

ADVENTURE MODULE

BARON'S GAMBIT



**Swords
&
Wizardry**
BY MATT FINCH



BARON'S GAMBIT

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A SWORDS & WIZARDRY ADVENTURE FOR FOR CHARACTERS LEVEL 1 OR 2

INTRODUCTION

This adventure, for characters level 1 or 2, is intended to provide not only a good adventure but a strong starting place for an ongoing campaign (if the characters play their cards right). One of the pieces of advice I often give at conventions is this: a strong campaign is one that allows the characters to "change the map." In other words, the game is much more rewarding if the characters' activities have an actual effect on the world rather than having the world exist as an unchangeable backdrop. Changing the world is what heroes do, and most adventure modules (and, frankly, world settings) don't provide tools for this aspect of heroism unless the Referee builds deliberately builds it in — which I consider one of the hallmarks of a good Referee/DM/GM. So, Baron's Gambit is designed in the context of a changing environment — the baron is trying to create a small town, and there are several different ways for the characters to gain a stake in future events.

START OF THE ADVENTURE

In the small town of Cat's Cradle, you are summoned before Lord Scale, the town's new baron. By all accounts, Baron Scale is very intelligent and well-regarded.

"Let's get down to business right away. I'm offering you employment in a small task, for fair pay. There's a tiny village called Gambit near the border of my domain, about halfway between Cat's Cradle and the town of Five-and-Copper. I want to develop it into a trading post and a border fort, which means I need to build a bridge, the fort, and a warehouse. We've finished the initial surveying, and delivered supplies so the builders can get to work in two weeks. But we've run into some sort of problem, which I want looked into and taken care of. Three of my men-at-arms were left to guard the supplies, and now they are all dead. I want answers to what happened, and I want Gambit to be safe for workers and supplies. I'll be there in two weeks to supervise the start of work, and if you've made the place safe you'll receive a small plot of land in the village and ten gold pieces each. This fellow here" —he gestures toward a man wearing a rabbit-fur hood — "can guide you to Gambit. You won't be able to find it otherwise. Are we agreed?"

And as you know, it's a bad idea for nameless, landless adventurers to bargain with people who own their own prisons.

Your guide, a peasant named Yarcho, tells you that Gambit is a two-day hike, and you'd best all be ready to leave at dawn. If there is anything you need to buy, you should head to the market in Cat's Cradle before it closes down for the night.

BACKGROUND

The situation in Gambit is more complex than the players are likely to assume based on their briefing from Lord Scale. The village is near a ruined temple to a god of trade and industry by the name of Dre'uain the Lame, a temple that has been abandoned for seventy years or so. This temple secretly maintained a small workshop in a level below the cellars, which housed a dock on an underground river, a millwheel, and a workshop for making intricate statuary and stonework. The priests, however, were not the ones who sculpted their signature trade-goods. Rather, they relied upon a pair of extremely minor earth elementals who were gifted to the temple by a grateful wizard. These elementals are, like all elemental creatures, difficult to control, so the wizard left several scrolls of minor elemental control in the hands of the priesthood to ensure that the elementals did not break free and commit mayhem.

Now, however, one of the elementals has been freed by an outsider, a scholar by the name of Tshal the Knowledgeable. Tshal discovered part of the temple's secret and corresponded with one of the villagers, a man by the name of Ulpher. Tshal secretly visited Gambit and made his expedition to the temple, where he discovered the elemental, removed it from a form of stasis, and used his scroll incorrectly. The elemental, freed from its restraints and starved for seventy years, promptly killed the scholar and began looking for food. First it ate all the iron available in the temple, then it found a small cache of semiprecious stones owned by a villager named Yarcho (the guide who is bringing the characters to the village), and then the Lord's guards arrived with their supplies. The men at arms wore metal armor, and the heads of all the shovels and picks were fashioned from iron. The elemental killed the guards and ate all the metal it could. This is the event that brings the characters to Gambit.

1. Ulpher's Inn
2. Yarcho's Cot
3. Sheepwarder House
4. Charce Homestead
5. Fugue Cottage
6. Turnip's Nest
7. Storehouse
8. Abandoned Temple
9. Burnt House

VILLAGE OF GAMBIT



8



← Cat's Cradle

→ Copper-and-Five

THE JOURNEY TO GAMBIT

The characters might or might not assemble provisions in Cat's Cradle before setting off, and might also think to talk to Yarcho about the problem before leaving. They will presumably talk to Yarcho at some point, before or during the trip, to gather whatever information they can. To get this started, give them a bit of description of the journey; here is an example.

Yarcho leads you to a track that runs roughly alongside a river, starting the trek to the village of Gambit. The countryside gets wilder as you proceed away from civilization. Is there anything you want to do along the way before you arrive?

If the characters don't ask any questions, then fair enough. However, Yarcho has a piece of information that might or might not be of use. In addition to the briefing from the baron, he has his own gripe about the situation in Gambit. He kept a small bag of turquoise stones buried on his property, and the bag disappeared three days (Day 17 on the timeline) before the guards were attacked (Day 22). Yarcho tries to avoid questions about how he got a bag of turquoise stones. He's not going to get any of it back — the xarshe ate it.

