

# CREATURE CODEX LAIRS



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# LAIR OF THE FIRE CULT

An agnibarra lair suitable for four or five 1st-level characters

## BACKGROUND

Dr. Ezra Freejus opened the Freejus Institute for the Restoration of Equilibrium to help those with conditions that prevented them from interacting in normal society. Catering to all walks of life, Dr. Freejus accepts clients based on uniqueness of situation rather than social station. For years she helped countless people who even the most powerful clerics could not heal with magic.

Recently, however, Dr. Freejus has been seen very rarely, even by her staff. She has locked herself in her basement office. She comes up to retrieve a patient, takes them into the basement, and is gone for hours or even days. The patient is not seen by the staff again: Dr. Ezra claims they were cured and returned to their families.

In reality, Dr. Ezra has been stricken with a pyromantic condition of her own. She believes madness can be burned out of people, and she established a fire cult to support her. Unfortunately, her experiments are destroying her patients and bringing agnibarras into the world that want to burn everything to the ground.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

A rich and powerful merchant named Solly Steffard asks the characters to look in on her son, who was placed in the care of Dr. Freejus in a nearby city. The young man, Jessop Steffard, saw and spoke to spirits, which urged him to sometimes do illegal things. Solly had her son placed with Dr. Freejus because she had heard the doctor could cure any illness. However, the last two times Solly tried to visit the Institute, the staff told her that her son was in a delicate state and could not be seen at the moment. She offers them a total of 100 gp to infiltrate the Institute, locate her son, and ensure he is safe.

## AT THE INSTITUTE

When the PCs arrive at the Institute, they are greeted by staff who politely show them around the facility and answer their questions. Everything seems fine at first glance. All patients are treated kindly, and the minimum amount of restraint is used in keeping them from hurting themselves or others.

When the PCs ask about Dr. Freejus or Jessop, however, the staff become nervous. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the staff cleverly avoids answering questions about them.

If a PC succeeds on a DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, one of the staff says that Dr. Freejus has been taking Jessop into the basement treatment facilities frequently over the last few days. She instructed the staff not to interrupt. The staff is uncomfortable with the doctor's demeanor, but they do not question her. The doctor's treatments seem to work, because the patients are released soon after she treats them. The staff does not see them released, but they believe the doctor.

If the characters speak to any of the clients at the Institute, they might provide fragmented or confusing information about the basement. Not every patient has seen the basement, so some of them might even provide misleading information to the PCs.

## INTO THE BASEMENT

The characters can access the basement by going through a locked door at the Institute that leads down a set of stairs to the passage into Area 1.

### 1. GUARDS

*Two people in leather armor sit at a table, playing a game of cards. At your approach they rise and pull scimitars. "The doctor is not to be disturbed," says one in an angry bark. "Go back."*

These two **cultists** are devoted to the fire cult, and they attack if the PCs don't turn back immediately. The Institute staff know nothing about these people, as none of the staff has been allowed in the basement since Dr. Freejus established the fire cult. The cultists know the uniform of the staff members, and, if a PC is disguised as a member of the staff, they might have a touch more leniency and give the "staff member" an extra round or two to leave before attacking.

**Fire Blast Trap.** The doors to Area 4 are locked and trapped. If the PCs attempt to forcefully open the doors into Area 4, the trap triggers. A successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools unlocks the door but triggers the trap, if it hasn't been deactivated. When the trap triggers, each creature within 10 feet



of the door must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (1d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check or DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a panel on the door inscribed with tiny runes. A successful DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check removes the panel and deactivates the trap. Opening the door with the correct rune-inscribed key will unlock the door and prevent the trap from triggering.

## 2. FUNGI

*Red mushrooms and crimson shrubs grow in patches of soil along the walls of this warm chamber. On the other side of the room, a wooden door is set into an alcove.*

This room is noticeably warmer than the others. Three execrable shrubs (*Creature Codex*, p. 304) grow here, created by the connection to the lower planes forged in the basement, and they are fed with the bodies of Dr. Freejus' failed experiments. They attack as the PCs cross the room to the door. A PC can detect that three of the shrubs are not ordinary with a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check. If a PC succeeds on this check, it isn't surprised at the beginning of combat. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals bones hidden among the mushrooms and shrubbery.

The door leading into Area 3 is closed but not locked.

### Treasure

The bodies dumped here had their valuables removed, but one of the victims had a pair of gold teeth worth 10 gp each.

## 3. OFFICE

*This nicely appointed office contains a desk and chair. Boxes and crates holding notes line the walls. Toward the back of the room, a small ball of fire, burning like a miniature sun, hangs in the air.*

A **fire imp** (*Creature Codex*, p. 103) called Shemoto hides within the fire orb. A creature that touches the orb or starts its turn within 5 feet of the orb takes 2 (1d4) fire damage.

**Desk and Papers.** The desk is used by Dr. Freejus to make notes on her studies. Characters taking the time to read the notes can find the following information:

- Notes from months ago show the genius of the doctor in working with patients to find the cause of and cure for their problems. Her notes indicate her genuine concern for the well-being of her patients and the dedication to resolving their issues.
- Over the last few weeks, the tone and tenor of the notes changed drastically. Talk of slow and methodical care and curing turned into more violent procedures for “burning the disease out of the body to save the mind and soul.”
- Dr. Freejus writes of consulting frequently with Dr. Shemoto, whom she refers to as “a consulting physician from a faraway land.”

One of the desk drawers is locked. A successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools unlocks the drawer. If the drawer is forced open, the two *potions of fire resistance* within break and are lost. The drawer also contains three gold plaques

and statuettes, awards to Dr. Freejus from the community for her work, worth a total of 50 gp if melted down. At the bottom of the drawer is a spare key that opens the doors leading into Area 4.

### Development

Shemoto stays within the fire orb, watching and listening to the PCs. If the PCs try to douse the orb, it comes out and presents itself as an assistant to Dr. Freejus. It says that Dr. Freejus is very close to finding a cure for all diseases—she just needs a few more weeks to perfect the technique. It tells the PCs to leave the basement and come back in a month, when her research is complete.

If the PCs don't leave, Shemoto uses the fire orb to teleport to Area 6 and warn Dr. Freejus that intruders are present. Shemoto can teleport between the magical orbs of fire as an action, but only the fire imp can do so. They are a gift from Shemoto's superior in Hell and are tied to the imp. All orbs within 60 feet of the imp extinguish if it dies. Igniting or extinguishing a fire orb in the basement causes the other orbs in the basement to flicker. If Shemoto is killed, the other orbs begin to fade and completely disappear after 24 hours. If the PCs kill Shemoto before it can teleport to Dr. Freejus, the flickering and dimming of the fire near the doctor will indicate to her that something is amiss.

## 4. SMOKE

*Stairs lead down into a large octagonal chamber whose center is obscured by thick smoke. More steps descend into the smoke within the central pit. Along three walls, stone tables hold vats.*

The smoke in this chamber heavily obscures everything in the 10-foot-deep pit. The smoke cannot be removed by normal means. However, if the PCs disturb the fire giant skeleton on the slab within the pit, the vats ignite with fire orbs, lessening the effects of the smoke (see Developments).

**Fire Giant Skeleton.** With the smoke obscuring vision in the pit, the characters can only feel their way through the area. When they touch the central slab or the skeleton, they are able to see again (see Developments). When they are able to see, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that the skeleton belongs to a fire giant. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check on the slab reveals that magical runes on it there are drawing energy out of the skeleton, making it a conduit to some other fiery plane of existence.

**Tables.** Each of the tables holds 2 vats that ignite with fire orbs if the skeleton in the center is disturbed. A variety of ritual implements sit on each table worth 25 gp per table. It takes 1 round to gather the implements on a table, so a PC may take fire damage while at a table if the orbs have been ignited.

### Development

When the skeleton or slab is touched, the vats erupt with fire, igniting fire orbs like the one in Area 3. A creature that touches the orb or starts its turn within 5 feet of the orb takes 2 (1d4) fire damage. If the vats are lit with orbs, the smoke in the room burns away slightly, leaving only a lightly obscuring haze in the pit. Alerted by the flickering of the orbs in Area 5, the two **cultists** in that area come to investigate within 2 rounds of the orbs igniting in this room.



## 5. VICTIMS

*Two burning orbs hang in the air in this room, while three pits covered by cage doors are dug into the floor. Double doors in the western wall are closed, but one hangs slightly off its hinges.*

The cultists keep people waiting for experimentation here. Currently the southernmost pit is empty, the middle pit contains an unconscious and burned **commoner**, and the northernmost pit's door was just smashed by its inhabitant, a violent patient of the Institute named Raubert [raw-BARE] (use **thug** statistics).

As with the orbs in the other rooms, a creature that touches an orb or starts its turn within 5 feet of an orb takes 2 (1d4) fire damage.

### Development

If the PCs already faced the fire cultists who came from this room to investigate Area 4, Raubert stands facing off against two **thugs**. If the PCs did not alert the cultists in this room to the happenings in Area 4, Raubert faces off against two **thugs** and two **cultists**. Raubert is hostile and wields a beam of wood (treat as a quarterstaff) in two hands, swinging at anyone that gets close. Because of his fragile mental state, the PCs have advantage on Charisma checks made to influence his behavior. A successful DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check convinces him to put down his weapon or to turn his attacks against the threatening cultists (or the doctor in Area 6).

## 6. FIRE

*This hall is supported by six stone columns. At the far end of the hall, a woman stands on a raised dais. She holds her hands to a young man standing on a stone. He seems unconscious even though he is standing. They are flanked by two burning orbs.*

The woman, Dr. Freejus (**cult fanatic**), uses her newly earned magical abilities to draw power out of Jessop. If Shemoto lives, it is hiding within one of the fire globes.

### Development

On initiative count 20 on the second round of combat and each round after that, an **agnibarra** (*Creature Codex*, p. 9) leaps from a fire orb. The first one engages in combat with the PCs, defending Dr. Freejus to the best of its ability. All the other agnibarras streak out of the hall, either up the stairs to a door that leads to an exit behind the Institute or out the double doors toward the Institute. Dr. Freejus fights to keep the PCs away from Jessop while the agnibarras are summoned. If the PCs remove Jessop from the dais, the fire orbs extinguish, halting the flow of agnibarras.

Shemoto fights until Dr. Freejus is defeated. After that, it disappears into a fire orb. If the PCs kill Shemoto, both orbs immediately extinguish, halting the flow of agnibarras. If Shemoto escapes, the PCs may encounter it again!

### Treasure

Behind the block where Jessop stands, the PCs find a satchel containing 200 gp, a *potion of healing*, and notes on “curing insanity” that the imp tricked Dr. Freejus into reading, leading to her fire mania.

## CONCLUSION

Any agnibarras escaping Area 6 must be tracked down and defeated before they burn down the city. They should be easy to find, since they leave a trail of fire in their wake. Provide bonus experience if the PCs can defeat all the fire creatures before innocents are hurt or killed.



# A RAT AMONG US

## PART ONE

The first part of two lairs—a ratfolk warlock lair and a rattok demon lair—suitable for four or five 3rd-level characters. The lairs can be run separately or together as one longer adventure.

### BACKGROUND

Chittr'k'k, the Demon Lord of Rats, is making a play to corrupt the city with his filthy influence. His followers have built shrines around the city, drawing followers and fostering the vermin population. At first the spread of Chittr'k'k's influence was contained to the least populated or least affluent parts of the city: slums, abandoned docks, squalid cellars, and the like. Now, however, Chittr'k'k's servants are growing bolder as the Lord of Rats bestows gifts upon them.

From dark holes, damp cellars, and refuse-strewn alleys, the ratfolk and other servants of Chittr'k'k emerge to show their growing might in other parts of the city. Now they hope to spread their influence to thieves' guilds, merchant consortiums, and others easily influenced by avarice.

A driving force behind this expansion is Jeeb Kraatuhl, a **ratfolk warlock** (*Creature Codex*, p. 316) dedicated to the service of Chittr'k'k. She has been gifted a **kuunganisha** (*Creature Codex*, p. 245) familiar, called Fleabit, by the Lord of Rats, and she whips her followers into a frenzy of destruction. Hoping to become the ruler of a city of rot and refuse, Jeeb uses the wharf and the nearby abandoned buildings as a staging ground.

Chittr'k'k has greater plans, however. He has planted a **rattok demon** (*Creature Codex*, p. 90) loyal to him in the city as well. This demon, Rathsys, ostensibly serves Jeeb and is detailed further in *A Rat Among Us, Part Two*. Jeeb is suspicious that the demon might have plans of its own and doesn't fully trust Rathsys.

#### WHO IS THIS DEMON LORD OF RATS?

Chittr'k'k is a relatively minor demon lord with an immense following among rodents, wererats, ratfolk, and a few strange humans. Chittr'k'k is not required to run or enjoy this adventure, but you can find more information about him in the *Creature Codex* on pages 76-77.

### ADVENTURE HOOK

The first offering from the *Book of Lairs*, The Riverfront Rat Gang, details the lair of a **ratfolk rogue** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 320) named Matimer Creel, a fugitive from the city's thieves' guild. Creel has established his base in an abandoned dock area, and he uses his ability to communicate with rats to build an army of eyes, whiskers, and gnashing teeth. If you run that adventure, add to Matimer's lair a letter from Jeeb Kraatuhl inviting Creel to join her movement. This introduces the characters to Jeeb's lair in the Wharf District.

