

Shadows on the Long Road

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INTRODUCTION

Shadows on the Long Road is an adventure intended to be played in a single session. Although it is set on the Long Road, it can be moved to any other setting with a small amount of work. The combat sessions have been designed to present a tough challenge to four 3rd level characters. It will present a less difficult, though still enjoyable, challenge to 4th level characters.

This adventure assumes you have access to the *Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition Basic Rules*, which are available for free download. However, it is recommended that you also purchase the *Player's Handbook* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

This adventure is designed to be run with minimal preparation. Before running the session, you should skim through the contents of this document and also ensure you are familiar with the following creatures –

- Animated Armor
- Ghoul
- Hell Hound
- Ogre
- Shadow
- Thug

Detailed descriptions for these creatures can be found in the *Monster Manual*. If you don't own the MM, you can find basic stats in the *D&D 5th Edition Basic Rules* and *SRD online*. The statistics for new monsters may be found at the end of this document.

It would also be helpful if you were familiar with the *grappling* rules, and understood the *Warlock* class.

Not every loose end is tied up in the following text, nor every possible reaction accounted for. Be ready to improvise, and do so with confidence!

In the following sections, the boxed text should be read aloud to the players. Unless stated otherwise, assume all NPCs have the stats of a **commoner**.

CARAVAN DUTY

Read the following aloud –

It's been some time since your last adventure - trouble and treasure have both been unusually scarce.

But then you heard a rumor in Triboar. It seems that people have been disappearing on the Long Road, on the hundred-mile stretch between there and Longsaddle. A large number of people now, all gone without a trace.

You joined a grain caravan heading north to investigate. The trip to Longsaddle was quiet, with nothing to show for it but sore feet.

Now your party is heading back south on your own. The journey started well, but then the weather changed. A cold gusty wind has come up along with a thick, wet fog. It seems to have gotten dark early too.

Someone – you can't remember who - suggested you push on. It was a bad idea, as the road has disappeared and the ground has turned into a smelly, shallow marsh. You are wet and cold, you have no idea where you are, and you can only see about five feet in front of you.

Just as you have resigned yourself to a miserable night squatting in the swamp – there, off in the distance! A warm light!

The party do not yet realize it, but they have been lured onto a small *demi-plane* by a subtle charm. The *demi-plane* is only a few miles across and turns back on itself at the ends. If

the party walk away from the light, they will find themselves approaching it again after an hour or two.

The demi-plane is always dark, and the ground is a cold, smelly marsh, broken only by clumps of rock and twisted, dying trees. There is thick mist everywhere, thinning a little near the light.

A number of **ghouls** roam the swamp. If the party wander around, they will encounter one every hour or so. They will hear splashing sounds for a few moments, and then the ghoul will leap at them from the mist, attacking viciously.



The Light

If the party approach the light, read the following –

You come to a wall of dilapidated stone, covered with decaying thorn. There is a wrought iron gate in the wall with a cheerless lantern hanging from the frame. The gate appears to be unlocked. Some distance beyond you can see an old manor house, with dull yellow light flickering in the windows.

The house is about 150' away from the gate. When the party get to within 75', they hear a sudden growl and are attacked by a **hell hound**. If they examine the body of the

creature after they dispatch it, they will notice it is wearing a collar.

GUESTS FOR DINNER

If they approach the house, read this –

The manor house is shrouded in mist and is difficult to make out fully. It is large but not enormous, and has an upper story. The gray brickwork is fractured and ancient, and a number of the facing windows are cracked and broken. A short gravel path leads through the swampy ground up to a heavy, wooden door.



Meeting Grundy

As the party approach, they hear the scrape of a lock and key, and then the door opens inward with a creak.

They are greeted by a gnome dressed in fine but rather old fashioned clothes. He will introduce himself as **Grundy**, the steward of **Saltmarsh Manor**. His master, **Lord Gideon Saltmarsh**, invites them to share a hot dinner after their weary journey.

Grundy will usher them through the Great Hall into the Dining Room at **location #1**. If they wish to stop and examine the Great Hall, read the following –

This large hall is impressively decorated, though it is also rather dirty. Paneled walls rise to meet a tall, vaulted ceiling with a number of lofty recessed windows. A great hearth dominates one end of the room, while the remaining walls are decorated with tapestries, portraits of varying sizes, mounted trophies, armor and weapons.

