

THE GARDEN OF SHADE AND SHADOWS



A 5E WARLOCK ADVENTURE FOR 4 PCS OF
4TH OR 5TH LEVEL BY BRIAN SUSKIND

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Background

Two millennia ago, the Valeran elves crafted arborstones, magical relics able to instantly create wondrous gardens (much like a *magnificent mansion* spell). These were symbols of status and pride, but many fell to corruption when the elves retreated and the shadow fey appeared. The elves who stayed behind did their best to hide or destroy any remaining arborstones, but a few slipped through their grasp.

Lord Dalibor Mazar, a minor Slahta noble in charge of the Krakovar village of Ogrodu and its surrounding lands, recently unearthed a peculiar stone while exploring the countryside. His arcane dabbling determined the stone to be some sort of elven relic, but he could not identify it further. Mazar believed he could trade his find to secure allies among the elves of Dornig, reaver dwarves, or perhaps even Baba Yaga herself to help free him and his people from the oppression of the Blood Kingdom. Unfortunately, he decided to test the stone first.

Three days ago, the corrupted item transformed Mazar into an umbral vampire and surrounded his family manor with a twisting labyrinth of shadows. Driven insane, he killed his wife and adolescent son, transforming them into

shadow skeletons. Since then, he has explored his new condition and tortured his surviving servants. Soon, he will turn his attention to the nearby village of Ogrodu.

Adventure Hooks

A magical garden of shadows has enveloped Mazar manor. The nearby village of Ogrodu trembles with fear as the paths and plants of this labyrinth abound with monsters, shadow creatures, and untold dangers. The PCs can stumble upon Ogrodu by happenstance or through runners sent from the village seeking aid, as detailed below. When the PCs arrive, they come upon a village under attack.

- The residents of Ogrodu fear they will be blamed for the disappearance of their nobleman, Lord Mazar. The rektor, Elena Baran, sends runners out in search of capable individuals who can find the missing noble and rescue him.
- The appearance of the garden disrupts nearby shadow roads, creating a 25 percent chance that travelers on the roads cross back into the Material Plane, appearing on the outskirts of Ogrodu instead of their intended destination.

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Battle of Ogrodu

The small village appears half swallowed by a vast labyrinth of tall, shadow-shrouded hedges. The maze overruns the entire village north of the main street and some buildings seem almost severed by the outermost hedges.

As the PCs approach the village square at the western edge of the community, they hear the sounds of battle and fearful screams.

Creatures. In the square, two groups of eight desperate-looking peasants (human **commoners**) stand behind makeshift barricades in Area 1, fending off two groups of six **shadow goblins** (*Creature Codex*, p. 191) who pour out of the maze opening at the northern rim of the square. After fending off the goblins, the PCs are quickly approached by the rektor, Elena Baran.

The Village

Ogrodu is located midway between Jozht and Wallenbirg in Krakovar. A fairly typical village of the region, it consists of a small inn, a church, a smithy that also serves as its general store, and a collection of barns, homes, and animal pens. Normally, just over 250 people live in Ogrodu, but two-thirds of the population vanished into the garden when it appeared. The garden covers everything north of the central street of the village and extends two miles to the east, west, and north. The only apparent entrance to the garden is just off the village square, on the west side of Ogrodu.

Meeting the Rektor

When the PCs meet Elena Baran (female human **acolyte**), she is less terrified of the magical labyrinth than she is of Protector Hristina's men finding out Lord Mazar is missing. She is an older woman in plain robes who holds her faith in Lada close to her heart to protect herself and her people from the vampires who rule them.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED HERE?

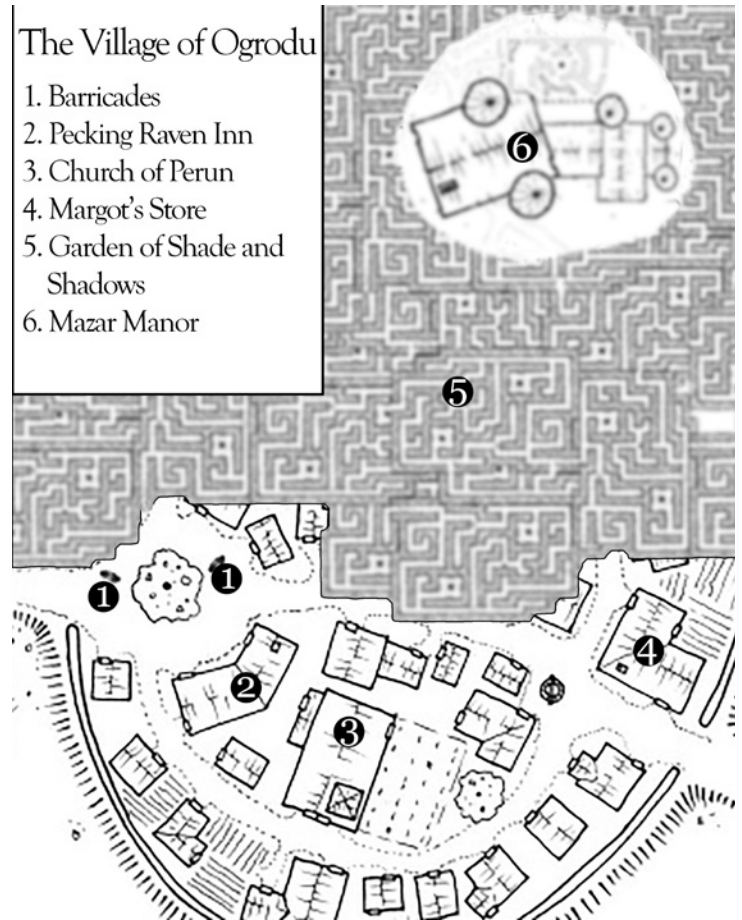
Our Slahta, Lord Mazar, has vanished. His manor just outside the village was swallowed up by that eldritch maze out there. It appeared overnight, and the manor was gone, along with half the village. No one has come out, but we've heard screams and terrible sounds from within.

WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

Three days ago. I fear what will happen if we don't get Lord Mazar back or, at least, have a better explanation than he was eaten by a magic garden.

The Village of Ogrodu

1. Barricades
2. Pecking Raven Inn
3. Church of Perun
4. Margot's Store
5. Garden of Shade and Shadows
6. Mazar Manor



WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

It's well-known that Lord Mazar chafes under the Protector's rule. How he escaped the initial purges, I don't know. But Princess Hristina does not tolerate any hint of rebellion amongst the Slahta or any of her own nobles, and I fear the Protector will not believe fanciful stories of a magical garden. Instead, she will likely assume we rebelled, murdered Lord Mazar, and concocted the story of the garden to hide the crime. Why we'd rebel but kill someone sympathetic to rebellion isn't a fact she'd dwell on. She'll put us all to death, if we're lucky.

WHERE DID THE GARDEN COME FROM?

I have an inkling. Lord Mazar found something during one of his wanderings around the countryside. A strange, carved stone. The lord dabbles in magic, and he believed it is something called an arborstone, a relic of the old elven empire.

HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE STONE?

Lord Mazar met with me the night before the garden appeared. He was very excited about the stone. He babbled on and on about trading it to Dornig or even Old Grandmother to get us aid. I told him it was a fool's idea, but he's young. Young and reckless.

HAVE YOU INVESTIGATED THE GARDEN?

Two days ago, I sent half our surviving town militia to try and recover anyone from inside. They never returned. Yesterday, I sent the other half, with the same result.

WHAT DO YOU WANT US TO DO?

I need you to go into that garden and recover Lord Mazar or, if he's dead, find out what happened. If you can save anyone from the village, all the better, but I fear the worst.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

We don't have much, but we hide a few magic trinkets from the ghost knights and blood priestesses during the fall. If you can get Lord Mazar back or prove we had nothing to do with his death, it's yours.

The rewards Elena can give them, if they succeed, are hidden inside the altar of the village church: three *potions of greater healing* and a *wand of fireballs*. She offers the characters healing, if needed, and room and board at the Pecking Raven Inn. Assuming the characters agree to help, they eventually enter the garden.

The Garden of Shade and Shadows

The hedge "corridors" of the labyrinthine garden surrounding Mazar Manor are 10 feet wide and 12 feet tall in most places. It is always night within the garden, regardless of the actual time of day. A strange dusk hangs perpetually over the entire area (treat as a near moonless night). The PCs may be tempted to simply try and cut their way through the hedges, however, doing so shunts them to the entrance to the garden (75 percent chance) or to a random location in the garden (25 percent chance) no closer to the center of the maze.

The garden is vast, comprising many twisting paths, strange statuary, magnificent gazebos, corrupted plants, dangerous creatures, and poisonous terrain. This adventure details only the innermost heart of the garden, where Mazar Manor and its lord await.

The following tables can be used to expand or complicate the garden in whatever way you wish before the PCs reach Mazar Manor. There is no set guideline for how many events the PCs should stumble across while traveling through the

garden. A shorter adventure could have just one of each type or two location encounters and a sightseeing encounter, for example. Roll a d6 and consult the Type of Encounter table and its subtables or choose entries based on pacing, thematic appropriateness, and preference.

After navigating the garden, the PCs reach the center of the maze where Mazar Manor awaits.

TYPE OF ENCOUNTER

d6	Encounter
1	Trap (see subtable 2)
2	Location encounter (see subtable 1)
3-4	No encounter, just twists and turns of hedgerow corridors.
5	Other encounter (see subtable 4)
6	Interesting sight (see subtable 3)

SUBTABLE 1: LOCATION ENCOUNTERS

d6	Location
1	Dark Altar. A vampire priestess (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 367) prays at a small shrine to the Blood Goddess as she prepares to sacrifice a bound villager. She does not notice the PCs at first and is quite angry if disturbed. The priestess, altar, and villager are an illusion, an echo of an event that happened some time ago in a different area of Krakovar. Dealing damage to the priestess or physically interacting with her, the altar, or the villager reveals the illusion.
2	Mosaic Path. As the PCs walk, tiny, colorful tiles gradually cover the walkway. The mosaic displays an image of victorious, dark-skinned goblins feasting on a variety of captives. Around the next corner, six shadow goblins (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 191) work to lay down more tiles and become enraged when they see someone dares to walk upon their artwork.
3	Grave Gazebo. A gazebo fashioned from bleached white bone occupies the intersection of several hedge rows. The stench of the grave hangs heavy in the air. Three vampire thralls (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 368) turn from the villager they just killed to face the PCs.
4	Ruined Greenhouse. The hedged path opens into a ruined greenhouse filled with an inky darkness. Old ceramic planters are scattered around the greenhouse, and an exit is barely perceptible at the far side. Two shadow oozes (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 287) lurk in wait.
5	Butterfly Shrubbery. The hedge path opens onto a small hill decorated with shrubs covered in butterflies. Albin and Lilia, two human children, sit on a stone, crying because they are lost. These creatures are actually broodikens (<i>Tome of Beasts</i> , p. 45) created by Mazar. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discerns the truth.
6	Deadly Grove. The pathway opens onto an intersection marked by four dead trees set around a larger one. Black, thorny vines choke all of the trees, and four children of the briar (<i>Tome of Beasts</i> , p. 56) caper and dance around the grove. They eagerly attempt to sacrifice the PCs to the duskthorn dryad (<i>Tome of Beasts</i> , p. 160) living in the middle tree.

