

# THE STRUGGLES OF STELMANE

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JVC Parry Presents...

A Tier 2 adventure from  
Matthew Whitby



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# FOREWORD

Welcome to *The Struggles of Stelmane*, an adventure set in the heart of Baldur's Gate, involving investigation, intrigue, and, worst of all, illithids. This one-shot adventure is the perfect supplement for those involved in *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus*, especially as the party find themselves dealing with the political intrigue in the absence of the Grand-Duke.

I want to express my thanks JVC Parry for giving me the chance to work alongside him, his beyond-valuable feedback, and making this product what it is now. Another special thanks to my playtesters, stress testing the adventures in the ways only they know how.

My last thanks is to you; in picking up this product, you've helped add value to the hours we've spent lovingly putting this all together. Hopefully there is a little bit of everything in each adventure, that yourself, and your party will enjoy.

# CREDITS

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## ON THE COVER

Brian McCranie depicts a mindflayer, in this case Grukt sneaking into the Stelmane Villa in order to enact part of a dastardly scheme.

# INTRODUCTION



EVERYTHING STARTED FROM ONE FATEFUL ATTACK, Duke Belynne Stelmene was victim to a mind flayer assault, barely escaping with her life. She has since returned to her home in Baldur's Gate, fighting the near endless mental assault to keep control of

her body.

The events of this adventure follow shortly after the attack, as Grukt, the mind flayer, begins to infiltrate Baldur's Gate in order to assume control of Duke Stelmene personally. However, this is not a mind flayer's mission for revenge, but the beginnings of an illithid invasion of Baldur's gate.

If a Duke were to become a thrall of the illithid, there is no telling what damage they could unleash. Fortunately for Baldur's Gate, Grukt and Duke Stelmene are on a collision course with one adventuring party, who may just have the ability to save the day.

## ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

As always, something sinister is afoot in Baldur's Gate. However, rather than a spree of murders or theft, this is an event that could shape the future of the city. Duke Belynne Stelmene fights tirelessly against the influence of a mind flayer, but as illithid begin to infiltrate the city, her time is short. The characters find themselves wrapped up in these events, and are forced to get to the bottom of things before it's too late.

By the end of the adventure, the characters have explored the caverns under Dusthawk Hill, and uncovered the beginnings of an illithid invasion. The adventure is designed for four 6th to 7th-level characters, and breaks down into three parts:

1. **Fists are Thrown.** Outside the Blade and Stars, two thugs unintentionally kill a man puppeted by an intellect devourer. Afterwards, Ollin Rought meets with the party, asking for assistance in aiding his secret employer against some unknown mental assault.
2. **The Hunt Begins.** Following a series of clues, the party are directed towards the caverns under Dusthawk Hill, where an illithid has created a temporary lair in what was once the hideout of a werewolf pack. However, the mind flayer is nowhere to be found and only a mile long bored tunnel remains.
3. **Checkmate.** The tunnel is carved deep under Baldur's Gate, stops under the Stelmene villa and emerges from its cellar. Grukt, the mind flayer, is patient knowing that complete infiltration requires getting to Duke Belynne Stelmene without being seen. Can the party stop them in time?

## ADVENTURE

## BACKGROUND

The events of this adventure are set up thanks to a previous encounter Duke Belynne Stelmene had with a mind flayer, and no doubt countless years of meticulous planning from illithid masterminds regarding the invasion of Baldur's Gate. The following sections give the needed background that leads to the events within this adventure.

## STELMENE'S ILLITHID

### ENCOUNTER

Duke Belynne Stelmene is one of the Council of Four of Baldur's Gate; a role of ultimate authority. Most know her for her political tact, though recently she has become something of a recluse, rarely being spotted outside her villa, other than for matters of the utmost importance. Belynne recently suffered from a seizure, that resulted in a partially paralyzed face. The rumours around Baldur's Gate are that it was a combination of stress and age, but this is just other politicians posturing to usurp her position of power.

In truth, the seizure was caused by a mind flayer attack, as it attempted to assume control of her. The assault occurred while she was out on a diplomatic venture that passed through the Cloud Peaks. A lone mind flayer named Grukt emerged from the Underdark, knowing that infiltrating the city of Baldur's Gate with a Duke under illithid control is a desirable outcome for their colony.

Belynne managed to fire a crossbow bolt as Grukt attempted to dominate her mind, disrupting the psionic ability and wounding the mind flayer but ultimately causing a seizure. Her armed escort forced Grukt to retreat, as they fled back to the safety of Baldur's Gate. However, the mere glimpse Grukt had inside Belynne's mind set them on a path to track her down and finish matters personally.

## THE INVASION BEGINS

Aside from Grukt's personal vendetta against Duke Belynne Stelmene, an illithid invasion of Baldur's Gate is brewing, and infiltration is the first stage. They have been brewing within the Underdark for years, and now a display of brute force is in order. The illithids seek to claim Baldur's Gate, to create an army of thralls, and gather much-needed sustenance along with it.

# RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Diagram 1.1 is a flowchart that presents the key events of this adventure in sequence. The adventurers should start at 6th level, advancing to 7th level after clearing out the illithid caverns. A further level could be rewarded at the end of the adventure at the DM's discretion.

