

# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

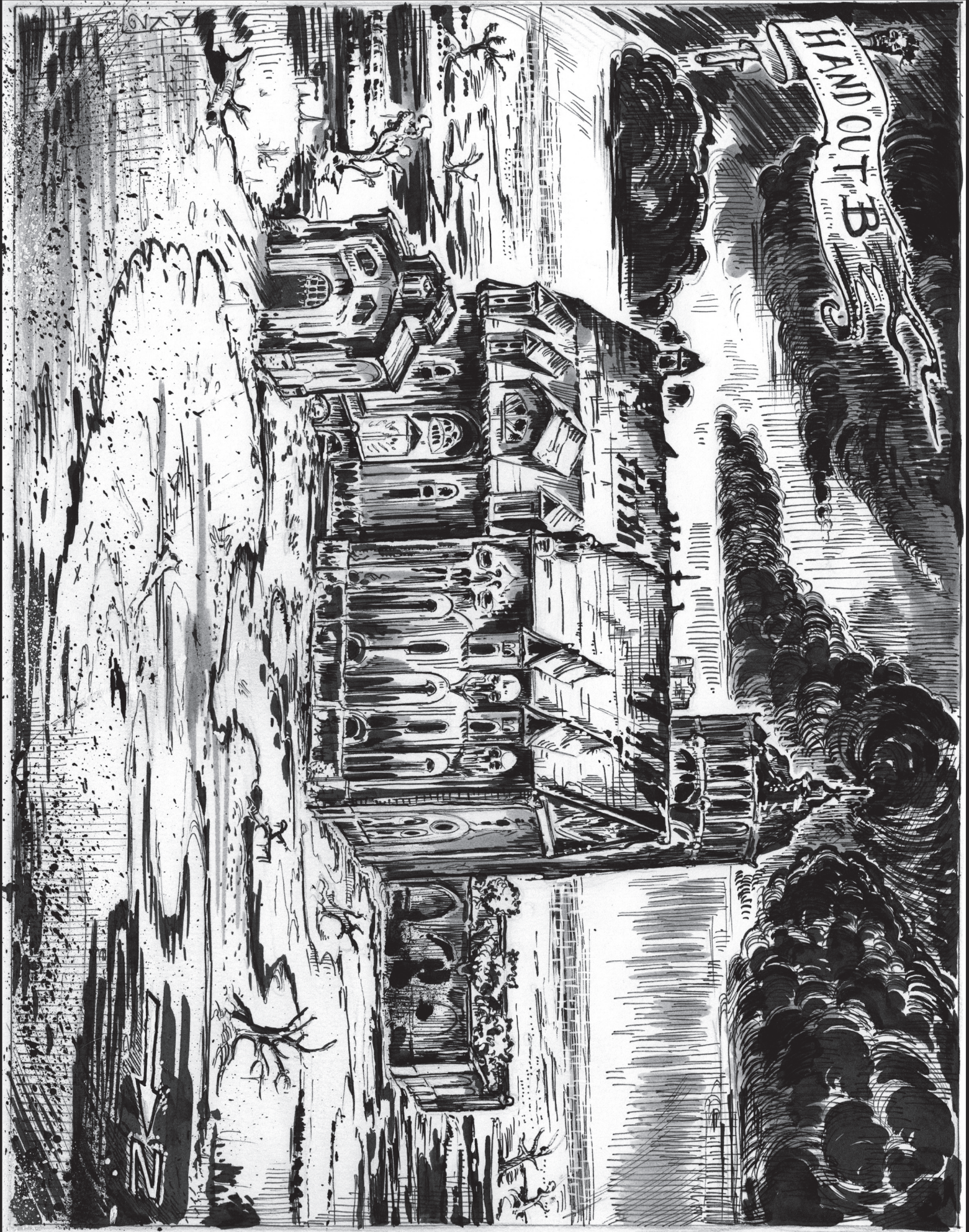
## BRIDE of the BLACK MANSE

#82: A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE  
BY HARLEY STROH



Plus a bonus adventure:  
**The Floating Oasis of  
the Ascended God**  
by Stephen Newton





HAND OUT B

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# BRIDE of the BLACK MANSE

## A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE

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SBP

*The wicked must always make quick work of the weak.*

## INTRODUCTION

**R**emember the good old days, when adventures were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics RPG adventures don't waste your time with long-winded speeches, weird campaign settings, or NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you remember, and the secret doors you know are there somewhere.

A horror-murder mystery, the events of Black Manse take place in a single evening, and are designed to be played out in a single 4-hour session. It is unlikely that that PCs will have the time to investigate all of the locations within the Manse during a single session – indeed, entire levels of the manse may be left undiscovered. Choices as to how and where the PCs spend their time will prove crucial to their survival.

The adventure is designed for four to eight 3rd-level characters. Because much of the adventure can be resolved without combat, running the adventure for higher level PCs requires little work, though lower level adventurers may meet a grim end before the mystery can unfold.

The party can be composed of PCs of any class, while including at least one thief and one cleric. Clerics will find the adventure an interesting challenge, their abilities providing the difference between life and eternal damnation.

The adventure drew its inspiration from a variety of sources which the judge is encouraged to review prior to play. Works include Fritz Leiber's *The Howling Tower*, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*.



## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

**W**hile their specific crimes have been blotted from the scrolls of the Overking, the flight of mad House Liis is well-known to scholars of royal madness. Cast out from the court, the exiles sought refuge on the low, cold moors.

Without court intrigue to distract them, the family quickly fell into infighting. The death of their matriarch, Lady Baethor, brought this bitter rivalry to a head, with each of the family's scions striving to secure his or her own place as master of the manse.

Lady Ilse, oldest of the brood, saw herself as the rightful heir. However, rules of primogeniture assigned that place of honor to the eldest son, Jost.

Desperate, Ilse sought aid from beyond this world and foul Mammon answered her call. In exchange for the promise of Ilse's soul and a diabolic betrothal, Mammon tutored the young regent in a ritual of horrific proportions.

On the appointed eve, Ilse transformed the entire manse into a magic circle. The moors were rent asunder, brimstone flared in the night, and – come dawn – Ilse stood as sole remaining scion of House Liis.

Ilse, now taking the guise of a male (thereby the rightful heir) and styling herself the Mad Prince, ruled for another 50 years, subjecting the surrounding hamlets and villages to her growing madness. The triumph of her reign proved hollow, for every year on the eve of her fell covenant, she was beset by visions of Mammon and her foul promise.

No longer satisfied with mortal power, and seeking to save her immortal soul, the Mad Prince withdrew to her manor. There, surrounded by a court of specters – some real and some imagined – she sought ways to buy her soul free from Mammon's hellish grasp. Gold, incense, and jewels were offered up to foreign gods, and serfs were burned alive in gruesome sacrifices, but the devil could not be appeased.

Nearing the end of her mortal life and laden with the wages of decadence and sin, Ilse built a secret vault into the House of Liis. Laying wards and traps against both devils and men, Ilse and a cadre of trusted servants retired to her hidden sepulcher. And there, amid the glowing mists of weird incenses and with a dozen holy symbols clutched in her withered hands, Ilse bid her body wrapped in blessed linens and placed inside a rune-scored sarcophagus. Buried alive, the Mad Prince spent the last days of her life weeping in terror and fright.

The Prince's desperate wards and rites were not all for naught. They bought her soul a few score years, long enough for memories of the Mad Prince to fade into legends, and then mere stories, and for the abandoned manorhouse to fall into ruin. But the specters of damned House Liis demand an accounting and a devil can afford to wait a very long time.

The anniversary of the Mad Prince's bargain is at hand,





PLAYER NAME

HORNED MASK

PLAYER NAME

CROW MASK

THREE FACED MASK

Jost

Melancholic, absolute, grim

PLAYER NAME

Sabian

Indecisive, lonely, cruel

Kethe

Jealous, foolish, determined

PLAYER NAME

Josef

Focused, proud, disdainful

PLAYER NAME

Ursula

Friendly, manipulative, cunning

LION MASK

PLAYER NAME

Demut

Fearful, impulsive, distractible

THREE FACED MASK

PLAYER NAME

Ilse

Fiery, decisive, hopeful against all odds

Lady Baethor

HOUSE LIIS FAMILY TREE

PLAYER NAME

Matias

Gullible, mean-spirited, defensive.

IRON MASK

HANDOUT A



## SUMMARY OF KEY PLOT ELEMENTS

This adventure includes a number of unique plot elements. They are summarized below with references to more detail within the text.

- Each PC is associated with a specific heir of House Liis (handout A, the family tree on page 3).
- Each heir is associated with a specific heir mask, which has special properties when worn by the assigned PC (Appendix B).
- The bell tolls four times during the adventure, with each bell toll corresponding to the actual passage of time (page 4, below). The first toll is 9 bells, followed by 10, 11, and 12 bells at one-hour intervals.
- At the tolling of 10 bells, the appearance of area A-5 changes (page 12).
- At the tolling of 10, 11, and 12 bells, the appearance of the manse progressively changes (Appendix A).

and – after so many years – the last of the wards have fallen. Lightning peals across the darkening sky and diabolic forms stir beneath the moors. The deceased Prince has one last gambit left to play, drawing a band of powerful adventurers into her haunted manse, in the hopes that the devil will settle for one – or all – of the heroes in her stead.

Fell Mammon will leave with a soul at the end of the night. The only question is: *Whose?*

### ADVENTURE SUMMARY



The adventure is short, but dense, and the manse is a shifting, ghost-ridden place, playing a key role in the adventure. With this in mind, the adventure can be run with one of the following two premises: either the PCs are eternal warriors, the reincarnated spirits from the original outcast scions of House Liis; or that at the start of the adventure, all the PCs are chosen and then ridden by one of the original family's ghosts.

The result is the same: each PC is attached to a specific heir of House Liis. At area A-1, each PC is assigned to one of the heirs of House Liis. This can be done by randomly assigning each of the PCs to one of the heirs, or at the judge's discretion. Given the content of the adventure and its grim implications, some groups of players may need more consideration than others.

The adventure begins with the PCs entering the haunted manse, and encountering the Seneschal, a spectral manifestation of the manse's wickedness. Within the accursed manor, PCs discover any number of tormented spirits and specters. Few wish the PCs well, but all hold clues to the mystery of the black manse. Whether old lovers, rivals, forgotten servitors, or the house matriarch herself, all have their own vested interest in the night's outcome.

The haunted manor also contains ancient relics of foul disposition, which can be used by the PCs in their fight against the archdevil. The use of these magic items always comes at a cost, and it is left to the PCs to determine the price they are willing to pay.

### ONE MANOR, MANY VEILS



Through the course of the night, the spectral world creeps closer, lifting the veils to the material world, one by one, revealing the manse in all its psychic horror. Though the manse's belfry collapsed long ago, tonight the great bell sounds its slow, melancholic toll once more.

The bell sounds four times during the course of the night, with the following effects. A time tracker is included with the map to aid judges in marking the passage of the hours.

Note that, with the exception of the first bell, the tolling of the bells corresponds to the *actual passage of time at the game table*.

The first bell tolls when the adventure begins; the second bell tolls one hour into the session, and the third bell tolls two hours into the session. The last bell tolls three hours in, with a scant hour remaining for the PCs to solve the manse's mystery.

**9 Bells:** The bells toll at the start of the adventure, announcing the arrival of the PCs and summoning the material form of the manse, the Seneschal. The hauntings begin in earnest.

**10 Bells:** Upon the second sounding, a gray mist descends upon the manse. Any and all attempts to leave the manse fail. Departing PCs become lost, emerging from the mists at the moat house. Attempts to leave via magic misfire or divine intervention offer no hope.

The bell tower (area A-5) rebuilds at 10 bells. Spectral courtesans begin to flood the manor-house. Ladies in elaborate masks and diaphanous gowns are escorted through the dark halls by masked men in long coats and capes. Jesters tumble and prance all around, and spectral musicians strike up the band, all in preparation of the coming nuptials. At 10 bells the specters cannot yet perceive the PCs.

**11 Bells:** At the tolling of 11 bells, the ghastly menagerie is made flesh. Characters wearing heir masks are treated as part of the entourage, but those caught without masks are deemed intruders and offered up for sacrifice.



**12 Bells:** At 12 bells, foul Mammon himself appears, demanding his winsome bride. How the PCs answer decides whether they escape the manor-house with their souls intact, or are dragged into the pits of hell – brides to the archdevil.

Prior to running the adventure, the judge should review **Appendix A: The Devil’s Masque** for specifics on the changing nature of the manse.

## ENCOUNTER TABLE

Area	Type	Encounter
A-1	P	The Seneschal
A-2	C	The Gruesome Lover 5 men-at-arms
A-2a	P/T	Devil door
A-3a	T	Collapsing balcony
A-4b	C	3 spectral choristers
A-5	C	5 burned heretics
A-6	C	Lady Baethor
A-8	C	3 headless ladies 3 flying heads
B-1 / B-2	C	Thing of the Undercroft Skeletons
B-3	P/T	Thaumaturgic circle
C-1	T	Lesser charm spirit Greater charm spirit
C-1a	T	Greater charm spirit
C-2	T	Spear and poison trap
11 Bells		Host of devils
12 Bells		Mammon, Archduke of Hell



## ADVENTURE HOOKS



*The Bride of the Black Manse* was originally conceived as a challenging convention adventure – with few heroes living to tell the tale. Those that survived did so with cunning, creative thinking, and no small portion of luck. In such settings adventure hooks are hardly necessary; there is adventure to be had and damn the consequences.

The same cannot always be said for home campaigns with characters carefully raised up from zero-level. If a PC is going to risk life and soul in the search of adventure, it better be for a reason.

Ideally, any campaign hooks should be tailored to a judge’s own world. Generic hooks (god, gold and glory) prove toothless. With this in mind, consider the following when seeking inspiration for hooks specific to your home campaign.

- The PCs are awarded a manor-house as thanks for their service to the crown or church. The manor comes with a minor title and a small annual stipend; all that remains is for the PCs to claim their rightful place as masters of the manse.
- One of the PCs (preferably a noble or knight) receives a summons by a distant relative. The missive, pleading for the PCs’ aid, is dated 500 years prior.
- When a PC dies in a previous adventure, he awakens before a dark throne, surrounded by flames. A towering figure leans down from the throne and whispers, “Not yet, you are promised to another.” The flaming-regent presses its clawed thumb to the PC’s forehead and the PCs awakens in the real world, with 1 hp and a pentagram seared into his forehead. From that day forward the PC is haunted by dreams and finds his steps turning inexorably towards the high moors ...

## PLAYER START



The adventure begins with the PCs standing on a low ridge, looking down over the long black mere and the manor-house perched on its marshy shore. A hint of the night’s coming chill hangs in the air.

Read or paraphrase the following:

*Storm clouds darken overhead, limned red in the light of the dying sun. From atop the ridge you can see the manor-house, perched on the swamp’s edge. The manse leans back, its vaulted windows and gaping portal the eyes and maw of a leering corpse.*

Give players Handout B. Give each of the players a moment to study the handout, before:

*A cold rain begins to fall, obscuring sight of the manse. Through the hiss of the driving rain comes the slow toll of a funerary bell.*

This first tolling is 9 bells. Begin tracking time at the table; the next tolling – 10 bells – comes precisely one hour after the start of the game session.



# LEVEL A: THE HOUSE ON THE MOORS



Set on the shore of a lonesome mere, the manor-house is a foreboding sight. The entire castle appears ready to sink beneath the glassy waters, weighed down by the sins committed within its walls.

While crossing through the moat house is the most direct means of entering the manse, PCs are not obligated to “play along.” Determined PCs can swim across the moat (triggering the attack of the Gruesome Lover and its attendants, area A-2) to the manse. However, climbing from the moat and up the rain-slicked stone walls, in the dark, is difficult even for trained climbers (DC 23 Climb or Strength check).

Once atop the walls PCs can ready lines for their allies. From this vantage point PCs can descend into the manse via the courtyard (area A-6), the ruined bell tower (area A-5) or through the stained glass windows above area A-3. There is no means of access to the high halls (level C) from the slate roof; the windows are all blocked with stone and plaster, and the chimneys are barred and too narrow to permit passage by anything larger than a rat. Of course, if the PCs *do* find a way in despite the barriers, the chimneys open into the main hall, area A-7.

