

# TALES FROM THE WASTES



GREEN, HITCHCOCK, MADSEN, VICTORY



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# The Sanctum

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 3RD LEVEL

## Adventure Background

Time means nothing to the Elder Gods. Centuries pass, their temples crumble, yet their whispers linger, hidden in forgotten icons, cryptic runes, and eternal shadows.

In her dreams, she heard the whispers. They promised her that if she followed the call, it would lead to her desire, her palace, her sanctum. It was her Mother's voice, the Mother of all things, the Mother of 1,000 young. She recognized the voice and obeyed.

Hidden in the craggy wasteland hills stands the crumbling remains of an ancient temple dedicated to the Goat of the Woods, known as the Cathedral of the Black Goat. For many years, the crumbling structure lay abandoned yet never consecrated or cleansed of its past. With time, the Mother's children eventually inherited her legacy.

A monstrous creature, a vile amalgam of woman and beast known as a lamia, now occupies the cathedral. She believes the Goat of the Wood sent her visions and called her to rebuild the cathedral. Naming herself the Black Goat's Daughter, she used her enchantments and amassed sufficient wealth to transform the cathedral ruins into a false utopia she calls The Sanctum.

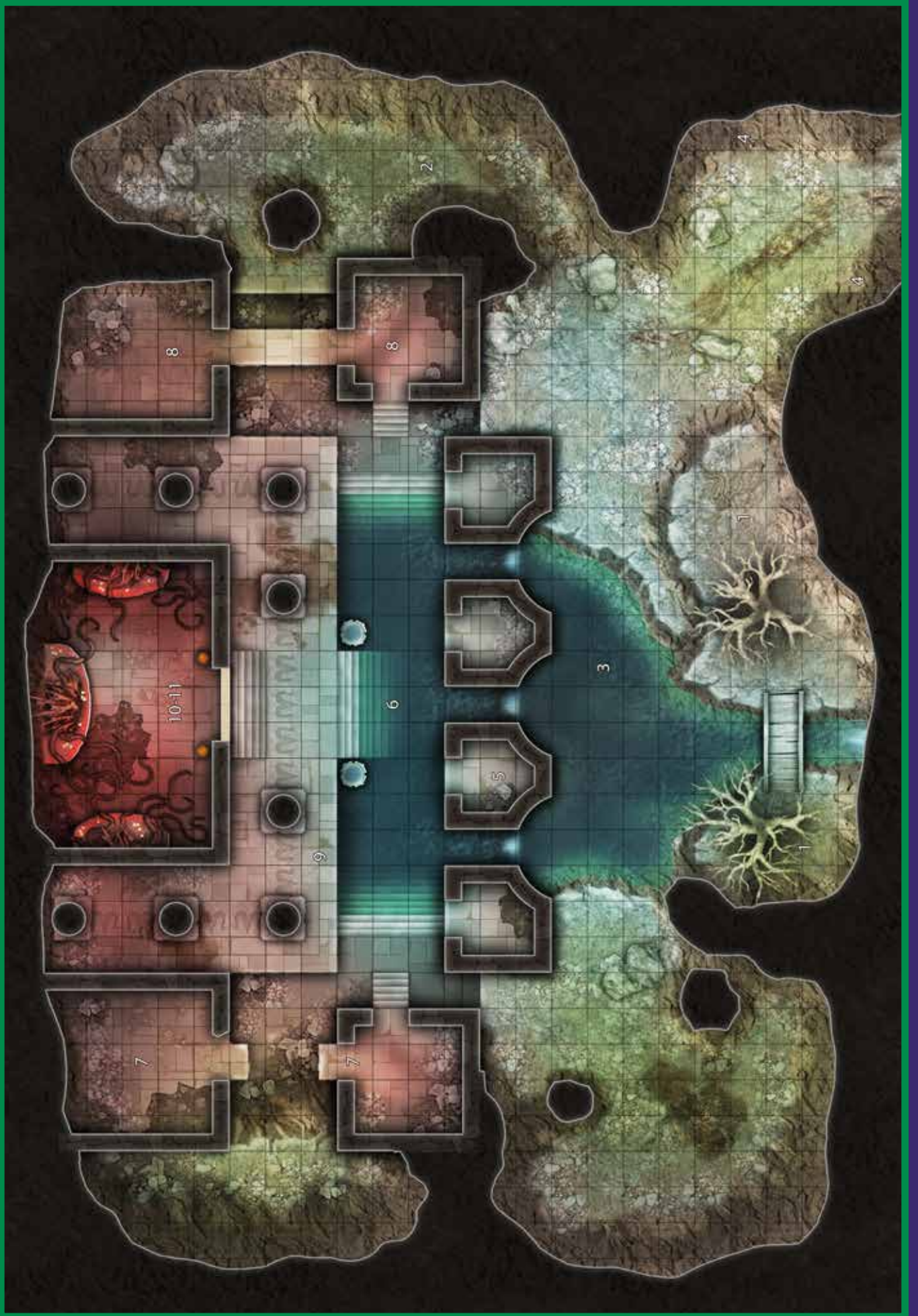
The lamia employs three doppelgangers disguised as prophets and guides to inner happiness. The doppelgangers assume the guise of a prophet

known as The Speaker and travel the wastelands recruiting people to come live in The Sanctum. Using her powers, the lamia sries for impoverished settlements where individuals have lost hope for independence and opportunity. The Speaker targets these settlements, selling false dreams of a new beginning. Then, using manipulation and enchantments, The Speaker convinces the broken, hopeless, and destitute to follow it off to The Sanctum. These unfortunate victims never return, for the utopia of the Black Goat's Daughter serves to mask her carnal pleasures, dark rituals, and murder.

## Adventure Hooks

As the PCs travel the wastelands, they hear rumors about a mysterious figure known as "The Speaker." The Speaker has visited small settlements and preaches to the downtrodden about a utopian community of outcasts known as The Sanctum, hidden within the Wastes.

Whenever the PCs enter a settlement or converse with other travelers, they learn a rumor about The Speaker or The Sanctum. Individuals describing The Speaker are never entirely sure of his appearance (because three doppelgangers perform the role). However, he typically appears as a human man dressed in simple brown robes and is always barefoot.





## SPEAKER RUMORS

### d8 Rumors

- 1 A secret community called The Sanctum offers everyone an opportunity for a new life. It has ample food and water, and provides protection.
- 2 No one knows The Speaker's origin. However, the common folk hail him as a herald or prophet.
- 3 The Speaker always arrives just before sunset and journeys onward shortly after he speaks. He always leaves at sunrise, and one or two people often follow him.
- 4 No one has ever seen The Sanctum. At least, no one has ever returned to talk about it. It probably doesn't exist.
- 5 My cousin Miran went to The Sanctum. A cloth merchant I know told me he saw him recently, wearing brown robes and preaching about the wonders of his community. If he comes here, I might follow him.
- 6 There are several oases deep in the unsettled wastelands. The Sanctum probably lies hidden in one of them.
- 7 Those living in The Sanctum must possess powerful magic to protect its secrecy.
- 8 The Speaker must be a mad sorcerer.

## THE SPEAKER COMES

The inns and streets of the remote town buzz with excitement. Word reaches the common folk about the coming of "The Speaker." Allow the PCs time to overhear or gather more rumors about The Speaker before he arrives.

Just before dusk, The Speaker enters the square, surrounded by a throng of eager listeners. Preaching to the gathered, he calls to those whose lives have been taken from them by the wealthy and the powerful. He offers them a chance for a new life in an egalitarian community he calls The Sanctum. All they need do is walk away from their old lives and follow him into the Wastes.

**Development.** The Speaker is a **doppelganger** wearing *eyes of charming*. Once it begins speaking, the creature uses its Read Thoughts ability to scan individuals in the crowd, sensing who it believes might be predisposed to its offerings. On the vulnerable, it uses its *eyes of charming* to ingratiate itself and win them over. Then, after speaking for a few minutes, it draws things to a close. It offers the crowd its blessing and invites all who wish for a new life in The Sanctum to gather at the town gates at dawn. If, at any time during its presentation, The Speaker senses skeptics intent on causing problems or disrupting its mission, it quickly draws its proselytizing to a close. After, it slips off and changes its appearance to avoid altercations.

At dawn, the doppelganger stands at the edge of town, waits for 15 minutes after sunrise, and then departs. 1d4 **commoners** meet him there. It



congratulates them on their decision to join the settlement at The Sanctum, reiterating that The Sanctum meets every need, and those who abandoned their lives never return.

The Speaker books passage on a small merchant caravan for all those making the pilgrimage. After booking the passage, he tells them he has other

seekers he needs to find. The caravan is headed to a roadside encampment where he will meet them in two days. He bids them farewell and heads off.

Those who take the caravan have a dusty and bumpy ride through the Wastes that ends at a traveler's encampment in a small oasis near a rise of rocky foothills. The GM can jump ahead, run a random encounter, or roleplay interactions with passengers, merchants, or pilgrims headed to The Sanctum. Once this section resolves, run the next event.

## PILGRIMAGE TO THE SANCTUM

**GM Note.** This section serves to lure adventurers to The Sanctum. If the PCs decide to hunt and kill The Speaker, the revelation of his monstrous nature should be enough motive for them to seek The Sanctum on their own. Otherwise, they can attempt to follow The Speaker covertly or play along and pose as recruits. The following section describes what happens to recruits traveling with The Speaker. You may need to modify the adventure depending on how the PCs approach this section.

.....

An encampment of brightly colored tents surrounds a small oasis near the foothill's edge. A winding path of hard-packed earth leads up into the rocky crags from the encampment. Multicolored flags hanging from a string flap slowly in the light breeze, marking the entrance to a narrow ravine. The ravine has a slight slope, intermittently carved into short flights of steps.

.....

At the flags, The Speaker blindfolds all newcomers to keep the location of The Sanctum secret. The blindfolds in no way appear harmful or threatening. Regardless, charmed individuals are utterly compliant in their participation. At this point, the doppelganger uses his Read Thoughts ability to screen those who claim they wish to accompany him to The Sanctum. He primarily attempts to infer whether they're corruptible or will eventually become a sacrifice. Once all participants are blindfolded, he leads them up the ravine to The Sanctum.

**Development.** The Black Goat's Daughter has harpy allies (see Area 5) that protect the perimeter of her territory. As the procession walks into The Sanctum, two **harpies** fly overhead, searching for stragglers or spies. If they spot PCs acting independently from The Speaker and the procession, they either attack or fly off to inform the lamia, whichever seems more strategic at the moment.

## INTO THE SANCTUM

**Illusory Features.** The lamia can cast *major image* at will and liberally employs the spell to alter the appearance of structures within the cathedral. Some locations have additional illusory descriptions; however, since the spell requires concentration, she cannot simultaneously apply more than one illusion. PCs interacting with an illusion can attempt a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check on these. A success determines that illusion magic masks the object's appearance.

### 1. THE PROCESSIONAL

The ravine empties into a vast, open chasm that faces a grand and ancient temple of towering stone. Flowering vines coil up its spires and columns, swarming with hundreds of brightly painted butterflies. Four stone faces carved into massive crenelated blocks stare down from the façade. Waterfalls burst between the blocks sending crystalline water cascading into a pool below. The temple seems impossibly old, with entire sections weathered and crumbled away. Still, it radiates an unearthly, magical beauty. Everything around it appears green and lush with life.

.....

Upon arrival, The Speaker directs all pilgrims to the encampment in Area 2. He tells them to get acquainted with other residents to help them get situated in their new life. The Speaker then says he must speak with The Sanctum's benefactor, the Great Mother, but will return shortly. He excuses himself and heads toward the gardens in Area 4.

### 2. THE LOWER ENCAMPMENT

Small clusters of colorful tents prop themselves in the temple's shadow and along the ravine walls. Garlands of colorful cloth and feathers are strung between each tent. In the earth between tents, residents have tilled the soil into small garden plots. Over a dozen residents dressed in plain brown robes wander about, working in the gardens, hanging laundry, and performing other mundane tasks.

.....

The Sanctum has fifteen residents. When a PC interacts with any individual in the camp, they may attempt a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check to determine the reason why that person has chosen a life in The Sanctum. Success reveals that person's



## WHAT TIRA KNOWS

### d8 Information

- 1 There is more than one Speaker.
- 2 Speakers come to the garden to meet with individuals who have concerns or needs.
- 3 Residents can only go to the front of the garden. Entering deeper is forbidden.
- 4 Not all visitors to the garden return; however, some become Speakers.
- 5 To “protect” The Sanctum’s secrecy, only Speakers may leave.
- 6 Others have fled in secrecy, but none have returned. Tira is unsure if the escapes succeeded or met with death.
- 7 Each time someone fled the settlement, Tira thought she heard a faint song sung by an exquisite voice echoing through the ravine.
- 8 Not all is as it seems. Illusion magic masks some of the structures.

reason: the charmed, the manipulated, the resistant, and the corrupted. Assign reasons to residents as you see fit.

### THE CHARMED

Six **commoners** act under the influence of the lamia’s potent enchantments. If confronted, they do not perceive the PCs as a threat. Instead, they happily explain the advantages of living in The Sanctum. They offer to arrange for the PCs to meet with The Speaker, as programmed. To hear a different perspective, the charmed must first be freed from enchantment. Spells or similar effects such as *calm emotions* or *dispel magic* are sufficient to break the enchantment. A creature charmed by the lamia automatically succeeds on saving throws against other charm effects.

### THE MANIPULATED

Four **commoners** are merely tricked. They bought into the myth of The Sanctum and haven’t thoroughly questioned their reality. Thus far, living in The Sanctum is a blessing compared to their old lives.

**Development.** If the PCs present evidence to the manipulated that convincingly reveals the horrors of The Sanctum, they are overcome with fear and plead for help in escaping. The PCs can attempt a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a success, they calm the manipulated resident and convince them to play along by joining Tira (see “The Resistant,” below) as a resistant until the PCs finish their exploration or attempt to lead them out. If the PCs do not take action to aid the manipulated, they attempt to flee on their own. If this happens, the lamia allows them to exit the ravine, but commands the harpies to slay them before they reach the Trade Road.

### THE RESISTANT

Tira, a young **scout** dubious of The Speaker’s intentions, masked her thoughts and sneaked into The Sanctum, posing as one of the manipulated. She is distrustful of the PCs when they arrive. However, a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces her that the PCs have come to investigate The Sanctum. If befriended, Tira shares all of the information in the “What Tira Knows” table; if she is *not* successfully befriended, good roleplay can extract 1d4 pieces of information from her.

**Development.** The lamia and her allies frequently check the mental state of various residents, including Tira. Shortly after the PCs arrive, The Speaker determines Tira’s true intentions and soon summon her to an audience in the garden. When Tira arrives, The Speaker leads her into Area 4a, where twig blight allies ambush and overwhelm her.

Once captured, The Speaker takes Tira to the lamia in Area 14. The lamia uses enchantments and manipulation to interrogate Tira. If the PCs previously interacted with Tira, the PC with the highest Charisma score may make a DC 14 Charisma check. A success prevents Tira from revealing any information about them to her captors. After the interrogation, the Black Goat’s Daughter and her Speakers torture and eat Tira.

### THE CORRUPTED

Three **cultists** represent corrupted individuals who know the truth behind The Sanctum’s façade and have chosen to serve the lamia. If they suspect the PCs know the truth about The Sanctum, one rushes to alert The Speaker or the lamia, while the others attempt to lead the PC into areas where the lamia’s

allies or the quippers in the pool (Area 3) can dispose of them. If a strategic opportunity arises, the cultists participate in the attacks.

#### THE MONITOR

One **doppelganger** lives among the residents, as one of them. It monitors activities and reports directly to the lamia. A simple Wisdom (Insight) check does not reveal its existence among the residents. In a pinch, it behaves as one of the manipulated until an appropriate time to escape or attack.

### 3. THE POOL

At the foot of the temple, the waterfalls pool, dividing the ravine floor. To the south, the pool empties into a small stream that flows from the ravine through a wide gap in the stone.

**Illusion.** Polished white stones line both sides of the pool, and a playful school of colorful carp splashes in the crystalline waters. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows a PC to see through the illusion.

**Reality.** The water is clear but tinged red with iron. The carp are a **swarm of quippers**.

**The Pool.** The plummeting waterfalls dug out the center of the pool, making parts of it deceptively deep. In the red areas marked on the map, the knee-high water drops suddenly to a depth of 10 feet. PCs attempting to cross the pool must make a successful DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or slip into the deep area. PCs that fall in are swept up and carried 20 feet south by the current. Those caught in the current can make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check. On a success, a PC swims to safety and climb into the shallows at the start of their next turn. Those swept downstream take 1d6 bludgeoning damage. At the gap, the waters plunge, wedging the first PC in the tunnel. The current continues to move water into the area around the gap. A wedged PC becomes trapped underwater and risks drowning. A creature, including a wedged PC, can free a wedged creature with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check.

All the charmed commoners and cultists know the safe route to traverse the pool, which they use when visiting the gardens in Area 4.

### 4. GARDENS

Lush gardens ripe with fruits and vegetables hang from an elaborate vine-wrapped trellis that spans the ravine floor. A path of bleached cobblestones winds from the pool's edge and into the garden. Tiny glass crystals and threaded metal chimes dangle from the trellis face, tinkling in the breeze.

The lamia occasionally uses the crystals for scrying. The cobblestones wind deeper into the garden, following a playful, meandering path that eventually leads to Area 4a. PCs following the path disappear within the lush greenery, gaining total concealment from any creatures outside the gardens.

#### 4A. INNER GARDENS

Where the trellises end, an arched gate is threaded with blooming vines of moonflower and wisteria. Next to the gate stands a water-filled marble font. Beyond, the gardens become denser and wilder, erupting with exotic flowers and multiple varieties of small manicured trees, which twist and coil into bizarre, stunningly beautiful shapes.

Residents come to the gates leading to these gardens when they wish to see The Speaker, whom they contact by gazing into the font and touching the water's surface. The Speaker forbids any residents to pass beyond the gate. He threatens exile to anyone who attempts to do so.

**Development.** The inner gardens about the face of the temple. A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a vine-draped stone archway that opens to a winding staircase that leads to Area 7. The arches are marked on the map with an X.

**Creatures.** Six **awakened shrubs** oversee the gardens beyond the trellis. If they detect intruders, they attempt to encircle them before attacking.

### 5. THE AERIE

A high, rocky ledge overlooks the pool at the chasm's southern edge, its outcroppings separated by a narrow wooden footbridge. On either side of the bridge stands a massive tree with long drooping branches.

**Illusion.** The lamia uses her illusions to enhance the appearance of this area, making trees appear lush and



ripe with dark purple fruit. The bridge is white and gold, draped with colorful scarves, and banners waft in the breeze.

**Reality.** The skeletal trees are long dead; their dry, lifeless limbs stretch outward like brittle hands. The plain wooden bridge is decorated with entrails left by the sloppy eating habits of the aerie's bloodthirsty inhabitants.

**Creatures.** The lamia employs two **harpies** to watch over the courtyard and surrounding territories. She feeds them well and typically only uses them as scouts or during raids. Whenever possible, they keep out of trouble. If under siege, she calls upon them to use their Luring Song and attack any unaccompanied creatures emerging from Area 7.

## 6. FALLING WATERS

Matching stone fountains carved into the likeness of naked horned satyrs flank a staircase climbing the temple's face. Water gushes from bronze spouts projecting from their mouths, flooding the center section of the stone floor in front of the stairs and racing into channels that flow between huge crenelated stone blocks. An open arch in each block allows access to a small chamber within. At either corner, a flight of stairs ascends into an archway opening into a spire.

**Creatures.** A patrol of one **doppelganger** in the guise of The Speaker and three **black goat cultists** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) walks this level's perimeter. If they spot intruders and have time to hide, they set an ambush. Otherwise, they approach and ask the PCs how they can help them. Then, they lead PCs on a wild goose chase while signaling for the **harpies** (in Area 5) to attack. At first, they appear terrified of the harpies; however, once the harpies attack, the cultists and Speaker turn on the PCs, siding with the harpies.

## 6A. KILLBOXES

These chambers originally served to monitor and protect the cathedral. Arrow slits line the walls, providing the only light source.

Each alcove has a weapon rack holding three longbows, a basket holding fifty arrows, and a jar of beeswax.

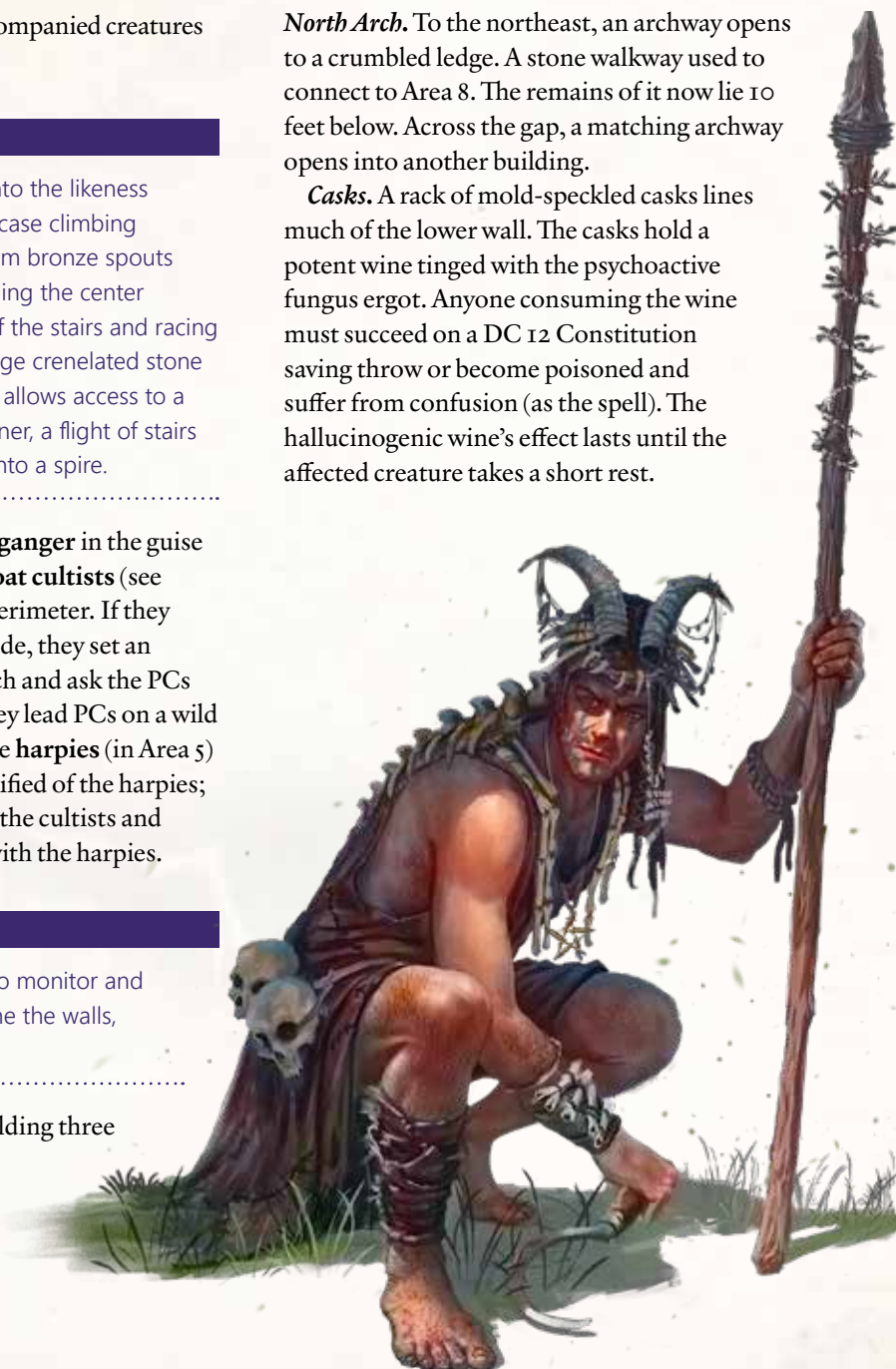
In the event of an attack, the cultists and other allies use the wax to plug their ears to avoid the effect of the harpies' song.

## 7. TOWER OF BACANA

Stairs climb into a damp circular chamber with a fetid smell. A series of ancient, faded murals painted on the walls depict vignettes of gruesome acts featuring half-naked priestesses and satyrs drunkenly reveling, engaging in carnal rites, and ritually sacrificing and eating humans.

**North Arch.** To the northeast, an archway opens to a crumbled ledge. A stone walkway used to connect to Area 8. The remains of it now lie 10 feet below. Across the gap, a matching archway opens into another building.

**Casks.** A rack of mold-speckled casks lines much of the lower wall. The casks hold a potent wine tinged with the psychoactive fungus ergot. Anyone consuming the wine must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned and suffer from confusion (as the spell). The hallucinogenic wine's effect lasts until the affected creature takes a short rest.





## 8. THE GOAT'S BLESSING

The walkway connecting to this section of the temple collapsed, leaving its entrance 10 feet above the floor. PCs can scale the rough walls with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. Upon accessing the entrance, read or paraphrase the following.

.....  
This unlit chamber has suffered extensive damage. Long cracks snake across the walls, floor, and ceiling, all of which brim with patches of weeds and moss. Several parts of the ceiling have collapsed, and rocks and other debris cover the floor. In the center of the room stands a towering statue that resembles a malformed crab fashioned from bone, sinew, and dried entrails.

.....  
**Statue.** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the statue as an effigy of the Black Goat of the Woods. The bones are easily identified as human, and a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check determines that most bones are less than a year old. The bones are perfectly clean.

**The Goat's Curse.** The effigy is cursed. The first time any non-evil creature comes within 10 feet of it, they must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be affected by the *bane* spell until they take a short rest. Once per day, any evil creature that kisses the statue gains the effect of the *bless* spell.

**Bypass.** Anyone approaching the statue holding a human bone bypasses the curse.

**Creatures.** Two **ochre jellies** live within the effigy, fed by cleaning the remains off carcasses of the lamia's victims. Anyone exploring the chamber attracts their attention. When PCs come near, they ooze from the effigy and attack.

## 9. HOUSE OF THE PROPHET

**Red Door.** A crumbling stone staircase strewn with dried flowers leads to a brightly painted red door decorated with strings of glass beads. The door leads into the east spire, known to citizens of The Sanctum as the House of the Prophet. The doppelgangers use Areas 9 and 10 as their private quarters. A door to the north opens to a suspended walkway that leads to another red-painted door.

.....  
The door opens into a small, circular room cluttered with piles of clothing. Spread about the perimeter stand several full-length mirrors, some draped with silks, some uncovered. Between the mirrors lay piles of clothing, half organized on racks or folded, the rest bunched up and kicked against the walls. A round table covered with patterned cloth and four mismatched wooden chairs occupies the center of the room. Atop the table lie half-sorted piles of bric-a-brac.



**Treasure.** The items cluttering the tabletop include 31 gp and 120 sp stacked into piles, a deck of playing cards, three near-empty bottles of wine, a collection of wine-stained pewter goblets, and a silver dagger. A broken dresser and four chests stuffed with clothing and other personal items rest buried beneath some of the piles. In the top right-hand drawer of the dresser is a music box worth 20 gp. In the chest are three coin purses containing coins totaling 6 gp, 43 sp, and 90 cp, and five pieces of miscellaneous jewelry (15 gp each).

#### 10. CHAMBER OF STOLEN EMPATHY

Nailed to the walls are a grisly display of preserved skins flensed from dozens of humanoids in every size, shape, and color. The skins are fastidiously displayed and outlined in chalk with numbers, measurements, and other descriptive details. Three long work benches run down the center of the room. Upon one lies a half-assembled skeleton and an assortment of surgical tools. The others have scatterings of items, and one has a large book.

The doppelgangers use this room to study the creatures they kill to impersonate them better. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check gleams that the scribbles and measurements may create character studies. The descriptive details list mannerisms, eating habits, or more subtle character traits such as greetings and nervous ticks. Thousands of names fill the pages of the weighty tome.

#### 11. CREPIDOMA

A broad marble platform sweeps around the temple's exterior, lined with decorative columns that once may have supported a roof. Someone took the time to festoon the columns with scraps of colorful cloth knotted into long decorative garlands, threaded with trinkets, dried flowers, and other miscellaneous items.

**Staircase.** A broad flight of stairs climbs upward to a set of double doors. Offerings, strands of glass beads, dried flowers, and bits of bone litter the stairs.

**Doors.** A pair of heavy locked doors leads to Area 12. If the lamia still lives and lurks within her chambers, she hides the door with *major image*.

**Illusion.** The stairs end before broad, gold-plated doors embossed with a stylized image of the rising sun flanked by columns of spiraling flights of doves.

**Reality.** A pair of imposing stone doors blocks this entrance, their façade carved with a hideous image of a monstrous crab erupting with tentacles. Any creature proficient in Religion quickly identifies the image as the Goat of the Woods.

**Alcoves.** On either side of the doors, a wrought-iron basket hangs a shallow alcove. Within the basket lies a splayed human corpse. Greedy flies swarm savagely torn bite wounds. Further inspection reveals that something has ripped out the corpse's tongue. The bodies are those of former residents, their half-eaten remains displayed as offerings.

#### 12. THE BLACK GOAT'S DAUGHTER

Collapse has badly damaged much of this once grand hallway. A rocky cliff face cuts into the north wall, half burying a raised dais, and large chunks of fallen rubble spill into the room. Two more stone daises rise like islands from the surrounding clutter on either side. A fine plush carpet lies draped across the dais to the west, piled with colorful pillows. To the east, a grand, gold-framed mirror is propped against the wall. The rest of the floor lies buried beneath a bizarre landscape of miscellaneous items such as vases, furniture, paintings, rolls of cloth, bits of armor, costume jewelry, and other would-be treasures.

**Creatures.** This chamber serves as the sanctum of the temple's overseer and mastermind, a **lamia** known as The Black Goat's Daughter. In a gaudy display of opulence, she has strewn her treasures throughout

the chamber. Valuable items lie scattered among a vast collection of cheap trinkets and baubles. Several twisted paths wind through the cluttered room; the remainder of the floor counts as difficult terrain.

**Tactics.** If the PCs make an excessive amount of noise in Areas 9, 10, or 11—or if they fail a DC 12 group stealth check as they enter this room—the lamia is alerted to their presence and uses *disguise self* to assume the appearance of a young priestess, garbed in plain brown robes consistent with those worn by The Speaker. She pretends to be distraught, unsure about the room's clutter. She does her best to unassumingly approach PCs so she can use her Intoxicating Touch to curse opponents before attempting to charm and manipulate them. However, if pressed, she transforms into her beast form and attacks. After initiating her attacks, she calls for aid. Any allies in the vicinity hear her and rush to help.

## Concluding the Adventure

The adventure ends when the PCs defeat the lamia and cleanse the Cathedral of the Black Goat by killing or driving off all the doppelgangers. When they finish, any residents are free to leave or stay and try to rebuild the cathedral, perhaps creating a true Sanctum under the leadership of the most charismatic resident.

If the PCs flee, the lamia attempts to track them by scrying and employing her harpy allies. She seeks to destroy them and prevent them from revealing the secrets of The Sanctum.







# The Lost Temple of Anax Apogeion

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 3RD LEVEL

.....  
"No one knows what goes through the alien minds of the Great Old Ones. The Cult of Anax Apogeion thought they knew how to find out. Instead, they found starvation and death in a temple lost in the sands of the wastes. With them lies the scroll of Anax Apogeion, supposedly lost for all time. But I know where it is. I will uncover it. I will find the song that sings to the Great Old One."  
.....

## Adventure Background

Three centuries ago, in the mountains of the wastes, a small cult now long forgotten built a temple to the Great Old One—Anax Apogeion. The leader of this cult possessed a scroll said to allow one to speak to the ancient horror. To protect and study the scroll, the cult secluded themselves in the temple and dragged an enormous idol of Anax Apogeion in front of the temple's only entrance, sealing themselves in. They soon starved and died, whispering strange prayers to their uncaring patron with their last breaths.

Until recently, the temple lay hidden behind the huge idol whose very appearance filled those who looked upon it with nightmares. An enterprising wizard named Nathryn Yelles, from a nearby magocracy, found the only piece of evidence describing the lost temple. Stealing a flesh golem

from the vaults of the magocracy, he used it to tip over the massive statue and reveal the lost temple. Filled with hubris, the wizard entered the temple and never came out again.

The Black Goat's Flock, a demon cult of chaos, soon became aware of the vault's discovery through their dust goblin spies and sent their own expedition into the temple. They seek to recover the scroll of Anax Apogeion and add it to their Viridian Codex.

## Adventure Hooks

Use any of the hooks below or create your own to bring the characters to the temple of Anax Apogeion.

***Prophecy of madness.*** One of the characters has a vision of the awakening of a horrifying, tentacled monstrosity floating over a dead city. The character sees the disturbing image of the toppled idol and, with some investigation, learns of the temple of Anax Apogeion.

***Coincidental discovery.*** While traveling through the wastes, the characters spot the toppled idol and feel both the horror of the Old One's temple and the mystery contained within it. One of the characters might recognize the idol of Anax Apogeion, but none know of the secret temple sitting behind it.

***Hired by the Magocracy.*** An agent of a nearby magocracy, Finnius Kalarex, hires the characters to learn the fate of a mage who stole a flesh golem and





headed to an ancient idol in the wastes. Along with the fate of Nathryn Yelles, Finnius seeks the recovery of an ancient scroll said to be within the temple behind the fallen idol.

## Secrets and Clues

As your game unfolds, drop in the following secrets or clues whenever they make sense. Characters might discover these secrets and clues in conversations with NPCs or through skill checks while investigating the lost temple.

- Anax Apogeion is one of the Great Old Ones lost in the wastes. Anax Apogeion itself hangs above the last ancient city it destroyed hundreds of years ago.
- Anax Apogeion cared nothing for the cult that followed it, but they revered it as a god.
- The Black Goat's Flock knows of the lost cult of Anax Apogeion and seeks the scroll it possessed.
- The cult of Anax Apogeion buried itself along with the scroll in its temple.
- The cult of Anax Apogeion uncovered terrible secrets that allowed its members to whisper to the horrors from beyond the realms of mortals.
- Members of the magocracy seek the scroll because they too want to understand how to communicate with the Great Old Ones.
- The Black Goat's Flock, a demon cult of chaos, seeks to complete the Viridian Codex, the forbidden litany of the Goat in the Woods.

### USE IN MIDGARD

This adventure originally appeared as *Warlock Lair #8* and was set in Midgard's Western Wastes region, with the Magocracy of Allain serving as the power behind the investigation.

### CREATURE ENTRIES

When a creature's name appears in **bold** without any additional reference, its stat block appears in the *System Reference Document 5.1*. If the creature's name is in **bold** with a separate book title in parentheses, its statistics appear in that book. Where the source is a book other than *Wastes of Chaos*, SRD substitutions are also recommended.

## 1. ENTRANCE

The massive, toppled idol of a tentacled abomination reveals a carved tunnel leading deep into the rockface of the mountainside. The statue's huge single eye stares out across the lands. A hulking humanoid of stitched patchwork skin stands next to the fallen statue, its mismatched eyes following your movement.

Two Black Goat **cultists** stand guard at the exposed doorway of the temple. They warn any who approach to leave at once, or they shall release the golem. This is a ruse. The **flesh golem** was commanded to wait here for Nathryn Yelles who lies dead inside. The flesh golem accepts no other commands and will stand here until the elements shred it to the bone.

If they are not heeded, the cultists attack. The cultists wear silver necklaces around their necks of a five-pointed star formed from stalks of wheat. A DC 14 Intelligence (History) check identifies these necklaces as symbols of the Black Goat's Flock. They were ordered to guard the doorway and do not know what happened to their companions who entered.

Examining the massive statue of Anax Apogeion is fraught with risk. Anyone who examines the statue must make a DC 14 Charisma saving throw or take 2d6 psychic damage. Further, any physical damage to the statue releases a **death butterfly swarm** (*Tome of Beasts* or use two **swarms of insects**) trapped in the idol and feasting off the idol's dark energy.

**Treasure:** Within the idol, deep in the stone, is a large black diamond worth 500 gp. A DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the diamond is not of this world. The amulets of the Black Goat cultists are worth 10 gp. each, though selling them gains the attention of the leaders of the Black Goat's Flock.

## 2. THE STAIRCASE

Torchlight illuminates this steep cracked stairwell leading up into the mountainside. Dozens of skeletons lie upon the stairs, many dressed in ragged gray robes. Two husks lie in less tattered black robes, silver pentagram necklaces around their necks. The carvings of hundreds of eyes and thousands of tentacles decorate the walls of the stairwell.

A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the older skeletons are nearly three centuries old. The other corpses were more recently killed and wear

the garb of the Black Goat's Flock.

A DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that some of the eyes on the wall pulse with energy. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the energy as necrotic. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (Religion) check can disrupt the necrotic energy of the walls and allow safe passage down the stairs.

Unless disrupted, when any living creature walks halfway down the stairs, a number of eyes begin to gleam with violet light. All creatures on the stairs must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious for 1d10 minutes. Black ethereal tentacles then reach out from the walls and attempt to drain the life out of those who fell asleep, draining them for 2d6 necrotic damage. Damage from these tentacles will not wake those who sleep, but any other damage they take awakens sleepers and causes the tentacles to whip back into the walls.

### 3. THE RELIQUARY

Disfigured husks stand in alcoves in this long hallway. The twisted and pierced bodies of two cultists, recently killed, lie at the bottom of the twenty-foot-deep spiked pit in the front of the room. Another staircase descends deeper into the temple on the far side of the chamber.

A DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that some of the husks appear to be moving.

As the characters move into this chamber or if they attack any of the husks, four of the disfigured husks emit a horrifying screech. All creatures in the chamber who can hear the screech must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or fall under the effects of a *fear* spell. On their turn, characters under this effect must flee the chamber and must roll 1d6. On a 1 or 2, they run into the spiked pit and take 2d6 piercing damage and 1d6 poison damage from the mold-covered spikes at the bottom of the pit. If they do not fall into the pit trap, they might run back into the sleeping trap in the previous stairwell. Creatures under the *fear* effect can make new saving throws at the end of each of their turns.

After the screech, four **skin bats** (*Tome of Beasts* or use eight **giant bats**) tear themselves away from the



skeletal remains they use as their roosts and attack those who do not flee.

A DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that a breeze seems to blow from the thin rock wall behind the corpse of a dead cultist on the right-hand side of the chamber. Breaking through the wall reveals the lost vault.

### 4. THE LOST VAULT

A stone slab sits in the center of this untouched chamber. A skeleton in tattered robes lies on the slab. Four hulking statues sit in the four corners of this room, each with a single eye and twisted tentacles for arms wrapped around their bodies.

Despite the grim statues, there are no traps in this room. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the room has not been touched in over three centuries.

**Treasure:** A careful examination of the skeleton on the slab reveals that the *bracers of defense* it wears still shine as though recently polished.

### 5. CHAMBER OF THE SECOND

Violet torches glow eerily in sconces along the walls of this chamber. A figure wrapped in cloth lies upon a stone platform in the center of the chamber. The body of a Black Goat cultist lies on the floor, its face contorted in agony.

Should anyone enter the chamber, the **mummy** on the stone platform rises and attacks.



**Treasure:** A +1 scimitar named “Dust” once held by the mummy lies on the floor. As an action, the wielder of Dust can cast *fog cloud*. Once this action is used, it can’t be used again until the next dawn.

## 6. THE HALL OF SCREAMS

Two wrapped corpses sit in alcoves on the sides of this hallway. Stairs on the far end of the hallway continue down deeper into the temple. Tattered robes lie in a pool of blood on the floor. A black wasp crawls its way out of the gaping mouth of the corpse on the left side.

Should any living thing continue into the hall, two **swarms of insects** (black wasps) flow from the mouths of the corpses and attempt to devour those within the hall. A DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check reveals that these wasps are not of this world.

## 7. THE ALTAR OF ANAX APOGEION

An octagonal stone ziggurat rises up from the center of the floor. Stairs rise to the top of the ziggurat, flanked by a pair of large carved eyes of deep black. Violet light arcs out from a swirling portal in the ceiling of the chamber above the ziggurat. A corpse in gold and violet robes lies nearby, its head missing. Another figure stands near the top of the ziggurat, a large scroll is open in his hands.

Korresh the Whisperer, a **cult fanatic** of the Black Goat Flock, stands on the steps with a large scroll open in his hands. He finishes his last dark incantation and smiles. “It is done,” he says to the characters. “Anax Apogeion hears me!”

A **dorreq** (see below) then falls from the portal above and lands on Korresh, snapping his head off with its huge beak as it twists the cult fanatic’s body with its tentacles. The scroll falls down the steps to the sand below. With the cultist slain, the dorreq attacks the characters. For the first two rounds, the dorreq uses its bite to chew up the body of Korresh. On the third round, it begins using its bite attack against characters it already has grappled.

The corpse of Nathryn Yelles lies on the ground. A *wand of secrets* remains on his person.

## Conclusion

When the characters defeat the dorreq, the portal snaps shut and the chamber grows quiet. The characters can choose the fate of the scroll of Anax Apogeion. Given to the Black Goat’s Flock, it helps them complete the Viridian Codex. Returned to the magocracy, it disappears into their vast libraries for further study. Destroying the scroll could bring on the wrath of both the magocracy and the cult. The choice is up to the characters.

## Dorreq

*These twitching balls of tentacles surround an inhuman face dominated by a squid-like beak.*

**Servants of the Void.** The dorreqi are servants to ancient horrors of the void and realms beyond human understanding. They are guardians and sentries for such creatures, and they swarm and attack any creatures approaching too close to the elder aberrations they serve.

**Death from Above.** Dorreq prefer to drop on their victims from above, pinning them in a grapple attack with their many tentacles and biting them with their large, chitinous beaks.

### DORREQ

*Medium aberration, neutral evil*

**ARMOR CLASS** 15 (natural armor)

**HIT POINTS** 93 (17d8 + 17)

**SPEED** 20 ft., climb 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	8 (–1)	10 (+0)

**SAVING THROWS** Dex +6

**SKILLS** Intimidate +2, Perception +1, Stealth +8

**DAMAGE RESISTANCES** acid, cold, lightning

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

**LANGUAGES** Void Speech

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

**PROFICIENCY BONUS** +2

**Void Warping.** The area around the dorreq is warped by its connection to the Void. A creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of the dorreq must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or its speed is halved until the start of its next turn.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The dorreq makes one Bite attack and two Tentacles attacks.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

**Tentacles.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 14) and pulled up to 5 feet closer to the dorreq. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The dorreq can grapple up to two creatures at a time.

**Void Thrum (Recharge 5–6).** The dorreq emits a barely audible, vibrating thrum laced with Void energy. Each creature within 20 feet of the dorreq must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) thunder damage and 10 (3d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## BONUS ACTIONS

**Stone Step.** The dorreq teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. The origin and destination spaces must contain a stone or rocky surface, such as a cliff face or rocky terrain.





# Strange Alchemy

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 3RD LEVEL

In *Strange Alchemy*, the PCs must venture up the River of Alchemy at the behest of a gnome tinkerer to find a fragment of an ancient device known as the *Aberrant Sextant*.

## Adventure Background

Years ago, a gnomish alchemy lab tucked into the Pytonne Mountains exploded. Coupled with the wild magic of the nearby Wastes, this caused a massive river of alchemical liquids to spring into being. A gnome by the name of Grinzerrialt somehow survived the explosion with few memories intact. He has survived

in the river with the use of a magic item called the *arc of the Sextant*. He now lives on an island in the river, and studies the strange magics of the area.

Vivi Sparksprocket, a gnome tinkerer in Barsella, has been searching for years for a portion of the fabled artifact, the *Aberrant Sextant*, which is said to open interplanar gateways. Recently, her sources reported that the piece in question, the *arc of the Sextant*, was in the laboratory that exploded years ago and caused the creation of the River of Alchemy. Now Vivi hopes to hire some adventurers to locate the *arc* and bring it to her.

