more about the Orcs of the Flayed Skull. A character with local knowledge may know something about the orcs.

- The Orcs of the Flayed Skull are foul even by orc standards. They use the skulls of their enemies as decorations and eat the flesh of their slain foes.
- The Orcs of the Flayed Skull are the implacable, hereditary foe of the Erdukr dwarves.
- The orcs live several days journey into the hills (or mountains depending on your setup) in an old mining village and the mines which run under it.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **The Twin Gates**: Twin Gates warded the Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves. Now, only one of the passages is traversable.
2. **The Grand Hall**: Built to amaze visitors and celebrate the Erdukr's glorious history, this grand chamber is replete with carvings of dwarven victories over their foul foes.
3. **The Processional**: This chamber once provided access to the dwarves' deeper halls. A huge cave-in now blocks such access.
4. **Chamber of the Gate Warden**: Herein dwelt Fargrim Erdukr, the Gate Warden.
5. **Guardroom**: Two dwarf warriors charged with watching over the Twin Gates dwelt here.
6. **Ransacked Storeroom**: This once-organised storeroom has been comprehensively ransacked and looted.
7. **Chamber of Summoning**: This chamber was one of two required by Ninazu Urusilim to complete his ritual. The other chamber is location 10.
8. **Shattered Armoury**: The dwarves kept a goodly supply of weapons and armour here for use in the defence of the Twin Gates.
9. **Bedchamber**: Herein dwelt another important dwarf charged with protecting the Erdukr's home.
10. **Hidden Summoning Chamber**: The characters may never realise this hidden chamber exists.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

Ceilings: Unless otherwise noted, the ceilings throughout the dungeon are eight feet high.

Walls: The dungeon's walls are of smoothed and dressed stone. In places, the dwarves have decorated the walls with carvings or reliefs depicting great moments from their long, glorious history.

Floors: The dungeon's walls are of smoothed and dressed stone. Generally, they are flat and unimpeded

Stone Doors: Stone doors set on nested hinges ward the donjon's various rooms and chambers.

Slain Dwarves: Slain dwarves lie scattered about the hold; descriptions of several appear in "Dungeon Dressing".

Stairs: Carved from stone, the stairs in the dungeon have half-foot risers and count as difficult terrain.

Statues: Stone statues of the dwarves' greatest heroes watch over certain areas of the donjon. Such statues depict stout dwarven warriors clad in plate armour armed with a battleaxe or warhammer.

Generic Dungeon Hazards

Some parts of the hold are unsafe:

Unstable Rubble: Piles of rubble may shift and slide under the characters' feet. Such areas are difficult terrain.

Unstable Ceilings: Unstable ceilings are prone to collapse if they are unduly prodded or if combat takes place beneath them.

- **Collapse**: The ceiling collapses, filling the square below it and all adjacent squares with rubble. Characters in the area suffer damage from the falling rocks and are part-buried. A characters with swift reactions may negate the buried result and only suffer half damage from the falling rocks. Squares filled with rubble are difficult terrain.
- **Part-Buried Characters**: Conscious characters part-buried in the rubble can free themselves with or without the help of their unburied companions.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

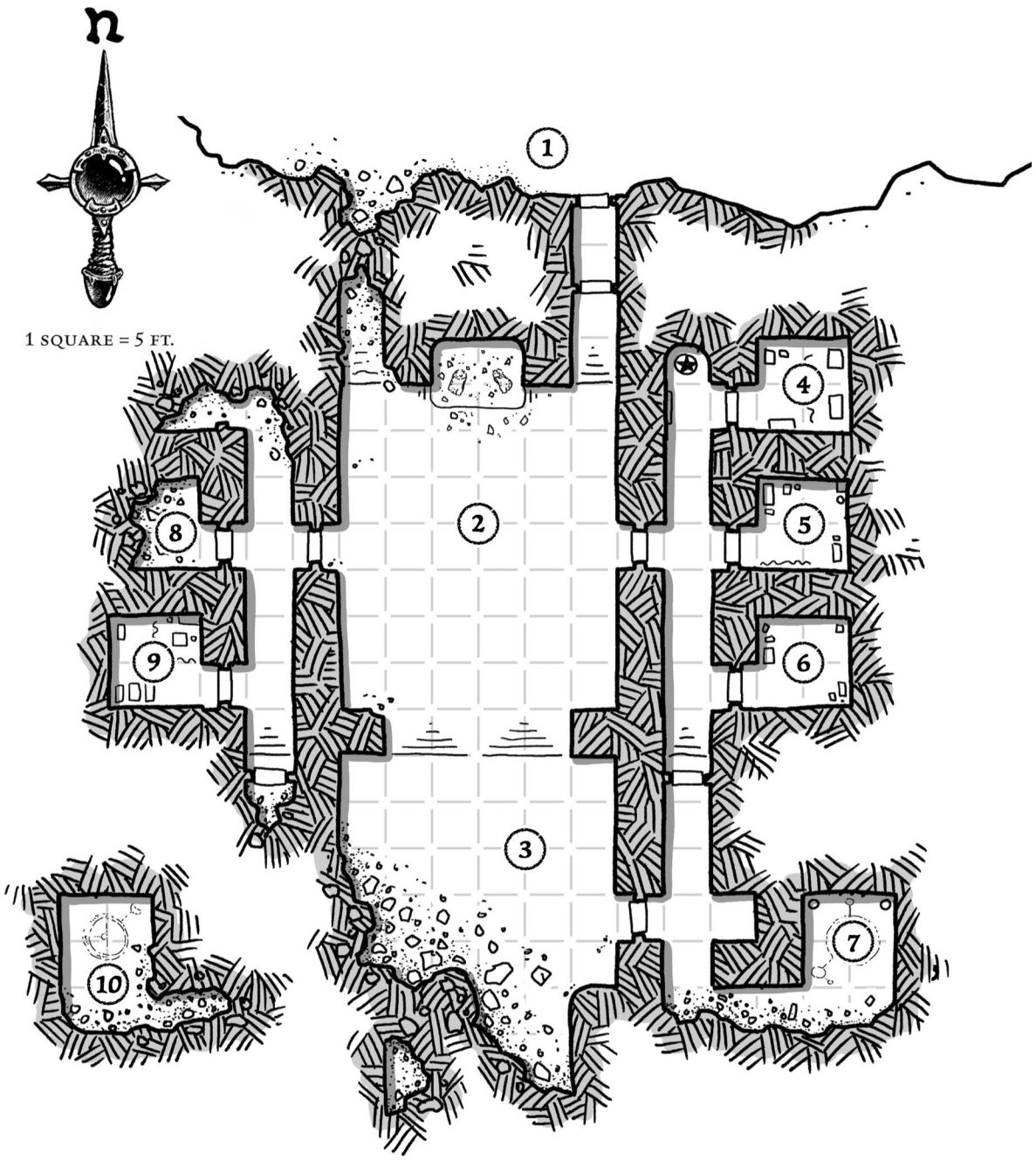
1. Smeared bloodstains on the walls and floor tell of something being dragged through here.
2. A warhammer, its head covered in a drying, viscous black ichor, lies on the floor.
3. An eviscerated dwarf sprawls on the floor; their armour is rent, and their axe lies nearby.
4. The floor is pitted as if someone had dribbled acid or something similar onto it. The faint trail leads toward the Twin Gates.
5. A small pile of rubble—perhaps fallen from the ceiling—creates an area of difficult terrain.
6. Chunks of dwarf are scattered about; it appears something literally pulled the poor dwarf limb from limb.
7. A slain dwarf sprawls on the floor; the dwarf is missing an arm, and a spray of dry arterial blood paints a grim picture of the dwarf's final moments.
8. The faint aroma of incense hangs in the air.
9. Dust and grit sift down the ceiling.
10. A disembowelled dwarf slumps against a wall. Their blood and gore decorate the floor and wall. A battleaxe drenched in greenish ichor lies near the dwarf's outstretched hand.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A heavy one-foot-long key carved from stone lies at the end of a black iron chain sized to fit around a dwarf's neck. Carvings of hills and mountains decorate the key.
2. A well-hidden storage niche in one wall, at dwarven shoulder height, holds a *potion of healing*.

3. A bloody pouch holds a half-dozen round platinum coins.
4. A beautifully wrought stone potion vial lies on the floor. The vial is empty, and its stopper lies nearby.
5. A crossbow bolt lies on the floor; its tip is dented.
6. A battleaxe, its blade covered in black ichor, lies on the floor in the middle of the area.
7. Portions of the ornate wall carvings in this area have been deliberately defaced.
8. A wall carving depicts a heroic dwarf warrior standing atop a pile of orc corpses. The dwarf's black eyes glimmer in the party's lights. Investigation reveals they are onyx (each worth 100 gp).
9. A pouch stuffed into a recess behind a wall carving holds ten gold coins.
10. The tapestry hanging in this area glimmers strangely in the light. It depicts a wilderness scene lit by a blazing sun. Gold and silver thread have been cunningly woven into the tapestry to pick out the sun's rays. The tapestry is worth 200 gp.



GM Notes

***Construct Guards**: Some of the carvings on the walls in locations 2 and 3 could be magical or construct guardians that survived the Erdukr's destruction.*

***Further Adventures**: More of the Erdukr's hold lies behind the massive collapse to the south of location 3. To access the areas beyond, the characters will require powerful magic –perhaps gaseous form, dimension door or the like–or much careful excavation.*

1: The Twin Gates

Twin Gates warded the Donjon of the Erdukr Dwarves. Now, only one of the passages is traversable.

A stout eight-foot-high stone door–partly open–pierces the cliff. About 30 feet to the west, a rockfall has blocked what might have been another entrance.

Illumination: Outside, the illumination depends on the time of day. Beyond the Erdukr's outer gate, the light level drops one step. Beyond the inner gate, it drops another step.

Stone Outer Doors: These thick stone portals are perfectly balanced to be easily openable from the inside. They open into the donjon.

Blocked Passage: A great collapse of rubble has blocked the western passage leading to level 2. It is impassable without the use of magic, such as *gaseous form,* or extensive (and careful) excavation.

2: The Grand Hall

Built to amaze visitors and celebrate the Erdukr's glorious history, this grand chamber is replete with carvings of dwarven victories over their foul foes.

The ceiling of this lofty chamber is 30 feet high. Elaborate bas-relief carvings of dwarves slaying orcs decorate the walls and ceiling. To the south, wide steps ascend to another chamber.

Wall Carvings: Elaborate, high-quality bas-relief carvings depicting the Erdukr's many victories over their foul, monstrous enemies decorate the walls.

High Ceiling: The ceiling in this chamber rises 30 feet above the floor and features similar carvings to the walls.

Sundered Statue: The rubble and ruin of a 25 feet tall statue stand upon a five feet high plinth. Only the statue's carven feet and part of its legs remain intact. It depicted the Erdukr's first and mightiest chief.

3: The Processional

This chamber once provided access to the dwarves' deeper halls. A huge cave-in now blocks such access.

An immense collapse fills the southern part of his lofty chamber. More elaborate carvings of innumerable dwarven victories cover what's left of the walls.

Wall Carvings: Elaborate, high-quality bas-relief carvings depicting the Erdukr's many victories over their foul, monstrous enemies decorate the walls.

High Ceiling: The ceiling in this chamber rises 30 feet above the floor and features similar carvings to the walls.

Unstable Rubble & Ceiling: An unstable pile of rubble fills part of the chamber. A character wise in engineering or mining examining it realises the debris is unsafe. See "Generic Dungeon Hazards" and "Further Adventures" for more information.

4: Chamber of the Gate Warden

Herein dwelt Fargrim Erdukr, the Gate Warden.

This tiny room holds a chest, desk and chair. A tapestry covers the opposite wall.

The characters may not initially realise the tapestry here actually divides the room in half.

Door: The door to this chamber is part-closed.

Tapestry: A tapestry hangs from the ceiling, dividing the room in two. The tapestry is a dark but starkly beautiful view of a vast natural cave. A perceptive character who can see it realises the tapestry ripples slightly when the characters open the door into this chamber.

Furniture: A chest, desk and chair stand without the tapestry. Behind it lie another chest and Fargrim's bed. The chests have been smashed open and contain Fargrim's scattered possessions—clothes, boots and so on.

5: Guardroom

Two dwarf warriors charged with watching over the Twin Gates dwelt here.

Two beds—one overturned—and a tapestry hanging on one wall are the major features of this looted, gore-splattered chamber. Two dead dwarven warrior sprawl on the floor.

Door: The door to this chamber stands open.

Tapestry: A tapestry hangs from the wall; it depicts a view of a prominent landmark in the surrounding wilderness.

Furniture: The furniture here is sturdy and of good, if a little plain, design. It is all gore-splattered.

Dead Dwarves: These two dwarves died shockingly brutal and violent deaths. Their armour is rent in many places, and both have suffered terrible wounds. An appropriately skilled character examining the wounds may be able to gain valuable insights into what killed the dwarves.

6: Ransacked Storeroom

This once-organised storeroom has been comprehensively ransacked and looted.

Opened boxes and crates—their contents strewn across the floor—are scattered about this chamber.

Door: The door to this chamber stands open.

Scattered Boxes and Crates: Overturned and opened boxes and crates lie scattered about this room. The dwarves stored the fruits of their labour here before selling them to visiting human merchants and their other customers.

The contents of the turned-over and emptied boxes and crates scattered about this chamber create difficult terrain.

GM Notes

These locations contain innumerable opportunities for searching characters to find minor dwarven treasures. They also offer an opportunity for you to seed handouts depicting the Erdukr's decline or clues to the recent disastrous events at the hold.

***Dead Dwarves' Wounds**: The identify of the creature who slew these dwarves depends on your design. This is a good place to reward attentive players by providing subtle clues to suggest what the characters may face in the future.*

***Missing Dwarves**: If you are using the Missing Dwarves adventure hook it is likely that the dwarven brandy Aleksandra Ikitiera asked the characters to retrieve will be found here.*

GM Notes

***Magic Circle**: Add such detail and flavour to the magic circle as appropriate to foreshadow (or explain) the identity of the creature responsible for the Erdukr's destruction.*

***Dwarf-Crafted Weapons**: Location 8 is a good room to place some dwarf-craft weapons and armour for the characters to find—if they take the time to sort through the rubble. This has the twin-purposes of providing treasure and suggesting to the characters that it might be worth excavating other parts of the collapsed hold.*

7: Chamber of Summoning

This chamber was one of two required by Ninazu Urusilim to complete his ritual. The other chamber is location 10.

Rubble partly blocks the entrance to this small chamber. A magic circle of elaborate design covers the floor to the north.

Door: The door to this room has been shattered; however, the rubble lies without the room in the corridor. This strongly suggests something burst forth from the room.

Unstable Rubble & Ceiling: An unstable pile of rubble fills part of the chamber. A character wise in engineering or mining examining it realises the debris is unsafe. (See "Generic Dungeon Hazards".)

Magic Circle: The remains of a magic circle dominate the north part of this chamber. A character wise in magical matters examining the circle can determine that the circle was part of a ritual designed to summon a demon or devil. A character wise in magical matters able to cast summoning spells realises this is one of a pair of circles required for the successful conclusion of the ritual. (The other circle lies in location 10).

8: Shattered Armoury

The dwarves kept a goodly supply of weapons and armour here for use in the defence of the Twin Gates.

The western part of the chamber has collapsed. Weapons—most horribly bent or broken—jut from the rubble.

Door: The door to this chamber is closed.

Unstable Rubble & Ceiling: An unstable pile of rubble fills part of the chamber. A character wise in engineering or mining examining it realises the debris is unsafe. (See "Generic Dungeon Hazards".)

Buried Arms & Armour: Characters carefully digging through the unstable rubble may find various items of interest, such as dwarven weapons and armour. Add such items as appropriate to your campaign.

9: Bedchamber

Herein dwelt another important dwarf charged with protecting the Erdukr's home from all intruders.

Tapestries cordon off one corner of this chamber. Without the tapestry stands a table flanked by benches and one chest.

Door: The door to this chamber stands open.

Tapestries: The tapestries depict scenes of battle in which dwarves are crushing an orc horde.

Furniture: A table, two short benches and a chest stand without the tapestry. Behind the tapestry lies a small bed and another chest. The chests contain mundane equipment, clothes and so on. A perceptive character searching the chests discovers a small pouch containing 15 gp and 3 pp.

10: Hidden Summoning Chamber

The characters may never realise this hidden chamber exists.

A collapse of rock and rubble blocks the entrance to this chamber. A rubble-strewn summoning circle covers much of the floor.

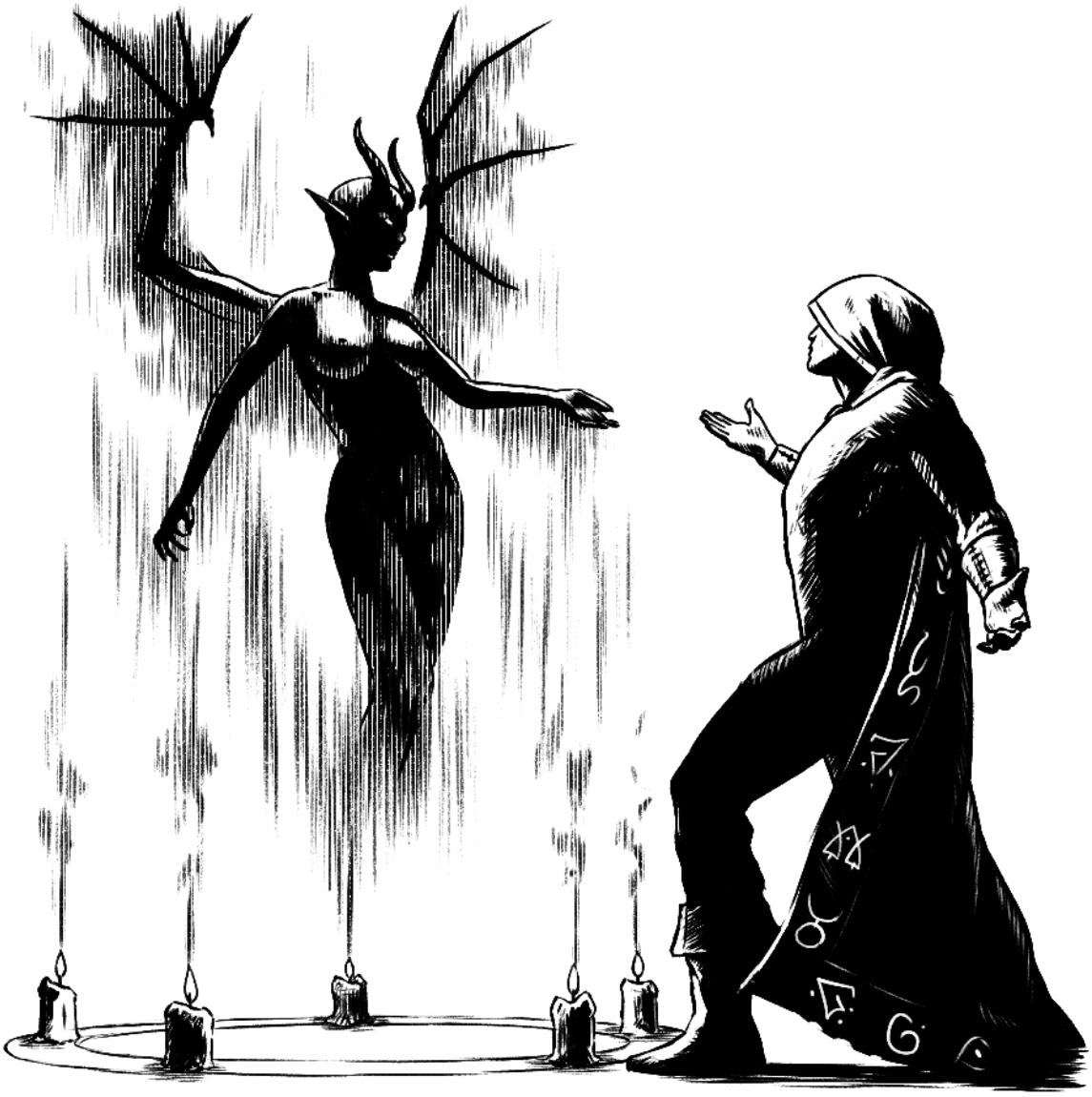
Unstable Rubble & Ceiling: An unstable pile of rubble fills part of the chamber. A character wise in engineering or mining examining it realises the debris is unsafe. (See "Generic Dungeon Hazards".)

Summoning Circle: The remains of a magic circle dominate the north part of this chamber. A character wise in magical matters examining the circle can determine that the circle was part of a ritual designed to summon a demon or devil. A character wise in magical matters able to cast summoning spells realises this is one of a pair of circles required for the successful conclusion of the ritual. (The characters have likely already discovered the other circle in location 7.)

GM Notes

***Magic Circle**: Add such detail and flavour to the magic circle as appropriate to foreshadow (or explain) the identity of the creature responsible for the Erdukr's destruction.*

Ninazu Urusilim Dead? Perhaps Ninazu died during or immediately after the summoning. Alternatively, perhaps–trapped–he starved or suffocated to death here. If you decide that is the case add his body to the description and prepare suitable treasure for the characters discovering the corpse of this skilled demonologist (who, of course, could have risen as some form of undead).



Aftermath

The Blasted Donjon the Erdukr Dwarves doesn't have to fade from the campaign once the characters have completed their initial exploration of the site. Much of the hold remains yet unexplored—easy access is blocked by the massive collapse in location 3.

Similarly, the fate and location of Ninazu Urusilim could remain a mystery, depending on your design of the dungeon. The characters could determine that the foul demonologist must be punished for the destruction of the Erdkur clan—along with his other crimes—and hunt him down.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Dead Dwarf**: The characters may bury the body of the dead dwarf either by the road where he fell or back at the Erdukr's home. If they do neither, they begin to hear stories of a haunting in the hills—travellers being accosted by a spectral dwarf who attacks them when they refuse to help him.
- **Missing Dwarves**: Once the characters have explored the accessible parts of the dungeon and returned to Aleksandra Ikitiera with news of the dwarves' fate, the campaign can progress in a number of directions. Perhaps that is the end of it, and the characters go on their way. Alternatively, Aleksandra could ask the characters to dig through the rubble to reach the parts of clanhold cut off by the massive collapse in location 3.
- **Searching for Ninazu**: If the characters did not find Ninazu during the adventure, their quest continues. Ninazu could be long gone to wreak havoc elsewhere, or he could be trapped behind the massive collapse in location 3.

Further Adventures

As discussed in the preceding section, the Erdukr's home does not have to fade from the campaign once the initial adventure is over. Much of the hold remains inaccessible; if the party contains a dwarf, they may feel honour bound to find out what happened to the rest of the Erdukr clan. Alternatively, if the creature that destroyed the clan escaped the characters, they may feel that they have to hunt it down before it causes untold mayhem and death in the locality.

Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest

Forests & Woodlands, Ashlar, Lonely Coast, Picaroon Peninsula

In his remote woodland lair, the cannibal druid and his pets grew ever-hungry and creep forth to prey upon the hapless travellers and peasants using an isolated woodland track. The increasing number of disappearances on the road have been noticed, however, and the story of a hunter who saw an old, hideously ugly man chewing on what looked like a human arm has begun to circulate through the nearby settlements—something must be done!

Dungeon Background

The wizened half-goblin druid Tal Nar has dwelt alone in the deep, trackless woods for decades. An outcast from his tribe, he has led a lonely life. With only the nameless, atavistic spirits of the primal forest, roving packs of wolves and the occasional bear for company Tal has sunk deep into insanity's black pit.

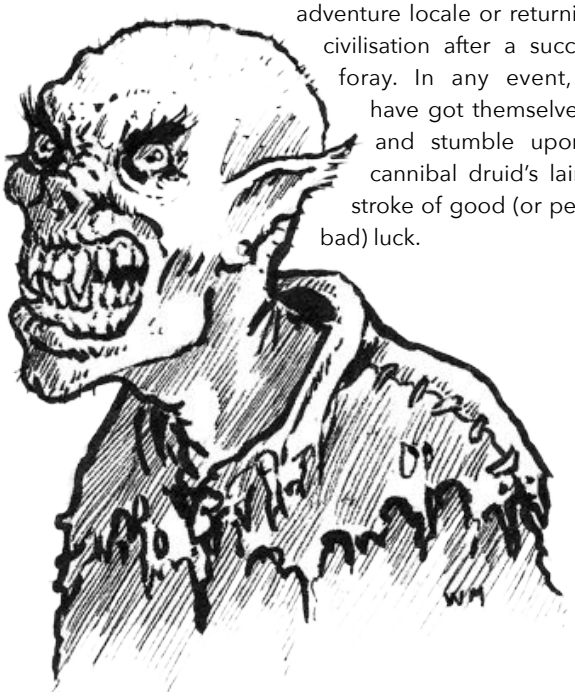
In the grip of his insanity, Tal has had several important revelations: he has come to believe that the real enemies of his way of life and the way of life of his animal friends are humankind (and their allies). Such folk encroach upon the wood and cut down trees, hunt the local animals and so on. It seems only fair, therefore, that he return the favour.

Tal has grown to like the taste of human flesh and enjoys feeding the friends who share his isolated home. His depredations have not gone unnoticed, though, as he has grown careless of late. Folk in the nearest settlements have noticed that travellers, hunters and loggers go missing in greater numbers in certain parts of the wood. One hunter has seen Tal capering through the wood while chewing on what looked to be a human arm. As the characters reach the region, the dark story of what the hunter saw Tal doing has begun to make its way through the local populace…

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the cannibal druid's lair by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Hopelessly Lost**: The characters are hopelessly lost in the wilderness. They may be searching for another adventure locale or returning to civilisation after a successful foray. In any event, they have got themselves lost and stumble upon the cannibal druid's lair in a stroke of good (or perhaps bad) luck.



- **Missing Travellers**: The characters are investigating rumours of travellers going missing in the locality. The party could have been hired to search for a specific someone, or they may have been hired to stop the ongoing disappearances (perhaps by the local authorities.) They stumble upon the cannibal druid's lair while following a promising set of tracks.
- **Savage Storm**: A savage storm pummels the area. As the winds rage and the rain pummels the land, jagged forks of lightning light up the sky. Staying in the open is clearly dangerous, and the characters search for shelter. In a stroke of good (or perhaps bad) luck, the characters stumble upon the cannibal druid's lair.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Cannibal Druid of the Scorned Forest. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use this below to determine what the character learns.

1. An old, mad and hideously ugly man lives in the deep woods, far from civilisation. Vague and unwholesome rumours circulate about the man, and no one has a good word to say about him.
2. Travellers have been going missing on a major woodland track linking several settlements of late in increasing numbers. The road has always been dangerous, but now travellers are grouping together for mutual protection.
3. The woodlands around here are ancient places populated by nature spirits and capricious fey. They remain a dangerous wilderness.
4. The local lord is aware of strange doings in the woods and the increasing disappearances. However, as long as they keep getting their required taxes and tithes from the merchants who can afford to travel with mercenary guards, it's not worth doing anything about it.
5. Old ruins of a lost civilisation lie beneath the forest's ancient, numberless boughs. Some say elves used to live within, while others mutter the fey still claim the place as their own.
6. Sometimes—in the depths of the wood, far from the possibility of any aid—the trees themselves come alive and devour those daring to invade the forest's deepest, most primal reaches.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The Surrounding Locality

Tal Nar's home lies in a dense swath of isolated, hilly woodland miles from the nearest settlement. However, his home lies close to an important track used by merchants and travellers. The track is the quickest route between two settlements. Dense woodland flanks the track, and in several places, it runs between steep-sided hills and through a narrow valley. It is in these hard-to-escape places that Tal normally strikes.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Old, hoary trees grow thick and close to the trail. The tree's boughs crowd together high overhead casting this section of track into deep gloom.
2. A tumbled pile of moss-choked stones lies under and about an immense oak tree. Close investigation reveal marks on the stone typical of stoneworking but that the marks are tiny.
3. Game trails cut a winding path through the woodlands. They all lead downhill to a marshy hollow wherein lies a large pond of muddy, foul water. Many animal tracks—deer, wolf and bear—mar the pond's muddy banks.
4. The howl of a distant wolf reaches the characters' ears. A few moments later, another wolf takes up the howl—this time on the other side of the party.
5. A slick wall of grey stone rises from the forest floor. The zenith of this natural outcrop lies about 30 feet above the characters' heads. From there, a climber can get a good view of the immediate surroundings—even if that primarily comprises nothing more than dense woodland.
6. An old yew tree stands upon a steep, crumbling earthen bank. Its roots—frozen like petrified serpents—writhe forth from the thick, dark earth.
7. A tree has partly fallen across the trail but was caught by an opposite neighbour. The characters must duck under the fallen tree, which crosses diagonally over the path. Paranoid characters may suspect a trap.
8. Here, the trees seem to press in on one another, and it is dark and gloomy. Fallen branches litter the otherwise bare ground, making going slow and difficult.
9. An old stone monolith wreathed in thick creepers and moss rears from the forest floor. If the characters clear away the fecund growths, they see delicate, tiny carvings of innumerable forest creatures decorate the stone.
10. The pathway leads to the banks of a swift stream. A fallen tree lies across the ten-feet-wide stream. It is obvious that someone has hacked away all the tree's branches so that its bare trunk forms a serviceable bridge. The path continues on the other bank.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. Drag marks in the forest's thick, damp earth lead off deeper into the wilderness. A skilled tracker spots a mostly obscured set of tracks under the first set—as if someone was dragging someone else through the forest. The tracks lead toward Tal's home.
2. An arrow juts from a tree trunk. Judging by its appearance, it has been here for only a week or so.
3. A small abandoned campsite sits at the centre of a dense stand of trees. The camp comprises two tents, a small (well-constructed) fire pit and an empty crude drying rack set up for furs and the like.
4. A sodden backpack lies under a bush. It contains mouldering clothes, several parcels of rotten food, a flask of good brandy and a rough map of the locality.
5. The near skeletal remains of a man sit with his back to a tree trunk. Judging by his clothes, he was a forester. The man is missing a leg and tried to stem the bleeding with a tourniquet. His backpack's (worthless) contents are strewn on the ground around him. His pouch holds 12 cp and 7 sp.
6. Deep tracks show where a large group of wolves passed by. The tracks are evident to everyone, but only a skilled tracker can determine that these are wolf tracks and that they were left within the last few days.
7. Lightning struck this scorched, dead tree sometime in the recent past. A character gazing up at the tree's branches sees the blackened, rotting corpse of a man tied to a high-up branch. Investigation requires climbing into the tree and reveals the man purposefully tied himself to the tree to stop himself from falling. The few silver coins in the man pouch are fused together by the lightning strike.
8. A keen-eared character hears what sounds like a faint, high-pitched tittering from behind the party. Investigation reveals no one lurking nearby.
9. A wolf's skull perches atop an old spear driven deep into the ground. Wisps of fur yet cling to the skull, but it has evidently been here for quite some time.
10. A battle was fought here—at least, that's what the churned-up ground, numerous bloodstains and confused tracks suggest. Characters searching the area find a battleaxe in good condition along with a mildewed sack holding 137 sp and 48 cp dumped under a bush. (Determine the details of the tracks based on your design of the cannibal druid's lair—this was the last stand of a group of neophyte adventurers who did not survive his pets' attentions.)

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **The Scorned Approaches**: Tracks crisscross this area of low-lying, boggy ground.
2. **Chamber of the Favoured One**: Herein dwells the cannibal druid's favoured and largest pet.
3. **Aberrant Statues**: Two statues, laboriously crafted by the mad cannibal druid to depict atavistic nature spirits, watch over this chamber.
4. **The Den**: A pack of the cannibal druid's pets dwell here. They also serve as his "watchdogs".
5. **Larder of the Cannibal Druid**: If any of Tal's victims survive his initial assault, he keeps them here—until he or his pets grow hungry.
6. **Chamber of the Cannibal Druid**: The cannibal druid dwells in this noisome, dank chamber.
7. **Treasures of the Cannibal Druid**: The cannibal druid has taken many trinkets and suchlike from his victims. He keeps such treasures here.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

Smell: A musty smell redolent with the scents of earth, sweat, wet fur and excrement hangs in the air throughout much of the cannibal druid's lair.

Ceilings: The ceiling height varies widely throughout the dungeon. In most places, however, it is between six and 13 feet high.

Walls: The walls are of natural stone and riddled with small fissures, ledges and the like. Characters can scale the walls with the normal chance of success.

Doors: The dungeon's wooden doors are crudely made affairs, and most do not fit the space they fill well. The doors are easy to force open and have many gaps in them, meaning a cautious character can see through to what lies beyond.

Floors: The dungeon's floors are of rough and uneven stone. In most places, the floor is essentially flat, although here and there, small dips and rises hinder easy movement. In such places, the floor is difficult terrain.

Escarpments: The escarpments dotted throughout the dungeon are between five and ten feet high. Characters can easily scale an escarpment unless they are in a high-stress situation such as combat.

Rough-Hewn Stairs: The dungeon's rough-hewn stone steps follow the contours of the ground. Thus, they are irregular and uneven. Squares contain rough-hewn stairs are difficult terrain.

Rubble: Small piles of rubble cover scattered parts of the floor; such areas are difficult terrain.

Dungeon Dressing

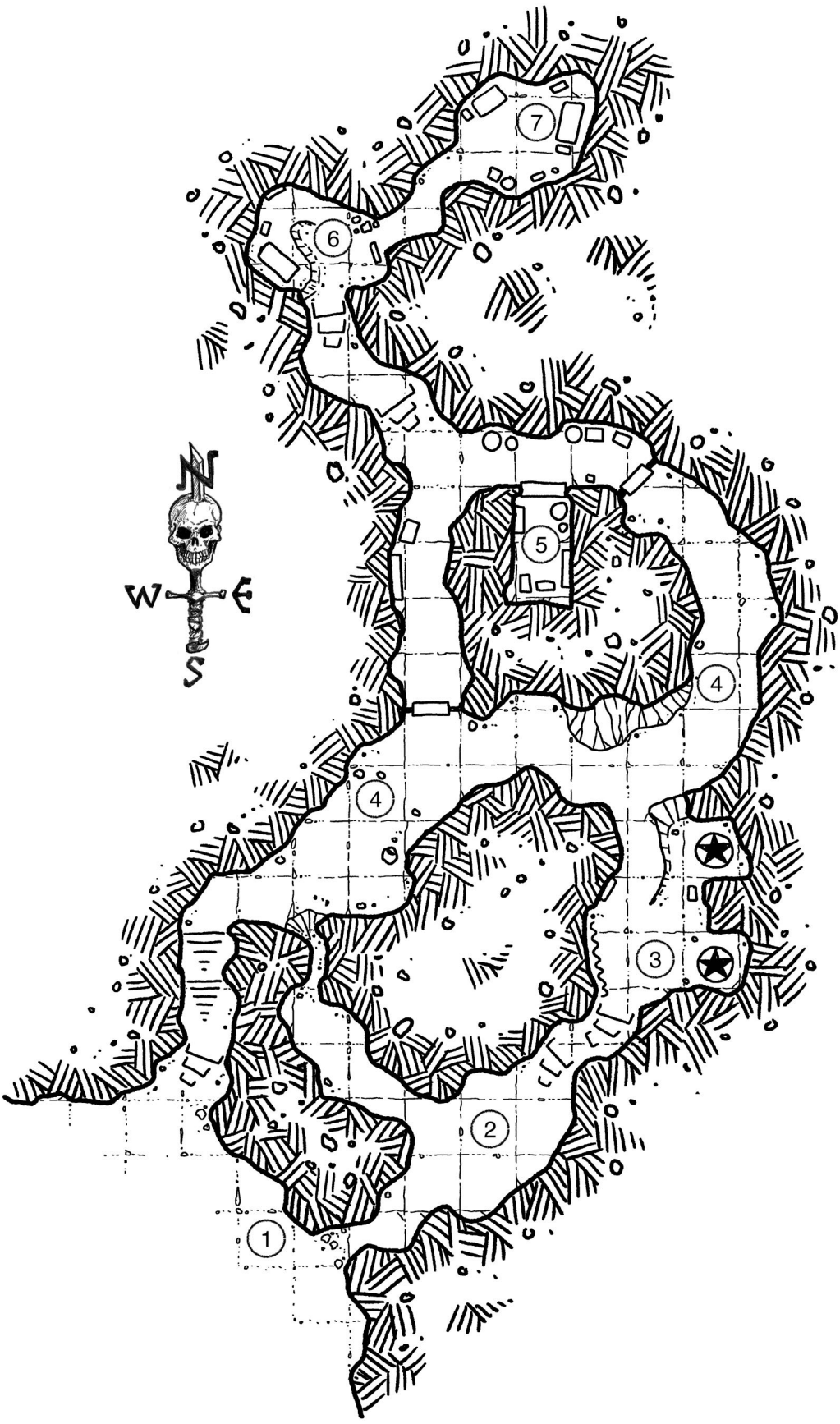
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Water trickles from a large crack cutting through a wall at roughly head height. The water oozes over a small ledge before falling—mostly—into a rusty iron pot.
2. A score or so tiny sleeping black bats hang from the ceiling. The bats sway gently in a soft, subtle breeze.
3. Scratches on the uneven stone floor show where something large once sharpened its claws.
4. A pile of filthy, sodden clothes—perhaps once belonging to a woodsman or hunter—lies balled up against a wall.
5. Two dusty, grimy cobwebs fill narrow niches in the ceiling and a wall. Tiny black spiders scuttle about within. Both of the niches are quite deep but hold nothing of interest.
6. A pile of stones—gathered from the nearby floor—leans drunkenly against a wall. The nearby uneven floor is clear of debris.
7. Patches of fur—perhaps wolf or bear—are snagged on a couple of sharp protrusions jutting from a wall at the narrowest part of the area.
8. A small, muddy puddle fills a hollow in the floor. Characters stepping into it discover it is quite deep.
9. The distant clatter of falling stones heralds a minor rock fall or, perhaps, something knocking over a pile of rocks.
10. Large, crude images drawn on the wall with excrement and blood depict strange humanoids with antlers growing from their heads.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A single chewed boot lies on its side. The boot has a secret compartment in its heel containing a lock pick and three shiny gold coins.
2. A bloody handprint—probably a human's—mars a wall. The print is smeared as if whoever left it was being dragged further into the dungeon.
3. A dagger with dried blood on its blade lies in a shadowy overhang. The dagger is plain and nothing special.
4. Deep scratches on a wall depict a small humanoid figure with antlers on its head.
5. Yellowish moss covers a damp swath of wall. The swath of moss is harmless.
6. A cracked wooden holy symbol showing a stylised moon with a face fills a niche in the wall. This is the Mother's holy sigil.
7. Slimy green mould grows across the ceiling. The slimy mould is harmless.
8. Scratches cover a low section of the wall.
9. An almost empty quiver holds five silvered arrows.
10. A dropped, ripped pouch holds 13 sp and 4 gp.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GM Notes

***Tracks**: The tracks in location 1 should provide meaningful clues as to what the the characters will face inside the dungeon. Remember that the cannibal druid likely has two kinds of pet: one group dwells in location 4 while a larger, solitary and more powerful animal dwells in location 2.*

***The Favoured One**: This large creature could be a bear or other large predator. Depending on the cannibal druid's power he could have charmed an owlbear in some way or forced or bribed an ogre to serve him. This large creature likely has some treasure in its lair.*

***Bloodspawn Treants**: In the deep woodlands, the crazed shaman of the Bleached Skull Gnolls warp slumbering treants with their living sacrifices. Such treants develop an unquenchable thirst for blood.*

1: The Scorned Approaches

Tracks crisscross this area of low-lying, boggy ground.

Two cave mouths pierce the cliff beyond a swath of boggy, muddy ground covered in animal tracks. A set of rough stone steps leading up into darkness fill the northernmost passage.

Boggy Ground: A swath of boggy ground lies in front of the entrances to the cannibal druid's lair. The ground is slippery and squelchy; it is difficult terrain.

Tracks: A profusion of animal tracks crisscross the area. A skilled tracker can determine what animals made the tracks and might even spot Tal's footprints among them.

2: Chamber of the Favoured One

Herein dwells the cannibal druid's favoured and largest pet.

The smell of wet fur, excrement and other things fills the air. Sticks, scraps of cloth, bones and so on cover the floor.

Detritus-Strewn Floor: Areas of the floor where the pet's detritus and leavings are deep and piled are difficult terrain.

The Nest: Whatever dwells here sleeps on a pile of branches, clothes and bones in the narrow northwestern part of the cave.

3: Aberrant Statues

Two statues, laboriously crafted by the mad cannibal druid to depict atavistic nature spirits, watch over this chamber.

Two horrible statues—nightmarish creatures of bones, sticks and other things stand on a ledge overlooking the rest of the cavern. A tapestry—seemingly woven from hair—hangs on the opposite wall.

Aberrant Statues: These terrible statues—products of Tal's fevered and deranged dreaming and imaginings are a sanity-shaking amalgamation of gnawed bones, rotting branches, animal skin and other unidentifiable things.

- **Northern Statue**: This statue is meant to depict a dryad, but the dryad has twisted horns jutting from its forehead. It is a mockery of these shy woodland spirits.
- **Southern Statue**: Crafted mainly from wood, this statue is meant to depict a treant, but Tal has hung several bleached skulls from its branches. A character steeped in nature lore can identify the thing as a representation of a bloodspawn treant.

Blasphemous Tapestry: Woven from the hair of Tal's uncountable victims, this horrible tapestry depicts a macabre, poorly rendered and crudely detailed woodland scene. Tal has used his victims' hair to weave portentous and malign shadows into the primal woodland scene. A character examining the tapestry closely spots several faint outlines of oddly-shaped humanoids lurking in the deep shadows below the trees.

4: The Den

A pack of the cannibal druid's pets dwell here. They also serve as his "watchdogs".

Drifts of chewed bones of uncountable creatures, scraps of cloth and gnawed, rotting and rusting equipment covered the rocky floor of this cave.

Detritus-Strewn Floor: Areas of the floor where the pets' detritus and leavings are deep and piled are difficult terrain.

Gnawed Bones: Characters examining the bones easily determine that the remains of many animals and humanoids are scattered about the cave. Much equipment—most of it gnawed beyond use—is intermingled with the bones. Characters searching through the bones, boxes and crates may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. Scraps of bloody, rough-spun fabric—likely belonging to a hunter or peasant—are intermingled among the bones.
2. A chewed, knee-high leather boot hides a scabbard, which yet holds a poniard.
3. The scraps of this leather necklace still bear wisps of the coloured threads that once decorated the whole.
4. A forgotten clay vial daubed in yellow paint and decorated with a rising run sigil lies under a pile of bones. The vial holds holy water.
5. A coin pouch lies under a gnawed leather belt. The pouch holds 7 cp and 1 sp.
6. A slender, dirty silver ring (worth 25 gp) lies amid the bones. Faint engraving on the ring's inner band reads, "Lusia and Sipro".

5: Larder of the Cannibal Druid

If any of Tal's victims survive his initial assault, he keeps them here—until he or his pets grow hungry.

The smell of sweat, excrement and fear well out of this small chamber. Two dishevelled humans sit on the floor.

Barred Door: This strong wooden door opens outwards and is barred. Removing the bar is a simple matter.

Boxes & Crates: Empty boxes, crates and barrels stand about the wall of this chamber.

Prisoners: The cannibal druid keeps two terrified captives in his larder.

- **Sampsa Kari** (NG male human) served a merchant, Teemu Otava, as a mercenary guard. He has been here for two weeks—the merchant (a plump, ripe fellow) fed Tal and his pets a week ago. Sampsa has been savagely beaten and is in no condition to fight.
- **Marke Jurva** (N young female human) wandered into the woods in search of nuts, berries and mushrooms and fell into the cannibal druid's clutches. She is catatonic with fear.

GM Notes

***"Watchdogs"**: Location 4 is ideally suited to a pack of animals; wolves or feral dogs are the obvious choice. However, the cannibal druid could also have an affinity for bats or spiders— swarms of them could lurk on the ceiling.*

***Missing Travellers**: If you are using the Missing Travellers adventure hook any survivors likely languish in location 5. Survivors will have seen the cannibal druid and his pets dine upon their companions and will be terrified. All will be eternally grateful to be rescued.*

GM Notes

If you want the cannibal druid to present more of a challenge consider making Tal a werewolf or vampire.

If the characters find the cannibal druid's carven map consider adding some hitherto unknown locales to augment the characters' knowledge of nearby sites ripe for adventure and exploration.

***Tal's Treasures**: Design appropriate treasures for your campaign and the characters.*

6: Chamber of the Cannibal Druid

The cannibal druid dwells in this noisome, dank chamber.

A crude bed stands atop a small escarpment in the western part of this cave. A scattering of broken crates and the like part-block a passageway leading east.

Ceiling: This chamber's ceiling is 15 feet high at its highest point. However, the ceiling of the passageway to the east is only about six feet high.

Carven Map: Decorating the wall behind Tal's bed, this carven map represents his knowledge of the nearby environs. It shows all major hills, valleys, streams, rivers, and settlements. It could also show potential adventuring sites, the locations of various tribal lairs, monsters' dens and so on.

Bed: Here sleeps Tal. His bed is a foul thing covered in old blankets and the like. It is riddled with fleas and lice.

Boxes & Crates: These boxes and crates are in poor repair, and Tal has dumped them here to stop his pets from wandering into his treasury (location 7). The pile is easily pushed aside.

7: Treasures of the Cannibal Druid

The cannibal druid has taken many trinkets and suchlike from his victims. He keeps such treasures here.

Boxes, crates and two wooden chests stand around the walls of this small cavern.

Ceiling: The ceiling is barely six feet high.

Boxes & Crates: Tal keeps anything he thinks might be valuable or useful in this cave. It is his treasury. The boxes and crates are a glorious riot of disorganisation. Clothes, mundane equipment and other odds and ends are here in great profusion.

Characters searching through the boxes and crates may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. This black bearskin cloak, in good condition, is sized for an individual almost seven feet tall. It is heavy, cumbersome and incredibly warm.
2. Four pouches hang from a broad brown belt. The pouches are filled with spell components. Perhaps a rare or expensive component, such as a pearl, lies within.
3. This pair of fine brown leather boots is sized for a human. They are supple, well worn and waterproof.
4. This plain longsword of severe—even brutal—design has a keen edge. Its scabbard is missing.
5. Wrapped in a bundle of rags, this sharp-edged silver sickle could cut an unwary searcher's fingers.
6. This longbow is six feet tall and crafted from beautifully stained yew. It is missing its string but in otherwise excellent condition.

Chests: These old but sturdy wooden chests hold Tal's greatest treasures—some are even valuable!

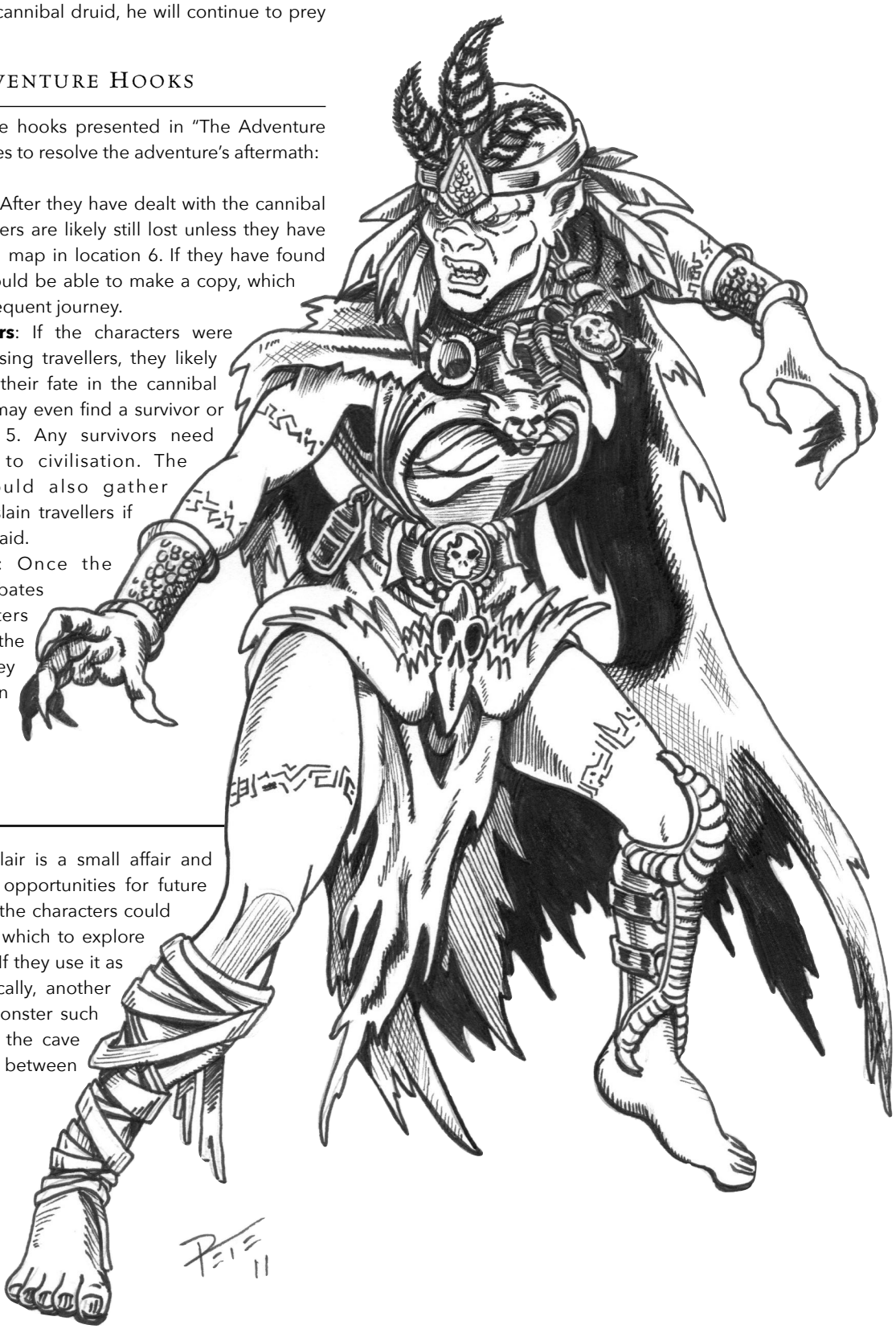
Aftermath

After the characters have dealt with the cannibal druid, his lair will likely fade from the campaign. However, if the characters do not stop the mad cannibal druid, he will continue to prey on travellers.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Hopelessly Lost**: After they have dealt with the cannibal druid, the characters are likely still lost unless they have found Tal's carven map in location 6. If they have found the map, they should be able to make a copy, which will aid their subsequent journey.
- **Missing Travellers**: If the characters were searching for missing travellers, they likely find evidence of their fate in the cannibal druid's lair. They may even find a survivor or two in location 5. Any survivors need escorting back to civilisation. The characters should also gather evidence of the slain travellers if they want to get paid.
- **Savage Storm**: Once the savage storm abates and the characters have dealt with the cannibal druid, they can continue on their way.



Further Adventures

The cannibal druid's lair is a small affair and does not offer many opportunities for future adventures. However, the characters could use it as a base from which to explore the surrounding area. If they use it as a camp only sporadically, another druid or perhaps a monster such as an owlbear claims the cave complex as its own between the group's visits.

Appendix 1: Half-Goblins

Men whisper that ghosts of an elder age stalk the deepest, unknowable reaches of the Lonely Coast's ancient woodlands. Along with the forsaken holy places and forts of a long-fallen elder civilisation, a debased and twisted race—half-goblins —haunts the forest's deepest thickets. The mongrel descendants of a human tribe subjugated by goblins centuries ago, they are bitter, evil folk. Never numerous and dedicated to dark powers, they skulk about civilisation's fringe, weaving terrible plots to destroy their neighbours.

Half-goblin clans dwell deep in the Tangled Wood, in places well hidden from the prying eyes of their enemies. They often choose defensible caverns, but the elder places of the world—places where ancient peoples raised mighty temples or high fortresses— also attract them.

Half-Goblin Lore

A character recognising a half-goblin might know additional information about the creature:

- This creature is a half-goblin. A debased and twisted mongrel race, they dwell in secluded, wild places. They hate humans and goblins with equal vigour.
- Half-goblins are stealthy and fleet of foot. They can see in pitch darkness and are skilled riders.
- Half-goblins normally worship Braal.

Ecology & Society

Although thoroughly evil and despicable, half-goblins have nevertheless developed a tight-knit, hierarchical society. Assailed by innumerable external threats, half-goblins have learnt personal survival and advancement depend on that of the clan.

Half-goblins dwell in small clans—little more than extended family groups—of no more than forty individuals. Although the clans compete among themselves for glory and wealth, contact and trade between groups are brisk and relatively peaceful. An elder, assisted by the learned folk of the clan, rules each clan. Groups of clans, in turn, make up a tribe. No one individual rules the tribe except in times of great crisis or war. Normally, clan elders form a council which loosely directs the tribe's activities.

Relations: Half-goblins hate all other races, viewing them as potential aggressors. In particular, they hate goblins (who hunt them) and humans (who treat them as normal goblins to be killed on sight).

Alignment and Religion: Half-goblins are sadistic, hate-filled creatures concerned only with the survival and advancement of their clan at the expense of others. In the main, they worship Braal (NE god of hate, malice and revenge) a few worship fell demonic powers or the ancient, atavistic spirits of the woodland in which they dwell. Others stray toward lawful evil. Most such individuals dream of uniting the disparate clans under a strong leader (normally themselves) and scourging the Tangled Wood clear of both the human and goblin infestations.

Wandering Half-Goblins

Most wandering half-goblins are outcasts from their tribe for some reason and, fleeing some terrible punishment, are forced to endure human civilisation's perils. Perhaps their outlook on life is different to their brethren, or maybe the same burning hatred for humankind does not surge through their veins.

Few half-goblins wander the world without a compelling reason. The more learned folk among them—clerics and druids mainly—search for ancient knowledge and power. The life of an itinerant wanderer suits them very well as it enables them to plunder ancient sites of power and accumulate power and wealth.

Alternatively, raiding goblins could have destroyed the half-goblin's clan. Finally, a half-goblin could have fled their home to escape death at the hands of their enemies or rivals. In both cases, perhaps they wander to gain enough power to return and crush their enemies.

Most wandering half-goblins fall into the small portion of the race that can pass for a human.

Learn More

More information about half-goblins appears in *The Lonely Coast*—a mini-campaign setting from Raging Swan Press.

Craghollow Mine

Forests & Woodlands, Lonely Coast, Secret Name

The old lead mine of Craghollow lies somewhere deep in the Tangled Woods. Long has humanity toiled here to bring its iridescent black ore to the surface, and long has it suffered for the privilege. The last owners, the Red Rubric society, were cultists of Braal who fell foul of marauding goblins. Now, several parties seek Craghollow Mine and the foul secrets the cultists may have hidden in its cursed depths.

Dungeon Background

Long before it became the toxic pit known as Craghollow Mine, the cavern hidden in the Tangled Wood was shelter for primitive humans seeking escape from the terrible beasts roaming the land. Their desperate need to survive drove them into the darkness beneath the earth, to dwell among bats and vermin. Here, the tribe's darkest hopes and fears awoke a black-winged primeval horror which would cast its long, dark shadow over the Lonely Coast for millennia to come. They named it Daudrabaoth the Death-Bat who watched over them with a thousand eyes. But the fell protection of their bat god carried a terrible price. Centuries later, insanity, isolation and inbreeding turned the followers of Daudrabaoth into cannibalistic, blood-drinking savages. The ancient Tuath waged war upon these degenerates, hunting them down to the last man, woman and child in an effort to eradicate the Bat God's vile brood. This attempted genocide only served to scatter the servants of Daudrabaoth, who then spread their foul influence throughout the Lonely Coast.

It would be several more centuries until adventurers from Oakhurst re-discovered the fallen tribe's ancestral lair. Finding rich veins of lead and silver ore inside, they named it Craghollow Mine. Using advanced fire-setting techniques, dousing heated rock with vinegar, the miners dug deep into the hillside, excavating tons of iridescent black ore to take back to Oakhurst, where its metals were extracted. The chemical reaction of vinegar and heated lead ore within the mine, however, created a highly toxic dust which slowly drove the miners mad. Many years and many lost lives later, Craghollow Mine's largest veins were depleted, and the mine was abandoned. Its ownership transferred to Ravin Wearne who soon sold it to a society called the Red Rubric—suspected followers of Braal, god of hatred and malice. Before long, however, the cult's heinous rituals attracted the attention of the goblins who dwelt in the Tangled Wood. A concerted attack by several goblin tribes razed the old mining camp and slaughtered the cultists who sought refuge in the mine. Thus, the Red Rubric was condemned to the annals of history.

Stocking the Dungeon

When choosing adversaries to populate Craghollow Mine, goblins are probably the first creatures to spring to mind. Nevertheless, consider the possibility of a different, more dangerous threat making its lair in the old mine. Perhaps the cult of the Red Rubric isn't extinct. Or maybe echoes of their blasphemous rituals have summoned some terrible evil. Undead are also a good fit for the mine.

Living creatures dwelling in or near Craghollow Mine are also likely to suffer the effects of lead poisoning. Symptoms range from tremors, memory loss and cognitive defects all the way through to violent delirium.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on Craghollow Mine by happenstance and decide to explore it on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lead the characters to the mine:

A Silver Lining: The grizzled half-orc Takhaarr (CG male half-orc fighter 4) throws a severed human hand and a bloodied purse of coins (50 gp) at the characters' feet. His gruff voice breaking with barely restrained rage, Takhaarr explains it's all that's left of his companions. *"There's an evil in Oakhurst"*, he says, *"but to defeat it, I need warriors to accompany me to Craghollow Mine. Accept, and the gold is yours."* Takhaarr reveals no more for now, claiming that the evil has eyes and ears everywhere.

What's Mine is Yours: Sliding a glistening chunk of silver ore across the table, notorious barfly Rollo Varn (N male human) asks to hire the characters to clear Craghollow Mine—an abandoned silver mine he inherited from his father. Rollo explains he's a little coin-shy currently, but promises the party can keep half of whatever they carry from the mine. They can keep the nugget as a down payment; it's worth 20 gp.

Fevered Goblins: Goblin raids on Oakhurst have grown increasingly frequent over the past weeks. The raiders' mad, attacks, combined with their strange pallor, suggest they are diseased. When the characters reveal themselves as adventurers, they are swarmed by panicked villagers begging them to track down the diseased raiders. The raiders' tracks lead north and can be easily followed to Craghollow Mine.

Whispers & Rumours

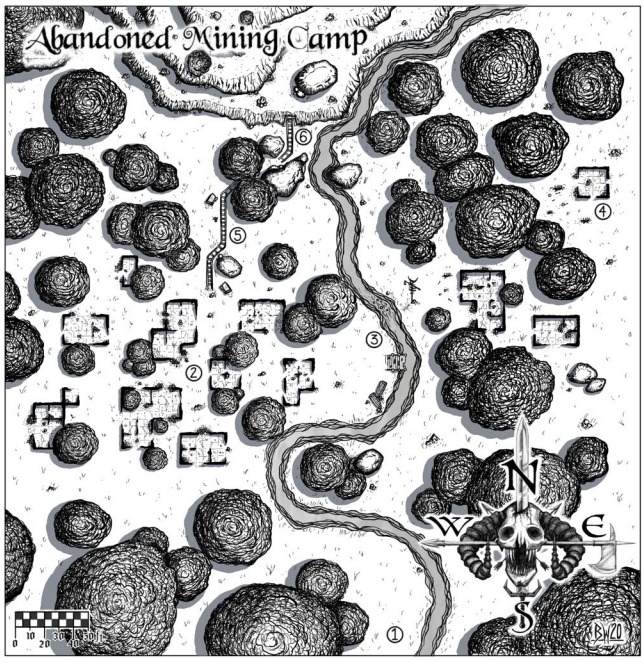
A character may learn one or more rumours from the list below. The character can learn this information in several ways: by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

1. My grandfather told stories of a sugar mine deep in the forest. That's right—all sugar-dusted rocks, sweet as honey, he said! Then again, grandpa was mad as a bat...
2. When the mine was found, its walls were decked with ancient paintings of twisted spirals and maimed limbs. No one dared touch them for fear of inviting some horrible curse.
3. The old silver mine? Why would anyone want to go there? Even before it was played out, they say something horrible inside sent all the miners insane!
4. Ever heard of the Red Rubric? Supposedly, they were some cult dedicated to Braal. It's said they made their lair inside the mine after it was abandoned.
5. The goblins are afraid. There's something in the woods that's gotten them spooked, and I'll be damned if it doesn't have something to do with that old mine!
6. Sure, they said it was a silver mine. But the ore brought back to Oakhurst was black as midnight!

The Surrounding Locality

The old lead mine pierces a sparse-grown hill deep in the Tangled Wood. Surrounding its entrance are the fire-scorched ruins of a mining camp briefly inhabited by the Red Rubric before goblins razed it to the ground. The characters are likely to approach this area from the south (area 1), especially if they've been following the goblin tracks from the Fevered Goblins adventure hook.

1. **Goblin Trail**: Shallow tracks in the mud betray the recent passing of a dozen individuals wearing hobnailed boots. A successful tracking roll confirms these are goblin tracks.
2. **Mining Camp Ruins**: Whether they are still inhabited or not, these bone-strewn ruins are a perfect ambush site.
3. **Ford and Jetty**: The jetty and two nearby skiffs are rotting beneath a shroud of dark moss. A grisly totem comprising a blue-tinged skeleton lashed to a T-beam topped with an aurochs' skull looms across the shallow ford. Half-devoured carcasses lie scattered nearby.
4. **Mad Bear's Den**: A ferocious bear claims the east bank as its territory. Years of feeding on lead-poisoned prey have rotted its brain to the point of violent insanity, and its mangy, scarred form is only barely recognisable as a bear. It lairs in the northeast building, surrounded by the decaying remains of its prey.
5. **Rusted Rail Track**: This part of the track is almost completely overgrown. The two mine carts lying nearby are serviceable, however. With some effort, the carts can be dragged to the mine's entrance, where they can be lifted onto the rails. A cart is large enough to fit three Medium-sized creatures.
6. **Craghollow Mine Entrance**: This location corresponds to location 1 of the mine.



Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail into the mine's surrounds:

1. Faint smoke drifts from a campfire quenched not long ago. The soggy ashes stink of goblin urine.
2. Impaled on a crude spike trap is the decayed corpse of a long-dead adventurer. A dull, grey-blue sheen covers what few teeth remain in the skull.
3. Startled by a salvo of savage war cries sounding from dangerously near, a flock of ravens suddenly takes wing.
4. An open camouflaged trapdoor reveals a narrow tunnel barely wide enough to fit a Small creature. Investigation reveals the tunnel is part of a vast network of goblin tunnels stretching beneath the woods.
5. Scores of blackbirds are nailed to tree trunks using crude iron nails. Of the birds, 1d6 yet live.
6. A massive oak, whose gnarled bark resembles a human face, towers over the nearby shrubs. Half-absorbed into its trunk are 1d3 votive gifts to unknown Tuath gods.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search the surrounds. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A crude axe comprising an iron head lashed to a notched thighbone haft. The bone is stained a dull, greyish blue.
2. A brittle bronze-like face mask resembling a human skull. A close examination confirms the alloy was made using lead instead of tin.
3. A rotted leather satchel contains 2d4 concrete sling bullets made from crushed limestone mixed with brain matter. They shatter upon impact.
4. A dozen blue-tinged goblin skulls heaped in a shallow ditch. They all show signs of trepanning.
5. A primitive stick figure made from hazel twigs tied with string hangs from a dead branch. Another 3d6 can be found dangling from as many withered boughs nearby.
6. A haunch of putrid meat crawls with maggots. The small bite marks covering its surface are less than a day old.

A Bad Case of the Blues

A character skilled at healing can confirm the blue tinge on the bones and teeth found near the mine is the result of prolonged exposure to high quantities of lead. In addition, if you used the Fevered Goblin adventure hook, this suggests the goblins' madness is caused by lead poisoning.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The mine has several notable locations:

1. **Adit**: This is the mine's only entrance.
2. **Primitive Caverns**: These locations are the ancient refuge of the Bat God's fallen tribe.
3. **Main Stope**: This long tunnel followed a rich vein of ore.
4. **Fountain Room**: The characters find an important letter hidden in one of this room's gargoyle heads.
5. **Storeroom**: Yellow mould infests this disused room.
6. **Bronze Door**: This heavy, locked door protects area 9.
7. **Scriptorium**: Here were birthed many blasphemous books of hideous lore.
8. **Ritual Chamber**: Echoes of black magic still linger in this sacrificial chamber.
9. **Chapel of Castigation**: Steeped in magical darkness, a false prophet's corpse guards the Red Rubric's secrets.

Architecture & Environment

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: A primeval, chthonic darkness fills the mine

Ceiling: Water perpetually drips from cracks in the ceiling.

Unworked Stone Walls (Areas 1-3): The walls are clammy and smooth to the touch, yet pocked with all manner of nooks and crannies.

Hewn Stone Walls (Areas 4-9): These walls are rough, riddled with tiny insect-ridden fissures and easy to climb.

Natural Stone Floors (Areas 1-3): Rough and uneven, these floors are difficult terrain.

Hewn Stone Floors (Areas 4-9): Covered in gravel, earth and debris these floors are treacherous. Characters running or charging here may slip and fall.

Doors: These sturdy wooden doors are warped with age. Once opened, these stuck doors do not close properly.

Sugar Dust: A fine, white dust resembling powdered sugar covers almost everything in the mine. A dwarf, gnome or character with a mining background knows it is lead diacetate (see "Lead Cause of Death").

Lead Cause of Death

The fine "sugar dust" covering the rocks is lead diacetate: a sweet-tasting, yet highly toxic compound created when lead reacts with acetic acid. It is an unfortunate side-effect of fire-setting, a common mining practice where heated rock is shattered by dousing with cold vinegar. The acidic vapours settled upon the lead-rich black ore, creating a poisonous dust. It takes several weeks of exposure before any significant effects of lead poisoning begin to set it, but there's no need to tell the players that—better to let them worry..

Dungeon Dressing

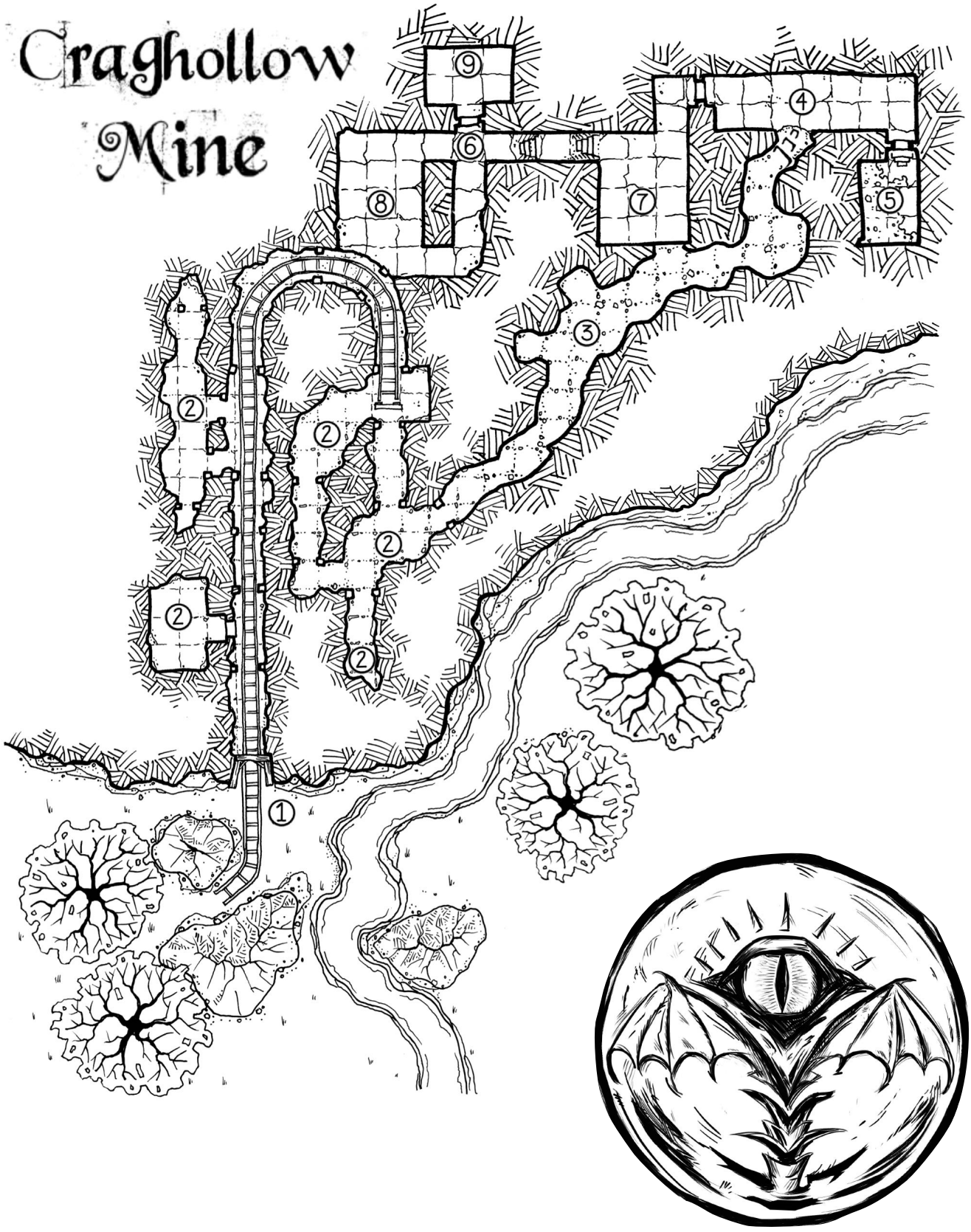
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. A slate-grey spider twitching uncontrollably at the centre of an irregular, crooked web, dusted with white powder.
2. A mangy brown rat guarding its meal angrily hisses at the characters. A closer look reveals it's eating its own tail.
3. A trickle of water drips onto a large patch of pale blue moss thriving over the black ore studding the rock.
4. Vibrations caused by a character's footsteps loosen a shower of fine white dust and debris from the ceiling.
5. A pair of thin limestone columns stretch from floor to ceiling, hindering progress. Characters can either destroy them (which makes a lot of noise) or squeeze past (squares containing the columns are difficult terrain).
6. Images of bat-winged humanoids dancing along an endless spiral are scratched into the walls. While resembling the cave paintings in location 2, they look far more recent.
7. Viscid oil leaks from an old barrel, forming a ten-foot square dark, sticky puddle. If lit, it burns for 2d6 rounds, inflicting 1d4 fire damage on creatures in the puddle.
8. Three deep, parallel gouges run across the wall as if some huge monster dragged its claws across the stone.
9. Intricate, yet strangely erratic patterns have been drawn in the white dust. They can be traced to a large white snail with a misshapen blue-grey shell.
10. A great bat-winged shadow detaches itself from the gloom and swiftly glides towards a random character. The apparition disappears, when it touches the character.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search the mine. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A large chunk of black ore, streaked with veins of almost pure silver. It weighs 50 lbs. and is worth 2d4x10 gp.
2. A stack of empty burlap sacks, covered in white dust.
3. An oversized pickaxe, clearly intended for a Large creature. Medium creatures can wield it, with two hands, with a -4 penalty on to hit rolls. The pickaxe inflicts 2d8 piercing damage. It weighs 12 lbs.
4. A sturdy iron lantern with a short, hooked chain which enables it to be attached to a shield or pole arm.
5. A small, dented birdcage contains a tiny bird's skeleton.
6. A rusted kettle helm with 2d6 half-melted candle stubs perched on its wide metal brim.
7. A wave-bladed dagger wedged inside a crack in the wall. A character can yank the blade free, with a bit of effort.
8. A sack of crude salt containing a mummified human head with a silver piece wedged into each eye socket.
9. Seven odd-shaped bone dice stained a dull blue-grey.
10. A sealed clay jar filled with rancid grease. The jar shatters when thrown, mimicking the effects of a vial or oil.


Craghollow
Mine
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GM Notes

***Random Cavern Features**: Here's an example for determining the contents of one of the Primitive Caverns detailed in location 2: if you roll a 3 and a 4, the area contains both stalactites and abandoned tools. If you roll a double 2, it contains bloodthirsty bats. Make a brief note on the map in case the characters return to the area later.*

***Cave Paintings**: If Takhaarr (See "The Adventure Begins: A Silver Lining") is with the party, the half-orc takes a particular interest in the cave paintings found in the Primitive Caverns, though he doesn't reveal why. See "Aftermath" for details of Takhaarr's quest.*

1: Adit

This is the mine's only entrance.

The faint glimmer of light reflecting from the rails ahead reveals a long, sloping tunnel leading into darkness. Though rusted, the iron tracks still seem serviceable.

One Wild Ride: The characters can use the mine carts found outside (see "The Surrounding Locality" area 5) to swiftly traverse the tunnel. If they do so, the cart quickly gathers speed, however. Unless one character succeeds in pulling the rusted brake handle in time (a character rolling equal or under their Strength score on 3d6 succeeds), the cart jumps the bend, crashing through the wall into area 8 and inflicting 3d6 bludgeoning damage on all its the occupants (who land prone amid the wreckage).

2: Primitive Caverns (Multiple Areas)

These locations are the ancient refuge of the Bat God's tribe.

Disturbing images of winged monsters and maimed limbs painted in angry shades of red ochre and black soot decorate the walls.

Random Cavern Features: To determine the contents of each location, roll 2d4 and apply both results separately, unless a double was rolled:

1. **Disturbing Cave Paintings**: Crude images depict primitive humans engaged in acts of ritual sacrifice and self-mutilation.
    - **Double 1 (Maddening Paintings)**: A great, bat-winged shadow looms over a gathering of cowering stick figures. A scarlet eye blazes at its centre. Characters examining this image may become magically confused.
2. **Bats**: A large bat colony nests on the ceiling. The floor is slippery with their droppings. Characters running or charging here may slip and fall.
    - **Double 2 (Fluttering Bats)**: Swarms of bats flutter about the characters' heads obscuring their vision for 1d3+1 rounds before flying out of the mine.
3. **Stalactites**: The cavern ceiling bristles with a forest of sharp stone spikes.
    - **Double 3 (Fragile Stalactites)**: Every time a creature makes a loud noise, there's a 50% chance a stalactite breaks off and falls on them, inflicting some damage.
4. **Abandoned Tools**: Split mattocks and rusted pick-axes are heaped upon a pile of rubble.
    - **Double 4 (Fire-Setting Tools)**: Two intact crates sit underneath a layer of fine white dust. One contains 2d6 vials of oil.

3: Main Stope

This long tunnel followed a rich vein of ore.

Like spider webs, thin cracks and crevices cover the shimmering black walls of this narrow tunnel. Fine, chalky dust hangs suspended in the air, leaving a faint sweetness on your tongue with every breath.

Shimmering Walls: The shiny black ore reflects light, effectively doubling the range of all lights in the tunnel.

Cracks: A gnome, dwarf or character with a mining background can confirm the cracks are the result of heating and then rapidly cooling the rock.

4: Fountain Room

The characters find an important letter hidden in one of this room's gargoyle heads.

A trio of leering gargoyle heads protrude from the room's north wall. Two vomit cold spring water from their stone gullets into a shallow basin below, while the third only drools.

Gargoyle Heads: Leaded spring water feeds these ornate water spouts. Only two heads produce a steady stream; the third merely drips. A character reaching into the drooling gargoyle's throat finds a lead scroll case.

- **Scroll Case**: Unless the case is carefully opened, the brittle parchment within falls apart. It takes 2d10 minutes and a character must roll equal or under their Intelligence score on 4d6 to reassemble the crumbled scroll. It is a letter from the Red Rubric, dated over a century ago. Having angered the goblins of the Tangled Wood, the cultists requested their superiors send help from the Shard Isles. A locally knowledgeable character knows the Shard Isles are a cluster of small islets a few miles from Wolverton.

5: Storeroom

Yellow mould infests this disused room.

Pale motes slowly dance in your dim light. A sickly yellow sponge-like mass clings to the floor and walls, covering every inch of the motes' silent abode.

Yellow Mould: When the yellow mould is cleared, a search yields 1d4+1 trinkets (see "Things to Find") and six scarlet jaspers worth 20 gp each.

6: Bronze Door

This heavy, locked door protects location 9.

The relief of a cloven skull sits embossed upon the verdigris-encrusted door, a giant lock clenched between its teeth.

Bronze Door: Unless the characters possess the door's key, the lock must be picked or broken open (both with the normal chances of success).

GM Notes

***Reflected Lights**: Paranoid characters might believe the reflected lights in location 3 belong to another party of explorers. If Takhaarr (See "A Silver Lining") is with the party, the half-orc uses a dagger to pry several pieces of black ore from the walls in location 3. If asked why, he curtly replies, "Silver...maybe", but reveals no more for now. Takhaarr's quest is revealed in "Aftermath".*

***Unlocking the Door**: If the characters have already visited the Shard Isles and recovered the Master Key from Skygrave Tower, it opens the bronze door in location 6, bypassing any traps. You are considering placing a trap on this door, right?*

GM Notes

***Magic Light**: The magical light shed by the braziers in location 8 can counter the pall of darkness in location 9.*

7: Scriptorium

Here were birthed many blasphemous books of hideous lore.

Amidst an iron forest of many-limbed candelabra, a trio of dark wooden writing desks sits against the south wall. Yellowed sheets of parchment crawling with faded crimson lettering cover the floor.

Parchment: The dry parchments pose a major fire hazard. If set alight, they burn for two rounds, dealing a small amount of fire damage to any creature in the scriptorium.

Desks: These sturdy oaken desks contain an assortment of fine golden writing quills, as well as six vials of vermillion ink, worth a total of 2d6+10 gp. In addition, the characters find a scroll listing an index of over a dozen blasphemous books, all copied in this very chamber. The final entry mentions several failed attempts at copying *"The Second Sacred Syllable"*, whatever that may be.

8: Ritual Chamber

Echoes of black magic still linger in this sacrificial chamber.

Beneath the watchful gaze of an imposing skull mosaic set against the west wall, four ornate braziers surround a rectangular slab of iridescent black stone squatting low at the centre of this chamber.

Skull Mosaic: The magical wards laid upon this mosaic have lost much potency over the years. A character entering this area may suffer a head-splitting migraine until they leave. At best, a character can expect a throbbing headache.

Black Altar: Carved from a single chunk of shiny black lead ore, the altar has four deep grooves cut into its slightly convex surface. Each leads to a tiny brass spout set above one of the braziers. With a successful find concealed door roll, a character investigating the altar finds a curious ebony box hidden in a dark, shadowy recess.

Ebony Box: This flat square box is closed with a simple latch. A character lifting it feels the weight of a heavy object shift within. The box contains a crude hand-drawn map depicting a circle of standing stones atop a hill north of a coastal village. This is Swallowfeld.

Prying out the box's false bottom (a successful find concealed door roll finds) reveals a hidden compartment holding an eight-angled star amulet fashioned from brass. A message scrawled on the inside of the box's false bottom reads, "*Place on altar stone pointing east. Trace backwards".*

Braziers: These heavy iron braziers emit faint evocation magic. Each weighs 500 lbs. Up to four characters can work together to move one of the braziers. If a brazier is dragged, not lifted, a horrible screeching echoes throughout the entire mine. Weak characters are unable to move a brazier at all.

When a brazier is anointed with a drop of blood, it blazes with cold green fire, shedding light like a torch for 1d8 hours.

9: Chapel of Castigation

Steeped in magical darkness, a false prophet's corpse guards the Red Rubric's secrets.

A wall of inky blackness fills this chamber like the liquified essence of night, laced with wisps of foreboding and dread.

Darkness: The magical darkness lingering in this area functions as a permanent *darkness* spell, with its area of effect restricted to the chamber's confines. It can be *dispelled* or countered with magical light as normal, revealing the chapel's contents. When this happens, read:

Suspended from barbed hooks stretching apart the flayed skin of its back, a desiccated corpse floats in the centre of this chamber like a charnel angel. A fell brand is emblazoned upon the bare, cracked skin of its chest.

Corpse: Many broken bones jutting from beneath a latticework of scars upon his parched skin suggest this man was subjected to severe torture before death. A character closely inspecting the half-flayed corpse finds a faded skull tattoo on the neck. A cleric, paladin or other character wise in religious matters identifies it as the symbol of Braal, god of hatred and malice. Clearly, the unfortunate was a cultist. Characters able to perceive magical auras detect faint evocation magic radiating from the brand.

- **The Brand**: A wizard or cleric identifies the brand as the Abyssal runic character for "*Di*"—a vocal sound without any intrinsic meaning. When read aloud, the brand glows a hot, sullen red. After 1d3 rounds, the rune flares brightly, setting fire to the dried corpse. At the same time, the reader feels a sharp burning pain in their chest, and suffers a small amount of fire damage. Inspection reveals *Di* has been branded upon their flesh. The Abyssal brand cannot be removed by magical means, short of a *wish*. All attempts to disfigure or remove the mark are unsuccessful, as the brand magically returns within 1d12 minutes. While the hit points lost to this branding cannot be healed as long as the rune is present upon their flesh, the bearer of *Di* suffers no additional ill effects.

GM Notes

***Exploring in Darkness**: Adapt the area descriptions for any brave characters insisting on exploring location 9 without the benefit of sight.*

***The Body**: The body belongs to a renegade cultist who stole the secrets of the "Di" brand from its gilded scroll. For his transgression, he was tortured and executed, his broken body serving both as a warning and the rune's new receptacle. A pall of magical darkness ensured no-one else could read and receive the brand by accident.*

If you prefer the cultist's punishment to be particularly cruel, consider turning his corpse into a zombie with a speed of 5 feet (due to the broken leg bones).

***The Brand**: The brand bestowed by the false prophet's corpse is an adventure hook (see "Further Adventures"). The "permanent" hit point loss merely provides extra motivation for the characters to pursue this. If you or your group dislike this effect, remove it.*

Aftermath

After clearing out the Craghollow Mine, the characters are certain to have made several interesting discoveries leading to further adventures. Use the suggestions below to expand the story and continue the characters' adventures on the Lonely Coast.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used one or more of the hooks in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

A Silver Lining: As the characters prepare to return to civilisation, Takhaarr finally breaks his sombre silence and reveals his motives behind the expedition to Craghollow Mine. The half-orc produces a bloodstained copper medallion bearing the stylised image of an eye flanked by great bat wings. He explains it is an unholy symbol belonging to a cult of bat-worshipping degenerates based in Oakhurst. The Bat God's most loyal servants can take the shape of great, blood-drinking bats, and an ambush by four of them cost Takhaarr the lives of his companions. Having heard the rumours about Craghollow Mine, he wanted to examine the cave paintings to see if they held any clues to the Bat God's origins. In addition, any silver recovered from the mine could be used as a weapon against the werebats.

Takhaarr is far too proud to ask the characters for help fulfilling his vengeful quest but accepts any aid freely offered. Should the characters wish to cleanse Oakhurst of the Bat God's foul influence, Raging Swan Press' aptly named adventure module, *"Against the Cult of the Bat God",* has got you covered!

What's Mine is Yours: When the characters return to Oakhurst, they learn Rollo was arrested for having forged his family's deed to Craghollow Mine. Under threat of torture, Rollo gave false testimony, accusing the characters of having masterminded the plan to claim the old silver mine. Now, the foul inhabitants of the village are looking for them, and the characters face severe punishment if caught. Perhaps they can find Rollo in Oakhurst Jail and somehow persuade him to reverse his testimony? Alternatively, they could try convincing Talek Wearne, Oakhurst's degenerate ruler, of their innocence. After all, why would Talek even be interested in a dangerous and almost depleted old mine? Of course, that's what all adventurers would claim when they've just discovered rich veins of silver and gold...

Fevered Goblins: While the goblin threat may have been eliminated, the poison-riddled mine remains a considerable hazard to the surrounding wildlife. Collapsing the mine would only partially solve this toxic problem; the very soil around it is also contaminated. Can the characters devise a solution to cleanse this part of the forest? Perhaps redirecting the forest stream would wash away the contaminated soil and dilute it to less harmful levels. But it would take much time and effort and could anger some of the forest's inhabitants downstream.

Further Adventures

In all likelihood, the characters' adventures in the poisonous black bowels of Craghollow Mine have raised far more questions than they answered. Consider the following story hooks when preparing for any upcoming adventures:

Question Mark: Possibly, one of the characters (or an unfortunate ally) has been branded with *Di*, the Abyssal rune found on the false prophet's corpse in location 9.

While the brand seems but a minor cosmetic inconvenience at first, its true effects might not manifest for several days. But how can the bearer rid themselves of the brand? And what, if anything, does *Di* mean? Maybe there is a sage or scholar out there capable of fathoming the rune's occult meaning? Or does the answer lie with the supposedly extinct cult of the Red Rubric? Perhaps it's wise for the characters to remain discreet in their investigations so as not to attract the attention of those seeking to attain *Di*'s secret for their own sinister purposes.

Dead Letter: If the characters recovered the letter from the gargoyle's gullet in location 4, they know the Red Rubric had their headquarters on the Shard Isles. Over a century after their demise, what foul secrets might remain hidden among those rocky islets?

Megalithic Mysteries: Judging from the hand-drawn map found in location 8, the Red Rubric had some special interest in the stone circle atop Scarlock Hill, near Swallowfeld. What happens when the brass star amulet is placed on the ancient stone altar between the menhirs?

The Secret Name

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone product, it has been designed for use with the *Secret Name* storyline by Raging Swan Press.

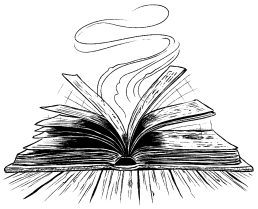
The Secret Name provides GMs with a selection of antagonists, agendas, and agents to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following products:

- *Dungeon Backdrop: Scarlock Hill*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: Craghollow Mine*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: The Shard Isles*

The Crumbled Tower

Forests & Woodland, Ashlar

Hidden deep in the forest stands the Crumbled Tower. Pressed close by hoary, gnarled trees and wreathed in moss and lichens, the tower is a forlorn remnant of an earlier time. Once, a wizard lived here, but now the tower is nothing more than a brooding ruin standing amid the forest's gloom. Sometimes, bandits lair within or adventurers wandering the surrounds use the ruin as a base. However, unknown to all, a hidden crypt yet lurks under the tower undisturbed these long ages past.



Dungeon Background

A thousand years ago, a race of primitive humans dwelt amid the hills and woods of what would become Ashlar. They fought against the orcs infesting the hills and lived a simple existence in harmony with their surrounds. Their heroes, chieftains and shamans were much venerated, and their burial rites were far more elaborate than those of the common folk. Worthies were interred in hidden, sealed underground tombs wherein their enemies could not disturb their eternal slumber. The old tunnels below the Crumbling Tower are such a tomb. Sealed for centuries, the tomb has remained undiscovered.

As fate would have it, the wizard Aleksandra Ihalempi chose to build her home above the tomb. Deep in the forests, the location was peaceful and provided her with the solitude and peace she craved to conduct her mystical researches without interruption. Dwelling in the tower for two decades with a few choice henchfolk Aleksandra never discovered the tomb cut into the rock below her home.

Eventually, 50 years ago, Aleksandra's adventurous past caught up with her. One night, cultists assailed her tower, slew her servants and spirited Aleksandra away for ritual sacrifice to their dark god's glory. Damaged in the battle, her tower slowly crumbled into decay and decrepitude.

Since Aleksandra's death, the tower has been sporadically fought over by disparate groups; sometimes bandits camp in the tower, while other times, adventurers come to poke around the ruin in hopes of finding overlooked treasures.

Adventure Hooks

The characters can stumble on the Crumbled Tower by happenstance and decide to explore it on a whim. Alternatively, use one of these hooks to lure the characters to the tower.

- **An Old Book**: The party comes into possession of one of Aleksandra's old spellbooks or journals. In it, the wizard mentions her home and her ongoing studies. The book also hints at a magical treasure hidden in the tower against a time of great need. (Depending on the party's level, the treasure could already have been discovered and carried away or could yet lie in the tower. Any treasure hidden in the tower is likely concealed in the secret niche below the fireplace in location 6.)
- **Thunder & Lightning**: The characters are in the wilderlands—perhaps on the way to their next adventure or returning to civilisation after their most recent foray. A thunderstorm assails the woods through which they travel and—in search of shelter—they stumbled onto the Crumbling Tower. Perhaps fate led them to the tower or, if the tower is occupied, the party's scout spots the flicker of a campfire coming from the tower's ruined upper levels, and they decide to investigate.
- **Old Stonework**: The party are in a village near to the Crumbled Tower when one of the characters notes odd, out-of-place stonework set into the village inn's walls. The ostler explains that when his father built the inn he used stonework from an old tower hidden deep in the nearby woods. Intrigued, the party decide to find the tower.
- **Battling the Cult**: The characters are locked in an ongoing battle with the same cult that wrought Aleksandra's doom so long ago. Learning of her ancient battles against the evildoers, the characters discover hints she owned a powerful, unique magic item that served her well in her struggles. The item is not mentioned in any other texts, and it is possible it might yet lie in the ruined Crumbled Tower.
- **Related**: One of the characters discovers they are distantly related to Aleksandra Ihalempi. Learning of the wizard and her tower, the party decide to investigate. (Perhaps the character thinks of claiming the tower; if so, refer to "Repairing the Tower" in the adventure's Conclusion for more information.)

Whispers & Rumours

If the characters think to learn more about the Crumbled Tower, use the list below to determine what information they uncover. Determine which rumours are true based on your dungeon design.

1. Hidden deep in the woods, the old wizard's tower is a favourite lair for bandits, raiders and other ne'er-do-wells.
2. The wizard Aleksandra Ihalempi built the tower as a quiet place to conduct her esoteric research. When she disappeared, the place fell into ruin. Some say her ghost haunts the ruins.
3. The woods surrounding the ruin are haunted by the ghosts of those who once dwelled in the tower. All right-minded people avoid the place. The few people who live in the locality are strange, insular folk rumoured to belong to certain strange, "unorthodox" religions.
4. Sometimes, at night, travellers report seeing flickering lights high up in the tower. The lights could be travellers' campfires or something more sinister and malign.
5. Avaricious bandits often lurk near the tower and sometimes use the place as a base from which to raid nearby settlements and to fall upon travellers passing through the locality.

Additional Resources

If you are pushed for time, and want more tools and tables to help design and populate the Crumbled Tower and its surrounds, the following resources may be of use:

- 20 Things *#3: Wizard's Tower*
- *20 Things #27: Ruined Castle*
- *20 Things #35: Bandits & Brigands*
- *Monstrous Lair #15: Bandit Camp*

6. Humans have long lived in the hills and woodlands of the surrounding area. Their ancient ruins—stone circles, subterranean tombs and the like—dot the surrounds.

The Tower's Surrounds

The Crumbling Tower stands amid a stand of centuries–old trees. The stand could be part of a larger wood or forest or could be merely an isolated copse.

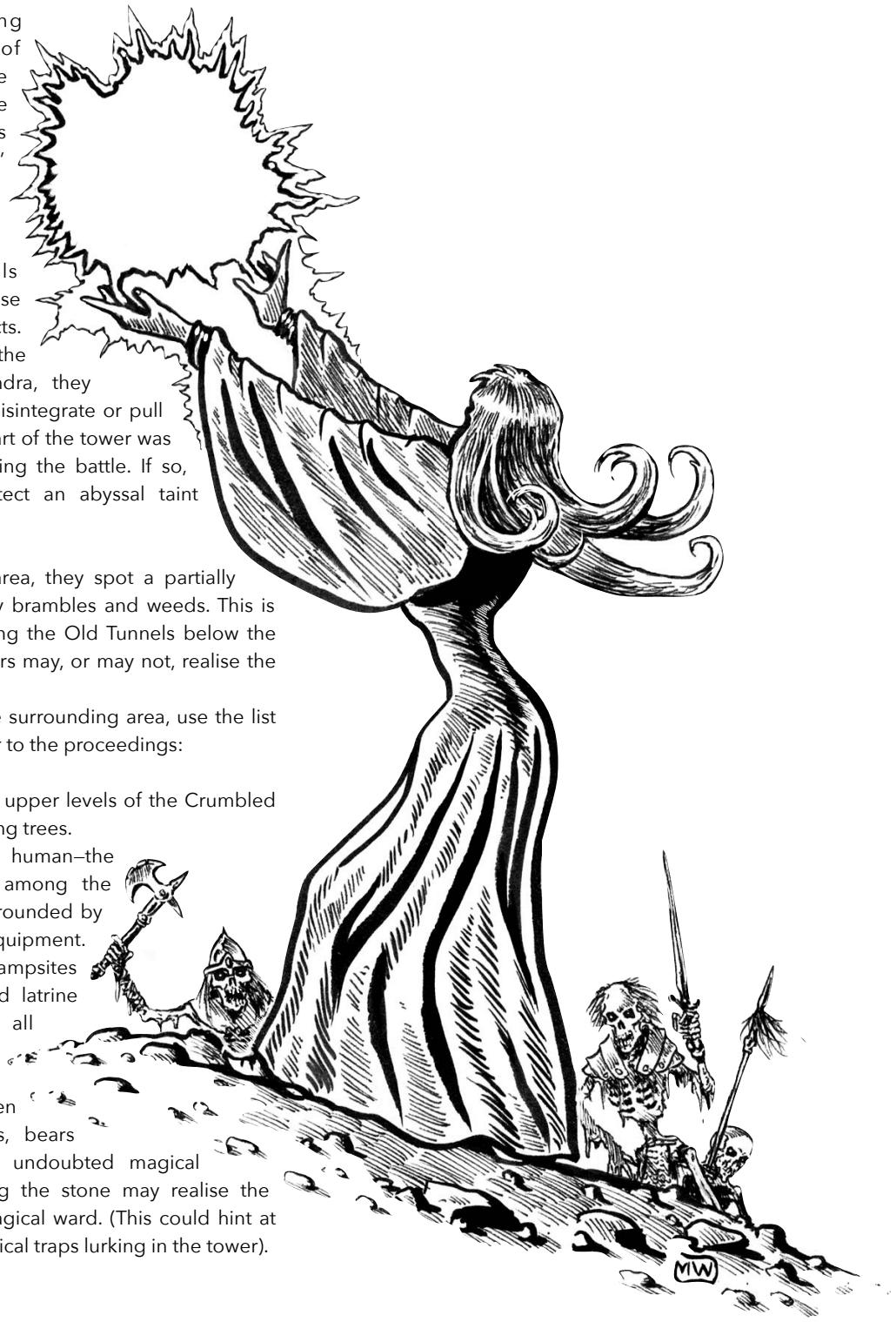
Although part of the tower has collapsed, the surrounding ground is curiously free of rubble. Depending on the campaign's setup, this could be for one of several reasons depending on the characters' levels and the preponderance of magic in the campaign:

- **Harvested Stone**: Locals took the fallen stones to use in their own building projects.
- **Powerful Magic**: When the cultists came for Aleksandra, they used powerful magics to disintegrate or pull apart the tower. Perhaps part of the tower was hurled into the Abyss during the battle. If so, divination spells may detect an abyssal taint around the ruin.

If the characters search the area, they spot a partially buried boulder surrounded by brambles and weeds. This is the Capstone (area U1) warding the Old Tunnels below the Crumbled Tower. The characters may, or may not, realise the boulder is more than it seems.

If the characters search the surrounding area, use the list below to add detail and flavour to the proceedings:

1. Many birds roost upon the upper levels of the Crumbled Tower and in the surrounding trees.
2. The bleached bones of a human—the skull partially melted—lie among the weeds and long grass, surrounded by the rotting remains of his equipment.
3. The remains of several campsites dot the area. Rubbish, old latrine pits and cold campfires all bear mute testimony to previous visits to the site.
4. A chunk of masonry, hidden in a thicket of brambles, bears carven esoteric runes of undoubted magical origin. A wizard examining the stone may realise the carvings were part of a magical ward. (This could hint at the possibility of more magical traps lurking in the tower).
5. A gnarled old oak stands forty feet or so away from the tower. The part of the tree's trunk facing the tower is blackened as if lightning had struck it.
6. A narrow, steep-sided dell through which flows a stream passes close to the tower; this is a good way of getting close to the ruin without being observed by anyone—or anything—lurking within.



Notable Locations at a Glance

The Crumbled Tower is a small, self-contained adventure location. Use the notes below as a starting point, and modify them as necessary to complement your design of the tower and its inhabitants. The tower comprises two distinct areas: the above-ground ruins and the tunnels under the tower.

Generic Tower Features

An aura of decrepitude and decay hangs over the Crumbled Tower. Locations in the tower share several generic features:

Illumination: It is dark on the tower's ground floor. Light levels in the upper levels are dependent on the time of day.

Outer Walls: The tower's outer walls are five feet thick and comprise rough field stone. Age has not been kind to the tower, and in places, the walls have fallen away, exposing the interior. Characters can climb damaged portions of the wall more easily than areas remaining in good condition.

Arrow Slits: The tower's arrow slits are too narrow to squeeze through but do admit slivers of light into the interior.

Inner Walls: The tower's inner walls are of cut and dressed stone.

Ground Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded, although in squares indicated on the map light rubble creates areas of difficult terrain.

Upper Floors: Creaking wooden boards comprise the tower's upper floors. Moving silently across the floor is difficult.

Ceilings: The ceilings are roughly 12 feet high.

Wooden Doors: The tower's wooden doors are in a bad state of repair. They open into the room they ward. Unless noted, doors are plain and unadorned.

Spiral Staircases: Narrow, cramped and built for defence, the spiral staircase provides cover for combatants fighting foes lower down the stairs. Squares containing a spiral staircase count as difficult terrain.

Birds' Nests: Many birds nest upon the Crumbled Tower's ruins. Bird excrement streaks the tower's outer walls (and some of the walls and floors inside).

Generic Old Tunnels Features

The Old Tunnels are of worked stone, hacked from the ground centuries ago. They have several generic features:

Illumination: It is dark in the tunnels below the tower.

Ceiling: The ceiling is about 10 feet high. In most places, it is plain and unadorned. Perceptive characters spot the occasional signs of tool marks on the ceiling.

Floor: Of smooth stone, the floor is flat, unimpeded and thick with dust.

Walls: The dungeon walls are of plain worked, natural stone; characters have the normal chance of climbing these walls and perceptive characters spot the occasional signs of tool marks on the stone.

Dungeon Dressing

Use the lists below to breathe life and detail into the tower and its tunnels. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

The Tower

1. Splinters of mouldy, broken-up furniture litter the floor.
2. Bird droppings and leaves cover parts of the floor.
3. Faded scraps of fabric hanging from a tapestry rod flutter gently in the breeze.
4. Faint, muddy footprints lead across the floor. (A tracker may be able to learn more about what lurks in the tower.)
5. Cobwebs gently undulate in the breeze.
6. Dust and grit sift down from the floorboards above.

The Tunnels

1. Cold water oozes down the wall to pool on the floor.
2. Scratches on the wall depict crude figures locked in battle.
3. Here, the air is particularly heavy and turgid.
4. Dust and rubble cover part of the floor.
5. Desiccated cockroach carcasses litter the floor.
6. Faint patterns in the dust hint at insects dwelling nearby.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of the items below to suit your campaign.

The Tower

1. A dusty, empty steel potion vial lies on the floor. A character searching the area carefully finds the vial's stopper nearby.
2. Scratches on the wall read, "Beware the lurker above."
3. A dusty bottle lies on its side under a mass of leaves and other rubbish. The bottle holds a mouthful of brandy.
4. A golden ring with a setting fashioned into the shape of a blooming flower lies amid the grime. A red transparent stone (a jasper) fills the setting.

The Tunnels

1. A hidden storage niche conceals a noisome bundle of rotting herbs.
2. A character searching the area spots graven, dust-filled symbols on the floor. Carved in the ancient language of magic, the symbols mean "danger", "rest", and "curse".
3. Worked into the shape of a perched eagle, this lump of stone fills a small storage niche high up on one wall.
4. A forgotten bronze bracer wrought into shapes reminiscent of swirling smoke lies on its side.

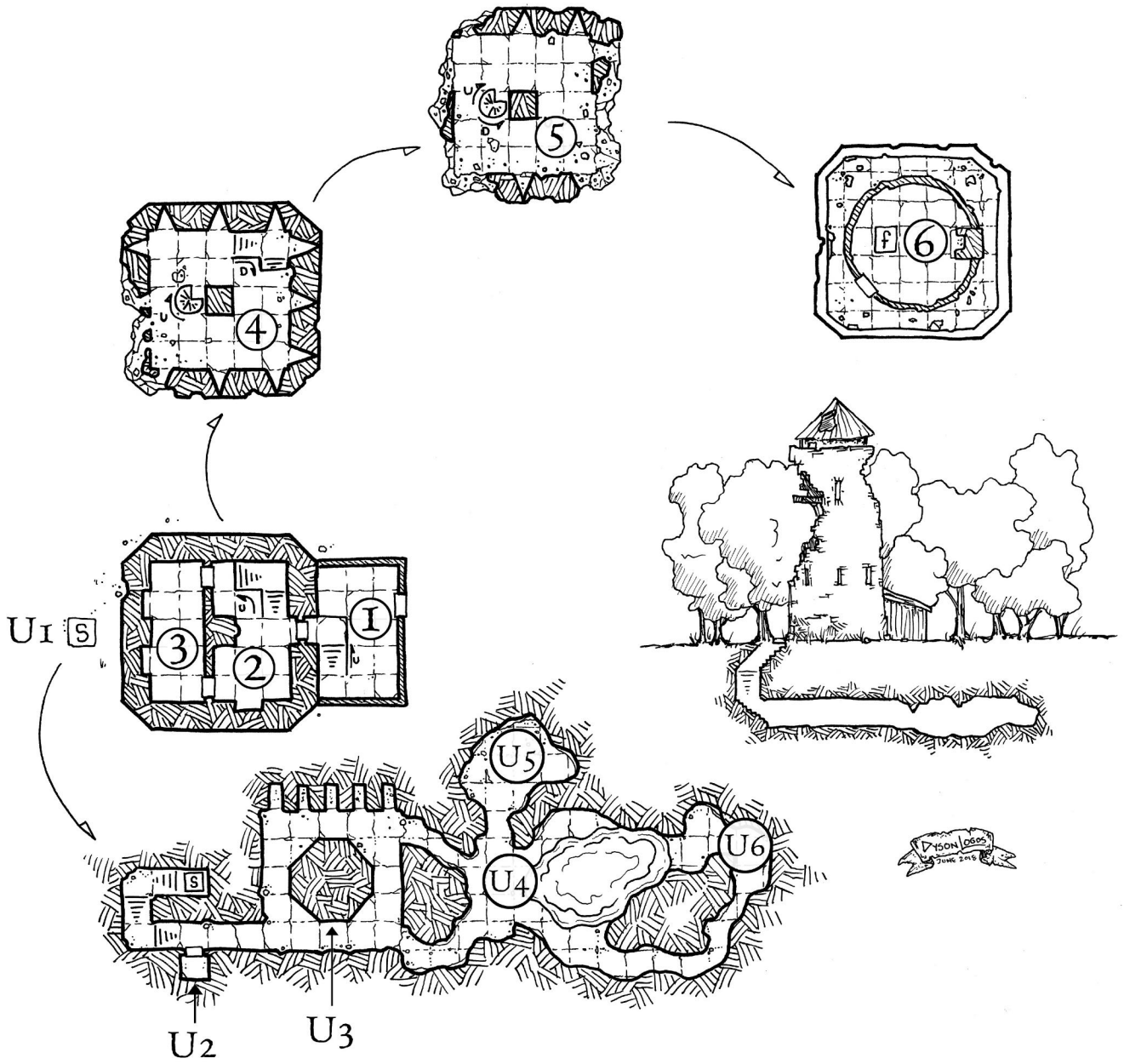
Notable Locations

The Crumbled Tower comprises the following locations:

1. **Vestibule**: Wind-blown detritus covers the vestibule's floor.
2. **Guardroom & Barracks**: Travellers sometimes camp here.
3. **Kitchen & Store**: Although the tower's twin chimneys have long since collapsed, travellers sometimes light fires in this chamber's fireplaces.
4. **Great Hall**: A large table and benches yet stand here—they are too big to fit down the stairs.
5. **The Solar**: This chamber was Aleksandra's private domain.
6. **Study & Roof**: Seeking peace from even her own henchfolk, Aleksandra worked in her lofty study.

The Old Tunnels have lain undisturbed for centuries.

U1. **The Capstone**: This old, weathered capstone wards the Old Tunnels.
U2. **Trapped Door**: The old ones constructed this door as a deadly lure for tomb robbers searching for hidden treasure.
U3. **The Catacombs**: Here lies the ancient heroes' warrior bodyguards, ready to protect and serve them in the afterlife.
U4. **Ceremonial Pool of the Old Ones**: The old folk cast offerings into this pool in hopes the local nature spirit would watch over and protect the tomb.
U5. **Tome of the Fallen**: Herein rests a hero of old.
U6. **Hero's Rest**: Herein rests a hero of old.



GM Notes

***Rubbish**: Many travellers have used the Crumbled Tower as a temporary base; the remains of campfires and the rubbish of their stays are scattered about.*

1: Vestibule

Built to protect the tower's outer doors, this small outbuilding is not as sturdy as the rest of the structure.

Outer Door: Weatherbeaten and rotten, this door is in a terrible state of repair.

Sticks, leaves and other wind-blown rubbish cover the floor of this small vestibule. A short flight of stone stairs leads upwards to an iron-bound oaken door.

Stairs: A short flight of stone stairs leads up to the tower's inner door. The stairs are difficult terrain and have no handrail.

Iron-Banded Oak Door: This door provides access to the tower's interior. It opens into location 2. The door has a bolt that can be shot from the inside.

Animal Tracks: A character searching the area finds the tracks of small animals—foxes, badgers and the like—in this area. Druids and rangers automatically can identify the tracks.

2: Guardroom & Barracks

Travellers sometimes camp in the old guardroom. Most of the furniture here was broken up for firewood long ago.

An old wooden table stands against one wall of this dingy room. Rubbish—food wrappings and bits of clothing and the like—cover the floor.

Illumination: There is no natural light here.

Graffiti: Previous explorers and travellers have scratched messages and so on onto the walls. Investigation reveals many names and dates along with the message, "Floors above unsafe", carved in Common into the wall by the stairs.

3: Kitchen & Store

Although the tower's twin chimneys have long since collapsed, travellers sometimes light fires in this chamber's fireplaces. The room's wooden furniture has all been broken up over the years for firewood.

Two large fireplaces pierce this chamber's west wall.

Illumination: There is no natural light here.

Twin Fireplaces: Two fireplaces pierce the west wall. Ash, charred wood and the like choke both fireplaces. Now, they hold the remains of melted candles, rubbish and the like.

Stone Shelves: Carved into the chamber's walls these shelves once held foodstuffs and the like.

Evidence of Old Camps: A small pile of dry firewood and kindling fills one corner of the room, while the floor opposite the fireplaces has been cleared of all rubbish and detritus.

If someone has recently camped here, the smell of burnt wood and sweat lingers in the air.

4: Great Hall

The Great Hall was the heart of the tower; here Aleksandra entertained her rare visitors and dined with her henchfolk.

The wall in the room's southwest corner has collapsed. Two large tables and several benches are piled in the opposite corner. Three thin tapestries hang from the walls.

Support Pillar: A stout stone pillar runs up through this chamber's ceiling and into the room above.

Furniture: Two large tables and several benches yet stand here—they are too big to fit down the stairs.

Mouldy Tapestries: The three mouldy tapestries depict woodland scenes and the like. Tapestry rods hang between many of the other arrow slits.

5: The Solar

This chamber was Aleksandra's private domain.

The walls of this chamber are heavily damaged. A rotting bed blocks one gap in the east wall.

Wooden Trapdoor: Set at the top of the spiral staircase, this heavy wooden trapdoor is in good condition. It opens upwards into the room above.

6: Study & Roof

Seeking peace from even her own henchfolk, Aleksandra worked in her lofty study.

This gloomy chamber features a large fireplace and shelves built into its circular walls.

Fireplace: Soot-blackened but intact, this large fireplace was once the chamber's focal point. A large bird's nest now blocks the chimney—anyone lighting a fire here soon finds the room full of smoke. A secret niche pierces the floor of the fireplace.

- **Secret Niche**: Perceptive characters spot a faint rectangular outline in the soot and ash. Clearing away the fire's leavings reveals a shallow hidden niche.

Bookshelves: Cut in the chamber's walls up to a height of around five feet these shelves once held many books and other esoteric items. Now, dust and ruin is all that remain.

- **Lost Scroll Case**: Forgotten on a high shelf lies a cured leather scroll case; characters searching the shelves automatically find the case.

Iron-Banded Door: This door provides access to the tower's crumbling walkway. It has an iron bolt that can be shot from the inside.

Crumbling Walkway: A three-foot-high parapet edges the tower's uppermost floor. It provides cover from attacks originating from below.

GM Notes

***Magic Traps**: Any remaining magical traps in the tower likely lie in locations 5 and 6—these areas have not been as explored and picked over as much as the lower levels.*

***Hidden Treasure**: If the characters are searching for a specific item hidden somewhere in the tower, it is likely here.*

GM Notes

Undead: *The tomb's likely inhabitants are, of course, undead. However, the nature of the undead is up to you. Low-level characters may face nothing more terrifying than skeletons, while more powerful characters must deal with greater undead—perhaps spectres, wights or even wraiths.*

Ancient Ward: *If the old folk set a trap to ward their tomb complex, location U1 is a good place for it.*

Another Trap: *The door in location U2 is a good place for a trap. If you decide the door is not trapped, simply rule the trap's mechanism has succumbed to time's remorseless onslaught.*

The Old Tunnels

The Old Tunnels predate the tower. Portions of the crypt are worked while the complex's furthest reaches are of natural origin. The descriptions below assume the tomb has lain undisturbed since it was sealed. If the tomb's inhabitants are active (or it has already been found by other adventurers) remember to modify the descriptive text to reflect this.

U1: The Capstone

This old, weathered capstone wards the Old Tunnels.

A profusion of weeds and brambles grow around the top of this large weathered boulder.

Characters spotting the capstone might realise something is not quite right with the stone.

Capstone: A character making a find secret door checks realises the capstone is not a boulder, but is a slab of stone only about one-foot thick set into the ground to appear that way. The capstone can be levered up and out of the way by characters with a combined Strength score of 35.

Stairs: Three short sets of stairs lead down into the tunnels below the Crumbling Tower. The stairs count as difficult terrain.

Turgid Air: The air in the tunnels is musty. The smell dissipates after the tomb has been ventilated for a few hours.

Dust: Thick, trackless dust covers the floor; this suggests the tomb has lain undisturbed since it was sealed.

U2: Trapped Door

The old ones constructed this door as a deadly lure for tomb robbers searching for hidden treasure.

A stone door pierces the wall to your right. Ahead, the corridor continues for about 15 feet before opening into a larger area.

The niche beyond the door is empty.

Trapped Stone Door: This stone door holds up its lintel. The trap is designed so that if the door is opened, the lintel begins to fail. This results in a cave-in which blocks the tunnel leading into the tomb.

U3: The Catacombs

Here lie the ancient heroes' warrior bodyguard, ready to protect and serve them in the afterlife.

Five burial niches pierce the north wall. Detailed wall carvings –showing signs of battle and heroic victory–decorate the area's other walls.

Wall Carvings: Finely detailed wall carvings show scenes of battle–humans fighting and killing orcs. Many of the scenes feature a hero wielding an axe, blasting his enemies with magic fire and lightning.

Burial Niches: Each niche holds a human skeleton clad in archaic scale mail armour armed with a spear.

U4: Ceremonial Pool of the Old Ones

The old folk cast offerings into this pool in hopes the local nature spirit would watch over and protect the tomb.

A pool of pure water dominates this large natural cavern.

Ceremonial Pool: Fed by small fissures in the rock, this pool of fresh water is eight feet deep at its deepest point. The water is pure, clear and safe to drink.

A character looking into the pool spots several irregular shapes—remains of objects cast into the water—at the bottom of the pool. A character subsequently searching the pool finds something valuable. Roll once on the list below; each item can be found only once.

1. This silver torc is wrought to resemble a two-headed snake. It is sized for a human's head.
2. Covered in verdigris and rust, this once fine bronze armband is worthless; the three small transparent dark green stones embedded in the rusting metal, however, are bloodstones.
3. A broken clay vase holds several chunks of gold ore.
4. Crafted from a strange kind of light-weight black stone, this small idol represents some kind of hideous squatting frog-like creature.

Cave Walls: The walls in the cave are rough and natural.

U5: Tomb of the Fallen

Herein rests a hero of old.

A skeletal figure wearing armour of ancient artifice lies on a low plinth of piled stone.

Skeletal Figure: This skeleton, an ancient warrior hero, wears fine scale mail. A small metal shield rests at his feet; a spear and battleaxe lie on the bier next to him.

Cave Walls: The walls in the cave are rough and natural.

U6: Hero's Rest

Herein rests a hero of old.

A skeletal figure clad in rotting fragments of clothes of undoubtedly ancient cut lies on a low plinth of piled stone.

Skeletal Figure: This hero was a powerful wizard. Sadly, most of his equipment has mouldered away. About his waist, a leather belt holds four mouldering leather pouches full of unidentifiable fragments or rotting things and dust. (These were the wizard's spell component pouches). However, a bronze amulet forged in the shape of a hawk lies on his breast, and a plain bronze torc rests on his bony forehead.

Cave Walls: The walls in the cave are rough and natural.

GM Notes

***The Thing in the Pool**: A strange, watery creature—perhaps a crystal ooze or the like—could dwell in the ceremonial pool. If you decide this is the case, insert a small, flooded, tunnel into the pool through which the creature reached this area.*

Conclusion

Once the characters have explored the Crumbled Tower and the Old Tunnels below, the adventure doesn't necessarily have to end. Either the characters can decide to use or claim the tower, or other interested parties might take an interest in the group and their adventures.

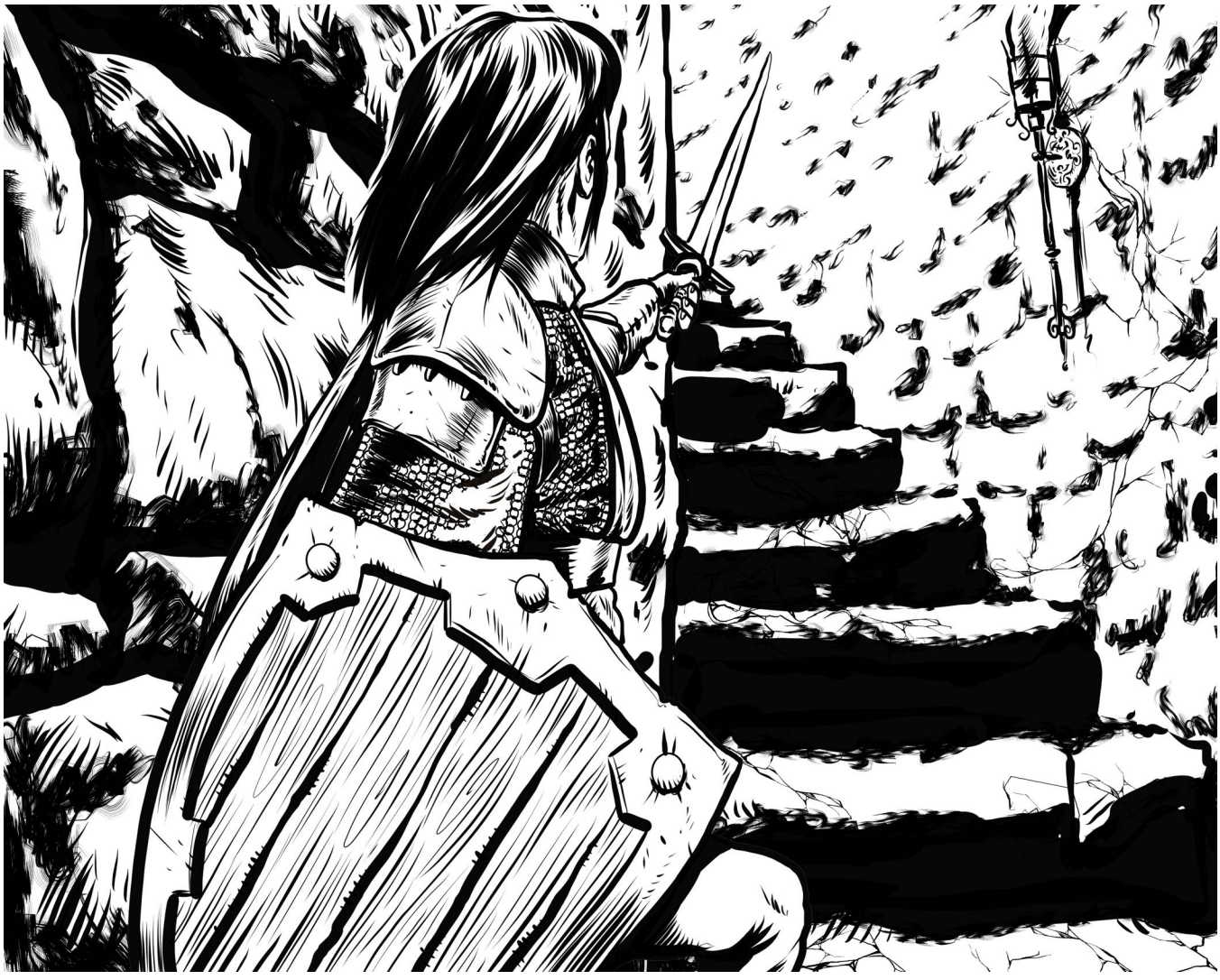
Using the Tower as a Temporary Base: If the characters have not yet finished exploring the surrounding area, they could use the tower as a secure base from which to do so. While it is in a poor state of repair, it is a safer place to camp than most other locales in the vicinity. Garrisoning it with a small force of men-at-arms or the like guarantees they'll be able to control the place—at least for a short while; the local lord may become irked that adventurers are claiming parts of their land and demand they leave.

Repairing the Tower: Wealthy or high-level characters may see a great opportunity in the Crumbled Tower. While the ramshackle structure desperately needs repair, restoring it would be cheaper than building a new tower.

Of course, the local lord might not take kindly to adventurers rebuilding a fortified tower in their lands, and they might object to their activities. At the very least, they'll require the characters to purchase permission to crenelate. Alternatively, the lord might command some service of them before they recognise the characters' claim on the tower.

Curious about Aleksandra Ihalempi's Fate: If the characters are curious about the fate of the tower's mistress, they could attempt to learn more about the wizard's adventures, research and the like. If they discover her enmity against the cultists who eventually wrought her doom, they might attempt to track the cult down to wreak revenge for Aleksandra's death.

The Cultists Strike: When the cultists attacked the tower so long ago, they had two goals—to capture Aleksandra and to recover a certain item in her possession. While they captured the wizard, they failed to recover the item, and their agents have kept a watch on the surrounding area ever since. Those exploring or dwelling in the tower are often "visited" by the cult's agents, who slay the interlopers in case they have found the item in question.



Cursed Refuge of the Valley of Tears

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar

Once the last friendly place in the so-called Valley of Tears the Hall of Nuraduum is now known by a name of far more sinister demeanour—the Cursed Refuge. Some travellers who pass through its stone door do not emerge again, while others tell terrifying stories of the nameless horrors they encounter in the enduring dark of the old dwarven fastness. Persistent rumours tell of old treasures hidden in the place, and a few old dwarves dream of reclaiming the refuge—so that at least a fragment of long-fallen Vongyth may again be held by dwarves.

Dungeon Background

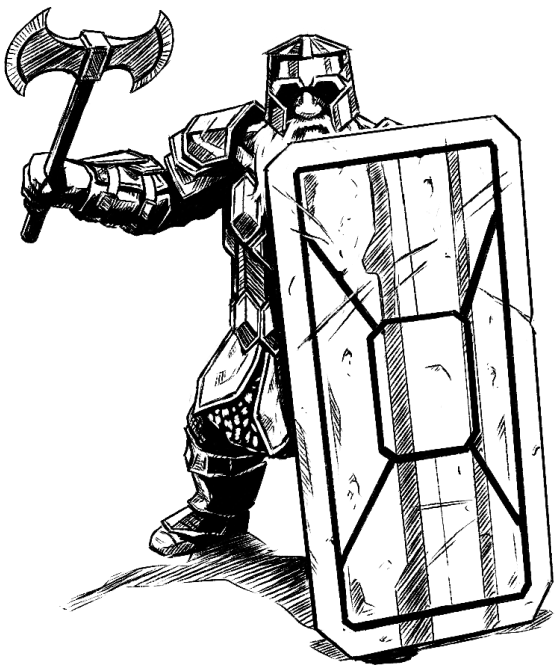
Beyond the fallen dwarven hold of Vongyth—once home to the Nurthen clan—the so-called Valley of Tears cuts through the nameless plateau upon which stands the mythical and legend-shrouded Forest of Gray Spires.

The dwarves of Vongyth built the now-called Cursed Refuge as a waystation for weary travellers to rest and as a fortress from which to watch for threats emerging from the mysterious southlands. The refuge—formally called the Hall of Nuraduum—survived Vongyh's fall two centuries ago at the claws of the green dragons Klauthosk and Yeiarxin. However, isolated in the wilderness and far from the nearest friendly settlement, its small garrison could not hold out for long. Since the refuge's abandonment, it has been fought over and occupied by a succession of bandits, travellers, humanoid tribes and worse. Those who know of the Cursed Refuge no longer count upon it as a safe place to rest.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Cursed Refuge by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Dwarf in Need**: The dwarf warrior Arak Nurthen (LG male dwarf warrior) approaches the characters. Arak wants to find and explore the so-called Cursed Refuge and gaze upon the hall of his ancestors. He has heard rumour #6 and wants to see if there is any truth to it. He secretly wants to claim the place as his own—a small part of Vongyth would then be back in dwarven hands.



- **Missing Adventurers**: A group of neophyte adventurers –the Red Cloaks—ventured south through the Valley of Tears a few months ago. They have not been seen since. One of their number—Kosti Miekka—has wealthy parents, and they are desperate for news of their son. They hire the characters to retrace the Red Cloak's trail and find their son.
- **Terrible Weather**: A savage storm rages in from the north. As the wind howls and hard, savage rain pummels the valley, jagged forks of lightning light up the sky. Water begins to pour into the valley down its steep flanks, first forming puddles and then a small stream. Soon, the water will form a raging torrent! In a stroke of good (or more likely bad) luck, the characters stumble upon the Cursed Refuge just as the volume of water flowing into the valley reaches dangerous levels.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Cursed Refuge. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use this list to determine what the character learns.

1. The Cursed Refuge is an old dwarf waystation of fallen Vongyth. It was the last place travellers could see a friendly face before they plunged into the weird and fantastical Forest of Gray Spires. After Vongyth's fall, it declined and fell into ruin.
2. Of late, horrible stories of ghostly doings and hideous deaths have shrouded the now-called Cursed Refuge. Few travellers now willingly enter its gloomy halls.
3. The Valley of Tears is a difficult place. Steep and choked with debris, it is difficult to traverse and impossible for wagons and similar vehicles.
4. Folk have entered the Cursed Refuge and never been seen again. It's better to risk sleeping in the open than to go inside that foul place.
5. Some say twisted and debased dwarven ghosts lurk amid the grime and darkness of the Cursed Refuge. Jealous of the living, they slay all who invade their domain.
6. The Cursed Refuge is much larger and more extensive than most people think. Deeper passages and chambers lie behind a nearly unfindable dwarf-craft secret door. The dwarves hid Vongyth's lost wealth behind that door, and anyone who finds it will be fabulously rich.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The Surrounding Locality

The Valley of Tears cuts its way upward through the nameless plateau upon which stands the legend-shrouded Forest of Gray Spires. The valley is steep, narrow and littered with debris—stones and boulders fallen from the flanking cliffs and the rubbish of previous expeditions daring to traverse the place. It is a hard passage and has well earned its name over the years. For all that, the valley is one of the easiest ways to reach the Forest of Gray Spires.

Vegetation in the Valley of Tears is sparse, although occasional wind-stunted trees cling to their precarious existence on narrow ledges and shelves above the valley floor. Ferns and suchlike grow in a few sheltered off-shoots from the main valley. Water is plentiful in the valley; rills and small pools abound.

Wilderness Dressing

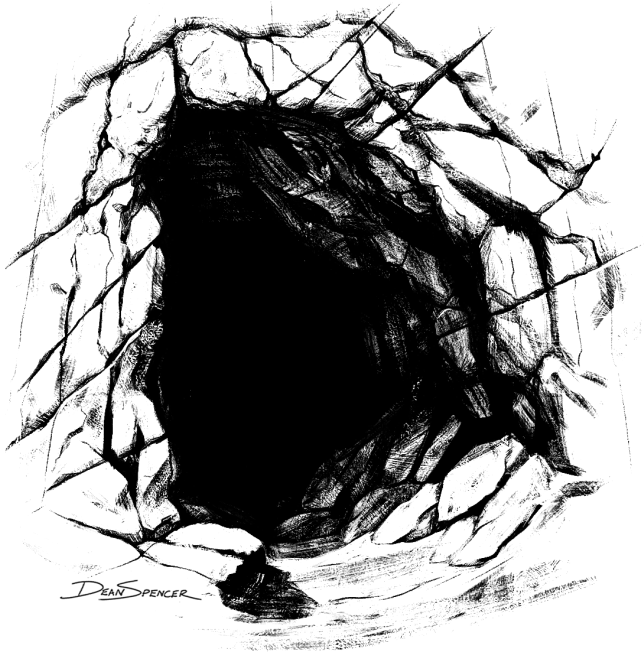
Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Rocks of various sizes litter the steep slopes of the Valley of Tears. Every now and then, something dislodges small pebbles and rocks, and they clatter to the valley floor.
2. A cold wind whines up the valley from the north. It plucks at the characters' cloaks, and the temperature drops.
3. A stunted tree grows amid a small field of boulders.
4. A large boulder has tumbled from the cliffs above to part-block the narrow valley floor. The characters must scramble around or over it to proceed.
5. Obvious tracks amid the dirt and gravel show where something large, heavy and two-legged walked recently.
6. A large boulder perched on a narrow ledge overlooks the valley floor. It looks like the boulder could easily be dislodged and would likely kill anyone it struck.
7. Dark shadows cluster deeply in a shallow niche piercing the valley's wall.
8. Gouge marks in the thin, gravel earth of the valley floor show where torrents of water have flowed.
9. Dark clouds scud across the sky, plunging the valley into gloom and cold. Shadows gather among the rocks and upon the valley walls.
10. The trail passes under a gloomy overhang that juts almost the whole way across the valley floor. It is dry here, but the overhang funnels the wind, and it whines through the narrow space.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. The stark white bones of a horse lie partly buried under a rock slide. The horse's skull grins up at passersby.
2. A sigil depicting an axe backed with a hammer head crossed with a shield decorates a large rock. This is Vongyth's mark. Any dwarf knows this as does any character steeped in historical or dwarven lore. Such characters also identify the weapon as a thunderaxe—an exotic weapon wielded by Vongyth's fallen warriors.
3. A javelin—part-covered by grit and gravel—lies on the path; the weapon's tip is bent and rusted.
4. A burial cairn fills a small ledge above the trail. If the characters break into the cairn, they find a traveller's mouldering bones, scraps of clothes and so on. A hole in the person's skull hints at the cause of their demise.
5. Tracks on the trail show where a wolf has recently stalked. The tracks lead to a small wolf den holding four cubs and three adults. The adults defend the cubs vigorously.
6. A small pool, filled with potable freshwater—lies in a narrow side-spur. Ferns grow thickly around the pool, which is fed by water oozing from the rock. This is a pleasant place to camp.
7. A precariously piled pillar of stones sits atop a flat-topped boulder. The tower—almost five feet high—looks fantastical, but it is easily destroyed.
8. A backpack lies under a rocky overhang. It contains mouldering food, damp clothes and a pouch holding a tinderbox, an oil flask and a small bag of marbles.
9. A dead traveller, partially pinned under a fallen boulder—moulders by the side of the trail. All the unfortunate's easily found gear has been looted, and everything under the boulder has been crushed. By the corpse's position and the frozen expression on its face, the traveller survived for some time after being crushed.
10. A dark cave pierces a nearby cliff. The passage beyond disappears into darkness, and a faint but noxious smell drifts from the cave. A perceptive character hears faint sounds of movement coming from within.



Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations:

1. **Stonewatch**: A heavy stone door wards the Cursed Refuge. This area is one of two that provides the defenders with a view of the valley.
2. **Antechamber of the Wardens**: Herein congregated the garrison of old.
3. **Sentinel's Watch**: A concealed arrow slit in the western wall affords a clear view of the valley.
4. **Sanctuary of the Seven**: This chamber was once a small shrine dedicated to the dwarves' patron deities. No dwarf has worshipped here for many years.
5. **Chamber of the Sleepers**: Three stone sarcophagi stand about this chamber. They hold the mouldering remains of three dwarves.
6. **Common Room**: Travellers often make use of the heavy stone furniture remaining in this chamber.
7. **Storeroom of Ages Past**: Here the dwarves stored their provisions and so on. This chamber has been repeatedly ransacked over the years.
8. **Chamber of Slumber**: Here slept the dwarven sentinels of old.
9. **Avenue of Olden Heroes**: A dozen oversized statues of dwarven warriors watch over the trail. The stone bridg e over the gully collapsed long ago.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills the Cursed Refuge.

Architecture: The Cursed Refuge is dwarf-wrought; its architecture reflects its origin. Despite its great age, it is in good condition.

Ceilings: The ceilings throughout the Cursed Refuge are seven feet high.

Walls: The walls are of smoothed and worked stone.

Floors: The floors throughout the Cursed Refuge are of worked stone. They do not obstruct movement unless obstructed by rubble, bones or other items.

Doors: Stone doors on cleverly concealed hinges protect the Cursed Refuge's rooms. Doors open into the chambers they ward.

Stairs: The Cursed Refuge's steps are cut from the living rock. Their risers are six inches high and intricately decorated with beautiful carvings of caves, caverns and mines. Squares containing stairs are difficult terrain.

Dungeon Dressing

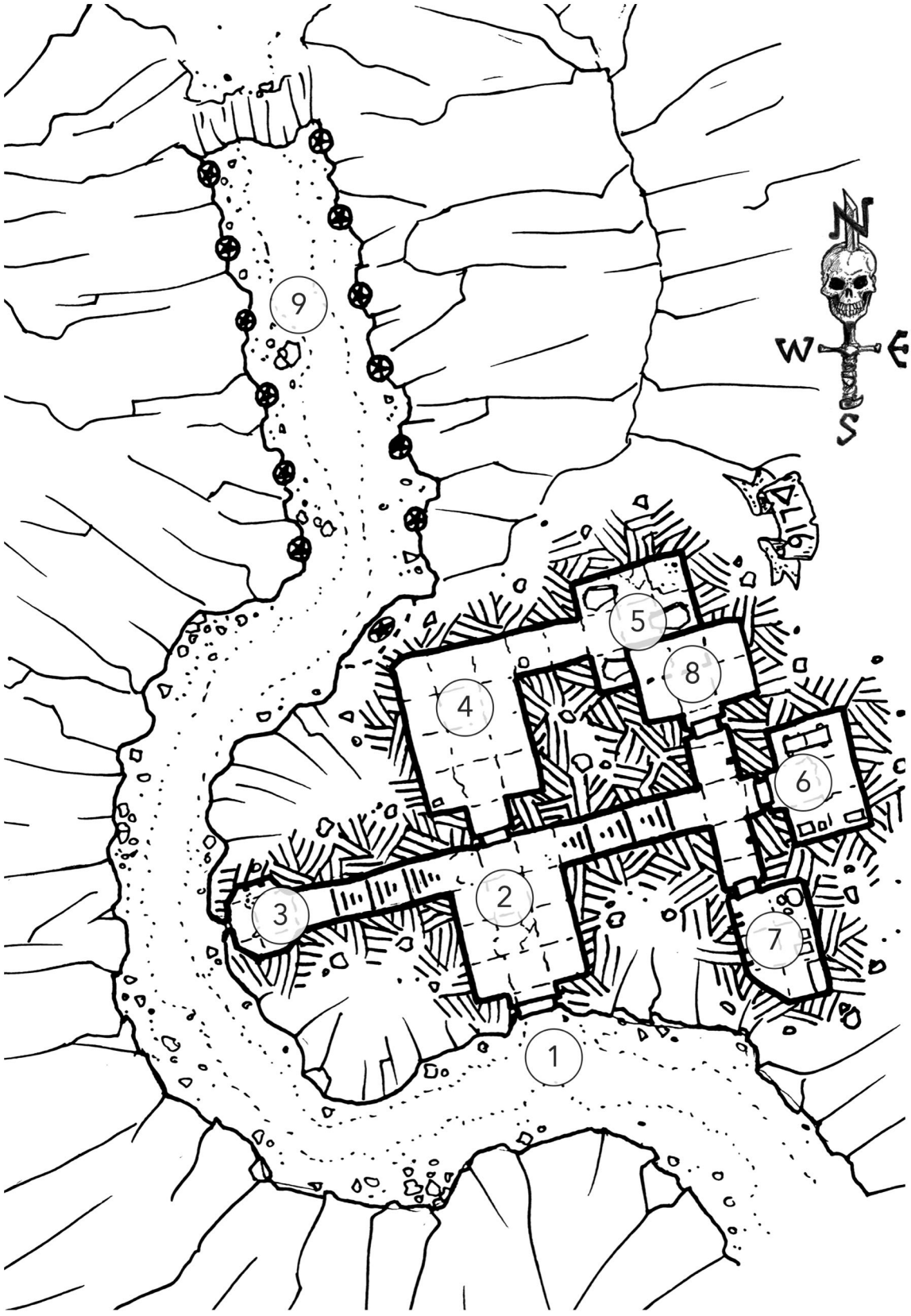
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Faint scratches—a date two years ago—mar one wall a few feet below the ceiling.
2. Dusty cobwebs cover the ceiling and gently undulate in the breeze caused by the characters' passing.
3. Cracks in the floor or wall show where someone strong hit the stone with a bludgeoning weapon.
4. Water oozes through a crack low down in a wall; the nearby floor is slick with moisture.
5. A faint brown stain on the floor shows where someone or something long ago bled—a lot.
6. A rounded pale patch on a wall surrounded by tiny cracks shows where someone hit it hard—perhaps with a mace or warhammer.
7. Scratches in the wall, carved in Common, read, "Fly, you fools. That which dwells here is beyond you."
8. A flagstone rocks slightly under a character's foot. Scratch marks along one side show where someone tried (and failed) to lever it up.
9. Fragments of faded, brittle cloth cling to three iron spikes driven into a wall; they are the remnants of a banner that once hung here.
10. The faint howl of a sudden gust of wind reaches the characters' ears. Outside, the wind is picking up. A few minutes later, the faint, distant rumble of thunder joins the wind's whining.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A battered steel shield missing its leather straps leans against a wall. If disturbed without care, it falls over with a loud clatter.
2. This old traveller's pack is mostly empty, but two silver coins are caught in its brittle folds.
3. Scraps of chainmail are scattered about the floor. Although dusty and obviously old, the fragments of armour have not rusted.
4. Once-beautiful carvings of mountain peaks decorate this part-squashed bronze goblet.
5. A neat bundle of dry firewood—abandoned by a previous traveller—fills a corner of the room.
6. A rusting dagger juts from the gap between two stones. The dagger's blade snaps if it is removed.
7. Odd, indistinct tracks in the dust provide a clue to what lurks in the Cursed Refuge.
8. A scrap of parchment bears an accurate map of the northern part of the gorge.
9. A small transparent white gem (a moonstone worth 50 gp) glows with a soft blue radiance. If the party has light sources only a perceptive character notices the gem. If the characters are exploring without light, the gem is much easier to notice.
10. A square gold coin and a half-dozen silver coins lie amid the dust and debris. If the characters have light sources they may see the old coins' glimmer. If not, only a perceptive character notices the forgotten treasure.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GM Notes

What's in a Name? *An essential part of this Dungeon Backdrop is determining how the Cursed Refuge came to earn its name. Determining this will—to an extent—determine the challenges and threats the characters face inside.*

1: Stonewatch

A heavy stone door wards the Cursed Refuge. This area is one of two that provides the defenders with a view of the valley.

