Ravenloft®: Mist Hunters

THE CITY OF DREAMS

RMH-07

By Jay Africa

An Adventure for 6th Level Characters

RMH-07

THE CITY OF DREAMS

A *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* Adventure

Entrusted with greater responsibility, you've been dispatched to I'Cath to find the Urn of Dreams. There, you must navigate the city and find a way into the Palace of Bones—the home of the domain's Darklord. To accomplish this, you'll need help from unlikely sources. Whatever you do, though, don't fall asleep.

The eighth adventure in the *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* series of adventures.
An adventure for 6th-level characters.

CONTENT WARNING: body horror (eyes, teeth), gore, death, children in peril, oppression (slavery, poverty, imposed insomnia), mental health (grief), self-harm.
Reference the Mist Hunters' Safety Kit article and *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft* for tips and tools on running a safe and fun game.

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Adventure Primer

I don't think the sun even exists in this place, because I've been up for hours and hours and hours and the night never ends here.

—Alex Proyas, Lem Dobbs, and David S. Goyer, *Dark City (1998)*

This adventure can be played by **three to five 6th-level characters** and is optimized for **four 6th-level characters**.

The City of Dreams occurs in the ever-changing city of I'Cath, with glimpses of the dreamworld that torments the domain's Darklord.

Background

Continuously impressed by their accomplishments, **ALANIK RAY**, an investigator hired by the **ORDER OF GUARDIANS**, dispatches the heroes to **I'CATH**, a domain of dreams and the pursuit of unachievable perfection. The trail of clues found in **KARTAKASS**, **FALKOVNIA**, and **BAROVIA** has led them to the **URN OF DREAMS**—which Alanik believes can be found within a library in the **PALACE OF BONES**, the home of the domain's **DARKLORD**, **TSIEN CHIANG**.

The adventurers must navigate the ever-changing city, face the city's destitute denizens, avoid the **JIANGSHI** in Chiang's service, and find egress into the Palace grounds. They must be careful; the palace is a dangerous place only to be entered after the haunting, discordant peals of the **NIGHTINGALE BELL** have sounded.

Overview

The adventure's story is spread over **three parts** and takes approximately **3 hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action scene. "Extending Play" sidebars in the adventure provide guidance on how to expand the adventure to occupy a roughly four-hour time slot. These estimations don't include time spent in pregame and postgame discussion:

Call to Action: Domain of Dreams. Alanik Ray sends the characters to I'Cath to retrieve the Urn of Dreams. The characters learn about the city's dangers.

Part 1: Immaculate Imperfection. The characters must avoid jiangshi and other denizens of I'Cath as they make their way to the Palace of Bones.

Part 2: To Ping'On Tower. The characters enter a sprawling garden within the palace grounds. They encounter the palace's wicked grounds keeper, who directs them to seek out Tsien Chiang's daughters.

Part 3: The Daughters Four. The characters seek out Tsien Chiang's daughters to learn more about the palace, the library, and the Urn of Dreams.

Story Awards

At certain points in the adventure, you may see this glyph along with an entry describing how the specified story award is earned or how it impacts the story. Ignore the entry if it refers to a story award none of the characters have. If it refers to a story award the characters just earned, the entry instead provides information for you and the players.

Character Hooks

At the conclusion of the previous adventure, the characters learned of the Urn of Dreams and the urgency of its acquisition. Characters who didn't participate in the previous adventure are being vetted by Alanik for potential long-term membership in his employ, and this investigation is a test of their abilities.

Haunted Ones and Urchins

Characters with the urchin background know the poverty and desperation that beleaguer I'Cath. Those with the haunted one background are familiar with the dread that pervades the city. While in I'Cath, characters with these backgrounds have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) and Intelligence (Investigation) checks.

I'Cathan Characters

Characters native to I'Cath know of the city's transforming nature and the dangers that stalk the streets. They may have encountered the jiangshi and know how deadly they are. They're also familiar with the ways of the city's residents and are better equipped to bargain with or pry information from anyone they might encounter there.

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CALL TO ACTION:

Domain of Dreams

Estimated Duration: 20 minutes

Alanik, impressed with the characters' progress in the investigation, promotes them to lead field operatives. This promotion doesn't come without additional duties, however. He believes the Urn of Dreams is in I'Cath, specifically in the library within the Palace of Bones. He instructs them to find the urn. Alanik gives them a dire warning: don't enter the palace until after sunset, when Chiang rings the Nightingale Bell, and more importantly, don't fall asleep lest the characters drift into I'Cath's nightmarish dreamscape.

Themes: Raising the stakes, rising to the occasion

Character Introductions

Allow each character a minute or so to introduce their character, describe their appearance and mannerisms, and the reason they're here. Give everyone equal time in the spotlight and be prepared to gently stop people if they run on. Character introductions are crucially important for the players to understand who the other characters are, to build a basis for roleplaying opportunities, and for you, the DM, to learn more about the characters so you can create story elements that really speak to the characters.

Award inspiration (explaining what inspiration is and how it works) once everyone's had a turn.

Promoted!

Impressed by the characters' investigation in previous adventures (or by their reputation, if this is their first *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* adventure), Alanik promotes the characters to lead field operatives within the Ray Agency. While this means additional duties—such as searching for the urn—it also means opportunities for greater rewards and other possible benefits, firsts and foremost being the removal of the gp limit on nonmagical equipment that the characters have access to.

Outfitting for the Investigation

Before proceeding on this leg of their investigation, the characters decide what they brought with them on their journey:

Mundane Equipment. The Order of the Guardians has offered the characters access to its substantial resources to aid in their investigation. Each character has access to any mounts and nonmagical equipment from the *Player's Handbook*, as well as the material components for any spell they have prepared (or known for casters who don't prepare spells). Following the characters' promotion, the gp limit on these acquisitions has been removed. The characters are still bound to the normal rules regarding carrying capacity and, at your discretion, may find themselves in a situation that precludes being able to haul around too much—while their resources are great, the Order discourages frivolous requests.

Magical Equipment. As they adventure, the characters "unlock" magic items for later use. The group begins this adventure with one copy of each of these unlocked items and then decides who'll use them. At the end of the adventure, each item is returned to the character who brought it with them. Magic items that are destroyed or that lose their magic, such as a quaffed *potion of healing* or an exploded *horn of blasting*, however, are removed from the character's investigation journal and are no longer unlocked; the character must find another one if they want to use it in a later adventure. The character who brought an unlocked item to the table has ultimate discretion in who gets to use it. They should, however, note that their investigations require teamwork and cooperation.

Example: Outfitting for Investigation

Peter's character, Gregov the Fighter, is preparing for their next adventure. He requisitions a greatsword, a longbow and some arrows, and a suit of plate armor. He's also heard rumors of werewolves, so he asks for a silvered dagger . . . just in case. In his previous adventures, Gregov unlocked a *horn of blasting* and a *potion of healing*. The group decides who should carry the horn and the potion. At the end of the adventure, both items are returned to Gregov. However, if a character uses the potion, or if the *horn of blasting* explodes during the adventure, Peter crosses it off the investigation journal where it was unlocked.

Order of the Guardians Ring

Characters with this magical ring (more information can be found in the Mist Hunters Safety Kit article) can obtain another dose of the anti-charm tonic from Alanik—provided the last dose they obtained has been used.

The Ray Agency

The characters arrive at the Ray Agency, detective agency of Alanik Ray and his husband, Arthur Sedgwick, located in the port city of Martira Bay in the domain of Darkon. Arthur is elsewhere, leaving Alanik to conduct business with the characters.

When the scene begins, the characters are in a parlor just outside Alanik's office, waiting for the detective while he converses with his associate, Kabe Whippoorwill. Characters who participated in previous *Ravenloft: Mist Hunters* adventures recognize various objects displayed in an ornate cabinet: souvenirs or evidence Alanik has collected from previous adventures (a forged invitation from RMH-EP01 *The Grand Masquerade*, a half-full bottle of Meekulbrau from RMH-01 *The Final Curtain*, a battered Talon helmet from RMH-02 *Back to the Front*, a chunk of raw amber from RMH-06 *Amber Reclamation*, etc.).

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Darkon: The Domain on the Brink of Destruction

Darkon has failed; its monuments and wonders crumble and the mists consume the domain and its denizens. Its lands were once filled with gothic cities and memorials to forgotten wizard-tyrants. Its Darklord, Azalin Rex, locked himself away, creating magical atrocities and manipulating prophecies in order to free himself from the Dark Powers' grasp. One day, everything changed.

A magical event, known as the Hour of Ascension, shook the entire domain. Since then, a strange golden star hangs in the sky and the mists creep inward—slowly cannibalizing the domain. What happens to the land and people claimed by the mists is a mystery. But Darkon is facing gradual annihilation, for sure.

Creature Information

Once introductions are done, Alanik and Kabe enter the scene.

> The door to the Great Detective's office opens and Alanik Ray wheels in, followed by his associate, Kabe Whippoorwill. "Greetings, friends." Alanik begins. "I hope you all got a good night's sleep. Where you're going...Well, you're going to need it if you're going to find the Urn of Dreams."

Alanik Ray

Elf investigator

Alanik (Uh-LAHN-ick RAY) is confident and insightful, a shrewd investigator, and one of the most well-traveled mortals in the Domains of Dread. Alanik is a master of insights and deduction; he can learn details about others after a few moments of meeting them. For example, he can almost instantaneously deduce a character's native domain from their accent and mannerisms. An accidental fall during an investigation caused a spinal injury that paralyzed Alanik's legs. He uses a custom wheelchair he created with the assistance of his husband, Arthur Sedgwick.