Except where noted, the interior manse is dark and damp. The walls are wet with rain seeping through the ruined roof, and there is no light, save for what the PCs carry. The stink of the swamp and moat – churned by the falling rain – fills the chill air. As a whole, the manse is grim and unwelcoming, making the shift to the Devil’s Masque all the more dramatic.

Finally, some of the manse’s doors open to blank stone. Attempts to destroy the stone or bypass the walls inevitably fail. Some of the manor-house’s secrets were never meant to be discovered.

**Clerics:** Upon entering the manse, priests of every faith immediately recognize the presence of restless spirits. Clerics can attempt to divine the nature of the haunting:

## Spell Check    Divination

1-4            The cleric is overwhelmed by the horror of the manse and must attempt a DC 20 Will save or fall victim to the manor’s madness. On a successful check the cleric merely takes 1d5 disapproval. On a failed check the cleric seems unaffected, but turns on his fellow PCs at a time of the manse’s choosing (as decided by the judge). The madness lasts for 1d5+2 rounds from the moment of betrayal.

5-9            The cleric angers the manse, which responds by lashing out at the caster with raw psychic fury. The cleric must attempt a DC 15 Will save. On a successful check, the cleric asserts mastery of his faith over the horror of the house, and is granted +5 to a single spell check of his choosing. On

a failed check, the caster is sent reeling, taking 1d12 damage and is unable to cast spells for 1d20 turns.

10-14

Divinations confirm what the PCs must already suspect: the manor-house is weighted down from the sins of its past. The cleric has a vision of something moving amid murky waters, and a coffer – or coffin – hidden in the same.

15-19

The cleric receives indications that the PCs’ prior selves are responsible for the horrors of the manse, debts which have come due on this very night. The cleric hears a great bell tolling, and has a vision of a devil coming at midnight. The devil looks to the cleric and beckons him closer.

20+

As 15, but also that the devil is Mammon, and that a nuptial promise has been made by a member of the party. Finally, the cleric has a vision of a promise ring, long forgotten, hidden somewhere in a “high hall.”

**Area A-1 – Moat House:** *A short passageway runs through the crumbling moat house. The way is impeded by a rust-flaked portcullis – half raised – hanging in the darkness. Beyond, a stone bridge crosses the murky mere to the manor-house.*

*A strange premonition hangs over you and your companions – the sense that you have been here before. Chill rain drums on the slate roof of the moat house, seeping into your clothes and pooling on the muddy ground.*

Ask the PCs to make Luck checks, reporting the totals. From highest to lowest, assign the PCs to heirs of House Liis, as shown on Handout A (the family tree, page 3). For the remainder of the adventure, each PC will be tied to that specific personality.

As the PCs enter the moat house, they are hailed by a withered man garbed in a mold-blackened robe and a mantle bearing the sigil of House Liis. His robe is wet with marsh water and he leans heavily on a sodden walking stick.

*The old man raises a crooked hand in a salute and calls out in a weak voice:*

*“An auspicious hunt, to be sure! Well done, masters, well done!”*

The old man gestures behind the PCs – the body of an enormous stag lays on the floor where moments before there was naught but cold stones. Heat steams off of dozens of bloody wounds.

The Seneschal rubs his liver-spotted hands in delight.

*“The beast will make a fine addition to tonight’s celebrations. But come, masters, you must be weary. Retire to your chambers, don your masks, and make ready for the fete.”*



*The old man gestures within the citadel, and then cranes his head towards the darkening skies. "You brought the storm with you, masters. Looks to be a wild night."*

The strange, withered man is the embodied spirit of the manse – the psychic torment of the house made manifest in the flesh. Though appearing real for all intents, this is the spectral manifestation of the manse's wicked past: the Seneschal.

The Seneschal refers to each of the PCs by their former names (as keyed by the handout), and treats each with the utmost respect. If the PCs inquire about the nature of the fete, the Seneschal shares that it is a wedding, of course, and that all are excited, for tonight the manse's lord and lady are to ascend their thrones. He can share that the PCs have been gone "for far too long," and that it is grand that the PCs have returned home for the wedding. If asked who will be married, he responds, "The master, of course, and his long-promised bride!"

Pressed further he politely shakes his head, averring that his memory is not what it once was. If PCs ask questions about their former selves, the Seneschal assumes that his masters are teasing him, and waves aside their questions, saying that he is far too old for their silly jests on such an important night. In all interactions he treats the PCs with utmost respect, referring to them as the lords and ladies of the manse.

**Important Note:** The Seneschal refers to the PCs by the gender of their associated heir; thus male PCs may be referred to as Ladies, and female PCs associated with male heirs, called Lords. Astute players may quickly realize that – even among the manor's ghosts – not all is as it seems.

Pressed or attacked, the phantom vanishes from sight, along with the bloody stag. If turned by a cleric, the Seneschal smiles as he fades from sight, whispering, "As you wish."

**Area A-2 – The Mere Bridge:** *A slick stone bridge crosses the span to the manor-house. Below, the moat is slowly being reclaimed by the swamp: tall reeds bend in the driving wind as beds of black algae are churned by the driving rain.*

Though aged, the fixed stone bridge retains all its former strength. The stone surface is slick due to rain and debris; any melee fumbles atop the bridge send the character spilling into the water, 10' below. The mere is roughly 15' deep, with a muddy bed.

Lady Ursula, her lover, and their men-at-arms were murdered here, drowned in the mere. Despite the passage of years, the Lover yet yearns for Ursula's embrace.

As the first PCs reach the center point of the bridge, the storm increases in magnitude; sheets of icy rain hammer the PCs, and the buffeting wind threatens to hurl the PCs from the bridge. The howl is nearly deafening, but Ursula's PC hears their name repeated again and again on the wind.

The Lover pulls itself out of the muck and mire beneath the mere bridge. A towering, rangy man in life, in death the

Lover is a gaunt, troll-like fiend, his mere-blackened skin clinging to his long bones. His long arms hang nearly to the ground, his legs and spine are twisted and rotten, and haunted eyes threaten to pop from the drawn face.

The Lover is attended by five men-at-arms, all matching the grim appearance of their master. Their once-handsome locks are strung with reeds, and algae hangs about their bodies like filthy tabards.

Dripping with mud, the Lover begins combat by attempting to surprise the party from beneath the mere-bridge. His goal is to close with Ursula's PC; on a successful attack, he hugs the PC to his icy chest and plunges into the water. Drowning creatures take 1d6 points of Stamina damage per round and die when Stamina reaches 0; lost Stamina is restored immediately if they are removed from the morass. A character can escape the deadly hold by winning a contested Strength check against the Lover (d20+3).

The men-at-arms focus their attacks on distracting the party, permitting their master to capture his lost love. They carry a length of rope and several anchor stones in leather bags. On a successful attack the attendants loop the noose around their target. To escape, the PCs must deal 10 hp to the rope or succeed on a DC 15 Strength check. Once noosed, the men-at-arms hurl the satchel of stones into the mere, dragging the PC under (DC 20 Strength check to resist). On a failed check the PC is hauled underwater and begins to drown.

The bog creatures pursue the PCs until the party is safely inside the manse. The creatures can be turned by Lawful clerics, and by clerics whose faith opposes un-dead.

**The Lion Mask:** Ursula's heir mask is hidden in the brackish waters. Anytime a PC falls into the mere or spends a round in the water, make a secret DC 15 Luck check. On a successful check the PC brushes against a black iron strongbox – "something hard and angular in the water." Thorough characters opting to search the muddy mere discover the strongbox on a DC 5 Luck check.

The coffer is filled with water and covered in dead reeds and muck. Hauling it from the mire requires the efforts of two or more PCs or a DC 20 Strength check.

The strongbox's lock is fouled with mere-slime, making it difficult to pick (DC 15 Pick lock check). Alternately, the coffer may be struck open by a single blow inflicting 5 or more points of damage.

The coffer isn't trapped, however with a DC 10 Find traps check the thief notices vibrations emanating from within. Further examination reveals a muffled buzzing sound, like that of a hive. Former beekeepers (and their peers) confirm this suspicion: a swarm of insects resides within the coffer.

The instant the coffer is unlocked, the lid cracks open, releasing a flood of vermin: clicking roaches, spiders, biting flies, stinging insects, and strange, crawling larvae never before seen outside the confines of Hell. The buzzing, clicking swarm attacks any character within 10' of the coffer.



Characters beating a 10 initiative can easily flee the swarm, but those failing the initiative check (or those simply failing to retreat from the swarm) are overrun by the dispersing swarm. The vermin force their way into the PC (mouth, nostrils, ears, eyes – any exposed orifice will do); infected PCs take 1d5 Stamina points of damage, per round, as the vermin worm their way into the target's body. The vermin continue until the PC is slain, the target is healed by a cleric's lay on hands, or the target succeeds on two DC 10 Fort saves. The target may make one save per round. The temporary Stamina damage is healed back at the rate of 1 point per hour.

Within the coffer, atop a bed vermin husks, is a leonine mask decorated with thick bristling hairs, a rich mane, and a convincing snout and pearly teeth. Worn by Ursula, the **Lion Mask** grants +3 to all saving throws and +d10 hp. See Appendix B for additional abilities of the Lion Mask and the other heir masks.

**The Gruesome Lover:** Init +2; Atk crushing hug +3 melee (1d7); AC 12; HD 5d6; hp 18; MV 35'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SA drown; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C.

**Men-at-Arms (5):** Init +1; Atk first +1 melee (1d3) or noose +0 ranged (10 hp or DC 15 Str to escape); AC 9; HD 3d6; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +2; AL C.

**Area A-2a – The Great Doors:** *A pair of towering bronze doors bars your way. The paired portals are cast with depictions of a single figure, surrounded by seven impaled bodies. Above, a corpulent devil leers from atop a mighty throne.*

Adventurers closely inspecting the casting can determine that the figure wears a crown and the ceremonial robes of a summoner. Inquisitive PCs can discern the summoner's gender as female, but little else. Clerics, wizards, elves, and their ilk readily recognize the devil as Mammon.

As the PCs approach the doors they hear a voice booming from above: *Who would enter?*

If the PCs reply, "The masters / lords / ladies of the manse," or the rough equivalent, the doors unlock and swing wide. After the last PC passes, the wind gently closes the doors.

If the PCs answer otherwise or refuse to answer, the doors must be picked (DC 10 Pick lock check) and then forcibly hauled open with a successful DC 15 Strength check, or by three or more PCs simultaneously forcing the door. Unless propped open, or specifically held by PCs (DC 15 Strength check) a blast of howling wind hurls the doors closed as the last of the PCs enters the manse. Characters can dart out of the way with a DC 15 Ref save, but on a failed check the PC is caught and crushed between the doors for 1d7 damage.

Once closed, it requires the collective efforts of four characters or a DC 25 Strength check to force the portal back open.

**Area A-3 – Illuminated Hall:** *The arched, vaulted dome is shrouded in shadow. Dark tapestries hang from the walls like dripping entrails.*

*High above, rain courses in dark rivulets down the stained glass windows circling the dome. In the crash of the lightning, the stained glass casts the chamber in flashes of red and violet.*

*Paired doors stand to your left and right. Across the hall, twin wooden staircases rise to a balcony.*

Show the players Handout C. There is one tapestry for each PC, though it is left to the players to make this connection. All depict the members of the House of Liis, with one stylized figure per tapestry. A PC touching his keyed tapestry immediately feels a warm familiarity, like the recollection of a long-forgotten dream.

The tapestries were once richly woven arras, depicting scenes illuminated with silver, gold and copper threads. Worn thin by the passage of time, devoured by moths, and blackened with rot, all that remains of each arras is the top portion: some 2' wide and 6' in length.

There is a single, "master" tapestry, hanging from the balcony. Unlike the others, it shows no hint of wear or aging. The master tapestry depicts three scenes, transpiring in chronological order:

- A woman in a white gown with flowers in her hair. Around her lie seven corpses.
- An enormous fiery-form, composed entirely of black flames, offering the woman a fiery ring.
- The woman vanishing into a crown of seven others. The demonic form, enraged.

Following are descriptions of the tapestries keyed to individual heirs:

**Ilse's Tapestry:** The arras depicts a tall warrior with shining golden hair. Arrayed in white armor, the warrior is armed with a short sword. (Players must make their own assumptions of the warrior's gender, as the tapestry does not allow for enough detail to discern her sex.) Curiously, the tapestry is dry to the touch.

**Ursula's Tapestry:** The arras depicts a small, golden-haired girl accompanied by a handsome prince and five men-at-arms.

**Jost's Tapestry:** The arras depicts a golden haired figure with a sweeping mustache. The figure holds a mace in one fist and a massive tome in the other.

**Sabian's Tapestry:** The figure appears as the inverse of Ilse's. The tapestry depicts a warrior in black armor, with black hair, and holding a spear. To either side are stylized wolves.

**Kethe's Tapestry:** The tapestry shows a red-haired woman in a long black dress. On one hand perches a raven or black-hawk.

**Josef's Tapestry:** The arras portrays a tall, dark-haired warrior in a white tabard and armed with a bow.

**Demut's Tapestry:** The dun-haired woman is depicted in a white dress. She clutches a serpent in one fist and a dagger in the other.





**Matias' Tapestry:** The tapestry shows a young, golden-haired child arrayed in a white tabard. Red lines snake from the child's wrists.

If the PCs attempt to remove or harm any of the tapestries, the storm redoubles its ferocity. Read or paraphrase the following:

*A stained window explodes above you, as the full fury of the storm pours into the hall, tearing the tapestries from your grasp! Sheets of glass rain down, exploding as they strike the floor. A raven, cast inside by wind, flops weakly on the floor, its blood mingling with the shards of wet glass.*

The shrieking wind continues, but determined PCs can easily tear the flapping tapestries from the walls.

**Area A-3a – High Balcony:** *The staircases rise to a high balcony overlooking the hall. Supported by wooden beams, the ancient balcony creaks with every step.*

*A set of wooden double doors stands at the rear of the balcony. Stylized vultures, illuminated in gold flake and dark stain, emblazon each door.*

The doors once opened to the master's wing on the second floor, but Ilse had the corridor filled – floor to ceiling – with stone and earth. Thieves investigating the doors (DC 10 Find traps), and those tapping on the doors, determine that the space behind the doors does not seem hollow. The doors open out, onto the balcony and are not locked.

If the doors are opened the compacted earth spills out onto the balcony. The balcony collapses, falling 30' back to the floor of the hall. This, in turn causes the *hall* floor to collapse, spilling PCs in a shower of wooden beams, flagstones and earth into the pooled water in area B-2.

Characters beginning on the balcony must make DC 15 Ref saves or take 3d5 damage as they pitch into the inky darkness below.

Characters in the hall (area A-3) must make DC 10 Ref saves to avoid falling through to area B-2 below. Those succeeding on the save, manage to cling to beams and flagstones as the floor collapses beneath them. Characters failing the Ref save fall into the waters below, and must attempt a DC 10 Fort save, or take 2d5 damage.

In the aftermath of the collapse, nothing is left of the balcony save a few rotten timbers extending from the wall. The northern half of area A-3 is collapsed, leaving a pit 20' across. Crossing the pit requires inching along the remaining slip of a ledge (DC 5 Climb walls check or DC 10 Agility check), magic, or cunning. Those reaching the opened doors can shimmy over the remaining mound of stone into area C-1.

**Area A-4 – Oratory:** *The simple wooden doors open into a narrow stone chapel. Rotten pews lay cast about like playthings. The walls and ceiling are hung with moldering violet draperies; once rich, the cloth is now ratty and torn.*

*At the head of the chapel is a trio of toppled altars on a dais of*

*black stone. Garlands of rotting flowers droop from the walls and adorn the toppled altars.*

Dedicated to Mammon and his dukes, Abbadon and Belphegor, the oratory was formerly the private chapel of House Liis. Following the fall of the House, Ilse desecrated the chapel in hopes of ending her contract with Mammon. This, like all of her various efforts, was doomed to failure. Clerics, bards and their ilk quickly recognize that the chapel is decorated for a wedding.

All three of the toppled altars are cracked and broken, retaining none of their original power. Clerics, sages and diabolists inspecting the altars readily identify the unholy trinity. The largest altar is fashioned of red and black marble, and was dedicated to Mammon. The first of the smaller altars is pure black, and sacred to Abbadon. The second of the smaller altars is red, flecked with black, and dedicated to Belphegor.

