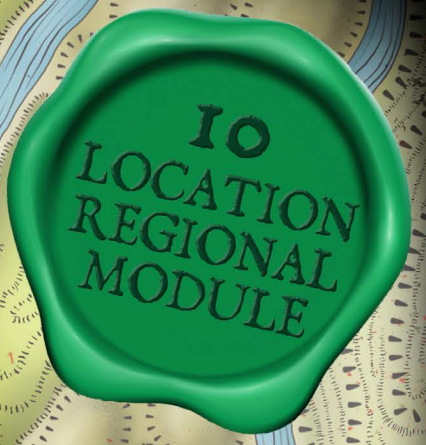


DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

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No. 38



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ShadowDark RPG



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Credits	2	The Accursed Cloak	31
		<i>Level-3 Stand-Alone Adventure</i>	
Table of Contents	3		
Foreword by Arthur Rouise	4	Trials of the Knightly Tenets	37
		<i>Level-2 Adventure</i>	
Zarveck County	5	The Zarvs Secret Archive.	40
<i>Level 1-4 Region</i>		<i>Level-3 Adventure</i>	
Zarveck City	8	Be Careful What You Wish For!	43
<i>Level 1-3 City</i>		<i>By: David Hill</i>	
Crypt of Two Chapels	11	Magicworks and Patrons	45
<i>Level-4 Adventure</i>		<i>By: Marco Bizzarri</i>	
Brighton Hill	14	The Light Ring of King Leran	47
<i>Level-2 Settlement</i>		<i>By: Viel Nast</i>	
A Call from Below	17	Guest Contributions	49
<i>One-Page Dungeon</i>		Thank You	50
Flesh-Eating Veggies.	18	Licensing	51
<i>Level-3 Stand-Alone Adventure</i>			
Sepulcher of the Zarv Family	28		
<i>Level-4 Adventure</i>			



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DUNGEON MAP PACK VOL. 2

WEB OF HATRED
LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE

ELVEN TOWER ADVENTURES



Foreword

Our seventh magazine release written with Shadowdark RPG in mind comes with a new approach. This supplement focuses on a small region setting for levels 1-3. Have fun exploring the different places, adventures and NPCs in the Zarveck County. All characters shall find something worth their silver and lives in this sprawling regional module.

Alas, it took our home group a while to tie things up with a different campaign before actually switching to Shadowdark. Apart from a few short play-tests, we only fully switch our IRL game to SD 2 months ago. I've been GMing for a quite a while so our conversions were pretty accurate but I should also admit that low-level play was a bit more granular and deadly than we all anticipated.

My associate, Arthur, is a player in that game and we both noticed this dynamic. We shall take it into account for further encounter building as low-level characters are frail.

Fortunately, they are easy to come by since the greed and thirst for glory abound in those ready to take on the mantle of adventurer!

Until the Next One, Crawlers!
- Derek



Fresh Shadowdark RPG Content

ZARVECK COUNTY

Nobles and merchants all made their fortunes mining zircons. People say the countess wears a dress embedded in hundreds of these tiny, sparkling rocks.

Common Belief



Zarveck County, the Land of Zircons, is a sprawling region that features fertile lands for farming, verdant forests, and some of the richest mines. The rulers and stewards of these lands, the Zarv family, have profited from large mining operations for generations. They are an opulent, decadent lineage of nobility that makes all decisions from their high castle in the capital, Zarveck City.

The current head of the Zarv Family is Countess Eleanor Zarv. She has been in power for 3 years. Alas, her popularity drops by the day as the conditions of the general population have decreased significantly during her reign. Kobolds scourge the eastern folds of the county. Elves assail the north near Brighton Hill. And common brigands and masterless warriors roam the lonely roads looking for easy prey. Despite the townsfolk's demands for increased security, the countess has remained a far-away figure that appears to care little for the lives of commoners and the peasantry. To add insult to injury, the countess has increased taxation and levies since last Spring. Farmers and laborers claim for a revision of these changes as the rate of taxation may be a factor during the following winter. Life has never been harsher in Zarveck County. For this reason, many people turn to mercenary work and adventuring. There are plenty of places to explore in the county to find wealth and glory.

REGIONAL PLAY

This supplement encompasses several locations in a region named Zarveck County. This territory is ripe for low-level adventures. Tables and succinct rules for traveling and carousing in the capital, Zarveck, are included. This area contains challenges from levels 1 through 4. If preferred, the characters may start this campaign as citizens of any of the described settlements in Zarveck County. The party is expected to follow the scent of rumors or adventure hooks to explore the few settlements in the region. They may also delve down into the intricate **Shadowdark** passageways within dungeons in search of treasure, renown, and glory. News travels fast in the Land of Zircons. If the characters become important enough, they may be summoned for an audience with the ruler, Countess Eleanor Zarv.

Levels 1-4 Region

► **Travel Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Traveling Encounter** each day of travel in Zarveck County (4-in-6 chance). Roll twice per day if the characters move fast, in a large company, or in a caravan (see **Traveling**).

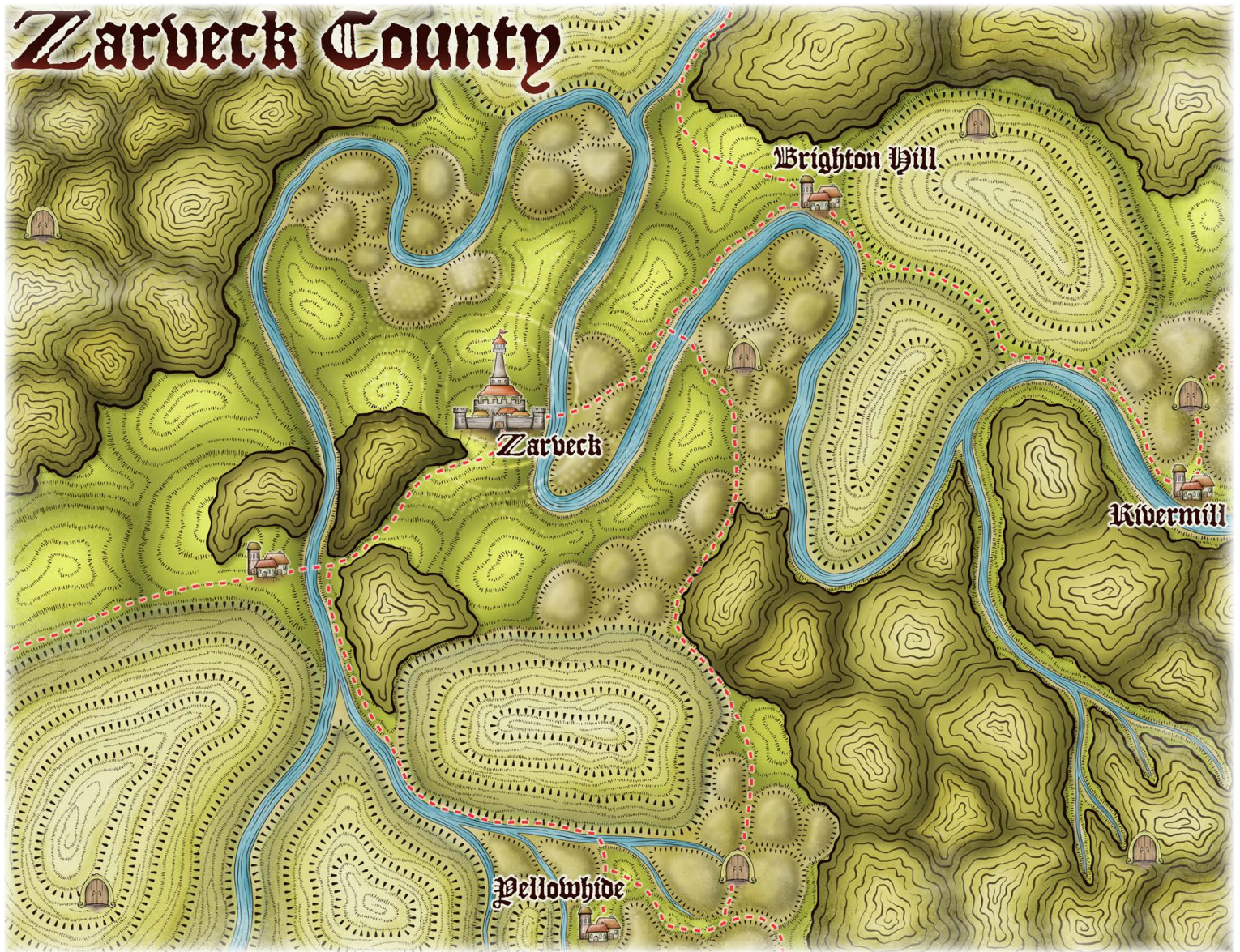
► **Mist.** Curtains of dense, humid mist roll down from the nearby hills and mountain ranges and obscure visibility. When cloudy, this heavy mist may fall at any time. Traveling like this is dangerous as many creatures take advantage of the limited visibility to prey on travelers. In settlements, the locals perform a holy sign to ward their homes from the dangers that lurk in the mist.

► **Law.** Criminals are sent to the constable in the nearby settlements for swift justice. When a trial is required, culprits are sent to Zarveck City for the bailiff's assessment and a court date. The law is swift and merciless in Zarveck County; very few are sent to jail because capital punishment is the preferred method of justice.

REGION RUMORS

d6	Details
1	People say in hushed voices that Countess Eleanor Zarv is not a legitimate heir to the Zarv family. Some say she was adopted, others say she is an illegitimate daughter, a bastard. Some think the leader of the Zarvish Front, Indigo, is the true heir to the opulent, noble family.
2	People gossip that in Yellowhide, where they grow the largest vegetables, some of them now move and talk. Some claim that a pumpkin devoured livestock animals.
3	In the hills east of Zarveck City, rangers claim there is a forlorn dungeon that no one dares explore after a valiant adventuring party was almost killed by the traps therein.
4	Something is going on in Brighton Hill, merchants claim that forest elves guard the roads and assault the townsfolk. The elves seldom interacted with the settlement before. Something has triggered their animosity.
5	The lair of a kobold sorcerer named Gulduk is located in the rocky crags north of Rivermill. The kobolds demand a monthly tribute from the secluded town lest they awaken the rage of Gulduk, the Fire Spirit. The townsfolk requested aid from Zarveck City but no one has come.
6	There is a legend that a mighty, legendary blade forged of zircons is hidden in the southwest hills of Zarveck County. The legend says this blade is protected by a mighty guardian. Only a true-born hero may challenge this timeless protector to a fight and earn the blade.

Zarveck County



ZARVECK CITY

The tall spires of Zarv Castle can be seen from afar, above the sturdy city walls. All manner of plantations and farms extend for miles around the sprawling city.

The county's capital is the home of most people in the region. It is supported by the large farming region around it and imports from nearby settlements. In recent months, Zarveck City has become a gathering hub for adventurers and mercenaries. As the situation in the county becomes more difficult, more people turn to adventuring. Most of them gather in a secret society known as the Forlorn Guild. The authorities disavow this organization and have threatened to raid their base if the mercenaries mess with the nobles' activities. This is a serious threat for would-be adventurers because the punishments for criminals in Zarveck City are severe. Two adventurers were recently hung from the palace walls to make an example to others. Some people claim the countess is afraid of free-lancer adventurers as they pose difficulties to her strict reign and the collection of taxes and tithes.

BRIGHTON HILL

The fragrance of summer flowers and sweet fruits precedes the appearance of Brighton Hill and the flower-bouquet sculpture in its midst. North of the town, endless forests cover the fertile territories.

Brighton Hill is the second largest settlement in Zarveck County but it is only an unfortified, small town near the northern forest. The locals have plantations of sweet fruits and edibles that are later exported to the capital.

► **The Elvish Rage.** In the past few months, stealthy elvish parties have attacked travelers. They never kill the locals but steal their things and do their best to scare them off. Lately, some elf rangers have even broken into town buildings to sack them. The locals ignore what reason causes the elves to behave like this. In the past, the forest elves kept to themselves and seldom interacted with human populations. Today, they run rampant.

► **Healing Herbs.** It is known that Brighton Hill's apothecary buys all manner of rare ingredients and herbs.

YELLOWHIDE

Yellowhide is a small village known for its leather-work and the cultivation and harvest of enlarged vegetables and fruits. The village tannery is the largest building in town; it supplies leather products to the whole region.

► **The Green Festival.** Farmers congregate to thank the goddess of harvest once per year. The main attraction is a contest where farmers show off their largest produce. Usually, the largest piece of produce wins.

► **Flesh-Eating Pumpkin.** A local farmer and a mage apprentice used arcane secrets to enlarge vegetables for the festival but ended up creating a dangerous breed of carnivorous plants. A pumpkin attacks the livestock. This shall ruin the local leather economy if left unsolved.

RIVERMILL

Rivermill was once a small border settlement with a large watchtower that doubles up as a mill. It has since grown into a small village. The settlement is far from the capital. Separated by so many hills and forested regions that communication with the authorities takes too long. Sometimes, the village is altogether ignored by the county's capital and left to fend for themselves.

The Draconic Threat. A tribe of pesky kobolds inhabits the rocky crags north of Rivermill. Its leader unearthed a wizard's spellbook and learned a few tricks from it. Now, he calls himself '*Gulduk, the Fire Spirit*', and demands tribute in the form of meat and coins from the locals. No confrontation has occurred thus far.

TRAVELING

Zarveck County is small enough that most locations can be reached in a single day. Places deep in the forest or in the rocky ranges take two days of travel. During such journeys, something may occur (4-in-6 chance).

ENCOUNTERS

d10 Details

- 1 A curtain of mist creeps in. It precludes dark, tall clouds and lightning. A violent thunderstorm is imminent.
- 2 A baby **mammoth** flees a pack of 2d6 **wolves**.
- 3 Two **hill giants** trudge along carrying three horses. They may be persuaded to sell them (**Reaction** check).
- 4 An **orc** sits inside a weathered henge of stones. His kin were slaughtered by envoys of the Zarv family. He may join the party if they oppose the nobles (**Reaction** check).
- 5 2d6 **kobolds** loyal to Gulduk emerge from a cave and fling rocks and flaming excrement at the characters.
- 6 A **giant snake** coils in the mud of a dried-out riverbed (DC 13 WIS to notice). It attempts to ambush the party.
- 7 A merchant caravan travels to the capital. The six **guards** may mistake the party for brigands (**Reaction** check).
- 8 A scouting party of three **elves** shoots arrows at the party from a forested region. If pursued, the elves blend into the forest and flee. They avoid melee combat.
- 9 A hooded man approaches. He claims to be from the Zarvish Front. He offers an introduction to the guild's leader, but only if the heroes oppose the countess's reign.
- 10 3d6 **peasants** fearfully inspect a dying **cave creeper** by a hillside cavern. A moment later, it turns out to be a hunting strategy, the vermin monster rises and attacks.



ZARVECK CITY

The peasants shall obey my edicts under penalty of death. Such is the way of the world. I understand my place in it and so shall they. Even if it hurts them...

Countess Eleanor Zarv

People call Zarveck City the *Crown of Zircons* after the immense wealth that the Zarv family has accumulated from mining operations in the region. The mines produce primarily iron and copper ore, and an endless stream of zircons which are used in foundries, as an alchemical reagent, and as gemstones for jewelry and decor items. People say the ruler, Countess Eleanor Zarv, wears a crown of zircons.

Civil unrest in Zarveck City has become a concern to the authorities due to the high taxes and the strict, oppressive enforcement of the law. Things are somewhat more calm in the city's outskirts where farmers enjoy a bit more leniency. But in the city, things are ripe for trouble. People claim the worst about the countess in an attempt to justify her despotic attitude toward the common folk. Alas, few can ever expect to meet her.

THE CAPITAL

Zarveck City is a sprawling metropolis of several tens of thousands of people. The capital is a cosmopolitan settlement where citizens of different ancestries, occupations, and demeanors live. If anything can be found in Zarveck County, it can certainly be found here. From personal services, spellcasting for hire, mercenaries, and even illegal activities. The locals have a saying: "A zircon can buy your way into anything you can imagine..." With enough money or influence, the characters can procure anything in Zarveck City.

City Features

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** when visiting a new area or doing something that draws too much attention from the locals (3-in-6 chance).

► **Townfolk.** Zarvish are warm and welcoming overall but the recent developments and the government's continued oppression have caused many to become distrustful and even outwardly resentful of outsiders and those who enforce the countess's strict edicts.

► **Taxation.** Tax agents at the city gates review people's belongings and charge a 10% fee for any wealth above 50 gp per person. Adventurers must pay this tax for any treasure and valuables retrieved from dungeons.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	An artisan accuses a character of breaking a priceless item by the storefront (8d8 gp). They are ordered to pay lest the city watch is summoned. There is a 4-in-6 chance this is all a ruse carried out by corrupt merchants.
2	Six guards beat some street merchants for failing to pay the <i>countess's dues</i> . The hapless merchants and any who intervened in their stead are put on the stocks for 2 days.
3	A deep sinkhole falls open in a cobblestone street. The sewage canals can be seen below. A storeroom below betrays the activity of an underground organization. It all belongs to the Zarvish Front, an outlaw organization that condemns the countess's reign as illegitimate.
4	2d20 city guards march down the streets and detain people at random. There is a 4-in-6 chance that the characters are ordered to stand down for interrogation.
5	The characters stumble upon a gathering of unruly civilians. A man preaches about Indigo, proclaiming him the legitimate heir to the Zarvish throne. The Zarvish Front shall soon make a move against the countess.
6	An adventurer is hung at the gallows for fraternizing with the Zarvish Front. Unexpectedly, the noose breaks and he scampers away into the slums of Zarveck City.

ZOLA HORSES

This establishment provides warhorses, the finest steeds in the county. Ordinarily, only the nobles and wealthy merchants can afford these steeds, but if the characters meet the price, they can acquire the best horse here. The Zola family is numerous and all have specialized in the craft of breeding, caring, and training warhorses.

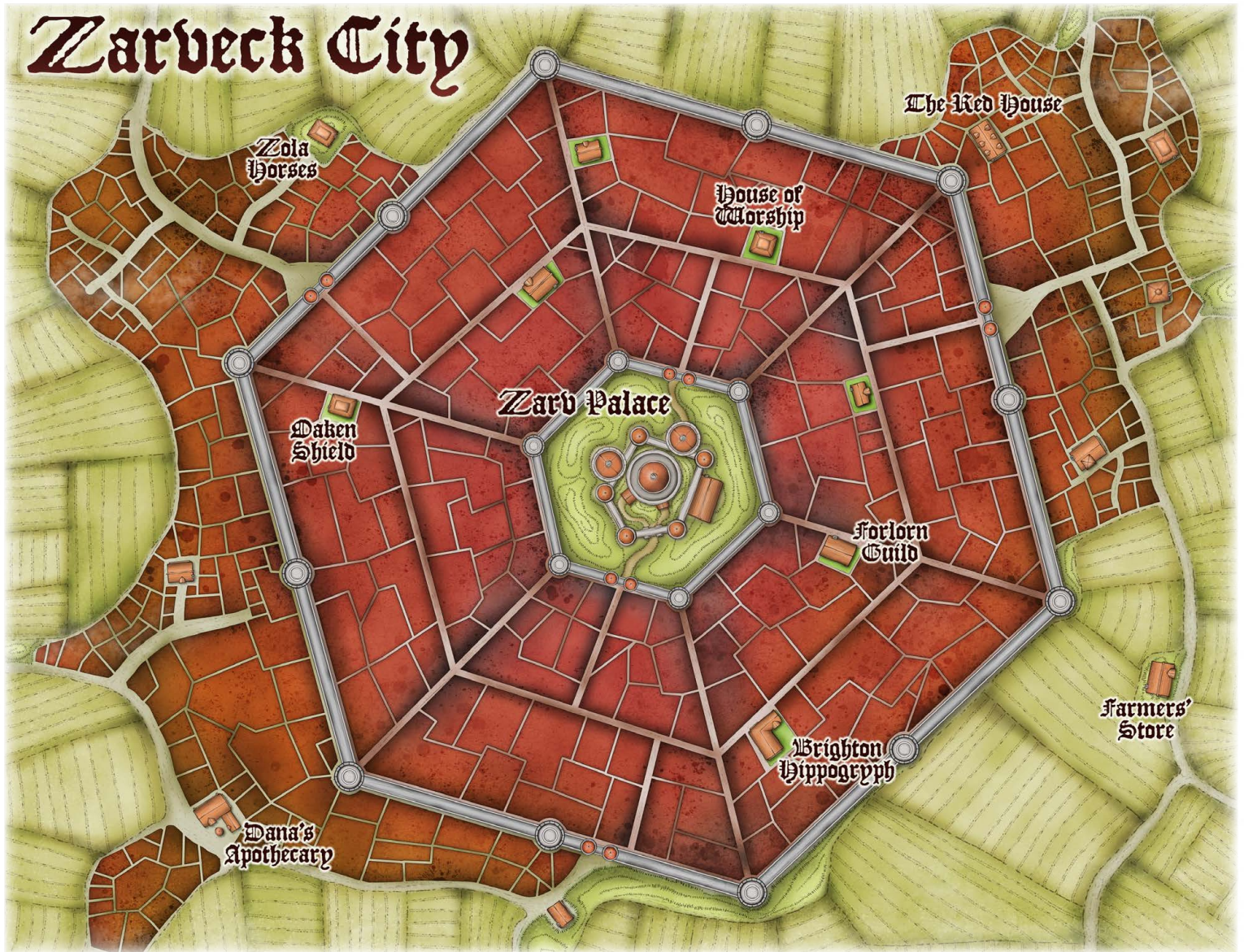
► **The Mountain Stallion.** Varlo Zola spotted a magnificent gray stallion in the hills east of Brighton Hill. The Zola family is willing to pay handsomely for this horse. The stallion is to become the countess's steed.

