

CAST TOWER OF THE BLOOD MOON RISES!

WRITTEN BY CLINT BOHATY
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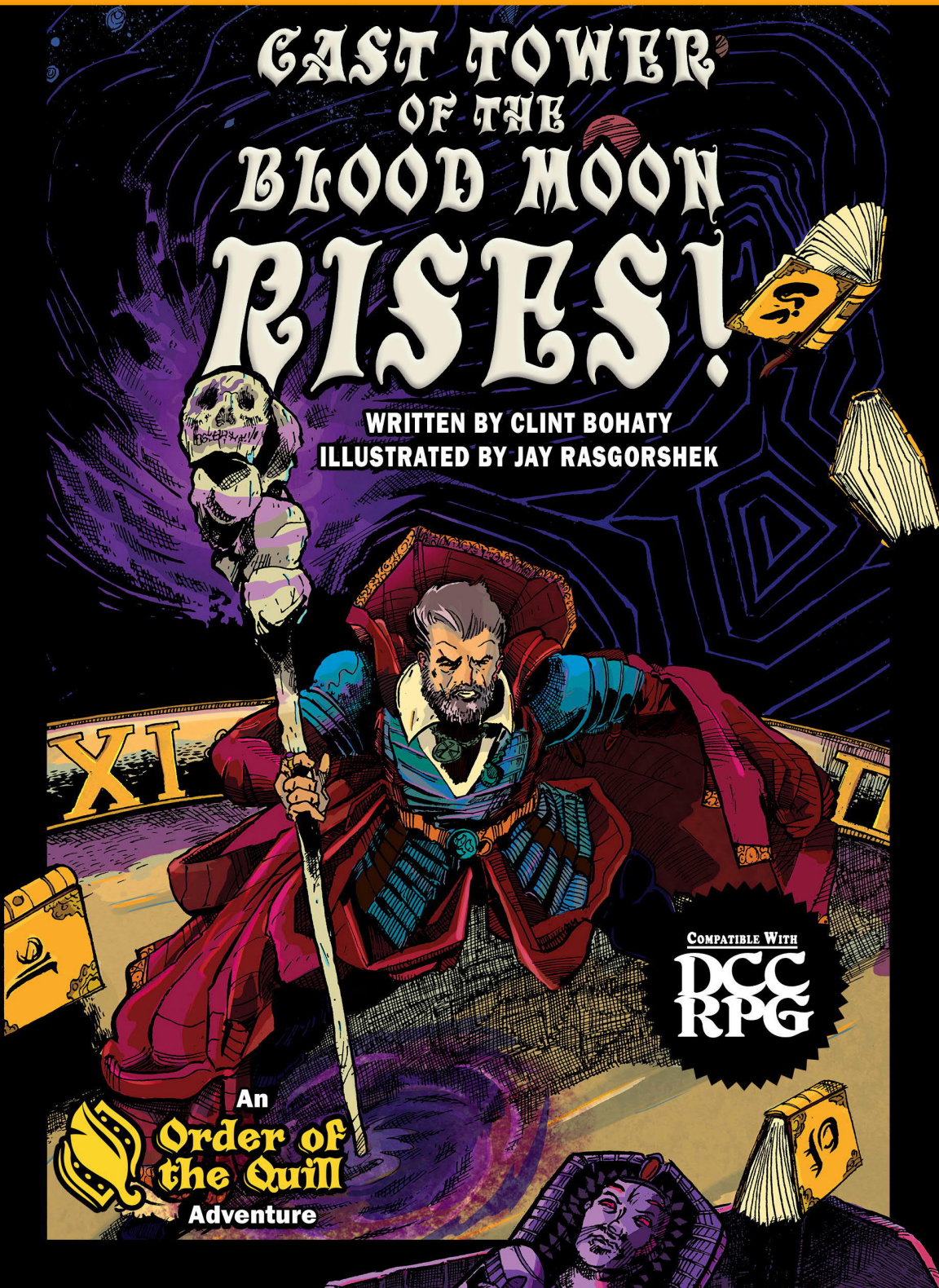
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An

**Order of
the Quill**

Adventure



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OF THE
BLOOD MOON
RISES!**

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**AN ADVENTURE FOR 2ND AND 3RD-LEVEL CHARACTERS
BY CLINT BOHATY**

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INTRODUCTION

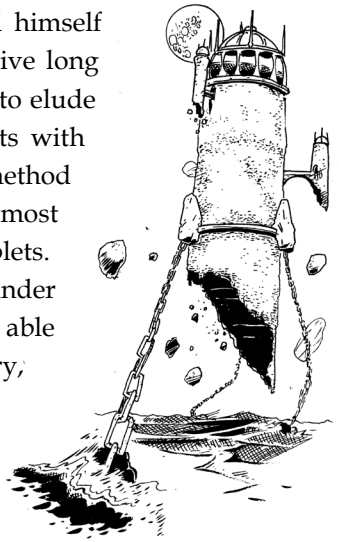
Whether drawn by happenstance or the summons of nightmarish visions, the adventurers arrive in the small troubled town of Thanesmire, where they are sent upon a quest to both rescue the Thane's daughter and purge the town of the giant beast which torments it. Before the villagers can be unbound from fear, the players will find themselves plunging down a mysterious spiral of betrayal, half-truths, blood magic, and death – eventually gaining possession of an extraordinary artifact of an immortal but perilous nature. This adventure is written to be played over two 4-hour sessions, giving the adventurers time to untangle the mysterious affairs surrounding Thanesmire. However, the adventure doesn't end with this module, for the players will be sent searching your game-world for three lost spell tablets required to perform an ancient ritual of immortality! What happened to Torene? Who was Harfin Hazelnook? And what has spawned the beast which now preys on the weak of Thanesmire? The answers await only those courageous enough to seek them out!

Cast Tower of the Blood Moon Rises! is designed for five to eight 2nd-level characters or four to seven 3rd-level characters. There are plenty of encounters and traps hidden within the Bloomingshroom Forest and the sunken tower of Ruzzick-Tol to quickly thin out any party, so having both a warrior and cleric are recommended. It is also encouraged to allow players several 0-level characters to serve as henchmen.

This adventure was loosely inspired by several fantasy novels which the judge is encouraged but not required to read. These books include *The King of Satan's Eyes* by Geoffrey Marsh, *Mossflower* by Brian Jacques, and *Wyrd Sisters* by Terry Pratchett.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Thousands of years before the founding of Thanesmire and the battle between Wilgrim the Hammerer and Thack-ugh the Cyclops, the Hallowstone Valley lay twenty leagues below a primordial sea of poison. This is where Ruzzick-Tol, a powerful wizard of Myassari, the patron stenographer of birth and decay, chose to build his tower — a spiraling fifty-story fortress suspended above the toxic sea. Although the tower was a noteworthy achievement even by the standards of modern wizards, Ruzzick-Tol never found himself satisfied; he knew the only way he could live long enough to fulfill his craving for power was to elude death itself. Through countless experiments with time and space, Ruzzick-Tol discovered a method of cheating death by entombing his four most powerful spells into four small obsidian tablets. By drawing out and casting these tablets under decades of Blood Moons, Ruzzick-Tol was able to defer death for an extra quarter century, granting himself the time to unlock the secrets of interstellar spellbinding. Unfortunately, he was never able to fully realize his strength after the foul hand he revealed took more life than he had bargained. By this fatal casting, Ruzzick-Tol's body was regressed to that of an infant. Betrayed by the Fates, the once powerful wizard suffocated to death, smothered by his own robes and ambitions.



The primordial sea withered, casting Ruzzick-Tol's accursed tower deep into the muck below. Eventually the toxicity of the seabed subsided, giving birth to the Hallowstone Valley and the Bloomingshroom Forest. Many of the wizard's treasures were lost in the process — looted by time, nature, and thieves.

Centuries later, Thanesmire was established by Thane Wilgrim of Hallowstone and the legends of Ruzzick-Tol and the poison sea became muddled myths told by old crones to keep their grandchildren from making mischief. More commanding than stories, however, was the Thane's use of the bottomless pit located near the heart of the Bloomingshroom Forest.

Always one for show, Thane Wilgrim established the pit as an executioner's tool. Those who were charged with the most heinous crimes were sentenced to death by being thrown into the pit. These public executions were often accompanied by the celebration of large crowds. For seven decades, the pit itself stood as a symbol of law and order in Thanesmire.

Now the pit is seen with fear and ill-fortune due to the arrival of a giant, bipedal, bewhiskered beast which has taken up residence within the Bloomingshroom Forest. After a farmer and his son were discovered in pieces along the forest trail, travel to the pit has been restricted to the Thane's guardsmen only. This tragedy was felt even more keenly, as the murders came on the heels of the mysterious disappearance of Thane Wilgrim II's daughter Torene.

The citizens of Thanesmire desperately need to rid themselves of the beast which has terrorized and isolated them within the valley, and Thane Wilgrim II grievously needs to seek out his daughter. How lucky they would be if a group of courageous adventures heeded their calls for help and returned their town to its once prosperous glory!

THE FOUL HAND RITUAL

Under scarce Blood Moons, Ruzzick-Tol once performed his accursed Foul Hand Ritual in the hopes of gaining immortality. The ritual was performed first by placing all four obsidian spell tablets into a matching obsidian box inlaid with star-runes. Second, he placed the severed fingers of four distinct sentient species (Human, Dwarf, Elf, Halfling) into the four holes upon the box's lid – thus vitalizing the blood magic. Finally, each tablet was individually drawn out at random and placed face up in front of the wizard. At the drawing of the fourth tablet, Ruzzick-Tol's body would become contorted as the blood magic fractured its way through each plane of his existence. With the exception of the final foul hand which killed him, this ritual usually resulted in stunning physical rejuvenation.

For centuries since the wizard's departure, three of the four ensorcelled tablets of Ruzzick-Tol have been sought out and murdered for by insatiable kings, wealthy collectors, and all those who've learned of their unique power – to bestow even the weakest man with sorcerous talent. Unbeknownst to all, a fourth tablet and ritual box have rested undisturbed within the sunken tower... until now!

This adventure was written around Ruzzick-Tol's fourth cursed tablet which is located on Harfin Hazelnook in Area 5-2. Extremely rare, powerful, and sought after, the remaining three tablets are designed to be dropped within your game world and future sessions. If it's desired to have all four tablets held within this single adventure, some possible locations are suggested below.

Spell Tablet	Infused Spell	Suggested Location
1	Lightning bolt (<i>see core rulebook, pg. 222</i>)	2-3 – Mummified tomb robber
2	Forget (<i>see core rulebook, pg. 170</i>)	1-6 – Goblin's small leather pouch
3	Ventriloquism (<i>see core rulebook, pg. 158</i>)	4-1 – Wedged in the breast of Sissarinack
4	Enlarge (<i>see core rulebook, pg. 139</i>)	5-2 – Harfin Hazelnook

Individually, these enchanted tablets function much like a spell scroll, but each have the unique ability to be spellcast twice per day. Although this gives the common PC magical abilities normally out of his reach, it doesn't come without risk – as any wizard will tell you! The rules of corruption apply at a higher rate on these cursed tablets. Thus, the spell tables for each spell should be modified as noted below. Otherwise, all spells follow the *DCC RPG Core Rulebook* as normal.

1	Possession! Ruzzick-Tol's hateful spirit reaches out from the tablet's heart and conquers your body and mind! Roll 1d16 modified by Luck: For this many rounds, Ruzzick-Tol, using your body as a vessel, will lash out at your fellow adventurers – seeking to destroy all you love and cherish!
2-3	Failure and worse! Roll 1d4 modified by Luck: (0 or less) corruption + misfire; (1) corruption; (2+) misfire.
4-13	Failure.

Any wizard who attempts to permanently learn an infused spell has a fifty-percent chance of suffering from that spell's corruption (whether successfully learned or not).

If a PC gains possession of all four tablets AND the Blood Moon box, he may perform the Foul Hand Ritual each time he levels. Only after four severed fingers (Human, Dwarf, Elf, Halfling) have been placed stump-down through the holes in the box's lid may the tablets be drawn out at random. To perform the ritual, cut out, shuffle, and draw the four cursed tablets located on *Handout A*. The order that they are revealed will cast one of several possible effects on the PC. Burning Luck or Spell Burn on the Foul Hand Ritual will always be permanent, and burns at double cost. An alternate way to randomly draw is by having the PC roll 1d16. Foul Hand Ritual results are located below on Table I.

Table I: Foul Hand Ritual Results (d16)

Roll	Reveal	Result
1	1,2,3,4	A fate worse than death! Lose HD roll and take a corruption from each of the four tablet's spells: Lightning Bolt, Forget, Ventriloquism, and Enlarge.
2	2,3,4,1	Lose HD roll and 1d6 hit points permanently!*
3	3,4,2,1	Lose HD roll this level.
4	4,2,1,3	Roll HD twice; select lower result.
5	1,3,2,4	Roll reduced HD this level.
6	2,4,3,1	No effect.
7	1,4,3,2	Roll improved HD this level.
8	1,2,4,3	Roll improved HD this level.
9	2,1,3,4	Roll HD twice; select higher result.
10	4,1,2,3	Roll HD twice; select higher result.
11	4,2,3,1	Gain maximum hit points this level.
12	3,2,4,1	Gain maximum hit points this level.
13	3,1,2,4	Gain 1d6 additional hit points this level.
14	3,1,4,2	Gain 1d8 additional hit points this level.
15	4,3,2,1	Gain 1d12 additional hit points this level.
16	1,3,4,2	Roll triple HD this level!**

**If hit point loss results in the PC's maximum hit points dropping to 0 or less, the PC dies and his spirit is forever trapped within the accursed tablets!*

***On a natural 16 only! Otherwise roll double HD.*

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Table II: Encounters and Notable Treasure

Area	Type	Encounter	Notable Treasure
1-1	T	Small snake	2 mysterious iron leaves
1-2	T/C	Gastro-fungal trap 3 mushroom men Shamanistic shroom	Intricate ruby key (to Area 2-3) Bloomingshroom berries Congealed crystal vial
1-3	P/C	4 lost troupers	Unique swatch of fabric
1-4	C	Bog fly swarm	Crier's pendant Thane's plea parchment
1-5	P/T	Enchanted obelisk	—
1-6	T	Marsh poppies	Missing half of Torene's locket
1-7A	P	The pit	—
1-7B	C	Blackthorn snare	Discarded rope bindings
2-1	C	8 grunrick	Scroll of Comprehend languages Gladral's Pass, enchanted door knocker
2-2	T	Accursed mirror Enchanted sundial	—
2-3	P	Blood Moon box	Grinelda's ring Blood Moon box Warlock's manuscript Ruzzick-Tol's medallion
3-1	C	4 crazed humanoids	ferromorphic iron objects
3-2	T	Carnivorous pitcher plant	Rare Elvish healing vegetable
3-3	P	Journal of Ruzzick-Tol	Journal of Ruzzick-Tol
3-4	P	Crystal powerstone	Powerstone fragment(s)

Table II: Encounters and Notable Treasure (cont.)

