

BENEATH THE WITCHWILLOW



AN ADVENTURE FOR 4-6 PCs
OF 5TH LEVEL BY SARAH MADSEN

BENEATH THE WITCHWILLOW

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The adventure centers on a murder that occurred in one of the duchies of Dornig. Lilli Amberthaud and Harper Elincourt, the heirs of two rival families, fell in love. Because of the bad blood between their families, they kept their affair secret until Lilli was betrothed to another. A few days after the announcement, Lilli went missing. After an extensive search, the affair came to light, and Harper was accused of killing her out of anger or jealousy. Though no body was ever found and he staunchly maintained his innocence, Harper was imprisoned for the crime and remains in jail. However, the PCs have discovered something that may shed new light on Lilli's disappearance: a children's book called *Beneath the Witchwillow...* with a secret hidden within.

The Book

The book is a children's story, bound in faded blue leather with gold embossing and woodcut illustrations. It bears a bookplate inside the front cover that proclaims, "From the Library of Lilli Amberthaud."

The fairytale tells of a young girl who lived in a terribly abusive household: her father drank too much, her mother was often absent, and the girl suffered at both of their hands

when they were unhappy, which was most of the time. On the night of her twelfth birthday, after a fierce beating from her father, the girl's fairy godmother appears and tells her there's a way out of her terrible situation. All she needs to do is take a lock of hair from each of her parents and bring them to the old witchwillow in the woods where she will be taken to the land of the fairies to live happily ever after. The girl does as she's asked, and when she meets her fairy godmother beneath the witchwillow, the fey woman opens a doorway in the trunk of the tree, and the two step through to a world beyond.

The back cover of the book is peeling away from the interior. It seems to have been removed and then poorly repaired. A strange metal disk, paper thin and covered with runes, hides between the two layers along with a letter:

My Dearest Harper,

I'm sure you've heard by now what my parents wish for me. They refuse to listen to reason, but I cannot tell them the truth of why I do not wish to marry Lord Ransible. I must get away.

Meet me beneath the witchwillow north of my estate in two nights as the moon is at its highest. Bring this favor, and together we will escape our parents' petty squabbles and finally be together.

*Yours Forever,
Lilli*

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The Truth

When Lilli Amberthaud was told of her arranged betrothal, she tried to appeal to her parents to cancel the wedding. Yllara and Koriandril Amberthaud, however, thought they knew what was best for their daughter and refused.

Lilli fled to the woods in despair. The grove north of her family's estate had long been a place of comfort to her, and after a time, she found herself beneath the witchwillow. There Lilli was discovered by a companion of Yffreyja, a powerful fey, and was invited into the witchwillow demesne to converse with her. Lilli was startled at first but remembered the story she'd read as a child and thought there must be some truth in it. She appealed to Yffreyja, begging for assistance. Yffreyja agreed and sent Lilli on her way with two keys—metal disks, thin as a whisper, that would open the gateway to the Summer Lands and allow Lilli and Harper to escape through the witchwillow on the night of the full moon.

Lilli returned home, wrote the letter to Harper, and hid it within her copy of the tale. The next day, she sent it off with a courier to the Elincourt house, but the courier never made it to his destination. He was waylaid by bandits, killed, and hidden within the undergrowth. The bandits took everything he carried, even the book.

Two nights later, Lilli waited for Harper beneath the witchwillow. As time passed, the moon climbed higher in the sky, but Harper did not arrive. Distraught that her beloved had abandoned her, Lilli fled within the witchwillow to the world waiting beyond. There she's been in the company of Yffreyja in the tower at the heart of the demesne.

Adventure Hooks

There are a number of ways to introduce the adventure to your PCs. If you are weaving this adventure into an existing campaign, seed rumors of the murder into your local flavor ahead of time. Feel free to make it a recent murder or something that happened anywhere from several weeks to a few years in the past.

- **Finding the Book.** The book is a key hook for the quest, but where your PCs discover it is up to you. Whether they discover it in a bookstore, on a shelf in an abandoned house, or on the very bandits that stole it in the first place, they can easily find the hidden letter and disk at the back.
- **A Personal Plea.** If your players need a stronger call to action, Harper's parents are willing to pay a hefty sum to anyone who can prove their son's innocence. It's easy enough to hear of the reward being offered when in a tavern in Midgard.

Once the PCs have taken the hook, they should travel to Dornig to investigate. They can speak to the Elincourts, the

Amberthauds, and Harper himself in order to glean more information, or they might choose to immediately search for the witchwillow mentioned in the letter.

There are multiple opportunities for side quests and encounters as your PCs make their way to Dornig. Feel free to throw in your own random encounters as needed for those parties who need a little more action.

PART 1: REYWALD

The reception the PCs receive when arriving in Reywald depends on two main factors: on whether or not they've been in Dornig before and made a name for themselves and on the racial composition of the party. The more elves, elfmarked (half-elves), and humans in the party, the more favorably the citizens of Reywald will treat them. Conversely, if the PCs are mostly lesser or bestial races, they'll likely get more side-eye from the locals. Unless they've created a terrible reputation however, these elements won't block their investigation, but it might require a bit more elbow grease (and gold passing hands) for them to find their way.

Finding the Elincourts and/or the Amberthauds is not a difficult task. Asking in any of the town's taverns will get them the directions they need.

The Elincourt Townhouse

The Elincourts live in a townhouse in the Easternholds of Reywald. Harper is an only child, and his parents, Ollana and Maramir are staunchly convinced of his innocence. They welcome the PCs into their home out of hospitality and will quickly warm to them when they hear the PCs intend to investigate Lilli's disappearance. They not-so-subtly imply that the only reason Harper is in jail is because the Amberthauds have influence in the city and that Lilli likely ran off and that they are simply looking for someone to blame. It's obvious the animosity between the families runs deep, even before Lilli went missing.

