

# DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

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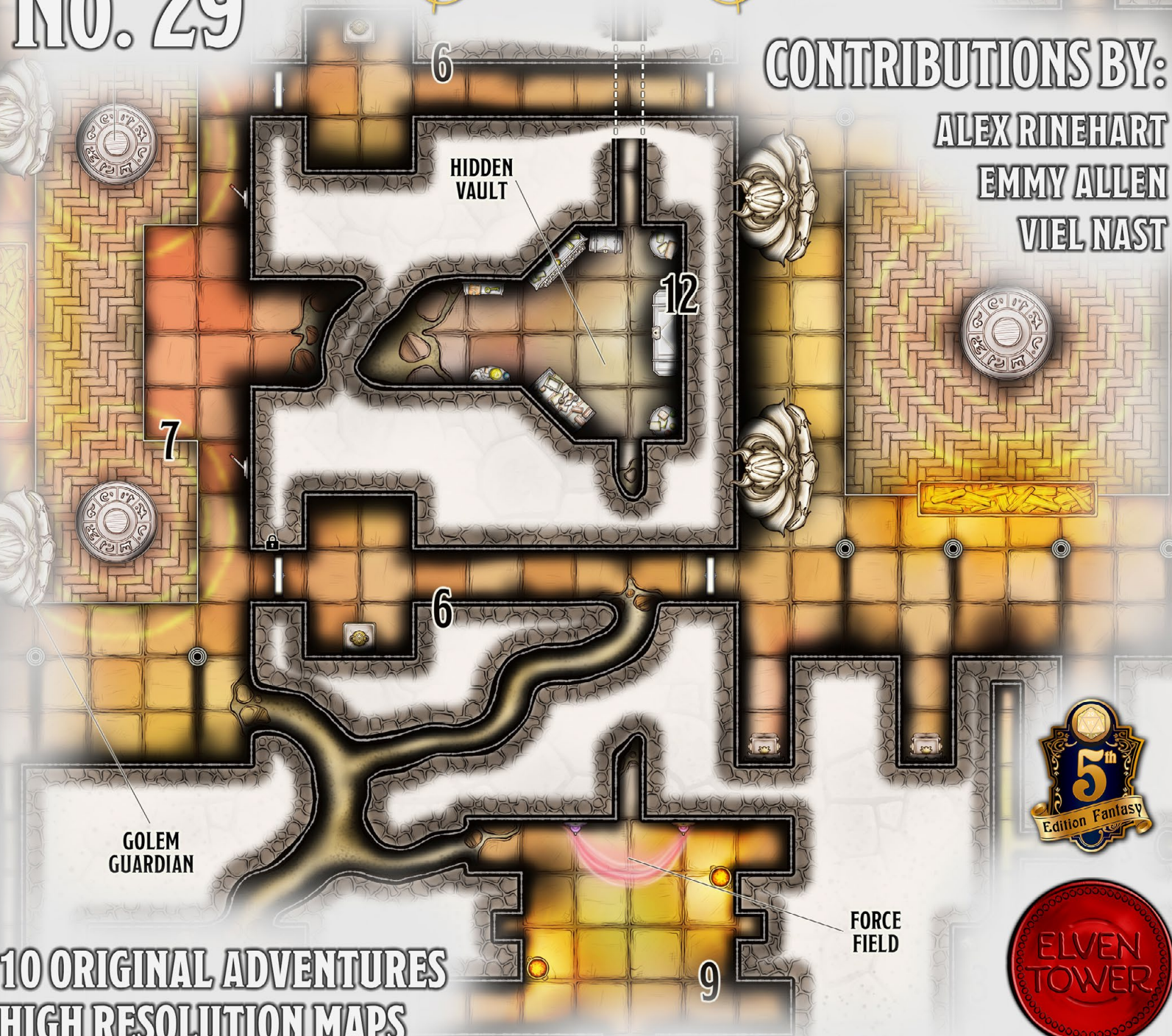


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10 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES  
HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS  
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THE BEST CONTENT FOR THE BEST GMs



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# THE IDOL OF ALABASTER

The secret of fire is held by the Idol of Alabaster. Many apprentice mages seek its power but are unable to prove themselves worthy of the challenge.

Duke D'Allimer, Court Mage

## Delve Level 4 (3,660 XP)

1 fire elemental  
4 fire snakes  
5 ghouls  
6 giant fire beetles

## SETUP

**APPRENTICE AND MASTER** mages seek the arcane secrets of the world to improve their understanding of magic and the eldritch techniques to manipulate space and time. Magic-users covet these secrets and often refuse to share them, even with their apprentices or pupils, preferring to set them in the right direction. Thus, novices must reacquire the knowledge from forsaken locations or lose their lives in the attempt. Cruel as this fate is, master mages refuse to give out their secrets, conferring a sentiment of camaraderie with other wizards that have managed to extract the same cabalistic secrets.

## THE SECRET OF FIRE

**MAGES ARE TAUGHT** that fire is one of the elemental forces of the world. Fire-controlling magic is one of the most important pillars of arcane teaching. Flames have the power to utterly destroy or transmute most materials. Elemental fire servants are powerful and resourceful. However, apprentices reach a dead-end when learning the basic fire-controlling spells. At first, fire appears to be a malleable force that reacts to the caster's wishes. The arcane formulae and the spells bind fire to the caster's will. But, as the mage rises in power, so does the elemental fire's resistance to their will. Soon enough, fire becomes rebellious and refuses to obey. Mages that continue on this path often cause terrible tragedies when trying to control it. The formulae can only control fire up to a point. A new understanding is necessary to further the magic-user's control of the element. When an apprentice reaches this level, their teacher instructs them to visit the Idol of Alabaster, where the Secret of Fire resides.

The Secret of Fire is known by many but has never been written down, thanks to the unwavering stubbornness of mages to share their knowledge. An apprentice wizard must seek out this information on their own.

## THE IDOL'S RESTING PLACE

**THE IDOL IS** located in an ancient tomb. Scores of valiant knights were interred therein after their gallant actions in a war thousands of years ago. The tomb does not contain arcane secrets or is related to the mages' research. Instead, it is the place where a mage first discovered the Secret of Fire. Since then, it became a site of pilgrimage and a trial of passage for rising spellcasters as they become powerful enough to wield magic fire.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**THIS ADVENTURE ASSUMES** that magic knowledge is not automatically acquired but rather learned from experience. This is a level 4 adventure meant to serve as the final stepping stone before leveling up and giving a spellcaster access to a higher level of fire-controlling magic, like the *fireball* and *glyph of warding* spells.

When the character reaches this level, they discover through a mentor or from research that they won't be able to control fire magic unless they infer the Secret of Fire from the Idol of Alabaster, in its ancient tomb. This sets them in the tomb's direction. If the character has direct access to such spells, then the GM can offer access to a stronger version of the *fireball* spell instead.

## FEATURES OF THE TOMB

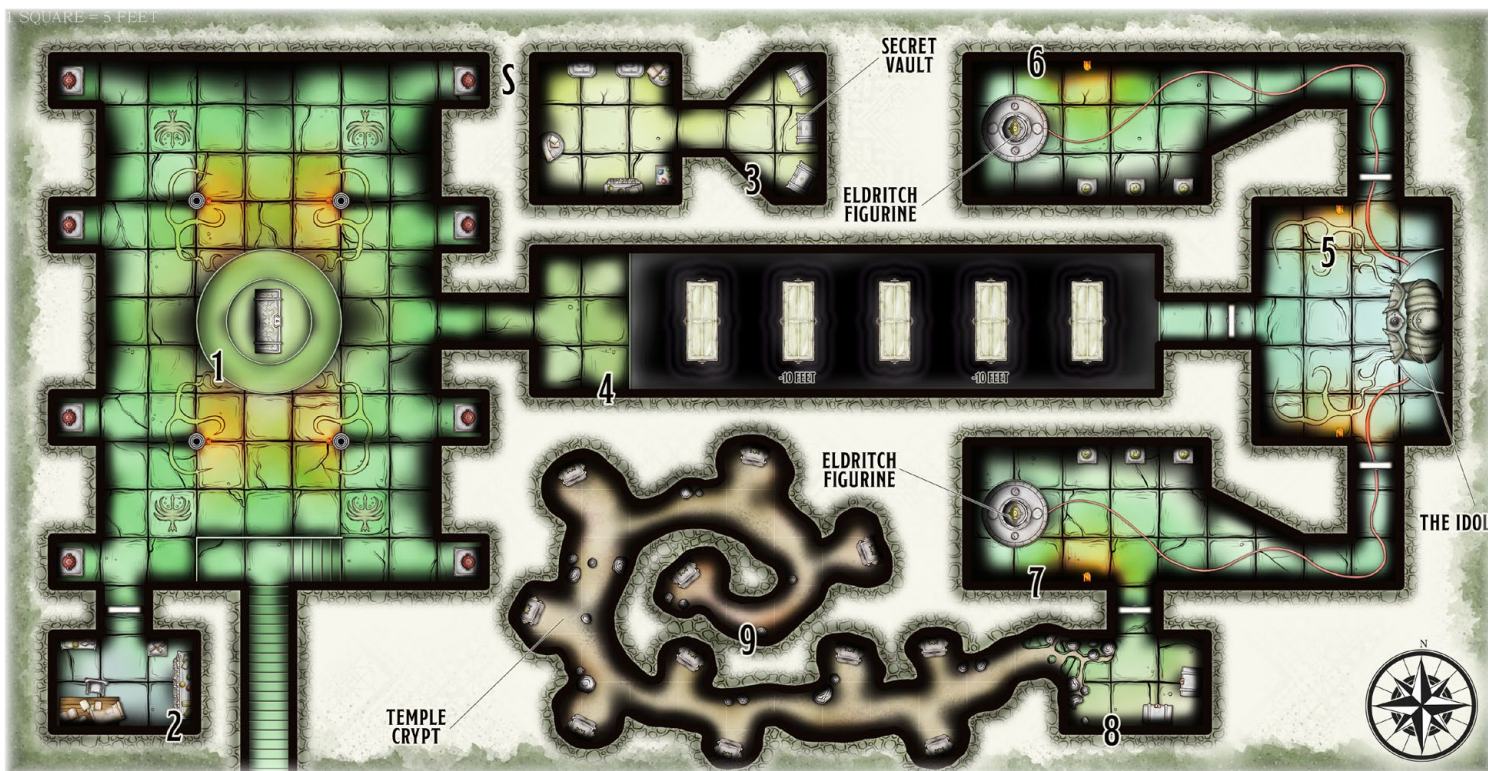
**Light.** The sconces in the mausoleum feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

**Locks.** All doors are made of soapstone slabs with medium-quality locking devices (DC 15 Thieves' Tools).

**Chamber Ceilings.** All areas have 20-foot-tall, domed ceilings decorated with intricate frescoes depicting armor-clad knights rushing into battlefields.

**Arcane Negation.** An anti-magic field in the tomb negates the casting of evocation spells within the dungeon (DC 13 Wisdom save per spell). Spellcasters acquire a Level of Exhaustion after a successfully cast spell.

**Jaded Guardians.** The spirits in the tomb are tired of mages coming for the Secret of Fire. Each time a location is visited, there is a 2-in-6 chance that 1d6 **shadows** emerge from the cracked walls and attack.



## 1. GRAND ENTRANCE HALL

*The stairs give way to a grand hall. A rune-inscribed coffer lies on a two-level dais at the center. Eight clay jars on alcoves tremble as if waking from slumber.*

The grim chamber is decorated with carved runes and geometric patterns on the walls and pillars. The hall is guarded by magical guardians that are summoned each time a trespasser moves within 10 feet of the central dais. From the clay jars emerge four **fire snakes** and four **giant fire beetles**. These are elemental creatures bound to the tomb to guard it. These creatures reform at dawn and shall greet future visitors in the same manner.

**Treasure.** The coffer contains 823 gp left behind by other apprentice mages. Each left a coin as an offering of gratitude. Stealing this treasure is frowned upon.

## 2. TOMB'S ARCHIVE

*The archive remains in pristine quality despite the passage of time. Waves of semi-translucent magic move through the books and tomes momentarily.*

Perusing the archive's content requires an hour of lecture. It reveals the identities of the eleven knights interred in area 9 and accurate recounts of their deeds of yore. The archive also includes recent additions from apprentice wizards; a visitor log, and a treatise on the platforms of area 4 that reveals that their faulty, levitation magic might one day fail (DC 17 Arcana).

**Treasure.** There are 35 gp, two *potions of healing*, and a worn spellbook with four random, level 2 wizard spells hidden in a secret compartment (DC 14 Investigation).

## 3. SECRET VAULT

Observant characters notice the outline of a secret passage behind the last northeast alcove in area 2 (DC 16 Perception). The fire rune behind the clay jar must be powered with the *fireball* spell to open the secret passage to the vault. Otherwise, only a master locksmith can bypass the mechanism (DC 20 Thieves' Tools).

The vault contains an assortment of stone plinths, shelves, and three stone chests. Despite the recurrent mage pilgrimages, this vault has never been discovered.

**Treasure.** The chests contain 1,900 gp, 7,000 sp, three *potions of healing*, a *chime of opening*, a *+1 dagger*, and a gold and silver *+1 ring of protection*.

## 4. GAPING ABYSS

*The long hallway is divided by a 60-foot-long gap. Floating platforms are the only way across the abyss; some platforms float lower, near the dark depths.*

The floor below cannot be glimpsed. A *detect magic* spell reveals a conjuration aura beneath the platforms; a *darkness* spell impedes sight underneath. The crude, stone floor is 40 feet below. Creatures that fall from the floating platforms take 4d6 bludgeoning damage.

Jumping across the platforms is not a difficult deed, especially if the characters have access to ropes and climbing gear. However, the next-to-last platform's floating magic has diminished with time. When more than one creature steps on the platform at the same time, its magic fizzles out. It collapses onto the floor below. Creatures on it have one chance to jump away (DC 16 Dex save).

## 5. THE ANCIENT IDOL

*The alabaster, masterwork effigy of an armor-clad knight holding his broadsword in front of him towers high, overlooking the otherwise desolate chamber.*

A bronze plaque on the 3-foot-tall dais reads: “*Here lies Sir Robert Gadallast, valiant warrior and father*”. Historians recognize the name; Sir Robert was a mighty paladin from a forgotten time, a war hero (DC 19 History).

A summoning trap is meant to activate when trespassers reach this room. Alas, it is deactivated as its workings hide the Secret of Fire, for those that are sentient enough to discern it. Operating the Eldritch Figurines in areas 6 and 7 reactivates the summoning device in the idol’s base. After the activation, a **fire elemental** and two **giant fire beetles** materialize before the Idol of Alabaster. The defeat of the fire elemental is what springs the discovery of the Secret of Fire (see **Conclusion**).

**Treasure.** Sir Gadallast’s remains lie under the Idol of Alabaster. The statue must be brought down to access the enclosure beneath, damaging it beyond repair. The knight’s *+2 longsword* lies with the bodily remains.

## 6. NORTHERN ELDRITCH FIGURINE

*A cable swifts in its way to a dais with a stone plinth. A gold figurine with an empty recess lies upon it. Three glowing medals rest on plinths by the wall.*

One of the medals contains the power to activate the device. The other two are forgeries created by envious mages who wished to make the process more contrived and dangerous. A *detect magic* spell reveals that two medals have an aura of evocation while the last one has an aura of conjuration. Placing the conjuration medal powers the device adequately. Using any of the other two medals causes a 15-foot-wide explosion. Creatures in the area take 4d6 fire damage (DC 16 dexterity / half).

## 7. SOUTHERN ELDRITCH FIGURINE

This is a mirrored version of area 6. Powering this figurine is necessary for the summoning in area 6. The medals function in the same manner, potentially causing a deadly explosion if the incorrect medal is used. Perceptive individuals notice burnt-out bone remains near the chamber’s corners (DC 16 Perception). A mage notices the tell-tale signs of magical fire on the remains, revealing the presence of the explosive trap (DC 16 Arcana).

## 8. PLUNDERED VAULT

The northwest corner of this chamber abandons all lavishness and gives way to a crude, shifting tunnel where the crypt lies. Those knowledgeable in architecture infer that the tomb was rushed before its completion (DC 14 Intelligence). The two stone chests are empty. They were plundered hundreds of years ago by visiting mages.

## 9. THE KNIGHTS’ CRYPT

Eleven knights are interred in the shifting crypt, in lavish, ornate, standing sarcophagi. The mages who have come to this dungeon before have all ignored this area, finding no use in plundering the earthly tombs of long-gone knights. The ire of the knights has reanimated five of them as **ghouls**. When trespassers reach the sixth enclosure, they emerge in a rush of fury and madness.

**Treasure.** Collectively, the stone sarcophagi contain 380 gp, 684 sp, a *+1 shield*, and a *cube of force*.

## CONCLUSION

The characters reach the end of this adventure. They must face the consequences of their deeds.

Defeating the fire elemental in area 5 causes its energy to be absorbed by the mage who vanquished it. A spark of inspiration reveals the Secret of Fire: One must become one with the element and absorb it into one’s being to be able to truly gain control of it. Fire is the most rebellious of elements and its control requires the wielder to fuse their soul with it. After this revelation, the mage may opt, like those before him, to reset the dungeon’s traps so that acquiring the secret remains a trial of passage.



# THE FIRANNI PRINCIPALITIES

“No... Not kidnapping... Of course not. He’d be more like, spending some vacations in Pinevert for a while. Let’s see if Gabriel stays idle after that...”

Robert Pine

## SETUP

**THIS SUPPLEMENT CONTAINS** lore and adventure ideas to be used within the Firanni Principalities. They are an archipelago with countless islands and numerous settlements. Use the information presented herein to complement your campaign or employ it as a one-shot session.

The characters could be sent here to negotiate with one of the princes, settle a conflict between them, or they could be just traveling. If the options featured in this module do not fit the characters’ current campaign, the GM is free to come up with other reasons to explain the characters’ presence in the Firanni Principalities.

## THE ARCHIPELAGO’S STORY

**IT WAS HUNDREDS** of years ago when the great war occurred. Three principalities fought to be the sole occupant of the islands located in the Firanni Ocean. Their battle lasted many generations. Each prince inherited their father’s hatred for the other two. The will to begin a quarrel with their neighbors was passed on as well.

It was only fifty years ago when Uriel Marble offered a peace decree that comprehended all the occupants of the isles. It stated that fights and conflicts were unnecessary. That the three principalities had proven their might for hundreds of years and none of their predecessors had ever accomplished anything by fighting. Claiming that the war was only a waste of resources for all, it was decided that the Marble Peace decree would prevail.

## THE CURRENT GENERATION

**THE THREE RULERS** of the Firanni Principalities are Gabriel Sun, Robert Pine, and Uriel Marble’s first child, Fabian. The three princes were born into a new era. A time of peace. And, unlike their predecessors, who only thought about deploying troops and combat strategies, they have spent their lives looking for ways to improve their people’s living conditions, trade, commerce, and the exploration of the many places of interest in the archipelago. This has resulted in the creation of many settlements that could not hope for survival before. The Marble Peace decree has been respected until today. But the atmosphere in the peninsula is far from perfect...

## THE APPLE DOES NOT FALL...

**THE PRINCES ARE** surrounded by advisors, counselors, and influential personalities. They are aware of each other’s moves at all times. Even if the isles are at peace, dark, nefarious schemes are being plotted behind the scenes.