A heavy stone door pierces the valley's rocky cliff. The door mimics the natural undulations of the surrounding rock, but a wide crack around the door betrays its presence. A single carven word—Nuraduum—surmounts the door.

Heavy Stone Door: This heavy stone door can be barred from the inside with a stone bar, which can be raised or lowered by one person using an iron lever connected to a clever mechanism.

The door also has two hidden viewports: one of the viewports is at about dwarven head height, while the other is about a foot lower and designed so a spear or other weapon can be thrust through it.

2: Antechamber of the Wardens

Herein congregated the garrison of old.

This chamber is devoid of furniture, but sporadic carvings decorate the walls. A door pierces the north wall while stairs lead upwards to the west and east.

Wall Carvings: To while away their long (and often boring) postings at the refuge, the garrison decorated this chamber's walls with carvings.

The carvings depict a number of typical dwarven scenes—dwarves working in a mine, dwarves slaying orcs and goblins and so on—and are executed in a variety of styles and with varying degrees of success.

3: Sentinel's Watch

A concealed arrow slit in the western wall affords a clear view of the valley.

An arrow slit pierces this chamber's west wall. A faint draught of cold air blows through the slit.

Stairs: The stairs leading up to this chamber rise about 12 feet from location 2. Perceptive characters climbing the stairs notice the air is chill on the stairs.

Cold Air: Air seeps into the redoubt through the arrow slit making this room colder than the rest of the complex.

Arrow Slit: This arrow slit overlooks the trails and easily goes unseen as it is about 15 feet above the valley floor.

Shattered Furniture: The fragmented remains of a small wooden table and three chairs lie about the chamber. Examination reveals they have been hacked apart.

4: Sanctuary of the Seven

This chamber was once a small shrine dedicated to the dwarves' patron deities. No dwarf has worshipped here for many years.

Extensive wall carvings show seven dwarves in iconic dwarven locations—at a forge, working in a mine, at the forefront of battle and so on. Each figure is the centre of their tableaux and depicts an idealised version of a dwarf.

The carvings depict:

- **Duregal the Highlord, Father of the Dwarves** (god of dwarves) preaching to arrayed ranks of dwarves.
- **Dalrak Grimtooth Lord of War** (god of war and battle) slaying countless foes in glorious battle.
- **Grondinn the Seeker** (god of explorers, lore, wanderers and travel) exploring an expansive cavern.
- **Khanoss the Miser** (god of wealth and greed) sitting on a throne amid mounds of treasure.
- **Thaun the Forgemaster** (god of metal, mountains and mining) hard at work in a mine.
- **Valra the Hearth-Mother** (goddess of safety, truth and home) nurturing several young dwarflings.
- **Vorngrimm the Trickster** (god of wealth and luck) sneaking out of a goblin lair past oblivious sentries.

5: Chamber of the Sleepers

Three stone sarcophagi stand about this chamber. They hold the mouldering remains of three dwarves.

The shattered remains of a stone door litter the floor at the entrance to this burial chamber. Beyond the archway stand three stone sarcophagi.

Shattered Door: A stone door once warded this chamber, but it has been shattered. The door's remains lie in the doorway and create an area of difficult terrain.

Stone Sarcophagi: These heavy stone sarcophagi are of plain design. Of dwarf craft, they are barely six feet long. All three sarcophagi have heavy stone lids. Each sarcophagus holds the mouldering remains of a dwarven warrior. The name of each warrior is carved into the sarcophagi's lid:

- Falithur Kildann
- Ovdris Urzak
- Valric Werain

Crumbling Wall: Part of the north wall has begun to crumble. A smattering of rubble litters the ground in front of the wall. Squares containing rubble are difficult terrain.

GM Notes

***Sarcophagi**: The sarcophagi have not been opened and the corpses (and their grave goods) inside remain untouched. Why? Perhaps the spirits of the dead dwarves yet guard the refuge and they emerge to slay any who would defile their remains.*

GM Notes

***Missing Adventurers**: If the characters are searching for the Red Cloaks (see "Missing Adventurers") they could find a clue to the group's location or destination here.*

6: Common Room

Travellers often make use of the heavy stone furniture remaining in this chamber.

A stone table and four stone chairs stand in the north part of this chamber. To the south, a wide chimney pierces the wall and is flanked by three smaller stone tables.

Stone Furniture: The room's stone furniture is heavy and difficult to move. Over the years, travellers have scratched their names along with various short messages into the table top and the chair's armrests.

Fireplace: Cold ash and scraps of wood fill the fireplace. The fireplace was built to take advantage of a natural fissure in the rock. While it is almost ten feet wide at its base, the chimney narrows to only a few feet wide, about 15 feet up.

7: Storeroom of Ages Past

Here the dwarves stored their provisions and so on. This chamber has been repeatedly ransacked over the years.

Shattered remnants of broken chests and barrels lie about this chamber's floor. Carven stone basins and troughs jut from the walls, and stone nobs project from the west wall.

Shattered Chests and Barrels: The ruin here is complete, and the room has been repeatedly looted over the years. Squares containing broken furniture are difficult terrain. Nothing of value remains here.

8: Chamber of Slumber

Here slept the dwarven sentinels of old.

Two rows of short but deep niches—one above the other pierces—this chamber's walls. Small stacked horizontal notches carved into the stone flank each set of two niches.

Sleeping Niches: Four sets of two niches pierce the walls. The small stacked notches by each set served as a recessed ladder to reach the upper niche. Furs and bedding once covered the niches, but they are long gone. Sometimes, travellers sleep here.

Characters searching this chamber may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. A small dagger sized for a child or halfling lies at the back of a sleeping niche. This fine, elegant weapon was lost here long ago.
2. A forgotten silver coin lies amid the dust and grime. It bears a curious design—a three-headed frog on one side and what looks like a leaf on the other.
3. Scraps of brittle fabric—perhaps an old bandage—covered in dried, faded blood lie on one of the sleeping niches.
4. A gold hairpin yet clasps a lock of bright red hair. The hairpin is shaped like a swooping bird and is a thing of beauty and grace. It is worth 50 gp.

9: Avenue of Olden Heroes

A dozen oversized statues of dwarven warriors watch over the trail. The stone bridge over the gully collapsed long ago.

Twelve statues of grim-faced armoured dwarves flank the trail leading up to a shattered stone bridge. A gully—about 15 feet wide—cuts across the trail. Beyond, the trail continues upwards.

The Statues: Each stone statue is about 15 feet high, and when it was crafted was beautifully detailed. Time, the elements, occasional rockfalls and vandals have marred and damaged all the statues to some extent.

Those wise in the ways of dwarves might recognise one or more of the dwarves depicted here. A scion of fallen Vongyth will recognise at least a couple of these warriors. Each of the figures is posed in a similar fashion—legs wide, weapon grounded between their feet—and all look down onto the trail.

- **Dordon Bofeg**: male dwarf; plate armour, shield and warhammer; slew the orc chieftain Orzag and slaughtered his bodyguards.
- **Jarel Dolhak**: male dwarf; plate armour, shield and battleaxe; renown for his bravery and inability to retreat.
- **Valrim Ovlag**: male dwarf; plate armour, heavy crossbow; has only one eye but famed for being an incredible shot.
- **Elren Dellode**: old female dwarf; heavy robes, leaning on a quarterstaff; one of the greatest dwarven rune casters of old; said to be able to command the hills and mountains to do her bidding
- **Kilbir Darzak**: male dwarf, wears only rough trousers to display his much-scarred chest and has a battleaxe; famed berserk said to be beloved by the gods
- **Elgal Nurthen**: male dwarf; plate armour and battleaxe; ragged beard and wild staring eyes
- **Whurel Erdukr**: male dwarf; chain armour, battle-axe; a wanderer from a distant land famed for his lust for adventure and ale; an implacable enemy of orc-kind.
- **Badly Damaged Statue**: dwarf; top half of the statue has crumbled away and lies in a jumbled heap on the trail.
- **Marbryn Nurthen**: female dwarf; chain armour, warhammer; inspirational warrior-bard.
- **Dothan Torsten**: male dwarf; plate armour, double-headed two-handed axe; incredibly muscular and reputed to have once strangled a fire giant to death.
- **Morion Valzak**: female dwarf; chain armour, heavy crossbow; reputed for her ability to sniff out an ambush and to navigate through any cave system; her fate remains unknown.
- **Azthr Dalnore**: male dwarf; plate armour, bestial helm depicting a minotaur's snarling head and heavy pick; reviled for his cruelty in battle, he nonetheless never abandoned his clan.
- **Badly Damaged Statue**: dwarf; top half of the statue has crumbled away and lies in a jumbled heap on the trail.

GM Notes

Crossing the Gully: *To progress the characters must cross the gully; this can be an easy or hard task depending on the direction your campaign is heading.*

The Statues: *If you have a dwarf in the party consider having one of these statues be a long-dead ancestor of the character.*

Aftermath

The Cursed Refuge of the Valley of Tears could fade from the campaign once the characters head off on their next adventure. Alternatively, it could feature in future doings in your game if you or your players desire.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Dwarf in Need**: Once the characters have cleared the Cursed Refuge of any lingering threats, Arak reveals his true purpose. He offers the characters more gold to garrison the place while he returns to Ashlar to gather other dwarves to his banner.
- **Missing Adventurers**: If you want to extend the quest for the Red Cloaks, the characters find a scrap of diary or map showing where they intended to go in the Forest of Gray Spires. The characters can return to their patron with this information or push onwards.
- **Terrible Weather**: Once the storm has abated and the flood waters have ceased, the characters can continue their quest. However, the ground will be boggy, and the rains may have washed more boulders down onto the trail, making swift progress difficult. The rain may also have washed other, stranger things into the valley, or fallen boulders may reveal hitherto hidden and unknown cave mouths.

Further Adventures

Although the Cursed Refuge is a small self-contained dungeon, there are many ways it could feature in future adventures:

- **It's Ours**: The characters claim the place as their own and use it as a forward base from which to explore the nearby reaches of the Forest of Gray Spires. No doubt other groups will contest their ownership at some point.
- **Deeper Caverns, Hidden Treasures**: The rumours (see "Whispers & Rumours #6) of hidden dwarven treasure are true! While exploring the Cursed Refuge, the characters find a secret door that leads deeper into the plateau's flank. The door could lead to another small hidden area—perhaps riddled with dwarven traps or to an extensive cave network.
- **Someone Else Claims the Refuge**: If the characters continue south into the Forest of Gray Spires, they almost inevitably pass by the Cursed Refuge on their way home. The refuge could remain empty of dangers or another monster or group could have claimed the place. Bandits or ogres could demand a toll from travellers using "their" valley, while if trolls lair within, they just view all travellers as food!

Cursed Tower of the Astromancer

Urban, Ashlar (Dunstone)

Strange things have started to happen at the Tower of the Astromancer. Its mistress, the half-elven wizard Tuulitar Vihas, has not been seen for weeks, and the locals whisper that the tower is cursed. Odd lights and sounds emanate from the place, and calls that something must be done grow louder and more insistent.

Dungeon Background

One of Dunstone's tallest buildings, the Tower of the Astromancer, stands on Selka Street on the north edge of town. From here, it commands unrestrained views of the Mottled Spire and the open sky.

Herein dwells Tuulitar Vihas, the self-styled Astromancer. She lives with her apprentice but, as a powerful wizard, has no need for guards.

Tuulitar is independently wealthy, having a diverse range of investments in far-off Languard. Thus, she has no need to earn money satisfying adventurers—answering their irritating questions, sating their constant need for magic scrolls and so on—but occasionally hires such folk. For this reason, adventurers are not always summarily turned away from her tower-home.

Tuulitar owns several powerful—eye-wateringly expensive—spyglasses and telescopes and is building an ornate and complicated orrery in her tower. She pours all her money into this project, and the rest of the tower, its furnishings and so on, while fine, are dated as a result.

Recently, strange things have been happening at the Tower of the Astromancer, and some folk have begun to believe it and its residents are cursed.

Folk of the Tower

Two people dwell in the Tower of the Astromancer:

- **Tuulitar Vihas the Astromancer** (N old female half-elf wizard 9) believes great power lies in the stars and is determined to unlock that power for herself. To this aged half-elf, nothing else matters.
- **Reima Itkonen** (NE male human wizard 5) schemes against his mistress, although he professes great loyalty to, and admiration of, her. He serves her solely to steal her power and lore. Reima has a black heart and cares for no one but himself. He is a proficient deceiver, though, and appears to be a thoroughly pleasant and helpful, if a little obsequious, chap.

The Cause of the Curse

A key part of your preparation for *Cursed Tower of the Astromancer* is determining what has recently happened at Tuulitar Vihas's tower to give it such a fell reputation. Use one of the below explanations or design your own:

- **Mind-Bending Vile Star**: Tuulitar recently took possession of a fallen vile star recovered from the Mottled Spire. The meteorite comprises a rare metal that has a terrible warping effect on the astromancer's mind.
- **Reima's Machinations**: Reima Itkonen, the astromancer's apprentice, covets her wealth, magic items and spellbooks. Thus, he has started poisoning his mistress, which has driven her to madness.
- **The Thing From Beyond the Stars**: Many things lurk in the spaces between the stars. When Tuulitar attempted a powerful divination spell, the magic formed a portal into her mind and an alien thing filtered down from the stars to possess the astromancer; its control is less than perfect, however.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can hear of the Cursed Tower of the Astromancer by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the tower:

- **Forgotten Lore**: Tuulitar wants to read a certain book that lies in the library held at the Dreaming Spires in Languard. She engages the characters to retrieve the book and provides a letter of introduction to the Mistress of the Spires—the two are old friends. She needs the book quickly and urges the characters to hurry. Undoubtedly, complications will ensue either on the road or at the Dreaming Spires. When they return with the book, they fail to gain admittance to the tower.
- **New Stars and Planets**: As her knowledge grows, Tuulitar adds to the orrery she builds in her tower. She has received word that a new consignment of parts is ready for delivery. Tuulitar engages the characters to travel to the Great Forge—the temple of Abarin in Languard—where the parts wait and escort them back to Dunstone. Delays and distractions mean the characters are away for a few weeks. When they return, they discover that things are amiss at Tuulitar's home.
- **Cursed Whispers**: The characters are in Dunstone, resting between adventures. While lingering in their favourite tavern, they hear two locals gossiping about the Cursed Tower of the Astromancer. The characters automatically learn rumours #1 and #2 from "Whispers & Rumours" below.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use bribes and honeyed words to gather information about the Cursed Tower of the Astromancer and its mistress, Tuulitar Vihas. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp. The character learns another rumour for every additional 1d4 hours and 1d4 gp they spend. Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. Something has recently happened at the Tower of the Astromancer. For about two weeks, no one has been admitted to the tower, strange noises have been heard coming from within, and no one has seen the astromancer Tuulitar Vihas.
2. Tuulitar Vihas—the astromancer—sometimes hires groups of adventurers to travel into the Mottled Spire to recover

objects from the ruins riddling the nearby territory. One such group returned three weeks ago.
3. The astromancer's apprentice, Reima Itkonen, is not well-liked around town. He is entirely too nice to be genuine, and some folk whisper of his savage temper.
4. There are rumours of strange stirrings in the wild and rugged uplands of the Mottled Spire. Orcs have been seen in greater numbers further south than usual. Given these rumours, it won't be long before the town's population of adventurers expands—which will be great for the local economy.
5. The astromancer is a powerful wizard; as her title suggests, she is obsessed with the stars and the heavens. She can sometimes be seen on her tower's roof at night, surveying the night sky.
6. The astromancer, Tuulitar Vihas, has no time for adventurers bothering her in the hopes she will craft magic items for them—her research is too important to waste time on such trivialities.

The Surrounding Locality

The (Cursed) Tower of the Astromancer stands on Selka Street on the northern edge of Dunstone. From here, the tower commands unrestrained views of the Mottled Spire and the open sky. Selka Street is named after the nearby river; most of the shops on the street sell fishing, camping and survival gear.

Selka Street by Day

Use this list to add life and detail to the tower's surrounds:

1. Two locals, arm in arm, wander along the street. When they get close to the Tower of the Astromancer they cross the road and speed up—it is as if they do not want to walk in the tower's shadow.
2. Beggars and street folk are conspicuous by their absence on the street near the Tower of the Astromancer.
3. Several peasant children sit on a wall near the astromancer's tower, intently watching the place. By their conversation, it seems like they are daring each other to run up and knock on the tower's door. There's lots of bravado but no real action.
4. The shops are open up and down the street, and a smattering of people—mostly adventurers, explorers other outdoor types—are browsing their wares.
5. A cat emerges from between two buildings, clutching a dead rat in its jaws. It stalks off to enjoy its meal.
6. A wagon rumbles down the street, and pedestrians step aside to let it pass.
7. Four soldiers march along Selka Street ostensibly to keep the peace. One of them casts an uneasy glance at the tower as they pass.
8. The shops are open up and down the street, and a smattering of people—mostly adventurers, explorers other outdoor types—are browsing their wares. The businesses near the Tower of the Astromancer seem quieter than those further away. In these shops, the characters can haggle for bargains

Selka Street by Night

Use this list to add life and detail to the tower's surrounds:

1. Dark shadows fill the street, and all the shops are shut. Lights glimmer from shuttered windows above the shops, but few people are abroad on Selka Street.
2. A thin stray mongrel ambles along, sniffing the ground. It stiffens, and its hackles rise as it intently watches a shadow. A low growl escapes its throat.
3. It is a cloudless night, and numberless stars blaze down over the town from the inky-black sky.
4. The gentle sounds of life—muttered conversations, laughter, and soft singing—emanate from the houses lining Selka Street. Ahead stands the Tower of the Astromancer—dark, silent and gaunt.
5. Bats flutter hunt for food. If a character is unlucky, one of the bats gets tangled in their hair.
6. Faint clouds drift across the moon, giving it an insubstantial, evil cast. A wan, thin light filters down to bathe the tower and town.
7. The street near the tower is devoid of traffic; if the characters plan to break in, there are no witnesses.
8. The yowling of a cat breaks the quiet of the night. Strangely, other cats—and some dogs—join in. A great cacophony of yowling and barking fills the air.

Odd Effects

The (Cursed) Tower of the Astromancer has been gaining a fell reputation of late—mainly because of the strange effects emanating from the tower. Use this list to generate the details of such strange effects:

1. Bobbing balls of magical violet light dance atop the astromancer's tower.
2. Low sounds akin to sobbing, punctuated by wailing, drift from the arrow slits of the astromancer's tower.
3. A yellowish-red light flashes at one of the tower's arrow slits. Then, it turns blue.
4. A flock of birds flies toward the tower and then suddenly wheels away, screeching loudly.
5. A loud screech—like someone in the depths of great sorrow and pain—echoes from within the tower.
6. Strange shadows seem to writhe across the tower's walls. Some of them form glyphs and sigils.
7. A faintly luminous mist sometimes rises from the tower's roof. The colour of the mist—in some undefinable way—defies classification.
8. One or more of the characters feels a kind of mental intrusion when they are close to the tower—it feels like some unknown, incorporeal entity is trying to force its way into their mind.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The tower has several notable locations.

1. **Portal of Stars**: Twin double doors provide the only easy access to the tower.
2. **The Orrery**: This double-height chamber holds Tuulitar's pride and joy—an orrery that she uses to track and recreate the positions of various astrological bodies.
3. **Hallway**: From here, explorers can access the tower's upper floors.
4. **Library**: High wooden shelves filled with books on astronomy, geography and other mundane but learned subjects line this chamber's walls.
5. **Study**: From this plushly appointed chamber, Tuulitar can gaze out at her orrery.
6. **Kitchen**: This chamber serves both as a kitchen and a food store.
7. **Hallway**: This hallway doubles as a seating area.
8. **Reima's Quarters**: Herein dwells Tuulitar's scheming apprentice Reima Itkonen.
9. **Tuulitar's Quarters**: Here dwells the astromancer, Tuulitar Vihas. Several powerful arcane protections ward this chamber.
10. **Tome Vault**: Tuulitar keeps her spellbooks and a few other rare and valuable esoteric volumes here.
11. **Treasure Vault**: This warded vault contains Tuulitar's treasures—her gold, silver and gems—along with a few magic items she does not regularly carry with her.
12. **Observatory**: Tuulitar observes the passage of stars and other bodies across the heavens from atop her tower.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the tower's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Magical light fills the tower; one or more globes equivalent to a *dancing light* hover on the ceiling of each area. Their illumination is controlled with a series of command words.

Ceilings: The ceilings are 12 feet high in most areas.

Walls: The walls are of dressed field stone plastered over to enable decoration with frescos and murals. In some places, tapestries serve as decoration.

Ground Floor: Flagged, the ground floor is flat, unimpeded and in good condition.

Upper Floors: Creaking wooden boards comprise the tower's upper floors. Moving silently across these creaking floors is difficult.

Internal Doors: Stout wooden doors ward the tower's chambers. Doors open into the rooms.

Spiral Staircases: Narrow, cramped and built for defence, the spiral staircase provides cover for combatants fighting foes lower down the stairs. Squares containing a spiral staircase count as difficult terrain. Esoteric symbols and sigils are deeply incised into the stairs' risers.

Tapestries: Tapestries hang throughout the tower, depicting a variety of scenes. (Refer to the relevant room description). Each tapestry is worth between 50 gp and 100 gp. A character behind a tapestry is somewhat concealed. Characters can scale a tapestry quite easily; however, a tapestry only supports 130 lbs. of weight. Heavier characters rip the tapestry from the wall once they have climbed 10 ft.; such climbers suffer 1d6 damage and land prone. Common sense suggests that the tapestries are unlikely to support heavy climbers.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list to breathe life and detail into the tower:

1. Arcane sigils are incised deeply into the floor.
2. A tapestry depicting a rugged range of hills sprawling under a night sky hangs on a wall. The weavers used silver thread to pick out each star. A falling star in the centre of the tapestry is shown plunging toward the hills.
3. The beautiful furniture in this chamber is delicate and ornate—it is clearly of elven artifice.
4. Reddish-black spots on the floor could be dried blood or spilt red wine.
5. A gossamer spiderweb fills a corner where the ceiling abuts a wall. A red spider with black dots all over its body squats at the web's centre.
6. A bobbing orb of faintly glowing yellow light slowly drifts through the air.
7. The heady scent of esoteric spell components and the smell of musty old books hang in the air.
8. A beautiful painting, done in vivid colours and depicting a blazing star falling toward a range of hills, decorates the entirety of one wall.
9. Odds sounds (perceptive character hears) filter down from an upper floor. They could be weeping or tittering.
10. A strange, indefinable feeling hangs in the air. Modify this entry to complement the cause of the "curse" hanging over Tuulitar's tower.

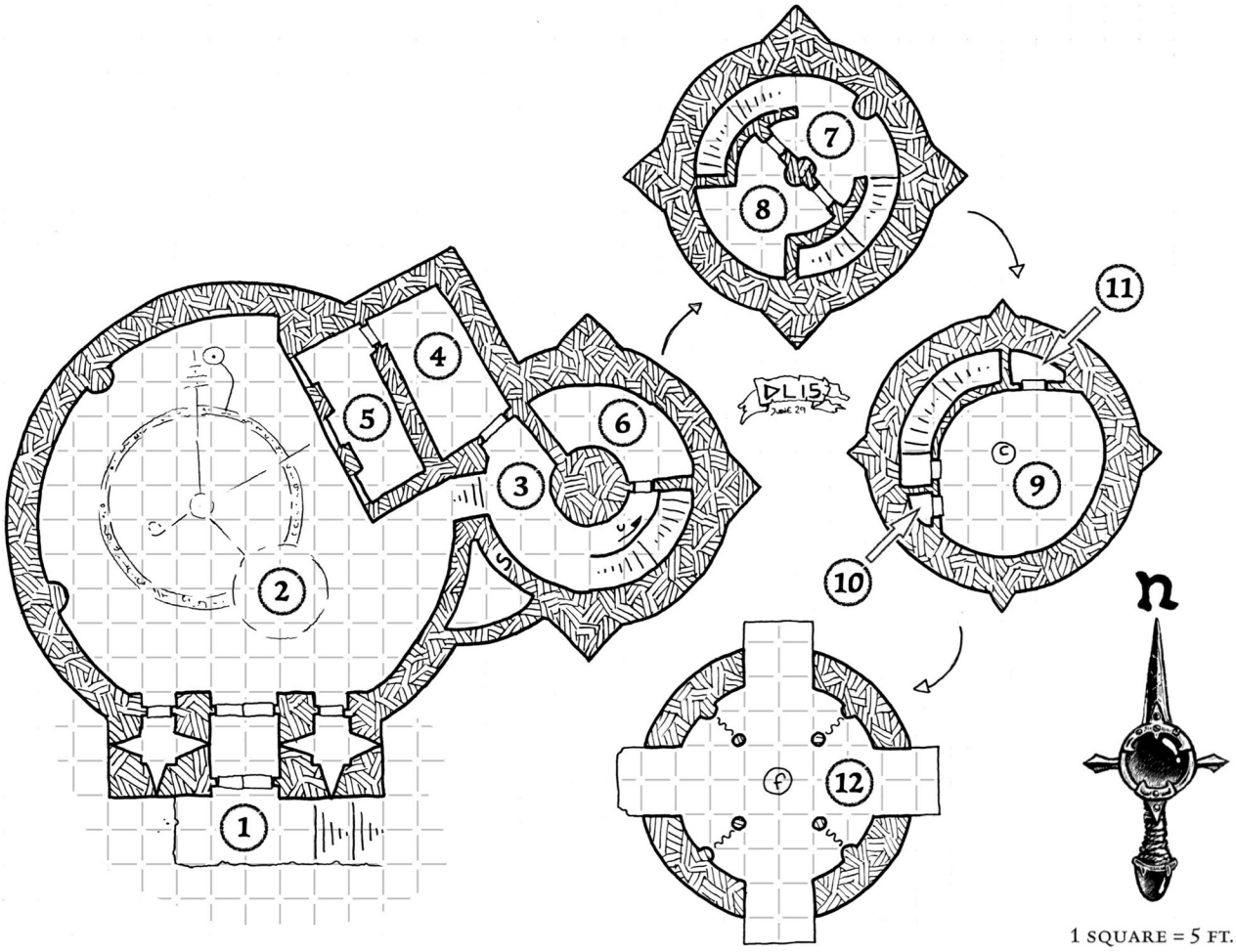
Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a tower location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. The beautiful image of a well-known constellation is painted onto a swath of black wall. The stars seem to shimmer in the light—ground-up gemstones have been added to the paint to create the effect.
2. A fragile glass decanter half filled with white wine and two matching glasses stand on a side table.
3. A scroll case contains a fresh sheet of vellum. A clean ink pen and a pot of ink are positioned next to the case.
4. Painted with vivid colours, this small picture depicts a star blazing across an inky black sky. The paint is old and

cracked, suggesting the painting is decades, if not centuries, old.

5. Scratch marks on the floor suggest that something heavy has been dragged through the area.
6. A book lies open on a side table. The book is a treatise on the night sky, and Tuulitar's handwritten notes festoon its margins.
7. A faint blood smear mars the wall by the nearest door.
8. A scroll, dropped carelessly lying behind a piece of furniture, holds a *magic missile* spell.
9. A tightly-rolled piece of parchment shows a map of the nearby Mottled Spire. The map shows the locations of several known ruins in the near reaches of the hills as well as several intriguing locations marked with a star symbol.
10. A wine glass—miraculously not damaged—lies on its side by a long stain on the floor; clearly, the glass was full when it was dropped.



GM Notes

***Getting into the Tower**: The doors in location 1 offer the only relatively easy way to get into the tower. Characters that can fly can, of course, access the roof. Some characters may be able to squeeze through the arrow slits. If the doors are barred, characters without access to fly, gaseous form or reduce person may struggle to enter the tower.*

Some characters may simply knock on the door. Determine, in regards your setup, how likely it is that Tuulitar or her apprentice, Reima, answer the door if the characters do so.

***Arcane Defences**: The tower's front doors are an excellent place for a non-lethal arcane trap.*

***What's an Orrery?** An orrery is a mechanical model of the planetary system that illustrates or predicts the relative positions and motions of the planets and their moons. It may also show the relative sizes of these bodies; however, since accurate scaling is often not practical due to the actual large ratio differences, a rough approximation may be used instead.*

Remember, Tuulitar's orrery is a work in progress, and she is exceptionally knowledgeable about the heavens. Thus, her orrery may include planets and moons of which the characters are unaware.

1: Portal of Stars

Twin double doors provide the only easy means of accessing the tower.

Atop a flight of stone steps, iron-banded double doors pierce the tower's windowless walls.

Stair: The wide set of stairs leading up the tower's entrance is difficult terrain. The stairs lack a balustrade or handrail.

Arrow Slits: The tower's arrow slits are too narrow to squeeze through but do admit slivers of light into the interior.

Iron-Banded Oak Double Door: These tough doors provide access to the tower's interior. The doors have a bar that can be dropped into place from inside (which makes them extremely difficult to force open).

2: The Orrery

This double-height chamber holds Tuulitar's pride and joy—an orrery she uses to track and recreate the positions of various astrological bodies.

A large and complicated metal contraption dominates this large double-height chamber. High windows pierce the northeastern wall.

The Orrery: A number of differently sized orbs are suspended from metal poles attached to a convoluted gear-like mechanism set into the chamber's floor. A complex series of gears and levers enable the movement and positioning of the orrery. The orrery itself is both extremely valuable and a work in progress. As Tuulitar's understanding of the major stars and planets grows, so does her creation.

Windows: These paneless windows enable Tuulitar to observe her orrery from a suitably elevated position.

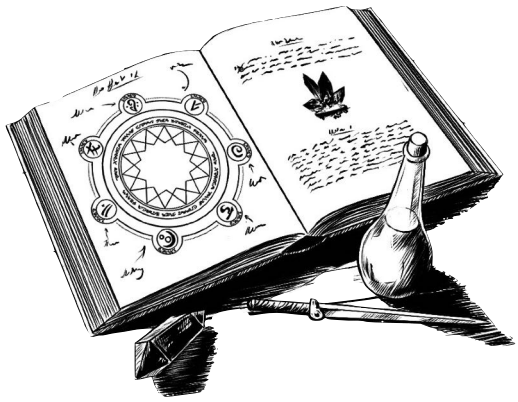
Stair: This short set of stairs is difficult terrain. Esoteric symbols and sigils are carved into each stair's risers.

3: Hallway

From here, explorers can access the tower's upper levels.

Tapestries cover the walls of this short hallway. Against the tower's outer wall, stairs spiral upwards.

Stairs: This short flight of stairs is difficult terrain.
Tapestries: Thick tapestries hang from the walls.



4: Library

High wooden shelves filled with books on astronomy, geography, and other mundane but learned subjects line this chamber's walls.

High bookshelves packed with books, scrolls, small statuettes, models and the like line the walls of this small chamber.

High Wooden Shelves: Crammed with books, scrolls and small decorative nicknacks, these deep shelves reach almost to the ceiling. A character can scale these shelves easily. The books here are mainly treatises on the natural world with a special focus on the stars, celestial bodies and history. None are particularly rare or valuable. Notable volumes include:

- ***Ivanka's Constellations***: Written centuries ago by a dwarven seer, this tome describes the cyclical motions of various astronomical bodies. It also details several comets that visit the planet at long intervals.
- **Imatar Tiera's Diary**: This fragment of the famed wizard's diary has led Tuuliar to believe a fragment of Vile Star may yet lurk in the ruin of Imater's home.

5: Study

From this plushly appointed chamber, Tuulitar can gaze out at her orrery.

Three paneless windows pierce one wall of this room. An ornate desk of dark wood and a matching high-backed chair stand before the middle window.

Windows: Set about six feet above the floor of location 2, these three windows provide an excellent vantage point to study the orrery in location 2.

Ornate Desk: A scattering of open books, scraps of parchments, an ink pen, ink pot and so on cover the desk. A tray holds a half-empty bottle of wine and a cut crystal wine glass of the highest quality. The desk has two long drawers; both contain more papers.

6: Kitchen

This chamber serves both as a kitchen and a food store.

This small kitchen is crammed full of everything you would expect to find in such a place. A large fireplace dominates the outer wall.

Fireplace: A wide fireplace dominates the outer wall. A spit and various other cooking paraphernalia stand nearby.

Kitchen Apparatus: All the items necessary for operating a small kitchen can be found here.

Food Stuffs: Boxes, chests and cupboards hold enough good quality food for two people for roughly two weeks. Three small barrels hold good quality wine.

GM Notes

***Clues**: The library and study are good places for you to seed clues as to Tuulitar's fate and recent doings.*

***Ruin of Bleak Hill**: Imatar Tiera was a wise woman steeped in the lore of magic and the heavens. Tuulitar Vihas has come into possession of a fragment of her diary in which Imatar speaks of hiding "star metal" in the "bleak dark". She hires the party to recover the "star metal" and any other writing they can find in the ruin of Imager's home. Design this adventure yourself, or refer to Ruin of Bleak Hill for a ready-made Dungeon Backdrop.*

GM Notes

***Proof of Reima's Treachery**: If Reima is behind his mistress's descent into madness, the characters should find proof of this in his room—perhaps a carefully hidden diary detailing what he plans or vials of poison destined for Tuulitar's wine.*

***Meeting Tuulitar**: The characters will likely find Tuulitar in her quarters. Doing so gives them a chance to uncover clues about what has happened before they meet the wizard. Thus, if they realise she is possessed or poisoned they will probably deal with her in a different fashion to the way they would deal with a stereotypical evil or mad wizard.*

7: Hallway

This hallway doubles as a seating area.

Two chairs and a side table stand on this small landing. Tapestries decorate the area.

Tapestries: Four long, thin tapestries, obviously made for this space, decorate the walls. Each tapestry depicts a different well-known constellation.

8: Reima's Quarters

Herein dwells Tuulitar's scheming apprentice, Reima Itkonen.

This chamber is chaotic and disorganised; the bed is unmade, and wrinkled clothes and so on are scattered about.

Bedchamber: The normal accoutrements and furniture—a bed, several chests, a table, chair and so on—one would expect in a bedchamber are here. They are of good, if unremarkable, quality.

Hidden Treasures: Reima has hidden a pouch containing 74 gp and 132 sp under his mattress at the foot of the bed (a character searching the bed finds).

9: Tuulitar's Quarters

Here dwells the astromancer, Tuulitar Vihas. Several powerful arcane protections ward this chamber.

Stout Wooden Door: Magical defences protect this iron-banded oak door. An *arcane lock* makes the door harder to force open and the lock harder to pick, while an exploding *glyph of warding* presents a threat to unwary thieves. Only Tuulitar has the key to this door.

A four-poster bed dominates this room. Chests, a wardrobe, and so stand about the walls. An iron-banded trapdoor pierces the ceiling.

Furniture: The furniture herein is uniformly of the highest quality. The chests, wardrobe and so on are all beautifully craved and richly stained; the bed and its fittings are of even higher quality.

Tapestries: Plush tapestries hang from the walls. Unlike the tapestries elsewhere in the tower, these tapestries are enchanted. Permanent illusions give the impression that the stars depicted thereon glimmer and shimmer. One tapestry depicts the changing phase of the moon, while another shows constellations moving and changing—immense amounts of time distilled into mere hours. Each of these tapestries is worth at least 500 gp.

Trapdoor: An *arcane lock* protects this sturdy iron-banded oak trapdoor. The trapdoor leads to the roof. Tuulitar uses magic—*levitate*, *fly* and the like—to reach the trapdoor.

10: Tome Vault

Here, Tuulitar keeps her spellbooks and a few other rare and valuable esoteric volumes.

Thick books, some in good condition and others little more than fragments of mouldering pages, fill the shelves of this small storage niche. Thin strips of blueish-white metal line the chamber's walls, floor and ceiling.

Stout Wooden Door: Magical defences protect this iron-banded oak door. An *arcane lock* makes the door harder to force open and the lock harder to pick, while an exploding *glyph of warding* spell presents a threat to unwary thieves. Only Tuulitar has the key to this door.

Lead-Lined: The vault's walls, floor and ceiling are covered with a thin layer of lead to block magical detections.

Wooden Shelves: Wooden shelves line the back wall of this vault. The shelves are stout and of high quality.

11: Treasure Vault

This warded vault contains Tuulitar's mundane treasures—her gold, silver and gems—along with a few magic items she does not regularly carry about her person.

Two iron-bound chests almost completely fill this small storage vault. Thin strips of blueish-white metal line the chamber's walls, floor and ceiling.

Stout Wooden Door: Magical defences protect this iron-banded oak door. An *arcane lock* makes the door harder to force open and the lock harder to pick, while an exploding *glyph of warding* presents a threat to unwary thieves. Only Tuulitar has the key to this door.

Lead-Lined: The walls, floor and ceiling of this vault are covered with a thin layer of lead to block magical detections.

Iron-Bound Chests: Two locked iron-bound chests hold the astromancer's treasures. An *arcane lock* wards each chest. Only Tuulitar has keys to these chests.

12: Observatory

Tuulitar observes the passage of stars and other bodies across the heavens from atop her tower.

Four stone pillars jut from the tower's flat roof.

Stone Pillars: Four stone pillars jut from the tower's roof. Each contains an extra-dimensional portal akin to a *bag of holding*. Within, Tuulitar stores her spyglasses, telescopes and so on. Each extra-dimensional space opens to a different command word—and each command word is the elven name of a different constellation.

GM Notes

***Arcane Defences**: The tower's roof, and specifically the trapdoor in the ceiling of Tuulitar's chamber along with he doors to her tome vault and treasure vault are excellent places for lethal magical traps. Here, Tuulitar does not have to worry about innocents setting off the traps.*

***Treasure**: Modify the value of Tuulitar's remaining treasure to suit your campaign.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have resolved the events in *Cursed Tower of the Astromancer*, the location and its mistress need not fade from the campaign. Tuulitar Vihas is a powerful, wealthy wizard, and sometimes she needs adventurers to carry out certain tasks for her. Perhaps she wants them to get her certain book or recover something from some ruined tower or hold in the Mottled Spire. One such Dungeon Backdrop perfect for use with *Cursed Tower of the Astromancer* is *Ruin of Bleak Hill*.

About Ruin of Bleak Hill

The Mottled Spire's wild, rugged uplands lie beyond the Selka River. Crumbling ruins and abandoned mines—the leavings of civilisation's ebbing tide—dot the hills. One such place is the isolated wind-blasted ruin of Bleak Hill Manor. Here once dwelled the wizard-sage Ilmatar Tiera before her untimely death at unknown hands. The centuried ruin—decayed and crumbled—has alternately lain abandoned or served as the lair of marauders, bandits and worse. Now, however, events conspire to focus certain interested parties upon the ruin, and all such folk are in need of adventurers brave enough to dare the terrors of the Mottled Spire.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

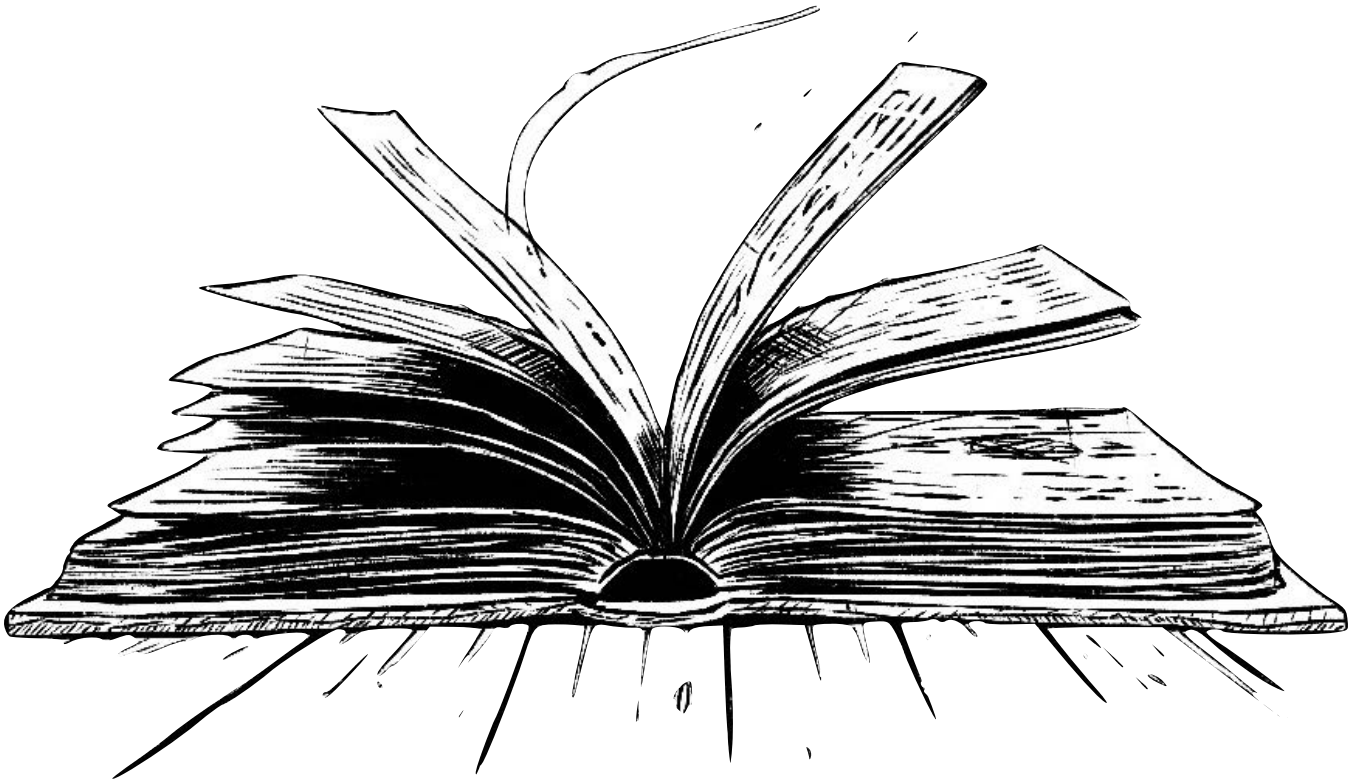
If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Mind-Bending Vile Star**: If Tuulitar's mind is being warped by the remains of a vile star, finding and removing the remains will enable the astromancer and her apprentice to recover their wits.
- **Reima's Machinations**: Defeating Reima is enough to end his machinations. Once he stops poisoning his mistress, her mind slowly heals itself. This process could be hastened by *neutralise poison* or a similar spell.
- **The Thing From Beyond the Stars**: Driving forth the alien creature from Tuulitar's mind instantly restores the astromancer's sanity. However, this could be the start of a new adventure! If the characters do not act quickly, the alien intelligence flees to possess someone else. Trapped in the world, it jumps from body to body, leaving nothing but chaos, confusion and heartbreak in its wake.

Tuulitar will be grateful to her rescuers and could prove to be a valuable, if slightly distracted by her studies, ally if the characters decide to stay in Dunstone.

Further Adventures

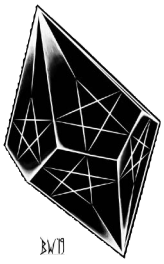
Tuulitar could be a useful ally or patron for the characters if they choose to stay in Dunstone. The rugged uplands of the Mottled Spire to the north are riddled with opportunities for adventure. Lost mines, crumbling ruins and tribes of savage orcs all await the characters beyond the Selka River. The astromancer is a powerful wizard steeped in astronomical lore —it is always wise to stay on the good side of such folk.



The Death King's Forlorn Isle

Coastal, Ashlar (Bitter Sea)

Every year, when the Blood Moon casts its baleful glow upon the world, the Death King's Forlorn Isle rises from the Bitter Sea's stormy waters like an elder monstrosity shaking off its slumber. Many brave souls have sought the isle, drawn like moths to a flame by legends of lost ancient treasure. At dawn, the bleak island sinks into the deep, drowning all who linger amid the fetid, flooded ruins of an ancient king.



Dungeon Background

Ten centuries ago, a multitude of small kingdoms jostled for power in the land that would become the Duchy of Ashlar. Petty rulers controlled these territories, waging constant war against one another to amass wealth and power. Amongst them was Raakus Muurhaja, an evil man renowned for his cruelty and treachery. From his basalt fortress of Helvettiin, perched upon a lonely islet in the Bitter Sea, Raakus ruled with an iron fist.

Every full moon, the tyrant sent his warriors to pillage the surrounding lands and abduct women and children. Those carried off to his dark citadel were never seen again. It was whispered that Raakus served the demon lord Dagon and that his captives were sacrificed to the Shadow in the Sea.

The other kingdoms eventually banded together to destroy Raakus. They raised an army and besieged Helvettiin as the tyrant-king rained evil spells down onto the attackers from the parapets of his jet-black tower. After two days, the victorious besiegers sundered Helvettiin's bronze gates and Raakus was slain by King Voitto in hand-to-hand combat. Fearing Dagon's wrath, Voitto ordered his men to entomb Raakus' broken body in the dungeons beneath Helvettiin. Helvettiin was razed to the ground, and the name of Raakus Muurhaja was struck from history.

Three days after the citadel's destruction, the isle inexplicably sank beneath the sea. It rises again every year when the Blood Moon hangs low in the night sky.

The Onyx Trapezohedron

An ancient object of fell and awesome power, learned sages have come to believe the *Onyx Trapezohedron* was the source of the Death King's power and a direct conduit to his fell master—Dagon, the Shadow in the Sea.

Peasants, adventurers and other uneducated types have a wide range of wild theories about this transparent black stone. Natives of Ashlar—or those who investigate the *Onyx Trapezohedron* know the following pieces of information:

- The *Onyx Trapezohedron* holds the souls of all those slain by the Death King. He used their energy to power his most powerful and evil magics.
- Hewn from the very stuff of the Abyss, the *Onyx Trapezohedron* is not onyx at all, but something else entirely more sinister.
- The *Onyx Trapezohedron* is the Forlorn Isle's keystone; remove it from the island, and it won't sink back below the waves. Bring it back to the island once it has been removed causes the isle to sink again.
- The Death King's soul lurks in the *Onyx Trapezohedron* waiting for, an unwary explorer to claim the gem as their own. When they do, that person is doomed!

Some, none or all of the above may be true, depending on your setup.

The Forlorn Isle Now

When designing the challenges lurking in the Death King's Forlorn Isle, you have three basic options for the isle's setup:

1. **Raakus Returned**: Raakus is a powerful undead being (for example, a wight, lich or anything else you desire). In this scenario, the Death King seeks to escape his sunken prison and conquer the lands of Ashlar anew. Helvettiin's passages are crawling with the undead—the remains of those who have drowned in its reeking halls.
2. **Shadow of the Death King**: The tyrant-king may be dead, but his spirit lingers on. Raakus' ghost patiently waits for adventurers to find a way into his crypt, at which point he seeks to possess one of them; an unwitting vessel to carry Raakus to the mainland. If an NPC provides the hook for this scenario, they might secretly serve Dagon and seek to orchestrate Raakus' return through the heroes' unwitting actions.
3. **Helvettiin's Heirs**: With the Death King imprisoned, dormant or destroyed, evil aquatic creatures (such as sahuagin, scrags or the like) lair in Helvettiin's ruins. This option works on its own but also works if you decide Raakus and his undead servants are trapped in his crypt (location 8) while other the other creatures roam the rest of the dungeon.

Alternatively, you could combine one or two of the above scenarios and complicate matters for the characters by having a necromancer intent on raising or controlling Helvettiin for their own sinister purposes racing to reach the island first.

Adventure Hooks

Seafaring characters could easily be shipwrecked on the sharp rocks of the Forlorn Isle and explore the place in search of a means of escape.

Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the party to the Forlorn Isle. Each of the hooks below uses a different notable NPC from the village of Coldwater; if you have placed the Forlorn Isle in your own campaign simply substitute suitable NPCs for those names below.

- **Iargo's Fate:** Last year, Iargo Itkunen (N male half-orc fighter) went to Helvettiin to seek its treasures. He never returned, and his mother Uzlen Itkunen (N female half-orc barbarian) is desperate to get his body back for a proper burial. Uzlen owns and operates Coldwater's only shipwright business of note and offers a reward appropriate to the characters' levels. She can also provide them with a sturdy fishing boat to reach the Forlorn Isle.
- **The Onyx Trapezohedron:** While her motives remain unclear, Elina Vuolle (LN female human wizard), the ruler of the dismal village of Coldwater, hires the characters to recover the *Onyx Trapezohedron*. This mystical gemstone

is said to have been owned by the Death King and yet languishes in his sunken crypt. According to whispered legend, the Death King received the black jewel from Dagon himself, and it is said to be the source of his ancient power. Elina offers the party a reward consummate with their level along with something else of great value—the thanks of a noblewoman of Ashlar, if they retrieve the gem.

- **What's in a Name?** The scholar Armas Hujanen (LE male half-elf wizard) seeks to learn the Death King's true name, claiming it can be woven into a spell to sink the cursed isle for good. He pays the characters handsomely to look for clues in Helvettiin, but depending on your design probably has some deeper purpose. Normally, Armas is at his home in Coldwater researching the place's strange preponderance of hideously ugly villagers, but he makes a special effort to seek out visiting adventurers. He offers to pay the party sell for their efforts.

Coldwater

In Ashlar, the nearest settlement of note to the Forlorn Isle is the dismal, smuggler-haunted village of Coldwater. For more information about Coldwater, see over the page.

Optional Event: Rival Party

The characters may not be the only ones interested in recovering Helvettiin's treasures! At any point during the adventure, a rival adventuring party may arrive at the isle intent on looting its treasures. (Or these adventurers could be Dagon cultists come to the isle for some unspeakable and diabolical purpose).

These rival adventurers are likely to complicate matters for the party. If the characters lost their vessel or equipment on the journey to Helvettiin, such a rival party might provide convenient replacements.

The rival adventuring party comprises:

- **Marke Ahti** (NE middle-aged female human wizard) cares only for herself and lusts after the *Onyx Trapezohedron's* power.
- **Albin Toivio** (CE male human fighter) believes he is the Death King's descendant and dreams of claiming his birthright and forging a new realm.
- **Kaarle Vaito** (CE male human cleric [Braal or Dagon]) lusts after the *Onyx Trapezohedron* and dreams of using it to further his master's goals.
- **Ventla Kupias** (CE female human rogue) wants loot and the comforts it brings—no matter how many corpses she must climb over to get them.

Assign these NPCs abilities as you deem appropriate.

Whispers & Rumours

A character may hear one or more rumours about the Death King's Forlorn Isle. The character can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the character learns.

Entries 1, 3, 4 and 6 are always true. Decide on the others based on your own preferences.

1. Once every year, when the Blood Moon rises, the Forlorn Isle rises from the Bitter Sea. When dawn breaks, it sinks back into the sea's frigid depths. (True.)
2. Fire won't burn on the Forlorn Isle. Both magical and mundane flames are quickly snuffed out by the evil magic permeating the salt-caked basalt rocks.
3. Many centuries ago, an evil tyrant built a fortress called Helvettiin on the Forlorn Isle. The old kings of Ashlar allied against him and razed the citadel to the ground. (True.)
4. Only a small section of catacombs remains of the citadel which once stood on the Forlorn Isle. Entombed within is the body of an evil tyrant whose crimes were so vile his name was stricken from history. Sages later named him the Death King. (True.)
5. The Forlorn Isle sits atop the cyclopean tomb of a dark, primeval god who sleeps deep beneath the sea. The Death King was his faithful servant in life and the god raised him from the dead as his immortal champion.
6. Few adventurers ever return from the Forlorn Isle. Those who do claim the Death King's tomb is sealed by a massive stone door inscribed with a strange Elven poem. So far, no-one has managed to open it. (True.)

Coldwater

Ruler: Lady Elina Vuolle
Government: Overlord
Population: 188 (109 humans, 59 deformed humans, 18 half-orcs, 1 gnome, 1 half-elf)
Alignments: CN, N, NE
Languages: Common, Orc
Resources & Industry: Smuggling, fishing

An isolated place, perched upon an inhospitable coast at the head of a muddy coastal path, Coldwater is not an easy, or pleasant, place to visit. Few who visit the village do so a second time. The village huddles at the mouth of a steep-sided valley leading down to the sea. Here, the seabed quickly drops away and the waters are deep, dark and cold.

Widely (and correctly) thought of as a haven for smugglers and other miscreants, rumours swirl as thickly about the village as the persistent sea fogs that often blankets the place for days at a time. Other rumours—whispered in taprooms up and down the coast—speak of darker things: of unwholesome practises carried out in worship of some ancient, depraved power; of travellers going missing near the village; and of an ancient set of steps buried at the base of nearby cliffs and revealed only at particularly low tides.

Whatever the truth, Coldwater's folk are sullen, distrustful of outsiders and some are said to suffer from horrible deformities. Even the village's ruler—the aged Elina Vuolle—hates the place and leaves its folk to mainly fend for themselves. Two powerful commoner families dominate day-to-day life: the Eerolas and the Purhos. Trapped in a low-grade, but vicious, family feud the two families subtly work against one another and use the other villagers as their pawns. Street-fights, knifings and the like are not uncommon occurrences in Coldwater.

As well as being beset by all sorts of foul rumours, Coldwater stands perilously close to a great swath of stunted, warped and discoloured vegetation known as the Blight. It sprawls across the wind-swept hills north of the village.

Whispers & Rumours

While in Coldwater, a character may hear one or more rumours. The character can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use this list to determine which rumours the character learns.

1. Armas Hujanen is digging in his cellar for something best left buried. He dug so deep, his house almost collapsed!
2. Elina Vuolle has nothing but disdain for Coldwater and its folk. She's tried to sell it—and her title—several times.
3. A mysterious set of stairs pierces the cliffs of Devil Cove; they are only accessible at particularly low tides.
4. Many of the Purho are horribly disfigured; they take a perverse pleasure in their appearance and often drown healthy babies born into the family.

Village Lore

A character may know something about Coldwater, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the characters are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Coldwater is a dump—the place is a dismal cesspit of the worst sort. The people are sullen and tremendously ugly; there is no reason to go there.
- The folk of Coldwater are of the worst moral fibre. Many are smugglers and rumours of an evil cult based in the village refuse to die.
- A nearby cove has a strange feature buried in its cliffs—a sunken staircase only accessible at particularly low tides.

Villagers

Appearance: Dark haired and pale skinned, many of the villagers appear to be unwell in a general, non-specific way; some are horribly disfigured.

Dress: Villagers wear loose, ill-fitting woollen or leather clothes suited to their trade.

Nomenclature: *male* Arvo, Ilari, Kaarlo, Valto, Viljo; *female* Aila, Eeva, Helmi, Pia, Ulla; *family* Eerola, Itkonen, Purho, Varala.

D20	Male Name	D20	Female Name
1	Arvo Varala	1	Pia Varala
2	Ilari Eerola	2	Ulla Eerola
3	Valto Purho	3	Aila Purho
4	Kaarlo Itkonen	4	Pia Itkonen
5	Viljo Eerola	5	Helmi Eerola
6	Reku Tornio	6	Aamu Toiva
7	Pentti Neuvo	7	Elsa Itkonen
8	Immo Tuuli	8	Tilda Kostio
9	Soini Viti	9	Rauna Tiera
10	Niko Miela	10	Ulla Miela
11	Antti Vartia	11	Siiri Vartia
12	Klaus Vesi	12	Elina Vesi
13	Kalle Toivio	13	Ilta Toivio
14	Manu Ora	14	Ventla Ora
15	Joakim Tiera	15	Veela Tiera
16	Erkki Mielo	16	Miina Mielo
17	Kuura Purho	17	Auni Purho
18	Kaapro Eerola	18	Inga Eerolo
19	Piri Eerola	19	Ilta Eerola
20	Auku Purho	20	Vinina Purho

Notable Locations

Most of Coldwater comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Vuolle Manor**: Perched on the side of the valley, Vuolle Manor overlooks the village. Its battlemented walls give spectacular views of the surrounds.
2. **Waterside**: The harbour is the busiest—and smelliest—place in the village. Here, a gallimaufry of fishing vessels and small merchant craft jostle for berths.
3. **Itkonen's**: Here, Uzlen Itkonen builds and repairs fishing vessels and small merchant craft. Itkonen's is always busy.
4. **Sauli Eerolas's Home**: Here dwells the patriarch of the Eerola family.
5. **Crooked House**: This partially sunken building is the home of Armas Hujanen. Part of the cellar's foundations has collapsed, giving the house its name.
6. **Chapel of the Mistress**: Dedicated to Serat (the uncaring Mistress of Storms, this chapel is one of the village's most substantial buildings. On misty nights its, bells toll endlessly to guide home those still out on the water.
7. **The Stooped Man**: Coldwater's only inn and tavern, the Stooped Man is a bastion of cheap alcohol, surly service and draughty, flea-infested accommodation.
8. **Atro Purho's Home**: This large, ramshackle building. Has extensive cellars which intersect with a sea cave; here much of the Purho's clandestine business is conducted.
9. **Devil's Cove**: Strange goings-on and several disappearances conspire to keep the populace away from this nearby cove.
10. **Devil's Point and the Sunken Stair**: Only exposed at particularly low tides, these stairs lead to a chamber containing a seemingly unopenable pair of stone doors.

Notable Folk

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

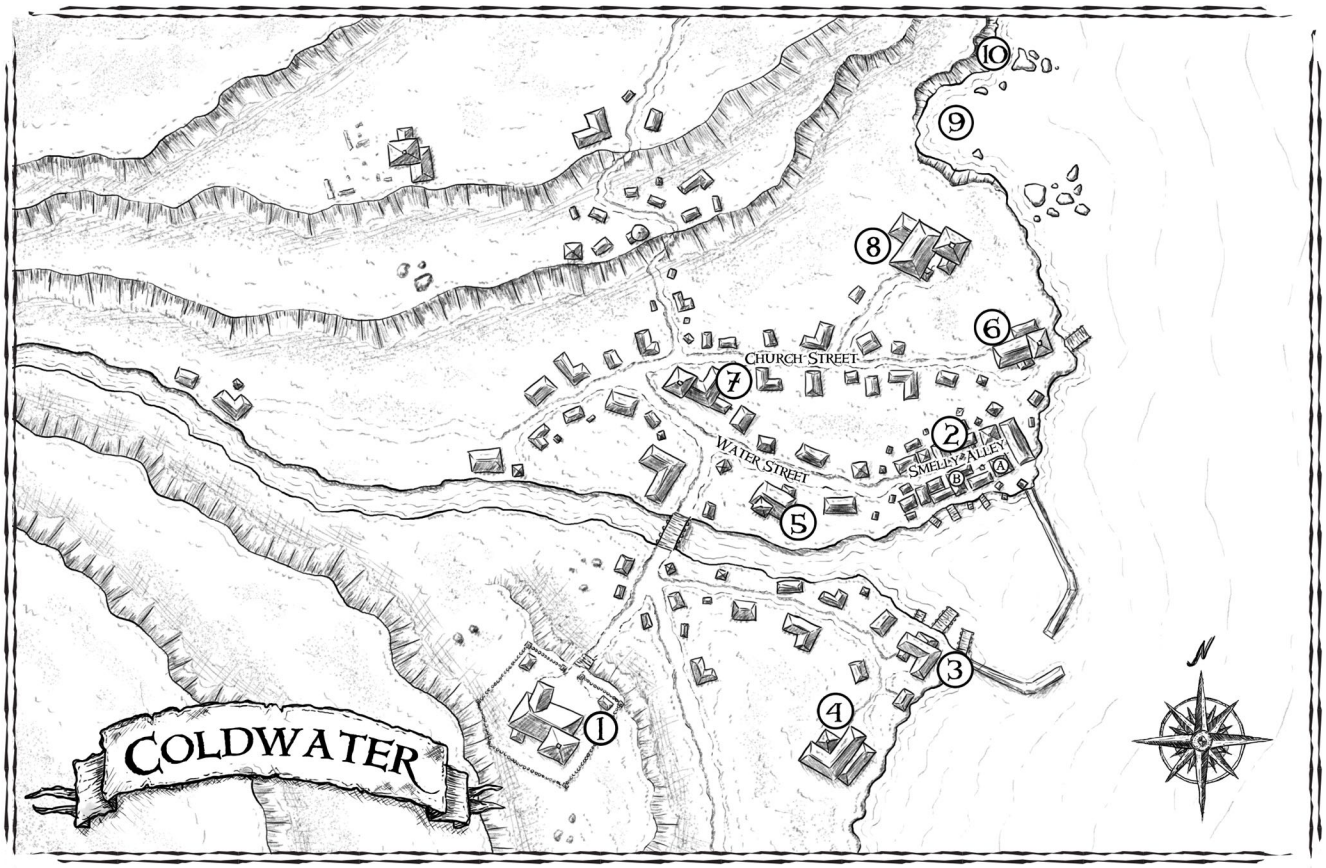
Armas Hujanen (location 5; LE male half-elf wizard) has come to Coldwater to study the high incidence of deformity in the populace.

Atro Purho (location 8; N male deformed human rogue) hates the Eerolas blaming them for his own ill fortunes. He is young and dynamic.

Elina Vuolle (location 1; LN female old human wizard) hates Coldwater (and her lot).

Sauli Eerola (location 4; NE male middle-aged human fighter) once served as a soldier but now runs the family "shipping" business. He is the Eerola family patriarch.

Uzlen Itkonen (location 3; N female half-orc barbarian) runs the local shipbuilding business and tries to stay out of the Eerola's and Purho's feuding as much as possible.



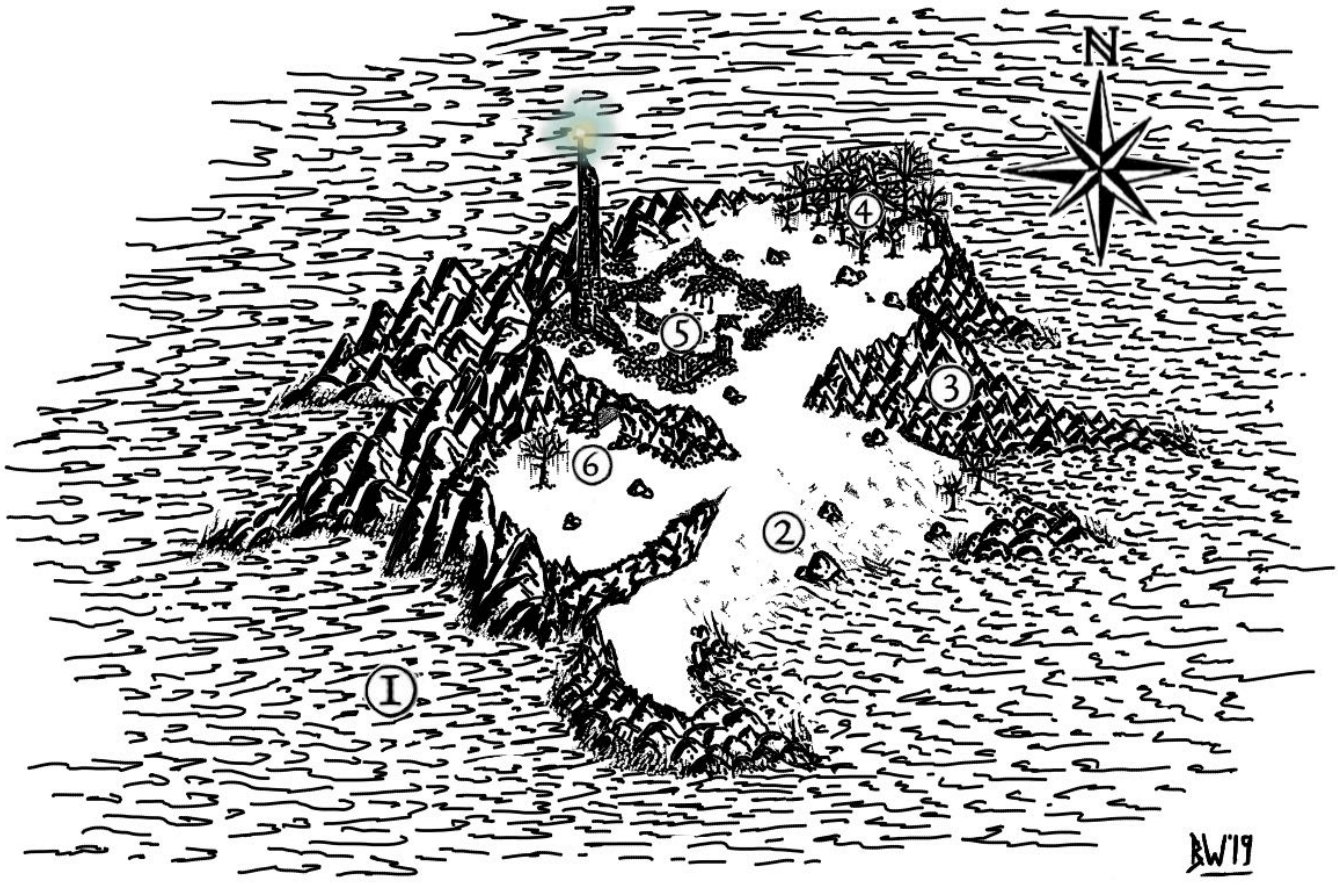
Helvettiin and the Forlorn Isle

A bleak, crag-jagged islet in the Bitter Sea, the Forlorn Isle surfaces approximately one mile east of Coldwater every year on the night of the Blood Moon. But one structure stands upon the Forlorn Isle—the Death King's mighty citadel of Helvettiin which was reduced to rubble centuries ago. Beneath these dismal ruins lie the dungeons of the fortress, accessible only via heavy bronze doors set into the rock on the isle's west flank.

A rugged mass of black stone, pock-marked by barnacles and swathed in reeking seaweed, is all that now remains of the isle. Crabs, clams and other shellfish brought up from the bottom of the sea provide a feast for countless seagulls whose screeching fills the fog-shrouded sky with their shrill, haunting cacophony, which mariners say are the screams of all those souls lost on and near the isle.

Measuring but a half-mile across, the Forlorn Isle takes little time to explore.

1. **The Bitter Sea**: Jagged rocks lurk just beneath the surface of the dark, choppy waters. A shallow-keeled boat is the best option to reach the isle. Even then, the characters must navigate the treacherous waters and avoid being shipwrecked.
2. **Black Silt Beach**: Pitted yellow bones and rusted weapons– the remains of those who besieged Helvettiin ten centuries ago—jut from the jet-black slurry covering the ground like so many charnel toadstools. If you are using "Optional Event: Rival Party" footsteps lead through the foul slurry to location 6.
3. **Crags**: Impaled upon the countless sharp spires of rock are the wrecks of several small and medium-sized boats. The cliffs on the isle's west side are 50 ft. high and slick with algae.
4. **Grove of Sacrifice**: Thick, reeking seaweed hangs from this dismal copse of dead, blackened trees like slimy spider webs. Nailed to the trunks and hidden beneath layers of algae and barnacles are the barnacle-encrusted skeletons of over a dozen victims; their weathered skulls gazing out unseeingly across the churning sea.
5. **Citadel Ruins**: Rising 30 ft. above the surrounding rubble like a glistening black needle, a single crumbling tower wall forms the sole remnant of the Death King's dark citadel. On stormy nights, the tip is wreathed in a nimbus of blue-green fire; a phenomenon known as "Serat's Torch"; mariners consider it a warning from the sea goddess herself.
6. **Dungeon Entrance**: This foreboding cavern hewn into the cliffside hides the only known entrance to Helvettiin's dreary dungeons. When the characters reach this locale, proceed to "Helvettiin at a Glance".



Reaching the Forlorn Isle

Whenever the Forlorn Isle rises, the very waters roar at its abomination and the howling wind rails against such an unholy blight. More often than not, a raging storm follows in the wake of the Forlorn Isle's resurgence, increasing the danger and difficulty of reaching its black-silted shore.

Unless the characters possess magical means of reaching the isle, getting there by boat is their only option. In order to reach the Forlorn Isle by boat, a character steering the boat must be vigilant against hidden dangers. The party experience 1d3 events on the way to the island. Effects preceded by "A" occur only when a result is rolled for a second time.

1. The painful groan of splintering wood briefly drowns out the thunder's roar as the boat grinds across sharp rocks lurking beneath the surface.
   A. The characters' boat breaks apart on some hidden rock, and the party is shipwrecked, washing ashore on the Forlorn Isle's black beach. The characters are now stuck on the isle without a ready means of escape and are possibly missing some of their equipment and supplies. (In this instance, "Optional Event: Rival Party" provides a means for the party to escape the island.)
2. Barbed lightning strikes the waves nearby, followed by a cacophony of rolling thunder.
   A. A fiery bolt strikes the boat! All characters suffer minor electricity damage, and the boat catches fire.
3. Driven by the lashing gale, a massive wave approaches! It rises like a black wall, towering menacingly above the characters before crashing down, swamping the boat.
   A. The wave is strong enough to knock a character overboard. (The character must resist the force of the waves or be knocked overboard).
4. As a nearby flash of lightning illuminates the sea, one character catches a split-second glimpse of an enormous pale grey tentacle writhing just beneath the water.
   A. The same character sees a great three-lobed alien eye staring back at them from the deep and is affected as though by a *fear* spell.
5. Floating face-down in the frozen brine is the corpse of a fellow adventurer, slain by the creatures of Helvettiin.
   A. 1d4 zombies latch onto the boat and attack the characters.
6. Coruscating green flame blazes from Helvettiin's ruined tower. A character wise in religious matters interprets this as a warning from Serat, Mistress of Storms, to turn back while they still can.

Helvettiin at a Glance

The dungeons of Helvettiin provide a small, self-contained adventure location set amid the crags of a mysterious sinking island. Use the descriptions below as a starting point and adapt them as necessary to suit your own design ideas.

Generic Dungeon Features

Ten hundred years spent at the bottom of the sea have rendered Helvettiin's drowned ruins uniformly dark, wet and slimy. All dungeon locations share several generic features.

Illumination: It is dark in the dungeon.

Walls: Skilled masons built Helvettiin's walls in ages past. Barnacles, mussels and seaweed cling to the dripping wet stones, providing a rough yet slippery surface.

Floors: Loose, cracked flagstones comprise the dungeon's floor. Fine silt, wet seaweed and rotting algae coat every inch, making it easy to slip and lose one's footing.

Bronze Doors: These heavy doors are pitted and tarnished with age. A thick crust of peeling verdigris conceals time-eaten carvings resembling a tentacled sea monster. Doors open into the area they ward.

Ceiling: The barrel-vaulted ceilings in the dungeon are 15 feet high and dangerously sagging in places. Grey-green stinking seaweed hangs from the many cracks between the great stones.

Seawater: All the water in the dungeon is saltwater—it oozes from the masonry and forms puddles on the floor. Silt, grey-green seaweed and small crustaceans and like lurk in such puddles.

Notable Locations

Helvettiin comprises the following notable locations:

1. **Entrance**: Great weathered bronze doors looming inside a dark hollow in the rock comprise the dungeon's singular entrance.
2. **Sloped Passage**: This narrow passage has a slippery floor which descends sharply toward location 3.
3. **Flooded Chamber**: This was Helvettiin's dreaded torture chamber. It now sits half-submerged in seawater at the lowest part of the dungeon.
4. **Hall of the Guardian**: An ensorcelled statue guards the entrance to the Death King's crypt. Only those who solve its riddle may pass.
5. **Cruciform Chamber**: This is the complex's largest chamber. Two hidden alcoves provide ideal spots from which to launch an ambush.
6. **Barricaded Room**: The dilapidated old guardroom is where the last adventuring party to explore the island barricaded themselves inside.
7. **Secret Passage**: Undisturbed since Helvettiin's fall, seawater this razor-sharp clam-lined passage lined.
8. **The Death King's Crypt**: The citadel's former prison is where the Death King was entombed by his enemies.

Dungeon Dressing

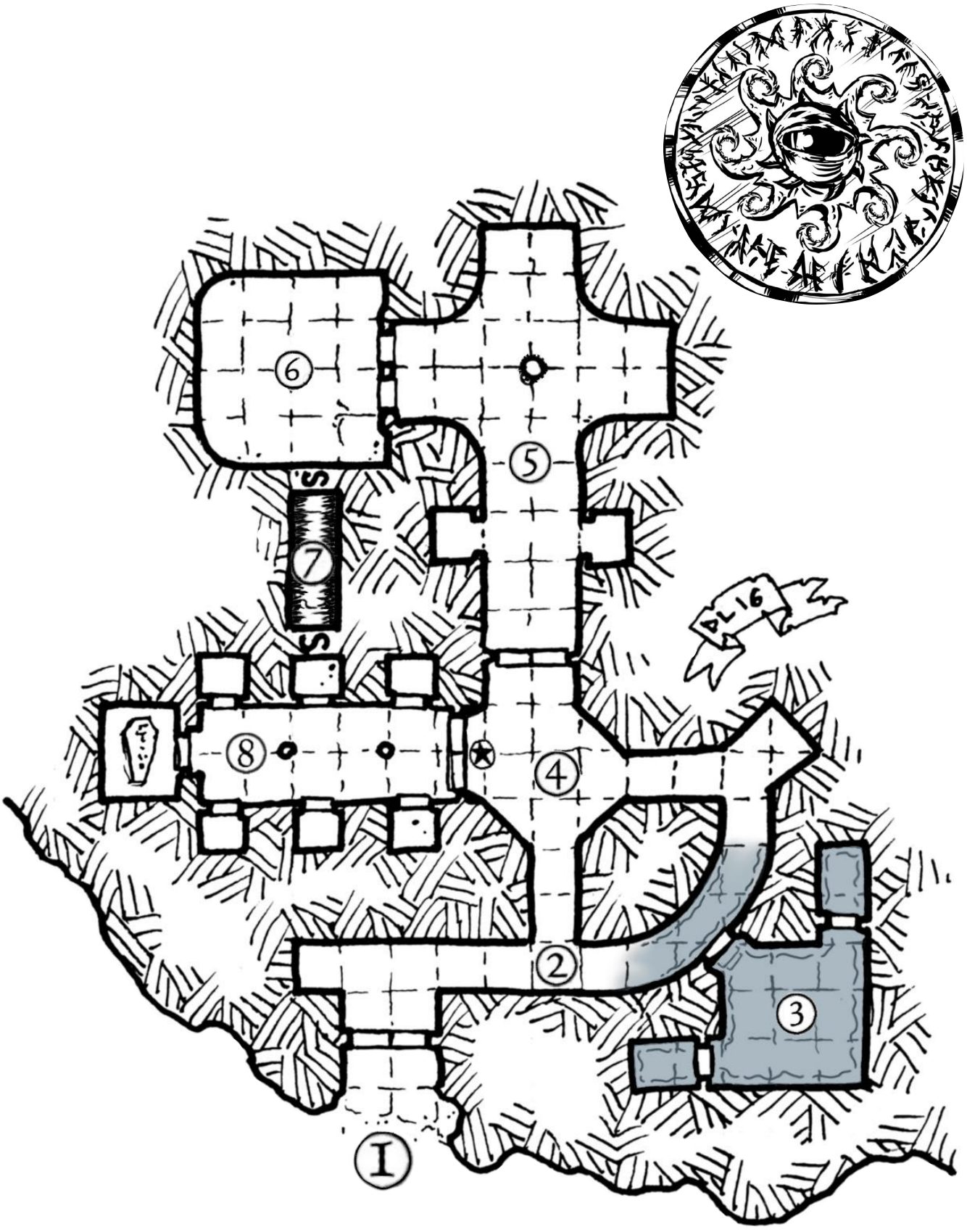
Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Tiny crabs nest in the seaweed. Characters disturbing the weeds are swarmed by 2d12 diminutive crabs.
2. The corpse of an adventurer lies twitching on the floor, its blotchy skin bloated with rot. If disturbed, the abdomen bursts open and 1d6 eels slither out.
3. Splashing noises sound from a shallow puddle where a large, ill-tempered moray eel is trapped beneath the seaweed. It attacks anyone who approaches.
4. A rotted skull sitting in a corner abruptly rises a few inches off the ground and scuttles towards the party, gnashing broken yellowed teeth. A large hermit crab inhabits the skull's brain pan.
5. A faint sulphurous odour and a slight ripple in the air hint at the presence of noxious gas. It could be harmless, suffocating or even explosive (unless rumour #2 is true).
6. A soft green glow shimmers across the wet basalt walls. Investigation reveals the source as bioluminescent algae.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Jet-black mussels encrust a centuries-old corpse huddled against the dripping wall. The mussels contain a total of 2d6 blood-red pearls, each worth 10 gp.
2. A seven-foot long trident impales a cracked human skull to the floor with two tines.
3. A rusted tinderbox and four unburnt torches, warped and split by the salty water, lie scattered about.
4. Slimy algae cover a length of rope lying stretched across the floor. Sturdy dwarven knots mark every five-foot section. The nearest end is cut and frayed, while the other trails off into the darkness ahead.
5. Scores of pale fleshy tentacles protrude several inches from cracks in the wall. They quiver slightly when approached. The "tentacles" are edible molluscs feeding off the algae in the dungeon. A party of hungry adventurers could subsist on them for several days.
6. Four heavy, bloated wineskins hang from a tangle of seaweed. While their contents have soured, the skins are intact and could be used as improvised floatation or breathing devices.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GM Notes

***Ambush**: The deep water in area 3 is perfect for undead or aquatic creatures to hide in and ambush the characters.*

1: Entrance

Great weathered bronze doors looming inside a dark hollow in the rock form the entryway to the dungeon.

The hollow stretches wide like the maw of some enormous sea monster oozing its foetid breath. Several feet into its gullet a set of tall bronze doors stands ajar, mutely beckoning—or perhaps daring—you to step inside.

Illumination: The Blood Moon's pale crimson light illuminates the entranceway with dim light. Beyond ten feet inside, however, darkness reigns.

Bronze doors: These tall double doors open when the isle rises from the deep and magically close when adventurers reach location 8 or interact with the statue or puzzle in location 4. They also open when the *Onyx Trapezohedron* (found in location 8) is brought within ten feet.

2: Sloped Passage

This narrow passage has a slippery floor which descends sharply toward location 3.

The dripping black walls of this sharply descending passage are encrusted with mussels and barnacles. Strands of rank seaweed and rotting algae hang from the ceiling like slimy green cobwebs.

Slippery Slope: The eastern branch of this passage descends five feet on either side of the door leading to area 3. Characters moving down the passage may slip and land prone in front of the door unless they are careful.

Murky Water: The water in the southern branch gradually deepens to approximately two feet deep in front of the door to location 3.

Door: The door to location 3 is bolted shut from the inside and is slightly swollen with moisture. However, the mortar around the hinges has worn away.

3: Flooded Chamber

This was Helvettiin's dreaded torture chamber. It is now half-submerged in seawater at the lowest part of the dungeon.

Rotted seaweed and several bloated bodies float atop a black mirror of ice-cold brine in this dank, dark chamber. Heavy shackles blossoming red with rust line the walls.

Chest-Deep Water: The water conceals an impressive array of rusty torture devices, greatly hampering movement.

Doors: The doors to the side chambers have small trellised windows.

Side Chambers: These contain more torture implements, as well as the rotted corpse of a drowned adventurer swathed in dark seaweed.

4: Hall of the Guardian

An ensorcelled statue guards the entrance to the Death King's crypt. Only those who solve its riddle may pass.

Shattered skulls and broken bones lie strewn across the cracked flagstones of this battle-scarred chamber, A gigantic headless, four-armed giant blocks the west doorway.

Battle Damage: The damage to the flagstones, walls and bones was inflicted by a heavy, blunt instrument. Clever characters easily identify the statue as the likely culprit.

North Doors: These heavy doors are hard to open and can be pushed open only with great effort.

West Doors: The doors leading west are blocked by a massive statue. A short poem is engraved into the left-hand door, while the right has eight images embossed upon it.

Giant Statue: The "statue" is a stone golem (or other kind of animate guardian). It remains dormant until someone tries to force open the west doors or turns the wrong image. Once animated, it hunts down and attacks all intruders. The golem returns to its dormant state in front of the doors when it has not encountered any intruders for one hour.

Text: Crude Elven runes spell a strange poem, engraved into the bronze doors:

Now I Live
Desire Not So Long

No, Lost One
Rise, Devil
I Won

Images: Eight embossed images are arranged in a circle, representing a collection of mythical creatures. Clockwise from the top, they depict a:

1. Winged lion
2. Cyclops
3. Two-headed serpent (one head at each end of its body)
4. Man-scorpion hybrid
5. Basilisk
6. Minotaur
7. Horned dragon
8. Griffon

Closer inspection reveals each individual image to be mounted on an axle, allowing it to be turned like a key.

Solving the Riddle

The poem is a palindrome; its sequence of letters looks identical when viewed from either end. The correct solution is to turn the two-headed serpent: the only creature sharing the poem's peculiar property.

When the correct answer is given, the door's guardian steps aside and the doors to location 8 creak open.

GM Notes

***The Guardian**: A rampaging stone golem could make short work of low-level characters. When faced with a lower level party, play the golem as a slow, ponderous brute, giving the characters a chance to run and hide until the construct returns to its dormant state. (Alternatively, replace the golem with a more appropriate guardian creature).*

GM Notes

***Aquatic Creatures**: If evil aquatic creatures dwell in Helvettiin, location 5 is a likely place to encounter their leader—perhaps as they venerate the Glowing Eye.*

***The Corpse**: The corpse is (or was) Iargo Itkunen (*see "Adventure Hooks"*). Those who knew Iargo in life can confirm this when shown his medallion of Serat. Iargo's mother, Uzlen, desperately wants his body returned for proper burial.*

5: Cruciform Chamber

This is the largest room in the complex. Two hidden alcoves provide ideal ambush opportunities.

A single pale glowing eye without pupil or iris unblinkingly gazes at you from the chamber's centre. Seawater drips from the thick curtains of algae lining the walls, filling the air with the constant murmur of falling water.

Glowing Eye: The "eye" is a large luminescent jellyfish with its tentacles entangled in the seaweed wrapped around the central pillar. Though harmless while trapped, it can still deliver a nasty sting if disturbed or touched.

Hidden Alcoves: Concealed by curtains of dripping algae, these alcoves provide an excellent hiding place or spot from which to launch an ambush.

Doors: The northern door is barricaded from the inside. The southern door stands slightly ajar, affording a narrow view of what lies beyond.

6: Barricaded Room

This dilapidated old guardroom is where the last adventuring party to explore the isle barricaded themselves inside.

Huddled in the far corner are the decayed remains of a dead adventurer clad in rusted chainmail. Oily, stinking water oozes from the south wall, covering the stones in a waxy sheen.

Remains: Kept in place by the weight of its armour, the corpse in the corner has remained relatively intact. A silvered crossbow bolt is buried in the back of its skull. The prominent brow and broad jawbone suggest the bones belong to a healthy and muscular male half-orc. A pewter medallion bearing the image of Serat, the Mistress of Storms, hangs from his neck. The body has been comprehensively looted of all portable, valuable items.

Barricade: Several spikes and assorted debris were used in barricading the doors leading to this room. It seems the southern door was subsequently cleared—possibly to allow someone to leave…

Oozing wall: Water seeps from a five-foot wide section of stone on the south wall. The water has a distinct fishy odour.

Secret Door: Marked by the area of oozing wall, this secret door is easier than normal to notice. However, its mechanism is rusted and in poor repair and requires oiling and lubricating or unsticking to operate (or brute strength to force open). When the door (or the one in location 8) is opened for the first time, a deluge of reeking brine pours out soaking everyone standing in front of the door.

7: Secret Passage

Undisturbed since Helvettiin's fall, this passage is filled with seawater and lined with razor-sharp clams.

The walls of this narrow passage bristle with razor-edged clams. Matted strands of pale grey algae hang from the ceiling almost all the way to the floor.

Illumination: Dripping algae extinguishes all open flames and reduces the light radius from other mundane sources to 5 feet of dim light. The slightly swaying algae throws weird shadows on the walls, which look, to nervous explorers, a bit like questing tentacles.

Grey Algae: A profession of wet and slimy grey algae hangs from the ceiling, almost reaching the floor. The algae obscures vision of what lies further into the passageway.

Dagger Clams: Growing up to sixteen inches long, these leaf-shaped clams sport keen serrated edges meeting in a sharp point. Characters squeezing through the passageway suffer minor damage for every five feet moved that round; moving slowly and carefully at no more than half speed halves this damage.

Secret Doors: From the secret passage, the rear of the two secret doors is obvious; characters in the passageway automatically spot both doors.

8: The Death King's Crypt

The citadel's former prison is where the Death King was entombed by his enemies.

The smell of mould and decay hangs heavily in this ancient prison. Seven dismal cells, each one sealed by a tarnished bronze door, line the walls.

Cell Doors: These doors have small trellised windows and are bolted shut from the outside but not locked.

Cells: Each cell holds the barnacle-encrusted, seaweed-choked skeleton of one of Raakus's soldiers.

Secret Door: This secret door is easier than normal to notice. However, its mechanism is rusted and in poor repair and requires oiling and lubricating or unsticking to operate (or brute strength to force open). When this door (or the one in location 6) is opened for the first time, a deluge of reeking brine pours out.

Sarcophagus: The Death King's basalt sarcophagus is plain and devoid of adornments. Its heavy lid can be pushed aside only through a combined effort of several strong folk.

On the inside of the lid, the name "Raakus Muurhaja" has been scratched deep into the stone at least a dozen times. Along with Raakus Muurhaja's mouldering remains the sarcophagus contains a glistening black gem of irregular cut—the *Onyx Trapezohedron*.

GM Notes

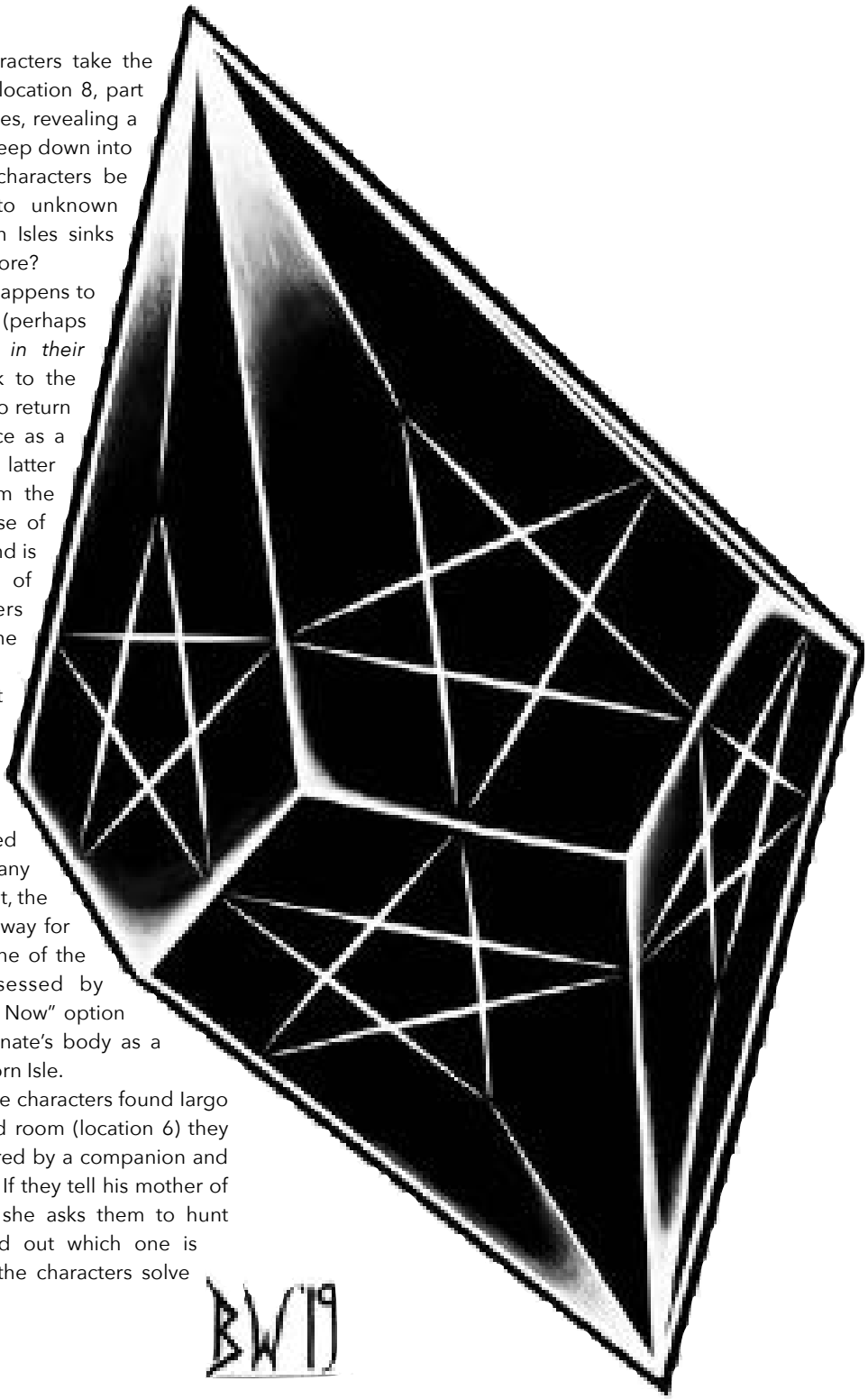
What's in the Sarcophagus? *Unless you decided Raakus walks again ("The Forlorn Isle Now" option 1), the sarcophagus in location 8 contains Raakus' withered cadaver—the Onyx Trapezohedron clutched in one fist. The fingers of his other hand are worn to stumps from scratching his name into the sarcophagus' lid.*

Refer to "The Onyx Trapezohedron" for more information about this fell stone and its powers.

Conclusion

When the foul creatures of Helvettiin have been defeated, the adventure doesn't necessarily end. Below are several suggestions on how to continue the story. Several of the options below may be combined to keep Helvettiin and the Forlorn Isle at the forefront of the characters' minds for many more months.

- **Tip of the Iceberg**: If the characters take the *Onyx Trapezohedron* hidden in location 8, part of the floor in location 4 collapses, revealing a labyrinth of tunnels burrowing deep down into the island's bedrock. Will the characters be able to explore these hitherto unknown passageways before the Forlorn Isles sinks below the ocean's waves once more?
- **Fate of the Forlorn Isle**: What happens to the isle after the characters leave (perhaps with the *Onyx Trapezohedron in their possession*)? Does the isle sink to the bottom of the Bitter Sea, never to return or does it remain on the surface as a now-permanent fixture? In the latter case the characters might claim the ruins of Helvettiin as a new base of operations. If they don't, the island is quickly visited by a succession of pirates, smugglers, adventurers and freebooters; more than one group are bound to claim the island as their own. No doubt many deaths will result as the various groups battle for dominion over the isle.
- **Raakus' Revenge**: Countless sacrifices to Dagon have earned the Death King immortality many times over. By breaching his crypt, the characters may have paved the way for his return! It is even possible one of the characters has become possessed by Raakus' ghost ("The Forlorn Isle Now" option 2), which then uses the unfortunate's body as a vehicle to finally escape the Forlorn Isle.
- **Murder Most Foul**: Assuming the characters found Iargo Itkunen's body in the barricaded room (location 6) they can deduce the boy was murdered by a companion and not one of Helvettiin's creatures. If they tell his mother of their discovery and suspicions she asks them to hunt down his companions and find out which one is responsible for his death. Can the characters solve the year-old murder?
- **The Onyx Trapezohedron**: The strange black gemstone found in the Death King's crypt is said to be the true source of Raakus' powers and is a sacred object for the Shadow's followers. The cult of Dagon is prepared to go to great lengths to recover the gem, and if they learn the party possesses the *Onyx Trapezohedron* the cultists make repeated attempts to secure the gem.



Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock

Swamps & Marshes, Ashlar (Salt Mire)

Lost to time and battered by the foulness of its surrounds, the decrepit and mouldering Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock slowly sinks into the Salt Mire. Wreathed in lurid tales of legendry and foul doings, the lonely citadel is now little more than a crumbling shell, yet peasants tell of its mistress's great power and great wealth. Atavistic lizardfolk haunt the surrounding fens and bogs and keep casual explorers away, but the legend of the Fated Warlock refuses to die. What yet lurks in her ruined castle? Are unfound treasures lurking therein waiting for those brave and clever enough to find them? And what befell the Fated Warlock herself?

Dungeon Background

Centuries ago, the feared warlock Loviisa Tapavaino built for herself a lonely fortress in the depths of the Salt Mire. There, far from prying, superstitious eyes, she carried out all manner of hideous and blasphemous experiments, summonings and bindings. The place quickly developed a fell and unwholesome reputation and common folk eschewed the dismal surrounds.

The primitive lizardfolk of the Salt Mire took note, however, of the warlock's hideous and unnatural doings. Whipped into a frenzy by their shaman, who sensed unnatural vibrations emanating from the fortress, they fell upon the place and, in one terrible night of orgiastic, atavistic violence, stormed the citadel and slew Loviisa and her servants.

None of Ashlar's peasants witnessed the warlock's fall, and her fate remains a mystery; the surrounding rank marshland and the numerous dangers lurking therein conspire to keep all but the most stubborn visitors at bay.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Cavorting Demons**: Strange sounds, an unnaturally chill, vaporous mist, and missing travellers in the Decaying Citadel's vicinity have combined to spawn whispered rumours of hideous, half-glimpsed demons seen cavorting on the ruin's crumbling walls and of the rising threat they present to the surrounds. Brave heroes strong in the cause of good and law are needed to end this nascent threat.
- **A Worm-Riddled History**: A character discovers an old, dog-eared, worm-riddled book—*Sorcerous Mysteria*. They could find the book in a treasure hoard, buy it at a curio shop or discover it hidden in the depths of a library. The book tells of, among other things, the warlock Loviisa Tapavaino, her fortress in the Salt Mire, and her no doubt hideous and grisly but unknown fate. The book describes in wild, lurid details the various unspeakable acts ascribed to the warlock and finishes with a passage describing her "great store of otherworldly wealth", which remains lost to the world.
- **Strange Lights**: Travellers report seeing odd lights of ill-favoured hues amid the ruins of the Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock. Some say the ruin is haunted by the spirits of all those slain by the warlock; others say treasure hunters are digging amid the fallen stones under cover of darkness. Whatever the truth of the matter, the party hears of these rumours and decides to investigate.

GM's Note

Depending on how much campaign time you want to devote to the Decayed Citadel, you can handwave the characters' journey to the ruin or design a series of minor encounters with the Salt Mire's denizens. Lizardfolk yet dwell in the surrounds and they could appear to warn the characters away from the ruin. Alternatively, more dangerous things—will-o'-wisp, harpies and so on—dwell in the Salt Mire; any of these creatures could ambush the party as they slog through the dismal swamp.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour.

Use this list to determine what the character learns.

1. Many years ago, a powerful warlock reputed to traffic with terrible fiends dwelled in a keep hidden deep in the Salt Mire. When the warlock disappeared, the keep fell into ruin and abandonment.
2. Even the lizardfolk of the Salt Mire dare not enter the Decayed Citadel's crumbling precincts. The primitive, superstitious creatures believe the warlock's ghost yet haunts the ruin.
3. Strange lights are often seen in the Decayed Citadel's vicinity. They are the disembodied souls of all those sacrificed by the warlock to her fiendish allies.
4. Hideous, half-seen forms have been glimpsed cavorting upon the Decaying Citadel's crumbling battlements. The terrified common folk whisper that these are demons come to ravage the land. Heroes are needed to end this terrible threat.
5. Whipped into a frenzy of violence by their shaman, the superstitious lizardfolk of the Salt Mire slew the warlock of the Decaying Citadel many years ago.
6. The Fated Warlock was surpassingly powerful and demanded tribute and gifts from her many otherworldly minions, servants and slaves. This treasure has never been found and yet lies somewhere in the Decaying Citadel waiting for someone brave and strong enough to claim it for their own.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The Surrounding Locality

The Decaying Citadel of the Fated Warlock moulders amid the Salt Mire's fetid, noisome reaches. The old, shattered keep stands upon a low, muddy island reached by a weed-choked causeway that wends its way through the mire.

The Salt Mire—a great swath of swampy marshland—nearly cuts the duchy of Ashlar in two. A narrow track—the Old Road—pierces the marsh, following an ancient dilapidated causeway. The causeway once served as a shortcut through the swamp, but it has fallen into disuse with the development of a more profitable, safer trade route. Journeying through the mire is unpleasant, slow and dirty; most travellers now take the Great South Road, which cuts around the southern fringe of the Salt Mire.

Lizardfolk lair in the fens. Most are indifferent to humans as long as they are left alone, but a few of the more primitive tribes—whipped into a religious frenzy by their shaman—are violently opposed to humanity's encroachment. Occasionally, fishermen and hunters go missing—their disappearances are blamed on such lizardfolk, but their guilt remains impossible to prove as no remains are ever recovered.

Two notable rivers, the Blackwash and the sluggish Tanglebriar, wend their way through the mire. With a surprisingly strong current, the Blackwash often brings forth strange things from the deep marsh. After heavy rains, the river water turns black for an unknown reason and coats the nearby reeds and trees in a thick, ebon slime.

Hundreds of creatures, from huge bull crocodiles living in the deeper pools to waterfowl, goblins, snakes and, of course, uncountable flies, mosquitoes and other insects, dwell in the marsh. Tiny blood-red worms lurk in the swamp's many stagnant pools, waiting for a source of warm, tasty blood to blunder into their home. Most of the swamp's denizens, such as lizardfolk, have tough skin and are generally immune to their attacks, although none are immune to the leech swarms endemic to the swamp.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the citadel's surrounds:

1. Fetid pools of muddy water fringed with reeds and low hillocks of dryer ground stretch away from the causeway.
2. Dark clouds hang low over the Salt Mire, and a gentle but persistent rain begins to fall over the surrounding marsh.
3. A tangle of dense weeds and low, thorny bushes mostly block this part of the causeway. The characters must hack their way through or wade around the obstruction.
4. A loud splash emanates from a deep, muddy pool partly obstructed by a tall stand of reeds. Large ripples spread across the pool.
5. Part of the causeway has crumbled away into the flanking marsh, halving its width. The wet soil of the collapsed section glistens dully in the wan light.
6. Heavy rain pummels the Salt Mire. The light grows dim, and a sense of dismal decay infuses the area.
7. A ray of sun breaks through the dark clouds and lances downwards to bathe the Decaying Citadel in glowing, golden light.
8. A cloud of buzzing insects hover in the air above a stagnant pool of muddy water. If the characters blunder too close, the insects descend upon them to sup upon their warm blood.
9. A mud-covered lizardfolk hunter, Grax (male lizardfolk), observes the party from a nearby stand of reeds. If the characters spot him and appear hostile Grax flees. If the characters are friendly and respectful, they may be able to speak with him and learn a bit about the Decaying Citadel and its fated mistress.
10. The sound of thrashing water and squealing comes from a nearby pool. If the characters investigate, they discover a bull crocodile dragging a marsh pig into a deep pool.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the citadel's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A yellowing skull of a snout-faced humanoid creature lies amid the mire. A brief search reveals the rest of the skeleton—what was once a powerfully built humanoid. These are a lizardfolk warrior's remains.
2. A half-sunken coracle lies part-hidden amid a stand of dense reeds bounding the causeway.
3. A stout pole thrust deeply into the moist earth of the causeway leans at a drunken angle. A faded, raged banner hangs from the pole's crossbeam and flaps gently in the intermittent breeze.
4. A long, sinuous track on the muddy causeway shows where a large snake slithered across it.
5. Deep footprints in the mud show where a group of clawed humanoids crossed from one side to the other. A skilled tracker can determine that six lizardfolk made the obvious tracks.
6. A rotting black-feathered arrow juts from the boggy ground. It is of crude, lizardfolk manufacture.
7. A low hillock hosts the remains of a soggy camp. The campfire is sodden, and investigations reveal one person slept here—and that the campsite is weeks old.
8. A willow tree casts its wide bough over much of a still pool; the tree provides excellent cover from prying eyes and inclement weather.
9. A half-sunken coracle lies part-hidden amid a stand of dense reeds bounding the causeway. A splash of bright blood is visible on the coracle's gunwale. A soggy backpack, holding ruined provisions and 5 sp along with a spear, lies in the boat.
10. A carved pole rises from amid a swath of rank weeds. The pole depicts a hideous, snarling demon face and is a lizardfolk-like thing designed to ward off evil.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The ruin has several notable locations:

1. **Courtyard of Ruin**: Rank weeds, vines and creepers grow about and over the forlorn, crumbling citadel.
2. **Crumbled Tower**: This tower was once three stories high, but the upper levels have long since collapsed.
3. **Procession of Fiends**: Six hideous, ivy-strangled statues watch over the entrance to the Crypt of Dank Shadows.
4. **Crypt of Dank Shadows**: Herein are interred the Fated Warlock's dead servants; they served her in life, and here they linger on.
5. **Maw of Sodden Darkness**: The pungent odour of dampness and decay wafts from this stairwell. Beyond lies the Chamber of Sunken Doom.
6. **Chamber of Sunken Doom**: A stagnant pool of foul-smelling water fills the lower part of this sunken chamber.
7. **The Sodden Stair**: Water dripping through the walls and ceiling has partly flooded this short passage.
8. **Redoubt of Shadows**: This stout tower served as the warlock's final redoubt; it has not been breached since her disappearance.

Generic Ruin Features

Many of the ruin's locations share certain features:

Illumination: The light level in the upper ruins depends on the time of day.

Open to the Sky: Much of the citadel is crumbled, decayed and has long since collapsed, leaving most of the forlorn ruin open to the sky and elements.

Crumbling Walls: The citadel's jagged walls are crumbling and, in places, are wreathed in vines and creepers. A character can scale a wall with varying degrees of difficulty depending on the condition of the relevant section. Easy-to-scale sections have numerous handholds and are covered in vines and creepers, while other sections are in better condition and much harder to climb).

Dangerous Crumbling Walls: Some sections of the crumbling walls are in danger of collapse. A character closely examining the ruin identifies such areas. A character climbing on a section of dangerous crumbling wall who fails their climbing check causes that section of wall to collapse. The character suffers falling damage and falls prone. The wall then collapses on them.

Rubble: Piles of rubble (treat as difficult terrain) lie throughout the ruins. Moss and weeds grow in and on these piles. Anything organic has long since rotted away, leaving only piles of tumbled stone.

Weeds: Clumps of sickly weeds grow throughout the ruins but grow thickest against the crumbling walls and in other low-traffic areas. Ivy and creepers grow across many of the crumbling walls.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills most of the citadel's dungeon.

Atmosphere: The dungeons below the castle are dank and wet. The smell of mould and decay fills the air.

Ceilings: The dungeon ceilings are ten feet high and are of dressed stone blocks. In many places, they leak.

Walls: The dungeon walls are of dressed and mortared stone blocks. In places, the mortar has crumbled away, and water oozes from between the stones. Green, brown and black mould grow across the pitted stone.

Floors: The dungeon's paved floor remains essentially flat and does not impede movement. However, much of the mortar holding the paves in place has crumbled away, and in several places, the paves subtly shift when stood upon.

Iron-Bound Doors: Iron-bound doors open into the room or space beyond. The doors are swollen with moisture and are in a poor state of repair.

Ruin Dressing

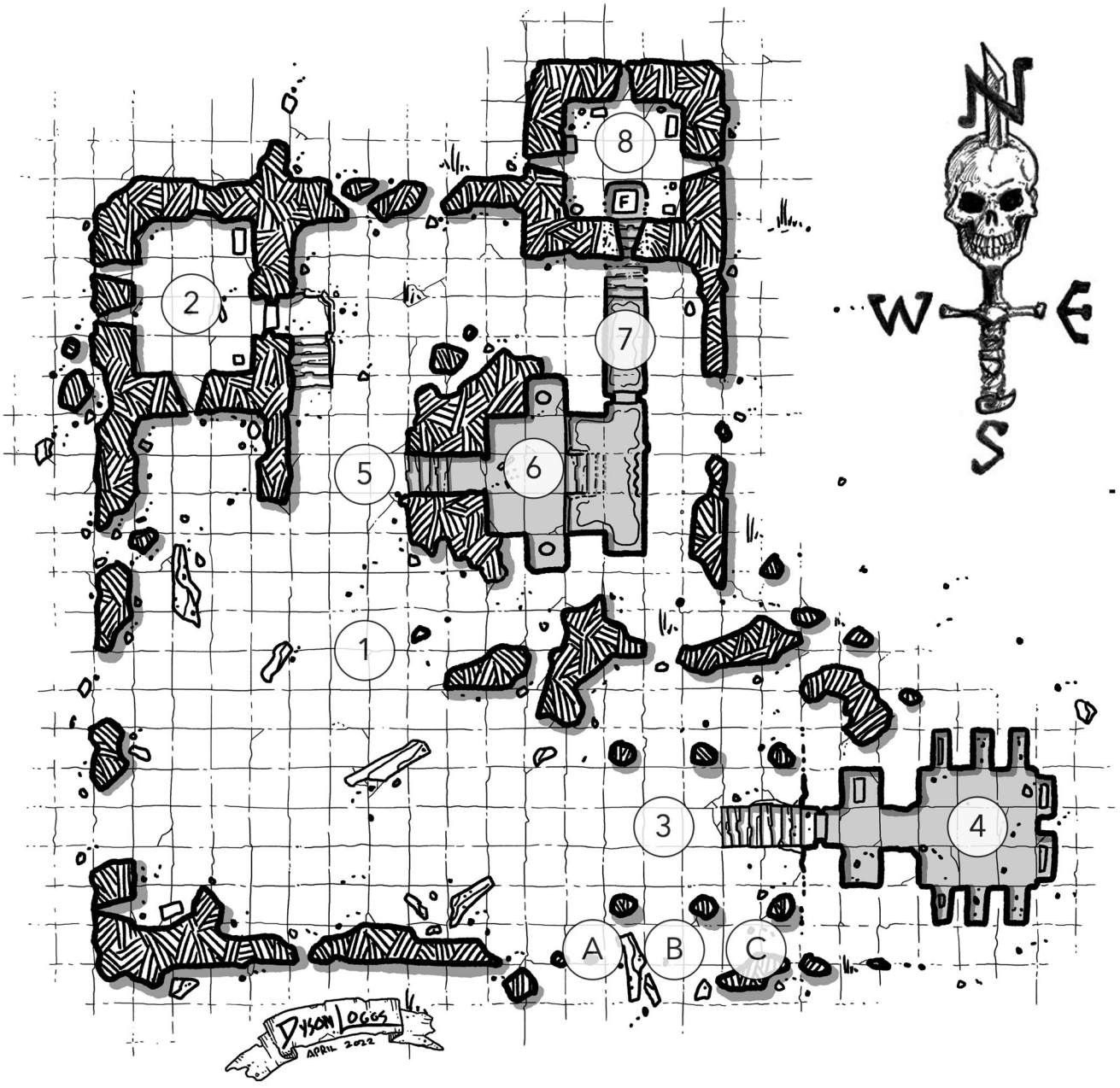
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the ruin:

1. Rank weeds grow thickly among the tumbled blocks. A few yellow and red flowers grow among the weeds.
2. Foul-smelling lichen and thick brown moss grow over the nearby stones. Thick creepers strangle a nearby wall.
3. A jumble of cracked and broken bones lies amid the weeds and the rubble.
4. A crow lands atop a crumbled wall and fixes the party with its beady eyes. It caws loudly, and two more crows of evil aspect join the first.
5. A scattering of feathers caught amid the undergrowth surrounds a broken and decomposing bird's corpse.
6. A stone in a nearby wall looks dangerously loose. A closer examination reveals that an entire section of the wall is in danger of collapsing.
7. The sun—shining over the broken walls and through the thick ivy and vines—casts odd, bizarrely-shaped deep shadows on the ground.
8. The tracks of a small animal—perhaps a badger or fox—cross the muddy ground. The tracks avoid locations 3 and 5.
9. A shred of torn cloak is caught in a tangle of vines and creepers writhing over a crumbling wall. The vines shiver and shudder. It could be just the wind, or something foul could lurk within.
10. Faint and indistinct carvings cover a wall. They may once have depicted a foul creature of some sort.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a ruined location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A fanged skull lies amid the weeds. Investigation notes faint charring to the bone, which suggests the creature was killed by fire.
2. A crudely fashioned rotting spear is entangled among the weeds.
3. A humanoid's skeleton has part sunk into the soft ground. This is a lizardfolk skeleton.
4. The muddy tracks of a small four-legged animal cross the floor; the tracks stop abruptly—perhaps suspiciously so.
5. A stone in one wall is loose. Removing the stone reveals a rusty lever. (The lever's mechanism is broken, and it does nothing.)
6. A pile of stones looks suspiciously like a burial mound.
7. A twisted lump of iron lies amid the weeds.
8. A loose stone juts from a wall. The small niche holds a mouldering pile of twigs and leaves. (This was a lizardfolk fetish that is now decayed.)
9. A muddy smear on a large stone looks like a handprint.
10. The dirty shards of a sundered *crystal ball* lie part-buried in the mud. They are worthless (but sharp).



GM Notes

***Set the Adventure's Feel**: The desolate and noisome decaying surrounds of the citadel (and the citadel itself) play a huge part in setting the scene for adventures in the ruin. Make sure to highlight this.*

1: Courtyard of Ruin

Rank weeds, vines and creepers grow about and over the forlorn, crumbling citadel.

Rubble lies scattered about within the weed-choked courtyard of this ruined keep. An air of isolation and decay hangs over the place.

The ruined courtyard provides shelter from the wind, but it is a gloomy place. The ground is dryer than the causeway and surrounding marsh.

2: Crumbled Tower

This tower was once three stories high, but the upper levels have long since collapsed.

A crumbling set of mossy stone steps leads up to an iron-bound door. Weeds grow thickly about the stair's bounds.

Stone Steps: Weather-worn stone steps lead up to the tower's only door. The stairs are difficult terrain.

Iron-Bound Door: This iron-bound door is in good condition. It opens into the tower. It is unlocked but closed.

Arrow Slits: Arrows slits provide excellent cover and allow dim light to filter into the tower during the day. Small-sized characters can easily squeeze through an arrow slit, but Medium-sized characters find it harder to do so. Note, however, that it may be impossible for particularly bulky characters or those wearing armour to gain access to the tower in such a fashion.

Ceiling: The first floor's rubble-covered floor serves as this chamber's ceiling. The bowing floorboards comprising the ceiling are clearly visible from below. When it rains, water oozes through the rubble, finds gaps in the floorboards and drips into this chamber.

3: Procession of Fiends

Six hideous, ivy-strangled statues watch over the entrance to the Crypt of Dank Shadows.

Three pairs of hideous, weather-worn, moss-covered statues form a processional leading to a dank stairway leading down into the bowels of the hill.

Hideous Statues: Three pairs of hideous stone statues form a processional leading to the Crypt of Dank Shadows (location 4). Each pair of statues faces one another and depicts a different kind of hideous creature. It takes ten minutes of work to clear away the moss and vines growing over each pair of statues to be able to clearly see what they depict.

A. These twisted, half-melted plant-like statues may depict a kind of warped willow treant. Each tree's wide, drooping branches almost touch the weed-covered ground.
B. These skeletal demon-like figures, carved from black stone, glare at each other. They are wreathed in mould and moss.

C. These betentacled monstrosities have a vaguely octopoid head and stand upon a mass of tentacles. The grey stone of these two statues is pitted and worn; the moss growing on them is of an unwholesome hue. A character examining the statues realises they are far older than the other pairs.

Signs of Digging: A small hole has been dug at the base of the southern willow tree treant statue. The hole is part-filled with muddy water, and the remains of a rotting and rusting spade jut from the hole.

Stone Steps: Weather-worn stone steps covered with wind-blown, wet, rotting leaves lead down into the citadel's crypt. The stairs are difficult terrain and descend about 15 feet to the Crypt of Dank Shadows (location 4).

4: Crypt of Dank Shadows

Herein are interred the Fated Warlock's dead servants; they served her in life, and here they linger on.

The smell of decay wafts out of this low-ceilinged dank crypt.

Depth: The Crypt of Dank Shadows is about 15 feet underground. Water drips through the cracks between the ceiling's stones in more than a few places.

Broken Sarcophagi: Piles of shattered stone, broken bones and mouldy, rusty equipment fill several of the niches. Such piles are difficult terrain.

Intact Sarcophagi: Three sarcophagi remain intact. These plain stone sarcophagi are sized for human-sized occupants. None present any obvious clue as to who or what lurks within.

Once the characters have dealt with any dangers lurking herein, they may search the sarcophagi for treasures. Use this list to determine what they find:

1. A heavy iron dagger with a slightly wavy blade fills a rotting leather sheath with a narrow black mould-covered belt wrapped around it. The dagger has grooves in its blade to channel blood away from the wielder's hands.
2. This simple bronze link necklace seems ceremonial in nature. The necklace is obviously very old. Various charms hang from its verdigris-covered chain. The bronze charms include depictions of a curved tentacle, a cloven hoof, a three-eyed frog, and a rearing swan. Verdigris covers all the charms, and several seem to be curiously worn—as if they have been repeatedly rubbed. If worn, the necklace feels heavier than it should be.
3. These three black stones—flattened shards of onyx—have odd, esoteric sigils carved into both sides.
4. This jagged green stone is one-half of a malachite amulet worn on a rotting leather thong. The rest of the amulet is missing. Part of some elder sigil is etched into the amulet —the rune is a disquieting shape.

GM Notes

***Minor Undead**: This is a good location to place some minor undead.*

***What Dwells in the Sarcophagus?** If corporeal undead lurk in the intact sarcophagi, perceptive characters may be able to hear them scrabbling about as they try to escape.*

GM Notes

What Lurks Within? *Something predatory—a large snake or some kind of ooze—could lurk in the pool.*

Magic Trap*: This iron-bound door leading to location 7 could yet harbour a magic trap. Arcane sigils on the door could give a clue to this lurking danger.*

5: Maw of Sodden Darkness

The pungent odour of dampness and decay wafts from this stairwell. Beyond lies the Chamber of Sunken Doom.

Wind-blown leaves and rubble choke the entrance to this narrow stair.

Stone Steps: Weather-worn stone steps covered with wind-blown, wet, rotting leaves lead down into the citadel's dungeon. The stairs are slippery and difficult terrain.

6: Chamber of Sunken Doom

A stagnant pool of foul-smelling water fills the lower part of this sunken chamber.

A dark pool of stagnant, debris-dusted water fills the lower part of this two-level chamber. A set of slimy, mould-covered steps descend into the pool.

Stone Steps: Mould-covered, slimy stone steps lead down to a fetid pool of stagnant water. The stairs are difficult terrain.

Stagnant Pool: The stagnant pool is three feet deep. Rotting leaves, detritus and other debris float upon the pool's scum-covered surface. Mud covers the bottom of the pool, making it slippery. The pool is difficult terrain; Small-sized characters may have to swim or be carried across it.

Once the characters have dealt with any dangers lurking herein, they may search the pool for treasures. Use this list to determine what they find:

1. A rotting spear covered in slime and decaying leaves lies in the mud at the bottom of the pool. Its tip is rusty.
2. A ball of leaves, plant fronds and suchlike is bound up in a small piece of net tied to a short length of thin rope. An old pouch lurks amid the slimy leaves; it contains 13 sp, a ball of sodden parchment and a whetstone.
3. The skeleton of a halfling wearing rotting clothing and ruined leather armour lies in the mud. The skeleton's wounds are consistent with whatever lurked in the pool. A broken arrow juts from the halfling's chest if the fetid pool is unoccupied. His pouches hold 14 cp, 9 sp and a set of thieves' tools.
4. An iron key lies amid the mud and the slime. This is the key to the door leading to location 7. The key is rusted and weak; if it is not used carefully, it snaps off in the door's lock; this makes subsequent attempts to pick the lock virtually impossible.

Iron-Bound Door: This locked iron-bound door opens into the corridor beyond. The door is swollen with moisture, and its iron bands are rusty. The key to this door lies in the stagnant pool.

7: The Sodden Stair

Water dripping through the walls and ceiling has partly flooded this short passage.

Fetid, stagnant water fills this short, narrow passageway. To the north, slimy stone steps emerge from the water to terminate below a closed stone trapdoor.

Fetid Water: The fetid water filling the corridor is three feet deep and is difficult terrain; Small-sized characters may have to swim or be carried across it.

Stone Steps: Mould-covered, slimy stone steps lead up out of the fetid pool of stagnant water filling the corridor. The stairs are difficult terrain.

Stone Trapdoor: This heavy stone trapdoor opens upwards into location 8.

8: Redoubt of Shadows

This stout tower served as the warlock's final redoubt; it has not been breached since her disappearance.

Several small ironbound coffers stand about the walls of this dimly lit tower chamber. A trapdoor pierces the floor.

This tower was once three stories high; however, the upper levels have long since collapsed.

Illumination: During the daytime, faint light filters into the tower through several arrow slits.

Arrow Slits: Arrows slits provide excellent cover and allow dim light to filter into the tower during the day. Small-sized characters can easily squeeze through an arrow slit, but Medium-sized characters find it harder to do so. Note, however, that it may be impossible for particularly bulky characters or those wearing armour to gain access to the tower in such a fashion.

Ceiling: The first floor's rubble-covered floor serves as this chamber's ceiling. The bowing floorboards comprising the ceiling are clearly visible from below. When it rains, water oozes through the rubble, finds gaps in the floorboards and drips into this chamber.

Stone Trapdoor: This heavy stone trapdoor opens upwards against the south wall.

Coffers: Several stout iron-banded coffers stand about the chamber; none are locked.

Once the characters have dealt with any dangers lurking herein, they may search the coffers for treasures. Use this list to determine what they find:

1. Old silver coins minted in a distant or olden kingdom.
2. A triangular black token or coin cast from iron inscribed with a horrible horned head sigil.
3. A small sack of powdered silver.
4. A long, cracked, jet-black beast horn of unknown origin.

GM Notes

***Magic Trap**: The stone trapdoor leading to location 8 could yet harbour a magic trap.*

***Treasure**: The coffers could hold some minor treasures left behind by the Fated Warlock. Organic material—scrolls, books and suchlike—will likely be heavily damage by the moisture in the air unless they have been magically treated.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have dealt with the Decaying Citadel, the site may fade from the campaign or it could feature in the party's future adventurous doings.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Cavorting Demons and Strange Lights**: Once the characters deal with whatever is causing the strange effects hanging over the keep their stock rises with the folk dwelling nearby. They are feted in nearby villages and hamlets as saviours and heroes. Their burgeoning reputations also bring complications: the common folk see them as saviours and begin bringing other problems to their door.
- **A Worm-Riddled History**: The *Sorcerous Mysteria* holds many mysteries and secrets. If you determine that Loviisa Tapavaino did indeed maintain a great store of otherworldly wealth, clues in the dungeon ruins could lead the characters to other discoveries in the text, which enable them to seek out her loot. Finally, the *Sorcerous Mysteria* is a book that has been copied and recopied many times. The information the characters need might not reside in their damaged copy; this could result in them searching for a more complete copy.

Further Adventures

The Decaying Citadel is in an advanced state of decrepitude. Claiming the place and repairing it is likely beyond the resources of the characters. However, the ruin can serve as a good, defensive and relatively dry campsite. The characters could use the place as a base from which to explore the nearby environs of the Salt Mire.

Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

Far below the sunlit surface lie places and things undreamt of by decent commonfolk. Some such things have never seen the light of day, while others have escaped into the Underlands to escape the hated sun. Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands, and its crumbling remnants yet linger in the endless dark below the town. A wealthy merchant, carrying out repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, has made a curious discovery—a rubble-choked set of stairs leading to who knows what subterranean depth—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies below…

Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage is a sequel to *Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage and Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage*. However, it can also be run as a standalone adventure if you so desire.

Dungeon Background

Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands. Much of the area's ancient history has been forgotten—lost to time and memory. However, some buried or lost fragments of the past yet remain and await rediscovery.

Ancient History: Centuries ago, a wizard raised a tower and therein conducted blasphemous and terrible research. The wizard engaged in even more terrible doings in the cellars below the tower—raising the dead, summoning demonic extra-planar creatures and so on. However, even the mightiest wizard will eventually succumb to the Final Enemy—death. After they departed the mortal realm, their tower—eschewed by the commonfolk—slowly crumbled and fell. Thus, finally, did the mage, their tower, and their blasphemous doings pass from the world and memory.

Recent Events: Recently, the merchant Antero Kalervo engaged a stonemason to repair a section of an old, sagging wall in his cellar. During the work, the stonemason—Matias Hirvi—removed some of the old stones to better repair the wall. Doing so, he discovered a small sealed-up chamber beyond. A cautious man who knows the local lore and rumours about Foundation Way and what might lie beneath, Matias did not enlarge the hole or enter the chamber himself. However, by the light of a flaring torch, he could make out a stone trapdoor set into the floor. For Matias, this was a problem for his employer to solve.

- **Standalone**: Instead of spying a trapdoor through the hole he made, Matias spots a rubble-choked stair leading deeper underground.
- **Sequel**: During their exploration of the Lost Cellar, the characters found a rubble-choked stair in location 8. The stair briefly ascends before descending. This is the stair detailed in location 1 in this Dungeon Backdrop.

Who is the Nameless Mage?

Essentially, the identity of the Nameless Mage is irrelevant to the immediate adventure. While the characters may be motivated to identify them and find out more about them, this information is not required to run the adventure; some things can remain a mystery. However, if you suspect the characters may pursue this matter further, you should generate details of the Nameless Mage and scatter clues to their identity throughout the Lost Cellar. Thus, the characters can pursue this matter further if they so desire. Design your own NPC or use one of those presented below:

- **Perttu Meurakas** was one of the first settlers to build their home in Dulwich. He discovered the ancient, buried settlement below the town and enthusiastically pillaged its secrets. He disappeared during a subterranean expedition into the ruined settlement.
- **Siduri Kisiga** dwelled in the locality a millennia ago. Obsessed with eternal life and the undeath, she pursued research of a diabolical nature. Eventually, she succeeded in opening a gate to the Ashen Plains—Orcus's domain—in the Abyss. Her final fate remains unknown.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the locale:

- **Ancient Parchment**: The characters have come into possession of a fragment of an ancient map that strongly suggests a lost cellar or dungeon lies under a house on Foundation Way. Fortuitously, their investigation leads them to Antero Kalervo just as Matias Hirvi reports his discovery to the wealthy merchant.
- **Investigate the Deeper Delvings**: Once the characters have cleared the Lost Cellar and the Forbidden Halls and reported back to Antero Kalervo, he asks them to find out what lies downstream from location 5 on the Forbidden Halls map.
- **Drinking Locally**: The characters are drinking locally when they hear Antero Kalervo moaning to a friend about a strange discovery in his cellar. The wealthy merchant wants to hire "specialists" to investigate but does not know anyone suitable.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. Dulwich is not the first settlement to be built on this site. Some parts of the old town are built on the rubble and ruin of a much earlier settlement.
2. It is not uncommon for the cellars of houses in the old part of town to have queer or odd architecture. Every year or so, someone discovers a hitherto unknown room, chamber or dead-end passage beneath their house.
3. Antero Kalervo is a wealthy, successful merchant. He could move to a better part of town, but his family has lived in the house on Foundation Way for generations.
4. Antero Kalervo presents himself as a successful merchant dealing in a variety of things. While he has had success as a merchant, he also has connections with some of Dulwich's criminal gangs.

5. A huge network of ancient tunnels and deeper caverns lies below Dulwich.
6. The old houses on Foundation Way are not safe—sometimes they collapse or subside.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The House on Foundation Way

Antero Kalervo's house stands on Foundation Way.

- **Foundation Way**: Built upon the ruins of a former settlement, the homes here feature deep cellars. Many are rumoured to connect to the ancient tunnels below Dulwich, making the homes useful for criminal gangs and those wishing to move about undetected.

Antero's family have dwelled on Foundation Way for generations. Although Antero could afford to move to a nicer part of Dulwich, he chooses to remain in the family home. The home features two levels of cellars; currently, Antero does not use the lower level; he plans to, though, and hence engaged Matias to do some repairs.

Antero Kalervo

Antero Kalervo (LN middle-aged male human) dwells on Foundation Way. He is a successful merchant who chooses to dwell in his old family home.

His hair peppered with grey, this tall and slim middle-aged man wears fine robes and boots. A friendly smile creases his time-worn face.

This successful merchant wants to make use of the deep cellar to store certain items of stock and so on. (He has a wide range of interests and buys and sells many things.) He can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Antero is a skilled merchant. He is growing more uncomfortable with each passing day at the tensions between the town's ruler, Wido Gall, and the merchant class. He is a family man dedicated to the community.

Mannerisms: Straight-talking but a little excitable at times. Antero speaks quickly—sometimes, his words all blur into one.

Background: Antero was born in Dulwich and loves the town and its people.

Connections: Antero is an upstanding member of the community and is rarely troubled by exciting matters. However, he has several connections with other merchants the characters may find useful. Design these as appropriate for your campaign; if you have set this adventure in Dulwich, Antero knows Bernhard "Badger" Ilmatoivia, owner of Badger's (location 15 on the Dulwich map).

Matias Hirvi

Matias Hirvi (N middle-aged male human) is a skilled stonemason. He has been hired by Antero Kalervo to carry out some repairs to the merchant's cellar.

Stocky and clad in much-worn leather work clothes, this bald, pot-bellied middle-aged man has a slightly hunched back but is obviously still strong.

Matias was born in Dulwich and knows much about the town. He knows about Foundation Way's history and can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Brusque and taciturn, Matias is not the most chatty of folk. He enjoys a drink and often suffers its aftereffects in the mornings. People who know the stonemason's ways often wait until the afternoon to discuss important matters with him.

Mannerisms: Why use many words when fewer will do? Matias is not rude, but he speaks slowly and considers everything he says carefully. "Better to trip with the feet than the tongue" is his motto.

Background: Matias was born and raised in Dulwich. He has worked on many of the town's more impressive buildings.

Connections: In demand as a master stonemason, Matias knows several important people throughout the town; one of those people is in need of a brave band of adventurers.

The Cellar

Two levels of cellars lie below Antero's family home. A single staircase links the two levels with the house proper.

The Upper Level: The family uses the upper level of cellars for storage; it contains old furniture, trunks of clothes, the personal effects of deceased family members, and so on. There is nothing of value or interest here.

The Lower Level: An old wooden door, swollen with age, lies at the bottom of the stairs. Beyond lies a small labyrinthine of rooms. The rooms are empty, and even a cursory glance shows they are little visited—dust and grime lie thickly on the floor. The architecture and construction of the lower level are evidently much older than the level above. Here, small drifts of crumbled mortar lie against walls, some stones have come loose, and the floor is of uneven flags.

Matias's tools are scattered across the floor of a small room in a distant part of the cellar. Beyond, a pile of stones lies at the base of a sagging wall.

Charismatic characters can convince Matias to break down the rest of the false wall with honeyed words of threats of violence. Such characters must be present while the stonemason works, however.

- When the characters are ready to proceed, refer to "The Descent" (location 1).

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations:

1. **The Descent**: This area lies downstream from location 5 in the *Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage* or beyond a cave behind the broken wall in Antero Kalervo's cellar.
2. **Suite of Chambers**: Herein dwelt and worked the Nameless Mage's most trusted human servants.
3. **Guardroom**: Here, trusted guards watched over the spiral stair leading to level 2 and the Lightless Stream.
4. **Treasury of the Nameless One**: The Nameless Mage stored certain problematical items here.
5. **Looted Armoury**: This chamber has been looted.
6. **The Moorings**: Beyond this area, the Lightless Stream speeds up noticeably and is dangerous to traverse.
7. **Chapel of the Glimmer-Altars**: This richly appointed chamber holds two malign items: the *Glimmer-Altars* and two disturbing but masterfully executed oil paintings.
8. **Hall of Clustered Shadows**: Herein, shadows cluster in a most unwholesome and disturbing fashion.
9. **Chamber of the Apprentices**: Here dwelt the Nameless Mage's otherworldly apprentices.
10. **Library of Horrors**: Here were stored tomes of forbidden and blasphemous knowledge. None now remain.
11. **Waterfall into the Unknown**: Amid the cacophonous roar and spray billowing up from below, the Lightless Stream tumbles into a far deeper cavern.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills the dungeon.

Ceilings: The stalactite-festooned ceiling throughout the dungeon is natural and unworked. The ceiling is between 10 and 20 feet high.

Cave Walls: The walls throughout much of the dungeon are rough and natural. They feature many small ledges, niches, and the like, making them comparatively easy to scale.

Cave Floors: Although much of the floor throughout the dungeon is natural, it does not inhibit movement. A perceptive character may notice tool marks here and there in high-traffic areas.

Natural Stairs: Squares containing natural stairs are difficult terrain; these natural shelves vary between one and two feet in height. A perceptive character may notice tool marks here and there on the stairs.

Worked Stone Walls: The stone walls are made of mortared stone blocks. They are about one foot thick and difficult to scale.

Flagged Floors: The dungeon's flagged floors are generally flat, and they do not impede movement.

Worked Stairs: Squares containing worked stairs are difficult terrain; given the height of the risers, the stairs are designed for human-sized people.

Spiral Stairs: These worked stone stairs are difficult terrain. It is impossible to run or charge on a spiral staircase. Characters below their opponents on the stairs have 50% cover (+4 AC).

Doors: Blackened with age, these once stout wooden doors open into the room beyond. Unless noted, they are not lockable but some are difficult to force open.

The Lightless Stream: This stream connects the dungeon to the *Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage*. Its path through the dungeon is steeply inclined, and its flow speeds up considerably from the sedate pace it exhibited in the Forbidden Halls. The stream is about five feet deep.

- **Level 1**: The stream is easily navigable by craft or swimming; tall characters may be able to wade.
- **Level 2**: The stream is still navigable by craft or swimming, but the water is noticeably faster.
- **Level 3**: The stream is difficult to navigable by craft or swimming, and the water is rough.