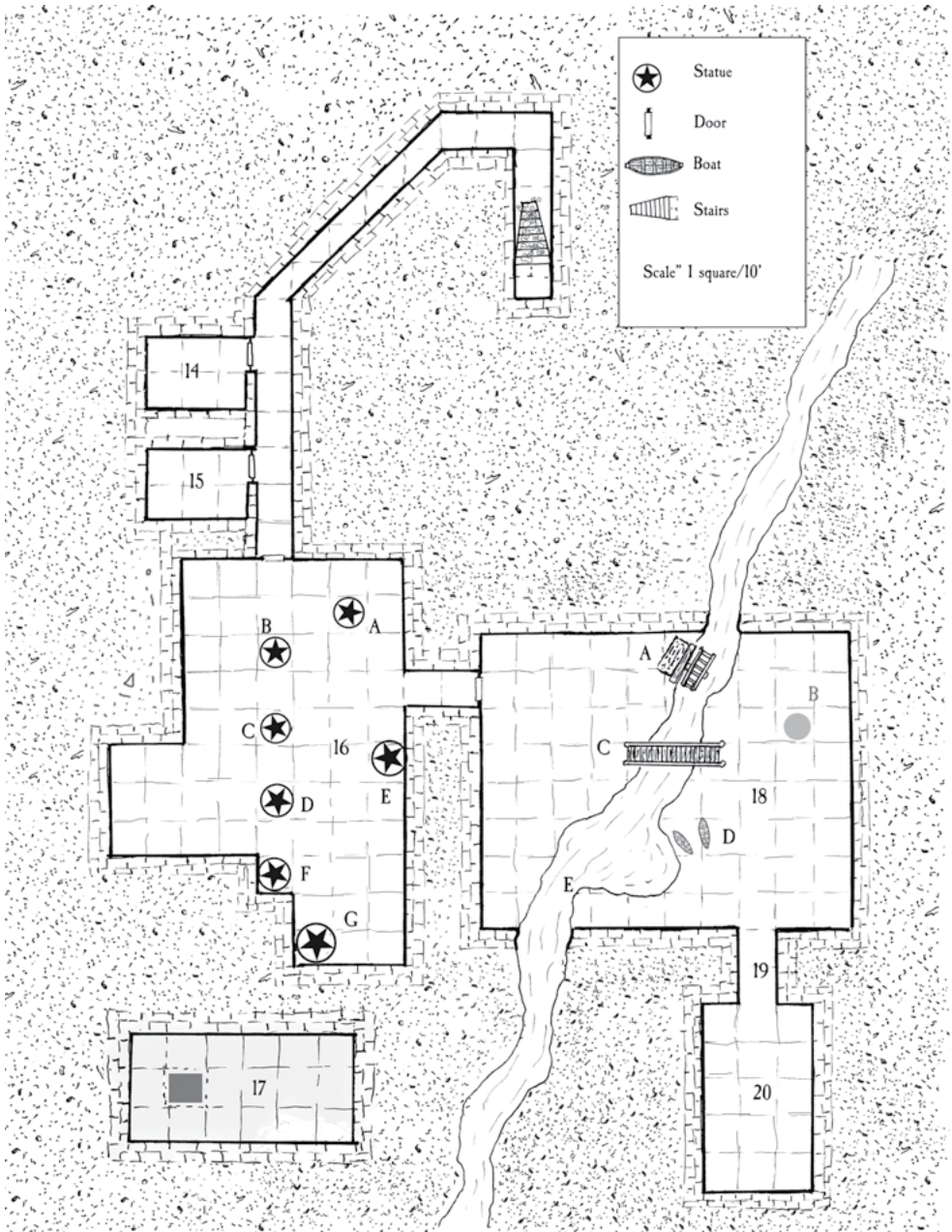
Yarcho might also mention that he is the one who brought news of the guards' death to the baron, since he was headed to town in any case, to sell furs he trapped in the woods near Gambit. He is also the one who found the bodies, and can give the characters the following description of the scene.

Well, I was going out to the woods to check my traps, and I stopped by the baron's warehouse to say hello to the guards, but I didn't see any of them. So I walked over to the building to see what was happening. All of them were dead, torn apart. I also noticed that all the shovels and picks and so forth were broken, and the metal parts were all gone.

Yarcho has no other useful information about the death of the guards. He didn't investigate any further, and eventually the villagers decided to send him to Cat's Cradle since he had already been planning on going there to sell furs. If the characters ask for general information about Gambit they can get a basic description of the inhabitants, learn of the abandoned temple and its history (the replacement priests never arrived, and the villagers just left the place to ruin), and that the road near Gambit is fairly well-traveled by merchants going from Cat's Cradle to Five-and-Copper, the reason why the Red Raven Inn exists in Gambit.

TIMELINE

- Day 1 Tschal visits and stays overnight at Ulpher's Inn. He asks Ulpher to hold some papers for him.
- Day 2 Tschal goes to the temple and tries to control the xarshe, which kills him.
- Day 13 The elemental finishes eating all the iron available and begins venturing out from the temple at night
- Day 20 Guards arrive at the village with building supplies
- Day 22 The xarshe eats the guards and all the iron from the supplies the baron sent
- Day 25 News of the guards' deaths reaches the baron
- Day 27 The baron hires the characters to investigate the problem and fix it
- Day 29 The characters arrive in Gambit
- Day 41 Deadline: Baron Scale arrives in Gambit to supervise the set-up of construction, and expects a report from the characters.



THE VILLAGE OF GAMBIT



Gambit is a tiny hamlet with only ten inhabitants at this time (although Lord Scale intends to bring more than fifty new residents into the area). The place consists of seven complete houses and three barns. There are also several areas marked out with stones by the surveyors to show where the new fort and houses are to be built.

The inhabitants of the village are: Ulpher the Innkeeper; Yarcho (a farmer); Tormis and Tischia Fugue (employees of the inn); Pontor and Trya Sheepwarder (shepherds); Sand and Aurila Charce (farmers) with their two children Fern and Ranny; and Olphi and Wincha Turnip (farmers).

1. THE RED RAVEN

The Red Raven (Ulpher's Inn) has a stone-and-plaster main building, with a stable in the back, an outhouse, and a shed. The inn has a low-walled garden devoted mostly to herbs and beans (beans appear in every meal served here).

The main building contains 6 guest rooms on the upper floor, which Ulpher rents at a rate of 1gp per night. Guests may also bed down in the common room for 1sp per night. Ulpher lives here with a stablehand (Tormis Fugue) and Tormis's wife Tischia Fugue, who assists Ulpher with the general maintenance and management of the inn.

Ulpher's main role in the adventure is his connection to the missing scholar, Tschal the Knowledgeable. Some of the other villagers know that Tschal visited and stayed at the Red Raven, but Ulpher is the only villager who knows

that Tschal planned to visit to the Temple. He still has a box of papers that Tschal left in his care.

Asking Ulpher about Tschal: Ulpher hasn't made the connection between Tschal and the strange events that followed Tschal's visit to the temple, since Tschal disappeared a full three weeks before the guards were attacked. If the characters ask, Ulpher is forthcoming — he isn't trying to hide anything — and is happy to tell the characters everything he knows about Tschal.

What Ulpher can tell the characters about Tschal:

- Physical description: Tschal had red hair and a long mustache. Ulpher doesn't remember much else about him, but thinks he was about "average" height.
- Tschal came here from the town of Five and Copper, but originally from some university in a city.
- Tschal was here to look into something going on at the temple of Dre'uain that he hadn't mentioned to anyone else.
- According to Tschal, the priests from the temple were told to leave and establish a new temple, with replacement priests being sent. Ulpher makes the obvious point that the replacements never arrived.
- Tschal had some piece of paper that he obviously thought was important, because he was always making sure he had it with him.

