DNH

Fifth Edition Fantasy

The Haunting of Hastur

A Campaign

by L. Kevin Watson

The Haunting of Hastur

Dark Naga Adventures

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Atryx Pycey Artist: Brian McCranie

Looking Over a Lost Caravan Artist: Brian McCranie

Above is a pair of pieces of art that were comissioned but did not fit in DNH4–Confronting Hastur. There are a few others throughout this version.

Introduction

This series started as an idea at GenCon in 2014 while having drinks and burgers at Dick's Last Resort with Rollin' D Dice, a longtime friend. I'd been playing D&D Next since January of 2012, and Fifth Edition was just a couple days from official launch. I was inspired to get back into writing, but I wanted to step up from writing for my home game and into commercial publishing. We talked about applying ideas from the other parts of life to create adventures that cater to multiple playstyles by blending roleplay and combat to break the mold of "combat, combat, skill challenge, combat." I wanted to offer something new and challenging, both to myself as a writer and to the players.

The role of crowdfunding in the modern renaissance of independent RPG publishing cannot be discounted. Its influences compare in scale with the OGL itself. In lowering the barrier for funding a small project with professional art, layout, editing, and maps, the production values of many projects have made a quantum leap forward.

With the enduring success of the OGL, the release of an edition I enjoyed as much as I did the flavors of Basic from my youth, and the rise of crowdfunding, it was time. I wrote the first draft of The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil in mid-2015 and playtested the living hell out of it. It was analyzed, overanalyzed, left to rest for weeks, and tweaked more, all while waiting for the SRD and the licensing announcement. A lot of people were using the free basic rules as an SRD guide, but I didn't want to take that risk. In January 2016, after the official SRD was released, I revised the adventure one last time to bring it better in line with the SRD and launched a successful Kickstarter in mid-February of 2016.

My goal is to create adventures that support all three pillars of play: exploration, interaction, and combat. I've never been comfortable running or playing combat-heavy, linear adventures, and this series harkens back to the sandbox-style play that I always preferred.

In your hands rests the culmination of my first three years on this quest. Enjoy!

L. Kevin Watson

January 2019

Forward

Dear Reader,

Kevin Watson, the author of The Haunting of Hastur and my friend, is a success. His adventures, both in life and in print, are born of his work ethic and strong character. The act of writing is not the same as the act of publishing, and that has never been more apparent than today; since the tools and sales channels required are available to everyone.

This is a good thing for creators and, apart from sifting through an apparently endless cornucopia of media, consumers as well. Which brings me back to Kevin and his collection here in your hands. Kevin did everything he set out to do: wrote an adventure he was proud of, ran a successful crowdfunding campaign, and delivered his books on time. Then he did it again and again. With the barrier to entry in published games its lowest, an overplenteousness of companies and names have tried their hand at publishing. I have seen failures, unearned success, hubris, and fraud. In almost a decade and only in a handful of instances have I been as happy as seeing a successful delivery from Kevin. He combines hard work and good planning with follow-thru and possesses the mental maturity to accept the criticism he requested from other authors (including this one).

A large percentage in our hobby are creators; many of those are thinking about putting their creations in the arena. My advice to them is simple.

Take it from me, be like Kevin.

Happy Adventuring to Everyone!

Zach Glazar

Frog God Games

January 2019

DNH1a

5th Edition Fantasy

A Side Quest for the
Haunting of Hastur Series

The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil

Side Quests–River Crossing

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Level Four

The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil is an adventure for 3–7 characters level 4–6 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. It is optimized for the fifth edition and for 5 characters at level 5.

Dark Naga Adventures
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DNH1a: The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil–Side Quests River Crossing

Dark Naga Adventures

Written: L. Kevin Watson

Illustrated: Rick Hershey

Cartography: Acrobata2000

Production and Layout: L. Kevin Watson with Rick Hershey

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Side Encounter: Caravan Crossing the River

This is a prequel/preview encounter, useful if the party needs a little more XP before starting *The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil*. It also provides some intrigue. While written as a preview to a specific product, this encounter can be adapted to any campaign world.

Setup:

The party members are making their way to Boldon from Lagduf to investigate reports of people going missing. They are at a river crossing with a caravan also headed to Boldon. They might be following it, escorting it for a bit of extra coin, or it might be coincidence that they are crossing at the same time as the caravan. Whichever fits into your campaign and makes sense.

Principals:

- **The Caravan** – Six wagons each drawn by four pack horses and with a driver and lookout. Four spearmen on horseback and eight footmen with sword and shield. (Drivers and lookouts are level 0, Spearmen are level 3, footmen are level 2.)
- **The Bandits** – 20 crossbowmen on horseback, all level 2. All of the bandits are also armed with scimitars.
- **Cultist Soldiers** – Five men on horseback, all level 5 cultist soldiers. They are wearing armor with the infinity snake symbol. (See Aftermath for what the party overhears.) At the end of the combat, their leader, a cultist fanatic enters the scene.

Setting:

The caravan has slowed to cross a river. The river is 30′ wide and 3′ deep at its deepest (First 5′ from each bank, depth is 1′; 5′–10′ from each bank, depth is 2′; the middle 10′, depth is 3′.)

Description:

The party is crossing a river along with a large caravan (the reason is up to the GM). At the crossing, all eight footmen are on the west side of the bank with the wagons that have already crossed, and the horsemen remain with the balance of the caravan on the east side of the bank. Currently, two wagons have crossed, one is crossing, and three await their turn. Allow the party to decide where they are in relation to the wagons.

When the 3rd wagon is at the deepest part of the crossing, all 20 bandits attack, 15 from the front and five from the rear. The bandits are armed with light crossbows. The five bandits at the rear use them to pin down the guards on the east (or south) bank while the bulk of the force overwhelms the footmen with concentrated fire.

The bandits are well rehearsed in overwhelming an opposing force. They will take out targets by concentrating up to three bandits per target to ensure targets go down each round of combat. This has a demoralizing effect on green troops, guards, etc., and has worked very well for the bandits. (Think blitzkrieg.)

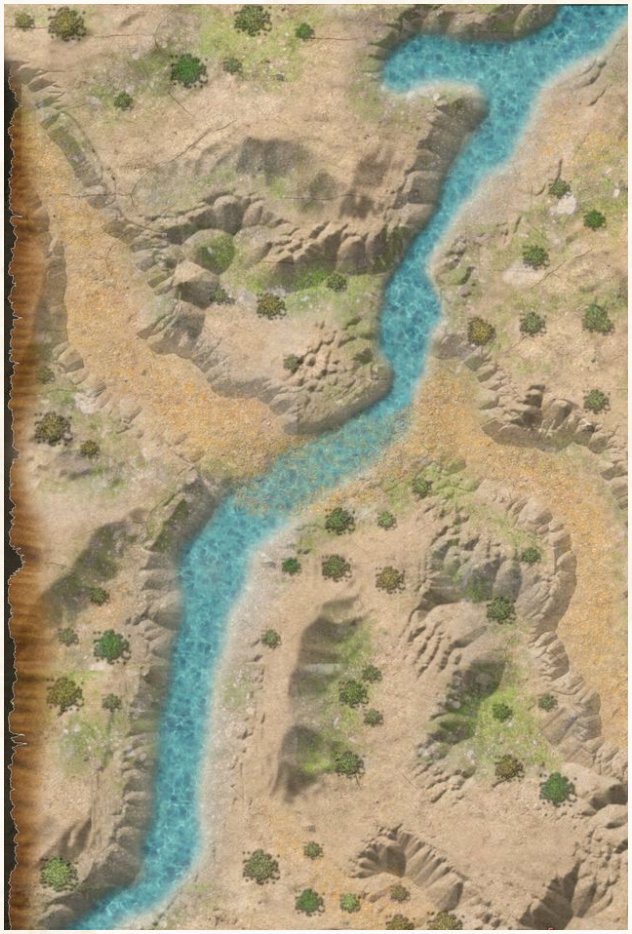
Timeline and Express Combat:

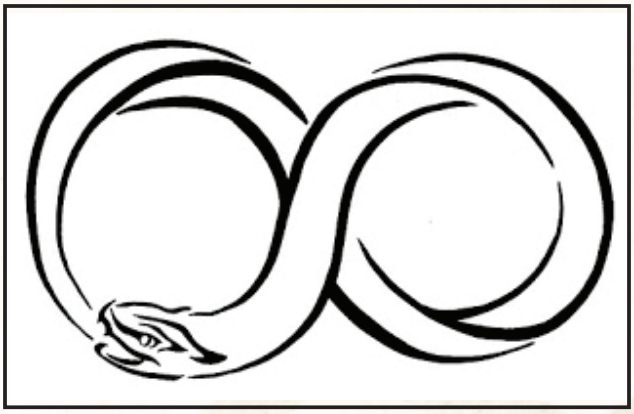
You are not required to follow this. It is offered as a quick way to resolve the actions of the bandits and the guards quickly and focus more on the players.

Party actions are expected to alter this.

- **Round 0**–Wagon three is mid-river (and will take 2 rounds to exit the river). All 20 bandits spend their move and action to get within 30′ of their targets. The guards do not attack this round. The bandits demand surrender; the guards respond with defiance.
- **Round 1**–Wagons stop moving. The bandits attack on 4 separate initiatives (5 bandits per initiative roll). The guards attack on 3 separate initiatives. 1 for horsemen and 1 for footmen.
  - ◊ **Express combat** – The front bandits will score eight hits and kill three or four footmen in round 1 (1–3 = 3 kills, 4–6 = 4 kills on d6). The rear bandits will injure two or three but not kill any of the horsemen (1–3 = 2 hits, 4–6 = 3 hits on a d6) for 6 hp each. Their role is to pin down the rear guard. The footmen will injure 6 of the bandits. The horsemen will injure 2 bandits.
- **Round 2**–stationary. All of the drivers and lookouts move under the wagons for cover.
  - ◊ **Express combat–**The front bandits will have killed at least six and possibly all of the footmen (1–3 = 3 kills, 4–6 = 4 kills on d6 for this round as well), the footmen break and run away. The front bandits position themselves to engage the horsemen. The cultist soldiers use their turn to enter the fray. They were trailing the caravan off map, are seen this round, and engage next round.
- **Round 3**–Footmen (if any alive) are routed and are still fleeing the map. The bandits focus their attention on the horsemen. They score ten hits for 6 hp each. This will kill the horsemen.
  - ◊ **Express combat**–The horsemen suffer concentrated fire from all of the bandits and are either defeated or broken. The cultists hit on 60% of their attacks. They hit 6 bandits previously injured and kill them.

- **Round 4** – All of the guards are dead or routed. Fourteen bandits are alive, and five cultists are pressing down on them.
  - ◊ **Express combat** – The bandits average six hits on the cultists for 6hp each. They concentrate all of their attacks on a single target. They do not kill their target. The cultists land six more hits for 8 hp each and take out four more bandits (ten remain).
- **Round 5** – The bandits rout, and the cultists pursue them. The real action will take place off the map. The party should not pursue. If they do, improvise.
- A sixth rider, the leader, comes from off map, approaches the crossing and heals the fallen guards of a total of 35 hp. He is wearing black armor under a black cloak with the snake infinity symbol seen above. He spreads the healing effect equally among the dying. After healing the fallen, he says, "Rest no more than an hour and get these wagons to Boldon!" He does not answer any questions or acknowledge the party. After speaking, he rides off in the direction of the other cultists.





Aftermath

The lookouts arm themselves with crossbows from the fallen. The caravan takes all of the horses, weapons, and any bandit insignia to explain their delay and limps to Boldon, which is about 10 hours away. They stop for nothing, and they move as fast as the horses can handle. Any guards who were routed catch up with the caravan, eventually, and do their best to protect the caravan. Nothing more befalls the caravan. If the party is with the caravan in any way, they are offered mounts (if needed) to stay with the caravan. If the meeting at the crossing is more coincidence, the caravan leaves the party behind. They are welcome to follow, but the caravan does not wait.

In addition to earned combat XP, the party earns 200 xp per player for their role in repelling the bandits (Quest reward: fighting, healing, escorting the caravan, etc.)

The party overhears the commands and responses that the cultists issue during the fray. Some of these attract the party's attention.

- "Protect the crates" DC 14 passive Perception: "Protect the crystals"
- "For the glory of God" DC 18 passive Perception: "For the glory of our dark god, Hastur"

Bestiary

Bandit

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 17; **ATK** 1d8; **HD** 2; **HP** 11; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 100

5e Stats

- Human, Fighter 2; NE; AC 15; HP 14; Spd 30 ft.
- DEX 14 (+2) CON 12 (+1)

Scimitar–Melee Attack: +4 to hit. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 2) slashing.

Light Crossbow–Ranged Attack: +4 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing.

These bandits are one of three teams organized by a local bandit captain. They ravage anything of value and only use violence when they meet resistance.

They attack in a blitzkreig-like fashion. 25% of the troops pin down the rear guards with crossbow fire while the remainder focus on the front guards, concentrating the fire of 2 or 3 men per target. Their goal is to kill as many men as possible each round, hoping to drive their opponents to rout.

Cult Fanatic

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 2; **HP** 24; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 225 **SA**: spells: ***Command, Inflict Light Wounds x2, Shield of Faith, Hold Person x2, Spiritual Weapon***

5e Stats

- Human; Cleric 4; LE; AC 15; HP 38; + 6; Spd 30 ft.
- DEX 15 (+2); Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2, Perception +0
- **Fanatic Frenzy**–The fanatic has advantage on saving throws vs. being charmed or frightened.
- **Spells:** Spellcasting DC 17
- 1st level (4 slots): command, inflict wounds
- 2nd level (3 slots): hold person, spiritual weapon

Multiattack–The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

Dagger–Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing.

The cult fanatic is a unit leader of the cult soldiers. He does not engage in combat but supports the troops with healing and direction. At the end of the battle, he uses his channel divinty to heal the fallen horsemen and footmen for a total of 35 hp, dispersed evenly across all the injured carvan members.

Cult Soldier

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8x2, 1d6 or 1d8; **HD** 5; **HP** 40; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 350

5e Stats

- Human, Fighter 5; LE; AC 17; HP 48; Spd 30 ft.
- STR 16 (+3); Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Multiattack–The veteran makes two sword attacks.

Longsword–Melee Attack: +6 to hit, Hit: 8 (1d8 + 3) slashing or 9 (1d10 + 3) slashing.

Heavy Crossbow–Ranged Attack: +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., Hit: 6 (1d10) piercing damage.

Footmen

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 18; **ATK** 1d8; **HD** 2; **HP** 10; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 100

5e Stats

- Human, Fighter 2; LN; AC 15; HP 11; Spd 30 ft.
- STR 13 (+1) DEX 12 (+1) CON 12 (+1); Skills Perception +2

Longsword–Melee Attack: +3 to hit, Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing.

Horsemen

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 6; **THACO** 18; **ATK** 1d6 or 1d8; **HD** 3; **HP** 14; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 3; **XP** 200

5e Stats

- Human, Fighter 3; LN; AC 14; HP 18; Spd 30 ft.
- STR 13 (+1) DEX 12 (+1) CON 12 (+1); Skills Perception +2

Spear (Melee)–Melee Attack: +3 to hit, hit: 6 (1d8 + 1) piercing.

Spear (Ranged)–Ranged Attack: +3 to hit, range 20/60 ft. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing.

If you enjoyed this encounter, the story continues...

The small town of Boldon and its surrounding villages are afraid. Dozens of people are missing, some speculate lost to some nefarious purpose. A broken drunkard tells fantastic tales of an evil temple and the horrible things within. The rare few who know the legends and history of the region are beginning to think the dark times have returned, not seen since the fall of the First Age of Man. People are beginning to feel the icy fingers of fear closing in. The party members become aware of these events and are inspired to investigate. This leads them to a broken man who tells them a story of a lost temple. Has it been rediscovered by men seduced by its forgotten evil? The drunkard's tale leads to others who might help the party members discover more before they face *The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil.*

DNH1

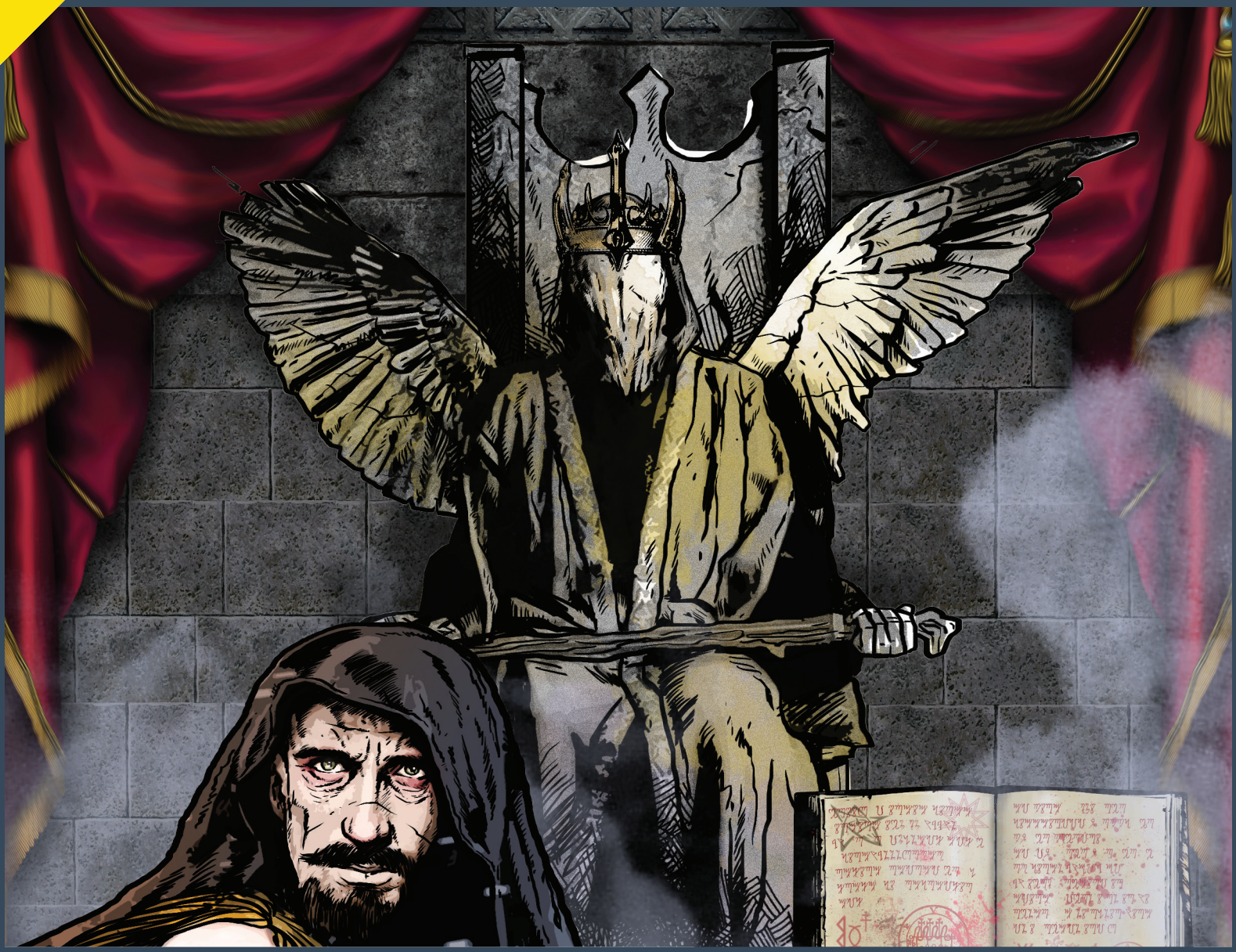
5th Edition Fantasy

Part One of the
Haunting of Hastur Series

The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Levels Four to Six



The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil is an adventure for 3–7 characters level 4–6 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. It is optimized for the fifth edition and for 5 characters at level 5.

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The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil

DNH1:
The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil

Dark Naga Adventures

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Cartography: Alyssa Faden

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The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil

Introduction

The Boldon region, a small town and its surrounding villages, is afraid. Dozens of people are missing, some speculate lost to some nefarious purpose. Tales of an evil temple and the horrible things within circulate. The few who know the legends and history of the region think the dark times, not seen since the fall of the First Age of Man, have returned. People are beginning to feel the icy fingers of fear closing in. Upon arrival, the party encounters Fredu, a homeless, broken drunkard prone to incessant rambling. This inspires an investigation into the stories of a lost temple. Has it been rediscovered by men seduced by its forgotten evil? The drunkard's tale leads to others who might help the party discover more before it faces The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil.

Campaign Integration

The area near the temple is designed to be woven into your world with minor modifications. The adventure is set along the coast of the Duchy of Lagduf, within the Kingdom of Meawold. Boldon, a small town that supports several farming and a few fishing villages, is the hub of the region. Sumer is a small fishing village on the Sea of Dince that could easily be on the shore of a large body of water in your world. Maria and Pinto are farming villages.

The villages are a half-day walk or a quarter-day ride from Boldon. They are more or less evenly spaced around Boldon. The distance between them keeps relations amiable. This region should drop into any world with small adjustments or be made part of some other fiefdom if that fits your world better. Meawold and Lagduf are lightly-sketched. Boldon, Sumer, Maria, and Pinto are more detailed, providing an open-ended campaign. Over 1,400 years of history and lore are provided.

Name	Role and Population	Location
Boldon	Town of 4,600	Center of the region
Sumer	Fishing village of 1,100	About 9 miles NW of Boldon
Pinto, Maria	Farming village of 1,300–1,400	About 10 miles from Boldon

For the GM

Fredu's tale starts the adventure and is the focus during the first act. The subsequent delve into the temple, the other focus, can be taken in a timeframe comfortable to the party. Six non-linear, optional quest components are detailed between the foci—making an ellipse that ties the components into the adventure.

The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil is composed of eight major encounter areas: meeting with Fredu, three optional encounters in Boldon, one optional encounter in each of the three larger villages, and the temple delve. With regard to the optional encounters, two of the encounters are intended to be combat, two of them are intended to be solved with roleplay, and two of them could be resolved by combat or roleplay at the discretion of the party.

The adventure is designed to balance between distinct differences in player methods and styles of play. Keeping goals non-linear and having no event or encounter be a necessity gives parties maximum flexibility. The players can complete or skip the encounters as they see fit, may tackle them in any order, and can walk (or run) away when overwhelmed. Each successful encounter leaves them more prepared for the dungeon.

The six optional encounters reveal:

- The location of a secret door
- Instructions to open the secret door
- Needed supplies
- Map A – player map of the temple
- Map B – player map of temple location
- Insight on the ancient magic of the temple's priests

Background

Fall of the First Age of Man

The Duchy of Lagduf and the Kingdom of Meawold sprang from the ashes of the previous age of man. Well over a millennia ago, temples of the dark god Hastur ruled. From the shadows, they spread like wildfire to every town in the land. Many dismissed the followers as a harmless cult and made excuses for reported misdeeds. Nobles were corrupted by promises of power, while the innocent were sacrificed to the dark god. No city was spared the temples. Leaders either submitted or were overrun.

The corrupting influence all but engulfed the kingdoms of man. In this bleak era, some men were forged into heroes. Backed by a large army of elves and a ragtag force of dwarves and halflings, the forces of good snapped from their delusional state to face the encroachment of darkness upon their world, and the fight to drive out evil initiated. Over the course of three generations, light gained on darkness as good conquered evil. Men, elves, dwarves, and halflings banded together and steadily drove back this plague of Hastur and his corruption.

Once the evil was conquered, the alliances dissolved; the races of the world returned to their petty bickering. Celebrations gave way to decadence, and eventually man forgot what had once made him prevail and he descended back into darkness.

The First Age of Man ended with the collapse of civilization only a few centuries after conquering the evil of Hastur. In the millennium of chaos and darkness that followed, the population of man in the Boldon region dwindled as nature reclaimed it. For the next 700 years, civilization would remain elusive. There were many sparks, but none would ignite to become a beacon in the darkness.

Rise of the Second Age of Man

Men of vision banded together to form something enduring. Starting some 300 years before the present, civilization took root, grew steadily, and survived a few generations. The Kingdom of Meawold formed and expanded. After a century of astonishing recovery, Duke Raffolk was presented a duchy within Meawold, Lagduf. He soon launched an ambitious initiative to tame his duchy and to transform it into a grand and prosperous place. Duke Raffolk was succeeded by his grandson, Duke Gauward, who founded the coastal town of Boldon. With Boldon at the hub, two fishing villages and five farming villages formed, along with hundreds of small independent farms in the surrounding region.

Thus, the duchy was supplied with foodstuffs and an additional market for trade goods and thrived for a quarter century until it was rent by a devastating earthquake. The farms and fields were decimated by the earth's shuddering, and the peaceful seaside villages were drowned beneath the ensuing waves. Fires and aftershocks further reduced the region to rubble.

The mayor of Boldon, Wulfa, rebuilt the region with his own architectural and managerial flair. The practice of specializing in specific crops was discontinued, and diversification was adopted to strengthen independence from external supply lines for the village and the region as a whole.

Today, Boldon exports foodstuffs to Lagduf and imports items useful but not vital to the region's survival, such as minerals, metals, and luxury items. Lumber, abundant in the duchy, is harvested and consumed locally; it is rarely traded. The Duke of Lagduf, Eandald, initially felt threatened by this fiercely independent streak, but his son, Bertio, leaning on his Meawold education, recognized the duchy's inhabitants as men of the earth, with complete loyalty to the Duke forged by tragedy. They had organized their lives and community to survive the next disaster. When Wulfa was apprised of Duke Eandald's concerns, he worked tirelessly with Bertio to alleviate all misgivings. Duke Bertio is now the ruler of Lagduf, his father having passed a score of years after the earthquakes.

Integrating with Starting Adventures and Starter Sets

This adventure assumes the characters are already levels 4–6. Most starter sets take the party to level 3, some to level 5. If you are starting a new party intent on running this adventure, and your starter set advances the party to level 3, you may find it necessary to provide some side adventures to advance the characters to level 4, or a bit more, before starting this adventure. This can be done by dropping in some level-appropriate side encounters as the party heads from its starting location to the Boldon region.

Most starter sets and introductory adventures are vague beyond the specifics necessary for the adventure. The end effect is they can be easily inserted into your world or published settings. The Five Kingdoms setting is similarly flexible and can accomodate most low-level adventures.

The earthquake's resulting upheaval exposed an entrance to a temple of Hastur, which had long ago been obstructed by the armies that purged the cult from the region. Undiscovered for decades, the orifice was inadvertently discovered three years ago by Fredu, a man lost in the forest.

Fredu's Encounter

Fredu, a farmer who was taking a shortcut from Pinto to Boldon, became startled by animal noises. Running through the rocks and trees, exhausted and barely able to see in the dim moonlight, he sought shelter in an opening in some rocks. Believing he had found a small cave to protect him from becoming dinner for some hungry beast, Fredu began to crawl, making his way to the deepest part of the crevice. There, Fredu discovered that the opening linked to a stone passage. By the light of a flickering torch he fashioned from materials within the temple, he found himself surrounded by horrifying images. The most terrifying was a statue of Hastur. Stricken with fear, Fredu ran for his life—ran home to Pinto to tell his story.

Yet, the humiliation and ridicule of the disbelieving townsfolk drove him to despair and finally to drink. As the months wore on, he sold everything he owned to numb his addled and fear-enslaved mind from relentless reproach and nightmarish memories. Fredu is a drunkard and now recounts his night of terror to all who will listen —with the right enticement. Recently, he has taken to telling a comic variation of his story in trade for drink. Once a productive farmer, he now takes odd jobs and tells his tale in exchange for some shelter, a little food, and copious amounts of booze. This has made him a manipulative and unreliable storyteller prone to fabrication to nurture his habit.

Some of Fredu's listeners entertained their own dark plans.

Cyne's Seduction

One who heard Fredu's tale is Cyne, a priest of light local to Boldon. Cyne became driven, his thoughts focused on the destruction of the temple's evil. His mind clouded by rage, he disregarded good judgment and immediately sought the temple. Unprepared and without allies, Cyne's weakness was easily discerned by Hastur. Cyne was corrupted—seduced by the trappings of power, control, and riches.

Cyne gave in to temptation and has become a dark priest of Hastur. He has recruited adepts, restored the temple, and begun to spread the dark influence of Hastur. He plans to corrupt the duchy and eventually the kingdom. Becoming a dark priest of Hastur took several months. Recruiting followers took a few months. Restoration of the temple took the better part of a year. The material for the dark crimson heavy woolen curtains that line most of the walls took a great deal of effort to acquire. However, along the way, Cyne found like-minded people to bring his complement of cultists to 40, a number that pleases Hastur. (The cultural equivalent of the number 42 for Douglas Adams fans.)

In recent months, there have been disappearances of locals to the region—315 total so far. Some were abductions; some were cultists or those attracted to a dark power. Others simply had mishaps while off the well-traveled roads and were never found. With a significant portion of the region's population unaccounted for, people are beginning to speculate that Fredu's impossible tale may have some truth to it. Perhaps he did face the dark god. Perhaps the door to the temple is truly ajar. Recalling the legends from the First Age of Man, people are no longer able to dismiss the threat of evil and ignore the ramifications of Hastur unleashed.

Fredu, Always Ready With A Story

The party's initial encounter with Fredu precipitates the journey that may end in The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil.

Potential Player Hooks

- The party might be a mixture of people who started in small towns like Boldon, left seeking their fame and fortune in the world beyond.
- They were asked by a patron or other contact to investigate the troubles.
- This may involve an assignment by the contact or come from the enticement of a reward. For example: Edmur, a member of the Meawold Court, has hired the party to follow up on a rumor of some kind of trouble in Boldon with a promised reward of gold and recognition.
- The players could be from the Boldon area and decide or be tasked to investigate the troubles.
- The players could be from another part of the kingdom and be sent to Boldon to help with the troubles.
- The players could be guarding a caravan that is bringing ore to Boldon and decide to look into the troubles.

About the Boldon Region

The Boldon region is about 30 miles across (~780 square miles), with about 15 percent being the Sea of Dinse. This leaves about 660 square miles of land. The land today is roughly half virgin forest, a quarter farmable land, and the balance unusable land including rivers, streams, rocks, bad soil, the upheaval from the earthquake, etc. The area is growing rapidly to feed a hungry duchy. The region has a current population of 10,483.

The region is a thriving community on the fringes of a large duchy and part of a major kingdom along the coast of the Sea of Dinse. Boldon forms a hub for a wheel of farming and fishing villages. The region has a population of about 2,100 families with more than 800 families living in Boldon. The balance of the regional population is distributed across a couple hundred standalone farms and seven relatively large villages, including two fishing villages and five farming villages, each with about 125 families. Dozens of smaller villages are comprised of three to five families each. The large villages are each roughly 10 miles from Boldon and between 6 and 10 miles from the next large village along the rim. These villages all look to Boldon for trade, defense, and other support.

Cyne, Priest of Hastur

Boldon

Boldon is the hub of a cluster of agricultural and fishing villages and standalone farms. The villages of the region include the fishing villages of Sumer and Woodbluff, and the farming villages of Baramunz, Maria, Owford, Pinto, and Porthy. Another hundred or so standalone farms exist in the region. The villages and Boldon engage in some light textiles, metal work, and woodworking.

Boldon's small size is reflected in a unique religious cooperation. Priests of three faiths (or more depending on your world) in the area work together and share worship space because the community is too small to support the churches individually. The GMs should include a faith of light and something druidic when fitting the region into their world.

Boldon sees a lot of trade traffic from the villages and from the core of the kingdom. The residents are not particularly bothered by strangers.

Fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat are brought into Boldon and then on to Lagduf from the surrounding villages. Ore, finished goods, and refined textiles flow into the region from elsewhere in Lagduf. Lumber is harvested and utilized locally. Following the earthquake and subsequent devastation, Wulfa changed the way the region was organized to help it survive future catastrophes. The region is largely self-sufficient, receiving mostly non-essential goods from the duchy.

Sumer

Sumer is a fishing village of nearly 200 boats and about 130 families, and the home of the only herbalist in the region who has the skill to brew potions. He moved his family and trade to the coast in hopes that the salt air would help his ailing daughter breathe more easily. Sumer's buildings are primarily densely packed on the beach-facing side of a large hill across four steppes. Caravan office, taverns, support businesses, and other trade buildings are near where the boats are beached after their harvest. Residents of Sumer see themselves as hard-living sea folk, and take a while (at least two rounds of brew) to warm up to strangers.

Maria and Pinto

Maria and Pinto are farming villages. Each village square is lined along one side by a caravan office, an outpost of the Boldon watch, general stores, shops, and a large pub. Behind these are the workspaces and shops of the other tradesmen of the village. Two of the other three sides are lined with farmers' homes. The remaining side of the square funnels into the road out of town. Most farmers have small cabins or huts to support and shelter the workers near their fields. A few of the farms raise livestock, but most are agricultural. After the earthquake 60 years ago, Wulfa, Boldon's mayor, had a strong influence on how the villages were planned and rebuilt. The larger farming villages are halfway between the xenophobic small villages and the indifferent residents of Boldon. The party will experience a wide range of receptions from Maria and Pinto residents.

The Tale of Fredu

Virtually all of the residents of the city of Boldon know Fredu. When the subject of the disappearances comes up in conversation, most will inevitably mention him and his fantastic tale. Some, such as Finy, the captain of the watch, and Tane, the mayor, will be more direct and suggest that inquiring parties talk to Fredu, as they have begun to suspect the presence of truth in his tale. They will also mention that his stories have gotten more fantastical over the years.

Unless he can wheedle an odd job that provides lodging, Fredu sleeps (as best he can) in the alleys while in the city of Boldon. If the party were to observe some of his tormented sleep and somehow translate his screams, the words would mostly be an indecipherable jumble, with occasional comprehensible phrases such as "after so long," "I am awake," "convert new followers," "sacrifices to restore," "I will give you power," etc.

By day, Fredu is usually found in the local taverns trying to tell tales in exchange for drinks. He likes to approach strangers who have not yet grown tired of hearing his tale. Fredu would like to receive six pints of ale to tell the story.

The first time Fredu tells his tale to the party, he will be himself and will tell the true version. Though the dark agent within his brain is aware of everything that Fredu does, Hastur desires that they hear the tale. He hopes they will be enticed to investigate, as the capture and sacrifice of adventurers of such level will greatly assist in the final restoration of the temple, and he believes the party will not be missed nearly as much as any locals, of which he has already sacrificed many.

Fredu's tale should make the party aware of the six optional encounters and of the temple itself. One possible telling of the tale is given.

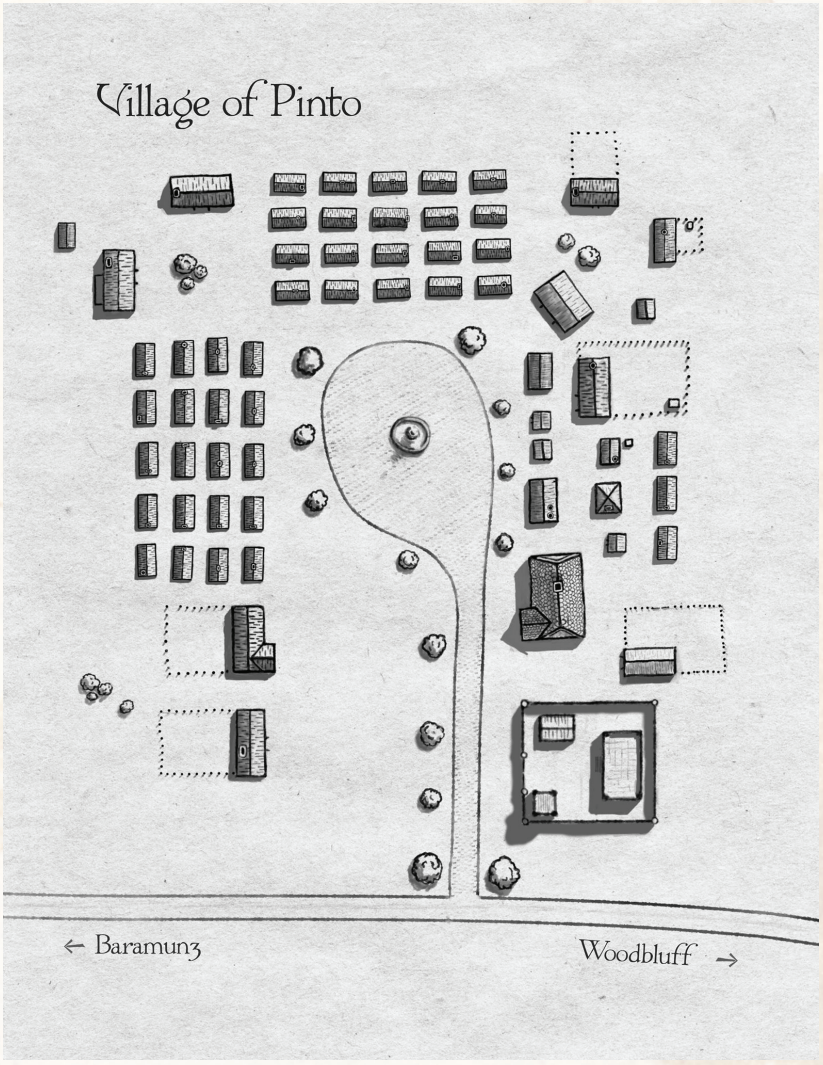
Ideally, the interactive encounter that is "Fredu's Tale" should have him reluctant to talk about that night and have the party draw more information out of him. Players may want to use ability checks, skill checks, or spells to help draw out the information and see if there is a way to magically or divinely help the broken man.

One possible solution is provided, but there are many other options. This is not meant to be a morality adventure about the evils of alcohol. However, compassionate players may see Fredu as a victim of the evil and want to undo its grip on him. There is no flaw with that argument, and players so inclined should be recognized for great roleplaying.

Fredu's Tale

Key Points

- He was out in the country lost, heard some noises that frightened him, ran, and ended up stumbling into a cavern. (The cavern was unearthed by the earthquake, but remained undiscovered for more than a generation.)
- The natural cavern gave way to finished stone, which led to a temple that held horrifying images.
- After a long, horrifying night in the temple, Fredu made his way home to his village (Pinto).
- Since then, he has told his tale to many people and remained drunk for as much of the last three years as possible. Among those who have heard the tale are:
- Cyne: A priest from whom Fredu sought help with the nightmares that eventually led to his drunkard ways.
- Thamas and Jopha: Fredu traded his tale for a few casks of ale from Thamas, who took detailed notes and interrupted the tale to ask too many questions. Jopha soaked up all without saying a word but asked Fredu to verify the accuracy of a map of the temple interior that he sketched. Additionally, Thamas drew a map of the temple's location.
- Fredu found a scrap of parchment on the floor and kept it when he left. It was written in a strange language.
- Fredu traded the scrap to Kriel for booze in an effort to stay drunk. Kriel said it contained a secret of the temple.
- Fredu has not connected these events with the disappearances that began two years ago.



Monologue

"That night. Ya wanna know about that night? Oh it's a good tale. I'll curdle your milk and make you glad you ain't old Fredu. I'll gladly tell you my tale for six pints of ale. Such a small price for such a lamentable tale of woe. And it's all true.

It was maybe three years ago. I was coming from my home in Pinto; I needed to get my chickens to Boldon. But I was going to be late, you see. So like an idiot I cut through the Badlands to save time. Now I know better. Everyone always knows better. A mile or so in, I ran into this pack of wolves, all yellow eyes and teeth. I just dropped that sack o' chickens, and the beasties tore into 'em. But some of them beasties started looking at me like I might be the biggest chicken they ever seen. So I just took off running. Over rocks, through the bushes, getting all torn up. I ran and ran, and eventually I realized I was lost with the sun starting to set. Lucky me, I think as I found a small cave. It was nearly dark as I slipped into it on my hands and knees, feeling for the back of the cave. After a while I found some parchments and a little jug of oil and improvised a torch. It took some work, but I was able to light some wood. I managed to keep some of them parchments too. They had some wild writings on them, like nothing I'd ever seen.

Anyway, I see the cave gives way to a flat, worked floor. Still covered in rubble, but not natural rock, like the floor of a castle. Eventually the rubble became just dust. I must have been 200 feet from the mouth, and 80 or so feet past where the finished floor began when I figured I was in some kind of underground tomb. And I think maybe I can liberate some dead guy of a gold ring or something. What would he need with it? He's dead! The tunnel was really carved near the floor on each wall. Detailed work, like dwarves or something.

As I went through that tomb, I saw things on some of the walls that were horrible, really made me shake. But I just kept thinking: tombs got gold, so much easier to get than from selling chickens. So I went deeper. Finally, I see this statue. And I start hearing something, buzzing, whispering in the back of my head. And I realize this ain't no tomb, it's some sort of temple. The sort that's the worst kind of evil. I felt … no, I knew that terrible things had been done in that place. Crimes against nature. Sacrifices...Heard a man say once to be wary of looking into the abyss, because when you do, the abyss looks into you too. He was right.

I turned and ran. I got lost in that temple, trying to find my way out. My torch went out. Crawling on my hands and knees, pleading with my god, any good god, to silence the noises in my head. Finally, I found the way out through the tunnel and the rubble. By the time I got to the cave mouth, it was daybreak. I headed home. All the way to Pinto, I walked.

After that, the terrible nightmares started. They won't let me sleep! My family says I'm smashing about in the night, and screaming something terrible that they can't understand. They think I've been possessed by a demon. And they run me right out of the farm! Tell me never to come back. So Fredu's got no home to go to.

I go to Boldon, to Maria, all the larger villages, telling my story, trying to find someone who can stop the noises. Almost no one will help. They all laugh at me, say I'm crazy. The first one who really listened to me was Cyne, a priest here in town. He said he would help deal with it, called it "the evil," but the nightmares and the whispering in my head never stopped. I guess he was sent back to the head temple in Lagduf for additional training or something, maybe because he didn't help me like he said? I'm not sure. I ain't seen him for a couple of years now. Anyway, the only thing that stops the noises in my head is the drink. So I start drinking, and I ain't never stopped since. For six pints, you are getting off easy.

Kreil, he gave me a lot of ale and wine for my story! Course he also wanted those lambskin parchments in exchange, the ones I kept, 'cause they had those writings on them. Turns out he was fascinated by the writing, said it could be some sort of secret from the temple. Being a sage, he didn't pay out the price for my weird little scrap all at once. Still, he helped get my brain nice and quiet. For a while at least. I wish I had more o' them little scraps for Kreil. He is wise, but values the strangest things.

About a year ago, Jopha, he gave me all of the ale out of a little keg. He makes the bows and arrows here in town. Anyway, he looked real bored … until I got to the part about the carved passageways. Then he got real interested. He pulled out a parchment, asked me to describe parts of that temple again and again, asking about doors and carvings and rooms and such. He kept showing me the map he was drawing, asking me to let him know if what he sketched looked right. I don't know why he was so interested. I don't think he ever went there. But that keg kept me in drink for a while.

Recently, Thamas, from my old home of Pinto, paid me in drinks for a whole week! He asked a lot of questions, kept interrupting my tale. Was doodling the whole time. Turns out he was sketching a kind of drawing of the area, trying to figure out where the cave was from what I was telling him. Didn't say what he wanted it for though."

He licks his lips and downs the fifth pint of the ale you bought him and eyes the sixth.

If asked about the disappearances, he has not heard of them. And he sees no connection between the temple and the disappearances.

It would take about 2–3 sp per night to keep him drunk enough to quell his nightmares for as long as his new patrons might want to help him.

To cure him would require a series of restorative spells, cast daily for a month. This will free him from the trauma and its lingering impact on his life. Another option would be "Greater Restoration" cast three times over a period of eight days.

If freed from the nightmares and subsequent alcoholism, Fredu will eventually rebuild his life and become a productive member of the Boldon region again. He will not make his new life in Pinto; he will opt to resettle as far away from the old temple as possible.

If he is left as he is now, he will be dead within a year. Each player who participates in curing Fredu should receive 300 additional XP.

Fredu is not as much of a drunk as he appears. His encounter with Hastur had more effect than he can possibly imagine. He is of two minds: one the drunk, the other an agent of Hastur. When he is controlled by Hastur, he is essentially blacked out and is left with no recall.

While under control, he has spread wilder versions of his story, and other things to undermine his own credibility, and sabotage his efforts to make the community aware of the dangers. He told the party his tale as himself, but the agent within is aware of everything that Fredu does and knows the party is aware of the tale. Cyne needs four people to sacrifice to begin the spread of the aura, and the characters, as annoying drifters, will not be missed, especially if they have harmed or threatened local citizens.

With the information from Fredu fresh in their minds, the characters now have a series of choices. The introduction encounter with Fredu and the temple dungeon crawl are the bookends of the adventure and the only encounters required to be completed to finish the adventure. However, finding the temple with so little information to go on will be risky.

The more logical plan is to follow up on some or all of the three leads directly provided by Fredu:

- Jopha drew a map that might be helpful to the party. He is a bowyer/fletcher in Boldon.
- Kreil, a sage living in Boldon, has a lambskin parchment with some writing on it in a lost language. He said it contained a secret of the stronghold.
- Thamas, owner of the only pub in Pinto, drew another map that might be helpful to the party along with some sketches of the entrance.

The other three encounters are discovered by investigating and following up on leads:

- Fredu is the only non-cultist alive who knows where the room described in Kriel's translation is located. When the characters realize that they have no idea where the secret door is located, they will likely think to go back to Fredu to ask more questions. He will be in Maria, drunk, when the party catches up with him.
- While either investigating or moving about Boldon (GM's discretion), the party encounters four cultists who are looking for either the party, or just some trouble (depending on which option the GM elects to use). The party is 25–35 feet from the cultists and 15–20 feet from one of the main streets of Boldon when the cultists confront it. The party can move to end the encounter with a normal round of movement.
- There are a number of healers and midwives, and any of them can sell the characters the materials necessary to restock their healing kits. However, the only healing potions to be bought in the region come from Saraq, an herbalist who lives in Sumer. The characters will likely need to ask about where they can get healing supplies in Boldon and discover they must travel to Sumer to buy potions. There is an issue there for them to solve.

What Happens Next

If no one actively opposes Cyne and his cult, the following will happen:

- There will be one more monthly sacrifice of an individual. The moon is waning, and the region will experience its next new moon two nights after the party hears Fredu's tale. On the new moon, there will be another sacrifice. The victim will be abducted by the cult on the night the party meets with Fredu, and be held at the temple for sacrifice, chained at the feet of Hastur. Every day after this upcoming new moon sacrifice, another will occur. The cult will begin abducting several people at a time (whole families), but with a twist.
- The crystals that the cultists plan to use to amplify the aura will all be installed in the temple in four days, and the cult will be ready to begin to amplify the dread aura of the statue of Hastur. The next sacrifice calls for four victims. The cultists will sacrifice all of their victims at once, and Hastur's aura of dread will start to grow. The large sacrifice kicks off the channeling through the crystals

- The aura of dread will expand with high tide, but never contract with low tide, be maintained by a nightly sacrifice, and be amplified with a quadruple sacrifice, called a feeding sacrifice, at each phase of the moon. After the initial sacrifice and three feeding sacrifices, the aura will expand to cover a circular radius of four miles centered on the temple entrance. This covers the entire town of Boldon. From this point forward the plan calls for 44 sacrifices per lunar month, which is the amount of souls required to grow the aura. One sacrifice per phase will maintain the aura once they are no longer expanding the aura.
- After twelve feeding sacrifices, (three new moons after the channeling sacrifice), the aura will cover the entire Boldon region. The initial phase of the plan will be complete, and the cult will start taking over the region by corrupting and enslaving the leadership. They will recruit new members and grow to a following strong enough to start expanding toward Lagduf. In a year, the Duchy of Lagduf will be under a similar assault, but with the statue of Hastur placed under Lagduf Keep so the duke is easier to influence and corrupt. With the strategic placement of the statue, Lagduf Keep and the duke will be under cult control four or five months after the statue begins to emit its aura. Conquering Lagduf will be a bloodless revolution, if you are willing to exclude the individuals sacrificed to the statue on each phase of the moon. Maintaining the aura requires four people to be sacrificed to the statue per month.

If the players oppose them and fail, the timeline will be impacted. If the party is victorious, then the temple will likely be destroyed.

Boldon Encounters

4 Cultists Enter an Alley (Combat Focused Encounter)

Actors: 4 Cult Fanatics

Motivation: Stop the players or beat them up in celebration of the coming horrors.

Potential outcomes:

- Run away
- Defeat the cultists
- Defeated by the cultists

Description:

This encounter works best when the party has been investigating and asking questions for a while. However, it can be played at any time. Most of the encounters in this phase of the adventure are designed to be completely optional, and can be skipped by ignoring the lead or by walking away. This encounter comes looking for the party. It cannot be skipped per se, but the party can retreat easily. The details of the encounter will vary some depending on if there is any reason for this band of four cultists to be looking for the party. In that case, the attackers make it clear that the party should stop asking questions and intend to teach the party that they mean business. If not, this will be more of a chance encounter of overconfident cultists drunk on power who are looking for someone to victimize.

While in Boldon, the party enters an alley and comes face to face with four human men in heavy cloaks who, after a brief verbal exchange, attack the party. The alley is 10 feet wide, about 30 feet long, and clear enough to be considered empty for combat purposes; however, a busy Boldon street is only 20 feet away. The party can run from the encounter easily. The two sides see each other as they enter the alley from opposite sides, starting the encounter at least 25 feet apart. Empowered by their ancient practice of linking (but away from the temple where even more powerful) the cultists' attacks are at +2 for all their efforts (+2 to hit, or their spell DC/player saving throws are 2 points more difficult depending on the specific situation).

Cultists Attack in the Alley

Follow-up:

When two or more of the cultists go down, the remaining cultists surrender. The party finds four sets of cultist regalia and some treasure (~300 gold pieces in mixed gems). The cultists will brag about their power and upcoming subjugation of the region as they resist interrogation and plot for an opportunity to escape. From the conversation and the combat, give the party an opportunity to learn the following:

- The cult is growing rapidly. They were adding two members a month. Hastur loves the number 40, so they paused recruiting for a short while once they hit 40 members to celebrate. When recruiting resumes, they expect to bring in a member a week and get to 80 members.
- The cult is practicing an evil that has not been seen in over a millennium. This evil is strange enough that modern protections are not as effective as they are against modern magic. This is part of their bonuses in combat. A discovered practice of "Linking" (which allows the use of their reaction to aid another cultist) allows them to attack at +2 when working together.
- They are emboldened by the seething evil (Aura of Dread) in their temple, which equates to an advantage on all attacks when within 500 ft. of the statue of Hastur.
- They expect to extend the range of the Aura of Dread to encompass Boldon by amplifying the effect with large crystals that they have sourced, are taking delivery of, and are installing near the statue.

The characters may need to commission additional regalia or otherwise fashion similar clothing if intending to disguise more than four members of the party as cultists. They can find someone to do the work in Boldon, but can they be trusted? Are they the original maker of the regalia? (GM's option)

Monster Stats: 4 Cultist Fanatics (See Bestiary) 1800 **XP total**
Cultist Fanatic (4): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 2; **HP** 24; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 225 SA/AD
See Bestiary

Jopha and His Temple Map

(Combat or Roleplay Focused Encounter, Non-combat XP 500/PC)

Actors: Jopha, 4 Priestesses, 4 Town Guard

Motivation: Jopha wants to ensure he gets a reward for his map. If he is attacked, his children recruit some compatriots and ambush the party with the intent to punish it for harming their father.

Potential Outcomes

- Negotiate for the map (600 gp, or equivalent)
- Attack the man
  - ◊ Be defeated by the ambush
  - ◊ Defeat the ambush
    - Successfully negotiate with captain of watch
    - Unsuccessfully negotiate with captain of watch

Description:

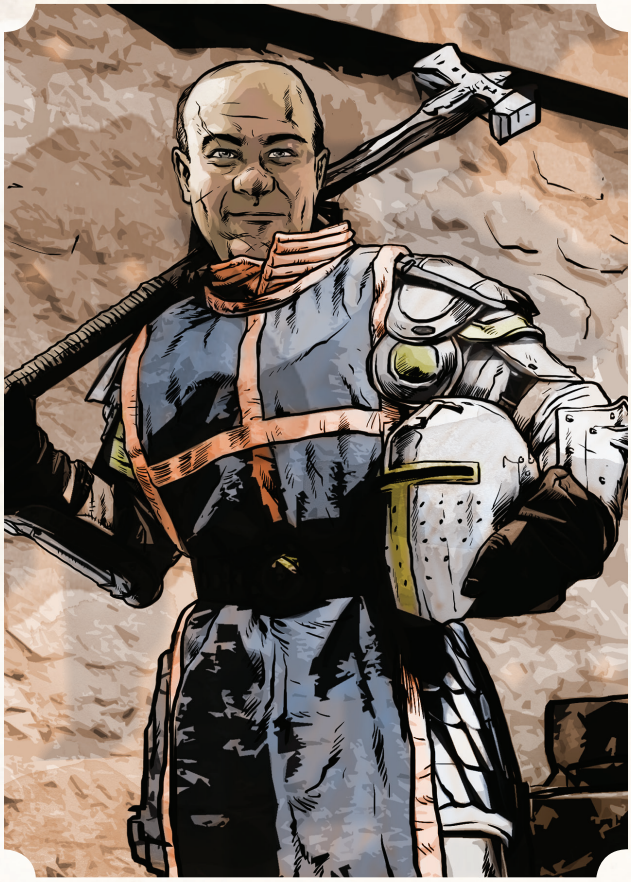
From Fredu's tale, the party may seek out Jopha. He is a fletcher and bowyer in Boldon. His home is a few blocks from his shop. During the day, he normally can be found in or near his shop; he makes his way from home to the shop between breakfast and lunch. (Use any shop map you may have for his shop.) At night he makes his way home about 8 pm after dinner and a couple of pints at the Knave and Mug, slipping out before the night gives way to drunken revelry. Jopha is a shrewd businessman and tries to see the angle in any offer. If the party follows up with him about what Fredu told him, he admits he heard the story and took notes. When asked if he made a map, he is evasive at first, but information about him asking Fredu to verify accuracy of the map will wear him down. He is not inclined to share the map. He is planning on organizing his own expedition of locals to go into the temple and loot any treasures they may find. This makes the idea of the party exploring the temple before him unattractive.

Follow-up:

The party might be able to convince him to share the map:

- Convince him that they will not (or cannot) carry off all the treasure.
- Convince him to give them the map for a share of the treasure.
- Convince him to sell the map.
- Use intimidation, force, or threat of force.

If the party uses force to get the map, Jopha is a trivial conquest; however, his family will come after the party and attack it. His family includes his son, a sergeant of the town guard, and his two daughters, both priests, and some of their friends. The attack will occur at a location of the GM's choosing, and depends on what tactical maps you have and want to use.



Qrquito Finy, Captain of the Watch for Boldon

There will be some form of consequences for entering combat with town guards, even in self-defense. The local command will see the bruises, the bodies, signs of a struggle, or the guards will cry foul to the local command. The players can probably roleplay their way out of an investigation if they can prove they were attacked by the guards; however, since this attack is provoked by attacking an elder citizen, it shouldn't be trivial to roleplay through the issue. This investigation will be easier to explain away if it follows the encounter with the corrupt local command in Pinto, since the captain of the watch will have an easy time believing that these people went rogue attempting to vindicate Vyncis and might even be in collusion with him.

Watch Captain Qrquito Finy lives in Boldon and sees to all conflicts that are referred to him by the lieutenants of the eight communities. The lieutenants in each community are in command of the guards. Qrquito's job has become more procedural than commanding until recently. He is a retired paladin. He is in his early 30s, average height, bald with black, close-cropped hair on the back of his scalp while the top has given way to baldness, grey eyed, clean shaven, with a strong build. While he does not directly command the guards in any of the villages and manages largely ceremonial and investigative roles, he is not a slouch and is a very capable combatant in formation, with a party or in a duel.

Monster Stats: 4 Town Guard, 4 Town Priests (***See Bestiary***) 2600 **XP**
Town Guard (4): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 18; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 1; **HP** 12; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 1; **XP** 100 SA/AD
See Bestiary
Town Priest (4): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 4; **THACO** 17; **ATK** 1d6; **HD** 2; **HP** 24; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 2; **XP** 225 SA/AD
See Bestiary

Kriel the Sage and His Translation

(Roleplay Focused Encounter, Non-Combat XP 500/PC)

Actor: Kreil, a sage and high-level wizard

Motivation: Kreil craves knowledge. The books, scrolls, and papers in the temple interest him—not the gold.

Potential Outcomes:

- Kreil is enticed to supply the information
- Kreil is attacked
  - ◊ The party is defeated
  - ◊ The party is victorious

Description:

Kriel is a sage who lives in Boldon. He finds the courts of Lagduf and Meawold far too loud, distracting, and useless. Moving to Boldon has magnified his productivity many fold, even with the delays of having information transported from Lagduf and Meawold to Boldon using existing trade caravan schedules. Kreil is secretive, even a touch paranoid.

The room where Kriel receives visitors is small and a bit spartan. His home is much different. Accessing the home from the reception room requires specific knowledge to open the door. If Kriel is attacked, the room could be their tomb.

He traded a few casks of ale and wine to Fredu for a lambskin parchment that had some writing on it. The parchment is in a nearly lost language from the First Age of Man, a coded language used by the spreading cult of evil that nearly toppled the kingdoms of the First Age of Man.

Kreil, Sage and Retired Battlemage

Naturally, the code was used to keep their communications from prying eyes. Kreil needed over a dozen books and scrolls and the better part of a season to translate. The parchment contains the directions for opening a secret door, not "real" knowledge. However, he is wise and realizes the party values the parchment, and will extract a good price for it from the party. There are things the party can offer Kreil in trade for the parchment translation:

- A significant amount of gold/share of the treasure (2,000 gp or a full share)
- All documents, scrolls, and books found in the temple would go to Kreil exclusively

Follow-up:

To help increase their desire and raise their offering, he will reveal to them that the door these instructions open leads to the temple treasure room and is the shortest path in the temple to the main altar. The operating of the secret door is quite complicated. To figure out the door's operation might take a lifetime. There are a total of 400 controls, each with 2 positions, leaving 1.1 trillion possible combinations. (Think of the map room in Raiders of the Lost Ark, but with four times as many holes in the floor.)

Brute force against Kreil is not suggested. He was a powerful wizard before retiring to the courts of Meawold.

Combat with Kriel:

If the characters use force against Kriel, they will discover they have poked the bear. Kriel's home is protected with permanent wards. Their effects:

- Kriel can cast any spell, and the effects will be confined to the room or blast out the windows and exterior door.
- With a gesture, cloudkill can fill the room.
- With a gesture, the room falls under darkness.
- In the room, casters other than Kriel take a penalty of 2 to attack rolls and spell DCs.
- Kriel resists bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

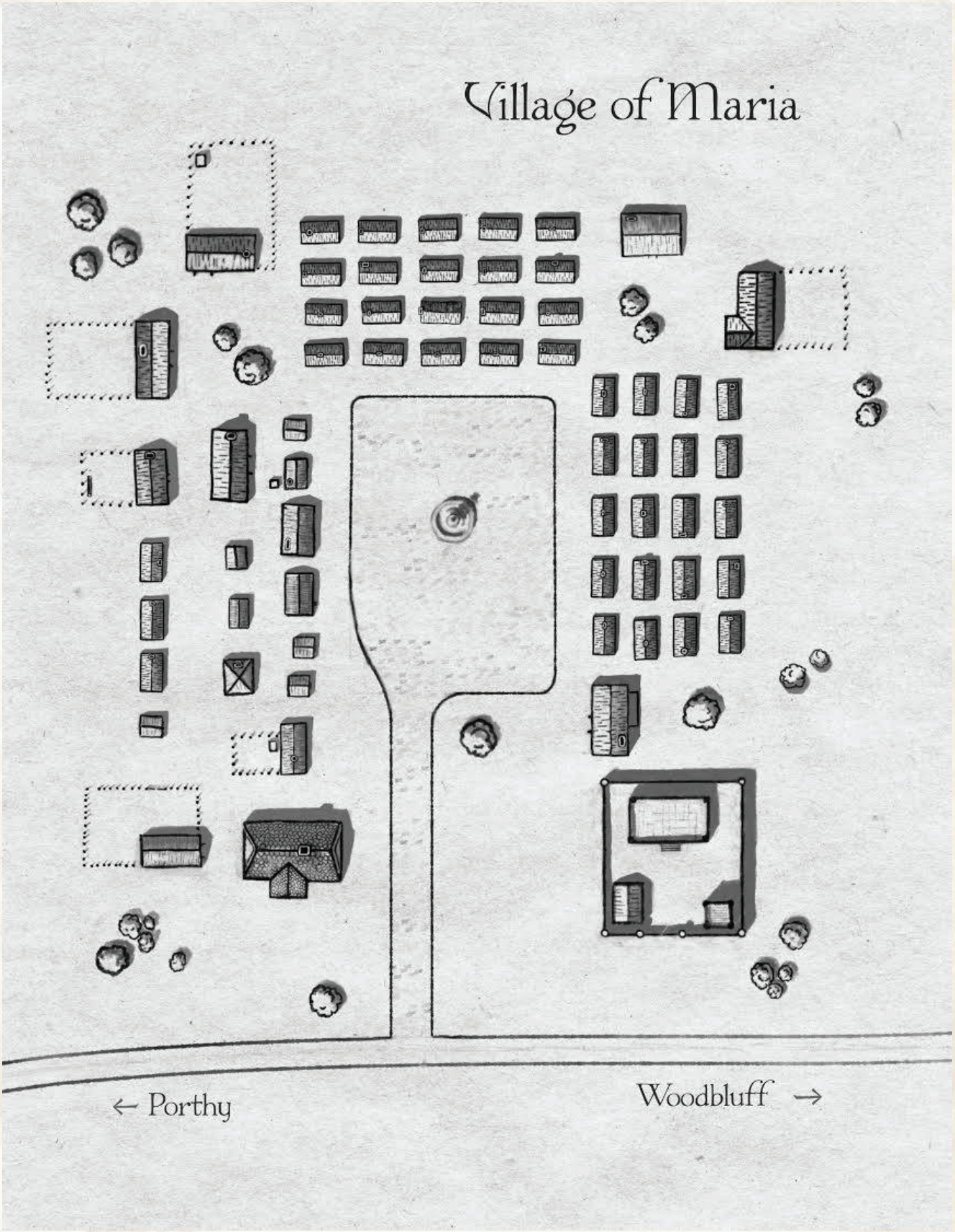
Kriel is exempt from the above effects, and Finy knows the password to make himself exempt as well.

Monster Stats: Kreil (Level 10 Wizard) (3900 XP)
Kreil: Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8; **HD** 9; **HP** 72; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 9; **XP** 1900 SA/AD ***See Bestiary***

Managing Available Healing

In your campaign, you control the healing available to your players. This is normally done via adjusting the availability of potions, potion making supplies, hireling healers, and town healers (including resurrection services).

This is a challenging adventure, and you might need to adjust your typical healing availability accordingly. How you do so is up to you. The Sumer encounter is one place that you can make adjustments. The number of potions available, and the number of potions Saraq gives the party for its help might not be the same quantity listed. Adjust as you see fit. The only right answer here is the one that is right for your game.


Village of Maria
← Porthy
Woodbluff →

Village Encounters

Looking for Fredu – Maria

(Roleplay Focused Encounter, Non-Combat XP 600/PC)

Actors: Fredu, potentially 16 drunken men

Motivation: Fredu doesn't want to recall the details; they might bring back the nightmares. He will discuss the memories if motivated by the players.

Potential Outcomes:

- Fredu supplies the information without force
- Fredu is attacked and his fellow drunks come to his aid
  - ◊ The party is defeated
  - ◊ The party is victorious

Description:

As the characters investigate, they figure out that they have the instructions to open a secret door in the temple, but have no idea as to its location. Fredu is the only non-cultist alive who knows the location of this elaborate secret door. As he told Jopha and Thamas his story, Jopha didn't make note of where the parchment was found, or which room contained the elaborate floor-to-ceiling carvings that moved. Unfortunately, Kreil's translation does not include the location of the door either. The party members may conclude they need to find Fredu and ask him about the location of the room.

This door leads to the room where the cult stores treasure they acquired from the ruins and their efforts to take over the region through regular ritual sacrifices. The room is the short path to the statue room. The statue is the key to the advantage that the cultists have in battle against the players. Destroying or desecrating it will end their advantage and make conquering the temple an easier task.

Fredu hasn't talked about the temple in detail for almost two years. He is reluctant to do so. Fredu is satisfied with drinking himself to death slowly, and forgetting the temple. The temple has a consistent and terrifying dressing. Knowing which room hides the secret door will be a huge help, but it is not the kind of door that can be operated easily. The mechanism is so complicated that without the directions, the door might take a lifetime of research to open.

Follow-up:

Fredu has moved to Maria to try to work a couple of odd jobs to maintain his drinking without resorting to begging. He is living in a small room attached to the main tavern in Maria, The Unicorn's Alehouse. He is normally found sober, working in the tavern, cleaning up and washing mugs. When he is in his room, he is drunk or blacked out. At work he is coherent. The most likely place for the party to talk with Fredu is in The Unicorn's Alehouse. Use any tavern or inn map that works.

Offering Fredu some coin to maintain his drunkard lifestyle, curing him of his alcoholism and what is essentially PTSD, and reasoning with Fredu are all ways to coax him to reveal the location. If the party starts the 30 days of Lesser Restoration, Fredu will feel better immediately, but it will take finishing the full 30-day treatment for the cure to be permanent.

Fredu has been inside the temple since the party last met him, and he has seen this door first-hand. The agent's control of Fredu wavered a bit when they entered the aura for the first time and the agent basked in it. During this time, the agent portion of Fredu failed to keep him completely in the dark until he pressed the first tile. Fredu's reaction to the tile moving snapped the agent back into the moment, and he resumed full control of Fredu. Those memories of the reception room are all that remain from the event.

The bartender, Jennavieve, is tall and powerfully built with jade eyes and long curly hair. She keeps to herself until the party gets rough with Fredu, then she will call down the thunder.

If the party resorts to force or violence to coax the location out of Fredu, 16 other drunks join the fray, and the party finds itself facing a mob of drunks. The drunks are a great opportunity to inject some humor into an otherwise serious and dark adventure. Feel free to use the optional abilities listed in their stat block to add some levity.

Monster Stats: 16 Town Drunks (***see Bestiary***) (3600 XP)
Town Drunk (16): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 8; **THACO** 18; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 1; **HP** 12; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 1; **XP** 100 SA/AD ***See Bestiary***

Vyncis, Captain of the Pinto Guard

Pinto and the Map

(Combat Focused Encounter)

Actor: Thamas, Vyncis, 4 Town Guards

Motivation: Thamas wants to live and not be extorted by Vyncis. Vyncis wants to maintain his power base and accumulate wealth.

Potential Outcomes:

- Vyncis defeats the party
- Vyncis is defeated

Description:

At some point, the characters may travel to Pinto to see if they can learn what Thamas knows about the location of the temple. From Fredu's tale, Thamas, the bartender at The Jester's Hall, was present when he exchanged a detailed telling of his tale of the temple for a large amount of ale, beer, and other alcohol. Since stumbling into that cave, Fredu has been firmly in the drinking cycle: passed out, hung-over, drinking, drunk. He traded his story for more booze after exhausting his savings and selling everything he had of value.

When the party finds Thamas, he is no longer in possession of the map to the temple that he drew while Fredu told him and Jopha about the horrors he saw in the temple. He refused to pay protection to the leader of Pinto, so he was visited by enforcers who bashed his home to splinters then took everything of value. Thamas can be convinced to tell the party how he came to lose the map pretty easily. It is in the possession of the local captain of the guard.

The captain of the Pinto guard, Vyncis, has a total of four guards (Level 4 fighters) in his office and antechamber. Two of them flank him in his office; the other two are in the outer room. He is a proficient soldier as well. If a fight breaks out, the two in the outer room will join during round two, on their own initiative(s). The party could bribe Vyncis for the map and avoid bloodshed, but his price is high, say 1,500 gp. (Which should be painfully expensive to the party; if not, adjust the amount until it is expensive.) Vyncis would take some convincing to lower the price or give the map to the party without significant compensation. (Set the DC high enough to require an 18–20 on the die to meet it.)

The outer office is small, about 10' x 20', and furnished with a small table with a pair of chairs for the guards and six more chairs for people waiting to see the leader. The inner office is twice as large, 20' x 20', with a nice desk, a nice chair for the leader, four chairs in two ranks of two facing the leader for those wishing to meet with him, and two chairs behind the leader where the guards sit. The guards stand next to their chairs whenever someone is in the office with Vyncis.

They are vigilant whenever there are visitors in the room. Perhaps this is a reaction to the significant ill will Vyncis has generated with his corruption and organized protection racket since being posted here.

The Boldon captain of the watch, if shown evidence of Vyncis's protection racket and other corruption, will not prosecute anyone for attacking Vyncis.

Use any building tactical map that works for you; don't forget to adjust the room description accordingly if you do so. There will likely be no consequences for attacking this local garrison. Vyncis is corrupt and unsubtle; the villagers will come to the defense of the players if the GM has an investigation reach the party. This may have a positive influence if this event precedes a violent encounter with Jopha's children in Boldon. However, if that encounter goes poorly and precedes this one, there will be an uphill struggle to convince the watch captain that this was another bout of self-defense against a rogue or corrupt element of the local watch.

Attack on an Old Man Outside Sumer

Monster Stats: Vyncis, 4 Town Guard (***See Bestiary***) (2600XP)
Vyncis: Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 2d10x2; **HD** 7; **HP** 100; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 8; **XP** 900 SA/AD ***See Bestiary***
Town Guard (4): Human SZ M; MV 30'; AC 8; **THACO** 18; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 1; **HP** 12; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 1; **XP** 100 SA/AD ***See Bestiary***

Sumer and the Herbalist

(Neutral Encounter, Non-Combat XP 500/PC)

Actors: Saraq, his 13-year-old daughter Helia, 12 longshoremen from Sumer

Motivation: Saraq and his daughter want to survive and help people. The longshoremen are transferring their grief to an attack on an old man.

Potential Outcomes:

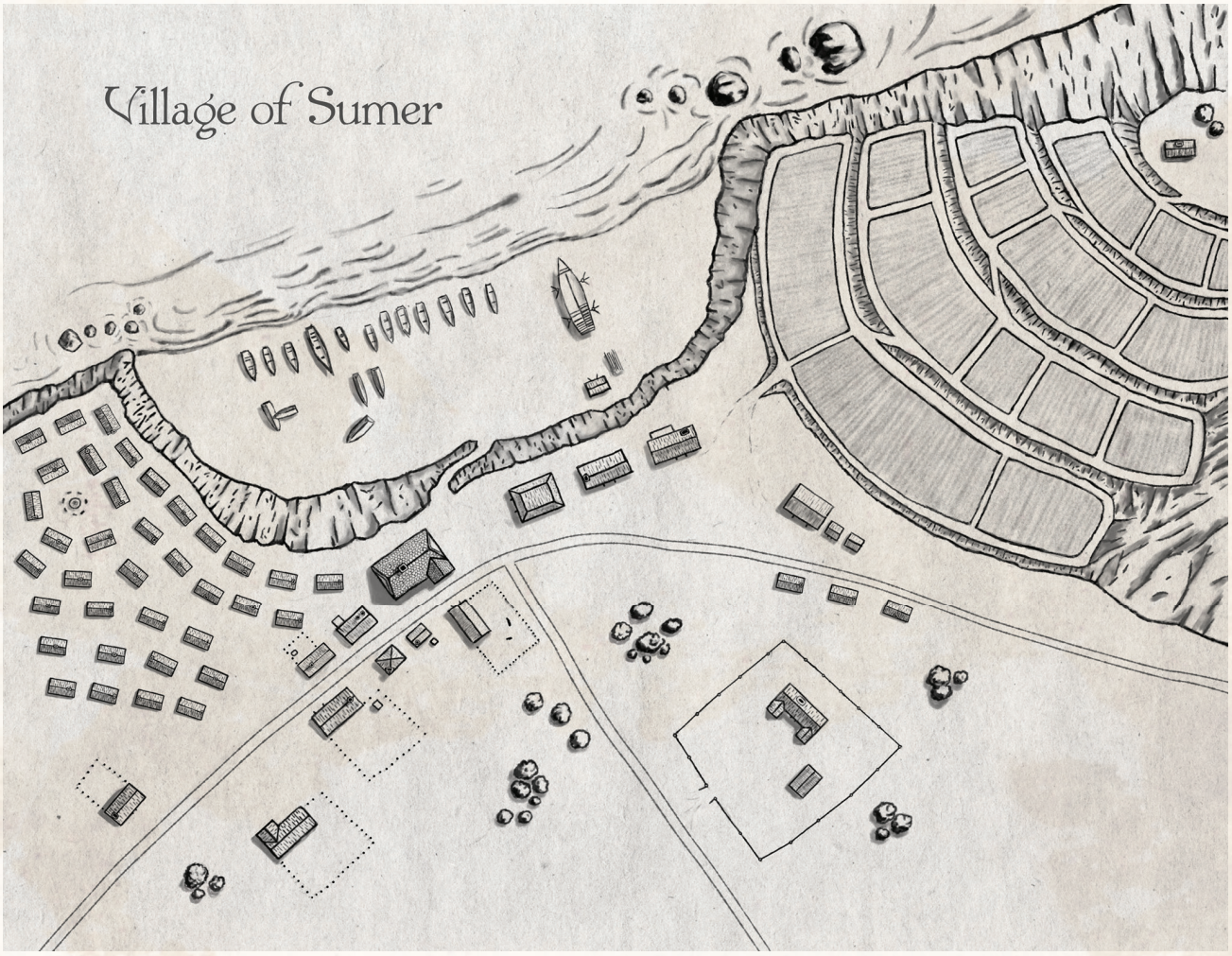
- If the character aids the men in the attack on the old man and he lives, they will have a long road ahead of them to convince him to sell even one potion to them, and if he does, it will be at an excessive markup.
- If the characters kills the old man, then they have effectively painted themselves into a bit of a corner. His daughter Helia is not yet skilled enough to brew a healing potion.
- Potions can be sourced from Lagduf with a 5–7 day turnaround, a total supply of 10, and a 300% markup due to the transportation expenses.
- The characters might be able to hire a level 3 cleric from the local clergy (GM's discretion), but will need to be viewed as more hero than thug locally, and provide some financial support for the church.
- If the characters uses force, they will find their welcome in Sumer icy, but no one will directly confront the party over the assault as long as no one is killed.

- If any of the men are killed, the captain of the watch in Boldon, Finy, will be called to intervene, and the party will need to talk or buy its way out of being charged with a crime. Sumer will be hostile to the players, but no violence will occur. Saraq will be blamed for the death(s) and will eventually move to Woodbluff. (Using violence as a default tool has consequences.)

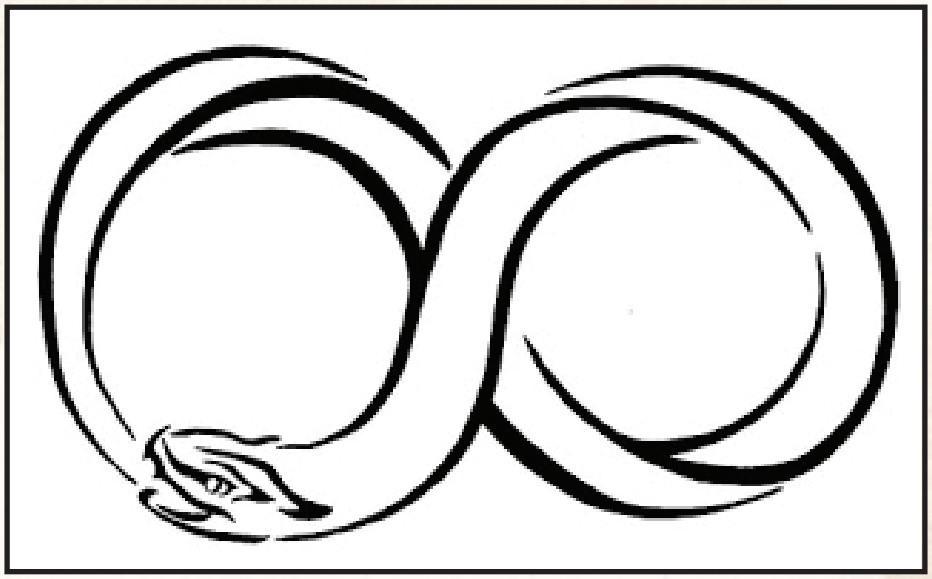
Description:

The party tries to restock its supplies in Boldon and is unable to find any healing potions. All of the villages have people proficient in the healing arts; however, only Sumer has someone who can brew potions. After asking around in Boldon, the party is advised to seek Saraq in Sumer. Saraq moved to Sumer about a year before. Many people can tell the party he moved to Sumer in hopes the salt air might help his daughter breathe more easily.

At some point the party may travel to Sumer, a large fishing village on the coast that is about 11 miles northwest of Boldon. Within a mile of the village, the party will encounter an old man and his young daughter (about age 13) being harangued and assaulted by 12 men with what appear to be quarterstaves. The men chant "murderer" at the old man as they strike him about the back, legs, and head with their staves. As he tries to run away, he is tripped with a staff roughly shoved between his ankles, and the round robin assault begins anew. The characters know they are headed to see an herbalist in Sumer, and that he is an old man with a young daughter who moved from Boldon to Sumer. Could this be the man they seek? Is it just an old man who is being drummed out of town for a crime?



Seaside Fishing Village, Sumer



Hastur's Symbol, Infinite Snake

Follow-up:

The old man is the herbalist potion brewer and the men are attacking him for unjust reasons, but this will not be immediately apparent to the players. One of the attackers lost his wife recently after the herbalist gave a cure. Turns out the cure was delivered too late and the man's wife was too far gone to survive. As no good deed goes unpunished, the husband's friends convinced him his wife died because the herbalist is a fraud, the husband's friends convinced him his wife died because the herbalist is a fraud, not because he waited over two weeks to seek treatment for her illness. If the party aids the old man by word or deed, he will reward them with his entire supply of healing potions (4–9 of them depending on what is appropriate for your game and the party's current supply levels, or d6+3).

Should things get out of hand, the captain of the watch, Qrquito Finy, becomes involved; defense of innocent life is acceptable. Killing 12 men will require some silver tongued justification, or a suitable stack of coin.

The twelve men, a mixture of longshoremen types and fishermen (with their crude staves) have a poor chance to harm the old man, hitting only on a roll of18+; however; the old man has 9 health remaining, and his daughter has 4 health total (currently she is unharmed). Both the old man and the young girl are unarmored, and cannot make any attacks or effectively defend themselves.

The area where the encounter occurs is near a crossroads between the path from Boldon to Sumer and the path from another fishing village and one of the farming villages. There are some trees and rocks within range of the crossroads to provide cover or concealment. Use any crossroads map you desire for this encounter.

Monster Stats: 12 Longshormen (use stats for Town Guard, but do not use minimum damage of 1, treat a roll of 1 as no damage.) (1,200 **XP**)

Longshorement, Modified (12): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 8; **THACO** 20; **ATK** d4-2 (see above); **HD** 0; **HP** 6; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 1; **XP** 50
SA/SD: do not use minimum damage of 1, treat a roll of 1 as no damage.

