

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 43



HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
VTT - ROLL20 MAPS

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



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Delve into the Dark Draw your Blade

May the light of Gede
guide your fearful steps.
Oh! Radiant Divinity,
Goddess of the Eternal
Light, we beseech Thee
in humble reverence.

Thou art the beacon
that cleaves the shroud
of darkness, the eternal
flame that guides our
wayward spirits. In
Thy luminous grace,
we seek solace, for Thy
brilliance illuminates the
weary path of the just
and the pure of heart.



PRISON OF THORNS

“May the Prison of Thorns be a bastion of safety and justice. Wrong-doers and criminals should experience the same fear as their victims did”.

Oxenta's Ruler



Some years ago, the ruler of Oxenta, in a bid to quell rising crime, commissioned the construction of a prison imbued with arcane enchantments. These incantations were meant to serve as a deterrent to would-be criminals, inflicting upon them a punishment so dire that even the most hardened offenders would shudder at the thought.

Within the walls of the Prison of Thorns, the bodies of inmates and prisoners would sprout thorns, like the gnarled branches of malevolent trees, as part of their sentence and punishment. For those condemned to death, the enchantment grew even more sinister, as jagged spikes erupted from their very bones, tearing through flesh and muscle in a grotesque display of agony.

UNEXPECTED OUTCOME

MAGIC IS CHAOS. After some time, the arcane spells, meant to administer justice, instead spiraled out of control. No longer discriminating between the guilty and the innocent, the magic claimed all within its grasp, snuffing the lives of all within the prison indiscriminately.

In the aftermath of this catastrophe, the tortured souls of the deceased, their bodies twisted and contorted by the thorns and spikes that had consumed them, rose from the earth as ghastly revenants. Faced with the dire consequences of their ruler's ill-conceived endeavor, the city now stands in desperate need of aid.

The prison was shut down and the city locked all the monsters inside. To confront the malevolent spirits that now roam the Prison of Thorns, the call goes out for brave souls, heroes willing to venture into the heart of darkness and vanquish the horrors that dwell within.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Heroes. A group of intrepid adventurers is thus assembled, their courage the Oxenta's last hope against the spectral terrors that infest the accursed prison. They must eliminate all threats within (1,500 gp, 7 XP).

Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas feature magical braziers that stay ever-burning. The undead within are all **dark-adapted**.

► **Smells and Sounds.** The Prison of Thorns exudes a noxious aroma of decay mingled with the faint rustle of spectral whispers echoing through its twisted corridors.

THORNY UNDEAD

The undead of this dungeon possess the following:

Thorny Grab. (DC 12 DEX) On a fail, 1d4 damage, and the target is grappled. Automatic damage each round until the target frees themselves or the undead is killed.

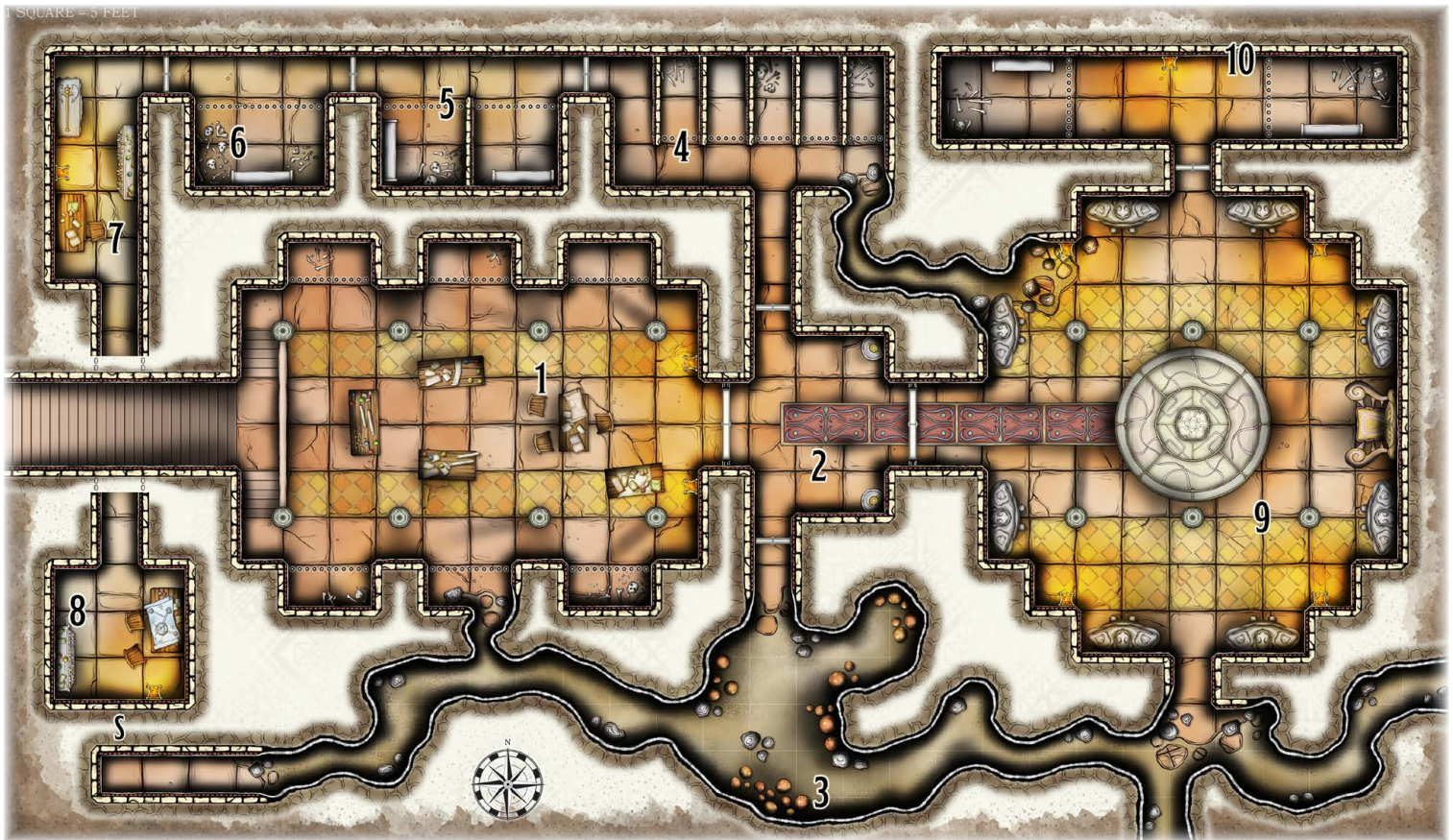
Death Throes. The undead explodes when it drops to 0 HP. 1d6 damage (DC 12 DEX check) to all creatures (including other undead) standing 5 feet from it.

1. MAIN LANDING AND HOLDING CELLS

The wooden desks are filled with unfinished notes and papers. Six barred alcoves work as holding cells. Four of them hold a **skeleton** each. The cells open when the heroes arrive. The middle south cell features a tunnel, a consequence of a recent cave-in. It leads to area 3.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	The heroes encounter a ghoul . A giant thorny growth in his thigh. His right hand is impaled there. He still fights to the death.
2	The arcane incantations are chaos. The uncontrollable magic targets one of the heroes at random (DC 13 WIS check). On a fail, a nasty thorn grows from their back, piercing through skin, clothes, and armor (1d6 damage). Only magic can heal this.
3	The magic is still causing cave-ins. The entire dungeon vibrates and debris falls on a random hero (1d8 damage, DC 12 DEX).
4	The characters stumble upon a group of three skeletons . All three attempt a Thorny Grab (see above) on the same target.
5	The heroes meet Kev, a friendly ghast . He was a prison guard. He managed to remain lucid even after the thorny transformation. He promises to help the heroes. But there is a 1-in-6 chance every crawling round that he loses his mind and attacks.
6	The characters find 120 gp inside a leather bag on the floor. Two zombies walk up to them after they take the loot.



2. ANTECHAMBER

A lush, crimson rug stretches from beneath, leading towards and beyond the formidable double doors at the chamber's end. To the north and south, corridors branch away. The walls themselves are canvases, adorned with detailed frescoes of the city, Oxenta.

Two small tables hold gold vases. They are free for the taking. The pair is worth 45 gp to the right buyer (2 XP).

3. CAVERN NETWORK

Since the chaotic magic was released, the dead roam freely, wild magic travels the dungeon, and new passages were discovered. A vast cavern network is connected to the Prison of Thorns. The heroes may find:

► **Fungi.** Three **mushroomfolk** inhabit these caverns. Telepathically, they warn intruders. No torches shall be allowed or tolerated. If the heroes put off their torches (if any), or if they use a lamp to light their path, they may pass unharmed. Otherwise, the 'shrooms attack!

► **Secret Passage.** A perceptive character may notice the brick that must be pushed to slide a section of the wall sideways and reveal a path to area 8 (DC 13 WIS).

► **Dark Tunnels.** Stalactites and stalagmites populate the way, their silhouettes like jagged teeth, promising a dangerous descent. Following this path leads to a small moss-ridden cave. Four **rot flowers** attack anyone who approaches. The tunnels beyond fork into endless paths.

4. NORTH BLOCK

This section of the prison features five holding cells. They are either open or their bars bent outward. Two **skeletons** and one **ghoul**, all covered in sharp thorns, stand near their former cells. They attack intruders.

► **Tunnel.** One of the consequences of the recent cave-ins is the connection between this area and the arcane chamber (area 9, see map). However, this humid tunnel is home to a **swarm of spiders**. The insects do not chase enemies outside their nest and flee if reduced to half HP.

5. TWIN CELLS

These larger cells are locked and closed. Word on the street is that Oxenta's authorities often punished criminals even further by putting six or even eight individuals together in here for days. One cell is empty. The other contains three **skeletons** standing still. Their only movement is their head turning toward the nearest intruder. One of the skeletons wears a beautiful, shiny, gold ring.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The golden relic is a **ring of protection**. Its wearer gains a +1 bonus to their AC.

6. LARGE CELL

This cell is also closed. Five **skeletons** stare at the intruders from within. Unlike their neighbors in area 5, they do not remain still, and try a Thorny Grab through the bars if the characters approach. There is a 4-in-6 chance that the door opens from the struggle.

7. STUDIO

In the prison's depths, a clandestine studio thrives. Chains and weapons adorn the walls, serving as grim decorations. Here, the prison guards took breaks, wrote journals, and did time-consuming paperwork.

The desk shows unfinished notes. The person doing this suffered the same fate as the inmates and became a monster. The shelf contains books and logs with the Prison of Thorn's history and prisoner count.

8. OFFICE

This hard-to-reach chamber is an extension of the studio. Two **ghouls** stare at the furniture as if trying to figure out what it is for. They fight intruders until slain. If the heroes spend 1 **crawling round** reading the documents in this chamber they learn the following:

- The list of employees is too long. There must be some money-laundering going on (DC 14 INT).
- The prison's magic was paid for with tithes and tax money. The population of Oxenta is not going to be happy to know their gold only satisfies the wishes of their egotistic ruler, and not the people's.
- The characters learn the bases of the spells and incantations placed in the arcane chamber (area 9). Mages or priests interacting with the magic devices in area 9 gain advantage on their first check.

9. ARCANE CHAMBER

The runes engraved all around this room pulse with dark magic, cursing inmates with thorns that pierce flesh, a horrible, perpetual, painful penance.

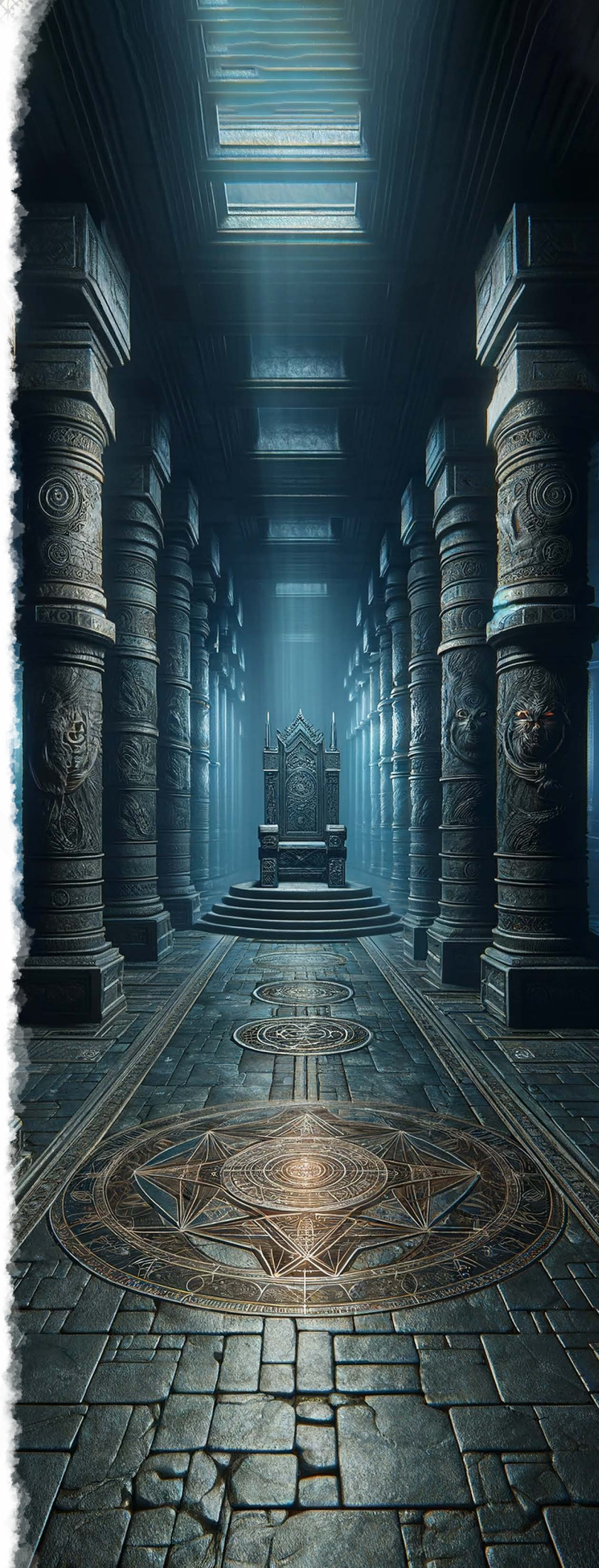
The incantations in this chamber are the ones that failed. A mage or priest among the heroes must be attuned to this wild magic (DC 13 spellcasting check). They make this check with advantage if they read the documents in area 8. On a success, they nullify the incantations and dispel them. On a fail, they may try a second time (without advantage this time). On a second failure or a fail by 5 or more, the device breaks, and all heroes are affected by **Random Event 2**, with no save (see table).

