

THE DM TOOL CHEST

BANE OF THE CHICKEN MAGE



THE HEIR OF A TYRANNICAL FAMILY HAS EMERGED
FROM HIDING AND THREATENING A-NEW REIGN OF TERROR



BANE OF THE CHICKEN MAGE

B*ane of the Chicken Mage* is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 2nd to 4th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. A young mage, scarred mentally and physically from her past, has hidden beneath the town of Umberghast for twenty years. Rising from her hiding place, she seeks revenge for her mother's death at the hands of the townspeople long ago. The last of a family of tyrants, she will let no one stand in her way, even turning her father into a chicken to keep him out of the way. This adventure occurs in the Freelands campaign setting and fits any existing campaign with only a few modifications and name changes.

BACKSTORY

The Chillheart family were tyrants who held their power over the town of Umberghast through magic and fear. For generations, they maintained control over the region and crushed any who opposed them. Eventually, the family began to dwindle until the last alive was the necromancer Elzora Chillheart, who terrorized the townsfolk from her family's dark tower. With the help of a band of traveling heroes, the people of Umberghast

finally rose against Elzora, defeating her and her undead minions before razing her tower to the ground. For the last twenty years, the town has known peace and prosperity, free from the yoke of evil.

Unfortunately for the town, Elzora had kept a secret, one that has been hiding below the ruins of her tower since that fateful day. Elzora's secret lover, the elemental mage Odrum, and their baby daughter Inriess escaped the destruction by hiding in a secret underground lair. They did not escape unscathed, however—the fires severely burned Inriess, scarring her for life.

Raising his daughter in hiding, Odrum attempted to steer Inriess away from the path of necromancy and evil, but the young woman's desire for vengeance grew as the years passed. The young girl hid her scars behind a mask in the shape of a wolf, the crest of the Chillheart family, but she never forgot who gave them to her. When Inriess announced her plans to take revenge against the townsfolk, Odrum tried to stand in her way and was polymorphed into a chicken and imprisoned by the young mage.

Now armed with her mother's spellbook and her father's elemental teachings, Inriess left her secret lair with her golem minion to declare that the town was once more under the rule of a Chillheart. She slew

Umberghast's mayor with magic while demanding the town prepare a tribute before retreating to her underground home, where she now waits and plots.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters are hired to rescue the town from a dangerous mage descended from a tyrannical family. While exploring the dungeon, they find another mage named Odrum polymorphed into a chicken. Odrum assists the characters in traversing the dungeon and confronting the younger mage, who turns out to be his daughter. The characters are then thrust into a dilemma where they must decide on the best course of action and the fate of a troubled young woman.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your characters hooked into this adventure:

At the Wrong Time. The characters stay the night in Umberghast and have dinner at the local tavern when a local bursts through the front door. The terrified resident recounts how a young masked mage just came into town with a golem, murdered the mayor, and declared herself a Chillheart and rightful ruler of the area. She instructed the townsman to tell the others to prepare a tribute for her return.

Heroes for Hire. The town of Umberghast is calling for heroes to help them in their time of need. Whether through their patron, local bulletin board, or adventuring guild, the characters have received notice of a substantial reward for those who would help rescue the town from an evil mage. Upon arrival in Umberghast, the characters learn the story of the masked mage who murdered the mayor before retreating to her lair to await tribute. Mari Brookline, the acting mayor, offers 500 gp if they can defeat the deadly mage.

UMBERGHAST

Umberghast is a quiet farming town nestled in the foothills of the Motionless Mountains. Its stone buildings are well-built and roofed with distinct red clay tiles. The last twenty years have been prosperous as the townsfolk rebuilt their economy through trade with nearby settlements. There is a pall of fear gripping the town after the appearance of Iniress and her golem minion.