The Elincourts, though adamant about Harper's innocence, do not accept the thought that their son may have been in a relationship with Lilli. If pressed on the matter, they even go so far as to suggest it's a plot by the Amberthauds to further incriminate him—jealous lovers are, after all, prime murder suspects—and beg the PCs not to go to the authorities with the information. They instead ask the PCs to do more investigating on their own and to track down Lilli or more evidence that Harper wasn't at fault. If the PCs leave on good terms, the Elincourts offer a letter of introduction to Karlora Everrest, Captain of the Guard, explaining they've been hired by the Elincourts to investigate the supposed crime and to grant the PCs access to Harper for questioning.

LADY OLLANA ELINCOURT

Neutral good elfmarked (age 56)

Ollana Elincourt is a lovely elfmarked whose fair face is lined with grief, making her look older than she is. Her blond hair is streaked with silver at the temples, and the entire time she is speaking to the PCs, her eyes flick between them as if searching for something. She is a stereotypical doting mother who believes the best of her son and cannot imagine him harming anyone. She knows nothing about the situation other than the certainty that Harper is innocent. She is soft spoken and kind and only shows any anger when speaking of the Amberthauds.

LORD MARAMIR ELINCOURT

Neutral good human (age 59)

Maramir Elincourt is a human with salt-and-pepper hair, dark skin, a straight nose, high cheekbones, and a strong chin. He carries himself in a way that suggests he's seen battle, and it wouldn't be surprising if he knows how to use the sword on his hip. His knuckles are scarred, and there's the silvery shadow of an old wound on his right jaw, just under his ear. He had his own share of adventuring as a young man, only settling down in Reywald once he met (and fell in love with) Ollana. Her reserve is the only thing keeping him from charging off and challenging Koriandrill Amberthaud to hand-to-hand combat.

The Amberthaud Estate

The Amberthauds reside in a manor on a sprawling estate outside the city limits, near the borders of the Arbonesse. They are considerably richer than the Elincourts and are held in higher esteem, and they are therefore markedly more influential.

If the PCs go to the Amberthaud estate, Koriandrill and Yllara Amberthaud initially welcome the group, thinking they have more information to further damn Harper. However, as soon as the PCs mention a possibility of Lilli being alive, Lilli's parents will thank them and ask them to leave, stubbornly insisting their daughter is dead and that Harper killed her and that's that. No amount of evidence, short of Lilli's presence, will convince them otherwise. In fact, if pressed too far or if the PCs mention a potential affair between Harper and Lilli, the Amberthauds become angry, accuse the PCs of working for the Elincourts to discredit the Amberthauds and get Harper out of prison, and kick them out. If the PCs visited the Elincourts first, the Amberthauds have already heard of the visit, further cementing their misconceptions.

Lenora Amberthaud, however, listens in on the PCs' conversation with her parents from behind a door. When Yllara and Koriandrill excuse themselves, Lenora will waylay

the PCs on their way out. She begs the PCs to find her sister. Lenora did not know about Lilli's affair with Harper, though she long suspected and suggests the PCs speak to the Elincourts if they've not already visited them. She knows the location of the witchwillow as she and her sister used to play in that area of the woods often as young girls (much to their parents' distress) and can mark it on the PCs' map. If the PCs have mentioned wanting to speak with Harper, she will present them with a letter of introduction to Captain Karlora Everrest, stating they are working for her family... though Lenora has forged her mother's signature, and she tells the PCs not to linger near the jail longer than necessary as the deception may not hold up to scrutiny for too long.

BARONESS YLLARA AMBERTHAUD

Neutral evil elf (age 212)

Yllara Amberthaud is every inch the stereotypical haughty elven noble. With blond hair that falls in ringlets, alabaster skin, and a mouth that's pressed in a nearly constant line of disapproval, she certainly makes an impression. For Yllara, the idea that her daughter could have had an affair with Harper, or that she ran off on her own, is something she cannot fathom—it's too scandalous and wounds the pride of their family too deeply.

BARON KORIANDRIL AMBERTHAUD

Neutral elf (age 130)

Koriandrill Amberthaud is wide-shouldered but otherwise lithe of figure with straight blond hair and dark eyes that are nearly black. His eyes soften, however, when he speaks of his daughter, and his resolve about Lilli's fate is not quite as solid as his wife's, but the doubts are quickly buried with a glance from Yllara or the thought that his precious daughter may not have loved them as much as he'd hoped.

LENORA AMBERTHAUD

Neutral good elf (age 18)

Lenora Amberthaud is young with pink cheeks and her father's straight blond hair. She has always held out hope that her sister was alive somewhere and is frustrated to the point of exhaustion with her parents' stubborn refusal to believe otherwise. It's obvious by the way she speaks that she and her sister were close, and she misses Lilli dearly. Forging the letter for the PCs is a new act of rebellion for her, and she seems surprised that it was so easy.

The Prison

The Reywald prison is a surprisingly small building, made of stone, with a large front room and eight small cells behind a sturdy door. Upstairs are a set of offices in the front and temporary barracks with bunks for any of the watch that

need a place to sleep between shifts. When the PCs arrive at the prison, no matter what time of day or night, there are six guards and the guard captain (**veteran**) within the building: Lucian D'or (human) at the front desk, Benn Barlin (dwarf) and Djoran Dunn (elfmarked) in the back area near the cells, Lilah Talinan (elf) and Ungol Wrathbone (bearfolk) asleep in the barracks, and Captain Karlora Everrest (elf) in her office upstairs.

The locks all require a DC 17 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check to pick.

CAPTAIN KARLORA EVERREST

Lawful good elf (age 150)

Captain Karlora is a formidable figure. Though she has the typical slender elvish build, there's something in her green eyes that tells you she brooks no nonsense. She is reluctant to discuss any aspects of the Amberthaud case with the PCs since they are strangers, but she harbors doubt at Harper's guilt while feeling pressured to keep him imprisoned due to his family's stature. On a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check, the PCs can tell she is a woman bound by duty, who is frustrated at their inability to crack the case.