SUBTABLE 2: TRAPS

d4	Trap
1	Bell Trap. The walkway narrows to 5 feet wide, and the hedges on both sides feature black flowers. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the bell-like shape of the flowers. A creature moving through this narrow corridor must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check or trigger the trap. The creature has advantage on this check if it succeeded on the check to notice the bell-like shape of the flowers. When the trap is triggered, the bells erupt into a cacophony of sound, drawing the attention of nearby creatures. Roll a d6 and consult the Other Encounters subtable or choose an appropriate encounter for the PCs.
2	Spiked Pit Trap. Netting camouflaged to resemble the ground lies over a 20-foot pit. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the covered pit. A creature falling into the pit takes 11 (2d10) piercing damage from the spikes in addition to any falling damage.
3	Hedge Darts. A creature approaching within 5 feet of a thorny hedge causes a flight of four thorn darts to shoot out from the hedge. Each dart makes a ranged attack with a +4 bonus against a random target within 10 feet of the hedge (vision is irrelevant to this attack roll). If there are no targets in the area, the darts don't hit anything. A target that is hit takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or suffer the effects of the <i>confusion</i> spell for 1d4 rounds. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check recognizes the danger of the thorns before getting too close to the hedge. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices a root near the base of the hedge that would prevent the darts from launching if cut.
4	Entangle Trap. Vines drape over the hedges on either side of the walkway ahead. A creature that steps between the vine-covered hedges triggers the trap. When triggered, all of the vines reach out, covering a 15-foot radius. The area becomes difficult terrain, and each creature that enters or starts its turn in the area must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be restrained by the vines. A creature, including the restrained target, can take its action to free the target by succeeding on a DC 12 Strength check. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the vines moving slowly, revealing the danger. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices a root at the base of the closest hedge that neutralizes the vines if cut. If the trap is triggered, it draws the attention of nearby creatures. Roll a d6 and consult the Other Encounters subtable or choose an appropriate encounter for the PCs.

SUBTABLE 3: SIGHTSEEING TABLE

d6	Sight
1	Toll Bridge. The path ends at a stone bridge spanning a stream of inky black shadow. Wspaniale the Great, an elder shadow drake (<i>Tome of Beasts</i> , p. 153) sits on the bridge demanding a toll in gems, gold, or magic items from any who wish to pass.
2	Shadow Spy. A shadow fey (<i>Tome of Beasts</i> , p. 171) walks down the path on his way back to the courts of the shadow fey to report his investigation of the effects of the arborstone's activation. If befriended with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he gives the PCs a token that grants the PCs a one-time audience with any minor shadow fey noble in the courts, should the PCs find themselves in the Shadow Realm.
3	Lovely Revel. Three korrigans (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 242) lead a dozen sprites in a revel with music and dancing and food laid out on tables in a circular opening of hedges. PCs coming within earshot of the party fall subject to the korrigan's Enchanting Revels. The party lasts for 1d6 hours.
4	Full Gibbets. Around a dozen villagers hang from old gibbets on either side of the pathway, their dangling feet swaying gently at shoulder height.
5	Playful Shades. All of the PCs gain a living shade (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 255). These playful shades hide in the PCs' shadows and toy with those around the PCs. The shades flee if confronted.
6	Shadow Sounds. Voices cry out for help, cry piteously, or whisper inaudibly in the gloom or just on the other side of the next hedge.

SUBTABLE 4: OTHER ENCOUNTERS

d6	Encounter
1	A wight dressed in a conductor's uniform leads eight shrouds (<i>Tome of Beasts</i> , p. 348) in a parade.
2	Five shadow blights (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 326) emerge from the hedges and attack.
3	A razorleaf (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 317) wants to feed the PCs to the garden.
4	Two darakhul (<i>Tome of Beasts</i> , p. 216) run into the PCs while investigating the garden.
5	Three ogre zombies trudge down the path toward the PCs.
6	A darakhul shadowmancer (<i>Creature Codex</i> , p. 173) was practicing magic in the Shadow Realm when it was pulled into this garden by the power of the arborstone. It has been prowling the labyrinth ever since, trying to find a way out, and is very hungry.

The Manor

A once-splendid manor looms at the heart of the garden, shrouded in shadow.

Illumination. Darkness and shadows overrun the manor house. Unless otherwise noted, all areas are filled with thick shadows. Magical sources of illumination of 2nd level or lower and nonmagical sources of illumination only provide dim light out to the distance they would ordinarily provide bright light. Beyond that distance, or without a light source, vision is heavily obscured. Magical sources of illumination of 3rd level or higher function normally.

Doors. Unless noted, doors in the manor are closed but not locked.

Portraits. Portrait or mirror frames hang in every room of the manor (minimum of two per room). Each contains rippling, water-like shadow. Lord Mazar can use these frames as portals to teleport from frame to frame anywhere in the manor or the garden maze (Area 13). No light source, magical or otherwise, can drive away this darkness, nor can the frames be removed or destroyed until the arborstone is neutralized. However, a successful *dispel magic* (DC 15) cast on a frame removes the shadow from that frame for 1 hour.