10. CELLS OF HATE

Four **zombies** are imprisoned here, two in each cell. The sight of living creatures makes them walk forward and realize their cells are open. The zombies attack.

DEVELOPMENT

THIS PLACE SHOULD have never existed. But now the heroes know crucial information that may jeopardize the position of Oxenta's ruler (see area 8). What the characters do with these facts is an adventure for another day...



THE GRIM CREATION

The line between life and death is but a whisper. Heed the call of the sea's darkest depths, where fate's hands weave the threads of destiny.

Excerpt from the Black Tome



his adventure is about Mr. Gibbs, a man of medicine turned mariner, who lives with his son Perry on the outskirts of the city. They lead a peaceful life next to the sea where sometimes when the need arises, Mr. Gibbs performs small medical procedures for a significantly small fee.

The turning point of their narrative began with a peculiar discovery aboard Mr. Gibbs' fishing barge—a safe ensconced in the ocean's embrace, harboring a tome as dark as the depths from which it was retrieved. Unbeknownst to Gibbs, its pages whispered necromancy, an art that veils the threshold between life and death.

MR. GIBBS'S OBSESSION

TIME CARRIED ON until it coursed through a day of despair. Perry, vibrant and full of youth, fell victim to sahuagin's savagery, leaving Mr. Gibbs to navigate a tempest of grief and guilt. The sea, which had given him so much, had now exacted a price much too steep.

Mr. Gibbs made a solemn vow—born of desperation and a father's love, to breach the unbreachable, to defy the natural order, and reclaim what was unjustly taken. Thus began his descent into necromancy, guided by the black tome's eldritch practices. The book became the beacon of his obsession. And Mr. Gibbs, once a healer of bodies, now sought to mend the ravages of death itself. Alas, the wretched art of necromancy is a cursed journey. The resurrection he seeks is but a mirage; the outcome is but a grim parody of life. Perry, the son he yearns to bring back, is beyond reach. In his stead, only a cursed ghoul shall rise; a mindless shell, a vile creation born of a father's undying love turned to desperation.

INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURE

This module is meant to be used as the first stop for a group of adventurers starting their hero lives. There is no job to be done, there is no objective to meet, and there is no treasure to loot. The characters simply stumble upon Mr. Gibbs on the grim day he succeeds. Perry, the deceased son, shall rise as a **ghoul**, ravenous and incapable of recognizing his people from food.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Introduction. The heroes' journey begins! They grab their gear, purchase stuff, and maybe even get a job. They leave the safety of town and come across Mr. Gibbs's home on the road. The heroes are unbothered by the seemingly empty building until they hear a horrible scream coming from inside the seaside house (0 XP).

Level 0 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Smells and Sounds.** The wind whistles and the birds sing. The crash of occasional waves breaks the few moments of silence. A rotting stench comes from the house.

► **Necromancy.** A *detect magic* spell shows the heroes the obscure energy coming from the book and the ghoul. The magic is the strongest near the evil-filled tome.

► **Bad Signs.** A rotting smell, necromancy, and the horrible screams coming from the house (see **Adventure Hooks**). A careful priest would conclude a *protection from evil* spell would work here (DC 11 INT).

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A group of four peasants approach the house (Reaction check); they hear the screaming too (see Adventure Hook).
2	A pair of elves from a nearby forest were sent by their seer. Their leader felt the obscure energies coming from this small home and they have been tasked with finding the source of this evil and destroying it. They are unsure about the heroes (Reaction).
3	A knight was hired to investigate the foul smells coming from the fisherman's home. He does not know the heroes (Reaction).
4	The smell from the house draws the attention of two hungry wolves . The beasts want to see the source of this stench for themselves. They become aggressive if someone stands in between. However, they leave if they are given at least 10 pounds of food.
5	A pair of sahuagin appear in area 3. They demand gold from the heroes. They fight for it but flee when reduced to half their HP.
6	An itinerant merchant travels from one city to another. He offers the heroes simple gear, common items, and rations.



1. THE CAPITAL ROAD

Beneath a canopy of whispering pines, a winding path clings to the rugged coastline, leading travelers to the secluded abode of Mr. Gibbs, where the sea's breath mingles with the scent of brine and pine.

The heroes leave Oxenta and travel southward when they stumble upon the fisherman's home. Let the heroes wander off, explore, or even ignore the home altogether.

2. THE SHORE

Beside Mr. Gibbs' home, the shore whispers tales of yore, where the gentle lapping of waves caresses the sands, a serene haven for stern, wayward seafarers.

It is when they approach this area that they hear horrible screams coming from the building. They must act immediately to have a chance to save hapless Mr. Gibbs.

THE CONFRONTATION

The characters rush to the house and kick the door open. A humanoid creature with one arm and its entrails hanging has Mr. Gibbs (**peasant**) pinned to the ground. The old man struggles to breathe. If the **ghoul** wins the initiative, the fisherman is bitten and might perish. Otherwise, the heroes arrive just in time to stop Perry, mindless and revived, from killing his grieving father.

3. THE SMALL GULF

Nestled next to Mr. Gibbs' abode, the gulf cradles tranquil waters, and a lonely boat rocks with the gentle waves. It looks like it has not been used in days.

Mr. Gibbs's boat is anchored to the wooden pier. The heroes may loot this place if they ignore the screams or if the fisherman lives no more. There are 18 gp, a dagger, and a dozen bags of rare spices (10 gp each, 2 XP).

4. ROAD (SOUTH)

The road continues for days. Several villages and hamlets dot the countryside before the next big city. Regardless of what happens here, the show must go on, and the heroes must continue their journey toward glory.

5. MR. GIBBS'S ROOM

A chamber filled with maritime relics, mementos, and old maps. A sturdy, oak desk stands by the window, inviting with an open, leather-bound journal.

► **Saviors.** The heroes save Mr. Gibbs and heal his wounds, if any. After the traumatizing event, he has no words to thank them. Instead, he grabs 150 gp from under his bed as payment (2 XP). He asks them to take the black book, which only fed him impossible fantasies.

► **Tragedy.** Mr. Gibbs is dead. The heroes may grab whatever they want from the house. If this happens, one of **Random Encounters 2** or **3** (or both) occurs. **Reaction** checks are made with disadvantage in this case. Skip the check if the heroes possess the book (see below).

6. STUDIO

Here, Mr. Gibbs used the mystical book to breathe life back into his son's corpse. A worn altar bears the faint, lingering touch of Perry's accursed revival spell.

This room is evidence of Mr. Gibbs's infirmity. He became obsessed with a fool's errand; a doomed plan.

► **The Black Tome.** A sentient black leather tome. It is up to the GM's discretion to decide the extent of the book's powers. The black tome is a beacon of evil that shall draw the attention of both justice-seekers and evil-doers. Whoever possesses it shall be considered an enemy of what is lawful, good, and right.

GRAY BISON MANOR

There is more to the Bisons than just wealth and influence. We've all heard that they are somehow behind most of the assassinations and attacks lately.

Concerned Innkeeper

In the shadowed outskirts of Ardennia, a city famed for its majestic architecture and bustling marketplaces, lies the foreboding estate of the Bison family. Gray Bison Manor, surrounded by thickets of dark woods, serves as a facade for the dark secrets harbored within. The Bisons, a seemingly noble and esteemed family of five, are the clandestine puppeteers of the city's underworld, orchestrating a web of crime that ensnares the city in fear and mystery.

The head of the family, Lord Victor Bison, is a man of charisma and ruthless intellect. With his wife, Lady Elara, they exude the charm and grace of high society. Their three children, each skilled in various forms of combat and deception, play crucial roles in the guild's operations, from espionage to assassination.

For the past six months, there have been a series of assassination attempts and mysterious abductions of key political figures. These crimes have left the city's leadership in a state of paranoia and the populace in fear. The Bison family is behind these heinous crimes. Beneath Gray Bison Manor lies their grim dungeon. Those abducted by the guild end up here. The dungeon is a place of torment, where the abducted are held for ransom, information, or worse, never to see the light of day again.

NATURE REVEALED

DESPITE THEIR SECRECY, many nobles and politicians already suspect foul play on the Bisons' side. However, due to their strong grip on key figures and diplomats, it is not easy to act against them. The few who oppose the Bisons and still remain free to do so consider acting outside the confines of the law to bring them to justice.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Covert Investigation. Bailiff Lockhart wants to investigate the Bisons but fears immediate retribution since the family has ties with his superiors. He summons the characters covertly and tasks them with investigating Gray Bison Manor to find evidence of wrongdoing. They are even authorized to arrest the Bisons if undeniable evidence is uncovered. Should the heroes fail, the Bailiff Lockhart shall disavow the operation (1,200 gp, 6 XP).

Level 4 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 3 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Oil lamps hang from sconces throughout the manor. They last for 4 **crawling rounds** before one of the two servants comes around to refill the oil font.

1. MANOR OUTSKIRTS

A stately two-story manor stands on the city outskirts, its stone facade weathered yet dignified. Over the ebony door, a majestic gray bison is emblazoned, symbolizing the family's strength and resilience.

Knocking on the front door causes a servant, Milli (**thug**), to attend. Milli invites the characters to the Grand Hall (area 3) where they are to wait on Lord Victor.

Alternatively, the characters may choose to infiltrate the manor. They can circle around the edifice to the veranda (area 8), where Lady Elara drinks tea with a friend. Or they can climb either side of the building to reach the second-story balconies (25 feet climb, DC 14 STR check). They lead to area 10, or areas 11 and 12.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A cloaked man (thief) arrives seeking an audience with Lord Bison. He bears an incriminating letter sent by a city official.
2	A troupe of four entertainers (guards), under the guise of performing for the Bisons, secretly scouts the estate for weaknesses, hired by an unknown benefactor. They are allowed into area 6 to audition. They may join the characters (Reaction check).
3	A mysterious merchant offers a rare artifact to the Bisons (<i>crystal ball</i>). He claims it is imbued with dark magic.
4	A knight disguised as a tax collector arrives with probing questions and a keen eye. He may join the party (Reaction check).
5	A repentant assassin (thief), once a Bison goon, seeks redemption by offering evidence of the family's crimes.
6	A mysterious alchemist (apprentice), bearing nearly undetectable poisons, requests an audience with Lady Elara Bison. With a stern gaze and expressive eyes, he hints at knowledge of her darkest desires of power and greed (eliminating her husband).

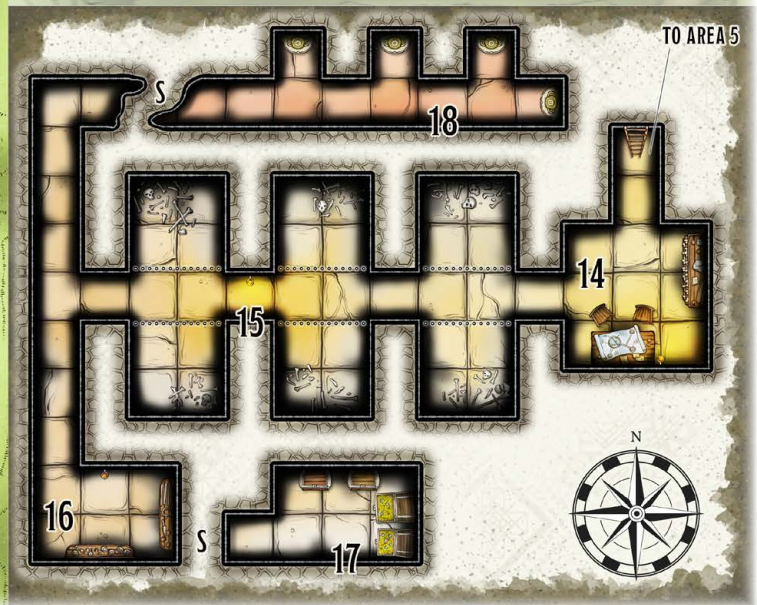
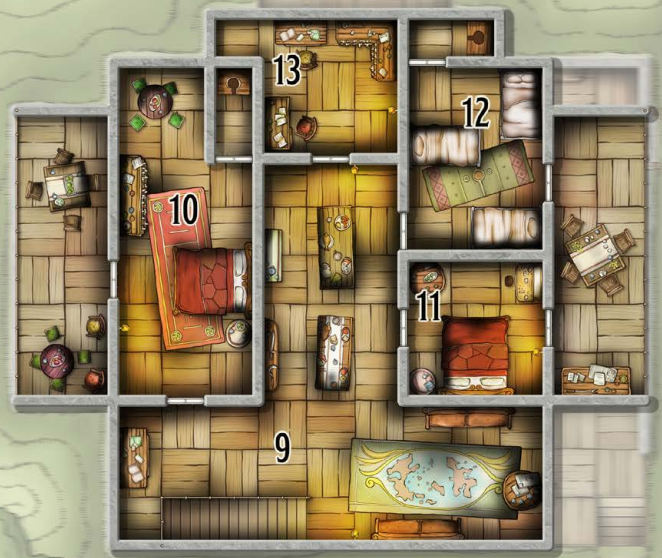


2. ENTRANCE HALL

The hall contains two statues of Victor Bison in armor with spread arms, as if welcoming visitors. The double doors to area 3 bear the family sigil, a gray bison charging forward. If the characters come here, Milli (**thug**) takes their coats and requests them to leave their weapons here but does not insist much if the characters refuse.