## Adventure Summary

Hired by Vivi, the party must venture across the countryside from Barsella to the River of Alchemy to retrieve the *arc of the Sextant*. Once there, they must contend with creatures and obstacles of all sorts, before locating the *arc of the Sextant* on an island in the center of the river, surrounded by strange machinery. An ancient gnome named Grinzerrialt waits on the island, and will not give up the *arc* easily.

## STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The quest starts in Barsella, an isolated city on the western shores of the Wasted West. The PCs do not need to be in Barsella to hear of the quest, but being in the city or nearby makes travel easier.

### THE ABERRANT SEXTANT

The *Aberrant Sextant* is a legendary magical relic, lost to the ages. It is composed of five individual parts, each a powerful magical item in its own right. The individual parts of the *Sextant* are: The index glass, the horizon glass, the eyepiece, the index arm, and the *arc*. A PC who succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) or (History) check has heard of the *Sextant*, but is light on details, the truth obscured by myth and legend. For more information on the *Aberrant Sextant* and its pieces, see *Wastes of Chaos*.







## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs may discover Vivi and her quest in a number of ways. A few options:

- A notice is posted on a local job board that a gnome in Barsella named Vivi Sparksprocket seeks adventurers for a quest full of danger and derring-do.
- Rumors and whispers circulate that a piece of the fabled *Aberrant Sextant* has been located, but no one knows where. A gnome named Vivi Sparksprocket in Barsella knows more.
- The PCs are walking the streets of Barsella when they hear an explosion nearby.

## TALKING TO VIVI

Vivi Sparksprocket (NG gnome **mage**) is a gnome tinkerer living in the city of Barsella. She's made a name for herself over the past few years. She has no shop front, but does custom work and research out of her lab on the fourth story of her townhome in Arch Town. Vivi is intelligent, enthusiastic, friendly, and ambitious, and seems perpetually smudged with grease or some other mysterious unguent.

When the PCs approach Vivi's townhome, read:

.....  
As you stroll the cobblestone streets, you hear a muffled explosion from nearby. Halfway down the block ahead of you, dark smoke begins pouring from the top-floor windows of a four-story townhome. A moment later, a gnome in a leather apron, gloves, and thick goggles tumbles out the front door, coughing and cursing.  
.....

The gnome is Vivi. After it is clear the explosion did not result in a fire, she looks the party over and asks if they're adventurers and, if so, if they're there for the job she posted. If the PCs seem interested, she invites them into her parlor to talk, offering tea and biscuits almost as an afterthought.

**Information.** Vivi quickly shares with the PCs:

- Everything noted in the Adventure Background section.
- She has located a piece the *Aberrant Sextant*—the *arc*—near the River of Alchemy, which was created by the lab explosion.
- The *arc of the Sextant* would be invaluable to a tinkerer such as herself.
- She has no illusions about the likelihood of finding the rest of the *Sextant*—nor does she have any real desire to do so.

- Vivi has a divining rod attuned to the *arc* that vibrates slightly when a creature holding it is within half a mile of the *arc*; the vibrations increase the closer one gets to the *arc*. If the PCs accept this quest, she gives it to them. The rod is twelve inches long and made of rune-inscribed metal.
- Travelling to the River is perilous because of the strange and unpredictable magics in the area.
- Everything noted in the Traveling to the River of Alchemy section.

**Quest.** Vivi wishes to engage the PCs to travel to the area, find the *arc*, and return it to her.

**Reward.** She's willing to pay 50 gp per person for the job, with a bonus if they bring back any other interesting devices or components.

## TRAVELING TO THE RIVER OF ALCHEMY

**Route 1.** The easiest route to the River of Alchemy is to take the Pytonne Road north out of Barsella to Maravahr, then follow it as it curves east past the Mage Road until it intersects with the northern edge of the Pytonne Mountains.

**Route 2.** The PCs can travel across the countryside rather than stick to the roads; they would have less distance to cover, but the rough terrain doesn't save any time.

**Travel Time.** Traveling by foot along either route takes roughly fifteen days of travel; if on horseback or in a carriage, this time is halved, though a carriage may have difficulty traversing Route 2.

**Navigation.** If the PCs follow the roads, they have little trouble navigating the route and only risk getting lost if they leave the marked roads. Following the roads results in them approaching the river from the north, ending up on the north bank.

If the PCs travel overland instead, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check is required each day to stay on course. Each failure adds a half a day's travel time to their trip. When they arrive at the River via Route 2, they end up on the southern bank.

## THE RIVER OF ALCHEMY

The River of Alchemy is visible from several miles away, as the strange, eerie glow and wisps of multicolored smoke that emanate from it rise into the air. A distinct smell, by turns acrid, sweet, and sour, drifts on the wind. The river cuts a slow, sludgy path through the landscape, burbling and boiling.

Once the PCs come within 100 feet of the bank, the divining rod begins vibrating, guiding them upstream.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS AT THE RIVER

The River of Alchemy spawns bizarre and hostile creatures of all types. Once the PCs reach the river, roll on the table below for every hour of travel.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS AT THE RIVER

d8	Encounter
1	1 gelatinous cube
2	1d4 chuuls
3	1 gibbering mouther
4	1 otyugh
5	1d6 slitherjacks (see <i>Wastes of Chaos</i> )
6	1 ochre jelly
7	1d4 gray oozes
8	1 warped treant (see <i>Wastes of Chaos</i> )

## SCAVENGING IN THE RIVER

If the PCs search for interesting devices or components for Vivi, they can do so by spending ten minutes looking along the riverbank. At the end of the time, roll on the Scavenged Items and Scavenged Item Location tables below to see what they find and where they find it.

## SCAVENGED ITEMS

d10	Scavenged Item
1	A mass of rusted-together cogs and gears.
2	A 1-foot-long, thick glass tube filled with a purple gas.
3	A tangle of tubes and wires connected to a lump of metal that resembles an anatomically correct human heart in both size and shape.
4	A pitted glass bottle with a rubber stopper, filled with a random potion (see Potential Potions in the River of Alchemy chapter of <i>Wastes of Chaos</i> ).
5	A kobold skull made of a silver alloy, with scratches in the eye sockets.
6	A thin copper disk, one foot in diameter, with rune-like etchings on the surface.
7	A quarter-staff-sized piece of metal, with a button in the center. When the button is pressed, the ends glow with a faint green light.
8	A marble of golden metal that hovers above your palm.
9	A flywheel with a pattern of holes that resembles a well-known constellation.
10	A squeezebox with a series of tiny lightbulbs attached to one end. Each bulb lights up in response to a specific note played on the instrument.





## SCAVENGED ITEM LOCATION

d6	Location
1	Protruding from the mud along the shore.
2	Half-buried in a pile of other refuse.
3	Glimpsed just beneath the surface of the river.
4	Pinned beneath a pile of rocks.
5	Balanced precariously on a tiny islet in the river.
6	In the possession of a creature (see Random Encounters at the River above).

### LOCATING THE ARC OF THE SEXTANT

The *arc of the Sextant* is on an island, in the center of the River, in the possession of Grinzerrialt (see Grinzerrialt and Gertrude below). Mechanical bits, like metal piping, tubes, a vat, and a lazily-spinning fan stick up at odd angles from the island and the river around it, and a pear-shaped glass dome sits half-submerged in the viscous fluid of the river. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check allows the PCs to notice that some machinery seems placed purposefully, and several of the tubes pump liquid from the river into one of the vats.

The river is eight feet deep here, though the current is slow, and the liquid in this portion of the river is thicker than water, though still swimmable. Swimming across the river requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check; on a failure, the creature makes no progress.

### 1. THE NORTH BANK

Broken scaffolding and strange machinery create a haphazard bridge between the north bank and the island. If the party arrived via the roads, they are already on the north bank, and can cross the bridge with a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, they slip off the scaffolding and fall into the river.

### 2. THE SOUTH BANK

The south bank of the river looms fifteen feet above the river, with sharp cliffs leading down to the water. Climbing down the Cliffside requires a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check; on a failure, the creature falls and takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

A ladder leans against one of the cliff faces. PCs that descend using the ladder can do so without a check.

There is no convenient scaffolding on the south bank of the river. To reach the island, PCs must swim or find another way to cross the river.

### 3. THE ISLAND

Once on the island, it's easy to see that the machinery here was purposefully placed. A motor hums within the fan, and the PCs can hear the gurgle of fluid within the pipes. The divining rod indicates that the *arc of the Sextant* is within the glass dome, but a sliding metal door stands shut between the island and the dome.

When a PC comes within ten feet of the door, it slides open suddenly, and a gnome with wiry gray hair, a scarred, wrinkled face, and a hunched back regards the party suspiciously. "What are you doing in my river?" he asks. The figure is Grinzerrialt (see Grinzerrialt and Gertrude below).

### 4. GRINZERRIALT'S DOME

This pear-shaped glass dome sits partially submerged in the river. The door to the dome opens with a touch. Inside, tubes, vats, pipes, and other machinery dominate the north side of the room. Two chairs sit at control panels covered with inexplicable buttons and levers.

**Treasure.** Grinzerrialt keep the *arc of the Sextant* in a small metal box, which is locked with a key he keeps in his pocket. Picking the lock on the box requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

### GRINZERRIALT AND GERTRUDE

An old gnome, Grinzerrialt (CN **cult fanatic**), lives in this dome. He is a tinkerer and potion maker who once worked in the alchemy lab before its destruction. He doesn't remember how he survived the explosion and has only hazy memories of his time before the catastrophe, but he is covered in burn scars and knows he once worked there. Since then, he's lived in the River of Alchemy, using its strange properties and the remnants of the factory to his advantage. He has possession of the *arc of the Sextant* and has used it to help him in his endeavors. His behavior is erratic and bizarre, a product of his memory loss, his time in the River, and his years of isolation.

Grinzerrialt is in the company of Gertrude, a Small **gelatinous cube** with a +1 *dagger* and a *ring of protection* floating inside. Gertrude is not hostile

## GRINZERRIALT AND THE ARC

DC	Result
11 or less	Grinzerrialt won't hear foolish talk. To proceed, either a different PC or a different skill must be used.
12	Grinzerrialt agrees to give the <i>arc</i> to the PCs, but only if they first kill a greater gibbering mouther (see <i>Wastes of Chaos</i> ) that's been menacing a portion of the river. He calls the creature Chuck. Chuck is stronger than a normal gibbering mouther, and Grinzerrialt is honest with the PCs that it will be a difficult fight. He suggests they rest in his dome and prepare themselves. He can give them an accurate accounting of Chuck's abilities.
16	After considering the argument, Grinzerrialt asks the PCs if they have anything magical they would be willing to trade. Grinzerrialt immediately agrees to part with the <i>arc</i> if they offer an item of Rare or higher rarity or two Uncommon items. If only one Uncommon item is offered, roll a d20; on a result of 11 or higher, Grinzerrialt agrees to relinquish the <i>arc</i> in exchange, but otherwise refuses. If the attempt to trade fails, Grinzerrialt presents the Chuck option detailed above.
18 or more	Grinzerrialt hems and haws for several moments, but reluctantly agrees to part with the <i>arc</i> .

to the PCs unless they attack her or Grinzerrialt. If provoked in such a fashion, Gertrude uses her bonus action to enlarge to Large size, and then attacks the aggressor, only standing down if ordered to do so by Grinzerrialt. When combat stops, she uses her bonus action to return to her Small size.

### RETRIEVING THE ARC OF THE SEXTANT

Grinzerrialt is not immediately willing to relinquish the *arc* to the party. He relies on it for survival and for his work here in the river. Likewise, he does not want to leave the River if that means leaving Gertrude behind, and he's too worried for her safety to bring her into civilization.

Once the PCs begin talking with Grinzerrialt, have the PC leading the conversation make a Charisma check (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion, depending on their approach), then consult the Grinzerrialt and the Arc table.

### DEALING WITH CHUCK

If the PCs take Grinzerrialt up on his offer to kill Chuck, the creature is easy to locate on the north bank of the river, five minutes upstream.

**Creatures.** The **greater gibbering mouther** skulks along the riverbank and is immune to the river's effects. It uses the terrain to its advantage and slips into the river when it drops below half its hit points, attempting to goad the PCs to come in after it.

While in the river, Chuck can forgo one of its attacks and instead makes a fling attack, attempting to splash the PCs with the liquid from the river. To do so, it makes a ranged weapon attack, targeting a creature within fifteen feet of it. On a hit, the target takes 4 (2d4) acid damage.

### RETURNING TO VIVI

Once the PCs retrieve the *arc of the Sextant*, they can return it to Vivi in Barsella. If they return with Grinzerrialt, Vivi is at first taken aback by the old gnome and his gelatinous cube companion. After a moment, though, her curiosity wins out, and she offers the two a place to stay until they get on their feet again. She is interested to see what she can learn from Grinzerrialt about his time in the factory and the river.



# Dust to Dust

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 3RD LEVEL

## Adventure Background

The numerous hexagonal basalt towers in the valley contain many wondrous mysteries. They are known as the Pillars of the Gods, and one possesses the body of an ancient mage who in life pledged himself to a fallen celestial.

The mage Amniox was a human mystic who bore an amulet of the fallen celestial Arakiel. Ages ago, before these basalt spires trapped him, Amniox sought to commune with Arakiel, to permit this evil entity to possess his flesh, so bringing a new dark power into the world. His ritual was interrupted though, and he was trapped within the stone, thus preventing the dark powers of the beyond from seeping through into the Material Plane.

Despite being encased in stone, the magic seeping from Amniox's amulet—the conduit for his communion with the dark celestial—has been eroding the basalt, revealing a glowing red center as it crumbles away. The amulet is no longer trapped and is the source of the strange red lights within the region, visible to travelers and residents within the Crooked Passage. Over the long ages, the amulet, containing a portion of the power from the ancient ritual and a seeming mind of its own, sought another to achieve its goal of bringing Arakiel to this plane. Recently, it has found refuge in the corrupted spirit of the oracle.

The oracle, called Kapha (“gray woman” in a forgotten wasteland language), or Gray Mistress by

her troupe of chaos goblins, has been summoned to the spires that contain Amniox. She and her troupe have established a semi-permanent bivouac there, and she has begun the long set of rituals required to call Amniox's spirit back to his body, free him from the stone spire, and permit Arakiel to finally reign. Unbeknownst to the oracle and her retinue, the rituals have caused several nearby arcane artifacts, scrolls, and devices to reactivate.

Should she complete her ritual, Amniox's spirit will re-enter his body, and they will work quickly to resume the summoning of Arakiel to the Material Plane through the amulet's power.

## CROOKED PASSAGE

The Crooked Passage is a winding stone trail that follows steep canyons. Many of its branching pathways lead to the Pillars of the Gods. Travelers often use the path to seek treasure in the valley or to earn renown by bringing back the heads of strange wasteland beasts as trophies. The path is barren and desolate, occasionally leading to bandit ambushes when the spawning storms are not active.

## AMNIOX AND ARAKIEL

Amniox was a mystic (human **cult fanatic**) who bore an amulet of the fallen celestial Arakiel. Ages ago, before the Pillars of the Gods trapped him, Amniox sought to commune with Arakiel and invite the evil entity to possess his flesh, thus bringing a new dark power into the world.





Amniox is just shy of 6 feet tall, bald, and bronze-skinned. He wears simple but flowing charcoal-colored robes and leather boots that are laced with black leather cords. He wears only one indicator of the favor bestowed upon him by his dark celestial patron: a mystical amulet. The chain and centerpiece of the amulet are both made of tarnished brass, and the circular centerpiece is covered in strange glyphs, featuring a hollow center that glows faintly red as energy swirls around it like smoke.

He is trapped in a towering hexagonal basalt spire, a look of mingled rage and surprise frozen on his face. Amniox's facial features and clothing are visible in fine detail. A portion of the amulet is both visible and free from the stone, revealing only the central hollow and a tiny bit of the brass glyphs.

### ORACLE OF ARAKIEL

Once a stately and beautiful woman, the Oracle of Arakiel traded away her beauty and name for power. She may only be in her late 20s, but she ambles and leans heavily upon a gnarled wooden staff. She now seeks to free both the amulet and its bearer from the stone spire around which she has built a site of ritual sacrifice and worship.

The oracle stands over 6 feet tall but walks hunched over, seeming smaller than she is. Once a lustrous deep auburn, her hair is now charcoal gray, though it retains its luster, and the tips hint at their former color. Once copper, her skin has faded to a pale silvery-white. She wears a roughly stained white silk veil over her face that has the sigil of Arakiel painted on it in black. She carries an obsidian dagger on her belt and favors clothing that aids survival, including a weathered tan cloak and hood, and guards against the ripping winds that slice through the basalt spires. She wears many bracelets and has several pouches on her belt that contain poisons, especially the narcotic mineral she burns to enter the trance that enables her communion with Arakiel.

### CHAOS GOBLINS OF THE GRAY MISTRESS

The chaos goblins that have gathered under the command of the oracle have fallen sway to her beliefs. First hesitant, they now willingly sacrifice themselves for her rituals, happily offering their severed hands for her to gather the knuckles from the bones. They have seen the visions she has conjured, and occasionally, during her narcotic-induced oracular visions, they have caught glimpses of the misshapen silhouette of Arakiel dancing in the white smoke of her ceremonial

pyre. Surrounding the oracle is her guard of unique goblins, chosen for their strange mutations: each has been exposed to a spawning storm and has a permanent effect from the Body Warping table (see Chaos Weather in Chapter 1 of *Wastes of Chaos*). They lord over the rest of the troupe and often randomly bring a weakened chaos goblin to offer as a sacrifice for their mistress, attempting to earn more favor.

## Adventure Hook

Recently, the village of Spireworth in the Crooked Passage, a narrow valley of stone that leads to the Pillars of the Gods, has had several ancient scrolls and arcane devices (long thought to have been ceremonial or expended) activate and start thrumming with a strange energy. This arcane awakening has coincided with recent reports that a troupe of chaos goblins, considered a menace to the local community, has established a semi-permanent camp underneath one of the pillars, which now emanates a strange red light. Fearing for the village's safety, its ruling council has mustered a group of adventurers to drive off the goblins and uncover the mystery of the glowing spire.

## Starting the Adventure

The adventure begins with the characters traveling toward or arriving at the village of Spireworth for the first time, before they have had a chance to visit the Pillars of the Gods.

### VILLAGE OF SPIREWORTH

Growing in the shadow of the Pillars of the Gods, the village of Spireworth is a critical waypoint for travelers making their way through the Crooked Passage. Due partly to its proximity to the strange valley and the constant flow of adventurers, many that grow up in the village find themselves drawn to adventuring life. The day-to-day of Spireworth is not easy though, being on the cusp of the wastes, and the village has seen its share of invasions, monster attacks, and other strange calamities. Families that thrive in Spireworth often perform mercenary work or protect the village as members of the esteemed village guard. Others seek to win renown by venturing to the Pillars of the Gods in search of strange artifacts and other treasures to trade. The steady stream of traders that traverse the Crooked Passage provides the village with its necessary food and supplies.

## LANDMARKS OF SPIREWORTH

The following locations may prove of interest to the characters during their stay in Spireworth.

### THE CROOKED CACTUS

The Crook Cactus is a tavern frequented by the village guard, including Shel Spirestrong (half-orc **gladiator**), the captain of the guard. Outsiders avoid the tavern unless they are looking for a brawl. Scuz and Scoz, **kobold** brothers, own and run the joint.

### TOOTH AND BONE

The Tooth and Bone is an inn and tavern preferred by travelers passing through Spireworth. Mercenaries often find work here, and bounty hunters occasionally conduct business in the main hall's dark corners. Zaetek (drow **commoner**) operates the establishment.

### APEX LEXICON

A repository for scrolls and manuscripts, the Apex Lexicon's primary function is the translation of texts, particularly from scrolls and similar ancient items, for the benefit of travelers and treasure hunters. The senior archivist, Cala (human **commoner**) is a true polyglot. Urnir Pyremantle (human **mage**) is often here conducting research.

### SHRINE OF PLACID SKIES

This shrine exists for travelers to make offerings to their deities and pray for safe passage along the Crooked Passage or for success on quests within the Pillars of the Gods. A married couple, Monmoth (dwarf **priest**) and Oris (dwarf **priest**) maintain the place and collect the offerings to pay for upkeep.

### SPIRE FOR HIRE

The Spire for Hire serves as sundries shop, catering to travelers passing through. It offers trade for many items (magical and otherwise). Mercenaries visit to collect bounties and accept new contracts. Pin (human **veteran**) is the proprietor.

## SPAWNING STORM

While traveling within the Crooked Passage from Spireworth toward the Pillars of the Gods for the first time, the characters encounter a massive magical storm known as a spawning storm gathering (see Chaos Weather in Chapter 1 of *Wastes of Chaos*). Multi-colored lightning flashing between heavy clouds allows savvy adventurers to recognize the tell-tale signs of such dangerous weather (DC 12 Survival check) and encourage them to seek out shelter to avoid being caught in the storm's erratic effects.

## ESCAPING THE SPAWNING STORM

To escape the spawning storm and find shelter, the party must succeed at a skill challenge.

- **3 Successes Before Any Failures.** The party suffers no exposure to the spawning storm and no injuries. Characters can swiftly navigate the narrow passage and find shelter, only needing to choose which set of caves to enter: northern or southern (see below).
- **First Failure Before 3 Successes.** A crack of thunder booms in the valley, shaking several large boulders loose from the ridge high above the party. All party members must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 bludgeoning damage. If a character fails by 5 or more, they are pinned under a large boulder. Freeing the pinned character requires a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.
- **Second Failure Before 3 Successes.** A strange, chaotic bolt of lightning strikes perilously close to the party. Each character must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 6d6 lightning damage and being blinded and deafened for 1 minute on a failed save or half as much damage and no additional effects on a successful one. If a character fails by 5 or more, they become frightened of the storm for 1 round.
- **Third Failure Before 3 Successes.** The spawning storm arrives and engulfs the party in torrential rains. All party members must roll on the Spawning Storm Exposure Effects table (see *Wastes of Chaos*), but the party finds the northern and southern caves (see below) and can find shelter in them.

The spawning storm subsides after 1 hour, giving the players time to take a short rest in one of the two cave systems and wait out the storm. After the storm, if the characters chose to shelter in the southern caves, the chaos goblins and their chieftain emerge from the northern caves and return to the encampment around

### GM'S TIP

Let the party know they are in a skill challenge and must achieve three successes to pass it. A GM might also suggest several ability checks that move them toward success, including Nature, Perception, and Survival.



the base of the spire. If the characters took shelter in the northern caves, the creatures in the southern caves only emerge after nightfall to hunt.

## PILLARS OF THE GODS

Once the characters make it through the narrow route of the Crooked Pathway and enter the large valley known as the Pillars of the Gods, they can visit the cave systems (which they will likely do during the spawning storm) or venture closer to the basalt spire where Amniox is imprisoned.

## NORTHERN CAVES: CHAOS GOBLIN RETREAT

A makeshift shelter has been set up within the northern caves by order of the chaos goblin chieftain, the informal leader among the chaos goblins serving the Gray Mistress.

### 1. SUPPLY STASH

Strewn about the roughly dug-out cave are several supply crates, containing assortments of moldy rations, rusted weapons, and dusty bottles filled with congealed liquid. A family of four **giant centipedes** have sought shelter in the long arc of the cave, having followed the chaos goblins. The party can avoid the creatures with a successful DC 11 Dexterity (Stealth) check. At the end of the narrow hall, the party can see several sealed crates, which contain four days' worth of fresh rations, four explorer's packs, a light crossbow, a shortbow, and a shortsword, all of goblin make, along with ammunition for the ranged weapons.

### 2. CULTIST CAVE

Six **chaos goblins** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) have sought shelter in the large bowl of the cave. Terrified and shivering while the storm rages outside, the goblins crouch around a low fire made from several

broken-down crates. It sputters and casts random shadows on the cave walls. Salvaged from the crates and littering the floor are three *potions of healing*. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a set of slippers with spiderweb designs (*slippers of spider climbing*), drying next to the fire, and an amulet (*amulet of health*), glowing faintly red, around the chieftain's neck. Piled in one corner are several empty crates, presumably to be broken down to feed the fire.

## SOUTHERN CAVES: BEAST LAIRS

Abandoned by the chaos goblin cultists, these caves house misshapen beasts. Characters must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check or alert the drakes (during the daytime, see Area 4) or wasps (during the nighttime, see Area 3) to the characters' presence, causing them to come investigate and attack.

### 3. WASP NEST

A nest of **giant wasps** fills this chamber. During the day, there are only four of these creatures (as the others are out hunting), but at night, there are 10. They have grown monstrously large due to the strange magics emanating from Amniox's amulet. The corpses of several desiccated giant spiders, giant snakes, and chaos goblins and their gear litter the floor. One of the chaos goblin corpses holds a dagger in its clenched hand (*dagger of venom*).

### 4. CHAOS DRAKES' DEN

Lounging near a shallow pool are a mated pair of **chaos drakes** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), also having grown monstrously large from the magic of Amniox's amulet. They laze about but are hungry and will ravenously attack and



attempt to devour any creature foolish enough to wander into their den. Otherwise, they leave their lair at night to hunt.

### THE PILLAR OF AMNIOX

A massive set of hexagonal pillars ascend in a tight column from the floor of the stone valley. A semi-permanent encampment surrounds the base of the pillars. Several decrepit tents of canvas and hide encircle the pillar, hiding its base from view. Due to the recent spawning storm, the normally alert camp has devolved into chaos, and most of the chaos goblins writhe in pain around the pillar's base as their bodies undergo bizarre mutations. The party may choose to take advantage of the chaos and infiltrate the camp, requiring a successful DC 17 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If the party is noticed, they encounter six **chaos goblins** and a goblin chieftain (use **berserker**) that put in a last-ditch effort to defend the tower.

Undeterred by the storm, atop the highest pillar, the oracle continues to engage in the rituals to return Amniox's spirit to his body, still trapped in stone. As she continues the ritual, the amulet grows increasingly brighter. Guarding her are five **chaos goblins**. They rush to her aid and do their utmost to prevent the ritual from being interrupted.

The oracle (human **black goat priestess**, see *Wastes of Chaos*) ignores the party at first, attempting to focus on the ritual, and only when the party has killed two chaos goblins does she go on the offensive, fighting with all her might to prevent her work from being sundered. If she or a chaos goblin brings a party member to unconsciousness, she offers to spare the character's life if the party retreats. The oracle also bargains for her own life if all the chaos goblins are slain or if she is brought below half her hit points, promising to abandon her ritual and retreat from the Pillars of the Gods.

If the oracle is defeated, her already ashen body fades to dust, but instead of being swept away by the wind, it is drawn to the surface of the amulet, coating it with gray corruption.

Should the party succeed in destroying the oracle, they receive a psychic transmission. It is unclear whether the transmission comes from the amulet or beyond the Material Plane. The speaker pleads with each member of the party individually to complete



the ritual by using the bodies of the dead chaos goblins to empower the amulet. The speaker promises power, wealth, or peace, as necessary, to appeal to each individual party member's desires. If a party member relents and agrees or swears to accomplish this mission, the amulet, empowered by the dust of the oracle, releases itself from the stone form of Amniox and hangs itself about the neck of its new champion.

### Concluding the Adventure

If the amulet's influence corrupts one of the characters, they may find themselves with a new warlock patron and a new powerful magic item that contains deep mysteries. However, should the party dispatch the oracle and eliminate the chaos goblin menace from the region, the village of Spireworth heralds them as heroes. Despite the defeat of the oracle, the amulet continues to glow, and many arcane devices previously inert remain active. A quest to gather more information about the amulet or to obtain a weapon powerful enough to destroy it may be on the horizon!



# Vault of the God-King

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 4TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

Recently whispered rumors tell of the discovery of the twisted wreckage of a metal meteor driven by a godlike antehuman sorcerer whose terrifying powers transported him between the worlds. His disciples call him god-king and claim him a blood descendant of the dreadwalkers. They say he speaks to otherworldly beings that reveal the secrets of divine ascension.

The god-king is a myth of sorts. The metal meteor is a crashed alien spacecraft. During its travels, it encountered another alien race known as children of the silver sphere. The children overran the ship, forcing it to crash.

Now living within the ruins, these aliens have established themselves as agents of divinity. Using their considerable psychic magic and the ship's unique bio-tech artificial intelligence, the children lure humanoids into the vault of the god-king by offering to teach the secrets of divine ascension to mortals. Those foolish enough to submit become guinea pigs for the aliens' manipulative experiments. Each month, the children of the silver sphere choose a new god-king from their fold of disciples. The current god-king is a sorcerer named Aroth. The aliens implanted him with the belief that he bears the bloodline of a dreadwalker.

## Adventure Hooks

- An individual of interest to the PCs made a pilgrimage to the Vault of the God-King and has yet to return.
- PCs require rare metals or other materials possibly found in the strange metal meteor.
- Reavers attack the PCs as they are travel through the wastelands. The reavers then flee into the hills and attempt to hide in the vault.

## The Crashed Craft

The crashed craft is fabricated from an unidentifiable alloy with a scintillating blue hue. The metal is cold to the touch, slightly reflective, and eerily glistens when light strikes it. The incredibly durable metal's physical properties closely resemble adamantine.

**Sliding Doors.** Unless otherwise noted, metal sliding airlock doors seal off all inner corridors and chambers. Without power, they must be pried open with a successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check using a crowbar or similar object. Characters lacking such a tool can find one if they spend 1 minute scavenging among the scrap metal.

**Door Destruction.** The doors are hollow, but the cavity is filled with a pressurized insulating fluid. If damaged, a clear, semi-viscous fluid bursts out, filling





the corridor and sealing it fast. Breaking a door—with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check—releases the fluid in a 20-foot cone.

Each creature caught in the blast must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 3d6 acid damage on a failed save or half as much on a success. Immediately after the blast, the area becomes difficult terrain as the fluid rapidly hardens. Any creature that failed its saving throw becomes grappled. If the creature fails the save by 5 or more, it also becomes restrained. A grappled creature can use its action to break free by succeeding on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Metal Madness.** Any Humanoids discovered on the craft who have been there for an extended period of time have become mentally compromised. They can be restored to sanity by using the *lesser restoration* spell.

**Manipulatives.** Several locations within the ship have switches, knobs, and other manipulatives. Long drained of its primary power supplies, some of the ship's auxiliary instruments run off reserve power. PCs that haphazardly manipulate the equipment risk triggering random surge effects.

## SURGE EFFECTS

D6	Effect
1	A low hum vibrates along the walls.
2	Lights power up for a second, flickering wildly before shutting off again.
3	A jolt of electrical energy shoots from the panel. The PC manipulating the panel must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) electrical damage.
4	A communications system unleashes a jarring howl of static blended with a high-pitched squeal of alien gibberish.
5	Lights flash in sync with an ominous beeping noise.
6	A blast of icy cold gas bursts from the panel. The PC manipulating the panel must make a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) cold damage.

## ACCESSING THE CRAFT

**Option 1.** Area 1 provides PCs with the easiest and safest way to enter the craft.

**Option 2.** There are two exterior doors located at the aft, in Area 11. One is entirely sealed but can be excavated as described in the entry. The other is readily accessible.

**Option 3.** PCs can attempt to climb on top of the craft and locate another access point. If they discover the courtyard (Area 10), they can enter through the break in the adjoining corridor. As written, this places the PCs adjacent to the adventure's main antagonists. If the PCs take this approach, the GM should consider moving antagonists elsewhere within the ship.

### 1. ENTRANCE

An opening in the weathered metal wall exposes an unlit corridor, its floor strewn with rubble and twisted metal debris.

The walls just inside the opening bear a passage of graffiti coarsely scratched into the metal. In Void Speech, it reads, "*Bow low in humility all who enter the Vault of the God-King!*"

About halfway down the corridor, a bent metal door torn from an arch in the north wall rests upon the grated metal floor. At the end of the hall, a set of sliding double doors blocks the western exit. The doors rest in a slightly open position, allowing PCs to peep through the crack into Area 4.

**Creatures.** A lone sentry (**bandit captain**) hides behind the broken door in the north arch. As soon as he spots intruders, he attempts to sneak into Area 2 and activate the hologram. Then he dashes to Area 3 and rouses the other disciples. If the PCs prevent him from getting to Area 3, he instead shouts a warning that there are intruders.

As soon as the sentry is successfully targeted with a spell or takes physical damage, the ship's biotech AI alerts the **children of the silver sphere** in Area 9.

## 2. BRIDGE

The door to this room lies on the floor of the adjacent hall, battered from its frame. The threshold opens into a broad chamber cramped with twisted metal objects and jagged rock covered in shards of broken glass. Scorch marks scar the panels, and serpentine coils of torn wiring hang from the ceiling, walls, and other objects. A section of the metal wall is bent inward, ruptured by the rocky side of a hill.

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**The Bridge of the Ship.** PCs can readily identify some wreckage as furniture. Other objects such as navigation equipment, sensors, and tracking systems are beyond understanding.

**The Hologram.** A curious chalk circle marks one of the panel buttons. If pressed, it triggers a holographic message prepared by the children of the silver sphere. A translucent rainbow-colored image appears of a blindfolded man wearing long robes accompanied on either side by two beautiful children. The man speaks, "Welcome, blessed ones, for you have entered the Vault of the God-King. Here all truths are revealed to those willing to accept their awakening."

## 3. PODS

Everything in this chamber is corroded and coated with several layers of fine, gray, crystalline dust. The north wall has collapsed inward, and boulders and other debris have tumbled into the room. Beneath one of the larger boulders lies a dented oblong metal canister fitted with ridged pipes. A row of three C-shaped alcoves faces the room. A badly cracked sheet of glass covers one of the alcoves. At the bottom of the alcove rests a large pile of resinous brown and red glop.

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**Creatures.** Three disciples (**bandit captains**) occupy the room. They are scraping the crystalline dust from the walls and floor and placing it into a glass tube. If they spot outsiders, they raise their hands in surrender and proselytize about the great blessing of how fate led them to the Vault of the God-King. They offer to lead the PCs to see the god-king, but only if they leave behind their weapons. They claim the god-king doesn't accept violence within the vault. The statement is accurate; however, the disciples resort to violence if necessary.

## 4. PULSE DRIVE CORE

This chamber sustained considerable damage. Its metal panels look rippled, and cracks breach the resin-coated floor. Solidified rivers of an unknown fluorescent green substance trail through the chamber. They emanate from a series of cracked glass cylinders vertically mounted to the east wall. The south ceiling is compressed and collapsed inward.

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Any creature touching the fluorescent substance discovers it has a thick, rubbery skin, while the inside feels like a viscous liquid.

The fluid connects the biotech artificial intelligence that operates the ship. Unfortunately, the material plane cannot provide the specific environmental conditions required for the fluid to function efficiently. At present, it has only minimal sentence.

Physical contact with the liquid puts individuals in contact with the ship itself. They begin hearing sporadic bursts of alien voices in an unknown language, accompanied by pangs of trauma and a sense of danger. Beyond that, the meaning is indecipherable. The voices persists until the creature spends an entire day outside of the ship and takes a long rest. Every 20 minutes, the voices escalate, forcing the creature to succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or take 1d6 psychic damage. If the creature rolls a 1 on the save, the AI fluids report their presence to the aliens, who can then contact the PCs each time they fail the Wisdom saving throw to avoid damage from the contact.

**Creatures.** A single **acolyte** wanders into this room. She is blindfolded and led by what appears to be a small child with long auburn hair and otherworldly silver eyes (**child of the silver sphere**, see *Wastes of Chaos*). If approached, the woman pleasantly welcomes the PCs to the Vault of the God-King. The beautiful child then releases her hand from the disciple and extends it to the PCs, offering to lead them to the place where they will truly see and understand reality.

**Tactics.** The child of the silver sphere attempts to make contact with outsiders to activate its Metasoma ability. Once it accesses a character's desires, it manipulates them toward seeking the path to divinity. It is connected to others of its kind and alerts the other two children in Area 9 that newcomers have arrived who may be challenging to recruit. The child attempts to lead individuals off and separate the group. If attacked, she uses spells and attempts to



flee. If cornered, she reverts to her true hideous form and counterattacks while telepathically calling for aid from her kin and other disciples.

## 5. STASIS CENTER

A large metal and ceramic box dominates the center of this room. An array of polymer ducts exit in every possible direction. On the faces of the box swirl fluid-filled crystalline globes. A series of dials labeled with unknown symbols runs beneath the globes.

All the machinery here remains intact. There are six globes, three filled with florescent green fluid of identical color to the fluorescent green fluid found elsewhere in the ship. Chartreuse, orange, and yellow fluids fill the remaining globes. The chartreuse knob is set at 10 o'clock, the orange at 11 o'clock, and the yellow at 5 o'clock. If any of the PCs have had contact with the sentient fluid in Area 4 and saved successfully saved against the damage at least once, they can decipher the writing: the chartreuse reads *purge*, the orange reads *siphon*, and the yellow reads *regulate*.

The dials control the speed and direction of the swirling liquids. Rotating the dial left causes the liquid to swirl counter-clockwise, increasing speed as the knob turns towards 6 o'clock. Rotating the dial right causes the liquid to swirl clockwise with increasing speed. If set to 12 o'clock, the speed and flow of the liquid stops, and its color slowly changes to fluorescent green. PCs manipulating the knobs can change the effect of how all creatures connected to the biotech AI communicate.

- **Purge** (chartreuse) fills or removes liquid from the vats in Area 9. If increased, the liquid drains off in several hours; if decreased, the vats overflow, spilling more AI fluid into the ship.
- **Siphon** (orange) drains or restores psychic energy from every creature connected to the AI. If increased, all connected creatures gain resistance to psychic damage. If decreased, all connected creatures gain vulnerability to psychic damage. If set to 12 o'clock, divide psychic damage between all creatures connected to the biotech AI.
- **Regulate** (yellow) controls the flow of communication between creatures connected by the AI. If decreased, all creatures can hear and respond equally; if increased, only creatures of equal CR or lower can communicate freely. If set to 12 o'clock, all communications cease.

## 6. SPECIMEN ROOM

A massive tank filled with green fluid pins the door to this location shut. PCs must succeed on a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check to slide the tank enough to gain access to the chamber.

Inside the room, several panels along the west wall collapse inward, exposing the damaged framework beneath.

**Parasites.** A door to the north opens on a storage closet filled with several dozen sealed cylindrical ceramic cases. PCs with a crowbar or tinker's tools can attempt to break the seal and open the case with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. Inside each ceramic case is a glass tube preserving a sample of organs collected from alien creatures. If a creature attempts to break the seal but fails by 5 or more, they accidentally rupture the glass, exposing everyone in the room to an alien parasite (treat the parasite like *sewer plague*).

## 7. COILS

The door to the south bulges inward as if struck by a tremendous force. To the north extends a circular corridor with translucent gray walls. Coils of thick tubes filled with a slow-moving viscous fluid are sealed behind the walls. Bubbles rise lazily through the fluid. Halfway up the corridor, the coils empty into a sealed vat with several layers. The frothy fluid fills only the bottom third of the vat.

The door to the north is sealed and requires a security clearance. Without clearance, any attempt to force the doors triggers the release of its pressurized fluid, as described in the sliding doors feature section. Once opened, the door provides access to Area 9.

## 8. NAVIGATION

A tapering chamber with a low arching ceiling is comprised of a metal and glass framework. The glass is yellowed with age and covered with crystalline dust. Thick ceramic and metal panels flank the entrance, floor to ceiling. Each face bears an elaborate array of knobs, switches, and colored crystalline beads.

Near the center of the chamber, a blindfolded man dressed in a gossamer robe sits on a polished white throne before a broad curved table covered with switches, dials, gauges, and meters.

The auxiliary helm was used for navigation and monitoring various ship functions. It also provided a failsafe that could override the main controls and pilot the craft. The white throne is a swivel chair cast from an alien polymer. The table houses the control unit.

Anyone scraping away the dust on the glass can see the landscape outside the ship.

**Creatures.** The man (**mage**) on the chair is seemingly in a trance. If the PCs attempt to communicate with him, he identifies himself as God-King Aroth, the first of his line. He then expresses his joy that others have come to bear witness to his ascension. The children have driven him mad, believing he is to become a god. If the PCs question his beliefs, he offers to take them to speak with the children. If physically threatened, he warns them of his tremendous power and near omnipotence and arrogantly demands they bow before him. If the PCs persist, he bellows gibberish and the phrase, “In the name of Aroth, First of his line of divinity! I banish thee!” and launches into spell attacks. The children are content to observe and do not come to his aid or otherwise intervene.

If, the PCs cure Aroth instead, the children gather outside the door in their true forms and ambush the PCs as they attempt to leave.

## 9. AUXILIARY CORE

Battered machinery clutters much of the chamber. The northern area appears badly damaged, with large cracks zigzagging across the floor. Long resinous pipes run the length of the inner walls and across the low, curved ceiling. Two massive metal vats occupy the chamber’s center, sealed with bulbous crystalline lids that emanate an otherworldly fluorescent green glow. Of the more identifiable debris, two chairs face a blackened sheet of cracked glass. Two humans sit in the chairs, facing the screens. Each is connected to a tangle of fine, flexible, hollow tubes protruding from a resinous console. A pair of stunningly beautiful children with silvery eyes holds each of their hands.

**The Vats.** Both sealed vats hold the florescent green fluid described in Area 4.

**Creatures.** The two human **acolytes** have blank expressions and remain entirely motionless unless PCs attempt to interact with them. The humans connected to the biotech AI have gone mad. They believe they are talking to the god-king and do not want to be disconnected. Unless cured of their

madness, they cannot be reasoned with and violently attack anyone attempting to break the connection. The children (**child of the silver sphere**, see *Wastes of Chaos*) notice anyone entering the room; however, they are slow to react if the PCs are not immediately threatening. Instead, they welcome the PCs and attempt to get them to see the “truth.” If the PCs turn violent, they assume their true forms and attack. If either alien becomes badly injured, they exit combat and attempt to flee.

## 10. COURTYARD

Sand and rubble spill into this curved corridor, froming a gaping hole in the north wall. The hole opens into a makeshift courtyard. Near a pile of boulders, a ruptured ceramic and metal tank spills hundreds of fine translucent cables and tiny scintillating rubbery orbs. Along the edges of the wall lie small piles of cracked bones.

The courtyard’s occupant is a towering **hill giant** named Uvog. His amputated right hand has been replaced with a chunk of scrap metal that he uses to smash opponents. The bones are the (humanoid) remains of his meals. When first approached, Uvog asks the PCs if they have seen the children. He claims he is hungry, and they promised him food. He knows nothing about the god-king. The huge brutish creature lacks patience and restraint. If the PCs cannot tell him where the children have gone or where his food is, he decides the PCs shall be his next meal and attacks.

## 11. RIFT

Jagged strips of bent metal protrude from the walls, marking where this section ripped free from the main hull during the crash. The walls of the main structure intersect, forming a corner that was once part of the starship’s interior. Hunks of scrap and debris pile against two doors, one leading north and the other leading west (Area 10). A hard, transparent glass-like substance (emergency insulation fluid triggered by the initial crash) seals the western door. Breaking through requires significant effort and takes several hours.



## 12. CORE DRIVE

This cramped arched chamber centers around a massive semi-hollow cylindrical metal device. Several other machines line the walls that hold glass-plated gauges. Sloppily scribbled messages in dried blood cover the walls, and a trail of dried bloody footprints runs out the north door.

The messages written in Void Speech consist of rambling diatribes decrying the lies of the silver oracle, the rise of false gods, and the apocalyptic death of divine ascension. The handwriting is similar to that found on the door in Area 1.

