

Whisper & Venom



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BY ZACH GLAZAR, JOHN HAMMERLE,
AND EDWIN NAGY

NECROMANCER GAMES™

presents

Whisper & Venom

WRITING:

Zach Glazar,
John Hammerle,
and Edwin Nagy

EDITING:

Jeff Harkness

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT:

Zach Glazar and Edwin Nagy

LAYOUT:

Charles Wright
and Jeff Harkness

CARTOGRAPHY:

Robert Altbauer
and Alyssa Faden

5E DEVELOPER:

Edwin Nagy

DEVELOPMENT MANAGER:

Michael Gross

TECHNICAL PUBLISHING MANAGER:

Rich Oliver

CONTENT REVIEW:

John Barnhouse, Zach Glazar,
Michael Gross, Jeff Harkness,
Sean King, Edwin Nagy,
Anthony Pryor, Ken Spencer,
Laramie Wall, and Steven Wells



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ART DIRECTOR:

Casey Christofferson

COVER ARTIST:

Thuan Pham

INTERIOR ART:

Adrian Landeros, Brian LeBlanc,
Hector Rodriguez, Faith Bugar, CJ Marsh,
Casey W. Christofferson, Martina Scafa,
Michael Syrigos, Thuan Pham,
Brett Barkley, Santa Norvaisaite,
and Lloyd Metcalf
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John Hammerle, E. Scott Swift, Jeff Dee,
Lloyd Metcalf, and Michael Badolato
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MEMORIAMS

► Dedicated to the life of Doug Rhea
whose courage and kindness made dreams
a reality.
► In Memory of Beverley Jayne.



ON THE COVER

Dark energy rips through
the mouth gate and allows
a demonic soldier to exit.

Necromancer Games is:

Bill Webb, Zach Glazar, Edwin Nagy, Jeff Harkness,
Casey W. Christofferson, Ken Spencer, and Michael Badolato

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME TO WHISPER & VENOM	4
PART I: THE WHISPER VALE AND ENVIRONS	8
PART II: PEOPLE AND PLACES OF THE WHISPER VALE	16
PART III: WHISPER & VENOM	27 - 71
GAMEMASTERS'S INTRODUCTION	27
AREA A: MEANDERBROOK MONASTERY	32
AREA B: TEMPLE CATACOMBS	45
AREA C: L'UORT LAIR	51
AREA D: THE SUBTERRANE	59
AREA E: THE PRECIPICE	64
PART IV: ADVENTURES IN THE WHISPER VALE	72 - 90
BIRD OF A FEATHER	73
THE FIRST SENTINEL	82
APPENDICES	91 - 131
APPENDIX 1: MALEVOLENT CREATURES	91
APPENDIX 2: NEW MAGIC ITEMS	114
APPENDIX 3: SPECIFIC ENCOUNTER MECHANICS	119
APPENDIX 4: ADVENTURE MAPS	121
OPEN GAME LICENSE	132

WELCOME TO WHISPER & VENOM

Whisper & Venom is a setting and adventure set in the Whisper Vale, an isolated community of insular villagers beset by an outside supernatural force and hardships of their own making. The adventure and setting are designed for use with your Fifth Edition fantasy roleplaying game, but the setting itself could easily be adapted for use with other systems. Everything between these covers is yours. We labored to create a place that is colorful, vivid, and believable. First and foremost, **Whisper & Venom** is a sandbox. Not every detail is a plot device, nor is every encounter a fair fight. Here, a search for answers might be rewarded with lingering questions.

Whisper & Venom is designed to be as much fun to read as it is to play. The first chapter on the setting itself includes many details of the Whisper Vale, from its numerous locations to its colorful villagers, to game hooks you could use in your campaign. In the adventure, we have included textboxes designed to be read aloud to your players. We recommend familiarizing yourself with them as they also contain pertinent material. Of course, the option to read them aloud is yours.

As with the setting guide, the adventure is written to evoke the qualities of a believable location. A place on the cusp of deadly change. It is set at a time when each passing hour brings the pastoral and decent inhabitants closer to a fundamental loss of something precious and irretrievable: their innocence.

Whisper & Venom is an adventure presented with many elements and accoutrements, in keeping with those you create yourself. Detailed locations and new adversaries for you to use, augment, or ignore (as your campaign requires) are provided within a familiar framework.

In order to allow easy integration into your existing campaign, we made limited use of details regarding specific places, pantheons, and other world specifics. Additionally, the use of magic and healing exists in **Whisper & Venom**, but to what level it is integrated is, for the most part, up to you. The setting is limited to a small valley with minimal contact beyond its borders. This should allow you to easily integrate **Whisper & Venom** into your world without compromising your vision or hard work.



APPENDICES

Notations throughout the adventures refer to the various appendices located at the back of the book. Use the key below to find further details (although most of the notations should be understandable when they are encountered).

A1	Appendix 1: Malevolent Creatures
A2	Appendix 2: New Magic Items
A3	Appendix 3: Specific Encounters Mechanics
A4	Appendix 4: Adventure Maps





Eleft

The Gauntswept

Gelidstream

The Verdant



Northwall

Swindle

Whisper

Meander R.

PART I: THE WHISPER VALE AND ENVIRONS

THE WORLD OF WHISPER & VENOM

The Whisper Vale is an isolated valley on the northern periphery of civilization tied economically and culturally to a succession of titular aristocrats, arrogant despots, and feckless bureaucrats far to the south. Centuries of foppish reign ended abruptly after a horrific onslaught of disease, but antiquated notions of *de jure* birthright kept the Vale from fading off the map. Cartographers, not rulers, ultimately define empires.

The Whisper Vale's isolation was abrupt as pestilence spread quickly through its villages and hamlets, leaving misery and death in its wake. The plague's harsh judgment was swift and indiscriminate.

When kingdoms find themselves under duress, civilization presses on as best it can, even as turmoil and suffering mark such eras. Trapped by geography and distance, the Whisper Vale paid dearly. As populations dwindled, kingdoms and empires turned

inward to recover and protect their power. Cut off, the Vale's survivors persisted and rebuilt.

In the south, the Whisper Vale now exists only as faded ink on aged maps. Manor houses, walled trading outposts, and large homesteads form sad ruins. Armed caravans occasionally traverse the rutted trade road that winds along the Gelidstream's western bank. This road connects the town of Bounty south of the Vale to the northern town of Cleft, a dwarven stronghold. Only the boldest southern merchants attempt this route. Their infrequent visits to the Vale are thus met with raucous merrymaking.

Residents of the Vale are focused on their routines, ambivalent to the outside world. By day, they till crops of food for their tables and to supply grain for their taverns. The power that keeps excess in check wields a wedding ring by night.



THE GELIDSTREAM

The Gelidstream, a large river, flows south from dying glaciers far to the north. Its deep, cold waters flow through a narrow channel, skirting the mountains near Cleft. Downstream, the Meander joins the Gelidstream, and the river widens and slows its pace. Crossing the Gelidstream above the confluence is not safe. Sheer cliffs and strong currents form a natural barrier to the north and west of the Whisper Vale. The gentle slopes on the western bank of the river lead to cold, desolate grasslands known as the Gauntswept.

The river system boasts one surviving bridge located at a crossroads near the village of Whisper. The sporadic caravans cross the Gelidstream farther north via an ancient ferry. A road winds down from the mines of Cleft to the ferry's landing. Cleft's dwarven woodwrights maintain the ferry, which remains functional despite its age. It is the town's sole link to the wider world.





THE WHISPER VALE

The Meander River is born at the convergence of two cirque headwalls at the valley's peak. Its source consists of two short waterways. The mellifluous Springborn issues from the cleft where the Vale's headwalls collide. Its twin, the Fjäll, roars over the scarp of the eastern headwall before tumbling violently down to the valley floor to merge with the Springborn. The ruins of a monastery are cradled by the two waterways just north of where they converge to form the Meander. From here, the Meander winds steadily southward through a long, fertile vale. The nutrient-rich Ahlma seeps from the mountains to the west and feeds the Meander some leagues downstream, nourishing the Vale's rich farmland.

Wide flatlands spread from the Meander's banks to distant mountain ranges that hem the Vale in from the east and west. These flat expanses are spotted with green woods and lush orchard groves. Small conifers prosper in the mountains' foothills, rising in height and grandeur as they ascend the steepening lands beyond.

Stewardship of the wild is showing its effects. Healthy forests with wide canopies and tall grasses are grazed upon by an abundance of wildlife. Predators cull the weakest of these. Even the fey have returned.

THE WALL

Tall, forbidding mountains rise majestically along the length of the Whisper Vale, breaking through the tree line to reveal barren crags of stone. This range is known as the Wall. Each mountain in the Wall has a steep versant, which makes them virtually impassable. Foothills slope upward from the Meander to each inhospitable wall. Vagabond marauders wander the foothills as conflict or hunger drives them from the vast, cold wastes to the east.

THE TAINT

Cracks in the Wall bleed down through the mountains' arms into the foothills. A shadow prowls deep in the foothills, where tainted sylvan bowers hide. Knotty pines and poisonous plants fill these dark hollows. Insects plague slender swaths of land behind the wholesome facade of the foothills. A fissure near the town of Whisper heaves an ominous sigh at the edge of hearing, hinting at a deep, lurking fear. It is the dark breath of Tartarean depths from the very bowels of the world. These depths have powerful roots in local folklore. Legend tells of dark waters of unplumbed depths at the world's soul. The fissure's regular exhalations trigger primordial dread.



EMPYREAN REACH

The crumbling remains of a mysterious tower are atop the tallest western peak, beyond the tree line. Covered in lichen and weathered by centuries of unrelenting winds, this crumbling tower is marred by time. The structure resembles a giant hand with its fingers stretching toward the heavens.

Seers and sages of any race, even the seemingly immortal elves, only mutter furtively when they are asked about the Reach. Tales vary. Some tell of a master of elementals who once dwelt within its walls. Others refer to a demonic summoner who stood atop the highest ramparts and mocked forgotten gods through the enslavement and torment of their mortal children.

The Empyrean Reach continues to keep its secrets, as even those fortunate enough to return are lost. Loremasters, conjurers, and treasure-seekers have, at various times, made bold expeditions to the Reach. Survivors of such trips occasionally wander back to civilization bearing strange artifacts and tales. These hardy souls return transformed by madness.

An unlocked doorway at the entrance leads past a shimmering curtain of light into the mountain's roots. Beyond that point, no two memories have ever been reconciled.

The power of the great kingdoms to the south has waned. Without the vast resources of wealthy patrons, expeditions have declined. Thus, the mysteries of the Reach remain elusive.

Atop its peak, the Reach points ever skyward.



THE GAUNTSWEPT

The frigid grasslands and biting cold of the tundra form the Gauntswept, which is home to vast herds and their predators. Savage bears and packs of aggressive Gauntswept scavengers — reptilian creatures the size of great dogs — roam the countryside. The herds lazily migrate north to south every winter and return again in the spring. Tribes of inhuman savages follow the migration across the Gauntswept's vast expanse. These roving bands are outcasts of every description. When not on the hunt, they engage in bloody raids against each other.

Life among the nomadic humanoid tribes is brutal and short; it is an existence marked by conflict. This is the essence of their culture. Periodically, they set up impromptu markets to trade in weapons and more illicit goods. Strong leadership in the past also led to loose confederations. These hordes tend to last only as long as their leaders live.

The endless grasslands of the Gauntswept also host ogres, trolls, and lawless marauders. Individuals and small bands rove recklessly — these monstrous entities are very strong and wicked. This is necessary to their survival, as they compete with the more populous barbaric tribes.

Ancient tales tell of places untrodden where monsters dwell. Wild rumors of outlandish civilizations endure.

The great fortresses of the frost giants loom near the glacial wall that forms the Gauntswept's northern boundary. Long ago, their icy strongholds witnessed the site of a climactic battle. The giants faced a powerful army from the south led by a fiendish sorcerer. The sorcerer king and his army succeeded in part by wresting a powerful artifact from the clutches of the frost giants. However, his forces decimated, the sorcerer fled south and disappeared with the artifact. The best conjectures point to a ghostly vanguard that protects its powerful undead king.

The Gauntswept also hides a society of lizardfolk within icy marshes. Whether by evolution or animistic magic, these reptilian beings adapted to the cold. The icy folk can be fierce adversaries when threatened; it is not in their nature to be cruel. The icy folk are insular and suspicious of outsiders. Their remote, chilly swamp — both distant and inhospitable — ensures seclusion.

Organized expeditions have not penetrated the Gauntswept for many generations of men, leading to fantastical reports. Most believe they are merely stories told to frighten children. However, not all fables are mired in myth. A measure of truth inevitably emerges from the most preposterous tales; dread demons and deadly dragons are not merely the figments of a frightened child's imagination. Such powers indeed exist, their truths passed portentously through the ages via stories and legends. Now, only minstrels sing of such things. Although they do not know it, their rhymes ring true.



THE VERDANT

Boundless expanses of grasslands sweep south from the Gauntswept. The lush lands forming the Verdant are a natural barrier stretching deep into uncharted lands to the south and west. A perpetual horizon meets the sky above. An oppressive ocean of blue presses down upon the endless veldt, where even the grass seems to bend under its weight. One could travel days through this land and never slake one's thirst. This is the Verdant's perilous secret. Hardy souls have been swallowed by the grass, perchance to be discovered years after. Only their bleached bones remain, in stark relief against the greenery in which they are entombed.

The Verdant is deceptive and deadly.

“FAREWELL HAPPY FIELDS WHERE JOY FOREVER DWELLS: HAIL HORRORS ...”

— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

The rustic village of Whisper consists of 19 farmsteads, a busy inn, an empty temple, and a smattering of small shops. Talk at the Archmug — the tavern and town hall — revolves around weather, harvests, and (most importantly) the quality of ale. Arguments in the town are rare and usually drunken; brawls are rarer still and always drunken.

Most of Whisper's residents are content. Any unrest ceases at finger-pointing over the use of common grazing lands. Wealthier families view the use of such land as shrewd and prudent, while others interpret it as freeloading. Such disputes are usually settled amicably over mugs of ale.

The inn — not the temple — is the spiritual center of Whisper. Innkeeper Jon Herbergier makes particularly good ale that is bartered within Whisper and sold at mercenary prices beyond. This renowned brew is a source of great pride — and income — to Whisper. His ale has earned the cordial innkeeper affection and respect. The brooding brewer Lialio rides the coattails of this success.

Whisper's famed penchant for draining the barrel encourages Lialio to siphon a little ale from each batch, which he smuggles out of Whisper. This shadowy export is now the backbone of Whisper's flourishing trade. Citizens also sell excess grains (usually moldy) to the hamlet of Swindle, and meat and feed to the town of Cleft. These goods often ride on the same cart that moves Whisper's ale.

Another of Whisper's exports is happily given, if not gladly received. A number of wives from Whisper formed a zealous temperance society, with feckless support from Ashby, the town's priest. This dedicated group of harridans spends its days sewing modest patterns for the poor and handwriting numerous pamphlets for those in need. Whisper's citizens use this traveling ministry to send all exports out of town on a single cart known as “the wagon.” Before the wagon leaves Whisper, these pious women are gently settled atop a luxurious featherbed — the only one of its kind in Whisper — that itself sits on meticulously thatched grains. The air is tense with anticipation as the zealous temperance society settles in. The helpful onlookers are confident, however, in their gallant effort to ensure a safe, comfortable, and quiet ride for the women of the temperance society — and the barrels of ale concealed neatly beneath the whole affair. The village priest Ashby and his flock see the ladies off on their weekly rounds with the bulging wagon before returning inside the inn to minister.

The wagon is a relic from the past, left in Whisper by a group of monks fleeing from a monastery to the north. It broke down in Whisper, and the monks, loathe to wait for repairs, pressed onward out of the Whisper Vale. The order of monastic scholars fled from the Meanderbrook Monastery. At its height, the monastery was renowned for its wine. It was



abruptly abandoned during the time of the plague and never reclaimed. The monastery is remembered fondly, with frequent lamentations over the loss of its excellent wine. The great library of scholars who strove to spread their faith through reverential religious evangelism with incessant calls for moral, selfless living were easily forgotten.

Rumors and theories abound regarding the monastery. Remnants of great wealth and magical artifacts are conversation standards. Being a little too far away and a lot too dangerous keeps idle speculation idle. As there is no excuse for cowardice that is not coupled with an equally ridiculous imaginary danger, the residents of Whisper loudly proclaim the monastery's ruins to be haunted.

Mysterious events have upset Whisper's culture of geniality. Herds were culled at night, crops were rudely trampled, small fires sprang up in prized turnip gardens, and heirlooms disappeared. Folks scratched their heads at first, but picked the lazy road and simply assigned blame when confronted with the hard work of investigating. Without a semblance of law, neighbors fell to blaming neighbors on the quick road to righteous justice. Drinking, arguing, and finger-pointing replaced drinking and toasting. Thus was paradise lost. This shredding of the social contract diminished the potency of Whisper's alehouse arbitration.

**“THERE IS NO FATIGUE SO WEARISOME
AS THAT WHICH COMES FROM LACK OF WORK.”**

— Benjamin Franklin

Generations of hard work cemented Cleft’s sterling reputation as a town of stoic northern folk. By all appearances, this tradition continues in earnest. Cleft’s taskmaster spends most of his time in a tall tower that looks out upon the town. A symphony of hammers, bellows, and furnaces rises musically to the taskmaster’s chamber on the top floor and spreads out over the valley to welcome visitors.

At the center of Cleft’s industry is the famed Guildworks, which has produced finely crafted — even magical — weapons, armor, and gizmos. For years, the artisans of the Guildworks toiled at their furnaces, building a surplus of items ... a surplus the current generation inventories and carefully maintains.

Once the northernmost in a chain of mines that supplied iron and other metals to their rulers in the south, the mountain town of Cleft is now an independent enterprise. Steadfast dwarves, along with a smattering of human journeyman and tinker gnomes, make up its population.

Within Cleft’s protective outer walls, the mountain forms a natural overhang that provides shelter and hides its secrets. Skillfully crafted switchbacks wind down from the town’s gated entrance. Beyond the gate, the road passes a narrow fissure that whistles with a blast of cold air four times daily. Cleft’s topography provided a reprieve from the great pestilence; hence the town’s patriarchal and artisan traditions have remained largely intact. Cleft’s venerable taskmaster hails from a long line of chiefs.

The dwarves have always made weapons, and their surplus grew in step with their ego. As the dwarves see it, their prized creations belong only in deserving hands, although they have been known to make rare exceptions for a few members of Whisper’s makeshift militia. The dwarves’ handiwork is known to be the finest in the northern world.

Or so it would seem ...

Those hardworking days are over. Those who assumed the mantle of responsibility realized that reputation is more valuable than work ethic. If Cleft’s sons spent as much time working the forge as they did devising clever methods for convincing the taskmaster they were working, the town of Cleft would be truly worthy of its reputation. At first, the younger generation at the Guildworks had difficulty reconciling their quiescent outlook with time-honored tradition. Inevitably, they found a loophole: The old saying, “A day’s work never ends ...” was updated to include “... when it never begins.”

Equipped with their new mantra, the young members assembled an ingenious device deep in the Guildwork’s main workshop. This pinnacle of modern engineering’s one purpose is to make noise. In true Cleft form, hammers ring, bellows sing, and dark, thick smoke belches endlessly from the Guildwork’s chimneys. Cleft’s taskmaster’s heart fills with joy as he rises every morning to see workers streaming in and out of the Guildworks. Assured of his legacy, he keeps to his chambers, where he is attended diligently. From his tall perch, his elderly eyes fail to note the clues that mask Cleft’s mighty ruse. Great trains of wheelbarrows pass through the Guildwork’s doors daily, carrying provisions that could easily be mistaken for a midsummer feast.

Fine creations crafted and hoarded by the sweat and sacrifice of their forebears pay for the current generation’s largess. Their stockpile dwindling, the Guildworks carefully inventories and scrutinizes their trade. Even so, no one seems inclined to leave the large, comfortable, and luxurious breakroom in the Vale. Periodically, someone gets booted into the machine room to stoke the deceptive furnaces.



“A MAN IS USUALLY MORE CAREFUL OF HIS MONEY THAN OF HIS PRINCIPLES.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

The grimy hamlet of Swindle shelters near the foothills of the Vale, its crude denizens plotting to enrich themselves. The concept of honesty is as foreign to their large ears as the virtue of charity.

As a rule, goblins are shunned for their penchant for lawlessness. Alone, they pose a threat to no one, but they become more brazen as their numbers swell. Short, vulgar, and notoriously ungovernable, they can be menacing. They lack culture, and their ambition is limited. Over time, the decent folk of the Whisper Vale have come to accept these neighbors near the mountains.

This once-quaint town was abandoned during the pestilence. Its farmers and tradesmen fled, leaving a clean and orderly village with its renowned central garden. Seizing the opportunity, Swindle's new citizenry of goblins fell upon this idyllic setting, dragging an artisan sundial (pilfered from a nearby ruin) behind them. “No one conquers who does not fight” apparently does not apply to these guys.

Weeks of wanton looting and creative vandalism ensued. With the town in ruins, it began to feel like home. Appreciating their handiwork, the tribe stayed on. The town grew filthier; the goblins, content, grew lethargic and fat.

Bullied out of Swindle proper, a smallish goblin made a momentous discovery. He fell to looting a watermill next to a small stream on the outskirts of town, where he stumbled onto a still. Being a “clever” goblin, he accidentally fired up the still by swiping an especially shiny cap. Treasure poured from the still, creating an economic niche for the tribe. He became an instant hero in Swindle.

The result — known as Rotgut — heralded a new, insidious assault on the Vale. Never aged, poorly distilled, and highly potent, Swindle's pungent export is less tasty and more effective than Whisper's finest. In time, with the help of an indentured group of pollinating pixies, the goblins added floral extracts and other herbal ingredients that gave it a distinctive taste and, to anyone who imbibed, a pleasant hallucinogenic effect.

With the birth of Rotgut, Swindle's place in the Vale was assured. The goblins took to trading their sordid creation for various necessities. With goods in hand (and booze in barrels), they began to host the region's seasonal market. Shady deals, heated arguments, and cheated customers are its hallmarks. It is a good time for all. Held quarterly, the market's rowdy, boisterous atmosphere attracts the stout folk of Cleft, and a few lucky husbands also sneak out of Whisper on “business.” Whisper's wives hate it,

their menfolk love it, and the goblins profit from it.

Unfortunately, word of Swindle's success reached other bands of goblins. One of the more organized tribes traced the Swindle goblins' path to the village. Upon learning that Swindle's clan picked something up in some ruins, they resolved to follow this same path to riches. This ambitious L'uort tribe crisscrossed the Vale before discovering finally uncovering some ruins. They were unaware that these were the very same ruins — the Meanderbrook Monastery — from which the Swindle clan appropriated their prized sundial. Thrilled at their success, the L'uort looted their way through the ruins. Inevitably, they discovered a still — it's a monastery, after all — behind a king's ransom in casks of liquor. It dawned upon the L'uort chief that mastery of markets is more complex than simply combing through dangerous places.

The L'uort goblins are pressing to wrest control of Swindle's monopoly on gut-wrenching liquor with the aid of a disgruntled Swindle goblin. In Swindle, this miserable creature had been demoted to the lowly task of minding the pixies of Perch. Unhappy with this duty, the adjutant plotted petty vengeance. Late one night, he stuffed a few pixies in a sack and set out to establish an alternative swill to strike at the heart of Swindle. A pair of L'uort scouts picked him up, and the L'uort gained the missing piece to their liquor puzzle. With restless abandon, the L'uort fired up their still and reveled in their genius.



NOW, SINCE BY MY OWN RECKLESSNESS I HAVE RUINED MY PEOPLE, I FEEL SHAME ...”

— Homer, The Illiad

Lush vines drip from a sheer cliff overlooking Swindle, where a small, shallow hollow conceals a secret that would scandalize polite society. This is where Swindle’s indentured servants, the pixies, come to roost. They live a hardscrabble life as pollinators for Swindle’s Rotgut liquor. Swindle manages to hide the fact that their pitiful pixies are the secret, critical component of the goblins’ commercial success. The pixies’ hollow is disorganized, cold, and damp. Known for its proximity to Swindle’s garbage heap, no one likes to talk about Perch.

The hapless pixies of Perch are trapped. Complicit in their confinement, these malcontents sullenly waste away their days. They fixate on the past when they lived innocently in a loose collection of woodland dwellings. A druid charged the pixies with protecting an enchanted fountain, but it was inevitable that their curiosity would lead them to partake of the charmed waters. Their thirst slaked, the pixies soon realized their mistake. With each draught, the fountain’s allure turned to sweet torment.

