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VILLAGE BACKDROP:  
LANTHORN



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# VILLAGE BACKDROP: LANTHORN

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*High up in the mountains, and often besieged by packs of murderous trolls, the village of Lanthorn stands as civilisation's last glimmering light in an otherwise bleak and barren mountain range. A strange alliance of wizards—the Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers—and a gaggle of (almost) civilised goblins—the Flaming Skull tribe—dwells in a bizarre atmosphere that is both scholarly and anarchic. Protected by high walls and gigantic magical lanterns imbued with portent fire magic, the wizards craft the mundane and wondrous items for which they are famed. Without the walls brave—or foolhardy—goblin “miners” search the nearby troll-haunted mines for lead and silver—some of which is reputed to have magical properties.*

*Designed for use with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game.*

## CREDITS

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## LANTHORN AT A GLANCE

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**Ruler** Ishme-Dagan

**Government** Council

**Population** 183 (38 humans, 139 goblins, 6 half-orcs)

**Alignments** LN, N, NE

**Languages** Common, Giant, Goblin

**Nomenclature (Human)** *male*: Adad, Enmul, Nergal; *female*: Irkalla, Ninki, Sabit; *family*: Isin, Larsa, Uruk, Zimbar.

**Nomenclature (Goblin)** *male*: Bak, Cri, Sij; *female*: Bel, Kark, Wid

Named for the great magical lanterns set atop its gates, and perpetually shadow-wreathed, Lanthorn clings to a cliff under a ponderous granitic overhang high up in Kuldor Pass. Here the winters are harsh and the summers brief. Sometimes cut off for weeks by driving snow or avalanche, it is an isolated place.

The heavily defended, fortified village controls traffic through Kuldor Pass and its lights mark civilisation's last glimmer before the untamed wilderness of the deep, troll-haunted mountains. Established a century ago by the Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers—a cabal of wizards obsessed with crafting items of portentous power—the village is renowned as a place for the wealthy to commission magic item creation.

Within its walls, an odd alliance of wizards and an atypically (almost) civilised goblin tribe work together to keep the ever-present trolls at bay. The goblins—inveterate scavengers—all—also explore the many nearby abandoned mines dotted through the mountains. Such work is too taxing, dangerous and dirty for the wizards or their trusted servants, but the goblins are at home in the mines' unending darkness. Although most such workings are played out, some treasure yet lie within. Chief amongst these is lead—much in demand among the low-land folk for its magic dampening qualities. Occasionally, silver is also brought forth from the mines; some such deposits have strange properties much coveted by Lanthorn's artificers.

### MARKETPLACE

**Resources & Industry** Mining, magic item crafting, hospitality

Lanthorn is renowned as somewhere to go to commission a skilled wizard to craft specific magical items. As such, some of the following items may be available for sale:

- **Consumables** *potion of hill giant strength, scroll of fireball*
- **Mundane** explosive oil (inflicts double fire damage; 2 gp/vial)
- **Wand** *wand of fireballs*
- **Weapons & Armour** *+1 sword, +1 shield*

However, the wizards of the Grand Conclave will not be satisfied with mere gold; no doubt they'll demand some service of the PCs—perhaps a trip into a certain troll-infested mine...

### LORE

A PC may know something about Lanthorn, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

**DC 10:** Lanthorn bars the troll-haunted Kuldor Pass; all those who would venture into the mountains must pass through its heavily defended gates. The village is named for the huge—reputedly magical—lanterns set atop both gates.

**DC 15:** The Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers—and their goblin allies—control Lanthorn. The goblins are surprisingly civilised and scavenge through the many played-out mines dotting the nearby mountains.

**DC 20:** Strange metals are sometimes brought forth from the mines. In particular, some of the silver found has certain properties making it much in demand by artificers.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Lanthorn, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1	The goblins of Lanthorn belong to the Flaming Skull tribe. The tribe is a matriarchy and they (mainly) live in peace with their human neighbours.
2	Deep tunnels run into the mountains from Lanthorn. In their depths, the goblins collect a special kind of oil that burns so hot water cannot extinguish its flames.
3*	The Grand Conclave are searching for a lost item of power in the mountains. What they intend to do with it is anyone's guess.
4	Travellers should be especially careful if they bring dogs or horses into Lanthorn; the goblins have not lost all their depraved hereditary habits...
5*	The Flaming Skull goblins resent the Grand Conclave's control of Lanthorn. They plot to overthrow the wizards.
6*	The trolls are too organised for normal trolls. Some powerful, fell force compels them to lurk in the deep darkness of the ancient mines to ambush those exploring their depths.