## 13. BATTERED HULL

This section of the ship suffered extensive damage. These chambers are cramped and filled with jagged metal debris and broken glass. Where the ceiling collapsed, rain caused extensive rust damage, and fungus and moss growth penetrated the hull. Treat movement in this area as difficult terrain. Any creature that moves farther than their speed (such as via the Dash action) must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid taking 1d8 slashing damage from rubbing against jagged metal.

More of the sentient florescent fluid pools in the western corner of the room. If PCs interact with the fluid, they risk connecting with the ship's AI, as described in Area 4.

**Creatures.** An unstable **berserker** hides within this section of the ruins. He fled here after the children's experiments drove him insane. He believes the children are hunting him and has rigged three **collapsing roof traps** to protect himself. If anyone enters, he assumes the children have sent them, or they are children. He cannot be convinced otherwise. He first attempts to stalk opponents and, using stealth, tries to lure them into his traps. If confronted, he goes berserk and attacks with a makeshift scrap metal ax. If cured of his madness, he offers the PCs 250 gp and a useful uncommon magic item for his safe return.

## Concluding the Adventure

Defeating the children of silver sphere removes the Vault's primary threat. The remaining occupants consist of victims driven mad by the children's experiments. If the PCs treat their madness, the NPCs ask to accompany them back to civilization. The acolytes both belong to a small temple in the nearby hills, and, if returned, their high priest offers the PCs food and respite. While the priests are poor, they possess significant insight, wisdom, and knowledge of the area. The priest also offers his insights as a diviner and seer and can cast *legend lore*.

If cured, Aroth seeks passage to the nearest city. Unfortunately, the delusion of becoming God-King never leaves him, and eventually, the strange secrets of the Vault lure him back. Unable to connect to the children, he uses the fluids as reagents in a phylactery and attempts to become immortal by becoming an alchemical ooze-lich.

If characters share knowledge of the Vault, their tales draw explorers to the region. This introduces a flux of strange and potentially dangerous salvaged items into the local economy, spurring a black market demand for illegal space metals and biofluids.

If any children of the silver sphere survive, after a couple of weeks or months they attempt to hunt down the PCs. They select a single PC and attempt to use their Psychic Link ability to override that PC's desires and convince them to return to the Vault to uncover the secrets of immortality.

# A Cry for Help

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 4TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

Mikos Addlebury is a trader who makes a living traversing the edges of the marshlands with his wagon, mule, and one or two mercenary bodyguards. Aside from a broad selection of general goods, Mikos is happy to buy artifacts and other knickknacks from adventurers plundering the ruins dotting the marshlands. Most of the time, these items are mere junk, but once in a while, Mikos gets his hands on a magic item or rare piece of ancient technology.

Recently, Mikos procured an oddly shaped idol of dark green malachite from a passing adventurer who seemed a little too anxious to get rid of it. That alone should have been enough to warn the trader, but his greed got the better of him. He took the idol off the adventurer's hands for a pittance, with intent to sell it to a prospective buyer.

Before Mikos reached the next town to get rid of his new find, his wagon was attacked by a massive swarm of will-o'-wisp that spilled from the distant marshes and overwhelmed his hired guards. Panicked, Mikos's mule veered off the track they were following and raced for hundreds of feet before plunging into one of the fetid muck pools that dot the area.

With his wagon hopelessly stuck in the mire, Mikos knows that every passing second could mean his death. He is also astute enough to know that the idol might have something to do with his predicament. If only he had someone to save him.

## LOCALE

This adventure takes place on the fringes of the Ghost Light Marshes (see *Wastes of Chaos*) or any similarly vast tract of magically corrupted marshland bordered by several small communities.

## Adventure Hooks

The hook for this adventure is relatively straightforward. The PCs are traveling to another adventure location when they discover the mercenaries slain by the will-o'-wisps. If you wish to give the PCs are more meaningful motivation, use one of the following hooks instead:

- **Debt Collectors.** The PCs have been asked by an aggrieved party to track down Mikos to get him to repay his gambling debts. He happily repays if the PCs save him from his predicament.
- **Dangerous Disposal.** A local lord has hired the PCs to track down and dispose of several hazardous magic items that threaten the region's harmony. The idol's description fits one item on their list, and they've learned that a trader named Mikos was recently seen leaving town with it.



## THE IDOL

Unbeknownst to Mikos, the idol represents Vh'al Zhubbuth (see the Ghost Light Marshes entry in **Chapter 4** of *Wastes of Chaos* for more details) and was pivotal in summoning the alien entity during the ancient Mage War. Because of its connection with Vh'al Zhubbuth, the idol draws creatures and magical blight from the marshlands toward it, slowly infesting the area it inhabits. Unfortunately, the pace and radius of this infection seem to be completely random, and the relic's powers cannot be controlled. Thankfully, the idol cannot summon Vh'al Zhubbuth without the rest of the ritual, though it still emits strong conjuration and enchantment magic.

Every time the PCs enter one of the encounter areas described below, roll a d4. On a 1, the idol's powers manifest in some way. When the idol's powers manifest, roll on the Idol Manifestation table to determine what occurs:

### IDOL MANIFESTATION

d6	Manifestation
1	Strange slurping and rumbling sounds fill the air.
2	The ground below the PCs feet turns to thick mud (unless it was already mud).
3	A fog envelops the PCs. It functions as the <i>fog cloud</i> spell.
4	1d2 <b>giant toads</b> appear from a nearby pool or similar location and attack.
5	A <b>will-o'-wisp</b> flies toward the PCs to attack.
6	A <b>swamp grick</b> (see Encounter Three: The Stuck Wagon below) arises from a nearby pool or similar location and attacks.

The idol has 17 AC, 10 hit points, and a damage threshold of 15. In addition, it has immunity to poison and psychic damage, resistance to slashing and piercing damage from non-magical weapons, and cold, fire, necrotic, and radiant damage. If shattered, the idol loses all abilities.

## ENCOUNTER ONE: DEAD MERCENARIES

The PCs are traveling along a road on the fringes of the marshlands when they spy the corpses of the two mercenaries that were with Mikos before his wagon was attacked. The mercenaries fought bravely against the will-o'-wisps but eventually succumbed to their injuries. PCs can tell at a glance that the bodies are dead, covered in deep burn wounds from the will-o'-wisp lightning attacks.

The two mercenaries were armed as guards, but each was also equipped with a light crossbow and quiver of twenty bolts. If the PCs investigate the area around the bodies and succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check or DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check, they find the tracks left by Mikos's wagon.

**Creatures.** Though most of the **will-o'-wisps** have disappeared back into the marsh, two of them still linger invisibly near the bodies and attack the PCs when they come within 30 feet. The will-o'-wisps fight until destroyed.

## ENCOUNTER TWO: FALLEN CRATES

If the PCs follow the tracks left by Mikos's wagon, they come across a pile of battered crates thrown from the back of the wagon during its frantic dash into the marsh. The crates contain a variety of everyday goods including candles, rope, sacks of wheat and barley, and soap totaling around 50 gp in value.

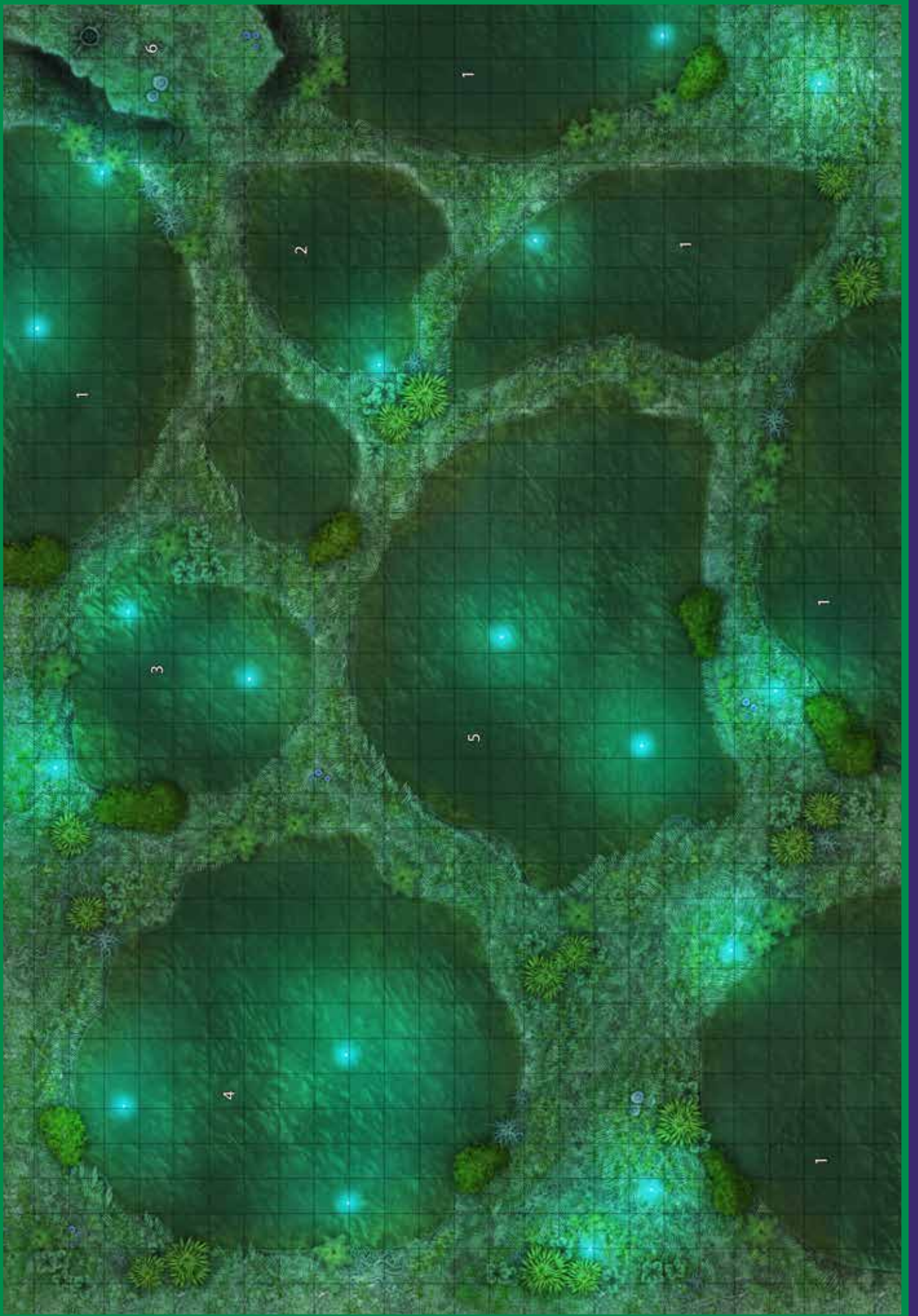
While the PCs are searching the crates, they hear the distant cries of Mikos's mule as it is sucked deeper into the oozing mud. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check can identify the general direction of the sound.

## ENTERING THE MARSH

Some 120 feet from the crates, the PCs enter the marsh proper. The ground beneath their feet becomes soggy, while pools of dank water and mounds of swampy vegetation stretch out before them in all directions.

The marsh is difficult terrain for those not adapted to the conditions, though a PC can spend an action and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to navigate their way. On a success, the PCs can proceed at their normal movement speed for one minute and partially avoid quicksand and other natural hazards associated with a marshy setting.

For every hundred feet the PCs travel through the marsh, roll a d8. On a 1, they stumble upon a hazard of some kind. If one or more of the PCs have made a successful Wisdom (Survival) check, roll a d12 instead.





If the PCs encounter a hazard, roll on the Hazards table below.

### ENCOUNTER THREE: THE STUCK WAGON

A wagon is hopelessly stuck here in the mire, its spoked wheels sunk almost entirely into the muck. The entire vehicle leans precariously on its side as if it will be sucked into the swamp and disappear at a moment's notice. A frantic mule is attached to the wagon, struggling against its harness, while a gray-bearded male human wearing a black linen cap, mud-caked leather breeches, and a long-sleeved gray tunic stands on solid ground nearby trying to calm the beast.

This is Mikos Addlebury, the trader who bought the idol of Vh'al Zhubbuth. Mikos has the statistics of a **commoner** but with Intelligence 12, Charisma 14, and a dagger instead of a club.

Mikos is elated to see the PCs and shouts for them to help him out of his predicament. He recognizes adventurers when he sees them and defers to them in any situation involving combat, magic, or any other dangerous activity. If Mikos sees the PCs carrying any of his crates, he thanks them for bringing him his goods and tells them that they can stack them back on the wagon once it has been pulled out of the muck.

Mikos is aware that the idol might have something to do with his situation, but he can't be sure of it. Of

course, if the idol's influence begins showing itself (see The Idol above), he makes up his mind to get rid of it and tries to hand it over to the PCs.

The mule is terrified and pulls at its harness. If a PC succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check, they can calm the mule enough to free it from its harness and guide it to dry land or convince it to help pull the wagon out of the mud (with PCs pushing). When the swamp gricks attack (see below), the mule flees if freed from its harness unless a PC stops it with another DC 14 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

The wagon has the statistics of a regular wagon but carries around 600 pounds of additional goods. While stuck in 3 feet of thick, viscous mud however, the wagon is effectively immovable. Lifting the wagon free of the muck and moving it onto dry land (30 feet away) requires a combined Strength score of 40 or higher. Placing logs or stones under the wagon's wheels can help. PCs using these sorts of tactics reduce the necessary Strength score by 5. Magic can also help, but could potentially worsen the problem depending on what the PCs try (such as causing the mud to dry while the wheels are still stuck).

**Creatures.** Three minutes after the PCs arrive, the wagon draws the attention of three **swamp gricks** (use statistics for **gricks** with the changes noted below) that emerge from the nearby vegetation to

### HAZARDS

d6	Hazard
1	One PC steps into a small pool of boggy water concealed by thick reeds. The pool is around 5 feet deep and contains stagnant muddy water. The PC must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, they plunge into the pool. Pulling free of the muck (or being pulled free by another creature) requires a successful DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.
2	A bubble of putrid swamp gas rises up and explodes in a PC's face. They must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or gain the poisoned condition for 1 minute. They can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on themselves with a success.
3	A sudden heavy rain squall hits the area, lightly obscuring vision for d4 minutes and thoroughly drenching the PCs.
4	A PC stumbles into a mildly poisonous plant native to the marshlands. They must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or take 2 (1d4) poison damage.
5	A PC disturbs a swarm of gnats or other irritating insects. If the PC is concentrating on a spell, they must succeed on a DC 9 Constitution saving throw to maintain it each round while the insects swarm. The insects disperse after d4 rounds.
6	One PC catches their foot in a hole unless they succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the PC takes 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage as they sprain their ankle. Their speed is reduced by 10 feet until they take a short rest.

attack. Two of the swamp gricks attack the PCs, while the third attacks the mule. The swamp gricks would not usually attack a party of the PCs size, but the idol's presence has driven them into a state of agitation.

**Creature Change.** Swamp gricks have a swim speed of 30 feet instead of a climb speed, and their camouflage works in swampy terrain rather than rocky terrain. They can breathe both air and water.

## EXPLORING THE MARSHLANDS

While the bulk of this adventure revolves around rescuing Mikos, the PCs may take the opportunity to explore the area. You can use the descriptions detailed below or those presented in the Ghost Light Marsh entry in the *Wastes of Chaos* sourcebook since both this adventure and that entry use the same map. You can also mix and match to your liking.

### 1. LIFELESS POOL

A massive bloom of thick olive algae clogs the surface of this large pool. Dead branches and other detritus float atop the morass.

**Hazard.** This pool has been rendered uninhabitable by toxic green algae that poisoned the water. A PC falling or wading into the pool takes 2 (1d4) poison damage at the end of their turn but can reduce the damage by half by succeeding on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw.

If a PC makes a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check from the edge of the pool, they can make out a skeleton partially submerged in the water; its body kept aloft by the clinging algae. The skeleton is that of a human male whose possessions have rotted away save for the silver holy symbol still hanging around its neck.

### 2. SWAMP GRICK POOL

This large pool is filled with murky brown water and numerous reeds. Bubbles rise from its fetid depths in multiple places.

**Creatures.** This large pool of muddy water is around 4 feet deep and is home to the **swamp gricks** (see Encounter Three: The Stuck Wagon above) that attack the wagon. Another 1d4 + 1 swamp gricks lurk here, their numbers growing and shrinking depending on how many are out hunting at any one time. The

swamp gricks move to attack any PCs exploring their pool and fight until half of their number are slain before fleeing (though if the PCs have the idol in their possession, the swamp gricks fight until destroyed).

**Treasure.** If the PCs search this pool and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they locate the swamp gricks' burrows. Each burrow is 5 to 10 feet long and completely submerged. Persistent PCs who wish to navigate the burrows find a small treasure trove: six banded agates worth 10 gp each, two citrines worth 50 gp each in a rotting leather sack, a *potion of lightning resistance* in a sealed iron flask, a *lesser shielding bracelet* (see *Wastes of Chaos*), a badly rusted battleaxe, and a set of six silvered daggers in a threadbare bandolier.

### 3. MAGICAL POOL

The water in this small pool is crystal clear despite the surrounding muck and filth. The bottom of the pool is filled with an array of glittering pebbles.

The magical energy flowing through the marshlands has transformed this 2-foot-deep pool of water into a permanent spring of cleansing liquid. Any creature drinking from the pool gains the benefits of drinking an *elixir of health*. Unfortunately, the water loses its properties 1 minute after being removed from the pool, preventing the PCs from bottling it and taking it with them.

The pebbles at the bottom of the pool are purely ornamental, worth at most 1 sp each. A total of 672 pebbles line the bottom of the pool. Collecting them takes at least 10 minutes of work.

If the PCs leave this area and do not deal with the slitherjack (see *Wastes of Chaos*) in Area 4, it devours the pool's magical energies over 24 hours, transforming it into a pool of normal water.

### 4. RUINED WAR MACHINE

The wreckage of an old, twisted, indecipherable machine lies at the top of this hill. Motes of baleful light dance amid the toppled and rusting parts, while ferns and other vegetation grow in and about the contraption's gears and springs.

This pile of rusted parts was originally a magical war machine used in the same war which created the marshes. The machine is in a state of complete





disrepair and cannot be fixed. The motes of light are similar to the lights seen elsewhere in the marshes. For the possible effects of ghost lights, see their description in Chapter 4 of *Wastes of Chaos*. You could also make the lights something simple like a swarm of fireflies.

**Creatures.** Though the machine itself is not dangerous, it currently serves as the lair of a **slitherjack** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) that is draining the last of the magic from it. The slitherjack attacks any PC approaching the wreckage but targets the PC with the most magic items first. The slitherjack flees if reduced to fewer than 10 hit points but takes a stolen magic item with it if possible.

#### 5. EMPTY POOLS

Except for frogs, insect larvae, and dirty swamp water, these pools are empty. Each pool is 2d4 feet deep. PCs investigating these pools have the normal chance of sparking a manifestation from the idol unless it has been destroyed.

#### 6. THICK VEGETATION

**Hazard.** This area contains a thick mat of ferns and rushes. PCs searching or passing through this area stumble across a patch of corpsecabbages (see *Wastes of Chaos*) that explode immediately when touched. The water from the magical pool in Area 3 can remove the poison and the foul stench associated with the corpsecabbages.

### Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs have defeated the swamp gricks and freed Mikos's wagon from the mud, Mikos asks them to escort him to safety. If the PCs take him to the nearest town, he offers 200 gp as a reward and promises to provide them with cheap goods should they come across him again, lowering his prices for the PCs by up to 10%.

If the PCs choose not to destroy the idol, but leave it in the swamp instead, it continues to cause problems in the region. Chaos cultists (see *Wastes of Chaos*) or marsh creatures like lizardfolk might discover the idol and use it to try to summon Vh'al Zhubbuth for their own dire purposes.

# Crater of the Flaying Star

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 5TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

Centuries ago, it is said that for three days and three nights the tribes of the Wastes watched the omen star streak through the sky. All cowered in fear—all except Princess Mynna, who yearned in secret for the star to fall from the firmament and shatter the reign of her mother, the Tyrant Queen Okalveka.

And shatter it did, crashing through the apex of the royal pyramid, leaving a noxious crater where the holy chambers once stood. Queen Okalveka's empire unraveled in an instant. Everyone, for miles around, fled for their lives—everyone except Mynna, who remained behind to tend to the giant lamia skeleton that was mysteriously embedded in the meteorite.

With the Queen's inquisitors fled or dead, Mynna delved into the scrolls of forbidden knowledge to learn the secrets of unlife. Prolonging her existence with blasphemous magic, she sought to bring the fallen lamia back to life by flaying captured nomads, raiders, and wanderers, stitching their skins over the giant's bones.

Given enough time and flesh, the lamia would be whole again. It would wake, reveal to Mynna the portentous secrets it carried from beyond space, and take Mynna—now the sorceress Flaying Star—into her bosom as high priestess.

## Adventure Hooks

- The PCs hear of the falling star and set out to scavenge any occult treasures that remain in the ruins of the royal pyramid.
- In exchange for a favor, the PCs are tasked with investigating the disappearance of missionaries, nomads, or traders that passed near the pyramid.
- The PCs seek to destroy or reclaim any vestiges of the Black Goat cult that remain in the pyramid.

## THE MOTHER'S PYRAMID

The pyramid is in a remote, sandblasted desert deep in the Wastes. Travelling there is perilous because of the magical devastation caused by the star's impact and the creatures that now live there. It is also difficult terrain to traverse. No roads lead to the site of the old empire. It takes two weeks of overland travel time to reach the pyramid regardless of method.

**Difficult Journey.** Each day of travel, the PCs must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check or become lost in the desert; each failure adds 1 day to their overall travel time. For the majority of the journey, the PCs see no life (or unlife), just sun and sand. See the Types of Wastes: Deserts section in *Wastes of Chaos* for additional information about desert travel.



**Nearly There.** Once the PCs get within a day's travel of the pyramid, roll a d20 for every four hours of travel. On an 11 or higher, roll on the Desert Wastes Encounters table.

## DESERT WASTES ENCOUNTERS

d8	Encounter
1	2d6 gnolls
2	2 desert slimes (see <i>Tome of Beasts</i> 3)
3	2 wights and 1d6 skeletons
4	1 dust devil and 1d2 dust mephits
5	2 wasteland trollkin (see <i>Wastes of Chaos</i> )
6	1d4 berserkers
7	1d8 giant vultures
8	1 dread moulder (see <i>Wastes of Chaos</i> )

### 1. MOUTH OF THE PYRAMID

An acid-rain-scarred ebon pyramid stands in a desert of lighting-blasted sand. It once rose ten stories toward a sky low with coal-colored clouds, but now only three remain, the rest shattered by the falling star. A tightly latticed gate streaked with corrosion blocks entrance into the pyramid. A maiden lies slumped against the gate. A dozen undead warriors scattered at the foot of the pyramid futilely attempt to place desiccated strips of flesh back onto skeletons half-buried in the sand.

**Undead Warriors.** Their armor is etched with the holy symbol of Medivh, the Liberator. If attacked, the undead warriors cower.

**Sealed Gate.** The gate is corroded shut. Area 5 can be seen beyond. The *knock* spell opens the gate but alerts the basilisk ghouls in Area 3.

### RING OF MERCIFUL SHATTERING

*Ring, Rare (Requires Attunement)*

The ring of merciful shattering functions as a *ring of protection*.

In addition, when a creature attuned to this ring would fall to 0 hit points while grappled by a lamia, all of the wearer's bones shatter, killing them instantly. This prevents the constricted creature from being turned into a frenzied lamia thrall.



**Deceased Maiden.** The maiden is recognizable as the leader of a missionary troop bearing the promise of Medivh.

The maiden clutches a faintly glowing ring. PCs recognize it as a *ring of merciful shattering*.

### 2. PYRAMID STEPS

Wide steps ascend the east and west faces of the pyramid. The steps rise thirty feet until reaching the opening atop the pyramid shattered by the meteor.

The PCs can see and drop down into the lamia crater (Area 3) from the top of the steps.





### 3. LAMIA CRATER

The impact site of the falling star, this once-imposing royal hall of the pyramid is now an open-air crater smothered with the debris of fallen columns. A giant lamia skeleton, half-mummified with flayed skin, lies embedded in glittering meteoric rock in the center of the crater. A mated pair of basilisk ghouls devour the viscera, clothing, and jewelry of skinned corpses.

**Creatures.** If the PCs did not cast *knock* to enter the pyramid, when they enter this area they surprise two **basilisk ghouls** (use the statistics of a **basilisk**, but make its creature type Monstrosity and Undead). The basilisk ghouls fight until destroyed. They do not pursue PCs beyond Area 3.

**Treasure.** Killing the basilisk ghouls damages their already rotting corpses sufficiently that the treasures hidden within their bellies is visible, though they are a rather grotesque proposition to collect. Cutting open the basilisk ghouls' stomachs reveals 1,028 gp worth of jewelry and a *mother's petrified finger* (see sidebar below).

**Spawning Storm.** A prismatic storm roils at the end of the second round of combat with the basilisk ghouls. At the end of each round thereafter, a prismatic lightning bolt targets one random creature atop pyramid or in the crater (including the basilisks). The target must make a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (6d6) lightning damage and suffer a random effect on the Spawning Storm Exposure Effects table (see *Wastes of Chaos*). Targets atop the pyramid have disadvantage on their saving throw. The storm passes at the end of the encounter.

**Giant Lamia Skeleton.** Casting *speak with dead* on the giant lamia skeleton fails, revealing that it is Undead, but dormant.

Attempting to damage the skeleton or its flesh wrappings causes all the flesh wrappings to animate, resulting in twenty **withered forsaken shells** (use

the statistics of a **zombie**, but each has 10 hit points and cannot benefit from the Undead Fortitude trait) peeling free to attack the PCs.

**Exposed Spiral Stairway.** This stairway leads down to the rotten fog gate (Area 8).

### 4. COLLAPSED CORRIDOR

This ten-by-twenty foot section of corridor has fallen away into a dark pit. Shining a light source down into the pit reveals a north-south corridor fifteen feet down. This underground passage stops at a cave-in to the south.

A set of stone double doors at the north end of the underground passage leads into the Black Goat chapel (Area 7).

### 5. THREE SISTERS

This area is visible through the gate in Area 1.

Statues of two hooded women stand over a third statue of kneeling girl. The sisters expose pregnant bellies painted with the pentagram of the Black Goat. The left statue holds a stone basin above her head, the sound of rolling glass rattling from within. The right statue clutches a polished golden urn to her chest. The kneeling girl statue wears a crown of wheat and is depicted singing and digging a dagger into a stone goat. The scent of incense and the gentle sound of rain plinking against the gate hang in the air.

**Left Hooded Sister.** The basin held by this statue contains an onyx cobra in a rolling glass sphere. This is a key item used in the Black Goat Chapel (Area 7).

If this sphere is shattered (most likely by the trap in Area 7 or by the transition of Flying Star between phases), the cobra bites the living creature nearest to it. If the creature is not immune to poison, the creature must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour.

**Right Hooded Sister.** This statue clutches a golden urn filled with rancid raw goat's milk. This milk is needed to solve the puzzle in the Black Goat Chapel (Area 7).

**Kneeling Sister.** The dagger held by this statue can be removed from where it was plunged into the goat statue. If so, sweet-smelling blood bubbles from the "wound." Any creature that consumes any of the blood regains all lost hit points.

### MOTHER'S PETRIFIED FINGER

*Bone (Consumable), Unique (Only 2)*

A creature may crush the finger bone and name a target it can see. The target cannot use legendary actions until the start of the crushing creature's next turn.

## 6A. CRUMBLIED RELIEF

A bas-relief has fallen from the wall in large chunks. If reassembled, the relief depicts a woman in wash-maid's clothing boiling milk over the bones of priests still clutching various holy symbols. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the holy symbols as faiths that have attempted to stamp out the cult. A member of the Black Goat cult automatically succeeds on this check.

## 6B. CRUMBLIED RELIEF

A bas-relief has fallen from the wall in large chunks. If reassembled, the relief depicts a young woman in the garb of a Black Goat cult Shepherd. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the garb. A member of the Black Goat cult automatically succeeds on this check. The Shepherd is shown feeding a black goat kid with a saucer of milk.

## 7. BLACK GOAT CHAPEL

A large ivory idol of a woman looms over this chapel decorated with murals of swaying wheat fields. The woman is depicted feeding an ebony goat in her arms with a milk saucer. The corpse of woman wearing only a loincloth rests atop an altar at the idol's feet. Her skin is marked with sigils rendered in charcoal. Pews line the chapel, all filled with skeletons pressing hands to their shattered skulls. Shattered glass blankets the floor.

**Corpse.** Three spells have been written on the woman's body in charcoal: *animate dead*, *gust of wind*, and *forced chaos surge* (see *Wastes of Chaos*). A ceremonial flaying dagger rests on the altar. If flayed from the Shepherd's corpse, the writings function as spell scrolls that can be cast by any PC.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that one marking on the woman's body is not charcoal, but a tattoo. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check recognizes the tattoo marks the woman as a Shepherd of the Black Goat cult.

**Altar.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a seam at the base of the altar, as if it retracts toward the idol. It opens if the puzzle is solved (see the Puzzle: Nursing the Black Goat sidebar).

A successful DC 18 Strength check forces open the altar, revealing the iron maiden (see sidebar). However, doing so triggers the flaying smoke trap.

## PUZZLE: NURSING THE BLACK GOAT

If *animate dead* is cast on the Shepherd corpse and she is commanded to boil the milk from Area 5 over the bones of heretics (the missionaries outside the pyramid will suffice), the milk becomes consecrated.

If the consecrated milk is poured into the basin, it flows into the mouth of the ebony goat and the altar retracts to reveal an iron maiden beneath (see below).

If anything other than consecrated milk is poured into saucer, the ebony goat emits a calamitous scream. All creatures in the chapel must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw and take 14 (3d8) thunder damage on a failure or half damage on a success. In addition, there is a 2-in-3 chance any glass container is shattered, such as potions or the glass sphere containing the onyx cobra.

**Iron Maiden.** An iron maiden under the altar is locked shut. A hole is bored into the center of the iron maiden below a painting of an onyx cobra.

If the glass sphere containing the onyx cobra is shattered while the iron maiden is visible, the cobra does not bite a creature. Instead, it crawls into the hole and the iron maiden unlocks.

The iron maiden contains dozens of assorted gems (worth a total of 1,989 gp) and jewelry confiscated from pyramid royals sacrificed to the Mother Whose Loins Bring Forth Multitudes. The iron maiden also contains the *flaying star shotel* (see sidebar below).

## FLAYING STAR SHOTEL

*Weapon (Scimitar), Artifact (Requires Attunement)*

The flaying star shotel functions as a +2 scimitar. Attacks made with this weapon score a critical hit on a roll of a 19 or 20 and deal 2d6 extra slashing damage to creatures with exposed flesh or hide.

In addition, when a creature attuned to this weapon scores a critical hit with a melee attack with it, an inked page is flayed from the target if it has flesh or hide. The GM determines the nature of the flayed page:

- A spell scroll of 4th level or higher thematically relevant to the flayed creature.
- A partial dungeon or treasure map.
- A page from a tome or other legendary text that has significance in the campaign.



**Flaying Smoke Trap.** A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals hundreds of small holes in the murals.

If the iron maiden is forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or the *knock* spell, violet smoke billows from the holes and fills the chapel. Creatures in the room must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (3d8) acid damage (half damage on a successful save).

## 8. ROTTEN FOG GATE

The stairwell ends at an archway filled with opaque fog the color of bone. The fog reeks of spoiled meat. Wet sounds of agony echo from beyond.

Creatures passing through this rotten fog must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw or lose 1d4 hit dice.

Casting *gust of wind* scatters the rotten fog. Other spells may allow passage at the GM's discretion.

## 9. FLAYING STAR'S ABATTOIR

Skinless victims drag their glistening bodies on gnarled limbs along a carpet of bones. Their wails reverberate off the sagging walls of this humid, fetid abattoir beneath the pyramid's central chamber. The sounds of chewing and a young woman singing in an occult tongue rise over the groans of the flayed from a side-chamber to the south.

**Skinned Victims.** If the PCs attempt to ease the suffering of any of the victims by using up a healing item or spell, a grateful victim offers a *mother's petrified finger* (see sidebar next page) in gratitude.

**Creatures.** The undead sorceress, **Flaying Star**, sits cross-legged on slab carved from meteoric rock in the southern half of the catacomb, devouring organs.

When she spots the PCs, she hisses and teleports to the top of the lamia skeleton in Area 3, where she awaits the final confrontation with the PCs. She attacks them once they are in range.

**Treasure.** *basilisk skull-and-spine flail* (uses statistics for a +1 maul), *rod of peeling* (in the hands of any creature other than Flaying Star, this functions as a *wand of magic missiles* that deals necrotic rather than force damage).

## FLAYING STAR (PHASE I)

Medium Undead, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 14

HIT POINTS 100

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Int +4, Cha +7

SKILLS Perception +4

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, frightened, poisoned

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES Abyssal, Common

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP) PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

**Legendary Resistance (1/day).** If Flaying Star fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

**Uncanny Alacrity.** Flaying Star has advantage on initiative rolls.

**Innate Spellcasting.** Flaying Star's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). She can innately cast each of the following spells once per day: *doom of the oasis*, *doom of the warped skull*, and *doom of the void* (for all, see *Wastes of Chaos*).

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Flaying Star makes two attacks with either Nails or Rod of Peeling.

**Nails.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) slashing damage.

**Rod of Peeling.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) necrotic damage. A creature damaged by this attack must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw if it has flesh. On a failed save, a spell scroll is flayed from the creature's skin and drifts into Flaying Star's possession. Roll 1d6; on a 1–2, the spell inked is *doom of the oasis*; on a 3–4 the spell is *doom of the warped skull*; and on a 5–6 the spell is *doom of the void*.

## REACTIONS

**Phase Transition.** When Flaying Star is reduced to 0 hit points, she sloughs off her skin, revealing blood-streaked scales that cover her body. This transforms her into her Phase II form. She regains all hit points, legendary actions, and legendary resistances. All conditions on her end. Flaying Star also lets out a piercing shriek, shattering

the glass sphere containing the **onyx cobra** if it's in the PCs' possession. In addition, 2d4 **withered forsaken shells** (use the statistics of a zombie, but each has 10 hit points and cannot benefit from the Undead Fortitude trait) peel themselves from the lamia skeleton.

#### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Playing Star can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Playing Star regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Teleport.** Playing Star teleports to an open space she can see.

**Lithe Sorcery (Costs 3 Actions).** Playing Star casts a spell from her list of innate spells, expending a daily use as normal, or uses a scroll.

#### PLAYING STAR (PHASE II)

*Large Monstrosity, Chaotic Evil*

**ARMOR CLASS** 18

**HIT POINTS** 100

**SPEED** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

**SAVING THROWS** Str +7, Con +6

**SKILLS** Perception +4

**DAMAGE IMMUNITIES** necrotic, poison

**CONDITION IMMUNITIES** charmed, frightened, poisoned

**SENSES** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**CHALLENGE** 6 (2,300 XP) **PROFICIENCY BONUS** +3

**Damage Transfer.** While grappling a creature, Playing Star takes only half the damage dealt to her (rounded down) and that creature takes the other half.

**Legendary Resistance (1/day).** If Playing Star fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Playing Star makes one Tail Constrict attack and one Basilisk Skull-and-Spine Flail attack.

**Tail Constrict.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the creature is restrained, and Playing Star can't constrict another target.

**Basilisk Skull-and-Spine Flail.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one or two targets. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or be knocked prone.

#### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Playing Star can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Playing Star regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Tail Lash.** Playing Star makes a Tail Constrict attack if she is not already grappling a creature.

**Crushing Tail.** Playing Star deals 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage to a creature she has constricted.

**Withering Shriek (Costs 2 Actions).** Playing Star shrieks and spawns two **withered forsaken shells** to an open space within 5 feet of her.

**Lithe Sorcery (Costs 3 Actions).** Playing Star casts a spell from her list of innate spells, expending a daily use as normal, or uses a scroll.

## Concluding the Adventure

When the PCs defeat Playing Star, she melts into tar. The lamia skeleton then awakens and communicates with the PCs via telepathy. The voice in the PCs' minds echoes like a chorus of wailing women:

"My beloved sister is soon to fall, as I did, from the skies above. Aid me in catching her, and I shall carry you to a holy monument where our benevolent mother is entombed, where lie riches and power beyond imagination."



# The Spider's Eye

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 5TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

While many rulers claim dominion in the wastelands, gold reigns supreme. Gold buys land, warriors, wizards, and even kingdoms.

However, even kings do not control the merchant lords or their houses. They cannot claim sovereignty over the trade caravans that travel the desolate and dangerous trade roads. Conversely, they owe no obligation to protect the merchant lords or their ventures. Protection must be bought like any other commodity, and the seller sets the price.

The adventure begins when the wealthy merchant lord Bathris Tal requests the PCs based on the recommendation of a mutual acquaintance. He offers each PC a handful of gold to join him for a meal at his favorite restaurant to listen to a proposition. PCs that seek to know more quickly gather that Lord Bathris Tal runs a vast shipping network. His reputation precedes him, and many notable individuals rely upon his services.

## A Curious Proposition

When the PCs arrive, one of the serving staff seats them in a private room at the back of the restaurant, where they find the portly merchant lord already seated and indulging in an impressive spread of fruits,

caviar, and roasted meats. Wiping grease from his fingers, he introduces himself, tells the PCs to sit and eat. He explains his position when the wine is poured. A small silken pouch at each seat contains the promised 10 gp.

During the wine pouring, Bathris Tal explains that one of his caravans failed to arrive as scheduled. While concerned about his missing supplies and possibly his hirelings, one of his clients didn't disclose their identity or the shipped contents. He shows the PCs the receiving stub of a packaging tag that reads Crate #43, 67 Brokebrick Alley, Jon Piper.

"Jon Piper" is one of several traditional aliases used by the local thieves' guild when dealing with outsiders. Fearful of retribution and unsure how to handle the situation, Bathris wants someone else to find "Jon Piper" and let him know his package has gone missing. Wasteland raiders likely hijacked the caravan, he says. Bathris then offers the PCs 200 gp to visit "Jon" and deliver the news.

If the PCs accept, Bathris Tal hands them the shipping tag, wipes his hands, and then excuses himself, telling them he paid the bill, and they are welcome to stay and enjoy the rest of the dinner. He states he will pay them the promised sum upon receiving confirmation that they handled everything properly. He then exits. At this point, the PCs are free to discuss plans and continue however they see fit.







## BROKEBRICK ALLEY

The address leads to a nondescript wooden door in a narrow building near the end of the alley, wedged between a fish market and a ropemaker. A knock at the door draws the attention of a sentinel that waits on the opposite side. In a gruff voice, he asks, "Who sent you?" The only acceptable answer is "Jon Piper." If the PCs give any other answer, the thug tells the PCs to sod off, locks the door, and goes quiet. PCs forcing their way inside can expect a fight.

If the PCs give the correct answer, the thug opens the door and ushers them into a cramped, windowless room lit only by a smoky oil lantern. Hard-packed dirt covers the floor. In addition to being packed with crates, someone tied a pair of pigs up in the corner. The stagnant air smells of lamp oil, sweat, mold, and livestock.

Six guild members surround the PCs, sizing them up. All are on edge and prepared to fight at a moment's notice. Finally, a one-eyed woman with a jagged scar across her face greets them and says, "I'm Jon... what's it to ya?" She waits patiently for a response.

Jon (**bandit captain**) and her comrades (five **thugs**) are cautiously skeptical when dealing with the PCs (or any guild outsiders). The PCs must convince her they don't have ties with the authorities and deliver the unfortunate news. If all goes well, the PCs can avoid combat, after which they can discuss the nature of their job.

News of the missing packages hits Jon hard, and she flushes with anger and outrage. Menacingly placing her hand on the hilt of her weapon, she demands to know where the merchant is, what happened, and who's responsible. Fortunately, Jon is more interested in answers than a fight. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check calms her enough to keep the conversation bloodless. With little choice, she offers to parlay with the PCs and exchange information about the packages for mutual benefit.

If the PCs agree, Jon spits in her palm and extends her hand to shake on the deal. She only completes the deal after all PCs spit and shake. Once she feels confident, she speaks in a low, dry tone, "We were transporting a SOA for Lord Emerglas." Allow the PCs a moment to try and figure out what SOA means before she clarifies: "*Sphere of Annihilation*."

The implication of a missing *sphere of annihilation* evokes dread, even from hardened guild members.

Its loss would considerably damage the guild's reputation, and this responsibility places Jon in grave danger. She explains that PCs can expect Lord Emerglas to place bounties on the heads of Jon, Bathris Tal, and anyone else involved in the theft.

Jon expects the PCs to provide details about the missing package. As soon as she learns the caravan was targeted by raiders, fury overwhelms her, and she curses loudly. Her disbelief spins into accusation as she scans the eyes of the other individuals in the room. "No one knew!" she barks, "This must have been an inside job!"

Allow all PCs to scan the room and attempt a DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check to determine which of Jon's crew leaked the information. Jon also makes this check (with advantage).

A newer guild recruit leaked the information. After a run-in with spiderface goblins, a chaos-spawn priest cast *geas* on him. The priest commanded the man to reveal how the guild intended to transfer the sphere. As soon as Jon utters her curses, the man attempts to flee. If the PCs attempt to stop him, he fights to the death. Searching the body reveals a tattoo on the inside of his wrist of a stylized spider. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies it as the mark of Ahu-Nixta, an evil Elder God worshipped by a clan of violent goblins known as the spiderface clan. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines the tattoo served as a spell focus for a powerful enchantment spell, such as a *geas*.

Jon pleads with the PCs to recover the sphere. She and her surviving allies must remain here to prevent powerful guild members from learning of the theft until the PCs recover it. If the PCs don't immediately agree, she argues that an alliance is in their best interest and would prevent much bloodshed between the guild and agents of Lord Emerglas, as well as keep a *sphere of annihilation* out of the hands of spiderface goblins.

Jon notes too that mutated chaos-spawn goblin priests lead the spiderface clan, and that they execute acts of extreme violence in their worship of the elder god Ahu-Nixta, seeking to pull all living creatures into the Void. If the PCs still balk at taking up the quest, Jon offers to pay them an additional 100 gp for the job.

## CRIME SCENE

The remains of the raided caravans lie a few days' ride into the Wastes. When the PCs reach the location, read or paraphrase the following description.

.....  
Ahead, the broken remains of several caravan wagons lie toppled across the trade road. The reins of the draft horses are all pulled taut, yanking the wagons to one side as if large scavengers tried to drag the carcasses off. There is little left of the horses, though the heat has caused the remains to bloat. Eerily, a first glance reveals no humanoid corpses.  
.....

A preliminary survey notices several small trenches dug along either side of the road, draped with hides covered with dirt and loose debris. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check correctly infers they were used to hide attackers and stage an ambush. The survey implies a strategically planned attack. A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Survival) check notes dozens of small-clawed footprints (likely made by goblins) and also spots scraping marks in the dirt. The marks travel east, suggesting the ambushers dragged their victims off. A number of dried blood swaths staining the ground suggests the defenders fought back.

A more thorough search of the caravan wagons discovers a decapitated human head beneath some shattered struts. The head belonged to Corbinian, a priest of Thoth-Hermes (or any god of Knowledge, Travel, Commerce, or Trickery). The torn remains of the priest's body lie a few yards away. A **spider** crawls from its neck stump and attacks anyone searching the corpse.



A quick search of the corpse uncovers a sealed case with a *Speak with Dead* scroll, a standard provision for priests traveling the Wastes, so their studies may be secured even after death. If the PCs speak with the head and ask it what happened here, it replies with the following account:

.....  
A horde of goblins ambushed us, swarming out from camouflaged burrows lining both sides of the road. There was nowhere to run. They roped the horses' legs, pulled the animals to the ground, and quickly butchered them, hacking with their jagged blades and occasionally leaning forward to bite off pieces of raw flesh.  
.....