Area	Type	Encounter	Notable Treasure
4-1	C	Sissarinack	—
4-2	C	6 hungry snakelings	10 tonic tree frog spores
5-1	C	Axnelda	Axnelda's crimson collar
5-2	C	Harfin Hazelnook 6 stone golems	Aegis of Myassari Fourth accursed tablet

PLAYER START

The adventure begins when the PCs enter the town of Thanesmire. Their unexpected appearance is celebrated by peasants and merchants alike who believe the party to be heroes come to accept “the Thane’s plea” and rid the town of the murderous forest beast. Food and drink are freely offered as the crowd steers the party toward Thane Wilgrim II’s Great Hall. Blinded by feverish hope for salvation, the villagers refuse to listen to any objections that the PCs may have.



Fearful there has been another attack, Brunel Sleech, the Thane's Steward, accompanied by six guardsman, meet the crowd at the entrance to the Great Hall. Once the PCs and crowd reach the hall's entrance, read or paraphrase the following:

You are quickly pushed to the front of the crowd as the village's steward calls for silence. His guardsmen look at you, gripping their weapons with unease. After nervously combing the white mop of hair from his eyes, the Steward looks you over; a yellow-toothed smile crawling across his pale face. He raises his bony hands in the air and cries "Adventurers! Bold knights, be welcomed here where you come to rescue our Thane's daughter – my cousin Torene! And to rid us of the beast that lurks these forests. For months we've been waiting for a lot as brave as you to take up the generous offer of Wilgrim II, Thane of Hallowstone and Lord of Thanesmire. Please, come into the hall and fill yourselves with food and wine as I answer any questions you may have."

As the Steward finishes welcoming you, cheers spring from the crowd, throwing up a breath of stink and decay which make your eyes water.

If the PCs decide not to enter the Great Hall, Brunel mockingly dismisses the party as common travelers, causing the crowd to disperse in disappointment and frustration. Having upset the locals, any PCs bartering in Thanesmire will pay double for common goods.

If the PCs enter the Great Hall at Brunel's invite, they find it dark and empty. Along the way, their torchlight reveals velvet tapestries richly embroidered with depictions of Thanesmire's founding. Most eye-catching is a pristine tapestry portraying a young woman with silver-threaded hair. On her head she wears a unique circlet which gives her the guise of having a third eye. If asked, Brunel will identify the woman as Thane Wilgrim II's wife, the late Lady Elsie.

An enormous hearth void of logs sits at the center of the dining hall. Brunel motions the party to sit with him at one of the many abandoned dining tables as a guardsman lights a single candle.

"Please sit. Time is short and I'm afraid our Thane may not last many more nights. My name is Brunel Sleech, I'm Steward of Thanesmire and nephew of Wilgrim II, Thane of Hallowstone. Two seasons ago, my uncle, Wilgrim II, announced the passing of his lands and titles to his daughter,

Torene — quite a controversy on its own. The next morning however, after the celebration had ended but before any titles had officially passed, Torene failed to appear for her coronation. The city was searched high and low, and to my personal distress, the cobbler found this locket of Torene's near the edge of Bloomingshroom Forest. Yes, that IS dried blood upon the hinge! We've had several adventurers seek out Torene, but none have returned. I believe her to be lost to the murderous beast that was spotted by migrants shortly after her disappearance... but I dare not confess this to my uncle.

I've been told the beast is thick with hair and would stand above the beams of this hall. Wilgrim has taken to drowning his sorrow with ale and each night seems one horn closer to death. I'm willing to pay 30 gold pieces to each adventurer responsible for the safe return of Torene; and an extra 15 pieces each if you also bring me the head of the forest beast. Will you take up our fight?"

The broken locket that Brunel presents the PCs is only the cover piece. On the front, carved in bone upon gold inlay, is the Thane's crest: a sword passing through the eye of the Cyclops Thackugh. On the interior is engraved, "*Near thy heart, Daughter of Hallowstone...*" It appears that the writing must continue onto the missing half of the locket.



If the party asks to see Thane Wilgrim II, Brunel refuses, stating "*His hopes have been crushed too many times already; once more would surely kill him! You can see him when you return with Torene...alive.*"

If they inquire more about the beast, he points them to the tavern and suggests that they "*Ask one of the poor souls who's seen it.*"

If asked about sending guardsmen to aid the party, he denies their request because "*Too many have already been lost.*" Brunel is, however, willing to let the party accompany two guardsmen carrying out an execution at the pit in the evening. He warns the

PCs that they are not to wander off the trail and must not interfere with the execution.

Although Brunel won't betray his uncle outright, he is enjoying his temporary rule and is in no hurry to see Torene brought back alive. Because of his unctuous guise, PCs may be quick to accuse Brunel of being behind the disappearance – although such false accusations will only be met with the pit! A dozen guardsmen wait hidden in the shadows of the hall, ordered to intervene if the strangers cause trouble or turn violent.

Guardsmen (12): Init +0; Atk short-sword +2 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 1d8; hp 6 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +4; AL L.

Table III: Thanesmire Rumors (d12)

If the PCs inquire more around Thanesmire, they will hear several rumors. Some of them are bogus, but most will lead the party down the right path. The judge can either deliver his favorite rumors or let the dice decide.

Roll	Rumor
1	<i>"Thane Wilgrim's dead! I've got a cousin whose friend's daughter works in the kitchens and she swears they ain't seen him in months!"</i>
2	<i>"Whatever the beast is, it's been killing the forest's game. Already had to cancel the Thane's hunt twice now."</i>
3	<i>"We all know Torene ran away after the Thane had that cook sentenced to the pit. The nitwit got drunk and asked the Thane himself for permission to marry her. Believe that? Torene marry a dwarf? Got what he deserved, he did."</i>
4	<i>"I'm tellin' you that there ain't been no beasts ever since Wilgrim the First killed Ol' Thack-ugh. Just as sure as I am this here itch is just a rash."</i>
5	<i>"Some travelin' merchants'll claim to have seen a giant shimmering snake in the undergrowth of Bloomingshroom. Never seem it myself though, and I've grown up here. The craziest thing they say is that it's as wide as a cart!"</i>
6	<i>"They're hauling that bandit Boonshanks to the pit this evening. Guess the Steward don't want to risk any kind of problems while Wilgrim's locked himself away."</i>
7	<i>"I'd bet my coin that this so called 'beast' is that Cyclops Wilgrim the First 'killed' for his Thaneship. Probably worked out a deal or whatnot for the land and such. Grandma Cull always said "never trust a thing that only winks."</i>
8	<i>"Is that plum-of-a-bard still staying up at the tavern? Been hanging around for months, he has. Last I heard, he was looking for someone interested in a lil' adventurin'. Maybe even a group, he asks... the pervert!"</i>
9	<i>"Iron leaves sometimes fall in Bloomingshroom. Supposed to be good luck, they are... but nobody can find which tree they're from! The man who finds that tree will be richer than the Thane himself."</i>

Table III: Thanesmire Rumors (d12) (cont.)

Roll	Rumor
10	<i>"I seen the monster! It was as tall as two horses standing on each other's shoulders and its hands were as big as goats! Buy me some more drinks and I'll show you how big its other parts were!"</i>
11	<i>"You ain't one of them show-fighters, are ye? Travel from all over Hallowstone just to eat those cursed Bloomingshroom buds – stomping through the forest and scaring off the game. A lucrative business, blah! They like the strength 'n'anger it gives 'em. You can always spot a fighter by the scratches 'round his neck!"</i>
12	<i>"I swear a mouse mus' be tryin' to live in me belly-button! Every couple of weeks er so I find a little nest buildin' in there. Always finger it out... but always comes back!"</i>

THE HILTED EYE

The Hilted Eye acts as Thanesmire's premier tavern and inn. Its poor lighting and poorer ventilation would be sold as "atmosphere" in a more populous city. The boards creak at each step, the mortar crumbles at each brush, but the beer still goes down... smooth? This is why The Hilted Eye is the place in Thanesmire to order a pint and argue about who's-done-what-to-whom-behind-the-other's-back!

Once the party has had their fill of rumors and are about to leave the tavern, a waitress silently delivers the drunkest PC a handwritten note. It is composed upon a page torn from "Lazariel's History of Magical Relics" and is blotched in fresh, dark red stains. If smelled or tasted, the stains are identified as raspberry jam. The note reads:

Bravest Adventurers! I have what you seek, although you may not yet know it. Fame! Riches! More? It is all within our grasp. The sooner we speak, the sooner those around us will speak our names in legend! If you are indeed worthy, you will seek me out...

With a pie in hand would be most preferable.

– J.B., Vagabard of the Northern Pass

The mysterious note is from a once-prominent traveling bard named Joffrey Blunderblouse. Any PC with relevant background knowledge may be familiar with “The Ballads of Blunderblouse,” a required reading for apprentice poets and famous for being rather carnal.

Three years ago while researching blood rituals (for poetic inspiration of course!), the washed-up bard accidentally uncovered a cryptic passage

loose within the bindings of a reptilian warlock’s manuscript. The discovered page was obviously much older than the manuscript itself and was accompanied by notes in the warlock’s pen. After deciphering the ancient language, Joffrey learned of an early-era wizard who used blood-magic to prolong his own life. The text gave vague detail as to where the wizard’s tower was located and described an elaborate obsidian box which held the wizard’s “hand.” The warlock had even gone so far as to crudely draw a map as described in the passage. To Joffrey, the box sounded like a fantastic prop with which to win



theatrical praise, and if the wizard’s hand still held any magic, he may yet live long enough to achieve infinite riches and the eternal glory of song!

Eventually, the bard found himself performing at The Hilted Eye for the people of Thanesmire. Impressed by his act, Thane Wilgrim II hired Joffrey to write a ballad about his father’s battle with Thack-ugh, granting him free board until the poem’s completion. Joffrey soon learned from the elders of Thanesmire that Hallowstone Valley had once lain beneath a toxic sea and

had been home to a vile wizard — just like the sea of poison mentioned in the warlock’s manuscript!

After settling into the tavern long-term, Joffrey soon found that bravery was as rare a trait in Thanesmire as cleanliness. Secretly, he employed an ambitious dwarvish cook named Harfin Hazelnook to seek out the wizard’s tower which he suspected was hidden within Bloomingshroom Forest. The cook, who was head-over-heels in love with the Thane’s daughter, was easy enough for Joffrey to manipulate into bravery. Within a week however, the bard’s plan backfired, and Harfin, with a mind clouded by rhymes of passion, stole Joffrey’s map and proposed to Torene while claiming lawful right to the lands of Thanesmire by virtue of the parchment. Thane Wilgrim II, insulted and threatened by this development, had Harfin immediately pitched into the pit along with the warlock’s manuscript!

If the PCs ask around the tavern for information regarding “J.B.”, the staff complain about the *“plumb-of-a-bard who has yet to perform the Thane’s ballad!”* According to the barkeep, the bard’s only redeeming quality is that he’s a good tipper — albeit on the Thane’s coin. They warn the PCs of Joffrey’s presumptuous personality and direct them toward the only occupied room on the second floor of The Hilted Eye. When the PCs knock on the bard’s door, read or paraphrase the following:

At the rap of your knuckles, the tavern door creaks open slowly. Peering through the gap stands a man whose swollen neck and patchy beard give him the appearance of a mange afflicted toad. His finely stitched robe, dribbled with food stains, barely covers the nakedness beneath. Over his head, you see piles of teetering books and empty plates obscuring the floor.

Panting strangely, he rubs his tired eyes and suddenly bursts into whispered praise, “Ahh! Neomold himself couldn’t have written up a more suitable group of adventurers. Thank you for arriving at my call, for the matter at hand is very very important. You must set out at once!” His eyes sporadically dart across your hands as if searching for something.

If the PCs have brought a pie for Joffrey, he quickly snatches it, revealing a room full of open books, scattered star maps, and a second-rate telescope. With or without pie in hand, he eventually continues on...

"I had in my possession a map... but my previous associate, who stole the map, now rests at the bottom of the Thane's pit. I need that map! And I am willing to share in the riches it leads to. Ballads will be written of us! Now quickly, the sooner you set out and get my map, the sooner you can find the tower!"

Joffrey only knows that the tower must stand somewhere within the Bloomingshroom Forest and is primarily interested in obtaining the obsidian box which holds the wizard's "hand." Any other treasures found within the tower are the adventurers to keep as payment. The only information he purposely withholds is his limited knowledge of the wizard's Foul Hand Ritual and the immortality it is said to bestow.

AREA 1 — BLOOMINGSHROOM FOREST

Area 1-1 — Abandoned Pass

The soft peat beneath your sore feet comes as a relief as you splash through pools of stagnant water. Behind you, the silhouette of Thanesmire sinks below a sea of rocky hills. Two separate paths before you enter the thick blockade of ancient, fungus-sprinkled trees. To the left leads a long abandoned cobbled walkway broken up by patches of weeds. To the right is a dirt path forged by centuries of stomping hooves. A metallic shimmer catches your eye just within the path's undergrowth.

If the PCs are traveling to the pit with the execution party, read or paraphrase the following:

Two guardsmen walk beside you, hauling a disheveled old man with wrists bound in rope. Upon his ragged white gown is stitched the Thane's crest. The prisoner's mouth is gagged, and his watery eyes run frantically over the tree line.

The party finds themselves at the edge of the Bloomingshroom Forest, named after the rare, small, clustering, mushroom-shaped flowers that grow within. The Thane's guardsmen dare not enter the forest alone, and the villagers dare not enter at all for fear of the beast lurking within.

If asked, the guardsmen will inform the PCs that the cobbled path leads toward the pit, while the dirt trail only leads deeper into Bloomingshroom. If a PC investigates the tree line, a DC 13 Intelligence check reveals a thick lock of red hair snagged high on a broken branch near the stone path.

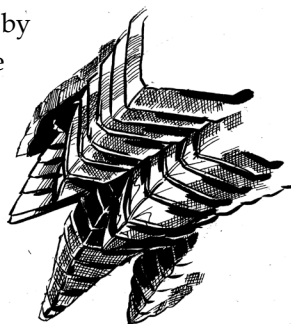
If a PC investigates the metallic shimmer sighted within the nature path, read or paraphrase the following:

Behind rising saplings and dying weeds lay twin metallic leaves shed upon the forest floor. As you reach in low to grab them, two small black eyes glare into yours from what looked to be a low branch. With a hiss, the branch coils upon itself and lashes out!