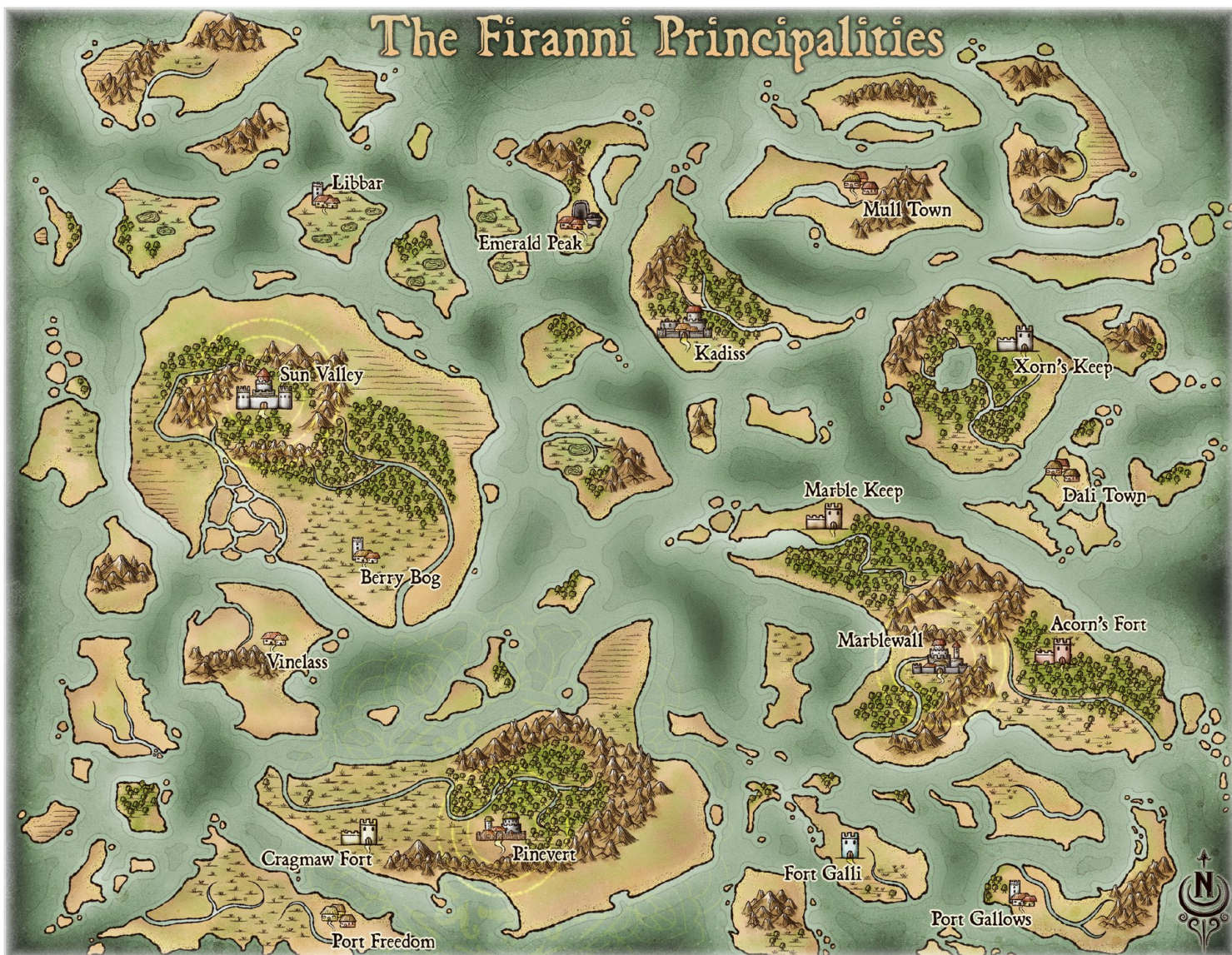
► **Gabriel Sun.** Gabriel is an overconfident, naive leader who rules over the largest portion of land in the islands. And, like his father, he is more of a neutral character when it comes to problems. The prince contents himself by staying out of conflict and keeping things as they are. Unbeknown to Gabriel, though, his advisors make use of spies to spread foul rumors to provoke a quarrel or conflict between Marblewall and Pinevert.

► **Robert Pine.** Pinevert is a city located south. Much like his father, Robert does not think the Marble Peace decree was such a good idea. He believes it is unfair that Pinevert should settle with whatever the isles offer south. Even though there has been no conflict between the princes for decades, Cragmaw Fort and Fort Galli remain active and operational. For a few years now, he plots how to break the peace decree and take over Marblewall. However, he knows he cannot do this alone and requires an alliance (at least temporary), with Sun Valley. But he hates Gabriel Sun for his neutral posture...

► **Fabian Marble.** Being the son of Uriel, the author of the Marble Peace decree, Fabian and his family are regarded as the good guys of the story since then. To make things worse, Fabian misses no opportunity to remind the other princes to behave: “*Your fathers, the princes before you, signed my dad’s decree. You would do best to respect it*” he would say. This attitude has caused hatred, distrust, and a desire to fight in Robert Pine’s heart and mind. Gabriel Sun, on the other hand, remains in the shades, seemingly unaware of these events.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

**THE CHARACTERS ARE** summoned by one of the three factions of the archipelago for work. Each of them wants something that shall cause conflict with the other two principalities, or at least one of them (see below). If the heroes make friends in one principality, they must pay the price of earning the enmity of the others.



## SUN VALLEY

**MOUNTAINS AND WOODS** surround this city. To avoid even more conflict with the other two principalities, Gabriel Sun's settlements were built north. This does not mean the city is not ready for war. The government takes plenty of decisions behind Gabriel Sun's back.

**Quest.** The characters are summoned by the city's council to hire them as mercenaries. Their job is to sail and raid Vinelass (one of Pinevert's settlements) and plant a Marblewall flag on the scene of the crime.

**Quest.** If the characters find a way to convince the prince that his advisors are acting behind his back, Gabriel asks them to get rid of the corrupt politicians. This is no easy task. They have bought many of the city guards.

### LIBBAR

A small village and military outpost. Libbar is home to an entire guild of criminals that work for Sun Valley's corrupt advisors. The commonfolk here are the criminals' families who support their immoral activities.

### EMERALD PEAK

Since the peace decree was signed, it is possible to have a profitable mining operation here. Gabriel Sun hired a team of dwarf prospectors/miners for the job. Emerald Peak sends hebdomadal goods to Sun Valley and Kadiss. They also make regular exports to Pinevert, Marblewall, and coastal towns in the Eastern Territories.

### KADISS

For Pinevert and Marblewall, the town of Kadiss is closer and easier to reach than Sun Valley. Gabriel Sun's government handles most of its foreign affairs here, so that unnecessary visits to Sun Valley are reduced to a minimum. This suits the corrupt government while it also fits Gabriel's personality, who prefers to avoid it all.

### BERRY BOG

A handful of guards and farmers live here. Berry Bog is more a military outpost than anything else. It exists to be the first point of contact in case someone wishes to approach Sun Valley from the south unannounced.



## PINEVERT

**ROBERT PINE IS** the ruler of the archipelago's south. He possesses the largest military force in the isles. There are troops deployed in Fort Galli, Port Gallows, and Cragmaw Fort; and more arrive each passing day. Robert only needs a good excuse to start a war. He does not wish to do it without a reasonable cause, lest Gabriel could wake up from his slumber to help the enemy, and not him.

**Quest.** The characters' exploits are tracked by Robert Pine's advisors. He summons the characters for an important job. They must infiltrate Sun Valley and kidnap Damian Sun, Gabriel's only child and heir to Sun Valley. Robert will use him to force Gabriel's hand into action.

## VINELASS

This is a small settlement of fishermen, hunters, and trackers. They are all good soldiers that work for Robert Pine. They scout the area, including the neighboring, unsettled islands at all times, even at night. They maintain Pinevert informed of any naval movement.

## CRAGMAW FORT AND FORT GALLI

Robert Pine prepares little by little. He waits for the best time to make his move or a way to twist Gabriel's hand into joining forces with him (see quest above). Both of these places are packed with soldiers, weapons, and siege weaponry such as scorpions, ballistas, and rams.

## PORT GALLOWES

Lots of fishermen work on this side of the archipelago to catch the best shrimp and tuna of the isles. However, ever since Robert's plans of conquest started, this port is slowly becoming another military outpost.

## PORT FREEDOM

Robert incorrectly believes that this place is named after his philosophy of war. To this day, he ignores that this settlement is home to many who wish to leave Pinevert's military inclinations. A clandestine operation helps people move to Sun Valley or Marblewall on small boats.

## MARBLEWALL

**EVEN IF IT** is all due to his father's work, Fabian has the best reputation and standing with foreigners. The Eastern Territories seek to trade with Marblewall twice as much as with the other two principalities. And this is not only because of its geographic advantage. Fabian does not care how this makes the other princes feel. He has an idea to make them bend the knee a bit more.

**Quest.** Fabian knows the characters for their diplomatic exploits and negotiation successes in the past. He believes they are the perfect group to deliver a letter to the other two princes. In this letter, he politely requests Gabriel Sun and Robert Pine, princes of Sun Valley and Pinevert respectively, to sign a new peace decree. This one is called Fabian's Peace decree. The letter then goes on with 10 pages of formalities and details.

## MARBLE KEEP AND ACORN'S FORT

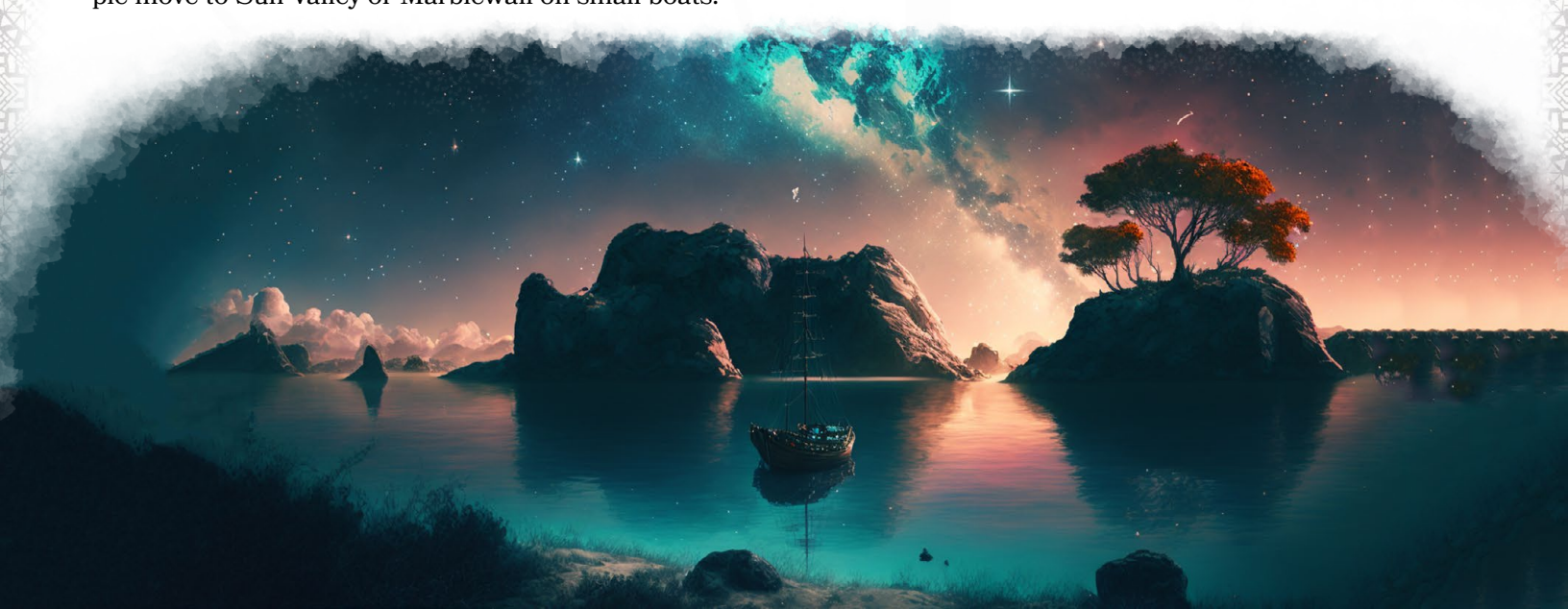
Despite Fabian's dreams of greatness, he is not a bad leader and knows how to manage his people. He is aware of Robert's soldiers to the south but he trusts that the man won't make a move unless he has a real cause. Fabian has the support of the Eastern Territories' leaders and Robert knows that. He needs a reason to act.

## DALI TOWN AND MULL TOWN

These two small settlements are extensions of Marblewall. The city grows and they opted to expand north. Many of the farmers and folk that live here come from the Eastern Territories. They seek better lives in the rich archipelago. They hope to be the pioneers of a larger community. They build for the generations to come.

## XORN'S KEEP

Fabian placed this military outpost in between the two smaller villages to protect them from any surprise move from Robert. Soldiers scout the area regularly. The fort also serves as a communication outpost for the cities and leaders from the Eastern Territories.



# THE TREE OF SACRIFICES

Many people have gone missing in the past few weeks. All clues point in the same direction. I never trusted those elves in the forest depths anyway...

Constable Harold

## Delve Level 4 (3,600 XP)

9 scouts  
4 thugs  
2 veterans  
2 cult fanatics

## SETUP

**THE VAST UNIVERSE** is filled with many cultures and societies. Some of these people have customs that differ completely from one another. So much, so that what can come as usual or traditional to a person can alienate an individual from a different part of the world.

This supplement brings the characters to Darkbark Forest, a beautiful green land with an endless bed of deep green woods. This forest is home to the sapphire elves, named like this after the magical stone that glows on the forehead of the giant tree they call their leader. Uhlamog is its name. The grand tree has been here since the elves can remember. The face on the bark guides them, speaks to them, and it passes on obscure lore and understanding through ancient rituals. For generations, the fuel for these old ceremonies has been living sacrifices.

## THE DARKBARK ELVES

**THIS COMMUNITY OF** wood elves had never caused problems in the many nearby towns. However, it was about a month ago when the tree's messages to the elves changed. It no longer allowed them to perform sacrifices from among their people. The face on the bark requested the elves to bring fresh blood of a different kind.

The elves, blinded by their devotion to their tree god, became the worst version of themselves and started attacking travelers or people in nearby areas. Humans, half-elves, halflings, it did not matter. The sapphire elves attack on sight and poison their victims to bring them before their leader alive. They slay the poor unfortunate ones at the sacrificial stone in the depths of the forest (see map). It was only a matter of time before the authorities were informed of the several kidnappings in the past few weeks. The capital's constable offers a reward for the job, but the characters may have another reason for coming to Darkbark Forest (see **Adventure Hooks**).

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**USE ONE OR** any combination of the following hooks to get the characters involved with the sapphire elves.

### BRING THOSE PEOPLE BACK

The characters are hired by the capital's authorities to investigate the forest, track the culprits, and bring back any survivors. Constable Harold offers 4,000 gp and an additional 500 gp for each person they rescue.

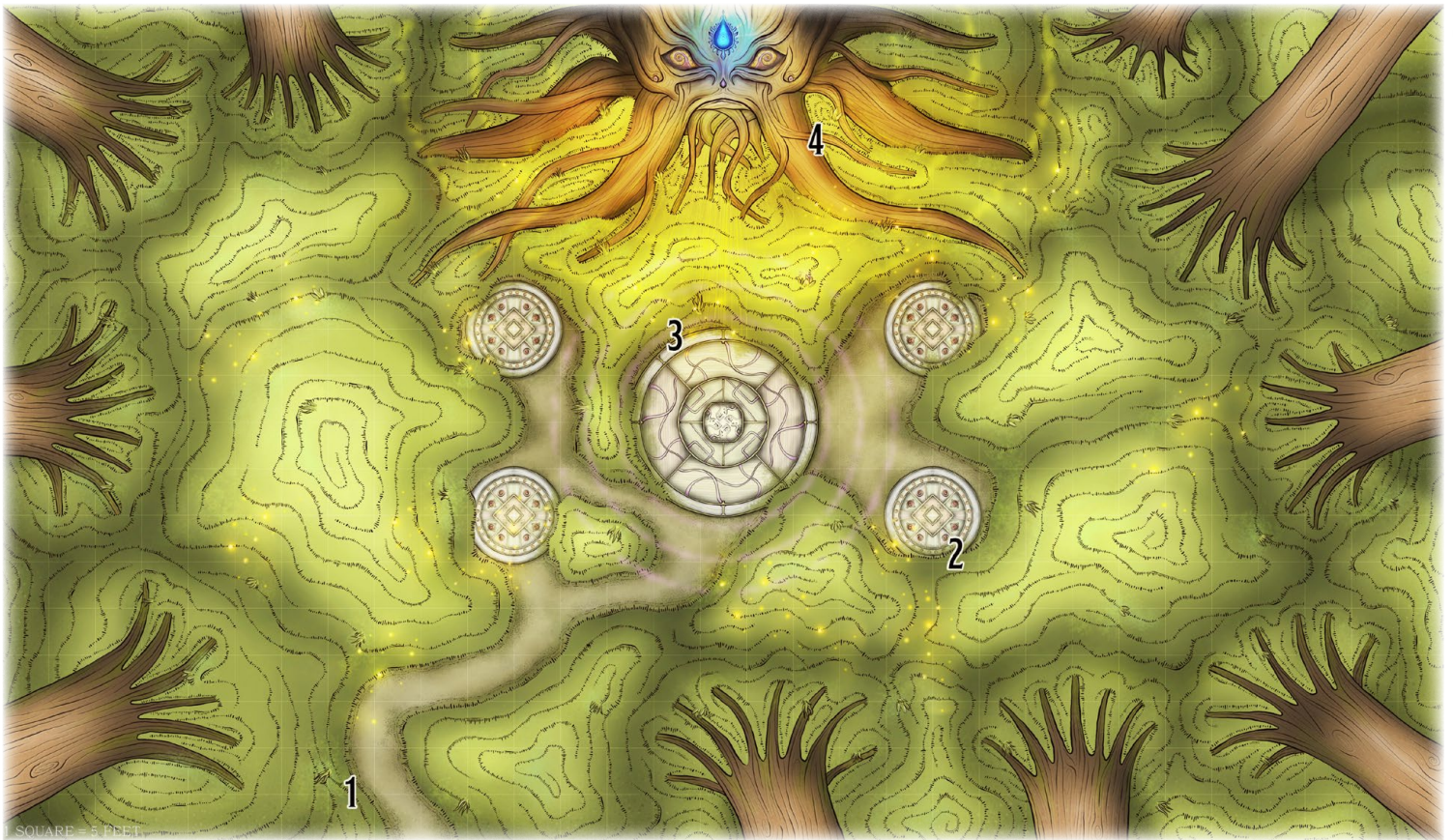
### A BAD FEELING

A druid or nature-inclined character in the party has a vivid, nightly vision. They see a grand tree with a carved face and an elvish coven about to ritualistically slay someone. When they wake up, they know the location of Darkbark Forest. They are compelled to investigate.

### PROTECT OUR TRADITIONS

An elf speaks with the characters before they enter the forest. He begs them to help his people. He claims that evil humans want to raid their village. All because their traditions are different. When they get to the scene, the characters are free to decide if they help the elves or not.





## THE SCENE

**THERE ARE ABOUT** sixty elves gathered between areas 3 and 4. The vast majority of them form a half-moon-shaped crowd before the visaged tree and around the runic circles to witness the ceremony. Standing next to the tree, with large drums and air instruments, eight elves play a tribal tune that the audience sings along to.

**Stopping the Elves.** The characters must defeat all combatant elves described in the areas to stop the last sacrifice. They must do this in less than 5 combat rounds to get to the shaman in time and stop him from performing the last sacrifice. All elves fight until slain.

**Helping the Elves.** The characters join the elves in their foul ceremony. If they stand and watch, a squad of twenty **guards** and four **veterans** attack. The soldiers take the characters for enemy allies and attack them too.

### 1. ROAD

The characters arrive from this side unless they attempt to circle unnoticed (DC 16 Stealth). Hundreds of footprints mark the hard-packed soil of this grassless area. Six elf **scouts** patrol the area for any intruders.

### 2. THE FOUR STARS

The elves think their ancestors created the stone circles. It was the tree. A *detect magic* spell reveals them as arcane energy vessels. Their inhumane sacrifices have empowered the stones for hundreds and hundreds of years.

### 3. THE SACRIFICIAL STONE

Not even the elves could say how many of their kind have surrendered their lives to the tree at this stone. But it is today, that with the blood from other races, Uhlamog is about to accomplish its goal: to open a portal between the Material Plane with the Abyss, the world of demons.

**Elves.** Three **scouts**, four **thugs**, two **veterans**, and one of the two shamans (**cult fanatic**) fight the intruders. Their job is to buy time for the remaining shaman so that he can perform the last sacrifice (see **Conclusion**).

### 4. UHLAGOG, THE VISAGED TREE

The tree with face witnesses all that occurs. If the elves are losing the battle, it summons three **dretches** to aid them. Even the elves are frightened by the demonic apparitions. The tree is not what they think it is. Uhlamog has fooled the naive wood elves for generations.

## CONCLUSION

**1.** The characters stop the shaman on time. They might never weigh the gravity of the catastrophe they just avoided. They find one survivor and get paid for a job well done. They shall be heroes with no capes.

**2.** The portal to the Abyss appears. The tree's mouth opens, sucking everything within 20 feet in front of its maw. Demons shall emerge any minute. How to close this festering door is an adventure for another day...

# SOLVING OUTSIDE THE BOX

*A GM supplement about approaching puzzles by Alex Rinehart*



**FEW TOPICS ARE** as hotly contested among tabletop games players as puzzles. There is no shortage of supplements, forums, public posts, etc., offering brilliant challenges for your groups, articles claiming that puzzles should be abolished, and arguments about whether they offer a problem to solve to the players or their characters. Usually, these arguments are about whether the wizard in the party should be able to make an Intelligence check to figure out the solution to a riddle, considering the answer could be or is unclear to the player in question.

I'm here with a different opinion: puzzles are great **when they are appropriate**. I don't mean tonally (though it can be jarring if the solution to your puzzle relies on puns, lore, or linguistic peculiarities that aren't present in the fictional world you are playing in). Rather, I'm telling you that there are two types of puzzles:

- Those presented to players
- And those presented to characters.

**Note:** Within the two categories, there are puzzles that are good at achieving your goals but others that are not.

Puzzles that are presented to players are bad. Or at the very least they are contentious and out-of-place in a role-playing game. These include riddles, mazes, crosswords, and anything you might find in the “*fun and games*” or “*brainteasers*” section of a newspaper. Stop using them. Everyone at the table has gathered around to play a game, not to unscramble words or search for anagrams.