What They Want. Alanik is requesting that the characters venture to I'Cath and seek out the Palace of Bones. There, they must find and return the Urn of Dreams.

Lead Investigator. Alanik has been brought in by the Order of the Guardians to help solve a missing person case. More information on Alanik can be found in *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

Kabe Whippoorwill

Halfling interdomain scout

Alanik Ray's scout, associate, and friend, Kabe Whippoorwill (KAYB WIP-er-wil) is also secretly a member of the Keepers of the Feather (a fact known only to Alanik). A lightfoot halfling with a quick smile and a mean right hook, Kabe possesses a Dark Gift that allows them to traverse the Domains of Dread. Acting as both a guide for the characters and a field contact, they're an invaluable member of the investigative team.

What They Want. Kabe's line of work is dangerous, so they want to ensure everything goes smoothly. Losing an agent is never the desired outcome.

Mist Walker. Kabe is Alanik's scout, investigatory partner, friend, and an invaluable member of the team. They also work as the characters' field contact.

After following leads from fellow Mist Walkers, Alanik concludes that the Urn of Dreams is in the domain of I'Cath—a desolate city with streets that are notoriously difficult to navigate. Some say the city's streets change while those within aren't looking and are filled with strange, terrible creatures that waylay anyone they find.

The Task at Hand

Alanik believes the urn, which the characters are directed to find, is stored in the library within the Palace of Bones, the lair of the domain's Darklord, Tsien Chiang (SEE-enn CHUNG). The adventurers' goal for this mission is to make their way through the city, enter the palace, and retrieve the urn. The characters must not enter the palace until after sunset, when Chiang rings an artifact known as the Nightingale Bell. Wicked undead roam the palace until then, before being driven out into the city by the bell's chime.

The city is guarded by jiangshi, Tsien Chiang's undead servants. These reanimated corpses move with a stiff gait and drain life from the living, leading many to call them

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hopping vampires. They wander in packs and aren't to be trifled with.

Furthermore, I'Cath has a phantasmal counterpart that exists within the dreams of those who sleep there. Little is known of this dream city, but rumors abound of its danger and deceptive allure. The characters must not fall asleep in I'Cath or risk slipping into this dreamworld and being trapped within—forever.

Radaga, Dark Outfitter

After the briefing, Kabe leads the characters into another room where they find Radaga, a specialist in the study of the Dark Powers. Her crawling claw familiar floats toward the characters, giving them a hardy wave. It assists Radaga as she supplies the characters with specialized equipment.

Radaga

Human scholar of the Dark Powers

The initial subject of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (ruh-DAH-guh) is a scholar and an arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She's brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalog the sinister, as well as a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has pale skin and dark-red hair.

What They Want. Radaga is driven by her research into the domains of the Mist. Partnering with the Ray Agency gives her opportunities to gain knowledge while staying out of harm's way.

Obsessed with Forbidden Knowledge. She is angry and laments the loss of time due to her recent possession. She is champing at the bit to return to her life and studies.

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The scholar loans the characters *the Bagman's Gambit* (handout 1), a magical backpack in which they can carry the Urn of Dreams.

Parting the Mists

Before departing, Kabe gives the characters a tarnished silver shrimp fork—a Mist talisman from the domain of Dementlieu. When the characters have acquired the Urn of Dreams, they may leave I'Cath by entering the misty border with the Mist talisman in their possession.

After the characters are outfitted, Kabe leads the characters into the Mists and to the domain of I'Cath.

> The Mists hang thick before you. Kabe sighs loudly, as if steeling themselves for something unpleasant. "Let's get this over with," they say with a quavering voice. The halfling steps toward the Mists, hesitates, then continues forward.

While journeying through the Mists, Kabe shares their own experience as they press onward, revealing that they've ventured to I'Cath before. During Kabe's last incursion to the domain, a bell tolled into the Mists. Hearing the bell, Kabe was nearly overcome by an enchanted sleep that might have trapped them forever in the Mists—hence their reluctance to return to the domain.

Arriving at I'Cath

Approaching I'Cath, Kabe bids the characters farewell. The halfling's voice fades into the distance as the characters push on—Kabe doesn't arrive with the characters.

The Mists taunt the characters with a supernatural occurrence just before they arrive in I'Cath. Roll on the Misty Visions table in appendix A, then continue to part 1.

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PART 1:
Immaculate Imperfection

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

The characters must navigate the waking city—avoiding the jiangshi and other residents as they make their way to the Palace of Bones. They must be careful to avoid notice—the denizens of the city are everywhere.

Themes: Mazeophobia, paranoia, poverty

I'Cath

Darklord: Tsien Chiang
Hallmarks: Endlessly changing labyrinth, inescapable dreamworld

When the inhabitants of I'Cath fall asleep, they enter an alternate version of the city they call home—a city dreamed into being by the domain's Darklord. Over time, these poor souls can't remember which version of I'Cath is real and which is the dream.

In the physical world, I'Cath is a twisted maze of row houses and windowless walls. It's also hauntingly quiet; most of the residents lie slumped against walls, in the street, or wherever they may have succumbed to sleep. These unfortunate souls are trapped in a collective dreamworld created by Chiang. Within this shared dream, they labor without end—striving to create their Darklord's impossible, perfect city. Jiangshi emerge from their tombs each night to reshape the city and hunt down those who've woken from the dream.

For more information about I'Cath, refer to *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

The Waking City

The characters arrive midafternoon at the Four Trees Gate, entrance to I'Cath.

> Up ahead, you hear the groan of a wooden gate opening. The Mists' gray tendrils part, revealing a massive city gate flanked by tall stone walls. The walls extend into the Mists to your left and right, offering no other path besides that into the city.

As the final character steps through the gate, it silently closes shut. No attempt to open it succeeds—magical or otherwise—and spells or effects that attempt to venture back into the mists beyond the walls fail.

Should any character retrace their steps to find the gate after leaving the area, their search is in vain; the gate has vanished, leaving only a wall behind. Each character who makes this realization must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on their next ability check made before the end of this adventure.

Superlative Sleuths!

Characters who earned the **Superlative Sleuth** story award during RMH-EP01 *The Grand Masquerade* make this Wisdom saving throw with advantage, noticing details that help reorient them as the city transforms (see "Area Features: Mansions" and "Ambient Haunts," below).

Area Features

I'Cath has the following features:

Dimensions and Terrain. I'Cath is a large, walled city situated on mostly flat terrain. The city center sits atop a low hill, on which stand the Palace of Bones and Ping'On Tower. The streets spiral and radiate out from the palace grounds in a mazelike tangle of roads paved in cobblestone or wood and muddy, unpaved trails.

Lighting. I'Cath is perpetually overcast, the weak sun providing bright light outdoors. At night, the city's few waking residents seldom risk lighting lanterns or torches, but do so if necessary.

Sounds and Smells. Wind moaning through deserted streets, chimes jingling from a building's eaves, vermin skittering into alleyways, the stench of spoiled food, and the odor of unbathed bodies.

Mansions. The streets of I'Cath are crowded with dilapidated row houses that range from one-room shanties to multi-floor manors. Regardless of size, the mansions are derelict, devoid of valuables, and rickety from having been moved or rebuilt by the jiangshi (see "Ambient Haunts").

Sleeping Residents. Most of the population lies asleep in the streets or within mansions, unable to awake from the dream of I'Cath. Neither normal nor magical means can awaken these sleepers—the dream's hold is too strong.

Ambient Haunts

Play up the city's environment using the suggestions below, or develop your own using these as inspiration:

Shifting Streets. The jiangshi reconfigure the city as the characters explore. Sounds of breaking wood and scraping stone are heard far off. Streets loop onto themselves, suddenly become dead ends, then just as suddenly open up again into new streets.

Unnerving Reflection. One of the characters sees themself inside a mansion through an open window. If they investigate inside, they find a mirror on the wall. Surely, they simply saw their own reflection! Looking back toward the window, however, they see themselves outside looking in. Searching the area reveals no presence of their double nor any explanation for the double vision.

Mysterious Family. If the characters get separated, each group is approached by the same family at the same time. These duplicates ask the characters for food, help, and supplies then disappear into the fog.

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Wandering the Streets

The Palace of Bones is always visible from the city's streets—regardless of where the characters are. This landmark helps them navigate toward their goal.

> Rising above the rooftops, an ivory-white castle in the distance cuts a jagged profile against the sky. This is unmistakably the Palace of Bones. Beside it stands an octagonal tower adorned with dragon motifs. At least your goal is in sight!

Creature Information

As they explore, they eventually happen upon a waking I'Cathan (a human **commoner**) stumbling out of a decrepit mansion, fleeing some unseen terror within.

> **Xīyì**
>
> *Human street urchin*
>
> Xīyì (shee-YEE) has lived in I'Cath all their life. Surviving without a caretaker, a family, or a home, they're well practiced at evaluating the safety of a shelter and fleeing the jiangshi. They may be thin, dirty, and dressed in scavenged rags, but these are all testament to their survival skills. Xīyì is part of a coalition of sorts among those living on the streets of I'Cath, sharing resources and information, and otherwise looking out for each other. Like most waking I'Cathans, they know to be cautious and don't readily trust without significant evidence of a person's trustworthiness.
>
> **What They Want.** Xīyì wants help with keeping the city safe from the jiangshi and other dangers ("See Encounters in I'Cath").
>
> **Potential Ally.** Xīyì is familiar with the city and, through information distributed among the coalition, knows where the biggest dangers to the citizenry are.

Xīyì was scavenging in the mansion when something scurried toward them. They fled, afraid for their life. If the characters investigate the mansion, it's largely empty, but if time permits, the characters can have an encounter from the Encounters in I'Cath table, below.

