

Queen of the Shadows



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Introduction

That night in Medrok started like any other night. The air was cool and quiet. What few clouds dotted the night sky did little to block the fat, white moon and twinkling stars above. Children lay in their beds dreaming of heroes slaying dragons while the citizens of Medrok gathered around fires to unwind after a long week's worth of work.

But then the screaming started. A black mist bled down the streets of Medrok. It seeped around corners. It crept under doors. This mist was hardly some meteorological hazard. Loathsome undead creatures called shadows brought the mist with them, all borne from the bodies of the recently deceased. The touch of a shadow drained the vitality from the living. Non-evil creatures who fell victim to their enervating touch rose as shadows within the hour, doomed just like their makers to interminably lust for life force. Only inherently evil creatures were spared their hunger.

A few hours after the mist first appeared, all of Medrok's citizens lay dead, victims of the shadows' touch. Then, their shadows darkened and broke free, cursed to join the shadow army's ranks. Leading this army of the undead was a pale-faced woman whose mind boiled with grisly thoughts of vengeance; her name was Celestina. Of course, the rare few who witnessed her called her something else entirely: Queen of the Shadows.

About This Adventure

Queen of the Shadows is a Fifth Edition adventure for **three to five characters of 5th to 7th level** and is optimized for a party of **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 6**. The adventure works best with a party of evil characters whose unsavory pasts will grant them a distinct advantage over the dangers presented in this adventure. Good characters are possible but might find themselves the target of many of the creatures in this adventure, especially the shadows. This adventure is designed to easily fit into any campaign world of your choice and is very much at home in a dark fantasy campaign setting. See the section "A Dark Fantasy Setting" for details on setting the right tone for this adventure. In the Omeria campaign setting, the locations in this adventure could be set around Steel Church, the Knotside Region, or even around the city-state of Cabal.

Adventure Summary

The adventure is divided into four distinct chapters, each one focused on an important set of events that we recommend you follow. Of course, feel free to change the adventure as you see fit.

Chapter 1 puts the characters, prisoners in Medrok's dungeon, at ground zero of Celestina's attack on Medrok during the Night of Shadows. Spared thanks to their evil alignment or some secret in their background, the characters flee the city before the dead start to rise.

Chapter 2 offers two paths to the return to Medrok depending on how good they are at lying low after their escape. If they successfully navigate the wilderness and reach the inn The Mannered Bear, they learn that their special 'advantage' allows them to enter Medrok unnoticed by the shadows. The Mannered Bear's owners convince them to rob a large national reserve at the center of the city. However, if the characters were tracked down by a bounty hunter called Red Tatiana, she offers a proposal: re-enter Medrok and defeat Celestina and her shadows.

If the characters are working for Red Tatiana, she tells them to investigate the village of Gdasko to potentially learn more about Celestina. **Chapter 3** details the village of Gdasko and two locations where the characters can find clues that point to Celestina's origin.

Whether they're working with The Mannered Bear's owners or under directions from Red Tatiana, in **Chapter 4**, the characters return to Medrok. In Medrok, they have two main paths as decided by their decisions up to this point. If they are under orders of Red Tatiana, they must confront Celestina at The Melody Opera House. If they are working for the owners of The Mannered Bear, they must break into the Pennerton Exchequer Bank and steal its reserve. Finally, the characters can also claim the gold that a fellow inmate stored at a safehouse in the city.

Running NPC Party Members

There are multiple opportunities for the characters to form alliances with non-player characters (NPCs) throughout this adventure. Typically, these NPCs are controlled by the GM. However, there are times in this adventure when a friendly NPC might join the party for one or more game sessions. If roleplaying that NPC becomes a burden to you, see if one of your players is willing to run the NPC as a secondary character.

Running the Adventure

To run the adventure, you need the three Fifth Edition core rulebooks. If you don't have a copy, you can access a free basic rule set from the official source.

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

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

Dark Themes

The Queen of Shadows is both a horror story and an adventure created for evil players. As such, there are many dark themes in this adventure, including murder, theft, torture, and other elements that some players might find discomforting. Be sure to speak with your players before you run this adventure about these themes to ensure that everybody knows what to expect and/or avoid. Naturally, you can remove any element of the story that you don't feel is appropriate for your table.

Spells and nonmagical equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core manual for players. *Magic items* are described in the core manual for game masters, unless the adventure's text directs you to an item's description in the Appendix.

Using the Maps

This book contains several interior maps used in the adventure. You can also get the full map pack from DMDave's Patreon preset for Virtual Tabletop (VTT) play. Unless stated or marked otherwise, the maps are positioned so that the north side of the map is at the top of the map and all grid squares equal five feet.

A Dark Fantasy Setting

Queen of the Shadows takes place in a nameless dark fantasy setting. In such a setting, magic is usually seen as evil, and those who practice it are often warped and corrupted by its influence. Even the most mundane magic items might be evil, too—in fact, part of the plot of this adventure revolves around an evil *ring of three wishes*.

The Kingdom of Balaspatak featured in this adventure is a massive, powerful force that uses its unjust laws and expansive military to bend people to its will. Although the majority of Balaspatak's citizens and soldiers are good, many of the members of Balaspatak's royal court are villainous politicians and masters of intrigue.

The campaign also assumes that religion is another tool used by people in power to bend people to their will. Although the gods impart some of their magical ability to clerics and acolytes, the gods are seen more as unforgiving or careless deities who are better left alone lest they bring down their wrath on the land. And most clerics reserve their power for those willing to pay for it.

Heroes are few and far between in this setting, too. Most adventurers are mercenaries who only care about earning coin and rarely do "the right thing." While there are certainly a few knights in shining armor who offer a hand where needed, these rare folks are either secretly evil or quickly killed by vile creatures who don't play by the same rules as they do.

Character Creation

Before starting the adventure, consider spending your first game session explaining the dark fantasy setting in which this adventure takes place. This adventure works

best with evil characters, so be sure to ask plenty of questions regarding the characters' pasts. What drives them to perform evil deeds? What crimes did they commit that (possibly) placed them in Medrok's Judicer's Hall? Do they have a secret that they wish to keep from the other players? Can they be redeemed?

Character Secrets

The Queen of the Shadows asset pack contains secrets that you can print or photocopy, cut out, and share with players in your home games. As the players create their characters, decide whether you want each party member to have a secret or not. The secrets are designed to drive home the fact that the characters in this adventure are antiheroes whose ambitions may not be in line with the party's.

Determine each character's secret by having that character's player draw a random card from the deck. If a player doesn't like the secret they've drawn, or if the secret is a bad fit for the character, let the player discard the first draw and pick another card. Each character gets one secret to start with. Some of the secrets are benign, others not so much.

Using Secrets

The following suggestions are offered to help you make the most out of the secrets included in this adventure.

Con Artist. The character's last mark was Judge Virgil Lacusta. Lacusta hopes to make the character's life a living hell as long as they're a prisoner in Medrok.

Conspiracy Theorist. Understanding her plight, the character has advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to interact with Celestina.

Cult Leader. The artifacts that the character discovers within the vaults in the Pennerton Exchequer Bank might serve as proof that the character's god exists.

Doombringer. The character automatically passes any Intelligence (History) checks related to the ring of three wishes and the insidians.

Master Thief. The character is very familiar with the contents of the Pennerton Exchequer Bank—and knows that there's a secret entrance to get inside. The character has advantage on checks made to traverse the sewers (see Chapter 4).

Murderer. The shadows of the friends and family members of those who the character killed track and haunt the character whenever they're in Medrok.

Mutineer. The character can easily find a ride aboard any seafaring vessel.

Necromancer. The night before The Night of Shadows, the character dreams of a pale woman with long, black hair holding a ring with three gems. Two of the three gems give off a purplish glow.

Re-Distributor. Drago and his bandits have heard of the character and revere them as a hero of the people. That character has advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to convince Drago and his team to join the characters.

Rebel. The character already knows the owners of The Mannered Bear and trusts them.

Scum. The character's been imprisoned in the Medrok Judicer's Hall before; they have advantage on ability checks to avoid attacks and the wrath of the guards. The character also knows at least one of the secrets of the prison.

Shadowless. At some point when the characters are in Medrok for the second time, the character's original shadow appears and attacks the character.

Traitor. The character was previously a guard at the Medrok Judicer's Hall and knows all of its secrets. However, they are always the target of the guard's attacks and have disadvantage on ability checks to avoid their wrath (see the section Guard Bullies in Chapter 1 for details).

Vigilante. There are inmates at the Medrok Judicer's Hall who were put away thanks to the character's previous efforts. They now seek vengeance.

Prisoners

All of the secrets in this adventure place the characters in the Medrok Judicer's Hall for one reason or another, and the majority of those secrets see the characters as prisoners. If a character is a non-spellcaster, they are in one of the cells on the first sub-level, possibly sharing that cell with another character or NPC. Spellcasting characters and those with magical abilities—such as ki, innate spells from their racial features, psionics, etc.—are kept in the antimagic solitary cells on the second sub-level of the hall. All prisoner characters start without weapons, armor, and equipment. All they have is the clothing on their backs.

Because playing the role of a prisoner might make some players feel restricted, be sure to discuss this element of the game with your players before you start. If your players aren't interested in being incarcerated, you can just as easily start the adventure at Chapter 2 with the assumption that the characters previously escaped Medrok together.

Redemption

This adventure is designed almost exclusively for evil characters. The story presents multiple opportunities for characters to perform unselfish acts. While such deeds would normally be encouraged in a typically heroic fantasy adventure module, doing good places characters at risk of becoming good—which means they will be targeted by the adventure's hungry shadows.

Any time an evil character performs a good act, have them make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, an evil character's alignment shifts to neutral (for example, a chaotic evil character would become chaotic neutral). On a successful saving throw, the character's alignment remains unchanged.

A character's alignment automatically reverts if they commit another selfish crime or activity. The trigger for this realignment should be on par with the event that originally turned them good. For example, if a character saves an innocent person from death and turns away from evil because of the deed, they must kill a non-evil person to regain their evil alignment.

It's up to you whether or not you share a character's alignment shift with them. If you do keep it a secret and the character is attacked by shadows, use a story technique like a flashback to the previous event that changed their alignment to remind them why they are no longer evil. "As the shadow's dark touch starts to drain your vitality, you suddenly see the face of the woman you saved from the hill giants."

Moderato

First system of a musical score in 3/4 time, marked Moderato. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The right hand is mostly silent, with a few notes in the final measure. The left hand plays a series of chords, starting with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the final measure of the system.

Second system of the musical score. The right hand features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a quarter note, and then a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The left hand continues with chords, including a triplet of eighth notes in the fourth measure. A measure number '10' is written above the right hand in the fourth measure.

Third system of the musical score. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a quarter note, and then a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The left hand continues with chords, including a triplet of eighth notes in the fourth measure.

Fourth system of the musical score. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a quarter note, and then a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The left hand continues with chords, including a triplet of eighth notes in the fourth measure.



Chapter 1. 'Through the Night to You'

This chapter introduces the characters as criminals interred in the dungeon below the city of Medrok. The characters must fight to survive in their new environment as they handle despicable politicians, cruel guards, and vicious inmates. The characters may try to escape with the help of an ally named Emilian.

Failing that, they can escape when all of the guards are killed during The Night of the Shadows.

Running This Chapter

For whatever reasons, the players decided on before the start of the adventure, their characters find themselves in the Medrok Judicer's Hall when the Night of Shadows occurs and Medrok falls. The shadows spare the characters and a few NPCs. However, the majority of Medrok's citizens aren't so lucky. Every non-evil living creature in Medrok lies dead in the streets, their life essence drained by the touch of Celestina's shadow army. After a few hours, the citizens' shadows break away and rise from their corpses.

Soon, Medrok becomes a wasteland that no living creature would dare enter. With the help of a few useful NPCs, the characters flee the city.

Character Advancement

In this chapter, the characters advance to 7th level after they escape the Medrok Judicer's Hall or find a way to flee the city of Medrok during The Night of Shadows.

Medrok Judicer's Hall

Medrok's Judicer's Hall functions as Medrok's courthouse, town hall, and dungeons. Medrok's dungeons are so well-known and feared throughout the land, they have a nickname: the Tenth Layer. The hall is divided into three levels. The ground level serves as its administrative buildings and courts where most of Medrok's trials are held. Below the building are its two dungeons. The uppermost dungeon level hosts cells for non-spellcasters and other mundane humanoids. The lower dungeon is used for its most dangerous criminals, particularly spellcasters. Much of the lower dungeon is warded with *antimagic fields*.

General Features

Unless stated otherwise, the Judicer's Hall has the following features.

Architecture. The majority of the hall's ceilings, floors, and walls are made from worked brick and stone. Ceilings on the ground floor rise 20 feet above the floor, while the ceilings in the dungeon level are only 12 feet high.

Doors. There are two common types of doors found throughout the Judicer's Hall, detailed below. All of the doors in the Judicer's Hall are kept locked at all times. Regardless of the material from which a door is made, it takes a successful DC 17 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools to unlock one of these doors or a successful DC 21 Strength (Athletics) check to force the door open.

Sturdy Oak Doors. Many of the doors on the ground level are made from sturdy oaken planks bound with iron. These doors have AC 16, 20 hp (damage threshold 5), and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Barred Doors. The dungeon level's barred doors are made of iron. These doors have AC 19, 25 hp (damage threshold 5), resistance to piercing damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Illumination. Candles, torches, and lanterns hang throughout the entirety of the Judicer's Hall night and day, brightly illuminating the complex. Even after the shadows attack the building, the lights remain intact.

Private Sanctum. The entirety of the Judicer's Hall is protected by the spell *private sanctum*. In parts of the dungeon protected by *antimagic fields*, the antimagic fields overrule the *private sanctum*'s effects (but more or less cause the same restrictions).

Organization of Keyed Locations. The maps and keyed locations assume that the characters start as prisoners within the hall's dungeons.

NPCs of the Judicer's Hall

In addition to many of the nameless nonplayer characters (NPCs) throughout the Judicer's Hall, there are a few important NPCs that the players' characters will have a chance to interact with throughout this chapter of the adventure. Each of these NPCs is detailed below.

Sergeant Dracul "The Dragon" Cardei

"The Dragon" oversees the dungeon's guards and is equally feared and loathed by the dungeon's inmates.

Temperamental and sadistic, Cardei enjoys causing pain wherever he can. Cardei is a forty-two-year-old lawful evil human **bandit captain**. Celestina's shadows spare him during the Night of the Shadows.

Judge Virgil Lacusta

A despicable man if there ever was one, Judge Virgil Lacusta thrives on punishing the wicked. When he's not at his bench, he's downstairs helping the guards work over inmates who "won't talk" in one of the interrogation rooms. Judge Lacusta is a sixty-seven-year-old lawful evil human **noble**. Celestina's shadows spare him during the Night of the Shadows.

Mayor Haralamb Prunea

Although it's unlikely that the characters will ever interact with Prunea before the fourth chapter of this adventure, Prunea is a key player in the overall story. Prunea is

Medrok's slimy mayor and Celestina's former lover. He spends most of his days hiding in his office on the ground floor of the Judicer's Hall. He is a fifty-three-year-old lawful evil human **noble**. Celestina's shadows seize Prunea during the Night of the Shadows to "stand trial" for his actions.

Unnamed NPCs of the Judicer's Hall

Beyond the important NPCs described above, it would be a big ask to have you learn all of the other NPCs' names, features, traits, and personalities. Therefore, to simplify things a bit, this adventure organizes the NPCs of the Judicer's Hall as follows:

Administrators. The Judicer's Hall's administrators include its clergy members, judges, and other non-martial personnel who see to the hall's day-to-day operations. Except for the named NPCs in this adventure, all administrators use the **noble** stat block and are either lawful neutral or lawful good. Nearly all of the administrators are indifferent toward the dungeon's inmates. In the absence of guards, the administrators are downright afraid of the inmates. Administrators avoid combat whenever possible.