Finding the Temple

There are a few ways that the party can find the temple of Hastur and confront the growing threat to the peaceful farms and fishermen of the Boldon region. The temple was initially discovered by Fredu, and his tale led to a map being drawn that leads to the location. Since Fredu's discovery of the lost temple, Cyne has been seduced by Hastur to reawaken the cult. Cyne has brought the rosters to 40 members, so there is enough foot traffic for the characters to find the entrance if they do not have a map. The entrance is in the rocky region between Boldon and Pinto, marked on the region map with a church icon.When the earthquake happened, a shelf of rock almost 2 miles long (10,000 feet) with about 40 feet of displacement opened up along a line that separates Maria from Pinto.The farmland near the upheaval is largely unusable.

Pinto Mission

The temple location is indicated on the regional map. The region is the scene of most of the upheaval from the earthquake. Following that map will lead the party within line of sight of the rough cave entrance that Fredu followed to the original entrance of the lost temple. Once the party leaves the road, the terrain is rough and the land lawless. Movement rates are halved, and the chance for random encounters is increased.

Clues and a Wilderness Search

The information supplied by Fredu is enough for anyone with tracking abilities to find the temple entrance or signs of cultist patrols, which will lead to the temple entrance. The temple is indicated on the region map. Finding the entrance will take quite a while. The GM should roll 3 checks per hour on the Regional Random Encounter Table below (with 1 on a d6 generating a random encounter). The minimal time to reach the cave entrance is 2 hours; add 1 hour (and 3 wandering monster checks) for each failed tracking check.

Regional Random Encounter Table

3 checks per hour, select encounter from table

1. Bandit Captain (MM 344, cr 2) and 15 x Bandit (MM 343, cr 1/8); 825 xp
2. 4 x Will-o-wisps (MM 301, cr 2); 1,800 xp
3. 2 x Cult Fanatics (See Bestiary, cr2); 900 xp
4. 3 x Cult Fanatics (See Bestiary, cr2); 1,350 xp
5. 4 x Swarm of Poisonous Snakes (MM 338, cr 2); 1,800 xp
6. 4 x Giant Elks (MM 325, cr 2); 1,800 xp

The Temple Delve

Dungeon History:

The dungeon was created by Dwarven craftsmen as a commissioned job over 2,000 years ago. It was taken over and dressed for worship of Hastur about 1,500 years ago, sealed by wizards over a millennium ago, and exposed by an earthquake and partially restored by new followers of the cult over the last few years.

Dungeon Walls: Superior Masonry (DC 20 to climb. Curtains will fall if climbed). The walls have been engraved with geometric patterns as crown molding and baseboard decorations. Ceilings are typically ten feet high. Most walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling heavy woolen theatre curtains. (They absorb almost all noise and resist fire, save versus fire DC 6 due to an enchantment.)

Dungeon Floor: Flagstone

Temperature: Slightly cooler than typical room temperature, but not so cold as to affect the party.

Air: A breeze pulses in and out of the temple, synchronized with the surf coming in and out along the coast. This air comes through passages too small for anyone to travel.

Illumination: Well-lit by magic at regular intervals. All rooms are well-lit unless otherwise noted. Player actions might alter this.

Random Encounters: There are, at the start, 40 occupants of the temple grounds. All but five of them are in the encounter areas. The remainder are running errands and might be encountered when using the **Regional Random Encounter Table**.

Additionally, groups move within the temple regularly. If a random encounter is called for, pick a group from an encounter area and have the party encounter it while moving through the temple. Examples of this could include:

- The party has a random encounter in Area 10: a group is headed from Area 13 to the kitchen (Area 8) for wine (or the opposite if they are returning with wine).
- The party has a random encounter in Area 5: a patrol from Area 11 has just returned and is heading to check in with the head priest, Cyne.

Any group can be potentially encountered randomly if the situation calls for it.

Room 1–Reception Room

This room is 15' x 20'. The walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling heavy maroon curtains with simple contrasting yellow stitching. Behind the curtains, the walls are covered in deeply engraved elaborate geometric patterns in 1'x1' grids. On the north wall, the center of each square foot pattern has a 2-inch square section that can be pressed about 2 inches inward. The wall has five panels, each with fifty squares. The middle panel is a secret door, and the center sections do not respond when pressed inward. The remaining panels are the operating mechanism to the secret door. A specific combination of pressed sections opens the door. There are trillions combinations. To try them all would take several lifetimes. No critical success or luck will help. Without knowing which panels to press, the secret door will not open. Otherwise the room is clean, non-descript, with no other significant features. No cultist has figured out that there is a secret to this puzzle.

No one is in this room.

Room 2–Hub Room

This is a 20' x 15' hub of the main temple. It connects the various parts of the temple to each other including prayer rooms/cells, kitchen, dining area, preparation room, and the other parts of the temple such as the entrance and the reception rooms. It is adorned like the bulk of the temple with floor-to-ceiling deep maroon woolen curtains that have bold yellow contrast stitching. There is a low table below a mural that holds a collection of cult artifacts. The mural depicts the old god Hastur devouring the soul of a victim, casting his lifeless husk aside. The artifacts are small fetishes of Hastur: a copy of their prayer book, some ritual daggers (dull because they are symbolic, not actual sacrificial tools), some small stone cubes that might be dice without pips, and a bowl full of runes for casting.

There is no one in this room.

Managing the 5 Minute Adventuring Day

If the players take too many rests, have the action come to them. Give each rest a 50% chance of being disrupted by a cultist attack. The attacks might be just enough to disrupt the Long Rest. Use a die to determine which hour of the rest the attack comes, with a 1 representing the 4th hour of the rest, i.e., the party takes an 8 hour rest, the attack will occur on hour d4+3. This will ensure the rest is ruined for recovery purposes and hopefully inspire the party to keep moving forward.

Another option is to have each rest advance the cultists' plot a step or have another citizen abducted or killed. See the section "What Happens Next" for more details.

Room 3–Cultist Quarters

This room, 15′ x 20′, is a prayer room and residence for four cultists. It contains four bedrolls, four prayer rugs, an incense burner, several bundles of incense, and a book of prayer. The walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling heavy curtains, maroon with simple contrasting yellow stitching. The room, like all the prayer rooms, is a bit spartan. If they are sleeping or praying, the weapons, armor, and other effects of the cultists are in a bundle at the side of each cultist. When awake and not in prayer, the cultists have their possessions stacked next to their neatly rolled bedrolls.

What the cultists are doing (d20)

1–5	Out on patrol
6–12	Sleeping (surprised)
13–17	Praying (surprised)
18–20	Lounging about the room (surprised)

Due to the curtains and their focus, it is likely the cultists will be surprised, then attack.

Monster Stats: 4 Cult Enforcers (2800 XP)
Cult Enforcer (4): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 2d6 x2; **HD** 4; **HP** 48; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 4; **XP** 350 **SA/SD** ***See Bestiary***

Special Note for Locations 4 and 5

During nighttime, the cook and assistant will be encountered in Location 5–Kitchen, and caught by surprise, either busy working or asleep. During the day, the cook and his assistant are active, cleaning the dining room (Location 4) when not in the kitchen (Location 5) preparing meals, cleaning, or otherwise tending to the needs of the kitchen. They will normally be taken by surprise. The table below can be consulted to determine what these two people are doing and where they are located.

d12	
1–4	Sleeping (Location 5)
5–9	Working in kitchen (Location 5)
10–11	Cleaning the dining area (Location 4)
12	The entire temple staff is dining (Location 4). The party hears the din, and has adequate warning.

Monster Stats: 1 Enforcer of the Old God, 1 Cult Soldier (2700 XP)
Enforcer of the Old God (1): Demon **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 15; **ATK** 4d6; **HD** 8; **HP** 72; **INT** Average; **AL** CE; **LV** 2; **XP** 1,000 **SA/SD** ***See Bestiary***

Cult Soldier (1): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8x2, 1d6; **HD** 5; **HP** 40; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 350 **SA/SD**

See Bestiary

Room 4–Dining Hall

This room, 40′ x 25′, is the dining hall for the temple. While working on the temple grounds, all meals for the cultists are taken here. A bench is placed against the south wall and runs its length. Four 8′x4′ tables are placed end to end aligned with the south wall, a foot or so from the bench. On the east and west walls, in the corners formed with the south wall, are benches designed to seat two people. On the north wall, stacks of benches straddle the doorway, each designed to seat four people. The built-in bench seats over 25 people. The combined tables seat 24–30 people per long side and two on each end. The cultists take their midday meal together as one body.

See **Special Note for Locations 4 and 5** for information about who may be in this room.

Room 5–Kitchen

This room, 20′ x 30′, is the kitchen area. This is not a typical kitchen. The cultists are fed via "Summon Food and Water" spells and served wine. This room stores tableware, serving ware, wine glasses, and casks of wine. Additionally, there are 3 tables for summoning and plating the meals. Lastly, the cook and his assistant bed here when not working.

See **Special Note for Locations 4 and 5** for information about who may be in this room.

Room 6–Cultist Quarters

This room, 25' x 20', is a prayer room and residence for four cultists. It contains four bedrolls, four prayer rugs, an incense burner, several bundles of incense, and a book of prayer. The walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling heavy curtains, maroon with simple contrasting yellow stitching. The room, like all the prayer rooms, is a bit spartan. This is a room with four cultists preparing to patrol the temple. They will not be surprised and will attack the party on sight.

Optionally, the room could be empty, and the cultists could return from a patrol as the party begins to rest. This is up to the GM to decide.

If the GM wishes to have the cultists not preparing for a patrol and behave like other cultists in their rooms, use the table from Room 8 to adjudicate what they are doing.

Monster Stats: 4 Cult Fanatics (2700 XP)
Cult Fanatic (4): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 2; **HP** 24; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 225 SA/AD
See Bestiary

Room 7–Cultist Quarters

This room, 25' x 20', is a prayer room and residence for six cultists. It contains six bedrolls, six prayer rugs, an incense burner, several bundles of incense, and a book of prayer. The walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling heavy curtains, maroon with simple contrasting yellow stitching. The room, like all the prayer rooms, is a bit spartan. The bedrolls are rolled neatly with the other effects stacked next to the roll while the cultists are on patrol.

There is no one in this room.

Room 8–Cultist Quarters

This room, 20' x 25', is a prayer room and residence for four cultists. It contains four bedrolls, four prayer rugs, an incense burner, several bundles of incense, and a book of prayer. The walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling heavy curtains, maroon with simple contrasting stitching of yellow. The room, like all prayer rooms, is a bit spartan. If they are sleeping or praying, the weapons, armor, and other effects of the cultists are in a bundle at the side of each praying cultist. When awake and not in prayer, the cultists have their possessions stacked next to their neatly rolled bedrolls.

What the cultists are doing (d20)

1–5	Out on patrol
6–12	Sleeping (surprised)
13–17	Praying (surprised)
18–20	Lounging about the room (surprised)

Most likely, the cultists will be surprised, then will attack. Otherwise they are on patrol.

Monster Stats: 4 Cult Enforcers (2800 XP)
Cult Enforcer (4): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 2d6 x2; **HD** 4; **HP** 48; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 4; **XP** 350 SA/AD
See Bestiary

Room 9–Training Room

This room, 40' x 30', is used by the cultists to maintain their martial and casting skills. It has some targeting dummies along the west wall and some mats to soften falls taken while practicing combat skills in the middle of the floor. There are some training weapons on a rack along the south wall. They are of little to no value, inflict no lethal damage, and in combat will break after 2–4 hits.

The five monks in this room train all of the cultists to be stronger, faster, and more lethal. They will rarely be surprised (1 on a d10 if rolling, or something crafty if roleplaying). They will attack the party as soon as they see an enemy of the cult.

If using tactical combat style rules, all but the outermost 5 feet of the room is covered in pads that double movement costs as if it were difficult terrain. The monks sleep in this room.

Monster Stats: 5 Cult Monks (2,250 XP)
Cult Monk (5): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 2; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8x2; **HD** 2; **HP** 24; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 2; **XP** 225 SA/AD
See Bestiary

Room 10–Cultist Quarters

This room, 25' x 20', is a prayer room and residence for two cultists and the second in command, Rancent. He is Cyne's lieutenant and the most dangerous melee combatant. It contains three bedrolls, three prayer rugs, an incense burner, several bundles of incense, and a book of prayer. The walls are covered in floor-to-ceiling heavy curtains, maroon with simple contrasting yellow stitching. The room, like all the prayer rooms, is a bit spartan. If they are sleeping or praying, the weapons, armor, and other effects of the cultists are in a bundle at the side of each cultist. When awake and not in prayer, the cultists have their possessions stacked next to their neatly rolled bedrolls.

What the cultists are doing (d6)

1–2 Sleeping (surprised)

3–4 Praying (surprised)

5–6 Lounging about the room (not surprised)

Monster Stats: 2 Cult Soldiers, Rancent (3900 XP)

Cult Soldier (2): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8x2, 1d6; **HD** 5; **HP** 40; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 350 SA/AD

See Bestiary

Rancent: Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 2; **THACO** 13; **ATK** 1d10+6x2; **HD** 71; **HP** 90; **INT** Above Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 7; **XP** 900 SA/AD

S***ee Bestiary***

Room 11–Ritual Room

This 25' x 20' room is used to store the mundane items of the cult's victims and the dusty husks left behind from the sacrifices. It contains personal items from all of the victims. The husks crumble to dust within a few days. The room is thick with dust.

Cyne, Priest of Hastur

Room 12–Ritual Room

This 20' x 25' room is used for some kind of ritual outside the main temple. There is a large runic circle on the floor. A DC 25 Religion check will reveal that the circle is used to test the cultists to ensure they are pure.

For OSR gameplay, any caster will recognize this as a runic circle and that stepping within will trigger something. Those with a deep knowledge of religion will recognize it as something designed to harm those aligned with good and to a lesser degree those who are neutral in their leanings. Only an expert in ancient religions would be able to directly discern that this is a testing circle, but the party may deduce that from more general knowledge.

Other than the runic circle drawn in chalk on the floor, the floor-to-ceiling maroon woolen curtains with the yellow contrast stitching, and the magic light sources, there are no other furnishings in the room.

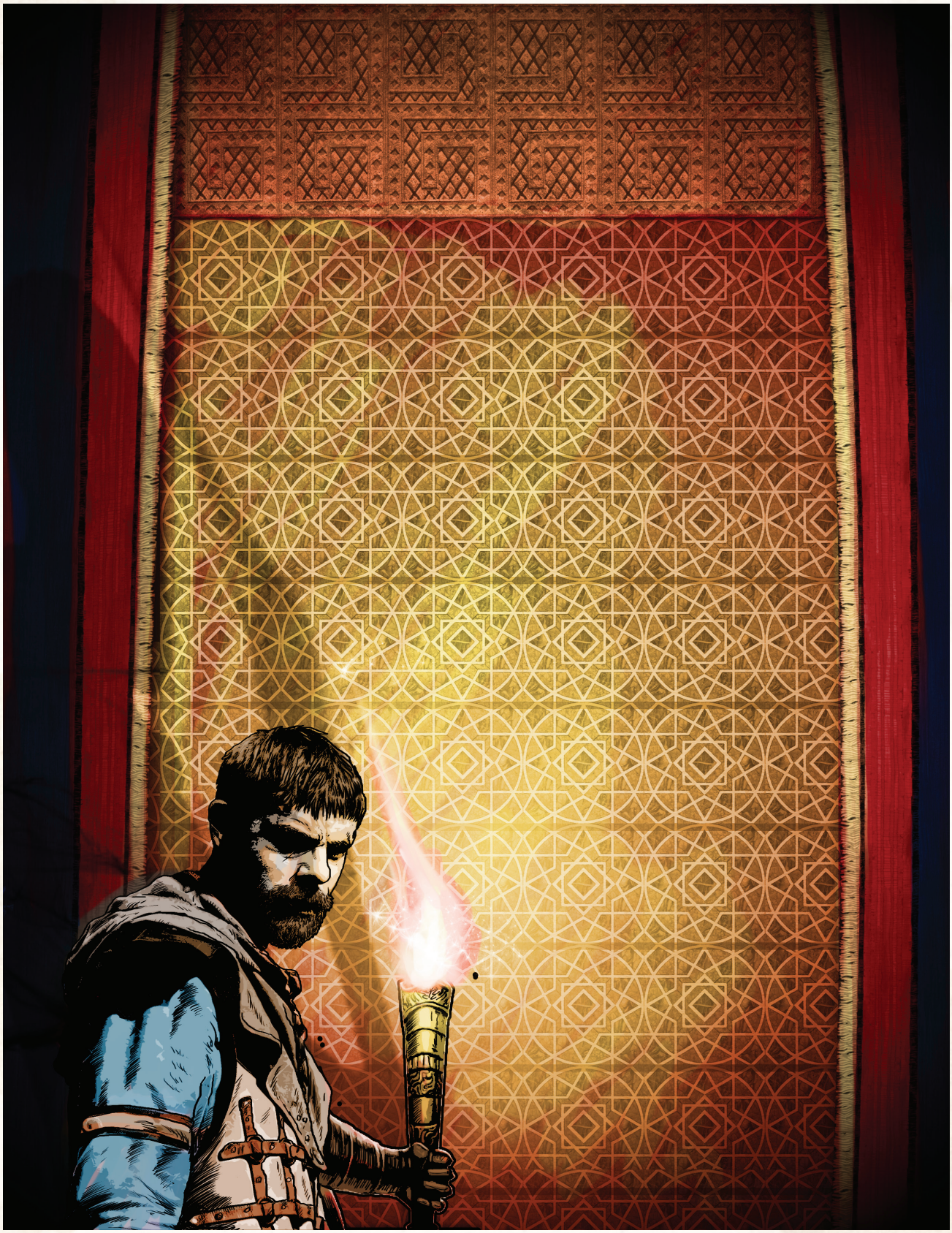
Good-aligned characters who enter the circle take 6d6 necrotic damage. Neutral characters take 4d6 necrotic damage. There is no saving throw.

Room 13–Preparation Room

This room, 20' x 25', is the preparation room where cultists transition from the general temple grounds to the altar room. Cultists purify themselves with three basins of clear, foul smelling liquid and two braziers of incense smoke before donning their temple robes and entering the temple. Two large jugs of each of the clear liquids and two large bundles of incense (one herbal and one heady) are stored in the southwest corner under a maroon sheet. One basin each of the three clear liquids sits on a table along the east wall. One brazier of herbal incense and one brazier of a heavy, heady incense frame the table on the east wall. Fifty temple robes hang on hooks along the north wall.

Cultists sweep the heady smoke of the southmost incense burner, then dip their arms to their elbows in the three liquids before finally sweeping the herbal incense smoke over themselves, donning their robes, and entering the altar room. While the alcohol might produce a cooling or stinging sensation depending on the state of the skin where it is applied, the water will result in almost no sensation, and the hydrogen peroxide might bubble a bit, the chemicals are actually harmless. The party should not be told what the chemicals are, and discovery should be entertaining.

There is no one in this room.



Art Missing from the Original Adventure

Opposing Page: Puzzle Room

Left: Monks Training

(Any likeness to Alex Kammer is an accidental tribute)

Below: Treasure Room with Haunting Art

Room 14–Altar Room

"At the farther end was a high stone dais reached by five steps; and there on a golden throne sat a lumpish figure robed in yellow silk figured with red and having a yellow silken mask over its face."–H.P. Lovecraft, The Dream-Quest Of Unknown Kadath

This room is 50' x 50'; the ceiling is 20' high and has over a dozen crystals about the size of a human foot embedded in it as well as another two dozen holes for more crystals (40 in total). It is the main altar room. During ceremonies, the priest goes to a pedestal in the treasury to get the Book of Hastur and displays it on a stand near the altar. The passage from the chapel to the treasury is not hidden by curtains, merely framed by them. In the middle of the north wall rests a very large statue of Hastur sitting on a throne. At his feet, two rings are set into the base with staples, presumably to secure sacrifices. The statue of Hastur rises 12' on a stone dais five steps above the floor. It weighs nearly a ton, and radiates a sickeningly evil aura. A 3' high altar, clearly used for a large number of humanoid sacrifices, honors Hastur at the base of the dais.

The statue is emitting an aura of evil that the players can sense. Lawful or good-aligned players will take efforts to avoid the statue. (If in combat, double movement costs to move closer to the statue.) Lawful Good players will really struggle to get close unless their intent is immediate destruction.

The Book of Hastur has pages of lambskin, gilded hinges and lock, and is covered in demon skin. (Think Necronomicon, only flashier.) While it is worth up to 3,000 gp, most good parties will likely opt to destroy it. Kreil would consider this a significant find and would pay 2,000 gp for it, if such information is not part of a deal for the translation of the lambskin parchment.

The floor is covered in large geometric shapes etched into the stone. There are no furnishings. In the middle of the south wall is a passage to the head priest's quarters (Area 15). This passage is obscured by the floor-to-ceiling sound-dampening curtains that line most of the rooms in the temple.

When not in use (which amounts to 22 hours a day), the room has three cultists (well, they look like cultists, two of them are enslaved demons who appear like human cultists) who are tending to the room, cleaning it, and preparing the ceiling for more crystals. For an hour centered on each sunrise and sundown, the temple is full of 40 cultists and up to four sacrifices. Attacking then could be suicide. However, if the party members insist, let them do their best.

Toppling the statue will destroy it and end the aura of evil that empowers the cultists. (If toppled in combat, have the effect end at the start of the next combat round.) While the statue is intact, all cultists have an edge on all efforts against the party. (PC saves when attacked by cultists are with disadvantage, or cultist attack rolls have advantage.) When the statue is destroyed, the cultists lose advantage and revert to the +2 to all attacks and Save DCs (Linking–See Appendix).

It is possible for two people of average strength to put their backs against the wall behind the statue and push the statue over. A single person might be able to do it if they push off from the wall nearer the head, but that would require a DEX save DC 15 (For OSR Gameplay: roll below their DEX on a d20) to avoid taking 2d10 damage. Only in combat should a Strength check be required to topple the statue of Hastur. Out of combat, it is merely a matter of teamwork or exertion to accomplish.

Monster Stats: 2 Agents of the Old God, 1 Cult Soldier (2,900 XP)
Agent of the Old God (2): Demon **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 4; **THACO** 15; **ATK** 1d8 x2; **HD** 6; **HP** 60; **INT** Average; **AL** NE; **LV** 6; **XP** 550 SA/SD ***See Bestiary***

Cult Soldier (1): Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8x2, 1d6; **HD** 5; **HP** 40; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; **XP** 350 SA/AD ***See Bestiary***

Room 15–Cyne's Chambers

This small 20' x 15' room, off the altar room, is the quarters of the head priest of the cult, Cyne. Both ends of the 10' passage between the altar room and Cyne's private chambers are closed off with heavy, woolen floor to ceiling curtains. The chamber is not lavishly appointed, but it is comfortable. The room has a desk, a bed, a pair of storage trunks, a tall shelf holding books and scrolls, and a small table for mixing and concocting poisons. He is a true believer and feels that posh quarters are a sign of corruption.

He will not hear any fighting in the chapel unless it gets between the two sets of curtains that separate his room from the altar room or a spell/effect causes the curtains to be disturbed enough for him to hear. He will smile when first encountered, but will attack if the party does not submit. If the party submits, and agrees to join the cult, he will hold an initiation that will require a DC 20 Constitution check (For OSR gameplay: System Shock Roll) to survive. If the party joins the cult, the adventure is effectively over, and the characters become NPCs. There is no treasure in this room. All of it is in the treasury (Room 16).

Monster Stats: Cyne (3,800XP)
Cyne: Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 12; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 9; **HP** 72; **INT** High; **AL** LE; **LV** 10; **XP** 1,900 SA/AD ***See Bestiary***

Room 16–Treasure Room

This room is quite large, 40′ x 30′. It is the treasury. The walls are bare (no heavy maroon curtains here). Between the upper and lower engravings, the walls are adorned with five lovely tapestries. Small tapestries frame the doors in the east wall, and larger works adorn the north, south, and west walls. All five tapestries depict the heyday of the cult when they conquered various kingdoms in their quest to rule the world of men. The room contains:

- 600 cp, 10,000 sp, 2600 gp, 60 pp
- Ornate Silver Mirror set with hematite (250 gp)
- Ivory Necklace set with moonstone (250 gp)
- Silver Miniature (of a Tree) set with citrine (250 gp)
- Platinum Cloth Vest (250 gp)
- Tooled Leather Bracers (250 gp)
- Sable Gloves (250 gp)
- *Spell Scroll (Thunderous Smite)*
- 4x *Potion of Greater Healing*, *Potion of Climbing*
- A pedestal holding the Book of Hastur

Resolution

Conquering the temple, destroying the temple and killing the majority of the cultists will break the cult. The remainder of cultists, if any, will be tracked down and killed. The party will likely want to reseal the temple. This can be done in a number of ways.

- Magic (Arcane or Divine) can be used to collapse the tunnel, remove the defiled energy, and allow nature to reclaim the area.
- The party can pay laborers to fill in the tunnel with boulders and other large rocks, fill in the gaps with gravel, and mark off the area as forbidden. This method will take longer due to the dark energies that permeated the land.
- The party can come up with some crazy idea to collapse the tunnels by some other way.

Let them have some fun with this stage of the adventure. If the party is not comfortable resealing the temple, Lagduf or Meawold will send wizards and clerics to seal the temple for the good of the kingdom. The area will be shunned for a generation (three if not purified first) then once again forgotten.

The Mayor Tane of Boldon, will weigh the party members' intent, any harm they caused to the community, and any statement they would like to make before deciding their fate within the region. Count Gylip of Meawold will declare the characters heroes and reward them accordingly. However, the mayor of Boldon is more sensitive to any assaults on town guards, etc. and may feel the party are more villains than heroes. Gylip will pardon any sentence that Tane might hand down. However, the party members will no longer be welcome in the Boldon region if its mayor is overruled by Count Gylip. In addition to the rights to keep the contents of the cult treasury, he rewards the players with 1,500 gp each (adjusted to fit your campaign economy). If the party elects to try to come to some kind of middle ground with Boldon, Duke Bertio has shown all sides he is a wise man who balances all concerns deftly.

Reaction to the Party

The cultists will likely not hear the party due to the heavy curtains and the wheezing nature of what functions as their ventilation system.

If a cultist is able to run away and alert the others, no cultist will be surprised and they will all be ready for an attack; however, since they are expecting at most the town guard, and not a party of adventurers, they do not actively hunt down intruders. Their arrogance could be their undoing.

If one or more of the cultists who attack the party in the alley escape, then the reaction to the party will be much different. Add patrols of 4–5 enforcers regularly throughout the temple (encountered on a roll of 1 on a d6 when entering any empty room or corridor). However, if the cultists defeat the party during the attack in the alley, they assume they are not a threat to the temple.

Bestiary

Agent of the Old God

Challenge 4–1,100 XP

Demon **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 4; **THACO** 15; **ATK** 1d8 x2; **HD** 6; **HP** 60; **INT** Average; **AL** NE; **LV** 6; XP 550 **SA**: Soul Drink–if both claw attacks hit, take 2d8 damage, save vs. spells for half damage

5e Stats

- Medium fiend; NE; AC 16; HP 86; Spd 30 ft.
- DEX 17 (+3); CHA 20 (+5)
- Skills: Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Persuasion +9, Stealth +7, darkvision 60 ft.
- **Damage Resistance—**Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons, cold, dire.
- **Shapechanger—**The fiend can use its action to polymorph into any S/M creature.
- **Claw (Fiend Form)—**Melee Attack: +5 to hit, Hit: 8 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.
- **Multiattack—**The fiend makes 2 Claw Attacks on the same target.
- **Soul Drink—**If the fiend hits with both claws during a Multiattack, the fiend drinks from their soul. 16 (2d10 + 5) psychic, DC 15 Con save for half damage. Max HP reduced by damage total until target finishes a long rest.

Cult Enforcer

Challenge 3–700 XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 2d6 x2; **HD** 4; **HP** 28; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 4; XP 350

5e Stats

- Human; LE; AC: 17; HP 40; Spd 30 ft.
- STR 15 (+2); DEX 14 (+2); Saving Throws +3
- **Multiattack—**Makes two greatsword attacks.
- **Greatsword—**Melee Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft.; Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Cult Fanatic

Challenge 2–450 XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 2; **HP** 24; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; XP 225 **SA**: spells: ***Command, Inflict Light Wounds x2, Shield of Faith, Hold Person x2, Spiritual Weapon***

5e Stats

- Human; Cleric 4; LE; AC 15; HP 38; + 6; Spd 30 ft.
- DEX 15 (+2); Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2, Perception +0
- **Fanatic Frenzy—**The fanatic has advantage on saving throws vs. being charmed or frightened.
- **Spells—**Spellcasting DC 17
- **1st level** (4 slots): **Command, Inflict Wounds**
- **2nd level** (3 slots): **Hold Person, Spiritual Weapon**
- **Multiattack—**The fanatic makes two melee attacks.
- **Dagger—**Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing.

Cult Monk

Challenge 2–450 XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 2; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8x2; **HD** 2; **HP** 24; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 2; XP 225

5e Stats

- Human; Monk 4; LN; AC 18; HP 40; Spd 30 ft.
- DEX 18 (+4); WIS 18 (+4); Saving Throws Str +4, Dex +6, Int +3, Wis +4.
- **Psychic Defense—**While wearing no armor AC includes its Wisdom modifier.
- **Multiattack—**Makes two unarmed strikes.
- **Unarmed Strike—**Melee Attack: +6 to hit; Hit: 7 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 5 (2d4) psychic damage. This is considered a magic weapon attack.

Cult Soldier

Challenge 3–700 XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8x2, 1d6 or 1d8; **HD** 5; **HP** 40; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 2; XP 350

5e Stats

- Human; Fighter 5; LE; AC 17; HP 48; Spd 30 ft.
- STR 16 (+3); Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2
- **Multiattack—**The veteran makes two longsword attacks, and a shortsword attack.
- **Longsword—**Melee Attack: +6 to hit, Hit: 8 (1d8 + 3) slashing or 9 (1d10 + 3) slashing .
- **Shortsword—**Melee Attack: +6 to hit, Hit: 7 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.
- **Heavy Crossbow—**Ranged Attack: +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., Hit: 6 (1d10) piercing damage.

Cyne

CR 8–3,900 XP

5e Stats

- Human; Cleric 5, Assassin 5; LE, AC 15 (studded leather); HP 128; Spd 30 ft.
- DEX: 20 (+5); CON: 14 (+2); Saving Throws Dex +9
- Skills: Acrobatics +7, Stealth +11; Resist Poison; Perception +4
- **Spells—**Spellcasting DC 18
- Cantrips: **sacred flame**
- Level 1 (4 Slots): **inflict wounds**
- Level 2 (4 Slots): **blindness/darkness**
- Level 3 (2 Slots): **spirit guardians**
- (Prefers to cast **inflict wounds** at higher level)
- **Evasion—** Per the Rogue Ability.
- **Sneak Attack—**(1/Turn) Per the Rogue Ability, extra 14 (4d6) of the same type damage as the weapon making the sneak attack.
- **Multiattack—**The assassin makes two mace attacks and one dagger attack. Or casts a spell and makes an offhand attack with poisoned dagger.
- **Dagger—**Melee Attack: +9 to hit; Hit 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage and taking 25 (7d6) poison damage, saving throw for half damage (DC15 Con).
- **Mace—**Melee Attack: +9 to hit; Hit: 7 (1d6 + 3) blunt damage, and taking 25 (7d6) poison damage, saving throw for half damage (DC 15 Con).
- **Magic Mace**–See Appendix.

Daughters of Jopha (Town Cleric)

Level 5 Cleric

5e Stats

- Human; LN; AC 16; HP 37; Spd 25 ft.; WIS 16 (+3)
- Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +4
- **Divine Eminence—**Bonus action, expend spell slot, melee attacks deal an extra 3d6 radiant damage on hit.
- **Spells—**Spellcasting DC 15
- Cantrips: **light, sacred flame, spare the dying**
- 1st level (4 slots): **cure wounds, inflict wounds, guiding bolt, bless**
- 2nd level (3 slots): **hold person, silence**
- 3rd level (3 slots): **dispel magic, spirit guardians**

Mace–Melee Attack: +4 to hit, Hit: 7 (1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

Enforcer of the Old God

Challenge 6–2,000 XP

Demon **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 15; **ATK** 4d6; **HD** 8; **HP** 72; **INT** Average; **AL** CE; **LV** 2; XP 1,000 **SA**: save vs spells or half of damage taken also reduces max hp until rested for a week, or affected by spell like Greater Restoration

5e Stats

- Medium fiend; CE; AC 15; HP 84; Spd 30 ft.
- STR 15 (+2), DEX 15 (+2); Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +5; Skills Perception +5
- **Damage Resistances—**cold, fire, lightning;
- **Damage Immunity**–poison; Senses: darkvision 120 ft.
- **Magic Resistance—**Advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.
- **Death Touch—**Melee Attack: +5 to hit; Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 20 (5d6) necrotic.

Kreil (Level 10 Wizard)

Challenge 8–3,900XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 5; **THACO** 14; **ATK** 1d8; **HD** 9; **HP** 72; **INT** Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 9; XP 1,900 **SA**: Spells: ***Magic Missile, Sleep, Shield x2, Blur, Ray of Enfeeblement x2, Fireball, Lightning Bolt, Vampiric Touch, Ice Storm x2, Evard's Black Tentacles, Coudkill, Cone of Cold***; SD Reduces damage taken from melee and ranged weapons by half

5e Stats

- Human, LN; AC 15; HP 71; Spd 30 ft.; INT 20 (+5); WIS 18 (+4); CHA 18 (+4)
- Saving Throws Int +8, Wis +7, Cha +7; Skills: Arcana +8, Insight +7, Perception +7, Persuasion +7, Stealth +4
- **Resistance—**Advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects. Resist physical damage

Staff–Melee Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (1d10 + 4) damage.

Spellcasting–Spellcasting DC 18; +8 Spell to hit

- Cantrips: **fire bolt, ray of frost**
- 1st level (4 slots): **magic missile, shield, sleep**
- 2nd level (3 slots): **blur, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement, scorching ray**
- 3rd level (3 slots): b**link, fireball, lightning bolt, vampiric touch**
- 4th level (3 slots): **evard's black tentacles, ice storm,**
- 5th level (2 slots): **cloudkill, cone of cold**

Rancent (Cyne's Lieutenant)

Challenge 5–1,800XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 2; **THACO** 13; **ATK** 1d8+6x2 and 1d6+4; **HD** 7; **HP** 75; **INT** Above Average; **AL** LE; **LV** 7; XP 900

5e Stats

- Human, Fighter 7; LE; AC 18; HP 90; Spd 30 ft., swim 50 ft.; STR 19 (+4); DEX 15 (+2); CON 16 (+3)
- **Saving Throws:** Dex +5, Con +6, Int +5, Wis +4; Skills Perception +7;
- **Blood Frenzy—** Rancent has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

Multiattack–Rancent makes two attacks with longsword and one attack with shortsword

Longsword–Melee Attack: +7 to hit; Hit: 12 (1d10+6) slashing.

Shortsword–Melee Attack: +7 to hit; Hit: 10 (1d6 + 6) slashing.

Town Drunk (Level 3 Rogue)

Challenge 1–200 XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 8; **THACO** 18; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 1; **HP** 12; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 1; XP 100 SA/AD ***See Bestiary***

5e Stats

- Human, LN; AC 12; HP 32; Spd 25 ft.
- **Multiattack—**Makes two melee attacks.
- **Improvised Weapon—**Melee Attack: +4 to hit, Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.
- **Improvised Weapon–**Ranged Attack: +4 to hit, range 10/30, 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.
- **Staggering Dodge—**After missing an attack, anyone attacking the drunk does so with disadvantage until the start of the drunk's next turn.
- **Moment of Coordination—**When the drunk hits a player for more than half damage, another drunk in melee range can use his reaction to attempt to knock the player prone. The attack succeeds if the player fails a DEX save.

Town Guard

Challenge 1/4–50 XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 18; **ATK** 1d6x2; **HD** 1; **HP** 12; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 1; XP 100

5e Stats

- Human, Fighter 3; LN; AC 17; HP 27; Spd 30 ft.; Skills Perception +2
- **Spear—**Melee or Ranged Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Vyncis

Challenge 5–1,800 XP

Human **SZ** M; **MV** 30'; **AC** 3; **THACO** 16; **ATK** 2d10x2; **HD** 7; **HP** 100; **INT** Average; **AL** LN; **LV** 8; XP 900

5e Stats

- Human, Fighter 7; LN; AC: 17; HP 112; Spd 30 ft.
- STR 18 (+4); DEX 14 (+2); Saving Throws: Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6
- **Multiattack—**Makes two greatsword attacks.
- **Greatsword—**Melee Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft.; Hit: 14 (2d10 + 2) slashing damage plus 8 (2d6) bludgeoning

Appendix

Magic Items

Book of Hastur

This book has pages of lambskin, gold fixtures, and is covered in demon skin. It radiates evil. While of significant value to those who study religion, arcane knowledge, or seek to protect the world from its evil, most good-aligned characters will feel more inclined to destroy it than to save it. It contains a number of evil rituals (the exact details are left to the GM) and a detailed history of Hastur and his plans to devour civilization and reform it in his own image. The book is a minor artifact. It is worth at least 3,000 gp to most collectors, maybe more if the person has a special interest.

Soulsmasher

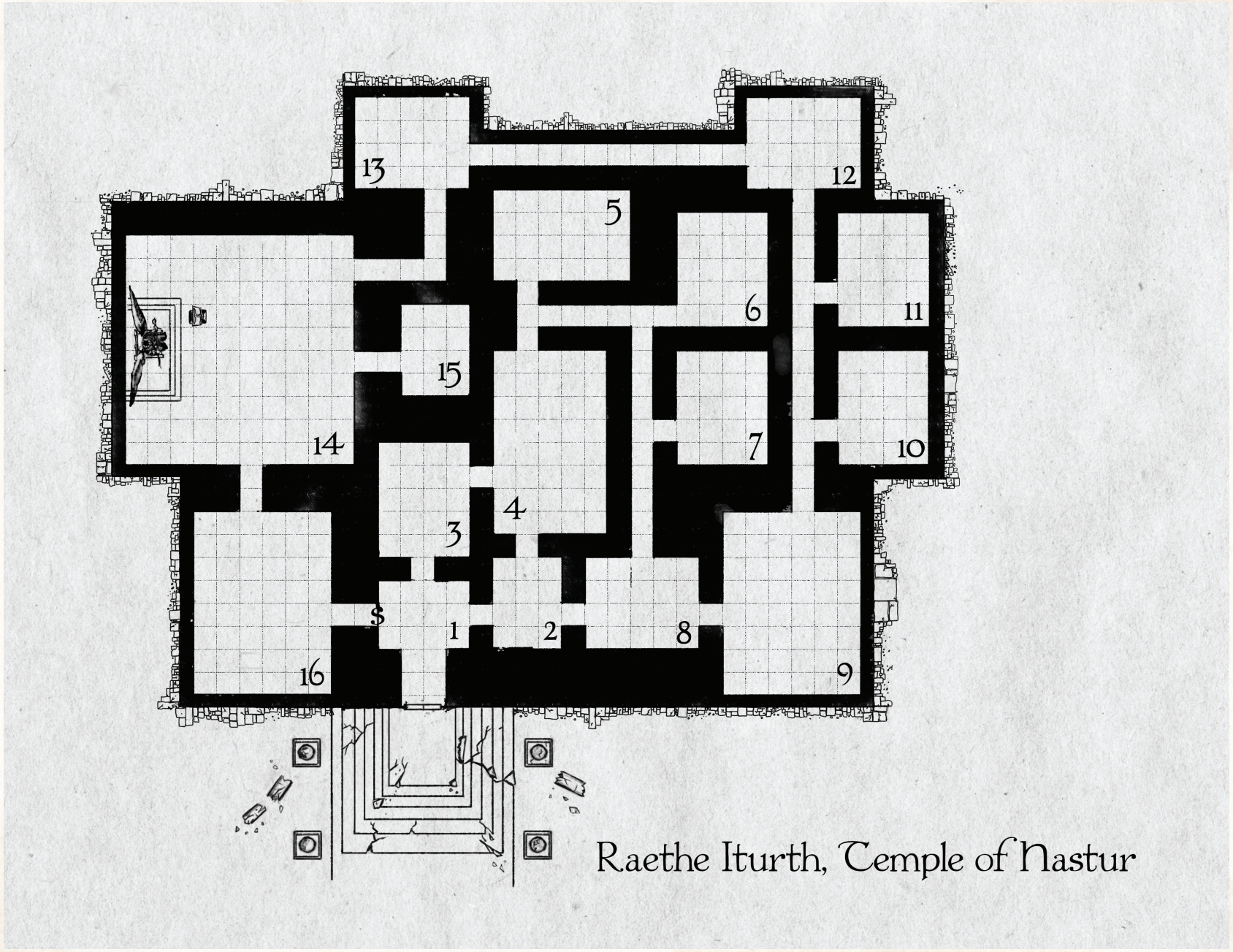
Hastur's temple held a treasure, a mace +2 that is imbued with his evil life force. This mace is black as night, reflecting almost no light. When it hits a target, the wielder can cast **Darkness** on any target he can see. When the weapon scores a critical hit, the wielder is healed for an amount equal to the damage dealt on the attack. This weapon radiates evil. Any good or neutral character who grasps it will suffer disadvantage on all attacks and actions until the item is no longer in contact with the character. If kept near the character for more than a day, the character will begin to suffer from exhaustion and will not be able to regain HP or Hit Dice during long rests. The mace has 40 charges. Each critical hit automatically consumes a charge when healing the wielder. The mace can only be recharged with a blood sacrifice of someone vitally important to the wielder. Over the expenditure of the last four charges, the wielder will come to know this.

Special Effect–Linking

The effect of the Aspect of Hastur on the world allows the cultists some additional abilities when outside the aura.

The cultists use their reaction to give an ally that they can see a +2 bonus to all attacks, spell DCs and saving throws.

Town of Boldon



Raethe Iturth, Temple of Nastur

The small town of Boldon, and its surrounding villages are afraid. Dozens of people are missing, some speculate lost to some nefarious purpose. A broken drunkard tells fantastic tales of an evil temple and the horrible things within. The rare few who know the legends and history of the region are beginning to think the dark times have returned; not seen since the fall of the first age of man. People are beginning to feel the icy fingers of fear closing in. The party becomes aware of these events, and is inspired to investigate. This leads them to a broken man who tells them a story of a lost temple. Has it been rediscovered by men seduced by its forgotten evil? The drunkard's tale leads to others who might help the party discover more before they face *The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil*.

DNH2

Fifth Edition Fantasy

Part Two of the
Haunting of Hastur Series

The Buried Zikurat

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Levels 6–8

The Buried Zikurat is an adventure for 3–7 characters level 6–8 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. It is optimized for the fifth edition and for 5 characters at level 7.

Dark Naga Adventures
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The Buried Zikurat

DNH2:
The Buried Zikurat

Dark Naga Adventures

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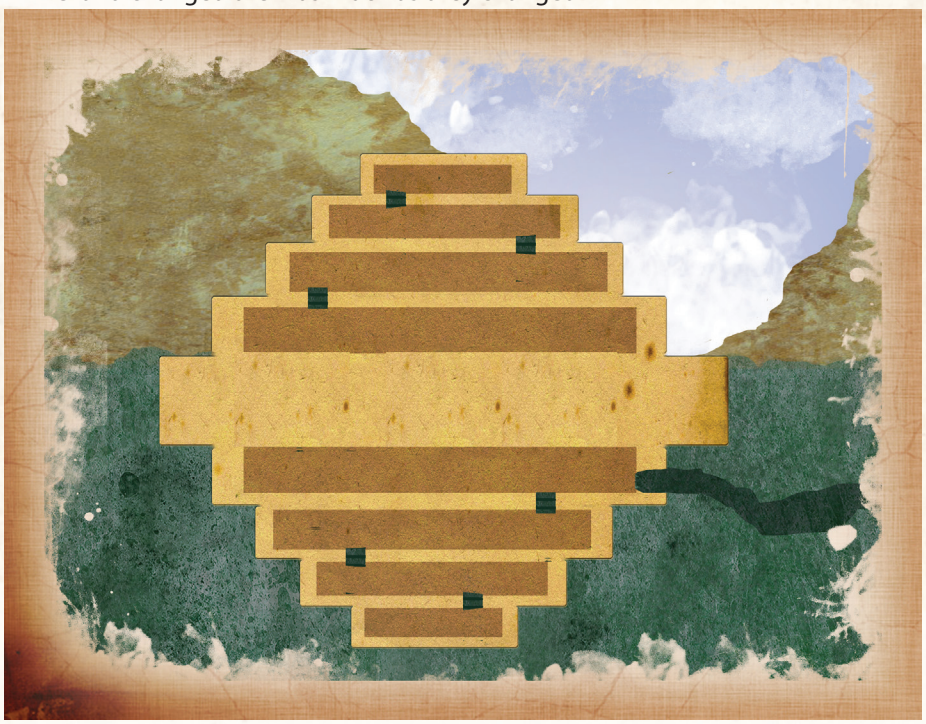
The Buried Zikurat

DM Background–An Atypical Adventure

Several thousand years ago, strong, light, and rare metals, adamantine and mithril, were found in the deep earth. This happened early in the First Age of Man; Man, Dwarf, Elf and Halfling learned to make spectacular weapons and armor from these new metals. The gear quickly became valuable due to its strength, durability and ability to hold enchantment. Man's thirst seemed unquenchable. One tribe of Elves, concerned that Man would destroy the subterranean realm in pursuit of the metals and minerals of the deep earth, moved into the Formene, elvish for "The Lands of Night", and negotiated with the native denizens to become wardens of the subterranean realm and its resources.

The new wardens adapted to their subterranean home, and became known as Formene Elves (commonly shortened to the Formene). The Formene used powerful wards and illusions to make every known entrance difficult to find, much less access. They balanced the closing of the Formene by creating trading Nexuses throughout the land. These Nexuses allowed controlled quantities of resources to enter the surface world while shielding the Formene from exploitation. At these locations, they traded goods, knowledge (mundane and arcane) and, rarely, services with the surface dwellers.

The land changed them as much as they changed the land. Over a century, the founders adapted to their new world. These adaptations changed their senses, their biology, and their relations with nature. Adapting to a world without sun made them strangers to surface elves, but allowed them to form the many native cultures of the Formene into a confederation of common interests, trade and eventually civilization, protecting them from future invasion. See Appendix 3: The Ecology of the Formene Elves.



Side View of the Trading Nexus

Fifteen hundred years ago, the cult of Hastur was poised to take over the lands of man. The Formene elves closed and secured the trading Nexuses, effectively sealing off the Formene from the surface. The Nexuses never reopened and were mostly forgotten when the First Age of Man ended a few centuries later. Some legends persist, exaggerated and distorted by the dark ages. Legends can rarely be trusted to be completely accurate.

During the intervening years, the Nexus near Caford was buried under a large sheet of clay due to regular, heavy seismic activity during the dark

About the Formene

The Lands of Night exist predominantly in the roots of mountains. The rock there produces large voids, caverns and other key elements necessary to have a vast subterranean civilization. The roots of mountains are rarely more than 80 miles wider than the mountain ranges and extend throughout the crust of the planet, an average of 30 miles thick. The continent of the Five Kingdoms has two large mountain ranges, along the east and west coasts, and three medium ranges, two of which are spurs of the larger ranges, and one that sits to the north of the west coast range. All of them are thought to host Formene kingdoms, and legends of tunnels connecting them abound.

ages between the First and Second Ages of Man. The sheet exceeds 100' in thickness and covers hundreds of acres on the west side of the Batun mountains. In this region, clay is mined for ceramic production. Two months before the adventure starts, the miners exposed a strange stone structure which was revealed to be a step pyramid (the trading Nexus). After a month of digging, and trying to discover the origins and purpose of the strange pyramid, the mining foreman sent a messenger to Meawold seeking help.

The Situation

There is little conflict in this adventure. It is more of an investigation than a treasure or monster hunt. In fact, this adventure has the ability to be played without bloodshed, which is rare. All doors within the Nexus are locked, some with mechanical locks, others with magic puzzle locks. For puzzle locks, a panel opens next to the door, and the party is presented with four to ten controls. The controls themselves vary from lock to lock. Within the adventure, these locks are symbolically defeated using challenges from the Book of Puzzles (BoP) or other suitable challenges. The BoP contains riddles, logic puzzles, math puzzles and cryptograms of varying difficulty for the players to solve. Solving them opens the locks. Within the game, each lock is opened by positioning knobs, buttons and sliders to the correct positions. If the challenge is answered incorrectly three times or the lock is attacked, a number of Nexus Guardians spawn from the lock and attack the party. The guardians have randomized special abilities. The abilities can be the same for all guardians of a given lock, or different for each guardian at the GM's discretion. See the Bestiary for a table of random special abilities.

The Nexus is presented with all puzzle locks in working order, and with the guardians appearing after three failed attempts. Changes to align the adventure with your party are encouraged. For those desiring more combat, for some or all of the locks, either allow only one failed attempt or have the locks attack the party immediately when triggered. The locks that act in this way have suffered from age degradation and think the three permitted attempts have been mostly or completely used up. If you, the GM, feel that pure logic puzzles are not a great match for your players, a change of this nature might alter the adventure to better suit their playstyle.

Throughout the Nexus the party finds, among the trading records, a number of opportunities for power, riches and exploration at the Formene capital city of Talos. At the base of the Nexus is a Formene elf named Sherin Po-thole who teleported here to both greet and challenge the party. He explains the lockdown and fills some of the gaps regarding the history. During the conversation he recognizes that the surface races have faced and defeated the forces of Hastur, and offers the party access to the Formene and the city of Talos. The city has determined it's ready to resume interaction with the surface. Sherin provides supplies needed to survive in the Formene and thus travel to and around Talos. Boots of the Formene, Cloaks of the Formene and Rings of Elvenkind will make expeditions in the Formene more survivable. Without these items, navigation through the Formene is nearly impossible for surface peoples. There are few landmarks, numerous hazards, and ferocious predators.

Player Background

If the party completed "The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil"

While the party is being celebrated in Meawold for their defeat of Hastur's Aspect in Boldon, Edmur, Minister of Internal Affairs for Meawold receives word of the discovery, and determines that his heroes of Boldon should be the team to investigate. He approaches them at breakfast one morning.

If the party is new to the "Haunting of Hastur" series"

A courier from Edmur in Meawold finds the party resting and enjoying life after an adventure and invites them to the Royal Court at Meawold. If they accept, upon arrival they are treated to the hospitality of the Duke and access to many of the splendors of Meawold before being approached at breakfast by Edmur.

Sage Alfred, Expert on First Age
Artist: Adam Schmidt

The Breakfast Meeting

Edmur finds the party at breakfast and holds a private conference with them. He tells the party that about two months ago, the clay miners near Caford discovered something in their mine. Over the course of a month, they excavated about 20% of a zikurat, or step pyramid, from the stone base to the top. During the excavation, they discovered what appears to be an entrance and the miners attempted to open this possible entrance, but their efforts were ended within an hour by the mine foreman, knowing that Meawold would prefer to send their own investigators. The foreman sent word to Meawold that they needed help with the next wagon train headed from the mine. Edmur is sending the party to be that help. He asks the party to travel to the Caford clay mines and undertake two major quests: Discover the origins of the zikurat and determine if it is a threat to Meawold. He offers each party member 1,000 gp and favored status within the Meawold Court.

He also advises the party to consult with Alfred, a jovial, witty sage with a penchant for sharing the sweets he makes. He can tell the party about two known zikurats. One is a temple; legends are unclear as to who the temple was devoted to and even more ambiguous as to the location. The other is mentioned in a partially destroyed scroll about a trading post in the Batun mountains where exotic goods were traded. The zikurat they are going to investigate could be either or something else...

From Meawold, Caford is a week's travel. From Caford, the step pyramid is an hour's ride or a two-hour walk. A letter of introduction from Edmur to the mayor of Caford, Altes, provides the party with sufficient authority to access the town, the strip mine and the surrounding areas.

About Caford

Caford is a mining town of about two thousand people. Only about ten percent of them are not active in mining operations. The biggest mine is the copper mine about an hour by foot to the north. The majority of people in Caford work there (eleven hundred), the balance either supports the town (one hundred) or works in the clay pit mine (five hundred). Like many mining towns, it has a boom town look, but has been a growing town for over a century. Minimal effort is invested in the town; all the energy is expended at the mines. Most of the accommodations are little more than flop houses with large common rooms, overpriced food, and watered down beer and ale. As representatives of Edmur, the party is given nicer accommodation, but nice for Caford, not nice in any absolute sense of the word. The local authorities are expecting the party.

The Clay Mine

The clay mine is a pit mine stretching about 250 feet by 500 feet in a rough rectangle and is about 130 feet deep. The miners have reached bedrock at the floor of the mine and have begun expanding the pit to the north. On the east face a wide set of ramps in a switchback configuration allow cart and wagon access to the floor of the mine. Scaffolding is used to ensure safety for those digging out clay. The southeast corner of the zikurat was discovered about two months ago. When it was clear that the smooth pale stone was not a large statue or a displaced stone block, they began digging out the zikurat to gauge its size. They have exposed about half of the zikurat. Only one potential entrance has been found. The top level has a section of stone that is a darker shade and appears to be a cover stone. While it resembles a cover stone, the miners had no luck moving it aside the one time they tried. No other entrances have been found (three of them are along the base on the north face, still buried under 125 feet of clay). The miners have set scaffolding to allow the party to access the top level and the possible entrance they have found.

The Entrance

The scaffolding leads to the upper level and the possible entrance. There are some tool marks where the miners have tried to open the zikurat. The entrance is a magical effect that is opened with a command word. It can be opened with magic that would open a lock set by a level 8 wizard, an Intelligence (Arcana) skill check (DC20) to probe the magic and extract the keyword, or via brute force (DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check). This will not destroy the entrance, only trigger an opening. The dark stone swings out from the bottom forming a covered deck. A short railing rises from the stone making a 20-foot square area for relaxation and allowing entrance into the upper level of the trading Nexus. The miners could fully expose the zikurat in about ten weeks of mining. If requested, they will agree to do so since it would have almost no negative impact on their productivity.

Quests and Milestones (Adventure Structure)

Major Quests (1,500 xp per player)

- Discover the purpose and origin of the zikurat
- Determine if the Nexus is a threat to Meawold
- (Bonus) Convince Meawold to enter negotiations to restore trading relations with the Formene by re-opening the Nexus

The first two major quests are given by Edmur; the bonus major quest comes when the party encounters Sherin Po-thole (Area 80).

Minor Quests (500 xp per player)

- Enter the Nexus
- Exit the Administrator's office using the teleporter
- Make the trading floor teleportation runes operational
- Use the Formene teleporters
- Discover the path to Talos

The minor quests are significant challenges on par with Medium Puzzle Locks. They are solved through exploration and from reading the letters, journals, and other lore in the Nexus.

Milestones (200 xp per player)

- Find the trading floor
- Discover there are levels below ground
- Enter the Formene Levels
- Discover Sherin Po-thole
- Report to Edmur

The Milestones are discoveries that mark the players' progress on quests. They are comparable to an Easy Puzzle Lock in difficulty and reward.

Arial View of the Mine

View of the Nexus from the Top of the Mine Artist: Z Mann Zilla

The Trading Nexus

The entire Nexus has been sealed for over 1,500 years. The upper levels are covered in 1,500 years of dust and magically lit unless noted otherwise. The lower levels are clear of debris due to magical custodians that maintain the area. They are also magically lit, but not as brightly. The name of this Nexus is Cafeld in common, Arlond in elvish. This information is found within the game at Area 1, Surface Administrator's Office.

All doors, desks, cabinets, etc. not identified as having magical puzzle locks are mechanically locked (DC 15 Dexterity, thieves' tools apply, or DC 20 Strength (Athletics) to open with brute force).

Magic Puzzle Locks

Several doors, and some desks, are locked with magic puzzle locks. These locks present as a projection in which the person attempting to open the lock must position a number of items to unlock it. In terms of game mechanics, these locks are represented as puzzles such as riddles, logic puzzles, and cryptograms. These can be found in the Book of Puzzles. There are twice as many puzzles of each difficulty level as there are locks to allow the GM to select options that are appropriate for the players. Any other puzzles or similar challenges can be substituted.

All locks identified as magical puzzles have the following qualities:

- The puzzle cannot be cleared with a skill check. Only solving a puzzle from the Book of Puzzles or defeating the Guardians will unlock it.
- Defeating a puzzle via solving the puzzle or destroying the guardians results in XP per the chart to the right.
- Attacking the lock (or what the lock is securing) will result in a number of Nexus Guardians attacking the party. Defeating the Guardians will defeat the lock. See table for quantity.

Administrator Genniver Challey and her kids.
Drawn by Epiccan, her husband.
Artist: Adam Schmidt

Puzzle Guardian and XP chart		
Easy Puzzle	1 Nexus Guardian	1,800 xp
Medium Puzzles	2 Nexus Guardians	3,600 xp
Hard Puzzles	4 Nexus Guardians	7,200 xp

Human Levels

The walls of the human levels are large stones placed adjacent without mortar. They appear magically placed (and were). Dwarves and others with a stone mason background will recognize this fact without need for a skill roll. The stones that compose the exterior walls, floor and ceiling are 5' cubes. The interior walls average a foot in thickness. The stones are anorthosite, producing a wonderful, light toned array of interesting patterns and also serving as a form of art in the Nexus. On the human levels, the teleporters are raised (by 3") runic squares, about 5' on a side, twisted 45 degrees relative to the floor blocks. In the center is a glowing area that indicates the direction: green for down, red for up. On the trade floor, the teleportation runes are pylons due to the additional energy required to move the cargo. A DC 10 Arcana check will reveal a conjuration aura for all of the teleportation runes that are not dead; even the pylons that are offline have the aura.

A4–Surface Administrator's Level

1–Surface Administrator's Office

Ingress/Egress: Teleporter to 8 (A3–Teleporter room), Activation password in room; Terrace to Outside–Enclosed in stone. Inside: activation password in room. Outside: DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check, or DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check to force open. Some spells can open it.

Description: 20'x20', 1 green (down) teleporter, desk, chest, chair with ottoman. Desk contains a journal and papers. Walls decorated with art from administrator's home, done by her children. This was the office of Genniver Challey, the woman in charge of the upper four levels of the trading Nexus. She was responsible for regulating trade, settling disputes and collecting trade fees from all activities on the surface levels. Genniver died over 1,500 years before present. Spending thirty minutes skimming the journal will allow an Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 15) or three hours reading it will reveal the command word for the terrace and the teleporter: "denaketya".

Players: This room contains a desk covered in scattered papers with a journal on top, an old wooden chest and a comfortable looking chair and matching ottoman. The inside cover of the journal contains a drawing of the Administrator and two of her children. The walls have faded drawings that look like they were created by children. There is a rune on the floor with a glowing green center.

Lore: History of the Nexus, and clues to the nature of the lockdown protections.

A3–Trade Support Level

2–Security Office

Ingress/Egress: Door to 3 (A3–Watch Staging Area)–medium puzzle lock

Description: 15' x 15', desk, hooks on wall for weapon storage. This was the office of Breda, the last head of security patrols on the surface levels of the Nexus. Walls hold a watch roster and three posters of *Personae Non Gratae*: Willeon Grythey, Simond Koerwe, and (something unreadable) Onweard. The watch roster is unreadable.

Players: On the wall are three posters that are mostly readable, and a faded page with a grid, but the contents are lost to time. A desk holds an incident log book.

Lore: Incident Log–One entry identifies an attempted break-in, their target was Area 4 (A3–Vault), identified by reference as the room with a shared wall.

3–Watch Staging Area

Ingress/Egress: Door to 2–medium puzzle lock, Door to 5–mechanical lock, Door to 6–mechanical lock, Stairs down to 11 (A2–Hallway)

Description: 15' x 45', three doors, stairs down, table with four chairs, hooks on the north wall for weapons, cloaks, etc., mostly empty. A ratty cloak closest to the west wall has a side view map of the Nexus within. This was where the watch gathered before patrols. A guard sat at the table here to filter people from direct access to the head of security and to monitor who came up the stairs. Guards used the table when receiving shift briefings.

Art from Genniver's Children
Artist: Jeremy Corff

Players: A table in this room has some scratches carved into the top by someone who was facing the stairs. A chair on that side shows the most wear. Ten hooks on the north wall are empty except for the westmost, which holds a cloak.

4–Administrator's Vault

Ingress/Egress: Door to 5 (A3–Watch Rest Area)–Hard Puzzle Lock

Description: 25' x 15', one door, locked chest, locked vault. Four pieces of art on the walls.

This area was used to store valuables. The door is locked with a magical puzzle. The chest is locked [DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools apply) check to open] and trapped [DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) to detect, DC 18 Dexterity (thieves' tools apply) to disarm, 3d10 necrotic damage, DC 16 Constitution save for half] and contains:

- 300 sp
- 800 gp
- 8 small pieces of tanzanite worth 100 gp each

The vault is locked with a hard magic puzzle lock and contains:

- bloodstone statuette worth 250 gp
- soapstone bird cage worth 200 gp
- jade mug with gemstone inlay worth 350 gp
- linen robe worth 250 gp
- fur stole with a gemstone pendant worth 150 gp
- soapstone set of animal figurines worth 300 gp
- *potion of frost giant strength*

The art on the walls is above average and worth an average of 100 gp each.

Players: This room is clearly a vault. There is one chest and one large safe remaining among signs of another half dozen being removed. The chest is about 2' x' 3' and 3' tall, with a flat lid. The safe is about 6' tall, 3' square at the base, and of sturdy metal construction. On the wall are four framed pieces of art depicting life in a different time or land.

5–Watch Rest Area

Ingress/Egress: Door to 4 (A3–Administrator's Vault)–hard magic puzzle lock, Door to 3 (Watch Staging Area) mechanical lock, Door to 7 (Private Meeting Space) medium magic puzzle lock

Description: 25' x 30', three doors, two tables each with four chairs, hooks on the walls, some cloaks on the hooks. This room was used by the watch to rest, prepare for shifts and prepare to go home (similar to a police locker room).

Players: There are worn hooks on the walls with extremely faded grease pencil letters over them, as if they might have been assigned to someone. Wooden tables carry abandoned mugs and a deck of cards. This might have been a gathering area.

6–Office of the Assistant to the Administrator

Ingress/Egress: Door to 3 (A3–Watch Staging Area)–mechanical lock, Door to 8 (Teleportation room)–hard magic puzzle lock

Description: 20' x 30', two doors, desk, chest

Hune, the majordomo of the Surface Administrator, worked here. The majordomo's desk has an appointment book and a journal.

Players: This room looks like an office. The desk is orderly; the chair was placed under the desk before the occupant left. A small, neat stack of parchment is held in place by a journal. An appointment book rests on the opposite half of the desk.

Lore: The journal discusses the reasons the Nexus was closed, confusion over why it was not locked down immediately, and the nature of the lockdown.

7–Private Meeting area

Ingress/Egress: Door to 5 (A3–Watch Rest Area)–medium puzzle lock

Description: 15' x 40', one door, locked cabinet, table with four chairs. This was a secure meeting place. All participants placed their weapons in the cabinet, and it was locked to ensure that the meetings, no matter how tense, did not end in bloodshed. The cabinet is empty. The locker is empty, but scratches show where long and short swords were likely stored within.

Players: The single egress and complicated lock on the door, accompanied by the weapon locker on the opposite side of the room, suggest that negotiations took place here. On a table sits a blue leather-bound book.

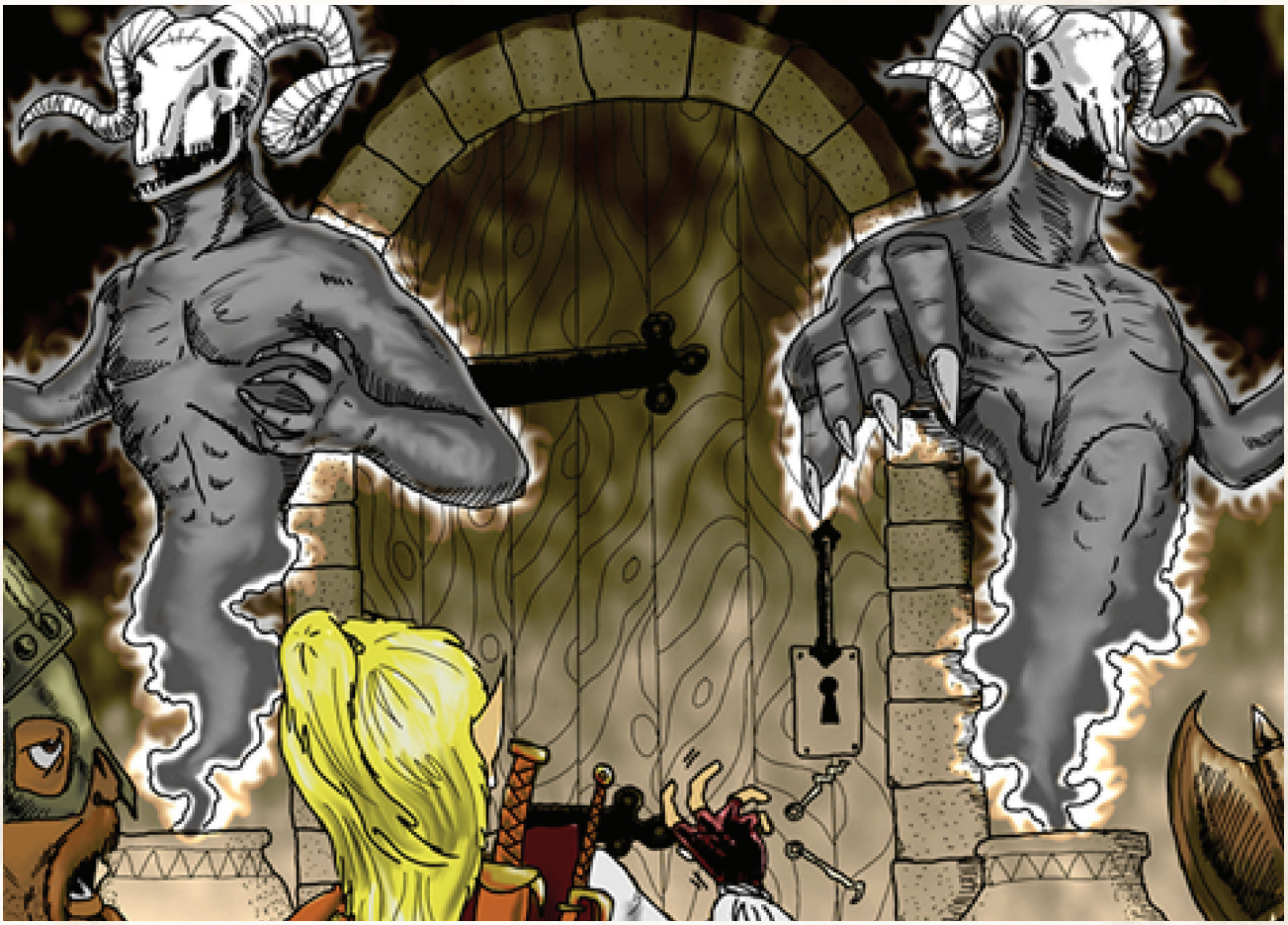
Lore: A journal from a guard and war vet on table discusses a Lost Caravan laden with treasures; it left the Nexus and never made it to Talos.

8–Teleportation Room

Ingress/Egress: Door to 6 (A3–Office of the Assistant to the Administrator)–hard puzzle lock

Description: 20' x 15', one door, two teleportation runes (one green, one red). The command words for these teleporters are not in this room. The red teleporter leads to 1 (A4–Administrator's Office). which is where the command word can be found. The green teleporter leads to 72 (F3–Teleporter Area). The command word for the green teleporter can be learned in 71 (F3–Office of the Assistant to the Formene Administrator).

Players: This room contains a pair of runes on the floor. One has a green glowing center, the other red.



A Magic Puzzle Lock Attacks - Artist: Z. Mann Zilla

A2–Trading Offices Level

9–Storage Room for Tool Merchants

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–mechanical lock

Description: 15' x 20', one door, four crates of hand tools. This was a storage room shared by some tool merchants. Excess inventory was stored here. The four crates contain wooden handled tools like hammers, hand axes, and wooden mallets. Since wood is not available in the Formene, surface merchants made a good living trading them to the denizens of the Formene.

Players: This room contains four open crates. Each crate contains about a dozen of one type of hand tools: hammers, hand axes, mallets and chisels. The wood handles are well preserved and the steel is still sharp. The lack of a desk or table suggests this might have been storage and not trade space.

10–Tool Merchant, Rewilh Alys

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–easy puzzle lock

Description: 30' x 15', one door, crate, display table. This room is where Rewilh conducted small trades and displayed samples for larger orders. She traded hand tools, particularly wood working tools, into Talos for a long time before the lockdown.

Players: The crate in this room contains nine hand tools with wooden handles: three mallets, three hand axes (the tool, not the weapon), and three hammers. The table is scratched suggesting tools might have been placed on it and picked up with regularity. The table has a note, folded into quarters with a hammer resting on it.

Lore: There is a note to self from Rewilh indicating that she overheard the gem merchant across the corridor telling his son how to deactivate the puzzle trap to the area.

11–Recorder's Office

Ingress/Egress: Open to area 13 (A2–Main Hallway)

Description: 15' x 30', open to adjacent area, large desk. This was an office used to record all goods taken into and out of the Nexus by the surface population. All of the vital records and the official seal were removed in preparation for the lockdown.

Players: The desk is empty of papers. There are a couple of dried up inkpots, a few quills, and some sealing wax.

12–Beer Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–mechanical lock

Description: 15' x 20', door, stack of three beer casks. This room was used by a beer dealer to sample wares and negotiate larger orders. The three casks used to contain three different beers, but today they are largely evaporated, and quite gross. Anyone brave enough to sample one will encounter the following flavors: vinegar, goat, and soured milk, and will need to make a DC14 Constitution save to avoid retching for 1d6 x 10 minutes (as Poisoned). Stirring them releases some noxious odors.

Players: This room has a heady smell of brewed drinks. The three casks have open tops. Each of them contains some liquid, but none are recognizable.

13–Main Hallway

Ingress/Egress: Stairs up to 3 (A3–Guard Staging Area), Stairs down to 30 (A4–Trading Floor, Outer Area), 14 doors (one to each room on this level) about half with mechanical locks, the balance with magic puzzle locks.

Description: 20' wide hall surrounding a 50' square inner office area with some offshoot areas in the NE, SE and SW corners. The NW corner contains a guard station for the watch, and the SW corner contains a table with three chairs at the landing for the stairs leading up from area 30 (A4–Trading Floor, Outer Area).

Players: The hallway circles around a central core. It links all of the rooms on this floor to each other and the floors above and below. A thin layer of dust uniformly covers the floor.

14–Spice Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A3–Main Hallway)–mechanical lock

Description: 20' x 20', small stack of sealed spice casks and a table. The merchant who worked from this office traded in surface spices: pepper, cinnamon, cloves, paprika, thyme and bay leaves—all spices not found in the Formene. The spices are all are stale, but not completely useless.

Players: The room contains several small casks and a table. On the floor and table, traces of cinnamon, paprika and some crumbling bay leaves are found.

15–Gem Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A3–Main Hallway)–easy puzzle lock

Description: 20' x 20', large desk. The desk contains two secret compartments: a false bottom in the upper left drawer and a false back in the upper right drawer. Both are empty. Inventory was kept in them. The main drawer contains a journal of Roguy Mynge.

Players: The room is empty except for a desk and its companion chair, which is knocked over on its back.

Lore: A cave with veins of tanzanite, a gem unique to the Batun mountain region, lies somewhere in the Formene.

16–Wine Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–easy puzzle lock

Description: 15' x 15', door, stack of three wine casks. This room was used by a wine dealer to sample wares and negotiate larger orders. The three casks used to contain three different vintages, but today, they are largely gone to vinegar, and quite gross. Anyone brave enough to sample them will encounter the following flavors: vinegar, goat, and soured milk, and will need to make a DC 12 Constitution save to avoid becoming dizzy and having their movement rate reduced by half for 1d4 hours.

Players: This room has a heady smell of fermentation. Three casks with open tops each contain some liquid, but none of the liquids look potable.

A Collection of Art from the First Age of Man - Artist: Z Mann Zilla

17–Tool Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–easy puzzle lock

Description: 15' x 20', table. This room is where Francis conducted small trades and displayed samples for larger orders. He traded hand tools, particularly metal working tools, into Talos for a long time before the lockdown. There is an enchanted sharpening stone on a table that will give any bladed weapon a +2 bonus to damage for a total of ten hits. The stone will affect four weapons before it is consumed. Also on the table is an unsent letter from Francis to a partner, Larissa.

Players: A table bears marks from heavy things being placed on it and picked up frequently. There is folded piece of parchment with a wax seal on the table held in place by an overrun of wax.

Lore: Letter, discusses plan to break into the Administrator's Vault and lists the erstwhile treasure within.

18–Grain Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–mechanical lock

Description: 15' x 15', bare. A grain merchant used this room to sample grains for larger orders. The goods that were not evacuated when the Nexus was abandoned were taken by people who looted the Nexus behind those who left when ordered. Careful inspection shows a mixture of rice and wheat grains along the east wall.

Players: This room appears empty.

19–Art Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–easy puzzle lock

Description: 15' x 20', large desk, ten canvases rolled, tied, and stacked in the NW corner.

An art dealer worked from this office. Some of the denizens that the Formene Elves watched over enjoyed human art and had the trade imbalance to afford luxury items. The canvases depict art from the height of the First Age of Man, which was akin to the Greco-Roman era of our history. The art is worth 300 gp per piece. They weigh 6lbs each.

Players: The desk here is empty. A stack of canvases in the northwest corner are tied with silk rope, three loops per canvas: each end and the middle.

20–Spirits Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–mechanical lock

Description: 15' x 20', door, chair. This room was used to sample hard liquor (whiskey, rye, etc.) for larger trades. There are marks on the floor where a desk was moved. The chair was nice, but has aged poorly.

Players: This room has one ragged chair near the far wall from the door. Scratches in the floor suggest something large and heavy was dragged through the room, perhaps a desk.

21–Spirits Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–mechanical lock

Description: 15' x 20', stack of six small barrels. The barrels contain the remnants of beer (three casks), wine (two casks) and rum (one cask). The casks were cheap, and the contents evaporated a long time ago. There is a residue remaining. If ingested, the residue will do 1d10 poison damage, DC 15 Constitution save for half. The residue can be used on a bladed weapon (or ammunition) to add 1d6 poison damage (DC 15 Constitution save for half) to a total of two weapons or ten pieces of ammunition. The poison lasts for four strikes of a weapon or one use of a piece of ammunition. Between two casks, Ernard left a letter to his partner.

Players: A stack of six barrels in this room are stacked three on the base layer, two on the layer above and one on the top. They are held in place with ropes tied in loops around the base. Between the center and left casks on the bottom row is a letter folded in half.

Lore: Letter discussing a test of the Nexus lockdown and how long it took to restore the Trading Floor Teleporters (Area 33A–D) to operation due to the need to adjust the stones at the base of the Teleporters; specifically, they must all be turned to align the base into a continuous loop.

22–Fruit Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–easy puzzle lock

Description: 15' x 20', four barrels. The barrels contain fungus that eventually starved. Disturbing the fungus results in a choking and sneezing fit and a 10 percent chance to develop a fungal infection of the lungs that prevents natural healing and requires a **Lesser Restoration** spell to cure.

Players: This room has a pungent smell that seems to come from a collection of four barrels.

23–Exotic Goods Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Door to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)–mechanical lock

Description: 15' x 30', large desk, chest. The desk and chest were emptied when the Nexus was closed. Neither is locked or trapped.

Players: There is a large desk and a chest, but no other furnishings.

24–Meat Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 13 (A2–Main Hallway)

Description: 15' x 20', large desk, book shelf. A man, Walton Intes, representing dozens of livestock farms and hunters operated here. Dried and other preserved meats sit on the shelf, remains of product samples. Beef, lamb, game, poultry, and some species of fish were traded by this merchant. The bits of jerky flex a bit when handled. The desk contains a letter.

Players: A book shelf holds about a dozen small objects smelling of salt and meat. They look like bits of salami and jerky. The top of the desk is empty.

Lore: Letter discussing life in the Nexus, and how weird Formene elves are compared to the elves he has seen before.

A1–Surface Main Trading Level

25–Trading Log Station

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Main Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 40', large desk, two crates, and a cabinet. This area was used to check trade caravans in and out of the trading floor, and direct them to their goods-specific stall until time for trade. The cabinet contains trade logs going back 50 years before the closure of the Nexus. The two crates are seized contraband, destroyed. The desk is empty.

Players: Two crates contain broken bits of wood and metal. A cabinet contains 50 large matching books (12" wide, 18" tall). A desk sits in front of the cabinet, its drawers slightly open.

26–West Trading Door

27–Central Trading Door

28–East Trading Door

Ingress/Egress: 3 doors to area 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area), 3 doors to the exterior

Description: 20' x 70', metal doors to the exterior will not open because the magic effect cannot create a path from them to air due to the thousands of tons pressing against the doors. If the doors were forced open, the tons of clay would result in a cave-in like event and would fill the passage and about 40% of the room with clay. The metal doors on the interior emit a persistent spell-like effect that tunnels through the stone wall to the exterior doors, similar to a **Passwall** spell. All of the doors are in a large room, which provided a buffer from the trading floor and the exterior doors. Red and green glyphs to the left of each door used to operate them. If pressed, the red glyph does nothing. The green glyph glows for about 5 seconds and goes dim again.

Players: The metal doors each have a pair of glyphs to their left: one red, one green. The red glyph glows; the green is dark.

29–Caravan Check-in

Ingress/Egress: Open to area 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 15' x' 20', desk, and 25' x 35', large desk, cask. Caravans checked in here and were assigned to the appropriate stall for negotiating trade. Almost all of the outer stalls were merchant stalls for negotiating trade. The stalls (Areas 31–32, 34–39, 41–43) all are open to the Main Floor Outer Area (Area 30).

Players: (29, 31-32, 34-43): These areas are open on one side and show significant traffic and wear under the dust.

30–Main Floor, Outer Area

Ingress/Egress: Stairs up to 13 (A2–Main Hallway), 3 Doors in the north wall lead to 26–28 (Trading Doors), opens to 16 stalls (no doors), surrounds area 33 (Trading Floor), which has a contrasting floor stone with flush teleportation runes.

Description: 15' wide walkway surrounds a 100'-wide square area, set of stairs up in the SW corner.

The hallway circles around the trading floor and the stairs to the level above.

Players: This area bridges the stalls and the trading floor. The interface between the corridor and the trading floor is demarked by a change in color of the floor blocks.

31–Grain Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', desk. Wheat, oats, and barley were traded here.

Players: There are small traces of various grains here.

32–Fruit Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', two barrels (empty). Citrus, apples, raisins, and other fruits were traded here.

Players: Small bits of dried rind can be seen.