Significant locations in and around Umberghast, and the essential people located there, include the following:

Town Hall. The Mayor of Umberghast, Kenneth Brookline, was recently murdered by Iniress. Mari Brookline, a stoic human **noble**, has stepped into the shoes of her late husband to help guide the town



through this challenging time. She keeps a patient attitude when in public, but she is fearful for the town's future.

Inn & Tavern. The Brass Arm Tavern is owned and operated by Dagobert Button, a friendly and verbose halfling **commoner** terrified of Iniress' return. He was among the mob that burned the Chillheart Tower to the ground, and he remembers the horrors that drove them to commit the act.

General Store. The sarcastic half-orc **commoner** Kirine Sandar runs The Fancy Fork, a dry goods general store. Although Kirine does not stock weapons or armor, characters can purchase other adventuring gear worth 25 gp or less.

Guards. There are no regular guards or military presence in Umberghast. Some of the local hunters act as a small militia in case any wandering monsters threaten the town. Tolith Faevalur is an elderly elven **scout** who has some combat experience from the Great War but knows the hunters are no match for Iniress' magic.

Shrine. A small temple in the center of town holds a non-denominational shrine. Aldres Mulhaven, a quiet human **priest** of Sylvanis, goddess of life, maintains the shrine. He provides services for the town's spiritual needs and healing when needed.

RUMORS IN CLEARWATER

The characters can learn the following additional information by spending time in the tavern or through conversation and asking the right questions of the locals.

- The tower just outside of town was once the home of the ruthless Chillheart family who terrorized the region for generations.
- Elzora Chillheart was a necromancer and thought to be the last of her line. She was believed to have been killed in the fire that destroyed the tower twenty years ago.
- The townsfolk rose one night to fight against the tyrannical Chillhearts and ended their reign of terror—or so they thought.
- Rumors of ghosts have kept the townsfolk away from the tower ruins. Many have claimed to see the specter of Elzora Chillheart walking among the rubble at night, searching for something.
- No one knows anything about the mage who murdered the mayor and claimed to be a Chillheart. They know that she arrived in a hooded cloak with a mask in the shape of a wolf and a large wooden bear by her side.
- The mage demanded the townsfolk prepare a tribute of goods and gold, and they wait for her return within the next few days.

ELEMENTAL LAIR

The Chillheart family once ruled the region from a magnificent tower just outside of the town of Umberghast. When the townsfolk rose against the family, they razed the building to the ground. The tower ruins are barely more than a cluster of broken stone walls covered in overgrowth. The once lush gardens surrounding the area are choked with weeds and thorny vines.

The underground complex that was once the secret laboratory of the family escaped the blaze and has been the home of Odram and his daughter Inress ever since. The complex was converted into a self-sufficient home powered by Odram's elemental magics. With access to fresh food and water, the pair stayed hidden from the town above for almost two decades.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the elemental lair unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The lair is constructed of smooth-hewn granite mortared blocks. The ceilings in each room are 15 to 20 feet high, and the floors are smooth stone tiles.

Doors. Doors are oak bound in wrought iron. Each door has an AC of 15, 18 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Lights. The complex is well lit by sconces enchanted with *continual flame* spells.

Elemental Runes. Odram has used his elemental magic to create a self-sustaining environment inside the underground complex. Runes etched into the walls generate a light breeze that keeps the air fresh and warm, while others help plants grow or draw water up into the well in area 8.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of the elemental lair on page 5.

1. ENTRANCE

The iron trapdoor entrance to the underground lair sits among the rubble of the tower grounds. The townsfolk have stayed away from the ruins ever since the fire that burned it down and never came found it. The trapdoor is unlocked and opens to a stone staircase leading into the complex. Once the characters open the trapdoor, read aloud the following:

The iron trap door opens to reveal a winding staircase leading down below the ruins. A blast of warm air blows through the opening, carrying with it the scent of wet earth. There is a faint light flickering up from the bottom of the stairs.