\*False rumour

## NOTABLE FOLK

The folk of Lanthorn fall into two categories: wizards belonging to the Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers and goblins of the Flaming Skull tribe. A few individuals are of particular interest to adventurers:

**Ishme-Dagan** (location 5; LN old male human **archmage**) A brilliant artificer, Ishme-Dagan is obsessed with creation. He ruthlessly destroys any threat (real or perceived) to Lanthorn.

**Marpa** (location 9; NE male goblin **mage**) Tired of the Flaming Skull's matriarchy, Marpa joined the Grand Conclave to make something of himself. He is its only goblin member to date. He struggles to keep his base nature hidden and hates trolls. He wants to make lots of *wands of fireballs*.

**Nank** (location 3; NE female goblin **spy**) This conniving "merchant" deals in anything as long as she gets paid. Her favourite sales involve fake treasure maps...leading directly to troll lairs.

**Oggor "the Thumper"** (location 8; NG male half-orc **druid**) Oggor loves the mountains' stark beauty. He stays in Lanthorn to tend the animals coming through its gates; he knows no one else will.

**Tuko** (location 4; LN female goblin **mage**) Tuko dreams of one day leading the Flaming Skull tribe. She's got big plans—mostly involving exploding trolls.

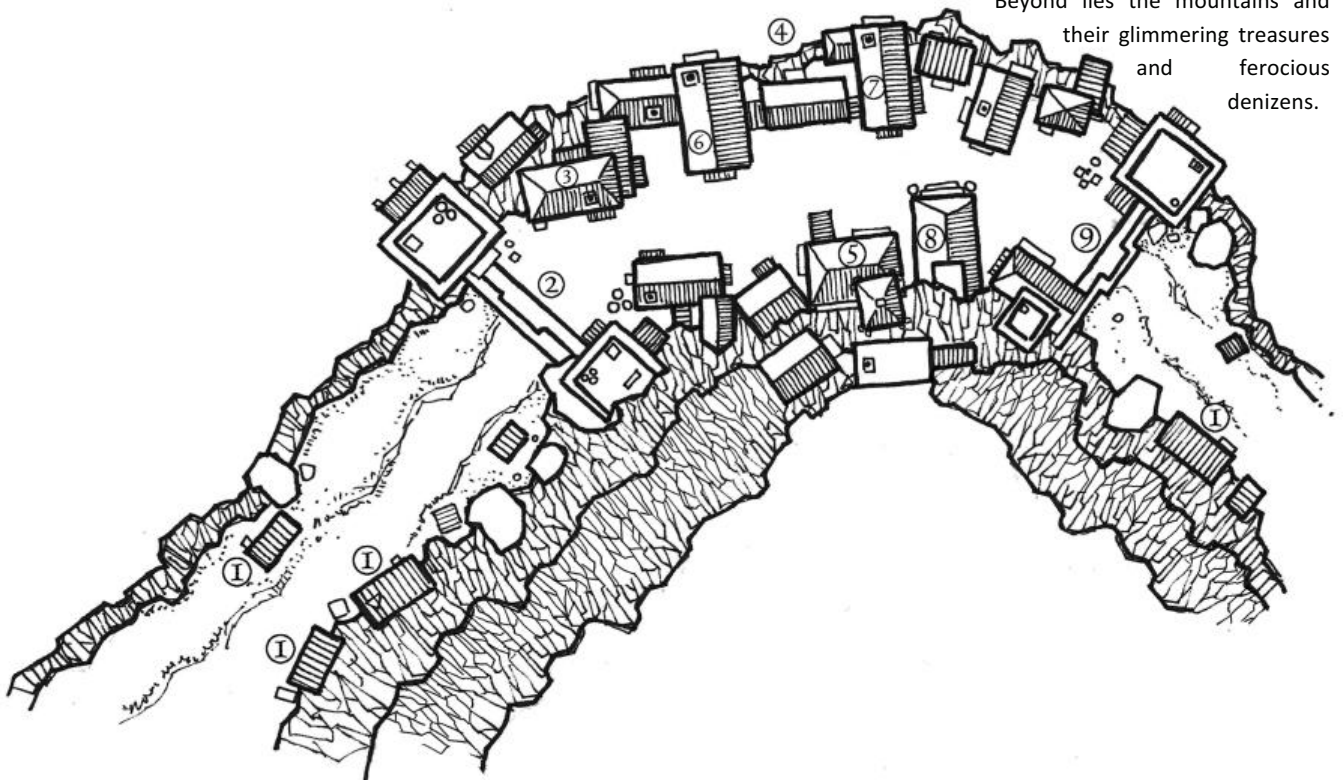
**Uurki** (location 6; N female **goblin boss**) An accomplished scout, she knows the nearby mines better than most. She's hard-talking and hard drinking (and phenomenally brave). She drinks (a lot) at the Smouldering Troll.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of Lanthorn comprises homes. A few locations, however, are of particular interest to adventurers:

1. **Refuge:** Lanthorn's gates close at dusk and do not open until dawn. Those caught outside can seek shelter in several buildings standing without the village's walls.
2. **High Gate:** High Gate is impressively fortified. Its southern tower is the highest building in the village.
3. **The Shadow Market:** Many goblins scrape a living running small stalls in the market. Here they sell whatever they've scavenged from the mines or stolen from unwary travellers.
4. **Caves of the Flaming Skull:** The bulk of the tribe dwells in a complex warren of cramped tunnels cut into the mountain.
5. **Hall of the Grand Conclave:** This rambling collection of buildings provides the Conclave with the space to carry out its works. Visitors can only enter if accompanied by a member.
6. **The Smouldering Troll:** An obviously magical sign depicting a smouldering troll corpse marks this place as Lanthorn's best inn. Here travellers find a warm welcome, good food and strong drinks all served by the exuberant, if occasionally larcenous, goblin staff.
7. **The Broken Blade:** This downmarket inn hosts a popular, and raucous, weekly fight night.
8. **Stables:** Lanthorn's only non-goblin run business, all dogs and horses must be kept here until their owners leave Lanthorn.
9. **Low Gate:** Low Gate is even more fortified than High Gate.

Beyond lies the mountains and their glimmering treasures and ferocious denizens.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: REFUGES

These sturdy, battle-scarred buildings are basic in the extreme. Designed for travellers who reach Lanthorn after the gates shut they offer shelter from the weather and protection from marauding trolls. Each building features a stout, barred door and a few narrow windows.

### 2: HIGH GATE

This overly stout gatehouse watches over Lanthorn's western approaches. The gate's supernaturally hardened wood bears scorch marks and its battlemented towers loom high over the approaching trail. The Grand Conclave have set here a large—reputedly sentient—magical silvery lantern to protect the gate. It has the power to call forth magical fire to scorch attackers.

### 3: THE SHADOW MARKET

Lanthorn has no typical assortment of shops; instead many goblins operate small stalls from the cramped rooms of these buildings. Prices are wildly inflated and haggling is rife. While the goblins—in the main—have managed to shrug off the worst of their racial heritage they are still devious and greedy. Notable stallholders include:

- **Bal** (CN male goblin **acolyte**) Bal offers basic healing services. He prefers to use traditional goblin methods—experimental surgery and cauterisation—wherever possible.
- **Nank** (NE female goblin **spy**) A vicious piece of work, Nank always has treasure maps for sale. Unfortunately, they all lead to troll lairs. She also seems to always have a good supply of “exploding oil” for sale.
- **Perg** (N male **goblin**) Perg buys and sells weapons and armour. Everything is guaranteed, but only until it's used.

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#### THE FLAMING SKULL GOBLINS

A few years after Lanthorn was founded, the Flaming Skull tribe was almost wiped out by their hated troll enemies. The few desperate survivors begged for shelter within Lanthorn's walls. The wizards, in need of servants brave or stupid enough to explore the nearby abandoned mines, took them in and thus an unlikely—and at the start uneasy—alliance was born.

Nine decades later, and atypically for goblins, the tribe has adopted some of civilisation's trappings. However, even now, they hate horses, loath dogs and love fire. Most remain stubbornly illiterate, but a few hoping to join the Grand Conclave—much to their fellows' disgust and derision—have taken their first faltering steps toward literacy.