33–Trading Floor

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area), teleportation runes to and from 51 (F1–Formene Trading Floor)

Description: 70' x 70' with a raised section (1' higher) in the middle 20' x 20'. Each of the four outer quadrants are 25' x 25' with a large runic perimeter and two teleportation nodes (3' tall, 2' diameter pylon versions of the teleportation runes seen in other parts). Each teleportation node has a ring of stone tiles about its base. The tiles are about an inch long and only a quarter inch thick. They can be rotated like dials with some resistance. This is the trading floor. The trade master stood in the central, raised area and, after confirmation from his counterpart in area 51, and the trader before him that both were ready, the two trade masters would execute the trade.

Nodes A and D can be restored. A will only come up from area 51, D will only go down to area 51. To get the nodes functioning, the party needs to align the stones to form a continuous circuit around the node (this can be discovered with a DC 15 Intelligence check, masonry proficiency and proficiency bonus for Dwarves apply) and uncover the commands to activate each node. The *up* node for A, both B and C nodes, and the *down* node for D have too many of the stones around the base damaged to be activated by the party. It would take some very advanced magic and some rare materials to restore them.

Players: This 70-foot square area is demarked by a change in the color of the floor blocks. A central square, 20'x20', is lighter than the surrounding stone floor, and a foot higher. Pylons, two per quadrant of the area, have a dark top. One per quadrant is green and the other is red. None of them glow. The pylons look as if they might be extended versions of the runes seen elsewhere.

34–Tool merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', large desk, barrel. Woodworking Tools were traded here.

Players: There are wood shavings on the desk and on the floor.

35–Beer Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 25', large desk, beer cask (empty). Meads, beers and ales were traded here. Beer was not popular. This was not a very busy trading stall.

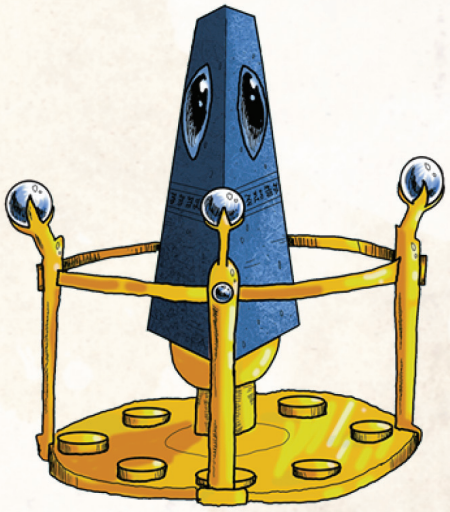
Players: This stall is empty. There are no signs of significant wear. The empty cask appears to have never been used.

36–Meat Merchant

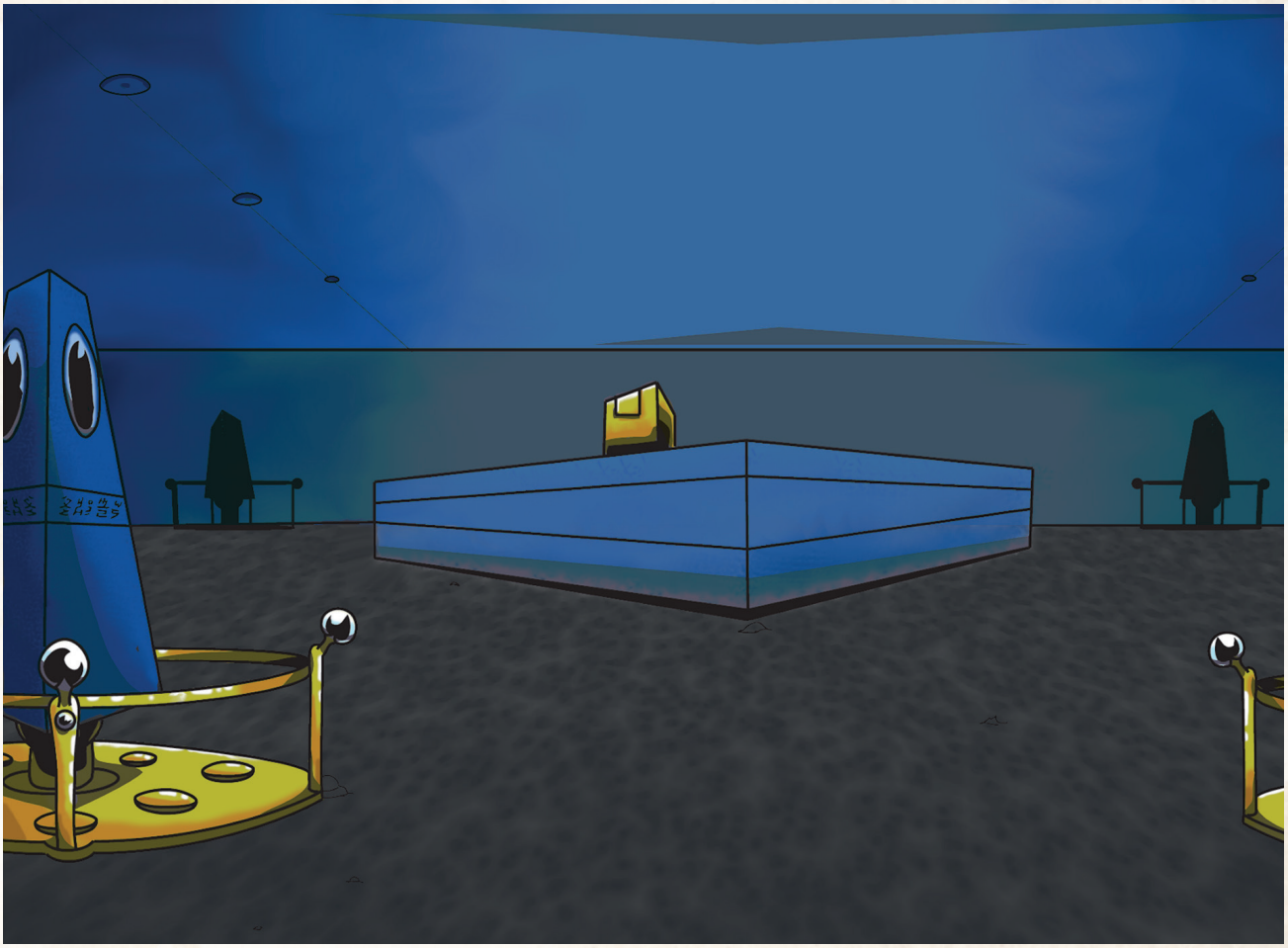
Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', table. Duck, pheasant and chicken were traded here. The meats of the surface were something that the Formene missed from their former life.

Players: From the wear, this was a busy and important trading stall. There are a variety of feathers in a small pile in a corner



Close Up of Teleportation Pylon
Artist: Z. mann Zilla



Nexus Trading Floor–Artist: Jeremy Corff

37–Spice Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', desk, cabinet. Pepper, cinnamon, cloves, paprika, thyme, and bay leaves were traded here.

Players: There are some traces of spices in a cabinet.

38–Wine Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', barrel, crate of wine bottles. Wine was traded here. Wine was the most popular surface drink that could not be produced in the Formene.

Players: This stall is very worn, and there are corks, corking machines and plenty of evidence that this was a very busy trade stall for wines.

39–Exotic Goods

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 25', large desk, chest. There is a letter, still sealed, at the rear of one of the desk drawers.

Players: No one can tell what used to be traded here from the contents of the stall.

Lore: Letter discussing a (rare) visit to the Formene portion of the Nexus and how strange the Formene elves are.

40–Trade Recorder

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 25', desk. The person working here kept records of all of the trades between the surface and the Formene. The desk was emptied when the Nexus was abandoned.

Players: This area is devoid of any details that might reveal its original purpose.

41–Spirits Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', three large barrels. Whiskey, rye, vodka, rum and other spirits were traded here. This was a busy trading stall. The barrels contained spirits that evaporated, and left the barrels open to rot. They will fall apart at the slightest touch.

Players: The casks here smell faintly of spirit alcohol.

42–Grain Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', large desk. Corn, rice and millet was traded here. There is a journal in the desk written by Kater Arnet.

Players: There are grains scattered on the floor.

Lore: Journal, one entry includes the command word to send the contents of the southeast teleportation quadrant (33D) to the Formene trading floor (51D). Most of 33 is not working, only 33A (Up) & 33D (Down) can be restored. The command word is "Hindra".

43–Meat Merchant

Ingress/Egress: Open to 30 (A1–Trading Floor, Outer Area)

Description: 20' x 20', two desks, one crate. Beef, lamb and other livestock were traded here. This was a busy and important trading stall.

Players: There are some meat hooks hanging from the walls and some curing agents like salt and nitrates are on the floor. A crate is coated with dark brown dried smears.

Formene Levels

The Formene levels are maintained by enduring magic that keeps them dust free and well preserved. Spells akin to **Unseen Servant** and **Mend** largely hold time at bay throughout these levels. Several levels have natural passages into the Formene itself. These tunnels are blocked by a series of invisible walls of force, except that the one leaving the Formene Administrator's Office (79) is not blocked. This is a factor common to the "Players" description of the areas not repeated for brevity. Not all areas have a "Players" entry due to this consistent element.

When the party crosses from the Surface levels to the Formene levels of the Nexus for the first time, an alarm is triggered. Some Formene hear the alarm in Talos. The players hear nothing.

F1–Main Trading Floor Level

Ingress/Egress: All of the areas on this level are open to the main corridor (not numbered), unless otherwise noted.

44–Empty Alcove

Description: 10' x 20', empty

Players: This alcove is completely empty. There is nothing to help identify what purpose this space served.

45–Alcove

Description: 10' x 20', crate

Players: The crate in this alcove is open and empty. There is no sign to indicate the contents.

46–Mushroom Merchant

Description: 20' x 25', large desk cabinet–Easy Puzzle Lock. This is where Nellaser, the mushroom merchant, operated. In the top drawer of the desk is a letter from her family in Talos.

Players: There are some dried husks of mushrooms beneath the desk.

Lore: Letter from family talking about the Nexus being closed due to the encroachment of Hastur on the surface.

47– Caravan Check-In

Description: 20' x 25', locked cabinet. Caravans coming from and going to Talos that enter the Nexus from the north tunnel check in here for recordkeeping. The cabinet is locked with a mechanical lock; it contains ten log books.

Players: Records make it clear that this area was where caravans checked in and out of the Nexus and were steered to the staging area for their specific cargo. It only takes about two minutes of looking at the records to garner this information.

48–Wine Merchant

Description: 20' x 25', large desk, stack of six casks (in a 3-2-1 stack). The desk is unlocked and empty. The casks are empty, and vaguely smell of exotic fermented Formene mushroom juice, representing a brief craze on the surface world.

Players: This area contains scraps of cork and empty bottles, along with six empty casks and a desk.

49, 50–Caravan Break Area

Description: 25' x 20', long bench along one wall, or 30' x 20', long bench along one wall. Most goods were not transported between the Nexus and Talos by pack animals. A few used larger cave lizards as pack animals; the majority used carts with a variation of the spell **Floating Disk** to move them. If any player touches it, it will follow them, about 5 feet behind, matching their pace until it is tapped three times by anyone. However, a fourth tap will restart the process. This was where the caravan masters rested while their cargo was being traded before transporting acquired goods back to Talos.

Players: The worn bench provides little clue to determine what this area was used for. There is a 3' wide, 6' long, 3' high box floating in one corner.

51A–D–Trading Floor–Teleport Area

Ingress/Egress: The trading floor is accessed through 51E and 51F (F1–Trading Floor–Outer Areas) which in turn connect to the outer corridor

Description: 70' x 70', four red and green pairs of teleportation devices flush with the floor. The middle 10'x10' section of the floor is raised. This is the Formene Trading Floor. Like the Surface Trading Floor, the trade master stood in the central, raised, area, and, in conjunction with his counterpart in area 33, executed trades where the goods were exchanged between upper and lower quadrants simultaneously. Unlike the Surface Trading Floor, all of the pads here are functioning. However, with only 2 of the 8 pylons in area 33 capable of being restored to functioning (33A-Down and 33D-Up), only those two pads will function without a lot of work from the wizards of Talos. The pads and pylons work in a push/pull capacity to handle the weights that were transported regularly. If the down pylon in the southeast quadrant was aligned to restore function, the corresponding down rune will glow green. If the party restored the pylon in the northwest quadrant, that corresponding rune will glow red. All other runes are dark, even though the color can still be determined, because the corresponding pylons are out of commission.

Note: It is possible for the party to appear to lock themselves in the Formene part of the Nexus by restoring 31A-Down but not 31D-Up before moving from area 33 to area 51. In area 72, there is a way back to area 8 (A3–Teleportation Room) and in area 79, they encounter more options (see area 72). If they think they have no way back, run with it.

Players: Eight pylons, surrounding a raised floor.

51E–F–Main Trading Floor–Outer Areas

Description: 25' x 30', tunnels into the Formene. This area connects the main corridor of level F1 to area 51A-D (F1–Trading Floor, Main Area) and to the tunnels into the Formene. The tunnels are blocked with walls of force (five in each tunnel) as part of the lockdown. (They were blocked with a single wall when surface people were in the Formene portion of the Nexus.) The walls of force might be bypassed by a clever party. To navigate the Formene without support from a Formene elf (see area 79) is nearly impossible and will require some clever thinking to avoid becoming hopelessly lost.

Players: These areas show significant traffic unlike most others areas on this floor.

52–Mushroom Merchant

Description: 30' x 20', desk–Easy Puzzle Lock. A mushroom merchant had an office here. There are a few dozen little white caps on the floor that have taken root in the dust and some soil that sifted out of the sacks used to transport them. They look interesting, and smell inviting. See Appendix 3 for possible effects of ingesting them. In a lower desk drawer is a letter.

Players: The mushrooms growing in this area provide clues to the use of the area.

Lore: Partial letter to a surface grain merchant discussing using a gold piece standard for trade.

53–Trade Master's Office

Description: 25' x 20', desk–Easy Puzzle Lock, stack of six casks of water. This was the office of the Formene trade master. In his desk a journal can be found. The water probably was used to refresh the pack lizards that some Formene traders employed. The water is brackish and stale. Also in the desk is a loose sheet of faded parchment.

Lore: Journal where in Findire explains how to align the teleporters in area 31 after lockdown and how to operate the teleporters. On the parchment is the command word for area 55 (F1–West Teleport Area): "Nelebrie".

54–Weapon Merchant

Description: 25' x 20', large desk–Easy Puzzle Lock. The desk is scratched heavily. Something heavy was placed on and picked up from this desk a lot. From the effects found in the desk, this merchant traded rare metal weapons. There is a letter about mithril weapon trade among the papers.

Players: Scratches on the desk look like test taps, pokes, and slashes from finely crafted weapons.

Lore: Letter, discusses the huge profits for mithril weapons, and how the humans have a lust for the well-crafted weapons.

55–West Teleport Area

Description: 25' x 20', teleportation rune flush with floor. This pad leads to area 69 (F2–Southwest Teleportation Area). The command word can be found in the desk at area 53 (F1–Trade Master's Office).

Players: The room has two runes in the floor. One has a red glowing center, the other, green.

56–Gem Merchant

Description: 25' x 20', chest.

Players: The velvet trays in the chest suggest that this merchant traded gems or jewelry. No valuable stones were left behind.

57–Wine Merchant

Description: 25' x 20', large display case, four bottles. A wine merchant had a stall here. A few bottles of wine remain; all but one have gone to vinegar. The remaining bottle is worth 200 gp unopened. There is a thick layer of black fungus on the corks. This fungus is common to wines stored for a long time, harmless, and has no effect on the taste. However, it looks pretty creepy. There are a number of ways that the players can determine, before opening, which bottle is good, and which have gone to vinegar. Let them get creative.

Players: The large wine rack has four corked bottles and half a dozen empty bottles, but is otherwise empty. The corks are fully covered in a black fungus with a hair like texture. Two of the full bottles have sediment and two are sediment free.

58–East Teleport Pad

Description: 25' x 20', teleportation rune flush with floor. There is no indication of a magic aura. It is dead.

Players: The room has a rune in the floor. Its center is a dull green.

F2–Trading Offices Level

Ingress/Egress: All of the areas on this level are connected to the main corridor by a door. Doors with a blue sigil under them are locked with Medium Puzzle Locks. The remaining doors are locked with mechanical locks. Two areas are open to the main corridor.

59–Metal Goods Merchant's Storeroom

Description: 15' x 20', two large shelves, both empty. Table near door. The shipping manifest on the table near the door reveals the merchant here traded in exotic metal goods, but not weapons or armor.

Players: The table has a small stack of papers. The shelves are empty. On the floor are some remnants of packing straps and paper.

Lore: Shipping manifest indicating some of the exotic goods that are available in Talos but unseen in the surface world for over 1,500 years.

60–Northeast Teleport Area

Description: 15' x 20', teleportation rune flush with floor. This pad leads to area 72 (F3–Teleportation Area). The command word can be found in the desk at area 53 (F1–Trade Master's Office) and is the same command as area 55 (F1–West Teleport Area).

Players: This room has a rune in the floor with a glowing green center.

61–Minerals Merchant

Description: 20' x 15', cabinet. The remains in the cabinet suggest that this was the office of a minerals merchant.

Players: Remnants of feldspar, phosphate rock, potash and quartz can be found in the cabinet.

62–Antiques Merchant

Description: 20' x 20', ornate desk. In a lower drawer of the desk is the journal of the merchant, Almon. From the journal, the merchandise is obvious.

Players: The desk has drawers down the left side and a lap drawer. The desk is much more ornate than the others in the Nexus (other than the Formene Administrator's Office [Area 79]). The chair is missing.

Lore: Almon discusses a fortune hunter and the steady supply of finds she supplies. Speculates if she has found an abandoned city.

63–Storeroom

Description: 20' x 20', five sets of shelves. This is a storeroom for one of the merchants (Area 62). However, the inventory has all been removed and it will be nearly impossible to determine who used this room to store goods. The shelves are all empty.

Players: The shelves show no significant wear. There is no debris. This room could have been used lightly or not at all.

64 & 65–Open Merchant Area

Description: 20' x 20', large desk. This office, open to the corridor is empty of almost all signs of who used it. The desk has mechanical locks typical to the Nexus, but the desk is as empty as the office. A very careful search will produce indications of wooden casks being stored here, suggesting wine or other liquids were stored by the occupant.

66–Storeroom

Description: 20' x 20'. This room is a twin of area 63 (F2–Storeroom), including empty shelves.

Players: The shelves show no significant wear. There is no debris. This room could have been used lightly or not at all.

67–Rare Minerals Merchant

Description: 20' x 20', ornate desk–locked. This was the office of Quennethir, a rare minerals merchant. This is only evident from the contents of the papers in the desk, including a letter instructing someone on the operation of the teleport runes.

Players: On the desk are a dozen sheets of parchment. Most of them discuss rare minerals trading; one is a letter with a wax seal.

Lore: Letter reminding the recipient of the commands to operate the teleporters between F4 and F3, and between F3 and F2.

68–Mushroom Storeroom

Description: 20' x 20', empty except for a carpet of mushrooms across the majority of the floor. Even after 1,500 years of being empty, this room can still be identified as a storeroom for mushrooms. They were a very popular trade item with the surface population. While the smell is overpowering, the room is not a generally hazard. However, the players' paranoia will be fun when it comes to this room. Eighteen species of mushroom in total are scattered about the floor. See Appendix 3 for possible mushroom effects if a player ingests one.

Players: This room has an overpowering smell of decay and mushroom spores. At least five varieties of mushrooms can be seen at a glance.

69–Teleportation Area

Description: 20' x 20', red teleportation rune. The teleportation rune in this room is flush with the floor, and leads to area 55 (F2–Teleportation Area). The command to control this teleport rune is the command learned in area 53.

Players: This room has a rune in the floor. Its middle glows red.

70–Gem Merchant Storeroom

Description: 20' x 20', chest–locked. Like the other gem storeroom, the velvet lined trays in the chest reveal this room was used by a trader of gems or jewelry. Below the trays sits a thick book.

Players: The room is empty except for a chest.

Lore: Book detailing the history of how the elves adapted to the Formene over a century.

F3–Trade Support Level

Ingress/Egress: the doors on this level open to area 72 (F3–Main Corridor and Teleportation Area). Most doors have a magic circle indicating they are locked with a magic puzzle. A few suffice with mechanical locks.

71–Office of the Assistant to the Formene Administrator (Very Hard Puzzle Lock)

Description: 15' x 15', ornate desk, chest–both locked. This was the office of the Assistant to the Administrator of the Formene levels. Akin's job was to ensure that issues were received by the administrator in a timely fashion with the nuisances filtered out, and that Administrator decrees were communicated. In a locked lap drawer, the desk has a stack of parchment documents.

Lore: Instructions for operating the Teleporters between the Formene levels and between the Formene and surface levels are mixed in with details of the Administrator likes.

72–Main Corridor and Teleportation Area

Description: 15' x 20', two teleportation runes (one red, one green). This corridor is narrower than the others. The mild traffic at this depth did not require more than 5' wide corridors. There are two tunnels that extend into the Formene, and eventually lead to Talos. They are blocked with five walls of force as a part of the lockdown. When not locked down, one wall remains to protect the Formene from intruders (and more importantly, to spare surface dwellers from the dangers of the Formene). The green teleportation rune leads to area 79 (F4–Administrator's Office), and the red rune leads to area 60 (F2–Northeast Teleport Area).

Players: The tunnels are blocked with an invisible wall. In the northwest part of the corridor there are two runes in the floor. One has a red glowing center, the other a green glowing center.

73–Trade Leader's Office (Hard Puzzle Lock)

Description: 10' x 25' east to west with a 20' x 10' extension north to south. Ornate desk, large chest–both locked. This large office also served as a union hall of sorts. The trade leader met frequently with the merchants of the Formene levels here. Many of the concerns of the merchants were funneled to the Administrator through this office. Also the trade leader enforced the Administrator's decrees. In the desk, a number of letters, records, invoices and a journal can be found. The letters cover a myriad of mundane matters. The invoices concern tracking the incoming and outgoing trade and the tariffs owed on the trade. The other records track internal concerns: concerns being taken to the Administrator, and decisions being communicated to the merchants.

Players: This room is 'L' shaped, and shows more wear than other areas of the Formene part of the Nexus. Letters, records and invoices cover a journal on the desk.

Lore: Journal contains a passage that deftly explains the concerns that the Formene elves have about the encroachment of the cult of Hastur on the surface world: they fear that man will unite and overwhelm their protection of the Formene, and it will be exploited to extinction.

74–Private Meeting Room (Medium Puzzle Lock)

Description: 20' x 15', table with four chairs, pegs along the west wall for hanging weapons, cloaks, etc.

The room is lightly furnished, and bereft of valuables, making the enhanced security point to its likely purpose: a secure meeting room.

Players: This room shows signs of more than average wear. The hooks on the walls are mostly empty. Two cloaks remain, as does a belt with a sheathed dagger.

75–General Meeting Room

Description: 20' x 25', large table, with four benches. The table in the center of this room would seat sixteen for a meal or over twenty for a meeting. The low security suggests it was a casual use room.

Players: This room shows signs of wear and signs that meals were held here. The table has fifteen place settings (plates, eating utensils, and mugs). The benches could hold five people each comfortably, maybe six if they are really friendly people.

76–Administrator's Teleportation Room

Description: 15' x 20', rubble in the northwest corner, red teleportation rune flush with the floor. The teleportation rune was used for the majordomo of the surface levels and the Administrator's Assistant of the Formene levels to travel freely and to communicate regularly. The Administrators also used these runes, just not quite as often as their seconds.

Players: There is a rune in the floor with a glowing red center. A corner of the room has a partially collapsed ceiling, the rubble from which is on the floor. The ceiling seems safe.

77–Administrator's Vault

Description: 15' x 20', large chest–locked.

This room has been emptied. It appears to have held nearly a dozen chests, but only one large chest remains today. The chest might have been forgotten. In the chest, the party finds:

Gems: (Total Value of each type)

- 1 x brown diamond (2,000 gp)
- 6 x deep blue spinel (3,600 gp)
- 4 x violet garnet (2,400 gp)
- 6 x tanzanite (3,000 gp)

Magic Items:

- *(GM's Choice: Weapon) +2*
- *(GM's Choice: Weapon) +1*
- *Robe of Scintillating Colors*
- *Potions: Healing (4), Water Breathing, Frost Giant Strength, Clairvoyance, Superior Healing (2)*
- *Eyes of Minute Seeing*
- *Armor +1 (Half Plate)*
- *Scroll of **Destroy Stone** (New spell, see Appendix 1)*

Players: This room's floor shows some scratches. A single chest remains. It is obviously locked and looks very sturdy and heavy.

78–Private Meeting Room (Medium Puzzle Lock)

Description: 25' x 10', table with four chairs, pegs along the east wall for hanging weapons, cloaks, etc. The room is lightly furnished, and bereft of valuables, making the enhanced security point to the likely purpose: a secure meeting room.

Players: This room shows signs of more than average wear. The hooks on the walls are mostly empty. Two cloaks remain, as does a belt with a sheathed short sword.

Forgotten Chest in the Formene Vault
–Artist: Jeremy Corff

F4–Formene Administrator's Level

79–Formene Administrator's Office

Ingress/Egress: Teleport Rune flush with floor leads to 72 (A3–Main Corridor and Teleportation Area), tunnel to the Formene.

Description: 20' x 20', Teleportation Rune, ornate desk, bookshelf full of books, scrolls and loose parchment, comfortable chair. The office of the Administrator, Celadir, has the nicest desk in the Nexus and a luxurious reading chair, which is well worn from the Administrator's use. The bookshelf is full of scrolls and books. One of the books is a history of the elf move into the Formene. When the party enters the room they hear a cry of agony from somewhere down the passage into the rock.

Players: The room looks almost like time has stood still, like much of the Formene levels. With no dust and no rot, the room is nearly in the condition it was left by the occupant. The natural cavern passage into the Formene, unlike others from previous levels, is not blocked with spells. A pained yell comes from down the tunnel.

Lore: History of the Formene and account of a tribe of elves moving in the Formene.

Office of the Administrator–Artist: Adam Schmidt

Beyond the Nexus

The passage from 79 (F4–The Formene Administrator's Office) into the Formene has no barriers. A few yards down the narrow passage the party discovers a Formene elf. The elf is half embedded in rock. There was a partial cave-in and a significant amount of rubble obscures the teleportation pad. The elf teleported to the Nexus responding to the alert that the seals had been breached, and ended up embedded in the rock. He is dead (see sidebar: Saving Sherin), and the party has less than an hour to learn from him what they can before his magic fails and he fades from the world.

- The elf is Sherin Po-thole; he is a Formene elven wizard who teleported from Talos to the Nexus to investigate the party entering the Formene levels of the Nexus. He is tall for an elf at nearly 6 feet, and has orange eyes, pale skin, and pale hair. He is in a great deal of pain, and consequently talks very slowly.
- He tells the party that when they teleported from the Surface Trading Floor down to the Formene levels (most likely the Formene Trading Floor), an alarm was triggered. He teleported here in response to that alarm to challenge the party. If more than half of the party played through "The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil", he will sense that they have faced and defeated an aspect of Hastur, and will welcome them to the Formene as brothers. The Formene elves are ready to make contact with the surface world again. To enable the party to travel to Talos and beyond under the protection of the Formene Elves, the wardens of the Formene, Sherin reaches into his pack and provides the party with three items each. These items are a combination of signs of the party's protected status and magical adaption to the environment: Boots of the Formene, Cloak of the Formene, Ring of Elvenkind. See Appendix 2 for details. Sherin directs the party to follow some specific signs to Talos only visible when wearing these gifts and tells them they will be welcomed and provided with the education necessary to explore the Formene on their own. The adventure continues in *DNH3–The City of Talos*.
- If the party has not played *DNH1–The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil*, the elf is less inclined to open the Formene to them. A party dominated by good aligned characters whose motivation comes more from exploration and assessing the danger to their community than from lining their pockets with gold would be welcome. A mostly neutral aligned party with similar motives would be tolerated. A mostly evil aligned party, with any motive, would be very unwelcome. The GM is free to invent intermediate quests, and other challenges to earn entry to Talos. Sherin will be dead, but another can come replace him when the party returns after their challenges, one who might escort them to Talos and chaperone them until they prove themselves worthy.

Saving Sherin

The party may be inspired to try to free Sherin from the stone and heal him. Short of a wish spell, this is not possible. He is already dead. Currently, he is using powerful magic to stay alive long enough to determine the party's motivation and if they are worthy of being the first surface visitors to Talos. The damage done when he teleported into stone is beyond any healing magic. Converting the stone to something less damaging will not reverse the trauma to his internal organs. Were he a lesser wizard, he would have died instantly when he teleported unto solid stone. His power allows him to cling to this world long enough to complete his mission.

Surviving the Nexus

Without the gifts from Sherin, entering deeper than a few hundred yards into the Formene will result in the party wandering with an infinitesimal chance of finding their way to Talos, and a large chance of dying if they do not turn back. Navigating the Formene is as challenging as surviving it. Circumventing the walls of force before encountering Sherin will likely end with the party turning back or becoming hopelessly lost.

Sherin Po-Thole's Final Mission–Artist: Adam Schmidt

Bestiary

Nexus Guardian

Medium Construct, Neutral

- **Armor Class 18** (Construct Hardened Skin)
- **Hit Points 52** (5d10 + 25)
- **Speed** 40 ft.
- **STR** 22 (+6) **CON** 21 (+5) **All Others** (+1)
- **Saving Throws** Str + 9, Con +8, All Others +4
- **Skills** Athletics +9, Perception +6
- **Damage Resistance** Blunt, Piercing, Slashing (including magical weapons)
- **Senses** Passive Perception 16
- **Languages** Elvish
- **Challenge 4** (1,800 XP)

Actions

- **Special Attack: see Table to right. (GM can roll per individual or per group)**
- ***Multiattack.*** The guardian makes two light-axe attacks.
- ***Light-axe.*** *Melee Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft. *Hit: 12* (1d12 + 6) slashing damage.
- ***Energy Bolt.*** *Ranged Attack:* +8 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit: 17* (2d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Nexus Guardian Random Ability Table

d12 Result	Special Ability
1	Each attack does additional 1d6 cold damage and target must make DC 10 Constitution save or be SLOWED (half move, save ends)
2	Each attack does 3d10 necrotic damage (replacement); DC 14 Constitution save halves damage
3	Guardian doesn't have a weapon. Casts **magic missile** at will as if from a level 5 spell slot
4	On critical hit, target takes no damage but is phased into another dimension, DC 15 Wisdom save to return
5	On hit, the target must make a DC 10 Dexterity save or be blinded until the end of their next turn
6	If both attacks hit, the Guardian can make a bonus attack using Energy Bolt (This is not at disadvantage, unlike typical ranged attacks in melee)
7	After being hit, the Guardian's AC increases by 3 until the start of its next turn. This effect does not stack
8	Each hit reduces target's STR by 1d4. At STR 0, the character collapses. Recovery takes a long rest
9	Successful hit requires target to make a DC15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid being disarmed
10	Successful hit can become a Feint, which negates target's Dexterity bonus to AC until the end of their next turn
11	On a successful hit, the attacker can grant a +2 AC bonus to its nearest ally that it can see that does not currently enjoy this benefit until the start of the attacker's next turn.
12	Each successful hit requires target to make a Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) save (DC10) to avoid being knocked prone

Appendix 1

New Spell
Destroy Stone

5th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 2+ actions (One to aim, one to execute each cube)

Range: 20 feet (to the first cube. Further cubes require no movement)

Components: V, S, M (a small stone and a pinch of rock dust)

Duration: Instantaneous

With the small stone in your dominant hand, and the dust in your other hand, a thin, pale blue beam springs from the stone framing a 10' cube ahead of you. You move your hand to aim the projection, and when ready, rotate the hand holding the dust until the dust hits the ground at your feet. When the first dust speck touches the ground a 10' cube of stone disintegrates.

Everything in the 10' cube is gone, except a few grams of stone dust. Any minerals, or other materials in the cube that are not magical are destroyed. This includes organic material. However, stone must be the target for the spell to work. The organic material must be incidental.

This spell is most typically used in siege actions. But elves have been known to create tunnels by this method.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, an additional 10' cube is destroyed for each level beyond 5 that the spell is cast. These additional cubes are normally behind the initial cube, but can be directed by moving the hand holding the dust to point in the direction of the next cube.

Lore: Legend holds that some wizards and a pair of clerics, all among the most powerful, spent years making a tunnel to connect two large Formene sprawls.

Using their potential, they could clear over half a mile per day. The clerics were part of the party using their divine magic to provide nourishment, comforts, and emergency healing if needed. They could have cleared 100 miles per year this way.

Reality: Four groups of twenty, fourteen wizards and six clerics, (along with servants) made multiple parallel tunnels, all 20' wide, linking the two major and three minor Formene realms. The gaps averaged 1,200 miles. The wizards also carved out rest stops at 20 mile intervals. The rest areas are 60' square (36 cubes) and connect to the main tunnel with a 10' wide and 40' long (4 cubes) tunnel.

Each group averaged 80–90 miles per year. While It was uncommon for a wizard to become burned out and quit the project, replacements were scarce, so progress suffered the handful of times this occurred.

The group camped in the nearest rest area, and travelled to the current excavation site in teams of three (two wizards and a cleric) using various magics. Once on site, one wizard would use **destroy stone** to excavate the path while the other stood on the ready to project a **wall of force** to protect them if the excavation hit something disruptive. In about an hour, the excavation team could travel to the current site, cast all of the spells possible that day, and return to camp. This left about sixteen hours for other endeavors back at camp.

Most of the wizards on the project used the quiet and short work day to study, research or contemplate philosophical quandaries. On average, each tunnel took thirteen years to complete.

More detail about the project could be found in the City of Talos.

Appendix 2

Magic Items

Wondrous Items, Very Rare, (require attunement)

Boots of the Formene–This pair of boots connects the wearer with the Formene allows the wearer to:

- Navigate the Formene like an elf, by following hidden signs to reach their destination and avoid known pitfalls,
- Avoid cave-ins through seismic warnings passed through the soles of the boots, and
- Derive nutrition from the fungus, animals, and plants of the Formene without vitamin issues.

Cloak of the Formene–This cloak envelopes the wearer in a shroud of protection:

- Providing protection from air quality issues, including toxins in the air, lack of oxygen, and breathing underwater. The hood of the cloak has a face mask that protects the wearer from such threats.
- Suppressing all fires within 20' of the wearer to protect them from air depletion, toxins, etc.
- Reducing damage from flash floods. In addition to allowing underwater breathing, the cloak gives the wearer protection from damage that might be taken from sudden flooding of caverns. (Advantage on all saves to mitigate damage, and the saves are for half vs. no damage, not full vs. half damage, similar to the Rogue Ability **Evasion.**)

Ring of Elvenkind–This ring grants the wearer a connection with nature. This allows the wearer to:

- Communicate via a form of telepathy with any willing intelligent being in line of sight, including strangers that want to communicate but have no common language or no language at all.
- Maintain a sense of time. The wearer is in tune with the sunrise and sunset on the surface.
- See in the complete darkness of the Formene (Darkvision 60').

Appendix 3

Things found in a desk

Each desk can contain d4 random items.

D20 Result	Contents
1	16 cp
2	3 quills
3	2 sheets of blank parchment
4	Sheath for a dagger
5	Belt buckle
6	2 sp
7	IOU note
8	Scarf
9	Floppy hat
10	Small blank book
11	Broken hand crossbow
12	Hairpin
13	Small mirror
14	5 marbles
15	30-40 dried beans
16	Blank sheet of vellum
17	Crumpled 'Dear John' letter
18	Sealing wax
19	Candle
20	Flint and steel

Mushroom Effects

Roll 3d6.

Result	Effect
3–4	Heal up to 4 hp (not to exceed max hp)
5	Euphoria (+1 to all rolls due to confidence)
6	Feel mild euphoria (no in game mechanical effect)
7–8	Feel refreshed (no in game mechanical effect)
9–10	Nothing happens
11	Stale
12	Upset stomach
13	Break out in hives
14	Vomiting
15	Mild hallucinations
16	Severe hallucinations (d6 hours to recover)
17–18	Complete psychotic break (Greater Restoration, or player becomes an NPC)

Appendix 4

This section details variations to the PC races from the default game setting to the world of Tumunzar, on which the continent Barestir resides. The Five Kingdoms are the core civilizations of the continent of Barestir. **Use of this material is not mandatory. Dark Naga adventures fit into any fantasy campaign world with little modification. However, if adapting this adventure to your world, this information will guide conversions from Tumunzar to your world.**

In Tumunzar, particularly on Barestir, the traditional non-human (demi-human) player races have all but withdrawn from the world of man. These races are: dwarf, elf, gnome, and halfling. Tumunzar has no dragonborn, half elves, half orcs, tieflings, or playable orcs.

Events that led to the collapse of the First Age of Man were instrumental in the decision for the demi-human races, one at a time, to withdraw from the world of man. Halflings started the movement, seeing the unhealthy obsessions take root within man as he slipped from celebration to debauchery. The elves and gnomes followed, deciding that man was more interested in shaping the world than living in harmony it. Dwarves were the last to withdraw as the fall of the First Age of Man started, and also hold the greatest distain for man among the demi-humans.

A party of adventures in the Five Kingdoms will be mostly human. Any demi-human who adventures in the world of man would be an exceptional individual, and will be met by the world with stares, questions, and sometimes fear, but not malice. The level of distraction will fall off over a few days until it becomes a mere distraction after being in an area for a while. The people of the Second Age of Man know of the demi-humans, and have vague knowledge of why they withdrew from civilization. The demi-humans of Tumunzar include all of the subraces. These races are not dying off, they are just withdrawn from the world of men to their own mountain towns, shires, forests, etc.

Dwarves

The Dwarf nations withdrew from the world to their mountain strongholds. Zigundum, Zigila, Zigunarg, Zinbizar and Zabarak are the capital strongholds of the five Dwarf nations of Barestir. Each shares a name with the Dwarven name for the mountain peak where the stronghold is rooted. Unlike the Formene which starts more than 1,000 meters below the surface, Dwarven strongholds are rarely found deeper than 300 meters below the surface and are predominantly deep within the mountain above the surface. All of the subraces of dwarf can be found on Tunmunzar.

Elves

The Elvish tribes withdrew from the world to the deep forests. Edheren, Eglavad, Egioniond, and Egulond are the Elven kingdoms. They are deep within forests scattered across Barestir. The forests that contain these kingdoms are Dorwine, Dondoris, Dyamene and Dalinde. Each of these forests covers between a score to two score million acres. While all of the elves live in forests, not all elves are of a sylvan subrace. All of the surface elf subraces can be found on Tunmunzar. Elves on Tunminzar have a lifespan of 500 to 600 years.

The elves of Tumunzar are a single species that have adapted to their environment. Those who have a cerebral life over time adapt and can be represented as High Elves. Those who select a more sylvan life will, over time, adapt and be represented as Wood Elves. On Tumunzar, there are no half elves. Humans and elves are reproductively incompatible. Additionally, the Drow are replaced with the Formene Elves in this world.

The elven ability to adapt to new environments attracts the interest of Hastur. He sees elves as a way to more fully manifest his Aspects and minions in this world. This interest scares elves as much as it intrigues those who follow the dark god.

Formene Elves

Another tribe, the Elonde, divided themselves among the five Formene regions, and became the wardens of their respective regions. No surface person has entered the Formene for over 3,000 years. The wardens secured it from surface civilization shortly after mithril was discovered. The five Formene areas include the vast lands under the Batun and the Alithis (greater mountain ranges) and the Gorthsea, Oliden and Argors (lesser mountain ranges). The Formene are their own subrace of Elves. In "The Five Kingdoms" campaign setting, the Formene replace the Drow of a typical fantasy campaign. In the "Haunting of Hastur" series, Formene Elves are not a PC race.

Gnomes

The Gnomish warrens were the last to withdraw from the world when Hastur began to take over. They were the first to join the fight to free the world from the clutches of Hastur when Man decided to fight back. Their burrows lie in the rolling hills of Barestir. Four very tightly knit communities, Stapoole, Wydale, Haley, and Ledale, enjoy burrows in the hilly forests that are not far from the shires of the Halflings or the forests of the Elves. All of the surface subraces of gnome can be found on Tunmunzar. However, when Man's decadence led to the collapse of the First Age of Man, they were the first to withdraw.

Halflings

The Halfling families withdrew from the world into their shires in the rolling hills of Barestir. The major families are: Beeford, Bemoor, Beydon, Chyley, Eswick, Rawood, Reywich, Snegate, Stahill, and Waywold. Each family maintains a large shire, with dozen or so smaller shires on the periphery. The shires are typically found in the foothills of the major mountain ranges of Baristir. Foothills put them in relative close proximity to the Dwarf nations. All Halfling subraces are found on Tunmunzar. Unlike other demi-humans, the subraces can be found within a single shire, especially in the smaller shires on the periphery.

Humans

Humans dominate Barestir. When the First Age of Man collapsed, civilization nearly disappeared as people struggled to survive and abandoned pursuits beyond subsistence. Over the last three centuries, civilization has returned to the lands of man. The Five Kingdoms setting is named for the Five Kingdoms that rule the lands of man. Meawold, Cawold, Wywold, Hawold, and Gamwold are the capitals of the five kingdoms and the names of the kingdoms. Man exists in a large number of varieties. Any fantasy race could be easily adjusted to be a human variant.

Other Races

If your world has races beyond what is enumerated, and they withdrew from the world of man, and potentially engaging again, create similar back stories for how and why these other races withdrew. Optionally, you can have a more integrated world. The DNH series of adventures are deeply human-centric, and have few demi-humans beyond the Formene elves. This can be altered if desired, or can be a source of roleplay interaction as players with demi-human characters encounter people who have never seen one.

The Ecology of the Formene Elves

The Formene is a vast subterranean world. The tribe of elves that moved into the Formene to become its wardens adapted dramatically over time. Their adaptations can be reversed if they change their environment for about a century. These adaptations make living in the Formene routine. Many people use Formene to refer to the elves and the lands interchangeably.

The Formene are attuned with nature, and worship mostly the same elven gods of Life, Light, Knowledge, and Nature as their surface cousins. Their guardianship of the Formene has led to millennia of peace among the subterranean races and prevented human incursion into the Formene.

Over time, they developed a pale, rough skin and large dark eyes that have two different sets of eyelids. Their eyes can see in "normal" light with the inner lids closed, and often do so when in Talos or other Formene Elf cities. This reduces the incoming light by 96%. In dim light, they open both sets of lids, which allows all available light to enter the eye. In complete darkness, they close both sets, which frees their minds to process other sensory information, which manifests as darkvision/blindsight 75'.

Like all elves, Formene Elves do not have body hair. Unlike their surface counterparts, many males keep their scalps closely cropped. Female Formene Elves tend to prefer very short hair as well, above the shoulders, typically in a pixie cut. Like all elves, the Formene live between 500 and 600 years.

As a elven children mature, they begin to adapt to their environment during puberty, which for elves is typically between age 16 and 32 years. By the end of puberty, elves are fully adapted to their home environment. During their childhood, elves look generically "elven", and during puberty progressively take on the appearance of their tribe. By mid to late puberty, the exterior appearance changes are complete and the internal changes finalize.

Adults adapt more slowly when they move into a new environment or change lifestyles. Adaptation pressure is noticeable after 25 or 30 years in the new situation, and changes start about ten years later; adaptation is usually complete about a century after the elves are introduced to the new environment.

During the First Age of Man, the Formene elves enjoyed the delights of the surface world though trade with it. They enjoy fine cuts of meat, surface fruits and vegetables, wooden goods, spirits, brews, varietals, and art. These they combined with subterranean plants, particularly mushrooms, and some lizards to create a unique cuisine. Like their surface cousins, the Formene elves live in harmony with the subterranean world. Since closing the Formene to the world, they have shifted their diet to exclude the surface delights of old.

Talos, the Batun mountain region's Formene capital is a brightly lit, open city. Within Talos, about 30,000 elves live (around 22,000 adults and 8,000 children and adolescents).

Hastur

Since closing the Nexuses and withdrawing from the world, the Formene Elves have spent centuries debating a return to interacting and trading with the surface and other issues. The biggest issue is Hastur. His influence on the world nearly destroyed man. Scrying and other intelligence gathering suggests that the threat is largely neutralized. Only once has an Aspect of Hastur reached into the world (see *DNH1–The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil*). Seeing the Aspect arise and be confronted so quickly in Boldon has led to a growing movement to open the Nexuses again. A marginal majority of the Formene feel that man is ready to try again and that Hastur's incursions will be confronted and stopped instead of taking root and spreading.

Connecting with the Surface

The Formene elves and their love of knowledge led them to build a collection of human knowledge. Man's thirst for discovery and innovation intrigued them and led to a vast library. Most of this library has been translated into Elvish by scribes who preserve and reproduce books.

Much like the role of Moors and Arabs and the Greco-Roman knowledge they translated and preserved, the knowledge from the First Age of Man that the Formene preserved will be critical to initiation the coming Renaissance phase of the Second Age of Man, assuming the party pursues the goal of restoring interaction and trade with the surface.

These negotiations are the core subject of DNH3: The City of Talos

Human Level 1

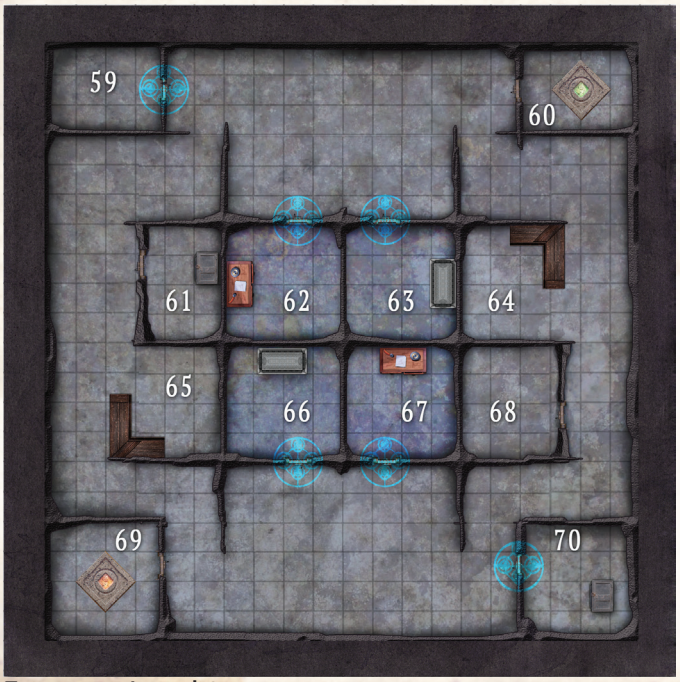
Human Level 4

Human Level 2

Human Level 3

Formene Level 1

Formene Level 4



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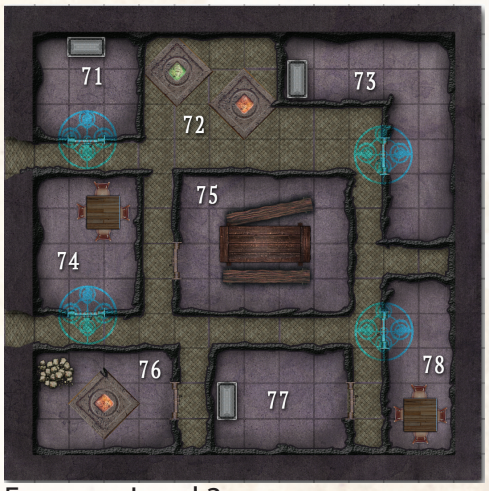
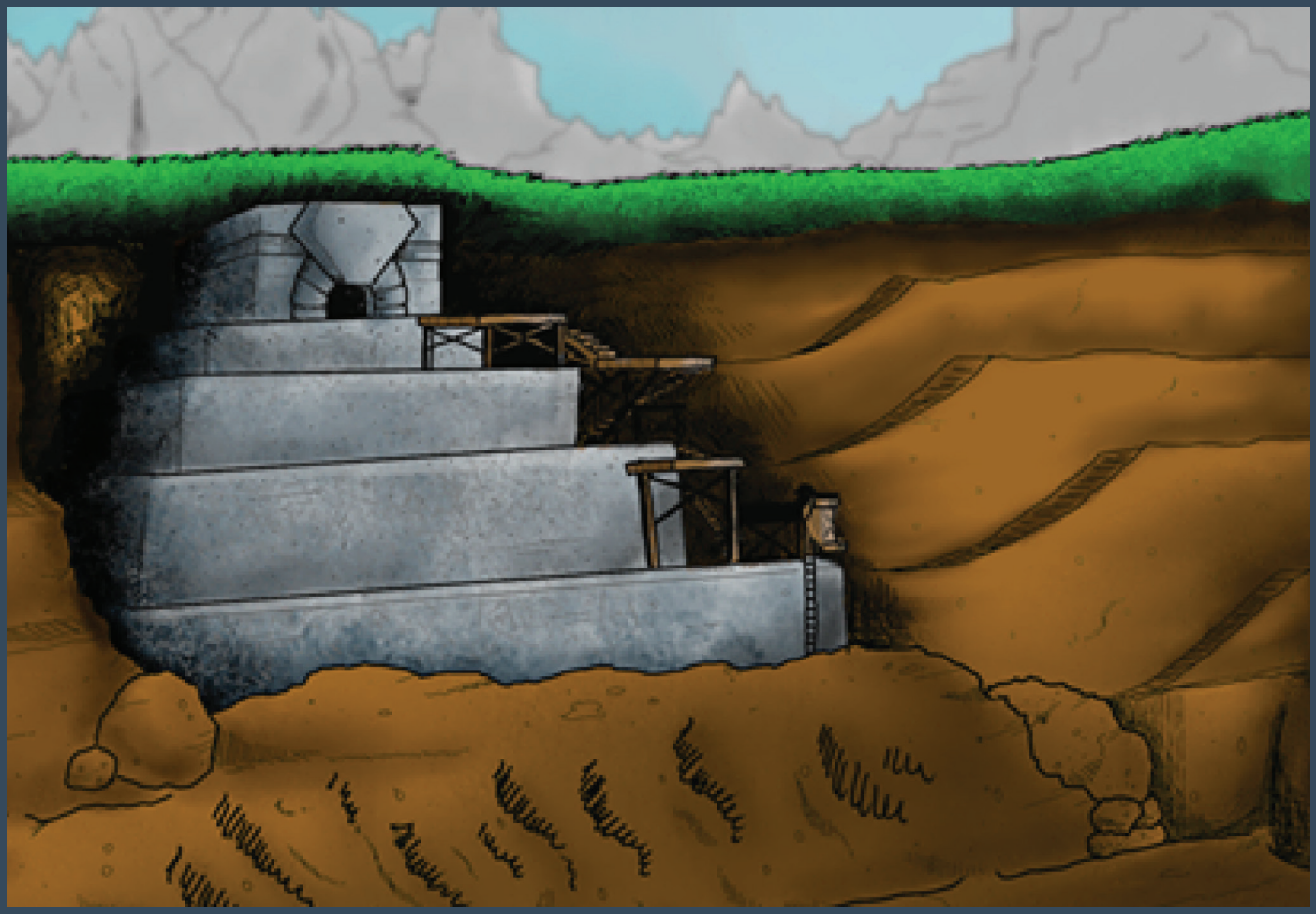


Formene Level 3



The clay mining operation at Caford has discovered a large step pyramid, or zikurat. This imposing structure was buried completely in the clay sheet they have been mining for decades to make brick and other ceramic products. The local miners see what they think is an obvious entrance, but cannot get past the slab of stone. A call for aid is sent to the capital city of Meawold, and the party is sent to investigate.

Could this be one of the Nexuses that traded goods from the subterranean Land of Night to the surface world?

Places where treasures of the subterranean kingdoms, like mithril weapons, were traded for surface goods. Bastions of trade that were lost during the fall of the First Age of Man. Why has it been dormant for almost two millennia? What lies within? Is it a threat to Caford, or the Kingdom of Meawold as a whole?

If they can get inside, the party will have to navigate millennia old magic locks and security sentinels to find answers to these questions and more within The Buried Zikurat.

DNH3

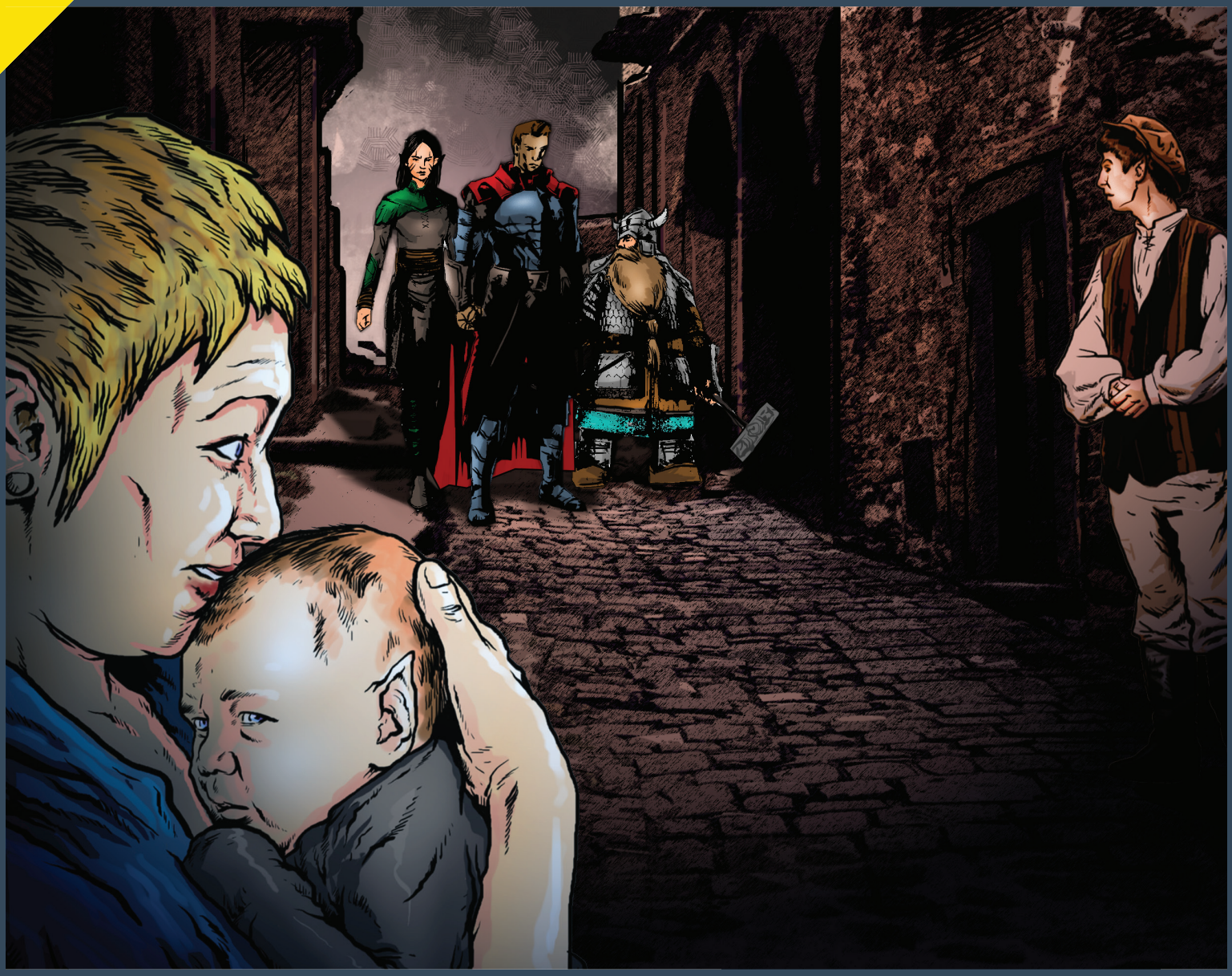
Fifth Edition Fantasy

Part Three of the
Haunting of Hastur Series

The City of Talos

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Levels 8–10



The City of Talos is an adventure for 3–7 characters levels 8–10 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. It is optimized for the fifth edition and for 5 characters at level 9.

Dark Naga Adventures
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DNH3:
The City of Talos—Gazetteer

Dark Naga Adventures

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City of Talos–Gazetteer

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History of the Formene and the Formene Elves

Tumunzar hosts five tribes of elves. These tribes are represented on the continent of Barestir. Four of these tribes live in the vast forests of Barestir. However, one tribe left the forest during the First Age of Man with a mission, the Elonde.

Several thousand years ago, strong, light, and rare metals—adamantine and mithril—were discovered in the deep earth. This happened early in the First Age of Man; man, dwarf, elf, and halfling learned to make spectacular weapons and armor from these new metals. These items quickly became valuable due to their strength, durability, and ability to hold enchantment. Man's thirst seemed unquenchable. One tribe of elves, the Elonde, concerned that man would destroy the subterranean realm in pursuit of the metals and minerals of the deep earth, moved into "The Lands of Night", Formene in Elvish, and negotiated with the native denizens to become wardens of the subterranean realm and its resources.

The tribe was quite large, nearly five hundred thousand strong, and committed to the project. Some began contacting the intelligent denizens to initiate diplomatic talks. Others looked for suitable places to build cities and to establish their presence. The balance focused on finding and securing every entrance to the Formene they could find. This process took the bulk of a century and yielded enormous progress. During that first century, the elves changed dramatically, becoming the pale-skinned, bulbous-eyed creatures of rock that they are today.

The Elonde divided themselves among the five Formene regions, and became the wardens of their respective regions. The five Formene areas include the vast lands under the Batun and the Alithis (greater) Mountain ranges and the Gorthsea, Oliden, and Argors (lesser) Mountain ranges. Each nation acts independently of the others, but they share goals, values, and methods. Long tunnels carved from bedrock connect the nations to each other, and communication is steady. The actions of the party will be known to the entire Formene within a month. Each nation formed several cities across its region, including a capital. The capital of the Batun nation is Talos; it is supported by six smaller cities, each of about fifteen thousand residents: Vinione, Hellone, Valone, Ossinone, Formone, and Eglone.

With time, the Elonde discovered that the Formene is divided into distinct bands. The Upper Formene consists of the top two miles of crust. Middle Formene and Deep Formene are two to eight miles deep and deeper than eight miles, respectively. These divisions are more temperature and natural flora and fauna driven than political, but most nations exist within a single band. The svirfneblin and the stone giant nations had a presence in the Upper Formene and Middle Formene even before the elves became the wardens of the Formene. Recently, deep duergar have hunted in the Middle Formene, but have not established anything beyond temporary hunting camps in the Middle Formene. Deep duergar have their capital (Akizdin) and dozens of smaller settlements (Zindin, Khathdin, Undin, Gabdin, and Naradin) in the Deep Formene. The elven diplomatic staff assigned to them expect expansion into the Middle Formene over the next century as they grow and become more comfortable with their distant cousins, the duergar.

Today, the Formene Elves of the Batun region maintain diplomatic and trade relations with ten races and sixteen nations. The kobolds are split into three nations along religious lines, the goblins are split into four nations due to irreconcilable tribal differences in leadership, and the grimlocks remain divided into two nations because neither wants to abandon its tribal territories to unite. The remaining seven races are consolidated into a single nation for each race, even when they are scattered hundreds of miles between their towns and other settlements.

The Formene nations of the Batun region have well-established boundaries to minimize conflict over hunting, farming, gathering, and living. While Talos is brightly lit, the diplomatic core has areas kept completely dark for the comfort of those visiting for formal meetings and less official reasons. Everyone is welcome to tour Talos; goggles are available to allow visitors to visit the city without discomfort. Few take this opportunity, preferring to work with the diplomats assigned to their capitals and occasionally visiting the dark areas of Talos when a meeting of several races is called.

While most citizens are allowed free travel within the Formene, it has been closed to the surface world, except for the trade nexuses, since mithril

was discovered early in the First Age of Man. Every entrance is warded with illusions, auras, and other protections. In over 2,500 years, no one has ever managed to enter the Formene from the surface. There are several challenges to the Formene: entering, surviving, and navigating. Entering is countered by powerful wards and illusions that discourage interlopers from exploring. Defensive wards are placed to further discourage anyone who can overcome the wards and illusions. Anyone who manages to bypass these protections will face a harsh, almost cruel, environment full of natural hazards and predators, one that cannot be survived, much less navigated, by surface dwellers without support.

Until now, no surface dweller has been invited into the Formene. The party members have been invited, and with any luck, the Formene will start a new chapter of their story that revolves around the Second Age of Man. Every act the party takes is being measured and taken as an example of the values of the Second Age of Man. One can only hope the players and their characters understand the gravity of the situation.

Denizens of the Upper Formene

The Upper Formene extends from the surface to a depth of about two miles.

Dopplegangers

Although most commonly found in the surface world, small groups of these neutral shapeshifters are found throughout the Formene, acting as parasites on more powerful Formene races.

Dragons

The magnificent wyrms who soar through the skies of Barestir are occasionally found in the tunnels beneath, particularly in the Upper Formene. Black, bronze, gold, and rarer breeds of dragons turn up in small numbers. Most of these wyrms can leave the Formene at will, typically through sheer vertical shafts in the mountains that are not secured, and are rarely used even by them.

Wyrms who lair in the Formene are looking to rest, enjoy their hoards, and savor life. Few denizens of the Formene would ever tangle with a wyrm. Often the wyrm will allow locals to worship it and allow them to guard its treasure. When they grow bored or hungry for more treasure, they venture out for a few months to raid, terrorize, and loot.

Negotiations with the Snirflebin. Artist: Adam Schmidt

Trade Nexus Network

The Formene used powerful wards and illusions to make every entrance difficult to find and almost impossible to access. They balanced the closing of the Formene by creating trading nexuses throughout the land. These nexuses allowed controlled quantities of resources to enter the surface world while shielding the Formene from exploitation. At these locations, they traded goods, knowledge (mundane and arcane), and rarely, services with the surface dwellers.

A total of thirty-five nexuses operated until they were shut down. Ten in each of the greater mountain ranges of Barestir: Batun and Alithis, and five in each of the lesser mountain ranges: Gorthsea, Oliden, and Argors. When cults dedicated to Hastur took over the surface world and threatened to overrun the Trade Nexus Network to gain access to the Formene, the elves elected to withdraw from the world of man, shutting down all nexuses and placing them in a magically induced lockdown state. Recently, one nexus has been breached, Batun #4. This breach was the subject of *DNH2 – The Buried Zikurat*.

Each nexus is a large space of eight levels. Structured like a pair of step pyramids, they mirror each other at the base with their equator separated by rock. The underground part belongs to the Formene Elves, and the upper half belongs to the surface dwellers. The two sides are linked by a pair of large trading floors where teleportation pylons moved tons of cargo between the sides. Most of the nexus pairs were separated by about two hundred feet of rock.

Surface sections held large doors at the ground level for staff and cargo to enter and exit throughout the day. Formene sections have tunnels that lead into the Formene. These tunnels are protected by force walls to prevent surface dweller incursion. When in lockdown, these walls are supplemented with four additional walls at random intervals along the tunnel. Many of the levels within the nexus are only accessible via teleportation pads. Additionally, magic maintains the lighting, refreshes the air, and reengages the locks for many of the doors. The powerful magics involved in creating a nexus drained many Formene wizards to the brink of death.

Each half had an administrator. Most of the surface administrators were human, over half were women. Both sides had a staff, including security guards, archivists, and other support personnel. Fees paid by those who traded in the nexus, especially those paid by traders keeping a trading office in a nexus, supported the infrastructure.

The main rule of the nexus network was fair trade or walk away. This simple rule governed the nexuses for over a millennium. Fair is subjective, but commonly understood that no one could be forced to accept a trade felt to be unfair. The Formene declined to enter trade contracts; the fluidity of demand made contracts stifling. However, the Formene were quite consistent in the quotas governing what rare metals, objects, and minerals were available through trade. The quantities were carefully selected to approach a balance between sating man's thirst and preventing man from trying to manipulate supply, thus exploiting the ores and minerals of the Formene indirectly.

Fifteen hundred years ago, the cult of Hastur was poised to take over the lands of man. The Formene Elves closed and secured the trading nexuses, effectively sealing off the Formene from the surface. The nexuses never reopened and were mostly forgotten when the First Age of Man ended a few centuries later. Some legends persist, exaggerated and distorted by the dark ages. Legends can rarely be trusted to be completely truthful.

Four Things to Know about the Trade Nexus Network:

- 1—Not all survived the two millennia – Of the 35 nexuses, 21 survived the ravages of time. Three were destroyed by earthquakes, and one was destroyed by surface stone giants. In all four cases the surface step pyramid was destroyed, leaving the subterranean portion without a mirror. Rebuilding a nexus takes about two years of construction after a year of preparation. The magics used are not currently practiced since the initial thirty-five were built ten generations

Goblins

Goblins are small, lawful evil humanoids with flat faces, broad noses, pointed ears, wide mouths, and small, short fangs. Other goblinoid races live within the cities and other settlements of the goblins. Bugbears are giant, hairy, chaotic evil cousins of goblins. Hobgoblins are lawful evil bulky humanoids with hairy hides ranging from dark reddish brown to dark gray. The confederation considers the goblinoids guests; however, some of them break the edicts of the confederation. This makes their presence a subject of diplomatic discussions and occasional sanctions. The bugbears are particularly disinclined to keep the peace. Hobgoblins tend to be much better behaved and are under consideration for a city and supporting smaller caves of their own.

The goblins are divided into four nations. In a chain of events that roughly parallels the War of the Roses, four leaders claimed to be the true goblin king. The backers of the goblins making the claim divided as well. When the Formene Elves approached the goblins, the easiest road to peace was to recognize each would-be king as a separate nation. Borethir founded Borethet, Byzou founded Byzothet, Anindel founded Anindethet, and Samua founded Samuthet. These leaders are long dead. The current leaders would end the division and settle who would be the rightful leader in a peaceful way; however, tradition keeps them from talking to one another, and thus prevents any progress down this line.

ago. The library contains the documentation needed to perform the work but only one of the many spells necessary is currently practiced, **destroy stone**. The remainder would need to be mastered by the current generation of wizards.

- 2—Reopening the first nexus won't happen in less than a year – Once the decision to reopen the network is made, the first reopening will be nearly a year after. The staff necessary will come primarily from the Trade Quarter, who will need time to shift responsibilities to other staff before they can train elves to man a nexus. If the four destroyed sites will be rebuilt, reopening all 35 nexuses could easily take forty to fifty years from start to finish.
- 3—Not all nexus sites have a significant settlement nearby – Meawold is a week's travel by caravan from Caford, situated near Batun #4. While this distance is not impossible for trade to be successful, it will mean dramatic changes for Caford over the coming decades. (It will grow along the six-mile road from the nexus and clay pit mine back toward Caford.) Lagduf, the duchy that is the focus on ***DNH1 – The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil,*** is nearly two weeks from Caford and roughly three weeks from two other, currently dormant but intact, nexuses. The Second Age of Man's civilization covers less than a third of the ruled lands of the various kingdoms during the height of the First Age of Man. Many of the nexus sites are too far from cities large enough to foster trade. This will affect the order and rate at which the Trade Nexus Network would reopen, the direction of growth of the Five Kingdoms, and will put a great deal of pressure on the leaders of the kingdom to claim the lands leading to each nexus. Of the thirty-five:
  - ◊ Three are within a week of a capital
  - ◊ Six are within a week of a major city
  - ◊ Eleven are within a few days of a town that could become a city or major city in time
  - ◊ The remainder are in what is currently 'the wilds' of Barestir
- 4—The elves knew Hastur was defeated but chose to leave the network closed – Hastur is obsessed with the elves of Tumunzar, and they can sense his presence. Evidence of this can been seen in the encounter with Sherin Pothole; he reports that the elves of Talos sensed Hastur's aspect being destroyed. The reasons why the network remained closed are, for some, the stuff of conspiracy. The leaders of the Formene observed man to see if they would fall back to their ways. After a century, the fate of man was clear to them: self-destruction and obliteration. The elves focused on strengthening their new subterranean civilization and left man to his own devices. Only when Hastur's aspect was destroyed in DNH1 did the Formene Elves realize that man had built a new civilization. In the months since the Aspect of Hastur was brought into Tumunzar and subsequently destroyed, very intense debates concerning resuming contact with the surface have been a nightly occurrence.

The Ecology of the Formene Elves

The Formene is a vast subterranean world. The tribe of elves that moved into the Formene to become its wardens adapted dramatically over time. Their adaptations can be reversed if they change their environment for about a century. These adaptations make living in the Formene routine. Many people use Formene to refer to the elves and the lands interchangeably.

The Formene are attuned with nature and worship mostly the same elven gods of Life, Light, Knowledge, and Nature as their surface cousins. Their guardianship of the Formene has led to millennia of peace among the subterranean races and prevented human exploitation of the Formene. Over time, they developed a pale, rough skin and large dark eyes that have two sets of eyelids. Their eyes can see in "normal" light with the inner lids closed, and often do so when in Talos or other Formene Elf cities. This reduces the incoming light by 96%. In dim light, they open both sets of lids, which allows all available light to enter the eye. In complete darkness, they close both sets, freeing their minds to process other sensory information, which manifests as darkvision/blindsight 75'.

Like all elves, Formene Elves do not have body hair. Unlike their surface counterparts, many males keep their scalps closely cropped. Female Formene Elves tend to prefer very short hair as well, above the shoulders, typically in a pixie cut. Like all elves, the Formene live between 500 and 600 years.

Elven children adapt to their environment during puberty, which for elves is typically between ages 16 and 32. By the end of puberty, elves are fully adapted to their home environment. During their childhood, elves look generically "elven", and during puberty progressively take on the appearance of their tribe. By mid to late puberty, the exterior appearance changes are complete, and the internal changes finalize.

Adults adapt more slowly when they move into a new environment or change lifestyles. Adaptation pressure is noticeable after 25 or 30 years in the new situation, and changes start about ten years later; adaptation is usually complete about a century after the elves are introduced to the new environment.

During the First Age of Man, the Formene Elves enjoyed the delights of the surface world through trade with it. They enjoyed fine cuts of meat, surface fruits and vegetables, wooden goods, spirits, brews, varietals, and art. These they combined with subterranean plants, particularly mushrooms, and some lizards to create a unique cuisine. Like their surface cousins, the Formene Elves live in harmony with the subterranean world. Since closing the Formene to the world, they have shifted their diet to exclude the surface delights of old.

Talos, the Batun Mountain region's Formene capital, is a brightly lit, open city. Within Talos, about 40,000 elves live (around 32,000 adults and 8,000 children and adolescents). It is the jewel of the Batun Formene, and while difficult for the other races of the Formene to visit due to the bright lights, remains a dream for many young members of the other nations to visit.

Some see the Formene Elves as paternalistic toward the other nations. With their long lives, and the attitudes that come with them, they do behave paternalistically at times. The Formene deeply embrace practices and values that avoid exploitation of anyone, and work to lighten their touch over the centuries. Closing off the Formene was an extreme decision driven by a genocide level threat, and something that a small number of Formene Elves struggle with three millennia later.

Relationship with Hastur

Since closing the nexuses and withdrawing from the world, the Formene Elves have spent centuries debating a return to interacting and trading with the surface and other issues. The biggest issue is Hastur. His influence on the world nearly destroyed man. Scrying and other intelligence gathering suggests that the threat is largely neutralized. Only once has an Aspect of Hastur reached into the world (see *DNH1 – The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil*). Seeing the aspect arise and be confronted so quickly in Boldon has led to a growing movement to open the nexuses again. A marginal majority of the Formene feel that man is ready to try again and that Hastur's incursions will be confronted and stopped instead of taking root and spreading.

Connecting with the Surface

The Formene Elves and their love of knowledge led them to build a collection of human knowledge. Man's thirst for discovery and innovation intrigued them and led to a vast library. Most of this library has been translated into Elvish by scribes who preserve and reproduce books regularly.

Much like the role of Moors and Arabs and the Greco-Roman knowledge they translated and preserved, the knowledge from the First Age of Man that the Formene preserved will be critical to initiating the coming Renaissance phase of the Second Age of Man, assuming the party pursues the goal of restoring interaction and trade with the surface.

The Formene Elves spend many nights debating the impact of sharing their knowledge with this new Age of Man, both their knowledge and the knowledge they saved from the First Age of Man. The potential impact on the Second Age of Man intrigues and concerns the Formene Elves. Humans could greatly benefit from a Renaissance much like Earth did in the Sixteenth Century, or man could become externally and internally destructive as he did during the fall of the First Age of Man. The Formene are not of one mind on the subject. When they come to a consensus, the impact on the Second Age of Man will be massive.

Formene Female and Male. Artist: Adam Schmidt

The Ecology of the Dehava

Dehava are typically six to eight feet diameter at the ground in a rough oval and average between four and five feet in height. They could be mistaken for a mound of rocks around a tar ball when sleeping. When active, tendrils of a thick, tar-like substance extend between the rocks to touch the ground. They are typically dark brown to dark purple. These creatures are living rocks, silicon-based life, with a connection to the Elemental Plane of Earth. However, they are not elementals.

Before their relationship with the Formene, the dehava were deeply afraid of the other denizens of the Formene. Their eggs were taken as trinkets and decoration by other races. When they attacked to recover their children, they left no survivors to help keep their existence secret. When another creature was sensed nearby, they froze, hoping to escape detection as more than a mere pile of rocks. The initial encounter with the Formene was violent. The patience of the elf who could make a telepathic connection with them, Alotel, changed their world. She is still regarded akin to a prophet of the dehava. Her ability to relate to life previously thought impossible allowed for an understanding to be established. Eventually, mutual need and opportunity combined to the current, near symbiotic, relationship that exists today. Dehava are no longer feared, and in many cases, are deeply respected. Their place among the nations is secure, and they travel unhindered throughout the Formene.

When the Formene mines were active, the dehava ate the veins of rock and metal, spitting out odd, purified metal structures that resemble hair balls expelled by house cats. These balls of metal are easily smelted into ingots of various metals, including the elusive mithril and adamantium for smithing. The dehava are no longer actively mining, but they wander the paths of the Formene eating fallen rock, occasionally stumbling across veins of the metals, which they mark and leave idle for future mining efforts, once they take enough ore for casual needs. In fact, the species is mostly hibernating. Only a few score adults are active. The others are waiting for their next active period. The small amount of metals collected from their explorations have been saved and are the source of a stockpile, primarily mithril and adamantium. Clearing cave-ins keep the dehava busy and mildly entertained.

Their children lie in clutches of eggs, near the elven farms, waiting for a time when the Formene residents request large projects or resume mining. The eggs will rest in suspended animation for millennia, needing to bask in heat over 300 degrees for a year to develop into dehava fledglings.

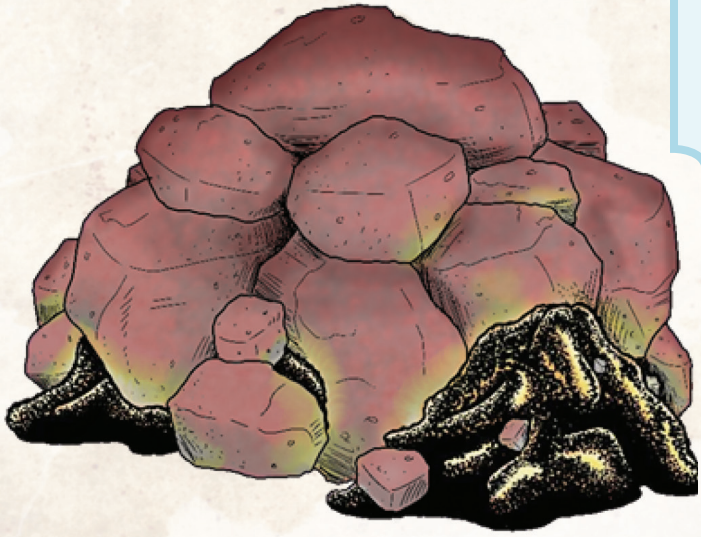
The Batun Formene Elves have a stockpile of 10,000 ingots of mithril and 8,000 ingots of adamantium, in addition to thousands of ingots of more common metals, for the eventual return of trade with the surface. Each dehava typically produces a score of ingots per year through incidental ingestion from clearing cave-ins and excavation requests. They also have thousands of veins of each metal marked for future mining.

Any denizen of the Formene can request a dehava excavation. They assess the request site, and if there are no risks, execute it. Denizens have requested new tunnels and expanded living space this way. The dehava follow the natural patterns of the rocks to ensure safe, sustainable expansions are made.

The dehava have learned to understand several languages. They 'hear' by interpreting the soundwaves striking their outer bodies. They are fond of the denizen groups that still practice oral history education, often sitting front and center close to the speaker so they can absorb the sounds and enjoy the stories. Histories and legends interest them the most. Debate and governmental details bore them. The dehava found a purpose when the elves moved into the Formene. The symbiotic relationship benefits both parties (dehava and the Formene denizens). The bigger reward for the dehava, beyond hearing oral history, myths, and legends, is the security that the Formene Elves provide for dehava eggs. This frees the adults to maintain paths throughout the Formene without worry that someone will discover and destroy their eggs.

Their diet does not allow them to easily consume the denser rock beyond the roots of the mountains, thus they are rarely seen beyond the mountain ranges. Because of this, Dehava do not maintain the intra-Formene tunnels, nor did they participate in their creation, due to the indigestion that afflicts them when they consume denser rock. On a few occasions, they have performed rescue missions in the tunnels. After such a mission, the dehava may lie dormant for a month to get over the strain of digesting the harder rocks.

Within the Formene, they are well known for clearing tunnels after cave-ins, helping towns and villages expand, and are legendary for their rescue efforts when denizens are trapped. Every nation welcomes them in their towns with open arms, something the dehava have learned to appreciate. They are very sensitive to seismic disturbances and often respond to emergencies before anyone else knows there is a problem.



Typical Adult Dehava. Artist: Z. Mann Zilla

Kobolds

Kobolds are short, lawful evil humanoids with hides that range from dark, rusty brown to rusty black, and non-prehensile, rat-like tails. Although kobolds are little more than pests in the world above, in the Formene they are a major threat. Kobolds can quickly strip a region of resources if their numbers remain unchecked. The independent races of the Formene enslave many kobolds; they are used primarily as front-line troops in the initial skirmishes of any war. The member nations actively work to prevent or liberate enslaved kobolds.

The kobolds are split into three nations along religious lines. The Duraga worship Ukalan, who has no form, but corresponds to the dog-men aspects of kobolds. The Amedos worship Eduban, who takes a form like Anubis and appeals to their war-like nature. Finally, Egal worship Akisun, an ancient red dragon. They are drawn to him through their inherent greed. The kobolds are the most difficult nations in the confederation, primarily due to their chaotic, warlike nature. The nations are constantly a source of discussion and sanctions within the Formene Confederation.

Minotaurs

Hulking and fierce minotaurs dwell in the Upper Formene, usually favoring the most confusing and complex cave systems for their lairs. Minotaurs generally lived by raiding and plunder, although most now sell their services to other folk who offer gold, food and a chance to fight the various predators of the Formene alongside them. Minotaurs are kept as slaves by Upper Formene dwellers such as shrooms, but such slaves are not numerous.

The vast delve known as the Labyrinth was once a minotaur empire of sorts. While no signs of the former minotaur civilization remain, thousands of the creatures still infest the area. Having fallen from those glory days, today they are more sell swords helping weaker nations keep their areas clear of predators and hunter-gatherers trying to restore their past prominence.