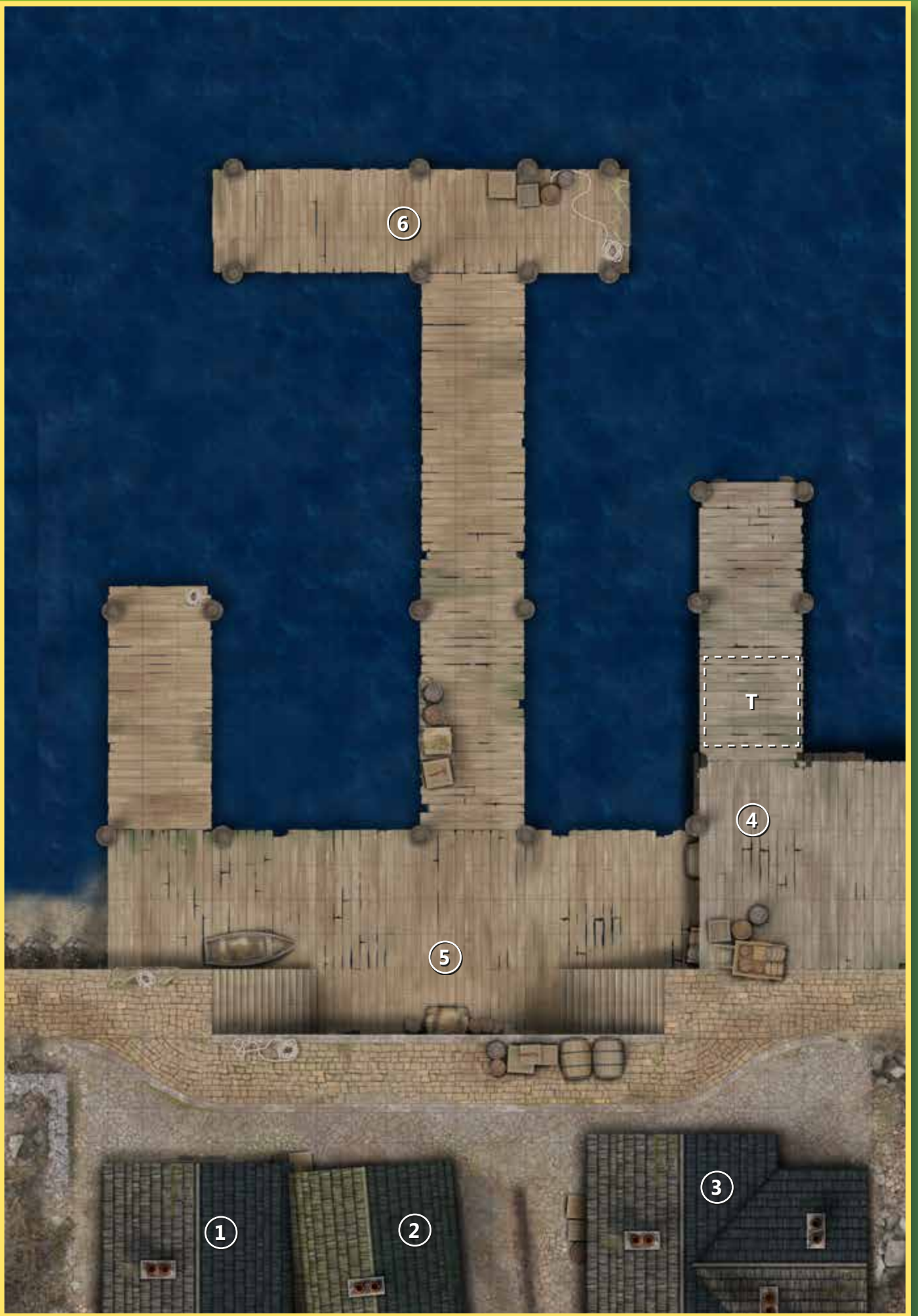
The Wharf District is beset with a mystery. Cats, both wild and domesticated, are going missing, and swarms of rats are making the area uninhabitable. Many merchants have abandoned the area and moved to a different part of the city to dock their ships. A merchant and owner of several buildings in the area, a dwarf called Horath Firmbirch, seeks help in getting to the bottom of the problem.

Firmbirch tells the PCs that he is expecting a very important shipment of valuable foodstuff in a day or two. He needs to ensure that his docks are clear of problems when the shipment arrives. So many rat attacks have occurred in the Wharf District recently that he is having trouble getting teamsters and porters to agree to offload his wares when they arrive.

#### SETTING "A RAT AMONG US" IN MIDGARD

This adventure fits neatly in the Midgard setting, either in a harbor town of the Seven Cities or a river town along the Argent, most likely Zobeck. Note that in Zobeck, the Mouse King also exists and openly holds the line against Chittr'k'k and his kind. If the PCs get stuck in a dead end or need a push in the right direction, a talking mouse and servant of the Mouse King is one easy solution. In addition, the Dock District of Zobeck is fully described in the *Zobeck Gazetteer for 5th edition*, pages 58-60.







## THE WHARF DISTRICT

The PCs can investigate the wharves at whatever time of day suits them. The area is brightly lit during the day; at night, however, it is absolutely dark. Posts for lanterns and sconces for torches have been vandalized and destroyed.

### 1. EMPTY WAREHOUSE

*The doors to this abandoned warehouse are warped. The windows are shuttered, and paint peels from the wooden boards. A faint light flickers from within, peeking through the cracks between the doors and the walls.*

The door is stuck and can be forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength check. If the PCs push on the door to the warehouse, they trigger a trap.

**Necrotic Rat Droppings Trap.** When the door is pushed, a small spike between the door and wall is dislodged, and a panel above the door releases rat droppings infused with necrotic energy onto those below. Each creature within 10 feet of the door must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage and is poisoned for 1 hour. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and isn't poisoned.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the spike. A character can jam the spike in place, preventing the trap from triggering, with successful a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check or a successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

Within the warehouse, a pair of lanterns flicker with guttering flames. Each is low on oil. Dead cats of various sizes and colors litter the floors, hang from rafters, and fill empty crates. The smell of death and decay fills the air. Each body has been gnawed on by rat-sized teeth.

#### Treasure

Some forgotten treasure lies in a locked chest in the corner of the warehouse. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check locates the chest, and a successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools unlocks it. It can also be smashed open but doing so destroys the potion and the vase within.

Inside the chest is a *potion of poison resistance*, a ceramic vase worth 30 gp, and several pieces of fine linen worth a total of 100 gp.

### 2. ABANDONED OFFICE

*The door to this building has been torn from its hinges. The sound of hundreds of tiny feet skittering on wood echoes from the building as a squeaky voice mutters: "Fleabit herds the rats. Fleabit steals the coins. Fleabit helps the master. Well now Fleabit tired so Fleabit have fun and rip papers."*

*The voice is accompanied by the rhythmic sound of tearing paper. These sounds come from beneath a heaping pile of pages torn from books scattered around the floor of the building. A desk, table, and some chairs are haphazardly piled in the corner.*

If the PCs haven't encountered Jeeb, her **kuunganisha** (*Creature Codex*, p. 245) familiar, Fleabit, is here seeking respite from a busy day of doing fiendish things for its master. If the PCs already defeated Fleabit or Jeeb, the kuunganisha isn't present.

Fleabit gleefully tears pages from old logbooks and ledgers abandoned here by Firmbirch. Fleabit remains unaware of the PCs until they make their presence known. If at any point the PCs attack Fleabit, it yells out to the rats in the warehouse for assistance. Two **swarms of rats** attack the PCs while Fleabit attempts to escape via the chimney. The familiar flees to warn its master, Jeeb, of the presence of interlopers in the area.

Fleabit will talk with the PCs as long as they are polite and don't attack, but it doesn't reveal anything important. It talks fondly about its master, who is bringing the glory of the rat kingdom to the city. With a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check, a PC can coax Fleabit into sharing some details about the happenings in the tavern (Area 3).

### 3. POP-UP TAVERN

*Sounds of chatter and off-pitch singing emerge from this building. It has not suffered the same neglect and vandalism as the others in the area. A filthy human enters the building through the dockside door, and a cheer erupts from within. The din dies down momentarily, replaced by further conversation and singing.*

This building once acted as a meeting hall and storage area: a place for Firmbirch to do business, entertain guests, feed dockworkers and sailors, etc. After the rat infestation and its abandonment by Firmbirch, the structure was repurposed by Jeeb. Vagrants and ne'er-do-wells were using the building as a shelter and meeting place. Jeeb seized this opportunity to recruit new followers to the cult of Chittr'k'k, bringing in casks of ale and roughly-crafted tables and benches. She turned the place into a makeshift tavern for the growing cult.

Before long, word spread that this was a place to get a hot meal, a mug of ale, and a roof over your head. Jeeb found the clientele amenable to her preaching. Those who still have their health are given weapons to fight for the Lord of Rats. The infirm act as spies as they wander the city. Money gathered through theft or panhandling is turned over to Jeeb or her lieutenants. The warlock has progressed well with building her own thieves' and beggars' guilds, all in the name of Chittr'k'k.

#### Developments

The "tavern" is currently occupied by 18 **commoners**, half of whom are armed. Among the rabble are three **ratfolk rogues** and four **ratfolk** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 320). These ratfolk remain mingled among the mostly human occupants, only making their presence known if the PCs threaten anyone or try to interfere with the operation. Members of Chittr'k'k's cult wear red clothing—signaling their status to Jeeb's ratfolk, who defend these tavern-goers above the others if any threatening actions occur.

PCs can pretend to join the festivities with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. Success earns them a welcome cheer from the crowd, while failure draws the attention of the ratfolk. No important information is revealed to the PCs, but if they spark the suspicion of the ratfolk, the rogues follow the PCs out of the building and attempt to ambush them at the worst possible time for the heroes.

One of the revelers here, a woman named Treniece, is an undercover agent of the city guard (use **spy** statistics). She wears the tattered clothes and dirty countenance of a vagrant,

and she is attempting to learn more about the overall goals of this strange rat-adoring organization before calling in the authorities. If the PCs get in over their heads, she does not blow her cover, although she might surreptitiously stabilize or otherwise assist them to protect innocent lives. Alternatively, if she notices the ratfolk rogues following the PCs out of the building, she might also secretly follow as this new lead might get her more information than listening to the revelers in the tavern. Whether she assists the PCs when the ratfolk rogues ambush them or not is at your discretion.

### The Basement

The basement holds crates of simple foods and kegs of weak ale. A PC can find a secret door hidden behind a stack of barrels with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If the PCs find the secret door and open it, two **keg golems** (*Creature Codex*, p. 199) animate and attack, pursuing intruders through the tunnel but not upstairs into the main tavern area.

The tunnel winds for a great distance beneath the city, ending at the basement of Area 1 in the Gnawing Thirst Inn, a business located in a residential area. The Gnawing Thirst Inn is detailed in *A Rat Among Us, Part Two*. If you are not running that lair in conjunction with this one, the tunnel can lead to some other section of the city or be removed from this tavern, at your discretion.

### Complication

One of the ratfolk rogues in the tavern is a young ratfolk named Squoon. He had a run of bad luck and a falling out with his family, which put him firmly into the waiting embrace of the cult of Chittr'k'k. He isn't sure this group is where he wants to be. At your discretion, he might surrender during any combat where he's present. If the PCs treat him kindly, their mercy gets back to his mother Mirley, the proprietor of the Gnawing Thirst Inn. This earns them her favor when they encounter her, assuming Squoon has had the chance to reunite with his mother and share the story.

### Treasure

In a coffer behind the bar, a cache of copper and silver pieces totaling 120 gp represents the day's take from thieving and begging. The ratfolk rogues carry a total of 40 gp in coins.

### 4. UPPER DOCK

*The upper dock extends from street level, reaching out over the water. The dock is currently empty; however, a pair of hands grip the end of the dock.*

The hands are two pairs severed from two different corpses (one elf and one orc), nailed to the end of the dock as bait for intruding do-gooders. The pinky finger on one hand wears an opal-set ring worth 70 gp.

**Weakened Pier.** The upper eastern pier has a weakened section where it meets the dock (represented with a "T" on the map). If a creature steps on the weakened section, the wood collapses, dumping the creature into the water.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) reveals the weak spot in the pier. With a successful DC 12 Dexterity check, a creature can use thieves' tools to wedge the planks together and make it safe to walk down the pier.

Two **ahuizotls** (*Creature Codex*, p. 10) lurk here and attack any creature that falls into the water or that walks down the pier.





## 5. MAIN DOCK

Two sets of stairs from street level lead down to the main docks. From here, two piers jut into the water. The dock area is empty save for a few damaged crates and barrels.

One **ratfolk** and one **ratfolk rogue** hide under each set of stairs, keeping watch for any intruders that might interrupt Jeeb's plans. The four do not emerge or attack unless they are spotted and confronted, or if the PCs attack Jeeb (see Area 6). If the PCs confront the ratfolk here, Jeeb is alerted to their presence by the sounds of combat. She goes to the aid of her ratfolk lookouts, bringing Fleabit (if it is still alive) and the *potion of fire breath* with her.

## 6. LONG DOCK

A long dock juts into the water, suitable for larger ships delivering cargo. A stack of crates and barrels rests at the end of the dock.

Jeeb, a **ratfolk warlock** (*Creature Codex*, p. 316), hides among the barrels at the end of the dock. Unless the PCs dealt with her familiar, Fleabit, already (Area 2), it is hiding with its master. Jeeb heard rumors that Firmbirch's ship might arrive tonight, so she waits for it. She hopes to steal the cargo to sell, use, or contaminate, depending on your campaign's direction. If confronted, she calls on the lookouts in Area 5, if the PCs haven't already dealt with them.

A *potion of fire breath* sits on a barrel of lantern oil next to Jeeb. If the fight is going in her favor, Jeeb or Fleabit use the potion as a weapon against the PCs. If the fight is looking grim, Jeeb or Fleabit uncork the barrel and roll it down the pier as an action, coating the area within 15 feet of Jeeb in lantern oil. Jeeb then lights the oil with a *fire bolt* spell or the potion, or Fleabit lights it with the potion to provide a distraction for Jeeb's escape.

Jeeb is a coward, and, as soon as it looks like her life might be in danger, she uses any means at her disposal to escape, including diving into the water and swimming away. She is allied with the ahui-zotls in Area 4 who come to her aid in the water if the PCs have not dealt with them already. If she flees, she heads directly for the rattok demon's lair to recover and seek shelter.

Among Jeeb's possessions are her rod (a rune-covered human femur), 2 *potions of healing*, and an emerald worth 50 gp. Her red cloak and cape are not magical, but the stitching forms runes and symbols of devotion to Chittr'k'k.

## CONCLUSION & INTERLUDE

If the PCs defeat Jeeb and her hench-rats—or at least drive them away from the Wharf District—the dwarven merchant Firmbirch offers them a total of 200 gp for saving his business. If the PCs befriended Treniece or earned her trust, they now have a contact in the city guard, though how often and in what ways they can call on her aid is up to you. This concludes the first part of the adventure, which can stand alone and resolves at this point.