### 4: CAVES OF THE FLAMING SKULL

This convoluted cave network is cramped and torturously maze-like. With deliberately designed narrow entrances, few wizards ever visit the goblins in their homes. Here dwell the bulk of the Flaming Skull tribe, in small family groups. Although the goblins have evolved a more refined, civilised way of life than their normal brethren the caves are still a glorious riot of disorganisation, mess and nauseating smells.

In the deepest section of caves, the goblins discovered a bubbling pool of particularly viscous, unstable oil. Devastatingly effective when used as a weapon, the goblins delight in using the oil to burn their trollish enemies.

- **Tuko** (LN female goblin **mage**) Tuko dreams of one day leading the Flaming Skull tribe. She's got big plans—mostly involving exploding trolls. She needs money to fund her dreams and is available—at the princely sum of 20 gp a day—to guide travellers through the pass. Somewhat of a liability, she refuses to hide from any trolls encountered and—depending on her mood—sometimes leads travellers into ambushes (so she can burn and explode trolls).

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#### THE GRAND CONCLAVE

The Grand Conclave of Sublime Artificers, a small guild of crafters and alchemists, founded Lanthorn a century ago. Its then master knew the history of the mountains and of the many ancient dwarf lead and silver mines therein. She was also in possession of fragments of certain elder texts that told of the mines' wealth and of strange silver deposits that could yet be found if one looked hard enough.

Of course, the perils of mine exploration were not lost on early guild members and the Grand Conclave constantly struggled to find enough freeswords, freebooters and adventurers brave enough to dare the troll-infested mountains. Thus, the arrival of the Flaming Skull goblins was met with cautious excitement among the forward-thinking Conclave members.

Now 30-strong, the Conclave is sought after for its skill at crafting items both magical and alchemical. Ironically, its members are best known for crafting lead-lined strongboxes (5 gp) and chests (10 gp) designed specifically for those with magical items to hide. Some particularly cunning artificers have even learnt the secrets of crafting excellent hollow locks (300 gp) coated in lead that can be imbued with virtually undetectable magical traps.

## 5: HALL OF THE GRAND CONCLAVE

Whereas the bulk of Lanthorn is turned over for travellers and goblins, the Grand Conclave dwell here in semi-isolated splendour. Most goblins never pass through the Hall's doors. Here the wizards, led by Ishme-Dagan (LN old male human **archmage**), eat, sleep and work. Their workshops and laboratories are crammed with items both magical and mundane.

The Conclave has many items for sale (see "Marketplace") and members often undertake commissions. However, payment for such services often involve an expedition deep into the troll-infested mines to retrieve the lead and silver languishing therein.

## 6: THE SMOULDERING TROLL

A sign enscribed to show wisps of smoke rising from a troll's scorched body marks this establishment as the Smouldering Troll. Widely accepted as the finest inn for 100 miles—competition for this honour isn't fierce—the Smouldering Troll offers a warm welcome to all. Here, the rooms are (relatively) clean, the drink is plentiful and the food (probably) won't give you food poisoning.

- **Food & Drink** meal ([burnt] mutton sausages, cheese [on the turn] and [hard] bread) 3 sp, weak ale 6 cp, wine (pitcher) 3 sp.
- **Accommodation** Two-bed chamber 10 sp; four-bed chamber 20 sp; common room 2 sp.

Gak (NG female goblin rogue 4), along with her extended family, runs the Smouldering Troll. Gregarious in the extreme—and a little over-excitable with new guests—she loves telling stories of her family's troll-baiting and troll-burning prowess. Sadly, she is not as good at running the Smouldering Troll as she is storytelling. Still at least she tries—who cares if the rooms are dirty, the food's often burnt and the home-brewed beer isn't as strong as it could be? It could be much, much worse.

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### TROLLS & MINES

Hunting through the mines is doubly dangerous. For along with the dangers possessed by the harsh conditions and all too frequent cave-ins a surprisingly numerous, and unsurprisingly violent, troll tribe claims the largest mine as their own. Drawn to the mines by some nameless compulsion, they prey on any they discover invading their domain. Among the folk of Lanthorn, mine trolls—as they are locally known—are universally considered even madder and more unpredictable than normal trolls. Consequently, "mining" expeditions into the mines are now either numerous and well-guarded or small, stealthy affairs.