The next logical step is to move those puzzles down a layer in fiction. For instance, instead of presenting a maze to your players, you describe to them the paths and dead-ends they take with each turn, until someone inevitably pulls out pen and paper and starts drawing the maze. This is just the previous class of puzzle, but more tedious, not to mention more prone to errors caused by miscommunication. If you do present these puzzles, there's no reason they shouldn't be able to be resolved by a simple die roll, or by players narrating how their characters get out of the jam à la *‘I run my hand along the right wall and follow it until I get to the end’*.

There is no engagement in this last interaction, and these kinds of puzzles punish players who are playing characters with stats wildly different than their own (which is very common). If you have a player saying, *‘Well I know the answer, but I don't think my character Brick has the brains to figure it out’*, you are probably heading down the wrong path: that path is full of unengaged players. This means you need a different approach.

So what is a better option? Puzzles that are presented to characters that can be solved using the tools the characters have at the moment. These are in-world obstacles that the characters can tackle using what is on their character sheet or whatever ideas they can think of. This is how puzzle games like *Portal* are designed: they give you a set of tools and constraints and watch as you solve the problem within those established constraints.



## ENGAGING PLAYERS

My favorite example of this is a lever in a hard-to-reach location. Perhaps it is on the other side of a grate and needs to be pushed. That is easy enough, a long stick will do. If it needs to be pulled? That's when players will start looking for spells like *misty step* or *mage hand*. These spells weren't designed to be used this way exactly, but they do present a way to solve a multitude of situations. This harkens back to an older style of play where spells could interact with one another and the outside world.

I'm not suggesting you design puzzles without a solution, or that you just take the third (or best) idea your players come up with: the puzzles should have clear victory conditions (a pressure-plate on the ceiling, a switch that is behind a mousehole-sized hole, or multiple buttons that need to be pressed all at once). Legibility is your friend. It should never be unclear what the puzzle is or what conditions need to be met to satisfy it.

Pick the simplest possible tool to interact with (a rope to pull, a bell to ring, a door to open, a chest to lock-pick), and put a simple obstacle in its way. One that your players can deal with in similar simple ways. They will surprise and astound you with the innovative solutions they come up with on the spot. And best of all, they will feel remarkably clever for taking the tools that they have and applying them in unusual ways to accomplish a goal.

And that is the real joy of puzzles and problem-solving.



### SIMPLE OBSTACLES

- Time or timing (multiple things happening at once)
- Distance (crossing a large ravine or gator-filled moat)
- Obstruction (narrow or nonexistent opening)
- Dangerous terrain (e.g. lava)
- Hostile creatures better left unaware (guards, monsters)
- Cages / bars

### SIMPLE MECHANISMS

- Pull a lever or switch
- Press a button or apply weight to a pressure-plate
- Ring a gong
- Steal / replace an object (key / egg / scroll)
- Move an object to a specific place (like a ball to a socket. This would be trivial if you could act on it directly)
- Destroy a number of supports, magic orbs, or protective charms



# A WAGER FOR MIGHT

Otherworldly power can be retrieved from the unseen pathways across the planes. But it comes with a ruinous cost. One that can render you insane!

On the Art of Planar Binding

## Delve Level 7 (4,500 XP)

10 gibbering mouthers

### SETUP

**FOR THOSE INVOLVED** in arcane studies and the practice of the magical arts, the temptation to dabble into the mighty field of study they call high-arcana is too strong to avoid. It is such a promise of power that few can let it remain in darkness. The path, at first, appears to be simple. One must only study and practice, and learn alchemy and transmutation. Mages get the impression that a steady progress and learning curve awaits them in the strange alleys of high-arcana. Alas, it is not that simple. It is a deceptively perilous path that hardens the heart and breaks the soul. What must be done to progress is a terrible test for the mind and body. Many of those mages lose their lives on the unfortunate wager for might.

### THE STUDENT OF MADNESS

**THE PLANE OF** madness is a source of fear and fascination for mages and scholars. A powerful spellcaster named Sebastian Brie dedicated decades of his prosperous life to studying it. According to him, with a properly adjusted device, the right enchantments, and a strong mind, he would be able to summon heralds from the plane of madness. What nature these creatures would have he ignored, but it did not matter. Sebastian's foul objective cared not for these messengers. He would magically bind them to a device in his laboratory and then distill their planar power into a substance he dubbed the Void Extract. A concentrated philter that would contain the power of the many desiccated planar entities.

The device was built from scratch in Sebastian's underground laboratory and lair. It took him five years to build it and test it carefully for its first use. Drunk with ambition, Sebastian cast his summoning spell. The amorphous, tentacled creatures that stepped forth from the portal gibbered maddening commands into the mage's brain. Sebastian underestimated them; he was not strong enough to withstand the lunacy in their presence. In a bout of derangement, Sebastian activated the device while standing in the transmutation circle.

### THE CORRUPTED PHILTER

**WHEN SEBASTIAN BRIE** activated the device, it stole away the life energy of three gibbering mouthers and the hapless wizard. Their combined essences were distilled into a vial of corrupted Void Extract. The strange mixture is fatal to drink but could be used as a focus for arcane experiments and binding rituals (see **Conclusion**).

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

**ON A LARGER**, overarching quest, the characters require access to a theoretical substance that can aid them in defeating a mighty foe. A mentor or ally is the source of this knowledge: A substance known as Void Extract has powerful magical properties that can protect them against extraplanar threats; it can also be used as a weapon.

The characters must spend 1d4 weeks following leads, investigating in libraries, and consulting sages. After this investigation, all evidence points to a small town where Sebastian Brie died in a dangerous experiment about 8 years ago. The locals claim the man was altruistic and helped the townsfolk often. After a thunderous explosion in his laboratory, he was never seen again. Some tried to explore the lair but fell prey to deadly traps.

### FEATURES OF THE LAIR

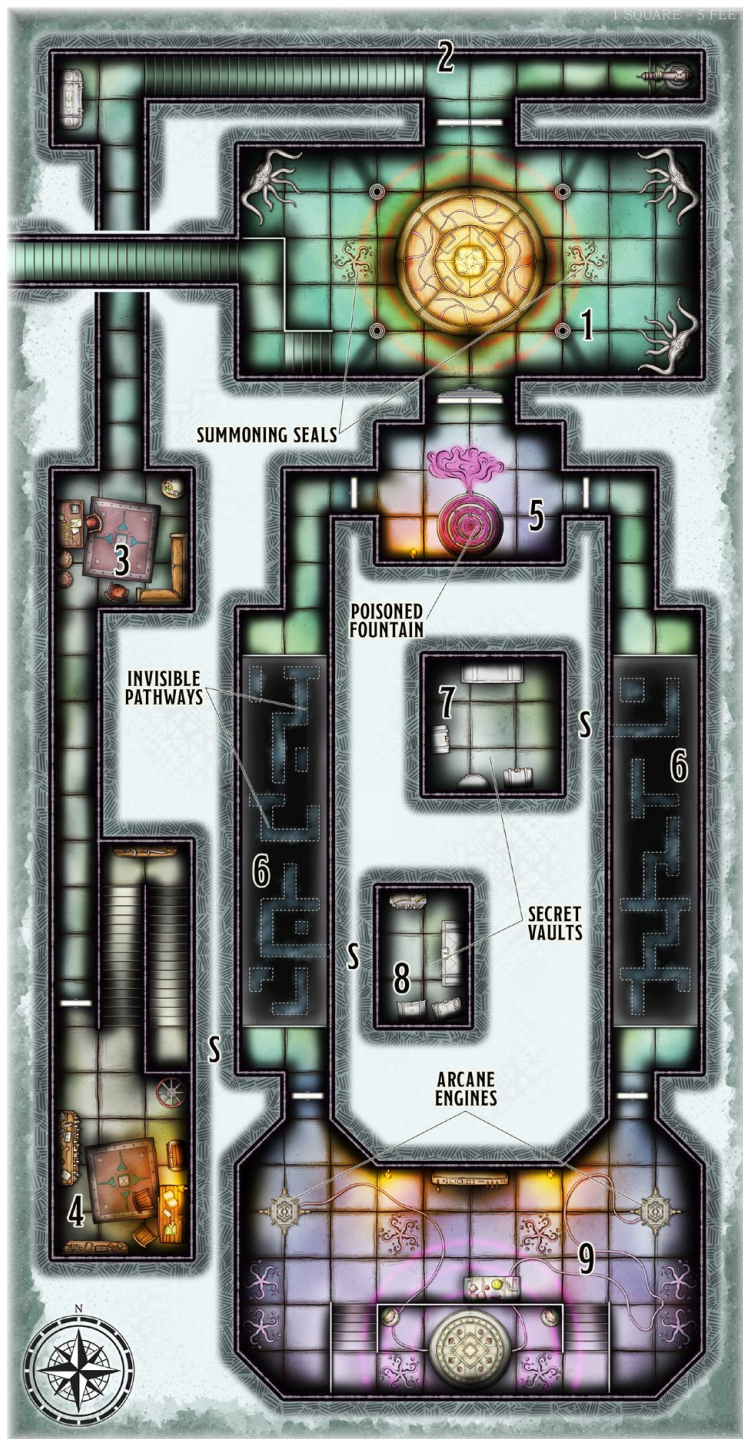
**Light.** The wall sconces in the lair feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

**Locks.** All doors are made of soapstone slabs with medium-quality locking devices (DC 15 Thieves' Tools). Forcing open a door causes a foot-wide magical explosion that deals 5d6 fire damage (DC 16 Dexterity / half).

**Chamber Ceilings.** All areas have 20-foot-tall, flat ceilings decorated with intricate frescoes that depict arcane formulae and never-before-seen constellations.

**Arcane Negation.** A random-acting, anti-magic field in the lair negates the casting of arcane spells within the compound. When an arcane spell is cast, there is a 1-in-6 chance it fizzles out. Divine spells are unaffected.

**Magic Traps.** Trap devices in the lair reset once per hour, including the exploding runes on doors. An automated *mending* spell repairs damaged devices too.



## 1. GRAND ENTRANCE HALL

*A long flight of stairs in the mage's abandoned home leads down to a grand chamber with a 15-foot-wide glowing circle surrounded by three tentacled statues.*

A fine sequence of runes in the circle can be used with the *circle of teleportation* spell. Stepping on the circle, though, triggers the two summoning seals in the room. A one-way, glittering portal into the plane of madness opens and two **gibbering mouthers** emerge to attack. During combat, the three tentacled statues on the walls take on a quasi-living quality and cast the *confusion* spell centered on a different character (recharge 5-6 each).

## 2. THE ILLUSORY WALL TRAP

The twenty-foot-long, east path is not visible when the characters come from area 1. A *major image* spell makes it seem covered by a stone wall and produces the sound of steps on the stairs in front of it. The sound is meant to distract the trespasser so that they turn left and away from the illusory wall. When a creature reaches the stairs, the hidden, automated crossbow activates and shoots a bolt aiming at the closest target. The creature takes 8d6 piercing damage (DC 17 Dexterity / half).

**Treasure.** The coffer at the bottom of the stairs contains a set of rotten robes, a pouch with 350 gp, two *potions of greater healing*, and a blank spellbook.

## 3. SEBASTIAN'S ROOM

*A layer of dust and cobwebs covers the furniture in this ancient bedroom. Despite the long-term abandonment, the room is somewhat welcoming and cozy.*

Sebastian lived and worked here. A foldable bed hangs on the east wall. The remains of decayed food lie on the night-table plates. Sebastian's incomplete journal on the desk reveals the following after a 10-minute review:

- The mage was working on a way to create the Void Extract in this underground laboratory.
- The command word for the valve in area 4 is 'Cina'.
- Sebastian was confident that his device could withstand the requirements of such an experiment.
- The last entry was a day before the experiment.

**Treasure.** 38 gp, a *potion of poison*, a *potion of slipperiness*, and a *wand of detect magic* lie on the desk.

## 4. SEBASTIAN'S STUDY

The room contains two bookcases, a desk, a wooden chest, and a wheel valve. Sebastian's research, arcane formulae, and documentation on his binding device are on the desk. A spellcaster can review them in 1 hour to understand the workings of the arcane engines in area 9.

The wheel valve causes the invisible pathways in area 6 to glow in the dark. It can only be operated by saying the command word (see area 3). Otherwise, a *dispel magic* spell allows the immovable valve to be used once.

## 5. THE POISONED FOUNTAIN

*A beautiful, three-level fountain pours a bright magenta fluid and produces a fragrance of roses and pines.*

When a creature comes within 5 feet of the fountain, all three doors lock and poisonous fumes are released from it. Creatures in the room take 6d6 poison damage per round of exposure (DC 16 Constitution / half). The reinforced doors from area 1 can only be bypassed by a master locksmith (DC 20 Thieves' Tools).

## 6. THE IMPASSABLE GAPS

*The hallway ends and an insurmountable gap follows. The walls are decorated with ancient, flowing elvish runes. The far side is hidden in darkness.*

The elvish runes spell an old poem about floating leaves in the wind. There is a path to cross the gap in each area 6. There are invisible, 2-foot-wide, floating sections of stone that can be used to cross south. Crossing without aid is a dangerous proposition. Through trial and error, a creature can use an object to feel its way across. Each 20-foot section requires caution and precision (DC 18 Dexterity). A failure by 5 or more causes a creature to fall. The bottom is 80 feet below, falling creatures take 8d6 bludgeoning damage. Operating the valve in area 4 causes the pathways to glow in the dark. This discovery is not immediately apparent if the characters have artificial light sources with them (DC 16 Intelligence).

## 7. EAST VAULT

The secret chamber contains several stone chests with bronze locks and a stone coffer. The enclosures are open.

**Treasure.** Collectively, the chests contain 90 pp, 2,000 gp, 4,350 sp, a black velvet mask stitched with silver thread (25 gp), a silver ewer (45 gp), a *bag of holding*, a *driftglobe*, a *potion of fire breath*, a *potion of resistance* (cold), and a *spell scroll* of *expeditious retreat*.

## 8. WEST VAULT

The secret chamber contains several stone chests and a single bookshelf packed with scrolls and tomes.

**Treasure.** The chamber contains 70 pp, 2,150 gp, 3,670 sp, a copper chalice with silver filigree (90 gp), a turquoise jewel box (45 gp), a *+2 shortsword*, and a spellbook with all spells from the archmage statblock.

## 9. THE BINDING DEVICE

*Two tower-like, arcane apparatuses glow in this chamber. Cables connect them to a magic circle on a raised dais. A layer of magenta dust on everything.*

Only dust remains of Sebastian and the aberration's corpses. However, a crystal vial on the magic circle contains the corrupted Void Extract. It contains Sebastian's deranged soul (see Conclusion). A spellcaster who reviewed the documents in area 4 can operate the control panel, place a new vial on the magic circle, and activate the device. Doing so, summons eight **gibbering mouther**s to each summoning seal (see map). Defeating them in combat weakens them and allows the arcane engines to function. Upon defeat, their essences are captured and distilled into the crystal vial. If a character stands on the circle when this occurs, they suffer the same fate as Sebastian and ruin the binding experiment (no save). Otherwise, a vial of Void Extract is created.



## CONCLUSION

**THE CHARACTERS REACH** the end of this adventure. They must face the consequences of their deeds.

Successful creation of the Void Extract overwhelms the arcane engines and damages them. They require years of research and work to be repaired. The Void Extract is a campaign item that shall aid them to overcome the planar threats of their home campaign. Thus, the nature of the Void Extract and its effects are left to the GM's discretion. It is recommended that the acquisition of this item marks a mighty change in the campaign.

The corrupted Void Extract is fatal if drunk (no save). However, an arcane spellcaster can attune to it as an arcane focus. It is cursed. Once per day, the caster can cast a spell as if one level higher. 2d6 weeks after, the caster starts hearing maddening whispers from the vial. It threatens to render the mage insane once per day akin to the *contact other plane* spell (DC 15 Intelligence).

A character standing on the circle when the arcane engines power on becomes trapped in a second vial of corrupted Void Extract. Retrieving their soul is almost impossible. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...



# THE EQUILIBRIUM APPARATUS

Beware of the hidden promises of arcane knowledge. An apparent blessing hides danger underneath. Never trust obscure enchantments blindly.

Ancient Drow Adage

## Delve Level 1 (1,200 XP)

3 ghouls  
2 shadows  
8 skeletons

## SETUP

**IN DROW CULTURE**, apprentice mages learn strict magic laws that restrict their advancement and knowledge. Many of these restrictions are born from taboos, deeply ingrained in their societies. Others are there to stop mages from wreaking havoc on the world. Things that, if left uncared for, have the potential to cause irreparable damage. One such arcane taboo is known as the Equilibrium Restriction. It places limits on conjuration enchantments so that mages never seek to duplicate items or beings. Unsurprisingly, a daring mage shall attempt this feat once per generation. They are severely punished for their transgressions and are fed to the spiders afterward.

## PRIESTESS AVRANA

**BORN IN THE** elite classes of the underground drow capital and surrounded by arcane tomes and all the implements gold can buy, a powerful mage priestess rose to prominence nine hundred years ago. Priestess Avrana Daoffin's eminence in the arcane field earned her renown and respect in her close-knit community. She was a prominent scholar and enchantress; it took her hundreds of years to reach her field's summit. At that moment, she felt invincible and untouchable. The secrets behind the Equilibrium Restriction tempted beyond anything else. Avrana wondered how powerful she would be if only she could duplicate her own power. Duplicating herself was the ultimate goal. For years, she worked in secret and built a powerful device in the family crypt. No one would ever dare delve within to discover her illicit work. One day, she turned the Equilibrium Apparatus on and gazed at a new Avrana materialize on its other end. One was ecstatic, the other confused. In madness, the new Avrana turned on her creator and a deadly, magical battle ensued. Collapsed and dying, Avrana learned the hard way that duplication of the self is a ruinous proposition. Both mages perished from their wounds that day.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**THE CHARACTERS HEAR** a most interesting tale of an ancient drow crypt where a magical device is said to be hidden. Legend has it that the device is so powerful, yet so forbidden, that drow moved away from the region and have shunned it for hundreds of years. Looking into it, the characters learn of the Daoffin family crypt and its location in the cavern network of the Underworld.

## FEATURES OF THE CRYPT

**Light.** The sconces in the dungeon feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

**Locks.** All doors are made of limestone slabs. Some of them are locked (see map, DC 14 Thieves' Tools).

**Chamber Ceilings.** All areas have 30-foot-tall, vaulted ceilings decorated with detailed bas-reliefs depicting spiderwebs and great ancient drow settlements.

**Collapsed Tunnels.** Burrowing critters have collapsed some passages. They can be dug through in 1 hour with shovels (DC 18 Athletics, double the time on a failure).

**Secret Tunnels.** Perceptive individuals notice hidden pathways behind collapsed walls (DC 17 Perception).

### 1. ENTRANCE HALL

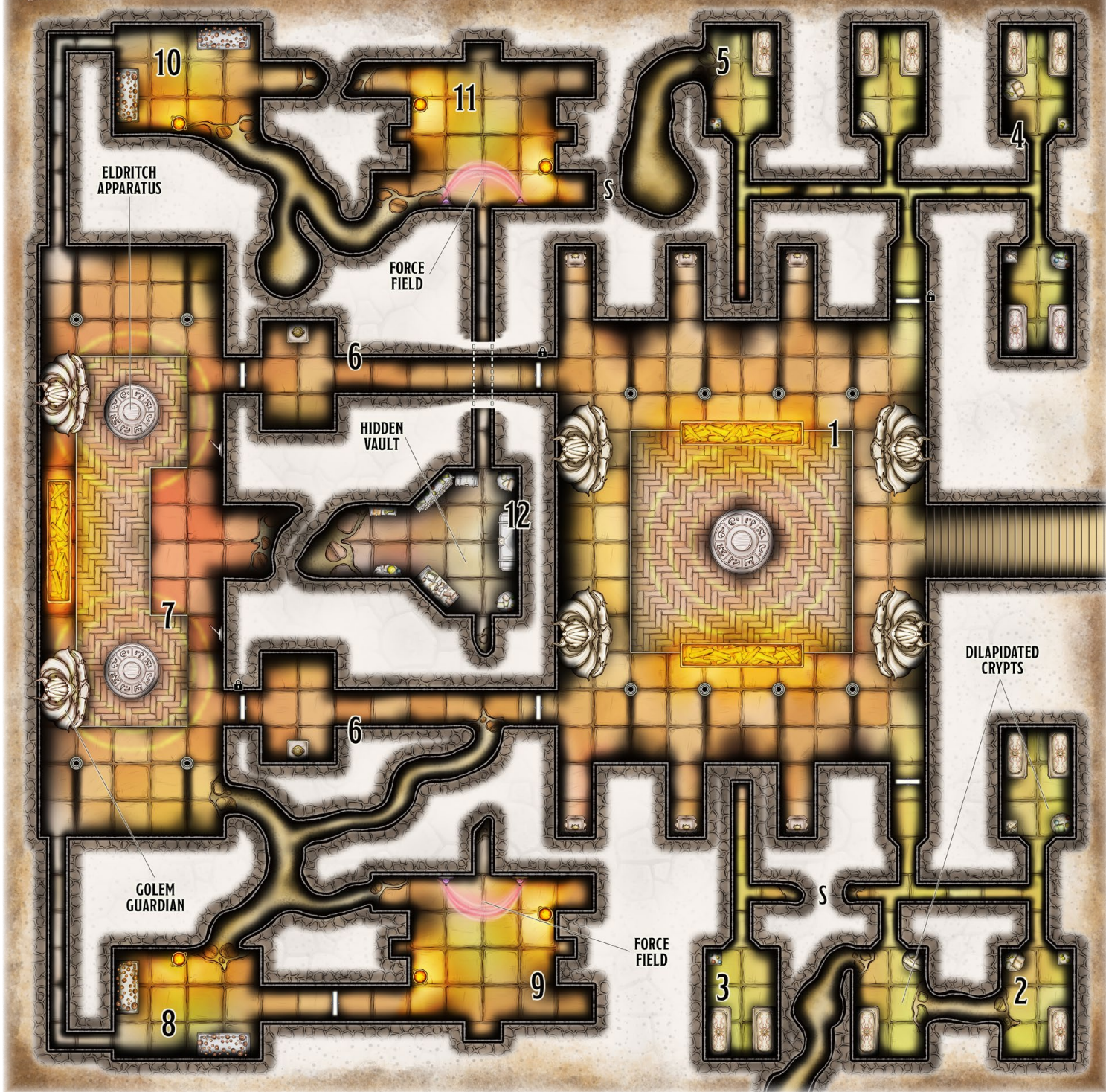
*The stairways give way to a grandiose hall decorated with elvish runes, a magic circle, standing sarcophagi, and four statues of armor-clad drow warriors.*

The runic circle can be used with the *circle of teleportation* spell. The characters are the first to come since Avrana's demise, no one else dared come because of taboo. The characters' intrusion is an insult against drow burial practices. The sarcophagi open and six **skeletons** emerge to attack. They crumble to dust upon defeat.

