

1ST LEVEL



DOWN THE DEMON WELL

A DUET ADVENTURE FOR ONE PLAYER AND ONE DM



FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE

A demonic cult is hidden beneath a sleepy village.



ADVENTURE PRIMER

Down the Demon Well is a Fifth Edition duet adventure intended for **one to two characters of 1st to 2nd level** and is optimized for **one 1st level character with a sidekick**. Characters who complete this adventure should earn enough experience to reach level 2. An old well hides a local demon cult's secret hideout, and a little boy has fallen in and exposed them. This adventure is setting agnostic and fits into any existing campaign with an abandoned well in a small village.

BACKGROUND

The countryside village of Ashwood is a quiet place with a dark secret: it's home to a nest of demon-summoning cultists. The cult has been meeting in a secret underground basement beneath the local tavern, studying an evil book and summoning demons. They have gone unnoticed for decades until a child accidentally discovers the back door to their lair when he falls down an old well.

ABOUT THE CULTISTS

Melceth Farsoar was a well-loved resident of Ashwood who spent his entire life in the sleepy town. He was the local tavern owner, a brewer of the best ale this side of the Shimmering Forest, a long-time bachelor, and a warlock who practiced his magic in a secret bunker he made under his tavern.

As the years passed, Melceth would take on a few students to follow in his footsteps. After his passing, they continued teaching themselves the dark arts, taking over the tavern and the hidden lair. Calling themselves the Order of Melceth in honor of their original teacher, they are small in number, but their power is growing.

Most of the cultists have no wishes to cause harm to the rest of the villagers and quietly seek to study to relieve them of their boredom. However, Erika Persil recently joined the Order with much darker desires — she has even killed a traveler and used his remains in a blood ritual, hiding it from the others.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your adventurer hooked into this story:

The Best Ale. As any true adventurer knows, it's not always a pile of treasure that one should seek — A fine brew and a hot plate of food are just as rewarding. While traveling, the adventurer has heard of "Malceth's Dark Lager" being served in the town of Ashwood and has decided it was a worthy treasure to seek.

The Missing Brother. Alban Orleth was a vagabond, a drunk, and a wastrel. No one noticed when he went missing except his sister Arlene with whom he was still close. She begs her friend (the adventurer) to go and see what has happened to him. She hasn't heard from him in over a month, and Alban wrote weekly letters to her. He was last staying in the inn at Ashwood.

The Merchant's Daughter. Harlen Persil is a hardworking cloth merchant based in Haven who is constantly on the road with his wares. He's recently come home to Haven to his daughter Erika has run off to some small village, stealing family heirlooms on her way out the door. He hires the adventurer for a hefty sum of 20gp to retrieve his wayward daughter or the missing valuables from a town called Ashwood.

WELCOME TO ASHWOOD

Nestled in the Verdant Hills near the Shimmering Forest, Ashwood is an idyllic country village. Being off the regular trade routes means very few travelers ever make their way here, and the villagers prefer it that way. Some because they like their quiet lives, and others because they belong to a demonic cult and don't appreciate strangers looking too closely.

The village itself consists of a few dozen small, thatched cottages centered around the village green. Further out is the lumbermill that employs many of the local workers along with a handful of farms.

ASHWOOD LOCATIONS

These are a few of the locations the adventurer can visit in Ashwood:

THE HUNTER'S LODGE INN

The Lodge is the only Inn in a 30-mile radius and was built by the former owner and secret cult leader Malceth Farsoar. Henrietta Elsmere took over from her mentor — and rumored lover — when he passed away. The lodge itself is the most well built in the entire village and the only one boasting a clay tiled roof. The Elsmere family lives here, along with a few guests that include Erika Persil. The Lodge's tavern is a lively place at night, with the locals dancing and singing along with the Elsmere boys who sing, juggle, and play instruments. There are three modest rooms available to be rented out at 5sp a night and well-cooked meals for 3sp. Spending some time in the tavern and chatting or listening to the locals for 1 hour will result in the adventurer hearing a rumor. Roll 1d6 and refer to the Ashwood Rumors table or choose one the adventurer has not yet heard.