However, if you and your players would like to investigate further, then any of Jeeb's followers, including her familiar, can tell the PCs that Jeeb is just one spoke of a larger wheel. The cult of Chittr'k'k is spreading through the city, and a tunnel beneath the tavern gives access to another area where the cult holds sway. Jeeb used the tunnel frequently to meet with other followers of the Lord of Rats, passing information and sharing wealth. If the PCs didn't find the tunnel, fleeing ratfolk or Treniece can point them to it.

The PCs can take a rest if they desire before pursuing this lead. However, if they take a long rest, Jeeb (if she survived) and any other of her followers have recovered and warn the rattok demon at the Gnawing Thirst Inn about a potential attack.





# A RAT AMONG US

## PART TWO

The follow up to the ratfolk warlock lair, *A Rat Among Us, Part One*. It is suitable for four or five 3rd-level characters. The lairs can be run separately or together as one longer adventure.

### BACKGROUND

Chittr'k'k, the Demon Lord of Rats, is making a play to corrupt the city with his filthy influence. His followers have built shrines around the city, drawing followers and fostering the vermin population. At first the spread of Chittr'k'k's influence was contained to the least populated or least affluent parts of the city: slums, abandoned docks, squalid cellars, and the like. Now, however, Chittr'k'k's servants are growing bolder as the Lord of Rats bestows gifts upon them.

From dark holes, damp cellars, and refuse-strewn alleys, the ratfolk and other servants of Chittr'k'k emerge to show their growing might in other parts of the city. Now they hope to spread their influence to thieves' guilds, merchant consortiums, and others easily influenced by avarice.

A driving force behind this expansion is Jeeb Kraatuhl, a **ratfolk warlock** (*Creature Codex*, p. 316) dedicated to the service of Chittr'k'k. Jeeb, her plans, and her followers are detailed in *A Rat Among Us, Part One*.

Chittr'k'k has greater plans, however. He has planted a **rattok demon** (*Creature Codex*, p. 90) loyal to him in the city as well. This demon, Rathsys, ostensibly serves Jeeb and maintains a lair in a residential area of the city, where it corrupts wealthy residents to fund its enterprises and spread its influence.

### ADVENTURE HOOK

*A Rat Among Us, Part Two* details the workings of a ratfolk warlock, Jeeb Kraatuhl, in the Wharf District of the city. Any of her followers or her familiar can be pressured into revealing that the warlock serves a rattok demon named Rathsys. The PCs can follow that lead to the Gnawing Thirst Inn. The conclusion of that lair holds further details of how the PCs go from the Wharf District to the inn, which graces a more sedate and residential area of the city.

Alternatively, this adventure can be run after *The Riverfront Rat Gang* lair from the *Book of Lairs*. In *The Riverfront Rat Gang*, a **ratfolk rogue** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 320) named Matimer Creel, a fugitive from the city's thieves' guild, establishes a base in an abandoned dock area and uses his ability to communicate with

rats to build an army of eyes, whiskers, and gnashing teeth. If you run that adventure prior to this one, add to Matimer's lair a letter from Rathsys inviting him to join Chittr'k'k's faithful at the Gnawing Thirst Inn.

### THE GNAWING THIRST INN

Many residents of this community, through magic or their own greed and vice, have joined the cult of Chittr'k'k. The Gnawing Thirst Inn acts as a hub for cult activity, while the private club across the street is where the major rituals take place.

#### The Basement

If the PCs following the tunnel from the Wharf District, they arrive at a blank wall after about 30 minutes of travel. The latch to an unlocked secret door is easy to spot on the wall.

**Acid Trap.** The door at the end of the hall is trapped with the explosive runes of a *glyph of warding* spell. If the door is opened without removing the ward or saying the passphrase ("Chittr'k'k rules the night"), acid sprays down the tunnel. Each creature within 20 feet of the door must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the explosive runes protecting the door. A successful dispel magic (DC 13) cast on the door destroys the trap. Alternatively, a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check suppresses the magic of the runes for 1 minute, allowing the PCs to safely open the door.

#### WHO IS THIS DEMON LORD OF RATS?

Chittr'k'k is a relatively minor demon lord with an immense following among rodents, wererats, ratfolk, and a few strange humans. Chittr'k'k is not required to run or enjoy this adventure, but you can find more information about him in the *Creature Codex* on pages 76-77.

The door opens into a basement stocked full of food and drink of a much higher quality than the makeshift tavern near the docks. A stairway leads up into the back room of the Gnawing Thirst Inn.

## 1. THE BACK ROOM

*The stairs lead up into a small room with a few casks and boxes. The stairs continue up to another floor, and three doors lead from the room. The din of conversation is obvious beyond the south door.*

The casks contain ale, and the boxes contain bread and cheese. None of the doors out of this room are locked. The stairs continue up to simply appointed rooms where the inn's current customers stay.

## 2. THE BAR

*The bar area of this inn is packed. Every seat is taken, both at the tables and at the bar. A matronly ratfolk scurries from bar to table to kitchen and back again. Some of the patrons are ratfolk, but just as many are human.*

The bar area of the Gnawing Thirst Inn is full of patrons. Some are members of the cult of Chittr'k'k, but most are just innocent folk getting a drink or a light meal, as interest in ratfolk cuisine has become a recent fad in the city.

The barkeep is a **ratfolk rogue** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 320) named Mirley. She is not a member of the cult of Chittr'k'k, but she pays them a protection fee. They force her to cater to their proclivities, and she knows that they sometimes snatch individuals from her inn for their rituals and sacrifices. She would rather run a nice establishment and introduce new customers to the joy of ratfolk cuisine, but the presence of the rattok demon means life in this area is all foul rituals, bloody sacrifices, and the like.

If the PCs enter the bar area through the door to the back room, Mirley doesn't fuss—after all, there is a door to the back alley from there. However, it does draw the attention of three more **ratfolk rogues** sitting at the bar. If any of the cultists of Chittr'k'k from the previous lair saw the PCs and then later escaped, their descriptions have been passed around.

Mirley tells the PCs to wait for the next table to open if they want a meal. Otherwise they can stand at the bar for a drink. With the ratfolk rogues watching, she cannot pass on information to them. However, if they spared her son Squoon in *A Rat Among Us, Part One*, she makes sure to answer their questions and help them stop the cultists here, if possible.

### Development

While the PCs are in the Gnawing Thirst Inn, a human man enters from the street and approaches Mirley. He asks her if she or anyone else has seen his wife, a woman named Delpha. They are new to the area, and she has been missing since the previous day, when she said she was going to come to the Chatterers' Social Club across the street to ask about joining.



Mirley answers in the negative, but a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals the barkeep is lying. Delpha was here yesterday, and she was grabbed when she went to the social club. The man, Dayell, thanks Mirley and leaves to go across the street. Unless the PCs interfere, Dayell goes across the street to the social club and gets grabbed for the sacrifice later that day.

## 3. PROPRIETOR'S QUARTERS

*This two-room suite contains a simple bed and nightstand in the first room, while the second is an office with a weathered but functional desk.*

Mirley lives in this suite. The desk in that office is locked. A PC can open the lock with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

### Treasure

The desk holds 50 gp, Mirley's life savings. A ledger on the desk shows expenses, including regular payments to the Chatterers' Social Club: extortion from the cult.

## THE CHATTERERS' SOCIAL CLUB

Across the street from the Gnawing Thirst Inn is a private club called the Chatterers' Social Club. The place is a front for, and the headquarters of, the cult of Chittr'k'k in this neighborhood. The rattok demon lairing here prepares for the ritual to create a rat king to serve it.





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## 4. ENTRYWAY

*The door to this nicely appointed building opens easily into an entryway. Two humans wearing splint mail and carrying longswords stand on either side of the doorway on the inside. “I’m sorry,” says one in a slow, bored drawl. “Private club. Members only. I’m afraid you are going to have to leave.”*

The two guards are **veterans**, and their job is to keep intruders out of the rest of the building. They are not technically members of the cult, but they do know that terrible things are happening in the club. As long as the cult pays them regularly, they don’t care and turn a blind eye to what transpires within the club.

If the PCs try to bluff their way in, the guards do not fall for anything but the most ingenious lies. If the PCs make a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check while wearing red robes, they can convince the guards they are members of the cult.

If Dayell came across the street without the PCs, he was attacked here, knocked unconscious, and handed over to the rattok demon as a suitable sacrifice. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check notices fresh drops of blood on the floor near the south door leading toward Area 6.

The stairs lead up to some bedrooms containing only sleeping areas and nothing of great value.

## 5. DINING ROOM

*Finely crafted chairs surround a matching dining table. A long, elegant tablecloth covers the table, and exquisite place settings sit atop the linen.*

Delpha, unconscious and bound with shackles, lies beneath the table. She is the main course for tonight’s celebration, after the ritual to create the rat king.

### Treasure

The place settings fetch a total of 50 gp if sold to a collector.

## 6. SITTING ROOM

*Two men sit on plush sofas, chatting over glasses of brandy and smiling amicably.*

Ruprecht and Belville are two **spies**, members of the cult acting as extra guards on this important day. Their shortswords are hidden in the sofas. A skirmish in the entryway (Area 4) brings one to assist the veterans, while the other runs to warn Rathsys, the rattok demon, in the shrine (Area 8).



## 7. KITCHEN

*Several ratfolk and others move about the kitchen, preparing a meal. Rats scurry among the pots and pans, nibbling from the food as it is being prepared.*

Four **ratfolk** and seven **commoners** prepare for the ritual and the festivities to follow. They are too busy to be bothered with questioning the PCs, unless the alarm has been raised by others in the club.

## 8. SHRINE

*This inner courtyard is littered with trash but also decorated with statuettes, emblems, carvings, and other totems dedicated to rat-kind. Dead felines are nailed to the walls of the courtyard. A jade idol of a demonic rat rests in the courtyard's center. Several human figures, sporting long red robes, prostrate themselves before the idol. Next to the idol, a small demon jibbers and prances. On the other side of the idol, a ratfolk wielding a bone wand chants along with the demon.*

If Jeeb escaped, the bone-wielding **ratfolk warlock** is here. If not, the warlock is another recruit of Rathsys, the **rattok demon** (*Creature Codex*, p. 90) at the center of the cult. Four of the prostrate figures are **nobles**, lured by the promise of power and coin to this odd cult.

### Developments

Rathsys orders the warlock and nobles to attack immediately. When the first combatant dies, the idol glows with a sickening purple light. At the second death, the idol glows brighter. At the third death, rats stream from the walls and form a **rat king** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 318), which attacks the intruders with gusto.

### Treasure

The jade rat idol itself is worth 500 gp. Rathsys' hoard—buried in a pit in the courtyard—includes 350 gp and a *cloak of protection* that the demon could not attune to.

## CONCLUSION

If the PCs run into trouble, Treniece might arrive with some city guards to help in the fight—especially if they accidentally summon the rat king through their slaughter of the enemy.

With the cult uncovered in this area, they might earn the thanks of the city for a job well done or there could be further threats posed by worshippers of Chittr'k'k elsewhere.





# CAVERNS OF THE HOWLING MOON

A serpentine lamia lair suitable for four or five 4th-level characters

## BACKGROUND

Meziwah [MEHZ-eh-wah] is a **matriarch serpentine lamia** (*Creature Codex*, p. 249) who, through intermediaries and proxies, leads a large consortium of merchants across several cities. Her snake-like body scares some, so she remains secreted away, keeping her enterprise running smoothly while enjoying the fruits of her labors in private.

At the height of every full moon, however, Meziwah succumbs to the hedonistic madness of her kind. For that one night, she takes up residence in a series of caverns she secured just for this purpose. Her merchant network is invited to join her in a festival of the senses.

This night of madness, unfortunately, includes a violent culmination. Enemies of Meziwah and her consortium—rival merchants, uncooperative tradespeople, interfering adventurers, etc.—are invited to the festivities to play a central role: death at the hands (and fangs) of Meziwah's servants.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

A merchant with whom the PCs have had interactions in the past invites them to join her for a celebration, presented by the leader of a merchant consortium. This invitation might ask the PCs to act as bodyguards, or be guests, or serve as a way of being introduced to the consortium's rich and powerful leader for potential work.

Whether this merchant is honest or deceitful depends on the direction of your game. She might be complicit in the deception and happenings at the caverns, or she might be horrified to see what occurs there. She could be an innocent needing protection or a full participant in the atrocities.

## HOWLING MOON CAVERNS

When the PCs arrive at the Howling Moon Caverns, they see an abandoned mine entrance.

### 1. ENTRANCE

*This cave was once an active mine, but it has been played out. Fresh red paint on the rock wall above the entrance reads “Howling Moon Caverns.” A cart of food and drink—fine ales and wines as well as fresh bread and expensive cheeses—sits by the entrance.*

The food and drink are laced with slow-acting, intoxicating poison. The “regulars” know this and avoid the food, unless they are noncombatants—then they make a full meal of it, relishing the intoxicating effects. The poison doesn't take effect until those that eat or drink it enter combat for the first time after ingesting it. When such a creature enters combat, it must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature gains one level of exhaustion and has disadvantage on Wisdom and Charisma saving throws until it finishes a long rest. On a success, the creature feels light-headed and finds things a little more humorous than normal but is otherwise unaffected.

### 2. PIT CAVERN

*Steep steps lead down a passage to a cavern with a pit in the center. Nicely dressed people carrying food and drink circle the pit. Their finery seems out of place among the dirt and rocks of the cavern.*

Seven **commoners** and five **nobles** occupy the room, enjoying the refreshments while waiting for the “entertainment” to commence. Four **guards** patrol the room, keeping the occupants safe—while also keeping the people who will provide the entertainment (whether they know it or not) from leaving (see Developments).

**Northwest Shelf.** Climbing to the 10-foot-high shelf in the northwest corner of the cavern requires a DC 5 Strength (Athletics) check using the ropes. On the shelf is a shaft leading down. Shining a light down the shaft reveals a deep pit full of hundreds of snakes of various sizes. The shaft is home to many snakes that serve Meziwah.





An unlocked chest in the corner of the shelf contains valuable gems and jewelry worth a total of 400 gp. All of the jewelry has motifs of snakes or moons.