Dungeon Dressing

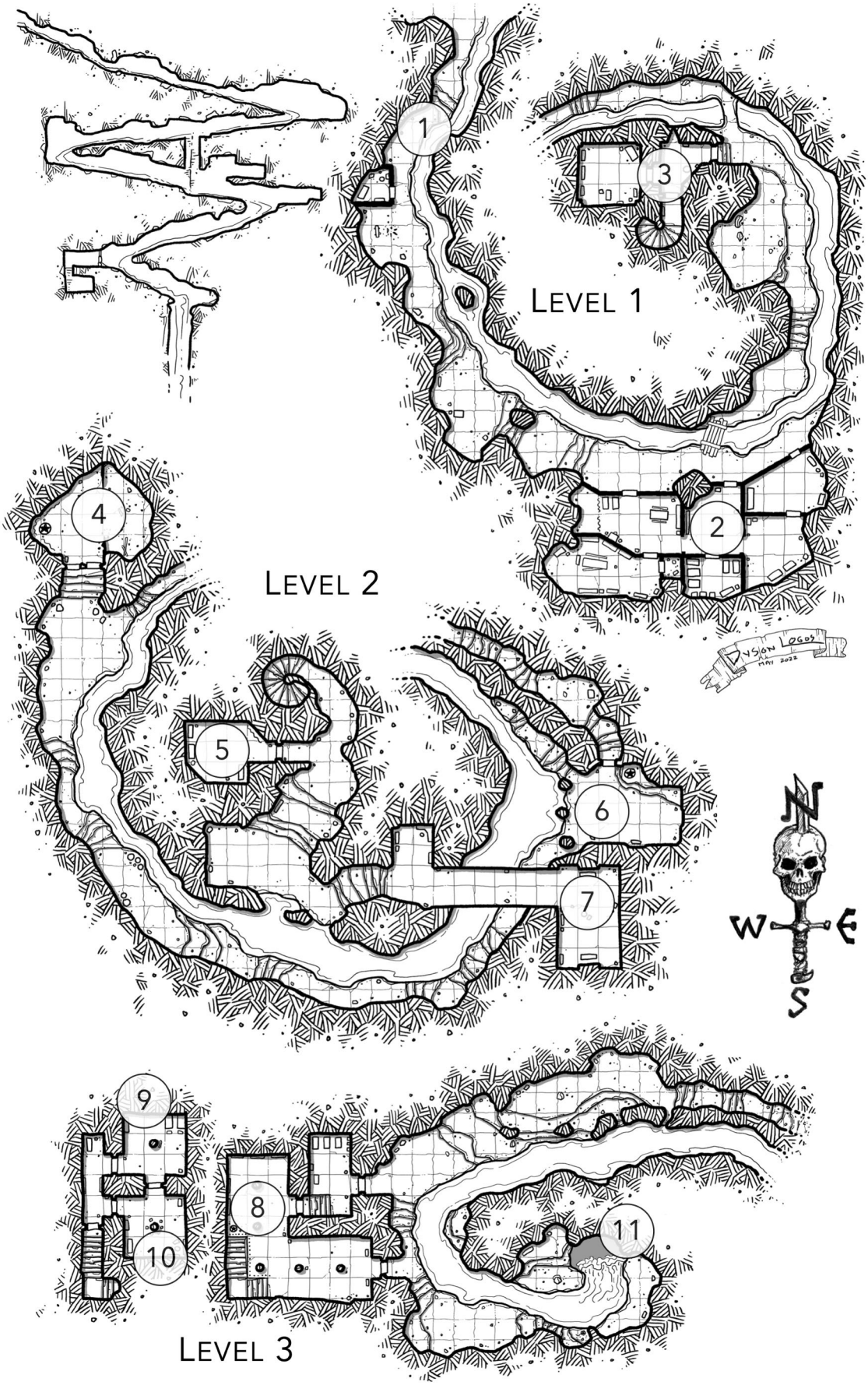
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. An old leather boot lies on its side; its twin lies a short distance away. Dried blood covers both boots.
2. Scratch marks on the floor show where something heavy and angular has been dragged.
3. Water drips from the stalactites on the ceiling to drip onto the stone floor (or the characters' heads).
4. Light rubble covers the floor.
5. Water oozes through cracks in the wall to puddle on the uneven floor.
6. Scraps of rotting cloth and a humanoid's bones—old, dusty and broken—litter the floor.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A dusty pouch attached to a frayed bit of belt contains 13 cp, 57 sp and 13 gp. All the coins bear designs not seen for hundreds of years.
2. A small black stone—an onyx worth 10 gp—glimmers sullenly in a rusty dagger's pommel.
3. A tiny stalagmite part covers half a jagged gold coin.
4. Two pieces of a sundered iron rod covered in deeply inscribed esoteric runes lie ten feet apart.
5. A bloody handprint—long dried but covered in mould—decorates the wall.
6. Graffiti scratched into a wall reads, 'Ware the Thing Below the Falls".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Level 1
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Level 2
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Level 3

GM Notes

1: The Descent

This area lies downstream from location 5 in the *Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage* or beyond a cave behind the broken wall in Antero Kalervo's cellar.

The stream flows through a narrow natural passageway that noticeably descends before curving out of sight. The noise of running water fills the air.

Store: Herein, the Nameless Mage's minions stored torches, lanterns, oil, stout boots and other items suitable for underground explorations. The characters may be able to scavenge some such items here.

Rotting Wooden Plank Bridge: This once stout bridge is slick with slime and mould. A character giving even a cursory glance realises it will not take a heavy person's weight.

2: Suite of Chambers

Herein dwelt and worked the Nameless Mage's most trusted human servants.

Shattered furniture and other rubbish and detritus cover the floor of these small chambers.

Wrack and Ruin: All is now in ruin in these areas: furniture is broken and rotten, foodstuffs have long since mouldered away, and almost everything of value was looted a long time ago. A character who spends ten minutes carefully searching the area finds several things of note:

- **Coins**: Coins—13 sp and 16 gp—are scattered about the room. It takes ten minutes to find and collect them all.
- **Statuette**: An exquisite ivory statuette of a ghostly woman (worth 50 gp) lies behind an overturned chair.

3: Guardroom

Here, trusted guards watched over the spiral stair leading to level 2 and the Lightless Stream.

A table, several chairs and three weapon racks stand about this chamber. An air of emptiness fills the chamber.

Arrow Slit: Arrow slits provide almost complete cover. Small-sized characters can squeeze through an arrow slit with relative ease but Medium-sized characters find it far harder. (Note, however, it may be impossible for particularly bulky characters or those wearing armour to squeeze through an arrow slit).

Furniture: A table and chairs, along with several weapon racks, stand about the chamber. The chests are open and empty. A character who spends ten minutes carefully searching the area finds something of note:

- **Gem**: A small transparent dark green stone (a bloodstone worth 50 gp) lies under the table.

4: Treasury of the Nameless One

The Nameless Mage stored certain problematical items here.

Two skeletons lie sprawled on the steps leading up to a set of iron-banded dark wood doors.

Double Doors: These stout, iron-banded doors are protected by a wizard's locking spell. They open inwards.

Statue: This statue depicts a skinny, emaciated humanoid with a demon's head, a maw full of sharp fangs and ram's horns growing from its forehead. It is a horrible thing. Its twin stands in location 6.

Tapestries: These tapestries depict a cloaked and hooded figure in the throes of mighty spellcasting feats. One depicts the figure opening a magic gate; another depicts four small balls of fire bursting from its outstretched hand, and the final tapestry shows the figure standing at the centre of a magical circle surrounded by foul, shapeless things.

5: Looted Armoury

This chamber has been looted.

Empty racks and chests stand about the walls of this small chamber. A dusty tapestry decorates the wall near the door.

Smell: The air smells damp.

Tapestry: Greenish-white mould grows over the tapestry, obscuring its image. This tapestry rips if pulled down.

Chests & Racks: Mouldy and riddled with woodworm, these chests and racks are in bad condition and filled with rubbish and detritus. A character who spends ten minutes carefully searching the area finds somethings of note:

- **Tabard** A rotting tabard with a faded sigil of a black hand wreathed in flame lies amid the detritus in a chest.
- **Crossbow Bolt**: A heavy crossbow bolt bearing scarlet fletching lies behind a mouldy chest. The bolt is in perfect condition; it is magic.

6: The Moorings

Beyond this area, the Lightless Stream speeds up noticeably and is dangerous to traverse.

Three thick stumps of slick stone rear from the bank of the stream. A statue watches over this area. A closed door stands next to the statue.

Moorings: These slimy chunks of smoothed stone rear from the floor. Remnants of several ropes hang from iron rings driven deep in the stones.

Statue: This statue depicts a skinny, emaciated humanoid with a demon's head, a maw full of sharp fangs and ram's horns growing from its forehead. It is a horrible thing. Its twin stands in location 4.

Noise: The roar of water is loud here, and it gets louder as the characters descend to level 3.

GM Notes

***Magic Trap**: The double doors warding this chamber is an excellent place for a magic trap. The state of the skeletons could provide a clue as to the trap's nature. For example, are the skeletons scorched and blackened as if they've been exposed to intense heat?*

***Treasure**. If this area remains unlooted when the characters reach it this is a great location to place some choice treasures—perhaps items they might need to traverse the waterfall in location 11.*

***Animate Statue**: This statue could be an animate guardian—or it could be nothing more than a decoration. If it is an animate guardian, consider not having the statue in location 6 also be animate.*

***Animate Statue**: This statue could be an animate guardian—a defence against anything emerging from whatever lies below the waterfall in location 11. Alternatively, it could be nothing more than a decoration.*

GM Notes

***The Glimmer-Altars**: This pair of malign items possess great powers—but they only function when used as pair.*

The altars could be summoning stones—keyed to pull forth ghosts from the Ethereal Plane—or scrying devices that function in a similar fashion to a crystal ball except that they project the Image of what they see into the chamber.

***Painting of Fell Provenance**: These paintings could be nothing more than foul decorations birthed of a deranged mind. Alternatively, they could be portals to the locales depicted upon their canvases. See "Further Adventures" for more details. Finally, if they are indeed portals to distant places, the denizens of those places could perhaps find a way to come through the paintings.*

***Predator**: Perhaps a small predator lurks in or under the beds. You could even place the undead familiar of a long-dead wizard here.*

7: Chapel of the Glimmer-Altars

This richly appointed chamber holds two malign items: the *Glimmer-Altars* and two disturbing but masterfully executed oil paintings.

Two glimmering chunks of stone face each other at opposite ends of this room. Two oil paintings set in ornate frames hang from the western wall.

The Glimmer-Altars: Standing against the south and north walls, this pair of fell things are shards of the Ethereal Plane dragged into the Material Plane and rendered semi-solid by powerful enchantments. They both glow with flickering grey light. The *glimmer-altars* are powerful magic items.

Paintings of Fell Provenance: These two disturbing but beautifully executed oil paintings were created by the Nameless Mage.

- **Painting**: This oil painting depicts a dark fortress growing from the cavern walls on both sides of a subterranean river. A walkway spans the river. This is the Wailing Citadel—a locale in Gloamhold's outer reaches.
- **Painting**: This painting depicts an undulating plain of greyish ash. Here and there, towers emerge from the ash, and tiny, indistinct figures stalk the plain. These figures seem to move (a perceptive character examining the painting notices), but this could be a trick of the characters' lights. This painting depicts part of the Abyss.

8: Hall of Clustered Shadows

Herein, shadows cluster in a most unwholesome and disturbing fashion.

Shadows cluster thickly about a line of slender pillars running down the centre of his hallway. A statue overlooks a set of stairs descending to a lower level.

Statue: This statue depicts a squatting toad-demon with three lidless eyes and three be-fanged mouths. It is a hateful thing.

Slender Pillars: These slender pillars give partial cover (to a character in the same square.

9: Chamber of the Apprentices

Here dwelt the Nameless Mage's otherworldly apprentices.

Two beds stand in one corner of this small chamber. A chest in another corner holds what looks like the remains of clothing and the like.

Slender Pillars: These slender pillars provide partial cover to a character in the same square.

Beds: These narrow beds are sized for a human-sized creature; the remaining bedding is lumped up and mouldy.

Chests: Remnants of once-fine clothes fill the chests. Examination reveals the clothes were likely sized for elves but were of odd (now ruined) design and cut.

10: Library of Horrors

Here were stored tomes of forbidden and blasphemous knowledge. None now remain.

The bookshelves here are nearly empty; only a few dirty and dusty books and scrolls remain.

Slender Pillars: These slender pillars provide partial cover to a character in the same square.

Stone Shelves: These stone shelves are cut into the walls. They are in good condition but mostly empty, and dust lies thickly on them. They are easy to climb.

- **The Books & Scrolls**: The few books and scrolls here are lesser works deemed not worth the hassle of carrying away when the dungeon was abandoned. They present low-level knowledge about the Underlands of the Ebon Realm and certain of the humanoid races known to dwell therein. The books and scrolls are in poor condition and fall apart if roughly handled or packed poorly.
- **Secret Compartment**: A secret compartment pierces the wall at the back of one of the shelves. A character searching the shelves who finds the compartment also finds its opening mechanism—a barely perceptible stone switch at the back of the shelf.

11: Waterfall into the Unknown

Amid the cacophonous roar and spray billowing up from below, the Lightless Stream tumbles into a far deeper cavern.

A dense cloud of spray and the cacophonous sound of falling water fills the air. Ahead, the stream's water foams and dances before plunging over a waterfall.

Waterfall: This waterfall tumbles into a cavern at least 60 feet deep. The water's cacophonous roar and clouds of spray billow up from below, making conversation and sight difficult. Within 15 feet of the waterfall, the stream foams and its flow becomes almost irresistible. Any character swept over the waterfall plunges at least 60 feet into a deep pool.

GM Notes

***Forgotten Map**: If you want to develop the caves and caverns at the base of the waterfall in location 11 consider placing a partial map here hinting at their existence.*

***Hidden Scroll**: This is a great place to place a magic scroll or other small magical treasure.*

***Dungeon Denizens**: Any creatures emerging from the waterfall in location 11 to explore or colonise the dungeon must be either excellent climbers or be able to fly.*

***What Lies Below?** The waterfall tumbles into a cave at least 60 feet deep. Further adventures could lie below in a much larger dungeon complex or the water could drain away through many small cracks in the rock or through submerged, impassable passages. See "Further Adventures" for more details.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have cleared the deeper delvings below Antero Kalervo's house, they can report back to their employer for their reward.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Ancient Parchment**: If the characters are intrigued by the Deeper Delvings and the Nameless Mage, they may seek out more ancient documents regarding the time before Dulwich was founded. A local sage such as Saini Alanen (location 9 on the Dulwich map) could assist them with their research. Through such a person, the characters could discover the strong possibility that many opportunities for adventure, including a network of deeper tunnels and catacombs discovered when the foundations for the Lawgiver's Hall (location 2 on the Dulwich map) were sunk, lurk under Dulwich's streets. Such tunnels can be reached through the cathedral's catacombs, but Conn's clergy tightly control such access. Convincing the clergy to give the characters access could be an adventure of its own! Alternatively, the characters might find a way to access this deeper, sprawling dungeon by traversing the waterfall in location 11.
- **Cleared the Deeper Delvings and Drinking Locally**: Once the characters have cleared the Deeper Delvings, they report back to their employer, Antero Kalervo, and get paid. Antero is, of course, delighted the characters have cleared the dungeon—as anything within could conceivably escape into his house. Depending on your design, Antero may block up the tunnels leading to the dungeons below his house, or he may decide to put them to some use.

Further Adventures

The dungeons below Antero Kalervo's cellar are ripe for further adventures under Dulwich; something truly ancient and terrible could lurk in the lightless realm below the town.

Deeper Tunnels: Deeper and more extensive tunnels could lurk at the base of the waterfall in location 11. To reach these, the characters will have to traverse the waterfall—no mean feat given the physically of the challenge. The characters will need Antero Kalervo's permission to explore these tunnels, as the only way to access them is through his cellar! The canny merchant might demand a share of any treasures recovered or may simply ask a favour or two of the characters in the future.

Foul Elder Taint: Some foul ancient or otherworldly taint could lurk in the tunnels at the base of the waterfall in location 11, and the characters' explorations have awoken or released it. Strange things start to happen in the locality, and Antero, or a concerned family member or neighbour, asks the characters to investigate.

Paintings of Foul Provenance: Two paintings of Foul Provenance lurk in the Chapel of the Glimmer-Altars (location 7). If you decide these are, in fact, portals to distant places, the characters could explore those locales by stepping through the pictures. In this instance, the paintings likely radiate strong conjuration magic. The spells used to enchant the paintings will determine whether the locales depicted are on the Prime Material plane or elsewhere. Finally, if the paintings are portals to distant places, the denizens of those places could come through them—giving rise to further adventures as the characters return to clear out some new infestation of the dungeons below Antero Kalervo's house.

Delthur's Folly

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Mottled Spire)

Hidden in the wild uplands beyond the Selka River, the sinkhole-mine of Delthur's Folly is a byword among locals for a fool's errand doomed to fail. The only survivor of the fated expedition—mad and raving of "the water's sibilant whispers"—died shortly after staggering into Dunstone a year or more after Delthur and his miners disappeared into the wilderness. And yet, every year, adventurers search for the mine—gold and silver are said to lie within. Some return empty-handed, and some do not return at all—local legend has it that something terrible dwells in the mine.

Dungeon Background

Fifty years ago or so, the dwarven miner Delthur Madann came to the borderland town of Dunstone. To the north, beyond the safety of Dunstone's wall and the Selka River, lay the Mottled Spire's jagged peaks and deep valleys. The dwarf —a scion of fallen Vongyth—sought precious metals he could use to hire and equip mercenaries to aid his folk in taking back their ancestral home from its new draconic overlords.

When Delthur declared he was to travel north into the Mottled Spire in search of treasure, he was widely derided as mad—the Mottled Spire was an inhospitable place full of danger and hardship. Stubbornly, he went anyway, and disappeared into the wilderness for over a year.

He returned with wild tales of a deep sinkhole, a dark and cold lake and a hidden mine. To prove his tale, Delthur brought back fist-sized nuggets of gold and silver! He would tell no one where his mine was, but recruited a small band of hardy miners before disappearing back into the wilderlands.

That was the last anyone in Dunstone saw of Delthur Madann or his band for over a year. Eventually, one of the miners staggered back into town. Badly injured, raving and half-mad the lone survivor of Delthur's expedition spoke of marauding orcs, Delthur's descent into madness and the "water's sibilant whispers".

The miner died shortly thereafter without revealing the mine's exact location or any other news of the expedition. Delthur—and the rest of the miners—were assumed dead and the expedition consigned to history. Among locals, the entire affair became known as "Delthur's Folly".

Occasionally, adventuring bands set forth from Dunstone to find Delthur's lost mine, but none who returned ever reported success. Now, locally, the phrase "Delthur's Folly" has become synonymous with obviously doomed, badly-thought-out expeditions. In Dunstone, a "Scion of Delthur" is one marked for an early, foolish death in the lands beyond the Selka River. Many adventurers have thus been named over the long years since Delthur's disappearance.

Adventure Hooks

Adventurers are drawn to rumours of unclaimed wealth like flies to offal. Of course, there could be many reasons why the characters decide to explore Delthur's Folly. Use one of the hooks below, or design your own:

- **Delthur's Wealth**: The characters hear of Delthur's (apparent) great wealth and have also learnt Delthur never brought his treasures back to Dunstone. Shortly thereafter a merchant of dubious morals, Pekka Outila (CN male human), offers them a map (for only 10 gp) purporting to show the location of Delthur's lost mine. The map is a fake, but ironically actually shows the mine's true location. If the characters find the mine and surviving the terrors therein, Pekka approaches them with another map—this one just as fake as the last. An opportunist, he massively increases the price of this map and then promptly disappears.
- **Missing Adventurers**: A few weeks ago, another adventuring party, the Fearless Wanderers, went in search of Delthur's mine and disappeared. One of the party was a local and his parents, Onni and Elina Rintala, are desperate for news of their boy, Ossi. Luckily, he told his parents roughly where they were going. They offer the characters their meagre savings to investigate. (Depending on your design, the Fearless Wanderers could —or could not—have found Delthur's Folly).
- **Stumbling Across the Folly**: Adventurers exploring the wilds north of Dunstone stumble upon Delthur's mine. Perhaps they are fleeing from, or hunting, orcs (who view the place as sacred) at the time. In the former situation, the campaign could feature an interesting role reversal as the characters defend the mine from the orcs.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about Delthur's Folly. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use the list below to determine what the character learns:

1. Delthur never escaped his folly. Some say, the orcs got him while others say his delving disturbed something that drove him mad!
2. Before his expedition ended in failure, Delthur had mined a great quantity of glimmering silver. If the orcs didn't find it, it might still be there—waiting for someone to claim it!
3. Delthur dug his mine into the sides of a huge sinkhole; a lake fills the bottom of the sinkhole; something horrible lives in the lake.
4. Delthur's mine lies around a lake; the orcs of the hills hold the lake sacred and hurl sacrifices into its depths. Much treasure might lie under its murky waters.
5. Madness and death have been the fate of any searching for Delthur's Folly. Several expeditions have disappeared without trace.
6. Delthur yet lives! He is mad, and slays any who disturb him in his subterranean home.

The Wilderlands

Delthur's Folly lies in a rugged section of hills three day's hard travelling north of Dunstone. Once the party cross the Selka River and the going becomes difficult and slow. There are few trails and no roads. Orcs roam the hills, and there are no reliable, current maps of the interior to guide their journey.

You can easily design a few level-appropriate random encounters or you can simply gloss over the journey and start the adventure at the head of the Crumbling Stair (location 1) after describing in broad strokes the party's search of the surrounding wilderlands.

Notable Locations at a Glance

Delthur's Folly comprises three distinct small subterranean complexes along with various "outside" locations. Outside locations are numbered 1 - 5. Each of the small complexes has its own key:

- **The Watchers**: Location in this mini-complex are tagged with the letter A.
- **Mine-Home**: Location in this mini-complex are tagged with the letter B.
- **The Delvings**: Location in this mini-complex are tagged with the letter C.

Outside

A path spirals down around the edge of the sinkhole to the mine workings far below.

1. **The Crumbling Stair**: The Crumbling Stair enables relatively easy access to Delthur's Folly.
2. **Way of the Shadows**: Here, the stairs plunge into deep shadow as they pass under a series of rocky overhangs.
3. **The Span**: A slender bridge spans the western portion of the Tenebrous Lake. It is entirely without guardrails.
4. **Workers' Way**: A narrow ledge cut into the sinkhole's flanks provides access to the delving's deeper reaches.
5. **The Tenebrous Lake**: This lake fills the bottom of the sinkhole. The remains of the orcs' sacrifices litter the bottom, and something terrible lives among the bones.

The Watchers

Delthur always set a watch here to keep his workings safe from marauding orcs…and worse.

A1. **Guard Chamber**: This cavern was a guardroom in Delthur's day. A cleverly hidden secret door enables access to the Mine-Home.

A2. **The Armoury**: This chamber served as a general-purpose storage area. Mining equipment, rotting foodstuffs and rusting weapons abound.

Mine-Home

Here dwelt the miners safe behind a series of pit traps of fiendish ingenuity.

B1. **Trapped Corridor**: Warded by stout double doors, this area was heavily trapped for the miners' protection.

B2. **The Privy**: This stinking chamber was the miners' privy.

B3. **Kitchen**: Here, the miners cooked their food. A secret door provides access to a hidden room wherein they stored their supplies.

B4. **Chamber of Slumber**: This room was a communal bunk room for the miners.

B5. **The Hidden Store**: Never discovered by intruders or explorers, this hidden room was both storeroom and hiding place.

The Delvings

The lowest level of Dlethur's Folly comprises mine workings as well as the mad dwarf's personal chambers and his cunningly trapped strongroom.

C1. **Workroom:** The miners stored their tools and other accoutrements necessary for mine work here.

C2. **Abandoned Mine Workings**: This small chamber is played out.

C3. **Lair of the Mad One**: Here, dwelt Delthur in the heart of his workings.

C4. **The Treasury**: Delthur kept his treasures in this strongroom, warded by a cunningly trapped portal.

C5. **The Deepest Workings**: This is the deepest section of Delthur's Folly.

Dungeon Dressing

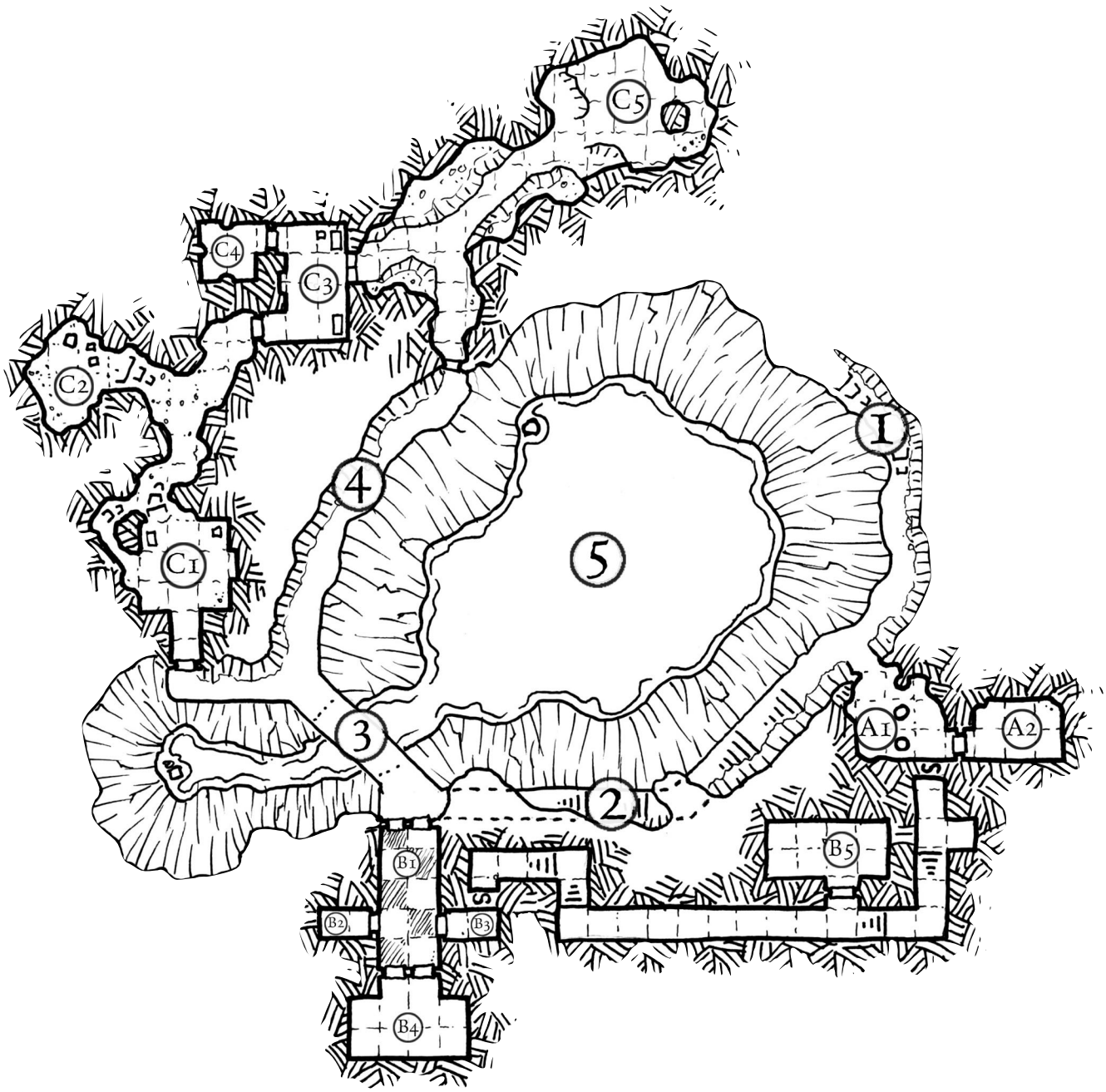
Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Cracks radiate from a gouge in the floor or wall that looks like a weapon strike. Nearby, a rusting warhammer, missing half its haft, lies on the floor.
2. A jumble of bones lies about the floor. The bones obviously once "belonged" to a humanoid, but the skull and both legs are missing.
3. Gently undulating spiderwebs festoon the ceiling.
4. A small pile of rubble and grit has been pushed to the side to clear a section of floor for no obvious purpose.
5. The bones of a small creature—probably a rat—lie splayed across the floor. Investigations reveal the rat's back was shattered by something heavy.
6. The shredded remains of a backpack hang from a rocky protrusion. It holds a single torch and a rotten cloak.
7. A faint breeze, coming from the direction of the nearest entrance, plays over the party.
8. Water oozes through the ceiling and drips onto the floor into a small puddle.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Graffiti etched into the wall reads, "Ware the lake and its whispering lord".
2. Scuffs in the dust and grime suggest a small group of man-sized individuals passed this way.
3. Etched into the wall these 48 short vertical marks could be a makeshift calendar or nothing more than a miner's bored scratchings.
4. Lost in the dust, a small silver locket (worth 10 gp) hanging from a shred of leather cord holds a faded picture of a handsome woman cradling a baby.
5. The initials G.H are scratched in small letters into the wall. A date—48 years past—is scratched next to them.
6. Graffiti—"Delthur is mad" and "The voices in my head"—is etched into the same wall.
7. A small tower of perfectly balanced stones stands in the corner of the area. The tower seems to have no purpose.
8. A small niche in the floor—hidden under a flat stone—holds 13 gold coins and a single transparent green stone (an onyx worth 50 gp).



Outside

Five areas comprise the outside portion of Delthur's Folly. These areas share some generic features:

Narrow Pathway: A five-foot wide pathway spirals around and down the sinkhole's flanks. One side of the path comprises the sinkhole's stony flank; the other is nothing more than a steep slope running down to the Tenebrous Lake's dark waters.

Crumbling, Worn Steps: Eroded by the weather and tramp of many heavily laden miners, and the occasional explorer or raider, these steps are dangerous to use at speed.

Sinkhole's Flanks: The sinkhole's steep slopes are climbable with care. The sinkhole is roughly 100-foot deep. Individual entries below note how far a character falling from that location would tumble before landing in the Tenebrous Lake. Also refer to the "Falling into the Lake" sidebar for details of how to handle falling characters.

1: The Crumbling Stair

Eroded by rain and the tramp of many feet, the Crumbling Stair is still the safest way to access Delthur's Folly.

A narrow flight of crumbling, worn stairs spirals down into this large and gloomy steep-sided sinkhole. In the gloom, perhaps 100 feet below, lie the dark, still waters of a lake of fell aspect.

The Crumbling Stair: The spiralling stairs are part worked and part natural.

The Lake Below: At the mouth of the stairs, the waters of the Tenebrous Lake are about 100 feet below.

2: Way of the Shadows

Two flights of carven steps pass under a series of overhangs protruding from the sinkhole's wall.

Stairs, cut into the side of the sinkhole, lead under two rocky overhangs. Deep shadows cluster under these slabs of rock. Beyond the overhang lies a span of stone bridging a small channel flowing away from the lake to the southwest.

Falling into the Lake

As a result of inattention or enemy action, a character might fall into the Tenebrous Lake. Such a fall may prove fatal, but lucky explorers can arrest their fall before they hit the water by grabbing onto a rocky protuberance, landing on a narrow ledge and so on.

Falling Characters: A falling character might be able to catch themselves after falling 1d6x10 feet. Alternatively, they could land on a narrow ledge.

Climbing Up or Down: Characters scaling the sinkhole's sides can move up to one-quarter their speed on the steeply-sloped flanks.

The Overhangs: Chisel marks and suchlike mar the underside of the overhangs. Each stands about seven feet above the ledge passing beneath.

The Lake Below: The waters of the Tenebrous Lake are roughly 70 feet below the Way of the Shadows.

3: The Span

Here a slender bridge of carven stone crosses the western part of the Tenebrous Lake (location 5). This was a defensive point designed by Delthur to protect his workings.

This slender span of carven stone arches over the waters of a channel feeding into the main lake. The span is entirely without railings of any sort.

The Lake Below: The waters of the Tenebrous Lake are roughly 70 feet below the Span.

The Span: The span is about five-foot wide, but essentially flat. It is of natural, but skilfully worked, stone. A perceptive character spots the marks of tools upon its surface.

4: Workers' Way

A narrow ledge cut into the sinkhole's flanks provides access to the delving's deeper reaches.

Running along the north-western side of the sinkhole this narrow ledge ends in two doors—one to the north and one to the west. Both doors appear firmly shut.

The Lake Below: The waters of the Tenebrous Lake are roughly 70 feet below the Workers' Way.

Mine Doors: These stout oak doors are shut and have resisted the elements well. Deep scratches and dents mar the outer surfaces of both doors. The doors open into the workings beyond.

5: The Tenebrous Lake

Comprising the entirety of the bottom of the sinkhole, the Tenebrous Lake is deep and cold. The sun's rays only caress these cold, dark waters during the hour either side of midday. Similarly, dusk falls several hours earlier and dawn breaks several hours later than normal over the lake's black waters.

Far below, in the gloom, lie still, black waters of unknown depth. To the south west, a narrow, steep-sided channel passes under a slender bridge of carved stone.

The Tenebrous Lake: The Waters of the Tenebrous Lake are calm, but chill. Fed by some underground source of unknown location, they rarely feel the sun's warming rays. The lake is 40-foot deep. Swimmers discover visibility is essentially zero at depths below 10 feet.

Occasionally something disturbs the lake's normally calm waters. Perceptive characters spot odd ripples on the lake's, suggestive of something large moving beneath.

The Watchers

Delthur always set a watch here to keep his workings safe from marauding orcs…and worse. The locations here share several features:

Ceiling: The ceiling is about ten feet high.

Walls & Floor: The walls and floors are of worked, smoothed stone, unless otherwise indicated by the map.

A1: Guard Chamber

This natural cavern was a guardroom in Delthur's day. A secret door enables access to the Mine-Home.

Two roughly hewn circular pillars hold aloft the roof of this low, irregularly-shaped chamber. Beyond the pillars, a stout wooden door pierces the end wall.

Characters searching the room may find some items or features of interest:

- Dents and scratches mar the pillars; they could be marks left by weapon strikes.
- A broken, rusty padlock lies in the dust near the far door.
- A secret door pierces the south wall. It is opened by pushing in a small rocky protrusion at the base of the wall. The door opens into the corridor beyond and can be barred with a heavy stone bar, which lies in the corridor.

A2: The Armoury

This chamber served as a general-purpose storage area. Mining equipment, sacks of ore and rusting weapons lie within.

Stout Wooden Door: Of stout oaken boards, this door has a large ring handle.

Dusty weapon racks line this small chamber's end wall. Dusty sacks seemingly full of rock and the like are stacked along the chamber's other walls.

Characters searching the room may find some items or features of interest:

- A dusty leather pouch is wedged between the weapon rack and the wall, low down by the floor. It holds 12 gp and a scrap of dirty parchment. Most of the writing (which is in Dwarven) upon it is illegible. Two words: "Delthur" and "mad" stand out amid the grime.
- Graffiti, in Dwarven, carved into the back of the door reads, "Why must the black waters whisper so?"

Sacks:, Here the miners stored some of the minerals they hacked from the workings below. Squares containing sacks are difficult terrain.

Weapon Rack: One broken and two rusty spears stand in the rack. A dusty leather jerkin and a small steel shield hang from the end of the rack.

GM Notes

What Happened to the Miners? *Consider the miners' ultimate fate. Were they slain by orcs or driven made by what lurks in the Tenebrous Lake? Has their fate left its mark on the mine? Do their skeletons lie about the workings or—mysteriously—is there no sign of their doom?*

GM Notes

***The Pits**: What lies in the pits? They could be empty or they could hold the remains of intruders who died fighting the miners. Alternatively, one of the pits could link to deeper tunnels through a narrow crawlway or hold the undead remains of a miner (or two).*

Mine Home

Here dwelt the miners behind a set of pit traps of fiendish ingenuity. Locations in the Mine Home share several features:

Ceiling: The ceiling is about ten feet high.

Walls & Floor: The walls and floors are of worked stone.

B1: Trapped Corridor

Stout double doors ward this trapped corridor. The pit traps here remain active and may yet catch the unwary.

Double Doors: Stout iron banded oak double doors protect Mine Home. About three-foot above the floor four shuttered peep holes—big enough for a spear to be thrust through—pierce the doors. The doors open inwards.

Beyond the double doors lies a wide hall roughly 25 feet long. Another set of double doors pierce the end wall, while smaller doors pierce the other two walls. The door to the east is slightly ajar while the other is shut.

Door Bar and Hidden Switch: A long wooden bar stands against the wall behind the east door.

Characters carefully searching the corridor discover a small switch low down on the floor in the north-eastern corner. Pushing this switch activates, or deactivates the pit traps in the corridor. The trap is currently armed.

B2: The Privy

This stinking chamber was the miners' privy.

Stuck Wooden Door: Warped and swollen into its frame, this wood door is difficult to open.

A horrible stench lingers in this small chamber. Several cast iron chamberpots stand under a crude wooden bench set against the far wall.

Graffiti: Several miners carved their names—Aaro, Riku, Teijo and Veli—or initials and short messages into the wooden bench and nearby wall.

B3: Kitchen

Here the miners cooked their food. A secret door provides access to a hidden room wherein they stored their supplies.

Wooden Door: This door stands slightly ajar.

Blackened with soot and riven with a large natural chimney this chamber's ceiling betrays the room's once-purpose—that of a kitchen. A scattering of broken cooking equipment—skillets, a cauldron and so on—lie about the floor.

Characters making a careful search of the room may find a carefully concealed secret door:

- A secret door pierces the north wall. It is opened by pushing a small rocky protrusion at the wall's base. The door opens into the corridor beyond and can be barred with a heavy stone bar which lies in the corridor.

B4: Chamber of Slumber

This was a communal bunk room for the miners.

Double Doors: Stout double doors of oak banded with iron protect the miners' dormitory. About three feet above the floor four shuttered peep holes—big enough for a spear to be thrust through—pierce the doors. The doors open inwards.

Five sets of bunkbeds stand about the walls of this dusty chamber. Two small chests nestle under the bottom bunk of each set.

Lever: A lever juts from the wall behind the western door. Like the switch in B1, it controls the pits in the trapped corridor. When the traps are activated, the lever is in the up position.

Bunks: Mouldering sheets and blankets cover the bunkbeds The chests under the bottom bunks contain personal items—rotting clothes, spare pairs of boots and other knick-knacks. Characters carefully searching the chests find something of interest:

1. A fine, stout leather belt worth 2 gp.
2. A silver tinderbox decorated with etchings of a fire-breathing dragon worth 5 gp.
3. A small golden ring with the name Helmi Markku inscribed inside the band. The ring is hidden in a sock and worth 5 gp.
4. Nineteen silver coins wrapped up in a long twist of paper. The paper bears a crude but accurate map of the surrounding hills.
5. A lump of stone shot through with veins of silver and gold. The stone weighs 15 lbs., but the ore is only worth 3 gp.
6. An empty magically hardened transparent crystal potion vial worth 10 gp.

Each item can be found only once.

B5: The Hidden Store

Never discovered by intruders or explorers alike, this hidden room was both storeroom and hiding place. Thick dust covers the floor of the passageway behind the secret door.

Wooden Door: Unlocked but shut this wooden door wards the miners' storeroom.

Boxes, barrels and chests fill this small chamber. A small area in front of the door is the only clear bit of floor.

Boxes & Barrels: The boxes hold rotting provisions and the barrels are empty—whatever was inside now long gone.

Chests: One small chest holds a large bag of salt (worth 5 gp) while the others hold cooking equipment and suchlike.

GM Notes

***Use the Pits**: Remember, if you place monsters in location B4, the creatures probably know of the pit trap in B1. They'll likely use it to defend their lair.*

GM Notes

What Dwells Within? *If the Delvings are occupied, remember the inhabitants may have to pass Mine Home and the Watchers (and their inhabitants) to access their home.*

Deeper Caves*: If you decide the mine is linked to deeper caverns this is one of the places it makes sense to have such a connection.*

The Delvings

The lowest level of Delthur's Folly comprises mine workings and the mad dwarf's personal chambers. The areas in the Delvings share several features:

Ceiling: The ceiling varies in height between six and 16-feet high. In places, it is worked, while in others stalactites hang from the ceiling.

Walls: As indicated on the map, the stonework here is rougher. Only areas C1, C3 and C4 have worked stone walls. The others are rough—the result of hasty mining.

Floor: In most places, the floor is generally flat—the miners having cleared away most obvious impediments to their work.

C1: Workroom

The miners stored their tools and other gear necessary for mine work, here.

Picks and shovels as well as empty boxes, barrels and sacks stand against the walls of this rough hewn chamber. Dust and grit cover the floor. A large wooden bin—filled with torches—fills an alcove in the east wall.

Rough Hewn Steps: Steps roughly cut into the floor link this chamber to the mine workings below.

Storage Bin: This bin holds well over 100 dusty torches.

Mining Equipment: Most of the picks, shovels and crowbars here are rusting and quickly break if used.

C2: Abandoned Mine Workings

This small chamber is all but played out.

Rough-hewn steps lead up to this small chamber. Marks on the walls, floor and ceiling show the miners' work. Here and there, glimmers of gold and silver emerge from the rock. Three barrels stand about the room.

There is nothing here of obvious interest to the characters. However, if the PCs search the area roll on "Dungeon Dressing" or "Things to Find".

Rough-Hewn Steps: Steps roughly cut into the floor link this chamber to the rest of the workings.

Barrels: The miners used stout barrels to carry away their rubble before casting it into the lake below. Several barrels, two half-full with rubble, remain in this chamber.

Tools: A handful of rusting picks and shovels lie discarded about the chamber.

Ore: A smattering of gold and silver ore remains to be mined from this chamber.

C3: Lair of the Mad One

Here dwelt Delthur in the heart of his workings.

Outfitted with a stout desk and wide bed, this living chamber was obviously once home to someone important. An iron door fills a niche in the northwestern corner.

Desk: Several stout ledgers lie on the desk. Here Delthur kept extensive records regarding the mine's output, wages paid to individual miners, made diary entries and so on. Characters perusing the books notice a general decline in penmanship and vocabulary in later entries. This is an excellent place to plant clues as to Delthur's fate.

Bed: Now mouldering, Delthur's bed was once a comfy affair. A character searching the bed discovers a plain, wickedly sharp dagger under one pillow.

C4: The Treasury

Delthur kept his treasures in this strongroom, warded by a cunningly trapped portal. When madness finally consumed Delthur, he locked himself into his strongroom so that none might steal his treasures.

Iron Door: This plain iron door is locked, and its hinges are nested into the walls to prevent easy tampering. The door opens into the strongroom.

A small chamber lies beyond the locked iron door. Stacked chests and sacks stand haphazardly around the room. A skeleton leans against one particularly large chest, a pickaxe across its legs.

Pay Chest: Herein Delthur kept his miner's pay.

Skeleton: This is Delthur—finally consumed by madness, he starved to death among his treasures.

Chests and Sacks: The chests and sacks here hold the mined ore Delthur coveted so much. All are heavy; to take more than a sack or two from the mine will be a major undertaking for the characters (probably involving several wagons or a magical method of carrying a great weight).

C5: The Deepest Workings

This is the deepest section of Delthur's Folly.

Doors: Double doors ward Delthur's personal chambers while a tightly fitting door leads to the outside.

Deep pits flank the slender walkway snaking through this section of the mine.

Pits: Each about ten feet deep, these pits have clearly been excavated by the miners. The glimmer of gold and silver is obvious in their sides and floor.

Raised Section: A stone slope leads upwards to the east. Here the ceiling is barely six feet high.

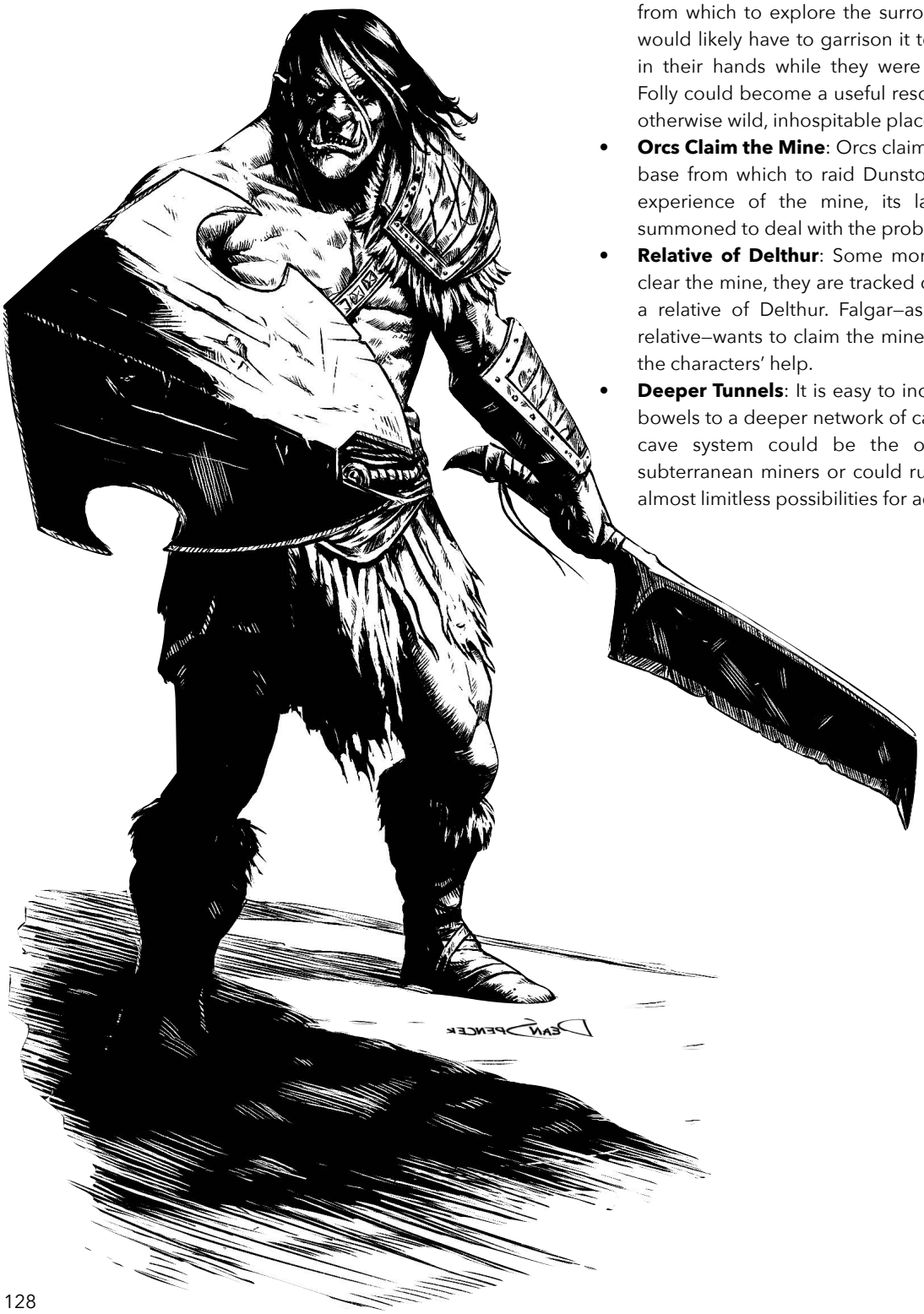
GM Notes

Is Delthur Undead? *Delthur could be nothing more than a skeleton, or he could be an intelligent undead of sorts. He is also a handy means of giving the characters a glimpse at the mine's backstory—particularly if his ghost must be laid to rest in some specific fashion.*

Conclusion

Once the characters have cleared Delthur's Folly of its monstrous inhabitants, the adventure doesn't necessarily end.

- **Mining Operation**: The characters could decide to export the mine's mineral wealth and hire miners and suchlike to that end. In this instance, the characters would also have to provide guards, or do the guarding themselves. As well as the possibility of something else emerging into the lake from far below, the characters would also have to make sure their hirelings are fed and equipped. They would also likely have to escort shipments of ore back to Dunstone to ward off bandit and orc attacks.
- **A Secret Lair**: Alternatively, the characters could use the tunnels and chambers around the sinkhole as a base from which to explore the surrounding area. While they would likely have to garrison it to make sure it remained in their hands while they were off exploring, Delthur's Folly could become a useful resource—a safe haven in an otherwise wild, inhospitable place.
- **Orcs Claim the Mine**: Orcs claim the mine and use it as a base from which to raid Dunstone. The characters—with experience of the mine, its layout and dangers—are summoned to deal with the problem.
- **Relative of Delthur**: Some months after the characters clear the mine, they are tracked down by Falgar Madann, a relative of Delthur. Falgar—as Delthur's closest living relative—wants to claim the mine as his own and asks for the characters' help.
- **Deeper Tunnels**: It is easy to include a link in the mine's bowels to a deeper network of caves and caverns. Such a cave system could be the outpost for a band of subterranean miners or could run for miles and provide almost limitless possibilities for adventure.



Deszraul's Hold

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Ochels)

Hidden deep in the Ochels Hills, Deszraul's Hold has a sinister reputation. The medusa Dezraul claims the caves and evidence of her fell powers—a bewildering array of uncannily lifelike stone statues—stand about her gloomy subterranean domain. All that remains of adventurers daring to face the cave's snake-headed mistress, the statues are a salutary warning on the dangers of facing a medusa in her lair. But does Deszraul still lair within? Has a band of merciless bandits fallen under her sway? Or does something else dwell in the deep dark of her former home?

Dungeon Background

The wooded forests and hills to Languard's east, the Ochels, have long been a haven for bandits, brigands and other outlaws. Here's civilisation's touch is light. The forest's wild reaches have oft-stymied the duke's attempts to winkle out the lawless folk dwelling beneath their boughs.

A score of years ago, the medusa Deszraul Valos fled into the hills. Coming from the far east, she was fleeing the wrath of an adventuring party—the Crusaders of the Burning Light—intent on slaying her. She found a small, hidden cave network and made it her own. The caves once housed a family of dwarves prospecting in the region, and it suited her to dwell therein. Inevitably, word of a terrible creature dwelling in the hills trickled down into the civilised lands to the west. Many adventurers have subsequently tried to make their names by slaying the cave's snake-headed mistress, and over a dozen have since fallen prey to Deszraul's stony gaze.

Deszraul's Fate

Before designing this adventure, you must determine Deszraul's status; this likely depends on your characters' level and power.

- **Deszraul Lives Alone**: While Deszraul has been attacked by several adventuring bands over the years, none have slain her. The remains of these adventurers litter the cave's outer reaches. A survivor of one such ill-fated group, Auni Hellikki (NG female human fighter), recently staggered into Languard to gasp out her story to all who'll listen. Thus, the caves come to the party's attention.
- **Deszraul has Minions**: Deszraul yet dwells in the caves but a few months ago, a gang of bandits fled into the caves after being driven away from a merchant caravan by an adventuring party travelling with the traders. Deszraul saved the bandits from the adventurers, and they have since thrown in their lot with the medusa. For her part, Deszraul likes having minions; they bring her treasures and she rarely has to leave the caves. For Deszraul, life is good. The emboldened bandits have begun more frequent raiding and have come to the attention of the local authorities who are casting around for a suitable group of adventurers to end their raids.
- **Deszraul is Dead**: Deszraul is dead, slain by adventurers. Her lair has been fought over and claimed by many groups since then. (This background gives you the most flexibility in stocking the caves.)

Adventure Hooks

The characters can merely stumble on Deszraul's Hold by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters into the caves.

- **Bandit Attack**: The characters are on the road travelling to their next adventure when bandits attack them. The characters drive off the attackers, who leave an obvious trail to follow. Alternatively, if the party takes a prisoner, the captured bandit offers to sell out their companions in exchange for their freedom.
- **Bandit Attack Aftermath**: The characters are on the road when they encounter the aftermath of one of the bandits' ambushes. A cart lies on its side by a dead horse. Three arrows sprout from the horse's chest and the cart has been comprehensively looted. As the characters investigate the area, one of them hears a low moaning. Investigation reveals a badly wounded mercenary—Aake Neuvo (LN male human fighter)—with an arrow in his thigh. He relates details of the bandit attack and begs the characters to help rescue the merchant (Ilta Lempo [NG middle-aged female human]) and her daughter (Charlotta [NG female human]). Perceptive characters quickly realise Aake has fallen in love with Charlotta. Searching the area, the characters discover the bandits' tracks.
- **Missing Adventurers**: The characters hear about a band of adventurers who have gone missing. The adventurers planned to explore a specific area of nearby forest or hills. If asked about the adventurers and their plans, the locals warn the characters that a deadly creature is reputed to dwell in the area in which the other adventurers disappeared. They relate that the creature can turn its prey to stone and most of the locals believe this is the fate that has befallen the disappeared adventurers.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about Deszraul's Hold. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use the list below to determine what the character learns:

1. A small cave complex hides a terrible creature—which can turn its foes into stone statues! Many people have entered the cave over the years, and none have emerged. Only fools dare enter the caves!
2. A terrible monster with the ability to turn its victims to stone once lived in the caves, but it is long dead. The statues of its victims yet remain, however.
3. Bandits—Venla's Crew—have been seen in the area in recent months. The gang prey on merchants and the like and have had some success. The local lord grows weary of

their depredations and seeks someone to rid him of the detestable bandits.

4. It's not bandits preying on travellers and the like, but fey creatures made angry by the logging and hunting carried out in the forest's fringes. (False rumour.)
5. The local lord has offered a reward of 100 gp to the group or person who can bring to justice whatever or whoever is responsible for the recent attacks on lawful travellers.
6. Bandits certainly have been active in the local area recently, but a few weeks ago, their attacks abruptly ceased. No-one has claimed responsibility for killing or driving them away and speculation is rampant among the peasantry as to who or what is responsible.

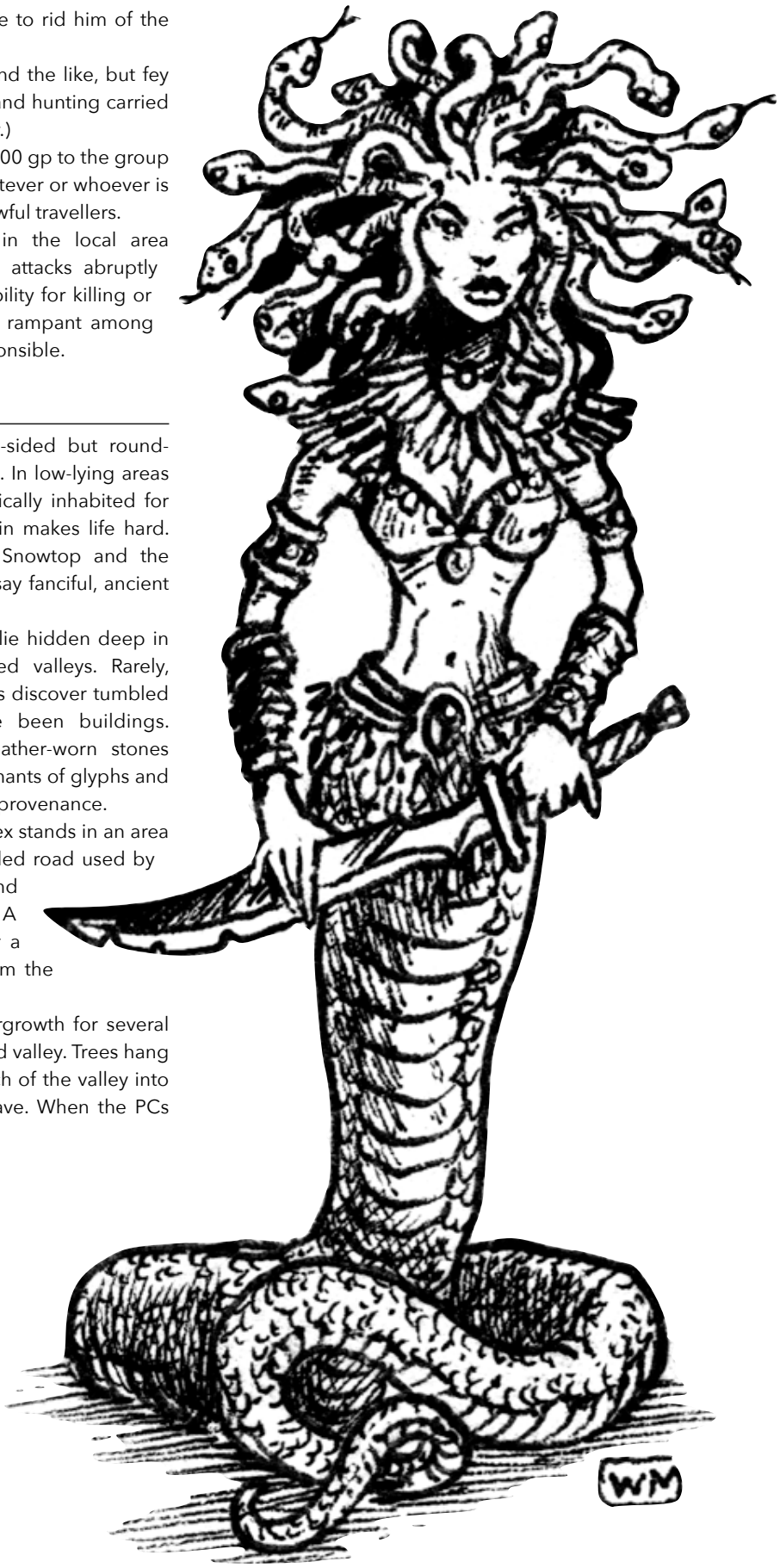
The Ochels

The Ochels—a range of rugged, steeply-sided but round-topped hills—rises to the east of Languard. In low-lying areas heavily forested the hills are only sporadically inhabited for the place's remoteness and rugged terrain makes life hard. Several high hills in the range—Helvel, Snowtop and the Giant's Seat—have colourful, some would say fanciful, ancient legends attached.

Crumbling, ancient tree-choked ruins lie hidden deep in some of the more inaccessible, wooded valleys. Rarely, travellers in the range's far eastern reaches discover tumbled piles of stones that could have once been buildings. Sometimes, such travellers discover weather-worn stones decorated with maddeningly illegible remnants of glyphs and sigils of unknown, but undeniably ancient, provenance.

Deszraul's Hold: The dungeon complex stands in an area of rugged, forested hills near a well-traveled road used by merchants, traders and the like. Game and forester trails criss-cross the region. A character skilled at tracking can discover a relatively well-trod path snaking away from the road and up into the hills.

The trail meanders through the undergrowth for several miles before entering a narrow, steep-sided valley. Trees hang far out of the valley's flanks, plunging much of the valley into shadow. Eventually, the trail leads to a cave. When the PCs reach this point, proceed to location 1.



Notable Locations at a Glance

Much of the cave system's features depends on what or who dwells within. Use the notes below as a starting point, and modify them as necessary to complement your design.

1. **Main Entrance**: Two life-like statues watch over the cave complex's main entrance from a raised escarpment. These statues are the characters' first concrete clues that something terrible lurks in the caves.
2. **Cramped Steps**: This secondary entrance to the caves is clear of suspiciously detailed statues.
3. **Cave of Statues**: This large cave comprises the bulk of the outer caverns. Over a dozen life-like statues—adventurers who once challenged Deszraul—are scattered about the area.
4. **Cavern of the Two**: Here stand two statues—these unfortunate adventurers were the two who made it furthest into Deszraul's lair. In the end, their progress availed them naught.
5. **Unfinished Chamber**: The dwarves who built the complex's inner chambers did not finish this large room before departing for a new home.
6. **Sloped Passageway**: This slightly sloped, low-ceiling passageway leads up to a set of curving steps. This passageway runs under parts of location 4.
7. **Short Staircase**: This curved staircase descends about five feet. It is designed for def and is and hard to fight on.
8. **Barracks**: This large chamber serves as the barracks for any large group of individuals dwelling in the caves. If no such group lairs in the cave, the bedrolls and suchlike are old, musty and dusty.
9. **Deszraul's Lair**: This chamber is/was Deszraul's private lair. If she, or a group of intelligent creatures claims the caves, they use the secret door in this chamber to attack interlopers from behind. They can also use the secret door to flee their enemies if the characters seem too mighty.

Generic Cavern Features

The outer reaches of this small complex are of natural stone. They have several generic features:

Illumination: Dim light fills locations 1 and 2 within 30-foot of the cavern entrance. Beyond locations 1 and 2, it is dark in the caves.

Rough Hewn Steps: Flights of rough hewn steps are difficult terrain. The steps are hacked out of the floor's to take advantage of its natural gradient.

Floor: The cave floor is of stone covered with gravel and (mostly dried) mud. In a few places, where water oozes down the walls or drips from the ceiling, the mud is wet and glistens in the party's lights.

Walls: The cave walls are rough and natural.

Ceiling: The ceiling is about 20 feet high throughout the caves. Above escarpments it is corresponding lower. For example, above a ten-foot high escarpment the ceiling is only ten-foot high.

Stone Statues: Many stone statues stand about locations 1-4. These statues are incredibly detailed. Note, if the statues are petrified adventurers and the like, destroying or damaging them will likely "kill" the petrified individual. Refer to the individual statue's descriptions for more details.

Generic Dungeon Features

The deeper parts of this small complex are of worked stone. They have several generic features:

Dwarven Artifice: A dwarf, or other character skilled in architecture or mining, recognises the artifice of the inner caves as being of dwarven origin.

Illumination: It is dark in the dungeon portion of the complex unless its denizens—perhaps a band of human bandits—require light.

Ceiling: Ceilings are about 10 feet high. In most places it is plain and unadorned. Perceptive characters spot the occasional signs of tool marks on the ceiling.

Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded.

Walls: The dungeon walls are of unadorned, worked, natural stone.

Wooden Doors: The complex's wooden doors are in good repair and open into the room they ward. Unless noted in the text, the doors are plain and unadorned.

Dungeon Dressing

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Water oozes down the wall into a small puddle.
2. Rubble has been pushed to the side against the wall.
3. A burnt-out torch stub lies on the floor against one wall. A smear of soot on the nearby wall and floor show where the torched smouldered for a while after being discarded.
4. Deep scrape marks on the floor show where something heavy was dragged toward the exit.
5. The remains of a small campfire fill a hollow in the ground. A small pile of dry firewood lies nearby.
6. Several spots of dried blood decorate the floor.
7. Water drips from the ceiling, turning the ground to sticky, wet mud. Several easily detected footprints in the mud provide a clue to what might lie deeper into the caves.
8. A faint smell—sweat and animal musk—hangs in the air.
9. Scratches on the floor show where someone or something tried—and failed—to dig into the stone.
10. Clumps of mottled green and brown lichen cling to the wall and ceiling. Several small bats hang from the ceiling.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. The broken-off tip of a stone finger lies on the floor.
2. Wisps of dusty cobwebs obscure part of the ceiling. Careful investigation reveals a small stone spider attached to the ceiling at the centre of the webs.
3. A grime-covered gold coin lies on the floor; only perceptive characters –or those searching the area–spot the coin.
4. Graffiti daubed in chalk on one wall reads, "Despair for Deszraul dwells here."
5. The tracks of several booted footsteps lead further into the caves. A skill tracker can spot at least six individuals. The track's age depends on what dwells in the caves.
6. Graffiti, neatly chiselled into the wall in Dwarven reads, "Dolrak Thorhig" along with a date eighty years past.
7. A loose stone hides a small hollow in the floor. A rotting pouch containing 12 gp and 19 sp fills the niche.
8. A ripped sack lies on the ground. It holds nothing but a few mouldering heads of wheat.
9. A (dried) bloody handprint decorates the wall. The blood is smeared as if whoever left it was steadying themselves.
10. Broken and rusty, a bear trap languishes on the floor.

GM Notes

***Tracks and Light**: Depending on what dwells in the cave, the characters will likely find tracks in locations 1 and 2. They may also see light emanating from location 4.*

1: Main Entrance

Two life-like stone statues stand on the escarpment overlooking the cave entrance.

Narrow, rough hewn steps, shadowed by a stone escarpment, leads down into the cave. Two life-like statues—one an elven man, the other a human woman—stand atop the ledge.

Escarpment: The stone escarpment is ten feet high; it is easy to climb, unless the characters are in a high stress situation such as combat.

Stone Statues: Two incredibly detailed stone statues stand atop the escarpment:

- **Northern Statue**: This elven man wears fine robes adorned with mystic symbols around the hems. He is holding a stone scroll and seems in the acting of reading from it.
- **Southern Statue**: This human woman wears chainmail and carries a mace in her left hand. Her right arm is extended and her hand points into the cave beyond.

2: Cramped Stairs

These narrow natural stairs provide a shortcut into the caves.

Narrow stairs leads down into a large cave.

3: Cave of Statues

Life-like stone statues stand about this large, natural cavern.

At least a half-dozen incredibly life-life statues stand about this large, natural cavern. To the northeast a crumbling stone escarpment rises about ten feet and hosts two more statues.

Eastern Escarpment: Two statues stand atop the ten feet high escarpment in the northwestern part of the cave. It is easy to climb, unless the characters are in a high stress situation such as combat.

- **Eastern Statue**: A half-elf woman clad in leather armour points a bow down into the main part of the chamber. A look of anger mixed with fear is fixed on her face.
- **Western Statue**: A halfling man wearing studded leather armour and holding two daggers is frozen in the act of creeping toward the wall. His eyes are narrowed, and his demeanour and pose is that of a hunter.

Secret Door: A secret door pierces the eastern wall. It is nothing more than a cleverly counterweighted slab of stone—simply pushing on it causes it to spin about an iron pole set into its centre line. The secret door is dwarf-crafted and quite difficult to spot.

Stone Statues: A dozen or so stone statues stand about the main part of the cavern; all are highly detailed and life-like. Some of the statues are smashed and broken; others remain whole. Use this list to generate the details of any statue the characters investigate:

1. A goblin crouches on the floor. It has its hands over its eyes, but clearly it could not resist seeing its doom approach. Observant characters note the unfortunate was petrified because it was peeking between its fingers.
2. This large, muscular human warrior has been petrified in the act of charging. His axe is held high over his head, and his face is twisted into a terrible snarl. As the warrior was petrified while running forward, the statue is finely balanced; anyone moving past it has a good chance of knocking it over and smashing it.
3. Smashed rubble surrounds this statue which is missing from the waist up. The figure may have been a human or elf based on his legs and waist and was wearing fine flowing robes.
4. A snarling wolf stands in the centre of the area, hackles raised and teeth barred. Slightly behind the wolf, and to one side, stands a female half-elf dressed in leather armour. The half-elf points deeper into the cave.
5. This headless statue of a muscular warrior wields a huge falchion. The man's legs are set wide and the falchion is pulled back as if he were ready to strike.
6. The statue of a halfling, a stone dagger clenched between its teeth, lies on the floor, practically filling a deep niche in the floor. The halfling is snarling. Cold, muddy water fills the remainder of the niche.
7. A stone warrior holds his shield up in front of his eyes and his short sword down low, ready to murderously rip the weapon up into his opponent's belly.
8. This heavily burdened human woman wears an oversized backpack and holds a lantern outstretched in front of her. A look of horror mars her otherwise attractive face.
9. This small rat was petrified in the act of looking around the stony legs of another statue.
10. Bones surround this statue of an adventurer caught as he looked back over his shoulder. From the stance of the statue—and the skull and spinal cord still draped about it—it looks like the adventurer was carrying a dead or unconscious companion when he was petrified.
11. This statue is smashed and broken—it is little more than a pile of rubble.
12. This statue is smashed in half; roll again to determine its appearance ignoring results of 11 or 12.

The Pit: A crumbling ledge bounds a ten-foot-deep section of cave to the north-western.

Narrow Passage: A three-foot-wide passageway leads roughly northward from the bottom of the pit. Small or larger creatures must squeeze if they plan to explore the passageway. Two short flights of natural steps each drop down about five feet.

GM Notes

***Organised Denizens**: Organised inhabitants of the dungeon dwell in locations 8 and 9. They likely keep a watch in location 4 so intruders will find it difficult to surprise them. Remember, if human bandits dwell in the caves, the guards probably have some source of illumination in location 4, which the characters will automatically spot when they enter location 3.*

GM Notes

***Organised Resistance**: If an organised group lair in the caves they'll likely make their stand in locations 8 and 9, but don't be afraid to have them send out skirmishers to attack the party from behind using the secret door in location 9.*

***Treasure**: The characters will find the choicest treasure in the complex in this chest. The chest itself may be trapped.*

4: Cavern of the Two

This raised ledge is a good place for organised groups claiming the caves to set a watch on the outer caverns.

Two more statues stand atop this low escarpment. A wooden door pierces the chamber's far wall.

The Statues: Two more stone statues stand here.

- **North Statue**: Missing its left arm, which lies half-way down the crumbling escarpment, this statue of a female half-elf is in a sorry state. A look of fury mars the woman's haughty face.
- **South Statue**: This statue of a dwarven warrior wearing studded leather armour has been extensively vandalised. Some wag has deeply carved his initials–MC–into the dwarf's buttocks.

5: Unfinished Chamber

This large chamber marks the extent of the dwarves' work in the cave complex.

The western portion of this chamber is akin to a natural cave, although here and there, signs of improvements are evident. To the east, the far section of the cave has been shaped and smoothed to be habitable.

Stonework: The stonework in this chamber is rougher, less finished, than in location 6 - 9.

6: Sloped Passageway

This area is a natural choke point; organised defenders may try to hold intruders here while more of their brethren use the secret door in location 9 to take intruders from the rear.

This 20-foot-long passageway slopes gently upwards to a set of stone steps rising to the east.

This area has no notable features. Roll on "Dungeon Dressing" or "Things to Find", if the characters search here.

7: Short Staircase

A wooden door stands at the bottom of the stairs. Defenders in location 8, may try and hold this door shut if intruders appear strong or numerous.

This short staircase spirals downwards to a wooden door.

Spiral Staircase: The staircase is difficult terrain. Built for defence, the staircase was designed to hamper attackers. Characters lower on the stair than their attacker gain cover from the curving wall.

8: Barracks

Here dwell the rank and file of any organised group claiming the caves.

Bedrolls and other pieces of camping equipment lie scattered about this large chamber. Soot covers the ceiling around a natural fissure in the northeast corner. The remains of a large campfire fill the niche under the fissure.

Camping Equipment: The bedrolls, spare clothes and other miscellaneous gear here are mundane and have little value. Squares filled with camping equipment are difficult terrain

9: Deszraul's Lair

Herein dwells the most dangerous creature in complex—either Deszraul or the bandit chieftain.

Richly appointed, this chamber has several rugs and what looks like a comfortable bed in one corner next to a chest. In the east wall, clear, fresh water fills a small niche.

Secret Door: A secret door pierces the west wall. It is nothing more than a cleverly counterweighted slab of stone—simply pushing on it causes it to spin about an iron pole set into its centre line. The secret door is dwarf-crafted and but easy to spot from this side.

Natural Basin: Clear, fresh and cold water oozing from a crack in the rock fills this stone basin.

Rugs: The rugs are dirty, but serviceable; one has an interesting geometric pattern.

Bed: The bed is sized for a human-like creature; furs and blankets cover the bed.

Chest: This stout wooden chest is locked. The bandit chieftain, if one is present, has the chest's key. The chest holds clothes and the band's choicest pieces of treasure.

Conclusion

Once the characters have cleared out the caves they can move on to their next adventure. Alternatively, the characters:

- Could use the caves as a handy base from which to explore the surrounding area.
- Could be altruistic and try to return to flesh some of the unfortunate petrified individuals.
- Might become victims of their own success. If they claim the caves and fail to publicise their victory over the cave's denizens they could be assaulted by other bands of adventurers seeking to make a name for themselves by slaying the cave's foul denizens.
- Might discover another set of passages and chambers after a rock fall in location 5 reveals a narrow passageway in the north wall; the tunnel slopes steeply downwards into the bowels of the earth.

GM Notes

***Personalising The Statues**: Add detail to the statues as you see fit. Perhaps the characters recognise an adventurer they have previous encountered. Such a discovery could lead to further adventures—particularly if they try to return the trapped adventurer to flesh.*

WM

Drowned Fane of the Elder God

Swamps & Marshes, Ashlar (Salt Mire)

The aeons-old Drowned Fane of the Elder God has been sacred to many dark-hearted races and peoples over its long existence. Long has is squatted on the dismal fringes of the Salt Mire, and long have dark rumours of the most terrible sort hung over the place. The elves called the place the Dead God's Water-Temple, and within its rune-scarred halls dwells an ancient primaeval horror –a timeless guardian that now stirs and begins to prepare for its master's return…

Dungeon Background

Far in the distant past, before the gods came into existence, there was a timeless aeon when the sun was but a dim star glowering over the black, primordial oceans of a neonate planet and the alien aboleth held dominion over a drowned world.

With science and sorcery stolen from the breathless void between distant stars, the aboleth created a servitor race of amphibious humanoids—skum—to carve out their vast subterranean empire. The aboleth ruled for millennia, thinking their hegemony would last forever. But forever never lasts.

Eventually, the skum cast off the shackles of their slavery in a revolt that sparked a great civil war, fragmenting the aboleth empire and causing its alien overlords to retreat into the deep, dark corners of the world. For long ages, the skum lingered on, building vast cities and temples along coasts and rivers, all close to the life-sustaining water yet far enough removed from the influence of their hidden former masters.

The sanctum, later known as the Drowned Fane of the Elder God, began as one such temple. Yet whereas most skum had been drawn to worship Dagon, the Shadow under the Sea, this splinter sect revered an entity even more ancient than the demon lord of deformity; a timeless being hailing from the void beyond the aboleth home world. Its name—never to be spoken aloud—was Hastur, the old one, the shepherd of black stars, embodied as the inscrutable Xanthous Emperor. While Hastur's name and nature have been lost in the fog of time, the shepherd's powers were insufficient to protect its flock, as the skum were all but wiped out by a great host of invading troglodytes. Before long, however, the eldritch powers lingering in the Drowned Fane led the invaders to abandon it.

When humans first settled the land that would become the Duchy of Ashlar, they were ignorant of the Drowned Fane's history. All they knew was an ancient and unknowable evil from forgotten aeons lurked therein. The Elves called it "Yesikir Juma'alan Kulleidh", which roughly translates as "the Dead God's Water-Temple". In time, humans came to call it the Drowned Fane of the Elder God.

Despite its ominous moniker—or perhaps because of it— the Drowned Fane has attracted its fair share of bandits, creatures, cultists, and other ne'er-do-wells to its rune-scarred halls. Whether lured by the safety offered by a secluded lair or the promise of forbidden knowledge, all who come to reside therein eventually succumb to the influence of the primordial deity whose malicious presence lingers amid the cyclopean stones.

Haudan Ryostaja, an itinerant wizard of ill repute, was the last person to explore the prehistoric fane. Although his motives and actions remain unclear, Haudan, too, fell prey to Hastur's maddening influence. What's even worse is that the wizard roused some primaeval horror from the depths—a timeless guardian whose sudden resurgence may herald the imminent return of the Xanthous Emperor itself…

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Drowned Fane of the Elder God by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to its sanity-shattering halls:

- **Earth Shall be Riven**: *"The Order of the Watch Eternal humbly requests your aid,"* croaks Joonas Mattila (LG old male human cleric [Darlen]). In a wheezing voice, he explains the Order believes a wizard called Haudan Ryostaja has come into possession of the dangerous grimoire *Earth Shall be Riven*. *"Rumour has it,"* Joonas continues, *"Haudan made his lair in what Dunstonians call the Drowned Fane of the Elder God. Go there, bring back the book, and the Order will be in your debt."*
- **Quest for the Doom Star**: With one fell swoop of his sallow arms, Vieno Rekola (N old male human wizard) clears the characters' drinks off the tavern table, replacing them with a jumble of maps, star-charts and texts written in a spidery hand. From what they can gather from his fifteen-minute ramble, Vieno wants them to retrieve a precious stone—the Doom Star—from a half-sunken cavern complex by the Selka River. The mention of gold being involved, however, is what really catches their attention…
- **Dreams and Portents**: The sudden, mysterious illness of Roosa Lajunen (CG female gnome illusionist) is the talk of the town. Felled by fever for the past four days, her delirious ravings mention a terrible "Yellow Man" who will soon come from "the dark between the stars". As Roosa is known for having prophetic dreams, this does not bode well… Perhaps the answer is to be found in the Drowned Fane of the Elder God—a location she keeps mentioning during her increasingly rare lucid moments?

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use Diplomacy to gather information about the Drowned Fane of the Elder God. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp. A character gains one additional rumour for every 1d4 hours and 1d4 gp they spend. Use this list to determine what the character learns:

1. If you speak someone's name seven times in Dead Echo Cave, that person will die within a year. (False rumour.)
2. You'll either need a dinghy or a guide to make it to the Drowned Fane—the overland route's all marshland.
3. That wizard, Haudan Ryostaja, went there a few months ago. Seemed to be on the run from someone… or something.
4. Fifty years ago, they found the Drowned Fane full of dead bandits. They had all killed themselves…and they all had their eyes gouged out.
5. Strange stars in the sky, my friend. Black stars. We can't see them but sense their pull on the river and the tides.
6. Tell me, have you seen it, too? That sign scrawled on people's doors in yellow paint? Who does such a thing?

The Surrounding Locality

The ancient ruins of the Drowned Fane of the Elder God languish in a lonely, sunken cove by the Selka River, surrounded by marshland. Reaching the Drowned Fane necessitates using a dinghy or flat-bottomed skiff—any boat capable of navigating shallow water while also being light enough to carry across stretches of dry land. Without such a vessel, the journey time quadruples.

As the characters travel along the river and across the marshes towards the Drowned Fane, they are soon confronted with evidence of recent flooding caused by unusually heavy rains several weeks ago. Where the water has since retreated, it left behind morbid relics of the past, scattered amid the driftwood and debris jutting from the mud.

Use the lists below to breathe life and detail into the characters' trek to the Drowned Fane and instil in the players a growing sense of wrongness, foreshadowing the harrowing events awaiting them in the cyclopean ruins.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Slimy strands of reeking brown kelp flank a pair of muddy, webbed footprints leading to the nearest body of water.
2. A wrecked boat's worn timbers jut from the sand, resembling the ribcage of some gargantuan beast's carcass.
3. Birds feast upon the rotting flesh of a corpse lying in the shoreline mud. Inspection reveals the body has no face; its skull being naught but a featureless bone sphere.
4. A swarm of pale, eyeless froglets infest a shallow marsh the characters must wade through. When back on dry land, each character discovers 2d6 froglets attached to their flesh, feeding on their warm blood like leeches.
5. A sudden squall blows from the north, howling in a chorus of unintelligible screams. A sharp-eared character makes out the word "fthagn" occurring repeatedly.
6. A grumble of maggots surrounds a squat, black monolith protruding from the earth. Investigation reveals the stone reaches down far beyond the characters' capacity for digging.
7. Troops of sickly purple mushroom stalks stick from the soil like a dead man's fingers desperately reaching skyward.
8. A misty mirage forms on the distant horizon, resembling a vast cyclopean city glowing with ghostly green radiance. After twenty minutes, the phantom city fades away.
9. A colossal slate-grey cloud appears overhead, casting out foggy tendrils with which it seems to drag itself across the sky against the prevailing wind.
10. Moss and weed cloak an old cabin built from beach rocks, now half-sunken into the mud. Inside, worm-eaten books surround the mould-encrusted skeleton of a deformed man whose skull is no more than a featureless bone sphere.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A bent lead amulet resembling a warped, five-pointed star with a burning eye at the centre.
2. A splintered oar with a broken blade covered in bite marks.
3. A giant freshwater mussel juts from the glistening mud. A character opening it discovers a green ovoid pearl worth 1d6 x 50 gp.
4. A fossilised skull belonging to a long-dead marine monster. With only a few minor adjustments, it can be worn as a helmet.
5. A tangled fishing net containing 1d6 unidentifiable blobs of gelatinous flesh.
6. A mud-encrusted whalebone carving of a long-necked bird surrounded by a mass of squirming tentacles, accompanied by the phrase "OMNIA MELIORA TENACULIS" written in the language of demons. Characters who can read Abyssal translate this as "Everything is better with tentacles".
7. A wax-sealed bottle contains a letter penned by the crew of the *Widow*—a ship reputed to be cursed to forever sail the Bitter Sea.
8. A beached cask of fine fortified wine worth five times its weight in gold.
9. A thin string tied to a stake leads to a submerged eel buck containing enough live eels to feed the party for a day.
10. A coil of strong hemp rope, 100 feet long and swollen with moisture. Until properly dried, the rope weighs twice as much as normal.

Rising Waters

When the characters arrive at the Drowned Fane of the Elder God, take a d8 and place it on the table with the number 1 showing. This die is called the Flood Die, and it represents the slowly rising water. Every 10 minutes of game time, roll 1d8. If the result is greater than the number showing on the Flood Die, increase the Flood Die score by one. Otherwise, it remains the same.

Each location in this Dungeon Backdrop has a Flood Point listed in the description, allowing its water level to be calculated as follows:

(Flood Die - Flood Point) x 2 = height of water level, in feet

For example, Area 4 (Dead Echo Cave) has a listed Flood Point of 2. If the Flood Die sits at 5, the water level in Dead Echo Cave is 6 feet high ([5 - 2] x 2).

The effects of different water levels are listed under "Generic Dungeon Features".

Notable Locations at a Glance

The Drowned Fane has several notable locations:

1. **Dark Waters [FP: special]**: An ancient horror lurks in these dark depths.
2. **Drowned Shoals [FP 1]**: A trapped dog bears an eldritch parasite.
3. **Slimy Ayre [FP 2]**: Reeking mucus covers every inch of this shingle beach.
4. **Dead Echo Cave [FP 2]**: Arcane acoustics muffle all sounds in this cave.
5. **Rune-Scarred Cavern [FP 3]**: The engravings here were never meant for mortal minds to comprehend.
6. **Lost Library of Haudan [FP 4]**: Rotted volumes of forbidden lore languish in this chamber.
7. **Star-Dome Chamber [FP 4]**: A *permanent illusion* causes this room to appear larger than it is.
8. **Oathspeaker's Sanctum [FP 5]**: Here, a dark oath sworn to nameless gods may spare the characters' lives.
9. **Shrine of the Xanthous Emperor [FP 5]**: The statue in this room isn't waterproof…
10. **Haudan's Study [FP 6]**: A blasphemous book of forbidden lore awaits the brave and foolhardy here.

Generic Dungeon Features

Unless specified otherwise, all locations in the Drowned Fane of the Elder God share the following features:

Planar Anomaly: The Drowned Fane lies in a planar anomaly, which prevents all forms of planar travel or teleportation.

He Who Must Not Be Named: Each time a character speaks the name "Hastur" aloud, they draw the ire of a certain align power and may suffer damage as a result.

Illumination: Bioluminescent bacteria live inside the hairline cracks of beach shingles and cavern walls, basking the drowned fane in a spectral jade glow.

Ceilings: Strange spiral carvings decorate the 15-foot-high ceilings.

Walls: Shallow spiral carvings decorate the fane's ancient yet smooth masonry walls.

Floors: The flagstone floors have been worn smooth by the passing of countless aeons.

Doors: Wrought of black basalt and carved with disturbing bas-reliefs depicting tentacled monsters, these heavy stone doors require effort to open.

Water Levels: The effects of a location's water level are relative to a character's height:

- **Knee-high:** Movement costs are doubled; acrobatics and stealth are a bit harder than normal.
- **Waist-high:** Movement costs are quadrupled, but swimming is possible). Characters enjoy cover, but acrobatics and stealth are much harder than normal.
- **Submerged:** Characters must swim, benefit from improved cover, and stealth is much harder than normal; acrobatics are impossible.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

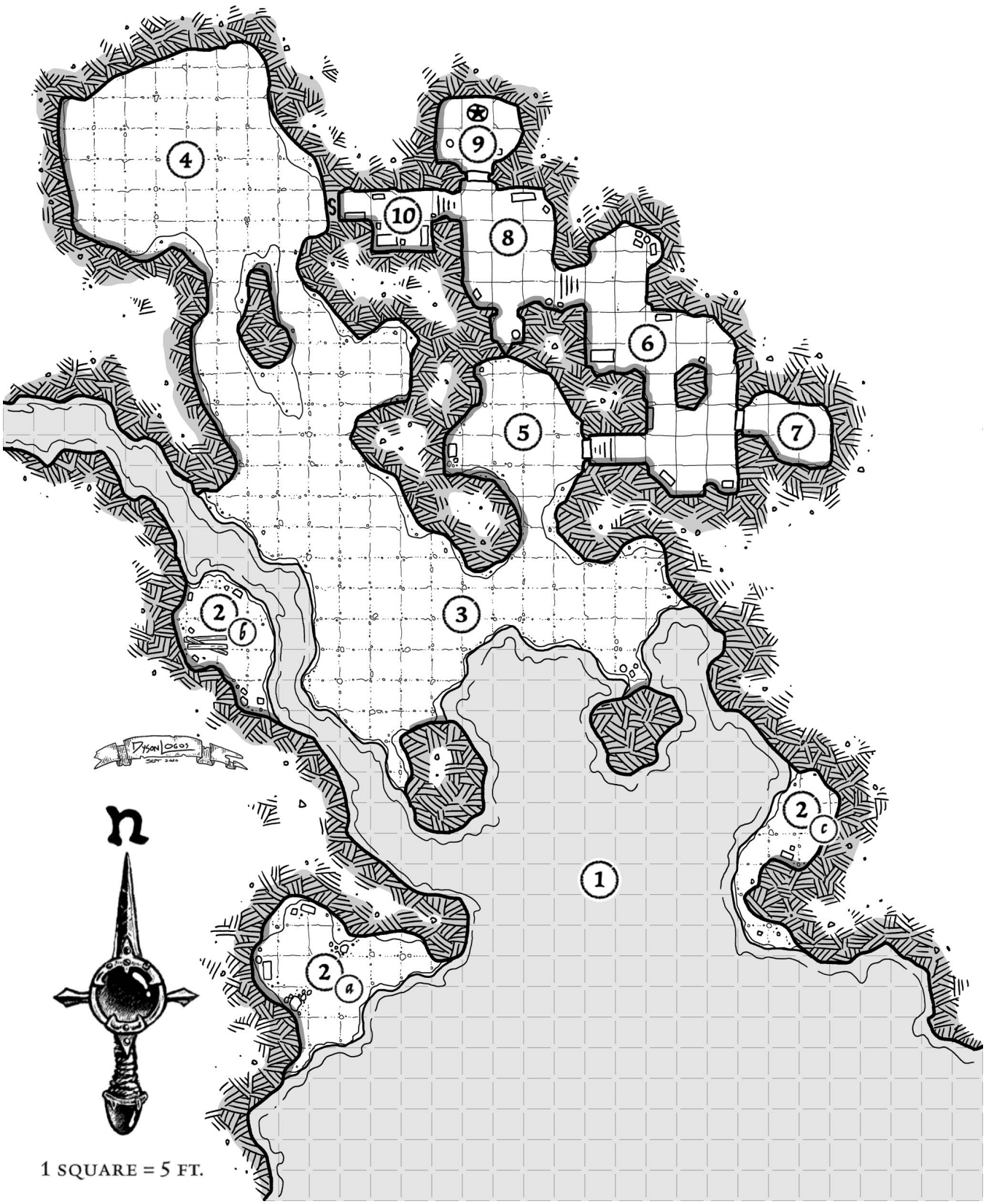
1. A large hermit crab scuttles across the floor, bearing an eyeless human skull on its back.
2. Ominous whispers echo from the walls. A character listening closely hears the words "*Say not its name*" repeated over and over again.
3. A pale yellow haze appears in the air and follows the characters around, observing their every move.
4. Nine eyeless skulls lie neatly stacked in a corner. The first character to interact with them discovers their first name written across the top skull's forehead.
5. A crunchy, crawling carpet of tiny ochre crabs covers the floor. When stepped on, they bleed a deep, dark red.
6. One character sees the strange hieroglyphs on the wall twist and warp, melting into a single lambent rune, which they instinctively recognise as the name "HASTUR".
7. A four-inch, sharp-toothed tadpole lies squirming in a puddle of pinkish slime. The slime trail leads to a large dead rat whose body has exploded from the inside.
8. A screeching horde of soaking wet rats skitters past, attempting to escape the rising waters.
9. A dead jellyfish bobs on the water, occupying a 5-foot square. Adjacent characters must dodge the corpse to avoid being stung and developing an itchy rash.
10. A severed tentacle the size of a human leg flops around helplessly, its ichor dyeing the water a cloudy blue-black.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A worn agate cameo (worth 1d6 x 5 gp) depicts a portly woman with great, bulbous eyes.
2. A defaced silver amulet (worth 2d6 gp) bears the scarred image of a one-eyed octopus.
3. A worn greatsword wrought from the bill of a giant sawfish. A critical hit inflicts triple damage, but a natural 1 shatters the bone blade.
4. A stoppered green glass vial contains a viscous ooze. The liquid is preserved aboleth slime.
5. An ancient conch shell horn, graven with eldritch runes. Once per day, its horn blast can be used to cast a *fear* spell.
6. A broken harpoon with an eight-foot-long heavy chain still attached.
7. A curious jade statuette depicting a squat, octopus-headed monstrosity worth 150 gp. Characters carrying the statuette are more easily targeted by mind-affecting spells and effects.

8. A long, straight spiral tusk, broken from the jaws of a sea creature. Although it is worthless, a shrewd character may be able to sell it off as a precious unicorn's horn.
9. A partially rotted oilskin made from seal leather. In a pinch, it can be used as a flotation device.
10. A small hoard of 3d6 gold coins encrusted with blood.



GM Notes

***Tentacled Horror**: Calculate the tentacled horror's attack and damage scores based on the average party level before play starts, and make a note of them here to save time.*

***Whining Dog**: Surely no-one calling themselves a hero can ignore the pitiful cries of a wounded dog trapped by the rising water? Yank those heart strings of your players as hard you need to ensure they save the poor pooch!*

Running the Tentacled Horror

In game terms, the timeless guardian of the Drowned Fane's dark waters is best represented using trap mechanics, rather than a creature stat block. This approach makes the monster easy to run during play, and allows it to be scaled to any party level.

Tentacled Horror

Once per turn, after moving in an area with at least four feet of water, a character is targeted by a tentacle. Roll 1d6 to determine what happens:

1-3 (Whiplash): This powerful melee attack deals bludgeoning damage.

4-5 (Grapple): This attack deals no damage; instead, the tentacle attempts to grapple its target.if it succeeds, the tentacle attempts to pin and drown its victim on subsequent rounds.

6 (Infect): This powerful attack deals half as much damage as the whiplash attack. However the target may become infected with an eldritch parasite (see "Aftermath" for details). Tentacles never target infected characters.

1: Dark Waters

An ancient horror lurks in these dark depths.

Flood Point: Special

Deep crimson clouds surround a sheep's carcass floating upon the dark waters. Ominous shadows ripple beneath the surface, urging you towards the rough shore.

Water Level: When the characters arrive at the Drowned Fane, the water is 20 feet deep. As the water level rises, determine the new water depth of this area as follows:

(Flood Die x 2) + 18 = water depth, in feet

Sheep Carcass: Close inspection of the carcass reveals a great gash in the animal's abdomen. A detailed inspection however, suggests the sheep was crushed to death before the wound was inflicted.

Ominous Ripples: The strange ripples beneath the characters' boat are caused by the writhing tentacles of the Drowned Fane's monstrous guardian.

When the Flood Die reaches 3, or when the characters try to open the stone door to area 6, read the following:

The black waters boil and foam like a witch's cauldron, disgorging a mass of flailing tentacles. With a deafening roar, the great, slimy tendrils crash down upon the beach and begin their search for living prey.

Tentacled Horror: From now on, until it is defeated, the tentacled horror occupies this area. Although the creature itself cannot leave this area, its slimy tentacles can reach into any location under at least four feet of water. Refer to the sidebar on this page for more information on running the tentacled horror.

2: Drowned Shoals (a, b, c)

A trapped dog bears an eldritch parasite.

Flood Point: 1

The pitiful howls of an injured dog trapped on one of the gravel bars surrounding the rocky beach echo through the air.

(2a) Whining Dog: A typical Dunstone sheepherding dog, this young white dog got separated from its master chasing a runaway sheep and got trapped on one of the shoals. The dog's abdominal injury was inflicted by the tentacled horror and infected the dog with an eldritch parasite (see "Aftermath" for details).

If rescued, the dog accompanies the characters on their adventure (treat it as a mastiff with 5 hp left). Being infected already, the dog is never targeted by the tentacled horror, although other enemies may choose to do so. When the dog is slain or the adventure concludes (whichever occurs first), refer to "Aftermath" to determine what happens.

3: Slimy Ayre

Reeking mucus covers every inch of this shingle beach.

Flood Point: 2

Translucent yellow ooze glistens upon the jagged grey shingles covering the beach like sickly stars upon a shattered night sky. An amorphous blob of pale mucus plays the part of the moon.

Slimy Shingles: The mucus-covered gravel is difficult terrain. A character wise in nature's ways knows the slime was not secreted by any known naturally occurring plant or creature.

Amorphous Blob: This formless mass of gelatine is the decomposed body of a skum—an amphibious humanoid rumoured to dwell in Ashlar's darkest watery depths. A thorough search of the remains yields a strange trinket (roll on "Things to Find") to determine when the character discovers.

4: Dead Echo Cave

Arcane acoustics muffle all sounds in this cave.

Flood Point: 2

Ragged, wet curtains of moss shroud both entrances to this vast cavern whose lofty ceiling lies hidden in the shadows above.

Dead Echoes: The cave's acoustic properties muffle all sound.

Shadowed Ceiling: The cave's ceiling is 30 feet high.

Secret Passage: A curtain of moss conceals a crack in the east wall at a height of eight feet. The crack is difficult to spot from this side. With some effort, enough stones can be removed for a Medium creature to squeeze through the gap into area 10.

5: Rune-Scarred Cavern

The engravings here were never meant for mortal minds to comprehend.

Flood Point: 3

Strange and terrible carvings deck the walls of this dark, dismal cavern. A mere glance at the hieroglyphs causes the hair on the back of your neck to stand up.

Horrifying Hieroglyphs: A character examining the strange hieroglyphs inscribed upon the cavern walls might be affected by their malign influence. Those failing to resist suffer a profound sense of uneasiness as if some terrible secret has just barely eluded them. Those who do resist, however, experience a brief, terrifying epiphany, allowing them to understand the runes' true meaning, as well as their own cosmic insignificance. Roll 1d6 on the list below to determine how the character's mind reacts:

- **1-2**: Affected by a *fear* spell.
- **3-4**: Affected by a stunning spell.
- **5-6**: The character is unconscious for 1d4x10 minutes as vistas from the distant past assault their senses. Upon recovery, they have learned all the information in "Dungeon Background".

GM Notes

***Shadowed Ceiling**: The shadowed ceiling in area 4 is a perfect hiding spot for cloakers, darkmantles, slimes and oozes!*

GM Notes

***Lost Library**: At your option, a handful of books found in area 6 may yet be salvageable. In this case, 20 Things #42: Archives & Libraries offers inspiration for any surviving volumes and their contents.*

***Doom Star**: Consider making the Doom Star found in area 7 an ioun stone, as there are many variants you can choose to suit the level of your campaign.*

***Sacrificial Bowl**: By offering a blood sacrifice in area 8, a character essentially seals a pact with an otherworldly entity, which is never a good thing… Refer to "Aftermath" for suggestions on how to weave the consequences of such an event into your own campaign.*

6: Lost Library of Haudan

Rotted volumes of forbidden lore languish in this chamber.

Flood Point: 4

Toadstools thrive upon the mouldy vellum pages of a hundred blasphemous tomes rotting on the stone shelves lining this chamber's walls.

Lost Library: *Daemonolatreia*, *Secrets of the Worm*, and *Scarlet Rites* are just a few of the rare and precious titles found here. Unfortunately, mucus, moisture and mould have ruined the entire collection, rendering the books' contents illegible and thus completely worthless…

7: Star-Dome Chamber

A *permanent illusion* makes this room appear larger than it is.

Flood Point: 4

A vast, star-studded void looms beyond the stone door; the cold and desolate majesty of infinity stretches boundlessly in all directions.

Starry Void: The star-studded void is a permanent illusion. A character wise in celestial matters recognises a handful of constellations but concludes the stars occupy positions they held countless millennia ago. In addition, the star Suraaja—heart of the Gorgon constellation and omen of doom— appears much closer than it should…

Doom Star: The reason this "star" appears so close is because it is a real gem, magically suspended in the air in this room. Its value and magical properties—if any—are left to you to decide.

8: Oathspeaker's Sanctum

Here, a dark oath sworn to nameless gods may spare the characters' lives.

Flood Point: 5

Graven images depicting a tentacled monstrosity decorate the stone walls. Wan light shines through the window of an alcove in the east wall, illuminating a sacrificial bowl set on a pedestal.

Graven Images: Inspection reveals the engravings depict the Drowned Fane. They show the tentacled horror recoiling from a robed figure standing in front of the sacrificial bowl before slinking back into the depths.

Windowed Alcove: The narrow window is scarcely a foot wide, offering a view of areas 5, 3, and 1.

Sacrificial Bowl: Dire runes and twisted spirals cover this ancient obsidian bowl; the bowl's rim is razor-sharp.

A character approaching the bowl faintly hears a chorus of disembodied voices repeatedly chanting the words "IÄ HASTUR". If the tentacled horror has risen in area 1, it raises several tentacles to sway in rhythm with the chant.

If at least one willing creature makes a blood sacrifice of 8 or more hit points into the bowl, the tentacled horror retreats back into the depths.

9: Shrine of the Xanthous Emperor

The statue in this room isn't waterproof…

Flood Point: 5

Wisps of amber smoke ooze from the pores of a brimstone effigy depicting a faceless man wrapped in a tattered cloak.

If the Flood Die is 6 or higher, read the following instead:

Acrid yellow fumes boil up from the waters surrounding the brimstone effigy of a faceless man wrapped in a tattered cloak, now quickly being dissolved by the rising water.

Brimstone Effigy: A character wise in religious matters identifies the sulphur statue as the Xanthous Emperor—an obscure supernatural entity said to dwell on a nightmare world orbiting the distant star Suraaja.

The wisps of amber smoke oozing from the statue are unpleasant but harmless. Should the statue come into direct contact with the rising waters, however, it begins to dissolve, producing clouds of acrid yellow smoke in the process.

Acrid Fumes: When the statue begins dissolving, it takes five minutes for the fumes to fill this area and another five minutes to fill areas 8, 7, and 6. Living, breathing creatures exposed to the acrid smoke are affected as if by a terrible, cloying stench of supernatural proportions. The fumes last for 15 minutes before dissipating.

10: Haudan's Study

A blasphemous book of forbidden lore awaits the brave and foolhardy here.

Flood Point: 6

Stretched across the cover of a black book laid upon a bone lectern is the flayed face of a dead man; his horrid grimace frozen in a scowl of perpetual malice and endless agony.

Lectern: The lectern is carved from the bones of an ancient sea monster and protected by powerful eldritch magic. A creature who lifts the book from the lectern gains the attention of a powerful being from the Outer Planes. It invades the character's mind, compelling them to reveal their true name to the entity (a character with an iron will may manage to lie). Then, regardless of the outcome, the entity breaks contact—for now.

Black Book: The dark, leather-bound tome displaying a flayed human face on the cover is an original copy of *Earth Shall be Riven*—the first of a series of nine nefarious volumes called the *Nine Books of Hodhek*.

Secret Passage: A cold draught draws attention to a crack in the west wall. With some effort, enough stones can be removed from the wall for a Medium creature to squeeze through the gap into area 4, some eight feet above the ground. As soon as all surviving characters exit area 10, the tentacled horror (if it's still around) mysteriously retreats back into the depths.

GM Notes

Brimstone Effigy*: If you are feeling generous, consider hiding a treasure inside the brimstone statue in area 9. As the sulphur dissolves, the item gradually emerges.*

Lectern*: The identity of the otherworldly being attempting to contact characters lifting the book in area 10 is left up to you. By default, however, this entity is either Hastur or its avatar, the Xanthous Emperor.*

The Nine Books of Hodhek

Legend holds these nine blasphemous tomes were written in a single night by Hodhek the Soulless; a monk possessed by Braal, the god of hatred and malice. While the books' pages contain a chaotic jumble of esoteric drawings, obscure symbols, and plain gibberish, they are also said to harbour a terrifying mystery. If one were to decipher the secret code hidden in the nine volumes, it would reveal the location of a mystical portal leading to Braal's black throne. Cultists, madmen, and careless scholars alike are desperate to obtain all nine tomes. Their titles are:

I. *Earth Shall be Riven*
II. *Revan Chants*
III. *The Woeful City*
IV. *Dwellers in Shadow*
V. *Ethics of Danakil*
VI. *Testament of Ruin*
VII. *Dirge of Reason*
VIII. *Black Solstice*
IX. *Throne of Wrath*

Supposedly, all existing copies were destroyed by Darlen's Order of the Watch Eternal. The characters' discovery of *Earth Shall be Riven*, however, suggests their purge was not as thorough as hoped.

Aftermath

As the characters retreat from the Drowned Fane, the water recedes, taking with it the remains of the twisted horrors they faced inside the fane's cyclopean stone halls. And yet, the characters' adventures—as well as their troubles—are far from over! Use the suggestions below to build upon events from the Drowned Fane of the Elder God and develop the characters' further adventures.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Earth Shall be Riven**: If the characters return *Earth Shall be Riven* to Joonas Mattila, he consigns the evil tome to a blessed fire. Inhuman howls fill the air as azure flames consume the pages. His wizened hands still trembling with anxiety, Joonas produces a white clay pipe from his raiment, stuffing it with strong tobacco before speaking. *"More copies exist,"* he wheezes, *"More than we know. And it's no secret the Order's knights aren't up to the task of finding them. Old men and drunken louts, the lot of them!"* he scoffs. If the characters agree to seek and destroy any remaining copies of the *Nine Books of Hodhek*, Joonas promises to make it worth their while. To reward the party's efforts in retrieving *Earth Shall be Riven*, Joonas grants them a minor wondrous item.
- **Quest for the Doom Star**: *"The what?"* Vieno Rekola absent-mindedly calls out when the characters bring the Doom Star to Rekola Manor. *"Right, the Doom Star!"* He exclaims, finally looking up from the jumble of scrolls littering his desk. Nervously rubbing his pince-nez glasses on the sleeve of his frayed robe, Vieno explains he's a bit short on funds at the moment. *"But the good news is I've got another job for you,"* he stutters. *"Payment in full, all but guaranteed! What do you say?"*
- **Dreams and Portents**: Not long after the characters return from the Drowned Fane, Roosa fully recovers. *"I saw you in my dreams,"* she says. *"You fought the monster. And you met the Yellow Man. He knows you now. He knows your names."* Roosa has another strange dream several days later, prompting her to seek out the characters again. *"The Yellow Man is calling you,"* she sobs. *"Calling you to a dark place…"* She then describes a lonely location near Dunstone where she claims to have seen the characters in her dream, with the Yellow Man waiting for them there.

Note: *All three aftermath resolutions provide you with the freedom to choose almost any follow-up adventure you like. For your convenience, however, they have also been designed to transition smoothly into Dungeon Backdrop: The House of Yspher. If your group hasn't played Raging Swan Press's unique take on a fantasy haunted house yet, it may well be worth checking out next!*

Further Adventures

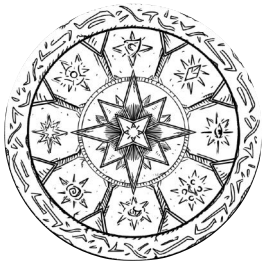
Regardless of the adventure hook you selected, the characters' actions in the Drowned Fane of the Elder God are likely to have profound implications, as well as far-reaching (and terrible) consequences:

- **Terror From the Deep**: While the tentacled horror has retreated to the depths, it has most certainly not been slain. Is there a chance the monster might return? And what caused it to rise from the deep in the first place? Was the beast raised in a dark ritual by Haudan Ryostaja? Or is its existence linked to the imminent return of Hastur and the Xanthous Emperor?
- **What is that Thing?!**: If the characters rescued the dog from area 2a they eventually discover the poor animal was infected with an eldritch parasite (either at the end of the adventure if the dog survived, or minutes after its demise if it did not). In any event, the eldritch parasite—which resembles a ten-inch tadpole with a maw full of razor teeth—bursts from the infected carcass and attempts to scurry away. You should determine its stats, as well as the sort of monster it eventually matures into. Additionally, if any characters were infected, they soon develop telltale signs of intestinal discomfort…how long do they have before the same fate awaits them, and what can be done to kill the parasite before it emerges in a fountain of gore?
- **Pact with the Elder God**: If a character made the sacrifice in area 8: Oathspeaker's Sanctum, they have entered into a dark pact with the god of the Drowned Fane. The exact details of this pact are left up to you to design. Consider allowing the character to enjoy some small supernatural benefit right away (they find a gold coin under their pillow every morning, or can cast a new cantrip but only at night and so on), as this only builds a sense of dread regarding the nature of their obligations.
- **A Little Light Reading**: If the characters recovered *Earth Shall be Riven* from the Drowned Fane, any scholar worth his salt can confirm its authenticity. Vieno Rekola and Joonas Mattila (see "Adventure Hooks") are both keen to obtain the book for their own reasons, as are many less savoury characters. Regardless of whether the characters choose to keep or destroy the book, they will likely gain unwanted attention from the cult of Braal.
- **The Xanthous Emperor Cometh**: Who or what is the Xanthous Emperor? If anyone can answer such a question, they are the Sagacious Masters of the Eldritch Nexus, who reside in the Black Tower. If the characters travel to visit the Sagacious Masters, the Xanthous Emperor is revealed as the embodiment of Hastur, a forgotten deity from Ashlar's primordial past. Hastur's terrible return was prophesied aeons ago. And now, the stars are right…

Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

The past rarely stays buried forever, and forgotten and forbidden things have a way of finding their way back into the light. Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands, and its crumbling remnants yet linger in the endless dark below the town. A wealthy merchant, carrying out repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, has made a curious discovery—a rubble-choked set of stairs leading to who knows what subterranean depth—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies below…



Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage is a sequel to *Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage*. However, it can also be run as a standalone adventure if you so desire.

Dungeon Background

Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands. Much of the area's ancient history has been forgotten –lost to time and memory. However, some buried or lost fragments of the past yet remain and await rediscovery.

Ancient History: Centuries ago, a wizard raised a tower and therein conducted blasphemous and terrible research. The wizard engaged in even more terrible doings in the cellars below the tower—raising the dead, summoning demonic extra-planar creatures and so on. However, even the mightiest wizard will eventually succumb to the Final Enemy—death. After they departed the mortal realm, their tower—eschewed by the commonfolk—slowly crumbled and fell. Thus, finally, did the mage, their tower, and their blasphemous doings pass from the world and memory.

Recent Events: Recently, the merchant Antero Kalervo engaged a stonemason to repair a section of an old, sagging wall in his cellar. During the work, the stonemason—Matias Hirvi—removed some of the old stones to better repair the wall. Doing so, he discovered a small sealed-up chamber beyond. A cautious man who knows the local lore and rumours about Foundation Way and what might lie beneath, Matias did not enlarge the hole or enter the chamber himself. However, by the light of a flaring torch, he could make out a stone trapdoor set into the floor. For Matias, this was a problem for his employer to solve.

- **Standalone**: Instead of spying a trapdoor through the hole he made, Matias spots a rubble-choked stair leading deeper underground.
- **Sequel**: During their exploration of the Lost Cellar, the characters found a rubble-choked stair in location 8. The stair briefly ascends before descending. This is the stair detailed in location 1 in this Dungeon Backdrop.

Who is the Nameless Mage?

Essentially, the identity of the Nameless Mage is irrelevant to the immediate adventure. While the characters may be motivated to identify them and find out more about them, this information is not required to run the adventure; some things can remain a mystery. However, if you suspect the characters may pursue this matter further, you should generate details of the Nameless Mage and scatter clues to their identity throughout the Lost Cellar. Thus, the characters can pursue this matter further if they so desire. Design your own NPC or use one of those presented below:

- **Perttu Meurakas** was one of the first settlers to build their home in Dulwich. He discovered the ancient, buried settlement below the town and enthusiastically pillaged its secrets. He disappeared during a subterranean expedition into the ruined settlement.
- **Siduri Kisiga** dwelled in the locality a millennia ago. Obsessed with eternal life and the undeath, she pursued research of a diabolical nature. Eventually, she succeeded in opening a gate to the Ashen Plains—Orcus's domain—in the Abyss. Her final fate remains unknown.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the locale:

- **Ancient Parchment**: The characters have come into possession of a fragment of an ancient map that strongly suggests a lost cellar or dungeon lies under a house on Foundation Way. Fortuitously, their investigation leads them to Antero Kalervo just as Matias Hirvi reports his discovery to the wealthy merchant.
- **Cleared the Lost Cellar**: Once the characters have cleared the Lost Cellar and reported back to Antero Kalervo, he asks them to investigate the rubble-choked stair in location 8 on the Lost Cellar map.
- **Drinking Locally**: The characters are drinking locally when they hear Antero Kalervo moaning to a friend about a strange discovery in his cellar. The wealthy merchant wants to hire "specialists" to investigate but does not know anyone suitable.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. Dulwich is not the first settlement to be built on this site. Some parts of the old town are built on the rubble and ruin of a much earlier settlement.
2. It is not uncommon for the cellars of houses in the old part of town to have queer or odd architecture. Every year or so, someone discovers a hitherto unknown room, chamber or dead-end passage beneath their house.
3. Antero Kalervo is a wealthy, successful merchant. He could move to a better part of town, but his family has lived in the house on Foundation Way for generations.
4. Antero Kalervo presents himself as a successful merchant dealing in a variety of things. While he has had success as a merchant, he also has connections with some of Dulwich's criminal gangs.
5. A huge network of ancient tunnels and deeper caverns lies below Dulwich.

6. The old houses on Foundation Way are not safe—sometimes they collapse or subside.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The House on Foundation Way

Antero Kalervo's house stands on Foundation Way.

- **Foundation Way**: Built upon the ruins of a former settlement, the homes here feature deep cellars. Many are rumoured to connect to the ancient tunnels below Dulwich, making the homes useful for criminal gangs and those wishing to move about undetected.

Antero's family have dwelled on Foundation Way for generations. Although Antero could afford to move to a nicer part of Dulwich, he chooses to remain in the family home. The home features two levels of cellars; currently, Antero does not use the lower level; he plans to, though, and hence engaged Matias to do some repairs.

Antero Kalervo

Antero Kalervo (LN middle-aged male human) dwells on Foundation Way. He is a successful merchant who chooses to dwell in his old family home.

His hair peppered with grey, this tall and slim middle-aged man wears fine robes and boots. A friendly smile creases his time-worn face.

This successful merchant wants to make use of the deep cellar to store certain items of stock and so on. (He has a wide range of interests and buys and sells many things.) He can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Antero is a skilled merchant. He is growing more uncomfortable with each passing day at the tensions between the town's ruler, Wido Gall, and the merchant class. He is a family man dedicated to the community.

Mannerisms: Straight-talking but a little excitable at times. Antero speaks quickly—sometimes, his words all blur into one.

Background: Antero was born in Dulwich and loves the town and its people.

Connections: Antero is an upstanding member of the community and is rarely troubled by exciting matters. However, he has several connections with other merchants the characters may find useful. Design these as appropriate for your campaign; if you have set this adventure in Dulwich, Antero knows Bernhard "Badger" Ilmatoivia, owner of Badger's (location 15 on the Dulwich map).

Matias Hirvi

Matias Hirvi (N middle-aged male human) is a skilled stonemason. He has been hired by Antero Kalervo to carry out some repairs to the merchant's cellar.

Stocky and clad in much-worn leather work clothes, this bald, pot-bellied middle-aged man has a slightly hunched back but is obviously still strong.

Matias was born in Dulwich and knows much about the town. He knows about Foundation Way's history and can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Brusque and taciturn, Matias is not the most chatty of folk. He enjoys a drink and often suffers its aftereffects in the mornings. People who know the stonemason's ways often wait until the afternoon to discuss important matters with him.

Mannerisms: Why use many words when fewer will do? Matias is not rude, but he speaks slowly and considers everything he says carefully. "Better to trip with the feet than the tongue" is his motto.

Background: Matias was born and raised in Dulwich. He has worked on many of the town's more impressive buildings.

Connections: In demand as a master stonemason, Matias knows several important people throughout the town; one of those people is in need of a brave band of adventurers.

The Cellar

Two levels of cellars lie below Antero's family home. A single staircase links the two levels with the house proper.

The Upper Level: The family uses the upper level of cellars for storage; it contains old furniture, trunks of clothes, the personal effects of deceased family members, and so on. There is nothing of value or interest here.

The Lower Level: An old wooden door, swollen with age, lies at the bottom of the stairs. Beyond lies a small labyrinthine of rooms. The rooms are empty, and even a cursory glance shows they are little visited—dust and grime lie thickly on the floor. The architecture and construction of the lower level are evidently much older than the level above. Here, small drifts of crumbled mortar lie against walls, some stones have come loose, and the floor is of uneven flags.

Matias's tools are scattered across the floor of a small room in a distant part of the cellar. Beyond, a pile of stones lies at the base of a sagging wall.

Charismatic characters can convince Matias to break down the rest of the false wall with honeyed words of threats of violence. Such characters must be present while the stonemason works, however.

- When the characters are ready to proceed, refer to "Rubble-Choked Stairs" (location 1).

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations:

1. **Rubble-Choked Stairs**: Until cleared, these rubble-choked stairs are impassable (without magic).
2. **The Echoes**: The gurgle of running water from the north fills the air in this part-ruined chamber.
3. **Archmage's Chapel**: This small chapel is dedicated to Morden, the greater god of magic and knowledge.
4. **The Failed Circle**: The Nameless Mage once held a bound creature here, but it escaped years ago.
5. **The Lightless Stream**: A broad stream cuts the dungeon in two.
6. **Three Ways**: Guards once dwelled here, but they are long gone.
7. **Unstable Chamber**: The Lightless Stream is still undercutting this chamber, and it is in imminent danger of further collapse.
8. **The Processional**: Four ornate stone statues stand endless vigil here.
9. **Chamber of Inescapable Summons**: An ornate (and potent) summoning circle dominates the centre of this magic-lit chamber.

Unkeyed Areas

Some locations in the Forbidden Halls remain unkeyed. Such areas could contain rotting furniture, the remains of frescos and so on. Use the details in "Dungeon Dressing" and "Things to Find" to bring the areas to life.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills the Forbidden Halls.

Decrepitude & Decay: No living creature has been in the Forbidden Halls for centuries; thus, dust and grime lie thickly everywhere. The air smells musty and stale.

Ceilings: The Forbidden Hall's vaulted dressed-stone ceilings are eight feet high in corridors and ten feet high in rooms. The ceilings have begun to sag in places, but no collapses have yet occurred (except those caused by the Lightless Stream [location 5]).

Walls: The Forbidden Hall's walls are of dressed stone, but in many places, the stonework is in poor repair. Rusty iron torch sconces hang from the walls spaced to provide bright light in chambers but only dim light in passageways.

Floors: The floors throughout the Forbidden Hall are of stone pavers. In some places, the pavers have shifted to create areas of difficult terrain.

Old Wooden Doors: Old, swollen wooden doors ward some of the Forbidden Hall's various chambers.

Dungeon Dressing

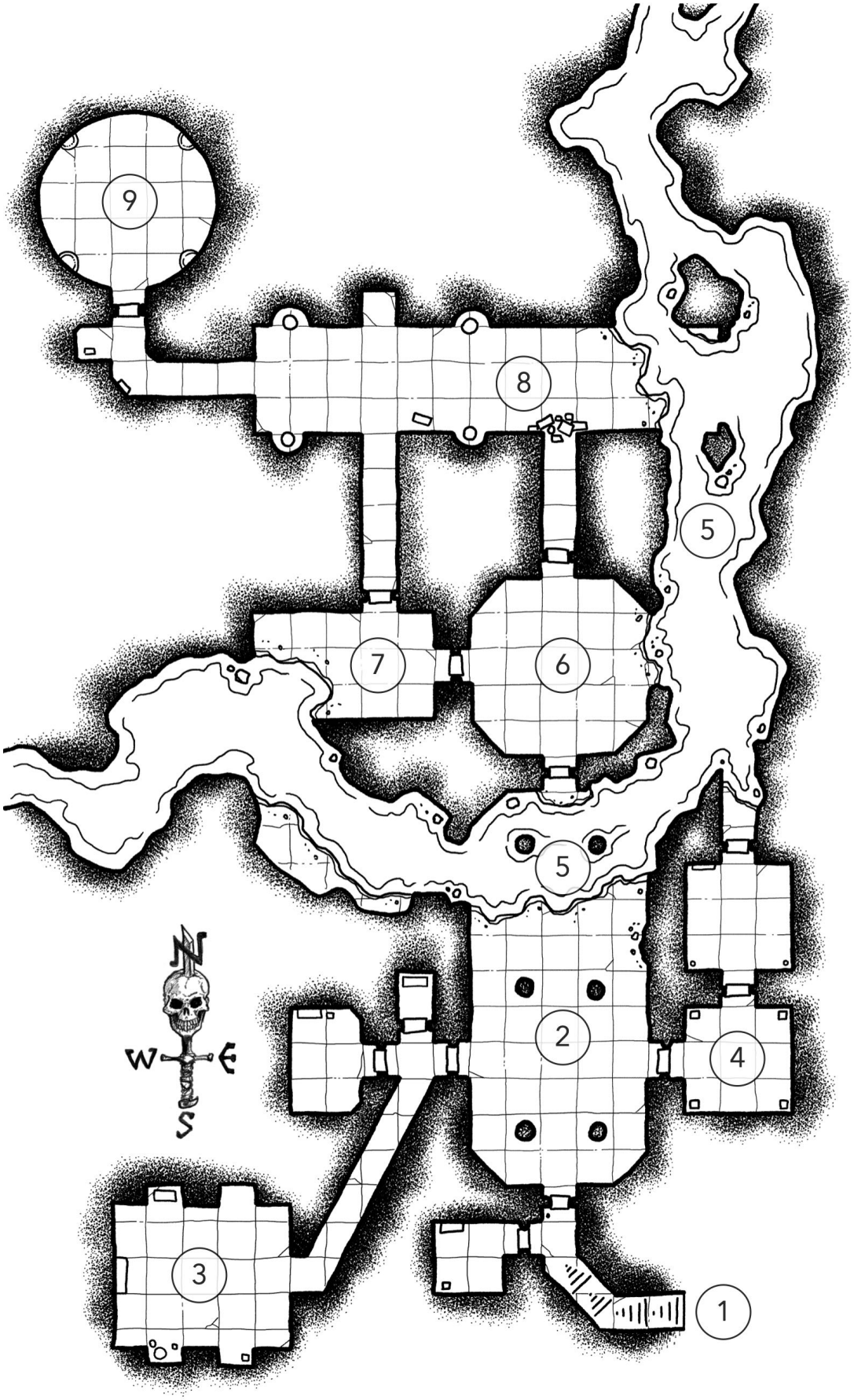
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Deep cracks, surrounded by wisps of white mould, riddle the ceiling or floor.
2. Faint marks in the dust are suggestive of old, long-left tracks. (This entry could foreshadow an upcoming encounter or could simply highlight the great age and abandonment of the place.)
3. Ancient, dusty cobwebs hang from the ceiling; tiny silvery cocoons hang within.
4. Faint scratches on the wall could be the claw marks of a creature or the result of desultory graffitiing.
5. The distant sound of running water reaches the characters' ears. This sound comes from the direction of location 5. (You could add the loud sound of splashing to this entry to foreshadow an encounter or to grow the characters' sense of paranoia.)
6. Small straw-like growths of thin stone hang from the ceiling. (To someone versed in subterranean matters, such as a dwarf, these growths hint at the great age of the Forbidden Halls.)
7. Rubble fallen from the ceiling or floor creates a small area of difficult terrain.
8. Rotting, mould-covered furniture leans drunkenly against a wall. It collapses if disturbed, releasing a cloud of (harmless) mould spores. Roll on "Things to Find" to add more detail to the area.
9. A swath of white mould speckled with green dots grows over the floor. A character wise in nature lore knows the mould is harmless.
10. Deep cracks pierce the ceiling, which noticeably sags in the surrounding area. Water drips through the cracks into a muddy puddle.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. The shards of a rusty dagger lie on the floor.
2. A scrap of black fabric is snagged on a piece of rubble.
3. A trail of dusty powdered silver wends its way northward.
4. The sigil for danger is scratched into a wall.
5. A dark water stain on the ceiling is (worryingly) shaped roughly like a spread-eagle humanoid's body.
6. The middle finger on a shattered skeletal hand yet wears a tarnished silver ring set with a fleck of red gemstone (a ruby); the whole is worth 25 gp.
7. A small carven gargoyle heads leers down into the area from high up on a wall.
8. The shards of a broken glass potion vial lie on the floor.
9. The rotting, mouldy remains of a component pouch lie against a wall. The pouch holds a pearl (worth 100 gp).
10. A dark shadow moves at the extent of the party's light.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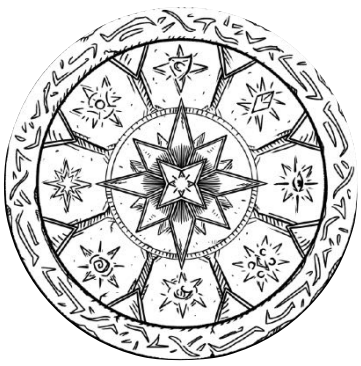
GM Notes

***Setting**: Depending on your design for this Dungeon Backdrop the rubble-choked stairs in location 1 could connect to the Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage (location 8) or they could connect to wherever you decide to place the dungeon. Wherever you place the stairs, the characters must have a reason to clear them.*

This is an excellent place to place a magical item or handout to encourage the party to investigate the Nameless Mage.



1: Rubble-Choked Stairs

Until cleared, these rubble-choked stairs are impassable (without magic).

Rubble chokes the top of a narrow set of stairs that descend deeper underground.

Rubble: A great collapse of rubble blocks the stairs leading to the Forbidden Halls. Initially, the rubble is impassable without the use of magic such as *gaseous form*. It takes three hours of labour to clear the stairs sufficiently to enable access to the Forbidden Halls.

Steep Stone Steps: These precipitous, rubble-strewn stone steps are difficult terrain.

2: The Echoes

The gurgle of running water from the north fills the air in this part-ruined chamber.

Six large stone pillars hold aloft the lofty ceiling of this long chamber. To the north, the floor has collapsed into a stream—its merry gurgle fills the air.

Floor: The chamber used to be longer, but the Lightless Stream (location 5) undercut the northern part of the area. Within five feet of the stream, the flagstone floor is buckled and uneven. Such areas are difficult terrain.

Stone Pillars. Wide stone pillars hold the ceiling aloft. The pillars are unadorned and provide minor cover to characters in adjacent squares.

3: Archmage's Chapel

This small chapel is dedicated to Morden, the greater god of magic and knowledge.

Peeling black paint covers the opposite wall; eight faded yellowing stars dot the wall. A stone altar stands in front of the painted wall.

Faded Mural: This mural shows eight stars set in an arched pattern. The stars were once a brilliant, vibrant yellow and stood out vividly against the black wall. The altar stands in the centre of the arch.

Altar: This simple stone altar stands in the centre of an arch of painted stars. (See "Faded Mural" above.) A single large star decorates the front of the altar. A secret compartment pierces the altar. Pushing firmly on the cavern star causes the top of the altar to "pop" open.

Reliquary: This stout, iron-banded chest holds items sacred to the worship of Morden. These items include a short staff topped by Morden's holy symbol, three vials of holy water and sundry other mouldering items including an altar cloth, the remains of a book and so on.

4: The Failed Circle

The Nameless Mage once held a bound creature here, but it escaped years ago.

A circle of silver runes pierces the floor at the centre of this chamber. An iron brazier stands in each of the room's corners.

Iron Braziers: An iron brazier stands in each of this room's four corners. Each holds a small amount of coal. A command word—*Erazil*—now long lost cause the braziers to burst into heatless flame.

Effaced Magic Circle: The remains of a five-foot-wide summoning circle fill the centre of the room. Picked out in silver, this deeply hewn magic circle would yet be active if a small chunk of fallen ceiling had not dented a part of its complicated runic design.

A wizard, or other character steeped in summoning lore, examining the circle determines the circle is designed to keep something in but that the damage wrought by the fallen rubble has rendered it inactive. The silver used to craft the summoning circle can be removed with 30 minutes of careful work and is worth 50 gp.

5: The Lightless Stream

A broad stream cuts the dungeon in two.

A broad stream cuts through the endless dark.

The Stream: The stream flows from the north and is between five and ten feet deep. Rubble covers the stream's bed Objects or creatures in the water move westwards at a rate of ten feet per round.

Cavern Ceiling: The natural and uneven cavern ceiling undulates between 12 and 15 feet above the stream.

Floor: Within five feet of the stream, the flagstone floor is buckled and uneven. Such areas are difficult terrain.

Cave Walls: The cavern walls are of rough, natural stone.

6: Three Ways

Guards once dwelled here, but they are long gone.

Three doors pierce the walls of this fresco-decorated chamber. To the east, the floor and wall have fallen away into the stream, whose constant gurgle fills the air.

Floor: Within five feet of the stream, the flagstone floor is buckled and uneven. Such areas are difficult terrain.

Faded Fresco: A faded fresco covers the whole north wall and depicts the crumbled ruin of a town. The town fills a cavern, and some of it has slid down the side of a chasm. The bottom of the chasm is not depicted. (This fresco depicts something the Nameless Mage found much deeper underground; the characters may one day discover it, too).

Rubbish and Trash: A rotting, black-mould-covered table and a bench lie in roughly the centre of the room.

GM Notes

***The Stream**: The Lightless Stream (location 5) is both an impediment to and opportunity for adventure. To explore the dungeon further, the characters must cross the stream. However, after the characters have explored the dungeon they may decide to explore the stream's course further. You can make this as easy or hard as you choose. The stream could narrow, a waterfall upstream or down could complicate progress and so on. Other small cave systems of a much larger dungeon could lie in either direction.*

GM Notes

***Splintered Wood**: Depending on your design, this could be the remains of a large piece of furniture or the remnant of a raft or rowboat. If you choose the latter, it strongly suggests that opportunities for adventure may lie either up- or downstream.*

***Guardians Against Disaster**: These stone statues could be nothing more than decoration. Alternatively, they could be a defence against whatever is trapped in location 9 escaping. Their forms should hint at their powers. They could activate in a variety of instances—when attacked, when someone tries to pry loose their eyes or when whatever is confined in the summoning circle in location 9 gets loose.*

7: Unstable Chamber

The Lightless Stream is still undercutting this chamber, and it is in imminent danger of further collapse.

The southwestern part of this chamber has collapsed into the stream. A pile of wood lies just above the gurgling watercourse's water level.

Floor: The chamber used to be longer, but the Lightless Stream (location 5) undercut the western part of the area. Within five feet of the stream, the flagstone floor is buckled and uneven. Such areas are difficult terrain.

- **Unstable**: A cursory investigation notes deep cracks in the western part of the floor. A subsequent close examination reveals the danger of imminent collapse.

Splintered Wood: A pile of splintered wood lies at the edge of the stream just above the current water level.

8: The Processional

Four ornate stone statues stand endless vigil here.

Faded and peeling frescoes decorate the yellowing, whitewashed walls of this wide passage. Four hideous statues depicting otherworldly beasts fill shallow wall niches. The sound of running water comes from the east.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 20 feet high and slightly arched over the centre of the passageway.

Floor: The chamber used to be longer, but the Lightless Stream (location 5) undercut the eastern part of the area. Within five feet of the stream, the flagstone floor is buckled and uneven. Such areas are difficult terrain.

Faded Frescoes: Beautiful, colourful frescoes depicting a cowled wizard engaged in mighty enchantments once decorated these whitewashed walls. However, time has worked upon them, and now only faded scraps and remnants hint at what once was.

- **Cavern Tower**: This fresco depicts the subterranean scene of the cowled wizard in front of a crumbling stone tower that backs onto a cavern wall.
- **Catacombs**: This fresco depicts the wizard enacting some kind of hideous ritual amid a bone-choked ossuary.

Stone Statues: Depicting terrible and ferocious otherworldly creatures of hideous aspect, these statues stand on three-foot-high stone plinths. Black stones—an onyx worth 25 gp—fill the statues' eye sockets.

Stone Blocks: A pile of stones part-blocks one of the passages leading to this chamber. The blocks are haphazardly piled. (They were reclaimed from the eastern collapse and are obvious paving stones and a few blocks of wall.)

9: Chamber of Inescapable Summons

An ornate (and potent) summoning circle dominates the centre of this magic-lit chamber.

A glimmering circle of silver fills the centre of the chamber. Four iron torches—blazing with magical light—set opposite one another jut from the chamber's wall. Frescos of hideous, otherworldly creatures decorate the walls.

Stone Door: A heavy stone door wards access to this chamber. It opens outwards and is not locked.

Summoning Circle: Picked out in silver, this deeply hewn summoning circle remains active. A wizard, or other character steeped in summoning lore, examining the circle determines the circle is designed to keep something in. The silver used to craft the summoning circle can be removed with one hour's careful work and is worth 100 gp. Damaging the circle ends its enchantment.

Magical Torches: Four iron torches—their heads wrought to depict a star—blaze with enchanted, heatless light. Each juts from a plain iron sconce set at shoulder height. Their light fills the room.

Frescos: Although time-worn and faded, the frescos decorating three walls of this chamber are still disturbing in their otherworldly depictions. A different fresco adorns the north, west and east wall; the south wall is unadorned.

- **North Wall**: This fresco depicts Dagon (demon lord of deformity, the sea and sea monsters) as a hideous fish/octopus hybrid with a black scaly body, numerous tentacles and a fang-filled maw.
- **West Wall**: This fresco depicts Amon-Pyr (troglodyte demon lord of darkness, evil, madness and water) as a massively muscled troglodyte with curled horns protruding from his head and a mass of sinuous tentacles curling forth from his back.
- **East Wall**: This fresco depicts Bibeldoop (demon slime of hunger and greed) as an amorphous slime creature dotted with various ridges and humps studded within which could be heads, appendages and so on.

A character examining the frescoes who is steeped in demon lore can identify each creature.

GM Notes

***Magic Trap**: This is a good place for a magic trap. Alternatively, a magic enchantment could make this door hard to open.*

***What's in the Circle?** Does something yet languish in the summoning circle? Trapped here for long years by the Nameless Mage's powerful magics it hungers for release. The creature will use trickery or negotiation to escape. Alternatively, the summoned thing could be lurking invisibly in the circle hoping that someone will damage the runes and free it.*

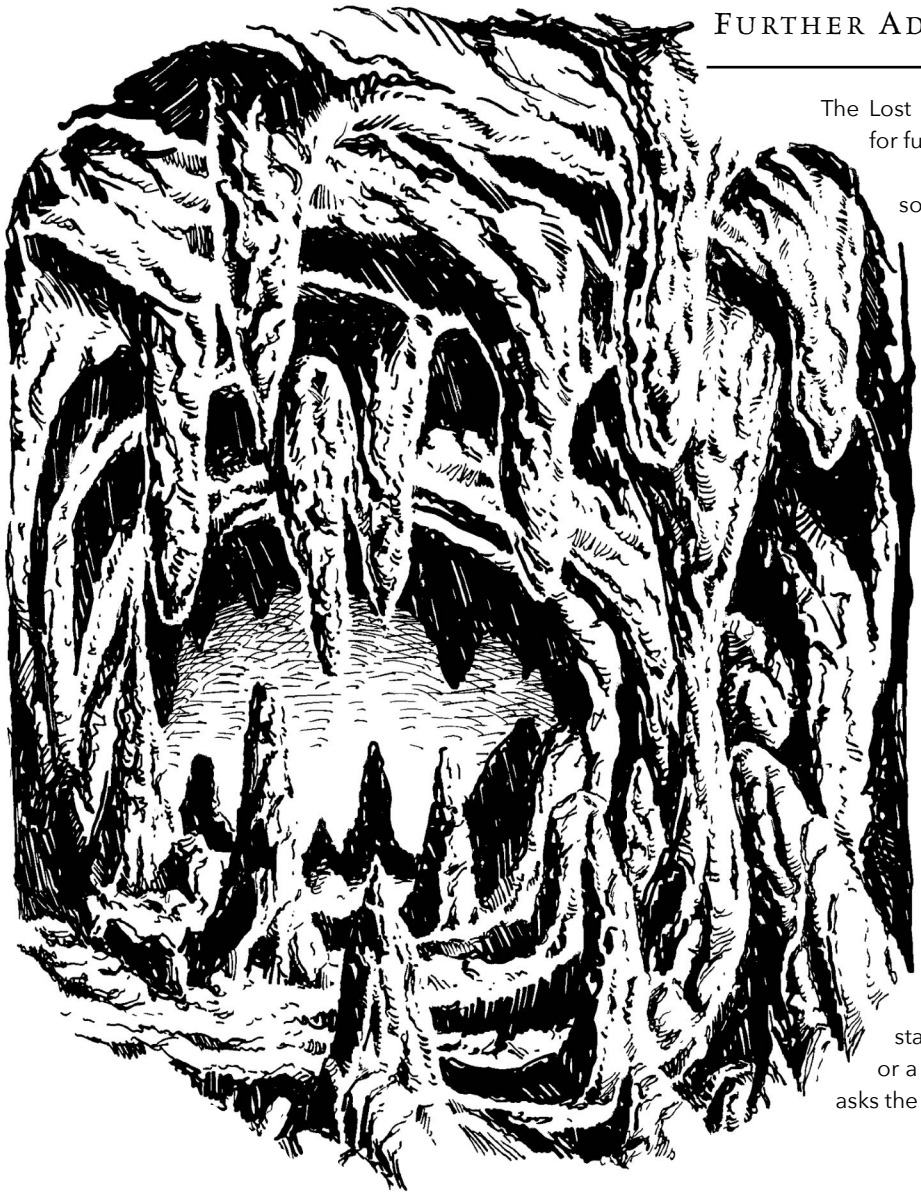
Aftermath

Once the characters have cleared the rubble-choked stairs leading to the Forbidden Hall and investigated the small complex below Antero Kalervo's cellar, they can report back to their employer.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Ancient Parchment**: If the characters are intrigued by the Forbidden Halls, they may seek out more ancient documents regarding the time before Dulwich was founded. A local sage such as Saini Alanen (location 9 on the Dulwich map) could assist them with their research. Through such a person, the characters could discover the strong possibility that many opportunities for adventure, including a network of deeper tunnels and catacombs discovered when the foundations for the Lawgiver's Hall (location 2 on the Dulwich map) were sunk, lurk under Dulwich's streets. Such tunnels can be reached through the cathedral's catacombs, but Conn's clergy tightly control such access. Convincing the clergy to give the characters access could be an adventure of its own! Alternatively, the characters might break into the catacombs—all in the name of adventure, of course.
- **Cleared the Lost Cellar and Drinking Locally**: Once the characters have cleared the Forbidden Halls, they report back to their employer, Antero Kalervo, and get paid. Antero is, of course, delighted the characters have cleared the dungeon—as anything within could conceivably escape into his house. Depending on your design, Antero may block up the tunnels leading to the Lost Cellar and the Forbidden Halls, or he may decide to put them to some use.



Further Adventures

The Lost Cellar and the Forbidden Halls are ripe for further adventures under Dulwich.

Ancient Secret Door: A secret door somewhere in the Forbidden Halls could lead to yet another dungeon network. Alternatively, it could lead to another deep cellar—this one claimed by one of Dulwich's many thief-gangs. The thieves will not be best pleased the characters' discovered their hideout!