DANA'S APOTHECARY

Dana is the daughter of Gilmo, the famous alchemist who lives in Brighton Hill. After a fallout with her father, Dana moved to the capital and opened her own shop of remedies, potions, and philters. She grows in popularity thanks to the usefulness of her alchemical brews.

► **The Alchemist's Stone.** Dana seeks to surpass her father by crafting a legendary catalyst he has pursued his whole life. However, Dana requires a chunk of *Soul Emerald* to do it. She needs mercenaries to retrieve it.

Zarveck City



FARMERS' STORE

The large, two-story building is a general store of farming implements and a granary and storage facility for Zarveck City. The person in charge is Balder, a red-bearded dwarf. A detachment of the city guard is often on the premises to oversee the shipments of rice bales and grain sacks. Most outgoing shipments go into the city.

► **Tax Evasion.** Despite the constant surveillance, Balder has a secret basement where plenty of grain and goods have been stored away to avoid the *countess's dues*. Slowly, Balder has used these goods to support Indigo's claim and the Zarvish Front. If Balder were to be exposed, he would be hung first thing next morning.

► **Caravan Escort.** A large merchant caravan shall soon depart from Rivermill but the locals fear that the kobold outlaw, Gulduk, may raid the shipment. Balder is looking for brave sellswords willing to travel to Rivermill and meet with his associate Harold. The job is to escort the caravan across the brigand-ridden roads of Zarveck County and back to Balder's establishment safely.

THE RED HOUSE

Popular among many locals and frequent travelers, the Red House provides sought-out services of the intimate kind. The men and women who work here as courtesans are also a reliable source of gossip. Often, the sale of information is more profitable than their trade.

FORLORN GUILD

Hidden in plain sight, posing as a brewery, the Forlorn Guild gathers adventurers and attracts patrons of all kinds. People looking for a life of adventure are sent this way to meet the guild leader, Aradnna. Mercenary work is currently outlawed by Countess Eleanor Zarv but Aradnna still manages to secure contracts for the most promising of adventurers. The only catch is that the guild does not provide aid to any adventurers caught by the city guards. Whatever punishment the characters earn, no one from the guild shall come to their rescue.

► **Contract.** Aradnna has heard that the townspeaker in Yellowhide requires able fighters to root out what appears to be a calamity of verdant vegetable monsters.

BRIGHTON HIPPOGRYPH

This establishment is the largest inn and tavern in Zarveck City. It is the perfect place for adventurers to find lodging, relax, and hear about the latest gossip in the grand capital. The owner is an old-looking elf named Farandir. He once lived in the northern forests but abandoned the life of a ranger for a life in the capital.

OAKEN SHIELD

This building houses the largest forge in the county. The master-forger, Berandhos, crafts the finest weaponry and pieces of armor in the region. Countless artisans beg him to become his apprentice but he refuses all.

► **The Dream.** Berandhos dreams of a blade, the finest of all, and wishes to study it to master his craft. He has heard this marvelous weapon is hidden in the county's southwest hills. He wishes to go there with an escort.

ZARV PALACE

The city barracks behind the palace walls are hiring. The city needs a strong law enforcement force due to the rash decisions the countess has made. If the characters wish to side with the current government, they are welcomed into the force. Due to their adventuring nature, characters are not given guard duty. The city guard employs mercenaries too. The characters are sent out into the county to sniff out the location of the Zarvish Front's lair. The characters are informed that its leader, an upstart named Indigo, plans to usurp the countess's seat in the palace, alluding to some blood connection that holds little to no veracity. Or so the captain says.

Audiences. Requesting an audience with the countess leads nowhere unless the characters become more popular. Only after the party deals with the many problems in Zarveck County and reaches Level 4, does Countess Eleanor Zarv take notice of them. She may feel inclined to hire the characters directly for an important quest.

DOWNTIME

These are alternate outcomes for carousing activities in the county's capital, Zarveck City. The roll is still modified by the **carousing event table** bonus (SD page 92).

ZARVISH CAROUSING

d8	Details
1	You wake up in the stables in Zola Horses surrounded by the finest stallions but soiled with manure and vomit.
2	You're locked in the stocks for 1d4 days and fined 45% of your total wealth for breaking into the house of Worship and stealing a silver-inlaid idol of sacred Gede.
3	You wake up in the slums with 25% of your remaining wealth spent. A stray dog is chained to your ankle.
4	You hazily remember donating 20% of your total wealth to a man claiming to represent the Zarvish Front.
5	After starting an all-out tavern brawl in the Brighton hippogryph, the city watch takes away your weapons.
6	Petty thieves rob you for 5% of your total wealth. You have a clue, one of them left a handkerchief with a crest.
7	You and the minstrels sang out mean poems about the countess. There is a warrant for your immediate arrest.
8	You survived a perilous demonstration of fire-wielding arcane tricks by a hooded kobold unscathed.
9	By talent (50%) or trickery (50%), you beat a rival adventurer in the Forlorn Guild in a test of combat prowess.
10	A city guard tried to arrest you after a brawl but he fell and broke his neck on a loose rock. Everyone saw it.
11	You performed a humiliating prank on a despised and corrupt city guard captain. Now, the city watch combs the streets in a manhunt for you. You are to be beheaded.
12	You defeated a dwarf blacksmith in a highly wagered drinking contest. Everyone keeps talking about it because that dwarf is known to be the best drinker.
13	You pulled off a heist. You and a thief broke into Zarv Palace and stole a necklace from the countess's jewelry box. Fencing the necklace is not going to be easy.
14	You wake up in Zarv Palace's jail. Accused of assassinating the countess's cousin and sentenced to death.



CRYPT OF TWO CHAPELS

They were forgotten but they never disappeared. Their names are unknown yet most books speak of them. Even today, some crazy folk venerate them.

Facts about The Lost



Not much is known about the forgotten gods, The Lost. But that does not impede obscure cults from growing and becoming stronger. Despite the absence of names or their faces, The Lost are more popular than some pagan deities. And the Land of Zircons is no exception. A double chapel lies hidden in the forest to the south of Zarveck County.

About a decade ago, there was a cult of The Lost. Their leader was from Rivermill. He gathered some followers and would traverse the woods to reach their hideout, a hidden chapel deep in the forest. The cult became a nuisance and the capital ordered the arrest of everyone involved with the forgotten gods. Countess Eleanor was appointed right after the cult was taken care of.

THE PRESENT

THE CURRENT RULER, Eleanor Zarv, decided to disavow the Forlorn Guild and increase taxation for adventurers bringing treasure. As a result, common brigands and thieves are more present than ever. This, in conjunction with the kobold threat, the elves' rampant attitude, and the increasing menace of an uprising, has created the perfect environment for the cult of The Lost to reappear. Their current goal is to regain strength.

THE CULT RETURNS

Theo Artens, a lonely farmer in his fifties, had a dream that changed his life. He experienced a spiritual manifestation of The Lost during the night and became a different person. He woke up as Owen Potter, the former cultist leader. The presence of magic is evident; Owen resisted his arrest and died fighting many years ago. Regardless, the personality and life of the man named Theo are long gone. The man claims his name is Owen, and his only goal is to strengthen the cult. With everything that is going on, he may succeed...

Level 4 Adventure

- ▶ **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 4 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).
- ▶ **Light.** Some areas have large braziers; the rest are in pitch darkness. The gnolls are **dark-adapted**.

ADVENTURE HOOK

THE CHARACTERS FIND themselves in Rivermill. Use one of the following hooks to have the heroes get involved with Theo Artens and his recently reformed cult.

▶ **The Missing Priest (20 gp, 2 XP).** The local priest, Harold Gunn, suspected the return of the cult. He was present when the cult was arrested and dismantled in the past. He asked two acolytes to accompany him and hired a couple of mercenaries to escort them south. They left 5 days ago and should have returned by now. The authorities in Rivermill offer a hefty reward if the characters can find out what happened to them, and bring back to Rivermill possible survivors, if any still live.

▶ **Lost Relics (10 gp, 1 XP).** Tristan, a historian, tips the heroes about the existence of the chapel in the woods. He claims that when the cult was arrested in the past, no one thought about the treasure in the chapel, a large, black, leather-bound tome. He says it must still be in there. More so with the recent rumors about the cult's return. Tristan offers a reward in exchange for the book. "You will know when you see it." The scholar says.

GETTING THERE

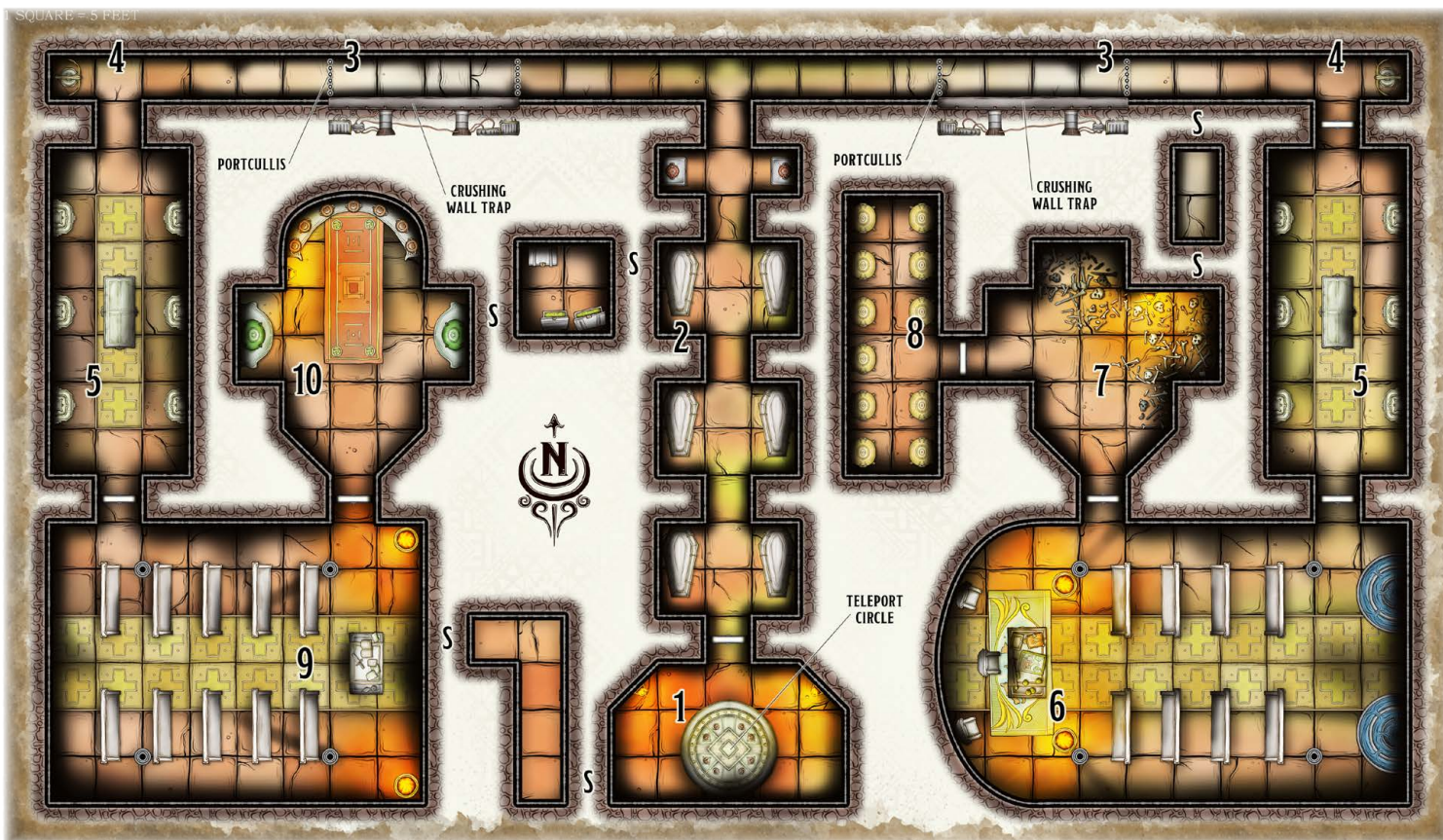
USING THE ROADS, it usually takes a day or less to reach most places in Zarveck County. But the characters take two days to traverse the forest upstream. Here, the highly forested area conceals a lonely stone mausoleum. Inside, the heroes find a teleportation circle. They are taken to area 1 of the dungeon when they stand on it.

1. TELEPORTATION CIRCLE

The paintings on the walls depict cloaked figures praying to huge faceless giants. The believers are portrayed as mindless, selfless followers who obey the faceless giants and heed their speech as if it were sacred.

2. THE GUARDIANS' SARCOPHAGI

A **ghoul** rests within each sarcophagus. The dead emerge one by one when the lids of their enclosures are tampered with. However, if the heroes interact with the red, clay urns resting at the end of the corridor, the six ghouls come out at once. Each of the intricately engraved urns is worth 5 gp (3 XP); they contain gray ashes.



RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6 Details

- 1 The characters encounter two of Theo's followers (**bandits**). The men hesitate for a second but then attack.
- 2 The characters stumble upon a lonely **ghoul**. The monster smells their flesh and fights them until slain.
- 3 A group of one **priest** and two **soldiers** arrive at the dungeon. They may join the characters (**Reaction** check).
- 4 An unnatural current of air travels the entire dungeon. All braziers are put down. All areas become dark.
- 5 An injured man stands before the characters. John (**peasant**) managed to escape from their captors. If helped, he may be convinced to stay and aid the heroes (**Reaction**).
- 6 A sword-wielding **skeleton** charges toward the party.

3. CRUSHING WALL TRAPS

The characters can notice two sections of the corridor's surface are made of pure steel. If they pay attention to the ground, they notice the pressure-sensitive plates and the marks where the portcullis bars land (DC 13 WIS check). If two or more characters stand on the plates, the trap activates: the bars fall and block both ends, and the steel wall crushes everything inside. It takes three rounds for the steel wall to reach the opposite end.

The characters may attempt to cross these sections without touching the floor (DC 12 STR/DEX check). Failing by 5 or more means they fall and trigger the trap. The trap's mechanism is behind a panel on the wall (DC 14 WIS). It can be disarmed with tools (DC 15 DEX check).

4. AUTOMATED CROSSBOW TRAP

Alcoves at the end of the corridor feature an automated mounted crossbow in each side of the dungeon (see map). Characters trigger the trap if they fail to notice and step on the stone tile 20 feet from the weapons (DC 13 WIS). Targets take 1d8 damage (DC 12 DEX for half).

► **Secret Path.** If the characters pay attention to their surroundings (DC 12 WIS check), they may find the hidden corridor next to the pressure-sensitive tile that triggers the crossbow on the west hallway (see map).

5. THE SARCOPHAGI OF THE LOST

Six standing sarcophagi flank a larger central one. Wall paintings show the faceless gods indiscriminately casting chaos and destruction upon the world.

Both areas 5 are identical. Six **skeletons** come out of the standing sarcophagi and an **Avatar of The Lost** from the central one. They impede the passage of intruders.

6. EAST CHAPEL

A **cultist** is Theo's second in command. Three **bandits**, one **thug**, and eight **peasants** listen to his words. Only half of the peasants stay to defend their cult. The others attempt to flee to area 9 to warn their leader, 'Owen'.

► **Tristan's Book.** A large, leather-bound tome rests on the altar. It is written in Diabolic. It is a cursed necromancy treatise with obscure lore about The Lost.

BRIGHTON HILL

The Seed of Wisdom belongs to us. It was taken from our village decades ago but it calls to our hearts. It must be retrieved in the same manner it was stolen.

Elvish Envoy

For a long time, Brighton Hill has been the county's bread basket. The small town is surrounded by miles and miles of farmlands and livestock farms. A significant portion of the capital's food supply comes from this region. The locals are hardworking people who have spent generations perfecting their craft. The town's landmark is a marvelous sculpture of five jasmine flowers in its center. At night, the stone flowers produce eddies of ethereal light similar to the northern light. They attract glowing insects and produce a heart-warming spectacle that even attracts some tourists from time to time. Brighton Hill owes its name to this magical sculpture.

THE THEFT

FEW KNOW IT, but the sculpture was not a glimmering marvel when the town was founded almost a century ago. It all came to be when a daring adventurer delved into the northern forest and infiltrated an elvish settlement. Amid the elves' heart tree, there was a glowing seed that shone with the light of the moon. The human thief killed the guards, stole this gem, and hid it under the flowery statue in Brighton Hill. This is the *Seed of Wisdom*, a relic that the elves long to retrieve.

For four human generations, the elves ignored the seed's whereabouts. But they recently learned it is in Brighton Hill. Their culture demands it be retrieved in the same manner: stolen by force. For 2 months, elvish scouts have attacked travelers and tested the town's defenses. The elves are forbidden from communicating but not all of them adhere vehemently to this tradition.

Level 2 Town

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** when the characters visit a new area in town (3-in-6 chance).

► **Economy.** The population of Brighton Hill is primarily farmers and fishermen. Excess production is shipped to Zarveck City. Trickle tourism to visit the town's glimmering sculpture and landmark is important too.

► **Ambiance.** After the random elvish raids and road attacks, the townsfolk are wary of visitors and especially of elves. They do not yet know why the elves continue to attack the locals. So far, the elves have not communicated.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Two elf scouts shoot arrows at the party from across the river. They disengage and attempt to flee if pursued.
2	Four peasant farmers wielding scythes distrust the characters. They interrogate the characters in the street (Reaction check, disadvantage if an elf is present).
3	In response to elves being close by, the <i>Seed of Wisdom</i> produces its well-known night glimmering even during the day. Elves that see it know the seed is what causes it.
4	A detachment of 2d4 guards arrives from the capital. They attempt to take over the town's defense and have strict orders to attack and arrest the forest elves.
5	A brown bear emerges from the forest looking for its cubs. The cubs are hiding in the town's granary (area 6).
6	After hearing of the town's recent plights, four brigands (thugs) barge into town on horseback. They demand the immediate payment of 10 gp and two carts of grain.