### 2. SOUTHERN CRYPT

The wing contains four burial chambers but one of them (area 3) is unreachable since the hallway collapsed. It can be reached through a hidden path (see **Features of the Crypt**). A **ghoul** hides in one of the closed coffins.

**Treasure.** Collectively, the four coffins contain 202 gp, 590 sp, a *potion of healing*, and a +1 mace.



### 3. DAOFFIN ELDERS

*Two ornate sarcophagi await in darkness; the likeness of two proud drow carved on their stone lids.*

Bronze plaques near the base of each enclosure identify the elves interred here as Daeg Daoffin, and Annega Daoffin. Historians recognize them as elder drow priests (DC 18 History). Their descendant, Avrana Daoffin, was a powerful priestess who broke an arcane taboo. Legend has it that she lost her life, mutilating her bloodline.

**Treasure.** A jeweled scepter with elvish runes and silver inlays (280 gp) is hidden under Daeg's remains.

### 4. NORTHERN CRYPT

The three northeast-most burial chambers contain six ornate sarcophagi. They belonged to renowned dignitaries of the Daoffin family. Their names and ranks are engraved on bronze plaques near the floor. Each lid is decorated with a stylized, spider-like sigil. When the characters intrude into the second burial chamber, two **ghouls** emerge from random sarcophagi. The ravenous, robe-clad, undead elves fight until slain.

**Treasure.** Collectively, the enclosures contain 24 gp, 900 sp, a dagger, and a *spell scroll of magic missile*.

## 5. DILAPIDATED TOMB

*A section of the wall in this chamber has collapsed. The edges are burned as if acid had corroded them.*

The cave-in leads to an irregular cavern chamber that can be used to access area 11 (see map). A naturalist concludes that the melted wall section was destroyed by hundreds of acidic centipedes; a type of vermin common in the Underworld (DC 16 Nature). The insect swarm appears to have left the crypt after finding nothing to eat.

## 6. GRAND HALL ANTECHAMBERS

*The long hallway leads to a small antechamber. The stone doors are marked with a slithering, green-hued elvish rune. It glows rhythmically, like a beating heart.*

Characters that speak Elvish identify the rune as an old form of the word 'Replication'. Historians recall an old rumor in drow societies about the prohibition to use magic to replicate objects or living beings (DC 18 History). The vase near the door contains a single dose of *dust of disappearance*. More dust is regenerated at dawn.

## 7. HALL OF EQUILIBRIUM

*Warrior statues oversee two magical circles carved with eldritch runes and enchantments. Decayed bones lie scattered across the eerily lit chamber.*

The bones belong to Avrana Daoffin and her duplicate. The eldritch apparatus that permits duplication magic is hidden underneath the stone disks. A spellcaster that knows Elvish can decipher the Equilibrium Apparatus' functioning with 10 minutes of study. The runes reveal that placing anything in the south circle shall be replicated in the north circle when the device is activated.

Pulling the two levers on the east wall activates the Equilibrium Apparatus. It can only be used once per week as its arcane batteries take that long to charge. When the characters enter this chamber the two **skel- etons** and two **shadows** rise to attack them mercilessly.

## 8. SOUTH PRAYING CHAMBER

The walls of this chamber house dozens of drawer-like niches where the ashen remains of members of the Daoffin family lie. A glowing candle burns for each of them. Elvish characters can pay their respects by kneeling and praying here as expected in traditional elvish customs. Doing so earns the gratitude of some of the spirits, awarding them 1 spell slot or healing 1d10 hit points.

## 9. SOUTH FORCE FIELD

A scintillating, glowing barrier impedes passage to area 12. A dexterous tinkerer can attempt to disarm the barrier generators (DC 19 Thieves' Tools). Failure causes a bolt of energy to arc and electrocute the hapless character. They take 4d6 lightning damage (DC 16 Dexterity).

## 10. NORTH PRAYING CHAMBER

This chamber is a mirrored version of area 8. In the same manner, an elvish character can pay their respects to the elf elders and gain a similar benefit.

## 11. NORTH FORCE FIELD

This chamber is identical to chamber 9 except that the narrow hallway beyond the force field is not collapsed and can be used to reach area 12. In addition, after operating the Equilibrium Apparatus in area 7, its workings overload the force field generators. The force field disappears for six hours before reappearing once more.

## 12. THE DAOFFIN HOARD

The chamber contains stone chests, plinths, and bookshelves. The Daoffin family crest is carved on the wall.

**Protective Measures.** A silent *alarm* is set up to notify living members of the drow priesthood. A permanent *arcane eye* in the room is used to identify the characters and see if the Daoffin hoard is shamelessly plundered.

**Treasure.** The chamber contains 55 pp, 3,200 gp, 7,900 sp, a +1 *spear*, a mithral vest, a set of masterwork kunai knives, a gilded holy symbol (35 gp), an onyx statuette of a drow goddess (90 gp), a collection of drow biographies and literary works (250 gp), two potions of healing, a *spell scroll* of *blight*, and a *spell scroll* of *heal*.

# CONCLUSION

**THE CHARACTERS REACH** the end of this adventure. They must face the consequences of their deeds.

## THE ELDRITCH APPARATUS

After defeating the undead abominations, the characters gain access to the arcane device Avrana left behind. It can replicate any object, even magical items. It can also create a duplicate version of any living being. It is a powerful artifact but it can only be used once per week. It works without issue unless a sentient being is replicated. Following ancient drow lore, the replication of sentient beings creates an overwhelming paradox in their minds. The bodies are separated but the minds are not. The resulting confusion often ends in a deadly clash or a descent into insanity. Should the characters attempt such a deranged idea, they shall soon meet a grim fate.

## THE DROW PRIESTHOOD

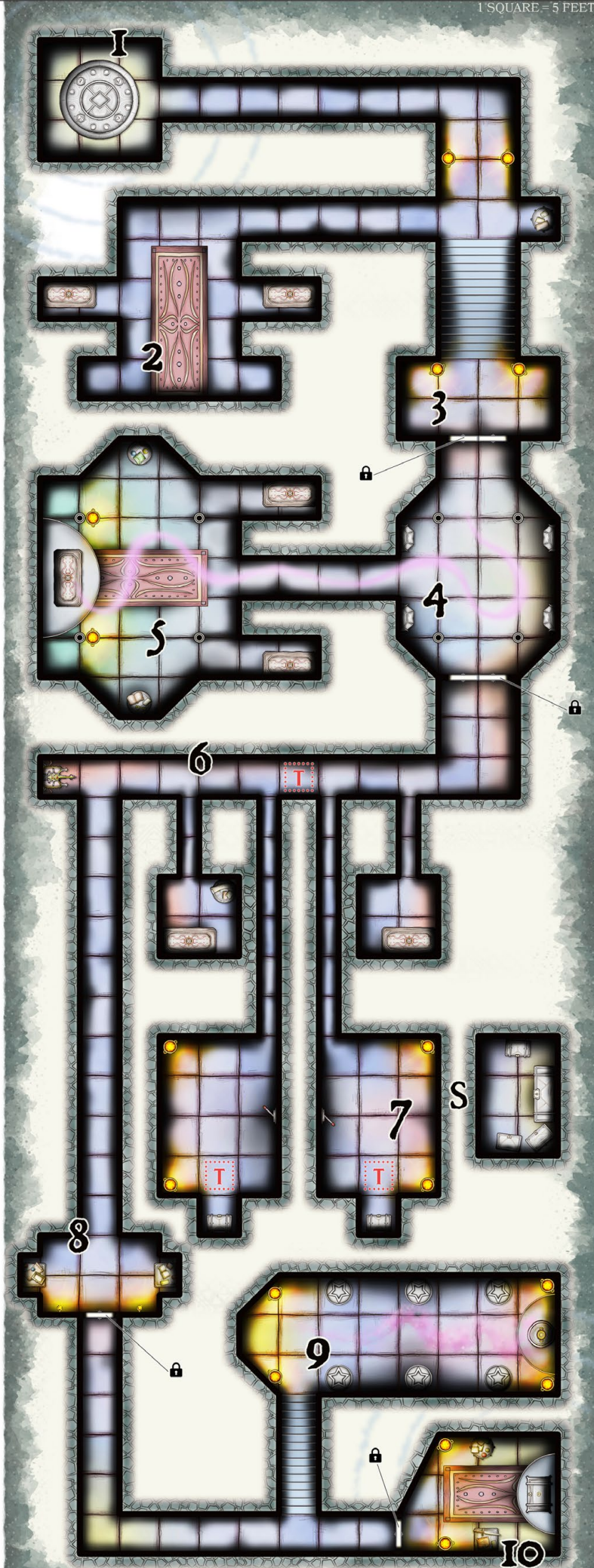
The characters' visit to the vault doesn't go unnoticed. The priests are aware of Avrana's creation and regard it with hate and fear. The characters' presence in the crypt presents a terrible danger of breaking the Equilibrium Restriction. The state of alert is heightened if elves are part of the group. The priests are far away but they shall soon track down the characters and bring forth their revenge. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...

# The Path of Pain

**P**ain is the true test of endurance. The main force that divides those that make weak claims, and those willing to risk it all to achieve their goals. In arcane circles, the rune sequence that opens teleportation access to the Path of Pain is well known. The arcane community at large ignores where the runes came from; they may have been in their libraries for hundreds of years. But what is known is that the demiplane they lead to contains a perilous dungeon that few have managed to explore and survive. The runes in the first chamber refer to it as the 'Path of Pain'. It welcomes travelers to test their resolve and gain access to a yet-unclaimed treasure.

## Area Descriptions

1. As known by many, the entrance hall's walls are marked with runes in Elvish and Draconic that dares travelers to explore the dungeon. Should they doubt their abilities, they must turn back now lest they are humbled.
2. The mural on the far wall depicts a scene of an epic battle of faceless warriors against a gargantuan, otherworldly monster. Two sarcophagi carved in the likeness of knights await in the darkness. The lids slide aside to free two tentacled abominations that shake the sentient mind.
3. The limestone door is magically locked. An eldritch carving on the stone depicts runes in an old, forbidden language. Reading the runes is the only way to open the door. Alas, the primordial language of darkness is not meant for mortals to utter. Whoever does it gains a terrible scar that starts in their mouth, continues down their neck, and reaches their abdomen.
4. Meandering strands of lilac, shifting mist move around four standing sarcophagi etched in the likeness of feline-folk. The ephemeral mist has an intoxicating effect when breathed. It causes mortals to hallucinate and see enemies where there are none. The enclosures open and four necrophages emerge. The scions of necromancy attack mercilessly. The gates to area 6 open when the necrophages are defeated in combat.
5. This chamber is an opulent tomb for three mages that walked the planes long ago. None have ever visited this place; the strongest visitors had only managed to reach area 4 before perishing or fleeing. The ethereal ghosts of the three mages materialize. They are not hostile. Instead, visitors can ask these sages any question that pertains to obscure knowledge.
6. The 50-foot-long hallway features a pressure-plate by its midpoint. Upon activation, it triggers a trap at the end of the hallway. It shoots a bolt of lightning strong enough to scorch and melt iron. Each of the side rooms that fork from the hallway contains a stone coffin. Within lie the earthly remains of some forgotten warriors. Necromancy runes in the enclosure reveal these warriors were meant to rise but the magic was worn off.
7. Two narrow pathways from area 6 lead to mirrored chambers that contain a stone chest with a bronze lock and an iron lever on the inner wall. Pulling both levers is required to open the reinforced door to area 10. When each lever is pulled, six evanescent shadows filter through the wall cracks and attack. The shadows are mindless ethereal constructs. The chests are empty bait. A pressure-plate in front of each chest triggers a barrage of poisonous darts from the side walls. The darts contain wyvern poison.
8. The limestone door is magically locked and marked with the forbidden language like the one in area 3. Reading the runes opens the door. However, the one who does must forego one of his deepest wishes forever. Such drive and motivation are lost to them during their lifetime. Those acquainted with eldritch knowledge recognize this as 'The Serpent's Fate'.
9. A golden vase on a stone plinth pours a lilac vapor that moves around the room as if alive. Granite statues of men covering their eyes hug the walls. The cursed vase has the power to ensnare the weak-minded. Those charmed by it feel an irresistible urge to reach for the vase. Alas, touching the relic causes a mortal being to become vaporous and be absorbed into the soul-stealing jar. It contains hundreds of tormented souls.
10. The locked door opens by pulling the two levers in area 7. Within, a large stone coffer awaits in the warm light of two magical braziers. After releasing the sliding lock and lifting the lid, the room is bathed in bewitching light as the grandest of arcane treasures is finally revealed...



# CHAOS WARRIORS

*A new character archetype by Emily Allen*



I've been looking back at Esoteric Enterprises, listening to [French Antifascist Rap](#), and arguing about 40k lately, and looking at the state of the world and the inexorable rise of authoritarianism at home and abroad, and being grumpy about how D&D-like games position PCs, and it has slowly solidified into some thoughts. Here they are: Scholars and experts will tell you that the true nature of chaos is incomprehensible. Perhaps they lie, or perhaps they've fooled themselves with their sophistry, but either way, they are wrong. Chaos is very easy to understand.

## WHAT IS CHAOS, REALLY?

**TAKE THE THREE-BY-THREE** alignment grid you are familiar with. It is a lie to confuse you. There is only one axis. Law vs Chaos and Evil vs Good are the same things. Law is evil, Chaos is good. Ideas like 'lawful good' or 'chaotic neutral' are word games designed to stop you from thinking clearly, like '*benevolent evil*'.

Law is evil. And it has to be, by its very nature. The process of Law is one of constant domination and subjugation. Law is the repetitive use of force - violent or coercive - to enforce the will of the few onto the otherwise unwilling many. Stripping away freedom, autonomy, and dignity to subject us to the tyranny of the lawful.

All Cops Are Bastards, and that includes paladins.

Law is the force that decrees certain types of people (women, the poor, the mentally ill, the goblins, the foreigners) as lesser beings, inferior. Law is the force that would strip your bodily autonomy from you, because it considers you unworthy of controlling your own mind and flesh. Law is the force that will inflict pain on those who don't comply until their will is broken.

Once you understand this, it is simple.

What is Chaos, then? At its heart, Chaos is freedom. Defiance of the forces and representatives of Law, personal autonomy, and your own will above all else. Chaos is anarchy, black magic, antifascism, and the furious howl of those who will be oppressed no longer. Many people understand this, on some gut instinctive level, but few embrace it, and even fewer embody it.

## WHO ARE CHAOS WARRIORS?

A **CHAOS WARRIOR**, then, is simply somebody who is fully dedicated themselves to Chaos. A burning torch of defiance in the face of oppression. They could come from any background, and possess any kind of talent.

The most well-known Chaos Warriors are fighters or barbarians, clad in ornate plate armor, unholy weapons, defeating the soldiers of order, and defiling their symbols of control. They carve through disciplined armies, burn tax records, demolish prisons, and desecrate churches.

Others are sorcerers, dabbling in forbidden magic, directing unshaped elemental power to remake creation to suit their whims. Witches, blasphemers, and madmen, no longer held back by the mere laws of nature.

Others still, are more subtle. Rogues and assassins that keep a low profile, sidestepping law enforcement, sowing havoc in their wake, and slipping back into the veil of their protective darkness. Arson, sabotage, and assassination carefully applied to cut the hamstrings of those who would oppress them from above.

Some Chaos Warriors seem to venerate greater forces. Change, decadence, fury, and entropy. Scholars see such practices and conclude that the Chaos Warriors must be worshipers of greater powers, slaves to some pantheon of unwholesome dark gods. They set to work classifying them, assigning them arrays of various carefully described demons, and categorizing their various gifts.

This, too, is a mistake, or a lie. The dark powers, in as much as they exist, are not external gods meddling with mortal puppets. Each dark power is simply a personification of the ideals that a given Chaos Warrior holds dear.

The lawful see a Chaos Warrior dedicated to decadence and excess - pursuing hedonism and self-indulgence with the same zeal as a priest pursues holiness - and conclude that he cannot be doing so of his own free will. So they hypothesize a dark prince, a thirsting god that he must be enslaved by, and invent all manner of demons and rituals in that dark prince's name. In truth, the dark prince is nothing more than that Chaos Warrior's own desires, given a name and personified.

It should be noted, however, that Chaos is not stupidity nor recklessness. Chaos Warriors understand the dire threat presented by Law. They are perfectly capable of freely choosing to associate with one another whenever it serves the cause. Often when the momentum builds, they gather into huge hordes, knowing that the tyranny of Law can't stand against their collective desires. Plenty wish to see others - the downtrodden and oppressed - find the same enlightenment they did, and work to spread their destabilizing message among the masses.

At the end of the day, though, every Chaos Warrior is an individual, following their own path and beholden to nothing and nobody, save their own ambitions.

## MECHANICS

**BECOMING A CHAOS** Warrior is an option for D&D-like games, ranging from 0th to 5th edition, as well as their various derivatives. Any character can become a chaos warrior simply by wanting to acquire this mindset.

**Alignment:** All Chaos Warriors are chaotic. They have *no* alignment on the good-evil axis (not even neutrality), as they realize that this axis is a lie. If any supernatural effect checks for good or evil, it fails to find any, and instead reports that the warrior is chaotic.

Further, a Chaos Warrior can never be bound by any oath, geas, or pact of any kind. They might enter into it, but even if the other party is bound by the agreement, the Chaos Warrior may freely disregard the pact.

**Chaos Points:** Chaos Warriors track the power of the energy of chaos within them, gaining new strength as they embrace it. Their pool of Chaos Points starts at 0, and can rise indefinitely high.

**Gaining Chaos Points:** A Chaos Warrior gains a Chaos Point when they do any of the following:

- Destroy or desecrate a public site of order, oppression, or control (such as a prison or a church).
- Slay, corrupt, or otherwise neutralize an agent of order (a police officer, a politician, or a pontiff).
- Weaken the grasp of an institution of law (a government agency, a church, or an order of paladins).
- Lead somebody else to become another Chaos Warrior and see them perform a chaotic deed.
- Achieve an extravagant goal in defiance of the strictures of law (such as a grand slaughter of the police, a drug-fueled orgy, or a blasphemous rite).

The GM is free to decide if an action is worthy enough of gaining the character additional Chaos Points.



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**Spending Chaos Points:** A Chaos Warrior can spend Chaos Points to do any of the following:

- **1 Point.** Immediately, shrug off any effect that would alter their mind, subvert their free will, or shift their perceptions. Mind control simply fails as soon as the Chaos Point is spent.
- **2 Points.** Free another from a similar effect.
- **2 Points.** Heal themselves, or another, a number of Hit Points equal to their remaining pool of Chaos Points, immediately and unnaturally.
- **5 Points.** Make a single permanent alteration to their physical form (perhaps by shifting gender, growing horns, becoming inhumanly beautiful, growing a third eye, an extra limb, or sprouting claws). Sort out the specific mechanical details with your GM, but a good rule of thumb is that the alteration grants Advantage to any appropriate rolls. The more Chaos Points they have when the change is made, the more dramatic the effect.
- **1 Point.** Where the Chaos Warrior chooses to rely on luck, re-roll that chance if it fails. They can keep spending Chaos Points and re-rolling as many times as they want, until they run out, give up, or get what they wanted in the first place. They might use this to bump into the exact person they need by sheer chance, close their eyes and walk through a hail of arrows unharmed, stick their hand into a mysterious sack to pull out the exact item they need, or leap from a castle walls trusting that they will land on something soft and be safe.
- **1 Point.** Create a minor magical effect (of a similar scale to something like *prestidigitation*) that lasts as long as they wish. They might cause food to go rotten, have unlocked doors open for them, carry an enticing scent, or leave bloody footprints wherever they tread. The more Chaos Points they have, the more dramatic the effect will be.
- **3 Points.** Ravage an agent of order (such as a cop or authority figure). For the rest of the encounter, add their remaining amount of Chaos Points to all rolls against that victim (attack rolls, damage, saves, etc). In the same manner, deduct that same amount from the victim's rolls against them.
- **5 Points.** Force those submitting to the forces of order (slaves, prisoners, soldiers, or the poor) to make a save of some sort. On a failure, they temporarily throw off the chains of order that bind them. What this means may vary depending on the situation; they might flee from the Chaos Warrior, riot against their oppressors, give in to temptation, or do something else as determined by the GM.