Then, from out of nowhere, horrible waves of eldritch mist surrounded us. All I could hear was the loud snapping of bone and the screams of the caravan guards. I watched as the veins of those poor souls turned black, and the men all fell to their knees and began vomiting spiders. Doomstricken, the rest of us attempted to flee. But then the spiders came for us all...  
.....

The *sphere of annihilation* is nowhere to be found. Searching the area reveals the other half of Jon Piper's wagon toppled on the ground. Drag marks in the soil make it look like someone dragged the crate several hundred yards to the east, deeper into the flinty hills, before smashing it open and taking the contents. The remains of the crate lie along the edge of territories occupied by the spiderface goblins.

**Treasure.** The spiderface goblins were only interested in the *sphere of annihilation* and flesh; they left all other supplies and valuables behind.

**Development.** After ten minutes of searching the attack site, four **swarms of insects (spiders)** crawl from the horse carcasses and attack the nearest living targets.

**Concluding the Encounter.** All evidence is consistent with known spiderface goblin tactics. Since spiderface goblins rarely travel far from their sprawling tent city, it suggests they have an encampment nearby. It may even indicate that the location of the tent city sprawl is shifting. Other than three bodies (including the priest) and the slain horses, there are no other corpses. The goblins took hostages, likely to become living experiments.

The spiderface goblins weren't clever when covering their tracks. After traveling for twenty miles, the PCs find the remains of a campfire, its ashes still warm. Nearby lie the half-eaten remains of three human



corpses and remnants of travelers' clothes, as if the goblins stopped here, slept, ate, and continued east.

## THE ENCAMPMENT

Approximately thirty miles east of the caravan attack, a splinter clan of spiderface goblins erected a small encampment between some low hills. They use the camp to stage caravan raids. As the PCs approach, read or paraphrase the following description.

A crude palisade formed from sharpened sticks, rocks, bone, and metal surrounds a small tent encampment. Two watchtowers flank the main entrance, with more towers around the perimeter.

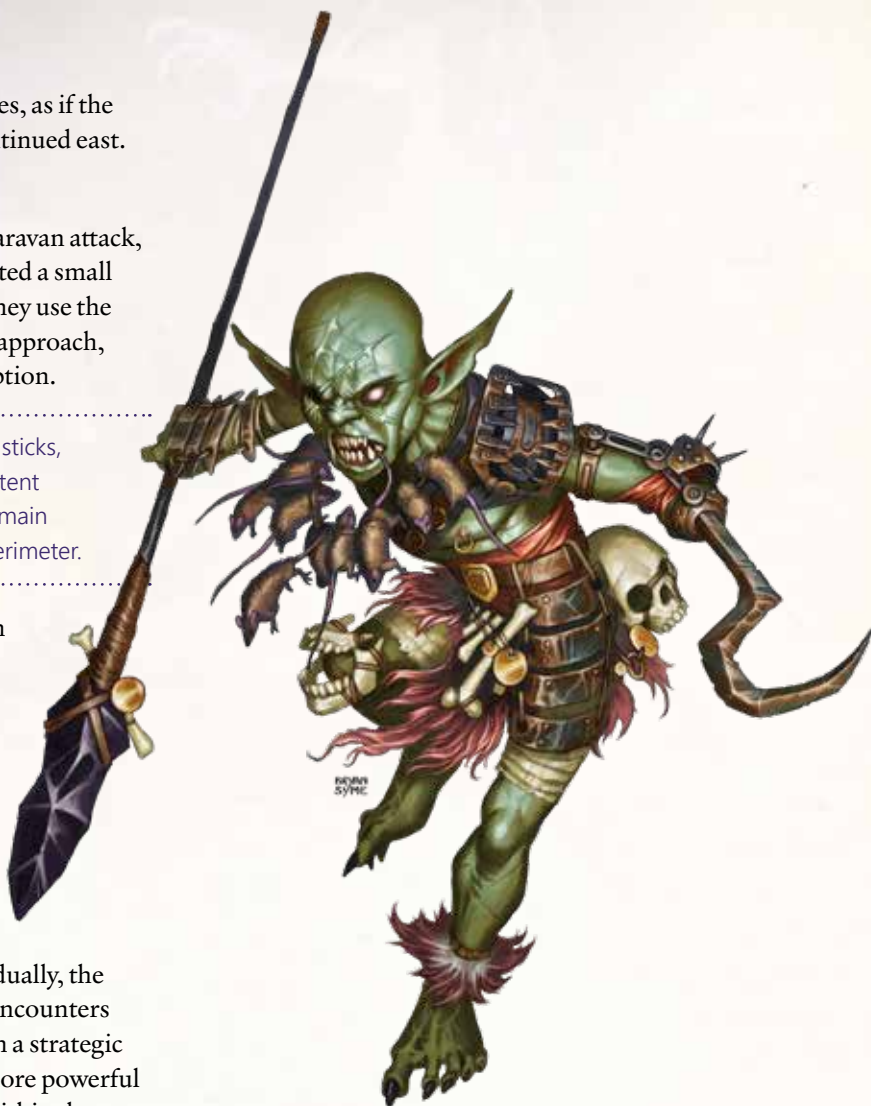
The small encampment centers on seven crudely fabricated framed tents stitched together from scraps of dried animal hide. They have sloping roofs, which only stand seven feet tall at the center pole. They were treated with oil to make them pliable and waterproof, but it also makes them vulnerable to fire damage.

The open encampment houses a considerable number of goblins. Individually, the goblins are little threat to the PCs, but encounters can easily become deadly if they strike in a strategic group. Furthermore, the inclusion of more powerful leaders scattered at surprise locations within the encampment has the potential to create a death trap. While the PCs might be tempted to rush in, allow any PCs trained in martial tactics to attempt a DC 8 Wisdom (Insight) check to determine that direct assault might not be the best tactic.

### 1. GUARD TOWERS

These towers consist of exposed timber frames crudely secured to the perimeter of the battlements with rope. Each stands roughly 30 feet tall, with a 10-foot-square platform accessible by a ladder. A 2-foot-tall palisade of sharpened logs surrounds the platform, just enough to provide cover for Small creatures.

**Creatures.** Four spiderface goblins watch from each tower. If they spot intruders, they shout warnings to others in the encampment, then keep below the cover of the tower palisades and use their bows to hail arrows upon intruders below.



### 2. CAMPFIRE

Throughout the encampment, goblins keep several small campfires burning at all times. Each campfire seats  $1 + 1d4$  goblins. When they spot intruders, they scream a warning and rush to attack. If the PCs drop half their number, the rest scatter and flee to warn others and regroup.

The campfires shed bright light in a 40-foot radius, and dim light another 40 feet. If a creature moves (or is moved) through a space occupied by a campfire, it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw; the creature takes 2d8 fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

### 3. CAGES

In the center of each cage, a thick metal spike driven into the ground attaches to a tangle of chains and throat manacles that bind the last survivors taken from the raid.

Two **goblins** and a **spiderface goblin warlord** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) guard the cages. The cages are locked with iron padlocks. The warlord has the key.

Each cage contains three **commoners**. The captors haven't fed any of them since the capture. Each has 2 hit points, suffer from two levels of exhaustion, and is bound with manacles. The commoners are all merchants and travelers captured from the caravan assault. If freed and armed, they willingly fight but desperately require food and rest. The commoners do not know what happened to the other survivors. However, they explain that a withered goblin with pale, pupilless eyes came and took some of them. An hour later, horrid screams echoed through the camp. Those taken have not returned.

**Development.** If the chaos-spawn goblin priest (see Area 12) commands it, the two guards open a cage and lead the prisoners to the well in Area 14. There, they unchain the victims and hurl them into the well that hides the *sphere of annihilation*. Those tossed into the well unleash horrific screams that are suddenly cut short.

So long as prisoners remain, the warlord guards the cages. If the other two guard goblins do not return, he secures others to watch the cages and investigates. If no other prisoners remain, the warlord accompanies the goblins on the final feeding. After the goblins finish with the prisoners, they hunt for intruders.

### 4. FIRE PIT

A circle of stones marks the perimeter of a massive fire pit. An iron cooking stand hangs above it, and several pieces of meat hang from hooked chains.

Two **goblins** oversee the cooking fire but rush to attack if alerted to intruders. If one dies, the other quickly flees, screaming an alarm.

### 5. SCRAP PILE

In the northeast corner of the encampment, the goblins have precariously piled scrap metal against the palisade.

Moving through the scrap counts as difficult terrain. Anyone Small or larger attempting to climb the unstable pile must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature falls prone and takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage. On a success, the individual takes half damage and doesn't fall prone.

**Complications.** Toppling scrap metal unleashes a loud clatter, potentially drawing goblins to investigate. Roll a d6; on a 1, 1d4 **goblins** hear the commotion and come to inspect the area.

### 6. THE LIVING STATUE

A towering pile of boulders stands here. Over a dozen humanoid bodies are bound to the rocks beneath blankets of delicate webs. Thin shunts carved from bone stab into the bodies, a slow trickle of blood flowing from a few. The soil at the statue's base is stained a dark crimson. It reeks of carrion, though curiously, it isn't swarming with flies.

Anyone drawing closer to the vile statue notices that the bodies and the statue crawl with hundreds of tiny spiders. Four **commoners** here still cling to life. Each has 2 hit points remaining, two levels of exhaustion, and suffers from the poisoned condition.





**Creatures.** Three swarms of insects (spiders) occupy cavities within the semi-hollow statue. The aggressive swarms attack anything that comes near.

## 7. SPIDERS

Along the edge of the palisade rests a large iron cage enshrouded in thick ropery webs.

The chaos-spawn priest (see Area 12) houses his sacred pets here.

**Creatures.** A spiderface goblin warlord (see *Wastes of Chaos*) watches over three giant spiders. At the first sign of commotion, he lifts the gates and releases them into the camp. The creatures are indiscriminate predators, attacking whatever prey they spot.

## 8. GUARD TENTS

Guards use the tents during shifts and shift changes or to escape dust or rain storms. As a result, they left the interiors undecorated and the bare earth floors are strewn with dried straw, peat, and leaves.

## 9. COMMONS

Three long tables set with benches occupy most of the floor space. Stains and gouges mar the wooden surfaces. The tables circle a great pit filled with charred bones and other refuse. At the foot of each table sits a large barrel, nearly filled with dirty water. Near one barrel rests a bucket filled with knives, two-tined forks, and a stack of wooden plates.

The water in the barrels is lightly spiked with rather potent alcohol.

**Creatures.** Six goblins work at cleaning the tent. Three are gathering and organizing. The other three toss refuse into the pit, about a minute away from lighting it all on fire.

## 10. SLEEPING TENT

Sleeping pallets draped with hides and blankets occupy most of the tent's floor space. Scattered near the pallets rest crates, baskets, and foot lockers stuffed with various personal effects such as clothing and weaponry.

The goblins use this tent as their main quartering area.

**Creatures.** Eight goblins occupy the tent. Three sleep while the others mull about performing mundane tasks, such as organizing beds, looking through possessions, or sharpening their fangs with stones. As soon as they spot intruders, half of the goblins rush to attack. The rest attempt to flee by crawling under the sides of the tent. If they escape, they immediately sound an alarm and call for reinforcements.

## 11. WARLORD'S TENT

Hides hung from bone frames partition the interior of the tent into three sections. All appear to be private quarters. Each contains a straw sleeping pallet, blankets, hides, and makeshift furniture built from old crates. The tent is unlit.

**Creatures.** This tent serves as the residence of the encampment's three spiderface goblin warlords (see *Wastes of Chaos*). At any given time, there's a chance that one of them uses this space to sleep or attend to personal business. Roll a d6; on a 1, a warlord occupies the room.

**Treasure.** Each warlord has a locked chest with personal items and some valuables. One chest is trapped with a poison needle trap. Each chest contains 20 gp, 100 sp, 400 cp, and two art objects worth 25 gp each. The chest with the poison needle trap also contains a +1 dagger and a ring of warmth.

## 12. PRIEST'S TENT

A thick leather harness dangles from dozens of ropes and pulleys mounted to wooden scaffolding. A tanned skin set with an arrangement of flasks and bone-needle syringes lies on a stone-topped table. They surround a wide stone dish holding several tiny black pearls.

This is the leader's sacred communing tent.

**Creatures.** Unless otherwise summoned elsewhere, the clan's leader, a chaos-spawn goblin priest (see *Wastes of Chaos*), lurks here, creating and consuming the strange fluids he uses to sustain himself and project into the Void. Years of using the semi-toxic substances have physically and mentally transformed the priest. If the PCs reach this area without alerting any spiderface goblins, he hangs in meditative suspension from his apparatus.

The chaos-spawn goblin priest is attuned to the *sphere of annihilation* in Area 14. He isn't shy about commanding the sphere and is eager to observe it in action against any who would oppose him. If he can, he uses spells such as *magic circle* and *spirit guardians* to maintain his distance and his safety while commanding the *sphere*.

**Black Pearls.** The black "pearls" in the stone dish aren't gems. Slightly soft to the touch, the chaos-spawn priest created them from congealed blood infused with void essence. They are highly toxic to those not tainted by the Void. Any creature that consumes a pearl becomes poisoned and must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw; the creature takes 6d6 necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. The priest—who is immune to their negative effects—consumes the pearls to allow himself to project his spirit into the Void, leaving his physical form on the Material Plane (similar to astral projection). During his projections, he keeps his body suspended in the harness and then hooks up the tubes to the veins in his neck, slowly dripping his bizarre potions into his bloodstream. The effect lasts for 4 hours.

**Void Serums.** A wooden display holds a collection of twelve metal canisters with glass insets filled with two different sickly-colored fluids. Long tubes exit the bottom of each canister, allowing the fluid to empty with a slow drip. Both fluids are serums and must be injected into the bloodstream to trigger their effects. Anyone drinking them must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw to avoid becoming poisoned and taking 3d6 poison damage (50% chance) or confused (as if affected by the *confusion* spell) for ten minutes (50% chance).

**Dread Pus.** This is a sickly yellow-colored, opaque fluid collected from the glands of a dread walker (see *Wastes of Chaos*) mixed with alchemical reagents and arcane components. If ingested, it provides sustenance for one day.

**Slow Life.** A brownish-purple solution is a potion, that, when consumed, causes the creature to regain 1d6 hit points every 10 minutes, provided that the creature still has at least 1 hit point.



**Book of the Void.** Strange sigils and diagrams fill a massive tome bound in gray pigskin. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that some of the diagrams resemble the geometric shapes of the wooden scaffolding and a possible correlation between interior patterns one might create with ropes attached to the harness. It suggests the use of the apparatus and the serums. A later chapter written in Void Speech describes something called the *Kiss of the Blessed Void*. Some loose pages placed into the middle of the book document attempts to transform a *sphere of annihilation* into a gate leading to the Void.

**Treasure.** A leather satchel resting on the shelf below the desk holds three amethysts worth 125 gp each and four *spell scrolls*: a *scroll of bane*, a *scroll of protection from good and evil*, a *scroll of divination*, and a *scroll of commune*.



### 13. SUPPLY TENT

Haphazardly piled crates and barrels hold the tribe's supplies in this unlit tent. The barrels contain water lightly spiked with potent alcohol. Most crates hold smoked meat of unknown origin. The rest contain materials such as dried hides, bones, lumber, and dried animal dung. Toward the center of the tent, lay piles of clay bricks, stones, hay, and dried peat.

The supply tent is unoccupied.

### 14. KISS OF THE BLESSED VOID

Between the tents stands a well built of dark green stones. From a wooden frame above the well, the limp body of a man dangles, bound in spider webs. The man is suspended by a leather collar tied to a long rope that runs through a gearbox with a crank handle. Two pale-eyed, grotesquely withered goblins slowly lower the man into the well as his eyes widen with terror.

The chaos-spawn goblin priest's latest experiments involve a rite it calls "the dipping."

Commanding the *sphere*, the deranged priest placed it twenty feet down the well. Above the well, the priest rigged a cranked gearbox to slowly lower experiments into the sphere.

The acolytes do not speak. However, when telepathically communicating, they refer to the sphere as The Kiss of the Blessed Void.

The priest's acolytes, two **chaos goblins** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), slowly lower a prisoner into the well. If interrupted, they release the crank handle, and the prisoner (**commoner**, 1 hp and two levels of exhaustion) drops quickly, plummeting into the *sphere of annihilation* in two rounds. Anyone climbing down the well to save the commoner risks climbing into the *sphere of annihilation*.

## Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs defeat the spiderface goblins, they can gain control over the *sphere of annihilation*. What they do with the legendary item is up to them. They know that Lord Emerglas hired the guild to procure it for him. The PCs should also understand the guild's consequences should they fail to deliver it.

**Keeping the Sphere.** If they decide to keep the *sphere*, both the guild and Lord Emerglas send agents to retrieve it. Neither organization ceases its efforts until they acquire the legendary item... or the PCs destroy them. Once the guild finds out about Jon's side deal, they order her assassination. When this happens, she attempts to make good on her threat to the PCs and places her entire focus on hunting them down. In short, claiming the *sphere of annihilation* creates lasting enmity and long-term complications.

**Returning the Sphere.** Conversely, returning the *sphere* earns respect and gratitude from the Thieves' Guild. They offer either 1,000 gp or future service to cover the cost of the debt they owe to the PCs. PCs returning the *sphere* can also collect the reward from Bathris Tal, the merchant lord, for saving his business and reputation.

**Into the Void.** Alternately, if the PCs are likely to balk at handing over such a dangerous item to anyone, let alone known criminals—and neither you nor they would enjoy dealing with the ramifications of that—the chaos-spawn goblin priest's experiments with the *sphere* have damaged it and connected it to the Void in ways never before conceived. Any attempt to remove the *sphere* from the well or to attune to it after the chaos-spawn goblin priest's death causes the sphere to disappear into itself, transported into the Void. Perhaps it is now in the hands of whatever strange masters the priest served.

**Reward.** Depending on how many captives the PCs save, they have a handful of commoner survivors to treat and transport back to safety. At least one of the commoners is a merchant who offers them 250 gp as a reward for their aid.

# The Shattered Halls of the Fallen Star

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 5TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

Long ago, a star fell from the night, blazing across the sky before crashing to the ground in the depth of the Wastes. No mere chunk of stellar debris, the star was a vessel constructed to ply the void between worlds—or even planes and dimensions. As it traveled, most of the crew slept in stasis chambers while a rotating shift of two monitored the journey.

During its last trip, an eldritch ooze was accidentally allowed on board. Its madness corrupted the awake crew, leading to the crash. The vessel broke up on impact and the command section was partially buried for decades. Though advanced stasis chambers protected the crew, the crash damaged the entire system. Following its directive to preserve life, the ship's artificial mind, influenced by the corrupting nature of the eldritch ooze, merged the sleeping crew into the form of a faceless wanderer.

Recently, an earthquake uncovered the command section. The new entity was awakened with the mind of Ocras, the ship's captain, temporarily in control. Now, Ocras seeks to repair his ship, desperate to save his crew one way or another. However, his repair

efforts go poorly as continual malfunctions cause chaotic effects. To make matters worse, Ocras needs new bodies to hold the minds of his crew. To that end, he dispatched his robotic minions to bring him appropriate lifeforms to use.

## Adventure Hooks

The following methods can draw the PCs to the Shattered Halls:

- Strange constructs have attacked settlements around the periphery of the wastelands, abducting inhabitants and retreating back into the Wastes. The lords of the area hire the PCs to track the attackers back to their lair and end the threat to life and property.
- Unconfirmed reports from passing caravans and wasteland travelers report a series of armored monstrosities emerging from a recently uncovered ruin. Lyzenna Karsa, the noted sage and naturalist, believes the monsters to be familiar creatures altered by some unknown magic. She hires the PCs to investigate the ruin.



- Doctor Terlyn, an inventor friendly to the PCs, has discovered a strange metal construct near the edge of the Wastes. Inside, was a message from Ocras, the captain of some sort of crashed vessel. Ocras seeks new bodies to save his crew and begs for aid. How captured living creatures can save the crew is a mystery, but Terlyn hires the PCs to venture into the Wastes, find the crashed ship, and aid Ocras in saving his crew.

## The Shattered Halls

The PCs have journeyed through the wastelands to reach the site. Along the way, they might encounter **robot drones** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) or **robot wardens** (see *Wastes of Chaos*).

### SHATTERED HALLS FEATURES

The Shattered Halls are all that remain of the crashed voidship. Power still flows through the walls, but most machines within the site are either nonfunctional or malfunction explosively.

**Illumination.** There are no light sources within the halls apart from dripping bioluminescent liquids and dimly glowing relays and diodes on equipment.

**Dimensionally Anchored.** The strange composition of the ship prevents teleportation. Magic such as *dimension door* or *misty step* functions within a room, but cannot pass through a wall, floor, or ceiling.

**Key Cards.** The metal doors in the halls open like an iris. They are indestructible, and most are unlocked. A few, however, are still secured by complicated locks. Small colored boxes next to these doors indicate the color of key card needed to open them. The cards themselves appear to be rectangular pieces of colored crystal.

### 1. APPROACHING THE HALLS

A crumbled collection of twisted metal structures and scattered fragments, perhaps revealed by a recent landslide, is arrayed at the base of a massive upthrust of stone. It is hard to determine the purpose of the buildings. It is certainly old. Yet, despite the massive physical damage, the debris shows little evidence of age. To the south of the structure, you see two sealed metal doors. Halfway along the western side, a dark opening gapes like a hungry maw.



The ruin is strange but isn't immediately identifiable as a vessel. The damage is so extensive that even PCs with knowledge of voidcraft find it difficult to discern the purpose of the site. To the casual eye, the site resembles one, or perhaps two, ruined metal buildings.

**Entrances.** Of the doors to the south, the northern one (to Area 2) is unlocked. The one leading east (to Area 3) requires a Red Key Card to open.

**Creatures.** Each time PCs enter this area, they encounter a patrol of 1d2 **robot wardens** (see *Wastes of Chaos*). These constructs are created by the malfunctioning ship's computer and emerge from a port on the roof of the vessel. They fight against any intruder but do not pursue beyond Area 1.







## 2. MED BAY

This strange chamber is partially collapsed on the northern side and is festooned with broken, mysterious machinery. A complicated looking device divides the room in half, stretching from floor to ceiling with an archway filled with a shimmering green energy. Through the emerald field you see that the room continues deeper into the structure. The upper body of a partially mummified skeleton sticks out from the rubble near the archway, its hand reaching toward a glowing crystal panel on the device.

This was part of the medical bay of the vessel before the crash, but the most important sections of the chamber (including the stasis pods) are beneath the collapsed section. What remains are broken or half-functioning medical equipment.

**The Body.** The skeleton is an unfortunate crew member who was trying to repair the decontamination field in an attempt to protect itself from the eldritch ooze. When the ship crashed, the crew member was crushed by the collapsing wall. The body is humanoid with strangely enlarged eye sockets, an oversized skull, and gray mummified skin. Examining the skeleton with a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals it to be a creature unknown to the PCs. The cause of death is, unsurprisingly, massive crushing damage.

**Machines.** For the most part, these machines are broken. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check does uncover a small, refrigerated compartment containing a single vial of green syrup. Consuming it renders a creature immune to acid damage for 5 hours. However, the syrup must be used within 1 hour of being removed from the compartment.

**Green Archway.** This is a decontamination field used by the crew to remove toxins and other conditions. Creatures attempting to pass through it before the correct code is entered repaired (see Glowing Panel below) take 3 (1d6) force damage and are pushed back 5 feet. Once the correct code is entered, the archway pulses a brighter green and PCs can pass through without damage. Passing through the archway removes the most recently acquired condition from the first three creatures who do so. After that, the archway must recharge for 24 hours. On the far side of the archway is a similar room with an open doorway to the North.

**Glowing Panel.** The glowing panel is a rectangular crystal displaying rows of numbers. Toward the bottom is a string of numbers with a gap at the end, as if waiting for a final input. The sequence is as follows:

7 - 5 - 3 - \_\_\_\_

Below this are three boxes, each with a number.

- First Box: 9
- Second Box: 13
- Third Box: 1

To solve this puzzle, the PCs must enter a prime number, in this case, the second box (13). When they do, they can pass through the archway without taking damage.

## 3. SOUTHERN UMBILICAL

A long corridor stretches east, curving toward the north at its far end. Midway along its length, a section of the northern wall is torn open.

This area encompasses the curving corridor and the open area to the north, accessible through the broken wall. The door at the end of the corridor requires a Green Key Card to open. When the PCs approach within 5 feet of it, a beam of white light shines from above the doorway brushing over all creatures within 20 feet. Each creature must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. Though there appears to be no immediate effect, failing the saving throw causes the ship to begin replicating creatures who failed in the cloning facility (see Area 9). Once they are scanned, a mechanized voice says in Common, "Command level authorization required. Please use the appropriate key card for entry."

**Creatures.** The eldritch ooze (see *Tome of Beasts* 2 or use **black pudding**) that caused the crash still languishes in this area, feeding on small animals, and the residue leaking out of the western wall (from the nutrient tubes in Area 6). Due to the slick nature of the ship's hull, the ooze can't use its spider climb trait to escape.

**Treasure.** A collection of bones near some wrecked machines hides a Yellow Key Card.

#### 4. SECURITY OFFICE

The musty air of this chamber bears an acidic tang. A thick growth of vibrant green moss and fungus covers the broken machinery growing from a pool of viscous, emerald liquid seeping out of the eastern wall. To one side, a glass-fronted, closed cabinet is almost completely obscured by dimly glowing growths, and a green light blinks from an intact machine in one corner. A single door leads to the north while a huge chunk of debris blocks the corridor to the east.

.....

The furnishings, machines, and contents of this chamber that survived the crash landing were later ruined by the moss and fungus encouraged by the goo flowing from Area 6. The debris blocking the opening to Area 6 can only be moved with a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check. Doing so floods the chamber with the collected pool of goo.

**Closed Cabinet.** PCs who attempt to open the cabinet must make a DC 15 Dexterity check. On failure, the glowing fungus releases a cloud of spores in a 5-foot radius. Creatures in the radius must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be subject to the effects of the *confusion* spell for 1 minute.

**Goo.** This substance functions as the green slime dungeon hazard, dealing 5 (1d10) acid damage to any creature that comes in contact with it. The creature takes the damage again at the start of each of its turns until a creature uses an action to scrape the goo off or the goo is destroyed with fire.

**Intact Security Terminal.** A diagram on the front of this machine shows two rectangles merging into one rectangle. When a blinking green button is pressed, two receptacles sized for key cards opens. If a Yellow Key Card and a Blue Key Card are placed in this machine, it destroys them and produces a Green Key Card. A successful DC 12 Intelligence check deciphers the function of the terminal.

**Treasure.** Ten machine parts made from gold and platinum (worth 20 gp each) can be scavenged from the machinery in this chamber with 20 minutes of work. Inside the closed cabinet is a *shotcaster* (see *Wastes of Chaos*).

#### 5. COLLAPSED CHAMBER

A collapsed wall opens the northern section of this chamber to the room beyond. Part of the ceiling has also collapsed, ruining most of the fragile machinery in this area. The only intact machine in the room is attached to the eastern wall. Next to it, the metal wall is buckled and torn, and a faint glow emanates from the opening. A desiccated body lies in the doorway to a small side-room to the north.

.....

**Torn Wall.** PCs peeking through the opening can see into Area 6.

**Intact Machine.** This was once a power-regulation machine, but it is only partially functional. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that activating it will send a blast of energy into Area 6. This blast will deal 10 (3d6) radiant damage to all creatures in Area 6. The machine can only be activated once.

**Treasure.** The body in the doorway holds a Blue Key Card.

#### 6. BIO SCIENCES LABORATORY

A large floor-to-ceiling cylinder of greenish liquid dominates this chamber. Tubes extend from it to other machines in the area. A slowly oozing river of goo flows from a broken device on the eastern wall to pool in a flooded corridor to the south. There is a door down a short corridor to the west and another on the eastern wall. Along the southern wall, a green light blinks from an intact device of unknown purpose.

.....

This was a laboratory focusing on biology and cellular manipulation. The door on the west wall can be opened with a Yellow Key Card.

**Creatures.** The flowing goo has sustained generations of **heggarna** (see *Tome of Beasts 2* or use **gibbering moulder**), which were pets of the crew. Now only six heggarna remain. The feral creatures lurk in out-of-the-way places, including among the pipes near the ceiling. They hunt in a pack, emerging in their cat disguises to get close to their prey.

**Rivers of Goo.** This substance acts like the green slime dungeon hazard, but the heggarna have been bred to consume it as food.

**Treasure.** Behind the door to the east (requiring a Red Key Card) is a partially intact workroom. A small bin holds five bars of orichalcum (enough to craft one



martial weapon or one suit of medium armor). On a wall mount is an *echo rifle* (see *Wastes of Chaos*) with two charges remaining.

## 7. RUINED CREW QUARTERS

The airlock from Area 1 was ruptured during the crash and stands open. When the PCs approach within 5 feet of it, a beam of white light shines from above the airlock sweeping over all creatures within 20 feet. Each creature must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. Though there appears to be no immediate effect, failing the saving throw causes the ship to begin replicating creatures who failed in the cloning facility (see Area 9). When the PCs venture inside, read or paraphrase the following:

.....  
A massive spar of stone has caved in the northern side of the structure. Whatever this chamber, or chambers, once held is scattered and ruined in a tumbling array of wreck and rubble.  
.....

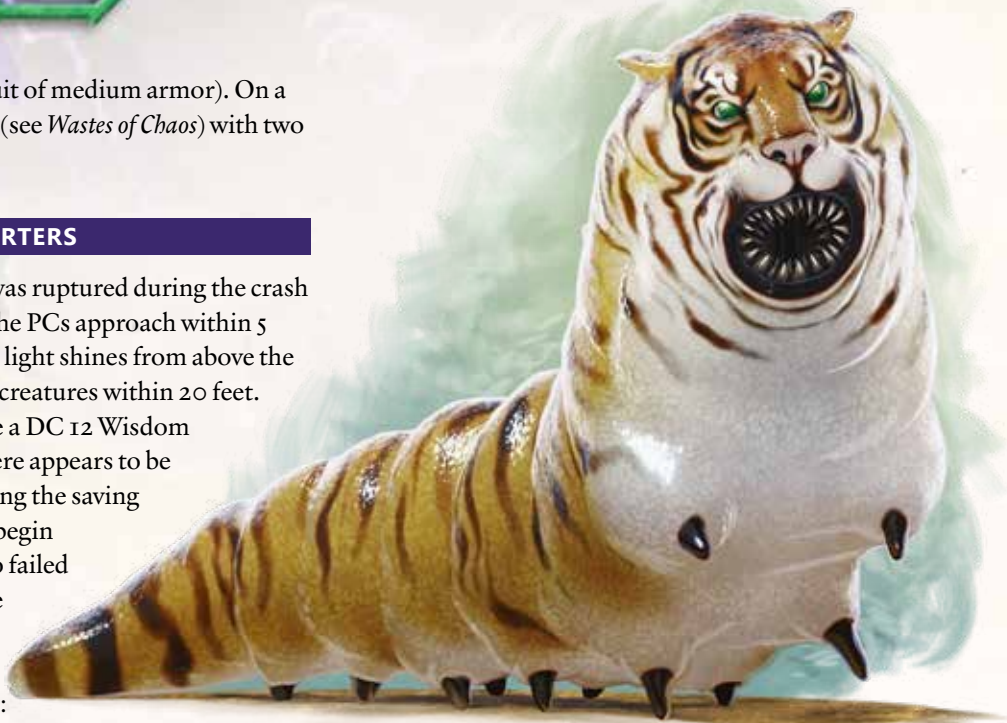
This area was once living quarters separated by walls and doors. The crash, and impact with the stone, destroyed most items in the area. A door on the southern wall requires a Yellow Key Card to open.

**Body.** Searching with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check uncovers the body of a crew member. The body is humanoid with strangely enlarged eye sockets and an oversized skull. Its mummified skin appears oddly gray. Examining the skeleton with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals it to be a creature unknown to the PCs. The cause of death is, unsurprisingly, massive crushing damage. In a pocket of the body's strange silvery clothing is a Red Key Card.

## 8. COMMAND HALLWAY

When the PCs approach the door, a mechanized voice says in Common, "Command level authorization required. Please use the appropriate key card for entry."

PCs can use the terminal in Area 4 to combine a Yellow and Blue key card into a Green one. You can use the computer to suggest such an action if the players don't think of it.



## 9. CLONING FACILITY

An acrid reek of chemicals fills the air. This long chamber runs almost the entire length of the structure, a larger area to the south and a smaller one to the north separated by an archway. In the northern part of the chamber, vertical rows of coffin-like tubes set with dark windows are stacked on either side of a narrow path leading to a sealed door. To the south, pulses of energy lance through makeshift tubes and conduits crisscrossing the floor between various devices and machines. Two tubes of transparent material stand in the southern area. A greenish mist leaks from them.  
.....

Ocras dwells here, desperately attempting to reverse the mutation forced on him by the malfunctioning ship's computer. When the PCs enter, the cloning cylinders open to disgorge up to two clones of the PCs. Any captives brought in by the robot wardens are also here.

**Creatures.** Ocras, a **faceless wanderer** (see *Tome of Beasts 2* or use **chuul**), is in the southern portion of the area. His mind is unstable, fluctuating between bouts of clarity and murderous rage. He fights to protect his crew and ship.

Additionally, if any PC failed their Wisdom saving throws in Areas 3 and/or 7, the computer has been busy using the scans to make clones (use statistics for **animated armor** but with AC 15). The clone is

dressed and armed like the original creature it copied. If a clone dies in combat, its body and gear melt into goo, and one of the tubes produces a replacement at the end of the same round. See Cloning Tubes below for more information.

**Cloning Tubes.** The tubes only make clones of PCs who failed their Wisdom saving throws. They can't make multiple copies of the same individual at once. If the computer has scans on more than two characters, roll randomly to see which creature the tube clones. The tubes have AC 16 and 30 hp. If Ocras dies, the tubes stop functioning.

**Parlay.** A successful DC 20 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check convinces Ocras to not fight or to stop fighting if combat has begun. The captain wants new bodies for his crew and presses the PCs to volunteer for scanning and cloning by the ship. He would also accept scans from other humanoid lifeforms. Short of that, Ocras fights to the death.

## 10. BRIDGE

The walls of this chamber appear to be made of some transparent material. Several chairs flanked by odd machines surround a larger throne set upon an upraised dais.

.....  
This was once the bridge of the ship. None of the controls here are functional.

**Treasure.** An unlocked coffer at the base of the command chair contains a collection of precious gems (worth 1500 gp), a *sentinel orb*, and a *lesser shielding bracelet* (for both items, see *Wastes of Chaos*).

## Concluding the Adventure

In the encounter with Ocras, the PCs either dispatched the unfortunate captain or agreed to his request.

If Ocras is killed, the computer detects the end of his life signs and goes into a locked subroutine. Without the captain's direct command, or a code from a newly authorized captain (which the PCs can't get), the computer does not divulge any information or respond to any commands. The AI maintains the ship systems for around a month before things starts

breaking down. Much of the technology on the ship is "alien" to the PCs and virtually impossible to reverse engineer.

If Ocras is befriended, he needs the PCs to bring him live sentient creatures (humanoids specifically) so he can clone them and implant the stored minds of his crew in the empty bodies. This is made more difficult by the captain's slowly deteriorating mental control. Ocras rewards the PCs with alien technology for each creature they bring to be cloned.

Either way, creatures captured by drones can be freed from the cloning tubes. The PCs can depart the crashed ship having accomplished (or survived) their encounter with the Fallen Star.







# Whispers of the Tumultuous Dark

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 6TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

A young woman, Sylphie Generet, lived with her mother, Dinah, in a small house in Salzbach. Her father died some years earlier, and Sylphie never got along with her mother. Recently, Sylphie befriended a strange woman who calls herself Calviana. The woman whispered to Sylphie of a place in the Wastes where she would be welcomed and beloved.

As Sylphie and her mother's quarreling increased in frequency and severity, Sylphie found herself disillusioned with life in Salzbach. After a particularly terrible argument, Sylphie fled her home, and accompanied Calviana to the Temple of the Tumultuous Dark, deep in the Wastes. Her mother, distraught and desperate, seeks adventurers to rescue her daughter.

## Adventure Hooks

Sylphie's mother, Dinah, distraught and desperate, seeks adventurers to rescue her daughter. The PCs might hear of the quest in a number of ways:

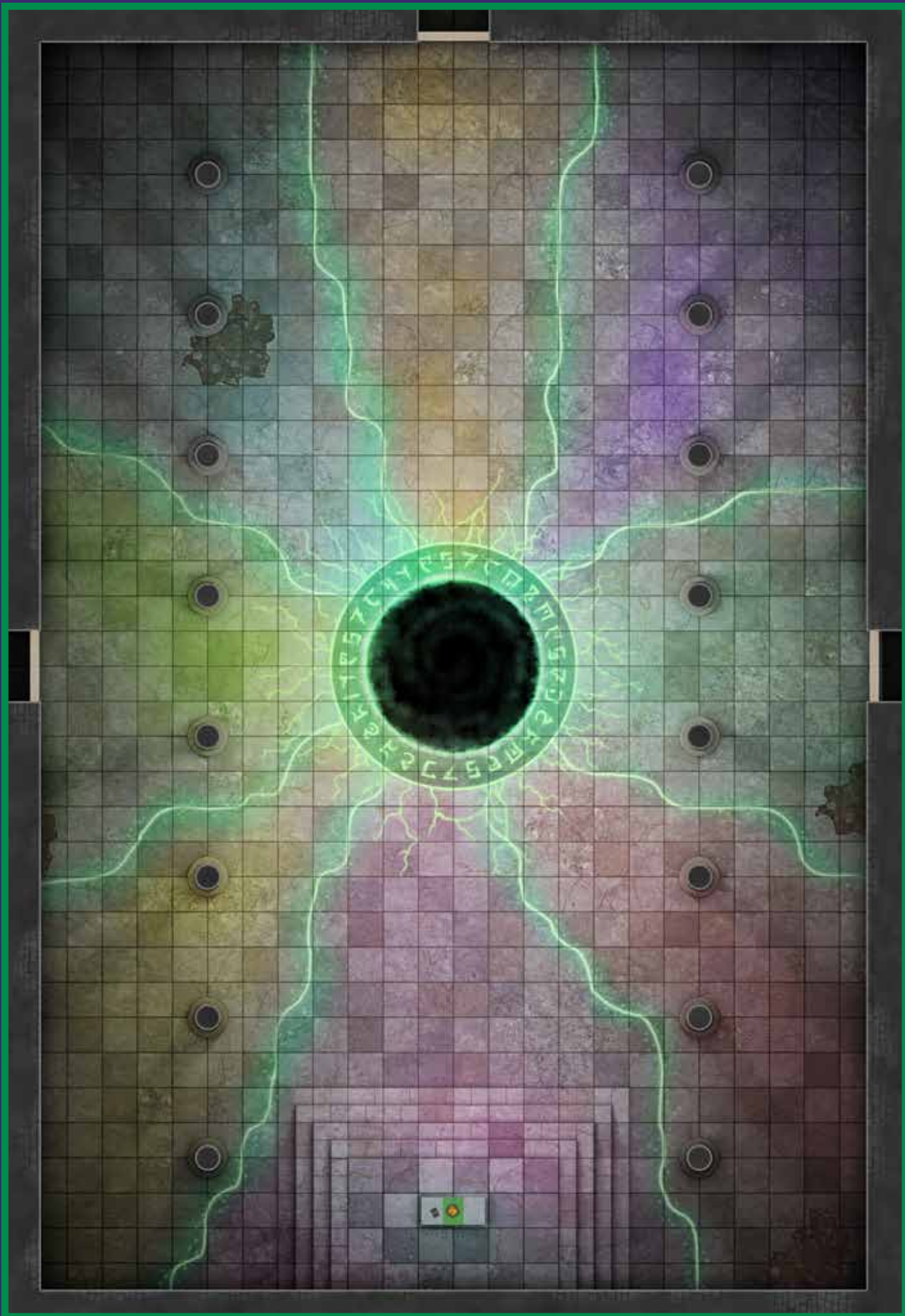
- Dinah is seated at a table in a nearby tavern, drinking away her sorrows when the PCs enter. Recognizing them for adventurers, Dinah makes an impassioned plea for them to save her daughter.

- Other adventurers talk of cultists in the Wastes outside Salzbach. Things have gotten rougher there in recent weeks, and a few are considering traveling to Salzbach to see if anything is being done about it.
- An old friend of Sylphie's, Kealie, is visiting whatever town or city the PCs are currently in. She hasn't heard from Sylphie in too long, and asks the PCs to travel to Salzbach to check in on her and her mother.
- The PCs encounter a flyer on the wall of a tavern or notice board with the headline "SEEKING BRAVE HEROES." It describes a young woman missing in the Wastes. It offers a "substantial reward" for a positive outcome.

## The Order of the Tumultuous Dark

The Order of the Tumultuous Dark is a cult dedicated to the worship of the unknowable chaos of the Void. They have taken up residence in a crumbling temple in the Wastes, and nurture a portal to another realm, which they believe will grant them access to their deity and allow their chaos to consume the world.

Calviana is one such cultist, and one of several who came to Salzbach to recruit members—or sacrifices—to their temple. As an organization, they follow High





Priestess Ciara, a woman with powerful abilities. It was she who felt the call of the Void and brought the cultists to the temple to coax open a potential rift.

Cultists who have been with the Order of the Tumultuous Dark for longer than a year exhibit unnatural behaviors, physical mutations, or anomalous abilities, warped by their proximity to chaos energy.

### SALZBACH BECKONS

The quest starts in Salzbach, on the southern end of the Grand Duchy or Dornig.

#### TALKING TO DINAH

Once the PCs meet with Dinah, either in the tavern or at her home in Salzbach, she implores the PCs to rescue her daughter, Sylphie. She can offer only 15 gp total, but begs for their help, apologizing for the small amount.

Dinah doesn't know much about the Wastes outside of Salzbach, but she's heard they're full of strange and wondrous things, and she suggests the PCs might find things of value wherever Sylphie is hiding. (Dinah is obviously grasping for straws here.) If the PCs seem unmoved, she suggests they speak to Lorren at the Blade & Bow, a tavern for adventurers and mercenaries. They may have a contract available for a job in the Wastes, and perhaps even one to deal with Calviana and the other cultists.

**What Dinah Knows.** Dinah doesn't know much about the Wastes or the cultists. She knows Calviana was strange and moved as if she had to think about every motion that she made. She flattered Sylphie and spent a lot of time making her feel special. The young woman obviously fell for her "charlatan tricks," as Dinah calls them. Dinah once heard Calviana mention "the temple" and something called "the Tumultuous Dark," but has little to go on other than a direction— southwest into the Wastes.

#### THE BLADE & BOW

The Blade & Bow is a simple tavern, with four rooms for rent above and a sparring ring of packed dirt out back. Mercenaries and adventurers of all types can be found here, drinking and dicing and fighting.

Lorren, an elf with long dark hair and a scar across one eye, spends most of their time sitting at the bar, surveying the scene and periodically speaking with nearby patrons in subdued tones. If the PCs ask about jobs in the Wastes, Lorren admits that they've been hearing troubling rumors of cultists recently, and was considering sending a group out to handle the problem.

**Reward.** If the PCs are interested, Lorren offers 50 gp a piece plus half the loot for handling the issue. A successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check can talk Lorren into taking only a quarter of the loot.

**What Lorren Knows.** Lorren can give the PCs a little more information about the cultists. The cultists are Void or chaos worshipers of some sort, though the exact god or entity is unclear. Several cultists have been seen in Salzbach, though apprehending them has been difficult. It seems that they have reclaimed an old, crumbling temple in the Wastes, about two days' ride southwest of Salzbach, southeast of the Lost Tower. Lorren warns the PCs that strange creatures have been seen about, and magic doesn't work quite right near the temple.