If the PCs wish to speak with Harper, they must convince Captain Karlora they're worth her time. To do so, they must succeed in a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check, but there are several conditions that adjust the DC:

- If the PCs have secured a letter of introduction from the Elincourts and/or Amberthauds (through Lenora), the DC is reduced by 2 for each letter in hand.
- If the PC doing the persuading is either lawful good or an elf, the DC is lowered by 1 for each quality.
- If they appeal to Karlora's sense of right and law, the DC is reduced by 3.
- If the PCs attempt to bribe her, the DC is increased by 5.

If the PCs present the forged Amberthaud letter to the captain, she realizes it's a fake after 24 hours, and the guards will arrest the PCs on sight.

HARPER ELINCOURT

Lawful good elfmarked (age 24)

Harper Elincourt is a handsome elfmarked with his father's facial structure and his mother's fair skin, blond hair, and slightly pointed ears. He has spent his time since Lilli's disappearance in prison, and it is apparent in the circles under his eyes and his thin frame. When speaking with the PCs, his mood fluctuates from anger to despair. He insists he's innocent, rails against the Amberthauds (but speaks

OWLBEAR ENCOUNTER

The owlbears have a nest with three eggs within the cave, and they fiercely defend them. The male owlbear stays within the cave near the nest while the female prowls the area. If the PCs make it into the cave without drawing the female's attention, she returns as soon as combat begins. Both the male and the female will fight to the death.

kindly of Lenora, Lilli's sister), and wishes nothing more than to be free, so he can find his beloved—or the one who took her life.

Harper begs the PCs to find Lilli or track down the person responsible for her disappearance. He wishes he could accompany them, and he tells them everything he can: about their secret affair, about how much he wished to run away with her, about his anger at her parents for forcing her into a betrothal with someone she'd never even met. He knows the location of the witchwillow and can mark it on the PCs' map.

If the PCs inform Harper about the note in the book, he redoubles his petition and will promise them anything to help find Lilli: gold, influence, whatever he has is theirs. He paces the cell in frustration, begging the guards to release him and imploring the PCs to show the letter to Captain Karlora, convinced she'll see her error and set him free (hint: she won't).

If the PCs break Harper out of jail, he asks to accompany them. If the PCs refuse to allow him to go with them, he will claim he's finding somewhere to lay low. However, if the PCs told him about the witchwillow, he will go straight there instead; otherwise, he will find an alleyway to hide out in, too worried to go home and risk his parents but unwilling to leave the city. If he arrives at the witchwillow before the PCs, he will investigate the area and hide nearby and wait.

PART 2: THE WOODS

The woods north of the Amberthaud estate are thick and imposing. Not quite part of the Arbonesse, they are nonetheless full of strange and marvelous things. Wagon trails struggle to maintain their hold against the encroaching greenery. If the PCs know the location of the witchwillow (given to them by Harper or Lenora), the tree is relatively easy to find. If they do not have the location marked on their map, they must succeed on a DC 14 Intelligence (Survival) check to find the tree. On a fail, they lose their way and stumble across a cave with a pair of owlbears nesting, not far from the tree. The PCs find the tree after the owlbear encounter is resolved.

The witchwillow is not the tallest tree within the forest, but it is still easy to spot—it's pale trunk and widespread

branches with silver-green leaves make it stand out against the darker oak, elm, and other trees around it.

A sprawling tree stands before you with smooth, pale bark and thin silver-green leaves. The trunk of the tree is bigger around than your arms are wide, and the umbrella of branches spans nearly 60 feet from one end to the other. When the wind blows through the twisted, arching branches, it sounds as if a thousand voices whisper, sending a shiver down your spine.

When the PC carrying the disk comes within 5 feet of the witchwillow, the bark “cracks,” and a faintly glowing portal opens within the trunk. The portal is 10 feet tall and 5 feet wide. A creature can use 5 feet of movement to pass through the portal. When the creature carrying the disk passes through the portal, the portal closes at the end of the round. Stepping through the portal causes the creature to enter the pocket dimension of the witchwillow demesne.

PART 3: THE WITCHWILLOW DEMESNE

The pocket dimension within the Witchwillow is a personal demesne created by a powerful fey, Yffreyja. She lived for centuries within this beautiful slice of her own creation, entertaining guests within her breathtaking tower, dancing and dining with elves and other fey. But within the past century or so, the Shadow Realm has been pressing in, causing the demesne to decay and slip away. Her visitors stopped coming, and the creatures that dwelled here have fled with the exception of Ellilee, a violet fey drake. Yffreyja fears for her very existence, terrified of sliding into Shadow herself, and only Lilli’s shining presence—her pure heart and unconditional love for Harper—gives Yffreyja the power to keep the darkness at bay.

THE DISK

The disk hidden within the book is a key that triggers the portal in the witchwillow. If your PCs have lost it, sold it, or otherwise find themselves at the tree without it, you can force them to recover it before they can enter or, in the interest of moving the adventure forward, place Ellilee the **fey drake** (from Part 3 below, see *Creature Codex*) in the branches of the tree. She invisibly observes the PCs as they investigate the area and opens the portal for them after some initial hesitation. If Harper is with the PCs, she recognizes him from Lilli’s tales and reveals herself, treating Harper as a friend, and opens the portal immediately.

As you pass through the witchwillow, you emerge on a low, grassy hill. The sky here is an orange-pink around the ridge of the horizon as if in the midst of sunset, fading toward purple and then dark blue until directly above is a circle of night seemingly tacked in place by a shining silver full moon. Below, a sprawling hedge maze fills the hollow. Impenetrably dense, deep green, and impeccably manicured, the hedges twist and bend in a multitude of dizzying pathways. In the exact center of the hedge maze stands a tower. Thirteen stories tall, the stone spire is an impressive sight. Though it is old and crumbling, it is nonetheless awe-inspiring... perhaps made even more so by the fact that, about halfway up, one entire floor seems to be missing, the walls broken away, and you can see the pink of the sky on the other side, yet the tower somehow remains standing.