3. GRAND HALL

There are thirteen seats and a king-worthy banquet spread across three tables. If the characters come here, Milli asks them to wait on Lord Bison here. Two servant girls, Agara and Irma (**bandits**), serve wine and allow the characters to partake in the feast. Alas, the wine is poisoned. Characters who drink it fall unconscious for 1d6 hours (DC 16 CON check). If all characters fall for this ruse, they are stripped to their undergarments and moved to a cell in area 15. Their belongings are stored in area 14 for review. Regardless of what happens, Lord Bison never comes to speak with the characters here.



4. KITCHEN AND LARDER

Four cooks work tirelessly here to provide the Bisons and their guests with all manner of delicacies of high cuisine. The cooks are Diana, Barbara, Valner, and Gord (**peasants**). They are aware of the Bisons' criminal activities but are afraid for their families should they act against the Bisons. The bravest of them, Barbara, may offer incriminating evidence against Lady Elara if the party inspires enough trust in her (**Reaction** check).

5. THE DEN

The chamber contains two rocking chairs by the hearth and twelve hunting trophies hanging from the walls. The trapdoor in the middle leads to the basement (area 14).

► **The Senator.** Oliver Garl (**peasant**), a prominent politician in Ardennia awaits Lord Bison here. His son, Carl, is a prisoner in area 15. The senator has come to make a deal with the Bisons. He wants to believe in the party but remains fearful (**Reaction** check with disadvantage).

6. ART ROOM

This room contains an assortment of fine musical instruments and a small library of contemporary music. The long piano and harp are the most prominent. A troupe of musicians may be here (see **Random Event 2**). Their leader, Gustaff, had a sibling abducted by the Bisons a fortnight ago. He wants to find the dungeon's entrance.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The lute and violin are of fine craftsmanship and can be sold for 20 gp each.

7. FIRST STORY LANDING

The room contains a wooden bookcase, a fine velvet couch, and the wooden stairs to area 9.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** The bookcase contains three Wizard spell scrolls written by Linda Bison. The spells are *hold person*, *levitate*, and *detect thoughts*.

8. VERANDA

Lady Elara Bison and her dear friend Dianora (**peasants**), a wealthy merchant, drink tea and relax in the sunlit veranda. A servant named Vinna (**thief**) is nearby.

► **Treason.** Lady Elara plays the part of a concerned housewife and a lady in distress unless she infers the characters' foul intentions against the Bison family. In that case, she offers a deal. She can provide documents and contracts that incriminate her husband while keeping herself and her children seemingly innocent. Greed and thirst for power are her main motivators.

9. SECOND STORY LANDING

Meant to cater to guests and associates, the landing features ample space to sit and banquet tables filled with exotic delicacies and the finest wines in the region. This area hub connects with all other second-story rooms.

10. MASTER BEDROOM

Victor and Elara's room has been scrubbed clean of incriminating evidence. The bookshelf has been carefully picked to favor the fine arts and philanthropy.

Treasure (3 XP). A locked safe (DC 14 DEX) under the bed contains a bag with 400 gp and a *kytherian cog*.

11. LINDA'S ROOM

The family's spellcaster, Linda (**mage**), is Victor's favorite. She works with her father in the basement (area 14).

► **Treasure (3 XP).** Linda's spellbook is on a side table. It contains four random Wizard spells of tiers 1-2.

12. THE TWINS' ROOM

The Bison twins, Varle and Harold (**knights**), rest here when the characters explore the manor. They are experienced combatants and are well-connected in the city's underworld. People fear their father more than them.

13. THE STUDY

The door to this chamber features a high-quality lock (DC 18 DEX check). It contains a bookshelf and two desks.

► **Trap.** The desk drawers feature poisoned needle traps. Opening them to retrieve the evidence within causes the person to be pinched by the needle. Victims of this poison drop to 0 HP and start dying unless they receive an antidote or magical healing (DC 17 CON check).

► **Evidence.** Inspecting the documents here for 1 **crawling round** yields several hit contracts and evidence of corrupt dealings with senators and nobles. The evidence implicates all members of the Bison family.

14. BASEMENT LANDING

The ladder in area 5 is the only way to get here. Linda (**mage**) and Lord Victor (**knight**) study a construction contract facilitated by a corrupt deal. It would allow them to expropriate several noble manors in the city's outskirts, leaving the tenants homeless and dispossessed.

► **A Truce.** Before combat ensues, Lord Victor offers the characters to become their patron and bolster their adventuring lives. He claims to be the benefactor of many adventuring parties because of his interest in magical relics. Should the characters accept, Lord Bison is true to his word and becomes a generous, yet corrupt, patron. Bailiff Lockhart shall not take such treason lightly.

15. THE DUNGEON

The six cells are littered with the bones of Grandfather Bison's victims who were left to die of dehydration in the cells. Five prisoners still live. Carl, the senator's son (see area 5) as well as Gustaff's sibling (see **Random Event 2**) are among the prisoners. All of them are starving.

16. DEAD-END LIBRARY

The hallway leads to a dead-end with two bookshelves filled with literary classics and ceramic trinkets. Pulling a miniature effigy of Lord Bison causes a section of the wall to move sideways and reveal area 17 (DC 14 WIS).

17. THE BISONS' VAULT

The dark chamber contains four wooden chests filled to the brim with the Bison family's ill-gotten riches.

► **Treasure (8 XP).** The chests contain 8,750 gp, two *potions of healing*, two diamonds (100 gp each), and a *+1 dagger*. Factions opposed to the Bisons shall hunt the characters if they take this ill-gotten treasure hoard.

18. ANCIENT CRYPT

Behind a wall of rubble are funerary plinths where Lord Bison's ancestors lie. Linda practiced necromancy on these remains, awakening seven aggressive **shadows**. The hallway was demolished and closed off after Linda Bison proved unable to control the undead spirits.

ABODE OF SPIDERS

...and fight not for gold, but for a purpose. Destroy evil not for glory, but because it is the righteous thing to do. Forge your legend with your deeds.

Excerpt from "What is a Hero? Vol. II"



In a dark, hidden corner of the world, lies the forsaken crypt of the Reid family. Their lineage, extinguished during the wars, left behind only the echoes of their existence, encapsulated within a few crypts. These sacred grounds have been ravaged by time, and forgotten. Now, two centuries removed from the era of the Reids, nature's unrelenting force has wrought further desolation upon the sole surviving crypt, leaving it a shadow of its former self.

THE LAST STRAW

WITHIN THIS SHATTERED sanctuary, three urns and a solitary sarcophagus stand as the last remnants of the Reid legacy. The spirits of the Reid family have watched over the centuries as the world outside moved on, accepting their fate with a dignified silence. However, a new peril encroaches upon their eternal rest, one not born of man or time but of the wild, unchecked growth of nature itself—a burgeoning spider infestation from the adjacent caves threatens to desecrate their final resting place. This imminent violation stirs the spirits from their solemn vigil, compelling them to reach beyond the veil in search of champions to protect their sanctity.

CALLING FOR HELP

MANIFESTING THROUGH DREAMS and visions, the spirits of the Reid family issue their silent plea to the living, a call to arms that transcends the boundaries between the seen and the unseen. Adventurers, drawn by the ethereal whispers of the past and the promise of uncovering lost secrets, may find themselves entangled in a quest that is as much about preservation as it is about exploration.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Saviors. The heroes experience the same dream, or perhaps the same vision manifests before them. Either way, they learn of the Reids' family crypt location and their non-desired spider situation. Tania Reid, the ghost from the sarcophagus, begs the heroes to hurry and impede the imminent arachnid takeover (0 XP).

AGENTS OF GOOD

This adventure has no monetary reward for the heroes. Their sole motivator is to do a good deed. A priest within the party is ideal but not required. Still, the heroes are free to hire a religious figure. Or a third party may ask for the heroes' help for this mission. In this case, Kevin (**acolyte**), experiences the vivid, dream-like vision.

Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** None of the dungeon areas are illuminated. The enemies within are all **dark-adapted**.

1. THE WOODS

The path to the crypt winds through an ancient forest. A dense mist clings to the soil, shrouding the way forward in mystery and stern anticipation.

► **Passage.** A character with eagle eyes may notice a spot on the hill's facade (DC 15 WIS, see map). Picks or shovels would dig a tunnel in little time. If the heroes have the tools, it takes them 1 **crawling round**.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	As adventurers delve deeper into the crypt, they stumble upon a hidden alcove. Something inside glows and reflects all light. If they inspect the place, the heroes find 74 gp (2 XP). However, they also disturb a dormant swarm of spiders .
2	In a narrow corridor, the floor suddenly gives way underfoot, revealing a pit trap lined with ancient, rusted spikes—a random hero must act fast or become impaled (DC 14 DEX, on a fail, 1d10 damage). It takes 1 crawling round to help a friend get out.
3	A ghostly figure appears (shadow), donning the faded regalia of the Reid family. It cannot tell between friend or foe and attacks.
4	A swarm of bats traverses the dungeon. If the heroes interact with it in any way, the winged creatures attack relentlessly.
5	A sudden chill fills the air and any torches or lamps the heroes hold flicker for a few seconds before turning off.
6	A party of three elves comes for the same reason as the heroes. They are not sure about the heroes' intentions (Reaction check).

2. FUNGI CAVERN

Within the confines of the cave, a vibrant tapestry of fungi blankets the walls and floor, emitting a soft, bioluminescent glow that reveals the path forward.

Here and there, delicate webs drape like gossamer curtains, hinting at the presence of unseen arachnid inhabitants. There are no spiders in this area, though.

► **Fungi.** Three **mushroomfolk** inhabit this cavern. They warn intruders that fire is not welcome. Approaching with a torch summons their anger and they attack. If the heroes hold a lamp or opt to walk in the darkness, the humanoids with toadstools for heads remain neutral.

3. CAVERN NETWORK

A chilling emptiness pervades the cave, where a solitary mound of gnawed bones lies discarded near a wall, silent testimony to forgotten demise.

This cavern is seemingly empty. However, if the heroes choose to search this area for 1 **crawling round**, they find an **amulet of secrecy** hidden in the mud (3 XP).

► **Bypass.** The characters may skip areas 2 and 3 entirely if they find the secret passage (see area 1).

4. CENTRAL CAVERN

This cave, awash in a sea of green moss, is strewn with bones and permeated by the pungent stench of decay, whispering tales of life's fleeting nature.

This cavern connects to varied sections of the dungeon. The large spiders eat elsewhere, but they have opted to discard their leftovers here. Despite the stench, all of the bones are clean; no flesh remains on them.

► **Infestation.** The heroes are attacked by two **swarms of spiders** when they traverse this area. The arachnids are vicious and relentless. They attack the intruder wearing the least armor. They flee when reduced to half HP.

5. DESTROYED CHAMBER

Ravaged by the relentless march of time and brutal cave-ins, this crypt chamber lies in near ruin, its once solemn contents reduced to fragments and dust.

This may be the first area of the dungeon that the heroes visit if they find the secret passage in area 1. What remains of the crypt's tiles greatly fails to cover the dusty ground. Three steel tablets feature delicate name inscriptions of all the Reids that were interred here.

► **Stairs.** A 40-foot-long tunnel with natural steps passes underneath area 4 and leads to area 2 (see map).

► **Uncharted Tunnels.** The cavern network continues to the south. There is no way to know what the heroes may find if their curiosity gets the best of them.



6. ARACHNID DEN

In the heart of darkness, the spiders' den unfurls as a vast cavern, shrouded in layers of thick, suffocating webbing that clings to every surface. Here, the air is heavy with the scent of prey ensnared, evidence of the arachnid inhabitants' inexorable dominion.

The heroes must confront three **giant spiders** and one **spider swarm**. The spiders keep their eggs nearby (area 7). The arachnids treat the heroes as dangerous invaders; they fight fearlessly to the death. After the fight, the heroes may loot the web cocoons. They find 18 gp, 289 sp, a set of chainmail (60 gp), and a **+1 dagger** (5 XP).



FIGHTING THE SPIDERS

The spiders stay put to protect their eggs, forcing the heroes to fight within their territory. Non-spider creatures have a 3-in-6 chance to be restrained by the webbings every time they move through the webs (areas 6 and 7). It is not easy to break free (DC 15 STR check). However, the characters may use fire to remove the webs. Though it is not fast, a hero may burn the webs with a torch instead of fighting. They burn a 10-foot-square every round. Nevertheless, this not only angers the spiders but it also makes them go berserk. All spiders prioritize the torchbearer in the next round.

7. THE NEST

This small, crumbling chamber now serves as the heart of the spiders' brood, with clusters of glistening eggs scattered haphazardly across the webs.

► **Eggs.** Countless spider eggs lay here. Five are giant eggs but the hundreds of others are regular-sized pods. The characters could sell the giant eggs as treasure. They are worth 65 gp each to the right buyer (5 XP).

If the heroes enter the dungeon from the secret passage (area 1), there is a chance that they find the eggs before confronting the spiders (see below). If any of the heroes hold spider eggs while fighting the spiders, all the arachnids concentrate their attacks on this individual.

8. REIDS' CRYPT

The last and only standing chamber of the crypt remains as a solemn sanctuary, where the whispers of the Reids' spirits linger. Here, the spirits converge, awaiting the heroes who dare to heed their call.

The Reids' spirits meet the characters and Kevin, in case he is present (see **Agents of Good**). If the spiders have been taken care of, the ghosts of the long-forgotten family are grateful for the heroes' selfless, kind deed. Otherwise, they appreciate them coming to their aid, and reveal the passage between areas 7 and 8 (see map).

► **Treasure.** The Reids wish the heroes to keep a *scarab of protection* once the job is done. The family relic rests inside the sarcophagus. If the heroes dare take it before dealing with the spiders, they summon the ire of the Reids. A **wraith** appears to punish their insolence.

