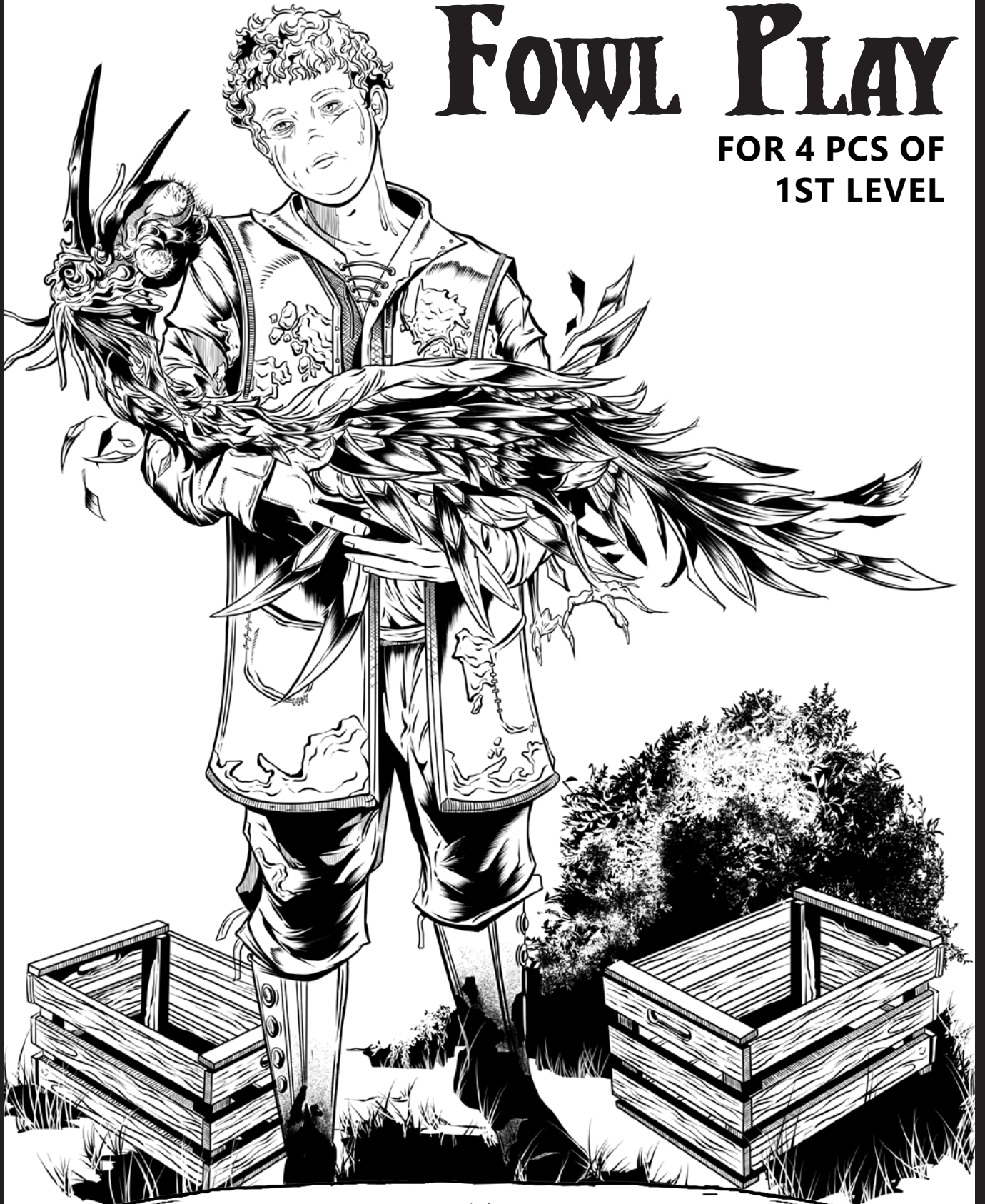


FOWL PLAY

FOR 4 PCS OF
1ST LEVEL



A 5E WARLOCK ADVENTURE
BY KELLY PAWLIK

FOWL PLAY

Adventure Summary

In the Magocracy of Allain, far to the west of the Leukos River, sits the farming hamlet of Belcassel. The settlement is named after Belcassel House, a decaying keep that squats atop a nearby hill. The keep is named after the Bell family, which has overseen the community for generations.