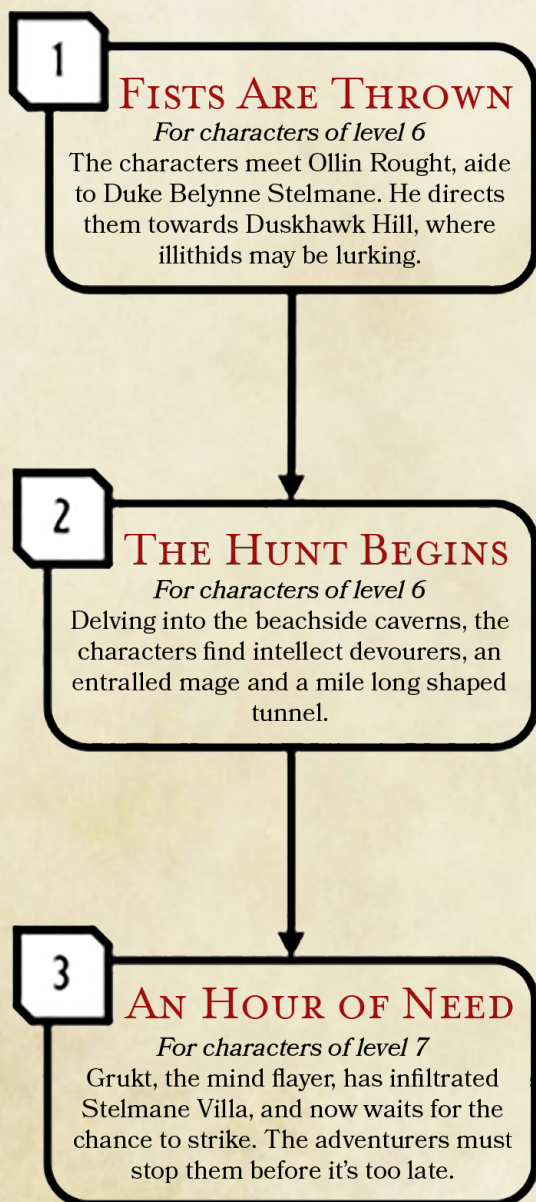


DIAGRAM 1.1: ADVENTURE FLOWCHART

# ADVENTURE HOOKS

If you wish to have further incentives for why the adventuring party get involved in this adventure, consider some of the following suggestions.

## THE MANY FORCES AT PLAY

The countless factions within Baldur's Gate in their own way have an inkling that something significant is brewing. From noticing Duke Belynnne's gradual decline in public sightings, the disappearance of commoners in manners unlike those caused by cultists of the Dead Three, and the ramblings of those who believe their thoughts have been recently scoured. Depending on the character's association, they have particular requests, mostly justifying Ollin Rought's reason for reaching out to the party.

## THE FLAMING FIST

Following or during the events of *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*, characters are likely to be linked to the Flaming Fist. As the largest mercenary group within Baldur's Gate, and certainly known for enlisting adventurers, Ollin Rought seeks out the more discrete members to investigate what might be troubling Duke Belynnne Stelmane.

## THE WATCH

Situated within the Upper City, most members of the Watch pride themselves on knowing every patriot within the city. They have noticed the shift in Duke Stelmane's daily routine, and while unable to uncover why, officers look to the assistance of adventuring parties to meet with Ollin Rought, and ensure everything is above board. This is of utmost importance given the recent disappearance of Grand Duke Ulder Ravengard, and the evil antics of Duke Thalamra Vanthampur (if it has been uncovered).

## THE GUILD

In the situation where the adventurers have aligned themselves with the Guild, the criminal organisation that runs from the underbelly of Baldur's Gate, Nine-Fingers Keene has been watching events closely. She asks the party to find out what has been happening to Duke Stelmane, hoping to uncover enough dirt to have her removed and replaced with a more 'suitable' candidate. The Guild have intercepted messages from one of Duke Stelmane's aides, Ollin Rought, and have organised a meeting.

## THE DUKE'S BEQUEST

If the characters have successfully returned from Avernus, it is likely that they are revered as heroes by the citizens in Baldur's Gate. Alternatively, from different actions the adventuring party may find themselves in high social standing as incredibly trustworthy, competent adventurers.

In this event, Duke Belynnne Stelmane asks to meet with the characters directly, without the knowledge of her aides. She explains the events of her assault in detail, believing the illithid to be in the city somewhere, but lacks any further information. This prompts the adventurers to take a more investigative approach to this adventure.

## WRONG PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Alternatively, one of the instigating events of this adventure is the accidental uncovering of an intellect devourer outside the Blade and Star tavern. This can be something that the adventuring party simply stumble upon, prompting a series of questions like; why is an intellect devourer in Baldur's Gate, why was it trying to lure people to Dusthawk Hill, and was it working alone?

## IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

This adventure focuses around two core characters; Duke Belynne Stelmene and Ollin Rought. While the adventurers may only encounter Duke Belynne Stelmene towards the end of the adventure, Ollin Rought should be a recurring character.

### DUKE BELYNNE STELMANE

Formidable. This is how countless people choose to describe Duke Belynne Stelmene. Their rise to political power was tough fought and well deserved. Her methods were never sinister; she did her research and as such found weaknesses. Some of her policies were firm but fair, benefiting the Upper and Lower City in near equal measure.

Belynne is one of the youngest serving dukes, despite entering the latter half of her life. Belynne has a stern expression, mostly due to the seizure she suffered, but there is an air of cold calculation that surrounds her. She is often sharply dressed with squared shouldered blazers, and carries a leather tome tucked under her shoulder, in which countless meeting notes are kept.

Since the illithid attack everything has changed for Belynne. Every day she finds herself fighting off waves of mental influence forced upon her by the mind flayer known as Grukt, however it is a battle that Belynne is currently winning. She is painfully aware that it is one she cannot win forever, but fears the implications of asking for help and losing her position of power.

**Personality Trait: Methodical.** I rose to my position of power through vigorous planning.

**Ideal: Truth.** Lies are a sign of weakness and can be easily used against you.

**Bond: Duty.** As Duke, I have an obligation to the people of Baldur's Gate both rich and poor.

**Flaw: Untrusting.** Every patiar is out for my title, to snatch everything from me at a moments notice.



### OLLIN ROUGHT, AIDE OF THE DUKE

Ollin Rought was born and raised in the Market Ward of Port Nyanzaru. From an early age he showed magical potential, a talent his parents put to use in offering magical services for coin. He came willingly to Baldur's Gate, as the opportunity to live within a noble's estate arose, offering him a life of comfort far away from home.

Ollin prides himself on his manners and cleaning ability, enjoying the simplicity that it brings. You can always tell when a cleaning task is complete because everything glitters and shines. Ollin began to work for Belynne Stelmene long before she became a duke.