Off Script

This chapter assumes that the players follow Grundy to the Dining Room to meet Gideon, and later head up to the Guest Chambers.

It is possible the players will ditch Grundy and explore the manor on their own. They might also have snuck in through the back door at **location #16**. If this happens, go to the chapter titled “Saltmarsh Manor” below, and treat the adventure as a normal dungeon crawl. Assume that Gideon returns to his study at **location #14**, and Grundy returns to his room at **location #10**.

Meeting Gideon

If the party follow Grundy, he takes them into the Dining Room –

This room speaks of comfort and opulence. The interior walls are plastered with a light stucco, carved in a most elaborate and magnificent fashion. Atop the clean flagstones lies a richly decorated rug, closely and beautifully woven. The center of the room is dominated by a long dining table, made of dark polished wood and set with gleaming silverware.

The room is well lit by a roaring fire in the hearth at the northern end, and a row of blazing candelabra suspended from the ceiling. A rich feast is laid out.

Sitting at the head of the table is **Lord Gideon Saltmarsh**, master of the house. He is a pale skinned human, very slender, with a bald head and a gray beard. He will welcome the party and insist they begin eating before the food gets cold.

The Feast

The meal includes such delights as cod liver pastries, beef marrow fritters, salt water fish, eel puree, bacon broth and roast beef. Grundy

is standing by to top up the character’s cups with fine wine and ale.

However, all is not as it seems. The feast is an illusion conjured by Gideon. The party are actually eating oatcakes and drinking water. It is perfectly harmless and quite filling, but not the banquet they imagine.

A **DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **Intelligence (Arcana)** check will enable a character to see through the illusion.



Gideon Talks

While they are eating, Gideon will ask his guests polite questions about their home, their family and their vocation. He does not seem especially interested in the responses.

If questioned about himself, he will share this information –

- his family has owned the house and estate for many generations
- he lives here with a number of servants
- he was married long ago, but his wife died giving birth to their first child, a daughter, who also died
- he spends his days reading and attending to the estate
- he receives a number of visitors, mostly lost travelers whom he is happy to help

If asked about the hell hound in his yard, he will note that there are “wild dogs” roaming the swamp.

The Wrestling Match

After dinner, Gideon will compliment one of the PCs on their physique and ask if they enjoy wrestling. He has a manservant named **Magnus** who is an excellent wrestler, and he suggests they “try a fall or two”.

If the PC agrees, Gideon will summon Magnus, who is actually a 6½ foot tall **minor flesh golem** (see “Monster Stats”). Magnus does not talk, and his face is a horrible mess of scars. Gideon will ask the party to ignore his appearance - “the result of a terrible childhood accident”. In reality, Magnus was a gift from Gideon’s dark patron.

The wrestling match takes place on a rug at the foot of the dining table. As per tradition, the wrestlers should strip down to loincloths. Use the *grappling* rules to conduct the match. The match is over when one of the contestants is *pinned* – that is, they are *grappled* for a full round without escaping. If everyone enjoys the match, Gideon will propose further matches.

Gideon will also suggest they gamble, and will stake up to 50gp per match.

Attacking Gideon

The party may choose to attack Gideon in the Dining Room. If so, he will *dodge* while screaming for help. If **Magnus** is not already in the room, he will appear after two rounds and charge into battle. Two rounds after that, the **four thugs** from **location #7** will join the battle. At that point Gideon, if he is still alive, will go on the offensive, favoring *scorching ray* and *eldritch blast*.

Gideon’s statistics may be found in the chapter titled “Monster Stats”.

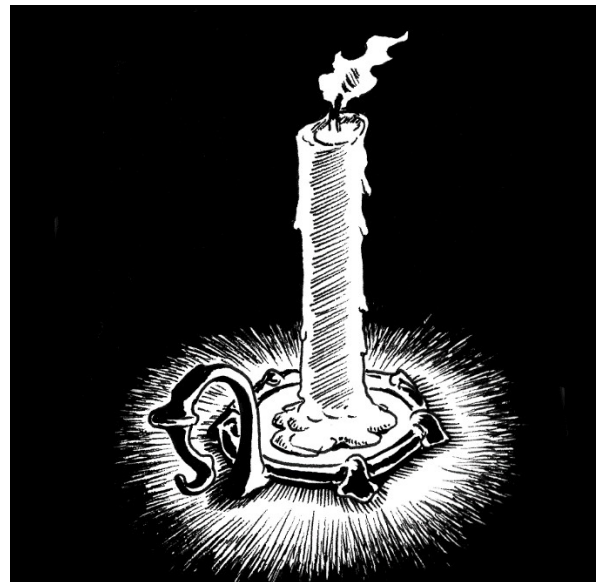
Time for Bed

Gideon will thank the party for their company, and suggest that it is time they all retired. Grundy will show them to their rooms at **location #2** –