If asked, Xīyì knows where the Palace of Bones (they simply point at the building looming overhead) and Ping'On Tower (where the loud bell rings) are, but stays away from these places. They live in constant fear of the "hopping ones" that roam the streets, and warns the characters to avoid them as well as the grounds keeper of the gardens surrounding the Palace of Bones.

Xīyì carries a small, octagonal hand mirror—a palm-sized sheet of glass bound by oxidized tin. This is the urchin's only defense against the jiangshi, creatures that fear their own reflection.

Unless promised protection (and a bit of food), the urchin doesn't stay with the characters long; they bolt and disappear around a corner after a few minutes of conversation, their hand mirror clattering to the ground as they do so. By the time the characters recover it, they're long gone.

> **The I'Cathans: Paranoid Insomniacs**
>
> The waking residents of I'Cath live in impoverished desperation. They rummage through the city, seeking what food and supplies they can to make it through drudge-filled days and harrowing nights. When sunset draws near, they seek shelter in the city's mansions. They fear the jiangshi and ghosts that haunt the streets. I'Cathans are skilled survivors—industrious and inventive, making the most of what little they find. Living in scarcity and danger affects their sleep, making them cautious of unknown shadows and strangers.
>
> For more information about the people who reside in I'Cath, refer to *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

Encounters in I'Cath

The characters encounter the city's dangers as they journey to the palace. With each encounter, they draw closer to the palace while the afternoon draws closer to sunset.

As they travel to the gates to the Palace of Bones, the characters participate in two encounters: one from the table below (chosen or determined randomly), and "D. Escape the Jiangshi." If time prevents running both, skip this section and proceed directly to "D. Escape the Jiangshi." Use the content found in Ambient Haunts to enhance the atmosphere of this part of the adventure.

Encounters in I'Cath

d3	Encounter
1	A. Mystery in the Mansion
2	B. Adrift in the Dream
3	C. The Abandoned Dead

A. Mystery in the Mansion

The characters hear whispers in the distance, "The urn is—." They'll need to follow them to hear the "east." If the characters follow the whispers, the source is on the second floor of a crumbling mansion. Should the characters investigate, they find rooms filled with a dozen or so sleeping I'Cathans spread throughout the two floors.

The whispers lead to a closed door at the end of a second-floor hallway. Inside, the characters find three **gremishkas** gnawing on the bodies of six humans that have been subjected to extreme violence. Upon seeing the characters, they scamper off and hide. If the characters interact with the bodies, the heads roll away, sprout wings, and attack as four **vargouille**. Additionally, two **vampiric mists** (the creatures that killed the humans) seep into the room and attack as well.

> **Adjusting the Scene**
>
> Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the characters' relative combat strength (see "Appendix B: Dungeon Master Tips").
>
> **Weak:** Remove one **vampiric mist**.
> **Strong:** Add one **vargouille**.

B. Adrift in the Dream

Three phantasms—shadows of those who offended Tsien Chiang—approach the characters as they explore.

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As punishment, the Darklord cast the phantasms into the space between the dream and the waking world to terrorize the waking folk of the city. Their transition into horrible creatures is still incomplete. They desperately ask the characters to find their sleeping bodies and wake them—which will hopefully stop their transition. Unfortunately, the city has changed such that they no longer know where their bodies can be found, but they know what their home looked like; they believe their bodies should still be there. If the characters refuse to aid, they transform in shrieks of anger and pain—turning into one **allip** and two **specters** that attack the characters.

Adjusting the Scene

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the characters' relative combat strength (see "Appendix B: Dungeon Master Tips").

Weak: Remove one **specter**.
Strong: Replace two **specters** with one **allip**.

If they agree to help, the characters must first find the sleeping bodies. To do so requires two group checks. Entertain different interpretations of the characters' skills! For example, a character who makes a Strength (Athletics) might climb a nearby building to search for the home from a rooftop vantage, while one that chooses Charisma (Persuasion) might coax other waking denizens from hiding to help find it.

Finding Their Home. Each character must make a DC 15 ability check using a skill of their choice as they scour the city for the house.

Finding Their Bodies. Each character must make a DC 13 ability check with a different skill as they search the interior of the building or the grounds surrounding it in search of the phantasms' bodies.

Success. If both group checks succeed, the characters find the bodies in time and are able to wake the sleepers before their transformation is complete—the phantasms sigh in relief and evaporate as their physical forms regain consciousness. Each character earns inspiration. The now-waking residents are of little help; they're ravenous with hunger and insist on trying to find food, but thank the characters for their kindness.

Failure. If one or both group checks fail, the bodies aren't found in time. The phantasms complete their transitions; one **allip** and two **specters** attack.

C. The Abandoned Dead

The characters find a figure crying beside four dead bodies—lamenting their community leaving them to be slain by jiangshi. The bereaved is obviously undead—evidenced by the visible decay that has set in.

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The undead creature begs the characters to eulogize the dead city folk by means of a DC 14 Charisma (Performance) group check. Each character takes a turn to make a speech. Instruct each to make up details they observe on the bodies that would provide insight into their lives (the ink-stained fingers of a scribe, the calloused hands of a carpenter, the broken brushes of a painter, etc.) to craft their eulogies. Award inspiration to characters who display exceptional roleplaying. You may consider imposing disadvantage on those who don't, but do so sparingly; some players prefer to avoid bringing attention to themselves.

Success. The undead creature is appeased and moves on to their afterlife, released from their torment.

Failure. The creature flies into a rage—transforming into a **rutterkin** and attacking the characters while three **swarms of maggots** burst out of the nearby bodies.

Adjusting the Scene

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the characters' relative combat strength (see "Appendix B: Dungeon Master Tips").

Weak: Remove one **swarm of maggots**.
Strong: Add one **rutterkin**.

D. Escape the Jiangshi

The characters hear a shriek and see a commoner tearing around the corner, being chased and overcome by a group of **jiangshi**. Their quarry quickly slain, the jiangshi turn their attention to the characters and shriek in anger.

If Xīyì (see "Wandering the Streets," above) is with the characters, they urge the characters to flee before running off themself. If the characters insist on fighting, two **jiangshi** attack the characters. The chase begins if the characters flee.

Adjusting the Scene

This combat is meant to be deadly, encouraging the characters to flee. No adjustments need be made.

Beginning the Chase

The characters have a 1-round head start. The chase begins as the jiangshi and the characters roll initiative.

Chase Complications

Ask each character whether they'd like to run or hide, then use the complications below as guidance for narrating the scene. Each participant in the chase consults the relevant table below at the end of their turn. A creature affected by a complication can expend their inspiration (if available) to negate it. At your discretion, characters can create their own complications to shake off pursuers.

Running Complications

d6	Complication
1	**Broken Paving or Roof Shingle.** The ground beneath your feet gives way; you must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or twist your ankle, halving your speed until the end of your next turn.
2	**Debris.** Your way is blocked by debris. You must succeed on a DC 12 Strength check to push it out of the way or a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to scramble over it. On a failure, a pursuing jiangshi gets dangerously close and makes a Slam attack against you.
3	**Shifting Mansion.** A building grinds in front of you and blocks your path. You must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check, quickly finding a way around it on a success. On a failure, your movement stops for the turn, and you're partially crushed by the building, taking 10 bludgeoning damage.
4	**Collapsed Bridge or Rooftop.** Your path leads to a bridge or rooftop that has collapsed over a churning river. You must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to leap over it or fall into the waters, ending your movement for the turn.
5	**Frantic Climb.** You scale a high wall to get past a dead end and must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or fall and take 10 bludgeoning damage.
6	No complication.

Hiding Complications

d4	Complication
1	**Locked Door.** You attempt to enter a room, but the door is locked. You must succeed on a DC 16 Strength check to break the door open or a DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to pick the lock. If you fail, a jiangshi catches up and makes two Slam attacks against you.
2	**Shriekers.** You run into a room colonized by shriekers. You must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check or cause the mushrooms to shriek loudly, drawing the jiangshi's attention and imposing disadvantage on your next ability check or saving throw.
3	**Hiding City Folk.** You discover a group of waking city folk hiding in a room. The scared group must be placated with a successful DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check, or by being given at least 25 gp worth of food or equipment. If you fail the check or refuse to give up equipment, the city folk cry out in panic and attract the jiangshi. A jiangshi crashes through the walls and uses Consume Energy on you.
4	No complication.

Ending the Chase

Once each character has experienced two complications, the jiangshi cease their pursuit and the characters escape and find themselves at the gates to the palace grounds.

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For Whom the Bell Tolls

After resolving their encounters, the characters arrive at the gates of the palace grounds.

> The street ends at a large wall that stretches out left and right, encasing the grounds of the Palace of Bones beyond. A murky moat surrounds the wall, spanned by a bridge that leads to a pair of tall, shut gates. The bridge and wall are constructed completely of bones, as is the palace stabbing above the wall's ramparts, silhouetted against the sunset.

As the characters approach, the deep, haunting toll of the Nightingale Bell fills the air. The toll is enchanted; even characters who are unable to hear experience its effects.

Weariness washes over the characters; each must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious. It isn't necessarily magical sleep; elves, half-elves, and other characters who shrug off magical sleep must still make this saving throw, though they do so with advantage. Characters who fail their saving throw succumb to the dream of I'Cath—falling to the ground where they stand.

Read or paraphrase the following to any characters who fail:

> The bell's toll covers you with irresistible oblivion and blissfully wrenches your mind into the dream of I'Cath. As your vision clears, a shining, golden city fills your view, achingly beautiful and perfect . . . until you see the city folk.
>
> Citizens endlessly toil to maintain the city, the misery in their eyes betraying forced smiles. This life of slavery is the nightmare they share, forced upon them by Tsien Chiang. Even in sleep they must work for the Darklord, never to receive any rest.
>
> Suddenly, you hear the nagging voice of Alanik Ray in your head reminding you: "Don't fall asleep! Wake! Wake!" and just as quickly as you fell asleep, you awaken once more.