In years past, the Bell family was acclaimed across The Magocracy of Allain for their facility at alchemy and the transmutation of mundane beasts into magical beasts and hybrids. The most recent Lord of the Keep, Victoir Bell, is known more for his drunken proclamations of arcane greatness than for any facility with municipal management. Despite this, the people of Belcassel love him and look forward to his erratic displays of illusion and evocation at feast times. His son and daughter, having grown tired of the provincial life available to them in Belcassel, have used some of the material in the Bell family library to experiment on the local fauna, creating a dangerous number of magical creatures.

Upon discovering his children's actions, Lord Bell confronted them in a liquor-fuelled rage. He was promptly killed and partially eaten by one of their experiments, a startled **griffon**, which subsequently escaped into the nearby farmland. Now, the creature's rampage through Belcassel's farmlands threatens to disrupt the Bell children's plans, making them desperate to get matters under control before their father's death is discovered...

Adventure Hooks

- A number of local farms have discovered the mauled and partially-consumed remains of livestock, prompting the people of Belcassel to put out a call for experienced hunters to exterminate the offending beast.
- The PCs have arrived in Belcassel to pay their respects to Lord Victoir Bell and request that he allow them to use his library to research some arcane subjects. Upon visiting Belcassel House, they were turned away by Lord Bell's son and have regrouped at Belcassel's premier, and only, tavern, The Toasted Stoat, to discuss the next steps.
- The PCs are guarding a merchant caravan traveling from Maillon to Bourgund and have stopped in Belcassel for the night. After suffering damages from the escape griffon, the caravan master Melia Arbright asks the PCs to accompany her to Belcassel House to request restitution. The lord of the land should be held accountable for damages incurred while in the area he protects.