The PC must make a DC 10 Reflex save, or else be bitten by the small snake, taking 1d4 damage. If damage is taken, the PC must also make a DC 8 Fortitude save, or else suffer an additional 1d3 Stamina damage.

The two retrieved iron leaves are identical, palm-sized, and very cold. The iron is smoother than any the PC's have ever encountered, and doesn't cause any irritation when handled by an elf. The leaves' peculiar shape is similar to a kite shield. These "leaves" are actually ferromorphic iron scales shed from the great snake Sissarinack who lives in Area 4-1, but occasionally hunts the forest during long droughts between pit executions.

Normally, the PCs will be traveling into the forest alone and will only encounter the execution party *here* by direct order of Brunel Sleech. Information on the two guardsmen and their prisoner can be found in Area 1-7A. The guardsmen will not linger and will travel down the cobbled path to Area 1-2. Unless the PCs follow in step, they have a seventy-five percent chance of losing sight of the guardsmen within Bloomingshroom's dense foliage.



Area 1-2 — The Ruins of Durralic Outpost

Suddenly the trees, densely packed around you like pipe-weed, open up to a circular clearing. Dozens of old stumps litter the ground like pockmarks and make any effort to leave the cobbled walkway difficult. At the center of

the clearing stand the ruins of a military outpost; its limestone blocks overgrown by bright-yellow fungus. A gravel path leads up to an iron door on the fort's southern wall.

Toward the northeast, a worn path split by a shallow streambed leads on to an area concealed by grey haze. The trickling streambed weaves east through the dense tree line, where a guttural shout of rage echoes out, sending flocks of crows cawing overhead. Toward the south, a cobbled path leads back in the direction of Thanesmire.

The ruins ahead are what's left of Durralic Outpost, which fell centuries ago during the last battle against the forest giants. Scars of war can still be seen gouged across the outpost's broken masonry. Although its four walls still stand, its clay roof has long since crumbled. The outpost is quite small, and was built as a storage facility with only a single cot.

The iron door on Durralic Outpost's southern wall is closed, but its bent frame prevents it from locking. The door has been booby-trapped by a tribe of Mushroom Men who've grown within. Searching the iron door with a DC 14 Intelligence check reveals a tripwire made of spider silk. Disabling the trap requires a DC 12 Disable trap skill check. Any PC opening the door without disabling the tripwire will tear a gastro-fungal plant, releasing a cloud of toxic pollen. PCs standing within a 10' radius of the door need to make a DC 14 Fortitude save, or else suffer 1d4 Stamina damage and 1d4 Intelligence damage for 1d12 rounds. When the PCs enter the outpost or trigger the trap, the Mushroom Men will attack!

The Mushroom Men are a tribe of rubbery, porous, and cruel gelatinous creatures. Matured from humanoid corpses, deep beneath every Mushroom Man's thick glossy hide is the decayed body of someone's lost love. The appearance and abilities of a Mushroom Man tribe are dependent on the beings from which they arise. This particular tribe sprouted upon the frostbitten corpses of a band of kobolds who took shelter in the ruins during a fatal blizzard. Within the countless mouth-like pores cratering these Mushroom Men sprout rows of hard fungal deposits resembling canine teeth – making the creatures deadly in close combat!

The tribe is headed by a Shamanistic Shroom grown off the corpse of a kobold who resonated with arcane magic. Because of this, glowing purple veins of arcana streak across the mushroom's glossy hide. The spells once wielded by the kobold have also mutated the Shamanistic Shroom, giving it

an unnatural healing ability. Once each round, the Shaman may cast *Festering Vitality* upon a Mushroom Man or injured PC. In either instance, the Shaman must first make a DC 13 spell check to successfully cast the spell. Rolling a natural 1 results in the spell's loss. If cast upon a Mushroom Man, have the targeted Mushroom Man recover 1d3 hit points. If cast upon an injured PC, have the targeted PC make a DC 12 Fortitude save, or else a small mushroom will sprout from his open wound. Uprooting the mushroom will take one full turn. If left untreated, at the end of the PC's second turn, the mushroom will double in size and cause 1d4 damage if uprooted. At the end of his third turn, the untreated festering mushroom will break away from its host, causing 1d6 damage and becoming an additional Mushroom Man!

Durralic Outpost's northern wall has been crushed in by a boulder, leaving a crack large enough for a PC to enter. If the area around the crack is searched, PCs will discover a fresh trail of blood leading into the outpost as well as a twisted tin brooch in the shape of a cobra-lily. If any PCs peer into the crack, they will see movement among the fungus inside, but will be unable to distinguish their shape or number.



Sprawled on the floor of the outpost is the dead body of a lost traveler bizarrely outfitted in a patchwork of scavenged fabrics. His bloodshot eyes bulge from his skull and his neck is covered in self-inflicted scratches due to bloomingshroom poisoning. Thousands of small bite marks mar his flesh. The man belongs to a band of actors lost in Area 1-3. In his pockets are a handful of strange “blueberries,” a silver flute, and an intricate ruby key. The key's teeth are a complex three-dimensional maze and can be used to unlock the circular stone entryway to Area 2-2. Etched with elvish ribbons and knots, the silver flute is a symbol of high artisanship and worth 10 gp to a court minstrel or bard.

The berries can be easily recognized by Thanesmire locals as bloomingshroom buds, and have been at the root of many unintended yet horrific murders! If a PC consumes the buds, he must make a DC 14 Fortitude save, or else become awash with extreme anger for 1d8 hours. While enraged, he will find everything around him disagreeable to the point of violence. When an enraged PC is requested to perform a task, he must make a DC 10 Will save, or else refuse to partake in said task. Physical symptoms of bloomingshroom poisoning include bulging, bloodshot eyes and an inflamed, itchy neck. Any poisoned PC will temporarily gain +2 to all attacks, damage, and saving throws while in combat.

Buried within the thick coat of yellow fungus on the outpost's interior is a small copper chest. The chest has been oxidized pale green and has had its lock destroyed. At first glance, the inside of the chest is empty; however, any thief who searches for a false bottom will discover a hidden compartment in the chest's lid. The compartment holds an iron skeleton key and a crystal vial of mysterious liquid. The key is a duplicate made for the entryway of Fort Durralic, and will click within the keyhole of the warped door if tested. The ancient liquid within the crystal vial has separated into two congealed layers – transparent on the top and pea green on the bottom. The liquid, once intended to deliver relief during extended siege, will grant a +1 permanent bonus to either Strength, Agility, or Stamina if shaken and consumed. If a PC consumes the elixir without first stirring it, he must make a DC 16 Fortitude save or else lose 1d3 (modified by Luck) permanent points of either Strength, Agility, or Stamina. Determine the modified stat randomly. If a loss results in the modified score being 0 or less, the afflicted PC dies.

Mushroom Men (3): Int -3; Atk bite -1 melee (2d4); AC 11; HD 2d8; hp 10 each; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP half damage from bludgeoning weapons, infravision; SV Fort +4, Ref -4, Will +3; AL N.

Shamanistic Shroom: Int -5; Atk bite +2 melee (2d4); AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP Festering Vitality (see above), half damage from bludgeoning weapons, infravision; SV Fort +6, Ref -4, Will +3; AL N.

Area 1-3 — Bloomingshroom Glade

The dense tangle of spiny bushes score your body as you weave your way through the forest, tripping over fallen trunks and pools of deceptively deep water. Bouquets of strange blue fungus branch out between gnarled, menacing roots. Ahead, the trail opens into a small glade split by a trickling stream at the center of which stand two men, an elf, and a woman. They are arguing too heatedly to take notice of your arrival.

"Dead, and we'll be next!"

"Not if you shut it and listen to me!"

"You're the one who suggested we leave the caravan! Now look where that got us!"

"Isn't there anything else to eat besides these damned berries?!"

The shallow streambed runs to the west, where it cuts its way into the dense forest. Across the stream toward the northeast, a faint insectile buzzing can be heard. To the south, a natural dirt trail leads back toward Thanesmire.

If the PCs lie in wait, the lost actors' troupe will argue until turning upon each other with violence. All four troupers are dressed in brightly colored outfits sewn from refitted velvet tapestries, gowns, drapes, and other patchworked fabrics. Besides sharing a common fashion sense, each wears a tin brooch hammered in the shape of a cobra-lily — the emblem of their band. All four constantly scratch at their own necks and suffer from enlarged, bloodshot eyes.

If the PCs have learned the appropriate rumor in Thanesmire, they may recognize these symptoms as bloomingshroom poisoning — which comes

from eating the plant's berry-like buds. The cure, known by every local, is to chill the victim's neck and plug his ears for thirty minutes.

If the PCs approach the lost band in a hostile fashion, the troupers will instantly turn their aggression on the strangers, fighting to the death. If the party approaches in a non-hostile way, the lost band will argue and contradict the PCs until ultimately turning on them with violence. A PC may convince the troupers to undergo the poison's treatment with a successful DC 15 Personality check. If the check is failed, the troupers will attack!

If the troupers attack, they do so with the ferocity, strength, and disregard for mortality induced by bloomingshroom poisoning. While poisoned, the troupers gain +2 to all attacks, damage, and saving throws while in combat. For weapons, they wield only their instruments: a recorder, crumhorn, drum, and bagpipe. If searched, PCs will find that the group holds nothing of monetary value, though they will discover a unique swatch of fabric depicting a royal warrior mounted atop a defeated lizard-man. What makes the swatch special is not the fine threading it's sewn from, but that the royal figure's appearance is identical to one of the PCs (determine randomly). If asked, the troupers recall stealing the swatch of fabric from a Halfling tailor located one month's journey west of Thanesmire.

If cured, the troupers will inform the PCs that they've been lost within the forest for days after leaving their caravan in search of their missing flute player. The companion, who is still missing, was the first of the group to eat the bloomingshroom buds. He stormed off to the West in a burst of anger after the band fought over the ownership of a curious ruby key discovered just off the forest trail. If asked about the wizard's tower, the troupers will deny seeing it within the forest, but will claim to have stumbled upon a strange monument to the north. Although they dared not approach it, their elf did notice that a message written in Undercommon was engraved upon its surface. Quick-tempered and blinded by rage, the band didn't have the patience to translate the message, however, if asked, the troupers will gladly accompany the PCs back to the obelisk in exchange for directions to Thanesmire.

If the creekbed is searched, PCs will discover a large humanoid footprint sunk deep within the mud. The bare print is approximately 4' long by 1' wide and points toward the northeastern trail.

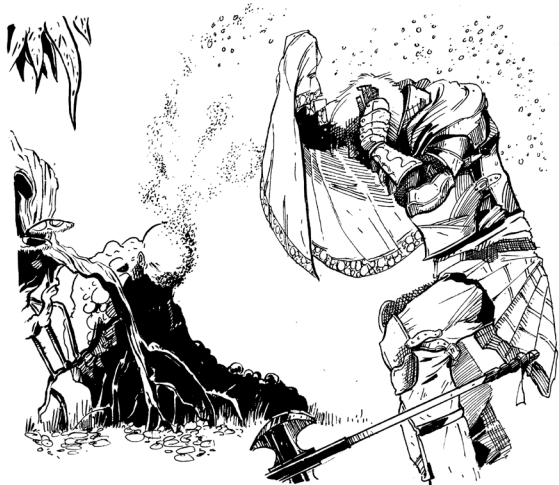
Lost Actors' Troupe (4): Init +0; Atk musical instrument +0 melee (1d4); AC 9; HD1d8; hp 6, 5, 7, 3; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP bloomingshroom poisoning (see above); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will + 4; AL L.

Area 1-4 — Strangleroot Tree Bower

After fighting your way through the forest undergrowth, your eyes catch a glimmer off a buckle on a pair of leathery boots sticking out from the trunk of a cankerous willow tree. The sound of humming can be heard from the tree's direction, about 15' off the trail. To the north, the trail continues, becoming narrower and overgrown with weeds. To the west, the trail splits in two, both paths leading deeper toward the heart of the forest. To the south runs a single dirt path in the direction of Thanesmire.

If the PCs decide to investigate the boots, read or paraphrase the following:

As you get closer to the boots, you realize that they are still buckled on the body of a man slumped within the large recess of the tree's trunk. His face and hands are black with bog-flies. Around his neck hangs a pendent and to his back is strapped a large cow-hide pack. His body is perched upon a mound of scrolls and papers stuffed within the trunk.



The body is that of a Thanesmire crier, sent out by the Thane to recruit brave knights to rescue his daughter Torene. The first PC to disturb the body will be swarmed by bog-flies. The flies will bite and sting till killed or driven away — always attempting to lay their eggs underneath the warm flesh of an unlucky

adventurer. When successfully bitten, the PC must make a DC 9 Fortitude save, or else bog-flies will burst from his skin in 1d3 hours, causing 1d6 damage. Minutes after the eggs have been laid, the afflicted PC will notice inflamed, itchy red spots upon his skin. The spots will continue to swell

until bursting with bog-flies. The eggs can be killed by magical healing, but the scarred spots will remain. Alternately, the bog-fly swarm can be kept at bay by fire, or driven away completely by thick smoke.

Upon the loose scrolls packed within the tree hollow is written the message:

"Thanesmire seeks brave adventurers! 50 gold to each responsible for the safe return of Torene, daughter of Thane Wilgrim II of Hallowstone, Lord of Thanesmire."

Each scroll has been signed by the Thane himself. Observant PC's may notice that the reward decreed on the parchments is more than what they were offered by the Thane's steward. If the scrolls are brought to Brunel Sleech as evidence of being swindled, he'll reluctantly raise the PC's reward up from 30 gp to 50 gp, while claiming, *"It must have been a mistake. The scribe will surely lose his hands for this."*

The crier's pendant is forged from copper and depicts a trumpet covered in vines. It is worth 15 sp. If the pendant is brought as evidence of the crier's death to Thanesmire, his family will reward the mindful PC with their heartiest goat.

In the crier's backpack, PCs will find more scrolls and rotten rations, as well as a pouch of 25 gp meant to serve as an advance to any interested but hesitant adventurers. If the body of the crier is inspected for a cause of death, the PCs will mark that his chest has been crushed inward giving him the appearance of a discarded apple core. Unbeknownst to the adventurers, the poor crier was squeezed to death by the magically enlarged grip of the corrupted dwarf Harfin Hazelnook, known to Thanesmire as the beast!