Characters who succumb to this vision snap awake a moment later, gain a level of exhaustion, and gain the To Sleep Is to Dream story award.

Continue to part 2.

To Sleep Is to Dream

You fell asleep and entered Tsien Chiang's dream of I'Cath. You awoke almost immediately, but echoes of the dream reverberate through your mind. Sometimes, you don't know if you're truly awake or if you're still dreaming.

JULIAN KOK

PART 2:

To Ping'On Tower

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

The characters arrive at the palace walls and enter the gardens beyond. Wandering toward the palace, they encounter more danger and the garden's disturbing grounds keeper.

Themes: volatile personality, mutilation

A. Knock, Knock

If they're to enter the Palace of Bones, the characters must first gain entrance into the grounds beyond.

Palace Gates. The gates are made of human femurs formed into bars, sealed with abjuration magic. No means of opening them succeed. Tiny creatures can slip through the bars unimpeded. Small or Medium creatures can squeeze through the bars. If a character does this, the bars constrict and crush them. They must succeed on a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to slip through or take 8 bludgeoning damage.

Scaling the Wall. The palace walls are 30 feet tall and made entirely of bones. Scaling the wall requires a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. A character who fails this check falls, taking 7 (2D6) bludgeoning damage.

Drainage Vents. Vents line the wall where it descends into the moat. The openings are 3 feet in diameter, protrude 6 inches above the waterline, and are visible through the murky moat water. Ambient light through the vents indicates that they connect to the grounds inside. A character may swim through one of these vents, surfacing into a narrow waterway that hugs the inside perimeter of the wall. The moat water is disease-ridden and characters swimming through must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for the duration of part 2. Effects that cure disease remove this condition.

Area Features

Once within the walls, the characters must explore the palace garden, which has the following features:

Dimensions and Terrain. The garden spans acres of land filled with innumerable varieties of flora. Narrow paths paved with polished shoulder blades run through the garden in no noticeable pattern: paths loop into themselves, split unpredictably, and dead-end unexpectedly. The Palace of Bones still makes a good landmark, as does the rise of the land as it ascends toward the center of the city. Grounds outside the path are unpaved and considered difficult terrain.

Lighting. The sun sets quickly, but a pale moon sheds dim light on the grounds where its beams penetrate the canopy. Most of the canopy is densely grown, shrouding large swaths of the garden in darkness.

Sounds and Smells. Rustling leaves, snapping twigs, sickly-sweet floral scents, decomposing vegetation.

Ambient Haunts

Play up the garden's environment using the suggestions below, or develop your own using these as inspiration:

Strangling Vines. As the characters explore, they hear rustling in the trees around them. Investigating the sounds, they find vines slowly wrapping themselves around the trees and covering the path. The vines creep up their legs, attempting to engulf them. It takes little effort to break free of the vines and flee.

Bizarre Ornaments. Gruesome decorations dot the garden, RotBlossom Madame's handiwork: rib cages stand on tastefully arranged posts, intestines coil around trees in intricate braids, wind chimes of bone rattle in the wind.

Wicked Garden

After walking the garden paths for a few minutes, the characters encounter two bodies lying in the middle of the path (**podlings** being used as lures by a nearby **bodytaker plant** hiding among the garden's other flora). The plants attack characters who draw near.

Adjusting the Scene

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the characters' relative combat strength (see "Appendix B: Dungeon Master Tips").

Weak: Remove two **podlings**.
Strong: Add four **podlings**.

Treasure

If the characters search the area around the bodytaker plant, they find remnants from the plant's previous victims: a variety of coins and gems, a case holding six *+1 crossbow bolts*, and a scroll tube decorated with goat eye motifs that contains a *spell scroll* of *tiny servant*.

B. The Hag

As the characters near the palace, they hear a voice further down the path humming a whimsical tune. Whether they choose to follow the voice or not, the path leads to a beautifully landscaped clearing occupied by a serene pond.

Creature Information

The Palace grounds keeper, RotBlossom Madame (an **annis hag** with the adjustments in Creature Statistics), kneels beside the pond. She pulls disembodied eyeballs from a large bowl of water at her side, and releases them into the pond—sending them squirming about like macabre tadpoles.

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RotBlossom Madame

Palace grounds keeper

RotBlossom, or Madame, as she prefers to be addressed, is an annis hag who appears to be a short, delicate human woman in her eighties with surprisingly fair skin and silky white hair. Seemingly sweet and soft-spoken, Madame has a volatile demeanor: grandmotherly one moment, hurtfully scolding the next, then back to her poised self just as quickly.

What They Want. Madame desires to please Lady Chiang so that the Darklord will give her more people to feed to the garden.

False Sweetness. Madame's sweetness is put on. Her underlying cruelty occasionally punches through, both socially and physically, with parts of her disguise dropping away in momentary lapses of self-control.

Madame avoids violence, instead choosing to converse with visitors: asking the characters what their business is and offering information to steer them onward. If attacked, she returns to her natural form and summons four **swarms of rot grubs**. In combat, she pleads with the characters to "stop this silliness." Any creature she reduces to 0 hit points is knocked unconscious. If combat ends, she calls off the rot grubs, which burrow back into the soft, loamy soil.

Adjusting the Scene

Consider the following suggestions for adjusting this scene depending on the characters' relative combat strength (see "Appendix B: Dungeon Master Tips").

Weak: Remove three **swarms of rot grubs**.
Strong: Add two **swarms of rot grubs**.

Madame keeps to the gardens and doesn't know how to enter the palace, nor does she know about the palace library or the Urn of Dreams, instead suggesting the characters ingratiate themselves with Lady Chiang's daughters. The reborn daughters wait each night at the entrance of Ping'On Tower—hoping for their mother's attention as she rushes by to ring the Nightingale Bell. If the characters hurry there, they might yet catch the daughters lamenting another night filled with disappointment.

The Darklord's four daughters are well-mannered, but desire the attention and love that Lady Chiang can't afford to give due to her pursuits in the dream. If the characters can earn the daughters' good graces, they may learn enough to accomplish their goals in I'Cath. If the characters miss the daughters' vigil at Ping'On Tower, Madame happily shares where they usually lurk:

- Tsien Seu-Mei can be found at Gwai-Huit Center, the market found just outside the palace gates.
- Tsien Wai-Ching drifts among the tombstones in the Gemstone Garden, the cemetery in the palace grounds.
- Tsien Man-Yi is bound to the Boughs of Restless Slumber, a willow tree also found elsewhere in the grounds.
- Tsien Lei-An shouldn't be sought out. She wanders the city streets at night and it's especially dangerous out there.

Bargaining with RotBlossom

As the characters speak with the hag, Madame comments on the characters' being a lovely addition to her garden. If the characters roleplay particularly well, or otherwise treat Madame with the deference she feels she deserves, she makes an offer to the characters: in exchange for their reflection, she'll give them two "special treats." The process is quick, but surprisingly agonizing; Madame makes two quick slashes around the character with a silvered sickle—seemingly at nothing but thin air—dealing 14 (4d6) psychic damage to the character in the process.

If the characters encountered the bodytaker plant before meeting Madame, she smells the plant on the characters. Madame is enraged that the characters would ruin one of Lady Chiang's "precious children." She demands that every character give her bones with which to decorate the garden as recompense (a couple of fingers or ribs, a dragonborn's frills, the tip of a tiefling's tail, etc.). If the characters disagree, Madame angers and attacks. If the characters agree, Madame takes each offered body part, quickly but painfully. Each character takes 15 slashing damage, but regains Madame's good graces.

Treasure

If the characters give their reflection to Madame, she gives them their promised "treats": a dull-gray stone engraved with a stylized eye (an *ersatz eye*) and yanks out one of her own thin, iron teeth (*vambraces of the coiled serpent*).

At the Tower Doors

After a short walk from Madame's Pond, the characters find themselves at the base of Ping'On tower. There is no sign of Tsien Chiang's daughters, however—the characters must find them elsewhere. Continue to part 3.

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PART 3:

The Daughters Four

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Forever seeking their mother's acceptance, the reborn forms of Chiang's four daughters gather at the base of the tower each night hoping for kindness from Tsien Chiang as she hurriedly passes them to ring the Nightingale Bell atop Ping'On Tower. The characters must seek out each of the four daughters and learn what they know of the palace and how to enter it. Within, lay the library and the Urn of Dreams.

Themes: Misleading appearances, kindness in a cruel world

Finding the Daughters

Ask the characters which daughter they'd like to seek out first, then use the sections below to set the scenes and guide interactions. The garden ceases to mislead them as they seek out Tsien Chiang's daughters, but continues to keep the characters from the palace.

Creature Information

As each daughter is encountered, if they're treated with kindness and respect, they share what they know with the characters. Each daughter describes her sisters, to aid the characters in their search. More than anything, the daughters want to sleep so they can join their mother in her vision of perfection. If you want to provide a small challenge here, you can ask the characters to perform a Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) **group** check to coax the information from the daughters—they may be dubious of the characters' goals or motivations, or the characters say or do something the daughters take offense to.

Though they'll defend themselves, the daughters never instigate violence. If attacked, they disappear in an explosion of putrid smoke, reappearing a distance away and asking the characters to stop attacking. If the characters persist, the daughters each defend themselves, but plead with the characters for mercy—giving them the information they have in exchange for their lives.