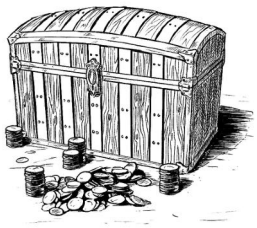
Deeper Tunnels: Deeper and more extensive tunnels could lurk either up or downstream along the Lightless Stream (location 5). To reach these, the characters will have to wade, swim or purchase a small craft—a rowboat, raft or perhaps some canoes. The characters will need Antero Kalervo's permission to explore these tunnels, as the only way to access them is through his cellar! The canny merchant might demand a share of any treasures recovered or may simply ask a favour or two of the characters in the future.

Foul Elder Taint: Some foul ancient or otherworldly taint could lurk in the tunnels below Antero Kalervo's house, and the characters' explorations have awoken and released it. Strange things start to happen in the locality, and Antero, or a concerned family member or neighbour, asks the characters to investigate.

Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser

Coastal

Hidden for long years and wreathed in legendry, the Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser ever looms large in treasure-seeker's dreams. Variously described as a pirate or adventurer in myths and folklore, Gilak Urser is universally thought to have been fabulously wealthy. His hidden lair—and his treasure hoard—has never been found…until now…



Dungeon Background

The Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser has long lurked at the centre of a web of legends, rumours and folklore. The Hidden Redoubt is said to contain much treasure, but no one has ever boasted about finding and plundering the place; thus, it remains a "site of special interest" to adventurers keen to burnish their own legends and fill their own hoards.

Who Was Gilak Urser?

Before using this Dungeon Backdrop, you must decide who Gilak Urser was. Whoever he was, legends of his wealth and success have endured and grown over the years; many adventurers and treasure hunters yet search for clues to the Hidden Redoubt's location.

Pick the backstory below that best suits your campaign, or design your own.

An Adventurer

Gilak Urser was an adventurer who made too many enemies. A powerful force for good, Gilak fought and slew many evil foes in his long and storied career. He slew pirate captains, bandit lords, savage humanoid chieftains, foul necromancers and evil high priests. His success, however, grew too great, and evil's minions conspired to bring about his doom. Learning of the plot, he fled to a remote place and built his Hidden Redoubt. Gilak was shortly thereafter slain in a cunningly-wrought ambush, and the Hidden Redoubt's location was lost.

A Mysterious Traveller

Gilak Urser was a mysterious traveller from an impossibly distant land. Some legends say he was an exile, while others describe him as a wandering prince or sage of peerless knowledge. Whatever the truth of the matter, all the legends describe his great wealth. Gilak Unser built the Hidden Redoubt to—depending on which legend you believe—either hide from his enemies or hide his great treasures from those who would take them for their own. Inevitably, Gilak was shortly thereafter slain, and the Hidden Redoubt's location was lost.

A Pirate

Gilak Urser was a pirate who made too many enemies. As a successful captain, he took many ships and stole much loot. However, he grew paranoid and believed many of his crew were plotting against him. Taking only those he knew were loyal, he built the Hidden Redoubt to protect his treasure. Inevitably, Gilak was shortly thereafter slain, and the Hidden Redoubt's location was lost.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the dungeon:

- **Chased**: The characters are aboard a ship being chased by pirates, marauders or some other enemy. The captain of the characters' vessel eludes the pursuers by concealing their ship in a hidden cove as dusk falls. As dawn breaks, the rising sun highlights the mouth of an intriguing sea cave piercing the cove's vertiginous cliffs.
- **Gilak Urser Manifests**: Through a circuitous route, one of the characters is distantly related to the long-dead Gilak Urser. When the character comes within five miles of the Hidden Redoubt, Gilak's ghost senses their presence and manifests before them. The ghost reveals who they are and the location of his hidden Redoubt.
- **Treasure Map**: The characters find a treasure map that shows the location of the Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser. Research leads the characters to discover Gilak Urser's identity and his legendary wealth. If the characters are not discrete when they investigate the map, rival groups of adventurers might learn of their discovery. Some such groups try to buy the map; others attempt to steal it.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can try to gather information (which may or may not be true based on your setup) about the Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp in drinks, bribes and so on. Use this list to determine what the character learns.

1. Gilak Urser was a powerful champion of good. Powerful evil folk banded together to slay him. While they slew him, his treasure—secured in his Hidden Redoubt—was never found. (Potential false rumour).
2. Gilak Urser was a wealthy pirate lord. He was eventually slain by his perfidious crew, but not before he secured his treasure in his Hidden Redoubt. (Potential false rumour).
3. Gilak Urser came from a distant land. Some say he was a prince or a sage; other stories say he was an exiled prince fleeing his enemies. All the stories agree that he was fabulously wealthy and that he built a Hidden Redoubt to protect his hoard. (Potential false rumour).
4. Gilak Urser's Hidden Redoubt—and the legendary treasure it is said to protect—has never been found.
5. Gilak Urser's Hidden Redoubt is cursed. No one who has found the place has survived to tell of it. (False rumour).
6. Many folk still seek Gilak Urser's Hidden Redoubt and his greatest treasure: a magic tapestry that worked like a *crystal ball* to show images of elsewhere.

The Surrounding Locality

The Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser pierces the cliffs of a hidden cove on an isolated and remote stretch of a storm-battered coast. There is no easy way to reach the cove from above. The cliffs are vertiginous, slick and high; characters attempting to climb down risk a potentially fatal fall. Seabirds nest on the cliffs and hunt the surrounding waters for fish.

A sea cave at the base of the cliffs provides access to the Hidden Redoubt. The cave entrance is wide but only about 15 feet high; thus, large boats cannot sail within. Characters must therefore secure several rowboats, craft a raft from driftwood, swim or use magic to reach the redoubt.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Clumps of glistening greenish seaweed undulate on the ocean swell. Tiny crabs cling to some of the clumps.
2. Seabirds soar and swoop in the air above. Nearby other birds bob up and down on the ocean swell. The birds in the air suddenly scatter as an osprey swoops down to pluck a fish from the sea.
3. A sea lion swims up alongside the characters' boat. If the characters are in a rowboat or similar craft, it nudges an oar and acts in a playful fashion. It swims away if attacked. This could be nothing more than an inquisitive animal. Alternatively, it could be a druid in animal form, seeing what the characters are up to.
4. Seaweed and barnacles grow voraciously over the cavern wall and show the extent of high tide. They glisten in the party's lights.
5. Sunlight breaks through the clouds to shimmer on a small part of the sea. The shimmering light highlights the gloom shrouding the rest of the locality.
6. Dark clouds, driven by a strong wind, scud across the horizon, bringing heavy rain. The swell near the sea cave increases considerably, making a safe and careful approach much harder.
7. A jagged hunk of rock juts just above the swell. A half-dozen seabirds perch upon the rock. At the characters' approach, the birds cry loudly and take flight.
8. A lone figure stands atop the cliffs overlooking the cove. The person watches the characters for a while before disappearing from sight.
9. A ship under full sail slides across the horizon. It does not approach the characters' vessel, but its crew might note the position of the characters' ship and wonder what they are doing in such a remote spot.
10. A shark's fin cuts through the water a hundred yards from the characters' vessel. Quickly four more fins appear. A shiver of sharks has come to investigate the party's boat. The sharks may be hungry or could just be curious.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. An abandoned rowboat floats in the surf a few dozen yards from shore. The boat's oars lie at the bottom of the boat next to an empty bag and waterskin.
2. Lashed to a shard of a spar, this bloated corpse of a sailor has obviously been in the water for days or weeks.
3. Just above the high tide mark, a small rock shelf holds several mostly burnt candles, a slender pile of stacked stones and a faded scrap of water-damaged parchment.
4. The lid of an old sea chest just emerges from the wet sand of the beach. Unfortunately, the rest of the chest (and all its contents) are missing—as investigating characters quickly discover.
5. A cresting wave sigil has been crudely cut into a section of flat stone. This is a representation of Serat's (neutral greater goddess of the sea, storms and voyages; the Mistress of Storms, the Uncaring) holy symbol.
6. A fragment of ship's hull floats amid the surf. The ship's name—*Hydra*—is still visible, although the black paint has faded from long immersion in salt water.
7. A skeleton lies on the seabed; chains around the unfortunate's legs and arms are, in turn, wrapped around a barnacle-covered sea chest.
8. A smattering of flotsam and jetsam bob in the swell and litter the narrow exposed beaches below the coast's vertiginous cliffs. None is of any value.
9. A sack either floats in the surf or lies tangled amid seaweed at the high tide line. The sack is mostly empty, but a good search reveals a *potion of water breathing* tangled in its folds.
10. The water is clear and flat. As the party enter the cove and approach the sea cave, a character notices the wreck of a ship lying in about ten feet of water below the keel of their vessel. What treasures may lie amid the wreck?

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **The Three Watchers**: Three ship figureheads ward this debris-strewn sandy beach.
2. **Outer Cave**: This natural cave provides a good vantage point over the Three Watchers (location 1).
3. **Inner Cave**: This cave is only accessible from location 2. Unless you design otherwise, it is a dead end.
4. **Guard Chamber**: Here, the Hidden Redoubt's guards once watched over their master's home.
5. **Barracks**: Here dwelt the Hidden Redoubt's guards. Only Gilak Urser's most trusted followers were left to watch over the redoubt.
6. **Treasury of Gilak Urser**: In this chamber, Gilak kept the bulk of his fortune.
7. **Gilak Urser's Chamber**: Herein dwelt Gilak Urser when he was at his Hidden Redoubt. The room contains his fabled *tapestry of farseeing*.
8. **The Well**: Here lies the Hidden Redoubt's only source of freshwater. A cave below could lead to further caverns.
9. **Beach Ward**: The arrow slits here provide an excellent position from which to shoot at intruders. However, only one of the four overlooks the beach in location 1.

Generic Dungeon Features

The general condition of the Hidden Redoubt depends on whether it is currently occupied by living residents. If only undead lurk within, describe the dungeon as dirty and dusty; many of its features—furniture, doors and so on—will be in a sorry state.

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

Ceilings: The ceilings are roughly 12 ft. high.

Stone Walls: The walls are of dressed stone and are in fair condition. In places, moss and lichens grow on the walls, and water oozes through the mortar. In corridors, torch sconces hang from the walls at 20-foot intervals.

Flagstone Floor: The floor's flagstones have started to shift and move under time's remorseless influence, but generally, they do not inhibit movement.

Wooden Door: Stout wooden doors ward the Hidden Redoubt's various rooms. Doors open into the room beyond or away from the main entrance to the redoubt if they do not open into a room.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

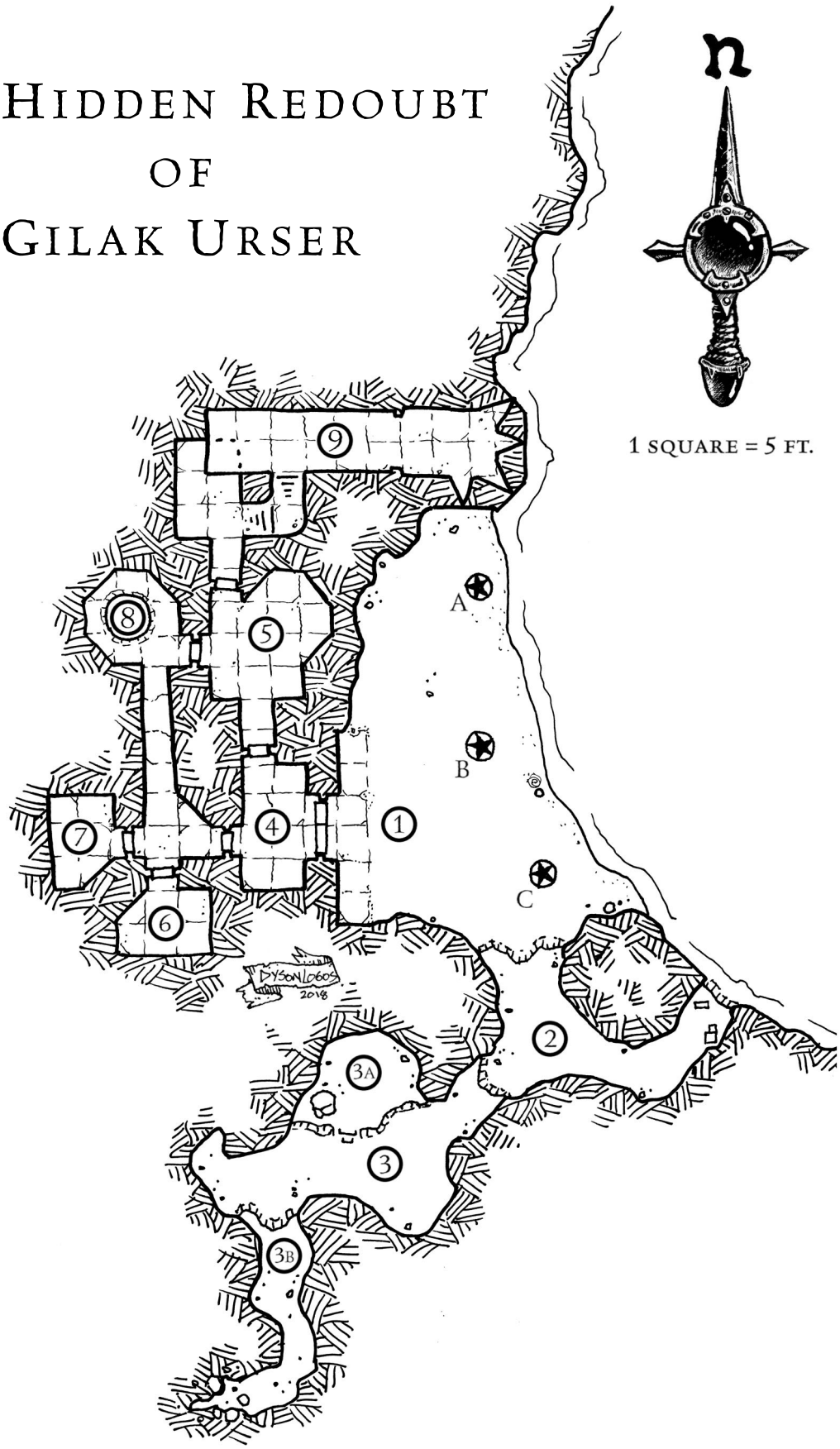
1. A dark stain on the wall, floor or ceiling shows where water oozes through cracks in the rock. A small puddle lies below the crack.
2. Faint scratches on the wall show where someone has tried—and failed—to leave their mark on the redoubt.
3. The rotting remains of an old sack lie bunched up on the floor in a corner.
4. The heavy tang of salt and the sound of the surf caressing the beach in location 1 fills the air.
5. A fishing net has been neatly folded up and shoved into a large sack.
6. Water oozes through a crack in the ceiling and tracks down a wall. The paving stone beneath the leak—covered by a small puddle—is slightly sunken.
7. A torch sconce hangs drunkenly from its fitting in one wall; it appears someone has tried to pry it loose.
8. One of the paving stones is loose and noticeably shifts when stood on. Sadly, no treasure lies beneath.
9. Cobwebs festoon the ceiling; a few tiny spiders scuttle about within. There are not enough spiders to form a swarm, although one of the creatures might fall onto a character's head as they pass by.
10. Graffiti—the names of several of the redoubt's garrison—are carved into a nearby door. Dates also show when the names were carved.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. This whalebone has been painstakingly carved into the likeness of a sailing ship. It is exquisite (and fragile).
2. This mouldering pouch holds 3 sp, 4 gp and a small opaque white stone—a pearl worth 50 gp.
3. A platinum coin—covered in dust and grime—lies forgotten in a hollow on the floor.
4. A faded map of the surrounding coastline fills an old water-stained leather scroll case. The map might show hidden coves, secret anchorages, sea caves and so on.
5. A folded-up piece of parchment has been hidden in a torch sconce. The faded writing on its reads, "Beware the Eldritch Tapestry".
6. A carved one-foot length of driftwood has been shaped into the form of a graceful, leaping dolphin. A character making a successful find secret doors roll detects a small hidden compartment in the wood. Sliding back the cover reveals five tightly-packed platinum coins.
7. A scroll case contains a map of the immediate area and shows several other coves and a few small islets. One such locale is circled in different colour ink.
8. This long, thin dagger fills a supple black leather scabbard. Silver thread sewn into a wave-like pattern decorates the scabbard. A thin, matching leather belt is wrapped around the scabbard.
9. Rolled up and shoved in a sack, this deeply cowled voluminous, waterproof sealskin cloak is heavy but perfect for enduring inclement weather.
10. This coil of 100-foot-long rope is light, supple and able to bear twice the weight of a normal rope. It is in excellent condition despite its age.

The Hidden Redoubt of Gilak Urser



GM Notes

***Trap**! Paranoid characters may think that the three figureheads in location 1 are animate guardians set there to protect the Hidden Redoubt. They could be right.*

***Barred Doors**: The double doors in location 1 may, or may not, be barred depending on your setup. If they are barred, characters lacking the requisite magic may fail to get into the dungeon.*

1: The Three Watchers

Three ship figureheads ward this debris-strewn sandy beach.

Three ship figureheads jut from this sandy, seaweed-littered beach. A rocky escarpment rises to the south, while to the west, double doors stand atop a single step of dressed stone.

Illumination: Dim light filtering in from outside illuminates the sandy beach.

Sandy Beach: The sandy beach rises gently toward the doors to the west. Scattered clumps of seaweed, pieces of driftwood and other odds and ends litter the beach. When the tide is high, the water caresses the stone step before the double doors. The stone steps stand about three-foot above low tide level.

Figureheads: Three ship's figureheads stand on the beach watching out to sea. A seaweed skirt grows over the bottom half of each statue.

- **Figurehead A**: This figurehead depicts a winged warrior woman holding a sword aloft above her head. She has a fierce expression on her face.
- **Figurehead B**: Carved to look like a winged snarling demon, this figurehead has long arms that end in hands tipped with curved claws. This figurehead is blackened with age.
- **Figurehead C**: This figurehead is carved into the likeness of a slender sea serpent. The serpent's fang-filled mouth is wide open. Flecks of red and green paint yet cling to the figurehead in a diamond pattern.

Arrow Slits: Arrow slits provide excellent cover and allow dim light to filter into the eastern portion of location 9. Human-sized or smaller characters may try to squeeze through an arrow slit. (Note, however, it may be impossible for particularly bulky characters or those wearing armour to squeeze through an arrow slit).

The Tide: The map depicts the tide at its lowest extent. At high tide, the sea laps against the raised flagstone step in front of the double doors.

Stone Step: This single step of dressed stone is two-foot high. Seaweed and barnacles grow on the front of the step.

Double Doors: A sturdy iron-bound set of double doors wards the Hidden Redoubt. The door has a lock, but the salt in the air has corroded it, and it is unusable.

Escarpment: A nine-foot-high escarpment leads to location 2. Characters can scale the rocky escarpment with no chance of failure unless they are heavily encumbered or in a high-stress situation (such as combat).

2: Outer Cave

This natural cave provides a good vantage point over the Three Watchers (location 1).

This natural cavern curves deeper into the cliff. Another escarpment, around ten feet high, lies ahead.

Sometimes the occupants of the Hidden Redoubt would come here for peace and quiet or for secret colloquy. The signs of such temporary occupation—old food wrappers, tracks in the dust and so on are evident to all but the least perceptive explorer.

3: Inner Cave

This cave is only accessible from location 2. Unless you design otherwise, it is a dead end.

The cave continues onwards. To the north, an escarpment of crumbling stone drops into another cave. To the south, yet another escarpment pierces the wall. A higher cavern lies beyond it.

3a: Pirate's Rest

Cairn: A small cairn of piled stone lies in the escarpment's shadow. The cairn holds a single human skeleton. The skeleton lies amid the mouldering remains of their clothes. The characters might find something here; if they search, roll on "Things to Find".

3b: Upper Cave

Rubble: A scattering of rubble covers the cavern floor; such areas count as difficult terrain.

Cave-In: A rockfall has blocked the passageway. The cave-in is impassable unless you decide to expand the dungeon. In this instance, magic or extensive manual labour to remove the rubble is required to proceed.

Cavern Features

Use these notes to describe locations 2 and 3.

Ceiling: The ceiling is of natural stone. Its approximate height varies throughout the cave system:

- **Location 2**: The ceiling is 30 ft. high.
- **Location 3**: The ceiling is 20 ft. high.
- **Location 3a**: The ceiling is 30 ft. high.
- **Location 3b**: The ceiling is 10 ft. high.

Walls: The cavern walls are of rough natural stone (successful climb walls roll scales).

Floor: The cavern floor is of rough uneven stone.

Escarpment: Escarpments are between eight and 12-foot high. Characters can scale the rocky escarpment with no chance of failure unless they are heavily encumbered or in a high-stress situation (such as combat).

GM Notes

***Different Challenges**: Locations 2 and 3 are good locations to place a different kind of encounter to those challenges lurking in the Hidden Redoubt. For example, a harpy or some other solitary predator could lurk in the caves—particularly if only undead or fiendish traps lie within the Hidden Redoubt.*

***Expanding the Dungeon**: The cave-in blocking location 3b could lead to a larger cave system. In this instance, if the characters examine the cave-in a faint breeze issuing through the pile of tumbled stone caresses their faces.*

GM Notes

***Trap**! The door warding location 6 is a good place for a trap.*

4: Guard Chamber

Here the Hidden Redoubt's guards once watched over their master's home.

A table and four chairs stand in the centre of this chamber. A thick wooden bar leans on the wall near the double doors.

Double Doors: A sturdy double iron-bound door wards the Hidden Redoubt. The door has a lock, but it is rusty and corroded. A sturdy wooden bar leans nearby against the wall.

5: Barracks

Here dwelt the Hidden Redoubt's guards. Only Gilak Urser's most trusted followers were left to watch over the redoubt.

Five bunkbeds stand about this small chamber. Two chests are shoved under each bottom bunk. Part of the chamber—given the pots, rudimentary chimney leading up to a crack in the ceiling, and so on—seems to have been given over to cooking.

Bunk Beds: Each two-tiered bunkbed is sized for a human-like occupant. Each bed has poor-quality bedding.

Chests: The chests under the bunkbeds hold the guard's mundane, personal possessions—spare clothes, boots and so on along with, perhaps, small hidden treasures.

Kitchen Area: A small portion of the chamber is a kitchen. A rudimentary beaten iron chimney hangs over a fire pit hacked into the floor. Pots and pans, along with sacks and barrels holding foodstuffs, stand about this small area.

6: Treasury of Gilak Urser

In this chamber, Gilak kept the bulk of his fortune.

Five iron-bound chests stand about the walls of his otherwise empty chamber.

Iron Bound Door: A tough iron-bound door wards Gilak Urser's treasury. A good lock wards the room. The key may lie in location 7.

Iron-Bound Sea Chests: These sea chests are not locked.

Tapestry of Farseeing

The *tapestry of farseeing* (location 7) functions as a *crystal ball*. The tapestry must be unfurled and hanging on a wall to function. The owner must be looking at the tapestry when speaking the command word—*Neyardrak*—to use its powers. Anyone looking at the tapestry can see the resultant images. The *tapestry of farseeing* is a unique item and could be sentient—or have other powers—if you desire.

The tapestry is heavy and bulky.

7: Gilak Urser's Chamber

Herein dwelt Gilak Urser when he visited his Hidden Redoubt. The room also contains his fabled *tapestry of farseeing*.

The skeleton of a man wearing mouldering studded leather armour lies next to a bed which stands against the opposite wall. Two chests stand against opposite walls. A plain black tapestry hangs on the wall above the bed.

Skeleton: The skeleton could be the remains of Gilak Urser or someone else entirely. The studded leather armour is of fine quality but needs a good cleaning. A character searching the body finds two keys on a chain around its neck. One key fits the coffer under the bed (see below), while the other fits the lock protecting the door at location 6.

Bed: Once-fine pillows, blankets, and sheets cover the bed. A small iron coffer has been shoved under the bed.

Iron Coffer: This small iron coffer contains 472 sp, 86 gp and 3 pp.

Sea Chests: These sea chests are not locked. They contain mundane items—clothes, boots, a few daggers, a longsword—along with spare bedding and other odds and ends.

Black Tapestry: This is Gilak Urser's fabled *tapestry of farseeing*. Refer to the sidebar on the facing page if you decide the tapestry is magical.

8: The Well

Here lies the Hidden Redoubt's source of freshwater. A cave below could lead to further caverns.

A two-foot-high stone wall encircles a hole in this chamber's floor. Several buckets attached to long coils of rope lie nearby.

Well: A two-foot-high stone wall encircles the 30-foot-deep well. A character falling into the well will suffer damage as the water is not deep enough to cushion their fall. The well's rough-hewn walls are easy to climb and descend to a small cavern-filled pool.

The pool is about four-foot-deep and contains freshwater.

9: Beach Ward

The arrow slits here provide an excellent position from which to shoot at intruders. However, only one of the four overlooks the beach in location 1.

Arrow slits in the southern wall let a feeble, pale light filter into this long, thin chamber.

Stairs: These hewn stone steps count as difficult terrain.

Arrow Slits: Arrow slits provide excellent cover and allow dim light to filter into the eastern portion of location 9. Human-sized or smaller characters may try to squeeze through an arrow slit. (Note, however, it may be impossible for particularly bulky characters or those wearing armour to squeeze through an arrow slit).

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GM Notes

The Tapestry of Farseeing: *Gilak Urser's fabled tapestry of farseeing could be a magic item with genuine powers. Alternatively, it could be nothing more than a tapestry about which Gilak spun lies and half-truths designed to confound and distracted his enemies.*

Expanding the Dungeon: *The pool-filled cavern below the well in location 8 is an excellent place to add additional areas to explore.*

Aftermath

Although the characters may have explored the Hidden Redoubt, plundered its loot and slain its denizens, the dungeon could still serve a purpose in your campaign.

Some groups may decide to claim the place as their own. After all, the redoubt has stayed hidden for so long that it makes a perfect base of operations to explore the surrounding area.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

Chased: Once they have explored the Hidden Redoubt, the characters may still have to deal with their pursuers who could yet be searching for them. Alternatively, their pursuers could have given up and sailed away.

Gilak Urser Manifests: Once the characters have explored the Hidden Redoubt, Gilak's ghost manifests before his relative. In return for his treasures, Gilak demands that his remains be interred in the family plot in his home town. If the characters do not agree to his request, Gilak flies into a rage and attacks them. He sees the betrayal by his relative as especially terrible and focuses his ire on them.

Treasure Map: Although the characters have looted the Hidden Redoubt, their treasure map still has value. If they do not decide to use the redoubt as a home base, they can still sell the map. Of course, the buyer will demand proof the map is genuine—this will likely involve the characters having to bring them to redoubt. Honourable buyers will then pay the characters; dishonourable ones may decide to slay the characters to keep the redoubt's location a secret (and to save themselves some gold).

Further Adventures

Whatever his identity (see "Who Was Gilak Urser"), Gilak Urser may have surviving relatives who feel the Hidden Redoubt is theirs by blood right. These relatives may also believe the characters have plundered their birthright and want revenge. Alternatively, they may seek Gilak Urser's fabled t*apestry of farseeing* and track the characters down to recover it either peacefully or through more forceful methods.

Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

Everyone—even the powerful—has enemies, and the Nameless Mage was no exception. In a hedge against future calamity, the Nameless Mage created the Hidden Sanctum—a bolthole of last resort—buried deep below present-day Dulwich. Never used, at least for its intended purpose, the Hidden Sanctum has mouldered and decayed, forgotten and abandoned, through long centuries of darkness and neglect. Now, a wealthy merchant, carrying out repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, has made a curious discovery—a rubble-choked set of stairs and a seemingly endless array of dungeons and caverns—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies within…

Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage is a sequel to *Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage*, *Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage* and *Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage*. It can also be run as a standalone adventure.

In this adventure, the characters explore the Nameless Mage's long-abandoned final redoubt.

Dungeon Background

Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands. Much of the area's ancient history has been forgotten –lost to time and memory. However, some buried or lost fragments of the past yet remain and await rediscovery.

Ancient History: Centuries ago, a wizard raised a tower and therein conducted blasphemous and terrible research. The wizard engaged in even more terrible doings in the cellars below the tower—raising the dead, summoning demonic extra-planar creatures and so on. However, even the mightiest wizard will eventually succumb to the Final Enemy—death. After they departed the mortal realm, their tower—eschewed by the commonfolk—slowly crumbled and fell. Thus, finally, did the mage, their tower, and their blasphemous doings pass from the world and memory.

Recent Events: Recently, the merchant Antero Kalervo engaged a stonemason to repair a section of an old, sagging wall in his cellar. During the work, the stonemason—Matias Hirvi—removed some of the old stones to better repair the wall. Doing so, he discovered a small sealed-up chamber beyond. A cautious man who knows the local lore and rumours about Foundation Way and what might lie beneath, Matias did not enlarge the hole or enter the chamber himself. However, by the light of a flaring torch, he could make out a stone trapdoor set into the floor. For Matias, this was a problem for his employer to solve.

- **Standalone**: Instead of spying a trapdoor through the wall, Matias spots a rubble-choked stair leading deeper underground and hears the sound of running water.
- **Sequel**: During their exploration of the dungeons below Antero Kalervo's house, the characters discover the Sunless Stream in the Forbidden Halls. Heading upstream, they reach the Hidden Sanctum of the Nameless Mage.

Who is the Nameless Mage?

Essentially, the identity of the Nameless Mage is irrelevant to the immediate adventure. While the characters may be motivated to identify them and find out more about them, this information is not required to run the adventure; some things can remain a mystery. However, if you suspect the characters may pursue this matter further, you should generate details of the Nameless Mage and scatter clues to their identity throughout the Lost Cellar. Thus, the characters can pursue this matter further if they so desire. Design your own NPC or use one of those presented below:

- **Perttu Meurakas** was one of the first settlers to build their home in Dulwich. He discovered the ancient, buried settlement below the town and enthusiastically pillaged its secrets. He disappeared during a subterranean expedition into the ruined settlement.
- **Siduri Kisiga** dwelled in the locality a millennia ago. Obsessed with eternal life and the undeath, she pursued research of a diabolical nature. Eventually, she succeeded in opening a gate to the Ashen Plains—Orcus's domain—in the Abyss. Her final fate remains unknown.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Forbidden Halls of the Nameless Mage by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the locale:

- **Ancient Parchment**: The characters have come into possession of a fragment of an ancient map that strongly suggests a lost cellar or dungeon lies under a house on Foundation Way. Fortuitously, their investigation leads them to Antero Kalervo just as Matias Hirvi reports his discovery to the wealthy merchant.
- **Investigate the Deeper Delvings**: Once the party have cleared the Lost Cellar and the Forbidden Halls and reported back to Antero Kalervo, he asks them to explore upstream from location 5 on the Forbidden Halls map.
- **Drinking Locally**: The characters are drinking locally when they hear Antero Kalervo moaning to a friend about a strange discovery in his cellar. The wealthy merchant wants to hire "specialists" to investigate but does not know anyone suitable.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Nameless Mage, Dulwich and Antero Kalervo. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use this list to determine what the character learns:

1. Dulwich is not the first settlement to be built on this site. Some parts of the old town are built on the rubble and ruin of a much earlier settlement.
2. It is not uncommon for the cellars of houses in the old part of town to have queer or odd architecture. Every year or so, someone discovers a hitherto unknown room, chamber or dead-end passage beneath their house.
3. Antero Kalervo is a wealthy, successful merchant. He could move to a better part of town, but his family has lived in the house on Foundation Way for generations.
4. Antero Kalervo presents himself as a successful merchant dealing in a variety of things. While he has had success as

a merchant, he also has connections with some of Dulwich's criminal gangs.
5. A huge network of ancient tunnels and deeper caverns lies below Dulwich.
6. The old houses on Foundation Way are not safe—sometimes they collapse or subside.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The House on Foundation Way

Antero Kalervo's house stands on Foundation Way.

- **Foundation Way**: Built upon the ruins of a former settlement, the homes here feature deep cellars. Many are rumoured to connect to the ancient tunnels below Dulwich, making the homes useful for criminal gangs and those wishing to move about undetected.

Antero's family have dwelled on Foundation Way for generations. Although Antero could afford to move to a nicer part of Dulwich, he chooses to remain in the family home. The home features two levels of cellars; currently, Antero does not use the lower level; he plans to, though, and hence engaged Matias to do some repairs.

Antero Kalervo

Antero Kalervo (LN middle-aged male human) dwells on Foundation Way. He is a successful merchant who chooses to dwell in his old family home.

His hair peppered with grey, this tall and slim middle-aged man wears fine robes and boots. A friendly smile creases his time-worn face.

This successful merchant wants to make use of the deep cellar to store certain items of stock and so on. (He has a wide range of interests and buys and sells many things.) He can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Antero is a skilled merchant. He is growing more uncomfortable with each passing day at the tensions between the town's ruler, Wido Gall, and the merchant class. He is a family man dedicated to the community.

Mannerisms: Straight-talking but a little excitable at times. Antero speaks quickly—sometimes, his words all blur into one.

Background: Antero was born in Dulwich and loves the town and its people.

Connections: Antero is an upstanding member of the community and is rarely troubled by exciting matters. However, he has several connections with other merchants the characters may find useful. Design these as appropriate for your campaign; if you have set this adventure in Dulwich, Antero knows Bernhard "Badger" Ilmatoivia, owner of Badger's (location 15 on the Dulwich map).

Matias Hirvi

Matias Hirvi (N middle-aged male human) is a skilled stonemason. He has been hired by Antero Kalervo to carry out some repairs to the merchant's cellar.

Stocky and clad in much-worn leather work clothes, this bald, pot-bellied middle-aged man has a slightly hunched back but is obviously still strong.

Matias was born in Dulwich and knows much about the town. He knows about Foundation Way's history and can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Brusque and taciturn, Matias is not the most chatty of folk. He enjoys a drink and often suffers its aftereffects in the mornings. People who know the stonemason's ways often wait until the afternoon to discuss important matters with him.

Mannerisms: Why use many words when fewer will do? Matias is not rude, but he speaks slowly and considers everything he says carefully. "Better to trip with the feet than the tongue" is his motto.

Background: Matias was born and raised in Dulwich. He has worked on many of the town's more impressive buildings.

Connections: In demand as a master stonemason, Matias knows several important people throughout the town; one of those people is in need of a brave band of adventurers.

The Cellar

Two levels of cellars lie below Antero's family home. A single staircase links the two levels with the house proper.

The Upper Level: The family uses the upper level of cellars for storage; it contains old furniture, trunks of clothes, the personal effects of deceased family members, and so on. There is nothing of value or interest here.

The Lower Level: An old wooden door, swollen with age, lies at the bottom of the stairs. Beyond lies a small labyrinthine of rooms. The rooms are empty, and even a cursory glance shows they are little visited—dust and grime lie thickly on the floor. The architecture and construction of the lower level are evidently much older than the level above. Here, small drifts of crumbled mortar lie against walls, some stones have come loose, and the floor is of uneven flags.

Matias's tools are scattered across the floor of a small room in a distant part of the cellar. Beyond, a pile of stones lies at the base of a sagging wall. Charismatic characters can convince Matias to break down the rest of the false wall, but such characters must be present while he works, however.

- When the characters are ready to proceed, refer to "The Sunless Stream" (location 1).

Notable Locations at a Glance

The Hidden Sanctum has several notable locations:

1. **The Sunless Stream**: The Sunless Stream flows from the north and connects the Hidden Sanctum with the Forbidden Halls to the south.
2. **Twisted Cavern**: This dry natural cavern lies above the level of the Sunless Stream. Bounded by escarpments to the west and east, it is a good place to rest.
3. **Overwatch**: A small garrison once dwelled here and watched over the Sanctum's main entrance.
4. **Great Hall**: This large chamber was once a meeting place and a critical part of the Sanctum's defences.
5. **Crossways**: This small chamber is mostly empty.
6. **Slime Landing**: Virulent slime grows over this small landing; the slime may give cautious adventurers pause.
7. **Guardroom of the Many**: Here dwelt the Sanctum's garrison; their leavings are scattered about the place.
8. **The Final Redoubt**: If terrible things boiled up from the caves below the Hidden Redoubt or other enemies pressed him too closely, the Nameless Mage would retreat to this chamber.
9. **Prison of the Damned**: Sometimes, the Nameless Mage would bring living things forth from the caverns below. Such creatures were often kept in this chamber.
10. **The Descent**: This set of landing-punctuated stairs leads down to an extensive network of caverns buried far beneath Dulwich.

Unkeyed Areas

Some locations in the Hidden Sanctum are unkeyed. Such areas could contain rotting furniture, the remains of frescos and so on. Use the details in "Dungeon Dressing" and "Things to Find" to bring the areas to life.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills the Hidden Sanctum.

Ceilings: The Hidden Sanctum's vaulted dressed-stone ceilings are eight feet high in corridors and ten feet high in rooms. The ceilings have begun to sag in places, but no collapses have yet occurred.

Internal Doors: Blackened with age, these once stout wooden doors open into the room beyond. Most do not have a lock.

External Doors: External doors comprise stout oak reinforced with iron bands. They can be barred from the inside to further secure them.

Worked Stone Walls: The stone walls are made of mortared stone blocks. They are about one foot thick and difficult to scale.

Flagged Floors: The Hidden Sanctum's flagged floors are generally flat, and they do not impede movement.

Worked Stairs: Squares containing worked stairs are difficult terrain; given the height of the risers, the stairs are designed for human-sized people.

Arrow Slit: Arrow slits provide excellent cover. Small-sized characters can squeeze through an arrow slit with difficulty. Medium-sized characters find squeezing through an arrow slit practically impossible. (Note, however, it may be impossible for particularly bulky characters or those wearing armour to squeeze through an arrow slit).

Dungeon Dressing

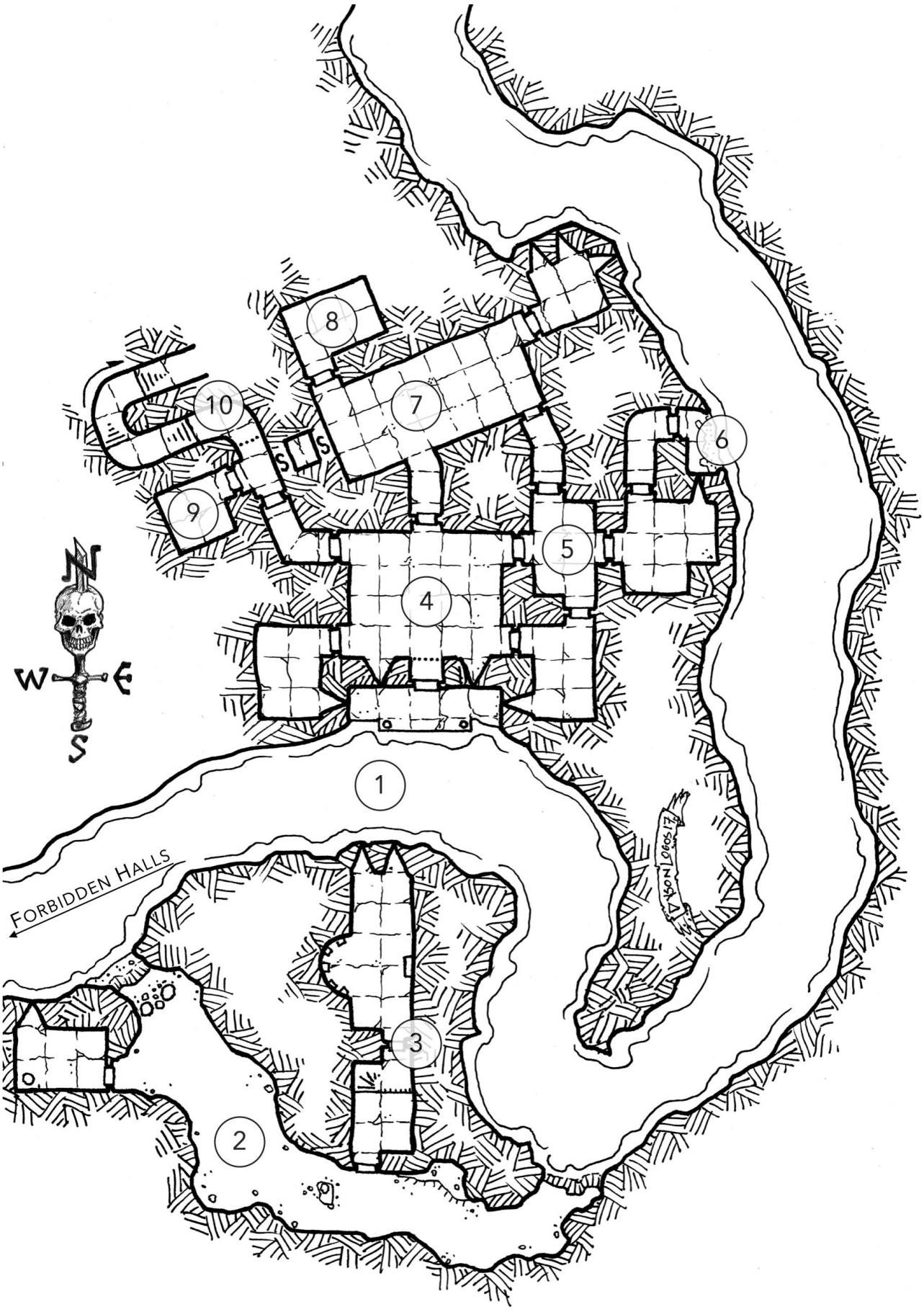
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. A deep crack cuts through the ceiling; a faint breeze issues forth.
2. Faint marks on the stone floor could be nothing, or they could be drying footprints.
3. Dusty cobwebs fill a corner high up against the ceiling.
4. The air feels colder—perhaps unnaturally so—in this area.
5. The sound of sustained splashing comes from the closest section of the Sunless Stream.
6. A broad and irregular unidentifiable stain mars the floor.
7. An albino insect scuttles across the characters' path.
8. Cracks radiate from an impact site on a wall; it looks like someone hit it with a heavy hammer.
9. A wide swath of faint scratch marks mars the floor.
10. Shreds of an unidentifiable banner or tapestry hang from a spike driven into a wall about six feet off the ground.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. Six old gold coins minted in Ashlar long ago are scattered about the floor.
2. A mouldy wine jack lies on the floor; it smells of decay.
3. A rusty dagger lies against a wall. The dagger is worthless, but its pommel comprises a chunk of obsidian (worth 20 gp).
4. The skeletal remains of an unnaturally large rat sprawl on the floor.
5. A faded map of a small cave system decorates a mouldering scroll lying behind or under other rubbish.
6. A dagger-shaped tarnished silver earring lies on the floor.
7. An almost impossible-to-spot chalk arrow points south.
8. The shards of a shattered (and now rusty) longsword are scattered about the area.
9. Two silver coins and a squashed tinderbox fill a mouldering pouch.
10. A small carving of many tentacles emerging from a pool fed by a waterfall decorates a wall. The carving is crude and depicts the cave below the dungeon presented in *Deeper Delvings of the Nameless Mage*.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GM Notes

Setting: *Depending on your design for this Dungeon Backdrop, several things could lie beyond the false wall in Antero Kalervo's cellar.*

- *If you run this Dungeon Backdrop as part of the Nameless Mage series, the characters can reach the Hidden Sanctum through the Lost Cellar and the Forbidden Halls.*
- *If you run this as a standalone Dungeon Backdrop, a small cavern lies beyond the false wall, and the Sunless Stream cuts through the cavern.*

Further Adventures: *The Sunless Stream bounds and flows past the Hidden Sanctum. Almost anything could lie to the north of the Hidden Sanctum. Refer to "Further Adventures" for ideas about how to flesh out the adventures of characters heading further north.*

Lone Predator: *The Twisted Cavern (location 2) is a good place for the characters to encounter a lone predator or scavenger or perhaps find the remains of a long-dead adventurer with a broken leg.*

1: The Sunless Stream

The Sunless Stream flows from the north and connects the Hidden Sanctum with the Forbidden Halls to the south.

The dark waters of a subterranean stream fill this narrow, twisted passageway of slick, smooth rock. The sound of running water fills the air.

The Stream: The stream flows from the north and is between five and ten feet deep. The stream bounds the Hidden Sanctum to the south and east.

The stream's water is cold but fresh (and drinkable). Perceptive characters may spot the occasional blind fish nosing about its depths; all are small and have dark scales.

Unattended objects or creatures in the water move southwards at a rate of ten feet per round.

The Southern Beach

A small beach littered with rocks fronts a ten-foot-high escarpment that rises to a cave beyond.

Escarpment: The escarpment is about ten feet high. Characters can easily scale the escarpment.

The Northern Landing

Two arrow slits flank a closed rust-streaked ironbound door blackened with age. Two thick, rusty iron stanchions stand near the water.

Iron Stanchions: These stout iron stanchions are driven deep into the stone landing. They are two feet tall.

Ironbound Door: Iron bands reinforce this thick wooden door. It can be barred from the inside.

2: Twisted Cavern

This dry natural cavern lies above the levels of the Sunless Stream. Bounded by escarpments to the west and east, it is a good place to rest.

A rocky escapement stops the rest of this natural cavern of indeterminate size from flooding.

Cavern Floor: The rough and uneven rubble-strewn cavern floor is difficult terrain. Rocks and rubble lie scattered about but have been mostly pushed up against the cavern walls.

Cave Walls: The cavern walls are of rough natural stone and easy to climb.

Cavern Ceiling: The rough and uneven cavern ceiling undulates between 13 and 15 feet high.

Escarpments: The escarpments are between five and 7 feet high. Characters can easily scale an escarpment.

3: Overwatch

A small garrison once dwelled here and watched over the Sanctum's main entrance.

An open, stout, iron-bound door provides access to a small chamber beyond.

South Chamber: A stout external door protects this chamber from attack. Stairs lead to a lower chamber to the north.

North Chamber: Guards stationed here could cast missiles and spells at any attacker assaulting the Hidden Sanctum's main entrance (location 1; The Northern Landing). The remains of rotting furniture and so on lie about the chamber—mostly against the walls. Squares containing rotting furniture are difficult terrain.

4: Great Hall

This large chamber was once a meeting place and a critical part of the Sanctum's defences.

Two long dusty tables, several benches and a high-backed chair crowd together in the centre of this lofty-ceilinged chamber. An iron chandelier bearing four lanterns hangs from the ceiling.

Portcullis: This iron portcullis is rusty but still strong. It has not moved for centuries. If a character lifts the portcullis and does not wedge it in place, it immediately falls back into its original position. The resultant noise could alert nearby creatures to the party's presence.

A lever to the right of the portcullis raises or lowers it. The first time the lever is used, it must be lubricated or forced to move by a strong character.

Ceiling: The arched ceiling is 25 feet high above the centre of the Great Hall.

Banqueting Tables: Two 20-foot-long tables, attendant benches and a single high-backed chair have been pushed into the centre of the room. Mystic symbols decorate the chair's back. Squares containing furniture are difficult terrain.

Chandelier: The iron chandelier and lanterns are in good condition. The chandelier can be raised and lowered via a thin chain running along the ceiling and down the west wall.

5: Crossways

This small chamber is mostly empty.

Four doors pierce this small chamber's walls. A pile of rotten wood fills a corner, and the vague smell of mould hangs in the still air.

Rotting Wood: The remains of several pieces of furniture are piled up in a corner; it is from here that the faint smell of mould emanates. Furniture-filled squares are difficult terrain.

GM Notes

***Taking a Break**: Overwatch (location 3) is an excellent, secure place for the characters to take a break from their adventurous doings.*

***Dangerous Mould**: Paranoid characters may be worried about the smell of mould emanating from the rotten wood. This is also a good location for a nuisance encounter—perhaps a swarm of centipedes or spiders.*

GM Notes

***The Slime**: This slime can be of any hue, but experienced characters will be doubly careful if it is green-coloured. Remember, also, that characters who can see in the dark only see in black, white and grey, making identifying this slime difficult without light*

***Magic Trap**: This is an obvious and logical place for a magic trap; making the trap easy to find and disarm rewards attentive players.*

***Old Map**: The map could show the location of tombs, hidden lairs and the like and could lead the characters to their next adventure. See "Further Adventures" for more details and suggestions.*

***The Scroll**: The scroll is old and faded, and the spell on it could malfunction—taking the characters to a strange place…and their next adventure!*

6: Slime Landing

Virulent slime grows over this small landing; the slime may give cautious adventurers pause.

Slick slime grows over most of this small landing. A stout wood, iron-banded door pierces the wall beyond the slime.

Slime: The slime is slick and voracious. Characters traversing the slime without due care and attention may slip and fall.

7: Guardroom of the Many

Here dwelt the Sanctum's garrison; their leavings are scattered about the place.

The remains of much furniture—bunkbeds, several tables, chests and so on—stand about the walls of this large chamber.

Old Furniture: The furniture in this chamber has survived in better condition than much of that scattered throughout the rest of the complex. A character carefully searching the room may find something of note:

- **Coins**: Coins—27 sp and 19 gp—are scattered about the room. It takes ten minutes to find and collect them all.
- **Lost Dagger**: A dagger with a bejewelled hilt decorated with tiny red and green stones (shards of ruby and bloodstone) lies under a bunk bed. The weapon is worth 300 gp.

Secret Door: A cunningly hidden secret door pierces the west wall. Pushing a certain stone set into the door causes it to open. A handle on the door's reverse enables a character beyond to open it.

8: The Final Redoubt

If terrible things boiled up from the caves below the Hidden Redoubt or other enemies pressed him too closely, the Nameless Mage would retreat to this chamber.

Numerous deeply inscribed esoteric symbols of fell appearance decorate this rust-free iron door.

Iron Door: This iron door has a good lock.

Furniture: Astutely furnished, this chamber only has a table, chair and a chest (filled with mouldering clothes and adventuring equipment). A character carefully searching the may find something of note:

- **Map**: A map of the area around Dulwich as it was centuries ago fills an ivory scroll case (worth 25 gp). The map has several locations marked upon it.

Iron Coffer: The iron coffer—lined with black velvet (worth 75 gp) holds an old *scroll of teleport*.

9: Prison of the Damned

Sometimes, the Nameless Mage would bring living things forth from the caverns below to study. Such creatures were often kept in this chamber.

Scratches cover this small chamber's walls and stained floor.

Iron Door: A stout iron door, rusted into its hinges, wards access to this chamber. Deep scratches and several large dents mar the back of the door.

Scratched Walls and Floor: Scratches in the walls and floors show where powerful things have sharpened their claws or tried to dig their way out.

Stained Floor: Several suspicious stains decorate the floor. Most of the stains are clustered in the room's corners. Small patches of white, furry mould grow on the stains.

10: The Descent

This set of landing-punctuated stairs leads down to an extensive network of caverns buried far beneath Dulwich.

A portcullis blocks this northward running corridor. Just beyond the portcullis, the corridor turns west, obscuring sight of what lies further on.

Portcullis: This iron portcullis is rusty but still strong. It has not moved for centuries. If a character lifts the portcullis and does not wedge it in place, it immediately falls back into its original position. The resultant noise could alert nearby creatures to the party's presence.

- **Rusty Lever**: A rusty lever just from the wall nearby. It once operated the portcullis, but age has fatally weakened it. It snaps if someone tries to use it.

Secret Door: A cunningly hidden secret door pierces the east wall here. Pushing a certain stone set into the door causes it to open. A handle on the door's reverse enables a character beyond to open it.

GM Notes

***Skeletal Remains**: Perhaps the skeletal remains of the Nameless Mage's last prisoner lie here. If they do, identifying what the creature was may give the party a clue as to what horrors lurk in the caves below location 10.*

***Traps**: The stairs beyond the portcullis are likely trapped—to stop things from coming up from below.*

***Further Adventures**: A network of caverns lies far below the Hidden Redoubt. If you do not want to design said caverns, you must block or dissuade the party from further exploration. A rock fall could have blocked the stairs; alternatively, they could have flooded, necessitating the characters to gain access to water breathing magic to continue. If neither of these options work for your design, consider placing a powerful monster at the bottom of the stairs—a monster the characters obviously cannot yet defeat. If you use this option, remember to provide plenty of hints as to what dwells below and opportunities for the characters to retreat to fight another day. Doing otherwise would be a Bad Show.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have explored the Hidden Sanctum, they can report it back to Antero Kalervo for their reward.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Ancient Parchment**: If the characters are intrigued by the dungeons below Dulwich and the Nameless Mage, they may seek out more ancient documents regarding the time before Dulwich was founded. A local sage such as Saini Alanen (location 9 on the Dulwich map) could assist them with their research and would be fascinated to learn all that they have discovered.
- **Cleared the Deeper Delvings and Drinking Locally**: Once the characters have cleared the Hidden Sanctum, they report to their employer, Antero Kalervo, and get paid. Antero is, of course, delighted the characters have cleared the dungeon—as anything within could conceivably escape into his house. Depending on your design, Antero may block up the tunnels leading to the dungeons below his house, or he may decide to put them to some use. He might also ask the characters to explore more of the tunnels—to make sure no additional dangers lurk therein.

Further Adventures

The dungeons below Antero Kalervo's cellar are ripe for further adventures under Dulwich; something truly ancient and terrible could lurk in the lightless realm below the town.

Knowledge of the Sage: If the characters have contacted Saini Alanen (or some other sage about their adventure), the characters could discover the strong possibility that many opportunities for adventure, including a network of deeper tunnels and catacombs, discovered when the foundations for the Lawgiver's Hall (location 2 on the Dulwich map) were sunk, lurk under Dulwich's streets. Such tunnels can be reached through the cathedral's catacombs, but Conn's clergy tightly control such access. Convincing the clergy to give the characters access could be an adventure of its own!

The Old Map: The characters may have found the old map in location 8. The map was drafted centuries ago and shows the land as it was not as it is now. The map could depict anything you choose—now forgotten and lost crypts, towers, villages and more. Any of these locations could serve as the backdrop to the characters' next adventure.

The Deep Stair: The stair in location 10 spirals ever deeper until it intersects with a natural cave system ripe for exploration. The Hidden Sanctum makes an excellent base from which to explore these unknown reaches of Dulwich's Underlands. Many subterranean terrors and hideous, alien creatures could lurk in these lightless depths. If they are not dealt with, one day, they could emerge to wreak a terrible doom upon Dulwich and its citizens.

The Sunless Stream: Although the characters have cleared the Hidden Sanctum, more caves and caverns could lie further up the Sunless Stream. The Hidden Sanctum makes an excellent base from which to explore these unknown reaches of Dulwich's Underlands.

House of Yspher

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Carmine Hills)

The lonely house on the hill is no place to spend the night. Many a weary traveller on the road to Dunstone has sought shelter there, only to find dark terrors lurking inside the crumbling house. Those who find death beyond the shadowed threshold are considered fortunate, for the few who escape the house's harrowing halls are cursed to endure a life of madness; their bodies and souls scarred beyond mortal comprehension. Few know the truth. The dreaded manor once belonged to Yspher, a reclusive wizard with an evil reputation who mysteriously vanished many years ago. Whispers of sinister experiments involving black magic and forbidden lore surrounded Yspher's disappearance, which would prove only the first of many tragedies linked to the house…

Dungeon Background

Nine generations ago, in the autumn years of Duke Arndul Nenonen II's reign, a reclusive wizard settled into the old rectory near Dunstone. A tall, lank-haired man with piercing blue eyes, Yspher's appearance soon earned him the distrust of the townsfolk. It was thus considered no small wonder when, four years later, Yspher returned from one of his lonely expeditions alongside a beautiful, raven-haired bride. Elvytta was kind and outgoing, and would often visit Dunstone to chat with the local folk, though she would never speak of her husband's alchemical pursuits. When several girls from Dunstone mysteriously disappeared, Elvytta went to great lengths to convince the local lord of Yspher's innocence. One day, however, she stopped coming to town, and the people of Dunstone became convinced the wizard's dark desires were the cause of these disappearances. They stormed the manor only to find it abandoned. Yspher had escaped justice.

The truth, however, is far more sinister. The thing Yspher took for his bride was no mortal woman. In the guise of the raven-haired beauty Elvytta, she had put a charm upon the wizard, forcing him to conduct terrible, secret experiments. As Yspher slaved away, Elvytta bathed in the blood of lifeless maidens taken from Dunstone. In the face of such cruelty, the fetters laid upon Yspher's heart and mind eventually broke. Realising the full extent of the horror he had brought to Dunstone, Yspher resolved to set things right. Feigning enthralment for several more days, he concocted a powerful arcane poison and administered it to Elvytta. Though it failed to kill her, she was paralysed long enough for Yspher to carry her frozen body to the basement, where he interred his bride inside her horrid torture chamber. The ordeal had taken a terrible toll upon the wizard's mind, however, and Yspher soon took his own life. Elvytta remains yet imprisoned under the house, driven mad by decades of darkness and isolation.

The House Now

Before designing the challenges and encounters lurking in the House of Yspher, you must determine Elvytta's fate.

- **Death Becomes Her**: Through command of the black arts, Elvytta reached across the boundary beyond, summoning and binding the souls of the dead to her will. Incorporeal undead and strange supernatural effects haunt the harrowed halls. In addition, corporeal undead have been created from the bodies of the dead at Elvytta's whim.
- **Master of Puppets**: Elvytta's alien mind is a powerful psychic beacon, attracting a host of madmen and evil creatures to the house. This option offers the broadest choice of encounters. For optimal results, consider using doppelgängers, mimics and similar creatures with shapeshifting or mind-affecting abilities suitable for replicating the tropes of a haunted house.
- **The Mind is a Terrible Thing**: The haunting comprises illusions created by Elvytta's unfathomably powerful psyche. Consider this option if you wish to torment the characters with visions of past failures, details from their tragic backstories, or the foreshadowing of some greater doom yet to come. Alternatively, combine this choice with either of the above, mixing regular encounters with terrifying vistas of personal horror to keep the characters on their toes.

Elvytta

Elvytta lurks in her prison beneath the manor. Her true nature and origins are left for you to decide. She could be a succubus, vampire, hag, or any other long-lived creature you choose, disguised by illusion magic.

Since Elvytta's goal is to escape her prison and not necessarily kill the characters, you can afford to make her a challenge beyond their level. Should Elvytta escape, she makes an excellent recurring villain!

Adventure Hooks

The mere existence of a haunted manor is often enough to attract intrepid adventurers to investigate. Alternatively, use one of the following hooks to lure the characters to the House of Yspher.

- **Any Port in a Storm:** While travelling along the road to Dunstone, a sudden savage storm catches the characters out in the open. The party are forced to seek shelter in the old manor on the hill until the storm passes.
- **Lost Lore:** Vieno Rekola (N old male human wizard), patriarch of the once-famed Rekola family (location 7 on the Dunstone town map), is desperate to restore the family's reputation as renowned wizards. Having long suspected Yspher possessed rare books containing arcane knowledge, he seeks to hire adventurers to search the house. Vieno downplays the manor's reputation, fearing it might scare off the characters. If they confront him after learning its history, Vieno grudgingly doubles his reward.
- **The Keys are Under the Mat:** The characters somehow gain possession of the deed to the House of Yspher. It could turn up amid the treasure of an earlier adventure or be granted as a reward by a wealthy patron for services rendered. Perhaps a recently-deceased relative of one of the characters has left it to them in their will. The characters must travel to Dunstone to have the deed authenticated by Lord Benjam Oksanen, who warns them of the manor's ill reputation.

Whispers & Rumours

The paragraph of the Dungeon Background is common local knowledge Dunstone. The House of Yspher is well-known throughout the area, and locals eagerly recount its legend.

A character may know something else about the House of Yspher, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the characters are and then impart some (or all) of the information below.

1. Yspher left no living descendants, and ownership of the manor passed to the Oksanen family, rulers of Dunstone.
2. From time to time, the manor attracts adventurers, vagrants and ne'er-do-wells, all either ignorant of its legend or foolish enough to ignore it. Few return, and those who do are driven irrevocably insane.
3. After murdering his bride, Yspher fled to the Mottled Spire, where he set up his lair in Gloamhold's doom-wreathed halls. (False rumour.)
4. Yspher's predations claimed nine local girls. Their names are engraved on a modest memorial stone in Dunstone's farmer's market (location 10 on the Dunstone town map). The girls' bodies were never recovered.
5. Stories say Elvytta was wise beyond her years and schooled in all manner of arts and sciences. Some claim she hailed from the Lonely Coast or the lands beyond the Forest of Gray Spires.
6. When the good folk of Dunstone came to arrest Yspher and found the house abandoned, they tried setting it ablaze. The fire would not take, and a dark spirit chased them from the manor.

The Surrounds

The House of Yspher sits perched upon a lonely hilltop south of Dunstone. It can be reached by climbing a narrow, bramble-choked path snaking its way up along the hill's rugged flanks. Stubborn thickets of holly and hawthorn surround the old manor, and vines of pale ivy crawl across its crumbling face like veins and exposed muscles. Only the sullen, eye-like windows are spared, behind which lurks an utter blackness, even on the brightest day.

The Garden

A rusted iron fence rings the remains of a garden where a thin, gossamer mist clings to the ground, lazily swirling around gnarled roots, weeds and poison blooms. Herbalists might recognise deadly nightshade, hemlock, foxglove and wolfsbane growing in and around the garden. Most striking, however, are the scarlet orchids growing in an otherwise barren plot at the back of the garden, marking the missing girls' graves. A character who spends one hour digging finds a girl's withered remains buried in the cold clay, matted blonde hairs still attached to the scalp.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The old manor has many rooms, spread more or less evenly between the ground and first floor. A secret door enables access to the cellar. Elvytta's prison lies hidden beyond.

The manor comprises the following notable locations:

✦ **Dynamic Room**: These chambers contain variable contents and dynamic events.

1. **Dining Room**: Angry townsfolk thoroughly ransacked this room long ago.
2. **Kitchen**: The manor's kitchen lies in disarray.
3. **Chapel**: This chapel is dedicated to Morden, god of knowledge and magic.
4. **Library**: The library houses a collection of alchemical and historical treatises.
5. **Master Bedroom**: This is where Elvytta slept, if she slept at all.
6. **Rookery**: Hundreds of cawing corvids nest in this dilapidated room.
7. **Gallery**: Ancient portraits of Elvytta's baneful bloodline deck these sombre walls.
8. **Secret Study**: This concealed study holds a blasphemous book of hideous origin.
9. **Basement**: Gaining access to Elvytta's prison (locations 12 and 13) requires demolishing part of the western wall.
10. **Laboratory**: The laboratory contains Yspher's remains, amid his remaining volatile compounds.
11. **Poison Cabinet**: This secret room was Yspher's arcane poison store. Only one vial remains.
12. **Black Ossuary**: Grisly trophies of her experimentations and rituals decorate Elvytta's unholy sanctum.
13. **Exsanguination Chambers**: Here, in her own torture chamber, Yspher imprisoned his demon bride.

Generic House Features

Nearly two centuries of decrepitude with a pervasive evil entombed beneath it have reduced the once-stately manor to a twisted shadow of its former glory. All areas share several generic features.

Unnatural Aura: A pall of dread hangs over the house. Animals refuse to approach the manor unless their master can force them therein. Corvids and vermin are unaffected.

Illumination: The evil permeating the manor dims all natural light. Windowless rooms are always shrouded in deep darkness, and windowed areas remain gloomy even on the brightest days.

Sound: The incessant cawing of the rooks nesting in area 6 echoes through the house, imposing a -10% penalty to all hearing-based hear noise rolls.

Walls: The walls of the house are typical masonry, covered in cracked stucco and warped wainscotting.

Floors: Sturdy oaken boards, covered with mouldy carpeting or stained parquet, make up the manor's floors. The aged planks groan and creak ominously underfoot, making moving silently difficult.

Doors: Unless stated otherwise, doors are of good wooden quality. When closed, however, they have a 50% chance of becoming stuck.

Secret Doors: All secret doors in the manor are easier to find than normal (the deterioration in the manor's interior, making them easier to find than when they were constructed).

Dungeon Dressing

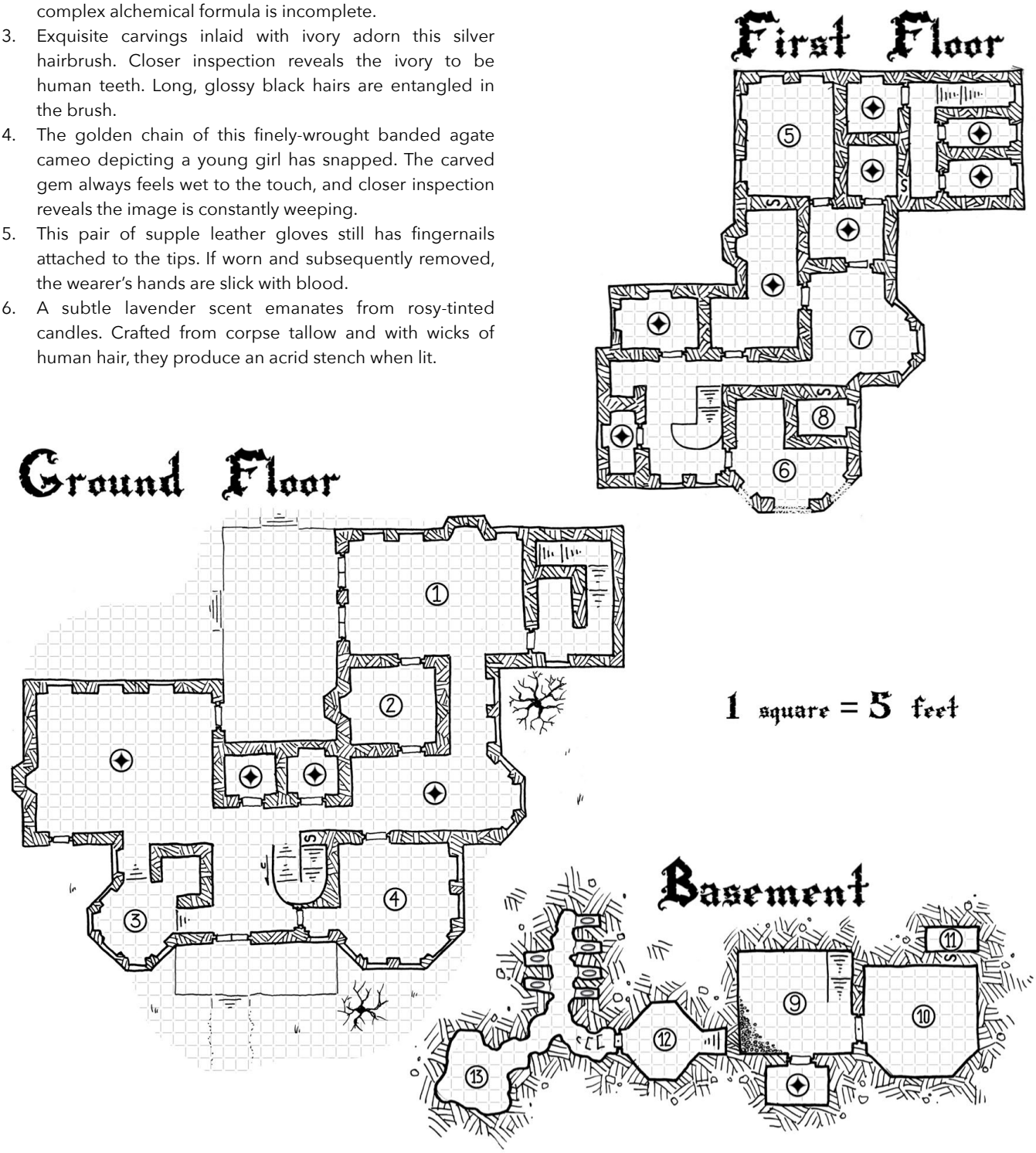
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the manor.

1. A blood-curdling scream rends the silence, sounding from another room, where a fresh, bloody handprint is found staining the door.
2. All candles, torches and lanterns in the room suddenly flare with bright blue witch-fire. Characters within 5 feet may be briefly blinded.
3. A sudden blast of chill wind tears through the room, extinguishing unprotected flames and slamming shut all doors. A malicious cackle echoes in the dark.
4. A clamour of rooks smashes through the windows, showering the characters with broken glass. After three combat rounds, however, the birds disappear, and the windows are suddenly intact as if nothing had happened.
5. With a soft whimper, a young spectral girl dressed in a bloodied, tattered nightgown crawls across the floor, dragging broken legs behind her. The apparition does not interact with the characters and continues crawling until her invisible pursuer catches up with her. With a heartbreaking cry, she dissolves into a cloud of ash.
6. Deep, claw-like gouges appear in the wall ahead. They approach with alarming speed, tearing across the splintering wood with an ear-splitting screech before coming to a sudden stop in front of the leading character who alone hears heavy breathing coming from some otherwise undetectable source.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. This lock of soft golden hair, bound with a bright red ribbon, feels freshly cut and smells faintly of lavender.
2. Spidery black writing covers this torn parchment. This complex alchemical formula is incomplete.
3. Exquisite carvings inlaid with ivory adorn this silver hairbrush. Closer inspection reveals the ivory to be human teeth. Long, glossy black hairs are entangled in the brush.
4. The golden chain of this finely-wrought banded agate cameo depicting a young girl has snapped. The carved gem always feels wet to the touch, and closer inspection reveals the image is constantly weeping.
5. This pair of supple leather gloves still has fingernails attached to the tips. If worn and subsequently removed, the wearer's hands are slick with blood.
6. A subtle lavender scent emanates from rosy-tinted candles. Crafted from corpse tallow and with wicks of human hair, they produce an acrid stench when lit.



GM Notes

***Dynamic Content**: Note where a dynamic room feature is first encountered, so you can easily remember its location when it's referenced by a follow-up event.*

✦: Dynamic Room

Use this list to generate content and dynamic events for rooms marked with a diamond. Effects preceded by "A" only occur when a result is rolled a second or subsequent time. Use these events to foreshadow upcoming encounters.

1. A dusty harpsichord sits at the chamber's centre; its many strings broken and frayed from age.

    A. The notes of a haunting toccata reverberate throughout the manor, coming from the harpsichord's room.

2. Yellowed bedsheets cover a jumble of old furniture. A broken grandfather clock stands in the corner.

    A. Ghostly peals sound from the old clock's room, striking thirteen times.

3. Silently standing at attention, 3d3+3 faceless wooden mannequins with split and splintered limbs fill the room.

    A. The stumble of footfalls is heard elsewhere in the manor. Investigating the noise leads to the mannequin chamber, where the dolls are found in complete disarray. 1d6 are missing.

4. Amid the clutter filling this room, the pale, ethereal form of a young girl in a torn white dress sits shivering in a corner. She doesn't interact with the characters but silently follows them around the manor.

    A. The ghostly girl silently strides into the room ahead, disappearing into a padlocked closet. Wicked iron barbs line the walls inside, with scraps of white cloth snagged on a handful.

5. The thick, shaggy carpet covering the floor writhes as if alive. If disturbed, it scatters into a swarm of rats who scurry off into the walls, leaving behind a gnawed-upon skeleton.

    A. Frantic scratching behind the walls heralds the reappearance of the rats, who gnaw through the wooden paneling in 1d10 rounds.

6. Clawed, wrought-iron feet support an enamelled bathtub crouching low on a ragged woollen carpet. It looks clean, save for a moist wad of long, dark hair at the bottom.

    A. The trickle of running water is heard, originating from the bathtub, which is now overflowing with tepid blood. Crimson footprints beside it lead to an unexplored room.

1: Dining Room

Angry townsfolk thoroughly ransacked this room long ago.

Scorched and broken furniture piled in a heap in one corner hints at failed arson. Through the cracked windows, faint shapes move.

Windows: Looking through the windows conjures ghostly images outside; while unsettling, these images are harmless.

- **Inside Looking Out**: A character looking out through the windows sees the faint outline of nine girls in tattered, bloody dresses staring at them from the garden.
- **Outside Looking In**: Characters standing outside looking into this room through the windows see a towering demonic shadow with menacing red eyes skulking in a corner of the room. If the viewer looks away and back again, the shadow is gone.

2: Kitchen

The old manor's kitchen lies in disarray.

Dented copper pans hang from rusty hooks along the walls. The wailing wind howls in the chimney above the fireplace, casting motes of dust across the cluttered floor.

Clutter: The contents of the shelves and cupboards are spread across the floor and constitute uneven terrain. It is difficult to move silently here.

Fireplace: A random character hears whispering from this spot. Anyone looking up the chimney is attacked by a shadowy creature with lambent red eyes hiding in the flue. It dissolves into a pile of soot when struck with a weapon.

3: Chapel

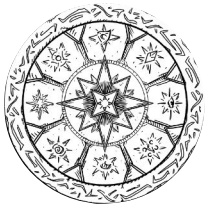
This chapel is dedicated to Morden, neutral greater god of magic and knowledge.

Blackened blood streaks the octagonal marble altar of Morden in this shadowy chapel. Frescoes of demons with leering faces deck the vaulted ceiling, twisting and writhing in the gloom.

The chapel has been perverted by the depth of malignant evil lurking in the manor house, and this has affected the initial appearance of this room.

Frescoes: At first look, the frescoes appear to be cavorting demons. A closer inspection reveals the frescoes depict the god Morden surrounded by eight sorcerers disciples. They seem still and perfectly normal.

Altar: Closer inspection reveals the altar is clean, apart from a thick layer of dust.



GM Notes

What Lurks in the Chimney*: The shadowy creature dwelling lurking in the kitchen's chimney could be nothing more than a harmless apparition or it could some other form of threat.*

GM Notes

What is it? *The animate bedsheets in location 5 could be nothing more than an annoyance incapable of hurting anyone, an animated object or the result of a poltergeist's or ghost's malevolent actions.*

Killer Birds: *The rooks in location 6 could swarm and attack instead of fleeing.*

4: Library

Yspher's library holds his alchemical and historical treatises.

Scores of sagging shelves sag underneath the weight of dusty, worm-riddled books. A sullen-faced bronze head sits on a marble pedestal at the room's centre.

Books: The shelves hold a few hundred books, the vast majority half-devoured by age and mould. The few volumes remaining intact are harmless treatises on alchemy, herbalism and history.

Brazen Head: When approached, the bust opens its eyes, revealing life-like, human orbs. The head speaks:

Master, what wisdom do you seek?

If a character convinces the confused head they are Yspher through good roleplaying, it truthfully answers 1d4 questions regarding the manor. If the deception fail or if the head is attacked, it retaliates by firing magical missiles at the character. If the characters destroy the head, a preserved human brain slides from the smashed brass casing.

5: Master Bedroom

This is where Elvytta slept, if she slept at all.

A magnificently carved canopy bed draped in dark velvet dominates this large chamber. A gilded vanity stands beside it.

Bed: Anyone approaching the bed is attacked by the suddenly animating sheets. A character successfully searching the room finds a concealed drawer in the headboard containing a single blood-red topaz (worth 100 gp) and a worn iron key (which unlocks the door to location 10).

Vanity: A character looking in the mirror sees their own features distorted into those of a beautiful, dark-haired woman bearing a menacing scowl. The reflection screams and the mirror explodes, showering the character with sharp glass shards.

6: Rookery

Hundreds of cawing corvids nest in this dilapidated room.

A thousand beady black eyes fix their gaze upon you as their madly cawing cacophony falls silent. Nests of straw, twigs and dead leaves cover every inch of the room.

Structural Damage: All the rookery's windows are broken; half of the roof has collapsed, leaving the room exposed to the elements.

Rooks: The birds disperse if attacked, escaping through the broken roof and windows. They return after 2d12 minutes.

Nests: With 20 minutes of searching, a character finds 2d6x10 gp worth of shiny trinkets amid the bird's muck.

Floorboards: The floorboards are weakened by rot. Whenever two or more characters share a 10x10 foot floor section, the floor buckles and breaks; the characters fall into location 4, ten feet below.

7: Gallery

Ancient portraits of Elvytta's baneful bloodline deck the walls of this sombre gallery.

Scores of sinister paintings with cracked paint line the walls. Most striking is the oval portrait of a beautiful, raven-haired woman; her dark, disquieting gaze forever staring outwards.

Paintings: These depict nameless nobles sharing similar aquiline features. An ancient castle perched atop a desolate crag is in every picture's background. A close examination reveals the artist's hidden signature as "Hamu Malari" on every picture.

Oval Portrait: Though undeniably old, this portrait of Elvytta has resisted time's ravages. A character within 10 feet meeting her withering gaze feels their skin crack and peel like old paint and suffers 1d6 damage every round until they tear their gaze away. Afterward, the portrait looks as new. The secret door to location 8 hides behind this portrait.

8: Secret Study

This concealed study hides a blasphemous book.

Resting on an ebony lectern lies a weighty tome, bound in cracked leather and closed with a bronze clasp.

Tome: A character steeped in arcane or religious lore can identify the book as the *Testament of Ruin*: one of a series of nine nefarious volumes called the *Nine Books of Hodhek*.

The Nine Books of Hodhek

Legend holds these nine blasphemous tomes were written in a single night by Hodhek the Soulless; a monk possessed by Braal, the god of hatred and malice. While the books' pages contain a chaotic jumble of esoteric drawings, obscure symbols and plain gibberish, they are said to harbour a terrifying secret. If one were to decipher the secret code hidden among the nine volumes, it would reveal the location of a mystical portal leading to Braal's black throne. Cultists, madmen and careless scholars alike are desperate to obtain all nine tomes. Their titles are:

I. Earth Shall be Riven
II. Revan Chants
III. The Woeful City
IV. Dwellers in Shadow
V. Ethics of Danakil
VI. Testament of Ruin
VII. Dirge of Reason
VIII. Black Solstice
IX. Throne of Wrath

Supposedly, all existing copies were destroyed by Darlen's Order of the Watch Eternal. The characters' discovery of the *Testament of Ruin*, however, suggests their purge was not as thorough as expected.

GM Notes

Does Something Happen? *Consider triggering a dynamic room event when someone lifts the book from the lectern.*

GM Notes

Break it Down! *Using force to break down the walls or doors in location 9 alerts all other creatures in the manor.*

That's Lucky*: The laboratory might contain a magical freezing agent to deal with the brown mould in location 9.*

9: Basement

Gaining access to Elvytta's prison requires demolishing part of the western wall.

A numbing cold emanates from the cellar, conjuring forth ghosts born of ragged breath. The rich, earthy smell of mould and graveyard soil hangs heavily in the air.

Brown Mould: The southwest corner of this room is infested with brown mould. A bricked-up doorway set into the west wall is hidden behind it.

Bricked-Up Doorway: The brickwork in this walled-up doorway is obviously of newer construct than the rest of the crumbling manor.

East Door: This sturdy iron door is locked. The lock can be opened with the key found in location 5.

10: Laboratory

The laboratory contains Yspher's remains, amid his remaining volatile compounds.

A skeleton clad in purple robes slouches over a dusty desk amid the clutter of this ancient laboratory. The acrid smell of spoiled alchemical mixtures hangs in the air.

Alchemy Laboratory: For every ten minutes spent searching the laboratory, a character can find one material spell component or alchemical item with a cost of 50 gp or less. Searching characters may clumsily disturb the volatile materials still here with various consequences.

Skeleton: The skeleton's teeth and finger bones are stained deep blue; the same colour as the powdery residue left in a nearby goblet.

A stained letter lies underneath the skull.

Letter: Written in a spidery hand, the letter tells of unspeakably horrible acts. Carried out under the thrall of Elvytta, who is called, "*a thing which should not be*". It relates how the writer eventually broke her evil spell and formulated a poison to incapacitate Elvytta, after which he interred her in the cellar. The final part reveals how the terrible toll inflicted upon the writer's sanity drove him to suicide. The letter is signed "Yspher".

11: Poison Cabinet

This secret room contains Yspher's arcane poison.

Shards of broken glass crunch underfoot; the remains of perhaps a hundred flasks, shattered when the aged shelves lining the walls collapsed cover the floor. An iron strongbox lies amid the debris.

Strongbox: The strongbox is locked. Using force to open the box has a 40% chance of ruining the contents. Inside is a small vial wrapped in parchment.

- **Vial**: The vial is unlabelled and contains a single dose of Yspher's poison: a silvery liquid, both odourless and tasteless. It affects only creatures of Elvytta's type (even if those creatures are normally immune to poison).
- **Parchment**: This contains the formula for Yspher's arcane poison, allowing a skilled alchemist to recreate it if they have access to the various esoteric ingredients.

12: Black Ossuary

Grisly trophies decorate Elvytta's unholy sanctum.

Ghastly remains lashed together with hair and sinew form a grotesque totem in the chamber's centre. The walls are lined with skulls and bones, mortared in place using a compound of lime and brain matter.

Charnel Totem: The totem exudes an evil influence, mimicking the effects of a *magical protection* spell designed to ward off evil.

Door: This sturdy iron-bound door is hammered shut with nine silvered steel spikes.

13: Exsanguination Chamber

Here, in her own torture chamber, Yspher imprisoned his demon bride.

A soft, melodic voice echoes from the primordial darkness ahead, its gentle melody hauntingly familiar. As the melody continues, twin blue flames spring to life in the shadows, fixing their unblinking gaze upon yours.

Haunting Lullaby: Characters who remember their mother and hear Elvytta's enchanting song may become shaken for 2d10 minutes.

West Chamber: An assortment of torture devices, kept in pristine condition despite their age, fills this chamber. These include a rack, a cast iron cauldron and an oversized cartwheel festooned with straps hanging from the chimney.

North Chamber: Each of the six cells branching from this chamber holds an iron tub caked with long-dried blood. An array of rusted chains, needles, and copper tubing hangs above each. Depending on your design, each iron tub could also contain a skeletal abomination.

GM Notes

Development: If the characters don't discover locations 12 and 13 they'll likely not encounter Elvytta. If the party lacks the resources to get past the brown mould in location 9, all is not lost. Part of the Black Ossuary (location 12) lies directly below the manor's chapel (location 3). Canny characters could lever up the floorboards therein to access to Elvytta's final resting place.

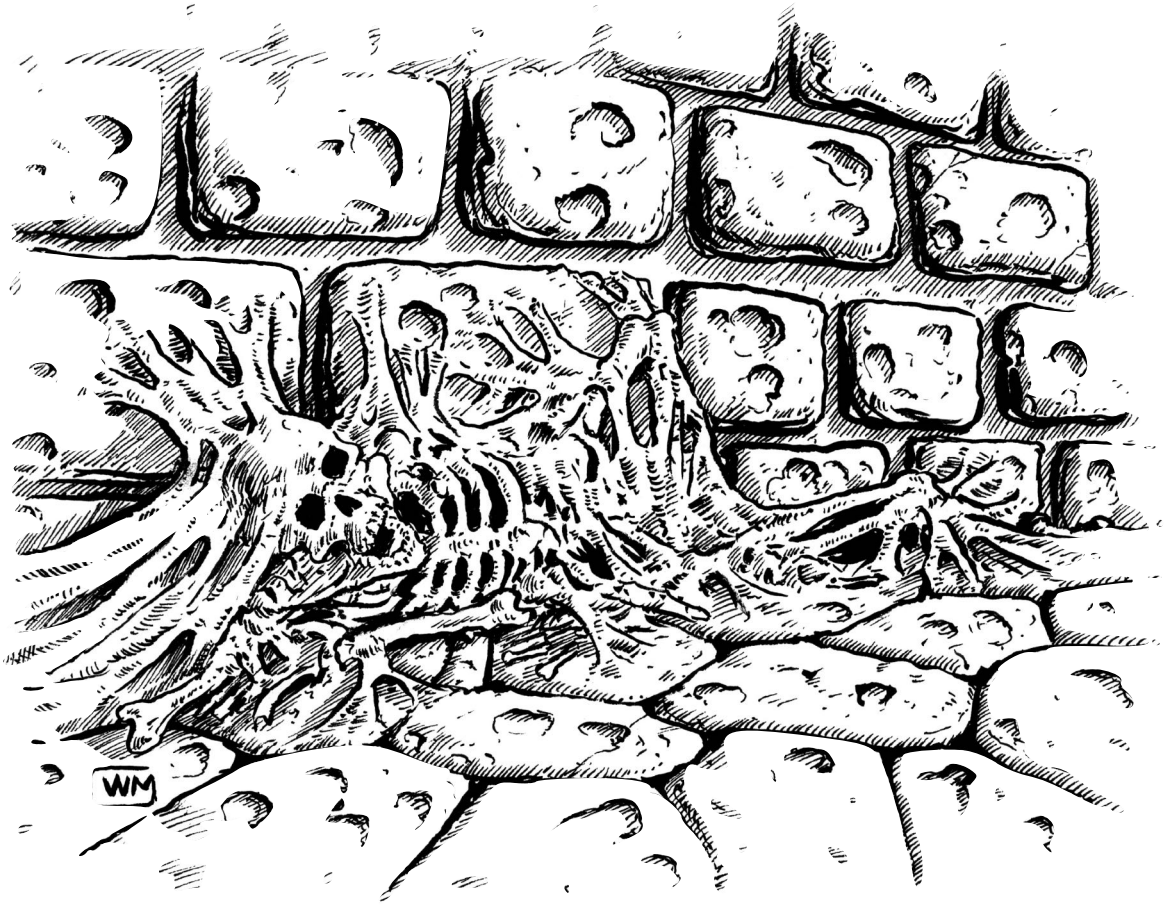
Alternatively, if the party are not under any time constraint in their explorations, they can travel to Dunstone to acquire the knowledge and resources required to defeat the brown mould.

Beguiling Elvytta: Elvytta first tries to sway the characters to her side. Failing that, her foremost concern is to escape her prison.

Conclusion

Even with the ghastly truth of the manor laid bare, many questions remain unanswered. Below are several suggestions on how to continue the story of the house. Feel free to combine several to keep the characters occupied for many months to follow.

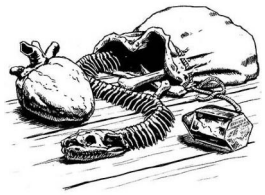
- **Home, Sweet Home:** With the horrors of the House of Yspher defeated, the characters can make the old manor their new base of operations or seek a buyer for the property. Now the manor is safe, however, Aavo Oksanen, grandson of the Lord of Dunstone, contests the legitimacy of their claim to the house. Prospective buyers may have sinister motives for acquiring the manor.
- **Charmed, I'm Sure**: If Elvytta escaped, she returns as the betrothed of some powerful personage. Under this new identity, she recommences her murderous activities and uses her position to make life difficult for the characters.
- **Ashes to Ashes**: If the characters burn down the manor (intentionally or otherwise), Benjam Oksanen, Lord of Dunstone, demands compensation for the destruction of the old manor which he considers his property. In addition, alchemical fires in the basement burn hotly enough to melt the silver seals on Elvytta's prison. Like a dark phoenix, she rises from the ashes and escapes.
- **A Baneful Bloodline**: The portraits found in the gallery suggest Elvytta was not the only creature of her kind. Hunting down any surviving members of her bloodline could become the focus of many new adventures. The name of Hamu Malari, who painted the sinister portraits, and the sombre castle featured in the background provide two valuable clues.
- **A Pernicious Poison**: Whether faced with the threat of Elvytta's return or the decision to hunt down her "family", Yspher's poison could prove indispensable to the characters. If the formula was recovered from location 11, creating more doses is a matter of obtaining the correct ingredients, as well as finding a skilled alchemist to brew the deadly concoction. Even without Yspher's formula, someone with a comparable mastery of alchemy might be able to create a similar compound. Such people are rare, however.
- **A Calamitous Collection**: If the characters recovered the *Testament of Ruin*, any scholar worth his salt can confirm its authenticity. Vieno Rekola (see "Adventure Hooks") is keen to obtain the book, as are many less savoury characters. No doubt the Order of the Watch Eternal would be interested to learn at least one copy survived their pyres. As the holy knights of Darlen, god of light and law, the order cannot abide the existence of the tomes and the threat they represent to Ashlar. Can the characters aid them in tracking down any surviving volumes and avert disaster?



Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage

Urban, Ashlar (Dulwich), Nameless Mage

Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands, but much of the area's ancient history has been forgotten—lost to time's remorseless advance and the fading memories of even the longest-lived folk. However, buried or lost fragments of the past yet remain and wait patiently to be found again. A wealthy merchant, carrying out long-needed repairs in the deepest part of his cellar, makes a curious discovery—an ancient stone trapdoor hidden in a sealed-up room—and needs a band of brave adventurers to explore whatever lies below.



Dungeon Background

Centuries ago, another settlement stood where Dulwich now stands. Much of the area's ancient history has been forgotten –lost to time and memory. However, some buried or lost fragments of the past yet remain.

Ancient History: Centuries ago, a wizard raised a tower and therein conducted blasphemous and terrible research. The wizard engaged in even more terrible doings in the cellar below the tower–raising the dead, summoning demonic extra-planar creatures and so on. However, even the mightiest wizard will eventually succumb to the Final Enemy–death. After they departed the mortal realm, their tower–eschewed by the commonfolk–slowly crumbled and fell. Thus, finally, did the mage, their tower, and their blasphemous doings pass from the world and memory.

Recent Events: A few days ago, the merchant Antero Kalervo engaged a stonemason to repair a section of an old, sagging wall in his cellar. During the work, the stonemason–Matias Hirvi–removed some of the old stones to better repair the wall. Doing so, he discovered a small sealed-up chamber beyond. A cautious man who knows the local lore and rumours about Foundation Way and what might lie beneath, Matias did not enlarge the hole or enter the chamber himself. However, by the light of a flaring torch, he could make out a stone trapdoor set into the floor. For Matias, this was a problem for his employer to solve.

Now: Concerned–and in truth, a little excited–about what Matias found in his cellar, Antero wants to find some suitably skilled individuals to explore beyond the newly discovered trapdoor. Refer to "The Adventure Begins" to determine how to bring Antero and the characters together.

Who is the Nameless Mage?

Essentially, the identity of the Nameless Mage is irrelevant to the immediate adventure. While the characters may be motivated to identify them and find out more about them, this information is not required to run the adventure; some things can remain a mystery. However, if you suspect the characters may pursue this matter further, you should generate details of the Nameless Mage and scatter clues to their identity throughout the Lost Cellar. Thus, the characters can pursue this matter further if they so desire. Design your own NPC or use one of those presented below:

- **Perttu Meurakas** was one of the first settlers to build their home in Dulwich. He discovered the ancient, buried settlement below the town and enthusiastically pillaged its secrets. He disappeared during one such subterranean expedition.
- **Siduri Kisiga** dwelled in the locality a millennia ago. Obsessed with eternal life and the undeath, she pursued research of a diabolical nature. Eventually, she succeeded in opening a gate to the Ashen Plains–Orcus's domain–in the Abyss. Her final fate remains unknown.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on *Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage* by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Guess What Antero Found in His Cellar?** The characters overhear two locals gossiping about Antero and what he has discovered in his cellar. If they are curious and ask more questions, they are directed to Antero's house on Foundation Way.
- **Guess What I Found in My Cellar?** The characters are in a tavern, perhaps the Dancing Bear (location 4 on the Dulwich town map), when one of them overhears two men. It transpires that one of the men, Antero Kalervo, employed a stonemason to do some work in his cellar–repairing parts of an old sagging wall. During the work, they found something odd, and Antero is looking for someone to investigate what lies below his house.
- **What's in My Cellar?** The characters are obviously adventurers, and adventurers have a reputation for exploring odd, strange and potentially dangerous places. Antero Kalervo approaches them–perhaps in a tavern, the marketplace or while they visit another local business –and explains his situation.

To facilitate any of the adventure hooks detailed above, refer to the "House and the Cellar" for more information. However, they come to learn of the mysterious stone trapdoor in Antero's cellar he offers them a reward appropriate for your campaign to investigate.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Lost Cellar of the Nameless Mage and Antero Kalervo. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. Dulwich is not the first settlement to be built on this site. Some parts of the old town are built on the rubble and ruin of a much earlier settlement.
2. It is not uncommon for the cellars of houses in the old part of town to have queer or odd architecture. Every year or so, someone discovers a hitherto unknown room, chamber or dead-end passage beneath their house.
3. Antero Kalervo is a wealthy, successful merchant; he could move to a better part of town, but his family have lived in the house on Foundation Way for generations.
4. Antero Kalervo presents himself as a successful merchant dealing in a variety of things. While he has had success as

a merchant, he also has connections with some of Dulwich's criminal gangs.

5. Some say the catacombs below the Lawgiver's Hall (location 2 on the Dulwich map) have been dug too deep and that foul things have begun to stir in the deep, unexplored caverns below the town.
6. A lot of the houses on Foundation Way are in imminent danger of collapse—just look at the Crooked House (location 14 on the Dulwich map).

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The House on Foundation Way

Antero Kalervo's house stands on Foundation Way.

- **Foundation Way**: Built upon the ruins of a former settlement, the homes here feature deep cellars. Many are rumoured to connect to the ancient tunnels below Dulwich, making the homes useful for criminal gangs and those wishing to move about undetected.

Antero's family have dwelled on Foundation Way for generations. Although Antero could afford to move to a nicer part of Dulwich, he chooses to remain in the family home. The home features two levels of cellars; currently, Antero does not use the lower level; he plans to, though, and hence engaged Matias to do some repairs.

Antero Kalervo

Antero Kalervo (LN middle-aged male human) dwells on Foundation Way. He is a successful merchant who chooses to dwell in his old family home.

His hair peppered with grey, this tall and slim middle-aged man wears fine robes and boots. A friendly smile creases his time-worn face.

This successful merchant wants to make use of the deep cellar to store certain items of stock and so on. (He has a wide range of interests and buys and sells many things.) He can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Antero is a skilled merchant. He is growing more uncomfortable with each passing day at the tensions between the town's ruler, Wido Gall, and the merchant class. He is a family man dedicated to the community.

Mannerisms: Straight-talking but a little excitable at times Antero speaks quickly—sometimes, his words all blur into one.

Background: Antero was born in Dulwich and loves the town and its people.

Connections: Antero is an upstanding member of the community and is rarely troubled by exciting matters. However, he has several connections with other merchants the characters may find useful. Design these as appropriate for your campaign; if you have set this adventure in Dulwich, Antero knows Bernhard "Badger" Ilmatoivia, owner of Badger's (location 15 on the Dulwich map).

Matias Hirvi

Matias Hirvi (N middle-aged male human) is a skilled stonemason. He has been hired by Antero Kalervo to carry out some repairs to the merchant's cellar.

Stocky and clad in much-worn leather work clothes, this bald, pot-bellied middle-aged man has a slightly hunched back but is obviously still strong.

Matias was born in Dulwich and knows much about the town. He knows about Foundation Way's history and can relate rumours 1 and 2 on "Whispers & Rumours" to the party.

Personality: Brusque and taciturn, Matias is not the most chatty of folk. He enjoys a drink and often suffers its aftereffects in the mornings. People who know the stonemason's ways often wait until the afternoon to discuss important matters with him.

Mannerisms: Why use many words when fewer will do? Matias is not rude, but he speaks slowly and considers everything he says carefully. "Better to trip with the feet than the tongue" is his motto.

Background: Matias was born and raised in Dulwich. He has worked on many of the town's more impressive buildings.

Connections: In demand as a master stonemason, Matias knows several important people throughout the town; one of those people is in need of a brave band of adventurers. See "Further Adventures" for more details.

The Cellar

Two levels of cellars lie below Antero's family home. A single staircase links the two levels with the house proper.

The Upper Level: The family use the upper level of cellars for storage; they contain old furniture, trunks of clothes, the personal effects of deceased family members, and so on. There is nothing of value or interest here.

The Lower Level: An old wooden door, swollen with age, lies at the bottom of the stairs. Beyond lies a small labyrinthine of rooms. The rooms are empty, and even a cursory glance shows they are little visited—dust and grime lie thickly on the floor. The architecture and construction of the lower level are evidently much older than the level above. Here, small drifts of crumbled mortar lie against walls, some stones have come loose, and the floor is of uneven flags.

Matias's tools are scattered across the floor of a small room in a distant part of the cellar. Beyond, a pile of stones lies at the base of a sagging wall.

Charismatic characters can convince Matias to break down the rest of the false wall with honeyed words of threats of violence. Such characters must be present while the stonemason works, however.

- When the characters are ready to proceed, refer to "Stairs into Darkness" (location 1).

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **Stairs into Darkness**: Hidden behind an old wall in Antero Kalervo's cellar, a difficult-to-open stone trapdoor provides access to the Lost Cellar.
2. **Antechamber**: Here once stood the Nameless Mage's sentient guardians.
3. **Festering Experiments**: Herein, the Nameless Mage kept certain foul experiments. They yet linger in the endless darkness—and they hunger.
4. **Cavern of the Dreaming Stone**: This small cavern holds a singular item—the *Dreaming Stone*.
5. **Chamber of Pain**: Dusty and decaying instruments of torture betray this room's original purpose.
6. **Storeroom of Horror**: Lined with sagging wooden shelves, this room held the supplies the Nameless Mage needed for their experiments.
7. **The Hideous Laboratory**: The Nameless Mage once carried out their foul and blasphemous experiments in this chamber. Their leavings yet lie herein.
8. **Rubble-Choked Stair**: Rubble chokes this narrow passageway. Further egress is impossible without extensive excavations or magic.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills the Lost Cellar.

Decrepitude & Decay: No living creature has been in the Lost Cellar for centuries; thus, dust and grime lie thickly everywhere. The air smells musty and stale.

Ceilings: The Lost Cellar's vaulted dressed-stone ceilings are eight feet high in corridors and ten feet high in rooms. The ceilings have begun to sag in places, but no collapses have yet occurred.

Walls: The Lost Cellar's walls are of dressed stone. Rusty iron torch sconces hang from the walls spaced to provide bright light in chambers but only dim light in passageways.

Floors: The floors throughout the Lost Cellar, except in location 4, are of stone paves. In some places, the paces have shifted to create areas of difficult terrain.

Old Wooden Doors: Old, swollen wooden doors ward some of the Lost Cellar's various chambers.

Dungeon Dressing

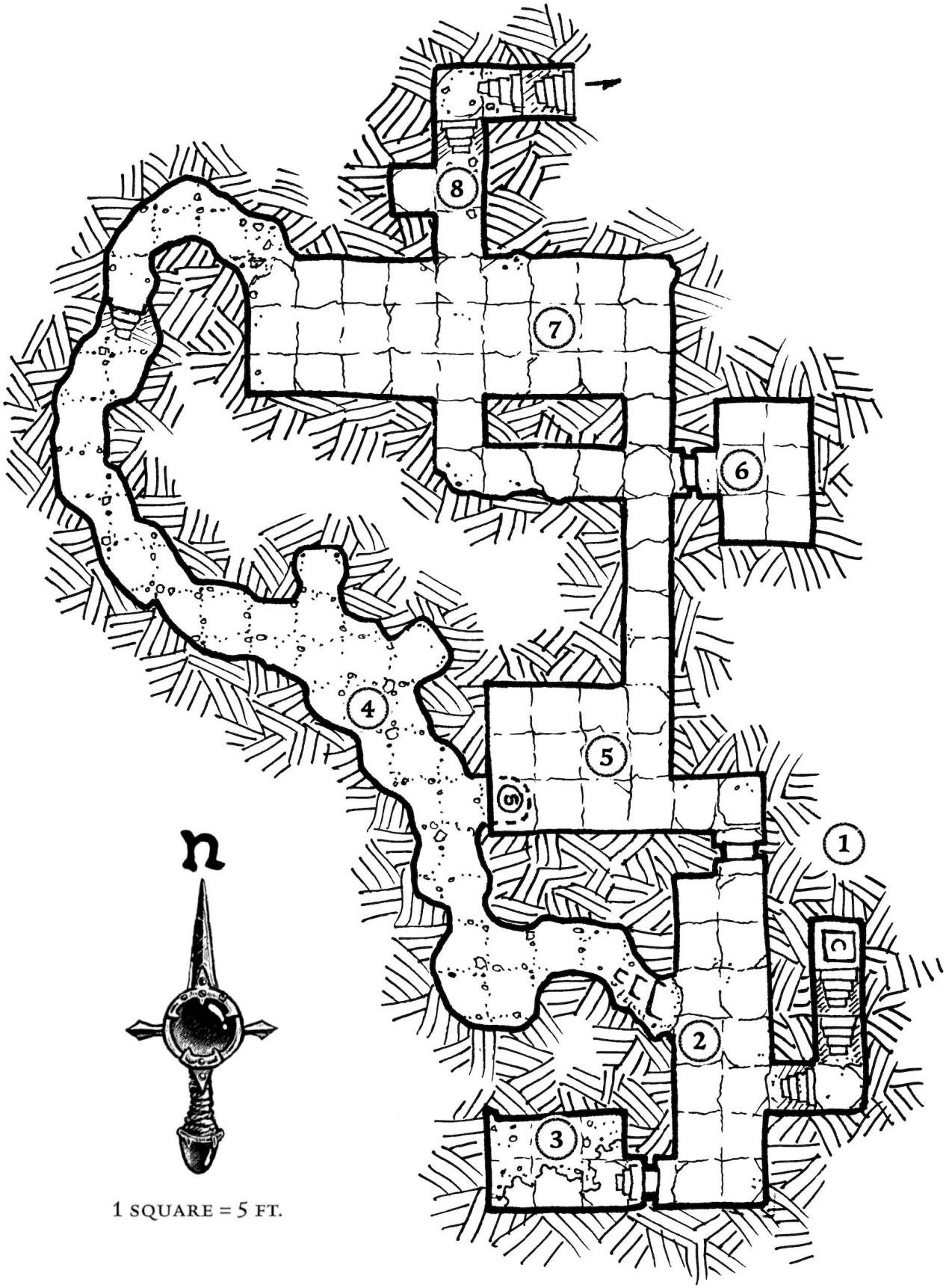
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Ancient, dusty cobwebs hang from the ceiling; tiny silvery cocoons hang within.
2. A stone has fallen from the wall, revealing the rough bedrock behind.
3. A smattering of small, unidentifiable bones covers the uneven paved floor.
4. Faint scratches on the wall could be the claw marks of a creature or the result of desultory graffitiing.
5. A small pile of mouldering wood may have once been a piece of furniture. The smell of dampness hangs in the air, and a patch of nearby wall and ceiling are slightly darker than the surrounding stone.
6. Small straw-like growths of thin stone hang from the ceiling. (To someone versed in subterranean matters, such as a dwarf, these growths hint at the great age of the Lost Cellar.)
7. A torch sconce hangs upside down on the wall. Investigation reveals one of the iron spikes used to hold it in place has sheered off as if hit by considerable force.
8. The ceiling sags here, and dust, grit and crumbled mortar have filtered down to create a small pile of debris below the sagging area.
9. A five-foot-long section of wall has collapsed to form a pile of rubble. The area is difficult terrain.
10. White mould speckled with green dots grows over the floor. A character wise in nature lore knows that the mould is harmless.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. Barely visible stains on the floor show where something once bled. The stains are greyish-black, suggesting that whatever bled here had odd blood or ichor.
2. A flat and dusty pouch lies on the floor by a wall. The pouch's contents have long since mouldered and rotted away, and their leavings have stained the inside of the pouch. This was a spell component pouch.
3. An old gold coin—strangely octagonal-shaped—has been forced in the gap between two paving stones. The carvings on the olden coin are worn and illegible.
4. A small, ragged carving on a stone wall shows a three-lobed eye. There is more than a hint of madness about the faintly incised carving.
5. A skull lies face down; its nose has been crushed.
6. An odd damp patch on the wall is vaguely suggestive of a humanoid's shape.
7. Deep scratch marks on the floor suggest something heavy—perhaps a chest—was dragged through the area.
8. A rat's skeleton lies amid a heap of fine dust and grit. Strangely, a tiny mouldering leather collar lies amid the bones.
9. Scraps of faded and mouldering parchment lie on the floor; the drawings on them may be anatomical in nature.
10. A small and cracked white gem, a pearl (worth 50 gp), lies forgotten amid the dust and grime.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1 SQUARE = 5 FT.

GM Notes

***The Experiments**: The Nameless Mage could have kept almost anything here; skeletons, zombies, ghouls, summoned minor demons or devil or something else entirely could lurk here. The things have languished here—trapped and undying—for uncountable centuries.*

***Slime, Fungus and Lichen**: These growths can be wholly mundane or they could be dangerous in some way. They could also grow on the creatures trapped in this chamber giving them an outlandish appearance that may confuse or terrify the characters!*

1: Stairs into Darkness

Hidden behind an old wall in Antero Kalervo's cellar, a difficult-to-open stone trapdoor enables access to the hitherto unknown Lost Cellar.

A stone trapdoor fits snuggly into the floor; an iron ring set in its centre is thick with rust and dust.

Stone Trapdoor: The stone trapdoor is heavy and has not been raised for centuries. Consequently, it is hard to open. Because of its location, only one person at a time can try to raise it.

Stale Air: Stale-smelling air wells from the passage below the trapdoor once it is opened.

Stone Steps: These grimy and dust-covered stairs descend through a half landing. The stairs, but not the landing, are difficult terrain.

2: Antechamber

Here once stood the Nameless Mage's sentient guardians.

Two swollen wooden doors pierce the walls of this long, thin chamber. To the west, a set of rough-hewn steps descend into a cave.

Rough-Hewn Steps: Hacked from the bedrock, these rough-hewn steps are uneven; they are difficult terrain.

3: Festering Experiments

Herein, the Nameless Mage kept certain foul experiments. They yet linger in the endless darkness—and they hunger.

A fetid stench of indescribably horror wells forth from this sunken, rubbish-strewn chamber. Slime, fungus and lichens of unwholesome hues cover much of the floor.

Stone Door: This barred stone door is heavy and difficult to open. The door opens outwards into location 2, and a thick, rusting iron bar keeps it closed. The door has no handle on the inside.

Fetid Stench: The long stench of the experiments "living" in this chamber fills the air.

Steep Stone Steps: This short but precipitous set of stone steps was deliberately designed to be difficult to traverse. It costs three squares of movement to traverse this near-vertical flight of stone steps.

Slime, Fungus and Lichen: A riot of fungus and lichen grow amid a patch of thick slime. Squares filled with such growths are difficult terrain.

4: Cavern of the Dreaming Stone

This small cavern holds a singular item—the *Dreaming Stone*.

This long, slender natural cavern undulates through the eternal dark of the Under Realm.

Rough Hewn Steps: Hacked into the bedrock, these steps are rough and even; they are difficult terrain.

Cavern Ceiling: The rough and uneven cavern ceiling undulates between five and seven feet above the floor. Tall characters must watch out or bump their head.

Cavern Floor: The rough and uneven rubble-strewn cavern floor is difficult terrain.

Cave Walls: The cavern walls are of rough natural stone.

The Dreaming Stone

The *Dreaming Stone* stands in the small niche under the secret trapdoor in the floor in location #5.

A jagged shard of obsidian juts from the cavern floor. It clearly does not match the surrounding floor and ceilings. Odd runes of a malignant demeanour cover the front and back of the ebon stone.

Investigating the Stone: A character giving the stone even a cursory investigation can determine the following:

- It was once much taller, but a portion of it has been snapped off. There is no black rubble around the stone, suggesting the top part was taken elsewhere.
- Faint brownish discolouration on the top of the stone suggests it was bathed—perhaps repeatedly—in blood. (If the characters have not yet found the trapdoor in location #5, this hints at its presence).

GM Notes

***The Dreaming Stone**: The Dreaming Stone is a remnant of an ancient pre-human civilisation that once claimed the lands that are now the Duchy of Ashlar. It is a mysterious relic which could play as much or as little role in your campaign as you deem wise. However, you decide to handle the Dreaming Stone it is not an object whose mysteries should be easily unravelled.*

The Nameless Mage discovered the Dreaming Stone while digging this cellar and studied it remorselessly. The stone has many strange properties; chief amongst these is the ability to slip strange dreaming of bygone times into the slumbers of those sleeping nearby.

Refer to "The Dreaming Stone" under "Further Adventures" for more information and suggestions.

GM Notes

***Storeroom of Horror**: The Storeroom of Horror provides you with an excellent opportunity to suggest the tenor and theme of the Nameless Mage's blasphemous research and experimentations. Modify any of the entries on the list presented under location 6 as you see fit.*

5: Chamber of Pain

Dusty and decaying instruments of torture betray this room's original purpose.

A bench laden with clamps, knives and instruments of torture stands against the north and south walls of this chamber. Another bench—sinisterly stained and fitted with manacles—stands in the centre of the room.

Decaying Torture Equipment: Various instruments of torture are scattered about the room; all are now rotting or rusting and not fit for their normal purpose. Their presence, though, hints at the terrible deeds once wrought here.

Secret Trapdoor: Cunningly disguised as a flagstone, this trapdoor is operated by pushing in a nearby stone in the wall at floor level.

6: Storeroom of Horror

Lined with sagging wooden shelves, this room held the supplies the Nameless Mage needed for their experiments.

Sagging wooden shelves filled with a vast array of rusting and rotting equipment and other decomposed and unidentifiable things line this chamber's walls.

Sagging Wood Shelves: These shelves are in an advanced state of decrepitude and decay and cannot take any additional weight. Characters incautiously examining their contents cause them to collapse. Characters searching the sagging wooden shelves may find one or more of the following items:

1. A small wooden casket holds dry, grey earth. The earth is very fine, and nothing grows within.
2. A small ornate casket holds two long, curved fangs. These are a vampire's fangs.
3. A small iron cage holds a small bird's skeleton.
4. A long but shallow box holds a dozen red candles. The candles give off an unpleasant, pungent aroma if lit.
5. An old and worn oversized leather wallet holds a silver dissection kit.
6. Six empty fragile glass beakers stand in a line.
7. A large bag, seemingly filled with nothing but fine grey and black ash, leans against the wall.
8. A small tin box holds a carefully coiled length of jet-black hair. If uncoiled, the hair is over three feet long!
9. A finely made small wooden coffer holds a collection of finger and toe bones.
10. Crystallised honey fills a large wide-mouthed earthen jar. A preserved vampire's fangless head is buried deep in the opaque honey.

7: The Hideous Laboratory

The Nameless Mage once carried out their foul and blasphemous experiments in this chamber. Their leavings yet lie herein.

Dust-shrouded tables covered in all manner of odd and esoteric equipment line this chamber's walls. More tables—similarly cluttered—stand in the middle of the room.

Tables: Stout workbenches stand about the room. All are covered in a vast array of old rotting and rusting equipment of archaic appearance.

Characters searching the chamber may find one or more of the following items among the rubbish:

1. A bleached white skull—probably from a human—fills a wide-mouth glass jar. Faint marks on the side of the jar suggest it was once filled with a yellowish liquid.
2. Brownish stains cover the blade of this small rusting knife. The knife has a smooth bone handle.
3. The elemental symbols for air, earth, fire and water decorate this circular iron amulet attached to a scrap of sundered chain. On the amulet's reverse side is the elder symbol for death.
4. A scattering of bluish glass shards lies amid the other rubbish and equipment.
5. A jagged chunk of transparent crystal lies on a battered bronze plate. A character looking through the crystal sees nothing but an odd blurred image of what they gaze at.
6. An upright wooden frame holds a sheet of parchment. The illegible words and pictures on the parchment are nothing but a suggestion of what they once were
7. An ink pen crafted from a long, thin bone of unknown origin rests on a pewter plate next to an empty ink pot.
8. Scraps of burnt parchment are scattered over the table. The few legible pieces seem to hold the drawing of a convoluted and complex pentagram.
9. Silver powder half-fills an iron coffer.
10. A thick book—with a ragged burn all the way through it lies under a table in a dusty corner. Curiously, all the book's pages are completely blank.

8: Rubble-Choked Stair

Rubble chokes this narrow passageway. Further egress is impossible without extensive excavations or magic.

A great mass of rubble—broken stone blocks and the like—block progress up this stair.

Stone Steps: A smattering of rubble covers these stone steps. Treat the stairs as difficult terrain.

Rubble: A great collapse of rubble has blocked these stairs; they are impassable without the use of magic or extensive and time-consuming excavations. If a character should explore using *gaseous form* or similar magic, they find themselves in the cellar of a nearby building.

GM Notes

***The Hideous Laboratory**: The Hideous Laboratory provides you with another excellent opportunity to suggest the tenor and theme of the Nameless Mage's blasphemous research and experimentations. Modify any of the entries on the list presented under location 7 as you see fit.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have completed their exploration of the Lost Cellar, the location does not necessarily have to fade from the campaign. Use these notes to facilitate further play either in Dulwich or the Lost Cellar. However, the characters are—of course—welcome to head off on their next adventure.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath.

When the characters emerge from the Lost Cellar and explain to Antero what they have found, he is both horrified and intrigued. Obviously, he is relieved to learn the characters have slain or destroyed any of the foul creatures lurking below his house, but he is also excited about the intriguing possibilities of further discoveries to be made.

Antero's first order of business is to clean out all the rubbish and leavings lying in the Lost Cellar. He will struggle to find workers willing to engage in such work without the promise of protection. Who better to offer that protection than the characters?

Further Adventures

Dulwich, the houses on Foundation Way (or perhaps more accurately, their cellars), the Nameless Mage and the *Dreaming Stone* all offer the possibility of further adventure.

Further Explorations

It is easy to add a secret door into the Lost Cellar, which leads to deeper, more extensive tunnels. Alternatively, further adventures could lie beyond the collapsed stairs in location 8. Another part of the Nameless Mage's cellar, or something else entirely, could await the characters.

Alternatively, the collapse could lead to the cellars of a nearby house. The owners—particularly if they are up to no good—could be less than pleased to discover nosey adventurers in their home.

Matias's Contacts

Matias Hirvi is a skilled stonemason. He was born in Dulwich and knows much about the town, its lore and history.

As a master stonemason, Matias has worked on repairs or effected alterations to many of the most prominent buildings in the town. Consequently, he knows—as customers, not friends—many of the town's movers and shakers. If he comes across any odd "architectural anomalies" on future jobs that require investigation, he recommends the characters to his employer. Alternatively, while working on another job, he could learn of an employer's unrelated problem—perhaps bandits have attacked the employer's distant holdings or a family member has disappeared—and recommend the characters as trustworthy folk who get things done.

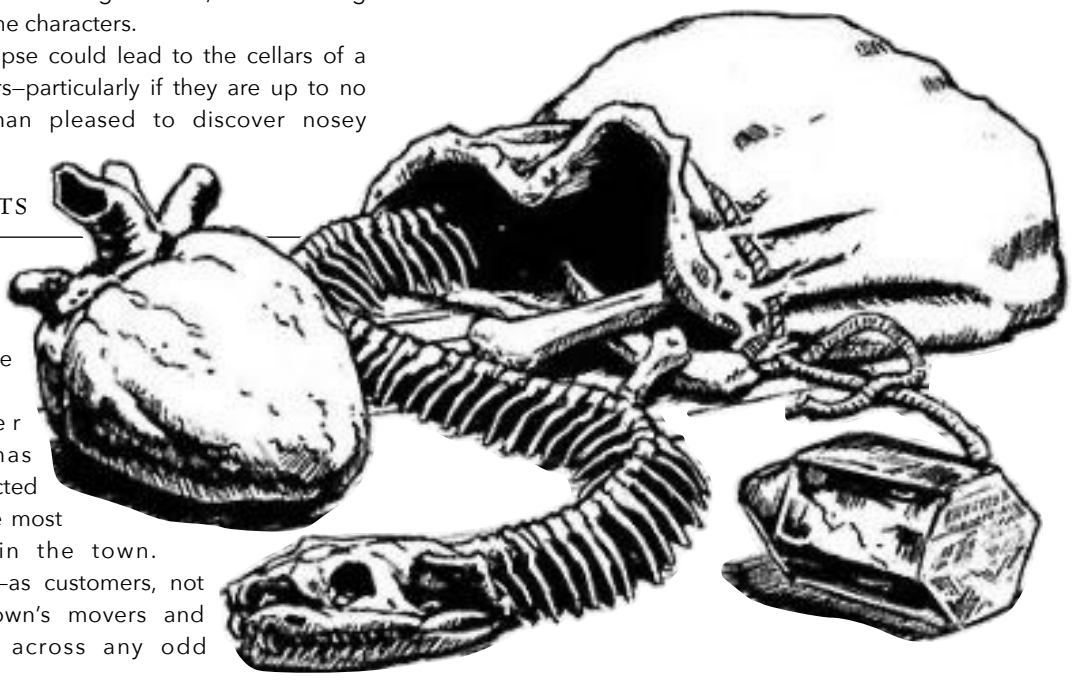
The Dreaming Stone

The *Dreaming Stone* is a remnant of an ancient, pre-human civilisation; as such, it could hold many secrets and be particularly fascinating to any wizards, priests and the like in the party. Depending on your design, it could be of elven, troglodyte or serpentfolk origin. It could even be an artefact from an extinct giant or dragon civilisation.

The *Dreaming Stone* juts from the floor in location 4. Thus, its full extent and size remain unknown. The portion of the *Dreaming Stone* visible in the Lost Cellar could be but the tip of a much larger object. Deeper caverns below the Lost Cellar could intersect with the lower portions of the *Dreaming Stone*, which could be truly colossal in scope if you so desire.

The key to understanding the *Dreaming Stone* and its secrets is deciphering the runes graven on its surface. This should be far more difficult than merely casting *comprehend languages* or some other minor divination upon them.

You should also decide how the Nameless Mage used—or tried to use—the *Dreaming Stone* in their research. Additionally, why is the *Dreaming Stone's* tip missing, and can the characters locate it?



Lost Eyrie of the Demon King

Hills & Mountains

Harpies once dwelt in the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King. Here they worshipped their demonic lord and engaged in certain terrible rituals before they were driven away. Now, an otherworldly evil festers in the bowels of their abandoned lair. And now that evil has attracted a powerful servant—a servant wreaking death and destruction on the surrounding countryside and villages. The local villagers need adventurers to eradicate this terrible threat, but just getting to its lair is dangerous! And once they have reached their goal will the heroes realise that something even worse lurks in the eternal dark of the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King?

Dungeon Background

A century ago, a pack of ferocious and depraved harpies dwelt in the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King and terrorised the surrounding area. The Eyrie served as a secure lair for the harpies, as most humans could not reach it.

The place was sacred to Pazuzu—the so-called King of Demons and the harpies' master. The Eyrie had another secret, however. Deep in its depths, the harpy sorcerer, Gyrtuskarr, opened a small portal to Pazuzu's Abyssal realm. Gyrtuskarr believed she was descended from her king's own seed and sought to prove herself to her father by expanding the portal from the Abyss to the Material Plane through bloody veneration and sacrifice. Eventually, a group of heroic adventurers slew most of the pack, drove the survivors far away and put an end to Gyrtuskarr's insane plan.

For long years, the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King lay forgotten and abandoned. Set halfway up a sheer cliff, it was a difficult place to reach for those without the ability to fly. The Eyrie's exact location was eventually forgotten, and the place—and its harpy mistresses—gradually faded into lurid and fanciful folklore. The Eyrie lay quiet and abandoned until a new threat claimed it as its own. This new threat—perhaps a young dragon, wyvern or manticore—has begun to threaten the locality and prey on the peasants eking out a living in the nearby settlements.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the dungeon:

- **Portentous Dream**: One of the characters—preferably a paladin or good-aligned cleric—begins to have hideous dreams of a most unsettling sort. In them, the dreamer sees a black, feathery darkness oozing from a cave high up on a cliff. As the party pass through the wilderness close to the Lost Eyrie, the character recognises certain distinctive landmarks from their dream that lead them to the Demon King's lost lair.
- **Rampaging Monster**: A ferocious and powerful winged predator is using the Lost Eyrie as a base from which to prey upon the surrounding settlements. The characters discover the aftermath of an attack on a nearby village. The peasants know where the beast lairs, they just can't do anything about it…
- **Tavern Rumour**: The characters are in a tavern when they hear another adventurer, Aapo Kare (LN male human fighter 3), telling of his discovery of a hitherto unknown cave buried high up in a cliff. If the characters get the adventurer drunker, he reveals the cave's location before passing out.

What Claims the Eyrie?

This Dungeon Backdrop assumes a flying monster (or two) has claimed the eyrie as its own. The Eyrie's new denizen could be a dragon, wyvern, roc, manticore or even a small pack of harpies. Modify the descriptions of locations 2 and 3 to better suit whatever dwells within.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can try to gather information (which may or may not be true based on your setup) about the Lost Eyrie of the Demon King. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp in drinks, bribes and so on. Use this list to determine what the character learns.

1. A long time ago, adventurers slew a pack of foul, half-bird/half-women who dwelt in a lair piercing a high cliff. The dungeon's location has been long lost.
2. The King of Demons is said to have once dwelt in the Lost Eyrie of the same name.
3. An adventurer reported spying a dragon emerging from a small cave high up on a cliff. (Potentially false rumour depending on your design.)
4. A century ago, a gang of harpies despoiled the countryside before being driven away.
5. No one and nothing lives in the vicinity of the cave…now.
6. Ten years ago, a hunter claimed to have climbed up to a cave high on a cliff. She claimed the cave was some kind of temple, but she did not explore too deeply inside.

Pazuzu

Epithets: King of Demons
Symbol: A black feather dripping blood
Favoured Weapon: Gutripper (the harpies of Pazuzu's Fury) or longsword (all other worshippers)
Raiment: None
Worshippers: The harpies of Pazuzu's Fury
Teachings: Power is all. Kill in the King's name, and power will be granted to you. Take what you want, and kill or subjugate any who oppose you.
Holy Text: None
Additional Notes: Pazauzu delights in possessing mortals and corrupting them utterly. Commonly-known legends hold that merely speaking Pazuzu's name is enough to draw the demon lord's attention. Folk speaking his name are in danger of being possessed and forced to do unspeakable things.
Temples & Shrines: No temples or shrines dedicated to Pazuzu are known to be extant in civilised lands.

The Surrounding Locality

The Lost Eyrie of the Demon King pierces a steep cliff about 65 feet above the ground. The cliff is vertiginous, but skilled climbers or a well-equipped party should be able to reach the dungeon without too many problems.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Splintered and cracked bones lie about this narrow rock shelf. The condition of the bones shows something powerful predated upon them. The skeletal fragments are identifiable as humanoid in origin.
2. A smattering of sickly wildflowers grows across this narrow, sloping ledge.
3. A small cave—barely five-foot wide and ten-foot deep—pierces the cliff. It is dry inside.
4. A bird's nest fills a shallow depression in the cliff. As the characters draw near, two large birds burst from the nest. The nearest character may fall from the cliff if the birds surprise them.
5. Birds wheel and dive in the air. Some of the more aggressive birds—warped by the proximity of the nearby Abyssal gate—may "dive-bomb" climbing characters.
6. Dark clouds scud across the sky as the characters climb toward the Lost Eyrie. It starts to rain heavily as the characters pull themselves inside; when they leave, the cliffs will be slippery and wet.
7. A section of the cliff is unstable; when the first character reaches it, some small rocks fall away, narrowly missing the next climber.
8. Bone-strewn ledges provide easy places to rest once the bones are swept aside.
9. A sapling grows from a narrow ledge; it provides easy handholds and a modicum of concealment.
10. An overhang blocks the character's progress.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surroundings. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A gold ring glimmerings upon the middle finger of this decomposing left hand. Judging by the sharp bone shard at the hand's wrist, it was torn or ripped from the unfortunate's arm.
2. A rope anchored with iron spikes driven into the cliff face leads upwards to location 1. The rope is hanging in a shallow crevice in the rock. It could have been here for some time and may or may not be strong enough to support climbers.
3. Dung covers the ground below the cave entrance. Some of the dung is fresh, indicating that something left it here not too long ago.
4. A large, cracked scale of the appropriate type lies upside down on a rocky ledge.
5. Streaks of dried blood decorate the rock. A character examining the stains realises they were caused by something flying or being carried by a flying creature, to the cave entrance.
6. Birds' nests festoon the cliff's nooks and crannies; some are occupied, while others are abandoned.
7. A backpack—one of its straps torn off—is snagged on an outcrop of rock. The pack is sodden and contains wet clothes and rotten food. A careful search also uncovers a faded, water-stained map of the locality.
8. An outcropping of rock above a small hollow in the cliff has been carved to depict a snarling, demonic face. The carving is an unsettling, hateful thing. (It depicts Pazuzu in all his malign glory.)
9. A bone-strewn ledge seemingly holds nothing but rusting and rotten equipment. A close search, however, reveals 15 gp, 37 sp and a coiled 50-foot-long silk rope stored in a waterproof sack.
10. A path of shallow hand- and footholds lead upwards to the eyrie's entrance.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **The Climb Perilous**: A vertiginous cliff, and a perilous climb, protect the Lost Eyrie from casual exploration.
2. **Lair of the Eyrie Lord**: Herein did harpies of old worship the demon lord, Pazuzu. A large, winged predator now lairs in this hall.
3. **Altar of the Demon King**: Centuries ago, the harpies eviscerated uncountable sacrifices to venerate the King of Demons on this altar.
4. **Into the Abyssal Depths**: The spiral staircase here descends to a deeper sub-level.
5. **Empty Antechamber**: This empty chamber lies about 20 feet below location 4.
6. **The Abyssal Font**: This chapel was built around a planar portal linking the Prime Material Plane to the Abyss.
7. **The Choked Stair**: This staircase once led to a larger complex; it is now choked with rubble and impassable.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

Ceilings: The ceilings are roughly 12 ft. high.

Stone Walls: The walls are of dressed stone and are in fair condition. In places, moss and lichens grow on the walls, and water oozes through the mortar.

Flagstone Floor: The floor's flagstones have started to shift and move under time's remorseless influence, but generally, they do not inhibit movement.

Wooden Door: Doors open into the room or space beyond.

Dungeon Dressing

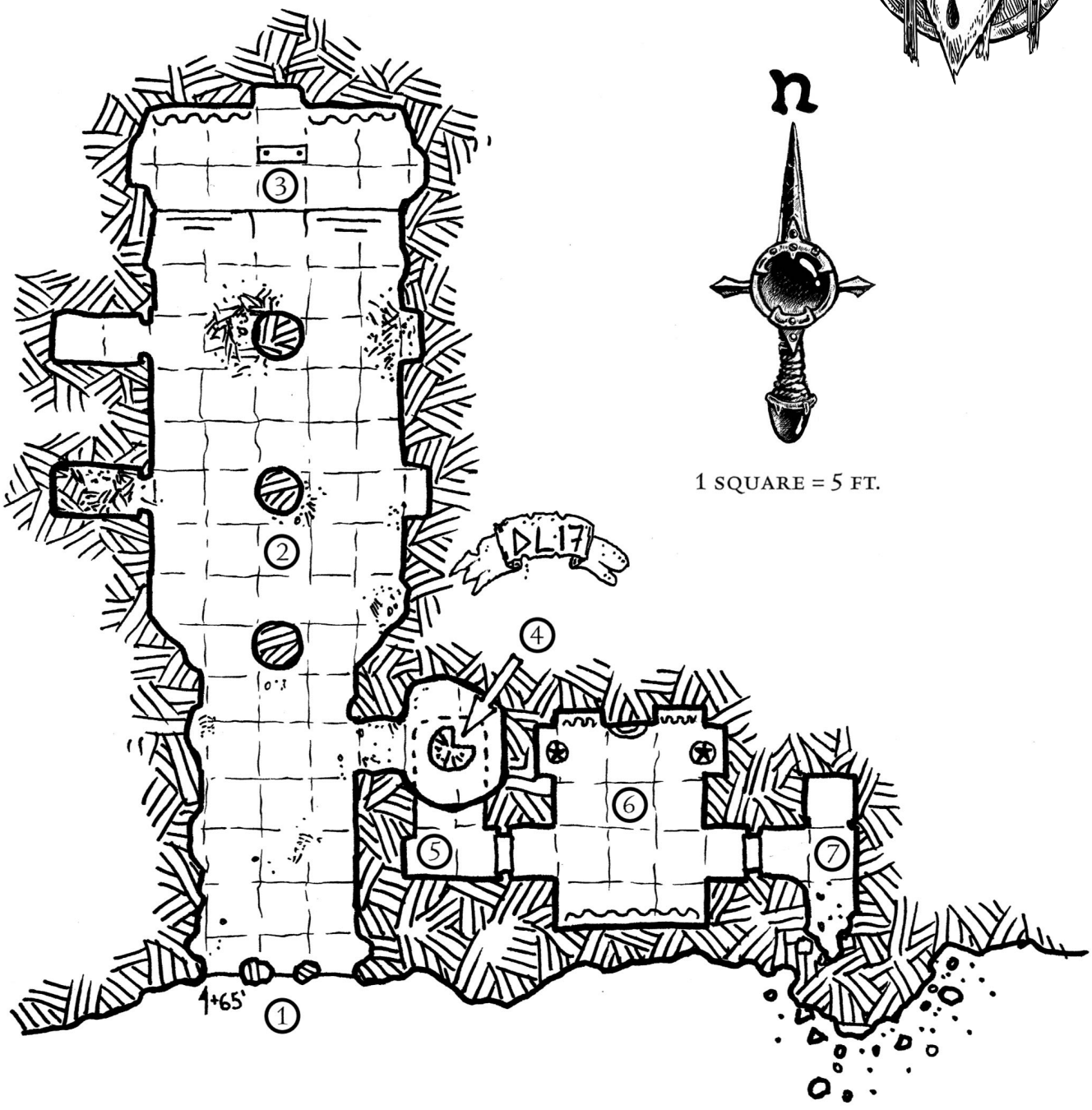
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Cracked bones, some with shreds of decomposing flesh, lie about the floor to create an area of difficult terrain.
2. Scratches and gouges on the walls or floor show where the Lost Eyrie's resident sharpened its claws.
3. Water oozes through cracks in the wall or floor to form a small puddle on the floor.
4. Flecks of faded paint yet cling to the wall; what the picture once depicted is impossible to determine.
5. Several chunks of stone have fallen from the wall to create a small irregularly-shaped niche. Below the niche, the rubble forms a patch of difficult terrain.
6. Dust and grime cover the floor; the tracks of the Lost Eyrie's resident are obviously evident.
7. A curtain of dusty cobwebs hangs from the ceiling; the grey cocoons of insects are visible within.
8. A gust of cold air blows into the Lost Eyrie from location 2, creating small dust devils that whirl about the area for a few moments before it subsides. The party's mundane light sources flicker in the sudden breeze.
9. The air is redolent with the stench of death and decay.
10. The frightened calls of the birds nesting on the cliffs reach the characters' ears. What has scared the birds?

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. The rusty remains of an iron unholy symbol wrought in the shape of a curved feather fill a hollow on the floor. The unholy symbol disintegrates if roughly handled.
2. The hanging rod of a tapestry yet clings to a wall, although the tapestry has long since rotten away. Close examination of the filthy rod reveals it is not wrought of iron but pure silver.
3. The outline of a poorly hidden storage niche is visible in a wall high up near the ceiling. The niche may or may not be empty, and it may or may not be trapped.
4. A bent dagger lies on the floor. A thick coating of rust on the blade suggests it has lain here for a long time.
5. Shards of a splintered arrow lie on the floor. The arrow's rusting tip has a faded bloodstain upon it.
6. Four gold coins are caught up in the folds of a damp ripped sack.
7. Soggy shards of wood lie about the floor; they might have once been a small shield.
8. A smashed lantern lies on the floor amid a small oil stain.
9. Graffiti, daubed in dried blood, low down on one wall, spells out in Common, "Beware the font".
10. Wisps of matted brown hair cling to the inside of this plain, dented pot helmet.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1 SQUARE = 5 FT.
DL 17
1+65'
1
2
3
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7

GM Notes

***Cliff**: If the characters are particularly unsubtle the denizens of the dungeon may hear the party approaching as they climb the cliff. Flying creatures have a distinct advantage against climbing foes and this could be the scene of an exciting battle!*

***Treasure Hoard**: The treasure hoard (which you have designed as appropriate for your campaign) is scattered about location 2. The writeup assumes one or two large creatures (such as dragons, manticores or wyverns) dwell in the dungeon but harpies (or other flying creatures) could just as easily have dumped their communal treasure here.*

1: The Climb Perilous

A vertiginous cliff, and a perilous climb, protect the Lost Eyrie from casual exploration.

A steep, ledge-broken cliff rises well over 100 feet into the air. About halfway up, a wide cave mouth pierces the cliff.

Cliff: The Lost Eyrie pierces the vertiginous cliff about 65 feet above the ground and 70 feet down from the clifftop. Characters can scale the cliff with or use magic to reach location 2.

Characters falling from the cliff suffer 1d6 damage for every 10 feet fallen and land prone.

Dressing the Cliff: Refer to "The Surrounding Locality" to add interesting dressing and objects to the characters' climb.

2: Lair of the Eyrie-Lord

Herein did harpies of old worship the demon lord, Pazuzu. A large, winged predator now lairs in this hall.

Two slender natural stone pillars divide this 15-foot-wide entrance into three roughly equal sections.

Illumination: The illumination in this locale depends on the time of the day. The level of illumination drops one step beyond the first huge pillar.

Slender Rock Pillars: Two slender pillars divide the entrance to this locale. Characters in an adjacent square gain partial cover.

Ceiling: The arched ceiling is 30-foot-high.

Huge Carven Pillars: Three huge circular stone pillars support the lofty ceiling. Each bears a huge carven feather at each of the cardinal directions.

Treasure Hoard: If the characters search the hoard, use this list to flesh out the treasure.

1. Broken and splintered bones lie scattered about the floor. They could also be scorched, frozen etc., depending on what dwells in the Lost Eyrie.
2. A wagon wheel leans precariously against a wall; it falls over if touched without care.
3. A ten-foot-long spear is partly buried in the hoard; its haft is made of some kind of incredibly tough but lightweight wood. The spear's tip is exceptionally sharp.
4. Shattered and punctured pieces of bloodstained armour and sundered shields are intermingled with the hoard.
5. A torn, blood-soaked flag bearing the insignia of a rampant lion on a sable background clings to the end of a wooden pole.
6. The shards of various broken gems are intermingled throughout the hoard; a character gathering them up finds 2d6x10 gp worth of gem fragments.
7. The shredded remnant of a magic scroll bears indecipherable writing upon it. The writing is a fragment of a *lightning bolt* spell.
8. A wide rent cuts through this large, dented iron shield.