## Developments

When the “entertainment” begins, a pair of **commoners** are shoved into the pit by the guards. Moments later, two **Zanskanan vipers** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 354) writhe out of cracks in the pit walls and attack the innocent people. The pit is 10-feet deep. A PC can climb down the walls with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Alternatively, a PC can jump into the pit and land on its feet without taking damage or falling prone with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

If the PCs take actions to rescue the people in the pit or interfere, the guards attack and attempt to push the PCs into the pit as well. After one viper is defeated, a **scitalis** (*Creature Codex*, p. 321) emerges from the shaft on the shelf, slithers down the ropes, and joins in the fray in the pit.

## 3. THE WIRBELN COLONY

*This cavern teems with colorful spiral-shaped fungi. Most are rooted in place on the floor or walls, but some of the strange fungi hover at eye level. A few revelers wander the room, some staggering as if drunk, and a few others pacing madly with panicked looks in their eyes.*

This cavern is at the edge of a wirbeln fungi colony. The sentient fungi have fostered a symbiotic relationship with Meziwah. She provides food and company, and they provide security for the lair when she’s away.

Two yellow and two purple **wirbeln fungi** (*Creature Codex*, p. 166) patrol the cavern. They attack only if attacked first. They



periodically use their spore cloud on assembled groups. The revelers await this eagerly, as they seek the strange effects the spores have on them. They call it “going sporing.”

The passage to the east leads to the main colony of the wirbeln. Only Small or smaller creatures can squeeze into the tight passage, but the main colony does not welcome trespassers.

## 4. GAMES

*More revelers fill this room. Tables on the western wall hold cards, dice, and other equipment for games of chance. A game of darts is just getting started on the eastern wall.*

Alter the goings-on here as you see fit if the “entertainment” already happened in Area 2. People in this cavern are ignorant of the violence and continue with their games.

The characters can take part in some games of luck and skill, perhaps making a few coins in the process.

- A PC that wants to play a game of cards or dice must make a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check followed by a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check. A PC that fails one check loses 5 gp. A PC that fails both checks loses 15 gp. A PC that succeeds on both checks wins the game and gains 20 gp.
- A tournament of darts is starting. A PC that wants to join the tournament must pay 50 gp. A PC in the tournament must make three consecutive successful ranged attacks against AC 8 to win the preliminary match and recoup the entry fee. In the next match, the PC must make three consecutive successful ranged attacks against AC 14 to win 30 gp. In the final round, the PC must make three consecutive successful ranged attacks against AC 18 to win the tournament and an additional 70 gp.

**North Chamber.** The chamber to the north of the main chamber is decorated with a sign saying, “The Most Beautiful Statue in the World: Kiss for Luck.” An intricately carved marble statue of Meziwah rests in the northwestern corner of the chamber.

If a creature kisses the statue, it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 6 (1d12) psychic damage. If a creature is charmed by Meziwah and fails this saving throw, it takes 13 (2d12) psychic damage instead. On a success, the creature gains advantage on its next attack roll, ability check, or saving throw.

The magic of the statue can be temporarily suppressed with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Meziwah, who has a magical connection with her statue, becomes angered if the statue’s magic is suppressed and sends two **Zanskanan vipers** to investigate. The magic of the statue returns after 1 hour.

## 5. GUARDS

*Steps lead down from the game chamber into an area where even more finely dressed individuals mill about, chatting with each other and looking at pieces of art hanging on the walls. Flanking the opening to a passageway leading north are two suits of plate armor. A line of revelers stands before the “guards,” as if they are waiting to enter the chamber beyond.*

The two “guards” are **animated armor**, and each holds a **swarm of poisonous snakes** inside it. When a suit of armor is defeated, the swarm of poisonous snakes inside it pours out and attacks.

The nobles and merchants here wait for their turn to meet the hostess, hoping to curry favor with the leader of the consortium. The guards await Meziwah's command before allowing anyone access to the chamber where she entertains her guests. If the PCs attempt to push through the line, the suits of armor block the passage. Further attempts to enter the chamber cause the guards to attack.

## 6. MEZIWAH

*A strange creature with the torso of a human woman and the lower body of a snake holds court in this chamber. An underground stream cuts through the eastern edge of the cavern, disappearing into a passage fully submerged in water. Several revelers stand transfixed, staring either at the serpentine creature or a body in the water, thrashing and struggling to stay afloat.*

Meziwah, a **matriarch serpentine lamia** (*Creature Codex*, p. 249), charms creatures here, then watches as the three **grindylovs** (*Creature Codex*, p. 210) in the water drown victims she sends their way. The grindylovs are members of a larger tribe of the creatures that reside in the stream. They have an alliance with Meziwah that is mutually beneficial: they protect the stream entrance to the area, and she brings them fresh victims.

The six **nobles** here are either charmed by Meziwah or intoxicated by the food and drink, leaving them incapable of doing anything other than stare. If the combat is too easy for the PCs, you might have Meziwah order a charmed noble to assist her in battle. Alternatively, if the combat is proving more difficult for the PCs, you can have a noble break out of its stupor and aid them.

If Meziwah charms a PC before open hostilities occur, she instructs the PC to kiss the statue in Area 4, taking the PC out of combat for a few rounds.

The grindylovs use their mimicry trait to make it sound like people are drowning in the water. If a PC enters the water to search for people to rescue, the grindylovs attack and attempt to drown the PC.

**Stream.** This stream is 10 feet deep, requiring a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to remain afloat and move. Two dead bodies are resting on the bottom of the stream already. A moored boat rests on land at the edge of the stream. As an action it can be pushed into the water to assist in the battle.

### Developments

If the guards in Area 5 were not defeated already, they rush to Meziwah's aid after a few rounds of combat. Meziwah does not want to die. To secure her safety, she surrenders before getting close to death or she might use the stream to swim to safety, where it is hard for the PCs to follow. Being a powerful mercantile and political force in the area, Meziwah might try to bribe the PCs to let her live in return for wealth and power.

## CONCLUSION

If the PCs defeat Meziwah, there is a noticeable decline in disappearances of people, especially around the time of the full moon. Unfortunately, Meziwah belongs to a large organization of serpentine lamia in the area, and, if the PCs killed Meziwah, those lamia eventually catch wind of their sister's death at the



hands of the PCs. An assassin or two might be dispatched, and, if those fail, the lamia might take more forceful means of revenge.

The wirbeln fungi are happy to make a new deal with someone other than Meziwah, ensuring that they can stay in the caverns without fear of encroachment. The strange fungi may not understand the humanoid world very well, but they can be powerful allies.

A note on treasure: how much the characters can get for the treasures from the caverns is up to you. Several of the revelers are wealthy nobles and merchants, and the statuary and paintings within could be worth a good bit of coin. If the PCs insist on taking everything, many of the art objects here could have been stolen by Meziwah, and the rightful owners would appreciate their return. Taking the coin, jewelry, and other possessions from the nobles and merchants could lead to further trouble when the PCs attempt to sell them.



# PAYING THE SHADOW TOLL

A shadow goblin lair suitable for four or five 4th-level characters

## BACKGROUND

Hurkl the **shadow goblin** (*Creature Codex*, p. 191) was a particularly unexceptional specimen of his kind—until he found his destiny (or vice versa) one fateful day traveling along the Dancing Shadow Path between two shadow roads. Hurkl's master, a lieutenant of the Moonlit King, led his troops into an ambush set by a rival band of shadow fey. Only Hurkl and a **shadhavar** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 344) mount survived.

When the cowardly shadow goblin emerged from his hiding place to search the area, he found the valuables of both forces decorating the ground. Among the assorted coins and weapons was a *wand of fireballs*, which the goblin quickly learned how to trigger. He also nursed the shadhavar back to health, earning the creature's loyalty.

Within weeks, Hurkl's growing sense of empowerment, his powerful new wand, and his dangerous shadhavar ally earned him a few shadow goblin followers. They established a base in the forest along the Dancing Shadow Path, forcing travelers to hand over some of their valuables in order to pass. This "shadow toll" has given Hurkl's band of shadow goblins a growing reputation in the area.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

The PCs are asked to hunt down a **shadow fey pattern dancer** (*Creature Codex*, p. 147) called Jaffmin who escaped from a local town's authorities after she was caught spying. It is important that she is captured alive, because she holds valuable information. The sheriff is willing to pay 500 gp to a group bringing her back.

She was last seen moving toward the nearest shadow road. As the PCs pursue her, they come upon a standoff between Jaffmin and the shadow goblins of Hurkl's army. When the tension is at its highest, a **shadow fey knight of the road** (*Creature Codex*, p. 146) approaches, seeking to claim the shadow fey bounties on the heads of both the goblin leader and the pattern dancer.

## DANCING SHADOW PATH

The PCs approach the lair from the south, following the trail of Jaffmin.

### 1. CLEARING

*The thick foliage and underbrush choking the path up to this point thin out into a clearing. A few felled trees and exposed rocks mar the otherwise flat, clear landscape along the path. Despite the day's wonderful weather, clouds hang above this stretch of the forest, leaving the area dim.*

The presence of the nearby shadow roads casts a pall over the area. The PCs' view of the standoff (Area 4) is blocked by trees and rocks. They must move past the pit trap before they can see what is happening. They also must move stealthily from this point forward if they want to escape the notice of the hidden shadow goblins in Area 2.

**Goblin Pit Trap.** A cloth piled with grass and dirt covers a pit in the pathway (represented by "pit" on the map). When a creature or creatures weighing 100 pounds or more step on the cover, it collapses and drops all creatures in the pit's area into the pit. The pit is 20 feet deep and creatures that fall into it take falling damage. A creature must succeed on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to climb out of the pit.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check discerns the edges of a green cloth that has been piled with grass and dirt and covers a pit.

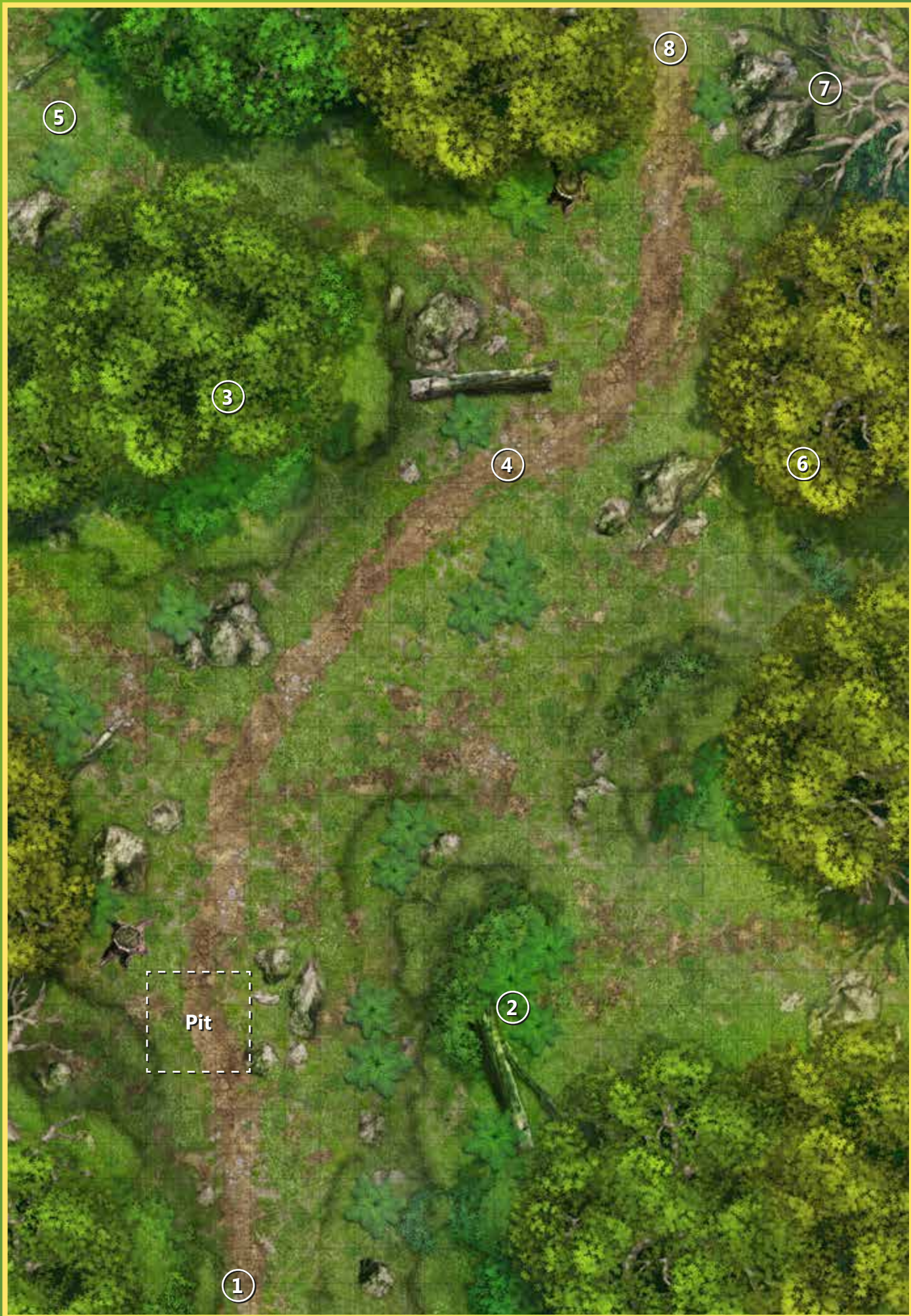
### 2. LOOKOUTS

Six **shadow goblins** (*Creature Codex*, p. 191) hide in the foliage of a felled tree. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to see them. However, their attention is focused fully on Jaffmin, so PCs have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to move past them.

### Developments

These shadow goblins wait to see how the standoff in Area 3 plays out. They are just as likely to flee as they are to attack,





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although they try to follow the commands of their leader, Hurkl, to the best of their (cowardly) abilities.

If the PCs hide and watch the situation instead of taking an active role, you can spur them into action by having these goblins throw knives at them. If the PCs trigger the pit trap in Area 1, these goblins attack those who didn't fall.