THE JUMPING KETTLE

The only general and dry goods store in Ashwood is owned and operated by a spry, elderly dwarven woman named Belnera and a secret member of the Order of Malceth. She is always happy to help and is willing to tell the necessary information about the different locations and important NPCs in town. Any essential adventuring gear worth no more than 25gp can be purchased here. A successful DC 12 Charisma check will result in Belnara liking the adventurer enough to gossip with them. Roll 1d6 and refer to the Ashwood Rumors table or choose one the adventurer has not yet heard.

VILLAGE MARKET

The Market is a small set up of stalls filled with produce from local farms and some artisans selling bolts of cloth, handmade wooden furniture, and clothing. The adventurer has a chance of running into many of the local NPCs here and overhearing gossip and bits of useful information. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check will result in the adventurer overhearing a rumor. Roll 1d6 and refer to the Ashwood Rumors table or choose one the adventurer has not yet heard.

ASHWOOD RUMOR TABLE

1d6

Rumor

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | "I hear Alban Osbeth disappeared from town because he owned someone a sum of gold, and he couldn't pay." |
| 2 | "There's been an odd smell in town lately, like rotten eggs. It comes and goes, but it's been stronger lately."
— This is referencing the sulfuric smell of the old well (see "The Cultist Lair") |
| 3 | "That new city girl Erika is mighty pretty, but there's just something about her that doesn't sit right with me. I think Tomas is too good of a lad for that one, but he's smitten for sure." |
| 4 | "Henrietta is such a dear! She's taking care of the Inn, and all three of her sons are such good boys." |
| 5 | "If you want to try the best brew this side of the Shimmering Forest, you have to try Malceth's Dark Lager! Henrietta at the Hunter's Lodge is the only one with the recipe!" |
| 6 | "I heard the Blacksmith yelling at Alban the day before he disappeared. I wonder if that's why he left town?" |

IMPORTANT NPCs

These NPCs are either central to the primary story or may have information that adventurer can use to track down the Order of Malceth:

Henrietta Elsmere (LE, female human **acolyte**) is both a village elder and the head of the Order of Melceth. A stern matriarch whose husband passed away in a lumbermill accident, Henrietta raised her three boys — Tomas, Terrance, Pietre — first as farmers and then as cultists in the Order. She took over the Hunter's Lodge Inn after Malceth passed away and now lives there. She is outwardly friendly to all but is not above murder if it means protecting her family or the Order. Henrietta is very wary of the newcomer Erika with whom her son Tomas has become enamored. She knows the following information:

- She does not know what happened to Alban Orleth. He stayed at the lodge for almost two months before packing his room and leaving without a word.
- Her three sons work and live in the Inn with her. Her son Tomas has a new fiance named Erika, who is adjusting to country life after moving here from the city.
- There's not much happening in this sleepy town, and there's much more excitement in the city of Haven.

Erika Persil (NE, female human **cultist**) is a pretty young woman with a sharp wit and a simpering attitude. She works as a waitress in the Lodge and stays with Tomas Elsmere (LN, male human **cultist**), who is head over heels for her. Tomas brought Erika into the Order and has been aiding her in blood sacrifices. He killed Alban Orleth, a traveler staying in the Hunter's Lodge Inn, while she performed a ritual to summon her first demon.

She knows the following information:

- If confronted about the stolen heirlooms, she will lie and say they were stolen from her by a thief in the village. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check will determine this to be a lie — She hid them under a loose floorboard in her room at the Hunter's Lodge.
- She refuses to return home to her father and proclaims she is staying here for love. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check will determine this to be a lie.
- She claims to have seen Alban Orleth leave town with a pack on his back and acting cheerful. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check will determine this to be a lie — she killed him in a ritual and buried his body in the nearby woods.