9. One low soft book of elven artifice—a *boot of elvenkind*—yet holds a decomposing foot; of the other *boot of elvenkind*, there is no sign.
10. A 30-foot length of knotted rope—its ends frayed—lies amid the hoard. The rope is in good condition.
11. The bottom half of a silver statuette depicting a dragon sitting on its haunches is hidden under a dented shield.
12. A black wrought iron candelabra with four slots for candles lies on its side. It is heavy and unwieldy.

3: Altar of the Demon King

Centuries ago, the harpies eviscerated uncountable sacrifices to venerate the King of Demons on this altar.

Huge faded tapestries hang from the north wall of this area. Low, wide steps lead up to a raised dais upon which squats a chunk of flat-topped black rock.

Steps: These wide, low steps ascend to a raised section at the northern end of the chamber. The stairs are difficult terrain.

Raised Section: The northern end of the chamber is five-foot higher than the main floor.

Altar: Suspicious brown stains mar this chunk of black basaltic rock and the surrounding floor. A secret compartment pierces the north side of the altar. The niche contains:

- A serrated knife of black steel; dried bloodstains cover its wickedly curved blade.
- A single ebon feather about one-foot long. The feather shrugs off all blemishes and stains. It also seems to be impervious to harm.
- An empty glass vial; some kind of brownish residue clings to the inside of the vial. The character removing the vial's stopper catches a faint whiff of corruption.

Faded Tapestries: Two faded cobweb-draped tapestries showing a legion of harpies falling on and destroying a human town decorate the northern wall. A feeling of menace and gloom hangs over the tapestries.

Characters can climb a tapestry; however, a tapestry only supports 130 lbs. of weight. Heavier characters rip the tapestry from the wall once they have climbed 10 ft.; such climbers suffer falling damage and land prone.

- **Tapestries in Battle**: A character can pull a tapestry free so it falls into an adjacent square. A character in such a square is caught as if they had been hit by a net, and must free themselves before being able to move out of the square.

GM Notes

***Ebon Feather**: The ebon feather found in location 3 could be a holy relic of the Pazuzu faith or could even hail from Pazuzu's own plumage! If you decide on the later, perhaps bringing it into close proximity of the Abyssal Font in location 6 causes the portal therein to expand or summons a demon to the Lost Eyrie.*

GM Notes

***Demonic Statues**: The demonic statues in location 6 could easily be animate guardians or part of an elaborate trap involving the Abyssal Font.*

***Planar Connections**: The Abyssal Font may or may not be a true planar gate as you see fit. Making it a planar portal, increases the stakes of the adventure—what good and true adventurer would leave a portal to the Abyss open? Alternatively, the characters could use the portal to enter the Abyss if they first reduced their physical size. A whole new "world" of adventure awaits them!*

4: Into the Abyssal Depths

The spiral staircase here descends to a deeper sub-level.

The top of a spiral staircase pierces the floor of this otherwise small, empty chamber.

Spiral Staircase: A steep, three-foot-wide staircase spirals downwards about 20 feet to the lower level. The stairs are difficult terrain. Combatants on the stairs gain partial cover against attacks originating from lower down the stairs.

The staircase is dusty, and no tracks are obviously evident.

5: Empty Antechamber

This empty chamber lies about 20 feet below location 4.

An empty, dusty chamber lies at the bottom of the spiral staircase. Faded painted scenes yet cling to the stone walls.

Faded Paintings: Lurid pictures decorate these walls. The scenes are sacred to Pazuzu's faith, but great age has dimmed their malign glory.

Northern Painting: This painting depicts a beautiful brown-haired, brown-eyed woman wearing a nun's habit. She has a lascivious look on her face.

Southern Painting: This painting depicts a nude harpy. She has brown plumage and a haughty, evil look on her face.

- A close examination of both paintings reveals that the woman and the harpy strongly resemble each other—in fact, they could be the same person.

Eastern and Western Paintings: A black feather drips blood from its barb.

6: The Abyssal Font

This chapel was built around a planar portal linking the Prime Material Plane to the Abyss.

Shadows and gloom gather thickly in this small chamber. To the north, two statues flank twin tapestries and a font filled with some kind of jet-black liquid.

Tapestries: Tapestries decorate the north and south walls. They are in much better condition than the tapestries in location 3. Refer below for descriptions of each tapestry.

Characters can climb a tapestry; however, a tapestry only supports 130 lbs. of weight. Heavier characters rip the tapestry from the wall once they have climbed 10 ft.; such climbers suffer falling damage and land prone.

- **Tapestries in Battle**: A character can pull a tapestry free so it falls into an adjacent square. A character in such a square is caught as if they had been hit by a net, and must free themselves before being able to move out of the square.

Northern Tapestries: Each of these ceiling-to-floor length white tapestries has the same symbol emblazoned upon it—a black feather dripping blood.

Southern Tapestry: This 15-foot-long tapestry covers the entire south wall. It depicts a bleak, desolate wasteland over which fly flocks of winged beasts. This tapestry depicts Pazuzu's Abyssal realm.

Statues: These finely detailed statues depict Pazuzu in all his demonic glory. They were once painted, but time's remorseless onslaught has dulled the once-bright pigments.

Abyssal Font: A thick mottled grey, gloopy liquid fills this font of black stone. This liquid—"water" from the Abyss—oozes through a planar gate to fill the font but does not overflow it. The font is large enough for a Small or smaller creature to be submerged in the "water"; those that do are transported to the Abyss.

7: The Choked Stair

This staircase once led to a larger complex; it is now choked with rubble and impassable.

A rockfall fills the southern portion of this chamber. Rubble covers the floor.

Rubble: A scattering of rubble covers the floor; such areas count as difficult terrain.

Cave-In: A rockfall has blocked the passageway and a spiral staircase. The cave-in is impassable unless you decide to expand the dungeon. In this instance, magic or extensive work to remove the rubble is required to proceed.

Crushed Skeleton: A character searching the rubble discovers the skeletal remains of a humanoid buried in the rubble. Alternatively, the characters discover the remains when they remove the rubble to access the staircase

GM Notes

***Expanding the Dungeon**: The cave-in blocking location 7 could lead to a larger complex either above or below the Lost Eyrie. In this instance, if the characters examine the cave-in a faint breeze issuing through the pile of tumbled stone caresses their faces. Clearing away the rubble reveals a spiral staircase.*

Aftermath

Use the notes herein to resolve the aftermath of the characters' exploration of the Lost Eyrie.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Portentous Dreams**: Once the Lost Eyrie has been cleared of obvious threats, the portentous dreams fade away to be replaced by deep, restful and contented sleep. However, if you decide to use the Abyssal Font in location 6 as an impetuous for future adventures, the dreams start up once again once it becomes evident the characters will not be returning to the Lost Eyrie.
- **Rampaging Monster**: If the characters slay or drive off the monster lurking in the Lost Eyrie, they can return to the local settlement as heroes. They are feted, a feast is held in their honour, and news of their prowess and bravery begins to spread.
- **Tavern Rumour**: Eventually, one way or another, Aapo Kare (LN male human fighter 3) realises the characters got him drunk and "stole a march" to the Lost Eyrie. He tracks the characters down and demands compensation; if the characters refuse, Aapo could become a reoccurring foe, although he is unlikely to resort to violence.

Further Adventures

Once the characters have completed their initial exploration of the Lost Eyrie, they can move on, or the dungeon can remain the temporary focus of your campaign.

A New Home: The characters may decide to transform the Lost Eyrie into a base from which to explore the surrounding wilderness.

Deconsecrating or Destroying the Abyssal Font: Good-aligned, or even merely sane, characters will likely be concerned that a minor portal to the Abyss lurks in the Lost Eyrie. Such folk may begin a new quest to gather the knowledge and materials necessary to seal the portal.

Deeper Tunnels: If the characters wish to continue their exploration of the complex below the Lost Eyrie, they must first clear the stairs in location 7 of debris (or use magic to bypass the obstruction).

Martryn Manor

Urban, Ashlar (Languard), Sacred Blood

Martryn Manor lies in Languard's Shambles district. Home to the eccentric recluse Rahvu Rantanen, on the outside the rambling manor appears dilapidated and rundown. Inside, however, it is an opulent place—as befits one of Languard's most dangerous and successful criminals. Now, the manor stands at the nexus of portentous events that might shake Ashlar to its core or at the least finally spell Rahvu's doom.

Dungeon Background

Most Languardians who recognise the name Rahvu Rantanen believe he is merely an eccentric recluse with a few shady associates and a taste for life's finer things. Few know he is a venomous spider sitting at the centre of a web of blackmail, murder and deceit stretching throughout Ashlar's capital.

Rahvu's criminal career began in the Shambles, forty years ago, when he was forced to steal to survive. Noticing the boy's exceptional talent for larceny, the Shadow Masks—Languard's thieves' guild—adopted him. Over time, however, it became apparent there was a deeply evil, sadistic side to Rahvu. After the city watch traced a string of brutal slayings to Rahvu, he was exiled from the guild. Having acquired an incurable taste for murder, as well as a love of luxury, Rahvu seduced a string of affluent widows, killing each in turn to claim their wealth. Recalling how his first slayings drew the attention of the city watch, Rahvu dissolved the widows' bodies in vats of alchemical acid and spun stories of how the women had left Languard to visit distant relatives. Using his victims' gold, Rahvu commissioned the renovation of Martryn Manor, a decrepit old manor in the Shambles, to serve as his home. The manor was rebuilt with a deliberately confusing floor plan, hiding many traps and secret passages. Builders and workers were frequently switched, ensuring no-one but Rahvu knew the manor's exact layout.

Each month, Rahvu would host a grand and decadent fete in his manor, where the high and mighty of Languard ate, drank and gave in to all manner of hedonistic depravities. These occasions, of course, served only to feed Rahvu's ongoing program of blackmail and extortion. By the time the city watch came to investigate the missing widows, Rahvu had already surrounded himself with a powerful circle of friends and associates, making him all but untouchable.

The wealthy merchant, Sofonias Ritari, is the latest victim of Rahvu's blackmail scheme. Refusing to yield to Rahvu's villainy, yet unwilling to live with the shame of his actions, Sofonias took his own life. His suicide letter, addressed to Chancellor Marja Pasanen, was intercepted by Rahvu's agents. From this, Rahvu learned Sofonias had no official heirs, and his fortune was to pass onto his closest living relative—a relation which could be proved only by establishing their direct descent from a common heroic ancestor named Talis Ritari. Immediately, Rahvu sent his agents to plunder both locations mentioned in Sofonias' death note: Talis's crypt in Redfern Cemetery and an old knightly chapel hidden in Languard's sewers. If Rahvu alone held the proof of their descent, any surviving heirs would be forced to deal with him.

While the first group was successful in retrieving the golden death mask of Talis Ritari, the second severely underestimated the dangers of their mission. In their attempts to reclaim a fragment of Talis Ritari's sword, the thieves breached a warded gate built by the Knights of the Black Swan to keep an ancient evil at bay. For now, Rahvu, remains unaware of the horrors he unleashed.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on Martryn Manor by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the manor:

Face Value: Nervously stroking his bulbous nose with a six-fingered hand, Mikal Havari (N male human) approaches the characters. He says he's being followed and fears for his life. Several days ago, a wealthy merchant, Sofonias Ritari, died heirless. Since the Havari and Ritari families are related, Mikal believes he is the sole heir to Sofonias' wealth. Unfortunately, Rahvu Rantanen, a notorious crime lord, believes it, too. Rahvu claims he has the death mask of Talis Ritari, a common ancestor whose features resemble Mikal's, proving his descent. Buying the mask from Rahvu would cost Mikal a fortune, and Rahvu could just have him killed afterwards. Mikal offers the characters 200 gp to retrieve the mask from Rahvu's home of Martryn Manor.

Rough Justice: After being rounded up on trumped-up charges, the characters are taken to see Veli Nikkonen (LN male human fighter), captain of the city watch. Veli explains a local crime lord, Rahvu Rantanen, has eluded justice more times than he cares to count. "*I can no longer stand idly by,*" Veli says. *"I want you to take him down. Tonight.*" Sliding a purse (containing 50 gp) across the table, Veli adds: "*This is from my own pocket. Return when the job's done and remember: this stays between us.*"

No Honour Among Thieves: The characters are approached by Haguk Salonen (LE male half-orc thief), a prominent member of the Shadow Masks. Getting straight to the point, Haguk says his crew recently "acquired" a knight's golden death mask for Rahvu Rantanen, a notorious underworld figure. Payment was never received. Loath to break the fragile truce between their organisations, Haguk wants the characters to retrieve the mask from Rahvu's home of Martryn Manor. The job pays 150 gp—or 300 gp if the characters don't implicate the Shadow Masks.

Whispers & Rumours

A character may know one or more rumours from the list below. The character can learn this information in several ways: by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

1. Rahvu Rantanen's has had many wives who left Languard never to be seen again. Everybody knows he killed them.
2. Martryn Manor has more hidden traps than a shark has teeth. Best stay away, and buy me a drink instead.
3. You'd be wise not to cross Rahvu Rantanen. He's connected, if you know what I mean. Friends in high places and all that.
4. Visiting Martryn Manor, are you? You don't seem the type for one of those—eh—"extravagant" parties held there.

5. The manor's always under construction, and Rahvu frequently switches artisans so only he knows its layout.
6. Martryn Manor has a massive crystal dome atop its roof to provide natural light for Rahvu's art collection.

The Surrounding Locality

Lying south of the Svart, between Cheap Street and Low Gate, the Shambles is a place of narrow, twisting alleyways, tottering tenement buildings and cloying desperation. Here dwell Languard's poor in cramped, unsanitary conditions.

Most of the Shambles' dilapidated buildings are of shoddy wooden construction. Typically, three—or sometimes four— stories high, they cluster together; upper levels jut over the alleys below, giving the district the aspect of a gigantic sunken maze. The streets are packed, worn earth that turns to slippery mud during heavy rainfall. To the north, Cheap Street divides the Shambles from the Fishshambles.

Shambles Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the manor's surrounds:

1. A pack of 2d6 scrawny street urchins surrounds the party, begging for food or a few coppers. Meanwhile, 1d4 of them try to pick the characters' pockets.
2. Characters skilled at alertness or danger sense spot 1d6 thieves following the group through the streets. It takes 2d10 minutes for the thieves to realise the characters aren't easy marks, at which point they abandon their hunt.
3. Whining pitifully, a scrawny, three-legged dog hobbles up to the party. Anyone petting the poor creature risks contracting a wasting disease.
4. The dreaded cry of "*Gardyloo!*", rings out overhead. Seconds later, the contents of a filled chamberpot plummet towards the characters.
5. A mob of 3d6 filthy, cackling beggars swarm the characters, pleading for alms. Unless the beggar-mob is quickly turned away, the characters risk contracting a vicious case of head lice.
6. Three scoundrels try to entice the characters to play "three shells and a pea" for 1 sp a go. Winning is impossible. If accused of cheating, the three turn hostile.
7. A horse-drawn cart laden with heavy barrels thunders through the narrow street. Slow-moving characters may be struck by the cart.
8. A nearby tavern door explodes in a shower of wood splinters as two burly men burst through, taking their fistfight to the muddy street.
9. An old man sells tasty-looking meat pies for 2 cp. 1d4 hours after eating one, a character might begin vomiting —impressively—until they have emptied their stomach.
10. Sickly yellow paint drips from a sinister symbol drawn upon an alley wall. A character who gazes upon the weird mark feels their head start to throb. The faint stench of decay hovers over the area.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search the surrounds. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A boat hook sticks from a rusty sewer grate. Four feet below, a fancy iron key lies in the muck.
2. A cheap linen purse with cut strings rests in the gutter. It's a decoy purse, filled with stones. Thieves lurk nearby.
3. A lustrous gold coin lies in a muddy puddle in the middle of the street. Characters who wade through to investigate soon realise it's a painted wooden disc, placed there "for a laugh" by street urchins watching from nearby.
4. A bright blue scarf sticks from an empty rain barrel. Investigation reveals the barrel contains a disguise kit and a change of clothes.
5. A green felt captain's hat crowned with an outrageous feather tumbles through the dirty, wind-blown streets.
6. A pack of 2d4 rat pups contend for the grisly prize of a human ear, pierced with a large gold earring (worth 2 gp)
7. A faded poster bill calls for the capture (dead or alive) of wanted arsonist Nura Stercus, who strongly resembles a random character. The reward is 50 gp.
8. A pair of polished riding boots filled with horse manure stand in the street; excited urchins hide nearby, waiting for someone to try on the boots.
9. A cracked clay beggar's bowl contains 1d100 copper pieces. Of the beggar, there is no sign.
10. A pile of tattered yellow robes reeking of decay lies half-hidden between a pair of refuse barrels. A pale and featureless waxen mask lies underneath.

Crawl or Prowl?

While you may choose to run Martryn Manor as a normal dungeon crawl, the adventure's premise lends itself extremely well to a stealth-based approach. If you choose this approach, consider the following:

- Rahvu's ever-changing crew of thugs makes it possible for the party to pass themselves off as new henchfolk.
- Having Rahvu host one of his lavish parties provides a diversion for the characters to infiltrate the manor.
- Do not default to combat if the characters are discovered; give them a chance to extricate themselves from the situation with a different skill or action. Alternatively, tick 1-3 boxes on the Suspicion Meter below. Once it's filled, the alarm is sounded.

Suspicion Meter

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Notable Locations at a Glance

The manor has several notable locations:

1. **Grand Ballroom**. If the walls of this room could speak, they wouldn't dare to.
2. **Rahvu's Office**. Here, Rahvu plots and records the details of his many vile schemes and deeds.
3. **Panic Room**. Rahvu retreats to this fortified room, when danger looms.
4. **Drawing Room**. Rahvu regales his guests with music and entertainment here.
5. **Torture Chamber**. This grisly dungeon reveals the depths of Rahvu's depravity.
6. **Secret Vault**. The vault holds a small supply of highly-explosive crimson beads.
7. **Shadow Gallery**. The stolen art displayed here is worth thousands of gold pieces.
8. **Light-web Room**. Beams of searing light protect Rahvu's most prized treasures, here.

Generic Manor Features

Many of the manor's locations share certain features:

Illumination: The manor's interior is well-lit by magical lights. Rahvu and his crew use the elven words "valo" (light) and "hamara" (dark) to brighten or dim the lights.

Ceilings: The manor's lofty ceilings are 15 feet high and decorated with frescoes depicting the whimsical and the macabre. Characters carefully studying the ceiling catch the glint of small mirrors set into the plaster. These mirrors transmit images to Rahvu's panic room (location 3).

Walls: Exotic wood panelling covers the walls. Any area has a 20% chance of containing a brass trumpet bell protruding from the wall. These allow two-way communication with Rahvu's panic room (location 3).

Floors: Dark and ominous stains have left their lasting marks on the otherwise clean and smooth parquet floors.

Secret Doors: All secret doors are disguised to resemble the surrounding wood-panelled walls. Unless stated otherwise, they are operated by a nearby trigger, often disguised as a book, picture frame or candlestick.

Doors: All doors in the manor are made of sturdy wood, and 30% are locked. The fancy iron key found beneath the sewer grate (see "The Surrounding Locality: Things to Find", entry #1) opens all the manor's doors.

Portcullises: Several heavy portcullises protect Martryn Manor from intruders.

Pressure Plates: Many fiendish traps protect the manor from intruders. Most are triggered when a creature steps on a hidden pressure plate. These traps and triggers can be detected and disabled as normal.

Manor Dressing

Use this list to breathe life and detail into the manor:

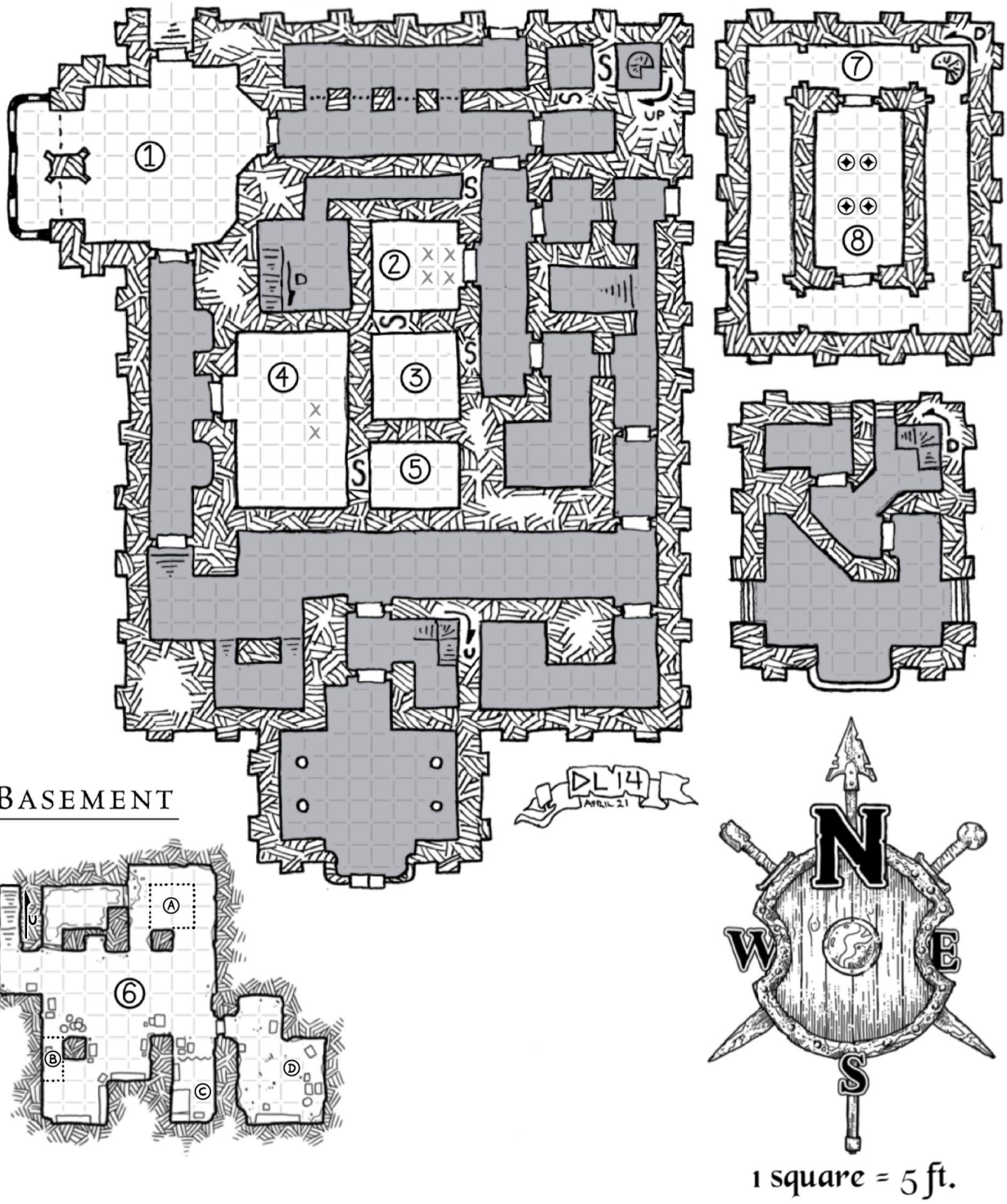
1. Austere portraits of old men and women line the walls. Their contemptuous gazes follow the characters around the room.
2. An unnoticed pressure plate sounds an ominous click. The trap has malfunctioned, but the characters don't know this…
3. A portcullis drops, sealing the doorway between this area and a randomly determined adjacent location.
4. A muffled scream sounds from location 6.
5. A hand crank raises, lowers or drops a massive iron chandelier hanging in the centre of the room.
6. Mounted on a plaque is the head of a massive white stag. Close inspection reveals the "trophy' to be a work of creative taxidermy using a cow's head.
7. The parquet floor creaks underneath a creature's feet, making it hard to move silently.
8. A group of 1d4+1 servants are busy cleaning the area.
9. Loud cursing sounds from a nearby area, where a minion inadvertently triggers one of the manor's traps.
10. Still intoxicated from the night before, a dazed courtesan wanders the manor's halls, oblivious to her surrounds.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of the items below to suit your campaign.

1. A hastily scrawled note reads: "*That idiot, Tibor, lost the master key again. Send Pekka to the sewer grate down the street—she's got long arms. -Hemor*"
2. A pair of gleaming longswords are mounted on the wall. Despite their appearance, the weapons are poor quality which break after 1d4 rounds of use in combat.
3. A rack holds 2d4 bottles of high-proof, exotic spirits. Each is worth 5d6 gp. Alternatively, the bottles can be lit and thrown like (highly expensive) oil flasks.
4. A golden statuette of Rahvu wearing a saintly aureola and posing as Darlen, god of law and justice is worth 20 gp.
5. A total of 2d10 gp, and 4d8 sp lie scattered beneath a nearby table. It takes one minute to gather up the coins.
6. A mysterious wooden puzzle box, which can be opened with 3d10+20 minutes of work. It contains a fist-sized amethyst (worth 50 gp).
7. A letter opener flecked with dried blood.
8. A serving bowl crafted from a human skull, containing a mix of assorted nuts and dried berries .
9. A gilded tambourine showing a faded butterfly tattoo, suggesting it is made with human skin.
10. A miniature exotic tree bearing 2d6 tiny red plums. The sweet, delectable fruits are Rahvu's favourite, and he waters the tree with fresh human blood each day.

Martryn Manor



GM Notes

***Design Your Own**: Design additional traps and features as you see fit to march your vision of the horrors lurking with the manor.*

Generic Manor Areas

Use the list below to generate content for shaded areas.

Something doesn't feel quite right about this place…

Random Area Features: To determine the contents of any shaded area, roll 3d6 and apply all three results separately, unless a double was rolled:

1. **Art Objects**: Macabre paintings and distasteful ornaments "decorate" the walls, tables and shelves. While their collective worth is 5d10+20 gp, only a truly disturbed individual would consider buying them.
   - **Double 1 (Portcullis Trap)**: A pressure plate at the area's entrance triggers 1d4+1 portcullises, sealing those doorways nearest the trigger.
2. **Arms and Armour**: 2d4+2 sets of full plate armour clutching halberds stand at silent attention. Gleaming shields and crossed swords line the walls. The armours and their halberds are welded in place, but any other weapons are useable.
   - **Double 2 (Swinging Blade Trap):** Pressure plates in front of the armour trigger a hidden mechanism which causes the knights to swing their halberds at the triggering character.
3. **Crystal Chandelier**: A majestic 10-foot wide chandelier bathes the area in bright, white light.
   - **Double 3 (Trapped Chandelier)**: A pressure plate causes the chandelier to fall on the triggering character(s) and showers the area with crystal shards.
4. **Book Collection**: An old bookcase holds 3d10+10 leather-bound books stored on its sagging shelves. Subjects include degenerate art, music and philosophy, as well as treatises on torture and the occult.
   - **Double 4 (Iron Beehive)**: Tiny holes in the bookcase conceal a myriad of spring-loaded darts, triggered by a pressure plate. This targets all characters in the room.
5. **Indoor Fountain**: Lewd sculptured nymphs and satyrs grace this small fountain whose fragrant waters smell of orange blossom; 1d4 fragile porcelain ewers sit nearby.
   - **Double 5: (Smokescreen)**: A hidden pressure plate dumps a large quantity of violet powder into the fountain. The resulting alchemical reaction fills the area with thick, purple smoke which reduces visibility to 5 ft and lasts 30 minutes.
6. **Nothing of Interest**: The area has no additional features.
   - **Double 6** (**Trap Bypass)**: A character searching the room spots a lever protruding from the wall. Pulling the lever disables the next 1d4 traps rolled on this list.

1: Grand Ballroom

If the walls of this room could speak, they wouldn't dare to.

Burgundy velvet drapes frame the windows of this spacious ballroom. Eight-foot tall mirrors line its candle-lit walls, and large, sumptuous pillows lie scattered on the waxed floor.

Pillows: With 2d10 minutes of searching, a character finds a perfumed silken veil, embroidered with the letters "HMN" alongside the Nenonen family crest. Characters who are familiar with Languard nobility quickly deduce this may belong to Hanna-Mari Nenonen, the duke' s betrothed…

2: Rahvu's Office

Here, Rahvu plots and records the details of his many vile schemes and deeds.

A striking dark wood desk dominates this imposing chamber. The majestic, high-backed chair behind it oozes with the hubris of a king's throne.

Trapdoor (X): The 10x10-foot area in front of Rahvu's desk hides a well-concealed trapdoor. The trap is triggered by pressing a button underneath Rahvu's desk. Characters standing on the trapdoor when it opens fall 20 feet to location 6A. The trapdoor automatically closes one round later.

Desk: The desk is locked, but the lock can be picked or forced as a manor door. Rahvu carries the only key. The desk contains Rahvu's business ledger.

With a thorough search, a character discovers a hidden button underneath the desk, near the chair. Pressing it triggers the trapdoor in front of the desk.

Rahvu's Ledger: This hefty, leather-bound tome contains a detailed account of Rahvu's criminal dealings, and a coded list of his victims and accomplices. Refer to "Aftermath" for details on the last entry dealing with Rahvu's feud with the Shadow Masks.

3: Panic Room

Rahvu retreats to this fortified room, when danger looms.

A curious mosaic of slanted mirrors sits in the east wall of this sparsely furnished chamber. Below the mosaic, a trio of brass trumpet bells protrude from the reinforced wall.

Fortifications: The doors to this room can be stoutly barred from the inside.

Mirror Mosaic: A complex system of mirrors concealed inside the walls reflect light gathered through hidden lenses, providing Rahvu with a mosaic view of all locations inside Martryn Manor.

Trumpet Bells: A network of brass pipes connect these trumpets to similar devices spread throughout the manor, allowing Rahvu to direct his men (or taunt his foes) from the safety of this room.

GM Notes

***The Perfumed Veil**: Whether or not the perfumed veil found in location 1 belongs to Hanni-Mari Nenonen, and if she even attended a ball at Martryn Manor, is left up to you to decide. It could just as easily have been found or stolen by another guest and subsequently lost (or hidden) among the pillows. In any event, it should leave the characters wondering just how far Rahvu's sinister influence reaches throughout Languard.*

***The Ledger**: The ledger in location 2 implicates many upstanding citizens in Rahvu's web of crime, either as an accomplice or a victim of blackmail. If you prefer, you can use the ledger to kick off a campaign of shadowy politics and intrigue in Languard. If you don't want to take the story in this direction, have the authorities step in and sweep the entire thing under the rug.*

GM Notes

***Powerful Healing Magic**: At your discretion, certain high-level spells may succeed at restoring the victim found in location 6 to his normal faculties, allowing the characters to question him immediately. A pragmatic party might achieve the same result by letting him die and using magic to speak with his spirit. In either case, refer to the Aftermath section for details on the victim's background.*

4: Drawing Room

Rahvu's regales his guests with music, here.

An elegant harpsichord sits against the east wall of this opulent, carpeted room, surrounded by a congregation of cushioned sofas and lavish wing chairs. A yellowed music sheet rests across the harpsichord's ivory keys.

Trapdoor (X): The 5x10-foot area in front of the harpsichord hides a trapdoor triggered when someone fails to play *Starlight Sonata* on the harpsichord three times. Characters standing on the trapdoor when it opens fall 20 feet to location 6B. The trapdoor automatically closes one round later.

Harpsichord: Characters skilled at music recognise the music sheet as a piece from Vilimzair Aralivar's famed *Starlight Sonata*. If played correctly (which takes 10 rounds), the secret door to location 5 opens.

5: Secret Vault

The vault holds a supply of highly-explosive crimson beads.

Heavy chains tightly coil around an iron-banded chest sitting in the centre of this bare vault.

Iron Chest: Three successful attempts undo the complex locks on this chest (Rahvu carries the only key). Jostling the chest causes the crimson beads inside to explode.

- **Crimson Beads**: The chest contains 1d4 curious red marbles which explode on impact when thrown.

6: Torture Chambers

This grisly dungeon reveals the depths of Rahvu's depravity.

Acrid fumes laced with the tell-tale scent of death sting your eyes and strangle your throat. Somewhere in the darkness, a broken voice cries out.

Cells (A and B): Characters who fell prey to any of the manor's pit traps end up in one of these barred holding cells. Each 5 ft. section of bars is as tough as a portcullis. A cell's lock can be picked but, Rahvu carries the only key.

Flensing Rack (C): The body of a young man lies strapped to this blood-slick, slanted table. A long, thin knife rests on a stool nearby, and scarlet strips of skin litter the flagstones beneath. The man on the flensing rack has had the skin flayed from his legs, up to his knees. Delirious with shock, he is barely conscious and can only cry out weakly. The victim is unable to speak until rescued and allowed to rest.

Acid Baths (D): Three claw-footed iron tubs crouch low in this shadowed alcove. Between wisps of thin yellow mist, the characters can spy sizzling human bones floating atop a pungent green liquid, readily identified as alchemical acid. An enamel coating protects the iron tubs from the acid The bones inside are the remains of three of Rahvu's thugs, guilty of disappointing their master.

7: Shadow Gallery

The stolen art displayed here is worth thousands.

Masterful paintings, fine sculptures and various other art objects line the walls of this looping corridor.

Art Objects: Money-smart characters estimate the value of all the art in this corridor at around 3,500 gp. All are major works stolen by Rahvu over many years. Fencing these filched artworks is all but impossible.

Doors: Both doors are locked.

8: Light-Web Room

Beams of searing light protect Rahvu's most prized treasures.

A dome of multi-faceted quartz set into this room's ceiling scatters beams of light focused and reflected by a complex configuration of lenses and mirrors all around this chamber, creating an intricate web of burning light. Priceless art objects rest on pedestals inside the web.

Brightly Lit: The light-web always keeps the room brightly lit.

Crystal Dome: The giant crystal dome is enchanted to collect, store and refract natural light, ensuring the light-web is active at all times of day. Four actions can disable it:

- Singing the *Starlight Sonata* piece found in location 4 (de)activates it.
- Dispelling the magic on the crystal disrupts the light beams for 1d4 rounds.
- Destroying the crystal causes falling shards to damage all creatures and objects inside the room.
- Creating a path through the light-web. Any failed attempt triggers the alarm and portcullises (see below).

Light-Web: Characters must carefully navigate the light-web, to reach the art objects. This requires careful, dextrous movement. Each of the following countermeasures make this process easier: using smoke or dust, using hand mirrors and lending aid by observation.

A failed check means the character touches a beam, suffering fire damage. In addition, an alarm blares throughout the manor and heavy portcullises drop to seal both exits.

Precious Art: Four precious art objects rest on marble pedestals at the centre of this room.

- A golden death mask of a hawk-nosed man (worth 450 gp; also see "Pick Your Nose").
- An ornate copper cauldron decorated with intricate druidic symbols (worth 300 gp).
- A copy of the disturbing painting "The Wreck of the Anvar", by the half-blind artist-seer Valdemar Lemmikki (worth 600 gp).
- A signed autobiography of the World's Greatest Ever Bard and Legendary Pirate Captain, Vilimzair Aralivar (worth 2,000 gp).

GM Notes

***Stolen Art**: Detail the various pieces of stolen art in location 7 as you see fit. Should you need inspiration, 20 Things #18: Troublesome Treasures presents five flavoursome tables designed to help you flesh out and bring to life Rahvu's collection of questionable curios.*

Pick Your Nose

If you are playing the Sacred Blood storyline, and you have chosen Mikal Havari (see "The Adventure Begins: Face Value") as the true heir of the Ritari bloodline, the golden death-mask features a large, bulbous nose instead of a hawk nose. Remember to modify the Aftermath section as well in this case.

Aftermath

News in Languard travels fast. If the characters dealt with Rahvu Rantanen, their reputation will earn them new allies and perhaps a few powerful enemies as well. Use the suggestions below to build upon these events and continue the characters' adventures in storied Languard and the Duchy of Ashlar.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used one or more of the hooks in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

Face Value: Mikal is disappointed, but not entirely surprised Rahvu's claims about Talis Ritari's death mask turned out to be lies. "*I suppose it sounded too good to be true…*", Mikal says "*Just imagine a knight with an ugly mug like mine heh!*" He laughs. "*Now, listen, about your payment…*" Mikal's cheeks flush red as he lists all the reasons why he can only pay half the promised reward right now, but solemnly swears he'll make it up to the characters in 1d4 weeks. True to his word, if the characters return after this time, Mikal pays them the remaining amount, along with a generous bonus of 10%.

Rough Justice: Although Veli Nikkonen is grateful the characters dealt with the vile Rahvu Rantanen, he regrets it required him to step outside the law. "*Unfortunately, the end doesn't always justify the means*", Veli sighs as he hands the characters a purse containing 30 gp. "*You'll find something extra in there, as a reward for keeping all of this between us.*"

The characters are targeted by Utu Sirara (NE male human thief), 1d4 days after meeting with Veli. He attempts to kill them by posing as a tavern's cook and poisoning their meals. If the characters track down and corner Utu, he reveals some of Rahvu's old patrons have put a price on their heads. The nature and power of Rahvu's old allies is up to you to decide.

No Honour Among Thieves: Just a few streets from Martryn Manor, the characters bump into Haguk Salonen, who greets them with a wide grin and a slow clap. "*Well done, gentlemen!*" He guffaws as he motions the characters to follow him. "*I've made reservations to celebrate your accomplishments in style. Join me, won't you?*" Haguk leads the characters to Dragonheart Tavern (Languard Location H9) where a sumptuous banquet awaits them.

Sacred Blood

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone adventure, it has been designed for use with the *Sacred Blood* storyline. *Sacred Blood* presents antagonists, agendas, agents, and assets to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following Dungeon Backdrops:

- *Aninas Family Crypt*
- *Martryn Manor*
- *Undercity Chapel*

After paying the characters their promised reward, Haguk regales them throughout their meal with stories of his delves into Gloamhold's doom-shrouded depths.

If Rahvu was killed, the banquet serves to keep the characters occupied while the Shadow Masks send a gang of thieves to take anything of value left in Martryn Manor.

If the characters were discreet and avoided implicating the Shadow Masks, and if they behave themselves during their dinner with Haguk, the self-styled "gentleman-explorer of Gloamhold" proposes an alliance. Haguk needs a party to join him on an expedition to Rivengate, and is willing to let the characters share in the spoils. Alternatively, if Rahvu Rantanen was killed, Haguk explains this new criminal vacuum needs filling, one way or another. The Shadow Masks are poised to corner Ashlar's market for stolen art, and they can do it with, or without the characters…

Further Adventures

Several important questions remain to be answered. Most of them involve the identity of Talis Ritari and the knightly legacy he left behind. Consider the following story hooks if the characters wish to learn more about Talis Ritari.

Read the Fine Print: The ledger in Rahvu's office lists every vile deed he's ever done—enough to have him sentenced to death many times over. The last entry details a job for which Rahvu hired the Shadow Masks, Languard's thieves' guild. The Masks were employed to recover both the sword hilt and death mask of Talis Ritari from Redfern Cemetery; an abandoned burial ground three miles east of Languard. When they returned without the hilt, Rahvu withheld payment, marking the start of a bitter feud between the organisations. If the Shadow Masks did not bring back the sword hilt, perhaps it might still be found in Talis Ritari's crypt?

Collateral Damage: Once rescued from the torture chambers, Iljas Vanska (NE male human thief), confesses he and several others were hired by Rahvu Rantanen to find a chapel hidden in the sewers and recover the blade of *Valcorim*, sword of Talis Ritari. Using crimson beads, they succeeded in dislodging the blade, breaching some kind of shadow gate in the process. When one of them was slain by the chapel's guardian statue, the rest panicked and ran. Iljas was later picked up by Rahvu, who made certain he paid dearly for the thieves' failure. A breached gate oozing with fell energies, could spell disaster for Languard. There's little time to waste—the undercity chapel must be found!

The Big Bang Theory: The explosive crimson beads found in Rahvu's secret vault are formidable weapons, capable of causing horrendous damage in the wrong hands. If the characters are able to interrogate Rahvu, he admits having purchased the pernicious pearls from the Shadow Masks—a statement soon confirmed by a series of explosive break-ins plaguing the city.

Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Ochels)

Mired in madness and delusion, the Insane Armiger watches over his tiny domain and demands tribute from all who pass through. The broken corpses of those failing to offer the proper respect and tax warning all those who would use his road: pay or die.

Dungeon Background

The Insane Armiger dwells in an old hunting lodge. The building once belonged to a wealthy merchant, Kaarle Venemies, but it fell into disuse when the merchant was slain by bandits. Kaarle was the last of his line, and thus, the lodge was forgotten. It lay abandoned until Sakarias Venemies stumbled upon it during a ferocious storm.

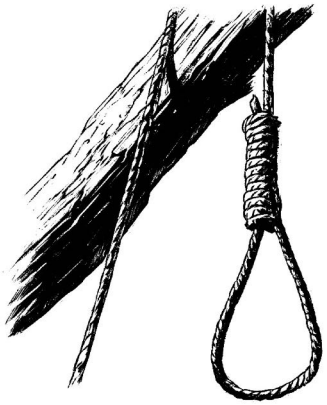
Sakarias Venemies was a brave warrior, but something he saw on his last adventure shattered his sanity. By incredible happenstance, Sakarias—while exploring the old lodge—discovered that he shared his last name with the long-dead owner of the house. In the depths of his insanity, he realised that this meant the house belonged to him, and clearly, the house was that of a nobleman. Therefore, Sakarias must be a noble, and the house belonged to him!

Sakarias has dwelled in the house ever since and—as a noble—practised his right to bear arms and demand tolls of people using "his" road. When he is denied his rightful tribute, he flies into a terrible rage and slays all who defy him.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Accosted on the Road**: The characters are innocently—as innocently as any adventurers ever travel—in the locality of the Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger. While on the road, the characters encounter the aftermath of one of the Sakarias's attacks. Four bodies lie about a wagon; three of the folk are dead, but one yet clings to life. If the characters revive the man, Laaus Tuntia (middle-aged male human), he describes Sakarias and tells of the warrior's demands for a toll and subsequent savage attack when his demand was refused. Tracks lead away from the site toward Sakarias's home.
- **Missing Travellers**: The characters are investigating a spate of travellers going missing in the locality. The party could have been hired to search for a specific someone, or they may have been hired to stop the ongoing disappearances (perhaps by the local authorities). Following a promising set of tracks, they stumble upon the Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger.
- **Savage Storm**: A savage storm pummels the area. As the winds rage and the rain pummels the land, jagged forks of lightning light up the sky. Staying out in the open is clearly dangerous, and the characters search for shelter. In a stroke of good (or more likely bad) luck, the characters stumble upon the Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger.



Whispers & Rumours

A character can use their social skills to gather information about the Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour.

Use this list to determine what the character learns.

1. An insane madman stalks the wilderlands bordering the road. He claims to be a nobleman and demands a toll from any he meets. He is a skilled warrior, and most folk pay the toll to avoid violence.
2. A mad, bloodthirsty warrior lives in an isolated, dilapidated hunting lodge. No right-minded peasants willingly go near the lodge, and various foul rumours hang over the place and its master.
3. The so-called Insane Armiger was once a noble warrior driven mad by the things he saw on this final adventure. He still has a great store of wealth hidden somewhere in his home. Brave locals who have had dealings with him report being paid with strange silver coins.
4. Hunting is good in the wilderlands and several powerful folk maintained hunting lodges in the surrounds. Most lodges are far from the roads, sited for privacy and easy access to the best hunting locales.
5. People sometimes go missing on the road. Some, no doubt, fall prey to bandits or other lurking predators. Other folk tell of a deranged mailed warrior who demands his "rightful toll" before letting travellers pass.
6. Years ago, an adventurer, Sakarias Venemies, passed through the area. The man was widely thought to be mad, and stories of his unseasonable rages still circulate. Several people believe he is the Insane Armiger, but no one wants to deal with him—he is reputed to be a puissant warrior.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The Surrounding Locality

The Nightmare Lodge of the Insane Armiger lies hidden in the depths of a tangled swath of hilly woodland.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the lodge's surrounds:

1. The mud is churned up, and the deep footsteps of a boot-wearing humanoid are obvious. A skilled tracker knows a heavy human—one likely wearing armour—left the tracks.
2. A huge old oak tree, moss dripping from its far-flung branches—casts a shade over the area. The ground around the tree's gnarled trunk is comparatively free of other vegetation. One side of the tree's trunk is scorched as if someone set a campfire against it.
3. A steeped-sided ridge of grey stone cuts across the forest floor. Characters climbing the ridge can get a good view of the surrounds. A keen-eyed character notices) spots the armiger's dilapidated home in the distance.
4. A sluggish stream flows through the forest. It is narrow, and most characters can easily step across it without getting their feet wet. A perceptive character (DC 15 Perception spots) notices the hacked and splintered remains of a shield part-hidden amid the weeds and mud of the stream's far bank.
5. A reed-fringed pool fills a steep-sided hollow at the confluence of several streams. The pool is shaded by trees growing about the hollow, and it is gloomy and cold. Croaking frogs fill the air with their calls.
6. A large owl perches high up in a tree, watching the group. A keen-eyed character notices the creature.
7. Dark clouds crowd out the sun and plunge the surrounding woods into deep, chill gloom. The wind picks up, and the numberless boughs of the forest begin to creak and clack against one another.
8. The characters stumble across an old trail leading to Sakarias's lodge. The trail is mostly overgrown, but here and there, a skilled tracker can discern signs of occasional use.
9. A thick stand of old trees looms over the surrounding newer growth. The stand is an excellent place to hide or camp as it provides good shelter from both the elements and prying eyes.
10. A tree has fallen across the trail. The tree obviously fell a long time ago; it has part sunk into the ground, and weeds and bushes have grown up all around it. Someone has forged a new trail around the obstacle.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the lodge's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A man's decomposing body lies partly under a bush. The corpse has been here for several months, and although he wears ruined fine clothes, nothing of value remains; the man's coin pouch is conspicuously absent.
2. A deer's mauled carcass, obviously fed upon by wolves and other smaller scavengers, sprawls at the bottom of a slight slope.
3. The corpse of a hunter hangs from the branches of a sprawling yew. The man has been hung by the neck, and from the look on his face and the hands gripping the rope around his neck, he obviously died slowly and in great pain.
4. Chunks of wood have been hacked from the trunk of a large tree. Shards of wood litter the ground.
5. A painted pewter brooch wrought in the shape of a kingfisher lies amid the weeds. The paint is faded and has begun to fade, but the brooch itself is exquisite and worth 50 gp even in this poor condition.
6. A humanoid's grinning skull glares up at the characters from amid a patch of red and purple wildflowers. There is no sign of the rest of the unfortunate's skeleton.
7. An empty noose hangs from the branch of a stout, old oak. The rope looks to be in good condition; the noose has not hung here long.
8. Deep tracks left by a heavy, human-sized humanoid are evident on the soft forest floor. A skilled tracker can identify the tracks as those of a human man (or a large woman) likely wearing heavy armour. The tracks lead toward the armiger's home, and the tracker can follow them there.
9. A thin, virtually overgrown trail leads to a part-collapsed hunter's hide hidden in the shadow of a dense thicket. Investigations reveal that the hide is old and has likely not been used in years.
10. A perceptive character spots a patch of freshly-turned earth. It is a grave and holds the corpse of an elf woman yet wearing slashed and torn scarlet robes.

Don't Forget the Weather

The Nightmare Lodge is a gloomy, horror-filled place. As well as describing the locale and its surrounds in as lurid detail as possible don't forget that the weather can play a pivotal roll in building atmosphere. If dark clouds fill the sky and a strong wind whines about the lodge as the characters begin their exploration the whole feel of the adventure will be different to if it is a bright and sunny day.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The lodge has several notable locations:

1. **Hallway**: This hallway runs through the ground floor.
2. **Trophy Room**: Dusty, threadbare animal heads hang from this chamber's oak-panelled walls.
3. **Withdrawing Room**: Several once plush chairs and occasional tables stand about this oak-panelled chamber.
4. **Dining Room**: The merchant Venemie once feasted with his friends here; now, Sakarias Venemie eats alone.
5. **Kitchen**: This kitchen is a riot of disorganisation.
6. **Upper Hall**: This dusty hallway has no windows and is always dark.
7. **Master Bedchamber**: Herein sleeps Sakarias Venemie.
8. **The Solar**: Sakarias Venemie often sits staring out of the dusty window panes, keeping watch over his domain.
9. **Guest Rooms**: The merchant Venemie once brought his friends to enjoy the hunt and the resultant feasts. These rooms have not been used for years.
10. **Servant's Quarters**: Herein once lived the merchant's servants and guards. These rooms have not been used for years.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the lodge's locations share certain features:

Illumination: During the day, gloomy light pierces the lodge in any room in which the windows' shutters are thrown open. At night, the armiger uses candles to fill the few rooms he uses with dim light.

Decrepitude: The lodge is in a general state of decay. Some roof tiles are missing, and water damage is evident here and there inside.

Ceilings: The ceilings are 12 feet high.

Walls: The lodge's exterior walls are of stone, while internal walls are of wood faced with oak panelling.

Floors: The ground floor is of levelled flagstones, while the upper floor comprises floorboards. Many of the floorboards creak when trod upon and are difficult to move across silently.

Internal Doors: The lodge's internal doors are of wood. Most have warped slightly, or their frames have slightly shifted. Consequently, they are hard to open or close).

External Doors: The lodge's two external doors are of iron banded oak; both have large locks with similarly large keys left in them.

Dungeon Dressing

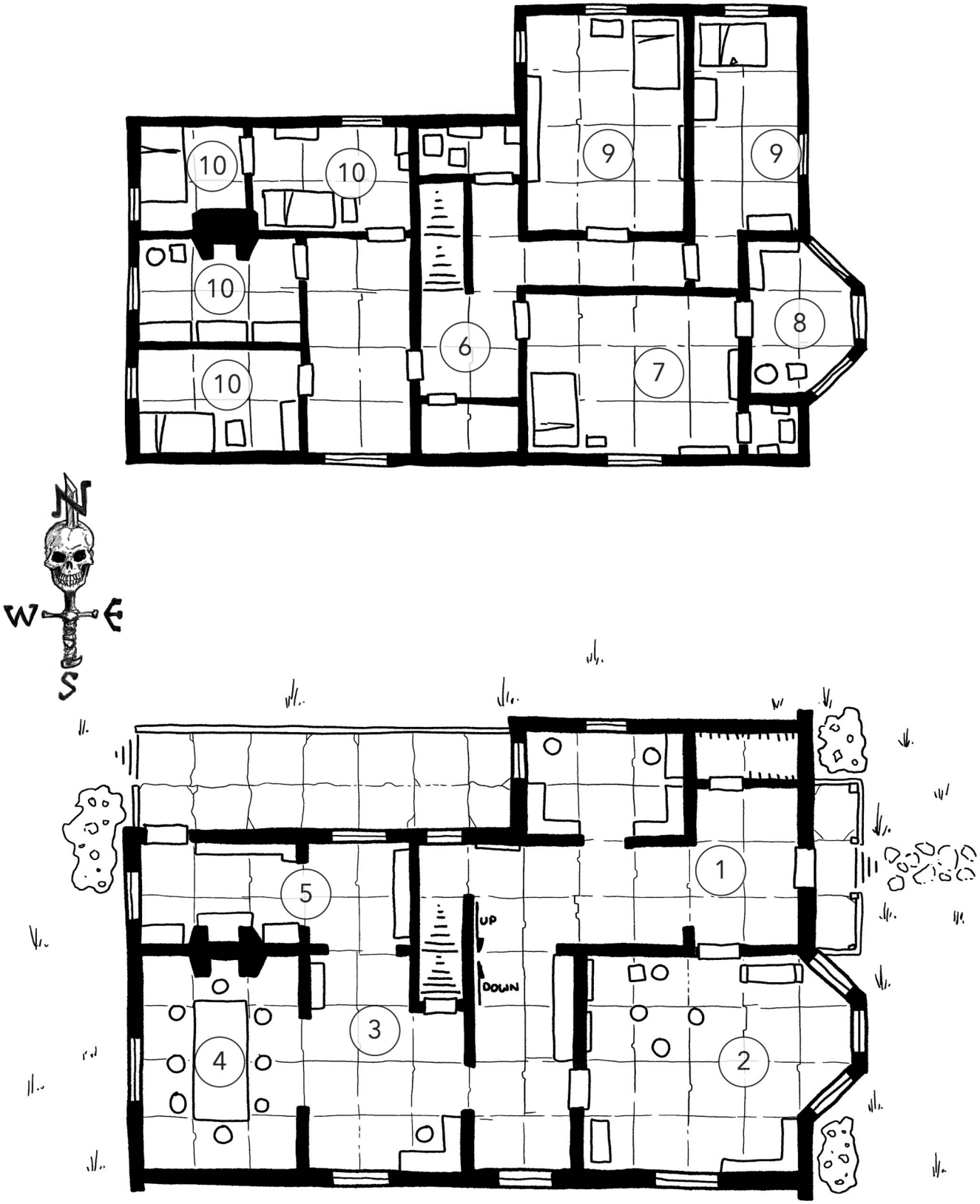
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the lodge:

1. Dust lies thickly on seemingly unused furniture scattered about this room. Slender cobwebs stretch between the walls and ceiling.
2. Dust lies thickly on the floor and clearly shows the armiger's footprints.
3. Part of the wood panelling on one wall has come loose, exposing the batons behind.
4. A damp patch mars the ceiling. The patch takes on a sinister demeanour in dim light—a pool of inky darkness against the exposed wood.
5. A smear of dried blood covers the wall close to the nearest door.
6. A cold breeze issuing from some unknown sources caresses the party's faces.
7. A faint scrabbling sound—perhaps rats or mice moving about—comes from inside a nearby wall.
8. Black mould grows across a swath of ceiling and wall.
9. Livid scratches on the floor show where something heavy has recently been dragged.
10. The wind howls about the house, and the building seems to whine in response.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a lodge location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A coat of arms, a stylised eagle, appears throughout the house—on cutlery, the backs of chairs, on mildewed cloaks and so on. (This is the Venemie crest.)
2. Three cloaks of elven cut are draped over a chair. One of the greyish-green cloaks has a jagged hole in its back.
3. A single riding boot, drenched in dried blood, lies on its side on the floor.
4. Water-damaged scraps of parchment lie across the floor and stir slightly in a gentle breeze issuing from some unknown place.
5. A bloody gold earring lies under a piece of furniture. The teardrop-shaped earring is worth 5 gp.
6. A pictorial map of the area shows the major geographical features but is not to scale. The map is faded and has suffered extensive water damage.
7. A scabbarded longsword has been thrust behind a piece of furniture; only its pommel is visible.
8. A mass of dusty grey spiderwebs covers a small chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The filthy chandelier is of cheap glass but still worth 20 gp; it is, however, bulky and fragile.
9. A tuft of distinctive red hair is snagged on a door frame. The hair's roots are bloody.
10. A gold signet ring bearing a stylised eagle device lies under a chair. The ring is worth 50 gp.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GM Notes

The primary threat in the Nightmare Lodge is the Insane Armiger, Sakarias Venemies. If you decide he has a servant or two remember to leave signs of their presence throughout the house—particularly in the kitchen and whichever bedchamber(s) they use.

***Gloomy & Forsaken**: The Nightmare Lodge is a gloomy, rundown place; make sure you describe it as such to your players.*

***Rats**: Rats dwell in the lodge—attracted by Sakarias's leavings—and could serve as nuisance encounters. The sound of them scrabbling through the walls could also add to the feel of the place.*

***Spellbook**: This book could still contain a spell or two, but most of its contents have been ruined by Sakarias's frenzied hacking. Perhaps the characters have heard of Sihvo Vaania. Perhaps they are looking for him.*

1: Hallway

This hallway runs through the ground floor.

Faint light seeps into this oak-panelled hallway from a solitary window. Dried mud and scuff marks cover the flagged floor.

Stairs: Solid oak stairs link the ground and first floors. The stairs are difficult terrain.

Mudroom and Cloakrooms: These rooms lie off the hallway, and Sakarias uses them as dump rooms. Clothes, mundane gear and so on are haphazardly piled here—these are the tithes collected by Sakarias from his victims. The floor in both rooms is difficult terrain. Characters searching these disorganised, musty rooms may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. These soft brown leather walking shoes are in excellent condition and sized for a human woman. The initials CP are stitched into the back of each boot.
2. A smattering of dried blood mars this plain gold earring stud (worth 2 gp).
3. This brown traveller's cloak has a voluminous hood.
4. A bulging backpack holds rope, pitons and a hammer.
5. An empty, dented lantern with cracked glass panels.
6. This hacked and battered leather-bound spellbook bears the name Sihvo Vaania.

2: Trophy Room

Dusty, threadbare animal heads hang from this chamber's oak-panelled walls.

Dusty and threadbare animal heads hang on this chamber's oak-panelled walls. A few chairs and rubbish-strewn tables stand about the room.

Animal Heads: Dusty and threadbare hunting trophies hang on the walls. Wolves, bears, deer, elk and more all hang here—their fixed, glassy eyes eternally gazing down into the room.

Comfortable Furniture: Dusty and musty chairs and divans—interspersed with occasional tables—are scattered about the room. Empty wine bottles, dirty plates, goblets and the like cover the tables. Characters searching the room may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. The glassy eye of one of the stuffed heads has fallen off; it stares unblinkingly up at the character finding it.
2. A leather pouch holds three matching silver rings (each worth 20 gp); one still encircles a decomposing finger.
3. A scrap of red fabric flutters in a faint breeze and catches the eye of the most perceptive character.
4. A stained and bloody map shows the surrounding territory. A big red ring encircles the lodge and a swath of the area—this is Sakarias's domain.
5. Thick black mould grows over the back of a chair.
6. A lone bat roosts in a stuffed bear's head open mouth.

3: Withdrawing Room

Several once plush chairs and occasional tables stand about this oak-panelled chamber.

Comfortable chairs and small tables stand about this chamber.

Comfortable Furniture: Dusty and musty chairs and divans—interspersed with occasional tables—are scattered about the room. Empty wine bottles, dirty plates, goblets and the like cover the tables.

Stairs: These stairs lead down into the lodge's cellar. This low, claustrophobic room is 20 feet square; shelves filled with mundane goods—candlesticks, spare (and broken) furniture, and so on can all be found here. This room does not appear on the map.

4: Dining Room

The merchant Venemies once feasted with his friends here; now, Sakarias Venemies eats alone.

A long oak table covered with empty goblets, filthy plates, two three-stemmed candlesticks and other clutter stands in the centre of this wood-panelled room. A fireplace pierces the north wall.

Dining Table: Eight elegant chairs sit around this ten-foot-long oaken table. The clutter of Sakaria's lonely feasts lies about the table. The two candlesticks standing here are of tarnished silver and worth 50 gp each.

Fireplace: Cold soot and fragments of charred wood fill the fireplace.

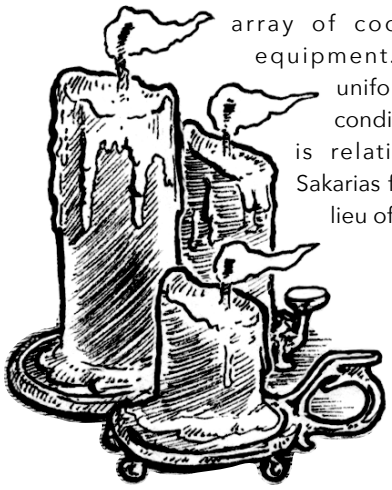
5: Kitchen

This kitchen is a riot of disorganisation.

A large, cold fireplace dominates one wall. Counters and cupboards stand against the other walls of this filthy, gloriously disorganised kitchen.

Fireplace: Cold soot and fragments of charred wood fill this fireplace. A large iron roasting spit stands over the fire.

Counters & Cupboards: Disorganised and filthy, the counters and cupboards hold a vast array of cooking supplies and equipment. The equipment is uniformly old and in bad condition; much of the food is relatively fresh—taken by Sakarias from his many victims in lieu of coin.



GM Notes

***Prisoners**: If Sakarias has any prisoners they are likely here.*

***The Depths of Depravity**: Depending on how insane you deem Sakarias to be, he could have begun to practise cannibalism. If this is the case, the evidence of his blasphemous diet will lie in the kitchen and dining room.*

GM Notes

If Sakarias has minions, servants or guards remember to include their tracks in the Upper Hall. These tracks will likely lead to the servants' quarters.

***Treasure**: Sakarias probably keeps his choicest treasures here and in the solar.*

6: Upper Hall

This dusty hallway has no windows and is always dark.

A dark, dusty hallway lies at the top of the stairs. Several closed doors pierce the wainscotted walls.

Stairs: Solid oak stairs link the ground and first floors. The stairs are difficult terrain.

Illumination: The Upper Hall has no windows, and all the doors are shut; it is dark here.

Dusty Tracks: The majority of the tracks in this area lead up the stairs and across the hall to location 7. These tracks are obvious. Older tracks also lead to the various other bedrooms on this floor.

Storage Cupboards: Two storage cupboards lead off from the Upper Hall. The cupboards contain spare sheets, towels and other items necessary for the smooth operation of the house.

7: Master Bedchamber

Herein sleeps Sakarias Venemies.

A filthy four-poster bed dominates this room. The pungent smell of sweat hangs heavily in the air.

Four-Poster Bed: This ornate bed dominates the room. Its curtains are filthy, as are its sheets.

Furniture: Clothes and other mundane equipment fill a chest and wardrobe.

Smell: The fetid smell of sweat fills the air.

Storage Cupboard: This door has a lock, and Sakarias has the only key. Three small chests fill this dingy cupboard; Sakarias keeps some of his treasures within.

8: The Solar

Sakarias Venemies often sits staring out of the dusty window panes, keeping watch over his domain.

Three ornate and delicate glass windows pierce the walls of this small chamber. A chair and a divan are arranged so those using them can gaze out at the surrounding countryside.

Unshuttered Windows: The external shutters over the windows in this room are open unless a storm rages outside. A clever rope-pull mechanism allows the shutters to be operated from inside.

- **The View**: Characters gazing out of the windows realise that they can see the distant Ridgeway. From here, Sakarias watches for folk trespassing on his road.

Comfortable Furniture: A padded chair, divan and an occasional table are arranged to make the best of the view. Three wine bottles, a goblet and a dirty plate stand on the table. The furniture looks used.

9: Guest Room

The merchant Venemies once brought his friends to enjoy the hunt and the resultant feasts. These rooms have not been used for years.

A bed, wardrobe and various other pieces of dusty furniture stand about this chamber. The air is musty here, and the window's shutters are tightly closed.

Shuttered Windows: The external shutters to this room are tightly closed. To operate them, a character must first open the delicate glass windows they protect.

Dusty, Musty Furniture: The once good-quality furniture here—a bed, chair, wardrobe and so on—is dusty and obviously unused.

Black Mould: A smattering of black mould grows on the north-facing external wall. A character wise in nature's ways (DC 15 Knowledge [nature] succeeds) knows the mould is harmless in such small quantities.

Hidden Treasures: Characters searching this dusty, unused room may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. This warm wool blanket is in good condition.
2. A long, slender dagger lies under the bed's mattress.
3. A small leather-bound book containing prayers to Conn lies on the floor under the bed.
4. A black velvet robe covered in spider webs hangs in the wardrobe. The robe feels slightly damp to the touch.
5. A dusty gold coin lies next to the wardrobe.
6. A blue silk hat (worth 5 gp) hangs from a bedpost.

10: Servants' Quarters

Herein once lived the merchant's servants and guards. These rooms have not been used for years.

Plain, simple furniture fills this unused bedchamber.

Shuttered Windows: The external shutters to this room are tightly closed. To operate them, a character must first open the delicate glass windows they protect.

Dusty, Musty Furniture: The furniture here—a bed, chair, small chest and so on—is dusty and obviously unused.

Black Mould: A smattering of black mould grows on the north-facing external wall. A character wise in nature's ways (DC 15 Knowledge [nature] succeeds) knows the mould is essentially harmless in such small quantities.

Hidden Treasures: Characters searching this dusty, unused room may find something of note. Roll on this list to determine what they find:

1. A threadbare wool sock lies under the bed.
2. Scraps of parchment litter the floor.
3. A dusty copper coin lies in a corner.
4. Mouldy, damp, simple clothes fill the room's chest.
5. An empty wine flask lies under the bed.
6. Virulent brown mould grows over the ceiling.

GM Notes

***Occupied Rooms**: If Sakarias has minions, servants or guards remember to include signs of their occupancy in various bedchambers.*

***Brown Mould**: This could be dangerous or it could be nothing more than the symptom of damp and long-disuse.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have dealt with the Insane Armiger, the lodge may fade from the campaign or feature in the party's future adventurous doings.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Accosted on the Road**: The sole survivor of the armiger's attack barely survived, and although magical healing will restore his physical health, the trauma of a near-death experience means he'll need help returning to the nearest town. The characters can do this before or after they hunt down the armiger.
- **Missing Travellers**: The characters will likely find evidence of the armiger's guilt regarding the missing travellers at his home. They may even rescue survivors who have not yet felt the harsh touch of his justice. Survivors will no doubt be traumatised and need to be escorted home, while the characters must deliver evidence of the armiger's foul deeds to the authorities to claim their reward.
- **Savage Storm**: Once the storm has passed, the characters can resume their onward journey.

Further Adventures

Once the Insane Armiger has been dealt with, the characters are free to move on to their next adventure. However, one or more of the characters may realise that it is likely that no one will claim the dilapidated hunting lodge and thus claim it as their own.

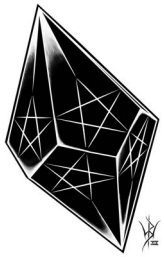
The isolated lodge is handily located for adventures in the Briarwood and Ochels but is in a bad state of repair. A character dwelling in the place will likely have to spend a considerable sum repairing it. They will also have to guarantee the safety of anyone working on the building, necessitating time away from normal adventuring or the hiring of guards. Subsequently, a character dwelling in the lodge will likely have to engage servants to help with the running and upkeep of the house.

Finally, a long-lost relative of the lodge's original owner could eventually appear and assert their ownership of the place. They could have a legitimate claim to the lodge or could be attempting to pull a fast one on gullible adventurers. Either way, the claim is certain to generate some interesting roleplaying activities.

Onyx Prison of the Demon King

Forests & Woodlands, Ashlar (Forest of Gray Spires)

Legends tell of Blackshard Hold—a dwarven redoubt nested far to the south, in the all but impenetrable Forest of Gray Spires. The dwarves of clan Kildare built the hold around a vast monolith of glimmering black onyx. For years, they dwelled there, mining the precious stone and accruing wealth from trading with Dulwich, Wellswood, and even the city of Languard, far to the north. Then, Kildare and his kin suddenly abandoned Blackshard Hold, claiming some eldritch horror lay imprisoned therein. Tales of captive demons imprisoned in the hold are thought of as nothing but tales told to dissuade the faint of heart from exploring the place. Many believe there's still precious onyx to be found in the dwarves' old mine!



Dungeon Background

An eternity ago, when the gods were yet young, the demon king Summanus emerged from the Abyss and declared itself ruler over the world's night skies. Caught up as they were in their own divine intrigues and affairs, the gods first ignored Summanus. Before long, however, the demon king began to see itself as the antipode of the sun god, Darlen, and made its own claim to godhood. For if a deity ruled over the light of day, it reasoned, surely another must hold dominion over darkness and night…

This time, the demon king's hubris did not go unnoticed–nor did it go unpunished. Even Braal, lord of malice– former ally of Summanus–recognised the upstart had overstepped certain bounds, and a price had to be paid. With honeyed lies and vague promises of ascension, he sent Summanus on the impossible quest of retrieving a distant black star from the night sky, to serve as a jewel upon its godly crown. Inevitably, dawn caught up with the betrayed demon king, and with it came Darlen on his golden sun-chariot. The Lord of Light assailed Summanus, tearing his great black wings and smiting its smouldering ruin upon a broken crag. Here, the great creator god Abarin wrought a prison of black onyx to contain the demon king's sundered form, entombing Summanus in a sarcophagus of stone, graven with heavenly wards.

Millennia later, the dwarves of clan Kildare began mining the Forest of Gray Spires in search of precious gems. Following a rich onyx vein, they stumbled upon the black obelisk forming Summanus's onyx prison and established the dwarven redoubt of Blackshard Hold around it. It did not take long for the dwarves to realise the onyx slivers they meticulously chiselled off the obelisk possessed certain powers, which they tried to bond with their weapons. Eventually, the dwarves decided the dangers of these tainted onyx shards outweighed their benefits. Blackshard Hold was abandoned, and its location struck from all records. Some 40 years ago, however, the site was rediscovered by a group of adventurers known as the Crimson Blades as they sought the fallen halls of Vongyth.

Go On, Finish the Story!

To ensure maximum flexibility in adapting this Dungeon Backdrop to your own campaign, it is up to you to fill in the dungeon's history between its rediscovery 40 years ago, and the moment the characters set out to Blackshard Hold.

What is certain is that, during this time, someone–or something–freed Summanus from its onyx prison, and an unknown party of adventurers has recently visited the site. Whether or not there is any connection between these events is up to you.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on Blackshard Hold by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the dungeon:

- **Collect 'em All**: Any adventurers looking for work are led to Rydeth Sehiatyn (N female half-elf wizard/thief), who is building a catalogue of Ashlar's minerals. Rydeth's collection is almost complete, save for a sample of "special" onyx found only in Blackshard Hold, southeast of Vongyth. Rydeth pays 50 gp for every shard, up to a maximum of ten, the adventurers can bring back.
- **Debt Collectors**: Several weeks ago, a party of adventurers passed through Longbridge, incurring a sizeable debt in rare spirits and tobacco at the Iron Fist (location 9, Longbridge). If the characters can track down the thieves and reclaim the money owed (318 gp, 8 sp and 3 cp), innkeeper Fruen Deadeye (LE female half-orc fighter) offers them a bottle of her finest whisky (worth 100 gp). Rumour has it the culprits were headed to Blackshard Hold.
- **Just in Case**: Though hardly anyone has noticed it, the nights have become darker, and midnight storms have grown more frequent. There's an old legend of a demon of night trapped beneath Blackshard Hold…it's probably nothing, of course, but Donatus Trond (location 6, Longbridge; LE male human rogue/cleric) confesses he'd feel much more at ease if someone were to investigate regardless.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can try to gather information (which may or may not be true based on your setup) about Blackshard Hold. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp in drinks, bribes and so on. Use the list below to determine which rumour(s) the character learns.

1. Did you fall for the "demon prison" story? The dwarves invented it to keep their precious onyx safe!
2. Blackshard used to be an onyx mine–a very lucrative business, I should think. Odd, then, that you can't easily find the gemstone around here these days.
3. Legend holds there's a demon imprisoned beneath Blackshard. Maybe every rock pillar in the Forest of Gray Spires marks a demon's tomb… Imagine that!
4. Blackshard Hold? Best bring warm clothes then, friend. the Gray Spires get mighty cold this time of year.
5. It's hardly two miles southeast of Vongyth. The funny thing is you're the second to ask me about it this month.
6. The dwarves claim the onyx mined at Blackshard was tainted somehow. That's why they abandoned the mine.

The Surrounding Locality

Blackshard Hold lies two miles southeast of the ruined dwarven hold of Vongyth, inside the mystery-shrouded Forest of Gray Spires forming the southern border of the Duchy of Ashlar. The dungeon's entrance lies hidden behind a curtain of blue moss.

The area around Blackshard Hold is much colder than normal; most of the year the temperature in the immediate vicinity never gets above freezing.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list, to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Tracks in the mud suggest another party of adventurers came this way recently. A successful tracking roll enables the party to follow the tracks to the dungeon's entrance.
2. Tremors accompanied by a low grumbling shake the earth for ten minutes, panicking the local wildlife.
3. Pitiful shrieks draw a character to a bird's nest fallen from a gnarled oak tree. The tiny, twisted creatures shrieking amid its branches are mutated beyond comprehension.
4. Smoke trails point the way to a blackened oak tree, seemingly struck by lightning…yet there have been no recent storms in the area.
5. Scorched vegetation surrounds a circular patch of vitrified sand and rock about 50 ft. in diameter.
6. A low, sulphurous mist rises from the hold, killing Tiny earth-bound animals within a one-mile radius.
7. Soggy ashes filling a ring of blackened stones betray the recent presence of another adventuring party.
8. Clouds gather above the forest, and blue streaks of lightning repeatedly flash through the sky. Oddly, there is no sound of thunder.
9. The sickly-sweet scent of decay alerts the characters to the corpse of an orc lying nearby. Its eyes—untouched by crows—have turned a solid black, and dark veins radiate outward from a deep piercing wound over its heart.
10. A trio of "ghost lights" spotted earlier from afar turns out to be several small pools of blue fire. The flames are ice cold and seem frozen in time—its fires do not catch.

Blackshard Horrors

When a sliver of demon-tainted onyx embeds itself in a living creature and kills it, the shard reanimates the corpse in 1d12 minutes. The creature's eyes turn jet-black, and inky veins grow across its body, radiating outwards from the shard. These undead creatures share a single mind, existing only to do Summanus the demon king's foul bidding.

Only living creatures can be transformed into blackshard horrors. Such creatures immediately lose all abilities that assume a living physiology, but retain all statistics, except as described below.

Type: The blackshard horror becomes an undead.

Senses: A blackshard horror gains infravision 60 ft.

Damage Resistance: Blackshard horrors suffer only half damage from nonmagical weapons or weapons not fitted with demon-tainted onyx.

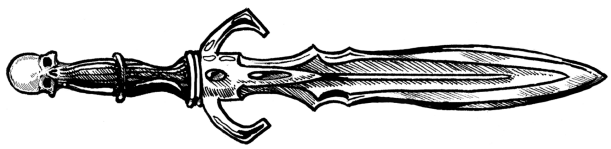
Immunities: A blackshard horror gains immunity to poison, and retains any immunities it had. A blackshard horror can't be charmed, frightened, paralysed or poisoned and is immune to magic *sleep*.

Weaknesses: Removing the onyx shard from a blackshard horror destroys it. In combat, this requires an unarmed attacks to pull the shard fire. Outside of combat, extracting a shard requires a feat of strength.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A crudely carved wooden goat recently whittled from green sapwood lies on the ground.
2. Maggots cover this portion of spoiled trail rations.
3. A patch of thick, brown shelf fungus sprouts from a dead tree. A dwarf, druid or ranger can identify it as leaftop fungus—an edible fungus with a strong beefy flavour. Since it's a dwarf favourite, dwarves identify the fungus automatically. There's enough to feed the party for a day.
4. A pair of rusted once fine shortswords—one dwarven, one elven—are embedded in a tree trunk as a mark of some ancient warrior oath sworn between the two kin.
5. A pair of leaky wineskins containing soured barley wine.
6. An uncured rabbit pelt has been spread over a rock. Properly tanned, it is worth 2d6 sp.
7. A large piece of flint, useful for starting fires, lies half-buried in the mud.
8. A leather scroll case dangles from a tree—its strap caught on one of the branches. It seems recently lost and contains a partial map of the dungeon (tear the untagged dungeon map and give the players half).
9. A stray crossbow bolt is embedded in a nearby tree. Its head is a razor-sharp sliver of coal-black onyx. Living creatures killed by this bolt turn into blackshard horrors (see the "Blackshard Horrors" sidebar below).
10. A recently discarded poison vial smells strongly of serpent venom.



Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **Entryway**: This area provides a taste of things to come.
2. **Grand Hall**: This hall was rendered unstable by the demon king's escape.
3. **Melted Corridor**: Sharp stalactites of melted stone wait to draw blood from unprotected flesh here.
4. **Ancient Forge**: The forge was spared from the demon king's onslaught.
5. **Overlook**: The anomalies here provide the first concrete evidence of demonic activity.
6. **Ruined Lapidarium**: A cloud of onyx shards, frozen in time, hangs in midair here.
7. **Shattered Obelisk**: The remains of Summanus's shattered prison loom over this frozen underground lake.
8. **Sequestered Shrine**: This shrine holds one last secret.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Intense Cold: Like its surrounds, the dungeon's bowels are freezing cold. Unprotected characters inside the dungeon may suffer minor damage due to the temperature at the end of each hour.

Brimstone Smell: The stench of burning sulphur lingers inside the dungeon's deeper areas. Whenever a character enters a new location (except location 1), they may lose some Strength and Constitution points for 20 minutes. Characters resistant to poison their normal bonus to this attempt to resist the stench. Various magic spells that war off poison may offer protection from the stench.

Illumination: The blue fire in location 6 reflects off the glassed dungeon walls, effectively providing dim light to all locations, except in location 8.

Ceilings: Except in locations 3 and 7, the dungeon's ceilings are 20 ft. high.

Walls: The superior masonry walls are sheathed in a layer of glass, caused by the heat of the demon king's rage. This renders them quite reflective, making it difficult to sneak up on other creatures inside the dungeon. All attempts to hide in shadows are harder than normal in the dungeon. The walls can be scaled as if they were slippery.

Floors: Like the walls, the flagstone floors are covered in glass. The many cracks and impurities present counteract its natural slipperiness.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list, to breathe lie and detail into the dungeon:

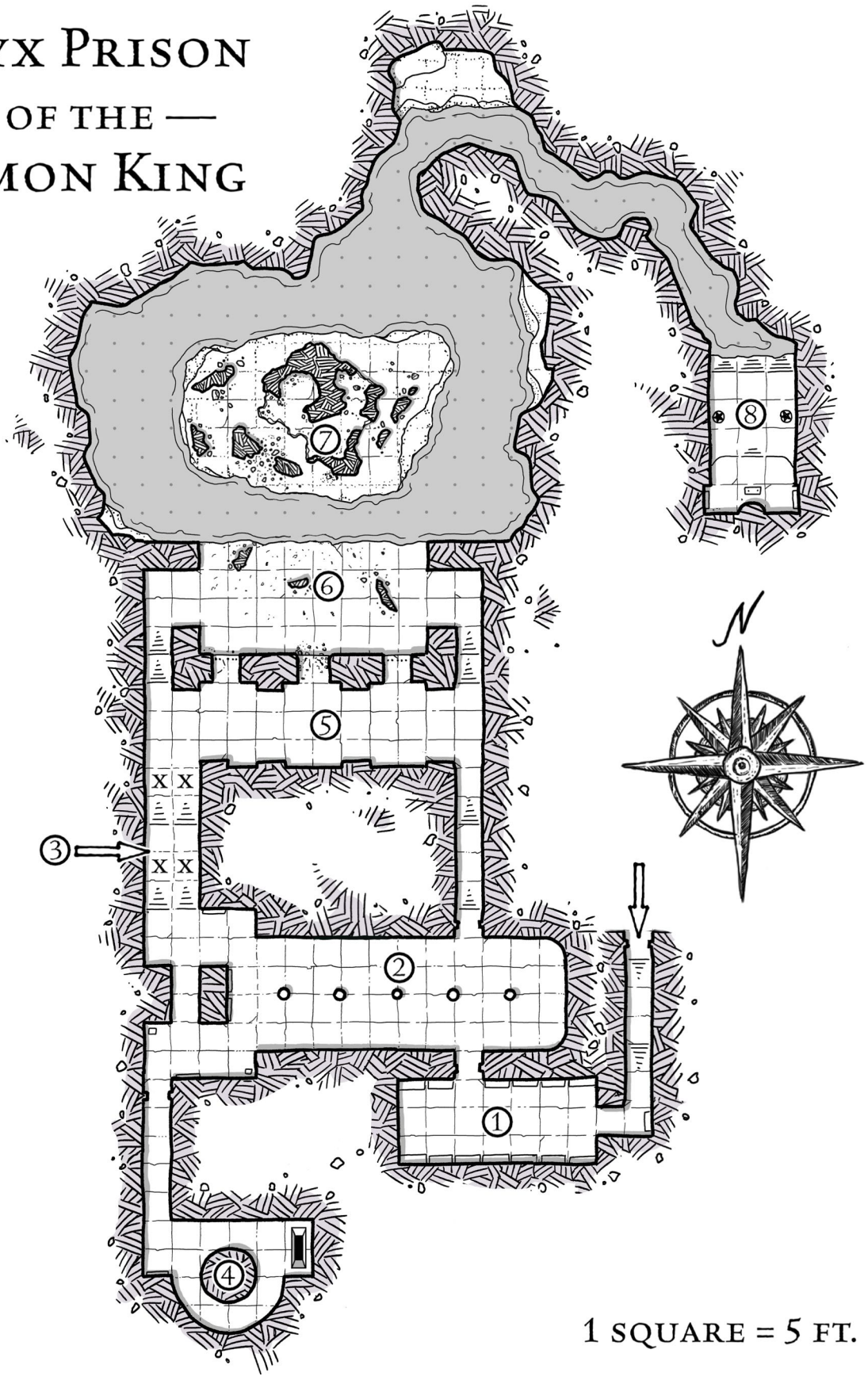
1. Three humanoid shadows have been burned into the surface of a nearby wall.
2. The party's footsteps cause the glassed floor to crack loudly, potentially alerting nearby creatures.
3. A large rat suddenly charges from the shadows, attacking the lead character. It is easily killed; investigation reveals a shard of onyx embedded in its chest.
4. Dark crimson streaks of frozen blood cling to the floors and walls of the area—evidence of some recent conflict.
5. A haunting chorus of disembodied screams suddenly sounds from location 3.
6. A trail of demonic runes flares up on a wall, leading to a random location (roll 1d8 to determine which one).
7. Ominous rumblings from deep below herald the coming of a small, yet powerful earthquake. The shock follows 1d10 rounds later, causing all characters in the dungeon to fall prone.
8. A shard of glistening black onyx hangs suspended in the air. A strong character can pull it free.
9. All liquids carried by the party (including blood from untended wounds) start dripping upwards. The gravitational anomaly lasts 2d10 minutes.
10. All fire sources carried by the party sputter and start burning with a bright, cold blue light for as long as they remain inside the dungeon.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. This fire-scorched longsword has lost its edge and is less effective in combat as a result.
2. A pile of vitrified human remains. The crystallised skull is worth 2d4x50 gp to a scholar or amateur of the macabre.
3. A finely crafted shortsword with a shard of onyx embedded into the crossguard (refer to the "Demon-Tainted Onyx" sidebar for details).
4. A glimmering pile of melted coins, worth 3d10x10 gp. The hunk of precious metal weighs 40 lbs.
5. A cracked and blackened leather purse containing 1d6 fractured rubies, each worth 2d4x5 gp).
6. A length of half-melted iron chain, its links fused together. It can be wielded as a large club.
7. A burnt scrap of vellum bears a partial map of the dungeon (tear the untagged dungeon map in half).
8. A light crossbow with a broken string. The flight groove smells strongly of poison.
9. A frozen *healing potion* fills a shattered vial.
10. A supercooled flask of oil. The slightest touch causes the liquid to freeze and expand, shattering the flask and igniting the contents.

Onyx Prison — of the — Demon King



GM Notes

***Exploding Glass**: Consider whether the dungeon's denizens know about the exploding glass in location 2. If they do, and are intelligent enough, they probably won't hesitate to use sling stones or hurled oil flasks to trigger explosions near the characters.*

1: Entryway

This area provides a taste of things to come.

The light from the entrance shimmers across the glossy floor and walls of this chamber, dancing like ghost-lights upon a frozen midnight sea. A faint brimstone smell drifts upon the stale air, laden with the promise of death.

Glossy Floor and Walls: Characters inspecting the floor and walls discover the stones are fused together and covered in a layer of dark, smoky glass. A clever character may realise this resulted from intense heat.

Brimstone Smell: Though the sulphurous stench in this chamber is bearable, any character who takes a whiff by the entrance to location 2 realises things are about to get worse from this point on…

2: Grand Hall

This hall was rendered unstable by the demon king's escape.

Starbursts of jagged cracks pierce this grand hall's walls like glimmering spider webs set against the night sky. A quintet of twisted glass pillars strain to hold up the vaulted ceiling.

Cracked Walls: The cracks are the result of thermal stress stored in the glassed walls. Damage inflicted on the walls releases the stored energy in an explosion of razor-sharp glass shards.

If a five-foot section of wall is destroyed, a 15-foot cone of glass shards explodes outwards. Creatures caught in the cone suffer slashing damage (but may be able to dodge some of this damage). In addition, creatures who suffer serious injury from a glass explosion are blinded for 1d4 rounds, as the blood from many shallow cuts obscures their vision.

Vitrified Pillars: All five pillars are sheathed in a layer of cracked, smoky glass, much like the nearby walls. Characters inspecting the pillars discover ominous gouges—as if a pair of massive, clawed hands melted into the pillars' granite cores.

If a pillar is destroyed, it explodes in a 15-foot burst of shards with an effect otherwise identical to a wall explosion (see "Cracked Walls" above). Destroying any three pillars releases all the residual thermal stress stored in this chamber at once, triggering the explosion of all remaining pillars and wall sections and lowering the ceiling by 10 ft.

3: Melted Corridor

Sharp stalactites of melted stone wait to draw blood from unprotected flesh here.

Glistening black stalactites resembling poison fangs droop from the ceiling of this long, wide corridor.

Black Stalactites: These long black spikes reach almost to the floor, forcing Medium or Small creatures to crawl in order to avoid their sharp tips. Alternatively, such a creature may proceed through the corridor crouched instead. Crouching creatures treat the corridor as difficult terrain, and must make avoid touching them at the end of its turn. Failure inflicts minor slashing damage. Small or smaller crouching creatures find it easier to dodge the stalactites. Large or larger creatures automatically suffer damage.

Trapped Souls: Pressed up against the glass walls and floors of this corridor, the characters see the melted faces and fire-scorched skulls of the demon king's many victims trapped inside the vitrified stone. Each time a character passes through a square marked with an "X", a cacophony of haunting whispers overtakes their thoughts, affecting them like a fear-inducing spell.

Melted Stairs: The stone steps all but melted away. Descending each flight of stairs is easy, but a character ascending them must be careful or slip over.

4: Ancient Forge

The forge was spared from the demon king's onslaught.

A gentle warmth radiates from this ancient forge. Against the far wall a host of weapons bask in a dull crimson glow.

Untouched Stone: The floors and walls here have not been vitrified and are like a normal dungeon's.

Gentle Warmth: The heat from the geothermal forge dispels the dungeon's biting cold.

Geothermal Forge: A marvel of dwarven engineering, the forge comprises a 60-foot shaft dropping straight down to a pool of magma. A system of chains and pulleys allows items to be lowered to specific depths, depending on the desired temperature. Characters inside the shaft suffer increasing amounts of fire damage every round the closer they get to the magma. Creatures in the magma likely burn to death near-instantly.

Weaponry: Hanging from iron hooks are 1d6+1 shortswords, 2d4 handaxes, 1d4 battle-axes, 1d4-1 greataxes, and 1d4-1 warhammers. All weapons are of fine quality. Inspection reveals each has an empty slot near the hilt where a gemstone might be fitted.

GM Notes

***Vitrified Corridor**: The demon king passed through location 3 during its escape. Much too cramped to accommodate Summanus's massive form, the corridor's walls and ceiling almost completely liquefied in contact with its blazing skin.*

Consider guarding the opposing corridor (sitting to the west and connecting locations 2 and 5) with traps, magical wards, or well-armed defenders to tempt the characters into using the Melted Corridor as an alternative, tactical route.

***Onyx Shards**: The weapons in location 4 were originally crafted to accept onyx shards. When the dwarves discovered the shards' dangers exceeded their benefits, the stones were removed and cast into the forge.*

GM Notes

***Blue Fire**: At your discretion, the blue fire in location 5 could inflict significant harm to a character occupying the same space in any of the overlapping planes.*

***Onyx Shards**: The cloud of time-frozen onyx shards in location 6 results from the explosion that freed Summanus.*

5: Overlook

The anomalies here provide the first concrete evidence of demonic activity.

Cold blue fire encircles a gaping hole melted into the centre of the far wall. Still plumes of azure flame rise from glowing pools sitting in an ocean of blackened glass flagstones.

Blue Fire: These frozen flames are motionless, yet blaze with a cold blue-green light. The fire inflicts no damage and does not affect creatures or objects on the Material Plane.

Gaping Hole: Melted black stones dotted with sparks of blue fire ring the large hole in the north wall. From the melting pattern and nearby debris, a clever character can deduce that the wall exploded inward, driven by a force coming from location 6.

Creatures looking through the gaping hole or one of the portcullises can see into location 6, ten feet below.

6: Ruined Lapidarium

A cloud of onyx shards, frozen in time, hangs in midair, here.

Suspended in the sulphurous air, myriad slivers of onyx hang over the area like a cloud of black daggers, locked in time.

Cloud of Onyx Shards: The cloud of black shards provides 50% cover to creatures standing in or beyond the area. While the shards resist being moved, Medium or smaller creatures moving at half speed or less can find a path to move through the shards unharmed. Larger creatures, or creatures moving through the cloud at more than half speed, suffer minor slashing damage for every 5 feet moved during their turn (unless they dodge some of the damage).

Onyx Shard: An onyx shard can be pulled free from the cloud by a strong character. See the "Demon-Tainted Onyx" sidebar below.

Demon-Tainted Onyx

Demon-tainted onyx is a new type of special material.

Slivers of onyx from Blackshard Hold can be used to augment weapons. It costs 20 gp to incorporate the black stone into a melee weapon's hilt or pommel. Arrows and bolts can be fitted with onyx heads at the cost of 1 gp per piece of ammunition.

If a sliver of demon-tainted onyx embeds itself in a living creature and kills it, the shard reanimates the corpse as a blackshard horror in 1d12 minutes (refer to the "Blackshard Horrors" sidebar for more details).

7: Shattered Obelisk

The remains of Summanus's shattered prison loom over this frozen underground lake.

The room opens up into a vast cavern, where a ruined obelisk of black stone rises from a lake of black ice.

Cavern: The cavern's ceiling is 50 ft. above the ice. The walls are unworked stone.

Ruined Obelisk: The remains of what was once a vast onyx monolith lie scattered about the area. With a 30-minute search, a character can find 2d4 chunks of onyx engraved with strange runes. Characters able to read heavenly script identify them as runes of imprisonment and containment.

Black Ice: The ice is covered in ash and debris, counteracting its natural slipperiness. While it is generally thick enough to support a character's weight, hidden weak spots render walking on the ice a treacherous affair.

At the end of every round, roll d% for each character on the ice. If the result is equal to, or less than one-tenth of its weight (including any gear carried), the creature falls through the ice.

The lake is 30 ft. deep, and the water is ice cold. Climbing out of the ice requires skill or strength. The water us is cold that characters immersed for more than a few minutes will likely suffer cold damage.

A wise character examining the ice likely spots nearby weak spots, reducing their chance to fall through to 0% for that turn.

8: Sequestered Shrine

This shrine holds one last secret.

Bone-white marble stairs emerge from the midnight ice, rising towards an undefiled sanctum where a pair of graven idols watch your approach with unblinking stares.

Graven Idols: A dwarf or other character steeped in religious lore identifies the statues as the dwarven gods Dalrak Grimtooth (greater god of war) and Thaun the Forgemaster (greater god of metal, mountains, and mining). Dwarves automatically identify the statues. Interestingly enough, neither deity is carrying their favoured weapon.

Dalrak holds a double-bladed greataxe, while Thaun clutches an ornate cleaver (treat as a battleaxe). Close inspection reveals that the weapons sit loosely in the gods' stony grips. While both weapons are of fine quality and forged of dwarven steel, they are otherwise unremarkable.

Altar: The cast-iron altar radiates faint transmutation magic. If the idols' axes are brought within five feet. of the altar, the characters carrying them feel the weapons being pulled towards the altar. If both weapons are placed on the altar, they slowly turn to face each other, after which a shower of sparks erupts between them, fusing the weapons into a single, giant key…

GM Notes

***Puzzlingly Runes**: When the characters are examining the chunks of the ruined obelisk in location 7, it is up to you whether or not they can puzzle together enough rune-graven shards to make sense of the writing. Decide beforehand what information—if any—you want the runes to convey within the context of the selected adventure hook and your campaign.*

***Something is Trapped Beneath**: Could one or more terrifying monsters have survived, trapped beneath the black ice? Probably not, but maybe, yes… Add aquatic horrors of your choosing to the frozen lake if you're feeling especially cruel.*

***The Key**: The giant "axe-key" which the characters can assemble in location 8 has no explicit use in this adventure. Refer to "Aftermath" for suggestions on incorporating this intriguing item into your campaign.*

Aftermath

If the characters survived the horrors of the dungeon beneath the spire, they have no doubt come to the conclusion the legend of the demon king trapped inside its onyx prison is true. Or at least, it was until recently… Something or someone has freed Summanus from its timeless incarceration, leaving the fiend free to bring the nightly skies under its dark dominion once more.

But who liberated the demon king? How did they manage such a feat, and—more importantly—why did they do it? All of these troubling questions demand (perhaps equally troubling) answers…

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Collect 'em All**: Rydeth Sehiatyn pays the characters as agreed. If the characters inform her of the shards' inherent dangers, she takes their warnings seriously but refuses to destroy or dispose of the shards until she's learned more about them. If the characters are interested in helping, she requests they escort her to the village of Wellswood, below which lies the dwarven redoubt of Don Galir. Rydeth explains: *"Mauno Neuvo resides there. He's an old friend of mine, as well as an ally of the dwarves. If anyone can help us learn more about these shards and their history, it's him."*

  Refer to *Village Backdrop: Wellswood* and *Village Backdrop: Don Galir* for more information on these settlements and their NPCs.
- **Debt Collectors**: Back at the Iron Fist tavern, the grizzled dwarven mercenary Anvar Kildare (LN male dwarf fighter) overhears the characters' tales of their discoveries in Blackshard Hold. Drunk on strong ale and a sense of adventure, Anvar clambers upon the nearest table, bellowing loudly: *"These adventurers here just returned from Blackshard Hold, home of my ancestors! Those who aid me in reclaiming it shall be richly rewarded with precious onyx!"*

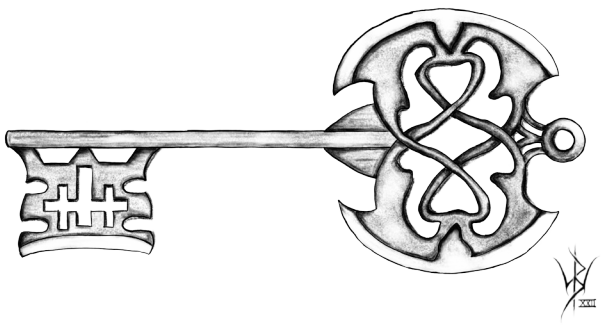
  Anvar's speech doesn't go unnoticed; immediately, 3d6 battle-scarred veterans rise from their tables to join the dwarf's impromptu adventuring party. Of course, no one will listen to the characters' claims of demons running rampant or cursed black gemstones…
- **Just in Case**: As the characters conclude the tale of their adventure inside Blackshard Hold, Donatus Trond gives a deep sigh. *"It is as I had feared… the demon king has been freed."* He then hands them a sealed letter and says, *"Here, take this coded letter to Eeva Keto in Woodridge, and take care to give it to no one but her. She's a friendly seer who knows a lot about the subject. I've added instructions for Eeva to pay you handsomely."* If the characters read and decipher the letter they learn Donatus sent another party of adventurers into Blackshard Hold to free the demon king at Eeva's behest. Donatus concludes the letter by saying his debt to Eeva is now settled, and to do with the characters as she wishes. How the demonic conspiracy further unfolds, and why the characters were involved, is up to you.

  Refer to *Village Backdrop: Woodridge* for more information on Woodridge and Eeva Keto (NE female human cleric [Braal]).

Further Adventures

Irrespective of the adventure hooks used to lure the characters to Blackshard Hold, certain events may continue to echo throughout your campaign.

- **Putting the Genie Back in the Bottle**: The evidence found inside Blackshard Hold suggests the demon king of ancient legend was recently freed from its onyx prison. When did this happen? Who was responsible, how did they manage the feat, and why did they free the eldritch horror from its tomb? Perhaps there is a way to imprison the demon king anew—but where is Summanus now?
- **A New Breed of Horrors**: Before long, a new breed of black-eyed, dark-veined undead creature starts appearing all over Ashlar; freshly-spawned blackshard horrors bent on inflicting carnage and destruction. Invariably, the hearts of these monsters are pierced by onyx-tipped crossbow bolts crafted from the tainted shards found in the fallen hold. Is this the work of the enigmatic adventurers whose tracks the characters encountered in Blackshard Hold? Why are they creating blackshard horrors? And how can they be stopped?
- **Keys to the Kingdom**: Any dwarf sage worth their salt can readily identify the giant key found in location 8 as bearing the markings of the ill-fated Nurthen clan, who were driven from Vongyth by a pair of green dragons. Though Vongyth's forlorn depths were supposedly cleansed of dragon-taint by the Crimson Swords 40 years ago, its graven halls of bronze-banded stone continue to keep many secrets. Certainly, a key of this size would open an enormous door somewhere in Vongyth. And what do dwarves hide behind such doors but glimmering and glittering treasure?



Pit of Unquiet Souls

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Mottled Spire), Vile Star

Saare's Pit has another, more lurid, name—and for good reason. The Pit of Unquiet Souls squats at the centre of a nest of macabre tales of madness, horror and death. It is said, those who spend too much time in the abandoned mine often go mad or disappear entirely, and old miners' tales tell of the pit's very rocks whispering horrible secrets to those toiling in its bowels. Still, there are those who think treasure yet lurks in the mine and will brave its terrors to retrieve them.

Dungeon Background

The Pit of Unquiet Souls was not always named thus.

Unnumbered centuries ago, a meteor crashed to earth. Comprising super-heavy metals the meteor buried itself deep underground. There it lay undisturbed for years uncounted until fate decreed humans colonising the southern lands would sink a mine over its burial site.

At the time, Dunstone was a vibrant border town. It was a place of great opportunity; here gathered brave and industrious folk keen to exploit the Mottled Spire's natural resources. Viljami Saarelainen was one such man.

Viljami Saarelainen was a simple, driven man. He wanted a better life for himself and his family and was prepared to do almost anything to get it. Crossing the Selka Viljami with a small band of miners Viljami sought a place to find his fortune. He chose the exact spot the meteorite had fallen to earth, centuries before.

Initially, things went well. Saare's Pit—as it was first known—produced a trickle of silver and gold, and Viljami grew moderately wealthy. As the miners delved deeper, however, the trouble started.

First, some of the miners on the deeper level declared they could hear a faint voice calling to them. Then, some of the miners refused to continue working in the pit while others went slowly mad. Eventually, Viljami was left alone to work the mine. His eventual fate remains unknown, but after his final workers disappeared, he was never seen again. After a few years, his family—near destitute—moved to Languard and he and his pit were mostly forgotten.

However, good pits rarely lie abandoned for long. Once the rumours of Viljami's fate petered out and the accounts of his miners were forgotten, ambitious, greedy folk started occasionally working the mine again. While some continued to pull forth small deposits of silver and gold, the digging never lasted long.

Such workings were fraught with danger. Sometimes orcs would emerge from the wilder regions of the Mottled Spire to raid. Other times, the harsh frontier life doomed the working to failure. And often, workers would quit the mine citing strange sounds—voices and whisperings coming from the deepest workings. It is from their stories—told in Dunstone's inns and taverns—that the mine's name comes.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Pit of Unquiet Souls by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Knight's Errand**: Nuythel Wilmatyn (NG male half-elf fighter) asks the characters to explore Saare's Pit with a view to the operation being restarted. Each expedition member earns 50 gp x character level when they report their finds to the elf at the Gilded Swan inn (location 5 on the Dunstone map).
- **Prospector, Missing**: Olavi Ilakka, an adventurer-prospector of small local repute recently declared his intention to reopen Saare's Pit. Olavi set out into the Mottled Spire two months ago, and he has not been seen since. Given the pit's location is well known, he likely reached his goal. His lover, Prusi Ilmatar (NG male human fighter), want to know what happened to him and offers each character 50 gp x character level to discover his fate (or bring him back safe to Dunstone).
- **The Saarelainen Papers**: A character comes into possession of the Saarlelainen Papers. The papers (Player Handout #1) are a partial account of Viljami Saarelainen's trials in digging the mine named after himself. The last entries in the diary cum work ledger are particularly intriguing. (Note, if you use either of the other adventure hooks, the characters could be given the Saarlelainen Papers by their employer).

Whispers & Rumours

While in Dunstone, a character may hear one or more rumours from the list below. The character can learn this information in several ways: by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

1. Saare's Pit is one of the many old mines dotting the southern portion of the Mottled Spire. It was sunk several hundred years ago, and has been the site of sporadic digging ever since.
2. Saare's Pit is one of the many old mines dotting the southern portion of the Mottled Spire. It has another name—the Pit of Unquiet Souls—on account of the strange sounds reported in its depths.
3. Even the orcs avoid Saare's Pit and its environs. The whole area is cursed.
4. Olavi Ilakka has been missing for two months after declaring he would explore and reopen Saare's Pit. Olavi is a prospector-adventurer known for his bravery and tenacity; he was a regular at the Dwarf's Folly (location 12 on the updated Dunstone map).
5. Saare's Pit produced a small amount of silver and gold, before it was abandoned. Many miners think further significant deposits lie in the area.
6. Saare's Pit was sunk into ground sacred to the elder people who once dwelled in the Mottled Spire. They worshipped a powerful earth spirit bound to the hill. Miners are not welcome in the pit, and the earth spirit drives them mad in revenge for their incursions.

The Surrounding Locality

The Pit of Unquiet Souls pierces the side of a valley lying roughly two miles north and east of Dunstone. The valley provides shelter from the worst of the seasonal storms battering the Mottled Spire and privacy from prying eyes. A swift and deep stream runs close to the mine and stands of trees can provide additional shelter and fuel.

Wilderness Dressing

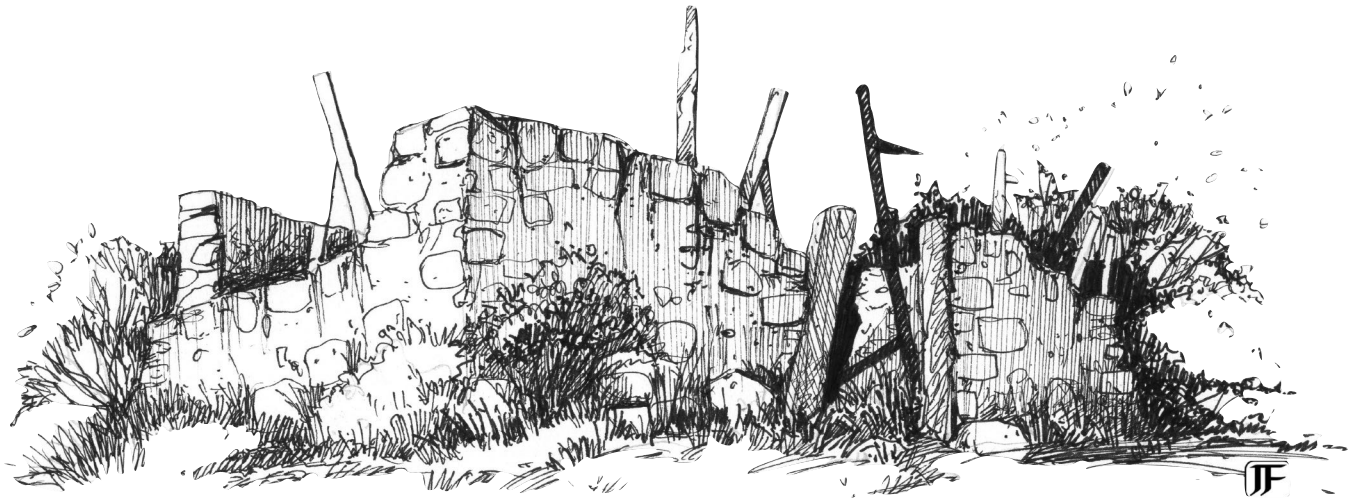
Use this list, to add life and detail to the pit's surrounds:

1. A gnarled old tree stands at the centre of a dense patch of weeds. The tree is virtually leafless, and its branches are horribly contorted. When the wind blows, the branches clack against one another.
2. A crude moss-covered marker of piled stones stands beside the overgrown trail.
3. The bleached, fleshless skeleton of a wolf lies crumpled amid the weeds. Strangely, the wolf has two broken legs.
4. A dense stand of weeds and brambles fills a hollow in the hill. A stream oozes forth from amid the tangle. If the characters cut through the brambles they discover a small cave from which the stream flows.
5. The cloudless sky stretches like an infinite blue dome over the mine's environs. Strong wind plucks at the characters' cloaks. A large bird of prey effortlessly hovers above the mine.
6. A stony outcrop jutting from the valley's flank overlooking the site looks curiously like a huge face melded with the surrounding rock.
7. Shadows cluster deeply under a stand of densely-packed trees. Underneath the trees, it is cool and sheltered. Comparatively little brush and undergrowth make this a good camping spot.
8. Great downward cracks run down the valley's exposed rock cliffs. These cracks are only easily visible when the sun strikes them at a certain angle. (These cracks are a hint of the meteor's long-ago impact).
9. A sickly tree stands amid a stand of tangled brambles. The brambles have curved, overly long thorns
10. A partially collapsed mine shaft pierces the ground. The shaft is only 20-foot-deep and ends in a jumble of mossy, lichen-covered stones of unwholesome colours.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what the characters discover if they search the pit's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A barrow—its wheel broken—lies on its side amid a patch of sickly weeds. A spill of rocks and stones lurk amid the weeds ready to trip the unwary.
2. Rusting mining equipment—picks, shovels and the like—lie amid the weeds. Incautious characters could stumble over the objects.
3. A drystone wall once encircled the mining operation. The characters have found a small portion that still stands; much of the rest lies amid the hill's weeds.
4. Two part-fallen grave markers stand in a small narrow hollow. Neither stone bears any markings.
5. A rotting pack lies by a fallen tree. Much of the pack's contents have succumbed to time, nature or the elements. Characters searching the pack find 13 sp and 4 gp wrapped in its folds.
6. A crumbled cottage stands amid the tangled ruin of a kitchen garden. Parts of the cottage's walls remain erect; a part-filled cellar lies below the cottage.
7. A faint path—clearly artificially smoothed—meanders its way along the land's natural contours toward the mine.
8. A humanoid skeleton lies face down in a stand of dense weeds. An arrow juts from the unfortunate's back.
9. A recently used campsite lies off the trail in a hollow surrounded by trees. The campfire's ash is yet warm.
10. Strings of bone wind-chimes hang hidden amid the left boughs of nearby trees. They ominously clack together in the wind.



Notable Locations at a Glance

The Pit of Unquiet Souls comprises four small, but distinct, levels. Two shafts connect the various dungeon levels.

Surface

S1. **Equipment Store**: Old equipment fills this ramshackle dry-stone building.
S2. **The Wheel House**: This stone L-shaped building houses the mine's wheelhouse, bunkroom and kitchen.

The Gallery

G1. **The Carven Stair**: Hewn from the rock, this cramped and winding stair links the Gallery to the Dead Drift.
G2. **The Dead End**: Miners used this dead-end tunnel as a place to eat, drink and rest during their workdays.

The Dead Drift

D1. **Two Ways**: This was the last part of the mine to be abandoned.
D2. **Cross Ways**: This area lies at the heart of the mine.
D3. **Old Workings**: This area was deemed unsafe and abandoned when the mining intersected with the workings above (location G2).

The Unquiet Rift

U1. **Shaft's End**: Here—in the deepest workings—the main access shaft ends.
U2. **The Subterranean Study**: Viljami Saarelainen lived here, to keep an eye on his workers.
U3. **The Four**: Driven mad by the insane whisperings of the four rock pillars here, the madman Olavi Ilakka lies close to death.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Depending on the time of the day, faint light may penetrate the pit's two shafts. Darkness fills the rest of the mine.

Ceilings: The pit's rough-hewn ceilings are roughly seven-foot-high.

Walls: The walls are rough-hewn, and show obvious signs of working. Here and there, glimmering minerals in the stone —perhaps tiny flecks of gold and silver—are reflected in the characters' lights.

Floors: For the most part, the pit's floors are relatively smooth, and they do not inhibit movement. Where present, any rubble has been pushed up against walls.

Doors: Of stout wooden boards, doors are well fitted. They lack a locking mechanism and have iron door handles. Doors open into the room they ward.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list, to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

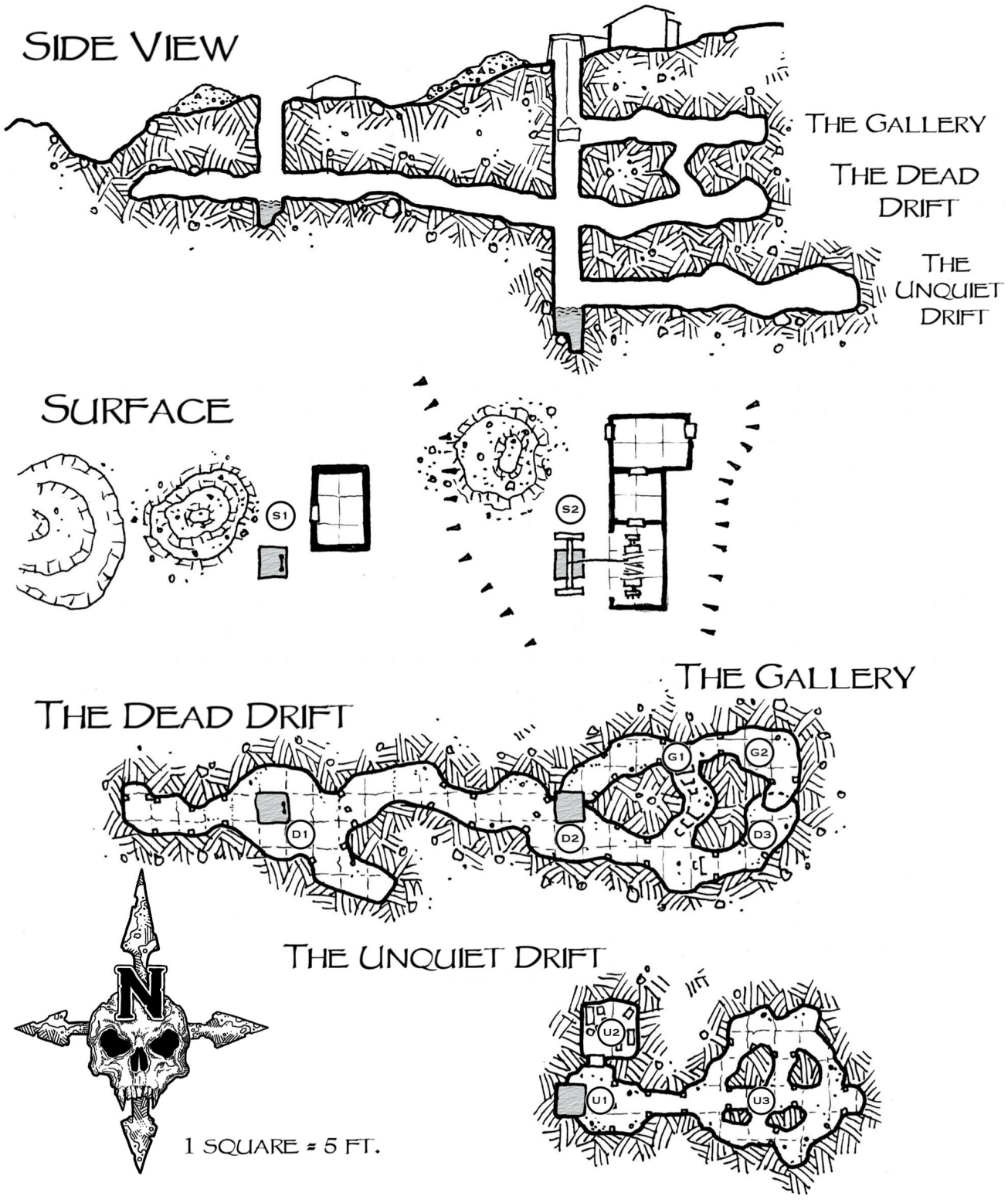
1. Water staining on the rough-hewn wall is vaguely reminiscent of a hideously ugly face.
2. Part-melted candles fill several niches in the walls. Dried wax streaks the stone below the niches.
3. Greenish-yellow mould covers the floor and wall. (Tracks may be evident in the mould if the mine is inhabited).
4. Cracks riddle the ceiling, and a small pile of grit and stones hint at the potential instability of the area.
5. Graffiti etched in Common into the wall reads, "Dead".
6. The smashed and mouldering remains of a wheelbarrow lies on its side. Chunks of rock cover the nearby floor.
7. Cold, dirty water drips through the ceiling to quietly splash on the floor.
8. A cracked pit prop holding the ceiling aloft looks in imminent danger of snapping.
9. Wide downward cracks cut through the pit's walls. The cracks are deep and jagged. Lichen grows inside; many small albino insects feed on the lichen
10. A faint breeze—coming down the nearest shaft—fills the area. It plucks at the characters' lights and has a 50% chance of extinguishing any open flames.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A heavy cast iron pickaxe lies rusting on the floor. A faint smear of blood mars its handle.
2. A squashed brass lantern lies on its side under a covering of grit and dust. From the damage, it looks like someone strong, or heavy, stamped on the lantern.
3. An old bucket filled with rubble stands against the wall. Anyone lifting the bucket discovers it has a rotten bottom; the rubble it holds loudly clatters to the ground.
4. Covered in grit and dust this skeleton—yet clad in old leathers—has been wedged into a small niche in one wall. The unfortunate's skull has been caved in.
5. Faint and dust-filled scratches on a wall (spell out the message, "The Voices. Why Do They Torment Me So?".
6. Confused tracks on the grimy, dusty floor provide a hint as to what lurks in the mine.
7. White mould grows on the wall in a shape vaguely reminiscent of a large handprint.
8. A small shrine to the god of miners pierces a wall. Several part-melted candles stand amid a small pile of offerings that include 14 cp, 16 sp and 8 gp.
9. A crudely-executed wall carving depicts a cluster of four pillars standing in the middle of a cavern.
10. A small bat colony hangs on the ceiling. Lights or noise startle them.

The Pit of Unquiet Souls



GM Notes

Two Ways In: *The characters can access the mine using either shaft.*

Unstable Slag Heap: *At your discretion, one or more of the slag heaps could be unsafe. Characters climbing the unsafe slag heap could start a small localised landslip.*

S1: Equipment Store

Old equipment fills this ramshackle dry-stone building.

Two weed-covered heaps of spoil lie to the east of a ramshackle drystone building. The mouth of an open pit gapes wide, nearby.

Outside

The equipment store stands near two slag heaps.

Slag Heaps: Two weed-covered heaps of loose rock and earth lie to the east of the equipment store. The heaps are difficult terrain.

Shaft: This 30-foot-deep shaft leads to the Dead Drift. A wooden ladder hangs on the western wall. The ladder is easy to climb, but one in ten of the rungs are rotten. A character putting their weight on a rotten rung might fall unless they catch themselves.

Chill, dark water fills a five-foot-deep sump below the shaft; the water is not deep enough to break a character's fall.

Inside the Building

The equipment store comprises one room:

Rusting, Disorganised Equipment: Rusting and rotting equipment lies scattered about the room, which has obviously been repeatedly searched.

S2: The Wheel House

This stone L-shaped building houses the mine's wheel room, bunkroom and kitchen.

This sturdy L-shaped building stands near a mine shaft. Thick ropes run from the building into the darkness-filled shaft.

Outside

Of more substantial construction, the wheel room is in much better repair than the equipment store.

Slag Heap: A weed-covered heap of loose rock and earth lies near the wheel room. The heap is difficult terrain.

Shaft: This 50-foot-deep shaft connects all three of the pit's levels. The rock walls are difficult to scale. Cold water fills the shaft's ten-foot-deep, but the water isn't deep enough to break a character's fall.

Basket: A wooden basket hangs in the shaft at the level of the Gallery. The bucket is in good condition and big enough to hold two squeezing characters at a time.

Inside the Building

Wheel Room: This open chamber holds the crank that operates the basket in the pit. It is rusty and hard to crank (a successful open doors roll operates).

Kitchen: Cramped and festooned with shelves this was once the miners' kitchen.

Bunkroom: Tipped over and smashed bunkbeds, broken chests and a riot of rotting clothes, blankets and the like cover this room's floor.

G1: The Carven Stair

Following a natural fissure in the rock, this cramped and winding stair links the Gallery to the Dead Drift.

A narrow set of cramped steps crudely hacked from the living rock curve away into darkness.

Ceiling: The ceiling is just under six-foot-high.

Stair: Hewn from the rock, these steps are rough and uneven. The stairs count as difficult terrain. While the stairs are cramped, characters of human size or smaller are not squeezing while on them. Larger creatures, however, squeeze while on the stair.

G2: The Dead End

Miners used this dead-end tunnel as a place to eat, drink and rest during their workdays.

This short tunnel ends in a dead-end. Odds and ends of rusting equipment lie about the floor.

Graffiti: Carven graffiti covers the walls. The leavings of tired or bored miners the carvings provide a small insight into the people who once worked here. Characters closely examining the walls may find some legible graffiti. A character searching the room finds one piece of legible graffiti. A character finds one additional piece of graffiti for each minute they spend carefully searching.

1. The voices. They torment me.
2. Viljo Uro (Date 138 years ago).
3. Damn greedy Viljami.
4. Taneli digs holes.

Discarded Mining Equipment: Various pieces of mining equipment and other pieces of lost personal items lie here. A character spending one minute searching the floor finds an object. A character finds one additional item for every minute they spend searching.

1. A small dented iron box holds the rancid remains of a miner's meal. The box has a clasp but no lock.
2. A small one-handed pick lies on the floor behind a flat stone once used as a seat. The pick is in good condition.
3. A small grimy wooden box holds four unused candles and a flint and steel.
4. A small sack shoved into a floor-level niche holds several gold and silver nuggets. They are worth a total of 25 gp.

Small Hole: A narrow fissure in the floor in the southern portion of this chamber connects the room with location D3. Thus, for stealthy characters who do not need light, this is a good place to spy on what is happening below.

GM Notes

What Lurks in the Mine? *The mine is a difficult place to easily get into or out of. With the exception of the deathless undead, creatures lurking in the mines likely need to emerge to hunt and so on. Remember this during your design. If things lurk at the bottom or the top of the stairs, their sounds—and perhaps smells—are likely detectable by characters on the stairs.*

Change the Graffiti*: Modify the entries in location G2 to suit your design. If orcs once lurked here, the graffiti and discarded equipment will be different to that left by dwarves, for example.*

GM Notes

***Dread Drift Denizens**: Along with the Gallery level the Dead Drift is the most likely place to be occupied, in the mine. Thus, this area will likely require the most customisation on your part.*

D1: Two Ways

This was the last part of the mine to be abandoned.

Below it lies a sump filled with cold, dark water.

Shaft: The pit's secondary shaft terminates in this chamber. A five-foot-deep water-filled sump lies directly below the hole in the ceiling. The ladder leading down the shaft does not enter the chamber; rather it ends at the bottom of the shaft.

West Spur: Tools—hammers, chisels, pickaxes and the like—lie scattered at the base of the western spur's end wall.

South Spur: The words, "No Further" are deeply incised into the wall at the end of the southern spur.

Whisperings: Only characters with exceptional hearing can hear a faint whispering here. It is slightly stronger in the south spur, however.

D2: Cross Ways

This area lies at the heart of the mine.

A mine shaft cuts through the ceiling and floor of this place.

Shaft: The pit's primary shaft passes through this chamber. Thus, five-foot-wide holes cut through the ceiling and floor.

Whisperings: Keen-eared characters can hear faint whisperings and murmurs from below.

D3: Old Workings

This area was deemed unsafe and abandoned when the mining intersected with the workings above (location G2).

Deep cracks and fissures riddle the walls and ceiling of this dead-end mine working.

Cracks and Fissures: A dwarf, gnome or character with mining experience examining the walls and ceiling knows this place is safe for exploration, but probably not for mining.

Riven Ceiling: A narrow fissure in the ceiling links this chamber with location G2 above. Thus, for stealthy characters who do not need light, this is a good place to spy on what is happening above.

Whisperings: Characters tarrying her overlong here begin to hear strange, intelligible whisperings and murmurings coming from the floor.

Tordel

Tordel is a rare star metal—deposits fall from the sky as part of meteorites. "Tordel" is a dwarven word which translates literally as "soul steel". The elves call it "azangthal" which translates as "glimmering soul metal".

Tordel is as rare and expensive as adamantine, and only skilled crafters can work the metal. When used in the crafting of a weapon, it is said to be able to trap the soul of those slain by the blade.

U1: Shaft's End

Here—in the deepest workings—the main access shaft ends.

The mines shaft ends over a water-filled sump.

Shaft: The pit's main shaft terminates above a water-filled ten-foot-deep sump.

Whisperings: Keen-eared characters can hear faint whisperings and murmurs from the east.

U2: The Subterranean Study

Viljami Saarelainen lived here, to keep an eye on his workers.

This chamber has obviously been looted at least once. A bed, desk, chairs and two chests lie in disarray about the floor.

Dirty, Dusty and Degraded: The furniture here is old and in poor condition. The wood is slowly rotting, fabrics (old clothes, blankets and the like) are mould-ridden and so on.

Deranged Writings: Characters searching the room find fragments of Viljami's diary (Player Handout #2).

Whisperings: Characters making a successful hear noise roll hear faint whisperings and murmurs from the east.

U3: The Four

Driven mad by the insane whisperings of the four rock pillars here, the madman Olavi Ilakka lies close to death.

Four thick pillars hold the roof aloft in this large working. Between the pillars, a man—oblivious to your presence—rolls around on the floor while stuffing his fingers into his ears.

Four Whispering Pillars: The four pillars here all bear signs of tool marks. Small deposits of tordel—star metal deposited here when the meteor smashed to the ground millennia ago—riddle each of the pillars. These deposits—fragments of alien intelligences imprisoned in the rock—are responsible for the whispers heard throughout the mine's lowest two levels.

Whisperings: In this chamber, anyone listening for a few moments can hear whispering coming from the pillars.

Raving Madman: This is Olavi Ilakka, the missing prospector-adventurer (see "The Adventure Begins"). Olavi has been driven mad by the alien mutterings and whisperings of the rock in the four stone pillars holding the ceiling aloft.

Olavi Ilakka

Caked in grime and filth this obviously insane man moans and mutters to himself.

Olavi Ilakka (CN middle-aged male human fighter) raves about the "people in the rock" and the secrets they can impart if he could only understand what they say.

Personality: Olavi is mad. Before he went mad, he was obsessed with wealth and respect.

Mannerisms: Olavi alternately grasps at the rock pillars and shoves his fingers into his ears to block out their incessant whisperings.

GM Notes

***Empty Lower Level**: Even if the pit is occupied it is unlikely anyone actually dwells on this lowest level, because of the whispering pillars in location U3.*

***Campaign Development**: The Whispering Pillars are a fertile source for campaign development. You can simply determine the whisperings are gibberish, or you could design personalities for each of the four pillars. What secrets do they know? What secrets will they tell the characters?*

***Why is Olavi Alone?**: If your design calls for organised dwellers in the Pit of Unquiet Souls, you need to decide how Olavi comes to be raving alone in its depths. Perhaps he snuck past the dungeon's denizens, or they took him prisoner and dumped him here until they could decide what to do with him.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have explored the mine, they can return to Dunstone. Their journey can be as straightforward or as complicated as you prefer. Bandits lurk in the hills, and sometimes orcs come down from the north to raid the human's borderlands.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Knight's Errand**: If the characters report to Nuythel Wilmatyn at the Gilded Swan (location 6 on the Dunstone map) he happily pays them their fee once they have explained their findings. If they seem to have done a good job he marks them as useful hirelings for future missions in the Mottled Spire's wild uplands.
- **Prospector, Missing**: If the characters found Olavi Ilakka, and return him alive to his lover Prusi Ilmater he is delighted and happily pays them all their fee (50 gp x character level). If Olavi died during the adventure, Prusi is devastated but still pays up.
- **The Saarelainen Papers**: With their successful exploration of the mine, the Saarelainen Papers could have given up all their secrets. Alternatively, if the characters didn't find Viljami's diary fragments in location U2 you could declare that they have found such writings among the Saarelainen Papers.

The Vile Star Storyline

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone adventure, it has been designed for use with the *Vile Star* storyline. *Vile Star* presents antagonists, agendas, agents, and assets to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following Dungeon Backdrops:

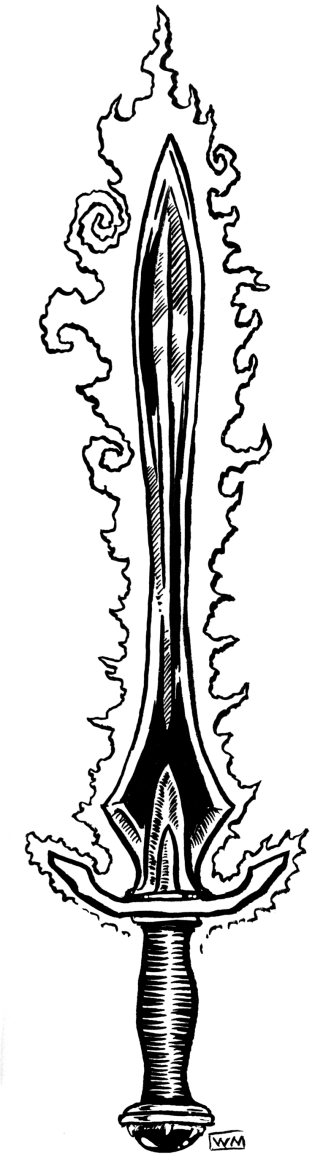
- *Pit of Unquiet Souls*
- *Ruin of Bleak Hill*
- *Starfall Chantry*

Additionally, *Cursed Tower of the Astromancer* works very well with the Vile Star Storyline.

Further Adventures

Irrespective of the adventure hooks used to lure the characters into the Pit of Unquiet Souls, the mine—or the characters' actions—may resonate through your campaign.

- **A Tordel Weapon**: A weapon forged of tordel is a valuable rarity. Disreputable types may try to steal the weapon while others may offer wildly exaggerated sums of money to own it.
- **Other Ruins**: If the characters found Viljami's diary fragments in location U2 they may decide to investigate the other sites noted in the writing. Such hints lead to the locations detailed in *Dungeon Backdrop: Ruins of Bleak Hill* and *Dungeon Backdrop: Starfall Chantry*.
- **The Vile Star Storyline**: If you are running *Bleak Hill Ruin* as part of the Vile Star storyline, refer to that supplement to guide the characters to their next adventure.



Player Handout #1

Galaer 11th, 436 NR

I've found a good place to dig. The rocks in the valley seem fractured and easy to work. It should be easy to sink the mine. I have much to do.

Gritheron 14th, 437 NR

Gold and silver! Not much, but enough to keep digging!

Laerdonna 3rd, 438 NR

Some of the men have complained of strange noises in the depths. I think I can hear voices, but I cannot hear what they say.

Helagos 438 NR

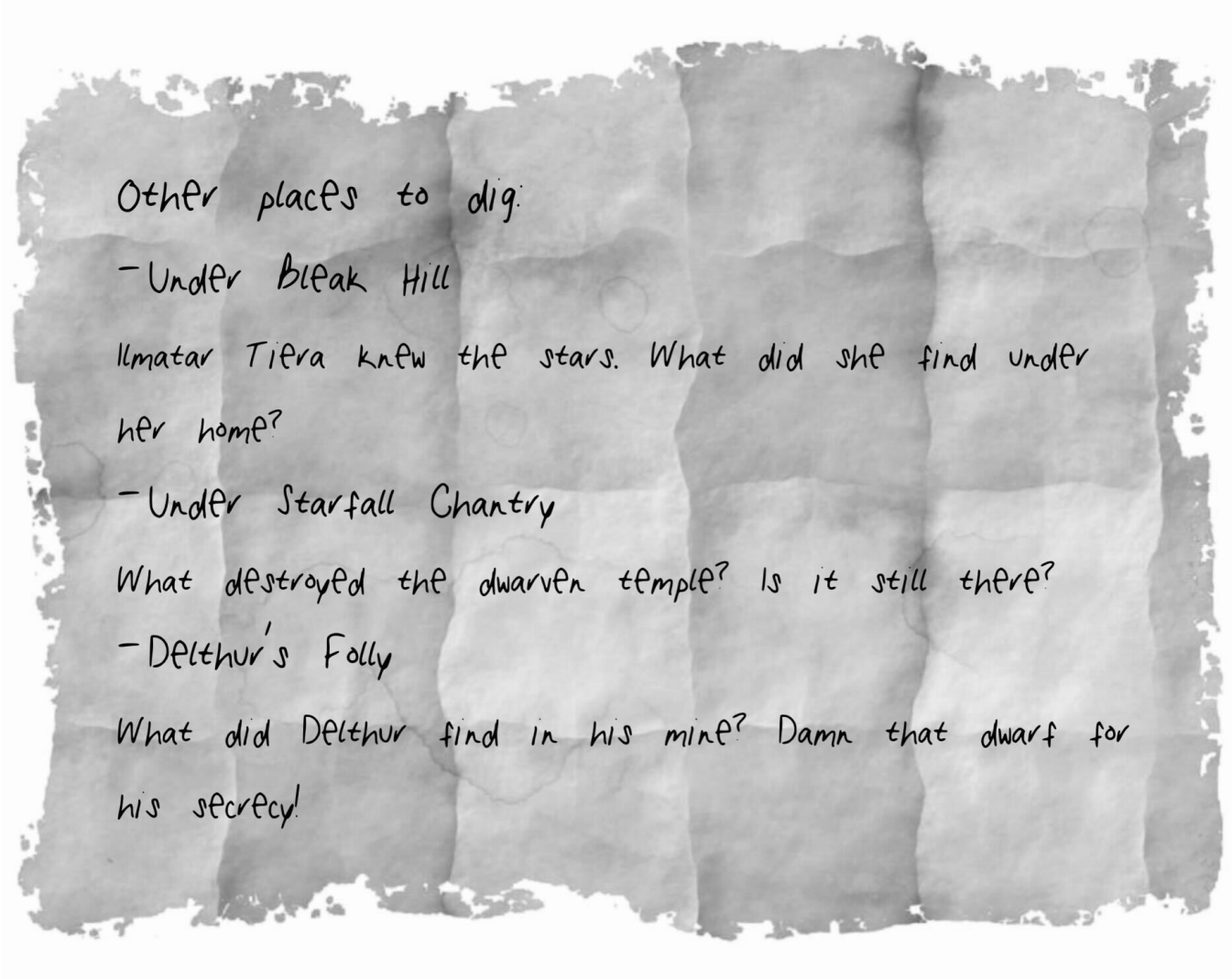
The voices keep whispering to me. Most of the men have gone now. THE FOOLS! There may be more than gold and silver in this mine!

Hithring 438 NR

WHY WON'T THEY STOP? I can't understand them, but they keep whispering. What do they want? What do they KNOW? Why ME?

LAERDONNA 439 NR

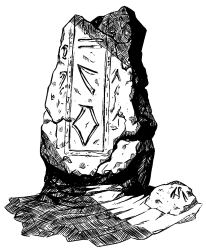
EVERYONE HAS GONE. IT'S JUST ME NOW. WHY WON'T THEY STOP?


Other places to dig:
- Under Bleak Hill
Ilmatar Tiera knew the stars. What did she find under her home?
- Under Starfall Chantry
What destroyed the dwarven temple? Is it still there?
- Delthur's Folly
What did Delthur find in his mine? Damn that dwarf for his secrecy!

Ruin of Bleak Hill

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Mottled Spire), Vile Star

The Mottled Spire's wild, rugged uplands lie beyond the Selka River. Crumbling ruins and abandoned mines—the leavings of civilisation's ebbing tide—dot the hills. One such place is the isolated wind-blasted ruin of Bleak Hill Manor. Here once dwelled the wizard-sage Ilmatar Tiera before her untimely death at unknown hands. The centuried ruin—decayed and crumbled—has alternately lain abandoned or served as the lair of marauders, bandits and worse. Now, however, events conspire to focus certain interested parties upon the ruin, and all such folk are in need of adventurers brave enough to dare the terrors of the Mottled Spire.



Dungeon Background

The Selka River has long marked the bulk of Ashlar's northern border. Beyond the river lies the Mottled Spire's wild uplands and the tribes of savage humanoids, and even fouler monsters, that claim the place as their own.

However, it has not always been thus. Throughout Ashlar's history, sporadic attempts have been made to push the duchy's border northwards. All such attempts have failed, but their leavings—abandoned mines, ruined fortified manor houses and the like—dot the southern hills.

Explorers, adventurers and miners sometimes venture into the hills in search of glory or wealth. Some such groups disappear without trace while others return laden with booty and tales of desperate battles against the Spire's denizens.

Bleak Hill Manor

Bleak Hill Manor stands in the southern foothills of the Mottled Spire. Built almost 400 years ago by Ilmatar Tiera, a wizard-sage fascinated—some said obsessed—with the heavens and the movements of its various bodies the ruin is well known among Dunstonians.

The ruins of Bleak Hill Manor stand atop a high hill with unobstructed views of the horizon. From her home, Ilmatar took voluminous notes on the constellations, the movement of planets across the sky and of the occasional appearance of so-called Vile Stars—blazing travellers streaking across the night sky. Commonfolk ascribe such dread visitors as messengers from the gods, but Ilmatar, steeped in ancient lore, knew the truth. Vile Stars were nothing more than wandering stars, fragments of which sometimes fall to the ground. She also knew such visitors often comprised valuable star metals such as mithral and adamantine as well as the exceptionally rare tordel.

Ilmatar Tiera died in 211 NR when her home was the focus of a ferocious magical attack. In the attack, the manor house was severely damaged and parts of the cellars collapsed. The attacker's identity was never determined—mainly because none of Ilmatar's household survived the conflagration.

Morden's Dagger

Morden's Dagger is a Vile Star. Morden's Dagger blazes passed the world every 370 years, and every time it does so fragments of the comet crash to the earth somewhere in the Mottled Spire.

Morden's Dagger hurtled across the night sky in 207 NR as the Time of Two Crowns wracked Ashlar. It will return next year and several learned folk eagerly await its appearance. The vast majority of Ashlar's populace, however, remain in blessed ignorance of the Vile Star's imminent return. Its return, however, will be met with near universal horror by Ashlar's populace who view such visitors as heralds of fell and foul doings.