An insolent, youthful pixie named Sartern proved to be the group’s undoing. Spurned by another pixie, the youth drifted away from the fountain and encountered a kindred soul who was also wandering the world. The black-hearted gnome Thopas gained the young pixie’s trust — even though they brought out the worst in one another. It ended badly for the pixie youth, however, as his newfound friend eventually subdued and enslaved him. Tricked, the pixie found himself bound to the whims of his new master. The gnome’s first order was for the pixie to steal the enchanted fountain.

Upon returning to the fountain’s glade, the pixies discovered the treachery. All that was left was a note. Brief and to the point, it read, “Vengeance is mine.” The clan knew immediately who had betrayed them and swore a solemn oath to wrest their fountain from the wayward pixie and his gnomish master. They immediately banished the spurned youth and readied themselves for battle. Alas for the pixies, their druid forsook them during the battle. The black-hearted gnome Thopas taunted and mocked the pixies as he routed them.

With the defeat, the pixies’ fates were sealed. The cruel gnome quickly traded the pixies’ fountain to Swindle for a song and a drink.

The pixies now toil endlessly in Swindle, mindlessly pollinating and caring for the plants. In exchange,

Swindle’s goblins allot the pixies measured sips from their fountain. Despite their wretched fate, the pixies of Perch are still better off than the insolent youth Sartern who ruined their lives. The gnome Thopas rewarded his new familiar with a list of tasks that he is sullenly bound to accomplish for his master.



PART II: PEOPLE AND PLACES

OF THE WHISPER VALE

Farmers, shepherds, and merchants form the backbone of Whisper, and its buildings reflect this. The town includes 19 farmsteads with large common lands for grazing. A few goods, including metals and wine, are imported; the rest are made or grown within 10 miles of the town square. On weekends, the local farmers host a small market in the village square where they barter for each other's goods. The crops are mostly vegetables and grains. Livestock consists chiefly of sheep and chickens with an occasional cow, horse, or ox. With the recent disappearance of so many animals, the commons are more likely to be occupied by suspicious shepherds than grazing livestock. Some crops have also begun to have weary guardians in the form of wary farmers and their families.

SMALL FAMILIES

Other families of shepherds, farmers, and tradesmen are generally humble and trustworthy. Their biggest considerations are festivals, harvests, and family. Of late, however, suspicions have risen regarding unusual occurrences. Suspicion breeds poor neighbors. These disturbances are putting everyone on edge.

If so desired, the younger members of many of these families would make good hirelings. They enthusiastically enlist in expeditions for a pittance, given that they usually spend their time plowing, weeding, and hauling manure. As farmers' sons, these hardy boys are competent with bows and spears.



INFLUENTIAL FAMILIES

FURROW

The Furrow family has the largest land and livestock holdings in town. Though well-to-do, they are not apt to flaunt their wealth. The widowed matriarch is well-regarded, but she has been a recluse since the death of her husband. She has six children and numerous grandchildren. One of her nephews is a merchant who directs the meager amount of legitimate commerce of goods into Whisper. The family's large holdings boast a manor house. The unpretentious Furrow family is the envy of the Ingilds, a rival family. This aside, the Furrows are on good terms with everyone else. For a reasonable fee, Furrow sons and grandsons make fine porters and linkboys.

INGILD

Whisper's other large family lacks esteem. The Ingild family envies the status and property enjoyed by the Furrows. The Ingild patriarch was once a devoted patron of the local temple. Now, he indulges himself to such an extent that his very health is in question. His absent-mindedness is exacerbated by his newfound enthusiasm for ale. His oldest daughter makes the family decisions, and her two sons can be reliably called upon to serve as men-at-arms in any militia.



THE ARCHMUG

The Archmug Inn is the social fabric from which the tapestry of the town is woven. It has two stories and one very important outbuilding — the brewery. Seven rooms are available to travelers for a nominal fee, but they are seldom used by anyone except lovers for carefully timed trysts. In fact, a hidden exit in one of the private bedrooms exists for anyone in need of a stealthy retreat. The commons is where everyone eats without pleasure and drinks with gusto. The kitchen serves meager fare, which is forgiven as it is washed down with the brewer's renowned ale. The other rooms are for storage. This is the place to look for all but the most uncompromising teetotalers.

JON HERBERGIER (INNKEEPER)

Jon is the most popular and, in all likelihood, the most trustworthy man in town. He continues his family's long tradition as proprietor of the inn. This cements his status in town. He is the *de facto* counselor, mayor, and arbitrator for the residents of Whisper. He is friendly but not overly talkative. He idolizes Ingra, his shrew of a wife, for reasons even he cannot fathom. Like most other prominent townsfolk, Jon is honest. His honesty, of course, is for sale. He can be bought on the cheap given his affinity for fine food and drink. He steers clear of disputes between the families in Whisper, however. Vyvyan, Jon's beautiful daughter, helps around the inn under his doting eyes. Jon is less inclined to trust his shifty son Jerrit and the unscrupulous brewer Lialio.

INGRA HERBERGIER (INNKEEPER'S WIFE)

Ingra, a harpy by any standard, has a temperament as vile as her culinary ability. This explains why her food is often refused even when offered *gratis*. Tall and frumpy, she seldom smiles and rarely bathes. Ingra adores her only son Jerrit and overlooks his shortcomings. She seldom interacts with anyone unless it concerns her son. Since no one likes her — or her son — her tendency to keep to the kitchen suits all.

JERRIT HERBERGIER (INNKEEPER'S SON)

Ill-mannered, untrustworthy, and prone to petty theft, Jerrit has an unsavory reputation with everyone in town save the brewer Lialio and the gnome Thopas. The townsfolk tolerate him only because of the respect they have for his father. Jerrit often deals with the seedier elements in Whisper, and he fancies himself an accomplished thief. By his own account, Jerrit is also irresistible — a real Romeo — to Whisper's fair maidens. The maidens beg to differ. He is widely suspected by many to have played a role in the recent unpleasantness, especially those incidents concerning missing items and heirlooms. The townsfolk's suspicions prove to be only partially true; Jerrit enriches himself a little on the side, but his real contribution is in spreading discord by inventing gossip and making sly accusations.

Any information gleaned from Jerrit should be treated appropriately. He's a lout, but his interest in the fairer sex may prove useful to female newcomers. Lately, he has been spied consorting with Thopas and his ilk. Jerrit is capable of hatching his own plot, wherein he may attempt to fool his way into a party as a porter. His specifics turn fuzzy at this point. Success at such a heroic undertaking would solidify Jerrit's notion of himself as a notorious bandit.



THE ARCHMUG (CONTINUED)

VYVYAN HERBERGIER (INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER)

The unspoken rule among the young men in town is: “Thou shalt not covet the innkeeper’s daughter.” Unsurprisingly, given her shapely figure, every one of them does. Aloof to the attention afforded to her exceptional beauty, Vyvyan is surprisingly unaffected and friendly. She works under the watchful eye of her father, who is quick to judge every suitor unworthy. For Vyvyan, this ensures a constant stream of admirers. Her tender inclinations lead her to lavish her affections upon a sickly cow in town. The subject of Vyvyan’s affection has survived many a butcher’s knife.

LIALIO (BREWER)

Lialio, like Jerrit, is suspicious, but he is respected due to his skill as a brewer. He rarely drinks his own brew. Rather, he sips constantly from a flask of Rotgut obtained from the goblins of Swindle. He is no stranger to the gnome Thopas nor to his boss’s cutpurse son. When not brewing, Lialio supervises preparations and siphoning for the wagon. Preparing for the wagon’s weekly rounds keeps Lialio busy. Whisper’s finest ale occasionally travels great distances, where it is sold at inflated prices.

Lialio spends his spare time as a rag-and-bone man making collections for clandestine deliveries under the guise of picking cloth and bones used by other craftsmen in town.

THE TEMPLE

With the abandonment of the monastery, Whisper’s temple is the source of spiritual life in the Vale. Unfortunately for the religious-minded, spiritual life consists of an eccentric priest and a few true-believing matriarchs. The majority of citizens dragged there to worship do so at their behest. The citizenry uses the

temple to attend ceremonies (which they generally hate), feasts (which they love), and funerals (which they avoid, if possible — especially their own).

Religion was more central to their lives when the Meanderbrook Monastery brothers were still active. The statuary and relics within the temple are shabby, a testament to the importance currently placed on religion.

The priest Ashby is a cloistered cleric who is more comfortable as a counselor than a healer. He can treat small wounds and other ailments with leeches, prayers, and holy magic. Major intercessions requiring deep communion with his deity can be arranged for a commensurate fee. Resurrection of a deceased relative can be arranged — once — with the use of a single scroll he keeps hidden.

ASHBY (PRIEST)

An eccentric drinker, Ashby tends his semi-enthusiastic flock with as much interest as he can muster. He collects religious icons and hard liquor, but not in that order. Ashby’s temple events are unorthodox and usually heavily abridged.

He knows more about the Meanderbrook ruins than anyone else in town. He can provide information about the monastery grounds, though his knowledge is declining — its accuracy is inversely related to his sobriety. As he is cloistered, he gladly helps decent folk. He often does this for little more than the price of an evening’s entertainment.

Ashby will not leave Whisper, but he is very interested in any group that ventures toward the monastery. He is aware of important religious relics and their possible locations within the ruins, items that his distant superiors are keen on retrieving. Among them are illuminated books and a sacred chalice. His personal interest is surprisingly secular. Ashby desires to act as a middle man so he can negotiate an inflated price for a fee. To that end, Ashby is willing to pass two pieces of useful information along to the characters. The first is the rumor that the chalice acts as a key for opening a secret compartment somewhere on the monastery grounds. The second rumor is the danger of encountering the restless souls of his dead brethren, whom he suspects were left unburied when the brothers fled before the plague.

THE FORGE

The blacksmith shop in Whisper specializes in pitchforks; it makes a lot of these. The blacksmith is reliable and can repair most iron and steel goods as the need arises. In a pinch, the blacksmith can make weapons and some lighter varieties of armor.

THOM TINKER (BLACKSMITH)

Thom is the local blacksmith. Apart from pitchforks, his work revolves around plows, harnesses, and horseshoes. Thom was originally apprenticed to a renowned armorer from the mining town of Cleft, but his mentor retreated to the Guildworks of Cleft, leaving Thom to his own devices. He is familiar enough with shields and armor to make repairs. While he cannot ascertain the exact properties of enchanted items, Thom knows good craftsmanship when he sees it. As happy behind an anvil as an ale mug, he frequently pops into the inn during and after work. Often those needing his services quietly fret about this, preferring the sound of ringing hammers to ringing laughter.

Thom is a popular resident. He is especially friendly with the innkeeper Jon Herbergier. He is also good in a fight and has the equipment to make himself useful.



THE APOTHECARY

Herbs, incense, and natural remedies can be purchased here. Unless seeking components or ingredients, most travelers find little of interest here, save a salve the apothecary concocts from local river plants. When applied, it heals minor wounds instantly (1d4 hit points) but can be used only once per day. Norah's recipe is a closely guarded secret. Therefore, only a handful of doses are available. Given time and money, the proprietress can make more.



NORAH (APOTHECARY)

The quiet and reclusive Norah is a minor mystery in Whisper. She does not share their religion or participate in their festivals. She is not unfriendly; she merely has limited interest in social niceties. Unmarried and uninterested in becoming a wife, she spends her days in her store or wandering the Vale collecting useful flora. She refuses to have any dealings with the residents of Swindle and never attends its fair. Norah is friendly with Atina, the secretive mistress of the grove.

THE MERCANTILE

This is, as the name implies, a combination dry goods, feed store, and supply shop. Catering to Whisper's farmers and shepherds, the Mercantile is of little interest to travelers. It carries a large, organized supply of rations and a few common goods such as torches, ropes, and poles that visitors may find useful.

ERGEN PRESTOR (MERCHANT)

Unassuming and mousy, Ergen is obsessed with keeping a tidy shop. Every bin is spotless, and each shelf is free of dust. His obsession spills over into his life, manifested by constant handwashing and frequent bathing expeditions to the river. He has few friends. This suits Ergen, as he prefers the company of cats to people. Sadly for Ergen, his cats prefer their own company.

THE COBBLER'S WEAVE

This store sells quality merchandise crafted by a talented and well-to-do couple named Kathryn and Percy Seamly. The Cobbler's Weave sells cloth, clothing, and shoes. The couple own a good collection of high-quality clothes and tapestries, many of their own creation.

KATHRYN SEAMLY (MASTER SEAMSTRESS)

Kathryn works making and repairing clothes for the locals, but she is loath to part with her finer creations. Kathryn takes great pride in being the best-dressed woman and the mistress of the most finely decorated home in the Vale. Aloof but friendly, she adores her hardworking husband, notwithstanding his embarrassing wardrobe.

PERCY SEAMLY (COBBLER)

Oblivious to fashion, Percy is the quintessential utilitarian. This is good for the village as a whole as fancy shoes make for poor harvest footwear. Hardworking, friendly, and sociable, Percy is no stranger to the inn. He is also the self-appointed grand marshal of the boozy festivals held in Swindle.

THE CHEMIST'S SHOP

Kurtiss, the town's alchemist, deals in small powders and minor chemicals such as fertilizers and dyes. He is often in the shop at irregular hours, and even then, he shutsters the windows

to avoid a rude awakening. If necessary, Kurtiss can provide other alchemist wares and products.

KURTISS DRAZ'UK (ALCHEMIST)

Kurtiss leads a double life as a part-time alchemist and a full-time hedonist. As a lazy merchant, Kurtiss can rarely be bothered to tend to his own store. It is not laziness, however, but the black market that keeps his store shuttered. He plies a healthy trade in unhealthy potions between Whisper and Swindle. No one in any of the towns admits to wanting his services but many would panic should he retire.

Kurtiss is good-natured and generous to a fault. He is best known in the community for his work with the brewer Lialio in improving the town's signature export. His chief innovation is a faster-acting yeast. But Kurtiss' principal contribution has been to serve as a reliable test subject for new brews. He takes copious notes regarding different brews and their relationship to stages of sobriety. It is obvious that Kurtiss tastes a few too many samples.

He has long since decided that the romantic life of a smuggler is preferable to further study in the chemical arts. He finds "spiritual" fulfillment in some of the products he "alchemizes" for himself — and a certain gnomish hedonist whose identity would surprise no one.

CRANK

Every one of Crank's clients has a story to share. He rejects such intrigues as so much noise. Kurtiss moves his contraband via this vagabond halfling. Following a series of unfortunate events wherein Toki (Whisper's enthusiastic constable) figures prominently, Crank moved his operation to a more appropriate venue. Crank stands on a dusty corner in Swindle as he engages in commerce on Kurtiss' behalf.





CONSTABLE'S BUILDING

When a sudden argument in Whisper involving visitors from Cleft became a riot known as the Untimely War (see **The Untimely War: A Tale from Whisper** sidebar), many requested a plan to prevent encore performances by the newly self-assured mob. Citizens who suffered torch burns or bruises from trampling boots waited for a proposal. The first suggestion involved prohibition and curfew, which was vetoed by a spontaneous mob. A mob-pleasing alternative was quickly proffered. An old, disused building on the edge of town was unlocked and deeded to Toki “Wrymouth,” the dedicated new constable. A safe distance from Whisper’s inn, this converted barn, with its strong stalls, was once used as a holding tank for Whisper’s drunk and disorderly. Having spent an uncomfortable night with frisky rats, these unfortunates were released the following day to return home to a good tongue-lashing from their spouses.

TOKI “WRYMOUTH” (CONSTABLE/MORAL AUTHORITY)

Toki is a “believer” who works in the service of a dwarven god. A tolerant polytheist, Toki advocates for order and the general weal. Toki unflinchingly believes that no one is beyond redemption, but his conviction was challenged on a trip to

Whisper when Toki witnessed a level of depravity heretofore beyond his experience.

Toki’s about-town garb is chain armor, a war axe, and a darkwood shield. He is an experienced holy warrior. His martial bearing and polished armor are a testament to his virtue.

DWEOMNER SCHMEIDESTAH (TRAPMAKER)

As a dwarf, Dweomner’s philosophy is that no task is too tall for brute strength and a low center of gravity. He seeks to prove himself through stout tenacity. Opportunity came knocking when Dweomner was offered bellows duty in Cleft. He attacked this task with exuberance, straining his muscular frame with each compression. Unfortunately, his enthusiasm resulted in a fire at the forge. As Dweomner departed, he mused at the flimsy tools employed by the loafers at the former forge.

Unable to procure traditional employment, Dweomner turned his talents to engineering powerful traps. His motto — might makes right — is deeply entrenched in all of his designs. His peerless ability to create complex kinetic snares found favor with the Vale’s wealthier folk, who prefer to catch perpetrators in the act. Such interlopers face hard time in the temperance society’s moral correction facility. Dweomner’s ambition drives him to use his gifts for the good of the world and fixing that which needs fixed ... one way or another.

While officially a citizen of Cleft, Dweomner is usually found at the inn in Whisper.



THE UNTIMELY WAR: A TALE FROM WHISPER

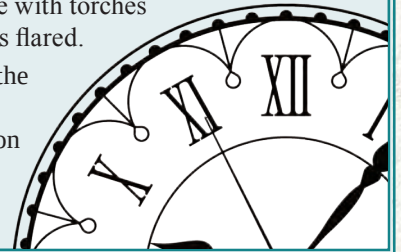
Elias the clockmaker times his instruments to the whistling of the fissure near Cleft. For the life of him, Elias cannot fathom why his clocks run 69.3 seconds late every 30 days, which forces him to make frequent returns to Whisper in order to reset his timepieces. None of Whisper's residents appear to notice this fundamental discrepancy. Elias is unaware that his problem lies with the fact that the fissures near Cleft and Whisper keep their own time. Dweomner, the timekeeper of Cleft, relies upon Elias' clocks to maintain his livelihood. Sadly for Dweomner, one of his specialties is meticulously timed traps ...

This disequilibrium causes words to fly like a murder of crows. Known as the Untimely War among the Vale's residents, Dweomner rails against Elias' incompetence, while Elias counters with accusations of Dweomner's shoddy workmanship and use of discount parts from Swindle.

While drinking ale in Whisper's tavern one fine evening, Elias was approached by an unhappy Dweomner, who had stopped by the tavern for his daily mug of ale. He had just set Toki's thatched-roof home security hammer trap, which sprang while he was halfway down the ladder. Dweomner was launched headfirst into a nearby stack of hay. As he entered the tavern, Dweomner spied Elias, who was lamenting his own misfortune. Elias had just finished resetting seven clocks in Whisper. Dweomner approached Elias and threatened to expose the dark secret behind his shameful lack of facial hair. Incensed, Elias responded with a wild swing, which went wide and hit Vyvyan, the innkeeper's daughter, knocking the wind out of her.

The ensuing battle sloshed back and forth as chaos spread in the tavern's common room. The conflict spilled into Whisper's square as people poured from nearby shops to join the fray. A mob formed, replete with torches and pitchforks. The violence escalated from there. Their personal cold war went hot. Tempers flared.

On a visit to Whisper from his home in Cleft, Toki calmly surveyed the scene, soaking in the sotted behavior in the square. "Such rampant buffoonery is an affront to decency," Toki said wryly, and he remained to bring law and order to Whisper. He is reluctant to leave Whisper on the grounds that he is all that stands between order and anarchy. Toki is, however, interested in helping adventurers who seek to get to the bottom of the rising tide of social dysfunction.



CONSTABLE'S BUILDING (CONTINUED)

ELIAS NOCK (CLOCKMAKER)

For the gnome Elias, fashion sense ended in a flash. It was not a clean death. For years, he has lived in a state of fashionable dysfunction, a byproduct of Elias' keen focus on his obsessions. For one, he is obsessed with time. While the details are vague, Elias was changed after an event wrested somewhere between seven and 75 hours from his mortal coil. Clocks, unlike people, can be trusted.

And second, Elias doesn't suffer fools; he despises and avoids them. He spends his time jotting down plans for sophisticated projects. Most days, Elias journeys to Whisper's busy inn, where he scribbles diagrams and ignores other patrons. Elias sits stooped over the bar, his graying locks showing more interest in his tankard than he does.

While his creations are elegant and intricate, they invariably are no more accurate than a discarded sundial in Swindle. Fortunately, Elias avoids Swindle at all costs and lives in blissful ignorance of the sundial-turned-lounge.

LIN LIREN (DOCTOR)

Lin Liren hails from a distant shore, but the gnome Thopas discovered him in a traveling circus while checking his

investments in a southern port. Never one to miss a circus, the gnome dropped in. To his delight, the affair was a front for a traveling gladiator fair with astonishing acts of senseless brutality. After an impeccably choreographed bloodletting, the gnome was rapt. He approached Lin Liren, the fight's victor, with a proposition in hand. A clandestine agreement was reached, thus heralding the end of the fair fight. Fixing the fair quickly proved profitable and dangerous for Lin Liren and Thopas. Under cover of darkness — and heavy suspicion — the conspirators left the southern port. The gnome returned to the Vale, his new friend Lin Liren in tow.

Lin Liren quickly tired of the gnome's undesirable company and eventually wound up in Whisper. He fills a busy niche as the town's healer. Recognizing the necessity for the treatment of the town's bizarre burns and bruises, Dr. Liren molded his practice to the treatment of physical manifestations of moral failure. He has become a master in this specialty as he applies his unorthodox techniques. The townsfolk might have protested were they not so spent. After a time, they came to realize that the good doctor's approach actually worked. This freed up the priest and his leeches to attend to other matters.

The respected doctor plies a healthy trade. Despite his inauspicious arrival, he has become one of Whisper's own.

The gnome Thopas' sporadic excursions continue, but he does not travel alone. The residents of Whisper miss their doctor during his long house calls to "some southern port"; the other one ... not so much.

WHEAT'S END

The miller and his son operate Whisper's mill to grind local grain for baking and barter. Business has been downright bad lately as families struggle with poor harvests and suspicious activities. The friendly miller is inclined to help in any manner available just to bring the town (and his business) back to normal. He has one adventurous son, Runem, who often has good reason to make himself scarce from some of the town's other inhabitants, as his eye for other men's women is renowned and (not surprisingly) unpopular.

NIGEL MILSTON (MILLER)

Nigel is Whisper's hardworking miller. He is a regular at the inn. He is agreeable and never argumentative, due in part to his being functionally deaf. He does very little negotiation without his ears — aka his son Runem — being present. His love for the village and his son is readily apparent.

RUNEM MILSTON (MILLER'S SON)

Runem — the miller's muscular son — is Whisper's second most-renowned paramour. With the decline of his father's health, Runem has assumed responsibility for the mill's daily activities. He is an avid hunter and tracker who is secretly involved with one of the maidens of the prosperous Furrow family. He is also dallying with the young wife of a local farmer. His fear of getting caught in this web of duplicity leads to many long days at the mill and even longer hunting expeditions. If asked, Runem would be willing, with adequate compensation, to join the characters on a reasonable expedition. Less savory characters may choose to retain his aid by threatening to expose his liaisons. He is a capable warrior with solid skills as a woodsman. He has an enchanted sword and a suit of fine chainmail armor. Both items are precious family heirlooms.

NOTEWORTHY NEIGHBORS

ATINA (MISTRESS OF THE GROVE)

Atina is one of nature's guardians. Attractive and strong-willed, she is tireless in her pursuit of natural balance. With help from reliable fey allies, she investigates any deviation from nature's plan. Atina evaluates each disruption with watchful wisdom, shepherding her charges against unnatural forces. This elusive mistress appears when the need is greatest. As the Vale approaches a fleeting state of equilibrium, Atina is there to usher in the dawn of a season. A new cycle begins. Atina moves on.

Atina's delicate mortal form is vigilantly guarded by Nor, her faithful ward. This bear is powerful, attentive, and unwavering in its devotion to Atina. Nor's spiritual bond with Atina gifts him with primal awareness. His only weakness is that he is hard of hearing.