Education on Survival and Navigation of the Formene

Navigation

About two feet off the ground, throughout the Formene, are hidden, subtle symbols that serve as navigation aids and warnings. These symbols are like road signs for the Formene. They are only visible to native species and those wearing Rings of Elvenkind.

Risks

Living below mountains means living below billions of tons of rock. The major risks include pockets of unbreathable air, flooded passages, cavern ceiling collapses, and predators.

Air

Many things threaten air quality in the Formene. Open fires are banned from use by any citizens of the Formene, because they deplete oxygen rapidly. (Lack of airflow affects air quality.) Rocks that heat to cooking temperatures are one of many alternatives to fire for the citizens of the Formene. Blacksmiths use magically generated heat to convert ore, mined or deposited by dehava, into ingots, and from there into weapons. Formene citizens have various means to detect and avoid pockets of bad air.

Flooding

Water exerts a great deal of pressure on rock. When enough water accumulates, stone yields, and caves that were previously dry, flood. These flash floods involve millions of gallons of water, tons of pressure, and submerge miles of tunnel in extreme cases. Most of these events give off seismic warnings hours or even days ahead of time. From contact with the rock, or from other senses, most denizens of the Formene have a way to sense these issues and avoid them. Some denizens travel with sentinel animals, using their sensitivity to seismic activity as an early warning device.

Cave-ins

Ceilings collapse, the ground quakes, and fissures open. These threats haunt every denizen of the Formene daily. The dehava can sense seismic activity for hundreds of miles, and often respond to render aid, mark the danger, and if possible, clear the passage and restore normal travel. Like the floods, creatures sensitive to seismic activity provide warnings to those who cannot natively sense these disturbances.

Predators

Not every living thing in the Formene is civilized or part of the Formene Elf driven civilization. There are numerous threats that roam the Formene. The citizens do not attempt to purge or control them. Denizens travel and hunt in packs sufficient to drive off the predators likely found on the paths. This keeps them from becoming prey. These threats are typically non-sentient beings and beings that refuse to join the confederation, like: basilisks, behirs, cloakers, elementals, lizards, trolls, undead, and worms.

Misunderstandings

In *DNH2 – The Buried Zikurat*, Sherin Po-thole gives the characters three magic items to allow them to survive travel in the Formene. Once the City of Talos accepts them as ambassadors of the surface, the council gives them a clasp for their cloaks that doubles as a badge telling all Formene citizens the characters are under the protection of the elves. This protection does not make the characters immune to consequences for their actions. The characters are in a foreign land with customs completely alien to surface dwellers. A misunderstanding is a significant risk. Hot heads rule the day, while cooler heads prevail in the end. Although the Formene and their diplomatic corps commit significant resources to ensure that the cooler heads prevail, a slight might result in a slaughter that goes undiscovered for weeks or longer.

Duergar Escaping a Cavern Collapse. Artist: Brian McCranie

Humans Learning to Navigate the Formene. Artist: Brian McCranie

The Batun Formene

If the party played *DNH2 – The Buried Zikurat*

At the end of the adventure the characters encounter Sherin Po-thole, who invites them to travel to Talos and provides rings, boots, and cloaks for each member of the party to facilitate their travel. (*See Appendix 2, New Magic Items*.) From the trading nexus, the trip to Talos is along paths that were well traveled for over a millennium before being abandoned for 1,500 years. The Formene marginally maintained the paths. The trip takes about three days.

If the party did not play *DNH2 – The Buried Zikurat*

The characters are approached by a female halfling who leads them to one of the warded Formene entrances in the Batun Mountains, where they meet Sherin Po-thole, who will send them on a quest to prove their worth before giving them permission to enter and the items necessary to survive in the Formene environment. Use the first adventure seed in the adventure book to allow the party to follow an alternative path to being allowed to access the Formene. From the meeting with Sherin Po-thole, the trip takes eight days to reach Talos from the point of entry that Sherin provides. This journey will require one roll per day on the Formene Random Encounter Table (See Adventure Book, Appendix 3, except for the last three days, when the party is observed and thus shielded from random encounters.)

The gear to get to Talos

Once the party is in the Formene, they can start making their way to Talos. With the rings, boots, and cloaks equipped, travel is possible. The Boots of the Formene are important to navigating the Formene. They impart the ability to interpret navigational symbols placed by the inhabitants of the Formene and provide warnings of seismic events. The Cloak of the Formene is vital to survival within the subterranean realms. It provides breathing support, suppresses fires, buffers the wearer from damage, and helps make the foodstuffs of the Formene edible. The Ring of Elvenkind is the key element to communicating, seeing, and maintaining mental stability within the realms. Combined, these three tools can allow someone to travel the Formene with lowered risk from its unique hazards.

Welcome to Talos, Honored Guests. Artist: Adam Schmidt

Entering Talos

As they near Talos, the characters notice the natural caves give way to dressed corridor ten foot wide and ten foot long. After a hundred yards, the corridor takes a large 'S' curve, the second half of which is dimly lit, but progressively brightens. The light continues to grow brighter until the end of the corridor, another hundred yards after the 'S' curve, where they move to a world of near daylight.

Reception of Surface Dwellers

The party is monitored throughout its last two days of travel to Talos. When the party members step into Talos, there is a group of Formene Elves to greet them and escort them to quarters so they can rest and prepare to meet the elders of Talos.

Within Talos, the characters have no need for their boots, cloaks, or rings. Talos is well lit, stable, and has natural air recirculation. The Formene Elves do not ask for the items back; they assume the party will need them to explore the Formene and to return home someday.

After being taken to a guest area consisting of four bedrooms connected by a common area, the characters are given a chance to rest, stow their adventuring gear, and refresh themselves. There are guards at the entrance to the building, but no guards on the party's doors. The group that greets the characters invites them to rest for a day before being given a tour of the city and an audience with the elders. The characters are advised they have little to no need for weapons while in Talos, but are not disarmed, and no one tuts or brings attention to any weapons the characters choose to carry while in Talos.

When the team is rested, a few of the greeters take the party on a tour of the city. The residents are as interested in the surface visitors and their impression of Talos as the party is in the city. However, the Formene Elves are too reserved to mob the characters; in fact, only a few ask them any questions. Most look for a moment, then get back to their day. When the tour reaches a residential loop, the reception changes tone as inquisitive kids gather at a respectful distance and watch with wonder.

The elders of Talos invite the party to sit with them and get to know each other. The elders are Estor, Finore, Arwel, Nerwenye, and Irien. They represent the five values of elven society: Harmony, Knowledge, Grace, Privacy, and Efficiency. (See the Ecology of the Formene Elves.) The first two are male elves; the latter three are female elves. The elders focus on a small number of key external issues:

- Ensuring Hastur is confronted at his every effort to establish a toehold on Tumunzar
- Ensuring the Formene is safe from exploitation
- Connecting with their surface brethren
- Connecting with the other citizens of the Second Age of Man

The audience lasts until the party finishes discussing these issues. Re-opening the nexuses, and trading the rare metals and minerals of the Formene are for a different day, and are addressed in the adventure book. The elves are not opposed to these items; however, they are items for a different group to discuss, and the elders want to leave those discussions to the experts on trade.

After the audience, the party is free to explore the city as it wishes. They are advised that Formene Elves close their doors when they want privacy and open them to welcome visitors. Knocking before entering an open door is a welcome courtesy. Knocking on a closed door, beyond dire issues, is considered extremely rude. If the party insists on intruding on closed doors, the elders will assign an escort or expel them from the Formene permanently.

Stone Giants

Powerful and ponderous in action and thought, stone giants are strong enough to keep all but the most magically powerful foes at bay. These creatures dig enormous quarries for their homes, and they can work wonders with their chosen medium.

Few in number, stone giants leave other folk alone for the most part, and expect the same courtesy from anyone passing through their lands. The most powerful stone giant realm is the kingdom of Cairnstead, beneath the Alithis Mountains. In the Batun Formene, they number under 10,000 strong across three large quarries: Ulukthar, Zarathar, and Gabthar.

The stone giants were the first to join the Formene Elves as a member nation of the confederation. They suffered horribly when man initially came to the Formene to seek mithril.

The guards at the visitor estate are warm and will help the party find anything in the Formene it desires. While they will not follow the characters as they move through the city, they provide directions, aid, and as much guidance as a hunter-warrior on guard duty can provide. Talos has no military; the hunters train as warriors and can be called to repel any threat that might arise.

The City of Talos—Overview

The city of Talos is the capital of the Batun Mountain Range Formene. Six other cities support Talos in the Batun region. It is home to over 40,000 elves. Talos is dominated by its Grand Dome, which is 200' high at the crest, with a main floor of about 1,200' x 1,800'. Talos is well lit with magical light—not quite daylight, but bright enough that the characters will not need augmented sight and elves keep their inner eyelids closed.

The Grand Dome is split equally between four quarters. Most buildings are twelve floors tall; the central building of each quarter is twenty floors tall. The dome's center building, the Council Chamber, is a single story and about 100' square. The remainder of the buildings, particularly the ones near the center, are also shorter, at six to eight floors each. The quarters balance green space with buildings of stone that tower to the top of the dome.

Administration, Agriculture, Knowledge, and Trade are the focal points of the four respective quarters. Administration manages high level management of the Batun Formene. Six elven towns provide support by handling the day to day administration, including relationship management with the denizens, elf community affairs, and record keeping. Agriculture receives, processes, stores, and distributes foodstuffs from the farms. Knowledge contains the vast libraries, many research labs, schools, and other areas dedicated to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. The Trade Quarter focuses on business relationships with the other civilizations of the Formene. Each quarter employs about 5,000 citizens who work inside the city, with the remaining 5,000 working adults working in the farm domes or as emissaries to the other Formene civilizations. The remaining citizens are homemakers, educators, children, or juveniles, and spend most of their days in the residential tunnels or the green spaces.

Surrounding the main dome are suburban residential areas. These residence loops cover about two million square feet, including the tunnels. Most of the residents live in clusters. Each cluster holds three families connected by a common room where they gather in the evenings before retiring to their more private family areas. Over 4,000 clusters are connected to the Grand Dome by twelve tunnels. The tunnels' loops connect to the Grand Dome on both ends.

The farms are connected by a vast tunnel network below the Grand Dome. The Formene Elves manage about 200 domes where they farm various crops. Each cave is a circular dome with over four acres of crops. Since the nexuses were closed, the Formene Elves have developed techniques to grow some surface crops in the Formene. Most of the domes grow mushroom varieties. A small number hold subterranean livestock. Meat is currently a minor part of a Formene Elf's diet; dairy and blood replace most meat consumption.

Deeper in the roots of the Batun Mountains, the Formene have mines where mithril and adamantium deposits lie. These mines are not managed by the Formene Elves anymore. When active, the mines were managed and excavated by the dehava. The mines have been idle for centuries due to the lack of trade with the surface.

Denizens of the Middle Formene

The Middle Formene lies between two and eight miles beneath the surface of Barestir. Most larger cities of Formene Elves and duergar are in the Middle Formene.

Formene Elves

Formene Elves probably have the most significant presence in the Middle Formene. Their cities and strongholds are numerous, wealthy, and well suited for defense, and the Formene Elves themselves are organized and well connected. Talos and Erran, the capital of the Alithis Formene, are the most famous of Formene Elves' cities.

Government Structure

The Formene Elves are guided by five principles: Harmony, Knowledge, Grace, Privacy, and Efficiency. Every aspect of their lives is aligned with one or more of them. As a people of harmony, these principles are reflected in their government as well.

The tribe called the Formene Elves was known as Elonde when its members were forest creatures of the surface. Interestingly, their culture and government structure changed only in superficial ways as they moved from the surface to be wardens of the Formene. The ruling authorities are the king or queen and the council.

Royalty

The royal title is hereditary, passed down to the oldest and closest living offspring, regardless of gender. Most rulers abdicate after around 250 years of rule, mostly to enjoy a peaceful retirement of contemplation and study. After abdication, a former king or queen is known as a King Father or Queen Mother. Often they serve as advisors to the monarch; while respected, they have no power. To abdicate is to fully relinquish all direct participation in the government. They become normal citizens who may be consulted by anyone who desires their input. Tradition prevents them from giving unsolicited advice. For Elonde, this was a way to ensure than a monarch who abdicates doesn't undermine the authority of the next monarch. This concern never manifested; however, the Formene see the wisdom in the theory and observe it as tradition. The royal family and their protocol for succession is well documented. The ten closest relatives are known as being 'royal successors'. The king or queen's spouse takes the title of royal consort to avoid confusion; additionally, they hold no other position of authority, such as being on the council. A few royal consorts have served as ambassadors to other Formene citizens, and one was a farmer.

Currently, Queen Minye is the ruler. The monarch is not an absolute authority. Her role is to adjudicate disputes, supervise the enforcement of laws, and ensure justice is tempered. The council maintains the full authority to author, rescind, and modify all laws.

Minye is the thirteenth monarch since the tribe moved to the Formene. Her royal consort is Dironwe, a councilman for Efficiency before stepping down at her ascendancy. He was thought a wise member, known for his lively discussions within his aspect and at council meetings. They have two children, both male, Ohin and Enelror. Both work as ambassadors to other Formene civilizations. Ohin works with the deep dwarves, and Enelror works with one of the two tribes of pech. Minye is one of the youngest queens. Her father, Penlorfin, took the crown late in life, after a long life as an ambassador deep in the Formene. He was recalled to assume the crown when

Queen Minye and Her Royal Consort, Dironwe. Artist: Adam Schmidt

his brother died unexpectedly. Needing heirs, Penlorfin started a family after his coronation. Minye was born early in Penlorfin's rule. She married Dironwe when she was 108 years old. Due to age, Penlorfin abdicated on her 115th birthday. At present, Minye has ruled Talos for 196 years. Gossip swirls around the question of whether she will abdicate after 250 years of rule, or wait until she is nearer the average age of abdication, 518.

Council

Each of the five aspects has three members on the council. One of the three is the senior councilman or councilwoman (Elvish has more elegant terms); the others are associates. All three have equal votes in council matters. The senior council members do most of the talking, and they retain the right to bring new matters to the attention of the council for discussion. Most matters that come before the council rarely affect only one aspect. The members of an aspect focus on how the issue interacts with their aspect when discussing an issue. Elven wisdom understands that often aspects can be in opposition; the council members are seasoned, wise orators and explore matters with detachment, but are fastidious in their examination. Most votes exceed the 60% majority required for approval by being unanimous.

Council members typically serve 100 years on the council before stepping down and allowing others to govern. The concerns, ideas, and will of the people are significant influences on their process. Formene leaders do their best to avoid operating in a vacuum. Meetings are held weekly to discuss and debate issues. A grand meeting is held monthly to take those discussions into action.

Efficiency

This aspect concentrates on ensuring waste is minimalized and that returns on consumed resources are maximized. Both seem simple on the surface, but are complicated when examined in detail. Moving from the surface into the Formene required revamping most aspects of elven life. Processes are still being optimized today, after over 3,000 years of living in the Formene.

Grace

Being graceful is a well-known elven trait. Maintaining grace takes effort, even for an elf. Adapting to the Formene required many changes to elven culture and mannerisms. Finding a way to restore and later maintain grace through these changes and ongoing challenges developed into a distinct aspect of their world.

Harmony

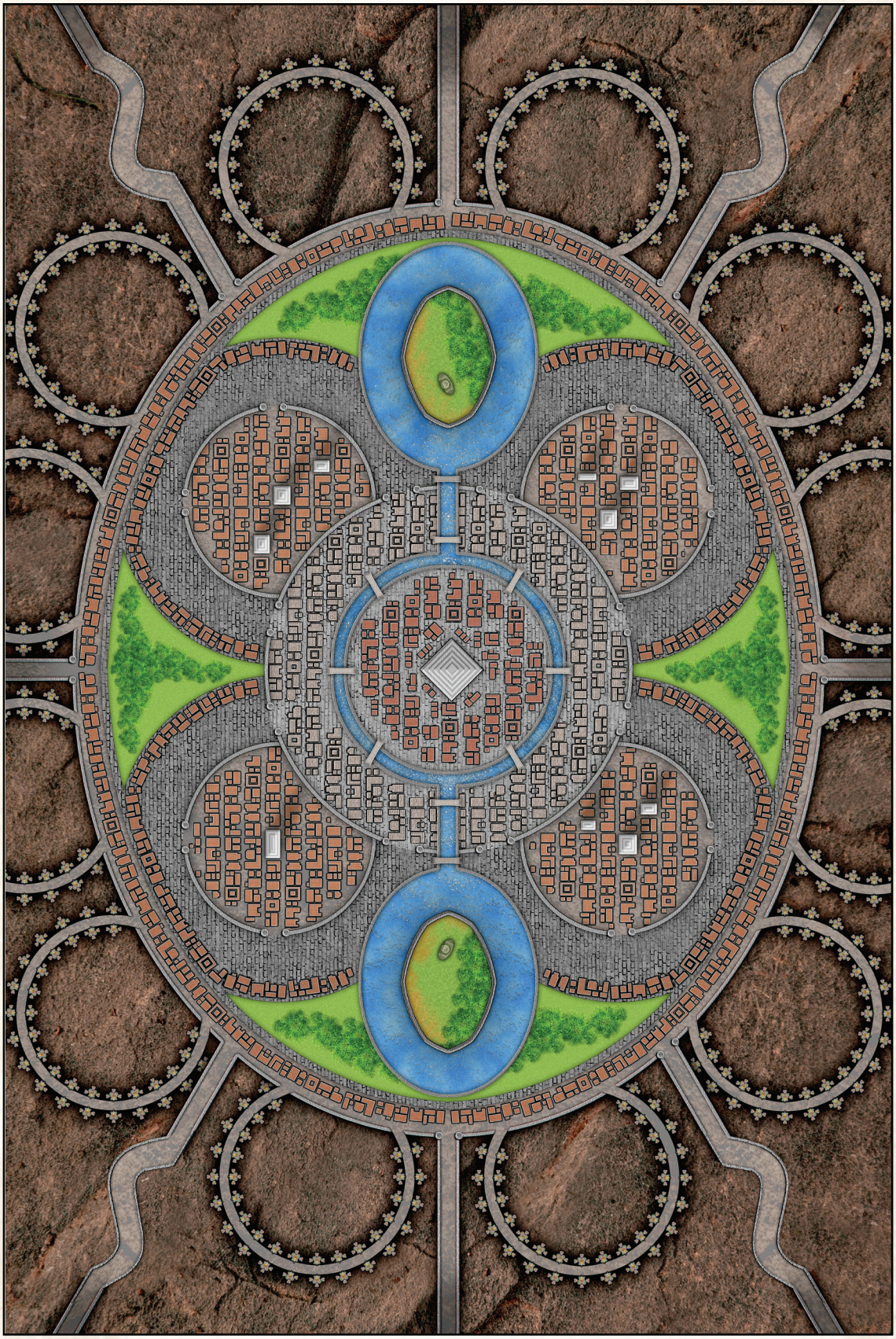
Living in harmony with their environment and their fellow subterranean denizens weighs heavily on the elven collective conscience. Having their fellow Formene citizens live in harmony after centuries to millennia of conflict and warfare is an even more challenging task. Conflict over resources, territory, ideology, and fear of exploitation are the key sources of disharmony. The Formene Elf places harmony among the residents as second only to preventing surface [read human] exploitation of the Formene.

Knowledge

The elven appreciation for knowledge is well known. The Formene have a duty to preserve and acquire knowledge. In the libraries of Talos, countless tomes of knowledge from the First Age of Man have been preserved. Additionally, the Formene Elves have recorded the history and knowledge of the Formene denizens they have encountered. The surface fell into a dark age when the First Age of Man collapsed. These libraries could be the key to recovering much of that lost knowledge and history.

Privacy

Many Formene Elves value privacy most. The privacy concern is often the one in opposition with the others. The aspect of Privacy stays very busy due to this shared concern, both within the tribe and for its neighbors. The leaders of Privacy are among the most skilled orators and debate opponents known to elvenkind. Always careful to offer solutions, not roadblocks, the Privacy aspect is well respected by even its fiercest political opponents.



The City of Talos. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Trade

The elves moved into the Formene to be wardens and shield it from the thirst of man for its resources. They found small isolated cultures, mostly small tribes bickering and warring when not struggling to find enough food to survive. After securing the Formene from the surface dwellers, the elves started to establish diplomatic relations with the denizens of the Formene. Being a peaceful tribe, the wardens sought peace and unity. They brought peace through trade, diplomacy, and education. Some isolated tribes reconnected and became larger tribes and later nations, neighbors settled border and resource disputes, and peace spread, slowly, but very surely. Today, tensions remain, but conflict rarely extends beyond a single skirmish of hours, before diplomacy restores peace. In three millennia of stewardship, peace has been truly broken less than a score of occasions, none of which lasted more than ten days.

Early in this process of peace, the tribe realized that keeping the peace with the surface was also necessary. Trade was determined to be the mechanism. Working with the various denizens of the Formene, the trade leaders established sustainable quotas for export of exotic goods to the surface. The most valued of these was mithril. It was exported only as finished goods, initially. The tribe did not want to share the techniques for working mithril. Over time, this position softened, and ore and the knowledge of how to work the metal into armor was exported. This sated the surface throughout the First Age of Man. Because ores and minerals are such an important part of the commercial balance, mining is controlled by the Trade Quarter. For about 1,500 years, mining of metals and minerals was a very important aspect of trade. When the Nexus Network was closed, mining became largely dormant.

To accomplish trade with the surface, several trading nexuses were built to focus the trade while providing security. A total of ten were built to support trade with the Batun Mountain Range Formene zone. The elves brought a wide range of surface goods into the Formene for the denizens to sample, and from there developed trade relationships. The nexuses were staffed by only Formene Elves on the Formene side. The surface side of the nexuses in Batun were primarily operated by humans. Some of the other nexus regions were staffed by dwarves and humans cooperatively.

Trade records run back to the earliest trades. The tribe keeps meticulous records and commits a good deal of effort maintaining them. With surface trade suspended for about two millennia, trade between the Formene regions has become their focus. Trade within the region creates efficiencies for basic needs where a group trades what it can produce easily for what it struggles to produce. While there is a market for luxury goods, art, etc., it is a minor fraction of all trade. The Formene Elves treat all the tribes as equals (even if they are paternalistic toward their shorter-lived neighbors), and use trade to develop and maintain interdependencies. The interdependencies also slowly led to a reduction in tensions and started the path to peace between the bickering groups. Within a few hundred years, the groups all had what could be called diplomatic relationships, all of which sprang from their strong trade relationships.

In the Formene, trade has also led to a shift from city-states to nations and then into a confederation. Not all the members of a species belong to a single nation, but most do. Many of the denizens were storytellers. When the Formene Elves began asking to collect their stories, legends, and myths as a record of the Formene's tribes, the denizens that had no written language, over time, adopted the elven alphabet, developed a written language, and transitioned to include written histories over a few centuries. Elvish, over time, became the Lingua Franca of the Formene. From these advancements, works of art developed. Initially, most of the art was retelling their legends, but they developed abstract and fine art over time. The trade efficiencies allowed a growing portion of each tribe to devote their time to intellectual pursuits beyond the basics of survival. Some tribes did not develop as fast or much at all. Not every denizen of the Formene is capable of these types of thought. However, most were. Cultural exchanges followed and peace became the norm in the Formene.

From simple trade, civilizations advanced and peace became the norm. Understanding, even appreciation, followed. All denizens of the Formene began to thrive. Soon the trade leaders absorbed a diplomatic corps, and the ambassadors from the tribe advised on more than just trade. Most groups of denizens have some form of ambassadors with their nearest five to ten neighbors. The Formene Elves maintain an ambassador with every identified group of denizens. They maintain neutrality, seeking to elevate all sentient beings in the Formene through peace, trade, and diplomacy, while favoring none.

Trade today is organized into critical goods and luxury goods. Critical goods include food and other essentials for day to day living, and are always given priority in transit, and in the event of a problem, recovery. Various regions of the Formene are more hospitable to certain food stocks. For example, the deep goblins, who live exclusively in the Upper Formene (the first two miles of the crust), have cooler caves than the deeper layers. These cooler caves are ideal for mushroom wine and several mushroom species that prefer cooler temps. The angulians (a Formene cousin of the sahuagin) live in the Deep Formene, where the ambient temperature is much higher. In this subterranean, near tropical environment, the mushrooms that grow take on a flavor and texture that resembles beef cattle when prepared properly. Meanwhile, duergar in the Middle Formene harvest fish from vast underground lakes that have developed into huge fisheries. The trade network makes these available to denizens from all zones.

The foundation of trade, and by extension agriculture and domestication, has enabled the denizens of the Formene to find peace, explore the written word, experience population and territory expansions without warfare, and opened the door for the denizens to advance well beyond their near-subsistence living and violent struggles to exist. While the Formene might seem like a utopia, and thousands of years of peace and improved quality would seem to support that conclusion, the Formene remains a dangerous place. There are tribes that are not part of the confederation who raid regularly and a significant quantity of wild life that nests, hunts, and roams the Formene. A dynamic environment of floods, bad air, and muck adds to the threat from hostile creatures. Also, there is still conflict and even violence from time to time.

So many generations have passed for the non-elven portion of the Formene Confederation, that they no longer pine for the goods of the surface. Only the elves remember; for them, it has been five generations—not fifty. Trade with the surface is welcomed by the traders of the Formene, elf and non-elf alike. The elves miss the surface goods, the non-elves, having seen the benefits of trade, are looking forward to new markets for their goods. Few have any ambitions to trade directly with the surface in a nexus, and even fewer desire to visit the surface.

Duergar

The Middle Formene is home to the largest and most powerful gray dwarf realms. The duergar have no use for Eldszar and do not worry about ages-old vendettas against the surface world; they came down to the Middle Formene because the lower one descends into the earth, the more rare and wondrous minerals one can find. If the Lower Formene were not so completely inhospitable, the gray dwarves would pursue their veins of ore and gemstones all the way to the roots of the world. The lower reaches of the Middle Formene represent the deepest depths at which large cities can be easily sustained.

Duergar cities are less numerous than those of the Formene Elves, but any given gray dwarf city is likely to be a strong, wealthy, and martially inclined realm, quite powerful enough to deter the attacks of its hostile neighbor, such as the shroom. The cities of Gundabiz, Sheledzund, Zaddushur, and Bunala are good examples of duergar large cities. Barukthur is their capital.

Grimlocks

Grimlocks are powerfully built, neutral evil humanoids in the northern and central reaches of the Middle Formene. Grimlocks have thick, scaly, gray skin and long, black, filthy hair. Their teeth are white and extremely sharp, and their eyes are blank white orbs. Tales speak of tribes of primitive humans who have dwelt overlong in the tunnels of the Formene, and grimlocks are said to be their descendants.

Grimlocks are tireless hunters and raiders, and they often range dozens of miles from their lairs in search of food. Like the goblins and orcs of the higher levels, grimlocks are frequently enslaved by other races (particularly shrooms) and can be found almost anywhere.

The grimlocks long ago laid claim to the cavern complex called Orgol. Within it, the village of Alcmeg is a sprawling sea of tents and stone fences surround a central clearing. The other nation, Gorga, makes its main home in the Cavern of Heads. The Cavern of Heads has hundreds of small caves where the grimlocks make their homes and a large central cavern where they socialize.

The Knowledge Quarter

This area of Talos is more than mere bookshelves stuffed with dusty tomes, scrolls, and scraps of parchment. The pursuit of knowledge is a noble task to the Formene Elves. There are some thirty thousand books in the Talos library. The quarter also serves as a university, stores trade records, hosts agricultural research, plans, and practices, as well as magical research, and holds much of the knowledge published during the First Age of Man.

Active records remain in the quarter where they are used. When the Agricultural, Trade, and Administrative Quarters archive records, they transfer them to the Knowledge Quarter. These records are a small portion of the library. Research, magical and nonmagical, occupies a significant portion of the library. However, the predominant share of the collection is books copied from the surface world and translated to Elvish.

The quarter employs a little over 5,000 people, most of whom work within the quarter. A tenth of the workers travel from tribe to tribe in the Formene collecting stories, histories, and other information. About half of the workers are research librarians specializing in specific collections. The balance is split between maintaining and creating new works.

The research librarians maintain a good grasp of what is in each tome within their collection. Two or three people are assigned to each collection and work together to maintain a body of living knowledge to aid visitors in finding tomes, scrolls, and parchments relevant to their study.

The work to maintain the tomes within can range from using magic, such as the **Mending** cantrip, to dusting and other maintenance tasks to repair or replace severely damaged tomes. Those who maintain the books also maintain the catalog and organize the books.

Many new books are created each year. Research, trade, composing poems, writing tales, and other academic efforts lead to over a hundred books per year. Additionally, about four dozen books are added to the library from the other nations of the Formene. Once a decade, the five Formene regions exchange new books.

The workers who create tomes have been actively organizing and converting scrolls and loose parchments into tomes. At peak, there were over a million loose scrolls and parchment pages. Today, that number is less than two hundred thousand. This pace indicates the project will conclude in about five hundred years. However, this is not true; it is the product of linear thinking. The bulk of the work is organizing the material into tomes, deciding if it will be in more than one, and determining the order within the tome. With only a fifth of the material remaining, the sorting portion is greatly reduced in scale, and the work will take closer to a hundred years to complete. This is well beyond the knowledge of any but the most knowledgeable sages.

Six Things to know about the Knowledge Quarter

- 1—New books from the surface – The elves who create new works look forward to receiving new books from the surface. Since the Trading Nexus Network closed, they have focused exclusively on converting the scrolls and loose parchment into tomes. They look forward to absorbing the books made by man since the nexus closed. Sadly, while there are about two thousand written books that could be obtained as a backlog, the intake of new books will likely number under seven hundred, significantly lower than the eleven to thirteen hundred they hope to buy or copy.
- 2—Maintaining old books – The elves who maintain the books spend more time copying them into new books than any other task. They spend their off time researching new forms of parchment that resists the ravages of time better, ritual magic that elevates **Mending** from one square foot to much larger volumes, and preservation techniques or magics. These areas of exploration are focused on one thing, minimizing the books they must replace each year due to the ravages of time. This could be an epic exploration quest for a party inclined to search for non-traditional treasures and rewards.

- 3—Trading knowledge with the surface – In the past, the knowledge created by the Formene Elves was traded for little in return. Most leaders in the quarter oppose continuing this trend. The remainder of the leaders do not share this concern. They see a future where the elves are mentors to man, and in their vision, man will value the archives of the Formene greatly.
- 4—Trove of new magic – Over the centuries, the Formene Elves have developed several spells. Many of them, the elves feel, have little use to those who live their lives on the surface. How to value these spells for the Trade Quarter to manage is a concern. These spells range from simple cantrips to high level spells. The spells that maintain the protections on the Formene from intruders are not available for trade or for training. One spell, **Destroy Stone**, could be found in DNH2.
- 5—The elves of the Knowledge Quarter do not know how they will find the staffing to meet the demand for copying books of lost surface knowledge for the expected demand. This is the driving force behind their plan to limit the release to a manageable number and set up a contract where the numbers will likely decrease each year.
- 6—A few centuries ago, a researcher had a spell backfire. The resulting explosion and fires destroyed about three hundred volumes of translated human knowledge. The names of the tomes reside in the library records. An adventurous party might be inclined to search the lands, including dusty monasteries and rebuilt cities and ruins, to help restore the collection. The rewards might be substantial.

The Agriculture Quarter

The Agricultural Quarter manages the workforce, plans the crop cycles, manages livestock for the farms, and collects, processes, and distributes the harvest. Most of the quarter consists of storage for harvests. Between the farms and the administration, the quarter is responsible for ensuring all harvests are collected, processed, and preserved while also ensuring that shares are distributed regularly. Crops grown for trade are transferred to the Trade Quarter instead of stored.

The quarter employs about 8,000 people in total. About half work in the 200 or so farms managed by this quarter. The remainder of the staff work to move harvests into the quarter or work within the quarter.

Farming is not a typical habit for elves. The Formene Elves adapted quickly but also used magic to find ways to make farming suitable for them. Over a dozen spells have been developed to manage irrigation, till, plant, tend, harvest, and load crops, along with analogs for livestock husbandry, birthing, feeding, tending, cleaning, and wrangling. Slaughter and preservation is done by workers in the quarter.

Five things to know about the Agriculture Quarter

- 1— Water – They tap a Lower Formene artesian well (starting eleven miles below the surface) for the water for all farms and the city. The water is pumped via magic to the various wells and cisterns. In the farms, the cisterns are above the farm, the natural seepage providing the water; spells manage the seepage so it is not continuous. There is a font in the Agricultural Quarter that is linked to the aquifer, and cisterns collect the waste water. The waste water is purified weekly and returned to the aquifer. Their calculations show they are losing about 0.1% of the water per year. Each century at some point, a portal to the Plane of Water is opened to replenish the aquifers.

- 2—Contention between agriculture and livestock – A story as old as civilization, livestock and farmers live at some level of contention. Livestock need a lot of resources. About forty percent of crops goes to feed the livestock. The livestock consume twice as much water as the crops. While these tensions are nowhere near the range wars sometimes seen on the surface, there are tensions. Most of the discussions concerning the contention for resources start civil, give into bickering, and a minority end only when the shouting starts. The leaders feel they understand both perspectives. The workers are not so sure.
- 3—Opinions concerning resuming trade – Most of the members of the Agricultural Quarter look to the possibility of resuming trade with more hope than fear. The big expectation is that when surface dwellers get a taste, specific crops (and livestock) will see increases in production to match those desires, and their goal will be to balance the types of crops (and livestock) between what is needed for surface trade and what is needed, along with imported foodstuffs, for Formene needs. If additional farms are needed, four of the active dehava are committed to making more farms. Wine production is down to a tenth of its peak. Many of the vineyards are 80% storage and 20% vines in a constant rotation to keep the soil fresh.
- 4—Problems – The farmers and ranchers face minor concerns daily. Additionally, they have long term problems that they ponder, seeking to explore options to find the one that provides the best result.

The Formene Elves of the Agriculture Quarter are concerned:

◊ that human greed will never allow the Formene to be opened to surface peoples (other than some exceptional individuals)

◊ that a water issue will develop and be blamed on the herds and possibly the carnivores

◊ that the tensions between farmers and ranchers will spill over into permanent division

- 5—Hopes – Contemplating problems is not what occupies their full attention. Contemplating the paths of hope takes an equal share too.

The Formene Elves of the Agricultural Quarter are optimistic:

◊ that their produce, wines, and cuts of meat will be very popular, which will make the workers too busy to bicker and argue

◊ that the increase in demand will lead to an increase in profit shares for all

◊ that interaction with the surface will create opportunities to explore the plants and animals of the surface for possible widening of the crops

Villains of the Middle Formene

Shroom

This creature is about the size and stature of a gnome but for the enormous mushroom cap atop a cylindrical head. Two sinister, drilling dark eyes pierce from beneath flaring eyebrows on an otherwise featureless face.

After the Formene Elves, the shrooms are probably the most powerful of the Formene's peoples. Sinister and notorious, shroom cities tend to be quite small by the standards of other races—few of them number more than 500 shrooms. However, since shrooms are uniquely well suited to hold great numbers of slaves and thralls, shroom cities may have ten times as many slaves as shrooms. Shroom thralls are compelled to absolute loyalty and zeal in the service of their horrid masters. The shrooms can field entire armies of thralls whenever they wish and hurl them into battle without concern for their loyalty or fighting spirit.

The shrooms prefer the lower reaches of the Middle Formene, but they also have numerous communities in the Lower Formene. The mighty city of Aggar is the most famous of their realms.

They are not part of the Formene Confederation, and are hostile to all they encounter. They capture and convert most of their foes into thralls rather than kill them. They are the greatest threat to all Formene nations.

The Trade Quarter

The Trade Quarter manages all trade relationships, fees, and transportation of trade goods between the settlements of the Formene. Previously they also managed the Trade Nexus Network, but for the last millennium and a half, it has been dormant. The quarter has kept records of every trade they have overseen since first contact with each of the settlements and nations. The Trade Quarter also warehouses goods coming in and out of Talos for transportation and for internal distribution.

The quarter employs about 5,000 people. About ten percent work outside of Talos in transport and oversight roles. Before the Trade Nexus Network went dormant, the quarter employed more than 6,000 people with twenty percent working outside the quarter. About a quarter of the Trade staff focuses on record keeping and trend analysis.

While elves find haggling over price to be petty and annoying, they recognize that trade leads to peace. They engage in trade with all the settlements of the Formene that will engage with them to improve communication and understanding. Trade also introduces interdependencies that help make open conflict undesirable.

Trade has been the largest contributor to the peace, stability, and growth of the Formene civilizations.

Four Things to know about the Trade Quarter:

- 1—Surface Contact – The Trade Quarter is a key proponent of resuming contact with the surface. Their goal is to reopen the Nexus Trade Network and grow to their previous position of prominence in Talos. Many Formene residents had favorite delicacies and goods from the surface world. Keeping these goods flowing greatly enhanced the status of the Trade staff. While about five generations have come and gone while the network was dormant, the current generation wants to return to those days and enjoy the status upgrade.
- 2—Reopening the network – The quarter has insufficient staff for a full restoration of surface trade. They will need to find a way to add about one thousand people to their teams to return to their glory days (at least as they see it). Many in the Trade Quarter expect to see a call for between six and eight hundred families to have a third child to help with this issue. Most of the homes in the residential loops are setup for a four-member nuclear family; however, families with one adult child could have another child without needing to expand the residential quarters. The Agricultural Quarter has already figured this out and is making plans to be able to feed so many new residents.
- 3—A step too far? – The trade between the settlements is overly specialized. Their unseen interdependencies run so deep that anything more than a skirmish could lead to famine and strife. Some elves feel this is a great thing; other elves and some of the other nations, if they were aware, would see it as a threat.
- 4—Inferiority complex – The staff of the Trade Quarter feel inferior to the Agricultural Quarter. This is a perception, not actually true. But with the Trade Nexus Network closed, they feel Agriculture has gained standing lost by Trade. The Trade Quarter's efforts have been focused on bringing Trade back to par with the other quarters in preparation to be top dog again when the nexuses reopen.

Svirfneblin

A dark-skinned, deep-dwelling breed of gnome, often referred to as deep gnomes, svirfneblin live in hidden caves and secretive strongholds throughout all three layers of the Formene though today most dwell in the Middle Formene. Deep gnomes avoid trouble by simply staying well clear of it, and few strangers even blunder across svirfneblin towns. However, they maintain three sites in the open: Cothorp, Beothorp, and Cuthorp, sites where they trade, host diplomats, and receive visitors. The remainder of their strongholds and caves are not known to any outside their nation. This practice is a point of contention between the svirfneblin and the Formene Elves, but not to the point of conflict or action.

The Administration Quarter

The Administration Quarter coordinates all activities in the other quarters and manages the diplomatic service. It is supported by six smaller cities in the Batun Mountain Formene. Nearly half of its staff works out in the Formene, not in Talos. Records include information on every settlement in the Formene known to Talos, including basic census data, alliances, and issues. This quarter also manages all requests for expanding settlements for the Batun Formene nations. All requests to have one of the dehava expand a settlement come through this office.

Administration coordinates the activities of others, but does not sit above other groups. They are a peer of the other quarters. They focus on communicating the needs of the confederation, the towns, and Talos to the other quarters, and the quarters manage the tasks without oversight from the Administrative Quarter.

The diplomatic corps falls under the Administrative Quarter; these elves are dispersed throughout the member nations of the Formene Confederation. Some diplomats work alone in small settlements or camps; others work in teams of five or six in the larger cities and capitals of the member nations. A small contingent explores with a detachment of hunter-warriors looking for previously uncontacted denizens. Their goal is to establish contact and gauge their response for establishing official contact.

Six things to know about the Administration Quarter:

- 1—Dehava – The dehava are not slaves to the Formene Elves. They enjoy interacting with others and gladly trade their efforts for the security of their eggs. They largely make their own assignments from the requests and enjoy nearly complete autonomy within the Formene. Being able to explore the Formene without fear of discovery or attack brings joy to them.
- 2—Diplomats – The diplomats maintain small staffs in all the major settlements and visit all settlements regularly. Lingua Franca for the Formene is Elvish. Their Elvish is different enough from Surface Elvish to take a little effort to understand. This is a product of thousands of years of separation. There is no game mechanic effect on the minor divergence of the languages.
- 3—Old Settlements – When separated groups of denizens combine into one city, the abandoned settlement is tracked. If no one claims it, eventually it is turned into a mushroom cave park, ripe for settlement as needs evolve. These caves dot the landscape.
- 4—Military – Talos has about a thousand hunter-warriors, but no standing military. They scout and escort a lot more than they patrol or invade. The biggest threat is the creatures that roam the Formene who lack the intelligence, or will, to join the civilization. Basilisks, behirs, cloakers, and worms are some of the more common threats that hunter-warriors manage for travelers.
- 5—Contact with the Surface – Most of the Administration Quarter is in favor of resuming contact with the surface. However, they are very cautious and are seen by the other quarters as being opposed to the idea because they are so vocal about their concerns but silent about their interests.
- 6—Missing Diplomats – Not every diplomat is accounted for. The records of missions with a final status of "indeterminate" would provide clues to their destination and mission. These could be investigated by a determined party. Some might be found alive. In all cases, closing the assignment, and providing closure to the families of these diplomats, would be a treasured gift.

Living Areas

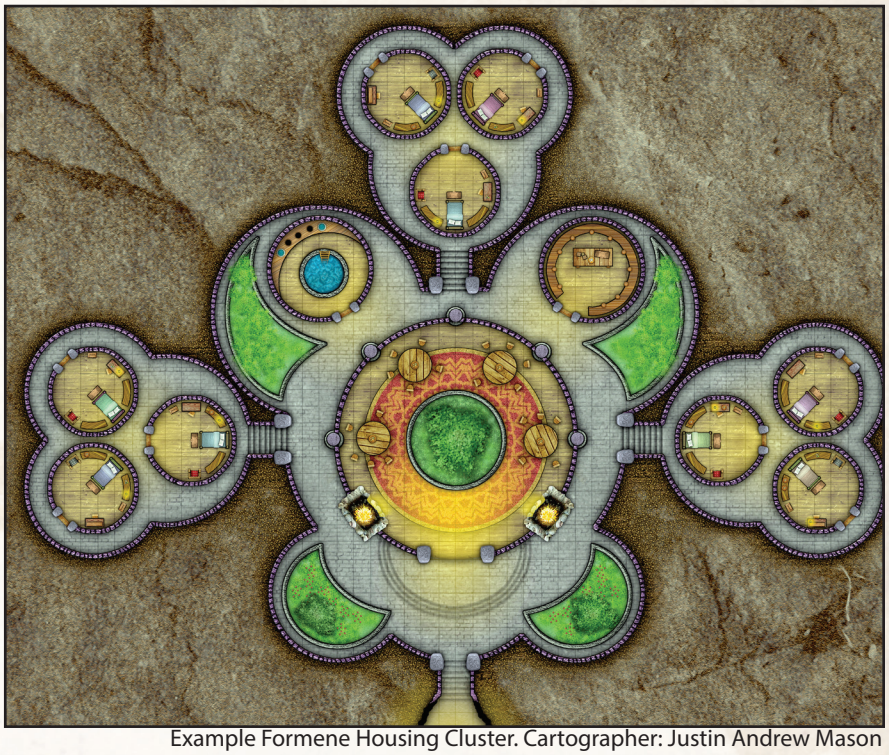
High up on the main wall of Talos is a balcony that wraps around the dome, with twin openings at regular intervals (like a clock face) that lead to the twelve residential tunnel loops. Each loop holds hundreds of residential clusters. All residents of Talos live in these clusters.

Talos has 4,200 clusters, 350 clusters per loop. Each typical cluster has private residences for three families of four individuals, a typical nuclear family. In addition, a cluster has green space, a common room, a study/library, and a place to bathe. There are other housing cluster designs, but they are the exception, not the rule.

During the day, the children of several clusters meet in the common room of a central cluster for child supervision, education, and other cultural traditions. Often the supervising adults are grandparents to the children they are tending. While grandparents often have an active role in the lives of their grandchildren, their parents also have an active role in the raising of their children. Once children reach age sixteen, their education becomes more advanced and more specialized. Many attend more structured classes in the Knowledge Quarter or apprenticeships in other areas.

Families typically have all their meals together and spend the evenings together. Midday meal is commonly taken in the greenspaces of the main dome. The clusters are organized to put families as close together as possible.

The visitor housing where the party will be housed while visiting Talos is in the Administration Quarter, near the dome wall near the North Grand Entrance. This building has four floors. The ground floor is open and commonly used for meetings. The remaining floors have four rooms attached to a common area. Each room can sleep two people. Two hunter-warriors provide minor guard duty for the visitor residence to ensure the privacy of visitors. This role is more ceremonial than critical; elves becoming overly exuberant and hounding a visitor is unheard of, but theoretically possible. The second floor is designed for the larger denizens of the federation like minotaurs. The upper two floors are designed for denizens from angulians to deep duergar. They can be entered from the dark diplomatic spaces, and all the light from Talos can be blocked with a single command. The human compatible beds have discreet little steps for smaller members to get into the beds, and chairs suitable to most statures are stacked in supply closets on the 3rd and 4th floors.



Example Formene Housing Cluster. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

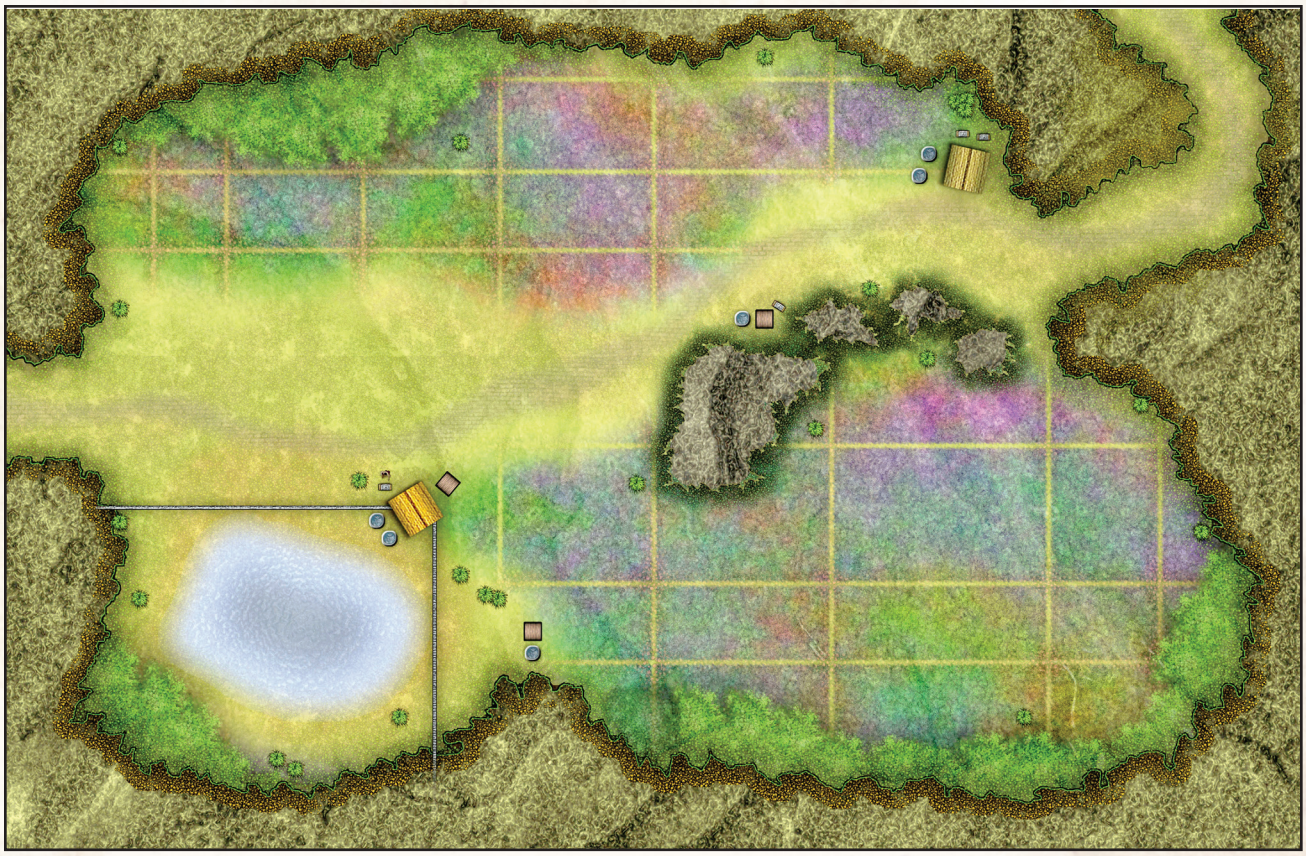
Farm Areas

In smaller domes, underneath the floor of the dome of Talos, the Formene Elves maintain over 200 farms. Most of these farms produce crops, the balance, livestock. The main crops are mushrooms. Supplementing them are crops like yams, carrots, radishes, beets, parsnips, salsify, turnips, and rutabagas. These tunnels are not shown on the City of Talos map.

The farms use a thick layer of mulch, peat moss, and other organic compounds to recreate soil. Some of the soil blends produce heat to help the crops grow. They are normally fenced in with stone fences since the soil is built up from the stone floor of the farm dome.

The heat producing soils are the ones that host dehava eggs mixed in with the crops. The heat is sufficient to keep the eggs viable, but in suspended animation, and the eggs have no impact on the yield. This keeps the eggs in accordance with the social contract between the Formene Elves and the dehava.

Livestock are another element of farming in Talos. About 20% of the farms are dedicated to livestock. Rodents, lizards, and larger insects comprise most of the livestock.



Example Formene Farm. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Denizens of the Lower Formene

No place on Tumunzar is as strange and dangerous as the Lower Formene. This level of the Formene extends from eight miles below the surface to unfathomable depths and features a degree of strangeness that would drive some surface dwellers insane. Few upper-worlders ever descend to the Lower Formene, and few of the Lower Formene's denizens want anything to do with the surface world. Some of the creatures in the Lower Formene—intelligent or otherwise—aren't even aware of a surface world; others have heard of it as a mythical place.

Why would any creature with intelligence or common sense live in such a harsh and barren environment? Some races have lived here for generation upon generation, and the Lower Formene is simply their home. Other creatures settle here to take advantage of the Lower Formene's unique magical properties, rare ores, or shelter from the hated sun. Still others view a sojourn in the Lower Formene as a temporary solution, since the dead magic areas and hostile territory may be a wanted criminal's most expedient means of avoiding capture.

Of course, not everyone is in the Lower Formene by choice. Some unfortunates are here because they neglected to research the destinations of the portals through which they ventured and have made a home in the inescapable Lower Formene. A few of these isolated groups have been discovered and provided escorts to the surface. However, the Lower Formene is too vast for anything beyond incidental discovery. Others feel more comfortable away from communities in the Middle Formene, the Upper Formene, or even the surface world.

Several Middle Formene races make frequent forays into the Lower Formene. Some do so because of expansionistic desires, others because they need the resources, and a scant few because they have something to prove. Grimlocks often set a coming-of-age trial for their young warriors to mark the passage between adolescence and adulthood. In a typical version of such a trial, the youth is sent into the Lower Formene, sometimes armed only with a dagger, and told to return with a trophy demonstrating his competence and ability to contribute to the community.

Aboleth

An aboleth resembles an enormous, prehistoric fish, measuring some 20 feet in length from snout to tail, with four 10-foot-long tentacles sprouting from behind its massive head. Its rubbery skin is blue-green with regular gray splotches running along its sides. The pink belly of the creature is interrupted by a lamprey-like mouth and four pulsating organs that secrete a foul-smelling gray slime.

Aboleths are both cruel and highly intelligent, making them very dangerous predators. They know many ancient and terrible secrets, for they inherit their parents' knowledge at birth and assimilate the memories of all they consume.

These horrible aberrations lurk in the deepest, blackest waters of the Formene, surrounded by legions of thralls, both water breathing and air breathing. This gives them servants no matter where they travel. Given their extraordinary intelligence and powerful magical abilities, the aboleths are the unquestioned masters of most Lower Formene lakes and seas. While some aboleth cities are quite large, small outposts of a dozen or so aboleths are much more common.

Angulians

Angulians are deep-dwelling, lawful evil relatives of the sahuagin, resembling a cross between a man and an eel. While most angulians live in the sunless depths of the oceans, a few have made their way into the flooded tunnels of the Formene that open to the seas and the depths of the oceans. These tunnels into the seas are not known to the Formene Elves. However, they are aware that angulians are able to enter and exit the Formene at will.

Deep Duergar

Formerly warlike and cruel, the mutated deep duergar now predominantly live peacefully in the Lower Formene where they enjoy the warmth and Eldszar radiation. Over the last couple of decades, they have begun hunting in the lower portions of the Middle Formene. However, their presence there is usually short lived, and they have established nothing beyond hunting camps outside of the Lower Formene. The small cities and strongholds of the deep duergar are buried deep in the Lower Formene. Akizdin is their capital, and their bigger strongholds are Zindin, Khatdin, Undin, Gabdin, and Naradin. Nutrition is too scarce in the Lower Formene to support large cities without importing most of their food and water. The deep duergar's slow metabolism makes them more suited for this stratum than most Formene races.

Pech

This small humanoid has the same height and rough build of a dwarf, but with gangly arms and legs. Its hands are broad and its skin is ochre-colored with lighter shades on its palms and feet. Its hair is a mix of reds and light browns. Its large, bulbous eyes are stark white with no apparent pupil or iris.

The pech is a fey creature believed to have its origins on the Elemental Plane of Earth. On the Material Plane, peches dwell deep underground in the Lower Formene, so deep they are rarely encountered outside of their trading posts, except when performing work for another Formene race.

They are unexcelled as stonemasons, a talent that leads to them being employed by other subterranean races for their skill at stone working and carving. Formene nations seeking ornate finishes for the spaces cleared by dehava often employ peches to enhance their spaces. Peches prefer isolation for their lairs and their skill at stone carving lets them blend their dwellings into the natural surroundings so well that few can find their towns. Like svirfneblin, peches maintain an unhidden presence for trade, diplomacy, and other business interactions.

Appendix 1

New Spell:

Destroy Stone

5th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 2+ actions (one to aim, one to execute each cube)

Range: 20 feet (to the first cube. Additional cubes require no movement.)

Components: V, S, M (a small stone and a pinch of rock dust)

Duration: Concentration

With the small stone in your dominant hand, and the dust in your other hand, a thin, pale blue beam springs from the stone, framing a 10' cube ahead of you. You move your hand to aim the projection, and when ready, rotate the hand holding the dust until the dust hits the ground at your feet. When the first dust speck touches the ground, a 10' cube of stone disintegrates.

Everything in the 10' cube is gone, except a few grams of stone dust. Any minerals or other materials in the cube that are not magical are destroyed. This includes organic material. However, stone must be the target for the spell to work. The organic material must be incidental.

This spell is most typically used in siege actions, but elves have been known to create tunnels by this method.

At Higher Levels: When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, an additional 10' cube is destroyed for each level beyond 5 that the spell is cast. These additional cubes are normally behind the initial cube, but can be directed by moving the hand holding the dust to point in the direction of the next cube.

Lore: Legend holds that some wizards and a pair of clerics, all among the most powerful, spent years making a tunnel to connect two large Formene sprawls.

Using their potential, they could clear over half a mile per day. The clerics were part of the party using their divine magic to provide nourishment, comforts, and emergency healing if needed. They could have cleared 100 miles per year this way.

Reality: Four groups of twenty, fourteen wizards and six clerics (along with servants), made multiple parallel tunnels, all 20' wide, linking the two major and three minor Formene realms. The gaps averaged 1,200 miles. The wizards also carved out rest stops at 20 mile intervals. The rest areas are 60' square (36 cubes) and connect to the main tunnel with a 10' wide and 40' long (4 cubes) tunnel.

Each group averaged 80–90 miles per year. While it was uncommon for a wizard to become burned out and quit the project, replacements were scarce, so progress suffered the handful of times this occurred.

The group camped in the nearest rest area, and travelled to the current excavation site in teams of three (two wizards and a cleric) using various magics. Once on site, one wizard would use Destroy Stone to excavate the path while the other stood on the ready to project a **Wall of Force** to protect them if the excavation hit something disruptive. In about an hour, the excavation team could travel to the current site, cast all the spells possible that day, and return to camp. This left about sixteen hours for other endeavors back at camp.

Most of the wizards on the project used the quiet and short work day to study, research, or contemplate philosophical quandaries. On average, each tunnel took thirteen years to complete.

Appendix 2

Magic Items

Wondrous Items, Very Rare, require attunement

Boots of the Formene—This pair of boots connects the wearer with the Formene and allows the wearer to:

- Navigate the Formene like an elf by following hidden signs to reach the destination and avoid known pitfalls.
- Avoid cave-ins through seismic warnings passed through the soles of the boots.
- Derive nutrition from the fungus, animals, and plants of the Formene without vitamin issues.

Cloak of the Formene—This cloak envelopes the wearer in a shroud of protection:

- Providing protection from air quality issues, including toxins in the air, lack of oxygen, and breathing underwater. The hood of the cloak has a facemask that protects the wearer from such threats.
- Suppressing all fires within 20' of the wearer to protect from air depletion, toxins, etc.
- Reducing damage from flash floods. In addition to allowing underwater breathing, the cloak gives the wearer protection from damage that might be taken from sudden flooding of caverns. (Advantage on all saves to mitigate damage, and the saves are for half vs. no damage, not full vs. half damage, like the rogue ability Evasion.)

Ring of Elvenkind—This ring grants the wearer a connection with nature. This allows the wearer to:

- Communicate via a form of telepathy with any willing intelligent being in line of sight,including strangers that want to communicate but have no common language or no language at all.
- Maintain a sense of time. The wearer is in tune with the sunrise and sunset on the surface.
- See in the complete darkness of the Formene (Darkvision 60').

None of these items have any effects outside of the Formene. However, they radiate a magic aura.

Villains of the Lower Formene

Undead

Because many undead creatures need no water, food, air, or other sustenance to survive, many of them find the Lower Formene almost hospitable. Liches are particularly suited here, since they have no need to prey on the living and find that the Lower Formene offers blessed solitude for their sinister studies. Some of the mightiest liches eventually found small realms or kingdoms here. Such a kingdom could consist of hundreds or even thousands of mindless undead laborers and soldiers, led by creatures such as mummies, wraiths, and even the occasional vampire (though vampires would fare better in cities full of the living for obvious reasons).

Missing Art—Art that Didn't Fit in the Original Release

Above: Typical Formene Farm. Below: Children playing in Mushroom Cave. Artist: Brian McCranie

DNH3

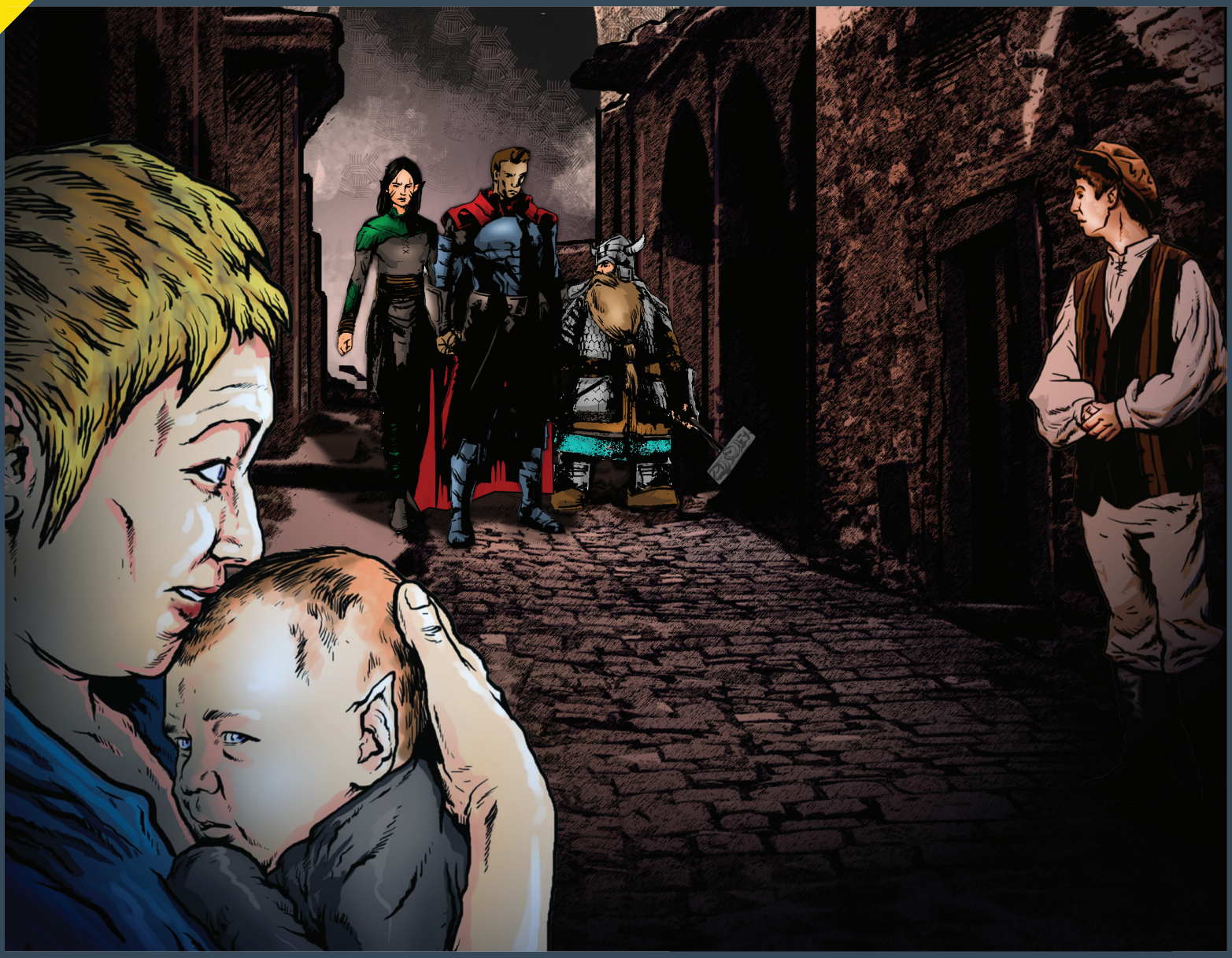
Fifth Edition Fantasy

Part Three of the
Haunting of Hastur Series

The City of Talos—Adventures

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Levels 8–10



The City of Talos is an adventure for 3–7 characters levels 8–10 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. This Module can be used with any old school RPG or modern clones, and is optimized for 5 characters at level 9.

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DNH3:
The City of Talos—Adventures

Dark Naga Adventures

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City of Talos—Adventures

1. Alternate Quest to Enter the Formene (Map 1)
2. Tanzanite Cave (Map 2)
3. Negotiate Reopening the Nexus Network (No Map)
4. Lost Human Knowledge (No Map)
5. Negotiate Trading Mithril Weapons (No Map)
6. Lost Subterranean City (Map 6)
7. Lost Caravan(s) (Map 7)
8. Human Encroachment of the Formene (Map 8)
9. Cornered by a Deranged Dehava (Map 9)
10. Addun—Abandoned Duergar Temple (Map 10)
11. Wyrm Lair (Map 11)
12. Mushroom Cave (Map 12)
13. Cave of Statues (Map 13)

Appendix 1—Formene Random Encounter Table

Appendix 2—Bestiary

1—Alternate Quest to Enter the Formene Introduction

The party (or one of its members) is approached by a female halfling somewhere, maybe a trading square. She tells the characters their heroism has been noted and that an elf would like to meet with them. The halfling provides directions to a sylvan grove about five miles from town and performs a bird call for the party. Before leaving, she adds "the response to the bird call is striking wood on wood" in a pattern of two strikes, beat, one strike, beat, then three strikes."

The two hour walk is uneventful. The characters find the grove on a successful **NATURE** check (DC 5). When they enter the grove, they hear the bird call. The call will be repeated three more times, at five minute intervals, before the elf gives up and leaves the grove. Until the party responds with the correct response, the elf will remain hidden, found only on a successful **PERCEPTION** check (DC 30). If the party harms the grove in any manner, the elf will leave as well.

When the proper response is provided, a cloaked figure enters the grove from behind the party, and bids welcome. He removes his hood, revealing a pale elf with large bulbous eyes and close cropped hair; his skin is rough. He is barely recognizable as an elf.

He introduces himself as Sherin Po-thole, an emissary of the Formene city of Talos. He briefly explains that the Formene is a subterranean realm closed off to the surface world since before the fall of the First Age of Man; however, they are ready to resume contact since Hastur has been unable to maintain a foothold in this new civilization. The party has been selected to be the first surface dwellers to see Talos to discuss restoring contact and trade between the Formene and the surface world.

To confirm they are worthy of this honor, they are asked to retrieve and destroy an evil item from a cult temple. This temple is about 100 miles away from the grove and has many perils. There is a book within that could bring Hastur into the world. Sherin wants the party to enter the temple, remove the book, and destroy it. They will recognize the book from its aura of evil, one so strong, any person can sense it.

Sherin provides directions to the temple and arranges to meet them here after allowing two weeks to complete the task. He also provides the materials and the ritual for the book's destruction (if there is no ritual caster in the party, instead he provides a scroll any person literate in common may use to destroy the book). For most parties, 100 miles is a three- to five-day journey. Sherin tells the party that he will be able to feel the book's destruction.

Approaching the Temple

The temple is largely shrouded by tree cover. The path to the temple is travelled enough that the temple is easy to find with the directions provided. It is an octagonal, white stone building with two tall, free-standing columns framing the entrance. Around the temple, the party encounters many people in white robes with orange trim. They are peaceful, genuine, and talk about love, peace, and holiness. If looked into, they are harmless dupes of the cult. This encounter uses the map1: **Cult Temple**.

The Temple

Location 1—Front Entrance/Stage: The entrance is a wide open area. As they approach, two statues (A & B) and two free-standing columns frame stairs that lead up to a wide, almost welcoming entrance to the temple complex. The party can picture the leader ministering to hundreds of people from this front area. The front area has four imposing double doors.

- A—Statue of a man, wearing only a loincloth, carrying stalks of grain on his shoulder
- B—Statue of a man, wearing only a loincloth, carrying a wineskin on his shoulder
- C—Statue of a woman, wearing only a loincloth, holding a jug before her (**HISTORY** check, DC 10—this jug is the type used to hold lamp oil.)
- D—Statue of a woman, wearing only a loincloth, holding a basket of fruit (**NATURE** check, DC 15—the fruits are pomegranates.)
- Columns—Both are 25' tall, 10' in diameter, and made of gneiss.

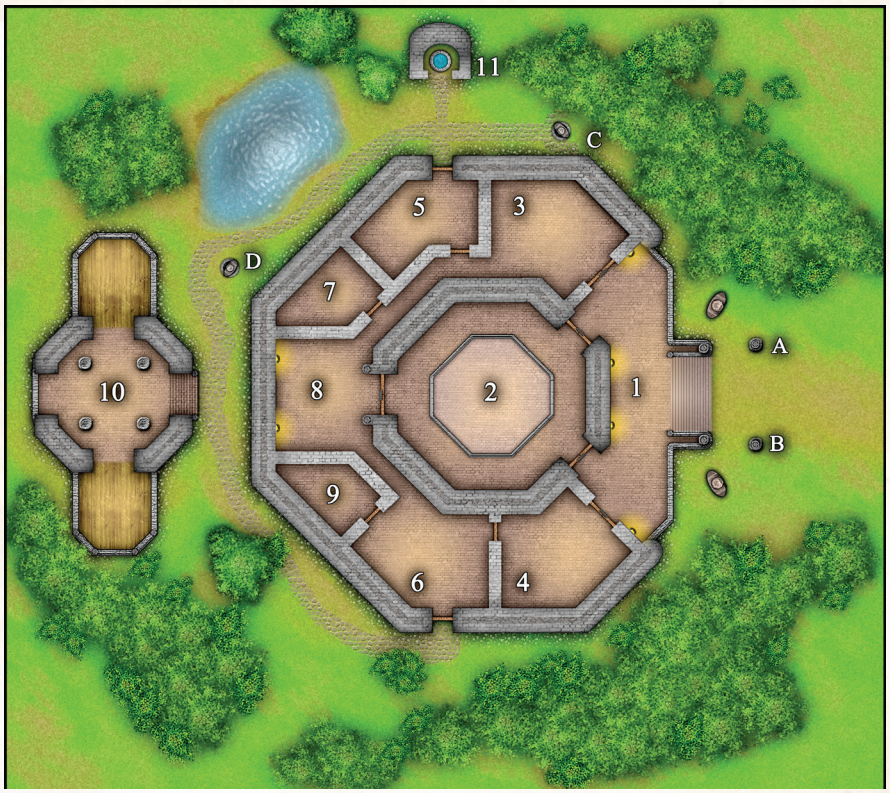
Location 2—Main Sanctuary: This room can hold all of the cultists at once. They all kneel on prayer mats while the leader talks before the double doors to the west. The walls of the octagonal room have one large religious symbol per wall except the west wall, which has a pair of symbols framing the doors. Typically, the leader and four cultists are in this room.

For the GM: The twelve cultists of the inner circle sleep here at night (midnight to sunup).

Location 3, 4—Side Chapels: These rooms are both adorned on the outer wall with beautiful tapestries. There is no furniture, only dozens of rolled up prayer mats.

Location 5—Head Cultist's Chambers: This room is modestly furnished. It has a bed, desk, armoire, and two chests, all containing mundane items. There is a book shelf containing religious texts.

For GM: The religious texts could be sold for 170 gp. Among these books is the book that Sherin Po-thole



1. Cultist Temple — Based on a map from Dyson Logos

wants destroyed. The head cultist is present only from midnight until sunup. From sunup to sundown, he is talking at the entrance or walking about the area talking to people. From sundown to midnight, he leads the inner circle cultists in demonic ritual sacrifices to Rangda, Queen of the Leyak.

Location 6—Kitchen: This room is used to cook meals for the cultists.

For the GM: A careful inspection of the room (PERCEPTION DC 20, or INVESTIGATION DC 15) will reveal human bones in the stew. Worshipers of Rangda are cannibalistic.

Location 7 and 9—Storage Rooms: These rooms are nearly identical; they contain cultist robes, one set in red with black hems and another set in white with orange hems. Each room contains 1,800 sp in donations.

Location 8—Inner Sanctuary: This room contains an altar against the west wall and storage credenzas along the north and south walls. On the altar rests a jade statue of a demon covered in blood.

For GM: Any good-aligned character will feel the evil emanating from it. Neutral-aligned characters sense nothing. Anyone trained in HISTORY or RELIGION (no roll required) will recognize it as a statue of Rangda.

Location 10—Gazebo: This area is empty except for four plain columns and some leaves in the east corners.

Location 11—Shrine: This shrine includes a roof. It contains one statue of a man, wearing only a loincloth, sitting in a meditative position, surrounded by grain, wine, oil, and pomegranates.

For GM: During the night, the (12) evil inner ring cultists and their leader are either at Location 8 or Location 2. During the day, the leader and cultists are at various places in the temple (specific location left to the GM). The temple echoes sufficiently that if a fight breaks out, 2 cultists will appear every 2 rounds until all of the available cultists have joined the fray. The members of the white and orange religion have no idea of the evil black and red cult within.

Advanced Cultist: See Bestiary.

Upon completion of the quest, Sherin Po-thole meets the party at the grove and awards each member a Ring of Elvenkind, Boots of the Formene, and a Cloak of the Formene. He also provides them with a map to the nearest entrance, and teaches them the symbols that will lead them to Talos. (See ***Gazetteer: Getting to Talos*** for details.)

XP: In addition to awards for defeating the cultists, each character receives 1,100 xp for completing the quest.

Sherin Po-Thole. Artist: Adam Schmidt

2—Tanzanite Cavern Introduction

While exploring the buried zikurat in adventure DNH2, the party might have discovered references to a cavern of tanzanite, a precious gem unique to the Batun Mountains. As they explore Talos, they will eventually encounter the gem, and hear rumors about its rarity and value. Few know the location of the cavern. However, most know that none who seek the cavern ever return.

This encounter uses map 2: **Tanzanite Cave**.

Tanzanite cavern rumors (litter these rumors through various interactions with Formene citizens):

- The cavern was mined regularly for about a year then abandoned two millennia ago. (True)
- The cavern is essentially a large geode full of tanzanite. (False)
- The navigation symbols to the cavern can be found in the Library or the Trade records. (True)
- The cavern is haunted by the ghosts of miners who died in a cave-in. (False)
- Mining is a violation of the party's visa to the Formene. (True)
- When trade resumes, dehava will hatch specifically to mine tanzanite. (True, but speculation)

Researching the location takes four days' effort, with a successful **INVESTIGATION** check (DC 15) at the end of that time. More than ten days of investigation will draw attention and potentially shut down the efforts.

If the party is caught, it will likely be expelled from the Formene. This would be a trial before the council. A silver-tongued explanation, followed by a **PERSUASION** or **DECEPTION** check (DC25), can avoid expulsion.

Approaching the Cavern

Once the navigation symbols are found, getting to the cave is a 2-day trek with checks every six hours on the Formene Wandering Encounter Table during the second day. (See Appendix 1 for Formene Wandering Encounter Table.) The symbols will lead the party within a mile of the cavern. From there, they will need to search for it. Within the area of the cavern are a total of 11 caverns. Roll a d12 to determine which cavern is the Tanzanite Cavern, rerolling a result of 12. The other ten caverns contain something from the Formene Wandering Encounter Table on a roll of 1 on 1d6.

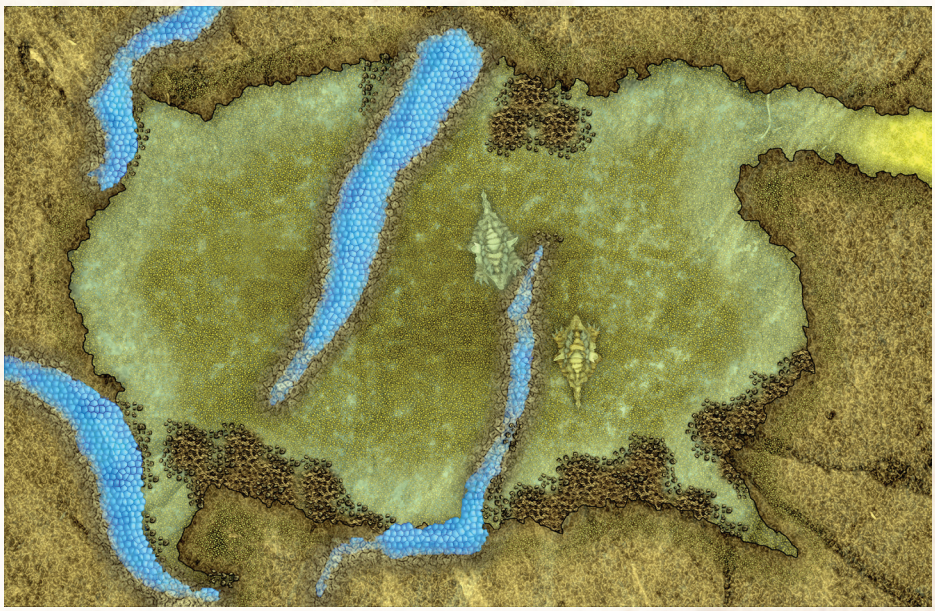
The Cavern

The cavern is a natural void space within the roots of the Batun Mountains. The ceiling is somewhat domed, cresting at 21' with an average ceiling height of 16'. The floor is a bowl shape but flatter than the ceiling. Most of the flatness comes from sand and rock debris on the floor; the debris is difficult terrain. The cavern has a total of six tanzanite veins visible. (There might be more, GM's option.) Two are exposed in the floor of the cavern in areas not covered. One is visible in the ceiling; erosion has exposed it. Three are visible in the walls. One has been mined. Swimming in the rock debris (which is actually 25' deep other than within 5–10 feet of the veins that bisect the room) are two Formene Bulettes, a mate-pair. They are located at the two bulette symbols on the map, lying perfectly still and waiting for the party to approach. They attack when they can both lunge out of the debris and hit a party member trudging nearby. They can each lunge 10' at a victim and normally surprise (**PERCEPTION** check [DC 25] to avoid being ambushed). When prey goes to zero HP, they toss it aside and attack another victim.

If the characters want to mine the area, they will need to limit their harvest to what they can carry out quietly as tanzanite is controlled. This is about one cubic foot or 1,000 gp per character without extra-dimensional space.

Formene Bulette—See Bestiary

XP: 2,900 xp per bulette



2. Tanzanite Cave

3—Negotiate Reopening the Nexus Trade Network

Introduction

If the players adventured through *DNH2—The Buried Zikurat*, they are familiar with a trading nexus. If not, they will discover them at some point during their tour of Talos and various conversations.

The network for the Batun Mountains contained ten nexuses, but the Formene closed them late in the First Age of Man, when the cult of Hastur was taking over the kingdoms of man. These buildings are scattered across the range, and allowed exchange of surface and Formene goods while protecting the Formene from incursion by potential invaders. The existence of exotic metals like mithril and adamantium drove one of the five great tribes of elves to enter the Formene as wardens, protecting it from expectations that man would destroy the Formene to have these exotic metals and the other rare riches and resources of the subterranean realms.

This encounter uses no map.

Exploring Interest in Reopening the Nexus Network

As the characters explore Talos and the surrounding regions, they will hear or overhear people who are expecting contact with the surface to result in reopening the Trading Nexus Network.

Negotiation

This negotiation will occur with the full council. The key elements for the Formene Elves include:

- They are looking for assurances that man will resist the influence of Hastur.
- They seek enforceable contract terms, with possible adjustments every 20 years.
- They insist on limits on the volume of rare metals, gems, and minerals leaving the Formene.
- They are looking to include favorite delicacies from the past. (GM to list foods that fit their world.)
- They want to restrict human access to the Formene to rare, special circumstances.
- They will view any attempt to enter or invade the Formene as an act of war.
- They seek to own books (copies or originals) of the works of man since they closed the Formene.

Key elements for Meawold include:

- They feel tight quotas will cause the price to inflate as the supply remains constant, but demand increases.
- They assert that 20 years is too long of an interval between adjusting terms, and 5 years is smarter.
- They want formal diplomatic relations, including a Meawold embassy in Talos, and its mirror in Meawold.
- They seek alliances against the evils that lie within the Formene. (Mistook surface giants for Formene.)
- They want access to the Formene metals, and knowledge of how to work them into arms, armor, and other goods.

This task will require considerable back and forth with the leaders of Meawold and the Council of Talos. XP reward is 1,100 xp per player (standard quest/medium encounter) for each point of concern successfully negotiated between Talos and the Kingdom of Meawold. The other Formene regions will negotiate with the other kingdoms in time, based on the success here.

Formene Bulettes Attack. Artist: Brian McCranie

4—Lost Human Knowledge

Introduction

The Formene, with their love of knowledge, sought to understand the rapid developments by humans during the First Age of Man. They undertook an effort to collect this information and add it to their libraries. One purpose of the Trading Nexus Network was to collect copies of the new books and scrolls that humans wrote during this time.

Talos has a copy of all the books the Formene ingested from the First Age of Man. This special collection represents an opportunity for the Second Age of Man to recover this lost knowledge and flourish much akin to the Earth's Renaissance where Arabs translated and preserved Greco-Roman knowledge in our world. The Formene's goal is for the kingdoms to share in the redistribution of knowledge by using their own resources to duplicate the books and that continued release of books will depend on this.