Extending Play: Family, Reunited

If you wish to extend the play experience of this adventure, the characters can help the daughters find peace and finally sleep. Use the information in encounters A through C, below to guide the narrative as the characters hunts for each daughter's desire. As they fulfil each daughter's desire, that daughter falls asleep. Each of these short side quests should occupy about 30 minutes, feature no combat, and allow the players to creatively roleplay. Be sure to award inspiration!

Whichever daughter the characters meet last bids them to venture into the city and find the fourth and final daughter, Tsien Lei-An. If the characters decide to do so, see "D. Finding Lei-An." As another option, you can use an unused encounter in part 1.

A. Gwai-Huit Center

The characters seeks out Tsien Seu-Mei. To find her, they must make their way to the palace grounds' gate. It opens, revealing a street leading to Gwai-Huit Center, the city's marketplace.

Area Features

Gwai-Huit Center has the following features:

Dimensions and Terrain. The marketplace is composed of empty stalls, tents, and booths. During the day, residents ply whatever they've scavenged for whatever else anyone has to offer. It spans several blocks of the city and is just as bare.

Lighting. Moonlight casts dim light in the marketplace.

Scraps of the Street. Some stalls contain detritus abandoned by the city folk. Searching them reveals trinkets, clothing scraps, and items worn to the point of uselessness.

Creature Information

Tsien Seu-Mei (use the **ghoul** stat block) wanders the aisles of Gwai-Huit Center.

Tsien Seu-Mei

Lonely monstrosity

Seu-Mei (SEE-enn syoo-MAY) is a humanoid creature made entirely of teeth. She communicates telepathically, injecting her chittering voice directly into people's minds. At night, Seu-Mei wanders Gwai-Huit Center carrying a pouch full to bursting with golden coins, but finds nothing to purchase—the stalls are all empty. She spends her days lonely, wishing for company.

What They Want. Seu-Mei wishes to purchase and taste a delicious dessert or to care for a fish.

Sweet Monstrosity. Though kind, Seu-Mei's horrific appearance frightens everyone away.

Seu-Mei knows nothing about the library or the Urn of Dreams. However, she informs the characters they're being followed by a "dark, waking spirit." She knows nothing about it, but has felt its presence since their arrival.

Extending Play: Family, Reunited

The characters may come up with creative ideas to concoct a dessert for Seu-Mei, perhaps cobbling together rations or finding fruit in the Gemstone Garden. Entertain the characters' ideas and encourage creative solutions.

If the characters decide to fetch Seu-Mei a fish, they can find one in the Gemstone Garden or take an eye from RotBlossom's pond (though doing so will surely arouse RotBlossom's anger).

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B. Gemstone Garden

The characters seeks out Tsien Wai-Ching. Gemstone Garden is a short walk from RotBlossom's pond.

Area Features

Gemstone Garden has the following features:

Dimensions and Terrain. The garden is a beautiful cemetery dotted by shining pavilions, fruiting trees, and ponds full of bone-white carp. Its colorful shrines and memorials are the resting places of the city's jiangshi. When the characters arrive, the jiangshi have all dispersed into the city.

Lighting. Candles and lanterns decorate the cemetery, bathing the garden in bright light.

Ornate Memorials. The shrines and graves in the garden are exquisitely crafted and well maintained. The plots by the shrines are burst open from the jiangshi rising.

Creature Information

Tsien Wai-Ching (use the **specter** stat block) tends to the graves in the Gemstone Garden.

Tsien Wai-Ching

Grieving child

Wai-Ching (SEE-enn why-CHEENG) is a sallow apparition made of living fog. Her voice is a quiet whisper that somehow echoes in listeners' ears. She is Tsien Chiang's youngest daughter and the most nurturing, spending her nights honoring the graves in the Gemstone Garden.

What They Want. Wai-Ching wishes to play with an incorporeal toy or to help a spirit from Ping'On Tower find their family.

Sweet Monstrosity. The youngest of the daughters, Wai-Ching is playful and wide-eyed with wonder when she isn't solemnly paying tribute to the dead.

Wai-Ching knows nothing about the Urn of Dreams or the dark spirit following the characters. She reveals that the library can be found toward the rear of the palace and is surrounded by a garden. If the characters treat peacefully with Wai-Ching, she tells the characters she'll leave them a sign on a garden bench.

Extending Play: Family, Reunited

Seu-Mei can use her supernatural senses to find an incorporeal toy in Gwai-Huit Center. Man-Yi can pull a toy from one of the sleepers' dreams beneath the Boughs of Restless Slumber.

If the characters offer to help Wai-Ching reunite a spirit with its family, she leads the characters to Ping'On Tower. There, she gives a breathy whistle that calls out a ghostly butterfly—the spirit of a child. The spirit's family sleeps beneath the Boughs of Restless Slumber. If the characters bring the spirit there, it joins a group of sleepers dressed in clothing decorated with butterfly motifs.

C. The Boughs of Restless Slumber

The characters seeks out Tsien Man-Yi. The Boughs of Restless Slumber are a short walk from the Gemstone Garden.

Area Features

The Boughs of Restless Slumber have the following features:

Dimensions and Terrain. The area around the tree is verdant and lush. The tree itself is a massive, ancient willow. Its branches sway in the breeze, giving it the appearance of heaving with breath.

Lighting. The tree shines with a soft glow, filling the area around it with bright light.

Troubled Sleepers. Dozens of figures lie asleep at the foot of the tree, struck by Tsien Chiang for a perceived slight. They writhe and groan as if in the throes of a nightmare. No efforts to wake them succeed, magical or otherwise.

Creature Information

Tsien Man-Yi (use the **dryad** stat block) emerges from the trunk of the tree when the characters approach.

Tsien Man-Yi

Calming caretaker

Man-Yi (SEE-enn MAHN-yee) is a slender woman made entirely of pale wood. Her voice rustles like wind through leaves. She's bound to the Boughs of Restless Slumber, returning there when she isn't waiting at Ping'On Tower. Man-Yi is the most parentlike of the daughters, ever tending to the sleepers at her tree: feeding them fruit, giving them water, and soothing them with calming whispers.

What They Want. Man-Yi wishes for flowers from the Gemstone Garden or for a friend to willingly fall asleep under the boughs of her tree.

Sweet Monstrosity. Man-Yi yearns to explore beyond the Palace Garden. However, she cares for the sleepers at her tree with utmost dedication and genuine kindness.

Man-Yi knows nothing of the library or the dark spirit following the characters. She knows that the urn is warded: removing it from the library will alert her mother, unless it's first placed in something that conceals it.

Extending Play: Family, Reunited

The characters can find flowers for Man-Yi in the Gemstone Garden.

She also wishes for someone to willingly fall asleep beneath the boughs, believing that one who does so will sleep in peace. She longs to rest with someone undisturbed by nightmares. Characters who willingly do so are drawn into the dream of I'Cath as described at the end of part 1. They're easily roused, but must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw or gain 1 level of exhaustion. Characters who fall asleep this way are haunted by the dream, gaining the **To Sleep Is to Dream** story award.

D. Finding Lei-An (Family, Reunited)

This encounter is only used if using the Extending Play option described above. The characters venture into the city—near Gwai-Huit Center—in search of Tsien Lei-An.

Area Features

The city remains fairly the same as in part 1. The streets are more active at night, however. The air echoes with the sounds of jiangshi moving mansions and threatening citizens with greater frequency.

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Creature Information

Tsien Lei-An (use the **scarecrow** stat block) can be found roaming the nighttime streets of I'Cath.

Tsien Lei-An

Adventurous monstrosity

Tsien Lei-An (SEE-enn LAY-ahn) is a humanoid creature made entirely of eyes. She communicates telepathically, with a voice reminiscent of rotten fruit being squelched together. She spends her nights wandering the city's streets, looking for items and diversions.

What They Want. Lei-An wants a jiangshi's slipper to keep for her own.

Sweet Monstrosity. Lei-An longs for excitement and adventure, sighing constantly about her desire for excitement.

Lei-An knows nothing of the Urn of Dreams or the dark spirit following the characters. However, she knows the library is guarded by a strange creature that need not be feared if one behaves correctly. She reveals no further details about the library's guardian.

Extending Play: Family, Reunited

The characters may find a jiangshi slipper in Gwai-Huit Center, where Seu-Mei can help them find one. Alternatively, you may have a jiangshi attack the characters as they wander. The attacking jiangshi flees if reduced to half hit points, leaving behind a slipper.

Treasure

The last daughter with whom the characters speak gives them a *potion of diminution* as thanks for their company.

Wrap-Up: Entering the Palace

Once they've spoken to the daughters, the characters may finally enter the Palace of Bones. The last daughter with whom they speak directs them to make their way through the garden toward the palace. If they bow their heads and ask for Tsien Chiang's grace at every intersection, they'll eventually reach the palace no matter which path they choose. Continue to "The Palace Doors."

Extending Play: The Dream Interrupted

If the Extending Play option was used and the characters have helped each of Tsien Chiang's four daughters to sleep, read or paraphrase the following:

As the last daughter falls asleep, their forms fade away, transported into the dream. An agonizing wail issues from the palace, filling the air with rage. As the wail subsides, countless screams and cries are heard from the city outside the palace walls. I'Cath awakes!

The monstrous daughters have been transported into the dream, sending Tsien Chiang into a fury as they terrorize the dream city's golden streets. The interruption has awakened I'Cath's residents, causing mass confusion and various disturbances. The characters earn the **Family, Reunited** story award.

Family, Reunited

You've enabled Tsien Chiang's four daughters to finally sleep and join their mother in their dreams. But doing so has disturbed the dream of I'Cath. What chaos will come of this?