The portal in the demesne opens and closes in a matching witchwillow tree on a hilltop above the hedge maze. Ellilee waits in the branches of the tree and invisibly follows the PCs as they work their way through the maze. If any of the PCs are of elven heritage or wear any sparkly or fancy jewelry or equipment, Ellilee fixates on them in particular. She is the companion to Yffreyja, who Ellilee refers to as “Her Lady,” and is the descendent of a long line of fey drakes that have lived in the witchwillow demesne for centuries.

If Harper is with the PCs, she will reveal herself immediately and aid the party as much as she can. (She knows the answers to the puzzles, for instance, but she stays out of any combat.) If the party is composed of all good-aligned PCs, Ellilee will reveal herself to them as they arrive at the first puzzle and will aid them if they give her sweets or other baubles. Otherwise, she is content to watch them struggle, amused by their blunders (and potentially even tripping them up on purpose, like shoving them onto a trapped paver in Puzzle 1). If the PCs befriend her, she will talk cryptically of “Her Lady” in the tower and how kind she is and how Ellilee hopes the PCs can help her against the coming darkness.

The Maze

A sprawling hedge maze surrounds the broken tower, which is always visible from anywhere within the maze. With magic or some mundane trick of perspective, the tower always appears to be the same distance away, no matter where in the maze the PCs stand.

The maze itself is woven through with illusion magic. Anyone who attempts to bypass the maze finds themselves at a loss:

- If the PCs attempt to fly over the maze directly to the tower, they find that they get no closer no matter how long they travel; teleportation magic fails; any map drawn from outside the maze is no longer accurate once they enter; and so on.

- If the PCs attempt to cut through the hedges, they find they make no progress, and the attacker must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the attacker takes 1d6 slashing damage as the hedge lashes out with a thorny vine to defend itself.

There are two sections to the maze, each ending in a clearing containing a puzzle. In order to arrive at the central tower, the PCs must successfully solve both puzzles. To find their way to the first clearing, the PCs must succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Survival) check to navigate the first portion of the twisting maze. On a failure, they spend 2 hours wandering through the labyrinth until they finally come to the clearing.

PUZZLE 1: ALONG THE TWISTING WAY

The clearing at the end of the first segment is 35 feet by 35 feet and paved with square marble flagstones in a variety of colors: black, white, green, red, orange, blue, and pink pavers create a dizzying spiral pattern. In the center of the clearing is a stone archway that shimmers with arcane energy.

Only the pink stones are safe to walk upon. If the PCs step on any other color paver (including if they walk toward the archway without specifying what paver they're stepping on), they take 1d4 damage of a type according to the paver's color: necrotic (black), radiant (white), force (green), fire (red), acid (orange), and cold (blue).

Once they reach the center archway, they simply step through and appear in the interior section of the maze. The tower appears larger here, though the same restrictions on travel are in place as before. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Survival) check is necessary to navigate to the next puzzle, or they spend 4 hours wandering before finding their way to the next clearing.

PUZZLE 2: A FOE OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING

The second clearing is larger than the first—the hedges here open to a 50-foot-square clearing. Soft green grass covers the ground. Again, a stone archway stands in the center, though this one lacks the shimmering arcane energy.

In front of the archway, a stone statue of a woman kneels with her head bowed in supplication, and her hands cupped before her. Four marble plinths surround her, two on each side. On each plinth is a delicate stand made of silver filagree, and in each stand is a different gemstone: a blue sapphire, a yellow diamond, a red corundum, and a brilliant green emerald. They are modified *elemental gems*.

To activate the archway, the PCs must choose a gem and place it in the outstretched hands of the statue. The statue then closes her hands around the gemstone, stands, and changes into an elemental according to the gemstone chosen: **Air elemental** (blue sapphire), **earth elemental** (yellow diamond), **fire elemental** (red corundum), or **water elemental** (emerald). The elemental immediately attacks the party. Once the elemental is defeated, the other gemstones vanish, and the archway activates. Stepping through the archway takes the PCs to the base of the broken tower.

The Broken Tower

Thirteen stories tall, the tower is a marvel of engineering and fey magic. Lilli Amberthaude resides in the topmost chamber with Yffreyja, which can only be reached by ascending the tower room by room.

A winding pathway leads up a small hillock to the doorway of the tower. A heavy, solid wooden door bound with brass, the entryway to the tower has no handle, only a knocker in the center. If the PCs knock, the door swings open soundlessly.

LEVEL 1: FOYER/ENTRY HALL

The front door of the tower opens into a foyer roughly 20 feet wide. Some empty coat racks and a dusty side table are the only items here. On the far side of the foyer are two wooden double doors that open into the entry hall. A staircase rises up ahead of them before stopping at a landing and splitting to rise to the left and the right to Level 2. A crumbling statue stands in an alcove on the landing: a statue of Yffreyja with Ellilee on her shoulder. Time has worn away much of the fey woman's features, and the tips of her long ears have broken away, which can be found in the rubble near the base of the statue with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

LEVEL 2: SITTING ROOM

The sitting room's stone floor is covered with numerous throw rugs. The rugs look as if they were once plush and beautiful, but they are now threadbare and dusty. Several groupings of decrepit couches and chairs sit against the far wall, arranged for quiet conversation. A spiral staircase in the center of the room leads up to Level 3.

LEVEL 3: GUEST ROOMS

The staircase also opens into a small foyer with a tapestry on the far wall. The tapestry depicts a hunt of some sort with twelve figures upon horses in a forest glen. Upon closer inspection, the horses have the heads, front legs, and wings of an eagle. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check or Intelligence (Arcana) check allows the PCs to recognize them as hippogriffs. The figures upon the hippogriffs are graceful and crowned with flowers and greenery and with pointed ears longer than any elf's the PCs have seen.

There are two doors in this foyer, one to the left and one to the right. They both open into small bedrooms with queen-sized four-posters, but the linens are moth eaten and the mattress musty.