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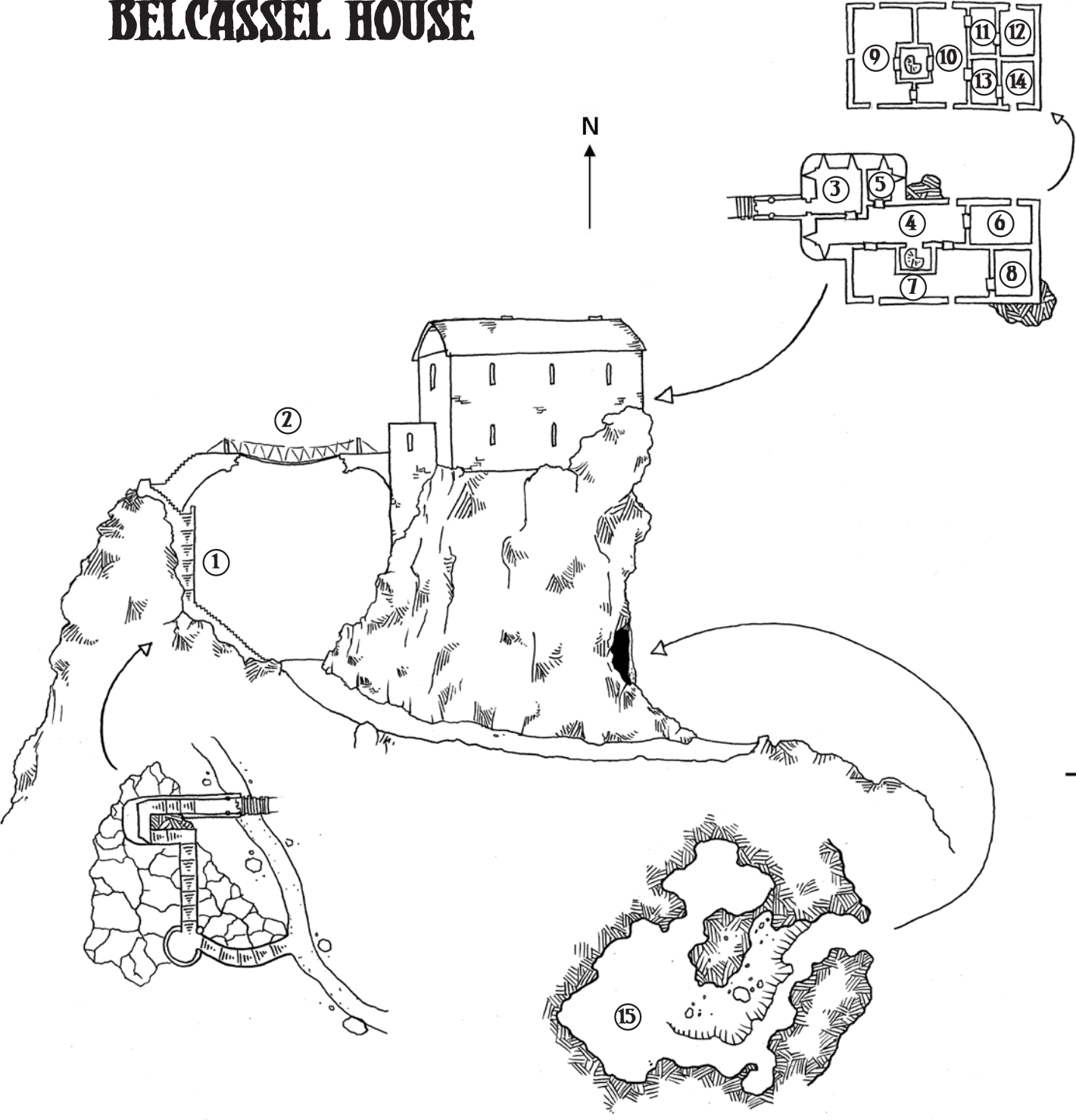
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Belcassel

Belcassel is a small farming community located in a wide but shallow valley approximately halfway between Maillon and Bourgund. The settlement is comprised of fourteen farms covering an area of approximately 100 acres. The primary crops grown in the region are alfalfa, barley, corn, oats, and wheat, though other produce native to the region is easily available. Most of the farms have a herd of sheep and goats, several swine, a few draft horses, and a coop of chickens. A few farms have very small herds of cattle. Wild turkeys and pheasants range the countryside.

There are approximately seventy full-time residents of the settlement, with numbers doubling during harvest times. The town center is comprised of The Toasted Stoa Tavern and Rooming House, Vauxhul's Provisions, a smithy, and a windmill with an attached granary and small shrine, which serves a variety of deities. Standard goods, provisions, and lodging can be purchased in Belcassel, but specialized tools and goods may not be available at your discretion. The cluttered general store, Vauxhul's Provisions, is run by the apple-cheeked Andrew Vauxhul, his always-smiling wife Sandrine, and their gap-toothed ten year old twin boys Aiers and Sweyn (all human **commoners**). The second floor of the whitewashed wattle and daub house is the Vauxhul's residence, comprised of two bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and a small dining area.

The smithy is run by Lukin Hennsen, a gruff, pale northlander, and his teenage daughter and apprentice Brigit (both human **commoners**). Lukin's work is sturdy though plain. Axes, hammers, arrows, and spears are typically available. There is insufficient interest in exotic weapons and long blades for Lukin to make them or keep them on hand. The windmill is run and maintained by all of Belcassel's residents, and usage is administered by Halva Shale (female dwarf **acolyte**), a priestess of Khors who also leads prayers at the attached shrine.