DEVELOPMENT

THE CHARACTERS LEAVE the crypt. Regardless of their choices, they are stronger than before. And perhaps, they possess a couple of spider eggs. They hatch after 1 week if they have not been sold. Will the heroes keep the spiderlings as pets? That is an adventure for another day...

THE DRUIDIC PORTAL

The twisted tree effigies look to the sky; always waiting for the right time to rip the fabric of reality and create a verdant path to the Woodlands Realm.

Ancient Druidic Text



In the outskirts of the Elderwood, surrounded by the most ancient oaks and the secrets of a bygone era, lies the Circle of the Celestial Trees, a druidic portal long lost to the annals of time. This arcane structure is composed of a large, magic circle, meticulously etched with runes that pulse with a dormant power, unseen but deeply felt by those attuned to its otherworldly energies. Surrounding this circle are four monolithic pedestals, each cradling a stone effigy of a twisted tree. These effigies boast myriad branches that reach skyward, yearning for a caress of the wind. At the heart of each tree, a single eye gazes eternally upward, watching the skies sternly.

Legend holds that the druidic portal serves as a gateway to the Woodlands Realm; the homeland of fey creatures. However, this portal does not yield its secrets lightly. It awakens from its slumber only during the equinoxes, when day and night find themselves in perfect harmony, and the veil between worlds grows thin. It is then that the runes upon the magic circle blaze to life.

FEY GUARDIANS

FOUR MEDITATIVE, ALOOF centaurs have taken on the role of keeping the druidic portal safe from prying eyes and evil hands. The presence of mortals during the equinox is not initially welcome (see **Guardians of the Portal**). These centaur oracles have spent decades deciphering omens in the skies to better understand the portal.

At the moment they are worried because the approaching portal opening caused Eldertown, a small hamlet, to disappear into thin air (see **Adventure Hooks**). One centaur has volunteered to look for survivors in the Woodlands Realm once the gateway through is opened.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Eclipse Ritual. A scroll discovered in a derelict library hints at an astral alignment that shall empower the druidic portal, opening a path to the Woodlands Realm for those brave enough to cross the veil of worlds. This event coincides with the spring equinox, a night when the forest becomes alive with magic and danger. Adventurers looking for access into the world of fey must come here for it is the only chance to reach it (0 XP).

The Last Wish. A dying druid entrusts the characters with his final mission: to reach the Circle of the Celestial Trees during the equinox and plant a seed from an ancient, withering tree. This act, the druid claims, shall renew the forest's magic and allow the eon-old tree to be reborn. Alas, the fey guardians of the druidic circle do not agree with the druid's dying wish (0 XP).

The Vanishing. Eldertown, a hamlet on the edge of the Elderwood, has vanished overnight, leaving behind a ghostly void. The only clue is a faint arcane trail that leads to the Circle of the Celestial Trees. The fate of the town and its people remains unknown but the secret to restoring them to life lies in the druidic circle. The characters are tasked with consulting the fey there to find out what can be done to retrieve those lives (500 gp, 4 XP).

Level 4 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Verdant Aura.** On the day of the equinox, the air carries a current of verdant energy from the Woodlands Realm. Plants grow faster and animals become fleetingly sentient as the path toward the fey realm approaches.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A mischievous pixie, hidden within the foliage, whispers riddles to the adventurers, promising a magical boon if they guess right.
2	A towering treant , guardian of the Elderwood, approaches solemnly, questioning the adventurers' intentions and offering wisdom about the natural world in exchange for a vow to protect the forest. It fights only in self-defense, being a pacifist.
3	Forty rabbits approach the characters and ask for nuts or seeds. The rabbits follow the party for a week if they comply.
4	A dryad, tears streaming down her face, seeks comfort and assistance to heal her blighted tree. Her tree is a few hours away from the druidic circle. The dryad offers a vial of life-lengthening dew to those who aid her.
5	A majestic stag with a coat that gleams like moonlight, a fey spirit, comes to cross the path into the Woodlands Realm.
6	Two druids approach the party (Reaction check). They have come to witness the path between worlds.



1. THE SLITHERING PATH

The road is seldom used as it doubles south of the Elderwood and leads to the ancient druidic ruins. Only lone hunters and forest inhabitants ever use it.

► **Reactive Flora.** As the characters approach the druidic circle, grass, herbs, and flowers swing in the wind and follow their movements as if aware of their presence.

2. THE FOREST PATH

This trail swings north and reaches the Elderwood; a 1-hour walk dotted with picturesque landscapes as one approaches the sprawling depths of the forest. The path leads to a small elvish hamlet near the forest tree-line.

GUARDIANS OF THE PORTAL

The characters' arrival does not go unnoticed by the animals and fey around the circle. Four **centaurs** approach the party to gauge their intentions. If the characters seek to use the portal or plant the druid's seed (see **Adventure Hooks**), the centaurs claim they must first prove their martial prowess to earn such right. They do not fight to the death. After overcoming this challenge, the characters are allowed to proceed.

During the equinox, the runes glow as the air parts to reveal the portal to the Woodlands Realm. The characters can then cross into the other plane. If the seed is planted, it sprouts into a seedling at dawn. Alas it shall take decades for it to reach its full growth.

THE MISSING HAMLET

If the characters inquire about the missing settlement of Eldertown, the centaurs admit they recently became aware of it. They ignore what happened but are sure that the townsfolk must have been transported to the sprawling depths of the Woodlands Realm. One of them, named Natolli, offers to accompany the party to the other plane as a guide. He too wants to fix this mistake.

3. THE TREE EFFIGIES

Each of the effigies is set on top of a 5-foot-tall granite pedestal. The effigies, while complex, are symmetrical and identical. Each is 20 feet tall and radiates a faint magical aura that the *detect magic* spell reveals. The intricate sculptures bear fine, intricate carvings of druidic runes that recount the creation myths of the world.

4. CIRCLE OF THE CELESTIAL TREES

The druidic circle is roughly 35 feet in diameter and has been partly retaken by nature as patches of grass and moss grow on it, obscuring the runes that empower it. This portal has connected the adjacent planes twice per year for eons on end. The fey creatures consider it sacred and a proud heritage of past eras when the creation of such powerful artifacts was possible. If the characters damage the effigies or the druidic circle in any way, all fey beings present take great insult; the characters are deemed foul and unworthy of the path between worlds.

Dissolved in Acid

Here lies a grim dungeon known to only a few as the Sanctum of Dissolution; the place is the cradle of dread and whispered superstitions. Hidden beneath this subterranean lair is the heart of a strange and fearsome cult, the Witnesses of Cleansing. Led by the enigmatic figure known only as the Purifier, this cult embraces a doctrine most sinister: the belief that human souls are burdened by their sins, and only through dissolution in acid can they be cleansed and prepared for the afterlife.

The Sanctum of Dissolution was carved eons ago by forces unknown. In its depths, there are two pits of bubbling, hissing acid, connected by deep, winding canals that snake through the dungeon's chambers. The cult worships a shapeless, half-melted, nameless entity. The fonts, the Purifier claims, are blessed by this mysterious deity. It is into these corrosive depths that the cult performs its most sacred and horrifying ritual. Victims, deemed impure, or willing supplicants seeking redemption, are cast into the acid, their physical forms dissolved in moments, leaving nothing behind but a whisper of steam.

Adventurers drawn to the Sanctum of Dissolution, whether by tales of its treasures, rumors of the cultists' atrocities, or hired by a benefactor to put a stop to the cult's nefarious activities, the heroes shall find danger-filled chambers; from acid mists that seep through the cracks, to bone-masked cultists. Only the bravest or the most foolhardy would dare to venture into the Sanctum of Dissolution, for within its stone embrace lies not just the promise of wealth and power, but the risk of a fate far worse than death: to be dissolved, body and soul, in the acid ponds; their souls damned for eternity.

1. The Sanctum of Dissolution is located beneath a sprawling metropolis, its entrance hidden among the seldom-traveled sewage passageways. The entrance used to appear in the city-archive's sewers plans but they were erased from the records a decade ago. Insightful individuals might notice the erasure and infer that something of importance may be hidden there. In contrast with the pitch-dark sewage corridors, the light at the bottom of the stairs reveals the sanctum's location. An acidic paste is smeared on the door knobs. Careless individuals may burn their hands when using them.

2. This perilous room contains a three-part acid canal, poisonous dart traps on the walls, and two automated crossbows by the south wall. A button by the south door temporarily disables the traps to let the cultists move in and out, aiding themselves with a wooden plank over the canals (leaning on the south wall by the door). In conjunction, the devices in this chamber may bring a character to their early death. The acid pours into this chamber from a canal that connects to area 4. A strong character may cross this tunnel by lifting themselves up, aided by the walls, over the running acid canal.

3. Three ravenous ghouls are trapped in the sarcophagi. The stone lids open magically when non-cultists enter the room. The undead creatures were slain recently and reanimated by the Purifier. One of them still wears tattered armor with the City Watch sigil. They fight to the death. Only a master locksmith can bypass the locked door to area 5.

4. This intermediate hub connects areas 2, 5, and 7. Acid flows from the north and east and out to area 2. A small alcove near its northern end contains a stone coffer with 200 gp and a *potion of healing*.

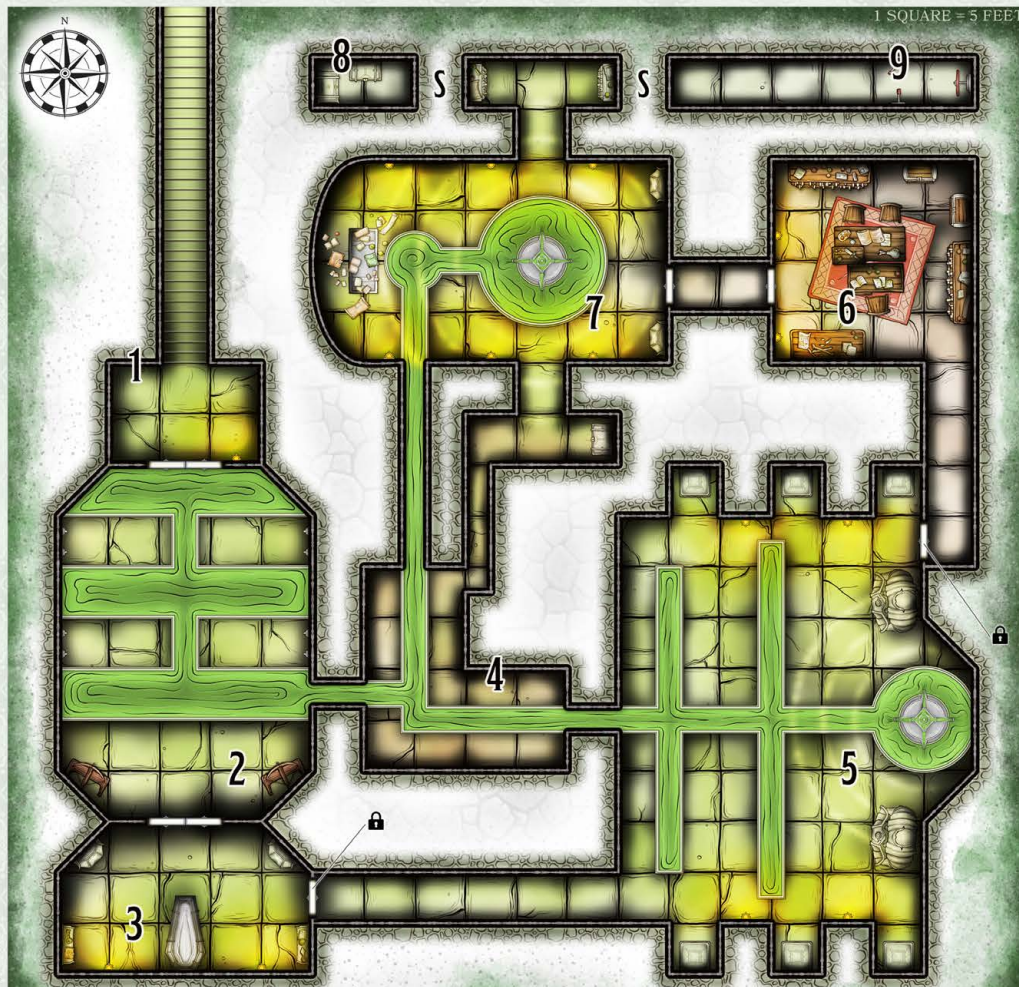
5. Two armor-clad effigies with their faces dissolved with acid overlook this chapel-like room. Between them sits one of the magical, acid-producing fonts. This chamber is where the cult congregates for most of its sacrifices and foul rituals. Seven cultists and two acid mages kneel in prayer when the characters arrive. The mages first believe that the newcomers have come to join the cult. If the heroes play along well, they can take advantage of the confusion to ambush the deluded cultists. The cultists fight to the death.

7. Only a master locksmith can bypass the locked door that connects to this area. Only the Purifier and those gifted with acid magic may come here. The library contains complex treatises and documents on the preparation of acidic substances and spells. If the characters inspect the contents of this library, they find 2d6 random spell scrolls, 1d6 random potions, 2d4 vials of acid, and the formulae to replicate the arcane substance that runs in the dungeon's canals. A spellcaster surmises from the documents that the cult's over-arching goal is to tear the fabric of time and space to bring forth a physical manifestation of their deity. Despite the detailed descriptions of their entity, no document shows its name.

8. The second acid-producing font dominates this chamber. Beyond it, a stone surface is littered with papers, scrolls, and open tomes detailing the most complex of incantations. The Purifier (**acid archmage**), two **acid mages**, and four **cultists** are here. For months, the Purifier has attempted to understand a strange incantation that is meant to bring forth an avatar of their malformed deity. Thus far, however, all they have managed to cause is the meaningless deaths of volunteer cultists who found their demises in the acid pond. Deluded by grandeur, the Purifier sees in the characters' appearance the result of omens he had previously failed to interpret. He is convinced that the characters must be shoved into the ponds for their ritual to finally come to fruition. The deranged cultists, fueled by zealotry, have no regard for their own survival and fight to the death. The Purifier, in contrast, attempts to use a teleportation spell to flee if the battle turns south. If slain and unmasked, the Purifier is revealed to be an elf. The north-most alcoves contain two bookshelves filled with poetry and history books, a clue to their misleading nature. Each covers a hidden passage that is revealed by pulling one of the bookcases into the adjacent wall.