#### DARK SPIES IN THE STREETS

Yryn, a human **cultist** of the Tumultuous Dark, has been trailing the PCs since shortly after they arrived in the city (or since they arrived at Dinah's or the Blade & Bow, if they were already in the city). When the PCs leave Dinah's home or the Blade & Bow, they notice Yryn with a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Yryn stays far enough away from the PCs that he has an opportunity to slip away if spotted. If the PCs approach or attack, he attempts to flee, only attacking when escape becomes impossible.

If questioned, Yryn refuses to answer any questions unless magically coerced or subjected to a successful DC 25 Charisma (Intimidation) check.

If a PC uses *detect thoughts* or a similar ability on Yryn, they hear only chaotic shrieking and must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or take 2d6 psychic damage for every round they maintain concentration.

If Yryn is killed and the PCs attempt to use *speaking with dead* or similar magic to gain information from his corpse, the only answer they receive is the screams of the Void.

Yryn has been a cultist of the Tumultuous Dark for years. He has been helping revive the abandoned temple and the organization. When Yryn speaks, his words are layered over with the echoes of other voices, speaking in languages both familiar and foreign.

**Treasure.** Yryn wears an amulet with a wide eye with a slitted pupil. The amulet is magical and allows him to see through the illusions obscuring the doors in the temple (see The Temple of the Tumultuous Dark below).

## TRAVELING TO THE TEMPLE

The PCs can follow the road southwest out of the city. On horseback, the trip takes two full days. On foot, it takes nearly four. As the PCs travel nearer to the temple, they notice strangeness abounds. (See the Random Encounters in the Wastes table below). Odd creatures and weird magic abound. Even the landscape is affected by the presence of the chaos portal.

The area surrounding the temple is dry, scrubby, badlands. Boulders lie about, as if strewn by some giant hand. Ravines split the landscape, some as shallow as five feet, while others cut swaths hundreds of feet deep and wide. The landscape constantly

changes. Some ravines seal up without warning, while others open with a rumble heralding their arrival. Occasionally, a river or lake springs into existence, remaining for only a few hours before vanishing again.

On their second day of travel, just when the temple rises into view in the distance, the PCs are attacked by d4 **giant boars**, with the following modifications: one has eight legs instead of four, one can climb vertical surfaces with ease, one can cast *blink* once a day, and one has far too many eyes, gaining advantage to its Wisdom (Perception) checks. See the Regional Effects section of the Raw Chaos Portal chapter in *Wastes of Chaos* for more information on strange regional occurrences.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE WASTES

For every four hours the PCs spend traveling to the temple, roll on the Random Encounters table below.

### THE TEMPLE OF THE TUMULTUOUS DARK

The Temple of the Tumultuous Dark sits on a wedge of land a mile long and half a mile wide, between two surprisingly stable ravines. Each of these ravines is 40 feet wide and 150 feet deep.

The temple is a rectangular building carved from the same red sandstone as the earth below it. Each face of the temple holds a double door, unlocked.

## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS IN THE WASTES

d8	Encounter
1	The PC with the highest passive Perception notices a cloud of insects moving toward them. As it reaches them, the PCs can see the insects are tiny eyeballs of all types, each with a pair of dragonfly-like wings. The eyeballs swarm past, showing no interest in the PCs.
2	A jackrabbit watches the party from behind a brush. It yawns, displaying sharp teeth and three tentacle-like tongues.
3	4d4 <b>stirges</b> attack the party.
4	The PC with the highest passive Perception notices a satchel lying half-buried in the red dust. The bag has a 50% chance of being a <i>bag of holding</i> with 1d4 <i>potions of healing</i> inside, and a 50% chance of being a mimic.
5	1d4 <b>hunter sharks</b> swim through the air, searching for prey (the sharks have a fly speed of 40 feet and can breathe air).
6	Shimmering ribbons of light, like the aurora borealis, fill the sky, in shades of pink, purple, red, and green.
7	Whispers rise up and echo around the party, coming from everywhere and nowhere all at once. They last for two rounds, then dissipate. A PC that succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check that also speaks Abyssal can catch snippets of the whispers: “No, no, no, no!” “Where am I?” “Mom? Are you there?” “No, stop, please!”
8	The PCs notice a shack that wasn't there a moment before. Inside, a table is laid with food and enough beds for all of them. The shack lasts for 1d20 hours, then vanishes. Any PCs or items inside the shack when it disappears are left in the dirt where the shack once stood.



## ILLUSORY HALLWAYS

Once inside, a 10-foot-wide hallway leads to the right and the left, with no obvious doors or markings. The connecting hallways are the same. The doorways deeper into the temple are obscured by illusion magic. A character who carries Yryn's amulet (see Dark Watchers in the Streets above) automatically sees through the illusion. A character who investigates the hallway can make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. On a success, they see through the illusion, and find a second set of double doors in the center of the inner wall of all four hallways.

If the PCs do not pierce the illusion, they find no other way in. After 10 minutes pass, a cultist exits the doorway nearest to them and steps into the hallway.

This does not break the illusion, but allows the PCs to automatically succeed on the Wisdom saving throw the next time they search for a door. If the **cultist** sees the PCs, they attack.

## NARTHEX

No matter which door the PCs enter through, they end up in the same room. This room measures 115 feet wide and 50 feet long and is divided by eight standing screens. Behind each screen is a single bed, a side table, and a trunk. The trunks are all locked but can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

Directly across from the double doors the PCs entered through is another set of double doors. These doors lead to the Inner Temple.

## CHAOS PORTAL EFFECTS

Zone	Effects
1	<b>Frost.</b> Ice coats the floor in this zone. It is considered difficult terrain, and creatures who attempt to use the Dash action must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw. On a failure, they fall prone. When the zones rotate, the ice remains for one round.
2	<b>Fire.</b> Flames erupt from the ground without warning. A character who starts their turn in this zone must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d6 fire damage on a failure or half as much on a success.
3	<b>Eyes.</b> 1d4 globules of floating eyeballs (Medium size) pop into existence here. Whatever they see, High Priestess Ciara sees. Creatures in this zone have disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks. If the globules of eyes take damage, they explode, dealing 2d4 force damage to any creature within 5 feet. When the zones rotate, any remaining globules stay in their current spot, and 1d4 new globules pop into existence in the new zone.
4	<b>Gas.</b> Cracks in the tile open up and seep strange gasses. Any creatures who start their turn in this zone must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, they take 1d4 poison damage and are subject to the effects of the <i>confusion</i> spell until the beginning of their next turn.
5	<b>Electricity Orb.</b> A 5-foot-wide orb of electricity floats around the confines of this zone. It has a movement speed of 15 feet, and heads toward the nearest creature at the top of the round. At the end of its movement, it pulses with electricity; every creature within 10 feet of the orb must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d4 lightning damage. The orb moves with the zone when it rotates.
6	<b>Tentacles.</b> A 10-foot-diameter circle filled with tentacles and eyes opens in the floor in a random location in this zone. The tentacles have a reach of 10 feet. Whenever a character comes within range, one tentacles lashes out and grapples the character (escape DC 13). A PC grappled in this way is considered restrained. If a tentacle takes damage, it disappears in a splash of sludge, and another takes its place. There can be no more than eight tentacles at a time.
7	<b>Void Pool.</b> A 15-foot-wide puddle of inky blackness appears at a random location within this zone and remains for as long as the zone is in place. A PC who enters the puddle falls into icy darkness and takes 1d4 force damage. At the beginning of their next turn, they may roll a d20. On a roll of 11 or higher, they reappear 30 feet above a random unoccupied space within the room and fall prone, taking 3d6 bludgeoning damage; On a roll of 10 or less, they take another 1d4 force damage and remain in darkness.
8	<b>Peace.</b> This zone is calm and refreshing. A warm breeze blows. A creature who starts their turn here regains 1d4 hit points.

If the PCs spend longer than 10 minutes in this room, they hear a scream from within the double doors to the Inner Temple.

**Treasure.** Each side table holds assorted coins worth 11 gp. Each trunk holds a set of robes, and two trunks hold a *potion of many forms* (see *Wastes of Chaos*).

### INNER TEMPLE

This room is 115 feet wide, 155 feet long, and 80 feet high. Two columns of 5-foot-wide pillars split the room into thirds. At the east end stands a raised dais, with a heavy stone altar. The floor is made of polished marble. Everything seems well made and well-tended.

In the center of the room is the raw chaos portal itself. Set into the floor, it looks like a round, inky pool, but periodic flashes of energy or light from within reveal it is more. Glowing 5-foot-tall runes are carved into the floor around the portal, glowing with an eerie light. The tile around the portal is cracked, releasing strange vapors.

At the altar stands High Priestess Ciara (CN human **mage** under the effects of *spider climb*); two **cult fanatics**—Llora (CN human) and Tomman (CN dwarf); and Calviana (**cultist**).

High Priestess Ciara welcomes the PCs. She only becomes hostile if the PCs harm her, her cultists, the temple, or the portal. Glowing runes cover High Priestess Ciara's arms, and she holds a wicked-looking ritual dagger. Llora has a second, smaller head at the meeting of her neck and shoulder, and Tomman's eyes each have three pupils.

Sylphie is laid on her back on the altar, eyes glazed. She is not dead, but in a trance that can be broken with *dispel magic* or a similar ability.

If the PCs do not intervene, Ciara continues with her ritual. After three rounds of chanting, she plunges the dagger into Sylphie's chest.

### ACTIVATING THE PORTAL

If Ciara completes her ritual, the portal sparks to life, activating the effects listed below. Similarly, if the PCs attack before she completes her ritual, Ciara spills some of her own blood over the altar, taking 1d6 slashing damage, activating the portal.

### PORTAL EFFECTS

Radiating out from the portal are seven beams of wavering light. The beams divide the room into eight nearly-identically-sized slices. Each of these slices is subject to a different effect, as listed in the chart below. At the top of every round, roll a d20. On a result of 1–5, there is a flash of light, and the entire “pie” of effects rotates one spot clockwise.

## Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs rescue Sylphie, she is tearfully reunited with her mother. If they kill High Priestess Ciara, the cultists scatter, but the portal remains open. If High Priestess Ciara escapes, she continues her work in the temple and with the portal, causing continued problems for Salzbach and its people.



# No One Leaves

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 6TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

For many years, the Espolmar Mine produced vast quantities of basalt and iron. When a freak magical surge placed the mine inside the boundaries of the chaotic wasteland, Hirschel Espolmar, the family scion, and his companion, Nadia, set out to investigate. They have yet to return.

Raiders from the village of Tangleside ambushed Hirschel and Nadia as they fled the partially collapsed Espolmar Mine. The pair have been delivered to the Terror Dome in Tangleside, where they are expected to entertain the town's bloodthirsty masses as gladiators.

Unbeknownst to them, Hirschel and Nadia are a hair's breadth from personal disaster. Their contact with an entity they encountered in the mine has cursed the pair to undergo a foul metamorphosis unless someone intervenes.

## Adventure Hooks

At the behest of Hirschel's father, Markos Espolmar, the PCs begin the adventure having given themselves over as prisoners of the Terror Dome, Tangleside's gladiatorial arena. After their first battle in the arena, the PCs will alternate between bouts in the stadium and building their reputations with fans and fellow gladiators after the fights.

The PCs face opponents ranging from other gladiators, to elemental assassins, to a mighty tyrannosaurus rex. Enterprising PCs may be able to take over the village and make its power structure work for them.

While this adventure is meant to start with the PCs already having agreed to be placed in Tangleside's cells, if you prefer to change the tone, consider one of the following hooks:

- The party wakes in a cell in the village of Tangleside. They recall a noxious gray mist rising from the ground as they traversed the waste and remember blacking out as they sought to escape it. Just before passing out, the PCs remember blurry shapes approaching.
- Kierah Stelthruigh, an experienced caravanner, was overrun by chaos reavers on her last journey through the Wastes. She made it back to town with only her life. She asks the PCs to hunt down the reavers and reacquire her wastelander's all-terrain wagon (see *Wastes of Chaos*) for her. She offers to pay the party 1,500 gp and lifetime passage through the wasteland for their service. Before the reavers left her, Kierah heard one mention the chaos village of Tangleside.





## AWAKENING

You awake on a hard-packed dirt floor. After blinking for a few seconds, you remember where you are. A young human man and woman, both of whom seem to have better accommodations, stare out of their cell across the corridor at you. Judging from the description you were given, they are Hirschel and Nadia, the people you were sent to find.

The PCs' cell measures 10 feet by 10 feet with steel bars stretching 8 feet from floor to ceiling. The steel door (AC 19, 27 hp, damage threshold 20) is secured with a quality lock. Without the key, the lock can be picked with a successful DC 21 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The PCs are wearing their armor, but the rest of their equipment has been taken.

Five other identical cells fill the room. Two of them hold one prisoner apiece while another cell holds a bedraggled human man and woman, both of whom appear to be ill. The expressions on the other captives' faces range from sullen indifference to curiosity. None of the other prisoners responds to any questions with more than a grunt.

A pair of double doors leads out to the village of Tangleside, while a smaller interior door leads to an office. A **duergar** works, and occasionally naps, if the snores are any indication, in the office.

**Guards.** Four **veterans** are on guard at all times. The guards keep six-hour shifts, staggered such that two guards rotate out every three hours.

**The Escort.** Within a few moments of their waking, three **veterans** accompanied by a **doombringer** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) enter the room and stride up to the PCs' cell. The doombringer commands the PCs to present their wrists so they can be shackled for escort to the Terror Dome.

**The Long Walk.** The escort guides the PCs through the busy streets from the gladiator pens to the Terror Dome. Some spectators who haven't made it to the arena yet crowd toward the PCs, jeering and calling insults at them.

## FIRST BOUT: WAR WAGON

Rain starts to fall as you walk into the arena past a pair of statues depicting weird tentacled felines. The ridged and rutted dirt floor already looks muddy enough that you need to watch your step. Looking further ahead, you see the familiar hafts and hilts of your weapons sticking out of a barrel near the center of the arena.

**Equipment.** The barrel near the center of the arena holds all of the PCs' weapons as well as any component pouches, holy symbols, or arcane foci that were among their belongings. Unless otherwise noted, the same barrel will be present in all subsequent battles.

**Reaver Wagon.** Before the PCs can regain their weapons, a shrieking rabble of four **berserkers** and two **wasteland barnstormers** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) rush into the arena. They are closely followed by a



## ACCLAIM BENEFITS

Acclaim	Benefit
2	The other gladiators in the arena speak to the PCs and answer their questions.
5	The party is gaining a fan base. Small gifts, worth 5 gp or less, are delivered to the PCs in their cell.
9	The other gladiators treat the PCs as equals. Gifts for the PCs worth 10 gp or less start to arrive at the cells. The PCs' gear is returned to them.
14	The guards no longer lock the party's cell at night. The PCs can leave Tangleside unhindered. Gifts worth up to 20 gp are brought to the PCs.
20+	The party is arena royalty. The PCs can have as much free food and drink as they want at any tavern in Tangleside. The populace can be convinced to rebel against the Overlord. Gifts worth up to 50 gp are brought to the PCs.

metal and wood *wastelander's all-terrain wagon* (see *Wastes of Chaos*) being drawn by a pair of ghostly, oversized goats. Four **chaos reavers** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) have taken the roles of the pilot, navigator, and two passengers.

**Fight!** As soon as the wagon is in the arena, the entrance is sealed. The overlord, Karvos Deathstealer (see *Wastes of Chaos*) stands from his throne and roars, "One side triumphs or no side leaves! Fight!"

**Muddy Ground.** The rain intensifies as the battle rages, making the ground difficult terrain. A creature that rolls a 1 on an attack roll must succeed on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) saving throw or become restrained by the muck. A restrained creature can free itself by using its action and succeeding on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Pitched Battle.** The reavers fight hard but with little skill or coordination. The berserkers target the strongest-looking PCs first, while the barnstormers each spend their first turn or two riffing on their instruments. The wagon uses its three actions to Move, Ram, and Fire Cannon.

A creature can climb onto the moving wagon as an action by succeeding on a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check.

**Victory or Defeat.** The party gains 1 acclaim for each PC that has 1 or more hp at the end of the fight. Their weapons are taken from them, and they are escorted back to the cell once the match is over. While their captors won't heal fallen gladiators, they won't stop the companions of the fallen from doing so.

## BUILDING ACCLAIM

To make their lives easier in Tangleside, the PCs need to build a reputation. In this adventure, that's built by earning acclaim.

During an arena match, each time a PC lands a critical hit, the party gains 1 acclaim. Each time an opponent lands a critical hit on a PC, the party loses 1 acclaim. At the end of a match, the party earns 1 acclaim for each PC that is still standing with 1 or more hp.

## PERFORMANCE COMBAT

PCs can also earn 1 acclaim for performing flashy maneuvers in the arena. When any PC uses the Attack action, as a bonus action they can make a Performance check with a DC equal to the AC of their opponent, using their choice of Strength, Dexterity, or Charisma. On a success, they don't add their Strength or Dexterity modifier to the damage they deal, but they gain 1 acclaim for the flashy move.

## EFFECTS OF ACCLAIM

As the party gains acclaim, they find their interactions with residents of Tangleside becomes easier. Use the Acclaim Benefits table to determine what kind of treatment the PCs can expect in the village.

After each bout, fans of the gladiators gain access to them by bribing the guards. The PCs can make requests of their fans by making Charisma (Persuasion) checks with a base DC of 25 minus the party's Acclaim score.

## TERROR DOME NOTABLES

Over the course of the adventure, the PCs have chances to get to know their fellow prisoners.

**Hirschel and Nadia.** Hirschel Espolmar and his companion, Nadia, both human **nobles**, were captured by raiders while fleeing a partially collapsed iron mine located inside the Wastes. Both of the young humans are filthy and unkempt, and they both smell of sweat, mud, iron, and something unpleasant. They sweat profusely, regardless of the temperature. Clear mucus leaks from Hirschel's pores while he is at rest.



Hirschel doesn't answer questions except to grunt or complain. Nadia tells the PCs:

- Hirschel is the only son of Markos Espolmar, a nobleman from a nearby town. She's certain his father will pay handsomely for their safe return.
- They were taken prisoner by raiders as they fled a partially collapsed mine in the Wastes. The raiders brought them to Tangleside.

If Nadia's questioner succeeds on a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check, she also divulges:

- She and Hirschel contracted an illness while delving a mine somewhere in the Wastes. She's too disoriented from her captivity to point the PCs toward the mine. If pressed, she states that the mine felt evil and that they encountered something that spoke directly into their minds.
- Since escaping the mine, Hirschel suffers from spells of dizziness that render him immobile for about an hour at a time.

A PC who examines Hirschel or Nadia and makes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (Arcana) check learns that their organs are shifting positions in preparation for a metamorphosis. On Hirschel's torso and back, beneath his clothing, overlapping chitinous plates are forming over his skin.

**Development.** If Hirschel is stressed in any way, such as being forced to move from his cell to the arena, he must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or transform into a **chuul** in a gory spray of blood and viscera. Creatures that witness the transformation must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature is stunned for 1d6 rounds, while on a successful save a creature is frightened for 1d6 rounds. A creature affected by the display can make a new saving throw at the end of each of its turns, overcoming the effect on a success. On each of its turns, the chuul attacks the closest living creature to it.

If a PC or Nadia realizes Hirschel is getting upset, they can make a DC 14 Charisma (Deception) or (Persuasion) check to give him advantage on his saving throw.

If one of the nobles transforms while the other is within thirty feet of them, the untransformed noble must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or undergo a similar metamorphosis in 1d4 rounds.

Nadia can be cured of her affliction with a *lesser restoration* or *remove curse* spell. Due to the progressed nature of Hirschel's affliction, only a *remove curse* spell can cure him.

**Tonja Throatcrusher.** Tonja has become the champion of the Terror Dome by being faster, stronger, and meaner than her opposition. She is initially indifferent to the PCs, but as their acclaim grows, so does her interest in them. Tonja is a **gladiator** with 143 hp and 18 AC (plate armor).

Tonja's primary motivation is to fulfill her oath to kill the Overlord, Karvos Deathstealer, and liberate Tangleside. She rarely cares what others are up to, as long as it doesn't negatively affect her or her interests. Tonja doesn't believe in forgiveness. If she is made into an enemy, there is no way back into her good graces.

**Development.** Once the PCs have proven themselves in the arena by gaining 14 acclaim, Tonja suggests they work together to remove Deathstealer and take over the settlement, unless one or more of the PCs have made an enemy of her.

**Calixtra Lirene.** This plain-faced NE female elf **assassin** is a relative newcomer to the arena. Despite quickly amassing a number of wins, she is unpopular with the crowds. Her staunchest critics call her bouts boring and overly methodical. Calixtra is one of the few gladiators that is initially friendly to the PCs.

Unbeknownst to anyone other than herself and the Overlord, Calixtra was placed here to murder Tonja Throatcrusher. Calixtra has no need to perform the hit herself and lies to the PCs about the threat Tonja poses to any gladiators who threaten to eclipse her popularity.

**Development.** Calixtra constantly assesses everyone around her. If she feels her goals align with the party's, she offers each of them 1,000 gp to assist her in killing Tonja and "removing the threat to the other gladiators."

**Parson.** This grizzled N male **duergar** schedules all the events in the Terror Dome. He cares little for the gladiators and has as little to do with them as possible. Parson likes being flattered though. If a character succeeds on a Charisma (Deception) or (Persuasion) check contested by his Wisdom check, he tells them what their next bout will be. In addition to his scheduling duties, Parson can act as an intermediary between the PCs and the Overlord.

## STADIUM BATTLES

The PCs will fight in the Terror Dome several times over the course of the adventure. The matches detailed below are numbered, but they can be run in any order, and you needn't run them all. The matches

are all spaced at least a day apart which allows PCs to be at or close to full strength for each. As a result, they are intended to be very challenging.

### SECOND BOUT: THIN AIR

Your second trip into the arena is less jarring than the first. The crowd is quieter, as though you proved yourselves as serious contenders in the previous bout. You expect that your competitors will follow you in after a short time, but to your surprise, the gates are closed and the Overlord orders the fight to start while you are the only beings present.

Mobility in the arena is normal, and the dust covering the floor puffs up a little with each footstep. A pair of **invisible stalkers** prowls the arena, moving in to strike and then darting away again, waiting for the PCs to lose their patience. The invisible stalkers focus on dispatching one target at a time. PCs with passive Wisdom (Perception) scores of 20 or higher can locate the invisible stalkers by the small eddies of dust they kick up as they move.

### THIRD BOUT: PRIMORDIAL

There is a palpable excitement in the air when you enter the arena. Everything feels as though it is electrified. While you wait for your opponent, the ground trembles beneath your feet. You hear the sound of bleating, as though the world's largest goat is nearby. When the house-sized lizard with a maw full of six-inch teeth follows the very standard-sized goat into the arena, a trio of stadium-goers unfurls a sign and holds it above their heads. Painted on cloth are the words, "T-REX EATS ALL!"

A dozen wooden half-walls ranging from 5 to 15 feet long have been erected in random locations across the floor of the Terror Dome. They don't affect the **tyrannosaurus rex's** movement, but they provide half-cover to a Medium creature and three-quarters cover to a Small or Tiny creature standing within 5 feet of one.

The dinosaur is an unsubtle opponent: On each of its turns, it tries to bite one PC and hit a second with its tail.

On the third round of the match, the arena gates open again and on the fourth round, a **triceratops** is prodded into the arena before the gates quickly close

behind it. On their turns, the dinosaurs each make at least one attack against the creature that hit it most recently. If that proves to be impossible, each one targets the closest enemy to it.

**Development.** If the tyrannosaurus makes a bite attack and rolls a 1 on the d20, it plucks the centermost person of the trio holding the sign in the stands from their seat and swallows them.

### FOURTH BOUT: HUNTER/KILLER

Four rickety scaffolds sway perilously in the arena, allowing anyone who climbs them to be at eye level with the people in the stands. Standing in front of each scaffold is a metal and glass statue of a humanoid figure with a blue light glowing on its chest. As the gate closes, a searing blue baton appears in the right hand of each statue.

This bout pits the PCs against four **warden robots** (see *Wastes of Chaos*). The robots are tireless and implacable foes that methodically focus on one target until it is neutralized before moving on to a new target. Every time a robot ends its turn on one of the scaffolds, there is a 25 percent chance that the scaffold collapses under its weight.

The scaffolds have AC 15 and 27 hp. Reducing one to 0 hp causes it to collapse. A creature standing within 5 feet of a collapsing scaffold must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage.

## Concluding the Adventure

Once the party has earned a total of 14 acclaim, they can leave Tangleside. If they also pay Parson 2,000 gp, they can take Hirschel and Nadia with them. If the party has earned 20 acclaim, the Overlord lets them take the prisoners without any additional payment, happy to see a potential threat disappear.

After Hirschel and Nadia are returned home, or if that is impossible because they transformed into chuuls, the party might wish to return to Tangleside to assist Tonja Throatcrusher in liberating the settlement from the Overlord. Alternately, they might think it more important to seek out the Espolmar Mine to investigate the cause of Hirschel and Nadia's ailment.



# The Crystalline Sepulcher

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 7TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

A tower once stood alone on a small island in the middle of a great lake. Its master used the remote location to conduct dangerous arcane experiments on magical items. When the mage wars decimated the land, the spellcaster abandoned the tower and fled, never to be heard from again.

The tower itself remained standing at the war's conclusion, and the lake remained strangely unaffected by the corruption that created the Wastes. Creatures vied for the resources provided by the lake's clear waters, but a group of nomadic humans eventually established a small town at the lake's edge, an oasis amid the devastated land. The tower remained a ruined curiosity until a mated pair of green dragons established their nest there. The dragons began to collect treasure for their horde, unaware that the ambient chaotic magic in the area altered the magical items that they acquired.

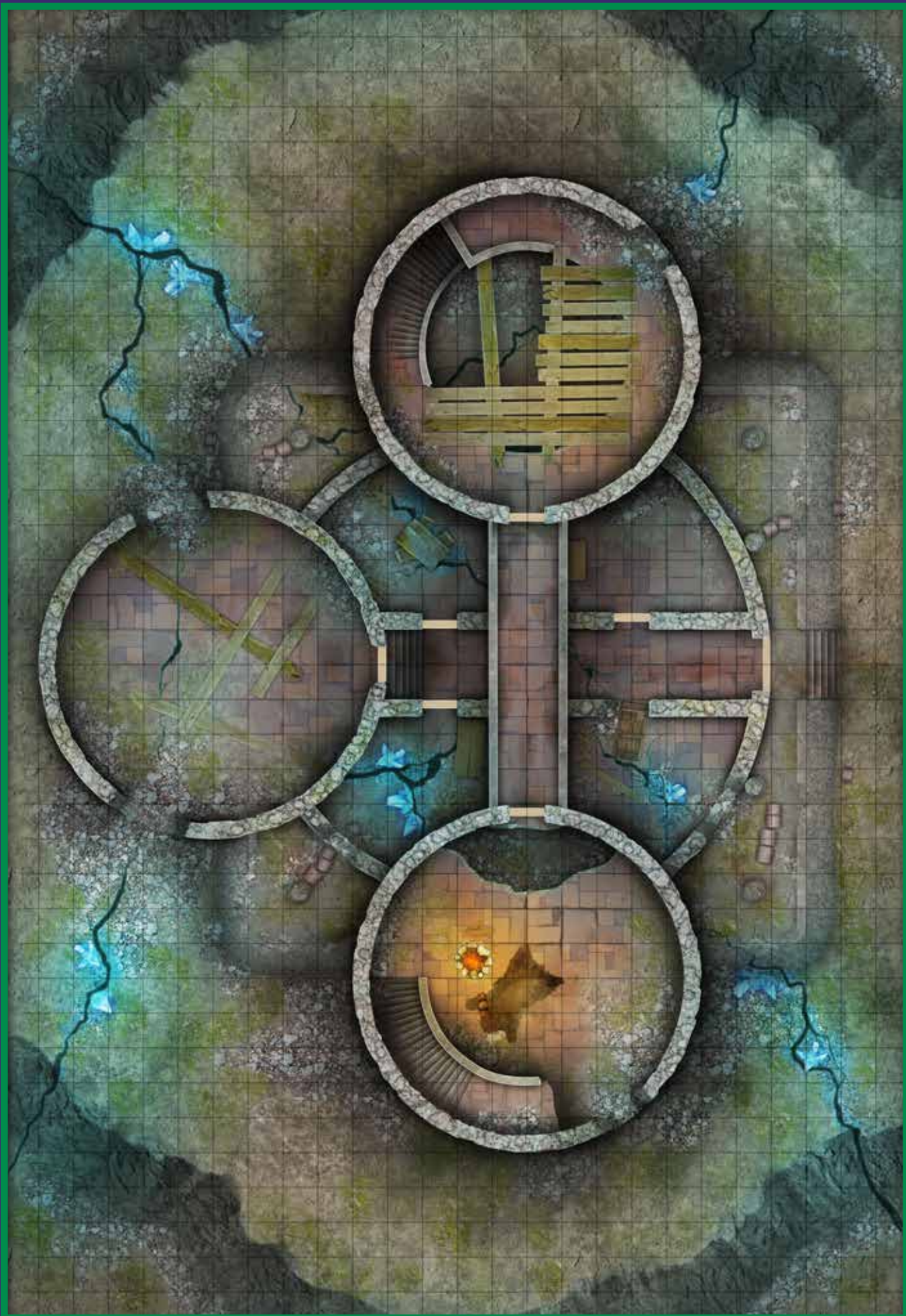
The dragons convinced the cowardly town council to provide them with one of the town's treasures as tribute, a *decanter of endless water*, in exchange for leaving the town unharmed. The heroes of the town were incensed by the council's behavior. They immediately set out to slay the dragons and retrieve their treasure. They killed one dragons by surprising him while his mate was away. The female dragon returned as the heroes were preparing to leave with

the *decanter*. She drove off the heroes and recovered the item but was badly wounded in battle.

In her pain and rage, she began to poison the lake with the *decanter*, which had been altered to produce poisonous salt water. Then she sacrificed herself to invoke her most destructive artifact. The magic ravaged the land with earthquakes, destroyed much of the town, and sunk the tower under the waters in a gaping sinkhole.

The *decanter of endless water* continued to spew poisonous water from the tower at the bottom of the lake. The lake slowly became brackish and spoiled, and vicious creatures appeared within. A coven of hags dominated the area, their servants attacking the town and kidnapping people from the land surrounding the lake. The townsfolk determined that the force corrupting the waters was in the sunken tower, but due to the danger posed by the coven and their servants, they resumed their nomadic lifestyle. The town was lost.

The chaotic magic of the mage wars altered another item that was part of the dragon's horde, a sentient *Ioun stone of insight*. The stone considered the dragons its friends and was devastated by their deaths. The stone began spreading, creeping over the walls of the tower while it lay underwater, ultimately covering and sealing the tower with its crystalline structure to honor the dragons as their mausoleum.





Several months ago, an earthquake caused the lake to rapidly recede. While the lake is not entirely gone, a large portion is now a swampy mass covered in dead fish and other creatures, and the fissure containing the tower itself has been exposed. The crystal had been largely impenetrable while the tower was underwater, but the sudden exposure has made it brittle. Portions have broken off to open the tower to the outside world once again.

The nomads and hag coven both know that the source of corruption is in the tower. Each seeks the source for their own ends; the nomads wish to retrieve the lost *decanter* and stop the corruption if possible, while the hags wish to restore the poisoned lake. The coven has sent one of their own, a sea hag named Mabel Muckreaver Mudleaf, to lead a group of servants to the tower to retrieve the corruption's source. The nomads seek heroes.

## Adventure Hooks

- The nomadic people seek the party's assistance. They are one of the few relatively safe groups in the Wastes; they seek to stop the corruption and if possible, retrieve the *decanter of endless water* their legends tell was stolen from their ancestors. Such an item is incredibly valuable in the Wastes, and the nomads will part with much of their material wealth to retrieve it. They offer a *ring of evasion* to the party, as well as offering one uncommon magic weapon each upon the group's successful return.
- Travelers in the Wastes can report on the lake's disappearance and note that the area is likely to have treasure.
- A good-aligned organization, such as a party member's church, wishes to investigate the corruption and stop the malevolent hags.

### THE APPROACH

The miasma of dead lake creatures hangs oppressively in the air. Shallow pools of swampy water filled with dying plants make up much of the approach to the tower. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check gets the group to the tower quickly. A failed check adds a day to the travel time and may result in a random encounter using the tables in *Wastes of Chaos*. Drinking any of the water found in the area without

using magic such as *purify food and drink* causes the imbiber to have the Poisoned condition until after their next long rest.

A soft blue glow illuminates an indistinct area in the distance.

As you approach, you see the glow is emitting from a large crevice in the ground. Coming nearer, you see the top of the tower barely visible, the bulk of it recessed in a large sinkhole. A blue crystalline substance covers portions of the tower, causing the eerie glow. Broken columns, collapsed walls, and brackish pools of stagnant water surround the pit. The waters of the pools ripple on occasion, despite the air's stillness. Giving at least some credence to the nomads' tales, the skeleton of a large dragon lies half submerged in one of the pools just to the southwest of the pit. The blue crystals that cover the tower also appear to have grown over the skeleton.

A **mire fiend** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) servant of the hags has temporarily made a home in the dragon skeleton pool, guarding the approach to the tower. It attacks as soon as it perceives creatures that it can feed upon.

The tower sits inside a massive sinkhole. The bottom of the pit appears to be covered in water, and from the surface, it is impossible to determine how much of the tower lies underwater. Three spires are open to the air, their ceilings collapsed long ago. The front of the tower to the southeast is largely blocked by rubble, and the staircase that once led to the north tower has collapsed.

PCs can attempt to descend to any of the three portions of the structure that remain, although the only direct path to the tower that does not require crossing open air is from the edge of the hole sliding down into the southwest spire. A PC who attempts to slide down the slope must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to land standing; otherwise they fall prone.

Alternatively, a rickety board leads down from the edge of the pit to the top of the stairwell. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to descend safely. If that check fails, the character falls down the stairs, takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage, and lands prone.

### THE CRYSTAL OF THE TOWER

The growth of the blue crystal covering the tower is the product of chaos magic affecting the dragons' *loun stone of insight*, causing it to spread over the structure like barnacles on a reef. The draining of the water has not affected the stone other than making it more brittle, and it finds the land creatures that have begun to enter the tower curious. The stone is aware of everything occurring in areas where it grows, and sections can move to a limited degree. It can also raise and lower the intensity of its light from dim to bright light.

The crystalline entity attempts to communicate with anyone who enters the tower. A successful DC 20

Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check notices that the crystals covering the walls seem to pulse after people speak near them. The crystal's attempts to communicate with the sea hags' creatures were unnoticed, and their attempts to dig through sections of the tower have made them its enemy.

If the party attempts to communicate with the crystal, it can respond to simple yes or no questions by pulsing. It is happy to be recognized and brightens any room the party enters to bright light unless they say otherwise. It is aware of all of the creatures in the tower. If the PCs intentionally damage the crystal, it leaves the areas the PCs enter dark.





## THE TOWER

### SOUTHWEST SPIRE

Broken stone litters the floor of this room. The rubble and large holes in the floor make the ground difficult to traverse. The stairwell that once led to the roof of the tower now leads to nowhere as the ceiling collapsed long ago. Blue crystalline veins line the walls of this room, their azure glow pulses rapidly.

The rocky slope that leads to this area can be climbed out of with a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. The floor in this room is difficult terrain.

Two **slitherjacks** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), servants of the coven, are in this room, attracted to the ambient magic. Their magic-draining abilities make the crystal uncomfortable. It pulses wildly when other creatures enter the room unaware of the slitherjacks, attempting to capture the new creatures' attention. The slitherjacks are resting under the stairwell when the PCs enter, but move to attack if someone lands prone in the room or when the group attempts to access the eastern door. Due to the crystal's actions, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check spots them from the ground before they attack.

A gaping hole 40 feet deep blocks easy access to the eastern door. The PCs can use whatever means they have available to reach the door; they may climb down one side of the pit and back up another or make use of the planks and fallen wood to make a makeshift bridge. A character that falls into the hole takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage. The pit is filled with rubble and has no exits other than climbing back out.

If the group entered here, the crystal attempts to communicate once the slitherjacks are defeated, or if they discuss the strange light effects that occurred when they first entered.

The eastern door leads to a bridge to the southeast spire.

### SOUTHEAST SPIRE

The floor of this room has entirely fallen, leaving just the stairwell standing along the room's edge. The intact stairwell leads to a door to the northeast below and continues further down to the ground floor. While the air has been still in other parts of the tower, you feel a slight wind in this room.

The hag coven has bound an **air elemental** to their service. Mabel set the creature to guard the room. The elemental is inattentive but attacks if the PCs make any noise. A successful DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check from the group allows them to pass quietly.

Noise from combat alerts Mabel that intruders are in the area. Once the elemental has lost three quarters of its hit points, it attempts to flee. PCs that fall or are thrown off the stairwell during combat take 4d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall but can exit through the door to the northeast room.

The door at the middle level of the stairwell leads to a small room in the northeast section of the tower. A doorway to the north of that room leads to the northern spire, and the stairway itself continues down to the ground level of the base of the tower below the three spires.

### NORTHERN SPIRE

The floor of this spire is littered with rocky, wooden debris. Gaping holes in the walls are filled with fallen rocks spilling into the room. Three skeletal wyrmlings lounge on the rocks to the southwest, bones visible through holes in their preserved, twisted flesh. They rise to attack when you enter the room.

**Creatures.** For the three **skeletal wyrmlings**, use statistics for **green dragon wyrmling** with the following changes: Remove the amphibious trait and change their type from Dragon to Undead.

If the PCs leave the northern spire, the creatures do not follow.

Much of the dragons' treasure had once been in this room. Approximately 100 gp still lay scattered about, but the rest was lost to looting and the tower's sinking.

The crystal feels protective of the wyrmlings. If the party destroys them, the light flashes brightly and rapidly. A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the crystal was upset by their action. The party

must succeed on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) or Intelligence (Religion) check to convince the crystal that their actions were what was best for the creatures.

### THE GROUND LEVEL

The stairwell from the southeast tower continues down to the lower level of the tower.

Dark, murky water covers the floor of this large room, requiring those who walk on the ground to slosh through the area. The walls are covered with thick, blue crystal that casts dim light throughout. A fifteen-foot diameter rocky outcropping of rubble sits elevated above the water along the eastern wall of the tower. Shards of blue crystal litter the floor by the outcropping, remnants from a hole gouged at that location where water slowly seeps through. A humanoid woman dressed in a damp cloak points accusingly at you, her face concealed by the hood. "This is my home! Leave!" she exclaims in a raspy voice.

The water is only a few inches deep, but it hides the uneven ground and a deeper hole by the rocky outcropping. PCs that move more than their speed in a round, such as by taking the Dash action, must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone.

**Creatures.** The **sea hag** Mabel is disguised by her Illusory Appearance ability when the group arrives. She has quaffed a *potion of hill giant strength* if she was alerted by combat with the air elemental, increasing her claw attack and damage by 2. A 20-foot-diameter, 20-foot-deep pit is hidden beneath the dark water just in front of the outcropping. A **chuul** servant of the hag lies in wait at the bottom of the pool. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the water is deeper in that area, and a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the creature.

If the group attempts to parlay with the sea hag, she beckons them to join her on the outcropping, with the lie that she will explain what she is looking for, but actually in hopes that they fall into the pit. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that she plans to attack the PCs. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check causes the hag to panic and call for her chuul servant to attack as she dives into the pool in front of the outcropping. She emerges once the party is engaged.

If any PC falls in the watery pit, the hag drops her illusion to expose the group to her horrific appearance and orders the chuul to attack.

**Treasure.** The *decanter of endless water* is embedded behind the crystal wall. If the party has successfully communicated with the tower, the crystal parts to reveal the *decanter* once the sea hag has been defeated. Three successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) checks will break through the wall to reveal the *decanter*, or dealing 75 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage to the wall. If the party has not cleared the Southeast Spire, the noise alerts the **air elemental**, which comes to stop the noise's source in 3 rounds. It attacks the PCs when it finds them. The *decanter of endless water* can produce fresh water as normal, but the salt water it produces causes the poisoned condition for one day to any who ingest it.

If the party defeats Mabel, they find the *potion of hill giant strength* on her if she did not use it before combat and discover that an amulet she is wearing is a hag eye. The others of her coven have seen everything that occurred and may act against the PCs in the future.

## Concluding the Adventure

If the party successfully communicated with the blue crystalline entity and either did not slay the undead wyrmlings or convinced the crystal that their actions were just, the crystal desires to travel with them, functioning as an *Ioun stone of insight* to whomever attunes to it. Whether the *Ioun stone* can continue to communicate is left to your discretion.

If the party took a long rest in the tower or its surroundings, or if you feel they need an additional challenge, they are ambushed by a pair of **vile looters** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) looking for treasure during their journey back to the nomads.

The nomads hold a feast for the group when they return the *decanter*, and provide the agreed-upon rewards. If the party keeps the *decanter* and the nomads discover this fact, they view the PCs as enemies and do not share hospitality with the PCs again.



# The Great Portal Hunt

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 7TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

For decades the maze has been under the dominion of the fearsome wasteland dragon Everstrife. The dragon terrorizes any adventurer intent on exploring the ruins and its mysterious portals. However, Everstrife has recently vanished. Many believe that the dragon was slain in battle with another creature of the Wastes or driven out of his lair.

With the dragon gone, explorers have seized the chance to investigate the dragon's lair. Several parties are preparing expeditions into the Wastes. The most notable of these is Verazel, an elven historian and wizard interested in the magical portals that the Conclave's dragonborn mages used to travel throughout the realms.

## Adventure Hooks

The PCs are hired by Verazel (LN **mage**) to explore the Maze Caverns of the Wasteland Drake (see *Wastes of Chaos*) and catalogue the magical portals and their destinations. Verazel provides the PCs with two weeks' worth of water, rations, and other essential gear up to 100 gp. He promises to pay 1,000 gp for the PCs' help, as long as they provide valuable information about the portals and their destinations. He tells them they are free to keep anything they find, but wants first look at purchasing any historical artifacts they find along the way for a reasonable price.

If you wish to use a different method for drawing the PCs into the maze, consider:

- **Dragon Hunting.** The PCs are hired by a local lord to provide proof of Everstrife's demise. The details are much the same as above, but the PCs are only paid the total amount upon confirmation of the dragon's death.
- **Ancestral Calling.** If one of the PCs is a wasteland dragonborn (see *Wastes of Chaos*), they receive a dream of something important hidden within a statue in the maze. The statue belongs to one of the dragonborn's ancient forebears.

## GETTING TO THE MAZE

The path leading up to the Maze Caverns of the Wasteland Drake is detailed in *Wastes of Chaos* and is free of hazards or traps. However, creatures approached the caverns in greater numbers since Everstrife's disappearance. Roll 1d4. On a 1, a random encounter occurs while the PCs explore the maze and/or canyon leading up to it. Roll on the Random Encounters table to determine what it is.

## MAGIC PORTALS AND CHAOS SURGES

The entry on the Maze Caverns of the Wasteland Drake in Chapter 4 of *Wastes of Chaos* provides extensive details on the magical portals and the chaos surges that occur because of them. When the PCs enter the area, the portals are undergoing a period of rapid deterioration, increasing the likelihood of a





## RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

### d8 Encounter

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1-2 | 2d6 treasure hunters (use statistics for <b>scout</b> ) led by a <b>veteran</b> looking to loot the dragon's hoard. They are not immediately hostile, their priority is accumulating wealth rather than engaging in battle. |
| 3-4 | 2d6 <b>bandits</b> led by a <b>bandit captain</b> . They have the same goal as the treasure hunters above but are more likely to attack. They flee once half their numbers are killed.                                      |
| 5   | Loose rocks tumble from the canyon walls. Each PC must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage from the falling rocks. Reroll this result if the PCs are inside the maze.              |
| 6   | 1d4 <b>manticores</b> looking for an easy meal.   |
| 7   | 2d4 <b>chaos goblins</b> (see <i>Wastes of Chaos</i> ).   |
| 8   | 1d4 <b>ogres</b> led by an <b>oni</b> seeking a new lair.   |

chaos surge to a roll of 1-2 on a d10. This also includes possible additional effects in each portal's description (see below).