Gareth Emerson (LG, male human **commoner**) is a village elder and the local blacksmith who has lived in Ashwood his entire life. A burly man of few words, Gareth tends to treat conversations the same as he handles hot metal on his anvil. His 5-year-old daughter Sally is well-loved by all the villagers, and since his wife's death at childbirth, treated as if she were their own. Like the rest of the villagers, he is utterly unaware of the Order's presence. He knows the following information:

- He does not like the newcomer Erika spending time with his daughter.
- He knew Alban Orleth and let him sweep up the forge for a few coppers here and there. He caught him sleeping on the job and yelled at him in a rare moment of temper. He has no idea where he went but feels guilty at the encounter. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check will reveal that he feels shame.
- He recommends Malceth's Dark Lager as the best brew this side of the Shimmering Forest, and only Henrietta at the Hunter's Lodge knows the recipe.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Once the adventurer has reached Ashwood, read the following aloud:

The sun is shining, there's a cool breeze blowing, and the sweet sound of songbirds fills the air in the quaint village of Ashwood. Bustling villagers laugh and call to each other across the village green at the farmer's stalls, and the sounds of a blacksmith at work ring through the air.

The largest building in the village green and the only tiled roof within sight is the Inn. A swinging wooden sign above the open front door proudly bears the name "The Hunter's Lodge," and the smell of fresh-baked bread wafts through the doorway.

EXPLORING THE HUNTER'S LODGE

There are many pieces of information and evidence that the adventurer can find in Ashwood, and they all lead to the Hunter's Lodge. There they can find the following pieces of evidence:

- Searching Alban Orseth's old room with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check will uncover an unsent letter to his sister Arlene in Haven tucked under the mattress. In the letter, he expresses concern that something sinister is happening in the Lodge's basement.
- Searching Erika and Tomas' room with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will uncover a loose floorboard hiding a sack of gold and silver jewelry worth 200gp and a bloodstained silver men's ring with an ornate letter "O" carved into it that belonged to Alban.
- Listening at the door of Erika and Tomas' room at night with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check and a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check will reveal them arguing over Tomas' distaste over "what they did" and how his "mother would not approve."
- Any of the Elsmere or Erika can be followed to the basement at night or the old well (see "The Cultist Lair") with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. The secret door in the Lodge's basement leading to the lair can be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