Ruined unholy implements litter the dais. Characters investigating the rubble discover six violet candlesticks, a trio of shattered cruets, and a blood-stained antependium lying about the floor. A shallow, empty pool is set into the dais.

Hidden amongst the rubble are three glass globes, each the size of a large fist. Within the globes are strange white pellets. Within each globe is also a second globe containing a reddish fluid. These globes contain sage's soda (known in our world as sodium hydroxide) and dyed water, respectively; when mixed – usually by crushing the inner and outer globes – the caustic solution dissolves flesh and muscle, leaving only brittle bone in its wake, causing 1d4 damage per round until washed clean with sufficient amounts of water, or healed via a cleric's lay on hands. Washing sage's soda clean is its own hazard; the exothermic reaction inflicts an additional 1d4 damage, and sets flammable objects alight. The fragile globes were used by worshipers to dispose of corpses, dissolving the bodies of the sacrificed in the pool set in the dais.

Characters righting, moving or searching the ruined altars discover a large iron ring set into the floor. Pulling on the ring raises the flagstone, revealing a stone stairway down into darkness (area B-1). The cool air below is moist, and stinks of mud and rot.

Astute characters note that there is a second floor to the chapel: a choir loft hidden in the darkness above. A circular staircase (area A-4a) rising to the loft is hidden behind the moldering tapestry hanging on the west wall. Alternately, trained climbers can scale the walls and moldering tapestries with a DC 10 Climb or Strength check. (On a roll of 1-5, the rotting tapestries tear out from the wall, pitching the PC to the stone floor for 1d6 damage.)

**Area A-4a – Staircase:** *Behind the moldering tapestry, the walls open to a narrow staircase that spirals up into darkness. Set into the wall of the staircase is a shallow alcove containing a curious bladed device and a rune-scribed crucible atop a brazier. To the right of the brazier are a handful of unburned coals.*



*Above, in the darkness, you hear the sound of hushed whispers and shuffling feet, then silence.*

The stairs rise to area A-4b. The sound originated with the phantom choristers (see area A-4b) in the choir loft. After the initial noise they are perfectly silent.

The bladed lever is bulky, but portable. By passing his forearm beneath the blade, grasping the handle, and forcing down on the lever, a single user can neatly sever his own arm beneath the elbow. The blade is crusted with blood.

The crucible is capped with a strip of dried leather. The crucible is filled to the brim with hardened beeswax. Inspection of the beeswax shows that it is flecked with bits of metal, identifiable by dwarves as lead, gold, and iron.

With a freshly severed hand, the collection of items provides all the necessary materials to create a *Hand of Glory*. The rite only works with the hand of a living humanoid, though the victim need not be willing. The victim can die afterwards, but must be alive for the completion of the ritual.

If the brazier is heated, and a severed hand dipped into the melted wax, the wax moves of its own volition, covering the hand in a thin coat of beeswax. Once the beeswax has cooled into a hardened shell, the fingers can be lit like candles, invoking the powers of the *Hand of Glory*. The brazier contains sufficient beeswax to coat a total of three hands.

Lit, the *Hand* casts a 30' diameter sphere of murky, red light. While within the light cast by the *Hand*, the bearer and his allies enjoy its powers. Each *Hand* takes on different qualities, depending on the alignment of its original owner:

**Lawful:** *Invisible* to extra-planar creatures (including demons and devils); +3 to turn unholy and lay on hands checks.

**Neutral:** +3 to saving throws; all illusions and disguises (including the false-visions of the Devil's Masque) are dispelled within the radius of the light.

**Chaotic:** *Paralysis* (DC 15 Will save to avoid) of living creatures (not devils, demons, or un-dead) within a cone extending before the bearer (15' long and wide at its furthest reach); secret and concealed doors are revealed by the cone, limned in a faint red light.

A *Hand* burns a total of 5d5 rounds, and may be extinguished between uses.

Note: As a special bonus in this second printing, there are even more *Hands of Glory* printed on page 23!

**Area A-4b – Choir Loft:** *The dark loft overlooks the ruined chapel below. A blue phantasm of a woman kneels on the floor of the loft. One of her arms has been severed at the elbow and lies on the floor beside her. The severed arm seems to be covered in wax. Flint, steel and tinder lie scattered on the floor before her; she is trying – and failing – to start a fire, one handed.*

The phantasm looks to the PCs with wild, terrified eyes. "Help! They're coming! Can't you hear?"

The ghost is attempting to light her wax-covered hand. She is referring to the approach of three choir boys. Give the PCs one round to act. If any PCs offer a torch or lit candle, she eagerly picks up her severed hand and thrusts it into the flame, setting it alight.

At the end of the round, three choir boys pass through the wall. Young men with bright eyes and curly locks, they look to the one-armed ghost with innocent smiles.

The one-armed ghost is speechless, pleading silently with the PCs.

If at any point (either now, or later) the PCs set the severed arm alight, all four ghosts are dismissed. The arm remains, burning for another 3d5 rounds, before vanishing from existence. If used against others, treat the arm as if it were taken from a Lawful PC (see area A-4a for details on the arm's powers).

However, should the PCs fail to light the arm, call for initiative. Characters that beat the choristers are permitted one action: plugging their ears, fleeing the chapel, attacking the choristers or the like. Attempts can be made to turn the ghosts.

On the choristers' turn, they break into a cacophonous three-part chant exalting the virtues of Mammon. The chant builds over the course of four rounds, and repeats until the choristers are dismissed with a turn unholy check, the arm is lit, or the source of the haunting is disrupted (see below). Holy men, nuns, and those with a background in music are able to anticipate the break in the music during round 3.

**Round 1:** The shrieking chant drowns out all speech and levies a -5 penalty on spell casting attempts (including turn unholy). Judges are within their rights to instruct players not to speak with one another. All PCs within earshot feel a piercing pain in their temples, and must make DC 5 Fort saves or suffer 1d3 damage. The one-armed ghost screams in agony and slowly fades from existence. Her severed arm remains.

**Round 2:** The hellish chanting swells in volume. All PCs within earshot begin to bleed from their ears and eyes, and must make DC 10 Fort saves or take 1d6 damage.

**Round 3:** The choristers pause for an instant, permitting spell casting, turn attempts and speech. Holy men, nuns, and musicians are permitted to act simultaneously at the top of the round. All other PCs may reroll their initiative checks, and those failing to beat the choristers' initiative are drowned out as they resume their chants on ...

**Round 4:** The chants reach a deafening crescendo, drowning out all speech and spell casting. The pitched shriek shatters any glass objects held by the PCs (including globes lifted from the chapel, below). Additionally, PCs within earshot are deafened for 1d10 rounds (or until divinely healed), and take 1d10 damage as blood gouts from their eyes, ears, noses and mouths (DC 15 Fort save to avoid).

**Future Rounds:** The choristers begin the cycle anew, starting with round 1.



Characters protecting their ears, or finding ways to otherwise silence the area are protected from the choristers' chants. Similarly, characters moving more than 90' from the area are freed from the chants' hellish power.

The choristers are immune to physical attacks by either mundane or magical weapons, and take no damage from spells. Clerics immediately know (but may not be able to convey) that there are three principle ways of defeating the phantoms: either by a successful turn unholy, by disturbing the specters' remains, or by lighting the phantasmal *hand of glory*.

Their remains – a trio of skulls and a single arm – are hidden in a crawlspace in the ceiling at the rear of the loft.

**Spectral Choristers (3):** Init +2; Atk hell-choir (see above); AC 10; HD 2d12; hp 12; MV 0'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, immune to non-magical weapons, immune to magical weapons, take no damage from spells; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

**Area A-5 – Bell Tower:** *The floor of this tower is littered with rubble: enormous stone blocks, blackened beams, cracked plaster, and bits of broken slate lie scattered about. A crumbling staircase climbs a wall of the tower, rising towards a second story that no longer exists.*

*The storm rages above, driving icy rain down through the skeleton of timber and slate.*

Searching through the rubble reveals the ancient bronze bell, cracked and tarnished with weather and the passage of time. The bell tower was struck by lightning and destroyed the night the Mad Prince swore her soul to Mammon.

Those uncovering the bell find that it is still hot to the touch

and stinks of brimstone.

Careful investigation of the floor reveals five separate flagstones, each scored with a blackened pentagram and concealing an alcove in the floor. If the flagstones are pried loose the PCs discover a skeleton buried beneath each of the five flagstones. The five skeletons radiate a burning heat and bear the mark of heresy emblazoned on their skulls, but pose no threat to the PCs.

**10 Bells:** Upon the tolling of the tenth hour the tower returns to its un-ruined state: an intact three-story bell tower. A great pull rope, braided from human hair, hangs down the center of the tower. The body of a masked, robed figure hangs by its neck from the rope 10' off the ground.

The mask is fashioned from hammered copper and gives the figure the appearance of a leering horned fiend.

Unless the PCs take special pains, removing the body (either by pulling it down to ground level, or cutting the body free) causes the bell to toll. The sonorous tone sounds throughout the manse, shaking the floor of the bell tower, and causes the skeletons of five heretics to rise from beneath the flagstones. Each of the skeletons is wreathed in blue flames and appears bound to a stake, though this in no way impedes their ability to move or attack.

The flaming skeletons – enemies of House Liis that were burned alive at the stake – watch on in silence, unless one of the PCs is wearing one of the heir masks (including the horned mask found on the corpse of the priest).

If none of the PCs is wearing an heir mask, the flaming skeletons plead with the party, "Free us, free us all," before vanishing back into the floor.



However, if any one of the PCs is wearing one of the heir masks, the flaming skeletons howl in agony, tear free from their phantasmal stakes, and attack.

The flaming skeletons attack the mask-wearer and anyone that defends the PC. They hammer at their foes with flaming limbs; on a successful attack a target is also set aflame, taking additional 1d6 damage per round until the flames are extinguished. On a critical hit, a cloud of smoke envelops the skeleton and the PC; when the smoke clears the following round, the heretic skeleton is gone, but the PC is trapped in place, bound to a flaming phantasmal pyre. The PC (and any other character coming within 5') takes 1d16 damage per round from the phantasmal fire until freed (a move action by another PC) or breaking free of the ghostly bonds (DC 15 Will save). One attempt at the Will save can be made per round.

The **Horned Mask** is decorated with hammered copper scales atop a molded leather mask with red silk ties, and is one of the house's masks. Worn by Jost, the mask grants the character the 1d14 ability to lay on hands per the cleric ability. If that PC is also a cleric, it instead adds a +1d7 bonus to the cleric's lay on hands. This power is granted by the haunted manse, and quite removed from the real world; wounds healed in this manner will forever bear jagged, discolored scars. See Appendix B for details on the heir mask's shared powers.

**Burned Heretics (5):** Init +2; Atk flame fist +2 melee (1d5 + flame); AC 10; HD 2d12; hp 12 each; MV fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SA crit on 19-20, pyre burn; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

**Area A-6 – Hanging Gardens:** *Icy rain pelts the open courtyard, pooling in the gloom. Sprawling greenery hangs from stone terraces arrayed about the gardens. In the flash of lightning you spy a marble statue, pale and pearlescent in the gloom.*

The terraced gardens are overgrown with thick, ropey vines and thorny hedges. A moldering carpet of rotting leaves litter the flagstones, and the disease-wracked trees have the impression of skeletal hands clawing free of the earth.

The statuary is set atop a dais in the center of the courtyard and depicts a mother surrounded by adoring children. The number of children matches the number of PCs. All but one of the marble children is defaced, their faces smashed and cracked. Close inspection of the surviving form reveals that it depicts a female, and is the tallest of the brood. A clever investigator may (rightly) guess that the surviving statue depicts the oldest of the children.

The statue is a cenotaph, marking the burial place of the matriarch of House Liis, Lady Baethor. Her body lies in a shallow tomb concealed beneath the statue. There is no sign of the tomb from above, or apparent portal to open, but passing dwarves will smell gold below. Opening the tomb requires removing the statuary. It can be tipped over with herculean effort (DC 25 Strength check), or toppled with the aid of rope or poles.

The storm grows in intensity as the PCs work on the statue. As the statue topples, there is a harrowing crack from above and a thunderbolt strikes the falling statue. Any character within 10' of the statue (or connected to it, via a wet, conductive, rope) is hurled 1d10' feet by the blast and must make a DC 15 Fort save or take 1d12 points of damage.

In the aftermath of the lighting bolt, PCs find a small nook beneath where the statue once stood. There, placed in a vertical hole, is an iron sarcophagus, chased with silver and gold. Hoisting the coffin free of the rotting earth, PCs discover that the cover of the sarcophagus once depicted a lovely woman with silver hair; the hammered silver and gold is worth 170 gp to any grave robber miserly enough to chip and pry it free.

The sarcophagus is secured with three simple locks (DC 10 Pick lock check). Inside is the desiccated body of Baethor Liis, wrapped in swaths of stained cotton. The shrunken body is dried and rigid, but if cut, bleeds a thick black ichor. Very careful examination of the body (nearly impossible outside, in the storm) reveals the faintest of heartbeats. Driven by the love of her children, the matriarch of house Liis is returning to life.

With but a single hit point, Lady Baethor is easily killed. Staking, beheading, or setting fire to the comatose body slays the matriarch once and for all. However, if left to her own devices, she returns to full power within an hour and begins to stalk the PCs through the manse. Her aim is to reclaim (kill) all her children (the PCs) before they fall prey to Mammon.

Lady Baethor travels primarily along the walls and ceiling. On a successful attack she hoists her target from the floor, and presses her foul lips to theirs, exhaling a gout of diseased miasma into the target's lungs; the PC must attempt a DC 15 Fort save. On a successful save the PC is left stunned, coughing the miasma from his lungs for 1d3 rounds. However on a failed save, the character collapses to the ground, only to rise 1d3 rounds later – a zombie under the matriarch's command. If the matriarch is slain, the zombie regains its freedom, but remains an un-dead. Un-dead characters are immune to cold, electricity, and mind-affecting attacks, but may be turned, damaged, or killed as un-dead of the same HD.

Should the matriarch catch up with the PCs after 12 bells, she hurls herself at the archdevil, shrieking that he cannot have her little ones. Mammon destroys her in battle, but her sacrifice buys the PCs 1d3 rounds of action.

**Lady Baethor Liis:** Init +2; Atk kiss +4 melee (1d3 + miasma); AC 13; HD 4d12; hp 1 (24); MV climb 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SA miasma kiss; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

**Area A-7 – Great Hall:** *A vaulted hall stretches before you, anchored by a great stone fireplace on one end and a wall of towering bronze plates on the other. Between them are three long tables, capable of seating an entire company. The tables are set for a grand feast, laden with wooden bowls, drinking horns, and knives – all draped with cobwebs and the dust of centuries.*

*The walls are hung with flower garlands, long since wilted and dead.*

**Judge's note:** This area is also the site of the adventure's conclusion – a dramatically different sight. See Appendix A for the changes wrought in the hall come midnight.

Prior to **10 bells**, the hall is disarmingly mundane. The walls are hung with trophies from the family's storied history: sundered shields emblazoned with the heraldry of a dozen city-states; captured swords, lances and spears from exotic lands; moth eaten war-standards and battle signs; and the bronze-dipped skulls of fallen foes. The fireplace is cold, the last fire having burnt out centuries ago. All are covered in dust and cobwebs and haven't been disturbed in one hundred years or more.

The tables and the settings are perfectly normal, save for one. At the head of the tables is an oversized throne, capable of seating a 14' tall giant. The massive chair is carved in the likeness of hellfire, the flames composed of leering imps, howling skulls, and bodies writhing in torment.

At the right hand of the giant's throne is a similar chair, with identical carvings, but human-sized. The smaller chair is hung with a dusty, lace wedding veil.

As the manse sinks closer to hell through the course of the night, the appearance of the hall changes, as follows:

**Prior to 10 Bells:** Upon the sounding, the faintest wisp of smoke drifts from the fireplace. Quiet groups can hear the clatter of crockery and faint laughter, and detect the smell of roasting meat.