### 3. TREE BARRAGE

Thirty feet up in this oak tree, a **shadow goblin** named Wriith sits holding a sack. Within the sack is a **swarm of insects** she has meticulously collected and trained over the weeks she has worked for Hurkl.

When she decides it is time, Wriith hurls the sack into a space within 30 feet of the tree. The swarm of insects then emerges to attack a creature in that space.

Wriith watches gleefully as the insects bite and sting the creatures below her. If the insect swarm is defeated, Wriith is distraught and furious. She hurls herself out of the tree at the creature who struck the final blow to the swarm (or the nearest ally of the perpetrator). The target must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. If the target is more than 30 feet away from the tree, it has advantage on this saving throw. On a failure, the target takes 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone as Wriith crashes into the target. On a success, the target takes half the damage and isn't knocked prone as Wriith's dive doesn't connect quite how she wanted. Wriith lands prone within 5 feet of the target whether it succeeds on its saving throw or not. She then gets up and viciously attacks the creature that struck the final blow to her swarm.

### 4. STANDOFF

*Standing on the path, wielding a shortsword, is the escaped shadow fey dancer. She holds very still, looking to the north. An enormous brown bear stands in front of her, growling and swiping with its razor-sharp claws at a log fallen beside the road. A trio of dusk-skinned goblins lie bleeding out at her feet.*

Jaffmin the **shadow fey pattern dancer** (*Creature Codex*, p. 147) was attacked by Hurkl and his troops when she refused to turn over any treasure, because she has none. She killed the three goblins at her feet with her blade, but she also took a *fireball* from Hurkl's wand before the cowardly shadow goblin retreated on the back of his shadhavar mount.

On the other side of the fallen log are four **shadow goblins**, ordered by Hurkl to remain there and parley with Jaffmin until the leader can figure out what to do. They are currently terrified by the *major image* of a brown bear that Jaffmin is concentrating on. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check after interacting with the bear reveals it to be an illusion.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that Jaffmin's arms and torso are burned quite badly. The PCs can notice the goblins behind the log with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check.

### 5. HIDING

**Hurkl the shadow goblin** sits with his **shadhavar** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 344) mount in a clearing off the main path. He retreated when he saw how easily Jaffmin took out three of his goblin followers. Hurkl has no idea that one more solid strike from his *wand of fireballs* would have taken down Jaffmin.

Hurkl is currently having a crisis of conscience: he wants to kill the troublesome shadow fey trying to cross his territory, but he is also not a big fan of dying. He is hoping that his followers can take care of the problem, but he also knows he has to put himself in danger again.

If Hurkl emerges from hiding on his shadhavar mount, read:

*A shadow goblin riding a unicorn emerges from the thicket of the forest. He clutches an arcane wand.*

The shadhavar is using its *disguise self* to appear as a unicorn, which might slow down area attacks that include it. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check after interacting with the shadhavar reveals the disguise.

### Development

Hurkl uses his mount's speed to his advantage, popping out to use the *wand of fireballs* and then riding away. The wand only has two charges left, but Hurkl does not know that.

### 6. FALLING TREE

A **shadow goblin** called Brak hides here, waiting to spring a trap when the time is right. Brak has chopped away at the base of the tree, and it is now only being held up by a rope. If Brak uses an action to cut the rope, the tree falls into the path, covering a 30-foot-by-30-foot area just south of the fallen log in Area 4.

If Brak does this, read:

*A loud twang, like that of a rope breaking, echoes from the east. It is followed immediately by a cracking and splintering sound. One of the large oaks of the forest falls across the path.*

**Falling Tree.** A creature in the path of the falling tree must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage, is knocked prone, and is pinned by branches. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and isn't knocked prone or pinned. A pinned creature is restrained and can't stand up. A creature can take an action to make a DC 10 Strength check, ending the pinned state on a success.

## 7. REINFORCEMENTS

Six more **shadow goblins** hide behind a pair of boulders, waiting to see how the standoff plays out. These goblins comprise Hurkl's elite guard (AC 14, 18 hp), and they do not run away from battle. If Hurkl emerges from hiding to attack, they do as well.

## 8. ARRIVAL

When you feel the time is appropriate, the situation is complicated by the arrival of Jesserry, a **shadow fey knight of the road** (*Creature Codex*, p. 146). She has heard that a bounty has been placed on the heads of both Hurkl and Jaffmin by the courts of the shadow fey, and she is moving to intercept the pattern dancer before the dancer escapes to the Shadow Realm.

As Jesserry arrives, read:

*Hoofbeats drum a sharp and steady rhythm from the north. Atop a dark steed sits a shadowy figure in an elaborately decorated breastplate. She levels a wickedly sharp lance and speaks. "Well, this looks like a situation that could use a little sorting. It's a good thing I am here. Sorting is my specialty! Everyone should drop their weapons, spell components, and general hostilities."*

Like the PCs, Jesserry has instructions to bring back Jaffmin alive—except that her bounty is being paid by the Queen of Night and Magic (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 192). Hurkl, on the other hand, can be brought back to the queen dead.

Jesserry is less conniving than Jaffmin, but just as self-assured and haughty. If both are given the chance to manipulate the PCs, they make promises of treasure and power that they can provide the PCs if the PCs assist one side or the other. Neither, of course, follows through on any promises in the long run, turning on the characters as soon as they are back in a position of power.

For his part, Hurkl also pleads with the PCs for his life if it comes to that. He is less convincing than the shadow fey, but he is much more earnest.

## CONCLUSION

This lair can end in a variety of ways, meaning it can spark further adventure. If the PCs end up siding with any of the three (Hurkl, Jaffmin, or Jesserry), those shadow creatures can be prompts for further quests. Doing this embroils the characters in the machinations of the fey lords and ladies.

Hurkl's treasure trove is hidden beneath a boulder just off the trail. It contains 275 gp in coins, 450 gp in stolen goods, assorted nonmagical weapons, and two *potions of healing*.

If the PCs kill or capture all three, they can go about their lives as usual—until, of course, the masters of Jaffmin or Jesserry learn what happened. The shadow fey may send out assassins or other servants to make life difficult for the PCs. Little is more dangerous than having the enmity of a powerful fey creature!





# SWEPT AWAY

A wind's harp devil lair suitable for four or five 6th-level characters

## BACKGROUND

No one in town knows who created the Obelisk of a Thousand Runes. Even the oldest elf says the great monolith was there when her grandmother was born. As far as folks are concerned, it has been there forever. A few hours' walk from town, the obelisk is deemed a symbol of good luck for those who make the trek to touch it. Since it's not on a main thoroughfare, it only gets visited by those specifically seeking it. But many do.

The granite obelisk rises over 100 feet in the air, thinning and tapering to a point near the top. One face of the monolith contains etched runes that even the most knowledgeable scholars could only guess at the origins or meaning of.

While the obelisk shows no obvious magical effects, the locals insist that if you touch one of the monolith's runes immediately before an important occasion in your life, your endeavor is blessed with good luck. The higher the rune's placement on the obelisk that you touch, the better the luck—or so it's said. On any given day you might find people hoisting pregnant women onto their shoulders to touch a rune higher on the obelisk. An engaged couple might climb the obelisk on the night before their wedding. Merchants about to embark on long journeys or craftspeople opening new businesses bring ladders to get as much luck as possible. A few intrepid youngsters have climbed to the top before leaving home on their adventures.

Unfortunately, the area around the Obelisk of a Thousand Runes was recently claimed as the new home of a wind's harp devil. The bizarre fiend's presence has drawn a menagerie of twisted creatures that share an affinity for wind. As their first act of aggression against the land around them, they toppled the obelisk and disrupted a wedding ceremony taking place there.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

While the PCs rest in town or travel along the road, a woman on horseback rides into town at a panicked gallop. The woman, a leatherworker called Geornie, tells a tale of the scene at the Obelisk of a Thousand Runes when she left: a dozen people were attending a wedding ceremony at the obelisk when a terrible gale began out of nowhere. The wind tossed people around like dolls,

and the great monolith began to tip. She rode away as fast as she could to seek help and escape the maelstrom.

## THE OBELISK OF A THOUSAND RUNES

The obelisk is located on a plateau, clear of many trees and other major foliage. A shallow, spring-fed stream runs across the path here. It is only a few inches deep where it crosses the path but deepens as it travels along the plateau. The path from town to this area is only dirt, but it has been beaten into a serviceable road by the frequent travel of visitors to the obelisk.

As the PCs approach the obelisk, they can get a general view of the area. Read:

*The path southward through the rolling countryside ascends slowly to the wide top of a large plateau. Tall grass covers the plateau while a few apple trees and berry bushes grow near a small stream flowing across a footpath.*

*Chunks of granite of various shapes and sizes are spread throughout the tall grass. Each piece has runes etched into one face. To the south, across the stream in a well-trod area, is a stump of rock emerging from the ground. Several humanoid bodies, all very still, lie near this protruding rock.*

The action does not begin until the PCs cross the stream. If they try to fly or teleport into the area, they are greeted by the storm spirits (see Area 2).

### 1. THE CROSSING

*The stream is only a few inches deep where the path crosses the water. A strong breeze picks up, rustling the leaves of the trees and bushes. The violence of the wind increases steadily.*

One **wind weasel** (*Creature Codex*, p. 375) hides in its whirlwind form, appearing as leaves dancing in the wind above the stream. Four **giant shockwing moths** (*Creature Codex*, p. 179) hide in the berry bushes and leaves of the apple trees. The wind weasel and the shockwings attack when a PC steps into the water or crosses the stream.







At your discretion, a PC standing in the water when it takes lightning damage from the shockwing could take an extra 2 (1d4) lightning damage, or the PC could have disadvantage on the saving throw to avoid the lightning damage from the shockwing's Charged trait. As the creatures are defeated, their forms dissolve to dust and are blown away on the wind.

## 2. REAPING THE WHIRLWINDS

In the clearing between the stream and the base of the monolith, ten **storm spirits** (*Creature Codex*, p. 350) protect against intruders. The wind's harp devil instructed them to make sure no one approached Area 3 without its permission—and the PCs certainly don't have its permission. Read:

*As the road curves south, the wind turns to blow directly against anyone approaching the obelisk's resting place.*

Moving east and west does not cost extra movement but moving south is considered difficult terrain. A creature moving north, either on its own or because it is forced to, moves an extra 10 feet. For example, if a storm spirit uses its tempest action to push a target north, the target is pushed 20 feet instead of 10 feet.

A creature that makes a ranged weapon attack roll at a target south of it has disadvantage on the attack roll, and a creature that makes a ranged weapon attack roll at a target north of it has advantage on the attack roll. Magic that controls wind or weather can eliminate the wind completely for the rest of this adventure. Alternatively, druid PCs or PCs who worship wind or weather deities could, at your discretion, call upon nature or entreat their gods to intervene.

## 3. THE WEDDING PARTY

*A well-worn path encircles an area that holds a stump of granite and a few rows of chairs. Two humans, a man and a woman dressed in fine clothes decorated with flowers and lace, rise with a jerking motion, leaves and rose petals dancing around them. Similarly, a woman dressed in priestly vestments rises between them. A small, cloaked figure sits behind the priestess and plays a strange, disconcerting tune on a large harp.*

The wedding party comprised the bride and groom, humans named Aplynn and Hrobert, and several attendants and family members (**commoners** lying on the ground that are unconscious but stable). Overseeing the ceremony is an **acolyte** named Sister Jatrice. The three “moving” people here are unconscious but stable, being held aloft by three **wind weasels** in whirlwind form. The cloaked figure is a wind demon (*Creature Codex*, p. 93), and the harp is, of course, the **wind's harp devil** (*Creature Codex*, p. 105). A second **wind demon** hides among the rows of chairs nearby, waiting for the wind's harp devil's signal to attack any intruders.



A PC watching the grim pantomime of the wedding play out can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. On a success, the PC realizes that the three humans are alive but unconscious, and that their actions are being manipulated by creatures hiding in the wind.

If the bride, groom, priestess, or any of the wedding party lying on the ground are damaged, they die. The wind's harp devil wants to have a little fun with the townsfolk before killing them, and, after the PCs arrive, it hopes to trick the PCs into accidentally killing the innocent people.

### Developments

If the PCs continue to watch and not act, the wind weasels make their unconscious puppets take violent actions against each other, such as slapping and kicking with flopping limbs. A PC watching this has advantage on its Wisdom (Insight) check to determine the humans are being manipulated.

The wind weasels might grow impatient and manipulate their puppets into making aggressive motions toward the PCs to increase the likelihood the PCs will attack the innocent victims. Alternatively, the wind weasels or the wind demons might grow tired of the whole charade and attack the PCs out of boredom.

Once all pretenses of subterfuge are removed, the wind demons, wind weasels, and wind's harp devil attack directly, hoping to knock the PCs unconscious and play with them next.

## Aftermath

Even after dealing with the fiends here, the PCs have one more challenge to overcome. The devious wind's harp devil has etched a magical trap into one of the unconscious wedding guests, which could bring a gruesome end to all of the innocent victims even after the devil is defeated.

**Trapped Guest.** An unconscious guest has been trapped with a *glyph of warding* spell. The explosive runes of the glyph are triggered when the guest stands up or is lifted to a standing position. When the trap triggers, the trapped guest explodes, killing it instantly in a crack of thunder. Each creature within 20 feet of the guest must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 22 (5d8) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that a wedding guest has blood on its shirt that looks like a specific pattern. Opening the shirt reveals a rune etched into the guest's flesh. The rune can also be found with a *detect magic* spell. The rune can be deactivated with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check or destroyed with a successful *dispel magic* (DC 13) cast on the guest. Alternatively, magical healing can close the wounds on the guest and eliminate the rune.

## Treasure

The wind's harp devil acquired a small amount of treasure before establishing its lair here. Buried at the base of where the obelisk once stood are 10 diamonds worth 50 gp each, 2 *potions of greater healing*, a *potion of animal friendship*, and a *wand of secrets*. There is also a map to another landmark in the area where people often congregate, but it is not clear why the devil had this map.

## CONCLUSION

If the PCs manage to save everyone, the father of the bride, a wealthy merchant from the town, offers each character 100 gp as gratitude. Any divine characters might be asked to oversee the marriage ceremony at a later date, and any offspring from the marriage might be named after one or more of the characters. If one or more people died, the situation is more somber. Smaller rewards might be offered by some of the townsfolk for stopping the spread of further evil.