This encounter uses no map.

Discovering the Archive

The party probably did not discover this information while playing DNH2. It was located in the Ecology Appendix, and none of the lore referenced it. If and how the party discovers this archive is up to the GM. Some methods of discovery include:

A Formene Elf mentions a book when talking about an ancient magic item a character might have. He or she might recognize the emblems on it.

The party asks the right questions during a history lesson about the Formene, their mission, and the city of Talos, and disclosure comes from those questions.

Research in the library leads the players to stumble upon the archive. (The archive is a special collection.)

The party hears a storyteller talking to a gathering of children and a couple of dehava and wonders about the origins of the story. The storyteller mentions the archive.

Negotiation

The negotiation happens between the party and the leaders of the Knowledge Quarter. They will want the release to proceed as follows:

- They will release up to three hundred books year one, to be distributed equally across the five kingdoms.
- At the end of the year an inventory of each kingdom's library, conducted by Formene Elf librarians, will measure the degree of sharing between the kingdoms.
- The total number of books copied to all five kingdoms from the current year's distribution will be used to set the number of new books released the next year.
- The party is welcome to explain this to the leaders of Meawold, and the other kingdoms, if it desires.
- The party may not copy the books; the kingdoms must willingly copy and trade the books betwixt themselves.
- The party is welcome to add any additional conditionals, and the GM is free to accept, counter, or ignore them as fits the story.

Example: Year one, the Archive sends 60 books to each kingdom. At the end of year one, twenty books are common to all kingdom libraries. For year two, the Archive sends twenty new books. At the end of year two, eight of the twenty books sent in year two are common to all kingdom libraries. In year three, the Archive sends eight books. By failing to share all they receive, the surface will eventually get nothing from this deal and will be forced to renegotiate from unfavorable terms. Likely the new terms would be quite costly.

This task will require considerable back and forth with the leaders of Meawold and Talos. XP reward is 1,600 xp per player (quest/hard encounter) for their part in negotiating between Talos and the Kingdom of Meawold. The other Formene regions will negotiate with the other kingdoms. After that, Talos begins shipping books to the Five Kingdoms.

Cloak of the Formene, Artist: Fat Goblin Games

5—Negotiate Trading Mithril Weapons with the Surface (or other options)

Reopening the Trade Nexus Network dealt with trading mithril ore to the surface for the creation of armor. This encounter is a negotiation concerning trading finished mithril weapons with the surface. Before the closing of the nexus network at Batun, one hundred weapons were available for trade each year. Mithril is the best platform for holding an enchantment. The largest share of the output was longswords (30%); the balance was a mixture of other weapons.

This encounter uses no map.

For over a millennium, about a hundred mithril weapons were traded with the surface each year. These weapons are the foundation of nearly every magic item found on the continent of Barestir. About a hundred thousand weapons were traded; less than half survive. About a quarter were enchanted during the First Age of Man. The exact distribution is up to the GM's discretion. Below is a sample distribution:

Type of Weapon	% of total production	Estimated number made
Longsword	30%	30,000
Dagger, Greatsword, Mace, Rapier, Shortsword	10% each	10,000 each
Spear	5%	5,000
Battleaxe, Greataxe, Morningstar	2% each	2,000 each
Glaive, Halberd, Handaxe, Lance, Light Hammer, Maul, Pike, Scimitar, Bolts	1% each	1,000 each

This negotiation is between Talos and the Kingdom of Meawold. Other kingdoms and Formene realms are beyond the scope of this adventure. The core concerns are:

- Managing the sale of weapons. In the past, the trademasters maintained a queue. When that failed, they ran auctions. While the Formene Elves are indifferent to which method is used, humans have created conflict in the past, and the Formene want to reduce this source of friction, since they bore the majority of the blame and hostility for the climbing costs as scarcity drove up prices.
- Determining the specific weapons to be produced each year. In the past, when a spot was purchased, the purchaser indicated what product they wanted. When the weapons sales went to auction, the types of weapons made were determined by the elves until conflict moved determination to the auction brokers who adjusted the production to match human demand. In both cases, non-warriors were making a decision that impacted warriors, and it never really worked. As a part of the negotiation, a plan for managing the issue going forward should be developed.
- Establishing a process for surface dwellers to be trained to smith mithril weapons. This became another source of contention. Ingots were traded, but no surface smith knew the methods for forging weapons, only armor. Part of the negotiation involves establishing training schools for surface smiths to be taught to smith mithril weapons. The Formene want no more than four students per year, a fee of 10,000 gp per student, and want the training to be conducted very close to the nexus. The surface dwellers want more students, less cost, and to be closer to Meawold, respectively. This task will require considerable back and forth with the leaders of Meawold and Talos.

XP reward is 1,600 xp per player (quest/hard encounter) for their part in negotiating between Talos and the Kingdom of Meawold.

Boots of the Formene. Artist Fat Goblin Games

6—Lost Subterranean City

This adventure will come into play if the party moves from Talos, which lies in the middle Formene, into the deep Formene. There they will encounter an eight person patrol of deep duergar, which are duergar who live so deep they have mutated. After an initial, peaceful encounter, if the party mentions they seek a lost city deep in the Formene, the duergar will reveal they are in possession of a journal that contains references to a Lower Formene city about fifteen miles below the surface, abandoned by the Ryba-Wiek (Fish-People). The duergar will trade the journal for about 50 gp worth of surface goods. Any goods will do. Additionally, if the party has discovered, freed, and learned the story of Elrani (See Encounter 13), she knows the location. The city is difficult to find; Elrani created her own code to it and placed sigils on the ceiling to make them harder to find.

This encounter uses map 6: **Lost Subterranean City**.

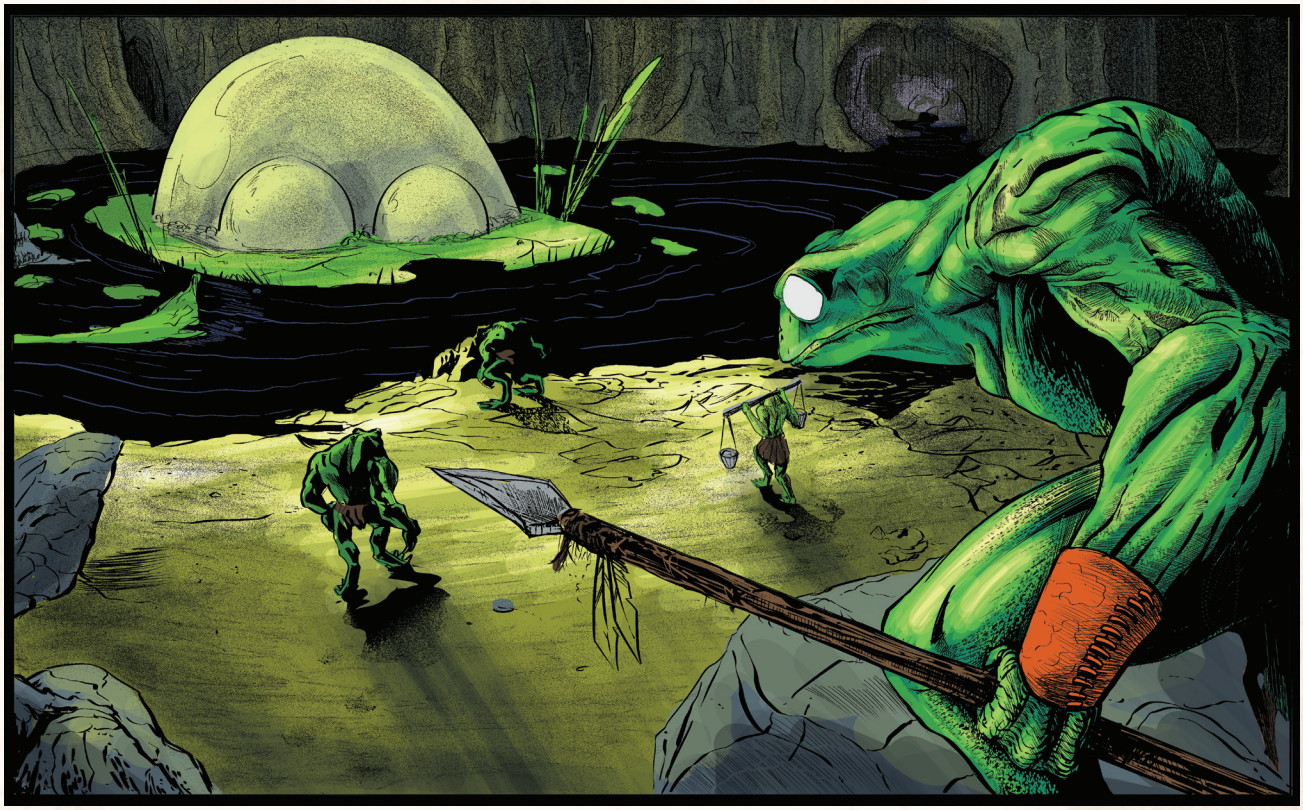
The village sits on the edge of a very large underground lake, in a protected cavern. It was abandoned thousands of years before the First Age of Man. Selmyn Elrani Queyore discovered this place during the First Age of Man and took artifacts from here to sell in the Trading Nexus Network. The village shown is one of dozens along the lake. The entire lake was the home of the Ryba-Wiek. Tunnel access was restricted to this village when the population died out. The lake is the only way to access the other villages.

The floor is rock. It might have been clear at one point, but minor debris is now heavy along the exposed floor due to small rocks breaking off over the millennia. The dome floors are bare of stray rocks once ten feet from the entrance. Along the perimeter of the village, there are piles of small rocks and seven-foot-long poles. (They were brooms once.)

The unnumbered buildings are single family homes and can use the following as their description: This building is essentially a permanent yurt/igloo dome made from rocks and a mortar derived from some organic source. It is about 30' in diameter. The yurt held a single family of four to eight residents. Bedrolls, spears, and refuse pails abound. An alcove near the back contains a number of religious and personal figurines, all quite intricate. All the perishables rotted away a long time ago. The area smells a bit stale. While the air should be damp, it's quite dry. The homes are covered in a thin layer of dust.

1—Warrior Quarters—This 40' diameter dome looks like an oversized residence. It contains 24 bedrolls. Four weapon racks line the entrance, carrying 98 spears.

2—Midwives Area—This 50' dome has a shallow pool covering half of the floor.



The Ryba-Wiek. Artist: Brian McCranie

3—Food Storage—This pair of 50' diameter domes are linked by an entrance with a desk. The domes contain crates. Some have soil at the bottom; the balance is salt. Other than the hundred or so crates, these domes are empty.

4—Tool Storage—This 50' room contains rolls of tools for repairing nets, making spearheads, and making mortar.

5—Tool Storage—This 50' room contains rolls of tools for sharpening spears, making spear shafts, and healing.

6—Warrior Quarters—See Area 1.

7—Work Area—This 50' dome contains several hundred hardened bamboo spear shafts and flint spear heads in separate piles. It looks like this was a place to assemble spears.

8—Weavers Area—This 50' dome has a dozen looms, and spindles that might have held threads or yarn. Shelves are along one wall with scraps of cloth on them.

9—Weavers Area—This 50' dome has scraps of fibrous plants on the floor and half dozen tool kits, the type used to make and mend nets.

10—Work Area—See Area 9.

11—Work Area—See Area 7.

12—Warrior Quarters—See Area 1.

13—Hospital Area—This pair of 50' domes has beds, cloth remnants, and some small, empty sealed bottles.

14—Food Storage—See Area 3.

15—Food Storage—See Area 3.

16—Work Area—This 50' dome contains tools for stone work and other carvings. There are several buckets, each with a few dozen pieces of stone about the size of a fist. The stones correspond to spiritual likenesses found in every dome. One of the buckets contains hammered gold roughly in the shape of an ingot. The stones and gold combined are worth about 1,200 gp.

17—Warrior Quarters—See Area 1.

18—Midwives Area—See Area 2.

19—Warrior Quarters—See Area 1.

20—Small Hospital—This area is similar to Area 13.

21—Shaman Area—This 50' diameter dome has a large collection of jars and bottles with covers and stoppers. Most of them seal the contents quite tightly. If any are opened, the most noxious odors emerge. (DC 15 **CONSTITUTION** save to avoid retching until save is made on a later round.) In the back of the dome is a book resting on a shelf. The language is long lost. The spell **Comprehend Languages** can access the words. (See History of the Ryba-Wiek.)

22—Net Storage—This 40' diameter dome holds racks containing remnants of fishing nets. Only scraps remain due to age, but it is clear that this room could hold miles of net.

23—Temple—This structure is over 100' in diameter. In the middle is a large statue of a fish-man hybrid with a pair of legs and three pairs of arms. All of the left arms are holding spears; all of the right arms are holding nets. The statue is about 15' in diameter and 30' tall. Made of bronze, the area near the knees and the lower hafts of the spears are massively worn from millions of hands touching them in passing, shaping the bronze (think Juliet's breast of her statue in Verona). If either knee of the statue is touched, the character will experience the "Fishing" flashback described below; if a weapon haft is touched, the "War" flashback will be experienced instead.

The temple is on an island, about 150' from shore. The water is 2' deep, cold, salty, and free of any life but tiny fish near the temple. As the party moves away from the shore, the lake gets as deep as 200', and teems with life: no monsters, just aquatic species in the circle of life.

History of the Ryba-Wiek

These are the major points from the book:

- Proud nation, villages were semi-independent.
- Total population over 10,000 in 26 villages.
- The lake surface is over 800 acres.
- Hunters supplied fish, gatherers supplied kelp, algae, etc.
- Mating pairs were always between villages. Males moved to their bride's village.
- Magic barrier keeps the moist air out of the village so things could dry.
- Hunter brought back a small statue of an angry god from the bottom of the lake.
- Males got sick, like a flu, but got over it. Seemed to spread to all of the villages.
- Birthrate dropped over next five years.
- Sacrifices to god were ignored.
- Lack of babies led to a sharp decline in civilization.
- As a village died out, its tunnels were collapsed by Ryba-Wiek warriors.
- Survivors consolidated to other villages.
- This was the last village.

For GM—The cursed tiki statue was infected with a virus. The virus spread across the entire nation. When the flu ended, the villagers' gonads were slowly destroyed. The birthrate dropped due to the damage to their gonads. Eventually the entire population ended because they couldn't reproduce. The tiki statue resides in a village on the far side of the lake, buried ten feet below the shaman hut. It is wrapped in cloth covered in prayers. If the GM allows the players to successfully recover the statue, the curse ended and the virus died when the Ryba-Wiek went extinct.

Flashbacks

No two flashbacks are identical. Select one or two elements from the list and tell a quick scene to the player who experiences the flashback.

Flashback—Fishing—The hunters pass their hand over the knee of their god's statue as they head out to hunt.

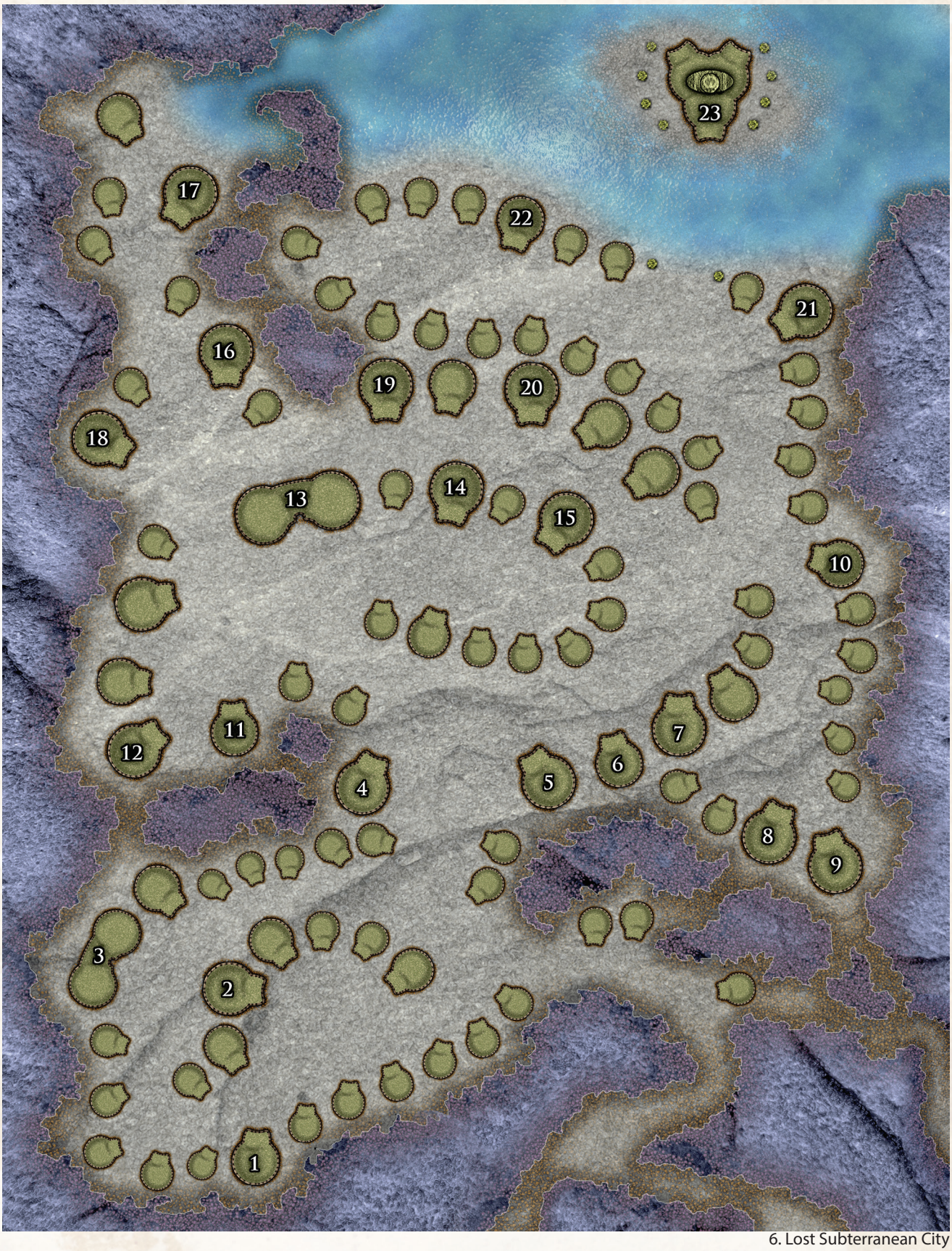
- Feeling excited
- Feeling hungry
- Aching from the long hunt and swim the day before
- Looking forward to seeing their child(ren) after the hunt
- Hoping to meet their quota early to get back to their ailing parent
- Desire to bring in the biggest haul of the pack today
- Worried they won't meet their quota
- Eager to prove self

Flashback—War—Warriors grasp the lower haft of a spear and run their hand to the bottom before a war.

- Fear of being injured
- Longing to see their family
- Excited to fight instead of fish
- Sense of alienation
- Feeling invincible
- Feeling they are doomed
- Blind rage
- Terror
- Urge to vomit or urinate self

There are thousands of artifacts here. Most are made of rare stone, some from semi-precious stone. A few are made from gold. No two are alike. These were very personal likenesses of loved ones: family, close associates, and their god. Their intricacy gives them great value beyond the materials. This is the area that Elrani visited for years to make her fortune as a treasure hunter and supplier to the elves that sold antiquities in the Trading Nexus Network.

Babya-Wiek, God of the Ryba-Wiek. Artist: Brian McCranie



6. Lost Subterranean City

7—Lost Caravan

The players hear about the lost caravans from their time in Batun Nexus Four (the nexus that was explored in the adventure ***DNH2—The Buried Zikurat***), or while hearing stories from the Trade Quarter. When they decide to look for lost caravans, whether as a service to Talos, for personal gain, or any other reason, they will logically begin at one of the endpoints of the path from Talos to Batun Nexus Four and start searching side caverns for signs of errant travel.

This encounter uses map 7: **Lost Caravan**.

Most of the encounters in this table are either in the Bestiary for this adventure, in the SRD (specifically the site http://5esrd.com, courtesy of John Reyst and crew), or other reference books. See their entry for stats, languages, etc. The following are part of Formene civilization and will not attack any party members displaying their Formene Ring, as it is a sign of safe passage: svirfneblin, minotaurs, goblins, and dehava. (See City of Talos book for ecology.)

This becomes a subterranean hex crawl exploration, and for every two hours of search at least 10 miles from the trade road, roll on the Formene Exploration Discovery Table below (3d6):

Result (3d6)	Discovery
3–5	Outbound (Talos to Nexus Four) caravan—See Table for Outbound Lost Caravan.
6	Dehava performing path maintenance—Will not attack or block party.
7	8 + 1d6 Svirfneblin encounter the party. They will not attack, follow, or otherwise hassle a party that is not hostile to them. Being highly suspicious, they will attack if provoked.
8	Small Minotaur village (10–20 residents), mostly harmless. The next roll ignores a result of a caravan; the minotaurs would have found it.
9	Signs of a Leng war party making camp. Abandoned 1d6 days. **SURVIVAL** check (DC 14).
10	Hunting party of 11–20 (1d10 + 10) Kobolds looking for food. They will defend if attacked, they will seek to disengage and go about their hunt if allowed. Will not pay a toll or ransom.
11	Mushroom patch (1d6: 1–2 harmless but not food, 3–4 food, 5 poisonous, 6 hallucinogenic [NATURE check [DC 10] will reveal]).
12	Denizen of Leng encounter—5–8 warriors, combat encounter.
13	Goblin village, 40–60 residents, nervous, but harmless unless attacked. No caravan can be found on next roll. The goblins would have found it already.
14	1d6 + 2 Dopplegangers discover and track the party, taking over at least two party members before attacking. The two party members will have been subdued with a poison that makes them sleep for 1d4 hours. The dopplegangers will reveal where the abducted party members were left in exchange for their lives.
15	Dehava performing path maintenance—Will not attack or block party.
16–18	Inbound (Nexus Four to Talos) caravan—See Table for Inbound Lost Caravan.

Consult the table below to help set the scene of a discovered caravan:

Result (1d10)	Why the Caravan Went off Path
1–2	Got lost—no sign of violence, no sign of foul play. The riders just layed down.
3–4	Betrayal—Evidence the caravan members killed each other after the caravan was diverted.
5–6	Raided—The remains suggest an ambush. There are remains of 1d4 members of a non-elf race (GM's discretion) that might have died in the attack.
7–8	Runaway—Evidence that the pack animals went on a stampede, crashed the carts, and died suddenly. No indication what happened to the elves.
9–10	Attack—10 Insect Swarms attack as the party explores the wreck. Roll again with a d8.

Consult the tables below to determine what is recovered from the caravan remains. There are different tables for outbound and inbound caravans. The value listed assumes the party seeks to sell the goods in secret on the surface and not return them to Talos as a service. If the party returns the contents and provides the location of the wreck as a service to the Trade leaders, it receives a reward. Each successful recovery will gain the party one gold ingot worth 2,000 gp. The reward is more for providing closure to the families of the lost members than for the recovery of the goods. The magic preservation placed on the foodstuffs deactivates at the whim of anyone trained in Arcana (no check required) or by anyone who can pass an ARCANA check (DC 10). If the check fails, the foods spoil immediately.

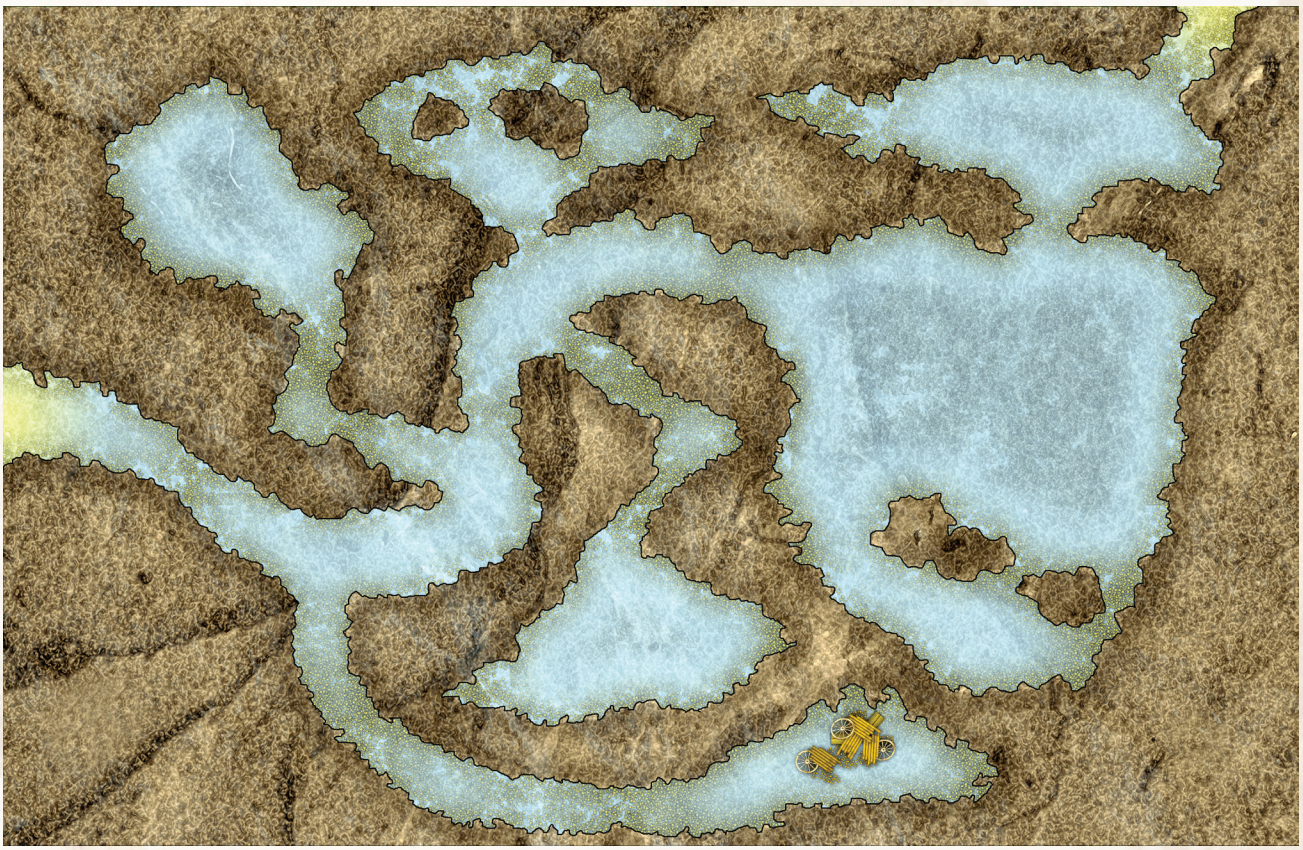
Outbound Caravan:

Result (1d10)	Recoverable Contents of the Lost Caravan
1–2	Rotten remains of mushroom crates. On a roll of 1 on 1d6, the remains are toxic if eaten. Sickness passes after a daily **CONSTITUTION** save (DC20).
3–4	Mithril weapons. 5 longswords, 1 greatsword, 1 battleaxe, 1 rapier, 4 daggers. Value 10,000 gp.
5–6	Ruined mushroom wine casks, and 2d20 preserved bottles of high quality mushroom wine. Value 200 gp each.
7–8	A small collection of Formene artifacts, odd religious symbols, small statues of gods, etc. from a race of Fish-Men. Most of the artifacts are made of valuable materials. Total value 3,000 gp.
9–10	A small sack of gems, diamonds, emeralds, tanzanite, and rubies, worth about 10,000 gp. Formene minerals and semi-precious stones, worth about 4,000 gp.

Inbound Caravan:

Result (1d10)	Recoverable Contents of the Lost Caravan
1–2	Preserved beef and lamb worth about 400 gp. Distilled liquor, 4 of 10 bottles survived, worth about 100 gp. Rotted fruits and vegetables, not identifiable and worthless. Might be listed in manifest.
3–4	Preserved grains (wheat, oats, barley) worth about 500 gp.
5–6	Ruined beer (casks rotted and beer gone but for the aroma), worthless. Ruined wine casks, and 2d20 preserved bottles of wine, value 50 gp each.
7–8	Tools, mostly rotted/rusted. The few preserved tools were in oiled cloth, value 400 gp.
9–10	Spice caravan, all contents spilled, stale, and worthless.

Notifying the Formene about the caravans will earn each player 1,100 xp (quest/medium encounter) plus any XP for the monsters they encounter.



7. Lost Caravan

8—Human Encroachment of the Formene

This encounter starts at a random time when the party is in Talos, not while out exploring. One of the council members sends a hunter-warrior to summon the party for a meeting (GM's discretion as to which council member). The hunter is not there to force the characters; he is a runner asked to collect them. If they will not follow, he will reveal a bit of what he overheard to try to convince the party to follow. He will not use force under any circumstance. If he fails his mission, he will return to the council chamber and explain the party's lack of cooperation. This may come up in future interactions.

This encounter uses map 8: **Human Enchroachment of Formene.**

If the party follows the hunter, the council member quickly explains to the party that humans have breached one of the protected entrances to the Formene after a series of visits, and the current visitors seem equipped to lay siege to the Formene. They have breached the barrier (a combination of illusions, subtle magics that create a feeling that there is nothing worth exploring in the area), a rock wall deposited by dehava, and bypassed the strong magical wards. How they managed to survive the wards is a puzzle on its own. The current plan of action is to send a unit to slay the invaders. After they are dead, the Formene will collapse the cavern and restore the barrier. The lives of 34 men lie in the balance.

Normally, the Formene would kill the invaders. The presence of the party and their interest in restoring contact with the surface has given them pause enough to see if the party can manage a peaceful outcome with the invaders. The council member asks the party to travel to the conflict area and convince the humans to turn back from their efforts by convincing them that breaching the Formene will end in disaster and loss of their lives. The party has the option to attack the invaders if they don't respond to reason. If the party does not attack, the Formene will. The method used is not really important to the Formene Elves, only the result. The Formene are committed to preventing the incursion.

The invaders consist of:

- An adventuring party: Mage (CR6), Gladiator (CR5), two Knights (CR3), and two Advanced Priests (CR4)
- 16 Soldiers (use stat block for Scout) (CR1/2)
- A Veteran (CR3)
- Ten Porters (Commoner CR0)

The invaders found the cavern by chance and became suspicious of the subtle feelings of not wanting to explore any deeper. Perhaps they were not subtle enough. Maybe the wards have aged enough to be too blunt. In any case, the invading adventure party became suspicious and mounted a concentrated effort to see what is going on. They are setting up camp in the center of the cavern; the party members may approach from any of the three tunnels or other methods they desire.

The characters can reason with the invaders, or they can destroy them. The Formene Elves contacted the characters to try to attempt a peaceful response. However, they will accept any result that keeps the invaders out of the Formene.

Factors that will help the chances of a peaceful resolution:

- Successful negotiation of the reopening of the Trade Nexus Network
- Successful negotiation of mithril weapons trade
- Successful negotiation to release ancient human knowledge to the kingdoms

Factors that will harm the chances of a peaceful resolution:

- Discussing the wonders of the Formene
- Bragging about visiting Talos
- Attempts to use intimidation against the invaders
- Hostile or violent language directed at the invaders

The players are going to need to use reason, not intimidation or threats, to resolve this issue peacefully. It will be a delicate negotiation, and will most likely end in violence. Use a d12 as a score indicator. Set the die on 9. Every item that helps lowers the number by 1; every item that harms increases the number by one.

If the number reaches one, the invaders will withdraw. If the number reaches twelve, the invaders will attack. The party can take as long as it likes to resolve the conflict. The Formene Elves will only intervene if violence breaks out, at which time they will destroy all of the invaders, collapse the cavern, and restore their defenses.

The party is welcome to lie to the invaders about their negotiations; each lie detected will move the die to a higher number. The party will need to make a **DECEPTION** check (DC15) to deceive the invaders. Each successive lie sees the DC increase by 3 points as the story gets more complicated. After a failure, all successive checks are made with DISADVANTAGE.

Solving the encounter is worth 8,900 xp. Steel or reason, either solution will earn the experience reward. If the Formene intervene, reduce the XP award proportional to the opponents that were fully killed by the Formene.

Advanced Priest

Medium human, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 19 (splint plus shield)
- **Hit Points:** 60 (8d8 + 24)
- **Speed:** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+3) **DEX** (+3) **CON** (+3)
- **INT** (+4) **WIS** (+5) **CHA** (+4)
- **Saving Throws**: Con +5, Wis +7, Cha +6
- **Senses:** passive Perception 15
- **Languages:** Common
- **Challenge:** 4 (1,100 xp)

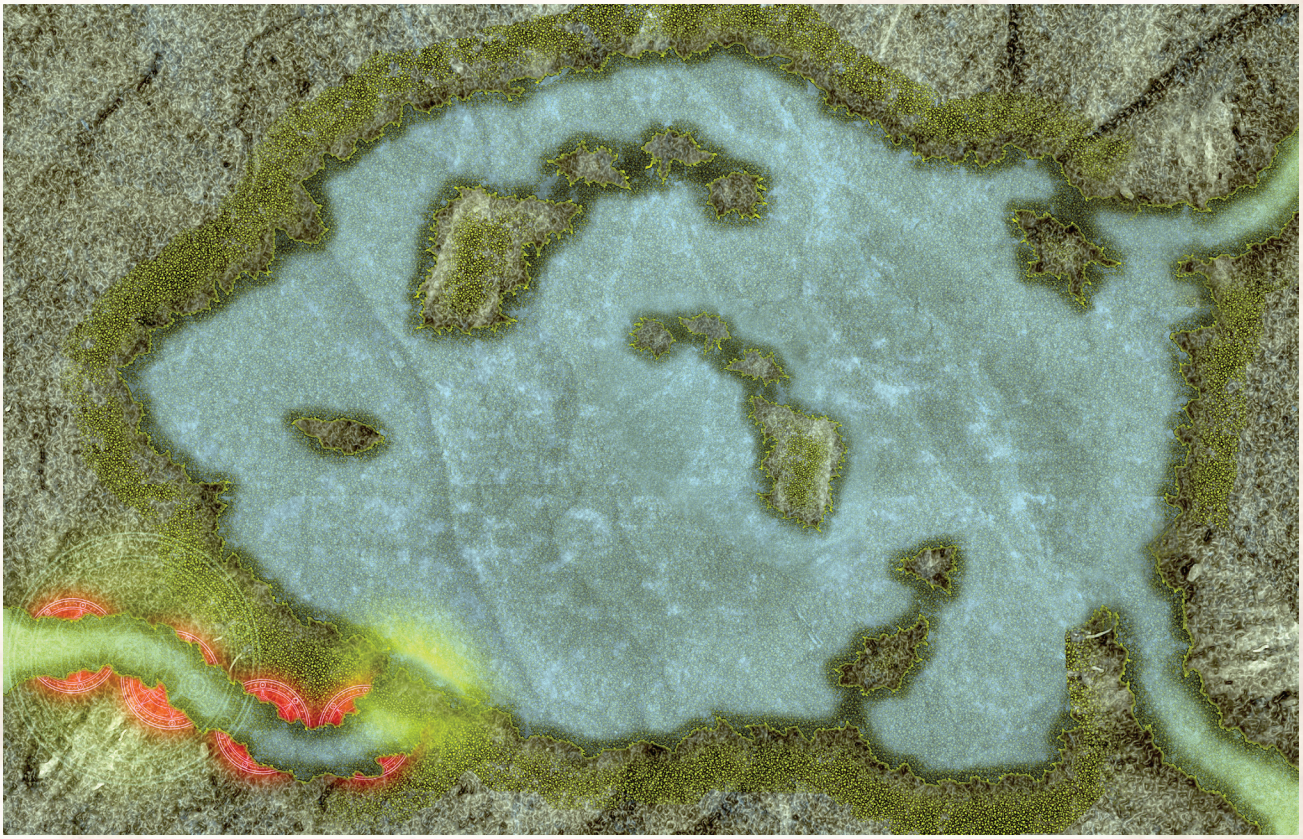
Special Traits

- **Spellcasting**: The priest's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, attack bonus +8). Knows following spells: 4/4/3/3/2
- **At will**: Guidance, Light, Mending, Sacred Flame
- **4/day**: Bless, Cure Wounds, Healing Word, Inflict Wounds
- **4/day**: Hold Person, Lesser Restoration, Prayer of Healing
- **3/day**: Daylight, Dispel Magic, Protection from Energy
- **2/day**: Banishment, Death Ward

Actions

- **Mace**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Ring of Elvenkind



8. Human Encroachment of Formene

9—Cornered by a Deranged Dehava

This adventure occurs while the party is exploring the Formene on their own. They are in a section of cavern with several small caves about. The small caves are dead ends. This mini-adventure can be inserted anywhere in the players' exploration of the Formene. It is not dependent on any other events. The caves are typical: natural cavern, no loose rock on the ground, some minor growth on the walls, dim (Rings of Elvenkind allow one to see, but does not light the room to 1,000 lumens).

This encounter uses map 9: **Cornered by a Dehava**.

An artist, little Peter, is leading the party members to a cavern with a lovely array of colorful minerals. Ahead, they see a dehava heading toward them. Unlike past encounters, this dehava is meandering left and right as it heads toward the party. When it gets within 20 yards, it starts heading directly toward them. Dehava normally step to the side and allow travelers to pass freely. This time, this dehava heads straight toward the party, not charging, not even moving at full speed, but clearly heading straight for it, with an almost aggressive stance.

The dehava ate a rock containing an irradiated mineral, and fell ill. Sadly, for the party, the illness affected its brain, and it thinks all life is a threat. It moves slowly because of the illness, but is actually enraged, and remains so until healed. However, normal healing spells will not benefit the dehava, since it is not a carbon-based life form.

Since the dehava has intelligence and thought, and each party member has a Ring of Elvenkind, the party can attempt to communicate. His thoughts are horribly disorganized. The GM is free to decide if the dehava is willing to communicate or not. (Their rings only work with a creature willing to communicate.) If the dehava is willing to communicate, the thoughts are unfocused, random snippets:

- Where is…
- Can't smell anything
- See thoughts
- (Expression of fear)
- Harm I
- Must save

The dehava is confused, scared, and cannot tell friend from foe. While healing spells will not aid the dehava, other spells could: **Greater Restoration**, a ritual casting of **Confusion** performed backwards, **Wish**, **Mind Blank**, **Heal**, or **Regenerate** would remove the toxins from his system and end his derangement. If the dehava becomes injured, **Stone Shape**, **Heal**, **Regenerate**, **Stoneskin**, and **Wall of Stone** can heal him for 1d6 hp per level of the spell slot used to attempt to heal him.

If a fight breaks out, take note of the considerable immunities and resistances that the dehava benefit from. The deranged dehava will fight to the death. Dehava attacks leave very distinctive acid burns on their opponent. These marks will identify the party as fighting a dehava for many days afterwards. If he is killed, at first, the characters face extreme hostility and are taken into custody when they return to Talos. After four days, the Council summons the characters and they are exonerated. A declaration that this was a horrible accident is declared for all to heed. An examination of the deranged dehava body revealed the toxins. Three dehava enter the chamber and deposit a tablet on the floor. It is inscribed in Common and Elvish. The tablet forgives the party for killing their brother, and apologizes for his attack on them. It details the dehava's name and the party members, and states that none may hold hostile feelings over this tragedy. This stone plaque ends the case, and becomes part of the archive.

If during the fight, the party takes an action that would dispel the deranged state, the dehava will stop fighting. If allowed to leave, he will retreat to an egg crèche and mend his wounds. Eventually he will confess to the Council and the matter dismissed as a misunderstanding. If the party communicates a willingness to heal him, he will return, slowly and meekly, to be healed. He will turn himself into the Council and all will be forgiven like above, except the dehava will respect the party for its act of mercy. There is no game mechanic benefit, just a social one.

If the party is killed, the dehava eventually metabolizes the toxins and comes to his senses. Realizing what he has done in his deranged state, he travels to Talos, requests aid, and has the party resurrected and restored. The dehava is horribly embarrassed over his actions and offers compensation for his offense. The compensation is in the form of two gold ingots per party member worth about 200 gp each. However, a successful check (**DECEPTION**, **INSIGHT**, **INVESTIGATION**, **PERCEPTION**, **PERSUASION**, or any other skill that the GM deems relevant, DC 15) will reveal that this offer is meant to be refused by the party as a sign of their grace and peaceful nature. If the ingots are accepted, the dehava accept that the matter is closed. However, if the offer is declined in a respectful manner, the characters gain the highest respect and admiration of the dehava, elevating them from the respect shown to a denizen of the Formene to something on par with the Formene Elves themselves. This honor will manifest at random times as a dehava appears randomly to escort the adventurers party on their travels and clear obvious obstructions from time to time. (They appear on a roll of 1 on a d10 when their aid would benefit the party.)

The deranged dehava has no treasure at the place he is encountered. The dehava encounter is worth 5,000 xp if successfully resolved.

Dehava

Large Sentient Rock, Neutral

- **Armor Class**: 18 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points**: 147 (14d10 + 70)
- **Speed**: 50 ft.
- **STR** (+5) **CON** (+5)
- **Damage Immunities**: acid, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Damage Resistance**: bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magical attacks
- **Condition Immunities**: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
- **Senses**: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
- **Languages**: understands most Formene languages, can only communicate telepathically
- **Challenge**: 9 (5,000 xp)

Special Traits

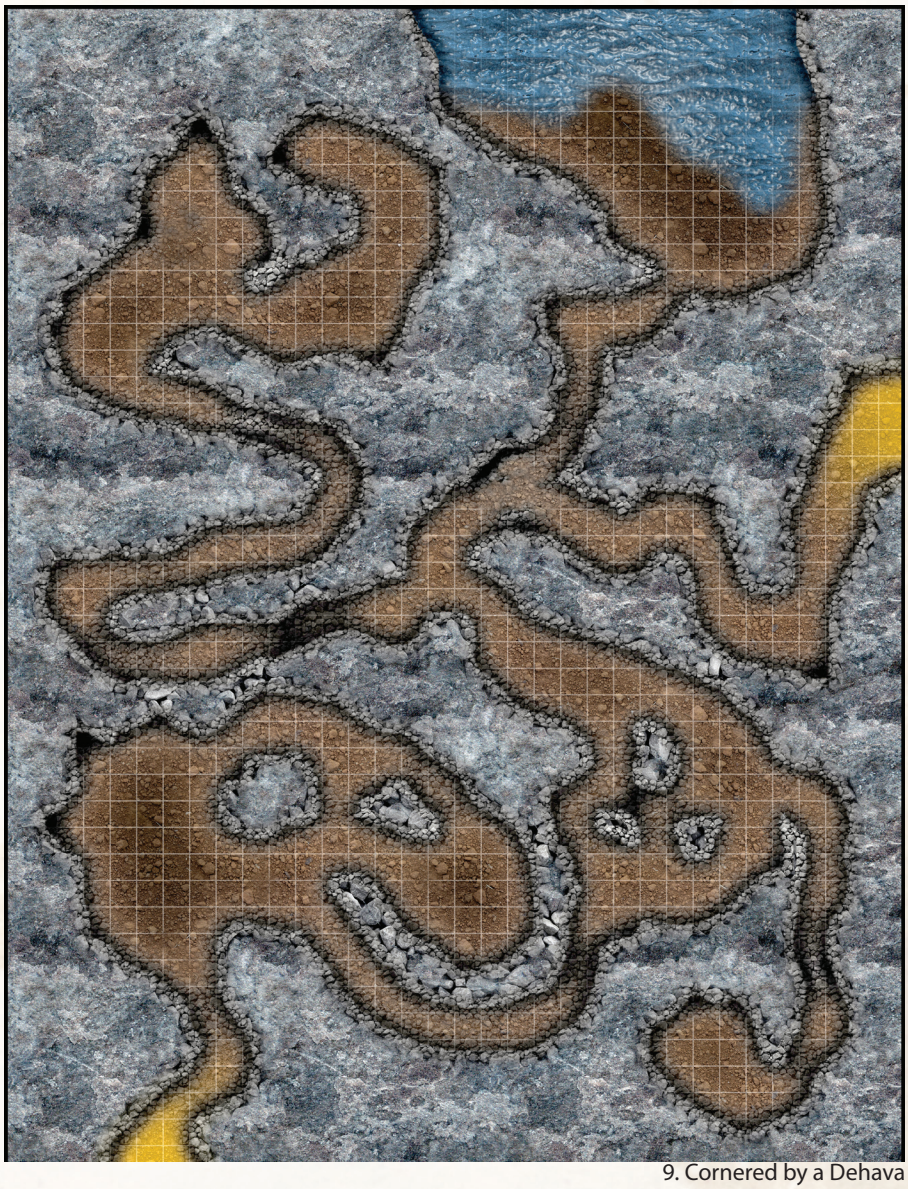
- **Acid Absorption**: Whenever the dehava is subjected to acid damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the acid damage dealt.
- **Immutable Form**: The dehava is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.
- **Magic Resistance**: The dehava has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- **Magic Weapons**: The dehava's weapon attacks are magical.
- **Rock Healing**: If the dehava becomes injured, **Stone Shape**, **Heal**, **Regenerate**, **Stoneskin**, and **Wall of Stone** can heal the dehava for 1d6 hp per level of the spell slot used to attempt to heal him.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The dehava makes two slam attacks.
- **Slam**: Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage and 4 (1d6 + 1) acid damage.

"Little" Peter Fineli

Standing well over six feet tall, Peter Fineli is the tallest Formene Elf alive today. His parents named him after a human artist they loved from the First Age of Man. Creative, curious, and enthusiastic. "Little" Peter likes the arts and enjoys the act of making art whether through his music or his paintings. He can be very eager and impulsive; yet, at the same time, he is willing to listen to advice. He prefers to learn from experience but will take the time to digest what other people have to say.



9. Cornered by a Dehava

10—Addun—Abandoned Duergar Temple

The temple is dedicated to Laduguer, but was abandoned when its duergar priests moved farther north seeking room for growth. It is infested with undead. Stat blocks per 5esrd.com or other reference materials.

This encounter uses map 10: **Addun—Abandoned Duergar Temple.**

Lower Temple

1—Grand Entrance—Over a hundred stairs lead up to a large door. The doors take an aggregate of sixty points of Strength, working in concert, to open. They are not locked, but each weighs many tons.

2—Outer Chapel—Behind the door is the outer chapel, dedicated to Laduguer, whose statue (with his benevolent face) dominates the room, a glow from his eyes casts the room in light on par with about ten torches. In its heyday, the room was lit by 24 large braziers. A pair of large doors flank Laduguer, and stairs up lead farther into the complex from the middle of the side walls.

3, 4—Preparation Rooms—The doors from the Outer Chapel each lead to a preparation room where inductees were prepared for the next step. A door on the inner wall of each room leads to the baptismal. Three dormant braziers are in the corners of each room.

5—Baptismal—This room has a large shallow (3') pool of water and an ever-burning brazier. The brazier channels fire from the Plane of Fire. The room is uncomfortably warm; however, the water is slightly cool. The inductees endured a ritual bordering on torture as they learned to let go of their fears. If the water is disturbed, four ghosts will attack.

Upper Temple

6, 7—Purification Rooms—Up the stairs from the Outer Chapel, these rooms are lit by ever-burning braziers like Area 5 and contain two large, dormant, incense burners near the door on the far end of the room. These rooms might have been used to inhale heady incense before proceeding deeper into the temple.

8,9—Waiting Rooms—These rooms also contained four large, dormant, incense burners. Worshipers might have met here, or might have waited here until summoned elsewhere in the temple.

10, 11—Crypts—Half a dozen steps down from the main upper temple are crypts for the leaders of the temple. The west crypt contains the tombs of warrior leaders, the east, divine leaders. The statue of Laduguer in the warrior crypt presents his warrior visage. The one in the divine crypt similarly displays his priestly aspect. Each coffin is haunted and six mummies will attack any party that disturbs the crypt, the statue, or any of the ten large dormant braziers. Each coffin contains a portion of the treasure of the temple.

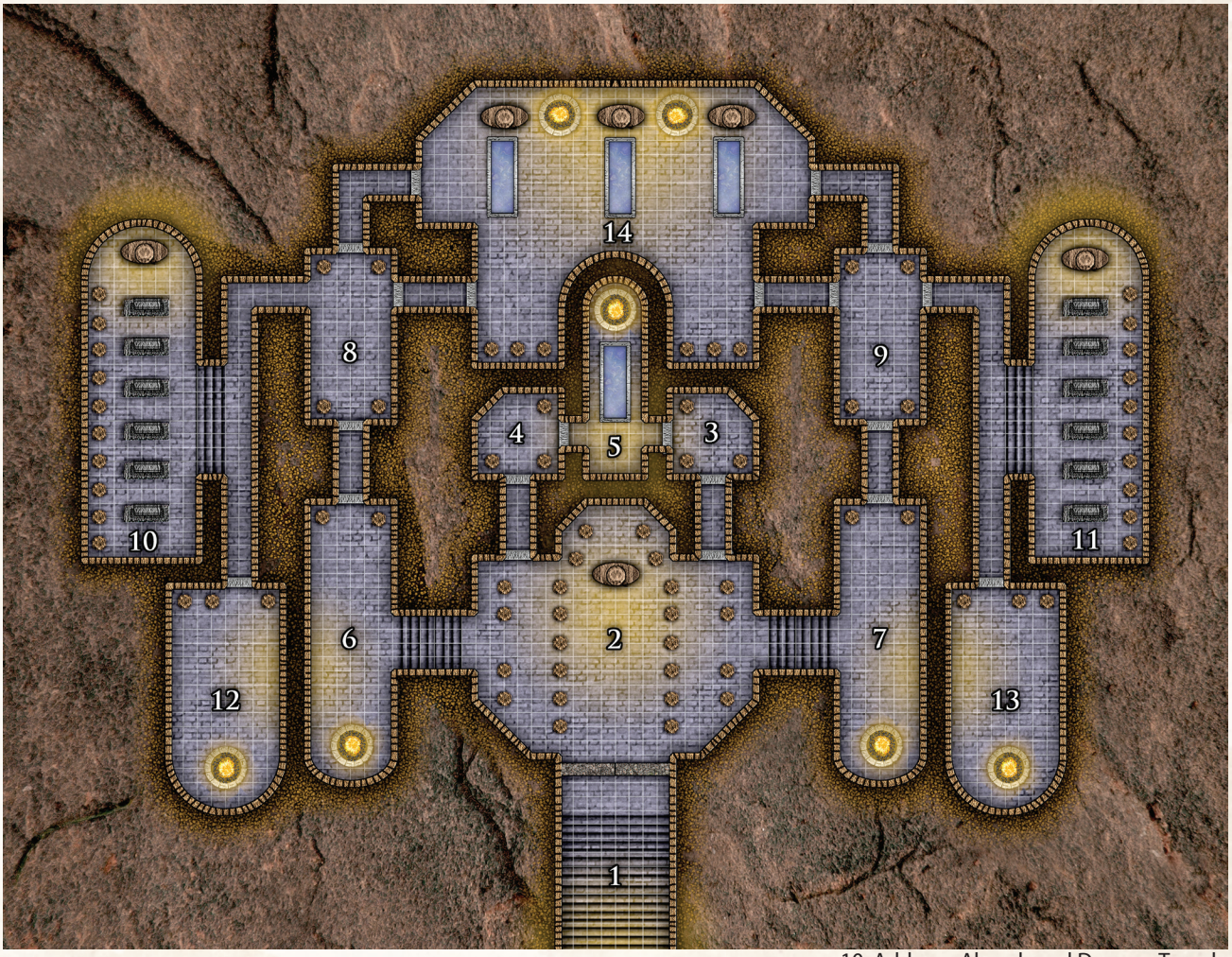
12, 13—Prayer Rooms—These rooms are lit by an ever-burning brazier. Each contains three large, dormant braziers near the door, opposite the ever-burning one. They also contain eight duergar zombies (use stats for ogre zombies).

14—Inner Chapel—This large room contains three different statues of Laduguer, showing his three aspects: Warrior, Priest, and his "true face", the Demon. The Warrior aspect was probably seen in Area 12 and the Priest aspect in Area 13. The back wall is bisected by a curved area. The two pockets each contain three large, dormant braziers. The room is lit by a pair of ever-burning braziers that sit between the Demon aspect and his other two aspects. A 3' deep pool lies before each statue, and if disturbed, releases two wraiths. The wraiths will actively attempt to directly or indirectly disturb the other pools to release their allies.

Treasure

Warrior Crypt: 700 cp, 7,000 sp, 2,100 gp, 90 pp, Carved Wooden Dice (pair) (25 gp), Iron Pin (25 gp), Pewter Chain (25 gp), Pewter Statue (25 gp), *Broom of Flying, Gauntlets of Ogre Power, Pipes of Haunting, +1 Weapon (warhammer)*

Divine Crypt: 500 cp, 10,000 sp, 1,700 gp, 110 pp, Coral Dice (pair) set with Onyx (250 gp), Ebony Miniature (of a ship) set with Zircon (250 gp), Fox-Fur Bound Book (blank) (250 gp), Dragonscale Pouch (250 gp), Ebony Mask (250 gp), *+1 Armor (chain shirt), Tentacle Rod*



10. Addun Abandoned Duergar Temple

Mummies Attack. Artist: Brian McCranie

11—Wyrm Lair

While searching the Formene for lost treasures and lost cities, the characters encounter a large cavern. Within the cavern, they hear water echoing, and on a successful **PERCEPTION** check (DC20), can hear a faint breathing, but breathing that inhales and exhales three times more slowly than most creatures known to the party.

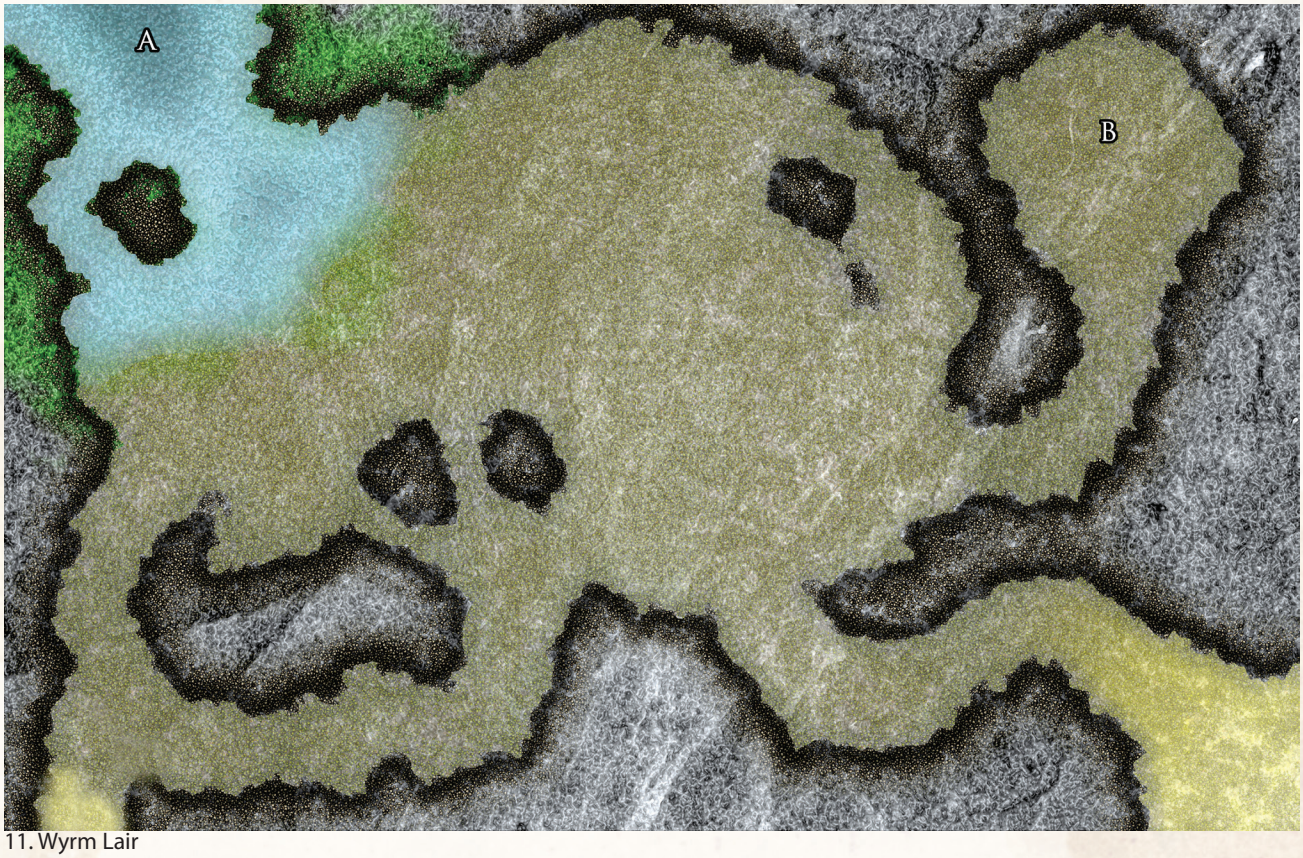
This encounter uses map 11: **Wyrm Lair**.

There are several approaches, all of which provide opportunities for stealth. Around the corner they see a young black dragon slumbering away (really, feigning sleep; he smelled them coming about 120 yards out, **INSIGHT, PERCEPTION, NATURE** check (DC25) to determine, if specifically asking if the dragon actually sleeps). There is a hoard in the room, and a side cavern (Area B) from which the smell of death and decay is nearly overwhelming. If the treasure hoard is approached, the dragon will wait until she can get half of the party or more in a breath attack before attacking, normally with surprise.

The wyrm is hungry to expand its hoard, brash, but not completely reckless. She will listen to attempts at negotiation. A peaceful end for this encounter is not impossible. For treasures worth 100 gp per level of each party member, she will allow them to exit as long as they never return. If they offer more, they will be allowed to each ask one question per additional 100 gp per level each character donates to her hoard. She can provide the following, if asked specifically about them:

- Location of the Cave of Statues
- Location of Addun, a lost temple of duergar

If attacked by the party or provoked to attack the party, at half hit points, she retreats to the water at the rear of the cavern (Area A), staying deep underwater until her breath weapon recharges, then surfaces to hit the adventurers while they presumably are looking over her hoard. She repeats this tactic until the party is defeated, she is defeated, or the party retreats. If her hoard is looted, she stalks the adventurers and ambushes them when they are weaker.



11. Wyrm Lair

Dragon, Black

Large dragon, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 162 (17d10 + 68)
- **Speed** 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.
- **STR** (+5) **DEX** (+3) **CON** (+4) **CHA** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +6, Con +7, Wis +4, Cha +6
- **Skills** Perception +7, Stealth +6
- **Damage Immunities**: acid
- **Senses**: darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 17
- **Languages**: Common, Draconic
- **Challenge:** 10 (5,900 xp)

Special Traits

Amphibious: The dragon can breathe air and water.

Actions

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

Bite: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Claw: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Acid Breath (Recharge 5–6): The dragon exhales acid in a 30-foot diameter cloud. Each creature in the cloud must make a DC 17 DEXTERITY saving throw, taking 72 (16d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Treasure

900 cp, 8,000 sp, 2,000 gp, 60 pp, 2 x Bloodstone (50 gp), 2 x Carnelian (50 gp), Chrysoprase (50 gp), 2 x Moonstone (50 gp), Quartz (50 gp), Sardonyx (50 gp), Zircon (50 gp), *2 x Potion of Superior Healing, Heward's Handy Haversack*

Black Dragon Attack. Artist: Brian McCranie

12—Mushroom Cave

This cave will be randomly found while exploring the Formene while searching for treasures learned through various legends and rumors. Its insertion into the adventure is up to the GM. This encounter might happen more than once, and might be a bit different each time. There is a table of four possible encounters below.

This encounter area uses map 12: **Mushroom Cave**.

The party follows a typical cavern to a larger, more or less circular cave. It has a shallow pool toward the middle, perhaps three feet deep. The cavern is faintly lit from phosphorescent mushrooms that are between ten and twenty feet tall. These giant mushrooms typically have caps about as wide as the mushroom is tall. Around and under these treelike giant mushrooms are hundreds of man-sized mushrooms and thousands of smaller mushrooms.

The species found include: indigo milkcap, latticed stinkhorn, bleeding tooth, amethyst deceiver, veiled lady mushroom, giant mycena chlorophos (the treelike shrooms), entoloma hochstetteri, turkey tail, devil's cigar, brain mushroom, morel, and the following poisonous species: death cap, webcap, autumn skullcap, and deadly dappering. Not all of the listed species will be found in each cave.

Encounter (1d4)	Description
1	Peaceful Cave
2	Violet Fungus
3	Psychedelic Sporers
4	Kids Playing

1. Peaceful Cave—This cave is gently lit, and comfortable, but a bit cool. The water is clean; there are a number of edible species of mushroom, and some inedible. (**NATURE**, **MEDICINE** or **SURVIVAL** check [DC 10]to verify which is which.) The party may rest here undisturbed. There is a 2% chance per eight hours spent here of someone traveling by stopping in this cave. If so, there is only a one in four chance of hostilities. This is a great place to take a long rest if desired. On a **MEDICINE** check (DC20), d8 mushrooms are found that are the equivalent of a weak *potion of healing* (1d6 healing), but will only be potent for an hour after being picked (and cannot be transported in pots). Any denizen of the layer of the Formene in which the cave is located could be a visitor. No citizen species of the Formene Civilization will be hostile to the characters once they are seen with their gifts of the Formene (cloak, boots, or ring). When they entered this cavern, they saw a navigation symbol they did not recognize. Logic would suggest it is a symbol of a safe place to rest.

2. Psychedelic Sporers—This cave seems like a peaceful cave in all major ways. The issue here is that one of the species of mushrooms is edible, but bursts forth a huge cloud of spores when plucked. The spores have psychedelic properties when inhaled. The effect lasts 1d6 + 2 hours. For each hour of the effect, roll on the table below, subtracting one from the die result (1 minimum) for each hour already passed since inhaling the spores to simulate coming down from the peak:

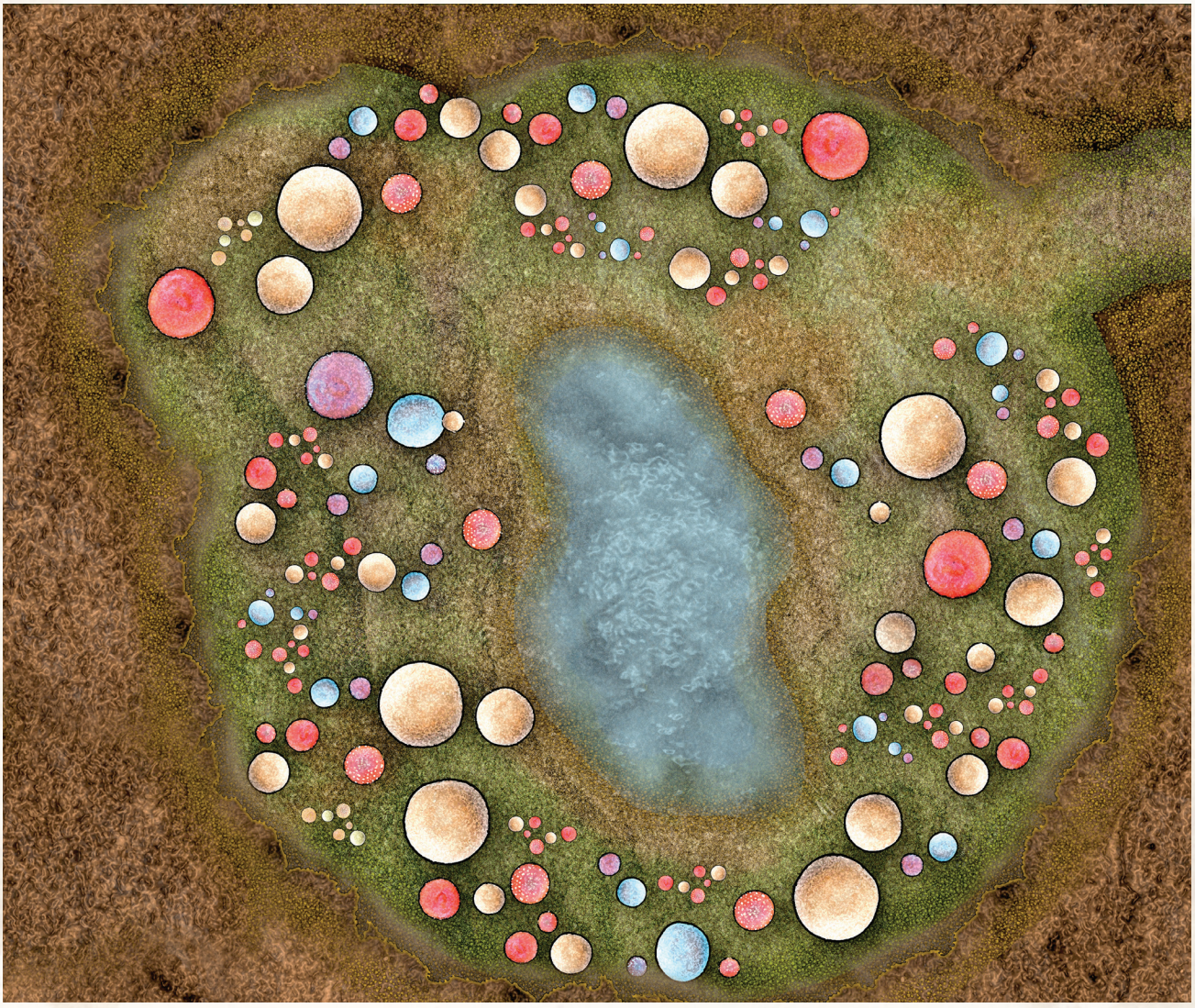
Roll (1d8)	Effect
1	Euphoric—The character feels at peace. Colors, sounds, and tastes are not distorted. Saving throws against fear and mind control are made with advantage due to the euphoria.
2	Mild Trip—Moving objects have an afterglow. Sounds are distorted randomly. Some are not affected while others are. Fast moving objects make the character a bit dizzy.
3	Trip—Still objects have an afterglow; moving objects have a huge afterglow. The character is extremely thirsty, requiring four times the normal amount of water to feel quenched.
4	Bad Trip—Everything is distorted just enough to cause fear or dread. Loud noises require a **WISDOM** saving throw (DC 10) with disadvantage to avoid running as far away as possible, saving again at the end of each round.
5	Tripping—Character is mellow, weird things only the player can see occur, like a fish leaping from mushroom to mushroom until finally diving in the pool. Everything tastes sweet—not sickly sweet, just sweet.
6	Reality Bent—Character recognizes objects, but they have extra features. All noises seem twice as loud as they really are. Character is noticeably thirsty, drinking about twice the normal amount of water to feel quenched.
7	Reality distorted—All but the most basic shapes are lost to the character. Details are beyond recognition. The character sees garish colors, all sounds are muffled as if hearing them underwater, and everything tastes like salt.
8	Reality disappears—Every object in the room is distorted beyond recognition. The character sees garish colors, the loudest sounds are distorted to a loud whisper, and everything tastes like ash.

3. Kids Playing—The party encounters a peaceful cave, but one that has 2d10 young children playing in the area. Every hour, an adult of the same species comes to check on the kids. The kids are half curious and half intimidated by the party. This manifests as half of the kids asking dozens of questions each per minute and half of the kids peering at the party from behind mushrooms large enough to hide them. The adult will recognize the party is under the protection of

the Formene Elves by its magic items, and will not be alarmed. Until they see these symbols, they might ask some sharp questions. All Formene Civilization citizens speak Elvish. Consult the table below for the children's race:

Roll 1d6	Species
1	Svirfneblin
2	Formene Elves
3	Deep Goblins
4	Duergar
5	Kobolds
6	Minotaurs

4. Violet Fungus—This cave is gently lit, comfortable, and slightly warm. The water is a bit covered in algae. When the party reaches the pool, or if any member climbs one of the large treelike mushrooms, 22 violet fungi attack. They surround the party, roughly dividing their numbers to attack each member with an equal number of fungi until the target is defeated, at which point the fungi all run to the next common target. The violet fungi attack until one side is defeated. Any characters who fall to their attacks will become a new violet fungi in 2d6 days.



12. Mushroom Cave

13—Cave of Statues

This cave is a false lead from the party's search for an abandoned city that was potentially discovered by the party in Almon's antiques office in DNH2, or while exploring rumors in Talos. They might know of Elrani, an adventure huntress who provided antique goods for Almon to sell, who talked of an ancient city she found.

This encounter uses map 13: **Cave of Statues**.

The clues leading here were thought to be useless by the people of Talos, just something for the party to explore, and return empty handed, and perhaps a little less inclined to search for great treasures. The teller of these tales, however, did not know the cave is the lair of a pair of medusas. The twenty-three statues are Formene Elves, caught by the pair, but posed instead of being eaten. Stats for the medusas can be found in the MM or the SRD. The female follows the classic description except for having typical human hair instead of the snakes for hair, and her eyes are striking but not glowing. The male is similar, adjusted for the natural differences between human men and women. Both are dressed in Greco-Romanesque clothing.

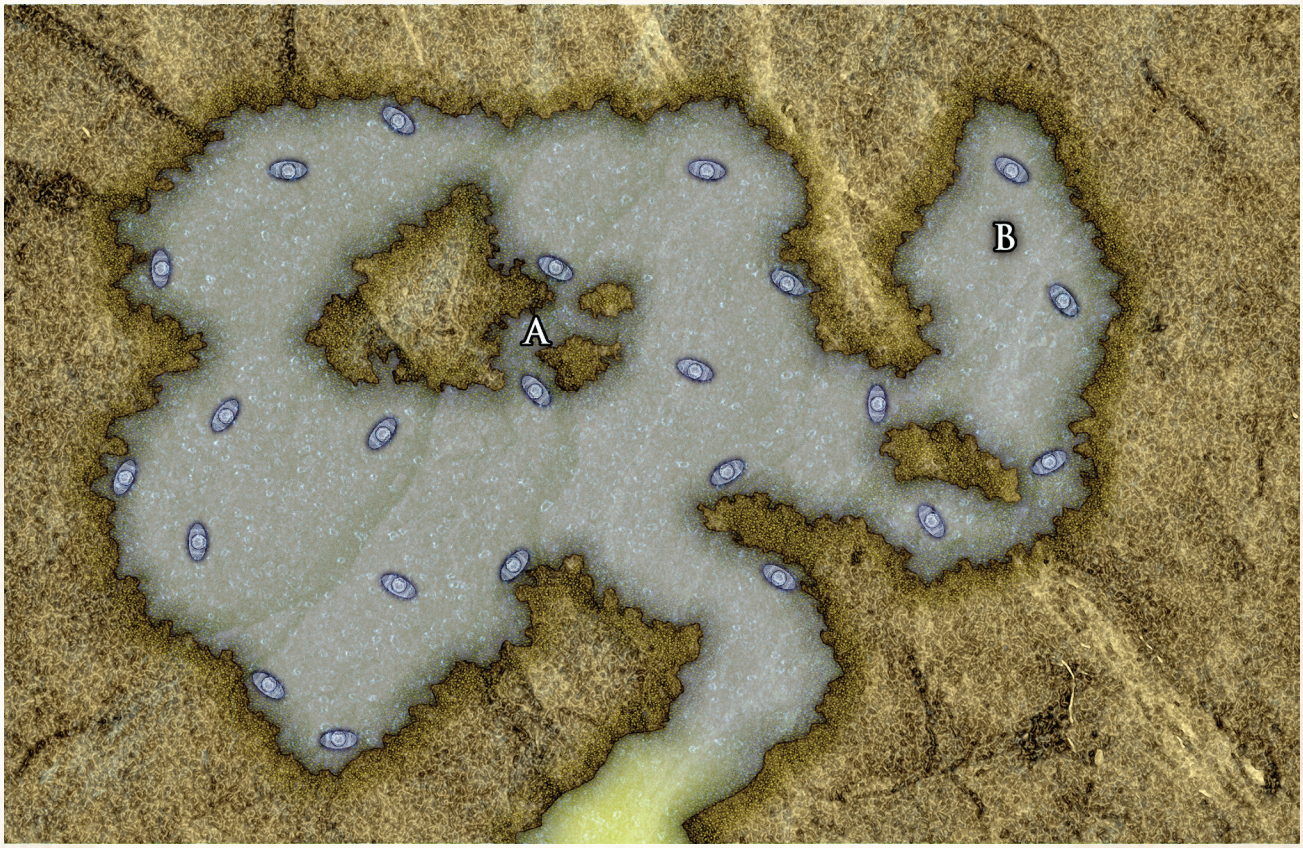
The pair prefer to petrify their targets, but are not above softening them up to make the hunt more entertaining. If the entire party is petrified, one of them is eventually found by a dehava and recognized. The dehava will send for help, and a war party of Formene hunters will clear the cave and free the entire party, 5d20 months after they were petrified.

If the party is successful in defeating the pair, a casting of **Greater Restoration** or similarly powerful magic can reverse the petrification. All of the statues are Formene Elves. The medusas thought they made better art than food. Everyone returned to flesh with five levels of exhaustion, unable to fight, defend themselves, or travel more than a dozen yards at a time. A small number of people (roll 1d12, on a 1) will exit petrification enraged instead of weakened and will attack the party on sight. See Formene Commoner description in Bestiary. The pair have a small treasure hoard from targets they killed and ate.

The pair will hide in Area A if they hear the party approaching (passive Perception: 21 for him, 22 for her) and will ambush the party. Area B contains their treasure and is where the party will find statue 17, **Selmyn Elrani Queyore**, a potentially important NPC. She is the rightmost statue in Area B.

Treasure

300 cp, 5,000 sp, 2,200 gp, 110 pp, 2 x Bloodstone (50 gp), Carnelian (50 gp), Chalcedony (50 gp), Chrysoprase (50 gp), Moonstone (50 gp), Onyx (50 gp), Quartz (50 gp), Star rose quartz (50 gp), *Broom of Flying, Pearl of Power, Slippers of Spider Climbing, +1 Weapon (greataxe)*



13. Cave of Statues

The Twenty-Three Statues

1. Sadon Twoorb: age 356, bounty hunter. He has long, straight, red hair and brown eyes.

1. Susanna Commonbrook: age 429, farmer. She has a bald head and brown eyes.

2. Golineth Taldilindar: age 133, bodyguard. He has cropped, curly, brown hair and grey eyes.

3. Orim Lavashield: age 177, soldier. He has short, straight, brown hair and brown eyes.

4. Diana Stonesworn: age 356, barrister. She has long, braided, auburn hair and brown eyes.

5. Peyton Caskbow: age 543, bandit. He has long, straight, black hair and blue eyes.

6. Destrian Redstream: age 237, fence. He has cropped, straight, auburn hair and cyan eyes.

7. Zane Bladewalker: age 426, bodyguard. He has cropped, wavy, auburn hair and brown eyes.

8. Katrina Cleves: age 237, armorer. She has short, curly, gray hair and brown eyes.

9. Nimlalwe Runelenrin: age 289, bounty hunter. She has very long, curly, black hair and red eyes.

10. Amelia de Mowbray: age 335, shepherd. She has short, wavy, red hair and blue eyes.

11. Gorvenal Ashglade: age 602, bard. He has a short, brown Mohawk and brown eyes.

12. Tarielye Haelond: age 629, trapper. She has very long, straight, gray hair and blue eyes.

13. Francis Woodleaf: age 332, pickpocket. He has cropped, straight, black hair and brown eyes.

14. Henry Cartwright: age 418, merchant. He has short, curly, auburn hair and brown eyes.

15. Rulf Commonbrook: age 209, diplomat. He has cropped, curly, auburn hair and brown eyes.

16. **Selmyn Elrani Queyore: age 232, deep explorer. She has a short, white Mohawk and green eyes.**

17. Xalvador Stonesworn: age 335, storyteller. He has very long, braided, golden hair and blue eyes.

18. Dain Caskbow: age 350, squire. He has short, wavy, gray hair and brown eyes.

19. Diana Cleves: age 323, gravedigger. She has cropped, wavy, gray hair and blue eyes.

20. Harley Bladewalker: age 231, fighter. She has long, wavy, black hair and brown eyes.

21. Janshai Darkdraft: age 576, bodyguard. He has long, wavy, auburn hair and blue eyes.

22. Hily Hornblower: age 381, monk. She has short, straight, silver hair and green eyes.

The highlighted entry, **Selmyn Elrani Queyore**, will not enrage. She is the fortune huntress mentioned by the Formene antiques dealer in DNH2 and is the only person who knows the location of a lost, ancient city. If freed, she will make her way back to Talos, get back on her feet, and eventually resume her adventures. If the party recognizes her name and her story, she might be inclined to help the party find the city.

The elves are grateful for their rescue, and will reward the party. Each elf who makes it home will reward the party with 1,000 gp. The party gains experience for defeating the medusas and an additional 1,000 xp per elf returned home. There is no penalty (but no XP) for any enraged elves that might be killed. The witnesses confirm the party's story of their deranged state and the threat they represented to the party and the weakened elves.

Medusa Lovers. Artist: Brandice Bos

Appendix 1—Formene Random Encounter Table

Formene Wandering Encounter Table

The difficulties listed here are based on a party of 5 characters of level 9.

Roll d12	Encounter
1	6x Basilisk (MM 24, CR 7); medium, 4,200 xp
2	Wraith (MM 302, CR 5) and 6 x Ghoul (MM 148, CR 1); medium, 3,000 xp
3	3 x Ghost (MM 147, CR 4); medium, 3,300 xp
4	3 x Chuul (MM 40, CR 4); medium, 3,300 xp
5	2 x Chimera (MM 39, CR 6); medium, 4,600 xp
6	Troll (MM 291, CR 5) and 4 x Ogre (MM 237, CR 2); medium, 3,600 xp
7	1 x Behir (MM 25, CR 11); medium, 7,200 xp
8	2 x Earth Elemental (MM 124, CR 5); easy, 3,600 xp
9	2 x Salamander (MM 266, CR 5); easy, 3,600 xp
10	1 x Cloaker (MM 41, CR 8); easy, 3,900 xp
11	2 x Xorn (MM 304, CR 5); easy, 3,600 xp
12	2 x Vampire Spawn (MM 298, CR 5); easy, 3,600 xp

Appendix 2—Bestiary

Advanced Cultists (including leader)

Medium human, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 95 (10d10 + 40)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+4)
- **Skills** Perception +8
- **Senses** passive Perception 18
- **Languages**: common
- **Challenge** 6 (2,300 xp)

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The cultist makes three punch attacks.
- **Punch**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Denizen of Leng

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 85 (10d8 + 40)
- **Speed** 40 ft.
- **DEX** (+4) **CON** (+4) **INT** (+4) **WIS** (+3) **CHA** (+5)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +7
- **Skills** Deception +9
- **Damage Resistances** cold, lightning
- **Damage Immunities** poison
- **Condition Immunities** poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
- **Languages** Deep Speech
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 xp)

Special Traits

- **Aberrant Biology**: A denizen of Leng does not need to breathe.
- **Sneak Attack**: Once per turn, a denizen of Leng can do an extra 4d6 damage, per the Rogue ability.
- **Innate Spellcasting**: It has the following spell-like abilities, using Charisma (DC 16, attack +8).
    - Constant: Tongues
    - 3/day each: Detect Thoughts, Hypnotic Pattern, Levitate, Minor Image
    - 1/day each: Locate Object, Plane Shift (self only)
- **Magic Resistance**: The Denizen of Leng has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: A denizen of Leng bites once and attacks once with claws.
- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft.; one creature. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Con saving throw or immediately gain one level of exhaustion.
- **Claws**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft.; one creature. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing.