The Adventure Begins

The characters may stumble on Bleak Hill Manor by happenstance. Alternatively, use one of these hooks, or the information presented in the Vile Star supplement:

- **Leavings of the Wizard-Sage**: Ilmatar Tiera was a wise woman, steeped in the lore of magic and the heavens. The characters have come into possession of a fragment of her diary in which she speaks of hiding "star metal" in the "bleak dark". (Provide the characters Player Handout #1). Research reveals the name of her home—Bleak Hill Manor—and the possibility the star metal she mentions may yet remain unrecovered.
- **Ruin in the Hills**: Rumours rife in Dunstone suggest Ashlar's rulers are again planning northward expansion, and that opportunities for reward and advancement await those brave enough to venture over the border. Nuythel Wilmatyn (NG male half-elf fighter) asks the characters to explore Bleak Hill Manor and to survey the site's suitability for a borderland fort. Each expedition member earns 50 gp x character level when they report their finds to the elf at the Gilded Swan inn.
- **Wizardly Doings**: Auni Ilakka (LN female human wizard) recently discovered fragments of Ilmatar's notes stored in the Dreaming Spire's extensive library. (See Player Handout #1 for details). She hires the characters to explore Bleak Hill Manor in search of any other notes or artifacts that survived the manor's destruction. She awaits them at at the Gilded Swan inn.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can try to gather information (which may or may not be true based on your setup) about Bleak Hill Manor. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp in drinks, bribes and so on.

Use the list below, to determine what the character learns.

1. Battered by wind and rain, Bleak Hill Manor was the home of a now long-dead powerful wizard. The ruin is aptly named.
2. The crumbled ruin of Bleak Hill Manor has a foul reputation. Orcs and bandits seem drawn to the site, and adventurers sometimes go missing in its environs.
3. The wizard and sage Ilmatar Tiera dwelled in Bleak Hill Manor, but a rival murdered her centuries ago.
4. Flickering lights are sometimes seen among the ruins of Bleak Hill Manor.
5. The orcs of the Mottled Spire are vicious and dangerous—even for orcs. Many of them can transform into the beasts of the hills—wolves, bears and even eagles!
6. Several powerful folk are interested in Bleak Hill and its ruin—some are said to be planning to build a castle there.

The Surrounding Locality

Bleak Hill Manor lies atop a high, windswept hill in the southern Mottled Spire roughly two miles north of Dunstone. The ruin commands expansive views, and in turn is visible from a considerable distance.

Getting lost on the way to Bleak Hill Manor is difficult, but not impossible. No defined trail now leads to the ruin—although in places, the faint outline of a track remains visible. Assuming a speed of 30-foot it takes the party at least two hours to reach the ruin. Parties moving at 20-foot a round take a minimum of three hours to reach the ruin.

Wilderness Dressing

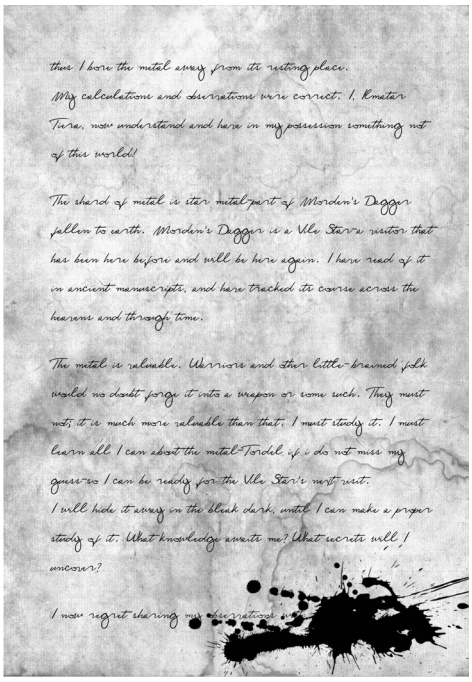
Use this list, to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Stunted, wind-sculpted bushes grow thickly along the trail and in the land's many folds and depressions. Shadows lurk thickly under the bushes.
2. Blocks of cut, dressed stone lie amid the sparse grass. Many of the blocks are scorched and blackened, as if exposed to intense heat.
3. An eagle soars high above Bleak Hill; it circles the hill, as if searching for something. After a few minutes, it screeches and streaks off to the north.
4. The cold wind blows harshly, as the characters climb Bleak Hill. As they approach the ruin, the wind intensifies cutting through the characters' cloaks and chilling any exposed flesh.
5. A family of foxes live in a den under a pile of fallen masonry. An elf, ranger or druid spots telltale tracks and droppings in the vicinity. At night, these shy scavengers emerge to feed. The sounds of their movements in the underbrush could scare a nervous guard.
6. A torn piece of red fabric snagged in a bush flutters on the breeze.
7. A makeshift pile of cut branches and felled bushes fills a gap between two piles of stones. The pile could be merely a windbreak or a hasty attempt at defence.
8. A long, low pile of stones is suggestive of a burial cairn. Investigation reveals, the cairn has already been opened and plundered; nothing but a skeleton clad in rusty chain armour lies within.
9. Worn tracks in the undergrowth lead through the ruins.
10. Dense clouds scud across the sky, plunging the ruin into deep shadow. It quickly grows cold, atop Bleak Hill.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what the characters discover if they search the surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. Tracks lead to and from the old manor's gatehouse. A successful tracking roll reveals the age of the tracks and the size of the creatures who made them. (Determine such details as appropriate to your setup).
2. Lichen covers the worked face of a large stone block, lying in a weed-choked hollow. A character examining the block realises the lichen obscures a carving of some sort. Clearing the lichen away reveals a low-relief carving of a fiery ball plummeting toward a jagged range of hills.
3. Bits and pieces of equipment lie scattered about the ruin. Most of it is rotting, rusting or broken, but its style provides an important clue as to who was last here.
4. Graffiti carved into a fallen stone block depicts a crude wolf figure mauling a humanoid.
5. A character making a find concealed doors roll spots a piece of disturbed earth near a fallen stone block. Digging at the spot quickly uncovers a mouldering sack holding a small hoard of 258 sp and 39 gp.
6. Weatherworn carvings on several dressed stone blocks are suggestive of arcane writings in the language of magic. A character with levels of wizard knows the sigils to be protective in nature.
7. Twisted lengths of metal and what could be the remains of cogs or gears lie rusting amid the weeds.
8. A slashed and torn tent lies entwined in the lower branches of a large, stunted bush. Dried bloodstains mar the inside of the tent. A pouch holding an oil flash, flint and steel and three nubs of chalk is ensnared in the tent's mouldy folds.
9. The skull of a wolf—or perhaps a large dog—hangs from a sharpened stake driven deep into the ground. A search reveals other such stakes—many fallen or obscured by bushes and the like—set in a ring around the ruin.
10. The remains of a campfire fill a hollow in the ground. Characters searching amid the ash find a part-melted silver tankard (worth 5 gp).



Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations:

1. **The Upper Ruins**: Bleak Hill Manor's ruins sprawl across the hilltop.
2. **The Darken Stair**: This is the only entrance to the manor's part-flooded cellar.
3. **The Grand Processional**: This grand processional once bounded the cellar to the west and south, but a collapse has cut it in twain.
4. **Storeroom**: This chamber was once a storeroom.
5. **Chamber of the Conclave**: Ilmatar used this chamber to discuss matters of great import away from her servants, prying eyes and waggling ears.
6. **Chapel of the Arcane**: Ilmatar worshipped Morden (N greater god of magic and knowledge), in this subterranean chapel.
7. **Shattered Orrery**: This chamber once held a fantastically complicated orrery—a mechanical representation of the known planets and major stars. Now little is left but a pile of twisted, rusting metal.
8. **Chamber of Secrets**: Here, Ilmatar stored and hid her magical paraphernalia, sagacious writings and a shard of star metal recovered from deep in the Mottled Spire.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

Ceilings: The arched ceilings are about 14-foot high.

Walls: The walls are of smooth worked stone. Iron torch sconces, roughly 20-foot apart, are set throughout the cellar's corridors. Some sconces are rusty while others till hold the remains of burnt-out torches.

Floors: Of worked stone, most of the floor is smooth and does not impede movement. Rubble covers squares adjacent to collapsed areas; movement costs in such squares are doubled and the chance of moving silently is reduced.

Wooden Doors: Hung on metal hinges, doors open into the area they ward. Doors adjacent to flooded locations are swollen and difficult to open.

Collapsed Areas: Collapsed areas are dangerous and unstable. A character skilled in mining, or a gnome or dwarf, realises extensive digging or rubble removal will likely cause a further collapse.

Unkeyed Locations: Use the information presented in "Dungeon Dressing" and "Things to Find" to breathe life into unkeyed locations.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list, to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

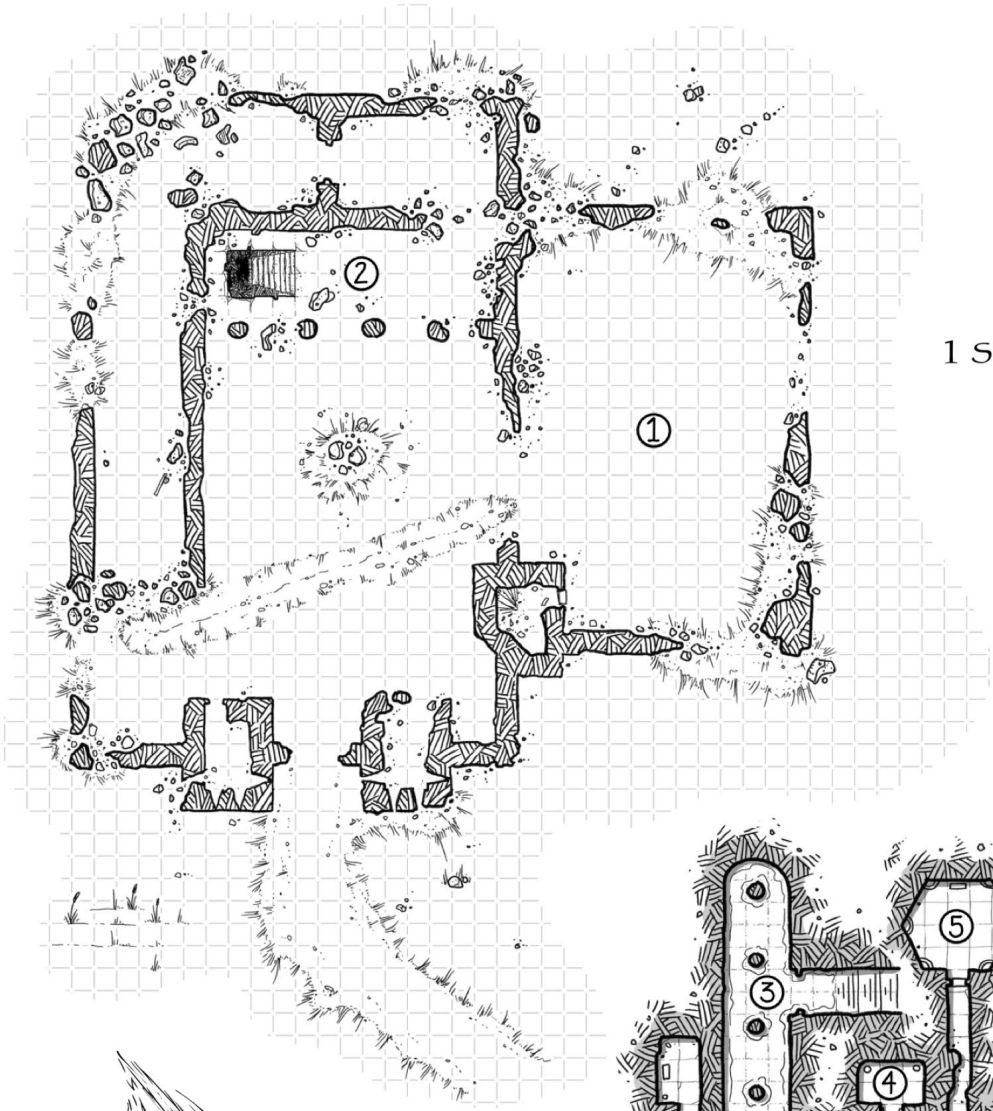
1. A section of cracked stone bows outwards at a dangerous angle, from the wall. Incautious investigation dislodges the stone and it loudly clatters to the floor.
2. Drapes of dusty cobwebs hang from the ceiling. Dark masses entombed in the web show where the spider has caught its prey. (Alternatively, many spiders could dwell within; paranoid characters may worry they will swarm).
3. Savage winds strike Bleak Hill and gust down the Darken Stair—its whine is audible from everywhere in the cellar. Imaginative or paranoid characters may think it sounds like the moaning spirits of the long-dead.
4. A smear of charcoal on the floor shows where someone ground out a torch. The burnt down torch lies nearby.
5. A pile of rotting shards of wood shows where an old piece of furniture collapsed (or was smashed up). Something interesting may lie among the pile (see "Things to Find" below).
6. Water oozes down a wall, from a crack in the ceiling. Strangely, the outline of the resultant wet patch vaguely resembles a humanoid with one arm outstretched as it pointing further into the cellar.
7. A three-inch-wide jagged crack runs across the ceiling. A faint breeze issues forth. After rain, water drips from the crack into a muddy puddle on the floor.
8. Scratches on the stone floor are disturbingly suggestive of large, clawed feet.

Things to Find

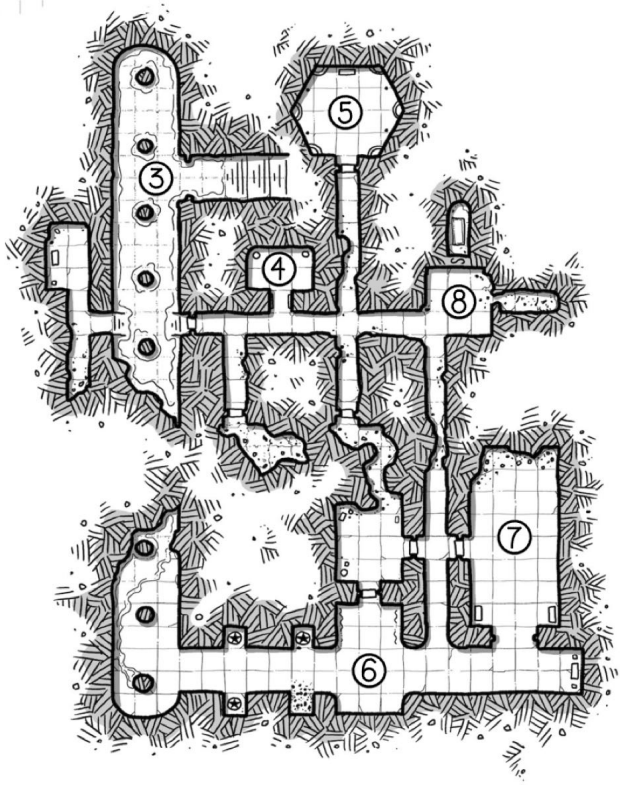
Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a location. Decide the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A character spots a rusting star-shaped symbol attached to a short broken chain lying on the floor. The sigil is battered and bent.
2. A character spots a tarnished silver dagger in a mouldy leather scabbard amid the rubbish and ruin. The weapon is blunt and only deals 1d3 damage, until sharpened.
3. Bits of a humanoid's disarticulated skeleton are scattered about the area. Tiny teeth marks cover the bones.
4. A faintly glowing old cloak hangs over a sconce. The cloak covers a rotting torch treated with a *continual light* spell. The torch disintegrates if roughly handled.
5. A broken crossbow bolt shot from a heavy crossbow lies on the floor. A chip of stone in the wall betrays the bolt's impact point. The bolt is a crude thing of orc artifice.
6. An old pouch holds a mass of rotting spell components.
7. A blackened javelin, fused by intense heat, lies on the floor. (This was a magical javelin that could transform into a lightning bolt).
8. A character searching the area finds a platinum coin stuck into a crack in a wall.

Bleak Hill



1 square = 5 ft.



GM Notes

***The Denizens Above**: If the ruins are occupied, it is likely the denizens will be using the remains of the gatehouse to keep an eye on the track leading to the manor.*

1: The Upper Ruins

Bleak Hill Manor's ruins sprawl across the hilltop.

Jagged walls of dressed, blackened and weatherworn stone show where once stood Bleak Hill Manor.

The characters are not the first folk to explore the ruins. If they search the ruins, consider using some of the entries in "Wilderness Dressing" and "Things to Find" presented under "The Surrounding Locality" to flesh out their exploration.

Overgrown Track: A once-levelled track leads up to the ruin. (Ilmatar often transported delicate astronomical equipment to her home and did not want it damaged in transit). The track is now overgrown and potholes pockmark its length.

Crumbling Stone Walls: Between five and 20 feet high the ruin's crumbling stone walls show the extent of the once grand manor. The walls are of dressed stone, but the crumbling mortar makes them easier to scale than normal.

Arrow Slits: Arrow slits provide almost complete cover. Halfling-sized characters can squeeze through an arrow slit with relative ease. Human-sized creatures will find it much harder to do so. (Note, however, it may be impossible for bulky or heavily armoured characters to pass through an arrow slit).

Stunted Vegetation: Stands of wind-sculpted bushes cluster on the ruin's windward side. Within the ruin, brambles and dense stands of weeds grow in the lee of the crumbling stone walls.

Remains of Camps: Blackened rings of stone surrounding the remains of campfires dot the ruins.

2: The Darken Stair

This wide stair is the only entrance to the manor's part-flooded cellar.

Wide stairs lead down into the darkness. Slime, leaves and other detritus cover many of the steps, except for a winding clear channel running roughly down the middle of the stairs.

Keening Wind: When the wind is from the east, it gusts down these stairs, sending a low keening sound through the cellars.

Stone Stairs: These slippery stairs are difficult terrain.

- **Clear Channel**: A character examining the area realises the clear channel running down the stairs was likely caused by rainwater flowing into the cellar.
- **Damp & Musty**: Characters descending the stair detect a faint smell of damp and mould issuing from below.
- **Foul Glimmering Water**: A character who gets within 15 feet of the bottom of the stairs while carrying a light source giving off bright illumination sees it reflecting off the foul water at the bottom of the stairs.

3: The Grand Processional

This grand processional once bounded the cellar to the west and south, but a collapse has cut it in twain.

A pool of black stagnant water fills a corridor at the bottom of the stairs. Ten feet to the west, this corridor intersects another running north to south.

Stairs: The stairs descend 25 ft. into Bleak Hill.

Foul Water: Two-foot-deep stagnant water—rainwater running down the Darken Stair—fills much of this area. Leaves, slime and other unidentifiable rotting things float in the water. The water obscures sight of the floor. Squares filled with water are difficult terrain.

Pillars: Stout stone pillars hold the ceiling aloft. Mould, and slime coat the bottom four-foot of the pillars, indicating that sometimes the water level is much higher.

Nesting Bats: Bats nest on the ceiling in the northern portion of the corridor, and flutter forth at night to hunt in the surrounds. Characters bringing a source of bright illumination into the corridor alarm the bats and cause them to swarm.

Collapsed Ceiling: Without magic or extensive excavations the collapse is impenetrable. Water has found its way through the collapse.

4: Storeroom

This chamber was once a storeroom.

Rusting hinges and shards of wood show where the door to this room once hung. The remains of various chests, barrels and boxes along with patched of black, rotten straw cover the floor beyond the doorway.

Rotting Wood: The smashed and rotting remains of innumerable boxes, chests and barrels are difficult terrain. If the characters search the area, roll on "Things to Find" to determine what they uncover. However, finding anything useful or valuable in here requires a successful find concealed doors roll due to the rubbish and clutter.

5: Chamber of the Conclave

Ilmatar used this chamber to discuss matters of great import away from her servants' prying eyes and waggling ears.

Six low stone dais complete with plain, high-backed chairs fill the corners of this irregularly shaped chamber. An ornate oak table stands opposite the door.

Furniture: The wooden chairs and table are of a style popular centuries ago with aristocratic types. They are exceptional examples and worth 250 gp as a set.

- **Hidden Dagger**: The western chair nearest the door has a hidden dagger affixed under the seat. A character looking under the chairs finds the weapon.

GM Notes

***The Lurker in the Water**: Paranoid adventurers may think something lurks in the water in location 3. They might well be right (and may end up fighting the thing while the Grand Processional's bats wildly swarm overhead).*

GM Notes

***Magic Traps and Magic Guardians**: The Chapel of the Arcane (location 6) is an obvious place for animate guardians or perhaps a trap set on the altar. A more complicated trap could involve the star-shaped sigils carved into the chapel's ceiling.*

6: Chapel of the Arcane

Ilmatar worshipped Morden (N greater god of magic and knowledge), in this subterranean chapel.

Soft magical light emanating from star-shaped sigils carved into the ceiling fills this long, slender chapel. A stone altar stands to the east while three statues of robed men stand vigil in alcoves to the west. The rubble of a fourth statue fills another alcove.

Illumination: The soft magical light emanating from the glowing symbols in the ceiling provides dim light throughout this location.

Glowing Symbols: The glowing symbols—eight small stars of gleaming light arrayed around a large central star—are Morden's holy symbol.

Stone Statues: The three statues each depict Morden. They are expertly carved.

Altar: A large and ostentatious stone sigil of a star surrounded by eight other stars decorates the front of this four-foot-high, five-foot-long stone altar. Cravings written in the language of magic venerate Morden and beseech him to guide his follower's spells and research.

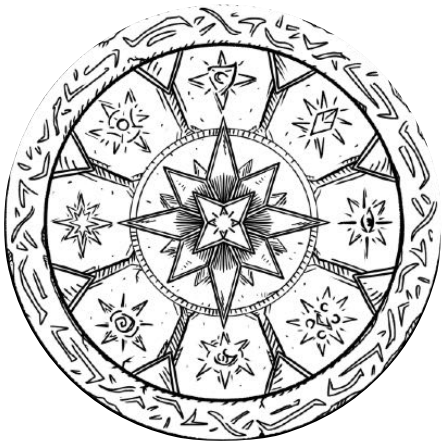
7: Shattered Orrery

This chamber once held a fantastically complicated orrery—a mechanical representation of the known planets and major stars. Now little is left but a pile of twisted, rusting metal.

A twisted mass of rusting metal and rotting wood lies scattered about the floor. Metals balls, various cogs and other pieces of some kind of esoteric mechanism are all evident among the ruin.

Twisted Metal: The orrery's scattered ruin creates an area of difficult terrain. A wizard or other learned character examining the twisted metal determines it is the remains of an orrery, and that the remains are (sadly) essentially worthless.

Rotten Wood: The rotten, splintered wood once formed a raised walkway around the room so Ilmatar could better observe the locations of the various stars and planets in her orrery. Aclose search reveals many small holes (used to secure the walkway) in the chamber's walls and floor.



8: Chamber of Secrets

Here, Ilmatar stored and hid her magical paraphernalia, sagacious writings and a shard of star metal recovered from deep in the Mottled Spire.

Eight graven stars—each with an esoteric symbol carved into its centre—decorate this chamber's north wall. Part of the eastern wall—similarly graven with stars—has collapsed revealing a long thin niche lined with dusty stone shelves.

A long-hidden secret yet waits in this room, for perceptive explorers to discover.

Graven Stars: The graven stars are not set in any recognisable constellation. Each symbol set into the stars represents one of the arcane schools—divination, evocation and so on. A character with levels of wizard knows this automatically.

Ruined Storage Niche: Dusty stone shelves line this once hidden, now comprehensively looted, storage niche. If the characters search the area, roll on "Things to Find" to determine what they uncover.

Secret Door: A cleverly hidden secret door hides a storage niche. Pressing and then twisting the star decorated with the symbol for divination opens (or closes) the door.

Secret Storage Niche: This storage niche has remained undisturbed since the destruction of the manor and Ilmatar's murder. The niche contains:

- **Six Books**: These half-dozen books record Ilmatar's celestial observations. They contain star maps, notes on the movement of planets, along with her musings on how their positions affect the weaving of magic spells and so on. A sage or wizard interested in such doings would likely pay 1,500 gp for the set.
- **Star Metal Shard**: Imbedded in a chunk of nondescript stone a hunk of tordel, large enough to forge a warhammer's head or battleaxe's blade, lies in an open coffer resting on the floor. The metal weighs 45 lbs.
- **Observational Equipment**: A pair of spyglasses with tripods, a sextant and various other pieces of equipment fill the shelves.

Tordel

Tordel is a rare star metal—deposits fall from the sky as part of meteorites. "Tordel" is a dwarven word which translates literally as "soul steel". The elves call it "azangthal" which translates as "glimmering soul metal".

Tordel is as rare and expensive as adamantine, and only skilled crafters can work the metal. When used in the crafting of a weapon, it is said to be able to trap the soul of those slain by the blade.

GM Notes

Where are Ilmatar's Notes? *If the characters are searching Ilmatar's old writings, the secret storage niche in the Chamber of Secrets (location 8) is a good place to hide them. The presence of the ruined storage niche and the similar wall decorations is an important clue that this chamber may not have yet given up all its secrets.*

Modify the type and amount of star metal hidden in the Chamber of Secret's (location 8) to suit your campaign.

Aftermath

Once the characters have slain any creature lurking in the above ground ruins and explored Bleak Hill Manor's cellar, the adventure is effectively over…unless other things have noticed their incursion into the hills. Bandits lurk in the area and the savage and wild orcs of the interior are always watching for intruders. Perhaps such marauders besiege the characters in the ruins or fall upon them as they retreat to Dunstone. Once the characters have dealt with any final complications, they reach the safety of Dunstone.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Leavings of the Wizard-Sage**: If the characters recover the chunk of tordel hidden in location 8, they must now decide what to do with it. The chunk is worth 1,500 gp, but instead of selling it they may wish to engage a master weaponsmith to forge it into a weapon. But one person in Dunstone—the elf weaponsmith Dulannis Fisfelond (location 9 on the Dunstone map) has the requisite skills to work tordel. Alternatively, several master crafters at the Great Forge (location T3 on the City of Languard map) could work the metal.
- **Ruin in the Hills**: If the characters report to Nuythel Wilmatyn at the Gilded Swan (location 65on the Dunstone map) he happily pays them their fee once they have explained their findings. If they seem to have done a good job—they have a map of the ruins and cellar, can point out nearby sources of water and so on—he marks them as useful hirelings for future missions in the Mottled Spire's wild uplands.
- **Wizardly Doings**: Auni Ilakka eagerly await the characters at the Gilded Swan inn (location 6 on the Dunstone map). She pays them for their efforts before immediately making plans to return to Languard to study her new acquisitions.

The Vile Star Storyline

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone adventure, it has been designed for use with the *Vile Star* storyline. *Vile Star* presents antagonists, agendas, agents, and assets to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following Dungeon Backdrops:

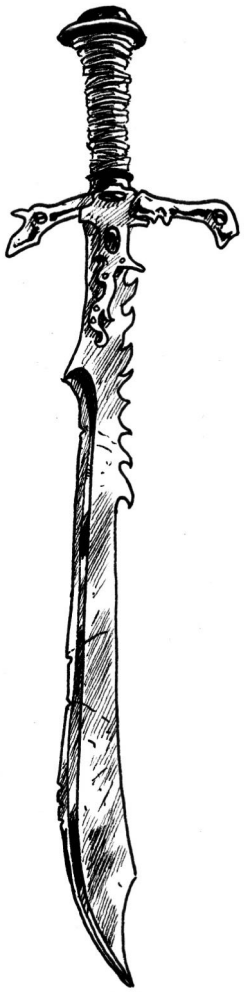
- *Pit of Unquiet Souls*
- *Ruin of Bleak Hill*
- *Starfall Chantry*

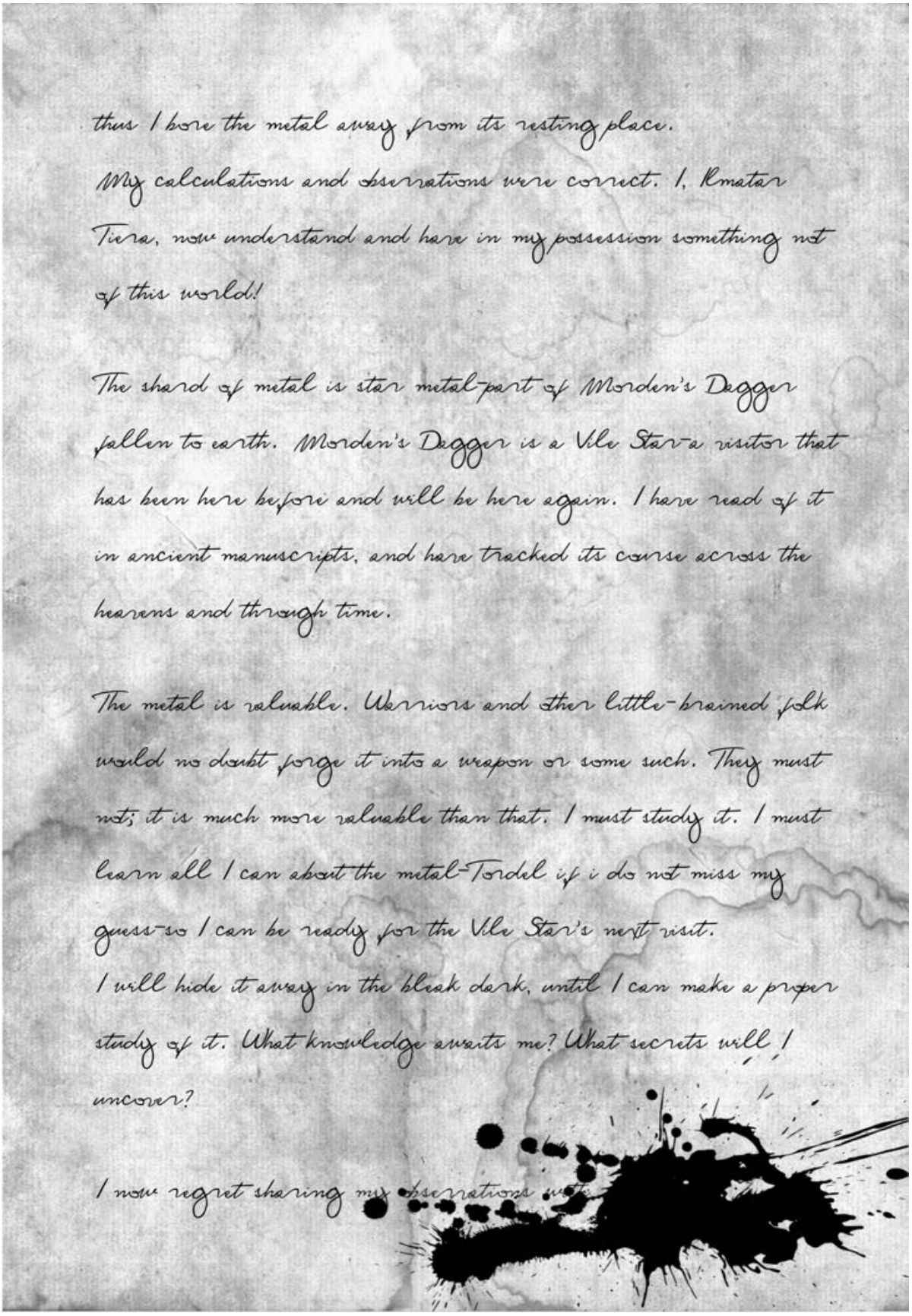
Additionally, *Cursed Tower of the Astromancer* works very well with the Vile Star Storyline.

Further Adventures

Irrespective of the adventure hooks used to lure the characters to Bleak Hill, the ruin—or the characters' actions at the ruin—may resonate through your campaign.

- **Claiming the Ruin**: If the characters are powerful and/or ambitious they may plan to claim Bleak Hill Manor as their own. While technically, the ruin falls outside Dunstone's (and Ashlar's) borders the characters would be wise to seek permission from Lord Benjam Oksanen or his grandson, Aavo Oksanen before doing so. Alternatively, the characters may use the ruin as a base camp from which to explore more of the Mottled Spire. To do so, they'll likely need to hire mercenaries, guards and other hirelings to create a secure base.
- **A Tordel Weapon**: A weapon forged of tordel is a valuable rarity. Disreputable types may try to steal the weapon while others may offer wildly exaggerated sums of money to own it.
- **The Vile Star Storyline**: If you are running *Bleak Hill Ruin* as part of the Vile Star storyline, refer to that supplement to guide the characters to their next adventure.



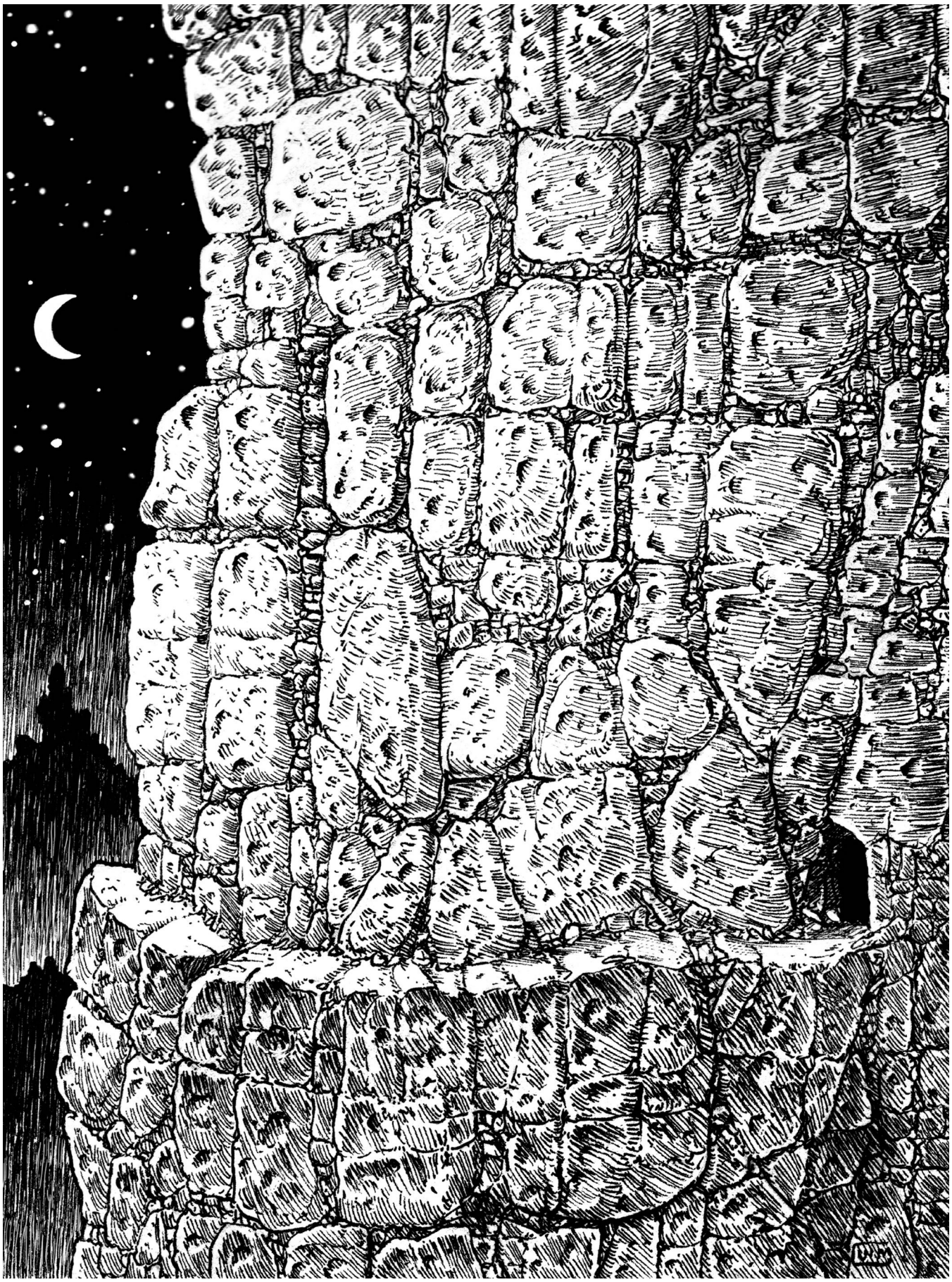


thus I bore the metal away from its resting place.
My calculations and observations were correct. I, Ilmatar Tiera, now understand and have in my possession something not of this world!

The shard of metal is star metal-part of Morden's Dagger fallen to earth. Morden's Dagger is a Vile Star-a visitor that has been here before and will be here again. I have read of it in ancient manuscripts, and have tracked its course across the heavens and through time.

The metal is valuable. Warriors and other little-brained folk would no doubt forge it into a weapon or some such. They must not; it is much more valuable than that. I must study it. I must learn all I can about the metal-Tordel if i do not miss my guess-so I can be ready for the Vile Star's next visit.
I will hide it away in the bleak dark, until I can make a proper study of it. What knowledge awaits me? What secrets will I uncover?

I now regret sharing my observations with



Scarlock Hill

Forests & Woodlands, Lonely Coast (Tangled Wood), Secret Name

Half-remembered legends speaking of powerful lightning storms and of ancient battles cluster thickly around Scarlock Hill and the Standing Stones set at its zenith. Long has the place loomed in the local's consciousness and long have they avoided the place. Now, though, the interest of a local noble and the long-dead leavings of an evil cult conspire to bring Scarlock Hill back to prominence on the Lonely Coast.

Dungeon Background

Two millennia ago, an ancient people—the Tuath—emerged from the primaeval Tangled Wood. Despite fighting an endless war against the goblins of the forest, these primitive humans dominated the Lonely Coast for almost 200 years. The goblin wars culminated in the massacre at Talan's Bluff, where the Tuath were defeated, leaving behind a legacy of stone and stories. Ancient hill forts, sunken tombs and crude temples remain the sole testament of a proud warrior people and their near-mythical hero-kings, whose history soon faded into storied legend.

One such hero-king was Grodek, who ruled over the fortress of Caer Killaen, near present-day Swallowfeld. Having suffered a mortal wound from a goblin arrow, Grodek lay dying on the field of battle. A wandering fey found the moribund king and used faerie magic to save his life. Grateful beyond words, Grodek vowed to repay his rescuer with whatever the fey desired. When the fey responded he would marry Grodek's first-born daughter on her eighteenth birthday, the king agreed. The girl had not even been born yet, and Grodek wagered the debt would soon be forgotten.

Many years later, Grodek wed Queen Ella, and the pair had a daughter named Elis, who grew into a fine young woman. On her seventeenth birthday, a visitor came to Caer Killaen. It was the fey to whom Grodek owed his life debt come to remind the king of his vow. Unwilling to part with his only child but loath to offend the fey, Grodek feigned acquiescence and sent him away.

Another year passed, and on the eve of Elis' eighteenth birthday, the king called upon his finest warriors to escort the girl to Talan's Bluff, far from the fey's domain. The fey, however, had foreseen Grodek's deception. On a lonely forest road, they confronted the royal retinue. It was then Grodek broke his oath, commanding his retinue to strike the fey down. But the betrayed forest folk called upon ancient magic and raised a dense mist to engulf the king and his men who, in their rage and confusion, set upon each other. When the fog cleared, the king found his daughter impaled upon his own spear. Of the fey, there was no trace.

Grodek went mad with grief and took his own life. A barrow was constructed atop a flat-topped hill and crowned with eight great menhirs to commemorate the king's tragic saga, as well as to ward his tomb against intruders.

The barrow remained untouched until a century ago, when the Red Rubric, a sect dedicated to Braal, god of hatred and malice, solved the riddle of the stones and used the barrow as a base of operations. Before long, however, the cult's horrid depredations drew attention to their lair, and the local people responded by building a massive bonfire atop the hill, which burned for several days, suffocating all the cultists trapped in the tunnels below.

Today, the hill's history is all but forgotten, leaving only half-remembered legends to serve as a warning against the dangers of lingering amid the lightning-prone megaliths.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on Scarlock Hill by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the hill:

Gone With the Wind: "Red" Hemmo Sakarias has been missing for two days now. The shepherd was last seen rounding up his flock atop Scarlock Hill in the midst of a terrible gale. His saddened wife, Alvi, begs the party to investigate and gives them an urn containing 1d100x10 sp.

Getting to the Point: It's no secret Sir Talek Annear (LN male human fighter), Swallowfeld's protector, deeply admires the hero-kings of ancient lore. He offers a standing reward of 100 gp for whoever can gain entrance to the barrow beneath Scarlock Hill and retrieve the head of *Balak*, King Grodek's legendary thrice-barbed spear.

What a Nice Man: Dour-faced Kitto Joliffe (NE male human fighter) approaches the characters with a few rumours about Scarlock Hill and tries his best to bait them into investigating the standing stones. If they seem interested, Kitto offers to guide them to the hilltop the next day.

In truth, Kitto is a cultist of Braal. He knows about the Red Rubric and seeks access to the barrow so he can learn their secrets. Rather than risk his own life, however, he prefers adventurers clear the barrow while he waits outside.

Whispers & Rumours

A character may know one or more rumours from the list below. The character can learn this information in several ways: by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

1. The standing stones mark the battlefield where King Grodek once lay dying. A fey prince healed his wounds, and the king promised him the hand of his unborn daughter in return.
2. The stones are petrified warriors. A king's daughter, Elis, was promised to a faerie prince, but the king absconded with her before the wedding. Suspecting betrayal, the fey confronted the king and his men on the hilltop and used their magic to turn Grodek's warriors to stone.
3. The megaliths are a prehistoric lunar temple where King Grodek wed Queen Ella. The king is famously known for having slain his own daughter, claiming he was blinded by faerie magic.
4. Under a century ago, a Braalite cult took refuge in the barrow beneath Scarlock Hill. Locals built a massive bonfire atop the hill to trap and suffocate the cultists.
5. Scarlock Hill derives its name from Scarlock; a cheeky rogue from local folklore. The hill is where he's said to have caught lightning in a bottle.
6. It's dangerous to roam Scarlock Hill. The stones are said to attract lightning strikes, even on clear, cloudless days.

The Surrounding Locality

Scarlock Hill lies less than a mile north of Swallowfeld, just beyond Feybrook Bridge. During the day, flocks of sheep lazily graze along its lush southern flank, while villagers hike up the winding Scarlock Way to wander the Bellswood, where it's customary for couples to hang tiny bells amid the tree branches to celebrate betrothals, weddings and anniversaries. The steep final climb, as well as the megaliths' well-deserved reputation for attracting lightning, causes most sensible folk to avoid the hilltop– especially during the all-too-frequent thunderstorms the hill seems to attract.

1. **Feybrook Bridge**: A bronze plaque bearing the name of Sir Talek Annear, protector of Swallowfeld, graces this well-kept stone bridge across the Feybrook. During the day children play nearby, hunt for frogs or pick sprigs of water mint growing beneath the bridge.
2. **Old Gallows**: Far too old to support a hanging body, the gallows are now a signpost. East points to Wolverton, and south to Swallowfeld. West lies Scarlock Way: a steep, winding path leading to the windswept hilltop.
3. **Bellswood**: Hundreds of tiny copper bells hang from the branches of these pine trees. A gentle ringing chorus resounds whenever the wind blows through them.
4. **Splintered Elm**: This hundred-year elm tree was shattered by lightning many decades ago. Owls and bluebirds nest inside its great hollow trunk.
5. **Hilltop**: Fire-scorched bushes and patches of sintered sand bear witness to the frequent lightning strikes plaguing Scarlock Hill. A character carefully searching this area finds 1d4 pieces of fulgurite—crystals created from lightning-vitrified sand each worth 1d10 gp.

Wilderness Dressing

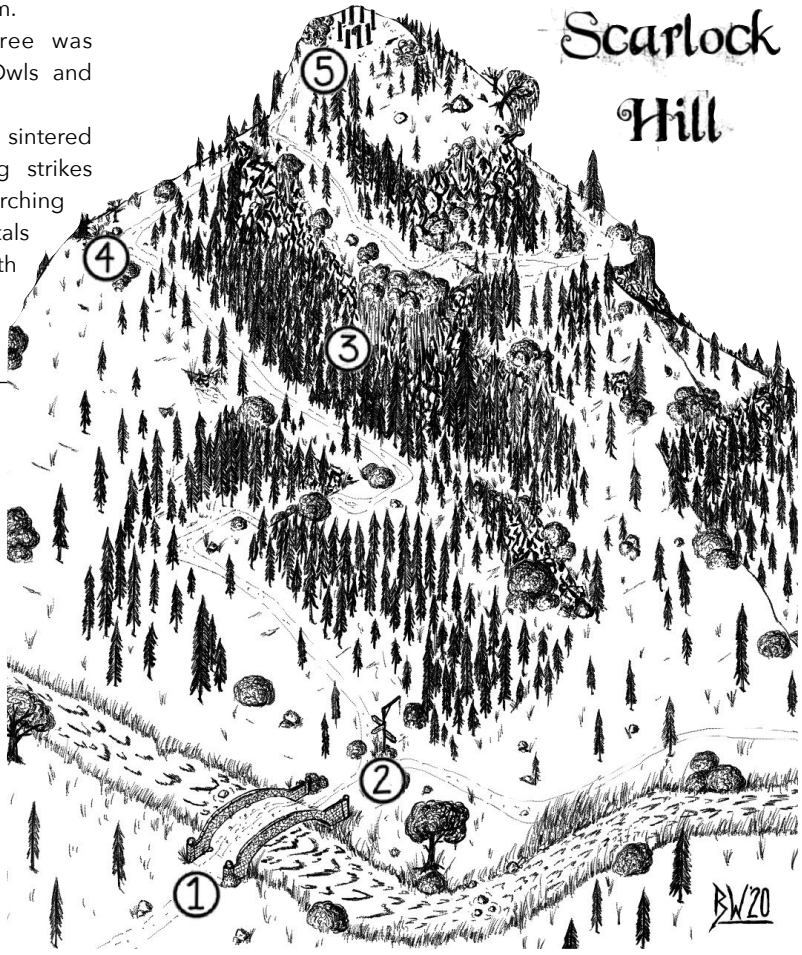
Use this list to add life and detail to Scarlock Hill:

1. Dark purple mushrooms stand amid the tall grass, forming a large, almost perfectly circular, fairy ring.
2. A sudden squall tears through the trees and noisily rips off a heavy branch, which just misses a character as it falls to the ground.
3. An angry buzzing alerts the characters to a fallen beehive several yards ahead, where swarms of surly bees hover over the sticky ruin of their honey-covered nest.
4. Plaintive bleating leads the party to a wounded sheep with a severely injured leg. A character tending the wound saves the poor, wolf-mauled creature.
5. A salvo of staccato shrieks echoes across the sky as a flock of blackbirds circles wildly overhead. A ranger or druid knows their behaviour heralds a coming storm.
6. Among the trees sits a poorly hidden lean-to shelter made of fallen branches. A foul-tempered badger lairs inside this disused children's fort.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search the surrounds. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A wax-wrapped honey-cake bearing tiny bite marks, perhaps made by a very small human child.
2. An old bird's nest, blown from its treetop perch holds a tarnished bronze pendant shaped like a cloven skull.
3. A pair of copper bells joined by a red silk ribbon. They bear the initials E and B, respectively.
4. A checkered red and white cloth bundle lies by a fine track. It contains a shepherd's lunch of rye bread, butter, hard cheese and a jug of watered-down ale.
5. A rusted saw firmly stuck in the trunk of a stout pine tree.
6. A sprung wolf trap tethered to a wooden stake. Tufts of grey fur are stuck between its steel jaws.



Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **The Standing Stones**: To enter the barrow, the characters must solve the mystery of the standing stones.
2. **Entry Chamber**: Cultist corpses lie piled upon one another in this soot-choked entry chamber.
3. **Cultist Cells**: The Red Rubric converted these tomb chambers into prison cells to hold their sacrificial victims.
4. **Hall of Heroes**: Five alcoves contain the desecrated remains of King Grodek's warriors.
5. **Grodek's Tomb**: Though the king's bones remain, this vault has been plundered long ago.
6. **Cultist Quarters**: This large burial vault was the cult's living quarters.
7. **Sanctum**: Here lies the Red Rubric's most prized treasure.

Architecture & Environment

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features. Unless stated otherwise in the location's description, assume the following:

Air Quality: Mould, soot and the dust of many of corpses make it hard to breathe the barrow's cold, damp air. Characters must make a saving throw against poison every 30 minutes spent inside the barrow. Failure indicates the character becomes fatigued. Characters who are already fatigued become exhausted. These conditions wear off after one hour of fresh air.

Illumination: A black, chthonian darkness fills the barrow.

Ceilings: Thick oaken beams support a low, sagging ceiling barely six feet high. Human-sized or larger creatures wielding bludgeoning or slashing weapons are hampered in combat due to the lack of space available to wield such weapons effectively.

Walls: Comprising crude masonry and groaning timbers, these ancient walls are full of cracks and crevices where tiny insects and other pests might lurk. The walls' poor condition makes them difficult to scale.

Floors: Several minor seismic events in the past shifted the flagstone floors of the barrow considerably. They are quite uneven and covered in light rubble throughout. Characters running or charging may fall over if they are not nimble-footed.

Doors: Six-inch thick slabs of blue granite set into shallow trenches greased with animal fat function as doors.

Stairs: The uneven, rubble-strewn stairs inside the barrow are difficult terrain. The irregular steps make running, charging and the like difficult. Characters running or charging may fall over if they are not nimble-footed.

Dungeon Dressing

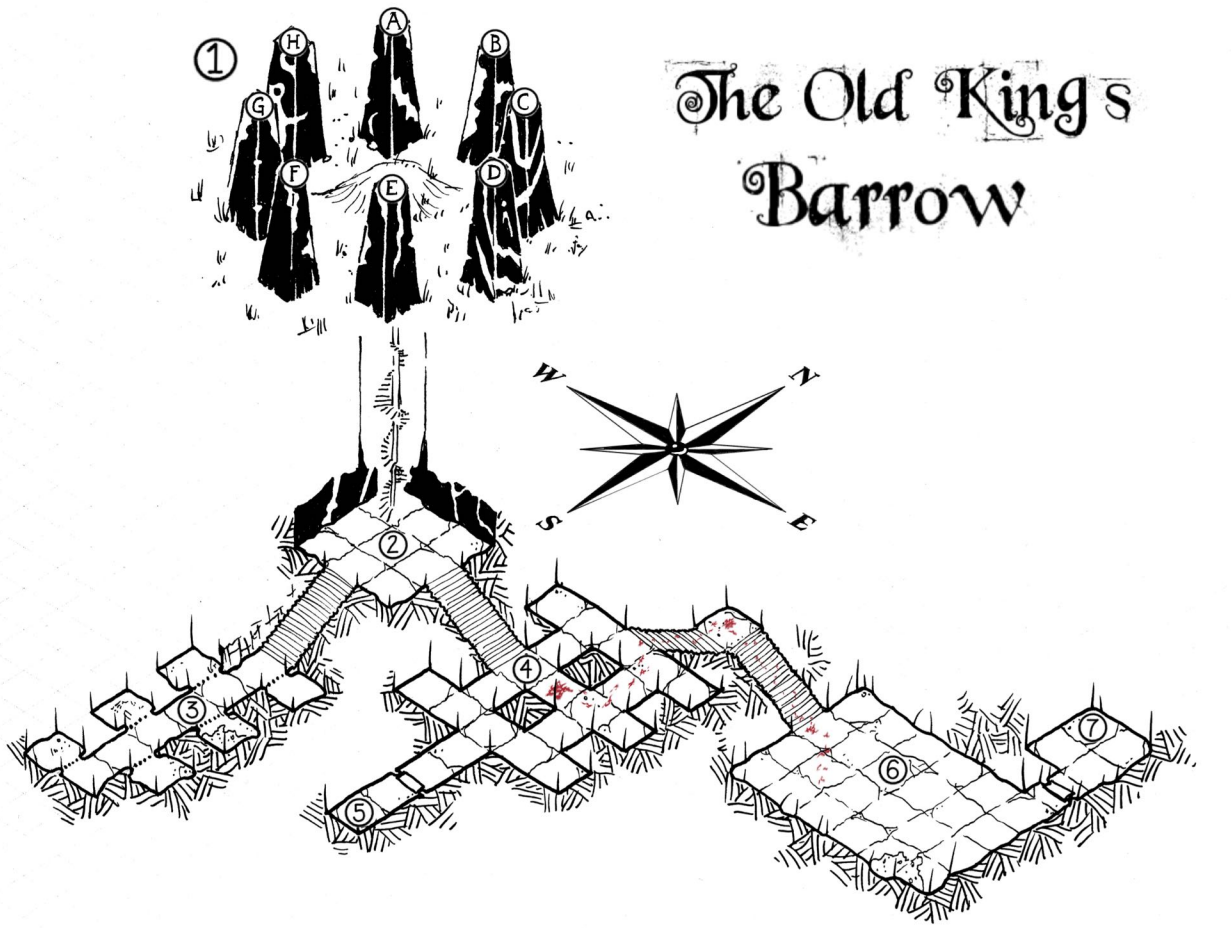
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Gnarled tree roots hang from the ceiling like hairy tentacles, impeding progress. They bleed a milky white resin, if cut.
2. A patch of wrinkly brown mushrooms resembles shrunken heads. They release noxious spores, if touched.
3. Jagged glass shards—the remains of perhaps two dozen jars and bottles—lie scattered across the floor. Treat the glass as caltrops that make moving silently difficult.
4. A pair of rusty iron shackles hangs from the wall.
5. Streaks of age-old blood defile the walls with the vile gospels of Braal, god of hatred and malice.
6. A chipped, crescent guillotine blade—a triggered trap—hangs from the ceiling from an iron pole.
7. Slimy patches of luminescent green fungus bask the area in a cold and dim emerald radiance.
8. Bulbous drops of jet-black tar seep from the cracked ceiling like thick, stygian blood.
9. A ghostly whisper echoes through the barrow, repeating the words "*Dwi'n difaru - dwi'n difaru yn fawr*" over and over again. Characters who speak Sylph understand this as meaning: "*I regret it, I regret it so much*"
10. The faintly glowing apparition of an old man wearing an iron crown silently strides through the darkness before disappearing into the wall.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of the items below to suit your campaign.

1. A mouldy linen bundle of dark burgundy cultist robes. The pockets contain 2d10 sp, as well as clumps of human hair, nails and teeth.
2. A tarnished silver whistle, serves as home to a large, harmless wolf spider.
3. An enormous drinking horn, nearly five feet long and banded with beaten copper. It can hold eight gallons.
4. A cloudy glass jar packed with 4d10 fermented toads. It explodes when opened. The resulting stench takes 2d4 days to wear off.
5. An oiled deerskin sheath containing a small but wickedly sharp flint dagger.
6. A polished horse skull, intricately engraved with decorative spiral patterns.
7. A cedar wood box containing 3d6 nuggets of sickly-sweet smelling incense.
8. A verdigris-encrusted copper signet ring emblazoned with the image of a cloven skull.
9. A bent iron sword. The dull rusty blade is pocked with indentations suggesting bite marks.
10. A small, felt-lined box containing six beautifully-preserved dead sparrows with tiny jets for eyes.


The Old King's Barrow
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GM Notes

***The Puzzle**: Running a fun puzzle at the table is an art. If the players are truly stumped, a gentle nudge in the right direction is preferable to frustration setting in. A leading question or two goes a long way: "Is there anything you recall about Scarlock Hill which can be linked to those glyphs?" Be permissive in allowing characters to obtain the necessary clues (glyphs and rumours), but let the characters solve the mystery on their own.*

If none of the characters know Sylph, consider using a different "ancient" language for the glyphs. Alternatively, a helpful sage may be able to translate for them.

1: The Standing Stones

To enter the barrow, the characters must solve the mystery of the standing stones.

Surrounding a cracked stone altar, eight megaliths stand atop the windswept hill. Empty wineskins and a campfire's ashes suggest this is a favoured haunt of local youths.

Altar: This massive slab of rock is six feet by three feet and is three feet high. Long, thin cracks run down the centre of its soot-blackened surface. The altar weighs 7,000 lbs. and is essentially unbreakable.

Megaliths: A thick coat of moss and grime covers the lower half of these 12 -15 ft. tall standing stones. A character examining the megaliths spots an ancient Sylph glyph on a random stone. If the moss is scraped away, each of the megaliths is revealed to bear a glyph.

The Puzzle: Characters who read Sylph can translate the glyphs with a half-hour of study. Each represents a concept:

- **Stone A**: Bargain, contract, oath
- **Stone B**: Bloodshed, death, murder
- **Stone C**: Flight, escape, evasion
- **Stone D**: Mercy, medicine, aid
- **Stone E**: Betrayal, treachery, oath-breaking
- **Stone F**: Father, parent, birth
- **Stone G**: Tragedy, sorrow, mourning
- **Stone H**: Confrontation, accusation, challenge

The Trap: Characters accumulate an increasingly large electric charge with every glyph they touch. Touching one to three glyphs only generates a slight tingling sensation. Touching up to seven glyphs has a character's hair standing on end and fills the air with an audible crackle and the smell of ozone. This built-up energy cannot be discharged like common electricity but remains with the character for 1d8 hours or until they have touched all eight glyphs.

When a character has touched all the glyphs in the wrong order, a bolt of lightning strikes them.

The Solution: Triggered in proper order (by a single character), the glyphs retell the tragic saga of King Grodek. This causes the altar stone to move, revealing a winding stair down into the barrow. The correct order is this:

D - A - F - C - H - E - B - G

Characters who analyse the partially conflicting rumours surrounding the origin of the stones (see "Whispers and Rumours" entries 1-3) may realise each contains an important part of the king's legend. After some deductive reasoning, they should be able to match each of these key events to their corresponding glyphs and put them in the correct order.

Sharp-witted characters may predict the full sequence if they recognise the emerging pattern of an eight-pointed star between the megaliths.

The barrow's entrance remains open for 2d8 minutes.

2: Entry Chamber

Cultist corpses sprawl atop one another in this soot-choked entry chamber.

Thinly veiled in a pall of soot and ashes, a score of twisted corpses covers the floor. Frozen in time, withered hands grasp at thin air, while leathery skulls are locked in silent screams.

A Way Back: Characters inside the barrow can cause the altar above to shift aside, by touching a spiral glyph at the top of the stairs.

Choking Dust: Unless the characters are very careful, wading through the bodies stirs up a cloud of ash, soot and corpse dust, which could set off a violent coughing fit, causing the character to be nauseated.

Once kicked up, the dust takes 1d6+2 hours to settle.

Corpses: The twenty-three bodies in this area were the men and women of the Red Rubric cult. When the villagers discovered the cult's lair, they built a great bonfire over the stone altar above this chamber. Burning for several days, the flames sucked the oxygen from below, replacing it with acrid, suffocating smoke which killed the cultists. Searching the bodies takes 20 minutes and yields 10d10 sp, as well as 1d4 random trinkets (see "Things to Find"). Remember, such a search will almost certainly stir up the choking dust.

3: Prison Cells

The Red Rubric converted these tombs into prison cells, to hold their sacrificial victims.

Three rusted iron gates on either side of this looming hallway mark dank, dismal cells. A large congress of pale grey salamanders nervously skitters across the floor and walls at your approach.

Iron Gates: Decades of corrosion have gnawed through the iron bar.

Cells: Each cell has a 50% chance of containing the withered remains of 1d2 kidnapped victims whose twisted limbs and leering faces are evidence of a horrible choking death, similar to the cultists in location 2.

Salamanders: Latent necromantic energies inside the barrow have turned these creatures into tiny undead. The pale, eyeless amphibians can see without light (range 40 ft). and begin stalking the characters as soon as they leave this area. Every ten minutes, 2d10 of them creep from the shadows to join the others in observing the characters. Once they outnumber the party ten to one, the zombie salamanders swarm one of the characters, "attacking" with their toothless bites. While completely harmless, the experience could be highly unnerving...

GM Notes

***The Cloying Dust**: The choking dust in location 2 isn't just a hindrance; the coughing fits of would-be intruders function as a crude alarm for the dungeon's denizens!*

If intelligent, living creatures dwell beneath Scarlock Hill, they'll need some protection from the dust as well as the dungeon's bad air in general. Primitive gas masks consisting of tarred leather sacks with reed tubes, for example, also serve to keep your players guessing at their foe's true nature and identity.

***More Than a Nuisance**: At your option, the zombie salamanders in location 3 can be upgraded to a proper threat. Consider using the stats for a giant rat as a base.*

GM Notes

Blood! *The blood in location 4 is from "Red" Hemmo Sakarias (see "The Adventure Begins: Gone with the Wind"). The cause of his injury depends on your design. A concealed spear trap is a solid choice, especially with the characters distracted by the blood...*

Coveted by Sir Talek*: Balak, the spearhead found in location 5, is coveted by Sir Talek Annear (see "The Adventure Begins: Getting to the Point"). When fitted to a new shaft, Balak grants a bonus to attack rolls and damage, although it is nonmagical (unless you decide otherwise).*

What Body? *Intelligent dungeon dwellers would likely have disposed of Red's body in location 6 by the time the characters arrive. In this instance, consider placing the poor shepherd's corpse outside—perhaps inside the splintered elm upon the hill (see "The Surrounding Locality").*

4: Hall of Heroes

These five alcoves contain the desecrated remains of King Grodek's warriors.

Tiny shapes cavort in a dark puddle lying between two massive pillars upholding the crumbling ceiling. From shadowed alcoves, hollow eyes glare at you.

Puddle: As the characters approach, 1d6+1 blood-slick zombie salamanders (see location 3) cease feeding and skitter away. Closer inspection confirms the liquid is semi-congealed blood. Crimson trails lead north from the puddle, down the stairs towards location 6.

Alcoves: Wizened corpses of ancient warriors occupy these alcoves. All have been severely disfigured, missing teeth, hair, hands or even entire limbs. A character wise in spell lore can reveal the missing parts were harvested for necromantic spell components. Nothing of value remains.

5: Grodek's Tomb

Though the ancient king's bones remain, his vault was looted long ago.

Half-devoured by pale moss and lichen, a crumbling granite throne rests against the far wall. Slouched upon it is the skeletal shape of a long-dead man.

The King: Deep gouges mark the skeleton's lower ribs and spine. A character examining the wounds identifies the cause as a fatal, self-inflicted wound, possibly the result of falling on one's sword.

The corpse was robbed of all valuables long ago.

Overgrown Throne: Characters sifting through the shaggy coat of moss and lichen find a spearhead. While the shaft has rotted away, the spearhead remains in good condition. Measuring over a foot long, it sports three sets of wicked barbs. A character learned in history identifies this as *Balak*, King Grodek's legendary thrice-barbed spear.

6: Cultist Quarters

This large burial vault was the cult's living quarters.

Scarlet streaks of blood lead down the stairs into a spacious chamber where rows of shabby beds and cupboards give the appearance of living quarters.

Blood Trail: The blood trail terminates behind a toppled cupboard, where the body of a stout, red-haired man in shepherd's clothing lies clutching a mortal wound.

Containers: Old clothes, perished foodstuffs and personal effects make up most of the items here. A thorough search takes 30 minutes and yields 2d6x100 sp, plus 1d4+1 random trinkets (see "Things to Find"). In addition, the characters find a 110-year-old deed of ownership for a place called Craghollow Mine, signed by one Ravin Wearne. A character familiar with the Lonely Coast identifies Ravin as an ancestor of Talek Wearne, the current lord of Oakhurst.

7: Sanctum

Here lies the Red Rubric's most prized treasure.

A three-fold lectern resembling a trio of kneeling demons stands on an elaborate mosaic at the centre of this chamber. A gilded scroll lies cradled between the brass-wrought fiends' curved horns.

Mosaic: Though covered in grime and missing several tiles, the mosaic presents a detailed map of a small archipelago near the coast. A character familiar with the Lonely Coast identifies the location as the Shard Isles; a cluster of small islets a few miles west of Wolverton.

Lectern: Artfully wrought of solid brass and moulded into disturbingly life-like images of three identical fiends, the lectern weighs 750 lbs. A character examining the lectern establishes its value at 500 gp, or 100 gp if sold as scrap metal. Resting across the ram's horns of each demon lies a gilded scroll.

Scrolls: At first glance, all three scrolls seem identical: supple sheets of gold-beaten vellum, loosely wrapped around an ornate ivory cylinder. Only one of them is the real deal, however; the remaining two are dangerous decoys:

- **Scroll 1**: Exuding a faint alteration aura, this decoy scroll explodes if anyone foolishly unfurls and reads it.
- **Scroll 2**: A faint transmutation aura hangs over this scroll. When removed from the lectern, it magically transforms into a venomous snake which attacks until killed.
- **Scroll 3**: Steeped in a faint evocation aura, this scroll bears only a single glowing rune. A character using magic to comprehend it or deciphering it in some other way identifies the writing as that of the Abyss; the rune represents "*Rho*" - a sound without any intrinsic meaning.
-
  - When read aloud, the rune glows a hot, sullen red. After 1d3 rounds, the sigil flares brightly, immolating the scroll which is reduced to ashes. At the same time, the reader feels a sharp burning pain in their chest, and suffers minor fire damage. Inspection reveals the *Rho* sigil is now branded into the character's flesh. The demonic brand cannot be removed by magical means, short of a *wish*. All attempts to disfigure or remove the mark are unsuccessful, as the brand magically reforms itself within 1d12 minutes.
  - While the hit points lost to this branding cannot be healed as long as the rune is present, the bearer of *Rho* suffers no additional ill effects.

GM Notes

***The Decoy Scrolls**: Adjust the effects of both decoy scrolls to your own tastes, as well as the party's level.*

***The Brand**: The brand bestowed by third scroll serves as a future adventure hook (see "Further Adventures, A Bad Sign"), and the "permanent" hit point loss (1d4) merely provides extra motivation for the players to pursue this. If you or your group dislike this effect, discard it.*

Aftermath

Although the ancient barrow may be cleared, the discoveries made therein serve only to deepen the mysteries of the cult of the Red Rubric. Use the suggestions below to expand the story and continue the characters' adventures.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used one or more of the hooks in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

Gone with the Wind: Fearing curious youths might suffer the same tragic fate as poor Hemmo Sakarias, the villagers of Swallowfeld demand the standing stones be pulled down and the barrow sealed for good. The request is flatly denied by Sir Talek Annear, who sees the work as a waste of time. Do the characters side with the villagers to demolish the stones and seal the barrow against Sir Talek's will? Or can Talek's promise of hard coin convince them to break up the angry mob preparing to storm Scarlock Hill?

Getting to the Point: If the characters recovered *Balak* from the tomb, Sir Talek Annear pays them the agreed reward. If the party manage to impress the haughty nobleman, Sir Talek has several more tasks for them, each involving the retrieval of some long-lost artifact or weapon from the Elder Days. Should the characters keep the spear, Sir Talek could become a powerful enemy, and one to bear a long-lasting grudge.

What a Nice Man: When the characters emerge from the barrow, they are greeted by Kitto Joliffe and his abrasive wife, Tecca (NE female cleric [Braal]). If the party seems badly hurt, the couple drop their charade and attack the characters. Otherwise, the Joliffes invite them to their home, Swallowfeld's Grist Mill (see *The Lonely Coast*). There the heroes are offered a hearty meal and several jugs of ale as the Joliffes coax them into recounting their adventure. As soon as they learn how to open the passage, Tecca sends a group of 2d6 cultists to Scarlock Hill to search the barrow and take anything the characters missed. In addition, one experienced cultist is assigned to follow the characters around and steal anything thought pertinent to Tecca's cult of Braal.

The Secret Name

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone product, it has been designed for use with the *Secret Name* storyline by Raging Swan Press.

The Secret Name provides GMs with a selection of antagonists, agendas, and agents to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following products:

- *Dungeon Backdrop: Scarlock Hill*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: Craghollow Mine*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: The Shard Isles*

Further Adventures

The characters' discoveries beneath Scarlock Hill will lead to exciting new exploits! Consider the following ideas when preparing for an upcoming adventure:

A Bad Sign: There's a good chance one of the characters (or perhaps an unfortunate ally) has been branded with *Rho*, the fell rune bestowed by the scroll in location 7. While the arcane brand seems a minor cosmetic inconvenience at first, its true effects won't manifest until several days later. But how can the bearer rid themselves of the brand? And what, if anything, does *Rho* mean? Maybe a sage or scholar is capable of fathoming the sigil's occult meaning? Or does the answer lie with the supposedly extinct cult of the Red Rubric? Perhaps it's wise for the characters to remain discreet in their investigations so as not to attract the attention of others seeking to attain *Rho*'s secret for their own sinister purposes.

It's Mine Now: The deed to Craghollow Mine found in location 6 suggests it belonged to the Red Rubric. But why would an evil cult be interested in mining ore? Perhaps Craghollow simply served as one of their lairs? Or were the cultists actually digging for some vile artifact sacred to Braal?

While the location of Craghollow Mine isn't clearly noted on the deed, Ravin Wearne's signature suggests it might not be far from the village of Oakhurst.

Island Vacation: Judging from the elaborate mosaic found in location 7, the Shard Isles must have held an important meaning to the Red Rubric. What foul, blasphemous secrets lie hidden among these rocky islets?

Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords

Coastal, Ashlar

Foul rumours of smuggling and piracy have ever-hung over the dismal village of Coldwater and its folk. But recently, lone travellers have been going missing in the village's environs, and some whisper that the Slaver Lords' scarlet-sailed ships have been seen in the region. Who but the characters can uncover the truth of the matter, discover the slavers' secret hold and rescue their doomed, helpless victims?

Dungeon Background

There are always those willing to profit from the most odious of all trades—slaving—and to grow wealthy from other people's misery. Most of the smugglers lurking in the dismal coastal village of Coldwater are nothing more than smugglers. But one family—the foul and deformed Purhos—are in league with smugglers, pirates and slavers. The slavers never enter the village itself—that would inevitably draw unwanted attention—and, instead, operate from a secret hold buried in the lofty, spray-slick cliffs of an isolated cove.

When the Purho have new merchandise for their business partners, they sail north to deposit the unfortunate now-slaves into the slavers' clutches before returning south with a handsome profit.

- **Setting Note**: This Dungeon Backdrop is set close to the village of Coldwater on the northern coast of Ashlar. However, the hold itself is self-contained and could easily be set near any coastal village with smuggling links.

Every month or so, a slaver ship visits the area and takes aboard any slaves or other merchandise gathered at the hold. When the characters arrive in Coldwater, the next ship is due in seven days. The slavers garrisoning the Secret Hold are members of a much larger organisation who have their base on an island out in the Bitter Sea. From there, the slaver lords send their scarlet-sailed ships hither and thither on their terrible business.

- **Setting Note**: This could be the first time the characters hear of these scarlet-sailed slavers or they could have already tangled with the organisation. See "Further Adventures" for more ideas about how to incorporate the slaver organisation and its lords into your campaign.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **Against the Slavers**: The characters have been following the rumours of slavers operating in Ashlar's waters and have come to Coldwater. They hear rumours of strange doings off the coast and of hidden coves and the like. Hiring a fishing boat, they sail up and down the coast before discovering the Secret Hold.
- **Find My Friend**: The characters are hired by Samuli Leino (male human) to find his missing friend, Tiera Paaso (male human), who was last seen in Coldwater. The characters visit the dismal village and come to the attention of the Purho family, who have taken the man to the Secret Hold.
- **Storm**: The characters are sailing along the coast—perhaps in a fishing boat—when a storm comes in from the Bitter Sea. As the storm rages, they spy a small sheltered cove and manage to make their way inside. While the storm batters the coast, one of the characters notices the entrance to the Secret Hold. With nothing else to do, they investigate the cave…

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use social skills to gather information about the Secret Hold of the Slaver Lord and its surrounds. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. Coldwater is a dismal, odious place. Many of it folk are smugglers, and some of the smugglers are terrible people, whispered to traffic in slavery.
2. Sometimes, solo travellers and the like go missing on the roads and tracks near Coldwater. Some of those folk saw something they should not have seen; others are taken as human cargo.
3. The waters near Coldwater are deep and treacherous. Ships—their lanterns shuttered—are sometimes seen sailing near the village at night. Such vessels no doubt have nefarious reasons for being there.
4. Slavery and kidnapping are again on the rise. Persistent rumours speak of raiders who strike without warning and carry their victims away to unknown fates. Most such attacks take place on or near the coast.
5. A fisherman saw a small sailing ship with scarlet sails loitering near a nameless cove about three miles north of Coldwater. The ship displayed no colours; its name was the *Dark Mistress*.
6. A fisherman and his boat went missing a few weeks ago. They were last seen sailing north. No wreckage has been found; their fate remains a mystery.

Alternatively, depending on your setup, a character may already know one or more rumours from the above list—perhaps as a result of carousing in a nearby tavern or chatting to locals in the last settlement they visited.

Determine which rumours are true and false based on your campaign setup.

The Surrounding Locality

The Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords lies roughly three miles north of the village of Coldwater on a stretch of desolate, little-visited coastline at the head of a small cove. The cove is accessible to rowing boats, fishing boats and the like, but ocean-going vessels will likely come to grief in the cove's narrow mouth.

High cliffs crowd over the cove, making access from landward difficult without extensive preparations or magical assistance. The ruin of an old building runs across the hilltop. A small single beach lies at the head of the cove, but it is mostly inundated at high tide. The entrance to the Secret Hold is visible to even the most casual of observers.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Steep, spray-slick cliffs rear up from the sea. Seabirds nest in the cliffs, and several seagulls—crying loudly to one another—circle overhead.
2. A patch of brownish seaweed floats upon the swell and gets tangled around a character's oar.
3. A dark shadow moves quickly across the surface of the water; above, a small cloud scuds across the sky.
4. A bird hurtles downward to plunge into the sea. A moment or two later, it emerges holding a fish in its beak.
5. Bubbles break the surface of the water just behind the party's boat.
6. A seal basks on the shingle beach at the head of the cove. It slips into the water if approached.
7. Dark clouds pass overhead, filling the cove with gloom.
8. A sudden wind plucks at the characters' cloaks, and the air becomes chill.
9. A few stones fall from a cliff and loudly splash into the cove's waters.
10. A thin trail of smoke drifts skyward from somewhere further inland.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the dungeon's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A large clump of seaweed floats past the character boat. A dozen tiny crabs cling to its sodden greenish fronds.
2. A character looking into the water sees an indistinct white shape resting on the sand covering the cove's bed. This is the rotting body of a slave who died in the hold and was sewn into a scrap of sailcloth before being dumped here. The body is in terrible condition.
3. Scraps of smashed-up wood—the remains of a rowboat—bob in the water hard against the cove's cliffs.
4. The chewed corpse of a large fish floats just beneath the surface of the water. Trickles of blood still ooze from the part-eaten corpse.
5. An empty brown sack bobs on the swell.
6. Bubbles break the surface of the water just behind the party's boat. A water flask bobs just below the surface.
7. A tower of precariously piled stones stands above the waterline on the beach. It is easily knocked over.
8. Freshwater oozes from a crack in the cliffs above the beach. Here, the characters can refill their waterskins. A character searching the area discovers signs that several booted humanoids have been here recently.
9. Amid the flotsam and jetsam scattered about the beach, a perceptive character notices several gleaming white bones. These are the remains of one of the slaver's victims washed ashore.
10. A rock formation jutting from a cliff has been carved to depict a gigantic face, but the face has only a central eye. The eye gazes down—perhaps balefully—into the cove.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations:

1. **Tenebrous Sea Cave**: Dim light suffuses the calm waters of this sea cave.
2. **Sandy Beach**: Scattered clumps of seaweed, pieces of driftwood and other rubbish litter this sandy beach.
3. **Natural Cave**: This cave is unoccupied and little used.
4. **Store Room**: The slavers store their victuals and other mundane equipment here, along with the stolen possessions of their prisoners.
5. **Chamber of the Marshal**: Here dwells the commander of the cave's garrison.
6. **Guard Chamber**: The guards here keep a watch on the sea cave and stop the prisoners from escaping.
7. **Barracks**: Here dwells the hold's small garrison.
8. **Chamber of Despair**: The slavers hold high-value victims in this dank, foul-smelling chamber. Such folk are sold for a premium or ransomed back to their families.
9. **Chamber of Horrors**: The slavers hold their rank-and-file prisoners in this dank, foul-smelling chamber.
10. **The Nowhere Stairs**: These stairs spiral upwards to a stone wall which bears signs of obvious tool marks.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills corridors and unoccupied rooms. Occupied rooms are normally illuminated by a torch or lantern.

Ceilings: In the worked portion of the dungeon, the ceilings are about 10 feet high. In the dungeon's various caves, the ceiling height varies wildly.

Walls: The dungeon's walls are of dressed and mortared stone. The walls are generally in good condition.

Flagstone Floor: The floor's flagstones are generally flat, and they do not inhibit movement.

Wooden Door: Doors open into the room or space beyond. A locked door can be opened with thieves' tools or brute strength.

Arrow Slits: Arrow slits provide excellent cover and allow dim light to filter into the eastern portion of location 9. Small-sized characters, such as halflings, and skinny human-sized characters can squeeze through an arrow slit. (Note, however, it may be impossible for particularly bulky characters or those wearing armour to squeeze through an arrow slit).

Smells & Sounds: The smell and sound of the sea is prevalent throughout the dungeon.

Dungeon Dressing

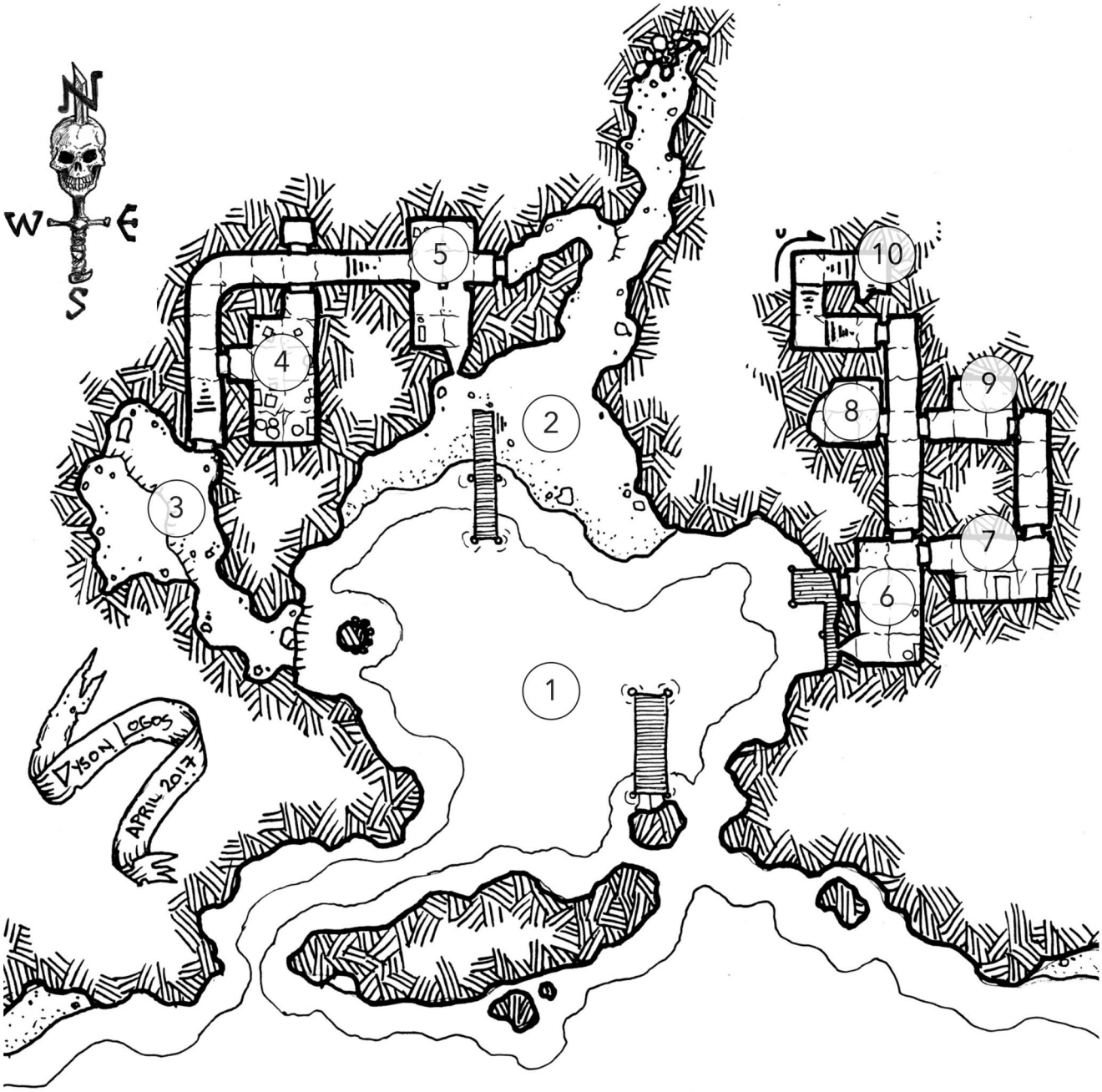
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. A small, lidless wooden crate holds a half-dozen torches.
2. The pungent smell of salt hangs heavily in the still air.
3. The sound of a distant splash—coming from location 1—reaches the characters' ears.
4. A ripped sack—the seam has given way—lies on the floor.
5. Yellowish mould grows over a patch of damp wall.
6. Drops of dried blood mar the floor; nearby, a smeared bloody handprint "decorates" a wall.
7. The words "Ozlon was here", along with a date from last year, have been poorly scratched into a wall.
8. The faint smell of urine hangs in the air.
9. Here, the ceiling sags noticeably and a small pile of grit and dust cover the floor below the affected area.
10. Two small brown rats scuttle away from the party and attempt to hide in some distant corner or small hole.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party finds if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. The faint outlines of wet footprints lead away from location 1. A tracker determines a booted human (or similar humanoid) left the tracks.
2. An empty wineskin lies on the floor; it has been stepped on and is squashed flat.
3. A scrap of bloody white rag has been stuffed into a hole in a wall. The blood is dry and crusty.
4. A foul-smelling bucket lies on its side; insects—flies and the like—feast on the bucket's noisome contents.
5. This bulging pack holds everything a traveller—or slaver—would need if they had to leave a location at a moment's notice. It holds several days' worth of food and water, a blanket, a sharp knife, flint and steel and a whetstone.
6. A handful of silver and gold coins fills a small pouch; all the coins were minted in a far-off land.
7. A quarterstaff leans in a corner. It is iron-shod at one end, and dried blood covers its tip.
8. An oar—its handle snapped in two—leans against a wall.
9. The body of a dead slave wrapped tightly in sailcloth lies awaiting burial at sea. The body is sewn into the sailcloth so that it might not float free. (The slavers dump the bodies at sea as they don't want them being washed up on the sandy beach in location 2.)
10. A loose stone in a wall wards a small storage niche. The niche contains a small bag of silver and gold coins and a sharp dagger in a plain leather sheath.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GM Notes

***Bloated Corpse**: To underscore the slavers' foul depravity consider having one or more drowned unfortunates manacles to the Chaining Stone.*

***Expanding the Dungeon**: The cave-in blocking the northern part of location 2 could lead to a larger cave system. In this instance, if the characters examine the cave-in a faint breeze issuing through the pile of tumbled stone caresses their faces. Design what lies beyond.*

1: Tenebrous Sea Cave

Dim light suffuses the calm waters of this sea cave.

Dim light suffuses the placid waters of this large sea cave. Here, the tang of salt hangs heavily in the air. Three jetties jut from the calm water, and a sandy beach lies to the north.

Illumination: Dim light filtering in from outside illuminates the sandy beach.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the sea cave is about 15 feet above the surface of the water at high tide.

The Sea: The map depicts the tide at its highest extent. At low tide, it recedes to the inner markings on the map. Except during the strongest storms, the waters in the sea cave are calm and easy to traverse.

Wooden Jetties: Three sturdy wooden jetties jut from the sea cave's calm waters. Slick seaweed clings to the jetties' wooden pilings. A wooden ladder hangs from each jetty, making them accessible even at low tide. A rowboat bobs on the swell by the north and eastern jetties.

Western Cliff: The cliff leading to location 3 is roughly ten feet high at high tide. Its lower reaches are slick with seaweed and barnacles.

Chaining Stone: This jagged stone rises about ten feet above the water at high tide. Three sets of slimy manacles are affixed to the stone about five feet below the surface of the water—they are just visible at low tide. Here, the slavers chain those who must be punished.

2: Sandy Beach

Scattered clumps of seaweed, pieces of driftwood and other rubbish litter this sandy beach.

Rubbish, detritus and seaweed clearly mark the hide tide mark on this sandy beach.

Sandy Beach: The sandy beach rises gently toward the doors to the north. Scattered clumps of seaweed, pieces of driftwood and other odds and ends litter the beach.

- **Tracks**: Many footprints mar the sandy beach. Most lead from location 5 to the jetty.

Collapsed Passage: A rockfall has blocked the northern passageway. The cave-in is impassable unless the characters use magic, such as *gaseous form*, to move through the blockage or undertake extensive work to remove the rubble.

3: Natural Cave

This cave is unoccupied and little used.

This irregularly shaped natural cave has a high ceiling. To the west, a five-foot-high escarpment cuts the cave roughly in half.

Ceiling: The natural stone ceiling is 18 feet high over the lower part of the cave and about 12 feet high above the escarpment.

Walls: The cavern walls are of rough natural stone.

Floor: The cavern floor is of rough uneven stone.

Escarpment: The rough escarpment is about five feet high and can be easily scaled by most characters—unless they are engaged in combat, flight from combat and so on.

4: Storeroom

The slavers store their victuals and other mundane equipment here, along with the stolen possessions of their prisoners.

Boxes, crates and several barrels crowd throughout this unorganised storeroom.

Crates, Boxes and Barrels: Filled with food, fresh water and other essentials, these are the garrison's supplies. Several open boxes hold piles of clothes, shoes and other low-quality mundane equipment; these are the possessions of those who have fallen into the slavers' clutches.

Barrel of Oil: This large half-full barrel holds oil for the slavers' lanterns. A filthy jug, a funnel and several full oil flasks stand nearby.

5: Chamber of the Marshal

Here dwells the commander of the hold's garrison.

Bright light fills this plushly appointed chamber.

Illumination: A hooded lantern provides bright light herein. Flickering light emerges from the room's arrow slit.

Plushly Appointed: The furniture here—a bed, chair, desk and several chests—is of good quality.

- **Chests**: These stout iron-banded wooden chests are locked. The slaver's leader holds the keys to these chests. The chest holds silver and gold coins along with various personal possessions taken from the captives. Such trinkets include:
    - A silver necklace holds a small rose-shaped pendant. The pendant bears the initials TA.
    - A pair of soft leather lady's boots sized for the dainty feet of an elf or suchlike. The boots are incredibly supple and comfortable.
    - A shiny brass snuff box; the inside of the lid is highly polished. A pleasant smell lingers in the empty box.
    - A heavy gold ring stamped with a sword sigil.

GM Notes

***Letters & Missives**: Various letters and messages litter the desk. This is an excellent place for a handout, particularly if the characters seek a certain captive or are searching for the slavers' main base of operations.*

***Choicest Treasures**: The slavers' leader keeps the choicest treasure for themselves along with expensive items destined for those higher up in the organisation. Design suitable treasure for your campaign.*

GM Notes

***Watchful Guards**: The slavers always maintain a watch of at least two guards here.*

***Treasure**: Herein lies the smugglers' treasure which should contain not only coins but various trinkets stolen from the prisoners languishing in locations 7 and 8.*

6: Guard Chamber

The guards here keep a watch on the sea cave and stop the prisoners from escaping.

A table surrounded by four chairs stands in the centre of this small room. Various boxes and two more chairs line the walls.

Illumination: A hooded lantern provides bright light herein, which emerges from the room's arrow slit and open door.

Doors: The door to this room is normally kept open so the guards can keep an eye on the sea cave without expending any effort. The other two doors are closed.

Table and Chairs: Four chairs surround a table set in the rough centre of the chamber. Two more chairs have been pushed back against the chamber's walls.

Boxes: Several boxes hold dry foodstuffs, flasks of oil, a large ceramic jug filled with water and the like.

7: Barracks

Here dwells the hold's small garrison.

Three bunk beds stand against the south wall; two chests are visible under each bunk bed.

Illumination: A hooded lantern provides bright light herein.

Bunk Beds: Three bunk beds stand in this chamber. Two small unlocked chests sit under each bunk bed. These contain the slavers' personal possessions, such as spare clothes and mundane equipment (flint and steel, spare pouches, and other odds and ends). A character carefully searching a chest may uncover an item of note:

1. A small pouch filled with low-quality costume jewellery is shoved into an old boot. The jewellery has a value of 5 gp as scrap metal.
2. A jet-black hood with holes for the wearer's eyes and mouth is concealed at the bottom of a small pack filled with clothes.
3. A set of manacles lies atop everything else in the chest. The manacle's keys have fallen out and got lost among all the other things in the chest. (The careful search locates the key.)
4. A *healing potion* is wrapped in a scrap of dirty linen that fills the inner pocket of a ragged crimson cloak.
5. This beautiful wooden carving depicts a leaping dolphin. The chest also holds a pouch containing small knives and other tools.
6. A sharp handaxe set with a bone handle is wrapped in a scrap of sailcloth. A wave-like pattern is carved into the weapon's handle.

- **Bunk Beds as Weapons**: Characters may push over bunk beds onto their enemies, who are knocked prone and trapped under the bunkbed until they struggle free. A fallen bunkbed counts as difficult terrain.

8: Chamber of Despair

The slavers hold high-value victims in this dank, foul-smelling chamber. Such folk are sold for a premium or ransomed back to their families.

Dirty straw covers the floor. Two simple beds stand against the walls; next to each, a set of manacles at the end of a long chain hangs from the wall.

Wooden Door: This door is locked.

Bunch of Keys: A bunch of keys hangs from the corridor's west wall just outside the door. The bunch holds keys for the door and the padlocks inside the room.

Manacles: Two sets of iron manacles are attached to the walls by long chains. A large padlock secures each set.

Beds: Two simple wooden beds with thin straw-filled mattresses and dirty blankets stand against the walls.

9: Chamber of Horrors

The slavers hold their rank-and-file prisoners in this dank, foul-smelling chamber.

Filthy straw covers the floor of this foul-smelling chamber. Four sets of manacles depend from the walls.

Wooden Door: This door is locked.

Bunch of Keys: A bunch of keys hangs from the corridor's west wall just outside the door. The bunch holds keys for the door and the padlocks inside the room.

Smell: The stench of fear, sweat and excrement pervades this chamber.

Manacles: Four sets of iron manacles are attached to the walls. A large padlock secures each set.

10: The Nowhere Stairs

These stairs spiral upwards to a stone wall which bears signs of obvious tool marks.

Narrow stone stairs circle upwards through a series of half-landings. The smell of sweat hangs heavily in the air.

Stairs: This staircase spirals upwards through a series of half-landings. Squares containing stairs are difficult terrain.

Worked Wall: The wall at the top of the stairs shows signs of obvious work.

Tools: Various stone working tools and several buckets lie on the floor in front of the worked wall.

GM Notes

***Prisoners**. If the characters seek someone of worth, they are likely imprisoned here.*

***Prisoners**. If the characters seek a commoner, they are likely imprisoned here.*

***Expanding the Dungeon**: The slavers set their prisoners to work here expanding the hold. Alternatively, the slavers could have all but completed work here and a poorly hidden secret door could lie at the top of the stairs. Design what lies beyond—perhaps the cellars of the ruin perched atop the cliffs overlooking the cove.*

Aftermath

Once the characters have dealt with the Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords, the site may fade from the campaign, or it could feature in the party's future adventurous doings.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

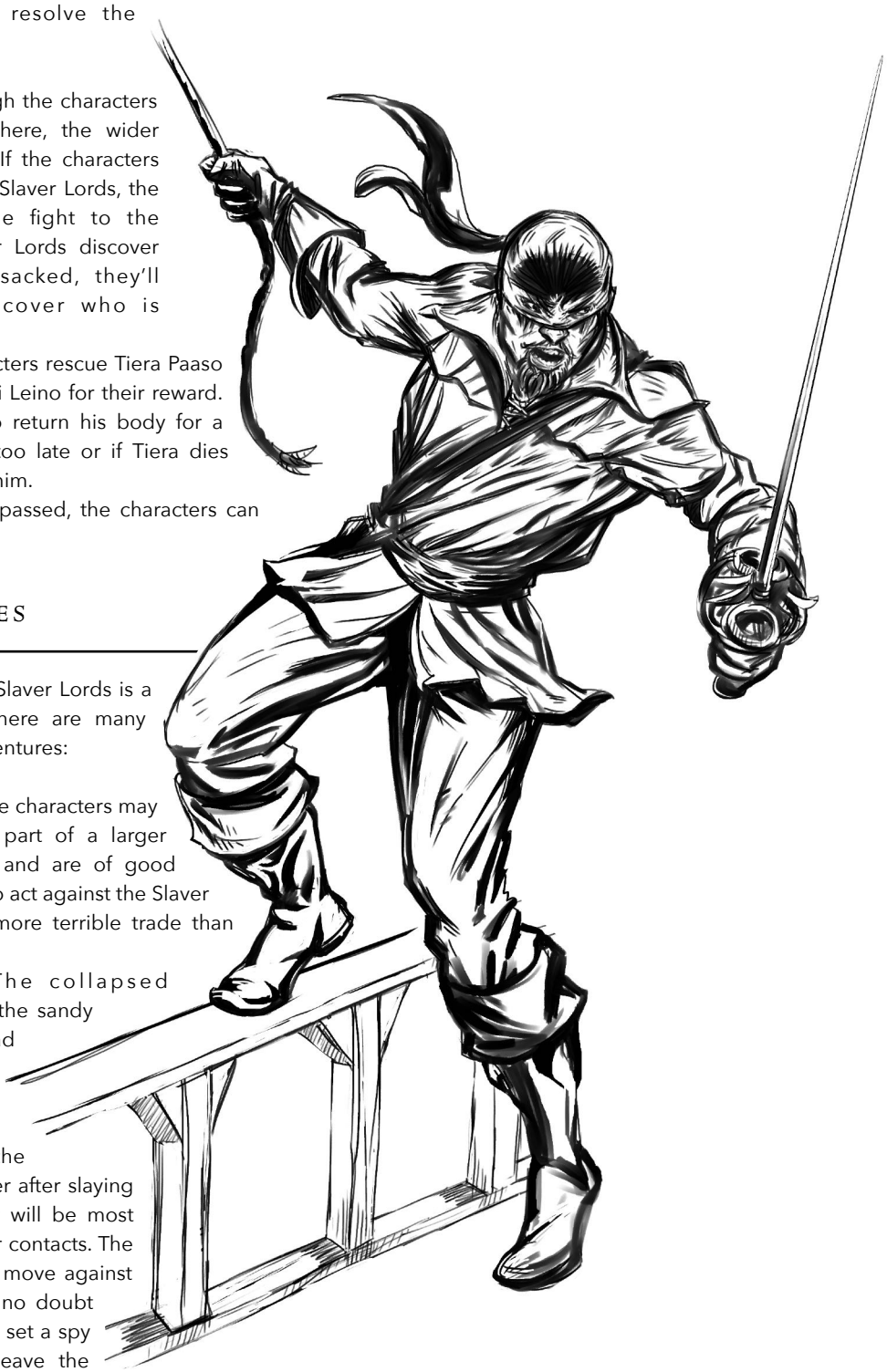
If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Against the Slavers**: Although the characters have defeated the slavers here, the wider organisation remains active. If the characters do not carry the fight to the Slaver Lords, the Slaver Lords will carry the fight to the characters. When the Slaver Lords discover their outpost has been sacked, they'll despatch agents to discover who is responsible.
- **Find My Friend**: If the characters rescue Tiera Paaso they can return him to Samuli Leino for their reward. Alternatively, they could also return his body for a decent burial if they arrive too late or if Tiera dies during the fighting to rescue him.
- **Storm**: Once the storm has passed, the characters can continue their journey.

Further Adventures

Although the Secret Hold of the Slaver Lords is a small self-contained dungeon, there are many ways it could feature in future adventures:

- **Against the Slaver Lords**: The characters may realise that the slavers are part of a larger organisation. If they do so, and are of good alignment, they may decide to act against the Slaver Lords—after all, there is no more terrible trade than slaving.
- **Collapsed Passage**: The collapsed passageway to the north of the sandy beach (location 2) could lead to a deeper network of caves and tunnels ripe for additional exploration.
- **Smugglers' Revenge**: If the characters return to Coldwater after slaying the slavers, the Purho family will be most displeased—as will their slaver contacts. The Purhos may not immediately move against the characters, but they will no doubt watch them. They might even set a spy to follow them after they leave the village. At some point in the future, agents of the Slaver Lords will no doubt catch up to the party and attempt to wreak their revenge.
- **Stairway to Nowhere**: If you determine an old ruin sat above the Secret Hold, the slavers could have cut these stairs up to its cellars. It is simple to add a door at the top of the stairs, which leads into the old cellars.



The Shadow Fane

Urban, Ashlar (Languard)

Evil is everywhere and humanity must be ever vigilant against its slow encroachment into all that is great and good. Small cults—dedicated to ancient, blasphemous powers—lurk throughout the world ready to carry out their dark patron's bidding. One such small cult dedicated to Braal, god of hate, malice and revenge, dwells in the Shadow Fane below Languard's High City. The cultists kidnap and murder in their dark god's name, but recently they made a mistake that threatens their very existence. Instead of kidnaping a beggar the cultists accidentally kidnapped the daughter of a wealthy merchant, and he is offering a handsome reward for his daughter's safe return.

Dungeon Background

Evil cults practise their foul rites wherever humans settle, for in humans certain dark powers find fertile ground for their whispered entreaties and honeyed promises. In every settlement, some folk will recoil from the light and embrace the darkness.

One such cult lurks under Languard, capital city of Ashlar. The cultists quietly worship their lord, and every month capture four doomed souls to sacrifice to their lord. Such activity cannot go unnoticed forever, however, and slowly several folk in the city are becoming aware of a pattern of disappearances among the denizens of the street as well other vulnerable people. Most citizens—wrapped up in their own lives and grappling with their own problems—spare little thought for the fate of a few beggars, homeless folk and the like. However, the recent disappearance of a wealthy merchant's daughter (see "Kidnap and Murder") has brought the matter somewhat to the fore.

Which Fell Power?

Of crucial importance to your design is the question: to which fell power is the fane dedicated? Answering this question enables you to embellish the descriptions herein with faith-specific details. For example, if the fane is dedicated to Braal's worship (see below), skull motifs are everywhere. Alternatively, if the adherents venerate Dagon eye and tentacle designs will predominate.

Remember, the evil god Braal is designed to be easily substituted for a power already extant in your campaign. Modifying the fane accordingly should be simple.

Braal

NE lesser god of hate, malice and revenge

Epithets: The Hated, Dweller in Shadows
Symbol: A cloven skull
Favoured Weapon: Morningstar
Raiment: Braal's adherents wear cowled black cloaks smeared with their sacrifices' blood and often shave their heads.

Worshippers: Braal whispers dark promises to the disposed, the bullied and those who desire power over their compatriots. Goblins and half-goblins also worship Braal, although he disdains such odious worshippers.

Teachings: Strike from the shadows; punish those who have wronged you and show no mercy. Take what you want and destroy that which you cannot take.

Holy Texts: The worship of Braal is not as prescriptive as other religions. No universally agreed upon text exists, but several dark tomes are preferred by various sects.

Additional Notes: Braal is the dark to Darlen's light. The struggle between the two is ancient and unending, and great enmity exists between their worshippers. For all his plotting and evil doings, however, Braal is nothing compared to the elder power of certain ancient, primal demons.

Temples & Shrines: Braal's temples are dark, hidden places concealed far from the prying eyes of non-believers. Normally his worshippers organise themselves into cults that confine themselves to a small geographical area. His followers are always secretive types, well versed in hiding in plain sight.

Adventure Hooks

The characters can merely stumble on the Shadow Fane by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the fane.

- **Kidnap and Murder**: An evil cult is active in the area and has been kidnapping locals to use as sacrifices in their blasphemous ceremonies. A few days ago, the cult made a mistake and accidentally kidnapped someone important, Aune Ehtaro—the daughter of Aatami Ehtaro. Aatami is an important and wealthy merchant and is fiercely protective of this family. Aatami offers the characters 500 gp to rescue his daughter and slay those responsible for her kidnapping.
- **Revenge**: The characters have previously tangled with worshippers of the Dweller in Shadows (or with whichever power you replace him). The fane's adherents attack the characters in revenge for previous setbacks; one of the slain cultists carries a crude map showing the fane's location or survives the fight with the characters and offers information in exchange for their life.
- **Kidnap, Interrupted**: The characters foil the attempted kidnap of Aune Ehtaro—the daughter of Aatami Ehtaro—while out carousing one evening. They either find a crude map on one of the attackers or trail fleeing cultists back to the fane. If they return Aune to her father he asks them to investigate the attack and offers them 500 gp to make sure his daughter is safe from another attempt.
- **Skulking About**: Abroad late at night, the characters notice a suspicious figure skulking about. Following the figure—a cultist on the way to the fane—the characters stumble onto the fane mere minutes before the monthly service begins.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use social skills to gather information about the Shadow Fane and its surrounds. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 2d6 sp. The character learns one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 2d6 sp they spend on this endeavour. Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. A foul cult operates in the vicinity; it is not safe to go outside after dark on your own. People that do sometimes disappear never to be seen again.
2. Whispers of terrible rites chanted in the dead of night and of faint screams coming from underground all centre on a part of the city near to the Svart's ever-flowing waters.
3. Dark figures have been seen moving furtively about the city at night.
4. A devotee of Darlen was raving a week ago about a dream he had. In it, he was flying above the city and could see a great darkness slowly oozing through the streets. He believed it to be a warning bestowed on him by his divine patron of a gathering evil.
5. Beggars and children of the street have been notable by their reduced numbers recently. No one knows where they are going.
6. A woman found a horrible necklace the other day. It was a crude cast iron thing decorated with a horrible grinning skull. She asked a blacksmith friend to melt it down, so disturbed was she by its imagery.

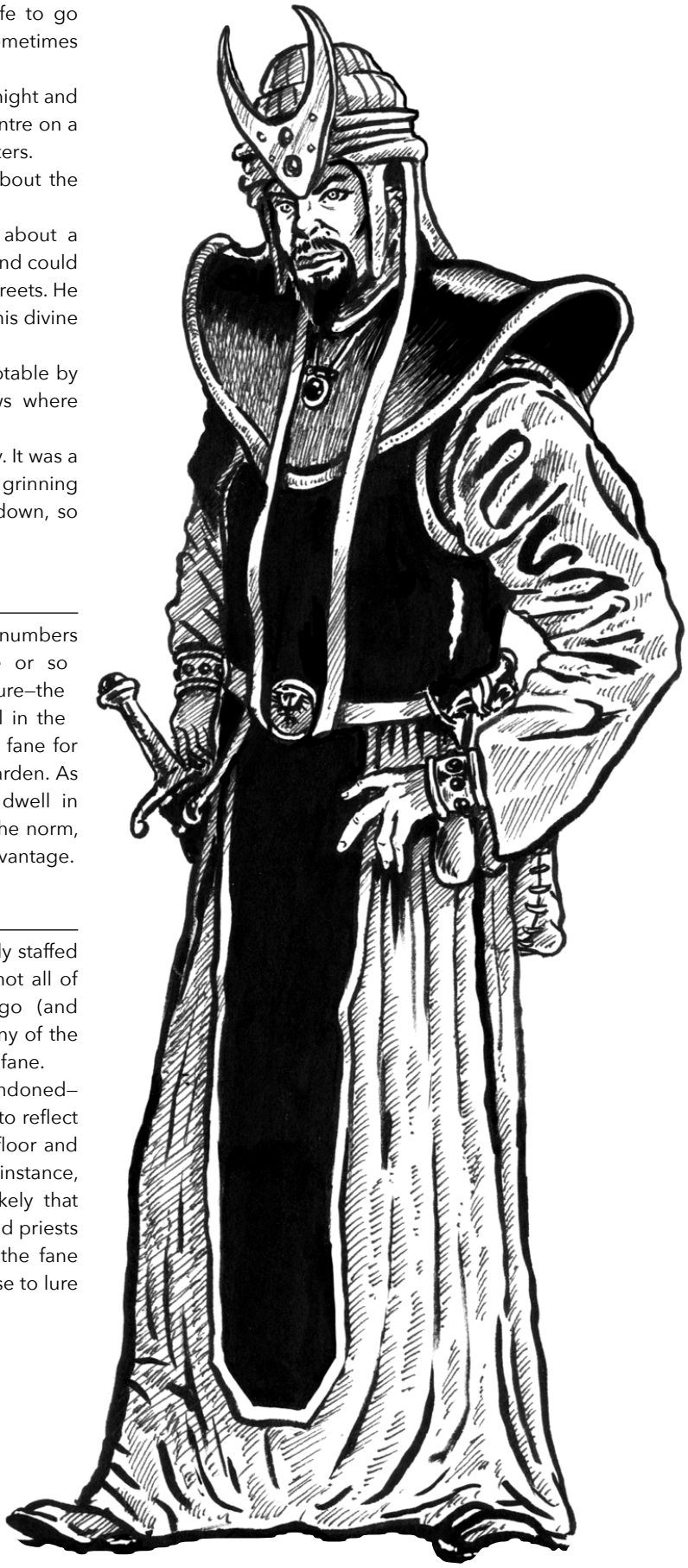
The Cult

The small cult dedicated to the Dweller in Shadows numbers no more than a half-dozen priests and a score or so worshippers scattered about the city. A shadowy figure—the Dark Warden—leads the cult. Only the priests dwell in the fane; other worshippers live in the city and visit the fane for the monthly sacrifices or as directed by the Dark Warden. As with any evil cult, the Hated's adherents do not dwell in blissful harmony; constant jockeying for position is the norm, and the characters may be able to use this to their advantage.

The Fane

This Dungeon Backdrop assumes the fane is currently staffed and in use. Thus, priests and worshippers—most if not all of whom will require light and food—come and go (and sacrifices for their dark lord). Thus, in this instance any of the hooks presented in "Adventure Hooks" work with the fane.

If you rule the opposite—that the fane is abandoned—remember to modify the dungeon's read aloud text to reflect its state. For example, dust might lie thickly on the floor and cobwebs may shroud the ceilings and walls. In this instance, no prisoners will languish in the fane and it is likely that undead and animate guardians—perhaps even undead priests—will lurk herein. (Remember, though, that having the fane abandoned reduces the number of hooks you can use to lure the characters to explore it).



Notable Locations at a Glance

The Shadow Fane is a small, self-contained dungeon complex dedicated to Braal. Use the notes below as a starting point, and modify them as necessary to complement your design of the fane and its inhabitants.

1. **Portal of Darkness**: Banded with iron straps graven with fell runes of evil, blasphemous power this stout oak door wards the complex beyond.
2. **Hall of the Damned**: Many of the fane's adherents never progress passed this area. Here stand four skull-shaped wrought iron braziers blazing with hellish magical light along with four small shrines complete with manacles to secure prisoners and sacrifices.
3. **The Dark Chapel**: The venue of the cult's blasphemous ceremonies, the Dark Chapel is where sacrifices die screaming in foul rituals enacted to glorify Braal.
4. **Store Room**: This locked chamber holds many boxes, crates and barrels filled with the possessions of the sacrificed. The cult periodically sells the items here to various local fences.
5. **The Dumping Ground**: The fane's priests dump the headless corpses of those sacrificed to Braal in this chamber. They then strip the corpse of anything remotely valuable before dumping the remains in location 7.
6. **The Old Ossuary**: This natural cavern holds the skeletal remains of the cult's oldest victims. Partially hidden behind heaped piles of bones, a narrow, twisting corridor leads way from the fane. At your discretion, the passage could end in a dead-end or intersect with more caves, the city sewers or some other dungeon complex.
7. **The New Ossuary**: Packed full of bones, decomposing bodies and the grizzly remains of the fane's sacrifices this small network of caves reeks of death, decay and disease.
8. **Tower of Skulls**: A towering column comprising hundreds of skulls dominates this lofty chamber. Risen in veneration to the fane's fell patron the column holds the skulls of all those who have been sacrificed to Braal's glory. At the end of every profane service, the column grows a little higher.
9. **The Dark Guardian**: A cloaked stone statue of a towering skeletal warrior clutching a two-handed morningstar watches over this junction. It stares impassively toward the door leading to the Tower of Skulls.
10. **The Processional**: Extensively decorated with lurid frescoes praising Braal, this wide corridor is both a thoroughfare and a place of devotion.
11. **Adherents' Dormitory**: In this communal sleeping chamber slumber the fane's minor priests.
12. **Chamber of the Dark Warden**: This sumptuously appointed chamber is the Dark Warden's lair. Here are also kept the shrine's choicest treasures.

Generic Fane Features

Many of the locations in the Shadow Fane share certain features:

Illumination: Unless noted in the text, darkness fills the fane. Read aloud descriptions assume the characters can either see in the dark or they have their own light sources.

General Decorative Features: As befits a shrine dedicated to an evil power, the fane's decorations are lurid and foul. Skull motifs feature prominently everywhere as do frescoes of deep shadows, blood and gore.

Vaulted Ceilings: The fane has barrel vaulted ceilings. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings in corridors are about ten-foot high; in chambers they are 15-foot high.

Walls: The fane's walls are of cut and dressed stone. In many places, lurid frescoes and the like dedicated to Braal's dark glory decorate the walls.

Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded.

Wooden Doors: The complex's wooden doors are in good repair and open into the room they ward. Unless noted in the text, the doors are plain and unadorned.

Dungeon Dressing

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

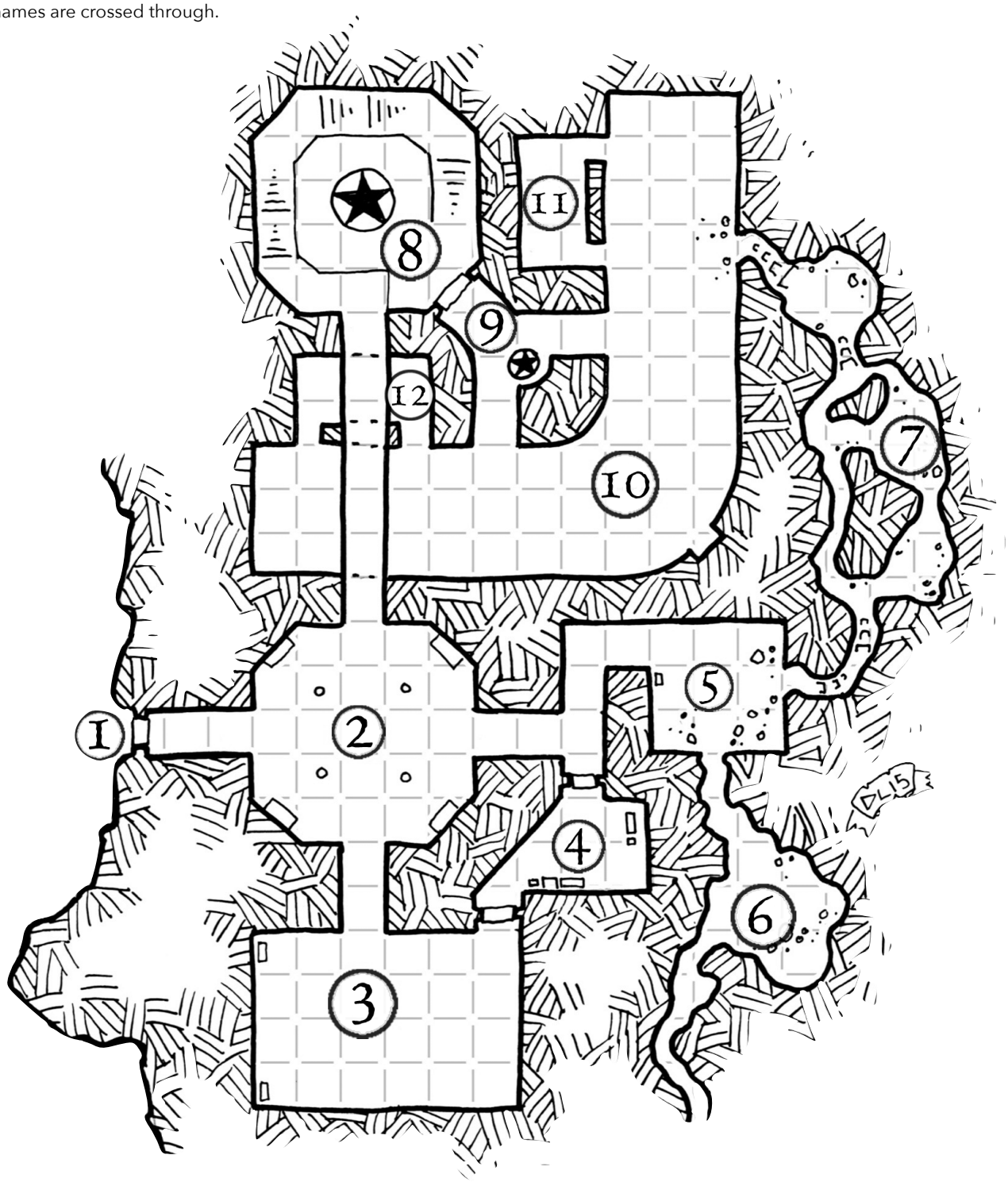
1. A fresco of a large, blackened skull decorates the wall. Blasphemously—for the faithful—someone has scratched away the paint depicting one of the skull's eye sockets.
2. Drips and smears of dried blood lead toward location 5.
3. Thick—perhaps unnaturally thick—shadows cluster in the corners where the walls meet the ceiling. Paranoid characters may suspect they detect movement in the deepest shadows.
4. From deeper into the fane, comes the faint sound of chanting in some alien, foul language.
5. The faint scent of death, decay and blood reaches the characters' nostrils. (The smell comes from the direction of locations 5-7).
6. Water drips from the ceiling with annoying regularity. The water drains away through cracks in the floor.
7. This fresco—depicting bloody slaughter before a gigantic, obscene statue—is particularly detailed and arresting.
8. Screams, sobs or harsh, mocking laughter come from elsewhere in the fane.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Dropped and forgotten, a tarnished holy symbol of two clasped hands—Conn's holy symbol—lies against one wall.

2. A loose flagstone hides a small storage niche, perhaps constructed in secret by one of the fane's priests. Roll again to determine what lies within (ignoring inappropriate or duplicate results).
3. A tarnished silver unholy symbol hangs from the remains of a fine silver chain; dried blood covers the chain.
4. A small black velvet pouch holds six gold-filled teeth ripped from the jaws of those sacrificed in the fane.
5. A crumpled scrap of parchment holds a short list of people's names in cramped handwriting. Most of the names are crossed through.
6. A small, obviously old, brass idol depicts the shrine's patron. Its head is worn and slightly shiny, as if it has been repeatedly rubbed.
7. Crafted from black iron, this small handbell has a worn handle and horrible etchings of skulls and death around its rim. When rung, it creates a harsh, discordant sound.
8. Wedged into a crack in the floor, an iron ring cast in the shape of a skull is scratched with wear.



GM Notes

Set a Trap: *The portal in location 1 is a good place for a trap.*

Chained Prisoners: *If the shrine has any prisoners, perhaps including Aune Ehtaro (see the "Kidnap and Murder" adventure hook, the characters discover them chained to the four shrines in location 2.*

1: Portal of Shadows

Beyond this door lies the Shadow Fane.

A stout iron-bound door pierces the wall ahead. An iron lock cast in the shape of a skull wards the door.

Portal: This stout iron-bound door has a large lock set into it shaped like a skull complete with a gaping, wide mouth. Every cultist has a key.

2: Hall of the Damned

Here languish the fane's doomed prisoners.

Four skull-shaped wrought iron braziers emit hellish, flickering light from their eye sockets. Four small shrines complete with manacles to secure prisoners stand against the walls.

Illumination: Dim light from the four wrought iron braziers illuminates the centre of this chamber. Behind the braziers, darkness and shadows shroud the room.

Shrines: Each set with manacles, these four small shrines are where the cult's prisoners are kept prior to sacrifice and decapitation. The wall behind each shrine is painted black, but splatters of blood and the faint smell of urine surround each shrine.

Wrought Iron Braziers: Wrought to depict skulls these iron braziers have lids which can be removed to add more fuel. Flickering light shines through each skull's eye sockets.

3: The Dark Chapel

Here, the cult practises their blasphemous ceremonies and sacrifices die screaming in foul rituals to glorify Braal.

The scent of death and some foul kind of incense hangs in the air of this large, rectangular chamber. To the west stands a bloodstained altar seemingly hewn from a single piece of black basaltic rock.

With the exception of the Tower of Skulls (location 8), this chamber is where the cultists feel closest to their foul lord.

Wrought Iron Candelabras: Four candelabras, each treated with a *continual light* spell, fill the chamber with flickering, sickly yellow light. An iron "cap" hangs from a hook on each candelabra and can be used to shroud the light.

Bloody Black Altar: Hewn from a single piece of black basaltic rock brought here from some unknowable, alien place the altar is the chamber's centrepiece. Dried blood and viscera splatter the altar and the floor around it.

Two sets of heavy manacles are set into the altar's uppermost surface.

The altar conceals a secret niche which can be opened by pushing in a small outcrop of rock protruding from the altar's rear. Within lie keys for all the manacles in location 2 and 3 and more foul-smelling incense for the burners.

Incense Burners: Several five-foot high incense burners stand behind the altar. Incense—foul and heady—burns within.

4: Store Room

This locked chamber holds many boxes, crates and barrels filled with the possessions of those sacrificed to Braal's glory as well as things the fane's priests need on a daily basis. The cult periodically sells the items stored here to local fences.

Many boxes, barrels and chests stand against the walls of this small, irregularly shaped chamber.

Boxes & Barrels: Characters searching the room find many mundane items such as clothes, hats, shoes and the like. A character searching for ten minutes finds something valuable. At your discretion, if the character searches particularly thoroughly, they may find more than one treasure. Each item can be found only once.

1. **Shoe**: A shoes has a false heel; inside, the character find three gold coins wrapped in a scrap of cloth.
2. **Headscarf**: A blue silk headscarf worth 5 gp, when the splatters of blood staining it are cleaned off. An overlooked silver necklace (worth 20 gp) is tangled about the bloody scarf.
3. **Belt**: A thick, black leather belt has a secret storage compartment; it contains 1 pp.
4. **Belt Pouch**: This leather pouch has a complicated set of cords to keep it closed. They make pick pocketing much harder, but take twice as long to open.

5: The Dumping Ground

The fane's priests dump the headless corpses of those sacrificed to Braal, here. They then strip the corpse of anything valuable before dumping the remains in location 7.

Four headless, naked corpses sprawl on the floor of this charnel house. Blood and gore splatter the walls and floor while a nauseating stench of decay and death fills the air.

The fane's clergy have not yet got around to disposing of their most recent sacrifices.

Corpses: The headless, naked corpses comprise two human males, one human female and one male dwarf.

6: The Old Ossuary

This natural cavern holds the skeletal remains of the cult's oldest victims.

Deep piles of yellowing bones fill the chamber.

Piles of Jumbled Bones: The skeletal remains of scores of the cult's victims lie scattered about the room. A character searching the bones notices there are no skulls here.

The bone piles are difficult terrain.

Concealed Passageway: Partially hidden behind the heaped piles of jumbled bones, a narrow, twisting corridor leads way from the fane. This could end in a dead-end or intersect with more caves, the city sewers or some other dungeon complex.

GM Notes

Foul Doings: *The finds in locations 4, 5 and 6 should highlight the cultists' foul practices and their penchant for wringing every morsel of value from their victims.*

Here Lurk the Undead: *Location 6 is a great place for the party to fight minor undead—perhaps headless skeletons.*

GM Notes

***More Lurking Undead**: Location 7 is a great place for the characters to encounter more undead—perhaps headless skeletons or zombies.*

***What Dwells in the Skull Column?** Location 8 is an excellent area to place an undead creature of some sort—perhaps of your own design. Perhaps the shrine's guardian lurks inside the skull tower or can animate portions of the foul structure.*

***Animate Guardian**: This statue could be an animate guardian filled with a sliver of Braal's foul essence.*

7: The New Ossuary

Packed full of bones, decomposing bodies and the remains of the fane's sacrifices this small network of caves reeks of death, decay and disease.

The pungent, nauseating stench of death and decay fills this natural cave. Rotting, decaying corpses and heaped piles of white bones cover the floor.

These narrow, claustrophobic tunnels and chambers have an oppressive feel.

Narrow Passageways: Characters moving through the narrow passageways must squeeze to get through.

Rough Hewn Steps: Crude steps lead down through the cave to the north. The steps are difficult terrain.

Piles of Decomposing Bodies: A character searching the pile of decomposing bodies notices there are no skulls here.

8: Tower of Skulls

The centrepiece of the fane, the column of skulls is a monument to Braal's glory. At the end of every profane service, the tower grows a little higher.

A towering column comprising hundreds of skulls dominates this lofty chamber. A spiral staircase unguarded by a handrail spirals around the room's wall.

Column of Skulls: A character examining the tower of skulls carefully notices many of the skulls atop the tower still have flesh and hair. The column is sturdy and can be scaled by a careful climber.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 40-foot high.

Stairs: Squares containing stairs are difficult terrain. The stairs have no handrail.

9: The Dark Guardian

A cloaked stone statue watches over this junction. It stares impassively toward the door leading to the Tower of Skulls.

A cloaked stone statue of a towering skeletal warrior clutching a two-handed morningstar stands at the intersection of two corridors. The statue stares to the northwest.

Stone Statue: This statue is seven feet tall and wears a cowled black cloak draped over its shoulders. It represents the fane's master—Braal.

10: The Processional

Extensively decorated with lurid frescoes praising Braal, this wide corridor is both a thoroughfare and a place of devotion.

Lurid frescoes praising Braal decorate this wide corridor.

Frescos: Lurid, blasphemous and done in a variety of styles these frescoes depict all manner of slaughter and perversion. Deep shadows, sometimes with the suggestion of sinister shapes lurking within, predominate.

11: Adherents' Dormitory

In this sleeping chamber slumber the fane's minor priests.

Woollen sheets cover the bunkbeds set against the walls in this small chamber. Two sconces hold flickering torches.

Illumination: The torches burning here provide bright light.

Bunkbeds: Rickety two-storey bunkbeds about six-foot tall line the walls. A strong character can tip over a bunkbed, perhaps trapping a foe beneath.

Bin: A small bin holds two dozen torches, several lanterns and four oil flasks.

Chests: Under each bunkbed two chests hold the priests' personal gear. If the characters thoroughly search the chests, roll on the list below to determine what they find. Each item can be found only once.

1. **Coin Purse**: This small pouch holds 15 sp, 7 gp and 1 pp.
2. **Foul Parchment**: This long, unused, scroll is made from stretched skin. It is curled up in a bone scroll tube.
3. **Book**: Holding a series of litanies and personal prayers, this book is the work of one of the fane's adherents.
4. **Flask of Fine Brandy**: A small half-full bottle of brandy lies at the bottom of one chest. It is worth 10 gp.

12: Chamber of the Dark Warden

This sumptuously appointed chamber is the Dark Warden's lair. Here are also kept the shrine's choicest treasures.

Chain Curtain: A floor-length chain curtain fills both entrances. It obscures sight of what lies beyond and makes it hard to sneak into the room.

Curtains of fine chain fill the two entrances to this sumptuously appointed bedchamber.

Illumination: A permanent magic flame (a *continual light*) cast on a brazier—or more accurately a lump of coal in the brazier—illuminates this chamber with flickering yellow light.

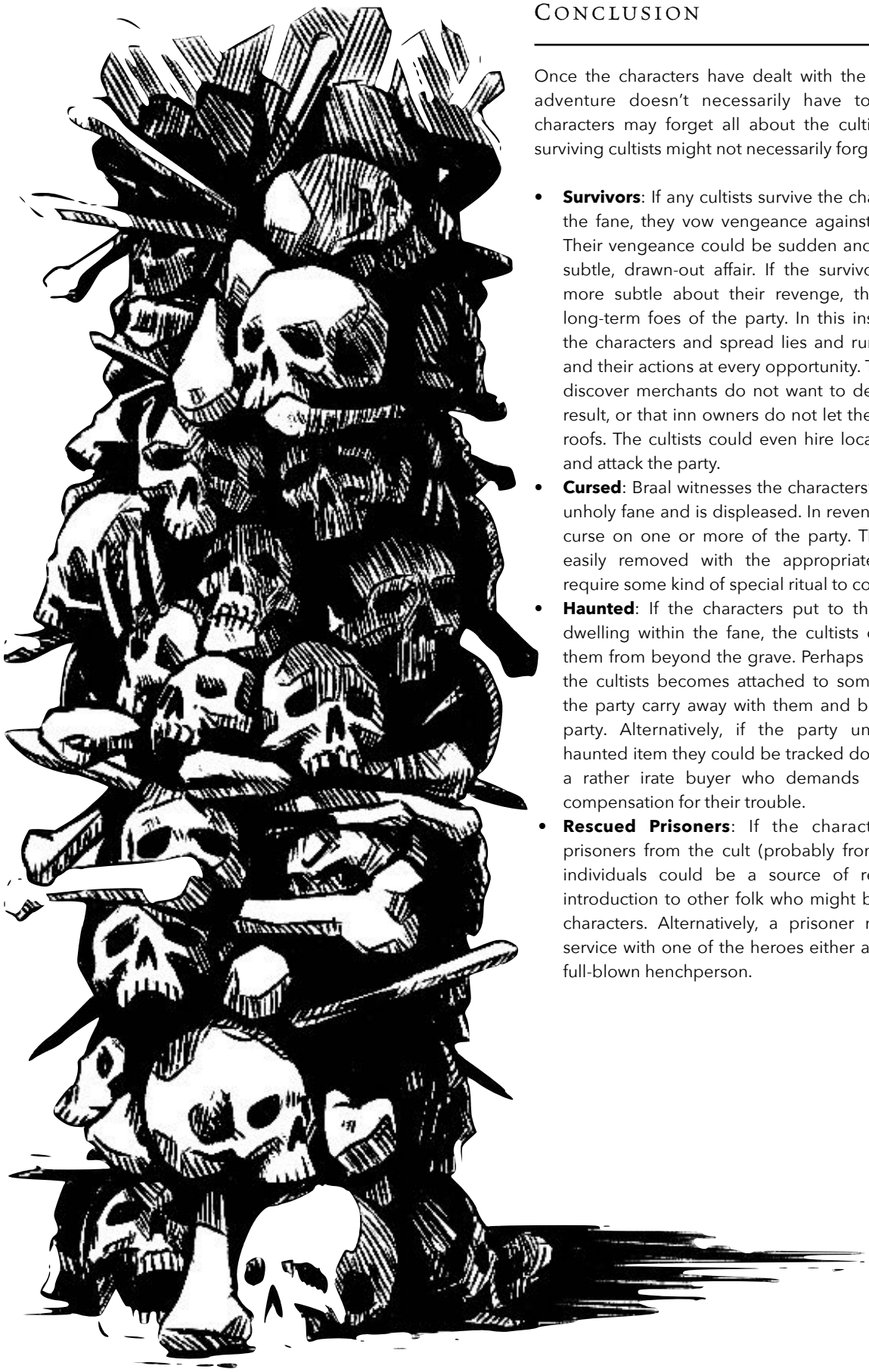
Four-Poster Bed: This double bed has four black velvet curtains (each worth 50 gp) which hides whatever (or whoever) is in the bed. A skull-shaped finial tops each of the bed's posts.

Chests: One chest holds the Dark Warden's personal possessions. Another locked, metal-bound, oaken chest holds the fane's greatest treasures and several ceremonial objects. They include:

- **Silvered Skull**: This jawless skull has been dipped in molten silver. It is a macabre, sinisterly beautiful thing.
- **Serrated, Curved Dagger**: Used in sacrifices this old dagger is wrapped carefully in a scrap of black velvet.
- **Nameless Book**: Black of cover, and thick, this book is the Dark Warden's diary and personal notebook. Inside—in narrow, cramped handwriting— a careful accounting of the cult, its practises and dark thoughts fill the pages.

GM Notes

How Many Priests? *The number of bunkbeds in location 11 should equal the number of minor priests serving the fane.*



Conclusion

Once the characters have dealt with the fane's cultists, the adventure doesn't necessarily have to end. While the characters may forget all about the cultists and move on, surviving cultists might not necessarily forget about them.

- **Survivors**: If any cultists survive the characters' assault on the fane, they vow vengeance against the blasphemers. Their vengeance could be sudden and violent or a more subtle, drawn-out affair. If the survivor(s) decide to be more subtle about their revenge, they could become long-term foes of the party. In this instance, they follow the characters and spread lies and rumours about them and their actions at every opportunity. The characters may discover merchants do not want to deal with them, as a result, or that inn owners do not let them stay under their roofs. The cultists could even hire local toughs to harass and attack the party.
- **Cursed**: Braal witnesses the characters' desecration of his unholy fane and is displeased. In revenge, he inflicts a fell curse on one or more of the party. The curse could be easily removed with the appropriate spells or could require some kind of special ritual to counter.
- **Haunted**: If the characters put to the sword everyone dwelling within the fane, the cultists could still be-devil them from beyond the grave. Perhaps the spirit of one of the cultists becomes attached to some item of treasure the party carry away with them and begins to haunt the party. Alternatively, if the party unknowing sell the haunted item they could be tracked down in the future by a rather irate buyer who demands a full refund and compensation for their trouble.
- **Rescued Prisoners**: If the characters rescued any prisoners from the cult (probably from location 2) such individuals could be a source of reward, rumour or introduction to other folk who might be keen to hire the characters. Alternatively, a prisoner might ask to take service with one of the heroes either as a hireling or as a full-blown henchperson.

The Shard Isles

Coastal, Lonely Coast, Secret Name

Skygrave Tower, the highest point on a barren archipelago—the Shard Isles—claimed by bandits, wreckers and other ne'er-do-wells, looms over the grey, wind-lashed waves of Drowned Bay. Beneath its waters once lay the town of Brochanmore, but a catastrophic flood destroyed the town centuries ago. A tidal wave struck the isles a century ago drowning the remnants of an evil cult intent on their unspeakable scheme, and now, through fate or happenstance, the Shards Isles once again find themselves at the centre of portentous events.

Dungeon Background

The ruins of Skygrave Tower loom over the grey waves like a cenotaph overlooking Drowned Bay. The crumbling spire forms the sole remnant of the coastal town of Brochanmore, obliterated by a catastrophic flood some 300 years ago. Brochanmore was a wealthy seaport whose people thrived on the rich earnings made from lucrative fishing and trading activities. A single, narrow causeway connected the town to the mainland. It was visible only during low tide, rendering the town all but impregnable.

The legend goes the people of Brochanmore grew vain and proud. Fishermen dressed in silk, and merchant's wives wore gold. It was said even the thresholds of all but the humblest homes were plated with silver. Such an abundance of wealth naturally attracted poor immigrants from all over the Lonely Coast, but the people of Brochanmore were uncaring and pitiless, and chased them off with dogs and tridents. Greed had corrupted the townsfolk's hearts, and in their hubris they thought themselves untouchable. One fog-shrouded morning, a fisherman caught a mermaid. From the nets, she warned him Brochanmore needed to change its ways or suffer the wrath of the sea goddess, Serat. When the mermaid's husband surfaced and demanded his wife's freedom, the fisherman refused. The waters foamed and blackened as the merman cursed the fisherman and his town, declaring "*Brochanmore will fall, only its gravestone will stand tall!*" The next full moon, a huge tidal wave washed over Brochanmore, destroying the town and killing all the inhabitants. When the waves retreated, the very island upon which the town had been built had been all but devoured by the ravenous waves. From that day onward, the few remaining rocky islets became known as the Shard Isles.

Soon after, the barren archipelago and its lonely tower became a haven to bandits, wreckers and ne'er-do-wells. A little over a century ago, following a narrow escape from the pyre, the witch Malwenn fled Wolverton with her coven of Braal-worshipers known as the Red Rubric. Traveling west along the coast, the cult settled upon the Shard Isles and made it their main base of operations. Atop Skygrave Tower, Malwenn conferred with demons, eventually learning an earth-shattering secret, far too great and terrible to contain, even for one such as herself. The witch divided the secret into three parts. The first two parts were given to her most trusted hierophants, who each left the Shard Isles with a dozen acolytes to found splinter sects elsewhere on the Lonely Coast. Malwenn kept the third and final part to herself, locking it away in a vault beneath her tower.

No-one knows whether what happened next was the wrath of the sea goddess, or simply a natural disaster. All that can be said with any certainty is that one night, another titanic wave rose from the deep; one as large and terrible as the one which destroyed Brochanmore. And when the tide withdrew, Malwenn and her followers had been erased from existence.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the Shard Isles by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the rocky archipelago:

Head Hunters: Tillo Iwanda (N male human) approaches the characters with a golden opportunity. Arumer Bey, the legendary pirate king, was one of the last pirates to be executed in Brochanmore, and his sun-bleached bones still hang from a gibbet atop Skygrave Tower. If the characters can bring back Arumer's head, a *speak with dead* spell might allow them to learn the location of his buried treasure. Tillo wants one full share of the treasure as a finder's fee.

In Deep Waters: Using false lights, a notorious gang of wreckers lairing on the Shard Isles recently lured a ship to its doom. *The Grey Mare* was plundered and sunk and the crew taken hostage. The exorbitant fee demanded for their release causes the ship's owner to seek a different solution. Surely, if a band of heroes were to deal with the wreckers and free the sailors, they would be richly rewarded.

Troll Toll: The tyrannous troll Druôn dwells in the stone tower on the Shard Isles. Aided by a band of half-goblin pirates, Druôn extorts a heavy toll from all ships sailing along the coast to Wolverton. Those who cannot pay have their right hand severed as punishment. Merchants offer a reward of 150 gp for whoever kills Druôn and brings back his right hand.