The chamber is small, though comfortable and well furnished. The walls are paneled with oak, matching the polished floorboards. A fire burns in the hearth at one end of the room, with two beds opposite and a small table between them.

A basin of steaming water and a pair of towels sit atop the small table in each room. Grundy then bows and leaves, promising to fetch them for breakfast.

The players may choose to explore the mansion at this time – if so, go to “Saltmarsh Manor”. If they decide to stay in their rooms, go to “Visitors in the Night”, below.



Visitors in the Night

About 3 hours after leaving the characters, Grundy will return (carrying a candle) with the **four thugs** from **location #7**. The thugs are not especially quiet, so if the party have a set a

watch they will hear the sound of heavy feet on the stairs.

The plan is crude, but has been effective in the past. The thugs will attempt to *grapple* the characters while they sleep, one thug per person. Grundy will then bind the restrained PCs hands (it takes one round per character for him to do this).

If this plan fails and the characters arm themselves, the thugs will draw their weapons and a normal melee will ensue. In combat, the thugs will choose to knock the PCs unconscious rather than kill them. Once combat starts, Grundy will attempt to flee back to his room at **location #10**.

Catching Grundy

If the party defeat the thugs and they may be able to catch Grundy. If they interrogate him, refer to the section called “Grundy’s Tale” in **location #10**.

Catching the Party

If the thugs manage to bind the PCs or defeat them in battle, the party will be knocked out, stripped naked, and taken to the Pen (**location #18**). Their equipment and treasure will be stored in the Cellar (**location #17**).

SALTMARSH MANOR

At some point the players will explore (and clear) the manor. This will most likely happen after the party deal with the thugs who attack them in the Guest Chambers, but could also happen at other points (if the party were to sneak in via the back door, for example). Maps for the manor can be found on the final page of this document. The squares are 5’.

Features

The ceilings of the manor are 10’ tall, except for the Great Hall and Chapel, which are 15’. The ground floor and basement are paved with

flagstones, while the upper story has a wooden floor. The interior walls are made of brick, but this has been covered with paneling or plaster in many of the rooms (this will be mentioned in the room descriptions).

Light

The house is always quite dark and shadowy because there is no daytime in the demi-plane. There are, however, fires in most rooms and also numerous candles in standing holders. Grundy extinguishes the candles after he goes to bed, and then relights them when he awakes about 6 hours later. The fires will burn down 3-4 hours after Grundy retires.

Resting

The creatures in the manor will stay in their own rooms, even if they hear a commotion from other parts of the house. Some are too timid to move, some are unable to move, and others will be preparing their position for an assault.

This means that the party can easily take a short rest when they need to. At your discretion, you may even permit them to take a long rest. If you feel they are resting too much, however, send the **thugs** from **location #7** out to look for the party.

1. DINING ROOM

This room speaks of comfort and opulence. The interior walls are plastered with a light stucco, carved in a most elaborate and magnificent fashion. Atop the clean flagstones lies a richly decorated rug, closely and beautifully woven. The center of the room is dominated by a long dining table, made of dark polished wood and set with gleaming silverware.

There is no-one left in this room after dinner - it is a much darker room then, with all of the candles extinguished and the fire burning low.

Treasure. The silverware (which is promptly cleaned and reset after dinner) is worth **100gp**. It is too bulky for the PCs to carry around, however.

2. GUEST CHAMBERS

The three guest chambers are all identical.

The chamber is small, though comfortable and well furnished. The walls are paneled with oak, matching the polished floorboards. A fire burns in the hearth at one end of the room, with two beds opposite and a small table between them.

Treasure. There is nothing of value in these rooms.