Once the characters walk down the stairs, read aloud the following:

The staircase leads to a short hallway ending in an arched doorway. A stone shield bearing a snarling wolf's head sits on the keystone, a flickering flame held in its open mouth. You can see a room with a carved statue of a wolf standing on a pedestal in the center through the opening. A light, warm breeze blows out of the room and down the hall past you.

There is a *continual flame* spell cast on the wolf's head.

Trap: Fire-Breathing Wolf. There is a pressure plate in the center of the hall and five feet in front of the open doorway. A character with a passive Perception of 13 or higher or actively searching for traps who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the faint outline in the stone. The trap activates when more than 20 pounds of weight is placed on the pressure plate, causing the wolf head statue to release a small stream of fire directly onto that space. A



creature in the fire must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Wedging an iron spike or other object under the pressure plate prevents the trap from activating. A successful *dispel magic* (spell DC 13) cast on the wolf head destroys the trap.

2. BANNER ROOM

This room is hot and muggy, and the air is thick with the scent of soil and plants. Roots dangle through cracks in the stone ceiling and spread across the room. A wooden wolf statue painted with swirling blue patterns stands in the center of the room on a low pedestal with a wooden door behind it on the north wall. Ragged purple banners displaying the same snarling wolf's head from above the doorway hang from the walls of this otherwise empty chamber.

If a character comes within 10 feet of the statue, read aloud the following:

Suddenly, blue light bursts in the statue's eyes, and it comes to life with a creaking snarl.

Encounter: Wooden Wolf. The wolf statue is a **wood golem** (see Appendix. Its attacks deal slashing damage instead of bludgeoning), one of many wooden animal companions and guardians Odrum built for his daughter. Iniress set it here to guard the entrance to the rest of the lair.

3. NURSERY

Odrum enchanted this room with runes that generate elemental effects to aid in the growth of an underground greenhouse. Once the characters open the door to this room, read aloud the following:

A muggy blast of air greets you as the door swings open to reveal a room filled with rows of raised stone beds filled with soil and plants of all types. Glowing runes are etched into the ceiling and on the sides of the plant beds. A wooden door exits to the west.

A character proficient in Arcana who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes the runes representing the elements and are being used to help the plants grow. A character proficient in Nature discerns the plants to be normal and healthy, and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check reveals one plant's berries to have healing properties. This plant has ten berries that heal for 1 hit point each when eaten as an action.

4. THE CHICKEN MAGE

This room is the main living area and where Iniress keeps her father caged and under guard. When the characters first enter the room, read aloud the following:

A cool, light breeze blows through this chamber. A large dining table sits in the center of the room, and a smokeless fire burns in a hearth in the southwest corner. Two suits of armor with helmets shaped like wolf heads stand in the northeastern corner, and a small kitchen is in the northwest with the remnants of a prepared meal still on the countertop. A large black chicken stares at you from behind the bars of an iron cage on top of the dining table. Suddenly, a voice rings in your mind, "Beware the armor!" just as the suits begin to move.

The hearth is enchanted with a rune that absorbs the smoke from the hearth. The chicken is the polymorphed Odrum speaking telepathically to the characters (see "The Chicken Mage" sidebar, page 7). Odrum reluctantly answers any questions the characters have (see the Backstory) but insists that Iniress is not evil and can be brought to see reason. He attempts to convince the characters to help him restrain his daughter and return him to his physical form so he can take Iniress away and never be heard from again. Once freed from his cage, he guides the characters to the Sanctum (area 8), where Iniress works.

Encounter: Armor Guardians. The two suits of **animated armor** were set to guard Odrum and defend against intruders.



THE CHICKEN MAGE

Odram (CG human **mage**, he has telepathy out to 30 ft.) is a cranky and belligerent codger who cares little for the rest of humanity and reserves his affection for his beloved daughter. The elemental mage has spent the last two decades protecting Iniress from the dangers of the outside world but was unable to temper her rage. When Iniress declared her intention to return to the world above to avenge her mother, Odram tried to stand in her way. She slipped a cursed necklace around his neck when he wasn't looking that polymorphed him into a chicken. He can speak telepathically but is unable to access his magic while transformed. The mage wants to protect his daughter from danger, including any that the characters pose.