The spiral staircase in the center continues up to Level 4.

LEVEL 4: ENCHANTING PARLOR

The staircase opens into another foyer, again with wooden doors to the left and the right. Both open into small rooms with their far walls crumbling and broken away, revealing

a third room at the back of the level. Here, a tall worktable stands against the far wall, made of heavy wood, and a chunk of the wall is missing completely as if it had been scooped away with a giant spoon. Upon inspection, the PCs see the stone is not shattered, but instead seems almost cut. Scattered on the floor and worktable are shards of glass, the broken remains of bottles and phials, as well as dried and moldering herbs, mushrooms, flowers, and mosses.

This was Yffreyja's first realization that something was amiss in her realm: she was crafting a potion when things went inexplicably wrong, and the potion she was creating exploded in her hands, evaporating a portion of the wall.

The spiral staircase continues up to Level 5.

LEVEL 5: DESTROYED ROOMS

This level is... mostly missing. The exterior wall stands only a foot and a half tall, and the rest of it is open to the elements. A large portion of the floor on the southeast side has fallen into the room below, and there are holes in the ceiling to the room above. Most of a large bed lies under the hole, shattered from the fall from above, as well as a broken dresser and chair. A *rope of climbing* lies coiled beneath the largest hole in the ceiling. There is no staircase or other obvious means of accessing Level 6.

Any character who weighs more than 150 pounds must make a DC 14 Dexterity check within this room when they move faster than half speed. On a fail, the floor collapses out from beneath them, and they fall through to the room below, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

The *rope of climbing* leads up into Level 6.

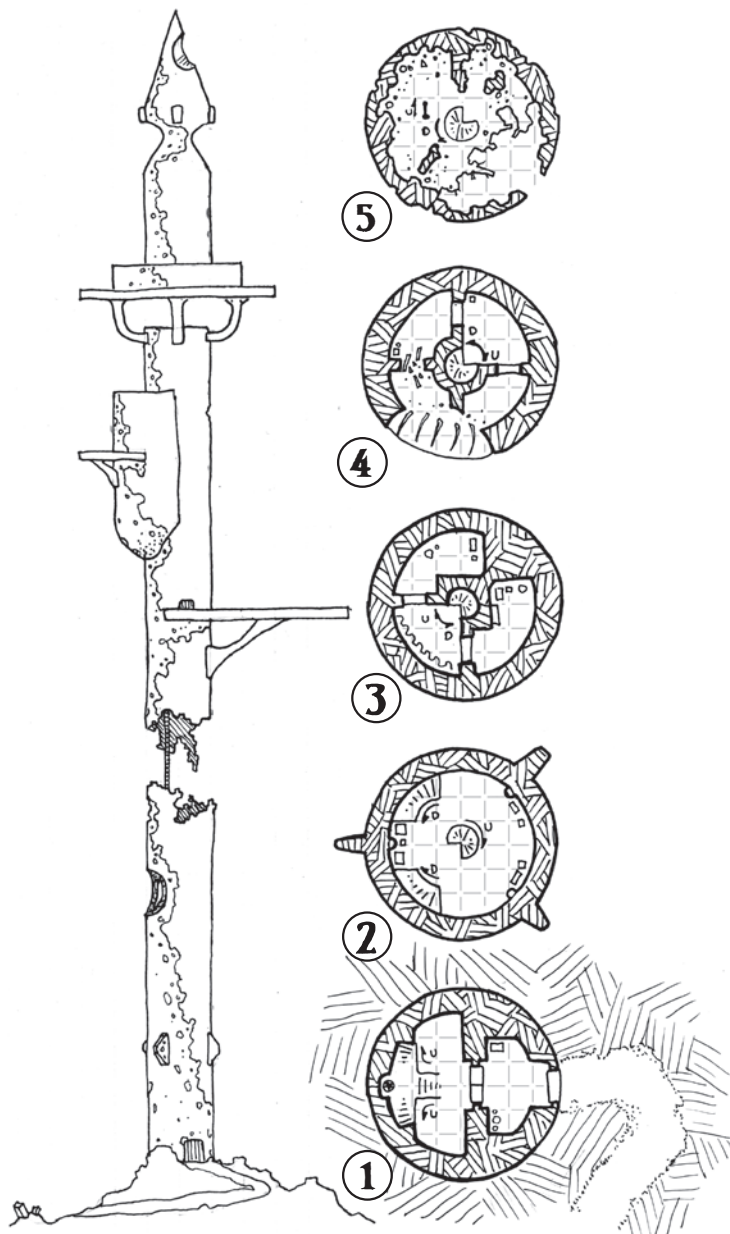
LEVEL 6: GUEST ROOM

The floor here opens into the space between two rooms, what was once a bedroom and a sitting room. Most of the furniture lies broken in the room below. A door in the upper room leads into a foyer with a thick, colorful rug of smothering at the base of the stairs and several bookshelves against the right-hand wall. The bookshelves hold moldering storybooks, written in Sylvan. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check allows the PCs to realize the rug is not threadbare like the others in the tower but appears to be in pristine condition. When the PCs touch the **rug of smothering**, it animates and attacks.

The staircase leads up to Level 7.

LEVEL 7: CORRUPTED GARDEN

The staircase from Level 6 opens into a large, round room with four stone columns positioned at each of the cardinal directions. To the right, a wooden door opens onto a sprawling stone balcony filled with terraced planters, potted trees, and other greenery. Flowers of all shapes



and colors bloom beneath the twilight sky, and the air is filled with a sweet, entrancing scent. The plants seem wild and untended. On the far side of the balcony, a veritable waterfall of glowing blue fungus sprouts from the low wall. This used to be a lush and well-manicured garden, but the press of the Shadow Realm caused it to shift and change—a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) check allows the PCs to recognize that each and every plant and fungus on this terrace is either highly poisonous or carnivorous (though they're only a danger to bugs or other small creatures).