**10 Bells:** Traceries of phantasmal courtiers, bedecked in grand costumes and elaborate masks, enter from the halls. Nearly transparent, the visions are best seen out of the corner of one's eyes, though if the lights were lowered, the visions seem clearer and more real. The courtiers seem unable to see, hear, or interact with the PCs. The sole exception is if one or more of the PCs is wearing a house mask. Seen through the masks, the courtiers are fully real, and can interact with the PCs as per the Devil's Masque.

The flowers hung from the walls begin to recover, slowly returning to bloom. The petals remain black, and drip a shiny ichor that pools on the floor.

**11 Bells:** The phantom courtiers are rendered flesh and blood, the tables are set with rich food and drink, and cacophonous music fills the air. The wedding flowers return to full bloom.

**12 Bells:** The archdevil Mammon arrives, bringing the adventure to a conclusion. See Appendix A for the adventure's finale.

**The Hidden Level:** The hall is vaulted, the ceiling rising some 30' from the floor. Thorough explorers will note a series of low, narrow windows set 20' above the floor in the south and east walls of the hall. These should open to the hallway or area A-8 but quick exploration of those areas reveals low-ceilinged chambers, with no corresponding apertures.

Skilled climbers can easily reach the window (DC 10 Climb walls check), but the narrow embrasure restricts passage. Elves and halflings can climb up the narrow stone chute with little difficulty, but humans and dwarves must first divest themselves of armor and backpacks before ascending into area C-1.

**Area A-8 – The Bower:** *The doors open to a low-ceilinged chamber appointed with a profusion of pillows, embroidered mats, fur rugs, and rich tapestries. Across the chamber is an enormous wardrobe of dark polished wood.*

*Three veiled women in gossamer dresses rise from the pillows, crossing towards you with otherworldly grace.*

The ladies-in-waiting were once attendants of Lady Ilse. The Mad Prince had them beheaded and their heads secreted away. For long years the spirits sought out their missing heads; now that they have been found all that remains is for the heads to be freed and placed on new hosts.

The ladies usher any PCs into the bower, divesting them of armor and arms. The ladies offer up ancient regalia – moth-eaten, dusty, cobwebbed rags of lace, velvet, and silk. If the PCs play along, the lissome maids insist that no lord or lady could possibly attend the fete without a mask. The ladies-in-waiting present three rosewood boxes to the PCs. Roughly one foot in length on each side, each box is secured with a delicate silver clasp and inscribed with the PC's name. The names are accented with a dull gray metal, readily identified as lead.

Characters opening the boxes discover severed heads adorned with delicate masks. The flying heads hiss and launch themselves at the PCs. At the same time, the ladies-in-waiting lunge forward, attempting to restrain the PCs. Tearing away the veils reveals that the ladies-in-waiting are headless; it is the ladies' own heads trapped within the wooden boxes.

**Combat:** The heads' aim is to attach to the PCs with the highest Personality, preferring elves over humans, and humans over dwarves or halflings.

The headless maids grapple with the PCs. On a successful attack roll the PC is held in place, suffering -2 to AC and Ref saves.

The flying heads direct their attacks at held (or unconscious) PCs; on a successful attack roll, the head's spiked spinal column bores into the PC, inflicting 1d4 damage.

Escaping from either the grapple or the head requires a move action, and a DC 10 Fort save or Strength check for each attempt. Held PCs must escape the grapple before attempting to tear free the flying heads.

If a head remains attached for 3 rounds it fuses bodily with the PC, tying into arteries, nerves, bones and muscle. The PC now has two heads. Thereafter any damage done to a head is also suffered by the host PC. *Example: If an attached head is dealt 3 points of damage, the host PC also takes 3 points.* Once a head is fused to a PC's body, the freshly two-headed PC must make a DC 5 Will save each round or be forced to





take the head's course of action – usually aiding attacks on the party. In general, the head aims to cause evil, but its first goal is survival.

Attached heads can be slain and then cut off (a gruesome process) or exorcised from the body with a DC 25 lay on hands check. Desperate characters are sure to come up with even more clever and terrifying solutions.

**Heir Masks:** The three flying heads all wear heir masks. In addition to the shared powers detailed in Appendix B, each mask displays special powers when worn by its rightful owner:

- **Wolf:** Long-nosed, and molded with thick, velveteen hair, when worn by Sabian the Wolf Mask grants a +3 to attack and damage rolls. Additionally the mask grants the wearer critical hits on a 19 or better. If the wearer is already a warrior or dwarf, his crit range increases by 1.
- **Medusa:** The Medusa Mask is decorated with a dozen emerald snakes. When worn by Demut, the mask grants the 1d14 ability to cast the following spells: *shield*, *magic missile*, *color spray*. The spells are lost per

the arcane spellcasting rules, and not regained. The wearer can spellburn per the wizard and elf rules.

- **Crow:** Decorated with iridescent black feathers and a long, arcing beak, the mask stinks of blood. When worn by Kethe, the mask grants the wearer the ability to burn luck as per the halfling class rules. Spent Luck is regained per the same rules, even after the mask is defunct.

**The Servant's Passage:** Characters taking the time to explore the chamber's back wall discover a simple wooden door hidden beneath the layers of silk tapestries. Short, narrow, and secured with a simple lock (DC 10 Pick lock check) the door was once used by the servants of the manse to access the high halls (level C). Ignorant of the passage, the Mad Prince failed to have the passage blocked. The door leads to a narrow stone stairway that rises to area C-1. (This counts as a secret door. Remember that characters wearing heir masks see the manse's secret and hidden doors as limned by a faint red light. See Appendix B for additional details.)

**Headless Ladies (3):** Init -2; Atk fist +1 melee (1d5) or grapple +3 melee (1d3 and held); AC 11; HD 3d6; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SA held target -2 to AC and Ref save; SV Fort +4, Ref -2, Will +2; AL C.

**Flying Heads (3):** Init +3; Atk spinal bore +3 melee (1d4); AC 15; HD 2d8; hp 8 each; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SA spinal tap; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C.

## LEVEL B: THE CATACOMBS

**H**idden beneath the manse, the catacombs were once the final resting place of House Liis and its servants. Over the decades the manse has slowly slipped into the swamp, and the mere water has begun to fill the catacombs. The murky water is preternaturally cold, and a 5-inch layer of muck covers the original stone floor, sucking at the PCs' boots with every step.

The chambers are all carved from rock. Arching columns support the ceiling, decorated with the perverse iconography of House Liis (demons, hellish sacrifices, and diabolic couplings). The ceiling, some 20' high in most places, is similarly decorated with flaking murals and worn carvings. Climbing the pillars and walls is a simple task (DC 10 Climb check).

Except where noted there is no light in the catacombs. The chill air is wet and still, and stinks of decay.

**Area B-1 – Undercroft:** *Wide stone steps, slick with mold and slime, curl down into what was once a vaulted chamber. Now a black lake occupies the chamber, creeping up the steps, concealing the chamber floor. Tall columns, some canted at odd angles, support the crumbling ceiling.*

*A quiet melancholy hangs heavy over the waters.*

Black with marsh-soil, the water is 3' deep in most spots.

The water conceals hundreds of skeletons – victims of the Mad Prince. Careful prodding reveals the thousands of bones; nearly all were once humans, though the skeletons of war dogs and horses also lie amidst the carnage.

All of the skeletons are the remnants of a single mass sacrifice – the Mad Prince's attempt to stave off her devil's bargain. The offering failed and their souls remain trapped within the vile manse.

The skeletons animate when the first PC comes into contact with the water. They rise, dripping, from the murky waters, gazing towards the PCs with eye sockets that glow like dying embers; there are 50+5d20 skeletons in all. All stand silently and point towards area B-3: the source of the foul magics binding their souls to the manse.

The skeletons pose no threat to the PCs, unless the characters attempt to leave without stealing Mammon's *soul stone*. If the PCs break the circle in area B-3, all the skeletons collapse into the water, their souls freed from bondage.

However, if the PCs try to leave the undercroft without the *soul stone*, they are faced with a far different challenge. Terrified at the thought of being left for all eternity, the skeletons attack. The party can retreat back into area B-3, but if they attempt to press forward, they are set upon by the bone horde.

The skeletons aim to overbear the PCs, drowning them be-

neath the murky waters. On a successful attack, a skeleton does no damage, but instead clings to the target. At the end of each round, a held PC must make a DC 5 Fort save, or be dragged beneath the waters. Each additional skeleton increases the save DC by +5 and reduces the PC's movement by -10. At the start of each round, submerged characters can attempt to stand free of the water (but remain trapped by the skeletons) with a successful Fort save.

Breaking free of a single skeleton requires a DC 10 Strength check, or slaying the un-dead.

Slain or turned skeletons collapse into the water. However, their spirits retain much of their power. Track the skeletons as they are destroyed: once ten are slain, they rise up as towering thing of bone, lashing out in fury at the PCs with spiked limbs formed of shattered bones. The more skeletons the PCs destroy, the more powerful the Thing becomes:

Slain Skeletons	HD	Ttl hp	Action Dice	Dmg	Save Bonus
10	4d8	15	1d16	1d6	+0
20	6d8	30	1d20	1d8	+3
30	8d8	45	1d20/1d16	1d10	+5
40	10d8	60	1d20/1d16/1d14	1d12	+7
50+	12d8	75	1d24/1d20/1d16/1d14	1d14	+9

Protected by the combined horror of its collective soul, the conglomeration of bones cannot be turned or destroyed by a cleric's faith; a turn unholy check sufficient to turn or destroy, collapses the Thing back into the inky waters for 1d3 rounds.

The Thing is too large to pursue PCs outside of the catacombs, or further than area B-3.

**Thing of the Undercroft (bone golem):** Init -2; Atk spiked bone +0 melee (variable); AC 10; HD variable; hp variable; MV 45'; Act variable; SP un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV variable - see table above; AL C.

**Skeletons:** Init +0; Atk claw +0 melee (DC 5 Fort save or submerged); AC 9; HD 1d6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, half damage from piercing and slashing weapons; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL C.

**Area B-2 - Water:** If the PCs fall into the cave from area A-3a, mundane light sources are extinguished as they strike the water.

Though the PCs' entrance can be dramatically different, this area is functionally identical to area B-1. The skeletons do their best to ensure that PCs failing to destroy the magic circle don't leave the catacombs alive. See area B-1, above, for details.

**Area B-3 - The Gate:** *The narrow cave grows warmer, leaving the chill of the icy water behind. The passageway opens to a small cave, some five paces across. Burned candles - some little more than pools of hardened wax - are set about the stone floor according to some curious pattern.*

*A dull violet glow and the stench of sulfur emanate from a rough-hewn pit in the center of the rocky chamber.*







The candles mark the points of a thaumaturgic circle. As the PCs approach, the candles sputter back to life, spitting sickly yellow smoke, choking the air. Moments later the smoke forms into spectral tracteries of hundreds of figures – the men, women and children sacrificed in the summoning of Mammon. The forms look on in silence, refusing to take action.

The pit is roughly 10' across, and of inestimable depth. Mammon's *soul stone*, the reliquary of the arch-devil's true-name, hovers some 15' down the pit. Six inches in diameter and cut with 414 facets, the dark gemstone pulses with malevolent violet light. Employed by Lady Ilse to summon the archfiend, the stone can also lend the PCs a degree of mastery over Mammon.

Characters attempting to cross into the circle (as circumscribed by the candles) encounter an invisible resistance, and hear demonic voices whisper: "We shall know our masters by their actions." The resistance equals the force of the PC attempting to enter; a PC can press 3 to 4 inches inside the circle, but is always rebuked.

Characters pausing to inspect the circumference of the circle discover three distinct pools of blood, a clue to one means of passage into the circle.

There are three means of entering the circle, though clever players are sure to attempt others. Judges are – of course – welcome to adjudicate unusual, thematically appropriate means as they see fit.

- **We Shall Know Them By Their Actions:** Even among the fiends of the lower planes, the sons and daughters of House Liis are infamous for their backstabbing ways. A PC that spills the blood of another PC while in the room is able to cross the circle.
- **Holy Passage:** A cleric successfully calling for divine aid (DC 10 or higher) drops the magic circle, dismissing the circle and its demonic forces. A lay on hands (DC 20 or higher) drops the circle for 1d12 rounds. At the end of this time, the cleric must make a second DC 20 spell check, or all the characters within the circle are violently expelled, taking 1d5 damage.
- **Sword Magic:** For reasons unknown to scholars, demonic circles can be dismissed by the blow of a magical sword wielded by the sure of heart. Only magical swords function in this way – other weapons are insufficient, regardless of enchantment. Upon striking the circle with a magical sword, the PC must make a DC 15 Will save. On a successful save, the circle is dismissed. On a failed save, the circle flashes violet, and lashes out at the PC, for 1d5 damage.

To those remaining outside the circle, PCs passing through appear as their former selves: the sons and daughters of House Liis. Characters that have studied the tapestries in area A-3 can readily identify the PCs' associated personas.

Once inside, PCs note twinkling crimson motes drifting from the pit. The lip and walls of the pit are worn and rough; the *soul stone* has been literally eating its way to hell, consuming all material and boring out the pit. If anyone falls into the pit, on this night of nights, the character falls 500' before passing

through to Mammon's lair. At the discretion of judge, the PC can return (horribly transfigured and transformed) with Mammon at the tolling of 12 bells.

The *soul stone* hovers in the air, 15' below the lip of the pit. Descending to the stone is easy (DC 10 Climb or Strength check), and the gem is readily snatched from the air. Any time a character possesses the stone he must succeed on a DC 15 Will save or be overtaken by megalomania, becoming utterly and absolutely convinced that he is the only one worthy of leading the party. If the stone is handed off, the mania passes after 1d5 minutes, but the PC will hunger for possession of the stone for as long as he lives. Given an opportunity to steal back the stone, the afflicted PC must make a DC 10 Will save or succumb to the temptation.

The *soul stone* carries Mammon's true name. Clever PCs can use the stone to bargain with the devil, while more daring (or foolhardy) characters can attempt to use the stone to achieve actual mastery over the archfiend.

**Exiting the Catacombs Level:** As the PCs exit the catacombs (with or without the *soul stone*), read or paraphrase the following:

*Two phantoms appear before you. Rich robes, cloaks and scarves hang from their bodies, heavy with water. They watch you silently from behind elaborately carved masks.*

The phantoms watch the PCs for a long moment. If the PCs react with violence – attacking the phantoms, or attempting to turn unholy – they vanish in an instant, leaving only pooled mere-water in their place.

However, if the PCs are restrained, if even for a moment,

the phantoms act:

*The phantoms take a slow, deliberate step forward. One by one they remove their masks, revealing bloody skulls infested with worms.*

*They both speak at the same time: the first, "Save us," and the second, "Save yourselves."*

*The phantoms slowly fade from sight, leaving two masks in a pool of icy water.*

These phantoms are the spirits of Josef and Matias sacrificed by Lady Ilse on the night of the great summoning. They bear the following heir masks:

- **Three-Faced Mask:** The masked is crafted to resemble three faces merged into one. Facing left, the mask is screaming. Facing right, it seems to laugh macabrely. Facing forward the masks appears devoid of emotion. When worn by Josef, the wearer seems to shift between multiple positions, granting a +3 AC bonus. The wearer also gains the 1d14 ability to Sneak Silently and Hide in Shadows (the rolls are modified by Agility and armor as the thief skills).
- **Iron Mask:** The mask is nearly featureless, and consists of a thin sheet of iron over cotton padding. When worn by Matias, it grants the wearer the chance to shrug off physical damage. Any round the PC takes damage from a physical attack (mundane or magical) the PC is granted a Will save vs. DC 10 + the amount of damage. If the Will save is successful, the target takes no damage at all.

See Appendix B for additional shared powers of the heir masks.

## LEVEL C: THE HIGH HALLS



he upper floor of the manse once housed the chambers of the masters of House Liis. Lady Ilse hid or blocked all the common means of egress to the upper floors of the manse. The only ways of accessing the high halls are via the blocked doors at A-3a, the forgotten stairway at the back of A-8, or by shimmying through the embrasures in area A-7.

Like the rest of the manse the high halls are sodden, cold and lightless. An air of disrepair and melancholia hangs among the peeling walls and fallen tiles. Mirrors hang on all the walls, or lie shattered on the floor. These, along with the pools of water, cast strange reflections in the darkness.