If the party clears out the trunk's cavity, they discover a dark shaft; its entrance barred by the tree's roots. Once the PCs chop through the roots, they can access the small chute which descends 80', ending at the firebox in Area 2-3. As outlined in Area 2-3, the iron grate floor of the firebox is actually a weakened trapdoor ready to give way under anyone weighing more than 200 lbs. The shaft's walls are laddered by vines and roots, but still require a DC 8 Agility check to climb down unaided. A failed climb roll results in the PC taking 8d6 falling damage from plunging 80' onto the firebox's weakened trapdoor in Area 2-3. Upon impact, there is a fifty percent chance that the iron trapdoor will collapse, further dropping the PC 45' into the pitcher plant in Area 3-2. The PC takes no additional falling

damage as he splashes into the pitcher plant's acids, but instead becomes trapped within its gaping maw.

Bog Fly Swarm: Int +3; Atk swarming bite -1 melee (1d3 plus lay eggs); AC 11; HD 3d8; hp 17; MV fly 40'; Act special; SP bite all targets within 10' x 10' space, lay eggs (see above); SV Fort +0, Ref +10, Will -2; AL L.

Area 1-5 — Obelisk of Omination

Razor-barbed brambles snag upon your armor as you hack your way through the suffocating ferns and weeds. The once prominent dirt path you follow has become overgrown, muddling your sense of direction. At the trail's end stands a black stone obelisk twice as tall as a man. The ground immediately surrounding it is barren. Even the birds who cry out overhead avoid flying over. The only way out is behind you, upon the path you just traveled.

The obelisk is chiseled from onyx and once stood 20' tall, although half of it is now buried. It was crafted by Ruzzick-Tol himself to ward off any who dared approach his tower.



If a PC inspects the stone obelisk from outside the barren circle, he sees that each of the obelisk's three sides feature a passage carved in Undercommon. Surrounding each verse are dozens of empty holes where gems were once embedded. Since Undercommon carries similar linguistic properties to

Elvish, any player learned in the Elvish language may attempt to translate the message line-by-line with a DC 14 Intelligence check per line. Once failed, the line's translation cannot be reattempted. If the elf trouper from Area 1-3 is accompanying the party, he will effortlessly translate the first stanza of the following warning:

*"Beware the power of Ruzzick-Tol,
Conqueror of Nature and Death.
Time defeated rewinds the soul,
Renewing one last breath.*

*The risk received lends to reward,
That powers all to be.
Things most common become restored,
For four hands are the key."*

Although the complete engraving is lost forever, the magical remnants which carved it remain. The full poetic warning can be learned by casting a "Read Magic" spell. If successful, the caster's inner voice will whisper the entire warning in Common tongue.

The obelisk has been enchanted with a Magic Mouth spell, and will shout out the passage written upon it to anyone who enters within 10' of the monument (within the barren circle). Although the Magic Mouth was originally cast by Ruzzick-Toll in Undercommon, it will deliver itself to each PC individually in his own racial tongue.

If the Magic Mouth spell is triggered, the clouds above darken and violently spiral down in a forceful cyclone, encircling the obelisk and trapping all those standing within the barren circle. The cyclone will continue until the Magic Mouth finishes reciting its passage to only those within. Any PCs trapped within must make a DC 14 Reflex save, or else lose their currently armed weapon (if any) to the cyclone. The weapons will be thrust into the air, eventually landing in Area 5-2. Any PC outside of the barren circle who observes the cyclone closely will notice that its tail bends toward the southwest, arching like a deadly rainbow.

Upon triggering the Magic Mouth, a tribe of four Mushroom Men (with no shaman) with identical stats to those of Area 1-2 will be alerted of the PC's location and will descend upon the area in three minutes.

Area 1-6 — Field of Marsh Poppies

A sweet aroma in the air tickles at your nose and carries you toward a large patch of short red flowers. The flowerbed looks like a well-cared-for crop, without a single foreign weed or tree sprouting within. At its center, however, lies a baffling heap of wood and fabric. Within the flowerbed, the air seems to sparkle like sunlight glistening across rippling waters.

Toward the east, a faint buzzing can be heard where a gap exists in the packed tree line. A dirt trail leads to the south, where the trees thin out and many stumps rise up from the ground.

The approximately 30' sq. flowerbed is naturally occurring, and feared by those who hunt within Bloomingshroom. The flowers thrive because of their deadly sharp pollen spores which resemble minuscule shards of glass. Any PC who enters the patch of flowers must make a DC 13 Fortitude save, or else take 1d6 damage as the airborne pollen cuts through their lungs. For every 10' traveled within the patch, the save must be rerolled. The save is automatically successful if the PC covers his mouth and nose while inside the flowerbed.

At the center of the patch is a fallen signpost which reads, "*Beware! Do not enter! Death!*" Near the sign lies the body of a short, pale-blue humanoid with leathery skin and sharp features. Her clothing is primal and made from furs and raw hide. Woven beautifully in her hair are the red flowers of the bed. On closer inspection, dry cracked blood can be seen under her nose and out her mouth. If searched, PCs will find a small leather sack containing: 13 cp, an iron "leaf," a small bone carved in the likeness of a deer, an emerald "cat's eye" silver ring (worth 30 sp), and... the missing half of Torene's locket!

The locket holds a masterfully painted portrait of a young woman with long silvery hair. Upon her head is a golden circuit adorned with a unique central opal. The white opal resembles an eye, centered by an iris-like copper ring and pupal-like onyx stone. PCs who closely examined the tapestries hanging within the Great Hall of Thanesmire may recognize the portrait as Torene's mother, the late Lady Elsie. Written around the portrait is the phrase, "*In thy blood, daughter of Thane.*" This is a continuation of the words written inside the cover of the locket, which stated, "*Near thy heart, Daughter of Hallowstone.*" The chain remains missing from the locket.

Area 1-7A — The Pit

The ground sinks into a great bog before you, clear of Bloomingshroom's plentiful trees and undergrowth. Grey mists drift up from a gaping dirt pit at the bog's center which cloak the rotten stumps on which you constantly stub your soggy feet. Three decrepit merchant booths lay collapsed around the hole; their cedar frames rotted and canvas shades torn. To the north, east, and south, wooden dock-ways rise from the bog and disappear back into the dense forest.

Before the recent beast attacks, this bottomless, 40' wide pit is where Thane Wilgrim II held his public executions. Families would travel from the edges of Hallowstone Valley just to watch the trials, making the pit an alluring source of revenue for Thanesmire. Now, the bog sits eerily quiet while the wooden booths, where merchants once peddled fluorescent-fungal sticks and black powder snap-crackers, rot in abandonment.

If the PCs travel to the pit with the Steward's execution party or arrive in the evening, read or paraphrase the following:

At spear point, two guardsmen herd a shambling man toward the edge of the gaping pit. With leather gauntlets, a guardsman clumsily removes the prisoner's gag. As the old man denies his life of crime and begs for the Thane's mercy, the guardsmen place bets on how long he'll scream — or if he'll scream at all!

The elderly man condemned to death is Boonshanks, a drifting pickpocket. He's been thieving in Hallowstone Valley for so long that he's become somewhat of a Thanesmire celebrity. Because of his age and illness, his hands constantly shake making his life's profession difficult. Most merchants will pretend not to notice Boonshanks picking a few coins from their pouches just to avoid embarrassing him. Some even consider it good luck to be picked by "Ol' Shanks." Brunel Sleech has sentenced Boonshanks to death for his life of crime — although his true crime is constantly badgering Brunel with nonsense about the dwarvish cook Harfin Hazelnook rising from the dead!



The guardsmen are aware of the party's presence and are used to spectators. If a PC tries to talk with the guardsmen, they will invite him and the rest of the party to join in on their wager. The bet, which is on how long Boonshanks will scream, costs 30 gp per person and the winner gets the pot – after deducting the Thane's tax of course!

Participants should choose a number between 1 and 24. Any unselected numbers are considered the guardsmen's. Once all the bets are in, roll a 1d24 to determine the winning time. Then, read or paraphrase the following:

With a slow spear thrust, the guardsman skewers the old man before a final plea for mercy can leave his lips. He falls, giving a scream of terror as his body disappears into the blackness below. After (1d24) seconds, the scream is suddenly choked into eerie silence. The guardsmen laugh, knocking at each other's shoulders in good nature.

"Told you he'd not last as long as that dwarf. They got big lungs, dwarves. Did I tell you I'd seen one hold its breath for an hour?"

"For the love of the Thane, that was a trout, Devlin – I'd seen it myself!"

The winning bet should be awarded with the pot minus 10 gp (tax!) and 1 point of Luck – but wait! It appears one gold piece is still missing! Unseen by the guardsmen or PCs, Boonshanks miraculously pinched one last coin before plunging to his death.

Any Lawful characters that make the bet are expected to lose Luck for playing against their alignment.

If the PCs try to rescue Boonshanks, the guardsmen will fight back, each making morale checks after reaching half their hit points. If one guardsman falls, the other will attempt to retreat back to Thanesmire to report the aggression. If the PCs haven't killed the Mushroom Men in Area 1-2, the guardsman will be killed before reaching Thanesmire. The guardsmen can also be bribed to spare Boonshanks for 225 gp.

If rescued, Boonshanks is willing to tag along with the party, although he'll flee or betray them at the first sign of danger. They may even feel him try to pick their pockets – quite an honor! If Boonshanks is asked about the beast, or why he was sentenced to death, read or paraphrase the following:

A sudden look of sadness crosses the man's craggy face. He gums his lips in thought, choosing his words with care.

"A true horror, that thing we call a beast. It ain't though... not that anyone at the tavern'll listen. I seen it think. I followed it... Hopin' it'd lead me to its gold. I don't know how to explain, but it's no beast... it was that dwarf cook from the Thane's hall. The dead one! Harfin, I believe was the fellow's name. One minute I was following that beast, and the next...that dwarf appeared. Nobody would listen! The Steward, curse him, accused me of scaring people. 'Not good for the economies,' he said! Well, spit on him!"

Guardsmen (2): Init +0; Atk spear +2 melee (1d8-2); AC 14; HD 2d8; hp 13 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2; AL L.

Boonshanks: Init -2; Atk bite -1 melee (1d4-1); AC 7; HD 1d4; hp 3; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref -3, Will -3; AL N.

Area 1-7B — The Pit (Interior)

Although the pit is thought to be bottomless, the darkness that the people of Thanesmire perceive is actually a massive tangle of wild blackthorn: A dark, root-like vine with sharp barbs known for growing in cold damp cellars. The residual magic of the sunken wizard's tower has caused the blackthorn to flourish and develop a unique desire for self-preservation, coiling and constricting anything that threatens it. Flaming oil or torches thrown into the pit will be quickly smothered by the blackthorn.

The circumference of the pit is rough with stringy roots and loose stones. Any PC attempting to climb down the pit unaided must make a DC 14 Agility check, or else plummet 60' into the cushioning blackthorn below, taking only 1d8 falling damage. If failed, the PC is also vulnerable to the blackthorn's *Barbed Grasp*, and must make a DC 14 Reflex save, or else be coiled head-to-toe by the deadly blackthorn, taking 1d3 damage as the barbed vines constrict. Once caught, the PC will automatically take 1d3 damage each turn until the save is successfully rolled. The PC can forego making the save in exchange for taking his turn to attack the constricting blackthorn at a reduced die attack penalty.

When the PCs descend into the pit, read or paraphrase the following:

As you descend deep into the pit, you realize that the ground encircling you is neither dirt nor clay, but moss-covered greystone. Wet mud seeps out from the large crumbling fissures which split the walls around you. Swiftly, the temperature drops and you are struck by the gagging smell of rotten meat. At arm's length below your feet is a massive tangle of coal-black vines. Light gleams off their sharp barbs as they coil in anticipation beneath you. Hidden beneath the mass of blackthorn, you spy several decomposing bodies and a twisting stairwell!

If Boonshanks was executed, include:

The body of Boonshanks lies dead at the center of the coiling mass, a vine already working its way into his skull. His hands are clenched tightly and his face is frozen in a grimace of victory and pain.

There are two alternative ways to enter the sunken tower besides fighting the blackthorn. The first is by way of the secret passage located in Area 1-4. The second, by traveling through a tunnel hidden within a large fissure upon the western wall of the pit. PCs who inspect the mud-dripping cracks will discover a tunnel leading to Area 2-2. The tunnel is only 4' in diameter, requiring the PCs to travel hunched or crawling single file through it.



During our playtest, the PC's, exhausted from their battle with the Mushroom Men, decided to pin down the blackthorn snare by tossing debris from Durralic Outpost into the pit – thus making the battle as easy as hedge-trimming. There are many smart ways to conquer this potentially deadly encounter!

If the blackthorn mass is destroyed and the pit searched, PCs will discover three crushed human bodies with hands still bound by rope; each at a different level of decomposition. Like all condemned to death in Thanesmire, they wear a simple cotton gown stitched with the Thane's crest. The corpses hold nothing of value. The body of Harfin Hazelnook, the dwarf, is not present, but a DC 10 Intelligence check reveals a pair of discarded bindings cut from newer rope.

If Boonshanks' corpse is present and searched, PCs will discover a gold coin clutched tightly in his hands.

The spiraling granite stairwell beneath the blackthorn safely descends to the 2nd and 3rd Floors of the sunken tower. Directly off the stairwell on the 2nd Floor landing are two sealed doors toward the north and south.

The northern door leading to Area 2-2 is circular with no hinges and carved from dark purple stone. Engraved upon the stone are magical runes spiraling toward a central keyhole. The wheel-like door requires the ruby key found on the corpse in Area 1-2 to be unlocked and rolled away. If anything else is inserted into the keyhole, the runes will glow black as a warning, momentarily absorbing all surrounding light. The second time something besides the correct key is inserted, the PC must make a DC 18 Reflex save, or else take 1d8 damage and 1d4 Strength damage as the runes and keyhole spin violently, mangling the PC's arm.

A DC 25 Strength check is required to forcefully spin open the circular door; for each PC assisting, add 1 + Strength bonus to the roll.

The southern door leading to Area 2-1 is made from ancient cedar and will break from its rusted hinges when opened.

Blackthorn Snare: Int +1; Atk barbed vines +2 melee (1d4 + barbed grasp); AC 8; HD 3d8; hp 18; MV 5'; Act 3d16; SP barbed grasp (see above); SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +1; AL N.

AREA 2 — SUNKEN TOWER

Area 2-1 — Study of Ruzzick-Tol

As you cautiously step into the darkened clammy room, the pungent odor of fresh feces quickly invades your nostrils. Chattering whispers echo in the shadows around you; their sources constantly evading your sight. The stone walls of the room crumble with deep cracks and loose mortar. A mound of dirt spills in from an iron window upon the western wall. Evenly spaced throughout the room tower four mighty piles of dung, ascending like clay monoliths. To the west, a snakewood bookcase lies face-down upon the floor, toppled forward to reveal a small archway once hidden behind it. To its left is a wooden lever headed by a brass skull.