1. GENERAL STORE

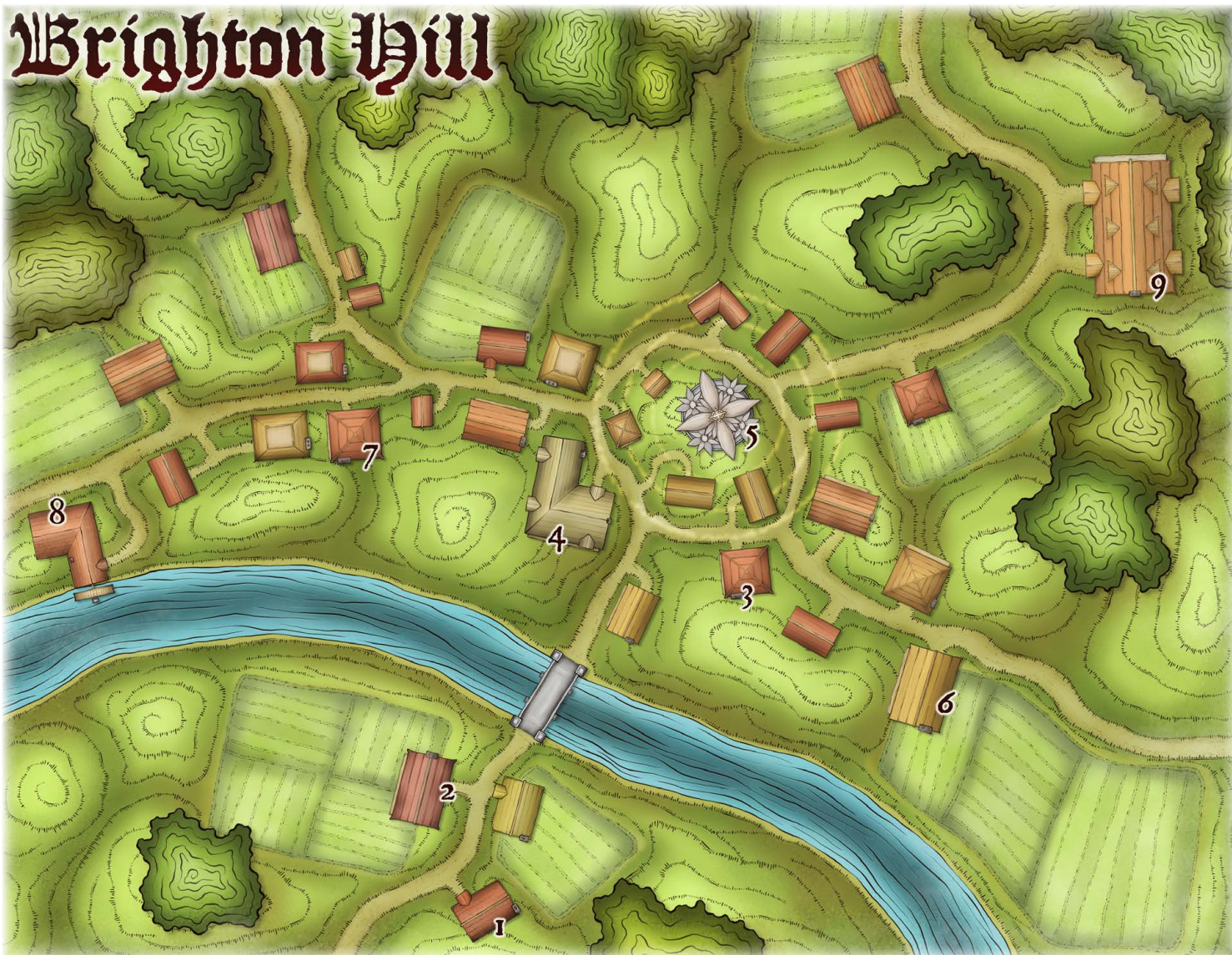
The town's store sells farming implements, seeds, utensils, and all manner of livestock supplies. The town was broken into by an elf ranger last week. The elf stole gold and seeds. The owner, Harold, thinks the capital should march its army into the forests to rout the elves.

2. GILMO'S APOTHECARY

Many-colored smoke rises from the chimney of this building. A wooden sign reads 'Gilmo's Remedies.'

Gilmo is the most renowned alchemist and apothecary in Zarveck County. He has been summoned to prepare remedies for the nobles in Zarveck Palace many a time. His daughter, Dana, used to work here as his apprentice until they had a terrible fight over the store's management and she moved to the capital. Gilmo misses Dana but is too proud to acknowledge it and seek her. His life-long goal is to craft the *Alchemist's Stone* but it requires an item known as the *Soul Emerald*. Gilmo is aware of the *Seed of Wisdom* hidden in the statue as his search for the *Soul Emerald* led him there. They are the same thing. Alas, Gilmo believes that crafting the *Alchemist's Stone* shall consume the seed and bring forth the death of the forest. It is too steep a price to pay just for the benefit of being the only alchemist to achieve such a deed. Gilmo knows that Dana seeks the seed too but he may not ever reveal its location (**Reaction** check).

Brighton Hill



3. XANDER'S FORGE

Black smoke and soot surround this squat building that houses the only forge in miles. Xander, a yellow-bearded dwarf works tirelessly to provide the surrounding region with all kinds of farm implements, horse-shoes, etc.

Xander used to forge armor decades ago and would welcome the patronage of an adventurer to craft more armor sets. He requires specialty materials, though.

4. THE EMPTY CAULDRON

The tavern is half empty with most patrons gazing eerily at newcomers. It is not a welcoming sight.

The characters can relax, secure lodging and food, and learn about recent events here. If an elf is present, they may be asked to abandon the town outright (**Reaction** check). The locals do not trust elves now, even if it is clear the person is not native to the forests. The tavern owner, Lara, welcomes the party as she knows that the more combatants are present, the easier it is to defend the town. She tells the characters that Townspeaker Yurmin is gathering a strike force in the Green Hall (area 9).

5. THE GLIMMERING STATUE

The sculpture is of remarkable craftsmanship. It is made of granite and has withstood little to no damage from exposure. A wizard knows that magic has been used to preserve the sculpture from damage (DC 15 INT check).

The *detect magic* spell reveals a magical presence under one of the stone flowers. However, removing the flower requires the use of masonry tools to destroy it. This action cannot be done without attracting the locals' ire.

6. A FARMER'S QUEST

Jon, a watermelon farmer, requires help to save his harvest. During an elvish raid last night, the elves spread a noxious powder that poisons his watermelon and threatens to ruin the season's work. Jon offers passing travelers a wage of 5 sp to wash the sprouting watermelons with an alchemical cleaner supplied by Gilmo (area 2).

This is one of the most valuable shipments as only the nobles buy such juicy fruits. If the characters help, they may collect a cart-worth of watermelons in a few weeks, when the harvest is done. They are a delicacy.

7. THE HUNTER'S LODGE

Logan, a forest hunter, lives here. He has had a few run-ins with elves in the forest but even the fey respect him for his craft. Logan refuses to fight the elves as he believes there must be a reason why they attack Brighton Hill. Alas, he is more interested in something else. He spotted a magnificent stallion in the hills east of town during an exploration trip with his friend Varlo Zola, a horse breeder from the capital. Logan wants to capture and tame the horse. In his mind, the horse carries with it the power of the mountain. Logan ignores that the Zola family wants to buy it for the countess herself.

The Hunt. When ready, the characters can join Logan (**soldier**) on a 2d4 day trip into the hills to track down and capture the wild horse. The journey is not without danger as splinter elvish parties may attack by surprise.

8. THE GRAIN MILL

The mill's machinery was sabotaged by an elf scout two weeks ago and the locals still have not managed to get it working again. The miller, Jacob, has not been able to repair the mill, even after Xander remade some of the broken parts. As it is now, production is stalled and might pose a danger of starvation in the coming winter.

► **Maintenance.** The characters can volunteer for this matter and help fix the mill. Each character that does this must study the machinery for 1 day and make a fixing attempt (DC 16 INT check). If at least two people succeed, the problem is found and solved. Later, the townspeaker rewards the characters 25 gp for this service.

9. THE GREEN HALL

Townspeaker Yurmin has gathered a small force of twelve **guards** and one **knight**. He does not know what the elves seek nor the existence of the magical seed. She welcomes the characters and informs the group that several elvish parties are approaching Brighton Hill, according to scouts in the forest. They may soon be attacked.

► **Research.** If the characters request access to the library, they may learn of how a magical stone was stolen from the elves a century ago. It is recorded in that time's townspeaker's journal (DC 16 WIS check).

THE SUDDEN RAID

THE ELVES STRIKE at the worst of times. Five groups of four **elves** attack Brighton Hill from different angles. The characters are free to suggest how to organize the town's defense and may need to run from one building to the next to fight the invaders. The elves flee when antagonized strongly or if most of them fall in combat (**Morale** check with disadvantage) but fight fiercely otherwise.

If forest elves are captured alive, they may be persuaded to reveal the reason for their attacks (**Reaction** check). On a result of 10+, the prisoner reveals that they seek the *Seed of Wisdom*, which was stolen from their village a century ago. It is easily found with *detect magic*. Alas, convincing the locals to defile the sculpture and remove the source of its glimmering is not an easy proposition. But unless a compromise is found, the forest elf tribes shall continue to attack Brighton Hill..



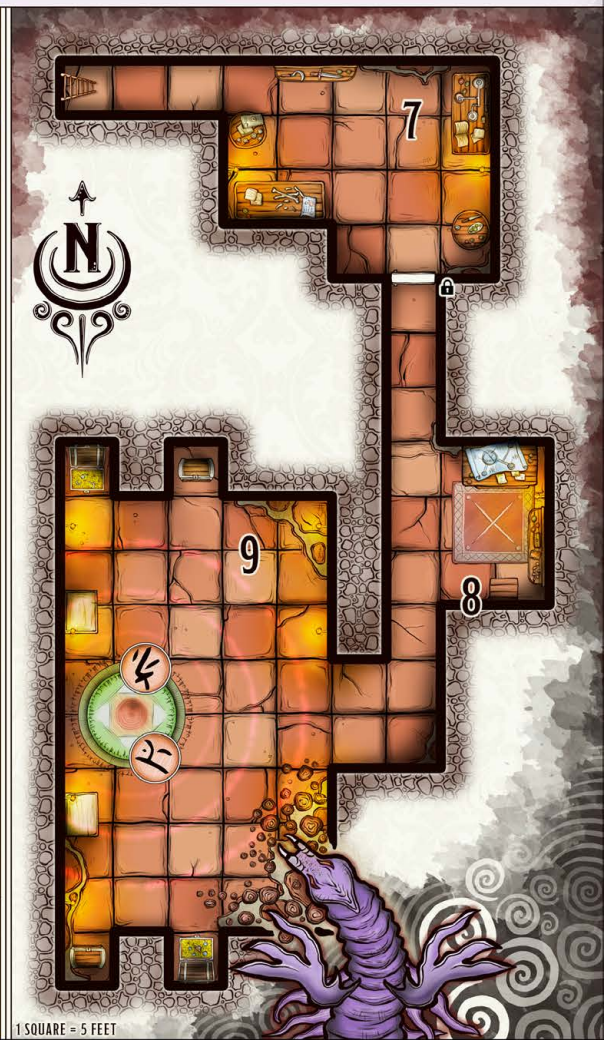
A Call from Below



Nefarious being crawled its way slowly from the depths of the earth and into the cellar of a church. This otherworldly entity was born from a timeless egg deep in the world's crust. It seeks only to feed and grow until one day it shall abandon this plane of existence and transcend into its next development stage. Its fanged maw pierces the stone basement wall. Its unavoidable gaze weakens men's hearts and controls the thoughts and actions of the weak-willed. Since it came, the clergy and churchgoers listen to its every call and heed its diabolic instructions. Visitors and believers have been fed to this abomination. Enough that authorities seek evidence and restitution. Brave adventurers are hired to visit the Church of the Three Lords, find the cause of the disappearances, and save the day.

1. The one-story church is made of stained granite blocks. It has shingle roofing and a single tall belfry. The doors stand ajar, guarded by two **acolytes** under the entity's spell. They can be persuaded to allow entrance if the adventurers claim to seek guidance and wisdom from the three lords.
2. The town's cemetery beside the church is dotted with countless gravestones and memorials. In the center, there is a large, gilded stone in the shape of a decorated shield. A hidden shaft into the embalming room (area 7) lies below. The gravestone has been pushed aside numerous times recently; there are dragging marks etched on the soil underneath it.
3. The church's nave contains three wooden pews, a stone altar, and the sacred statues of the three lords. This belief system is popular in the region. A congregation of twelve **peasants** sits in prayer. All of them gaze into the statues as if half asleep. The **priest** preaches of sanctity and obedience to the great worm; a talking point foreign to the lore about the three lords. The priest offers a goblet filled with the worm's saliva, drinking from it causes immediate submission to the being's commands. Refusal to drink it causes the congregation to rise from their seats and attack. The characters must drink, deal with all of them, or cowardly flee.

4. A young lad hides in the confession booth. He remains naturally unaffected by the worm's call. He knows something has gone terribly wrong with the congregation but lacks the courage to do something by himself. If given a weapon, the lad (**soldier**) is willing to fight his way out of this place.
5. The storage room contains a wooden coffer, a few crates and barrels, and a table. Spread on the table are 12 gp and two gilded holy symbols. The crates and barrels contain grain and flour. The coffer contains embroidered tunics, four holy books, and delicate statuettes of the three lords.
6. The priest's quarters have not been undisturbed in weeks as the worm's influence causes him to abandon all bodily needs. A lockbox in the wardrobe contains 8 gp and two *potions of healing*. On the desk, there is a letter addressed to the priest's sibling. It mentions that for the past few nights, dated to last month, he has heard the strangest of calls from below. He has decided to remove the gravestone that hides the shaft to the old embalming room and crypt; "*There must be something there,*" he wrote.
7. The shaft descends 50 feet into the embalming room. It is seldom used, only when an opulent family follows the old tradition of embalming the bodies to preserve them; instead of the more common cremation custom. The room contains embalming tools and bottled chemicals. There are two **acolyte** thralls in the room. They attack trespassers immediately.
8. The crypt's archive contains an accurate record of all people interred in the cemetery above and the columbarium (area 9). It becomes apparent that the last person to be embalmed was a duke who perished valiantly in battle. A lavish donation was made by his family. It is stored in area 9.
9. The walls of this chamber are dotted with countless funerary niches, each with a bronze plaque where the names of the dead are inscribed. Four wooden chests are placed in alcoves, they contain a hoard worth 1,200 gp. The abominate head of the extra-planar worm pierces through the southwest wall; the rest of its body obscured. This close to the monster, the worm attempts to exert mental control on any trespassers. The worm's fanged maw can inflict deadly wounds but the creature is mostly immobile, rendering it vulnerable to ranged combat strategies. The heroes must prove their courage and test their will if they wish to defeat it.



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

FLESH-EATING VEGGIES



By Elven Tower and Stained Karbon Maps

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL-3 ADVENTURE

A SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT SAVING A VILLAGE FROM CURSED PLANTS

TERROR IN YELLOWHIDE

You may not know us. But, if you don't help us, we will be doomed. In return, I can give you a Letter of Recommendation to meet Countess Eleanor Zarv.

Matthew Neves



Yellowhide is another one of the many locations in Zarveck County. This small farming settlement also suffers the consequences of the chaos caused by Countess Eleanor Zarv's inactivity and inability to maintain order. The kobolds' problem in the east, the wood elves in the north, and here, flesh-eating vegetables and monstrous crops.

YELLOWHIDE

THIS FARMING SETTLEMENT earns its name thanks to the many golden corn fields surrounding the farms. Pumpkins, zucchinis, carrots, and potatoes are other great examples of Yellowhide's specialties. The crops are transported all over the county, but mostly to the capital.

THE ACCIDENT

IT WAS ABOUT two weeks ago when the calamity occurred. Matthew Neves, the local wizard developed a magical fertilizer that makes vegetables and crops grow larger than normal. Everyone loved him for this. However, his apprentice Pavlov attempted to create an improved version of the same fertilizer. But the inexperienced mage failed. Giant, monstrous vegetables were created as a result. They eat livestock, attack travelers, and threaten to take over the entire town and its fields.

CURRENT SITUATION

THE MONSTER VEGGIES are a real danger. Not only do they attack innocents and kill farm animals. The vegetables themselves are part of the food supply that the county desperately needs to survive every winter. The veggie monsters are reckless. A solution must be found quickly.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 3 Adventure

► **Sorry, I Prefer Meat (5 XP).** The characters' arrival in town does not go unnoticed. They are rapidly summoned by Matthew Neves and his apprentice, Pavlov. They beg the heroes to help them undo this mess. They claim the veggies are led by a monstrous pumpkin. As a reward, they offer 30 gp and a Letter of Recommendation to meet Countess Eleanor Zarv in the capital.

RUMORS

d8	Details
1	Some of the villagers do not trust the capital or the countess. They claim the monster vegetables are a nasty strategy to drive them off their homes and farms.
2	A few farmers believe Matthew Neves betrayed them. They do not think their current situation was caused by an accident. They have no proof of their claims, though.
3	The characters hear some people say that a dozen guards were sent from the capital to help about a week ago. However, the farmers claim that the armored men fled when they witnessed what they were up against.
4	Most of the farmers in Yellowhide defend Matthew. They believe their vegetable problem was caused by elves. They suspect their ancient magic is responsible.
5	There were about ten guards stationed in the town. People have contradictory opinions regarding their whereabouts. Some say they perished defending the town. But the countess's detractors say they simply fled.
6	Word of a huge, sentient pumpkin frightens the farmers. It has large, glowing eyes, and an evil smile, they claim. Yellowhide locals shun its location in a northern field.
7	A local hunter has had a few encounters with the veggie monsters. He claims that the monsters are "humanoid". And that they are weaker without their heads.
8	The characters learn that a group of six valiant farmers grabbed forks, lit their torches, and went to the north fields to put an end to the vegetable monsters.

Town Features

► **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** each time a new area is visited. There is a 4-in-6 chance for an event.

► **Atmosphere.** Most people in town are scared and hiding in their homes. This means little work is getting done. If this situation continues indefinitely, the damage to the local economy might be too great, and the lack of food in winter may cause the deaths of many innocents.

► **Weather.** It is often sunny this time of the year, with weekly rains that help farmers with their harvests. Unfortunately, these seem to be the perfect weather conditions for the vegetable monsters to thrive and multiply.

► **State of the Town.** Even if the wizard has a few detractors, Matthew acts as the leader in town. This is because most of the guards, including the squad captain, left in a hurry after seeing the vegetable monsters. Most villagers beg the heroes for their help when they meet.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6 Details

- 1 Three **monster pumpkins** arrive looking for fresh flesh. They fight the nearest living creature until slain.
- 2 Two **elf** scouts come into town looking for clues about a certain seed of life. They do not want any trouble but they fight in self-defense if needed (**Reaction** check).
- 3 One **scarecorn monster** and two **monster pumpkins** attempt to break into a building. The characters hear people screaming and can approach to help on time.
- 4 Help from the capital finally arrives! A squad of one **knight** and three **soldiers** arrive in town. They cannot accompany the heroes to the north fields. They have strict orders to defend villagers and stay here. They aid the heroes if any random event occurs in the town.
- 5 It starts to rain! Everything and everyone outside is soaked in just a few seconds. Visibility is reduced in half.
- 6 An injured **boar** arrives in town. The poor animal was harmed by a monster vegetable. The pumpkin residue in its tusks is evidence that the animal was victorious in that confrontation. But now it is enraged and hurt. The animal can be calmed down (DC 15 WIS). Make this check with Advantage if the heroes offer food and heal the animal while trying to avoid physical harm to it.

1. SOUTH ROAD

The characters arrive in town. Before them, they see corn fields protected by a wooden fence. A young man with a scared face stands by the road, he greets them.

► **Pavlov.** The poor apprentice feels responsible for everything. He introduces himself, gives a rapid explanation of what happened, and begs the heroes to follow him and meet his professor, Matthew Neves.

2. HEALTHY CROPS

This parcel of land has not been affected by the monstrous agent. These vegetables are still healthy. Bright yellow corn grows on the hundreds of cobs.