3. GREAT HALL

This large hall is impressively decorated, though it is also rather dirty. Paneled walls rise to meet a tall, vaulted ceiling with a number of lofty recessed windows. A great hearth dominates one end of the room, while the remaining walls are decorated with tapestries, portraits of varying sizes, mounted trophies, armor and weapons.

One picture in particular captures your attention. It is of a young and graceful looking woman in a wedding gown, wearing a golden necklace. Her expression is sorrowful.

Two animated armor suits stand near the door on the long wall. They will immediately attack the party unless they are accompanied by Grundy or Gideon.

The woman in the picture was Gideon's wife, Lynessa. If the characters examine some of the

smaller pictures, they will notice that many have grisly and macabre themes.

Treasure. The ornaments on the wall could be of interest to someone decorating a large house. Together they would fetch perhaps **100gp**, but would be very bulky to transport.

4. CHAPEL

Unpolished bricks line the walls of this long and tall room. A row of hard benches leads up to a raised dais, atop which sits a wooden altar and a closed, black book. There is no fireplace in the room, no candles, and the windows are all boarded shut - the atmosphere is dark and oppressive.

The book is the only item of interest in this room. If the characters look closer, they will see that the cover is made of vellum, and there is a clasp with a small lock on it. If anyone touches the book, the cover will fly open and **three shadows** will emerge and attack the party.

If they examine the book after defeating the shadows, they will notice that the pages are now all blank.

Treasure. Beneath the book they will find an eldritch symbol made of platinum and embedded into the altar. It is not magical, but can easily be levered out and is worth **100gp**.



5. KITCHEN

This good sized room is clearly a kitchen. A large oven occupies one corner, while two cauldrons sit over an open fireplace in the other. Two long benches cross the middle of the room. Another corner has several open water barrels, alongside a large bag of grain.

Magnus the **minor flesh golem** is here, and never leaves unless summoned by Gideon. If the party enter the kitchen without Grundy or Gideon, Magnus will attack.

During dinner, 2-3 human and gnome servants from **location #9** will also be here, preparing the food (oat cakes and porridge). After dinner they will return to their room.

Treasure. There is nothing of value in the kitchen.

6. PANTRY

Empty wooden shelves line this small room. Piled at one end are numerous bags of grain alongside several unopened barrels. Against the far wall is a set of wooden stairs, leading down.

The bags of grain contain only oats (Gideon is an ascetic). Most of the barrels contain water (drawn from an outside well), though a few contain beer. The stairs lead down to the basement level.

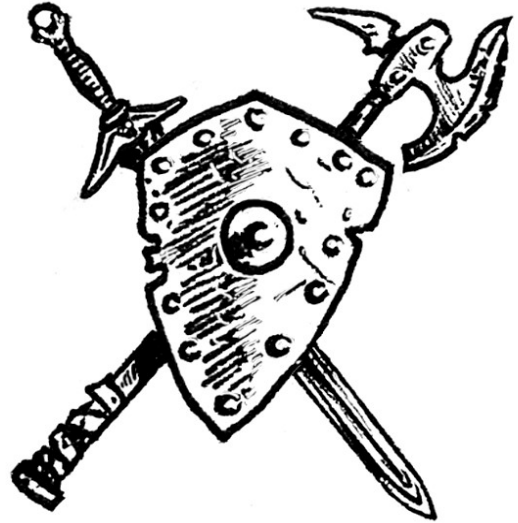
7. GUARD ROOM

This sparse room consists of several humble beds, a crude wooden bench and table, and a number of scattered weapons.

Four half-orc thugs reside here. If they have not already been killed, and if they have heard fighting in other parts of the manor, they will

have created a simple barricade for themselves out of their table and bench. They will fight with half cover against anyone who attacks across the barricade.

Treasure. If the PCs defeat the thugs and search their bodies, they will find **120sp**.



The Thugs Tale

Captured thugs will share the following. They were lured here by Grundy many months ago with promises of generous pay. Now they are trapped – afraid to wander the mists because of the hell hound and the ghouls.

Their main job is to help capture lost travelers, who are taken to a prison in the basement. They don't know what happens after that, but imagine it is unpleasant.

They have noted that they are taking many more prisoners in recent months. They don't know why.

8. SPARE ROOM

This room is covered in dust and cobwebs, and reeks terribly. It is bare except for a modest bed in the corner. There is a still figure beneath the covers.