**Area C-1 – Mezzanine:** *Fallen bits of plaster and broken clay tiles litter the floor of the hall, interspersed with dark puddles fed from the dripping ceiling. The walls and ceiling are hung with strange tangles of prayer beads, dyed silks, solemn idols, icon-laden tapestries, holy chalices, squat clay gods and the like – religious trappings from the far flung edges of the world.*

The hall is decorated with prayers to – practically – every god of every pantheon, pleading prayers to rescue Ilse's soul from Mammon's dread grasp. All have failed, but they

are still potent in their own right, and present a threat to PCs.

With a careful search, PCs can discover trappings of their own faiths, permitting the characters to accurately "translate" the meaning of at least a handful of the offerings. Seeing the prayer repeated one or more times may clue the PCs into the understanding that all the idols, beads, shrines and the like are pleading for one thing: *Save this repentant soul from the hoary grasp of her betrothed, Mammon.*

None of the myriad of prayers has freed Ilse from her promise. However, the religious implements retain all of their potency. They present no threat to the PCs, so long as they aren't disturbed, a fact that clerics and their ilk are quick to aver.

If these lesser charms are disturbed by a character of another faith, the character must attempt a DC 10 Will save. On a failed save the spirit of the charm comes alive, attacking the PC (and only the PC). The spirit is visible only to the PC; however, if other PCs disturb the same charm, they too are able to see and interact with the spirit. The spirits can either be defeated in combat by those that disturbed the charm, or



turned by clerics with a successful turn unholy check.

The form of the lesser spirit is largely irrelevant; the judge should choose a form fitting the specific mythos or roll on the following table. The base form should have other features (for instance a human face, wings, tentacles, multiple heads and limbs) as suits the whim of the judge.

Roll 1d14	Base Form
1	Monkey
2	Insect
3	Elephant
4	Octopus
5	Lion
6	Human
7	Fungoid
8	Dragon
9	Devil / Demon
10	Sphere of nothingness
11	Star traveller
12	Snake
13	Fish
14	Ooze

Once a charm's spirit has been defeated, the spirit can never be called again.

Decorated with precious metals, gems and rare woods, any one of the charms is worth 1d5 x 10 gp. There are over 100 charms ringing the hall, but all are tied to spirits that must be defeated before the charm can be claimed.

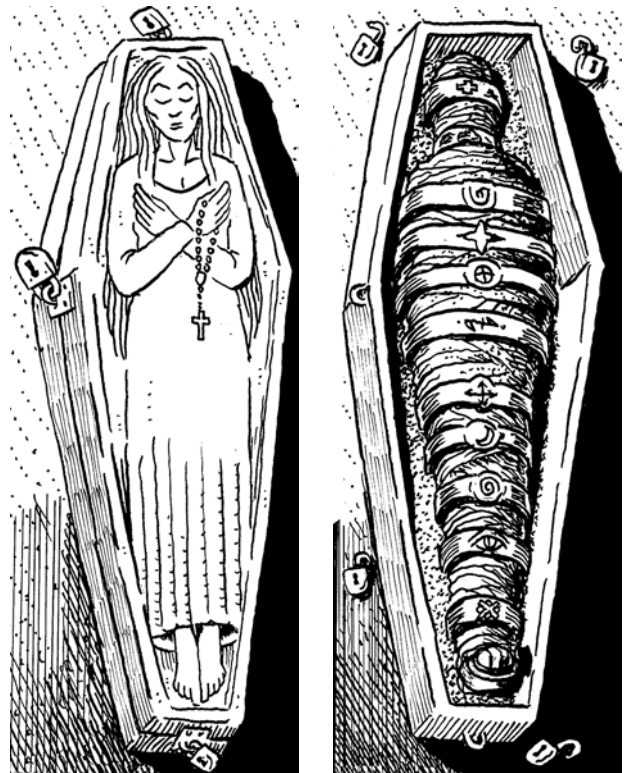
**Lesser Charm Spirit:** Init +2; Atk strike + 0 (1d5); AC 10; HD 2d12; hp 12; MV y 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead traits, immune to non-magical weapons, visible only to disturber; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

**Area C-1a - Vault Doors:** Characters discovering the entrance to the vault (area C-2) find that it is also hung with religious artifacts from a score of esoteric cults. Read or paraphrase the following:

*A pair of hammered copper doors bars your way. The doors are festooned like the rest of the hall, with weird artifacts: prayer beads in the shape of skulls, strange idols threaded on leather straps, hammered copper pentacles and several other holy symbols.*

The spirits assigned to the charms hung from the doors are far more powerful than their kin hung along the walls. If disturbed, the holy symbols release a greater spirit (whose form can be determined as with the lesser spirits, see area C-1 above).

Bypassing the door requires caution and courage. There are a total of seven symbols affixed to the door. A thief can safely remove a symbol with a DC 20 Disable trap or Pick pockets check, but must succeed seven times. Alternately, a cleric performing a DC 20 turn unholy check can "disable" the charms for 1 round, permitting other characters to remove the holy symbols. One character can remove two symbols in a round this way; with teamwork seven PCs can remove all the symbols in a single round.



If the charms are disturbed (the thief or cleric failing a check, or a character simply batting them aside) a greater charm spirit materializes. Like the lesser spirits, the greater spirit is invisible and immaterial to anyone that hasn't disturbed the same charm. It attacks the offending PC; on a successful strike, it inflicts damage and hurls the PC into the nearest wall - triggering 1d3 lesser spirits (see above).

**Greater Charm Spirit:** Init +4; Atk strike +3 (1d10 + hurl); AC 13; HD 4d12; hp 24; MV fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead, immune to non-magical weapons, attack hurls target 20', visible only to disturber; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +6; AL C.

**Area C-2 - Vault of Ilse the Damned:** *The gray, dusty walls and floor give way before a bed hung with silk, lace, and nuptial flowers. In sharp contrast to the remainder of the manse, the air is stale and dry. Motes float and hang in the air, buoyed by the shifting air.*

Characters drawing aside the silks and lace veils discover that the bed has no mattress. Instead a copper sarcophagus rests atop a low stone bier. The sarcophagus depicts a woman, her arms crossed before her, clutching a rosary.

The sarcophagus is secured with four locks, one on each side. While the locks aren't trapped, the bier-steps before the locks are, shifting beneath 25 lbs. or more weight. Careful thieves pausing to inspect the steps note the mechanisms with a DC 15 find traps check, and can easily prop the steps with a DC 5 disable traps check.

However, incautious thieves stepping directly to the sarcophagus are attacked by iron spears lancing down from above (DC 15 Ref save to avoid). On a failed save the thief is impaled and pinned by the spears, taking 1d8 damage. The

following round an acrid, viscous poison begins to seep down the spear shafts. The acid poison melts through cloth in one round and leather in three. It takes the poison 1d5 rounds to reach the thief; if the thief is trapped long enough for the poison to work into the wound, the thief must attempt a DC 10 Fort save or perish. The poison works on contact with flesh – those wiping away the poison to buy their thief time will need to exercise extreme caution or fall victim to the same fate.

The spears can be lifted, freeing trapped victims, with a single DC 25 Strength check or three simultaneous DC 10 Strength checks, but characters touching the acidic poison are left to struggle with its effects. Each of the sarcophagus' four sides can be triggered once.

**The Sarcophagus:** Each of the four locks can be opened with DC 15 Pick lock checks, allowing the lid of the sarcophagus to be lifted free. Beneath the lid is a corpse bundled in linen atop a bed of salt. The linen is held in place with a dozen lead bands; each band is stamped with symbols from a dozen different religions. PCs cutting free the bands and unwrapping the linens reveal the dried, blackened corpse of a small woman in a wedding gown. The desiccated corpse is none other than Lady Ilse.

Looped around the ring finger on the corpse's desiccated left hand is a black band – an engagement ring, given to Ilse by Mammon on the night of his summoning. The ring radiates intense heat. Removed from the corpse's hand, the ring flares with black hellfire, inflicting 1d12 points of damage every round it is handled. The hellfire is temporarily neutralized so long as the ring is handled with iron (tongs, or the tip of the spear, for instance). Characters donning the ring do so at terrible risk. The sole exception is the character associated with Ilse; this PC can both handle and don the ring without

risk, and without taking damage from the ring's heat.

All other characters suffer the following: First, the PC takes the 1d12 damage from the hellfire. Then, the PC must make a DC 15 Fort save as hellfire roars over his body. On a failed save, the hellfire consumes the PC's arm, and requires a DC 15 Fort save versus death.

If the PC survives the wash of hellfire, he has successfully usurped Ilse as the bride of Mammon. Hereafter, references to the character associated with Ilse are instead references to this PC.

If the PC associated with Ilse (or the surviving replacement) dons the ring, he receives the following benefits and curses:

- The PC is returned to full hit points.
- The PC receives +1 to his Luck stat.
- The character can lay on hands, as a cleric of the same level.
- The character's relationship to any Patrons or God is immediately severed. Henceforth – regardless of his own desires – the PC is the Chosen of Mammon. The judge is free to rule the implications of this association as best suits his campaign. If a wizard or elf, known spells are not lost, but all future spells must be won through negotiations with Mammon.
- The character is overcome with profound avarice. Presented with the opportunity to accumulate wealth, the PC must make a DC 15 Will save or be compelled to do everything in his power to acquire wealth.
- The character is immune to charm or compulsion effects of non-divine origins.

## APPENDIX A: THE DEVIL'S MASQUE

**10 Bells:** As the evening proceeds, the manse slips closer and closer to hell. Beginning with 10 bells, the PCs are able to ascertain the manse's true inhabitants. Faint trceries of regal forms, tumbling jesters, men-at-arms and musicians process down the dark halls, from the moat house to the great hall. Groups pausing in silence can hear faint sounds of celebration – laughter, music, the clack of crockery, and polite applause.

These spectral forms cannot yet perceive the PCs. They pass right through the characters, with only the hint of a chill. Turn unholy checks succeeding on a DC 10 or better dismiss the shapes into vanishing blue wisps. The trceries reform in 1d14 rounds, undeterred by the PCs' actions.

**11 Bells:** With the tolling, the spectral revelers are rendered in the flesh: lords and ladies, and their entourages, all in elaborate masks. Watchful PCs readily recognize the transformation as it takes place, the specters becoming more and more real with the crash of the great bell. Like the trceries before them, the nobles process from the moat house to the great hall, never venturing into the catacombs (level B) or

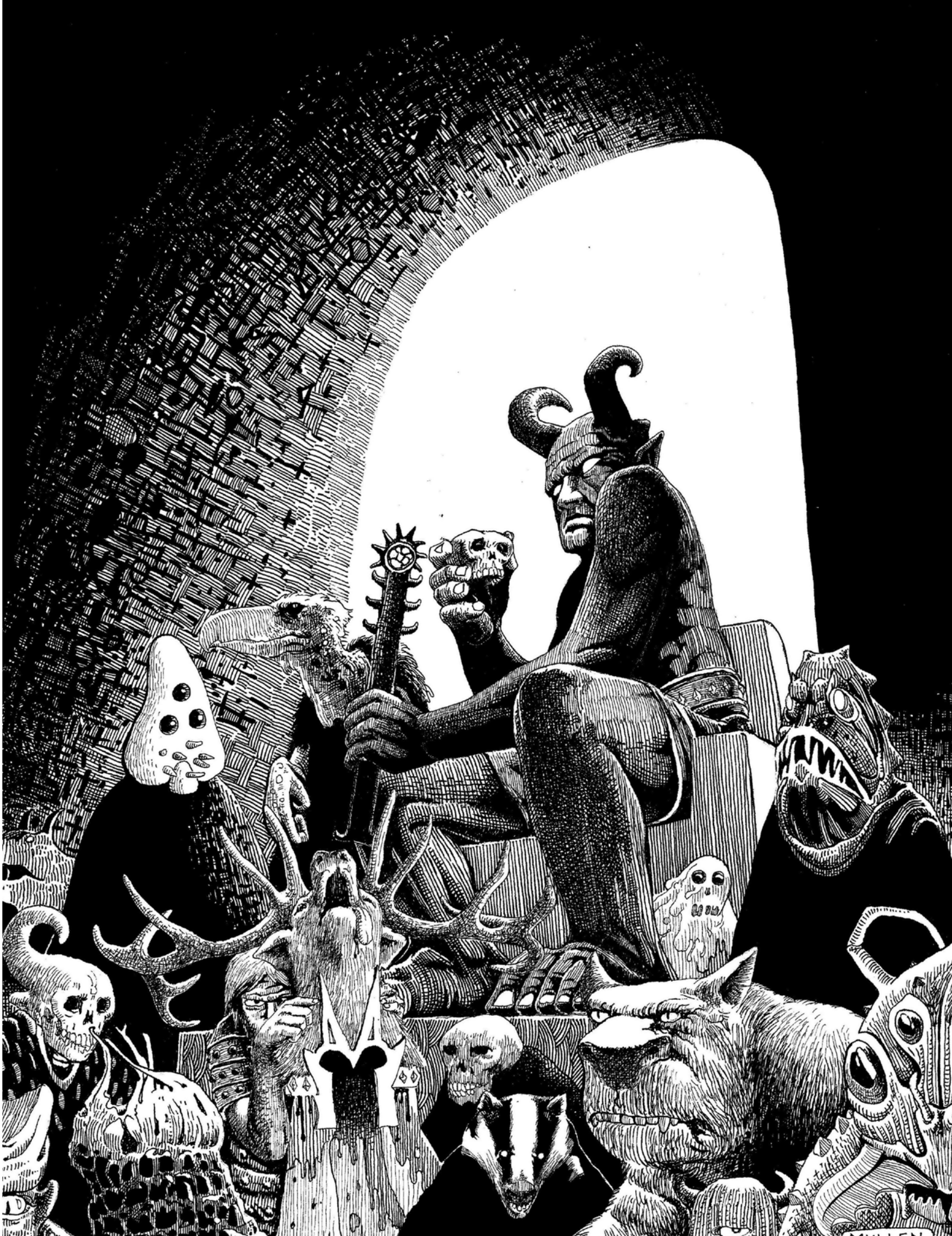
the high halls (level C).

With the tolling, the great hall undergoes a dramatic transformation. Bright flames spring to life in the hearth and sconces, rich food and drink appear on the long tables, and thick fur rugs and decorated tapestries cover the walls and floor.

Characters traveling level A find it hard to avoid the revelers. Each time the party enters a new area, and every 5 minutes, there is a 66% chance that a band of revelers comes upon the PCs. A band is composed of 1d5 nobles, 1d8 men-at-arms, 1d3 jesters and 1d5 entertainers, all dressed in rich regalia and wearing elaborate masks. All are devils, but this is only apparent to PCs wearing heir masks (see the entry for heir masks in Appendix B).

DC 10 Hide in shadows checks are sufficient to allow thieves to evade the revelers' notice, and with a check of 30 or more, judges may rule that the thief has sufficiently hidden the entire party. Otherwise, the party must resort to other wiles to avoid notice.







place stands at the head of the aisle, bearing the bloody head of the stag. The severed head has been gutted and hung with bloody lace to make a grisly veiled crown.

“For the heir of the manor, maid of the ball,” the Seneschal declares, holding the dripping head aloft. “Who claims the veil?”

In a seductive voice dripping with malevolence, the devil atop the throne commands: “I have done all I was bid. I gave you a ring to rule the world with the wrath of a fallen god; none could usurp your power. Now surrender to me what you promised. Render unto me my winsome bride.”

With the ending of the bells, the revelers’ true forms are revealed to all: goat-beasts, adorned in shrouds of flayed flesh; succubi mewling with insatiable lusts; waddling devil-kin, with fat fingers stinking of flesh; arch-cambions and their royal courts; slow flying imps and rolling oozes – all these and worse fill the black manse. The tapestries hanging on the walls are flayed skins. The rich furs on the floor are human bodies, crushed flat, and the food and drink are naught but maggoty flesh and curdled blood.

The enormous black being is none other than the archdevil Mammon, come to collect his due: the soul of the Mad Prince. The devil appears as a bare chested 14’ tall horned human, arrayed in folds of rich darkness. The dark form clutches a gemstone rod, and drinks from a cracked skull.

Having spoken his part, the devil rouses himself from his throne and raises a single fist into the air. The air cracks with a thunderclap, and a fiery circlet of hellfire appears in the air. Mammon turns to the PCs, demanding that his bride accept the blazing ring. Any character accepting the hellfire ring is surely doomed, however clever PCs might still escape with their lives (and souls!).