2. YARCHO'S COT

Yarcho's Cot is built of poorly stacked fieldstone, painted a bizarre mustard color. Yarcho swears the paint was originally white, and is defensive about how it turned out. The information available from Yarcho is described in the journey from Cat's Cradle to Gambit.

3. SHEEPWARDER HOUSE (AND PENS)

Sheepwarder House is well-built and clean, built of fieldstone like Yarcho's Cot but by a much more skillful builder. There are two low-walled pens behind the house, with a small, barn-like building at the back of the farther pen.

The sheepwarder family (Pontor and Trya) pastures a small flock of sheep in the area to the west of the village, occasionally penning them in the stone pens near the house but usually keeping them in the pasture under Pontor or Trya's watch, assisted by their dog Spots.

4. CHARCE HOMESTEAD

Charce Homestead is a two-story building with a stone ground floor and a half-timbered second floor. There are no outbuildings other than an outhouse.

Sand and Aurila Charce farm a large field to the East of the village. They have two children, Fern (a girl, 10 years old) and Ranny (a boy, 8 years old). Fern has seen a "short man" stalking around near the temple after dark, but has never gotten more than a glimpse of the xarshe.

5. FUGUE COTTAGE

Fugue cottage is well maintained, but smaller than the village's farmhouses. There is a large vegetable garden to the east of the cottage.

Tischia and Tormis Fugue both work at Ulpher's Inn.

6. TURNIPS' NEST. TURNIP FAMILY

Turnip's Nest is a thrown-together mix of fieldstone and half-timbering. Building it up is obviously a project that has been ongoing for several years.

Olphi and Wincha Turnip live in Turnip's Nest. They have a farm up the road from the village, where they grow potatoes.

If anyone should ask, they did farm turnips at one time, but one night ten years ago, Olphi was walking out in the fields and came upon a pack of wolves. They did not attack him, but ever since the shock of that encounter he broke out in a rash whenever he touched a turnip, so the couple switched to growing potatoes.

7. BARON'S STOREHOUSE

The Baron's storehouse was built in preparation for construction in the village. The wall around the enclosure is only two feet high, and made of stacked fieldstone. There is a building at the back of the enclosure, a quickly-constructed large shed made of wattle and daub. The tools (and guards) were all inside this building when they were attacked by the minor earth elemental.

Investigating the area reveals that the shed is very unstable – even leaning on one of the walls will cause the entire building to slowly and majestically collapse. First the north wall will collapse outward, and then the front wall will waver back and forth, eventually falling sideways, which will in turn cause the roof to buckle and collapse. Then the front and back walls of the structure will lean inward, slowly, and then land gently over the floor in a great cloud of dust. Only the doorframe will remain standing. This is, of course, because all the nails have been picked out and eaten by the xarshe. If the characters inspect the ruined building, they might notice all the empty nail-holes.

Unless there is a ranger in the party, there is no visible trail leading to or from the storehouse area. A ranger can make out faint tracks of a very heavy, non-human biped coming into and out of the area. These tracks lead north, but disappear just after entering the road, so the only conclusion to be reached is that they might link up with the Temple, with the Charce Homestead (**Building 4**) or with the Turnips' Nest (**Building 6**).

8. ABANDONED TEMPLE OF DRE'UAIN THE LAME (DREY-OO-AIN)

The temple once had a fieldstone ground floor with an upper story of wood and plaster. The upper floor has since collapsed, leaving piles of rubble in the still-standing walls of the ground floor. On one side of the temple door there is a bas-relief stone column of a strong-looking man with one badly-twisted leg, holding a hammer in one hand and a threaded needle in the other.

Any cleric immediately recognizes the statue as a depiction of the god of industrious labor, Dre'uain the Lame.

When the characters investigate the temple, they find that everything has been stripped from the above-ground part of the complex. The stairs down to the lower level are easily found, and are not obstructed by any of the rubble.



THE ABANDONED TEMPLE

This temple was abandoned seventy years ago, before anyone in the village was born. According to the tales told by their parents, the priests of the temple were ordered to leave by their superiors in the church to establish a new temple, and a second set of priests were supposed to take over the temple. However, no priests ever came, and the temple fell into ruin.

The story is accurate, simple as it might sound. The second set of priests assigned to the temple never arrived because their caravan was attacked by manticores on the way to Gambit. If the characters follow up on the missing priesthood, it could lead to tracing the caravan's progress to a nearby lair of the second generation of these manticores.

I. STAIR ENTRY AND ANTECHAMBER

This 30 foot by 40 foot room appears to have been emptied some time in the past; it contains no furnishings. There is an opening in the eastern wall once closed off by a door, but the door is now demolished. Four niches are cut into the walls, two in the north wall and two in the south wall, but these appear to be empty.

The room is indeed empty, but there are a few things the characters might observe if they poke around and look at things. First, there are some slight dents in the stairs leading to the surface. These aren't ordinary wearing-away of stone over time; they are distinct depressions in the stone, like footprints. Secondly, although the room hasn't been traveled much, there are signs that at least a couple of people have moved through it, stirring the dust about slightly. Thirdly, the ruined door in the eastern wall hasn't actually been broken; the slats of wood are intact and in good shape. Examination reveals that the door is no longer intact because all the nails and iron banding have been pulled out, and the hinges removed. Finally, the niches. These are 4 feet off the ground; they are a foot and a half tall and a bit less than a foot wide. They are empty, but the bottoms of them have bits of colored sand left behind. This sand is jade dust, identifiable by a dwarf or a magic-user. There is not enough for it to have any value.

The iron from the door and the jade religious statuette are missing because they were eaten by the xarshes (the minor earth elemental, see **Area 12**) — the characters will see much more of this type of damage as they move deeper into the complex, just as they may have seen if they collapsed the Baron's storehouse.

2. CENTRAL CHAMBER

This room is empty, but the walls are carved with religious images. Stone doorframes in the north, west, and east walls have piles of wood in them but no doors. There is a stone door in the south of the room, which also appears to be damaged.

The wood doors have suffered the same damage as the one described in **Area 1**; the iron is missing but the wood is intact.

The stone door in the south of the room is closed, but parts of the stone appear to have been ripped or melted away. The elemental melted/clawed its way through the stone to get to the iron opening-bar, pull it out, and eat it. It didn't go any farther into the room other than eating the door handle, though, so the rooms south of this point still contains intact metal objects.