Now, Ollin is the Head of the villa's staff, and personal aide to the Duke. He carries out his job with pride, and is incredibly well respected within the Upper City. His role grew complicated after Belynne's seizure, as she grew more distant with frequently occurring headaches. Ollin believes there is more to it, and resents being kept in the dark by Belynne, and is determined to solve matters himself.

**Personality Trait: Cleanliness.** I absentmindedly use prestidigitation to keep things clean.

**Ideal: Belonging.** There is a place for everyone out there, I'm fortunate to have found mine.

**Bond: Duke Stelmene.** The Duke is constantly kind and accommodating to me, I owe her much.

**Flaw: Insatiably Curious.** In my position, I have a right to know everything that happens in the villa.

# CHAPTER 1: NOTHING BETWEEN THE EARS

**F**OR WHATEVER REASON, the adventuring party are told to meet Ollin Rought at the Blade and Stars (or happen across the tavern by accident). They have sought out help for a private and sensitive issue that requires discretion. The meeting is due to take place towards the evening, which within Baldur's Gate introduces a few problems of its own.

## ROAMING THE STREETS

At this time of night, roaming the Lower City is risky business. The few members of the Flaming Fist on patrol are preoccupied with harsher applications of 'necessary' force. The characters are headed to the Blade and Stars, which can be found within the Eastway Neighbourhood of Baldur's Gate.

As the characters make their way through the city, they may face a random encounter. Roll a d6, or alternatively select on from the options below:

### STREET ENCOUNTER

#### d6 Encounter

- 1 A pair of Flaming Fist **guards** dragging an unconscious dragonborn down the street.
- 2 A large peacock being chased by a trio of street urchins.
- 3 Lorroakan, a neutral male human **mage**, offering to enchant clothes to repel moisture for 50 gp.
- 4 A trio of butchers (**thugs**), speaking in hushed tones regarding crew territories. All three stop and stare once they notice the adventures.
- 5 A drunken chaotic neutral female shield-dwarf **commoner** rambling about an invasion of devils and demons who devour human thoughts.
- 6 A **cranium rat** runs through the legs of the party.

## FISTS ARE THROWN

When the characters arrive outside the Blade and Stars, read or paraphrase the following:

Two burly individuals, one female human and one male tiefling, have cornered a man who looks ragged and weak.

"Are you drunk? We're not going to Duskhawk Hill with you. Got it?" spits the woman. She grabs the man by the ruff of his shirt and shakes him violently, but his blank expression does not shift. He continues in an insistent tone.

"You must, you must follow me." The tiefling lets out a slight chuckle, folding his arms as he watches.

"You say that one more time, you'll be spitting teeth."

**Creatures.** The two burly individuals are Hannar Grins (NE female human **thug**) and Beauty (N male tiefling **thug** with resistance to fire damage). The blank-faced man is a **commoner** (currently at 2 hit points) with an **intellect devourer** hiding inside.

**One Punch.** Unless stopped, Hannar delivers the uppercut to the commoner, if she misses, Beauty follows up with a punch of his own. Any damage kills the commoner and sends the intellect devourer out into the open. Both thugs are obviously shocked.

**Development.** The **intellect devourer** targets both **thugs** first, before turning its attention to the adventuring party if they intervene, otherwise it attempts to flee towards the sewers. Once confident that it has lost the chasing adventurers, the intellect devourer returns to the illithid lair under Dusthawk Hill.

### MISSING THE MEETING

In the event that the characters miss the scheduled meeting with Ollin Rought. The party are instead greeted with a crime scene, the two thugs both had their brains consumed. If they are a few hours late, Ollin Rought is knelt by the bodies as he investigates. If is the following day, two Flaming First **guards** have cornered off the scene and Ollin Rought returns to ask the guards what they know.

## A WITNESS EMERGES

From the shadows of the Blade and Star's entrance emerges Ollin Rought (CG male human **mage**). He hastily approaches the adventuring party and introduces himself, saying that he works on behalf of a powerful noble, one that wishes to remain anonymous. Any character that succeeds a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check discovers that Ollin is deeply concerned about whoever he works for, and is asking for tasks to be done without their knowledge.

Characters who succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check notice that Ollin bears a household crest of a winged staff under their cloak. The crest can be identified to belong to the Stelmane family, if that character succeeds a DC 14 Intelligence (History) check.

In exchange for assisting Ollin Rought with his dilemma, he promises the characters 250 gp each, or two uncommon magic items, as well as the valuable connections he has within Baldur's Gate's patriars. Alternatively, if any character fell victim to the intellect devourer, Ollin can ensure they are healed. See the *Restoring the Intelligence Lost* section for more details.

### RESTORING THE INTELLIGENCE LOST

If any of the characters fall to 0 Intelligence thanks to the **intellect devourer**, Ollin Rought insists that the party follow him back to Stelmane Villa. Once there, he sends out a messenger to fetch a priest capable of casting *greater restoration* to come to the villa.

Ollin Rought handles the costs, but asks the party to explore the caves under Dusthawk Hill in return, to document anything there, and return to Heap Gate where he shall be waiting.

### WHAT OLLIN KNOWS

Ollin knows that something or someone is trying to harm his employer, but not through physical means. Endless headaches, fatigue, and a loss of focus are all symptoms of some mental struggle. Ollin admits that he has no idea what could be the cause, which must not be helpful.

Ollin also overheard the conversation between the thugs and the puppeted commoner outside the Blade and Stars and suggests that the characters proceed to explore the ocean caverns under the Dusthawk Hill as a first step. He'd bet a sizable sum that those intellect devourers must be connected.

There are two known ways to access the caverns; openings along the southern beach, east of the Cliffside Cemetery, or diving into the Chionthar River. Ollin recommends searching the beach entrances first. He tells the characters to meet him back at Heap Gate once they know more.

## THE HUNT BEGINS

The encounter with the intellect devourer leads the adventurers out of the city of Baldur's Gate and into the hills. Inside a sea cavern, once claimed by werewolves, Grukt the illithid has created a temporary lair. Here they have been converting the brains of humanoids into additional intellect devourers, while carving out a tunnel towards Stelmane's Villa, through the use of an enthralled wizard.