This room, once used by Ruzzick-Tol as a study, is now infested by a dray, or family, of grunricks. The grunrick, a relative of the brown forest squirrel, lives underground and is recognizable by its nest built from dung and scavenged materials. A timber-monger who wishes for a long life knows better than to touch a grunrick's nest. The moment a PC disturbs a dung pile, he is attacked by eight adult grunrick who lie in wait upon the tops of their nests.

The nests are built from a mess of objects including: bone fragments, dried blackthorn, book covers, swaths of fabric, iron hinges, crossbars, etc; all held together by a mixture of dirt and fecal matter. At the center of each pile are 1d12 infant grunrick, each the size of a man's thumb. If properly raised and trained, a fully developed grunrick makes for a loyal, albeit feculent, companion. Any PC who searches through the nests will uncover a cracked copper helmet, a spell scroll of *Comprehend languages* (See core rulebook, pg. 136), and a pewter ring door knocker bound in gnomish runes.

This magical knocker is known in Gnome lore as *Gladral's Pass*, and was used by said mythical gnome to stealthily traverse the dimensions of space — often for purposes of mischief. When held at the center of a 5' by 5' min. clear, flat surface, the knocker will sparkle periwinkle and magically bind. Emitting from its pewter knobs, arcane beams stream across the bound surface, outlining the shape of a small 1' door. Pulling the door open via the knocker will reveal a two-way portal accessing a randomly determined point within fifty cubic feet of the knocker. To determine the point,

roll 1d100 for each the X axis, Y axis, and Z axis. Mapping out from the knocker (0,0,0), a result of 1–50 represents a negative value on the grid, while 51–100 represents a positive value. Once the magical door is closed, the exhausted knocker will fall away. Gladral's Pass can be used thrice daily – requiring time to reset its own position within the universe. For each month spent on focused study of the knocker (DC 12 Intelligence check), the PC gains further control over its resulting portal. He may learn to extend the zero point to a select location by 5' and narrow the axis results by 10' each time he is successful in his studies.

If the fallen bookcase is examined, PCs will notice runes inscribed along the edges of its back as well as damage upon its right side. Underneath the fallen bookcase are torn hardcovers and scattered pages – all of them soggy and unreadable. Notable, however, is a single book frozen upon the top shelf, which can only be seen if the bookshelf is flipped or righted. If PCs try to remove the book from the shelf, they discover it to be wooden and immobile. On its spine in gold calligraphy is written the phrase “Nepo-Esolc.” Uttering the phrase upon the book's spine will cause the enchanted bookshelf to properly open and close.

If the secret passage's stone archway is inspected, a DC 10 Intelligence check will notice glyphs similar to those on the fallen bookcase eroded around the archway's frame. Any PC who first passes into Area 2–2 will reactivate the enchanted bookcase, causing its glyphs to illuminate and returning it to its locked position. Any PCs caught standing between the bookcase and the entrance to Area 2–2 must make a DC 14 Reflex save, or take 1d4 damage as the shelf slams into them. All those who fail the save are locked within Area 2–2 along with the first PC who entered.

If the brass-skull topped lever is pulled, it snaps off in the PCs hand and sends the chamber into a shuddering symphony of rumbling groans. Hidden within the stone walls, ancient cog wheels, damaged by the towers collapse, fail to operate. Besides making the room tremble for several long seconds and knocking loose many crumbling stones, nothing happens.

Grunrick (8): Int +3; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4 +1 plus disease); AC 10; HD 1d6+2; hp 6 each; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 1d20; SP disease (DC 7 Fort save or additional 1d6 damage); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will -1; AL L.

Area 2-2 — Room of Reflection

Falling pebbles bounce off your armor like hailstones as you peer into the crumbling vault, its southern section already buried under heaps of rubble. Just beyond reach of the bone-crushing rock slide stands a strange sundial adorned with seven golden gnomons, or time hands. Upon the northern wall, a tall mirror framed in ornate black-palm wood reflects the vault in an illusion of depth and familiarity.

This hidden vault was where Ruzzick-Tol locked away his unstable attempts at immortality. Many of the cursed devices once stored here were stolen centuries ago, bringing ill fortune to all those who claimed possession.

The sundial is crafted from black-bone ivory and is worth 100 gp to a collector or noble. The dial face depicts a scene of Ruzzick-Tol magically suspending his tower above the primordial sea. The golden gnomons are masterfully smithed to bear the resemblance of a spellcast. Written around its circumference is the riddle:

*“A nightmare for some.
For others, a savior I come.
What you cannot touch, see, or hear.
Close your eyes and I come near.”*

When in absolute darkness, the dial glows displaying the times of all seven dimensions of Death. Each of the seven luminous streaks act as portholes looking down upon an endless sea of churning souls. It is said that those who possess the times of Death's dimensions can foresee the time of their own demise. The first time a PC gazes upon the dial in absolute darkness, his mind becomes momentarily awash with pain and sorrow. Although he can never recall the vague imagery cast upon him, he will unexpectedly receive a premonition when next dealt a fatal blow — granting the PC a Luck check to avoid the fatal damage!

Carved into the headpiece of the mirror's frame is a depiction of the sun rising in the west and setting in the east. The sun's phases are represented using three different gemstones: amber, honey agate, and ruby. If removed, each is worth 1d6 gp. When a PC inspects the mirror, make a secret DC 10 Intelligence check, and if successful, he will notice his reflected appearance becoming younger. Dust and dirt on his face will lift; recent wounds will

heal. The bewitched mirror reflects time backwards. If one were to look into the mirror for 10 minutes, he would watch himself grow 10 years younger within the reflection. Once the PC's reflected timeline reaches conception, he disappears from the mirror for eternity. Those who continue to gaze into the mirror for more than two minutes are required to make a DC 14 Will save, or else become entranced for 1d3 days. If the mesmerized PC is forced away from the mirror, he will constantly find reasons to go back. If a PC attempts to remove the mirror from the wall, it shatters and cannot be repaired. If the mirror is destroyed while a PC is trapped gazing into it, the affliction will lift – but not before a twenty-five percent chance of the PC regressing into the version of himself which existed within the mirror the moment it was shattered! If his reflection had passed conception and disappeared from the mirror, the PC will disappear from existence forever. It takes 1d12 hours for the PC to age back into his former physique.

Any PC who inspects the southern wall of rubble will discover a small dirt tunnel leading up to Area 1-7B. The tunnel is only 4' in diameter, requiring the PCs to travel single file through it.

Area 2-3 — Bedchamber

The hefty door screeches sideways on rusted iron tracks, revealing a mostly unspoiled bedchamber blanketed in dust. Upon the northern wall rests an empty canopy bedframe draped in blue velvet. A flock of feathers spill out from its rotting mattress. At the foot of the frame leans the hunched body of a dead man whose bones poke through his shriveled skin. His empty eye sockets gape in your direction as if surprised by your arrival. To the northeast is a small unlit fireplace with fresh wood in its firebox. Occupying the southwestern wall is a granite workbench. A host of strange tools hang above it on corroded hooks. On the tabletop rests a lone obsidian box. Puddled in the chair before it is an elegant robe.

Within this bedchamber, Ruzzick-Tol performed his Foul Hand Ritual in solitude. If the lambskin mattress or feather pile is searched, a PC with a knowledge of birds will find three large red-crested feathers with ebony shafts from a Bloodkeet worth 50 sp each. Also retrieved from the pile is an oak block with the wood-burned outline of a nude woman; her figure adorned with two small rubies. This ancient tablet was one of many carried

by traveling brothels to exhibit their courtesans and is worth 10 gp to any bachelor of noble birth.

The hunched body at the bed's footboard is that of an ill-fated tomb robber. The clothing he wears is noticeably simple with no metal buttons or buckles – with the exception of a cold iron cast resembling a tall boot which he wears around his leg. His form crumbles away at the slightest touch sending an unnoticed iron chest clattering to the floor. The small chest has been booby-trapped and requires a DC 12 Disable trap skill check to disarm. Any PC who tries opening the iron chest without deactivating it must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or else will feel a slight numbness in their fingers for 1d12 days. This numbness is all that remains of a once powerful spell infused into the chest. Pooled at the chest's bottom is a soupy, mucus-like layer of yellow sludge. If the sludge is searched, PCs will discover a twizzled copper ring. Etched on the inner edge of the ring are the words, "For Grinny, Love Pa." This ring belonged to a homely milk maiden named Grinelda, who was loved and betrayed by Ruzzick-Tol, her childhood friend.

If a PC investigates the obsidian box located on the workbench, read or paraphrase the following:

On the workbench, among stacks of decaying paper, is an obsidian box sealed by an egg shaped ruby with black speckles. The outside of the box is layered with spell glyphs and geometrical star maps. The layers seem to shift as you move around them, giving the illusion of endless space beyond the box's flat surface. Sunken into its lid are four funneled holes rimmed by dark red stains. Like the emotionless eyes of a spider descending upon its prey, the holes seem to watch your every move.

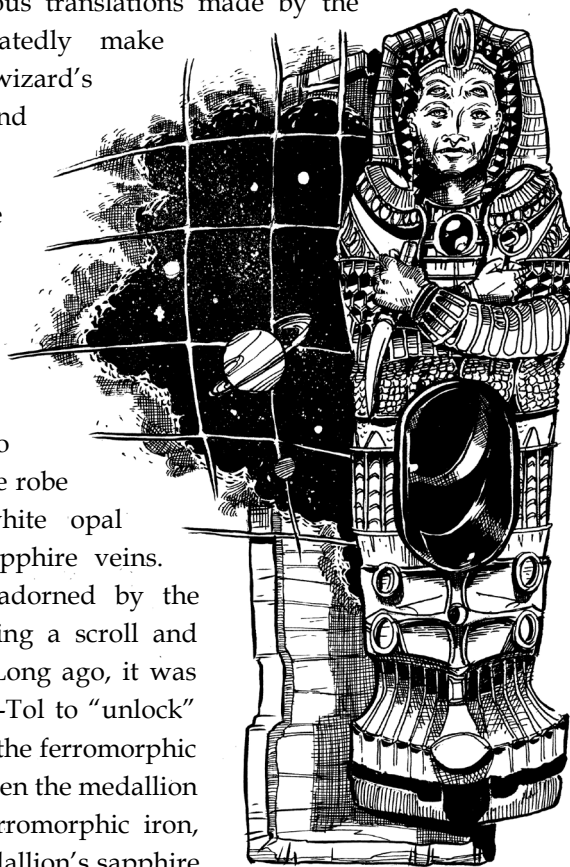
This box is none other than the enchanted container of the foul hand of Ruzzick-Tol. The four holes upon the box's lid are where the wizard inserted the harvested fingers of a Human, Halfling, Elf, and Dwarf to feed the blood ritual. Upon pressing the ruby, the box's lid springs open silently. The inside of the box is divided into four slots carved to hold the missing obsidian spell tablets. Wizards and PCs with astral knowledge will notice that the underside of the lid features an etched star map centered by a golden starpoint. When held up to the sky at midnight and aligned with the northern star, the lid's four holes map the four possible locations of a true Blood Moon.

Currently, the box is empty save for four skeletal fingers and a tattered scroll. Obscuring the crude writings upon the parchment are red stains of raspberry jam. This unusual document is the one desperately sought by Joffrey Blunderblouse, the bard at The Hilted Eye, and vaguely describes the Foul Hand Ritual. Penned by a reptilian warlock, this text is written in the language of Lizard-men. Around the original text in frilly penmanship are vague notes and dubious translations made by the bard. The jottings repeatedly make reference to a poison sea, wizard's hand, Blood Moon box, and immortal ritual.

If a PC investigates the discarded robe, he finds a mummified fetus wrapped inside. This is the corpse of the once great Ruzzick-Tol, whose experiments with immortality only led him to die young. In a pocket of the robe is a necklace with a white opal medallion infused with sapphire veins.

The square medallion is adorned by the image of a phoenix clutching a scroll and short-sword in its talons. Long ago, it was worn and used by Ruzzick-Tol to "unlock" objects he had preserved in the ferromorphic jelly located in Area 4-1. When the medallion first comes within 5' of ferromorphic iron, PC's will notice that the medallion's sapphire veins glow and the medallion becomes warm. The closer the medallion gets to the iron, the more intense its glow and warmth. Beads of dew begin to form on the ferromorphic iron and its surface begins to swirl. Upon contact with the medallion, the ferromorphic iron cast dissipates, releasing the object or creature held within.

If the fireplace is inspected, PCs will find that what had resembled a log is actually a thick root growing up from a cracked iron grate within the firebox. This grate is the lid of a trapdoor that Ruzzick-Tol used to shovel



ashes down to his greenhouse. A DC 8 Intelligence check will spot the trapdoor's hinges. The trapdoor in the firebox is weak and will collapse under anyone that weighs more than 200 lbs. Any heavier PC who stands on the trapdoor must make a DC 15 Reflex save, or else tumble 45' into the mouth of the pitcher plant in Area 3-2. The PC takes no falling damage as he splashes into the pitcher plant's acids, but instead becomes trapped within its gaping maw.

If the trapdoor is lifted, the PCs will reveal a cramped chute that descends to Area 3-2. It is too narrow for anyone but a Halfling to safely climb down unaided. Larger PCs may be raised or lowered by rope, but with their hands tucked tightly against their sides. The walls of the chute are laddered by vines and roots, requiring a Halfling to make a DC 8 Agility check to safely descend.

Above, the fireplace's wide chimney ascends to the tree hollow in Area 1-4 and requires a PC to make a DC 8 Agility check to climb. A failed climb roll results in the PC taking 2d6 falling damage from plunging 20' back onto the firebox's weakened trapdoor. Upon impact, there is a fifty percent chance that the iron trapdoor will collapse, further dropping the PC 45' into the pitcher plant in Area 3-2. Again, the PC takes no additional falling damage as he splashes into the pitcher plant's acids, but instead becomes trapped within its gaping maw.

Area 3-1 — Hall of Containers

A draft of chilly air exhales past you as you emerge at the center of a long and narrow hall running east to west. Littering the floor like cracked eggshells are iron fragments which crunch beneath each step you take. Rows of wooden shelves mount the walls endlessly, ascending up into the darkness above. The shelves within an arm's reach are bare, but glistening iron objects can be seen higher up. Deep at both ends of the passage, you glimpse two pairs of sealed oak doors. At the passage's center, the spiraling granite stairwell continues to descend.

Suddenly, looming in the shadowy alcoves to your immediate left and right you spot four metallic humanoid figures; an elf, a dwarf, a halfling, and a human — their mangled hands reaching out at you with violent intent!