## 7: THE BROKEN BLADE

The Broken Blade's offering is basic, but solid. Run by an old mercenary—Henk (NG male half-orc **berserker**)—the place is an homage to war and martial pursuits. Henk retired over a decade ago and has been here ever-since. He misses the excitement of battle, but not the blood, pain and mortal danger. He is popular with the goblins for organising weekly sparring matches held in the Broken Blade's common room. Such events are always well attended. Henk employs two obese bouncers—Torgan and Vrung (both N male half-orc **guard**)—and a small staff of goblins. Food here is basic—being little better than trail rations—but the drink is plentiful. The Broken Blade has no private rooms, but does boast several small dormitories suitable for groups of up to ten people.

- **Food & Drink** meal (hard biscuits soaked in mutton stew) 1 sp, ale 4 cp, sour wine (pitcher) 1 sp.
- **Accommodation** Dormitory 10 gp

## 8: STABLES

The only non-goblin run business in Lanthorn, all horses and dogs must be kept here while their owners are in Lanthorn. Animals escaping are often set upon by the goblins in an orgy of violence and slain. The goblins eat well that night.

- **Oggor "the Thumper"** (NG male half-orc **druid**) dwells here. A lover of nature in all its forms and a skilled healer, Oggor operates the stables on his own. He'd love to take on some help—he daren't leave the stables unattended for too long in case the goblins notice his absence and get hungry. However, he trusts no goblin to serve as a stable hand and few others seem interested in settling in Lanthorn. He's called "the Thumper" because that's what he does to goblins he finds in the stables.

## 9: LOW GATE

Even more heavily defended than High Gate, Low Gate bears the brunt of the trolls' attacks. Its thick iron-bound gates are secured with three wooden bars at dusk. They do not open again until dawn and woe-betide any caught outside after nightfall. Another particularly large silvery lantern—twin of the one atop High Gate—imbued with fire magic stands atop the north tower.

- **Marpa** (NE male goblin **mage**), the Conclave's only full goblin member, is often here. He loves exploding trolls and is never happier when he gets to blast them with the *Low Lantern's* fiery powers.

## LIFE IN LANTHORN

Life in Lanthorn is surprisingly ordered and peaceful. Visitors are reminded the goblin inhabitants have the same rights and privileges as its more “civilised” folk. The goblins are more exuberant and care-free than their wizardly co-inhabitants. In particular, the monthly festivals the goblins insist on celebrating are raucous affairs; serious injuries and (hilarious) accidents are common at these drunken, all-night affairs.

### TRADE & INDUSTRY

The folk of Lanthorn engage in several different industries.

Beyond the walls, the goblins provide guides for travellers and hunt through the abandoned mines for lead and silver. In Lanthorn the goblins run all the menial, mundane businesses (with the notable exception of the stables) servicing visitors’ needs in the village.

Meanwhile, the members of the Grand Conclave pursue their esoteric trades crafting not only magic items but also fine lead-lined chests, boxes, barrels and even vials for wealthy clients who wish to hide their magic from thieves’ divinations.

### LAW & ORDER

Violent arguments and assaults are rare in Lanthorn, although the goblin inhabitants sometimes revert to type and brawl among themselves or engage in petty theft from travellers.

All adult, able-bodied villagers are required to join the militia and take their turn walking Lanthorn’s ramparts. In practise, many wizards pay trusted goblin cohorts to take their places—something the goblins are only too happy to do as they relish the opportunity to burn trolls coming too close to Lanthorn’s defences.

### EVENTS

While the PCs are in Lanthorn, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	Just after dusk, a small merchant caravan approaches Lanthorn. The gates are already shut; the travellers must shelter in one of the refuges overnight.
2	As #2, but this merchant caravan is followed by a troll hunting party. In the depths of night, the trolls fall on the merchants, who are all slain if no one intervenes.
3	Two goblins argue in the street. Before long, they come to blows and a small crowd gathers to watch the fun. When the goblins’ friends join in, a high-spirited brawl ensues.
4	A goblin “miner” returns to Lanthorn literally bent double under a straining sack of lead ore. As he staggers toward the Hall of the Grand Conclave to sell his haul, the sack splits open and scatters ore on the ground. Within seconds, the unfortunate miner is at the centre of a writhing mass of goblins intent on stealing as much ore as possible.
5	The cloudless night is particularly cold. The goblins build a huge, oil-soaked bonfire and cavorting about it while drinking heavily. A carnival-like atmosphere develops and an impromptu series of races and wrestling matches provides entertainment.
6	Uurki enters the Smouldering Troll, carrying a bloody sack. She upends it on the bar to reveal a severed, scorched troll head. Gak wants it as a “nice decoration” for the bar and the two fall to haggling. Perceptive PCs may notice the troll’s eyes are still moving...