Finding the cavern in itself can be a little challenging depending on the approach the characters take. Grukt has claimed the closest cavern to the city, but there are others that may be encountered. If the characters begin to explore other caverns, use the Ocean Cavern Encounter Table found below.

## DUSTHAWK HILL

Aptly named after the breed of hawk often spotted atop it, Dusthawk Hill can be found in the east of the city. The entire hill has been fenced off to dissuade unlicensed hunters from killing the dwindling numbers of the Chionthar Dusthawk.

The southern side of the hill is a series of sheer cliffs that hang over the Chionthar River, with narrow beaches that are often submerged due to high tides. Under the hills are a number of sea caverns, most only accessible from the river itself, though a few have cavern entrances connected to the beach.

Characters familiar with Baldur's Gate may have heard rumours that the sea caves beneath Dusthawk Hill were home to werewolves. This rumour was true until Grukt arrived, and slaughtered most of the shapechangers for sustenance, the few remaining were enthralled.





## OCEAN CAVERN ENCOUNTER

### d6 Ocean Cavern Encounter

- 1 A **sahuagin priestess** and 1d6 **sahuagin**, who routinely ambush late night smugglers or anglers.
- 2 A cavern filled with 2d8 **giant crabs**, one of which possesses a crafted metal claw (dealing and additional 3 (1d6) piercing damage on a hit).
- 3 A lone **sea hag**, who offers to deliver knowledge in exchange for some mundane item.
- 4 A pair of **werewolves**, one of which has had its Intelligence reduced to 0 by an intellect devourer. The other pleads for help, but speaks only in broken common.
- 5 1d4 **water elementals** who guard a whirlpool entrance to the Elemental Plane of Water. They only attack those who attempt to enter.
- 6 1d4 **swarms of cranium rats**. The rats are all motionless because they are focused on sending messages to a distant elder brain.

## ABOUT THE ILLITHID LAIR

The Illithid Lair was once known to its previous inhabitants as Howling Cove, where a pack of four werewolves once lived. There are two entrances to the lair, both set into the Dusthawk Hill cliffside, one with a split cave mouth. Inside is a series of 5 to 10-foot wide winding caverns that open up to expansive chambers that have excess of 15-foot or higher, stalactite covered ceilings. The cavernous floors are often wet, as when the river rises the lair is flooded. The entire lair is dark, devoid of any light.

## ILLITHID LAIR

## LOCATIONS

The following locations are keyed to map 2.1.

### I1. DUSTHAWK BEACH

From the Cliffside Cemetery there is a gradual decline to the Chionthar River shoreline. Beady eyed Chionthar Dusthawk's monitor your movements from their perches as the blistering winds remind you that you're beyond the city now. Ahead are water carved coves, some of which open up to form cavernous mouths.

Along the shores of the Chionthar River unknown treasures and alarming sights are bound to be washed ashore, from the wares of a recently sunk smuggler's ship, to bloated corpses of people who made themselves enemies of the Guild.

During the day handfuls of **commoners** can be spotted roaming the shores in search of valuables washed onto the beach. At night time, the entire beach is deserted because of the rumours of werewolves.

**Footprints.** Footprints across the beach are not uncommon, however as the characters move further away from Baldur's Gate they quickly dwindle in number, leaving only two, easily noticeable sets leading to area I2. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that one pair belong to a stocky, wide-footed individual, and the other a smaller humanoid, such as a halfling or child.

## I2. SEA CAVERN MOUTH

The mouth to the Illithid Lair is part of an alcove carved deep into the cliff face, obscured from direct line of sight by a series of jagged rocks. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check informs a character that a deep cavern is nearby, given the formation of the surrounding rocks and shoreline. Alternatively, any character that succeeds a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the entrance.

**Wall Markings.** A crescent moon has been etched into the eastern side of the entrance. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that it is a symbol often attributed to the Goddess Sel ne.

Any resident of Baldur's Gate can attempt a DC 16 Intelligence (History) check, recalling the rumours of the Dusthawk werewolves on a success. The lycanthropes were often blamed for grisly murders despite there being little evidence of their existence.

**Sounds.** While outside the cave, any character with a Passive Wisdom (Perception) of 14 or higher hears the sound of running footsteps echoing from inside. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 19 or higher can also make out faint panting getting further away.

## I3. WINDING TUNNELS

From the entrance multiple branching paths emerge, each one at a different gradient. The Illithid Lair is a winding network of tunnels, all having been naturally formed or built by the werewolves that once inhabited it. Many tunnels lead to dead ends, while others loop back on themselves.

**Creatures.** Two **intellect devourers** are chasing Pamhorn Summerspark (CG female halfling **apprentice wizard** with a *ring of common-sense* (Appendix A)) through the tunnels. One directly chases the halfling while the other attempts to cut them off. They have been ordered to incapacitate the halfling, rather than kill them.

Pamhorn runs to try and keep ahead of the chasing aberrations. She doesn't know the *disguise delf* spell, instead having *feather fall* prepared. Pamhorn nimbly squeezes through the tunnels, entirely fearless, and stays one step ahead of her pursuers.

**What Pamhorn Knows.** If the characters can help Pamhorn deal with the intellect devourers, she explains why she entered the cavern. Her teacher, Krum Goldhorn, has been acting very strangely for the last three weeks, so she decided to follow him. Pamhorn witnessed Krum sneak into a villa within Baldur's Gate by turning invisible, only to emerge back in the city a few days later. She witnessed this several times, often late at night. She knows Krum is in the cavern tonight, and can lead the characters to area I5. Pamhorn has no idea what the intellect devourers are, or where they could've come from, she only wants her teacher back to normal.



MAP 2.1: ILLITHID LAIR

1 SQUARE = 5 FT.

#### I4. HUMANOID CORPSE

Tucked into an alcove is a scrawny human corpse. Claw marks have carved into the surrounding cavern walls. The man is filthy and adorned in ragged clothes, his eyelids still open revealing a vacant stare. A trail of dried blood runs down the back of his skull, across his neck.