This long, pantry-like hall is where Ruzzick-Tol stored rare objects preserved in ferromorphic jelly — a curdled liquid with magical properties located in Area 4-1.

The four metallic humanoids flanking the stairwell are prisoners of Ruzzick-Tol. Although their bodies have been locked in ferromorphic iron, their minds have been left intact, trapped in aeons of insanity. If a jumpy adventurer strikes at any metallic humanoid, its weakened iron shell will shatter, releasing the crazed mortal trapped within. The broken metal clings to the humanoid like an iron breastplate, modifying its AC by 4. Fortunately, the iron casing and modifier will dissipate if touched by Ruzzick-Tol's medallion. The crazed humanoids will fight to the death, feverishly going after any wizards first!

If a metallic humanoid is inspected, PCs will notice that 9 out of 10 fingers have been reduced to mere stumps. Ruzzick-Tol harvested the fingers of these prisoners for his Foul Hand Ritual — placing each harvested finger stump-down into the lid of the Blood Moon box located in Area 2-3.

The repeating rows of wooden shelves extend 40' to the ceiling and are crowded with unrecognizable ferromorphic iron shapes. Like all items cased in ferromorphic iron, each metallic shape is smooth and cold to the touch. To reach the objects, a PC must make a DC 12 Agility check to climb the shelves, or else fall 20' taking 2d6 falling damage. Once climbed, the PC will discover 1d8+2 iron encased objects.

There are two ways to release an object from its ferromorphic iron casing. The first is by physically breaking it open. If a PC wishes to physically crack the casing, he must make a DC 16 Strength check, or else hear the contents within crumble. The second method in releasing an object is by touching it to Ruzzick-Tol's medallion. This action will cause the casing to instantly dissipate as described in Area 2-3.

When a PC opens a ferromorphic iron object, roll 1d50 on Table IV to determine its contents.

At the eastern end of the hall are two oak doors. The wooden boards of the northern door are marred with splintering dents as if someone tried hammering nails through from the opposite side. It is unlocked and opens to Area 3-2. The boards of the southern door bulge out, holding back a deadly barrage of dirt. When inspected, the door groans deeply, snapping tiny oak splinters across the stone floor. If a PC pulls open the door, he must make a DC 18 Reflex save, or else be pounded backwards by a wave of dirt into Area 3-2, taking 1d8 damage.

At the western end of the hall are two additional doors. The northern door has been rusted shut and requires a DC 15 Strength check to open. Once opened, the door leads to Area 3-4. The southern door has been broken-in by an axe, leaving a hole large enough to crawl through. The opening leads to Area 3-3.

The spiraling granite stairwell at the hall's center descends to Area 4-1, but the steps abruptly end in a 10' wide hole. Across from the hole, the stairwell walls have collapsed, making continuing forward impossible.

If any of the PCs had their weapon swept away by the cyclone in Area 1-5, randomly select one of those weapons. When the PCs approach the hole, they find their weapon pinched under a small boulder. The weapon vibrates and hums with power. If freed, the weapon will fly down the hole into the darkness of Area 4-1. If a PC tries grabbing the weapon, he must make a DC 16 Strength check, or else be yanked over the edge falling 25' into Area 4-1 and taking 2d6 falling damage. The weapon will be missing once the PC regains himself. If the PC succeeds the save, he maintains control over the weapon, although it will be constantly tugging him toward Area 5-2.

Crazed Dwarf: Int +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 10; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP iron casing (+4 AC); SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +3; AL N.

Crazed Woman: Int +3; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4+2); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP iron casing (+4 AC); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

Crazed Elf: Int +3; Atk bite +3 melee (1d4+1); AC 10; HD 1d8; hp 8; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP iron casing (+4 AC); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; AL N.

Crazed Halfling: Int +2; Atk bite +2 melee (1d4+1); AC 8; HD 1d6; hp 5; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP iron casing (+4 AC); SV Fort +1, Ref -3, Will +3; AL N.

Table IV: Ferromorphic Preservatives (d50)

This table lists numerous strange ingredients preserved within the iron casts of Ruzzick-Tol's ferromorphic jelly. Many of these items are purposely left vague and their effects may be expanded on by the judge.

Roll	Preserved Goods	Roll	Preserved Goods
01	Powdered unicorn horn	26	Griffon's baby teeth
02	Jar of Halfling blood	27	Hive of fire ants
03	A vial of primordial ooze	28	Spell utterance in a jar
04	Wooden box of bone splinters	29	Pixie shavings
05	Marsh poppy pedals	30	Eruptive salts
06	Forest troll callus	31	Transparent egg pod
07	Whale bladder	32	734 Unique snowflakes
08	Rainbow mold spores	33	Hag's whiskers
09	Swollen tongue powder	34	Nightshade berries
10	Head of rival wizard	35	Wine caste, vintage unknown
11	Sack of jackal noses	36	Subterranean firefly
12	Living moss	37	Elf tears (common)
13	Strangleroot seeds	38	Hydra blood

Table IV: Ferromorphic Preservatives (d50) (cont.)

Roll	Preserved Goods	Roll	Preserved Goods
14	Orb of spider silk	39	Bundle of wolfsbane
15	Grizzly orchid	40	Leftover Chinese food
16	Mountain stone toad	41	Ball of organic twine
17	Two smaller iron objects! Reroll twice!	42	Orangutan howl
18	Lapis larch bark	43	Maltese tiger paw
19	Unlabeled earwax ball	44	Slippery elm pulp
20	Brain of a lizard-man	45	Collection of interesting rocks
21	Wart roots	46	Three bound fox tails
22	Dried gorgon eyeball	47	A horrific memory
23	Giagantionus jumping bean	48	Dehydrated sea sponge
24	Phallic mushroom	49	Tri-dimensional anthropoid
25	Sealed cocoon that emits hum	50	Primordial oyster milk

Area 3-2 — Alchemic Grow Room

With slight resistance, the oak door pulls open to what sounds like a twang of bowstrings. Where the door once rested, a netting of vines and creepers remain. Through the curtain of vines you see a miraculous overgrowth of exotic plants sprouting from four long troughs of soil. Within the soil crawl rat-sized glowworms that cast the garden in a dim blue light. At the northeastern corner of the room, a bulbous pitcher plant the size of a horse gawks toward the ceiling. The walls of the room are covered by a dense barricade of minty plant-life which freshens the otherwise stale air.

This room was once an alchemic grow room, housing many of Ruzzick-Tol's most exotic herbs. After aeons of overgrowth, the room has been all

but destroyed by the plants. Any PC who inspects the large carnivorous pitcher plant will notice an opening in the ceiling 15' above it leading to Area 2-3. The plant has adapted to digest bobcats, squirrels, and unlucky adventurers who fall down from Areas 1-4 or 2-3. Due to the shaft's narrow size, only a Halfling will have the elbowroom to ascend unaided. Any Halfling PC who attempts to climb the shaft must make a DC 8 Agility check or else splash waist deep into the pitcher plant's photosynthetic acid below, taking no falling damage but instead becoming trapped within its gaping maw.

For each round a PC is trapped within the pitcher plant, they must make a DC 16 Fortitude save, or else their armor corrodes, taking -1 permanent AC damage. Once the PC's armor bonus reaches 0 AC, he begins taking 1d8 damage each round instead. The inside of the pitcher plant is slick with acid and honey-scented oils, requiring a DC 17 Agility check to successfully climb out. The inner lining of the plant has hardened to withstand the claws of trapped animals, giving it an AC 15. Piercing the plant from within requires an edged weapon and successful attack roll. The outer skin of the plant is much weaker, only having an AC 8. If the digesting PC is cut free from the pitcher plant, acids will spill out of the gash, causing 1d6 damage to anyone standing within 5' of the opening.

If the bottom of the pitcher plant is searched, PCs will find a copper axehead among the beastial claws, rotted teeth, and brittle bones. Crudely etched into the copper is a romantic forest scene depicting three canaries upon a spruce branch. This axehead was once wielded by an unlucky woodsman whose entire family succumbed to hypothermia after he failed to return with firewood.

If the PCs investigate the soil troughs or walls of the room, they discover a translucent pink vine clinging to the surrounding stone. The vine is from an elvish vegetable which carries a life-nurturing substance, healing any PC who consumes it for 1d8 hp. The plant surges with enough nutrients to heal three PCs, or 3d8 hp total; however, the liquid will spoil if stored for more than three hours. Any Elvish PC or PC with an herbal background may recognize the rare plant and its properties with a DC 16 Intelligence check. If the PCs dig up the vegetable, they uncover a squash-sized, deep purple sack that continuously expands and contracts, pumping nutrients throughout the plant. If carefully removed from the plant, the sac is worth

150 gp to a sage, wizard, or anyone else with the means and wealth to value it. It takes one week for the plant to regenerate its nurturing fluids.

Area 3-3 — Wizard's Mews

As you peer around the silent and barren room, your eyes are drawn to a rack of small metal cages stacked upon the eastern wall. Next to them, a broken writing desk lies on its side; the legs having been snapped out from underneath it. Scattered upon the floor are worn quills and dried ink pots. A single breached window on the southern wall lets in a mound of dirt and rock.

This room was where Ruzzick-Tol drafted important letters and housed his messenger falcons. The cages on the eastern wall are void of life, but still hold the skeletons of the half-dozen birds who once called the iron cages home. Worn around each skeleton's bony ankle is a small brass ring. One of the rings has a miniature scroll bound to it by silver thread. If the PCs carefully unroll the fragile scroll, read or paraphrase the following letter:

"Honored Lord,

The emissary you sent departed many moons ago — along with ample food, drink, and rest as requested. If you write me again I pray onto Myassari that your lands and women run barren until death buries your house name. For I witnessed the birth of your father's father and can pluck a lineage from this earth as easily as I can allow the weed to root.

— Ruzzick-Tol, Warden of Temporal Being"

If the PCs search the writing desk, they discover a leather-bound book bearing the insignia of Ruzzick-Tol: a phoenix clutching a scroll and short-sword. Inside are thousands of handwritten dates, charts, and star maps predicting centuries of Blood Moons. Although wizards will find that most of the journal is comprehensible, drafted in a form of ancient Undercommon, the dates remain unintelligible, appearing as a scramble of letters and geometric shapes. Within the margins of the earliest pages, Ruzzick-Tol has hastily scribbled brief notes.

The earliest reads:

"It worked! It actually worked! The Halfling was hardest to come by, but the dumb little fool just wandered to my step looking for a meal. Trusted wizards! Ha! And right before a Blood Moon at that... I can feel the young blood surging through my veins as I write, yet my body doesn't look a day younger. Grinelda was wrong! It WAS worth trapping my tomes into those four tablets. I feel like I could live a thousand years!"

After several ink-stained pages, another entry reads:

"Results were different this time. My wrinkles are noticeably reduced and my bones no longer ache. I think I may also have grown an inch taller. Maybe I did physically change the first time, but was too shaken to notice? I was so excited that I forgot to lock Axnelda's cage. She made it to the observatory before I caught her. Hands took quite the burn."

The third note, past dozens of crossed out moon-charts and missing pages, is noticeably different from the previous, being penned by a steadier hand:

"The ritual is much more unstable than I first predicted. I went to the mirror and found that the body I now possess is that which I had during my academy years. I feel splendid, although I must admit envy for the beard of my later years! The lack of control over this blood magic only proves its power! I've hired, or rather imprisoned, a dwarven artisan to engrave the tablets with depictions of Axnelda. Now Myassari will surely look down with favor upon seeing their beauty and power."

The remaining decade of entries are faded and unreadable. One entry near the end of the journal remains intact, but is written so shakily that only the ending is decipherable. It reads:

"The hand of tablets is losing its power and I'm afraid that I may not live to see the next Blood Moon if betrayed again. I know Fate is an element of the magic, but if I could only peer into the ritual box as I drew them out. Maybe I could then be again dealt the hand that turned me so young so long ago! Grinelda's finger didn't make a difference either...so much for that theory. She was shocked that I'd taken it when last we spoke. Still, she refuses, so encased she'll remain."

Area 3-4 — Power Chamber

You walk into an orbiculate room surrounded by eight obelisks, each six feet tall. The top of each obelisk is veiled in a web of pale green creepers and goiterious fungus. Although obscured by vegetation, you see that runic inscriptions are carved upon each. Two of the obelisks have fallen and cracked open along their sides like iron maidens. Recessed in the stone floor run countless narrow channels meeting at the bases of each obelisk.

Bobbing in midair at the room's center is a fist-sized gemstone humming deeply with the labored breath of an angry god. Like the dying coals of an extinguished campfire, a faint glow flickers at the heart of the stone. Its thousand planes magnificently scatter your light into a spray of multi-colored star points upon the pale walls.

This room was the engine that kept Ruzzick-Tol's tower suspended above the primordial sea. Now, the crystal powerstone wavering at its center only holds enough energy to animate the stone golems located in Area 5-2. If inspected, PCs will notice that the chalk-white crystal radiates a faint, high-pitched buzz. The crystal cannot be removed from its suspended animation until the remaining six obelisks have been destroyed. Once freed, the crystal will glow unbearably bright before crashing to the floor. The stone floor beneath the falling crystal will crack upon impact, for the powerstone weighs more than the entire tower itself!

If inspected, the dead crystal is charred black and no longer emits sound. If a PC wishes to break the heavy crystal into carryable shards, he must make a DC 20 Strength check. If failed, he takes 1d4 damage as his weapon reverberates violently in his hands. If successful, roll 1d100 to determine the number of shards produced. Even when fractured, the powerstone shards remain unbearably heavy, restricting PCs to a carry limit of one each. The shards remain impossible to carry if the result is under 15. If the resulting shard count is between 15 and 45, then any PCs carrying a shard will suffer a -1 Agility penalty. Each shard is worth 75 gp to a lucrative jeweler or master artisan. With the crystal's power extinguished, the stone golems in Area 5-2 will no longer activate.

The obelisks are each inscribed with a demonic binding spell and were terminal prisons for the eight unlucky men bound within. A third level wizard who is versed in demonic language may study the obelisks to learn



the *Binding* spell (see *core rulebook*, pg. 270). Although their bodies were bound in stone, the prisoner's heads sat exposed at the top of each obelisk. After months of elaborate ritual, their bodies were fused with the tower's powerstone, transforming their physical time into raw *arcana*. The prisoner's biological clocks were scrambled; slowing their rate of decay and blurring the lines between life and death. Ruzzick-Tol would not only farm them of energy, but he'd also dehydrate them, only to relieve their thirst with experimental elixirs.