**Drawbacks:** There are no mechanical drawbacks to being a Chaos Warrior, but any who are public with their nature (or who are discovered) will earn the inevitable and unreasonable enmity of the forces of law and order.

In conclusion, remember:

- *None of us are free until all of us are free.*
- *All cops are bastards.*
- *If you think it can't happen here, it can and already is.*
- *Fuck the system.*
- *Kill the cop in your head.*



# SAVING THE HOLIDAY

By Elven Tower and Moonlight Maps



**LEVEL 4 ADVENTURE**

**A LOW-TIER ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME**



# SAVING THE HOLIDAY

“You must restore the magical protection in our city. You must not fail. The end-of-the-year celebrations are part of our lives, our tradition!”

Father Dos Santos

**T**he fourth season came. The climate changes and snow starts covering the entire Northern Territories. The landscape shall stay frozen white for a good third of the year. This does not trouble nor worries the people in the capital, White Horizon, for they have never suffered from cold or snow since they can remember. Their people ignore it to this day, but a chapel deep within the northern tundra contains a holy relic that has protected them for decades.

A long time ago, before the pioneers arrived in the Northern Territories and built what is today White Horizon, a small group of priest explorers made a holy pilgrimage to the northern wasteland. They found a chapel in the middle of nowhere. Therein, they had a vivid vision that gave them the instructions to perform a ritual. This ancient magic would protect this area of the Northern Territories from cold and snow storms for generations to come. After that, White Horizon was built.

This winter should be uneventful for the people of the capital, but this year something is eerily different. The wind blows harder and nights get colder. Some people came up with several theories, claiming frost giants from the north peaks announced their upcoming arrival. Others said this was the beginning of a series of snow storms, and that the entire city's population would need to find another place to live in the nearby future.

## THE CHAPEL OF SNOW

**ONLY A FEW** powerful, influential individuals in the city know about the chapel and the protection ritual. Long ago, it was decided that this lore would remain secret to safeguard the chapel's location and its magic. Hence, most people's theories are wrong. If something is messing with the weather, it surely has to do with the chapel. Worrisome is that a squad of ten guards, led by a capable captain, never made it back from a journey to the chapel.

Nicholas Mistle, the capital's constable and one of the people who know about the chapel's existence, has concluded they need external help. Otherwise, chaos and panic will surely spread; they are not ready for an arcane-infused winter without magical protection. Father Dos Santos, trying to help, looks throughout the church's contacts to find an old friend (see **Adventure Hooks**).

## THE HOLIDAY

**WHITE HORIZON HAS** strong traditions. One of the most popular and oldest customs they celebrate is their Winter Feast at the end of the year. It is a city-wide celebration of prosperity, and every year, people make honest attempts to improve their last year's celebration. They cook more food, give better gifts, build more snowmen, etc. Sadly, the current situation has the authorities doubting the possibility of this year's Winter Feast.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

*Saving the Holiday* may begin with one or any combination of the following adventure hooks:

### JUST IN TIME!

The characters travel north and reach White Horizon just in time to be offered a job. Nicholas Mistle goes to visit them in person and explains the gruesome situation. He offers 3,000 gp if they can investigate the chapel and do what they can to restore the arcane protection magic. In case none of the characters can perform divine spells or rituals, the city sends Bruno (**priest**) with them.

### DIVINE WARRIORS

The characters are old friends with Father Dos Santos. He summons them to the capital to ask for their help with their current situation. The characters are offered 2,500 gp and provided with medical supplies (1 healer's kit, 1 set of alchemist's supplies, and three *potions of healing*). Father Dos Santos urges the characters to travel north. They must stop whatever evil is preventing the divine relic from radiating its cold-protecting warmth.

### A BETRAYED MAN

Nicholas Mistle and Father Dos Santos have already found the help they needed and hired them for the job. However, one of the guard leaders, a man named Tristan (**veteran**), is not happy with this outcome. He is angry because his friends died or got lost in the snow and the foreigners were not hired to look for them. ‘*The authorities only care about the chapel*’, he says. He asks the characters to help him find survivors (or at least their bodies) amid the tundra. He has no gold. But in return, he offers his beloved magic sword (see **Conclusion**).



## A DIRE SITUATION

**WHITE HORIZON WILL** not survive the winter unless its magical protection is restored. It is a race against time and they cannot take any chances. It is a five-day trip to the Chapel of Snow, located somewhere in the north, provided there aren't any surprises or delays.

The city's evacuation is scheduled in case Nicholas Mistle does not hear any news of the characters in the next two weeks and the cold persists (see **Conclusion**).

## WHITE HORIZON ALE AND MEAD

*The large tavern sign is visible from afar. The tavern windows shower the street with warm light; the sound of conversation and dull music follows it.*

The largest, most prosperous tavern was one of the first buildings to be constructed in the city. All people know how to get to Kevin's tavern. If you are a mercenary looking for a job or information, this is your place.

### 1. WHITE HORIZON ROADS

The city seems empty. All people seek refuge from the cold inside their homes, near the hearths. If the characters stop to talk to someone or knock on a door, they are urged to go to White Horizon Ale and Mead and ask for Nicholas Mistle. From balconies, people shout stuff like "Please, help us!", "Why is it so cold!?", or "Look! Heroes, at last!" when they see the characters passing by in front of their homes.

### 2. LOBBY

*White Horizon Ale & Mead is packed. Five people wait to be seated. The tavern is a great refuge from the cold.*

Kevin, the innkeeper, has been informed of the characters' presence in the city. Upon arrival, they are welcomed. Kevin lets them in, gets them a table, and serves a round of drinks on the house. The characters are contacted, summoned, or visited here, regardless of the person who offers them the job (see **Adventure Hooks**).

**Inn's Fees.** Nicholas Mistle or Father Dos Santos pay for the characters' stay at the inn once they take the job. The owner of the place, Kevin, is good friends with Tristan, the guard leader. If the heroes are working for the upset captain, their lodging at the inn is paid for as well.

### 3. HEARTH

*More people than usual stand and sit by the fire. By the look of the people behind them, they are taking turns to benefit from the warmth of the flames.*

The general temperature of the tavern is low despite the many torches and candles burning inside as if something weakened the heat's warmth. An avid spellcaster recognizes this phenomenon can only be caused by magical means (DC 15 Arcana). It is the opposite effect of what the protective incantation normally does (DC 16 Int).

### 4. MAIN HALL

*All tables are occupied. No guest evidences any intention to leave. More than half the people have their hands around the candle flames at their tables.*

The owner, Kevin, stays at the bar (area 5) while a team of five people cook, serve, and take care of the tavern. The characters are fed and given drinks during their mission negotiations. They are expected to leave at once because time is not on their side (see **A Dire Situation**).

## 5. BAR

*The people crowded by the bar look like cocoons, covered in furs and heavy coats. Only their hands touch the hot surface of their cocoa mugs.*

The characters may speak to Kevin at any time. Regardless of who hired the characters, the innkeeper shares the following information after they take the job:

- Many of the people at the inn have no room. They sleep on the floor wherever they can. It is better than their cold homes without a fire or the streets...
- The barkeep tells the characters they must travel 5 days to the chapel and cross the crystal bridge. Once, Kevin wished to see the chapel but he could not traverse the bridge. He warns them about the strange voices, sounds, and mind tricks in the area.
- Kevin knows a lot of people. He can get a couple of hirelings or henchmen if the characters need them. With the pressure of time, two young brave men with little experience are what he gets (**scouts**).
- Kevin suggests the characters avoid the drunk man sitting alone at the bar. He claims the man is just a good-for-nothing itinerant (see below).

**Drunkard.** A gloomy man sits alone at the end of the bar. The man is too wasted to talk. A *lesser restoration* spell brings him back to his senses. Alan (**guard**) is one of Tristan's men. Like his captain, he is upset with the situation but he opted to drink away his sorrow. In case the characters work for Tristan (see **Adventure Hooks**), the sobered-up soldier wishes to help them.

## 6. KITCHEN

*Several pots burn with smelly broths and stews. The kitchen area is occupied by guests that look to find some refuge from the cold. There are people gathered by the raging fire of the larger cooking pots.*

Kevin's cooks and waiters are sympathetic and do not mind the crowded place. They do their best to bring food and drinks to the overcrowded tavern guests. They understand their role in this crisis and are happy to help.

## 7. WAREHOUSE

The tavern's stock is gathered here. Wooden crates and barrels of food are piled up near the walls. Kevin receives loads of cargo and merchandise from the backyard.

## AMBUSH!

**THE CHARACTERS ARE** about to leave the tavern when strong winds blow outside. The malign breeze finds its way through cracks in the wood and into the tavern. Minuscule snowflakes float around and coalesce into two snowy **specters** and one **shadow**. They appear in area 4 and attack living creatures around. The guests bolt toward the door to escape. The undead fight until slain.

**Dark Message.** When the characters defeat the undead monsters, a spectral voice trembles, and thunders in the entire tavern, echoing with each rasping word:

*"This is MY year. Nothing protects White Horizon now. I will feed from your sorrow and despair when the cold takes over the city. I will freeze your souls!"*



# THE CRYSTAL BRIDGE

**A**ny stories describe how the crystals in the northern territories came into existence. Would-be creators vary from ancient dragons to giant wizards or crazy sorcerers. However, none of these theories has been proven true. To this day, the reason for the crystals' existence remains a mystery.

What the capital leadership does know, is the lore behind the crystal bridge: the magnificent extension of the largest of crystals that forms an arcane-built cross-path. It was little after the foundation of White Horizon when the court's wizard devised a way to reach the Chapel of Snow faster. The 40-foot-long bridge crosses an ever-frozen chasm. Without it, one must walk around the mountains, making the five-day trip four times longer.

## BATTLE AFTERMATH

**THE SPECTRAL VOICE** utters its threat and vanishes. However, there is something to be learned from the message (DC 13 Intelligence). It knows the city's protection is gone. The only way to confirm this is by reaching the Chapel of Snow as soon as possible. The crystal bridge, located three days from the tavern, must be crossed.

## FEATURES OF THE CRYSTAL BRIDGE

**CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING** when the characters start crossing the bridge and step on its crystal surface.

- The entire extension of the bridge (40 feet) is slippery and uneven. It is considered difficult terrain.
- The characters must avoid looking at their reflection below them (DC 11 Wisdom). The old arcane forces that built the bridge play with the minds of the living. A character who fails their save is affected by a charming effect that compels them to stare at their reflection. They may repeat the save each round or whenever they take damage. An ally can use an Action to wake a victim from the stupor.
- If the characters move at normal speed, they may trip and fall (DC 12 Dexterity). Failing this save by five or more means the character slips outside the boundaries of the bridge's surface and falls 40 feet into the frozen water. See **Falling into the Chasm** to know more about how to get out of the water.

### 1. WEST SIDE OF THE BRIDGE

The characters reach the crystal bridge from this side. They are free to plan and prepare how they will cross the bridge from here. There are no other threats in sight. Consider the features of the bridge when they step on it.

### 2. CRYSTAL BRIDGE

Just like in the tavern, three **ice mephits** and two **specters** manifest in the middle of the bridge. The monsters target creatures charmed by their reflections first. They do their best to make the characters trip and fall.

### 3. EAST SIDE OF THE BRIDGE

The characters reach the other side of the crystal bridge. But their journey is not over. They must find their way through the tundra now (see **Finding the Chapel**).

### FALLING INTO THE CHASM

When a character falls, they take 2d6 bludgeoning damage from breaking the ice with their fall and become submerged in freezing waters. They must climb their way up fast or freeze to death (DC 14 Strength). Even if dried up, any character who falls acquires a Level of Exhaustion.

## FINDING THE CHAPEL

**THE CHAPEL IS** a two-day ride from the bridge. Alas, a snowstorm strikes the region on the way. The characters must find refuge from it and find the chapel after (DC 14 Survival). Failing causes all the characters to acquire one Level of Exhaustion and adds one day to their trip.



# THE CHAPEL OF SNOW

“So, you think you can challenge the power of frost? This is MY year, nothing protects White Horizon now. This year will be MY Winter Feast!”

Karrampus

**N**ot many have come to the Chapel of Snow since the group of pioneer priests came to this place for the first time. Only a few faithful and brave have succeeded at performing the dangerous pilgrimage to find holy wisdom at the chapel. Even with the crystal bridge, the journey remains a hazardous task, only for the fittest of adventurers.

## WHAT HAPPENED

**THE SPELLS** in the chapel have done their job for generations but their magic starts to weaken. At the start of this winter, a mischievous ice mephit found its way into the chapel and touched the holy relic. This corrupted its magic and protection, allowing a foul invasion...

From the depths of the Abyss, a demon called Karrampus succeeded at making contact with the holy relic. Without even being there, it managed to change the nature of its enchantments and corrupt its magic.

## KARRAMPUS, THE DEMON

**A CREATURE OF** pure evil. Even from its home plane, it feeds from the sadness and despair it causes. For millennia, the cowardly demon has terrorized mortal souls whenever it has the chance. It had been a long time since he had the means to wreak havoc upon the Material Plane. This changed thanks to the relic in the chapel.

The demon is aware of all the Winter Feasts celebrated in White Horizon in the past. Their happiness and the city's prosperity sicken it. Karrampus wants to force the entire population of the Northern Territories to leave. It wishes to see them homeless, helpless and dropping dead after walking miles and miles on the white snow. Unless stopped, the nefarious demon shall succeed.

## ALMOST THERE

**AFTER THE DANGERS** they have faced, the characters may be tired, hurt, or worried about not making it back alive. But just when their hopes were about to end, they glimpse the Chapel of Snow beyond the storm. As they approach, they feel the air around them get even colder. An aura of uneasiness and the feeling that they are being watched increase with each burrowing step they take.

## FEATURES OF THE CHAPEL OF SNOW

**CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING** when the characters are near the Chapel of Snow or within the edifice.

- The wind cuts the skin and the air seems unbreathable. The temperature here is too cold to endure. Living creatures in the area take 1 point of cold damage each minute they spend near the chapel. Consider this effect when the characters investigate rather than during a fight. This effect ends when the characters restore the protection spell.
- The chapel has no light sources. It is bathed in darkness. However, every few minutes, the clouds of mist in the tundra shift, and sunlight (or moonlight) bathes the chapel nave in beautiful, refracted blue from the chapel's stained glass windows.
- While Karrampus's influence permeates the chapel, divine spells cast within it have a 1-in-6 chance to fizzle out. When the protection is restored, however, divine spells are cast as if one level higher.

### 1. FROZEN TUNDRA

*After a hypnotizing horizon of endless white. Solitary trees dot the landscape. Ahead, through the haze of mist and snow, the silhouette of the chapel appears.*

The characters are surrounded by silence and quiet. When the characters reach this area, they hear the spectral voice again. Karrampus talks from the Abyss:

*“You think you can challenge the power of frost? You are but mere maggots before my power! This will be MY Winter Feast. You petty scum cannot stop me!”*

**Encounter.** The characters find some of Karrampus's goons outside the chapel. The snow around them moves and two **ice mephits** and two **zombies** attack. The zombies wear White Horizon's guard armor and robes.

**Tristan.** If present, the soldier freezes in place when he sees his former friends and comrades. After the fight, Tristan wishes to search for the others and begs the characters to help him. If they don't, he leaves to search the area alone. If they do, they find four **zombies** and five corpses in the next 5 minutes, taking 5 points of cold damage in the process (see **Conclusion** for more details).

## 2. VESTIBULE

*The large doors are blocked, with fused ice in the middle. A fine layer of ice breaks at the movement. A lonely wooden desk with two candles rests there.*

This small chamber is empty except for the decaying wooden desk. The aura of evil and uneasiness becomes stronger within the walls of the chapel. A *detect magic* spell perceives a strong aura coming from its interior.

## 3. NAVE

*All sounds echo within the empty nave. Three spectral figures sit on the frost-ridden, wooden pews.*

The characters can see the holy relic and sense its magic from here. Before they can approach it, they must confront Karrampus's goons. Two **specters** and a physical representation of Karrampus (**wraith**) fight the characters. Defeating all enemies allows the characters to perform the divine ritual that shall restore the protection spell and divine strength of the ancient relic (see area 4).

## A WARRIOR OF LIGHT

A **DIVINE CHARACTER** in the party realizes that the corruption affecting the holy relic can be removed (DC 14 Religion). Casting a spell like *protection from evil and good* or *lesser restoration* on the artifact eliminates the corruption and grants the following benefits. For 1 minute, the caster gains 2d6 temporary hit points and regains two spell slots, their attacks are made with advantage, and they are immune to cold damage. A white aura surrounds the character for the duration of these boons. The GM is free to decide that Bruno, the priest, if present, is the one who realizes they can do this.

## 4. ALTAR

*A couple of wooden pews flank the second, higher dais. Above, surrounded by symmetrical granite plinths, the holy relic rests on a limestone pedestal.*

When the characters defeat all enemies and stand before the holy relic, they experience the same vision that the pioneer priests had when they came centuries ago.

The relic has the shape of a trident with a circle on its long hilt. This symbol belongs to Sheevashi, an ancient tribal god of fire (DC 20 History / Religion). The rune-scribed weapon glows lightly.

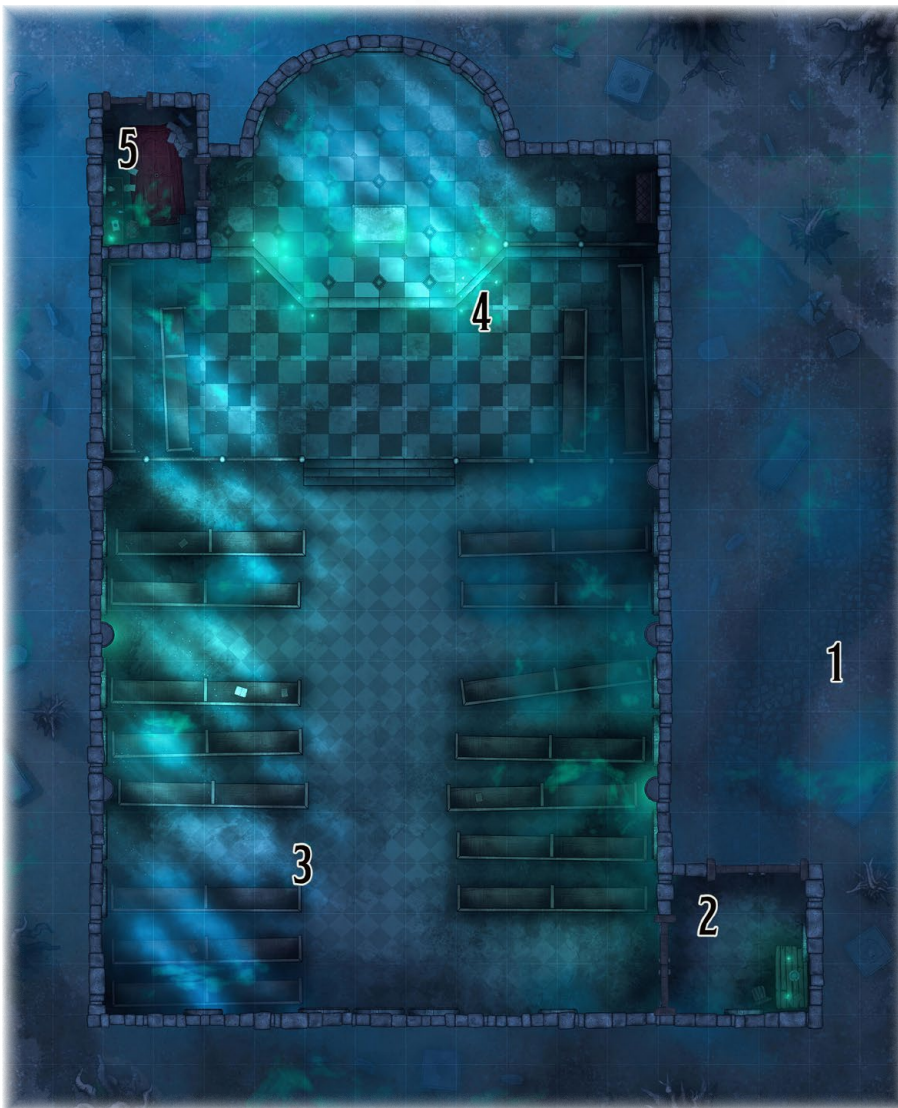
A divine character, or Bruno, must direct the long spell but others may participate as well. The ritual lasts 10 minutes and all participants hear this message in their minds when they finish:

*“We represent the spirits of the northern stars. Joy and prosperity. Strength and health. You protected the lives of many. Your deed shall not be forgotten.”*

## 5. ARCHIVE

The door to the outside is frozen shut. Frozen pieces of decaying papers and books lay scattered on the floor. Almost nothing remains of what looks like an archive of some sort. Nothing in the chapel except the relic betrays its origins.