9. This small chamber is the cult's vault. Only the Purifier is permitted here. The two stone chests are locked. They contain 1,400 gp, 4,500 sp, a *potion of healing*, a *+1 shortsword*, the Purifier's spellbook, and a journal that reveals he is an elf and has been the cult's leader for over 400 years.

10. At the far end of this 30-foot-long hallway, there are two levers and a wheel valve. They control the flow of acid from the fonts in areas 5 and 7. If the flow is closed completely, the canals dry up after 1 hour.



HALL OF FORLORN SPELLS

The king has commanded me to find a solution without leaving my duties at court. You must delve into the dungeon and find the way toward balance.

Lord Gaulding, Court Wizard



cross hundreds of years, when the kingdom of Ardennia was at the zenith of its power, there existed a cabal of spellcasters unparalleled in their mastery of the arcane arts. These magics served as the most trusted advisors and counselors to the dynasty of kings, wielding their magic to safeguard the realm and guide its destiny. Upon their deaths, they were interred in a crypt known as ‘The Hall of Forlorn Spells,’ an emblem of the wizards’ loyal service.

The underground hall, carved into the side of the Ardenn Plateau, is an architectural marvel adorned with intricate runes and mosaics. The entrance is guarded by statues of the four most prominent mages in the court’s history: Lord Vallaster, Lady Adilla, Lord Palleque, and Lady Vetross; they flank the dungeon’s entrance. In the depths of this place, there is a columbarium where the remains of dozens of lesser-known mages are interred; their urns inscribed with the wizards’ names.

RAVAGED BY TIME

HOWEVER, AS CENTURIES passed, the Hall of Forlorn Spells fell into disrepair and the eventual failure of crucial magical wards. Over time, the spells that protected the tomb began to weaken, and the residual arcane energies sealed within the mages’ bodies started to emerge from their bindings. This disturbance awakened the magics within the scrolls, tomes, and artifacts interred alongside the spellcasters, giving birth to a menagerie of elemental entities. These creatures, born from the raw elemental forces, roam the halls and chambers, driven by the chaotic nature of their creation. Some of them even exited the tomb and attacked nearby settlements.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Elements Unleashed. The elementals, and sometimes undead monsters that emerge from the Hall of Forlorn Spells have attacked nearby hamlets and put the reputation of the court wizards at risk. Lord Gaulding, the current court wizard, summons the characters to the castle after hearing of their past exploits. He offers a hefty reward for delving into the tomb and reaching the library. An arcane incantation to renew the magical wards in the tomb is there. They must cast it (2,000 gp, 6 XP).

Level 7 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas feature braziers with permanent **light** spells. The denizens are all **dark-adapted**.

► **Arcane Chaos.** When casting a spell, a random spell of the same tier is cast instead. The caster may still choose the target(s) of the new spell (DC 13 INT check).

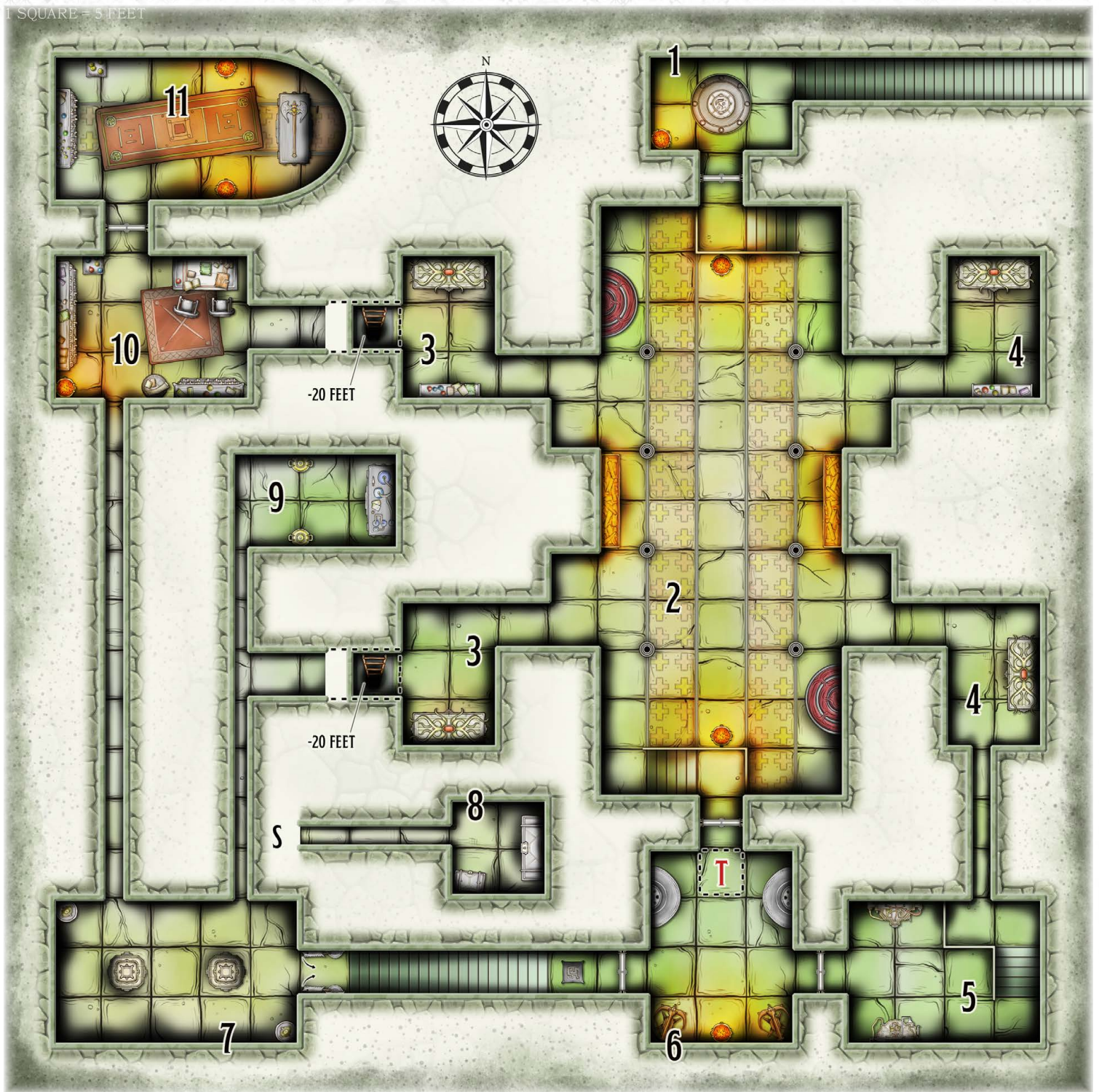
1. ENTRANCE HALL

The small chamber contains a teleportation circle, a burning brazier, and an engraved, stone door that bears the court wizards’ sigil. Lord Gaulding provides the rune sequence to teleport here and even offers to cast the *teleport* spell if the characters do not have access to it.

► **Journey.** If the characters refuse to teleport here, they must travel north from Ardennia for 1 day to reach the Ardenn Plateau. On the way, there is a 3-in-6 chance that they encounter a **lesser air elemental** and a **lesser fire elemental** roaming aimlessly. Their path of destruction leads directly to the statues by the hall’s entrance.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A sudden burst of elemental energy (fire, lightning, or ice) bursts from a broken seal. 2d6 damage, DC 14 DEX check for half.
2	Scrolls spring to life, flitting about the room. If a character catches or touches any of them, a random, Wizard, Tier 1-3 spell is cast targeting one of the characters. The scroll then burns down into gray ashes and falls to the ground.
3	The <i>Sphere of Annihilation</i> , once guarded in the sanctum (area 11), glides along, moving in a random direction.
4	A pack of ten shadows that escaped from the columbarium (area 7), emerges from the walls and attacks the party.
5	Time shifts and flows differently here, causing time to move forward at an accelerated pace. (Roll 1d10). On a 1-3, six hours pass. On a 4-7, 1d4 days pass. On an 8 or 9, 1 year passes. On a 10, a decade elapses by the time the heroes leave the dungeon.
6	Six thugs arrive at the dungeon looking for easy treasure. They may aid or hinder the characters (Reaction check).



2. GRAND HALL

A vast chamber stretches ahead, its floor adorned with intricate cross-shaped mosaics. The walls, etched with detailed engravings of myriad magés, harbor ancient secrets to those who gaze closely.

This central hub is connected with several other areas (see map). The domed ceiling is 40 feet tall at its highest point. It features intricate, symmetrical mosaics.

► **Elemental Chaos.** A greater earth elemental hides underneath the flooring at the chamber's center. It emerges to attack when creatures come within 10 feet.

► **Fonts.** The holy water in the fonts has been tainted by the presence of undead beings nearby. The water is acrid and carries a stench of rot and decay. A priest can use the *bless* spell to restore the fonts' water.

► **Engravings.** The walls bear intricate bas-reliefs of the most prominent court wizards in the past five centuries. Four of them are displayed in epic grandeur, with runes recounting their famous exploits and their signature spells. Once such spell, *polymorph*, is etched on the walls. A wizard who copies the detailed runes into his spellbook may learn this spell. They must spend 1d8 hours performing this task (DC 14 INT check).

3. WESTERN TOMBS

An ornate, stone sarcophagus dominates the room. A ladder leads down a pitch-dark opening next to it.

Each of the rooms labeled area 3 contains the resting place of one of the four famous court wizards. Their names are engraved on a brass plaque on the enclosure base: Lord Vallaster, and Lady Adilla.

► **Fire Column Trap.** Climbing the stairs triggers this trap when stepping on the fifth rung from the top (DC 20 WIS to notice). A fire pillar emerges from the bottom, burning everything in the shaft. The targets take 4d6 fire (DC 16 DEX). The trap resets after 1 minute but the ladder is consumed. This trap can be disabled in area 5.

4. EASTERN TOMBS

This area is a mirrored version of area 3 except that there are no shafts into the lower level here and that the engraved brass plaques on the enclosure bases read the names Lord Palleque, and Lady Vetross.

► **Evil Spirits.** The remains of both wizards have been tainted. An aggressive **wraith** emerges from each.

5. MACHINERY ROOM

Two sets of complex clockwork and hydraulic machines extend from the stone walls of this chamber. They function with a quiet whisper as gears and belts turn.

► **Machines.** A character can turn the machines off (DC 14 DEX). The north one deactivates the traps in area 3. The south one deactivates the traps in areas 6 and 7.

6. ROOM OF TRAPS

The trigger plate next to the north door (see map) triggers the spinning disks and the automated crossbows. Creatures that move through the tiles with the disks take 3d6 damage (DC 13 DEX). The crossbows shoot a bolt every two rounds (ATK +4, 1d8 damage). These traps can be disabled by operating the machinery in area 5.

7. COLUMBARIUM

The ashen remains of countless wizards who dedicated their lives to the kingdom are interred here. Unfortunately, many of them have found a way back to the world of the living in the form of despicable, incorporeal undead.

► **Guardians.** 2d4 **shadows** emerge from the niches when living creatures come within 5 feet. A **lesser air elemental** comes from one of the narrow, north passages on round 3. It attacks the party and the undead alike.

► **Slide Trap.** A pressure-plate at the top of the stairs that lead to area 6 (see map) causes the steps to angle and form a chute 20 seconds after activation. Creatures on the stairs slide to the bottom where two blades swing to deal 3d6 damage (DC 14 DEX to jump out of the way).

8. SECRET VAULT

Pushing a brick-button in the narrow passage that connects areas 7 and 9 reveals the presence of this chamber.

► **Treasure (8 XP).** The stone chests contain 10,000 gp, 27,600 sp, two *potions of healing*, one *potion of vitality*, nine spell scrolls with random Wizard spells (any tier), a +2 *longsword*, and a *helm of mind reading*.

9. ALCHEMY LABORATORY

This chamber contains a set of alchemy apparatuses and implements of the greatest quality. They are all clean and empty. The most potent potions can be crafted with this equipment. Or it can be all sold for 1,000 gp (2 XP).

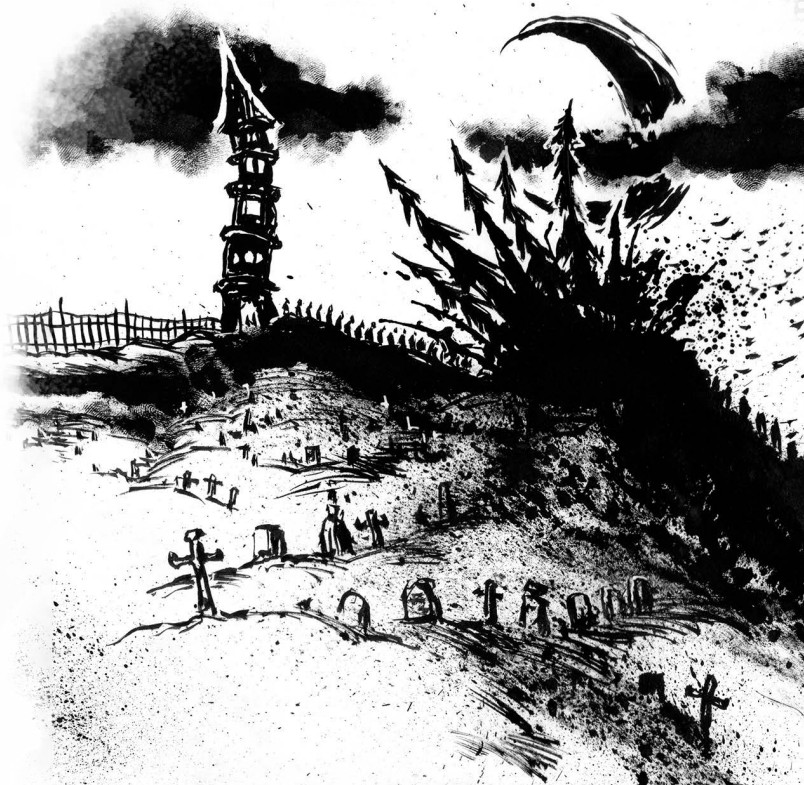
10. THE LIBRARY

The bookcases are filled with a collection of literary and arcane works loved by all spellcasters that were buried in the crypt. Among them is a tome in Draconic named *Arcanum Incantem*. It details the incantation needed to restore the crypt to its untainted state. Any spellcaster can perform it (DC 14 INT check or age 1d4 years).