The Arborstone. The arborstone's magic permeates the manor. Each undead in the manor has advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead. Mazar is linked to the arborstone and can see through the shadows in any room in the manor, except for the kitchen (Area 11).

MAZAR'S HUNT

Lord Mazar enjoys toying with his prey. After the PCs enter, he watches them by using the arborstone's power to see through the manor's shadows. He plans to make minor attacks on the PCs in the manor's hallways (Areas 2 and 6), using the portraits and frames in the hallways. To add to the atmosphere or increase the tension, you can have Mazar make single attacks against the PCs or speak to them through the shadows in any room of the manor, except the kitchen.

1. MANOR ENTRY

Two fortified towers rise up above a once-magnificent manor house. The windows of the structure show no light from within. Carefully planted beds of flowers grow only black roses. All lights, sounds, and smells seem muted, faded, or somehow distant around the manor. A stone statue of a crow stands above the doorway.

The unlocked front and rear doors of the manor provide the most immediate access to the interior. Opening the doors from the outside reveals the shadowy conditions inside the manor. The small door to the east of the southern front door has been bricked up.

2. MAIN HALL

Portrait frames line this long inner corridor, the images completely filled with rippling black shadows. Wispy coils of shadows hang from rich decorations like spiderwebs.

The inner doors halfway down the corridor stand open, but the doors leading to the manor's exterior are closed.

Mazar Attacks. Lord Mazar (see Area 13) lies in wait inside a portrait frame. When the PCs pass the portrait, he makes one Umbral Grasp attack against a PC then exits the hallway through the shadows of another portrait frame, his mocking laugh echoing from every shadow in the hallway.

3. GALLERY OF SHADOWS

Bodies hang on the walls of this once-opulent ballroom, their blood pooling on the painted tiles of the floor. Between the corpses, large portrait frames display only shadows. Shattered glass and broken pieces of furniture litter the room. A door to the south stands open.

Mazar toyed with his six servants for two days before tiring of them. The broken glass and shattered furniture make the area difficult terrain.

Creatures. The six bodies on the walls come to life as **zombies** and attack PCs who enter the room.

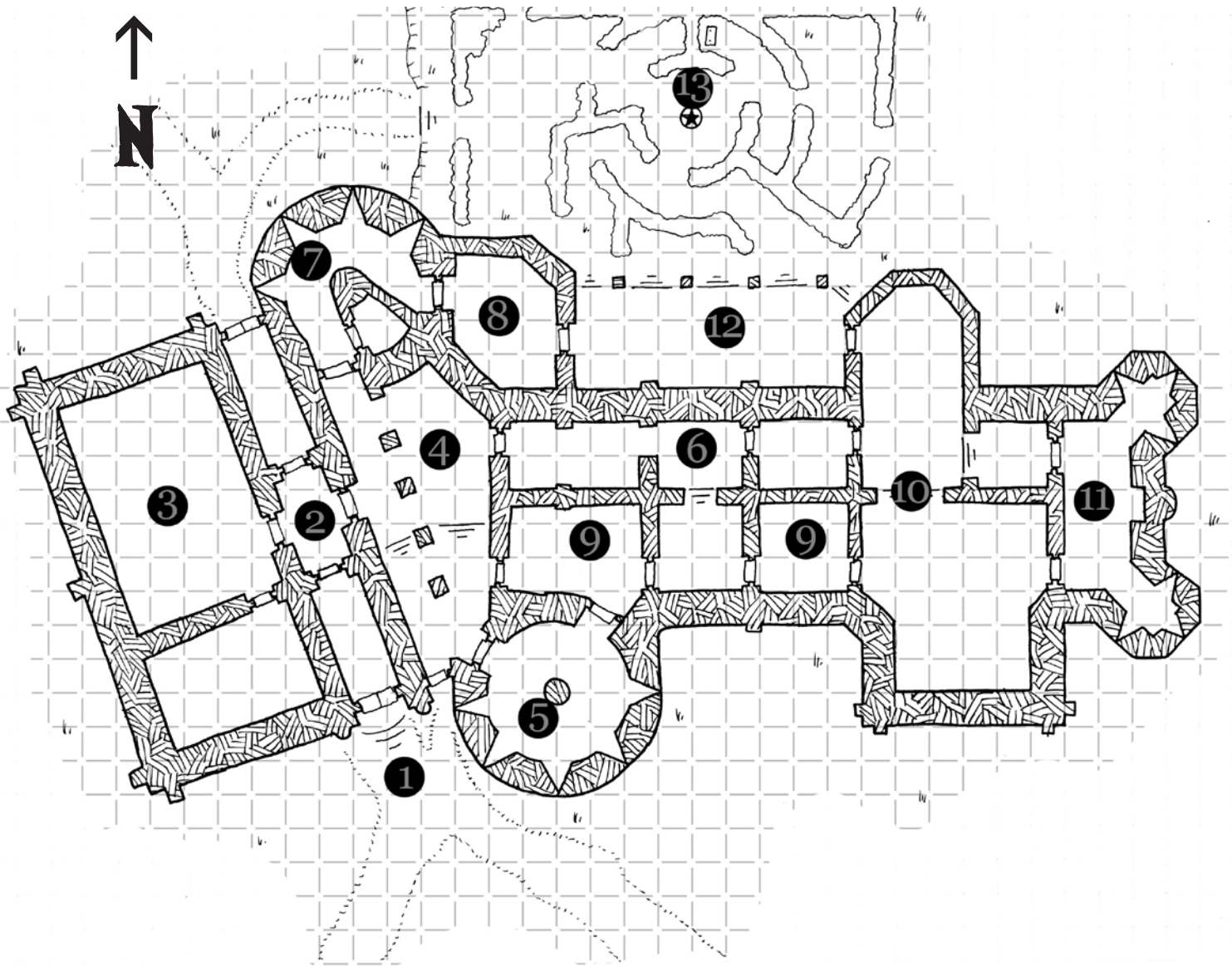
Treasure. The doorway to the south leads to a sitting room stocked with expensive wines and spirits. Though most of the artwork, armor, and weaponry on the walls are gaudy reproductions, one ornamental blade is actually a +1 *rapier*.