Visitors. Most visitors to the Judicer's Hall stay on the ground level. Unless stated otherwise, visitors are lawful neutral or lawful good **commoners**. Unless they know someone personally, visitors are often indifferent towards the inmates. Even in the presence of guards, most visitors are downright afraid of the inmates. Visitors avoid combat whenever possible.

Guards. The guards of the Judicer's Hall use two stat blocks: **guards** and **thugs**. The guards working on the first dungeon level and many of the guards throughout the ground floor use the **guard** stat block. The criminals on the lowest level are guarded by **thugs**. Regardless of stat block, most of the guards are indifferent to the inmates. These guards are either neutral, lawful neutral, or lawful good. A few of the guards and thugs are outwardly hostile to the inmates. These guards are either neutral evil or lawful evil. The guards prefer to fight in large numbers, usually three to one. Overall, they use "divide and conquer" tactics, ensuring that the inmates won't get the upper hand. They use the hall's various doors (which automatically lock when closed) as cover and will pull weapons from one of the guard stations when necessary. Lower-level criminals aren't allowed out of their cells unless they are manacled. Even then, those who have the potential for magic and spellcasting are never allowed outside of the *antimagic fields* that protect the lowest level.

Inmates. In addition to the characters, the prison houses thirty inmates. Inmates on the first level of the dungeon use the **commoner** stat block. Although they aren't supposed to have weapons, some of the inmates might have makeshift daggers and clubs. These weapons count as improvised weapons with which the inmates are proficient. The first level's inmates are usually neutral, chaotic neutral, neutral evil, or chaotic evil, and they can be friendly, indifferent, or hostile towards the characters. The second level of the dungeon's inmates are described in the areas where they are discovered as detailed below.

First Dungeon Level Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the Map of the Judicer's Hall's first dungeon level on pages 10 and 12.

1 - Cellblock West

Cellblock west contains criminals who lack spellcasting or magic-like abilities. Currently, there are thirteen inmates (see the NPCs of the Judicer's Hall for details) housed in this section of the dungeon.

During daylight hours, the inmates can move freely throughout their cells and the common area (1a). At night, the inmates must return to their respective cells, which are then locked. The doors leading to area 2 are always kept locked. There are three **guards** who keep watch in this area day and night.

2 - Ambulatory

This narrow hallway runs through the center of the first dungeon level. All of the doors are kept locked. There are four **guards** who patrol this hallway at all hours.

Secret Door. Although it's not a "secret" to the inmates, per se, the door that leads to the second level is hidden in the southern wall. Finding the door without prior knowledge of its existence requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. This door is always kept locked.

3 - Cellblock East

This cellblock is identical to cellblock west, except it only holds twelve inmates.

4 - Secret Stairs

Two sets of stairs connect this level to the second dungeon level. The west stairs go to area 9a, while the east stairs go to area 15.

5 - Cafeteria

The cafeteria serves breakfast from 7:00 am until 9:00 am, lunch from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm, and dinner from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Inmates are ushered into the cafeteria in groups of seven to eight. During service, two **guards** keep watch here.

The kitchen is managed by the inmates who prepare all the meals. Two trusted inmates are always stationed in the kitchen with a third acting as a busser and janitor.

6 - Privies and Cleaning Stalls

Inmates are ushered by a single **guard** to the bathrooms in groups of three once every half hour. There is always at least one guard stationed here. All inmates have fifteen minutes to do their business. The door that leads into this area is usually left unlocked for simplicity's sake.

7 - Guardroom

There is always one **guard** here at night, and two during the day. The doors are always kept locked. The weapons locker contains all of the weapons that the guards use during their shifts, as well as gear they use during rare riots. Those weapons include maces, light crossbows, and shields. There are also sleep bombs and anti-sleep-bomb potions which the guards can use for crowd control (see the sidebar).

The staircase at the rear of the guard room leads up to area 20.

8 - Processing

New convicts are brought down the stairs from area 20 to be processed here. They are stripped of their clothing,

Sleep Bombs

A sleep bomb is a special device that emits a gas that causes creatures that inhale the fumes to fall unconscious. As an action, a creature can throw a sleep bomb at a point up to 60 feet away. One round after the bomb lands, it emits a cloud of smoke that creates a heavily obscured area in a 20-foot radius. A moderate wind (at least 10 miles per hour) disperses the smoke in 4 rounds; a strong wind (20 or more miles per hour) disperses it in 1 round. Any creature that starts its turn within the smoke must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour. While poisoned in this way, the creature is unconscious. The creature wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake. A creature who ingests an anti-sleep-bomb potion is immune to the effects of a sleep bomb for 1 hour.

thoroughly searched, scrubbed clean, and deloused. From there, they are given their clothing and ushered to their cell.

Second Dungeon Level Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the Map of the Judicer's Hall's second dungeon level on page 10. This entire level is subject to an *antimagic field* as per the spell.

9 - Solitary

Inmates that are too dangerous to join the general population are kept in these eight cells. These prisoners are rarely—if ever—allowed out of these cells. The cells are only ever opened to remove waste and toss for contraband.

Two **thugs** keep watch in the hallway outside these cells (area 9a). A minimum of three heavily armed thugs are required to escort prisoners from these cells. Furthermore, the prisoners must have their arms and feet manacled and a bit placed in their mouths to further protect against spellcasting.

10 - Torture Room

Inmates who fail to adhere to the rules are brought here to the torture room. Most punishments are administered by Sergeant Cardei.

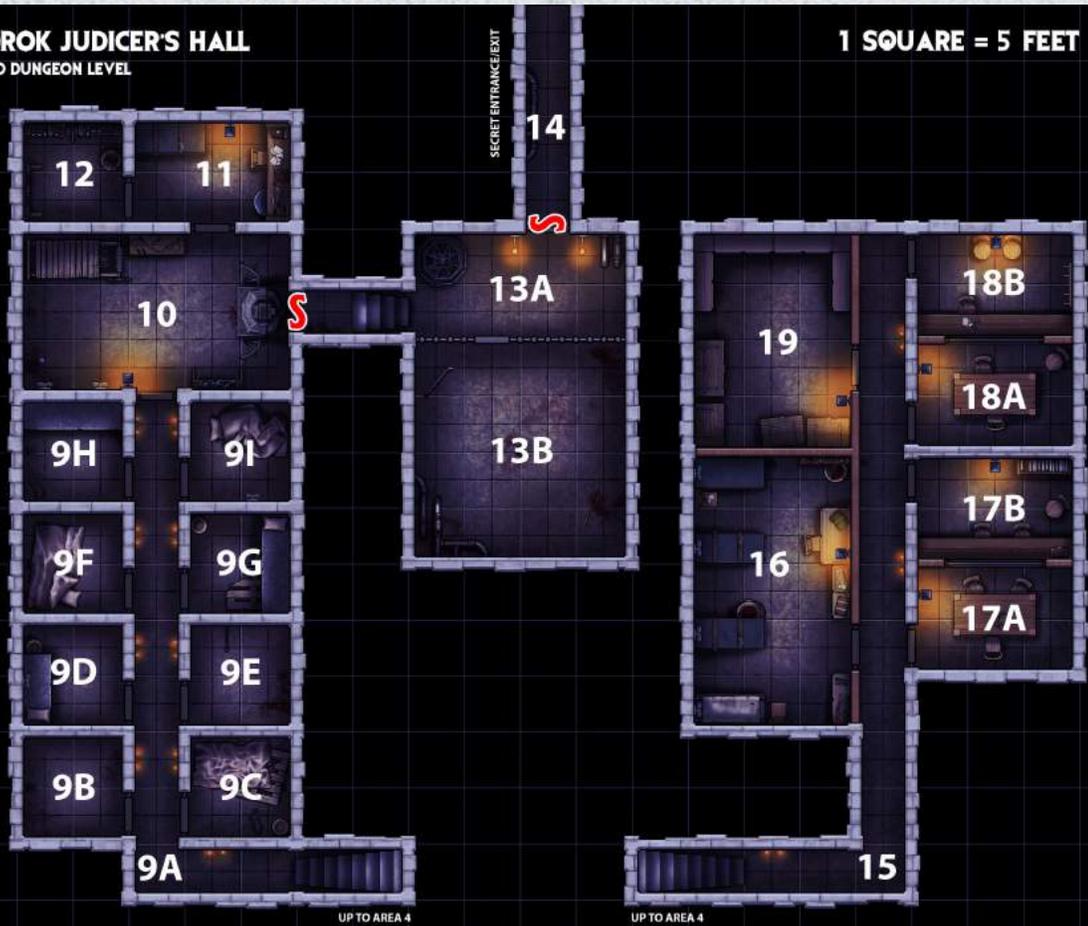
Secret Door. There is a locked secret door hidden behind the iron maiden. Finding the door requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. To open the door, a key must be inserted into the base of the iron maiden. Discovering this feature requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Then, the typical check to pick locks (in lieu of a key) must be performed to open the door.

11 - Research Room

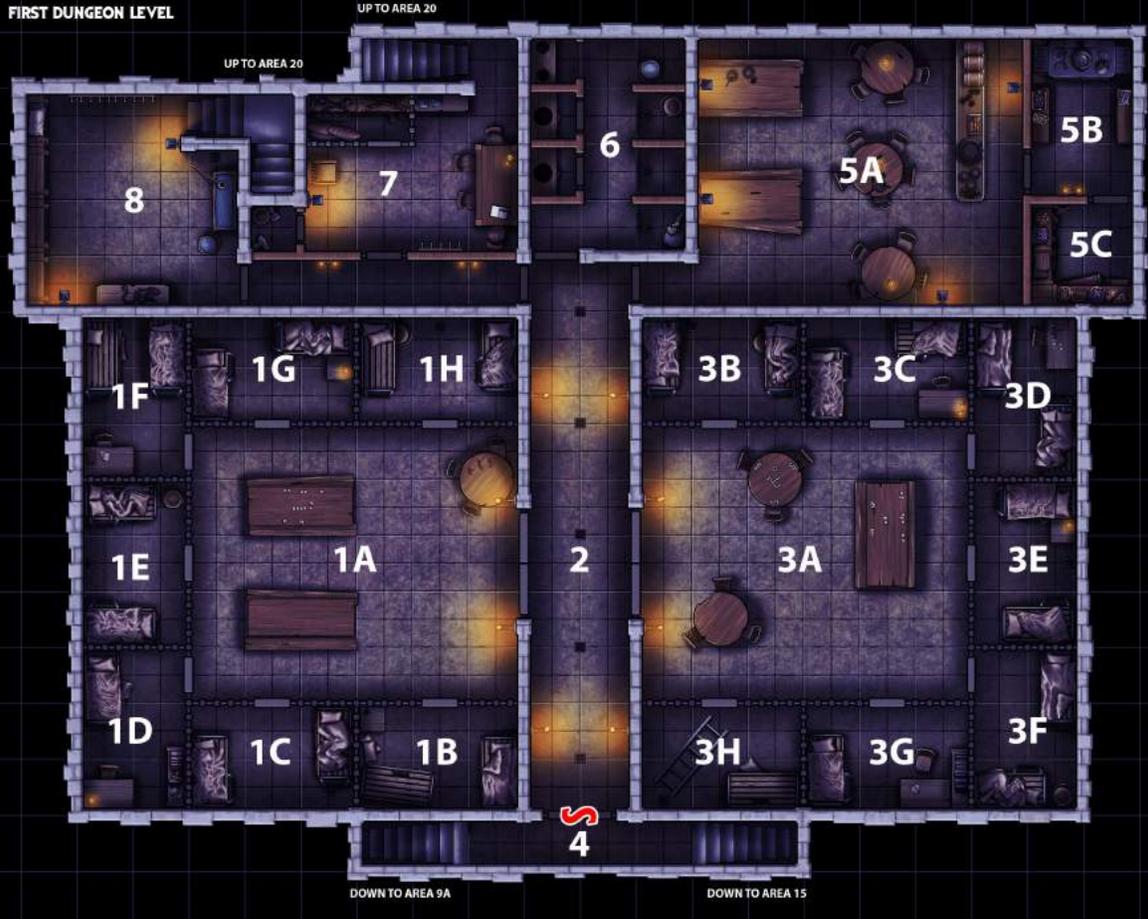
Natural spellcasters such as sorcerers are an area of intense interest for Judge Virgil Lacosta. With the help of Sergeant Cardei and the thugs that run this section of the Judicer's Hall, Lacosta "interviews" these spellcasters and performs research upon them to better understand their nature.

MEDROK JUDICER'S HALL
SECOND DUNGEON LEVEL

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



FIRST DUNGEON LEVEL



Sensitivity Warning

While it's suggested that you don't show the actual scenes of torture in this adventure—after all, a few hints and suggestions are far more effective than gory details—you might want to have the constant threat of the torture rooms hang over the characters' heads, especially if they are sorcerers or consistent troublemakers. Always be sure to consult your players before putting them in a position that might trouble or disturb them.

12 - "Tool Shed"

All of the malicious devices that the thugs on this level use to command respect from the solitary inmates are kept in this room dubbed "the tool shed." There are over a dozen tools designed for torture kept in this closet. Treat each "tool" kept in this area as a simple melee weapon that deals 1d6 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (varies by weapon). All of these weapons have the light property.

13 - Enhanced Interrogation Room

When the typical methods fail to produce results, uncooperative inmates are brought into this cell where they are worked over by this level's thugs, typically under the supervision of Judge Lacosta. It's not uncommon for a bloodied victim to lie locked up in the cell (13b) after suffering an "interrogation."

Secret Exit. There is a locked secret door hidden in the northern wall. Finding the door requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. To open the door, the left torch must be pulled aside to reveal a hidden keyhole and latch. Finding this feature requires a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The door leads to area 14.

14 - Secret Tunnel

This secret tunnel connects with the sewers below the city of Medrok. Although it hasn't been used in years (it's covered in cobwebs and rat feces), it does offer a safe way out of the hall in case there's a riot or other emergency.

15 - East Wing Ambulatory

This long hallway extends from the secret stairs that lead back up to the first dungeon floor to the northern end of the building.

16 - Sick Bay

Sick and injured inmates are treated here. An inmate in this area must be restrained to the bed (escape DC 20). There is usually one medical professional here, a **noble** with proficiency in Medicine.

Treasure. The cabinet against the southern wall holds six *potions of healing* plus enough supplies to create three healer's kits. The cabinet is always kept locked.

Picking the lock requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. Breaking the doors open requires a successful DC 15 Strength check.

17 - Interview Room A

This pair of rooms serve as an area for the building's administrators to interrogate suspects and inmates. The southernmost room (17a) is where the actual

interview happens. Meanwhile, observers watch from behind the two-way glass (17b) that divides the rooms.

18 - Interrogation Room B

This room is identical to area 17.

19 - Inmate Property Storage

When convicts are interred in the hall's dungeon, all of their possessions are stripped and locked in this area.

Treasure. If the characters start this adventure as prisoners, this room holds all of the starting gear that they would normally receive minus rations, water, and coins. Beyond the character's goods, the area also holds plenty of sets of clothing, weapons, and other knickknacks confiscated from the dungeon's other inmates.

Ground Level Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the Map of the Judicer's Hall's ground level on page 12.

20 - Guard Station

This guard station connects directly to both the guard station (area 7) and processing room (area 8) on the first dungeon level. There are two **guards** stationed here in the day and one at night.

21 - Temporary Holding Cell

Inmates participating in hearings and trials are kept within this small, locked cell.

22 - Prison Yard

Prisoners who behave themselves are allowed fresh air in this small, rugged yard. The yard's fences are 20 feet high and covered in barbs. Climbing the fence requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check and deals 1 piercing damage to the climber each round they remain on the fence.