Doppelganger

Medium monstrosity, neutral

- **Armor Class** 14
- **Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **DEX** (+4)
- **Skills** Deception +6, Insight +3
- **Condition Immunities** charmed
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
- **Languages** Common
- **Challenge** 3 (700 xp)

Special Traits

- **Shapechanger**: The doppelganger can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid it has seen, 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 isn't transformed. At death it reverts to true form.
- **Ambusher**: The doppelganger has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.
- **Surprise Attack**: If the doppelganger surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The doppelganger makes two melee attacks.
- **Slam**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning.

Duergar Zombies

Medium undead, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 8
- **Hit Points** 85 (9d10 + 36)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+4)
- **Damage Immunities** poison
- **Condition Immunities** poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
- **Languages** understands Common and Deep Speech but can't speak
- **Challenge** 2 (450 xp)

Special Traits

- **Undead Fortitude**. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

- **Morningstar**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning.

Formene Bulette

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 21 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 138 (12d12 + 60)
- **Speed** 40 ft., burrow 40 ft.
- **STR** (+5) **CON** (+5)
- **Skills** Perception +6
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 16
- **Languages** —
- **Challenge** 10 (5,900 xp)

Special Traits

- **Standing Leap**: The bulette's long jump is up to 40 feet and its high jump is up to 20 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 31 (4d12 + 5) piercing damage.
- **Deadly Leap**: If the bulette jumps at least 15 feet as part of its movement, it can then use this action to land on its feet in a space that contains one or more other creatures. Each of those creatures must succeed on a DC 16 **STRENGTH** or **DEXTERITY** saving throw (target's choice) or be knocked prone and take 19 (4d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 19 (4d6 + 5) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the damage, isn't knocked prone, and is pushed 5 feet out of the bulette's space into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice. If no unoccupied space is within range, the creature instead falls prone in the bulette's space.

Formene Commoner

Medium Formene Elves, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class** 12 (unarmored)
- **Hit Points** 17 (3d8 + 3)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **DEX** (+2) **CON** (+1) **INT** (+4)
- **Skills** Perception +8
- **Senses** passive Perception 18
- **Languages**: common
- **Challenge** 1 (200 xp)

Special Traits

- Enraged: Hit Points increase to 60, Armor Class lowers to 10, hits do double damage
- **Inate Spellcasting**: It has the following spell-like abilities, using Intelligence (DC 16, attack +8)
    - At Will: Inflict Wounds

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The cultist makes two unarmed attacks.
- **Unarmed**: Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Ghost

Medium undead, any alignment

- **Armor Class** 11
- **Hit Points** 45 (10d8)
- **Speed** 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)
- **CHA** (+3)
- **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 11
- **Languages** any languages it knew in life
- **Challenge** 4 (1,100 xp)

Actions

- **Withering Touch**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic.

Kobold

Small humanoid (kobold), lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 12
- **Hit Points** 5 (2d6 - 2)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **DEX** (+2)
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
- **Languages** Common, Draconic
- **Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

Special Traits

- **Pack Tactics**: The kobold has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the kobold's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

- **Dagger**: Melee Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing.
- **Sling**: Ranged Attack: +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning.

Medusa

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 127 (17d8 + 51)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **CON** (+3)
- **Skills** Deception+5, Insight+4, Perception+4, Stealth+5
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
- **Languages** Common
- **Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Traits

- **Petrifying Gaze**: See MM, SRD, or www.5esrd.com

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The medusa makes either three melee attacks—one with its snake hair and two with its shortsword—or two ranged attacks with its longbow.
- **Snake Hair**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage.
- **Shortsword**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.
- **Longbow**: Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Minotaur

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- Hit Points 76 (9d10 + 27)
- **Speed** 40 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+3) **WIS** (+3)
- **Skills** Perception +7
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
- **Languages** Abyssal
- **Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Special Traits

- **Charge**: If the minotaur moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.
- **Labyrinthine Recall**: The minotaur can perfectly recall any path it has traveled.

Actions

- **Greataxe**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12 + 4) slashing damage.
- **Gore**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Mummy

Medium undead, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 11 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)
- **Speed** 20 ft.
- **STR** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Wis +2
- **Damage Vulnerabilities** fire
- **Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
- **Languages** the languages it knew in life
- **Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Actions

- **Dagger**: Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + piercing damage.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The mummy can use its **Dreadful Glare** and makes one attack with its rotting fist.
- **Rotting Fist**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the **Remove Curse** spell or other magic.

Swarm, Insects

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 22 (5d8)
- **Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.
- **Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
- **Senses** blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 8
- **Languages** —
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

Special Traits

- **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 insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

- **Bites**: Melee Attack: +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. Hit: 10 (4d4) piercing damage.

Svirfneblin

Small humanoid (gnome), neutral good

- **Armor Class** 15 (chain shirt)
- **Hit Points** 16 (3d6 + 6)
- **Speed** 20 ft.
- **Skills** Investigation +3, Perception +2, Stealth +4
- **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12
- **Languages** Gnomish, Terran, Undercommon
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

Special Traits

- **Stone Camouflage**: The gnome has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.
- **Gnome Cunning**: The gnome has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws vs. magic

Actions

- **War Pick**. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.
- **Poisoned Dart**. Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Fungi, Violet Fungus

Medium plant, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 10
- **Hit Points** 18 (4d8)
- **Speed** 5 ft.
- **Condition Immunities** blinded, deafened, frightened
- **Senses** blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
- **Languages** —
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

Special Traits

- **False Appearance**: While the violet fungus remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary fungus.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The fungus makes 1d4 Rotting Touch attacks.
- **Rotting Touch**: Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Wraith

Medium undead, neutral evil

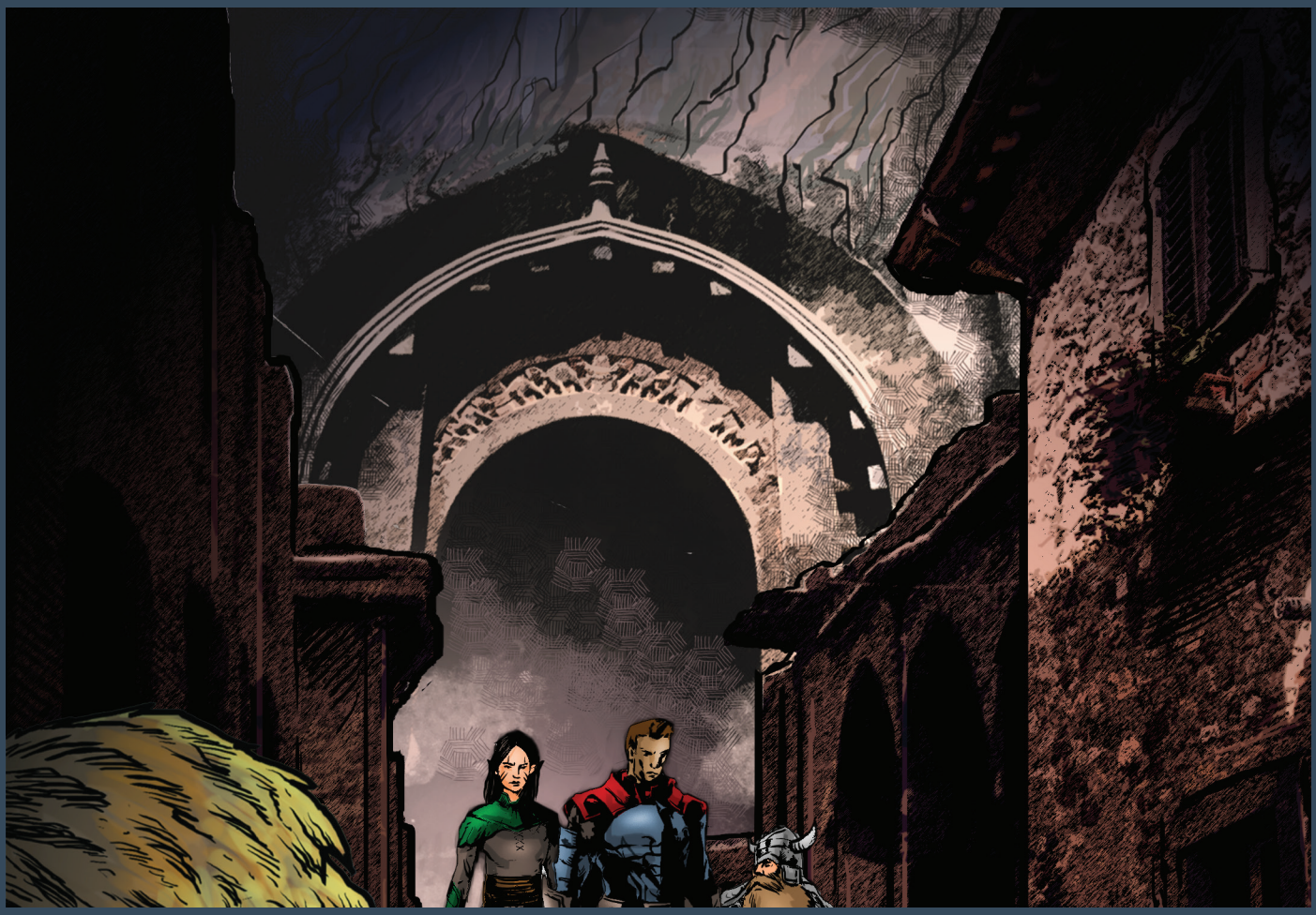
- **Armor Class** 13
- **Hit Points** 67 (9d8 + 27)
- **Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)
- **DEX** (+3) **CON** (+3)
- **Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
- **Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
- **Languages** the languages it knew in life
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- **Incorporeal Movement**: The wraith 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

- **Life Drain**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.



Talos, a city of legend, focus of tales dating back to the First Age of Man—exotic and forbidden. Buried deep in the Formene, this lone gem of the subterranean realms has legends as tall as the mountains under which it lies. Scholars and sages know more: it is the capital of the Elven race of the subterranean realms, sealed off from the surface world, supported by smaller towns, trading nexuses, and the wealth of knowledge accumulated by the Formene Elves who ward it.

In this Land of Night, dozens of nations, formed from the Formene races, join the elves in a powerful confederation of trade, protection, and mining of the most valued metal—mithril.

Recently, a trading nexus was uncovered and explored. The leaders of Meawold want to restore contact with the Formene Elves and access mithril, other rare Formene metals, and minerals for the first time in two millennia.

The explorers of that trading nexus found letters and journals suggesting a vast, untapped wealth of gems, metal, and minerals, as well as forgotten cities full of treasure, some with magical wealth.

What waits in the Formene? Both the city of Talos and the Formene wilds offer incredible opportunities for adventure and wealth.

And also, incredible dangers.

DNH3

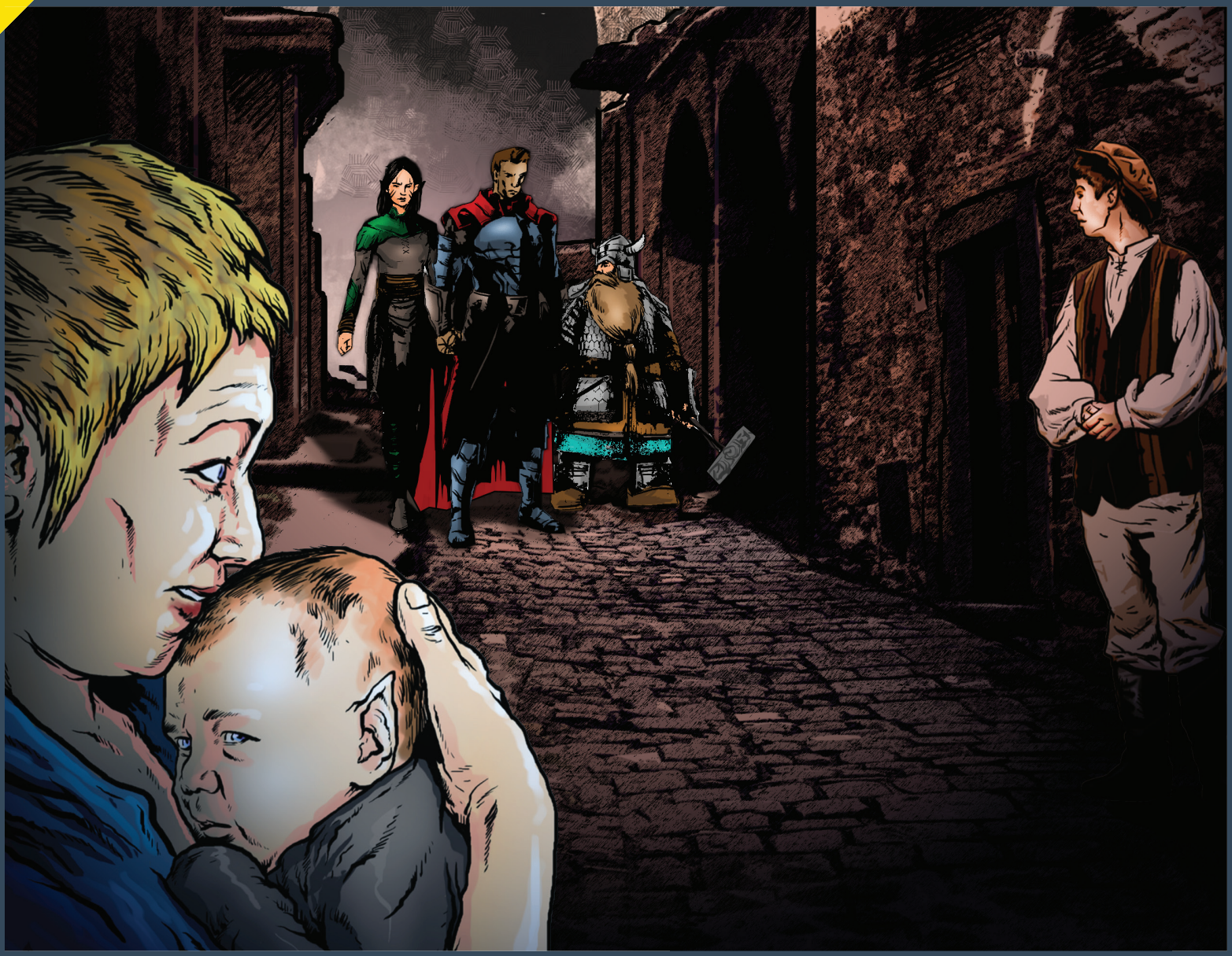
Fifth Edition Fantasy

Part Three of the
Haunting of Hastur Series

The City of Talos—Complete Bestiary

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Levels 8–10



The City of Talos is an adventure for 3–7 characters levels 8–10 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. It is optimized for the fifth edition and for 5 characters at level 9.

Dark Naga Adventures
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DNH3:
The City of Talos—Bestiary

Dark Naga Adventures

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City of Talos—Bestiary

1. Advanced Cultist
2. Advanced Priest
3. Basilisk
4. Behir
5. Chimera
6. Chuul
7. Cloaker
8. Commoner
9. Dehava
10. Denizen of Leng
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12. Dragon, Black
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25. Mummy
26. Pech
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28. Scout
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30. Swarm, Insect
31. Troll
32. Vampire Spawn
33. Veteran
34. Violet Fungus
35. Wraith
36. Xorn

Foreword

This document contains all the opponents the party members could face in the adventure. Most of the ones not in the adventure document come from Scenario 8—Human Encroachment of the Formene or the random encounter/wandering monster table. The encounter is expected to be resolved without a need for statblocks for the invaders.

Dark Naga uses a streamlined statblock for consistency and brevity. Stat bonuses below +2 and individual stat scores are not shown. Fill in the blanks by assuming all missing bonuses are +1 or lower, and that scores are the lowest score that can produce the bonus.

All the creatures listed here come from the Wizards of the Coast 5e SRD (also available here, Frog God Games' Fifth Edition Foes, or are a Dark Naga adaptation.

Advanced Cultists

(includes leader)
Medium human, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 95 (10d10 + 40)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+4)
- **Skills** Perception +8
- **Senses** passive Perception 18
- **Languages**: common
- **Challenge** 6 (2,300 xp)

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The cultist makes three punch attacks.
- **Punch**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage

Advanced Priest

Medium human, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 19 (splint plus shield)
- **Hit Points:** 60 (8d8 + 24)
- **Speed:** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+3) **DEX** (+3) **CON** (+3)
- **INT** (+4) **WIS** (+5) **CHA** (+4)
- **Saving Throws**: Con +5, Wis +7, Cha +6
- **Senses:** passive Perception 15
- **Languages:** Common
- **Challenge:** 4 (1,100 xp)

Special Traits

- **Spellcasting**: The priest's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, attack bonus +8). Knows following spells: 4/4/3/3/2
- **At will**: Guidance, Light, Mending, Sacred Flame
- **4/day**: Bless, Cure Wounds, Healing Word, Inflict Wounds
- **4/day**: Hold Person, Lesser Restoration, Prayer of Healing
- **3/day**: Daylight, Dispel Magic, Protection from Energy
- **2/day**: Banishment, Death Ward

Actions

- **Mace**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Basilisk

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)
- **Speed** 20 ft.
- **STR** (+3)
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
- **Languages** —
- **Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Special Traits

- **Petrifying Gaze**: If a creature starts its turn within 30 feet of the basilisk and the two of them can see each other, the basilisk can force the creature to make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw if the basilisk isn't incapacitated. On a failed save, the creature magically begins to turn to stone and is restrained. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified until freed by the greater restoration spell or other magic. A creature that isn't surprised can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If it does so, it can't see the basilisk until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If it looks at the basilisk in the meantime, it must immediately make the save. If the basilisk sees its reflection within 30 feet of it in bright light, it mistakes itself for a rival and targets itself with its gaze.

Actions

- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Behir

Huge monstrosity, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 168 (16d12 + 64)
- **Speed** 50 ft., climb 40 ft.
- **STR** (+6) **DEX** (+3) **CON** (+4)
- **Skills** Perception +6, Stealth +7
- **Damage Immunities** lightning
- **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 16
- **Languages** Draconic
- **Challenge** 11 (7,200 XP)

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The behir makes two attacks: one with its bite and one to constrict.
- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage.
- **Constrict**: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Large or smaller creature. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 17 (2d10 + 6) slashing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 16) if the behir isn't already constricting a creature, and the target is restrained until this grapple ends.
- **Lightning Breath** (Recharge 5–6): The behir exhales a line of lightning that is 20 feet long and 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 66 (12d10) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- **Swallow**: The behir makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the behir, and it takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the behir's turns. A behir can have only one creature swallowed at a time. If the behir takes 30 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the behir must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within 10 feet of the behir. If the behir dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 15 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Chimera

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 114 (12d10 + 48)
- **Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+4)
- **Skills** Perception +8
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18
- **Language**s understands Draconic but can't speak
- **Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The chimera makes three attacks: one with its bite, one with its horns, and one with its claws. When its fire breath is available, it can use the breath in place of its bite or horns.
- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.
- **Horns**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage.
- **Claws**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.
- **Fire Breath** (Recharge 5–6): The dragon head exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 31 (7d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Chuul

Large aberration, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 93 (11d10 + 33)
- **Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+3)
- **Skills** Perception +4
- **Damage Immunities** poison
- **Condition Immunities** poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
- **Languages** understands Deep Speech but can't speak
- **Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

Special Traits

- **Amphibious**: The chuul can breathe air and water.
- **Sense Magic**: The chuul senses magic within 120 feet of it at will. This trait otherwise works like the detect magic spell but isn't itself magical.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The chuul makes two pincer attacks. If the chuul is grappling a creature, the chuul can also use its tentacles once.
- **Pincer**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14) if it is a Large or smaller creature and the chuul doesn't have two other creatures grappled.
- **Tentacles**: One creature grappled by the chuul must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Until this poison ends, the target is paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Cloaker

Large aberration, chaotic neutral

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 78 (12d10 + 12)
- **Speed** 10 ft., fly 40 ft.
- **STR** 17 (+3)
- **Skills** Stealth +5
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
- **Languages** Deep Speech, Undercommon
- **Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

Special Traits

- **Damage Transfer**: While attached to a creature, the cloaker takes only half the damage dealt to it (rounded down), and that creature takes the other half.
- **False Appearance**: While the cloaker remains motionless without its underside exposed, it is indistinguishable from a dark leather cloak.
- **Light Sensitivity**: While in bright light, the cloaker has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The cloaker makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.
- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, and if the target is Large or smaller, the cloaker attaches to it. If the cloaker has advantage against the target, the cloaker attaches to the target's head, and the target is blinded and unable to breathe while the cloaker is attached. While attached, the cloaker can make this attack only against the target and has advantage on the attack roll. The cloaker can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can take its action to detach the cloaker by succeeding on a DC 16 Strength check.
- **Tail**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.
- **Moan**: Each creature within 60 feet of the cloaker that can hear its moan and that isn't an aberration must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened until the end of the cloaker's next turn. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the cloaker's moan for the next 24 hours. Phantasms (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The cloaker magically creates three illusory duplicates of itself if it isn't in bright light. The duplicates move with it and mimic its actions, shifting position so as to make it impossible to track which cloaker is the real one. If the cloaker is ever in an area of bright light, the duplicates disappear. Whenever any creature targets the cloaker with an attack or a harmful spell while a duplicate remains, that creature rolls randomly to determine whether it targets the cloaker or one of the duplicates. A creature is unaffected by this magical effect if it can't see or if it relies on senses other than sight. A duplicate has the cloaker's AC and uses its saving throws. If an attack hits a duplicate, or if a duplicate fails a saving throw against an effect that deals damage, the duplicate disappears.

Commoner (Human)

Human, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class** 10
- **Hit Points** 4 (1d8)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **Language** Common
- **Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

Actions

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

Dehava

Large Sentient Rock, Neutral

- **Armor Class**: 18 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points**: 147 (14d10 + 70)
- **Speed**: 50 ft.
- **STR** (+5) **CON** (+5)
- **Damage Immunities**: acid, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Damage Resistance**: bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from magical attacks
- **Condition Immunities**: charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
- **Senses**: darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
- **Languages**: understands most Formene languages, can only communicate telepathically
- **Challenge**: 9 (5,000 xp)

Special Traits

- **Acid Absorption**: Whenever the dehava is subjected to acid damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the acid damage dealt.
- **Immutable Form**: The dehava is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.
- **Magic Resistance**: The dehava has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- **Magic Weapons**: The dehava's weapon attacks are magical.
- **Rock Healing**: If the dehava becomes injured, **Stone Shape**, **Heal**, **Regenerate**, **Stoneskin**, and **Wall of Stone** can heal the dehava for 1d6 hp per level of the spell slot used to attempt to heal him.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The dehava makes two slam attacks.
- **Slam**: Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage and 4 (1d6 + 1) acid damage.

Denizen of Leng

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 85 (10d8 + 40)
- **Speed** 40 ft.
- **DEX** (+4) **CON** (+4) **INT** (+4) **WIS** (+3) **CHA** (+5)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +7
- **Skills** Deception +9
- **Damage Resistances** cold, lightning
- **Damage Immunities** poison
- **Condition Immunities** poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
- **Languages** Deep Speech
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 xp)

Special Traits

- **Aberrant Biology**: A denizen of Leng does not need to breathe.
- **Sneak Attack**: Once per turn, a denizen of Leng can do an extra 4d6 damage, per the Rogue ability.
- **Innate Spellcasting**: It has the following spell-like abilities, using Charisma (DC 16, attack +8).
    - Constant: Tongues
    - 3/day each: Detect Thoughts, Hypnotic Pattern, Levitate, Minor Image
    - 1/day each: Locate Object, Plane Shift (self only)
- **Magic Resistance**: The Denizen of Leng has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: A denizen of Leng bites once and attacks once with claws.
- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft.; one creature. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Con saving throw or immediately gain one level of exhaustion.
- **Claws**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft.; one creature. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing.

Doppelganger

Medium monstrosity, neutral

- **Armor Class** 14
- **Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **DEX** (+4)
- **Skills** Deception +6, Insight +3
- **Condition Immunities** charmed
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
- **Languages** Common
- **Challenge** 3 (700 xp)

Special Traits

- **Shapechanger**: The doppelganger can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid it has seen, 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 isn't transformed. At death it reverts to true form.
- **Ambusher**: The doppelganger has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it has surprised.
- **Surprise Attack**: If the doppelganger surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The doppelganger makes two melee attacks.
- **Slam**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning.

Dragon, Black

Large dragon, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 162 (17d10 + 68)
- **Speed** 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.
- **STR** (+5) **DEX** (+3) **CON** (+4) **CHA** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +6, Con +7, Wis +4, Cha +6
- **Skills** Perception +7, Stealth +6
- **Damage Immunities**: acid
- **Senses**: darkvision 90 ft., passive Perception 17
- **Languages**: Common, Draconic
- **Challenge:** 10 (5,900 xp)

Special Traits

Amphibious: The dragon can breathe air and water.

Actions

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

Bite: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Claw: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Acid Breath (Recharge 5–6): The dragon exhales acid in a 30-foot diameter cloud. Each creature in the cloud must make a DC 17 DEXTERITY saving throw, taking 72 (16d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Duergar Zombies

Medium undead, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 8
- **Hit Points** 85 (9d10 + 36)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+4)
- **Damage Immunities** poison
- **Condition Immunities** poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
- **Languages** understands Common and Deep Speech but can't speak
- **Challenge** 2 (450 xp)

Special Traits

- **Undead Fortitude**. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5 + the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

Actions

- **Morningstar**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning.

Elemental, Earth

Large elemental, neutral

- **Armor Class** 17
- **Hit Points** 126 (12d10 + 60)
- **Speed** 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.
- **STR** (+5) **CON** (+5)
- **Damage Vulnerabilities** thunder
- **Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Damage Immunities** poison
- **Condition Immunities** exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, unconscious
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10
- **Languages** Terran
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- Earth Glide: The elemental can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the elemental doesn't disturb the material it moves through.
- Siege Monster: The elemental deals double damage to objects and structures.

Actions

- Multiattack: The elemental makes two slam attacks.
- Slam: Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Formene Bulette

Huge monstrosity, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 21 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 138 (12d12 + 60)
- **Speed** 40 ft., burrow 40 ft.
- **STR** (+5) **CON** (+5)
- **Skills** Perception +6
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 16
- **Languages** —
- **Challenge** 10 (5,900 xp)

Special Traits

- **Standing Leap**: The bulette's long jump is up to 40 feet and its high jump is up to 20 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 31 (4d12 + 5) piercing damage.
- **Deadly Leap**: If the bulette jumps at least 15 feet as part of its movement, it can then use this action to land on its feet in a space that contains one or more other creatures. Each of those creatures must succeed on a DC 16 **STRENGTH** or **DEXTERITY** saving throw (target's choice) or be knocked prone and take 19 (4d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 19 (4d6 + 5) slashing damage. On a successful save, the creature takes only half the damage, isn't knocked prone, and is pushed 5 feet out of the bulette's space into an unoccupied space of the creature's choice. If no unoccupied space is within range, the creature instead falls prone in the bulette's space.

Formene Commoner

Medium Formene Elve, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class** 12 (unarmored)
- **Hit Points** 17 (3d8 + 3)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **DEX** (+2) **CON** (+1) **INT** (+4)
- **Skills** Perception +8
- **Senses** passive Perception 18
- **Languages**: common
- **Challenge** 1 (200 xp)

Special Traits

- Enraged: Hit Points increase to 60, Armor Class lowers to 10, hits do double damage
- **Inate Spellcasting**: It has the following spell-like abilities, using Intelligence (DC 16, attack +8)
    - At Will: Inflict Wounds

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The cultist makes two unarmed attacks.
- **Unarmed**: Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Ghost

Medium undead, any alignment

- **Armor Class** 11
- **Hit Points** 45 (10d8)
- **Speed** 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)
- **CHA** (+3)
- **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 11
- **Languages** any languages it knew in life
- **Challenge** 4 (1,100 xp)

Actions

- **Withering Touch**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic.

Gladiator (Human)

Human, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class** 16 (studded leather, shield)
- **Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **DEX** (+2) **CON** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6
- **Skills** Athletics +10, Intimidation +5
- **Senses** passive Perception 11
- **Language** Common
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- **Brave**: The gladiator has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.
- **Brute**: A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the gladiator hits with it (included in the attack).

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The gladiator makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.
- **Spear**: Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.
- **Shield Bash**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Reactions

- **Parry**: The gladiator adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the gladiator must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Goblin

Small humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 15 (leather armor, shield)
- **Hit Points** 7 (2d6)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **DEX** (+2)
- **Skills** Stealth +6
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
- **Languages** Common, Goblin
- **Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

Special Traits

- **Nimble Escape**: It can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action.

Actions

- **Scimitar**: Melee Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing.

Knight

Human, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class** 18 (plate)
- **Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+3) **CON** (+2) **CHA** (+2)
- **Saving Throws** Con +4, Wis +2
- **Senses** passive Perception 10
- **Language** Common
- **Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Special Traits

- **Brave**: The knight has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The knight makes two melee attacks.
- **Greatsword**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.
- **Heavy Crossbow**: Ranged Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d10) piercing damage.
- **Leadership** (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest): For 1 minute, the knight can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the knight. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the knight is incapacitated.

Reactions

- **Parry**: The knight adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Kobold

Small humanoid (kobold), lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 12
- **Hit Points** 5 (2d6 - 2)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **DEX** (+2)
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8
- **Languages** Common, Draconic
- **Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

Special Traits

- **Pack Tactics**: The kobold has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the kobold's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

- **Dagger**: Melee Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing.
- **Sling**: Ranged Attack: +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning.

NPC, Mage

Human, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class** 12 (15 with mage armor)
- **Hit Points** 40 (9d8)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **INT** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Int +6, Wis +4
- **Skills** Arcana +6, History +6
- **Senses**: passive Perception 11
- **Languages** Common, Elvish, Goblin, Draconic
- **Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Traits

- **Spellcasting**: The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:
  - Cantrips (at will): fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation
  - 1st level (4 slots): detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield
  - 2nd level (3 slots): misty step, suggestion
  - 3rd level (3 slots): counterspell, fireball, fly
  - 4th level (3 slots): greater invisibility, ice storm
  - 5th level (1 slot): cone of cold

Actions

- Dagger: Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 +1) piercing damage.

Medusa

Medium monstrosity, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 127 (17d8 + 51)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **CON** (+3)
- **Skills** Deception+5, Insight+4, Perception+4, Stealth+5
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
- **Languages** Common
- **Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

Special Traits

- **Petrifying Gaze**: See MM, SRD, or www.5esrd.com

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The medusa makes either three melee attacks—one with its snake hair and two with its shortsword—or two ranged attacks with its longbow.
- **Snake Hair**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage.
- **Shortsword**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.
- **Longbow**: Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Minotaur

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- Hit Points 76 (9d10 + 27)
- **Speed** 40 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+3) **WIS** (+3)
- **Skills** Perception +7
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17
- **Languages** Abyssal
- **Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Special Traits

- **Charge**: If the minotaur moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

Labyrinthine Recall: The minotaur can perfectly recall any path it has traveled.

Actions

- **Greataxe**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12 + 4) slashing damage.
- **Gore**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Mummy

Medium undead, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 11 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)
- **Speed** 20 ft.
- **STR** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Wis +2
- **Damage Vulnerabilities** fire
- **Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
- **Languages** the languages it knew in life
- **Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

Actions

- **Dagger**: Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + piercing damage.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The mummy can use its **Dreadful Glare** and makes one attack with its rotting fist.
- **Rotting Fist**: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the **Remove Curse** spell or other magic.

Pech

Small fey, neutral good

- **Armor Class** 11
- **Hit Points** 18 (4d6 + 4)
- **Speed** 20 ft.
- **STR** (+4)
- **Skills** Perception +3, Survival +3
- **Damage Immunities** Petrification
- **Damage Resistances** Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons
- **Senses** Darkvision 60 ft.
- **Languages** Terran, Undercommon
- **Challenge** ¼ (50 xp)

Special Traits

- **Earthbound**: A pech has tactical disadvantage on attack rolls against targets that are surrounded by an element other than earth; i.e., foes that are flying or swimming.
- **Spell-like Abilities**: A pech can use the following spell-like abilities, using Wisdom as its casting ability (DC 11, attack +3). The pech doesn't need material components to use these abilities.
    - 4/day: **stone shape**, **speak with stone** (functions identically to speak with plants, but with stones instead)
    - A pech can also use the following spell-like abilities as part of a group. All members of the group must be within 20 feet of all other members of the group, and all must use an action simultaneously to trigger the spell-like effect. An individual pech can use each ability once per day. Only one pech needs to maintain concentration to keep an effect ongoing.
    - 4 pechs: **wall of stone**
    - 8 pechs: **greater restoration** (only to remove petrification)
- **Stone Knowledge**: A pech's extensive knowledge of stone gives it tactical advantage on attack rolls against creatures made of stone, earth, or clay.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: A pech attacks twice with its pick or twice with stones, or uses one spell-like ability.
- **Pick**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.
- **Stone**: Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 30 ft./90 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Scout

Human, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)
- **Hit Points** 16 (3d8 + 3)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **Skills** Nature +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5
- **Senses** passive Perception 15
- **Language** Common
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

Special Traits

- **Keen Hearing and Sight**: The scout has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The scout makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.
- **Shortsword**: Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.
- **Longbow**: Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Salamander

Large elemental, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 90 (12d10 + 24)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4)
- **Damage Vulnerabilities** cold
- **Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Damage Immunities** fire
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
- **Language** Ignan
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- **Heated Body**: A creature that touches the salamander or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 7 (2d6) fire damage.
- **Heated Weapons**: Any metal melee weapon the salamander wields deals an extra 3 (1d6) fire damage on a hit (included in the attack).

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The salamander makes two attacks: one with its spear and one with its tail.
- **Spear**: Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20 ft./60 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.
- **Tail**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the salamander can automatically hit the target with its tail, and the salamander can't make tail attacks against other targets.

Swarm, Insects

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 22 (5d8)
- **Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.
- **Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
- **Senses** blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 8
- **Languages** —
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

Special Traits

- **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 insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

- **Bites**: Melee Attack: +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. Hit: 10 (4d4) piercing damage.

Svirfneblin

Small humanoid (gnome), neutral good

- **Armor Class** 15 (chain shirt)
- **Hit Points** 16 (3d6 + 6)
- **Speed** 20 ft.
- **Skills** Investigation +3, Perception +2, Stealth +4
- **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12
- **Languages** Gnomish, Terran, Undercommon
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

Special Traits

- **Stone Camouflage**: The gnome has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.
- **Gnome Cunning**: The gnome has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws vs. magic.

Actions

- **War Pick**. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.
- **Poisoned Dart**. Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one creature. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Troll

Large giant, chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 84 (8d10 + 40)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+4) **CON** (+5)
- **Skills** Perception +2
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
- **Languages** Giant
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- **Keen Smell**: The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.
- **Regeneration**: The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. 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.
- **Claw**: Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Vampire Spawn

Medium undead, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 82 (11d8 + 33)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** (+3) **DEX**(+3) **CON** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +6, Wis +3
- **Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +6
- **Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13
- **Language** Common
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- **Regeneration**: The vampire regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the vampire takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the vampire's next turn.
- **Spider Climb**: The vampire can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
- **Vampire Weaknesses**: The vampire has the following flaws:
    - **Forbiddance**: The vampire can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.
    - **Harmed by Running Water**: The vampire takes 20 acid damage when it ends its turn in running water.
    - **Stake to the Heart**: The vampire is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into its heart while it is incapacitated in its resting place.

Actions

- Multiattack: The vampire makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.
- **Claws**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the vampire can grapple the target (escape DC 13).
- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the vampire, incapacitated, or restrained. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the vampire regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Veteran

Human, lawful neutral

- Armor Class 17 (splint)
- Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)
- Speed 30 ft.
- STR (+3)
- Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2
- Senses passive Perception 12
- Language Common
- Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

- Multiattack: The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.
- Longsword: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.
- Shortsword: Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.
- Heavy Crossbow: Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

Violet Fungus

Medium plant, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 10
- **Hit Points** 18 (4d8)
- **Speed** 5 ft.
- **Condition Immunities** blinded, deafened, frightened
- **Senses** blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius)
- **Languages** —
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

Special Traits

- **False Appearance**: While the violet fungus remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary fungus.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The fungus makes 1d4 Rotting Touch attacks.
- **Rotting Touch**: Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Wraith

Medium undead, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 13
- **Hit Points** 67 (9d8 + 27)
- **Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)
- **DEX** (+3) **CON** (+3)
- **Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
- **Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
- **Languages** the languages it knew in life
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- **Incorporeal Movement**: The wraith 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

- **Life Drain**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Xorn

Medium elemental, neutral

- Armor Class 19 (natural armor)
- Hit Points 73 (7d8 + 42)
- Speed 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.
- STR (+3) CON (+6)
- Skills Perception +6, Stealth +3
- Damage Resistances piercing and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine
- Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 16
- Languages Terran
- Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

- **Earth Glide**: The xorn can burrow through nonmagical, unworked earth and stone. While doing so, the xorn doesn't disturb the material it moves through.
- **Stone Camouflage**: The xorn has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in rocky terrain.
- **Treasure Sense**: The xorn can pinpoint, by scent, the location of precious metals and stones, such as coins and gems, within 60 feet of it.

Actions

- **Multiattack**: The xorn makes three claw attacks and one bite attack.
- **Claw**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.
- **Bite**: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (3d6 + 3) piercing damage.

DNH4

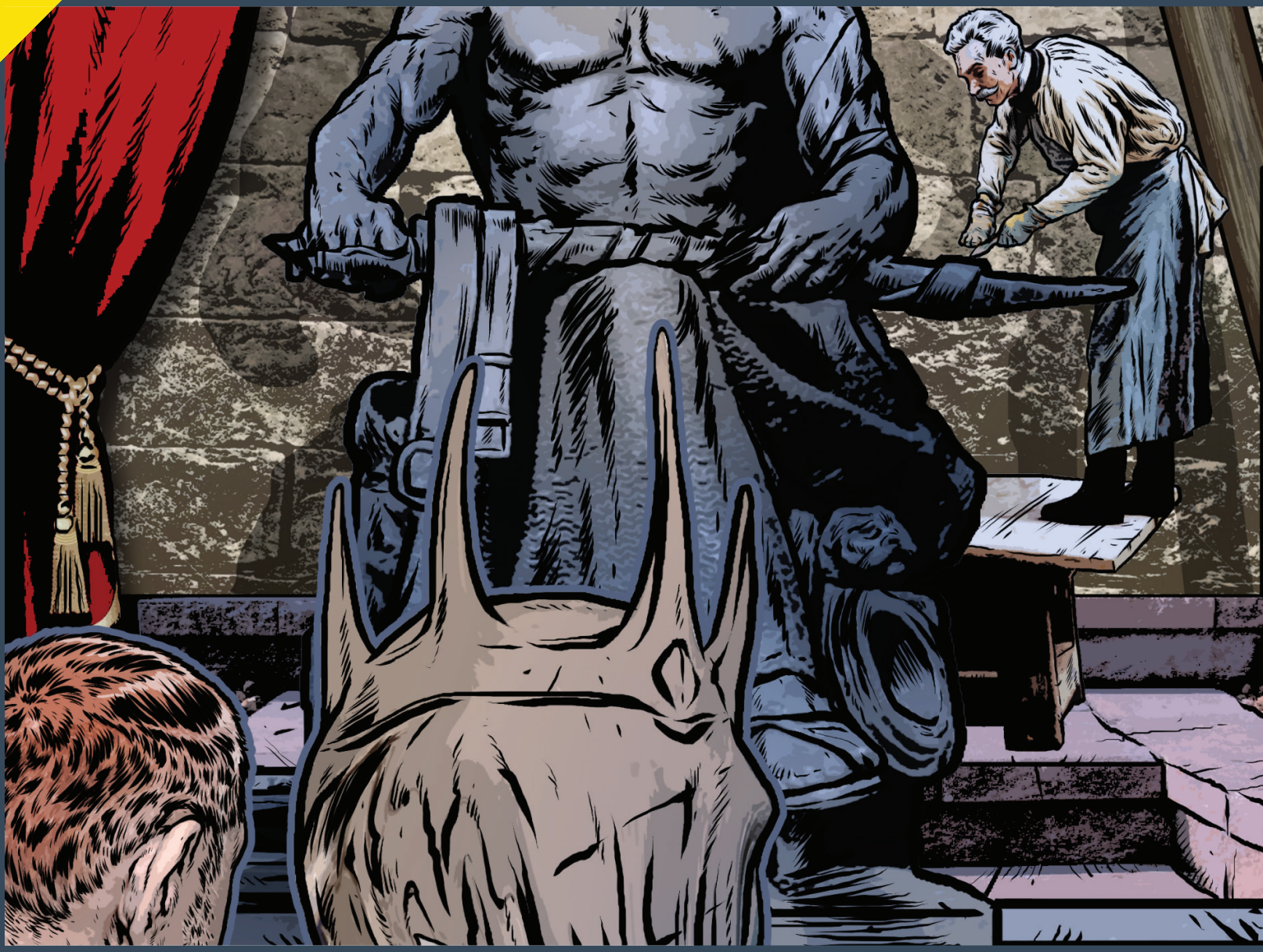
Fifth Edition Fantasy

Part Four of the
Haunting of Hastur Series

Confronting Hastur

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Levels 10–11



Confronting Hastur is an adventure for 3–7 characters levels 10–11 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. It is optimized for the fifth edition and for 5 characters at level 10.

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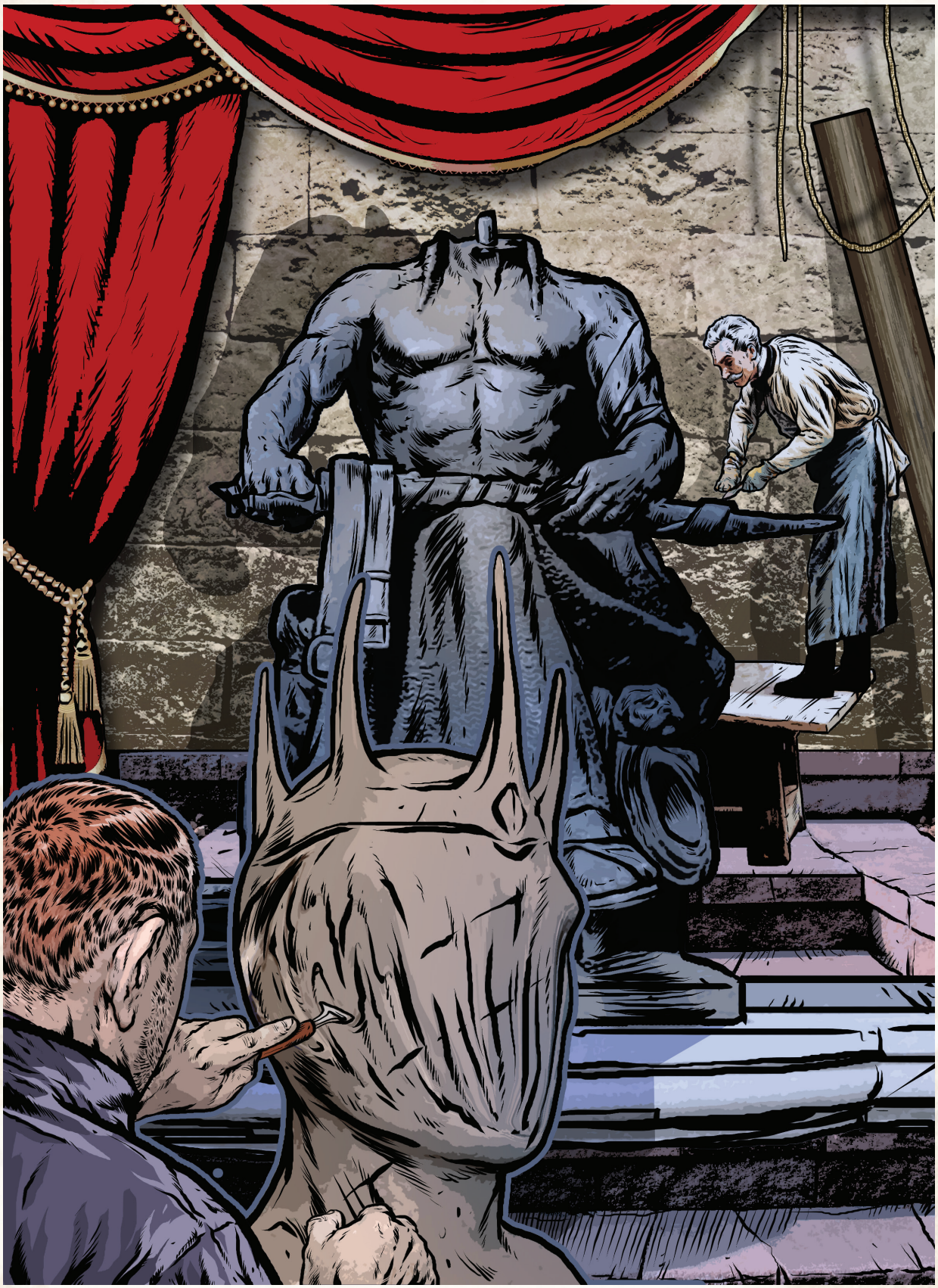

DNH4:
Confronting Hastur

Dark Naga Adventures

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Introduction

DNH4 – Confronting Hastur is the fourth adventure in the Haunting of Hastur series. It is set in the city of Meawold and picks up about a year after the events of *DNH3 – The City of Talos*. The party members should be in or near Meawold on other business when they are contacted by Wyatt, a Talos intelligent agent.

Overview of the Adventure

The focus of this adventure is primarily an investigation in the city of Meawold. The characters find not only clues to the endgame, but information about several other subplots they may choose to engage with. The finale is an attack on a temple of Hastur. The temple is being completed as the party members discover it. This part calls for them to defeat Hastur's cultists and destroy their statue before it can be used to draw an aspect of Hastur into the world—an act that would allow Hastur to launch a reign of terror.

Opening

Two openings are presented, one for players new to the Haunting of Hastur series and one for those continuing from the previous adventure, *DNH3 – The City of Talos*. In both cases Talos intelligence agent and master of disguise, Wyatt, contacts the party members and asks them to take over a mission assigned to him that is in need of their skills.

If the party participated in DNH3 – The City of Talos:

Wyatt, a young human, approaches the party. Disguised as a soldier on leave, he whispers, "Talos needs your services again, follow me to the Exalted Bear tavern."

He is an inch shy of six feet tall, slender, but with a round face. His hair is long, dark brown, and pulled back in a bun. He wears ordinary street clothes with a cloak which, when accompanied by a military demeanor and the hood of his cloak up, helps him blend into human cities as a soldier on leave.

Once settled in a quiet corner of the tavern, his military stance is replaced with a stone-cold seriousness unbecoming of a young man, "The cult of Hastur has risen! They have established a secret temple somewhere in or near Meawold and seek to summon an aspect of Hastur back into the world. They must be stopped! My employer, Eglin of the High Council of Talos, aims to see that they are. If the cult succeeds, Hastur will gain a foothold in Meawold and soon the entire world." He pauses, locking eyes with each party member to gauge reactions, then continues, "I am an observer, and my first task is complete. I have compiled a list of suspected cult members: people who have been acting strangely and or have a means to further such a conspiracy. The second part of my assignment is to find able-bodied adventurers, such as yourselves, capable of stopping the cult. Of course, there is an incentive. If successful, you will all be presented with an invitation to visit Talos again, to be rewarded with treasures commensurate with heroes who saved the world from The King in Yellow. The world needs you!"

If the players agree, read the following.

Wyatt relaxes, his cherubic personality bubbling forth at times while further sharing, "The cult is planning to build, then consecrate, a statue in the likeness of Hastur. The statue will act as a vessel for summoning an aspect of Hastur into the world. They have tried this before and failed. This time, however, they have infiltrated the Court of Meawold. The scryers of Talos have sensed increased attempts to contact Hastur and feel the completion of the statue is imminent."

If pressed as to why Eglin doesn't want to meet in person, he answers, "Time is of the essence!"

Wyatt also provides the party with a letter from Eglin confirming a lot of what he has said. It details the following:

- A cult is indeed attempting to bring an aspect of Hastur into the world (near the city of Meawold).
- They have not succeeded so far, but the planned vessel (statue) is much larger than the last time this was tried (See DNH1).
- Eglin fears that such a large statue so close to Meawold will allow the aspect's aura to ensnare the city in a matter of days.
- Intelligence reports indicate that a member of the Meawold court is directing the affair; however, Duke Bertio, his family, and staff have been cleared of any involvement in the cult.

Wyatt appears to have disregarded the last paragraph of the letter. Duke Bertio rules Meawold. The person in question is a member of his court and moves freely through the upper levels of high society, but the duke, his family, and staff have been excluded from being conspirators. It is part of why his list is long and is something he cannot get his head around.

How did Wyatt find the party?

He knows their whereabouts from Eglin, who can sense the party's general location, wherever they are, through the magic items Sherin Po-thole gave the party to help them survive the Formene.

Wyatt hands over a list of names and tidbits of information on twenty suspects. The characters need to quietly investigate the suspects to confirm or eliminate suspicions of involvement in the cult, find the hidden temple and statue, then neutralize the cult, and of course, destroy the statue (the aspect of Hastur).

If the party is new to the Haunting of Hastur series:

A young soldier (Wyatt) approaches the party members as they are about town tending to their business. He asks one member for news from the North. As he gets closer, his voice softens to a whisper, and the tone changes from a drinking soldier to a man of deep concern. "I have a very important mission for you. The rewards will be incredible. If you accept, ask me to show you to the best ale in town, and I will lead you to the Exalted Bear and explain the job to you."

He is an inch shy of six feet tall, a slender human with a round face. His hair is long, dark brown, and pulled back in a bun. He wears ordinary street clothes with a cloak which, when accompanied by a military demeanor and the hood of his cloak is up, helps him blend into human cities as a soldier on leave.

When settled in a quiet corner of the tavern, he shares, "My name is Wyatt. I work for Eglin of the High Council of the city of Talos." (Talos has been in the public conversation for the last year. People from anywhere in the Five Kingdoms are aware of what Talos is and what it represents for the kingdoms.) His jovial demeanor is soon replaced with a stone-cold seriousness unbecoming of a young man as he continues, "An ancient evil is threatening the land. The cult of Hastur has risen! They have established a secret temple somewhere in or near Meawold and seek to summon an aspect of Hastur back into the world. They must be stopped! My employer aims to see that they are. If the cult succeeds, Hastur will gain a foothold in Meawold and soon the entire world." He pauses, locking eyes with each party member to gauge reactions, "I am an observer, and my first task is complete. I have compiled a list of suspected cult members: people who have been acting strangely and or have a means to further such a conspiracy. The second part of my assignment is to find able-bodied adventurers, such as yourselves, capable of stopping the cult. Of course, there is an incentive. I have been empowered by the leaders of Talos to recruit you and let you know this mission comes with an invitation to visit Talos, something less than ten surface worlders have ever done, and be rewarded with treasures commensurate with heroes who saved the world from The King in Yellow. The world needs you!"

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Wyatt hands over a list of names and tidbits of information on twenty suspects. The characters need to quietly investigate the suspects to confirm or eliminate suspicions of involvement in the cult, find the hidden temple and statue, then neutralize the cult, and of course, destroy the statue (the aspect of Hastur).

Investigating

The list provided by Wyatt comprises twenty people in town who appear to have the means or motivation to be involved in the cult of Hastur. Fifteen are dead ends; the remaining five are prime suspects.

The fifteen dead ends are people who either do not meet the criteria from Eglin's letter (the head of the conspiracy is a member of the court, but not a member of the ruling family) or simply are not involved. These fifteen people include a cross section of the leadership of Meawold and are potential sources of information to further the investigation. The party members should be able to determine through logic, roleplaying a five-minute conversation, or an INSIGHT check (DC 15) that these suspects are not part of any conspiracy to bring Hastur into the world.

The remaining five suspects are people who clearly warrant further scrutiny. Within a few minutes of investigating, the party members should see these citizens have something to hide. If questioned, these prime suspects will not hesitate to throw wild or accurate rumors at the other four, or anyone else that might distract the party members from their secrets. Details of these individuals and their places of contact are the bulk of the material presented in the following pages.

Wyatt's Intelligence

The Dead Ends – City leaders who have little to hide and can be cleared quickly

(The information after the job title, when present, is a guide to the information the party members will learn when they interview them and includes some direct quotes.)

- Abet Malé (Female) – Court Scribe
- Ancis Rickenn (Male) – Leader of the Smiths' Guild – He has the means, but no interest in any gods.
- Answild Kater (Female) – Captain of the Personal Guards for the Bertio Family – Her loyalty to the family is beyond reproach.
- Anthohn Rowley (Male) – Captain of the City Guard – While a powerful man, his loyalty to Meawold is unwavering.
- Arran Esbyn (Female) – Captain of Customs
- Aten Dyley (Female) – Mistress of Assassins – "In a world run by an Old One, who would be hiring assassins to thin the herd?" Wyatt writes in the margin, "I don't trust assassins, but I see her logic."
- Atrin Pyley (Female) – Leader of the Magic Guild
- Deallu Eryn (Female) – Leader of the Merchants' Guild – Anything without coin as the reward is not on her mind.
- Drichye Gedde (Male) – Smuggler operating under the guise of a very successful privateer
- Gerey Lodge (Male) – Leader of the Inns and Taverns Guild
- Hadrian Boulderdown (Male) – Lead instructor of artificers at the Magic Guild – While he is interested in arcane and esoteric knowledge, he is oblivious to the Old Ones.
- Mary Weselw (Female) – Lead Hospitaler – Found in a military barracks where the top two floors have been converted to a healing and recovery ward. Hospitaler is a specific order of paladin; they focus on healing the wounded, regardless of what side of a conflict they fought. "Insanity is a disease to be conquered, not one to conquer man."
- Phely Gere (Female) – Leader of the Rogues' Guild – The idea of a destroyed world sounds incredibly boring to her.
- Raffolk Dratcley (Male) – Captain of the Wolves of Ovan, a mercenary company – He is too busy managing the clearing of the lands for Meawold to allow access to the Trade Nexus Network to scheme in such a manner.
- Tharder Page (Male) – Captain of the Meawold Keep Guard

The Prime Suspects – City leaders who have something to hide and will need further investigation

- **Beatrix Cornwallis – Owner of a transportation empire**

Cornwallis is probably the single most powerful woman in Meawold. She has a secret that could cost her everything, a shameful secret that could ostracize her from the Court of Meawold. This lead gets deep into an aspect of the politics of the city and kingdom of Meawold: sexual mores.

- **Cassius Stonesworn – Leader of the Martial Training School**

Stonesworn is having an affair with a married woman. Deeper investigation reveals she is gaslighting him into killing her husband. (Torrid affairs, and the like, are ostracizing events in the Meawold social scene, especially in the eyes of those who seem to rule "high society" in and near Meawold.)

- **Fay Commonbok – Owner of a farming empire**

Commonbok's driver has been making suspicious contact with the seedy elements of Meawold, which has drawn attention to his employer, Fay Commonbok. Fay is hiding the fact that she was robbed recently and is working, through her driver, with the thieves' guild to have her necklace returned. Also, her husband was recently asked to assist the book monks with a restoration project.

- **Gavin Montagu – Power broker for smugglers**

Montagu is a former smuggler, now powerbroker, frantic over a duel in the morning he is destined to lose. Through brokering smuggling jobs, he is aware that his new customer, Truegust, has been moving exotic stone and other goods into the city over the last year. Montagu does not know exactly what the goods are.

- **Sadon Truegust – Royal Explorer**

Truegust is the one that is driving the conspiracy. Well, the brain drinker controlling him is driving things. The brain drinker is using Truegust to coordinate information sharing and to bring materials into Meawold, and using another, Monder Balley, to build the temple and prepare the statue to host an aspect of Hastur. The clue to where the temple is built lies in a comment by the brain drinker and a reference to "book monks" from Commonbok.

Cult Temple

The references to the book monks should lead the party to the sublevel of Castle Brytha, the Bertio family home and the seat of power for the city and the kingdom of Meawold. Almost anyone can tell them where the book monks work and all about their operations. These are the people who repair or replace books for the Bertio family library and the Royal Library of Meawold. For parties who played DNH3, it is also the group that makes copies of the books from Talos that Meawold is to distribute to its peers in the Five Kingdoms.

The temple's location is strategic. It is in an excavation of an unused corner of the sublevel of the castle. The aura emitted by the statue will quickly control all the powerful people within the kingdom, and allow Hastur to conquer the kingdom with little resistance.

In addition to entering through the west wing of the ground floor of Castle Brytha, the sublevel of the castle can be discreetly accessed through the chapel on the castle grounds. A trap door covered by the chapel altar connects to a passage that leads to a storage room in the basement of the castle. The basement end is hidden by a large stack of wine tuns, the lowest of which is empty and about seven feet in diameter and depth. Its door swings on a pivot point, allowing two people at a time to enter or exit the secret tunnel.

To enter the temple, another secret door, near the storage room where the tunnel enters the basement, conceals the passage leading down to the new Temple of Hastur.

The Castle Brytha – Sublevel and Cultist Temple section details the temple and identifies the location of twenty-two of the thirty cultists, plus the leader. This leaves eight cultists for the GM to insert where they will challenge the party most, either as wandering encounters or reinforcements.

Conclusion

When the statue is destroyed, the characters are immediately drawn into Carcosa, Hastur's private demi-plane of madness. Once there, they will have an hour to escape before they become part of Carcosa. Escaping Carcosa is the subject of *DNH5 – Carcosa*.

Experience

For successfully neutralizing the cultists and destroying the statue of Hastur (or more accurately the aspect), characters earn 5,000 experience points each. This is a major quest.

Wyatt observing a shady deal. Artist: Henriette Boldt

Investigating the Leads

Stoneworn Petit Manoir

Key Person

Cassius Stonesworn appears on Wyatt's list because he leads a large number of people with fighting skills. Wyatt feels he could potentially recruit cultists from within his school.

He is a fifty-three year old human and still in prime shape. He stands nearly six feet tall and has only just started to slow and have his muscle turn soft in the last year or so. But he was never a brawny brute, so there isn't a lot of excess muscle to turn to flab. His oval face blends into a crowd, but his blue eyes are striking, particularly framed by his silver hair.

Years of being out in the wilds has left his skin tanned, rough, and somewhat leather-like. Cassius was a scout, ranger, and skirmisher for most of his career. His service was highly distinguished and his decorations are many. His knowledge of the wilds is unparalleled. He is the principle explorer in Meawold's discovery of dozens of fallen cities and dungeons.

Cassius is the highest-ranking ranger in the Meawold army and retains his rank as Colonel of the Irregular Services, but since he no longer holds the post, his title was modified to Honorary Colonel of the Irregular Services to avoid confusion with his successor, Anna McCoy. She comes to Cassius, discreetly, for advice from time to time. She is a great leader, and his mentoring is making her greater.

Today, Cassius runs a martial school where scouts, couriers, and rangers practice and sharpen their skills. He takes on many students from other walks of life as well, not just scouts, explorers, and other warriors. (Any class can learn a martial ability or feat from working with Cassius.) His school is quite popular, and a few of his former subordinates work as assistant trainers under him.

He distinctively speaks in a highly formal manner and rolls his R's. This habit was developed over his career as he sought to shake the rural, unsophisticated view that many have of rangers. Over time, he moved his mannerisms from rural to erudite. The rolling R's and formal manner of speech are well known, especially during the last decade of his command, where he spent more time in court than in the field. Some students seek him to learn how to fit into the court of Meawold rather than for sharpening their martial skills.

Cassius constantly looks for the loophole. Those he dislikes he closes or blocks. Those that favor him he protects and rewards. His unlimited access to hot water allows him to indulge in a vice that developed when he moved into court: bathing often, sometimes three or more times per day. Anytime he feels less than fresh, he makes time for a bath. His evening bath often lasts for a couple of hours. Another quirk, one that was not to his advantage in court, is that he takes almost everything at face value, a valuable trait in the field, but not in court where everything has at least two meanings. Additionally, he is an expert gambler. Gambling is the one place where he doesn't take things at face value, and he is quite good at running the table and cleaning out purses.

While Cassius basked in the favor of the duke's court for over a decade, he is clearly an individualist. He has little use for the laws of man, preferring the laws of nature. His alignment tends toward chaotic good.

Ability Scores: STR 14, DEX 16, CON 15, INT 12, WIS 13, CHA 10

Cassius is having an affair with Atrix Pycey, the wife of a merchant. They started their affair a few years after Cassius began attending court. With Cassius gone for nearly thirty years in the field, he lost track of his family. His parents died from a plague that hit the city when he was an only child. He has uncles who moved out of Meawold during the plague, but only one survived it, and he has since passed from age. He mentioned to Atrix that he wished he knew more about his family's affairs while he was out in the wilds for the duchy. She did some digging into his family and was able to reveal quite a bit to him. Five years ago, she added some of her fiction to the family history and started gaslighting him into thinking that he had a cousin, Saewe, who was murdered. Over time, the murderer's description was added, bit by bit, to resemble her husband. The latest clue to the identity of the murderer was that he is missing a finger on his left hand.

Her endgame is to manipulate Cassius to kill her husband, see Cassius hang for the crime, and enjoy her husband's estate without either man in her life.

Minor Person

Atrix Pycey is having an affair with Cassius. Her husband is not aware. Both are discreet. Her husband travels for business half the month. They have no servants, making her nightly dusk walk to his home a relatively simple two-hundred-yard walk between their homes. She spends the night and has breakfast with him before "continuing her morning constitutional" around to the merchants to get a fresh loaf, milk, and any other kitchen needs before returning home for the day.

Reactions to the Party

Cassius Stoneworn

Cassius takes time to warm up to the party. He connects better with martial types than arcane types or rogues. He has a deep respect for divine party members. If asked personal questions before he warms up, his responses will be guarded. Once he warms to the party, his answers are effusive and unrestrained. The GM should have Cassius change the subject until he warms up to the party. Talk of exploration, adventure, or tactics is easiest. Once he opens up to the party, he will mention his desire to find the man who killed his cousin and avenge Saewe.

If asked about the Old Ones, Cassius recalls hearing rumors from the first decade of his career of beings from another plane of existence (pressed, he says the person called it another dimension, and he assumed the speaker meant plane). However, he has no firsthand knowledge of the Old Ones or planar travel. If the party members describe any Old One, particularly Hastur, to Cassius, he will be horrified and will pledge his support the party. However, this support will be more material than martial. His horror is genuine, which can be verified with an INSIGHT (or an alternative skill the GM feels relevant) check (DC 15).

If asked about his cousin, Saewe, he will tell the whole tale to the party. He is vague about the person who helped him discover the information about his family. Some of what Cassius says is inconsistent, and in some places self-contradicting. The documentation Atrix provided him is a combination of real information, forgeries, and altered clues. If the party members ask for it, Cassius will provide it. If they search his home somehow, they will discover the bundle of documents.

If the party attacks Cassius, 20 + 1d10 students come to his defense. Six initially attack, and six more will join the fray every three rounds. His manor is adjacent to the training school, within ear shot of the guard, and near the student barracks.

The Pyceys

Walter Pycey will be in town overseeing his lumber business during the first ten days of the adventure. After that, he will head out to visit several timber operations and scout new ones, returning after fourteen days. He is missing the ring finger of his left hand. If asked or confronted about it, he lost the finger years ago when he jammed it in his office and the finger died from being tightly constricted by his wedding band.

Cassius Stonesworn. Artist: Henriette Boldt

Atrix's responses to questions about Old Ones, Cassius's cousin, the affair, or the conspiracy:

If asked about Hastur or any Old Ones, Atrix claims she has never heard of such a thing. There are mortals and gods, but no "Old Ones" in the universe. She is sincere and genuine. No check required.

If asked about the death of Saewe, she recounts the tale she has told Cassius. If confronted with the forgeries and alterations she has generated, she shifts from disbelief at the second piece of evidence to defiant by the fourth, finally becoming hostile when pressed on the matter.

If interrogated, she will reveal under duress that she hatched the plan within a day of meeting Cassius and has been working for years to rid herself of her annoying husband and her sappy patsy in one fell stroke.

For investigating Cassius and helping him solve his issues with Atrix, each party member earns 2,000 experience points.

Stonesworn Petit Manoir

Cassius Stonesworn lives in a small manor house near the training grounds. He has a valet and a cook for his staff. His home is also the quarters of up to ten of his more elite students. The valet and cook put them to work maintaining their rooms and helping prepare and serve meals. Most students study half the day on top of meal breaks and duties assigned by the staff and spend the balance of their day with martial training drills.

Ground Floor

1 – Entrance – The main entrance to the Stonesworn manor house is wide and grand. The room is wider than it is deep, and each of the alcoves created by this width holds a statue. One is of Erwendel, the Lady of Travel. She guards over those who are consistently far from home. The other is Agac, the God of the Earth. He gives the promise of winter, that spring will follow, and with it, renewal. These are the gods Cassius more closely identifies with than the others.

2 – Front Hall – This long hall holds cloak racks and weapon racks, and leads only to the atrium and the study.

3 – Atrium – This large room has a green space about fifty feet wide and thirty feet deep, along with a five-foot outer stone path. Several species of shrubs, grasses, and small trees thrive here. The ceiling is a single slab of glass, created with magic, that sits twenty-five feet above the floor. Ranger students tend to the greenspace daily as part of their nature studies. To make the atrium thrive, a little ranger magic is applied periodically. Cassius uses the greenspace to meditate, and occasionally for a romp in the loam with his lover.

4A – Beast Study – This portion of the study contains pelts, paws, sketches, and scrolls about various beasts of the world. Students often start by studying this material, and later in their careers contribute to the body of knowledge here with new material or corrections. The shelves are stacked floor to ceiling. This body of knowledge is one of the most comprehensive in the kingdom and would be of great interest to the Formene. Other libraries are more specialized. Ranger trainees from other schools often travel here to study for a couple of months. This school has similar privileges at the more specialized collections in the kingdom, although Cassius's students normally visit three or four collections in the time one of the other school's students spend here. The study can be accessed from the front hall, the back hall, or the atrium. Most students come in from the front hall, and use the other hall egress to attend meals.

4B – Nature Study – Like the Beast Study area, this portion of the study contains thousands of leaves, blades, and pressed blossoms in an archive of the kingdom's plant life, both dangerous and beneficial. Additionally, the area contains volumes of sketches of trees and other plants as well as text descriptions of their properties. Students often follow studying the Beast information with Nature information. Also, like the Beast Study, alumni often expand this body of knowledge later in their careers. This collection is much easier to maintain than the Beast Study. It is very rare for a ranger school not to have a collection on par with the one here.

5, 6, 7 – Back Halls – These three halls connect all of the back rooms with the atrium. The east hall connects the library with the dining hall. The north hall connects the guest rooms to the atrium. The west hall connects the staff quarters and Cassius's bedchamber to the atrium.

8 – Formal Dining Room – The dining room can seat Cassius, a special guest, and up to ten students at a single sitting. The student chairs are comfortable but basic. The other two chairs are nicer, almost opulent. Other students dine within their barracks. Guests and students who dine here are usually advanced students or otherwise distinguished. Dining here is the equivalent of dining at an officers' mess or a captain's table.

9 – Kitchen – This kitchen is undersized for the volume of meals prepared here. The cook normally does his work between the cooking fire and the prep table while two students function as minions, fetching dry goods, oils, and other needs on demand.

10, 11, 12, 13 – Guest Rooms – These four rooms hold two or three guests or distinguished students each. They contain comfortable beds, armoires, chests, and dressers for storage. Additionally, they contain a large open space for students to stretch and perform other low impact activities to get warmed up for the day and to soothe aching muscles at the end of the day.

14 – Staff Quarters – The cook and Cassius's valet share this room. Their beds are nicer than the student beds but still inferior to the one Cassius owns. They have an armoire, two dressers, and a chest at the foot of each bed for storage.

15 – Master Bedchamber – This grand room is the bedchamber of Cassius Stonesworn. It is opulent and decadent. The overstuffed chair by the fireplace is custom and expensive. The bed could hold three people and is probably one of the ten most comfortable in Meawold. The chest and armoire are from the same tree, delicately carved, master-craft work. The armoire contains armor; the chest contains day clothes, bed clothes, and some small valuables. Cassius rarely, if ever, uses the door that leads to the atrium. However, his lover, Atrix, uses the atrium door to avoid being

Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

seen when she visits. She casts expeditious retreat and makes the distance from the front door to his bedchamber in seconds.

She comes to spend the night with Cassius four or five nights a week when her husband is out of town on business. So far no student has seen her. The staff are aware of Cassius having a lover, but do not know who she is. Her anonymity is a product of their respect for Cassius's privacy and her discretion.

House of Montagu

Key Persons

Gavin Montagu

Gavin Montagu appears on Wyatt's list because he was a very successful smuggler in his prime and today functions as a powerbroker for smugglers and their customers. Wyatt feels he would be aware of exotic goods or materials coming into Meawold.

His 50 years have not been kind to Gavin (human). He stands four feet, ten inches, and is significantly underweight (reflected in his low Constitution). He squints due to failing eyesight. His face kept its sharp, angular aspects, including a mostly grey pencil mustache. His hair is thick, long for a man, wavy, and auburn. Gavin's skin is smooth, moderately pink, and covered in small scars from minor wounds that didn't heal well.

When encountered, he is distracted and impatient with the party members. However, his behavior is a product of anxiety over a duel that he has in the morning. The duel is to the death; he fears he will lose to Narder, who tarnished the memory of Ella, Gavin's wife who died a few years back. Narder implied his wife was unfaithful. Gavin lost his cool and threw a bowl of stew at Narder. This provided Narder with grounds to manipulate the insult into a duel.

Personality Traits

- He doesn't bathe.
- He sporadically quotes his father.
- His alignment tends toward true neutral.

Ability Scores: STR 7, DEX 14, CON 7, INT 13, WIS 11, CHA 14

Juliana Cartwright

Juliana Cartwright works for Mr. Montagu as his live-in chef. She is not on Wyatt's list, but she also has a secret. Recently, while collecting herbs, she found a map that suggests that it leads to a great treasure.

Juliana is a warm, open woman when not interacting with her fiancé or Mr. Montagu. The former she treats with disrespect, and the latter she treats with business formality. She is slightly plump, attractive, and just immodest enough in her manner of dress to keep Mr. Montagu distracted enough to ignore her Mohawk.

Standing just over five feet tall (human), she has a very muscular figure, emerald eyes, and a sharp but very attractive face. Her fiancé has a very slight, almost effeminate build. Her Mohawk, dyed black, annoys Mr. Montagu, but her cooking agrees with his fragile stomach too much for him to do anything about her hair.

Personality Traits

- She doesn't worship any god.
- She would rather act than talk or think.
- She takes everything at face-value.
- She is an alcoholic.
- Her alignment tends toward chaotic good.

Ability Scores: STR 14, DEX 11, CON 12, INT 10, WIS 11, CHA 11

Reactions to Party

Gavin Montagu is evasive and distracted. Most questions are answered with a few, usually polite, variations of "It's none of your business." If pressed, he will eventually state, "I'm a dead man," and becomes less resistant to revealing the story behind the duel and his concerns that he will be killed. As a smuggler, he is not opposed to the party discreetly helping him gain an advantage for his upcoming duel.

Gavin Montague. Artist: Z Mann Zilla

Narder is a stout fighter and will likely kill Gavin. Gavin is a commoner NPC, while Narder is level three and well equipped. Gavin would do well with light armor and a finesse weapon, but owns chainmail and a longsword. He has a proficiency bonus of +1. There are a number of ways that the party members can help Gavin gain an advantage over Narder. Gavin is open to going along with any that are not obvious to the audience of the duel. This would exclude casting spells or using martial exploits while he is in the duel. However, he will embrace loaned equipment, spells cast before he is seen by the audience, and other boosts that don't risk his reputation.

If asked about exotic materials coming into the city, he avoids giving a straight answer. Getting Gavin to accept help with his duel or a PERSUASION check (DC 20) will convince him to cooperate with the party. He acts as a buffer between client and operator. The two never meet. He holds payment in escrow, and coordinates collection and delivery of the illicit goods using a variety of stashes and discreet locations about the area. Sadon Truegust has become a customer in the last year and moves crates in and out of the city. The only thing that sticks in Gavin's mind is that he is a new customer.

If asked about his religious affiliations, he declares that he "worships no god or man." His dislike of the gods could cause the party members to feel like he could be a disciple of Hastur who wants to destroy everything in this world. If pressed, Gavin has never heard of the Old Ones or old gods and has no interest.

Juliana Cartwright is giddy and bubbly. She explains her happiness away, saying she is in love and freshly engaged to her man. Juliana enjoys cooking, even the bland food for the infirm Mr. Montagu. She and her fiancé live in the cellar which he has made comfortable for them. The cellar consists of two large rooms, one of which holds her library, sewing gear, and their bedroom.

Her man is henpecked and browbeaten. Any interaction with him will make it clear.

Queries reveal (without a skill check):

- She proposed to him.
- Something unusual is going on in her relationship with her fiancé.
- She expects to retire as a chef by year's end.

If pressed with follow up questions or a successful PERSUASION check (DC 20):

- A map that suggests it points to a great treasure was found by Juliana while looking for herbs.
- The map is old, but not ancient. She hopes the riches discovered via the map will allow her to retire in style.
- She makes her man go out daily to look for the landmarks from the map.
- Her man is henpecked, and she clearly dominates him in all aspects of their relationship.

Investigation of the map will reveal:

- The map's landmarks are within fifty miles of the Batun Mountains, far from Meawold.
- The map was found in a sealed scroll case and is over a thousand years old.
- The map leads to a location that was cleared about six hundred years ago and is currently empty. (Or maybe not, at the GM's discretion.)

If Gavin is attacked, 15 + 3d6 smugglers track down the party members and ambush them.

For investigating Gavin, discovering what Juliana is up to, and helping him solve his issues with Narder, each party member earns 2,000 experience points.

Juliana Cartwright. Artist: Henriette Boldt

Montagu House

Ground Floor

1. Entrance – This grand entrance to the Montagu house is 5 feet deep and 20 feet wide. The ornately carved wood double doors are framed by two lovely stained-glass windows depicting nautical scenes: a ship leaving port for the open sea and a ship navigating the open water. The ship in both windows is the same. The name, The Star of Hipool, can be seen on the aft of the ship in the glass window where the boat is leaving port.

2. Foyer – A plush rug welcomes entrants to this large room that could easily hold a formal dance for 20–30 people. The center of the floor is laid in a pattern of hexagons and slightly raised. The east and west walls are lined with stools. There is an open passage in the west wall, a pair of doors leading east, and a double door leading north framed by two copies of the Montagu family seal (twin daggers over a bag of gold). The Montagu's have been rogues, smugglers, and assassins for generations.

3. Library – Bookcases line three walls of this room and are filled with books that mostly concern maps, nautical topics, and political matters, the tools of the trade for a smuggler. The books are worth an average of 20 gp each. A large table and four chairs fill the middle of the room, and a reading lectern occupies the northwest corner. Windows look out upon the river and the merchant docks.

4. Downstairs Office – This office, used by Gavin for conducting meetings, holds a table with three chairs, a desk flanked by chests along the north wall, and a bookcase beside a small chest on the west wall. The books are of mundane matters, like local legends and tales. The chests contain writing materials for writing contracts.

5. Formal Dining Room – This room contains a large dining table that seats ten. In addition to the double door entrance from the south, a simple door leads west to the kitchen.

6. Hallway – This hall connects the grand entrance, the stairs to the upper floor, the observatory, and the parlor. Additionally, there are a pair of doors in the north wall that open to the kitchen.

7. Staircase – This room contains a spiral staircase leading to the upper floor and the observatory.

8. Lounge – This room holds a bench and two comfortable chairs with an end table between them. A buffet, containing many bottles of premium liquor, ports, and wines, in addition to a full bar setup, shares a wall with a stairway on the other side that descends to the cellar.

9. Kitchen – This large room contains two food preparation tables, a large cooking fire, a small larder, and containers of dry foodstuffs.

Upper Floor

10. Stairs – This spiral staircase connects the ground floor with the upper floor and the two levels of the observatory.

11. Main Hallway – This hallway connects every room on the upper floor to the stairs. It runs the breadth of the house from east to west.

12A. Gavin Montagu's Bedchamber – This large room is where Gavin retires from the world. It contains a large, extravagant bed and the table and chairs where he takes his breakfast. A map chest containing many detailed maps of Meawold (focusing on the major trade routes over land and via water) rests on the west wall. A large armoire and his deceased wife's dressing table are along the south wall. The east wall holds a door to his closet and a cabinet containing just shy of one hundred of his wife's two-foot by three-foot still life paintings. Five paintings are on display; the remainder are in the cabinet. He changes the art weekly.

12B. Montagu's Closet – The door to this room is locked with an advanced lock [Thieves' Tools (DEX) (DC 24) to open]. The room contains a chest holding four thousand platinum pieces, a cabinet containing his wife's jewelry (worth approximately 4,000 gp), a bench, and a crate containing the following: 5,000 sp, 2,600 gp, 60 pp, bolt of fine cloth (25 gp), rabbit fur ribbon (25 gp), ceramic miniature of a castle (25 gp), leather bracers (25 gp), +1 Shield (uncommon, DMG p. 200), Bracers of Archery (uncommon, DMG p. 156), and 2 x Sword of Vengeance (longsword) (uncommon, DMG p. 206). Note: Gavin is too rattled to recall he has these magic weapons.

13A. Posh Guest Bedroom – This room has two double beds, well made and comfortable. Each bed has a nightstand to the side and a chest at the foot for the storage of personal items. A table with a pair of chairs sits near the eastern window. The room has a door in the west wall leading to the closet and is completed by a double chest of drawers and an armoire.

13b. Guest Bedroom Closet – This closet contains two dressing benches and an armoire designed to hold armor.

14. Large Guest Bedroom – This room has three double beds, good, but not as nice as the other beds on this floor. Each bed has a nightstand to the side and a chest at the foot for the storage of personal items. A table with three chairs sits in the southeast corner. The room is completed by a double chest of drawers and an armoire. The table suggests that valets or other servants of guests might have polished boots and cleaned clothes for their masters here.

15. Montagu's Upstairs Office – This office contains a desk, a table with three chairs, and a bookcase with several bound journals on the shelves. The books are transactions, including special terms. The books are encoded in a way that only a comprehend languages ritual can decipher them. The logs go back four years. The last year contains several transactions with a new

customer named Truegust involving a string of boxes he has imported into the city from Boldon, a small city out near the coast.

16. Small Guest Room – This room has a comfortable double bed. The bed has a nightstand to the side and a chest at the foot for the storage of personal items. A table with a pair of chairs sits in the southwest corner. The room is completed by a double chest of drawers and an armoire.

17. Medium Guest Room – This room has two comfortable double beds. Each bed has a nightstand to the side and a chest at the foot for the storage of personal items. A table with a pair of chairs sits in the southwest corner. The room is completed by a double chest of drawers and an armoire.