Whispers & Rumours

A character may hear one or more rumours about the Shard Isles from the list below. The character can learn this information by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

1. Brochanmore was a prosperous town, but its people angered Serat, Mistress of the Sea. A great flood destroyed the town overnight, leaving only barren shards of the old island above the waves.
2. The witch Malwenn once laired on the Shard Isles along with her cult of Braal-worshipers. Their foul rituals attracted a cataclysmic wave, wiping her unholy sect from the isles.
3. Smart folk steer clear of the Shard Isles. Naught but pirates, wreckers and ne'er-do-wells fleeing justice (and punishment) dwell thereon.
4. On a clear day, you can see Skygrave Tower. In the good old days, convicted pirates were hung from the parapet in chains and cages as food for the gulls.
5. The Drowned Bay's treacherous tides have ended more lives than all the pirates preying upon the Lonely Coast.
6. Walking along the beach on a misty morning, one can hear the ghostly peals of Brochanmore's bells. At low tide, the ghosts of the drowned wander the foggy shores, ever repeating the last moments of their lives.

The Surrounding Locality

The secluded cove of Drowned Bay sits between Hosford to the west and Wolverton to the east, flanked by miles of desolate coastline.

Stubborn shards of land linger in its troubled waters; the remnants of a once-prosperous town drowned by the tide. Despite many legends of gold-plated houses buried in the silt, the Shard Isles attract few adventurers. Indeed, barely a third of those who set out to explore the isles make it back alive. While bandits, wreckers and ferocious sea creatures are responsible for a fair share of those lost lives, most are simply claimed by the sea. Drowned Bay's curious geography has given birth to a dangerous intertidal zone, where the waters rise swiftly and unpredictably.

Use the lists below to enrich the characters' journey to the Shard Isles.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the Shard Isle's surrounds:

1. Far away, spectral green lights dance and cavort upon the grey waves. A character wise in nature's ways knows they are bioluminescent algae.
2. Sudden gusts of wind blast the characters with sand, which creeps into their boots and clothes. Until the characters strip down and brush away the sand, the discomfort makes it difficult to concentrate or move.
3. The beached carcass of a wrecked sloop wallows in the silt. Its cabins are stripped of all valuables, and the pillagers' tracks have been washed away by the tide.
4. A series of erratic, many-legged tracks lead to a cast of tiny crabs picking at the near-skeletal remains of a nameless, drowned sailor.
5. Dunes crowned with razor-edged marram grass straddle the characters' path. Unless carefully navigated (adding 30 minutes to the journey), characters traversing the dunes suffer various minor injuries.
6. A colony of seagulls loudly circles above the beached carcass of a blue marlin, entangled in a fisherman's net.
7. A lone banner tree stands amid the windswept dunes. Moulded by the fierce wind, all its gnarled branches reach toward the sea.
8. Three sharp, metal tines poke from the sand. Investigation reveals it is the trident of some massive bronze statue buried in the silt.
9. The characters traverse a hardened sand dune. Creatures on foot have little trouble, but mounts and vehicles have a 25% chance of breaking a leg or getting stuck as the sand suddenly crumbles away. Avoiding the hazard adds 30 minutes to the journey.
10. Dense fog rises, blanketing the area in a ghostly pall. Far off, the silhouette of a gabled tower looms over the waves, and the characters hear a bell strike thirteen times.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search the surrounds. Modify the value of the items below to suit your campaign.

1. A massive clam lies half-buried in the wet sand. If forced open success open doors opens), it disgorges a lustrous blue pearl worth 50 gp.
2. A deep furrow flanked by footprints leads from the beach to the dunes, where a 500-pound barrel of rum lies abandoned. The footprints continue further inland.
3. A hempen rope tied to a wooden stake trails off into the water. A rotting cow's head crawling with fat eels is attached to a hook on the other end.
4. A beautiful pink and crimson-hued conch shell full of mud lies amid the rotting kelp. Once cleaned, it can be blown like a signalling horn.
5. A centuries-old cypress tree bearing hard, spiky seeds resembling caltrops. It takes 30 minutes to amass enough of them to fill a small bag.
6. A glass bottle contains a rolled-up piece of vellum. The letter is a call for help from the captain of *Widow*—a ship he claims is cursed. It is dated twelve years ago.
7. A giant, triangular tooth belonging to some ferocious sea monster. Lashed to a sturdy haft, it would make a fine axe.
8. A rusted iron spear pierces the soil at a shallow angle. The notch at its base suggests it was shot from a ballista.
9. A bleached humanoid skull sits in the sand near the waterline; the rest of the skeleton is buried up to the neck. A shiny opal worth 50 gp lies inside the ribcage.
10. A simple wooden cup engraved with a two-tailed mermaid bearing a crown of stars. Any drink poured into the cup magically gains a dark, foamy appearance.

Treacherous Tides

When the characters arrive at the Shard Isles, take a d6 and place it on the table with the number 1 showing. This die is called the Tide Die, and it represents the slowly rising tide. Every 10 minutes, roll 1d6. If the result is greater than the number showing on the Tide Die, increase the Tide Die score by one.

Every location in this adventure has a Flood Point listed in the description, allowing its water level to be calculated as follows:

(Tide Die - Flood Point) x 2 = depth of water, in feet

For example, Location 5 (False Cromlech) has a Flood Point of 3. If the Tide Die sits at 5, the water level at the False Cromlech is 4 feet high ([5 - 3] x 2).

The effects of different water levels are listed under "Generic Dungeon Features".

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **Intertidal Zone (FP 1)**: At low tide, characters can walk across the silt between the isles.
2. **Barren Islet (FP 2)**: Slick rocks surround this islet.
3. **Guard Post (FP 4)**: A pair of pulleys raises an abatis, blocking off the main access point to the isles.
4. **Jetty (FP 3)**: A small skiff is tied to the jetty of this islet.
5. **False Cromlech (FP 3)**: This imitation stone circle is raised from the ruined walls of lost Brochanmore.
6. **Storehouse (FP 5)**: This small cabin holds food stores.
7. **Living Quarters (multiple locations) (FP 5)**: Most buildings are merely simple dwellings.
8. **Skygrave Tower - Ground Floor (FP n/a)**: Access to the cellar is hidden beneath the weeds.
9. **Skygrave Tower - First Floor (FP n/a)**: This is the former abode of the witch, Malwenn.
10. **Skygrave Tower - Rooftop (FP n/a)**: A functional ballista for harpooning ships is mounted on the crenellations.
11. **Skygrave Tower - Cellar (FP n/a)**: This is the final resting place of the witch, Malwenn.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Lit torches, lanterns and braziers fill indoor areas with dim, flickering light.

Rocks: The rough, salt-caked rocks ringing the islets provide many hand- and footholds.

Ceilings: Ceilings comprise groaning driftwood planks nailed to sturdy oaken beams.

Walls: Being crude works of masonry pocked with mussels and barnacles, the walls are easy to climb.

Floors: Sea spray and slimy algae create a slippery surface. If intelligent creatures inhabit the isles, they might use spiked footwear to negate the slipperiness.

Doors: Swollen with moisture, these wooden doors no longer fit in their frames. Simple chain latches are used to keep them shut.

Stairs: Uneven steps are difficult terrain, and the low ceiling above the stairs makes it almost impossible to swing a weapon effectively.

Water Levels: The effects of a location's water level are relative to a character's height:

- **Knee-High**: Movement costs are doubled.
- **Waist-High**: Movement costs are quadrupled, but characters can swim if they choose.
- **Submerged**: Characters can move only by swimming.

Dungeon Dressing

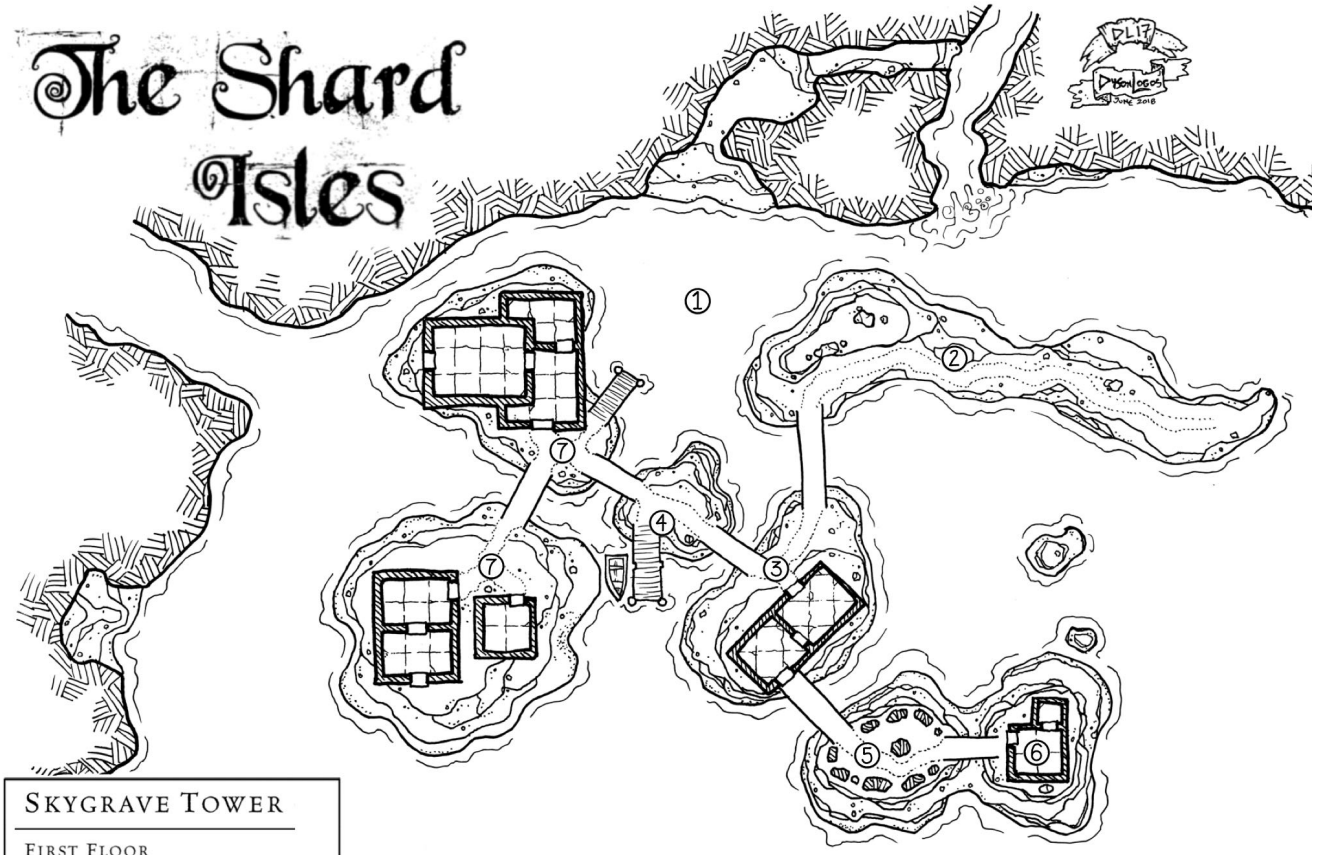
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. A rogue wave crashes onto a random islet. All creatures in the affected area are knocked prone unless they can resist the water's force.
2. An open barrel full of fermenting fish sits in a corner, its contents stinking to high heaven.
3. Long tresses of sickly green seaweed cling to the stones, writhing and squirming like so many live eels.
4. Recently beached by a wave, a four-foot shark thrashes around helplessly in a shallow puddle.
5. Carried by the waves, a giant driftwood log smashes into a building, showering nearby characters with debris.
6. Gusts of wind lash the characters' faces with sea spray, blinding them for one round (successful saving throw against breath weapon negates).
7. Strands of kelp stretch across the nearest doorway like a net, entangling any character carelessly moving through.
8. Crimson-beaked gulls feast upon the milky eyes of a bloated body, floating by on the waves.
9. Weather-beaten figureheads of rampant dragons, sea horses and maidens line a nearby wall; each was salvaged from a ship lost at sea.
10. The desperate cries of a young child call a character to the water's edge, where the shade of a drowned boy reaches out to them, only to fade into the depths.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A gilded weathervane resembling a swordfish impaled upon a trident. It weighs 50 lbs. and is worth 50 gp.
2. A six-pound hermit crab lives in this rusted great helm.
3. A giant maul, fashioned from a ship's anchor encrusted with blood-red coral.
4. A broken quartz statuette of a woman surrounded by cresting waves. A religiously-knowledgeable character confirms it is a votive gift to Serat, Mistress of Storms. It's worth 20 gp.
5. A cracked jar containing 5d10 gp bearing the crossed tridents of lost Brochanmore. A collector or historian might pay up to three times the coins' worth.
6. A bucket of sticky tar for waterproofing boats. Poured out, it covers a 10-ft. square area, and acts like *entangle*.
7. A barbed iron spear penetrates the rock ten inches deep. It can be pulled free by a character rolling equal or under their Strength on 4d6.
8. A gleaming iron key attached to a large brass ring.
9. A bowl of coarse salt. When thrown at a creature's face, it might briefly blind them.
10. A leather girdle made of inflated wineskins.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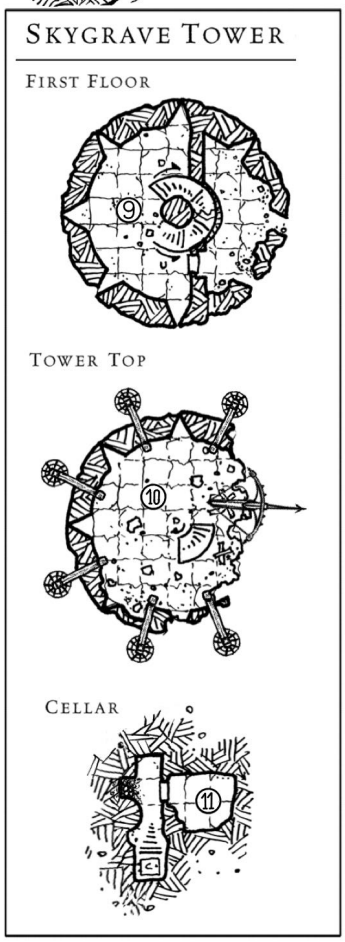

Skygrave Tower
First Floor
9
Tower Top
10
Cellar
11

GM Notes

***Decisive, Sneaky Action**: Stealth and swiftness are key when infiltrating the Shard Isles. If the characters are spotted while approaching the isles, any guards in location 3 can make the adventure very difficult if they raise the abatis in time. Provided the guards can hold their ground long enough, the incoming tide is sure to deal with any intruders.*

1: Intertidal Zone

Flood Point 1: At low tide, one can walk across the silt between the isles.

A slurry of reeking, grey mud stretches between the bay's rocky islets. Warped driftwood and old bones jut from the silt.

Silt: The fine, wet sand counts as difficult terrain. With ten minutes of searching, a character finds 3d10 cp, as well as one random trinket (see "Things to Find").

2: Barren Islet

Flood Point 2: Slick rocks ring this islet.

Shrieking seagulls fight over scraps of fish beached on this narrow sliver of barren rock. With hollow eyes, half a dozen skulls impaled on stakes watch the fracas unfold.

Skulls: All six skulls are human; 1d4 of them seem fairly recent, lacking the green algae "beard" of the others.

Rocks: The rocks are slick with algae and studded with razor-edged clams. Climbing here is difficult and could result in minor cuts and scrapes.

3: Guard Post

Flood Point 4: A pair of pulleys raises an abatis to block the main access point to the isles.

Damp rust-red bricks streaked with salt lend this building the appearance of raw bacon. Rusted chains dangle from pulleys at either end of the north causeway, disappearing into a shaggy carpet of kelp covering the ground.

Pulleys: Two creatures working in tandem can use the pulleys to raise a row of sharp iron stakes (termed an abatis) from beneath the kelp in 1d4+1 rounds.

Abatis: When lowered, the abatis is hidden beneath the kelp. When raised, it barricades the north causeway. To clamber over the spikes, a character must make two climbing checks, suffering minor piercing damage on each failed roll.

Guard Post: The north room has a small trellised window facing the coast. It contains a weapons rack and pair of stools next to a smouldering brazier. The south room is windowless, containing only a pair high-legged beds.

- **Weapons Rack**: Two crossbows, 20 bolts and two spears fill this rack—ideal weapons for attacking invaders!
- **Brazier**: Glowing coals fill this black iron brazier. When the Tide Die reaches 5, it hisses and steams, obscuring the area like a fog cloud.
- **Beds**: Sturdy oaken posts keep these crude driftwood beds four feet above the damp ground. Characters searching the mouldy straw mattresses find a purse containing 3d10 sp, as well as 1d3 whalebone scrimshaws depicting scantily-clad half-goblins engaged in various lewd but imaginative acts.

4: Jetty

Flood Point 3: A small skiff is tied to the jetty of this islet.

A salt-caked wooden jetty projects from this tiny islet. A flat-bottomed skiff struggling to break free is tethered to one of the groaning posts.

Skiff: The boat's speed equals 10 ft. But could increase if a particular strong character is rowing. The skiff comfortably seats up to three human-sized characters, or up to five with some added risk of capsizing (10% per additional character beyond three, per round).

5: False Cromlech

Flood Point 3: This imitation stone circle is raised from the ruined walls of lost Brochanmore.

Great slabs of old masonry imitating an ancient stone circle crown this islet. Scores of lit candles sit in holes in the masonry, fighting a losing battle against the powerful winds.

Stones: The stones are trivial to climb. The tops of the stones always remain above the water.

6: Storehouse

Flood Point 5: This small cabin is a food store.

Jet-black tar streaked with grey bird droppings covers this hut's walls. A sturdy padlock hangs from the door.

Locked Door: This door's padlock can be opened with an iron key (see "Things to Find" #8) or it can be picked or forced open with the normal chances.

Storehouse Interior: Both rooms contain barrels of salted fish. More fish and questionable meats hang drying from rusty hooks on the ceiling. Characters searching the barrels for 3d10 minutes find one containing the brined corpse of a man in clerical vestments. A golden holy symbol of Conn (worth 50 gp) hangs around his spongy neck.

7: Living Quarters

Flood Point 5: These buildings are simple wooden dwellings.

Low embankments ring these clustered buildings in an effort to keep the sea at bay. Torchlight flickers in the windows.

Room Contents: Roll 2d4 and apply both results separately to determine a room's contents.

1. **Beds**: These are rough driftwood frames filled with mouldy straw and rotting sheep skins. A 10-minute search reveals a stash of 2d6-4 gp.
2. **Cupboards**: The rickety cupboards are filled with basic earthenware, and foods and drinks. A ten-minute search turns up 1d6+2 days' worth of rations
3. **Tables and Chairs**: Various pieces of furniture clutter the area, creating areas of difficult terrain.
4. **Empty**: Nothing of interest.

GM Notes

***In Deep Waters**: If you used "In Deep Waters" as an adventure hook, you must decide where the crew of the Grey Mare are kept hostage. For maximum dramatic effect, consider having them tied to the stones of location 5; when the Tide Die reaches 6, the hostages start drowning...*

As a kinder alternative, you might have them incarcerated in location 7.

GM Notes

***Head Hunters**: If you used the "Head Hunters" adventure hook, the characters are here to recover the skull of a notorious pirate from the iron gibbets in location 10. Unless they possess some magical means of identifying the bodies, there's no way to determine which of the skeletons belongs to Arumer Bey. Better to take them all, then.*

***Zipline**: Crafty characters can create an improvised zip line by firing the harpoon bolt into a solid structure and sliding down the rope in order to quickly escape the tower! If the players don't think of this themselves, you may want to drop a little hint...*

8: Skygrave Tower: Ground Floor

Cannot Flood: Weeds hide access to the cellar.

Violent waves tore the tower's gates from their hinges long ago. Inside, you spy weeds and pale lichen covering the floor and clambering up the walls of its cold stone bower.

Weeds: The weeds hide a rotted wooden trapdoor in the south section of this area. A character stepping on the trapdoor might fall ten feet into location 11.

9: Skygrave Tower: First Floor

Cannot Flood: This is the former abode of the witch, Malwenn.

Grisly garlands of feathers and bird skulls strung together with twine stretch across the ceiling like a spider's web. Amid the shrieking of seagulls, a faint human voice can be heard.

West Chamber: This room has been stripped of all valuables. A thorough search reveals a trinket (see "Things to Find").

East Chamber: A colony of seagulls roosts in this partially collapsed tower room where torn scraps of grimoires now serve as nesting. A four-foot bronze key, stained with droppings, rests against the wall. The human voice sounds louder here, yet still muffled. A search reveals the following:

- **Talking Skull**: Hidden beneath the debris a human skull ceaselessly recites an ancient legend. Scratched into its brow is the number "1". A learned character identifies the legend as the Saga of Old King Grodek, whose legend is tied to the standing stones near Swallowfeld.
- **Master Key**: This heavy bronze key weighs 40 lbs. and bears the image of Braal, god of hatred and malice, upon its bow. Engraved upon the shaft are the words, "*We gift thee with this key to our sanctum in Craghollow Mine as a token of our penance.*" (Craghollow Mine as an abandoned silver mine near Oakhurst).

10: Skygrave Tower: Rooftop

Cannot Flood: A functional ballista for harpooning ships is mounted on the crenellations.

Shrieking dire warnings in the language of steel, six iron gibbets sway in the strong breeze. Aimed out to sea is a great bolt thrower; the massive steel-tipped bolt tethered to a nearby merlon.

Gibbets: Suspended from each gallows-style gibbets is an iron cage bearing the sun-bleached remains of a criminal.

Ballista: This war machine has a fire arc of 90 degrees. It can be repositioned to cover a different area. (This takes one round and requires two strong characters). Creatures hit by its barbed harpoon bolt are considered grappled. A supply of 2d4 similar bolts lie wrapped in oilcloth nearby.

11: Skygrave Tower: Cellar

Flood Point 3: Malwenn's final resting place.

Slick stone stairs lead to a partially collapsed cellar where strands of seaweed hang from the ceiling like witch's hair. A warped wooden door studded with barnacles strains against the east wall.

Door: Centuries of barnacle growth have effectively fused this door to its frame. If the characters spend 2d10 minutes removing the barnacles, it can be opened normally. Otherwise, it must be forced open. When it is opened, read the following, aloud:

The withered husk of a woman in black robes lies sprawled upon a pile of furniture stacked in the centre of this dank chamber. Long strands of pale green seaweed stretch from her scalp to every corner, making it all but impossible to tell where her hair ends and the weed begins.

Hair: The hair/seaweed is wet and slimy, but harmless.

Corpse: Closer inspection reveals the skeleton is missing most of its right hand; the wrist bones having been ground down to a smooth nub. The left hand clutches a gilded scroll case. The skull is arched back, its empty eyes fixed on the ceiling above.

Scroll Case: The gilded scroll case is empty.

Ceiling: Scratched deep into the ceiling above the skeleton is a hateful rune; its blood-blackened gouges studded with fragments of bone. When the rune is discovered, all characters in this area hear an evil voice scream the word "*Sha*" inside their heads. Unless they can resist this spell, they are deafened for one hour. In addition, the character who first spotted the rune feels a sharp, burning pain in their chest (inflicting minor fire damage) as the sigil magically transfers itself to their flesh.

Brand: A character wise in the ways of the Abyss identifies the brand as the Abyssal runic character for "*Sha*"—a vocal sound without any intrinsic meaning. The Abyssal brand cannot be removed by magical means, short of a *wish*. All attempts to disfigure or remove the mark are unsuccessful, as the brand magically reforms itself within 1d12 minutes.

While the damage inflicted by this branding cannot be healed as long as the rune is present upon their flesh, the bearer of *Sha* suffers no additional ill effects

GM Notes

***Malwenn**: The corpse in location 11 is Malwenn, the evil witch who founded the Red Rubric. As the waves rose to devour the cult, Malwenn fled to the tower's cellar to save her precious scroll containing the Sha rune, but became trapped. Desperate to keep it from being destroyed, the witch gouged the rune into the ceiling at the cost of her own hand, using the remains of her dark magic to ensure the next creature to gaze upon it would become its new receptacle.*

If the players don't think of having their characters look at the ceiling, the most perceptive character spots the evil-looking rune through the curtains of seaweed on the ceiling. However, you should only trigger the rune's effects when a character looks at the rune. Careful characters who consciously choose to ignore your bait should still be able to avoid being branded.

The brand bestowed by Malwenn's rune serves as a future adventure hook (see "Further Adventures: Brand New"). The "permanent" minor damage merely provides extra motivation for the characters to pursue this. If you or your group dislike this effect, ignore it.

Aftermath

Several hours after the party reaches the isles, the tide retreats, allowing the characters to return to the mainland and continue their exploits on the Lonely Coast. Use the suggestions below to build upon the events from the Shard Isles and develop the characters' further adventures.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used one or more hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

Head Hunters: If the characters secured the selection of grisly trophies from Skygrave Tower, their first order of business is to identify which of the heads belongs to the notorious pirate king. If one of them can *speak with dead,* they could try to cheat Tillo Iwanda out of his share and search for Arumer Bey's buried treasure on their own! Otherwise, Tillo calls in a favour with Galden Hearthtop (LN male halfling cleric [Conn]), who grudgingly agrees to question the skulls in the characters' presence. Unfortunately, nearly all of them claim to be Arumer Bey. And just how cooperative (or sane) is a disembodied head going to be after decades hanging from a gibbet? Finding Bey's lost treasure might not be as easy as the characters had hoped.

In Deep Waters: Whether the crew of *Grey Mare* have been rescued or not, the intervention of the characters has likely put an end to the situation. If the sailors were rescued, their grateful families reward the characters with all the wealth they can spare, which amounts to a meagre total of 3d10+10 gp. Since the characters' actions were not officially sanctioned by the authorities, they do not feel inclined to offer a reward. If any sailors were killed, however, the characters' actions are swiftly condemned as reckless and stupid. Perhaps a diplomatic conversation with the merchant and the dead sailors' families is needed to set things straight?

Troll Toll: With Druôn defeated, the waters between Hosford and Wolverton are safe once more. The troll's severed claw is seared with a hot blade (for good measure) and nailed to the rafters of the town hall. When word of Druôn's death spreads to the half-goblin tribes of the Tangled Wood, however, the creatures mount an attack on Wolverton to exact revenge and reclaim the troll's claw. The severed appendage soon becomes an important symbol of victory in this new series of skirmishes, and Lord Kenver Locher, ruler of Wolverton, wants to see it returned at any cost.

Further Adventures

For now, any secrets the characters unearthed from Drowned Bay remain just that. Nevertheless, all share a single common denominator in their link to the cult of the Red Rubric. Consider the following elements if the characters wish to delve deeper into Malwenn's legacy of evil:

Brand New: It's likely one of the characters (or perhaps an unfortunate ally) has been branded with *Sha*, the Abyssal rune Malwenn scratched into the ceiling in location 11.

While the arcane brand seems but a minor cosmetic inconvenience at first, its true effects might not manifest until several days later. But how can the bearer rid themselves of the brand? And what, if anything, does *Sha* mean? Maybe there is a sage or scholar out there, capable of fathoming the rune's occult meaning? Or does the answer lie with the supposedly-extinct cult of the Red Rubric? Perhaps it's wise for the characters to remain discreet in their investigations, so as not to attract the attention of those seeking to attain *Sha*'s secret for their own sinister purposes.

All Keyed Up: The inscription on the giant key suggests Malwenn received it from another branch of her cult, stationed in some abandoned mine deep in the Tangled Wood. What terrible transgression caused them to present the witch with the key to their sanctum? And what evil secrets might remain hidden inside Craghollow Mine?

Chalk and Talk: The characters soon learn the chattering skull marked with the number 1 is unintelligent and simply the result of multiple minor spells placed upon a dead head. Why would Malwenn hold on to such a seemingly useless trinket? Perhaps the answer lies within the saga retold by the skull? Although the tragic tale of Old King Grodek cannot be linked to the Red Rubric, it might be worth investigating the stone circle atop Scarlock Hill, where the legend claims his bones lie buried.

The Secret Name

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone product, it has been designed for use with the *Secret Name* storyline by Raging Swan Press.

The Secret Name provides GMs with a selection of antagonists, agendas, and agents to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following products:

- *Dungeon Backdrop: Scarlock Hill*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: Craghollow Mine*
- *Dungeon Backdrop: The Shard Isles*

Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles

Hills & Mountains

For centuries, the adherents of a strange cult have harvested the skulls of learned folk and interred them in the so-called Halls of the Undying Oracles. Thus, their knowledge is safeguarded for future generations. Now an earthquake has severely damaged the Halls. Was it a natural event, divine punishment for the cult's blasphemous works, or is something more sinister going on?

Dungeon Background

An extreme sect of Morden the Archmage (see sidebar) believes that a person's most valuable possessions—their knowledge and magic—lie in their mind. They view it as their sacred duty to preserve such knowledge. Thus centuries ago, they established the Halls of the Undying Oracles—a holy repository of knowledge that could live on past death.

The sect's adherents are not necromancers but rather fanatical devotees of knowledge. Members of the sect travel far and wide collecting skulls worthy of interment in the Halls. Other members of the sect travel to the Halls when they have need of the oracles' knowledge and use the *Star Crown of the Dead* to learn that which they need to know.

A month ago, a terrible earthquake struck the area around the Halls, seriously damaging the dungeon complex.

Was the Earthquake Natural?

Before you run this Dungeon Backdrop, you must decide if the earthquake that shattered the hall was a natural occurrence or if it was the result of some terrible, sinister ritual or plot.

Morden

N greater god of magic and knowledge

Epithets: The Archmage
Symbol: Eight small stars of gleaming light arrayed around a large central star.
Favoured Weapon: Dagger
Raiment: Plain robes embroidered with the eight sigils of magic
Worshippers: Wizards and sorcerers along with those that use and manipulate magic
Teachings: Magic surrounds and binds the world. The gods used magic to bring forth the world and all in it. Learning the secrets of the world is to learn the truth of the gods.
Holy Texts: Worshippers study the universe and everything in it, recording their findings in great tomes of lore. Many such tomes fill the faithful's library. Every spellbook is sacred holding—as it does—Morden's teachings.
Additional Notes: Worship of Morden is practically non-existent among the peasant folk. To them, Morden's teachings are an impenetrable mystery replete with strange words, otherworldly rituals and many rumours repeated by scared or drunk commoners—and that's just how his followers like it as it keeps non-believers away.
Sect of the Undying Oracles: This radical sect of Mordenites believes that knowledge is the greatest treasure and that it must be preserved at all costs—even in the face of death. They preserve the skulls of learned folk so that they can answer questions even after they enter death's realm.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt:

- **A Sign**: A character worshipper of Morden (see sidebar) has a terrible dream while near the Halls of the Undying Oracles. In it, they see skulls in the darkness and feel a sense of overwhelming dread. They experience the terror of the earthquake shaking the Halls. When they awake, they feel a mental tug toward the Halls.
- **Help Me**: The characters encounter Niilo Koira (see "Church of the Archmage" on the facing page) at the ruined Church of the Archmage. The wizard is desperate for adventurers to climb up to the Halls to ascertain the condition of the complex and its honoured dead.
- **In Search of Knowledge**: The characters are in need of some piece of esoteric knowledge to complete their current adventure. The knowledge is beyond them, but one of the heroes recalls a rumour about the Halls of the Undying Oracles. According to rumour, there is no question that the oracles cannot answer. Perhaps the Undying Oracles can help the party?

Whispers & Rumours

A character can use social skills and bribes to gather information about the Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp. A character gains one additional rumour for every extra 1d4 hours and 1d4 gp they spend. Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. A sect of fanatical wizards established the Halls of the Undying Oracles to preserve important knowledge. They are foul necromancers! (Partially true rumour.)
2. A wizard lairs nearby the halls to watch over the place. He is powerful and unpredictable. (Partially true rumour.)
3. Beware the Wizards of the Halls; they possess knowledge not meant for mortal folk. (False rumour).
4. The Undying Oracles require great sacrifices and gifts to reveal their knowledge (False rumour.)
5. Strange lights hover in the sky above the hall on certain nights. When the lights are visible, powerful magics are being wrought within.
6. An earthquake recently shook the area around the Halls of the Undying Oracles. The gods are angry at the blasphemies carried out within! (Potentially true.)

The Surrounding Locality

The Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles pierces a vertiginous cliff over 200 feet high. The Halls' entrance is clearly visible and lies roughly halfway up the cliff.

Church of the Archmage

The Church of the Archmage stands at the base of the cliffs below the entrance to the Halls of the Undying Oracles; it was also badly damaged by the recent earthquake. Its caretaker priest, Niilo Koira, survived the earthquake, but he is physically unable to reach the halls to see how they faired.

- **Niilo Koira** (N old male human wizard 4) despairs at what the earthquake has wrought; **Appearance**: thin with long unkempt white hair and pale skin; wears dirty brown robes; **Personality**: bookish, hopeless with practical matters of the real world, friendly; **Mannerisms**: stutters when stressed and vainly tries to comb out his hair while talking; **Background**: served at the church for decades; **Hook**: See "Help Me" under "The Adventure Begins".

Reaching the Halls

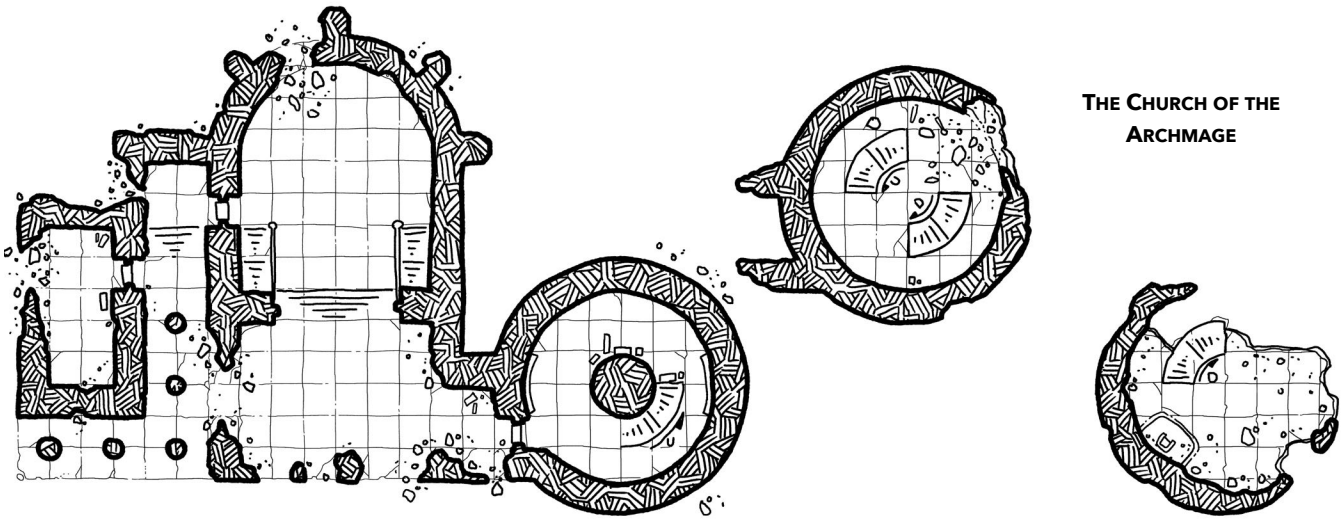
The characters have two basic ways of reaching the Halls without using magic. They can climb up from below or attempt to find a way up to the top of the cliffs so they can abseil down to the Halls' entrance.

- **From Above**: Climbing down is much easier if the characters use ropes. A character searching the locality finds a small gully about a mile away that wends its torturous way up to the top of the cliffs. Characters climbing down from the clifftop without ropes must be careful or fall.
- **From Below**: Characters scaling the cliffs from below must climb up carefully to reach the Halls.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. A heap of fallen rocks—large and small—lie at the base of the cliffs below the Halls' entrance. The pile is slightly unstable, and some of the rocks shift and move beneath the characters' feet.
2. A large bird lazily glides in wide circles above the cliffs. (This bird could be nothing more than a bird, or it could be a wizard's familiar or *polymorphed* enemy.)
3. A frayed length of rope emerges from a tumbled pile of boulders. The rope is dusty but in good condition; its other end is wedged somewhere in the pile. (Some characters may think that the body of a climber or two may lie under the stones—and they could be right.)
4. The shattered remnants of a stone door lie at the base of the cliff. Strange runes decorate the shattered door. A character steeped in magical lore examining the runes identifies them as runes dealing with magic, knowledge and death. The character also realises that the runes for undeath and the undead are absent.
5. Part of a statue—perhaps once depicting a robed man—lies amid the rubble fallen from the cliff above.
6. A faint rumbling or grinding sound emanates from inside the cliff; this is a minor aftershock and causes no additional damage.
7. Part of one of the steps carven into the cliff has fallen mostly intact to the ground Mystic symbols are carved into its riser. A character steeped in magical lore examining the runes identifies them as runes dealing with magic, knowledge and death.
8. A figure—perhaps a robed man—briefly appears at the top of the cliffs before ducking out of sight.
9. Dark clouds scud across the sky and plunge the cliffs and the entrance to the Halls into deep shade.
10. Small rocks and shards of gravel tumble down the cliff to crash at its base.



The Church of the Archmage

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations.

1. **Broken Stair**: Hewn steps once ascended the cliffs to the Halls of the Undying Oracles. The recent earthquake destroyed many of the steps rendering the Halls all but inaccessible without magic or climbing equipment.
2. **The Grand Processional**: Down this passageway processed all those who would seek the wisdom of the Undying Oracles.
3. **Hall of Divination**: This chamber hosts a shrine to the school of divination.
4. **Location Name**: This chamber hosts six shrines—each dedicated to a different school of magic.
5. **Location Name**: Those who wish to consult the Undying Oracles must be garbed in the appropriate vestments and regalia. Herein are found the requisite items.
6. **Hall of Knowledge**: Here in the holy place, those come to consult the Undying Oracles first venerate Morden.
7. **Reliquary of the Ancients**: Here are reverently stored the skulls of the oracles who have passed beyond the powers of the Halls' acolytes.
8. **Cave of the Unknown**: Linked to the Halls by the recent earthquake, this natural cavern plunges ever deeper into the cliff.

Generic Dungeon Features

Although hundreds of years old, the Halls of the Undying Oracles were, until recently, in good condition. The earthquake changed that; now dust and grit are scattered about, effacing the tracks of previous visitors.

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness.

Ceilings: The ceiling is about 12 feet high through most of the Sundered Halls.

Walls: The walls are of dressed stone in fair condition. However, close to the chasm running through locations 1 and 6, parts of the walls have buckled and cracked, making climbing easier.

Paved Floors: The floor's flagstones have started to shift and move under time's remorseless influence, but generally, they do not inhibit movement. The recent earthquake compounded this wear and tear; now, patches of buckled and raised flagstones dot the dungeon; such areas are difficult terrain.

Torch Sconces: Torches sconces jut from opposite walls every 15 feet or so.

Stairs: Stones stairs have one-foot high risers. Treat such areas as difficult terrain.

Wooden Doors: Doors open inward to the area they protect. None have locks. Some of the doors have been buckled and damaged by the earthquake, making them harder to force open.

Dungeon Dressing

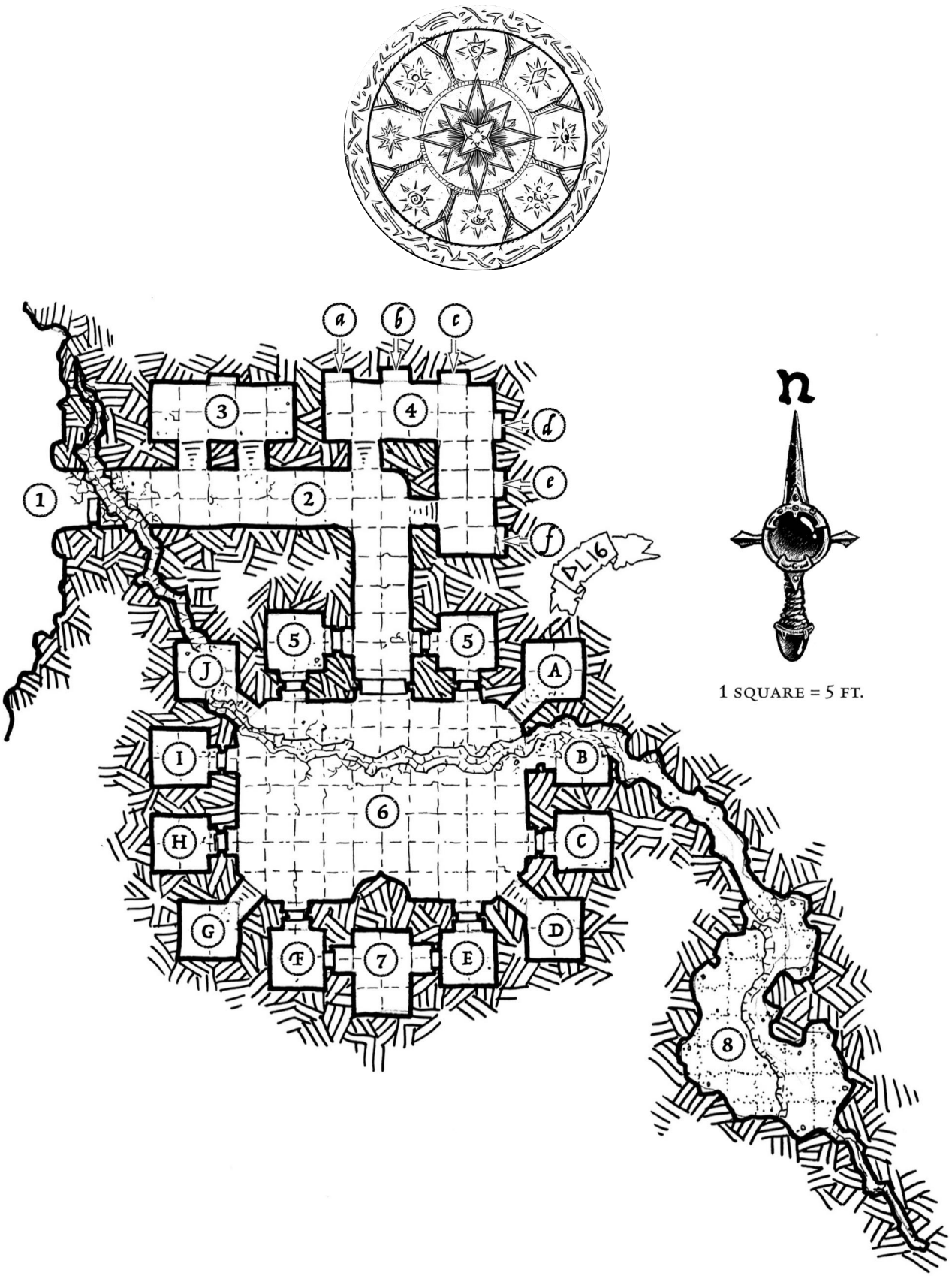
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. Dust, grit and tiny pieces of stone cover the floor above a sagging section of ceiling.
2. A chunk of masonry has fallen from the wall or ceiling, exposing the rock behind. Water has begun to ooze through the hole left by the fallen masonry.
3. Spider webs hang from the ceiling and undulate gently in the breeze entering the complex through location 1.
4. A small pile of rubble covers part of the floor, creating an area of difficult terrain.
5. The ceiling noticeably sags, and grit and masonry dust the floor.
6. Fissures crisscross the floor in a spiderweb-like pattern.
7. The wind whines through the fissure cutting through the dungeon, making it seem like the Halls have a voice of their own.
8. A few bats nest on the ceiling. Light or loud noises cause them to flee.
9. The faint clatter of a rock falling to the floor reaches the characters' ears.
10. A strong gust of wind from outside stirs the grit and dust on the floor into tiny, short-lived dust devils.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. The carving of a large star surrounded by eight other smaller stars decorates the wall.
2. Three old silver coins have been wedged into a gap between two ill-fitting stone blocks.
3. The suggestion of odd tracks in the grit and dust of ages mark the floor. (Whatever you have stocked the dungeon with made these tracks).
4. This torch sconce has been shaken loose from its fixings and lies on the floor by the wall.
5. Graffiti etched into the wall reads, "Glory and honour to the Undying Ones".
6. A small iron holy symbol—eight stars surrounding a larger star—hangs by a leather thong from a torch sconce.
7. A poorly hidden storage niche pierces a wall. It holds flint and steel, along with a dozen or so torches.
8. Covered by dust and grime, a mosaic depicts an oversized skull and a figure kneeling before it.
9. The body of a dead rat lies on the floor. Investigation reveals something stood on and broke its back. It has not been dead long.
10. An old mouldy pouch lies under a slight overhang. It contains 5 gp and a small pearl worth 50 gp.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1 SQUARE = 5 FT.

GM Notes

If an organised force has taken over the complex, they will likely post a guard at location 2. A guard here possessing ranged weapons could make climbing up to the dungeon significantly more dangerous.

1: Broken Stair

Hewn steps once ascended the cliffs to the Halls of the Undying Oracles. The recent earthquake destroyed many of the steps rendering the Halls all but inaccessible without magic or climbing gear.

A stone door hangs crazily on one hinge—its mate is missing. Beyond the door, a dark corridor riven by a narrow rift running across its floor leads deep into the cliff.

Cliff: The Shattered Hall pierces a rugged cliff of jagged weathered stone.

Sheltered Porch: A sheltered porch—the entrance to the original cave out of which the halls were carved—once pierced the cliff. The earthquake destroyed half the porch.

Sundered Stone Doors: A set of double doors once protected the Halls of the Undying Oracle from intruders. The recent earthquake shattered the doors; one fell down the cliffs to smash on the ground far below (see #2 "Things to Find" for more details).

- **Eldritch Runes**: Eldritch runes, cut deep into its face, decorate the door. A character steeped in magical lore examining the runes identifies them as runes dealing with magic, knowledge and death. The character also realises that the runes for undeath and the undead are absent.
- **Holy Symbol**: Half of a large symbol—four small stars arrayed around half a large central star—decorates the inner edge of the door. The other half once decorated the other door. This is (half of) Morden's holy symbol.

2: The Grand Processional

Down this passageway processed all those who would seek the wisdom of the Undying Oracles.

Faded frescoes depicting wizards casting great spells adorn the walls of the wide passageway.

Illumination: Faint light enters the Processional from location 1. This light drops one step about 15 feet from the entrance.

Ceiling: The domed ceiling in this hallway is 15 feet high over the centre of the corridor and ten feet high where the ceiling meets the walls.

Rift: A two- to three-foot wide, roughly nine feet deep rift pierces the floor. Scaling the rift's uneven walls is easy. Rubble fills the bottom of the rift. Treat small or larger characters in the rift as squeezing.

Frescos: Now dulled with great age, once bright and vivid frescos adorn the walls. They show wizards of all types crafting mighty magics.

Torch Sconces: Set every 15 feet on alternating walls, most of the torches sconces in this corridor hold the burnt-down remnant of a torch.

3: Hall of Divination

This chamber hosts a shrine to the school of divination.

A deep shrine-niche pierces the opposite wall. A single glimmering star sigil intertwined with another symbol decorates the niche's back wall.

Alcove Shrine: This chamber hosts a shrine dedicated to the divination school of magic. The shrine is emblazoned with a single star daubed in glimmering silver paint. The pigment is enchanted to resist time's onslaught and remains undimmed. The magical sigil for divination appears under the star.

- **Magic Aura**: The shrine radiates strong divination magic.

Praying at the Shrine: A character praying before the divination shrine for one hour gains the effect of an *augury* spell cast by a 10th-level cleric.

4: Shrine of the Schools

This chamber hosts six shrines—each dedicated to a different school of magic.

Deep niches in the wall here each hold a shrine emblazoned with a glimmering star sigil intertwined with another symbol. In each shrine, the second sigil is different to the others.

Alcove Shrines Each alcove is dedicated to a different school of magic. From west to east, the shrines appear in this order: **A**: Abjuration **B**: Conjuration **C**: Enchantment **D**: Evocation **E**: Illusion **F**: Transmutation.

Each shrine is emblazoned with a single star daubed in glimmering silver paint. The pigment is enchanted to resist time's onslaught and remains undimmed. The magical sigil for the relevant school of magic is intertwined with the star.

- **Magic Aura**: Each shrine radiates strong magic of the relevant school.

Praying at the Shrine: A character able to cast spells who prays before a shrine for one hour gains a minor magical boon. Such a character casts the next spell of the appropriate school as if they were two levels higher than their current level of ability. A character can only enjoy the benefits of one shrine at a time.

5: Vestry

Those who wish to consult the Undying Oracles must be garbed in the appropriate vestments and regalia. Herein are found the requisite items.

Grey robes hang from a row of pegs driven deeply into this room's walls.

Robes: Eight grey robes—each emblazoned with Morden's star symbol on the chest—hang from pegs.

GM Notes

GM Notes

6: Hall of Knowledge

Here in the holy place, those come to consult the Undying Oracles first venerate Morden.

A large room, its walls pierced by many doors, lies beyond the double doors. A once beautiful mosaic of stars, now badly damaged, dominates the floor. Another shrine stands across from the double doors.

Double Doors: A sturdy iron-bound set of double doors, slightly buckled by the recent earthquake, wards the damaged Hall of Knowledge.

Ceiling: The domed ceiling is 30 feet high in the centre of the room and 12 feet high around the room's perimeter.

Rift: A two- to three-foot wide, roughly nine feet deep rift pierces the floor. Scaling the rift's uneven walls is easy. Rubble fills the bottom of the rift. Treat small or larger characters in the rift as squeezing.

Mosaic of Stars: A badly damaged star mosaic of eight stars set around a central star dominates the floor. The mosaic comprises thousands of small painted flecks of stone.

Shrine: A shrine stands opposite the double doors entering the Hall. A glimmering star sigil decorates the wall. In the centre of the sigil, a wall niche holds the *Star Crown of the Dead* (see "Star Crown of the Dead" on the facing page).

Wooden Doors: A wooden door wards each of the Hall's Skull Repositories. A brass plaque on each door names the room's "occupant".

Skull Repositories: A wall niche in each repository holds the skull of an interred sage or wizard. A plaque on the nearby wall lists each sage's areas of expertise.

A: Marjaana Talvikki

Marjaana Talvikki (CN female human)

- **Personality**: Friendly, proud, optimist
- **Major Field**: Supernatural and Unusual (specialising in the Astral, Elemental and Ethereal planes and astrology)
- **Minor Fields**: Demi-humans, science

B: Ventla Pakkanen

This skull is broken—destroyed in the earthquake—and not enough remains to work with a *speak with dead* spell.

C: Merla Silverleaf

Merla Silverleaf (LN female halfling)

- **Personality**: Hostile, opinionated, proud
- **Major Field**: Demi-humankind (specialising in legends and folklore, history and philosophy)
- **Minor Fields**: Supernatural and Unusual

D: Aadam Kuutamo

Aadam Kuutamo (LE male human)

- **Personality**: Arrogant, curious, easy-going
- **Major Field**: Flora (specialising in flowers, fungi, grains, grasses and trees)
- **Minor Fields**: Humankind

E: Serafia Ikitiera

Serafia Ikitiera (LN female human)

- **Personality**: Arrogant, careless, haughty
- **Major Field**: Humankind (specialising in demography and history)
- **Minor Fields**: demi-humankind, humanoids and giantkind

F: Arijoutsi Himottu

Arijoutsi Himottu (LN male human)

- **Personality**: retiring, altruistic, humble
- **Major Field**: Supernatural and Unusual (specialising in astrology, heraldry, numerology, signs, sigils and the outer planes)
- **Minor Fields**: Demi-humankind

H: Kaarle Ikitiera

Kaarle Ikitiera (N male human)

- **Personality**: Antagonistic, prankster, cheerful
- **Major Field**: Science (specialising in chemistry, geography, meteorology and oceanography)
- **Minor Fields**: Giantkind, humankind and humanoids

H: Falgar Kilak

Falgar Kilak (N male dwarf)

- **Personality**: Diplomatic, precise, morose
- **Major Field**: Humanoids and giantkind (specialising in history and languages)
- **Minor Fields**: Demi-humankind and fauna

I: Miikkula Kaukovalta

Miikkula Kaukovalta (LE male human)

- **Personality**: Friendly, malevolent, insensitive
- **Major Field**: Fauna (specialising in arachnids, insects and reptiles)
- **Minor Fields**: Supernatural and Unusual

J: Kaleva Jutikka

This skull is broken—destroyed in the earthquake—and not enough remains to work with a *speak with dead* spell.

Star Crown of the Dead

This time-worn crown of black iron has an adornment of silvery skulls running around its circlet. Magical runes are incised into the crown's inner surface.

This ancient holy relic of the Sect of the Undying Oracles enables the wearer to cast *speak with dead* three times per day at the 12th-level of experience.

A character steeped in magical lore examining the runes on the crown's inner band identifies them as runes dealing with magic, knowledge and death. The crown radiates strong necromantic magic.

GM Notes

***Further Adventures**: If you want to expand the challenge of the Sundered Halls location 8 (overleaf) is an excellent place to do so. Simply determine that "The Squeeze" in location 8 eventually leads to a hitherto unknown cave complex.*

7: Reliquary of the Ancients

Here are reverently stored the skulls of the oracles who have passed beyond the powers of the Halls' acolytes.

Scores of stone niches piece the north and south walls of this chamber. Most of the niches hold a grinning skull of indeterminate age and origin. Four skulls lie on the floor.

Stone Niches: Each stone niche is about two-foot square and two-foot deep. About three-quarters of the niches hold a grinning skull, and a brass plaque lies in front of each skull.

The Skulls: A character investigating the skulls determines that the vast majority are human, although the skulls of several dwarves and elves, along with three very strange skulls that seem to be a blend of human and snake, are also present.

8: Cave of the Unknown

Linked to the Halls by the recent earthquake, this natural cavern plunges ever deeper into the cliff.

This natural cavern curves southwards out of sight. To the west, a crumbling escarpment rises upwards to a raised area. There the ceiling is much lower than in the rest of the cavern.

Ceiling: The ceiling is of natural stone.

Over the lower part of the cave, it is between 15 and 20 feet high. Over the escarpment, the ceiling varies between four to eight feet high.

Walls: The cavern walls are of rough natural stone.

Floor: The cavern floor is of rough, uneven stone.

Crumbling Escarpment: The escarpment is between eight and 12 feet high. Characters can easily scale the escarpment if they have two hands free.

Rubble: A scattering of rubble covers the cavern floor; such areas count as difficult terrain.

The Squeeze: This narrow tunnel slopes gently away to the southeast and is barely two feet wide. Treat small or larger characters in this area as squeezing. The ceiling is between 15 and 20 feet high.

The Squeeze ends in a dead end unless you decide it intersects with another cave complex. See "Further Adventures" for more information.

Aftermath

Once the characters have explored the Shattered Halls of the Undying Oracles, the dungeon does not have to fade from the campaign. At the very least, the characters have discovered a place wherein they may be able to secure answers to their most esoteric questions.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **A Sign**: Morden is pleased that his worshipper followed the dream and investigated the Halls of the Undying Oracles. If the worshipper helped clear the Halls of any lurking danger, Morden rewards them. The next time the character studies their spellbook, they discover two new spells of the highest level they can cast therein.
- **Help Me** Niilo Koira is grateful for the characters' help. As thanks, he offers them access to the Halls in the future if they should be beset by some question they cannot answer themselves.
- **In Search of Knowledge**: Clearing the Halls of danger means the characters can speak with the Undying Oracles if they have worked out how to do so. Alternatively, a normal *speak with dead* spell suffices.

Further Adventures

The Sect of the Undying Oracles claim the Halls, and this will not change after the characters have cleared the place of danger. However, the sect will be grateful to the characters for their aid and will look kindly on any future requests for knowledge or aid from them.

If you have chosen to expand the dungeon via the cave in location 8, the sect may ask the characters to explore the tunnel network beyond to make certain that no threats to the Undying Oracles lurk within. Such a quest could lead to a series of adventures in the depths of the Ebon Realm.

The Splintered Crypt

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Carmine Hills)

Famed for his unswerving devotion to his celestial lord and his magical sword, Demon Bane, Kal Voren was a paladin-hero of old. For five decades he stood between Ashlar's commonfolk and the darkness ever-pressing in on the small, isolated domain. Death is an implacable foe, however, and eventually old age caught up with the redoubtable paladin. Laid to rest not in the scared sepulchre below Tor Abbey but among the hills of his youth Kal Voren's legend—and stories of his legendary blade—live on long after his death.

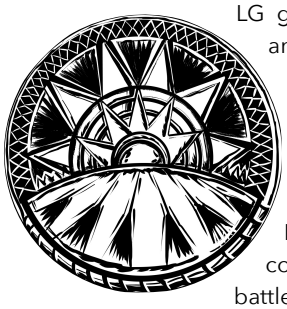
Dungeon Background

The Order of the Watch Eternal has ever stood in the vanguard of the fight against evil and chaos. An order of paladins and warrior-priests devoted to Darlen (LG greater god of Law, Order, Justice and the Sun), its members are heroes and protectors to the commonfolk. Of the many illustrious personages who have filled the order's ranks few are as well-known or celebrated as the ancient paladin-hero Kal Voren. Riding the land three centuries ago, Kal bore a magical sword of surpassing power. He called his blade *Demon Bane*, but it had another, older name: *Heaven's Fury*.

Kal fought the ever-gathering forces of darkness for almost five decades before dying peacefully in his sleep. Respecting his wishes, the order did not inter one of their greatest heroes in the deep sepulchre beneath Tor Abbey. Instead, they dug for him a hidden tomb in the hills to the west of Dunstone near the nameless hamlet where he had grown up so long ago. Here, the hero finally rested in the land of his forefathers.

However, the world did not forget Kal Voren or the mighty sword which he had borne for so many years. Many folk desired *Demon Bane* and sought the tomb. Kal Voren had foreseen this and had sent the sword away shortly before his death. This fact was unknown to all but a few at the time and now is all but forgotten, and thus adventurers still search for his tomb. A recent landslip has uncovered the hidden tomb, and it is just a matter of time before unscrupulous adventurers loot the place.

Darlen



LG greater god of law, order, justice and the sun

Epithets: The Justicar, the Shining Light, the Noble One
Symbol: The rising sun
Favoured Weapon: Longsword
Raiment: Voluminous, white cowled habits; unless expecting battle, clerics do not wear armour

Worshippers: Nobles, paladins and warriors; enemies of Braal

Teachings: The strong must protect the weak. Those with great abilities or aptitudes must use their gifts for the betterment of their fellows. The faithful must be ever vigilant for evil's rise but must show mercy when dealing with its tools.

Holy Texts: Darlen's teachings are set down in the *Scripture of Law*—a vast tome containing teaching, stories and lessons by some of his early, prominent followers. *Divine Order* and *On Darkness' Rise* are important early commentaries penned by legendary high priests.

Additional Notes: The holy warriors of the Order of the Watch Eternal stand between Ashlar and the darkness pressing in on all sides. Its members are heroes and protectors of the common-folk. Some of their number delve into Gloamhold's sinister, benighted depths while others patrol the duchy's bounds or strike out into the surrounding wilderlands.

Temples & Shrines: Darlen's faithful live throughout Ashlar. The Watcher's Spire—also known as the Champion's Abbey—is one of the most heavily fortified places in the duchy. The faith's paladins and warrior monks train at Tor Abbey in readiness for the unending fight against the encroaching darkness.

The Order of the Watch Eternal

Devoted to Darlen this order of holy warriors stands between Ashlar and the encroaching darkness. Its members are heroes and protectors of the common folk. Some of its members delve into Gloamhold's sinister, benighted depths while others ride Ashlar's bounds in search of evil to drive back into the wilderlands. The order maintains an extensive, well-defended sepulchre beneath Tor Abbey in which they inter their fallen members. Many followers of Darlen—paladins, fighters, clerics and the like—rest within.

Sample Members & Patrons

If you decide to use the "Priest of Darlen" hook, use one of the NPCs below. Both appeal to the characters' good natures to recover *Demon Bane* and Kal Voren's remains but will resort to bribery and pay if all else fails.

- **Kaija Timonen** (LG old female human cleric) nears the end of her days and worries the recent discovery of Kal Voren's tomb will result in his remains being desecrated. She further frets *Demon Bane* will fall into the wrong hands and become perverted by an unworthy wielder. Kaija walks stooped over with a cane but remains indefatigable in her faith.
- **Sakari Ojanen** (LG male human paladin) energetically hurls himself into every day. Consumed with energy—and a determination to worship Darlen with his deeds— Sakari is a driven man. He dreams of wielding *Demon Bane* and smiting Darlen's foes like Kal Voren did of old. Unfortunately, Sakari cannot accompany the party as he must answer a summons to Tor Abbey, but he will await the party's news there.

Adventure Hooks

The characters can stumble on the Splintered Crypt by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the crypt.

- **The Graven Door**: Rumours tell of a stone door graven with strange runes of unknown sort recently exposed by a landslip. The characters learn of the door while resting in a nearby tavern's common room when they hear excited locals discussing the discovery. The locals know rumours 1,2, 3 and 4 from the sidebar below. Intrigued, the characters decide to investigate.
- **The Graven Door #2**: As above, but a peasant was in the vicinity of the stone door just yesterday and reported a second smaller collapse of the nearby cliff has revealed what looked like a dusty corridor. Obviously, the commoner didn't get too close to investigate, but he will happily guide the characters back there for a small fee. The characters realise if the collapse is recent, the complex beyond the stone door has probably not yet been looted, and decide to investigate.
- **Priest of Darlen**: The party encounter a priest of Darlen looking for a trustworthy band of adventurers. The priest has heard of the recent landslip and the discovery of a hidden tomb. He knows who rests within the tomb and is troubled by reports of several adventuring bands preparing to loot the place. He worries about Kal Voren's eternal slumber being disturbed, but he also fears *Heaven's Fury* could fall into the wrong hands and begs the characters to secure the blade before it is too late.

Whispers & Rumours

If the characters thinks to learn more about the Splintered Tomb, use the table below to determine what information they uncover. Determine which rumours are true based on your dungeon design. Use the list below, to determine which rumour(s) the characters learn:

1. The tomb is the final resting place of Kal Voren—a famed paladin-hero of old. Kal Voren was a mighty hero renowned both for his faith in unwavering Darlen and his magical sword, *Demon Bane*, with which he slew countless foes.
2. The tomb holds not only Kal Voren's remains but also the paladin's accumulated wealth from a long, storied adventuring career. (False rumour).
3. Ferocious monsters—orcs, ogres and worse—dwell in the hills near the newly discovered crypt. Several adventuring bands have already fallen to their depredations.
4. Several adventuring parties have heard of the recently discovered so-called Splintered Crypt and are preparing expeditions to find, explore and loot the place. Several of the parties involved have unsavoury reputations.
5. A terrible curse lies upon the tomb; within its depths lie the unquiet spirit of an ancient sorcerer-king. Explorers will only find death and madness within. (False rumour).
6. Kal Voren was not a hero but a traitor—he betrayed the Order of the Watch Eternal. That is why he is buried in this tomb and not in the order's sepulchre under Tor Abbey. (False rumour).

Outside the Splintered Crypt

The Splintered Crypt lies in an isolated rocky valley a quarter-score of miles to the south and west of the town of Dunstone. It lies near a rocky promontory known throughout Ashlar as the Sphinx (for its decidedly singular, exotic appearance). The Sphinx is a well-known landmark lying along the dangerous trail wending its long way through the wild, monster-infested western hills to the isolated castle-hold of Ravenscrag.

The area in the crypt's immediate vicinity comprises several steep-sided valleys. Some of the deeper valleys feature sheltered woodlands of elder trees which local legends populate with lurking creatures of foul and sinister intent. Isolated homesteads and tiny hamlets of woodcutters, hunters and the like dot the area.

Rivals' Campsite

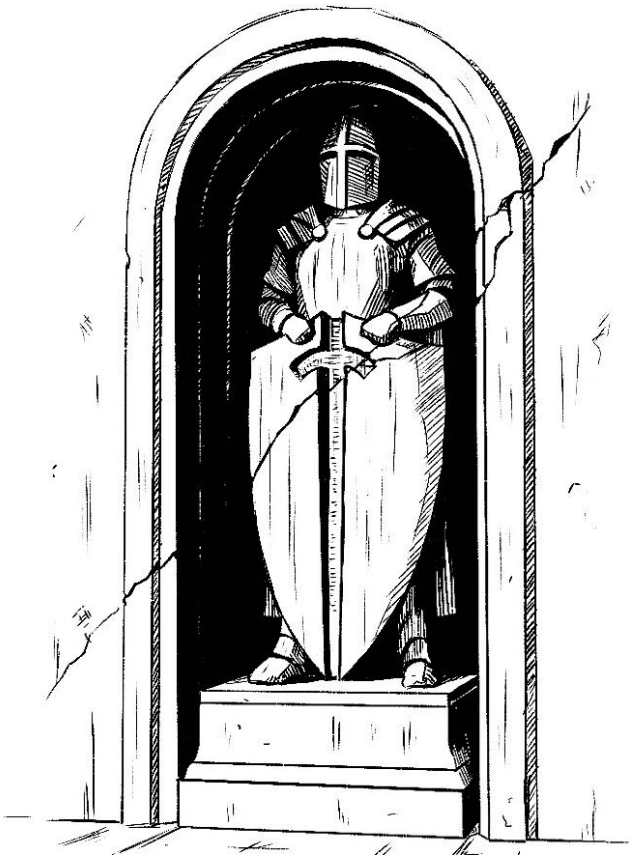
Depending on your setup there could be a campsite outside the Splintered Crypt. If another group of adventurers has already reached the site their retainers and servants—or the adventurers themselves—could be in camp when the characters arrive. This could set up an interesting role-playing encounter between the characters and their rivals (or their servants) or could herald the adventure's first combat.

The surrounding hills are home to many dangerous monsters and the other adventurers no doubt know this. Thus, the camp's occupants are likely to be on their guard and therefore difficult to surprise.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The Splintered Crypt is a small, self-contained dungeon complex. It has the following notable locales:

1. **The Graven Portal**: This heavy stone door wards the tomb. Beautifully ornate, flowing runes decorate the portal and speak of who lies within.
2. **Crumbled Wall**: This portion of the cliff has collapsed, creating a second entrance to the Splintered Tomb.
3. **Chamber of Wards**: Three deadly, camouflaged spear traps ward this chamber (and, originally the chambers beyond). The collapse at location 2 means explorers can bypass this area.
4. **Tahvo's Rest**: Herein lie the bones of Kal's faithful squire, Tahvo Ehtaro, who died shortly after his master. Together in life, they rest together in eternal slumber.
5. **Hall of Pillars**: Kal Voren's stone companion guard watch over the approaches to his tomb from four niches.
6. **Chamber of Deeds**: The now faded murals decorating this chamber's walls celebrate Kal Voren's most famed victories. The crypt's architect also included several clever traps here.
7. **False Tomb of Kal Voren**: Designed to fool tomb robbers and the like, this tomb is nothing but a decoy.
8. **True Tomb of Kal Voren**: Here lie the undisturbed remains of the ancient paladin-hero Kal Voren.



Dungeon Dressing

Use the entries below, to breathe life and detail into the locales described on these pages. Alternatively, use the information below to describe otherwise empty areas.

1. Here the floor is cracked and uneven and small pieces of rubble—fallen from the ceiling—lie scattered about.
2. Dusty cobwebs hang from the ceiling and almost brush the floor. Tiny desiccated spider corpses hang therein
3. A large carving of Darlen's holy symbol—a blazing, rising sun,—decorates the floor. Once painted in vivid reds and yellows, the now faded carven sun has a sullen air to it.
4. Water oozing down the wall has created a smear of faded colour down a once-fine, but now ruined, fresco.
5. A sudden gust of wind from location 2 stirs up the dust on the floor and it swirls around the characters' ankles.
6. Dust falls from the ceiling onto the characters' heads.
7. Outside, the wind howls down the valley; the faint sound reaching the characters could sound like a wolf's call.
8. A faint, chill feeling sweeps over the party and the shadows in one corner of the area seem to become denser and to have a certain, disquieting substance to them. (If the characters are looting the tomb, perhaps a ghostly guardian emerges from the shadows to attack.)

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they take the time to search. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. Indistinct smudges in the dust could be footprints or they could be nothing more than dust blown by the breeze entering the tomb through location 2.
2. An old, tarnished silver holy symbol of Darlen lies on the floor amid the dust, where it was dropped centuries ago.
3. Carven graffiti cut deeply into the wall reads, "Darlen preserve Kal Voren".
4. A small niche in a wall holds the remains of a burnt down candle. The candle stands on a wax-covered gold holder.
5. A pattern in the dust is vaguely reminiscent of Darlen's holy symbol. Is it a coincidence or does the Noble One yet watch over his servant's rest?
6. Part of the plaster onto which this fresco was painted has crumbled and fallen away, exposing the crypt's wall.
7. A loose flagstone hides a small niche in the floor; within lies the mouldering remains of some small offering to Kal Voren's eternal soul.
8. A particularly well preserved fresco—depicting Kal Voten in all his glory— adorns the wall.

Generic Crypt Features

The Splintered Crypt has the following generic features:

Illumination: Unless noted in the text, darkness fills the Splintered Crypt. The crypt's read aloud descriptions assume the characters can either see in the dark or have their own light sources.

Vaulted Ceilings: The Splintered Crypt has barrel vaulted ceilings. Unless otherwise noted, ceilings in corridors are about ten-foot high; in chambers they are 15 feet high.

Walls: The crypt's walls are of cut and dressed stone decorated with (now faded) frescos celebrating Kal Voren's life and deeds. They show the heroic paladin in various battles against obviously evil foes or in acts of devotion and prayer to Darlen.

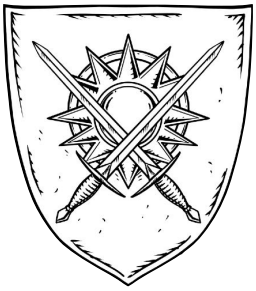
Floor: Flagged, the floor is generally flat and unimpeded, although some of the flagstones have shifted and moved over the centuries.

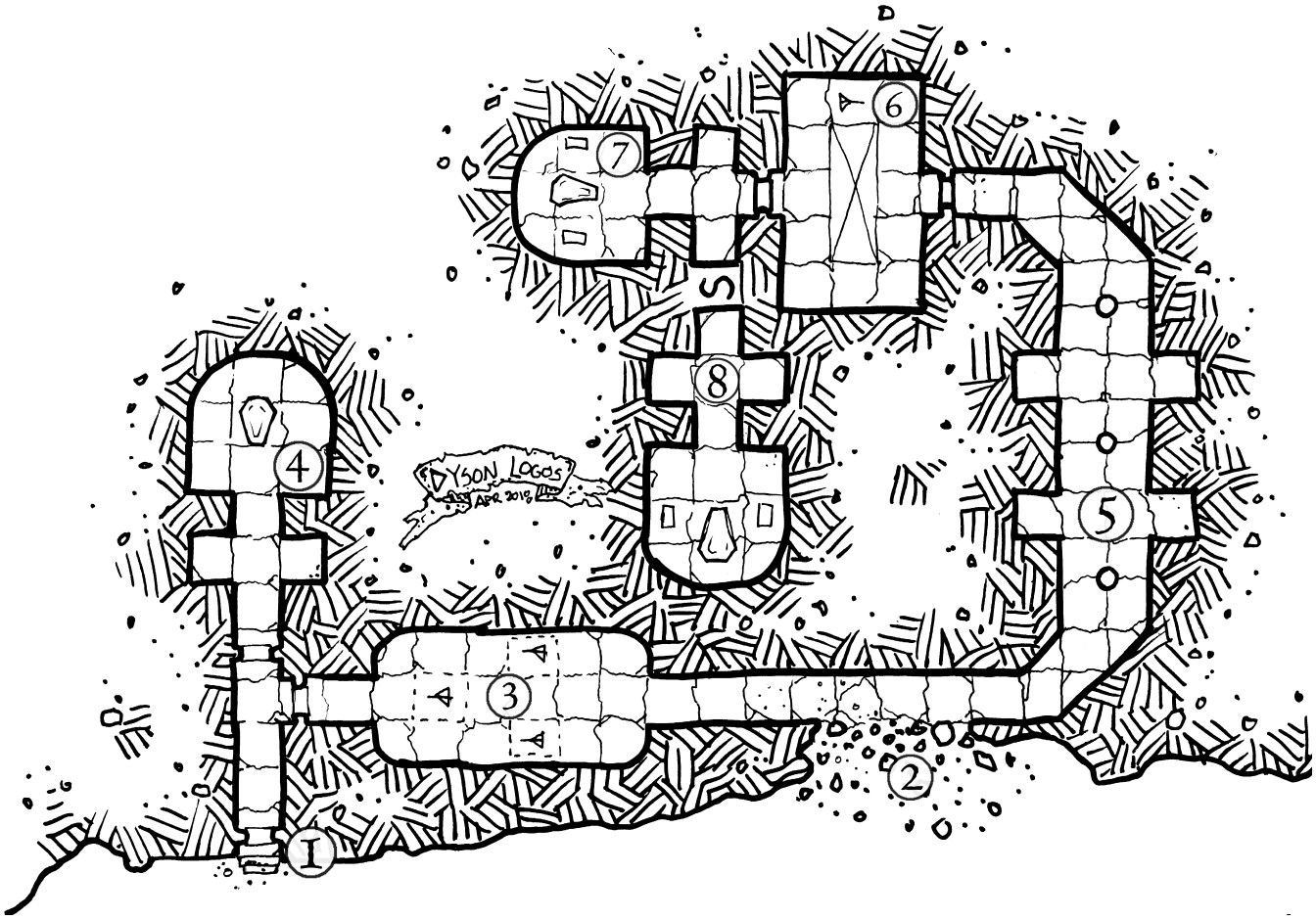
Wooden Doors: The crypt's wooden doors are in good repair and open into the room they ward. Unless noted in the text, the doors are plain and unadorned.

Air Quality: The air in locations 4 (and the corridor leading to the room), 6, 7 and 8 is stale. Elsewhere, the air in the tomb is fresh.

A Note on Traps

When the crypt was dug from the living rock of the surrounding hills the architects included several cunningly designed and hidden traps in its design. Such features appear in locations 3 and 6, but could also feature in locations 4, 7 and 8. The state of these traps (if they exist) depends on your setup of the crypt. In particular, if another adventuring party has already breached the tomb, they have likely disarmed or set-off one or more of the traps.





GM Notes

***Magical Glyph**: The stone door in location 1 is a good place for a magical trap—perhaps exploding runes or a glyph of warding lurk among the door's runes.*

***Warded Chamber**: The condition of the traps in location 3 depends on your setup of the crypt. The traps may be sprung or disarmed if the characters are not the first to explore the place.*

1: The Graven Portal

Originally, this was the only entrance to Kal Voren's tomb.

A heavy stone door—covered in beautifully ornate, but now worn and pitted, runes and sigils—pierces the cliff.

Graven Stone Door: Graven with many religious symbols and the like, this heavy stone door wards the Splintered Tomb. Carved in the language of the heavens, the symbols read, "*Herein slumbers Kal Voren. Despair oh evil-doer at his goodness and righteousness*".

2: Crumbled Wall

This portion of the cliff has collapsed, creating a second entrance to the Splintered Tomb.

Piles of rubble lie before a jagged gash in the cliff face. Beyond, a narrow passageway runs parallel to the cliff.

Dense Rubble: The rubble is difficult terrain; it slows movement rates by half and makes it harder to move silently.

Illumination: Dim light fills the corridor within ten feet of the collapsed wall. Darkness shrouds the rest of the area.

3: Chamber of Wards

Three deadly, camouflaged spear traps ward this chamber (and, originally the chambers beyond). The collapse at location 2 means explorers can bypass this area.

Opposite you, a single corridor leads away from this long and dusty, but empty chamber.

Traps: The crypt's builders placed several hidden traps here. They may—or may not—be active, depending on your design.

4: Tahvo's Rest

Herein lie the bones of Kal's faithful squire, Tahvo Ehtaro, who died shortly after his master. Together in life, they rest together in eternal slumber.

A stone sarcophagus, graven with many symbols, stands in the middle of this chamber. Faded frescoes depicting the same man at various stages of his life decorate the chamber's walls.

Stone Sarcophagus: Decorated with many graven symbols this stone sarcophagus has a heavy lid. A cleric or other character trained in matters of religion can identify several religious icons associated with Darlen. Inscribed over the symbols are the words, "*Tahvo Entaro, Faithful in Life, Faithful in Death*".

Inside the Sarcophagus

The skeleton of a short, burly man, his arms crossed over his chest, lies in the sarcophagus. He is clad in chainmail and a longsword lies at his feet.

5: Hall of Pillars

Kal Voren's stone companion guard watch over the approaches to his tomb, from four deep wall niches.

Three slender pillars hold this long hallway's ceiling aloft. Four niches—two to the east and two to the west pierce the walls.

Stone Pillars: Carven images of weeping angles carrying Kal Voren to his rest decorate the pillars. Originally, the carvings were painted, but such decoration is now faded and has flaked away in many places.

These slender stone pillars provide partial cover (+2 AC) to anyone in an adjacent square.

The Companion Guard: Each of the four wall niches in this hall hosts a stone statue of a vigilant knight. Each wears plate mail and holds a large shield in front of them. Each shield has a carven groove in it sized for a longsword. Filling each carven groove with a longsword unlocks and opens the door to Kal Voren's true tomb. Removing the swords locks the secret door.

6: Chamber of Deeds

The faded frescos decorating this chamber's walls celebrate Kal Voren's most famed victories. The crypt's architect also included several traps here which may, or may not, be active.

Faded frescos depicting a noble warrior triumphing over a succession of terrifying demonic or undead foes decorate the walls of this chamber.

Faded Frescos: The frescoes here depict Kal Voren's greatest victories such as his banishment of the otherworldly fiend Bala Sygax, the Despot of the Smouldering Hills, and the utter destruction of the Lord of the Nineteen Obsidian Steps, the lich lord Namtar Anshan.

7: False Tomb of Kal Voren

Designed to fool tomb robbers and the like, this tomb is nothing but a decoy.

A plain stone sarcophagus dominates the centre of this chamber; two wooden lecterns, black with age, flank the sarcophagus.

Plain Sarcophagus: This stone sarcophagus is a decoy placed here to deceive tomb robbers.

Plain Lecterns: Twin lecterns watch over Kal Voren's apparent resting place. The mouldering remains of old prayer books lie atop both.

Inside the Sarcophagus

A jumbled mass of bones lies among a variety of grave goods and the like. Chief among the dusty remains are a silver holy symbol of Darlen and a pitted, rusted sword with an ornate gold hilt.

GM Notes

***Deadly Trap**: Kal Voren's false tomb (location 7) is an excellent place for a fell trap or for the characters to encounter another adventuring party intent on looting the place of its treasures.*

***Obvious Treasures**: Additionally, the sarcophagus in Kal Voren's false tomb is likely stocked with treasures to placate any tomb robbers getting that far into the tomb.*

8: True Tomb of Kal Voren

The characters are the first explorers to discover this hidden chamber. Here lie the undisturbed remains of the ancient paladin-hero Kal Voren.

Secret Door: A locked secret door wards Kal Voren's true tomb. Perceptive characters searching the tomb discover the door and a nearby loose stone in the wall. Prying out the stone reveals a small niche; a recessed carving of Darlen's holy symbol decorates the niche's rear wall. Placing a holy symbol of Darlen in the recessed carving unlocks and opens the secret door. Alternatively, a successful open locks roll unlocks the secret door.

A stone sarcophagus decorated with a carving in high relief of a skeleton at rest dominates this dusty, stuffy chamber. Two ornate lecterns carved to look like kneeling angels flank the sarcophagus.

Dusty: Dust lies thickly in this chamber.

Ornate Sarcophagus: A large sarcophagus stands in the centre of the room.

Lecterns: Ornate wooden lecterns carved to look like kneeling angels holding aloft weighty prayer books flank Kal Voren's sarcophagus.

Inside the Sarcophagus

Kal Voren's Remains: Preserved in death by his celestial lord's beneficence, Kal Voren appears as he did when he died —an elderly man with a careworn face. He wears simple white robes edged with silver and gold thread.

Inscription: The underside of the sarcophagus' lid bears the inscription, "*The Ravens and the Grey Mistress Show the Way.*" A graven image of a flaming sword points to the inscription. This is a clue to *Demon Bane's* hidden location.

Aftermath

Once the characters have explored the Splintered Crypt, the adventure doesn't necessarily have to end.

Desecrated Crypt: Depending on who you decide slumbers in the crypt, the characters may have to decide what to do about the desecrated paladin's tomb. Its location is now general knowledge, and even if the characters have defeated any immediate threat to the place, other adventurers will no doubt eventually try their luck in Kal Voren's tomb.

Where Lies Demon Bane?: *Demon Bane* (or *Heaven's Fury* to give the sword its original name) does not lie with Kal Voren. Characters aware of the hero-paladin's famed weapon may well wonder where it now rests. If the group has a paladin among its ranks, the quest for *Demon Bane* could become a personal goal for that character. Alternatively, any follower of Darlen would surely like to ensure the weapon remains in the faith and is not borne by a non-believer (or even worse, falls in the hands of the faith's enemies).

Characters discovering the inscription in Kal Voren's sarcophagus have their first clue to the sword's location, but the significance of the carving may not be immediately clear.

Starfall Chantry

Hills & Mountains, Ashlar (Carmine Hills), Vile Star

Lurking twixt the crag-jagged hills south of Dunstone sit the ruined remains of an old dwarven fortress-temple. Rusted helms and broken blades jut from the surrounding soil like cast-off husks of iron grain, betraying the area's violent history. Over the centuries, thousands have fought and died to possess this land, staining the earth with the blood of the slain. Three centuries ago, it took the very sky to fall to put an end to this ceaseless bloodshed. Today, however, the scars of that cataclysm may be enough to rekindle the old flames of war.

Dungeon Background

The history of the Carmine Hills south and west of Dunstone is long, bloody and steeped in violence. The banded red rocks which lend the craggy hills their name are rich in iron and copper, marking the area as especially valuable to the nearby town. Unfortunately, the orc tribes dwelling therein consider these hills the sacred hunting grounds of Nargen Blood-Fist, greater orcish goddess of strength, cunning and fecundity. Orc legends say that when Nargen was wounded by Thanarlun (the orcs' name for Thanarii Caelvanas, elven god of archery and hunting), she pressed her bloody fist upon these very hills, whereupon great wolves sprang from the reddened rocks to chase Thanarlun away. As a result, the Carmine Hills have been disputed territory for as long as the Nenonens have ruled Ashlar.

Half a century ago, Dunstone's ruler allied with the dwarves of Don Galir, offering them mining rights in exchange for military aid in the re-conquest of the Carmine Hills. The surprise attack drove the orcs west, whereafter the alliance went on to establish mining enclaves in the hills. To honour their gods for granting them victory over the orcs, the dwarves raised a fortress-temple to Duregal the Highlord, father of the dwarves. The alliance held their ground for four years, fighting off every savage orc attack that followed. Until the sky fell…

In the year 207 NR, a blazing comet cleaved the night sky, exactly as it did every 370 years. This itinerant star has many names. Human astronomers call it "Morden's Dagger". To the dwarves, it is "Thaun's Ember". In orc legends, the comet is called "Gal-do-Narga": Nargen's Claw.

When fragments of the star fell to earth, one such blazing shard crashed in the Carmine Hills, destroying the dwarven fortress-temple and sending the panicked miners running for their lives. The orcs took the destruction wrought by Nargen's Claw as a divine omen to drive the enemy from the goddess' sacred lands. As such, the fallen star achieved what no orc chieftain had ever done: uniting the scattered tribes into a horde. In the face of such an overwhelming force, the alliance was forced to retreat to Dunstone. Victorious orcs collapsed each mine and razed every mining camp. Only a single fragment of the alliance survived: the ruined fortress-temple, smitten by Nargen's hand. It was the one place the orcs dared not destroy for fear of offending their goddess.

In the summer of last year, the dwarves of Don Galir approached Aavo Oksanen of Dunstone in a bid to explore the area and recover the meteorite that had destroyed their fortress-temple, now known as the Starfall Chantry. When the old lord refused to offer aid, the dwarves set up an expedition of their own. These dwarves, however, fell prey to an orc war party and never returned. Nevertheless, the actions of the doomed expedition have rekindled old feuds and interest in recovering the fallen star.

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on Starfall Chantry by happenstance and decide to explore the locale on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below, or those found in the Vile Star supplement:

- **Reaching for the Star**: With a sweep of his scraggy arms, Vieno Rekola (N male human wizard) knocks the characters' drinks off the table, replacing them with a complicated star chart. After rambling on about a fallen star for a good ten minutes, the wizard produces a hefty coin purse (containing 120 gp) to both make up for the spilt beverages and serve as an advance payment for the meteorite he wants recovered from Starfall Chantry.
- **Killing in the Name**: Scouts report orcs banding together in the Carmine Hills. Their leader, Gharka Red-Tusk (CE female orc cleric [Nargen]), has set up camp in the ruins of Starfall Chantry. A small force might be able to sneak into enemy territory and slay Gharka before she can gather her troops for the inevitable assault on Dunstone. Undoubtedly, the town's ruler is certain to reward such bravery with glittering coin.
- **Clerical Error**: A beardless dwarfling leads the characters to Durgan's Alley, Dunstone's dwarven quarter. In the backroom of a gemcutter's shop, they meet Vanatar Jarbek (LG male dwarf cleric [Duregal]), who explains he travelled from Don Galir to hire adventurers to map Starfall Chantry's ruins. A careless acolyte lost the original scrolls, and the temple's sacred records must be preserved. *"We dwarves have our ways of showing gratitude,"* Vanatar says, patting a bulging coin purse.

Whispers & Rumours

A character can try to gather information (which may or may not be true based on your setup) about Starfall Chantry. This takes 1d4 hours and costs 1d4 gp in drinks, bribes and so on.

Use the list below to determine what the character learns.

1. Starfall Chantry used to be a dwarven temple, you know? Something to do with their smith-god, I believe.
2. A cursed place, that old fane. They say no fire burns there because of the fallen star's foul magic.
3. Orcs claim those hills as the sacred hunting grounds of Nargen Blood-Fist. Here, refill my tankard, and I'll draw you a map of their favourite ambush spots.
4. I think the dwarves called it "Thaun's Ember", the rock that demolished their temple. Talk about a bad omen, eh?
5. The Carmine Hills? Best hire a guide, friend– your compasses won't work there.
6. Some dwarves from Don Galir set out to Starfall Chantry last summer. They never returned to Dunstone.

The Surrounding Locality

The blood-stained no man's land of the Carmine Hills stretches six miles south and west of Dunstone. High concentrations of iron ore in the surrounding rocks effectively render compasses useless, forcing would-be explorers to rely on other means of navigation. Since the region bears the scars of centuries of fighting, however, one might find their way to Starfall Chantry by following the traces of fire, bone and broken steel left in the wake of past conflicts.

Assuming a speed of 30 ft. per round, it takes the party six hours to reach Starfall Chantry. Parties moving at 20 ft. per round take eight hours to reach the ruined fortress-temple. Hiring a local scout for the hefty price of 5 gp reduces this travel time by one-third.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the surrounds:

1. Hollow eyes gaze out from the tree line, where 3d4 human skulls hang nailed upon gnarled tree trunks.
2. Six headless humanoid skeletons lie half-buried beneath a thin layer of scree at the foot of the nearest hill. Their rusted chain armour has fused to their bones.
3. The scent of wood ash and raw meat wafts from a cold campsite, where a wolf hide lies stretched out to dry.
4. A pair of crossed twigs ringed with white pebbles sits near the trail. Rangers instantly realise the markings warn of an impending ambush.
5. Scarlet streaks of dried blood and viscera smeared upon a boulder form the stylised image of a great, bloody eagle. This is the symbol of Nargen Blood-Fist, orc goddess of strength, cunning and fecundity.
6. The sudden sound of breaking branches startles a flock of blackbirds, who—shrieking—take to the skies.
7. Spiked iron balls lie scattered around the burned husk of a rotting trebuchet languishing in a ditch.
8. Pitiful mewling sounds come from a secluded grove where a brown bear cub struggles in a barbed snare. Blood pours from its lacerated hind leg.
9. An odd-looking patch of mud on the trail hides a spiked pit trap. Characters crossing the patch may fall into the pit and impale themselves on 1d4 sharpened stakes.
10. Tepid gore drips from a cast-iron eagle standard, marking this area as the hunting grounds of Nargen Blood-Fist. Characters defiling the standard must make successful save against spells or be marked by Nargen. In the wilderness, marked characters have an additional 25% chance of attracting predators every hour until the next full moon.

Things to Find

Use this list to determine what the characters discover if they search the fortress-temple's surrounds. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. An ugly, brown, fist-sized chunk of rock. Characters rolling equal or under their Intelligence recognise it as a "thunder-egg", a hollow rock filled with precious gems (worth 2d6 x 10 gp). Dwarves automatically succeed, on this roll.
2. A discarded pewter flask, half-full of strong dwarven liquor. Dwarves and connoisseurs instantly recognise it as Triple D—Durgan's Dwarven Delight.
3. A broken spear with a barbed iron head. Polished bone beads and eagle feathers decorate the splintered shaft.
4. A worn leather saddle with cut straps. Tied to the horn is a wooden amulet dedicated to the god of travel, Behron.
5. A split wooden shield riddled with black-fletched arrows. This is the crest of the dwarven hold of Don Galir.
6. A sturdy noose made from 50 feet of hempen rope dangles from a nearby tree branch.
7. A dented steel breastplate has a spiked iron ball embedded in the centre. A skilled blacksmith can salvage the armour for a fee of 2d6 x 10 gp.
8. A broken leather bracelet adorned with 1d6 gilded bear teeth. Each tooth is worth 1gp.
9. A wizard's scroll case containing 1d4+1 charred human ribs engraved with illegible orcish runes.
10. A small fragment of iridescent stone sits embedded in a fire-scorched tree trunk. Being a minute shard of the fallen star, it feels cold to the touch, and its presence snuffs out tiny, nonmagical flames (like those of lanterns or candles) in a 5-foot radius.

The Hills Have Eyes!

Roll 1d6 for every hour the characters spend exploring the wilderness. A roll of 1-2 indicates enemies have prepared an ambush 2d10 x 10 feet ahead.

If at least one of the characters obtained rumour #3 (see "Whispers & Rumours"), the party may choose to either avoid the ambush or spring one of their own!

Notable Locations at a Glance

The dungeon has several notable locations:

1. **Sundered Belfry**: The falling star utterly destroyed the chantry's belfry.
2. **East Tower**: The tower's upper floors have collapsed over time.
3. **Riven Nave**: The chantry's nave is the site of the fallen star's impact crater.
4. **Defiled Chancel**: Orcs thoroughly sacked and defiled the dwarven altar, but some magic yet lingers therein.
5. **Rectory**: The rectory hides a ladder to the undercroft.
6. **Crypt**: A shroud of icy mist fills this dismal crypt.
7. **Frozen Corridor**: The butchered body here is a testament to orcish cruelty.
8. **Impact Crater**: This frozen pit is the fallen star's grave.
9. **Hero's Sepulchre**: A dwarven fighter made a valiant last stand here.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many of the dungeon's locations share certain features:

Cold: The surface ruins (locations 1-5) are chilly (40°F). The undercroft (locations 6-9) is freezing (10°F).

Illumination: Natural light penetrates but dimly into the surface ruins (locations 1-5). Darkness fills the undercroft (locations 6-9).

Ceilings: Though the chantry looks severely damaged and ready to collapse at a moment's notice, the ceilings remain sturdy enough to last another century or so. A dwarf or character skilled in engineering or stonemasonry can confirm this. Where present, ceilings are 20 ft. high.

Walls: The walls were once smooth works of dwarven craftsmanship, but the meteor's impact cracked them in many places, making them slightly easier than normal to climb.

Floors: Cracked flagstones comprise the chantry's floors.

Doors: These strong wooden doors have withstood the test of time well. Since the last orc attack, all have remained unlocked and can be opened automatically unless otherwise noted in the text.

Starlight, Starblight

Some falling stars contain otherworldly materials with inherent magical properties. When such a meteorite remains in any place for several years, its magic saturates the area. This effect is known as "starblight" and it can linger for decades after the material itself had been removed.

This particular meteorite's starblight siphons heat from its environment. Non-magical fires brought within 200 ft. of the impact crater are automatically extinguished. Wizards and the like find it difficult to cast a fire-based spell in the area. Items that use fire magic are similarly affected.

Dungeon Dressing

Use this list, to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

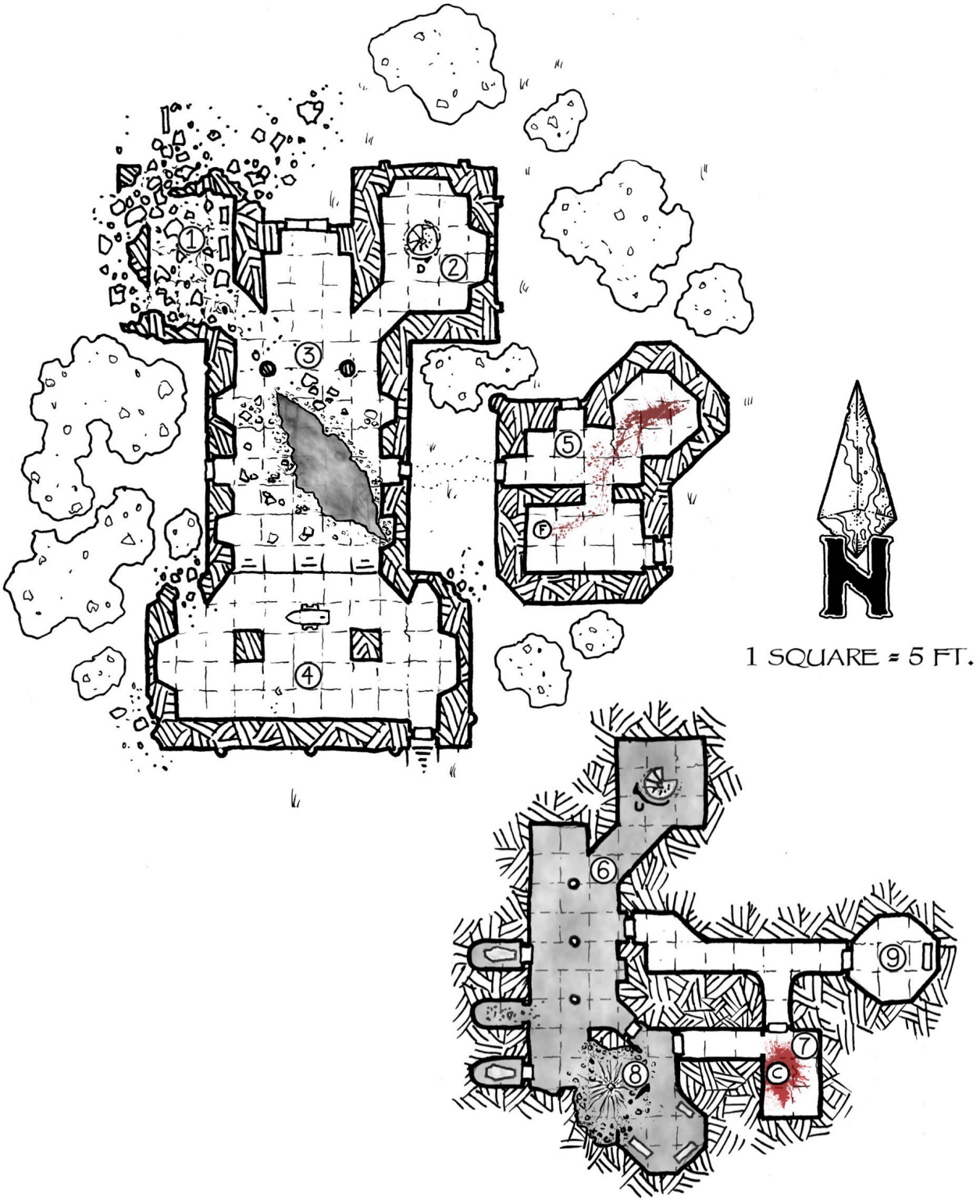
1. Acrid smells waft from a shattered flask of oil lying on the floor. Its volatile contents refused to ignite.
2. A black spongy mass covers the floor and walls. A druid, ranger, dwarf or gnome identifies it as a dead (and thus harmless) patch of brown mould.
3. Colourful, fragile flowers spring from a discarded component pouch lying in a corner.
4. Bloody smears upon the wall form the image of a screaming eagle.
5. Pale, dead spiders hang from rime-encrusted webs spun between wide cracks in the walls.
6. A series of sharp, cracking booms caused by expanding ice sound from somewhere in the undercroft.
7. A slick puddle of unlit oil coats the flagstones, creating an area of slippery floor.
8. Tremors caused by the characters' movements dislodge a trickle of icy dust and 2d4 frozen bats from the ceiling.
9. Startled by the characters' footsteps, a sluggish viper slithers from its overlong hibernation.
10. A patch of 2d4 icicles stretches from floor to ceiling, blocking the way. They can be squeezed past (at half movement rate) or destroyed.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party find if they search a dungeon location. Modify the value of items found to suit your campaign.

1. A mould-eaten spellbook. A character opening it may spend the next 1d4 rounds sneezing loudly. The book contains 1d4 legible low-level spells of your choice.
2. A discarded quiver contains 3d6 black-fletched arrows, 1d3 of which are coated with black adder venom.
3. A single platinum piece, stamped with the crest of the dwarven hold Don Galir. Shallow indentations made by crooked teeth mar both faces.
4. A linen bundle contains 2d4 unlit torches.
5. A notched throwing axe decorated with coarse red tassels; these are dwarven beard scalps.
6. A distended tin flagon of dwarven ale, turned to brown slush by the freezing cold.
7. A split and dented orc helmet bearing the distinct markings of a fatal hammer blow. Black blood and crusted brain matter cling to the inside.
8. An open flask of oil. Once removed from the starblight, its contents spontaneously ignite.
9. A bent silver hammer pendant, covered in globs of frozen orc-spittle. The cleaned pendant is worth 20 gp.
10. A riven shield bearing the holy symbol of Thaun, the Forgemaster. Despite the damage, the shield still grants its normal armour bonus.

STARFALL CHANTRY



GM Notes

***Getting Colder**: Describe the steep drop in temperature as the characters approach the ruins. Depending on the season, it might be only chilly, or the chantry could be covered in patches of snow and ice. The surface ruins shouldn't be too cold, though—such a bone-numbing chill is reserved for the chantry's undercroft!*

1: Sundered Belfry

The falling star utterly destroyed the chantry's belfry.

Shards of blackened stone ring the crumbling walls of this ruined tower. A blue-green dome resembling a gargantuan moss-eaten skull juts from the rubble.

Debris: The rubble-strewn ground is difficult terrain.

Giant Skull: Close inspection reveals the massive green "skull" is an old, bronze bell encrusted with verdigris. A foot-wide hole pierces the bell's waist in two places as if something punched through it with great force.

2: East Tower

The tower's upper floors have collapsed over time.

Moss and lichen clamber the walls of this hollow tower, like thick green smoke rising through some massive chimney. Rotten planks and broken timbers litter the floor.

Rotted Planks: The planks and lumber are the wreckage of the tower's upper floors, making this an area of difficult terrain. With a careful 20-minute search, a character uncovers the winding stair beneath the debris. Less attentive characters might find the stairs faster as the rotted planks give way beneath them, sending them hurtling down the stairs.

Winding Stair: These uneven steps are worn smooth and covered in rime. Characters navigating these stairs at more than half speed must be careful or lucky avoid slipping. Falling characters suffer minor falling damage and land prone in location 6.

3: Riven Nave

The chantry's nave is the site of the fallen star's impact crater.

A massive crater gapes amidst the broken pews in the middle of the nave. Icy wisps of fog billow from its jagged rim like phantoms being boiled in a witch's cauldron.

Broken Pews: The broken pews are low obstacles that provide cover.

Icy Fog: Although it looks mysterious and menacing, the undulating fog comprises nothing but harmless water vapour. The icy fog blocks all vision into location 6 below. While the fog can be temporarily removed by applying intense heat (by casting *fireball, for example*) or displacing the air (by creating magical wind, for example), it returns after 1d10 minutes.

Crater Rim: Crumbling flagstones line the crater rim. Creatures entering a square adjacent to the crater must be careful or slip and fall 20 ft., suffer minor falling damage and land prone in location 6.

4: Defiled Chancel

Orcs thoroughly sacked and defiled the dwarven altar, but some magic lingers therein.

An acrid stench wafts from the chancel, whose walls and floor are stained with all manner of foulness. At the centre, a great iron anvil sits basking in a dull, silver-blue glow.

Great Anvil: A dwarf, cleric or other character wise in religious matters identifies the anvil as an Iron Altar of Duregal, father of the dwarves. Non-evil characters who place a melee weapon upon the anvil and invoke Duregal the Highlord's name imbue the weapon with a minor magical bonus for one hour. The altar's magic is forever depleted after 1d4+1 uses.

Crude Graffiti: Streaks of old blood and fresh excrement deface the scarred chancel walls. Characters able to read Orc can translate them as insults aimed at the dwarven gods.

5: Rectory

The rectory hides a ladder to the undercroft.

A long iron spike sticks from this door, impaling the sun-bleached remains of a severed hand and forearm.

Outer Doors: A severed hand is affixed to both of the rectory's exterior doors. Closer inspection confirms the hands belonged to a dwarf. A character carefully examing the remains realises the limbs were severed sometime during the past summer.

North Chamber: All of the furniture in this chamber has been smashed to bits, except one sturdy oak table sitting in the northeast alcove. A bone-hafted iron axe juts from the split table and an ominous red-brown stains blossom upon the wood. A blood trail leads to the south chamber.

South Chamber: Like the north chamber, all the furniture in this room was violently destroyed. A trail of old, blackened blood runs from the north chamber across the room, leading to a trapdoor in the northwest corner.

Trapdoor: The trapdoor's metal latch is ice-cold. A character opening the trapdoor reveals a 20-foot-deep shaft. Iron rungs jut from the shaft's walls at regular intervals, forming a ladder reaching down to location 7.

You're Getting Colder

The starblight has transformed the entire undercroft (locations 6 to 10) into one giant icehouse. Characters who aren't dressed for cold weather may begin to suffer the effects of this supernatural coldness, perhaps suffering from hypothermia and suchlike. Characters reaching a place of safety and warmth regain any lost abilities or vitality after a few hours rest.

GM Notes

***Gharka Red-Tusk**: If you chose the hook "Killing in the Name" (see "The Adventure Begins"), consider placing Gharka Red-Tusk, the orc leader, in location 4 or 5. Alternatively, have Gharka and her sizeable war party return to Starfall Chantry while the characters are exploring the ruins—suddenly the adventure turns into a full-blown siege!*

GM Notes

***Dwarf-Gear**: Don't forget to leave both fallen dwarves some appropriate equipment for the characters to "borrow". They might need it.*

***Frozen Dwarf**: The frozen body of the dwarven ranger in location 6 is Orval Dolhak, a member of the doomed expedition from Don Galir. To escape the orcs, Orval hid in one of the caskets, but was overtaken by the cold. A spell enabling a character to speak with the dead dwarf reveals this, as well as any information provided in the background section (see "Dungeon Background").*

***Dismembered Dwarf**: The dismembered corpse of the dwarven cleric in location 7 is Achel Araral, another member of the doomed expedition. After cornering Achel in the rectory (location 5), the orcs lopped off his hands before throwing him into the cellar, where he expired. A spell enabling a character to speak with the dead dwarf reveals this, as well as any information provided in the background section (see "Dungeon Background").*

6: Crypt

A shroud of icy mist fills the dismal crypt.

Pale ghosts born of freezing fog claw at your exposed skin, chilling you to the bone as sure as any real spectre could. The cold mist limits your vision to a mere five feet.

Icy Fog: The fog is harmless but obscures all vision beyond five-foot. The fog can be temporarily removed by applying intense heat (by casting *fireball, for example*) or displacing the air (by creating magical wind, for example). It returns, however, after 1d10 minutes.

As the characters explore the crypt, or if they remove the fog, describe the following features as appropriate:

Rubble: The rubble-strewn floor is difficult terrain.

Destroyed Ceiling: A gaping hole looms 20 ft. overhead. The hole leads to location 3.

Broken Wall: Large ice crystals ring a seven-foot breach in the southeast wall; beyond lies location 8.

Tombs: A trio of archways set into the west wall leads to three small tombs. All three tombs house rime-covered stone caskets containing the skeletal remains of dwarven clerics. A close investigation reveals the northernmost casket's lid sits slightly ajar.

- **North Tomb**: The frozen remains of a dwarven ranger wearing full adventuring gear lie in the casket. A character examining the corpse comes to the conclusion the dwarf likely froze to death.

Winding Stair: These uneven steps are worn smooth and covered in rime. Characters navigating these stairs at more than half speed must be careful or lucky to avoid slipping. Falling characters suffer minor falling damage and land prone at the base of the stairs.

7: Frozen Cellar

The butchered body here is a testament to orcish cruelty.

Frozen blood lies pooled around a dismembered corpse lying on the floor. Myriad icicles jut from the ceiling, resembling the fangs of some gargantuan monster whose icy breath lingers upon the cracked flagstones.

Bloody Ice: Characters moving across the frozen blood must be careful or lucky to avoid slipping over.

Icicles: The icicles are too small to inflict harm.

Corpse: The body belongs to a dwarven cleric missing both hands. A cleric, paladin or dwarf character identifies the holy symbol around his neck as that of Duregal, the Highlord.

Trapdoor: A 20-foot-deep shaft pierces the ceiling, with a wooden trapdoor sitting at the top. Iron rungs jut from the shaft's walls at regular intervals, forming a ladder reaching up to location 5. The metal latch can be forced open with a successful open doors roll.

8: Impact Crater

This frozen pit is the fallen star's grave.

Billowing clouds of mist fill this ruined hollow. Somewhere inside the haze, a ghostly blue light glows enticingly.

Icy Fog: The fog is harmless but obscures all vision beyond five-foot. The fog can be temporarily removed by applying intense heat (by casting *fireball, for example*) or displacing the air (by creating magical wind, for example). It returns, however, after 1d10 minutes.

As the characters explore the crater, or if they remove the fog, describe the following features as appropriate:

Rubble: The rubble-strewn floor is difficult terrain.

Fallen Star: This fist-sized shard of star metal glows with a dull blue sheen. The shard mainly comprises tordel, flecked with crystalline impurities. The crystalline impurities are the likely cause of the starblight.

The shard weighs 30 lbs. and feels pleasantly cool to the touch. Since starblight takes years to accumulate in a location, its effects do not travel with the shard itself. A skilled blacksmith should be able to refine the tordel and remove these impurities.

9: Hero's Sepulchre

A dwarven fighter made a valiant last stand here.

Lying slumped against a sarcophagus is the body of a mail-clad dwarven warrior clutching a bloodstained warhammer. Grim defiance yet gleams in his cold, dead eyes. Almost a dozen orc corpses lie before him.

Dead Body: The frozen body belongs to a dwarven fighter; a black-fletched arrow juts from his gut. A close examination of the corpse suggests poisoning as the cause of death, likely delivered by the arrow lodged in his abdomen.

Sarcophagus: The sealed stone casket holds the body of a nameless dwarven hero. A character making a bend bars/lift gates roll opens the lid, revealing the skeletal remains decked in steel and gold lying within.

Characters stealing the corpse's magic *chainmail* or the 2d6x10 gp worth of jewellery is targeted by a magic curse. This pernicious effect is permanent until the character is able to have it dispelled.

Tordel

Tordel is a rare star metal—deposits fall from the sky as part of meteorites. "Tordel" is a dwarven word which translates literally as "soul steel". The elves call it "azangthal" which translates as "glimmering soul metal".

Tordel is as rare and expensive as adamantine, and only skilled crafters can work the metal. When used in the crafting of a weapon, it is said to be able to trap the soul of those slain by the blade.

GM Notes

Dead Dwarf: *The dead dwarven fighter in area 9 is Veldu Dolhak, leader of the doomed expedition from Don Galir. Pursued by orcs, Veldu retreated to the sepulchre, forcing his enemies into single file and striking them down one by one as they entered the chamber. Veldu killed eleven orcs before succumbing to a poisoned arrow. A spell enabling a character to speak with the dead dwarf reveals this, as well as any information provided in the background section (see "Dungeon Background").*

Dwarf-Gear: *Leave Veldu some appropriate equipment for the characters to "borrow"; he doesn't need it anymore.*

Aftermath

If the characters survive the dangers of the frost-bound chantry and recover the fallen star from its dismal grave, they may count themselves victorious. Nevertheless, the real adventure may have only just begun. Countless orcs yet lurk in the craggy hills. If the characters have left any tracks behind, the orcs will likely have discovered them by now—and every one of them has sworn a blood oath to Nargen to keep intruders from her sacred hunting ground. To make matters worse, thieves from Dunstone may have gotten wind of the characters' quest for the fallen star. Unscrupulous thugs could be preparing to ambush them on their return to town.

Once the characters have reached Dunstone, however, they should finally be safe—or are they?

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you used any of the hooks presented in "The Adventure Begins", use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

- **Reaching for the Star**: Vieno is visibly surprised to see the characters return. *"Mighty decent of you."* He says. *"For a moment, I was afraid you'd simply run off with the gold, just like those other types."* Vieno shakes his fist in anger as he explains he recently paid another party of adventurers to recover a different meteorite from somewhere in the surrounding wilderness. *"Oh indeed, there are many such vile stars fallen to earth. Dozens each year, by my reckoning. Would you be interested in fetching me another one, then?"* If the characters accept, Vieno takes out his star chart to show another impact site. Exactly where it is and how much the job pays is for you to decide.
- **Killing in the Name**: If the characters bring proof of Gharka's demise to Aavo Oksanen, the ruler of Dunstone rewards them with 300 gp for slaying the orc leader. Unfortunately, that is not all. During the hastily thrown together celebration ceremony, the characters are officially named honorary sergeants-at-arms in Dunstone's meagre fighting force. While the title earns them 5 sp a week, it also obliges them to fight for Dunstone when called upon. With Aavo Oksanen out to reclaim the Carmine Hills, and the orcs seeking to avenge the murder of Gharka Red-Tusk, that call may come very soon indeed. Deserters, of course, are outlawed and hanged without trial when caught.
- **Clerical Error**: As the characters enter the town, they are welcomed back by the same beardless dwarven youth, who again leads them to the gemcutter's shop in Durgan's Alley. After tending to the characters' wounds, Vanatar Jarbek asks them bluntly if they found the star, or the bodies of his brethren. *"Forgive our need for secrecy,"* the venerable dwarf continues, *"but the map, while useful to us, was a ruse. If Lord Oksanen knew we had sent warriors to retrieve the vile star, he would have sought to claim it for himself."* Vanatar explains the meteorite is a fragment of Thaun's Ember; a comet held sacred by the dwarves, and one that will pass over Ashlar again within the next year. *"This shard will aid our priests to accurately predict the event."* He adds. True to his word, Vanatar pays the characters handsomely for the completed map and the chunk of star metal—up to 1,200 gp, depending on the economics of your campaign.

Further Adventures

Irrespective of the adventure hooks used to lure the characters to Starfall Chantry, certain events and choices made by the characters may echo through future sessions.

- **The Art of War**: The orcs of the Carmine Hills consider any intrusion into their sacred hunting grounds an act of war. Furthermore, they believe the meteorite that tore through Starfall Chantry is literally the claw of Nargen Blood-Fist. Such a potent and sacred relic must not be allowed to remain in human or dwarven hands. Surely, the orc chieftains are already forging new alliances to rain vengeance upon the lands of men.
- **The Riddle of Soul-Steel**: The star metal known as tordel is a rare and valuable material. Highly skilled blacksmiths can smelt pure soul steel from the meteorite and even craft it into a fearsome weapon. While such skilled smiths are few and far between, Dulannis Fisfelond (location 9 on the Dunstone map) has the requisite skills to work tordel. Alternatively, several master crafters at the Great Forge (location T3 on the City of Languard map) could work the metal. Nevertheless, such a weapon is all but certain to draw unwanted attention from those who would seek the soul-steel for themselves, at any cost.
- **The Vile Star Storyline**: If you are running Starfall Chantry as part of the Vile Star storyline, refer to that supplement to continue the characters' adventures.

The Vile Star Storyline

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone adventure, it has been designed for use with the *Vile Star* storyline. *Vile Star* presents antagonists, agendas, agents, and assets to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following Dungeon Backdrops:

- *Pit of Unquiet Souls*
- *Ruin of Bleak Hill*
- *Starfall Chantry*

Additionally, *Cursed Tower of the Astromancer* works very well with the Vile Star Storyline.

Undercity Chapel

Urban, Ashlar (Languard), Sacred Blood

The Knights of the Black Swan were founded centuries ago to end a plague of the undead assailed Languard, capital city of Ashlar. In this they were successful, discovering and sealing the source of the infestation—a shadow gate buried deep below the city. When the Knights of the Black Swan were disbanded, the location of the gate and the chapel they built around it was forgotten. For nearly 200 years, the Undercity Chapel has remained hidden and untouched. Until now...

Dungeon Background

Never has the Duchy of Ashlar known a villain so vile as the treacherous Ilasual Nenonen—the so-called Bloodstained Prince. When Ashlar's founding father, the adventurer Arndul Nenonen, died almost four centuries ago, the crown passed to his eldest daughter Aelliah. Consumed with avarice, her jealous brother, Crown Prince Ilasual, forged secret plots and dark alliances to usurp Ashlar's throne. While Ilasual's allies travelled the land in secret, spending the duchess' own silver to raise an army against her, Ilasual plotted even darker schemes. In his hidden sanctum, buried deep inside Languard's labyrinthine undercity, the Crown Prince pored over evil tomes of forgotten lore, learning the secrets of black magic. The prince eventually succeeded in opening a gate to the plane of shadow beneath the city, and the nameless dead who dwelt in that nighted dimension revealed to Ilasual the secrets of life beyond death.

Eventually, Ilasual was ready, and his desire to seize the throne from his sister plunged Ashlar into a short, brutal civil war—The Time of Two Crowns. Ironically, Ilasual himself was betrayed by his lieutenants, leading to his defeat at the Battle of Selka River just north of present-day Ashford. Ilasual's body, however, was never recovered from the battlefield, and his ultimate fate remains unknown.

Over time, the magical wards Ilasual had placed upon the shadow gate hidden in his underground sanctum began to deteriorate, and the essence of the sunless realm seeped into the tunnels beneath Languard. As a result, the spirits of the dead found their way back to the land of the living, giving rise to a two-year period known as Languard's Haunted Years.

A new religious order—the Knights of the Black Swan—was established to deal with this sudden plague of undeath. After several gruelling expeditions into the haunted tunnels beneath the city, knight-captain Talis Ritari succeeded in locating the Bloodstained Prince's sanctum and sealing the shadow gate. To prevent fell forces from breaching the gate, the Knights of the Black Swan built a holy chapel over the site. The shrine was dedicated to Tuonetar, daughter of Conn and patroness of their order. The ensorcelled effigy of a great black swan—Tuonetar's sacred animal—was placed inside the chapel to protect it from intruders. Imbued with the powers of the Maiden of Death, the statue permitted only those of the order's knightly blood to approach the sealed gate, slaying all others outright.

When the Knights of the Black Swan were disbanded, the location of their Undercity Chapel was forgotten. For nearly two centuries, it remained hidden and untouched.

Until today...

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on the sewer section containing the Undercity Chapel by happenstance and decide to explore its tunnels on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters into the sewers:

Too Rich for my Blood: Covered in rat bites and reeking of sewage, Neah Tuomela (N female human thief), boldly interrupts the characters' dinner. She introduces herself as the illegitimate daughter of Sofonias Ritari, a wealthy merchant who recently died heirless. Neah has letters from her mother to support her claim but they are insufficient proof. "*There's a legend,*" Neah says "*that a swan statue hidden in the undercity can reveal those of Ritari blood. I tried to find it, but it's dangerous down there*." Neah offers to buy the next round of drinks if the characters can find the statue for her. She agrees to pay them whatever they want as soon as she's rich.

Missing in Action: With tears running down her cheeks, elderly Malin Uotinen (LE old female human fighter) thrusts a precious golden necklace (worth 40 gp) into one of the characters' hands. Stifling her sobs, she explains her only son, Matti, disappeared after having taken on a shady job. Matti was secretive about his employer, but he did mention an old chapel, hidden in the sewers. Malin begs the characters to investigate and bring back her boy.

Who You Gonna Call?: Chancellor Marja Pasanen (LN female human) seeks adventurers to investigate the rumours of ghosts rising from Languard's sewers. Reports of spirit activity increase every day, and the Dark Wardens can't handle them all. The job pays 100 gp for each party member.

Whispers & Rumours

A character may know one or more rumours from the list below. The character can learn this information in several ways: by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

1. The Dark Wardens are afraid to enter the sewers. I heard they lost an entire patrol there less than a fortnight ago.
2. Somewhere in the undercity, there's a hidden chapel built by a forgotten knightly order. They say it's guarded by a giant black swan, singing death spells.
3. Did you know Languard owes most of its sewers to the Knights of the Black Swan? It's their gold what built those tunnels—supposedly, they even built a sanctum in there.
4. Everyone suddenly seems to have an interest in the sewers. Not long ago, some shady types came around here, asking about a "sewer chapel". I told them I'd never heard of it, but they went down those smelly tunnels anyway. Idiots!
5. Swarms of giant rats live in Languard's sewers. I've seen them strip a man's body to the bone in seconds.
6. The spirits of the dead are rising from the undercity, just like 200 years ago! It's happening again!

The Surrounding Locality

The sewers beneath High City follow the course of a network of natural caves and caverns. Access to the sewers is tightly controlled as some tunnels intersect with the cellars of highly important buildings. The duke maintains a small force—the Dark Wardens—charged with maintaining and patrolling the sewers. Separate from the city watch, the Dark Wardens report directly to Chancellor Marja Pasanen.

Sewer Dressing

Use this list to add life and detail to the dungeon's surrounds:

1. Plumes of fine, white "hair" cover the floor, resembling tiny smokestacks frozen in time. A character skilled at nature lore can confirm they are harmless fungi thriving on rat droppings.
2. The front half of a capsized raft floats amid the sewage. Large bite marks line the raft's splintered boards.
3. Fresh chalk markings on the wall betray someone's recent passage. Thieves recognise the symbols as Thieves' Cant describing the tunnels ahead (the character automatically succeeds at navigating the sewers).
4. Fine grit falls from the ceiling as the sound of hoofbeats and cartwheels thunders by from the streets above.
5. The filth-covered remains of a full-sized horse block the tunnel ahead. Clearing the obstruction takes some considerable time.
6. A filthy nest of scavenged rags, dried sludge and detritus contains 2d4 pale green egg shells. A character skilled in nature lore realises the eggs only recently hatched.
7. Rhythmic drips and hisses lead to a small, smoking puddle created by an alchemical acid spilt somewhere above. A single drop inflicts minor acid damage.
8. Loud barking leads the characters to a wounded mastiff fending off 2d6 vicious rats. The dog is frightened but friendly. The tag on its collar reads, "Armas".
9. Thin, yellow blood seeps from the bisected corpse of a ghostly white four-foot lamprey lying on the flagstones.
10. An inflated pig's bladder filled with methane and dyed a gaudy red lazily bounces against the low, vaulted ceiling.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search the surrounds. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A bleached leather straitjacket, flecked with dried blood. Its ragged straps look as if a human gnawed them.
2. A fragile plaster mask featuring a long, curved beak filled with dried lavender and peppermint. Wearing it suppresses the horrible sewer smell, at the cost of somewhat restricting their field of vision.
3. An engraved die for minting local silver coins. The die is only half of a pair, and any coins minted with it only have a "heads" side, the "tails" remaining blank.
4. A leather scroll case floats upon the sewage. There's a 50% chance the scroll inside is still readable and contains a randomly determined minor wizard's spell.
5. A frayed whip dangles from a broken pipe suspended above a fast-flowing sewage channel.
6. A small wooden box contains 10d10 counterfeit silver coins; each only has a "heads" side and is worth 2 cp. Passing them off as real silver is punishable by death.
7. A battered slouch hat made of rats' skins sewn together with catgut. Lice and ticks nest inside the matted fur.
8. A poorly hidden stash of 1d4 ten-gallon casks of hard cider, worth 10 gp each. The owner's brand has been carefully filed off. Getting the bulky casks out of the sewer will be difficult.
9. A fire-scorched ram's skull sitting atop an iron spike. Sifting through the ashes underneath yields 1d6 globs of melted silver. Each is worth 1d10 sp.
10. A filthy straw bed surrounded by a collection of 4d6 wooden toys representing soldiers on horseback. Another toy resembling a bat-winged, tentacle-faced monstrosity is hidden beneath the pillow.

Navigating the Sewers

The Undercity Chapel is not easily found, even for those who know where to look.

In order to reach the part of the sewers where it lies hidden, the characters must find and follow a trail of subtle markers left behind by the Knights of the Black Swan almost two centuries ago.

Spice up the characters' exploration with "Sewer Dressing", "Things to Find", and a few combat encounters to feed the growing tide of rats! Additionally, *20 Things #13: Noisome Sewer* presents more flavoursome tables to help you to flesh out and bring to life a sewer system.

A Tide of Vermin

Soon after the group enters the sewers, a swarm of evil-eyed rats begins stalking them. Initially, the pack keeps their distance and greedily devours the bodies of any creatures the party defeats. With every meal, the swarm's size and appetite grows, until the rats feel confident enough to take on the characters.

Start with one pack of 1d6+4 rats, and increases their number by 1d10 for every creature devoured. Once the rats outnumber the characters at least ten to one, they attack.

Notable Locations at a Glance

The sewer section has several notable locations.

1-6. **Access Channels**. The party start at one of these locations.
7. **Central Basin**: This basin lies at the the complex's centre.
8. **South Flow Controls**: Here, two wheel cranks control the inflow of sewage from nearby channels.
9. **Pilferer's Workshop**: Scoundrels use this workshop to water down pilfered booze.
10. **Tavern Cellar**: Choice spirits and wines fill this room.
11. **Maintenance Room**: This room holds sewer maintenance gear.
12. **North Flow Controls**: A wheel crank controls the north outflow channel.
13. **Closed Passage**: This portcullis can only be opened from the north side.
14. **Cluttered Room**: This old room contains some suspiciously recent debris.
15. **Chapel of Tuonetar**: An animate statue slays all those who dare defile the chapel.

Generic Dungeon Features

Many sewer locations share certain features:

Illumination: Darkness fills the dank tunnels.

Methane Pockets: All locations except 10 and 15 contain pockets of explosive gas. If an open flame is present, there is a 1 in 6 chance each round the gas explodes. The gas in each area builds up slowly and can only detonate every 1d4 days.

Sewage: The sewage is four feet deep, has a default speed of 40 ft. per round and is difficult to swim in. Arrows on the map mark the current's direction. Characters immersed in the sewage may contract a horrible disease.

Walls: The crude masonry walls are caked with filth, making them challenging to climb.

Floors: Reeking sludge coats the flagstone floor, except locations 10 and 15, rendering them extremely slippery.

Doors: These simple wooden doors are warped and swollen with moisture. Each has a 50% chance of being stuck.

Sluice Gates: These rust-caked iron sluice gates are marked on the map with the symbol to the right. They are opened by spending 1d3+1 consecutive rounds turning the corresponding wheel crank. Unless oiled, the cranks are noisy to operate.

At the start of the adventure, only sluice gate C is closed, the others are open. Opening and closing sluice gates affects the sewage current speed. Refer to the map and area descriptions for more details.

Dungeon Dressing

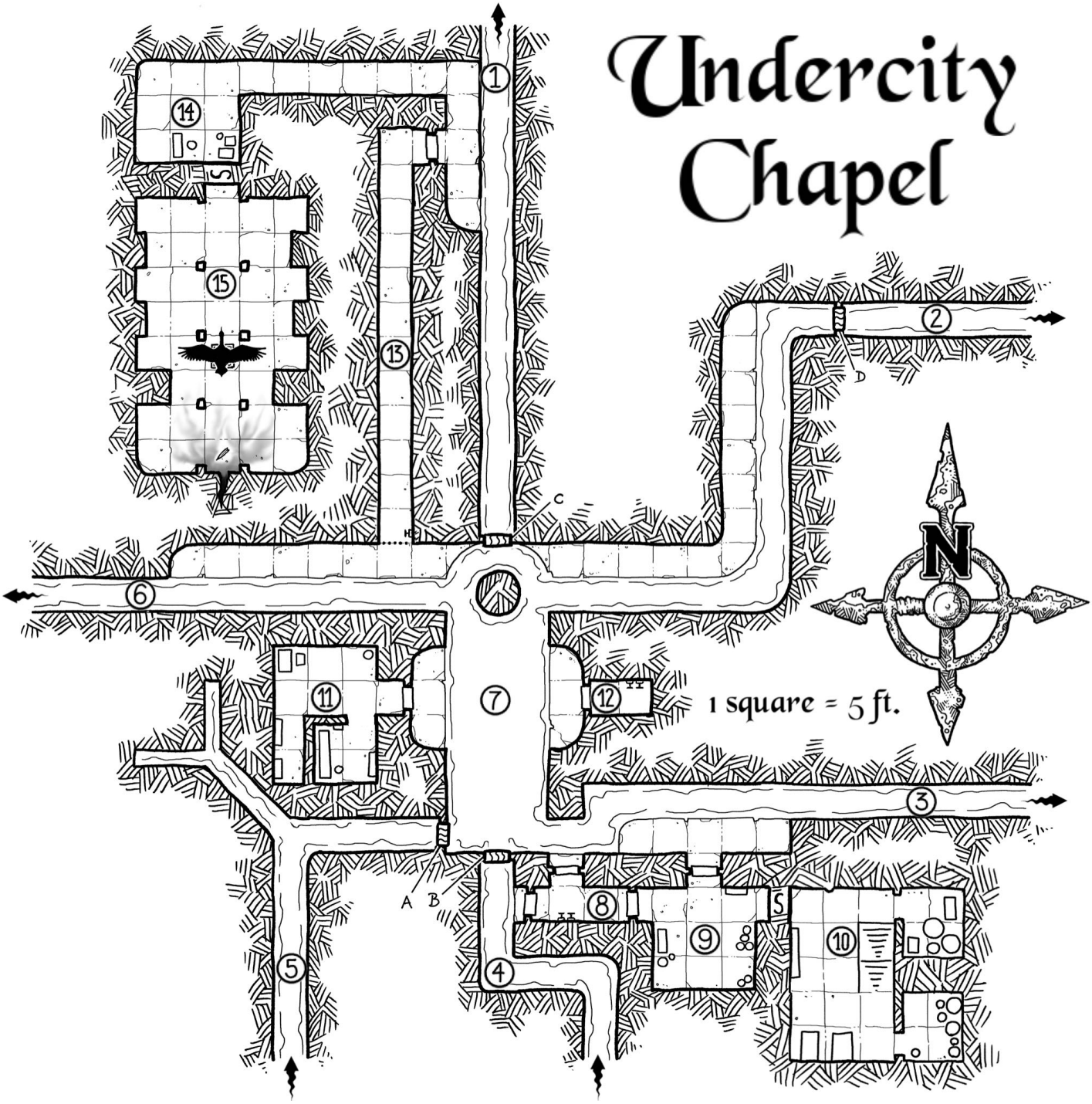
Use this list to breathe life and detail into the dungeon:

1. An inhuman roar echoes from somewhere in the tunnels.
2. A sudden torrent of water rushes through the tunnels. All creatures standing in, or next to a sewage square may fall fall prone and be pushed 2d4 x 5 feet towards the nearest outflow.
3. A rusted lever protrudes from the wall. It clicks when pulled, but has no other noticeable effect.
4. Dead cockroaches carpet the floor. Walking on their shells negates the floor's slipperiness, but the noise makes move silently difficult.
5. An engraved compass rose resembling half an apple and half a human skull decorates a cracked flagstone. A cleric, paladin, or other religious type identifies it as the holy symbol of Tuonetar. The arrow points to location 15 instead of north.
6. Sticky lamp oil floats on the sewage nearby, leaking from a split barrel. If lit, the oil burns for three rounds, inflicting minor fire damage per round.
7. A decomposed corpse slumps against the wall, twitching uncontrollably. Closer inspection reveals 3d6 rats burrowing inside its bloated abdomen for food.
8. Fouled blood from a slaughterhouse pours from a iron grate in the wall. Feeding on the stream keeps the tide of rats pursuing the characters occupied for 1d10 minutes.
9. Dried rat bones tied to strings hang from the ceiling, like grisly wind chimes. If touched, the clacking sound alerts nearby creatures to intruders (or prey).
10. A faintly luminous apparition floats before the characters. Dragging a thumb across its ghostly throat, it warns of impending death before disappearing into a nearby wall.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search a location. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A small wooden sword bearing numerous teeth marks.
2. An oiled canvas bundle holds 1d4+2 half-burnt torches.
3. A broken lute inhabited by a litter of 2d6+6 newborn rats.
4. An elegant leather pouch, branded with the initials "H.S." It contains a set of fine quality thieves' tools.
5. A 35-foot length of stiff hemp rope. The frayed ends seems torn or bitten off with great strength.
6. A gold signet ring bearing the Ahokas's family crest. The ring is worth 25 gp, but the family might offer more.
7. A bloodied boot with a caltrop embedded in the sole.
8. A trail consisting of 1d100 copper pieces wedged between cracks in the wall, leading to a randomly determined area.
9. A large piece of chalk, waterproofed with beeswax.
10. A cluster of 5d6 rats with their tails inextricably intertwined. 1d4 are still alive, the others are dead and near-mummified. Curiously, the voracious tide of rats encountered in these sewers refuses to approach within 20 ft. of the rat king cluster.



Sewage Flow Tracker

Valve	Type	Open	Closed
8A	Inflow	☑	☐
8B	Inflow	☑	☐
12C	Outflow	☐	☑
12D	Outflow	☑	*Cannot be closed*

The sewage flow speed equals (1 + X) x 10 in feet per round, where X is the number of *Open* valves.

GM Notes

***Example Random Features**: If you roll a 2 and a 3, the area contains both Broken Wards and Luminescent Fungi. If you roll a double 4, it contains a Sewer Boat. Make a brief note on the map, in case the characters return to the area.*

1-6: Access Channels

The party start at one of these locations.

A long, dark tunnel flowing with reeking sludge looms ahead.

Roll 1d6, to determine which channel the characters use to enter this part of the sewer complex.

Random Channel Features: To determine the contents of one of these channels, roll 2d4 and apply both results separately, unless a double was rolled:

1. **Lost Shades**: Faintly shimmering shades of forlorn souls wander the channel like lost children. Adrift in the sunless sea of their personal anguish, the spirits remain oblivious to the characters' presence.
    - **Double 1 (Vengeful Shades)**: Hollow eyes flare with cold fires of hatred as 4d6 wandering shades take notice of the characters, and descend upon them in a luminous green wave. The supernatural assault may terrify the characters.
2. **Broken Wards**: Complex arrangements of arcane sigils cover the walls on either side of the channel, just above the waterline. All have been cracked or defaced as if with well-aimed hammer-blows. Thieves and wizards can identify these symbols as magical wards, but they are too damaged to determine their type.
    - **Double 2 (Active Wards)**: 2d4 magical wards lurk upon the walls on either side of this channel. If triggered (by a character walking passed), each ward shoots a *magical missile*. The hidden wards are difficult to spot and disarm.
3. **Luminescent Fungi**: Thousands of tiny phosphorescent fungi bathe the channel in a dim, blue-green glow.
    - **Double 3 (Shrieker Fungi)**: 1d6 shrieking mushrooms thrive inside shadowed alcoves along the channel. If spotted, a character skilled at nature lore can identify them as shriekers.
4. **Floating Debris**: Rotted planks from broken barrels and crates float upon the reeking sludge. Swimming characters may sink under the "water" if they are not strong enough swimmers.
    - **Double 4 (Sewer Boat)**: A low, flat-bottomed rowboat is tethered to an iron ring. The boat's speed equals ten feet, but a strong character could propel it faster. It comfortably seats up to four human-sized characters, or up to six with some added risk of capsizing (20% per additional character beyond four) each round.

7: Central Basin

This large basin is the complex' central hub.

A massive stone pillar caked with grime supports the imposing domed ceiling above this wide basin. Filth-caked doors lurk in shallow alcoves, along the east and west walls.

Domed Ceiling: The domed ceiling's apex sits 30 feet above the water level. Unless an open flame is brought within 5 feet of the apex, there is no chance of igniting a methane pocket in this area.

Central Pillar: Two - five hooded lanterns hang from iron hooks set in this wide stone pillar. Using these special lanterns reduces the risk of igniting a methane pocket to 1 in 12.

8: South Flow Controls

Here, two wheel cranks control the inflow of sewage from nearby channels.

A pair of iron shafts crowned with wheel cranks protrude from the south wall. Large flakes of scarlet paint cling to the rust blooming on the wheels, like burst skin around an inflamed sore.

Wheel Cranks: Each crank controls a nearby sluice gate.

Crank A (Open): Controls sluice gate A. If closed, the sewage flow speed decreases by 10 feet/round.

Crank B (Open): Controls sluice gate B. If closed, the sewage flow speed decreases by 10 feet/round.

9: Pilferer's Workshop

Scoundrels use this workshop to water down pilfered booze.

Beads of syrupy liquid glimmer upon the staves of a half-dozen barrels at the far end of this room. Green glass glints from between the planks of several crates stacked against the west wall.

Crates and Barrels: These crates and barrels contain an assortment of fine wines and spirits, as well as several gallons of plain water. A bucket of unused corks stands nearby. Regular drinkers who sample the contents immediately recognise the wines and spirits as the high-end, expensive stuff served in Languard's finest upscale taverns.

There are 48 bottles of dwarven whiskey and 3 barrels of fine red wine. Money-smart characters estimate their value at 10 gp per bottle and 200 gp for each barrel. Moving the precious booze from the sewers requires several trips in a sewer boat. If the barrels or bottles come into contact with the sewage, there's a 50% chance the contents are ruined.