23 - Judge's Chambers

Judge Virgil Lacusta works from this office at the north end of the building. He can usually be found here in the early morning before court and in the late afternoon. Unless the judge is present, the door to this office is usually kept locked.

Treasure. Lacusta keeps a bottle of thirty-year-old brandy in his lower drawer. The bottle is worth 20 gp (not drunk, of course).

24 - Hallway

During the day, visitors, guards, and administrators crowd this wide hallway. The paintings on the walls depict Judge Lacusta, Mayor Prunea, and the Judicer's Hall's founder, Judge Georgina Saguna.

25 - Courtroom

Court sessions in this large chamber last from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm every workday. Judge Lacusta presides over all cases in Medrok. If Lacusta cannot make the bench, court is canceled and appointments are rescheduled. While in session, there are 1d4 guards, 3d6 visitors, 1d2 inmates, and 1d4 administrators present. Three small closets at the rear of the courtroom hold files on every case to pass through the court for the last six years. Older files are kept elsewhere.



26 - Town Hall

This chamber acts as the room where Medrok's citizens can air their grievances to Mayor Prunea and the city's ministers. Townhall is held once per week at 6:00 pm and lasts for two hours. During this time, there are 4d6 visitors present, 1d6 administrators (representing Medrok's ministers), and 1d2 guards. There is a seventy-five percent chance that Prunea skips the town hall meeting in favor of visiting the opera.

27 - Lobby

The lobby is the only way for visitors to enter the building. During the day, two guards stand just within the doors, and there is a third that sits at the station at the center of the room. There is only a single guard here at night.

The doors that lead to areas 28 and 29 are kept locked at all times.

28 - Meeting Room

Important meetings are held in this bookshelf-wrapped office. When not in use, the doors are kept locked. The side door is kept locked during all hours.

29 - Mayor's Office

Mayor Haralamb Prunea uses this room as his office. He spends most of his days hiding here from his wife and the townsfolk. The door is always locked.

Treasure. Prunea keeps a purse holding 20 gp in the desk.

30 - Main Entrance

The doors are open to the public during the day but kept locked at night. Two guards flank these double doors during the day.

Events

Below are a series of events that occur while the characters are within the Judicer's Hall. These events are written under the assumption that the characters are prisoners in the Judicer's Hall. For characters who aren't prisoners, you may need to devise other ways through which they will be present for any of these events, especially the final event, Night of the Shadows.

The event "Welcome to the Pit" comes first and the "Night of Shadows" comes last. Otherwise, you're free to play out the other events in any order you like.

Welcome to the Pit

The first event introduces the characters—as newly inducted prisoners in the Medrok Judicer Hall's dungeons—to their new way of life.

Non-magical prisoners. Characters who lack spellcasting abilities—or any sort of magical abilities such as ki—are first processed in area 8. All of their belongings are removed and stored in area 19. They are searched, scrubbed, and deloused. After receiving one set of clothing that consists of an off-white top with matching trousers and a pair of slippers, they are escorted to an empty cell in general populace. Shortly after they have a chance to settle in, all prisoners are called out to the central area. Judge Lacusta and Sergeant Cardei stand on the other side of the bars.

“This is Sergeant Cardei. I’m Judge Lacusta. You are convicted felons. That’s why you’re here. Rule number one, no blasphemy. I’ll not have the gods’ names taken in vain in my prison. The other rules, you’ll figure out as you go along. Any questions?”

From there, they learn the routine of the dungeon, including mealtimes, bathroom times, and sunset lockdown.

Magical prisoners. Characters with spellcasting abilities and other magical powers, such as ki, don’t have it nearly as good as their nonmagical counterparts. These characters have their arms and legs shackled and their mouths gagged. These characters completely avoid the processing steps of the standard population. Instead, they are interred in one of the eight cells in area 9 first. A single thug removes their belongings, searches them, and scrubs them. This is all done while the character remains restrained. Once finished, the character’s shackles and gags are removed, and they are given one set of clothing that consists of an orange top with matching trousers and a pair of slippers. Three meals are pushed in through a slot at the bottom of the door three times per day. Magical prisoners who behave themselves are allowed one non-magical book from storage to read. These prisoners are rarely allowed to leave their cells.

Troublemakers

Shortly after the non-magical characters are interred in the dungeon’s general populace, a gang of inmates approaches them, demanding respect. The gang consists of six **commoners** armed with concealed homemade knives (treat them as daggers) led by a **bandit captain** armed with a club and without armor (AC 13). One or more characters can convince the gang to back off with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check (character’s choice). If a fight breaks out, guards step in to break up the fight in 1d4 rounds. The gang will blame the characters for the fight—the guards, not knowing the characters’ nature—must be persuaded otherwise with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check (character’s choice). If the character fails this check or tries to intimidate the guard, the guard locks them in their cells for twenty-four hours without food or bathroom breaks. If one or more characters are especially violent, they might find themselves in one of the solitary confinement cells.

Screws

Sergeant Cardei is a cruel man and a terrible bully. After a week or two of being cooped up in the dungeon, have the characters all make Charisma (Deception, Performance, or Persuasion) checks. The character who rolls the lowest becomes the target for Cardei’s wrath. For the next week, each day, that character must make three checks: Charisma (their choice of Deception or Persuasion), Dexterity (Stealth), and Wisdom (Insight). The DC for each of the checks is 5 + 2d10; generate a separate DC for each one. If desired, another character can replace one of the target character’s skill checks with a Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check (the player’s choice). Consult the Bully Guards table below to see how the character did.

Bully Guards

Result	Outcome
0 successes	The guards attack the character in the night. The character must fight 1d6 + 1 guards plus Cardei alone and unarmed. The guards won’t kill the character but may beat them into unconsciousness.
1 success	The character is denied food, water, and bathroom breaks that day. If they protest, the guards attack the character during the night as described above.
2 success	The character avoids the attention of the guards that day.
3 success	The character is no longer targeted by the guards. The guards choose a new target (either another character or an NPC).

A Simple Plan

A neutral evil human inmate (**commoner**) named Emilian Bengescu pulls aside one of the characters (or speaks to them through the wall, if the character is in solitary confinement) with an interesting proposal.

“I’ve got 10,000 gp stashed in an old house here in the city. Nobody but me knows it’s there. You help me get out of here, and half of it is yours.

“Here’s the plan: there’s a secret exit on the second floor of the dungeon that leads to the sewers. It’s on the north side of the floor, right next to the cell where they work folks over. Both that door and the door that leads to that room are kept locked. All we have to do is find a way to cause a major distraction, grab the keys, and get through those doors.”

Emilian lifts his shirt. On the underside, he’s drawn a crude map of the second floor of the dungeon.

“Once you get me out of here, I’ll tell you exactly where the treasure is. Do we have a deal?”

If the characters agree to Emilian's deal, they will need to devise a way to distract the guards, grab a set of keys from one of them, and escape into the second level of the dungeon, all the while taking Emilian with them. Of course, all of this is easier said than done.

Emilian suggests that the characters first encourage a riot among the prisoners. During the riot, one of the characters—or Emilian, if necessary—pulls the keys off a distracted or unconscious guard. From there, the characters and Emilian escape into the second level.

If the characters like this plan, use the following rules.

Step 1 - Causing a Riot

Causing a riot requires the characters to spend at least one full week (seven days) encouraging their fellow inmates to revolt against the guards. Only characters who are in the general populace will be able to do this. Each day, have one of the characters make a Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check (the player's choice). The DC for each of the checks is 5 + 2d10; generate a separate DC for each one. Only one character can perform the check and cannot receive help from another character. However, a different character can perform a check each day. Keep track of each of the characters' successes and failures. If the party accomplishes five successes before they suffer three failures, they have an overall success. Inversely, if the characters accomplish three failures before they have five successes, then they have an overall failure. Refer to the outcomes below for details.

Overall Success. At the end of the week, the characters successfully trigger a riot which lasts for 15 minutes. When the riot occurs, all of the dungeon's NPC inmates revolt against the guards. One of the inmates (your choice, but likely the toughest of the bunch) takes one of the guards hostage and takes their keys allowing the inmates access to the blocked areas of the dungeon. Most of the guards are distracted during the riot, and thus have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks. The characters will still need to grab the keys off one of the guards (see below).

Note: While the NPC inmates fight the NPC guards and thugs who run the dungeon, you don't have to run their combats. Assume that brawls between inmates and guards last as long as necessary, and unless the characters get involved in a fight, the outcome of such small battles remain inconclusive.

Overall Failure. The guards catch wind of the characters' plot. In the middle of the night, a gang of guards led by Sergeant Cardei surprise each of the characters in their cells. Each character is then brought into one of the sections of the lower dungeon—the solitary cells, if there's room for each individual member of the party, or the interrogation room in area 13b. They must then remain in these cells for at least one week. At the end of the week, the character may make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If the check fails, the character must remain in solitary confinement for an additional week, repeating the check at the end of the week. Otherwise, the character is returned to the general populace. It's possible that one or more characters will be trapped in solitary confinement during the Night of the Shadows.

Step 2 - Getting the Keys

During the riot, the characters must secure one of the guards' keys. There are two ways to do this. They can knock a guard unconscious (or kill the guard) and take their keys that way,

or they can make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check contested by a guard's Wisdom (Perception) check, the latter made at disadvantage.

Note: Killing a guard during the riot earns the characters a permanent spot in solitary confinement (and potentially a death sentence).

Step 3 - Escaping Downstairs

Once the characters secure the keys—or if they devise a clever way to pick locks without keys or thieves' tools—they must first open the secret door that contains the stairs that lead down to the second level. Doing this without being noticed by the guards handling the riot requires the characters to succeed on a DC 7 group Dexterity (Stealth) check; the DC already factors in the guards being distracted during the riot. If the characters are successful, they escape below without any issue. Otherwise, 1d4 + 1 **guards** stop what they're doing to try to stop the characters from escaping.

Step 4 - Getting to the Exit

Once downstairs, the characters will have to make their way through areas 9, 10, 13, and 14. With the keys in hand, they can free any of their companions locked in the solitary confinement cells.

Encounter. During the riot, there are 1d4 + 1 **thugs** in area 9a and 10. These thugs have no qualms killing characters.

Step 5 - Fleeing the City

If the characters successfully run the gauntlet of guards and escape through the secret exit in area 14, they successfully escape. At your discretion, the characters might find themselves amid the Night of the Shadows. Otherwise, Emilian (if he's still alive) convinces them to rendezvous with him and his allies at The Mannered Bear. Proceed to Chapter 2.

Night of the Shadows

After the characters have had a chance to grow accustomed to their new life as prisoners in Medrok, their apparent "tranquility" is disrupted in the middle of the night.

Read the following:

There is a scream. Distant.

Only a few candles illuminate the area. Some of the other inmates rouse from their slumber. "Did you hear that?" someone asks. Only silence replies.

But then...

Another scream. Then another. A chorus of screams.

Terror grips the inmates and guards alike.

At first, the screams are a few hundred feet from where you are. But each new scream is closer than the last. Until...

Just outside of the set of bars nearest to you, a guard rushes into view. There's something wrong with them. Their face is pale, their features sunken. Their clothing sags on their form. With desiccated hands, they clutch their shriveling throat and fall to their knees. Horrifically, their eyes dry out and collapse into their skull and their lips pull tight, revealing their quickly-browning teeth. Even then, it takes a few more seconds for them to die, their last bit of life sliding out of their lungs in an extended death rattle.

Six **shadows** enter the area, barely visible in the darkness. They start to attack the guards and inmates, targeting those with good alignments first. All of the inmates start to scream at the few guards who remain, begging them to let them out of their cells. Much more powerful than their targets, the shadows quickly kill all NPCs they encounter; for the sake of drama, don't worry about making rolls. The shadows have no interest in evil-aligned characters and NPCs and completely ignore them unless attacked. After all of the good- and neutral-aligned characters and NPCs are killed, the shadows leave, searching for more creatures upon whose strength they can feed.

Escaping During the Attack

One of the guards of good alignment manages to open the cells of a few of the inmates before they, too, are attacked by shadows and killed. Before that happens, at least one character is freed (either a character of your choice or a character who has exhibited "good behavior").

Good- and neutral-aligned characters are in danger. The shadows are relentless in their pursuit of the living, and very little outside of sunlight and turn undead will stop them from their assault. Being the middle of the night when this happens, the sun won't rise for six hours.

If Emilian is still alive during the shadows' attack, he encourages the characters to escape through the second level (as detailed in the section above). All of the guards and thugs are too distracted by the shadows to stop the characters from escaping.

Alternatively, the characters can escape through the ground floor, too. If they choose this route, they might encounter some of the less-than-savory NPCs detailed earlier in this adventure, such as Judge Virgil Lacusta and Sergeant Dracul "The Dragon" Cardei. Although they will have been spared by the shadows, the event has chilled them both to their core. This is the perfect opportunity for the characters to enact vengeance upon these dastardly villains.

Mayor Brunei has already been abducted by Celestina and dragged to the opera house, as evidenced by his torn apart office (area 29).

Medrok

When the characters escape the dungeon at Medrok's Judicer's Hall, they emerge into Medrok to discover a scene of intense horror.

Men, women, children, animals—hundreds, if not thousands, of corpses litter the streets of Medrok, the vitality drained from their bodies. Save for the crackle of a few burning torches and dancing wind chimes, silence strangles the city.

Nearby, a dead city guard sits in a slump in the center of the street. The desiccated soldier still grips a burning torch which casts a flickering shadow on the wall behind them. Perhaps it's a trick of the light, but the shadow seems to darken before your very eyes—its jittery motions begin to cease, too.

Celestina's presence and her army of shadows made short work of Medrok, killing every good- and neutral-aligned creature in sight. If the characters remain in the city for an hour or longer, they will witness the shadows of the dead break away from their corpses and gain sentience. Before the sun rises the next day, over forty thousand undead shadows will control all of Medrok.

Escape

How the characters escape is up to them. Of course, there is no one left living to stop them from simply walking or rowing away from the city. Even if Emilian is still with the characters, he suggests they immediately flee the city before the shadows of the dead rise and attack; not even the idea of hidden treasure is enough to entice Emilian to remain in this dead city.

Instead, Emilian suggests that the characters travel 150 miles north of the city into the mountains. He claims that he has a friend who owns a tavern and bar which is friendly towards criminals and mercenaries. There, he suggests that they regroup with some of his companions and determine the best way to approach this new predicament.





Chapter 2. My Darling, Do Not Fear

A week has passed since Medrok fell under Celestina's wave of shadows. The Kingdom of Balaspatak has made a few different attempts to reclaim the city, but to no avail. With few options left, they turn to one last ditch effort—a party of villains. They send their best bounty hunter, Red Tatiana, to locate a group capable of infiltrating the city so they may defeat Celestina.

Running This Chapter

Following their close encounter with Celestina's shadow army during the Night of Shadows, the characters must try to rendezvous with old friends (either theirs or Emilian's) at a remote inn in the north. After a week of laying low and taking odd jobs, a bounty hunter named Red Tatiana tracks them. Tatiana offers the characters a proposition. The Kingdom of Balaspatak wants the characters to enter the city of Medrok and stop the leader of its shadow army. If the characters agree, they will be granted clemency, titles, and land. Clues point to the village of Gdasko, where a blight similar to the one that destroyed Medrok happened a few days prior.

Alternatively, the characters might avoid or resist Balaspatak's bounty hunter in favor of robbing the city's gold reserve.

Character Advancement

If one or more characters are still 6th level at the close of this chapter, they advance to 7th level. Otherwise, their level remains unchanged.