3. COMMON AREA

This room contains murals of people working at various tasks using different kinds of tools, including a winch, a crane, and some kind of tower that seems to be constructed of gears. There are some remnants of wooden furniture in here: a table and some chairs, a few scraps of cloth, and an old deck of cards. Five doorways lead out of the room, all of which have had their doors taken apart.

This was a common room for the inhabitants of **Areas 4, 5, and 6**. The red and blue doors were intended as a reminder to visitors that the stairs in **Area 7** must be traversed by stepping only on the red and blue stair-steps.

If the party made any noise entering this room, the giant badger from **Area 4** may emerge to attack them from behind if it sees the opportunity.

4. GIANT BADGER LAIR

This room reeks of wet dog, but with a sharper bite in the nostrils. The most prominent feature of the interior is a mirror hanging on the room's north wall, which has an intricate border of inscribed, frosted glass. There is a large pile of scraps in the northwest corner of the room.

This room is the lair of a giant badger that hunts in the woods and fields near the village, staying carefully away from humans. It is a vicious creature that defends its lair aggressively.

Giant Badger: HD 3; HP 17; AC 4[15]; Atk 2 Claws (1d3), bite (1d6); Move 6; Save 14; AL N; CL/XP 3/60; Special: None.

Treasure: The badger has no treasure, but it chose this room for a lair because it likes the mirror it found here. The mirror is silvered at the back, but the xarsh has not bothered the badger because it doesn't like the look of the badger's large digging-claws. The mirror's engravings and frosted glass are one of the temple's artistic creations, and it is worth 1,000gp if it is sold in a town such as Cat's Cradle or Five-and-Copper.

5. WORKER/PRIEST CHAMBER

This room was once a bedroom, although the furniture is now rotted and useless. It contains a large bed, a table, and a writing desk.

The room was used to house manufactory laborers, or occasionally a priest or visitor to the complex. It appears to be undisturbed, but this is because none of the furniture contained iron. If the characters have clued into the lack of metal in most of the complex, they will — as elsewhere — find none in here.

6. BEDROOM

This room contains long-broken, rotten furnishings, but was clearly once a bedroom. Nothing in here looks threatening.

This room was once a bedroom used by manufactory workers. As with the other bedrooms around the Common Room (**Area 3**), it contains no iron and the furnishings are badly dilapidated.

7. STAIRS DOWN

Stairs lead down into the darkness of a lower level, turning a corner almost immediately once they begin to descend. A slight breeze blows upward through the stairwell.

Just around the bend (the northern leg of the stairs), the stairs are almost completely collapsed, the breaks in the stairsteps revealing a pit below. This is, like all the damage in the complex, due to the elemental. It reached through the stairs to get at the wooden substructure with its iron bolts, and removed the bolts for food. The result was the partial collapse of the stairs.

The pit below the staircase is twenty feet deep (2d6 points of damage for anyone falling into it plus a saving throw to avoid an additional 1d6 points of damage from falling stones). The only safe way down the stairs is to treat it as a chasm; there is no place to put one's weight without the supporting stones falling away into the pit and carrying the character down with them. In addition to falling damage, the character will be hit by falling stones, but a successful saving throw allows the character to avoid this damage.

In addition to the problem of structural damage, there is a 50% chance that a sudden gust of air will extinguish all open flames (this includes torches, but not lanterns). Roll for this chance once every time the characters ascend or descend the stairs. The gust (if there is one) blows through 2d6 minutes after the characters arrive at the stairs, so they might or might not be in the middle of dealing with the problem of getting up or down.

On a positive note, quite a bit of spare change has fallen through gaps in the stairs over the years. The pit below contains 27 copper pieces, 5 silver pieces, 2 gold pieces, and a garnet worth 50gp, along with a key and 3 other shiny stones that have no value. The key does not work in any of the locks; that particular lock has been eaten by the xarsh.

8. FALLEN CORRIDOR

Fallen rocks obstruct most of the corridor here, although there is a narrow pathway between the rockfalls. The passage is about 3 feet wide.

Getting through the rockfall can be dangerous, because the ceiling is now unstable. If there is a dwarf in the party they will be able to spot the danger immediately. Anyone going through the passageway has a 1 in 6 chance to set off a new rockfall, and if there is a dwarf guiding them the chance is reduced to 1 in 10. A second rockfall inflicts 1d6 points of damage to the person caught beneath it, and has a 1 in 20 chance to block off the rest of the corridor behind the character who set it off.

9. WINCH ROOM

The most obvious feature of this room is in the easternmost portion, where a great hole opens in the ceiling, directly above another, similarly sized well in the floor. Both openings are made from cut and mortared stone blocks, obviously something that has been built here, not the result of a collapse.

The shaft here goes down to the lower level of the complex, cutting through 20ft of stone and entering through the ceiling of **Area 18**. Since the ceiling of **Area 18** is 20ft tall, a drop through the winch shaft would be a total of a 40ft fall (4d6 damage).

Provided that the characters take elementary precautions (using ropes, etc.), this is a safe way to reach the lower level of the complex. Only a thief can actually climb the wall of the shaft without using rope, and would also have to face the 20ft drop to the ground once the shaft opens into the ceiling of **Area 18**.

10. CHAPEL AND WORK AREA

The door in the northern wall, which is the only way into this part of the complex, is described in **Area 2**.

A circular bas-relief carving of a face dominates the west wall of this room, which also contains three long worktables. The tables are covered with a variety of materials; most of it looks like cloth and leather. Intact doors lead to the east and south.

This room served mostly as a workroom for sewing, leatherwork, and the other self-sustaining work of the temple. The carving on the west wall is an image of the god, and it extends the effect of a *protection from evil* spell into the room. This supernatural aspect of the statue is the reason why the xarshes never explored this part of the temple complex (other than tampering with the entry door). The wall-carving is seen as magical if the adventurers cast *detect magic* on it, but it is part of the wall and cannot be removed without also removing the spell.

Table #1: This table is covered with pieces of cloth, many of which are cut for sewing into clothing. There are sewing supplies scattered across the table surface, including several needles, a leather thimble, and a set of badly-rusted shears. The cloth is riddled with moth holes and has no value, even though much of it was once high quality.

Table #2: Half of this table was used to stack bolts of cloth, which are in just as poor condition as the cloth on table 1. The other half was obviously dedicated to leatherworking, and here the characters may find some useful objects. There is a completed set of leather armor at the very end of the table, 4 leather disks that might be coasters, and a bracelet of woven leather strips.