Any characters that investigate the body discover a hole in the back of the man's head. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals bruises around his throat, implying that he was grappled before having a hole punctured in his skull and brain hastily removed.

A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals the claw marks to be those of a large wolf. There are no pockets in the man's clothing, however he wears a wooden

pendant around his neck that is a carving of a crescent moon. The wooden pendant is a *waxing charm* (appendix A).

**Development.** If any of the characters move the body, it reveals a small crack in the rock from which a **swarm of cranium rats** suddenly emerges screeching, and flees into area I5.

#### I5. CENTRAL CHAMBER

The narrow tunnel opens up into a jagged circular chamber, just as dark as the tunnels before it. You can hear a series of echoing squelches that ring out; the sounds of some fleshy substance expanding and contracting.



**Creatures.** Krum Goldbottom (NG male shield dwarf **mage**) stands in the centre of the chamber. He has been made a thrall of Grukt. Beside him are two **werewolves**, who have also been enthralled. They have been ordered to obey Krum's every word. However, they have been injured from a previous fight and both start at 30 hit points. Krum has been given the task of defending the developing brains, as well as capturing any intruders. Grukt has been explicit in demanding the capture of humanoids, rather than killing them. Despite knowing spells like *fireball* and *cone of cold*, Krum does not use them if they risk damaging the brains.

Once a respected adventuring wizard, Krum's retirement involved training the future wizards of Baldur's Gate. Only taking one apprentice at a time, Krum was teaching Pamhorn everything he knew, slowly. However, an unexpected encounter with Grukt found him controlled and eventually enthralled. Grukt has been using Krum to carve out a tunnel from the cavern to underneath Stelmane's Villa, through the use of *mold earth* and *fly* to navigate the vertical portions. This has caked his wizardly robes in mud, dirtying his normally pristine attire.

**Transforming Brains.** Placed atop five pedestals formed by the *stone shape* spell sit humanoid brains in different stages of transformation into becoming intellect devourers. The later stages have begun to sprout legs, while the earlier stages seem to have simply expanded significantly. Any character that gets within 5 feet of a brain must make a DC 16 Intelligence saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. The brains each have an AC of 12, and 10 hit points.

**Development.** If Krum is killed, and Pamhorn is present, she becomes distraught. A successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check can calm her, as long as the characters do not try to justify killing Krum as necessary. Otherwise, freeing Krum from being a thrall is a costly procedure, requiring *regeneration*, *heal*, and *greater restoration* cast on him once per day for three days. Characters can gain this knowledge with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

**What Krum Knows.** Unless magically compelled to speak, Krum resists all attempts to persuade or intimidate him into speaking, because he is a loyal thrall. He does not even confirm the existence of Grukt.

**Treasure.** In Krum's pockets are two items of interest; a slab of stone with Qualith writing carved into it, and a spiked monocle, which is a *qualith translator* (appendix A). If the characters can read the slab of stone, read the following:

You are to ensure the growth of the intellect devourers. Intruders are to be incapacitated, I have uses for them. I shall venture through the tunnel, when I return our mission is complete. - Grukt

## I6. BORED TUNNEL

At the back of this cavern is a perfectly square 5 ft. hole that descends down 50 feet. If Pamhorn Summerspark is present she offers to cast *feather fall* to assist getting the characters down. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check reveals that the tunnel is unnaturally crafted; the result of countless *mold earth* spells. The tunnel was molded by the enthralled Krum Goldbottom, over the course of a week.

At the very bottom, the tunnel connects to the Riverveins leads directly under Baldur's Gate. The tunnel makes use of the existing bored maze, with some sections molded by Krum to save time and connect directly. There is the chance of encountering 2d4 + 2 **stirges** who inhabit the caverns, thirsty for blood.

The tunnel ends underneath Stelmane Villa, with a 30 foot vertical tunnel connected directly to the cellar of the villa. Climbing up or down the vertical tunnels requires a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, characters with a climber's kit have advantage on this check.

## LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

After clearing out the cavern, the characters should advance to 7th level before proceeding to the Stelane Villa.

## CHAPTER 2: AN HOUR OF NEED

**D**ESPITE THE DISCOVERY OF THE ILLITHID LAIR, the party have yet to encounter the mind flayer behind everything. All they have is a tunnel that must lead somewhere, and a cavern full of developing intellect devourers. They have been asked to report back Ollin Rought, but if Pamhorn Summerspark can link the actions of the illithid thrall back to Stelmene villa the party has a new location to investigate.

While the characters consider their next action, Grukt is infiltrating the Stelmene Villa. It lurks in the shadows, along with an intellect devourer that it intends to puppeteer Duke Belynne Stelmene with. The only thing stopping Grukt is waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike without any witnesses.

### ACT WITHOUT DELAY

In the event that the party wait more than two days before heading to the Stelmene Villa, they are far too late. Grukt managed to catch the Duke unaware, and allow the intellect devourer to consume her brain.

Now under the control of the mind flayer, the Duke insists that she is fine, and does everything in her power to get the adventurers to leave her Villa. Dismissing them as she has more important matters to tend to. If she had previously asked to meet with the party, the meeting entails her asking questions to discover what exactly they know, before thanking them and offering them a reward to dismiss them.

Ollin Rought is skeptical to start, but slowly falls for the deception, blinded by his joy to see Belynne back in better health. Over the following weeks, Duke Stelmene begins to reappear in the public and begin to shape the future of Baldur's Gate, in ways that assist the future illithid invasion.

## GETTING TO STELMENE VILLA

From the Illithid Lair, there are multiple ways to direct the characters towards the Stelmene Villa and the following section outlines three potential paths.

### FOLLOWING THE TUNNEL

The most direct route is to follow the Riverveins connecting the two locations. Getting down a vertical drop is often easier than going back up, but there are multiple magical means to solve that dilemma. If the characters follow the tunnel, they emerge in the cellar (area V10) from underneath a rug.