Lying Low

This chapter starts exactly one week after the characters escaped the city of Medrok during the Night of Shadows. In that time, they've traveled 150 miles away to a wilderness inn and tavern called The Mannered Bear. You can have the characters deal with encounters and side quests along the way. You're also free to handwave this travel time and drop the players directly into The Mannered Bear without any trouble. Alternatively, you can use the rules presented below to offer up one or more reasons why it was so easy for Red Tatiana to find them.

Lying Low Skill Challenge

As they travel, the characters must make a series of ability checks with the goal of earning a required number of successes before accumulating a maximum number of failed checks (similar to how death saving throws work). These

checks represent their efforts to travel without being seen, locating supplies, and finding their way safely to The Mannered Bear.

Some of the checks require the party to make a group check. A group check requires all members of the party, plus any NPCs that they are traveling with, to make the check. If at least half the party succeeds on the check, the entire group succeeds. Otherwise, the group check results in a failure.

Other checks only ask that one person makes the roll. Any one of the characters (or even an NPC ally like Emilian) can attempt one or more of the checks. However, only one character can attempt these checks; they can't receive help.

The characters must secure 4 successful checks before they get 3 failures.

After all checks are made, review the Overall Success or Failure section below to determine the outcome of Lying Low.

First Check: Navigation

The characters must find their way to The Mannered Bear. One of the characters must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check.

Success. The characters find a clear path that leads to The Mannered Bear.

Failure. The characters get lost on their way to The Mannered Bear. The characters must repeat the Wisdom (Survival) check to find their way back, and each subsequent time they fail, they must repeat the check again until they succeed, or these checks result in an Overall Failure.

Second Check: Avoiding Trouble

Militia members are patrolling the area, looking for escaped convicts from Medrok. The party has three options to avoid the patrol.

- They can bribe their way past the patrol. To do this, the party must spend at least 100 gp and one character must make a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. They gain a +1 bonus to the check for every additional 100 gp beyond the first they spend bribing the officials.
- They can disguise themselves to sneak past the patrol. The party must make a DC 15 group Charisma (Deception) check to do so.
- They can sneak past the patrol. The party must make a DC 15 group Dexterity (Stealth) check to do so.

Success. The characters successfully get past the patrol without any trouble.

Failure. The patrol attacks the party. The patrol consists of six **tribal warriors** led by a **veteran**. All are mounted on **riding horses**. If the party kills the patrol, this may affect the nature of their deal with The Kingdom of Balaspatak.

Third Check: Help Wanted

While traveling, the party enters a small village that's in need of help. A gang of hill giants has been attacking the village, robbing them of their livestock. Already, the hill giants have killed the village's best warriors. The local military is too tied up in what's happening in Medrok to lend assistance, and the village is poor and can't afford to pay heroes for help. The village begs that the characters help them out of the goodness of their hearts.

Instead of making a check this time, the characters must make a choice. If they avoid helping the villagers, they may continue along their way and they are considered to have another success. However, if the characters agree to help the villagers out of the "goodness of their hearts", there are two consequences. First, helping the villagers results in one automatic failed check. Second, evil characters may put their evil alignment into jeopardy which might harm their chances of defeating Celestina's army later in this adventure. See the section "Redemption" in the Introduction (page 5) for details on how this could affect a character's alignment and bring dire consequences.

To stop the hill giants, the characters merely need to wait in the village for a day. An hour after noon, three **hill giants** descend from the mountains and attack. The hill giants fight until at least one of them is killed. They then flee.

Fourth Check: Red Tatiana

The characters don't know it yet, but they're being pursued by a bounty hunter named Red Tatiana. She's tracked them for the last two days, keeping close tabs on them. If one or more of the party members has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 20 or higher, they notice Red Tatiana trailing them and they have a chance to avoid her. Otherwise, they automatically fail the check below and are none-the-wiser to the bounty hunter's presence.

If the party notices Red Tatiana, the characters must make a DC 16 group Dexterity (Stealth) check to lose her.

Success. The party avoids Red Tatiana and successfully makes it to The Mannered Bear.

Failure. If the party doesn't notice Red Tatiana or they fail their group check, Red Tatiana catches them off guard in the forest before they reach The Mannered Bear. See "The Bounty Hunter" below for details.

Overall Success

If the characters rack up four successful checks or they pass the fourth check successfully, they reach The Mannered Bear and rendezvous with their accomplices there. Proceed to the section titled The Mannered Bear below.

Overall Failure

If the characters rack up three failures or they fail their fourth check, they are ambushed by Red Tatiana and her gang in the wilderness. Proceed to the section titled The Bounty Hunter below.

The Bounty Hunter

If the characters failed their Lying Low checks (see page 16) for details, they are ambushed by the bounty hunter Red Tatiana and her gang of thugs. Where and when this happens is up to you. Tatiana is exceptionally intelligent and will have done her research up to this point. She knows when the characters sleep and which members she and her team should subdue first—especially dangerous spellcasters.

Tatiana is a lawful neutral **assassin** who rides a **riding horse**. She coats her weapons in a unique poison called "Last Scale" which replaces the poison normally used by assassins.

When she hits a target with a weapon coated with the toxin, the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the target becomes poisoned

for 1 hour. The target is unconscious while poisoned in this way. Any time the creature takes damage, it can repeat its saving throw, waking up on a success. Even if they wake up, they are poisoned for the entire hour until they the poison is removed by a *lesser restoration* spell or similar magic.

Joining Red Tatiana are seven **veterans** dubbed the Scarlet Posse. All of the veterans use poison similar to Red Tatiana's.

Red Tatiana and the Scarlet Posse have orders not to kill the characters, but to only take them hostage either by poisoning them with Last Scale or knocking them unconscious. Once they wake (or surrender), Red Tatiana offers her proposition (see below).

If Red Tatiana's hit points are reduced to one third or lower, or three or more members of the Scarlet Posse are killed, Red Tatiana surrenders and offers her proposition. If the characters successfully flee or kill Red Tatiana before she can offer her proposition, the characters can proceed to The Mannered Bear, detailed below.

Tatiana's Proposition

After the dust has settled, Red Tatiana pitches the following:

"Wealth, pardons, land, and titles. This is what Balaspatak is willing to offer all of you.

"As you know, a week ago, the city of Medrok's population was completely wiped out by a force of shadows. All attempts to recover the city by the Balaspatakian army have failed. Even mercenary groups have died trying to enter the city. However, there are rumors going around that a group of convicts—you—managed to escape the city unscathed.

"It turns out that undead shadows do not enjoy the taste of evil. In fact, they avoid evil creatures entirely. This is why you were able to leave the city without having your life essence drained by their shadowy touch.

"The Balaspatakian military tested this theory with a few of the other prisoners who escaped the prison. They, too, were spared. Of course, these individuals lacked the skills and expertise that a party such as yourself possesses. They were useful as spies, but any time we tried to send them into the shadows' lair, they were destroyed.

"So here is their proposal." The red-haired woman removes a scroll from inside her crimson cloak and unravels it. She then begins to read it aloud, naming each of you.

"You have been requested by his royal highness, King Teo Morariu IV to enter the city of Medrok and defeat the shadows that lie within. If you successfully



accomplish this task, you will each be awarded full pardons by the Kingdom of Balaspatak for all of your crimes prior to the task. You will also receive five hundred hectares of land, a keep, and the title of Count or Countess within the royal courts.

"Failure to accept this task will result in your immediate reincarceration in the distant northern colony of Hushos where you will serve in the Coal Mine of Corr until the day you die."

The red-haired woman stops reading.

"Sounds like a pretty good deal to me, wouldn't you agree?"

Taking the Deal. If the characters agree to Red Tatiana's terms, she asks that they sign the royal decree. She then continues:

"So far, little is known about why the shadows are in Medrok or how they gained so much power so quickly. However, there is a village called Gdasko across the Gulf of Darozawka that may lend clues. Two days before Medrok fell, a similar attack happened there, killing its population, too. Balaspatak's sages believe that the secret of the shadow-plague can be uncovered within Gdasko. But there's one problem; a gang of insidians seized the village shortly

after its fall. They've successfully repelled all of Balaspatak's troops. With the situation in Medrok, the King doesn't wish to risk anymore of his soldiers.

"I recommend you start there. Learn what you can, if anything, about the shadow-plague. Then meet me at the Balaspatakian encampment just north of Medrok. From there, we will grant you access to the city.

"One last thing. I would not try to turn against the Kingdom of Balaspatak. Recovering Medrok is all that matters to the King. He will not take betrayal lightly."

Avoiding the Deal. If the characters don't agree to Tatiana's deal, she and her gang have orders to kill the characters, even if that means putting her own life in jeopardy. Red Tatiana is fiercely loyal to Balaspatak and nothing short of magic will convince her otherwise. She will not stop hunting them until they are dead, or she is. Once the characters defeat Red Tatiana, they are free to travel to The Mannered Bear.

The Mannered Bear

If the characters successfully reach The Mannered Bear, they finally grab a comfortable bed and a warm meal after the long, arduous journey to reach this spot. The bar's owners are two bearded warriors (chaotic neutral human **berserkers**) named Dridgoll and Hyalf, both long-retired from their adventuring days. The couple keep a tamed **brown bear** named Manny in the tavern. Most new patrons to The Mannered Bear are surprised by Manny's friendly, dog-like demeanor.

General Features

The Mannered Bear's ground floor is centered around a large open fire pit. Most nights there will be a wide range of guests sharing stories and singing songs. These have all been heard before however, so a new tale is always welcome.

Upstairs serves as a setting area for discussion. There are beds both on the ground floor and upper floors; however, Dridgoll and Hyalf are reluctant to rent the rooms to anyone they don't know. Of course, gold-heavy purses may persuade them otherwise.

The basement is primarily used for storage, but it's also the location of Dridgoll and Hyalf's bedroom. At night, Manny sleeps just outside their door in the cellar. The basement also hides a secret meeting room. There are two ways into the meeting room. First, there's a secret door hidden in the corner of the cask room at the western end of the basement. Second, there's a staircase hidden behind the northern wall on the ground floor. Finding either secret door requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The Mannered Bear's Staff. In addition to Dridgoll and Hyalf, the bar is staffed by two more former adventurers, a human **mage** named Stagger and a **veteran** named Cassandra.

Like the owner couple, Stagger and Cassandra dabble in less-than-savory matters and often work outside the law; they are both chaotic neutral. Both live in separate rooms on the premises, although everyone assumes that they are in a relationship (they are not).

Friends in Low Places. The easiest way to involve the characters with the owners of The Mannered Bear is that they or Emilian already knew them from the past. The characters might have previously worked with the couple or even used to adventure together. Alternatively, the characters might have a mutual friend with the owner-couple who vouched for them and their knowledge of Medrok.

The Plan

After the characters have had a chance to settle in, Dridgoll and Hyalf invite them into their secret meeting room in the basement. Maps and blueprints decorate the large table at the center of the room. The largest map—a map of Medrok—shows a few locations of interest, one of which includes Emilian's safehouse (see "A Simple Plan" on page 13 for details).

However, Dridgoll and Hyalf have bigger plans.

"Here," says Dridgoll, pointing to a circled location on the map of Medrok. "This is the Pennerton Exchequer Bank, Loans Company and Royal Mint. It's one of only five institutions within the Kingdom with a license to produce official coinage, and the only one to be privately owned. This single location holds over 30% of Balaspatak's wealth.

"Rumors have it that the Pennerton family, the owners of the bank, all died during the Night of the Shadows—when all those shadows came in and wiped out the city's population. We've got contacts in the royal ministry of coin who informed us that this puts the Exchequer back into the hands of the King.

"He is desperate to take control of it. Already, he has tried sending a few different mercenary groups in there to reclaim it. It's no good. Nearly every man, woman, and child in the city was turned into a shadow that night—not even the gods can set foot in that place."

Stagger, the mage, speaks up, "Shadows feast on the souls of living creatures. However, they seem to dislike... evil creatures. They'll totally avoid them. Furthermore, people whose souls are black won't return as shadows when they're killed by the shadow's vitality draining touch."

Dridgoll nods. "We believe that if we can send a party of people with 'less-than-reputable motivations' into the city, the shadows will completely ignore them. Of course,



it's only a matter of time before the Kingdom recognizes this, too. Trust me—with this amount of wealth on the line, Balaspatak will do whatever it takes to get it back.

“If you're interested in helping us with this task, we can offer you a direct path back into the city. From there, you will need to break into the bank, unlock the vault, and recover the goods. It's estimated that there's at least 1,000 gold bars there. We want 500 of those bars. There's also three rare artifacts kept in separate vaults. We want those, too. You can take the remaining bars plus whatever else you find in the bank. Plus, we can make sure you get out of the country.”

If the characters agree, Drigdoll and Hyalf give them a series of maps and blueprints detailing Medrok, the Pennerton Exchequer Bank, and the city's sewers. He also shares what he's learned about the vault and offers a few items to help them get through its defenses. See below and Details of the Plan for everything he offers the party.

Drigdoll suggests that the characters move through the sewers to avoid notice by the Balaspatakian forces that surround the city. Drigdoll can give the characters any gear that they need so long as the gear is of mundane, nonmagical value. He recommends that they go on foot, as horses will not only bring unwanted attention to the party, but also be targeted by the city's shadows.

If the party lack a character with proficiency in thieves' tools, he sends a man named Gallant with them. Gallant is a chaotic evil **spy** with proficiency in thieves' tools (+4 to checks). Gallant is a nervous man who does not work well under pressure. He also despises anyone taller than him—he's 5'8".

Once the characters have everything they need, they can return to Medrok without any further issue. Proceed

to Chapter 4. "The Pain of Love."

Details of the Heist

There are quite a few things that the characters will need to know about the Pennerton Exchequer Bank which Drigdoll open shares. Those details are listed below.

Two Sub-Levels. The bank has a ground floor and two sub-levels. Customers and normal bank patrons use the ground floor for their transactions. The first sub-level is for accounting and the mint. And the second sub-level holds the bank's impressive vaults.

Locked Doors. Every door in the bank is locked. However, it's likely that the bodies of fallen guards still litter the bank's floors. They probably have keys to the bank's mundane locks.

Antimagic Fields. The entirety of the bank is protected by permanent antimagic fields. Therefore, spells like *knock*, *dimension door*, etc. are useless within the bank.

Shadows. It's likely that there are dozens of shadows lingering in the bank. However, Drigdoll has contacts who've shared that the shadows ignore evil creatures.

Expect Trouble. The characters can expect the Balaspatakians to send their own mercenaries to capture the bank. Furthermore, other thieves and bandits might already have the same idea to break into the bank.

Upstairs Stash. There are teller counters upstairs. They hold petty cash. In addition to those goods, they keep a couple safes and some safe deposit boxes in a small room behind the teller window.

Safe Deposit Boxes. There are eighty safe deposit boxes on the first sub-level. Those boxes will hold mostly art objects, knickknacks and other valuables.

The Mint. The bank's mint contain a fair amount of raw, unworked ore.

The Main Vault. The main vault is on the second sub-level. It contains 30% of Balaspatak's gold reserve, an estimated 1,000 gold bars. The vault door is one of the toughest to break into in the world.

Drigdoll will explain the nature of the vault and how difficult it is to break into. A character with proficiency in thieves' tools will understand the checks and locks needed to break into the vault. Give them the information about the vault's door as it appears on page 34.

Artifact Vaults. There are three artifact vaults on the second sub-level. These vaults aren't as difficult to break into as the main vault, but troublesome nonetheless. A character with proficiency in thieves' tools will understand the checks and locks needed to break into these doors. Give them the information about these doors as it appears on page 35.

Secret Entrance/Exit. The "dragon's hoard" room—a large room at the east end of the bank's second sub-level—seems to be empty. However, there is a closet in the north end of the room that hides a secret door. The character can sneak in through the vault via the sewers. However, the maps he has are somewhat unreliable. They will have to navigate the sewers with what little information he has. See page 30 for details on navigating Medrok's sewers.