The Toasted Stoa Tavern and Rooming House

The Stoa, as the locals call it, is the only inn and tavern in Belcassel. It takes a full day's travel on the small trade road, which runs southeast to northwest through the center of Belcassel, to reach another place of lodging. The exterior of the large, two-story building is made of grey brick and discolored, white mortar with wood shake shingles covering the multi-peaked roof. Two large, brick chimneys smoke ceaselessly. A slate sign vibrantly painted with a tipsy-looking short-tailed weasel wearing a top hat and holding a sloshing beer stein hangs above the main door.

The interior of the first floor of The Toasted Stoa measures 40 feet by 70 feet with its main entrance on the west wall. The bar, a solid piece of oak that has been lovingly polished to a shine over the centuries, sits north of the entrance. Casks of ale and wine stand behind the bar below shelves holding a startling array of fine liquors. The small kitchen, which has a staircase to the cellar, is east of the bar. The common room of the tavern contains three large, oak tables which shine in the same manner as the bar. Each table seats twenty-five people at a squeeze, allowing the entire non-harvest population of Belcassel to attend The Stoa at the same time, if somewhat uncomfortably. Stairs leading to the second floor sit across from the entrance.

The second floor holds seven simple, but comfortable rooms which can house four people apiece. It also has three dormitories, each of which can bunk thirty people. The dormitory rooms are arranged around a central room containing a fireplace and several tables which are often used for dice and card games.

The cellar contains dozens of barrels and casks of wine and ale. A large staircase to the east exterior of the building allows for easy resupply.

The Toasted Stoa is run by Ronaldo Cayune, a short and stocky middle-aged human male **commoner** with bristly black hair and a bushy beard. When he drinks, Ronaldo likes to lie about his parentage, intimating that his father was a dwarven hero of The Great Mage Wars. Ronaldo's wife, Gretchen, tends the kitchen and prepares all of the food served at the tavern. Ronaldo and Gretchen are talented brewers who brew all of the ale and beer they serve from local barley and the hops they grow behind the tavern.

Inciting Incident

The first evening the PCs venture into The Toasted Stoa, they hear several farmers complain loudly of a feral beast that has been slaughtering their livestock. Late in the evening, six **cikavaks** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 58) burst through a window and enter the tavern. The hideous birds peck at the patrons, though there is a 50% chance that a cikavak that hasn't been attacked attempts to fill its ventral pouches with ale or wine from the patrons' mugs or from the casks behind the bar.

The cikavaks are more nuisance than menace, fluttering around the common room, attempting to drink the available liquor. When a cikavak has half of its hit points of fewer or has filled its ventral pouches (requiring two actions), it attempts to escape back out the window to return to Belcassel House.

Aftermath

In the aftermath of the cikavak's assault, Ronaldo Cayune requests that the PCs seek out the birds' nest and destroy them, as they seem to be a hazard to his liquor supply. He offers as much ale as the PCs can drink and 25 gp per PC as a reward. If the PCs speak to the Stoa's patrons for clues, they hear some farmers say that Jerome Bell, Lord Bell's son, smelled much like the strange birds the last few times he came to town. The farmers pool their resources and offer the PCs an additional 50 gp if they can slay whatever beast has been killing the farmers' livestock while they're investigating the cikavaks. The cikavaks' clumsy trail can be followed back to Belcassel House with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check.

Should the PCs search the surrounding countryside for clues about the beast that is killing livestock, there is a cumulative 15% chance per day that they run into the escaped **griffon**. This chance increases to 35% if the PCs are traveling by horse.

Belcassel House

The PCs' investigation eventually leads them to Belcassel House, the ancestral home of the Bell family. Belcassel House is a large, two-story structure that looks much like a barn crafted of interlocking stones. Years of disrepair give the once-sturdy structure a somewhat saggy appearance. The house sits on a spur of rock straddling Belcassel's trade road with the stair and bridge leading to it from the other side of the road.

Belcassel House is located along the trade road one and a half miles northwest from The Toasted Stoa. If the PCs pass under the bridge, they find evidence of animal scat on the sides of the road. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the scat has been flung from the bridge. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the droppings were deposited by a canine, while a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check identifies them as **death dog** droppings.