ANNALISE (NYMPH)

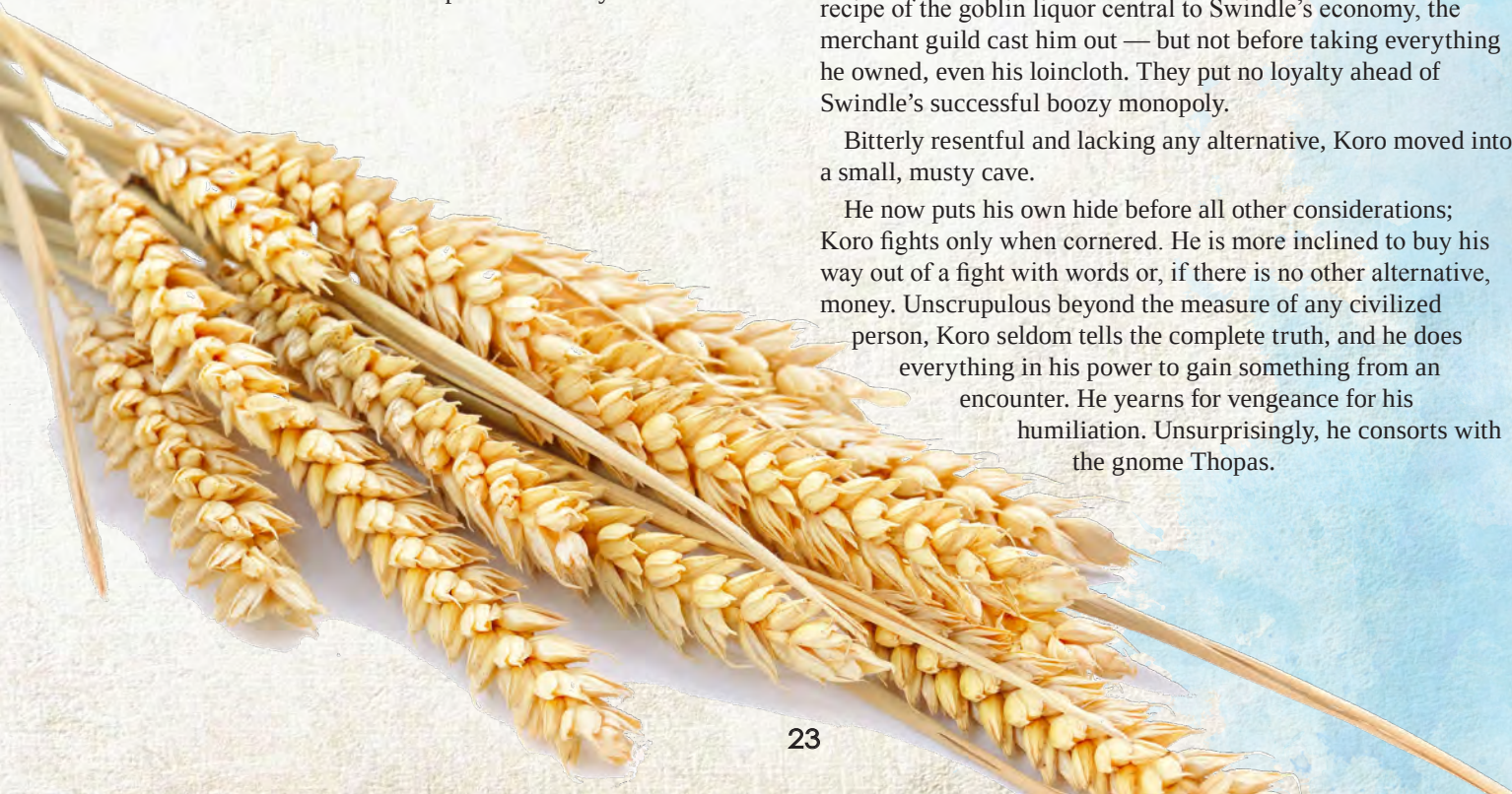
Legends of the nymph of the Vale are as old as time. Annalise drifts effortlessly through the Vale's secluded groves and meadows. On rare occasions, her impulsive vanity leads Annalise to reveal herself to unwitting menfolk. She basks in their adulation and delights in teasing. Her victims' virtue is a mere plaything to this ethereal maiden. Her playful antics have tortured the Vale's souls and inspired the finest poetry — and verse — for ages.

KORO (GOBLIN EXILE)

Koro is unabashedly filthy, irredeemably untrustworthy, and a victim of his own ambition. Formerly the chief of Swindle's distillery, Koro was ousted after his clan discovered that he was double-dealing with the L'uort, an aggressive, newly arrived clan of goblins. Fearing that Koro was planning to share the secret recipe of the goblin liquor central to Swindle's economy, the merchant guild cast him out — but not before taking everything he owned, even his loincloth. They put no loyalty ahead of Swindle's successful boozy monopoly.

Bitterly resentful and lacking any alternative, Koro moved into a small, musty cave.

He now puts his own hide before all other considerations; Koro fights only when cornered. He is more inclined to buy his way out of a fight with words or, if there is no other alternative, money. Unscrupulous beyond the measure of any civilized person, Koro seldom tells the complete truth, and he does everything in his power to gain something from an encounter. He yearns for vengeance for his humiliation. Unsurprisingly, he consorts with the gnome Thopas.



HELL'S BELL: A TALE FROM CLEFT

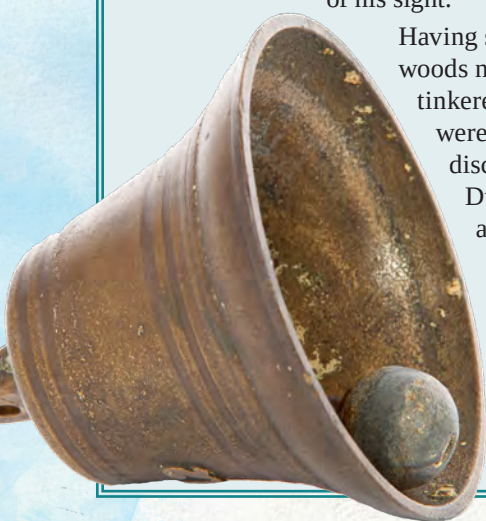
The goblins of Swindle, having stolen the monastery's ornate bell, could not get the device to ring. Told that eliminating deposits in the bell would solve the problem, Swindle's council accepted an offer to clean the bell from a pair of friends from Cleft. Their only stipulation was that the bell be transported to Cleft for the job. Swindle's council charged Faudder, the town crier, to accompany the bell on its journey. He was admonished never to let the bell out of his sight.

Having secured Swindle's bell in the woods near Cleft, the inseparable tinkerers Dweomner and Elias were keen to use a recently discovered scrubbing powder. Dweomner placed a miniscule amount of the powder inside the inverted bell and proceeded to scrub. His steel brush created a spark that caused a small detonation. The pair looked excitedly

at each other through the billowing smoke. Without a word, Dweomner poured the remaining contents of their large sack into the bell. Suddenly, Elias had an epiphany: They could use the bell to project the lead-lined barrel of Rotgut into Cleft's Guildworks, thus proving their genius and saving them the effort of dragging the hooch into town.

Dusk was falling, so Dweomner lit a torch to help Elias with his work. Faudder stood dutifully behind as the friends worked feverishly. This invention would surely change the very nature of trade. Elias proceeded to scrub the bell as before. Noting his friend's trouble seeing in the deepening dusk, Dweomner drew his torch closer to Elias, who was intensely focused on his work. Accounts differ on the details, but they are clear on the outcome. Dweomner and Elias' lifelong friendship ended abruptly.

To this day, the crater remains charred. Faudder returned to Swindle empty-handed and mute. Dweomner woke up the following morning on the bank near Cleft's ferry. Elias disappeared from daily life but eventually resurfaced to lead a quiet life in Cleft using his expertise as a clockmaker to fashion clever toys. Speculation abounds over the fate of Elias' long beard.



MONSIEUR MANGE

A runt ogre, once a tailor by trade, has spent many years exiled for a crime. A crime absolutely committed, yet seldom regretted, turned him to the life of a wanderer. Then he fell upon a silent gnoll clad only with a vacant expression; an obvious bludgeoning victim of local highwaymen or a rival gnolls. The runt dressed him up, and spiffed him up and, together, slipped into polite society...

The runt does all the speaking for the mute Monsieur Mange, who becomes the toast of every town. He and his rough looking footman are invited to the finest parties, the most debutante balls... He obliges all such invitations with the tireless aid of his dedicated manservant; M. Mange sets the trend.

People project their interests. Whatever they want to talk about, M. Mange obliges, though he remains aloof. M. Mange is private and mysterious. He is also witless. His only tell is the intermittent appearance of a red tongue that lolls lazily

out of the right-hand side of his mouth (just behind the shellacked incisor).

Most queries and comments are met with the same response by his footman, "Monsieur Mange says 'Oui.'"

He came to town with the pack, though for the life of them, not one of the gnolls can recall when, exactly, he joined up. His style and impeccable mustache are renowned.

He is indisposed. The quintessential "Man about Town."

When a savory meal is set before M. Mange, his footman rings a small, high-pitched bell, and the stately gnoll begins to drool appropriately, putting a sparkle in the matron's eye.

He is always addressed in the third person: "Did M. Mange enjoy his dinner?"

Whereupon the runt responds, "Monsieur Mange says, 'Oui.'"

He is a dandy... with a feather in his cap.



THOPAS' HUT

Thopas' eponymous hut is on the outskirts of town. It is a sturdy eyesore that is notable only for the oddity of its owner. All the respectable citizens of Whisper warn their children and recent newcomers to steer clear of its vicinity. Small scraps of magic writing, scrolls, potions, liquor bottles, bones, and other strange things litter the area around Thopas' hut. This inauspicious lair is the most likely place to find the gnome.

THOPAS (GNOME SORCERER)

Thopas' origin is shrouded in mystery. No one in the Whisper Vale can recall the time before he took up residence in his untidy hut. He never speaks of his past outside bitter, muted mutterings. This is just as well, as everyone knows better than to ask him about it. Any answers he deigns to give are peppered with falsehoods and a rotating array of changing facts.

A small number of other gnomes are loosely scattered throughout the region. These creatures mind their own business and work as honest tinkers and miners. However, from the mines of Cleft to the meeting of the rivers, when folks talk about "the gnome," there is never any confusion as to which gnome they are talking about. Apart from his physique and some of his innate mannerisms, Thopas has none of the qualities associated with other gnomes. He lives in a forest but hates it; he can talk to burrowing mammals, although they wisely avoid him; and his taste in companions of the fairer sex is unusual in its focus and surprising in its success.

Petty viciousness blended with minor criminality and a dash of the self-satisfaction he derives from bizarre cruelty weave the fabric of Thopas' nature. He is known to have influenced — at one time or another — all of the less-savory individuals in the Whisper Vale. Over the years, these mentorships have existed solely to fill a void: unprincipled entertainment. On the rare occasion when a protégé benefits from their relationship, it is purely accidental. Although not explicitly evil, Thopas does what he does for his own reasons, to the benefit of no one but himself.

Normally such a narcissistic and cruel gnome would quickly find himself on the wrong side of an angry, pitchfork-wielding mob. For complicated reasons, he is simply shunned by the majority of the residents of the three villages. At times, unwary or unprincipled people have sought out Thopas to further their malevolent plans.

For his amusement, Thopas is known to temporarily befriend others — usually petty or vicious-tempered social outcasts. Such friendships are usually short, and for Thopas, full of glee-filled opportunities for indecency and mischief.

Despite his nasty demeanor, Thopas is a useful and, oddly enough, entertaining companion. When asked for wisdom or advice, he is certain to listen. Often, those who seek advice must endure a barrage of rants on unrelated matters before he deigns to share his wisdom. He delights in opportunities to put his expertise to use — especially when it involves necromancy, divination, or illusion. Thopas' most important knowledge, which he shares only in dark hints, is gleaned from his favorite hobbies: extispicy and uromancy. These divination schools are



RUMPIS

Disowned by his family and shunned by his clan, a young fey was beguiled into servitude by a sorcerer of ill-repute. Proving to be worth less than the entertainment value of the abuse heaped upon him, Rumpis was set loose.

In an emotional parting, Rumpis was awarded his freedom and a wand with a trifling enchantment. With sad determination, he set out to fulfil his destiny. Time passed, and Rumpis gained focus. He marched eagerly toward his interlude with destiny with an air of bravura. Fate circled him like a vulture (it was, in fact, a vulture).

For his part, the master was glad to be rid of him, confident his gift would hasten the approach of destiny. It wasn't even a proper wand. Detect magic wouldn't even recognize it.

Eventually, Rumpis made his way to a knoll near a pond where he built himself a domicile. Years later, Rumpis will recall a jumbled mosaic of heroic deeds. He leapt from the end of a sharp talon into a pond (he was kicked), wherein he staved off the attack of a vicious monster (he was ejected). Ultimately, Rumpis found himself lying on the shore of said pond with a mangled leg. Destiny descended upon his wounded limb on giant black wings and bore it aloft with Rumpis in tow. His date with fate had come (he was spurned).

Rumpis, if encountered, can use the stat block of a **nilbog**, without spellcasting.

THOPAS' HUT (CONTINUED)

the reason that small animals of every description flee from him. Purely for amusement and distraction, he relishes any roles that employ secret plots and deceptive machinations. His love of mischief allows him to be the invisible hand that dissolves marriages, plans betrayals, and furthers many dark purposes.

Most citizens of the Vale tolerate him as a crazed miscreant whose habits, while loathsome, are mostly harmless. He often teeters on the brink of sanity while delighting in sowing maliciousness. His only real companion is his ill-mannered equal, a pixie familiar named Sartern, whom he treats appallingly. Their relationship is complex, to say the least, but what cannot be said is that they do not deserve one another.

Thopas' hut is strewn with small bones, straw, papers, and other detritus. A small cage, also made of bone, hangs in one corner and is where his miserable familiar sleeps on a little perch. Thopas frequently writes and mutters to himself about another "lesser" gnome, at which point he becomes hysterical and wildly paces about his hut. Thopas is capable of limitless vulgarities which, being who he is, turns out to be useful on many occasions.

Pressed to combat, Thopas uses powerful and insulting illusions to subdue his dazzled foe. Victorious, he enjoys a rare treat: He makes them beg for their lives and extracts ridiculous promises and a victor's trophy. He is more apt to select a cherished wedding band over a mountain of gems. He has little use for riches.

The twice-outcast goblin Koro and the innkeeper's dishonest son Jerrit are his ilk. He spies on the townsfolk through his pixie familiar, who regularly flits about the towns.

Thopas is aware of the current state of affairs at the monastery. He fears something is amiss, if only because his pixie saw that busybody druid Atina and her smelly bear chasing a small band of scouts. Atina takes action only when great danger threatens the natural order; Thopas knows this firsthand.

SARTERN (THOPAS' FAMILIAR)

Sartern is a pixie cast out by his tribe due to his early misplaced trust in his gnome master Thopas. The pixie is quick-tempered and foul-mouthed. Sartern's love/hate relationship with his master is peculiar but satisfying to both of their unfortunate personalities. Although magically bound to Thopas, Sartern is unlikely to leave even if given the opportunity. Familiarity may breed contempt, but it also encourages an odd sort of symbiosis.

Sartern is not above small-time theft, petty arson, or any other of a number of deviancies in order to achieve his master's goals. He balks at going to the abandoned monastery, as he is afraid of the giant bees on the property. He never visits Swindle for complicated reasons due to familial treachery of his own making.



PART III: WHISPER & VENOM



GAME MASTER'S INTRODUCTION

A mysterious dark force is unleashing a powerful energy in an isolated valley of the Whisper Vale, channeling a destructive power that is rending the fabric between worlds.

Fear is conjuring dark dreams for all those who dwell within the arms of the impassible mountain walls. The Whisper Vale is being cursed with poor weather and a late harvest, and cold winds are blowing through from the north. These portents are weakening residents' nerves and sowing the seeds of discontent. As clouds of despondency build, the villagers compensate with merrymaking. Excessive drunkenness and foul humors are leading to misplaced accusations of moral failure. Resentment and exasperation are eroding trust. Standing too near the tapestry, the residents of the Whisper Vale see only the threads of doom.

But there are those who see the full tapestry, their experience and knowledge giving them a greater perspective. They know that a foreign malevolence has entered the Vale, but they cannot explain the design behind this new threat. Even experience and knowledge have their limits. When such limits are reached, idle speculation is all that remains.

Ultimately, the folk of Whisper and their erudite neighbors will need to find kinship in their inaction.

But what good is a warning when none take heed?
Welcome to Whisper.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

During the recent new moon, a corrupt passage opened between the Nexid — an extraplanar dimension of energy — and the Meanderbrook Monastery in the Whisper Vale. This opening spewed an invisible corruption into the sunlit world, first tainting a subterranean fungus, then the reptilian attorals that fed off it.

Corruption continued to cascade from the Nexid Gate. Within days, the attorals were transformed into voracious predators that preyed on their young. Younger attorals were forced from the depths to the upper reaches, which were wide and full of prey.

Once established in the great cavern, the attorals began to breed at a monstrous rate and to spread even farther. Cunning, swift, and hungry, they did not have far to travel. The ruins of an ancient vineyard overrun with wildlife and full of dark places was just outside the entrance to their massive, cavernous chamber. The place was an ideal territory for them to establish their lairs.

It was in these ruins that the L'uort, a resident tribe of goblins who refused to abandon their home, confronted the attorals. The goblins hunted the creatures, who in turn hunted them. The attorals spit venom — a poison tainted and enhanced by the Nexid Gate's corruption — but this venom had now gained a curious effect. Originally a minor, but still damaging, poison, it was transformed and added a range of effects — some beneficial — to its target. At times, it made the target stronger, smarter, or more agile. On subsequent attacks, it had an opposite effect.

TABLE 1: GENERAL WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

1d10	Encounter
1	Cave Bear
2	Monstrous Beetle ^{A1}
3	Giant Shrew (use giant rat stat block)
4	Giant Mole ¹
5	Wolf
6	Fey ²
7	Insane Beggar (as cultist or cult fanatic)
8	Rhacos ^{A1}
9	L'uort ^{A1} Scouting Party
10	Aerial Attack ³

¹ As **giant rat** with a blinding attack from underground ambush point, advantage on first attack, critical hit if successful.

² Your choice; possibilities include **pixies**, **sprites**, **dryads**, etc.

³ Your choice; possibilities include **eagles**, **bats**, **wyverns**, etc.

TABLE 2: MEANDER RIVER ENCOUNTERS

1d10	Encounter
1	Murkbeast ^{A1}
2	Monstrous Beetle ^{A1}
3	Giant Beaver ^{A1}
4	Deer
5	Giant Catfish ¹
6	Fey ²
7	Raftsmen (as scout) ³
8	Rhacos ^{A1}
9	L'uort ^{A1} Scouting Party
10	Aerial Attack ⁴

¹ Up to you, but probably not dangerous except to small watercraft

² Your choice; possibilities include **pixies**, **sprites**, **dryads**, etc.

³ A solitary huntsman who may provide food or information

⁴ Your choice; possibilities include **eagles**, **bats**, **wyverns**, etc.



The beneficial effects caught the attention of the L'uort, who discovered that the venom also enhanced intellect and focus.

One of the tribe's shamans (inspired by a recent poisoning) concocted an elixir in his laboratory using liquor and a pinch of attoral nest sputum. When filtered and ingested, the elixir imbued the goblins with stamina, strength, and ferocity. It was also addictive, and those who partook needed to keep a constant supply on hand; the consequences of going without was a lingering, debilitating pain.

The attorals that roamed the ruins and caverns were suddenly valuable. The goblins, under orders from their emboldened chief Lalrech, subdued a pair of the reptiles. These attorals were thrown into makeshift cages and "farmed" for the ingredient that kept the L'uort powerful.

With their newfound power and ambition, the L'uort began seeking out places to flex their unnatural muscles and to feed their cruel desires.

They did not have to go far.

STARTING POINT

The nearby town of Whisper is considered the starting point for the following adventure. A thorough description of its history and a list of important residents can be found in **Part I: The Whisper Vale and Environs**.

Whisper is an easy day's journey from the ruins of the Meanderbrook Monastery. It is a small farming community and the principal town in a loose collection of settlements (Whisper, Cleft, and Swindle). Together, they make up the only population centers for many leagues.

Ordinary supplies, extraordinary ale, and rest are available in Whisper. But the friendly and hardworking townsfolk are now on edge. Strange acts of arson, midnight crop trampling, livestock rustling, and outright theft have bedeviled the citizenry for more than a month. These events remain mysterious as no one has witnessed the acts.

A few suspicious locals are taking advantage of the situation and are using the strange occurrences to lift a few items or to settle some scores. With the recent disappearance of livestock, the level of anger is palpable, and investigation would be welcomed — possibly rewarded.

ADVENTURE LOCALE

An ancient vineyard grows near the headwaters of the Meander River. A monastic order of scholars and winemakers spent years cultivating this orchard, until plague forced them from their home. The ruins remained abandoned until recently, when the L'uort tribe of goblins moved into the empty monastery. The keyed locations in **Whisper & Venom** begin at a gate in a hedge located in the abandoned ruin's vineyard.

Characters traveling to the ruins of the monastery are likely to encounter a host of wandering creatures in the Vale. **Table 1: General Wilderness Encounters** includes a list of possible encounters throughout the Vale. You can also use **Tables 2–4** for specific encounters along the Meander River, in the foothills, and in the Gauntswept on the valley floor. For more detailed descriptions of the region, please consult **Part I: The Whisper Vale and Environs**, which includes details of places and people the characters might meet during their travels.

TABLE 3: FOOTHILLS OF THE VALE ENCOUNTERS

1d10	Encounter
1	Cave Bear
2	Giant Centipede
3	Giant Shrew (use giant rat stat block)
4	Giant Mole ¹
5	Wolf
6	Fey ²
7	Giant Snake
8	Ogre
9	L'uort ^{A1} Scouting Party
10	Aerial Attack ³

¹ As **giant rat** with a blinding attack from underground ambush point, advantage on first attack, critical hit if successful.

² Your choice; possibilities include **pixies**, **sprites**, **dryads**, etc.

³ Your choice; possibilities include **eagles**, **bats**, **wyverns**, etc.

TABLE 4: THE GAUNTSWEPT ENCOUNTERS

1d10	Encounter
1	Gnoll War Band
2	Ogre Hunters
3	Gauntswept Scavengers^{A1}
4	Gaunt Deer (deer with 3d8 hit points, Speed 80 ft., and Strength 14)
5	Human Brigands (bandits)
6	Hill Giant Band
7	Half-Orc Wanderer (veteran , thug , or priest , as desired)
8	Hydra
9	Wretched One (gnoll fang)
10	Aerial Attack ¹

¹ Your choice; possibilities include **eagles**, **bats**, **wyverns**, etc.



The adventure portion of *Whisper & Venom* is divided into five areas, each with its own keyed map and encounter tables. The introductory page for each section contains text providing descriptions and other relevant information.

A NOTE ON NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Whisper & Venom breathes life into a number of non-player characters whose scope is beyond the adventure portion of the game. They have their own agendas, personalities, and histories. Some of these characters can provide story hooks should you choose to use them. None of these characters is key to exploring *Whisper & Venom*.

SUGGESTED SCENARIOS

- ▶ Thopas the gnome is largely considered *persona non grata* in Whisper. He sends Sartern, his pixie, to intercept new arrivals. Sartern requests two small skulls. If pressed for further details, he grouches about the party minding its own business and refuses to explain. Sartern offers a reward. He keeps his end of the bargain but doesn't divulge the dangers that lie ahead.
- ▶ At the Archmug (Whisper's well-regarded inn), a member of the Furrow family makes a request. Animals are disappearing from his flocks, and the family wants answers. Characters are

tasked with discovering the perpetrator. The L'uort are the likely culprits.

▶ Lialio, the brewer at Whisper's inn, is in hysterics over the theft of a large number of ale barrels. The priest Ashby, the alchemist Kurtiss Draz'uk, and the innkeeper Jon Herbergier are crushed by the smaller servings. They are looking for adventurers willing to investigate the theft for a small reward.

▶ The priest Ashby is at the inn in Whisper. He tells of powerful holy books and a miraculous icon left behind when the Meanderbrook Monastery was abandoned. He offers a reward to any who recover these sacred artifacts for him.

▶ A local is missing. Though no one laments his absence, folks still want to know the circumstances surrounding his disappearance. Whisper's innkeeper suspects foul play, with signs leading to the Meanderbrook Monastery.

▶ Town elders spin tales while sipping drinks at Whisper's inn. Their stories focus on treasure left in the ruins of the Meanderbrook Monastery. Tales of such riches provide entertaining barroom banter. Discovering the source of these tales might prove far more entertaining.

▶ Representatives of Swindle's boozy cartel come to Whisper with tales of a dangerous new competitor. Fear of losing their monopoly on bootlegging compels the goblins of Swindle to seek help.