Bracelet of Twice-as-Fast: The bracelet is a bracelet of Twice-as-Fast. For one minute in any given day (1 one melee round) a character can do something twice as fast as normal. In a combat context this would just mean making a second attack. The ability can be used for other things as well, with the effect to be determined by the Referee. The only thing that cannot be

done twice as fast is casting a spell, since the bracelet's magic cannot accelerate a different type of magic.

Table #3: This table is covered with pottery, and there is a potter's wheel beside it, covered in a piece of cloth so riddled with moth-holes that it looks almost like lace. None of the pieces of pottery were fired in a kiln, and they are not in usable condition, although they were obviously made by a potter with considerable skill. The only interesting thing about the pottery is that 5 of the pieces are stamped with an image almost exactly the same as the bas-relief carving of the god on the room's west wall (the stamp is located under the potter's wheel, which must be lifted to find it). These 5 pottery pieces may be used as holy symbols.

II. LIBRARY

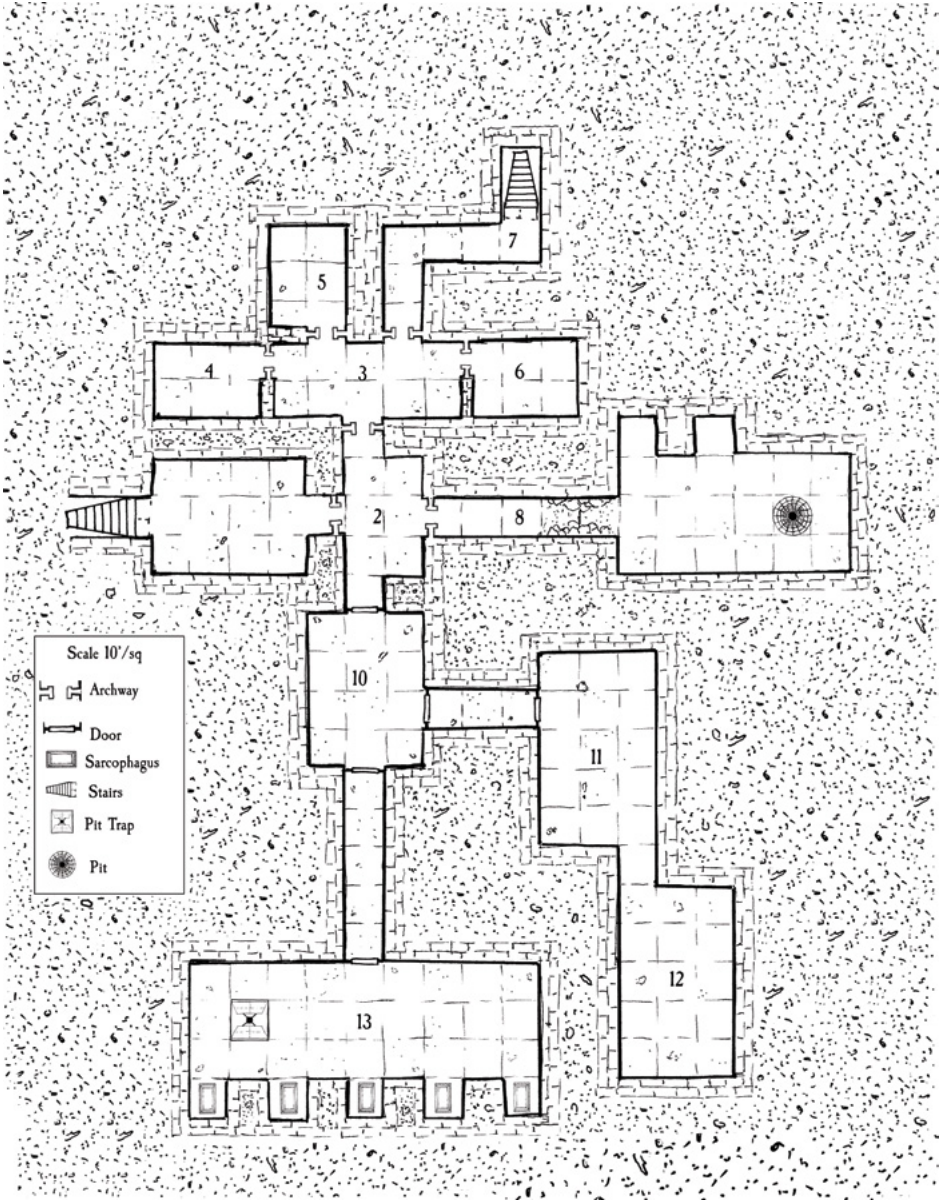
The walls of this room are lined with bookshelves, but they are almost entirely empty of books. A few broken wooden boxes are piled in the northeast corner of the room. A large writing table stands in the center of the room, tall enough that anyone using it would have to stand, or perhaps sit on high stools.

There are 6 books remaining on the shelves.

One of the shelves has a secret compartment at the back. Any careful inspection of the shelves will reveal that one of them appears to be a bit shallower than the rest, because the secret compartment takes up part of the "shelf space." There is a small panel in the wood at the back of the shelf that pries open easily once it is found; inside there is a sheaf of papers tied together with a ribbon.

The sheaf contains 6 scrolls of *controlling minor earth elementals*.

When the priests departed, they packed up the library; the boxes are left over from the packing process. Since replacement priests were due to arrive here, and the xarshes were being left behind, the priests left the scrolls behind for their replacements.



12. TEMPLE STORAGE

This chamber contains nine chests jumbled together in a pile. The walls were once lined with shelves, most of which have now collapsed to create piles of dust and scraps of cloth.

- Chest #1: This chest contains 4 moldy, moth-eaten ceremonial robes. When the chest opens, hundreds of moths fly out and begin swarming through the room. They offer no danger, and if the party is carrying open flames all the moths will eventually fly into these.

- Chest #2: This chest contains candles of varying sizes (a total of 34). One of the candles creates the effect of a *protection from evil* spell when it is burned, protecting the person holding it. Note: keep in mind that a *protection from evil* spell does affect elementals even if they are not evil.

- Chest #3: This chest is empty, with the exception of what look like mouse droppings. Further inspection reveals a small hole in the side of the chest, gnawed by small rodents.

- Chest #4: This chest is empty

- Chest #5: A piece of cloth hangs out of the lid of this chest, like a tongue. The chest contains 3 ceremonial robes, moth-eaten and unwearable. However, there is a forgotten ring of office in here as well, worth 700 gold pieces.

- Chest #6: This chest contains a wooden box, a one-foot cube with a removable top. This small box is a partly-grown mimic (see statistics below).