The thugs somehow managed to capture a **ghoul** and have chained it to the wall in order to torment the servants. The chain is just 5' long so it's possible to stay out of the creature's reach by sliding along the far wall. If anyone approaches the bed, the ghoull will throw off the covers and attack when they get close.

Treasure. Beneath the bed is a silver bracelet, worth **30gp**.



9. SERVANT ROOMS

This tidy room has whitewashed brick walls and a clean stone floor. Several small beds line one side, and there is a small table and basin sitting opposite them.

Both rooms are virtually identical. If fighting has broken out in the manor, the servants will be huddling together in the far room. There are six servants in total – four gnomes and two humans. They are responsible for cooking and cleaning. They will be very frightened of the PCs, and will co-operate in any way that doesn't put them in immediate danger.

Treasure. There is nothing of value here.

The Servants Tale

The servants were lured here with promises of generous pay, and then found themselves trapped. They know that Gideon does something evil with the travelers who stay, but they don't know what. They have been strictly forbidden from going down into the basement.

It is rumored amongst the servants that Gideon's wife died by suicide, and that her ghost haunts the manor.

10. STEWARDS ROOM

This spacious room is lightly plastered and decorated with a bright and simple fresco. A rich vermilion rug covers the cold flagstones, and a fire roars in the hearth. A four posted bed lies at one end of the room, and near it sits a tidy wooden writing desk.

This room belongs to **Grundy Amberkettle**, the Steward of the manor, and it is where he is most likely to be found if he is not serving the party dinner or leading the thugs to subdue them (see "Guests for Dinner").

He is an old gnome, not a fighter, and will surrender immediately if threatened. After so many years serving Gideon, he is utterly free of normal moral convictions. He is a good liar, though, and will pretend to be serving Gideon under compulsion.

Grundy's Tale

If questioned, Grundy will tell the following –

- He has served the Saltmarsh family for over 60 years
- Gideon Saltmarsh has mystic powers
- Gideon's daughter did not die at birth, but was born with hideous deformities
- Gideon never named his daughter, and simply calls her "the Offspring"
- The Offspring lives in the basement
- Grundy does not know how to escape the mist back to the real world
- Once a month, Gideon uses his power to part the mist, and Grundy goes to a local town (Triboar) for supplies

Grundy knows more than he is letting on. He pretty much knows every room in the house and the perils they present. He will not share this information, however, as he hopes one of these dangers will take care of the party.

Treasure. A **DC 20 Wisdom (Perception)** check will uncover a small alcove where Grundy keeps his private purse. It contains **250gp**. A keyring on Grundy's belt has keys to every lockable door in the manor.



11. LIBRARY

This long room is paneled with wood that has been painted dark green. There is a large hearth on one wall with an ornately carved wooden mantel. A long patterned rug stretches across the room, and a number of plush chairs are scattered all around. Near the door where you entered are three good sized bookshelves, crammed with books.

This is where Gideon spends a great deal of his time, reading from his extensive library of over **five hundred** volumes. The books cover history, philosophy, theology and folklore. Following are some typical titles –

- *Canticles of the Blessed Tabitha*
- *The Book of the Civilized Man*
- *Epic Poetry of the Northmen*
- *The Calimport Tales*

- *Ecclesiastical History of the Heartlands*
- *The Letters of Thoradin and Riardon*
- *Collected Essays of Lynessa*

Treasure. The book collection would be worth perhaps **150gp** to a collector in a large city – assuming the characters can transport it there safely.

12. LADY'S CHAMBER

This door is locked. The lock may be picked with thieves' tools and a **DC 10 Dexterity** check. The door is flimsy and may be beaten down with a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** check. Grundy and Gideon have keys to this room.

You open the door and stop suddenly – the floor of this spacious chamber is completely missing, and you stare into a black pit, with no sign of the bottom.

Floating in the middle of the room is a young lady, dressed in rags. She is slightly translucent, and has her face uplifted and her eyes closed as she quietly whispers to herself.

You see a thin ledge on the far side of the chamber. A beautiful wedding gown sits on a wickerwork mannequin the, with a rich gold necklace about the neck.

This wretched spirit is all that remains of **Lynessa Saltmarsh**, the wife of Gideon. She committed suicide soon after the birth of her daughter, and her spirit has been bound to the house ever since. The pit beneath her is actually an illusion, and is a projection of her misery.