A **bloom hydra** (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) has taken up residence in the garden, hiding in the shadows among the untended planters. It lies in wait until a creature comes within reach. It will not enter the tower though, so it will

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

not give chase to fleeing creatures. However, it will climb the outside of the tower to continue harrying creatures venturing out onto the open terraces of Levels 9 and 11 and even attack into the broken space of Level 5.

Another stairway continues up to Level 8.

LEVEL 8: STORAGE ROOMS/TREASURY

The layout of this floor is complicated: the two circles are inaccessible from one another. The upper circle is accessible via the staircase up from Level 7 and down from Level 9. From this vantage point, there seems to be nothing on this level except the enclosed staircase. A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a secret door just at the top of the staircase from Level 7. To open the door, the PCs must press a stone in the wall beside it, tripping the mechanism. Inside are several chests along with two sets of animated armor, one in each corner, that attack when the first PC enters the room. The treasure within the room consists of 485 gp, 1,204 sp, 3,348 cp, three bags of gems worth 50 gp each, a vial of *dust of disappearance*, a set of *pipes of haunting*, and an *efficient quiver*.

To access the lower crescent room, it is necessary to go up to Level 9 and then down the ladder into the storage rooms there. Within these rooms are boxes filled with supplies: dry goods for cooking, bolts of cloth, bottles of wine, tins of tea and coffee and sugar, and other various sundries. Some of the crates have been opened, others are still tightly sealed, though they're all covered in a thick layer of dust.

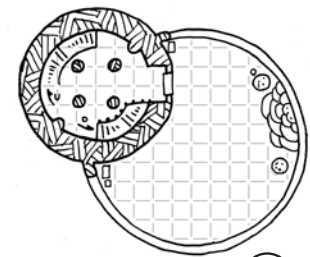
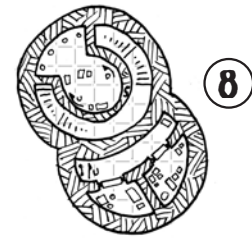
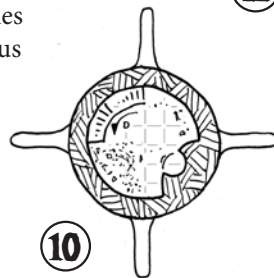
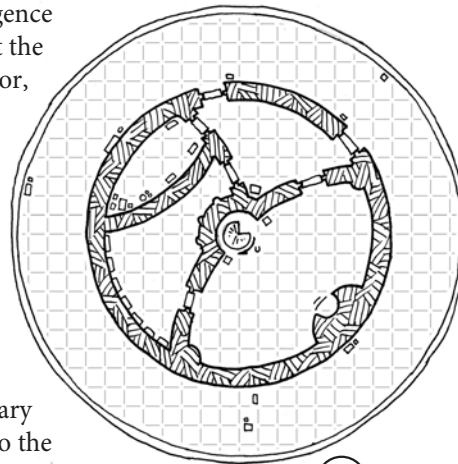
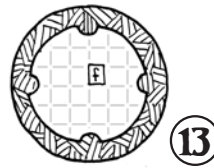
LEVEL 9: RECEIVING HALL

Yffreyja loved hosting lavish parties, and this receiving hall was where the guests would arrive, enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres, and await the invitation to the ballroom two floors above. Once-brilliant cloth-of-gold curtains hang on either side of a door to the balcony: one curtain hides a narrow door that opens to the ladder down to the storage rooms on Level 8, the other hides shelving filled with wine glasses and china.

The staircase leads up to Level 10.

LEVEL 10: WAITING ROOM

The staircase opens into a round room with no obvious exits. The room is empty, save for an ornate but threadbare carpet on the stone floor. A low, empty dais rises in a nook on the other side of the room. Within the nook is a teleportation circle: a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check or DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check allows the PC to



notice arcane symbols etched in the stone of the dais. When a PC steps onto the dais, they disappear from the room and reappear in the matching dais on Level 11. (If a creature steps onto the dais while a creature is on the dais in Level 11, the creature from Level 10 is teleported and then both creatures are knocked 5 feet off the dais into an unoccupied space and take 1d6 force damage.)

LEVEL 11: BALLROOM/LIBRARY/ANTEROOM

A creature teleporting from Level 10 arrives on the dais in the ballroom in Level 11. The floor here is of polished white marble with golden veins (again under a layer of dust), and a glittering gold-and-crystal chandelier hangs dark above the room. The door to the right opens to an empty room with

doors that open onto the balcony; the door to the left opens to an empty room with mirrors lining the outer wall. The wide balcony wraps the entirety of the tower and provides a stunning view of the maze and the wilds beyond. From this angle, the PCs can see a strange, undulating darkness just on the edge of the horizon, encircling the entire demesne.

A circular staircase in the center rises up to Level 12.

LEVEL 12: NOOKS

This floor is small, and each wall holds a nook with a curtain hanging behind a bench large enough for two people. One can easily imagine couples canoodling in these nooks over glasses of wine.

The circular staircase continues up to Level 13.

LEVEL 13: THE LIBRARY (LILLI AND THE FADING FEY)

A trapdoor opens to the top level of the tower: a gorgeous, well-appointed library. Ancient yet well-cared-for tomes line the floor-to-ceiling shelves. A fireplace 6 feet tall sits on the opposite side of the room with a fire crackling within. Two wingback chairs of purple brocade sit angled slightly toward each other with a mahogany end table between them and their backs to the fire. A tea set sits on the end table with two cups plus a number of cups equal to the number of members in the party. It is the only room in the tower not covered in dust and decay. In one chair sits Lilli Amberthaud, and in the other sits Yffreyja.

A tall, slender woman, Yffreyja has an otherworldly look to her. Her cheekbones are high and sharp, and her eyes are a pale violet. Her golden hair is twisted up in an elaborate braid, and a diadem adorns her brow. Her long ears sweep up and back, almost touching at the back of her head, and delicate jeweled earrings dangle from the lobes. She wears a deep-green gown with pointed sleeves and embroidery that echoes the twisting and winding of vines and branches.