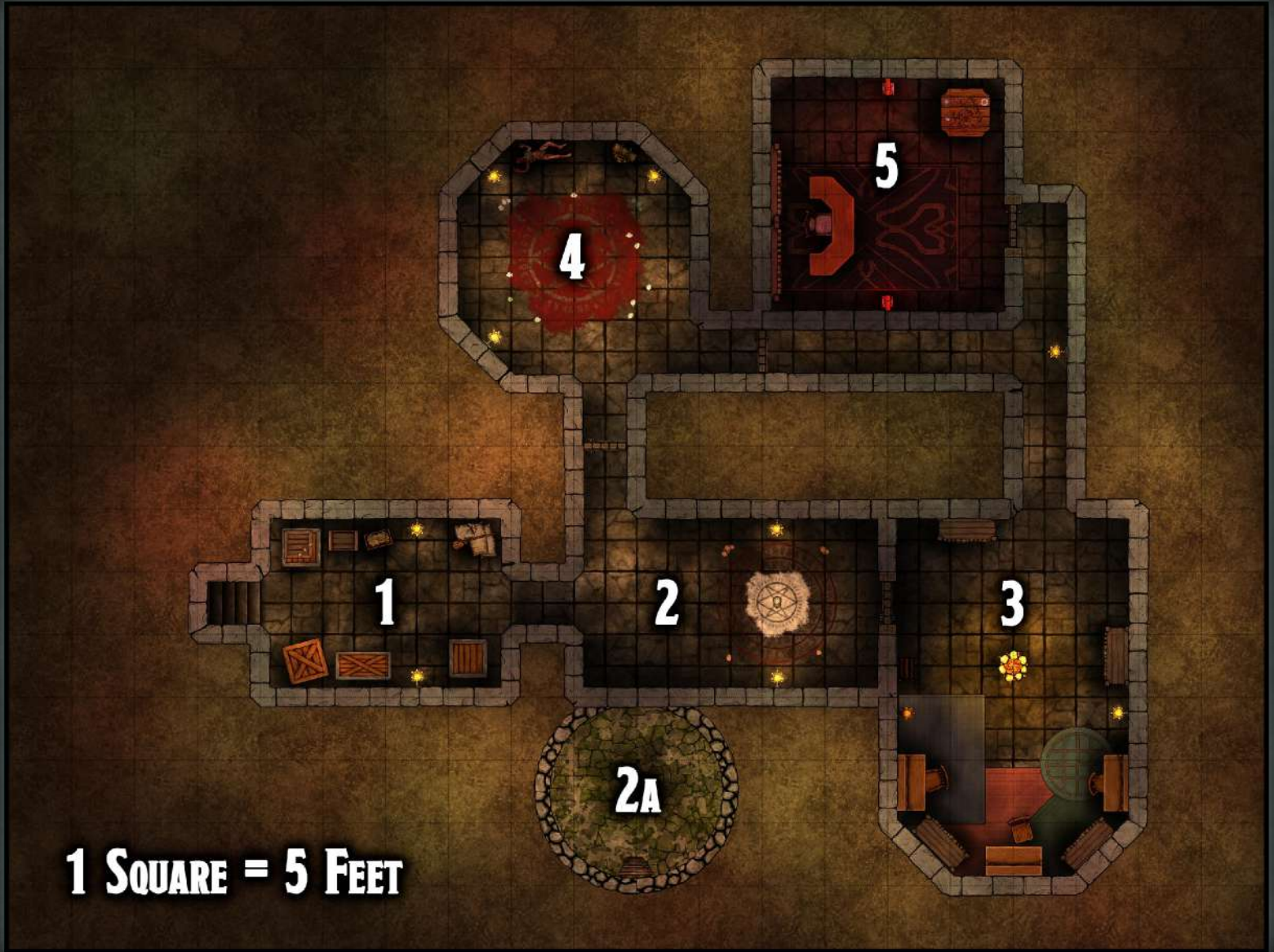
FINDING THE LAIR

If confronted, Tomas and Erika will fight and attempt to flee to the lair through the old well (see Cultist Lair). If the adventurer is having difficulty determining where to go, the following event can help further the story:

Sally, the blacksmith's daughter, is playing with a friend named Jeromy near the inn and trying to find the source of the "bad smell." They see the old well, and Jeromy falls inside, knocking himself out. Sally runs and grabs the adventurer and leads them to the now uncovered well that reeks of sulfur. She points down with tears streaking through the dirt on her face. "W-We were playing, and he fell through!"

Jeromy, a slender 5 year old human boy, is shaken up but not severely injured from the fall.





1 SQUARE = 5 FEET

THE CULTIST LAIR

After taking over the Hunter's Lodge, Malceth Farsoar discovered an old secret room connected to a series of caves in the basement. Documents he found revealed it to be a hiding place for the previous owner who moonlighted as a smuggler of illicit goods. Malceth worked for years to convert the caves into a complex for his — and eventually his students — demonic studies.

There are two ways into the lair: via a secret door (area 1) in the basement of the Hunter's Lodge that can be discovered with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check or through a hidden and forgotten old well (area 2a) that connects to the caves.

GENERAL FEATURES

The following features are prominent throughout the cultist lair unless otherwise noted:

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The lair walls and ceiling are mortared stone, and the floor is stone tiles. The ceiling is 10 feet high throughout.

Doors. The lair doors are built from sturdy oak and iron-bound. An adventurer proficient in thieves' tools can open a locked door with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check. The doors all have an AC of 15, 10 hit points and are immune to psychic and poison damage.

Lighting. Torches on the walls keep the lair well lit.