4. THE CONTESTED LIBRARY

Bookshelves stocked with old books, tomes, and scrolls line the walls of this tall room. A few tattered pages of blank parchment lie on the floor. Two doors to the east and one each to the north and south stand closed.

Bookshelves line the room's walls, extending all the way to its 20-foot ceiling. Mazar's once-captive pets, four **inklings** (*Creature Codex*, p. 227) and a **sigilian** (*Creature Codex*, p. 335), fight an ongoing war for control of the magical books in the library. When the PCs enter, both sides hide within or between books on the shelves. They join forces to fight the intruders before resuming their confrontation.

Treasure. Most of the spellbooks in the library have been drained by the combatants, but two remain. On the northernmost bookcase, a green leather spellbook contains the spells *blur*, *burning hands*, and *magic missile*. A blue leather spellbook on the southernmost bookcase contains the spells *bestow curse*, *continual flame*, and *fog cloud*.



5. THE MAGE'S STUDY

This round chamber contains the remains of an arcane laboratory. The contents of several worktables litter the area with broken arcane equipment, scattered notes, and abandoned, half-finished experiments. Two doors lead from the room.

Before his transformation, Mazar used this chamber for his magical research. He wrecked the place in a fit of pique and has ignored it since.

Mazar's Notes. Among the notes is information on the arborstone written in a code Mazar developed to guard his studies. If deciphered with a successful DC 15 Intelligence

(Investigation) check, the notes detail Mazar's method to activate the stone using cantrips: "*Channeling minor magic into one of the runes generates a progressive effect. Thus, by my calculations, activating three runes in this way should be enough to cause a cascade activation.*"

Unfortunately, his theories on how to turn the arborstone off again are more vague. Despite the uncertainty, anyone who reads the notes has advantage on checks to deactivate the stone in Area 13.

Treasure. Scattered among the broken arcane equipment are a *wand of magic detection* and a *potion of greater healing*.

6. THE LORD'S HALL

Portrait frames line this long inner corridor, the images completely filled with rippling black shadows. Wispy coils of shadows hang from rich decorations like spiderwebs. Halfway along the hallway, a trail of dried blood leads from a side chamber to the door at the eastern end of the corridor.

After killing his wife and son, Mazar dragged their bodies to Area 10, leaving a visible blood trail. The inner door to the west of the steps stands open.

Mazar Attacks. Lord Mazar (see Area 13) lies in wait inside a portrait frame. When the PCs pass the portrait, he makes one Umbral Grasp attack against a PC then exits the hallway through the shadows of another portrait frame.

7. SUSPICIOUSLY IMPRESSIVE ARMORY

This semi-circular chamber holds racks of weapons and chests of martial supplies. Hanging upon the wall are five weapons displayed with brass plaques denoting their provenance.

The racks hold nonmagical weapons (four short swords, three longswords, two battle axes, and two crossbows). The chests are not locked and contain bundles of bolts, four suits of leather armor, and various supplies for caring for arms and armor. With 10 minutes of work, the PCs can piecemeal the supplies into one sets of leatherworker's tools. The door in the middle of the chamber leads to a small garderobe.

Prominent Weapons. The weapons on display are nonmagical, but they seem magical due to the power of the corrupted arborstone. Treat each item as displaying a false magical aura as if enchanted with the *arcanist's magic aura* spell.

Infused with the ephemeral power of the arborstone, these items function as powerful magic items against the shadow and undead creatures in the manor, however, they function as normal, nonmagical weapons outside the manor and against Mazar himself. Once the arborstone is destroyed or if the items are removed from the area, the magic aura fades, revealing the weapons as mundane items. The weapons and their arborstone-infused properties are:

- Dagger of Sir Lokietek the Short, a +2 dagger with the reach property.
- Krakus' Slaying Edge, a dragon slayer greatsword stained with a dragon's blood.
- Blade of Lord Wawel, a scimitar of speed glowing with yellow radiance.
- Boruta's Cleaver, a giant slayer battleaxe inscribed with glowing runes.
- Mace of Black Rokita, a vicious mace made of blackened iron.

8. SERVANT'S QUARTERS

Blood, innards, and other body parts decorate the simple beds and furniture of this chamber. The remains of makeshift barricades surround both doors leading out of the room.

The various viscera and innards come from the servants hung in Area 3.

Creatures. Three **dhampir** (*Creature Codex*, p. 106) lurk in this room. They are three of Mazar's servants who attempted to lock themselves away from their corrupted lord, not knowing the umbral vampire could reach them whenever he wanted. Eventually, he captured them and used the power of the arborstone to turn them into dhampir. The servants are bound to Mazar and attack intruders on sight. They investigate any strange sounds, such as fighting, in Areas 7 or 12.

9. BESOILED BEDCHAMBERS

A richly decorated bedroom is splattered with dried blood. A crimson trail leads into the nearby hallway.