The illusion is very convincing. If the PCs drop something in the pit, they will see it disappear. If they stick a pole into the pit, it will feel as if they are poking thin air. If a PC falls into the pit, they will feel as if they are falling endlessly into a black hole (in fact, they will simply be

lying on the chamber floor). The dress is also an illusion.

A **DC 25 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **Intelligence (Arcana)** check will allow a character to pierce through the illusion. If anyone physically makes contact with the spirit of Lynessa, it will disappear along with the illusion of the black hole and dress. What remains is a dark and dusty Ladies Chamber, with a bed, cupboard and writing table.

Treasure. There is nothing of value in this room.

13. LORD'S CHAMBER

A large canopy bed sits in the middle of this commodious chamber. The walls are covered with a beautiful, textured paper, and hung over by a number of portraits and landscape paintings. A stone hearth lies in the wall opposite you with a roaring fire. You also notice a pair of cupboards, a plush chair and a dressing table.

This is Gideon's sleeping chamber. He keeps the fire well stoked as it also warms his study, but otherwise he spends little time here. The wardrobes are full of clothing, most of it once fine but now old and worthless.

Treasure. The dressing table has a number of rings and a silver necklace. The total value is **150gp**.



14. STUDY

This door is locked. The lock may be picked with thieves' tools and a **DC 15 Dexterity** check. The door may be beaten down with a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics)** check. Grundy has a key, as does Gideon.

The walls of this room are paneled with cedar, and a decorated crimson rug covers the floor. The room is large but only sparsely furnished, with a writing table and chair at the far end, flanked by a small glass-doored bookcase on one side, and a chest on the other. The room is lit only by a dim lantern on the desk.

This is where **Gideon** will be found at any time after dinner. For a full description of his abilities, see "Monster Stats" at the end of this document.

If Gideon has heard any noise at all, and especially if there has been combat in the house, he will be using *One with Shadows* to hide invisibly in the corner behind the door. Once the entire party has entered the study, he will attempt to quietly slip back into his bedroom, then *fireball* the study. He knows that he risks destroying many valuable items – but he also knows the situation is desperate.

If the party has been extremely quiet, they may be able to surprise him at his writing desk.

The bookcase contains Gideon's occult library of about a dozen volumes. Several are written in *supernal*. Titles include things such as *The Signature of Reality*, the *Principia Discordia* and the *Fourth Book of Ossander*. Gideon also has a small *Book of Shadows* which he keeps in his belt-pouch.

There is a poison needle trap on the chest latch. Whoever opens the chest takes 1 piercing damage and **2d10** poison damage, and must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution** saving throw or be *poisoned* for 1 hour.

A **DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation)** check allows a character to deduce the trap's presence. A **DC 15 Dexterity** check using thieves' tools disarms the trap. Unsuccessfully attempting to pick the lock triggers the trap.

Treasure. The occult books might fetch **200gp** from a collector in Waterdeep. If the party open the chest, they will find Gideon's treasure – **2000gp** and **300pp**. He also has **3 potions of healing**, a **potion of flying** and a **potion of speed**.

The characters will also find a thin square of engraved pewter. The engraved words are in *supernal*, and say the following –

*Master, please forgive my iniquity.
You hold my heart in your hand,
now as always. If the child be
yours, please take her to you. If the
child be mine, please heal her or
give me the strength to destroy her.
Your humble servant, Gideon.*

If Gideon fireballs the study, you must decide what has survived and what has been destroyed. Gideon has a full set of keys.



15. LINEN ROOM

There are a number of free-standing cupboards in this room containing linen. The stairs lead to the upper level.

16. BACK DOOR

The back door is locked, though it can be picked with thieves' tools and a **DC 20**

Dexterity check. It is too strong to break down. Outside the back door is a well, some old wagons and a stable with two horses. A few feet beyond that is a collection of crude grave markers sticking up from the marsh.

17. CELLAR

As the players enter the basement level, they notice that the floor is very muddy and emits a nasty, swampy odor. The Cellar door is locked (Grundy and Gideon have keys) but can be picked with thieves' tools and a **DC 20 Dexterity** check. It may also be broken down with a **DC 25 Strength (Athletics)** check.

Read the following –

This compact room is full of goods – clothing, armour, weapons, planks of wood, scrap iron and more beside. The floor has now turned positively swamp-like, and your boots sink down a couple of inches with every step.