- Chest #7: This chest contains 15 stone disks inscribed with the numbers 1 to 15. (These are simply counters used to keep track of items taken in and out of the storage room; they are not magical.

- Chest #8: This chest contains an egg, which contains a talking mouse. The mouse remains on the material plane for only 2 hours before it vanishes into smoke.

- Chest #9: This chest contains a dented lantern, 4 flasks of oil, and ten 2-ft long wooden poles with screws and sockets on the ends, allowing them to be connected into a pole as long as 20ft.

Monsters:

Small Mimic: HD 4; AC 6[13]; Atk 1 smash (1d6); Move 2; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** Mimicry, glue.

13. MAUSOLEUM

This large area is obviously a crypt. Five large alcoves are cut into the south wall, each of which contains a stone sarcophagus.

These sarcophagi hold the bodies of the five high priests that had administered the temple in centuries past. The bodies were not removed when the priests left, because they expected the temple to be occupied by their replacements. Each of the bodies in the sarcophagi wears a gold medallion, a holy symbol of the god Dre'uain. If any of the holy symbols is removed from one of the bodies, holy defenders rise from each of the five bodies, floating through the lids of the sarcophagi to attack.

Inspection of the floor reveals a pit trap in the western part of the room, which can also be discovered by stepping onto it. Anyone stepping on the trap has a 5 in 6 chance of triggering it and falling 15ft (for 1d6 points of damage) into the Lower Crypt (**Area 17**).

Monsters:

Holy Defenders (Type 1) (5): HD 2; AC 4[15]; Atk 1 sword (1d8); Move 9; Save 16; AL L; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** Semi-corporeal, retributive damage.

14. WORKER ROOM

This room was obviously a dormitory of some kind, containing three beds and a table with three chairs. All the furniture is slightly rotted and covered with mold and mildew.

This room contains nothing that would interest a party of adventurers.

15. SCULPTOR'S ROOM

This room contains three rustic beds and a table. The furnishings are intact, but are in very poor condition, with patches of mold blooming across all the wooden surfaces.

The mold in this room is dangerous to breathe. Anyone who opens the door must immediately make a saving throw (poison) or suffer one of the following effects:

1. The character is convinced they are an animal of some type for 3d6 turns. Roll 1d4. 1 = bat, 2 = frog, 3 = dolphin, 4 = shark. The player should direct the character's actions based on the animal, but the GM may take over the character if needed.

2. The character loses half of their current hit points.
3. The character begins coughing uncontrollably for 2d6 turns, and cannot fight or cast spells during this time.
4. The character's skin turns pale blue, and mold begins growing from their skin. The blue coloration goes away after 1d6 days, and the mold is harmless but smelly. It requires several baths to fully remove it.

Anyone who enters the room must make a saving throw in the same way as the character who opens the door.

16. STATUARY ROOM (WORKROOM)

This room contains several exquisite stone statues. All of them are unfinished, in various stages of completion, with the exception of the one in the southernmost part of the chamber. The finished statue is of a muscular man with one crippled leg, like the statue outside the temple door.

Statues were once one of the Temple's main commodities, shipped out through the docks (**Area 18**) to the river for sale in nearby cities and towns. The Temple managed to achieve such high quality because the xarshes assisted in creating them, an advantage available to very few other sculptors (if any).

There are 7 statues in the room, as follows:

- A. A woman holding a flail in her right hand, resting her left elbow on a millstone. This is a statue of the goddess Ceres (the hearth, healing). It was being carved for one of the goddess's temples, but was left unfinished when the priests departed.
- B. The statue of an unknown nobleman, incomplete from the chest down.
- C. A statue of a dragon, finished except for the tail. Any movement of this statue uncovers a nest of giant ants (see Monsters, below).
- D. A statue of a man in robes, holding a staff. The body is completed, but the staff is still connected to the body by stone that has not yet been sculpted away.
- E. A small statue of an owl, only 1 foot tall. The head is unfinished.
- F. A statue of a horse rearing up. Only the top half is completed.
- G. Statue of Dre'uain (finished statue). This statue is similar to the one outside the temple, depicting a muscular man with one crippled leg. There is nothing magical about the statue.

Monsters:

Giant Worker Ants (3): HD 2; AC 3[16]; Atk Bite (1d6); Move 18; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30;
Special: None.

17. LOWER CRYPT

Skeletons in grave-wrappings are arranged on short wooden platforms across the entire floor of this room.

This chamber can only be entered through the trap door in **Area 13**.

This room is where the remains of ordinary priests were laid to rest during the active days of the temple. There are roughly fifty skeletons in the room, each of them laid out on a low wooden platform. These are not animated skeletons. A few moments after anyone enters the room, a shining figure appears on the far side of the chamber, making a mystical gesture toward the trapdoor. As it does so, the trapdoor fills with the shape of a glowing rune. The figure is a Type 2 Holy Defender who follows very specific instructions it has been assigned.

The Rune: The mystical sigil is a one-way force field that allows material to enter the room but not leave. It can only be removed by *dispel magic* or by the Defender.

The Defender does not attack intruders; indeed, its first comment after someone enters the trapdoor is, "Oh dear. This is very unfortunate." Assuming the characters don't attack it, it will explain that it is tasked with keeping anything from leaving the tomb, which means anyone in the tomb is going to die there eventually. "Terribly sorry about that."

There is a way for people to escape from the tomb, but the spirit only explains if asked for details. Preparing and sacrificing a piece of fried bread to Dre'uain allows the spirit to re-open the glyph — this is how priests of the god left the crypt after interring a body (it is the final part of the interment ceremony itself).

The bread needs to be fried in the crypt, along with a set of prayers the Defender knows. Since the trapdoor only bars exit rather than entry, any necessary supplies may be lowered into the crypt by characters on the outside. Most adventuring parties will have the needed materials if they are carrying lantern oil and rations.

If the characters make the mistake of attacking and killing the holy defender, they will have no

way of removing the force field, and will have to figure out how to tunnel out of the chamber, for there is no other way to leave. Doing so, even with the proper tools, will take a week, so hopefully they brought enough water and rations. Characters outside the crypt can, of course, keep them supplied, but the time will cut into the Baron's two-week deadline.

Holy Defender (Type 2): HD 3; AC 3[16]; Atk 1 sword (1d8+1); Move 12; Save 14; AL L; CL/XP 5/240; **Special:** Semi-corporeal, retributive damage.