This adventure belongs to a series of collaborative projects that involve other Patreon creators. This one-shot adventure features work by [Elven Tower](#) and cartographer [Moonlight Maps](#). Check out their [Patreon page](#) for great cartography pieces and cool inspiration!



## ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

### THE WINTER FEAST IS SAVED!

The characters succeed in defeating Karrampus. The moment they restore the protective magic and they hear Sheevashi's message, the temperature in the entire Northern Territories becomes warmer. Flakes of snow still fall but snow storms subside. The wind blows but it does not prevent you from enjoying the day outside.

The characters are the guests of honor in the Winter Feast to come. Besides getting the agreed-upon reward, they receive baskets of food and gifts from everyone in the celebration. White Horizon is saved. Its people dance, sing, and cheer their heroes until sunrise.

### VICTORY FOR THE CHURCH

In case Bruno performs the ritual and makes it back alive, Father Dos Santos is extremely pleased with the characters. Their standing with the church and their friendship with Dos Santos greatly improves.

His role in this mission pleased Bruno. It broadened his horizons and opened new possibilities. He believes he can bring more good to the world. He asks the characters if he could join them in their adventures. Father Dos Santos has no objection to this, fortunately. On the contrary, he feels nothing but pride for brave Bruno.

### TRISTAN'S RESOLVE

The jaded soldier returns to the city heartbroken. Some of his friends were turned into monsters and the others froze to death in the merciless tundra. Despite this, he is glad they could at least recover their bodies. Their families give them a proper burial. The characters receive a total of 600 gp from their thankful relatives.

As promised, Tristan gives the characters his magical blade (*+1 longsword*). He acquired it a decade ago when White Horizon's army won the war against the eastern tribes of orcs. One of the enemies had it, and Tristan, being the man who defeat that orc warrior, kept the blade. The sword is of Elvish craft by the runes etched on it.

### BAD CONSEQUENCES

It is paramount for the characters to perform the ritual on time. If divine characters (or Bruno) are incapable of directing the ritual, the magic will not be restored before the city's evacuation. If the characters decide to rest too many times or if they get lost on their way to the chapel, Nicholas will have no option but to evacuate the city even if the characters succeed. And besides Bruno, the lives of Tristan, Alan (the drunkard at the bar), and the two scouts hired by Kevin (see area 5), could be lost as well.



# HALLS OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

By Elven Tower and Stained Karbon Maps



**LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE**

**A MID-TIER ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME**



# THE HUNT BEGINS

The town won't stand the spider's onslaught anymore. However, Madam Darlli claims there is a way to solve this quandary. Please speak to the soothsayer.

Constable Valerie Owen

**H**uman civilizations advance, grow, and thrive in the new world. But none can escape the primordial terrors of the past that remain ingrained in the deep recesses of the mind. The inescapable fear of creatures such as arachnids, serpents, and reptiles is as old as time. It emerges from the dark depths when such a critter is encountered and triggers a visceral response of fear and agitation. Few are immune to this feeling born of mere survival instinct.

## THE FALLEN PRIESTESS

**HUNDREDS OF YEARS** ago, in the underground halls of a large drow city. A priestess whose name none can remember aspired to celebrate an arcane ritual of great power. The ritual, the priestess theorized, would siphon the life force of all living beings in a large region and then distill it into a living vessel. She would be this vessel. The result would empower her beyond the comprehension of mortals. She would take a firm step toward becoming a goddess. It did not take long for the priestess' peers to turn against her, accusing her of heresy and shameless disregard for their drow goddess. Before the priestess could even lay the groundwork for her ritual, she was seized and punished for her heretic actions.

The captive priestess was tortured for months in the obscure dungeons of the drow palace. Then, she was collectively cursed by the other priestesses. They turned her into a half-spider abomination and banished her from the underground elvish halls. The priestess wandered the endless passages of the Underworld until she found a dwarvish home near the surface. She slayed the occupants and it became her lair. Her mind was fractured and disassembled. Her emotions were also disconnected. For hundreds of years, she became like a wild animal. An arachnid hunter that became a local legend and the reason no one in the area approaches her den.

In time, her mind began to slowly heal. She was sentient again. The only thing restored in her mind was an unquenchable, aimless hatred. This feeling motivated the abominate priestess to lay eggs and increase her dominion over the nearby regions. Unleashing her endless progeny on nearby hamlets and towns barely calms her thirst for death. Without recalling her elvish past, the long-gone priestess has become a spider queen.

## THE PLIGHT OF BARLEYTON

**WHAT STARTED AS** hearsay and rumors of large spiders in the forest and strange wounds on livestock, became widespread panic as a deluge of different varieties of arachnids emerged from Greenpine Forest to attack livestock farms, plantations, and small settlements. The spiders moved like a single unit, attacking and retreating as if commanded by a higher intelligence. The daring commonfolk that tried to stand against them all fell prey to hundreds of poisonous bites and became fodder for the endless spiders. The settlers near Greenpine Forest abandoned their homes and brought livestock and whatever they could carry in a desperate exodus toward Barleyton, the largest town and the only one with a palisade wall. Constable Valerie Owen was sympathetic to them and let them all inside Barleyton. They would sort out the cost of their prolonged presence later.

The spiders attacked Barleyton two nights after that. Countless vermin stormed the wall and clashed with a makeshift army of peasants, voluntary guards, and less than twenty combat-trained soldiers and knights. They survived but suffered ruinous losses. Constable Valerie believes the town won't stand another attack.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

In *Halls of the Spider Queen*, the characters may begin with one or both of the following adventure hooks:

### A BOUNTY FOR BEAST HUNTERS

Constable Valerie Owen summons sellswords and mercenaries in the region and offers a hefty bounty of 3,000 gp for tracking the spiders to their lair and finding a way to stop them. It is imperative to stop the spiders before their next attack, or else, the town shall fall. Constable Valerie also mentions that the town's soothsayer, Madam Darlli, is a good source of information.

### VISIONS OF THE PAST

The characters are summoned to Madam Darlli's home. The soothsayer claims she has seen the truth about the spiders in a dream vision. She claims the spider queen was once an elf priestess and that her vendetta is not against mankind but against her kin. She recommends trying to redirect her anger to the Underworld.



### 1. THE ROAD SOUTH

A narrow, overgrown trail leads to an open glade, suitable for setting up camp. A one-day ride to the south leads to Greenpine Forest edge. A tracker identifies the recent passage of hunters and goat farmers on these trails a little more than a week ago (DC 14 Survival).

### 2. CAMPSITE

The packed soil, the arrangement of stones, and the evidence of past bonfires reveal that this resting spot has been used by hunters and travelers in the past.

The spiders attack during the characters' Long Rest. There is a 3-in-6 chance this occurs at night. The spiders approach from above, hidden by the thick greenery (DC 17 Perception). At once, they drop and attack. The group is confronted by six **giant spiders** and four **swarms of spiders**. The merciless vermin prioritize sleeping opponents and those without armor. Upon defeat, the remaining arachnids crawl back to the secret cove and alert the spider queen.

## TRAVERSING GREENPINE FOREST

**GREENPINE FOREST FEATURES** a large variety of conifers and a small portion of deciduous trees that are flowering at this time of the year. The fragrance of flowers and their bright colors give the region an inviting nature that veils the terrible arachnid threat therein.

Observant travelers notice that the forest canopy is covered with thick, gray spiderwebs. This explains the lack of evidence of large quantities of insects in the forest soil (DC 17 Survival). However, a most alarming situation becomes clear when the characters travel for at least 3 hours following the spiderweb canopy, Greenpine Forest is silent and devoid of life. Birds, mammals, and even other insects are nowhere to be seen. Attentive trackers find the bone remains of wildlife half buried in the underbrush and behind thickets (DC 15 Survival). The spiders have consumed or driven off all other animals in the area. Nature-inclined characters know that the collapse of the ecosystem is imminent unless the spiders are stopped and other creatures return.

The secret cove that leads to the spider queen's den is a two-day ride into Greenpine Forest. The characters must rest once in the forest before resuming their journey. A combat encounter occurs during this Long Rest. They are attacked by a swarm of spiders that patrols the area.

### 3. THE ROAD NORTH

The trail north becomes fainter and disappears after an hour. A half-a-walk ride north leads to Greenpine River and the hidden cove where the spiders' den is. Following the web-ridden canopy is a simple, yet daunting, task.

## THE AFTERMATH

**A MOMENT OF** respite rewards the characters after the foul spiders are defeated. Countless insectoid carcasses surround them. Their nature may reveal valuable information if inspected by a person knowledgeable on the topic. The characters learn all information for which they meet or exceed the Nature skill check DC:

- ▶ **DC 12:** The small spiders from the swarm suffered numerous mutations and accelerated growth that left scarring and deficient use of their legs.
- ▶ **DC 14:** The giant spiders do not bear any mutation marks; they were born with their enhanced, foul features. Their carapaces form an elvish rune on their abdomen that reads: *'death to the priests'*.
- ▶ **DC 16:** Some spiders bear acidic burns on their legs, as if they had walked on a corrosive substance.
- ▶ **DC 18:** An analysis of the giant spiders' hemolymph reveals that their creation involved an advanced knowledge of necromancy and powerful magic.

# REACHING THE SECRET COVE

The spirit of the forest fades before the dark threat from the Underworld. All shall shrivel and decay unless the spider queen is stopped. Help the forest...

Diorifinnaku, The Faun

**IN THE DEPTHS** of Greenpine Forest lies a wondrous region; the greenery is vibrant and strong. Creatures from the fae realm inhabit this magical wilderness where Greenpine River traverses the forest. Fauns, faeries, and dryads fled their homes days ago when the spider swarm emerged and threatened to consume them in their voracious passage. Most wildlife fled or was consumed by the swarm. But a single faun refused to leave. Instead, pledging to approach the spiders' lair to find as much information as they could. When the characters arrive at the Greenpine River crossing, Diorifinnaku, the faun, emerges from the shrubbery and calls for their aid.

Diorifinnaku has a slender, 6-foot-tall figure. The faun's androgynous facial features are ambiguous and hard to read. Diorifinnaku's gait betrays a leg wound where a spider bit him recently. The faun is eerily grateful for the characters' presence; he reveals the following:

- The spiders live in a cavern beyond the cove where hundreds of years ago a dwarven family lived.
- The cove is well protected by spiders that can become ethereal and unreachable.
- A huge spider-like abomination controls them all. In their dialect, all spiders call it '*The Queen*'.

Diorifinnaku begs the characters to hurry into the spiders' lair to put a stop to their ruthless assaults. The faun claims it needs to rest as his poisoned wound causes terrible pain. A *protection from poison* spell and healing magic return the faun to health. In that case, Diorifinnaku (**satyr**) offers to accompany the characters on their quest. Diorifinnaku has maxed hit points and can use his flute to cast the following spells twice per day: *bles*s, *cure wounds*, *remove curse*, *shield*, *sleep*, and *jump*.

## FEATURES OF THE CROSSING

**Greenpine River.** The stream is wide and deep but its flow is slow enough that it can be mistaken for a still pond. It is 100 feet deep and harbors diverse fauna.

**Dwarven Remains.** The dilapidated ruins of an ancient dwarven shallow bridge litter both sides of Greenpine River. The runic patterns are distinctly dwarvish and of great expertise. Sadly, little of its greatness stands.

**Spiderwebs.** The spiders don't swim. Thus, they used spiderwebs to pull the tree canopies on both sides of the river and create a strange, insect-made structure. Cutting this passing stops the spiders' forays for two days while it is rebuilt (DC 14 Intelligence).



This adventure belongs to a series of collaborative projects that involve other Patreon creators. This one-shot adventure features work by [Elven Tower](#) and cartographer [Stained Karbon Maps](#). Check out their [Patreon page](#) for great cartography pieces!



## 1. DWARVISH BRIDGE FOUNDATIONS

The eroded, moss-supporting, stone foundations of a broken pathway lead to Greenpine River. A person knowledgeable in architecture identifies what remains of the foundations as those of a shallow bridge (DC 18 Intelligence). From the state of it all, it collapsed decades ago from disrepair. If Diorifinnaku accompanies the characters, he remarks that dwarves built this bridge almost a hundred years ago. A dwarvish family lived in a carved home in the cove above hundreds of years ago. The faun claims to be old enough to have met them in life. One day they stopped coming to the surface and the fae creatures assumed they moved underground forever.

## 2. GREENPINE RIVER

The river's slow but inescapable current pulls eastward. The characters can cross swimming. The river is not agitated enough to be considered a challenge. However, a breed of **acid-spitting spiders** hides in the web-choked canopy above (DC 18 Perception). These insects use the **giant spider** statblock with the following changes:

- They are Medium, have maxed HP, and are CR 2.
- Their green-hued carapace gives them advantage in Stealth checks when hiding in the trees.
- They have an acid-spitting ranged attack: +5 to hit, reach 30/60 ft., one target. 3d6 acid damage.

Four spiders hang on thin web strands above the river. They attack when the characters swim across. Failed acid attacks dilute in the water among the target and still deal 1d6 acid damage. A character can use a ranged attack against the fine silk strands. A successful hit severs the thread and causes the spider to fall. In the water, spiders have disadvantage and drown in 4 rounds.

## 3. THE FALSE COVE

The north end of Greenpine River is littered with the far side ruins of the dwarvish bridge that once connected both sides of the forest. The forest soil and the broken stone structure here are soiled with a high amount of spider droppings, betraying their increased activity nearby.

What from afar appeared to be the entrance to a cave is revealed to be a trick of geography and vegetation. The rocky gate is formed from two rock outcroppings and leads to a dense section of the forest. Rows of trees and their dense foliage create a kind of natural tunnel that leads north 200 feet toward a rocky hillside.

## 4. THE FOREST CANOPY

Climbing the rock formations to reach the web-filled understory reveals a grim scene of hanging fae and animal skeletons stuck to the webs. A thorough inspection reveals the bone remains of one dryad with a +1 *mithral dagger* piercing her ribcage (DC 16 Investigation).

# THE SPIDER NEST

None shall stand in my way. I hate them all. Their squalid flesh shall feed by countless progeny. Only then will I flavor a glimpse of well-deserved retribution.

The Spider Queen

**T**he spider queen slowly awakens to her long-repressed memories of her time in the underground halls of the drow cities. It is the closeness and amount of spiders that remind her of the drow goddess; a holy presence that remains hidden in the deep, obscure recesses of her troubled mind. The spider queen is in many ways insane. She clings to sentience by a thread but spends most of her time knitting elaborate conversations with the mindless spiders that surround her. The spiders are all obedient and friendly to her, but they lack any form of higher thought. The queen envies and hates them for it at times.

Since the spider swarm started attacking nearby areas, the queen has abandoned the relative safety of the lair many times to oversee the otherwise mindless insects. However, the spider queen finds open spaces overwhelming to be in, sunlight, in particular, burns her eyes and dries her flesh. Instead, she prefers to be in the tunnels and vaulted caverns of the lair. The other spiders do not perceive the outside world in the same manner.

## THE LAIR

**THE SPIDERS' LAIR** was once the home of a dwarf jeweler and his family. The spider queen killed them long ago and remained in the back caverns that lead to the tunnel network of the Underworld. Having lost all sense of self, the queen ignored the valuable material possessions of the dwarves and treated their home as a series of tunnels. For a long time, the deranged queen behaved like a common beast, lurking in caverns and hunting small game and, if she was fortunate, catching Underworld travelers like dwarves and gnomes unaware. Like other spiders, she would set ambushes and wait for months until some unfortunate soul moved near her hiding spot.

When the spider queen was ready to lay eggs, she settled down and created a growing nest in the dwarvish ruins. The adjoining rooms are now covered in web strands and silky egg clusters. In the back, beyond a pool of a naturally-occurring corrosive solution, the spider queen laid the giant spider eggs and a huge, necromancy-infused egg that shall sire the queen's true heir. Even the spider queen ignores the true nature of the creature that grows within but she feels an instinctual urge to nurture and protect whatever spawns from it.

## FEATURES OF THE DUNGEON

**Walls and Ceilings.** The limestone structure of dwarvish construction remains sound even after centuries of disrepair. Some walls are marked with runes that read: 'strength', 'endurance', and 'fervor'. The 20-foot tall ceilings are vaulted and etched with geometrical patterns.

**Darkness.** There are no light sources in the dungeon. In addition, the strange egg in area 9 produces a strange conjuration effect that reduces even magical light to dim-light. A *detect magic* spell reveals the effect's source.

**Stench.** All eggs produce an acute acrid-smelling musk that burns the lungs and produces uncontrollable coughing. Creatures that breathe it suffer those symptoms in addition to being poisoned (DC 15 Constitution). Creatures that succeed become immune for 24 hours.

### 1. ENTRANCE TO THE DWARVEN HOME

The rows of wide trees lead to a rocky hillside half-merged with a stone wall. A single open door marks this wall. The door and its surroundings are covered with a thick layer of spiderwebs and spider droppings. Upon inspection, the stone bricks' arrangement is revealed to be a traditional dwarvish pattern (DC 16 History).

Before entering, the characters may consider setting fire to the spider's lair from outside. Doing so kills the spiders up to area 6 but also damages all the treasure.

### 2. RUINED HALL

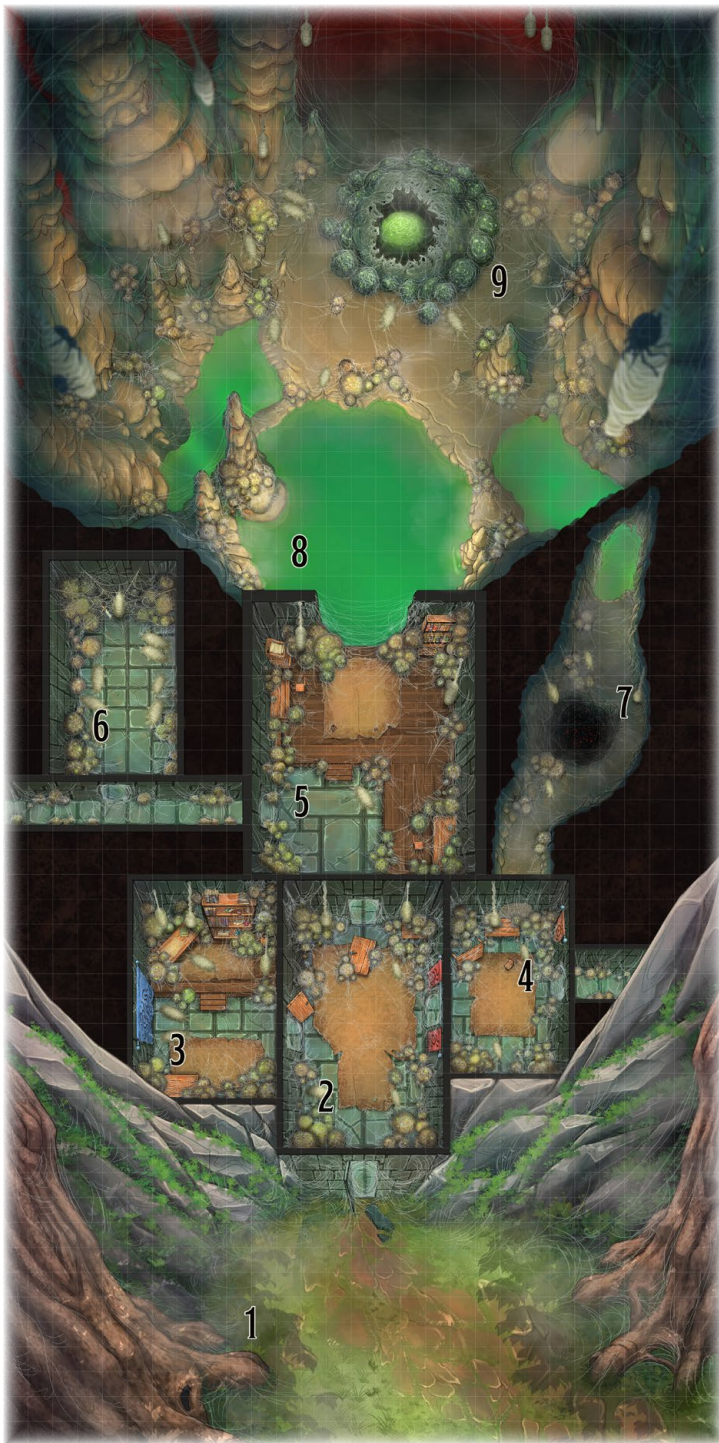
The barely recognizable hall is covered with eggs and cocoons. One **giant spider** and three **swarms of spiders** attack the characters as soon as they arrive.

**Treasure.** The two embroidered tapestries on the wall feature silver and gold threads (400 gp each).

### 3. THE JEWELER'S WORKSHOP

The room was once the dwarf jeweler's workshop. There are still some things of value hidden in the drawers and bookshelf for those with keen eyes (DC 14 Investigation).