**F**ollowing are a handful of the obvious choices – some ill-advised – but judges should allow for the wild and creative solutions that can only come from desperate PCs caught in horrific binds.

- **Surrender the Mad Prince to Mammon:** If the PCs can correctly guess the originator of the slaughter, Ilse, and that associated PC willing goes into the arms of the archdevil, the remainder of the party is free to escape.
- **No Fury Like a Devil Scorned:** If the PCs succeed in discovering the engagement ring hidden on Ilse’s corpse in C-2, they have the key to their escape. Returning the ring to Mammon, thereby spurning his offer of marriage, voids the devil’s contract. Doing so enrages the devil; Ilse’s PC suffers the enmity of the arch-devil for the remainder of her soul’s existence.
- **False Hand:** PCs that have discovered the arm cleaver (in area A4-a) have the opportunity to dupe the archdevil. The PCs can sever a living arm prior to the encounter, and present the arm to Mammon. If the archdevil places the ring on the false hand, the PCs are free to escape the Manse.

If the revelers spot the PCs, they insist that the PCs join them for the grand fete, and brook no protest, calling their comrades, until the PCs are outnumbered 5:1. The revelers don’t choose violence of their own accord, but return blows if initiated by the PCs. They fight to subdue the PCs, bearing them to the great hall. Otherwise the revelers simply make themselves a hellish annoyance: masked beauties of either gender plead with the PCs like lost loves, jesters pester the PCs with questions and taunts, and squires harass the PCs, insisting that the masked ball is about to begin.

Characters wearing heir masks suffer none of these dubious attentions. The revelers treat these PCs as their own, letting them come and go at will. With DC 15 Personality checks, the masked PCs can convince the revelers that unmasked PCs are their slaves, but this check must be repeated each time the PCs encounter more revelers.

Characters donning mundane masks have a chance – albeit slim – of passing as revelers (DC 20 Personality check). Those aided by thieves (DC 15 Disguise self check) are more likely to pass. A check must be made for each PC attempting to pass; the PCs don’t know if a disguise is successful or not until encountering one of the devilish revelers.

**12 Bells:** On the tolling of the midnight hour, the manse undergoes its final transformation. Immediately, all portals, doors, windows, and gates open directly into the masque in the great hall. Any attempt to leave an area, by any means, directly transports the PCs into area A-7. The bells continue their maddening tolling until the PCs arrive.

**W**hen the PCs enter (or are forced into) the hall, read or paraphrase the following: *The pealing bells drive the hordes of revelers into a frenzy. Howling with animalistic frenzy they spin and cavort about the hall in a wild dance. Smaller revelers are crushed underfoot and even the large nobles are sucked into the dark horde, never to emerge.*

*The final bell ceases its toll and the mob parts, opening a direct path from the throne to you and your companions. An enormous black form sits atop the throne: a grim, towering form, with curved horns and eyes ablaze with hellfire. Behind the throne, a pulsing portal swirls orange and violet.*

*The withered old man who first welcomed you into this accursed*



- **Begone, Fiend!** Banishing the archdevil is an option, though only slightly less risky than fighting. The banishment cannot be done without possession of the *soul stone*. If the PCs possess the fabled gem, a cleric may attempt a DC 25 turn unholy check. (If the PCs have mastered the gem, they need roll only 15 or better.) On a successful check, Mammon is driven – howling – back through the portal.
- **Deal with the Devil:** If the PCs have mastered the *soul stone*, they can use the power of Mammon’s true name to strike a bargain with the archdevil. The judge should call for a DC 15 Personality check and a DC 15 Luck check, and sit back to see how well the players play the role. The judge is obligated to do his very best to twist the PCs’ words, honoring the word, but never the spirit of the bargain.
- **To Duel the Devil:** PCs opting to battle the archdevil and his horde of devils face near certain death. They are surrounded on all sides and unable to flee, by either mundane or magical means. Unless the PCs take intentional, defensive tactics, each will be beset by multiple attacks each round; there is no end to the number of devils that can flood the hall.

However, existing in the liminal state alongside the devils also grants the PCs key benefits. Despite their relative strengths, all the devils (including the manifes-

tation of Mammon) are treated as mere type 1 demons in regards to combat immunities. Thus, they take half damage from non-magical weapons and fire, but are otherwise susceptible to magical weapons, acid, cold electricity and gas attacks

Slaying one or more devils buys a PC a single round free from attacks. In this way exceptionally deadly (or lucky) PCs might escape the wrath of the horde for a period of time, but eventually even the staunchest of warriors must fall before the onslaught.

Each PC class is set upon by a specific type of devil. Up to six devils can attack a single PC at once, but careful use of terrain and choke points – or simply fighting back to back – is effective in reducing the number of attacks.

**Wizards, Clerics and Elves:** Mewling succubi swarm the caster, lusting for the taste of hot flesh. On a successful kiss attack, the PC takes 1d4+3 damage, and must attempt a DC 15 Will save. On a failed check, the PC loses one random spell. On a subsequent round, the spell can be cast by the succubus with a d20+3 spell check.

**Succubus:** Init +1; Atk kiss +2 melee (1d4+3 plus drain spell) or claw +4 melee (1d6+2); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, drain spell as above; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

**Warriors and Dwarves:** Fighting men and their beard-

## MORE HANDS OF GLORY



With a freshly severed hand and the dweomered wax (found in area A-4a) the PCs can create a *Hand of Glory*. The rite only works with the hand of a living humanoid, though the victim need not be willing. The victim can die afterwards, but must be alive for the completion of the ritual.

Lit, the *Hand* casts a 30' diameter sphere of murky light. A *Hand* burns a total of 5d5 rounds, and may be extinguished between uses.

The adventure provides for powers by the original owner’s alignment, but at the judge’s discretion, flaming, wax-covered hands also display powers based upon species:

**Elf:** Elven *Hands* spit and flare with weird violet flames. Any spells or magical effects cast within the light fail, and characters attempting to use an item’s magic power must first succeed on a DC 10 Will save.

**Dwarf:** The leathery flesh of dwarven *Hands* slowly melts to reveal golden bones (worth a grisly 15 gp). The bearer of the *Hand* can detect gold or magic within the range of the hand-light; the bearer and his allies receive +3 to all attack and damage rolls made against targets within the glow of the light.

**Halfling:** Lit, the hand glimmers with soft silvery light. The bearer is able to burn Luck as a halfling. The PC does not regain any spent Luck spent in this manner unless the *Hand’s* flame is kept lit through the following day. (Keeping the flame alive for 24 hours obviously requires a great number of severed hands, but not all the hands need belong to halflings.)



ed kin are beset by lumbering, boil-backed devils with scythe-like limbs. If a devil succeeds in slaying a PC, it drives a proboscis down the PC's throat, then sucks itself inside the dead PC, animating the corpse with its former stats the following round. The reanimated PC has the devil's hp, but otherwise has stats identical to those it enjoyed in life.

**Boil-Back Devil:** Init +1; Atk scythe-arm +2 melee (1d8+2) or bite +4 melee (1d3+2); AC 13; HD 3d12; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, critical hit on 18+, possess corpse; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

**Halflings and Thieves:** Fat, gamboling devil-kin assault halflings and thieves from every side. Resembling overfed cherubs bursting at the pores, the laughing devils clutch at the PCs like eager children. Any time a halfling or thief attempts to burn Luck (whether aiding himself or an ally), the PC must make a DC 15 Will save. On a failed save, the Luck is burned, but to no effect; instead the nearest luck eater gains 1d7 hp, +1 AC, +1 to hit, damage, and to all saves, for every point of Luck burned.

**Luck Eater:** Init +3; Atk claw +2 (1d3); AC 10; HD 1d12; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP demon traits, consume burned Luck; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.



ould any of the PCs don the devil's wedding ring, their fate is inescapable. Mammon claims the PC for his own and returns to hell, dragging the screaming character after.

If the PCs somehow fulfill the devil's bargain without sacrificing their own souls, they have won a decisive victory over the fell being. The diabolic court responds in kind:

Mammon howls his fury, spilling terror through the ranks of lesser devils. The portals about the hall flare with hellfire and the PCs have but four rounds to escape. Call for initiative checks and actions.

## Round 1

### Initiative Manse Action

15 The devils erupt in deafening howls. The judge may rule that the players can no longer engage in table talk, but instead can only describe their actions. The ceiling of the manse cracks and begins to give way. Thousands of coins spill from Mammon's throne. Any PC sacrificing all other actions can scoop up 1d100 coins of copper, silver and gold.



## Round 2

### Initiative Manse Action

10 One by one, the devils are torn back to their planes of torment. They clutch and claw at the PCs. Any character remaining in the great hall must make DC 5 Ref save or be dragged into hell. Gemstones tumble from the cracks in the ceiling. Any PC sacrificing all other actions can scoop up 1d30 gemstones, each worth 1d10 x 20 gp each, along with coins, as above.

## Round 3

### Initiative Manse Action

15 The great hall begins to collapse. All characters in the hall must succeed on DC 5 Ref saves or take 1d14 damage from the falling rubble.

10 The floor of the manor gives way, beginning in the great hall and radiating out. Characters in areas A-7, A-6 or A-8 must succeed in DC 10 Ref saves or plummet to their doom. Characters remaining in the hall and giving up all actions for the round can scoop up gemstones and coins as above. If the PCs possess any magical weapons or armor, these items begin to glow with a hell-light, gaining +1 to any previous bonuses.

## Round 4

### Initiative Manse Action

15 Hellfire erupts from below, blossoming throughout the haunted halls. All PCs within the manor-house must succeed on a DC 10 Fort save or take 1d10 damage.

7 Mammon makes one final call to PCs remaining within the manor-house. As above, PCs sacrificing actions may scoop up coins and gemstones, and any previously magical arms or armor are increased by a second +1 bonus. Characters failing a DC 10 Will save are consumed by avarice for the remainder of their mortal lives.

5 The Black Manse collapses into the darksome swamp. Any PCs remaining within the manse (excluding areas A-1 and A-2) must succeed on DC 10 Fort saves or be sucked under by the dread currents and never heard from again.

**Mammon (lesser manifestation):** Init +6; Atk rod +12 melee (dmg 3d10+6) or tail +16 melee (1d12+4); AC 22; HD 18d12; hp 89; MV 60' or fly 60'; Act 2d20; SP spells (+10 spell check): *detect good*, *word of command*, *scare*, *charm*, demon traits; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +16; AL C.

# APPENDIX B: HEIR MASKS



cattered throughout the adventure, the heir masks offer specific PCs skills and abilities from their former lives. As detailed in their specific entries, the masks only provide these abilities for keyed PCs.

However, all the masks provide the following powers to any that wear them:

- The true form of the revelers is revealed.
- A PC wearing a mask is ignored by the revelers.
- The manse's secret and hidden doors are limned by a faint red light.
- The PC is granted +3 to hit and damage against fellow PCs, and is granted +6 to Will saves against spells and charms cast by fellow PCs.
- The character radiates evil, detectable by *detect evil* and the like.

The masks lose all their powers at the end of the night, whether the PCs have triumphed or failed.

Here is a summary of the masks and where they can be found in the text:

Heir to House Liis	Heir Mask
Ilse (Mad Prince)	None
Ursula	Lion Mask (area A-2)
Jost	Horned Mask (area A-5)
Sabian	Wolf Mask (area A-8)
Kethe	Crow Mask (area A-8)
Josef	Three-Faced Mask (area B-3)
Demut	Medusa Mask (area A-8)
Matias	Iron Mask (area B-3)



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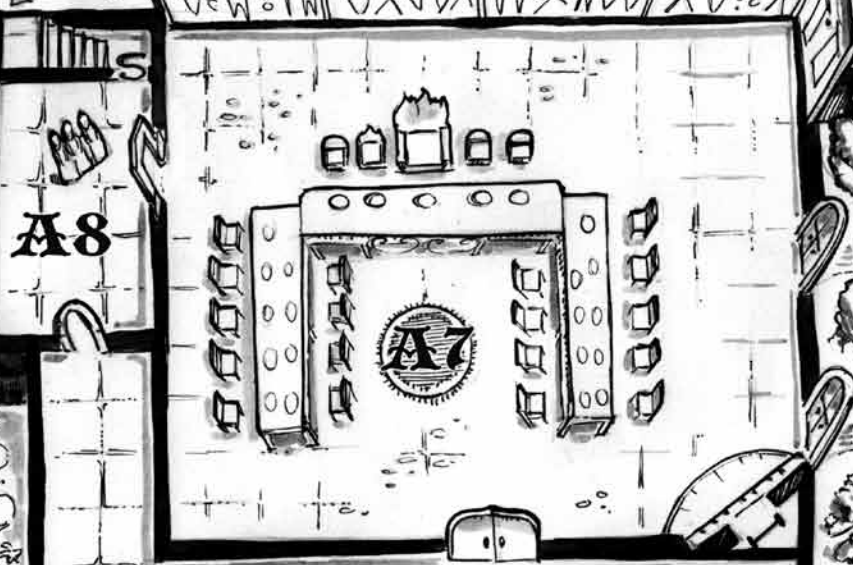
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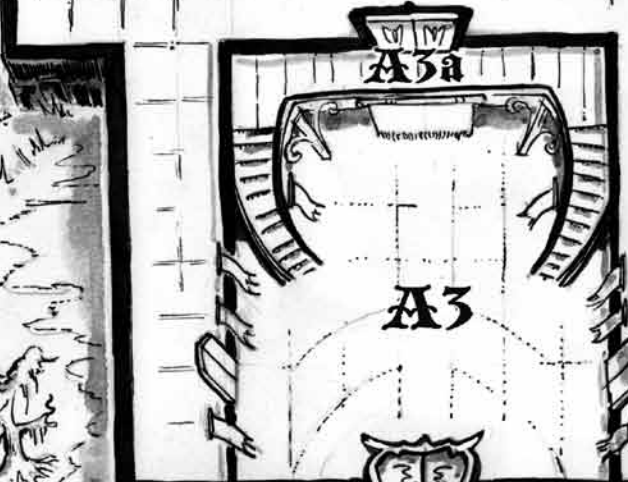
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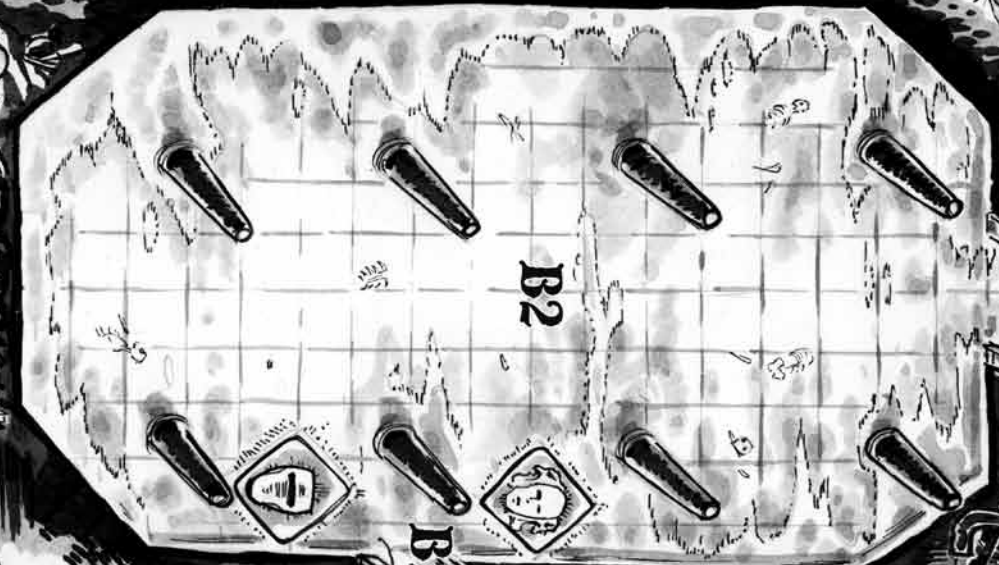
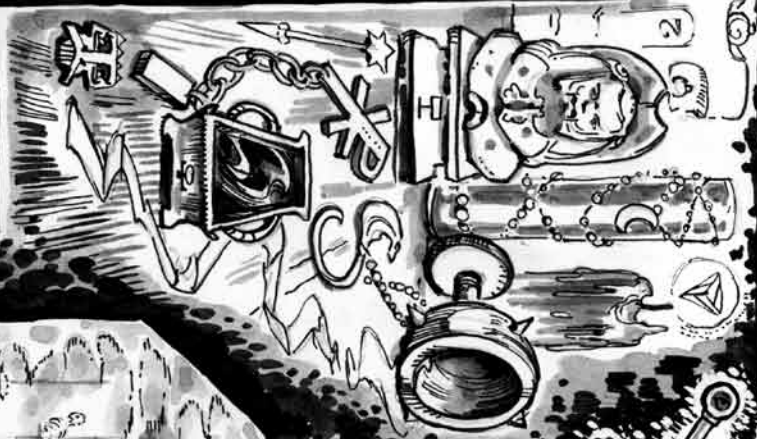
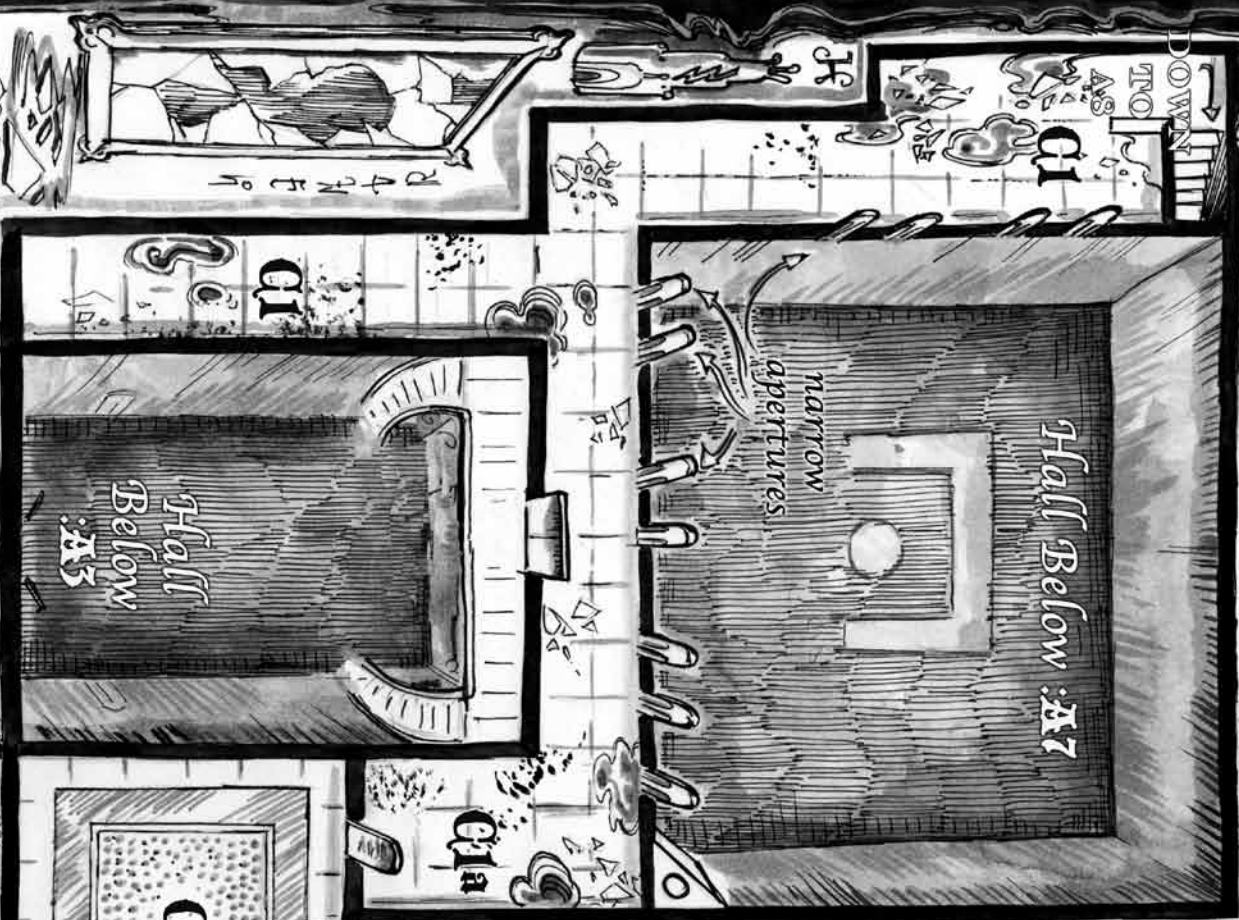
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BELL TRACKER