If a PC examines a portal and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check, it becomes clear that some outside force is causing the portal to behave erratically.

### 1. OSCILLATING PORTAL

A portal of shimmering violet light is suspended in the center of this roughly hewn passageway. The portal shudders and jerks violently, sinking partially into the ground one second before shooting back into the air the next.

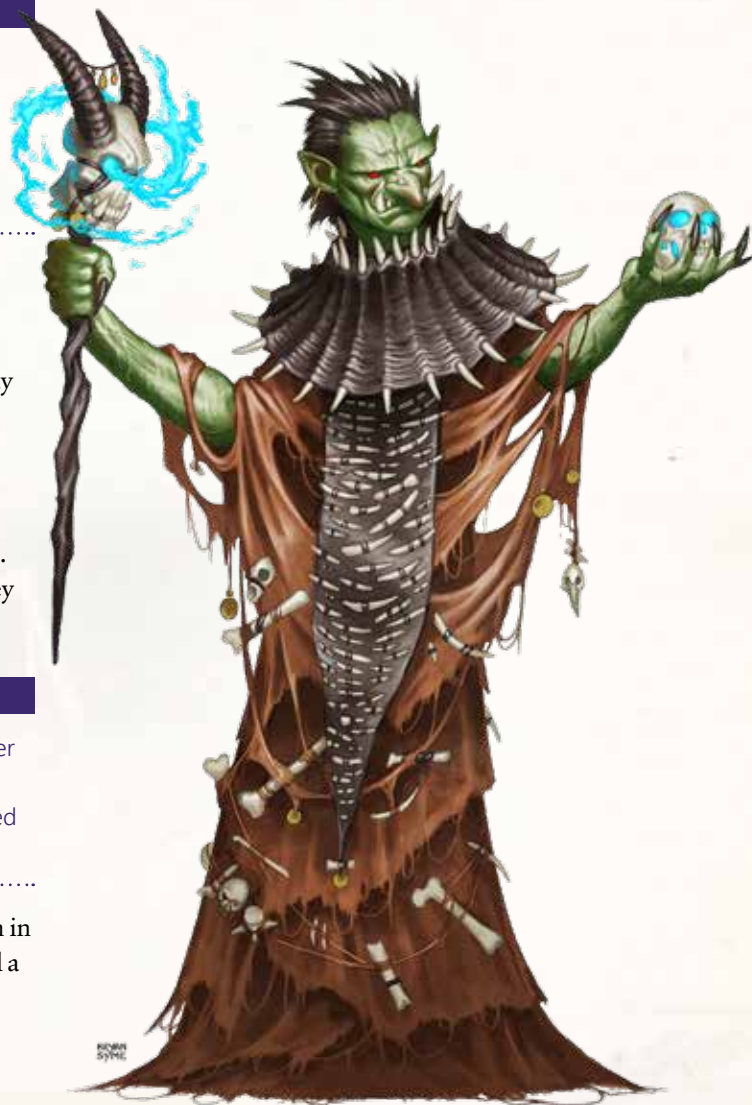
The constant movement of this portal makes it extremely dangerous to use. A PC using the portal must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the PC catches part of their body in the portal, taking 14 (4d6) slashing damage and falling prone as it merges with the ground or jerks swiftly into the air. If a PC is reduced to 0 hit points while attempting to pass through the portal, one of their extremities (such as an arm or a leg) is severed. If a PC succeeds in traveling through the portal, they instantly arrive in Area 8.

### 2. PORTAL OF BLOOD

A portal strobes with bright crimson light in this corner of the cavern. Next to the portal is a cracked marble column of impressive size, beside which has been piled several thoroughly gnawed bones.

This portal remains unchanged from its description in *Wastes of Chaos*. PCs stepping through the portal feel a brief rush of nausea before landing in Area 8.

**Creatures.** The pile of bones belongs to a **wasteland dragon troll** (see *Wastes of Chaos*, Chapter 4: Everstrife's Lair) that lurks in the area. Despite its lineage, the troll is not related to Everstrife. It has a tenuous relationship with the wasteland dragon, serving as a guard for the maze's eastern entrance in exchange for the right to freely hunt in the region. If



you want the PCs to have a more formidable challenge, you can replace this creature with a **chaos troll** or a **necromancer troll** (for both, see *Wastes of Chaos*).

The wasteland dragon troll is aware that Everstrife is no longer in the maze and knows that it is being watched by something dangerous lurking in the shadows. Depending on the PCs' actions, the wasteland dragon troll may not be immediately hostile. However, its evil nature makes it an untrustworthy ally.

**Treasure.** If the PCs search the bones at the base of the column and succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they find a *ring of swimming* on a half-chewed human hand.

### 3. DEAD PORTAL

Wisps of greenish mist swirl rhythmically about a tiny pinprick of emerald light in the center of this cavernous area. To the west, a massive fallen pillar rests on its side, its base still attached to the cavern floor. To the east, the cap of a second shattered column lies on the ground.

The portal that once hung in this area has almost completely vanished, leaving behind a tiny aperture of glowing green light no bigger than one inch in diameter. The rest of the portal has leaked into the surrounding area, forming a swirling vortex of green mist roughly double the size of the original portal (taking up a radius of twenty feet).

**Mist.** The green mist that swirls through this area provides light obscurement. It also retains some of the original portal's power and radiates conjuration magic. If a PC enters the mist, this lingering power manifests in a flash of green light, and the PC is teleported into an unoccupied space adjacent to the aperture (see below). A PC can resist this involuntary movement by succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, but they must repeat the saving throw should they start their turn in the mist's radius. A successful *dispel magic* (DC 16) cast on the mist causes it to vanish in a puff of emerald light.

**Aperture.** The hole in the center of the mist has become a deadly hazard for any creature moving next to it or touching it, functioning like a powerful vacuum. Should a PC end their turn adjacent to the hole or willingly touch it, they must immediately succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or become stuck to it.

If a PC is stuck to the portal, their speed is reduced to 0, and they are restrained. When this happens,

other PCs become immune to the aperture's powerful suctioning force and can move freely. Once a PC becomes stuck to the aperture, they must succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw at the beginning of their turn to pull themselves free. If the PC fails this check, the aperture begins sucking them through, dealing 9 (2d8) bludgeoning damage. If a PC is slain by the portal, their body is transformed into a string of fine mince as it is transported to Area 8. Any nonmagical items or equipment they have on them are completely destroyed. Should a PC suffer this gruesome fate, only a spell such as *resurrection* can bring them back to life.

**Complications.** If the PCs have not dealt with the half-wasteland dragon troll in Area 2, it has a chance of hearing any commotion here and comes to investigate. However, the creature is aware of the aperture's deadly power, having almost succumbed to it once already. As a result, it stays outside the mist's radius, and only attacks those attempting to leave its confines.

### 4. BLUE PORTAL

A shimmering portal of blue light takes up most of this corridor. Its form wavers slightly as you watch.

This portal appears operational but only functions normally half of the time. Whenever a PC enters the portal, there is a 50% chance that they are transported 1d10 × 10 feet in a random direction rather than being teleported to Area 8. If this would cause the PC to land inside an object, they are shifted to the nearest unoccupied space, taking 3 (1d6) force damage for every 10 feet they are moved in this way.

### 5. DRAGONBORN STATUE

Standing against a wall of choked rubble is the once-regal statue of a robed humanoid with the head of a dragon. Its clawed hands hold a broken scepter and a winged diadem rests upon its head. The figure would have been a grand sight in the ruin's heyday, but age and damage have worn away at its refined features.

This statue is of Azirath Boldstaff, one of the most famous wizards involved in the foundation of the Conclave of Spellscapes. He was instrumental in creating these portals. A PC knows all this information with a successful DC 17 Intelligence (History) check.



If a PC scrutinizes the statue and succeeds on a DC 19 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they notice cracks near the statue's base that are too symmetrical to be natural. If the PCs trace the letters of Azirath's name in the cracks with a finger or other object, the entire statue shifts to the side with a low rumble revealing a small lockbox constructed out of lead. The Conclave of Spellscapes symbol (a stylized maze) is etched on the lockbox's cover.

**Trapped Lockbox.** The lockbox is locked (but can be picked with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools) and trapped. If the PCs pick the lock or otherwise attempt to open the lockbox without first disarming the trap, it glows white hot and unleashes a wave of scathing heat in a 15-foot radius. Creatures caught within this radius must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failed save or half as much on a success. This does not harm the lockbox, but it remains red hot for 1 minute, dealing 3 (1d6) fire damage to anyone holding it. A PC can identify the trap with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check and can destroy the trap by successfully casting *dispel magic* (DC 14 or a 4th level casting).

Inside the lockbox is a leather-bound tome written in Draconic. The tome contains detailed instructions on creating magical color-coded gates, allowing instantaneous transmission between two points. The tome also details the dangers of such gates should they be damaged, discussing the possibility of drawing creatures from other realities through them. This tome is worth upward of 500 gp to the right buyer, and Verazel would be happy to take it off the PCs' hands.

## 6. BATTLEGROUND

The ruined shell of a once-magnificent building sits in this space. Its marbled walls are covered in dust and long, winding cracks. Its roof has collapsed in several places. The sounds of combat can clearly be heard echoing from within the structure.

**Creatures.** This ruined building hosts Everstrife's followers. When Everstrife vanished, the leader of the kobolds, **Iphix** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), went in search of his master with most of his troops, leaving behind a small number of kobolds to watch over the maze.

Currently, eight kobold **scouts** (each armed with a shortbow) are in the building defending it from a group of six orc **berserkers** who are raiding the maze

caverns for loot. The kobolds are clearly outmatched and will be slaughtered without help from the PCs. As soon as the PCs appear, the berserkers turn their attention to them, seeing the PCs as more worthy prey. The kobolds take the opportunity to retreat into one of the smaller rooms.

If the PCs defeat the berserkers, the kobolds drop to their knees and beg the PCs to spare them in a mixture of broken Common and Draconic. The kobolds are afraid that Everstrife and Iphix are dead and that the maze has become too dangerous for them. They know that some creature is stalking the maze and tell the PCs that it has already killed a couple of them. If the PCs allow the kobolds to live, they flee the caverns for good.

## 7. RUG CHAMBER

In the center of this chamber is a luxurious rug depicting several metallic dragons in flight over a desert. The rug is covered in thick stone dust and scraps of rubble but seems otherwise unaffected by the ravages of time.

This large rug carries a mild enchantment to protect it from the elements. It is worth 300 gp if the PCs can transport it out of here (the rug weighs 70 pounds and is over 10 feet long). Beneath the rug is a stone trapdoor that the kobolds don't know exists. The trapdoor is protected by an *arcane lock* spell. It can be picked with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or forced open with a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Development.** No one has opened the trapdoor in centuries. What the PCs find there is beyond the scope of this adventure, but Verazel would be very interested in investigating it.

## 8. TOPPLED PILLAR

An enormous column has fallen across this part of the cavern. The column is covered in intricate bas-reliefs and deep scratches as if from something with giant clawed feet.

This is where Everstrife would perch and watch the light show in Area 9. Since his disappearance, none of the inhabitants go near here.

## 9. PORTAL LIGHT SHOW

In the center of this cavern is a massive portal of glowing golden-yellow light surrounded by four smaller portals of different colors, sending waves of light coruscating off the nearby sandstone walls.

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As described in **Chapter 4** of *Wastes of Chaos*, these portals were used by the Conclave of Spellscapes to travel freely throughout the Wastes. Only the central portal still serves this function, though it has been corrupted by the maze's new inhabitant. It now has a 1 in 6 chance of transporting a creature to one of the lower planes rather than the locations listed in Chapter 4. This lower plane could be the Abyss or The Eleven Hells if you use the Midgard setting. The other portals are detailed below.

**Violet Portal.** This side of the portal appears normal. Unfortunately, anyone passing through it has a 1 in 4 chance of appearing on the other side where the portal is merged with the ground, taking 14 (4d6) force damage and being shunted into an adjacent unoccupied space (either back through the portal or out the other end).

**Red Portal.** This side of the portal functions normally. Anyone stepping through this portal is instantly teleported to Area 2.

**Green Portal.** This portal pulsates rapidly, constantly retracting a couple of feet in diameter before returning to its original size. Anyone attempting to access the portal from this side takes 14 (4d6) force damage and is pushed back 10 feet and knocked prone.

**Blue portal.** This side of the portal has a 50% chance of teleporting anyone stepping through it 1d10 × 10 feet in a random direction (see Area 4 for details).

**Creatures.** Shortly after Everstrife's disappearance, a powerful, deadly aberration known as a **dimensional shambler** (see *Tome of Beasts 2* or use **bone devil**, with the changes noted below) arrived through the central portal from the lower planes. The creature's other-dimensional nature somehow affects the stability of the portals. They are slowly being eroded and destroyed by its presence. The dimensional shambler has been happy to hunt the kobolds (and other creatures in the maze) and is pleased with the recent influx of prey. As a result, the dimensional shambler is an ever-present threat here. It can harass or stalk the PCs at any time, hiding in the shadows and using its Step Between trait to make guerilla-style strikes against the PCs.

**Creature Change.** If you do not have access to *Tome of Beasts 2*, you can use a creature such as a **bone devil** instead. If you use a bone devil or similar creature to fulfil this role, give it the following additional ability:

**Step Between.** As a bonus action, the bone devil can magically shift from the Material Plane to any Lower Plane or vice versa. It can't bring along other creatures with it when it shifts in this way.

## 10. RUINED LIBRARY

This area remains unchanged from its description in *Wastes of Chaos*. Despite Everstrife's disappearance, his treasure hoard is untouched.

## Concluding the Adventure

The adventure ends when the PCs defeat or drive off the dimensional shambler and catalogue the portals and their effects for Verazel.

Everstrife's fate has been left vague so that the dragon can be introduced at a later date during the adventure if the PCs are having too easy a time of it or need help in defeating the dimensional shambler. Everstrife is an arrogant and avaricious **young wasteland dragon** (see *Creature Codex* or use **young blue dragon**).





# Dead and Buried

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 8TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

When the dread walker Vh'al Zhubbuth appeared, some fled, some fought, and others turned to despair. Among the latter, a cult arose called the Children of Tomorrow's Dream, who sought the otherworldly entity's favor. They built a temple above a treasure vault with a grand offering, *the horizon glass of the aberrant sextant* (see *Wastes of Chaos* for details).

Despite the gruesome sacrifices, Vh'al Zhubbuth paid the cult no attention. The land was devastated in the battle between Vh'al Zhubbuth and Nygethuaac the Dread Colossus, and the temple sank into the mud of the marsh, lost in a ruined land.

## Adventure Hooks

These hooks can tie the lost temple to your campaign:

- Tentacle crabs have an uncanny attraction to magical sites and items, and they've been seen heading into the marshes. The crabs have felt the draw of the *horizon glass*. Anyone who follows them can find their way to the temple of the Children of Tomorrow's Dream. However, dust goblins are known to follow tentacle crabs for the same reasons that anyone else follows them.

- A treasure hunter named Lietta has made the party's acquaintance. An experienced explorer of the haunted marsh, she has determined the location of the temple from recovered correspondence between a cultist and their estranged relatives. She needs a crew to make this haul. She promises the party a fair split of any valuables found, but she intends to take the *horizon glass* for herself.

## Arriving at the Temple

The section on Haunted Marshes in *Wastes of Chaos* provides information on creatures and hazards the party might encounter on their journey to the temple.

## An Island in the Muck

The muck and mire have risen to the level of the temple's roof, which now serves as an island of sorts.

The orange tentacles of three **tentacle crabs** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) rise out of the dark water like strange reeds. The crabs themselves remain submerged as they dig through the silt toward the buried front doors of the temple.

Four **mire fiends** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) have made camp on the roof and enjoy the easy hunting. They are eating a tentacle crab when the PCs arrive. The





mire fiends are initially indifferent to the PCs, but they jealously guard their crab feast. They become hostile without a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince the mire fiends that the PCs won't take their crabs. Mire fiends only speak Abyssal but attempts to communicate with them through other languages and gestures can be made with disadvantage.

A portion of the temple roof has collapsed and provides an entrance down to Area 7a.



### ROLEPLAYING LIETTA

Lietta is a CN human **vile looter** (see *Wastes of Chaos*). She wears an oilskin hooded capelet over her studded leather armor. A coiled whip hangs from her belt, and she has a dagger strapped to her thigh. Her skin is tanned and her clothes are stained from exploring the wastes. She is charismatic and likable, but self-serving and untrustworthy.

**Personality Trait.** My excitement for the next big score is infectious.

**Ideal.** Other people can be useful, but I'm the only person I truly look after.

**Bond.** I was separated from my family in the wastes as a teenager, and I use the gold I find to hire investigators to search for them.

**Flaw.** I don't think of the consequences of my actions when treasure is within my grasp.

## Into the Temple

The temple interior is in darkness. The walls are stone, and the doors are thick wood unless otherwise described. Alter the read-aloud text as necessary, depending on PCs' vision and light sources.

Open flames burn green from the swamp gas that accumulates in the temple. This effect is intensified in Areas 3 and 9. The radius of bright and dim light each increases by 5 feet in those areas.

The temple is damp inside but has been spared the worst effects of the swamp flooding.

Characters who enter the temple through the hole in the roof arrive at Area 7a.

### 1. VESTIBULE

The longer walls of this medium-sized room each have wooden doors set into them. One of the shorter sides has a set of double doors, and the opposite wall is dominated by an altar with an offering bowl and a crude idol atop it. It has a fell appearance.

The two smaller doors lead to Areas 2 and 4. They do not have locks. The lower corners have been chewed and widened by the warp rats that nest in Area 4.

The double doors open outward but are blocked by mud and water. See *Flooding the Temple* above for more information. A character who specifically inspects the doors or makes a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching the room notices the floor is particularly wet near them.

The idol depicts Vh'al Zhubbuth and can be recognized by a character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or (History) check. It has a vaguely humanoid shape and appears to be made from oozing green stone.

The idol is the top of a hidden lever that opens a secret door. If a weight of five pounds or more is put in the offering bowl, the idol can be pulled forward and the altar slides backward into Area 6. Normally it would stop there, but the floor has partially collapsed and the altar will fall into Area 9, alerting the creatures there.

If a creature touches the idol without any weight in the offering bowl, they must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If they fail the save by 5 or more, they are stunned until the start of their next turn and hold

## ECHO POSSESSION

d6	Secret	Compulsion
1	The cultist intended to escape and hid a <i>potion of gaseous form</i> behind a brick in the dormitory.	Drink the potion upon entering Area 3.
2	The hunter of the maze can be released or sent back to its alcove with the command phrase, "rot and renew."	Shout the phrase immediately, releasing the stone golem in Area 5.
3	The initiates are sent to die in the maze as sacrifices to the dread walker.	Refuse to enter Area 7.
4	The bodies of the dead were thrown into the vault with the treasure.	Refuse to enter Area 9.
5	There is a key hidden in plain sight in the maze that opens the door to the offering room.	Take the Dash or Search action to try and find the key in Area 7 if the hunter attacks.
6	The masters of the cult wait in the offering chamber to reward any who make it there. They demand submission.	Fall prone and bow before the wasteland priest in Area 8.

onto the idol, taking 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage as they fall with it into Area 9d. The idol has an aura of enchantment magic.

**Treasure.** The idol is worth 500 gp to a collector with an interest in cursed relics.

## 2. SERMON CHAMBER

Ashes smolder in braziers in three corners of this oddly shaped room, filling the air with orange smoke and a heady scent. You hear echoes of distant conversations.

This room originally served to prepare initiates and sacrificial victims. Who was who was determined

by who could navigate the maze in Area 7 and successfully reach Area 8.

The braziers were filled with incense that had a mild hypnotic effect. They continue to magically issue smoke despite the exhaustion of their fuel. The braziers and smoke have an aura of enchantment magic. The echoes are the voices of the restless spirits, repeating cult sermons.

Creatures in this room who breathe and can hear will inhale the smoke and hear the voices. In addition, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by an echo. Roll 1d6 and consult the Echo Possession table below, rerolling duplicates among the party.

## FLOODING THE TEMPLE

The front doors of the temple are below the water level, and mud and silt have piled up against them. It is virtually impossible for the characters to excavate the mud and open the doors against the water pressure without using machinery or magical means. However, the tentacle crabs are working on it.

This adventure uses abstracted time units to determine when the crabs finish digging and break through the doors. Each of these actions expends 1 time unit: exploring a numbered area of the temple, reading the journal in Area 3, or taking a short rest.

After 1d4 + 2 time units have passed (or at the time of your choosing), the tentacle crabs break through the doors. If the initial three crabs are killed before the party enters the temple, the process is delayed.

More tentacle crabs continue to arrive and resume digging, breaking through after 1d4 + 6 time units have passed.

Once the doors are breached, marsh water floods into the temple. The flood pushes the altar in Area 1 into Area 6 and then through the hole in the floor. It lands in Area 9d, and any creature there must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage, is knocked prone, and is restrained under the altar. A creature can free itself or another creature by using an action to make a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

The water level in Area 9 rises by 2 feet per round until it reaches the 18-foot-high ceiling. After that, the upper level floods at a rate of 1 foot per round.



Echo Possession conveys a secret immediately and compels the possessed character to perform an action when they arrive at a specified location. The possession lasts until the creature drops to 0 hit points, follows the compulsion, resists the compulsion, or is targeted by an effect like the *dispel evil and good* spell. A creature cannot be possessed more than once in 24 hours.

If the creature tries to resist the compulsion, they can use their reaction to make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw. On a success, they end the possession and do not need to follow it. On a failure, they must take the action or take 11 (2d10) necrotic damage.

**Treasure.** The three bronze braziers have lurid etchings of figures being consumed by masses of rotting plant matter. They are worth 250 gp each. The ashes continue smoking until they are removed from the braziers.

### 3. INTO THE MAZE

This small room has two doors. The longest wall once had shelving mounted on it, but the wood has rotted and collapsed, leaving a jumbled mess on the floor.

Cult initiates would leave their personal belongings on the shelves before entering the testing maze. A disorganized pile of them lies on the floor amidst the collapsed shelves.

Swamp gas collects in this room. Open flames burn a brighter shade of green and the air stings the eyes. Characters can search the clutter by making a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, but each time they do, anyone in the room for the duration of the search must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If they fail the save by 5 or more, they are poisoned for 10 minutes. The gas disperses if both doors are held open for 10 minutes, or if an effect like the *gust of wind* spell is used.

Characters who successfully search the clutter find the following: clothes, minor personal belongings, graffiti scratched into the wall (“the end is near, yet here I am,” “we offer all we have to Vh’al Zhubbuth,” “It is too late to turn back”), nihilistic prayer notes (“death to our critics and enemies, may they only live to see the world die tomorrow”), and a journal.

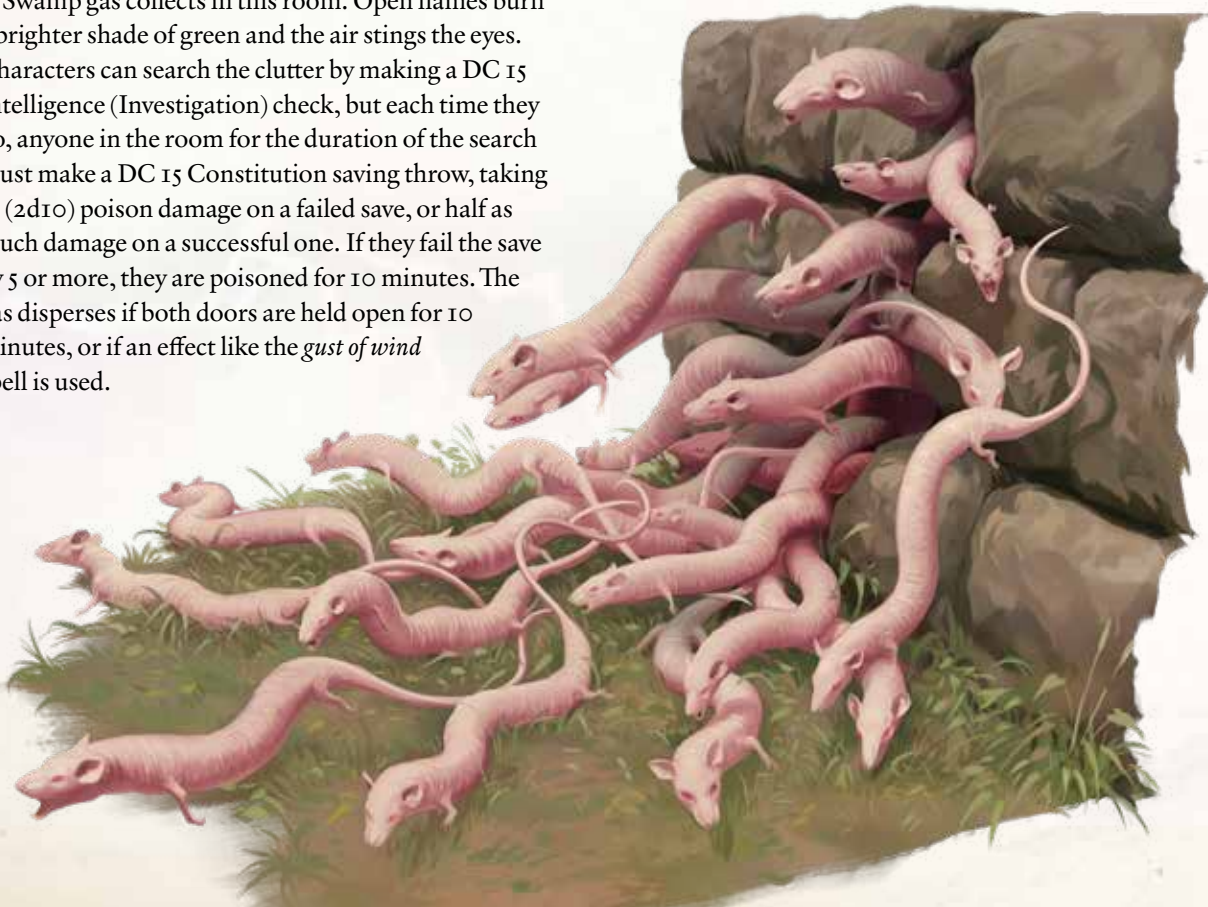
**Treasure.** The journal tells the story of how the unnamed author came to join the cult. Aimless and unappreciated, they fell in with the Children of Tomorrow’s Dream who intended to earn Vh’al Zhubbuth’s favor with an offering of treasure, including a fragment of a mighty artifact. Reading the journal takes 1 time unit for the purpose of tracking when the front doors are breached (see Flooding the Temple above).

### 4. DORMITORY

A dozen pallets with rough wool blankets are arrayed around the room. A black curtain covers part of one wall. The room smells of rodents and rot.

The curtain covers a portcullis that leads to Area 5. The portcullis can be unlatched from this side and opened with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Four **swarms of warp rats** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) hide in the pallets. They attack if disturbed and flee if reduced to half their hit points or fewer.



**Treasure.** A *potion of gaseous form* and 50 gp are hidden behind a loose brick. It can be found with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or automatically by a character who knows to look for it from the Echo Possession secret.

## 5. THE HUNTER

A blocky humanoid statue stands in a shallow nook. The wall across from it is crumbling and has fist-sized holes in it. The wall opposite the door has a portcullis set in it with a curtain covering the other side.

The crumbling wall leads to Area 6 and can be broken down (AC 17, 13 hit points), but doing so draws the attention of the creatures in Area 9.

The statue is a **stone golem** with the modifications listed below. It is decorated with etchings of ivy leaves. The golem remains still until it hears the phrase, “rot and rebirth.” Once activated, it patrols Area 7. It attempts to paralyze any Humanoids it finds and deposits their bodies at the door to Area 8. If it cannot paralyze them, it attacks to kill.

### STONE GOLEM MODIFICATIONS

The following replaces the stone golem’s Slow action:

**Paralyze (Recharge 5–6).** The golem targets one or more creatures it can see within 10 feet of it. Each target must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw against this magic. On a failed save, a target is paralyzed. This effect lasts for 1 hour.

The portcullis is latched in Area 4 and can only be opened without using magic from that side. If it is unlatched, it can be lifted with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or forced opened despite the latch with a successful DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check.



## 6. VIEWING CHAMBER

The center of the floor of this room has collapsed, revealing a mist-shrouded chamber below. Ornate goblets and ceramic jugs lie on the floor of one wall below a pair of arrow slits. Another wall is crumbling, and the adjoining room can be seen through the holes. Grooves in the remaining floor lead back to a third wall which has a fist-sized iron ring hanging from it.

The leaders of the cult used this room to watch the initiates in the testing maze and issue commands to the golem. The crumbling wall leads to Area 5 and can be broken down (AC 17, 13 hit points), but doing so draws the attention of the creatures in Area 9. The secret door to Area 1 can be opened by pulling the ring, but the altar on the other side will follow the rails and fall through the hole into Area 9d unless stopped.

**Treasure.** The two bejeweled goblets are worth 50 gp each. The wine jugs are empty.



## 7. THE TESTING MAZE

A maze of rust-stained stone walls extends into the darkness.

Characters who descend through the hole in the roof arrive at Area 7a. Shattered roof tiles litter the muddy floor. The rust stains on the walls are actually old blood splatters from the victims of the stone golem that resides in Area 5. They can be identified as blood splatters from intense bludgeoning with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation), or Wisdom (Medicine) or (Survival) check.

The door to Area 8 is locked and has a 1-inch-deep impression of a sawblade leaf for a keyhole. The matching key sits on a plinth at Area 7b. Without it, the lock can be opened by making three successive successful DC 18 Dexterity checks using thieves' tools. A character can use the Help action to assist after the first successful check by holding the unlocked tumblers in place. On a failure, the sequence must be started again, and the lock jams after three failures.

A **dread walker excavator** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) is in front of the door, shining alien glyphs on the lock from its central eye, trying to get through. It ignores other creatures unless they attack it or interfere with the door. If it gets through, it tries to retrieve the *horizon glass of the aberrant sextant* and escape into the wilderness to continue its mysterious work.

## 8. OFFERING CHAMBER

This wide room is dominated by a crane suspending a pallet that hangs over a ten-foot-wide opening in the floor. The walls bulge from the outside pressure and some of the stonework has collapsed. Two figures stand on the side of the room opposite the double doors, their attention fixed on something in the wall.

The cult leaders conducted offering rituals to Vh'al Zhubbuth here before sending treasure and sacrificial victims down into the vault.

The head priest and their second were trapped when the temple sank into the swamp, and through foul rituals they passed from life to undeath. They linger as a **wight** and a **wasteland priest** (see *Wastes of Chaos* with the following changes: its creature type is Undead and it has the trait **Undead Nature**: The wasteland priest doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep).

They are wary of intruders but don't immediately attack, eager to hear news of Vh'al Zhubbuth, as they are unaware of the final fate of the dread walker.

An **eonie loner** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) ventured into the temple recently searching for the *horizon glass*, hoping that it could show a path back to its home time, but it was subdued and captured by the undead pair. They have partially bricked it up into the wall opposite the door and have been tormenting it for entertainment and information.

## 9. TREASURE VAULT

Sickly green mist drifts about the chamber. A bubbling, sloshing sound comes from a grotesque mass that covers much of the floor. Grand columns support the high ceiling, and a central altar is covered in treasure.

Sweeping staircases descend into the room from a 10-foot-high platform at Area 9c. Climbing the wall back up to Area 8 from the platform requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. The ceiling is 18 feet high.

Two **dread mouthers** and two **eldritch horrors** (see *Wastes of Chaos* for both), the cursed remains of the cult's sacrificial victims, lurk here and attack anyone who enters. Excessive noise from above can draw them out as well.

The altar in Area 1 can fall into Area 9d. See Flooding the Temple above for more information.

**Treasure.** The *horizon glass of the aberrant sextant* rests atop the central altar surrounded by coins, jewels, and art objects worth a total of 2,500 gp.

## Concluding the Adventure

The dread walker excavator, the eonie loner, Lietta, and the tentacle crabs all want the *horizon glass of the aberrant sextant*. One or more of them may make a play for it in the vault or after the PCs emerge from the temple. It's also possible that a band of dust goblins arrives after following the tentacle crabs.

The question remains of the whereabouts of the other fragments of the *aberrant sextant*. Some or all of the other treasure in the vault may have been stolen, and the original owners or their descendants might have an interest that leads to further adventures.

# Down the Gullet

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 8TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

Four hundred years ago, the Mage War caused untold damage to the world, transforming huge swaths of fertile countryside and lush forests into blasted wasteland. Two of the most infamous mages who fought in the conflict were Svatobor the Dauntless, now the Lich King (see *Wastes of Chaos*), and his bitter rival, the sorcerer Aurufina Stormsoul.

In one of the biggest clashes of the war, Aurufina's tower was toppled by the army of Gralvrak Magebane, Svatobor's general who became the Lord of Ruin (see *Wastes of Chaos*). Although Aurufina Stormsoul's broken staff was found in the smouldering ruins of her fallen tower, her body was never recovered, and her enemies assumed she had perished.

But Aurufina yet lives. Realizing defeat was imminent, the sorcerer broke her staff to bring her tower down upon her enemies, simultaneously sending herself through a portal into the Void where she remained for 400 years. A few months ago, Aurufina returned to the Material Plane aboard a voidship sailed by the mysterious Folk of Leng.

Time passes strangely in the alien realms of the Void. Few return to the mortal world unchanged. Touched by the Void, the sorcerer hides her unnatural appearance beneath a cowl, and keeps her return a secret from her enemies. Out for revenge, her first goal

is to recover her broken staff and make it whole again.

After the fall of Aurufina's tower, the staff was seized as a trophy by a hobgoblin captain in the Spinneripper Legion. Since then, it has passed through many hands, ending up in the possession of an arcane archaeologist called Soave Dirtscrabbler who obtained it for her patron Lord Avius.

Just as Aurufina pinpointed the staff's location through her divinations and sent an agent to retrieve it, Soave disappeared while exploring a ruined observatory in the Wastes. Emerging from an underground chamber, Soave found herself in the shadow of Nygethuaac, the Dread Colossus (see *Wastes of Chaos*). The great monstrosity shot out its tongue, grabbed the archaeologist, and swallowed her, along with Aurufina's staff.

## Adventure Hooks

- An enigmatic sorcerer (Aurufina Stormsoul) hires the PCs to retrieve their missing, broken staff, offering lost magic of the ancients in return. The sorcerer—who does not reveal their name—wears a hooded robe that shrouds their eyeless face in darkness and hides their unsettling tentacles. The two pieces of the staff have been stolen by an arcane archaeologist named Soave Dirtscrabbler, last seen at the ruined Observatory of the Chaos Moon.



- Soave Dirtscrabbler, the famed arcane archaeologist, has failed to return from her latest expedition. Lord Avius, her wealthy, kindly patron, is worried. Will the PCs travel to the Observatory of the Chaos Moon to find out what has happened to her?

## Observatory of the Chaos Moon

Built on top of a remote hill deep in the Wastes, the Observatory of the Chaos Moon dates back to the time of the Mage War. Eight large stone structures, cracked and pitted by centuries of freak weather, are arranged in a semicircle. Each is a giant astronomical instrument, built to measure the positions of the stars and planets, and to predict celestial events such as the dreaded Chaos Moon. The tallest is a sixty-foot-high sundial, marked with a huge astronomical scale. Several underground chambers, long since abandoned, once served as the living quarters of the astronomers.

When the PCs arrive, the ruins are deserted, but they do find an empty campsite with the remains of a burned-out campfire, a sagging tent, and some moldy supplies. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that no one has camped here for at least two weeks. Faded footprints lead back and forth from the camp to the stone structures.

On the far the side of the hill, no ability check is needed to notice that the plants and grasses have been flattened by something very large indeed, perhaps as much as 300 feet in length. Another large, flattened area lies roughly 600 feet away down the hill. Further investigation and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check allows the PCs to determine that an enormous "thing" traveled up and then down the hill by making a series of giant leaps.

From their vantage point, the PCs have a clear view across the featureless plain and can easily spot the toad-like form of the Dread Colossus around six miles away. If they observe the creature for at least five minutes, they see it make a giant leap forward before settling down for the rest of the day.

## Atop the Dread Colossus

Nygethuaac, the Dread Colossus, is a gargantuan toad-like monstrosity from the Void, 100 feet tall at the shoulder and 300 feet from head to tail. It was summoned here during the Mage War and now moves blindly through the Wastes at a snail's pace.

As the PCs get closer to the huge creature, they can see that a ramshackle village is built on its head and shoulders, and its furry skin is dotted with disgusting yellow pustules and clumps of purple mushrooms. Rope ladders trail from the village down to the ground. See *Wastes of Chaos* for details.

### WELCOME PARTY

If the PCs climb the rope ladders or reach the village by other means, they are met by a trio of grinning **chaos goblins**. These mutated creatures speak only Goblin but try and usher the PCs toward the Assembly Hall (Area 2) where they offer steaming cups of mushroom tea.









PCs that drink the tea must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or experience surreal hallucinations for 1d10 minutes, becoming charmed and incapacitated with a speed of 0. Roll d6. On a roll of 1–5, the hallucinations are bright and beautiful. On a 6, they are dark and frightening.

If the PCs can communicate with the goblins, they point the PCs in the direction of the tower (Area 3) to speak with the Toad Whisperer. Alternatively, they are free to explore the goblin village.

### A GIANT LEAP FORWARD

At some point while the PCs are in the village—perhaps as they head to the tower—Nygethuaac leaps 600 feet forward. Just before the leap occurs, the Toad Whisperer (see below) uses his megaphone to shout, “Hold on tight!” in Goblin from the top of the tower.

When they hear the warning, the chaos goblins rush to secure themselves using the numerous rope loops hanging throughout the village. The PCs can do the same but there aren’t enough rope loops for all of them!

Have each PC roll initiative and do the same for the three closest chaos goblins. The creatures with the two lowest initiative scores fail to secure themselves by the time Nygethuaac leaps and must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or suffer 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and fall prone. On a roll of 5 or less, a creature must succeed on a second DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or be flung off the colossus to the ground below, suffering 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage.

Once Nygethuaac has leapt, the colossus settles down again, allowing the PCs to unsecure themselves or pick themselves up again.

### THE TOAD WHISPERER

Standing at the top of a rickety tower built on a large platform fixed to the colossus’s head, the Toad Whisperer is a squat, bowlegged **chaos goblin** with toad-like features and brownish-green, pustule-ridden skin. Almost bald with bulging eyes, a wide grin, and a long, thin tongue, he can communicate with Nygethuaac telepathically and acts as the goblins’ leader. The Toad Whisperer is vain and pompous. He responds well to flattery.

When he spots the PCs approaching, the Toad Whisperer climbs down from his tower to speak to them; unlike the rest of the goblins, he can speak Common in a croaking tone. If the PCs are respectful

of his status as Nygethuaac’s favored servant, he shares the following information:

- He remembers Nygethuaac visiting the observatory around two weeks ago and swallowing a human female.
- An orc was also in the observatory that day. The goblins captured him and locked him in a cage.
- Nygethuaac’s leaps have brought the colossus within a few miles of the observatory again. The colossus’s movements are mysterious.
- Swallowed people go “somewhere else.” They aren’t digested, but they don’t come back.
- If the PCs want to find their missing friend, they should let Nygethuaac swallow them.
- If the PCs make a point of flattering the Toad Whisperer and/or succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he also tells them:
- Nygethuaac once told him that his gullet leads to a fragment of the colossus’s realm in the Void.

### THE PRISONER

The goblins keep a wasteland orc **vile looter** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), named Yulagh, prisoner in one of the iron cages that hangs by a chain from the village buildings (Area 5b). Yulagh is suffering from three levels of exhaustion. If the PCs offer him food or drink, he tells them he was sent to spy on Soave Dirtscrabblor by a mysterious sorcerer (Aurufina Stormsoul) and recover her broken staff. Just as he was about to make his move at the observatory, Nygethuaac appeared and swallowed the archaeologist. Before Yulagh could decide what to do, the colossus croaked loudly and he passed out. He woke up inside the cage and has been unable to persuade the goblins to release him.

Yulagh is not to be trusted. If the PCs help him escape or persuade the Toad Whisperer to let him go, he accompanies them in the hope he can still recover the staff and give them the slip.

### THE SWAMP IN THE STOMACH

Getting swallowed by Nygethuaac is not difficult. PCs who stand or move within 120 feet of the creature’s head attract its attention with a successful DC 8 Charisma (Performance) check. The Dread Colossus whips out its long, sticky tongue to grab each PC one at a time, pulling them into its mouth and swallowing them unless they succeed on a DC 20 Strength saving throw. The PCs can fail the save voluntarily.

The Dread Colossus releases its tongue, and you slide down its throat at breakneck speed, sloshing around in its sickly sweet saliva. Then suddenly, you are falling through the air. You land with a splat on a soggy, muddy island in a strange swamp. It is nighttime. A blood red full moon is in the sky overhead, bathing everything in vermillion light.

Traveling down Nygethuaac's gullet has transported the PCs to a pocket dimension holding a fragment of the Dread Colossus's swamplike realm in the Void. The swamp is home to mutated monsters and strangely colored plants. It is always night, and the Chaos Moon is in the sky.

## GENERAL FEATURES

The pocket dimension is around five miles in diameter and surrounded by thick mist. PCs who enter the mist reappear at a random location in the swamp.

**Illumination.** A blood red moon bathes the swamp in dim light, giving everything a reddish tinge.

**Sounds.** The drone of insects and the constant croaking of frogs.

**Terrain.** Murky water surrounds muddy islands and hillocks covered in light vegetation. Fallen logs act as makeshift bridges between some islands. The bog is shallow (1 foot deep) closest to the islands, becoming deep bog (4 feet deep), and then deep water (5 to 10 feet deep) further out. Luminous green algae and lily pads grow on the water's surface.

**Vegetation.** Plants and trees have lurid green, red, or orange foliage and a strange, alien appearance. Here and there, clumps of large ferns with eyeballs grow on stalks. The eyeballs swivel to follow movement.

## ENCOUNTER AREAS

The map shows only a small section of the swamp. PCs who wander further can encounter **swarms of insects** (mosquitoes), **giant frogs** and **giant toads**, crimson **stirges**, and deadly patches of quicksand.

### 1. ARRIVAL

The PCs arrive in this relatively clear area. As they climb to their feet and take in their surroundings, a number of **slitherjacks** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) equal to the number of PCs appear, drawn by their arrival.

### 2. REAVER HUTS

Three mud huts stand on this island. Each has a roof made from dried reeds and an entrance covered by a reed curtain.

**Creatures.** Six **chaos reavers** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), a mixture of humans, dwarves, and goblins, are gathered around a firepit, roasting giant frog legs. They are led by a human **wasteland priest** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) named Jaska Leeno who has long hair matted with mud and is tattooed from head to toe with bizarre symbols. The reavers were swallowed by Nygethuaac and have been here for months, living off giant frogs and swamp plants. They have long since given up trying to escape. They are wary but not outwardly hostile to the PCs.

If the PCs explain they are looking for Soave, the reavers say that she was captured a few days ago by Terraxx the chaos troll (Area 6). A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check allows a PC to determine that this isn't the whole truth. To avoid being eaten by Terraxx, the reavers hand newcomers over to the troll as tribute. Jaska claims to have been sent a vision by his god telling them this is fine. Soave had returned to the huts after searching for an escape route when the reavers drugged her and left her outside the troll's cave.