No Horses. Moving the treasure will be very difficult as the shadows kill horses, too. Drigdoll suggests that the characters find manual rolling carts (like the ones stored in area 6) and move those through the sewers. It could take repeated trips to move the entire supply.



Chapter 3. ‘Do You Not Hear the Nightingale’s Call?’

After their meeting with Red Tatiana in Chapter 2, the characters travel to the dead village of Gdasko to uncover the secret of the shadow-plague that has consumed Medrok. In the village, they encounter a gang of insidians who hope to use the village as their staging ground for regular assaults on neighboring villages.

If the characters didn’t meet Red Tatiana, or refused to help the Kingdom of Balaspatak, you can skip this chapter and proceed directly to Chapter 4.

The Tragedy of Celestina

Unless the characters come to the village of Gdasko to uncover the secrets of the Queen of the Shadows—likely because they were asked to by Red Tatiana—it’s unlikely that they will ever learn Celestina’s backstory and motivations. Still, this section serves as a backstory for you, the game master, to learn more about the true creator of the army of shadows that’s taken over the city of Medrok.

The Canary of Medrok

Celestina Ragar was born in the village of Gdasko to Simona and Mikhail Ragar. From an early age, she exhibited a

lovely singing voice. Every weekend, she sang at the Temple of Ukbiam, offering a beacon of hope and joy to the people of her village. The temple’s youngest acolyte, Jonah, immediately fell in love with her, offering her flowers and gifts. Celestina’s ailing father, Mikhail, made it his dying wish that Celestina would marry Jonah and remain in Gdasko.

Celestina had other plans, though. Shortly after her father died, Jonah proposed to Celestina. Much to Jonah and her mother’s dismay, Celestina turned down his proposal and instead left Gdasko with dreams of singing at the Melody Opera House in Medrok.

It didn’t take long for Celestina to gain notice among the Medrokians. A year after she first graced the stage of the Melody, she was granted lead roles in all of their operas. The Medrokian citizens instantly fell in love with her, nicknaming her The Canary of Medrok.

Many suitors pursued Celestina, wining and dining the young singer. But she did not have eyes for any of them. Instead, she fell in love with the handsome mayor of Medrok, Haralamb Prunea. A married man, Prunea kept his relationship with Celestina a secret. The affair went on for months, with Celestina baited by frequent promises that Prunea would leave his wife. A powerful politician with close connections in the royal court, Prunea knew leaving his wife

for the daughter of peasants would become a controversy from which his career could never recover. Thus, he continued the ruse.

Inevitably, Celestina's patience wore thin. She demanded that Prunea leave his wife for her so that they could start a life together. Prunea refused and broke off the relationship. Before he could leave, Celestina threatened to expose Prunea before his wife and colleagues. Three days later, Celestina's corpse washed up on the shores of the Gulf of Darozawka. Prunea's assassin made it look like a suicide. Shortly after her death, Prunea presented false evidence that Celestina was a traitor to the throne and had been working as a spy for Balaspatak's rivals.

Celestina's Return

The people of Gdasko placed Celestina Ragar's body in the catacombs below the temple. Jonah, driven to near madness by Celestina's death, preserved her body with a dark necromantic ritual called *gentle repose*. He then swore that he would find a way to bring her back. After keeping Celestina's corpse preserved for a year with his magic, Jonah finally found a way to bring his love back. A traveling merchant from the distant desert realm of Jaspire offered to sell Jonah a special ring that could grant its user three wishes. In return, Jonah had to sign over the deed of the temple to the merchant. Jonah agreed and took the ring.

That night, Jonah recovered Celestina's body from the tomb and brought her to the temple's altar. Following the directions given to him by the Jaspirian merchant, Jonah invoked the power of the ring, wishing Celestina back to life.

Immediately, Celestina's eyes opened, and she gasped. At first, she seemed to be alive. She was moving again, and she could draw breath into her lungs. But then something started to happen. Flowers that Jonah had recently decorated with the temple started to wither in her presence. A few feet away, a rat that had snuck into the temple started to tremble; its fur darkened and its skin shriveled. Jonah, too, started to succumb to this sudden blight effect. His hands started to wither. His hair turned white, then began to fall out. Blisters and sores appeared on his skin, then turned gangrenous. Before he could scream, his tongue shrunk and collapsed into his jaw. Celestina watched in horror as her friend—the man who brought her back to life—died before her.

Shortly after Jonah died, his shadow began to darken. It stopped dancing in the nearby candlelight and finally, stood away from Jonah's corpse. Celestina stared at this sentient shadow for a minute. Within its absolute darkness she could see an echo of Jonah's form. She touched her palm to the shadow's cheek and caressed it. Celestina saw something beautiful in the thing she'd just created. As a human, Jonah was flawed and pitiful. As a shadow, he was strong and loyal. Celestina wept and laughed.

Celestina left the temple with Jonah's shadow at her side. More plants and animals died around her. Then, when she reached the village proper, others started to die. They, too, became shadows, loyal to Celestina. Those who escaped Celestina's blight were hunted by the new shadows. It only took twenty minutes to completely convert all of Gdasko.

Celestina then turned her attention to the city across the gulf, Medrok. In life, she gave them joy and hope with her voice. But in death, they called her a traitor. Weak. Unhinged. Just as her compulsion to sing at the Melody had

driven her to travel to Medrok in her youth, a new compulsion drove her to cross the Gulf of Darozawka: vengeance.

With an army of shadows at her back, Celestina, Queen of the Shadows, stepped into the cold, black waters of the Gulf of Darozawka and marched straight for Medrok.

Running This Chapter

The characters travel to the village of Gdasko to discover that nearly all of its inhabitants died and were turned to shadows by Celestina. Here, they find that the town is overrun by vile bandits with whom the characters will have to contend. After they handle the bandits, the characters discover a lone house with a light in its window. The house is owned by Simona Ragar, Celestina's mother, whom she spared during the Night of Shadows. Simona recounts Celestina's tragic story to the characters, then recommends that the characters investigate the Temple of Ukbiam. At the temple, the characters discover that Celestina's old friend, Jonah, resurrected her with a *ring of three wishes*. Finally, they learn that the only way to stop Celestina is to destroy her ring.

Character Advancement

Characters of 7th level who successfully complete this part of the adventure advance to 8th level at the conclusion of this chapter. Characters of 8th level or higher do not gain a level.

Gdasko

Ask anyone who visited Gdasko before The Night of Shadows what they thought of the village, and they'd share with you that they thought the place was quaint and pleasant. Its relatively small population worked primarily as lumberjacks, laborers, and tuna fishers. Nearly all the folks of Gdasko worshiped at the temple of the lesser water god, Ukbiam.

When Celestina returned from the grave, her blighting presence killed nearly every living soul in the village. The few who survived her wrath fled out of fear. Two weeks after The Night of Shadows, Gdasko is just as lifeless as the people who lived here.

General Features

It's only been two weeks since The Night of Shadows. As such, the village looks very much as it did before Celestina's presence wiped all life from the location. Gdasko's buildings are made from sturdy timber planks and topped with thatched roofs. Nearly every house had its own fenced yard within which small livestock once thrived.

The first thing that the characters will immediately notice when they arrive at Gdasko is the complete lack of life in the entire village. The forests that surround the village bear only dead trees. All of Gdasko's grass and plants have turned yellow, withered and died. Dead fish, crabs, and other sea life wash up on its rocky banks. There are no living birds, crickets, or frogs to fill the air with their songs. Many of Gdasko's citizens are still where they were when they were killed; desiccated corpses gathering around dinner tables, hearths, and snuggling in their beds. And they all lack shadows.



Searching the Village

A veritable ghost town, there are only a few locations that should interest the characters. Still, as villains, they might want to search the empty homes for valuables. If the characters stop to search for treasure, each building takes 30 minutes to clear. Whenever the party searches a building, roll percentile dice and consult the Gdasko Building Interior table to see what, if anything, the building contains.

Gdasko Building Interior

d100	Building Contents
01-40	—
41-60	Insidian party
61-65	Ghouls
66-75	Vermin
76-00	Treasure

Insidian Party

A band of insidian veterans are in the house. Like the characters, they are searching for valuables. The band is composed of 1d4 **insidian veterans** led by an **insidian elite**. See the sidebar for details. The insidian fight until killed. After the characters defeat the insidian, roll a d6. On a result of 5-6, the insidian have treasure on them as detailed on the treasure table below.

Ghouls

Drawn by the evil permeating Gdasko's soil, a pack of ghouls scours the houses for things to eat. Although they prefer food with a bit more "meat on its bones", they're not above snacking on the desiccated remains of Gdasko's shadowless dead. There are 2d6 **ghouls** led by a **ghast**.

Vermin

Celestina's blight left dozens of corpses throughout the village. Although many creatures were reluctant to enter

Insidian Veteran

Medium humanoid (insidian), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (splint)
Hit Points 71 (11d8 + 22)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)

Skills Arcana +3, Athletics +5, Perception +3
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
Languages Draconic
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Magic Resistance. The insidian has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Tactical Step. If the insidian veteran hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, it can immediately move up to 10 feet without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Actions

Multiattack. The insidian makes two glaive attacks and one bite attack or two longbow attacks.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute.

Glaive. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 13 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

the area at first, they are slowly starting to reenter the village. Roll a d6 and consult the Vermin table to determine the type of vermin the characters find. All of the vermin are diseased. A character who takes damage from a vermin's bite must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become infected with shadow rot. The diseased target can't regain hit points, and its Strength score is reduced by 1d4 for every 24 hours that elapse. If the disease reduces the target's Strength score to 0, the target dies. Once the disease is removed, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. If a non-evil humanoid dies from this disease, a **shadow** rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

Vermin

d6	Vermin
1-2	1d6 swarms of insects
3-4	2d6 stirges
5-6	2d4 swarms of rats

Insidian Elite

Medium humanoid (insidian), neutral evil

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)
Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Int +4
Skills Arcana +4, Athletics +7, Intimidation +3, Perception +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Draconic
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Magic Resistance. The insidian has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Tactical Step. If the insidian elite hits a creature with a melee weapon attack, it can immediately move up to 5 feet without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Actions

Multiattack. The insidian makes two longsword attacks and one bite attack or two longbow attacks.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage when wielded with two hands.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Reactions

Sentinel. When a creature moves within 5 feet of the insidian, the insidian can make one melee weapon attack against that creature.

Treasure

The empty building contains 1d6 art objects (family heirlooms, jewelry, painted pottery, religious iconography, and so forth). Each art object is worth 25 gp.

Insidian Attack

Shortly after the characters arrive in Gdasko, unless they are stealthy, they are ambushed by a gang of insidian. The party of insidian is composed of four **insidian veterans** led by an **insidian elite**. See their stat blocks on page 24 for details. These evil creatures fight to the death.

House with the Light On

After the characters have had a chance to wander around Gdasko's empty streets, read the following:

Although Gdasko appears totally devoid of all life, you spot something unusual—one of the houses a few hundred yards from where you stand has smoke rising from its chimney.

As the characters get closer to the house, they see that it has lights on inside. If they're stealthy, they will find an elderly woman making tea, gently humming to herself, otherwise she is standing at the door. Despite Gdasko's current state, the woman carries on like everything is fine.

Simona Ragar

This is Simona Ragar, Celestina's mother (a chaotic neutral human **commoner**). No matter how the characters approach Simona, she smiles and invites them into her home; she pretends as if she's been expecting them.

"Please, please, come in!" the elderly woman says with a laugh. She gestures, offering a spot at her small kitchen table. "I'll have tea ready in a moment. Celestina should be here shortly."

A character who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check recognizes that Simona has gone insane. Unless the characters cure her of her madness with a *greater restoration* spell, she continues to speak to them like everything is fine and insists that her daughter, Celestina, should be home at any moment.

If the characters do think to remove Simona's madness, she immediately snaps out of her stupor and begins to weep. Once she's had a moment to mourn, she shares with the characters what she knows about Gdasko and what's happened. Have Simona offer the details from the section The Tragedy of Celestina on page 21, except she does not know about Celestina's affair or that she was murdered by Haralamb Prunea's assassin. However, she doesn't believe Celestina would kill herself.

Searching Simona's Home

If the characters can't cure Simona of her madness, they might try to find clues in Simona's home. It only takes a few minutes to find the following clues:

- In the hallway, a painting of Simona, younger, with her late husband Mikhail hangs on the wall. Their daughter, Celestina, sits between the two of them. Celestina used her earnings from the Melody to purchase this painting for her mother.
- A character who searches the small office and succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds two letters of interest shoved into the desk drawer. The first letter

is from Johan, the acolyte of the Temple of Ukbiam. In his letter, he shares that he may have found a way to "bring her back", although the letter doesn't say who or how. The second letter is from Celestina and it's a couple years old. The letter explains that she had the painting commissioned in Medrok and that she hopes it makes her mother happy. She then writes her mother that she's met someone—a wealthy politician—whom she hopes to soon marry.

- A character who searches the bookshelf in Simona's bedroom and succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a folded pamphlet between two of the books. The pamphlet advertises an opera from over a year ago titled *The Pain of Love*. A drawing of Celestina decorates the front of the pamphlet, boasting "The Canary of Medrok' Celestina Ragar in her greatest role to date!"

After the characters have had a chance to find a few clues, they might try to question Simona about what these items mean. So long as Simona retains her madness, her answers are vague and somewhat incomprehensible.

Who is Celestina? Why, Celestina is my daughter. She just has the most beautiful voice. She hopes to one day travel to Medrok and become a famous opera singer.

Who is Johan? Johan is that nice acolyte boy who manages the Temple of Ukbiam. He's deeply in love with Celestina. She keeps telling him that she's not interested in him, but I think that's just her playing games with the boy. How could she *not* be interested in him?

If the characters persist in their line of questioning, Simona snaps and lashes out violently. So long as her mind remains damaged, she has no interest in facing the reality that her daughter died a year ago.

Temple of Ukbiam

The Temple of Ukbiam is a small temple tucked away in the forest at the western edge of town. A character who travels through the forest to reach the temple and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes right away that this area must have been "ground zero" for whatever occurred in Gdasko, and by extension, Medrok. The plants, animals, and life that died in this area died so quickly, they almost crumbled to dust. Even non-living objects such as rocks, stone, and timbers were affected by Celestina's emerging blight.

To secure the *ring of three wishes*, Johan gave the deed to the temple to a wandering Jaspirian merchant. Little did Johan know that the merchant was an insidious sorcerer named Thrazk. With Gdasko's citizens dead, the Kingdom of Balastpatak in shambles after Medrok's fall, and total ownership of the temple, Thrazk hopes to turn Gdasko into the staging ground for chaos.

General Features

Even before Celestina's blight rapidly aged the building, the Temple of Ukbiam was entering a state of irreversible disrepair thanks to Johan's persistent negligence. The two-story temple's solid stone walls are cracked and blanketed in

Who is Thrazk?

Thrazk is an insidian, a race of three-eyed lizardfolk who are naturally resistant to magics and curses. They come from a land far away from Balasatak, but have long hated the humans who live in these regions. Like many of his brethren, Thrazk spent his youth plundering the ruins of the fallen desert civilizations that mar his people's lands. This is where he found the ring of three wishes. Understanding its malevolent nature, Thrazk knew someday the ring would create trouble. He just had to find the right person to sell it to.

Although Thrazk is only featured briefly in this adventure, you are free to expand his story. He might act as a contact for the evil party, or may even become a central villain an ongoing campaign set in Balasatak.

crumbling, brown vines. Rotting leaves cover its crumbling tiled floors. All of the furniture within lies in tatters. Even the doors fail to shut properly, thus rendering their locks useless.