YFFREYJA, THE SHINING SWALLOWTAIL

Neutral fey (age 423)

Yffreyja is expecting the PCs—this is her demesne after all. She welcomes them to her home and is kind, though she is occasionally forgetful and mercurial as her concentration slips, and the PCs see her personality fraying around the edges. So much of her concentration is used to maintain the integrity of her demesne that she sometimes misses parts of the conversation.

Yffreyja is desperate to keep Lilli with her, though she won't go so far as to hold the woman against her will. She attempts to convince Lilli to remain or suggest the adventurers should return to the jail and slaughter everyone in order to free Harper as she has no qualms about breaking mortal laws.

Yffreyja cannot leave her demesne as she's put so much of herself into maintaining her hold against the darkness that she would quickly fade and perish outside of its boundaries.

LILLI AMBERTHAUD

Neutral good elf (age 21)

Lilli Amberthaud is a young elf with a mass of curly blond hair, bright blue eyes, and a sparkling smile. She wears a gown of yellow and white and a pendant shaped like a lily of the valley set with seed pearls.

Lilli met Yffreyja while wandering the forest at the edge of her estate. Distraught over her parents' decision to betroth her to another against her will, Lilli sat beneath the witchwillow and sobbed. Ellilee sat in the branches above her and watched curiously, and once Lilli had gone, Ellilee entered the witchwillow and relayed what it had seen to Yffreyja. Sensing some purity in Lilli's grief, Yffreyja had Ellilee extend an invitation to Lilli the next time the young elven woman visited the witchwillow. Lilli was hesitant at first but was desperate enough to cling to any hope, and she visited Yffreyja within her demesne. Enthralled by Yffreyja's beauty and bearing, Lilli poured her heart out to the fey over tea, and after several visits, the two became friends. When Yffreyja offered her the opportunity to escape to the witchwillow demesne with Harper, she took the chance happily.

When the PCs arrive, Lilli does not know what happened to Harper and thinks he must have forsaken her. If she is told what really happened, she wishes to return to her love, but she knows that if she leaves the witchwillow Yffreyja's power will fade quickly. If Harper is with the PCs, the two lovers have a tearful reunion.

CONCLUSION

There are several ways the adventure can end, depending on the choices the PCs have made.

If the PCs Freed Harper

If the PCs broke Harper out of jail and allowed him to accompany him, there's not much more they are required to do in the witchwillow demesne. Harper and Lilli remain in the tower with Yffreyja, and the three are happy in their shared realm. Over time, the tower regains some of its former glory. Yffreyja allows the party to keep one of the disks and says they are more than welcome within her demesne whenever they wish.

If the PCs broke Harper out of jail but left him in Reywald, they must return to the city to track him down. Finding him is easy enough: he lingers near the jail (perhaps foolishly) and approaches the party when he sees them return. However, the guard will arrest the PCs on sight for the crime of breaking Harper out of prison, and they're on high alert, especially if any guards were killed during the jailbreak.

If Lilli Leaves the Witchwillow Demesne

Unless the PCs convince her otherwise, Lilli leaves the demesne and returns to exonerate Harper. Unless Lilli returns to the witchwillow demesne in 3 days, Yffreyja's control slips over the threshold irredeemably toward the Shadow. If the PCs return to the demesne after a week, they find the land plunged into darkness, the hedge maze dead, and the top half of the tower lying broken in the bushes below. Yffreyja is nowhere to be found. If they return to the witchwillow after a month, the disks no longer open the portal within the trunk, and the demesne is inaccessible. Ellilee is found hiding in the branches of the tree and weeps for the loss of her lady. She is unable to divulge any details other than visions of the shadows swarming in.

The Amberthauds are thankful to the PCs for returning their daughter and grant them a reward of 100 gp per person (a rather paltry sum for such a wealthy family). They insist that Lilli return home and marry her betrothed as arranged and place her under guard day and night.

The Elincourts are likewise grateful and pay the PCs whatever was agreed upon if they spoke previously. Harper is freed and weeps when he sees Lilli again. He is heartbroken at the prospect of her marrying another, but it is nothing compared to when he thought she was dead, so he is resigned to let her go.

If Lilli Remains in the Witchwillow Demesne

The PCs can convince Lilli to stay with Yffreyja by promising to bring Harper to her. The PCs can attempt a jail break or may try to convince Captain Karlora or the Amberthauds that Lilli is alive and well with no desire to return to them. If the PCs mention returning to her parents or the guard, Lilli will give them her necklace as proof that she yet lives.

The PCs can present the necklace to Captain Karlora or to the Amberthauds... the Amberthauds attempt to shift the blame to the PCs, accusing them of being part of the plot and taking the necklace from her body, but Captain Karlora has grown tired of their excuses and takes the opportunity to release Harper, and she asks Harper and the PCs to wish Lilli well. Harper returns to the witchwillow with or without the PCs and joins Lilli in the tower. If the PCs return with him, Yffreyja will offer one of the disks to the PCs to keep. If the PCs return to the demesne in the future, they find the tower in better shape, filled with unseen servants cleaning and repairing the building. Music fills the halls. The sky, though still twilight, seems just a bit brighter.

If the PCs convince Lilli to stay within the demesne and do not return with Harper in a week, Lilli leaves the demesne herself to find her love, sealing Yffreyja's fate.

APPENDIX

All of the new game elements in this adventure are presented here.

Bloom Hydra

Found in the deepest of forests, bloom hydras (see *Tome of Beasts 2*) are highly effective predators.

BLOOM HYDRA

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +1

Skills Acrobatics +5, Perception +5, Stealth +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, fire, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Azalea Nectar. A creature that hits the hydra with a melee weapon attack while within 5 feet of it takes 3 (1d6) poison damage. This trait functions only if the hydra has at least 1 azalea vine.

Daisy Regeneration. The hydra regains 5 hp at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hp and at least 1 daisy vine.