18. DOCKS

The details of this large room are difficult to take in all at once. A waterfall dumps its way into the chamber from high in the north wall, splashing over the remains of a broken waterwheel. The river runs through a channel cut deeply into the floor of the room, widening before it reaches the south wall to accommodate a small dock, with two boats drawn out of the water to rest on wooden blocks on the floor. A bridge spans the river at the middle of the room, and in the eastern part of the room there is an opening in the ceiling and some sort of loading machinery. The river leaves the room through a tall tunnel carved into the south wall.

This chamber was the main center of the Temple's industry until the priests moved out for their new assignment. The winch brought supplies to and from the surface, the waterwheel powered various machines, and the boats were used to bring trade goods in and out of the Temple complex.

The ceiling is 20ft high, which is probably only an issue if a character comes plummeting down through the winch shaft from **Area 9** above.

A. Cascade and Water Wheel

The river flows southward into the cavern here, dropping 10ft from its higher level to drive a waterwheel 5ft in diameter. The waterwheel is not in operation since the elemental has removed all the iron parts and eaten them.

B. Winch Platform

This platform contains the bottom half of the winch apparatus that once brought goods to the upper level of the temple. As with the water wheel, all the iron parts are missing.

C. Bridge

A stone bridge, 5ft wide, spans the river at this point.

D. Boats

Two boats are drawn up on the "shore" of the cavern and placed on wooden blocks. Since they have no iron parts, they are entirely usable if the characters should decide to take a joy ride down to where the underground river emerges. They are 70 years old, and they look it, but they are safe enough to use.

E. Tunnel to the River

This tunnel has been shaped by expert stonemasons, although a dwarf can tell that this is a natural feature of the original cavern that has been widened to create a safe waterway. If the characters decide to explore in one of the boats, they find that the underground river eventually flows into the river outside, only a half mile from Gambit. It has been 70 years since the channel to the river received any maintenance, and a dwarf will definitely spot some places where there are loose bricks or other minor problems. The channel is still quite safe, although anyone planning to use it frequently would want to spend some efforts on repair.

19. REMAINS OF TSHAL THE KNOWLEDGEABLE

A body lies in this hallway, and from the smell of it, it has been here long enough to decompose quite a bit. You can tell that the dead person had reddish hair and a long mustache. The carcass wears leather armor and clutches an unrolled piece of parchment in one hand.

This is the final resting place of Tshal the Knowledgeable, who turned out, at the end, not to be knowledgeable enough. The scroll in his hand is magical — containing a spell for controlling lesser elementals — but Tshal didn't understand how to use it. The scroll contains several words written in common, and the page has what appears to be a decorative border of interesting-looking symbols. In point of fact, these magical symbols are what activate the spell; the words written in the common tongue are merely reminders. A magic-user looking at the scroll immediately realizes what happened here, and by casting *read magic* would be able to cast the spell from the scroll.

Tshal's Equipment: scroll of controlling minor earth elementals, leather armor, short sword, belt pouch containing 25 gold pieces.



20. ELEMENTALS' CHAMBER

This chamber contains 2 structures resembling cages, made of softly-glowing wires that extend outward from a one-inch-high pedestal of some kind of strange, blue stone. A third pedestal is surrounded by tangles and scraps of the same wire, but the structure is ripped and the wires on this third structure are dead and dull, all glow faded. Both of the intact cages contain a lumpy, half-formed statue, vaguely human and floating in the air. A creature like the others sits on the pedestal with the broken wiring, aware and alert.

The three creatures in the room are all xarshes, a form of minor earth elemental. Two of them are in a condition of stasis, but the third one was freed by Tshal the Knowledgeable — without use of the proper magic to control the creature. If the characters do not cast the spell on the *scroll of controlling minor earth elementals*, on the freed xarshie, it will attack.

Monsters:

Xarsh (Minor Earth Elemental): HD 4; AC 2[17]; Atk 3 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d6); Move 9; Save 13; AL N; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** Immune to fire and cold, half damage from electricity, travel through stone.

Treasure: The pedestals used to support the stasis machines are worth 500 gold pieces each.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

When the Baron arrives at Gambit at the end of two weeks, the characters have presumably succeeded to some degree with their task of clearing out the temple — or died trying. They might have dealt with it in a variety of different ways, which will get them different results from their meeting with the Baron. It is the nature of their results which determine opportunities for later in the campaign. These are simply guidelines, and the Referee should feel free to adapt them based on what exactly happened during the adventure.

The xarshes are still alive and the characters can explain how to control them. This is the optimal outcome for the characters. The Baron considers the xarshes to be his, but offers the characters the following as a reward:

- 500 gold pieces for each of the pedestals, since they will still be needed to keep the Baron's elementals under control
- 500 gold pieces for each scroll the characters still have
- Property in the town of Gambit, which can be used as a base of operations and will also appreciate quite a bit in value when Gambit grows (which it will do rapidly, as described below). Since the xarshes are available to help, the baron will have them build a small structure on the land he grants to the characters.
- Some kind of temporary task in his service. If this is pegged to include out-of-game time of about a month, the characters will return to find Gambit much changed.

The xarshes are still alive, but the characters failed to learn how to control them. The Baron will grant them 250 gold pieces for the pedestals, and 250 gold pieces for each scroll they have located. He will grant them the property in Gambit, but will not offer to have the elementals build them a house on it. As with the optimal outcome, he will offer them a task in his service (as with the optimal outcome, you may want to ensure that the total time on this mission is about a month regardless of the in-game time spent on it). Also as with the optimal result, the charac-

ters will return to find Gambit a much-improved base of operations and a lead-in for future adventures.

Another Possibility. The Characters figure out how to control the xarshes and leave before the Baron arrives, to go adventuring with their new minions. Note carefully the control limits on the elementals in this case, since using them as minions can be very dangerous. Taking them and running might seem like a good idea at the time, but waiting to present them to the Baron happens to be a much better option in the long run.

The xarshes are dead but the temple is cleared of enemies. In this case, the Baron will reward the characters as agreed, but Gambit's growth as a base for future adventures will be much slower.

The characters are alive but failed in their task. The Baron will be upset, and dismiss the characters from his service. Depending on where you want to take the campaign, of course, you might also choose to have him offer a "second chance" to prove themselves.

GAMBIT'S GROWTH.

Under the two outcomes where the elementals remain alive and the Baron takes possession of them, he will use their services (using the scrolls of minor elemental control) to build a small town — very rapidly — on Gambit's location. The Baron will be able to increase the town's population to roughly 500 people in short order, by drawing people from both Cat's Cradle and Five-and-Copper to the town. These are mostly merchants and adventuring types, so Gambit will resemble a boomtown for quite a while before farmers and craftsmen really begin to settle in. As such, it will be an excellent place to serve as both a home base for the characters and as a jumping-off point for future adventures.