There are no lights in the temple. If the characters enter the temple at night, they will need their own light sources or darkvision to search the area.

Keyed Locations

The locations below are keyed to the map of the Temple of Ukbiam as shown on page 27.

1 - Main Entrance

Two **insidian veterans** guard the decaying front doors to the temple. It's likely that a fight here draws the attention of the other insidian lingering in the temple's graveyard (area 2).

2 - Temple Graveyard

This old graveyard was where the original founders and elders of the Temple of Ukbiam were laid to rest. Later, the followers of Ukbiam added a mausoleum to store their dead. Although the door to the mausoleum is locked, there is nothing of value within—just dust and bones.

Encounter: Insidian Veterans. Three **insidian veterans** stand in the graveyard.

3 - Temple

Broken pews and dead leaves litter this area. Two flights of stairs flank the area, offering a way up to a mezzanine that overlooks the ground floor.

4 - Shrine

A colossal statue of the lesser water god Ukbiam commands the attention of anyone that enters this room.

Johan's Corpse. The withered corpse of Johan still lies where he died horribly. He casts no shadow. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Medicine) check (the player's choice) notices that one of the fingers of his right hand has been severed post-mortem. The discarded finger lies a foot away. Celestina broke Johan's finger off to reclaim the *ring of three wishes*. A character

Thrazk

Medium humanoid (insidian), neutral evil

Armor Class 11 (14 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +7, Perception +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Magic Resistance. The insidian has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Actions

Chill Touch (Cantrip). *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) necrotic damage and the target can't regain hit points until the start of Thrazk's next turn. If Thrazk hits an undead target, the target has disadvantage on attack rolls against Thrazk until the end of Thrazk's next turn.

Cone of Cold (5th-Level Spell; 2/Day). A blast of cold air erupts from Thrazk's hands. Each creature in a 60-foot cone must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 36 (8d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature killed by this spell becomes a frozen statue until it thaws.

Spellcasting. Thrazk casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *light, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation*

3/day each: *comprehend languages, detect magic, dispel magic, identify, hold person, location object, floating disk, unseen servant*

1/day each: *contact other plane, dimension door, instant summons, legend lore, locate creature, planar binding, polymorph, protection from evil and good, scrying, sending, true seeing*

Reactions

Counterspell (3rd-Level Spell; 2/Day). If the creature is casting a spell of 3rd level or lower, its spell fails and has no effect. If it is casting a spell of 4th level or higher, Thrazk makes a spellcasting ability check (+7 bonus). The DC equals 10 + the spell's level. On a success, the creature's spell fails and has no effect.

TEMPLE OF UKBIAM

UPPER LEVEL

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



GROUND LEVEL



who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check notices that he's still wearing his acolyte's robes.

Burial Shroud. A tattered burial shroud lies at the foot of the statue. The name "Celestina" is embroidered in yellow thread on the shroud, easily noticeable (no check required). A character who investigates the shroud and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check (the player's choice) notices that the burial shroud seems to be unaffected by the blight that's damaged the rest of Gdasko. Also, it radiates necrotic energy. A creature who touches the shroud immediately takes 2 (1d4) necrotic damage. Casting *dispel magic* or *remove curse* on the shroud removes this effect.

5 - Johan's Room

The temple's caretaker, Johan, lived in this small bedroom. Now, Thrazk uses it as his quarters. Johan's name can be found in many of the books on the shelves as well as letters on the desk.

Treasure: Blessed Dagger. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check can find a blessed dagger in Johan's desk. Although it offers no other benefits, this dagger counts as magical for the purposes of overcoming damage resistance and immunity to piercing damage. It can also be used as a holy symbol.

6 - Guest Room

The insidian who work from the temple use this area to sleep and recuperate. Although they keep the area tidy, it smells heavily of animal musk.

Encounter: Insidian Veteran. Unless encountered elsewhere, there is a single **insidian veteran** in this room.

7 - Temple Office

This large room served both as Johan's office as well as a place to entertain guests. Now, it's where Thrazk and his lieutenants plan their assault on Balaspatak's hamlets and villages.

Encounter: Thrazk. Unless encountered elsewhere, **Thrazk**, two **insidian elites**, and three **insidian veterans** pour over a series of maps of the region. They all speak Draconic, so unless the characters also speak Draconic, it's unlikely they will understand what they're discussing.

If the characters charge into the room, Thrazk commands his soldiers to hold fast. Surprised that the characters made it past the temple's initial defenses, he thinks it might be better to parlay than to engage in a fight. Unless the characters are in disguise, Thrazk recognizes right away that they are mercenaries. Furthermore, his high Insight should immediately pick up on the fact that the characters aren't necessarily "good guys."

In Common, he asks the characters their purpose for being in Gdasko. After listening to them, he proposes a truce, explaining that he has no intention to prevent them from stopping the Queen of Shadows or her army of shadows. He's even willing to share the nature of her power.

Thrazk explains that a powerful, cursed artifact was used to bring Celestina back to life—a *ring of three wishes*. He theorizes that she still holds the ring. However, he shares that she cannot use it, as only a living creature can wield the ring's power and she is no longer living. Finally, Thrazk tells the characters that the only way to end her curse is destroy the ring. Unfortunately, the only way to destroy the ring is to use its own power to destroy itself.

"Few can resist the temptation of its wishes," he adds with a toothy grin.

To further seal the deal, Thrazk offers another magic item from his collection: a magical mace called *Daydream* (see the asset pack). He's very blunt about its function—the mace is used to destroy undead creatures. However, it has a mind of its own. Only those with strong wills can overcome its desire to destroy.

Thrazk has nothing more to offer beyond the information he shares and *Daydream*. If the characters continue to press the issue, he commands his insidian soldier to attack them while he uses his magic to obliterate them.





Chapter 4. 'The Pain of Love'

The final chapter of this adventure offers two paths for the characters. One path sees the characters re-enter Medrok in pursuit of the city's massive gold reserve kept within the Pennerton Exchequer Bank. Another path sees the characters challenge Celestina, Queen of the Shadows, at the Melody Opera House. It's possible that the characters pursue both paths, too, having taken both the owner of The Mannered Bear's deal as well as Red Tatiana's.

Running This Chapter

The characters sneak back into the city of Medrok, now overrun with the shadows of the dead.

If they are hunting for the gold supply at the Pennerton Exchequer Bank, they discover that they aren't the only ones aware of the treasure trove. Another band of evil mercenaries have discovered the bank and hope to break into it. However, they don't possess the same knowledge the characters do. The characters must join forces with them or defeat them.

If the characters enter the city to put a stop to the Queen of the Shadows, they discover Celestina at the Melody Opera House. She holds Medrok's mayor, Haralamb Prunea, hostage. She forces him to reenact the crimes he committed against her before an audience of shadows. She then kills Prunea. Unsatisfied with vengeance, she proclaims that she

will spread her plague of shadows across the world. All that stands between her and her goal are the characters.

Character Advancement

There are two ways characters can advance in this adventure. Characters who successfully recover the gold supply from the Pennerton Exchequer Bank gain a level. Additionally, characters who successfully recover the *ring of three wishes* from Celestina gain a level. In the rare event the characters accomplish both tasks, they gain two levels (to a maximum of 10th level).

Return to Medrok

The method by which the characters enter the city depends largely on the path they chose earlier in the adventure.

Characters working for Red Tatiana and the Kingdom of Balaspatak may enter the city through its gates. See "The Encampment" below for details.

Meanwhile, characters who hope to recover the treasure trove at the city's center must enter the city through its sewers. See "Medrok's Sewers" below for more information.

The Encampment

After Medrok fell, the Kingdom of Balaspatak sent one of its armies to secure the area around the city. No one can



get in or out of the city without express permission by one of the army's officers. If the characters agreed to help Red Tatiana earlier in the adventure, she told them to meet her at this encampment.

In that case, the characters should realize by this point that the infamous Queen of the Shadows is none other than the deceased opera singer, Celestina Ragar. Red Tatiana and her colleagues aren't totally surprised to learn this—their sources know that the shadows are gathered around the Melody Opera House.

Red Tatiana and the Balaspatakian military offer the characters any mundane arms, armor, and equipment they request. They also offer each character two *potions of greater healing* each. Red Tatiana explains that the shadows fear sunlight—therefore, it's wisest if the characters enter during the early hours of the morning while the shadows are

locked indoors.

Once the characters are ready, Red Tatiana and a retinue of soldiers usher the characters to the city's gates.

Medrok's Sewers

If the characters rejected or completely avoided Red Tatiana's proposal earlier in the adventure, they will need to find another way into the city. The Mannered Bear's owners suggest that they enter the city via its sewers. An old map identifies a service tunnel roughly half a mile from the city. Finding the service tunnel requires the characters to spend 1 hour looking for it, at the end of which they must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check (the player's choice) to find it. If the check fails, they must spend another hour and make another check to find it. If their check fails by 5 or more, they draw the attention of Medrok's soldiers.

Six **tribal warriors** led by a **veteran** accost them. Unless the characters can bluff their way out of this entanglement, the soldiers attack.

Navigating the Sewers

Once the characters discover Medrok's sewers systems, they must navigate its labyrinth of filth-ridden tunnels. Finding their way through the sewers requires 2 hours of work. At the end of the hour, the characters must make a special group check. The group check consists of three different checks: Intelligence (Investigation), Wisdom (Perception), and Wisdom (Survival). The DC for each of the checks is 5 + 2d10; generate a separate DC for each one. One character can make all three checks, or the checks can be split among multiple party members. However, only one character can attempt one of the checks; they can't receive help. If one of the checks is not made by one of the characters, a failure is contributed toward the group check. After all checks have been made, review the Navigating the Sewers table below to determine the outcome of the group check.

General Features

Even devoid of life, Medrok remains a testament to modern architecture. Most of its buildings are white and black timber-framed buildings with blue roofs, boasting leaded windows flanked by blue shutters. Virtually every building in the city stands at least two stories tall, with many toward the city's center reaching greater heights.

Navigating the Sewers

Result Outcome

0 successes	The characters become lost in the sewers. They must spend another hour and make another series of checks to try to navigate the sewers.
1 success	The characters successfully escape the sewers but run into a pack of 2d8 shadows . The shadows won't attack if the characters are evil. They also find themselves at the opposite end of the city from their destination.
2 successes	The characters successfully escape the sewers but find themselves at the opposite end of the city from their destination.
3 successes	The characters successfully navigate the sewers. If they are searching for the secret entrance to the Pennerton Exchequer Bank, they find it and emerge in area 24 (see below). Otherwise, they arrive within 100 feet of their target destination.

Of course, the city is silent. By the time the characters return to Medrok, the tens of thousands of Medrokians are either dead or evacuated. Many of Medrok's homes are exactly in the same state as they were when The Night of Shadows transpired. The desiccated corpses of the dead can be found hidden under the covers, sitting before fires, and even gathered around supper tables. All of these corpses lack shadows.

Except for the insane, brave, and stupid, no living creature dares enter the city. The shadows' thirst for life force knows no limits. They will even drain the vitality from a

cockroach to sate their compulsion.

Navigating the City

No matter how the characters enter the city, it's likely they will need to navigate their way through its eerily silent streets to reach their destination. Cautious characters can move through the city at a rate of 250 feet every 5 minutes. Characters who throw caution into the wind can move twice as fast; however, they can't use Stealth and they have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to notice threats.

Like Gdasko, the characters can stop in any of the homes, businesses, and municipal buildings to search for treasure. Doing so requires 30 minutes of work. Whenever the party searches an abandoned building, roll percentile dice and consult the Medrok Building Interior table to see what, if anything, the building contains.

Medrok Building Interior

d100 Building Contents

01-40	—
41-45	Bandits
46-75	Shadows
76-00	Treasure

Bandits

More than a few evil humans have discovered the advantages of a shadow-run city. The characters encounter a large group of such humans—3d6 **bandits** led by a **bandit captain**. All of these bandits are evil, so they won't hesitate to attack the party. However, they're cowardly, too, and quickly cow when the party demonstrates their combat abilities.

Shadows

A gang of 2d8 **shadows** lingers in this building. The building's windows have been sealed, preventing sunlight from entering the area. Still, the shadows are dormant. They only attack non-evil members of the party or any member of the party that happens to be wielding *Daydream*.

Treasure

The empty building contains 1d6 art objects (family heirlooms, jewelry, painted pottery, religious iconography, and so forth). Each art object is worth 50 gp.

Emilian's Stash

Emilian's safehouse is located at the south end of the city. The safehouse is a rundown two-story home. So long as the characters help Emilian escape the dungeon, he shows them that the treasure is hidden in the upstairs privy room in the wall just behind the privy seat. As Emilian promised, there is 10,000 gp stuffed in a bag in the secret compartment.

Without Emilian revealing the treasure's location, there's no way of knowing the treasure in this building exists.

The Pennerton Exchequer Bank

Very few Balaspatankians understand the importance of this

mundane bank at the center of Medrok. Nearly one third of the Kingdom of Balaspatak's wealth is held within the Pennerton Exchequer Bank. Naturally, when Medrok fell under the rule of Celestina's shadows, Balaspatak's nobles panicked. If Balaspatak permanently lost its mint and reserve, it would soon default on its debts. No longer protected by its promise of future repayment, Balaspatak's allies would eventually turn against them. It wouldn't be long before the entire nation started to suffer from invasions from all sides.

General Features

Unless stated otherwise, the bank has the following features:

Antimagic Protections. The entirety of the bank plus an additional 30 feet around it in all directions is protected by a permanent *antimagic field*, as per the spell. All of the bank's protections are practical in nature.

Architecture. The bank's walls are made from thick stone blocks. The ceilings on the ground level are 15 feet high, while the ceilings in the two lower levels are 10 feet high.

Doors and Windows. Except for the doors that lead to the privies, all of the bank's doors and windows are locked. Picking most of the locks (the obvious exception being the vault locks) requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. Alternatively, a door can be broken open with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check. A character cannot repeat a check to pick or break open a door unless they use a new tool, receive help from another creature, or complete a short or long rest. The steel reinforced doors throughout the bank have AC 19, 22 hp (damage threshold 5), and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Windows are also steel reinforced but have only 11 hp (damage threshold 5).

The shadows that still linger in the bank (see below) have covered the windows with fabric to prevent sunlight from shining through.

Illumination. Except for the areas where Dragos and his gang have set up camp within the bank, the bank is completely dark.

Shadows. The shadows of the dead still linger in many of the bank's rooms. The shadows won't attack unless they are attacked first, or a non-evil living creature comes within 30 feet of them.

Dragos' Gang

Dragos Liescu, a criminal of some renown in Balaspatak, came to the same conclusion that others did regarding Medrok's predicament—shadows don't attack evil creatures. Thus, he and a gang of handpicked mercenaries marched into Medrok with the intent to rob its empty houses. After nabbing the contents of a handful of noble homes, something new grabbed Liescu's attention: the Pennerton Exchequer Bank. While Dragos is not aware of the bank's importance as it relates to the Kingdom's fragile economy, he has made it his goal to plunder its innards. Woefully underprepared for the challenges the bank's locks and vault present, Dragos and his gang have been at it for a week now, trying to get through to the reserve.

Dragos is a male human **bandit captain**. His gang consists of two human **spies** named Adam and

Isabella, and three human **bandits** named Daniel, Mario, and Eugenia. Everyone in the gang is neutral evil.

During the day, most of the gang sleeps in their respective sleeping areas. They prefer to sleep during the day as the sun offers limited protection against the shadows that haunt the city. At night, the majority head downstairs to try to crack one of the bank's highly protected safes. The gang keeps the downstairs area well-lit. So far, they haven't had an incident with the bank's lingering shadows, but they aren't willing to take any chances.