In these chambers, Mazar killed his wife and son before dragging them toward Area 10. He has since ignored the rooms. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching the western room uncovers a hidden cache containing jewelry and a dozen assorted gemstones worth 175 gp in total.

10. DEADLY DINING HALL

Shadow-filled portrait frames line the walls of this vaulted chamber while a short flight of steps separate the area into two sides. To the north, a massive feasting table set with silver candlesticks sits in front of wide windows, overlooking the ornamental garden behind the manor. To the south, plush furniture and rugs decorate a sitting room. Doors lead to the east and west. A blood trail leads across the room and out the exterior door along the northwestern wall.

A throne of bone and shadow rests against the southern wall of the sitting room between two massive paintings of a young woman and a boy. A Krakovan nobleman with pale skin and misty strands of darkness coiling in his empty eye sockets sits on the throne.

If not already defeated elsewhere, Mazar awaits the PCs here. He greets them graciously, introducing himself before saying, "Dinner is unfortunately delayed due to trouble with the cook."

The Lord's Offer. Mazar tries to convince the PCs to accept the "blessing" of the shadows; to become his new "Shade Knights" and help him raise the "new generation of Krakovan heroes." He spouts a passionate but rambling diatribe about restoring Krakova to its rightful rulers and

pushing the Blood Kingdom out. He disputes any attempt to convince him of his own vampiric status.

If the PCs accept his blessing, he calls the PCs one at a time to his throne where he slays the PC with his Umbral Grasp. If he slays all the PCs in this way, he drags their bodies to the arborstone where they are reborn as shadows, dhampir, or shadow skeletons under Mazar's control.

If the PCs continue to refuse his blessing or if they attack him at any point, Mazar flies into a rage. He calls forth his "children" before diving through a nearby shadow portrait and retreating to Area 13.

Creatures. When Mazar calls his "children," two **orphans of the black** (see page 12) and four **shrouds** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 348) emerge from various shadow-filled portrait frames around the room. The small fey cajole and encourage the shrouds as if they are favored pets or toys. As the favored of the orphans, the shrouds are not valid targets of a creature affected by an orphan's Incite Violence. All of Mazar's "children" attack and fight to the death.

Kitchen Doors. The two doors to Area 11 show signs of attempts to break through them. They are locked and barred from the inside. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check while listening at the door hears the sound of someone praying inside. PCs wishing to enter the kitchen must speak to Rozalia (see Area 11) through the door or break it down with two successful DC 15 Strength checks.

11. WARDED KITCHEN

Brilliant light shines from hanging lanterns and a fire roars in the massive fireplace filling the center part of the western wall. Tables, cupboards, and cabinets hold cooking supplies while two alcoves extending from the main chamber hold additional workspaces.

Prayers adorn nearly every available surface of the kitchen. They are written in a variety of ways - ink, charcoal, paint, colored liquids or sauces - as if the writer kept running out of implements. The prayers implore Father Forest and Mother Field for protection from the darkness. A matronly elfmarked woman kneels in the middle of the room, praying aloud.

This is the domain of Rozalia Wujek, a female elfmarked **acolyte**, the manor's cook, and a fanatical worshiper of Yarila and Porevit. When the arborstone activated, her prayers kept the shadows at bay. Since then, she warded the kitchen with her faith, inscribing prayers on the walls and renewing their power every few hours by repeating them aloud. The kitchen is the single area in the manor where light functions normally, and it is a safe place for the PCs to rest.

Entering the Kitchen. If the PCs attempt to speak to Rozalia through the door, she initially believes they are yet another one of Mazar's tricks. A successful DC 15 Charisma

(Persuasion) convinces the cook that the PCs are real and aren't Mazar's agents. Mentioning or praying to a deity of good or light in earshot of Rozalia gives a PC advantage on this check.

What Rozalia Knows. The cook has all of the information detailed in the background of this lair from the moment Mazar found the stone. She attempted escape once but failed to navigate the outer labyrinth and decided it was safer to hold up here until a better opportunity for escape presented itself.

Rozalia believes the arborstone to be the source of the darkness and only by destroying it can the manor be freed. As best she knows, the arborstone is in the ornamental garden behind the manor. The garden also holds a small altar to Yarila and Porevit. She believes calling on the power of those gods while placing the stone on the altar might be enough to destroy the arborstone. Rozalia is unaware of the possibility of deactivating the stone as she wasn't privy to Mazar's research.

Treasure. If the PCs befriend Rozalia, she offers them a number of potions hidden among her cooking supplies. She has four *potions of healing*, two *potions of greater healing* and one *potion of lesser restoration*.

12. BLOODY BALCONY

Blood covers this wide balcony, splattering the white marble balustrade and pooling across the colorful tiles on the floor to cascade down the five short staircases facing the ornamental garden to the north. Blood pours slow and steady from the wounds of a noble-looking woman and an adolescent boy lying in the middle of the balcony at the center of the crimson pool.

Here lie the forms of Mazar's wife, Donata, and their son, Leszek. Though Mazar killed them days ago, the bodies appear to still be alive. From a distance, the bodies breathe and move slightly, despite the blood pouring endlessly from their wounds. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals no one could survive the loss of that much blood.

Pool of Blood. The ever-flowing blood pool fills the balcony, leaving the area a slick mess. It is difficult terrain.

Creatures. Two **shadow skeletons** (*Creature Codex*, p. 342) tear free of the bodies if anyone approaches within 5 feet of them.