Basement

18. Larder and Food Storage – This room sits at the bottom of the stairs from the ground floor. It holds a larger larder than the kitchen, dry foodstuffs, and drying herbs. Additionally, fresh water, wine, ale, mead, and cases of fine liquor are stored here. There is a door in the south wall.

19. Cook Quarters – This unused storage room has been converted into the quarters for the cook and her mate. The room was previously used as additional food storage when the family lived here, but the children have moved away and Mrs. Montagu passed almost two years before the present. The room is posh for servant quarters, on par with the medium and small guest rooms on the upper floor. There is a bell that Mr. Montagu can activate from his bed chamber to make Julianna aware of his needs.

Observatory

20. Observatory Landing – Torches topped by stones imbued with continual flame illuminate the landing. Each "torch" has a cap that can be used to cover the stone. Spyglasses for use in the loft lie on benches, but there are no windows here.

21. Observatory Loft – This room overlooks the river with a grand view. The passenger docks and the merchant docks can be seen from this vantage point. The "torches" in this room are identical to the ones on the observatory landing. All the windows can be opened to have a slightly clearer view of the area.

Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

The Cornwallis Empire

Key Person

Beatrix Cornwallis

Wyatt listed Beatrix Cornwallis because she is a powerful woman, seems a bit off to Wyatt, and her equestrian empire sits as the sole provider of horses in the region. She owns the city stables, wainwrights, coachworks, coach storage, and a large horse farm a few miles from the capital city. Her stables produce all the types of horses required for Meawold except heavy war horses; others specialize in breeding them. Her equestrian empire is based in Meawold and gives her the freedom and power to potentially back a conspiracy to help Hastur into the world. The idea of cornering the market on horses and horse services started three generations before Beatrix. She saw gaps in her ancestor's plans and filled in the gaps to create her empire. In modern business terms, she has fully vertically integrated the horse industry for Meawold and the surrounding region.

Count Gylip has standing contracts with Beatrix Cornwallis to supply all equestrian, cartwright, stable, and coachwork needs to the Kingdom of Meawold and its military forces. This base income, due to the vertical integration, covers the operating costs of all her businesses and her household. All additional services enrich her war chest. The war chest is growing to allow her to take over more related industries. Whenever she tires of paying for a service, she looks to take it over. Because she provides fair and consistent service, the court of Meawold does not see any harm in allowing her to maintain her monopoly. She is a businesswoman who is centuries ahead of her time. Despite her sharp business acumen and constant empire building, she is not difficult to work with and is quite easygoing when not in a business state of mind.

Beatrix is short for a human at four feet, ten inches tall. She is slender with long, curly, white hair framing an oval face with black eyes. Her skin makes her look about a decade older than her actual age of forty-four. Plagues from the past have left her skin rough and pockmarked. Her demeanor is warm and open. She carefully maintains a balance of business aggression and physical aggression although she is, at heart, a pacifist. This doesn't mean she is a doormat or goes about unprotected, only that her protectors will seek to resolve a situation with as little use of force as possible while keeping her safe.

Beatrix enjoys her large empire, but the business deals do not quell her interest in understanding how things work. Many contraptions have been bought, disassembled, and followed by notes from her to the inventor showing where they could improve their design. Always thinking forward, this minor aspect of her personality feeds into her innovations in controlling all aspects of horse-based businesses.

Beatrix runs the business because her husband, Ledym, has no mind for it. He spends his time in social clubs, attending court, and drinking in pubs. He drinks considerably, to the point of affecting his life expectancy. The members of high society and the court (largely one and the same) assume she took over to keep them from failing. Really, Ledym was picked by Beatrix exactly because he was good in court, and horrible at business. He willingly turned everything over to her, and she continued to build an empire once he admitted he was a failure at business.

Their unusual relationship doesn't end there. Their manor house has a small live-in staff: her lady's maid and four others. The remainder of the staff live elsewhere and come to the house to perform their duties. Two staff members, Beatrix's driver and bodyguard, live in a small apartment over the stables of her home. Her maid is really her lover. Ledym is merely a convenient beard for her real love. Stella has been her lover under the guise of her maid for fifteen years.

While Meawold has no laws governing sexual practices, high society and the court have different views. They feel that for the nobles, marriage is about political or business alliances, and children exist to cement those alliances and provide opportunities for future alliances. They see torrid affairs, including same-sex relationships, as threats to the alliances built on marriage and heirs. Because of these leanings, the members of both tend to shun those who they see as indulging those base desires.

Ledym is left to take care of his own needs. He keeps a mistress in town very discreetly. He accepts his role because it allows him to indulge in his vices and frees him from responsibility. He is given an allowance, which is sufficient to cover his memberships, his mistress, and his lifestyle.

Beatrix is an interesting blend of aggression and compassion with sharp business acumen and deep secrets. She dislikes court due to their feelings toward her orientation, but attends regularly to maintain and grow business connections. Her alignment tends toward neutral good.

Ability Scores: STR 8, DEX 10, CON 9, INT 16, WIS 10, CHA 15

Reactions to the Party

Beatrix is warm, open, and cordial to the party, answering all questions after giving them adequate consideration. Her answers come naturally, even the offensive ones. Only when the party is a threat to her empire will she become defensive. At this point her demeanor will start to change, and she will grow hostile as the questions continue along the wrong lines and the threat to her empire grows.

If asked about Hastur or the Old Ones, she proclaims that she proudly worships Saren, god of spring, dawn, birth, youth, vitality, and athletics, and knows nothing of Hastur or the Old Ones. If the party talks about how vile Hastur is or what he wants of the world, she wants to know who would support bringing such a revolting being into the world. Her aid to the party regarding this threat is limited because she will leverage no military or guard connections. She will do what she can to help the party move against the person or persons responsible for bringing Hastur into the world. Any request will be considered; any request within reason and her areas of influence will be indulged.

If confronted or asked about her relationships with Ledym and Stella, she is very guarded. She has a reasonable answer for everything. Stella helps her before she rises for the day: breakfast in bed, helping her dress, etc. If the party presses further, interrogates Stella or Ledym, or otherwise has proof of the relationship, she will become defensive. Her need to protect her secret is great enough that if she perceives a serious threat to her secret, she will hire assassins to track the party members down and eliminate them. If they are merely a threat, discrediting the party will be sufficient.

If attacked, guards track the party relentlessly (in several teams of twelve) until captured and returned to Meawold for judgement. Roleplay the encounter. The most likely outcome is execution of the party members.

For investigating Beatrix and helping her protect her position in court, each party member earns 2,000 experience points.

Beatrix Cornwallis. Artist: Henriette Boldt

Cornwallis Manor

The Cornwallis manor is located five miles outside the city, near to their tenant farms. The opulent estate is surrounded by gardens with two outbuildings: stables with a pair of apartments for Beatrix's driver and her bodyguard, and a bunkhouse where two shifts of guards work three days at a stretch before being rotated back to the city.

Ground Floor

1 – Grand Entrance – This entrance is one of the nicest in Meawold. It is marble, expensive, and well maintained.

2 – Main Hall and Side Halls – The halls connect to most rooms on the ground floor. They are lined with statues and art.

3, 4 – Side Halls – The side halls allow access to a pair of rooms each, and both end in an alcove commonly used for meditation.

5 – Staff Dining and Break Room – This front room is used by the staff to take their meals and breaks. It contains a table for six and four additional chairs.

6 – Garden – The house hosts a large garden with a well. This area is where visitors are left to wait while the staff asks if the residents will receive their guests.

7 – Meeting Room – This room will seat ten plus Beatrix Cornwallis; additionally, there is room for a presenter in the middle. Beatrix does not use the town guildhall to host negotiations. Her contracts are uniformly enforced due to her ties with the royal house.

8 – Dining Room – This is an intimate space for the eight that it can seat. Normally it seats three. Beatrix takes the head of the table, Ledym sits to her right, and Stella sits at the far end of the table on Beatrix's left.

9 – Beatrix's Office – This office is very opulent and is where Beatrix works on estate matters and more intellectual pursuits. It contains her desk, a lectern, a work table scattered with astrological instruments and notes, a large telescope, a large bookshelf, and two cabinets containing more items of interest: crystals, gems, and a dozen meteorites ranging in size from a marble to a cannon ball.

10 – Ledym's Office – When conducting business for society, court, or his various clubs, Ledym uses this office. It contains some notes about each group. The notes that stand out cover Ledym's plan to methodically coax society to soften their abhorrence toward other sexualities. At the bottom of his plan is a comment, "Then I can divorce her and enjoy my life with Lydia."

11 – Grand Ballroom – This room is used when the Cornwallises host parties for the members of high society. In the past, it has seen use as a large banquet hall and held memorial services. Ledym arranges these events. Beatrix makes a tastefully timed visit to them.

12 – Kitchen – This room is where all meals are prepared. It contains the larder, storage for dry goods, barrels holding cooking oils, water and ale, and a wine rack holding about thirty bottles.

13 – Storage Room – This room connects the grand ballroom to the basement and holds household supplies, including a spare area rug.

14 – Stairs Down – These stairs lead down to the basement.

Upper Floor

15, 16 – East and West Stairs – These stairs connect to the ground floor and are mirrors of each other. They are another example of the separate lives Beatrix and Ledym lead.

17 – Cornwallis Library – This large library holds about eight hundred books, two lecterns, and a table that can seat six.

18 – Ledym Cornwallis Study – Ledym is very active in court, high society, and several social and hunting clubs. His study reflects his many interests and awards from these organizations.

19 – Guest Room – This nice room will sleep up to four. It contains a large armoire, a table with chairs, a trunk at the foot of each bed, and a shared night table between the beds.

20 – Ledym Cornwallis Bedchamber – This bedroom is nicely furnished with armoires, a comfortable bed, nice art on the walls, and a table for taking his breakfast on the upper floor. Ledym sleeps here a lot less than he should. He has become lazy and careless concerning his current mistress, Lydia. This issue is coming to a head, and Beatrix will start having him locked in his bedchamber at night and reduce his allowance if it doesn't end soon. Discretion is a must if he is to continue his affairs.

21 – Maid's Bedroom – Beatrix's lady's maid, Stella, uses this room as a bedroom. She was installed here to be close to her lady. There is a connecting door to Beatrix's bedchamber. An INVESTIGATION check (DC 23) as part of a thorough investigation reveals that the bed is rarely used, and the door is used excessively, suggesting something secret between the two women.

22 – Beatrix Cornwallis Bedchamber – This opulent room is the bedchamber of Beatrix. It is finely furnished with a lot of storage for clothes, a luxurious bed, a pair of overstuffed chairs facing the fireplace, and a door connecting to the maid's bedroom. This room looks like Beatrix spent four times the gold furnishing it as she did Ledym's bedchamber.

Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Basement

23 – Basement Entrance – Beatrix Cornwallis's manor is so grand that she has a dedicated entrance to the basement. The staff placed some of the most often used supplies in the area.

24 – Household Storage – This storeroom holds spare goods for the house: linens, bed linens, out of season clothes, candles, writing materials, dry goods, and other household items.

25 – Staff Quarters – When off duty, the staff rests, recreates, and sleeps here. It contains four beds, two large armoires, a dressing table, and a table with four chairs.

The Explorer

Key Person

Sadon Truegust

Sadon made Wyatt's list because he behaves oddly, is quiet and reserved, and because his position as a Royal Explorer allows him to move about the kingdom with complete freedom. Sadon could easily move information from Boldon, where the first attempt to bring an aspect of Hastur happened a couple of years ago, to likeminded people in Meawold.

Sadon (human) is fifty-three years old and looks every day of it. Exploring Barestir has left its many marks on him. His diamond-shaped face is horribly scarred from the worst of his exploits. He wears his curly, auburn hair very long. This along with the hood of his cloak, seemingly always raised, go a long way in helping him hide the artifacts of his travels and misadventures. When he is face to face with someone, his bright, mesmerizing golden eyes have a similar effect on people. So effective are his techniques that few realize just how scarred his face is.

He stands an inch shy of six feet with an average build of well-toned, but not brawny, muscle. From decades of travel throughout Meawold and other parts of Barestir, his skin is permanently tanned. Unlike his face, his body is largely unscarred and smooth. A poorly executed tattoo of a nude woman is inked on his upper left arm, a relic of his idealism and youth from the first few years of his career.

The explorer is married; however, his wife gave up on him over a decade ago after he spent six years on an assignment and never checked in on her or sent word that he was well. She moved to Lagduf and started a new life with a merchant who is home every night for dinner and dotes on her. Sadon sold his abandoned home after she left. When in Meawold, he lives in a nice room at the Cracked Flask that he keeps year-round. He has no contact with his wife.

Sadon is under the permanent control of a brain drinker. His nightmare began shortly after the events of *DNH1 – The Lost Temple of Forgotten Evil*. After the weakened aspect of Hastur was destroyed, the brain drinker took interest in the remnants of the cult, captured them, ate most of their brains, and controlled a few for interacting with others. After a few weeks of planning, Sadon fell into his trap and was also controlled.

Sadon Truegust. Artist Todd Shearer

Ability Scores: STR 12, DEX 19, CON 17, INT 13, WIS 13, CHA 10

Reactions to the Party

Sadon is cold and distant towards the party members. He stares off into space for a few moments before answering.

If asked about Hastur or the Old Ones, he will ramble on about how the world is chaotic, vile, and falling into debauchery. On and on he will ramble, to the point of sounding like a mad hermit. At several points, he will mention that Szordree (sounds a bit like swordry) will bring about an end to corruption. When pressed on who Szordree is, he will revert to a childlike state. Pressed further, and he will sit upright, his tone of voice will shift, and Szordree will speak to the party directly through him. Szordree will taunt the party members and dare them to find him. Also, he will mention his monks will finish what he has started. If forced to expose himself, Szordree will kill Sadon. Another of his puppets will take over Sadon's role of communicating with the cultists.

If asked about his explorations, he will liven up and tell as many tales of exotic ruins, fierce monsters, and daring escapes as the party can handle. Eventually, the party members will need to change the subject to get him to stop. The GM is welcome to make up as many tales as it takes to drive the party members to change the subject. With thirty-five years of exploration, coming across as if he has seen it all is not unrealistic. He has seen a lot.

Szordree Tsambrae

The brain drinker, Szordree Tsambrae, who controls Sadon is the real entity behind the attempt to create a vessel for Hastur's aspect and bring the world under his control. As an extraplanar creature, this world falling has little consequence for Szordree. However, he expects to dine on many insane brains as the world crumbles, leaving only when he has had his fill.

Szordree's plan is well constructed. He learned much from the failure at Boldon and has countered each of their mistakes with a masterful plan. The vessel is larger because the old one was too small. The cultists at Boldon had no idea; they inherited the vessel. The small size of the Boldon vessel required many rituals to draw the aspect into the vessel, and it was destroyed before more than a quarter of the aspect could be drawn. Szordree's vessel can pull the aspect across in one ritual.

Stone for the vessel was imported from about a thousand miles away. The type needed is not local to Meawold. It was collected near dwarven lands. The temple was constructed to match the specifications of the ritual books Szordree recovered from the temples he could find and the dark libraries he could plunder.

The head of the statue is about two weeks from being completed, plus another week to set it and let it cure in place. The temple room is waiting on more fabric for the curtains and for the altar to be completed. The stonemason cracked the first altar from a careless strike on a stress point. It will be ready about the same time as the statue. The stonemason is missing three toes as a reminder to be more careful.

Sadon smuggled Szordree into Meawold and installed him in the room he keeps year-round at the Cracked Flask. Confronting them there will not stop the plans. The man running the secret temple for Szordree, Monder Balley, knows the plans from where he is now through completion—drawing the aspect of Hastur into the vessel. From there, the vessel will animate, and Hastur will be in charge.

After a year of planning and another year of execution, the brain drinker has built a temple and a nearly completed vessel. He is about three weeks from filling the vessel with an aspect. The statue is not finished and will need to be consecrated, and ten more members need to be recruited. This time the aura will enthrall the leaders of Meawold within days, and Hastur will have the kingdom within three months. From there, the brain drinker expects to move on to the other four kingdoms using a similar agenda to cause Barestir to fall to Hastur.

For investigating Sadon, confronting Szordree, and discovering the temple below Castle Brytha, each party member earns 4,000 experience points.

Szordree Tsambrae. Artist Z. Mann Zilla

The Cracked Flask
(Sadon Truegust)
Ground Floor

1 – Dining Room – This large room holds several tables that seat four normally but can seat six when at capacity. Spare chairs are stacked under the south window for this purpose.

2A – Bar – This area seats about ten and is where the bartender prepares drinks and calls food orders back to the kitchen.

2B – Kitchen – This large room has a small larder, cooking fire, two preparation tables, and storage for dry goods. Meals are prepared here from dawn to midnight by two shifts of three staff. Stairs behind a door lead to a basement.

3 – Storage – This storage room holds casks and kegs of wine, beer, ale, and mead. There are four cases of liquor as well. The door is locked; the on-duty bar back helping the bartender holds the key to this room.

Middle Floor

4 – Common Area – All rooms on the second floor connect to this area that has a pair of tables and a cabinet holding spare bed linen. Additionally, this room connects to stairs down to the ground floor (A) and to the upper floor (B). This floor holds the nicer rooms of the inn.

5, 6, 7 – Deluxe Rooms – Each of these rooms has two firm beds, an armoire, a chest at the foot of each bed, and a small nightstand next to the bed. These rooms rent for 1 gp per night.

8 – Private Suite, Bedroom – This suite is occupied by Sadon Truegust. He has a single comfortable bed with a nice area rug under it, fireplace with two overstuffed chairs, a well-built wooden table for meetings, an armoire, and a chest at the foot of the bed. The door is locked with an advanced lock (DC 23 to open). Normally, Sadon and his master are in the room and the door is locked. If anyone knocks or calls from the door, Szordree retreats to Area 9. The staff brings Sadon meals three times a day. Szordree slips out into Meawold every three days to take three lives, one brain to drink during the kill and two to bottle for the next two days. This minimizes his exposure.

9 – Private Suite, Office – The office can only be accessed from the suite bedroom. It holds a large bookshelf, two armoires, a dresser, a chest, and a comfortable desk. Szordree will keep his existence a secret unless their plans are threatened, then he and Sadon will attack viciously. Somewhere in the interaction with the party members Szordree will taunt them, saying that even in death he will ultimately prevail.

Upper Floor

10 – Common Area – This common area connects most of the rooms of this floor to the stairs from the middle floor.

11 – Second Common Area – This second common area connects the upper floor common area with the remaining two guest rooms. Guests are welcome to take any of their meals at the table in this area.

12 – Corridor to Rooms – This hallway connects the meal area to a pair of rooms.

13, 14, 15, 16, 17 – Guest Rooms – These rooms hold two double beds, a chest at the foot of each bed, and a nightstand next to each bed. The occupants share an armoire. These rooms can quarter up to four people and rent for 5 sp per night.

Basement

18 – Kitchen Storage – This room has a large larder and more storage for dry goods. It also holds brewing supplies and barrels of water.

19 – Brewing Room – The Cracked Flask brews beers and ales here.

Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Guildhall
(Fay Commonbok)

Most guilds use the Guildhall. No intra-guild or inter-guild deal is official unless held in the hall and the written contract holds the seal of the guild master. The guild master and his staff belong to no guild, but serve all guilds.

1 – Entrance – Eight spectacular carved columns, each depicting a guild, surround the entrance.

2, 3, 4, 5 – Front Lobby – This area is open to the public from dawn to dusk, allowing them to mill about and ask questions. The four large statues are all of the god of trade, Mercu.

6 – Private Waiting Area – This room has sturdy doors, secured by reinforced thick wood and locks. A member of the guild house staff can allow access. This is where Fay Commonbok agrees to meet the party members to discuss their concerns. She is at the guild house overseeing negotiations to buy five thousand acres from the trade guild, who is negotiating on behalf of a lumberjack team. She desires the nearly clear-cut property to grow her farms.

7A, 7B, 7C, 8, 9, 10A, 10B, 10C – Halls – These halls are secured most of the time against the public. They separate the pre-negotiation rooms and the negotiating table to dampen conversations. Guildhall staff are careful to keep these areas clear of loiterers, and they will not hesitate to usher them to the lobby (Areas 2–5) if someone appears to be eavesdropping. The Guildhall staff are polite to a fault, but will not hesitate to direct, walk, or drag people from the area if they appear intent on disrupting, or worse, spying on the proceedings.

11, 12, 13, 14 – Pre-Negotiation Rooms – These four rooms allow for both sides to meet in a smaller, private setting and work toward an agreement, usually on specific points of the larger deal. The rooms have a pair of desks facing each other for the primary of each party to work on specific points, a bookshelf with a library of past contracts, three cabinets holding writing material, and enough chairs for each party to bring two more participants.

15 – Guild Masters Office – This opulent office is the primary workspace of the guild master. She often reads over a contract here before holding the final reading and has chairs to allow her to bring both parties into the office to discuss problems with the contract, almost like a judge seeing counsel in their chambers. The large cabinets contain past contracts, and the bookshelf that engulfs most of the south wall holds books on law for Meawold, including every duchy in the kingdom.

16 – Public Contract Storage – This room holds copies of every contract executed in the kingdom for all to peruse. Access to this room is chaperoned by a member of the Guildhall staff.

17 – Storage Room – This room contains spare quills, ink, stamps, wax, and other miscellaneous supplies.

18 – The Grand Negotiating Table – This room hosts the contract negotiation starting meetings, round table discussions, and the final reading. Additionally, all parties sign the contract before the guild master. There is adequate seating for up to six members of each party and a gallery for an additional twenty observers. When an initial or final meeting is held here, up to twenty members of the public can observe the proceedings. When the parties are having round table conversations, the public is removed.

Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Commonbok Dynasty

Suspicious activity from her coachman, Darren, earned the Commonbok clan a place on Wyatt's list. The Commonbok's were the only list item she had time to follow up on before delivering the list to the party. Darren answers to Colin and Fay Commonbok directly. He receives guests for them, making him more of a butler than a coachman. Wyatt notes that Fay was observed having more interactions with Darren than Collin.

Key Persons

Darren (Coachman)

The coachman for the Commonbok family is fully dedicated to the family. He is discreet, reserved, and never speaks out of line. After a few minutes talking with him and receiving answers along the lines of "You would best talk to Mrs. Fay about that matter," the party members will understand he is not the person they seek. He is in communication with members of the thieves' guild concerning a private matter for Fay.

Collin Commonbok

Colin, 58 y.o. (human), is an artist preferring to spend his days painting and leaving their empire in the capable hands of his wife. Within a few minutes of talking with Colin, the party members have a general idea that he is in his own world and not the party of interest. He does mention a royal consultation from the book monks working in the castle: they were struggling to restore a book, destroyed it further, and asked him for help reproducing or transplanting several illustrations.

Fay Commonbok

Fay Commonbok, 53 y.o. (human), is the magnate of a very large agricultural empire to the southwest of Meawold. The empire spans over twenty thousand acres, managing about four hundred tenants with their families along with about twelve hundred farm workers, and storage of the crops.

She stands about five and a half feet tall and is quite curvy. Her long, straight blonde hair frames a diamond shaped, innocent face with deeply tanned skin and emerald green eyes. Her left ear has a very large earring, while she wears a simple stud in her right ear. She dresses elegantly when in public and more rustically when visiting the farms.

Her attractive features hide a shrewd businesswoman, one who built an empire from the two thousand acres her father left her forty years ago. She maintains key strategic alliances with her competition, swallows many family farms yearly, and guards her monopoly contracts with Meawold. These strengths position her to grow without limit, handle matters as she sees fit within her empire, and rely on the armies of Meawold when she has problems that threaten Meawold's critical food supply.

Despite her sharp business acumen, she is always extremely polite, respectful, and well spoken. She is polite even when disciplining a disappointing tenant. Her politeness is in sharp contrast to her lack of compassion for her tenants or their workers. She keeps them in debt enough that they can never leave her farms, ensuring labor for her empire for generations.

Fay runs her farms with an iron fist in an elegant glove. Tenant farmers frequently find themselves deep in debt for any number of, mostly petty, reasons: lost crops, poorly maintained farm gear, unkempt grounds, children not in school or at work, and a litany of other deviations from how she expects them to live. When an infraction occurs, property is seized, fines are assessed, workers are reassigned for a fortnight, or the family is forced to buy food from her company store at severely marked up prices. Complaints to the authorities of Meawold are, by contract, referred back to Fay for resolution. Which means the fine, penalties, and other conditions remain, sometimes with an additional fine added on so she can reclaim her time.

Despite her harsh treatment of her tenants, Fay works within the law. She isn't really evil, just has no concern for how the law impacts peasants. She tends toward an alignment of lawful neutral.

Ability Scores: STR 11, DEX 8, CON 9, INT 11, WIS 13, CHA 14

Reaction to the Party

Darren

He will answer every question posed to him about such matters with "I will ask you to discuss this with the lady of the house. I have nothing to say on that topic."

Colin Commonbok

If asked about the Old Ones or Hastur, he will respond that he knows little beyond landscapes and wildlife for his paintings. The family worships Lyvalia.

If asked about the harsh treatment of tenants and their workers, he will respond that he doesn't follow business concerns and that his wife, Fay, would be a better source for such queries.

Fay Commonbok

If asked about the Old Ones or Hastur, she will state that she has never heard of them, or it, and that she and her family are worshipers of Lyvalia. If pressed, she has heard the name Hastur once in court, but thought it was an old tale used to scare peasants to mind their curfew.

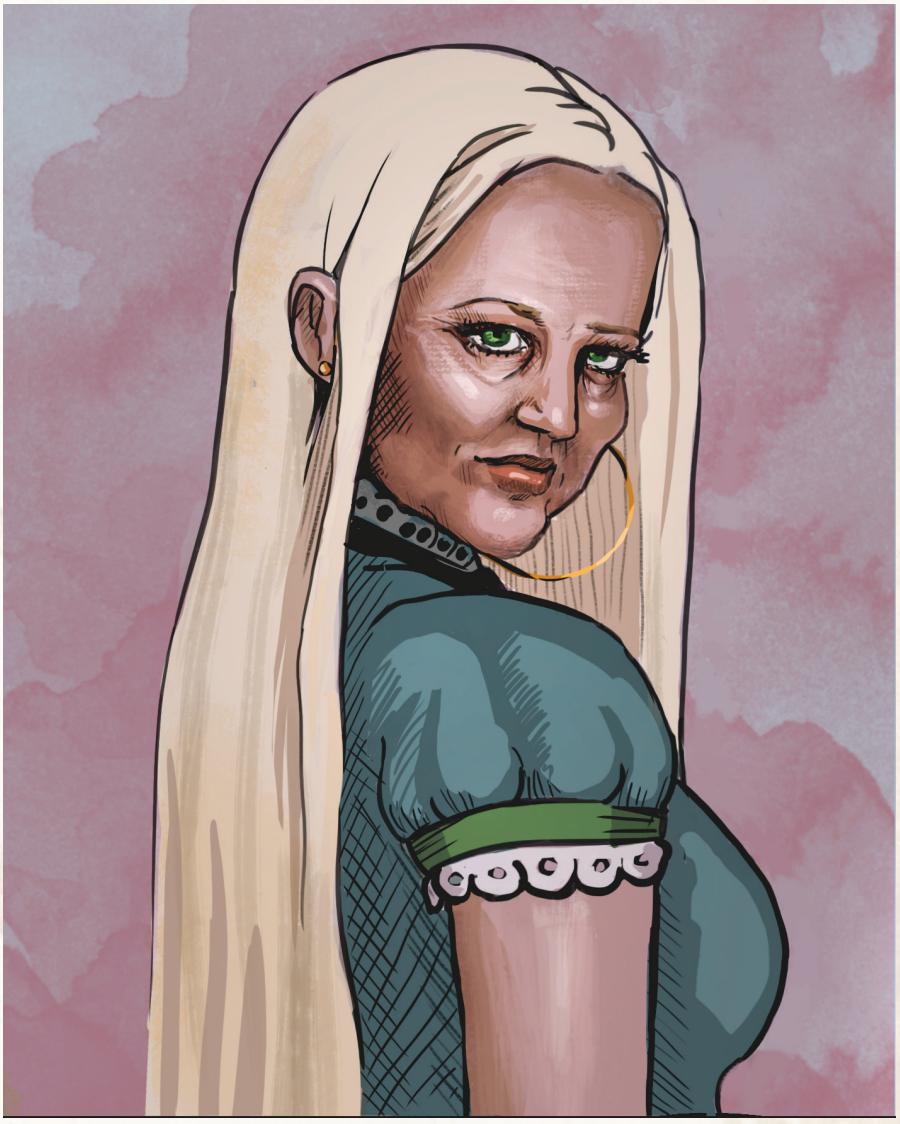
If asked about the harsh treatment of tenants and their workers, she will reply that peasants must be protected and guided, left to their own they become lazy and fail to serve the kingdom by providing foodstuffs. She is a bit strict because the peasants are particularly difficult, even going so far to invent stories of abuse to get a few hours off to laze about.

If asked why Darren has been skulking about town and having conversations with known thieves and other knaves, she explains that just over a fortnight ago, while on their way back from a farm inspection, their coach was robbed. The thieves took trinkets and some cash, neither of which matters to her, and a pendant. The pendant was a gift from her paternal grandmother during the two-year gap between her parents' and the grandmother's deaths. It holds great sentimental value to her as it feels like her grandmother, in giving the pendant, was telling her to replace her father and grow her inheritance into an empire. Darren was tasked with discreetly contacting the thieves' guild to arrange return. They disavowed conducting or authorizing the robbery. Darren was sent back to the guild to hire them to recover the pendant and discipline the encroaching robbers for not obtaining sanction before the attack. Now that she is aware her coachman has not exercised discretion, she is furious.

If the party members convince her there is a threat to Meawold, she offers an independent reward of 500 pp per party member for neutralizing this threat to her homelands. If the players ask for armed men, she will supply a dozen men-at-arms who fight to the death as ordered by the party members. (They use the stat blocks of NPC, Spy, MM p. 349.)

If attacked, eight guards will come to the aid of the Commonboks, with eight more arriving each third round until the party is routed or killed.

For investigating Fay and helping her protect her empire from scandal within high society, each party member earns 2,000 experience points.



Fay Commonbok. Artist: Henriette Boldt

Castle Brytha

Castle Grounds

The castle sits behind a wall with four towers and a gatehouse. There are six independent structures in addition to the keep.

1 – Gate House – The gatehouse is fortified by outer doors, three portcullises, a fifteen-feet-long drawbridge over a water pit, and numerous guards. The water pit is fifteen feet below the drawbridge and filled with twenty feet of water coated with a thick oily sheen. The oil can be lit to help repel invaders.

2 – Grounds and Entrance to the Keep – The grounds are paved with gravel, allowing access to the detached structures without risk of mud or muck. The gravel is three feet deep. Stairs lead to massive double doors, the entrance to the keep. From the outside, an observer cannot tell the main keep is split into two wings with the inner courtyard being the only connecting feature.

3 – Inner Courtyard – This courtyard provides a fountain and some green space for the residents of the keep while separating the two wings.

4 – Well House – Fresh water is drawn from a spring in this building.

5 – Grounds Keeper Quarters – The grounds keeper for the castle lives here.

6 – Blacksmith – A master blacksmith has a smith shop on the ground floor and lives in a loft over the shop.

7 – General Barracks – The staff and guards live here. Generally, they are either on duty, here resting, or at the pub socializing.

8 – Chapel – This chapel seats about 50 and has a bell tower.

9 – Castle Pub – This pub serves as entertainment and refreshment for the staff who work on the grounds of the castle. Meals can be prepared and served here. Most of the time, food is sent from the castle kitchen piping hot.

10, 11 – North Towers – These towers look over the north approach and allow the guards to protect the north wall.

12, 13 – Mid Wall Observation Post – This area extends out from the walls, providing better visibility to the guards.

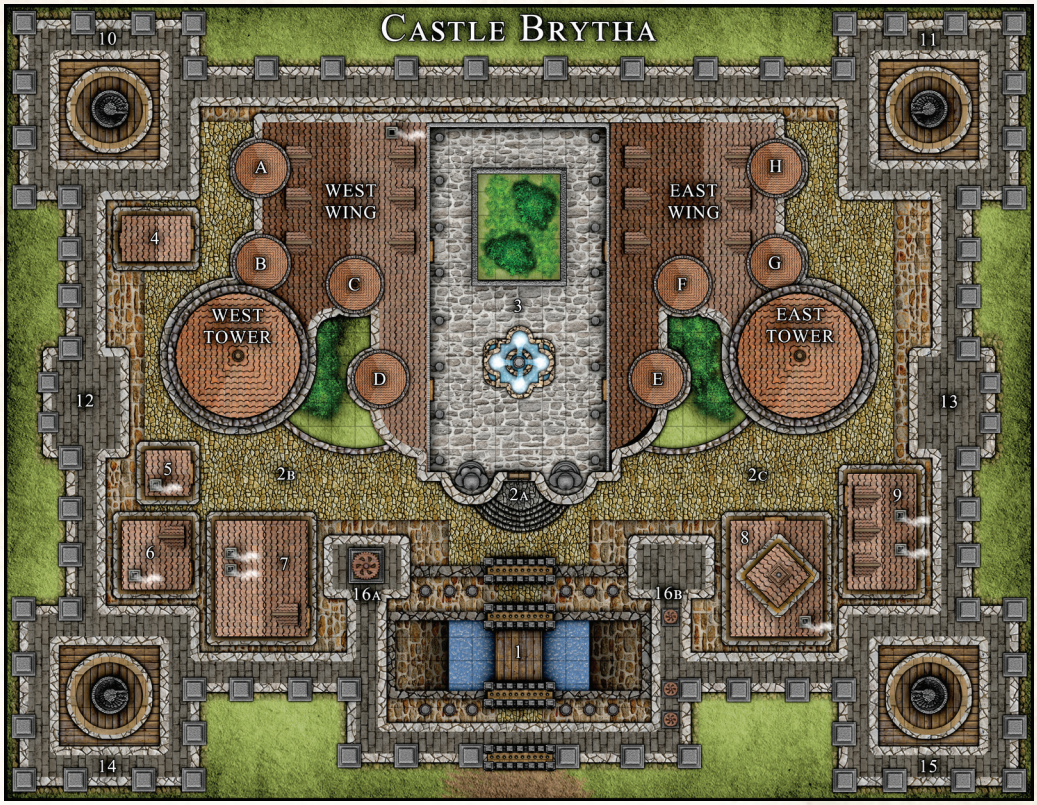
14, 15 – South Towers – These towers look over the south approach and allow the guards to protect the gate.

16A – Drawbridge Control – The drawbridge is controlled from this area.

16B – Portcullis Control – All three portcullises are independently controlled from this area.

If Violence Occurs in the Castle

The castle and grounds are guarded continuously. Any violence on the castle grounds that can be overheard (everywhere except the temple and cases of stealthy kills) will draw six guards to end the violence. A backup unit of six more will arrive each third round until a total of twenty-four guards engage. If defeated or captured, roleplay the encounter, banishment being the most likely outcome.



Castle Brytha–Castle Grounds. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

The East and West Towers

These towers are identical, extend five levels above the ground floor of the keep, and are used for storage. They are the keep's food reserves.

1 – Mead Storage – This room is filled with half-barrels of mead.

2 – Rain Water Storage – This room is filled with barrels of rain water.

3 – Wine Storage – This room is filled with half-barrels of wine.

4 – Wheat Storage – This room contains a large quantity of wheat.

5 – Rye Storage – This room contains a large quantity of rye.

6 – Barley Storage – This room contains a large quantity of barley.

7 – Oat Storage – This room contains a large quantity of oats.

8 – Black Bean Storage – This room contains a very large quantity of dried black beans.

9 – Lima Bean Storage – This room contains a large quantity of dried lima beans.

10 – Pinto Bean Storage – This room contains a large quantity of dried pinto beans.

11 – Dried Peas Storage – This room contains a large quantity of dried peas.

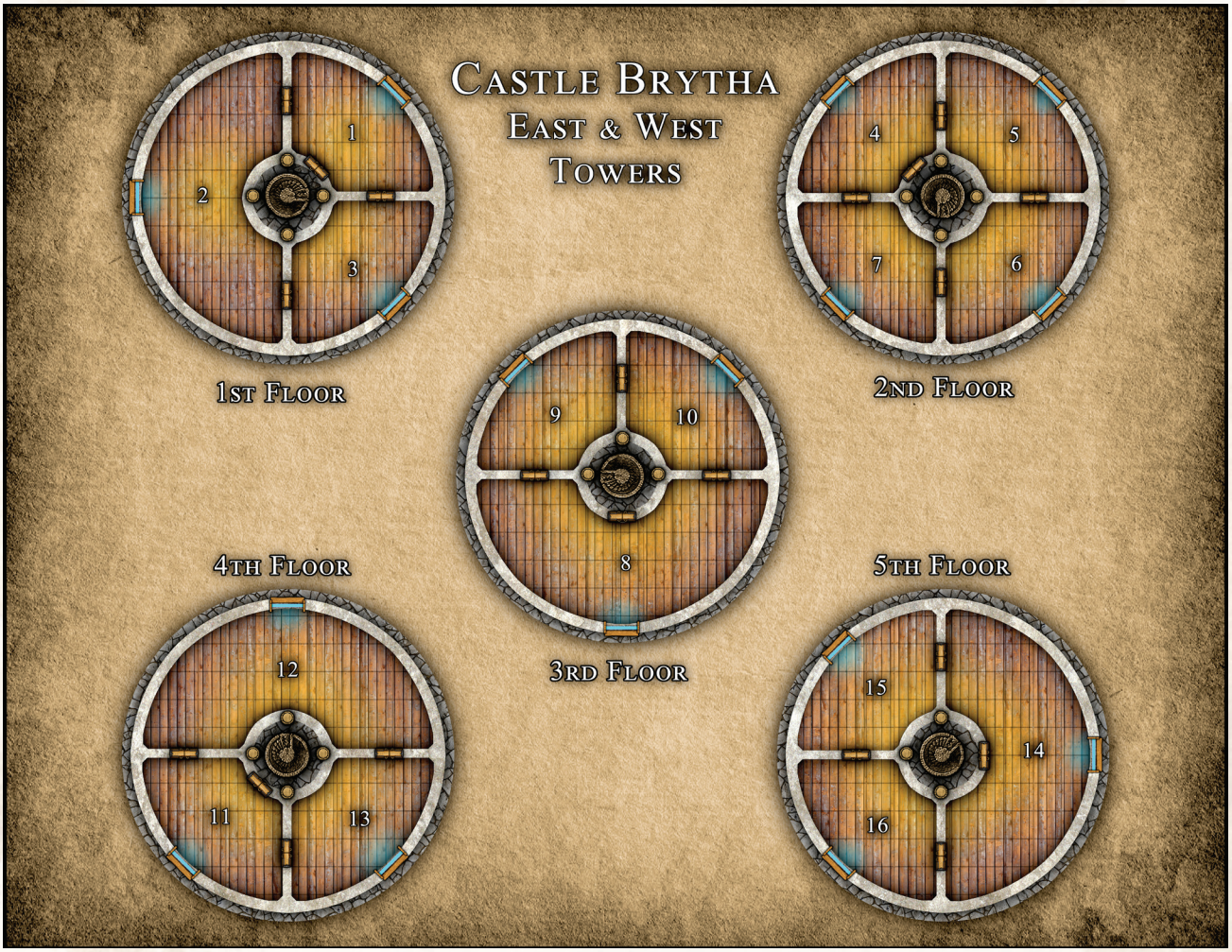
12 – Smoked Fish – This room contains a very large quantity of smoked fish.

13 – Salted Fish Storage – This room contains a large quantity of salted fish.

14 – Smoked Ham – This room holds a very large quantity of smoked ham.

15 – Smoked and Salted Sausages – This room holds a large quantity of smoked and salted sausages (think salami, not breakfast sausages).

16 – Smoked Bacon – This room holds a large quantity of smoked bacon.



Castle Brytha–Towers. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Main Keep – Ground Floor

The main keep is divided into two halves. This sprang from a dispute between brothers after a siege burned their keep and left their father clinging to life for the better half of a decade some hundred years ago. It was rebuilt in halves because of their searing hatred.

1, 2 – Storage Rooms – These rooms contain non-food supplies for the keep: more smokeless torches, writing supplies, blankets, spare clothes, bed linens, etc.

3 – Grand Dining Room – This opulent dining room can seat twelve plus the duke and duchess.

4 – Kitchen – This large kitchen prepares all meals for the keep. There are two crews of cooks. They live outside the keep. The room contains a large larder, preparation tables, barrels of water, casks of cooking oils, a large cooking fire, and dry goods storage.

5 – Hallway – This hallway connects the guestrooms to the stairs to the upper level, stairs to the west tower, the dining room, and the kitchen.

6 – Stairs to the West Tower

7 – Stairs to the Upper Floor

8, 9, 10 – Guest Rooms – These comfortable rooms house guests. Each has a comfortable double bed, a table, a chest, an armoire, and a basin and pitcher for freshening up. The chest can be locked; a key is left on the table for the guest. The majordomo holds a spare key to every lock in the keep on his person or secured in his room at night.

11 – Guard Storage Room – The men-at-arms who guard the keep use this room to store spare armor, spears, arrows, and other items they may require while maintaining security within the keep.

12 – Duty Guard Bunk Room – This room allows for the three guards (not on shift) from each duty cycle to rest, relax, and dress in their armor. It is spartan.

13 – Throne Room – This is where the duke presides over Meawold, and where court is hosted.

14, 15 – Negotiation Rooms – These rooms host negotiations with other kingdoms and within Meawold. The rooms are enchanted to prevent eavesdropping.

16 – Hallway – This hallway connects the throne room to the stairs to both the upper floor and the east tower, the majordomo's quarters, and a guest room.

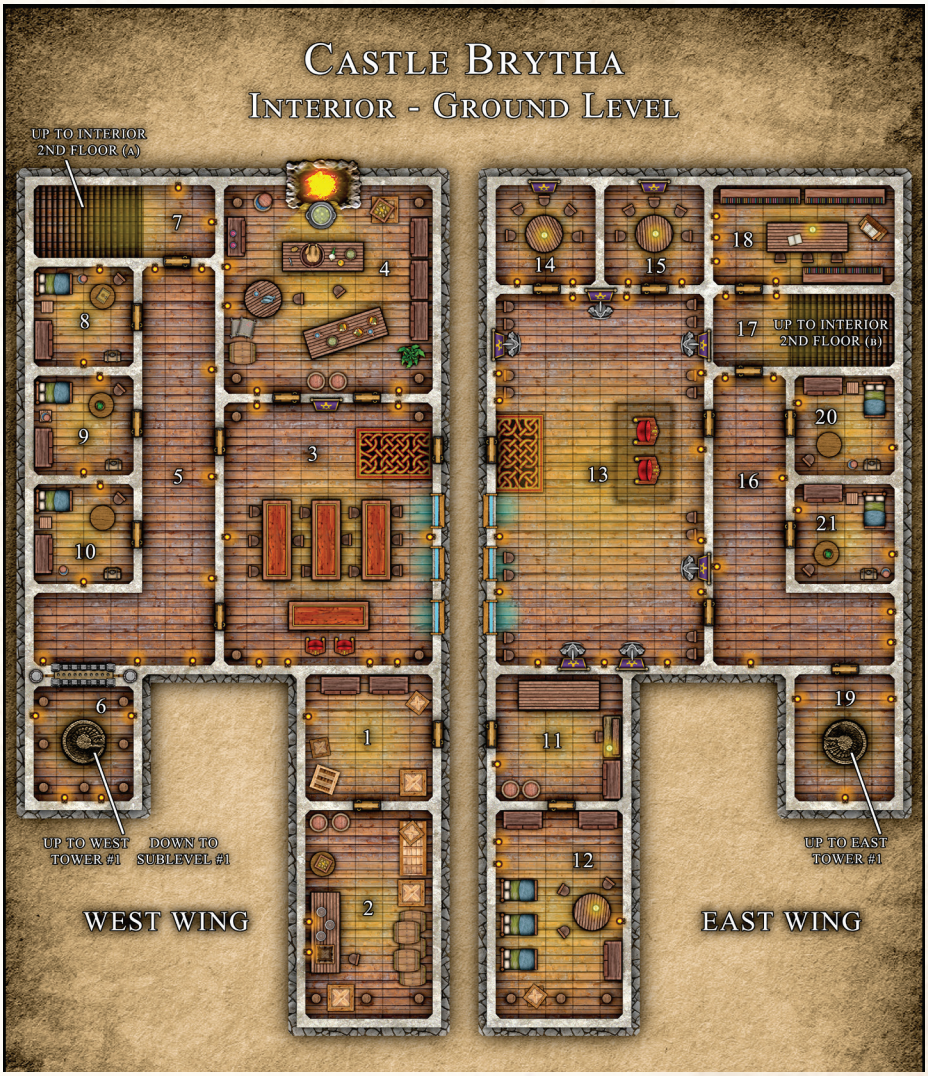
17 – Stairs to the Upper Floor

18 – Library – This is the private library of Meawold. It contains roughly a thousand volumes on various topics.

19 – Stairs to the East Tower

20 – Majordomo Chambers – This comfortable room is the quarters of the majordomo. It is nearly identical to Room 8, the differences being the amount of clothes and personal papers within. It could easily be the room of a guest staying for months. When the majordomo retires, the master keyring is put in the chest, where it is guarded by a Glyph of Warding (set to explosive runes, per the spell) and a mechanical trap (DC 24 to detect, DC 25 to disarm). The trap, if triggered, hits for 5d8 poison damage, **CONSTITUTION** save for half (DC 10).

21 – Guest Rooms – This room is identical to Room 8.



Castle Brytha–Ground Floor. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Main Keep – Upper Floor

1 – Hallway – This hallway connects the stairs from the ground floor to the grand fireplace and the staff dining room.

2 – Small Tower Access – This area connects the hallway to the spiral stairs to short, small Towers A, B, and C, as well as the visiting staff bunk room. This area is used to address the guards before starting their patrols.

3 – Long Corridor – This corridor connects the small tower access area to short, small Tower D.

4 – Visitor's Staff Bunk Room – This room contains six beds with a chest at the foot, six armoires, and four tables with two or three stools at each table. When visitors bring a bodyguard or a valet, they are quartered here. Lady's maids are quartered in the room with their lady.

5 – Visitor's Staff Dining Room – This room is where the staff of visitors take their meals and recreate when not on duty.

6 – Access to Tower A – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower A.

7 – Access to Tower B – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower B.

8 – Access to Tower C – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower C.

9 – Access to Tower D – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower D.

10 – Small Tower Access – This area connects the hallway to the spiral stairs to short, small Towers F, G, and H, as well as the visiting staff bunk room. This area is used to address the house staff as a body.

11 – Long Corridor – This corridor connects the small tower access area to short, small Tower D.

12 – Hallway outside the Royal Bedchamber – Two guards are stationed here when either member of the royal couple is in the bedchamber.

13 – Ducal Study – This is the private study of the Duke of Meawold. It contains a very large reading table, a desk, and a bookshelf holding about two hundred volumes.

14 – Grand Bedroom – This is the sleeping chambers of the duke and his wife. It contains an opulent bed, a writing desk, two plush chairs, and three armoires.

15 – Access to Tower H – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower H.

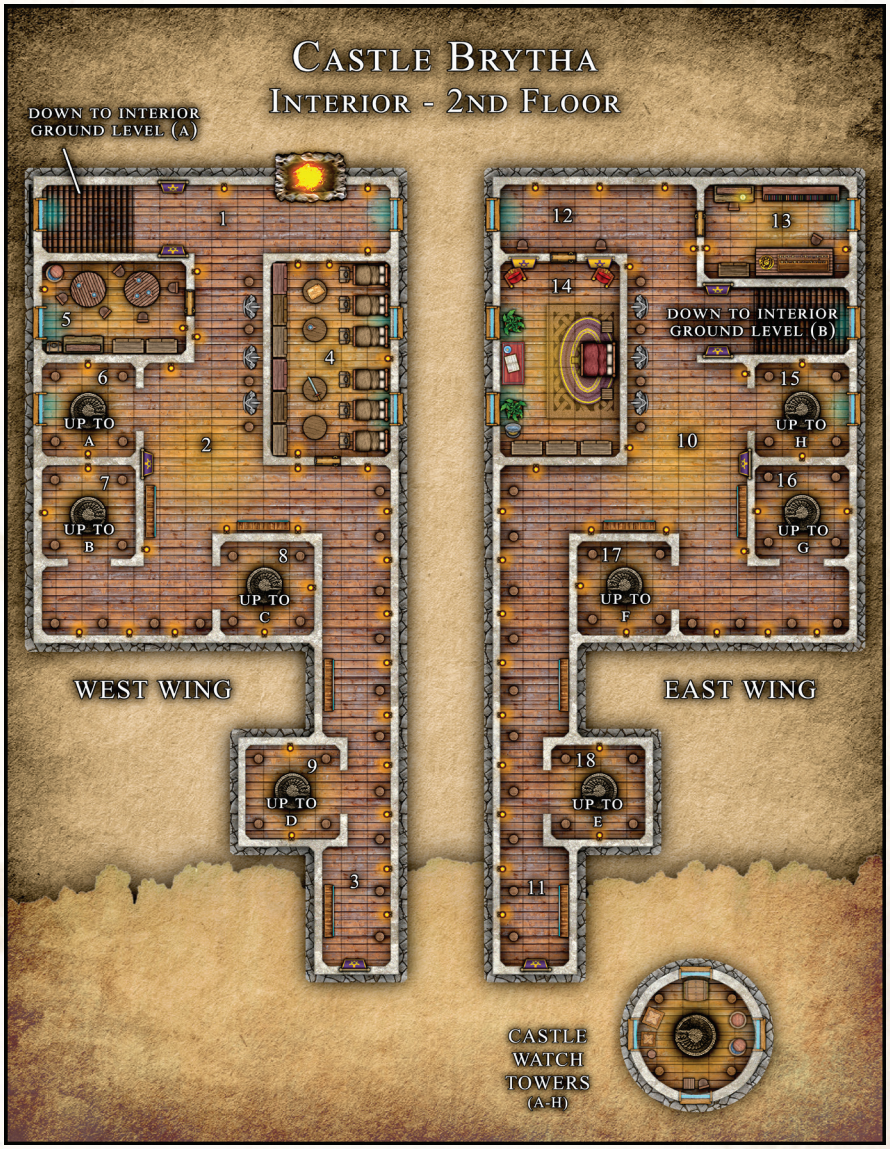
16 – Access to Tower G – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower G.

17 – Access to Tower F – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower F.

18 – Access to Tower E – This room contains spiral stairs that lead to Tower E.

Castle Watch Towers – All eight towers use the same map.

1 – Castle Watch Towers – These towers are one level above the upper floor of the keep. They contain some backup supplies and offer a spectacular view of



Castle Brytha–Second Floor. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Meawold and the surrounding lands.

Castle Brytha – Detached Buildings Floorplans

1 – Gate House – Described under Castle Grounds

2 – Grounds and Entrance to the Keep – Described under Castle Grounds

3 – Keep Courtyard – Described under Castle Grounds

4 – Well House

This building shelters the main well and allows fresh water to be drawn as needed. Several barrels are stored here.

5 – Ground Keeper's Quarters

The groundskeeper, his wife, and young boy live in this small building.

6 – Blacksmith

A – Smithy – This is the workshop for the master blacksmith of Meawold. It contains a medium forge, anvil, racks of tools, and tables for planning work and working metals.

B – Smith's Loft – This small loft is enchanted to remain comfortable despite the heat generated by the forge while working. It contains a small desk, a comfortable bed, an armoire, a table, and a crib.

7 – General Barracks

The staff and off-duty guards sleep and rest here.

A – Entrance – The main floor holds ten double beds with a chest at the foot of each bed, and two armoires for storage.

B – Common Room – The tables in this room host a pair of card games most days of the week.

C – Storage – This room contains the stores for the barracks. The inventory includes spare bed linens, water, ale, some rations, and the stairs up to the commander's suite.

D – Commander's Bedroom – The commander of the guard sleeps, works, and plans here. It holds a desk. He is here most of the day, resting or working.

E – Briefing Room – This room hosts two shift change meetings per day. It can seat eight plus the commander. The bookshelves hold incident reports and shift logs.

8 – Chapel

A – Sanctuary – All rites, ceremonies, and services are held in this room. There are twelve pews that seat four each. The royal family has a private service elsewhere. The temple is dedicated to many gods. Priests who live in the town come to provide services on their day. There is a ladder to the right of the altar and an access point in the ceiling that leads to Area B.

B – Bell Tower Mid-Level – This room is halfway from the chapel to the bells. There is a bell pull in this room.

C – Bell Tower Top Level – This area is open to the elements. It is visited for bell maintenance.

9 – Castle Pub

A – Main Bar Area – Most patrons take their leisure time in this room. It has a long bar and two small tables.

B – Kitchen – This room stores additional kegs of beer, ale, and wine. Food is also prepared here. Most of the staff take their meals here. Normally the kitchen inside the keep sends food. Sometimes the pub prepares food using its kitchen.

C – Larder – Food materials and food sent over by the keep kitchen is stored here until warmed for the staff.

D – Landing – This room connects the stairs from the ground level to the private room, staff bedroom, and owner's bedroom.

E – Staff Bedroom – The staff rests and sleeps here. It contains a table with several chairs, two armoires, and three comfortable beds.

F – Owners' Bedroom – The owners of the pub sleep and rest here. It contains two comfortable beds (one for the couple and one for their two daughters), a small table with two chairs, and two armoires.

G – Private Room – This room seats seven at the table and two in overstuffed chairs facing the fire. It is used for celebrations, as overflow when the pub is packed, and for private meetings.

Castle Brytha–Castle Complex Level. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Castle Brytha – Sublevel and Cultist Temple

1 – Stairs – These stairs connect the west wing of the ground floor to the sublevel.

2, 3, 4, and 5 – Corridors – These well-traveled stone floors encircle the central group of rooms.

6 – Corridor – These well-traveled stone floors encircle the rooms on the east side of the sublevel.

7 – Book Intake – When a book is brought to the sublevel for repair or other problems, it is documented here and assessed a severity by two book monks who are stationed here. They are a liaison between the monks who do the repairs and the staff who bring in books to the book monks. Books are also processed for return in this area. These monks are also responsible for making copies of the books sent by the Formene each year and distributing them to the other four kingdoms.

8 – Book Storage – Books to be repaired are stored here until a book monk is available to work on it. About two hundred books are stored here at any given time. The room is enchanted to be cold, dry, and pest free.

9 – Ante Room – This area holds some supplies for the head monk and the intake monks as well as records of the books that the monks have serviced.

10 – Office of the Head Book Monk – The supervisor of the book monks uses this room as his office. That is the head cultist, Monder Balley, uses this room to develop the cult's goals and to study the books on Hastur that Szordree located for him.

11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 – Each of these study rooms are occupied by two cultists who work repairing books for the city and private libraries of the duke. Most of the time, they are studying works of Hastur. An INSIGHT check (DC 21) is required to sense anything is off with them.

20 – Break Area – The cultists, disguised as book monks, take meals and breaks here.

21, 22 – Storage Rooms – These two rooms hold supplies for book restoration, copying, and preservation. The cultists also hide their materials and supplies in these rooms. Since they infiltrated the castle, they are the only ones on this level with the exception of the scullery staff and maids who bring trash down here for disposal in Area 27.

23 – Stairs – These stairs lead down to the antechamber of the castle vault. The door is locked and trapped both mechanically and magically (DC 21 to detect and disarm each).

24 – Castle Vault Antechamber – This room is guarded by an iron golem (See 5eSRD.com). Without the password (which can be obtained only from Count Gylip), it will attack anyone who descends past the second highest stair.

25 – Vault – This vault contains most of the money wealth of Castle Brytha. The chests contain jewelry worth approximately five hundred thousand gold pieces, gems worth over one million gold pieces, and mixed platinum, gold, and silver coins totaling over six hundred thousand gold pieces.

26 – Hallway – This long hallway has racks holding spare weapons. It also leads to the waste disposal well.

27 – Waste Well – This room contains a well. The well shaft descends one hundred feet to a small *sphere of annihilation*. This sphere is used for waste disposal as the sphere will absorb and destroy anything that touches it.

28 – Hallway – This long hallway is lined with shelves holding spare bed linens and simple clothes. They are used when a titled guest arrives in a destitute state and has nothing but bloody rags to wear. They will do until suitable clothing can be obtained or made for the recovering guest.

29 – Storage Room – This room holds crates of art: paintings and sculptures. The stack of barrels against the south wall includes a hollow five-foot diameter tun for wine. It is a secret door connecting to a forgotten tunnel that connects the sublevel to the chapel. The cultists found this and use it to come and go from the temple undetected.

30 – Secret Door – The end of this corridor hides a secret door. Perception check (DC 22) to detect.

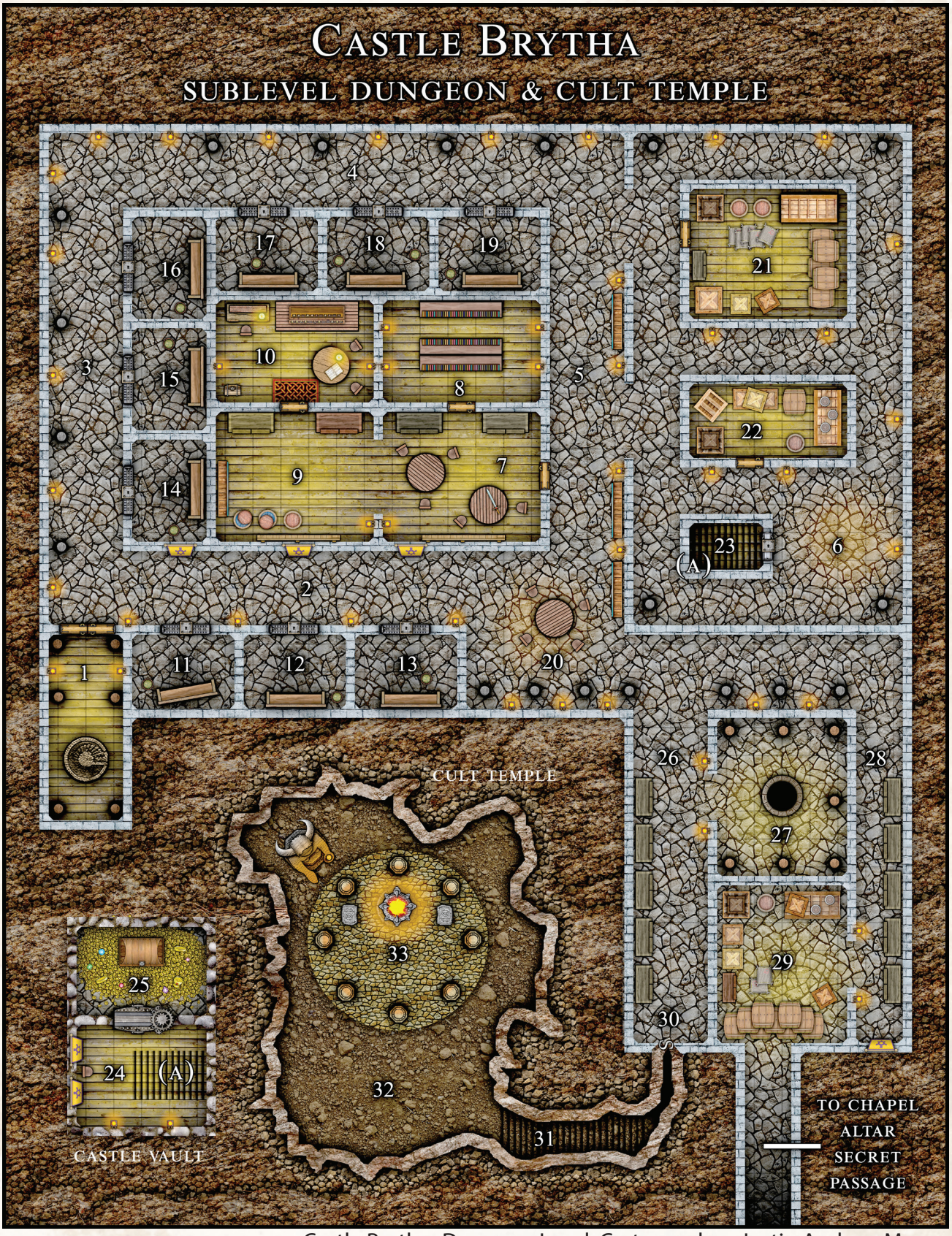
31 – Stairs – These stairs link the secret door at Area 30 to the temple floor at Area 32.

32 – Temple Floor – The ground here is littered with a loam of crushed bones that resemble pea gravel.

33 – Cultist Circle and Statue of Hastur – The circle is rimmed by braziers with a heady incense. The statue body is complete. The head is sitting 90% complete to the right of the statue. A pair of stone masons are working on the head in this room.

The statue can be destroyed by the spell **destroy stone**, toppling it from the efforts of four party members (or enlisted help from the castle staff), or any other means the players come up with that seems reasonable. Once destroyed, a blue and black floating sphere rises from the center of the statue remains, growing for a few seconds, then a blast of light envelops the room and the party members find themselves in a room with a pitch-black floor and walls of swirling blue and black like the ball. They have been sucked into Carcosa, Hastur's private demi-plane of madness.

For investigating the temple, destroying the statue, and defeating Hastur, each party member earns 4,000 experience points.



Castle Brytha–Dungeon Level. Cartographer: Justin Andrew Mason

Bestiary

Cultists (including Monder Balley)

Medium human, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 121 (12d10 + 55)
- **Speed** 30 ft. (6 sqr)
- **DEX**(+5) **CON**(+5)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +8, Con +8, Wis +4
- **Skills** Athletics +11, Perception +4
- **Senses** passive Perception 14
- **Languages** Common
- **Challenge** 6 (2,900 XP)

Special Abilities

Mystic Ways: Cultist weapons hit as if they were magical weapons.

Actions

Multiattack. The cultist makes two rapier attacks and one short sword attack.

Rapier. Melee Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (3d8 + 5) piercing damage.

Short Sword. Melee Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Description

This cultist is lean, toned, and lithe, throwing off robes when combat starts, allowing access to a rapier and shortsword.

Guards (Private, Castle, and City)

Human, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class**: 16 (Ring mail, Shield)
- **Hit Points**: 90 (12d8 +36)
- **Speed**: 30 ft. (6 sqr)
- **STR**(+4) **CON**(+3) **WIS**(+3)
- **Skills**: Athletics +6, Intimidation +1, Survival +5, Medicine +5
- **Saving Throws**: Str +6, Con +5
- **Challenge**: 4 (1,100 XP)
- **Languages**: speaks Common

Actions

Multiattack. The guard makes three weapon melee attacks or three ranged attacks.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing dmg.

Light Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack + 4 to hit, range 80/320, one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Sadon Truegust

Male human, chaotic good

- **Armor Class**: 15 (Leather)
- **Hit Points**: 135 (18d8 + 54)
- **Speed**: 30 ft. (6 sqr)
- **DEX**(+4), **CON**(+3), **WIS**(+3)
- **Skills**: Survival +6, Perception +6, Stealth +7
- **Saving Throws**: Dex +7, Con +6
- **Challenge**: 5 (1,800 XP)
- **Languages**: speaks Common and Elvish

Actions

Multiattack. Sadon makes three weapon melee attacks or three ranged attacks.

Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack +7 to hit, range 150/600, one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Smugglers

Human, neutral Good

- **Armor Class**: 15 (Padded)
- **Hit Points**: 45 (6d8 + 18)
- **Speed**: 30 ft. (6 sqr)
- **DEX**(+4) **CON**(+3) **CHA**(+3)
- **Skills**: Acrobatics +6, Deception +5, Athletics +4, Perception +3
- **Saving Throws**: Dex +6, Con +5
- **Challenge**: 1 (200 XP)
- **Languages**: speaks Common and one extra

Actions

Multiattack. The smuggler makes two weapon melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Scimitar. Melee Weapon Attack +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Shortbow. Ranged Weapon Attack +6 to hit, range 80/320, one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Stonesworn Students

Human, lawful neutral

- **Armor Class**: 15 (Leather)
- **Hit Points**: 39 (6d8 +12)
- **Speed**: 30 ft. (6 sqr)
- **DEX**(+4)
- **Skills**: Survival +4, Perception +4
- **Challenge**: 2 (450 XP)
- **Languages**: speaks Common and one extra

Actions

Multiattack. The student makes two weapon melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Shortsword. Melee Weapon Attack +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 +4) slashing damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack +6 to hit, range 150/600, one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 +4) piercing damage.

Szordree

Medium aberration, lawful evil

- **Armor Class** 16 (breastplate)
- **Hit Points** 110 (17d8 + 34)
- **Speed** 30 ft. (6 sqr)
- **DEX**(+3) **INT**(+5) **WIS**(+4) **CHA**(+3)
- **Saving Throws** Int +9, Wis +8, Cha +7
- **Skills** Arcana +9, Deception +7, Insight +8,
- Perception +8, Persuasion +7, Stealth +7
- **Senses** darkvision 180 ft., passive Perception 18
- **Languages** Common, Deep Speech, Elvish
- **Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

Special Traits

Magic Resistance. The brain drinker has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting. The brain drinker's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components.

•At will: detect thoughts, levitate, hypnotic pattern

•1/day each: dominate monster, dominate person, plane shift (self only)

Spellcasting. The brain drinker is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The brain drinker has the following wizard spells prepared:

•Cantrips (at will): blade ward, dancing lights, mage hand, shocking grasp

•1st level (4 slots): detect magic, disguise self, shield, sleep

•2nd level (3 slots): blur, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement

•3rd level (3 slots): clairvoyance, lightning bolt, sending

•4th level (3 slots): confusion, dimension door

•5th level (2 slots): telekinesis, wall of force

Actions

Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 17) and must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

Brain Drink. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the brain drinker. Hit: 60 (10d10 + 5) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the brain drinker kills the target by sliding its tongue into the nose or mouth, punching an opening through the soft palette, injecting digestive fluids, and feasting on the target's liquid brain.

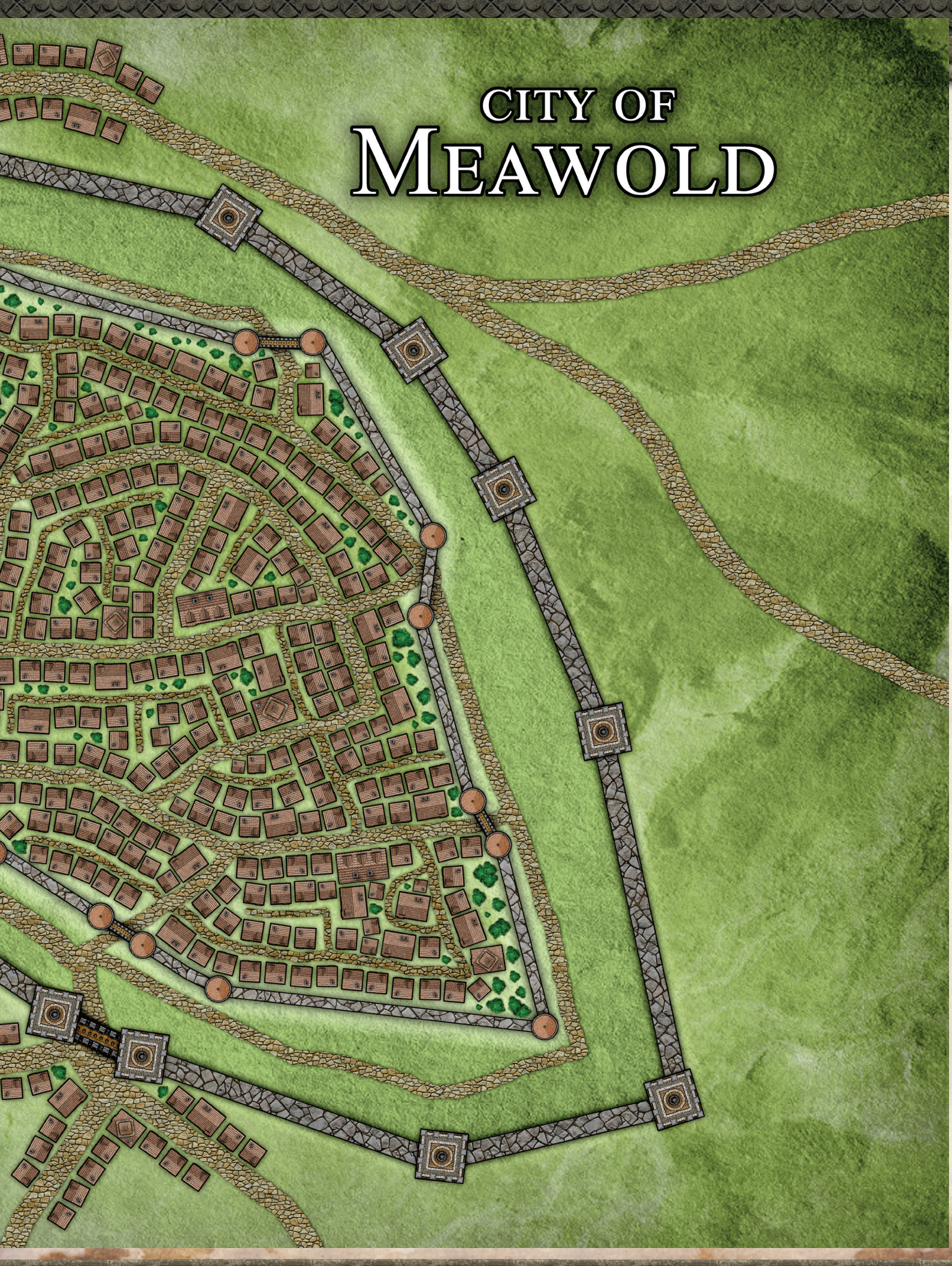
Stunning Pulse. The brain drinker emits a wave of mind rending power in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or take 23 (4d8 + 5) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Enslave (1/Day). The brain drinker targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the brain drinker until the brain drinker dies, it voluntarily releases the target, or until it is on a different plane of existence from the target. The charmed target is under the brain drinker's control and cannot take reactions. The brain drinker and the target can communicate telepathically with each other over any distance.

Whenever the charmed target takes damage, the target can repeat the saving throw. On a success, the effect ends. No more than once every 24 hours, the target can also repeat the saving throw when it is at least 1 mile away from the brain drinker.

Description

Szordree looks like a vole's head on a humanoid body. With large red eyes, light grey mottled skin, and a full head of hair, were it not for the dozen tentacles hanging from his cheeks, he might be mistaken for a fat, ugly elf. He has a long, barbed tongue that, once he seizes a victim's face with his tentacles, can punch a hole through the soft palette into the brain and inject a pint of digestive fluids. After a few minutes, he drinks the brain through the victim's mouth.


CITY OF
MEAWOLD

About two millennia ago, Hastur nearly conquered the continent of Barestir before being defeated by a coallition army of humans, elves, dwarves, gnomes and halflings. Since being cast from the world of Tumunzar late in the First Age of Man, Hastur has long sought to return. The elves of the Barestir continent offer an opportunity for Hastur to maintain an aspect indefinitely on Tumunzar.

Someone in Meawold is working to build a temple, build a host and pull an aspect of Hastur across from the beyond, where the Old Ones wait and plot their dreams of feasting on worlds. The Formene Elves detect this activity and ask the party members to investigate.

They are given a list of people who have the ways and means to build a cult or are acting suspicious and asked to investigate, confront, and find the person or persons involved in this horrible plan.

DNH5

Fifth Edition Fantasy

Part Five, the Conclusion of
the Haunting of Hastur Series

Carcosa

by L. Kevin Watson

An Adventure for Characters Level 12

Carcosa is an adventure for 3–7 characters at level 12 and designed for use with most versions of the best-known fantasy roleplaying game. It is optimized for the fifth edition and for 5 characters at level 12.

Dark Naga Adventures
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DNH5–Carcosa

Dark Naga Adventures

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Production and Layout: L. Kevin Watson
Playtesting: Door Kicking Death Dealers

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Cover: Grustka and Her Admirers–Artist: Catia Fantini

Background

NOTE: This section assumes the players have played through the first adventures of the Haunting of Hastur series, DNH1–DNH4; if that is not the case, there are entries for adapting the adventure.

At the end of *DNH4—Confronting Hastur*, the party defeated a cult of Hastur that was building a temple under Castle Brytha in the city of Meawold. The cult was mere days away from completing a vessel to hold an aspect of Hastur when the party members defeated the cultists. The party managed to smash the not quite completed statue of Hastur, and from the rubble, a blue and black sphere sprang from the heart of the statue. It grew until it filled the temple, engulfing the party members.

The sphere deposited them in the Carcosa Complex, the private Demiplane of Madness dedicated to and controlled by Hastur. However, Hastur is not present: He, like the other Old Ones, lies sleeping beyond the known worlds. Sadly, his slumber is lighter than that many of his brethren '. This light slumber allows him to influence the universe in ways his fellow Old Ones often cannot. He has now twice tried and failed to use his influence to establish an aspect of himself on Tumunzar (See DNH1 and DNH4). The same party of petty mortals is responsible for both defeats, something Hastur knows and wants to address, permanently, hence his capture of the party members. His slumber limits his reach, and thus Hastur has delegated the fulfillment of his revenge to subordinates.

For the party members, defeating Hastur is crucial, for he is mere decades from recovering and waking from his massive defeat at the end of the First Age of Man some two millennia ago. If he fully wakens, he will be able to inspire more than just a cult, and will overwhelm the world of Tumunzar, especially the continent of Barestir. Currently, Hastur can only connect with one individual at a time, and his preferred host for his aspect would be an elf. The extraordinaire longevity of elves, coupled with their magical talent would allow Hastur to channel more magic and power compared to previous hosts, all while retaining a general mien of social acceptability, in stark contrast to hosts that worked but were limited by brief lifespans or frustrated Hastur's efforts to establish a foothold on Tumunzar due to their weird physiology. He desires a full conquest of the elves so he can take advantage of their incredible adaptability to nearly any environment to create armies that will allow him to control more and more worlds over the coming eons. See *DNH3–The City of Talos* for more details on the elves of Tumunzar, especially the Formene Elves.

For Players New to the Haunting of Hastur Series:

The GM is encouraged to use the summary of events provided or invent another reason for Hastur to draw the party members into the Carcosa Complex for the amusement of Grushka and her would-be lovers.

For Players Who Participated in Some Parts of the Series:

The GM is encouraged to fill in the blanks (or play the missed adventures) so that the story makes sense.

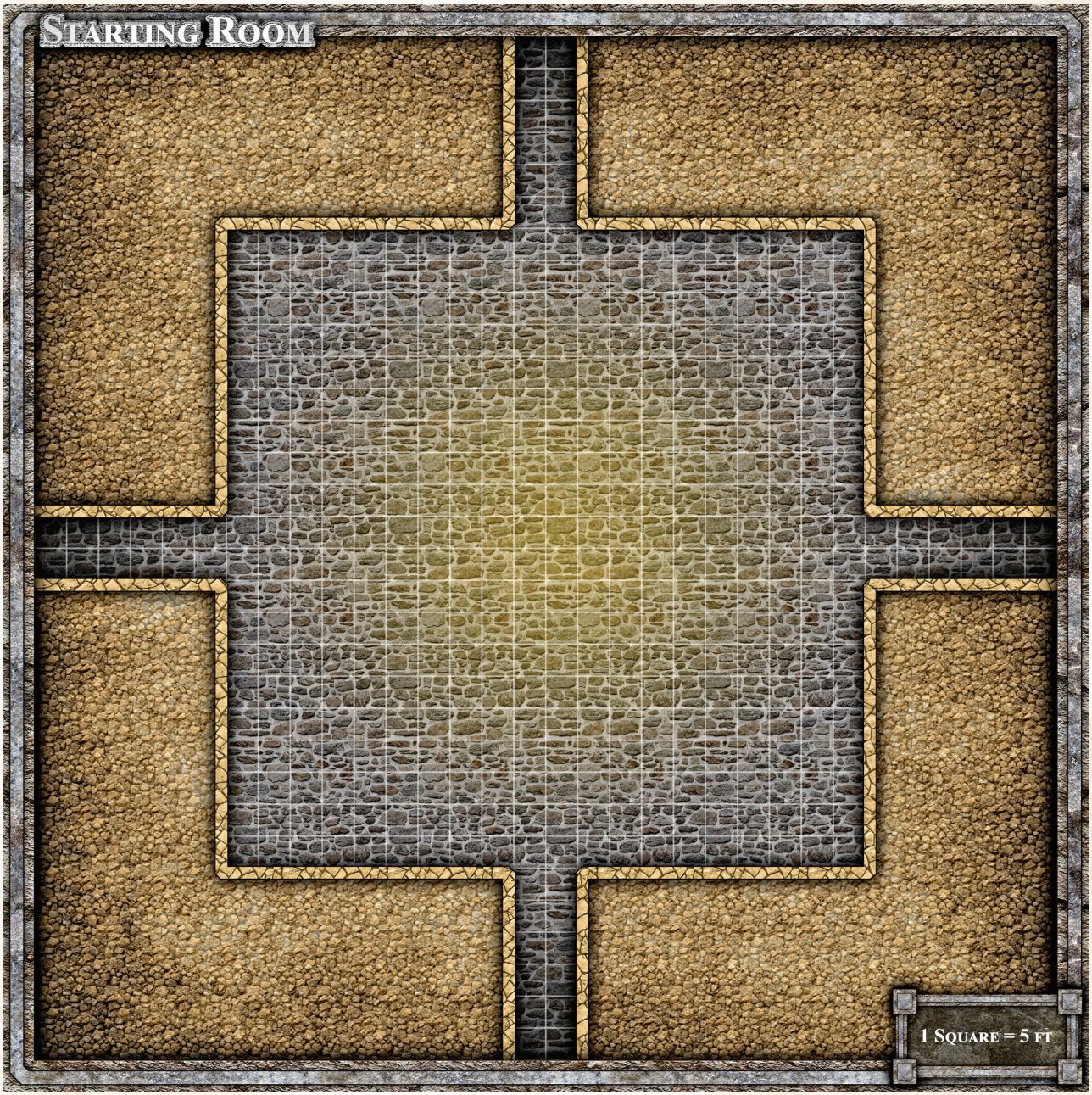
Notes on Running the Adventure

At the beginning of the adventure, the party members have been unconscious for some unknown period of time. Allow the characters the benefit of a long rest and assume they have all their hit points and Hit Dice restored and are ready to prepare fresh spells. This does not count as a long rest for the purpose of the following conditions for permanent imprisonment:

There are three conditions that bind a party member to the Carcosa Complex forever: Dying, taking a long rest (or falling asleep), or spending more than twenty-four hours in the Carcosa Complex .

Optionally, the GM may bind a soul to the Carcosa Complex if the party member reaches zero hit points, regardless of the number of death saves failed, or set the threshold to being bound to the Carcosa Complex at a number lower than three failed death saves. Keep track of time spent, rounding to the nearest fifteen minutes to minimize accounting overhead. It can be assumed that recovering and regrouping from each encounter will take a few minutes, which makes the fifteen-minute increment reasonable. Most of the denizens of the Carcosa Complex are not particularly inclined to fight the party members. Avoiding resource-draining encounters should take some work and consume time, but not be exceedingly difficult.