Odram is wearing a silver chained medallion engraved with a chicken. The wearer is cursed to transform into a chicken until the curse is removed by a *lesser restoration* spell or similar effect. This was Elzora Chillheart's favorite way to punish wayward servants, and Iniress found it in the hidden compartment that included her mother's spellbook (see area 8).

5. ODRAM'S CHAMBER

This chamber appears to have been hit by a tornado. A disheveled bed sits pushed against the western wall, and loose paper and books hide the floor entirely. Empty bookshelves stand against the southern wall opposite a messy desk sitting against the northern.

After Iniress found her mother's spellbook hidden in the Sanctum (area 8), she tore through Odram's room, looking for other secrets he had hidden from her. Odram is not particularly keen on the characters rifling through his belongings, pecking at the ankles, and cursing at any who do so.

Treasure. A character actively searching who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a *spell scroll* of *spider climb* lying among the scattered papers. A character searching the desk who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a false bottom in a drawer that hides a pouch containing 100 gp and a wolf's head signet ring worth 5 gp.

6. THE FOREST ROOM

A large tree stands in the center of this chamber, its branches reaching up to a twenty-foot-high domed ceiling. A bright blue sky with drifting clouds and tiny birds in flight fills the dome, and a golden sun casts bright light to fill the room. Paintings of tall trees adorn the walls, forest animals peeking from behind them. Stone archways carved to resemble interconnecting tree branches exit to the north and east.

Odram built this room to give his daughter the experience of being outdoors. The dome is enchanted with spells set to mimic the day and night sky outside. He does not know that Iniress cast an *awaken* spell on the tree in this chamber and cannot forewarn the characters if asked before entering the room.

Encounter: Tree Whomper. The **awakened tree** in this room moves to block the western exit as soon as the characters enter and attacks any creature except Odram.

7. INIRESS' BEDCHAMBER

The air in this room is fresh and carries a hint of a sweet fragrance. Colorful paintings of fanciful creatures adorn all four walls, and everything is neat and orderly—the bed is precisely made, and the bookshelf on the eastern wall has every book arranged by size and color. A ceramic wolf mask painted with colorful blue swirls lays on top of a wooden chest sitting at the foot of the bed. In the center of the room sits a partially carved wooden statue of a wolf.

If Odram is still alive, he is upset when the characters enter this room and loudly protests any search of his daughter's belongings. He pecks the ankles of anyone who rifles through the room if he is still in chicken form and will proceed to turn hostile if in his human form. If Iniress is packing her bags to leave (see area 8), she asks the characters to leave her in peace.

A search of the wooden chest uncovers a small journal written by Iniress. The passages detail her growing frustrations with being locked underground and a passionate hatred for those who killed her mother and left her scarred for life. Iniress' journal details how she hides these feelings from her father to avoid his disapproval. If shown to Odram, he sadly acknowledges his failure to see what was in front of his face the whole time.

Treasure. There is a complete set of carpenter's tools sitting on the floor. The ceramic wolf mask is a magic item enchanted to give an attuned wearer darkvision out to 30 ft.



8. SANCTUM

The door to this room is locked by an *arcane lock* spell that can be opened by speaking the passphrase “it’s time for dinner” or by a character using thieves’ tools that succeeds on a DC 25 Dexterity check. Odram knows the passphrase and is slightly embarrassed when he explains that dinner was the only reason Iniress was allowed to interrupt his work.

When the characters enter the room, read aloud the following:

Tables covered in alchemical equipment and assorted spell components line the walls of this circular chamber. In the center of the room is a pool of crystal clear water. On the far side of the room is a large wooden bear standing next to a young woman holding a potion in her hand and a shocked expression on her heavily scarred face. She recovers quickly and grabs a ceramic wolf mask that was sitting on the table next to her. “Who are you?” she demands as she slips on the mask. “How did you get in here?”