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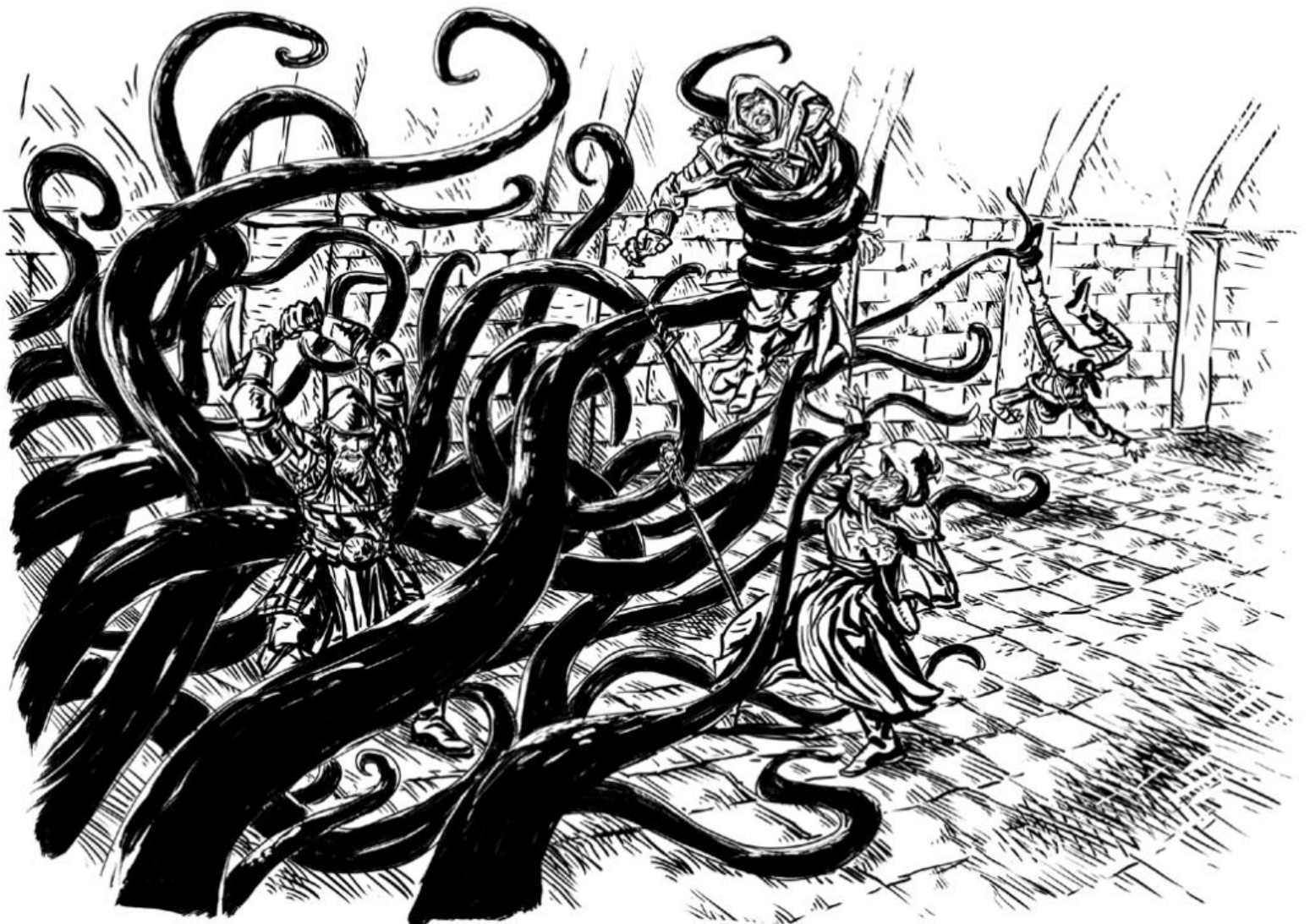
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