Treasure. A locket containing portraits of a younger Mazar and Donata sits in the pocket of Donata's dress and can be found with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching the bodies. If a PC uses this locket while speaking to Mazar, the PC has advantage on any Wisdom (Insight) or Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) checks against Mazar.

13. GARDEN MAZE

Towering walls of roiling shadows cover the natural privet walls. Faint screams and bestial roars whisper from the walls, creating a constant, maddening murmur. A dozen ghostly spirits swirl through intricate patterns above the garden, and the stench of death and blood hang heavy in the air.

This simple, ornamental maze once delighted visitors to the manor with waist-high hedges. Now it is the home of the arborstone, whose corruption has spread through the manor and its surroundings. The stone rests in the center of the garden maze, denoted on the map by the star symbol. Mazar, an **umbral vampire** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 397 or see page 13), attacks the PCs as soon as they enter the garden.

MAZAR'S TACTICS

Mazar attacks the PCs with hit-and-run tactics, using the arborstone's power to his advantage. This close to the stone, Mazar's shadow-stepping gains an additional wrinkle. As a bonus action, he can step into the end of a shadow hedge and emerge from the end of any other shadow hedge in

Area 13. When he does so, an illusory duplicate appears out of a random nearby hedge end. Mazar can have no more than three of these illusory duplicates active at one time. An illusory duplicate's AC is 14, and it is destroyed if it takes damage.

Mazar attempts to split up the PCs and alternates hit-and-run attacks against the weakest-looking PCs. However, his first priority is to defend the arborstone, and he attacks anyone within 5 feet of the stone.

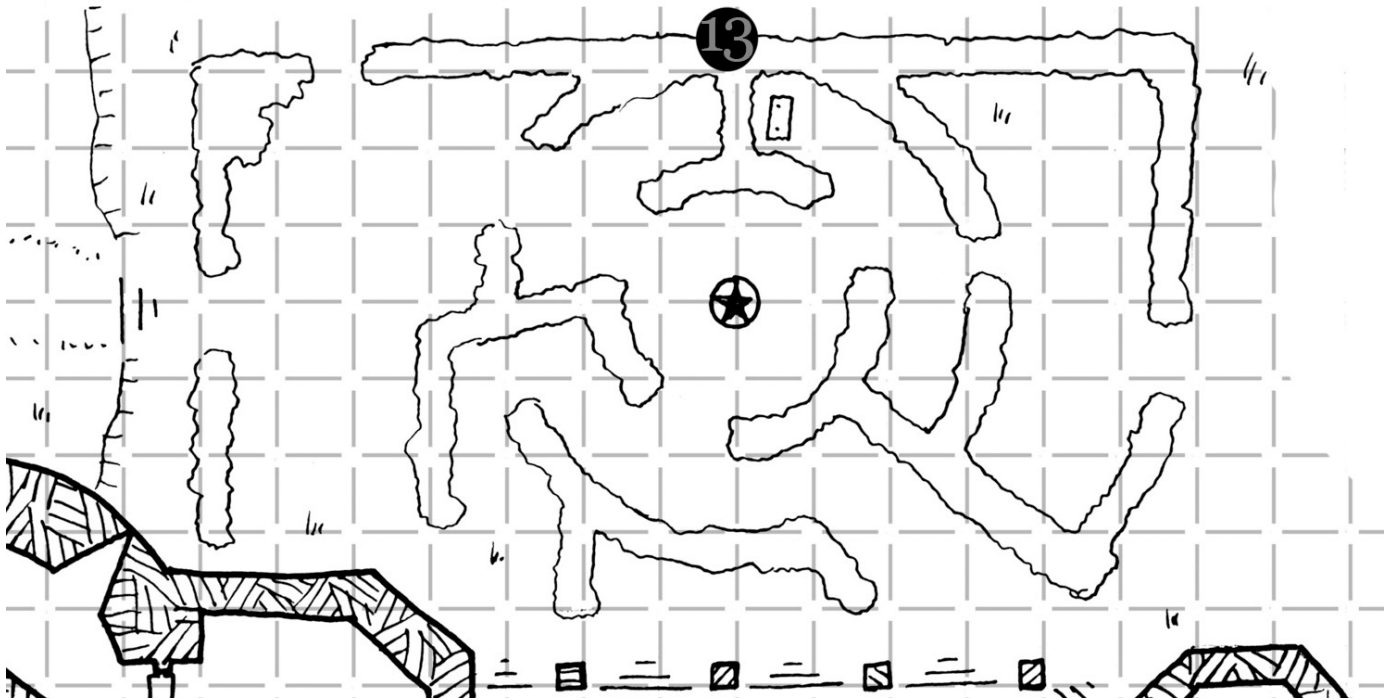
THE DARK GARDEN

The corrupted arborstone infuses the house and grounds of Mazar Manor with dark energy leached from the Shadow Realm. While in Area 13, Mazar can use lair actions.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Lord Mazar takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; Mazar can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Mazar calls down one **shroud** flying overhead. It magically appears in an unoccupied space Mazar can see within 30 feet of him and attacks his foes. Mazar can have only one shroud active at a time.



MAP: [CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THIS MAP FOR YOUR VIRTUAL TABLE TOP.](#)

- The arborstone produces a wave of shadow, covering all of Area 13 until initiative count 20 on the following round. Treat this shadow as the *darkness* spell, except Mazar can see through it.
- Mazar calls on the power of the spirits flying overhead, absorbing the undead into himself. He regains 9 (2d8) hit points. Mazar can use this lair action 5 times each day.
- Mazar chooses one target he can see within 5 feet of the end of a hedge in Area 13. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or shadow tentacles magically pull the creature into the hedge and eject it into an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the end of another hedge in Area 13.