Pavlov asks the heroes to hurry so they can speak with Matthew. The cornfield is so large that it is easier to traverse it in the middle than to surround it. The characters may spend a few minutes gathering corn. If they do, the vegetables gathered make up for three daily rations.

3. MATTHEW'S HOME

A bearded man in his forties mixes several ingredients on a wooden table. He looks so invested in what he is doing that he fails to notice when his apprentice and the group of heroes enter his humble home.

Pavlov calls Matthew and the man in spectacles turns around to greet the visitors. The local wizard gives his version of the facts and asks the heroes for their help (see **Adventure Hook**). Matthew says he must stay to protect the town but Pavlov (**apprentice**) can go.



► **Pavlov.** The young lad is tasked with helping the characters how he can. However, the apprentice feels so bad that it causes him to “act like a hero”. He shall make reckless, dangerous decisions during this journey.

4. SMALL PUMPKIN FIELD

This is Matthew’s pumpkin field. He performs experiments and tests new magical substances to spray the fields with in here. There are miniature pumpkins, veggies that change color depending on the time of the day, and pumpkins that taste like other vegetables. These fields were not sprayed with Pavlov’s botched fertilizer.

5. NORTH ROAD

Before the characters leave, Matthew explains that the main threat is the huge pumpkin abomination in the northern fields. Somehow, the monstrous plant found a way to corrupt other veggies around it and turn them into abhorrent monsters too. The characters must travel north and cut this dire problem from its roots.

Monster Pumpkin

A pumpkin with a twisted grimace and glowing eyes. Intertwined vines form its thin, long arms and legs.

AC: 11

HP: 12 LV 2

ATK: 2 Slam +3 (1d6) or 1 Grapple +3

MV: Near

S:+3 D:+1 C:+0 I:-2 W:+1 Ch:-2

.....

Mindless. Immune to Morale checks.

Vulnerability. Takes double damage from fire.

Grapple. One target is restrained (DC 13 STR to free themselves). The pumpkin can only attack grappled targets once. Automatic hit (1d6).

.....

Scarecorn monster

Twigs and clothes with humanoid shape. Corn hands and feet coordinated by a mute screaming face.

AC: 10

HP: 9 LV 1

ATK: 1 Slam +2 (1d6) or 1 Kernel Missile (far) +1 (1d4)

MV: Near

S:+1 D:+0 C:+0 I:-2 W:+1 Ch:-2

.....

Mindless. Immune to Morale checks.

Vulnerability. Takes double damage from fire.

.....

DEVELOPMENT

The characters help how they can in town and defeat any enemies found in the area. They are now aware of the kind of threat they face. They go north to find the pumpkin leader and put an end to the veggie uprising.

► **Pavlov.** The apprentice is eager to mend his mistakes and stays in front of the traveling group, leading the way.



THE CURSED CORN FIELD

I know my teacher Matthew wants to be kind and professional. He does not want me to feel bad. But I must atone for my mistake and do what I can.

Pavlov

It has been two weeks since Pavlov's experiment went wrong. It all started with a single 10-foot parcel of land. But the vegetable corruption has spread and contaminated more and more terrains until the entire north of Yellowhide became dangerous and hostile. No one has come to this area in days and the guards cannot contain the monster veggies from traveling south into the settled area.

The vegetable monsters obtain their strength from a mother root under the massive pumpkin. The characters may learn this when they explore their surroundings.

Area Features

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

► **Atmosphere.** The magical corruption spawns a heavy mist above the field. Sunlight does not illuminate this area as it should. The water behind the large trees north took a greenish tone, as if cursed or diseased.

► **Light.** The area is mostly dark. The central road is illuminated by randomly placed pumpkins with carved faces and glowing cores. They evoke an eerie aura.

► **Pumpkins.** The field is illuminated by glowing pumpkins (see above). The characters may grab them and use them as torches. However, there is a 2-in-6 chance that each pumpkin they grab is a **monster pumpkin**. They unearth themselves, leave a hole, and attack.

RANDOM EVENTS

d4 Details

- 1 The pumpkin colossus releases a large cloud of greenish smoke through its mouth. It covers the entirety of the area and all living creatures are affected. The smoke burns the lungs and everyone standing in the cornfield takes 1d8 damage (DC 12 CON for half damage).
- 2 Two **scarecorn monsters** in the field move and react to the presence of living creatures. The attack until slain.
- 3 Pavlov reacts to a plant moving and throws a bottle of *alchemist fire* at it. There are 3-in-6 chances that the field starts to catch fire. This may get out of hand (see **Fire**).
- 4 The six farmers that wanted to put an end to the monster veggies hide in the vicinities. They regain their **Morale** when they see the characters arrive. However, there is only one **soldier** among them. The rest are **peasants** with forks and hoes. But they shall try their best.

FIRE

The vegetable monsters are vulnerable to fire. However, fire is known for its unpredictable behavior and uncontrollable fury. Each time the characters use fire to defend themselves, there is a 3-in-6 chance that the field catches fire. The only way to control the fire is if everyone in the party spends the next round mitigating the flames in some way. Otherwise, the field catches fire and the expanding flames devour the entire field. This is an excellent way to remove the enemies from the area but the people of Yellowhide won't be happy to see their entire northern fields destroyed (see **Conclusion**).

1. ROAD

The characters can see the pumpkin colossus from here. The trunks from nearby trees protect it, like a great nest. The massive pumpkin's facial expression makes even the strongest warrior shiver. A field of corrupted corn cobs stands between the heroes and their target.

2. HOLLOW TREE

The base of this tree features an unnatural opening. The roots and bark moved and created a hole. Monster vegetables spawn from these breeding pits.

On a closer look, the tree resembles the huge, hollow, barked home where the pumpkin colossus grows (area 5). Two **monster pumpkins** and a **scarecorn monster** emerge from the tree's pit. They battle until slain.

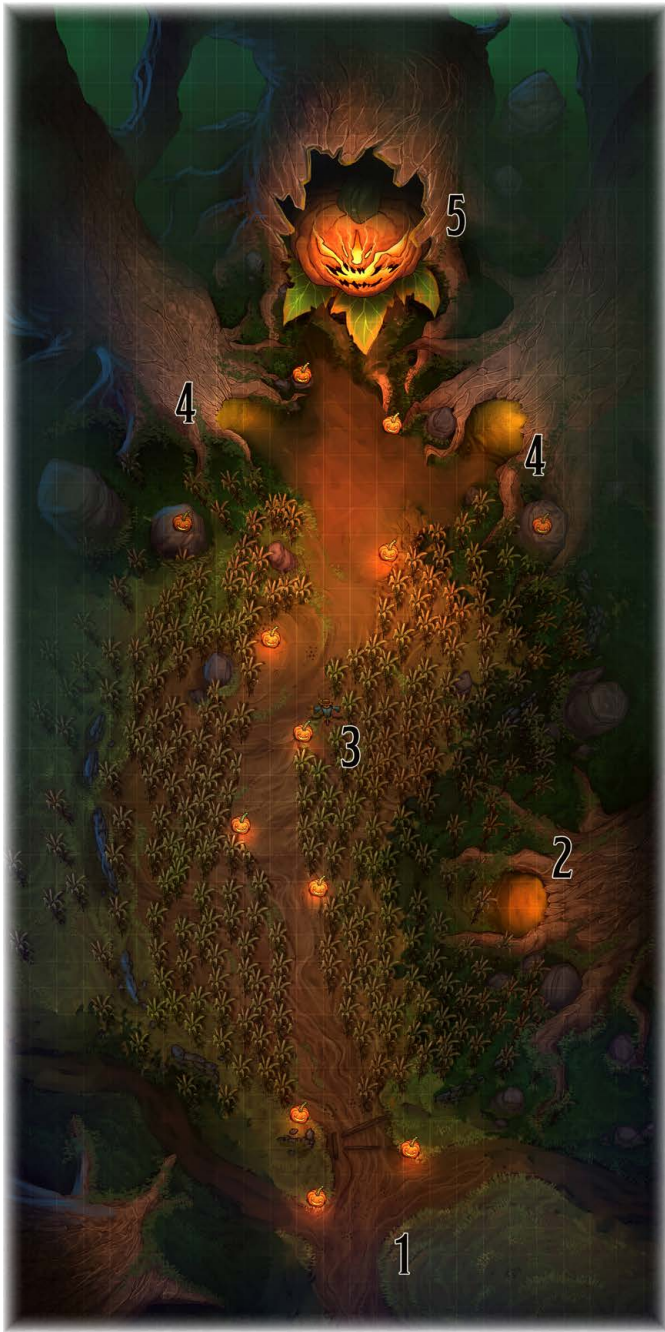
3. CORRUPTED CORN FIELD

The characters must traverse the field to get closer to the pumpkin colossus. Pumpkins with glimmering gazes light the way (see **Area Features**). The glowing vegetables turn to stare at the characters as they pass through.

4. HOLLOW TREES

These trees suffer the same fate as the others. The openings on their bases spawn more monsters. However, the entities that stumble forth are not vegetable-based.

► **Zombified People.** Some human victims were captured, put into cocoons, and turned into mindless plants. Six **zombies** come out of here and attack. Nothing remains of their humanity, they are dead plants now.



Pumpkin Colossus

A massive pumpkin with evil, gleaming eyes.

AC: 9

HP: 36 LV 4

ATK: 1 Pull (far) +5 and 2 Rend +5 (2d6)
or 1 Poison Gas

MV: None

S:+4 D:+0 C:+2 I:-1 W:+1 Ch:+1

.....
Pull. DC 12 STR. One target is pulled to near.

Poison Gas. Creatures in the area take 1d8.
(DC 12 CON check for half damage).



5. THE PUMPKIN COLOSSUS

To enter the pumpkin dungeon, the characters must defeat the **pumpkin colossus**. When the fight starts, two **scarecorn monsters** and one **monster pumpkin** appear to help the veggie leader. The characters must delve into the giant pumpkin and deal with its verdant core.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters reduce the pumpkin colossus to zero Hit Points. This rends it immobile and allows them to go in. Once inside, the characters shall explore the several areas of the pumpkin as if it were a dungeon. They must find their way and search for the core. Only by destroying it, will the monstrous plants stop spawning in the region.

THE PUMPKIN COLOSSUS

It does not matter how much you fight it and how many strategies you employ. Sooner or later, you will need to remove more weeds from your fields.

General Gardener Knowledge

The characters defeat the pumpkin colossus; it is incapacitated. They must explore the insides of the monstrous vegetable to find its core. Once inside, they witness the pumpkin's flesh regenerating quickly. The heroes have a limited amount of time to find and destroy the core and leave. Otherwise, if the characters are still inside when the pumpkin wakes up, they will be 'eaten' by it.

► **Fire.** The characters may use fire to harm the pumpkin as normal. However, it is too humid and next to a large body of water that it cannot be engulfed in flames.

Area Features

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

► **Light.** The only areas with enough light to see in the dark are areas 1, 7, 9, and 11. The green rocks glow thanks to the arcane energy from the core in area 11.

► **Sounds and Smells.** The smell of pumpkin permeates the entire dungeon. The sounds of a large beast breathing slowly accompany the characters' journey.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	Some farmers met their demise in the corn fields and were eaten by the pumpkin colossus. The characters stumble into four zombies . They fight until slain.
2	The characters may notice a "trip wire" made of green vines (DC 13 WIS). If they fail to see it, they trigger a trap. Large pumpkins fall on a random character's head. They take 1d8 damage (DC 13 CON check for half).
3	Greenish smoke travels through the entire dungeon. All living creatures inside the pumpkin are affected. The smoke burns the lungs and everyone inside takes 1d8 damage (DC 12 CON check for half damage).
4	Two scarecorn monsters find the living creatures inside the pumpkin dungeon. They battle intruders until slain. The characters may notice that a section on the ground looks softer and weaker (DC 12 WIS). If they fail to do so and step over it, they are sucked into a hole and soaked with viscous pumpkin flesh and juice. Their movement is reduced by half for 1 hour or until they wash themselves.
5	Two monster pumpkins track the living creatures inside the dungeon. They fight until slain. If combat lasts more than three rounds, a third monster pumpkin arrives.
6	

PUMPKIN DUNGEON

The characters may decide to climb the pumpkin from the outside and enter the dungeon from one of the eyes. This means they access the dungeon from areas 7 or 9.

1. MOUTH ENTRANCE

The pumpkin's twisted smile and pointy teeth form an opening. A soft green light comes from within.

The pumpkin colossus's mouth is large enough for the characters to go in without trouble. The inside of the massive vegetable is warmer and darker. However, this area is brightly illuminated by a strange glowing rock.

► **Glimmering Stone.** The underground core (area 11) is connected to all areas of the pumpkin via tendrils and vines (see map). They feed the vegetable's flesh with arcane energy. And this makes the green ores glow. The rock is destroyed and stops glowing if it takes damage.

2. PUMPKIN'S BASE

The characters must defeat three **monster pumpkins** to descend the stairs. The vegetables stand in their way to impede them from delving further down.

3. SECOND LEVEL LANDING

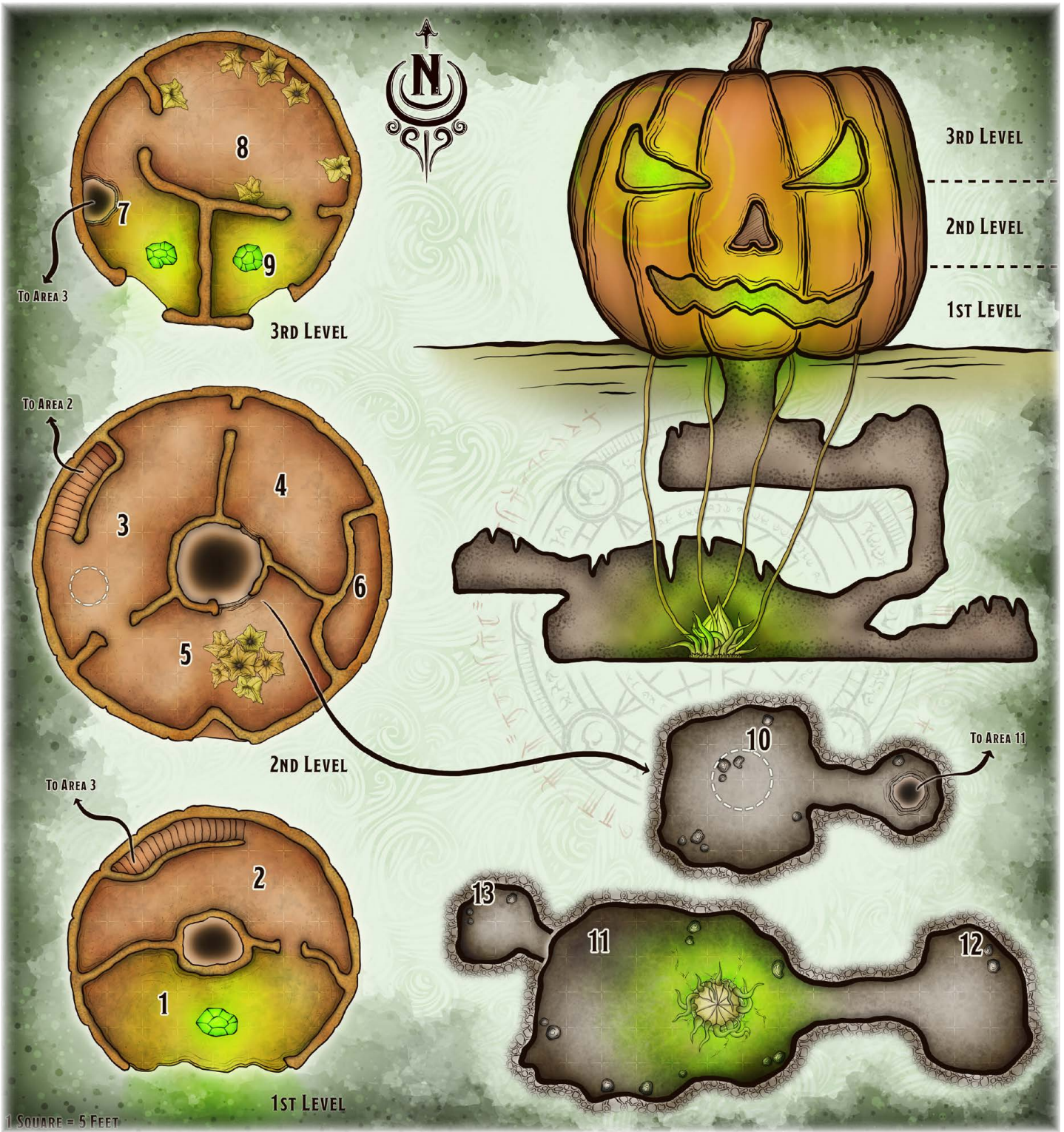
This area is bathed in darkness. If the heroes light a torch, they may notice the walls feature small glands that release faint clouds of green smoke (DC 13 WIS). The smoke is poisonous but these tiny doses are harmless.

► **Glands.** They are delicate and react to the touch. If the characters manipulate, touch, or mess with the glands, the entire chamber is covered in green smoke. Creatures in the area take 1d8 damage (DC 13 CON).

4. PUMPKIN'S FLESH

The walls of this area feature the innards of a living beast. The ceiling moves too, stretching in and out.

The characters may notice the pumpkin's walls regenerate (DC 11 WIS). They cannot stop this process due to the pumpkin's enormous size. Two **scarecorn monsters** climb up the central shaft and try to push intruders down the 40-foot orifice. Creatures must climb down carefully (DC 12 STR) or take 2d6 damage on a fall.



5. PUMPKIN'S LEAVES

There is a mound of leaves in the center of this chamber. The central wall bears an opening into the central shaft that descends to the dark depths.

There is a **monster pumpkin** and two **zombie** plant people hiding in the pile of leaves (DC 14 WIS check). The monsters ambush the heroes if they fail to spot them. Otherwise, the heroes earn a surprise round. The enemies try to shove the heroes through the central hole.

6. SECRET CHAMBER

This area is obstructed by pumpkin flesh. But there is a spot on the wall that looks weaker and softer (DC 12 WIS). The characters can hack their way in by cutting the pumpkin's wall. A small, long alcove is revealed.

► **Unexpected Friend.** A friendly **dryad** is trapped here. She does not remember how she ended up inside the pumpkin and she is too weak to help. If the heroes escort her outside, she blesses them (**luck token**). If they heal her, she might consider helping them (**Reaction**).

PUMPKIN'S REGENERATION

The characters explore the insides of the pumpkin dungeon. However, the giant vegetable slowly regains its strength. The heroes have 10 **crawling rounds** before the giant pumpkin comes alive again (with half its Hit Points). If this occurs, the pumpkin releases poison gas inside it to suffocate all creatures and turn them into zombies. While inside, the characters take 1d8 damage each round until they find a way to escape or get out, which can be done through the mouth and eyes.

This forces the heroes to defeat the pumpkin again so they can return inside and search for its core.

7. PUMPKIN'S RIGHT EYE

This section of the dungeon is brightly illuminated thanks to a glowing green rock. It is similar to the glimmering stone found in the mouth (area 1). The rock is destroyed and stops glowing if it takes damage. There is a shaft that descends to area 3 next to the west wall.

8. LARGE CHAMBER

This area is littered with a few scattered pumpkin leaves. Three **scarecorn monsters** crawl up from the withered leaves and attack intruders. They have been weakened by the pumpkin's recent defeat and have half Hit Points.

9. PUMPKIN'S LEFT EYE

The pumpkin's left eye features another glowing rock. It is similar to the glimmering stone in the (area 1). The rock is destroyed and stops glowing if it takes damage.

10. UNDERGROUND LANDING

The pumpkin's central shaft leads to this underground cavern. This small cave is dark and devoid of life. The eastern chamber features another hole. The heroes must descend 30 feet to find the pumpkin's core.

► **The Core.** A *detect magic* spell reveals a strong aura coming from below. The spell perceives the core's presence from anywhere within the dungeon. But the aura becomes stronger as the heroes descend further.