11. ARCANE SANCTUM

The door to this chamber is magically locked and cannot be breached. Restoring the crypt with the ritual in area 10 causes the door to open. Within, the **ghosts** (level-6 Wizards) of the four mages interred in areas 3 and 4 await. The four mages' magic items are stored here. As a way to thank the characters, the ghosts allow them to take a single one. The items are: *greataxe of the horde*, *hat of intellect*, *wand of unlife*, and *staff of Ord* (3 XP).

► **Slayers.** The characters may take all four items if they destroy the four ghosts. The cursed characters shall be haunted by the beleaguered ghosts thereafter.



SEA SERPENT CARCASS

The great sea serpents were once the guardians of our world. They hold the secrets of the deep, and each of their coils is a thousand years old.

Majestic Creatures of Yore, Vol. II



In the age-old dance of predator and prey, a tale of monumental struggle unfolded beneath the most secluded waters. Herein lies the legend of one of the last great sea serpents, a leviathan whose very existence blurred the lines between myth and reality. This majestic creature, known as Thalassor, roamed the abyssal depths and hidden coves, a guardian of secrets sunk and tales untold.

THE LAST HUNT

THALASSOR'S LAST HUNT was marked by an event so rare, it would seal the fate of the serpent. The target of its voracious hunger was a mammoth, a behemoth that had tragically found its way into the serpent's realm through submerged pathways that connect the Shadowdark. Remnants of an ancient time, these paths occasionally allowed land creatures to venture into foreign domains.

The serpent ensnared the mammoth, constricting it with its massive coils. In a desperate and final act of defiance, the mammoth managed to pierce Thalassor's flesh with its formidable tusks from the inside. But it was not enough to escape its grim fate. Swallowed whole, it became Thalassor's last meal. However, the serpent's victory was short-lived. The wound was grave; Thalassor's lifeblood mingled with the salt of the sea as it sought refuge in a nearby grotto, a hidden sanctuary known only to the ancient denizens of the deep. This grotto is hidden at the edge of the Shadowdark and an uncharted dungeon. It was here, amidst the sand and moss, that Thalassor came to rest, its body succumbing to the injury sustained. As the serpent's life ebbed away, a profound silence filled the cave, marking the end of a legend.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Whispering Pearl of Thalassor. This artifact is said to be as large as a human heart and glowing with ethereal light, contains the essence and wisdom of Thalassor, one of the last great sea serpents. It is rumored that the pearl possesses the power to grant its bearer insight into the magic of the seas, including the ability to communicate with sea creatures and command the ocean's currents. However, the pearl lies within the belly of Thalassor, in a grotto guarded by the spirits of the sea and hidden from the land-dwelling world (0 XP).

Level 6 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Except for area 1, all the areas in the dungeon are dark. All denizens within are **dark-adapted**.

GETTING THERE

The heroes must delve into the Shadowdark to find one of the ancient passageways that connect the surface to the underground world. It is up to the GM to decide whether their journey is dangerous or uneventful. Either way, the characters reach area 1 after this. The dungeon entrance is marked by an ancient rug, its symmetrical patterns a testament to forgotten craftsmanship, laid upon stairs that descend into a mysterious antechamber. Flanking the entryway, two ancient braziers cast a flickering light, their flames illuminating the threshold to realms untold. An aura of uneasiness invades all those who cross the seldom-visited threshold.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A sudden tremor shakes the dungeon. Rocks and debris fall on a random character. They take 2d8 damage (DC 14 DEX check).
2	The ghostly figure of a drowned sailor manifests (shadow). The poor soul is corrupted with anger and attacks the living.
3	A swarm of hybrid, luminescent fish, escaped from an underground stream. They have wings. And like bats, they traverse the corridors of the dungeon with a soft, guiding light. They like company and stay with the heroes if they act neutral toward them.
4	The characters experience a vivid vision depicting the epic battle between Thalassor and the mammoth. When the vision ends, all the heroes are aware of the serpent's carcass lying on the sand, and they all feel the presence of a pearl, coming from within.
5	A sudden drop in temperature freezes all areas of the dungeon and a current of air turns off all light sources.
6	The adventurers find a <i>potion of water breathing</i> resting on a garden of underwater flora that thrives without sunlight.



1. LANDING

The characters are not the only ones interested in the serpent's corpse. A group of one **mage**, one **knight**, and two **bandits** explore this area when they arrive. They are not sure about sharing this quest (**Reaction** check).

2. SHRINE

A stone pedestal cradles a sculpture of a tentacled deity, worshiped by forgotten ancient tribes. This ominous effigy is surrounded by six golden urns and casts an aura of mystique and reverence.

Each of the golden urns is worth 75 gp. Interacting with any of them causes six **shadows** to coalesce from the darkness and attack whoever disturbs them (4 XP).

► **Secret Passageway.** A curious character may notice the strange tentacled idol can be pushed aside to reveal a small alcove behind it (DC 14 WIS check to notice).

3. SECRET VAULT

Three chests lie in the dark. Their origins are veiled in mystery with no clues as to their ownership.

► **Treasure (8 XP).** The characters may take the following from this room: a gold ring with a black pearl (65 gp), a censer with hooded, skeletal figures (70 gp), a *potion of polymorph* (200 gp), a jade sculpture of a meditating elephant-man (140 gp), an opal-decorated giant conch shell with silver inlays (250 gp), 457 gp, and 125 sp.

4. CAVERN OF BONES

This cavern is a sea of sand strewn with the bones of countless creatures. The air is thick with the silence of ages. The remains tell tales of battles fought, lives lost, and the relentless, imminent march of time.

The sea serpents are such powerful creatures that even their dead bodies may still hold arcane power. In this case, the serpent's carcass has caused these bones to reanimate. A small army of fourteen **skeletons** rises from the dead and fights the characters until slain.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** If the characters spend 1 **crawling round** exploring this area, they find the following buried in the sand: a dagger with emerald in the pommel (120 gp), a pendant with three lambent pearls (120 gp), an ivory horn mug carved with drinking dwarves (35 gp).

5. NAUTILUS SHELLS

In a chamber illuminated by an ethereal glow, five nautilus shells rest on beautiful, sand pedestals.

The nautilus shells are arranged in a mysterious pattern that hums with arcane energy. Each of them, when touched, emits a harmonic tone that resonates and echoes throughout the chamber. Melodies can be played. If the heroes investigate for 1 **crawling round**, a musician, or a clever hero may discover the special magical tune that can be played (DC 15 INT). Creatures that hear this magical series of notes gain a **luck token**.

6. GROTTO

A hidden sanctuary beneath the earth cradles the colossal carcass of the legendary sea serpent, Thalassor. Its once-mighty scales glimmer faintly. Surrounding the sea behemoth, the grotto's waters allude to secrets about the fabled serpent's timeless saga.

The characters stand before the sea serpent's corpse. Its eyes are open but lifeless. The stench of rot is strong but tolerable. The *Whispering Pearl of Thalassor* lies somewhere inside the dead legendary creature.

► **Foreign Territories.** Before the characters decide what to do or how to enter, a band of eight **sahuagin** emerge from the water. They demand that the intruders leave. If they refuse, the fish people fight to the death.

7. THE SEA SERPENT INNARDS

To venture within the leviathan's remains, one must navigate a macabre pathway of sinew and bone. The air is filled with the scent of brine and the absence of a heartbeat long stilled. Faint bioluminescent algae cling to the inner walls, providing dim light.

The characters traverse a road of flesh and pools of gastric acid. It is hard to avoid all of it. Each **crawling round**, there is a 1-in-6 chance that a random character steps on acid (1d6 damage), or that gastric acid falling from above burns a random item they carry within a backpack.

► **The Injury.** A character who studies the wound determines this is what killed the serpent (DC 13 WIS).

► **Enemies.** The serpent's arcane residue has spawned a **lesser water elemental** within its body. The heroes encounter it before they reach the stomach (area 8). The mindless monster fights fearlessly until it is destroyed.

8. THE SERPENT'S LAST MEAL

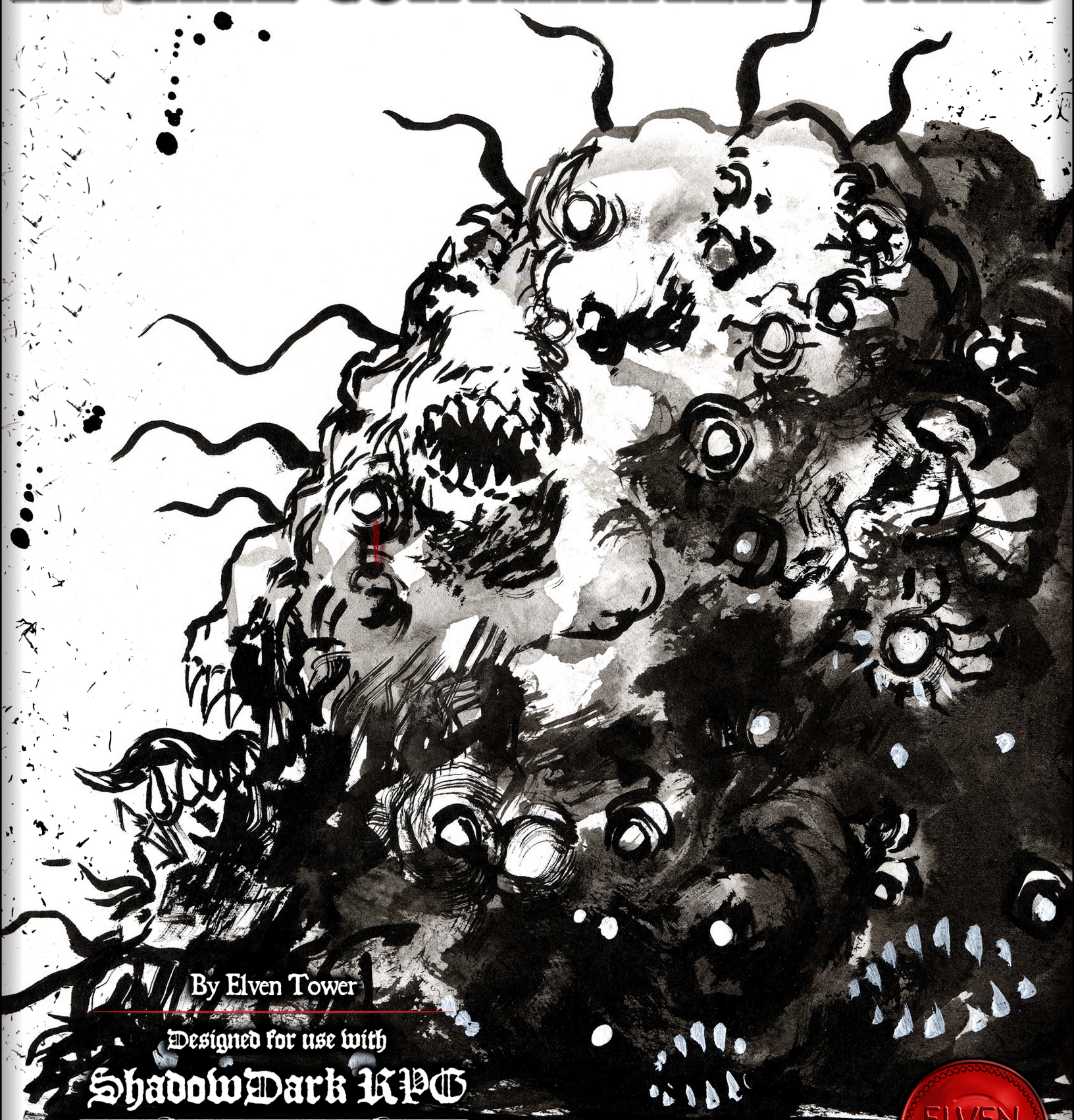
Within the cavernous expanse of the serpent's stomach lies the partially digested corpse of a mammoth. The mammal's fur and flesh, etched with the corrosive marks of digestive acids, pulsate softly, revealing the inexorable process of digestion.

► **Smell.** The rotting stench of the mammoth is piercing (DC 13 CON). On a fail, heroes regurgitate for 1 minute before they tolerate the smell. On a fail of 5 or more, they retch and must leave the area for at least 1 **crawling round** before attempting to endure it again.

► **The Pearl.** The artifact lies below the stomach. The heroes are free to come up with ways to reach it. However, two **swarms of centipedes** emerge from the carcass when they pierce the stomach wall. What the brave heroes do with the *Whispering Pearl of Thalassor* or the possible enemies they shall gain when they take the pearl, are both adventures for another day...



ARCANE CONTAINMENT WARD



By Elven Tower

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL-5 ADVENTURE

AN EPIC ADVENTURE ABOUT BINDING AN ANCIENT PRIMORDIAL TO SAVE THE WORLD

ADVENTURE PRIMER

Such primordial entities are part of the world's fabric and cannot be destroyed. They can only be bound. Alas, no spell is truly permanent.

Tome of Elder Binding



In the twilight epochs, when the world was a maelstrom of creation, there existed a being of unfathomable power. This entity, named the Primordial Slime, was a relic of the universe's nascent forces, embodying both the unbridled potential for life and the inexorable entropy of destruction.