Drag Marks: A search of the room reveals faint drag marks in the dirt. They disappear behind the east wall, suggesting the presence of a secret door.

Secret Door: This heavy stone door is carved to resemble the wall.

GM Notes

***Wines & Spirits**: Every so often, unscrupulous criminals use the secret door in location 9 to sneak into the cellar of Dragonheart Tavern and take a handful of bottles. The crooks then pour half the contents into bottles or barrels of their own, water down the remaining half, and re-cork the bottles before planting them back in the tavern cellar. It's a lucrative business! At your option, the characters may even encounter the pilferers as they are busy loading their precious cargo into a sewer boat. No doubt, the thieves want to keep their operation a secret.*

GM Notes

***Dragonheart Tavern**: Dragonheart Tavern, which can be accessed from the stairs in location 10, is not part of this Dungeon Backdrop. When this adventure concludes, however, the characters may want to dig deeper into the case of the watered-down-booze.*

10: Tavern Cellar

Many choice spirits and wines are stored here.

Sturdy oaken barrels and dusty, bottle-filled racks occupy almost every inch of this cramped cellar's walls. The sweet smell of fine wines and roasted meat wafts from above, drowning out the sewer's stench.

Bottles and Barrels: These all contain fine wines or spirits. Close inspection reveals about half of the bottles are dustless and seem recently corked. Characters who sample the drinks realise they have been heavily watered down.

Secret Door: The secret door is well-concealed on this side, and can only be found with a careful search.

Stairs Up: These stairs lead to the taproom of Dragonheart Tavern—a renowned upscale tavern in High City.

11: Maintenance Room

This room holds sewer maintenance equipment and gear.

All along the walls of this dank chamber, rusted crowbars and split mattocks crowd sagging wooden shelves.

Tools: With a ten-minute search, a character finds 2d10 iron pitons, one random trinket (see "Things to Find"), and a large, bent crowbar which can be wielded like a heavy mace.

12: North Flow Controls

A wheel crank controls the north outflow channel.

Two iron wheels mounted to tarnished bronze fittings sit on the north wall of this tiny room. Fed by a steady trickle of water from above, corrosion has all but devoured one of the cranks.

Wheel Cranks: Each crank controls a nearby sluice gate.

Crank C (Closed): Controls sluice gate C. If opened, the sewage flow speed increases by 10 feet/round.

Crank D (Open): Corrosion has eaten away at this crank's shaft. Firmly rusted in place, it snaps off when force is applied. Its corresponding sluice gate (D) cannot be closed.

13: Closed Passage

This portcullis can only be opened from the north side.

The wet brick walls of this narrow passage lend it the appearance of a monstrous gullet, glistening red and raw. A heavy iron portcullis blocks the south exit.

Portcullis: The portcullis is connected to a ratcheting mechanism, operated by a nearby wheel crank. This makes it especially difficult to open by any other means.

Wheel Crank: A character who spends 1d3+1 consecutive rounds turning this wheel crank opens the portcullis. Unless oil is first applied to the mechanism, it produces a horrible screeching noise when operated.

14: Cluttered Room

This old room contains some suspiciously recent debris.

This dank chamber's cracked flagstones sag with age. Broken crates and barrels are piled high against the south wall.

Uneven Floor: The floor is difficult terrain.

Debris: The debris looks quite recent. Clearing it away takes 1d10 minutes and reveals the Thieves' Cant symbol for "secret door" written in chalk on the south wall.

Secret Door: This secret door requires the normal effort to find, but its existence has probably been alreadydeduced. It can be pushed open with minimal effort.

15: Chapel of Tuonetar

An animate statue slays all those who dare defile the chapel.

The towering effigy of a black swan sits at the far end of this golden-walled chamber, its obsidian feathers glimmering like molten midnight. A shrivelled humanoid husk lies before it, limbs contorted in impossible agony.

Golden Walls: Two hundred shiny brass plaques mounted on the walls lend this chapel its golden sheen. Each bears the name and rank of a Knight of the Black Swan. The largest mentions one Talis Ritari, a knight-captain credited with sealing the shadow gate. It states his body was interred at Redfern Cemetery. A character knowledgable about history recalls the old cemetery lies just a few miles east of Languard.

Shrivelled Corpse: Although the desiccated flesh implies this human male died several decades earlier, the suppleness of his dark leather armour and boots suggests he was slain less than a week ago. A wizard can identify the cause of death as a powerful necromantic spell. Rifling through the corpse's pockets yields thieves' tools, 2d10 sp and a scrap of parchment with the words *"Martryn Manor - date plus four"*.

Obsidian Swan: Engraved along the base of this imposing obsidian statue are the words: "*Sacred blood holds death at bay, those unworthy I shall slay*". The effigy exudes a strong aura of necromantic magic. The swan targets any living creature who tampers with it or tries to enter the area behind it with powerful magical attacks. Only members of Talis Ritari's bloodline may pass freely.

Breached Gate: Beyond the swan statue, two great slabs of bone-white marble form a massive stone gate set in the south wall. Scorch marks and hairline cracks mar the face of the right-hand door, which stands slightly ajar. Slender wisps of fog ooze from the blackness beyond. A broken sword blade lies on the flagstones in front of the breach. Closing the gate requires a feat of strength.

Broken Sword: The gleaming blade of this ornate longsword was snapped from its hilt. A character knowledgeable about history deduces this is the blade of *Valcorim*, the sword once wielded by Talis Ritari. According to legend, Ritari jammed the sword between the gates to the underworld and snapped it off at the hilt, to seal the entrance.

GM Notes

***The Deadly Swan of Death**: The Obsidian Swan is highly likely to kill any characters trying to make their way past. If the shrivelled body and ominous inscription fail to deter the players, make sure they fully understand the deadliness of the situation by giving them fair warning, such as a large rat falling prey to the statue's magic. Unless they are accompanied by a member of Talis Ritari's knightly bloodline, the south part of the chapel remains off-limits to them, at least for now.*

The features of the shrivelled body lying before the statue match the description of Matti Uotinen (see "The Adventure Begins: Missing in Action"). A spell able to interrogate the dead confirms his identity and reveals Matti was part of a small group of thieves sent by Rahvu Rantanen (see "Further Adventures: One Man's Death") to reclaim Valcorim's blade. The "date plus four" mentioned in the note is the password to gain entrance to Martryn Manor.

At your option, the broken sword Valcorim, may possess one or two minor powers.

Sealing the Breach

If you are playing the Sacred Blood Storyline, sealing the breach may require more than a simple feat of strength. Refer to the Sacred Blood appendix for details.

Aftermath

The characters' adventures in the labyrinthine sewers beneath the city are certain to leave a mark long after the stench of effluent has been washed away. Use the suggestions below, to drive the story onwards and continue the characters' adventures in storied Languard and the Duchy of Ashlar.

Resolving Adventure Hooks

If you employed one or more of the hooks in "The Adventure Begins" use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

Too Rich for my Blood: Neah Tuomela tracks down the characters shortly after they've left the sewers and rudely interrupts their dinner again. Resting her dirty boots on the table, she leans back in her chair and orders a round of strong dwarven stout before asking about the chapel. When told of the deadly statue and the breach, Neah's confidence falters a little: "*Huh - perhaps I should make sure about that Ritari blood before putting my life on the line...*" Nervously scratching her prominent hawk nose, she adds "*I don't suppose you can help me with that, can you? There's hard coin to be earned*."

Missing in Action: When the characters describe the desiccated body they found in the chapel to Malin Uotinen, hope fades from the old woman's eyes. Just as it seems she is about to start weeping, her wrinkled face darkens into a hateful scowl. "*I want you to find the bastards that got my boy killed*" she hisses angrily, spittle flying from her quivering lips. "*And I want you to MAKE. THEM. PAY!*" Adding weight to her words, Malin produces a serrated steel dagger, planting it into the table with a swiftness belying her age. "*Use this,*" she continues. "*It was his father's. Return to me when the job is done. Coin is no issue - you'll be well paid.*" She then leaves the characters to ponder her offer.

As an ex-adventurer with plenty of old friends in Languard, Malin is certainly not the kind old lady she appears to be. Exactly who her contacts are and how Malin scrounges up payment for the job is left to you to decide.

Who You Gonna Call? As the characters return to report their discoveries to Marja Pasanen, they find the city in chaos. Questioning a nervous watchman, the characters learn ghosts are now being sighted all over Languard, and the watch have their hands full dealing with panicked citizens in High City.

In her office, Chancellor Pasanen confirms this before listening to the characters' account of their investigations in Languard's undercity. Finally, she hands them a heavy purse containing the agreed reward and thanks them for their efforts. "*I'm not a woman who begs,*" the chancellor continues, "*but we can use all the help we can get. Sadly, I have no gold to offer for what I'm about to ask of you.*" The chancellor then requests the characters either deal with the breach in the chapel, or help prevent riots in the Low City (since most watchmen are occupied in High City).

Although there's no monetary reward, having Languard's chancellor and the duke's right-hand woman owing them a favour should be worth something to the characters.

Further Adventures

Several important questions remain to be answered. All of them involve Tuonetar's Knights of the Black Swan, and their legacy. Consider the following story hooks, if the characters wish to delve deeper into the order's history.

One Man's Death: The thieves' mark on the secret door to the chapel and the shrivelled corpse found in front of its guardian statue prove others were there recently. But who? Are they the ones who breached the gate? A hastily scribbled note found in the dead man's pockets forms the characters' only lead. After a few hours of gathering information in Languard's seediest taverns, the characters learn Martryn Manor is an old house in the Shambles. Its owner is Rahvu Rantanen, an alleged murderer famously acquitted with the aid of friends in high places. In spite of its appearance, Martryn Manor is reputed to be extremely well-protected.

Digging for Answers: The "sacred blood" mentioned in the cryptic verse graven upon the obsidian swan refers to members of the Ritari bloodline. If the characters fail to make the connection, a helpful priest at the Father's Hall can point it out. Finding any surviving members of the knightly bloodline might prove a challenge, however. It seems like the best place to start looking would be Redfern Cemetery. According to the memorial plaque found in the chapel, the old graveyard is where the heroic knight-captain himself was interred.

We're Ready to Believe You: Now the characters have seen the breach with their own eyes, the increased ghost sightings all over Languard are no longer just rumours. Soon, these spirits may find old bones to inhabit, leaving droves of dead to wander the city's catacombs and graveyards. With the city watch stretched past breaking, Languard needs all the help it can get to keep coming the tide of evil dead at bay.

Sacred Blood

While this Dungeon Backdrop is a complete, standalone adventure, it has been designed for use with the *Sacred Blood* storyline. *Sacred Blood* presents antagonists, agendas, agents, and assets to customise a mini-campaign linking together the following Dungeon Backdrops:

- *Aninas Family Crypt*
- *Martryn Manor*
- *Undercity Chapel*

Wreck of the Sea Sprite

Coastal, Ashlar (Hard Bay)

Thought lost after a year at sea the merchant ship Sea Sprite lies wrecked not five miles from home. Driven onto jagged rocks, the ship will not survive the next storm. Her mistress, the wealthy merchant Vilutar Pakkanen, needs stout heroes to board the wreck and recover the ship's charts and logbook. The only problem, beyond the ship's condition and the surrounding unpredictable waters, is the wreck lies but a scant bowshot from Gloamhold's benighted, doom-drenched halls.

Dungeon Background

A year ago, the merchant Vilutar Pakkanen despatched *Sea Sprite* to the far-off southern waters of the Coral Sea. Vilutar is a wealthy merchant dealing in high-value rare and exotic items. *Sea Sprite,* under Captain Paavo Joutsi, was to trade with the various natives and nations rumoured to dwell in the Coral Sea and to establish favourable trading relationships for future voyages. In exchange for wine, finished metal goods and the like, the captain sought exotic spices, coral, pearls, animals and other things normally unobtainable in Ashlar.

The southward leg of *Sea Sprite's* voyage was trouble free. Once he reached the Coral Sea, Captain Paavo made several profitable deals, and established good relations with several tribes and merchants. By the time the captain was ready to return, exotic goods filled *Sea Sprite's* hold. It promised to be a profitable voyage for the captain and his mistress.

Sea Sprite's return voyage, however, went horribly wrong. One of the crew had been infected by a wererat at the ship's last port of call. Unknowingly, the crew set sail with a killer in their midst. Trapped aboard the ship in the middle of the ocean, hundreds of miles from home, the crew died one by one—torn apart by the wererat and its rapidly multiplying horde of furry, hungry allies.

As *Sea Sprite* neared Languard, Captain Paavo Joutsi tied himself to the ship's wheel in a desperate attempt to reach home. Malnourished, badly dehydrated and feverish, however, he succumbed to his wounds, and *Sea Sprite* floundered on rocks dangerously close to the Murkwater.

The waters in Gloamhold's immediate vicinity are treacherous, wreathed with legends and widely thought to be supremely dangerous. Few folk willingly sail there, and—thus—the Vilutar finds herself in need of doughty adventurers.

What Killed the Crew?

Although the Adventure Background identifies a wererat as the cause of *Sea Sprite's* doom, a different creature can easily be employed. A vampire, vampire spawn or even a snakefolk could all have slain the crew. Alternatively, another thematically appropriate lycanthrope, perhaps a wereshark or werebat, could be to blame. Given the Coral Sea's distant location, this is an excellent opportunity to introduce a new, exotic creature to your campaign.

Whichever kind of creature you pick, keep in mind its damage resistances and immunities, and the characters' ability to bypass those abilities. If the group is low-level even a vampire spawn could prove too deadly. Also, when designing combat encounters keep in mind some players are particularly paranoid about waterborne combat. Characters normally favouring heavy metal armour may feel the need to don something lighter which will likely considerably reduce their armour class (and possibly their enthusiasm for a dangerous adventure).

The Adventure Begins

The characters can stumble on *Sea Sprite* by happenstance and decide to explore the wreck on a whim. Alternatively, use one of the hooks below to lure the characters to the ship:

Vilutar Needs You: Vilutar greatly desires to learn what happen to her ship and her crew. To that end, she hires the party to investigate the wreck and recover *Sea Sprite's* logbook and charts. She offers 100 gp to each character on successful completion of the mission. Vilutar puts the crew of the *Valerr* (another of her ships) at the party's disposal. The merchant emphasises the urgency of the situation and suggests the party set sail as soon as possible—preferably on the morning tide.

A Proposal: Several crews are preparing to board *Sea Sprite* to claim salvage on her (supposed) cargo of fine, exotic items. The captain of one such vessel, *Wave Dancer*, approaches the party and offers to split the proceeds of the expedition if they sail with him. Captain Aleksi Lempinen explains he has a ship, but his crew will not board *Sea Sprite's* wreck—rumours of the ship being cursed are already circulating on the docks. Aleksi could be a merchant out to gain advantage or he might be a smuggler who will use the characters to loot the wreck before double-crossing them.

Storm Driven: A storm catches the party while they sail across Hard Bay. Before it abates, the storm drives them close to *Sea Sprite*. Thus, the party are the first to reach the wreck.

Whispers & Rumours

A character may know one or more rumours from the list below. The character can learn this information in several ways: by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

1. *Sea Sprite* set sail a year ago under the command of the experienced captain, Paavo Joutsi. She was declared lost with all hands, several months ago.
2. At least one "salvage" crew has already boarded the wrecked *Sea Sprite*. While they recovered some of the ship's cargo several of the boarders were killed. The survivors are reticent about events aboard the wreck.
3. The waters near Gloamhold are treacherous. Rocks lurk just beneath the surface ready to rip out the hull of any vessel sailing too close, and foul things live beneath the waves. It is a strange thing that such an experienced captain as Paavo Joutsi would sail there.
4. *Sea Sprite's* voyage has almost bankrupted Vilutar Pakkanen. She is desperate to salvage what she can from the disaster. (False rumour).
5. Smugglers sometimes ply the waters around Gloamhold, and some even set up lairs in the dungeon's outer halls.
6. Vague rumours of smuggling—in anything portable and even people—hang about the crew and captain of *Wave Dancer*. The crew are not to be trusted.

The Valerr and her Crew

This stout, single-masted 80-foot-long cog is slow, but seaworthy. Its captain, Knut Untamo, is a capable, but cautious, seaman. *Valerr* has a crew of 23:

- **Captain Knut Untamo** (LN middle-aged male human fighter 3) knows well the dangers of the waters near the Murkwater. Bald, but sporting a ferociously tangled beard, Knut looks fierce, but prefers conversation to violence. All too aware of his crew's nautical superstitions he won't put them in a position where their fears could come to the fore.
- **First Mate Eevi Lotta** (NG female human fighter 2) greets the characters enthusiastically. She was once a marine and loves sharing stories of derring-do. She finds life a little boring, on *Valerr*. If the characters are short of muscle, she volunteers to join their boarding party, but—of course—requires an equal share of the proceeds.
- **21 Sailors** (various alignments, human) do their jobs with skill, but do not risk their lives to help the party. Most are superstitious, and none are keen to risk their lives or limbs for the party.

The first part of the characters' journey—leaving Languard and sailing across Hard Bay—is without incident. During the voyage, the characters can chat with the crew. This is a final opportunity for them to learn some of the information presented under "Whispers & Rumours".

The Surrounding Locality

Sea Sprite came to grief on a rocky shoal about 200 feet from the Murkwater's black, gaping maw. Here the waters are rough and unpredictable. Many rocks lurk just beneath the water ready to tear out a large vessel's hull. Fishing boats, rowboats and the like have shallow enough drafts to navigate the waters, but larger vessels do so at their own peril.

Thus, on whichever ship—*Valerr* or *Wave Dancer*—the party sail the captain won't sail closer than a 100 feet to *Sea Sprite's* wreck. The characters must row, swim or fly the remaining distance. None of the ship's crew, except Eevi Lotta, offer to help them reach the wreck.

Wilderness Dressing

Use this list, to add life and detail to the final part of party's journey to *Sea Sprite's* wreck.

1. Sea birds swoop and wheel overhead. Several of the birds are large and aggressive. Such birds may swoop down to pluck food from the characters' hands.
2. Dark clouds hang low over the Mottled Spire, casting the whole area into shade. In the lee of the spire's granitic bulk there is no wind.
3. The wind picks up and the sky darkens as a squall passes overhead. Heavy rain lashes the area for ten minutes. Everyone gets soaked.
4. The sinuous back of a playful seal breaks the surface of the water, mere feet from the characters' boat.
5. White water breaks over a submerged rock directly in the path of the characters' boat.
6. A huge black and white long-winged bird—an albatross—glides effortlessly high overhead. The bird is heading further out to sea.
7. A dark shadow under the water shows where a submerged jagged, seaweed-and barnacle-covered rock almost reaches the surface.
8. The fin of something large—perhaps a dolphin or shark—breaks the surface a score of feet from the characters' boat. Intrigued by the boat, it circles for several minutes before swimming away.
9. A thin shaft of sunlight breaks through the clouds, illuminating the rowboat. Is this a good omen?
10. A flock of seabirds circle in the air above *Sea Sprite*. Perceptive characters—or a druid or ranger—notice that (strangely) none of the birds actually land on the wreck.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover on the way to *Sea Sprite's* wreck. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. An empty crate bobs in the water near *Sea Sprite*. Occasionally, it bumps against the ship's hull.
2. A parrot—replete with beautiful plumage—alights on the characters' rowboat. The parrot regards the party with seemingly wise, sorrow-filled eyes.
3. Shards of wood—bits of *Sea Sprite's* hull—bob in the water.
4. The bloated body of a crewman bumps against the hull of the party's rowboat. The man's face and neck have been nibbled and gnawed upon. A perceptive characters makes out small bite marks around the wounds.
5. Like an ethereal burial shroud, a torn piece of white sail drifts just below the waves.
6. A clump of sickly white and yellow mottled seaweed undulates with the swell, but seems to be moving toward the characters' boat. Several small brown crabs cling to the seaweed.
7. A leather belt wrapped around a loose spar, floats near the wreck. The wide belt has deep scratches on it, reminiscent of claw marks.
8. The sodden corpse of a headless seabird gets caught by an oar and flipped into the boat.
9. Gathered by the random action of the sea, a thick "skirt" of seaweed has collected about *Sea Sprite's* wreck. The weed entangled the characters' oars and slow progress toward (or away from) the wreck.
10. A bottle bobs about on the water. It contains a rolled-up scrap of parchment, but the seawater has got into the bottle and obliterated whatever was written upon it.

Notable Locations at a Glance

Sea Sprite has several notable locations:

1. **Upper Deck**: The deck is in disarray. Paavo Joutsi's body is lashed to the ship's wheel in the centre of a scorched ring of planking.
2. **Ship's Armoury**: This locked cabin is given over to the crew's arms and armour.
3. **First Mate's Cabin**: This cramped cabin housed *Sea Sprite's* first mate, Elsa Pakkanen. Now, it holds her body.
4. **Captain's Cabin**: Here dwelt the captain, Paavo Joutsi, in this finely–appointed cabin.
5. **Hold**: The crew stored their provisions and fresh water in this large hold.
6. **Storeroom**: Captain Paavo Joutsi kept the crew's supply of wine and brandy, in this lockable storeroom.
7. **Passengers' Cabin**: When the *Sea Sprite* carried paying passengers, or specialists required for the voyage, they were given the relatively privacy of this partitioned cabin.
8. **Private Store**: Here were stored the passengers' luggage and equipment.
9. **Mess**: The ship's company ate, here. Part of the hull has been smashed away, opening the mess to the elements.
10. **Kitchen**: The ship's cook, Alpo Tornia, prepared the crew's food here, with the help of Aake Seppo the cabin boy. Aake is still alive, but terrified.
11. **Crew Quarters**: Over a dozen hammocks hanging from the rafters mark this as the crew's cramped quarters.
12. **Cargo Hold**: Here was stored *Sea Sprite's* cargo. The hold is open to the sea; much of the goods have been ruined or washed away.
13. **Brig**: Prisoners and members of the crew being punished for drunkenness and the like were locked in the brig.

Architecture & Environment

Many of *Sea Sprite's* locations share certain features:

Illumination: Below decks, small shuttered portholes pierce the hull, and enable dim light to enter the ship.

Floor & Ceiling: Below decks, the wooden ceiling–the floor of the deck above–is only eight-foot high. It has the same statistics as the ship's internal walls.

Steep Stairs: Steep wooden stairs link *Sea Sprite's* decks. The stairs are difficult terrain.

Doors: Stout wooden doors open into the room which they ward. All the doors have locks, but unless noted in the text are unlocked.

Internal Walls: Internal walls are of wooden boards nailed onto stout joists.

Hull: *Sea Sprite's* hull is of thick reinforced wooden planks. Characters can climb the slick hull with difficulty.

Ship Dressing

Sea Sprite has been at sea for months, and was the scene of a horrible massacre. Thus, the ship is in a state of extreme disorder, and many of its supplies have been exhausted. Use this list, to breathe life and detail into *Sea Sprite*:

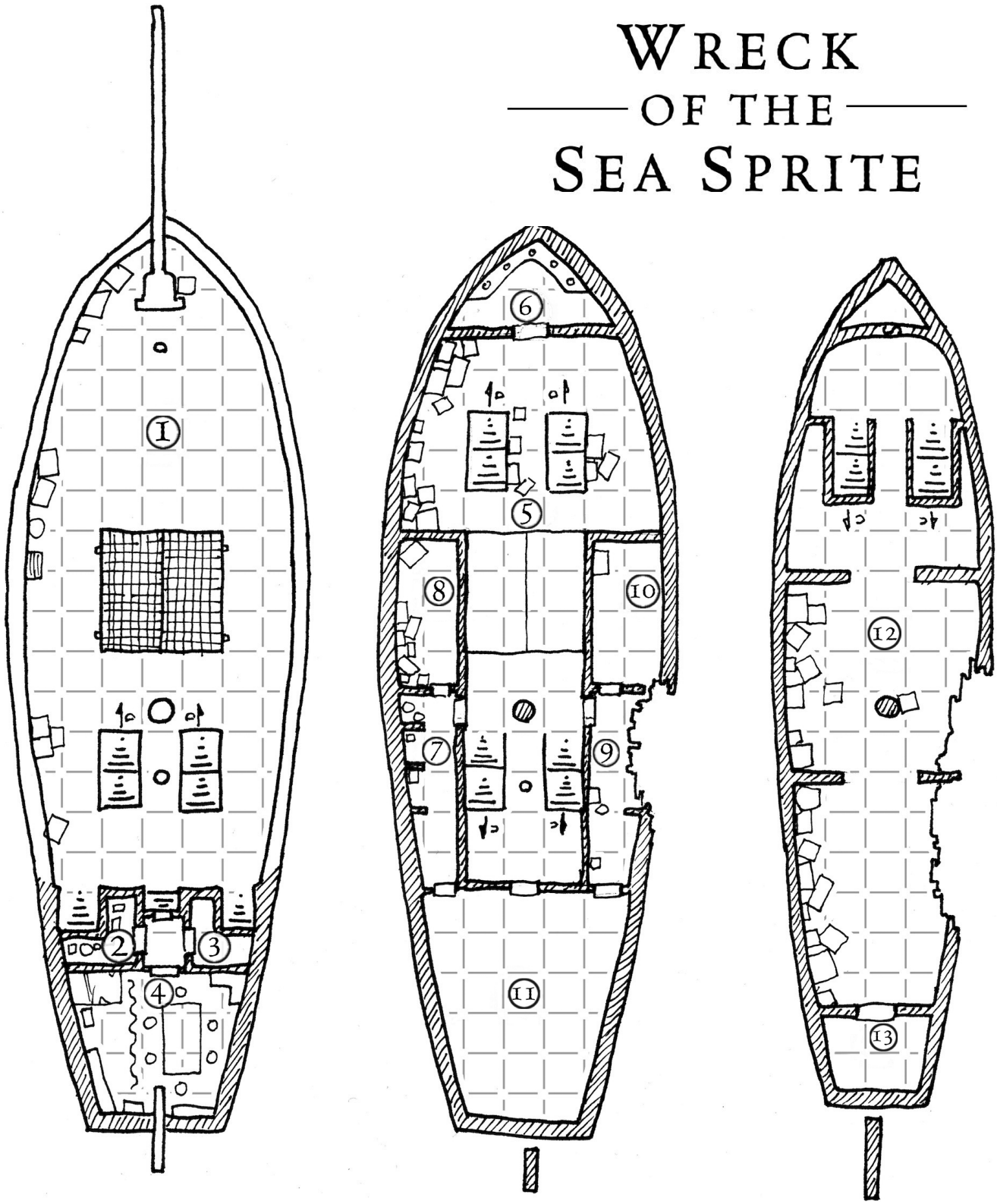
1. A deep gouge in the wall shows where someone wildly swung a sword–and missed their target.
2. The horribly decomposed and gnawed-upon body of a crewman lies sprawled on the floor.
3. Scattered clothing and other personal items are scattered across the deck. All are of the sort a common sailor would own; there is nothing of value here.
4. A rat skitters away from the party–disappearing through a crack in the wall.
5. A loud, and alarming, creaking sound comes from below decks. The sound continues rhythmically for several minutes, before abruptly ceasing.
6. A splatter of dried blood covers the deck.
7. The shutter of a porthole bangs open and closed as waves strike *Sea Sprite*.
8. Mingled with the salty smell of salt the heavy tang of blood hangs in the air.
9. A slashed, empty wineskin hangs from a door handle.
10. The furtive, approaching scrabbling of tiny clawed feet–rats–reaches the characters' ears.

Things to Find

Use this list, to determine what minor objects or features of interest the party discover if they search an area. Modify the value of items below to suit your campaign.

1. A severed hand clutches a dagger stabbed into a wall.
2. An open sea chest lies on one side. The chest's contents–clothes, shoes and the like–are scattered about the floor.
3. The hilt of a broken cutlass lies on the floor. The weapon's splintered blade lies nearby.
4. A line of silver coins forms a bizarre line across the floor.
5. A rat corpse–its back horribly broken–lies on the floor amid a pool of dried blood.
6. A bloody ear, from which depends a small gold hooped earring, squelches under a character's foot.
7. A nine-foot length of frayed rope with what look like teeth marks at one end hangs from a hook.
8. A crewman's gnawed-upon remains lie under an overturned shelf. Mundane items lie scattered all about the area.
9. Shards of jagged glass–the remains of several wine bottle–cover the floor. Treat the glass as caltrops.
10. A bloody handaxe lies against a wall. Marks in the dried blood suggest someone licked the blade while the blood was still fresh.

Wreck of the Sea Sprite



GM Notes

***Clues**: Paavo Joutsi's body likely represents the party's first chance to determine what befell the crew. Modify his injuries and rough time of death to suit your setup.*

1: Upper Deck

The deck is in disarray. Paavo Joutsi's body is lashed to the ship's wheel, in the centre of a scorched ring of planking.

The deck is in a shambles. On the poop deck, a figure slumps against the ship's wheel.

Even an unskilled sailor can see *Sea Sprite*'s rigging and sails are in a terrible state.

Charred Poop Deck: A ring of charred deck, a veritable ring of fire, surrounds the ship's wheel.

Body at the Wheel: This is Paavo Joutsi, who lashed himself to the wheel before his death. He wears slashed and torn leather armour, and a bloodless shortsword lies on the deck at his feet. His right leg has been ripped apart, and a pool of drying blood surrounds the corpse. A healer examining the body determines Paavo was dead before *Sea Sprite* hit the rocks. Paavo wears a chain around his neck from which depend various keys.

2: Ship's Armoury

This locked cabin is given over to the crew's arms and armour.

Locked Door: The key to this door hangs around Paavo Joutsi's neck.

A weapon rack runs along one wall while several open chests stands against the other.

Weapons & Armour: The open chests contain four suits of studded leather armour and six quivers each holding 12 crossbow bolts. Three shortswords, eight spears and six light crossbows rest in the weapon's rack.

3: First Mate's Cabin

This cramped cabin housed *Sea Sprite's* first mate, Elsa Pakkanen. Now, it houses her corpse.

A body-shaped object, covered in tightly-tied sailcloth, lies on the bed in this cramped cabin.

The slight smell of decay fills the air of this small cabin.

Wrapped Body: Here lies the first mate, Elsa Pkkanen, stitched up in a length of sailcloth, ready for burial. Characters closely observing the body notice small lumps moving about under the cloth. Paranoid characters may suspect the body is undead, but these are "merely" rats feasting on the corpse.

Elsa's Personal Possessions: A locked sea chest holds Elsa's personal possessions. Captain Paavo planned to give them to her husband when *Sea Sprite* made port. The coffer's chest is on Paavo's keychain. The coffer contains Elsa's clothes, boots and other mundane possessions. A character searching the coffer finds a beautiful ivory comb intricate carved to depict a creating wave. It is worth 30 gp.

4: Captain's Cabin

The captain's cabin is the most richly appointed on *Sea Sprite*. It is here, the characters find the ship's logbooks and charts.

Locked Door: The key to this door hangs around Paavo Joutsi's neck.

This richly appointed cabin features a large table and chairs along with a curtained section holding a bed, stout sea chest along with other sundry items and pieces of furniture.

Sea Chest: Captain Paavo's locked sea chest contains *Sea Sprite's* charts and log along with writing implements, a sextant and so on. The chest's key is on the captain's neck chain. The chest also holds a plentiful supply of silver and gold coins in several cloth sacks.

Dinner Service: Captain Paavo enjoyed the finer things in life and owned a set of silvery cutlery with four place settings (worth 30 gp), four crystal wine glasses and a matching decanter (together worth 100 gp). In extremis, the silver knives could be used as weapons.

5: The Hold

The crew stored their provisions and fresh water in this large hold. By the time the characters board *Sea Sprite*, the crew's supplies have run perilously low.

Boxes and barrels stand about the hold. Some remain against the hull, while others lie scattered about. Whatever order was once here is long gone.

Boxes and Barrels: Most of the boxes and barrels are empty. Characters searching the hold find two barrels of fresh water and a sea chest filled with hard tack. Squares containing boxes and barrels are difficult terrain.

Rats: Several rats lurk in the hold, attracted by the smell of food. Unless they swarm, the rats stick to the shadows and avoid the characters.

6: Storeroom

Captain Paavo Joutsi (wisely) kept the crew's supply of wine and brandy under lock and key. As an experienced captain, Paavo deemed it prudent to control the ship's supply of strong alcohol.

Six barrels are chained up against the ship's prow under a curved wooden shelf. Battered pewter tankards lie scattered about the cabin floor.

Barrels: These barrels held wine; five are empty while the sixth holds nothing but dregs.

Shelf: The shelf has a raised lip to stop things falling off. A small casket of brandy, still half full, sits on the shelf.

GM Notes

***Treasure**: Place an appropriate amount of silver and gold in Paavo Joutsi's sea chest.*

***Lycanthrope Immunities**: If you use a lycanthrope as the agent of Sea Sprite's ruin, remember their immunity to nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered. If the party don't possess weapons capable of injuring their enemy, make sure they find the silvery cutlery set when they search the captain's cabin.*

GM Notes

***More Treasure**: Locations 7 and 8 provide a handy opportunity to provide the party with treasure. Most of the items on the ship are ultimately the property of her mistress, Vilutar Pakkanen, or her crew. Vilutar has no claim on items found here.*

7: Passengers' Cabin

When the *Sea Sprite* carried paying passengers, or specialists required for the voyage, they were given the relatively privacy of this small, partitioned cabin.

This partitioned cabin holds four berths. Beddings, clothes and other mundane items, cover the floor. A door to your right bangs gently against its frame as waves hit the wreck.

This area has been comprehensively despoiled. The bedding and clothes are ripped and slashed. Large bloodstains mar several of the sheets, and the signs of a fight are all around.

8: Private Store

Here were stored the passengers' luggage and equipment.

Several open sea chests and sacks fill this small, cramped cabin Deep shelving set along one wall holds various odds and ends useful aboard ship.

It is obvious, this area has been looted. However, there are no signs of fighting here.

Chests and Sacks: Squares filled with chests or sacks are difficult terrain. Many items—clothes and the like—hang from chests or lie on the floor. A character searching here finds something from this list:

1. A fine white silk scarf embroidered with delicate blue and red flowers worth 20 gp.
2. Small pouch holding 15 gold coins—all of different designs and age.
3. A sheaf of papers decorated with intricate drawings of strange and exotic animals and birds.
4. A two-foot long ivory tusk with the start of a great sea snake scrimshaw. The work is in its early stages, but of excellent quality.

9: Mess

The ship's company ate, here. Part of the hull has been smashed away, opening this cabin to the elements.

Daylight streams into the ship through a huge hole in the hull. Splinters of wood, broken furniture and so on are scattered all about. The legs of a man jut from under a broken table.

Rats infest this room—drawn here by the scraps of food and tasty corpse under the table.

Corpse: The decomposing corpse of a sailor—Alpo Tornia, the ship's cook—lies partially under a pile of broken furniture. Rats have gnawed on Alpo's body; his face, ears and much of his stomach is missing.

Broken Furniture: Squares filled with broken furniture are difficult terrain.

General Mess: Cutlery, utensils and flagons litter the mess's floor along with other minor personal items dropped here by the crew. If the characters search here and roll on "Things to Find".

10: Kitchen

The ship's cook, Alpo Tornia, prepared the crew's food here, with the help of Aake Seppo the cabin boy.

Wedged Door: The kitchen's door frame was bent by the impact of *Sea Sprite* on the rocks and the door is stuck fast.

Pots, pans and other cooking utensils, along with scraps of food and other rubbish, cover the floor.

Rubbish: A mass of rubbish covers the floor, which counts as difficult terrain.

Aake Seppo: Here hides Aake "Newt" Seppo (N young male human) *Sea Sprite's* sole (human) survivor. Dehydrated and driven mad by his ordeal, Aake huddles in a corner sobbing. Dressed in bloody, torn clothes, Aake has a deep scratch across his face. His black hair is hopelessly tangled, and his grey-blue eyes are red-rimmed.

11: Crew Quarters

Over a dozen hammocks hanging from the rafters mark this as the crew's cramped quarters.

Hammocks hang from the ceiling. Empty sea chests stand about the room. A huge pile of clothes, blankets and the like is heaped against the rear wall. All here is disordered chaos.

Ransacked Chests: Most of the chests have been opened and their contents ransacked. Most spare clothes, blankets and the like have been dumped in a big pile.

12: Cargo Hold

Here was stored *Sea Sprite's* cargo. The hold is open to the sea; much of the goods have been ruined or washed away.

A large rent in the hull lets murky seawater slosh into the hold. Caught by the water's undulations, several boxes and barrels gentle thump against the hull.

Thigh-High Seawater: Seawater fills the hold to a depth of about two-foot.

Sodden Chests & Ruined Cargo: A cursory search of the hold reveals most of the cargo has been ruined, (assumably) swept away or already been looted. Bits of seaweed festoon the cargo and characters carefully observing the scene spot scores of tiny crabs scuttling about the hold.

13: Brig

Prisoners and crew members being punished for drunkenness and the like were locked in the brig.

Locked Door: The door to the brig is locked. It has a small grilled window so one can see inside. The door's key hangs on a hook nearby.

Two thin mattresses, filled with old rags and the like, lie upon the floor of this small, dank cabin.

There is nothing of interest, here.

GM Notes

What Does Aake Know? *Decide what Aake can relate—if anything—regards Sea Sprite's doom. Encountering Aake provides an opportunity for some roleplaying and could serve as a change in pace from exploring the wrecked ship. Paranoid characters may suspect Aake is infected with a disease—perhaps lycanthropy—which could present an interesting moral dilemma.*

Aftermath

If you used one or more of the adventure's hooks, use these notes to resolve the adventure's aftermath:

Vilutar Needs You: Vilutar is delighted to receive *Sea Sprite's* logbook and charts, but is devastated by the loss of her crew. She pays the party their reward and thanks them for their efforts. While she is grateful, she views the characters as nothing more than (useful) paid mercenaries. However, if the characters saved Aake Seppo, were kind to the cabin boy and treated the remains of the other crew with dignity, she would view them more favourably.

A Proposal: Captain Aleksi Lempinen may be an honourable man, or he may not be. If you want to set up a rivalry for the party consider having Aleksi cheat or betray the party in some way. If he delays his scheme until *Wave Dancer* has returned to Languard the party will likely not immediately resort to violence to resolve their differences. The rivalry can be as intense as you desire. Perhaps the party occasionally gets into brawls with *Wave Dancer's* crew or the two groups badmouth each other around the city.

Storm Driven: The party are first onto *Sea Sprite's* wreck and is the first to know of its fate. If they find the ship's logbook in Captain Paavo's cabin, they can quickly learn Vilutar Pakkanen is the ship's ultimate owner. If they visit her, she offers them 50 gp each for the logbook and charts.

Further Adventures

Sea Sprite is not long for the world. With the wreck's proximity to Gloamhold and the bad weather periodically lashing Hard Bay, it is likely she will soon break up. Without using magic to seal the huge hole in her side returning the ship to Languard for repairs and refit is impossible.

However, that doesn't mean future adventures stemming from the events during the characters' exploration of the wreck are impossible. For example, if the characters injure, but do not kill the agent of *Sea Sprite's* destruction, they could encounter the villain again. Perhaps the villain—seeing all is lost—jumps over the side and is swept into the Murkwater. Such a foe could reappear when the characters explore Gloamhold's benighted depths. Alternatively, the same foe could eventually make it to Languard—perhaps hitching a ride to the city on the vessel of some other adventuring party returning from their exploration of the dungeon. Burning for revenge, the villain stalks the characters through the city.

Finally, Vilutar may have further need for the characters who recovered Sea Sprite's logbook and charts. She may be moving a valuable cargo which requires specialist protection. If you want the campaign to move further afield, Vilutar could even plan another trip to the Coral Sea and seek to hire the characters as extra protection for her ship and its crew.

The Secret Name Storyline

Lonely Coast

To know a being's true name is to hold power over it. The arcane fetters binding a summoned creature to a conjurer's command are tied to its name. Celestials, fiends and even gods must yield to the sovereignty of their one, true name. Hence, these mighty beings often go by many epithets, ever jealously guarding the word which could shackle them to another's will. But what if the secret name of a god were to become known? Such power was never meant for mortal men to wield…

The Lonely Coast at a Glance

Ruler: Lord Kenver Locher
Government: Feudal fief
Population: 6,200
Alignments: LN, N, CN, NG, NE
Languages: Common, Goblin
Towns: Wolverton (pop. 1,923)
Villages: Bossin (pop. 648); Hosford (pop. 678); Oakhurst (pop. 413); Swallowfeld (pop. 526)
Fortifications: Caer Syllan, Kerensa's Hold
Resources: Lumber, tin and slate

Turbulent waters and forbidding, trackless forests separate the Lonely Coast from the pleasures and comforts of more civilised lands. Avaricious pirates and merciless slavers ply the storm-tossed waters while atavistic goblins and other foul things creep through the gloom of the Tangled Wood that chokes the forgotten holds and sacred places of the Old People. Deep within the forest, a narrow, rock-strewn defile choked with shadow cuts through a nameless range of rugged, tree-shrouded hills birthing dark, fearsome legends of terrifying monsters and glittering, doom-laden treasures.

Features of the Lonely Coast

The Lonely Coast has some geographical features of note:

Dense Woodland: The Tangled Wood shrouds most of the coast. Much of it is trackless and unexplored. Vicious humanoids, strange wolves and other threats lurk within.

Trails and Tracks: Meandering tracks link the main settlements with a patchwork of farms and the isolated farmsteads of hunters and charcoal burners.

Cliffs: Lofty sea cliffs dominate the approaches to the Lonely Coast. In a few places, shingle beaches stand at their base, but most are inaccessible from the cliffs above.

Hills: A nameless range of rugged, tree-cloaked hills rises to the north. Beyond the range lies the deep Tangled Wood, and unknown perils.

Locations of Note

The Lonely Coast has several locations of interest:

Talan's Bluff: The remains of an ancient hill fortress, sprawl across the summit of a high hill giving impressive views over the Tangled Wood.

Aruis's Watchtower: A ruined tower hidden deep in the Tangled Wood, the watchtower is famous for the powerful conjurer who once dwelled within (and for the eldritch manner of his disappearance). Legends cluster thickly around the ruin.

The Twisted Gorge: Caves and passageways honeycomb the steep, overhanging cliffs of this foul place. Ferocious monsters dwell here in profusion, and a rambling ruin of precariously perched buildings and pathways cling to the cliffs at the head of the gorge.

Deepwater Lake: This lake's cold and deep waters are rumoured to hide much treasure (and a ferocious beast).

Priory of Cymer: This isolated, rundown church dedicated to Darlen and the defeat of a slumbering evil said to lurk in caverns beneath the priory welcomes few visitors these days.

The Orestone: Wind-swept and wave-lashed, this shard of rock lies a mile or so offshore from Wolverton. Many ships have come to grief on this spray-drenched rock. Caves and passageways honeycomb the Orestone; certain deep shafts quest downwards to the squat, cyclopean ruins of the ancient (but not abandoned) troglodyte city of Kar-Loth.

Distance and Journey Times

Distance (to the Nearest Mile by Track & Tra

				Wolverton
			Bossin	4 miles
		Hosford	12 miles	8 miles
	Swallowfled	6 miles	18 miles	14 miles
Oakhurst	8 miles	14 miles	26 miles	22 miles

Travel Times (20 ft.)

				Wolverton
			Bossin	2 hours
		Hosford	6 hours	4 hours
	Swallowfled	3 hours	9 hours	7 hours
Oakhurst	4 hours	7 hours	13 hours	11 hours

Travel Times (30 ft.)

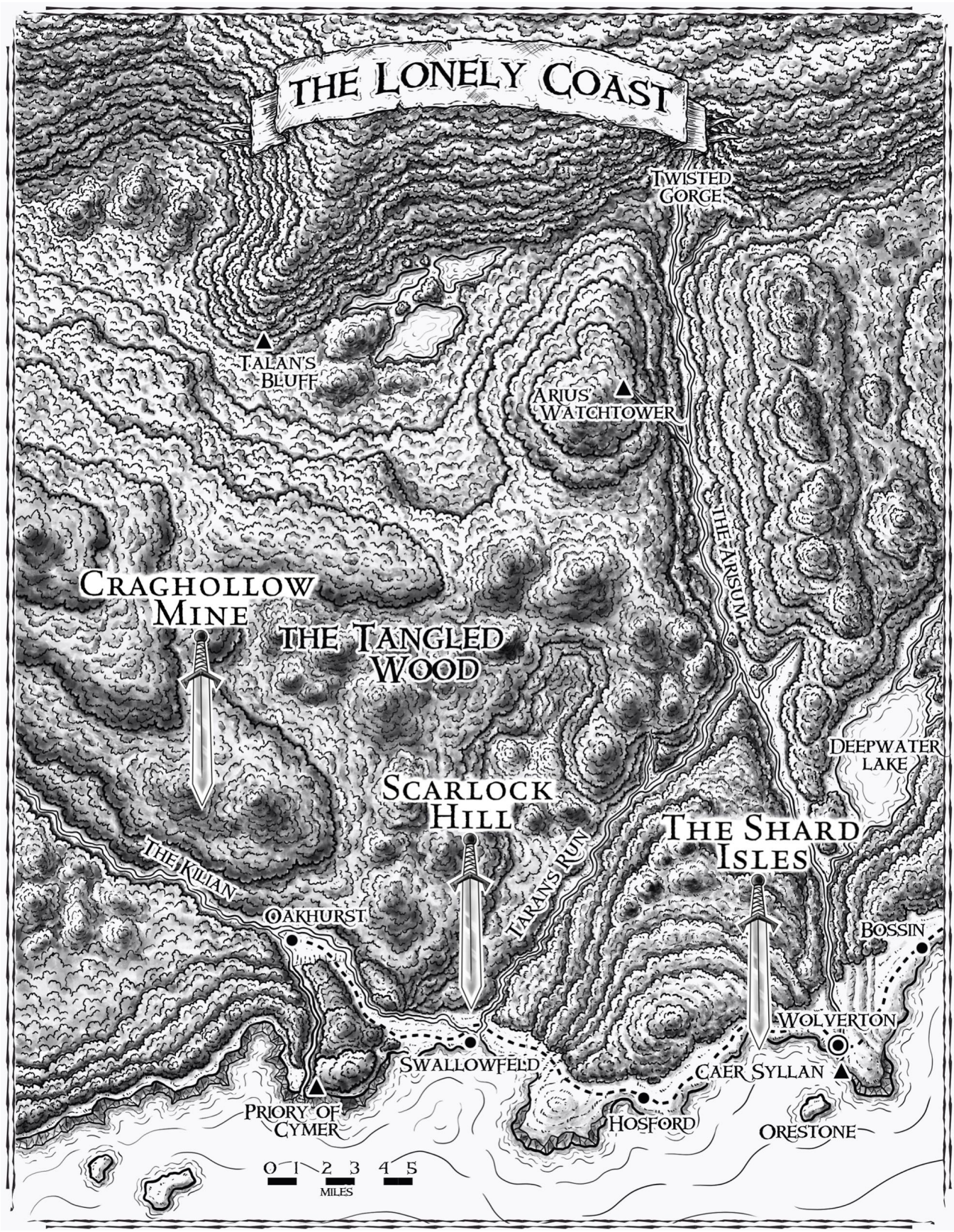
				Wolverton
			Bossin	1 hours
		Hosford	3 hours	2 hours
	Swallowfled	2 hours	5 hours	4 hours
Oakhurst	3 hours	5 hours	7 hours	6 hours

Travel Times (40 ft.)

				Wolverton
			Bossin	1 hours
		Hosford	3 hours	2 hours
	Swallowfled	2 hours	5 hours	4 hours
Oakhurst	2 hours	4 hours	7 hours	6 hours

Travel Times (50 ft.)

				Wolverton
			Bossin	1 hour
		Hosford	2 hours	2 hours
	Swallowfled	1 hour	4 hours	3 hours
Oakhurst	2 hours	3 hours	5 hours	4 hours


THE LONELY COAST
TWISTED GORGE
TALAN'S BLUFF
ARIUS' WATCHTOWER
THE ARISUM
CRAGHOLLOW MINE
THE TANGLED WOOD
DEEPWATER LAKE
SCARLOCK HILL
THE SHARD ISLES
THE KILIAN
TARAN'S RUN
OAKHURST
BOSSIN
WOLVERTON
SWALLOWFELD
CAER SYLLAN
PRIORY OF CYMER
HOSFORD
ORESTONE
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES

Using a Storyline

A Storyline is a self-contained mini-campaign tying together three Raging Swan Press products. While each instalment provides a complete, standalone scenario, they contain plenty of adventure hooks leading to the linked products, and can be played in any order. The Storyline provides an overarching narrative, tying together these three products in a flexible, non-prescriptive way.

While we have done much of the design, you, as a GM, still have some decisions to make to tailor this Storyline to your campaign. First, you must determine the Storyline's Four "A"s:

- **Antagonist**: Who (or what) is the main enemy?
- **Agenda**: What are they trying to achieve?
- **Agents**: Who is helping or supporting them?
- **Assets:** What special advantage(s) do they have?

Second, refer to *Running the Storyline* for ideas to help you decide where to start and how to weave the selected elements together. Third, *Conclusion* offers suggestions on handling the story's climax. It also lists several questions to consider during play, and you need to come up with definitive answers to these by the time you reach the end.

Using Dungeon Backdrops

Tweak and modify the Dungeon Backdrops to make them your own. The parts of this supplement describing the actual dungeons feature extensive space for you to make notes–adding treasure, opponents and so on.

Campaign Setting: This Dungeon Backdrop is designed for use with the Lonely Coast. However, the dungeon is relatively self-contained and with minimal effort can be easily modified to fit almost any campaign world.

Location Descriptions: The various location descriptions provided herein only describe the basic appearance of the dungeon's rooms, chambers and corridors. They do not include descriptions of any monsters lurking therein. Remember when describing the dungeon to your players the snarling orcs (or whatever) are probably more noticeable than the room's features. Also remember, creatures in the dungeon will modify their home to better suit their needs.

Treasure: The text only presents the details of minor treasures the characters could discover in the course of their adventure. Most is of little value, but serves to underline the flavour of the dungeon. Remember to add level-appropriate treasure when designing your dungeons.

Storyline Synopsis

Long ago, the cult of the Red Rubric learnt a god's secret name. The knowledge was far too dangerous to contain in a single place, so the cult split the name into three syllables and transcribed these onto gilded scrolls which they hid in separate sanctums until the time was ripe to unleash the power of the secret name.

The first syllable, *Rho* was hidden in an ancient barrow beneath Scarlock Hill, near Swallowfeld. The second, *Di,* was concealed in Craghollow Mine; a depleted lead mine close to Oakhurst. The third, *Sha*, was taken to the Shard Isles off the coast of Wolverton, where the Red Rubric had its headquarters.

Less than a decade later, a combination of natural disasters and unwanted attention drawn by their sinister rituals led to the destruction of each of the cult's unholy dens. Yet somehow, the runes bearing these stolen fragments of divine power remained undiscovered–until now...

When the characters discover one of the Red Rubric's fell runes, an evil force takes notice, marking the beginning of a thrilling race to obtain the secret name and prevent great tragedy from befalling the Lonely Coast.

The Four "A"s

Select one from each of the categories below:

Antagonist

Who seeks to uncover the secret name?

- **The Cabal**: Contrary to common belief, the Red Rubric survived the destruction of its sanctuaries. Controlled by an obscure triumvirate of hierophants, they long to finish what its predecessors started so many decades ago.
- **The Creature**: Created by the Red Rubric, a profane construct known as the Anathema was wrought from the bodies of the dead, sewn together in a twisted orgy of decaying flesh. Originally meant to serve as a vessel for *Rhodisha,* it reawakens with an unyielding desire to absorb the secret name and thus fulfil its dark, twisted destiny.
- **The Wizard**: Varennos Nero is a powerful wizard whose scholarly pursuits led him to discover the Red Rubric's secret. Nero's obsession with learning the secret name has him meddling with forces far beyond his control.

Agenda

Why does the Antagonist seek control over the secret name?

- **Ascension**: *Rhodisha* is the name of a forgotten god, slain by Braal at the dawn of time. Used in conjunction with a mystic ritual, however, its dormant divinity can be rekindled to the point of allowing a mortal host to ascend to godhood.
- **Destruction**: *Rhodisha* is Darlen, god of law and justice true name. If the name were to be uttered in reverse as part of some dark ritual, it would sever the divine bonds with Darlen's priesthood and undo the god's existence.

- **Incarnation**: *Rhodisha* is the secret name of Braal, god of hatred and malice. Along with the proper incantations, its ritual utterance calls Braal to the mortal realm.

Agents

Who (or what) are the Antagonist's agents?

- **Mercenaries**: Whether forced, bought, enthralled or just inherently evil, this enemy party of adventurers ceaselessly works against the characters, matching them move for move.
- **Monsters**: Summoned, bound or enslaved to their master's mighty will, these fell creatures prowl the land to do the Antagonist's every dark bidding.
- **Zealots**: A collection of cultist, fanatics and ne'er-do-wells united in their misguided dedication to a horrific cause.

Assets

What special item, power, or asset does the enemy wield?

- **Dazzling Wealth**: Either because they are being funded by a wealthy patron, or because they possess a vast trove of treasure, the enemy can rely on an almost inexhaustible supply of gold to fund their sinister endeavours.
- **Excoriator**: The Antagonist or one of their lead Agents wields the *Excoriator Dagger*: a magic, razor-edged blade capable of permanently removing Abyssal brands by flaying the skin from the bearer. At your discretion, the *Excoriator* may possess additional powers.
- **Power at a Price**: The enemy has been hunting for the lost names of gods and demons for many years. The Antagonist and some of their Agents already know a handful such name fragments which, when when spoken aloud, mimic the effects of powerful spells. The price exacted by the utterance of these forbidden words is terrible, however, causing the caster to age 2d6+1 years per level of the spell emulated. Feel free to alter this cost to your liking, perhaps instead using hit points, experience levels or attribute points.

Running the Storyline

Modify or ignore any of the notes below to suit your campaign. This Storyline encompasses the following three Dungeon Backdrops, which can be played in any order:

- *Scarlock Hill*
- *Craghollow Mine*
- *The Shard Isles*

Each Dungeon Backdrop presents several adventure hooks, to introduce the Storyline to your campaign.

Development

All three Dungeon Backdrops contain multiple leads pointing towards each other, as well as several clues through which the characters can learn the story of the Red Rubric and their plot involving the secret name. Thus, the players can choose the order in which they these dungeons. Your remaining task is to weave the Four "A"s together.

The following encounters can develop the story at set points during this mini-campaign. The details have been left deliberately vague to make them easily adaptable to your own campaign.

Suggested Encounter: Let's Make a Deal

Run this encounter after the first adventure.

At the end of their first adventure, the characters have almost certainly discovered one of the syllables of the secret name. In all likelihood, one of them is now branded with an Abyssal rune and keen to learn more about it. Before long, the Antagonist learns of the brand and sends Agents to verify the rumour.

The Agents begin by shadowing the characters, hoping to learn as much about them as they can. If the Agents are confronted, or when they finally choose to approach the characters, they introduce themselves as working for a powerful patron but remain secretive about the Antagonist and their motives. Attempts are made to strike a bargain with the characters, albeit one the Agents do not intend to keep: they offer gold, favour, or whatever it takes in exchange for revealing the leads to the remaining two Dungeon Backdrops. If you think the players need an extra incentive to check out the other dungeons, have the Agents hire them to clear the nearest of the two.

Encounter Goals: This encounter is meant to introduce the Agents and suggest the brands are part of someone's Agenda (although the Agenda itself should not be revealed yet). This confrontation also serves as a plausible way to have the Agents learn about the characters' strengths and weaknesses; information you can put to good use later on! Most importantly, however, you should try to avoid combat during this encounter, and have the Agents flee if needed.

Suggested Encounter: Broken Promises

Run this encounter after the second adventure.

When the second adventure concludes, the characters should have pieced together enough elements to realise the syllables form a key component in the Antagonist's sinister Agenda. Perhaps they were more careful this time and avoided being branded. Even so, if they simply left the second syllable behind in the dungeon, the Agents are certain to acquire it. The Agents, of course, remain on the characters' heels and are ready to show their true colours...

The Agents reappear in force to ambush the characters when they leave the dungeon, or at some other suitable location. They come prepared, having adapted their tactics to counter whatever ploys the characters are known to use. The

time for bargaining is over; the Agents demand the characters surrender both syllables immediately in exchange for their lives.

Encounter Goals: This encounter establishes the Agents (and, by extension, the Antagonist) as enemies. Unless the characters give up both syllables (difficult if one of them bears an Abyssal brand), combat is all but unavoidable. If the Agents are triumphant, they take both syllables, carrying away any branded characters. The others are left for dead. If the characters defeat the Agents, they can learn more about the Antagonist and their Agenda from a surviving enemy.

Suggested Encounter: On Your Marks

Run this encounter before the third adventure.

Before the start of the final adventure, the characters find themselves in one of the following positions: either the Agents are in possession of the two syllables (possibly after having captured one or more characters), or the characters possess them. Whatever the outcome, the characters know the location of the final syllable. The Antagonist is close, however, and should they succeed in reaching its location first, there's no telling what havoc they could wreak—perhaps even with only a part of the secret name! If any characters were kidnapped by the Agents, they can also be tracked to the final Dungeon Backdrop.

A few remaining Agents (most are preparing to travel to the final location) attempt to sabotage or waylay the characters, in order to prevent, or at least delay, their arrival at the final Dungeon Backdrop. The type of sabotage depends on the Agents you chose for this Storyline, but it could include: poisoning the characters' horses, conspiring to have them arrested, sinking their boat, setting ambushes along the road and so on…

Encounter Goals: This encounter highlights that time is of the essence. In addition, its outcome determines how you should stock the final Dungeon Backdrop:

- If the characters overcome the Agents' attempts at sabotage, they arrive at the location before the Antagonist and their Agents, who follow the characters into the dungeon and confront them after it's been cleared. Stock the Dungeon Backdrop as you would normally.
- If the Agents succeed in delaying the characters long enough, the characters arrive some time after the Antagonist and their Agents have cleared the dungeon, but before they are able to complete their foul ritual. Stock the Dungeon Backdrop with Agents and place the Antagonist in the complex's most suitable area.

Conclusion

The final Dungeon Backdrop is where the characters come face to face with the Antagonist. Exactly how this confrontation unfolds depends entirely on your Four "A"s, as well as the outcomes of the first two adventures. If the Antagonist possesses the syllables of the secret name—or is bold enough to improvise without the full set—a diabolical ritual to fulfil the Agenda is probably the most fitting climax to this Storyline.

By the time you arrive at this point, you should have prepared answers to the following questions:

1. **What are the minimum requirements for a successful ritual?** Does the Antagonist require all three syllables to fulfil their Agenda? Must the physical bearers of the three brands be present for the ritual to succeed? Is it possible to take a few shortcuts instead, offering a lesser reward at greater personal risk?
2. **How can the characters foil the ritual?** Apart from preventing the Antagonist from obtaining the necessary elements to complete the ritual, how can the characters sabotage their efforts? Does it require a certain spell, action or item? Make sure they have the opportunity to learn how to disrupt the ritual before the confrontation.
3. **What is the ritual's effect?** Consider what happens in your campaign if the ritual succeeds. Does the Antagonist realise their ultimate goal, or was the secret name flawed after all? What happens if the ritual fails or the characters interfere part-way through? Do the effects manifest partially or temporarily?
4. **How do the brands work?** Do the brands bestowed by the Red Rubric's scrolls have any effects beyond safeguarding the syllables? Can they be removed from a bearer?
5. **What if the characters fail?** What happens if the characters fail to thwart the Antagonist's plans. Remember: under no conditions should failure mean the end of your campaign!

The Sacred Blood Storyline

Ashlar

Stone and secrets form the foundations of storied Languard, jewel of Ashlar. In spite of its strong walls and numerous allies, the ancient city is poised to fall. Deep within the bowels of Languard's labyrinthine undercity, a half-forgotten chapel is the only thing keeping the coming darkness at bay. When a failed attempt at ransacking the old chapel weakens its power, a chain of fateful events is set into motion, threatening to drown Languard in a tide of restless dead. Only one person can avert this disaster...but who are they?

Using a Storyline

A Storyline is a self-contained mini-campaign tying together three Raging Swan Press Dungeon Backdrops. While each is a standalone scenario, they are also designed to contain adventure hooks leading to the other instalments, and can be played in any order. The Storyline provides an overarching narrative, tying together these three products in a flexible, non-prescriptive way.

While we have done most of the heavy lifting in outlining the narrative and embedding clues and leads, you still have some decisions to make to tailor this Storyline to your own campaign. First of all, you must determine the Storyline's Four A's:

- **Antagonist**: Who (or what) is the main enemy?
- **Agenda**: What are they trying to achieve?
- **Agents**: Who is helping or supporting them?
- **Assets:** What special advantage(s) do they have?

Refer to "Running the Storyline" for ideas to help you decide where to start and how to weave the selected elements into the narrative. "Conclusion" offers suggestions on handling the story's climax. It also lists several questions to consider during play; you must decide the answers by the time you reach the end.

Synopsis

Nearly 400 years have passed since Ilasual Nenonen, traitorous pretender to Languard's throne was vanquished. In his sanctum, hidden deep below Languard, the Bloodstained Prince studied black magic, attempting to unlock the secret to immortality. After his defeat, his untended experiments, chief among them an unstable gate to the plane of shadow, began to fail. As its magical wards deteriorated, the spirits of the dead found their way back to the realm of the living. These were Languard's Haunted Years.

A new knightly order—the Knights of the Black Swan—were founded to deal with this plague of undeath. Eventually, knight-captain Talis Ritari succeeded in locating and sealing the breach, and a holy chapel was built over it, protected by powerful wards.

When the last known member of the knightly bloodline dies, a local crime lord learns of the chapel, and his attempts to rob it result in a new breach. Among the restless dead pouring from it is the ghost of Alma Nenonen, Ilasual's cruel bride. If Alma succeeds in possessing the last remaining knightly heir, nothing can stop her from opening the gate and unleashing the fell energies of the plane of shadow onto the unsuspecting city.

The Four A's

Select one from each of the categories below:

Antagonist

Which of the three possible heirs is currently possessed by the spirit of Alma Nenonen?

- **Varis Karna**: Varis appears in *Dungeon Backdrop: Aninas Family Crypt* (see "The Adventure Begins: A Helping Hand").
  - Varis has six fingers on each hand.
  - Varis has a prominent, hooked nose.
- **Neah Tuomela**: Neah is introduced in *Dungeon Backdrop: Undercity Chapel* (see "The Adventure Begins: Too Rich for My Blood").
  - Neah has five fingers on each hand.
  - Neah has a prominent, hooked nose.
- **Mikal Havari**: Mikal makes an appearance in *Dungeon Backdrop: Martryn Manor* (see "The Adventure Begins: Face Value").
  - Mikal has six fingers on each hand.
  - Mikal has a large, bulbous nose.

Agenda

What drives Alma to breach the shadow gate beneath Languard?

- **Alma's Revenge**: Consumed by an immortal thirst for vengeance, Alma seeks to sunder the shadow gate and let the dead run amok in the city.
- **Alma's Diversion**: Ilasual, the Bloodstained Prince, yet lives! Opening the shadow gate is merely a diversion designed to keep Languard occupied while Ilasual prepares a new plan.
- **Alma's Ambition**: With the aid of a ghostly army, Alma intends to besiege Castle Languard, possess the duke and reclaim the throne she believes is rightfully hers.

Agents

Who (or what) are Alma's minions, servants or followers?

- **The Living**: Local thugs and criminals whose loyalty can be purchased for hard coin.
- **The Undead**: Spectral spies stalk the characters, while corporeal undead are deployed to hinder their progress.
- **The Possessed**: An ever-changing group of diverse citizens possessed and controlled by Alma's ghostly lieutenants.

Assets

What special item, power or advantage does Alma wield?

- **Captive Spirits**: Among the restless dead pouring from the shadow gate breach are the spirits of the characters' former friends and family members. Once Alma learns of the characters' involvement, she uses these spirits as leverage, threatening to destroy them unless the characters comply with her demands.
- **Phantom Periapt**: This golden necklace set with a single dusky amethyst gem obfuscates Alma's alignment and nature. As long as the Antagonist wears the periapt, Alma's possessing spirit cannot be magically detected.
- **Storm of Souls**: The steady stream of apostate souls bleeding from the breach slowly coalesce into a single, spectral mass hovering above Languard. Its size increases after each adventure, until the breach is closed.
  - After the first adventure, daylight becomes dim light.
  - After the second adventure, darkness replaces daylight.
  - After the third adventure, a spectral storm perpetually scours the darkened city.

Choosing the True Knightly Heir

Before running this Storyline, you must decide which of the three possible heirs is Talis Ritari's true descendant.

These three heirs are listed in the "Antagonist" section, and each is detailed in their own respective Dungeon Backdrop. A pair of dominant physical traits listed underneath each NPC suggests how their descent from Talis Ritari might be proved. For example, if the characters learn Sir Talis has six fingers on each hand (by examining his sarcophagus in the *Aninas Family Crypt*) as well as a prominent, hooked nose (by finding his death mask in *Martryn Manor*), Mikal Havari is the true heir.

We recommend you do not choose same NPC as both the Antagonist and the true heir, since this would make things too easy for Alma.

Running the Storyline

The following guidelines are intended to help you construct a compelling narrative with minimal preparation. Do not hesitate to modify, expand or ignore any of them to suit your own play style.

Where to Start

This Storyline encompasses the following three Dungeon Backdrops, which can be played in any order:

- *Aninas Family Crypt*
- *Undercity Chapel*
- *Martryn Manor*

Simply choose one of these to kick off the Storyline, ideally using the first adventure hook provided under "The Adventure Begins".

Development

All three Dungeon Backdrops contain leads pointing towards each other, as well as several clues through which the characters can learn the story of Tuonetar's Knights of the Black Swan and how they managed to seal the shadow gate two centuries ago. The heroes can choose the order in which they explore these dungeons. Your task is to weave your Four A's into the overarching narrative and have everything interact with the characters between, or even during, those three adventures.

The following encounters can be used to develop the story at set points during this mini-campaign. Note some details have been left deliberately vague to make them easily adaptable to your own campaign.

Between Any Two Adventures

This Storyline hinges on the characters meeting all three possible heirs in order to determine the true heir of Talis Ritari's sacred blood. The easiest way to do this is by using the first adventure hook of each Dungeon Backdrop (see "The Adventure Begins").

It is also important to establish a sense of urgency throughout the Storyline, spurring the characters into action. The following two encounters drive the story forward.

Ghosts at Traitor's Gate

At dusk, a battalion of some 300 spectral soldiers materialises at Traitor's Gate—Languard's east gate named for the corpses hung from its parapets. The heraldic device of a black hydra features prominently on the soldiers' livery, identifying them as renegades who fought for the Bloodstained Prince four centuries ago. They do not interact with mortals and simply remain standing in silent attention, as if waiting for something or someone. Their numbers grow by 3d10 each day.

Encounter Goals: This encounter shows things are getting worse. In addition, the throng of ghostly renegades gathered at Traitor's Gate reveals a link to the Time of Two Crowns, which plunged Ashlar into a brief, but bloody civil war. Before long, rumours telling of Ilasual's imminent return begin circulating.

Alma Reveals Her Hand

Alma attempts to possess one of the other two possible heirs. Halfway through the process, she is interrupted (perhaps even by the characters) and fails to claim her new host—at least for now. If Alma's victim survives, they tell the characters what they learned of her Agenda during the brief time their souls were interwoven.

Encounter Goals: This encounter enables the characters to learn the Antagonist's true identity and Agenda, making it clear the stakes are high! If Alma realises her cover is blown, she possesses an NPC soon after, leaving the original Antagonist to serve as a red herring.

After the Aninas Family Crypt

Inside the old crypt in Redfern Cemetery, the characters were able to verify the number of fingers on the hand of Talis Ritari, allowing them to eliminate one or more possible heirs. In addition, it is likely they recovered the hilt of *Valcorim*—the sword wielded by Talis Ritari. Alma's Agents are aware of this, however, and are preparing to ambush the characters in Redfern Cemetery as they exit the dismal vault.

Suggested Encounter: Ambush!

The Agents have surrounded the Aninas Family Crypt, and are hiding among the tombs and bushes, ready to strike. Allow the characters the opportunity to spot or sense the ambush as they prepare to leave the crypt. Clever and alert parties might even turn the tables on the Agents by exiting the crypt via the Secret Tunnel (location 7).

Encounter Goals: This encounter is meant to bring the characters face to face with the Agents, possibly for the first time. The Agents' motive behind the attack is to take everything the characters found inside Talis Ritari's tomb chamber. Unless the characters have discovered the Antagonist's identity, Alma won't allow her Agents to kill them, believing they may yet serve as unwitting accomplices to her Agenda.

After Martryn Manor

In Martryn Manor, the characters discovered Talis Ritari's stolen death-mask, allowing them to verify the knight's noble features, providing another valuable clue to the true heir's identity. In all likelihood, they crossed swords with the evil Rahvu Rantanen and perhaps even succeeded in bringing this vile murderer to justice. As the characters are about to find out, Rahvu's enemies are many, and some of them are extremely grateful to be rid of him.

Suggested Encounter: Enemy of My Enemy

The characters are approached by Narlen Vuolle, chief enforcer of the Shadow Masks—Languard's pre-eminent thieves' guild. Narlen explains Rahvu has been a thorn in the guild's side for quite some time, and by eliminating him, the characters have earned the gratitude of the Shadow Masks. The entire "ghost affair" Narlen explains, is bad for the guild's business. The Shadow Masks have several hideouts and operations in the undercity. If the duke were to send men to scour the tunnels, all those assets risk being exposed or lost. Perhaps the characters and the Masks should work together?

Encounter Goals: This encounter presents the characters with a tough choice. While they can use all the help they can get, the question remains if it's wise to trust the Shadow Masks. If they agree to work together, Narlen has an elite group of thieves accompany the characters. (As a rule, though, the thieves should not outshine the characters).

Conclusion

This Storyline meets its epic conclusion in the Undercity Chapel! As soon as the true heir is revealed, the characters must locate (or revisit) the chapel to seal the breach. Naturally, Alma and her Agents are prepared to confront them there. Exactly how the final confrontation unfolds depends on your Four A's, as well as the outcomes of the characters' earlier adventures. If Alma somehow succeeded in possessing Talis Ritari's true heir, Languard's doom is nigh, and the characters must win a desperate race against time to foil her diabolical Agenda.

By the time you arrive at this point, you should have prepared answers to the following questions:

1. How is Languard affected by the breach?

As more and more spirits begin roaming the city streets, how do Languard's citizens react? Do they stand firm, confident their gods and rulers will protect them? Or do they succumb to fear, fleeing the doomed city or rioting and plundering in its streets? A bit of civil unrest goes a long way towards explaining why neither the duke nor the priests at the Father's Hall have the resources to deal with the breach themselves.

2. How can the breach be sealed or opened?

Does a simple feat of strength suffice to seal the shadow gate? Or is there a mystical component involved as well? Perhaps *Valcorim* must be placed between the doors to seal the gate? Is one shard enough, or must the sword be reforged first? And what of Alma? Does she need a specific spell or ritual to fully open the shadow gate? If so, describe what it is, and give the characters a chance to learn how they can sabotage it.

3. Who can safely enter the chapel?

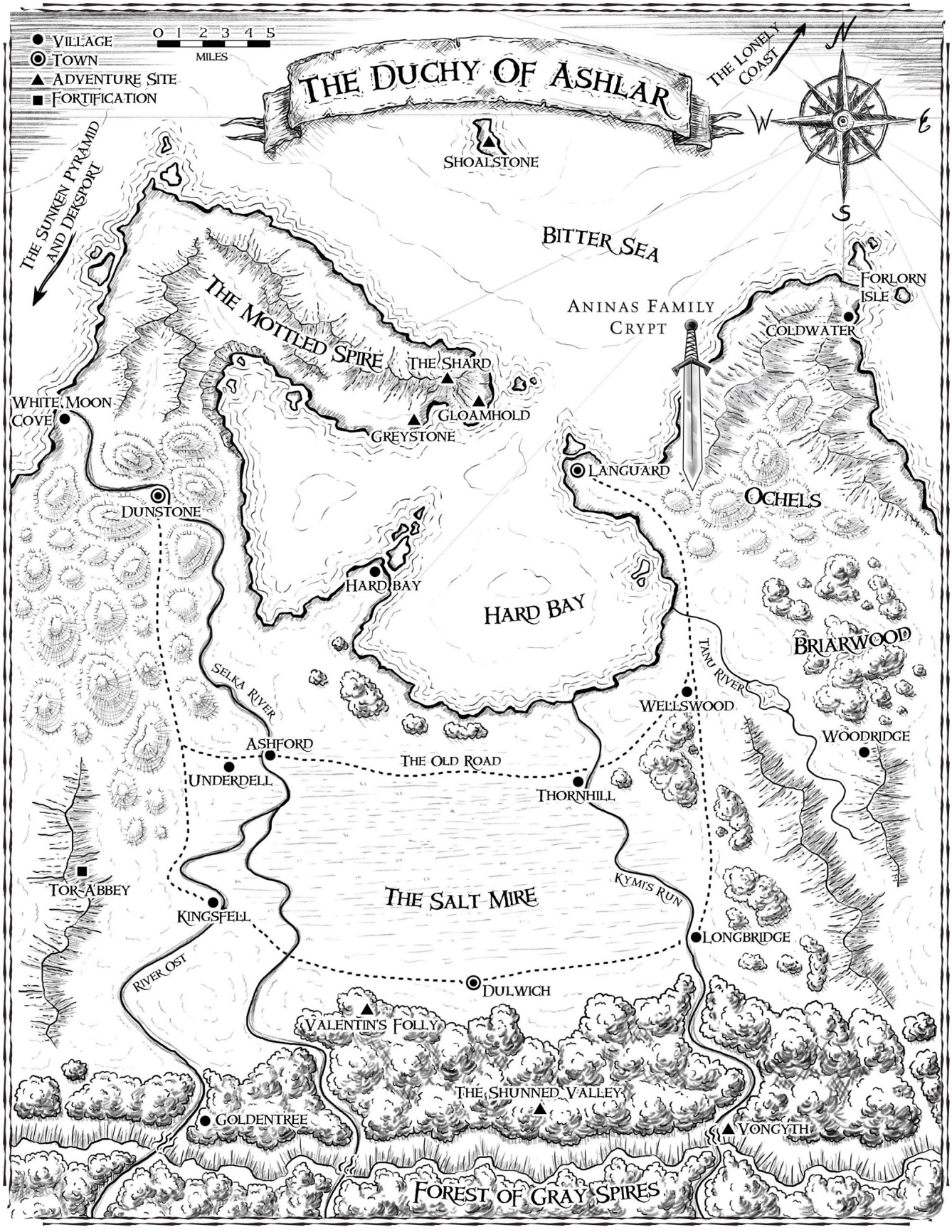
Does the true heir's presence suffice to temporarily suppress the fell powers of the chapel's guardian statue, allowing others to approach the breach as well? Or can only those of sacred blood pass the chapel's guardian? Is there some way to circumvent the deadly spells cast by the Obsidian Swan?

4. How does Alma's ability to possess people work?

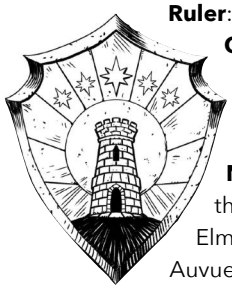
Most systems provide a rules framework for ghosts to possess the living. You should review these rules and adjust them if need be in order to reflect the practiced ease and increased duration of Alma's possession ability.

5. What if Alma succeeds?

Consider beforehand what happens if the characters fail to thwart Alma's plans. Unless you are prepared to accept Ashlar's capital being overrun by the evil dead, introduce some flaw or oversight in Alma's plans to prevent the worst from happening. Remember: while failure should have dire consequences, it shouldn't mean the end of your campaign!


THE DUCHY OF ASHLAR
VILLAGE
TOWN
ADVENTURE SITE
FORTIFICATION
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES
N
S
E
W
THE LONELY COAST
THE SUNKEN PYRAMID AND DEKSPORT
SHOALSTONE
BITTER SEA
FORLORN ISLE
ANINAS FAMILY CRYPT
COLDWATER
THE MOTTLED SPIRE
THE SHARD
GLOAMHOLD
GREYSTONE
WHITE MOON COVE
LANGUARD
OCHELS
DUNSTONE
HARD BAY
HARD BAY
BRIARWOOD
TANU RIVER
SELKA RIVER
WELLSWOOD
WOODRIDGE
ASHFORD
THE OLD ROAD
UNDERDELL
THORNHILL
TOR ABBEY
KYMI'S RUN
THE SALT MIRE
KINGSFELL
LONGBRIDGE
RIVER OST
DULWICH
VALENTIN'S FOLLY
THE SHUNNED VALLEY
GOLDENTREE
VONGYTH
FOREST OF GRAY SPIRES

Languard at a Glance



Ruler: Duke Armas Nenonen
Government: Overlord
Population: 7,923 (6,614 humans, 287 dwarves, 189 elves, 236 half-elves, 264 half-orcs, 189 halflings, 144 gnomes)
Notable Folk: Atro Ahokas (leader of the Worshipful Company of Freetraders), Elmo Rekunen (First Protector), Hannele Auvuenen (High Priestess of Conn), Heimo Karppanen (High Priest of Abarin), Marja Pasanen (Chancellor), Taneli Eronen (Serat's Stormlord), Taneli Laitnen (Guildmaster of the Shadow Masks), Varma Nikkonen (Lady Protector [of Darlen]), Veli Nikkonen (Captain of the Watch)
Alignments: LN, N, NG
Languages: Common
Resources & Industry: Fishing, commerce, general industry

Languard is a busy, noisy place. The administrative and mercantile heart of the Duchy of Ashlar it is, however, also a place of fear and gradual decay.

Sprawling over a series of rocky bluffs, and heavily fortified, the town defends Hard Bay's narrow mouth and the settlements beyond. Many adventurers, sell-swords and mercenaries come to Languard. The closest settlement of note to Gloamhold, and the duchy's largest port, here are found the greatest opportunities for fame, gold and advancement. Here also (for the unlucky or careless) are found the greatest opportunities for infamy, poverty and death.

City Lore

Most characters know something about Languard.

- Capital of the Duchy of Ashlar, Languard is its largest and wealthiest settlement. It is also the nearest settlement of note to Gloamhold's doom-shrouded halls.
- Languard is the oldest human settlement in Ashlar, founded almost 500 years ago by the first duke. Castle Languard is the city's oldest structure.
- Caves and caverns are reputed to honeycomb the rock beneath Castle Languard; some run all the way down into High City.

Lie of the Land

Visitors approaching Languard likely first spy Castle Languard's towers and battlements towering above the city. Then, the spires and lofty roofs of various churches and abbeys come into view along with the city's impressive defences.

From each of Languard's gates, a broad and muddy street leads into the city. The finest houses and inns of each district flank these roads. Here, merchants and craftsfolk live above their shops, sea captains rest and other rich folk—members of the clergy, adventurers (both retired and active) and so on—enjoy life. Narrower roads lead away from these bustling thoroughfares; along these, the houses are narrower, taller and in worse repair. From these streets, a warren of alleys and tiny lanes radiate into the depths of the city.

Languard has five distinct districts.

High City

Set upon the Svart's northern bank, High City rises above the stink and muck of the rest of Languard by dint of a series of bluffs rising from the river's waters. Here dwell the great and the good (or perhaps just the wealthy) of Languard.

In High City, the streets are cleaner and broader, the houses are of stone and slate, and the folk are wealthier and healthier. The concentration of so much wealth and power should attract thieves and other ne'er-do-wells. However, given the large numbers of men-at-arms, bodyguards and other armed personages serving the folk dwelling here, it is a brave, stupid or superlatively skilled burglar who works in High City.

Low City

The name given to the bulk of Languard sprawling to the south of the Svart, the Low City is home to most of the city's populace. It is named both for its position below the High City and for the low-born status of most of the folk dwelling therein.

The Shambles

Called the Shambles by visitors and locals alike, much not available in the nicer (and safer) parts of the city is on offer here. Respectable folk rarely visit the Shambles. Lying exclusively to the south of the Svart, between Cheap Street and Low Gate, the Shambles is a place of narrow, twisting alleyways, tottering tenement buildings and cloying desperation. Here dwelling cheek to jowl live Languard's poorest citizens in cramped, unsanitary conditions.

Perpetual gloom cloaks these alleys—the jetties of the ramshackle and dilapidated shoddily built wooden houses—typically, three or sometimes four-stories high—almost meet those of the house opposite high above the street. Thus, the Shamble's alleys have the aspect of a gigantic sunken maze. The streets are nothing more than packed, worn earth that turns to slippery mud during heavy rainfall.

There are worse places to live, though, than the Shambles.

The Fishshambles

Where the dilapidated houses run down toward the Svart's southern bank, the Shambles blurs into the Fishshambles. Here among the tangled, reeking labyrinth of narrow, tenebrous alleys dwell many of the fisherfolk and other ne'er-do-wells.

The Fishshambles sprawls along a waterfront replete with rickety wharfs and jetties to the north of Cheap Street. A few folk maintain totteringly decrepit warehouses, hard against

the docks; most such locations are used for nefarious activities such as smuggling. At least two are under the Shadow Marks' control.

The folk here are tough, well used to dealing with the vicissitudes of life and Hard Bay's perils. Most of the folk and businesses in the Fishshambles make their living from the sea. Adventurers seeking a boat and its owner brave enough to sail to Gloamhold will likely eventually gravitate here.

The Wrecks

The basest folk—the degenerate and debased takolen—dwell in the Wrecks, a swath of waterfront dominated by rotting wharves and fetid, half-sunken boats. A singular air of ruin and decay hangs heavily over the rotting wharves and the festering, stinking boats moored alongside or grounded in the shallow water thick with silt, seaweed and jetsam. The whole forms a confused mishmash of homes, warehouses, whorehouses, taverns and other unsavoury businesses. A cancerous darkness lurks within the takolen's hearts; one day it might ooze forth to draw Languard and its folk into darkness.

Even the Shadow Masks dare not work here, but some of the braver—or perhaps more debased—souls do sometimes visit certain of these uniformly foul, unwelcoming businesses.

Inhabitants

Appearance: Languardians are a fair-skinned folk. Brown or sandy coloured hair and brown or hazel eyes predominate. Facial hair is worn mainly by the lower classes—being clean shaven (for men) or sporting elaborate and impractical, hairstyles (for women) are the marks of breeding, class and wealth.

Dress: Woollen tunics and breeches, along with heavy woollen cloaks in the winter, predominate. Clothes worn by the wealthy are of finer quality and more colourful.

Nomenclature: male Armas, Einar, Jani, Onni, Taisto, Veijo; female Aila, Elina, Kaari, Laina, Saini; family Ahokas, Eskola, Korpela, Ojanen, Rintala, Varala.

Daily Life

Although it is a city—and Ashlar's largest and richest settlement—living in Languard still feels like living on the frontier. Although the city has not been attacked or overtly threatened in living memory, its proximity to Gloamhold's doom- drenched halls throws a pall over its alleys and thoroughfares. The high proportion of adventurers, retired adventurers and other folk well used to magic and/or violence means the city is rarely truly peaceful.

Winter storms all but cut off the city and the duchy from the outside world. With travel by sea too perilous the populace turns inwards. Little of import or excitement is accomplished over the winter months.

Trade & Industry

Daily life in Languard centres around the Low Market (location L1) and the sea. A great, wide-open space of mud and sparse, worn grass the marketplace hosts weekly markets. Then, small stalls and tents crowd the place as merchants and tradesmen from the nearby settlements, as well as visiting merchants and itinerant pedlars, flock here to sell their wares.

Languard's harbour hosts a multitude of small fishing boats, which set sail daily to haul in their catch to the fishmongers, inns and street vendors of the town. Despite the risks inherent in fishing Hard Bay's waters, catches are always plentiful, the water around Languard seemingly ever- teeming with fish.

Law & Order

Duke Armas Nenonen, through his elected officials and the city watch, holds Languard in an iron grip. However, despite his best efforts, lawlessness—particularly in the Wrecks, the Shambles and the Fishshambles—yet flourishes. A certain amount of low- level crime is—of course—inevitable, but the Shadow Masks continue to operate in the city, something which greatly vexes the duke.

The Watch

Charged with maintaining law and order throughout the city, except within Castle Languard's walls, the watch maintains garrisons at strategic points throughout the city. Led by Veli Nikkonen (LN middle-aged male human fighter 5) the watch numbers roughly 180 individuals, although only a quarter or so of this number are on duty at any given moment.

The watch maintains a continuous presence in High City and Low City with daily and nightly patrols. Disturbances—particularly in High City—are quickly investigated. In the Shambles and Fishshambles, however, the watch is a rare sight; here they only venture in large numbers. The watch avoids the Wrecks except in times of great need; incursions against the clannish Takolen are always well- planned and often have support from the Watcher's Spire such is the foul reputation of these degenerate folk.

Unless they are specifically expecting trouble, watch patrols normally comprise four men. Sometimes, in the Low City, the watch mounts double patrols led by an experienced sergeant. Most watchmen prefer working in the High City; here the folk are generally more pleasant, violence and robbery are rarer and the opportunity for bribery is greater.

Festivals & Traditions

The Languardians celebrate several festivals including:

Darkness Rising: On the shortest day of the year—the winter solstice—Languardians light candles and place them in their windows to ward away the coming winter darkness, and fires are

kept burning bright through the night. On this day, evil's influence is seen to be strongest over the world and it is a night of wicked deeds and foul doings.

Founder's Day: Founder's Day commemorates the day the first duke, Arndul Nenonen, came ashore and established a camp on the headland upon which Languard stands.

On this day, the duke and his household process through the streets to the commoners' acclaim. Family Nenonen also provide a feast for the city's commonfolk at High Market, to which all are invited. It is a day of great celebration and game playing. The revels go on late into the night. In anticipation of Founder's Day many people travel to the city; consequently, finding lodgings in the city around this time can be all but impossible.

Storms' End: Celebrated when the worst of the winter storms have abated, the exact date of Storms' End is at the whim of Serat's Stormlord (Taneli Eronen). The festival occurs on the open water and comprises a great flotilla of fishing vessels and other small craft setting sail into Hard Bay to release offerings into the water for a good season.

Notable Locations at a Glance

Most of Languard comprises homes or businesses. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers. Such locales are tagged on the map with a letter followed by a number.

The letter portion of each tag identifies either the part of the city in which the location can be found (L, S, F, W, H) or the location's type (G, T). Thus:

- **F**: A location in the Fishshambles.
- **G**: One of Languard's gate.
- **H**: A location in High City.
- **L**: A location in Low City.
- **S**: A location in the Shambles.
- **T**: One of Languard's temples.
- **W**: A location in the Wrecks.

Fishshambles Locations

F1 The House of Sighs: Seeking shelter in this almshouse is little better than living on the streets.

F2 The Drunken Sailor: A popular dockside tavern.

High City Locations

G2 River Gate: These two towers oversee all river traffic.

G4 Duke's Gate: The least-used of Languard's gates. Only those traveling northwards use this gate.

H1 Castle Languard: Family Nenonen's seat.

H2 High Market: Those with a taste for the finer things in life come to High Market.

H3 Urmas' House: The aged sage Urmas—one of Ashlar's greatest authorities on Gloamhold—dwells here.

H4 The Dreaming Spires: Ashlar's centre of learning, the library here is only matched by that held at the Black Tower.

H9 Dragonheart Tavern: A favourite among nobles for its wide and every-changing menu, the Dragonheart is always busy.

T2 The Father's Hall: A cathedral dedicated to Conn's worship and the centre of his faith in Ashlar.

T3 The Great Forge: A clamour of noise and smoke perpetually rises above Abarin's temple-forge.

T4 Watcher's Spire: Darlen's followers dwell in this fortified temple.

Low City Locations

G1 Low Gate: Low Gate is always busy, choked with a multitude of carts piled high with trade goods.

G3 Traitor's Gate: "Decorated" with the remains of traitors to the crown, Traitor's Gate is well named.

L1 Low Market: A bustling market fills this muddy space.

L2 Vonya's Span: Of dwarven craft—and reputedly haunted—Vonya's Span is the only bridge spanning the Svart.

L3 The Scythe: The one-legged Arvo Outila runs this drinking den renown for live music.

T1 Fane of the Waves Eternal: Here, Serat's worshippers commune with the ocean's eternal glory.

Shambles Locations

S1 Raisa's Curios: Idle adventurers often come here to browse the eclectic range of goods on offer.

S2 The Bloody Eagle: A seemingly destitute merchants runs this tavern, which is a Shadow Mask front.

Wrecks Locations

W1 Duranki's: The Duranki family will ferry (unwary, too-trusting) adventurers to Gloamhold, for a fee.

W2 The Fallen Maid: Here dwells one of Ashlar's pre-eminent assassins.

Locations by Category

Fortifications: Duke's Gate (G4), Low Gate (G1), River Gate (G2), Traitor's Gate (G3), H1 Castle Languard (H1)

Homes: Urmas' House (H3)

Inns: Bloody Eagle, the (S2)

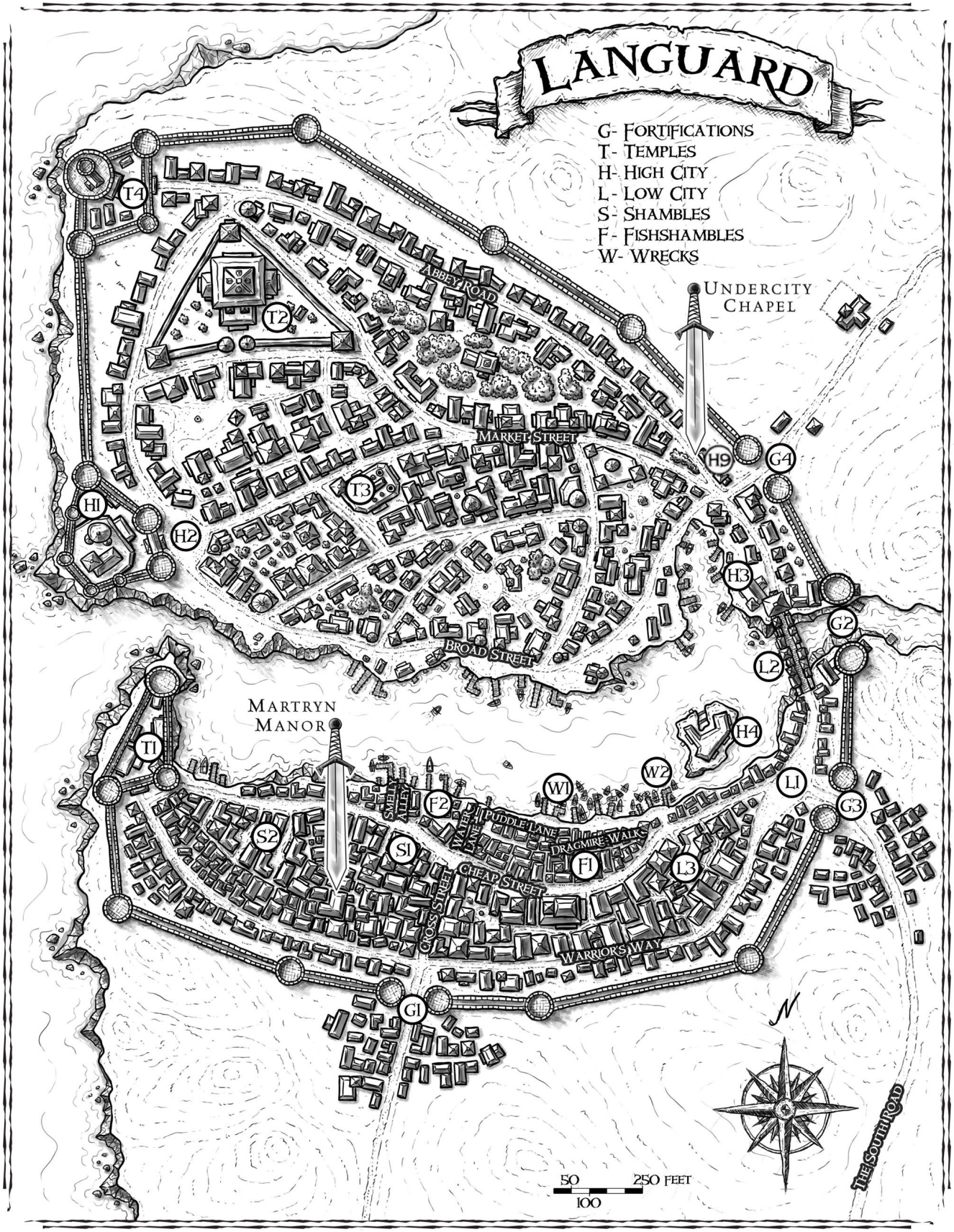
Places of Learning: Dreaming Spires, the (H4)

Shops & Markets: High Market (H2), Low Market (L1), Raisa's Curios (S1), Vonya's Span (L2)

Taverns: Drunken Sailor, the (F2), Scythe, the (L3)

Temples: Fane of Waves Eternal (T1); Father's Hall, the (T2); Great Forge, the (T3); Watcher's Spire (T4)

Services: Duranki's (W1); Fallen Maid, the (W2); House of Sighs, the (F1)


LANGUARD
G- Fortifications
T- Temples
H- High City
L- Low City
S- Shambles
F- Fishshambles
W- Wrecks
Undercity Chapel
Abbey Road
Market Street
Broad Street
Martryn Manor
Puddle Lane
Dragmire Walk
Cheap Street
Cross Street
Warrior's Way
The South Road
T1
T2
T3
T4
H1
H2
H3
H4
H9
G1
G2
G3
G4
L1
L2
L3
S1
S2
F1
F2
W1
W2
N
50
100
250 feet

WM

The Vile Star Storyline

Ashlar

Death comes from the sky in many forms—the rarest and most valuable of these are Vile Stars—fragments of meteorites, comets and other celestial objects plunging to the ground in fiery ruin. But with death comes opportunity—for many Vile Stars are comprised of mithral, adamantine and other fabulously rare starmetals such as tordel. For some reason, the Mottled Spire—a great tangle of wooded hills and valleys north of Ashlar—has always attracted more than its fair share of Vile Stars and thus miners, adventurers, wizards, artificers and more come to Dunstone—the Town on the Borderlands—in search of their great bounty.

Using a Storyline

A Storyline is a self-contained mini-campaign tying together three (or more) Raging Swan Press products. While each instalment provides a complete, standalone scenario, they contain plenty of adventure hooks leading to the linked products and can be played in any order. The Storyline provides an overarching narrative, tying together these three products in a flexible, non-prescriptive way.

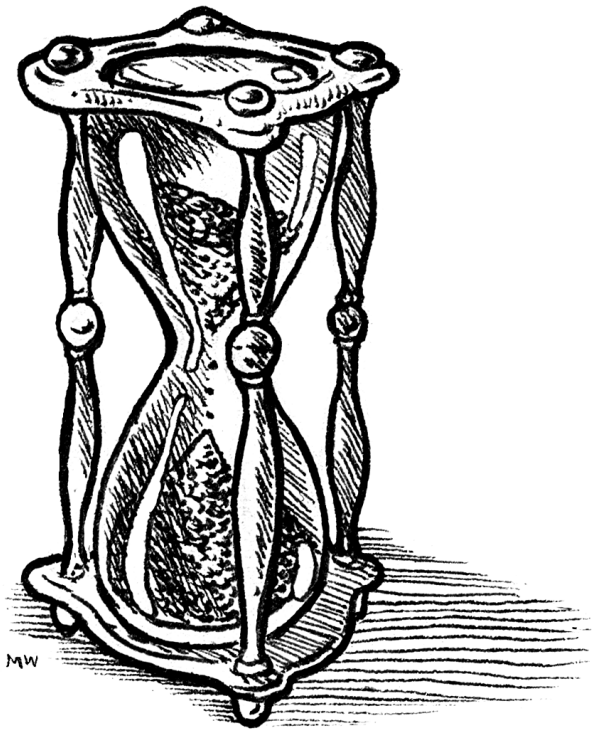
While we have done much of the design, you, as a GM, still have some decisions to make to tailor this Storyline to your campaign. First, you must determine the Storyline's Four "A"s:

- **Antagonist**: Who (or what) is the main enemy?
- **Agenda**: What are they trying to achieve?
- **Agents**: Who is helping or supporting them?
- **Assets**: What special advantage(s) do they have?

Second, refer to "Running the Storyline" for ideas to help you decide where to start and how to weave the selected elements together. Third, "Conclusion" offers suggestions on handling the story's climax. It also lists several questions to consider during play, and you need to come up with definitive answers to these by the time you reach the end.

Setting

The Vile Star Storyline's nominal setting is the town of Dunstone in the Duchy of Ashlar. However, with only minor modifications, you could set Vile Star in virtually any borderland town close to a wild swath of wilderland.



Storyline Synopsis

Dunstone is a sleepy borderland town in the northwest of the Duchy of Ashlar. Once a place of danger and opportunity, it is a sleepy place. Dunstone's defences have not been tested for many years and its people, once hardy and brave—and have grown indolent and complacent. Similarly, its ruler, the elderly Benjam Oksanen, has grown old and seems content to live out his days avoiding struggle and strife. His grandson and heir—Aavo Oksanen—is altogether a different story; he nurtures big plans for Dunstone and sees it as his duty to bring prosperity to the town. Aavo is energetic in his pursuit of that goal. Young, handsome and brave Aavo has many supporters among the younger folk, but many of the older townsfolk see him as a dangerous influence on the town. His drive has also brought other ambitious folk to the town. Some seek to tie themselves to Aavo while others work toward their own ends…

The Four "A"s

Select one from the categories below, or devise your own:

Antagonist

Who seeks to secure all the tordel in Dunstone's environs?

- **Nuythel Wilmatyn**: Nuythel Wilmatyn appears in *Dungeon Backdrop: Ruin of Bleak Hill* and *Dungeon Backdrop: Pit of Unquiet Souls*. The half-elf warrior seeks to found a small domain in the hills beyond Dunstone's hinterland. Modify Nuythel's listed alignment to better oppose the overall ethos of the characters' group.
- **Auni Ilakka:** Auni Ilakka appears in *Dungeon Backdrop: Ruin of Bleak Hill*. The wizard has recently become interested in tordel and the opportunity it presents to further her magical and temporal power. Modify Nuythel's listed alignment to better oppose the overall ethos of the characters' group.
- **Thrayxix**: Thrayxix is an intellect devourer who recently come to Dunstone. It masquerades as Jyrki Klemetti, the owner of the Gilded Swan (location 5 on the Dunstone map), and dreams of leading the town's burgeoning thieves' guild. Eventually, its plans to rule the town through a puppet leader.

Agenda

Why does the Antagonist seek control over the deposits of tordel scattered across the lands surrounding Dunstone?

- **Artifice**: The Antagonist requires a goodly supply of tordel to complete some great work. This could be a mundane item for a singular purpose or a unique magical item of surpassing power. Tordel is in exceedingly short supply, so the Antagonist will stop at nothing to secure all known caches.

- **Control**: The Antagonist seeks control over some or all of the unclaimed lands around Dunstone. The quest for star metal is merely a cover to map and clear various ruins in the locality. The Antagonist's long-term goal is to supplant Dunstone's rulers or become so powerful and influential they rule Dunstone from the shadows. Once they control Dunstone, they'll turn their attention to the rest of the duchy.
- **Power**: With tordel the Antagonist can craft, or have crafted, a weapon or other device designed to imprison the souls of its enemies and those who otherwise may be useful. Such folk could include its enemies' loved ones, those whose knowledge is useful to the Antagonist and so on.

Agents

Who (or what) are the Antagonist's minions, servants or followers?

- **Mercenaries**: Whether forced, bought, enthralled, misled or just evil, the Antagonist's hired help work against the characters, matching them move for move. Mercenaries are unlikely to know the Antagonist's true agenda.
- **True Followers**: A collection of devoted apprentices, cultists or other loyal henchfolk united in their misguided dedication to the Antagonist's cause. True followers will likely know the Antagonist's actual agenda.
- **Unwitting Dupes**: The Antagonist works through a network of unwitting accomplices. The unwitting dupes don't know the Antagonist's true identity or agenda. The unwitting dupes could be true believers or mercenaries.

Assets

What item, power or other advantage does the Antagonist wield?

- **Wealth**: Either because they are being funded by a wealthy patron, or because they possess a vast trove of treasure, the enemy can rely on an almost inexhaustible supply of gold to fund their sinister endeavours.
- **Organisation**: The Antagonist belongs to a larger organisation. They may be a powerful figure in the organisation or but a cog in its wheels. In any event, the organisation possesses greater resources than the Antagonist which they may be able to call on.
- **Weapon**: The Antagonist already possesses a tordel weapon. The weapon could be complete or it could be broken or in need of additional tordel to upgrade or complete.

Running the Storyline

Modify or ignore any of the notes below to suit your campaign.

Where to Start

This Storyline encompasses the following three Dungeon Backdrops, which can be played in any order:

- *Ruin of Bleak Hill*
- *Starfall Chantry*
- *Pit of Unquiet Souls*

Each Dungeon Backdrop presents several adventure hooks, to introduce the Storyline to your campaign. Additionally, the Vile Star Storyline compilation presents several mini-eventures designed to be run between the Dungeon Backdrops. Such mini-eventures can be run in virtually any order, depending on your scheme and plot. They comprise:

- *Drinking at the Dwarf's Folly*
- *Drinking at the Gilded Swan*
- *Praying at the Bastion of Peace*
- *Praying at the Tower of the Sword*
- *Shopping at the Merchant of Coin*
- *Visiting the Rekolas*

These mini-eventures—Patreon-exclusive supplements—are not vital to the running of the campaign, but rather provide some downtime and roleplaying opportunities for heroes returned from the wilderness.

Development

The following encounters can develop the Vile Star story as you choose. Adaptable them for your campaign.

I. After the First Adventure

At the end of their first adventure, the characters may have secured a small supply of tordel—or, at least, know where such a supply may lie in the case of the Pit of Unquiet Souls.

Suggested Encounter: Let's Make a Deal

The Agents approach the characters and attempt to (openly and pleasantly) buy the tordel from the group. If the characters have already sold the tordel or given it to their employer the Agents seek to learn the identity of that individual. If they are rebuffed, they attempt once more to reach an agreement with the party.

Encounter Goal: This encounter serves to alert the characters that other interested parties seek the tordel.

II. After the Second Adventure

Once the characters have completed the second Dungeon Backdrop, they return to Dunstone.

Suggested Encounter: Attack

The Agents ambush the party while they are in the wilderness far from help. (Perceptive characters may have noticed, of course, they are being watched and followed). The Agents' goal is to secure any tordel the characters possess and any other items of interest to their employer. This could include various handouts, maps and the like.

Encounter Goal: This encounter shows that other interested parties are not above murder and violence to achieve their goals. The borderlands are a dangerous place, and far from Dunstone's safety, there is little help to be had.

III. After the Third Adventure

By now, the characters have likely stymied the Antagonist's initial attempts to secure the tordel. This has greatly angered the Antagonist who now decides to violently solve the situation.

Suggested Encounter: Attack

The characters are attacked during the first night after they have returned to Dunstone. This could happen at the inn where they are staying or in the streets as they go to meet their employer. The Antagonist is not present, but the characters find evidence on the bodies of the Agents sent to slay them that identifies their as-yet unseen enemy.

Encounter Goal: In this encounter, the characters learn the identity of their Antagonist. A small amount of local research should be enough to turn up a location where they can confront their foe. This sets up the dramatic final battle of the Storyline.

Conclusion

Once the characters have explored all three Dungeon Backdrops and have defeated the Antagonist the Vile Star Storyline is finished—unless you decide to extend it! Dunstone is still a place of opportunity and danger. Likely, the characters' actions have come to the attention of several powerful people in the town. Depending on how they have acted, even Aavo Oksanen—Dunstone's de facto ruler—could have learnt of their identities and actions. Aavo is looking for adventurers of the "right sort" to help him revitalise Dunstone. A whole new set of adventures could await!

Further Adventures

Dunstone is rife with possibilities for adventure. Several other Raging Swan Press adventures and supplements are set in and around the town. These include:

- *Delthur's Folly*
- *House of Yspher*
- *The Splintered Crypt*
- *Sepulchre of the Wolf King*
- *Dunstone: Town on the Borderlands*

Dunstone at a Glance

Sleepy Dunstone is seemingly at peace, but a lurking threat within and naive ambition may soon spell its doom.

Ruler: Benjam Oksanen
Government: Overlord
Population: 3,574 (3,493 humans, 18 dwarves, 4 elves, 5 half-elves, 11 half-orcs, 33 halflings, 10 gnomes)
Alignments: LG, NG, N, LN, LE, NE
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven
Resources & Industry: Brewing, farming, hunting and livestock

Dunstone hunches under the menacing gaze of the nearby Mottled Spire's grey bulk. An old, moss-covered fortress—home to the ruling Oksanens—watches over sagging row houses meandering across a low hill. Newer builds straggle down the hill beyond Old Town's crumbling 12-foot high wall. To the north, surly guardsmen oversee a rickety wooden bridge spanning the Selka River and the little-used path towards the Mottled Spire. In bygone days, monsters crept forth from the Mottled Spire to die against Dunstone's walls and formidable moat. Now the moat is a grassy slope where pigs graze and children play.

The town is civilisation's last bastion before the Mottled Spire's wild uplands. Often cut off from the rest of the Duchy of Ashlar during the deep winter, the town is a tight-knit community. The townsfolk are resilient and hardy people. Locals trade whispers and gossip amongst themselves and treat strangers with suspicion until they prove themselves honest and hardworking folk like the Dunstonians. The townspeople engage in farming, raising livestock and crafting trade goods. Except for travelling merchants, few from Dunstone travel into the wider world, though an occasional brash youth dares the hardships of the Mottled Spire. All remember the failure of Greystone.

Lord Benjam Oksanen rules Dunstone fairly though he is approaching the end of his years. His young grandson, Aavo, will inherit his title; Aavo's father having perished long ago in the Mottled Spire. Aavo seeks to revitalise Dunstone's sagging fortunes by granting tax incentives for merchants to trade Dunstone's goods throughout Ashlar. He also plans to bolster the meagre strength of the Knights of the Eternal Watch, a knighthood based at the local Darlenite temple (location 2; Tower of the Sword), and to mount expeditions into the Mottled Spire with the aim of colonising the nearest hills. Thus, Aavo eagerly seeks promising adventurers to map the many canyons and trails crawling through the twisted hills to Gloamhold itself. An influx of wealth might just break the lethargy hanging over a town clinging to its old ways. Yet, even Aavo is unaware of the growing threat in Dunstone. Something sinister crawled up from Gloamhold's lightless halls, a creature with a malign alien intelligence seeking to integrate itself into the town.

Townsfolk

Appearance: Dunstonians have fair skin, sandy hair and brown or hazel eyes. Men grow thick beards and women wear their hair long in braids. Both sexes tend to be stout.

Dress: Both sexes prefer heavy, dyed woollen tunics with fleece lined jackets in the winter. Jewellery is often simple rings, brooches and necklaces passed down through a family's generations.

Nomenclature: *male* Hannu, Kalervo, Osmo, Ralf; *female* Ilma, Minja, Sirpa Tehri; *family* Jussila, Laasko, Pihlaja, Soro.

Town Lore

A character may know something about Dunstone, its history and its surroundings. Determine how knowledgeable the characters are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Dunstone lies near the Mottled Spire. It is a sleepy, borderland town.
- Dunstone's lord seeks to increase trade and push the town's border northwards across the Selka.
- The Darlenites at the Tower of the Sword (location 2) guard an ancient relic of great power.

Whispers & Rumours

While in Dunstone, a character may hear one or more rumours. The character can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on.

D8	Rumour
1	Lately, Father Mattila spends most of his time sequestered with his knights at the order's temple.
2F	Soili Kotka was a witch who takes the form of a demoness at night to lay with men and women. Now, she might be a ghost.
3F	The Rekolas are demon worshippers. Anyone who goes near their old home is captured and sacrificed to evil gods.
4	Lately, there's been a rash of burglaries of homes throughout Old Town.
5	Kildann's Cuts has a special menu for discreet, wealthy customers.
6F	Aavo murdered his grandfather and is taking over the town. He's enacting all sorts of new, crazy laws and taxes!
7F	The crazed, mad dwarf Kildrak has been seen again in the town!
8	Aavo is ambitious and wants to push Dunstone's borders across the Selka.

F = False rumour

Notable Folk

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Aavo Oksanen (location 1; LN male human fighter 2/thief 5/bard 2) works hard to turn Dunstone around and has taken over much of the town's day to day business.

Benjam Oksanen (location 1; LN old male human fighter 5) rules Dunstone but is resistant to change.

Dulannis Fisfelond (location 9; LG male elf fighter 6) makes high-quality weapons and is perhaps Ashlar's pre-eminent weaponsmith. He now only works sporadically.

Hannes Joutsi (location 15; LN old male human fighter 3) runs the Merchant of Coin, but is ready to hand over the reins to his daughter and retire.

Joonas Mattila (location 2; LG old male human cleric [Darlen] 5) serves as high priest at the Tower of the Sword and leads the Knights of the Eternal Watch therein.

Mari Parviainen (location 11; NG female half-elf) works closely with Aavo in revitalising Dunstone.

Marjo Oiva (location 3; NG old female human cleric [Conn] 4) nears retirement. The ageing priestess works with the town's newest generation.

Panu Laukkanen (location 16; NG middle-aged male human fighter 3) lost his left hand a decade ago but is still Dunstone's pre-eminent bowyer and fletcher.

Rister Osma (Location 12; N middle-aged male human fighter 4) runs the Dwarf's Folly. He is a happily retired grizzled ex-mercenary warrior.

Roosa Lajunen (location 4; CG female gnome illusionist 3) owns the Sheep Knuckles inn. She is an amateur magician and often plagued by strange dreams.

Soili Kotka (location 10; LG female human) organised the town's farmer's markets but was recently murdered by the mad dwarf Kildrak. She was reputedly a witch. Now she is reputed to have returned as a ghost!

Thrayxix/Jyrki Klemetti (location 5; CE intellect devourer) poses as a wealthy businessman while building a secret thieves' guild and plotting Dunstone's ruination.

Tuulitar Vihas (location 13; (N old female half-elf wizard 9) believes great power lies in the stars and so studies them intensely and exhaustively.

Urzag Airikka (location 14; NG middle-aged male half-orc werewolf fighter 3) worries he will seriously hurt or kill someone as a result of his curse. He is a werewolf.

Verna Brandybottle (location 8; NG female halfling) hails from the Lonely Coast. She runs the Brandybottle Distillery and heads the Brewery Guild.

Vieno Rekola (location 7; N old male human wizard 4) laments his family's decline in the magical arts as he seeks new items and spells. He can craft a few minor potions for adventurers.

Whurkus Kildann (location 6; LE male dwarf thief 4) heads the Butcher's Guild and is known for his shop's exotic meats. He is wanted in his homeland for murder.

Law & Order

The Oksanens rule Dunstone and the surrounding countryside from Dunstone Keep (location 1). The family came to power as a reward for years of dedicated service to the duchy five generations ago after the previous ruling family died out during an outbreak of plague. Its current patriarch, Benjam Oksanen, passes judgment on matters fairly and equitably between nobles, merchants and ordinary folk. Corruption exists amongst town officials but is severely punished when discovered (which furthers Benjam's popularity). Lord Oksanen, often bed-ridden in recent years, secedes much of the daily business to his grandson, Aavo.

Aavo is proving to be a more than capable administrator. Where his grandfather stymied change, charismatic Aavo embraces it and is already implementing policies designed to lift Dunstone out of stagnation and into prosperity.

The lurking threat to Aavo's plans is the intellect devourer Thrayxix (location 5). The intellect devourer is quietly forming a small thieves' guild and subtly corrupting influential townsfolk. It's still learning about the human world and sees Dunstone's ultimate subjugation as something to savour.

Dunstone supports a small, ill-equipped and ill-trained town guard. In the town's early days, a much larger force dealt with threats emerging from the Mottled Spire. As the danger waned, so did the guard. It received aid from the Knights of Eternal Watch stationed at the Tower of the Sword (location 2). Now, the knights have dwindled in size and importance, and the two organisations rarely cooperate anymore. Aavo recently began implementing changes to the guard, requiring regular drills and additional martial training. Guards derelict in their duties find themselves guarding the bridge spanning the Selka facing the Mottled Spire.

Aavo also sends regular letters to the Knights of the Eternal Watch in Languard, requesting additional recruits. He pushes the Dunstone's knights to resume their patrols of the Mottled Spire (something their distracted high priest Joonas Mattila is loath to do).

Doings in Dunstone

The Duchy of Ashlar is small and constrained. Always, the forces of evil and shadow press inwards upon its borders. If it were not for a stout few, death and darkness would have long ago overwhelmed the land. Dunstone was once Ashlar's northern bulwark. Now, it is a dangerously sleepy and insular place. Wicked humanoids yet lurk in the dark forests and deep valleys of the surrounding hills. Abandoned mines and crumbled ruins stud the surrounds, calling with their siren song to bold adventurers. To the west, lies the time-worn, oft-cursed ruin of the ancient Nameless Monastery.

Not all dangers lurk without, though. Folk—both fair and foul—have plans for Dunstone. Change is coming, to the Town on the Borderlands.

Notable Locations in Brief

Most of Dunstone comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Dunstone Keep**: Home to the ruling Oksanen family, the keep serves as a bastion against predators emerging from the Mottled Spire. The lord's grandson, Aavo, has taken over the duties of rulership and works to reinvigorate the town.
2. **Tower of the Sword**: This stout tower houses a church of Darlen and a sacred relic of the Father. A garrison of the Knights of the Eternal Watch, charged with keeping the town safe, is headquartered here.
3. **Bastion of Peace**: Worshippers of Conn gather here; this temple is Dunstone's heart and soul.
4. **Sheep's Knuckles**: This strange inn sticks out in Dunstone but is a beloved drinking spot for the locals. Various forms of entertainment take place here nightly.
5. **The Gilded Swan**: One of Dunstone's most prominent inns, it has been taken over by the intellect devourer. Thrayxix posing as the businessman Jyrki Klemetti. For a price, various hedonistic delights can be had in the inn's secret cellar.
6. **Kildann's Cuts**: Renowned for its quality meats, its owner –Whurkus Kildann–is a wanted murderer. The shop offers a special menu comprising the flesh of exotic creatures for special customers.
7. **Rekola Manor**: Once a wizarding school, this manor and its ancient family have fallen into decay. Its current patriarch seeks to repair the family's fortunes.
8. **Brandybottle Distillery**: This distillery is known for its fine spirits. Its halfling owner, Verna Brandybottle, single-handedly started a brewing revival in Dunstone.
9. **Fisfelond's Smithy**: The elven weaponsmith Dulannis Fisfelond sporadically crafts fine weapons here, but only for the true of heart or for Dunstone's protection.
10. **Farmer's Market**: Farmers come here to sell produce in a festival-like atmosphere. While the market is open lively music fills the air and fresh beer can be had from several stalls.
11. **Trade Market**: The town's guilds come here to sell their wares and intermingle. Special events occur frequently, to showcase a particular guild or business's wares.
12. **The Dwarf's Folly**: This rowdy inn is a favoured haunt of adventurers, mercenaries and the like.
13. **Tower of the Astromancer**: Herein dwells Tuulitar Vihas, the self-styled Astromancer. An independently wealthy sage and wizard she studies the night sky.
14. **Urzag's Stones**: Here works Urzag Airikka–a skilled stonemason and stone carver.
15. **Merchant of Coin**: Customers can trade gems, jewellery and other precious commodities here. Other services include moneychanging and secure storage.
16. **Arrows & Bolts**: Arrows & Bolts is widely acknowledged as the best bowyer/fletcher in Dunstone.

Notable Streets

Some of Dunstone's streets are notable for one reason or another. Most are unpaved, comprising little more than packed mud.

Beacon Street: An old, ruined tower currently undergoing renovation dominates this simple street. The tower held a beacon fire in olden times to warn of monsters coming down from the Mottled Spire.

Brewer's Row: Most of Dunstone's beer brewers operate from long wooden buildings on this popular street.

Butcher Street: Well-constructed wood and stone shops line both sides of this busy, tree-lined street.

Dunstone Boulevard: Home to Dunstone's administrative buildings, the street has a small public park.

Durgan's Alley: Most of Dunstone's dwarves live in stone buildings along this shaded alley, making a living as gemcutters, jewellers and smiths. A small cellar tavern–the Dark Corner–serves Durgan's Dwarven Delight (a potent dwarven liquor).

Fae Way: This winding road leads passed simple cottages. Local rumour states fey creatures lived here once. Now, it's home to a large colony of stray cats.

Falcon's Aerie: Located near the top of the hill, the businesses here raise falcons and other birds of prey as well as messenger pigeons and ravens.

Gate Course: Gate Course starts at Dunstone's eastern gate and is home to several stables and small inns. Several shops here also sell simple equipment and riding gear.

Hillview: Located near the top of the hill, Hillview boasts scenic views of the surrounding countryside and is popular with couples.

Lotti's Avenue: The Wool Guild makes its home on this street named for a hero of Dunstone, supposedly a shepherd who slew an ogre chieftain.

Memorial Boulevard: This small square contains a time-worn stone memorial enshrining the names of Dunstone's heroes and those who have given their lives in defence of the town. Work has recently begun on a new memorial stone.

Oksanen Avenue: Named for the current ruling family, this street of upper-class homes features a stern statue of the first Oksanen lord, Havro Oksanen.

Rauni Road: This narrow street was once the site of an ancient temple dedicated to the Mother. Many small shrines lie between the buildings where Dunstone's midwives and apothecaries practice. Small twig dolls and other fetishes hang from the many windows here during spring.

Selka Street: Named after the nearby river, most shops here sell fishing and survival gear.

Trader's Street: One of Dunstone's few paved roads, Trader Street runs through the town's heart. Many shops and workshops front onto Trader's Street. At night, shopkeepers light small lanterns to illuminate the street. Wealthier shopkeepers add an alchemical compound to the lanterns, transforming the light into colourful shades.

DUNSTONE
BREWER'S ROW
BEACON STREET
HILL VIEW
SELKA STREET
MEMORIAL BOULEVARD
OKSANEN AVENUE
DUNSTONE BOULEVARD
DURGAN'S ALLEY
TRADER'S WAY
FALCON'S AERIE
BUTCHER'S ROW
GATE COURSE
FAE WAY
LOTTIS AVENUE
RAUNI ROAD
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
N
50
100
250 FEET

Dunstone's Surrounds

Many locales of note ripe for adventure lie in Dunstone's immediate surrounds.

Locales of Note

Delthur's Folly (Mine)

Hidden in the wild uplands beyond the Selka River, the sinkhole-mine of Delthur's Folly is a byword among the locals for a fool's errand doomed to fail. The only survivor of the fated expedition—driven mad by his ordeal and raving of "the water's sibilant whispers"—died shortly after staggering into Dunstone a year or more after Delthur and his miners disappeared into the wilderness. And yet, every year adventurers cross the Selka in search of the mine—gold and silver are said to lie within. Some return empty-handed and some do not return at all. Local legend has it that something terrible dwells in the mine.

Note: Delthur's Folly lies beyond the northern edge of the below map.

House of Yspher (Ruined Manor House)

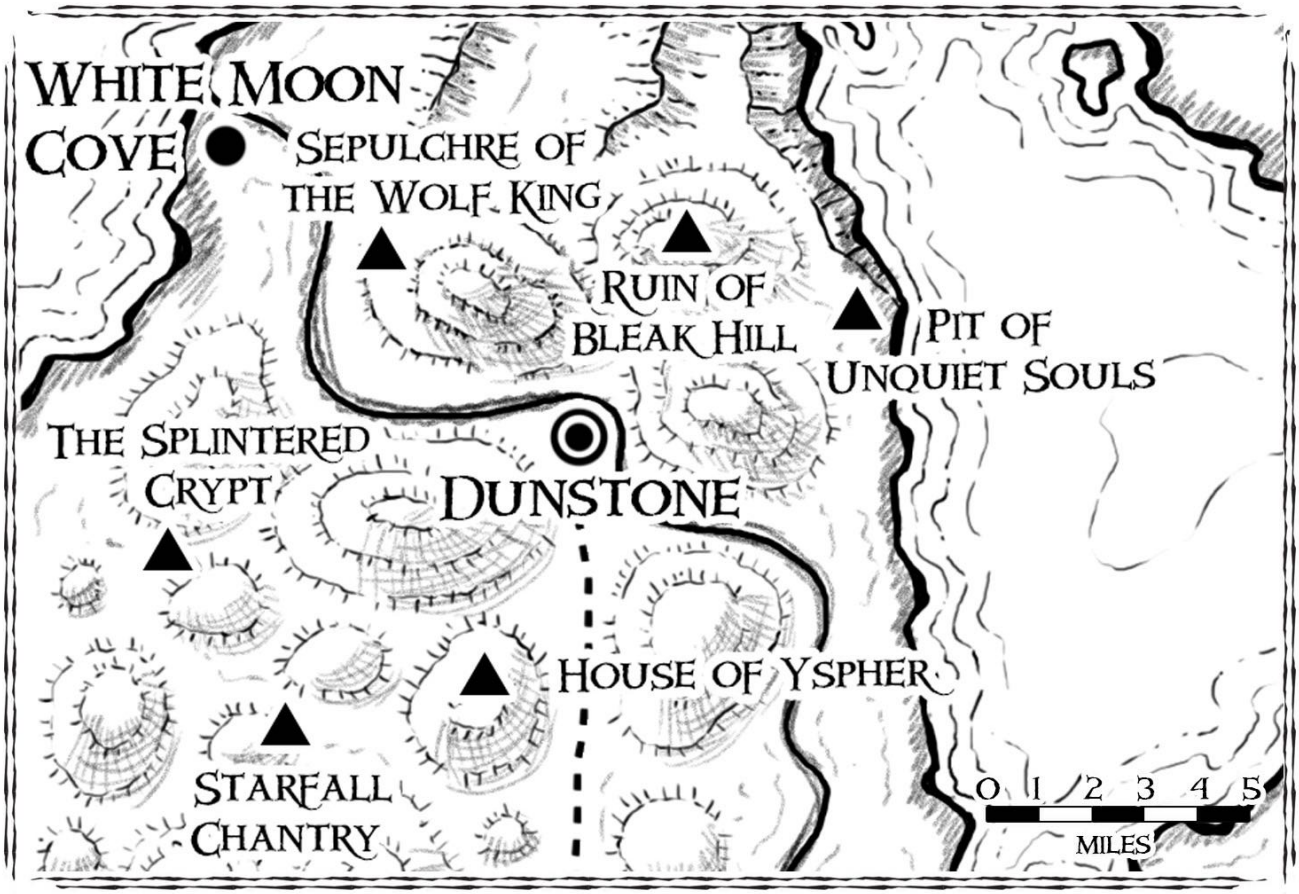
The lonely house on the hill is no place to spend the night. Many a weary traveller on the road to Dunstone has sought shelter there from the dangers of the night, only to find even darker terrors lurking inside the house's crumbling walls. Those who find death beyond the shadowed threshold are considered fortunate, for the few who escape the house's harrowing halls are cursed to endure a life of madness; their bodies and souls scarred beyond mortal comprehension. Few know the truth. The dreaded manor once belonged to Yspher, a reclusive wizard with an evil reputation who mysteriously vanished many years ago. Whispers of sinister experiments involving black magic and forbidden lore surrounded Yspher's disappearance, which would prove only the first of many tragedies...

Pit of Unquiet Souls (Mine)

Saare's Pit has another, more lurid, name—and for good reason. The Pit of Unquiet Souls squats at the centre of a nest of macabre tales of madness, horror and death. It is said, those who spend too much time therein often go mad or disappear entirely, and old miners' tales tell of the pit's very rocks whispering horrible secrets to those toiling in its bowels. Still, there are those who think treasure yet lurks in the mine and will brave its terrors to retrieve them.

Ruin of Bleak Hill

The Mottled Spire's wild, rugged uplands lie beyond the Selka River. Crumbling ruins and abandoned mines—the leavings of civilisation's ebbing tide—dot the hills. One such



place is the isolated wind-blasted ruin of Bleak Hill Manor. Here once dwelled the wizard-sage Ilmatar Tiera before her untimely death at unknown hands. The centuried ruin—decayed and crumbled—has alternately lain abandoned or served as the lair of marauders, bandits and worse. Now, however, events conspire to focus certain interested parties upon the ruin, and all such folk are in need of adventurers brave enough to dare the terrors of the Mottled Spire.

Sepulchre of the Wolf King (Tomb)

A pair of exceedingly large, powerful and ferocious ogres prey on travellers and merchants alike from their crumbling, subterranean home. The unimaginative brutes have no idea what deathless horrors lurk in the deeper dark below their noisome lair.

Starfall Chantry (Abandoned Temple)

Lurking twixt the crag-jagged hills south of Dunstone sit the ruined remains of an old dwarven fortress-temple. Rusted helms and broken blades jut from the surrounding soil like cast-off husks of iron grain, betraying the area's violent history. Over the centuries, thousands have fought and died to possess this land, staining the earth with the blood of the slain. Three centuries ago, it took the very sky to fall to put an end to this ceaseless bloodshed. Today, however, the scars left by that same cataclysm may be enough to rekindle the old flames of war.

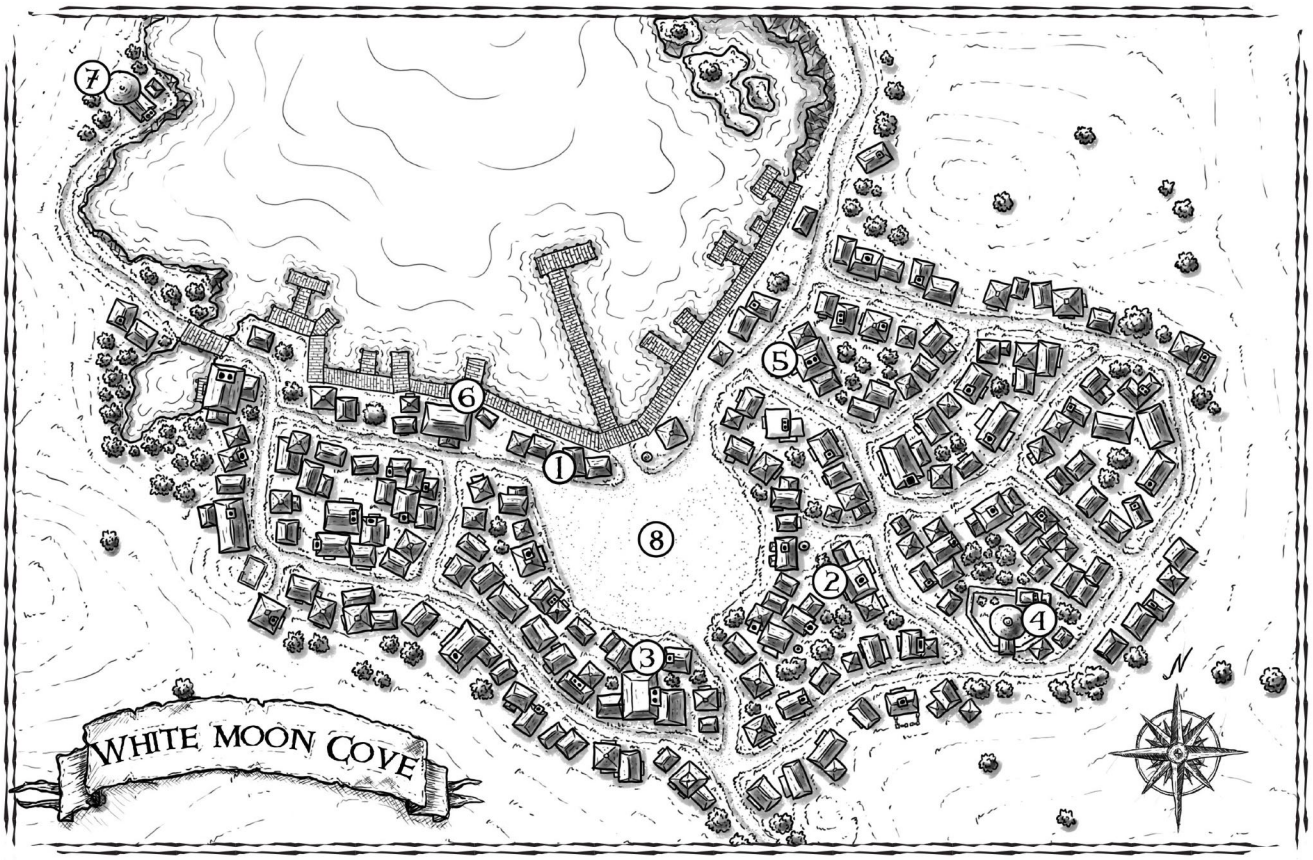
The Splintered Crypt (Tomb)

Famed for his unswerving devotion to his celestial lord and his magical sword, Demon Bane, Kal Voren was a paladin-hero of old. For five decades he stood between Ashlar's commonfolk and the darkness ever-pressing in on the small, isolated domain. Death is an implacable foe, however, and eventually old age caught up with the redoubtable paladin. Laid to rest not in the scared sepulchre below Tor Abbey but among the hills of his youth Kal Voren's legend—and stories of his legendary blade—live on long after his hidden crypt was lost to time.

A recent landslide, however, has returned Kal Voren's lost crypt to the world of men. And with it have returned the stories and legends of Demon Bane which is said to rest unclaimed and wielded with him in his sepulchre.

White Moon Cove (Village)

White Moon Cove is a respectable fishing village set in a sheltered cove which acts as an excellent, natural harbour. The inhabitants of this tightly-knit community are sober, hardworking and amiable fishermen, traders and other sturdy folk making their living from the sea. Despite being a fairly peaceful and law-abiding place, White Moon Cove still hold many opportunities for adventure, from rumours of secret smuggler activity to an ancient and possibly haunted lighthouse. Yet, perhaps the most famous reason for White Moon Cove's notoriety is the mysterious underwater edifice known as the Sunken Pyramid which lies hidden far beneath the waves a few miles out to sea.



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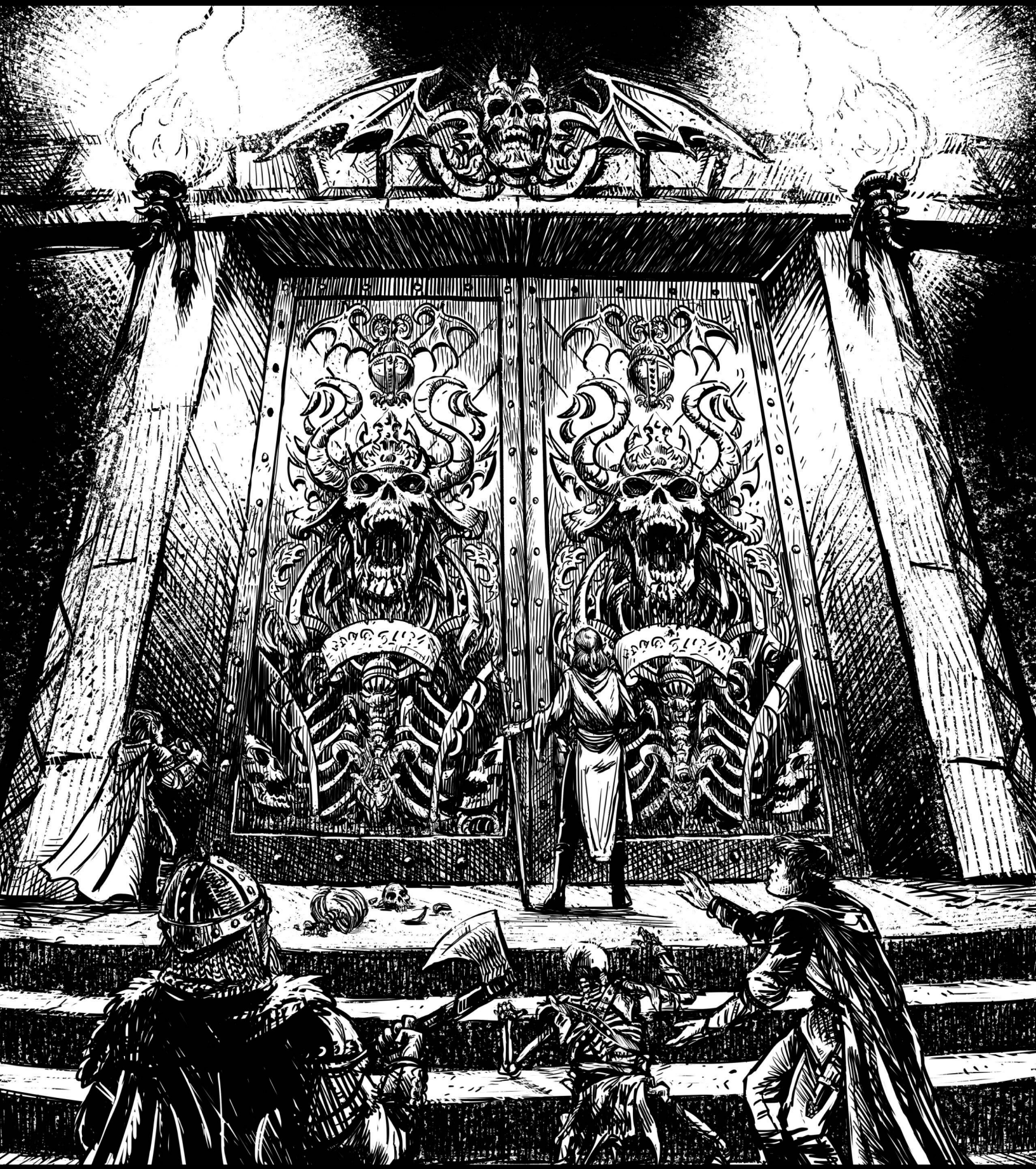

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