## PAMHORN'S LEAD

If the characters opt to not go down the tunnel, Pamhorn, if she is still with the party, can guide the characters to Stelmene Villa as it was where she saw Krum Goldbottom sneak into. Pamhorn is not aware that the villa is owned by Stelmene, but she has no issues pointing it out to the party. In this event, the characters will be led to the Guard Post (area V1) that sits on the wall surrounding the Villa.

## THE DUKE'S SUMMONS

If the party returns to Baldur's Gate to report back to Ollin Rought at Heap Gate, he confides that he told Duke Belynne Stelmene about the intellect devourer encounter. Ollin informs the party that the Duke has requested a meeting with the party, in order to discuss matters personally. Ollin insists that the party follow him back to the villa immediately.

## ABOUT THE STELMENE VILLA

Stelmene Villa is located just north of the Heap Gate, within a collection patriar manors. It shares the same style of slanted red tiled rooftops, with green glass lanterns evenly spaced out across the external walls. However, being the residence of a Duke, a 12-foot high stone wall encloses the entire villa, with a guard tower positioned by the front gate which is the only official entrance.

Recently all the windows and doors have been reinforced with sturdy locks, and the doors to Belynne's private quarters protected with enchanted runes. There are still six City Watch **guards** that are employed to patrol the yard (area V1), who change shifts every eight hours and inform Kirsty Holm of any sightings.

## SERVANTS

Duke Belynne Stelmene employs four highly trusted, full-time, live-in servants;

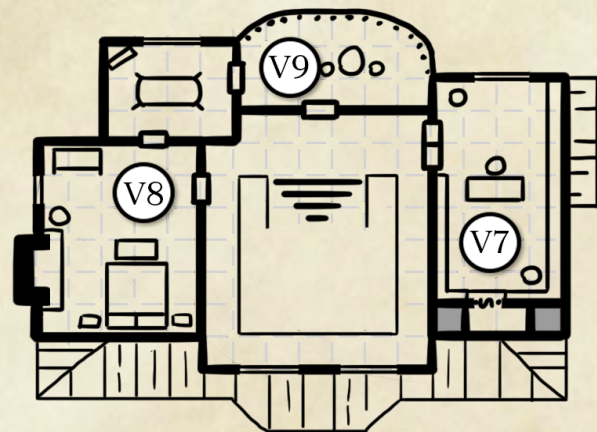
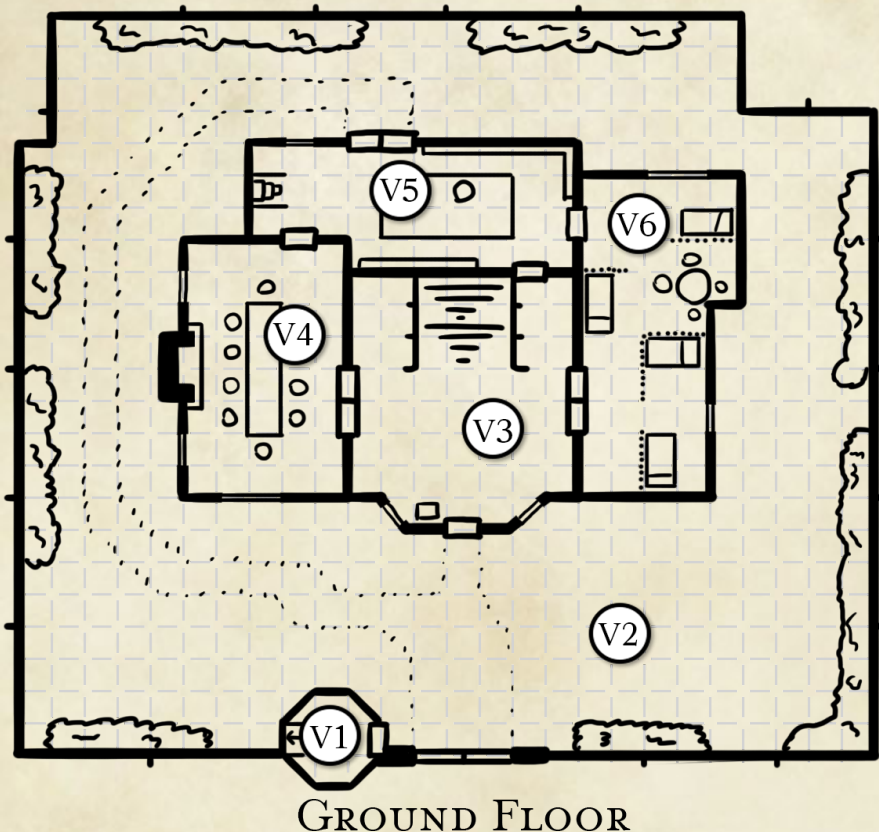
- Kirsty Holm the Head Guard (LG female human **veteran**), who is often calm but stern.
- Hamut von Grund (N male human **commoner**) the cook, who is elderly and a little eccentric.
- Naleen Corkhammer (NG female shield dwarf **commoner**) the groundskeeper, a middle-aged woman with a motherly personality.
- The final servant is Ollin Rought, who acts as Belynne's aide and uses his magic to clean the villa.

## STELMENE VILLA LOCATIONS

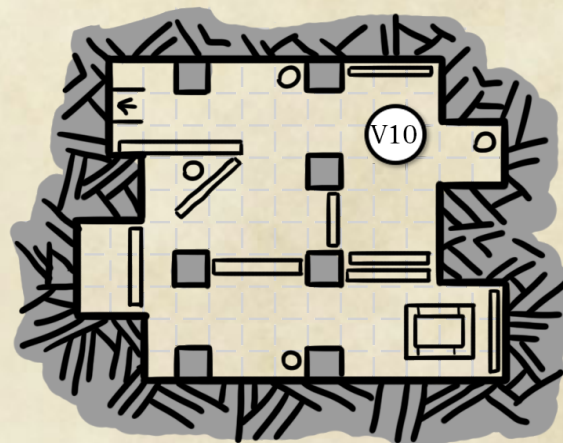
The following locations are keyed to map 3.1.