For further adventure, the wind's harp devil might have been sent to the obelisk by a master that needed the great monolith toppled because its protective powers were hindering a larger invasion. The townsfolk could ask the PCs to find a way to reconstruct the obelisk themselves or go out in search of a powerful creature who can do it. The wind's harp devil's master would not want this to happen and would send more minions to interfere. The area detailed on the wind's harp devil's map may have something to do with the mastermind behind these terrible deeds.





# ICE MAIDEN'S KISS

A snow hag lair suitable for four or five 7th-level characters

## BACKGROUND

Mother Rime, a **snow hag** (*Creature Codex*, p. 214), lives north of a small fishing village in the cold and barren wastes. The villagers do not know her true nature. She is cunning enough to make them think she is a beneficent figure, even as she, year after year, secretly brings trouble and strife to the population.

A year ago, Mother Rime stole a young girl named Bruffa from her fisherfolk family, bringing the girl back to the lair and eating her, as snow hags are known to do. Just recently, Bruffa was born again from Mother Rime as an **ice maiden** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 254). Unlike others of her kind, however, the new incarnation of Bruffa is not evil by nature. She retained a bit of her humanity, although spending too long under the tutelage of Mother Rime will eventually drive that out of her.

Just a few days ago, after birthing the ice maiden version of Bruffa, Mother Rime went back into the village. This time she stole three children: Dove, Kallik, and Jermini. She was seen, however, leaving the vicinity with the children, and the townsfolk are confused as to why the kind Mother Rime would take children.

Mother Rime intends, with Bruffa's help, to turn these children into *ursa polari* to join the one that currently serves her as a terrible lair guardian. With an army of four of these mighty monstrosities, Mother Rime could wipe out the village, completely dominating this area for years to come. Bruffa, however, cannot bear to see these children harmed. The conflict between her humanity and her new form rages inside her.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

The PCs are asked by the fisherfolk villagers to travel to the home of Mother Rime, which is rumored to be an ice-choked cove a mile's boat ride from the village. The villagers are poor, but they offer the PCs 50 gp and the indefinite hospitality of their village, if the PCs can bring home the children and learn what led Mother Rime to take them away.

If the PCs ask the villagers about Mother Rime, they speak of a gentle and wise hermit who lives by herself in an icy cove. She visits once a year, bringing her medicines and toys for sale. She

only stays one day, and then returns to her cove until next year. The villagers say no ill word against Mother Rime, for the snow hag hides her treachery well. The villagers do admit that people go missing frequently in the area, but such is the lot of seafaring people in the icy environs. They do not know that Mother Rime is responsible for many of these missing folks.

An expert sailor named Helusta offers the use of her boat if the PCs require it. She even volunteers to pilot the small fishing vessel into the area free of charge. As winter sets in, the cold weather, the dangerous terrain, and the prowling monsters on the tundra make getting to the area overland practically impossible. The waters to the cove have not yet frozen over, so that path is the safest.

## MOTHER RIME'S LAIR

Mother Rime lairs in a secluded cove that ices over in the winter. Mountains and other dangerous terrain make the cove inaccessible by land travel, but it is easy to sail into the cove.

Because winter is approaching, the water of the cove is frigid. A creature in the icy water must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw each round or take 3 (1d6) cold damage. Each minute a creature remains in the water, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion. If a creature finishes a long rest near a warm fire, it removes one level of exhaustion gained from being in the icy water. Creatures with resistance or immunity to cold damage or creatures naturally adapted to living in arctic water automatically succeed on this saving throw.

The water leading into the cove is calm and still. A creature without a swimming speed can swim in it with a successful DC 5 Strength (Athletics) check, despite its biting cold. An icy sheen covers the beach here, making movement on land difficult. The ice is considered difficult terrain. If a creature uses the Dash action while on the ice, it must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone at the end of its movement.

Because of the approaching winter, the daylight in this area provides only dim light. At night there are fires in the caves just west of the beach, providing dim light on the beach.



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## 1. GHOUL ATTACK

*The cove rolls into sight above the calm water. No signs of life are apparent on the shore, but a series of caves behind the beach could hold life. As the boat pushes forward toward the shore, an icy blue hand rises from the water and grasps the edge of the boat.*

While still far from shore, the PCs encounter Mother Rime's first line of defense. She turned many of the villagers she has taken into undead creatures that guard the approach to her cove. Currently, seven **ghouls**, remnants of former fisherfolk she killed, swim the waters outside of her cove.

A creature that succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check isn't surprised by the ghoulish attack. The **ghouls**, as specialized variants created by Mother Rime, have a swimming speed of 20 feet, and they are adapted to the chill of the arctic water. They are not strong enough to capsize the small fishing boat. Instead they climb onto the deck of the ship to attack or cling to the side of the ship and attack those near the edge. A paralyzed PC, however, might be dragged into the water by a ghoulish, forcing the other PCs to mount a very cold rescue.

### Treasure

Each of the ghouls carries what they did in life. Some carry fishing gear in small tackle boxes on leather belts. One ghoulish wears a locket that contains a drawing of her children. Another wears a silver wedding band, and his widow, still back in the village, wears its mate. These items hold little monetary value if sold, but the sentimental value to the villagers is great. These trinkets also prove that Mother Rime is more than what she appears.

## 2. URSA POLARIS

If the PCs survive the ghoulish attack, their trip gets even more dangerous as they approach the shore. Mother Rime's personal **ursa polaris** (*Creature Codex*, p. 364), which she calls Berg, floats placidly just off the beach. When he does this, he is almost indistinguishable from a small ice floe. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that one of the ice floes is actually a dangerous creature.

### Developments

One round after Berg attacks the PCs, the **metee-kolen-ol** from Area 3 assist the **ursa polaris**. Each **metee-kolen-ol** takes cover behind one of the ice slopes and lobs whatever spells it thinks will assist Berg the most. The **metee-kolen-ol** do not come down to the beach to help Berg directly—even if the bear appears to be losing the fight—preferring to harass the PCs from a distance.

### Treasure

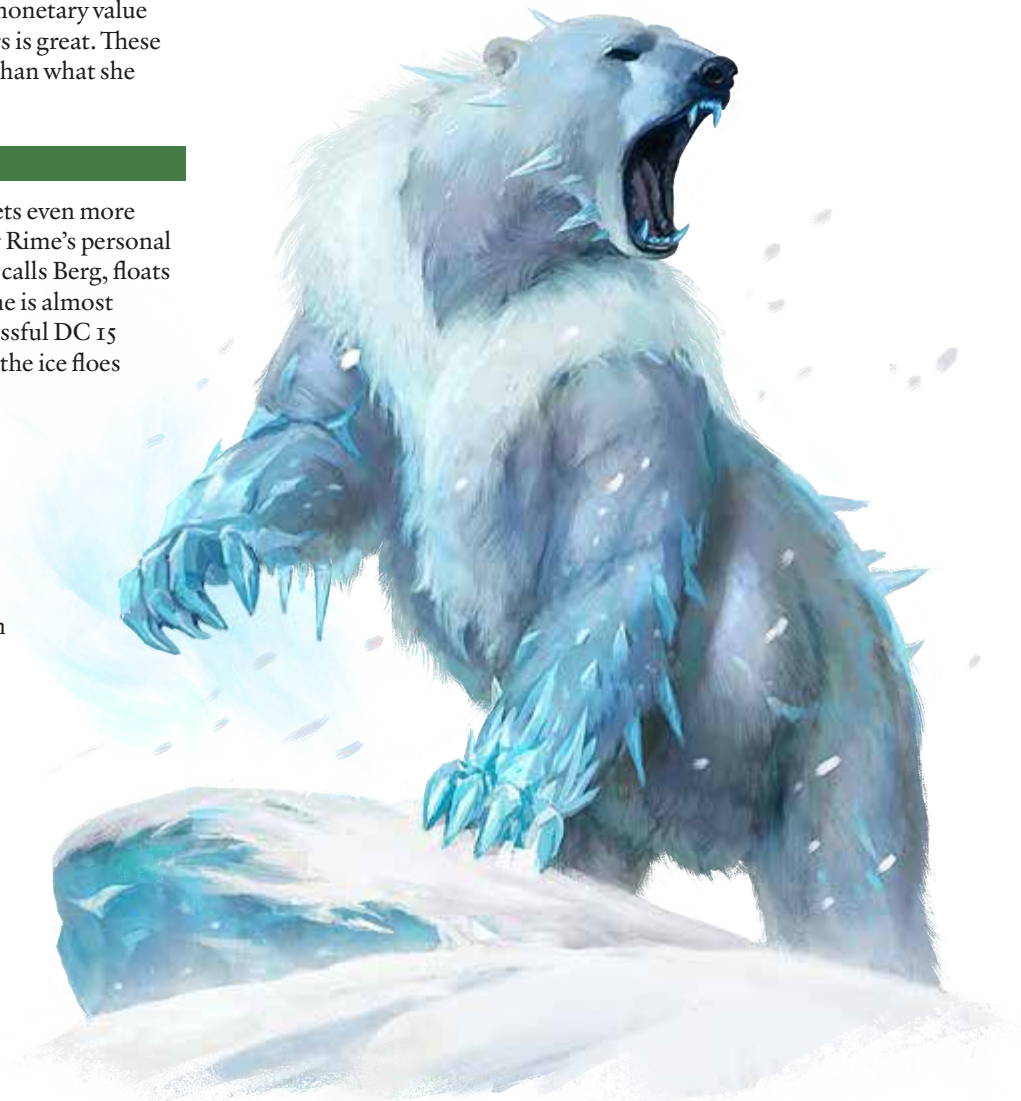
Berg's pelt, if fashioned into magic items by a master leatherworker, could be made into a *cloak of protection*, *boots of the winterlands*, or a *+1 leather armor of cold resistance*. Otherwise the pelt would be worth up to 750 gp if taken to a city with merchants looking for exotic fur.

## 3. MOTHER RIME'S HANDMAIDS

Three **metee-kolen-ol** (*Creature Codex*, p. 404) were offered up by another nearby community to serve Mother Rime in exchange for her protection and mercy. The snow hag ordered them to guard the beach as she prepares for her important ritual. The creatures hide behind the sloping, 10-foot-high ice ridges, which provide three-quarters cover against attacks from the beach, and they use the **exploding shard traps** to their advantage. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check is required to climb the icy, east-facing slopes of the ridges.

**Exploding Shard Traps.** The flat areas between the ice ridges are trapped with magically exploding shards of ice (represented with a "T" on the map). When a creature first enters the trapped area, it must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) piercing damage and 11 (2d10) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The magic of the trap automatically resets after 1 minute.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots magical runes that have been etched into the ice. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check made as an action while within 30 feet of a single trapped area suppresses the magic of the trap for 1 minute, allowing creatures to cross the area without triggering the trap.



## Developments

Mother Rime and Bruffa are discussing the fate of the three children in the caves to the west of the area represented by the map. When you deem it dramatically appropriate, they can emerge (as discussed in Area 4 below).

## Treasure

The three metee-kolen-ol carry a total of 250 gp worth of tiny ice diamonds. One of them also carries a *potion of greater healing*.

## 4. THE ICE MAIDEN'S DILEMMA

With all the disturbances on the beach, Mother Rime the **snow hag** (*Creature Codex*, p. 214) and Bruffa the **ice maiden** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 254) are aware that intruders are present. Bruffa emerges first to see what is causing the commotion, followed closely by Mother Rime.

## Developments

If Bruffa exits the cave while the characters are still fighting the metee-kolen-ol, she immediately begs all parties to cease hostilities. If the PCs continue to fight, Bruffa joins the battle against the PCs. Each time she attacks, however, each PC must make a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check. On a success, the PC realizes that Bruffa does not want to hurt anyone, but the violent actions of the PCs are spurring her on.

If Bruffa exits after the metee-kolen-ol have been killed, she angrily orders the PCs to tell her what they have done and why they are here. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check pacifies her, at least momentarily, but she demands answers to her questions and will attack the PCs if they refuse to answer.

How the combat plays out is at your discretion and depends on the roleplaying of the PCs. Mother Rime emerges and tries to convince Bruffa that the PCs are a threat and need to be eliminated before they hurt the children. The snow hag tries to counter any PC arguments by telling Bruffa that the children are ill, and that she needs to perform a ritual to save their lives and to make them stronger.

In general, you can play out the scene with the PCs making Charisma checks opposed by Mother Rime's Charisma (Deception) checks. Make sure to give advantage or disadvantage based on roleplaying and good logical reasoning. As a guideline, if any PC uses the mementos gained from the ghouls as evidence against Mother Rime, the PC gains advantage on the Charisma checks. Similarly, if the PCs withhold information or do not mention they were sent by the fishing village, they have disadvantage on the Charisma checks.

**Success with Bruffa.** If the PCs can convince Bruffa that they are no threat and that the children are in danger from Mother Rime, Bruffa agrees to return to the village with them. Mother Rime is furious, but she knows she is no match for the party

without the assistance of Bruffa. She flees across the tundra, taking advantage of her Ice Walk trait and the incoming winter.

**Failure with Bruffa.** If the PCs cannot convince Bruffa of their good intentions and Mother Rime's evil ones, Bruffa joins the snow hag in attacking the PCs.

## Treasure

In the caves, in addition to the children, are 800 gp worth of coins, gems, jewelry, and art—loot stolen from passing ships and local settlements. Mother Rime also stored away a *+1 wand of the war mage* that she had yet to attune to.

## CONCLUSION

If the children are returned to their families, the village is ecstatic. The elders of the community order a celebration to honor the PCs, who not only saved the children but also defeated a terrible threat.

If Bruffa returned with the PCs, she is slowly but inevitably accepted into the community and, after a time, evolves to become a true guardian of the village. However, the cold heart of an ice maiden beats in her chest and fighting the magic that created her could prove too much for the young woman. She might even seek the PCs' aid in curing her affliction at a later date.