11. THE CORRUPTED CORE

A breathing fleshy bulb. Tendrils and vines writhing aimlessly. It pulses like a heart, and a green light is released with each beat. Akin to a laboratory apparatus, a dozen rambles ascend and connect this otherworldly organ with the huge pumpkin above.

The characters find the pumpkin's core; the consequence of Pavlov's botched fertilizer sprayed on the fields above. The shapeless, green mass of leaves, vegetable flesh, and pumpkin moves as if it breathed like a living being. The core is defenseless. If the characters take too long, Pavlov attacks the core in a fit of rage and destroys it.

12. CAVERN

This dark cavern is mostly empty; the walls are mold-ridden. If the characters search this area thoroughly, they disturb a **swarm of centipedes**. The aggressive insects flee if they are reduced to half their Hit Points.

► **Mold.** A character with chemical knowledge knows that this particular breed of mold is great for concocting medicinal remedies and healing salves (DC 13 INT). The heroes may spend a **crawling round** to grab six samples. They are worth 10 gp each to the right buyer.

13. HIDDEN CAVERN

The characters may notice this small alcove with a 10-foot elevation after they deal with the core (DC 12 WIS).

► **Treasure.** There are 23 gp scattered on the ground and a leather scabbard with a *+1 silver longsword*.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

HEROES OF YELLOWHIDE

The characters destroy the core. They burn it, cut it into pieces, or if Pavlov is present, he does not hesitate to throw a flask of alchemist fire to burn his mistake. All monster plants die and the fields heal. It may take some time and a lot of hard work but there will be enough food for next winter. The corruption is gone. Matthew Neves and the rest of the villagers in Yellowhide are glad to see their heroes return. They have a feast in their honor but everyone agrees to eat meat, bread, or fruits. They leave all pumpkin dishes and corn out of the menu.

VICTORY, BUT AT WHAT COST?

The characters succeed and remove all vegetable threats and destroy the core. But fire was their primary means to do so. They burned Yellowhide's northern fields to complete their mission and now the imminent lack of food is serious. The heroes fixed a problem but created another. Any solution they offer is an adventure for another day.



Dungeon Craft

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for a TPK

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SEPULCHER OF THE ZARV FAMILY

I've been wronged! A puppet impostor rules the capital, robbing me of my legacy. All who stand in my way shall know my ire and my endless hate!

Spirit of Eleanor Zarv

In the western reaches of Zarveck County, deep in the forest is a granite mausoleum that appears out of place. It was built by dwarves from a bygone age but the Zarv family repurposed it as a sepulcher. A place where the Zarv nobles find eternal rest. A place where the Zarvs often pilgrimage to honor their ancestor. Nine generations have been interred in the sepulcher. The last recorded burial took place three years ago when Count Ellen Zarv, Eleanor's father, passed away. This is common knowledge.

Alas, something strange is occurring. An undead spirit has arisen in the tomb. She wears a tattered dress, bears a deathly chest wound, and believes herself to be Eleanor Zarv. She wants to reach the capital but is tied to a funerary urn. Her only hope is to possess a mortal's body to do so. Fortunately for her, the townsfolk's dissatisfaction with the ruling class might well inspire a few adventurers to come here to ransack the lavish vault.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Past installments mention that Countess Eleanor Zarv, the despotic ruler of Zarveck County, is alive and well in Zarv Palace. However, very few people have seen her during her reign as she rarely gives an audience to outsiders. She is elusive and secretive. Conversely, the ghost in the sepulcher believes herself to be the real Eleanor Zarv, murdered and interred five years ago. Could she be a deluded, wretched, spirit? Could the nobles be hiding something of this importance? Is the countess in the capital an impostor? The GM is welcome to decide which is the truth as the characters learn of it.

Level 4 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with *light* spells; the rest are in darkness. Denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Necromancy Aura.** Healing spells are cast with disadvantage. Undead have advantage versus *turn undead*.

► **Smells and Sounds.** The stench of death pervades the dungeon. The cackling laughter and whimpers of abject undead can be heard in the distant darkness.

ADVENTURE HOOK

MANY SPEAK OF the legendary wealth buried therein. Even more claim it is time to rob the rich of their wealth, to even out the past three years of abuse. It takes the party two days to follow the rumors and reach the depths of the forest. They find the dwarvish mausoleum therein. In the center of the lonely room, there is a magic circle.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	Three zombies barge into the room. They wield large femur bones as clubs. The undead still wear tattered tunics and scraps of armor. They fight until slain.
2	Four adventurers (soldiers) arrive at the sepulcher. They are a rival party seeking to enrich themselves. A tenuous truce can be achieved with them (Reaction check).
3	A wight approaches. It once was a guard in Zarv Palace and remains unaffected by the nefarious aura in the dungeon. He is unsure about the party (Reaction check).
4	A scarab swarm boils out of cracks in the floors and walls. These are a breed of flesh-eating vermin.
5	A gelatinous cube contains 2d6 skeletons trying to escape. The ooze obstructs passage but destroying it allows the skeletons to escape its slimy grasp.
6	A screaming wind of spirits robs all unused luck tokens .

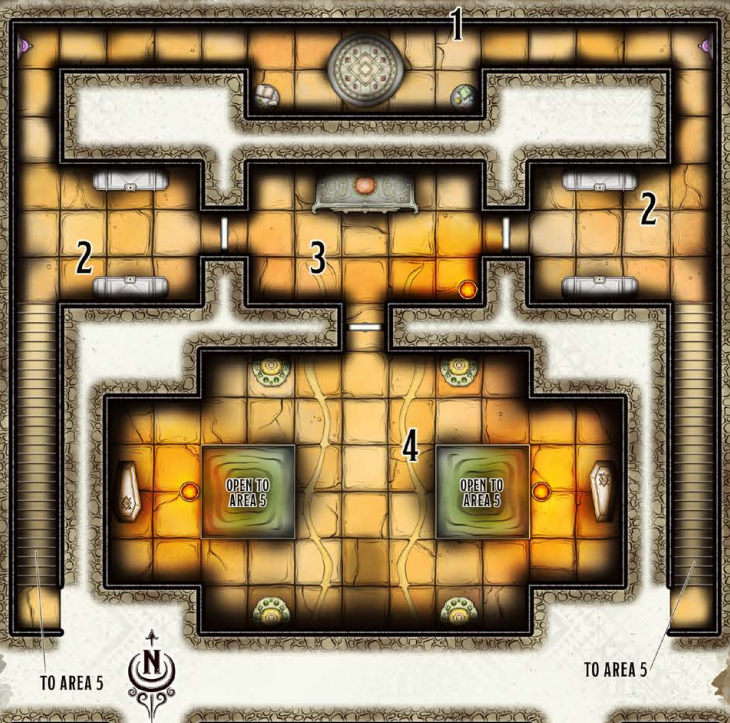
1. ENTRANCE HALL

Living creatures that stand on the mausoleum's magic circle are teleported 200 feet below, to this area. The entrance chamber contains two shelves with useless trinkets and nothing else. This is the highest level of a three-tier dungeon. The magic circle can be used to ascend after at least four hours have elapsed.

2. COFFERS OF ORBS

Each of the chambers labeled area 2 contains two limestone coffers. They contain an endless assortment of 3-inch-diameter glass orbs. A scholar recalls that such glass orbs were used by dwarves as a medium of exchange (DC 14 INT). Its current value, if any, is unknown.

► **The Spheres.** A character can collect enough glass orbs to fill two sacks. They can be used as a large variety of ball bearings but they take two inventory slots. They can be spread in a room to cause creatures to lose their footing and fall. Such use damages them beyond repair.



3. THE COUNT'S SARCOPHAGUS

The burial chamber is dominated by a large, lavish-decorated sarcophagus. The lid bears intricate mithral and silver inlays and embedded gems.

The county's previous ruler, Ellen Zarv is interred here. The remains are unaffected by the witch-like spirit that roams the lower level; the spirit of Eleanor Zarv.

► **Treasure (8 XP).** The sarcophagus lid weighs 900 pounds. Moving it to the magic circle (area 1) is a logistic riddle. Well preserved though, it is worth 800 gp.

4. AMBUSH OF THE DEATH

Four gilded urns on granite plinths and two sarcophagi line the decrepit walls of this chamber. The two openings in the floor lead into the darkness below.

Guardians. When a living creature reaches the center of the chamber, two **shadows** filter through the walls and two **ghasts** emerge from the sarcophagi to attack. They attempt to push the characters to the openings.

The Openings. A creature that falls into the openings falls into the acidic pools 30 feet below (area 5).

Treasure (3 XP). There are twenty-eight emeralds by the gilded urns (20 gp each). The gems are 5 gp each.

5. PRESBYTERY OF ACID

The walls of this chamber are decorated with intricate paintings of dwarf priests in prayer. The five clergymen are interred in standing enclosures.

► **Dwarf Remains.** Three derelict **skeletons** of dwarven priests emerge from the enclosures to attack. Being immune to the acid, they jump into the pools to attack.

► **Acid Pools.** The pools are 10 feet deep. Creatures that fall into the acidic fluid take 3d6 acid damage and acquire a gruesome burn scar (DC 14 CON check).

6. CURSED COLUMBARIUM

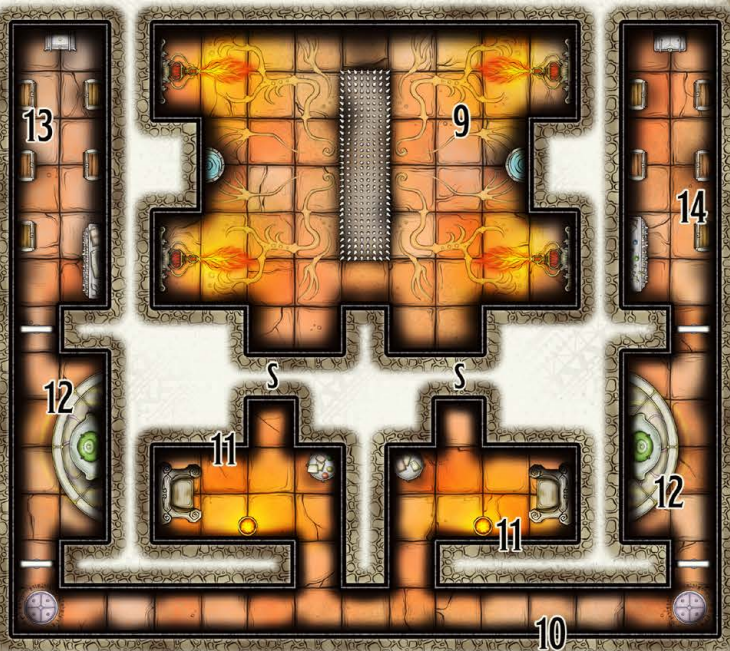
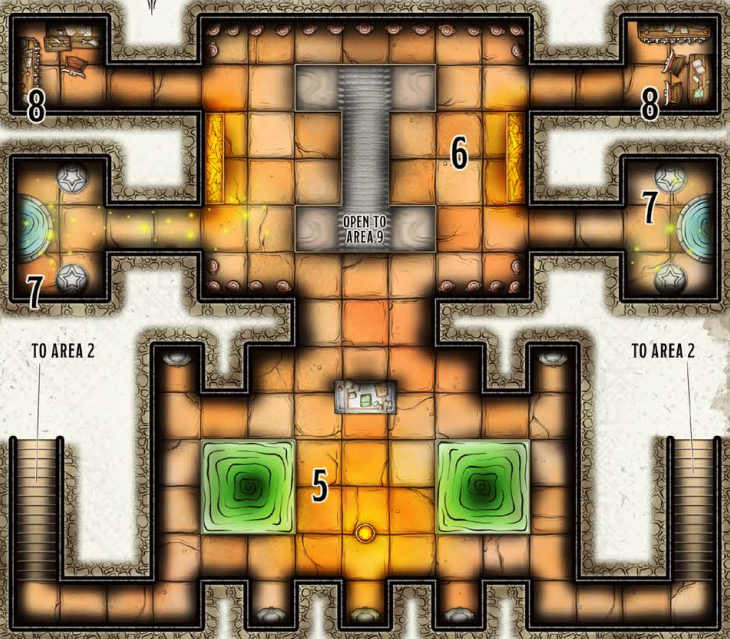
Countless clay urns hug the wall of this chamber, dark energy surrounds one of them. An irregularly shaped opening on the floor leads into darkness.

The Urn. The cursed vase houses the ashen remains of Eleanor Zarv. Destroying this urn after casting *protection from evil* reduces her Hit Points by one-third.

► **The Opening.** It leads to a spiked pit 30 feet below in area 9. The party requires climbing gear to reach it.

7. FONTS OF LIFE

Both rooms labeled area 7 contain statues of dwarf priests and a pond of healing water (heals 1d10 HP, once per day). A **will-o'-wisp** inhabits each chamber. They may emerge into area 6 and attack the characters there if they make too much noise descending to area 9.



8. THE ARCHIVES

Both areas labeled area 8 contain a wooden bookcase, a desk, and chairs. They contain a mixture of dwarvish documents and logs and historical recounts added after the Zarv family took over the underground sepulcher.

Evidence. There is no evidence or record of Eleanor Zarv being buried 5 years ago, as she claims in area 9. She thinks her murderers would not update the archive.

Treasure (2 XP). It takes three crawling rounds to round up all dwarvish documents. They are worth 20 gp. A mage's spellbook is also found among them.

9. THE BESPOKEN WRAITH

Sharp spikes rise in the chamber's center. They are surrounded by four fire-spitting clockwork devices.

The Spikes. The characters must use climbing gear to descend from area 6 (DC 12 STR). Failure by 5 or more means the character falls on the spikes (3d6 damage).

The Devices. The arcane devices eject a chemical that ignites when in contact with air. They run non-stop for hours before recharging briefly. Coming into the raging flame deals 2d6 damage to creatures (DC 14 DEX).

The Noble. The spirit of Eleanor Zarv (**wraith**) materializes over the spikes. Four **zombies** materialize by her side. She wears Zarv finery and claims to be the daughter of Ellen Zarv. If confronted, she berates the characters and claims she has been usurped by an impostor.

Possession. Eleanor's goal is to possess a living creature to abandon the sepulcher and move to the capital. She can attempt to take over a character's body only when they are dying (DC 16 CON check). On a success, she pretends her undead form is destroyed and tries to play the part of the almost-dead character. She hopes to fool the rest of the party long enough to escape.

Destruction. If the party destroys Eleanor's spirit, all other undead in the dungeon disappear. It is not clear whether she was just a misled ghost. The party may wish to inquire more when they return to Zarveck City.

Secret Doors. A secret passage connects areas 11 and area 9. They are revealed by pulling a brick (DC 13 WIS).

10. THE RUNIC CIRCLES

Elaborately carved runic circles are etched on each corner of this long hallway. If deciphered, they hold valuable information about the vaults. Characters who know Dwarvish can read the runes and find out there is a false vault meant to slaughter careless robbers (DC 12 INT).

11. THE DWARVISH THRONES

Each of the rooms labeled area 11 contains a limestone throne. They are crude, approximate replicas of the seats of the ancient dwarvish lords (DC 15 INT).

12. THE VASES OF DESIRE

Each of the chambers labeled area 12 contains a large limestone vase that contains a powerful spell. Etched on their surface reads: "*Speak your wish lone traveler and it shall be fulfilled to the letter.*" Once per year, a person may state a wish and the vase casts a *wish* spell. However, the magic vases always interpret the wish's phrasing in the worst, most convoluted way possible.

13. THE FALSE VAULT

The chests in this vault feature deadly traps. When a chest is opened, a random effect is triggered (1d6).

1. Firejet, 3d6 fire damage (DC 14 DEX).
2. Muting spell, cannot speak for 1 week (DC 14 INT).
3. Poison needle, target drops to 0 HP (DC 16 CON).
4. Loud, cackling laughter comes from the chest.
5. The target is randomly polymorphed (DC 14 CON).
6. Two **shadows** emerge from the chest.

14. THE ZARVISH VAULT

The vault contains six unlocked chests and a granite bookshelf; wealth accumulated by past Zarv rulers.

► **Treasure (10 XP).** The chests contain 250 gp, 3,600 sp, 2 *potions of healing*, 1 *potion of giant strength*, *night-cloak armor*, and a scroll of *create undead*.



THE ACCURSED CLOAK

By Elven Tower and Map Doctor

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL-3 ADVENTURE

A SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE WHERE AN ANCIENT UNDEAD-RIDDEN TOMB IS EXPLORED

RIVERMILL AND THE WELL

Business is truly ruined. Those kobolds hold the roads for ransom and demand outrageous tribute. If only the countess would turn our way and help the town...

Harold, Merchant

Disaster looms closer in Rivermill as a kobold warchief threatens to attack. Gulduk, the Fire Spirit, as he calls himself, commands a large force of kobolds and a few masterless brigands. After the townsfolk of Rivermill refused to comply with the ruinous commands, Gulduk ordered his forces to barricade all roads and force the town to acquiesce.

THE ACCURSED CLOAK

UNTIL RECENTLY, GULDUK was a simple kobold with nothing to set him apart from his brethren. It all changed when he explored the ragged hills and sparse forests north of Rivermill. He came across a magical well. Jumping into the glowing waters, he was transported to twisting tunnels connected to a burial human site. A human wizard from a bygone age was buried here centuries ago. Ransacking the place looking for treasure, Gulduk came across a gray, velvet cloak in the mage's coffin. In life, the mage imparted a sliver of his mind and soul onto the cloak, it became a quasi-sentient magic item. Donning it, Gulduk instantly gained some of the wizard's magical talents and knowledge. Gulduk unearthed the wizard's spellbook and promptly became a capable spellcaster.

Gulduk's newly-acquired magic abilities earned him the respect and loyalty of several kobold clans. The simple kobolds see in him a leader and a hope for greatness. A shadow of the might that kobolds once wielded in the past, as far as their legends and myths claim.

A PLEA FOR HELP

THE TOWNSFOLK IN Rivermill soon realized that opposing the kobold's unified clan was beyond the scope of what the few local guards could do. Gulduk sent a messenger demanding a harsh payment in gold coins and dry meat. Sustaining this tribute for as few as 3 months would ruin Rivermill and doom them to starve in the coming winter. The locals have tried to stall Gulduk by alluding to slow town councils and their inability to decide so promptly. Alas, Gulduk's patience is running thin. Kobold scouts now patrol the few roads in and out of Rivermill. The locals dare not travel west and hope that past missives to the countess are answered soon. They are at Gulduk's mercy unless someone swoops in to help.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 3 Adventure

HELPING IN TIME

The characters hear that many people have petitioned the countess to help Rivermill as kobold brigands threaten to attack. Indigo, from the Zarvish Front, hires the characters to travel to Rivermill and fix the situation. He hopes to earn the local's loyalty this way (40 gp, 4 XP).

JUST HERE FOR BUSINESS

The characters were hired by Balder, in Zarveck City to escort a caravan to Rivermill and back. His associate, Harold claims that the return trip will not be allowed by the kobolds. The characters must deal with them (0 XP).

RUMORS

d6	Details
1	Hunters have spotted kobolds up north by the strange wells the locals fear. A local legend claims that whoever gazes upon their waters may see how they shall die.
2	Rivermill's watchtower and mill was a military outpost before. But rumor has it that it was there long before the Zarv family arrived. Many think it was a wizard's tower.
3	Two guards who survived a recent skirmish saw Gulduk in the flesh. They say the kobold warchief wears a gray, velvet cloak that flaps and moves as if it were alive.
4	Archaeologists came to Rivermill a decade ago looking for what they claimed was the tomb of an ancient mage. They failed to find the crypt and left unsatisfied.
5	Many think the countess cares not for Rivermill. The locals expect that help from the capital may never come.
6	An envoy of the Zarvish Front came to Rivermill months ago seeking allies. The locals refused to join the front, expecting that the countess would improve her reign.

Forest Features

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Tracks.** Careful rangers notice the footprints and dropped scales of kobolds (DC 13 WIS). The tracks move toward the large well and disappear there.

► **Arcane Auras.** The spell *detect magic* reveals a magical aura surrounding each well. This is ancient elemental magic that cannot be dispelled by mortal means.