If the PCs pull away the creepers and fungus obscuring the tops of the six standing obelisks, they reveal a partially decomposed head atop each. The prisoners' eyes and tongues have long since rotted away, but their flesh remains rosy and alive. Once uncovered, their six toothless maws open and shut like baby birds begging for a worm. The obelisks can be destroyed (killing the prisoner trapped within) with a DC 12 Strength check. If failed, the prisoner's head will be knocked loose, sending its diseased mouth chomping at the PC's shoulder, resulting in 1 permanent ability point damage (determine randomly).

Two of the eight obelisks collapsed long ago during the tower's fall, cracking apart where their halves were once magically bound. If the PCs inspect the toppled obelisks, they find a pair of brittle human bones entombed within. The ancient bones have fused with the surrounding stone and are cratered with hundreds of tiny holes.

Area 4-1 — Ferromorphic Fountain

You descend into a cavernous ash-stone chamber; its floor buried under a sea of dead blackthorn. As you wade waist-deep through the crackling husks, your eyes catch the twinkle of golden thread woven into four large tapestries mounting the walls. The spiraling stairwell at the room's center ends in a heap of shattered granite. To the west, a large semi-circular fountain springs forth from the wall below a relief of a young woman's face. A milky white jelly curdles from her eyes into a strange opal basin below. To the southeast rests the entrance of a smaller room, its door splintered and twisted ajar. To the north, a thick stone archway gives entrance to a steeply descending passage. Chiseled upon the archway's keystone is a mysterious crest.

This round chamber is where Ruzzick-Tol preserved rare biodegradable ingredients within cold iron casts by way of ferromorphic jelly; thus allowing the object's physicality to transcend time. The fountain on the room's western wall depicts the face of Grinelda; the wizard's first and only mortal love beyond himself. Her soft features are broken by a deep fissure across her right cheek. The enchanted fountain is carved from white opal infused with glowing veins of sapphire. PCs may recognize this to be the same unique stone as the medallion found in Area 2-3. Like the medallion, the fountain is warm to the touch. Churning within the fountain's basin is a white jelly sparkling with millions of tiny silver flakes. This ferromorphic jelly was one of the less deadly byproducts of Ruzzick-Tol's immortal experiments.

If the jelly is removed from the enchanted fountain, whether through consumption or other means, it will harden into enchanted iron. There are only two ways to destroy ferromorphic iron. First, the iron will instantly dissipate when touched against the enchanted white opal of either the medallion or the fountain. Second, PCs can crack the iron cast with a DC 16 Strength check. If failed, whatever was held within is damaged or destroyed.

If the jelly has been ingested, the afflicted PC must make a DC 15 Fortitude save every turn or else take 1d4 damage until the ferromorphic iron has been dissipated or removed. If a PC gets any part of his body coated in jelly, his limb(s) will be cast in iron. Being cast in iron will not hurt the PC, but it can limit his mobility and communication. A PC in possession of Ruzzick-Tol's medallion is resistant to the jelly's hardening effect.

The floor of the chamber is covered in 3' of dead blackthorn. Those who search through the decay will find the bones of both men and animals, a life-sized iron grunrick "statue", a tarnished silver short-sword, and a sheet of iron leaves. While searching the blackthorn husks, PCs may notice it rustle, or may feel something move across their feet. A DC 14 Intelligence check will glimpse something large and metallic moving beneath the blackthorn. This is the enormous and enduring snake Sissarinack, who has dwelled within the fallen tower for a short two centuries.

When the PCs make to enter Area 4-2, read or paraphrase the following:

Suddenly, the sea of dead blackthorn around you begins to stir. Like the glint of a sword blade, a massive snake with coils as thick as an auroch bursts out from the husks. The snake's metallic body shimmers in the torchlight as it strikes out!

Sissarinack is a constrictor-type snake covered by a layer of ferromorphic iron, giving her a powerful metallic exoskeleton (+4 AC). Sometimes the iron-clad scales shed off, leaving the "iron leaves" that bewilder the villagers of Thanesmire. This iron shell can be removed – perhaps by pinning the medallion on her or making her swallow it. Once shed of her iron armor, Sissarinack will lose the ferromorphic iron's AC bonus. She will fight to the death to protect her egg clutch located in Area 4-2, always refocusing on the target closest to her nest. When she successfully scores a bite, she wraps her silvery coils around the victim. Each round thereafter, Sissarinack attempts another bite and also constricts the coiled target for an automatic 1d6 damage. If the PCs retreat from Areas 4-1 and 4-2, she will not follow.

On the circumference of the room hang four moth-eaten velvet tapestries; each depicting a different stage in a phoenix's life cycle: birth, life, death, and rebirth. The rebirth tapestry, located next to the thick stone archway, depicts a newborn phoenix bursting from ash and flames. The tips of the flames hold five inlaid rubies worth 3 gp each. Behind the tapestry is a secret passage leading to Area 5-1. Although the sealed entrance is well-hidden among the stones of the wall, deep scrapes upon the floor will be noticed by anyone removing the tapestry or searching for secret passages.

The trefoil archway on the northern wall gives passage to Area 5-2. Chiseled into the crown of the archway is a phoenix clutching a scroll in its left talon; its right talon is empty and strangely twisted. If PCs have found Ruzzick-Tol's journal or medallion, they may recognize the crest as being nearly identical. The one missing element is a short-sword in its right talon. If a PC places a short-sword in the empty talon and rotates 90 degrees, the talon tightens and the secret passage to Area 5-1 grinds open. A thief using his *Pick lock* skill on the archway can identify how the mechanism functions on a DC 16 Skill check, and can pick the mechanism on a DC 24 Skill check. The revealed secret passage is shallow and grants access to a descending ladder.

Sissarinack: Init +3; Atk bite +1 melee (1d6 + constrict); AC 11; HD 4d8; hp 25; MV 30'; Act 2d20; SP constriction 1d6, iron casing (+4 AC); Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

Area 4-2 — Egg Nursery

Stepping past the mangled door, you peer over a towering mound of dry soil into what remains of a small storage room. A gaping hole on the eastern wall has given way to heaps of dirt, overloading the room and causing the stone floor to collapse inward. Swept along the edges of the funnel-like sinkhole are three warped crates; each one barely visible within the silt. At the center of the hole rest a dozen giant, tear-drop shaped orbs. Like a beseeched sun peeking out behind dark clouds, the orbs pearlescent color shines out amid the bed of dirt.

Once used for storage, this small dirt-ridden room now acts as an egg nursery for the great snake Sissarinack. At the bottom of the steep sinkhole rest her clutch of eggs ready to hatch at any moment. The sinkhole can be easily traversed under calm circumstance. Any PC who is running or fighting within the room must make a DC 12 Reflex save, or else tumble down the slope, taking no damage but smashing into the egg clutch. If disturbed, half of the clutch will hatch, releasing six hungry snakelings.

Although weak, the hungry snakelings are fast and tend to attack in groups of two. Like their mother, they constrict their target after a successful bite, causing 1d3 additional damage each, but only after two or more snakelings are constricting the same target.

At one time, the three warped cedar crates contained finely packed batches of alchemical ingredients. Listed upon a fragile ledger found within are: (6) wolfsbane, (7) tonic tree frog spore (dehydrated for shipping), (3) tear of a weeping willow, (7) Venus flytrap stalk, (2) iron bar. Centuries of decay, along with the storage room's collapse, have destroyed all but the rusted iron bars and a small deerskin pouch. Within the pouch are seven tonic tree frog spores. The raisin-like spores are tough to chew and taste like bile, but when swallowed heal for 1d6 hp each. If the spores are hydrated before consumption, they double in size and healing strength.

Hungry Snakelings (6): Init +5; Atk bite +1 melee (1d3 + constrict); AC 7; HD 2d8; hp 9 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP constriction 1d3 (see above); Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +2; AL L.

Area 5-1 — Phoenix's Cell

Your grip tightens on the iron rungs of the ladder as heat bellows past you from deep within the shaft. After a slow, careful descent, your feet find ground upon a solid stone floor. You wipe the pooling sweat from your brow and take in the dark octagonal room behind you. At its center stands a large metallic cage perched atop a basalt pedestal. Like giant anthills, piles of ash engulf its base. A small rusted wheel wrapped in chains is mounted upon the eastern wall. Two glowing orbs, like droplets of fire, peer out from within the cage; their attentive gaze following your every move!

This cell was built by Ruzzick-Tol to hold Axnela, his captive phoenix. Only the size of a small donkey, Axnela sits perched upon a bar within the cage watching the party with curiosity and caution. Her body is starved and skeletal, with fire-touched feathers molting from malnutrition. For millennia since the passing of Ruzzick-Tol, she's been doomed to a cycle of birth, starvation, death, and rejuvenation. Subsequently, the ceiling and floor of the cell are deeply blackened with soot.

If a PC approaches the phoenix, she'll belt a harrowing scream, becoming inflamed and brightly illuminating the cell. Axnela's scream is deafening, and any PCs with exposed ears must make a DC 15 Reflex save to quickly clasp them, or else lose 1d3 Intelligence. The bird can be calmed by feeding her fresh meat, or by calling out her name, Axnela, which can be learned from Ruzzick-Tol's journal located in Area 3-3. She will also quiet once all PCs have retreated at least 15' from her cage.

If attacked, Axnela will use her harrowing scream while throwing whips of flame at the nearest PC. Any targeted PC successfully struck by Axnela's flame whip must make a DC 10 Reflex save, or else catch fire suffering 1d4 damage each round. Although Axnela's flames are weaker, they are also more difficult to extinguish. Those who catch fire can spend a full round putting out the flames by making a DC 14 Reflex save. Upon death, the phoenix's body will incinerate, spewing smoke and flame for twenty-four hours. Once the fire is extinguished, a small red phoenix egg with black speckles can be found within the corpse's ash.

The cage uses a simple hatch lock which can be easily lifted open. If released, Axnela will frantically charge toward freedom, attacking any PCs

who stand in her way. Once she reaches Area 4-1, she takes flight and exits the tower. A phoenix's natural body temperature makes it impossible to bind or capture her with rope or any other flammable material.

If PCs search her cage, they uncover Axnelda's hinged, crimson collar ornamented by brass studs. When rotated under torchlight, the mysterious brushed-metal dances as if it were made of flame itself. The collar was forged by the hands of an infernal imp named Tuthroli, whose life was spared by Ruzzick-Tol in exchange for crafting a demonic tool to silence Axnelda's scream. The collar causes the wearer's throat to parch and blister, rendering him temporarily mute.

When turned, the rusted wheel on the eastern wall opens a large venting shaft located upon the ceiling of the phoenix's cage. The iron cover grinds open, and allows the flames and cry of the phoenix to escape from the statue located in Area 5-2, giving it the illusion of life. The iron chain may be detached from the wheel and then easily climbed to reach the shaft. Once reached, a DC 15 Agility check is required to climb up the soot-laden shaft into Area 5-2. Failure results in 1d6 falling damage.

Axnelda: Init +4; Atk flaming whip +5 melee (1d6 + ignite); AC 15; HD 3d8; hp 20; MV fly 40'; Act 2d20; SP harrowing scream (see above), ignite 1d4; Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3; AL L.

Area 5-2 — Grand Foyer

The smell of black smoke and burnt flesh sear your nostrils as you peer beyond the passage's exitway. A cavernous chamber engulfs your vision, dwarfing even the giant statue erected at its center. Grand twin stairways, each blanketed by spongy cave moss, wrap down to the ground floor. Buzzing insects travel between the fungal stalks which sprout from cracks within the stone walls. While the wall sconces remain cold and unlit, a bonfire at the eastern edge of the room blazes; its kindling made up of broken furniture and old books. Within its warm glow lie several iron pots, a mound of linen sheets, and a silver plate holding the cooked breast of a small animal. Along the eastern and western walls are eight shallow alcoves; each occupied by a hulking stone figure. To the south is a mangled portcullis twisted into a prison. Trapped behind its thick iron bars is the

silhouette of a young woman; her body lying in a heap like a child's discarded doll!

This room served as the tower's magnificent foyer; intimidating all emissaries and noblemen who dared distract Ruzzick-Tol from his studies. Presently, the chamber is more cave-like than lavish, with Harfin Hazelnook taking up residence and using it as a refuge close to Thanesmire. A constant trickle of water through cracks in the crumbling stone has submerged the western floor in a series of shallow puddles. The wet walls are gripped by white moss, and along the mortar cling translucent, jelly-like egg clusters.

Securing the stairwell's northern edge is a rusted iron railing which depicts the tale of how Ruzzick-Tol stole a phoenix's egg. Most of the story has been lost to corrosion, but it seems to have involved a mountain goat and a barrel of wine.

Carved from pale green granite, the 40' tall statue at the foyer's center is of Myassari, the patron stenographer of birth and decay, who resembles an elderly woman bearing the head and wings of a fierce bird. At her breast she holds a man-sized shield forged from crimson-gold. Her curved beak also glimmers with gold and is fixed open in a rapacious screech. Any PC who greedily climbs the statue to remove the beak finds that it's fixed in place, but discovers a secret tunnel within the statue's mouth. The tunnel leads down 60' to the phoenix's cell located in Area 5-1. The tunnel's exit is sealed by an iron plate. The plate can be broken with a DC 10 Strength check. Depending on the scenario, a PC who succeeds the check may tumble into the room, frightening the phoenix held within.

The Aegis of Myassari (+2/-1) is removeable and useable by any neutral PC with Strength 12 or higher. It was gifted to the loyal Ruzzick-Tol from an indebted acolyte of Myassari. Any lawful or chaotic PCs who wish to wield the shield must first make a one-time DC 18 Fortitude save, or else ignite, taking 1d6 damage each round. Once ignited, the PC can spend a full round to extinguish the flames by making a DC 10 Reflex save. The front of the shield has been hammered and finely detailed to resemble the feathered wings of a phoenix. When held, it radiates with heat, giving the wielder warmth where there is only frigid cold. When the wielder successfully blocks a melee attack from a flammable weapon, the attacker must make a DC 6 Fortitude save or else ignite (as detailed above). If the wielding PC is



of neutral alignment, the save becomes DC 15 Fortitude. If the PC takes Myassari as his patron, the save becomes DC 8 Fortitude.

The linens, pots, and cooking utensils around the fire serve as Harfin's rough-and-ready camp. If a PC searches the linens, he will find several broken sword hilts belonging to Thanesmire guardsmen. He will also find the tattered cotton uniform worn by those sentenced to death in Thanesmire. Upon the floor near several large, broken egg shells rests a silver plate worth 60 sp, which holds the cold breast of a masterfully cooked rabbit.

Around the perimeter of the room stand eight stone golems. These golems were conjured to defend the tower during siege and are powered by the powerstone located in Area 3-3. If any weapons were seized by the cyclone in Area 1-5, they will be clasped within the stone fingers of the golems. Each weapon can be removed with a DC 21 Strength check. The weapon will fall from the golem's hand when it has been defeated, or when the powerstone in Area 3-3 has been destroyed.