# KING OF ILL FORTUNE

A kobold king lair suitable for four or five 8th-level characters

## BACKGROUND

In a ruined, abandoned tower said to be cursed by its creator, a **kobold king** (*Creature Codex*, p. 239), going by the appellation King Qalqat, gathers kobold followers in a bid to establish his own realm. A dragonborn **war chaplain** (*Creature Codex*, p. 410) named Brustival, a traitor to her people and wanted fugitive, has joined King Qalqat's court as an advisor. A squad of dragonborn bounty hunters moves on the Tower of Ill Fortune, determined to bring Brustival to justice.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

The local authorities have put out a wanted poster with a sketch of Brustival, a dragonborn who is wanted alive in relation to a series of attacks on pilgrims traveling the roads of the area. Survivors of the attacks relate that the dragonborn focused her attacks on priests, clerics, and acolytes of deities that she claimed “did not represent the true faith of the land” and “allowed discord and chaos to seep into the realms.” The authorities want her alive because it is believed she knows more about a conspiracy brewing in the land. A 500 gp reward is offered if she is brought in alive but only 50 gp if she is returned to the local sheriff dead.

Brustival was last seen in the badlands west of the city, near a ruined tower known as the Tower of Ill Fortune by the locals. A wizard built the tower a century ago, and rumors said he did terrible magical experiments there. Local legend tells that there was an explosion at the tower that could be heard over 100 miles away. People who went to investigate found only a ruined tower, its rubble strewn for miles. The wizard was nowhere to be found.

The area around the Tower of Ill Fortune has also been teeming with kobolds as of late. The creatures have kept to themselves, fleeing when spotted, but there is worry in the city that they are gathering. The locals worry that increased kobold activity might mean a dragon has taken residence nearby and is using the kobolds as servants.

## TOWER OF ILL FORTUNE

The remains of the Tower of Ill Fortune rest atop a terraced hill, carved out of the land to provide defense against attack. The sheer cliffs behind the tower limit access to it. The long, winding stone steps to the southeast provide the easiest access to the tower.

Each sheer cliff is 20 feet high and requires a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) checks to climb. A creature climbing the cliff with climbing gear has advantage on this check. A creature standing within 5 feet of the cliff's edge has disadvantage on Dexterity ability checks that require balance and on Dexterity saving throws due to the loose, treacherous footing. The stairs, though an easier climb, also present their own hazard.

**Treacherous Stairs.** The stairs were carved into the cliff face long ago and haven't been maintained. A creature that ascends or descends the stairs must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw as some of the steps give way. On a failure, a creature takes 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone as it slides to the bottom of the stairs. On a success, a creature takes half the damage but isn't knocked prone and doesn't slide down the stairs.

**Prevention.** The crumbling, treacherous steps can be found with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check. If they are spotted, they can be avoided while ascending or descending the stairs. The kobolds have found the safe paths and avoid the dangerous steps when traversing the hill.

During the day, the area is brightly lit by sunlight. At night, the area is dimly lit by the lanterns, torches, and bonfire kept by the dragonborn besieging the tower. The height of the cliffs prevents creatures from a lower tier seeing the happenings of the tier above.

The walls of the tower that remain standing are 20-foot high. Nothing remains of the upper floors, and the interior of the tower is open to the sky. At night, no light emerges from the tower, although the noises of kobold chattering and stones being moved and stacked echoes from it.







## 1. DRAGONBORN SIEGE HEADQUARTERS

*A tall hill rises in terraces toward a ruined tower at its summit. Steep stone steps carved into the cliffs provide access to the terraces up the hill. At the base of the first set of stairs, several dragonborn sit around a cart that has been turned into a makeshift table. A purple pennant made from coarse sackcloth snaps atop a lance next to the cart. Twelve warhorses, snorting and pawing at the dirt, are secured to trees a short distance from the group of dragonborn.*

A troupe of dragonborn called the Order of the Coarse Pennant, a mercenary group known for their ferocity and willingness to do anything for pay, is laying siege to the tower. They are led by a **dragonborn edjet** (*Creature Codex*, p. 121) named Stanislaw. Brustival was once a member of the Order, but her religious mania caused her to betray her former allies. She saw them as insufficiently devout and too prone to chaos, an accusation Stanislaw finds insulting and inaccurate.

In addition to Stanislaw, the contingent from the Order of the Coarse Pennant includes a **dragonborn elementalist** (*Creature Codex*, p. 122), two **dragonborn heavy cavalry** (*Creature Codex*, p. 123), and eight **dragonborn light cavalry** (*Creature Codex*, p. 124).

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check reveals the identity of these dragonborn as members of the Order of the Coarse Pennant. They are known to be brutal and efficient, working for the highest bidder regardless of the ethical or moral nature of the work they do. The group numbers in the hundreds, so this is just a small contingent of the larger organization.



## Development

Since Brustival is a traitor to the Order of the Coarse Pennant, the mission of this group is her destruction. They are willing to work with the PCs for that purpose, and that purpose only. Any talk of capturing her alive and returning her to the city for trial or questioning is waved off. Stanislaw looks down on other races, and he does not hesitate to use threats and intimidation to drive the PCs away, resorting to violence if that does not work. He also orders an attack if the PCs attempt to move up the hill toward the tower, unless they agree to all of his demands.

A battle with the Order of the Coarse Pennant is difficult but not impossible. None of the dragonborn surrender, each happily fighting to the death for their group. A dragonborn that is knocked unconscious and allowed to live immediately returns to the main headquarters of the Order, which might spell trouble for characters in an ongoing campaign (see Conclusion).

## Sharing Knowledge

If the PCs try to gain knowledge of the area and situation from the dragonborn, they learn very little unless they join forces (or pretend to) with the Order of the Coarse Pennant. In that case, they learn the following:

- Brustival was a member of their group, a devout war priestess dedicated to the god of justice, war, and law. A few months ago she seemed to go mad. She claimed the Order had lost its way, failing to mete out justice and uphold the law to her exacting standards.
- She killed a few of the members of the Order when she fled. The group polices their own, so she must now die for her crimes.
- The Order has heard rumors that Brustival has been attacking clergy of other deities in the area, which allowed them to track her here. They believe she resides in the tower at the top of the hill.
- Kobolds are swarming around the area, which is the only reason the Order is hesitating in their assault. They have no doubt that they can defeat any obstacle before them, but they are taking it slowly.

## Treasure

If the PCs defeat the members of the Order of the Coarse Pennant, either here or at a later time in this adventure, they find the following treasure: a total of 75 gp in various coins and four *potions of greater healing* on the dragonborn cavalry and a *spell scroll of fireball* on the elementalist. Stanislaw also carries a golden badge of his office worth 100 gp.

## 2. KOBOLD AMBUSH

*A stream runs quickly north to south on this terrace. Large chunks of stone, likely from the ruined tower, litter the area.*

King Qalqat knows the dragonborn are here, and he has sent some troops to deal with anyone who climbs the steps to the first terrace. Tunnels have been dug leading down from the tower ruins to this level, allowing the small kobolds to move between them without being seen.

Eight **elite kobolds** (*Creature Codex*, p. 237) and two **swobolds** (*Creature Codex*, p. 240) hide behind stones and within the cracks in the cliff. They attack the first creatures to access the terrace.

The 3-foot-deep stream drifts along slowly but steadily. A creature in the stream has disadvantage on melee attack rolls.

**Tactics.** The swolbolds use their normal attacks, hurl opponents off the cliff to the ground below, or crush grappled foes while holding the creatures underwater. A creature that fails its saving throw against a swolbold's Crush action while being held underwater starts choking (see the Suffocating rules in the *System Reference Document 5.1*).

Two elite kobolds team up on their turns to use their picks to take advantage of the unstable cliff. A creature that fails its saving throw against the elites' Small but Fierce action while within 5 feet of the cliff's edge slides in a rockslide down the cliff and is knocked prone on the terrace below.

### Developments

The swolbolds fight to the death, but the elite are not as brave and foolhardy. If both the swolbolds and more than half of the elite are slain, the remaining creatures attempt to flee through the tunnels. Only Small or smaller creatures can use these tunnels and must squeeze to do so.

### 3. THE TOWER

Within the tower, Qalqat the **kobold king** (*Creature Codex*, p. 239) waits for his last stand in case the attack reaches him. The mad dragonborn **war chaplain** Brustival (*Creature Codex*, p. 410), who is convinced that Qalqat is a divine representative of her god of justice, stands at the kobold king's side. Peppik, a **kobold wizard** (*Creature Codex*, p. 241), also stands with the king. Four more **elite kobolds** act as personal bodyguards and stand in a circle around Qalqat.

**The Tower.** The area within the confines of the tower walls is difficult terrain, and the interior of the walls themselves are scorched. Runes etched into the remaining walls hint at some kind of powerful magic. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check determines that these runes were used in a ritual to summon and trap a powerful angelic creature in the tower. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a large stone on the ground amid the rubble. It is unblemished by whatever took down the tower and is carved with the same runes. Brustival, in her madness, believes the runes on the walls of Qalqat's chosen home are signs of his divine right to rule the area. Qalqat basks in this adoration, but Peppik knows the runes are magically holding something. He isn't certain if the runes are imprisoning a creature, an item, or some secret knowledge, and he hasn't been able to "unlock" the runes to release whatever they are holding.

A good-aligned creature who touches the stone on the ground and succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check can release the trapped **song angel** (*Creature Codex*, p. 20), who appears above the stone in a golden cacophony of heavenly music. If the creature touching the stone succeeded on the earlier check to recognize the runes on the walls, it has advantage on this check. The angel, disoriented by its long imprisonment and sudden release into combat, aids the one who released it. After combat, the angel thanks its rescuer and, at your discretion, speaks briefly with its rescuer. The angel might answer questions about the tower's history and how it was trapped, or it might ask its rescuer the current year and recent



events to learn how long it was trapped. What the angel tells the PCs, if anything, is up to you. If the angel has no reason to speak with the PCs, it vanishes in a flash of golden light and divine song after thanking its rescuer.

### Developments

This is a very tough encounter, which could be offset with the help of the song angel. Some of the dragonborn from the Order of the Coarse Pennant, either allied with the PCs or bolstered by the PCs' successful ascent into the tower, could join the fray as well, aiding the PCs in securing Brustival. The kobolds are all cowards once they are threatened and might also turn the battle in the direction of the PCs.

### Treasure

The kobold king might offer his *wand of fear* and *ring of free action* in exchange for his life. In addition, his crown is worth 250 gp, and his scepter is worth 500 gp.

## CONCLUSION

The PCs can return Brustival to the authorities, dead or alive, for the reward. If they ran afoul of the Order of the Coarse Pennant, other members of that group or the Order itself might seek revenge. Also, the main forces of the kobold king might have been elsewhere at the time of the attack, and they could harass the PCs in later adventures.



# TROLLKIN HUNT

A venom maw hydra lair suitable for four or five 10th-level characters

## BACKGROUND

The Red Craw Marsh, so called because of the delicious and plentiful red crayfish that live in the area, is a boon to the nearby village. More than a few intrepid souls brave the swamp each season to collect the crayfish. They either sell the crayfish to local establishments or ship them to nearby cities, where they earn a good price as the crayfish is a delicacy among the wealthy.

The villagers have established a tentative peace with a clan of trollkin that inhabit the swamp. The crayfish collectors pay a small fee to the trollkin, who allow them to ply their trade in the marsh without (much) interference. It is a tense but profitable relationship for all involved. A powerful creature has moved into the marsh, however, threatening the delicate balance.

When a venom maw hydra decided to move to the area of the marsh between the human and trollkin villages, it brought along a number of creatures that worship and serve it. This hydra and its allies have killed some of the crayfish hunters and some of the trollkin. Each side, unfortunately, believes that the other has broken the truce, thus stirring up animosity and putting both groups on the verge of war.

## ADVENTURE HOOK

The PCs hear that the village on the edge of the marsh needs adventurers. When they arrive, the villagers are in an uproar, fearful of a trollkin attack and itching to take the fight into the marsh. The town's village elder, however, preaches patience before sending all the able-bodied folk into the swamp to fight dangerous trollkin.

So far, five crayfish collectors have failed to return. The only witness to this is another collector named Hurm Fervit. He saw the dead bodies in the area of the Red Craw Marsh called White Willow Grove. A coward and a drunk, Hurm fled immediately. He did not examine the bodies of his peers, who were killed by the venom may hydra. When presented the opportunity to gain

free drinks and attention with his story, he concocted a narrative that sounds more dramatic: he claims that he witnessed trollkins attacking and killing the others.

The village elder wants the PCs to enter White Willow Grove and investigate. He wants them to scout and see why their trollkin neighbors might be on the warpath. He offers each character 50 gp for completing the task. If the PCs interview Hurm Fervit before leaving, a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals he is not being truthful. If the PCs press him on the matter, he reveals the truth: he saw the bodies from a distance but did not see any attacks, although he strongly suspects the trollkin are the perpetrators.