Although Dragos wants what's in the vault, he's intelligent enough to recognize trouble when he sees it. Furthermore, the vault has caused him a ton of trouble. He's willing to compromise with the characters—they get through the vault and he'll split it with them. If the characters agree, he and his gang act as additional eyes and ears for the characters. If the characters refuse Dragos' offer but allow him and his gang to leave, Dragos creates trouble for them down the road. See the section titled "The Assault" on page 36 for details.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Pennerton Exchequer Bank on pages 33 and 35.

1 - Main Entrance

The dried-up corpse of a guard lies sprawled over the steps. It casts no shadow.

2 - Lobby

Two more shadowless guard corpses litter the lobby proper (2a). The teller counter was wrecked by Dragos' gang. They stole all the coins, including the electrum.

Encounter: Shadows. Three **shadows** linger here.

Encounter: Lookout. During the day, Mario stands guard here, keeping his eye out for potential troublemakers. If Mario spots the characters, he flees downstairs to warn the others that they've got company. Mario carries a set of keys that opens most of the doors throughout the bank's ground floor and sub-level.

3 - Conference Room

The door to this room is unlocked. Eugenia uses this room as her sleeping chambers.

Treasure: Hidden Sack. Eugenia hid a sack of coins under a loose floorboard. Finding the floorboard requires a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. The sack contains 30 pp. She also keeps the contents of a burglar's pack here.

4 - Manager's Office

Mario claimed the manager's office as his sleeping chambers. Possessing the dead guards' keys, he keeps the room locked while he's away.

Treasure: Mario's Stash. Along with his personal possessions (contents of a burglar's pack), Mario has a sack filled with 100 cp, 300 sp, 50 gp, and 10 pp stowed in one corner of the room.

5 - Loading Area

A simple mechanical elevator offers access down to area 18a. The elevator is relatively loud; unless they've already been encountered, using the elevator will draw the attention of Dragos and his goons.



6 - Courtyard

This paved courtyard is surrounded by 20-foot-high fences covered in barbs. Climbing the fence requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check and deals 1 piercing damage to the climber each round they remain on the fence. The gate at the south end of the courtyard is locked.

Treasure: Cashier's Box. The small room at the south end of the courtyard (6b) has so far gone unnoticed by Dragos' gang. The desk drawer contains 100 cp, 100 sp, and 100 gp.

7 - Teller Break Room

There is a dried-up corpse sitting on the couch of this break room. The door that leads to area 8 has been hacked open by Dragos' goons.

Encounter: Shadow. A lone **shadow** stands near its former body.

8 - Upstairs Safes

This room contains two safes and a wall of safe deposit boxes. The boxes have been forced open and cleared by Dragos and his gang. However, the safes remain untouched (not for lack of effort, mind you).

Treasure: Safes. To crack a safe, a character with proficiency in thieves' tools must spend 20 minutes listening to the safe's tumblers. Characters who lack proficiency in thieves' tools have no hope of cracking the safe outside of breaking it open. At the end of the 20 minutes, the character must make a series of checks in the following order: Intelligence (Investigation), Wisdom (Perception), and Dexterity using proficiency in thieves' tools. The DC for each check is 20. If a single check fails, the character must start the entire process over. A safe has 20 AC, 35 hp (damage threshold 10), and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If damage from a single attack or spell reduces a safe's hit points to 0, the safe's contents are destroyed as well.

Each safe contains 5,000 sp, 5,000 gp, and 5,000 pp.

9 - Conference Room

Isabella uses this room as her quarters. She carries a set of the guards' keys, so keeps this door locked when she's not in the room.

Treasure: Isabella's Loot. Isabella keeps her burglar's pack here. Within the bag's pouches, characters may find valuable jewelry and gems worth 500 gp altogether.

10 - Assistant Manager's Office

The withered remains of the bank's assistant manager still sit at its desk.

Encounter: Shadow. The assistant manager's **shadow** stands near its corpse.

11 - Stairwell Down

These stairs lead down to area 12.

12 - Stairwell Up

These stairs lead up to area 11.

Encounter: Shadow. A lone **shadow** stands at the bottom of the stairs. Dragos' gang nicknamed this shadow "ol' creeper" as it tends to surprise anyone who descends the stairs.

13 - Safe Deposit Boxes

The door to this room was forced open by Dragos' goons. All eighty of the safe deposit boxes found here were crowbarred open and relieved of their valuables.

14 - Guardroom

Two withered corpses still sit at the table at the center of the guard room (14a). They're still holding playing cards. A third corpse lies in the hammock in the southern room (14b).

Encounter: Shadows. The guards' three **shadows** quietly linger in this area.

15 - Accounting Office

Dragos uses this office as his personal quarters.

Treasure: Bank's Loot. Most of the loot recovered from the bank's drawers and safety deposit boxes is stored here. The hoard contains 1,000 cp, 2,000 sp, 5,000 gp, 500 pp, and a variety of gems and art objects worth 2,500 gp altogether.

16 - Records

Daniel and Adam share this room as their quarters. Beyond the contents of both their burglars' packs, there's nothing else of value here.

17 - Stairwell Down

The withered body of a guard lies with its back bent over the railing. These stairs lead down to area 20.

18 - Storage Room

Except for the precious metals used to create the coins, the mint's raw goods and tools are stored in this area. The mechanical elevator still functions, offering access up to area 5.

19 - Mint

The mint's forge still glows hot with fire, keeping the basement warm. Dragos' gang broke open the doors to areas 19b and 19c, then relieved both areas of the raw ore and fresh coins. The corpse of the mint's supervisor still sits at its desk.

20 - Stairwell Up

This stairway leads up to area 17.

21 - Reserve Vault

This room contains Balaspatak's impressive gold reserve. So far, Dragos and his gang have failed to get through its two heavily reinforced doors.

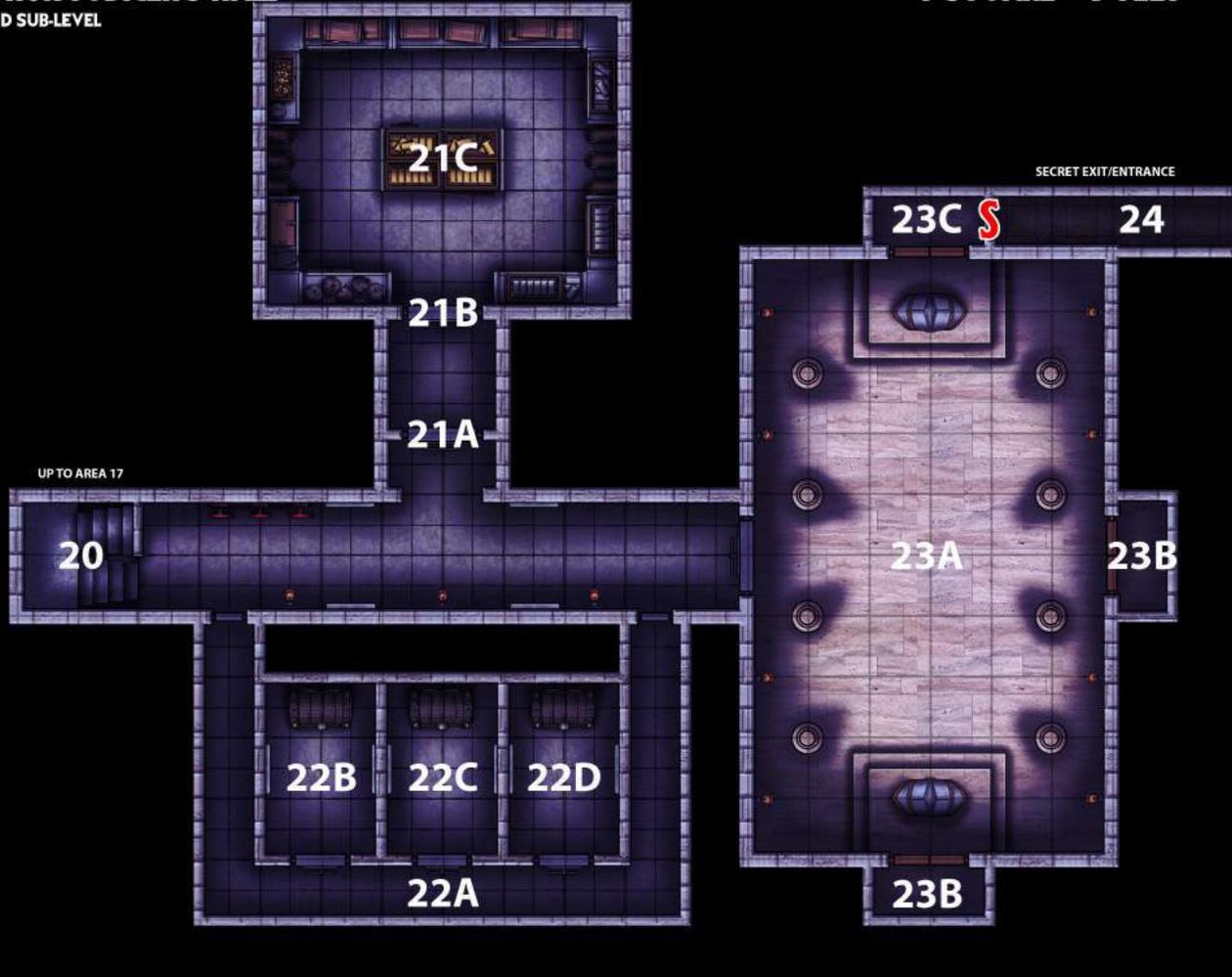
First Door (21a). The first door requires a character with proficiency in thieves' tools to make a series of checks to open the door. Each check, its DC, and the length of time it takes to make the check are detailed on the First Vault Door table below. A character must perform each check in order. If they fail a single check, they must start the entire process over from the beginning. Only one character can make all of these checks, and they cannot receive help while doing it.

Trap: Timed Locks. After the characters open the first safe door, they have only 1 minute before the second safe door's timed locks arm itself. When this happens, the characters won't be able to get through the vault's door until the first door is shut and reset and 24 hours have passed.

MEDROK JUDICER'S HALL

SECOND SUB-LEVEL

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



First Vault Door

Order	Check	DC	Time
1st	Intelligence (Investigation)	15	20 minutes
2nd	Wisdom (Perception)	20	30 minutes
3rd	Dexterity (thieves' tools)	15	5 minutes
4th	Wisdom (Perception)	20	30 minutes
5th	Dexterity (Sleight of Hand)	15	5 minutes
6th	Wisdom (Perception)	20	30 minutes
7th	Dexterity (thieves' tools)	10	5 minutes

Second Door (21b). Time is of the essence with the second door. Each round, the character attempting to crack the vault's locks must use their action to make a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. If the character succeeds on five checks in a row before 1 minute passes, they successfully unlock the door. Failure to do so in the allotted time causes the second safe door's timed locks to arm itself (see above).

The Balaspatak Reserve (21c). The reserve contains 1,000 large gold bars, each one weighing 27 pounds. A single gold bar is worth 1,350 gp. The vault also contains 500 7-pound silver bars worth 35 gp each. There are six tons of unworked gold ore stored in the vault, worth a total of 600,000 gp. Finally, there are 50,000 gold pieces kept in various sacks and bags lining the walls.

22 - Artifacts Vault

Three powerful artifacts are kept in these rooms.

Vault Doors. Areas 22b, c, and d are all guarded by strong steel doors. Each door requires a character with proficiency in thieves' tools to spend 20 minutes listening to the door's tumblers in order to open the door. Characters who lack proficiency in thieves' tools have no hope of cracking the safe outside of breaking it open. At the end of the 20 minutes, the character must make a series of checks in the following order: Intelligence (Investigation), Wisdom (Perception), and Dexterity using proficiency in thieves' tools. The DC for each check is 20. If a single check fails, the character must start the entire process over. Each door has 20 AC, 55 hp (damage threshold 10), and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Treasure: Sphere of Annihilation (22b). The westernmost vault's chest contains a *sphere of annihilation*.

Treasure: Deck of Many Things (22c). The central vault contains a *deck of many things* (13 cards).

Treasure: Talisman of the Sphere (22d). The easternmost vault contains a *talisman of the sphere*.

23 - Antechamber

The vault door that leads into this chamber has been disabled. This massive chamber was designed to hold large amounts of treasure if the city ever needed it. It's completely empty. The two chests that adorn either ends

of the room are decorative and empty.

Secret Door. The northernmost closet hides a secret door that offers a way to escape into the city's sewers. Finding the secret door requires a character to search the insides of the closet and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The secret door is obvious from the other side.

24 - Secret Passage

This secret passageway connects the bank to the city's sewer system. Characters who successfully navigate the sewers arrive here.

The Assault

After the characters have had an opportunity to explore the bank and learn its secrets, something unusual happens—all of the bank's lingering shadows leave the bank and move toward the Melody Opera House. A few minutes later, an explosion rocks the entire city of Medrok.

The characters don't know it yet, but the Balaspatakian army is bombarding the opera house with *fireballs*. Although Balaspatakians don't believe their attack will stop the Queen of the Shadows or her army, they hope it distracts the shadow plague enough so that they can secure the bank.

Ten minutes after the explosions start, a squadron of heavily armed soldiers rushes the bank. There are twenty-eight **guards**, ten **veterans**, and two **knights**. They're escorting two human **commoners**, a man named Gregori and a woman named Susette. Both work for the company that designed the bank's vault doors. The soldiers also have five carts for transporting the bank's contents. Each cart is pulled by a pair of **warhorses**. An armed escort waits for the strike team just outside the city gates.

The strike team, the commoners, and their horses are all non-evil. They estimate that they have only 15 minutes to get into the vaults, open the doors, and secure the payload before the shadows return. If the characters pushed Dragos out of the bank but let him live, Dragos and his gang are now working with the strike team.

Characters who've seen the vault and its nigh impenetrable doors who then see the commoners can piece together their purpose for being there with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check.

The strike team has orders to kill anyone or anything that gets in their way—including the characters and Dragos' gang. If the characters hope to maintain control of the vault, they must keep the strike team at bay for 15 minutes. Since time is important in this situation, keep track of time in the real world. Assume that every minute a player spends making decisions and speaking outside of combat for their character counts as 25 seconds (or 2.5 rounds) in time. Then, when characters enter combat, pause the clock and run the combat round-by-round—each round of combat counts as 6 seconds of real time.

After the 15 minutes ends, a wave of shadows rushes the vault. Already, they can sense the life forces of the soldiers invading the city. Unless the characters have taken measures to protect any of the soldiers or the commoners capable of cracking the safe, the shadow-plague kills every non-evil person in a matter of seconds, washing over the bank like a tidal wave.

The Melody Opera House

If the characters took Red Tatiana's deal in chapter 2, they will need to find a way into the Melody Opera House and stop Celestina and her army of shadows. Finding the opera house is easy. Not only will Red Tatiana and the Balaspatakians offer directions, the sound of music pouring from its stage is one of the few things that cut through Medrok's silence.

General Features

Unless stated otherwise, the opera house has the following features:

Architecture. The opera house's outer walls are made from worked stone bricks. Inside, the walls and most of the floors and ceilings are made from wood. In most areas, the ceilings rise 15 feet above the floor. The theater's ceilings soar 30 feet above the auditorium.

Doors and Windows. The opera house's doors and windows offer the same level of expert craftsmanship as the rest of the theater. The doors are made from solid oak, while the windows are leaded glass. None of the opera house's doors or windows are locked. Many of the theater's windows have been covered to prevent sunlight from entering the building.

Illumination. Interestingly, Celestina prefers to keep the opera house well-lit, despite the trouble it poses for the shadows' Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Music. The orchestra pit's shadow musicians play at all hours of the day. Until they (or Celestina) are destroyed, their music never ceases.

Shadows. The Melody Opera House is home to over a hundred **shadows**. These shadows will not attack the party unless the party attacks one of them, the party attacks Celestina, or a non-evil creature enters the area.