# THE HIGH HALES

DOWN  
TO



2K2



# THE FLOATING OASIS OF THE ASCENDED GOD

By **Stephen Newton** • Editor: Rev. Dak J. Ultimak • Cartography: Brad McDevitt • Playtesters: Terry Olson, Maxwell Spann, Jessica McMillin, Ava Newton, Cori Newton, Amanda Rajchel, Sean McGuire, Farah McGuire, Mike Masuda, Tina Masuda • Special Thanks: Game Kastle (Santa Clara)



*The Floating Oasis of the Ascended God* is designed for 4-6 1<sup>st</sup>-level characters. It sends the players to a floating island where they will encounter bizarre underlings to an absent deity busily judging the mortal accomplishments of recently-deceased followers. Given the mystical nature of the location, there are other-worldly treasures which can be recovered, but not without first facing significant peril.

## BACKGROUND

The Floating Oasis of the Ascended God has stopped high in the noon sky—4000 feet high to be exact—as it does once every 77 years. The Oasis, a floating cloud island, provides respite for both divine ethereals and avian servants of the Ascended God—a goddess of air, weather, and magical flying creatures. For the past several centuries, the island has been occupied by Momoaa, a mid-level servant in the Ascended God's celestial bureaucracy, who has been using the Oasis as a station to pass judgment on the Ascended God's recently deceased human and humanoid followers. Those followers will either be granted additional years of life (via partaking from the Basin of Immortality) and bestowed the gift of flight, or will be stigmatized as "flightless birds" and be sentenced to additional years of servitude back on earth.

Meanwhile back in the PCs' village, Raa-Zhel, a fledgling low-level wizard, has misinterpreted ancient scrolls describing how rain clouds from the Floating Oasis once filled the divine waters in the Pool of Immortality. However, Raa-Zhel does not understand the Oasis' true nature and mistakenly thinks the humid clouds of the Oasis are the source of the Pool of Immortality. She has recklessly provided the means for the PC's to travel to the Oasis via a charmed sky squid to collect a sample of these priceless, life-giving waters.

**About the Oasis, Crits and Fumbles:** The Floating Oasis is a collection of clouds, platforms, and tunnels fused together by a loose collection of thin magical fibers. The fibers allow mortals to walk upon the clouds, but only *very carefully*, for each step needs to be carefully taken to ensure secure footing on the spongy "ground." Thus, the judge should keep the following in mind when navigating the tricky terrain—falling to the earth below always results in 12d6 damage:

- *Discarded Items:* any item dropped or placed on the ground must make a DC 15 Luck check (applying the PC's Luck modifiers) or become lost in the clouds.
- *Fumbles & Crits:* if a PC fumbles, or a foe scores a crit, the PC must make a DC 10 Reflex save or plummet through the clouds.

- *Running & Jumping:* or acrobatic Mighty Deeds are similarly risky. PCs must include an additional DC 5 Reflex save to these maneuvers to prevent falling through the clouds.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The default hook described in the *Player Beginning* involves the fledgling wizard Raa-Zhel recruiting the PCs, but that's not the only scenario that could get the players to the Oasis. The judge should feel free to mix and match from the following ideas or come up with one of their own:

**Festival of the Ascended God:** The party stumbles across a small gathering of religious fanatics, absurdly dressed in cloaks covered in feathers and helmets fashioned with beaks constructed of dried leather. This "bird cult" is engaged in a bizarre ritual—bobbing and strutting like chickens—to celebrate the arrival of their "Avian God." Squinting upwards towards where they point, the PCs can indeed see an unusual bronze-colored cloud in the otherwise clear sky. Suddenly, their squawks and hoots grow to howls of panic as the PCs realize the cult has lost control of their magic ritual. Without warning, the PCs are suddenly sucked into a violent whirlwind and carried thousands of feet upwards toward the mysterious cloud island.

**Flight of the Golden Falcon:** A haggard warrior approaches the PCs with a stuffed falcon whose gold-plated feathers shimmer with magic when exposed to the sun exactly at noon. She describes how she collected the macabre trophy while plundering the crypt of a fallen priest of the Ascended God, the deity of harpies and griffons. She offers the PCs 10 gp each if they will stand with her at high noon and help her decipher the meaning of the magic bird. During the ritual, the bird comes alive, transforms into the size of a great wyrm, and devours the warrior woman in a single gulp. The now giant falcon then gives the PCs a choice to be devoured or to be judged within the Floating Oasis.

**Patron Favor:** A PC's patron (or deity) is underwhelmed by the meager tokens which have recently been offered. The offending spellcaster is given an ultimatum by his patron: if he wants the magic to continue to flow, then the party must travel on the backs of invisible companions to collect the elixir of immortality rumored to be under the control of rival patron who lairs on a floating island.

## PLAYER BEGINNING

*Hovering high in the noonday sky, an unnatural, bronze-colored cloud with a rainbow spilling from its edge sat motionless, just as it had since it spontaneously appeared a week before.*

*More concerning, however, was the giant sky squid which do-*



cilely floated 10 feet above you. The wizard Raa-Zhel – adorned in her peculiar feathered attire resembling a crazed peacock – had charmed the great monstrosity only minutes earlier. She had then quickly herded you and your companions into the rickety basket tethered between its limp tentacles.

“Don’t worry,” Raa-Zhel had said, “my magical glamour will keep the creature docile and under my control long enough for you to reach the Floating Oasis.” She had then pushed a crystal vial into each of your hands before continuing, “One for each of you, just in case you encounter something unexpected up there. Once you collect a vial of the Water of Immortality from the Floating Oasis, return to me for the remainder of your reward!”

She then wiggled the tail feathers affixed to her cloak and muttered a few indecipherable words. In response, the floating beast’s tentacles squirmed into life, launching itself and your party upwards towards the bronze cloud. As your basket rose higher, the town beneath you became comically small as you clutched your garments tighter to fight off the cold.

Then, as the squid drew closer to the island, you realize that the Oasis was not a single cloud, but a collection of chambers connected by cloud tunnels stretching off into the horizon.

Alas, your examination was cut short! You realize in horror that the sky squid’s tentacles have started squirming in agitation, and its giant eye fixates upon you as it begins to violently snap its beak.

The edge of the bronze cloud is only a few feet away now – you could just make the leap onto its spongy surface, or you could take your chances with the sky squid.

The PCs arrive at area 1 just as the massive sky squid is coming out of its charm. The PCs may use the first melee round to jump to area 1 (DC 2 Reflex save or fall back to the village suffering 12d6 falling damage).

If the PCs foolishly attempt to attack the sky squid, it will use 2 of its attacks against the PCs, and 2 “attacks” to shake the basket out of its tentacles. The squid must make two DC 10 Reflex saves to free itself from the basket).

**Sky Squid:** Init special (usually +3 but last in order for this game session); Atk tentacle +3 melee (1d3 + grasp), beak +3 melee (1d10); AC 12; HD 4d8; hp 23; MV walk 20’ or fly 40’; Act 4d20; SP grasp (1d4); SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +2; AL N.

*Grasp:* If the sky squid makes a successful melee attack, it will grasp the victim; the PC must make a DC 10 Reflex save or be dropped from the basket. The sky squid will not pursue the PCs once they jump to area 1.

**Area 1 – Soft Landing:** It is assumed the PCs have jumped from the basket of the sky squid into area 1; update accordingly if the PCs arrived via a different method:

*As you leap from the sky squid’s basket, you find yourself landing knee-deep in the billowy mists of the cloud island. The “ground” is soft and spongy and feels uneven beneath your feet. To the south, the bronze-colored clouds become wispy and translucent affording visibility to your village which looks tiny, thousands of feet below. Off to the north, you see a multi-colored waterfall and the mouth of a cloud tunnel leading deeper into the Oasis.*

*A flag with the symbol of a golden humanoid with broad wings and the head of a bird is affixed atop a 15’ flag pole fluttering in the wind.*

The surface of the Oasis is arcane, defies physics, and is not entirely safe to walk upon. Once the PCs begin to move, the PC with the lowest Luck must make an immediate DC 12 Reflex save. If the PC succeeds, his legs punch through the cloud, but he is somehow able to flay his arms and swim back to the surface. If the PC fails, turn to the player (not PC) immediately next to the character who is falling and say, “Your friend is falling, do you reach out to try to save them? Tell me RIGHT NOW or they’re lost! 3... 2... 1...” If the would-be rescuer declines to answer in 3 seconds or says ‘no’, then the falling PC plummets to the village below (12d6 falling damage as he reaches terminal velocity, no save.) If a rescue is attempted, a successful Luck check will save them both, but failure sends both PCs spiraling back to earth in freefall.

**Flag:** the flag bears the sigil of the Ascended God (which will be identifiable by sages and clerics and similar PCs with a DC 10 Intelligence check). It waves atop a 15’ copper pole (worth 15 gp) which can be removed with a DC 10 Strength check and may come in handy later.

**Area 2 – The Waterfall and Prismatic Tunnel:** *A waterfall, whose waters are made up of streams of different colors – red, yellow, blue, silver, and indigo – empties seemingly from mid-air, splashes against the edge of clouds, and then descends over the side of the oasis as a rainbow stretching to the ground far below. To the north, a tunnel leads deeper into the oasis. Its inner cloud walls are lined with tiny gem flecks which create numerous narrow beams of light crisscrossing through the passage. The rays periodically change color.*

After the PCs examine the tunnel:

*At the far end of the tunnel, you see a small device that looks like a tiny, colored, windmill.*

**Waterfall/Rainbow:** The “waters” of the waterfall hit the clouds and become a rainbow. They are quite viscous, and can be applied like paint. Drinking the water is harmless and refreshing.

**Tunnel:** The tunnel is 60 feet long and its walls are choked with micro-gems emitting colored, laser-like rays corresponding to the color wheel at the tunnel’s end. The color of the beams changes every 60 seconds. At the end of each round that an unprotected PC is exposed to the rays, they incur 2d3 hp damage. The “waterfall paint” acts like a shield if the PC is completely covered in the paint color matching the current color of the rays. The color wheel at the tunnel’s end (marked by an X on the map) controls the setting of the gems, and can also be set in a position which completely disables them.

A thief examining the tunnel will think, “Hmm, I might be able to contort my body as I walk through to avoid these rays...” (envision how cat burglars evade laser alarms in movies) and can do so successfully with a DC 12 *hide in shadows* check. Failure happens midway down tunnel resulting in 2d3 damage if they’re not covered in protective paint.

For every round spent in the tunnel, a PC can harvest 1d3 5 gp gems (maximum of 20 gems).

**Area 3 – Sky Orchard:** *Emerging from the cloud tunnel, you find yourself standing before a vast grove of alien trees. The trunks are comprised of gelatinous, indigo-colored tubes intertwined to-*

gether. These tube-trunks rise upwards from the cloud-ground before blossoming into thick, cumulus mists of silver and blue. Darting amongst the trees are large translucent birds with stiletto-like beaks. The birds slurp nectar straight from the tree mist, which causes their see-through bodies to change colors. They notice your party and start converging towards you!

The cloud slurpers are attracted to bright colors, and will focus their attacks on PCs that are painted in blue, silver, or indigo from area 2. If none of the PCs are painted, they will just attack at random.

**Cloud Slurpers (6):** Init +2; Atk beak +2 melee (1d4 plus pigment drain); AC 12; HD 1d6; hp 3 each; MV fly 30'; Act 1d20; SP pigment drain; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1; AL N. Any PC hit by a cloud slurper must make a DC 12 Fortitude save or have all color drained from their skin and hair becoming an albino for 1d6 weeks or until magically healed.

**Trees:** The nectar of the trees has wondrous properties. There are two doses of each color, each lasts 2d12 rounds: indigo (healing, 2d3 hp), silver (bravery, +2 bonus to initiative and morale checks), and blue (levitation, 5 rounds).