The Palace Doors

Read or paraphrase the text below to close this adventure.

Finally, the Palace of Bones stands before you, the library somewhere inside. The five gates to the palace open, as if you're expected—their intertwined bones parting like the teeth of five sideways grimaces. The Urn of Dreams waits inside. Who knows what dangers wait as well?

The story continues in RMH-08 *The Palace of Bones*.

Investigation Journal

Provide each player with a copy of the Investigation Journal (handout 2). Before the session is over, each player must choose which of the items found during the adventure they'd like to keep and line out others.

OLGA DREBAS

Dramatis Personae

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure:

Alanik Ray

Elf investigator

Alanik (Uh-LAHN-ick RAY) is confident and insightful, a shrewd investigator, and one of the most well-traveled mortals in the Domains of Dread. Alanik is a master of insights and deduction; he can learn details about others after a few moments of meeting them. For example, he can almost instantaneously deduce a character's native domain from their accent and mannerisms. An accidental fall during an investigation caused a spinal injury that paralyzed Alanik's legs. He uses a custom wheelchair he created with the assistance of his husband, Arthur Sedgwick.

What They Want. Alanik is requesting that the characters venture to I'Cath and seek out the Palace of Bones. There, they must find and return the Urn of Dreams.

Lead Investigator. Alanik has been brought in by the Order of the Guardians to help solve a missing person case. More information on Alanik can be found in *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

Kabe Whippoorwill

Halfling interdomain scout

Alanik Ray's scout, associate, and friend, Kabe Whippoorwill (KAYB WIP-er-wil) is also secretly a member of the Keepers of the Feather (a fact known only to Alanik). A lightfoot halfling with a quick smile and a mean right hook, Kabe possesses a Dark Gift that allows them to traverse the Domains of Dread. Acting as both a guide for the characters and a field contact, they're an invaluable member of the investigative team.

What They Want. Kabe's line of work is dangerous, so they want to ensure everything goes smoothly. Losing an agent is never the desired outcome.

Mist Walker. Kabe is Alanik's scout, investigatory partner, friend, and an invaluable member of the team. They also work as the characters' field contact.

Radaga

Human scholar of the Dark Powers

The initial subject of the Order of the Guardians' search, Radaga (ruh-DAH-guh) is a scholar and an arcanist who has delved far into the nature of the Dark Powers—some say a bit too far. She's brilliant but obsessive in her desire to catalog the sinister, as well as a bit possessive of her knowledge. Radaga has olive skin and dark hair.

What They Want. Radaga is driven by her research into the domains of the Mist. Partnering with the Ray Agency gives her opportunities to gain knowledge while staying out of harm's way.

Obsessed with Forbidden Knowledge. She is angry and laments the loss of time due to her recent possession. She is champing at the bit to return to her life and studies.

MAX DUNBAR

RotBlossom Madame

Palace grounds keeper

RotBlossom, or Madame, as she prefers to be addressed, is an annis hag who appears to be a short, delicate human woman in her eighties. Seemingly sweet and soft-spoken, Madame has a volatile demeanor: grandmotherly one moment, hurtfully scolding the next, then back to her poised self just as quickly.

What They Want. Madame desires to please Lady Chiang so that the Darklord will give her more people to feed to the garden.

False Sweetness. Madame's sweetness is put on. Her underlying cruelty occasionally punches through, both socially and physically, with parts of her disguise dropping away in momentary lapses of self-control.

Tsien Lei-An

Adventurous monstrosity

Tsien Lei-An (SEE-enn LAY-ahn) is a humanoid creature made entirely of eyes. She communicates telepathically, with a voice reminiscent of rotten fruit being squelched together. She spends her nights wandering the city's streets, looking for items and diversions.

What They Want. Lei-An wants a jiangshi's slipper to keep for her own.

Bored Abomination. Lei-An longs for excitement and adventure, sighing constantly about her desire for excitement.

Tsien Man-Yi

Calming caretaker

Man-Yi (SEE-enn MAHN-yee) is a slender woman made entirely of pale wood. Her voice rustles like wind through leaves. She's bound to the Boughs of Restless Slumber, returning there when she isn't waiting at Ping'On Tower. Man-Yi is the most parentlike of the daughters, ever tending to the sleepers at her tree: feeding them fruit, giving them water, and soothing them with calming whispers.

What They Want. Man-Yi wishes for flowers from the Gemstone Garden or for a friend to willingly fall asleep under the boughs of her tree.

Sweet Monstrosity. Man-Yi yearns to explore beyond the Palace Garden. However, she cares for the sleepers at her tree with utmost dedication and genuine kindness.

Tsien Seu-Mei

Lonely monstrosity

Seu-Mei (SEE-enn syoo-MAY) is a humanoid creature made entirely of teeth. She communicates telepathically, injecting her chittering voice directly into people's minds. At night, Seu-Mei wanders Gwai-Huit Center carrying a pouch full to bursting with golden coins, but finds nothing to purchase—the stalls are all empty. She spends her days lonely, wishing for company.

What They Want. Seu-Mei wishes to purchase and taste a delicious dessert or to care for a fish.

Sweet Monstrosity. Though kind, Seu-Mei's horrific appearance frightens everyone away.

Tsien Wai-Ching

Grieving child

Wai-Ching (SEE-enn why-CHEENG) is a sallow apparition made of living fog. Her voice is a quiet whisper that somehow echoes in listeners' ears. She is Tsien Chiang's youngest daughter and the most nurturing, spending her nights honoring the graves in the Gemstone Garden.

What They Want. Wai-Ching wishes to play with an incorporeal toy or to help a spirit from Ping'On Tower find their family.

Sweet Monstrosity. The youngest of the daughters, Wai-Ching is playful and wide-eyed with wonder when she isn't solemnly paying tribute to the dead.

Xīyì

Human street urchin

Xīyì (shee-YEE) has lived in I'Cath all their life. Surviving without a caretaker, a family, or a home, they're well practiced at evaluating the safety of a shelter and fleeing the jiangshi. They may be thin, dirty, and dressed in scavenged rags, but these are all testament to their survival skills. Xīyì is part of a coalition of sorts among those living on the streets of I'Cath, sharing resources and information, and otherwise looking out for each other. Like most waking I'Cathans, they know to be cautious and don't readily trust without significant evidence of a person's trustworthiness.

What They Want. Xīyì wants help with keeping the city safe from the jiangshi and other dangers ("See Encounters in I'Cath").

Potential Ally. Xīyì is familiar with the city and, through information distributed among the coalition, knows where the biggest dangers to the citizenry are.

OLGA DREBAS

Creature Statistics

Allip

Medium Undead, Typically Neutral Evil

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 40 (9d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +5
Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages the languages it knew in life
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Incorporeal Movement. The allip can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Maddening Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) psychic damage.

Whispers of Madness. The allip chooses up to three creatures it can see within 60 feet of it. Each target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw, or it takes 7 (1d8 + 3) psychic damage and must use its reaction to make a melee weapon attack against one creature of the allip's choice that the allip can see. Constructs and undead are immune to this effect.

Howling Babble (Recharge 6). Each creature within 30 feet of the allip that can hear it must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, a target takes 12 (2d8 + 3) psychic damage, and it is stunned until the end of its next turn. On a successful save, it takes half as much damage and isn't stunned. Constructs and undead are immune to this effect.

Annis Hag

Large Fey, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +5
Skills Deception +5, Perception +5
Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Common, Giant, Sylvan
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). She can innately cast the following spells:

3/day each: *disguise self* (including the form of a Medium Humanoid), *fog cloud*

Actions

Multiattack. The hag makes three attacks: one with her bite and two with her claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Crushing Hug. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 36 (9d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15) if it is a large or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the target takes 36 (9d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage at the start of each of the hag's turns. The hag can't make attacks while grappling a creature in this way.

RotBlossom Madame's Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing ties), Madame takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; Madame can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Madame makes two Vile Spit attacks. ***Vile Spit.*** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and the target is poisoned until the end of its next turn.
- Purple flowering vines erupt beneath and constrict three targets of Madame's choice that she can see within 30 feet of her. Each target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be restrained until the end of its next turn.
- Madame belches enervating gas at one creature within 10 feet of her. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious. A target that falls unconscious in this way may repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, awakening on a success.

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Bodytaker Plant

Huge Plant

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 92 (8d12 + 40)
Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (–1)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Damage Vulnerabilities poison
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 120 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 12
Languages Deep Speech, telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Podling Link. The plant can see through and communicate telepathically with any of its podlings within 10 miles of it.

Rejuvenation. When the plant dies, it returns to life in the place where it died 1d12 months later, unless the ground where it took root is sown with salt or soaked with poison.

Unusual Nature. The plant doesn't require sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The plant makes three Vine Lash attacks.

Vine Lash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained. The plant has four vines, each of which can grapple one target.

Entrapping Pod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Medium or smaller creature grappled by the plant. *Hit:* 22 (4d8 + 4) acid damage, and the target is pulled into the plant's space and enveloped by the pod, and the grapple ends. While enveloped, the target is restrained, and it has total cover against attacks and effects originating outside the pod. The enveloped target must also immediately succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be stunned by the plant's sapping enzymes until it is removed from the pod or the plant dies. The enveloped target doesn't require air and gains 1 level of exhaustion for each hour it spends in the pod. If the target dies while enveloped, it immediately emerges from the pod as a living podling, wearing or carrying all of the original creature's equipment.

As an action, a creature within 5 feet of the bodytaker plant that is outside the pod can open the pod and pull the target free with a successful DC 15 Strength check. If the plant dies, the target is no longer restrained and can escape from the pod by spending 10 feet of movement, exiting prone. The plant has one pod, which can envelop one creature at a time.