NEW MAGIC ITEM

SCROLL OF CONTROLLING MINOR EARTH ELEMENTALS

This scroll brings a minor elemental under the control of a magic-user who reads it. The duration of the spell is 24 hours. In this adventure the only available minor elemental is a xarshe (see New Monsters), and xarshes are relatively rare. However, the scroll also works for controlling mephits and similar creatures. The spell only affects one elemental. The scrolls in this adventure are specifically attuned to xarshes: ordinarily the spell would allow a saving throw, but with these particular scrolls a xarshe gets no saving throw. If the elemental's controller orders the elemental to commit violence, however, the elemental immediately gets a saving throw and might become uncontrolled.

If the elemental becomes uncontrolled, it has a 50% chance to attack the caster, and if not, it will simply attack whatever creatures come closest to it.

NEW MONSTERS

HOLY DEFENDER

	Type 1	Type 2
Hit Dice:	2	3
Armor Class:	4 [15]	3 [16]
Attacks:	1 sword (1d8)	1 sword (1d8+1)
Saving Throw:	16	14
Special:	Semi-corporeal, retributive damage when damaged by anyone of Lawful alignment	Semi-corporeal, retributive damage when damaged by anyone of Lawful alignment
Move:	9	12
Alignment:	Law	Law
Number Encountered:	Varies	Varies
Challenge Level/XP:	4/120	5/240

Holy Defenders are spirits tasked with defending places sacred to the gods of Law. They are ordinarily summoned forth by an act of desecration, to defend the place that is being desecrated. These spirits are able to pass through stone and other solid objects, but ordinary weapons are capable of damaging them.

The Type 1 Holy Defender is the weakest of these guardian spirits, although they may appear in larger numbers than more powerful types of Holy Defenders.

Holy defenders are not affected by protection from evil spells, for they are spirits, not summoned creatures. They are also not affected by the turning of a Lawful cleric. They will focus their attacks on creatures of non-Lawful alignments, although if there are no more of these targets they will turn to any Lawful creatures who are committing whatever non-Lawful act the spirits are defending against.

Any Lawful creature that inflicts damage on a Holy Defender immediately takes one-quarter of the damage that they delivered to the spirit (the spirit still takes the full amount of damage). This retributive damage is doubled if the attacker is a paladin or cleric of Law.

In general, holy defenders cease attacking if whatever act summoned them is undone (replacing a stolen item, for example).

MIMIC (SMALL)

Hit Dice: 4
Armor Class: 6 [13]
Attacks: 1 smash (1d6)
Saving Throw: 13
Special: Mimicry, glue
Move: 2
Alignment: Neutrality
Number Encountered: 1
Challenge Level/XP: 6/400

Mimics are formless creatures that imitate surrounding features they have seen. In subterranean settings, they might be disguised as an archway, treasure chest, door, etc. When touched, they glue themselves to the victim with a strong adhesive, while striking with a suddenly-formed tentacle.

Glue: The glue's adhesion cannot be avoided, but if a person ends up with part of their skin glued to the creature they can tear free in 1d4 +2 melee rounds as long as they do not attack or try to focus on anything else. If a piece of equipment gets glued to the mimic then the character simply has to drop the equipment (or escape from armor, gloves, etc.), in whatever time frame seems reasonable to the Referee.

The mimic in this adventure is younger and smaller than normal, as reflected in the numbers shown.

MINOR EARTH ELEMENTAL (XARSHE)

Hit Dice: 4

Armor Class: 2 [17]

Attacks: 3 claws (1d3), 1 bite (1d6)

Saving Throw: 13

Special: Immune to fire and cold, half damage from electricity, travel through stone

Move: 9

Alignment: Neutrality

Number Encountered: 1d4

Challenge Level/XP: 6/400

Xarshes are relatively rare on the Material Planes, for they are not able to cross the planar boundaries by themselves. Since they are no more easily summoned than any other elemental, the great spellcasters capable of such feats ordinarily choose to summon more powerful servitors.

These creatures resemble small, lumpy, half-formed statues of humans. The heads have three eyes, evenly spaced around the head, but the other features are essentially human.

Different xarshes have different tastes in food — some eat semi-precious stones, some eat iron, some eat gold, and so on. The xarshes in this adventure tend to prefer iron and semi-precious stones such as jade and turquoise.

Like most earth elementals, a xarshe can walk through stone and earth, at its normal rate of movement.



DRE'UAIN THE LAME

God of Craft and Smiths; God of Industry and Hard Work

Greater/Lesser/Demigod

Alignment: Lawful

Symbol: Three interlocked cogwheels

Garb: Crafter's outfit (different outfits for different crafts)

Favored Weapon: Warhammer

Form of Worship and Holidays: Worshippers sacrifice one high-quality item per year (if they can afford it). Worshippers without the means to create or purchase high-quality items for sacrifice can purchase small tin replicas at local temples for use in sacrifices. Late summer craft festivals, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions are also occasions when sacrifices are made to Dre'uain.

Typical Worshipers: Craftsmen, inventors, laborers

Dre'uain appears as a clubfooted, dwarf-like being with strong but fine-fingered hands. His flame-red hair and beard always appear singed from his labors over the forge. He has a long nose and piercingly curious eyes and wears a soot-covered apron. His altars consist of complex assemblages of gears that represent the mechanical workings of the cosmos, which Dre'uain understands and has mastery over.

Some religious scholars consider Dre'uain to be one of the oldest deities. As the patron of creativity and artistic labor, he is worshipped by artisans, inventors, smiths, architects, and other craftfolk of all races. Oddly enough, he is also associated with earthquakes, volcanoes and other seismic events, which is believed to be a remnant of his earlier role as a great earth deity, at which time early myths say that he battled the primordial earth spirit Demogorgon for supremacy.

Small shrines to Dre'uain are often found at construction sites or in manufacturing, where laborers pray for his guidance and aid.

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BARON'S GAMBIT

Recruited by the Baron of Cat's Cradle, the characters are tasked with investigating the deaths of some guardsmen in a small hamlet known as Baron's Gambit. They will end up exploring the ruins of an abandoned temple in search of a strange foe, and uncovering a secret that could make them quite rich ... provided they survive. Baron's Gambit is an introductory adventure for first level characters.