Treasure. The rising damp has rendered most of the goods useless. A **DC 25 Wisdom (Perception)** check will, however, uncover a small gold necklace that someone overlooked, worth **90gp**.

18. THE PEN

The floor of this long room is covered in deep mud and shallow pools of water. Tiny mangrove shoots push up along the walls.

A row of iron bars cordons off one side of the room, and beyond those bars is the most pitiful sight imaginable. A great mass of people, all stripped naked, are crammed into the pen, wallowing in the mud and their own filth. Some are moaning, some are calling out in terror, and others merely rock back and forth in silent anguish.

There are nearly 70 prisoners crammed into this space. The majority are human, though there are also a number of elves, dwarves, gnomes and half-orcs. Some have been there for months, and are on the brink of madness. The coherent ones tell the same story – they got lost on the Long Road in a strange mist, sought shelter in the manor, and then were overpowered in the night and dragged into the Pen.

Every day or so, an ogre (known only as “the Butcher”) comes into from the next room, selects an unlucky prisoner and drags them back to his room. The sound of heavy chopping and screaming follows, then silence.

If the party free the captives, a great many of them will rush back toward the cellar stairs. The Butcher will hear the noise and will come in to investigate from **location #19**.

If the Party Are Captive

It’s possible the party were captured in the Guest Chambers (**location #2**). If so, they awake in this room, naked like the rest of the prisoners. They have several options for escape –

- When the Butcher comes in to select a prisoner, they could try and overpower him barehanded, or charge past him
- They could use sleight of hand to pick the key from the Butcher’s belt
- Someone may be able to pick the lock with a hairpin that one of the prisoners still has. A **DC 20 Dexterity** check would be required
- A couple of the bars near the edge of the pen are loose, and a character could work them out of their frame with a **DC 15 Strength** check

Any remotely plausible escape plan should work. The PCs equipment is in the Cellar (**location #17**).

Treasure. One of the prisoners has managed to keep a gold necklace hidden, worth **75gp**. She will give it to the PCs in gratitude if freed.

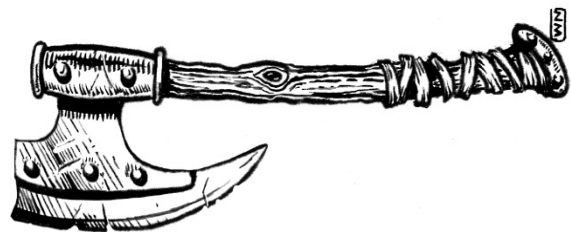
19. BUTCHERY

A truly gruesome sight greets you in this room. Blood splatters cover the wet, slick walls while nauseating piles of gore float on the swampy floor. In the middle of the room is a massive wooden table – it is very bloody and several enormous butcher’s cleavers are embedded in it. A crude nest of clothes lies in a corner, alongside several wooden barrels.

There is an **ogre** in this room, dressed in old rags and an enormous leather apron. He is known only as “the Butcher”, and his job is to slice up the prisoners and feed them to the Offspring in **location #21**.

He will stare at the party in astonishment when they enter, then rush to attack them with his enormous cleaver, which does **2d8+4** slicing damage. He has a key to the Pen in **location #18** tied to his belt.

Treasure. If the party search the nest of clothes in the corner, they will easily find the ogre’s stash. He has **500sp**, **150gp** and 4 emeralds worth **200gp** total. He also has a **Wand of Secrets** which he found in the possession of a prisoner long ago (and which somehow escaped Gideon’s notice). He has no idea how to use the wand, of course, and treats it simply as a “pretty stick”.



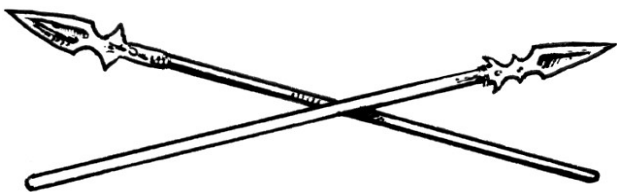
20. INFERNAL GATEWAY

As you trudge down the corridor, the muddy water grows deeper and deeper, until it is indistinguishable from marshland. The mangroves cluster thicker and thicker against the walls and even the ceiling, and it's no longer possible to catch a glimpse of the underlying stone. A dozen paces more and the twisted mangroves begin to thin. Yet instead of revealing stone, to your astonishment you glimpse open air. A few more steps and you emerge into the open, blinking in the light. A vast swamp, endless and vile, stretches before you, beneath a nauseating sky of churning ochre clouds. The mire before you is littered with foul carrion, and is broken only by piles of rotting soil and warped vegetation. Clouds of green-yellow gas drift lazily across the surface.