While not bound to the Carcosa Complex, there is a way for the party members to escape the Demiplane of Madness. Each demon has a portal that connects the Carcosa Complex to a place called "The Plane of Portals". This plane is a vast collection of hallways, each ending in a portal to another dimension. The portal of Grushka, the most powerful demon, is special and can also be used to connect to other destinations. Smearing the blood of any party member on Grushka's portal will tune it to the party member's home world or plane, if



applicable. Reciting the command words then activates the portal, and if stepped through, the party members will be transported up to 1,000 miles away from where they entered the Carcosa Complex (which was presumably beneath the City of Meawold). If the party ends up on another plane or world, the destination is subject to the GM's discretion.

Deepening Hastur's slumber requires the party members to step through Grushka's portal in its native configuration, then find and perform a ritual at the portal that leads to where the Old One slumbers. The ritual takes an hour to recite and requires the hearts of all four abrar (the demon brothers and Grushka) as material components. After completing the ritual, a successful DC 10 **ranged spell attack** deepens Hastur's slumber for a million years. If the attack misses or the ritual fails, the hearts disappear, and the demons must regenerate and return to their domains before the ritual can be attempted again. Unlike most denizens, the demons take a week to reappear in the Carcosa Complex, suffering in the Abyss during that time to remind them of their duties and the consequences of failure. Waiting seven days to attempt the ritual without escaping and reentering again means the party members become permanent residents of the Carcosa Complex.

Introduction

The party members awaken to find themselves in a large room, approximately a 100' square, with a stone floor and a stone ceiling 15' above. All four walls have a passage in the center of each wall, leading out of the room. The air is comfortable, slightly cool, and smells of rotted leather and decay with an ephemeral whiff of death. The light is dim, comes from no discernable source, and is everywhere throughout the room. The four passages leaving the room are much darker.

As the party members start to regain consciousness, a voice booms in their heads. "Welcome to Carcosa. You will fit in here, eventually. Explore all you like, find where you fit best, and settle in. Eternity is a mighty long time, and you will be here for eternity. When you pick your new home, the demon lord of that domain will grant you an audience." With the voice seemingly done, the party members open their eyes and take in the room.

As they stand and start to orient themselves, a hunched, cloaked figure about twenty feet away addresses them in Common. His voice is male and deep. "I guess I, too, should welcome you to Carcosa. Not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing. Probably a bad one. Do not go to sleep here. You only get one wakeup here, on the house, and you have just spent that . The next one has dire consequences. If you sleep again, the life you knew is gone forever. You must find an exit before you sleep, or Carcosa will be your prison forevermore. This is an awful place and maybe you can fight your way out. Who knows, maybe you're smarter than you look, and you can talk your way out. Either way, you want to get out before your soul is consumed by Carcosa." The figure is a male human, about forty, broken, and covered in boils. He presents no threat to the party members and can be easily killed if they desire.

The Rules of Carcosa

- Each demon has a portal in its throne room that connects to the Plane of Portals.
- On the Plane of Portals, you can connect to hundreds of dimensions (other worlds, planes, etc.).
- While in the Plane of Portals, you take 5 (1d10) necrotic damage per hour.
- If you die here, your corpse dispears after ten minutes.
- If you die here, you become a permanent resident (Fail 3 death saves, take damage that reduces your hitpoints below zero, etc.).
- You will return to Carcosa at midnight as if your death never happened.
- If you sleep here, you become a permanent resident, including a long rest.
- There is a ritual that can take the party home if they can find a portal to link to their home world.

The Yellow Sign

Welcome to Carcosa–Artist: Brian McCranie

If they question the cloaked figure, he talks with them for a few minutes and then scurries off. The conversation might contain the following information:

- I am one of millions of humans and demi-humans trapped in the Carcosa Complex. I have ventured outside of my assigned domain, the sewers, to warn you and must return soon, or I will be caught.
- Four demons run the Carcosa Complex, Grushka and her three admirers: Lyosha, Mitya, and Vanya. They each run one of its wings.
- You are all still alive so that the demons may enjoy the misery that emanates from your despair as you become trapped in the Carcosa Complex until the end of time.
- Most of the denizens are indifferent to new residents, I mean "new arrivals". Some talk freely; others require prodding. However, some like to pick fights with new fish.
- This place, the Carcosa plane, is a Demiplane. It is infinite, but this structure, the Carcosa Complex, consists of the main hall (where you are now) and a domain devoted to each demon.
- Grushka toys with all three brothers.
- Mitya is the worst of them, Lyosha, the best.
- Sleeping or dying here binds your soul to the Demiplane. If you die in the Carcosa Complex, you appear here, at midnight, as if you never died, but with the memories of your death.
- Each demon has a substantial treasure hoard.
- The demons bicker constantly; a shrewd person can play them off each other.
- There is a way to escape the Carcosa plane.
- You want to escape.
- Each brother does anything to curry Grushka's favor.
- Grushka is really in charge.
- Mitya acts as if he runs the entire Carcosa Complex.
- Mitya rules his brothers with an iron fist.
- Vanya hates his brothers.
- Lyosha is distant and standoffish with his brothers.
- Hastur's current slumber is shallow, and he will awaken in a few decades.
- The north exit leads to Grushka's domain.
- The east exit leads to Vanya's domain.
- The west exit leads to Lyosha's domain.
- The south exit leads to Mitya's domain.

Grushka's Domain

Grushka runs the Carcosa Complex from this cavern network. She sits on a throne on a raised dais, with a reflecting pool between her and supplicants, , so she can admire herself as she desires. She constantly maintains the visage of a beautiful human woman, never showing her wings or demonic features.
She serves Hastur but lives to tease, torment, and manipulate the three demonic brothers, and she enjoys toying with mortals. Her goal is to integrate the party members into the Carcosa Complex with as light a touch as possible. Watching mortals struggle to escape, fail, and then wallow in the ensuing despair entertains the demons to no end. Who knows, maybe they're made of something special and can replace the demons as her tormented admirers in time. If they are here and unable to threaten Hastur's efforts on Tumunzar, her mission is accomplished. To this end, she sends them on wild goose chases to the brothers. Grushka knows how the party can return home and how they can push Hastur into a deeper slumber. However, she is not willing to suffer a week in the Abyss to deepen his slumber, and the ritual to deepen Hastur's slumber requires the hearts of all four demons. The Carcosa plane is fueled by misery, and new members provide a wealth of misery as they lose hope. She will do her utmost to prevent the party members from returning to their world.

Key points for roleplaying Grushka:

- She flirts and teases constantly.
- She never appears as a demon but always as a beautiful human woman.
- She loves accumulating wealth.
- She is loath to reveal the portals or the way home for the party members.
- Her goal is to trap the party members in the Carcosa Complex.
- Watching the party members scurry about trying to play the brothers off each other gives her a little joy though not as much as teasing the brothers directly.
- Ruling the Carcosa Complex is boring at times; toying with mortal creatures helps her pass the time.
- Grushka pretends to be sympathetic to their plight, feigning a dislike of her role in this whole affair, and sends the party out on phony "quests" to frustrate the party members and the demon brothers.
- She has a genuine affection for Lyosha, but she is so twisted that she cannot express it in any way other than tormenting him.
- If forced to fight, she viciously uses spells to eliminate specific targets. She focuses on clerics, then other casters.
- To avoid a return to the Abyss and the ensuing torture, she won't give her life to prevent the party members' escape. However, she also tries to trick them into using a portal in the Plane of Portals to send them to the Abyss or some other place instead of their home if given a chance.

Few intelligent creatures trust Grushka twice. Fewer still trust her thrice.

Grushka–Artist: Brian McCranie

Area Descriptions

The dressed stone passage widens to a natural cavern.

1. Entrance—40′ wide. Ingress/Egress passage at south end, 'Y' junction at east end.

This cavern is naturally lit with phosphorescent lichen to a brightness about half that of a torch. The floor is flat, bare stone; the other surfaces are natural. The cavern is a few degrees below room temperature; the air moves gently and consistently from the back of the cavern toward the entrance.

2A. Shortcut Passage—10–20′ wide, 90′ long, Ingress/Egress east/west passages at either end of the passage.

This shortcut is a trap. At the point where it widens, the poison gas shortcut trap springs.

Prisoner for the Executioners–Artist: Brian McCranie

Poison Gas Trap

Magic trap

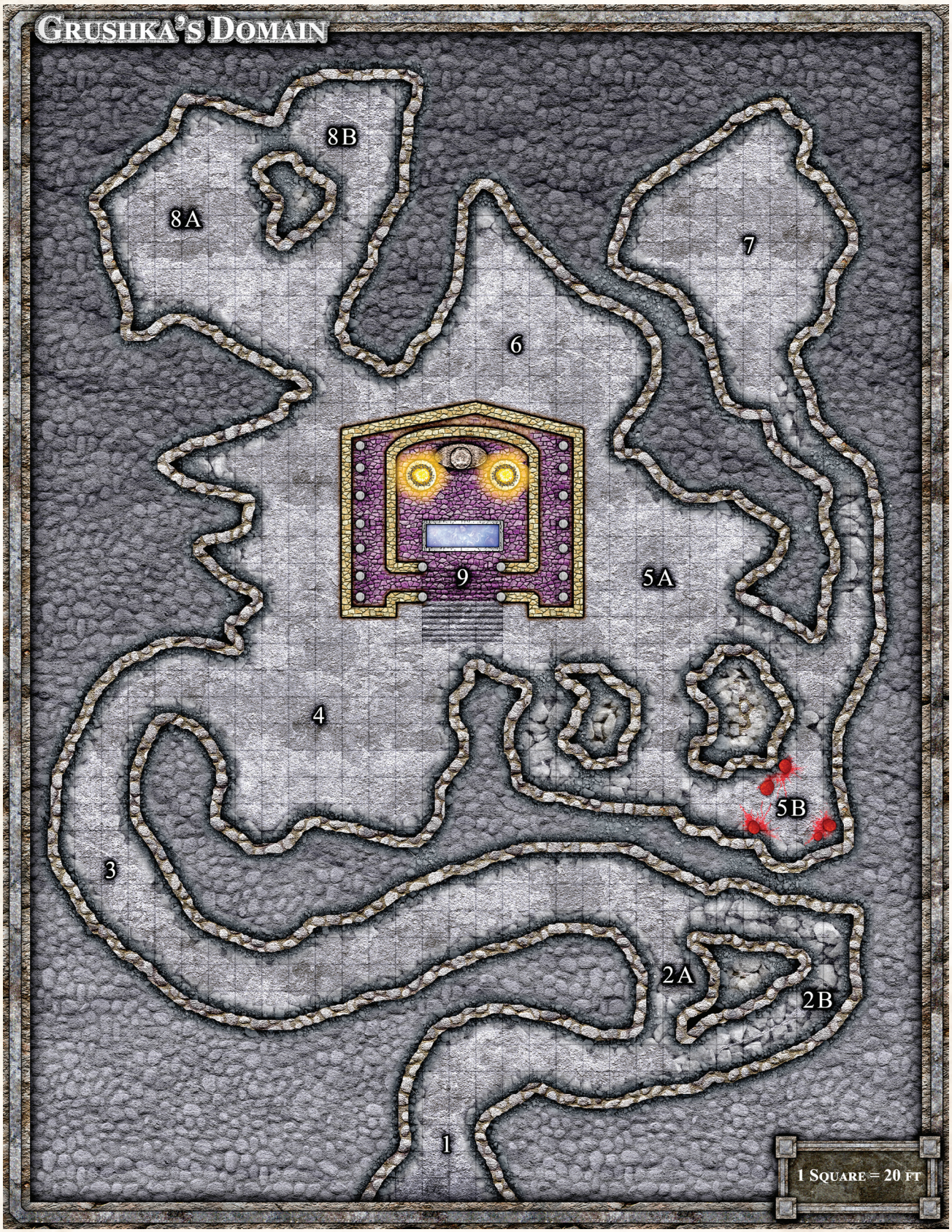
The magical nature of the trap requires a DC 23 **INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA)** check to detect. It cannot be detected as a mechanical trap. Walls of Force block off the passage in all directions. Roll initiative. On an initiative count of 5, poison gas floods the magically-sealed section. All targets inside must make a successful **CONSTITUTION** saving throw against DC 19, or take 21 (6d6) poison damage and suffer the poisoned condition while inside the gas, or half as much on a success (and avoids the condtion). This process repeats until the PCs have managed to destroy at least one of the walls of force or have succumbed to the gas. Alternatively, the trap has a failsafe: Two consecutive, successful DC 25 checks in either **INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA)** or **INTELLIGENCE (Religion)** or any combination thereof can temporarily shut down the trap.

2B. Long Route Passage—20′ wide, 280′ long, Ingress/Egress both ends connect to the Shortcut Passage (Area 2A) and the main corridor (Areas 1 and 3).

The floor is rougher than other areas of the cavern complex. Following this path avoids the trap in the Shortcut Passage (Area 2A).

3. Path of Trials—40′ wide, 300′ long, Ingress/Egress connects to a room at north end, connects to the Shortcut Passage and Long Route Passage at south end.

This passage is very difficult to traverse. Every thirty feet (10 times as the party members move from 2A/2B to 4), party members must make a DC 11 **WISDOM** check. This DC starts at 11 and increases by 1 every thirty feet. Each failed check slows their movement speed by five feet. A party member with zero movement cannot advance and must remain stationary for 30 minutes. This waiting period qualifies as a short rest and restores the party member to full movement. Party members that have been reduced to a speed of 0 may be carried by their allies, provided these allies can carry them. This trial is intended to make sure anyone coming before Grushka contemplates the need critically and keeps their appeals both brief and rare. The abrar are immune to this effect as are her staff (the demons in her domain).


Grushka's Domain
8B
8A
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5A
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5B
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2A
2B
1
1 Square = 20 ft

4. Waiting Room—180' x 160', Ingress/Egress passage in west wall, passage to north, steps up and passage in northeast corner.

Nine **yeles** guard the waiting room and conduct visitors to Grushka. They do not attempt to contain visitors to this area, but those who wander off are placed at the rear of the procession to see Grushka. They tend to line visitors up along the wall of the cavern starting about fifteen feet from the base of the stairs and snaking along the wall clockwise. Any disturbance is met with an attack on all parties present. Today, there are no visitors to see Grushka. The yeles make the party members wait an hour to see Grushka just to keep them in their place and remind them how insignificant they are. Being particularly sadistic demons, they can't be bargained with.

5A. Holding Room—140' x 160', Ingress/Egress steps and passage in northwest corner, passage to north, three passages to the south and southeast that connect to the Execution Room (Area 5B).

Six **runo** hold prisoners here who have been sentenced to death by Grushka. The runo are rough with everyone and assume that anyone who enters the area is condemned. Kneeling in this room is a battered **Deva**. He is near death from his torments. After about ten minutes, he is taken away to be executed. If freed, he is too weak to fight if saved. After an hour, party members are taken, one at a time, ten minutes apart, to the Execution Room for execution. Anyone who attempts to leave is attacked.

5B. Execution Room—80' x 80', Ingress/Egress passages to north and west.

This room is covered in blood splatters. There are no bodies present; in the Carcosa Complex, corpses disappear ten minutes after death. Three **mara** form the execution team: Two to hold the prisoner and a third to bash the victim's head with a maul. Unescorted individuals are attacked on sight.

6. Storage Area—180' x 160', Ingress/Egress passage to west and passage in southeast corner.

This area stores food and other items of low value.

7. Treasure Room—160' x 220', Ingress/Egress corridor to the south.

This room contains Grushka's hoard. The hoard is guarded by 3 runo. The hoard consists of:

- 18,000 gp
- 1,500 pp
- Gold Armband Set with Coral (750 gp)
- Leopard Fur Corset (750 gp)
- Copper Amphora (750 gp)
- Bolt of Gold Cloth (750 gp)
- *Elixir of Health* (rare, DMG 168)
- *Necklace of Fireballs* (rare, DMG 182)
- *Periapt of Health* (uncommon, DMG 184)
- *Potion of Clairvoyance* (rare, DMG 187)
- *Potion of Superior Healing* (rare, DMG 187)
- *Sending Stones* (uncommon, DMG 199)

Ritual Book bound in pulsating flesh (including the ritual to return home and the ritual to put Hastur into a deep sleep for a million years). This ritual book does contain the rituals the PCs require, but it is, alas, written in a difficult, everchanging cipher in Abyssal and slightly sentient, a fact that becomes evident to anyone that holds the tome. The adventurers may attempt a DC 30 **INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA)** check to understand the Abyssal code. Trying to do so takes a full hour per ritual. Once failed, the check may be retried, but takes twice as long for every consecutive failure. If the book is fed blood and convinced of the characters being devout adherents of Hastur with a DC 25 **CHARISMA (DECEPTION)** check, the book ceases its scrambling, lowering the DC of the **INTELLIGENCE (ARCANA)** check to 20. All abrar can fluently read the book and share its information.

8. Empty Rooms—220' x 220', Ingress/Egress passage to the south.

This area is empty. The floor at 8A and 8B is a bit darker than the surrounding floor, but nothing significant is present here.

9. Throne Room—25' square, Ingress/Egress steps to the south.

A large fifteen-foot-wide and six-feet-across reflecting pool separates the entrance from the throne which sits ten feet beyond the rim of the pool. The throne is flanked by a pair of large braziers. Grusha (**abrar**) paces around the area between the throne and pool when she is either angry or flirtatious. The floor is made of a disquietingly warm, slightly throbbing purple stone, while the walls are made of cold, tan rock. The braziers leave the room with just a relatively mild scent of oleander, considering their size. Behind her throne sits her portal, an ornate and impossible moebius band of stone about three feet wide and ten feet tall. When activated, the interior of the loop displays the destination and stepping through the loop takes the party member to the destination. Touching the portal activates it for the Plane of Portals. Other uses require a ritual.

Lyosha's Domain

Lyosha runs the Sewers of the Carcosa Complex. He sits in the middle, where a slow drain keeps the room in a mild, yet dizzying, swirling motion. He is the youngest of the demonic brothers, deeply devoted to Hastur and sincere, yet likable. His demeanor reflects a level of honesty uncommon to demons. He withholds information but does not actively lie to the party. He knows how the party members can escape. Earning his trust to share this information is the first task. Earning his cooperation will cost the party members dearly, though: All the nonmagical treasure the party carries, plus two rare magic items will earn his cooperation. A DC 25 **CHARISMA (PERSUASION)** check may reduce this toll to but one rare magic item, but on a failure, he instead increases his demanded price to three rare magic items instead. If his conditions are met, he discloses that Grushka's realm has a portal that can be tuned to either the Plane of Portals (the domain where some of the Old Ones can be freed) or to a party member's home world. The other three portals (one per brother) only link to the Plane of Portals. He does not, however, know how to tune the portal to a home world, or the ritual to get them home for that matter.

All areas of the sewers echo horribly. The echoes are so intense that all creatures are at disadvantage for anything they would hear, and no one comes to join a fight based on sounds alone. While passive Perception is enhanced by +5 in the complex, only visual verification of a fight has a chance to attract the occupants of the next room: 40% chance if they are the same species of demon, 20% chance if they are of a different demon species, and 50% chance if the players look weakened by the fight. Check at first sight of a fight, and again if the party appears to be doing poorly.

About the Humans in the Carcosa Complex:

- They know little of the Carcosa Complex beyond the domain where they live.
- They answer Lyosha's call to prayer without delay and otherwise stay out of the way.
- Killing them is a trivial feat. They are commoners.
- There is no way to help them. They are trapped in the Carcosa Complex forever and are the bottom of the totem pole when it comes to abuse from other denizens.
- Lyosha has forbidden the demons from feeding on them, but yeles in this area have intimidated the humans to prevent them from alerting Lyosha.
- Anyone who dies in the Carcosa Complex reappears at midnight, intact and unharmed. This does not duplicate equipment.

Area Descriptions

1. Back Room—80′ x 60′, Ingress/Egress east, west, and south walls, middle areas have 2–3″ of water, 3 mara.

This room includes an alcove in the north wall where a trio of **mara** lounge near a grate that supplies water flow toward the center of the sewers. They are not inclined to challenge intruders in the sewers as they know the party members are doomed and will make better prey once their spirits are broken.

2. North Shield Room—120′ x 160′ shield shape, Ingress/Egress, two passages in east and west walls, one passage in north and south walls, fourteen 4′ diameter columns as shown on the map, colored areas sit in 4–6″ of water, 6 runo.

This room is home to six **runo**. If they hear echoes in the sewers, they hide behind the columns and wait for prey. If not, they are lounging in the water close to the south egress. If aware of a disturbance in the sewers, they cannot be surprised, but might surprise the party members.

3. Northwest Square Room—60′ square, Ingress/Egress east and south walls, middle 15′ of room has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

The **humans** are cowering in the corners and would be trivial to kill. If asked about the sewers, they only know that Lyosha expects all to answer his calls to prayer, and to otherwise stay out of his way. In exchange for obedience, the humans are fed regularly, preventing an eternity of agonizing deaths of starvation.

While the yeles are forbidden to feed on the humans, they do so anyway. The humans are too afraid of the yeles to resist or report this abuse. What Lyosha doesn't know cannot be stopped. The intervention of the party members could put an end to this abuse.

4. Northeast Square Room—60′ square, Ingress/Egress west and south walls, middle 15′ of room has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 **humans**.

Identical to Area 3.

5. Northeast Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress one passage in each cardinal direction, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 8 take a **human** from this area or Area 10 daily and devour them.

6. Northwest Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress one passage in each cardinal direction, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 7 take a **human** from this area or Area 9 daily and devour them.

7. Northeast Round Room—60′ in diameter, lemon-shaped room, Ingress/Egress north, south, east, and west walls, in the northeast and southwest corners, middle area has over an inch of water, 9 yeles.

Putting Hastur into a Deeper Sleep

- Only Lyosha is unaware of the ritual.
- Mitya doesn't know the details of the ritual.
- Grushka and Vanya know they must die to perform the ritual.
- The ritual book is in Grushka's treasure hoard.
- The book alone will make the party members aware of the entire process. No demon cooperation is necessary.
- The hearts of all four demons are required to perform the ritual.
- The ritual takes an hour.
- The party members can use a portal behind the throne of any of the demon lords to enter the Plane of Portals to perform the ritual.
- Finding the portal to the dimension where the Old Ones sleep is described in the ritual book.
- When completed, a Spell check (DC 10) is made, using the ritualist's Spell Attack modifier (Proficiency bonus plus relevant ability modifier). If the check fails so does the ritual.
- The demons return to the Carcosa Complex seven days following their death. (This is a departure from all other denizens returning the midnight following their death). The demons can be defeated and the ritual attempted again if the party members desire. However, this means they will have become permanent denizens of the Carcosa plane.

The **yeles** feed once a day, picking a human from Area 6 or 9. They are not particularly inclined to fight but are so used to dominating humans and demi-humans that any defiance from the party members likely prompts an attack.

8. Northwest Round Room—60′ in diameter, lemon-shaped room, Ingress/Egress north, south, east, and west walls, in the northwest and southeast corners, middle area has over an inch of water, 9 yeles.

The **yeles** feed here once a day, picking a human from Area 5 or 10. They are not particularly inclined to fight but are so used to dominating humans and demi-humans that any defiance from the party members likely prompts an attack.

9. West-north Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress east, north, and south walls, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 7 take a **human** from this area or Area 6 daily and devour them.

10. East-north Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress one passage in each cardinal direction, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 8 take a **human** from this area or Area 5 daily and devour them.

11. West Shield Room—120′ x 160′ shield shape, Ingress/Egress two each in north and south walls, one each in east and west walls, fourteen columns, each 4′ in diameter, colored areas sit in 4–6″ of water, 6 **runo**.

As Area 2.

12. East Shield Room—120′ x 160′ shield shape, Ingress/Egress, two each in north and south walls, one each in east and west walls, fourteen columns, each 4′ in diameter, colored areas sit in 4–6″ of water, 6 **runo**.

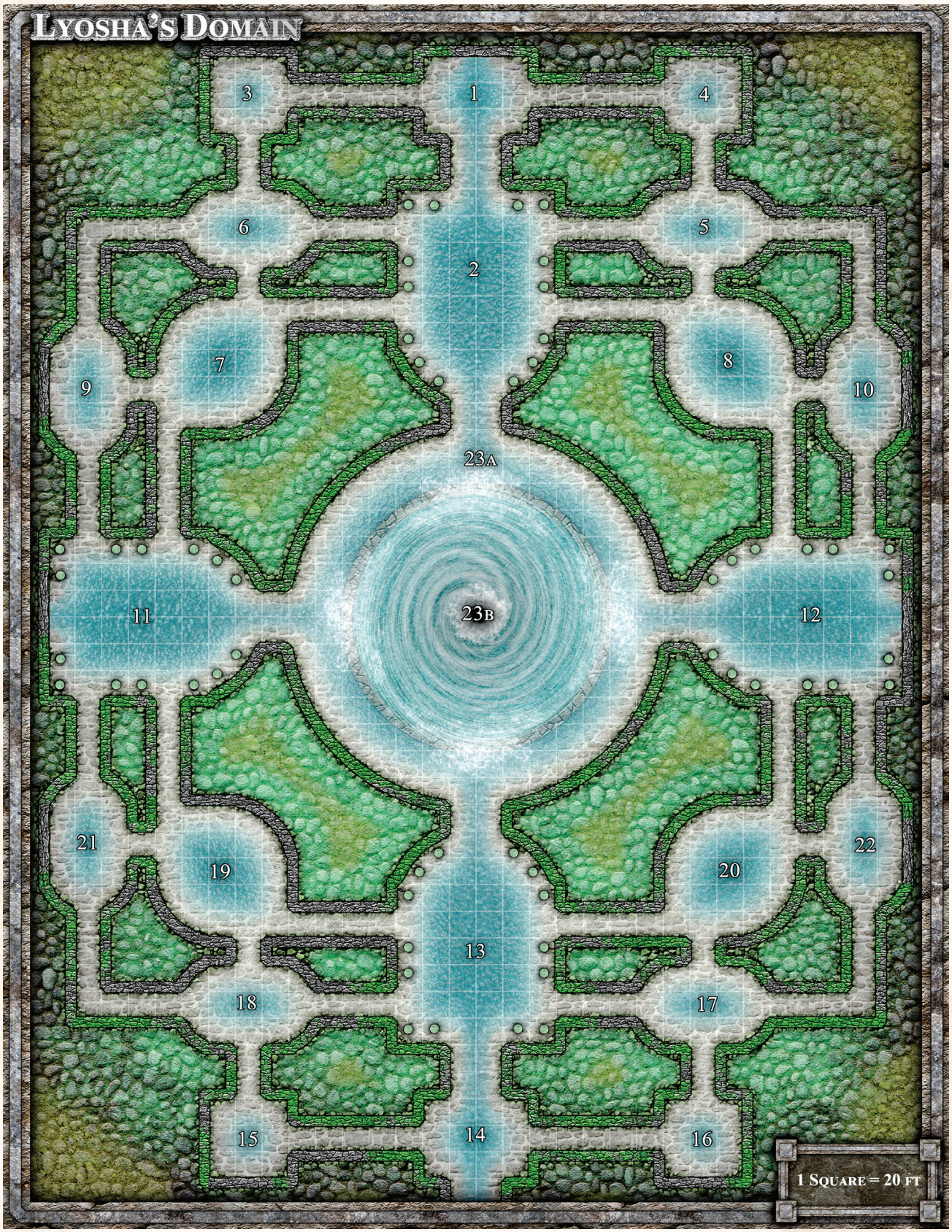
As Area 2.

13. South Shield Room—120′ x 160′ shield shape, Ingress/Egress, two each in east and west walls, one each in north and south walls, fourteen columns, each 4′ in diameter, colored areas sit in 4–6″ of water, 6 **runo**.

As Area 2.

14. Front Room—80′ x 60′, Ingress/Egress east, west, north, and south walls, middle areas have 2–3″ of water, 3 batu.

This room has a trio of **batu** lounging in the northeast corner. They are digesting a huge meal, and thus are not inclined to attack. If a dismissive wave or a thrown rock doesn't discourage interaction, they eventually get to their feet and prepare to attack. They give the party members several opportunities to disengage, but eventually become annoyed and attack. The water in this room comes from a grate in the southwest corner.


Lyosha's Domain
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23A
23B
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1 Square = 20 ft

15. Southwest Square Room—60′ square, Ingress/Egress passages in the walls of each cardinal direction, middle 15′ of room has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 **humans**.

As Area 3.

16. Southeast Square Room—60′ square, Ingress/Egress west and north walls, middle 15′ of room has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 **humans**.

As Area 3.

17. Southeast Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress one passage in each cardinal direction, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 20 take a **human** from this area or Area 22 daily and devour them.

18. Southwest Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress one passage in each cardinal direction, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 19 take a **human** from this area or Area 21 daily and devour them.

19. Southwest Round Room—60′ in diameter, lemon-shaped room. Ingress/Egress north, south, east, and west walls, in the northwest and southeast corners, middle area has over an inch of water, 9 yeles.

The **yeles** feed once a day, picking a human from Area 18 or 21. They are not particularly inclined to fight but are so used to dominating humans and demi-humans that any defiance from the party members likely prompts an attack.

20. Southeast Round Room—60′ in diameter, lemon-shaped room. Ingress/Egress north, south, east, and west walls, in the northeast and southwest corners, middle area has over an inch of water, 9 yeles.

The **yeles** feed once a day, picking a human from Area 17 or 22. They are not particularly inclined to fight but are so used to dominating humans and demi-humans that any defiance from the party members will likely prompt an attack.

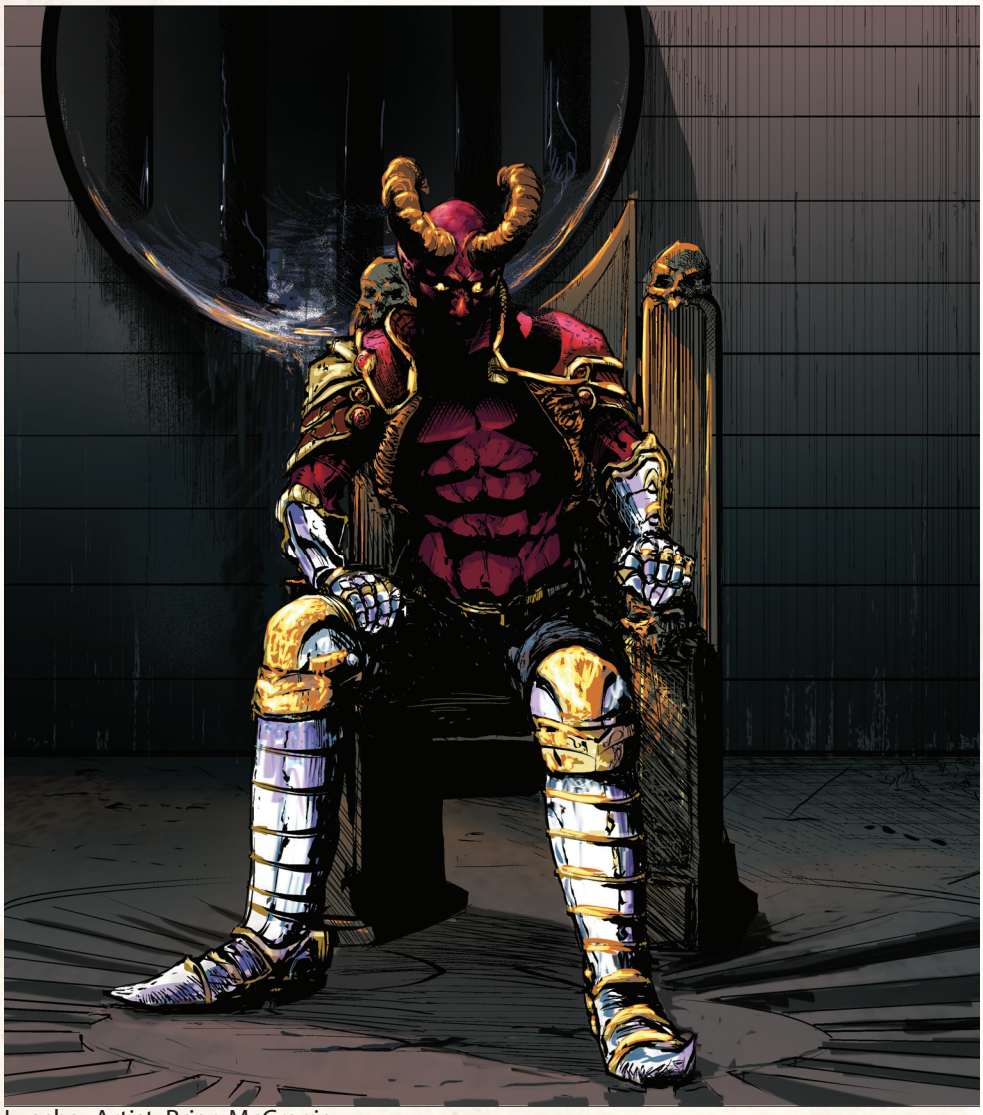
21. West-south Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress: north, south, and east walls, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 19 take a **human** from this area or Area 18 daily and devour them.

22. East-south Oval Room—100′ x 60′ oval, Ingress/Egress: north, south, and west walls, central area has about an inch of brackish water, 10–15 humans.

As Area 3. The yeles in Area 20 take a **human** from this area or Area 18 daily and devour them.

Yeles Taking a Human Meal–Artist: Brian McCranie



Lyosha–Artist: Brian McCranie

23A. Drain Room—240' diameter circular room, Ingress/Egress passage in the walls at all four cardinal directions, entire room under about 8" of water.

About 40' in from the outer walls, the room has a brick ring wall. Within the ring, the floor is two feet lower, and water falls over this ring and joins a circular current that cyclically spirals to a thirty-six-inch drain.

23B. Throne Area—Center of room, 20' diameter, 1' raised platform straddling a 3' diameter drain.

In the middle of the room, straddling the drain, is a 20' diameter dais. On the dais, Lyosha (**abrar**) sits on a small throne. Five other empty chairs accompany him. If the party members approach without attacking, Lyosha invites them to join him and take seat. He tells them some of his story, guessing that the party members want to escape the Carcosa Complex. Lyosha drives a hard bargain. He will only aid the party members for something he values, and the only thing more valuable to him than growing his hoard, is Grushka. A group of adventurers might offer to destroy his brothers, so he can have her all for himself. However, the party members will also need to help him attack her, so he can pummel her into "proper" submission. He will not act against his brothers directly. He states that her submission to his dominance lead the party members to discover how to return home. Lyosha keeps his word, once given. Behind Lyosha's throne rests his portal. It is an ornate loop about three feet wide and ten feet tall. When activated, the interior of the loop displays the Plane of Portals and stepping through the loop takes the party member there.

Lyosha's hoard is suspended in a massive chest from the dais over the drain, secured by four sturdy chains. The party members need a combined **STRENGTH** of 40 and make a successful DC 14 **DEXTERITY** group check to move the chest without losing it to the drain. No more than 4 medium-sized individuals can contribute towards the maximum STRENGTH required. The chest contains:

- 20,000gp
- 1,400 pp
- Bolt of Fine Steel Cloth (250 gp)
- Ornate Silver Mirror Set with Lapis Lazuli (250 gp)
- Copper Mask Set with Citrine (250 gp)
- Sable Talisman Set with Star Rose Quartz (250 gp)
- Tooled Leather Mask Set with Quartz (250 gp)
- Vorpal Sword (Longsword) (legendary, DMG 209)

Mitya's Domain

Mitya runs the Mushroom Caverns of the Carcosa Complex. He sits in the northeast of the map and is the oldest of the brothers, a hedonist and a bully. Mitya has a poor relationship with Lyosha and is close with Vanya. He nominally serves Hastur faithfully, but truly entertains delusions of grandeur, of running the Carcosa Complex in his own name until Hastur wakens. He lies to and manipulates the party members any way he can, trying to leverage them against his brothers. Mitya wants his brothers to truly grasp that they are nothing to him and rightfully should submit to his dominion, even his favorite brother, Vanya. He wants Grushka's attention and isn't above subjugating her by force to have her all for himself. He doesn't know how the party members might escape and is too ignorant of how the Carcosa Complex works to understand the means to do so. However, he will toy with the party by claiming that he can send them home, but he cannot deliver on this promise. A DC 25 **WISDOM (INSIGHT)** check might clue the PCs in that he's not telling the truth. Mitya does know, however, about the precise way that can force Hastur to slumber for another million years. He attempts to manipulate the party into aiding him in locking Hastur out of the universe, so that he can one day assert control over all the Carcosa Complex.

If the party members seem sincere in the deals they offer to get home, Mitya will exploit them in any possible way to further his own goals. There is no trust to be earned, only abuse: Mitya exists to exploit and torment all lesser beings, which is to say, all beings. He is aware that he can open a portal to the Plane of Portals but knows nothing about which of the portals can be tuned to other destinations, much less how to do so.

The Mushroom Cave complex is cool, about fifty-five degrees Fahrenheit. The cave walls are covered in vibrant, fungal lifeforms. Lichen and moss encrusting the walls absorb a lot of noise, making hearing what is going on very difficult. All **WISDOM (PERCEPTION)** checks based on hearing are made at disadvantage, and passive Perception based on hearing is penalized by -5. The Mushroom Cave complex is dimly lit by phosphorescent mushrooms growing on most of the walls. Together they produce about half the light of a torch, creating an eerie, multihued twilight.

Area Descriptions

1. Tunnel—Width varies from 80' to 40' wide, dimly lit, Ingress/Egress Area 2 and the starting room.

From the central hall, this passage snakes left, then right, and opens to Area 2. The passage is cooler than the main hall and dimmer. There are small mushrooms along the edges of the passage along the floor.

2. Irregular Room—About 200' wide by 140' deep, dimly lit, Ingress/Egress passages east and west, nine yeles.

This oval room has a small alcove in the west wall, near the north corner. Nine **yeles** are compressed in this area. When the party members pass, they exit, one per round, and attempt to ambush the party members from the rear.

3. Bonfire—Triangular shaped room about 200' across, Ingress/Egress wide passages to south, northeast, and northwest, alcove to southwest, very large bonfire in middle of room.

The fire in this room makes it much brighter and warmer than the surrounding caves of the complex. The room is otherwise empty.

4. Mushroom Storage—Forty feet wide, sixty feet deep, Ingress/Egress passage in northeast wall.

This room contains stacks of mushroom stalks, dried and stacked like firewood. These stalks are used to feed the bonfire in Area 3. This room is otherwise empty.

5. Batu Area—About sixty feet square, Ingress/Egress wide passage to southwest, two narrow passages in southeast wall, passage in northeast wall, three batu.

In three indentations along the northwest wall sit a trio of **batu**. They are easy to see and easy to avoid. They are not looking for a fight and ignore creatures that give them a wide berth. If confronted, they attack.

6. Runo Area—Boomerang shaped area, about eighty feet wide, one hundred feet long, Ingress/Egress large passage to southeast, northeast, narrow passage east, six runo.

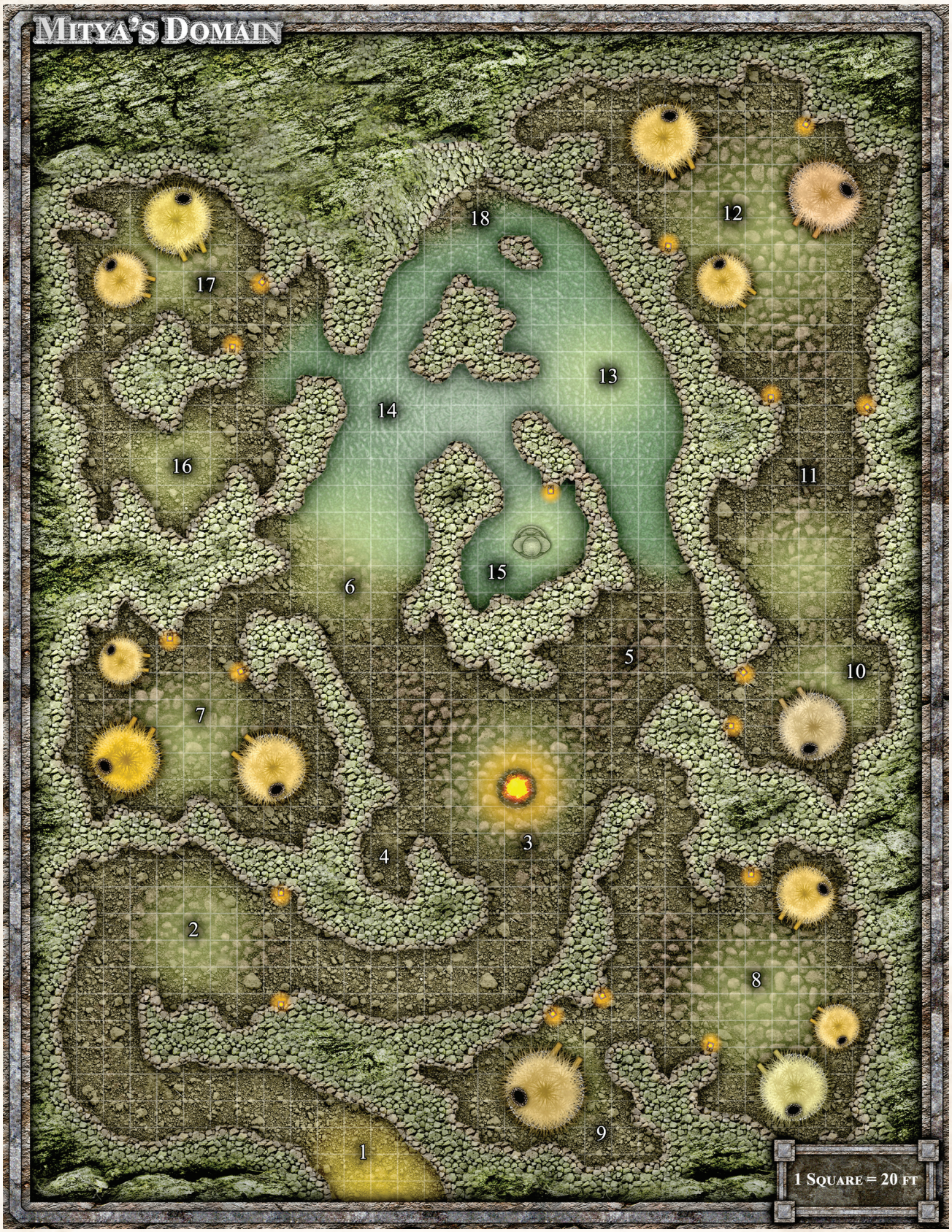
Resting at the water line are six **runo**. If the party members approach, one of them faces the party and orders them to go away. If the party members hesitate or attempt to communicate, they attack. If the party members retreat immediately, they go back to lounging in the water.

7. Mushroom Cave—Irregular area about 200' x 160' at extreme, Ingress/Egress narrow passage in northeast corner of area.

This cave has a central clearing surrounded by three large mushrooms. It is like a picnic area. The phosphorescence here is a bit brighter than other areas, around 75% of torchlight.

8. Mushroom Cave—Irregular area about 200' square, Ingress/Egress narrow passage in northwest corner of area, three mara.

Two large and one medium mushroom frame this rest area. Three **mara** lounge here. They are not inclined to fight but will attempt to extort a tribute from hapless mortals to avoid a fight. The more eager the party members are to avoid a fight, the greedier they become.


Mitya's Domain
18
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1 Square = 20 ft

9. Mushroom Alcove—Oblong area about 180' at widest and 120' at longest, Ingress/Egress passage in northeast corner.

This little alcove has one huge mushroom with hundreds of crates of food stacked below. Food is stored here and distributed throughout the Carcosa Complex regularly.

10. Mitya Cloakroom—Irregular area about 140' x 120', Ingress/Egress narrow passage to west and wide passage to north, four batu.

A large mushroom has dozens of nooks cut out of the trunk. Visitors are required to leave all arms here before proceeding to an audience with Mitya. Four **batu** enforce this rule. The nooks are all empty. The four batu clear the nooks when Mitya destroys a visitor and distribute the weapons in exchange for favors.

11. Mitya Ante Room—Triangular area 60' at narrowest and 140' at widest, Ingress/Egress wide passages to the north and south, batu majordomo.

The majordomo escorts visitors from this waiting area to the throne room. He is a single **batu** with extreme confidence. If any disturbance occurs here, Mitya storms down and tries to indiscriminately kill everyone, including the majordomo, knowing that his servant will rise again within a day.

12. Mitya Throne Room—Triangular area 280' at widest and 240' at longest, Ingress/Egress wide passage to south, Mitya.

Mitya (**abrar**) has a throne in front of the westmost large mushroom. The throne sits on a dais about eight feet above the rocky floor. Getting here while armed is nearly impossible. If Mitya is angered by violence in his Ante Room (Area 11), he does not negotiate with the party members. The party members need to surrender their arms to be escorted before Mitya for a conversation. Behind his throne sits his portal. It is an ornate loop about three feet wide and ten feet tall. When activated, the interior of the loop displays the Plane of Portals and stepping through the loop takes the party member there. Touching the portal activates it.

Mitya's hoard is in a set of chests behind the mushroom he sits before. It contains:

- 16,000 gp
- Fox Fur Corset (750 gp)
- Fine Steel Amphora (750 gp)
- Ornate Carpet rolled up (750 gp)
- Bolt of Electrum-threaded Cloth (750 gp)
- 3 *Potions of Supreme Healing* (very rare) (DMG 187)

Mitya–Artist: Brian McCranie

13. Deep End—long, narrow area, about 300' long, 100' at widest, Ingress/Egress Passage at southeast and northwest ends and along southwest wall.

This area is deeper than the other parts of the cave complex. The lighter area near the number is about four feet deep.

14. Shallow End—Large area, Ingress/Egress passage in the west wall, wide passage to south, passage to the south by southeast, passage to east.

This area is under about ten inches of water. Small, blind fish live in the water. The water is considerably cooler than the air of the cave complex.

15. Lost Statue—Irregular shape about 100' across, Ingress/Egress passages to the north by northeast.

The passage into this area is under about a foot of water. The floor drops steeply so that only the head and shoulders of the twelve-foot-tall statue of an incubus are visible. The statue is shirtless, with what appears to be a skirt from the waist down. This was a rival of Mitya, petrified and abandoned here. Occasionally, Mitya will come and spit on him.

16. Yeles Area—Irregular shape, Ingress/Egress passages northeast and northwest, 9 yeles.

This area has two alcoves that are very narrow. The nine **yeles** like to hide in these areas (four in the smaller area, five in the slightly larger area). Compressed tightly when strangers enter, they wait for intruders to leave, then ambush from behind. Due to their incorporeal nature, two may exit each alcove per round. When not preparing for an ambush, the yeles roam about the area.

17. Mushroom Cave—180' wide x 140' deep, irregular, dimly lit. Ingress/Egress passages southeast and southwest.

This cave is dominated by two very large mushrooms about 30 feet in diameter each. The mushrooms here are nutritious and safe for consumption, but few creatures come here due to the yeles in Area 16. Anyone who lingers here for more than ten minutes will attract an ambush attempt from the yeles, with half coming from the west passage and half from the east.

18. Cave-in—Width 40' Ingress/Egress none.

This part of the cave collapsed in the last five years. Anyone with a background that deals with stoneworking or the stonecunning feature can automatically tell that the hundreds of tons of rubble would make clearing this a lengthy project. If cleared, who knows what the party members might find within.

Time and Direction in the Carcosa Complex

- The demiplane is infinite, thus really has no "north".
- The use of cardinal directions is a convention to help the GM understand the map.
- The description for the starting room describes where the four domains lie on that map.
- Time, however, does exist in the Carcosa Complex. The day is marked in 3-hour increments by the ringing of bells.
- At 3 am, a single bell rings; at midnight, eight bells ring, and all dead denizens return to the Carcosa Complex in the entry room and make their way to their sector.
- The bells are heard throughout the Carcosa Complex.
- The party members arrive in the Carcosa Complex just after midnight. When the eighth bell of midnight tolls, all within the Carcosa Complex are permanently bound to the Carcosa plane.
- Some of the party members remember the toll of a bell when they woke. Maybe eight tolls.

Returning Home

- Only Grushka and Vanya are aware of the ritual.
- Grushka is the only one who knows the details.
- Vanya knows only Grushka's portal can be used for the ritual.
- The ritual book in Grushka's treasure hoard includes the ritual.
- The blood of a party member must be smeared upon Grushka's portal to tune it to the party's homeworld.
- The ritual takes ten minutes.
- The ritual automatically succeeds.
- When the party members step through, they find themselves at a random location d1,000 miles from the place from which they entered the Carcosa Complex (which was most likely the Temple of Hastur under Brytha Castle in the city of Meawold, see DNH4).
- Any party member who is bound to the Carcosa Complex who uses the portal suffers a painful death and then reappears in the Carcosa Complex at midnight.

Vanya's Domain

Vanya runs the Cloisters of the Carcosa Complex. He sits in the middle at the darker tables, reading a book, the same book he has read, over and over, for centuries: He never even flips the page. It keeps rewriting its content constantly as he reads it and depicts the history of the Abyss. Vanya has no throne and is the middle brother, deeply devoted to knowledge and withdrawn. Sullen but likable, his demeanor reflects a level of isolation and sensitivity all but unknown to demons. He manipulates the party members, even lies to them, but only to further his own agenda: To escape the Carcosa Complex with the party members and live in their world, freed from his eternal shackles. He knows how the party members can escape the Carcosa Complex and his demeanor reflects his interest in trusting the party members. He is a little slow to share the extent of his knowledge, wanting a demonstration of loyalty before revealing the entirety of his plan. When first approached, he sizes up the party members and knows if they are there to kill him or to talk—he is a shrewd judge of character and it takes a DC 25 **CHARISMA (DECEPTION)** check to fool Vanya. Failing to attempt to deceive Vanya will render him hostile. If the adventurers are here to attack, he summons allies and mercilessly attacks. If they are there to talk, he invites them to his table and asks them to tell their tale. When the party members are done telling their story, he tells them a tale of envy, spite (toward his brothers), loneliness, and despair. Vanya hates Mitya and sees Lyosha as a pathetic fool. He worships the ground Grushka walks upon but has grown to hate her for staying beyond his reach while toying with him. He first and foremost wants to escape and killing his brothers would be icing on that cake. He knows Grushka can control the portal in her domain and is willing to torture who he used to adore to be liberated of all three demons and the Carcosa Complex for once and for all. If any party member mentions killing Mitya or Lyosha, the gleam in his eyes tells the party members all they need to know about his interests.

If a party member asks about Hastur, Vanya explains that Hastur and some of the other Old Ones are locked away in a dimension that limits their reach into other dimensions. The Old Ones slumber, but Hastur slumbers more lightly than the rest. A party member who inquiries about deepening Hastur's slumber or otherwise cutting him off from their world, finds Vanya claiming to be able to assist. However, accomplishing this deed requires the hearts of his brothers and Grushka, as well as his own. This is a sacrifice he will make to put an end to his never-ending nightmare.

The residents of the cloisters (humans, batu, runo, yeles, and mara) work tirelessly, scouring tome after tome for tales of their master. When such a story is found, it is transcribed into the language-approximation of the Old Ones and given to Vanya. Monthly, Vanya crosses into the Plane of Portals to read them to the realm where the Old Ones lie sleeping for eons. The dedication to their job leads the less than sane residents to be largely indifferent to intruders.

The cloisters are sound-dampened by magic. The silence is so intense that all creatures suffers from disadvantage on any **WISDOM (PERCEPTION)** checks reliant on hearing. Passive Perception is penalized by -4, and no one will come to join a fight based on sounds alone. Only visual verification of a fight has a chance to attract the occupants of the next room: 40% chance if they are the same species of demon, 20% chance if they are of a different demon species, and 50% chance if the players look weakened by the fight. Check at first sight of a fight, and again if the party appears to be doing poorly.

All creatures encountered in the cloisters, other than Vanya, use the below reaction chart. They are expected to focus on their work and not bicker, dally, or involve themselves in other time wasters.

Modifiers: -2 if party expresses a desire to talk, +2 if the party is seen engaging in combat.

Cloister Clerk Reaction Table

Roll (d6)	Reaction
1-	Ignores party unless attacked.
2	Ignores party unless the party disrupts them for too long (1d8 + 4 rounds).
3	Stops their activity and stares down party Will defend if attacked.
4	Threatens but will only attack after several threats (2d6 +3 rounds).
5	Threatens and attacks if not left alone quickly (within d4 + 2 rounds).
6+	Attacks immediately.

Cloister Roaming Clerk Table

Roll (d6)	Clerk Race
1	d6 Humans
2	3 Mara
3	3 Batu
4	6 Runo
5	9 Yeles
6	2d6 Humans

Reader's Rooms—The reader's rooms are eerily like one another. 15' square (13' square on the interior), Ingress/Egress a single door in the wall that faces the outer perimeter.

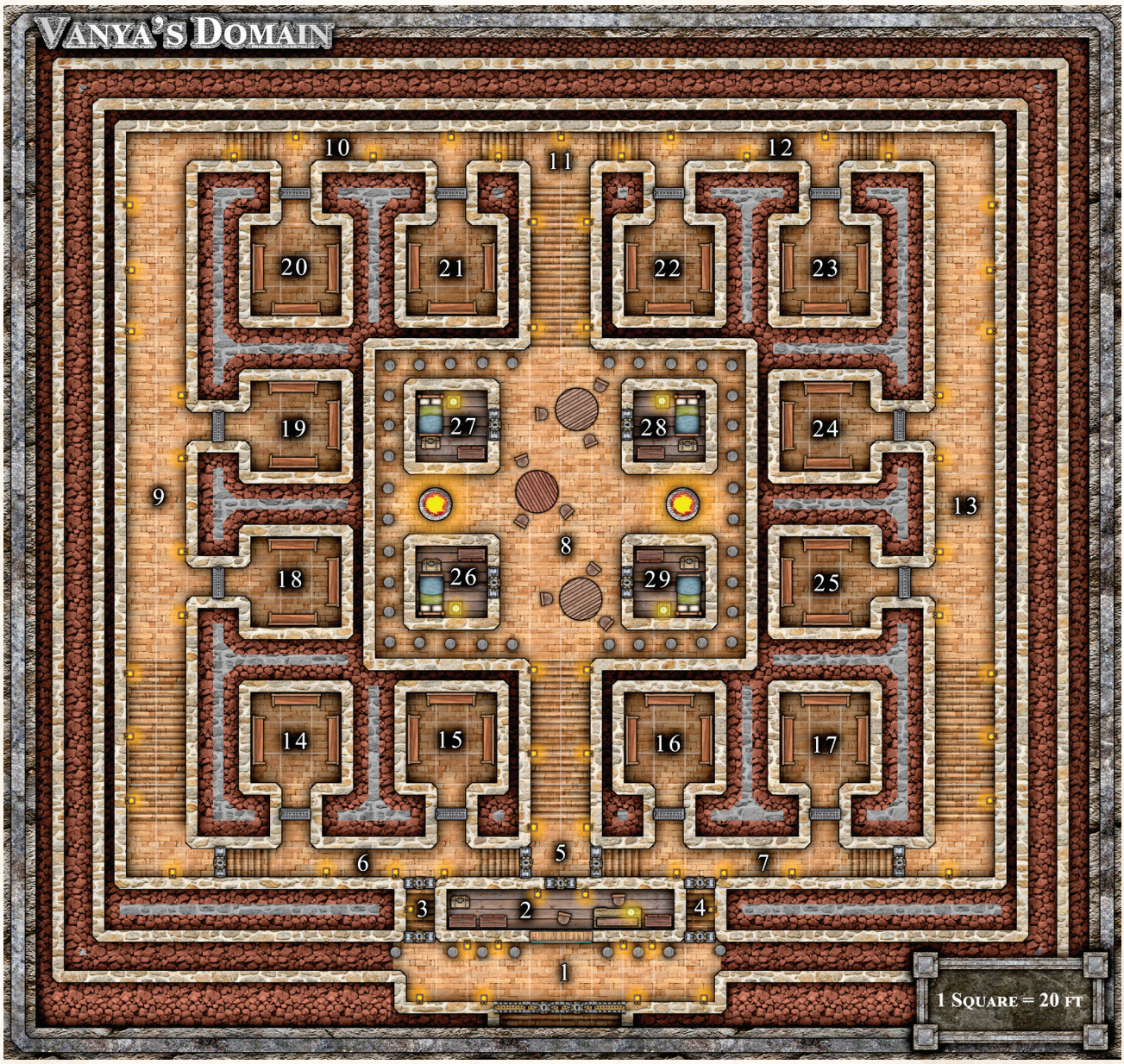
Each room has wide desks facing each of the three walls, excluding the wall with the door. Each desk has stacks of books and a handwritten journal. The rooms are slightly cooler than room temperature; the air is fresh, but the fresh air has no apparent source. The rooms are lit at a level comfortable for the occupants to read (this will vary some from occupant to occupant). Each room has three occupants.

Area Descriptions

The tunnel from the central room ends at a double door. The door is unlocked.

1. Cloisters Entrance—50' x 10', Ingress/Egress double door to south, single doors north wall at east and west corners.

This room serves as the grand entrance to the cloisters. In the middle of the north wall is a ten-foot-wide, three-foot-tall opening starting about three feet off the ground. This leads to Area 2 but serves more as a counter than a door. Leaping over the counter into Area 2 requires a DC 6 **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** check to avoid taking 3 (1d6) falling damage from gracelessly



tumbling over the counter. There are six bar stools, three on each side of counter. Eating and drinking is not allowed in the cloisters; all breaks are taken here. At any time, there are d6 + 1 cloister clerks taking a break in this room. The GM can choose from humans, yeles, mara, batu, or runo. Clerks on break have a -1 to their reaction rolls.

2. Cloisters Supervisor Office—40′ x 5′, Ingress/Egress window to south and door (**locked**, DC 20) to north.

This narrow office contains a desk, two bookshelves, a locked chest, and a chair sitting at the counter. The supervisor is a **human**. The shelves contain records of completed work. The chest has a difficult lock that can be opened with a DC 20 **DEXTERITY (thieves' tools)** check and is trapped. A DC 19 **INTELLIGENCE (INVESTIGATION)** detects the trap and it can be disabled with a DC 19 **DEXTERITY (thieves' tools)** check. When tripped, the trap releases a gas in a 10-ft. diameter sphere. All affected targets must succeed a DC 16 **CONSTITUTION** saving throw or take 17 (5d6) poison damage, or half as much on a successful saving throw. . The chest contains a magic pitcher and a dome-covered plate. The pitcher can pour water continuously and the domed plate summons enough food to provide sustenance for an average humanoid when the dome is tapped three times before being lifted. Each can be used up to fifty times per day. On the wall behind the counter, near the wall sconces on either side of the door in the north wall, are levers that unlock the doors on the corresponding side.

3. and 4. Cloister Mantrap—5′ x 10′, Ingress/Egress locked doors at the north and south ends of the passage.

All cloister doors are iron-bound oak, latched, and only locked when the map shows a keyhole. The area has people in motion constantly. On a roll of 1 on a d6, some roaming clerks are encountered. Check for roaming cloister clerks every fifty feet of travel. Consult the Wandering Encounter table, then the Cloister reaction table to determine the starting disposition of the encounter. Locked doors require a successful DC 19 **DEXTERITY (thieves' tools)** or a DC 20 **STRENGTH** check to open.

5. Central Shortcut Passage—10′ x 35′, Ingress/Egress locked doors to the south and at the south extreme of the east and west walls, north end opens into an area.

The northmost twenty-five feet of this corridor is floored with wooden planks that are not fully secured a DC 22 **WISDOM (PERCEPTION)** check notices this. Crossing that floor without making a huge racket requires a DC 18 **DEXTERITY (STEALTH)** group check. The doors to the south are all locked. The doors in the east and west walls can be unlocked with a turn of the key that is permanently affixed to the lock. From the outside, the door must be picked or broken open with a DC 20 **DEXTERITY (thieves' tools)** or a DC 22 **STRENGTH** check. The south door may be opened with a DC 20 **DEXTERITY (thieves' tools)** or a DC 22 **STRENGTH** check, or it can be released from inside Area 2. If the planks are disturbed, a loud racket ensues. The residents of the cloisters become agitated and on a roll of 1–2 on a d6; as a result, three **runo** attack the party members shortly after the floor is disturbed.

6. and 7. South Passages, West and East Sides—5′ x 10′, Ingress/Egress doors at the east and west ends of the short passage, **locked** (DC 20, also can be unlocked from levels in Area 2).

Short sections of this passage have the same noisy floor as Area 5.

8. Central Area—60′ x 50′, Ingress/Egress wide passages to north and south, door outside each of four square areas within the room.

Vanya (**abrar**) sits at the middle table here, reading a book. The other two tables are empty. Two roaring fires illuminate and warm the area. The walls are lined with water barrels in case of a fire.

9. Outer Perimeter, West Passage—50′ x 5′, Ingress/Egress doors to two reading rooms in east wall, passages at the north and south ends of the corridor.

10. North Passages, West and East Sides—5′ x 10′, Ingress/Egress openings east and west ends of the short passage, locked. DC 20 **DEXTERITY (thieves' tools)** to open, also can be unlocked from levels in Area 2).

Sections of this passage have the same noisy floor as Area 5. Roll an encounter in this passage.

11. Central Passage—10′ x 35′, Ingress/Egress passages leading east, west, and south.

The southernmost twenty-five feet of this passage has the same noisy floor as Area 5. Roll an encounter in this passage.

12. See Area 10.

13. Outer Perimeter, East Passage—50′ x 5′, Ingress/Egress doors to two reading rooms in west wall, passages at north and south ends of corridor.

14. Reader's Room—3 **runo**.

15. Reader's Room—3 **runo**.

16. Reader's Room—3 **batu**.

17. Reader's Room—3 **batu**.

18. Reader's Room—3 **mara**.

19. Reader's Room—3 **mara**.

20. Reader's Room—3 **yeles**.

21. Reader's Room—3 **yeles**.

22. Reader's Room—3 **yeles**.

23. Reader's Room—3 **yeles**.

24. Reader's Room—3 **runo**.

25. Reader's Room—3 **batu**.

26–29. Bunk Room—13' square, Ingress/Egress locked door facing toward the middle of the room.

These rooms are individual bunk rooms for the readers. The rooms are in extradimensional space. When the occupant puts its key in the door, the door links to its individual space. Everyone in the cloisters has their key on their person. Each room has a bed, trunk, armoire, and a nightstand with a lantern. The lanterns are minor magic items that illuminate the room per the light spell. A tap of the base turns the light on and off. The lantern illuminates automatically when the door opens. Exiting the room puts the occupant(s) at a random door. By all appearances, the four rooms are just simple rooms. The extradimensional effect is seamless.

One of these rooms is Vanya's quarters. The appointments are much nicer, and the room is twenty-three-foot square (as opposed to thirteen-foot square for the denizen readers). In a corner sits Vanya's portal. It is an ornate loop three feet wide and ten feet tall. Touching the loop activates the portal. When activated, the interior of the loop shows the Plane of Portals; stepping through transports the party member there.

Vanya's hoard rests in five chests stacked in the opposite corner of the room and includes:

Vanya–Artist: Brian McCranie

- 21,000 gp
- 1,900 pp
- Fine Leather Boots Inlaid with Silver (250 gp)
- Fine Steel Flask Inlaid with Fine Steel (250 gp)
- Wooden Miniature Tree Inlaid with Brass (250 gp)
- Fine Leather Boots Set with Zircon (250 gp)
- Rosewood Holy Symbol (of a demonic goddess) set with Chalcedony (250 gp)
- Dragonscale Gloves (250 gp)
- Chrysoberyl Box (250 gp)
- Silver Sickle (250 gp)
- *Potion of Superior Healing* (rare, DMG 187)

Conclusion

Exiting the Carcosa Complex

If the party members discover the ritual to return home and perform it, the portal shows an image of a world that looks very familiar. The location is actually up to 1,000 miles from where they entered the Carcosa Complex, which is likely to be the cultist caverns under Castle Brytha in the city of Meawold (use d1,000 to determine distance and 6d6 to determine cardinal direction). Any party member who dies or spends more than twenty-four hours in the Carcosa Complex is bound to it forever. Optionally, for each failed death save, the GM might assign a 33% chance, cumulative, of being bound to Carcosa. If someone bound to Carcosa crosses the portal, their body disintegrates (no saving throw) and their soul is seen for a few moments before dissipating. These victims will return to the Carcosa Complex at midnight. How the party determines how far from home they are is left to the GM.

Remaining in Carcosa

Any party members who become bound, will invariably return to the Carcosa Complex at midnight following their death, like all other denizens of this place. Any of the demon lords who were killed rematerialize in the Carcosa Complex after seven days. Exploring how the remaining party members might fit into the dynamic of this area of Carcosa could be an interesting wrap-up to a campaign.

Hastur

If the party members discover the ritual to deepen Hastur's slumber and perform it, Hastur falls into a deep sleep that prevents him from reaching out to dimensions beyond his own.

Plane of Portals–Artist: Brian McCranie

Bestiary

Abrar, Demon Lord

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 19 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 150 (20d8 + 60)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** 19 (+4), **DEX** 11 (+0), **CON** 16 (+3), **INT** 10 (+0), **WIS** 18 (+4), **CHA** 17 (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Con +8, Int +5, Wis +9, Cha +8
- **Skills** History +5, Religion +5
- **Damage Vulnerabilities** fire
- **Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
- **Languages** Abyssal, Common
- **Challenge** 15 (13,000 XP)

Special Traits

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

Polymorph. The abrar magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating equal to or less than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the abrar's choice). In a new form, the abrar retains its game statistics and ability to speak, but its AC, movement modes, Strength, Dexterity, and special senses are replaced by those of the new form, and it gains any statistics and capabilities (except class features, legendary actions, and lair actions) that the new form has but that it lacks.

Spellcasting. The abrar is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is **WISDOM** (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The abrar has the following spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): *ray of frost, sacred flame*
- 1st level (4 slots): *bane, inflict wounds, ray of sickness, thunderwave*
- 2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, scorching ray, silence*
- 3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, fireball, lightning bolt*
- 4th level (3 slots): *banishment, freedom of movement, wall of fire*
- 5th level (2 slots): *contagion, wall of force*
- 6th level (1 slot): *harm*

Actions

Multiattack. The abrar can make two attacks with its claws.

Demonic Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 21 (6d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 17 **CONSTITUTION** saving throw or be infected with a disease called chaos phage. While infected, the target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 10 (3d6) every 24 hours. If the disease reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies. Chaos phage can only be cured via greater restoration.

Legendary Actions

The abrar can take three legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The abrar regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Attack. The abrar makes one attack with its demonic claws or casts a spell.

Brimstone. Blinding smoke and soot swirl magically around the abrar. Each creature within 5 feet of the abrar must succeed on a DC 16 **CONSTITUTION** saving throw or be blinded until the end of the creature's next turn.

Channel Negative Energy (Costs 2 Actions). The abrar magically unleashes negative energy in a 60 ft.-radius sphere. Creatures in the sphere, including ones behind barriers and around corners, can't regain hit points until the end of the abrar's next turn.

Whirlwind of Soot (Costs 2 Actions). The abrar magically transforms into a whirlwind of soot, moves up to 60 feet, and reverts to its normal form. While in whirlwind form, the abrar is immune to all damage, and it can't be grappled, petrified, knocked prone, restrained, or stunned. Equipment worn or carried by the abrar remain in its possession.

Batu

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 138 (12d12 + 60)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** 22(+6), **DEX** 10 (+0), **CON** 21 (+5), **INT** 10 (+0), **WIS** 10 (+0), **CHA** 10 (+0)
- **Languages** Abyssal, Common
- **Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The batu makes two greatclub attacks, or one rock attack.

Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 28 (4d10 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Description

The batu is a bulky creature with massive hands. Standing about 14' tall and just over two tons, a batu could be mistaken for a giant. They can summon a rock (weighing from a pound to one hundred pounds) in their hand at will. They use these as missile weapons.

Batu - Artist: Brian McCranie

Mara

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 123 (13d10 + 52)
- **Speed** 30 ft.
- **STR** 20 (+5), **DEX** 11 (+0), **CON** 18(+4), **INT** 10 (+0), **WIS** 11 (+0), **CHA** 10 (+0)
- **Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 1 1
- **Languages** Abyssal, telepathy 60 ft.
- **Challenge** 7 (2,900 XP)

Special Traits

Magic Resistance. The mara has advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects.

Regeneration. The mara regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. The mara makes three attacks: One with its bite and two with its claw.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 15 **CONSTITUTION** saving throw or be infected with a disease called chaos phage. While infected, the target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 10 (3d6) every 24 hours. If the disease reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies. Chaos phage can only be cured via *greater restoration*.

Mara - Artist: Brian McCranie

Runo

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 16 (breastplate)
- **Hit Points** 76 (9d10 + 27)
- **Speed** 30 ft., swim 50 ft.
- **STR** 18 (+4), **DEX** 11 (+0), **CON** 16 (+3), **INT** 10 (+0), **WIS** 11 (+0), **CHA** (+3)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +3, Con +6, Int +3, Wis +3
- **Skills** Perception +6
- **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16
- **Languages** Abyssal
- **Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

Special Traits

Blood Frenzy. The runo has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.

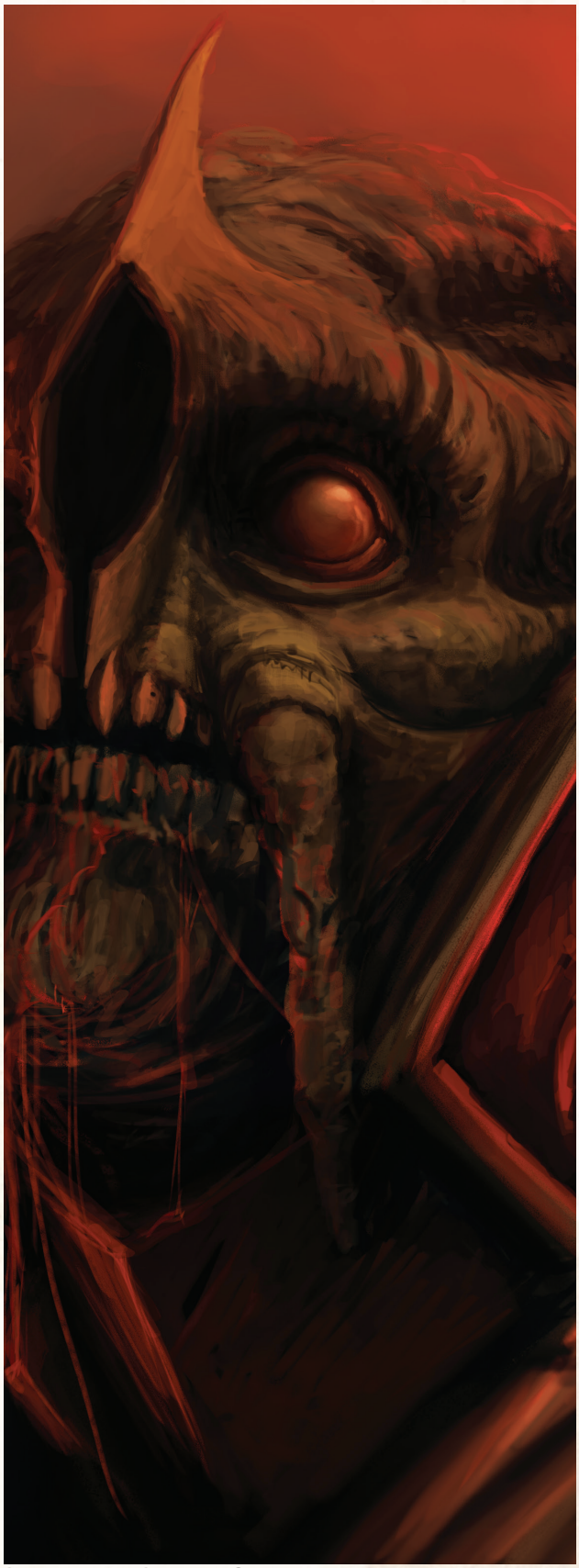
Actions

Multiattack. The runo makes three attacks: One with his bite and two with any combination of his claws or trident.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage.

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

Trident. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.



Runo - Artist: Brian McCranie

Yeles

Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil

- **Armor Class** 13
- **Hit Points** 66 (12d8 + 12)
- **Speed** 30 ft. fly 30 ft.
- **STR** 11 (+0), **DEX** (+3), **CON** 12 (+1), **INT** 11 (+0), **WIS** 10 (+0), **CHA** 14 (+2)
- **Saving Throws** Dex +5, Cha +4
- **Skills Stealth** +7
- **Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant
- **Damage Resistances** fire, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
- **Damage Immunities** cold, lightning, poison, acid, necrotic
- **Condition Immunities** exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
- **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11
- **Languages** Abyssal, telepathy 120 ft.
- **Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

Special Traits

Incorporeal Movement. The yeles 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.

Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the yeles has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on **WISDOM (PERCEPTION)** checks that rely on sight.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the yeles can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) psychic damage, or if the yeles had advantage on the attack roll, 17 (4d6 + 3) psychic damage.

Yeles - Artist: Brian McCranie

After defeating a second incursion of Hastur's cult under Castle Brytha in Meawold, preventing the kingdom from falling under his control, the party members find themselves drawn into Hastur's Domain: Carcosa.

With twenty-four hours to escape before they become a permanent part of the domain, the party members must navigate the foreign land and find a way home. Four demon lords, three brothers and the demonic seductress they all worship, control Carcosa. Perhaps one or more of them can be manipulated to help get the party home.

Afterword

The OG of the Great Old Ones, Hastur, has always been a favorite of mine, and when the first module for the "Haunting of Hastur" series fluttered in and hit my review pile, I was cautiously optimistic. While, at this point, the Cthulhu Mythos is anything but horrifying and has become a staple of fantasy gaming in the same way that rust monsters are, there are a couple examples out there wherein a given series manages to craft a compelling yarn from blending entities from the mythos with traditional (dark) fantasy. While the dual stat format of the first module back in the day did slightly hurt the integrity of the adventure, it proved to be a solid piece of dark fantasy. It did not prepare me for what was to follow.

Little did I know back then that the advent of the second adventure and the subsequent releases in the series would return something to my table that I didn't even realize I was missing.

Let's talk shop for a bit. I get to see a ton of adventures for both new and rules-centric systems and even more freeform old-school adventures, and two common pitfalls I observe result from the most commonly seen dominant stratagems for making compelling adventures as follows:

1) Make sure that your prose is amazing and create, via details and vivid descriptions, a unique and compelling atmosphere. These run the risk of being well-written, but overwrought and linear.

2) Make sure that your mechanics are superb; focus on the technical aspects of challenging players and PCs alike. These run the risk of feeling bland and soulless.

Both of these strategies are valid, and the best modules mix success in both of them. RPG-aficionados that have dived a bit into the theory of supplement/adventure-crafting will recognize these strategies by the associated terms of "Fluff" (descriptions) and "Crunch" (rules). This dichotomy, while helpful indeed, ultimately also serves as a reductive simplification, but its pervasiveness throughout the design space of adventure writing, in particular, has been made obvious by this series.

You see, L. Kevin Watson focused on neither of them. The appeal of the "Haunting of Hastur" series does not lie in murder-hoboing through countless rooms of deadly adversaries, fine-tuned to mechanically challenge your group, nor does it lie in an abundance of vivid descriptions that generate premade vistas in front of your mind's eye to be shared at a moment's notice. Instead, its appeal stems from something significantly more ephemeral and harder to pinpoint.

If you're like me, you will still remember the days of old-school (A)D&D and, indeed, how those modules felt…different than what we get to see nowadays. This was not, contrary to popular (mis)conceptions, solely due to simpler rules or necessarily a different design paradigm. Indeed, one can find a metric ton of different adventures out there, for pretty much any system, that focus well on providing a traditional dungeon crawling experience. Why, then, does it always seem like there is something missing from such offerings?

Well, the answer came to me gradually as I was analyzing and playing this very series. Somewhere along the line, this dichotomous thinking process had codified us, trained us as both players and authors/designers, to think of gaming material in a certain way…and this, subtly, has limited our experience of playing the game.

"The Haunting of Hastur" proposed a paradigm shift in pretty much all aspects of its execution. We get an adventure that could be played in the regular way, with copious dice rolling and brute forcing, sure—but you could solve it without violence and just by solving the puzzles, which also could be customized according to the skills of your party, preventing any of the frustration that notoriously (and ironically) haunts (pardon the pun) lesser, puzzle-centric adventures, but not this series. That is not just a simple matter of choice—it is, once more, an assumption of what players and GMs want that differs from the dualistic focus of fluff and crunch: This series assumes that roleplayers are a) intelligent, b) interested in exerting their mental faculties beyond hacking stuff apart, and most importantly, c) actually want to…you know…ROLEPLAY. With the focus being on the "role" part of the compound.

Much to my pleasant surprise, this did not prove to be a fluke—and indeed, "The City of Talos" drove beautifully home in how much we've been lacking the daring, the courage, it took to deviate from the assumptions of what one could expect from a…gaming book? I'm not even sure I'd consider this to be a module or a setting supplement—it is, in a way, both. It casts the PCs as explorers, as diplomats, who will shape the cultural dialogue between different species, and focuses on something I have genuinely never seen before. Here, we have a focus on a fantastic plausibility of a culture that the PCs get to experience firsthand. In the small details, on a micro- and macro-level, this module champions cultural dialogue and has the PCs and players achieve something far beyond slaying things and taking their stuff.

Indeed, there is perhaps no better example in the whole series for how it manages to capture a sense of nostalgia…and not because it is a rehash of a classic with serial numbers filed off and dressing changed as so many modules are. No, it, in a way, represented a homecoming, as befitting of the etymology of the word "nostalgia", in that it actually succeeded in recapturing that spark of genuine wonder that we felt when we stumbled, wide-eyed, for the first time into a dwarven hall, an elven encampment, a humanoid hub, long before we all got inured to the clichés and implicit tropes associated with the game. When we first heard about gnomish ruby wine, about elven funerary poetry breaking the hearts of mortal men, when we first read about the alien vistas of sahuagin cities. Dauntingly old-school in its focus, we nevertheless have something novel here, something captivating, brave, and even grand in its humble way.

We have genuine roleplaying entwined with a sense of wonder and plausibility; we have adventure structures that most publishers wouldn't touch with a 10-foot pole, like a complex, freeform investigation sans set-piece scenes. We have honest experiences of jamais-vu, laced with a dose of nostalgia, which is evoked by something that is genuinely novel, which does not draw its strength from references or the quoting and rehashing of tropes. Instead, it makes the sense of palpable wonder, the feeling of being thrust into another, novel world available for a new generation of gamers that may have missed the classics, who perhaps only know the sense of participating in a linear and story-driven adventure, the mechanical challenge. For these players and GMs, this may well be a mind-blowing eye-opener that shows what adventures can do. And I'd be hard-pressed to imagine a veteran grognard who doesn't get a sense of homecoming from these adventures.

L. Kevin Watson has found a unique voice that resounds strongly beyond the confines of genre-pieces and provides a unique experience that stands out as unique and captivating among all the adventures out there. I can't wait to see where this journey will take him, and I can't wait to read and play more from his pen. Here's to the next saga, may it turn out to be even greater than this one!

Thilo "Endzeitgeist" Graf, Erlangen, December 2018

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