The archaic civilizations of yore beheld the looming cataclysm. United by the brink of extinction, the greatest mages and sages of that time convened to enact a plan of unimaginable scale and complexity. They constructed an arcane containment ward, a masterpiece of magical engineering designed to imprison the Primordial Slime; as it just could not be destroyed. This artifact has held the Primordial Slime in check for untold time. But the passage of the ages has caused the binding wards to wear off and weaken. The ooze struggles in its prison as it sees an opportunity to finally emerge. Its growing power has caused all manner of oozes and elementals to coalesce and attack nearby settlements. The locals are at a loss and the king just recently issued a command to seek refuge in Gray Harbor Castle. All in the county able to fight must report to the barracks to defend the capital.

ADVENTURE HOOK

HEROES ARISE

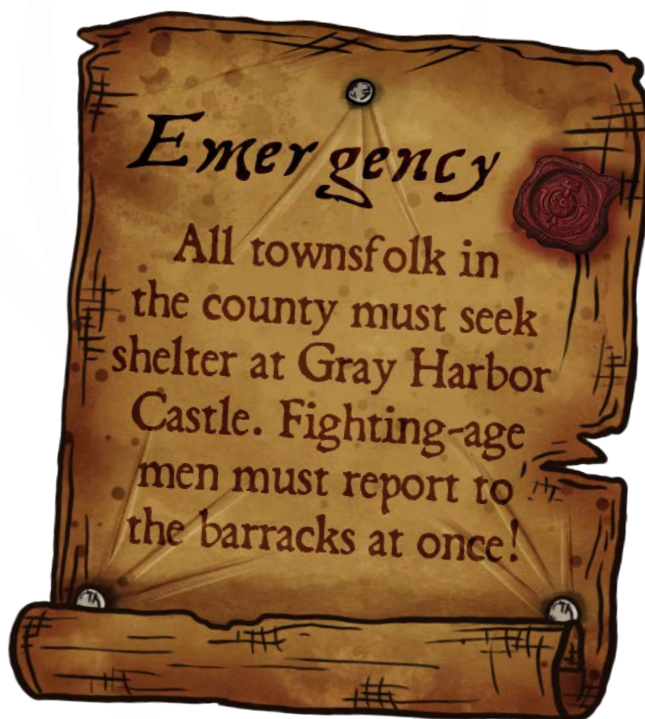
The characters' reputations and past exploits precede them. They are summoned before the king in Gray Harbor Castle to receive secret information. The characters learn from the court seer about the Primordial Slime's failing prison ward. They must travel to the Dryads' Arboretum. The ooze's prison lies below it. They must find a way to restore the arcane wards (2,000 gp, 7 XP).

Level 5 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas in the dungeon have magical light sources (see map). Denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Gibbering.** The Primordial Slime radiates a psychic aura that deranges the minds of mortals. Creatures within 100 feet of area 8 are affected each hour (DC 13 INT). On a fail, the creature starts babbling nonsense and cannot take actions for 2d6 minutes. Magical healing on anyone affected instantly heals them from this.



RUMORS

d6	Details
1	Forest elders recount tales of a time when the sky darkened with evil. The same darkness is said to gather once more currently.
2	A few farmers and hunters claim to hear the whispers from below, warnings of a deep hunger awakening from its ancient slumber. Their kin say that when they hear these gibberings, they become unresponsive for a few minutes, as if daydreaming.
3	Local wildlife near the Dryads' Arboretum has fled the area, as if terrified of an unseen predator. Only two dryads remain as their fate is tied to the enormous tree. An elf wanderer is worried about the dryads as they have no means to escape this place.
4	A rumor among thieves says a priceless relic or knowledge lies within the church's vault, protected by unspeakable horrors.
5	Dreams of consuming darkness have plagued the sleep of those within 10 miles of the Dryads' Arboretum.
6	A traveling merchant claims that a zealous sect heads towards the arboretum. He claims they chant of an impending rebirth. The merchant thinks this must be connected with the increase in highway robberies near the forest.

THE DILAPIDATED WARD

I shall remain here and follow the fate of the great tree. A great evil hungers below but we cannot venture into the dungeon. I'm ready for my ultimate fate.

Gianna, the Dryad

FINDING THE DUNGEON

SOUTH OF GRAY Harbor Castle, the characters must follow the Royal Road for two days to reach the Dryads' Forest. A day from the border, in the forest depths, the characters find the Dryads' Arboretum. Despite the glade's beauty and verdant vibrancy, it is devoid of wild-life; all have fled the cursed forest. A *detect magic* spell reveals a powerful magical aura beneath the Great Tree.

1. THE DRYADS' ARBORETUM

The forest glade is dominated by an oak tree. It is twice as tall as any other tree in the forest. Where its roots meet the ground, an opening leads into its core.

When the characters approach, the two dryads reveal themselves. Gianna and Navel have helplessly observed all forest denizens leave. They are bound to the Great Tree and cannot leave it. The dryads explain that an ancient dungeon of unknown origin lies beneath the tree. They have only explored the closest chambers, though. They also mention that robe-wearing individuals went into the compound yesterday. They dared not fight them.

► **The Gift (2 XP).** Navel has a request: she begs the party to retrieve her bone earrings; an awakened raccoon stole them and fled into the dungeon a few weeks ago. As a reward, she offers a *jewel of barbalt*.

► **Brave Fey.** Gianna offers to accompany the party into the dungeon. She cannot move further than area 5.

► **Gibbering Cultists.** Six **cultists** and one **mage** arrive at the glade chanting. They demand passage and fight to the death if opposed. The **dryads** help in this encounter.



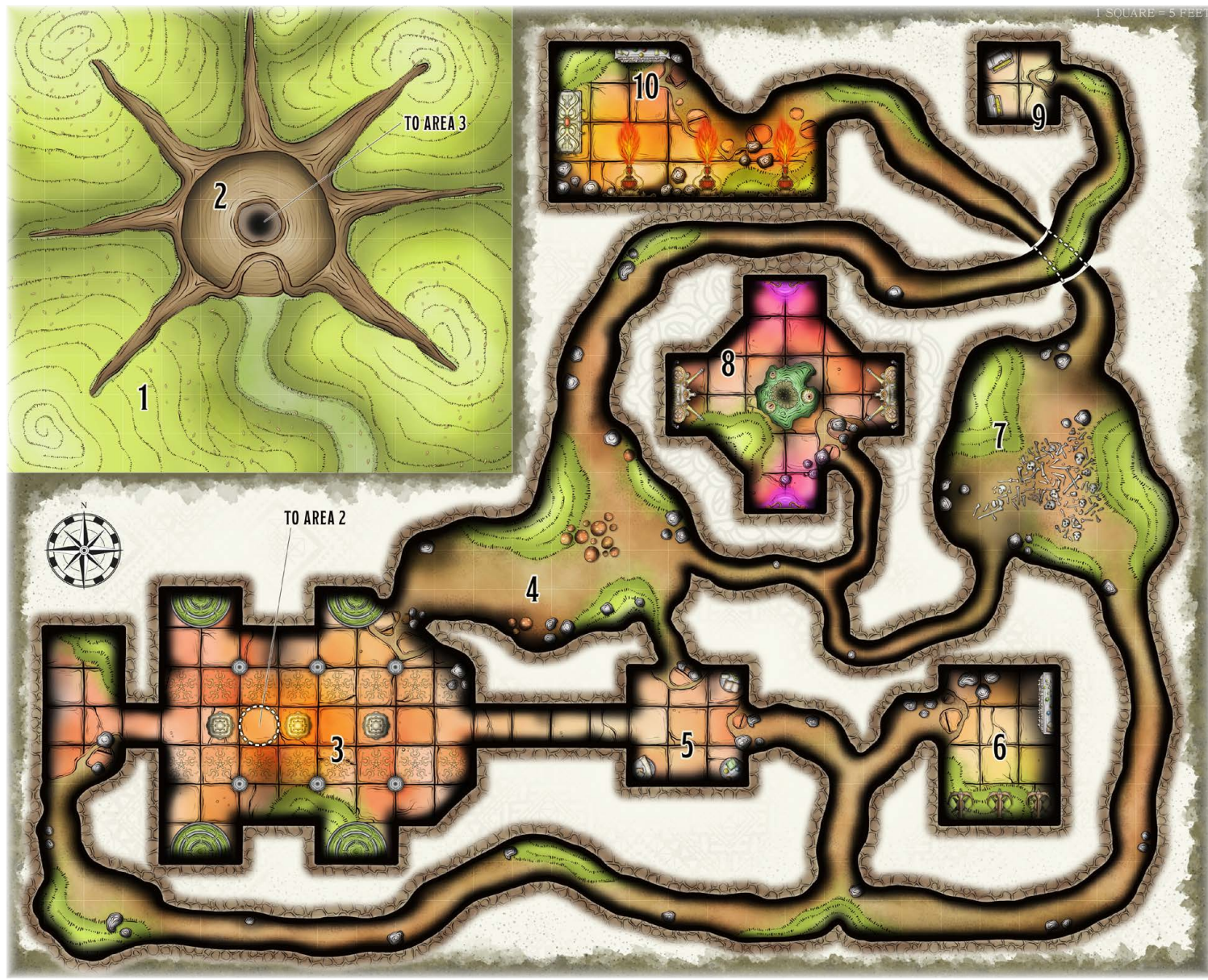
2. WITHIN THE GREAT TREE

The Great Tree is partly hollowed out. The interior chamber is Gianna and Navel's home but the sparse contents have been destroyed or stolen by the cultists.

► **The Entrance.** The hole in the center of the room leads down 50 feet to area 3. The characters can climb down the shaft using a rope or climbing gear (DC 14 STR check with advantage or 3d6 damage).

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A spectral guardian (wraith), bound to the ancient ward, challenges intruders mistaking them for would-be robbers.
2	Two ochre jellies detach from the ceiling and drop on two random characters. They were created by the Primordial Slime.
3	Sir Duncan (knight) arrives at the dungeon, hired by his lord to investigate the recent attacks on the road (Reaction check).
4	Two cultists stumble upon the party. Cut off from the rest of their kin, the cultists attempt to parley to stall the characters. One of the cultists, a man named Adam, claims he is sick of the cult and wants to defect (DC 15 WIS to discern the lie).
5	An ancient trap unleashes a torrent of magical energy that affects people's spellcasting skills. A spellcaster may lose their spellcasting ability for 1 hour while any non-spellcaster may gain access to a single Tier-1 spell for 1 day (DC 10 INT check).
6	A party of greedy scavengers (six thieves), turned mad by the dungeon's promise of wealth, mistake the party for rival looters. Their leader, Ciara, is influenced by the gibberings; she thinks her ancestors built this place and she claims to own it.



3. THE HALL OF FONTS

Four, three-level fountains of greenish water flank three stone pedestals at the center of the eerie chamber.

- ▶ **Tracks.** The footprints of at least five cultists can be discerned traveling toward area 4 (DC 14 WIS check).
- ▶ **Treasure (3 XP).** Eight rubies can be pried out of the pedestal. Each gemstone can be sold for (100 gp).
- ▶ **Elemental.** The central pedestal, embedded with gleaming rubies, contains a **lesser fire elemental**. It emerges in a fiery explosion if the gems are stolen.

4. THE HAPLESS MUSHROOMFOLK

The fungi patches in this chamber are the home of three **mushroomfolk**. Unfortunately, they have been so close to the ward (area 5), that they have become aggressive.

- ▶ **Spores.** The mushroomfolk rise with a 15-foot-wide cloud of toxic spores (DC 14 CON, 2d6 damage).

5. THE DILAPIDATED ROOM

Little remains of this half-collapsed room. The cultists have made it their camp in the dungeon. When the characters arrive two **cultists** sleep on the floor while a third cultist sharpens a dagger while whistling a song.

6. THE CRUMBLING LIBRARY

The chamber contains an enchanted bookcase that has withstood the passage of time and three automated crossbows that protect it from would-be robbers.

- ▶ **Trap.** The clockwork devices activate when a living creature enters the room. They gyrate and track their target before shooting simultaneously a moment later. ATK 3 crossbow bolts +5 (1d8). They shoot once per round.
- ▶ **Binding Ritual.** A spellcaster that inspects the place finds the *Tome of Elder Binding*. It contains one-half of the powerful spell that restores the binding wards and prevents the Primordial Slime's escape (see **The Ritual**).

7. BED OF BONES

A mound of humanoid and animal bones litters the center of this chamber. Tattered clothes and decaying trinkets are sprinkled among the grim remains.

► **The Flesh-Eaters.** One of the most nefarious consequences of the Primordial Slime's gibberings is its long-term effect on humanoids. After a week of uninterrupted exposure, a humanoid becomes a mockery of their former self. They shed their humanity and become flesh-eating, ravenous monsters. There are four of these ghoulish creatures in the chamber. They are responsible for the road attacks. The four **ghasts** emerge from the darkness and attack all living creatures on sight.

► **Half-Alive.** After the battle, a submissive fifth monster emerges. It claims to be named Harlo. He was a hired mage protecting a caravan before becoming whatever he is now. He wants to turn back to normal.

► **The Remains (2 XP).** Inspecting the bed of bones for 1 crawling round reveals a few valuable items. There are 200 gp, 300 sp, a *potion of healing*, a *potion of invisibility*, a *+1 dagger*, a *spell scroll of bless*, and a *pearl of power*. The pearl can be spent in its entirety to gain advantage in the binding ceremony (see **The Ritual**).

► **The Earrings.** A capable tracker can discern the footprints of a raccoon among the mess in the chamber. They lead to the northwest corner where a pair of bone earrings are buried under a rock. They belong to Navel.



8. THE ARCANE CONTAINMENT WARD

The narrow tunnel leads to a chamber that contains an abominate entity in its midst. The shapeless, shifting matter of the Primordial Ooze is barely kept in place by the arcane machinery that lines the walls.

The Primordial Slime is close to escaping its prison. It cannot move from its center position but it can fight.