Keyed Locations

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Melody Opera House on page 37.

1 - Main Entrance

Two **shadows** stand outside these double doors.

2 - Lobby

A **shadow** stands behind the desk at the south, almost as if it's there to collect tickets. Two more **shadows** sit in the chairs closest to the door.

3 - North Lounge

A **shadow** stands behind the bar while two more **shadows** sit at one of the couches at the sound end of the room.

3b - Stairs Down. These stairs lead to area 15.

3c - Stairs Up. These stairs lead to area 5h.

4 - South Lounge

Four **shadows** sit silently at tables in this attractive room.

4b - Stairs Up. These stairs lead to area 5i.

5 - Auditorium

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

MELODY OPERA HOUSE

GROUND LEVEL

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



UPPER LEVEL



Shadows fill all one hundred seats of this impressive auditorium, including its balconies. Shadowy ushers slide between the aisles, pretending to show the shadowy spectators to their seats. Delightfully grim music swells from the orchestra pit, where shadowy musicians play the instruments they once played in life.

More shadows stand on stage, some of which are dressed in colorful theatrical costumes. In the middle of the fray stands a pale-faced human woman with long dark hair. A ring with two glowing purple gems dangles from a chain around her neck. A man dressed like a jester kneels at her feet. His eyes are bloodshot, and his exhaustion is apparent.

“Please,” he begs, tugging at the pale woman’s tattered dress. “I beg you, Celestina. Let me go.”

The woman ignores his pleas. Instead, she smiles out over the audience and begins to sing. Despite her pallor, the melody that escapes her lips is filled with a haunting blend of beauty and remorse. The shadows who watch from their seats pretend to wipe tears from the spots on their faces where their eyes should be.

Have each character make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a character feels the pain in Celestina’s voice and starts to weep.

Encounter: Celestina. The woman is **Celestina** (see the sidebar for her statistics). She wears the *ring of three wishes* on a chain around her neck. The man dressed as a jester is Haralamb Prunea, the mayor of Medrok (**noble**). He’s currently suffering from two levels of exhaustion. Celestina refuses to let him die. There are 120 **shadows** in the auditorium.

The moment any of the characters attack Celestina or try to steal the *ring of three wishes*, she stops her song and commands the shadows in attendance to attack.

The shadows attack as one. Since there are so many shadows present, instead of running the shadows individually, treat them as a single hazard. On initiative count 12, each character involved in the fight must make a special DC 12 Constitution or Dexterity saving throw (the target’s choice). On a failed saving throw, a character takes 18 (4d6 + 4) necrotic damage, and their Strength score is reduced by 2d4. On a successful saving throw, a character takes 7 (2d4 + 2) necrotic damage, and their Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

The characters can attack the shadows to temporarily protect themselves from the shadows’ attack. If the characters deal 30 or more damage to the shadows (AC 12) before the next initiative count 12, all of the characters have advantage on their next round of saving throws. The wave of shadows automatically fails any saving throws against spells that deal damage to an area. A cleric of 5th level or

higher can expend one use of channel divinity to completely drive away the shadows for one turn, foregoing the party’s need to make Constitution saving throws.

The best way to stop the shadows is to take the ring from Celestina. This can be done with an opposed grapple check. Then, once a character secures the ring, they can use their action to cast a *wish* spell from it to destroy the ring itself. Of course, this might be problematic; see the Celestina’s Ring of Three Wishes sidebar to learn why. Until the ring is destroyed, Celestina cannot be destroyed. If the shadows in the auditorium aren’t enough to kill the characters, she draws every shadow in the city to the location. If the characters can’t destroy Celestina within 1 minute of triggering her wrath, they will be destroyed and turned into shadows.

Multiple Vantage Points. Wise characters will try to sneak into the auditorium without entering through the lobby doors. In doing so, they may catch Celestina off guard. These vantage points are detailed below.

5b - Orchestra Pit. The orchestra pit is set two feet below the auditorium’s floors and five feet below the stage.

5c - Stage. The stage is 5 feet above the auditorium’s floors.

5d - Ladder. A ladder tucked into the northern part of the stage offers access up to the catwalk above the stage (area 5m).

5e - Backstage. There are no shadows behind the curtains here.

5f - Northern Backstage Stairwell. These stairs lead down to area 20.

5g - Southern Backstage Stairwell. These stairs lead down to area 22.

5h - Northern Stairwell. These stairs lead down to area 3c.

5i - Southern Stairwell. These stairs lead down to area 4b.

5j - Upper Deck. The upper deck offers seating for thirty. There is a shadow in each seat. This balcony is 12 feet above the auditorium floor.

5k - North Balcony. The northern balcony offers a clear view of the stage. There are two shadows sitting here. This balcony is 12 feet above the auditorium floor.

5l - South Balcony. This balcony offers a clear view of the stage. There are two shadows sitting here. This balcony is 12 feet above the auditorium floor.

5m - Catwalk. This catwalk is 18 feet above the auditorium floor. It offers a clear view of the entire stage, including backstage.

6 - Restrooms

A stack of twenty desiccated corpses crowds this area, making it almost impossible to pass through.

7 - Manager’s Office

The dried, shadowless corpse of the theater’s manager still sits in her chair. Her **shadow** stands by the northern wall, looking at the books on the shelf.

8 - Storage

This room contains spare props, costumes, and supplies needed to operate the opera house.

9 - North Side

The northern side of the building offers a side door that

MELODY OPERA HOUSE BASEMENT



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

leads to areas 3a and 5a, as well as a staircase that climbs up to the upstairs hallway (5h).

10 - Rear Entrance

This set of double doors is unguarded.

11 - Upstairs Lounge

There is a single **shadow** standing behind both counters in this area.

Treasure. Merchandise sold during shows clutter the counters in this area. The contents of the counters total to 1,000 gp in valuables, mostly overpriced jewelry.

12 - North Meeting Room

There is nothing of interest in this fancy conference room.

13 - South Meeting Room

Six **shadows** sit around the large table that dominates this room. A small exterior balcony (13b) provides another way to enter the opera house. The balcony is 15 feet above the street below. Climbing onto the balcony via the stonework requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

14 - South Balcony

This balcony is 15 feet above the street below. Climbing onto the balcony via the stonework requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

15 - West Stairwell

This stairway leads up to area 3a.

16 - Actor's Rehearsal Space

A colossal pile of sixty-three desiccated corpses fills this rehearsal space. All of them are dressed for the opera. The first time the characters witness the pile of bodies, they must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, a character shrieks in horror at the grisly sight.

17 - Director's Office

The corpse of the theater's director sits at his desk, still clutching a bottle of wine. The director's **shadow** lingers nearby.

18 - Green Room A

Three dried-out corpses wearing stage make-up and feather boas sit in chairs around the room. Their shadows aren't present.

19 - Actor's Lounge

Beyond a half-drunk bottle of now-flat sparkling wine sitting on the table, there is nothing of interest in this area.

20 - Northeastern Stairwell

These stairs lead up to area 5f.

Celestina, Queen of the Shadows

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 136 (16d8 + 64)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Str +3, Con +7, Wis +4, Cha +8

Skills Performance +11

Damage Resistances psychic

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Aura of Blight. Celestina emits a sphere of necrotic energy that extends 30 feet from her in all directions. Each creature that enters or starts its turn in the area takes 4 (1d8) necrotic damage and the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A non-evil humanoid slain in this way returns as a shadow in 1d4 hours. Nonmagical plants that aren't creatures, such as trees or shrubs, simply wither and die within her aura.

Regeneration. Celestina regains 10 hit points at the start of her turn. Celestina's body is destroyed only if her *ring of three wishes* is destroyed and Celestina starts her turn with 0 hit points.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage plus 2d8 necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A non-evil humanoid slain in this way returns as a shadow in 1d4 hours.

Song of Melancholy. Celestina sings a magical melody. Every humanoid and giant within 120 ft. of her that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed until the song ends. Celestina must take a bonus action on her subsequent turns to continue singing. She can stop singing at any time. The song ends if she is incapacitated.

While charmed by Celestina, a target is incapacitated. If the charmed target is more than 5 ft. away from Celestina, it must move on its turn toward Celestina by the most direct route. It doesn't avoid opportunity attacks, but before moving into damaging terrain, such as lava or a pit, and whenever it takes damage from a source other than Celestina or shadows, a target can repeat the saving throw. A creature can also repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the effect ends on it.

A target that successfully saves is immune to Celestina's song for the next 24 hours.

Treasure: Prop Sword. Although the sword in the display case is a prop, its craftsmanship is enough to fetch 100 gp at the market.

21 - Property Room

The property room contains many of the special-effects props used by the theater to wow its patrons. Many of the boxes contain pyrotechnics filled with smoke powder. A character who observes these items and succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes that if this room caught fire, it would create a huge disaster.

If the smoke powder in this room takes any fire damage, it explodes. Each creature in the room and within 20 feet of the explosion must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. Creatures behind cover—or on the stage above the room—make this check with advantage. A target takes 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed saving throw, and half as much damage on a successful one.

Triggering this explosion sets Celestina into an uproar as it likely kills Mayor Prunea (if he's still alive).

22 - Southeastern Stairwell

These stairs lead up to area 5h.

23 - VIP Dressing Room B

This fancy dressing room appears to be empty.

Treasure: Perfumes. Various perfumes cover the vanity's surface. All of these bottles together (six in all) are worth 250 gp.

24 - VIP Dressing Room A

The remains of a dead actor sit in the vanity's chair. Their shadow is not present.

25 - Orchestra's Rehearsal Space

Other than a litany of well-cared for musical instruments, there is nothing else of interest in this area.

26 - Green Room B

Two dead actors lie face down on the floor. Their shadows are not present.

Rain of Fire

Although Red Tatiana tasked the characters to take out Celestina and defeat the shadows, she doesn't trust that they will actually accomplish their mission. The military commanders instead turn to their war mages for help. On the backs of **griffons**, the ten **mag**es drop *fireballs* on the city below from *necklaces of fireballs*.

When this happens is up to you, but it's recommended that this happens only if a) the characters are slow to make a move against Celestina, b) they defeat Celestina and claim the *ring of three wishes*, or c) they're unable to defeat Celestina in close combat.

When the bombardment begins, the characters must escape the opera house or suffer serious damage. Fortunately, the *fireballs* distract Celestina and her shadows (if they're still present) enough that they won't attack the characters unless the characters continue their assault.

The bombardment lasts for twenty minutes. At the end of a character's turn, have them roll a d6. Consult the Bombardment table below to determine whether a complication occurs. If it does, it affects the next character in turn order. You do not have to make these rolls after the shadows or Celestina take their turn.

Bombardment

d6 Complication

1-3	No effect.
4	A <i>fireball</i> lands exactly where the character stands (DC 15 Dexterity saving throw).
5	A part of the ceiling collapses above the character. The character and each creature within 10 feet of the character must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. A character who fails their saving throw takes 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage and becomes pinned under the rubble. As long as the character remains pinned, they are prone and restrained. A character, including the pinned target, can use their action to pull the character from the rubble with a successful DC 15 Strength check.
6	Flammable objects catch fire near the character. If the character ends their turn in the space next to the fire, they take 3 (1d6) fire damage from the fire.

Adventure Conclusion

There are two primary adventure paths in this adventure, both of which are tied together.

If the characters decided to work for Red Tatiana and the Balaspatakians, they likely went into the city to the Melody Opera House and confronted Celestina. If they took her ring and wished the ring out of existence, Celestina's reign ends immediately. Her shadows dissipate into nothingness and inevitably return to their corpses. Despite the *fireball* assault on the Melody Opera House, the Balaspatakians fulfill their end of the bargain and grant the characters the promised gold, land, and titles. Although Medrok is clear of the shadows, many Balaspatakians fear returning to the city.

Inevitably, the city falls into disrepair and becomes a haven for rogues and cutthroats.

On the other hand, the characters may have died or chosen to work alongside the owners of The Mannered Bear, likely discovering the city's incredible gold supply. It's possible that they even made it through the vaults and escaped with the treasure before the Balaspatakians could secure it themselves. Either way, this ending does not lead toward Celestina's destruction. No matter what happens to the characters, no other parties can enter Celestina's opera house and defeat her. Approximately one month after the original Night of Shadows, Celestina expands her reach across all of Balaspatak. It takes her only three months to completely convert every man, woman, child, and animal in the land into shadows under her control. The region becomes known as The Shadowlands, a dark territory where no sane living person would dare set foot. Celestina, Queen of the Shadows, rules this realm for eight centuries until she is finally defeated by an angel named Ophiel.

Additional Hooks

Of course, there are a lot of questions left unanswered at this adventure's conclusion. Who is Thrask and what's his stake in the story's outcome? Why did the owners of The Mannered Bear want the artifacts at the bank? What happened to the dungeon's managers? You can use these hooks to create new adventures with the evil party. Ω

Celestina's Ring of Three Wishes

Wondrous item, legendary

While wearing this ring, you can use an action to expend 1 of its 3 charges (the ring only has 2 charges while in Celestina's possession) to cast the *wish* spell from it. Only living creatures can use the ring.

Sentience. The ring is a sentient chaotic evil magic item with an Intelligence of 9, a Wisdom of 14, and a Charisma of 19. It has hearing and darkvision out to 30 feet. It communicates by transmitting emotion to the creature carrying or wilding it, but cannot speak.

Personality. The ring feeds on strong emotions and loves turning its wishes against its user. It goads its wearer into acts of destruction, vengeance, and terrorism. If it is forced to do something that would endanger it—such as a user trying to wish the ring out of existence or undo one of its previous wishes—the ring attempts to take control of its wielder. The wielder must make a DC 16 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the wielder is charmed by the ring for 1d12 hours. While charmed, the ring tries to have its wielder make a wish.

Once the ring's charges are used, it goes dormant and enters a deep slumber for 100 years. Once the ring wakes from its slumber, it regains its expended charges.

Con Artist

I conned thousands in gold from wealthy nobles but eventually got caught after targeting the wrong mark.

Conspiracy Theorist

I spread rumors around Medrok that the opera singer Celestina was murdered by Medrok's mayor, Haralamb Prunea. They imprisoned me for sedition.

Cult Leader

I started a dark cult dedicated to necromancy. A secret agent of the crown acted as a member of the cult and arrested me.

Doombringer

I planned on destroying the Melody Opera House by triggering an explosion in its basement. An ally of mine was caught and turned me in for clemency.

Master Thief

I disguised myself as a guard at the Pennerton Exchequer Bank in Medrok. I got all the way to the second sub-level before I was caught.

Murderer

I've killed multiple people in and around the city of Medrok. Clues led investigators back to my home where I was arrested.

Mutineer

I started a riot aboard a sailing vessel on which I was a crew member. We killed the captain and nearly sailed away before the Royal Navy caught us.

Necromancer

I ran a morgue at a nearby village where instead of interring bodies, I kept them preserved in my basement using necromancy. Grave robbers turned me in.

Re-Distributor

I stole from the wealthy and gave to the poor. The wealthy didn't like that, so they hired the bounty hunter Red Tatiana to track me down and arrest me.

Rebel

I was a member of a group that wants to overthrow the nation's monarchy. Myself and a few others were caught planning a protest.

Scum

If there's a crime that can be done, I've probably done it. This isn't my first time in a dungeon.

Shadowless

I was killed by a shadow years ago. My shadow separated from my body and left me. I was later raised. Now, I cast no shadow.

Traitor

I was once a guard at the Medrok Judicer's Hall. I lost my temper and tried to kill Judge Lacusta, and he had me thrown into the dungeon.

Vigilante

I worked as a vigilante in Medrok bringing justice to the unjust. The corrupt officials in Medrok didn't like me making the city guard look bad; therefore, I was captured and imprisoned.

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