TABLE 5: RUMORS

1d20	Overheard
1	Giant bees in the Vale build hives from the bones of their victims. (False)
2	A wandering band of halflings indiscriminately digs holes. (False)
3	The raids on Whisper do not originate from any of its residents. (True)
4	Wealth springs from the top of a giant, flightless bird. (True)
5	A powerful wizard holds court in an unsightly hut beside a magical tower. (Partly True)
6	An old cavern is behind the monastery. (True)
7	The goblin in the bushes near the bathing pond is at large. (False)
8	A huge cache of well-aged wine awaits the intrepid adventurer. (True)
9	Whisper's wagon delivers the goods. (True)
10	A nymph roams the Vale and can be caught <i>in flagrante delicto</i> . (True)

1d20	Overheard
11	Swindle harbors a terrible secret, and it involves some fey. (True)
12	The monastery is definitely haunted. (True)
13	Ill omens are a portent of a real threat. (True)
14	Whisper teeters on the brink of mob rule. (Partly True)
15	A smelly, deaf bear protects a nosy druid. (True)
16	The fissure near Whisper leads to the dark soul of the world. (True)
17	A race of intelligent tadpole men lives in the foothills west of Whisper. (False)
18	A machine in the monastery can see torches in the sky. (False)
19	Casks of top-shelf wine are stashed in the catacombs below the monastery. (False)
20	An ogre making wishes drops gold coins down a well at the monastery. (False)



NOTES ON PLAY BALANCE

Adventure design for a broad audience that uses numerous systems and house rule options is inherently inexact. That being said, **Whisper & Venom** was designed and tested for systems that used early edition-style rules as their inspiration. The playtests were done with 4–8 players using character levels 3–5. This current edition was translated to use the Fifth Edition rules, and an attempt was made to retain the rough level of challenge found in the original version.

This is your game, however, and nothing described in the text is sacrosanct. It feels unnecessary and almost arrogant to make recommendations for your campaign. The techniques that worked over the preceding four decades to assimilate third-party materials into individual campaigns are perfect for balancing **Whisper & Venom**. Adjusting hit dice, hit points, and armor class of monsters is one method. Adjusting the number of adversaries in individual encounters is another.

Corruption flows from the Nexid Mouthgate for as long as it remains open. Should the game progression following the L'uort Lair (**Area C**) need in-game adjustments, this can be done by using the corruption as a balancing tool. In the play tests, it proved useful as a way to nudge one of the groups toward quicker action as they would “feel” weaker as they slowly advanced. A minor penalty could be assigned during each wandering monster check.

However, it is important to note that, as designed, **Whisper & Venom** is meant to have encounters that could easily prove fatal to characters — especially those who make rash decisions.

WANDERING MONSTERS

Each section of **Whisper & Venom** includes a wandering monster table. They are, for the most part, self-explanatory. All new creatures found in **Whisper & Venom** are described in **Appendix 1: Malevolent Creatures**. As the adventure progresses to the deepest points in the caverns, these monsters are increasingly substituted for random sounds or events that are designed to reinforce the influence of the corruption. Roll on the appropriate Wandering Monster table when you feel like it or when the party makes a significant amount of noise.

As the party advances, attorals move through the main passageways but also in a snake-like motion through small, interconnecting tunnels that weave throughout the caverns. When a successful wandering monster roll results in an attoral encounter (or if one is selected), you have the option of substituting the attoral's Viper Strike ability, which is described in **Appendix 1: Malevolent Creatures**.

A few locations include more significant challenges that can be tweaked to keep your game balanced as you see fit. These are discussed in **Appendix 3: Specific Encounter Mechanics** and noted in the text where they could occur.

REGARDING THE L'UORT

The Meanderbrook Monastery is home to the L'uort goblin tribe. Their numbers are flexible (we envisioned 40). The L'uort are designed as a faction rather than a series of separate encounters. The L'uort intelligently adjust to various scenarios and party actions. They send out hunting parties; rotate, move, and reinforce guard positions; and set ambushes, among other things.

When not specified in the adventure text, the following table and item list can be used to determine items the L'uort warriors carry.

TABLE 6: STANDARD POSSESSIONS OF L'UORT WARRIORS

Item	Chance of Possession	Amount	Suggested Value
Coins (any type)	80%	2d10	Per coin type
Wineskin filled with liquor	60%	1	2d6 sp
Gems	10%	1d2	4d10 gp each
Venom elixir	50%	1	Unknown
Trinket item	25%	1	Your discretion



NOTE ON CLERIC ITEMS

Special illuminated scripts are found within the monastery grounds. These are scrolls or books designed to be used like *spell scrolls*, i.e., as single-use items.

NOTES ON ATTORALS

The corruption that flows from the Nexid Mouthgate altered the attorals found in *Whisper & Venom*. As a result, the attorals' very nature is different. This corruption manifests in four ways for the attoral colony:

- ▶ Their venom production has increased, allowing for unlimited spitting attacks.
- ▶ The venom's effect is altered from a simple damage effect to an array of effects — both positive and negative — on their targets. This results in significant short-term changes to combat encounters. (See **Table 18: Attoral Venom Effects**^{A1} for more.)
- ▶ They are more aggressive and slightly more intelligent. This intelligence reveals itself primarily through new forms of communication between groups. Individual attorals also use this newfound intelligence to make higher-order decisions regarding survivability.
- ▶ They have improved vision and hearing. They are no longer light-sensitive and are much more difficult to surprise.

It is worth reiterating that a successful strike by an attoral spitting venom results in positive and negative effects for the characters (and other creatures). The L'uort's shaman mixes this corrupted venom with liquor and attoral nest residue, then distills the mixture to produce a powerful and addictive elixir^{A2}.



AREA A: MEANDERBROOK MONASTERY

The decaying ruins of the Meanderbrook Monastery are at the northern end of the Whisper Vale. The ruins are flanked by tall, rocky cliffs that merge to form the Vale's northern border. The monastery was abandoned many years prior during the last great plague. At its height, the monastery was a conclave of learning where members of the order concentrated on scholarship and prayer while cloistered. The monks of Meanderbrook made paper and were famed for producing beautiful, illuminated manuscripts. Noted for their work on the *Book of Hours*, the monks were frequently sought out far and wide for their iconic artistry. They were also renowned vignerons. Penitent, chaste, and hardworking, the brethren plied their trades in peace.

Withered vines and empty bottles are all that remain of a brisk trade. The monastery's once-proud library suffered the scourge of time; crumbling walls, climbing vines, and broken windows greet those who approach. For decades, vermin crept among its buildings, and rotted furnishings and decayed trappings are a sad reminder of what was once a great center of learning. An untended hedge hems the monastery buildings and workshops. The entrance to the grounds is through an old, rusted iron gate and across a bridge that spans a clear brook.

The monastery's silence is shattered by the harsh cries and raucous laughter of its new inhabitants, a small tribe of goblins

known as the L'uort. Their arrival agitated a colony of reptilian attorals who had steadily encroached upon the ruins after the monastery was abandoned. Nocturnal and ill-tempered, attorals are scavengers. Typically considered little more than a nuisance for their mild poison, the monastery's attorals experienced a grotesque transformation. These attorals are now monstrous predators: aggressive, territorial, and highly venomous.

Giant bees fan out through the monastery's ruins and from its vineyards. The L'uort hate and fear the bees in a manner that would seem, to sensible folk, disproportionate to the threat they present. When they encounter any bees inside the monastery grounds, the L'uort throw nets over them and destroy them mercilessly. For all the animosity, the bees' focus remains on pollen. Such indifference to the L'uort's "heroic" efforts at extermination serve only to further infuriate the goblins.

TABLE 7: MONASTERY GROUNDS WANDERING MONSTERS

1d8	Encounter
1	2 giant rats
2–3	2d4 giant bees ^{A1}
4	4 L'uort goblins ^{A1} on patrol
5	2 monstrous beetles ^{A1}
6	Rhacos ^{A1}
7–8	None



AREA A - MONASTERY RUINS MAP



A1. ENTRANCE

The ruins of an imposing gate loom as a sad welcome. An ancient hedge of deep green and brown forms a barrier extending from each of the gate's pillars into the distance. Words are inscribed in faded runes into the arch over the gate: *Meanderbrook Monastery: Through Seclusion and Reflection, There Can be Found Peace.*

The large gate is crafted with a combination of hardwood and iron bars. The years took their toll, and most of its hinges are broken. In fairer days, the gate was part of a large stone archway that sat between two sides of a 12-foot-tall hedge wall. Entwined branches form a barrier that is difficult to penetrate. Focused attempts to bypass the gate with axes or fire take up to two hours and alert all nearby adversaries. However, by getting down on all fours, even the tallest characters can crawl into the courtyard beyond. Each character passing under the gate should attempt a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. A character that fails accidentally breaks the final hinge of the decrepit gate while attempting to pass underneath. This causes the gate to crumble. Each character within a five-foot radius must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage from the falling debris. If the gate falls, it may alert any patrolling members of the L'uort clan. However, since parts of walls and other old structures collapse fairly often, that chance is only 30%. Should the L'uort be alerted, a small party of scouts investigates. On the party's first visit, any scouts are sotted as a result of their revelries (see **Area A2**).

A2. COURTYARD

The ruins of three large buildings surround this grassy courtyard. The northern building is the most ornate. Structures to the east and west are austere. A well descends into darkness in the center of the courtyard. Pillars jut from the ground like jagged teeth in a circle around the well.

The central feature of the old courtyard is a solar calendar made from a number of low stone pillars and markers buried around the well. The solar calendar in the courtyard is still functional. After careful study, characters can make out the dates of the equinoxes. The other markings on the calendar have been vandalized or are faded. The pillars and markers around the courtyard were a way for the monastic brothers to note and prepare for upcoming celebrations and feasts. If the party does not recognize the significance of the courtyard, a clue can be found among the markings. Characters who search the area notice that the word "equinox" is still legible in common runes on one of the primary pillars. A peculiar symbol, freshly etched, is located on a nearby marker. It emits a foul, fetid odor. This marking is a demonic symbol. Non-evil aligned characters feel oppressive unease while within three feet of it.

The well's cracked stone cover sits a few feet from its mouth. The yawning opening is about four feet wide and is flush with

the ground. Otherwise, the well has no distinguishing features. The well itself is 45 feet deep and descends to a dark, shallow pool. The climb down the well is difficult, as the first nine feet are smooth, requiring a rope or a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check to descend safely. Any fall from the top lands the character on a shelf outcropping 15 feet below, causing 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. Beneath the ledge are many outcroppings that could facilitate a descent. From this point, it is an easy descent to the bottom.

A small, winding tunnel leads from the well bottom to the Black Mere (**Area E3**). This is by far the most dangerous way into the caverns and is never used by the L'uort clan. It is, however, the primary entrance in and out of the caverns for all but the very largest attorals. Depending on the time of day when the characters arrive on their first visit, either of two scenarios occurs:

CELEBRATION (NIGHTTIME)

A cacophony of wicked laughter, bellowing insults, and crackling flames announce a raucous celebration. A gaggle of reveling goblins is silhouetted against bright flames. Well-groomed livestock are tied to nearby stakes.

If the characters approach at nighttime, they hear the sounds of raucous revelry wherein 14 **L'uort goblins**^{A1} are in the throes of a loud celebration. The roar of a crackling fire, the slaughter and butchering of animals, the tapping of kegs, and the loud drunken laughter of the clan's members mask any approach by the characters. Even the pretense of vigilance is forgotten. Under these circumstances, the characters can quietly avoid detection and enter any of the buildings.

AFTERMATH (DAYTIME)

The courtyard contains the remains of freshly killed livestock stolen from the herds of Whisper. Bonfires smolder under greasy spits. Broken ale barrels, dropped goblets, and bones are carelessly strewn everywhere. The forms of 6 (1d8 + 2) armed **L'uort goblins**^{A1} lie like corpses on a battlefield, defeated by debauchery (unconscious).

With the L'uort warriors in such a wretched state, sneaking past them requires no special ability checks. For every five minutes spent in the courtyard, there is a 20% cumulative chance that a post-celebratory goblin wakes and sounds the alarm. A goblin that takes damage likewise sounds the alarm and wakes the other goblins. The celebration's lingering effects cause the L'uort to suffer disadvantage on attack rolls for four hours. Any captured L'uort antagonizes its captors and cannot be interrogated without magical means. Their capture seals their fate, as they correctly anticipate the wrath of other clan members for their dereliction of duty.

A3. WEST LIVING QUARTERS

This large stone structure provided one of two primary residences for the monastic order of brothers. Each structure originally had many small cells, each with its own common rooms and kitchens. The second story of this building, as



well as the northeast corner of the ground floor, collapsed and is now only rubble and broken rafters. The building can be entered either through the door or via one of three broken windows.

A3A. FOYER

Rotting tapestries hang in tatters on aged walls. A stifling stench wafts through the room. Grime coats a chipped stone floor. Rubble litters a staircase to the west.

The rotting tapestries are mostly torn and/or burned on the walls. A hideous stench pervades the area. An intact stairway is on the west side of the room. The roof and upper floors collapsed, blocking the top of the stairs. Excavation allows entry to the top, but a dedicated search takes days. Two **monstrous beetles**^{A1} made the upstairs ruins their lair and attack anyone

who unblocks the staircase. Consult **Table 8: Items Found in Exterior Ruins** once per hour of searching to determine what items are recovered from the rubble.

A3B. GREAT ROOM

Rubble from the collapsed roof covers the northeast quarter of this room. Broken beds, tables, and other scraps are heaped in a pile against the debris. A gaping hole exposes this room to the open sky. The carcass of a rat lies in the middle, emitting a nidorous stench.

A large pile of broken beds, tables, and other scraps are stacked in a corner of this great room. The diseased corpse of a giant rat rots in the center of the room. It has a 25% chance of transmitting disease to any characters who touch it. A pair of **young attorals**^{A1} nests in a concealed corner of the rafters.

The nest is difficult to detect, requiring a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

If characters approach the area quietly, the attorals are outside their nest making a meal of the decayed rat. The stench of the dead rat masks the characters from the feasting attorals. A small locked chest is beneath a large pile of broken furniture and wrecked bureaus. It contains a leatherbound illuminated prayer book titled *Scriptorium Verbatum* (45 gp), as well as a large (poorly cut) topaz gemstone (25 gp). The book's value can be gleaned from the priest Ashby in Whisper, who pays full price upon its return. The chest can be unlocked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check or smashed open with a successful DC 18 Strength check.

A3C. EMPTY CELLS

Broken doors lead to five (mostly) empty rooms along the west side of the great room (A3b). Overturned cots, broken bureaus, and rotted tables litter the various rooms. The cell in the southwest corner contains a rotting cat o' nine tails and a rusty chain. Consult **Table 8: Items Found in Exterior Ruins** after every 10 minutes of deliberate searching.

A4. EAST LIVING QUARTERS

Except for its intact upper story, the east living quarters mirror the layout of the west living quarters (**Area A3**). A total of 39 small cells once housed the brothers of the monastery.

A4A. FOYER

The stairway on the east side of this chamber remains intact. A rat's nest lies abandoned in the southwest corner. Fungus flourishes under the stairway. The room is moldy and has a strong musty odor.

A4B. GREAT ROOM

A large room with stone walls is rank with the stench of an animal's den. A dingy, chipped window faces out onto the courtyard to the west. A table with three legs stands propped in the fourth corner by a pile of planks. A barrel of ale sits upon it.

L'uort partygoers pilfered the purloined goods from the merry-makers in the courtyard (**Area A2**). Armed with three barrels of Whisper's finest ale, a haunch of cold roast meat, and a wheel of cheese, this splinter group of 7 celebrant **L'uort goblins**^{A1} were depositing their thrice-appropriated bounty. As they were stashing provisions for a clandestine indulgence of their own, they entered the great room. A pregnant pause — followed by a brief moment of mutual astonishment — turned sour when they were surprised by an especially irritable **adult attoral**^{A1}.

Before this rude interruption, it had hunted and scavenged all



night in the caverns using the well in the courtyard (**Area A2**). The attoral was sleeping in this chamber without interruption during the day. At your discretion, the characters may enter this room in the midst of a pitched battle between the two sides. Alternately, they may all converge on the great room at the same time, which could lead to chaotic combat. Consult **Table 18: Attoral Venom Effects**^{A1} for each successful venom attack the attoral makes to determine the effects of the venom on all participants of the battle.

A4C. EMPTY CELLS

A thick layer of dust covers the room. Cobwebs hang listlessly from the ceiling. The very air is thick and stale.

These rooms are identical to the five cells described in (**Area A3c**). Consult **Table 8: Items Found in Exterior Ruins** after every 10 minutes of deliberate searching.

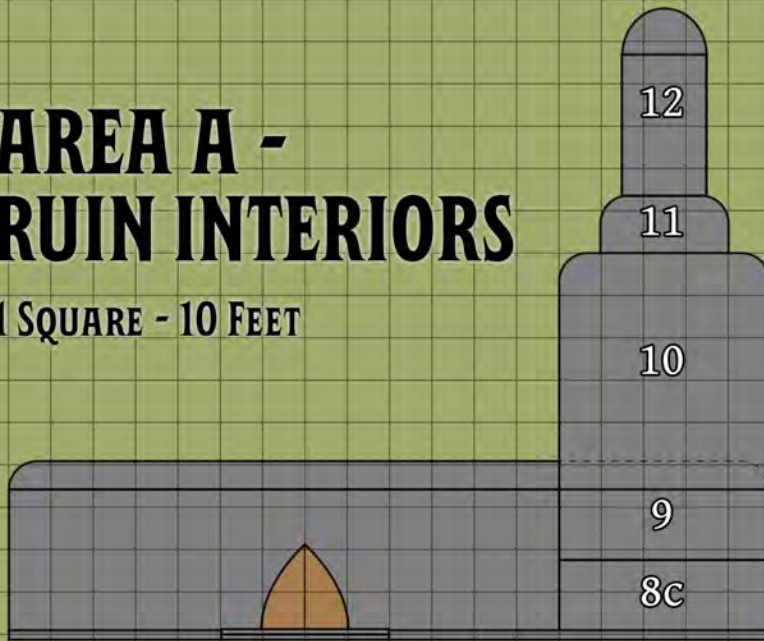
A4D. UPSTAIRS CELLS

The cells upstairs are identical to the ones below. Decayed reminders of its previous tenants litter the floor. A buildup of filth from years of neglect and vermin infestation is pungent.

Ten rooms and a small common area are located here. The rooms are identical in size, with various bits of broken furniture and piles of rotted straw bedding. Unusual amounts of mice and other vermin are here as indicated by the excrement and smell.

AREA A - RUIN INTERIORS

1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



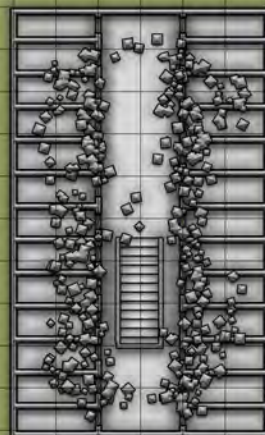
8. TEMPLE BUILDING



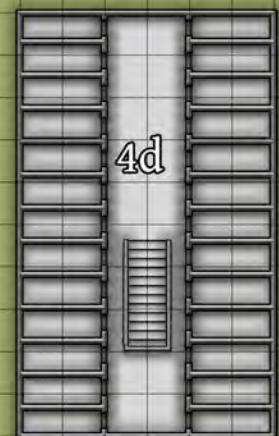
PRIOR'S TOWER



3. WEST LIVING QUARTERS



4. EAST LIVING QUARTERS



Consult **Table 8: Items Found in Exterior Ruins** after every 10 minutes of deliberate searching.

The cell in the northeastern corner has a loose stone that can be found with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. Removing it reveals a small, locked jewelry box encrusted with semiprecious stones. The lock is trapped with a needle laced with poison that has weakened with age. The trap can be found with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check and disarmed with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. A character who springs the trap must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (2d4) poison damage. The box contains a *ring of protection* and a jeweled brooch set with a small amethyst (value 110 gp). The box itself is worth 50 gp.

TABLE 8: ITEMS FOUND IN EXTERIOR RUINS

1d12	Items	Number Available	Value
1	Nothing	NA	NA
2	Loose prayer beads	Unlimited	None
3	Small pouch (empty)	14	None
4	Small pouch (coins)	10	2d10 cp
5	Torn/stained book	27	None
6	Rusty tools/utensils	Unlimited	None
7	Silver goblet	4	15 gp
8	Fine silverware set	5	10 gp
9	Single rotted sandal	11	None
10	Gilded religious figurine	1	200 gp
11	Tome titled <i>Manual</i> (only in living quarters)	1	35 gp
12	Soiled cloth (indeterminate origin)	Unlimited	None

A5. THE PENS

Old and decrepit, the pens were shoddily repaired recently. Makeshift fencing includes materials ranging from broken doors to shellacked church pews. An ornate, gold-leafed cathedra has been relieved of its ornaments and tossed unceremoniously into a gap near a pile of manure. The din of nervous shuffling and grunting issues from a corner stable.

The pens show signs of recent, unsophisticated repair. Old gaps in the fence are filled with broken doors and other large objects. Inside the pens are 14 sheep, three cows, two pigs, and a horse. These are the spoils of a recent raid on the common grazing areas of Whisper. A shed in the corner houses the hanging carcasses of four more sheep at various stages of butchery. Strewn throughout the stables are rusted horseshoes, decayed leather saddles, stirrups, and other timeworn and unusable equestrian paraphernalia. A nest with 12 **giant rats** is in the southeast corner.

In addition to the rats, the stables are home to 3 **L'uort Gauntswept scavengers**^{A1} chained to a large stone in the corral. Trained in the same manner as war dogs, they alert the

L'uort goblins to intruders. If unchained by their masters, the Gauntswept scavengers fight ferociously and, unless called off, relentlessly track any adversary.

The scavengers are tended by 4 **L'uort goblin**^{A1} handlers. The citizens of Whisper will be interested to know the status of their rustled animals. They have, up to this point, accused each other of nefarious activities regarding the animals' whereabouts. The majority of the animals belong to the Furrow family, and characters are entitled to a reward of 900 gp for their safe return.

Once the townspeople are aware of the true nature of the animals' disappearance (if they do not already know), they are more willing to help the characters. If characters leave the animals unattended without clearing out all the other inhabitants of the outer monastery, there is a 75% chance that 1d6 more animals are slaughtered out of hunger (or plain spite), thus reducing the reward. Since their capture, the animals have endured irregular feedings and regular beatings. Depending on the circumstances of their discovery, they may either attack the characters or bolt unexpectedly. If none of the characters is proficient in Animal Handling, the party probably needs to enlist some expertise from the shepherds in Whisper to safely bring the animals back to town. If the party attempts to bring them back without soliciting help and at least 18 goblins from either aboveground or in the caves are still alive, a hunting party of 3d4 + 1 **L'uort goblins**^{A1} sets out from the ruins. Their singular goal is to recapture the animals and exact revenge on those who rustled their contraband herd.

A6. ORCHARDS

The surrounding wilderness has reclaimed this area. The musty smell of rotting fruit rises in wisps around bulky boles. Rows of unpruned trees grow to massive heights to form a dense canopy above the orchards. Vines and brambles choke the ground below, hindering movement. Rabbits, squirrels, and skunks scamper nervously through the undergrowth. A game trail marked by large tracks winds through the trees.

The orchards have been left untended since the monks fled. Although the trees still produce fruit, they are untrimmed and overgrown. The undergrowth is heavy and difficult to traverse. The scent here is a combination of musty and fruity. A large number of woodland fauna are within the confines of the orchards. Grazing herds of wary deer wander the grounds regularly.

A **rhacos**^{A1} passes through the orchards as it hunts. The L'uort — under orders from their clan leader Lalrech — occasionally leave scraps of meat out for the creature. Lalrech lusts after one of the long, extravagant plumes found atop the rhacos. Such a prize would bolster his status as a great leader — at least in his own mind. For their part, clan members have mistakenly convinced themselves that such a rare bird must be delicious. Their logic is infallible, as anything so highly desired by haberdashers surely must similarly appeal to gourmands and epicures. If encountered as a wandering monster, the rhacos is extremely aggressive and attacks any group that enters its territory^{A3}.

A6A. DECAYED FRUIT SHED

The monks used this nearly collapsed wooden building for storing and drying fruit. The door is broken into many weathered splinters across the threshold. A large number of rusted knives, rotted hides, and broken bones are evidence of old butchery.

Dilapidated shelves line the walls and contain all manner of garbage: broken crockery, animal droppings, and shattered glassware. All of these items are worthless. A concealed trapdoor near the shed's west wall can be located with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

A6B. DRY CELLAR

Concealed beneath ubiquitous flora, the damaged trapdoor opens to uneven earthen steps that lead down to a shallow cellar. This room is dark and dank. Broken jars litter the dirt floor. The cellar's walls are made of dried mud and straw bricks. Applewood logs evenly spaced along the ceiling support wooden planks.