Commoner

Medium Humanoid (Any Race), Any Alignment

Armor Class 10
Hit Points 4 (1d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 0 (10 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

IRINA NORDSOL

Jiangshi

Medium Undead

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 119 (14d8 + 56)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	3 (−4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +8, Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +5
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages any languages it knew in life
Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Jiangshi Weaknesses. The jiangshi has the following flaws:

Fear of Its Own Reflection. If the jiangshi sees its own reflection, it immediately uses its reaction, if available, to move as far away from the reflection as possible.
Susceptible to Holy Symbols. While the jiangshi is wearing or touching a holy symbol, it automatically fails saving throws against effects that turn Undead.

Unusual Nature. The jiangshi doesn't require air.

Actions

Multiattack. The jiangshi makes three Slam attacks and uses Consume Energy.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Consume Energy. The jiangshi draws energy from a creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The jiangshi regains hit points equal to the amount of necrotic damage dealt. After regaining hit points from this action, the jiangshi gains the following benefits for 7 days: its walking speed increases to 40 feet, and it gains a flying speed equal to its walking speed and can hover.

A Humanoid slain by this necrotic damage rises as a wight (see its entry in the *Monster Manual*) at the end of the jiangshi's turn. The wight acts immediately after the jiangshi in the initiative order. If this wight slays a Humanoid with its Life Drain, the wight transforms into a jiangshi 5 days later.

Change Shape. The jiangshi polymorphs into a Beast, a Humanoid, or an Undead that is Medium or Small or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the jiangshi's choice). It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Podling

Medium Plant

Armor Class 10
Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened
Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Deep Speech, the languages the creature knew in life
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Semblance of Life. The podling is a physical copy of a creature digested by a bodytaker plant. The podling has the digested creature's memories and behaves like that creature, but with occasional lapses. An observer familiar with the digested creature can recognize the discrepancies with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check, or automatically if the podling does something in direct contradiction to the digested creature's established beliefs or behavior. The podling melts into a slurry when it dies, when the bodytaker plant that created it dies, or when the bodytaker plant dismisses it (no action required).

Unusual Nature. The podling doesn't require sleep.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Rutterkin

Medium Fiend (Demon), Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 37 (5d8 + 15)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	5 (−3)	12 (+1)	6 (−2)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Crippling Fear. When a creature that isn't a demon starts its turn within 30 feet of three or more rutterkins, it must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. The creature has disadvantage on the save if it's within 30 feet of six or more rutterkins. On a successful save, the creature is immune to the Crippling Fear of all rutterkins for 24 hours. On a failed save, the creature becomes frightened of the rutterkins for 1 minute. While frightened in this way, the creature is restrained. At the end of each of the frightened creature's turns, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* + 4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (3d6 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw against disease or become poisoned. At the end of each long rest, the poisoned target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If the target is reduced to 0 hit points while poisoned in this way, it dies and instantly transforms into a living abyssal wretch. The transformation of the body can be undone only by a *wish* spell.

Scarecrow

Medium Construct, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 11
Hit Points 36 (8d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)

Damage Vulnerablities fire
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

False Appearance. While the scarecrow remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary, inanimate scarecrow.

Actions

Multiattack. The scarecrow makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of the scarecrow's next turn.

Terrifying Glare. The scarecrow targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the scarecrow, the target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be magically frightened until the end of the scarecrow's next turn. The frightened target is paralyzed.

Specter

Medium Undead, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (–5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Incorporeal Movement. The specter can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the specter has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Swarm of Maggots

Medium Swarm of Tiny Beasts, Unaligned

Armor Class 11
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (–4)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)	7 (–2)	1 (–5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages —
Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a tiny maggot. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Infestation. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. A creature damaged by the swarm must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or contract a disease.

Each time the diseased creature finishes a long rest, roll a d6 to determine the disease's effect:

1–2. The creature is blinded until it finishes a long rest.
3–4. The creature's hit point maximum decreases by 5 (2d4), and the reduction can't be removed until the disease ends. The creature dies if its hit point maximum drops to 0.
5–6. The creature has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls until it finishes its next long rest.

The disease lasts until it's removed by magic or until the creature rolls the same random effect for the disease two long rests in a row.

NIKKI DAWES

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Swarm of Rot Grubs

Medium Swarm of Tiny Beasts, Unaligned

Armor Class 8
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (–4)	7 (–2)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)	2 (–4)	1 (–5)

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained
Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 6
Languages —
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a tiny maggot. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* The target is infested by 1d4 rot grubs. At the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage per rot grub infesting it. Applying fire to the bite wound before the end of the target's next turn deals 1 fire damage to the target and kills these rot grubs. After this time, these rot grubs are too far under the skin to be burned.

If a target infested by rot grubs ends its turn with 0 hit points, it dies as the rot grubs burrow into its heart and kill it. Any effect that cures disease kills all rot grubs infesting the target.

Vampiric Mist

Medium Undead, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 30 (4d8 + 12)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	6 (–2)	12 (+1)	7 (–2)

Saving Throws Wis +3
Damage Resistances acid, cold, lightning, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages —
Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Life Sense. The mist can sense the location of any creature within 60 feet of it unless that creature's type is Construct or Undead.

Forbiddance. The mist can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

Misty Form. The mist can occupy another creature's space and vice versa. In addition, if air can pass through a space, the mist can pass through it without squeezing. Each foot of movement in water costs it 2 extra feet, rather than 1 extra foot. The mist can't manipulate objects in any way that requires fingers or manual dexterity.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The mist takes 10 radiant damage whenever it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, the mist has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Life Drain. The mist touches one creature in its space. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw (Undead and Constructs automatically succeed), or it takes 10 (2d6 + 3) necrotic damage, the mist regains 10 hit points, and the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if its hit point maximum is reduced to 0.

Vargouille

Tiny Fiend, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 13 (3d4 + 6)
Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	4 (–3)	7 (–2)	2 (–4)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
Languages understands Abyssal, Infernal, and any languages it knew before becoming a vargouille, but can't speak
Challenge 1 (200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Kiss. The vargouille kisses one incapacitated Humanoid within 5 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or become cursed. The cursed target loses 1 point of Charisma after each hour, as its head takes on fiendish aspects. The curse doesn't advance while the target is in sunlight or the area of a *daylight* spell; don't count that time. When the cursed target's Charisma becomes 2, it dies, and its head tears from its body and becomes a new vargouille. Casting *remove curse*, *greater restoration*, or a similar spell on the target before the transformation is complete can end the curse. Doing so undoes the changes made to the target by the curse.

Stunning Shriek. The vargouille shrieks. Each Humanoid and Beast within 30 feet of the vargouille and able to hear it must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of the vargouille's next turn. While frightened in this way, a target is stunned. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the Stunning Shriek of all vargouilles for 1 hour.

Venom Troll

Large Giant, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 94 (9d10 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	7 (–2)	9 (–1)	7 (–2)

Skills Perception +2
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Giant
Challenge 7 (2,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Keen Smell. The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Poison Splash. When the troll takes damage of any type but psychic, each creature within 5 feet of the troll takes 9 (2d8) poison damage.

Regeneration. The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of each of its turns. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Actions

Multiattack. The troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage, and the creature is poisoned until the start of the troll's next turn.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Venom Spray (Recharge 6). The troll slices itself with a claw, releasing a spray of poison in a 15-foot cube. The troll takes 7 (2d6) slashing damage (this damage can't be reduced in any way). Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 18 (4d8) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. A poisoned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

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Handout 1: Bagman's Gambit

The Bagman's Gambit

Wondrous item, rare

This backpack has a central pouch and two side pouches, each of which is an extradimensional space. Each side pouch can hold up to 20 pounds of material, not exceeding a volume of 2 cubic feet. The large central pouch can hold up to 8 cubic feet or 80 pounds of material. The backpack always weighs 5 pounds, regardless of its contents.

Placing an object in the haversack follows the normal rules for interacting with objects. Retrieving an item from the haversack requires you to use an action. When you reach into the haversack for a specific item, the item is always magically on top.

The haversack has a few limitations. If it is overloaded, or if a sharp object pierces it or tears it, the haversack ruptures and is destroyed. If the haversack is destroyed, its contents are lost forever, although an artifact always turns up again somewhere. If the haversack is turned inside out, its contents spill forth, unharmed, and the haversack must be put right before it can be used again. If a breathing creature is placed within the haversack, the creature can survive for up to 10 minutes, after which time it begins to suffocate.

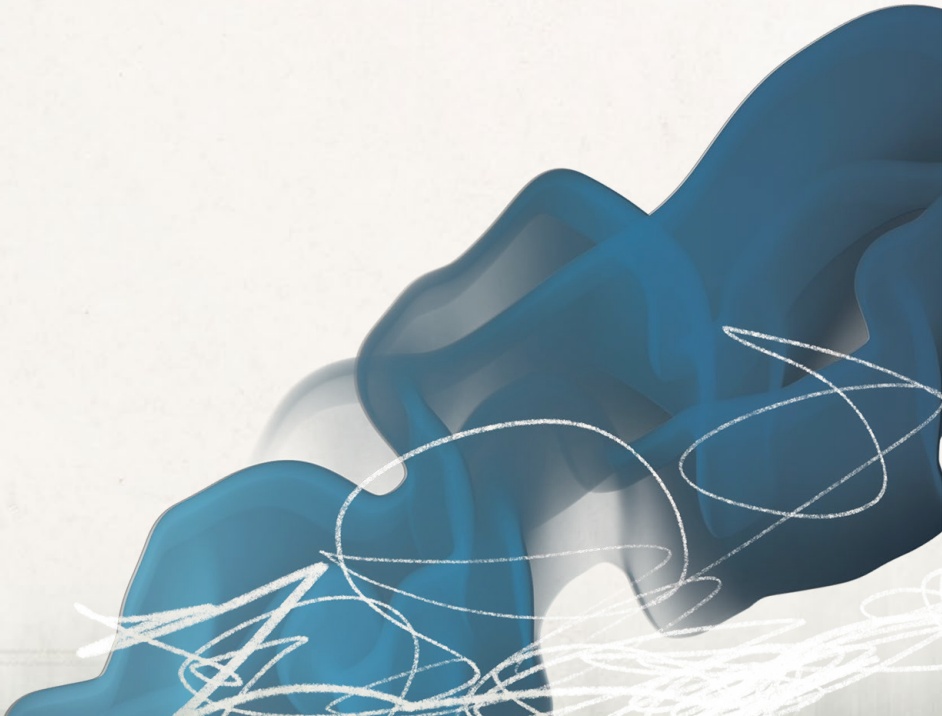
Placing the haversack inside an extradimensional space created by a bag of holding, portable hole, or similar item instantly destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it and deposited in a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened.