The pool of water is a 20-foot-deep well that is kept full by elemental runes at the bottom that generates water.

Encounter: The Wolf and the Bear. Iniress is a **young mage** with a bear-shaped **wood golem** (see Appendix for both stat blocks) under her control and a *potion of healing* in her possession. Iniress is a brash youth filled with rage, instantly turning hostile at the first sign of a threat to her or her father. Characters can attempt to persuade her to give up her plans to terrorize the town above with a compelling argument, and on a successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check, she agrees to listen. Although she expresses regret for killing the mayor, Iniress refuses to stand trial for his murder, and any insistence that she does ends with hostility on her part. If persuaded to abandon her plans and the characters agree to let her leave unhindered, she uses a potion to remove the cursed amulet from her father, transforming him back into his normal state. The pair thank the characters for their assistance and begin to pack bags to leave at once quickly.

If the characters cannot persuade the hot-tempered mage but manage to restrain her, Odram points them to the *potion of remove curse* on one of the tables to remove the cursed amulet. He attempts to persuade the characters to leave Iniress in his charge, promising they will disappear and never bother Umberghast again and offering them a reward (see treasure below). If the characters insist she stand trial for the mayor’s murder, he will defeatedly acquiesce.

If the characters defeat Iniress and Odram survives, he attempts to escape by dashing through the lair to the exit, swearing revenge on the party.

Treasure. Odram has a *ring of warmth* and 200 gp that he gives the characters as a gift or a bribe, depending on the circumstances. These can be taken

from his corpse if he is killed. A *potion of remove curse* and a *potion of healing* are on a table in the room. If the characters defeat Iniress in combat, her mother’s spellbook can be taken from a pouch on her waist. The book contains the following spells: *Alarm, Alter Self, Animate Dead, Arcane Lock, Bestow Curse, Blindness / Deafness, Blink, Blur, Burning Hands, Charm Person, Clairvoyance, Continual Flame.*

CONCLUSION

There are many outcomes to this adventure that depend on how the characters handled the encounter with Iniress. They are as follows:

If Iniress is killed. The townsfolk hail the characters as heroes in Umberghast and throw a feast in their honor. They are presented with a 500 gp reward and given free food and lodging in the town’s inn for a week. However, if Odram escapes, he vows revenge on the characters, and they must now look over their shoulder as it will not be the last they hear of the Chicken Mage.

If Iniress is brought to stand trial. A trial is held for Iniress in which the characters can provide witness testimony along with Odram. The outcome of this trial and the resulting circumstances are beyond the scope of this adventure and are in your hands. Either way, the characters are rewarded the 500 gp promised for bringing Iniress to justice.

If Iniress is allowed to escape. The townspeople of Umberghast are appalled if they learn the characters allowed Iniress to escape, no matter the explanation or circumstances, and they are banished from the town. On the other hand, the characters can convince the townsfolk they “defeated” the mage to gain the promised reward. Unfortunately, the rage that burned so passionately in Iniress is sparked once more after her father’s passing not long after they left Umberghast. The town is visited once more by the young mage and razed to the ground in her anger. The characters are next on the list for the wolf-masked mage as she starts gathering more power to confront the party eventually.

APPENDIX

WOOD GOLEM

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)
Speed walk 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The wood golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wood golem makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

YOUNG MAGE

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 10 (15 with shield)
Hit Points 27 (6d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	12 (+0)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Senses passive Perception 12
Languages any one language
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus:** +2

Spellcasting. The young mage is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following wizard spells prepared:
Cantrips (at will): *mending*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*
1st level (4 slots): *grease*, *magic missile*, *shield*
2nd level (2 slots): *mirror image*, *hold person*

ACTIONS

Knife. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 - 1) bludgeoning damage.

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