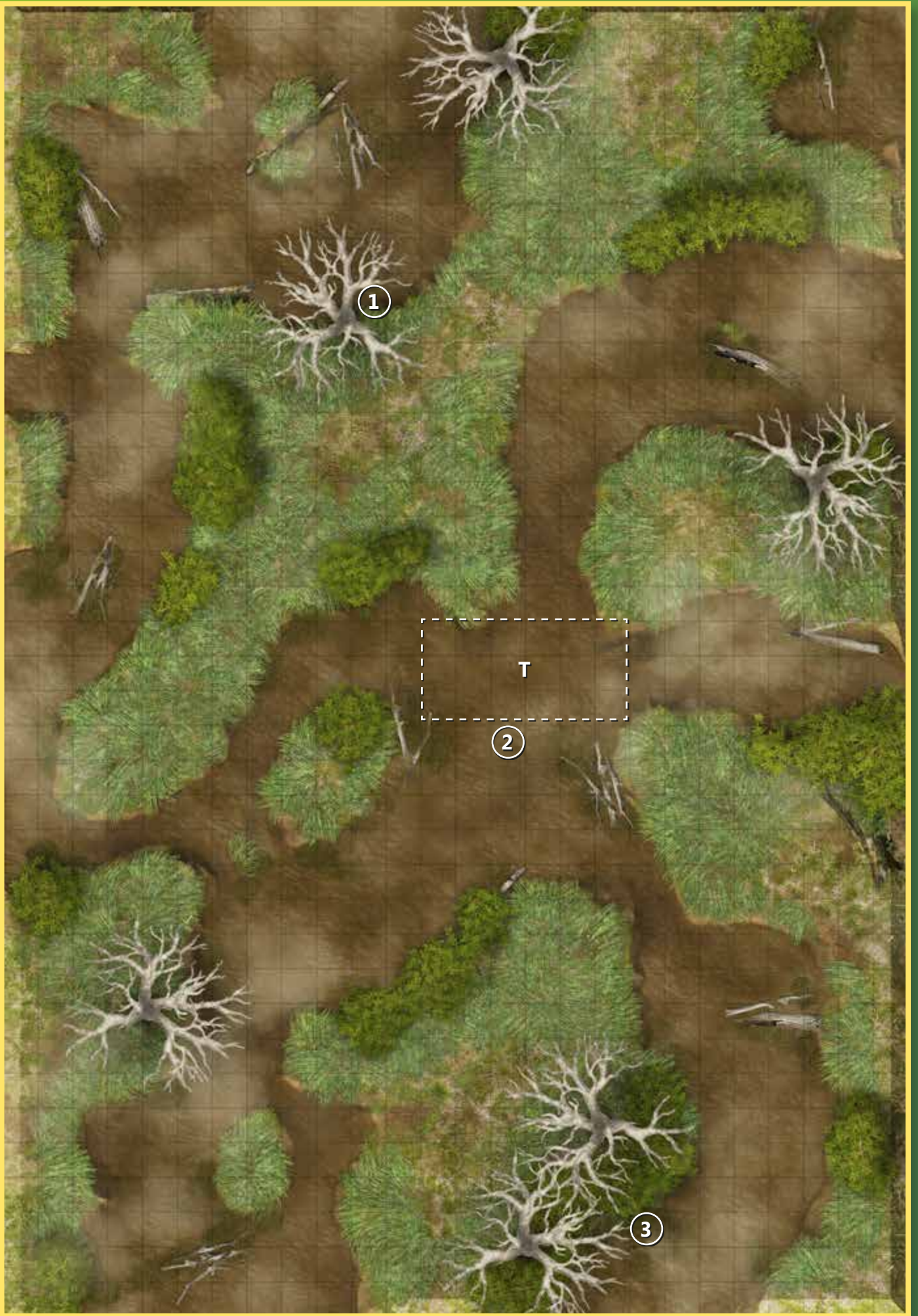
## THE RED CRAW MARSH

The Red Craw Marsh is a fetid wetland, overgrown with tall reeds and many exotic plants found only here. In places where there is enough land amid the water, tall willow trees thrive. White Willow Grove is the closest area to the village that teems with the much sought-after red crayfish, and it is a favored spot for collecting them.

For a majority of the marsh's terrain, the land (shown as green on the map) is interspersed with knee-deep muddy water (shown as brown on the map) that is difficult terrain for a creature that doesn't have a swimming speed.

As the PCs enter White Willow Grove (approaching from the top of the map), read:

*The land and muddy water alternate in this part of the marsh, making travel difficult. Mud coats everything moving through the marsh while humidity hangs in the air like a warm, wet cloak. The low-hanging branches of several white willow trees and the tall reeds of swamp plants obscure sight in the area. Nothing obvious prowls the landscape here, although the normally cacophonous insect chirps are silent near the willows.*





## 1. THE BODIES

*The ground beneath this tree is shielded from view by the low-hanging willow branches. Half buried in the mud and water are five human bodies and one trollkin corpse.*

The five humans from the village were killed beneath the drooping branches of this willow. A trollkin reaver who came to investigate the area later was killed nearby.

A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the dead were killed by a combination of acid and bites from a very large creature. It is obvious that the humans and the trollkin did not do this damage to each other.

**Creatures.** A group of six **lou carcolh** (Creature Codex, p. 257) hide in the muddy water to the east of the dead bodies. They watch from their hiding place until a good opportunity presents itself to attack.

**Sticky Strands.** Each of the lou carcolh has extended its sticky tongues into the area with the dead bodies. The PCs must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check while investigating these strands to recognize them as part of a living creature. Otherwise the strands look like some sort of plant. If a creature touches one of these sticky strands, it must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained as it adheres to the strand.

### Treasure

The human corpses hold no treasure. The trollkin wielded a +2 *battleaxe*, comprised of an obsidian head lashed to a highly polished mahogany handle. The entire weapon is intricately carved with symbols and decorations relating to the trollkin, his deeds, and his tribe.

## 2. SCRAG PACK

*A larger pool of muddy water rests in the center of White Willow Grove. Faint bubbles ripple along the top of the water. Shiny glints of gold, possibly the size and shape of coins, sparkle on the surface.*

The northernmost section of this mud pit contains a **mud pool geyser** (represented with a “T” on the map and detailed below). To the south of the geyser area, five **lesser scrag**s (Creature Codex, p. 322) lounge beneath the surface of the muddy water. The shiny objects on the surface are indeed 20 gold coins, hinting that more might be resting in the pool.

The scrag cannot see or hear anything happening on the surface, as they are resting. However, if the water is disturbed, they realize intruders are nearby. Similarly, the PCs cannot see or hear the scrag, but if the scrag start swimming or moving through the area, they reveal their presence.

**Mud Pool.** The muddy water in this area is deeper than in the other areas. Within five feet of land, the muddy water is five feet deep, but it is 10 feet deep further out from the land. A creature swimming through the muddy water must succeed on a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check each round it is in the mud pool to move where it wants. On a failure, the creature remains afloat but is unable to move to a different space. A creature with a swimming speed automatically succeeds on this check.

**Mud Pool Geyser.** A natural geyser sits near the center of this pool of mud. It erupts every couple of rounds in a shower of heated mud (treat as Recharge 6). Each creature in the area when the

geyser erupts must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage and is blinded until the end of its next turn. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and isn't blinded. The scrag know about the geyser and swim around its eruption area when possible.

**Geyser Mud.** A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that creatures covered with the geyser's mud are resistant to acid damage. Only creatures that are struck by the mud directly from the geyser gain this resistance. The mud hardens and flakes off after 1 hour unless a creature continues swimming in the mud around the geyser.

### Developments

The venom maw hydra (Area 3) hides beneath the long, drooping branches of the two willow trees. It watches any combat between the PCs and the scrag, studying the PCs with its limited but cunning intelligence.

If it looks like the PCs are easily overpowering the scrag, the hydra might sneak forward to attempt to scare the PCs away with an overwhelming assault. It cares nothing about its scrag servants and burns them with acid without pause.

### Treasure

Buried at the bottom of the mud pool is an open chest that fell from a pirate ship offshore. The scrag found it during a foraging expedition and dragged it here. The chest contains a total of 500 gp, which is now spread throughout the muddy pool because of the geyser. It takes 1 hour to collect all of the coins.

## 3. HYDRA

*A pair of huge, white willow trees dominate an island in the middle of a mud pool. Tied into the branches are carcasses of various swamp creatures: crocodiles, marsh deer, large cranes, and others. Many of these creatures are rotten and partially eaten. The stench of their decay hangs thick in the humid air.*

Unless the **venom maw hydra** (Creature Codex, p. 370) has moved forward to attack, it hides in the long branches of the white willows that hang to the ground.

Despite its size, the hydra is an ambush predator. It hides beneath the muddy water or within the willow branches, hoping to surprise intruders.

**Enemy of Nature.** Some of the creatures that the hydra and its followers killed and tied in the tree were favored by nature, which angered the spirits of nature. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check recognizes an almost shimmering presence of nature spirits beneath the branches of the willow trees. As a bonus action, a creature hostile to the venom maw hydra can call on these spirits with a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A PC with a connection to nature such as a druid, a ranger, a cleric of a nature deity, or a barbarian or warlock closely aligned with the natural world has advantage on this check. If successfully called, the spirits wrap the hydra in the branches of the willow trees, restraining it for 1d4 rounds. The spirits of nature can be called on only once.

### Developments

When the hydra first takes damage, it bellows in pain. Four **boloti** (Tome of Beasts, p. 38) who serve the hydra arrive at the end of the hydra's next turn, ready to defend their master. They

belong to a larger tribe that lives in a section of the marsh much further south, which worships the hydra as a god. Once the hydra is dead, the boloti flee back to their tribe.

### Treasure

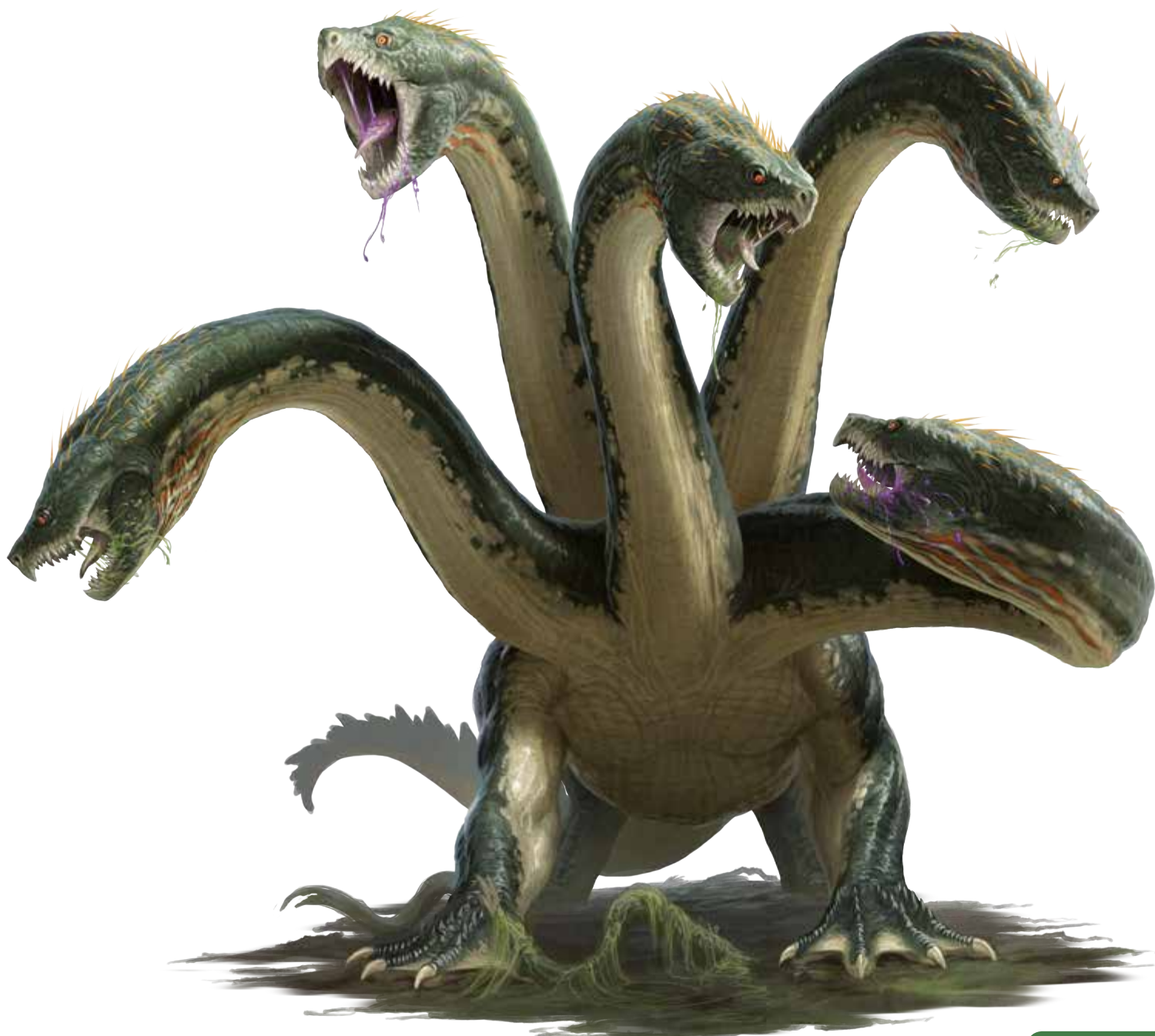
Three sacks, containing offerings to the hydra from the scraggs and boloti, are buried in a hollow at the base of the southern willow tree. One sack contains gems and jewels worth a total of 500 gp. A second sack contains intricately carved idols and statuettes of the hydra made of various stones, woods, and bones worth 700 gp to a collector. In the final sack are a pair of *boots of levitation* and a *+1 shield*.

### CONCLUSION

The boloti, if they successfully flee the area, want nothing to do with any creature that can kill their hydra god. After news

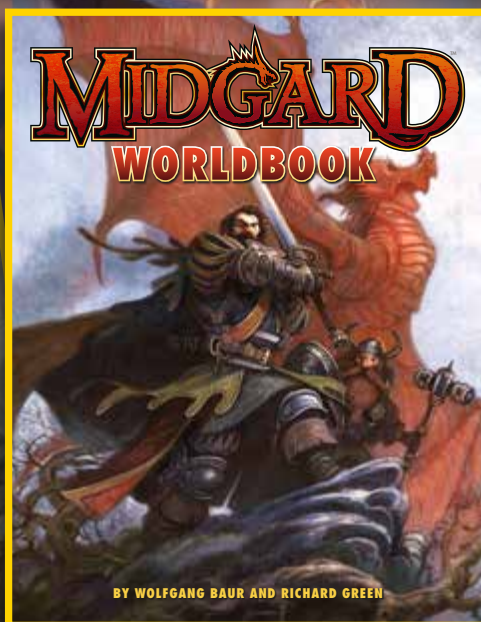
spreads to the tribe of the hydra's defeat, the tribe moves out of their southern, deep water section of Red Craw Marsh within 1 week. If the PCs follow the fleeing boloti, the whole boloti community runs away, immediately moving the tribe out of the area.

If the PCs rest in this area after defeating the hydra and its allies, four trollkin reavers (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 390) visit the area, looking for their fallen comrade. If the PCs took the *+2 battleaxe* that was next to the trollkin corpse in Area 1, the reavers assume that the PCs killed the trollkin to steal the weapon, and they begin the encounter hostile to the PCs. Having the PCs talk their way out of another fight, not to mention reestablishing the peace between the villagers and the trollkin, would be a fine diplomatic encounter worthy of true heroes. Or, if things go horribly awry, the PCs might actually cause further hostilities between the two groups.





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