The shallow cellar under the decayed shed (**Area A6**) was originally used to store all manner of fruits and nuts. It is now home to 2 **monstrous beetles**^{A1}. Unless already encountered as wandering monsters during daylight hours, both beetles are found here. At night, there is a 40% chance that the lair is empty.



A7. THE FONT

Dark water choked with peat forms a black mirror of the sky above. Rows of grimy marble benches march down a gentle slope on three sides to form an amphitheater. Game trails wind down to the water.

A 140-foot-long pool to the north of the temple building was used as a baptismal font and a place of prayer when the monastery was occupied. Marble benches where the monks sat during ceremonies surround the font. The monks dropped tubes of seeds, small trinkets, and other offerings into the font to purify them during baptisms and seasonal ministrations. Time has choked the sacred waters and transformed the font into a deadly mire. The dark water is not very deep (20 feet at its deepest point). Searching through the mire turns up relics of the past. Consult **Table 9: Items Found in the Font** after every 10 minutes of deliberate searching. Two **murkbeasts**^{A1} lurk in a dark corner of the mire and investigate any disturbance of the water. These nasty denizens survive on various grazing animals that wander the grounds and approach to drink from the pool.

TABLE 9: ITEMS FOUND IN THE FONT

1d8	Items	Number Available	Value
1	Nothing	—	—
2	Metal box with small gem	3	1d6 x 10 gp
3	Golden figurine	2	75 g
4	Rotted book binding	17	—
5	Ceremonial dagger	1	150 gp
6	Animal bones	15	—
7	Platinum box (empty)	1	50 gp
8	Silver clamshell box with pearl	1	110 gp

A8. TEMPLE BUILDING

The old temple building sits prominently in the center of the monastery ruins. Once the hub of activity for monks and visitors, this building's fine stonework and ornate carvings are a faded memory of its former glory. Shattered stained-glass shards from lancet windows are in the rubble, reflecting colorful reminders of a better time. A tower rises solemnly from the northeast corner of the building. An empty belfry sits atop the tower at a height of 100 feet, a silent sentinel without purpose. The temple doors are rotted and broken. A carved edifice above the doors contains words of welcome.

A8A. MAIN SANCTUARY

The walls are made of stone and stand 30 feet tall, with broken windows at regular intervals. A ceiling with complex vaulting rises from the walls to a total height of 80 feet above the ground. These windows are the source of light for the main temple chamber. Remnants of rich tapestries adorn the walls, and rows of pews are rotted and broken. Various vermin scurry about. A spiral staircase winds up from the northeastern corner.

Two statues of the monks' matron dominate the interior from behind an altar at the far end of the sanctuary, but only one is intact and recognizable. The following is written crudely in fresh blood on the wall behind the altar: *We are Thankfull to your Ded Godz.*

If a resident of Whisper is with the party, they can identify the statue as an important symbol of their faith. Although quite heavy and difficult to move, the statue is considerably valuable (5,000 gp). Word of the statue's pristine condition is greeted with excitement. Transport could be arranged after the area is made safe and doing so enriches the spiritual life of many and the purses of a few more. Recovering the statue by day encourages a spiritual revival in Whisper. However, as dusk falls, the rewards become more tangible, with black-market operatives offering considerably more (up to 10,000 gp) for the "exclusive rights" to take the statue off the characters' hands. These less-spiritual clients seek such unusual artifacts to sell elsewhere, but do most of their business after dark.

An altar is opposite the main entrance. It was utterly desecrated relatively recently from the looks — and smell — of it. The mutilated corpse of a human female defiles the stained antependium. A silver necklace adorned with sapphires (500 gp) is lodged deep within the victim's throat. An obsidian altar inlaid with gold supports the grotesque scene. The altar can be pushed aside to reveal another set of stairs leading down to the catacombs (**Area B**). The stairway under the altar has remained undisturbed since the monastery was abandoned.

Unless an alarm is raised, 6 **L'uort goblins**^{A1} lounge among battered columns inside the sanctuary. They are armed and join their brethren in **Area A2** in any courtyard battle that lasts for more than four rounds. If the clash of combat reaches them and they have not yet joined in, they prepare to ambush anyone who enters the sanctuary.

A8B. STOREROOM

Originally a repository for items used in worship, this room occupies the northwestern corner of the sanctuary. Nothing of value or interest is here.

A8C. PRIORY STAIRWELL

A spiral staircase is in the room in the northeastern corner of the sanctuary. These stairs ascend to the tower above the sanctuary (**Area A8a**). It contains the library, the observatory, the prior's chambers, and the belfry. The staircase is still quite

sturdy, though the balusters are broken or missing. The prior of Meanderbrook Monastery called the tower home. The tower is accessed by ascending the staircase.

A9. LIBRARY

The stairs emerge into a library that forms the tower's first level. Twisted and broken shelves line the walls and are strewn about the floor. A strong, musty smell and a thick layer of dust and cobwebs covers everything. Dozens of books left behind after the monastery was deserted are in piles.

Most of the books are damaged; some are illegible. Hastily scribbled lists remain atop each pile, a testament to the ambivalence toward scholarship in the Whisper Vale. Most of the volumes contain records and manifests. A small stack of books sits near the doorway with a note monogrammed with a "T." The words "Commission Unpaid" are underlined below it. One of the books is open on a shelf. A marked passage reads, "The gifts to the priors lie behind a portal known as 'The Seal.'"

Other books that can be found here are:

BOOK PILE

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ► <i>Scortatoris Nuptiae</i> | ► <i>Incomptus Eremitae</i> |
| ► <i>Iratusaum Suxoris</i> | ► <i>Fatus Gibberum</i> |
| ► <i>Pravus Harpyiae</i> | ► <i>Fascinatus Dryadis</i> |

A10. OBSERVATORY

This room once served as an observatory. The walls curve inward as they reach the ceiling, where 12 casements angle through thick stone and provide views in all directions. Only their hinges remain, as the wooden shutters decayed and fell away. Open to the elements, these casements allowed the weather outside to work its wrath upon the observatory. Books are strewn about the floor and lean against the walls. Mildew stains the tomes.

The observatory shows few signs of desertion. Shelves lining the walls contain faded tomes. An ornate desk is against a wall, old wax dripping from its edges. A broken chair is nearby. The single desk drawer holds a small, oblong case of purpleheart wood with wispy platinum inlays. A *quill of correspondence*^{A2} is inside the case. The drawer contains a spring-loaded lever (located behind the desk) that triggers a mechanical gas trap that affects everyone within a five-foot radius. The trap can be located with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check and disarmed with thieves' tools and a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. If the trap is triggered, characters in the area must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks for two hours due to incessant choking.

Searching the chamber reveals four books that are surprisingly legible. Three of these books have monetary value (125 gp each):

<i>Chants and Missives</i>	A book of atonal musical notation
<i>Ritual Feasting</i>	A description of the days and times of feasts
<i>The Solarium</i>	A description of how the solar calendar in the monastery's courtyard was built, with exact plans for construction. It also describes ceremonies involving the calendar.

The final book (as a *spell scroll*) has a royal blue cover and contains three spells: *remove curse*, *lesser restoration*, and *cure wounds*. A silver key is tucked lovingly into a small cutaway. This key opens the door to the baluster (**Area B7**).

A11. PRIOR'S CHAMBER

The tattered remains of tapestries, broken furniture, faded paintings, and dusty sculptures adorn this stately sanctum. The floor's intricate mosaic of tiles depicts the symbol of a constellation shaped as a sapling with a single branch. A second mosaic behind an alcove near a ruined bed stands out as a colorful rendition of a chalice. A crystal chandelier hangs precariously from the end of a rusty chain at the center of the chamber. A small ladder leads up to a closed trapdoor directly opposite the alcove mosaic.

The mosaic's stars glitter, with nine white gems (100 gp each) representing each star of the constellation Surculus. The chamber's domed ceiling reaches 60 feet to the top of the tower and has an intricate crystal chandelier that can be raised and lowered by a mechanism near the stairwell. The crystals can be removed and are worth a total of 580 gp.

An alcove near the ruined bed once held the *blessed vessel*, which is hidden in the depths of the catacombs (**Area B5**). If the vessel is returned to the alcove, a secret compartment opens with an audible click. The compartment can be located with a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, but opening it requires either the *blessed vessel* or significant time and brute force. It contains the following items that were prized by the prior:

Letters addressed to the deceased head of the monastic order in a port to the south: These letters detail the plight of the monks once they were cut off from trade and ravaged by the plague. These are of great value to the brotherhood. If offered to the right buyers, they could fetch up to 2,000 gp.

A jeweled prayer necklace (100 gp): This belonged to the prior, who wore it during burial rites. It can be used to detect elementals, fiends, and undead within 30 feet.

Ceremonial incense (6 sticks, 75 gp total): If lit, any characters exposed to the fumes for 10 minutes receive the effects of a *bless* spell bestowed upon them for 24 hours.

Two spell scrolls: They contain the spells *web* and *invisibility*.

A masterfully forged mace: Although nonmagical, the weapon grants a +1 bonus on to-hit and damage rolls due to the expertise of the smith who crafted it.

A12. BELFRY

Massive blocks of stone rise in a circle to a distant ceiling approximately 100 feet above the floor of the belfry. Each block is meticulously cut to form sheer walls. A stone staircase skirts the wall and winds up into the darkness. Wooden steps finish the ascent to the rafters, where deteriorated ropes and rusty chains dangle from great iron cogs. There is no sign of a bell.

A narrow ladder leads from the prior's chamber (**Area A11**) to a trapdoor in the tower belfry. The bell is missing, but the ringing mechanism with its rusted chains and rotted ropes remains. At one time, a small number of giant bats made this place their home. They left behind piles of guano and old bones. Three **giant spiders** lurk in the rafters. They investigate any noise or movement in the room below.

A13. DILAPIDATED BARN

A large tree abuts this decayed structure, its branches tearing through old walls. Naked trusses sit precariously upon skeletal walls. The barn's roof collapsed long ago, littering the interior with broken, worm-infested planks.

A large barn is between the entrance to the first and second vineyards. It is littered with empty casks and rusted tools. A crumbling well is next to the barn, and a small marsh is nearby. Both are choked with old leaves and refuse.

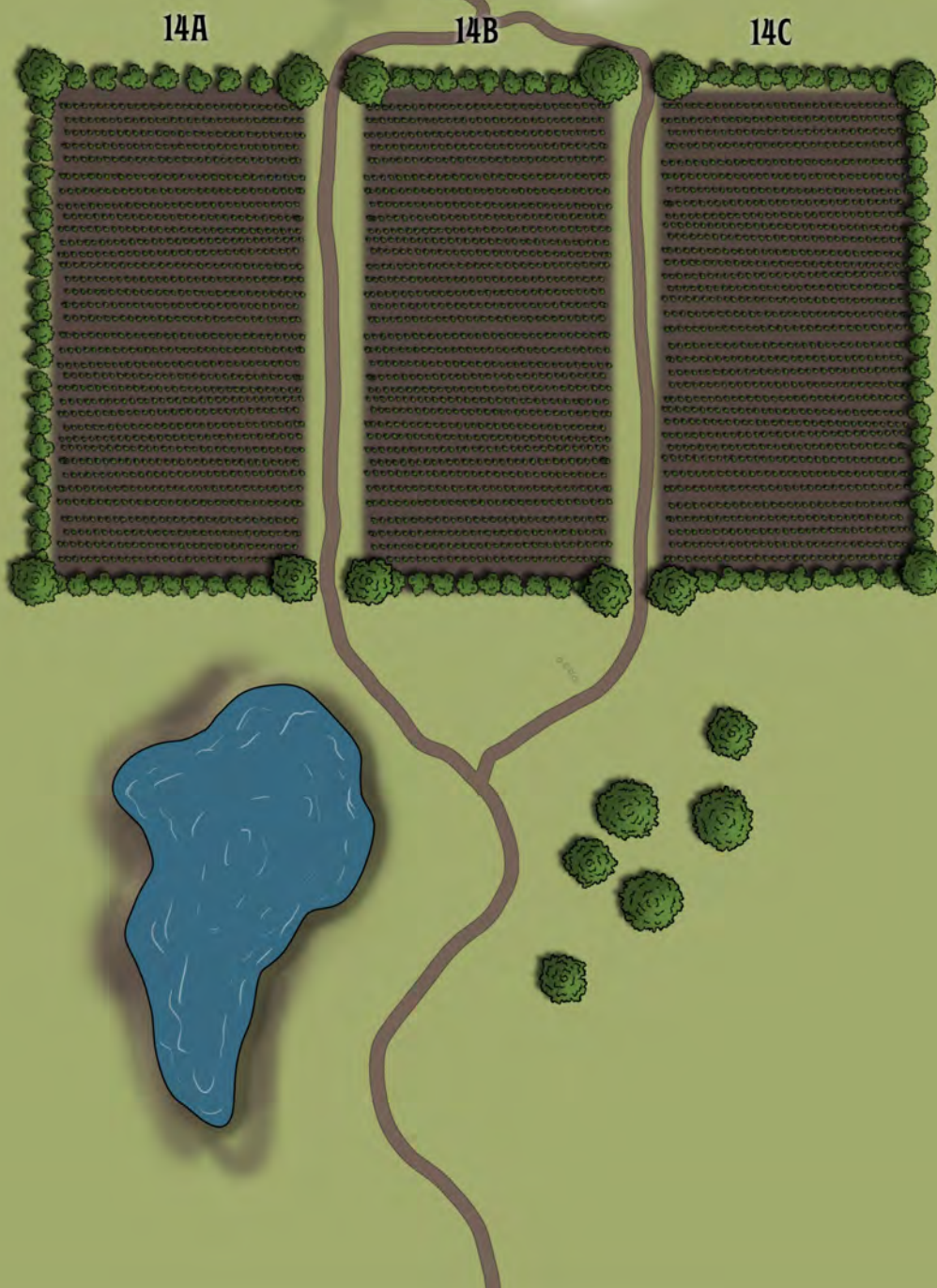
A14. THE VINEYARDS

The old vineyards of the Meanderbrook Monastery consist of three vineyards on a low, south-sloping hillside that is a short walk north of the ruins. Row after row of withered vines and bent or broken trellises march down the gentle slope.

Traversing the vineyards is tedious. Two overgrown but usable paths separate the vineyards. A tall hedge similar to the one surrounding the monastery is on the side of each path. Both paths are accessible through a living arch formed by a pair of large oak trees. Ancient tree trunks dot the landscape, their branches roughly six feet off the ground.

AREA A - MONASTERY RUINS MAP 2

AREA C
GOBLIN LAIR ENTRANCE





AI4A. FIRST VINEYARD

The old vineyard trellis structures have been hacked down near the west entrance. A ring of scorched earth peeks from the top of a gentle slope. Vegetation surrounds it, but the ring itself remains barren. Large bees mill lazily about the vineyard.

The first vineyard is rectangular, 400 yards by 200 yards. A large ring of scorched earth approximately 75 feet in diameter is toward the northwest corner. A charred skeleton with metal fused into its bone structure is in the very center of the ring. Hideously deformed, it appears that whatever fate was suffered here happened many years ago.

AI4B. SECOND VINEYARD

The middle vineyard retains the appearance of its original function. Ordered rows of lush vines march up a gentle slope. Exploring the interlocking vines appears to be tedious.



A large skeleton planted face down in the earth is concealed within the second vineyard. These are the remains of an unfortunate ogre who at one time took up residence in the abandoned barn. The ogre died an ignoble death after tripping on overgrown vines. Tattered clothing still clings to his remains, and his large wooden club (now broken and useless) is next to him. A small purse made of animal skin on the corpse contains 51 gp and some old gnawed bones. A curious stone carving around its neck is a curiosity seldom seen outside the scorching deserts of the south. The corpse clutches a small polished stone that, if inspected, radiates magic. The ogre mistakenly believed this stone to be lucky, but it is actually a *cursed luckstone*^{A2}.

AI4C. THIRD VINEYARD

This is the easternmost of the three vineyards. The southeast corner is scarred with burns, and weapons litter the area. The large body of a L'uort goblin is face down on a gentle slope.

A fire recently damaged the east entrance between the second

L'UORT EXTERMINATORS' TALE

The L'uort clan leader has had enough of bees. The nefarious insects pester him whenever he passes through the vineyard on his way to covet the plume of a particularly ugly bird. One near-sting too many prompted the clan leader to order a purge of the vineyard's giant bee population. Lalrech's nuisance became his subordinates' problem when he decreed that all bees were to be exterminated forthwith.

Those unfortunates who drew lots were woefully unprepared for what followed. Emboldened with draughts of liquor, they cursed words of encouragement to one another. "This one's for the boss," shouted the leader as he led the charge toward the busy hive. The bees launched a swift aerial assault and broke the ranks of the discombobulated L'uort. The party's leader was the first to fall, and the remaining goblins fled.

Unaware of the bees' affinity for heat, the L'uort lit bonfires in a final desperate act. Reinforcements swarmed the goblins' fallback position and turned their stand into a rout. The surviving L'uort beat a humiliated retreat as their enemies returned to gathering pollen.



and third vineyards. A series of four small burnt patches runs northeast from this entrance at 300-foot intervals. They are the remnants of recent bonfires. Dropped weapons (seven swords and five spears of the L'uort) are scattered about the wreckage. Husks of dead giant bees litter the area.

This vineyard is home to a bee colony located 30 yards northeast of the bonfires. A dull buzzing can be heard once characters enter

the vineyard, and they have no difficulty following the noise to its source. The hive represents an ongoing irritation for the L'uort goblins. Although generally docile, the bees are a menace to the goblins. If threatened, 5d6 **giant bees**^{A1} issue from the hive's underground entrances and swarm to protect their home. If the characters leave them alone, the bees ignore them. Clever players could use the area surrounding the bee colony as an effective and amusing ambush point against the L'uort goblins.



AREA B: TEMPLE CATACOMBS

The catacombs — unlike the rest of the monastery complex — have remained entirely undisturbed since the time of the great plagues. The stairway drops steeply to a depth of 40 feet, but from the top of the stairs, nothing at the bottom can be seen — or heard — in the darkness below. The staircase's granite walls are perfectly smooth and eerily reflect any light source. Sounds are hauntingly amplified. The bottom of the stairs open into a large, elliptical room with a high, domed ceiling.

B1. CATACOMB STAIR

Moving the altar in the sanctuary reveals a stairway leading down. As the entrance is breached, a great creaking sound is heard, followed by a powerful rush of cold wind. The air from the catacombs is curiously moist with an overpoweringly foul odor. The stairs and walls are dark obsidian with white granite streaks.

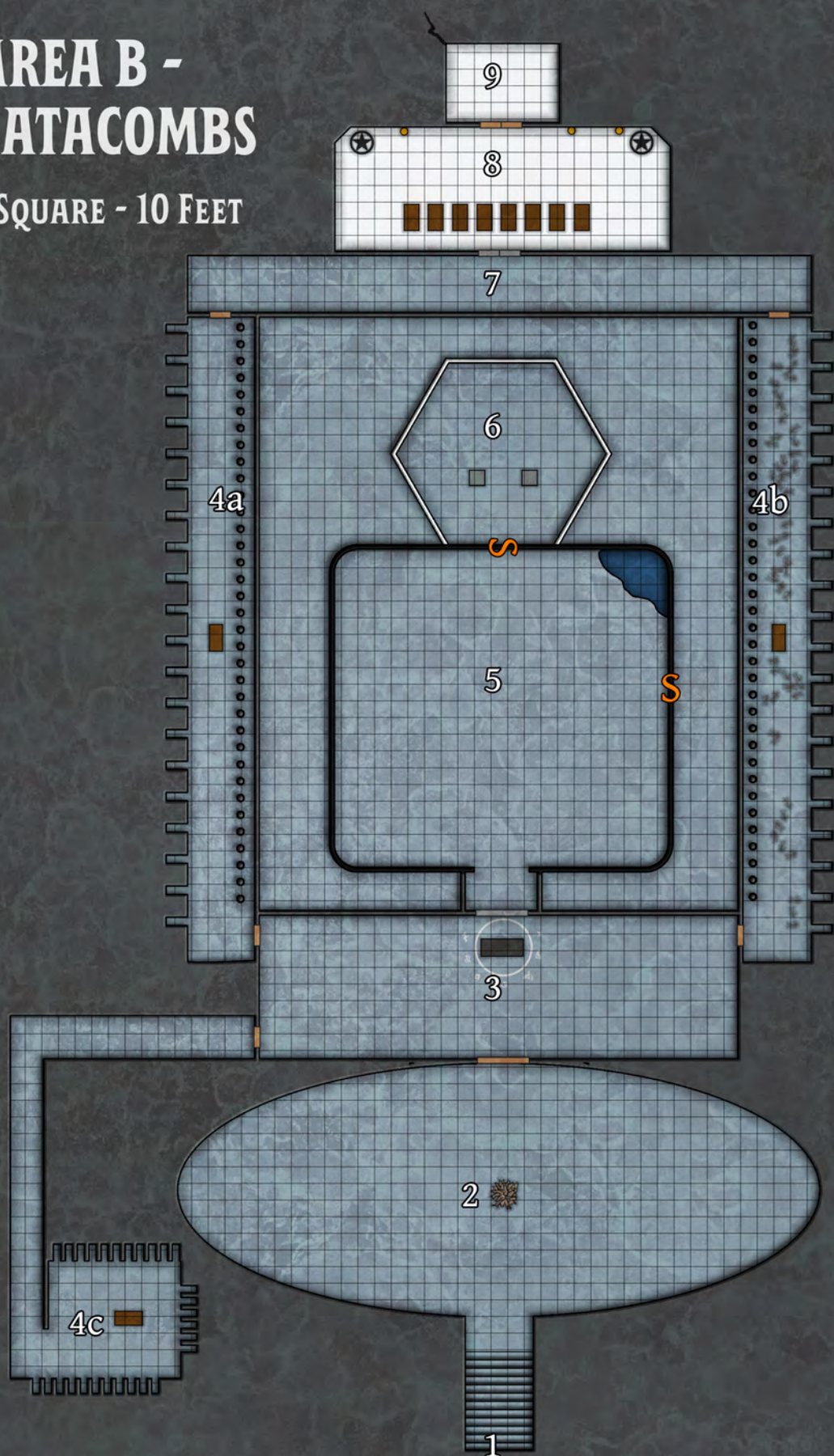
B2. THE HALL OF MOURNING

The stairs emerge into a massive oval room. The air is still and dense, a willful resistance to the intrusion of sound. Disturbing the quiet causes muted reverberations from the solid obsidian walls. Steel sconces line the walls, their candles still intact. A stack of corpses in burial shrouds are amassed near the center of the room.

There are 19 peculiarly well-preserved corpses still dressed in burial shrouds stacked in the center of the hall. As the plague took its toll on the monastery, the monks grew afraid to handle the bodies. As death overwhelmed them, the beleaguered monks abandoned giving rites to the dead altogether. These corpses are the plague's final victims before the monastery was forsaken. An encroaching corruption affects six of the corpses. If the pile is approached, two of the bodies rise as **restless**^{A1} and attack any character in the hall. After three rounds, an additional 2 **restless** animate and seek out the characters — even if they left the room. Another pair animates after another three rounds^{A3}.

AREA B - CATACOMBS

1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



A good-aligned cleric could give last rites to the remaining bodies, which would be doing the souls a great service by releasing them from their torment. At your discretion, some reward may be earned by characters who suggest or carry out such a mercy.

B3. THE ALTAR OF THE DEAD

A large rectangular room contains a single altar in the center. The same dark marble that surrounds the entryway adorns the walls and ceilings of this chamber. The floor has a mosaic with seven symbols; each symbol is equidistant from a large circle that contains the altar. A closed iron gate is behind the altar. Closed doors are also located in the northeast, northwest, and southwest corners of the room. A single sconce illuminates each of the doors with a soft, green flicker.

A dead monk was placed here and prayed over before his body was entombed. The altar is encrusted with gems and gilded with annular inscriptions. These runes codify the correct order that prayers of the dead must be chanted in accordance with the soul-cleansing ritual.

A total of 16 gems (50 gp each) are arrayed around the altar, with two stones adorning the rune sets. The gems vary in shade, from black to white. Removing the gems is an act of desecration, and good-aligned characters should be wary of such activity.

In a circle surrounding the altar are 8 **restless**^{A1}. They animate and fight — and can be put to rest — in the same manner as the restless in the Hall of Mourning (**Area B2**). Each restless has a gold piece in its mouth. These poor souls died quickly from the plague. Their surviving brethren, fearing for the own lives, gave them incomplete funeral ceremonies, robbing their souls of tranquility.