Once a PC approaches the portcullis prison, read or paraphrase the following:

Although pale skinned and gaunt, the woman locked behind the portcullis can be none other than Torene, the Thane's daughter. A metallic rattle resonates with each shallow breath she draws, and the pointer finger upon her right hand has been chopped off and cauterized. Weakly, she lifts her head to look upon you. Her lips move, but no sounds escape her.

Suddenly, Torene's eyes swell with fright as frigid air gusts across the chamber, sending her hair capering around her shoulders. Granite bits shatter to the floor as a 20' giant, stalky, humanoid beast crashes down onto the central statue. The beast is a hulking snarl of matted red hair. Its disproportionately large hands are scarred with dark purple veins and brandish a tree trunk embedded with twisted swords. Its face cannot be seen through its thick hair, but you catch the glimmer of two small eyes staring down at you.

Like the slow groan of a bowing tree, the beast bellows, "How dare you enter my tower! Golems! Rise! Cast out these intruders...but leave their fingers for me! For another Blood Moon rises, and I shall have my revenge!"

Harfin, possessed by the soul of Ruzzick-Tol, will fight to the death for the second chance at gaining immortality. Unless the powerstone in Area 3-3 has been deactivated, six of the eight stone golems will come to life to assist him, attacking their nearest PC. If an attacking golem wields a PC's weapon, attack with it rather than the golem's slam. When wielding a PC's weapon, the golem receives +2 to attack and +1 to damage. The golems will continue to fight even after Harfin is defeated.

If a PC is wearing or has visible possession of Grinelda's twizzled ring found in Area 2-3, he becomes the sole focus of Harfin's assault. From the dwarf's corrupted body, Ruzzick-Tol screams out accusations of murder and betrayal while demanding the return of his love's ring! Returning the ring to Ruzzick-Tol will momentarily distract him, giving the former ring bearer a free attack on the giant dwarf.

Once Harfin falls below 5 hp, he'll lose his mental concentration; breaking the "Enlarge" enchantment brought on by the fourth accursed tablet and shrinking him back to his normal height. Even after returning to dwarf size, Harfin's hands remain disproportionately large due to spell corruption. Dazed and exhausted, Harfin will remain in a spell-induced coma for 1d3 days. Any PC who searches Harfin's body will find the fourth accursed tablet of Ruzzick-Tol! The obsidian tablet is warm to the touch, and the light within its gems faintly pulses. Beautifully etched into its hard stone is the depiction of a phoenix's rebirth, similar to that of the tapestry found in Area 4-1. Like all four exquisite tapestries, each of the four obsidian spell tablets portrays a different stage in a phoenix's life cycle: birth, life, death, and rebirth.

The twisted portcullis can be lifted to free Torene with a DC 26 Strength check; for each PC assisting, add 1 + Strength bonus to the roll. If a PC has acquired the fourth tablet off of Harfin's body, he may exhaust it for the day to try bolstering his strength. Alternately, the rusted bars can be weakened and easily broken if splashed with the photosynthetic digestive acid of the pitcher plant in Area 3-2. Once freed, Torene weakly thanks the PCs, and requests their assistance back to Thanesmire.

Harfin Hazelnook: Int +0; Atk spiked club +4 melee (2d6+2) or hurled stone +2 missile fire (1d8+4, range 50'); AC 16; HD 5d10; hp 40; MV 20'; Act 1d24; SP infravision, crit on 23-24; SV Fort +8, Ref -1, Will +6; AL C.

Stone Golem (6): Int -3; Atk slam +0 melee (1d4+2) or special; AC 13; HD 2d8; hp 10 each; MV 10'; Act 1d20; SP wield stolen weapon (see above); SV Fort +5, Ref -1, Will +3; AL C.

CONCLUSION

If the party returns to Thanesmire with Torene alive, they are rewarded with their promised gold by a sour Brunel Sleech. Thane Wilgrim II himself comes out to embrace his daughter and the PCs responsible for her rescue.

Feeling safe, Torene recounts how Harfin came to her by surprise the night after his execution. Feverishly, Harfin told of a tower hidden within the pit, and how he'd survived execution by climbing to a tunnel bored upon its western wall. Torene escaped into the Bloomingshroom Forest the night of her coronation to meet Harfin at the pit. For weeks they lived together within the tower; Torene caught game at night while Harfin cooked. Their happiness lasted only until Harfin revealed to her the discovery of a small stone tablet imbued with a spell... a spell which he'd been using to get revenge upon the people of Thanesmire! "*He'd probably have kept it hidden,*" she recounts, "*if not for what it did to his hands.*" After that, he'd sworn to stop using it. But within a moon cycle, she discovered Harfin, barely recognizable, in a giant beastly form. On sight, he attacked and imprisoned her behind the twisted bars of the portcullis. She pleaded with him, but he no longer recognized her, and referred to himself as "Ruzzick-Tol." For some time she sat alone and starved, thinking he'd forgotten about her. This silent torture lasted until three nights ago, when he reappeared to cut off her finger!

That night, the town celebrates Torene's return by throwing a party at The Hilted Eye in honor of the adventurers – where a restless bard eagerly awaits news from the PCs.

If the party returns in failure, the citizens are devastated. Gloom hovers over the crowd as Brunel bids farewell to the party; himself in quite a chipper mood. If they present the Steward with the missing half of Torene's locket or other evidence of her death, he'll gladly pay the PCs 15 gp each for their time. If word of Torene's death reaches Thane Wilgrim II, he drinks a vial of poison to be with his beloved daughter again – thus ensuring that the title of Thane passes to Brunel Sleech unchallenged, ushering in an era of chaos and starvation to be suffered by the villagers of Thanesmire!

MAP OF THE BLOOMING & SHROOM FOREST



1-6



1-5

1-4



TO
1-7B






1-7A

1-3

1-2



1-1

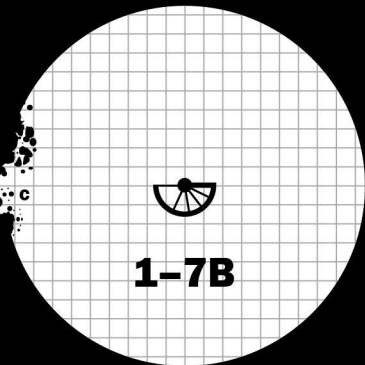
-  Trapped Door
-  Obelisk
-  Concealed Entry
-  Chute In Floor (↓)
-  Streambed

Each square equals 5 feet

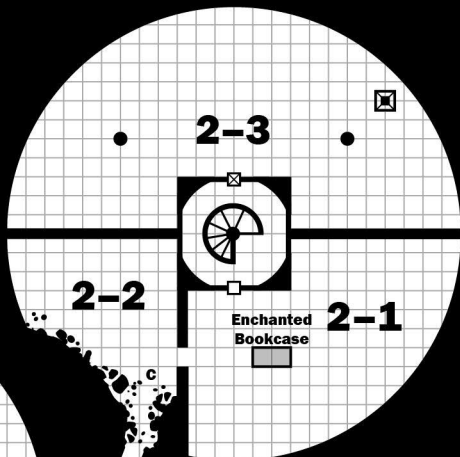
MAP OF THE SUNKEN TOWER



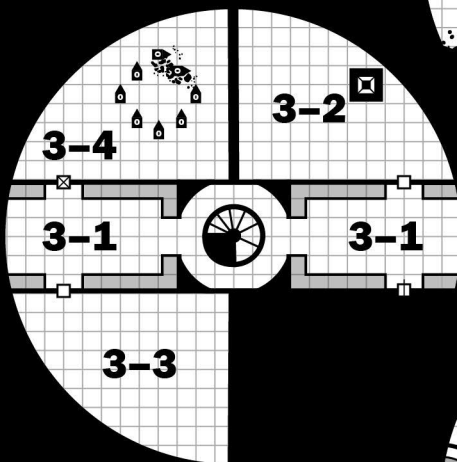
Level 1



Level 2

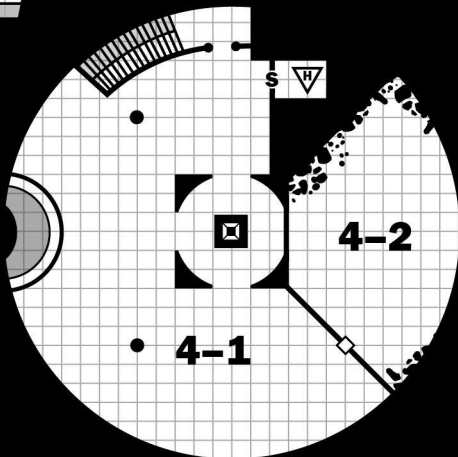


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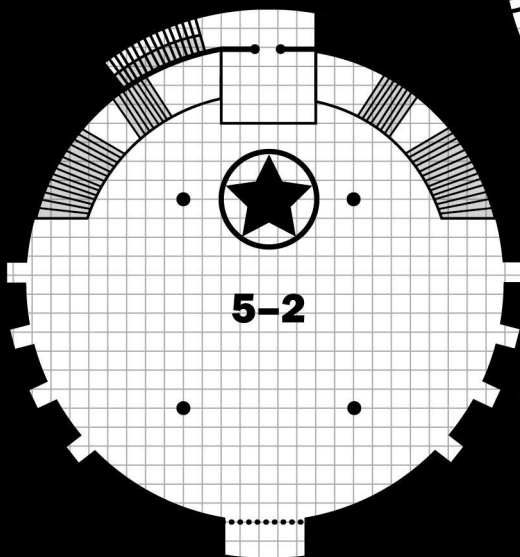


Tunnel to
1-7B

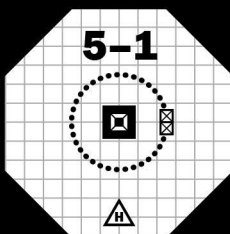
Level 4



Level 5



Secret



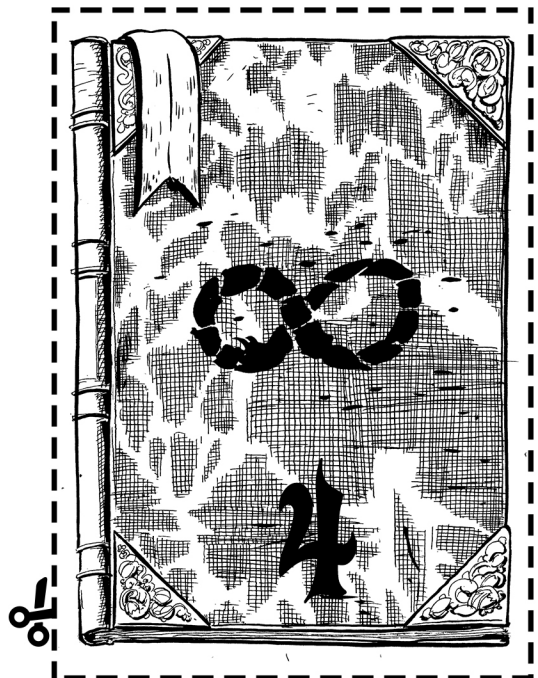
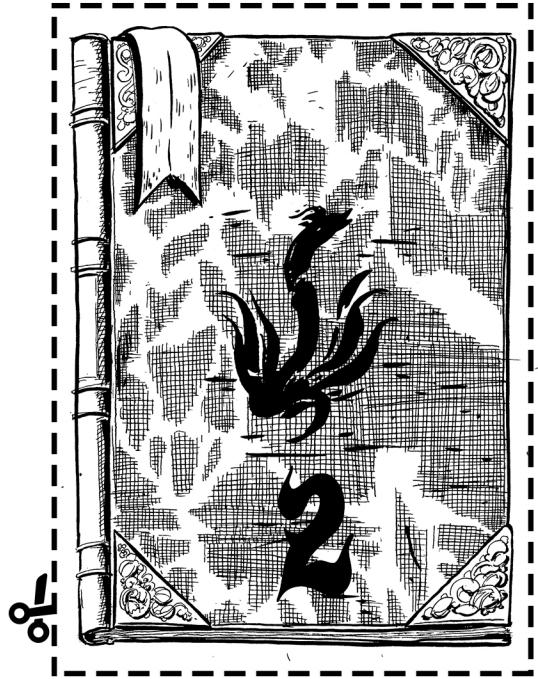
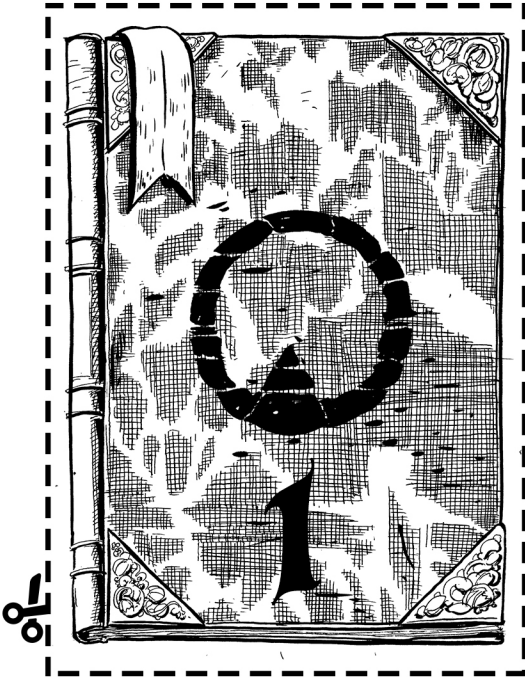
- Door
- Trapped Door
- Locked Door
- Secret Passage
- Concealed Entry
- Portcullis or Bars
- Spiral Stairwell
- Statue
- Chute (++)
- Chute In Ceiling (+)
- Ascending Ladder (+)
- Descending Ladder (+)
- Obelisk
- Column

Each square equals 5 feet

JUDGE'S NOTES

HANDBOUT A

Accursed Spell Tablets of Ruzzick-Tol



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**EAST TOWER
OF THE
BLOOD MOON
RISES!**

**"Beware the power of Ruzzick-Tol,
Conqueror of Nature and Death.
Time defeated rewinds the soul,
Renewing one last breath."**

Terror pillages the minds of those rooted within Hallowstone Valley; their Thane's daughter lost and their families tormented by the arrival of a murderous beast! Before the villagers can be unbound from fear, adventurers brave enough to lend hand will find themselves plunging down a mysterious spiral of betrayal, half-truths, blood magic, and death – eventually gaining possession of an extraordinary artifact of an immortal but perilous nature. What happened to Torene? Who was Harfin Hazelnook? And what has spawned the beast which now preys on the weak of Thanesmire? The answers await only those courageous enough to seek them out!

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Adventure