RANDOM EVENTS

d4 Details

- 1 Four **beastmen** approach looking to hunt kobolds to eat. They hesitate before the characters (**Reaction** check).
- 2 A patrol of six **kobolds** emerges from the magical well. If they see the characters (DC 13 DEX to hide), the kobolds draw their spears and attack with zealous rage.
- 3 A **boar** hunts the kobolds as they slayed its piglets. It is unsure about the characters (**Reaction** check).
- 4 Astral bodies align and the magic well reacts to this event. The wells glimmer and nearby vegetation flourishes and grows. A years-worth of growth promptly occurs.

THE MAGICAL GATES

CRAFTED BY THE wizard who created Gulduk's cloak, the magic wells used to serve a star-gazing purpose that is lost to time. They react and glimmer to astral events that remain elusive to the common eye. The largest well can be used to travel to the wizard's tomb. Normally, this can only occur during the summer solstice; when Gulduk found the tomb by accident. But the kobold leader has now used magic to keep the arcane gate open.

1. REACHING THE WELLS

The region north of Rivermill is formed of ragged hills, rocky outcroppings, and sparsely forested areas. It is a 1-hour walk from the village to the wells. The locals know the place but it is shunned to them as they believe that evil spirits haunt the area. No one dares approach it.

2. THE LESSER WELLS

Three 10-foot-wide, stone-brick wells erupt from the otherwise untouched soil. The bricks are engraved with eroded, washed-out runes. The milky-white water appears to glow faintly and react to hidden currents.

► **Magic.** A spellcaster may spend 1 **crawling round** studying the wells to determine that the underlying spell that powers them has degraded with time. Alas, their true purpose and function remain a mystery.

► **The Runes.** A character that knows Draconic identifies some of the less-eroded runes. They speak of stars, gates, and planes. Each of the lesser wells is aligned with an outer plane of existence (DC 12 INT).

3. KOBOLD GUARDS

A patrol of ten **kobolds** and two human **thugs** hangs by a fallen tree trunk next to the main well. They become aware of the characters if they approach noisily or with uncovered light sources. Otherwise, the characters may attempt to surprise the guards (DC 13 DEX check). The thugs yield and offer their allegiance to the characters if the battle turns south, they care not for the kobolds.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Collectively, the enemies carry 18 gp, 56 sp, a *potion of healing*, and a longsword.



4. THE MAIN WELL

Effulgent stars and untold world are reflected in the pearl-white surface of the well's water. The fluid has an elusive quality that confuses eyes and minds.

Contrary to the other smaller wells, this is an active teleportation gate. It was held open by Gulduk's magic after he retrieved the wizard's spellbook, many weeks ago.

► **The Well.** A spellcaster that inspects the construction for 1 **crawling round** determines that it is a teleportation device. If they speak Draconic, they surmise after reading the runes that it was meant to serve as a filter that would only allow certain individuals through with the appropriate key. As it is now, the gate is held open and anyone can pass; as even the kobolds have used it recently.

► **The Gate.** Jumping into the milky water causes living creatures to disappear in the gleaming waves and reappear in a dark cavern (area 1 of the following chapter). Traveling thus has a strong effect. First-time travelers experience nausea and intense vomits (DC 14 CON).

THE WIZARD'S TOMB

How dare you approach like this? We are the heirs of dragon blood and fire. Accept your place, surrender, and swear a life-long allegiance to me, Gulduk!

Gulduk, the Fire Spirit

The wizard's tomb is located 300 feet under the magic well on the surface. What once was the secret lair of a mage has been partly reclaimed by nature after the protective spells degraded or failed. Half the underground structure has succumbed to the weight of the world above. Hollow, meandering caverns are what is left of most of the compound. Now, the tomb has become the lair of dozens of kobolds who place their blind loyalty on Gulduk, whom they have grown to love and admire. Gulduk, under the cloak's advice or influence, refuses to leave this place. Inadvertently, he seeks the late wizard's research goals.

Area Features

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Torches on the walls provide dim light in most areas. Kobolds are **dark-adapted** but Gulduk is obsessed with fire and insists on having flames everywhere.

► **Smells.** The acrid, pungent stench of kobold musk pervades the dungeon. It is strongest near areas 5 and 6. The caves and tunnels also have a smell of dampness.

RANDOM EVENTS

d4 Details

- | d4 | Details |
|----|--|
| 1 | A cave creeper arrives from the south caverns looking for an easy meal. It has killed a few kobolds already. |
| 2 | Twenty kobolds approach in a festive way, playing music and dancing. 2d4 of them are combatants. They fight the characters if they spot them; the rest flee to area 5. |
| 3 | A tremor shakes the ground and sections of the ceiling collapse, dropping loose debris. Two random creatures are hit by debris. 2d6 damage (DC 13 DEX for half). |
| 4 | Sir Damien Lurey, a knight from Zarveck City has come to rid the townsfolk of the kobold threat. If the characters allow it, he tags along to help them in their quest. |

1. TELEPORTATION SITE

A teleportation circle lies hidden by loose soil and gravel. It is 300 feet below the main well on the surface.

► **Activation.** Living creatures that return to this area 1 hour after their arrival feel a sudden sense of floating. If they let themselves be carried by it, they are teleported back to the well above. Otherwise, they may continue south to explore the network of uncharted tunnels.

2. STORAGE CHAMBER

The cavern contains wooden coffers, crates, and barrels that the kobolds stole from merchant caravans in the past week since they blocked the roads. At least half of the merchandise belongs to Harold and his associate in the capital, Balder (see **Adventure Hooks**). The rest of it belongs to small merchants from Rivermill and beyond.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** One chest contains two flasks of oil, a hooded lantern, rope (50 ft.), and ten rations. The merchants pay 20 gp for the return of their stolen wares.

3. AMBUSH IN THE CAVERN

This chamber is so large and its ceiling so high that even with the wall torches, some spots remain untouched by light. They are bathed in darkness.

► **Footprints.** Rangers notice that footprints move in and out of the dark spots (DC 12 WIS). Such realization gives advantage on rolls to avoid being ambushed.

► **Ambush.** Eight **kobolds** stand hidden in the shadows. They attack when the party splits or leaves. They first throw nets to immobilize trespassers. Then, they use the wall torches to set alight pieces of sun-dried kobold excrement (Attack +2, 1d8 fire damage).

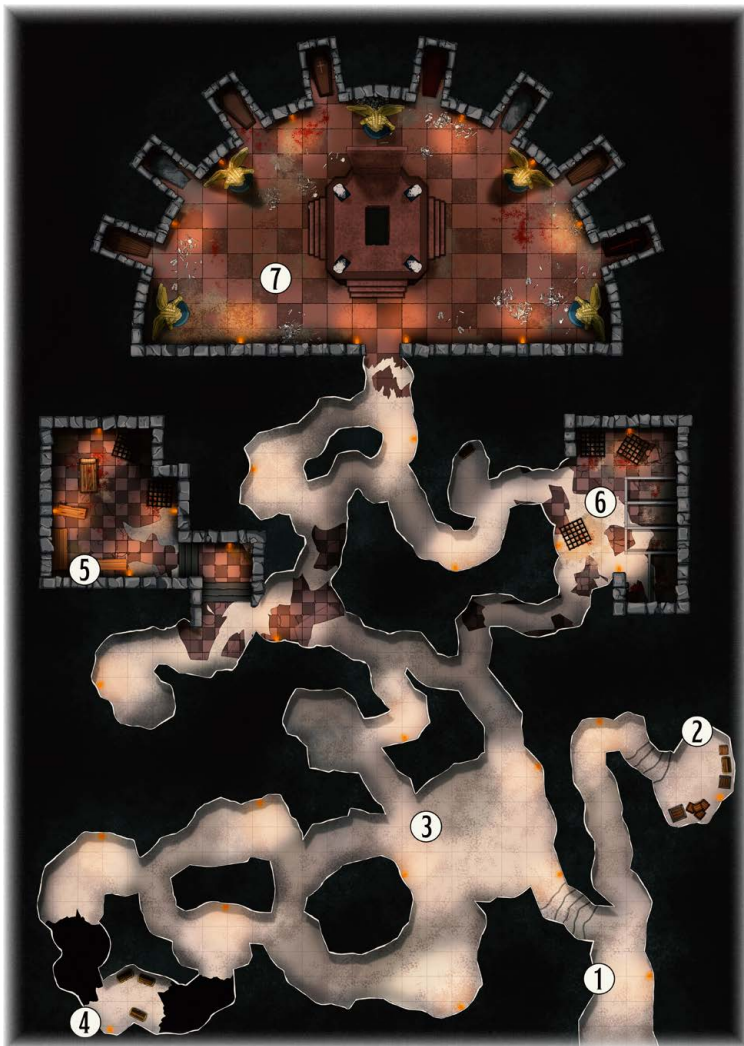
4. THE CLAN'S TREASURE

80-foot-deep chasms stand at either end of this place. Only the fittest may be able to jump across the grim opening (DC 14 STR). Failure means the character hurts their hand while grabbing the edge (1d6 damage). Failure by 5 or more means they fall to their inevitable death.

5. KOBOLD WARRENS

What was once a prison and laboratory has become a stench-filled warren of dozens of kobolds of all ages. They gígggle, eat, chatter, and sleep all around.

Caring not for comfort, the kobolds live in squalor and overpopulation. Fifty kobolds are here at any given time as they move about frequently. Alas, most of them are not combatants and refuse to engage in combat. 4d4 **kobolds** gather whatever is on hand as a weapon and step up to defend the colony if they are threatened. If possible, the brave warriors do their best to allow the matrons, the children, and the elders to flee toward the south caverns.



Gulduk, the Fire Spirit

A scaly dog-lizard painted with colorful stripes and wearing an oversized velvet cloak that flaps about.

AC: 14 (leather)

HP: 19 LV 4

ATK: 1 Club +1 (1d4) and 1 spell +3

MV: Near (Walk)

S: -2 D: +3 C: +0 I: -1 W: +1 Ch: +3

.....

Dodge. 2/day an attack that would hit misses.

Burning Hands (CHA Spell). DC 11. Near range, multiple targets. 1d6 damage.

Fire Jet (CHA Spell). DC 12. Far, one target. 2d6 damage.

Dispel Magic (CHA Spell). DC 13. Near. End one spell affecting a target within near.

.....

6. HATCHING CHAMBER

The musk of kobolds is strongest here. Piles of red, pale eggs are arranged against the walls, most of them next to the wall torches of raging braziers.

The hatching chamber is the heart of the kobold colony. Dozens of eggs in different states of development are here. Eight kobold matrons and four koboldlings care for the eggs and move them closer and farther from the fires following their breeding and caring instincts.

► **Massacre.** If threatened, the matrons do their best to plead for their lives and the safety of the eggs. If possible, they try to call the other kobolds in area 5 for help. Only as a last resort, four **kobold** matrons grab pokers and fight while the rest grab as many eggs as possible and make a run toward the south caverns.

► **Hatching Eggs.** If the characters keep an egg, they may properly care for it to hatch it (DC 15 INT check). When the koboldling emerges, it bonds with the first living creature it sees, usually a kobold matron but any creature can do this. Koboldlings are largely independent except for food-securing. They are not obedient and cannot be trained to do tricks. Despite that, they are smart.



7. THE HAGGARD CRYPT

Five horned, winged, gilded effigies hug the walls of a semicircular chamber. They surround a 5-foot-tall dais with an open granite sarcophagus. The contents of eight coffins are grimly scattered across the floor.

The ancient wizard was interred here along with his eight loyal apprentices. The statues that overlook the burial chamber are of a fire demon named Orgundt (DC 16 INT check). This entity facilitated the fire-wielding spells that the wizard, and now Gulduk, have access to.

► **Runes and Bones.** The identities of the wizard and his apprentices have been obscured. Every mention of them in runes and plaques in the chamber has been scribbled over and erased. The bones bear the marks of necromancy (*detect magic*) but they are inert now.

► **The Sarcophagus.** Gulduk destroyed the contents of it with fire spells; only ashes remain in the enclosure.

► **The Kobolds.** Gulduk, the Fire Spirit, and a group of six kobolds and two thugs await the characters here. They are overconfident from Gulduk's presence. However, the thugs yield and attempt to flee at the first sight of defeat. The kobolds panic if Gulduk is defeated too. Before the battle, though, Gulduk speaks in broken Common and offers the characters to swear loyalty to him and become his envoys to the capital. Just like with Rivermill, the naive kobold leader wishes to extort Zarveck City and make the countess pay a hefty tribute to him.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** Gulduk carries a pouch with 26 gp, the wizard's spellbook (the author's name erased), and the semi-sentient magic item, the *accursed cloak*.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

KOBOLDS ON THE RUN

The defeat of Gulduk, the Fire Spirit in combat deals a devastating blow to the confidence and morale of the rest of the unified kobold clan. They clamor and cry for forgiveness and mercy. Some kobolds burrow and hide in narrow holes while others gather as many eggs as possible from the hatching chamber and make a run for the south caves. The clans are divided once more.

THE ACCURSED CLOAK

The cloak floats out from under Gulduk's defeated body and floats in the air. A wizard can do it. It functions like a *hat of intellect* with the added property that it contains a sliver of the wizard's sentience. It communicates through feelings and may influence its user to act toward certain elusive goals (contested +2 CHA check).

THE TOWNSFOLK'S GRATITUDE

Upon returning to Rivermill, the locals are grateful for the great service. Harold, the merchant, invites the party to his farmstead home for a homemade feast. If the party was hired by the Zarvish Front, Indigo is in town when they return. The self-proclaimed liberator has earned the trust and loyalty of many of the locals, increasing his influence in the region. Indigo tells the characters of a fabled blade that is said to be hidden in a dungeon. It is located in the southwest fold of the county. Perhaps the party would be inclined to acquire it for the Zarvish Front. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...



TRIALS OF THE KNIGHTLY TENETS

Only one of pure heart and noble values may wield my sword. You shall have a moment to demonstrate your chivalry. May the heaven bless your valiant souls.

Sir Gawain



Centuries ago, when the Zarv family first conquered the land and established Zarveck County. There was a valiant knight who fought without fear in gruesome battles to retake the region from brigands and warchiefs. Sir Gawain was an exemplary knight who lived by the core tenets of chivalry: loyalty, valor, honesty, and selflessness.

Sir Gawain lived to see the fruits of his valiant efforts as Zarveck City was founded and built upon. He perished of old age and was interred in a knightly mausoleum in the southwest fold of the county. The mausoleum is located in a region with rolling hills, irregular terrain, and preternatural mists. Decades after Sir Gawain's interment, pilgrims were unable to find the crypt. Legends claim it was swallowed by the mists that often cover the county's territory. During his life, Sir Gawain wielded a sword that grew with him and became more powerful as he carried out his knightly deeds. Sir Gawain's Blade has become a sought-after relic that many wish to retrieve. The legend says this weapon cuts through the darkness and admonishes the virulent abominations spawned from evil magic. But one must be worthy enough to wield it.

ADVENTURE HOOK

EXPLORERS AND HUNTERS report that an eerie entrance has appeared in the hills west of Yellowhide. It can be reached only at dawn, the entrance is surrounded by dense clouds of mist. None of the witnesses dared cross the threshold. They were invaded by a feeling of longing and despair, which made them desist. Characters looking for the legendary weapon and treasure have an incentive to come. They may be the first to arrive.

Level 2 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with *light* spells; the rest are in darkness. Denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Aura of Truth.** A permanent *zone of truth* spell pervades the dungeon (DC 13 WIS). Creatures are immune to the aura for 1 hour on a successful check.

► **Smells.** The fragrance of jasmine and roses covers the dungeon. It appears to come from everything.

RANDOM EVENTS

d4 Details

- 1 Four **faeries** are summoned into the room. They consider the presence of trespassers an insult to Sir Gawain's heritage. They fight and vanish upon reaching 0 HP.
- 2 Two adventurers failed the tests a week ago and became **ghasts**. The undead monsters approach groaning. The ghost of Sir Gawain appears. He is conversational and willing to share some of the history of the county and his knightly deeds. The characters may each ask one question of his life and deeds. He answers truthfully.
- 3 A **scarab swarm** boils out of cracks in the floors and walls. These are a breed of flesh-eating vermin.

1. REACHING THE MISTY HILLS

It takes the characters 2 days to reach these hills from Zarveck City. Hours before reaching the dungeon gate, the hills are bathed in dense mist that obscures visibility and hides the landscape. It is denser than normal.

An otherworldly gate parts open from a wall of seemingly-unassailable mist that flows and unfurls. A set of stairs descends into the darkness beyond this gate.

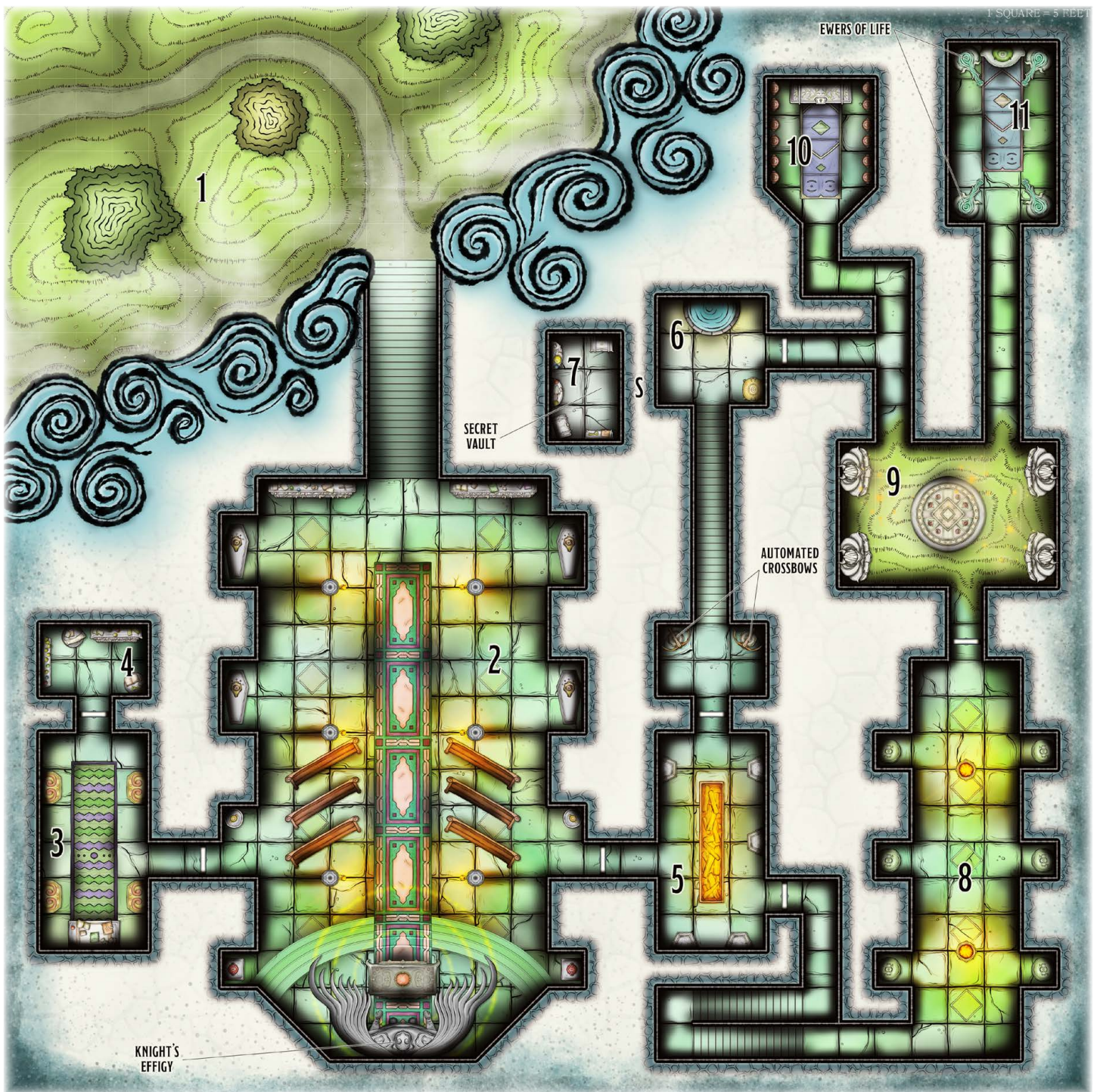
The stair walls are painted with images of brave knights facing adversity and conquering the tests of evil.