# MAP 3.1: STELMANE VILLA

1 SQUARE = 5 FT.



SECOND FLOOR



CELLAR

## V1. GUARD POST

A 20-foot high, white stone tower stands over the thick wooden front gate. The lower floor is where Kirsty Holm can often be found, keeping a register of everyone who enters and exits the Stelmane Villa. She also handles opening and closing the gate, which is 4-foot high, and composed of two parts.

The upper part of the guard post can be reached by a 15-foot ladder, and allows for an aerial view of the yard and villa. Kirsty often takes short breaks to watch the stars if guarding during a night shift, though remains vigilant.

## V2. YARD

The six guards are situated across the yard in three pairs. Two groups remain stationed at opposite corners of the yard, while the third patrols in a clockwise fashion.

Trespassers are quickly apprehended and pacified. The guards follow a strict non-lethal approach unless deemed absolutely necessary. Since there is only one entrance, anyone spotted off the main path is assumed to be trespassing, because otherwise Kirsty Holm would've guided them to the villa personally.

**Nalen Corkhammer.** During the day, Nalen can be spotted tending to the two beds of flowers, and series of bushes that hug the perimeter wall. Nalen is never more than a few feet away from her trusty wheelbarrow. Anyone watching her work that succeeds a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices her tapping some wooden bracers before she plants anything. A further successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) can determine the bracers have a

druidic rune on them. The bracers are *bracers of nutrition* (appendix A).

## V3. GRAND FOYER

If the characters enter the Grand Foyer from the Yard, read or paraphrase the following:

You enter a grand foyer, with red carpet outstretched before you that leads to the upper floor. A steel chandelier hangs overhead, fit for purpose rather than form. There are three exits from the room other than the front doors, one to your immediate left which is mirrored on the right wall, and a door tucked to the right of the wide stairs. Flanking every door are a pair of vases, with seasonal flowers poking out. The occasional wilted leaf can be spotted on the floor.

The walls of the foyer are bare of paintings and tapestry, but are covered in a printed wallpaper that gives the appearance of gold filigree. The colour scheme inside the villa adheres to a gold and red theme, which is shared on the carpets, wallpaper, and curtains.

**Stack of Letters.** Beside the front door are three bundles of letters tied with linen string. Many bear the insignia of Baldur's Gate's many patriarch families, or crests of the other Dukes. They are unopened.

## V4. DINING HALL

Once intended for larger gatherings, the dining hall is dominated by a 20-foot long table surrounded by ten high-backed oaken chairs. Above the mantle on the fireplace rests a 10-foot square tapestry that depicts the Stelmane crest, which is a nested hawk, dove, and owl.

**Treasure.** The tapestry is a valuable art piece worth 250 gp, however it is rather recognisable given the Stelmane crest upon it. If stolen, it could only be sold on a black market, such as the Undercellar.

Tucked either side of the fireplace are two locked cabinets filled with twenty sets of fine silverware (30 gp each), along with a smaller selection of vintage wines (10 gp each). The cabinet locks require a successful DC 18 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to be picked.

## V5. KITCHEN

During the day, the kitchen is a cacophony of sounds and smells. Hamut von Grund the cook works tirelessly to create hearty meals for the guards, servants, and Duke Stelmane. There is a clear divide in the kitchen, one side has the wooden worktops and shelving, while the other has two stoves that are often burning hot.

**Hamut von Grund** Hamut has a habit of singing while he works. Having been born in Barovia, he was adopted by a Vistani family and escaped the mists. A lot of the songs Hamut sings are Vistani folk songs, to which he taps his heavy feet as he bakes.

**Trapdoor.** A 3-foot square trapdoor opens up to reveal a steep wooden staircase that leads 10-foot down into the cellar (area V10).

## V6. SERVANT QUARTERS

The servant quarters runs the same length as the dining room, and is lavishly decorated with four single beds, and a round dining table complete with four chairs. Wooden screens have been placed to give some privacy between the four beds, and each of the servants have taken steps to personalise their section.

- **Ollin Rought.** Ollin's area is devoid of any personal effects.
- **Kirsty Holm.** Her section is regimentally neat, with off-duty clothes neatly folded, but she keeps a stack of fiction novels under her bed.
- **Hamut von Grund.** Hamut is a fond reader of Baldur's Mouth, keeping stacks of papers under his bed or interesting news clippings cut out and pinned to his wall.
- **Naleen Corkhammer.** The messiest bed by far, Naleen keeps potted plants under and at the foot of her bed, beyond where her legs reach.

Nothing of value is kept in this room other than the servants personal trinkets or clothing.

## V7. STELMANE'S LIBRARY

Stelmane's personal library also functions as her study, three of the four walls have floor to ceiling bookshelves, while the last is a grand circular window. A writing desk is placed within the centre of the room, books stacked high around and atop it, some open. Three leather chairs are strategically placed around the room.

**Stelmane's Desk.** Atop her desk, Duke Stelmane appears to be intensely researching something. The books around the desk share a common theme of strengthening resolve, or mental wards.

There is a secret compartment inside the desk, where a book on illithid sightings is hidden. Any character that succeeds a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) discovers the latch to reveal the compartment.

**Rune Protected Door.** When locked, the door has a *symbol* spell rune activated for anyone attempting to enter. It can only be seen after a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, while a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) reveals it to have the *sleep* effect were the door to be opened.

**Bookshelves.** Duke Stelmane is an avid reader, prioritising non-fiction books regarding the history of politicians or the rise and fall of civilizations. There is in excess of three-hundred and fifty books. Any character that spends an hour sifting through them can find forty first-edition books (25 gp each). The remaining books are worth 3 gp to interested buyers, but none of the titles stand out as out of place.

**Secret Room.** Any character that searches the bookcases and succeeds a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a faint gap between two of the bookshelves, enough to imply a secret door. From behind one of the bookshelves, a small secret room can be uncovered. Inside this cramped room, Duke Stelmane keeps books of forbidden lore, such as demonology, devil worship, and illithids.