THE ARBORSTONE

The arborstone, a fist-sized, seed-shaped stone inscribed with vine-like elvish glyphs, rests on a short marble plinth in the middle of Area 13. Swirls of shadow trace the air around the stone.

Deactivating the Arborstone. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines the proper method for deactivating the arborstone. This check also reveals that the dark labyrinth surrounding Mazar Manor will disappear if the arborstone is deactivated. A PC who read Mazar’s notes in Area 5 has advantage on this check. To deactivate the relic, three cantrips must be cast into the arborstone but no more than once per round. Casting a second cantrip in a single round into the stone allows Mazar to use a second lair action on initiative count 10 on the following round. See the Conclusion for information on what occurs after the stone is deactivated.

Destroying the Arborstone. The stone has 125 hit points and resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons. It can be targeted by spells that require an attack roll, but it is immune to any spell that requires a saving throw. The “magical” weapons from Area 7 deal no damage to the arborstone.

A small stone altar to Yarila and Porevit sits tucked into a dead-end curve of the garden just north of the arborstone, marked by a square on the map. A

successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check knows the arborstone will be easier to destroy if placed in a holy location. This check also reveals that the dark labyrinth surrounding Mazar Manor won’t immediately disappear once the arborstone is destroyed, but it will start to fade, eventually freeing Ogrodu and the manor from its grasp. If the PCs spoke with Rozalia in Area 11, they have advantage on this check and may have been told of the presence of the altar in the garden. Placing the arborstone on the small altar and striking the stone with a metal weapon eliminates the stone’s damage resistance and reduces its hit points to 50. If it has 50 hit points or fewer when it is damaged on the altar, it is immediately destroyed. See the Conclusion for information on what occurs after the stone is destroyed.



Conclusion

If the PCs destroy the arborstone, the garden labyrinth surrounding Mazar Manor remains for 1 year and plagues the countryside with shadow creatures and fell monsters, prompting the Protector to send ghost knights to clear the garden. The very presence of the labyrinth is enough to convince the Protector's enforcers that Lord Mazar's death isn't the fault of Ogrodu's villagers.

If the PCs deactivated the arborstone instead of destroying it, the garden labyrinth surrounding Mazar Manor, the darkness, and all of the creatures who came with them vanish. Evidence of the dark garden's presence decorate the area surrounding Mazar Manor in bits of shadow-tainted flora and shadow-stained buildings. Rektor Elena believes these bits of evidence along with Rozalia's testimony, if the cook survived, are enough to prove the village's innocence, and the PCs are free to collect their reward. In addition, the PCs now possess a powerful, albeit shadow-corrupted, magical relic. The shadow fey court already knows the stone was found and has dispatched agents to investigate it. Acquiring the stone may be the first step in a long adventure to cleanse the relic of its corruption while keeping it out of shadow fey hands...

If the PCs deactivate then destroy the arborstone, the garden labyrinth around Mazar Manor disappears as detailed above. The nonmagical shards of the arborstone are enough proof for the Protector's enforcers that Lord Mazar's death was due to his own foolish magical dabbling and wasn't the fault of the villagers.

Orphan of the Black

Found originally in *Warlock 8: Undead* and later in *Empire of the Ghouls*, the orphans of the black are children who were mistreated by authority figures and whose sorrow and pain helped them escape into the Shadow Realm. The realm has since twisted them into dark fey with a hatred of those who covet law and order.

ORPHAN OF THE BLACK

Small fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 49 (9d6 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Forbiddance. An orphan of the black can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants.

Sense Law. An orphan of the black can pinpoint the location of a lawful creature within 30 feet of it.

Transmit Pain. A creature that hits the orphan of the black with an attack must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or take 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The orphan of the black makes two melee attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Incite Violence (Recharge 5-6). The orphan of the black forces a creature it can see within 15 feet of it to commit an outburst of violence. The target must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature must use its action on its next turn to attack the nearest creature other than the orphan of the black. On a success, the creature takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage from the violence boiling at the edge of its consciousness. A creature immune to being charmed isn't affected by the orphan's Incite Violence.

Umbral Vampire

Found in the *Tome of Beasts* on page 397, umbral vampires are humans twisted into a dark reflection of themselves by ancient curses and powerful shadow magic. In this adventure, Lord Mazar became an umbral vampire after binding himself to a corrupted arborstone and activating it. The twisted nobleman then killed his family and servants, turning many of them into dark creatures of shadow. In his newly empowered state, he seeks to grow an army of shadow creatures to overthrow the vampires who took hold of his homeland a decade ago.

Shadowy Nature. An umbral vampire doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

UMBRAL VAMPIRE

Medium fiend, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Cha +7

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Umbral, Void Speech

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The umbral vampire can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Shadow Blend. When in dim light or darkness, the umbral vampire can Hide as a bonus action, even while being observed.

Strike from Shadow. The reach of the umbral vampire's umbral grasp attack increases by 10 feet and its damage increases by 4d6 when both the umbral vampire and the target of the attack are in dim light or darkness and the umbral vampire is hidden from its target.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in direct sunlight, the umbral vampire has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Innate Spellcasting. The umbral vampire's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The

umbral vampire can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *mirror image*, *plane shift* (plane of shadows only)

3/day: *bane* (when in dim light or darkness only), *black tentacles*

ACTIONS

Umbral Grasp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (4d6 + 4) cold damage and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d6. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest. If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.



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