2. SIR GAWAIN'S TOMB

The stairs open to a grandiose, lavish burial chamber. The wings of a stone angel by the far wall cradle a large coffin marked with silver inlays and gems.

Except for two lonesome adventurers (see **Random Event 2**), the characters are the first to visit Sir Gawain's tomb. The translucent outline of Sir Gawain's ghost is visible, standing by his lavish sarcophagus at the end of the church-like chamber. The knight's ghost welcomes the characters and bows respectfully. Sir Gawain says it is time for him to bequeath his heirloom blade to a worthy warrior. But that person must first demonstrate worthiness in the four tenets: loyalty, valor, honesty, and selflessness. The characters must explore the dungeon to prove themselves thus. When the three trials from areas 6, 8, and 11 are concluded, Sir Gawain shall conduct the Trial of Valor here, once the challengers return.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The coffin contains 45 gp, 200 sp, a *potion of healing*, and Sir Gawain's +2 longsword.



3. TOMB OF SCRIBES

Four standing sarcophagi with gilded lids await in the darkness. They are marked with the scribe's rune.

Four laborers who lent their scribing services to Sir Gawain's order were honored with a burial in this chamber.

► **Scrolls.** An assortment of documents lies strewn on the table. Most have rotted and decayed. One still reads a set of poetry dedicated to Sir Gawain's deeds. It would make for a great gift for Countess Eleanor Zarv.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** Within a lacquered box, *Brak's cube of perfection* is hidden. It has been here for centuries.

4. THE OLD ARCHIVE

The contents of this chamber are clean and resistant to the passage of time. Even ink appears fresh in some of the books, tomes, and magic scrolls.

► **Documents.** The archive contains fantastic recounts of knightly deeds and poetry exalting Sir Gawain's deeds. The documents detail how each of them would constantly prove their worth in the four tenets of their order.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Hidden in the shelves of poems are five priest spell scrolls (DC 13 WIS). They contain the spells *augury*, *bless*, *light*, *smite*, and *cleansing weapon*.

5. LONESOME PURGATORY

Several ghostly apparitions stand by the fire. They whisper and complain of their mistakes in life...

▶ **Doomed Souls.** The ghosts of knights who failed to uphold the core tenets of the order lament their failures here. They are projections from another plane and cannot be interacted with (DC 11 INT check). Casting *protection from evil* brings momentary respite to these souls and awards 1 **luck token** to each character.

▶ **Crossbows Trap.** The north door is connected to a clockwork sensor that triggers the two crossbows in the next room when the door opens (DC 13 WIS to find). Two bolts are shot at the threshold when the door is opened, the creature there takes 2d6 damage (DC 12 DEX).

6. THE FONT AND THE VAULT

A bronze plaque over the clear font reads: “*Here lie the earthly treasures of valiant knights. They are left here to honor their deaths and valor.*” In addition, the secret passage to area 7 stands ajar, as if inviting explorers.

▶ **Trial of Honesty.** Characters who shamelessly plunder the treasure from the vase or enter area 7, even just to snoop around, fail the Trial of Honesty. A pure knight would respect the dead and their treasures.

▶ **Treasure (3 XP).** The pewter vase in the room contains 280 sp and a set of +1 *chainmail armor*.

7. THE VAULT

The chamber contains two stone coffers, a plinth, and small, worthless trinkets arranged on shelves.

▶ **Treasure (4 XP).** The coffers contain 45 gp, 140 sp, a scroll of *lay to rest*, and a scroll of *prophecy*.

8. SOULS IN PAIN

Countless souls of innocents gather by the plinths in this chamber. They are engraved with an ancient rune that reads ‘*Hope*’. They clamor and beg for mercy and rest.

▶ **Trial of Selflessness.** One or more characters can bring solace and rest to these souls and send them to the afterlife by meditating for 1 **crawling round** and foregoing 2d6 years of their lifetime. A pure knight would always do this to lessen the suffering of the commonfolk; thus talking the heavy burden on their shoulders.

9. CIRCLE OF FAERIES

Four armor-clad statues surround a gleaming circle of runes. Tiny wisps of light float about the chamber.

The Circle. Characters who speak Sylvan read of an ancient covenant between Sir Gawain’s knights and the faeries. Both groups shared the same values and often worked together. The faeries often come to visit the knight’s tomb and to help Sir Gawain’s ghost in the trials.

10. A TRAP FOR THIEVES

A plaque over the coffer reads: “*Begone filthy thief. Your hands are not meant to touch this treasure.*”

▶ **Explosive Runes.** Opening the chest causes an explosion that deals 3d6 damage within 15 ft. (DC 14 DEX).

11. EWERS OF LIFE

Four ewers pour clear water on the stone tiles. The fluid disappears as soon as it reaches the ground.

▶ **Trial of Loyalty.** Sir Gawain’s ghost makes an incredible offer to each person. He offers to grant them whatever it is they want the most. But in exchange, they must renounce their religion, goal, or whatever it is that drives them. They must betray their ideals to earn this gift. Accepting means failing the Trial of Loyalty. A knight would never renounce the cause they swore to uphold.

THE FINAL TRIAL

IF AT LEAST one person has passed all three trials, Sir Gawain (**knight**) challenges the party to a fight to prove their valor in area 2. Four **faeries** fight alongside him. After his defeat, Sir Gawain gifts his blade to whoever passed all tests. If no one is worthy, Sir Gawain grimly orders the party to leave. Should they challenge the knight anyway, Sir Gawain does not back down and fights fiercely. The characters may wrongfully steal Sir Gawain’s blade after this. Using the blade in this manner earns them the eternal enmity of Sir Gawain’s ghost.



THE ZARVS SECRET ARCHIVE

I'm not asking you to believe me, I'm asking you to do what's right! Eleanor Zarv is destroying the county. True blood is the least of the problems here.

Indigo Zarv



Life is hard in the Land of Zircons. Countess Eleanor Zarv has not made it easy for her people to adapt to her new rules and laws. The particular one that forbids mercenary activity within the region has affected many lives. Not only do adventurers lack work. At the same time, villagers and farmers cannot solve the problems for which they usually hire external help. Giant rats in a cellar often represent easy gold for a would-be hero, but such a thing is too dangerous for the commonfolk to solve.

UNREST IN THE CAPITAL

ZARVECK CITY HAS been the home of chaos and uncertainty during the past few months. People are jumpy and the streets are dangerous. To top it all, loud rumors about the legitimacy of the capital's current ruler spread fast. More and more people suspect Eleanor Zarv took the ruling position by force, or by usurping the true successor's right. Thus, an opposition was born.

THE ZARVISH FRONT

This rebel force claims that their leader, a man named Indigo, is the rightful Zarv successor. Their objective is to find physical proof that Eleanor Zarv obtained her position through lies and mass deceit. So far, their movement has only gained them more followers. But they still have no real proof of their claims. One thing is certain: Zarveck County would be better off with a different kind of leader. And Eleanor Zarv is not it.

ADVENTURE HOOK

THE CHARACTERS FIND themselves in the capital. They either side with the Zarvish Front or fight against them.

► **Capital's Agents.** The characters work for the county. Their mission is to intercept the Zarvish Front's attempt to rob and pilfer one of the city's secret lairs. All books, documents, or scrolls must be left untouched.

► **Truth Seekers.** The heroes join the Zarvish Front and meet Indigo, their leader. He gives them the crucial mission to retrieve tomes, books, or any document that proves Eleanor Zarv's claim to the county is false.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A squad of four soldiers arrive. The armored men were sent by the capital. They attack anyone in the dungeon unless they prove the countess sent them (Reaction).
2	There is an almost invisible tripwire before the characters (DC 12 WIS). If they fail to see it, they trigger a trap when they touch the wire. A blade swings from one wall to the other and deals 1d8 damage (DC 13 DEX for half).
3	The characters meet two bandits and one thug . These are members of the Zarvish Front. They attack the characters unless they identify themselves (Reaction).
4	A current of wind extinguishes all light sources. The dungeon magical braziers turn on again in one minute.
5	The characters may notice a pressure-sensitive plate concealed on the dungeon floor (DC 12 WIS). If they fail to spot it, they step on it, triggering a poison darts trap. All creatures in the area take 1d8 damage (DC 13 CON).
6	Two sets of animated armors stand in the characters' way. They know no fear, they fight until destroyed.

Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with *light* spells; the rest are in darkness. Denizens are **dark-adapted**.

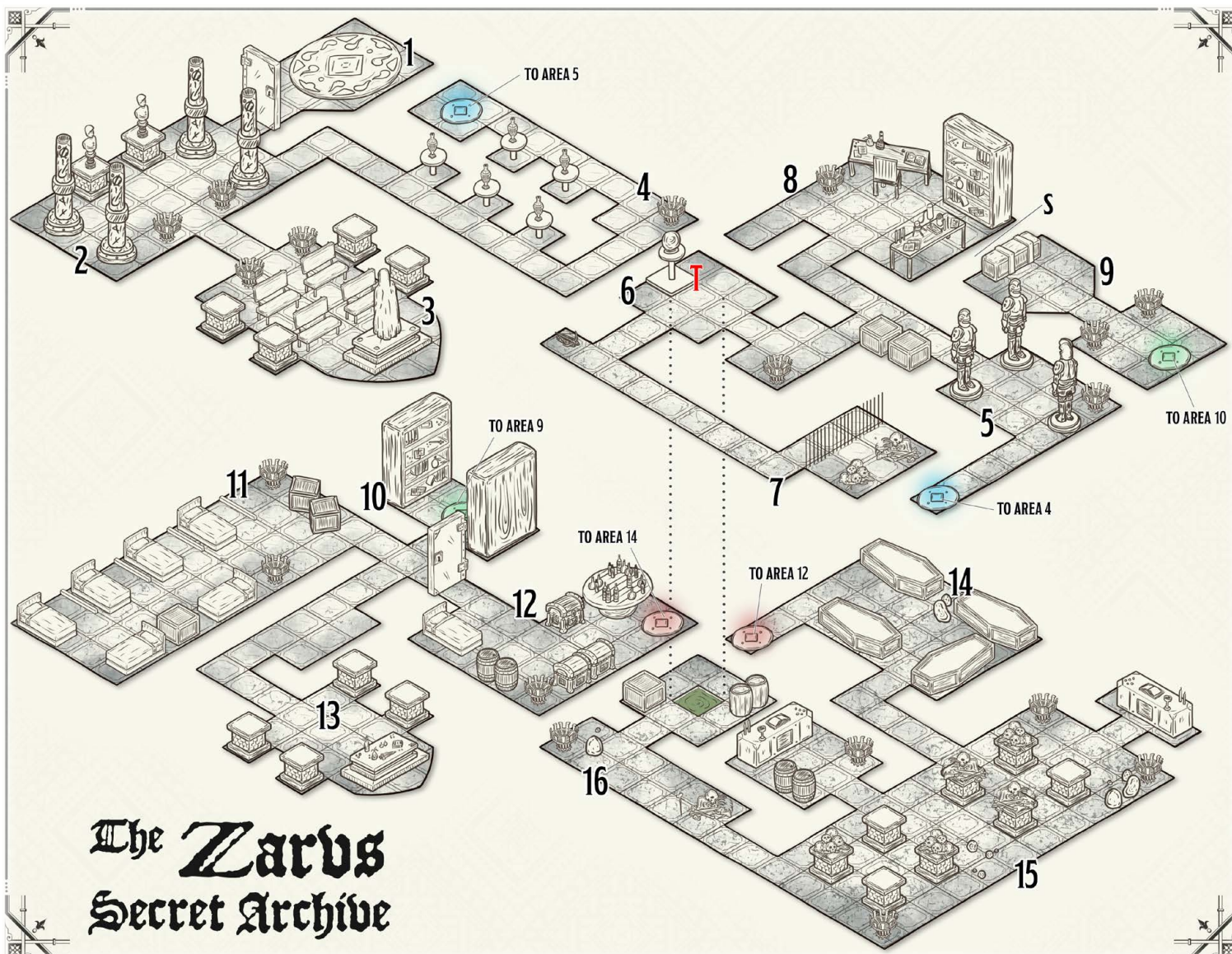
► **Magic Circles.** The four levels of the dungeon communicate via **teleportation circles**. Each circle pair connects to a different level of the dungeon (see map).

GETTING THERE

WHETHER THE CHARACTERS work for the capital or on behalf of the Zarvish Front, they are given instructions to infiltrate the city sewers and find a secret room with a stone circle (DC 11 WIS check with advantage). On a fail, the heroes have an encounter before they find the arcane circle. A **dire rat** and two **giant rats** approach from dark pipes. The rodents flee when reduced to half their Hit Points. Alternatively, the heroes may avoid combat if they swiftly surrender 10 pounds of food.

1. FIRST LEVEL LANDING

Stepping into the circle of the secret room in the sewers takes the characters to this area. A door blocks the way of the only corridor. It reads: 'City's Secret Archive'.



The Zarvs Secret Archive

2. ANTECHAMBER

The banners in this room bear the sigil and coat of arms of the Zarv family. Two stone pedestals hold bronze busts of two past rulers of the county.

The characters stumble upon two **bandits** (Zarvish Front) fighting two **soldiers** (City Watch) when they arrive. Their attire helps identify which side they fight for. The characters' arrival may take them by surprise, regardless of whose side they are on (**Reaction** check).

3. ORD TEMPLE

A statue of Ord dominates the far end of this chapel-like chamber. The benches are flanked by four alcoves that foster smaller, bronze Ord idols.

The characters find a friendly **priest**, Jules. He belongs to the Zarvish Front but he refuses to take part in any violent act. He invites the heroes to sit and pray with him.

► **Pray.** If the heroes spend 1 **crawling round** meditating or praying, Ord's power grants them a **luck token**.

4. DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Five gilded vases are in this switching corridor. Each vase is worth 10 gp but three of them hide a deadly, colorless poison gas trap. Interacting with one of the booby-trapped vases triggers them. Targets in Near take 1d8 damage (DC 13 CON). The characters may spot the tiny orifices on the walls (DC 12 WIS) and avoid the gas by holding their breath when taking the vases.

5. SECOND LEVEL LANDING

The characters arrive at the second level of the compound. The room before them has three **animated armors** ready to defend the place against trespassers.

6. MESMERIZING ORB

A beautiful crystal ball lies on a stone pedestal. Hypnotizing clouds, gold, and every mortal's desire caress the surface of this mind-numbing sphere.

The characters may fall for the mesmerizing spell (DC 13 WIS). Victims approach the ball and fall to area 16.

7. CELL

The city's compound has a single cell. It holds no prisoners. However, the characters may open the gate and search it. There are 5 gp, a silver dagger, and a torch.

▶ **Crossbow.** This automated weapon fires whenever a creature stands in front of it. The target takes 1d8 damage (DC 13 DEX). The weapon reloads every minute.

8. LIBRARY

The shelf, table, chair, and all the books and tomes in this area look well-conserved and clean of dust.

A permanent magic aura and an invisible servant keep this area orderly and impervious from the passage of time. The characters may spend 1 **crawling round** reading the documents here to learn a most-secret fact.

▶ **The True Zarv.** Putting together and cross-referencing several pieces of information from various books, scrolls, and pages reveals the suspicions are true. Eleanor Zarv is not who she says she is. She is the niece of a wealthy noble and merchant in Zarveck City. Indigo Zarv is the legitimate heir. Some documents even speak on an assassination contract against Eleanor, 5 years ago.

▶ **Interruption.** Three **soldiers** and one **knight** brandishing the city's sigil arrive and accuse the heroes of robbery. They do not care whose side they are on.

9. SECRET CHAMBER

The encounter causes a bookshelf to move a little and reveal a secret passage on the wall behind it. A teleportation circle connected to area 10 is hidden there.

10. THIRD LEVEL LANDING

The characters reach the third level of the underground compound. The shelves contain logs, diaries, and documents about the daily duties of the guards.

11. BARRACKS

The city sends guards here to make 24-hour-long shifts as punishment for underperforming or for receiving a sanction while on duty. There are three **guards** and three **soldiers** stationed here. They are jaded and bored. The characters may even convince them to join their cause if they work for the Zarvish Front (**Reaction** check).

12. MASTER BEDROOM

The knight that was in charge of the guards is dead on the bed. His job was to monitor the people here and make sure they did their rounds. However, he was sent here as a punishment as well so he cared little about anything that occurred during his shift. The door is closed but unlocked. He was murdered in his sleep. Upon approaching the bed to examine it the characters realize the man is dead. If the heroes search the knight's chamber, they also notice that all valuables have been taken.

13. ORD CHAPEL

The far end of this room features a sacred shrine. Its surface is filled with gifts and offerings that believers leave to earn Ord's blessing and honor the dead.

▶ **Encounter.** The characters meet two **soldiers** and one **priest** here. The characters may convince them to join their cause if they work for the Zarvish Front (**Reaction** check). Otherwise, they must keep searching the place because these men are unaware of what happened to their captain in the adjacent chamber.

14. FOURTH LEVEL LANDING

The granite walls become darker while a sepulchral atmosphere invades the lowest level of the dungeon.

Six sarcophagi rest by the walls of this chamber. A **ghoul** emerges from each enclosure but only when the lids are interacted with. The undead fight until destroyed.

▶ **Treasure (10 gp, 1 XP).** Fine fabrics, silverware, and pieces of jewelry are found in each enclosure.

15. FUNERARY PLINTHS

A dozen plinths contain the ashes of Zarv servants, friends, and people who obtained the honor of being interred here. Members of the Zarvish Front search the area when the heroes arrive. Indigo Zarv (**knight**), three **thugs**, and two **bandits** see them coming.

The characters's job is to stop Indigo and his men if it was the capital that sent them. If they work for the Zarvish Front, the rebel's leader confesses he could not stay idle and leave it all to them. He believes the archive must hide more secrets. He yearns to learn the truth.

▶ **Treasure (1 XP).** Each plinth contains 10 sp worth of offerings (12 gp total in all plinths). Shamelessly plundering this gold summons the ire of three **shadows**.

16. ACID POOL

The thick acid works as a cushion for the falling victims from area 6 and they take no damage from the fall.

▶ **Acid.** Submerged creatures take 1d8 damage per round and 1d4 damage after they pull themselves out.

▶ **Phylactery.** A tiny silver flask rests at the bottom of the acid. It is visible only by staring at the unmoving pool of acid. *Detect magic* reveals a necromancy aura.

DEVELOPMENT

REGARDLESS OF WHO sent them here, the characters become the countess and her entourage's targets because of the bombshell they may soon drop. Law enforcement and assassins look for them. Will they find a way to reveal the truth? Will Indigo take his rightful place as count? That is an adventure for another day...

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR!

A GM-facing supplement to introduce a dire magic item by David Hill



FROM THE EARLIEST days of magical experimentation, mortals have craved the powers that were withheld from them by gods or rulers of the world. One power above all others was the most coveted, the power of a wish.

For several millennia, magical beings known as genies monopolized control over the ability to grant wishes. Despite the efforts of some of the most talented arcane practitioners of the era, all efforts to unlock a genie's secrets were in vain. In their desperate search, envy, and greed, the worst instincts of covetous mages, were drawn out. So they tried to take this power by force.

One mage who let their thirst for power overcome all ethical concerns was Bothayna of Kalem. Most people know a little of Bothayna: her infamy endures thanks to the troublesome item she created as a result of her fever to harness the coveted ability of wish-granting.

Believing the power to grant wishes was mainly innate to genies, Bothayna captured and flayed a pair of them. She employed a ritual she learned from torturing a minor devil of the sixth circle of hell. Then, speaking foul words, Bothayna consecrated the genies' flayed skins into a malevolent book. She believed it would allow her to bend reality and fulfill her deepest desires.