Weather conditions were rainy in the days prior to the start of this adventure, and the skies are cloudy, leading to brief periods of cold drizzle.

1. THE APPROACH

The stone steps leading to the house spiral to a height of nearly 150 feet and are covered with moss and lichen. The recent rains have made the stairs slippery. A PC that moves faster than half its walking speed must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or slip down the stairs, taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage before catching themselves. A PC that uses the Dash action while ascending the stairs has disadvantage on the saving throw.

2. WOODEN BRIDGE

This wooden bridge looks rickety and unsafe but is actually quite sturdy. A tall chain guardrail running along both sides of the bridge prevents all but the most foolhardy from falling the 150 feet to the road below.

If the PCs have explored the house and have not yet encountered the escaped **griffon**, the creature attacks them from above as they are crossing the bridge back to Area 1. When it has 20 hit points or fewer, the griffon attempts to grab the closest PC and fly away.

3. COURTYARD

Mouldering piles of hay dominate the northwest and northeast corners of this small, stone-covered courtyard. Between the piles, several ruined cages, each large enough to house an adult rooster, lie piled against the north wall. A **swarm of rats** inhabits each hay pile and hungrily attacks anyone who disturbs the hay. Animal droppings are scattered across the stone floor. The entrance to the keep lies on the south wall.

4. ENTRY HALL

The door to the entry hall is a sturdy slab of wood banded in steel (AC 15, 33 hp, damage threshold of 5). The door is locked and requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools to open. If the PCs knock on the door, a thin male voice responds after several moments. The voice belongs to Jerome Bell. A successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check convinces him to allow the PCs entry.

Jerome is a short, chubby **noble** (except he isn't wearing armor) with curly brown hair, tired brown eyes, and round, dimpled cheeks. His clothing is filthy, sweat-stained, and crusted with bird excrement. In order to regularly interact with the cikavaks located in Belcassel House, the teenager has not bathed in nearly a year and reeks of a foul mixture of body odor and animal excrement. Jerome is tired, miserable, and unable to provide much assistance to the PCs. If questioned, he murmurs that his sister, Yvette, left four days ago with the books they used to create the monsters in the house, and that he can't control them anymore. A pawn in his sister's schemes, Jerome is at a loss for what to do now that she is gone. Jerome has one level of exhaustion when the PCs meet him.

The interior of the entrance hall is a ruin. Ancient hangings have been shredded, smashed pottery litters the floor, and the once-exquisite rugs have been torn and fouled by animal droppings. Most of the windows have been smashed from the inside. The staircase to the second floor is located in an alcove off the south wall of this room. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check hears scratching and whining coming from Area 5.

The heady scent of unwashed bodies, poorly kept animals, and bodily waste suffuses the entrance hall and wafts throughout the rest of the house.

5. DEATH DOG DEPOSITORY

Jerome has trapped a **death dog** in this large linen closet. The dog has shredded the contents of the closet to create a nest of torn linens, towels, and feathers. It is hungry and attacks anyone who opens the door, other than Jerome as it finds his odor repulsive.

6. JEROME'S BEDCHAMBER

Jerome's room holds a four-poster bed, wardrobe, desk, and a small worn sofa. Unwashed clothing is strewn across the floor and has been pulled into small piles in a few locations. Every surface is coated in cikavak guano. Any of the six cikavaks that escaped back to Belcassel House after their attack at the Toasted Stoat are located in this room.

7. DINING HALL

A long oak table runs nearly the length of this large room, and a large buffet sits in the northeast corner, holding the house's few remaining dishes and flatware. Three crystal goblets, worth 7 gp each, sit inside a cabinet on the western wall. Three cikavaks are currently roosting in this room and only attack the PCs if they are attacked first.