**Area 4 – Judgement Chamber:** *A short tunnel opens into a grand audience chamber composed of bright silver clouds. A 20'-tall gold-skinned creature with the body of a broad-shouldered, winged woman and the head of an eagle, keeps audience. A steady stream of gray, vacant-eyed humans and humanoids of various races emerges from a dark purple-clouded archway. The giant eagle-woman examines the colorless ashen individuals as they emerge, emits a birdlike-squawk, and then casually points at one of the two northern exits. The individuals guided to the northwest door seem excited and hurriedly exit through that passage. Those that are pointed to the northeastern tunnel deflate with dejection before begrudgingly slouching toward that exit.*

*Two man-sized, ochre-colored creatures casually hover near the exits. They eye you suspiciously as the colorless bodies pass through the exits beneath them.*

The PCs will be ignored by all in the chamber until they attempt to pass through one of the northern exits. PCs attempting to exit who have *not* been drained of color by the cloud slurpers in area 3 will be attacked by the winged guardians; they fight to the death to prevent the PCs from progressing through a northern exit without first being “judged.” Once both guardians are killed, Momoaa will task two prejudged souls to attack the party.

**Momoaa the Golden Judge:** Momoaa is a mid-level servant of the Ascended God currently meting next-life assignments to the deities' fallen followers. She is an eternal being and will not bother to respond to any of the PCs questions or attacks, but merely nods to one of the doors for each soul that arrives. As the PCs dispatch the winged guardians, Momoaa will absently direct two prejudged souls to antagonize the PCs. Once those are dispatched, she will wave a hand over the PCs and gesture to both doors “judging” them to choose whichever exit they desire. If the PCs can decipher the languages of Angelic, Dragon, Griffon, Harpy, or Neutrality, they will recognize that her squawks roughly translate to “worthy” and “unworthy” as she judges the souls. She has no statistics because, from an in-game perspective, she should be treated as an invulnerable deity.

**Winged Guardians (2):** Init +1; Atk claws +2 melee (1d6) or *charming cry*; AC 14; HD 3d8; hp 12, 14; MV walk 20' or fly 35'; Act 1d20; SP *charming cry* (DC 12 Will save), ignores colorless characters; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N. *Charming cry:* As transmundane ancestors of harpies, the winged guardians can tune their cries into frequencies audible to a specific person. Once per melee encounter, they attempt to *charm* a PC (DC 12 Willpower save to resist) to walk off the edge of the clouds and plummet below. Charmed characters can be restrained by another PC successfully making a DC 8 Strength check. The charm persists for 1d3 rounds.

**Prejudged Souls:** The prejudged souls are recently deceased followers of the Ascended God, many still bearing the visible wounds of their demise. They are technically dead mortals on their way to their afterlife. They will ignore the PCs unless Momoaa tasks them to attack. Clerics will instantly recognize the malleable state of their in-transition souls and realize they have the potential to be *turned* into allies (literally). Turned souls can act as a follower of the cleric (or as a replacement PC) while they're on the Oasis, but they will wither into dust within 1d6 rounds of leaving the cloud island.

**Prejudged Souls: (2, but add more if PCs haven't suffered enough)** Init -2; Atk unarmed strike +1 melee (1d3); AC 11; HD 1d8+2; hp 6 each; MV walk 20'; Act 1d20; SP un-dead; SV Fort +0, Ref -2, Will +2; AL N.

**Area 5 – Gateway to Ascended Status:** *You emerge from the tunnel into a bright, spacious chamber where a pool of water is somehow contained within the clouds. Emerging from the far end of the pool is a set of steps which ascends to a large platform. Striking an imposing figure on the platform, a lusty creature resembling a great, winged lizard with huge jaws perches near a golden basin.*

*As you examine the creature, an ashen-colored man bustles past from behind you with an excited look on his face. He wades into the pool and then climbs the steps before drinking deeply from golden basin. Immediately, you see him transform: the lines on his face fade away and his pruned muscles regain youthful vigor. He raises up his newly-muscled arms before the creature who, to your astonishment, immediately bites them both off. And then, from the bleeding stumps which were once his arms, a pair of wings blossom and spread. With an ecstatic look on his face, the winged man flies away!*

*The giant reptile then turns and blinks at you with black, expressionless eyes.*

Judged souls will emerge from the tunnel at a rate of 1 per round, and the “winging” ritual will repeat itself.

**Basin of Longevity:** The golden basin contains 4 doses of *elixir of longevity*. Drinking a dose extends a person's life by 3d4 years (which in game terms means permanently adding 1 point of Stamina and 2 points of Luck (maximum of 17)). The PC also gains 6 temporary hit points which last for 3 rounds – a necessary precaution to the sometimes-fatal winging ceremony. However, three turns after drinking the elixir, the PC's body is permanently transformed into one that showcases the magnanimity of the Ascended God: they lose all body hair, and their skin turns completely bronze colored.

If the PCs molest the dimorphodon, or attempt to take or consume the elixir without willingly offering up their arms within 1 round, then the dimorphodon will attack everyone in the party and try to prevent escape.

**Dimorphodon:** Init +4; Atk bite +4 melee (1d8 +2 + arm-to-wing) and 2 wing +2 melee (1d4); AC 16, HD 4d8; hp 25; MV 20', fly 40'; Act 3d20; SP arm-to-wing on 18-20; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; AL N.

*Arm-to-wing:* On a natural 18-20, the bite will inflict an automatic 6 hp damage, and removes one of the PC's arms, which will be replaced with a leathery bat wing 2 rounds later. Restoring an arm from a wing requires a 4 HD clerical lay on hands per arm.

**Area 6 – Stigmas and Exits:** *Light fades away as you enter a cavern comprised entirely of foreboding storm clouds. Electric energy courses not only in the clouds above, but throughout the walls and below your feet as well. Your hair stands on end and your skin is tingling with the energy in the room.*

*A swirling basin descends into a bowl 60' across and 30' deep. At the edge of the basin is a large vat filled with black tarry liquid, and an empty scone. In the center of the basin, a dark, whirlwind, funnel churns violently downwards towards earth.*

*As you examine the inverted whirlwind, a young, ashen-colored man emerges from the tunnel behind you, strips himself naked, and then steps into the vat covering himself entirely in the black tar. With a resigned sigh, he then trundles into the center of the maelstrom. Electricity crackles beneath each of his steps, leaving neon footprints in the clouds. Finally, you hear him scream as the swirling funnel overtakes him plunging him downwards back towards earth.*

This is the chamber for those judged to perform additional years of terrestrial servitude; a dismal penance to followers of the Ascended God.

**The Walk of Lightning:** The entire chamber tingles with electric energy. If the PC is wearing or carrying any sort of metal (armor, swords, lanterns, etc.) then for each 10 feet they travel they must make a DC 10 Reflex save or take 1d5 electrical damage (3 attacks total). However, players who first study the patterns of the lightning strikes will notice 4-inch thin edges between the clouds where the tines of energy within the clouds never cross. A PC attempting a carefully balanced walk along these edges can weave through the clouds avoiding the lightning. Success requires a one-time DC 12 Agility check, with the PC taking 1d5 lightning damage upon failure. If a PC manages to insert good-sized metal object (e.g. a 10-foot pole or the flagpole from area 1) into the empty scone, the lightning will thereafter only strike the object. If a PC just throws the pole some distance away (as opposed to carefully placing in the empty scone), then they must make a Luck check lest it fall through the clouds to the earth below. PCs not wearing any sort of metal do not attract lightning.

**Stigma of the Flightless Bird:** Dousing oneself in the black tar initiates the shaming ritual an unworthy follower must perform as part of their sinful penance. While considered a punishment to the eyes of the Ascended God and her followers, a land-dwelling PC may find the punishments contain useful side-benefits. For each PC that douses themselves,

roll d3 and consult table below; all effects become available on the following day and persist until the PC reaches their next level.

1	Ostrich Legs	The PC's legs grow bulbous, ungainly muscles. Movement is increased by 5"
2	Penguin Traits	The PC's skin patterns transform into shades of black and white similar to a penguin, and the PC can swim at the same rate as their regular movement.
3	Beak of the Dodo	The PC's nose becomes elongated and sharp like a beak. The PC's sense of smell becomes quite acute being able to smell normal creatures from up to 40' away when concentrating.

**Whirlwind Back to Earth:** A PC entering the maelstrom at the center of the chamber will be violently sucked back to earth within 2 rounds. The PC must make a Luck check or be pummeled by flying debris for 1d4 hp damage during the descent before landing 5 miles away from the village where they began the adventure.

If the judge used the Raa-Zhel adventure hook, the wizard will reward 50gp for each vial of *elixir of longevity* given to her.

## CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

The PC's actions have attracted the attention of the Ascended God. Whether this scrutiny results in boon or curse depends on the future actions of the PCs. Clerics who choose to start worshiping the Ascended God after visiting the Oasis will temporarily receive a +1 bonus to spell checks (duration lasts 1 day for each point of Personality). Similarly, wizards or elves automatically gain the opportunity to attempt a *patron bond* with Momoaa and gain a similar bonus (1 day of +1 spell check per point of Intelligence).

Both the Ascended God and Momoaa are of Neutral alignment and are worshiped by avian creatures. As such, they will periodically send harpies, cloud slurpers, and even the occasional pterodactyl to molest PC's who have dared to visit their sanctuary and then gone on to flagrantly worship deities or patrons of opposed alignment or elements (e.g. chaotic gods, competing air-based patrons such as Azi Dahaka, etc.)

The Oasis itself only remains another 12 hours hovering above the PC's village before it spontaneously relocates to the region of Sha-aw in the elemental plane of air. Anyone still on the Oasis when that happens will immediately be transported there as well. Sha-aw is an unearthly environment populated by magical flying creatures resembling lizards, roaches, and starfish. All creatures of Sha-aw are incredibly rare and valuable, as well as dangerous. In the brief interlude between the PCs' return and the Oasis' departure, the wizard Håake will seek the PCs' assistance to collect and return several specimens.





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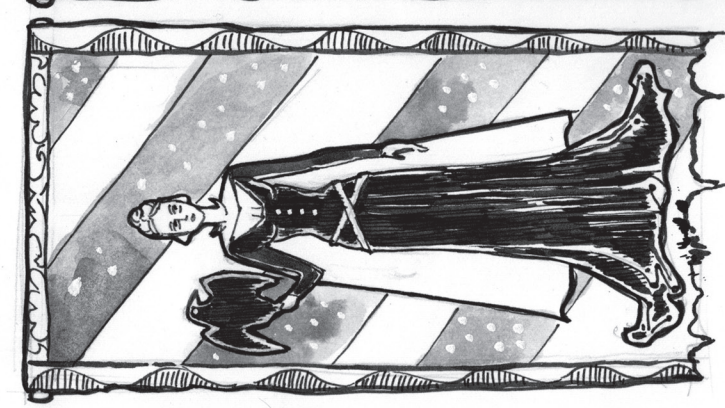
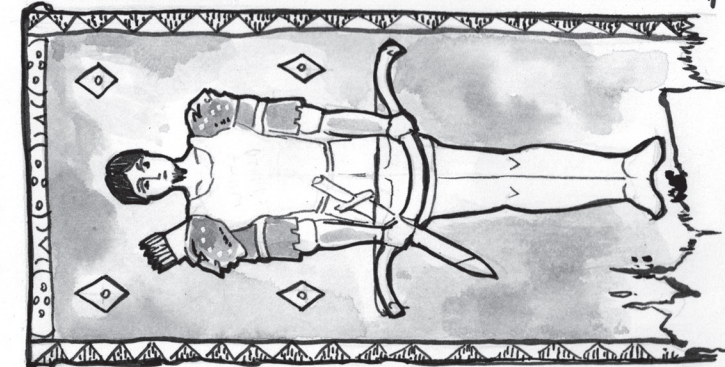
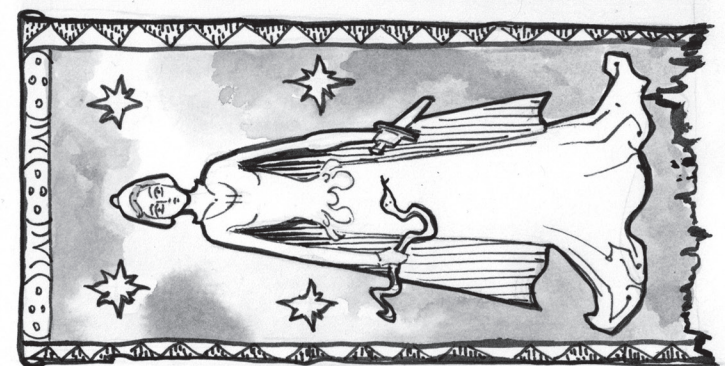
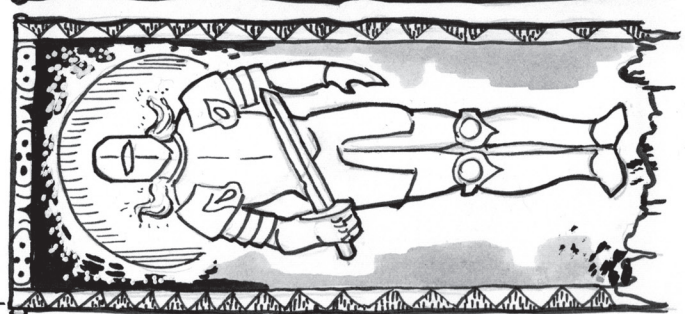
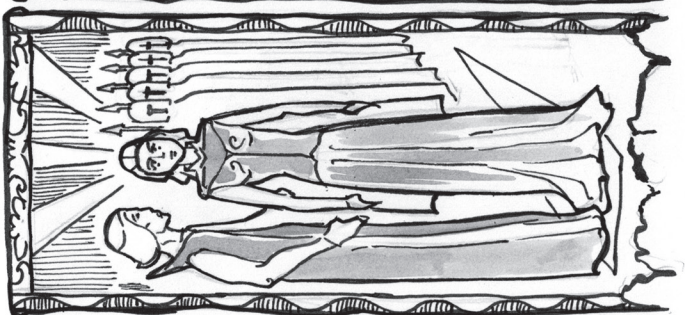
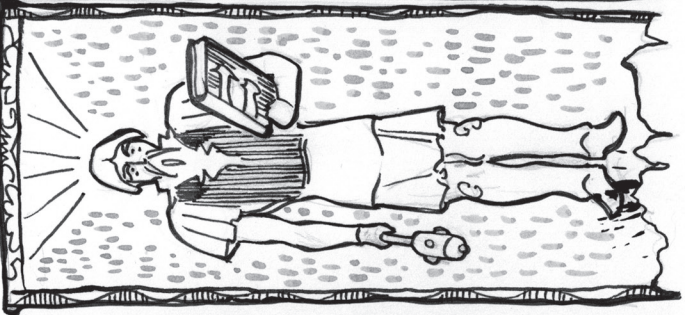
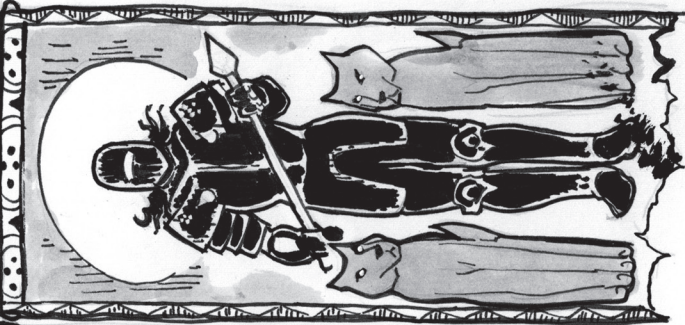
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# Floating Oasis of the Ascended God

■ = 10 feet

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# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

## BRIDE of the BLACK MANSE

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BY HARLEY STROH

**Centuries past, Lady Ilse ascended to scion of House Liis by trading the archdevil Mammon what he wanted most: her immortal soul – and a diabolical betrothal. The triumph proved hollow, for every year on the eve of her fell covenant, she was beset by visions of Mammon and her foul promise. Seeking to save herself, she was buried alive, swaddled in the holy symbols of a dozen divergent faiths. This desperate ploy held Mammon at bay for centuries...but a devil can afford to wait a very long time.**

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