Flowered Vines. The bloom hydra has four vines, and each vine has a single flower at its tip. These flowers are azalea, dahlia, daisy, and marigold. Whenever the hydra takes 15 or more damage in a single turn, one of its vines dies. If all its vines die, the hydra dies.

At the end of its turn, it grows two vines for each of its vines that died since its last turn, unless it has taken acid damage since its last turn. Each new vine sprouts a single flower at its tip, chosen at random from the flowers above. When a new vine grows, it has a 25 percent chance of sprouting a hydra lily instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bloom hydra makes as many vine lash attacks as it has flowered vines. If it hits a Medium or smaller target with two vine lash attacks, the target is

grappled (escape DC 14), and the hydra can't grapple another target. The hydra can use its Marigold Beam in place of one vine lash attack.

Vine Lash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Marigold Beam. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) fire damage. The bloom hydra can use this action only if it has at least 1 marigold vine.

Flower of Death (Recharge 5–6). The bloom hydra releases a cloud of death-infused pollen. Each creature within 15 feet of the bloom hydra must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The bloom hydra can use this action only if it has at least 1 hydra lily vine.

REACTIONS

Strength of the Dahlia. The bloom hydra adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the hydra must see the attacker and have at least 1 dahlia vine.

Fey Drake

Though capricious by nature, fey drakes (see *Creature Codex*) still make skilled servants for powerful patrons.

FEY DRAKE

Small dragon, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 82 (15d6 + 30)

Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +5, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +7, Perception +6, Stealth +8

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic, Sylvan, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Magic Resistance. The fey drake has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Superior Invisibility. As a bonus action, the fey drake can magically turn invisible until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the drake wears or carries is invisible with it.

Innate Spellcasting. The fey drake's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The fey drake

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

At will: charm person, color spray, grease

3/day each: hypnotic pattern, locate creature, suggestion

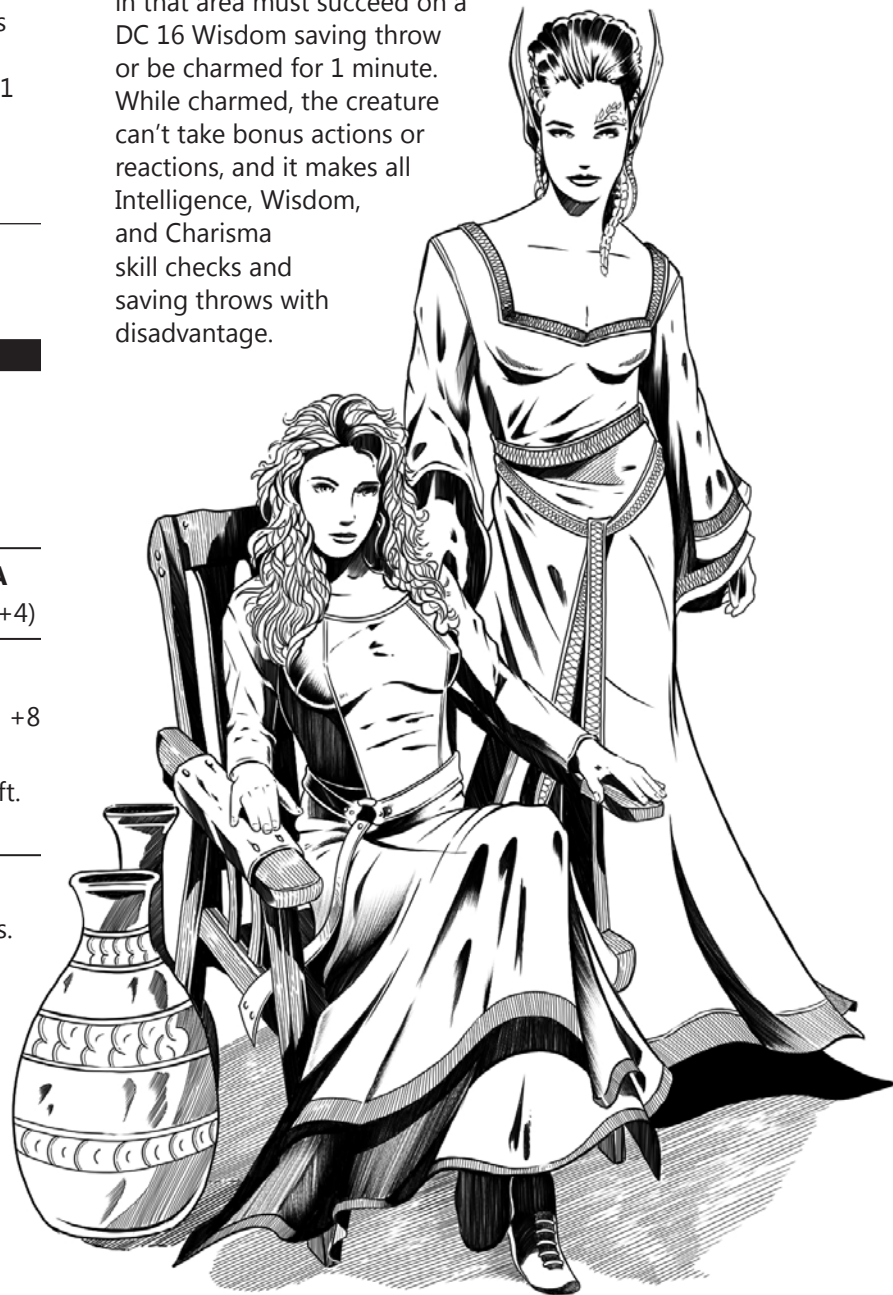
1/day each: dominate person, polymorph

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fey drake makes three bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour.

Bewildering Breath (Recharge 5–6). The drake breathes a plume of purple gas in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 minute. While charmed, the creature can't take bonus actions or reactions, and it makes all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma skill checks and saving throws with disadvantage.



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