### A MEETING WITH THE DUKE

If the party have been asked to meet with Duke Stelmane, she waits for them inside her library. Waiting until Ollin has joined them in the room, Duke Stelmane explains how she was attacked by a mind flayer, and how she believes it is still after her.

She describes her obvious hesitancy for getting help, given her position, and her ability to withstand the mental assault, however she admits that she doubts she'd leave another encounter with the mind flayer alive.

If informed about the tunnel, she welcomes the characters to investigate her cellar. Duke Stelmane is accommodating to the adventurers requests, though she refuses anything that might impact her social standing as duke.

## V8. BELYNNE'S BEDROOM

Directly above the dining room, Belynn's room simply consists of a double-poster bed, a fireplace, two side tables, a wardrobe, and a bulky chest that sits at the foot of the bed. Multiple windows let large amounts of natural light through, but the thick curtains are almost always drawn closed.

**Rune Protected Door.** When locked, the door has a *symbol* spell rune activated for anyone attempting to enter. It can only be seen after a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, while a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) reveals it to have the *sleep* effect were the door to be opened.

**Treasure.** Duke Stelmane's personal chest contains neatly folded clothes especially tailored for her, and a simple wooden jewelry box. It contains three rings (5 gp each) and a thick silver chain with fine engravings that depict wings (7 gp).

## V9. BATHROOM & BALCONY

Directly leading from Belynn's bedroom is her personal bathroom, which features a central cast iron bathtub. In one corner is a cracked body-length mirror,

From the bathroom, a semi-circular balcony extends out from the villa that overlooks the yard. It's surrounded by 3-foot high walls, and is a 15-foot drop to reach the ground below.

## V10. CELLAR

Spanning the size of the villa, the cellar is a maze of shelves and cloth covered furniture. The walls are carved stone, supported with the occasional wooden beam. The entire cellar is pitch-black without any sources of natural light.

**Creatures.** Lurking in the darkest shadows is Grukt (**mind flayer**) and an **intellect devourer**. They do not move, hoping to remain unnoticed and wait for nightfall. If their detection is inevitable, Grukt uses his *mind blast* to strike, and incapacitate the party. Characters with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 20 or higher can determine that a figure is lurking in the room.

**Pantry.** The rows of shelving closest to the wooden stair exit, are filled with dried food, spices, and barrels of ale.

**Dusty Rug.** A ten-foot by eight-foot rug covers a portion of the cellar floor, it is incredibly dusty and upon closer inspection a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check can see a visual dip in the middle, implying it covers a hole. If the party are travelling from the Illithid Lair, they emerge from under the dusty rug.

**Development.** Any character that stays alone in the cellar is ambushed by Grukt, hoping to get the **intellect devourer** to puppeteer their body in order to get close to Duke Stelmane.

Alternatively, when fighting if Grukt is brought below half of its hit points, it attempts to flee, deeming its own life too valuable to lose.

## AFTERMATH

As the characters leave Stelmane Villa, either with the knowledge of, or having defeated, a mind flayer, they begin to feel a little uneasy. Grukt's actions were the first step in the schemes of masterminds; there is likely far more to these events that the characters couldn't possibly know... Yet.

## RESOLVING THE CHARACTER HOOKS

From the range of reasons as to why the characters got involved, there may be some loose ends that need tightening up to resolve the adventure. Especially if the party have made a series of lifelong friends along the way.

## THE MANY FORCES AT PLAY

Each faction is certainly happy with the actions of the party, either through ensuring the peace in the case of the Flaming Fist or the Watch, or now having significant leverage over a Duke for the Guild. Whatever their motives might be, there may be some changes in store for Baldur's Gate.

## THE DUKE'S BEQUEST

Duke Stelmane can be satisfied in having successfully placed her trust in the adventurers (assuming she's not a puppet for an intellect devourer). She vows to take the lessons of sharing a burden with those she can trust, rather than attempting to face problems alone.

## WRONG PLACE, RIGHT TIME

From what started as an accident, the characters find themselves having saved the day. This may be a common occurrence for the party, but often it's best not to think what might've happened had they -not- been there.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

Even once Grukt's efforts have been thwarted, there remain some unanswered questions. Depending on how the characters acted, and who they interacted with, answering the following questions can plant the seeds of an entire campaign:

- How will the elder-brain react to Grukt's death?
- Was Grukt the only mind flayer in Baldur's Gate?
- Now free of the mental assault, how will Duke Stelmane govern?
- What will Pamhorn do without a teacher?
- Did any werewolves survive the cavern encounter?

Regardless, many of the characters are eternally grateful for the party's assistance, and Ollin is true to his word in offering gold, connections, or magical items as a just reward. In particular, Duke Stelmane now knows of a group of adventurers that she can trust, who knows what opportunities might arise?

## APPENDIX A: MAGICAL ITEMS

This appendix contains information on the unique magical items not found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The items are all in alphabetical order.

### BRACERS OF NUTRITION

*Wonderous item, common*

While wearing these wooden bracers, when you plant any seed roll a d20. On a 10 or higher, the seed instantly begins to sprout the moment you plant it. A result of 9 or lower, means the plant begins to sprout twice as fast.

### QUALITH TRANSLATOR

*Wonderous item, uncommon*

This spiked monocle has a clear illithid design, and when you place it to your eye it pieces itself into place. You suffer 1d4 piercing damage, but for as long as you wear it you can comprehend Qualith, the writing of mind flayers.

### RING OF COMMON-SENSE

*Ring, rare (requires attunement)*

This rather simple ring has the words "Think, think, think", engraved around the outside. While attuned to this ring, your Intelligence score cannot be reduced to below 8.

### WAXING CHARM

*Wonderous item, uncommon*

While wearing this pendant necklace, you have advantage on any Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.





# A BATTLE OF MINDS RAGES ON

Set within Baldur's Gate, Duke Belynnne Stelmane wards off a mental illithid assault trying to claim control of her body. The pieces are falling into place.

Explore the caverns underneath Baldur's Gate, confront the illithid threat, and discover the truth behind some of Baldur's Gate's greatest secrets.

Written by Matthew Whitby  
Produced by JVC Parry