**Development.** The reavers may attempt to drug the PCs by offering them food marinated in toxic frog sweat. A PC subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 4d6 hours. The poisoned PC is also incapacitated.

### 3. TAINTED GROVE

The fetid stench of swamp gas surrounds this stand of gnarled cypress trees, draped in long strands of luminous green Spanish moss.

PCs entering the area must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute.

**Creatures.** Two **warped treants** (see *Wastes of Chaos*) lurk here, ready to attack intruders.



#### 4. NYGETHUAAC STATUE

Tall reeds cover much of this island. Hidden among them is an ancient stone statue of the toad-like Nygethuaac, ten feet long and covered in moss. It can be spotted with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check.

**Croaking.** The constant croaking of frogs reaches a crescendo the closer the PCs get to the statue and is extremely disturbing. Creatures who hear the croaking must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or become afflicted with short-term madness for 10 minutes. On a successful save or after the madness effects wear off, a creature is immune to the croaking for 24 hours.

**Treasure.** A *bead of monster summoning* (see *Wastes of Chaos*) can be found inside the statue's mouth, left there long ago as an offering.

#### 5. TREACHEROUS WATER

**Creatures.** A mutated hydra hides below the surface of this stretch of 15-foot-deep murky water, ready to ambush swimming PCs. The six-headed hydra is eyeless and has transparent skin, making it harder to spot. Use statistics for a hydra with the following changes:

- It is AC 14, has six heads, and 200 hp
- It has the blinded condition and blindsight 60 feet
- Stealth +4

**Treasure.** Among the bones of crocodiles and humanoids lying on the muddy bottom is a *+1 shield* emblazoned with the face of a frowning goblin. When the wielder of this shield suffers a critical hit, they can use their reaction to turn it into a normal hit. The goblin's face grins when this effect is triggered. This property has one charge and recharges after a long rest.

#### 6. CHAOS TROLL LAIR

The far end of this island rises to a height of 30 feet above the surface of the swamp. A half-submerged opening in the muddy bank beneath a dead tree leads to the underground lair of Terraxx, a two-headed **chaos troll** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), and Snap, his pet **giant crocodile**.

The troll's cave is 50 feet in diameter. Roots from the trees growing above poke through the 25-foot ceiling, and several inches of muddy water cover the floor. If they are home, Terraxx and Snap react aggressively to intruders.

**Prisoner.** Soave Dirtscrabbler, a red-haired female human arcane archaeologist (**scout**), lies tied up



against the wall. She is being kept here until Terraxx is ready to eat her—the troll told her he is saving her for his birthday. She has four levels of exhaustion.

**Development.** If freed, the grateful Soave tells the PCs she believes the standing stones (Area 7) offer a possible way back to the Material Plane, but she hasn't figured out how to activate them. Her explorer's pack, containing the two pieces of Aurufina Stormsoul's broken staff, hangs from a root dangling from the ceiling.

**Treasure.** Terraxx has embedded a +2 *greataxe* in the wall of his lair. It can be pulled free with a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. The axe gives out a piercing scream whenever it misses its target in combat.

## 7. MEGALITHS

Several ancient standing stones are grouped between three large cypress trees. Each stone is 20 feet tall and covered in moss. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals worn runes of alien appearance carved into its surface.

**Creatures.** An **eonic loner** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), dressed in strange garb fashioned from crystal-studded leather and scrap metal leans disconsolately against a stone. It has come to the swamp as part of its aimless planar wanderings and suffers from chronic ennui.

The loner knows how to activate the megaliths to open a portal back to the Wastes but must be convinced by the PCs that there is a point to life and hope for the world before he will do so. An impassioned speech, a joyous song, or an entertaining yarn can shake the loner out of its apathy. This can be roleplayed, or you can ask the PCs to make a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Performance) check to rouse the loner's spirits.

**Development.** If the group succeeds, the eonic loner touches each megalith in turn, causing the runes to glow. Anyone within 10 feet of the stones is teleported back to the Wastes. If they fail to inspire the loner, they are trapped in the swamp for the foreseeable future.

## Concluding the Adventure

You can have the portal return the PCs and Soave close to the Observatory of the Chaos Moon or to another location in the Wastes.

If the PCs were hired by Aurufina, Soave denies stealing the broken staff, claiming to have obtained it legitimately. The two pieces of the staff are made from black wood and carved with Void glyphs, recognizable with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Soave offers it to the PCs as a reward but warns them to think carefully before giving it to the sorcerer, lest it be remade and used to dark ends. If the party fails to heed her words and gives the staff to Aurufina, this is exactly what happens. Wielding her staff again, the sorcerer seeks revenge on the Lich King, potentially triggering a second Mage War.

If Yulagh is with the party, he tries to steal the broken staff from Soave's pack and bring it to Aurufina himself.

If the PCs were hired by Lord Avius, they are paid a handsome reward for rescuing his favorite archaeologist. The wealthy noble will likely have further job opportunities for the party in the future.



# The fleshwarper's Walking fortress

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 10TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

A caravan of sixteen zealous Mavrite pilgrims winds its way through the Western Wastelands, attempting to reach their most holy site: the Seat of Mavros. There, they hope to be reborn in the Crucible, reforged into purer, more worthy, more devoted followers of the God of Storms.

However, they have been betrayed by their guide, the dust goblin ranger, Vellyx. Vellyx was paid handsomely by a mad wizard of the Wastes, qi-Livexis, known as “the Fleshwarper,” to bring her specimens for her unspeakably vile experiments. The goblin lured the pilgrims off the Bone Road into a dead-end canyon near qi-Livexis’s Walking Fortress, where she and the rest of Vellyx’s dust goblin mercenaries have prepared a deadly ambush. Meanwhile, a chaos storm rapidly bears down on all of them.

## Adventure Hooks

There are several ways the PCs may become involved in this treacherous ambush and desperate battle:

- One or more of the party may be taking the pilgrimage.
- The PCs have been hired as caravan guards by the pilgrims.
- The PCs may stumble upon the ambush as it begins.

## DEAD END

The sixteen pilgrims (and possibly the PCs) have been lured off the traditional pilgrim’s route, known as the Bone Road, toward a small canyon at the edge of a massive steaming chasm, known as the Cauldron of Oxloon. Vellyx assures the pilgrims and the PCs that the Seat of Mavros is just beyond the canyon, but it is a dead end and a deadly ambush. If any of the party succeed on a DC 23 Wisdom (Insight) check against Vellyx, they realize he is lying.

## 1. GEYSER VENTS

The ground here is littered with steaming fissures. The locations marked G (1–12) are steaming fissure cracks in and around the floor of the canyon. At the end of each round, roll a d12 to see which vent erupts in a huge geyser of steam. Any creature standing over the vent must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw; a creature takes 6d6 of fire damage on failed save or half as much on a success.

Until the end of the next turn, the vent’s space is considered difficult terrain and any creature in or behind that space is considered partially obscured, due to the boiling water and dense steam. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the dangerous nature of the geyser vents.







## 2. AMBUSH HOLES

This narrow ravine leading to the canyon beyond has steep, rocky walls. The floor is covered with a thick layer of soft sand and gritty dust.

**Creatures.** The five locations marked D are the camouflaged ambush holes where Vellyx's five rugged **dust goblin ambushers** lie in wait for the signal to attack. Use the statistics for **veteran** with the following added traits:

- **Lightning Lope.** The ambusher can Dash or Disengage as a bonus action.
- **Pack Tactics.** The ambusher has advantage on its attack rolls against a target if at least one of the goblin's allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Any PC who makes a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Survival) or (Perception) check within 10 feet of one of the ambush holes spots it. A PC who succeeds on the check does not know what is in the holes unless they investigate more closely, which initiates combat as the goblins spring forth.

## 3. THE WALKING FORTRESS

This large rocky outcrop looming over the canyon is made of a different color stone from the rest of these cliffs and has several flying buttress columns extending from the sides of its rocky escarpments.

The **Walking Fortress** is a Gargantuan, ancient construct (AC 21, hp 1200; it is marked with an F and begins at the top-right side of the map). A successful DC 19 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that the rocky formation with buttress pillars is not a natural formation. Once qi-Velexis awakens the fortress, it rears up on its crab-like buttress legs and heaves forward 15 feet per round acting on Initiative Count 20 in the direction marked on the map. A great gaping maw opens in the face of the fortress and three 60-foot-long clockwork whip-tentacles emerge and wave about menacingly.

When the fortress reaches the far end of its movement at the edge of the canyon (as marked on the map), its whip-tentacles are in range to snatch up pilgrims. Any pilgrims grabbed by the clockwork tentacles (see the mad wizard's legendary actions under her description, below) are immediately pulled



into the fortress's maw and swallowed. The prisoners are placed in extradimensional cells in suspended animation until such time as the mad wizard decides to experiment on them.

## 4. DEAD END CANYON

Once you exit the ravine into the canyon, you see there is no other exit, just more steep, rocky cliff walls, and more steaming fissures.

**Creatures.** If the PCs discover the ambush holes and the **dust goblin ambushers** (see Ambush Holes above), combat starts immediately. If the party does not preempt the ambush, when the pilgrims and the adventurers are past the ambush holes and realize they have been led into a dead-end canyon, Vellyx and qi-Velexis teleport to their ambush position at the top of the far wall of the canyon (marked on the map with a Q and a V).

Vellyx announces that the pilgrims and the PCs are "now the property of the mighty mage of the Wastes, qi-Velexis!" While he is shouting this, the mad wizard (who does not speak during the encounter), uses her legendary actions to awaken the Walking Fortress (see The Walking Fortress above). The mad wizard has a round with surprise to activate the fortress.

If a PC has a high enough initiative to speak or act before anyone in the party or the caravan is attacked, they can attempt to bargain for their lives with Vellyx, as qi-Velexis does not speak in this encounter. With a convincing enough roleplay and/or a high enough Charisma (Persuasion) check (DC 24 or higher at your discretion), the party can persuade the mad wizard and the goblin leader to let them go with a promise of returning two to three times as many captives for her vile experiments within 30 days. The wizard then casts a *geas* spell on the party to ensure their compliance.

If the party and the pilgrims are bottled up in the canyon, the wizard and the goblins do not try to kill everyone, just anyone who fights back, as the wizard wants live “specimens” for her ghastly experiments in mutation and “flesh warping.” The pilgrims are all **commoners** and noncombatants. They huddle in fear for the duration of the encounter unless directed otherwise by the PCs, and each has only 1 hp.

The five dust goblin mercenaries do not attack pilgrims, but might grapple and bind any pilgrims nearby. They each have three 25-foot lengths of giant-spider-silk rope to bind prisoners. They are there to attack and subdue the party, and prevent anyone from escaping.

If three or more goblins, Vellyx, or the mad wizard are killed or subdued, the remaining goblin mercenaries attempt to flee or beg for their lives, as opportunity permits. Vellyx uses the concussive and entangling alchemical shells in his rifle to knock combat opponents prone, entangle them, and break the concentration of spellcasters.

When the pilgrims are attacked, they huddle together and cry out for help from Mavros. The chaos storm which spawns is a manifestation of their desperation in this magic-warped place. It reaches the canyon 10 minutes after combat starts (see The Approaching Chaos Storm below). After 15 minutes, it causes a flash flood in the canyon, dealing 6d6 bludgeoning damage to anyone still on the canyon floor. PCs who fail a DC 17 Strength saving throw are also knocked prone, and possibly swept into the abyssal Cauldron of Oxloon at the south edge of the map. Any pilgrims caught in the flash flood are instantly killed.

At the end of each round, as well as rolling for a geyser eruption (see Geyser Vents above), have each PC make a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, a PC notices purple storm clouds

approaching. Reducing the DC by one each turn, until someone spots the storm.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or (Arcana), or Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the nature of the storm, and its unfortunate side effects. The wizard and the goblins are immune to the storm’s effects. See the Chaos Storm Exposure Effects table for more information on the storm and its effects.

If qi-Velexis is killed or driven away, the fortress and its tentacles fall limp, but the opening in the side of the fortress remains agape, so that PCs can enter and free any prisoners with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. The party and the pilgrims can also take cover inside the inert fortress from the approaching Chaos Storm.

If the mad wizard is reduced to 25 hp or less and is not incapacitated, she teleports herself into the fortress and uses its arcane mechanisms to teleport the whole fortress to a random spot in the wastelands within sixty miles, taking any prisoners with her. If the party defeats the mad wizard and the goblins before the fortress teleports away, they can explore the many extra-dimensional rooms, cells, and eldritch laboratories within, at your discretion, as it is beyond the scope of this adventure.

#### VELLYX, ALCHEMICAL RANGER

Vellyx is a NE dust goblin. Use the statistics for the **Alchemist Archer Elf** (see *Creature Codex* or use **Assassin stats**). Replace the longbow with an alchemical *vril dual-charge rifle* and replace the **Hunter’s Aim** ability with **Dusty Step**.

**Dusty Step.** As a bonus action, Vellyx can teleport to an unoccupied space he can see within 120 feet, three times per long rest, while in the Wastelands.

#### QI-VELEXIS, “THE FLESHWARPER” (MAD WIZARD)

*Medium Humanoid (Mutated Human), Neutral Evil*

**ARMOR CLASS** 17 (torn robe of the archmagi)

**HIT POINTS** 176 (32d8 + 32)

**SPEED** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

**SAVING THROWS** Int +9, Wis +5

**SKILLS** Arcana +13, Intimidation +7

**DAMAGE RESISTANCES** damage from spells



TABLE 1: CHAOS STORM EXPOSURE EFFECTS

d100	Chaos Storm Effects
01–15	The creature increases in muscle mass, becoming stronger but clumsier. Its Strength increases by 2 and its Dexterity decreases by 2.
16–30	The creature's body swells, causing pain, discomfort, and lack of motion. It has disadvantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution checks.
31–45	The creature suffers from headaches, minor hallucinations, or other mental maladies. It has disadvantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma checks.
46–60	The creature's flesh grows especially dense. It gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical sources, but its speed (for all modes of movement) is reduced by 10 feet, and it loses any swim speed for the duration.
61–70	The creature's body produces growths and tumors. It gains +1 to its natural armor and advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks, but it has disadvantage on other Charisma checks.
71–80	The creature experiences growth of claws, horns, and teeth, and it deals +2 damage on such attacks.
81–85	The creature experiences a swift, painful period of growth. It is treated as if enlarged by the <i>enlarge/reduce</i> spell for the duration. This effect can be negated by <i>dispel magic</i> .
86–90	Dormant spores and seeds on the creature begin to sprout, covering it in fungal or plant growth, adding +1 to AC and providing advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in areas of thick plant growth. If this effect becomes permanent, the plants begin to subsume the creature. It loses 1 point of Charisma each hour. When the creature's Charisma reaches 0, it is fully subsumed, and the creature becomes a shambling mound. This change can be prevented or reversed by the <i>greater restoration</i> spell.
91–95	Lightning strikes the creature, forcing it to make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. The creature takes 35 (10d6) lightning damage on a failed save or half as much on a success. If the saving throw is failed, roll again on this table for an additional effect.
96–00	<b>Body warping.</b> Roll again on Table 2.

**SENSES** passive Perception 11

**LANGUAGES** Abyssal, Celestial, Common, Draconic, Infernal

**CHALLENGE** 12 (8,400 XP) **PROFICIENCY BONUS** +4

**Legendary Resistance (3/day).** If the mad wizard fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

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

**Special Equipment.** The mad wizard wears a torn *robe of the archmagi* (only has the armor class benefit)

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The mad wizard makes two Arcane Burst attacks.

**Arcane Burst.** *Melee or Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) force damage.

**Rend Reality.** A target of the mad wizard's choice within 60 feet that she can see must make a DC 17 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 22 (4d10) psychic damage, and must roll a d4 for a secondary effect:

- **Chain.** Three additional foes within 30 feet of the target must make a DC 17 Charisma saving throw or take 18 (4d8) lightning damage.
- **Blast.** All creatures within 30 feet of the target must make a DC 17 Charisma saving throw or take 18 (4d8) fire damage.
- **Healing.** The target instantly recovers hit points equal to twice the amount of the psychic damage dealt.
- **Teleport.** The target is teleported to an unoccupied space within 120 feet.

On a successful saving throw, the target takes half the damage, and no secondary effect occurs.

**Spellcasting.** The mad wizard casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 17):

At will: *mage hand*, *message*, *prestidigitation*  
3/day each: *counterspell*, *confusion*, *dispel magic*,  
*mage armor*

1/day each: *teleport*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*

## REACTIONS

**Shield of Delusion.** When the mad wizard is hit by a ranged attack or targeted by a spell that causes damage, her loose grip on reality protects her. As a reaction, if she successfully saves against the spell, she reduces the damage to 0, and chooses an ally within 30 feet (usually Vellyx). That ally regains a number of hit points equal to half of the negated damage.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The mad wizard can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The mad wizard regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Cast a Spell.** The mad wizard uses Spellcasting.

**Chaos Magic.** The mad wizard uses Rend Reality.

**Arcane Regeneration (Costs 2 Actions).** The mad wizard regains a used Spellcasting slot.

**Laugh With Me (Costs 2 Actions).** The mad wizard cackles insanely, and her laughter is infectious. Every creature within 120 feet must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a creature is overcome with laughter, falls prone, and becomes incapacitated. At the end of each of its turns, and each time it takes damage, the target can make another Wisdom saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

**Command the Fortress (Costs Variable Actions).** The mad wizard can use one action to awaken the fortress, order it to move 5 feet, or grab a pilgrim within range (if it has reached the edge of the canyon). Using two actions, she can order it to move 10 feet or grab two pilgrims within range. Using three actions, she can order it move 15 feet or grab three pilgrims within range.

## THE APPROACHING CHAOS STORM

Eldritch chaos storms with deadly side effects occasionally sweep the land, a dangerous remnant of the ancient mage wars. One is rapidly approaching the canyon as the ambush is sprung. It washes over the ravine 10 minutes after the ambush begins.

A creature that is exposed to the storm in the canyon for at least 2 minutes or caught in a flash flood caused by the storm, must roll on the Chaos Storm Exposure Effects table below. Most exposure effects are temporary, lasting 2d12 hours after initial exposure and an additional 2d12 hours for every hour the creature is exposed to the storm. Each effect then has a 5% chance of becoming permanent.

The exception to these temporary effects is body warping. If the result of the exposure effect is body warping, roll on the Body Warping table for additional results. These changes are permanent and can only be removed by a *wish* spell or similarly powerful magic.

TABLE 2: BODY WARPING

d10	Body Warping Effects
1-2	Unsightly pustules grow from the creature's skin. If the creature takes piercing or slashing damage, all creatures within 5 feet of it must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature is poisoned for 1 minute and takes an amount of poison damage equal to 1d6 times the warped creature's proficiency bonus. On a success, a creature is not poisoned and takes half as much damage. The warped creature gains resistance to poison and is immune to its own poison.
3-4	The creature gains +2 to its natural armor. The source of this armor can be thickened skin, scales, bony growths, or other similar mutation.
5-6	The creature grows an extra limb or prehensile tail. It can take a bonus action with this limb, including an attack action.
7	The creature grows extra eyes, gaining advantage on all sight-based Wisdom (Perception) checks.
8	The creature's skin changes color and gains resistance to one of the following types of damage: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder.
9	The creature is infused with violent magic. It gains resistance to nonmagical damage of one of the following types: bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage. Its natural attacks are now considered magical.
10	The creature gains magic resistance, giving it advantage on all saving throws against spells and other magical effects.



# The Doomed Patrol

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 15TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

Centuries ago, an entity known as Ssileficus the Slumberer appeared in the Wastes. A colossal creature, it slithered on a tail, protected by thick, spiny skin. Tentacles trailed from it, and it bore two segmented arms ending in cruel pincers. Hundreds of bilious eyes gazed from its face above a large, circular maw filled with sharp, serrated teeth.

Some say it emerged from the Void, the nothingness between the planes, summoned by ancient mages to crush their enemies. Others claim an ancient cataclysm shredded planar boundaries and the Slumberer slipped through. Whatever the truth, the creature has been inert for centuries, its colossal body silent, still, and free of decay.

Later, the nation of Tiarrh expanded to the edge of the Wastes. The fortified city of Vel'Tiarrh held its border wall and watchtower vigilant against its threats. From the watchtower, the Wasteriders patrol the Wastes.

Recently, the tower's defenses have been tested by the relentless forces of the nihilistic satarre. The satarre worship the Void Lord, a creature of the Void who wishes to reawaken Ssileficus. Some say the Void Lord was once a god, but its power has dwindled over the ages. It must now sustain itself by feeding creatures to the portals it opens. The Void Lord intends to use Ssileficus as an anchor, drawing

on its Void energy to open permanent portals to the Void, vastly increasing its power. Should this happen, other entities could slip through these portals and the planar boundaries could collapse, consuming everything on the Material Plane.

Five days ago, a Wasterider patrol rode into the Wastes discovering a satarre force atop Ssileficus's body, a mere half day's ride from the watchtower. The patrol discovered their intent to awaken Ssileficus and defeated the satarre. One of the Wasteriders reported back to their leader, Commander Raftis, while the rest held the site. Raftis dispatched two more patrols to secure the site. That was three days ago.

### THE SATARRE

This adventure features the nihilistic, reptilian creatures known as **satarre** (see *Tome of Beasts* 2). If you don't have access to that book, see the entry for **satarre infiltrators** in *Wastes of Chaos* and make the following replacements: replace **satarre destroyers** with **veterans** and replace **satarre mystics** with **cult fanatics** (with 75 hp and CR 3). Give both darkvision out to a range of 60 feet as well as the following ability:

**Void Weapons.** The creature's weapon attacks are magical. When the creature hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 1d8 necrotic damage.

Nothing has been heard from the patrols since. Meanwhile, the satarre aggression intensifies, requiring the Wasteriders' full attention. Commander Raftis, unable to address the missing patrols, looked for other options.

## Adventure Hooks

One of the following hooks can be used to involve the PCs:

- **Raftis's Desperation.** If the PCs have a reputation as capable adventurers, they are approached while in Vel'Tiarth by a Wasterider on Commander Raftis's orders. The Wasterider requests the PCs meet with her regarding a matter of great import. The Wasterider can also inform them that Raftis is offering payment for their service.
- **The Panicked Partner.** Loresh Konal, a Wasterider, recently broke his arm and has been acting as a messenger while he heals. Loresh is romantically involved with Korin Nightmist, a member of the first missing patrol. Korin was assigned to the patrol because of Loresh's injury. Loresh now worries for his partner. He approaches the PCs while they are in Vel'Tiarth to convince them to save Korin.

## THE OUTPOST

The watchtower is easy to find—it's the tallest building in the city. When the PCs arrive, they find harried and distracted guardsmen. If they were summoned by Commander Raftis, the PCs are escorted straight to her. If they were instead approached by Loresh Konal, they must convince the guards to let them enter. If they do (via good roleplaying or a successful DC 13 Charisma-based skill check), they are taken to Raftis.

**The Watchtower.** Commander Eliana Raftis coordinates her Wasteriders from the tower which overlooks the border wall and the Wastes beyond. When the PCs arrive, she is surveying the satarre forces assembled just beyond the reach of the Wasteriders' arrows. Her expression is grim and deep lines mark her face. She has the look of a person burning the candle at both ends. She thanks the PCs for coming and explains that three of her patrols have disappeared. She can't spare anyone to search for them because of the satarre threat. She asks the

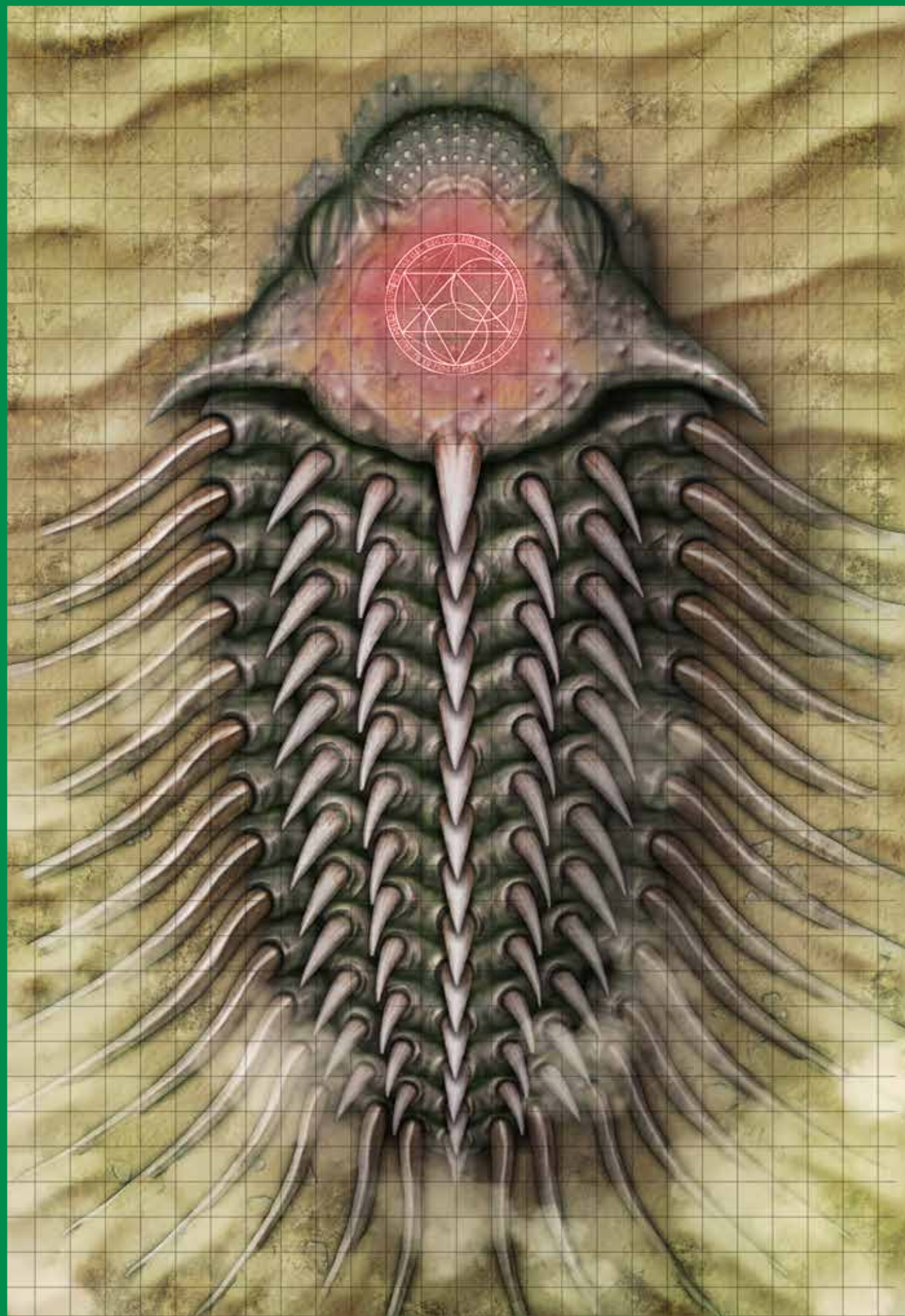
PCs to investigate, rescue any survivors, and provide directions to the Slumberer's body.

She fears the satarre have found a way to awaken Ssileficus. She also wants the PCs to secure the site or, if they can't, to stop whatever nefarious activities taking place for good. If the PCs succeed, Raftis promises coin and treasure from the city's vaults.

**The Secret Passage.** As Raftis finishes her briefing, a Wasterider shouts that the satarre are attacking even as the sounds of battle fill the air. Raftis urges the PCs to leave, imploring them to find the missing patrols. "We can't face the satarre and the Slumberer both," she says. "There's a secret tunnel under the wall that should take you beyond the horde. Go now. Find my people or avenge them. And stop whatever evil is stirring." She leads the PCs to the tunnel entrance at the bottom of the tower as she prepares to join the fray. A mechanism in the wall lifts a large stone block in the floor. A ladder descends into darkness. "May the gods be with you," Raftis says. Once the PCs are in the passage, she seals it behind them.









## CROSSING THE WASTES

The ladder descends to an underground tunnel which exits about a mile into the Wastes. The tunnel is 10 feet wide and 10 feet tall and shored up by stone. It's dusty and rough but easy to navigate, assuming the PCs have a light source or darkvision. At the far end, another ladder leads up to a hatch that only opens from the inside. The hatch is carefully camouflaged to blend into its surroundings. The tunnel is used infrequently because the Wasteriders ride out on horseback. If an enemy should gain access to the tunnel, it can be collapsed from inside the watchtower.

When the PCs emerge, the satarre assault on the watchtower is visible in the distance. Unfortunately, they can't help if they want to complete their mission.

The surrounding Wastes can be customized to suit the needs of the campaign. The journey to Ssileficus's body takes half a day. While the PCs travel through

the Wastes, roll on the appropriate encounters table from Appendix B: Wasteland Encounters (see *Wastes of Chaos*).

## SSILEFICUS THE SLUMBERER

When the PCs reach Ssileficus's body, it is occupied by satarre protecting the Void Lord's ritual, in progress.

### 1. SSILEFICUS'S TAIL

A long, ridged tail stretches out, narrow at its tip and widening where it meets the colossal creature's body. The creature, inert for ages, still glistens with moisture. An odor fills the air, earthy, almost fungal, with the occasional smoky or acrid whiff. Guarding the end of the tail are eight determined satarre.

The tail is 5 feet wide at its tip and widens to 20 feet where it meets the Slumberer's body.

**Creatures.** The satarre group consists of four **satarre destroyers** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) and four **satarre infiltrators** (see *Wastes of Chaos*). They attack on sight to defend the Void Lord and the ritual. If these satarre are defeated, the satarre on the back (see Area 3) remain where they are, though they're aware of the PCs' approach and prepared for them.

### 2. SSILEFICUS'S BACK

The creature's massive, broad back sits as tall as a building. Bumps and protrusions cover it, interrupted by large, stalagmite-like spines. More satarre are amassed here.

The Slumberer's back is 20 feet above the ground. PCs that use the Dash action near its edge must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall to the ground. The ridges and bumps make the area difficult terrain.

**Creatures.** Stationed here are five **satarre destroyers** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) and five **satarre mystics** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*). The mystics use the spines (see Area 3) as cover while attacking with their Void Bolts.





If the PCs search this area, they find Wasterider possessions wedged into the crevices: a brooch with the Wasterider symbol, a dagger, a cloak, etc.—the remnants of Wasteriders the Void Lord fed to its portals. One such item, a silver ring with a bright blue stone, is inscribed on the inside, “*To Korin, the realm’s greatest protector. Loresh.*”

**Treasure.** The ring is magical and functions as a *ring of protection*.

### 3. BACK SPINES

Long spines ridge the creature’s back, their wide bases tapering to sharp points at the tips. Their surface is rough, almost stone-like, but they weep a foul-smelling, viscous substance.

Each spine is 5 feet wide at the base and provides three-quarters cover to a Small or Medium creature that hides behind it. The viscous substance oozing from the spines is harmless, but makes climbing the spines difficult. A creature with a climbing speed must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to climb a spine. A creature without a climbing speed makes the check with disadvantage.

### 4. TENTACLES

Hundreds of thick, ropy tentacles glistening with a mucous-like fluid fringe the edges of the creature’s broad back. Limp and lifeless, they hang down to coil on the ground below.

When the PCs arrive, the tentacles are inert, though they awaken as the ritual proceeds (see below). The tentacles are about 3 feet in diameter and 60 feet long. A creature can attempt to climb down a tentacle while it is inert, but the mucous makes it difficult. A creature with a climbing speed must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to climb a tentacle, and a creature without a climbing speed makes the check with disadvantage. Failure means falling 20 feet to the ground below.

### 5. RITUAL CIRCLE

Centered on the creature’s short neck, between the back and head, stands a ritual circle of writhing, indecipherable runes, glowing with an eerie purple light. High above this circle, suspended in air, hangs another circle, similar in size, the color of a bruise, a planar wound. A humanoid creature in a hooded robe stands between these two circles, arms outstretched above it. One arm, large and muscled, ends in a three-clawed hand, while the other, much longer, ends in four long, multi-jointed fingers. The face within the hood is beautiful, of no particular gender or creature but a mix of different creatures melded together. Small writhing tentacles extend from the folds of its robes.

**Creatures.** The creature is the **Void Lord** (see *Wastes of Chaos*), performing the ritual to awaken Ssileficus. The Void consumes things, so the ritual is necessary to channel Void energy into Ssileficus. The ritual circle provides the power to accomplish this. See The Void Lord’s Ritual below for more details on the Void Lord and its ritual.

Though the ritual circle can be broken or dispelled, this takes one hour to accomplish, making it an impossible task during combat with the Void Lord and its minions.

### 6. SSILEFICUS’S HEAD

A bulbous, lumpy head protrudes from the creature’s neck like a massive fungal growth. Hundreds of spherical eyes cover it, each a sickly, bilious green. Despite remaining glossy and moist, they appear lifeless and unseeing.

The eyes are inert when the PCs arrive, but as the ritual proceeds, they reflect Ssileficus’s awakening state (see The Void Lord’s Ritual below). In Phase Two, each eye gleams with a yellow-green light. In Phase Three, they chaotically dart and roll in their sockets. During Phase Three, their pace gradually slows, displaying coordination. By Phase Four, Ssileficus’s visual senses fully awaken, waiting for the rest of the body to follow.

## THE VOID LORD'S RITUAL

The Void Lord is already nearing the end of the ritual to awaken the Slumberer when the PCs arrive. As the ritual continues, Ssileficus starts to awaken, creating additional challenges for the PCs. The ritual proceeds in phases, as described below.

Unless stopped, Ssileficus fully awakens and Tiarth, and the rest of the world, face not only an eldritch horror of tremendous power, but an empowered Void Lord with the capacity to tear the Material Plane apart. If the Void Lord is killed, the ritual immediately ends, the portal closes, the ritual circle disappears, any remaining satarre flee, and Ssileficus returns to its slumber.

**Breaking the Void Lord's Concentration.** Though the Void Lord can continue the ritual outside of the circle, its concentration on the ritual can be interrupted (as if concentrating on a spell) when outside the circle. While inside the circle, its concentration on the ritual can't be broken, even if it is incapacitated.

If the Void Lord's concentration on the ritual is broken, the ritual regresses one phase. For example, if the ritual is currently in Phase Three, interrupting the Void Lord's concentration changes it to Phase Two. The phase progresses on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) the round after the Void Lord returns to the ritual circle, automatically reestablishing its concentration.

**Void Lord's Tactics.** Though part of its concentration must remain on the ritual, the Void Lord can still take actions and move. It stays in the circle whenever possible to ensure the ritual isn't interrupted and does everything in its power to prevent the PCs from disrupting it. If the PCs engage the Void Lord directly, it boasts in a voice full of emptiness that they cannot stop it. It tells them that the pitiful Wasteriders who attempted to prevent the ritual were fed to its portals.

### PHASE ONE

During the first round of combat with the Void Lord, it, and the remaining satarre, attempt to prevent the PCs from disrupting the ritual. The ritual portal's bruise becomes a tear in reality, bleeding black Void energy into the circle and Ssileficus.



### PHASE TWO

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) of the second round of combat with the Void Lord, tumorous pustules and boils bubble on Ssileficus's back, causing the entirety of the Slumberer's body to become difficult terrain. At the beginning of each creature's turn, roll a d6. The Void Lord is immune to this effect while within the ritual circle. On a roll of 5 or 6, a pustule appears within 5 feet of the creature and bursts in a sickening spray. The creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. During this phase, the ritual portal widens, fringed by crackling purple energy, revealing blackness beyond.



### PHASE THREE

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) of the third round, Ssileficus's tentacles awaken and lash out in all directions. The tentacles are long enough to reach any creature atop Ssileficus's body. At the beginning of each creature's turn, roll a d10 and consult the Ssileficus Hazards table below. The Void Lord is immune to this effect while within the ritual circle.

If the result is a pustule burst, one bursts near the creature as if you rolled a 5 or 6 on the Phase Two pustule effect. If the result is a tentacle attack, the creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 2d10 bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. On a success, the creature takes half the damage and isn't knocked prone. During this phase, the ritual portal widens further, the purple energy intensifying at its edges, as if stabilizing it.

### SSILEFICUS HAZARDS

d10	Hazard
1–5	Nothing happens
6–7	Pustule burst
8–9	Tentacle attack
10	Pustule burst and tentacle attack

### PHASE FOUR

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) of the fourth round, Ssileficus's whole body trembles and shudders as it awakens. At the beginning of each creature's turn, it must contend with both a pustule burst and a tentacle attack (as described in Phases Two and Three). During this phase, the area between the portal and the ritual circle (a cylinder 20-feet tall with a 5-foot radius) contains magical darkness as Void energy fills it.

### PHASE FIVE

If the PCs do not stop the Void Lord and the ritual, Ssileficus awakens on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) of the fifth round. When this happens, Ssileficus stands and shakes creatures atop it off (or uses its tentacles to remove them).

Ssileficus is an elder eldritch being and an apocalypse-level threat that isn't easily defeated in standard combat. If it fully awakens, Ssileficus and the Void Lord carve a path of devastation throughout the area and beyond. To stop Ssileficus after this, the PCs must find an ancient sleeping spell, a powerful artifact, or ancient knowledge that can defeat or subdue an elder eldritch being from the Void.

## Concluding the Adventure

Once the Void Lord and satarre are defeated, and Ssileficus returns to its slumbering state, the PCs can report back to the watchtower where the defenders are recovering after a long and difficult battle. The Wasteriders defeated the satarre, but their losses were great. It is clear that the satarre forces crumbled when the Void Lord was defeated.

When Raftis hears the PCs' report, she is saddened by the loss of the patrols but grateful to the PCs for preventing Ssileficus's awakening. She expresses hope that the threat ended with the Void Lord but pledges to monitor the Slumberer regardless. She conjectures that the satarre attack was devised to distract the Wasteriders while the ritual was completed.

If the PCs were enlisted by Loresh Konal, he is devastated by news of Korin's death. He thanks the PCs for avenging him, but blames himself, believing he should have died instead. If the PCs give him Korin's ring he takes courage, viewing it as a symbol to carry on in Korin's stead. He insists on informing Korin's family and invites the PCs to accompany him. If they do, Korin's family thanks them and gifts them a *gem of brightness*, a family heirloom. It has 47 charges.

Commander Raftis rewards the PCs with the following: 10,000 gp, 2,000 pp, a *potion of speed*, a *potion of supreme healing*, a *potion of fire giant strength*, and a *frost brand (longsword)*. In addition, she gives each PC a Medallion of the Wasteriders, a steel medallion bearing the order's symbol, a mounted rider bearing a pennant. The medallions give them status in Vel'Tiarth and allow them to access the Wastes through the watchtower should they wish to explore further. Raftis asks only that they share important intelligence with her if they discover any.

Commander Raftis can continue to be a source of adventure hooks and knowledge should the PCs remain in the area.

# City of the Worm King

AN ADVENTURE FOR FOUR TO FIVE CHARACTERS OF 20TH LEVEL

## Adventure Background

In the time of lost legends, the magnificent towers of the City of Wonders rose high above the barren expanse of sweeping flint hills. It is said that its hanging gardens blossomed with thousands of flowers, and its fountains never ran dry, for it stood at the nexus point of intersecting ley lines from which its sorcerous rulers drew their power.

During the Age of Cataclysm, the rulers sought more extraordinary powers from dark and terrible patrons. Elder Creatures from beyond time and space could sense the power of the nexus who sought to draw from it and grow their presence in the Material Plane. From the Void, the herald of the Unsatiated God placed whispering pangs of hunger and destruction into the dreams of the unborn son of Imarios XII; the would-be heir of the City of Wonders and the first Dharkul Emperor of the sunlit world. The dead-born child whom terrified mortals called the Worm King.

## Adventure Hooks

A stranger approaches the PCs. Drawn by their reputation or the recommendation of a mutual ally, he introduces himself as Imarios (**archmage**) and says he would like to offer them a proposition.

The name “Imarios” seems familiar to any PC trained in Arcana or History. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check recalls the legend of an ancient sorcerer-king that ruled the mythical City of Wonders, which was swallowed by the Unsatiated God during the Age of Cataclysm. If the PCs ask about the connection, Imarios confirms his relation to the sorcerer-king but requests their secrecy if they would hear his request.

Imarios recently acquired an ancient map, which confirms the existence of the City of Wonders. After several months of study, he believes he has deciphered the map. He seeks adventurous companions to travel to the ruins, where he hopes to find a powerful artifact, a gemstone called the *Eye of Eternity*, which his ancestors used to protect their souls when bargaining with powerful gods and demons.

According to the map, the *Eye* is hidden within an enchanted clay vessel atop the temple of the sorcerer-kings’ patron demon, resting at the city’s center. Imarios claims invaluable tributes to the demon patron fill the temple. For himself, he desires only the *Eye of Eternity*. However, if the PCs agree







to accompany him, he promises them whatever other treasures they uncover. Allow the PCs to confirm with Imarios and set the details for their companionship. Once settled, he requests they meet him at The Last Laugh, a remote inn at the edge of the Wasteland Marshes.

### EVENT 1

The PCs arrive at dusk. The innkeeper (a portly halfling named Jaran Dubby) informs them that their meals and rooms were paid for, although their patron hasn't arrived yet. Instead, he expects to meet them by the marsh's edge at dawn. Unfortunately, Jaran doesn't know the patron's name, but if asked, he provides a description that matches Imarios.

**The Rivals.** Members of an evil cult of sorcerer-assassins known as the Ichor of the Saint recently learned that Imarios discovered a map to the City of Wonders. They want to follow him and recover the *Eye of Eternity* for themselves. The cult members consist of four **assassins** and an **archmage** named Cyrin. They occupy a corner table in the main hall at the inn, covertly attempting to gather information about Imarios and his expedition. If outsiders approach, they act standoffish and quickly return to private conversations. If pressed, all become silent, stand, and leave the main hall for their rooms. Thereafter, they do not exit their rooms until after the PCs meet with Imarios the following day.

There are several ways to incorporate the members of the Ichor of the Saint, depending on how you need to balance the adventure. Their initial intention is to trail Imarios to the City of Wonders and wait for the opportunity to ambush him and steal the *Eye* after the PCs did the hard work of procuring it. However, you can introduce them earlier and have the two groups form a temporary alliance if the combat challenges become overwhelming. Alternately, they might attempt an earlier attack, making the temple exploration more challenging.

### EVENT 2

Imarios greets the PCs near a worn flat-bottomed swamp boat tied to the dock. He explains that the map shows the city ruins lying at a low point at least 10 miles west, far into the vast and desolate marshland. Accessing the ruins by any other means seems improbable. He gives them 10 minutes to gather whatever they require and stresses the need to leave as soon as possible. If asked, he suspects others might be watching him.

### EVENT 3

PCs load the swamp boat and head into the marshes. The water is shallow, so the PCs must slowly pole the flat-bottomed boat through the marsh. The work is tiring, and anyone poling for more than an hour must make a successful DC 10 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion.

After about an hour, the air thickens with aggressive swarms of tiny flying insects. The distracting insects disrupt passive Perception.

**Development.** One of the assassins from the Ichor of the Saint placed an amulet in the bilge water bottom of the swamp boat. Imarios notices the tiny glass amulet and picks it up to examine it.

**Creatures.** The ornate amulet is hollow, made of fragile glass, and contains a **gellimite** (see *Wastes of Chaos*). Cyrin sealed the amulet with an *arcane lock* spell and scribed the password "curiosity" upon the lid. If spoken, the spell suppresses the arcane lock allowing the gellimite to escape. Similarly, rough handling of the amulet breaks the glass, releasing the horrific ooze. Once released, the gellimite attempts to burrow into the flesh of the nearest living creature.