Sulfur. There is a stink of sulfur from the number of demonic rituals that lingers in the air in the entire lair. Sticks of cinnamon incense are lit in many of the rooms to combat the smell. This scent lingers on many of the cultists' clothes.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the provided map of the cultist lair:

1 - WAREHOUSE

The old smuggler's warehouse is connected to the basement through a secret door. The cultists are using it as a storage room for their ritual supplies. Stacks of crates filled with herbs, paper, ink, chalk, candles, and other ceremonial accouterments line the walls.

Treasure: Ceremonial Supplies. Carefully searching the crates with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a pack of rare spices worth 10gp.

2 - SUMMONING ROOM

The room reeks of sweet incense that does little to cover the smell of sulfur. Demonic symbols cover the floor and mix with old and fresh melted candle wax.

Encounter: Young Cultist. Pietre Elsmere (cultist) has just summoned a **mane** using a ritual.

Treasure: Coin Pouch. There is a pouch containing 2gp, 6 sp, and 12 cp on Pietres waistband.

2A - OLD WELL

The bottom of this well dried out a long time ago, and it is filled mostly with old debris. A rope ladder dangles off the side, and a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check

reveals that it is much newer than the rest of the debris in the well. The door that leads to area 2 is hidden from sight at the top of the well by an overhang.

3 - STUDY

Desks and bookshelves crammed with tomes fill the large room; large carpets cover the cold stone floor beneath them. A fire in the center of the chamber burns bright and fills the room with warmth and light.

Encounter: The Lovers. There are two **cultists**, Erika and Tomas, in this room. Tomas will protect Erika at all costs; Erika will attempt to flee to area 5 if Tomas dies or she loses more than half her hit points.

Treasure: Demonic Love. A careful search of the bookshelves and a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a rare first edition of the "The Devil's Companion," an erotic fictional story of a gnome and a devil praised for its surprisingly accurate depictions of demonic rituals and worth 20gp to a collector. The iron key that unlocks the door to area 4 is in a pouch at Erika's waist.

4 - MURDER ROOM

The door to this room is locked (see "General Features"), and Erika has the key in area 3. Anyone standing near the entrance will smell a foul stench coming through the cracks and hear claws skittering on stone. Demonic symbols and phrases in abyssal written in blood cover the walls and floors and the smell of cloying incense hangs heavy in the air. **Encounter: Something Rotten.** Erika and Tomas used this room to murder Alban Orseth and summoned a **dretch** that they have kept locked here.



Treasure: Alban's Corpse. Alban's corpse lies mostly eaten and discarded into a corner of the room along with a small pouch. Inside the satchel is a stack of letters from his sister Arlene and a *potion of healing* tucked into a side pocket.

5 - HEAD CULTIST STUDY

A large mahogany desk dominates this room's far wall, overlooked by ceiling-high bookshelves lined with tidy rows of old tomes. Red paned lanterns hang in the corners and cast a red-tinged light that makes the room appear awash with blood. Sitting patiently at the desk is a figure in a long black robe with their face obscured by a raised hood.

Encounter: Mommy Dearest. The figure at the desk is Henrietta Elsmere (**acolyte**), and she is not at all pleased to find the adventurer in the lair. She calmly converses with them and gives them the history of the Order, holding back her rage. If the adventurer mentions they killed any of her sons, she immediately attacks.

Treasure: A Mother's Love. Henrietta has a gold chain necklace with amethyst, opal, and sapphire settings representing her three sons' birth months. Each of the stones is worth 20gp each, and the necklace as a whole is worth 100gp.

AFTERMATH

If the adventurer was able to defeat the cultists and solve the murder of Alban Orseth, the villagers hail them as a hero. Shock and horror at learning about the cult shake the village to its core. They throw a feast in their honor and offer them stories they've heard about other troubles nearby — the simple villagers just don't know how to handle a real-life hero among them. While at the feast, many of the villagers come up to the adventurer to thank them, but the one thing they can't figure out is who smells ever so faintly of cinnamon incense.

CREDITS

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A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL MY PATRONS, YOU ROCK!

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