B4. THE HALLS OF THE DEAD

These three hallways leading off the Altar of the Dead (**Area B3**) contain the bodies of members of the order laid to rest in alcoves. A combined total of 136 alcoves are in the three halls, each containing a body or ashes. A single gold piece can be found in each corpse's mouth or within its ashes (or scattered among the remains in **Area B4b**). If collected, 18 of the 136 offering coins prove to be lousy forgeries. Each of the halls also contains 40 cinerary urns placed against the walls. The walls are bare in keeping with the monks' belief that decoration is for the living.

B4A. THE MAUSOLEUM

A long, narrow hall is found through the northwest door from the Altar of the Dead (**Area B3**). Embalmed remains of 49 members of the order lie peacefully at rest on recessed shelves on the mausoleum's western wall. Cinerary urns line the eastern wall.

A small chest left among the urns contains 45 gp. This chest also contains a *spell scroll* with the spells *speak with dead* and *commune*.

B4B. DESECRATED HALL

Bodies previously resting in alcoves have been violently dislodged. They blanket the floor in a macabre layer of twisted limbs. Each step in this hall is accompanied by the crunching of bones. A lone sconce emits a pallid glow that sends shadows to dance among the dead.

The east hall is not as orderly as the mausoleum (**Area B4a**). Ceremonial gold coins that glint eerily in the flickering light of the sconce are scattered along the length of the hall. A total of 48 coins can be pulled from the horrid mess. Lifeless limbs clutch listlessly at passing characters. Each step through this hall displaces a mat of death and brings a fleeting appearance of life to this grotesque scene.

B4C. SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER

The south hall ends in a small chamber that contains a scone that flickers with a green flame. The walls are neatly lined with corpses and urns. A lone, open sarcophagus occupies the center of the room.

Thirty-nine corpses lie at peace in alcoves recessed into the northern, southern, and eastern walls. Each corpse has a coin in the manner described in the mausoleum (**Area B4a**). The eerie light of the scone emits neither heat nor magic. The sarcophagus is plain and empty.

B5. THE FUNERARY

This large, square room with rounded corners has black obsidian walls. Unlit sconces line the sheer walls. The air is moist and dense. Water seeps into a small pool in the northeast corner of the room.

A skillfully laid mosaic adorns the center of the eastern wall. Nine gems highlight the symbol of the constellation in a design similar to that found in the prior's chamber (**Area A11**).

Bodies were washed and dressed in this chamber for the ceremony at the Altar of the Dead (**Area B3**). A small pool of water seeps from a subterranean source in the northeast corner. Four chests are in this room, one against each wall. Four corpses whose burial rites were never completed are on a massive marble slab in the center of the room. If approached — or if any previous desecration occurred — they rise as **restless**^{A1} and attack the characters in the manner described in the Hall of Mourning (**Area B2**).

The Surculus symbol on the mosaic is a mechanism that reveals a secret door to the Celestial (**Area B6**). A successful DC 16 intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the mechanism and the door's location. A central gem can be twisted, and an audible click is heard as the door's hidden latch releases.

B6. THE CELESTIAL

This chamber's white marble walls are a stark contrast to the shiny, black obsidian found on its ceiling and elsewhere in the catacombs. The room's dark ceiling is dotted with gangue minerals, creating the uncanny sensation of being under a fair night sky. A pair of fluted marble half-columns occupy the center of the room. Fine cloth is draped over one of the columns. A silver chalice sits atop the other.

The Celestial contains two sacred items that were central to the religious life of the order.

The first is the *disciple's dalmatic*^{A2}, which the prior wore during rituals and prayers. It is valuable to interested parties in

Whisper and beyond, fetching at least 3,500 gp.

The second item is the *blessed vessel*^{A2}. If the proper prayer is said while holding the chalice, it fills with holy water three times per day. The priest Ashby in Whisper knows the prayer and can share it with characters at your discretion. *Chants and Missives* — found in the Observatory (**Area A10**) — includes the prayer as well. If a character's wounds are washed with holy water from the chalice, the effect is identical to the spell *cure wounds*. Each character who sips from the chalice gains the effects of the spell *bles*s for four hours (up to seven characters per filled chalice). The *blessed vessel* is the key to the secret compartment in the prior's chamber (**Area A11**).

B7. THE BALUSTER

A long, hallowed hallway serves as a threshold. An imposing pair of ornate steel doors in the center of the north wall seals off a room beyond.

A pair of ornate steel doors stand locked against intrusion in the center of the north wall. The doors are protected by a magical trap that can be disabled by using the silver key from the observatory (**Area A10**). Alternately, it can be disabled with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. If not successfully disabled, the trap creates a strong fear effect. Characters within 30 feet of the trap if it is triggered must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or flee in terror at full movement for three rounds. Characters cannot take reactions during this movement and must use their action to move, if possible.

B8. THE PRIORY CHARNEL

A large chamber is beyond the steel doors. Its walls and floors are unblemished white marble. Tessellated patterns gaze down from a lofty rotunda. Champions of the brethren's faith struggle against diabolicae on the northern hemisphere. The grotesque chaos flows to tranquility, where the same heroes minister to the sick and dying. A spectral form floats menacingly beneath the violent scene. A door blocks entry to a room at the north end of this chamber.

Three golden, ensconced lanterns (150 gp each) are affixed to the rear wall. A door known as "the seal" blocks passage at the north end of the Priory Charnel. Seven iron candelabras stand among eight stone sarcophagi. Deceased priors were laid to rest here with records of the events of their stewardships accompanying them. The sarcophagi contain the remains of the priors. A single gold coin is in the mouth of each corpse. These bodies were given a proper burial and are completely at rest.

Floating among the sarcophagi is a **malice**^{A1} in its spectral form. This entity shed its restless sinews and developed a preternatural mind. The malice cannot be surprised. It immediately lets out a low-pitched, malevolent wail and attacks the first character to enter the room. If defeated, the negative energy of the malice dissipates in an icy blast that causes no damage.





B9. THE SACRED VAULT

This small chamber is constructed of flawless white marble. The stonework is pristine. A finely etched suit of plate armor is on a stand near the east wall, and a shield with an intricate silver inlay is propped against the wall beside it. The shield is adorned with a knot of serpents, their fangs bared.

Darkness invades the chamber from a thin fissure in the northwest corner. A slight creature with slim, leathery limbs and short wings surveys the chamber with quick, perceptive glances. An ornate sword and flail hang high upon the western wall.

Access to the Sacred Vault is granted through “the seal” in the north wall of the Priory Charnel (**Area B8**). The room’s walls are white marble. Hanging on the west wall are a *+1 longsword* and a *mace of disruption*. A suit of *+1 plate* and a *+1 shield* are on display near the east wall.

A fissure that is 18 inches wide and four feet high is in the northeast corner. Darkness issues from the fissure to languidly consume the chamber. Its taint stains everything it touches within a six-foot radius of the fissure. Upon close inspection, the blasphemous stain reveals, in detailed relief, the tortured and twisted faces and hands of imprisoned demonic souls. A **Nexid odalisque**^{A1} surveys the chamber from its perch on the flow. It casts *darkness* and flees to the ceiling to watch the party. If attacked, the Nexid odalisque absconds through the fissure. The fissure seals itself behind the Nexid odalisque as it retreats to the shores of the Black Mere (**Area E3**).



AREA C: L'UORT LAIR

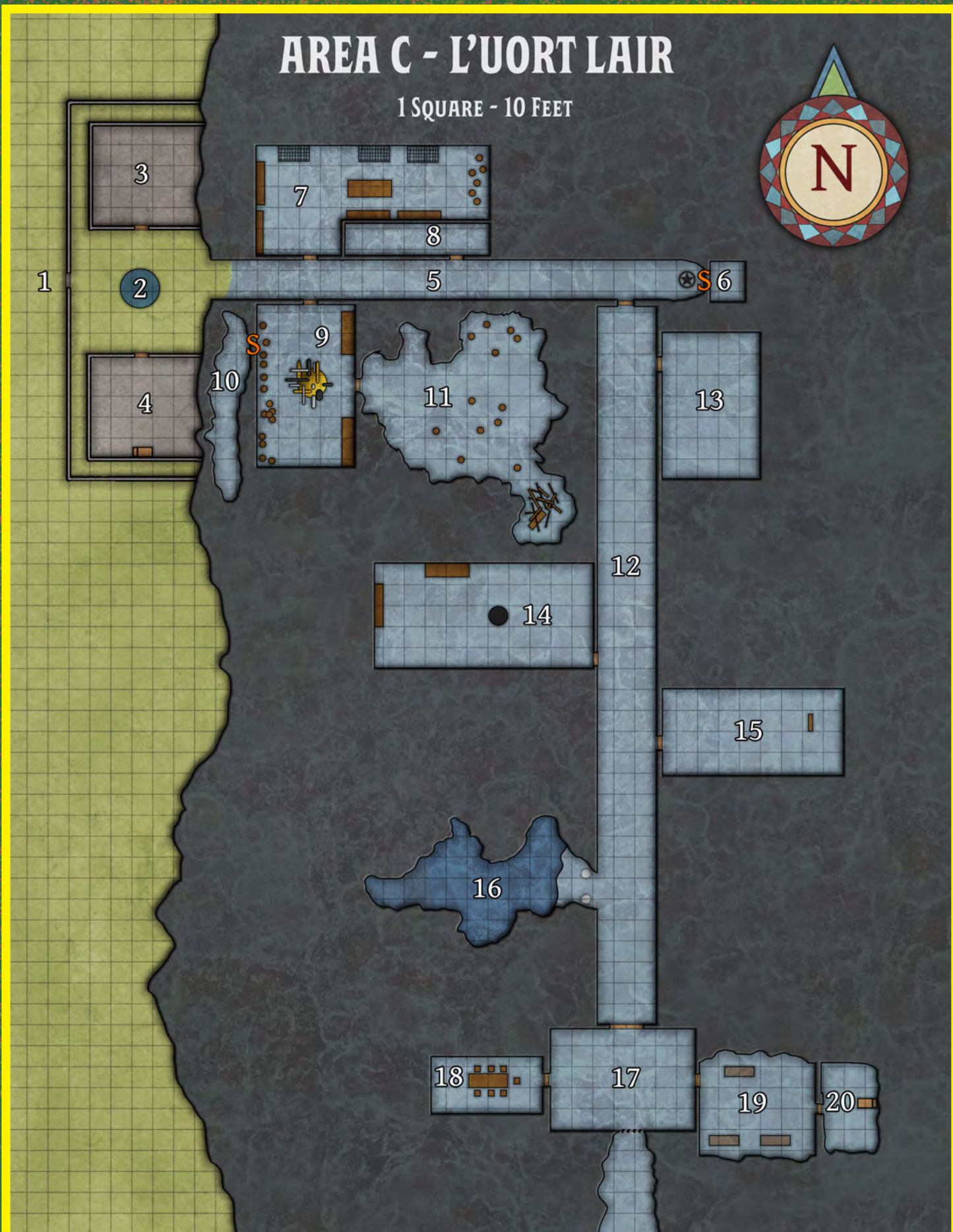
A large stone wall touches a tall, rocky cliff that overlooks gently sloping vineyards to the vale beyond. Storage buildings to the north and south form the courtyard walls; their doorways face each other across the courtyard. An entrance to a network of caverns below is reached through a passage at its east end. For years, the monks worked the stone to create a series of chambers from its natural cavern walls. These chambers became the workshops and storerooms for the Meanderbrook Monastery, but the construction was never completed. The monks also built a large gate to secure themselves from what might lurk in the depths beyond. Once secured, the brothers felt further exploration was unnecessary. These structures became the lair of the lawless L'uort clan.

TABLE 10: L'UORT LAIR WANDERING MONSTERS

1d20	Encounter
1	5 L'uort goblins ^{A1} on patrol
2	3d4 spiny horrors ^{A1}
3	3 L'uort goblins ^{A1} and 2 scavengers ^{A1}
4	2 monstrous beetles ^{A1}
5	2 giant spiders
6–20	No encounter

AREA C - L'UORT LAIR

1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



C1. GATEWAY

The cavern's mouth is concealed beyond a courtyard guarded by a stone gate with attached storehouses. This large gate is sturdily built of a combination of hardwood and iron. It was forcibly opened and no longer closes.

C2. COURTYARD

Vines creep up and over the courtyard walls. Neglected flower beds swell against the walls of two large stone buildings within the courtyard. The buildings' closed doors overlook the courtyard and central well. Foul water bubbles up from the well, which is choked with weeds, leaves, and other debris, making the flotsam moist and malodorous. A fire pit smolders nearby. The courtyard was once used for crushing grapes. The remnants of two ancient vessels used for pigeage lie in heaps. A tunnel breaches the cliff face to the east.

The first time the characters enter here — regardless of any previous encounters — they encounter 5 **L'uort goblins**^{A1} armed with spears on guard duty. If three of the goblins are slain or otherwise incapacitated, the two survivors attempt to wake Lieutenant Grimbull (**Area C4**).

This is the main entrance to the L'uort's lair (**Area C**). It is not left unguarded. If characters leave the lair area for more than half a day, a detachment of 3d4 guards is posted.

C3. THE CRIBBAGE

Broken glass litters the floor. The stench of rotting food is held at bay only by the nauseating vapors from leaky flasks of bad liquor.

The monks used the north building to store bottles waiting to be filled with wine. It now serves as a storeroom for L'uort goblin guards. It contains some rancid rations, three leaky flasks of the goblin Rotgut — these have some value to the usual suspects back in Whisper — as well as a cache of eight spears and nine shortwords with scabbards. The weapons are not especially well-forged, nor are they particularly beautiful.

C4. THE MERCANTILE

This building was ransacked and is mostly empty. Dilapidated wine-making implements are shoved among broken glass against the outer wall.

A heap of flea-ridden animal hides are rolled up in the southwest corner of the building. The L'uort use these as bedding for a second shift of guards. Snoring atop a bed piled selfishly high is Grimbull, one of the chieftain's lieutenants

(**L'uort goblin lieutenant**^{A1}). A pair of bottles are at his side. He awakens if any combat in the courtyard lasts for more than three rounds. Otherwise, he remains asleep.

C5. THE SAINT'S HALL

The breach in the cliff-face leads to a lit passageway with four doors. Two are cut into the north wall, and two more are in the south. A prominent statue of the order's patron saint of wine fills an alcove at the east end of the passage.

The symbol for the constellation Surculus is prominent at the base of the statue. Standing upon the symbol opens a secret panel to a vault (**Area C6**) behind the statue with an audible click. The panel remains unlocked so long as a person's weight remains atop the symbol. Prayers and incense were devoted to the statue as part of a ceremony to gain the saint's favor while the monks went about their wine-making duties. Ignored and deteriorating, the statue is covered with dust, fungi, and stains. The passageway's floor of tiled stone is covered with dirt but shows signs of heavy traffic.

C6. STATUE'S VAULT

Standing on the representation of the constellation Surculus at the foot of the saint (**Area C5**) opens a panel to a vault concealed behind the statue. This small area hides a rich collection of books and scrolls. Among the stacks are 15 valuable books.

A clerical spell book sits conspicuously on a lectern at the rear of the vault. This book contains the following spells:

1st Level: *detect evil and good, protection from evil and good, sanctuary, command*

2nd Level: *silence, hold person*

3rd Level: *animate dead, dispel magic*

Stacked neatly on a nearby shelf are three *spell scrolls*:

1st scroll: *jump, clairvoyance, arcane eye*

2nd scroll: *globe of invulnerability, true seeing, cone of cold*

3rd scroll: *enlarge/reduce, remove curse*

C7. HARVESTING ROOM

Old shelves and barrels line the room's walls. Irate creatures hiss angrily through the bars of three cages as they spit foaming toxin at goblin agitators, who leap frantically about. Dark, viscous liquid strikes the walls behind them, where another goblin scrapes it into a small pot.

The L'uort use this room to harvest venom from captured attorals, which they brew into their addictive elixir. Three battered cages sit against the north wall. Each contains a captive (and irate) **young attoral**^{A1}. A fourth attoral corpse lies on a table near the cages. This unfortunate creature has been skinned and gutted. Three **L'uort goblin**^{A1} warriors toil with poles to



harvest the attoral venom. They use control hooks attached to the ends of the poles to pin the attorals' throats to the cage bars. A fourth warrior collects the acrid discharge. This dismal charge is hazardous work. Hence, the beleaguered L'uort are vigilant.

If they are surprised in the midst of their task, the L'uort attack ferociously with their shortswords. As the characters are blocking their only exit from the room, they open the cages (should the fight go badly) in the desperate hope that the fuming attorals attack the characters. The infuriated attorals are not picky at this point. You should determine the object of the attorals' wrath.

C8. ATTORAL SUPPLY ROOM

Entering this room kicks up a fine layer of dust. A musty smell overpowers the senses.

This room can be reached from the Saint's Hall (**Area C5**). Jugs of brackish water line an old shelf. Piles of attoral food and the carcasses of recently dispatched rats fill this room. Extra control hooks hang on the south wall. A stash of Rotgut is secreted away in a barrel in the northeastern corner.

C9. DISTILLERY

The walls and ceiling in this room are charred. A machine dominates the center, its network of oft-repaired pipes extending like branches from its core. Their condition varies from blackened, to melted, to lovingly polished. Several pipes evince signs of all three. Goblins are meticulously filling flasks. A small, dented gong is behind the apparatus.

This large room was originally a distillery the monks used to make liquors. When they abandoned the monastery, they left the stills and other equipment behind. The L'uort stumbled on this cache when they settled into their new home. They arrived with a captive from Swindle in tow. They had swiped him from a bathing pond outside Whisper, where he was wont to linger. Through threat of torture, the goblins wrested a recipe from their hapless captive, which led to large-scale production of liquor. They also use the equipment to manufacture their Rotgut elixir. A small gong (worth 30 cp) is also here.

The room itself is filthy, but all of the equipment is functional. Large and small barrels are stacked about the room and are filled

with Rotgut in various stages of aging. The equipment is large and difficult to move but could be valuable if it survives intact. Of more immediate concern to the characters is the extremely flammable nature of the Rotgut. Any open flame brought into the room has a cumulative 10% chance per round of causing a small, loud explosion doing 4 (2d4 – 1) force damage to everyone in the room. In addition, the explosion ignites everything in the room and ruins the equipment.

Grolkoth (**L'uort shaman**^{A1}), the goblins' chief distiller, is in this room with 3 **L'uort goblin**^{A1} guards. His guards carry short swords. Grolkoth wields a staff topped with a fresh scalp. If surprised, the L'uort attempt to use the gong to raise an alarm.

The liquor, if intact, is worth 100 gp in Whisper. The equipment, if completely undamaged, could fetch upward of 1,600 gp from an ambitious coalition of drinkers and potential bootleggers among Whisper's citizenry.

C10. HIDDEN CACHE

A secret door behind a pile of barrels on the west wall of the Distillery (**Area C9**) leads to an alcove. The secret door can be found with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check once the barrels are out of the way. This chamber contains a cache of valuable goods left behind by the monks, who had hoped to return. Twelve decorative religious icons made of silver (15 gp each) are arranged on the floor near the entrance. There is a chest with 375 sp, a *potion of healing*, and three prayer books with intricate illuminations (worth 75 gp each). Against the east wall,

a +1 *shield* lies on the ground beside a leather quiver with 17 arrows (six of these are +1 *arrows*, but they are indistinguishable from the others without the use of *detect magic* or a similar spell). Rolled in tight tubes and stacked to the south are four hand-woven rugs (125 gp each).

C11. COOPERAGE

The monastery's cooper used this natural chamber as a workshop. Broken barrels — in various stages of completion — are splayed out on the floor. A splintered pile of wood fills an alcove to the southeast. Nesting in this pile are 3 **monstrous beetles**^{A1}. An upended workbench is in the center of the chamber.

C12. SECOND HALL

Entry to the Second Hall is gained through a large oak door at the eastern end of the Saint's Hall (**Area C5**). This hallway is similar to the Saint's Hall (**Area C5**) with the exception of its walls. They are a combination of natural rock, chiseled stone, and mortar. The rock is laced with veins of a reflective metallic ore (tin). Its spider-web pattern shimmers in torchlight. The floor has been worked with tools but remains roughhewn. Broken barrels and trash are strewn throughout the hall. There are six exits from this hallway.

If any goblins escaped previous encounters with the



characters, it is assumed that they alerted their comrades. Unless a counterattack already occurred, the L'uort are marshaling their forces here in the second hall. Seven **L'uort goblins**^{A1} are arming themselves and prepping 3 **Gauntswept scavengers**^{A1}. If encountered here, characters face an alerted force. If at your discretion enough time passes (See **Area C13**), they are not on alert.

C13. AGING ROOM

This room was obviously used to age and store liquor and wine. Broken bottles have been tossed about the room. Three small unopened containers are untouched in a corner. This room reeks of vinegar. Mugs, discarded food, and straw beds are flung about the chamber.

The three untouched casks still contain wine, as the goblins have an indelicate palate. One of the casks reeks of vinegar. The other two, now aged quite nicely, are worth about 30 gp each.

If there is no muster in the second hall (**Area C12**), or if 48 hours have elapsed since the party's initial entry into the L'uort's lair (**Area C**), 7 **L'uort goblins**^{A1} are found here in their quarters. Three **Gauntswept scavengers**^{A1} are chained to the wall. If surprised, the goblins are unable to act for one round, and the Gauntswept scavengers remain out of combat until they are unleashed. Scavengers still attack any character who comes within range.

C14. ALCHEMY LAB

The floors of this large square chamber are uneven. Its finished walls and ceilings are made of chiseled stone. A large wooden table is pushed against the west wall, opposite the entrance. Skins, vials, and flagons litter the tabletop. A black metal cauldron bubbles over a fire in the center of the chamber.

This room had been a small alchemy laboratory with many glass containers, most of which have been broken. A table is pushed against the west wall; a flagon of raw attoral venom and a wineskin containing three doses of elixir and five vials of strong acid sit on it. Combining attoral nesting materials with their harvested venom and freshly distilled liquor results in a vomit-wrenching concoction. This brew is addictive and physically enhancing — and has a range of side effects (see **Table 18: Attoral Venom Effects**^{A1}). A bowl of dried centipedes and jars of pickled newts are arranged neatly around a cauldron in the middle of the lab. Cabinets and bookshelves full of broken items are up against the walls. A concealed alcove in the northeastern corner contains two potions and a pearl. The potions are *diminution* and *heroism*. The pearl is an *ioun stone* (insight). Three unbroken attoral eggs are on the ground, appropriated from the deeper parts of the cavern by a small goblin scouting party. Each greenish-purple egg is the

size of a large fist. Consuming the eggs raw causes a random effect (see **Table 11: Effects of Consuming Raw Attoral Eggs**). Consuming the eggs cooked — and properly seasoned — is satiating but uneventful.

This room now serves as the laboratory where a **L'uort shaman**^{A1} brews L'uort venom elixir. The shaman, Lagras, and his assistants, 2 **L'uort warriors**^{A1}, are too involved in their labors to notice much else. Unless other goblins warn them, neither Lagras nor his assistants allow their work to be interrupted. A noisy intrusion immediately outrages the shaman, who rings a bell on the shelf in an attempt to alert other tribe members. His assistants are armed with shortswords and attack at the shaman's command. There is a 50% chance that one of Lagras' assistants uses a small vial of acid from the table as a missile weapon against the characters, doing 3 (1d4 + 1) acid damage on a successful hit.

TABLE 11: EFFECTS OF CONSUMING RAW ATTORAL EGGS

1d10	Consumption Effect (per Egg)
1	+1 temporary hit point
2	+2 temporary hit points
3	–1 from maximum hit points for two hours
4	–2 from maximum hit points for four hours
5	+2 to AC for two hours
6	–2 to AC for two hours
7	+1 to random ability score until after a long rest
8	–2 to random ability score until after a long rest
9	Advantage on saving throws until after a long rest
10	Disadvantage on saving throws until after a long rest

C15. ARMORY

In addition to a small chest, this chamber houses various articles of war. The chamber smells of rotten food.

The L'uort discovered the old, undisturbed armory upon their arrival. It contains 16 longbows and 18 polearms; these remain untouched in their respective racks (the goblins cannot use them due to their diminutive stature). Three shortswords and two small shields are stacked in a corner; the L'uort took the rest. Two quarterstaves are in a rack adjacent to the swords. None of the items in the room are magical, but they are still in usable condition.