### EVENT 4

Toward the end of the first two hours, the PCs hit the edge of the city ruins. They spot broken blocks of cut stone jutting from the murk at odd angles while the water darkens and the air stings with a hint of sulfur and carrion.

After a second hour, more rubble breaches the surface, forming small islands bearing the crumbling remains of foundations, walls, and other stone structures. Toward the end of the hour, swamp grasses droop, turning dark and sickly. A film of crimson froth covers the water's surface.

At this point, have all PCs make a Wisdom (Perception) check. The character with the highest roll first spots the temple rising from the swamp. As the PC points it out to the others, the PC with the highest passive Perception notices tiny black dots circling above the temple. Several dots begin moving toward the PCs within seconds, rapidly drawing closer.

**Creatures.** Three **neophrons** in vulture form (see *Creature Codex* or use four **vrock**s) break from the flock circling above the temple. Their current fly speed takes them about 6 minutes to arrive and start attacking. They fight until they drop to half their hit points, then flee back to the temple to summon reinforcements. In total, twelve neophrons fly above



the temple. If the PCs defeat two waves of flight attacks, all surviving demons return to the temple and prepare to defend it.

**Tactics.** Strafing demons attempt to damage or capsize the swamp boat. In the event they succeed, PCs toppling into the 2-foot-deep water quickly discover it rests atop 5 feet of loose silt. The water instantly becomes heavily obscured, and the viscous mud forces any PCs in the water to succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to avoid becoming restrained in the muck. A restrained creature can use its action to repeat the check to escape. Due to the severity of this hazard, this check is made with disadvantage. Another creature can use the Help action to nullify the disadvantage on the roll.

## EVENT 5

After dealing with the demons, the PCs may finish the journey to the temple unimpeded. As they draw close, read or paraphrase the following description.

A mountainous octagonal stepped temple carved from great blocks of dark mottled stone rises from the sickening marsh. It has four platforms, each rising thirty feet above the tier below. High atop the temple, a gruesome clay sculpture of a monstrous tentacled worm demon dominates the top.

The symmetrical temple provides multiple access points. Regardless of which route PCs take, all the troughs and staircases are identical. The temple, troughs, and stairs slope at forty degrees.

## 1. TROUGH

A hardened slick of congealed blood and entrails snakes down the center of the trough. On either side, withered corpses run the length of the walls, chained to the stonework with long, rusted manacles. Only the last bits of desiccated flesh still cling to their bleached bones.

## 2. LOWER STAIRS

A broad stone staircase climbs from the morass up the side of the temple. The first platform passes between a pair of towering earthen clay statues depicting monstrous, bloated worms with wide gaping mouths surrounded by tentacles.



The statues are hardened clay with a reddish tint and covered with arcane demonic sigils. Tapping the statue causes a slight echoey sound, implying they are hollow.

A successful DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check to interpret the sigils determines that they act as a dimensional seal connected to an entity in the Void that calls itself Hriggala. A DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies Hriggala as the herald of the Unsatiated God. If the Religion check succeeds by more than 5, it also recalls that Hriggala manifests as a great crawling worm and reaps madness and destruction upon living mortals.

Each statue is a vessel allowing the material manifestation of a hellish fiend bound to protect the

temple. Physically manipulating or damaging the vessel breaks the seal, allowing one of the creatures to manifest (see below). There are several other ways of breaking these seals noted elsewhere.

**Creatures.** The clay vessel begins to crack and break apart as a **spawn of Hriggala** (*Tome of Beasts 2* or use **glabrezu**) manifests within. The summoning takes one round, after which the demon bursts from the clay shell and attacks. If the spawn moves within melee attack range of another clay vessel, it uses one of its attacks to target it. If the attack deals more than 15 damage to the statue, it begins to break, breaking the seal on its spawn.





### 3. MID TIER

The stairs empty onto a platform located halfway to the summit. Across the platform, another flight of stairs continues to the top. Alternately, arches running beneath the troughs allow access to the rest of the level. Slender tapering pillars forged from dull gray metal encircle the perimeter at twenty-foot intervals.

**Development.** If any neophrons (see Event 4 above) remain alive when PCs attempt the final ascent to the summit, they swoop from the skies and attack.

### 4. FIRE PILLARS

Living creatures that move within 30 feet of these pillars cause them to activate. When activated, the top of the pillar erupts, spewing 20-foot-tall gouts of green and orange flame. Creatures in direct contact with a pillar must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much on a success. Creatures failing the saving throw also catch fire, taking 10 (3d6) fire damage at the end of each of their turns. The burning continues for 1 minute or until the flames are extinguished by completely submerging them in water.

Once one fire pillar ignites, 1 minute later, the heat of the flames ignites adjacent pillars. Targeting a flame pillar with fire or magical fire causes it to ignite. Igniting all eight pillars activates the calling of Demon Lord Hriggala.

### 5. SUMMIT

Atop the temple summit rises an enormous twenty-foot-tall clay statue of a worm-like creature whose body erupts in dozens of long spiked tentacles that seem to engulf the stonework and spill down the side of the temple to the platform below.

Like the other statues, this one also functions as a seal. Once all eight flame pillars ignite, the statue's seal breaks, triggering the following chain of events.

**Round 1.** There is a loud cracking sound as hundreds of tiny fractures race through the clay statue atop the temple.

**Round 2.** The flame pillars grow dimmer, decreasing their gouts to 10 feet.

**Round 3.** With another loud cracking sound, pieces fall from the clay statue as a form writhes beneath. A tremor rushes through the temple. All creatures standing on the temple must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. Those falling their saves within 5 feet of an edge of the pyramid fall to the next level, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

**Round 4.** The gouts of flame extinguish. Everything goes silent; then a maddening chatter and rattling of metal arise as all the corpses in all the troughs animate simultaneously, unleashing a cacophony that forces every living creature within 60 feet of a trough to make a successful DC 18 Wisdom saving throw or become confused (as the *confusion* spell) for 1 minute. A confused creature can attempt a new save at the end of each of its turns to end the effect.

**Round 5.** The last of the clay shatters, completing the manifestation of **Demon Lord Hriggala** (see *Tome of Beasts 2* or use **pit fiend** with the changes noted below). The demon bursts from the clay to devour the flesh and souls of all living creatures and continues to feast until destroyed. If Hriggala is defeated, his mortal remains slowly slough into black ichor, which flows into the troughs and down to the marsh.

**Creature Change.** If you use the pit fiend for this encounter, change its hp to 350 (28d12 + 168) and add the following: 3 legendary resistances; +1 to its save DCs, attack rolls, and saving throws; the spells *confusion* and *dispel magic* to its at will innate spellcasting options; the spells *blight* and *create undead* to its 3/day options; damage immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks; and 3 legendary actions: Cast a Spell (Costs 3 Actions), Tail Attack (make one tail attack), and Move (move up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks).

### EVENT 6

Atop the temple, beneath the shattered remains of the demon lord's clay vessel lies a massive circular flagstone, nearly 10 feet in diameter, with an interweaving spiral of demonic sigils inscribed upon the face. Pale ocher-colored wax seals the crack around the stone's perimeter. The heavy flagstone weighs 600 lbs. and covers the entrance to a deep vertical tunnel leading into the center of the temple. The tunnel's stale air reeks of mold and must.

The 5-foot-wide circular passage descends 90 feet into a vast unlit chamber, octagonal and roughly the diameter of the temple. Two feet of mire flood

the chamber floor, blanketing a clutter of unknown objects. In each corner, a mummified corpse hangs silently from the wall, arms delicately folded across their chests.

**Creatures.** The mummified corpses are the remains of Imarios XII (**mummy lord**) and his council of advisors (seven **mummies**). A tiny gemstone glitters in the left eye socket of the mummy lord. It is the *Eye of Eternity*.

**Treasure.** Scattered across the bottom of the fetid murk lies a treasure hoard consisting of 23,000 gp, 16,000 pp, various gemstones and jewelry worth 35,000 gp, a *scimitar of speed*, a *figurine of wondrous power (obsidian steed)*, a *ring of fire elemental command*, and a *scroll of polymorph*.





**Development.** If the PCs take the time to recover the treasure from the unholy guardians, this gives their rivals, the Ichor of the Saint, the opportunity to set an ambush in order attempt to seize the *Eye of Eternity* (see below) when they emerge.

## Concluding the Adventure

The adventure ends once the PCs defeat all the creatures and recover the *Eye of Eternity*. Imarios is sadly misinformed about the *Eye*, its purpose, and the history of the City of Wonders. If permitted to keep the *Eye*, it inevitably corrupts him or falls into the hands of entities who would abuse its powers. Good-aligned PCs will likely want to convince him to destroy it or surrender it for safekeeping.

### EYE OF ETERNITY

*Wondrous Item, Artifact (Requires Attunement)*

This artifact is a tiny crystal calcified from the blood of a demon lord. Those who shed blood on it may call upon the demon lord as their patron and receive its aid.

During the Age of Cataclysm, the sorcerer-kings of the City of Wonders forged pacts with demonic powers to draw their dark eldritch powers and reap destruction upon their enemies. Unfortunately, while these patrons promised greatness, it came at the cost of their humanity and eventually led to the spiral of corruption that caused their downfall.

### RANDOM PROPERTIES

The *Eye of Eternity* has the following random properties:

- 2 minor beneficial properties
- 1 minor detrimental property
- 1 major detrimental property

**Spells.** The *Eye* has 5 charges and regains 3 + 1d4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you are attuned to the *Eye*, you can use an action and expend 1 or more charges to cast one of the following spells (save DC 18) from it: *chill touch* or *darkness* (1 charge), *black tentacles* (2 charges), or *contact other plane* (3 charges). You can also use an action to cast the *augury* spell from the *Eye* without using any charges.

**Conjure Demons.** You summon a **spawn of Hriggala** (see *Tome of Beasts 2* or use **glabrezu**) that appears in an unoccupied space you can see within 90 feet. The

spawn of Hriggala disappears when it drops to 0 hit points or when the spell ends. The spawn disappears after 10 minutes or when it is reduced to 0 hit points. For the duration of the summoning, the spawn acknowledges you as its summoner and won't attack you. Roll initiative for the spawn of Hriggala. On its turn, the demon attacks and attempts to devour the nearest living creature (including, possibly, the summoner's allies). It continues to feed for the duration of the summoning. The GM has the spawn of Hriggala's statistics.

**Petition Patron.** As an action, you use the *Eye of Eternity* as a focus to call upon the Lord Hriggala to intervene on your behalf. While focusing, you describe the assistance you seek, then roll a d20. If you roll 1–3, Lord Hriggala intervenes. The DM chooses the nature of the intervention. The effect of any of Hriggala's powers, actions, or legendary actions would be appropriate. If you roll a 20, Hriggala manifests at a random location within 30 feet of the *Eye of Eternity*'s wielder. The angered demon lord only manifests for 1 round. During that round, it uses all of its effort to recover the *Eye of Eternity*.

**Destroying the Eye of Eternity.** The *Eye of Eternity* cannot be destroyed. However, feeding the *Eye of Eternity* to Lord Hriggala breaks its attunement to any mortal claiming the artifact. As long as the *Eye* rests within the demon lord's gullet, it remains impotent.

# Further Adventures in the Wastes

On this and the following several pages are a set of adventure seeds, sets of tables you can use to flesh out plots you might wish to run as adventures in the wastes. Each table provides some options for an adventure's setup, environment, enemies, and ongoing development.

Creatures shown in **bold** are found in the *System Reference Document 5.1*, while creatures in **bold\*** with an asterisk are found in the *Wastes of Chaos* campaign supplement. Pick and choose these options as you like or roll a d8 to come up with unusual selections. Even seemingly nonsensical combinations can be made to work by applying some logic-warping wastes magic to them.

## Battlefield

Ancient battlefields often hold magical secrets or powerful artifacts among the detritus and bones of the fight. The characters may be keen to find a lost battlefield, or they might already know of the place but can no longer avoid it. Of course, they are not the only interested parties, and the site does not easily give up its treasures.

### SETUP

The heroes might be motivated simply for their own enrichment, or they may have been hired by another with promises of significant rewards. Some possibilities include:

d8	Result
1	Rumors abound of a powerful champion who died during the battle and who carried a legendary weapon (or shield, or helm, etc.) that was never found.
2	The battlefield is haunted, and the characters are motivated to put the undead to rest in order to protect a nearby community.
3	The battle was fought at an ancient site where a powerful evil was imprisoned, and that barrier had to be kept intact, with one side defending it from being overrun by those who would release the evil.
4	The battle was fought at an ancient holy shrine in danger of being defiled.
5	The battlefield has been the site of many conflicts and the characters have reason to believe there is something at the site that draws clashing forces to it.
6	The devastating magic used during the fight leached into the soil and into the bones still scattered across the battlefield. These remnants hold some useful value to the right parties.
7	One side of the conflict came through a portal during the skirmish, and it might still be there, waiting to be activated or in need of closure.
8	The body of a great beast that was summoned to turn the tide of the fight still lies on the field of battle in death, completely inert but intact and free of decay.



## ENVIRONMENT

The battlefield itself is the key locale, although the lands through which the characters trek to reach it may be significant, as well. Some possibilities include:

d8	Result
1	The battlefield lies within a stretch of desolate plains that was once at a busy crossroads before the chaotic energies of the battle made the place too dangerous to pass through.
2	The battle was fought in a region of badlands with many hills and ravines, and the flow of combat swirled around pockets of outnumbered soldiers trying to hold high ground against many enemies all around.
3	The site is at a hidden temple in swampland, where the plant life (perhaps mutated and animated by the chaos energies) has almost completely overgrown the structure, and the dead lie just beneath the surface of the shallow waters.
4	The battle was a siege of a strategically placed fortress positioned high upon the side of a mountain, with but one difficult-to-traverse pathway to its front gates.
5	The battlefield took place at the walls of a great city, its grand structures now half-buried but still visible jutting up from the land.
6	The battlefield sits on the border between this plane and another, and it only becomes visible and accessible every few years.
7	The battle took place between two warring flying cities, and both the ruined communities still orbit one another in the skies above the wasteland plains.
8	The battle took place in a great underground cavern with many branching side passages.

## ENEMIES

The most obvious creatures to pit against the characters are undead tethered to the battlefield, but additional enemies can add layers of complexity to the plot. Such options include:

d8	Result
1	Massive hordes of standard undead—of both soldiers and their mounts—such as skeletons, ghouls, and ghosts could be nearly limitless.
2	A more powerful undead foe with its own goals and resources could covet the battlefield and not brook interlopers. Conversely, it could desire fresh “meat” for its schemes.
3	Scavenging local fauna, like <b>swarms of insects</b> , <b>anathema locusts*</b> , and <b>mire fiends*</b> might find the battlefield a fantastic breeding ground.
4	Other treasure hunters, such as <b>bandits</b> or <b>cultists</b> , can compete with the characters for the scattered treasures to be had—even if they are merely scavenging for equipment that can be repurposed.
5	A true rival, such as an <b>archmage</b> or necromancer with a company of subordinates, might be searching for the same lost secrets the characters are hunting.
6	Harmful residual magic that lingers from the devastation may prove to be a dangerous counter to efforts to investigate.
7	Eternal creatures such as <b>demons</b> and <b>golems</b> summoned during the fighting might still linger in the vicinity, bound by ancient pacts or instructions to continue their vigil.
8	Deadly scavengers such as <b>ankhegs</b> , <b>bulettes</b> , <b>giant vultures</b> , and <b>chimeras</b> attracted by the availability of food—both the dead and the explorers—are drawn to the area.

## DEVELOPMENT

Once the characters arrive at the site, they may find what they are looking for, but other outcomes are also possible that can lead to further adventures. A few options include:

d8	Result
1	The characters find the treasure they seek, but chaos energy has somehow warped it, making it dangerous to possess.
2	The characters' enemies have acquired the treasure before they were able to, and they must pursue their rivals elsewhere.
3	The treasure's previous undead owner is not happy the characters have taken it with them and comes after them in retribution.
4	The characters discover another, unexpected item, bit of knowledge, or source of chaos magic they must contend with.
5	The characters manage to quell the residual dangers that lurked upon the battlefield, causing trade to open up along a route through this section of the wastes.
6	Ridding the battlefield of its dangers allows another, more subtle force of malevolence to reach a previously unattainable site, where it acquires fell power.
7	Disturbing the battlefield causes the uneasy peace that exists between the two forces who once fought there to evaporate, and war begins again.
8	Disturbing the battlefield offends a god of conflict and war, who considers the site a holy monument and who sends adherents after the characters to punish them.





## Champion

The characters must confront a powerful adversary—or seek out a needed ally—before chaos within the wastes grows out of control.

### SETUP

There are many reasons characters might run across a dangerous champion. There are a variety of reasons characters might run across a dangerous champion:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The characters are asked to awaken a legendary hero from a tomb hidden somewhere in the wastes.
- 2 The characters hear of a mighty warlord who is intent on conquering vast swathes of the wastes.
- 3 The characters learn of a font of magic that grants one pure of purpose who drinks from it great powers.
- 4 A reluctant individual the characters know looks exactly like a champion prophesied in myth.
- 5 A war between rival factions in the wastes pits two champions against one another.
- 6 The characters are captured by a powerful foe who promises them freedom if they defeat the foe's champion.
- 7 A person from the characters' pasts, to whom they owe a favor, asks them to enter a competition of champions and defeat the favorite.
- 8 An NPC ally of the characters is captured by a cult and transformed through magic into a horrible champion the characters must defeat.



### ENVIRONMENT

Coming face to face with a champion, whether in alliance or as enemies, can occur in just about any place in the wastes. Here are a few examples:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The confrontation occurs upon a high hill during a raging battlefield with war and chaos all around.
- 2 The characters meet the champion in a pit arena with a roaring crowd that throws things at the contestants.
- 3 The characters cross paths with the champion during a running battle atop the rooftops and walls of a ruined city.
- 4 The characters find the champion within the central altar chamber of a great temple.
- 5 The characters face off with the champion upon a narrow and crumbling bridge that spans a deep chasm.
- 6 The characters meet the champion in the central market square of a thriving city.
- 7 The characters must confront the champion in ritual combat within the walls of a monastery.
- 8 The champion faces the characters in a great mausoleum.

## ENEMIES

The kind of champion featured in this type of adventure plot can be pretty straightforward, but there are plenty of more unusual options, as well:

d8	Result
1	The champion is—or must face—a mighty warrior such as a <b>doombringer overlord*</b> .
2	The champion is a chaos-warped creature such as a <b>warped behemoth*</b> giant.
3	The enemy is an ancient and terrible monster the champion must fight, such as a <b>wasteland dragon*</b> or a summoned <b>demon</b> .
4	The champion is either protected or held prisoner by a vast tribe of <b>dust goblins*</b> or <b>chaos goblins*</b> .
5	The champion must battle a towering mechanical construct or golem such as a <b>dread colossus golem*</b> .
6	The champion is actually a renowned, heavily armed and armored war wagon made from strange, waste-warped parts and driven by a gang of clever humanoids.
7	The foe is an ally who is under the mind-control powers of one of the characters' oldest enemies.
8	The foe is a seemingly fragile being that nonetheless gets back up after every injury and keeps fighting.

## DEVELOPMENT

Encountering a champion can be unpredictable and have unexpected wrinkles. Here are a few possibilities:

d8	Result
1	The champion is afflicted by a magical force, loses all sense of reason, and turns on its controllers/allies.
2	The champion wins the hearts and minds of those it served/saved and supplants their previous leader.
3	The champion becomes a pacifist and must itself be saved from destruction.
4	The champion triumphs but must thereafter be cared for and housed, as it has no capability to do this on its own.
5	The champion demands assistance from the characters for its own quest before it will agree to fight on their behalf.
6	The champion loves fighting so much that it demands ever-more-powerful foes against which to test its mettle.
7	The resolution of the confrontation brings down a powerful family or organization that was once the characters' ally and whose members now vow revenge upon the characters.
8	The defeat of the champion (or its foe) releases a mighty fiend that had been bound to it, freeing it to wreak even more deadly havoc in the wastes.



## Excavation

The heroes become involved in a dig at a mysterious or significant site where ancient curiosities are known to exist. But unearthing those treasures is never as easy as it first appears.

### SETUP

The characters get drawn into an activity in the style of an archeological dig. Some of the ways this can happen can include:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The heroes are hired by a wealthy collector who wants them to lead a team to a known site in the wastes and supervise their safety while they excavate artifacts.
- 2 The characters become aware of an excavation being conducted by someone foolishly digging in a very dangerous location and who is risking releasing a terrible evil.
- 3 The characters discover through research into another topic that a large-scale excavation was started but never completed at a forgotten site many years ago.
- 4 The characters themselves wish to dig at the site to find hidden knowledge they've been seeking for a long time.
- 5 The site has only recently been buried, by powerful creatures who have dragged the place down into the bowels of the earth to keep for themselves.
- 6 Forces that are normally enemies have banded together to begin a dig for some unknown purpose.
- 7 The characters need to put something back into the site, restoring a stable condition that was disrupted by treasure hunters.
- 8 While traveling elsewhere on an unrelated matter, the characters stumble upon a site with no previous record or knowledge of its existence.



### ENVIRONMENT

The site of the excavation should be both dangerous and interesting. Some options include:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The site is within a lost city from an ancient civilization located in the middle of a magical devastation.
- 2 The site is a shrine in a mountain valley buried under a rockslide.
- 3 The site is a great temple partially submerged in a swamp and thus difficult to drain.
- 4 The dig site is a mad alchemist's toxic laboratory.
- 5 The site lies within a hard-to-reach crater where a mysterious object, such as a skyship, fell from above.
- 6 The place is within a magically altered landscape where the physical layout of the dig site changes each dawn.
- 7 The site is at the top of an impossibly steep and thin spire of rock that juts above the clouds.
- 8 The site is in the bowels of the ruins of an ancient flying city.

## ENEMIES

Whether the foes the characters encounter are part of the dig site itself or factions that rival or oppose the character's digging efforts, enemies can add an unusual wrinkle to the plot. Here are some examples:

d8	Result
1	A powerful undead such as a <b>mummy</b> or perhaps the remnants of a previous explorer who died trapped within the ancient structure lies within the bowels of the site.
2	A ruthless rival adventuring company who will stop at nothing to beat the characters to the treasure oppose them at every turn.
3	Local tribesfolk who hold the site as sacred and will tolerate no one disturbing the place attempt keep the characters away.
4	The site itself, which is somehow sentient and resists all efforts to delve into its interior, actively throws up obstacles against the characters.
5	Local fauna that is extremely dangerous and uses the site as mating grounds, such as <b>basilisks</b> or <b>chaos trolls*</b> , make even approaching the site dangerous.
6	Sentient forces of magic, such as <b>elementals</b> or <b>living spells</b> (see <i>Magical Wastelands</i> for more information on living spells) roam near the site, making it dangerous to linger there.
7	The weather and/or terrain at the site is unstable and deadly, with storms, earthquakes, flowing lava, and other dangers common.
8	The original builders placed fierce magical wards on the site, ensuring anyone who disturbed it would succumb to a terrible curse.

## DEVELOPMENT

In addition to finding something of value at an excavation, the process of disturbing the site can trigger complications. Some examples include:

d8	Result
1	The heroes stumble upon a previously sealed route into the sunless regions of the deep folk.
2	The heroes discover a forgotten, ancient prophesy that is on the verge of coming to fruition, spelling doom for all.
3	An ancient but perfectly healthy monstrous creature rationally and warmly greets the characters and asks for their help as they open the doors to its long-sealed abode.
4	A local culture sees the heroes as god-kings when they emerge from the interior of the dig site, bearing what they've found.
5	A local culture reviles the heroes as anathema when they emerge from the interior of the dig site, bearing what they've found.
6	The heroes attract the attention of a ruthless collector who intends to track them down and steal the items they have found.
7	The heroes attract the unwanted attention of a god venerated at the site, who sees them as pawns in a divine contest with other deities.
8	The characters' act of removing an artifact from the site causes the chaos of the wastes surrounding the place to rapidly increase in intensity.



## Lost Library

Through some sequence of events, the characters learn of and visit a hidden repository of knowledge. What they find might be a great boon, but it might also draw the unwanted attention of others.

### SETUP

The characters can learn of a lost library through a variety of means, including any of the following:

#### d8 Result

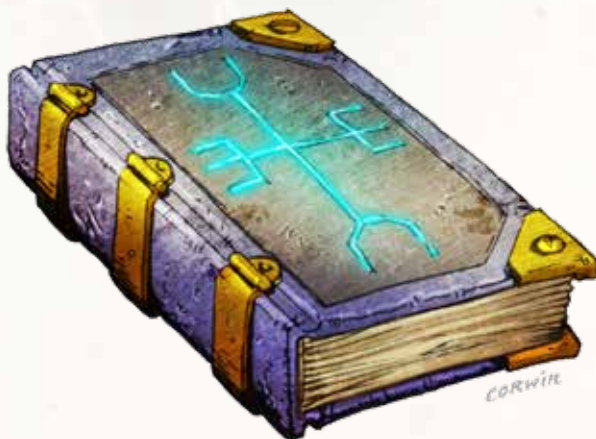
- 1 A map is found on the inside of a freshly skinned animal hide that reveals its location.
- 2 A cult leader asks the characters' help in solving a great riddle, the answer to which leads them there.
- 3 The heroes break through a wall in a ruin they are exploring for an unrelated reason and discover the library.
- 4 A meteorite falls from the sky and uncovers it in an isolated place in the wastes.
- 5 A character has known of the site their entire life but did not have the wherewithal to reach it before now.
- 6 Fragments of famous texts taken from the well-known but lost library start showing up for sale in a city.
- 7 A tome that acts as a dynamic catalog of the library's contents and shows the methods for reaching the place falls into the player's hands.
- 8 The most scholarly character in the group has fragmented visions of how to get to a site but knows nothing of what the place is.

### ENVIRONMENT

The location of a lost collection of written works can be several different options, including:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The library is within an archmage's tower that is usually magically hidden.
- 2 The library is a central building, protected by powerful chaos magic, in the center of a ruined city.
- 3 The knowledge is locked in the minds of a cult of savants who enter a trance and chant the contents, then remember nothing of what they said afterward.
- 4 The place can actually be revealed on the surface of any stone, but only by wetting said stone with the waters from a hidden spring.
- 5 The site sits within extradimensional rooms inside a noteworthy building with another purpose.
- 6 The library is hidden within the fur and horn patterns of herds of wasteland creatures.
- 7 The library is housed in a flying city that drifts above the clouds.
- 8 The library can be reached by passing through a mirror on the wall of a more well-known library.



## ENEMIES

Whatever knowledge the characters seek, there will be others who desire the information for themselves or who wish to prevent the heroes from possessing it. Options include:

d8	Result
1	A religious zealot who fears what possession of the knowledge might mean for all sentient beings tries to prevent the characters from finding it.
2	A rival explorer who wants the wealth such knowledge would provide if sold races the characters to be the first to claim it.
3	A powerful cabal of wizards who want the knowledge to complete a dangerous summoning if the characters don't stop them work against them.
4	An undead guardian charged with preventing access to the library tries to stop them.
5	An employer who hired the characters to find the library double-crosses them after the task is complete.
6	A warmongering tribe of nomads who use the site as a yearly gathering place have gathered there at a very inconvenient moment.
7	A collection of sentient artifacts housed within the library protect themselves from being disturbed.
8	Future versions of the characters who have traveled back in time to stop the characters from making a horrible mistake, but without revealing their identities.



## DEVELOPMENT

Finding the library and the knowledge it contains often causes unexpected consequences, such as:

d8	Result
1	The heroes find a powerful artifact thought lost and trigger a conflict as others try to take it from them.
2	The characters discover the library is actually a means of hiding the secret tomb of an ancient hero they manage to awaken.
3	Removing sacred knowledge from its resting place within the library causes the entirety of the library to collapse, burying it.
4	The characters inadvertently provide a nihilistic cult with the forbidden knowledge they need to begin a world-ending ritual.
5	Knowledge found within the library proves the lineage of a national ruler is founded on lies.
6	Opening an unholy text causes anyone in the chamber to be cursed by demonic pursuit.
7	Discovering the library fills the minds of each character with more knowledge than they can reasonably handle, and they begin suffering mental breakdown.
8	The knowledge uncovered within the library gives one nation at war with another new insight into powerful weapons and turns the tide of the conflict.



## Rescue

The heroes are asked to hunt down and rescue someone or something. This target might be missing individuals lost somewhere in the wilds of the wastes, or it could be an object of great sentimental or financial value. Both the journey itself and the rescue efforts involve obstacles to overcome.

### SETUP

The characters must travel through the wastes to reach the target of the rescue. The options for what they are trying to locate can include:

#### d8 Result

- 1 They seek an entire caravan overdue from a trek across the corrupted wilderness and that no scrying can locate.
- 2 The characters are asked to find a seasoned group of NPC adventurers whose families or companions are worried about.
- 3 The characters must free an entire village that has been captured during a bandit raid and held for ransom.
- 4 The characters are asked to retrieve a cherished family heirloom that has been stolen by thieves who have fled into the wastes.
- 5 The characters must meet with an individual who has important information for them but who lost a bet and has been forced into servitude for an agreed-upon period of time.
- 6 The characters are convinced to aid a powerful creature of good that is under threat from malevolent forces from another plane.
- 7 The characters wish to rescue a potential ally who is cursed with lycanthropy or a similar disease and is a danger to itself.
- 8 The characters seek a clever alchemist or tinkerer who prefers to work alone in the wastes but who is in danger of backlash from their inventions.

### ENVIRONMENT

The region the characters must explore will include the lands they must travel through, as well as the site where the actual rescue takes place. Any type of terrain described in *Wastes of Chaos* can be used for this adventure plot, but a few of the more interesting approaches can include:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The characters are forced to follow a faint trail through forests, marshes, or swamps, where visibility is severely limited.
- 2 The characters must pass through parched badlands filled with twisted, dead trees and the skeletons of ancient behemoths, sure signs that survival resources are scarce.
- 3 The characters must journey across old, forbidding tundra with few places to shelter.
- 4 The characters must reach a hidden oasis.
- 5 The characters must visit an isolated village.
- 6 The trail leads the characters to a set of temple ruins or an ancient tower thought abandoned.
- 7 The characters must explore the underground lair of a fearsome beast.
- 8 The characters must find their target in the midst of a thriving wasteland city.

## ENEMIES

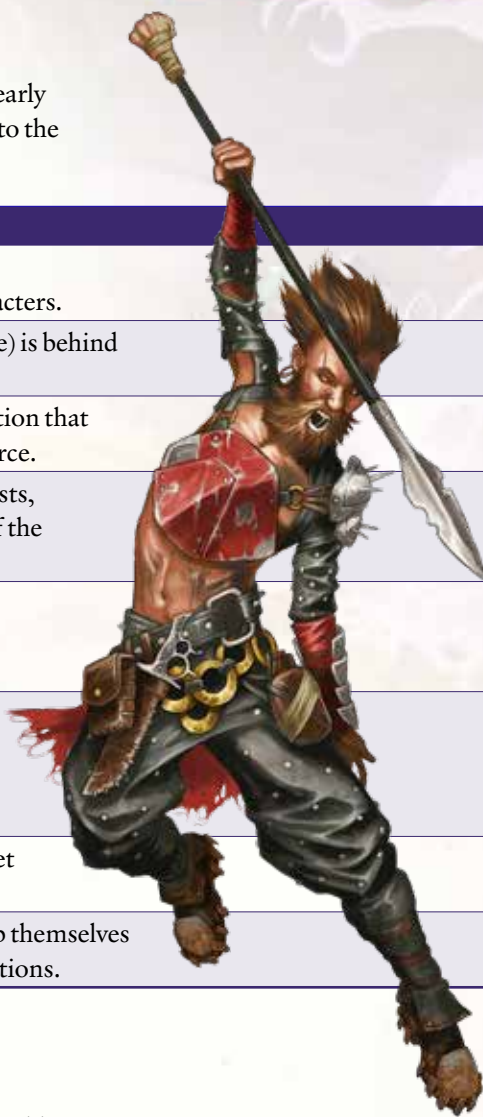
The foes the characters are likely to encounter and defeat can be nearly any creature or group, from the very obvious and straightforward to the more unusual and unexpected. Some examples include:

d8	Result
1	A large bandit group, led by a sinister champion (see the <b>Chaos Reavers*</b> for an example), opposes the characters.
2	A nihilistic cult (see <b>Cult of the Black Goat*</b> for an example) is behind the disappearance.
3	The characters must overcome a magical curse or foul pollution that affects the mind, preventing the target's escape from its source.
4	The characters must contend with a swarm of voracious beasts, such as <b>manticores</b> or <b>slitherjacks*</b> , that have the targets of the rescue trapped in a dead end.
5	The characters must overcome a disaster such as a cave-in, magical storm, or injury that has the rescue targets trapped in ruins or caverns.
6	The rescue targets themselves are actually fleeing from unpleasant conditions—such as family cruelty, debt, or from someone they've stolen from who wants revenge—and who won't return willingly.
7	The kidnappers have been falsely accused by the rescue target and only want to be heard in order to clear their names.
8	The targets of the rescue have actually set the whole thing up themselves as a means of throwing off suspicion for their malevolent actions.

## DEVELOPMENT

The rescue mission might be straightforward, but complications could arise from the effort. Some further plot elements could include:

d8	Result
1	The heroes must serve as go-betweens to kidnappers and loved ones, or as negotiators, or they might be called upon to acquire enough wealth to pay off the ransom.
2	The heroes discover a previously lost or forgotten site of mystical importance during the rescue, and new adventure opportunities present themselves.
3	The characters learn that the individuals they were sent to rescue are actually agents of a malevolent force that must be stopped.
4	An item being rescued is cursed and must be destroyed by complex means.
5	The item being rescued is of great importance to its owner, who needs further assistance with a grand scheme once it is back in their possession.
6	The rescue mission is a trap set up to capture the heroes themselves.
7	The rescue mission foils a larger plot of the forces behind the kidnappers/thieves, which turns those forces' eyes and ire upon the characters.
8	The targets of the rescue "reward" the characters with an artifact of legend that also happens to be cursed, thus ridding themselves of the curse and passing it on to the characters.





## Stars Align

A predicted magical phenomenon is nigh and takes the heroes into the wastes to deal with it. Whether they are assuring it comes to pass or are trying to prevent it, opposing forces are certain to complicate their efforts.

### SETUP

Something draws the characters' attention, whether it be an unusual event or a carefully noted moment in time. Some possibilities include:

#### d8 Result

- 1 A prophecy predicts a shining entity falling from the heavens, and at the appointed time, something blazes across the sky in a trail of flame and smoke and disappears into the wastes.
- 2 The heroes must visit a complex stone structure built so that the sun shines on specific runes during an equinox or solstice.
- 3 A doom cult prepares for the coming of their elder god by kidnapping potential sacrifices and taking them to their hidden lair in the wastes.
- 4 Everyone within a few miles of a mysterious site in the wastes begins having the same disturbing dream each night.
- 5 A tribe of humanoids normally antagonistic toward others in the wastes sends emissaries to all quarters, pleading for help—though they don't yet know for what.
- 6 Stars in the sky seem to drift into strange new patterns and magic in the wastes starts behaving differently than expected.
- 7 A herald from a peculiar sect begins preaching of miracles from a holy site in the wastes, and they are coming true.
- 8 The characters begin seeing the same map showing up over and over again in their environment: in the pattern of their breakfast, in the frost on a window, in the embers of the campfire, and so forth.

### ENVIRONMENT

Locations within the wastes most likely to be affected by mysterious events of this nature can include the following:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The portents lead the characters to an ancient observatory high atop the rim of a dormant volcano.
- 2 The characters discover a hidden library with its contents scribed on massive sheets of polished crystal.
- 3 The characters stumble upon a shrine dedicated to a god of primeval forces.
- 4 The characters make their way to a subterranean grotto that fills and drains of water at unusual but predictable times.
- 5 The characters are welcomed into a community of homes carved into the cliff walls of a canyon system.
- 6 The characters find themselves in the middle of a blasted crater where a large pool of melted and re-hardened slag perfectly reflects the sky.
- 7 The location revealed is a particular city block in the old part of town.
- 8 The characters arrive at a high plateau with a pentagon-shaped top.

## ENEMIES

Foes the characters could encounter during their investigations might include those purely of proximity and enemies of the characters' efforts. Such possibilities include:

d8	Result
1	A horde of <b>wasteland worms</b> * congregate near the site, drawn by the strange energies forming there.
2	Gangs of <b>cultists</b> and <b>void witnesses</b> who insist on being a part of foretold events follow the frustrated characters everywhere.
3	Powerful rulers about whom mystic revelations are a threat and who wish to put a stop to them actively oppose the characters.
4	An avatar of an elder god in the form of a <b>dread colossus</b> begins walking the wastes, visiting destruction on all in its path.
5	The citizens of a village who have been magically cursed by the foretold events resist all efforts to cure them.
6	A holy order of paladins and clerics who believe any who fool around with ancient prophecies deserve death brings the fury of their dedication upon the characters.
7	A sinister warlock works to bring about the conditions for summoning its patron into the world and doesn't want the characters interfering.
8	A portal to a nether realm opens up when the stars align, spewing forth the vilest creatures to overtake the world unless the portal can be closed again.

## DEVELOPMENT

Uncovering, investigating, or participating in a celestial event or prophecy can have some unintended consequences. Possibilities include:

d8	Result
1	The characters (and anyone with them) become cursed by a magical affliction that must be ritually removed.
2	A rival lich covets what the characters find and sends minions to either negotiate or steal from them.
3	A <b>wasteland dragon</b> is awakened by the events and goes on a rampage.
4	A champion is awakened to defeat the evil foretold by the event but ends up being a worse problem.
5	The characters' actions create a time paradox that they must undo.
6	The event causes the wastes to start healing, which drives some native wasteland creatures into more civilized lands.
7	Because of their interference, a god of portents has made the characters unwilling—and perhaps at first unwitting—vessels of its will.
8	The completion of the ritual causes a great volcano to rise up from the plains, its lava and obsidian a powerful magical component for many spells.



ties from  
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## Waters of Life

The characters learn of a magical source of water that might provide some legendary benefit. Not only must they find it, but they must deal with those who would protect it or claim it for their own.

### SETUP

The characters can learn of the magical font, and its nature, in a variety of ways. Some options include:

#### d8 Result

- 1 The characters learn of a hidden spring that serves as a portal to another realm.
- 2 The characters are invited to visit a monastic bathhouse where those who bathe are granted extra years of youth and vitality.
- 3 The characters hear of a special *decanter of endless water* that produces magical effects like potions.
- 4 The characters are given a basin that purports to grant wishes when filled with **wasteland worm's\*** blood.
- 5 The characters learn of a human whose blood acts as a scrying device.
- 6 The characters read about a means of creating a magic font, but they must collect rare resources to do so.
- 7 The characters meet an elemental being of water that is the magical font but is shy and flees anyone and everyone who tries to interact with it.
- 8 The characters must pay off a debt by standing watch over a magical fountain for some specific length of time.

### ENVIRONMENT

A magical font or similar source of power will almost always be in a remote, difficult-to-reach location. Some places include:

#### d8 Result

- 1 A fountain is in the middle of a flying city hovering over the wastes that might or might not be abandoned.
- 2 The magic flows forth within a cave in a remote mountain range.
- 3 The magical waters are frozen within a glacier.
- 4 The source of the magical waters is kept under lock and key in a lonesome tower and guarded by many dangerous creatures.
- 5 A natural waterfall at the edge of the world serves as the source of the magic.
- 6 The source of the magical waters is contained inside a great beast, such as a **tarrasque** or an **ancient wasteland dragon\***.
- 7 The magical waters flow from a portal to a plane of magic found at the bottom of a cenote in the remote, warped jungle wastes.
- 8 The magical waters shoot up as a geyser in the middle of a great sulfuric- and fumarole-pocked caldera.

## ENEMIES

Enemies of the characters will try to prevent them from finding and using the magic of the water source. Some foes could be:

d8	Result
1	A <b>necromancer troll</b> * whose work would be ruined should the source be disturbed opposes the characters.
2	A chaos-warped spirit of water such as a <b>water elemental</b> that guards the source and the environs immediately around it tries to chase the heroes away.
3	An extraplanar being such as the <b>Void Lord</b> *, who wants to reroute the flow of the magic through a portal and onto another plane, always seems to be one step ahead of the heroes.
4	A gathering of creatures such as <b>giant crocodiles</b> or <b>warped treants</b> * live in the vicinity of the waters and will be difficult to avoid.
5	The citizens of a village whose livelihoods are based on trading the water's magic for other necessities cannot thrive if the heroes disturb the source.
6	A band of <b>chaos reavers</b> * want to drive off the rightful owners of the waters and claim the source of magic for themselves.
7	The magical waters are protected in an ancient temple by a group of <b>cult fanatics</b> and their unholy leader.
8	The waters themselves are very dangerous, overflowing with magical energy that threatens all who approach too closely.

## DEVELOPMENT

Finding or defending an enchanted spring or similar source of magic is often only half the story. Often, possession or knowledge of the site leads to complications, such as:

d8	Result
1	The characters' or their enemies' actions cause the source to begin drying up.
2	The characters' or the enemies' actions cause the source to warp into something much less beneficial.
3	Discovery of the site draws the unwanted attention of several powerful arcane or extraplanar creatures.
4	Benefiting from the source of magic drains the lifeforce of other creatures that live in the vicinity.
5	Benefiting from the source of magic creates a dependency on it that must be replenished in greater amounts over time, or else the beneficial effects are doubly reversed, causing withering and decay.
6	Bottling and taking the magical waters elsewhere brings the chaos effects of the wastes to the new location, as well.
7	The benefits of the waters actually spreads like a pandemic, granting more and more of the population odd arcane or healing powers.
8	The effects of the magical waters applies an anti-magical aura upon any who drink it, making their other magical abilities and equipment useless to them.



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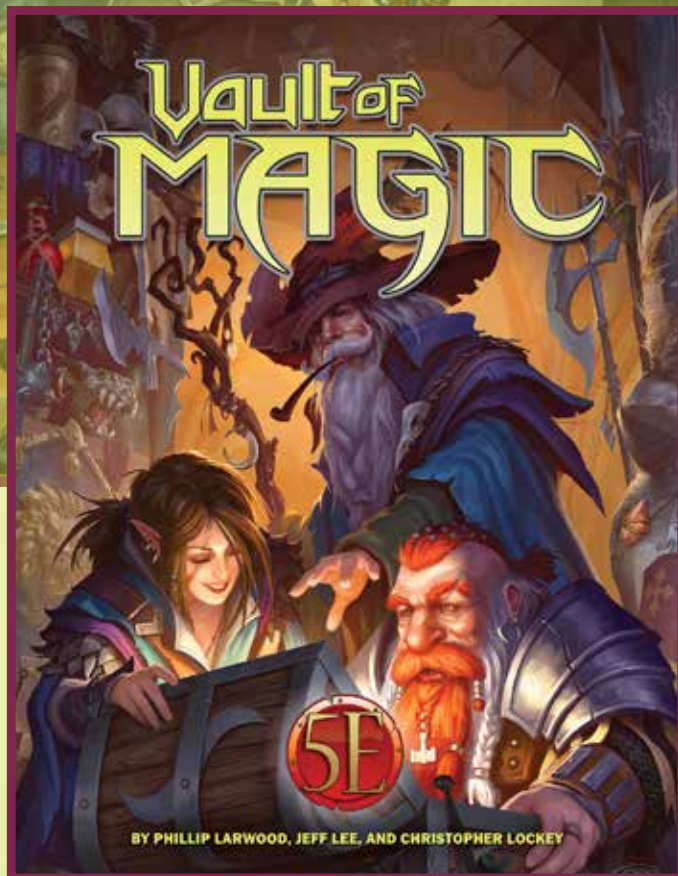
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