8. KITCHEN

The kitchen shows the least amount of animal activity on the first floor. The counters are cluttered with unwashed dishes and cookware. Sacks of flour and cornmeal sit in the corner, and fresh produce, several coils of sausage, and an entire smoked ham rest in the pantry on the north wall. The fireplace on the east wall is filled with cold ashes and scraps of animal bone. A stoppered *decanter of endless water* hangs from a rope above the washbasin on the south wall.

9. ARCANE LABORATORY

This large chamber shows no sign of animal activity. A large variety of arcane and alchemical equipment lie scattered across several tables, and glass doored cabinets hold numerous bottled tinctures, liquids, and powders. There are enough stools in the room to seat eight humanoid. If the PCs spend an hour in the laboratory, they can put

together 3 component pouches, 2 sets of alchemist's supplies, a set of brewer's supplies, a set of cartographer's tools, a set of glassblower's tools, 2 sets of leatherworker's tools, and a set of tinker's tools. In addition, 2 vials of antitoxin and 3 *potions of healing* hide among the alchemical equipment and can be found with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check.

10. LIBRARY

Book-filled shelves line all the walls of this chamber, with several freestanding shelves in the center of the room. Two comfortable armchairs sit in this room with matching ottomans. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check locates a well-hidden hollow below the cushion of one ottoman that contains a mahogany case holding a *wand of the war mage +1*. An empty wooden pedestal sits against the east wall. PCs using the library to research transmutation magic, alchemy, the history of The Magocracy of Allain, or farming have advantage on their skill checks.



11. ARMORY

This room smells strongly of animal musk. Empty weapon racks and armor stands have been pushed against the walls.

12. LORD BELL'S BEDCHAMBER

This once-lavish bedroom was used to house the now-escaped griffon. The bed is shredded and the desk and bedstand have been reduced to rubble. The bedframe, door, and walls are scarred with talon marks. The window is shattered. White feathers and tawny hair are scattered about, with a proliferation under the broken window. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies the former resident of this room as a griffon.

13. YVETTE'S CLOSET

This room holds three wardrobes and a vanity, all of which are empty.

14. YVETTE'S BEDCHAMBER

Lord Bell's eldest child's bedroom contains a four-poster bed which is made and turned down, as if waiting for an occupant. A number of potted plants native to the region sit on tables and the floor along the south wall. A table holding a colorful array of mushrooms, including two **violet fungus**, sits against the north wall. Before she ran away, Yvette placed a **gray ooze** in a ceramic bowl in the center of her mushroom table, hoping it would stall pursuit. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check identifies the shards of shell scattered throughout the room as owlbear eggshell.

15. HENHOUSE

Belcassel House's hens live in a small cave on the east side of the stone spur that holds the house. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check sees the edge of the cave from the road. The chickens formerly living in the cave were eaten by the pair of aggressive **cockatrices** the Bell children placed in here after being unable to handle them in the house. The decaying corpse of Lord Victoir Bell is also in the cave. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies the cause of death to be from wounds made by a large beak and talons.

Conclusion

Once the PCs have cleared out Belcassel House, driven off or slain the griffon, and collected their reward, they can continue on toward their intended destination, or they could attempt to track Yvette as she travels toward Maillon with her owlbear chick. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check finds her trail, or the PCs can hear about a lone female traveler heading north from some travelers heading south through town. Yvette is sure to cause more trouble in the next part of this adventure: *Rumble in the Henhouse*.

Cikavak

The cikavak is a remarkably ugly magical bird—a supernatural creature conjured through a lengthy ritual. A dark gray comb flops atop its head, and shapeless wattles dangle from its throat. It seems unimposing.

Potion Pouches. Cikavaks possess an odd ability: when fully distended, their ventral pouches hold up to half a gallon of almost any liquid. These resilient pouches take little or no damage from their contents, holding potions without ingesting them or even carrying acid without injury.

CIKAVAK

Tiny fey, neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 17 (7d4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances acid, fire, poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Common; telepathy (touch)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The cikavak's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *speak with animals*

1/day: *silence*

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 5 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

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