A cruel wind suddenly picks up, and a smattering of acidic rain burns your flesh. The smell is utterly stomach-churning.

In the distance you can see harsh metal towers rising from the mire, and a cluster of winged atrocities wheeling above the horizon. The vista feels alien, powerful and malevolent.

The PCs have discovered a gateway to Minauros, one of the levels of Hell. You should probably try to discourage them from exploring. If they insist, quietly shut your rulebook and say, "And they were never heard from again."



21. NURSERY

The door is barred from the outside.

As the door opens and you peer into the room, you are greeted by the stuff of nightmares, a horror beyond anything you have seen in your adventuring career. Seated at one end of this cell, squatting on the swampy floor amidst the mangrove-covered walls, is a pale figure, vast and loathsome. With its leathery skin, ridged forehead, clawed hands and fanged maw, it's parentage seems more infernal than human. It looks up expectantly as the door opens. A severed leg dangles from its mouth and blood dribbles down its chest. The creature looks momentarily confused, then roars in anger and lurches clumsily toward you.

This is the **Offspring**. As Gideon has long suspected, it is actually the progeny of his infernal patron, who molested Gideon's bride on their wedding night in revenge for some slight. Details of the Offspring can be found in the **Monster Stats** chapter at the end of this document.

After the Offspring dies

The demi-plane the manor sits in was a gift from Gideon's patron, and only exists so long as both Gideon and his legal heir (the Offspring) are alive. Once both have died, the manor will return to the natural world, but the basement below will collapse. The party will have about a minute to return to the ground floor while the basement shakes and crumbles. If they stay below ground, they will be buried alive and quickly suffocate.

Treasure. If the party spend ten or so minutes digging through the Offspring's excrement, they will find roughly **50gp** worth of gold dentures. Of course, if both the Offspring and Gideon are dead, they will not have time to search before the cave-in.

CONCLUSION

Assuming the party escaped from the basement, they will find that Saltmarsh Manor has returned to the natural world. It is mid-morning and the mist has lifted. They will have little difficulty locating the Long Road, and will discover they are about 30 miles north of Triboar.

There is the problem, of course, of about seventy former prisoners, all naked, frightened and shivering in the morning sun. But the characters have proven themselves resourceful, and will no doubt come up with a plan...

MONSTER STATS

Gideon Saltmarsh

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armour Class 14

Hit Points 38

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (0)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Cha +7, Wis +3

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Dark One's Blessing. When he reduces a hostile creature to 0 hit points, he gains 9 temporary hit points.

Agonizing Blast. When he casts *eldritch blast*, he adds his Charisma modifier to the damage it deals on a hit. Note: This has already been applied in the stat block below.

Eyes of the Rune Keeper. He can read all writing.

One with Shadows. When he is in an area of dim light or darkness, he can use his action to become invisible until he moves or takes an action or reaction.

Spellcasting. Gideon is a 5th-level Warlock. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has two 3rd level spell slots, and knows the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast*, *fire bolt*, *poison spray*, *shillelagh*, *spare the dying*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level: *hellish rebuke*, *hex*

2nd level: *blindness*, *scorching ray*

3rd level: *fireball*, *vampiric touch*

Actions

Eldritch blast. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., two attacks, one or two targets. *Hit:* 1d10 + 4 force damage.

Minor Flesh Golem

Medium construct, neutral

Armour Class 9

Hit Points 66

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities lightning, poison

Damage Resistance bludgeoning, slashing and piercing from non-magical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Aversion to Fire. If the golem takes fire damage, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn.

Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

The Offspring

Large fiend, chaotic evil

Armour Class 13

Hit Points 90

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	9 (-1)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistance fire, poison, bludgeoning from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Languages understands Common but can't speak

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) slashing damage.

INSPIRATION

This adventure was inspired by *The Nameless Offspring*, a short story written by Clark Ashton Smith.

CREDITS & LEGALS

Design: M.T. Black

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