**Treasure.** A collection of dwarvish jewel-cutting techniques (200 gp), blueprints for custom jewelry (100 gp), three vials of acid (30 gp), a box with nine emeralds (50 gp each), a *spell scroll* of *stone shape*, *spell scroll* of *stoneskin*, and a *spell scroll* of *transmute rock*.



#### 4. SECONDARY ROOM

The spider-egg-ridden chamber once was a bedroom for two young dwarves. The remains of two bed-frames, a desk, and a chest are barely recognizable as such. Two **swarms of spiders** emerge from the countless eggs and attack. A new swarm emerges every 1d2 rounds until a total of eight swarms have appeared. A hole in the north wall leads to a natural tunnel (area 7). A chirping, crawling sound comes from the dark cave and foreshadows the countless spiders in the dark pit.

**Collapsed Tunnel.** The tunnel east is blocked off by a cave-in after 30 feet. It was once an alternate entrance.

#### 5. THE MASTER BEDROOM

The chamber is covered with webs and spider eggs like the rest of the ancient dwarvish home. The wooden furnishing is rotten, decayed, and almost unrecognizable. The chamber's back wall features a 10-foot-wide opening into a large cavern. The stench from the acid pond is present here. An eroded portrait on the floor pictures a dwarven family of four posing by their home's entrance.

**The Keepsake.** A jade amulet with an etched, fae rune that reads '*forever friend*' lies on the desk. If Diorifinnaku is present, he claims it was a gift from the dryads to the jeweler. The faun asks to keep it so he can return it to the fae as soon as they return to Greenpine Forest.

**The Dwarvish Ghost.** An ethereal apparition materializes before the characters when they explore this chamber; the ghost of a journeyman dwarf. With a thirst for revenge, the dwarf recalls the events of how the spider abomination came and killed him and his innocent family hundreds of years ago. The befouled dwarf wants to help the characters slay the spider queen. If a character agrees, the dwarf uses his soul's energy to empower the character's weapon. It becomes a *spider slayer* weapon (like the *giant slayer* but modified to attack spiders).

#### 6. STORAGE ROOM

What once was a storage room and a larder is a den of arachnids. Near the far wall, next to a cluster of silky eggs, a sword is suspended in the web strands. Several humanoid bones are either scattered across the floor or suspended in the webs as well. Upon inspection, it is revealed that the bones belonged to the dwarvish family, from the size and physical markers (DC 16 medicine).

Coming within 10 feet of the suspended sword causes three **swarms of spiders** to emerge from the numerous eggs. One round later, four **acid-spitting spiders** approach from the westbound hallway outside.

**Treasure.** The sword belonged to the dwarf jeweler who fought for his life in this chamber. The *+1 shortsword* features a line of inscribed dwarvish runes.

#### 7. PIT OF COUNTLESS PROGENY

This natural cavern connects areas 4 and 8. The far end of this tunnel is half-flooded with the corrosive substance in area 8. A 70-foot-deep pit in the middle of the tunnel contains hundreds of thousands of spider eggs. The vermin are so numerous that their crawling sound is perceivable. Living creatures that fall into the pit have no chance to escape with their lives. They are consumed by the countless spiders (no save). Three **swarms of spiders** emerge from the pit if they detect creatures nearby. Each round, two more swarms exit the pit to attack. They do not stop as long as creatures are nearby.

## 8. THE ACID POND

Three 10-foot-deep ponds of corrosive acid separate the dwarvish home from the great cavern beyond. The other side is too far to jump across. The characters can climb around the cavern's wall to cross it (DC 16 Athletics). Conversely, they can dump wooden furniture from area 5 into the pond to use as rafts. The furniture is consumed after 30 minutes. While dangerous, the acid is not too strong. Creatures that fall take 3d6 acid damage per round submerged and for another round after exiting.

## 9. THE HALL OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

The cavern is so large that light doesn't reach its ceiling or its far end. Pulsing, throbbing eggs of giant spiders litter the room and limestone stalagmites. Worst of all is a single, green-hued spider egg of epic proportions 20 feet from the acid pond. The green ovum pulses like a beating heart while a strange shape moves within as if in response to the trespassing characters. Upon close inspection, the spawn growing within is a kind of demonic arachnid known as a bebilith (DC 20 Arcana). Fortunately, it is still too early for it to hatch. The bebilith shall emerge within two months if left to its own devices.

The spider queen (**drider**) is angered beyond comprehension by the characters' intrusion into her domain and the foul treatment of her endless children. If an elf is present, the queen instantly recovers her drow memories. She may then more easily be convinced to return to the Underworld (see **Adventure Conclusion**). Otherwise, she is ready for battle. Two **giant spiders** and two **acid-spitting spiders** aid her in this encounter.

## ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

### THE QUEEN VANQUISHED

The characters rise to the challenge and defeat the spider queen in combat. In her death throes, the spider queen remembers her whole life and despairs. With her renewed magical power, it attempts to cast a *geas* spell to compel the characters to accomplish her revenge against the drow priesthood that overthrew her hundreds of years ago. The characters most likely have ways to resist such compulsion as a *remove curse* nullifies it, however, they gain a glimpse of the treasure-packed halls of the high-priests and may choose to go either way.

Upon return to Barleyton, Constable Valerie Owen pays the 3,000 gp reward. The townsfolk soon return to their settlements and the fae return to the forest as well.

### AN AGES-OLD VENDETTA

To retrieve the queen's memories, a *remove curse* spell is necessary (DC 16 Religion). The queen returns to her senses but is momentarily confused. Unless quickly appeased (DC 16 persuasion), she turns to violence. On a success, the spider queen reconsiders her position and her true enemies. The queen issues a soul-wrenching cry that commands all spiders in the area to follow her into the veins of the earth, the Underworld. The once elvish priestess turned abomination, starts her slow march back into the drow cities where she shall exact a ruinous revenge. That is, however, a story for another day..



# FACTIONS GUIDE PART 1

# NOBLE HOUSES

*A GM supplement with options for intricate factions by Viel Nast*

## INTRODUCTION

**THE FACTION RULES** as detailed in various Dungeons & Dragons 5e supplements have a specific or narrow concept, region of utilization, and minimum ranks with very slim details or customization options.

In this supplement, we show options on how to expand faction rules to make them more detailed and interesting, providing resources to even base a campaign on them!

The first part pertains to the noble houses and embarks on a typical (or not!) fantasy medieval and feudal type style of play. This section also provides a detailed rank system for the characters to grow and expand their influence in the world and give them access to several rewards through various actions. Then, we will suggest a few special items as rewards (magical or not) that can be incorporated into a knightly type of game.

This article is a shorter version of a supplement that shall expand on the above resources and provide more material to work on, like special squire sidekicks who can accompany or support knights or their families, and many more. We shall develop dynasty formation, ranks above that of a lord for a more political and strategic game. And finally, we elaborate on some special rules about different races and classes that can become knights or be involved in a noble house faction.

The noble house faction can be played in a solo game (one GM and one player) or in a classic group where at least one player is required to be a fighter or paladin/knight. There shall be special rules for the group in a noble house faction in the supplements to come.

## 1. NOBLE HIERARCHY

Knights are militant nobles who have been received into the special organization that encompasses heavily armored, well-trained, and (usually) cavalry warriors. The ceremony where they are pronounced knights can vary from simple stuff (a tap of the sword on their shoulders by another knight with the pronouncement of knighthood) to a ritualistic event, whatever suits the campaign.

All knights are considered equal in theory, but in practice, influence, wealth, and ancestry take crucial parts and differentiate greatly each knight from the next.

Overall, the hierarchical system of knights can be determined as per the following table:





Rank	Title	Prerequisites	Description
0	Squire	Session zero	A young noble serving a knight
1	Mercenary (hedge) knight	Level 1 fighter with a warhorse	A landless, masterless knight seeking service or employment
2	Household knight	Level 2 fighter, plus 4 prestige points	A knight that has pledged liege to a lord. He belongs to his noble house, offering his services but receiving gifts and protection from his lord
3	Officer knight	Level 3 fighter, plus 10 prestige points and proficiency in a relevant-to-his-office skill (Survival, Animal Handling, History, Persuasion, etc.)	A trusted knight that had received an office from his lord (chief of hunt, master of kennels, taxman, head of justice, treasurer, steward, captain of a unit, etc.) The officer is of equal standing with other higher-ranking knights form the lord's council <i>From this point upward, a knight can receive a squire to train and guide</i>
4	Knight warden	Level 4 fighter plus 25 prestige points	The knight has received for a certain period or until his life's end a manor house or a fief to manage and provide its income to his lord
5	Knight castellan	Level 5 fighter plus 50 prestige points	The knight has received a fortified building or a place to hold, manage, and protect for his lord for a certain period or until his life's end
6	Baronet or vassal knight	Level 6 fighter plus 100 prestige points and cha 14+	The trusted knight had received a fief or manor house for his own to rule and bequeath to his descendants. He gains his own banner to display and wear himself as well as his household
7	Lord knight	Level 7 fighter with enough resources to support vassal knights	A rich knight that has at least three vassal knights
8	Lord officer	Level 8 fighter, a lord plus 150 prestige points and one stat at 16+	These lords form their liege lord's (baron, count, duke, etc) inner circle or personal council and each one is assigned a title like baronial/ducal, marshal, justice, treasurer, etc. They are the overlord's most trusted knights

## KNIGHTLY LIFE

**KNIGHTS DISPLAY BANNERS** and heraldic symbols, either their own or their lord's. These are shown in their clothes as patches in the place of the heart, upon tabards, in shields and banners, and on their horses' caparisons.

All titles and offices are given by a writ kept in two copies held by the liege lord and vassal. A knight's obligations are time of service in battle, guard duties, offices, and accompanying his lord in various obligations. Household knights have events all year round but landed knights have less service time to be in their lands. They make sure the goods are gathered and taxes paid (they also take care of their families and oversee their subjects).

A lord's obligation is to provide weapons, armor, and a warhorse for his vassal so he can be adequately equipped and able to serve. By the year's end, the most active and glorious knights might receive extra gifts or boons.

Of course, promotion is not awarded when all prerequisite criteria are met unless relevant positions are vacant... But these also create opportunities for new adventures, campaigns, or even political intrigue!

## 2. PRESTIGE SYSTEM, QUESTS, SERVICE

**KNIGHTS ARE KEEPERS** of the law and order. They live by their code to protect their lord and serve their realm. Hence, they do what they can to earn people's respect and love. They always try to keep their name and reputation clean. Knights are ranked by prestige and their actions are rewarded with Prestige Points. These can provide additional rewards like offices, honors, and squires.

Prestige points attract younger knights to serve a well-known knight or squires to learn from a famous veteran.

Each knight begins with one Prestige Point (for being knighted). If they ever lose all prestige and their Prestige Point total is zero or less, they must embark on a quest to achieve atonement within a month of their last dishonorable act. Otherwise, he is not considered a knight anymore (although he may be still a noble and retain his fortune, he must rely on mercenaries and peasants for his army as no knight will follow him).

The following table shows several examples of the Prestige Points obtained after doing a Service:

Service	Prestige Points
Each year serving as a household knight	1
Each year serving successfully as an officer knight	2
Each year serving successfully as a knight warden	3
Each year serving successfully as a knight castellan	4
Each year serving successfully as a knight baronet	5
Each year serving successfully as a knight lord	6
Each year serving successfully as a lord officer	7
Participating in a victorious skirmish (up to 49 total participants)	2
Participating in a victorious battle (up to 99 total participants)	4
Participating in a victorious war (100+ total participants)	6
Participating in a victorious campaign	10
Complete a minor quest for his lord	5
Complete a major quest for his lord	10
Complete an epic quest for his lord	20
Become the champion of a fair lady (or lad)	5
Defend a person in distress	5
Defeat alone a monster that has equal CR as his level	5
Defeat alone a monster with more CR than his level	10
Defeat alone a monster with double CR than his level	20
Win a minor tournament	5
Win a major tournament	10
Win a royal tournament	20

In the same manner, Prestige Points may be deducted if the Knight falls under any of this situations:

Disobedience to your lord	-20
Cowardice in the face of the enemy	-30
Attacking defenseless foe	-10
Failing to protect the weak	-15
Being discourteous to a lady (or lad)	-5
Abandoning a quest	-10
Failure in your duties	-5 to -15
Acting dishonorably in a tournament	-10



Quest Rank	Quest Type	Way of Acquisition	Person Involved
Minor	Dueling with a cruel weak knight	In the manor of the lord	A damsel in distress
Minor	Fighting a large monster	In a tavern	A peasant
Minor	Rescuing a maiden from an evil sorcerer	On the road	Relatives of the maiden
Major	Destroy a demon	In a dream	A priest that will give further instructions
Major	Defeating a huge monster	People asking for help	The head of the village is in danger
Epic	Defeating a gargantuan monster	Heralds of the king asking for champions	A chieftain in the region in danger
Epic	Reclaim a lost artifact	Omen from a seer	The king and his sages that will interpret the omen

### 3. NOBLE QUESTS

Quests of glory and bravado are in the daily life of a knight. These quests can be either random events or prearranged adventures depending on your play style.

Quests can be given in various ways (see table above).

### 4. KNIGHT SERVICE

A knight is he who serves. Thus, in every position he finds himself, he must serve and perform admirably to please his lord and gain prestige.

Besides military duties, a knight is a noble so he must present himself at court being intelligent, eloquent, wise, and charming. A knight must:

- Participate in noble councils and offer his opinion.
- Take part in festivities and celebrations organized by his lord or represent his lord in similar events.
- Be part of diplomatic missions with various parties (other nobles, temples, guilds, etc.).
- Entertain guests by singing, playing a musical instrument, or reciting poetry.

### 5. REWARDS

A noble lord is obliged to provide for his vassals all necessary materials for them to fight by his side but a good and wise lord who wants to also gain prestige from his generosity shall give special presents:

- A rich embroidered tunic (advantage to the first Charisma check in nobility encounters).
- A silver or gold engraved sword that gives Inspiration in battle to its wielder and to 1d4 of his allies.
- A fine steel armor (no Encumbrance to its wearer).
- A beautifully carved horn (advantage to Survival).
- A fur-amplified cloak that gives advantage to saving throws against cold.
- A semi-intelligent (INT 5) warhorse that obeys simple verbal commands.

These are mainly ornamental gifts but add a lot to immersion, roleplay, and fun! Of course, a lord can give magical items to his knights depending on the magic availability of each campaign or the GM's play-style. Conversely, a gifted item can have one other non-magical ability or quality. The GM is free to come up with other rewards.

### EPILOGUE

**ALL OF THE** above are optional rules to enhance your game and add a small political flavor to it. The aim is for the characters to gain notoriety for their acts and become part of their world-setting-society. Their names will live forever and even become legends for newer players to aspire, inspire, and aim to emulate.

In the upcoming supplement(s) we shall explore far more detail and options to further enhance your game so that characters can influence the world around them and be a part of the it and not just a character sheet...



# ASTRAL SEA HIDEOUT

We must retrieve that cargo. Otherwise, I'll never financially recover from this. Those astral riders have it coming; this is hardly the first time they raided us...

Foreman Jackie Adams



Sailors find their homes at sea and learn all kinds of skills to navigate, care for their vessels, gather food from the sea, and even survive disastrous weather conditions. It is a lifestyle that not many can endure. It requires resolve and a soul of steel. However, the brutal truth an initiate learns fast is that the worst threat is not the weather but other mariners. Heartless, ruthless individuals with no other objective than to strip other vessels for anything of value and often slit the throats of all those within. They are known as pirates or corsairs. They brandish black sails and wreak havoc wherever their ships pass.

## TERROR IN ALL WATERS

**BEYOND THE SEAMS** of the Material Plane, few are aware that a nearly infinite sea fills the void between the countless planes of existence. The nature of the Astral Sea is difficult to understand with the current knowledge of magic and arcane secrets. It is a wondrous region where even sentient creatures' will help shape it.

Pirate bands scourge the Astral Sea too. Moving in impossible ways across the ephemeral, semi-fluid substance that fills the void. A humanoid race native to the Astral Sea, the Targgi, makes up most of the corsair population. They surf the ethereal waters with their ships and revel in pillaging, robbing, and kidnapping.

The Targgi retreat into uncharted regions of the Astral Sea after a successful hit. They reach small, unknown islands where they maintain safe houses. There they can lay low for a while before their next incursion.

## THE BLACK BLADE CORSAIRS

**A SMALL GROUP** of Targgi pirates slowly paves their way in the complex Astral Sea hierarchy. To grow in prominence, they behave boldly and attack priority merchant targets that would fall under the influence of other pirate factions. Their leader, Captain Gihanna, believes that their faraway lair can remain secret long enough for them to be able to scale up their operation. Captain Gihanna is a fearsome warrior who commands the respect of seven other pirates. They all have previous experience as corsairs; years ago, they affiliated with other pirate factions and learned the tricks and tools of the trade.

## MISSING SHELLS AND INGOTS

**CAPTAIN GIHANNA'S CREW** has struck Astral Sea merchant companies in the past six months. They have lost so much to these pirates. Last week, Captain Gihanna's pirates attacked a well-defended astral vessel and stole a valuable cargo of exotic mollusk shells and silver ingots. The person in charge of the trading operation, Foreman Jackie Adams, went out to look for the missing vessel and found it adrift in the Astral Sea. The sailors were dead. Their throats slit. The cargo carried away.

Foreman Jackie Adams had a difficult talk with the silver ingots' owner, as she was only hired to move them from one port to another. Her employer was furious and blamed Foreman Jackie for her incompetence on what the employer referred to as '*simple transportation*'. However, the employer was also quick to inform her that some of the ingots have invisible, traceable arcane runes.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

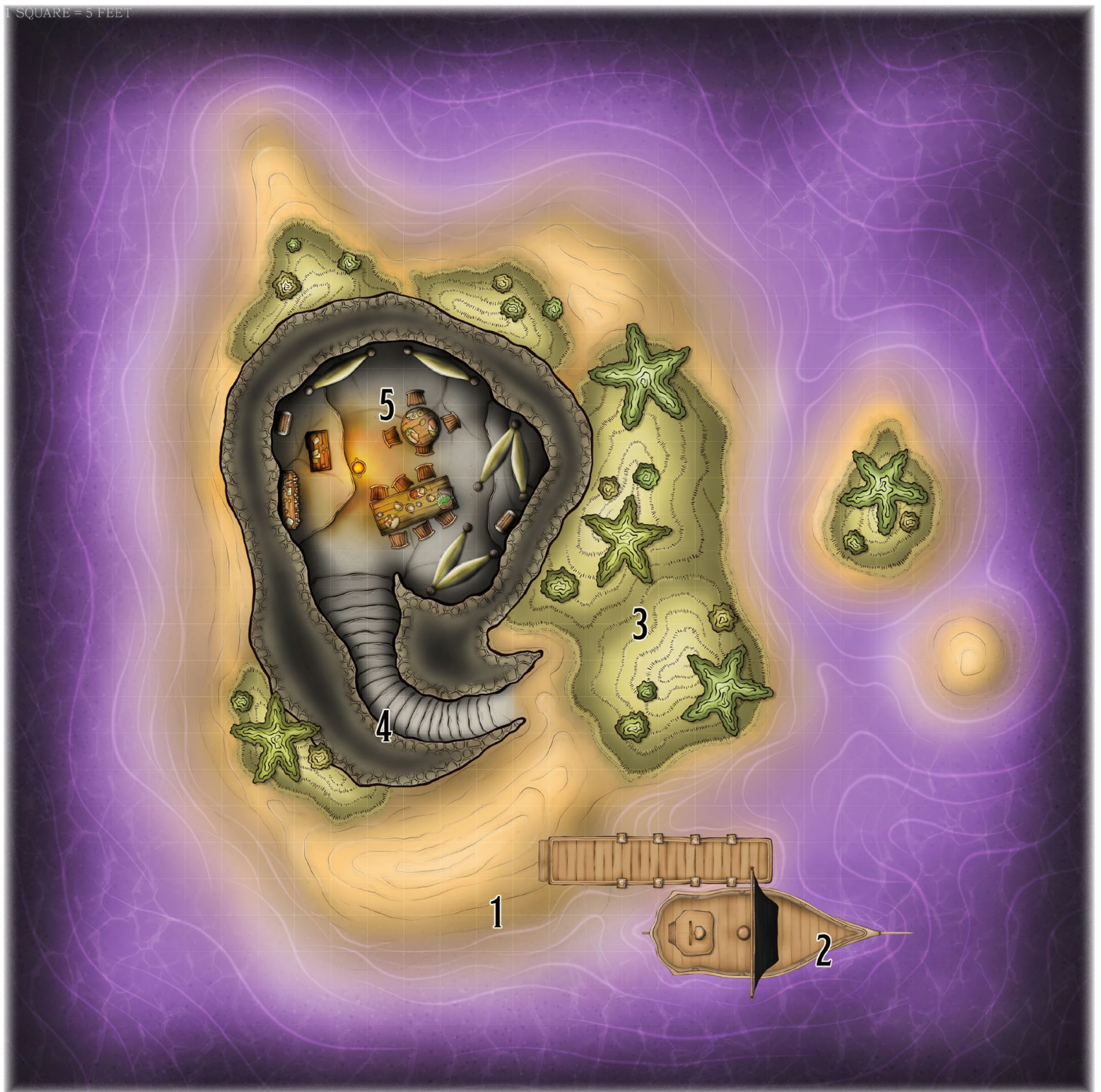
**FOREMAN JACKIE ADAMS** needs to retrieve the lost shipment. Her employer has given her a magic compass that can detect the location of the stolen ingots, even across the Astral Sea. With no other options, Foreman Jackie offers a bounty of 2,000 gp out of her pocket for the tracking and retrieval of the stolen goods. She also offers an Astral Sea-ready skiff so that the characters can surf the astral waters and track down the petty mariners.