However, all her attempts to make her wishes come true with the new book resulted in a twisted or corrupted version of what was wished for. Some historians claim this flawed magical book was hell's plan from the start. They think Bothayna was tricked into creating this vile tome while others think that it is Bothayna's evil nature that was imprinted in her gruesome creation.

CODEX MALUS ANIMUS

Radiating evil, the obscure tome creaks ominously as its genie-skin pages are turned. Scribbled throughout the book, in twisted and almost illegible penmanship, are the failed stated wishes of past unaware users.

► **Benefit.** By writing their greatest desire into the pages of the book an individual gets a single use of the *wish* spell. Whatever is wished, the book shall attempt to twist the written words to have the worst possible unintended consequences while still technically fulfilling the terms of the written sentence. Each individual may only use this book once during their lifetime.

THE CODEx IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

IT SHOULD GO without saying this is a dangerous item that has the chance to seriously derail any campaign! You should take great care to foreshadow the nature and consequences of the Codex Malus Animus so that your players can make an informed decision before using it. Chaos is fun but only when people have an idea of what they are getting into. 'Gotcha' moments are rarely enjoyable for all at the table. It is also worth keeping in mind that once the players figure out how the Codex Malus Animus works, they may attempt to give it to someone they do not like and have them unknowingly use the item.

In figuring out how the book works characters should be able to read wishes that have been previously written into the book. I would suggest placing the consequences of at least one of those previous wishes near the Codex Malus Animus when it is discovered. Others may be remembered or researched through an appropriate skill check. Below are some examples of people who discovered the cursed tome and their fate which could hint at what happens when the book is used.



KING RAGNAR THE RESTLESS

AFTER WISHING FOR immortality, the once-poor Ragnar was able to seize control of his local petty kingdom.

As time went by, King Ragnar's heirs became increasingly impatient for their inheritance, eventually fearing that they would never receive it. Drugged and spirited away, it is said Ragnar was buried alive at a secret location beneath many heavy stones. It is believed that centuries later, he still suffers within this bewitched cairn.

Any tomb your players are exploring may make a suitable place for them to discover the long-forgotten King Ragnar. They may choose to free him from his torment.

CASSIA'S SIGHT

IF SHE HAD had a measure of foresight, young Cassia would have never wished to know the future. While Cassia might know the future, she found she was unable to change it and none would believe her prophecies. Locked away and kept under guard, Cassia shall tell her tale to anyone else who finds themselves imprisoned with her.

Meeting Cassia would be executed as a prison encounter; she might even be awaiting execution. The public blame her for either failing to convince them of the truth of her prophecies, or for orchestrating the events to punish the public for refusing to listen to her.

MAN OF MANY TONGUES

A SAGE HOPED to further his studies using Bothayna's book by wishing to be able to speak all existing languages. The man can indeed speak any language now however his speech always comes out in a random language. Usually never the one that those around him understand or know. An unintelligible sage is a versatile encounter that might fit in many locations or settings.

WANDA'S CHILDREN

DURING THE LAST winter, a peasant named Wanda lost her two children to a disease that ravaged the local area. Upon finding Codex Malus Animus, Wanda wished for the return of her beloved children. The next morning Wanda found her little ones had returned to her, but they came back as undead creatures that had clawed their way out of their graves. They shambled back to her home, seeking their mother's love. Now Wanda keeps her children chained up in her hovel and is responsible for several disappearances in the settlement in an attempt to sate her children's hunger for mortal flesh. Investigation of the disappearances or seeking shelter at Wanda's hovel would introduce Wanda and her story.

STAR-CROSSED LOVERS

HAVING SET HIS eyes on the fairest maiden in all the land and finding she paid no interest in him, a young noble called Roman wished that Julianne would fall deeply in love with him. Such was the depth of Julianne's sudden new infatuation with Roman that when she saw him talking to another maiden, she stabbed both of them to death in a fit of jealousy. You could set up a dramatic murder scene for your players to witness or have them investigate Julianne's sudden change of heart.



MAGICWORKS AND PATRONS

A world-building supplement about magic item creation by Marco Bizzarri



ARTWORKS EXHIBIT MANY of the qualities that we would like magic objects to have in a typical fantasy TTRPG:

- Artworks are common but they require ability so they do not fall in the category of mundane.
- Each artwork is different from others more often than not (no vanilla *+1 longsword*).
- Each artwork has been crafted by a particular artist, usually under the patronage of a person or an organization that sponsors the artist.

Based on this premise, we shall explore in this article which organizations or creatures would sponsor the creation of a magic item (or better, magicwork), and why.

For each of the varied possible kinds of organizations, consider the following base outlines:

- The purpose for sponsoring the magicwork.
- The (intended) owner of the magicwork.
- The typical craftsman who crafted/forged the magicwork.

Magicworks are assumed to be of an increased rarity, with additional costs and usually a longer time required to complete the task. In this article, we will group the levels of rarity in magicworks as follows:

- Common: 50 gp - 1 week
- Uncommon: 200 - 800 gp - 2 weeks
- Rare: 800 - 10,000 gp - 10 weeks
- Very Rare: 10,000 - 50,000 gp - 25 weeks
- Legendary: 50,000+ gp - 50 weeks



ACADEMY (OR UNIVERSITY)

THIS IS AN institution that has the purpose of researching (magical) knowledge and teaching magic to students. Academy members will look for the institution to fund their projects, usually for research purposes; *common* magicworks (up to a certain point) are financed with little or no problem; *uncommon* or *rare* shall require approval from the council which rules the academy; *very rare* and *legendary* magicworks are usually out of the question unless the academy is extremely wealthy.

The member who asks for financing must usually craft the item; this could be a researcher who is devising some new form of magic and requires the academy's sponsorship to finance the project. The purpose is usually increasing knowledge: "*Can we bind the colors of the rainbow in a wall?*" Once the magicwork is created, it belongs to the academy, even though the researcher could use it for a long time; eventually, these magicworks are stored and forgotten. Alas, often the sole incentive for the academy to invest in these projects is to bolster their wealth and earn regional renown. A political move to demonstrate their reach to other learning institutions.

ANCIENT BEING

AN ANCIENT BEING is a creature whose lifespan covers many of a human's; like a dragon or a lich; in any case, these creatures look at long-term results. Usually, these creatures consider any magicwork below *rare* quality not worth their time. They could craft the item itself, or they could hire an unsuspecting member of an academy, a guild, or a religious order, who would realize only after a long time the type of creature they were working for.

Crafting the item would be either part of a long-term plan, which ought to reveal itself in due time, or could just be a hobby of this creature, used to fight the boredom that centuries of existence can bring. Once the magicwork is created, its fate depends on the mood of the creature: if this was part of a plan, the intended owner will be one of the servants; if this was done to fight boredom, the owner could be someone who doesn't even suspect that the object is magical. Often these legendary items end up in a hoard with little to no use, only momentary entertainment for an immortal being.

GUILD

COMMON MAGICWORKS ARE usually commissioned when a member of a guild reaches mastership; *uncommon* and *rare* ones are commissioned as a display of power and wealth, as an investment because the guild requires that specific magicwork, or as a gift to a powerful ally; *very rare* and *legendary* items are out of the league for any but the most powerful guilds.

The craftsman could be a guild member, a journeyman, or a master from another guild; a guild rarely contacts someone who is not operating within its organization.

Aside from the usages described above, a magicwork is commissioned to show the power of the guild itself, or as a gift to forge alliances with other organizations. The owner is usually the member of the guild, for minor magicworks, the guild itself, or the recipient of the gift.

ORGANIZED CRIME

COMMON AND UNCOMMON magicworks are part of the *business as usual* for a criminal organization; *rare* magicworks are for special circumstances; *very rare* or *legendary* are best 'acquired' than crafted.

The craftsman could be a journeyman or a master with a shady past. Or someone kidnapped by the organization itself. A crime boss could commission such an object because it is required for the 'business', but also to impress rivals; donating a magicwork to an official institution could be a way to gain some respectability or a manner of fencing goods and laundering money.

Unless the magicwork is a gift or a reward, commissioned magicworks often end up in the hands of the boss, or some trustworthy henchman.

MILITARY FORCE

COMMON AND UNCOMMON magicworks are routinely commissioned by a military force; on the *rare* part, armor and shields are common occurrences; *very rare* and *legendary* magicworks are usually out of the possibilities of such an organization. The job is usually assigned to a journeyman or a master from an academy or a guild, depending on the relationship of the military force itself; possibly even from a religious order, in case of a military force that has some connection in that sense.

A military force usually commissions magicworks for practical purposes. These comprehend simple stuff like ensuring that the soldiers are properly equipped for action. In a few cases, a magicwork can be commissioned to celebrate a recent victory or a combat achievement. While the magicwork could be in the hands of single officers and soldiers, it shall always belong to the military force and may be retrieved at any time.

NOBLE FAMILIES

A NOBLE COULD commission a magicwork just because they are bored; *uncommon* magicworks require a little more thought. They will ultimately be used as presents for the noble's children, when they turn of age, or as a token of appreciation for others of the nobility class. *Rare* and *very rare* magicworks are a way to show the power of the family... even though, more than one family has ruined itself over the crafting of a *legendary* magicwork. It is also true that the most powerful noble families are among the few who can provide the resources required to bring such items to completion.

The craftsman is usually a master from an academy, a guild, or even a religious order; the more powerful families look for the best craftsmen in their land (and abroad); or they may employ such craftsmen full-time; providing full patronage, stipends, and even lands. Eventually, the magicwork is usually owned by the family itself. Or by the recipient, if it was meant to be gifted.

RELIGIOUS ORDER

RELIGIOUS ORDERS OFTEN sponsor the creation of powerful potions, as many are going to look for those items from them; a religious order always ensures that even the most remote of its branches have at least a couple of *potions of healing*. Being informed of who is going to buy those magicworks is as much valuable information as the cost paid for them in silver. Sometimes a religious order sponsors the forging of holy items, at the *common*, *uncommon*, and *rare* levels, to promote the belief system of the religious order. *Very rare* and *legendary* are rarely commissioned. They are left to the deity's whims for their creation, for purposes unknown to the mortals. Many legendary religious magicworks were gifted to mortals by angels of deities themselves. However, most of these relics are lost to history.

When created in the mortal realm, the craftsman is usually either a member of the order (for items of more religious meaning) or a hired guild person; religious orders usually do not resort to the academies, seeing them as rivals. While potions are usually sold, other magicworks are often in the possession of members of the order. The ownership of them however remains of the order.



THE LIGHT RING OF KING LERAN

A short adventure about a fabled magic item by Viel Nast



INTRODUCTION

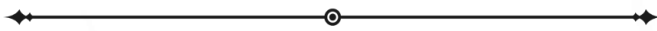


It was many centuries ago when a great hero saved the then-small, town of Agekenberg and became its king. He wore a sun ring that burned through his opponents and always saved the day. The hero proved to be a fair king as well. The small town prospered and became a large city; the small kingdom thrived and expanded. The grateful subjects ordered an enormous bronze statue of King Leran to be constructed. It now adorns the central square of the city in front of the royal palace. Unfortunately, darkness crept back after so many years, and now evil shade creatures threaten the kingdom once more.

GETTING INTO THE ADVENTURE

SMALL VILLAGES HAVE been attacked and numerous people have gone missing. Victims were not killed. Instead, the poor innocents were turned into shade monsters that creep towards the capital. They absorb all light and color as they pass. The country has been turned into a gray wilderness. The current ruler, King Leran IX, has used all his forces to stall the shade wave but in vain.

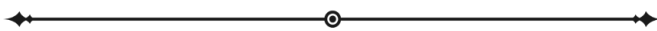
The PCs are close to reaching the capital, Agekenberg. Use the table below to come up with reasons to involve the characters further in this grim adventure:



1d6

Random Event

- 1 One PC is from Agekenberg and wants to help.
- 2 A friend from the past asks the PCs to help.
- 3 A noble that knows the PCs from before, asked them for help to escort him to the capital.
- 4 A weird, cloaked person from a sun cult asks the PCs to accompany him to the threatened capital.
- 5 An old sage wants to study the event and needs assistance. He asks the PCs to escort him.
- 6 The king has summoned all mercenaries and adventures to come to help; he offers a hefty reward.

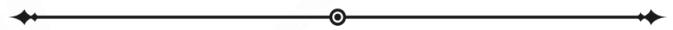


Before arriving, the party encounters four **shades** (or one per character). The undead abominations appear to wear the attire of farmers and artisans; they ask for forgiveness and a quick death while savagely attacking. The encounter is a rude awakening to the gravity of the situation. This battle occurs while large numbers of shades in the background gather and fight other caravans and travelers as they approach the town. The characters are the last to arrive before the city gates are shut.

Those struck by the shades are robbed of all color. And 1d4 items they wear or carry become gray and dull. However, the objects retain their regular properties.

DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTIGATION

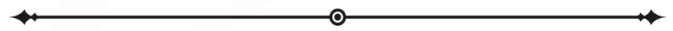
By mingling with the locals, gossiping, and asking around in taverns and the streets, the characters can begin picking up one or more rumors using the table below:



1d6

Rumors

- 1 This problem is too big. Only old King Leran I and his sun ring can save the day (true).
- 2 The shadow god has punished us all (false).
- 3 A curse may be the source of these events (false).
- 4 The horrible shades cannot be harmed by ordinary means. Only true light can harm them (true).
- 5 We can't do anything to protect ourselves, the shades are too powerful. We're doomed! (false).
- 6 The poor people turned into shades can be rescued and become alive again (false).



The citizens of the now-besieged city are frightened and have lost all hope. Most of the refugees from villages and hamlets in the countryside came looking for safety. But they live in squalor in the streets, or in whatever shelter they could find, sharing their horror stories. To make matters worse, the prices of food, drink, and lodging have risen to five times as normal or more.

INVESTIGATIVE PCs DEDUCE THE FOLLOWING:

The first few hours upon arriving:

- DC 10 WIS check – All creatures killed by a shade are turned into shades as well.
- DC 12 WIS check – Not all the shades possess the same power or force.

The first night in a tavern:

- DC 14 WIS check – Legends claim that the legendary King Leran I destroyed a shade swarm.

Next day:

- DC 16 WIS check – The royal library has many tomes about the life and deeds of King Leran I.
- DC 18 WIS check – The magic light ring is lost.

A search in the library is fructuous if the PCs find an available librarian (DC 10 CHA check). When the appropriate books are found, (DC 12 INT check) a thorough search reveals that the bronze statue of the king holds the ancient relic. However, an oath must be taken before the king's effigy. The petitioner must promise that the ring shall be used for the good of the kingdom and will later be returned after the quest is fulfilled.

Visiting the king's statue and taking the ring cannot go unnoticed so the PCs must ask the current ruler for his permission. Or else they shall be branded thieves!

When the characters climb to retrieve the ring, they hear in their heads a stern voice giving them further advice on how to activate and 'charge' the sun ring.

"Build a huge bonfire and place the magical ring in its midst for a whole night, feeding the fire constantly. Then, at the first rays of the sun, take the ring and bring it up, to face the sun's light. The ring thus shall burn the shades and protect the kingdom, and my legacy!"

The king speaks once and says no more.

If the PCs follow these steps to the letter, they unlock the ring's true powers; it becomes a *ring of sunlight*. The wearer obtains the following benefits:

- The wearer has a *protection from evil* spell on them for as long as they keep the ring on.
- Undead enemies within 15 feet burn. They take 5 damage each round they stay within this area.
- The ring enhances the wearer's weapons. Shades are destroyed when touched by them.

► **Fire Magic.** Of course, fire-based magic can destroy undead too. But with the ring, there is an infinite power source that is entrusted to all party members.

The rest is a classic hack-and-slash for the party to enjoy. As long as they remain close to the ring-bearer, they each have the power to destroy a shade with a single strike. A final epic battle ensues in the surroundings of Agekenberg. The characters fight endless waves of shades but they manage to save the realm from certain doom.

EPILOGUE

IF THE PCS defeat the shades, they become heroes of the kingdom. The authorities may grant them many gifts or give them titles. After the grim ordeal, if the characters decide not to return the ring, they find it extremely hot to the touch and growing hotter daily until it is so hot that they cannot stand to be even near it.

The characters either realize their mistake and return to face the consequences or abandon it and receive a ban from the kingdom. A large reward is set for their heads.

The ring shall eventually return to its rightful owner no matter what. Even a *wish* spell cannot change this as the magical relic and the hero, King Leran I, are bonded to the kingdom. Such is his timeless legacy.

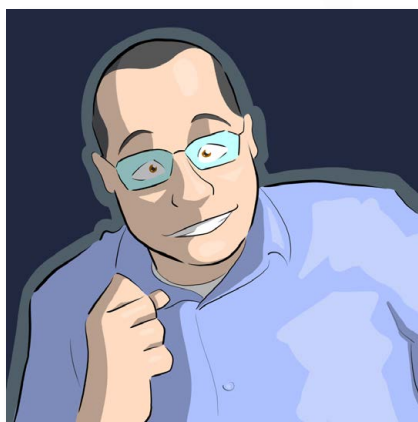




DAVID HILL

David, known online as QED42, is an aspiring game designer and nonsense maker from England.

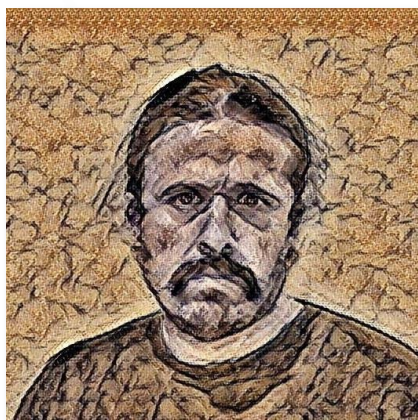
You can find more of David's content at the [DMsGuild](#), [DrivethruRPG](#), or at his [official blog](#) which focuses on adventure reviews, OSR classes, and the occasional D100 table.



MARCO BIZZARRI

A software engineer by day and a dungeon master by night, Marco started playing TTRPG back in the 1990s. He quickly moved behind the screen, and since then has mastered multiple campaigns for his family, friends and colleagues.

His background as a software engineer led him to contribute to the opensource [VTT MapTool](#), which he uses in his campaigns. Speaking in his "thick italian accent", he semi-regularly publishes videos on RPGs and MapTool on his [YouTube channel](#), with his twin brother Paolo and his wife Claudia. Now and then he writes about RPGs [on his Blog](#). You can find him either on [Twitter](#) or on the MapTool Discord Server (emmebi).



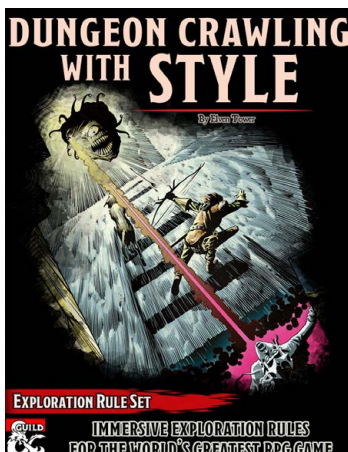
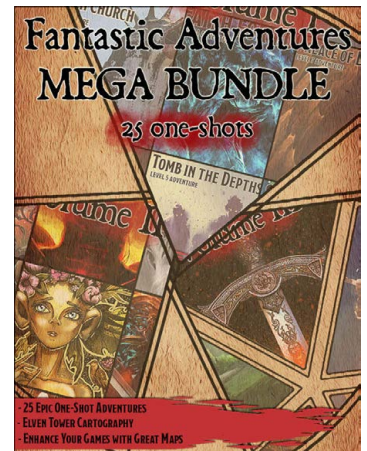
VIEL NAST

Viel "Talbot" Nast has loved all things epic since 1990. Epic metal, epic fantasy and TTRPGs! He has created the epic fantasy world of Land of Oyr and via the company Talbot Epic Press has published five books in his world. Writing anything about RPGs has become a growing passion in the last decade or two! You can find more about him and his works in his [official blog](#), his [Facebook Page](#), and his [Amazon Book Store](#).

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