Two 50-foot coils of rope, 11 torches, and a tinderbox are in a pile in the armory's northern corner. A locked chest in the southeast corner contains three bolts of soiled linen and some rotting goblin rations (long since forgotten by their owner). The chest may be broken open, but the lock is easily picked, requiring only a successful DC 10 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

C16. THE MIDDEN

Beyond a cloud of incense emanating from two tall, jewel-encrusted ceremonial censers is a wall of stench. Just inside to the immediate right is a stripped goblin corpse impaled upon a six-foot spear. Near a vile shore, a second body lies on the ground as liquid offal laps gently against its recently scalped pate. A tower of filth looms at the far end of a sludge-filled lagoon. Something glitters atop the pile.

Through the fifth exit of the second hall (**Area C12**) is a long, narrow cavern. Steamy green mists emanate from the room. Two masterfully crafted, six-foot-tall sacred incense censers (750 gp each) stand majestically on each side of the entrance, a desperate attempt to mask the stench from the Midden. Ripped unceremoniously from the altar in the main sanctuary (**Area A8a**), these religious icons were previously used at baptisms and garish weddings for the wealthy. Greedy characters who attempt to loot the censers unleash the Midden's heretofore contained stench and its effects (see below) into the second hall (**Area C12**) for a period of weeks.

A stripped goblin corpse is impaled on a pike just inside. His crime? He tossed one of Lalrech's bags of jewels onto a pile in an ill-conceived attempt at revenge. The bag now sits atop the heap, its contents spilling out. Small objects glitter in the torchlight. The bag contains a large number of gems.

Upon entering the fetid cavern, characters must succeed on DC 15 Constitution saving throw or vomit uncontrollably for one minute. A large gelatinous pile of filth towers in the rear of the cavern. A small mire of soupy filth oozes from the pile, lapping gently against a rock outcropping 40 feet from the cavern's entrance. The scalped corpse of the ogler kidnapped from Swindle lies on the beach. His garb suggests he was a resident of Swindle.

If retrieved, Lalrech's bag contains: 12 rough moss agates (10 gp each); a fine moss agate (50 gp); a star rose quartz (100 gp); a smoky quartz (100 gp); a blue quartz (25 gp); a rough citrine (75 gp); a fine citrine (100 gp); a small eye agate (25 gp); a large eye agate (50 gp); an onyx (75 gp); a sardonyx (100 gp); and a malachite (25 gp).

C17. ANTEROOM

This chamber has locked double doors that may be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check with thieves' tools or forced with a successful DC 15 Strength check. In the room beyond, the southwest wall is masonry, while the other walls are natural cavern rock.

The small chamber has two doors to the east and west, and a large wrought-iron gate frames the southern exit. The gate is barricaded and locked, as the L'uort are particularly hesitant to go deeper into the caves. The anteroom represents the end the stonework, which was completed at the height of the monks' influence.

Lalrech carries the gate key. Unless previously encountered, he is found through the western door. Lalrech's door can be forced open with a successful DC 17 Strength check. If opened, it makes a very distinctive, loud noise that alerts Lalrech and his lieutenants if they are inside the war room (**Area C18**). The lock can be picked with thieves' tools and a successful DC 17 Dexterity check.

C18. WAR ROOM

A large table sits in the center of this room. Six plush and ornate chairs surround the table. A great map is upon the table. A silver dagger with a red garnet on the hilt is thrust into the tabletop. Some plates with meat and jugs of liquor are on the table. A chest sits in the room's northwest corner. The walls are adorned with six tanned hides.

The silver dagger is a +2 *dagger*. The six tanned attoral hides are worth 120 gp apiece. The chest contains booty from the L'uort's last raid on Whisper:

- ▶ A small gold trinket shaped like an hourglass (10 gp).
- ▶ A bag of unsorted antique silverware lifted from the Ingild family. They offer to pay a finder's fee of 25 gp for its return, but its true worth is closer to 270 gp.
- ▶ The Furrow matriarch's prayer book, which is bound in fine leather with a gold clasp and the family name embossed on the

THE UNFORTUNATE CASE OF TOMUZ PEEZ

Tomuz Peepz of Swindle went about preaching his own brand of spiritualism and salvation. He spent his spare time, which was considerable, in the bushes near a small bathing pond outside of Whisper. Though his actions there remained a secret, rumor was abundant in Whisper as to his true intentions. When Tomuz vanished from public life, it seemed odd, but no one questioned his disappearance. But rumors in Whisper are abundant.

cover (finder's fee 75 gp, worth around 30 gp).

- ▶ 15 small purses of silver and copper coins (120 sp, 220 cp total).
- ▶ Whisper's alchemist Kurtiss' stash of "medicinal" fungi (10 gp to him).
- ▶ Various small porcelain pieces and silver dinnerware from nearly every family in town (85 gp). Only goodwill and free drinks await good samaritans who return the porcelain to their rightful owners, or they can obviously be fenced in Swindle.

If the characters successfully made it this far without alerting the garrison, Lalrech (**L'uort Chieftain**^{A1}) and 2 of his lieutenants, Vargluk and Vruthan (**L'uort goblins**^{A1}), are deep in argument over the merits of sending another scouting party deeper into the caverns. Their quarrel can be heard through the door. The dispute is in broken Common and is peppered with surprisingly clever uses of profanity. Lalrech carries the gate key on his belt in addition to a small, shrewdly hidden key in his sleeve. This key opens the door to his chamber (**Area C20**) and can be found with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check while searching him.

Lalrech and his companions immediately attack anyone who enters this room. Lalrech's pet, Pookie, a **Gauntswept scavenger**^{A1} with a spiked collar, attacks his target. If the characters' presence is known, an additional 3 **L'uort goblin**^{A1} bodyguards are here.

C19. HAREM/TAILORING WORKSHOP

The walls and floor in this chamber are natural cavern, with fungus growing in the nooks and crannies. Beds of straw and pieces of linen and wool are piled about the chamber. Half-sewn loincloths and tunics are scattered about. A closed door is across the room.

The room contains a group of 9 female **L'uort goblins**^{A1} who labor away, sewing furiously. These are the clan's seamstresses, so their living quarter doubles as a workshop. Thread and other tailoring implements are chucked about as seamstresses croak throaty demands for items. A locked doorway is to the rear of the room.

The workshop houses Lalrech's harem of nine goblin females. They are unarmed, but they attack should anyone other than Lalrech enter this room. There are no goblin imps or pregnant females, as one of the side effects of the natural attoral venom and the venom elixir is impotence (a source of aggravation for the tribe). If more than five of the females are incapacitated, the remaining goblins attempt to flee or surrender.

The door to the next chamber (**Area C20**) is locked, and a needle trap is in the door handle. The trap can be located with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check and removed with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. The lock can be opened with a DC 16 Dexterity check with thieves' tools. Failing to pick the lock triggers the



trap. If triggered, the dart makes a ranged attack against a single creature within five feet at +6 to hit. On a hit, it does 1 piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) poison damage. Using Lalrech's key automatically avoids the trap, as does breaking down the door.

C20. LALRECH'S CHAMBERS

This small, smelly room is luxuriously furnished, but poorly apportioned. Hides hang from the wall over gaudy carpeting. An open chest spills coins from the northeast corner.

Lalrech's room is richly appointed. Four rugs (140 gp each) are on the floors, and three tanned attoral hides (120 gp each) cover the walls like tapestries. It is very clean and has an ornate bed with a feather mattress, now tainted by a powerful stench. A large open chest is in the northeast corner. It contains valuables looted from the monastery ruins when the goblins first arrived. Two unopened casks of wine (300 gp each) are beside the chest.

The chest contains 235 gp, 423 sp, 500 cp, and two necklaces (one pearl worth 180 gp and one amber worth 60 gp). It also contains a *potion of healing* and a *ring of free action*. Two crude maps are inside. One shows the location of other nearby humanoid clans, and the other is a rough map of the first area of the Subterrane (**Area D**).

The nightstand beside the bed is furnished with a foot-long piece of broken, black crystal. The survivor of a scouting party into the deepest reaches of the caverns brought this back to Lalrech. The crystal is shaped like a quadrant of a shattered geode, with a smooth exterior surface and a jagged interior. It radiates evil. Any character who touches it feels very uneasy. A character who carries the *Nexid orb shard*^{A2} for more than two hours becomes nauseous and has disadvantage on all saving throws while it is in their possession.



AREA D: THE SUBTERRANE

The walls throughout the Subterrane are scarred with cracks and small fissures. Some open into larger chambers just on the other side, while others join with an extensive network of small, inaccessible jagged tunnels. Interstices run great distances between larger subterranean pockets. This underground network is vast and plunges through hidden gaps into an immense Tartarean ocean. They are the unplumbed depths. It is the dark, deep unknown of this realm. Its black tides drive foreboding forces through the tunnels above. Wind claws from below. Air whines through tunnels and bellows from cracks concealing great caverns, a concordant melody beating through the heart of the world.

Those who venture into these depths pass very small cracks and fissures in walls and floors that open into the aforementioned tunnels and pockets. Young attorals seeking sanctuary from predators, among other things, claim these many hidden areas. They cling desperately to the rock as they sense pressure building from the depths below. They shriek shortly before a blast of air issues from interconnecting tunnels and caverns that threatens to dislodge them from their refuge.

TABLE 12: THE SUBTERRANE WANDERING MONSTER TABLE

1d20	Encounter
1	3d4 spiny horrors ^{A1}
2	1d4 byrghs ^{A1}
3	1d2 young attorals ^{A1}
4	1 adult attoral ^{A1}
5–6	Sounds of the deep (roll on Table 13: Precipice Sound Table)
7–20	No encounter

Other caverns are in the foothills and mountains near the Whisper Vale that, as of yet, remain undiscovered. These underground pathways allow the younger attorals to travel between distant caverns and unsurveyed depths in search of new mates and new homes. They also are used as foraging spaces for fungi and other underground plants that make up a significant portion of their diet.

AREA D: THE SUBTERRANE



1 SQUARE - 10 FEET

D1. GRAND CAVERN

Swallows nest in stalactites that have formed over the years from moisture dripping slowly down through five natural shafts dispersed throughout a massive domed ceiling. Their songs echo in the dim chamber, dying plaintively away into an eerie silence in the cavern's reaches. Stalagmites stretch up from

the ground below the shafts to form jagged crowns around four murky pools. These shafts provide the cavern with dim illumination, leaving remote corners in a hazy twilight. In the darkest corners, patches of mold grow around wet surfaces where moisture collects. A gaping hole in the southern wall leads to an intersection of tunnels.

Passing through the wrought-iron gate in the Anteroom (**Area C17**), characters find themselves in a short, 10-foot passage that opens to a spacious cavern beneath the hill. The cavern's ceiling curves up to 80 feet above the center of the room. During the day, pillars of light illuminate the natural crowns below. By night, the stars and moon cast eerie beams into the room.

Five **byrghs**^{A1} scavenge among the fungi and uneven rock formations of the chamber's floor.

D1A. ENTRANCE

As the short passageway opens into the cavern, characters are greeted with cool, moist, fresh air. A heap of rusted picks and shovels sits at the cavern's mouth to the west. Beside it is an assortment of crude excavation and exploration tools. These items, while makeshift, are still in usable condition.

D1B. BYRGH NEST

A nest fills this recess. It is a muddled mess of mismatched items, including bones and bits of barrels and crates. Three crab-like creatures mill about the nest.

Byrghs collect anything they can carry, which they haul around on their backs. Once overburdened, byrghs return to the nest to drop their loads and begin foraging for more. Such nests vary in size and composition. Three **byrghs**^{A1} occupy this nest.

D1C. CAVERN CENTER

The center of the cavern sits beneath the largest shaft, breaching the hillside above. The shaft's perilous nature is revealed by a pile of carcasses from local fauna at different stages of decay, resting in a natural depression in the floor. This pit is dry. The sound of dripping water echoes softly from a hidden fissure. Drawing nigh evokes an inexplicably powerful sense of vertigo.

Unlike the other four pits, this pit is dry as moisture escapes



down through an 18-inch fissure. Entering the pit disturbs the lattice of bones and sends some of them into the fissure. A staccato tapping follows as the bones clatter beyond the range of hearing. The depth is beyond measure.

D1D. SOUTHWEST CORNER

This area is shrouded in gloom. Surveying symbols have been etched into the wall near a crude etching of a demonic symbol similar to the one near the well in the ruined courtyard (**Area A2**).

D2. CUL-DE-SAC

The floor here is slick with droppings and the bodies of dead rats and bats. A cacophony of small clicks can be heard from this cul-de-sac. The noise is concentrated in a recess at the far end. A hollow carapace lies just inside the cavern, spines digging deep into its shell.

A dry passage in the southeast corner of the cavern leads to another small chamber. A dead byrgh lies just inside, the recent prey of a group of 8 subterranean **spiny horrors**^{A1} that have so far avoided being eaten by the larger attorals. Originally a prospering pack of 40 individuals, their numbers have dwindled due to the same dark energies that corrupted the attorals. They became

almost rabid and occasionally resorted to cannibalizing their own.

A cluster dangles from the ceiling and springs to life if characters come within 15 feet. Once alerted, the spiny horrors skitter down the walls and leap toward their prey.

D3. WESTERN CHAMBER

This cavern is reached through a natural cleft on the western wall of the grand cavern (**Area D1**). Fungus covers the walls and ceiling, and the walls are slick with moisture. Near the rear wall, close to the ceiling, a pair of **young attorals**^{A1} built a nest made of sputum and regurgitated fungus. The nest forms a protective wall and provides cover to the attorals, as well as the element of surprise to characters not explicitly searching the ceiling area.

The nest is relatively new, and no eggs or hatchlings are nearby. If characters uncovered the method used to create the goblins' elixir, they may choose to harvest some of the nest structure for themselves or for others to study. While ingesting attoral eggs causes random effects (see **Table 11: Effects of Consuming Raw Attoral Eggs**), consuming their nest compound has no effect except as a violent and fast-acting purgative.

D4. INTERSECTION

If they pass through the southern wall of the grand cavern (**Area D1**), the characters find themselves in an intersection of tunnels that run in all directions. The intersection opens into a massive cavern complex to the south, and tunnels also lead to the east and west. This area is small and stifling, though the air is surprisingly fresh. As characters enter the intersection, a distant shriek pierces the silence, answered by another, louder cry. If the party has not encountered the attorals in the western chamber (**Area D3**), a third and fourth shriek follow in quick succession.

D5. EASTERN WING

Tunneling east from the intersection outside the grand cavern (**Area D1**) is a 150-foot-long corridor that curves around to the north and culminates in another large chamber.

D5A. EASTERN TUNNEL

This long, dark tunnel runs 150 feet, then bends north. Four strike points line the walls; three are interspersed along the south wall and one cuts into the east wall where it snakes around to the north.

LIFE IN THE DEPTHS

The Subterrane springs to life as characters venture deeper into the intricate cavern complex within, with increasing numbers of attorals lodging themselves into the interstices behind the complex walls. Shrieks erupt at intervals, followed by increasingly powerful gusts of air, which issue from cracked walls and columns. When the party approaches within 15 feet of a fissure, there is a 20% chance of hearing a shriek followed by an attoral attack. Some events are a one-shot attack with surprise and no further aggression. Farther into the complex, such attacks may be followed by an attoral Viper Strike (see the attoral's Viper Strike ability^{A1}).

D5B. SUN CAVE

This round, well-lit chamber is 45 feet in diameter. A massive sink pit in the hillside above has collapsed in the center. A pile of rock is in the middle, ringed with a pool of water. A school of silvery fish swim idly through the clear water.

D6. THE APOTHECARY

This long passageway is remarkable for its toadstools that form small colonies on the walls and ceiling.

A short tunnel to the west of the intersection (**Area D4**) leads to colonies of toadstools gathered in small clusters on the floor and walls that quiver if approached. This movement discharges a fine mist, numbing the skin of any passersby for a few seconds.

D7. SIDE CHAMBER

This large curving cavern is made of limestone shelves. They drip with moisture that nourishes masses of fungi. Small spiders skitter about the cavern. A small, narrow fissure is in the east wall.



D8. NEST CHAMBER

A narrow crack in the eastern wall of the side chamber (**Area D7**) presents an inaccessible entrance (to the characters, without magical means) to a protected attoral nest. A similar crack issues from the opposite side into a nest chamber. A fresh clutch of 21 eggs are clumped together, secreted to walls and floors within the nest chamber in an attempt to protect them from the cyclical exhalations of the deep. An **adult attoraless**^{A1} keeps vigil.

Unless attempting deliberate stealth as the party passes by either entrance, the fiercely protective attoraless attacks using the narrow fissures concealing her den to her advantage. Such an attack is immediately preceded by the click of talons on stone. She then uses her venom attack on the nearest character and follows that with a reptilian shriek. Should the party remain within range or attempt an attack, she becomes enraged, uses her Viper Strike and disappears back into her lair before retreating farther into the network of interstices behind the walls, if necessary.

D9. REAR CAVERN

Several torches lining the rear walls illuminate this room. A crude heavy metal gate is on the floor next to goblin workers along with an assortment of spikes, hammers, and other sapping tools. A shaft drops into the darkness nearby. Fingers of white mist creep randomly from the hole, which the goblins cautiously avoid. Darkness envelops the southeast corner.

This chamber is similar to the Grand Cavern (**Area D1**) due to its expanse and small shafts of light and air that penetrate through the hill above. Fungus grows in dark corners, and the walls are very moist.

A work detail of 5 **L'uort goblins**^{A1} toil desperately with picks and shovels in the southwest corner of this chamber. Four, armed goblin guards (**L'uort goblins**^{A1}) spit pejorative encouragement.

Should the party opt to observe at this juncture, they notice that every few minutes a goblin accidentally passes through the mist and lets out a muffled cry. The afflicted show no signs of duress or injury, merely fright.

This crew is attempting to install a makeshift gate over the shaft leading down into the Precipice (**Area E**). They are under

orders — and threats — from Lalrech. Over the previous few weeks, seven goblins have gone missing or turned up dead on missions into the Precipice. They have been warned about ancient attorals that make the Precipice their lair, but until now they paid little heed. Previously, it was common knowledge among L'uort scouts that if they were reasonably cautious, they could go about on their scavenging missions with little to fear. Apparently, this is no longer the case, given the obvious alarm manifested by this group. This is the deepest any from this party has delved, and they are visibly fearful.

If captured and interrogated, any information they share is only secondhand and vague. They are, however, intensely aware that they are not installing the gate for their own entertainment, as many of their clan's strongest warriors are hesitant to descend. The corpses of three unwilling tribe members are brutally impaled nearby.

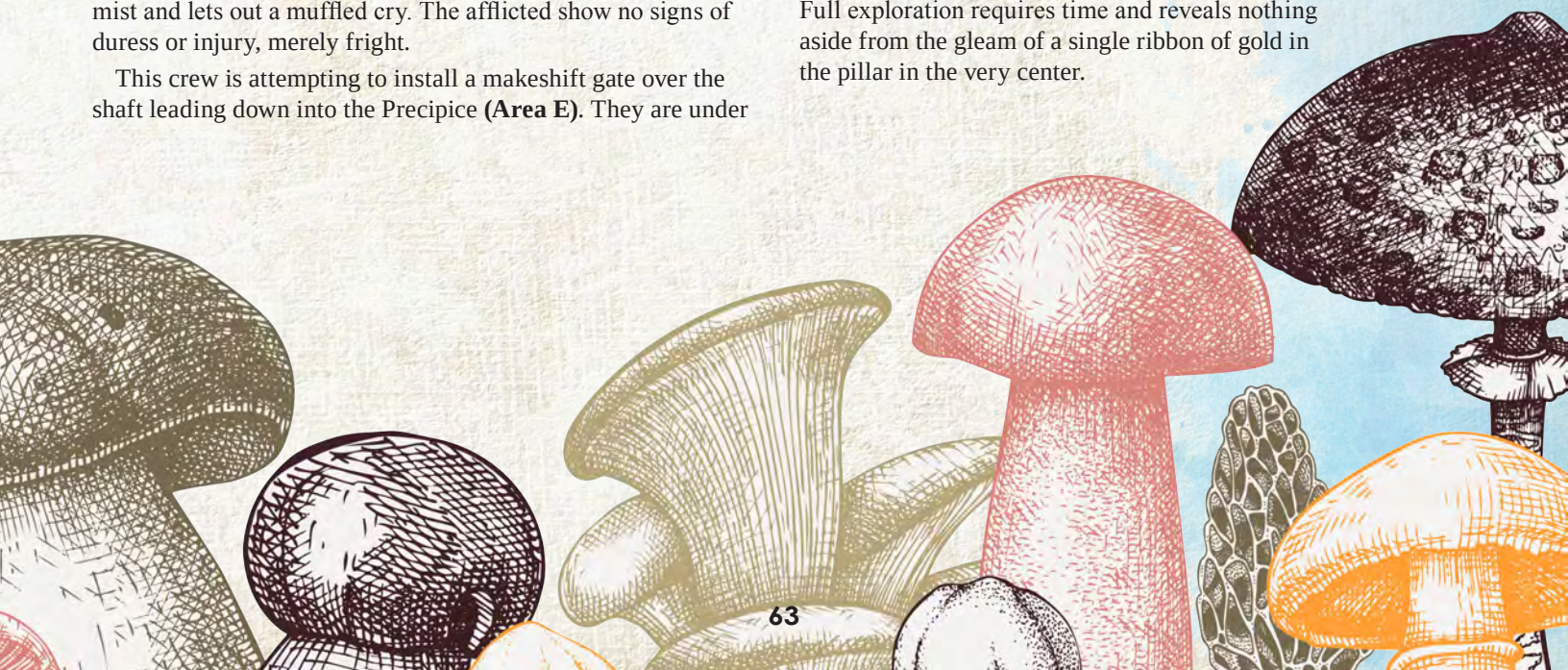
D10. OBSIDIAN SHELF

Narrow, obsidian walls emitting a dim sheen rise in the southeastern corner. Pestilent darkness stabs through the wall like an ebony blade. The darkness is so complete that it seems to overwhelm even light thrown from torches or lanterns.

Escalading a four-foot shelf into the wall brings characters into a black crawlspace. Writhing through it for six feet, characters emerge into a spherical obsidian warren (**Area D11**).

D11. THE WARREN

The Warren is every linkboy's worst nightmare. An obsidian shelf opens to a large, spherical lava chamber. There is a 10-foot drop into the interior. A mummified attoral corpse is directly below the shelf within. Characters are engulfed in a blackness so complete that the very air seems stifling and sound is muffled. Massive obsidian columns form a disorganized maze about the floor, reflecting a muted glimmer as lights play over them. Jagged convex walls of granite rise into the darkness above. Full exploration requires time and reveals nothing aside from the gleam of a single ribbon of gold in the pillar in the very center.



AREA E: THE PRECIPICE

The locus of the transformation of the attorals and the goblins lies in the Precipice.

The Precipice was never explored during the monks' tenure at the monastery as the tin vein that was the impetus for the initial excavation into the hillside was depleted near the entry to the grand cavern. The area remained untouched by any of the surface folk until recent, reluctant forays by the strongest of the L'uort warriors. Many years have passed since the attoral broodsource seeded a new colony here. Ceaseless nights and a shortage of predators allowed the colony to grow. The broodsource pair dominates this subterranean ecosystem. They reign over these caverns — at a cost: They have become too massive to escape into the upper reaches. This is a process that has repeated itself in many other caverns throughout this part of the world.

The broodsource remain trapped here, having long ago outgrown any of the available exits to the world outside. They feed and breed with impunity. Their own offspring must elude them, as their instinct is to eat, kill, or drive out potential rivals. Thus, their despotic hierarchy is preserved. The broodsource are territorial and destroy the nests or offspring of other colony members. This explains the nests in the caverns above, as lesser attorals seek refuge beyond the reach of the broodsource.

It was in this deep place that the Nexid Mouthgate appeared during autumn's new moon. On a fall day and over the course of one night, a sheer cavern wall was corrupted. The middle of the wall opened into a gaping mouth with fangs and closed eyelids. The mouth sat silent for months. Finally, it unlocked its jaws to the subterranean world around it. As the mouth opened, a thick white mist rolled forth into the Precipice like a rising tide. It covered the area with heavy white fog. The gaping stone jaw then vomited 14 perfectly smooth and reflective black orbs. The orbs came to rest in a semicircle around the Mouthgate.

Except for an occasional attoral silently scavenging for food, the Mouthgate Chamber remains undisturbed.

Then, last night, the Nexid Mouthgate opened its eyes and began to cry, shedding dark, silent tears.