This supplement is a level-4 adventure where the characters raid a pirate island in the ephemeral Astral Sea.

The magic compass pulses when pointed in the direction of the stolen ingots. Once the characters are at the Astral Sea, following the compass' directions is not difficult. Foreman Jackie Adams (**thug**) accompanies the characters as she wants her investment recouped.

### 1. THE BEACH AND PIERS

After two days at sea, a speckle in the fussy horizon is revealed to be a small isle. A large rock formation sprouts from the fine sand. It is made from a strange material that is only found on the Astral Sea and can be fashioned into cheap jewelry and armor. The corsairs' vessel by the ethereal shore indicates this is the right place.



## 2. THE BLACK BLADE

*A 30-foot-long ship awaits by the wooden pier. The pirate black sail is currently tied up to the upper mast. There is no sign of the Targgi corsairs on the beach.*

A wooden strip on the vessel's side reads 'The Black Blade' in Targgi. Well-informed individuals know that this particular pirate band brandishes knives and armors made from the black rock that dominates the island (DC 18 History). Upon inspection, the ship's upper deck contains nothing of value as the shipment crates have already been moved off to the underground lair.

A trapdoor under the sail leads to the lower deck. It is dark, unkempt, and pestilent. The chamber contains several wooden crates with iron locks; all empty. Eight hammocks hang from the ship's beams and mast.

Two bound, human sailors shield their eyes from the light when the characters arrive. They work for Foreman Jackie but were presumed dead. The poor sailors, Carl and Darella (**scouts**), are weak and dehydrated from the crude conditions of imprisonment they endured. If healed and offered something to eat and drink, they gladly join the characters on their retrieval mission.

### 3. OTHERWORLDLY VEGETATION

*Tall grass of fine blades, shallow shrubs, and strange, star-shaped conifer trees dot the desolate island. The trees' fruits produce an intense, alluring fragrance.*

Unknown to the Targgi on the island is the fact that the fruit trees in their domain are rare and exotic. The fruit is poisonous to Targgi, hence their lack of interest. But to other humanoid races, the Star Fruit is a highly-coveted delicacy that has great flavor and medicinal qualities.

An expert cook knows how to prepare the Star Fruit so it is edible; otherwise, eating the fruit raw carries unforeseen consequences that may be useful or a hindrance (DC 16 Nature). The first time a person eats a raw Star Fruit each day, it has a random magical effect. Roll 1d6:

1. The skin turns permanently yellow.
2. +1 to a random Ability Score.
3. -1 to a random Ability Score
4. The character vomits maggots and snails.
5. All body hair grows to 5 feet long.
6. The nose swells and triples in size permanently.

### 4. THE STAIRS' TRAP

Light and chatter can be perceived from the top of the stairs. The characters have the upper hand as the corsairs eat and drink with no one on watch. However, runes of magical transmutation enchant the stairs (DC 20 Perception). When a person descends to the seventh or eighth step, the trap triggers. In an instant all steps slant down for one minute to form a slide, dropping all creatures on them (DC 16 Dexterity). They fall to the base of the stairs in area 5. Then, a mechanical contraption dumps two buckets of a viscous substance on them. The glue-like substance imposes disadvantage on all actions. Those who succeed on the save can retreat or descend slowly by grabbing the walls and jumping over the dumped glue matter.

### 5. CAPTAIN GIHANNA'S LAIR

*Eight corsairs interrupt their drinking to draw their ashen blades. The surprise in their looks cannot be hidden, they thought their lair was untraceable.*

Captain Gihanna (**bandit captain**), her trusty spellcaster (**priest**), and six corsairs (**bandits**) stand to confront the untimely trespassers. They all carry black stone blades. They are sharp and crude-looking but have the disadvantage of being too frail. Failed attacks have a 2-in-6 chance of sundering the weapon. In contrast, the pirates carry a second blade at all times. The Targgi pirates are trapped but they still attempt to reach their vessel if the battle turns sour or if Captain Gihanna falls.

## DEVELOPMENT

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

The missing cargo is in the underground lair (area 5) and Foreman Jackie Adams is glad to recover it. She pays the characters the bounty and bids them farewell.

If the characters defeat Captain Gihanna and her goons in combat, they inadvertently rise to prominence among the pirate factions in the Astral Sea. They may soon summon the characters and conscript them for a different mission, this is an opportunity to build a villainous reputation among the Astral Sea criminal circles.

If Captain Gihanna is surrendered to the authorities or she manages to escape the characters, the defeated mariner eventually acquires a new crew and vows to take revenge against the characters. She becomes a recurring villain and shall soon return to hinder the characters' adventures. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...

This is a collaborative project of [Elven Tower](#) and illustrator [Victor Escalante](#). Check out his [Patreon page](#) for awesome concept art!



# THE DWARVEN TRIALS

“When it comes to real wealth and treasure, seek the lost hoards of dwarves. You either waste resources or find something of lesser value elsewhere.”

Old Dwarvish Saying

## Delve Level 6 (5,700 XP)

6 shadows  
10 skeletons  
1 gorgon  
4 veterans

## SETUP

**THIS MODULE BRINGS** the characters to a dwarven shrine deep within the mountains. Ancient dwarvish relics and great treasures await. But the Dwarven Trials were built to test the wits and strength of those who think themselves worthy of the task. Contenders must step on the magic circles to visit all four sections in the dungeon. Only by activating the arcane devices in each of them, will they be able to explore the final room (area 9).

A cleric or paladin character in the party may need to come here to atone for their sins. Alternatively, the characters may be looking for a specific dwarven relic they need. Or perhaps, they just want the treasure in here. See **Adventure Hooks** for more information.

## THE TRIALS' LEGACY

**HUNDREDS OF YEARS** ago, within the walls of Northern Peak, dwarf sages looked for ways to protect a holy dwarven idol found therein. The dwarf government stumbled upon the ancient relic during a mining operation. The idol has the shape of a small forge made of marble, malachite, and quartz; put together with a fine alloy of silver and steel, all of it decorated with threads of pure gold. Everyone in the city deemed the discovery as a representative of the Forge God. At first, they placed the idol in the city's town square for everyone to pray at, admire, or just feel blessed by its presence. But, despite the guards protecting the relic at all times, the attempts to rob, defile, or destroy it did not take long to occur.

The dwarves realized the holy relic was too valuable to be placed in public. They ordered the construction of a magical vault filled with immortal protectors and traps deep to guard it in the mountain depths. Today, brave dwarves make the journey to the Forge God's Idol to prove themselves, overcome their inner demons, or see if they are worthy of the god's blessing, boon, or gift.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

**USE ONE OR** any combination of the following hooks to get the characters involved with the Dwarven Trials.

### SEEKING ATONEMENT

There is a cleric or paladin within the characters in the party. They make their journey toward the Northern Territories and learn of the dungeon's location. The divine character must gain access to area 9 (see **Conclusion**).

### THE WISDOM OF THE DWARVES

The characters need to come here to acquire insight and ancient wisdom that will allow them to continue a larger quest. This could be a well-kept dwarvish secret to forge legendary weapons, an ancient dwarven spell to summon the strength of the mountains, or perhaps secret knowledge to defeat giants, demons, or monsters from the depths of the earth. The GM is free to rationalize other pieces of lore that only the dwarven vault could hold.

### JUST FOR TREASURE

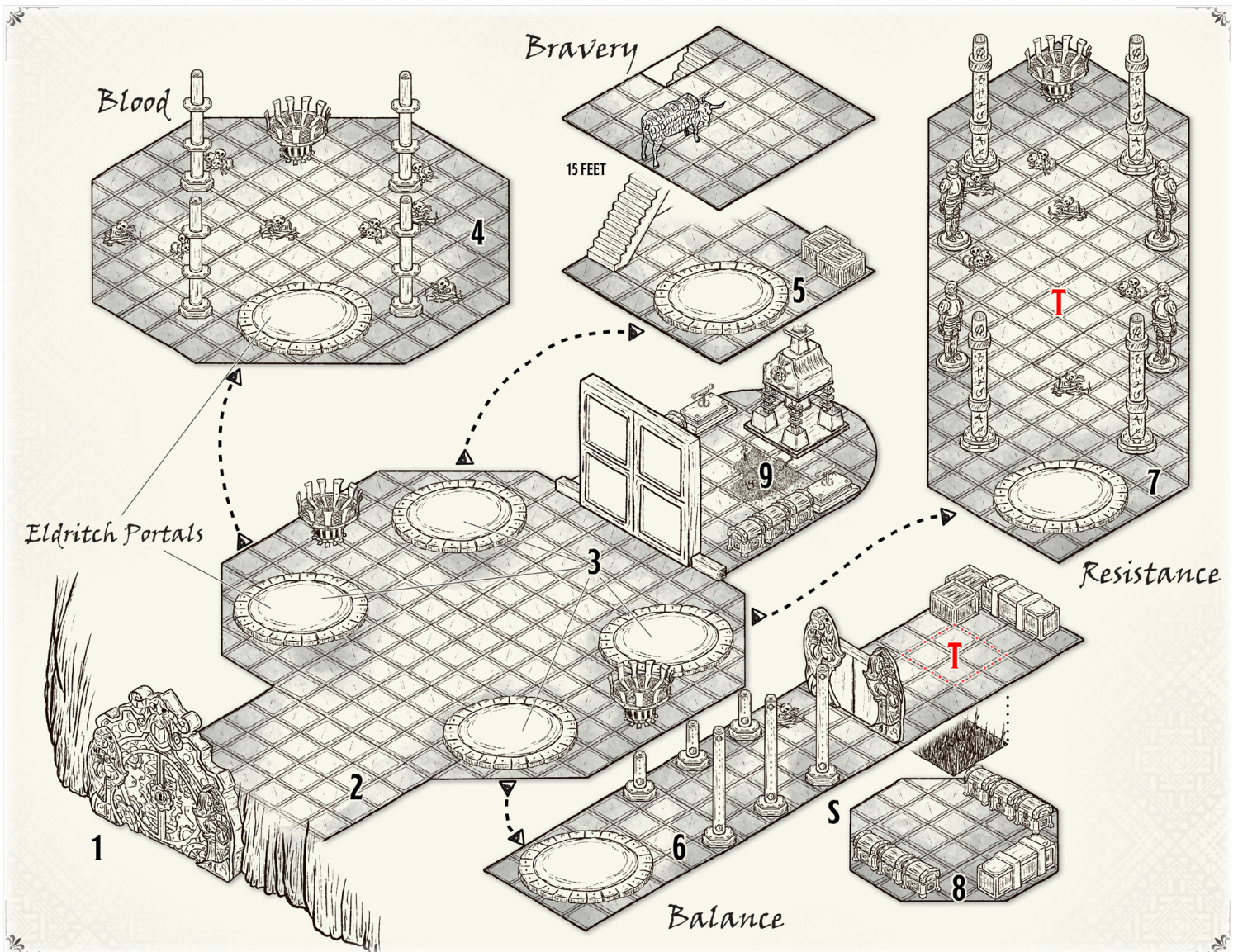
The characters are tipped about this place and cannot wait to get their hands on dwarven ancient treasure. This vault is not to be touched by tomb robbers, though. Only those worthy may leave with a piece of dwarven riches. Thieves and pillagers shall find dangerous obstacles, monsters, and traps between them and their loot.

## FEATURES OF THE DUNGEON

**Light.** All areas in the dungeon feature sconces with a *continual flame* spell on them. Removing any of the torches makes the magic fade in less than a minute.

**Portals.** The main dungeon chamber has four teleportation circles (see area 3) that lead to the trial rooms. But the characters must be careful when using them; only two people can teleport at a time. And an interval of twelve seconds (two combat rounds) must pass before using either of the circles again. This means that if a battle starts for the two characters that travel first, their companions cannot join them until round three.

**Magic.** Powerful dwarf mages used arcane spells to build the machinations of this dungeon. Traps and enemies in all areas magically respawn every 6 hours.



## GETTING THERE

**THE CHARACTERS' JOURNEY** toward the Forge God's Idol must not be without a challenge. The characters should encounter local monsters or foreign factions looking for the sacred place on their way here.

### 1. ENTRANCE

*Two steel dwarf warriors flank the dungeon's locked entrance. The beautiful gate features intricate details, geared sections, metal bars, and arcane pistons.*

The first test is to open the gate (DC 22 Thieves' Tools). The characters may employ magical means to do this. If they must use sheer strength, those involved gain a Level of Exhaustion after pushing the heavy doors.

### 2. MAIN CHAMBER

Engravings of dwarf warriors, priests, and landscapes cover the walls. A mage recognizes the circles' teleporting nature (DC 12 Arcana). The characters may access the trial rooms with them (see **Features of the Dungeon**).

### 3. TELEPORTATION CIRCLES

*Four identical stone circles cover the corners of the main hall. Dwarven runes run along the edges.*

The moment a character steps on a circle, it starts to glow and teleports a maximum of two people to the other side corresponding trial chamber (see map).

### 4. TRIAL OF BLOOD

*The brazier's fire casts shadows on the walls that seem to take menacing, deformed humanoid shapes.*

When a living creature arrives at this chamber, the trial begins. The shadows on the walls shift and become ephemeral apparitions while the bones on the floor tremble and coalesce into warriors. Six **shadows** and ten **skeletons** attack. The teleportation circle does not work to return to area 2 until all undead are defeated.

**Bypass.** Cutting oneself and spilling one's blood on the enemies destroys them immediately, no save. The engravings on the walls show this (DC 18 Perception).



## 5. TRIAL OF BRAVERY

*This section is divided into two levels. A beast's heavy breathing can be heard from above the long stairway.*

The characters must confront a **gorgon** here. Some of the monster's victims lie petrified in the second story. The gorgon charges the characters the moment it sees them approach. Its gas spreads on both levels.

**Bypass.** The characters may prove they have the coldest blood and a dragon's wit. If they breathe the gorgon's foul gas willingly, they become immune to it.

## 6. TRIAL OF BALANCE

*Six columns flank this corridor-shaped chamber. A gate blocks the way by its midpoint. A strong wind current pushes newcomers toward the magic circle.*

The characters must use the columns to resist the wind and advance 5 feet per round (DC 18 Athletics).

**Bypass.** If a dwarf is part of the group, they may remember their nature and stand straight against the wind and not use the columns as protection, knowing well it won't knock them down. Others may do the same and advance at normal speed. The key is not to resist the wind.

**Spiked Pit.** Characters that fail to notice the pressure-sensitive plate (DC 18 Perception) before the treasure fall 15 feet and get impaled by rusty metal spikes. They take 6d6 piercing damage (DC 16 Dexterity / half). The containers at the end do not exist, they are illusions.

## 7. TRIAL OF RESISTANCE

The bones in this large chamber belong to the many people that failed these trials before... Their souls are trapped by the dungeon's wards and enchantments. Their energy gives life to four sets of armor. They fight like brave dwarf warriors (use the **veteran** stats but grant them the properties of a construct). They respawn in 6 hours.

**Trap.** Standing in the very center of this area activates a trap. Poison darts shoot from a thousand tiny holes in the walls and fly in every direction. They target all creatures in the chamber. Victims take 6d6 poison damage and become poisoned for 1 hour (DC 15 Constitution).

**Bypass.** There is no way to bypass this trial. Only those with strength and resolve can best the immortal dwarf warriors and gain access to the Forge God's Idol.

## 8. HIDDEN VAULT

Only the most curious of characters find this hidden area behind a pushable brick (DC 17 Perception). There are 3,486 gp, three *potions of greater healing*, a *+1 dagger*, and two magic items of the GM's choice.

## 9. THE FORGE GOD'S IDOL

Each of the gate divisions glows with each traversed trial. It opens when the last trial is completed. The characters succeeded. They stand before the Forge God's Idol. Besides the treasure, they may learn ancient dwarvish lore, or find divine atonement (see **Conclusion**).

## CONCLUSION

The characters reach the end of this adventure. They must face the consequences of their deeds.

### THE PATH OF THE DIVINE

The character seeking divine guidance and forgiveness may do so by praying to the Forge God's Idol. They must concentrate on prayer during an entire day (or the time that the GM considers best) to remove whichever affliction prevents them from communicating with their god, cast spells, etc. The GM is free to come up with a magical boon if the character in question is of dwarf origin.

### A TREASURE FOR THE WORTHY

Chests full to the brim. Piles of gold with silver weapons interred in them. Pedestals holding magical scrolls. The characters are free to take something or grab it all. No one shall judge what they do with well-earned treasure. The GM determines how large this hoard is.





## ALEX RINEHART

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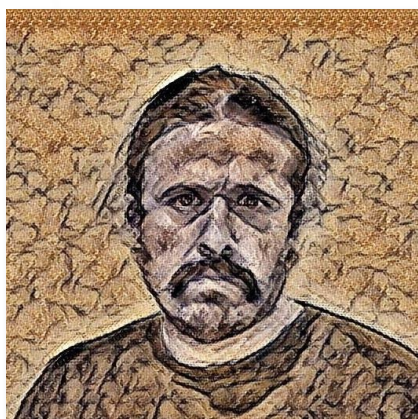
Alex Rinehart (he/him) runs monthly ones-shots of various indie games for friends and strangers alike. For the past 2 years, this has been in his discord server, [The Hartland](#). If you'd like to try a new game, stop on by! When he's not running games, Alex is usually playtesting his own, or writing adventures for the systems he loves. Last year he released [Gratitude: A Horror Game](#), over a dozen classes and hunts for the Slayers RPG, and launched a Kickstarter for Cyberrats, a game about cybernetic rats trying to save the world from an alien invasion. You can find Alex on [Twitter](#), or his previously published games and adventures on [Itch](#).



## EMMY ALLEN

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Author of various RPG books including [The Gardens of Ynn](#), [Esoteric Enterprises](#), [The Dolorous Stroke](#), and the Ennie Award-winning [Stygian Library](#). Emily has been designing and publishing RPGs for five years. When she isn't working, she relaxes by making little models and doing special effects makeup. You can find faer on faer [TTRPG blog](#) and [Twitter](#).



## VIEL NAST

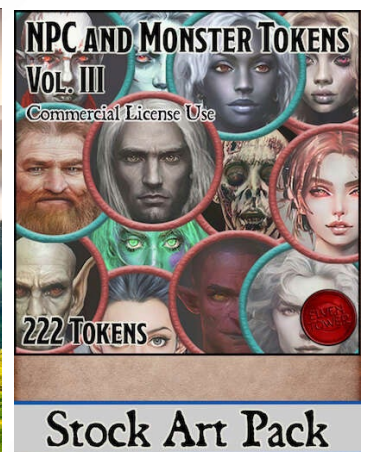
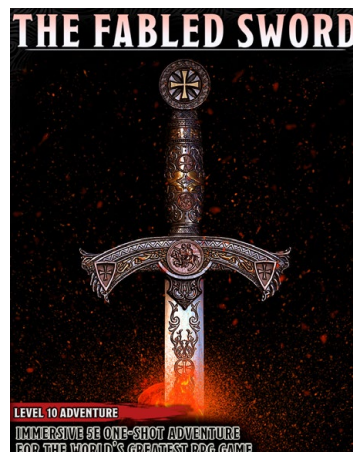
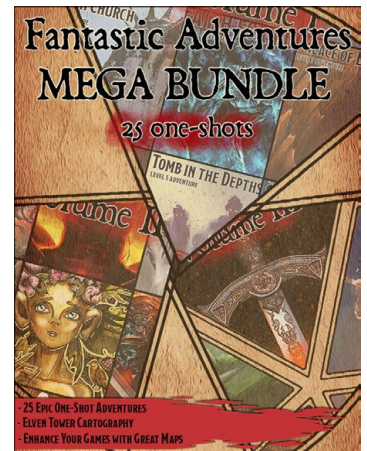
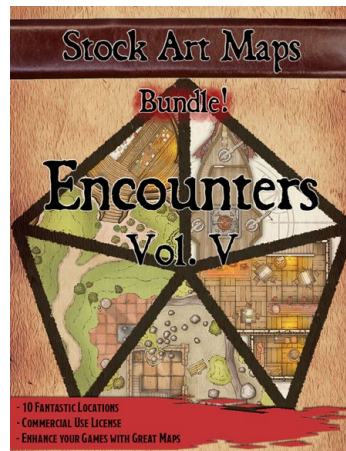
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Viel "Talbot" Nast has loved all things epic since 1990. Epic metal, epic fantasy and TTRPGs! He has created the epic fantasy world of Land of Oyr and via the company Talbot Epic Press has published five books in his world. Writing anything about RPGs 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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