Anything put inside *Bagman's gambit* is magically concealed and can't be detected, divined, or scried upon. Additionally, it's been filled with a variety of useful consumables. At any time, as an action, a character may reach inside and pull out one of the following magic items:

- One dose of *Keoghtom's ointment*
- One *potion of greater healing*
- One *potion of heroism*
- One *potion of vitality*

When a character pulls any item out of the haversack, they must roll a d10. On a 1, the Bagman (use the **venom troll** stat block) comes out of the haversack and attacks the characters. If the Bagman is defeated, he reforms inside the backpack the next day, ready to wreak havoc again. For more information about the Bagman, see *Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*.

Bagman's gambit functions as a *Heward's handy haversack*, which is found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.



Handout 2: Investigation Journal

I don't envy your incursion into wretched I'Cath; despite its fascinating, shifting nature. But I do envy your progress toward acquiring the urn of dreams!

The city was an ever-changing nightmare, indeed, but you handled the ghost-ridden streets well. We appreciate the information you provided on the palace grounds keeper and the Darklord's daughters, as I'm sure it'll prove beneficial for future interactions.

Are you ready to delve into the Palace of Bones? We shall find out soon, I suppose. But I feel it in my jellies that we shall see each other once again.

Yours in reason,
Alanik Ray

PS: The item that you found along the way is safe at my chateau should you have need of it in the future.

Choose one item from the list below by checking the box next to it.

- ☐ *Ammunition (crossbow bolts), +1* (6)
- ☐ *Ersatz eye*
- ☐ *Potion of diminution*
- ☐ *Spell scroll* of *tiny servant*
- ☐ *Vambraces of the coiled serpent**

**Vambraces of the coiled serpent* functions as a *coiling grasp tattoo*, which is found in *Tasha's Cauldron of Everything*. This tattoo covers both arms with the image of a coiled serpent with brilliant green scales and fiery yellow eyes. The serpent is quick to anger, however. If a creature grappled by the serpent escapes by making a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check, you take 7 (2d6) fire damage as the beast roars in silent protest and burns with intense heat.

Story Awards

- ☐ Family, Reunited
- ☐ To Sleep Is to Dream

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Appendix A: Misty Visions

This adventure begins with the characters traversing the horrors of the misty borders of the various Domains of Dread. When instructed, roll on the table. If time permits, roll once for each character. Otherwise, roll once for the entire group. These effects end when the character leaves the domain.

Misty Visions

d20	Vision	Effect
1	Dark, malevolent shadows flit around you, moving within the mists just beyond your sight.	You have disadvantage on initiative checks.
2	Thick, thorny vines erupt from the ground and grasp at your limbs—threatening to pull you into the clammy ground.	You have disadvantage on checks made to escape a grapple or end the restrained condition.
3	You hear the screams of friends and family crying out in fear and agony, but can't find them, despite your best efforts.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against being frightened.
4	The ground becomes wet with black, sticky mud (or is it blood?)—at first ankle-deep, then up to the knees . . .	You must spend an extra foot of movement for each foot spent moving through difficult terrain.
5	Countless clawed skeletons swarm you, clawing at your flesh and clothing.	You gain vulnerability to slashing damage.
6	You bump into a stone grave marker. Examining it closer, you see your own name engraved in its surface.	You have disadvantage on death saving throws.
7	The stench of rotting flesh fills your nostrils. Glancing at yourself, you see dark spots of decay covering your flesh.	You gain vulnerability to necrotic damage.
8	After a moment's distraction, and looking back, you find yourself in the Mists alone until you arrive at your destination.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to notice hidden creatures and objects.
9	You see a small child in the Mists ahead of you—coaxing you deeper into the mists. After finally catching up with them, you find nothing but a cornhusk doll.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks.
10	The Mists turn into a thick, noxious miasma that burns your eyes and throat—threatening to suffocate you.	You have disadvantage on saving throws against poison.
11	Your deepest fear manifests before your eyes.	If you fail a saving throw against being frightened, you're also blinded until the end of your next turn.
12	A bone-chilling wind fills the area—driving the warmth from you and sending your body into tremors.	You have disadvantage on Dexterity checks made to accomplish tasks that require fine motor skills.
13	The Mists coalesce into a tall, dense hedge maze that seems to go on forever, and you pass the same landmarks repeatedly.	You have disadvantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks made to navigate or to discern your location.
14	You encounter a group of terrified adventurers who attack you with a rusted dagger before fleeing back into the Mists.	You take slashing damage equal to a roll of your largest Hit Die.
15	An incorporeal undead creature manifests in front of you and passes through you—driving your strength away.	You have disadvantage on Strength (Athletics) checks.
16	One of your teeth loosens and falls out. One by one, more fall out and crumble away into fine, white powder.	The anxiety caused by the vision imposes disadvantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made to positively influence people.
17	You run from beastly shadows in the night. Your heart pounds at every snarl, hiss, and howl, feeling their breath on your heels as they catch up.	Your memories of the vision give you disadvantage on Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks made to positively influence animals.
18	Everything around you withers and decays before your eyes.	If you roll a natural 1 on an attack roll made with a nonmagical weapon, the weapon breaks and becomes unusable.
19	You find yourself in a library behind your closest loved ones as they turn to you, all faceless. You open nearby books to find the answers to help them, but all their pages are blank.	You have disadvantage on Intelligence (History) checks involving the recollection of lore.
20	You breathe and your lungs fill with the Mists. It flows through your body, weighing you down and weakening you.	You have disadvantage on Constitution saving throws to maintain concentration on spells.

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Appendix B: Dungeon Master Tips

To run this adventure as a DM, you must have three, four, or five players, each with their own character within the adventure's level range (see the "Adventure Primer" section at the start of the adventure).

New to D&D Adventurers League?

Information about the Adventurers League, including finding places to play, organizing events, and a list of supporting resources and documents, can be found here: https://dnd.wizards.com/ddal_general

Preparing the Adventure

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running it, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use during combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendixes and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running the adventure, such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battle maps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception) score; and anything the adventure specifies as notable (such as backgrounds and story awards).

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a player or ran as a DM, but they can do so only once with a specific character. Ensure each player has their character sheet (if not, get one from the organizer)

Preparing the Characters

The adventure is designed to be played with characters of a specific level; characters of a different level should be modified accordingly. If necessary, the characters should be afforded the time needed to adjust their characters to suit.

If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they can't, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Characters that died during a previous adventure return to life, free of any conditions, curses, or other effects that would remove them from play—such as vampirism or lycanthropy. They keep any story awards they have, as any spells they might have copied during their adventures.

During the Call to Action, the characters are likely to review their available magic items among themselves and determine who is carrying what. Make sure they have a few moments to outfit one another.

New Players? No Problem!

With starter adventures like this one, it's possible you might have players new to D&D, or new to fifth edition D&D. As the DM, it's up to you to ensure these players have fun with the game, and that they learn the basics of how to play. At this level, having fun is more important than learning every rule exactly right. Be gentle with new players who make mistakes. Make sure to keep your players smiling and rolling dice. Be positive and enthusiastic when describing the action, and you'll notice the players will quickly follow suit.

If you're a new DM, then welcome—and thank you! New DMs are the lifeblood of the D&D community. To help you run your game, some adventures include sidebars like this one that provide an explanation of the game's rules as they're used in the adventure.

Adjusting This Adventure

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, assess the **party strength** by consulting the table below.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party Strength
Three characters	Weak
Four characters	Average
Five characters	Strong

Safety Tools

Safety tools help ensure players aren't pushed beyond their comfort levels. These tools let your players know you want them to have a positive experience. Some common safety tools are provided below, each with a summary of how they work. An article about one such safety kit is provided to help with further information. Ensure that you discuss these tools with your players before the game:

- **Code of Conduct.** This is a group agreement for play. It outlines desired and prohibited behaviors, confidential reporting, and possible consequences.
- **Pregame and Postgame Discussions.** Use time before the game to explain content warnings, set boundaries, and collaborate on a safety plan. Then decompress and discuss improvements at the end of the game.
- **Be Welcoming.** Welcome and encourage respectful and open conversations about issues as they arise. Show that you're listening by avoiding defensive responses.
- **Confidentiality.** Provide contact information for private and confidential conversations between players and DM. Only disclose another player's name if that player gave unpressured permission for you to do so.
- **Safety Tools.** Learn about the safety tools that TTRPG community members have created and compiled. A broad range of such safety tools are available for you and your players online, or you can get more information by reaching out to your event organizer or community@dndadventurersleague.org.

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