► **The Ooze.** The **Primordial Slime** can extend its body beyond the chamber center. All its attacks have a range of 30 feet. A **gibbering moulder** sprouts from its mass on round 3 and round 6 (two in total). The Primordial Slime cannot be destroyed but in its imprisoned state, the characters can aspire to weaken it so it becomes temporarily inert. After defeat, the ooze retracts to the center of the chamber and remains harmless for 2d6 hours. After this time, the slime heals and starts its efforts to escape again. If the characters engage it then, they have to defeat the Primordial Slime in combat once more.

► **The Clockwork Machinery.** Complex magic empowers this combination of arcane and alchemy devices. The passage of time has worn most of them down to near unsuitability. If a character has access to alchemy equipment, they can perform a makeshift repair on the apparatuses (DC 18 INT check). If successful, the spellcaster performing the binding ritual gains advantage.

► **Treasure (6 XP).** The machines focus arcane energy on diamonds. There are eight diamonds (200 gp each). Removing them gives disadvantage in the binding ritual.

9. THE VAULT

Due to the Primordial Slime's proximity, no one has ever visited this vault. It contains two stone chests.

► **Treasure (10 XP).** The chest contains 1,000 gp, 780 sp, two *potions of healing*, a *necrotic mace of withering*, a *+2 longsword*, a *necklace of charm*, and eight Wizard spell scrolls of the following spells (one of each): *hold person*, *mirror image*, *illusion*, *magic circle*, *divination*, *stoneskin*, *antimagic shell*, and *prismatic orb*.

10. THE TOMB OF ARALLA

Three clockwork engines spew torrents of never-ending fire. There is a sarcophagus beyond the flames.

The Fire. Creatures that come into contact with the fire take 4d6 damage (DC 18 DEX). A thief can use fine tools to disable the deadly machines (DC 16 DEX).

The Sarcophagus. It contains the mummified remains of Aralla, one of the arcane ward's original builders. Little remains of the body but it is an unknown ancestry.

The Bookcase. A spellcaster that inspects it finds two scrolls that contain one-half of the powerful spell that restores the dungeon's binding wards (see **The Ritual**).

THE RITUAL

To perform the binding ritual, the characters must find the two halves of this spell. They are located in areas 6 and 10. Any spellcaster may cast this spell after learning it (DC 15 INT, 2d4 hours). The time spent learning it may incur a second confrontation with the Primordial Slime (see area 8). Once the spell is learned and the spellcaster is well-rested, it can be cast (DC 15 INT check). The spellcaster is aware that the ritual collects a terrible cost that must be paid with their lifespan (aging).

On a success, the spellcaster ages 15 years, the arcane wards are restored, and the Primordial Slime slumbers for the foreseeable future. On a fail, the slime is contained too but the caster ages 30 years; potentially leaving them too infirm to continue adventuring. On a critical failure, the caster's body is consumed by the Primordial Slime as it becomes free of its shackles.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

THE SLIME CONTAINED

The characters overcome this perilous challenge and restore the arcane prison that keeps the Primordial Slime dormant. It shall one day come back. But hundreds, if not thousands of years shall elapse before then. So, the characters return to Gray Harbor Castle victorious and with a tale worthy of fable heroes. The characters are summoned to court before the king and his advisors.

The regal monarch congratulates the characters and pays the agreed-upon reward. The king also schedules another day when there shall be a banquet and a tourney. After the celebration, the characters are to be knighted and registered for a yearly stipend, paid by the crown.

FRIENDS OF THE FOREST

If the dryads, Gianna and Navel, survive the adventure and Navel's earrings are returned to her, the dryads promise the characters to introduce them to the fey court advisors in the Woodland Realms. Surely, the fey nobility shall have work for the party of heroes after hearing of their marvelous exploits in the Dryads' Forest.

THE SLIME IS FREE

If the spellcaster fails critically during the casting, the Primordial Slime breaks through and starts consuming all in its wake. The rest of the party may yet survive but the calamity that has been unleashed upon the world shall soon leave a terrible mark. The heroes must regroup with the sharpest minds in the realm and find a solution. However, that is an adventure for another day...



EAST RACHDALE

“These are not mere festivities. ‘Tis the heart of East Rachdale you protect. May your blade and courage guide us through these dark times”.

Lady Marianne Eldrige



East Rachdale, nestled on the windswept coast near the heart of the kingdom, whispers tales of mariners and intrepid explorers in the ears of all who wander its cobblestone streets.

Born from the sea's embrace, this quaint town's history is steeped in the ocean brine and the ventures of those who sought to explore the world. In the days of yore, East Rachdale served as the launch point for vessels daring to traverse uncharted waters. The town's architecture, a blend of old-world charm and seafaring practicality, stands as a testament to its rich heritage.

A PLACE FOR HEROES

IN RECENT TIMES, East Rachdale has flourished into a haven for souls yearning for rest or new beginnings. Its proximity to the capital allows for a steady flow of tales, work, and treasures, making it a crucible of opportunities for those brave enough to seek their fortune.

Taverns and inns, renowned for their hearty fare and warm hearths, offer solace and camaraderie to weary travelers. The town square, alive with the vibrant exchange of goods and stories from distant lands, serves as a meeting point for adventurers and locals alike, fostering bonds that transcend map borders.

Lady Marianne Eldridge, the esteemed Viscountess of East Rachdale, presides over the coastal town with a grace and wisdom that belies her youthful visage. A descendant of the town's founding mariners, she embodies a grand spirit of adventure and resilience. With a keen intellect and a compassionate heart, Lady Marianne ensures her people thrive, weaving the rich tapestry of tradition and progress into the fabric of daily life.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

► **The Mysterious Saboteur.** East Rachdale's annual Festival of Tides, a celebration that honors the town's deep connection to the sea with a week of feasting, games, and ceremonies, is under threat. Mysterious sabotage has befallen the festival's preparations: supplies go missing, decorations are destroyed, and a sense of unease permeates the usually jubilant atmosphere. Behind all this, whispers of an old rivalry surface, suggesting that a Doriasssen descendant seeks to disrupt the festival. The Doriasssen were a family of corrupt politicians that were banished a decade ago. The viscountess calls upon cunning adventurers to uncover the saboteurs, protect the festival's traditions, and ensure the safety and happiness of her people (1,000 gp, 4 XP).

Level 1 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every two areas that the heroes visit (3-in-6 chance).

► **Atmosphere.** Some of the locals are worried and a bit jumpy. Not all people are happy to see the heroes.

THE SABOTEURS

The Doriasssen are behind the sabotage. This module has the heroes ask around and visit different areas in town. The Festival of the Tides takes place in **1 week**; there are only a few days to identify the culprits. Each area they visit and each NPC they meet may help the heroes learn additional information to get closer to the truth. But some tasks take a day or more (marked in **bold**). Time is of the essence (see **Conclusion**).

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	While the heroes speak with someone on one side of town, the saboteurs strike again and destroy more decorations on the other. By the time the characters are warned and make their way to the crime scene, the culprits are nowhere to be seen.
2	An itinerant merchant loves to be in town for the Festival of Tides. He gives the heroes a <i>potion of healing</i> to help them out.
3	A fierce storm sweeps through East Rachdale. Visibility and checks based on hearing and sight are reduced for two whole days.
4	At the tavern, a friendly patron offers the heroes a very strong spirit (DC 12 CON). On a fail, they pass out for one full day .
5	The characters stumble upon two thugs robbing an innocent man (peasant). The robbers flee if reduced to half their HP.
6	A distraught mother pleads for the heroes' help in finding her child, who has wandered into the woods. She offers a family heirloom in return (a 150 gp silver choker). A good tracker finds the child (DC 12 WIS). However, this task takes two days .



1. MAIN ROAD

Winding through rolling hills, the cobblestone road is shrouded in sea mist each morning, hinting at the town's close bond with the ocean and life at the sea.

The heroes receive Lady Marianne's request. This can be via a spell, a letter, or a verbal messenger. They move out, travel toward East Rachdale, and arrive here.

2. THE DRUNKEN KRAKEN

The tavern buzzes with the lively chatter of locals and travelers alike, its walls adorned with maritime relics.

Within, the air is thick with the aroma of roasted meats and ale. Here, amidst the laughter and the clinking of tankards, stories of the sea and adventures untold weave together, binding stranger and friend alike.

► **The Retired Knight.** Farvald Durg is the owner of the tavern. However, almost no one knows he is a war veteran. Patrons believe that the full armor and sword hanging on one of his walls are just decorations.

3. EAST RACHDALE'S MARKET

The marketplace is a nexus of commerce and culture, where cobblestone paths weave between stalls bursting with local produce, exotic spices, and artisan crafts.

► **Mira Shadowsight.** The person to seek when subtlety and stealth are needed. Her knowledge of the town's less savory elements can be invaluable for those willing to venture into the depths of intrigue and conspiracy.

She claims to have vital information that could lead to the saboteurs' whereabouts. In exchange, she wants the heroes to retrieve a silver ring she lost on a bet against a tribe of barbarians that live near the capital.

If they agree, they may use diplomacy, gold, attempt to steal the ring or fight for it (The outcome of this interaction must be determined by the GM). The trip to the tribe's grounds and back to town takes **three days**. If Mira gets her ring back, she tells the heroes that the Dorienssen, under new names, are behind the sabotage. Their leader, she claims, is Gweneth Silverstream.

4. THE SEA'S EMBRACE INN

This building's facade is a testament to the town's prosperity and welcoming heart. Its spacious common room, with roaring hearths and walls lined with tales of the sea, invites weary travelers to rest and share stories, making it the cornerstone of community and camaraderie in the bustling coastal town.

Matron Elara, a woman whose laughter fills the halls as warmly as the fires in the hearths, runs the business. She enjoys spending her time smoking and chatting with the regulars, all while enjoying Lirael's music and voice.

► **Lirael Lightfoot.** With his slender frame and ethereal presence, the virtuous elf captivates the inn's patrons, his fingers dancing over the strings of his lute as if weaving magic into melody. His eyes, alight with the wisdom of the ages, hint at depths unexplored and stories untold.

► **Quest.** Lirael asks the heroes for their help. It is not advisable to traverse the forest alone but he was hired by the elves in the Eastern Woods and must be there in the next 24 hours. He offers 100 gp for escort (2 XP) and information that could lead to the festival's saboteurs. If they agree, escorting Lirael and coming back to town takes **two days**. The only obstacle they encounter is a hungry **brown bear**. The beast leaves if given 20 lb. of food. At the elven camp, Lirael reveals that Matron Elara is in truth, one of the Dorianssens. The bard adds that he cannot go back to East Rachdale after this revelation.

5. RACHDALE'S TREE

An ancient, majestic oak stands sentinel at the heart of East Rachdale, its sprawling branches casting a soothing shade over the town square. The week of the festival, its boughs are adorned with lanterns and ribbons and become a beacon of light and color.

Beneath its watchful presence, townsfolk and visitors alike gather in unity, sharing stories, laughter, and dance, making Rachdale's Tree not just a landmark, but a living symbol of the town's heritage and communal spirit.

► **Burglars.** If the characters visit this area late at night, they stumble upon four **bandits**. The men are trying to rob decorations from the central tree. If stopped and questioned, they reveal Matron Elara hired them.

6. ELDON REED, THE FISHMONGER

With his robust laughter and weather-beaten face, Eldon is known for his unparalleled knowledge of the sea's bounty. His stall always has the freshest catch.

► **Quest.** Eldon wishes to catch a Rainbow Trout. A rare, elusive fish that can only be found in sahuagin territory. Eldon offers a pair of *boots of the cat* in return for their help. The heroes must spend **two days** fishing west. Three **sahuagin** shall attack and attempt to rob them while they fish. They flee if reduced to half their HP.

7. GWENETH SILVERSTREAM, THE ALCHEMIST

This building has rooms for rent and it has a large store on the first floor. The local purveyor of alchemy tools and crafts, Gweneth, treats the heroes as any other customer. Even if she is aware that Lady Marianne hired them.

► **Fake Job.** Gweneth summons the heroes at night at Rachdale's Tree (area 5). She claims that burglars tend to take the festival's decorations at this time. If they buy it, four **bandits**, three **thugs**, and Gweneth (**thief**) ambush the naive adventurers. They spare the characters' lives but they strip them from everything but their breeches.

CONCLUSION

► **Enough Time.** The heroes learn where the Dorianssens hide before the day of the festival. They reveal that Elara and Gweneth are behind it all. East Rachdale's authorities, prompted by Lady Marianne, help the heroes arrest them if needed. The Festival of Tides occurs like every year; a week of smiles and happiness.

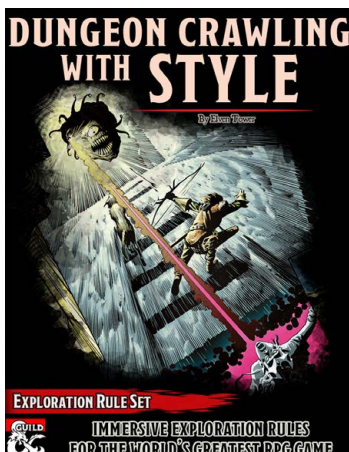
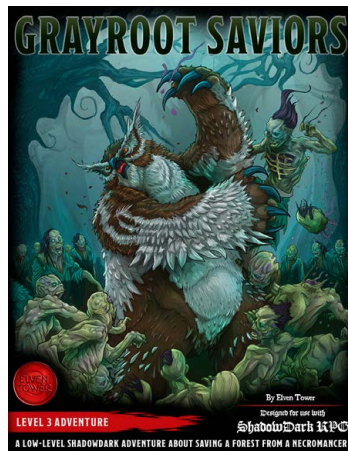
► **Too Late.** The heroes fail; an entire week goes by without them learning who the culprits are. The festival is an utter failure full of robberies, scams, and riots. Lady Marianne refuses to reward the heroes and regrets having tasked them with such an important matter. She asks them to leave East Rachdale and never come back.



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