TABLE I3: PRECIPICE SOUND TABLE

(Replaces Wandering Encounter Check)

1d6	Name	Number of Repetitions (per event)	Volume
1	Skittering behind walls	1d4	Loud
2	Hiss of cold air	1d4	Soft
3	Attoral call	1d2	Loud
4	Broodsource roar	1d2	Loud
5	Tones of the deep	1	Soft
6	Tones of the deep	1	Loud

A STORY OF ORBS

Ten orbs remain in the likeness of a toothless grin. As to the fates of the missing four, one orb was shattered by a L'uort scavenging party — the largest shard sits on the nightstand in Lalrech's chamber (**Area C20**). The event concerning the fate of the other three is what led to the tribe attempting to seal the shaft into the Precipice. A second foray of well-armed L'uort warriors ended in calamity. When they entered the Mouthgate Chamber, three orbs "sang" to each other. They resonated, a small atonal choir, quivering with each off-key note. The goblins watched in quiet fascination, not knowing what to do next.

Baffled by the phenomenon, the party leader gathered the courage to confront one of the singing orbs. As he touched the orb, a brilliant, blinding flash filled the chamber. When the L'uort regained their sight — and their wits — they realized that they had lost a goblin and that the number of orbs in the room had decreased by three. The warriors instantly wilted with fear and fled to the relative safety of their own lair. Their report inculcated a feeling of dread into their tribal leaders (their shaman especially).

The survivors were executed. Such is the price of silence.

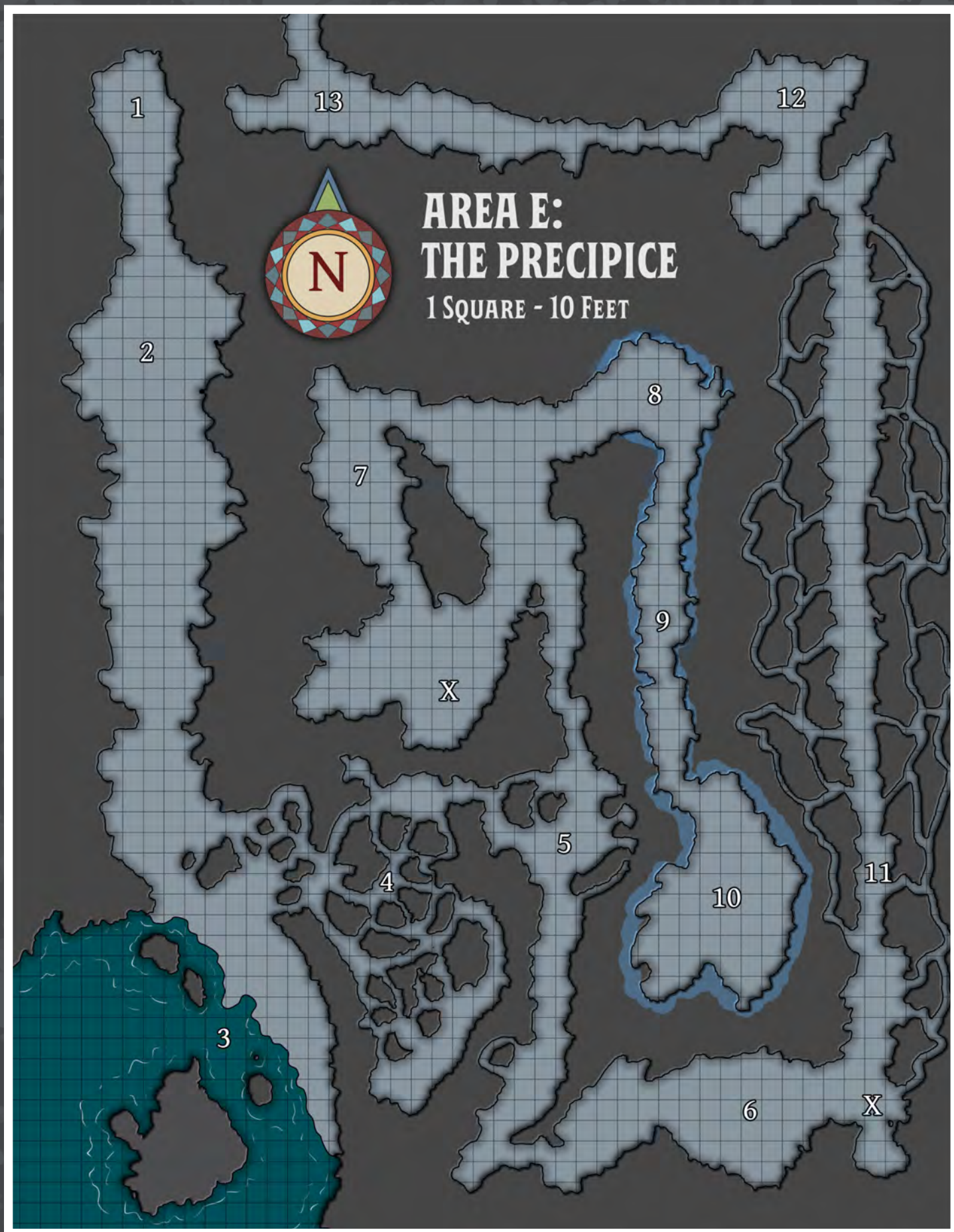
Each of the 10 remaining orbs contain a Nexid odalisque.

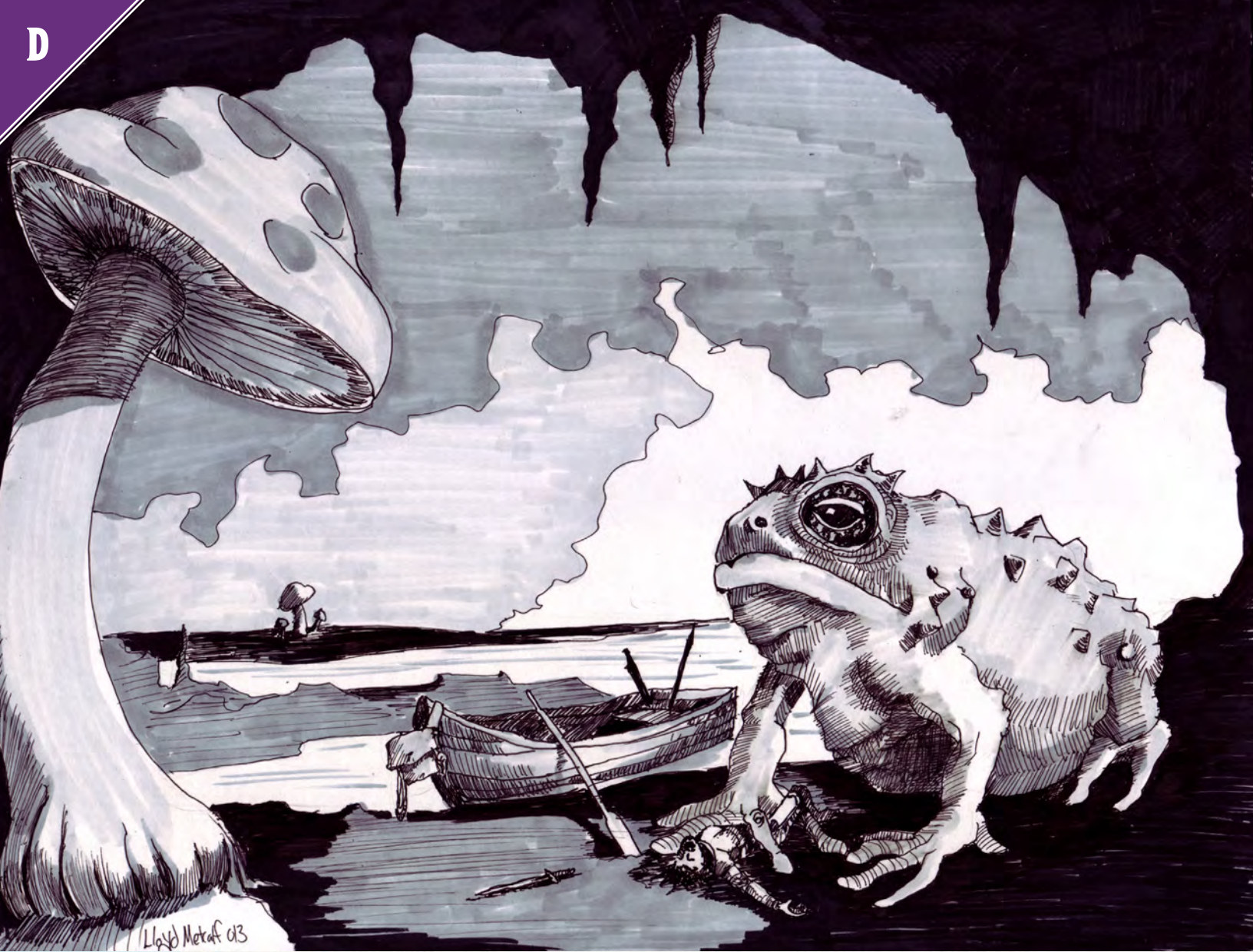


E1. PRECIPICE ENTRY CHAMBER

Mist blankets the floor. Moving through it creates ripples and currents. Small pillars of mist waft, ghostlike, into the shaft.

The shaft from the upper caverns is 40 feet deep and five feet wide. The climb down is arduous, but the chance of falling is minimal. A DC 8 Strength (Athletics) check is required unless ropes and climbing equipment are used. The shaft ends in a small round chamber, roughly 30 feet in diameter. The air is heavy with moisture. White mist blankets the floor of the Precipice.





E2. CAVERN HALL

This vast cavern's ceiling is packed with speckled fungi. Bioluminescent pinpoints sparkle eerily from above. A shredded nest hangs from a crevice in the ceiling.

The southern exit from the precipice entry chamber (**Area E1**) leads into a massive corridor. Initially a 10-foot passage, it gradually widens to 60 feet, and then tapers down again to a dark tunnel at the southern end. The cavern's ceiling is dense with a speckled fungus (fungalloyd) in varying shades of gray. The fungalloyd's specks illuminate when a source of heat draws near, evoking an effect similar to stars on a clear night. Intense heat, such as that of a torch, releases the bioluminescent spores. They drift serenely to the cavern floor. The ground is littered with fragments of eggshells that snap underfoot. The body of a juvenile attoral lies just below the layer of mist, its throat slashed.

E3. THE BLACK MERE

Dark waters lap lightly on the shores of a subterranean lake. A thick, swirling mist obscures the lake's surface. Woodworking implements lie about a rocky shoreline. The mere's surface is still. It is swallowed by the darkness; the ubiquitous mist ends at the shoreline. A rock juts out of the surface of the mere 30 feet from the nearest shore. A boat's keel and ribs jut from the water just off the island's shore like the bones of a beached leviathan. Its planks float tranquilly about the wreckage.

The southern pass of the cavern hall (**Area E2**) opens into a large cavern. Dark water laps against a shore, obscured by precipitous mists. Firm ground hugs the cavern wall, curving around the mere to the south into a long darkness. A long, single-file march eventually leads to the bottom of the courtyard well (**Area A2**). The western wall of this cavern (immediately north of the mere) has two piles. The first is a heap of roughly hewn planks. A second pile contains two saws, two hammers, and a stack of rusty nails.

The island is home to a **giant toad**. This toad usually feeds on subterranean insects and attoral hatchlings, but it is not picky. Should any party members enter the pool, the giant toad investigates. If the waters of the lake remain undisturbed, the toad keeps to itself and remains hidden.

E4. THE DARK FOREST

This dense cavern slopes gently downward and is thick with formations of rock. Each of the columns grows into a low-hanging ceiling lush with a stalactite canopy. A pathway winds through the pillars of stone, which crop up every few feet. Water drips from above, creating the sensation of a gentle rain. The ubiquitous white mist settles just above the ground.

Six **byrghs**^{A1} scavenge below the mist, which ripples behind them. A nest is in the southernmost alcove. A thick column rises a few paces from the nest; fossilized remains reach from the rock. The fossil's arms are outstretched, as are its wings, one of which has been broken. The remaining wing extends a full nine feet from the column. Close inspection of the fossil reveals a fracture in the neck.

A single massive byrgh (**prime byrgh**^{A1}) patrols the nest. A large black choker of unknown material known as the *orbis dolor*^{A2} sits atop its carapace. Engaging the prime byrgh awakens the power of the *orbis dolor*, which sends all other byrghs scurrying for cover. This initiates a defensive reaction by the *orbis dolor*. A shock wave clears out the mist in a 30-foot circle about the byrgh, and each creature within the area must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed back 10 feet, ending prone. Characters face the prime in a 40-foot-radius magical ring. The *orbis* improves the prime's AC by 2. Characters attempting to cast a spell within the ring of combat must succeed on a Concentration check or else the spell fizzles and the spell slot is lost.

The nest contains the characteristic collections deposited by the byrghs, as well as an ancient black satchel, an ancient dark blade (+2 *longsword*), a bone ring (600 gp), a fire opal (400 gp), and an oddly cut emerald (600 gp).

E5. THE BEND

A long curving tunnel connects the Hatchery (**Area E6**) to the Broodsource Mating Chamber (**Area E7**). This artery connects the broodsource's separate lairs.

E6. THE HATCHERY

This lengthy cavern is littered with islands of carcasses, broken bones, and cracked shells that peek through the misty blanket. The reek of rotting death lies heavy throughout the cavern.

breeding ground of the dominant attoral pair. The eastern part of the hatchery is filled with hatched and unhatched eggs. Walking here results in a crackling sound, as the entire cavern is littered with broken eggs and small attoral bones, not to mention filth accumulated over many years.

The Hatchery is the lair of the **attoraless broodsource**^{A1}. She lingers near her nest in the southeastern corner. Simply passing into the cavern alerts the attoraless. She surveys the chamber from atop a hideous pile of half-devoured offspring, looking to feed again.

A long, shrill challenge greets party members if they come within 60 feet of her location. The attoraless spits venom and then springs from 30 feet, launching a vicious attack on the nearest character.

E7. THE MATING CHAMBER

Two large alcoves make up this chamber. The floor is slick with moisture and excrement and littered with small bones. The eviscerated body of a recently deceased goblin is in a corner of the southern alcove. A heap of reptilian corpses in varying states of decay sits to the rear of the northwestern alcove.

The corpse of the L'uort clutches a *Nexid orb* shard in its hand. A pouch containing 38 sp is nearby, as well as a notched and broken sword.

This is the lair of the **attoral broodsource**^{A1}. The famished male picks through rotting carcasses in an effort to satiate himself. His hunger makes him bold, and he ruthlessly attacks any who enter his lair. The male's attacks are calculated and strategic.

E8. THE LATTICE FALLS

Mist flows down a gentle slope. Crystals cut through the mist, creating ripples and eddies. The crystals are bluish in color, though any definite color is difficult to ascertain as a result of their lucent properties. Over the edge, crystals jut from the cliff face, providing a way down.

A small cavern similar to the precipice entry chamber (**Area E1**) descends 20 feet into darkness. The crystals are rare and valuable (each fetching upward of 100 gp if removed). Metalworking tools are required to remove them, however, and they are unwieldy. Striking the crystal with any metal object causes a high-pitched sound that can be heard by anything in the Precipice. After 20 feet, the slope suddenly drops, sending the mist cascading like a waterfall over its edge. Without using rope or other climbing gear, the characters risk a precipitous fall. Climbing down unaided requires a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check. A 10-foot drop at the bottom lands characters into the pooling mist.

This elongated cave (120 feet from the bend to the lair) is the



E9. THE NETHER TUNNEL

Shaped like a cylinder, this passage is jagged with crystal shards that protrude from the walls and floors. They reflect light in the same strange manner as the crystals in the previous chamber. The mist flows lazily in a gentle current, like a meandering meadow river.

The reverberations of echoes are magnified, making stealth unlikely. A **young attoral**^{A1} chews on a rat at the end of the passage. It flees through the southern exit if characters enter the tunnel.

E10. THE CRYSTAL VINEYARD

This spherical vault is covered with crystals, reminiscent of a geode. The air in this cavern is still. Rows of subterranean plants hang from the ceiling, swaying in eerie harmony.

The Nether Tunnel (**Area E9**) leads to this grand spherical chamber, 50 feet in diameter.

The **young attoral**^{A1} that fled before the characters in the

Nether Tunnel (**Area E9**) now fights desperately against a large **hanging snagwort**^{A1} that flings it back and forth against the crystals. It uses a sticky tendril to grasp and club its prey to death against the walls. Beyond this violent struggle, five rows of snagworts (number of snagworts per row is 2d6 or at your discretion) can be seen hanging, swinging harmoniously.

E11. THE GAUNTLET

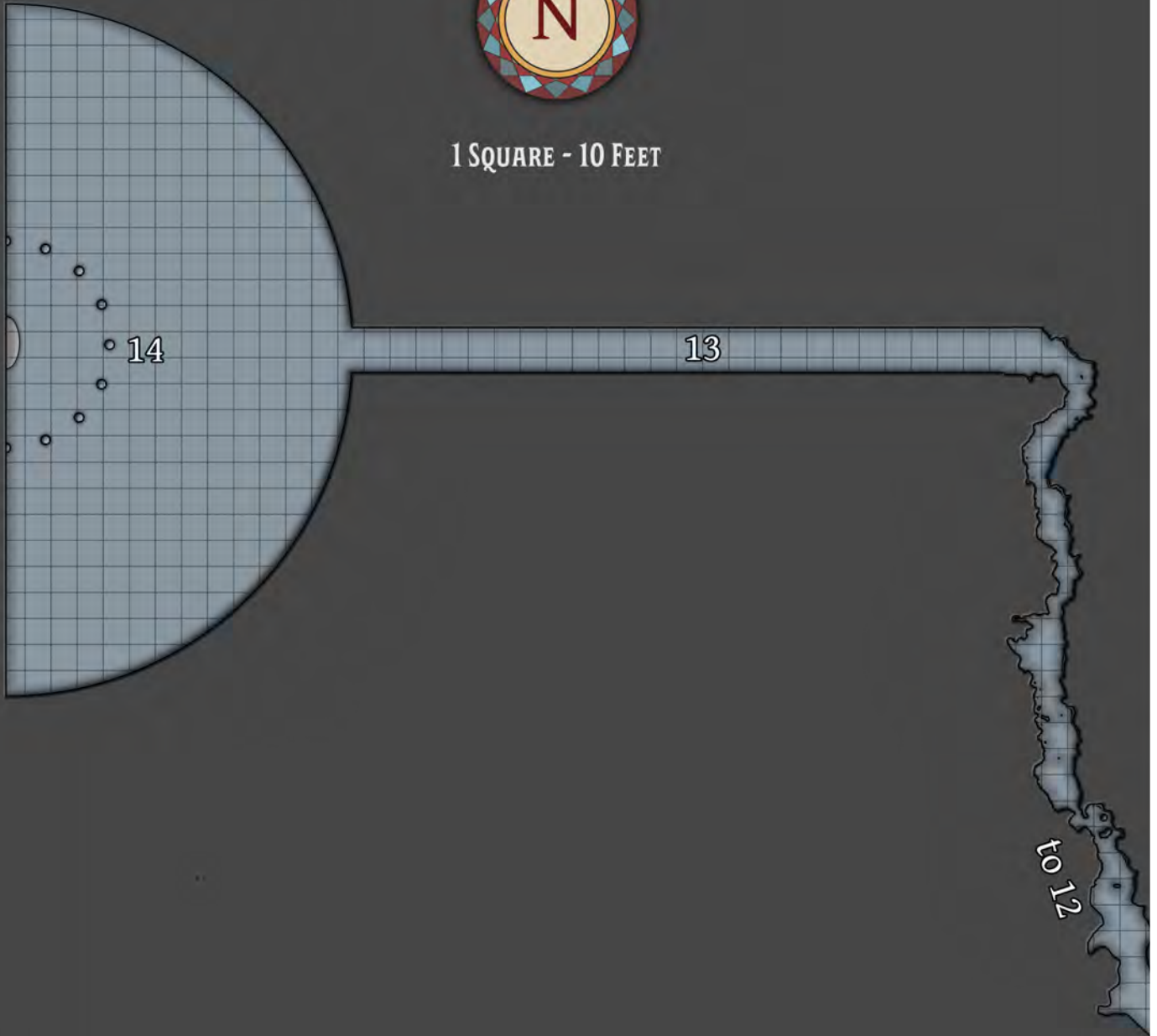
A long tunnel is honeycombed with small fissures. A disconcerting series of staccato ticks can be heard echoing behind the walls. Masses of fungi illuminate the walls and ceiling in concert with the movement behind.

An exit in the northeastern corner of the Hatchery (**Area E6**) leads north, through a long, straight tunnel. The Gauntlet is nine feet high and approximately 20 feet wide. The 210-foot passage is riddled with cracks and fissures. The interstices run the length of the tunnel behind The Gauntlet's walls. These cracks are used by 2 **adult attorals**^{A1} as a protected lair. A massive fungalloyd blankets the ceiling. If characters enter the Gauntlet, they are met with a dynamic similar to that of the cavern hall (**Area D8**) in the Subterrane. See **Appendix 3: Specific Encounter Mechanics** for the attorals' strategy. Portions of the fungi colony luminesce as the attorals pass back and forth behind the rock above.

AREA E - NEXID ANTECHAMBER



1 SQUARE - 10 FEET





E12. THE MYCENAEUM

This chamber is covered by a low mist and has no natural lighting. A narrow pathway passes through the center. With the exception of this trail, dark, twisted fungus thickly coats all surfaces.

The fungi's proximity to the Nexid Mouthgate corrupted it. It has become warped, forming misshapen hands and claws that clutch at passersby from all directions. Should a character pass within a foot of the trail's edge, a choking spore cloud bursts with a loud pop, initiating a chain reaction that radiates from the point of contact. This event causes no damage but interferes with movement and communication. The area off the trail is difficult terrain.

E13. THE MARCH

This smoothly bored hallway runs in a straight line west from the Mycenaem (Area E12) to the Nexid Antechamber (Area E14). It is coated by the Nexid flow (refer to the description in Area B9). Thick mist swirls and flows across the floor toward the Mycenaem. Bright light reveals glimpses of shadowy images and demonic faces upon the walls and ceilings. The tunnel, however, is surprisingly smooth. Light issues from the west exit.

E14. NEXID ANTECHAMBER

A sheer wall to the west bisects this massive domed chamber. A map of the Whisper Vale and the lands beyond is delicately inlaid into the wall in silver. The walls are as smooth as glass; patterns ebb and flow just beneath the surface. Floating beneath a high ceiling, just below the apex, is an amorphous globe that illuminates the entire cavern.

Ten orbs form a barrier in a broken semicircle extending from a gaping mouth, framed by a face at the center of the western wall. It is the tearful visage of a Tartarean goddess. The likeness is bewitching in its detailed beauty yet hints at impending doom. She holds silent vigil over the antechamber. A tear slips from indifferent eyes. Her fanged mouth frames a pulsing distortion.

This is the Nexid Mouthgate. The barrier orbs protect the gate. Characters must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be drawn to touch the nearest orb. If touched by a character, the orb pulses and shatters, releasing a **Nexid odalisque**^{A1}. Should a character attack the orb with a weapon, it does not pulse, but shatters into large shards, destroying its contents. After three rounds, the nearest orb to the characters releases another odalisque. This continues until three orbs remain.

The gate senses when only three orbs are left intact,

whereupon energy rips through the gate and a tall **Nexid soldier**^{A1} wielding a black blade materializes. He fights within the boundary originally set by the orbs until he reaches half his hit points, at which time he communes with the Mouthgate in his native tongue. The globe above implodes, and its light is doused. The Mouthgate devours the Nexid soldier when it perceives that he is outmatched. His silhouette lingers briefly before being ripped apart, a sacrifice providing the dark energy necessary to demolish the Mouthgate. A sliver of light escapes from the portal. Looking into the portal gives the distorted vision of a vast underground stronghold with hundreds of armed Nexid soldiers standing in deadly formation. Just beyond the ranks is the unmistakable form of three identical gates, all of them active, tears streaming. Any attempt to force entry to this phasma automatically fails. Characters who make such an attempt must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become catatonic for 48 hours. After three rounds, the Mouthgate hisses, shudders, and is torn asunder.

A small crevasse is in the northwest corner of the chamber. Nexid odalisques deposit items retrieved during their probes.

Within a pile of L'uort skulls, broken weapons, and L'uort miscellany are the following items:

A black, leather spellbook containing the following spells:
1st-level — *charm person*, *protection from evil and good*, *sleep*

2nd-level — *flaming sphere*, *locate object*, *spider climb*

3rd-level — *fireball*

A *spell scroll* in a bone tube containing the following spells: *dispel evil and good*, *mass healing word*, *freedom of movement*.

A second *spell scroll* in a pouch contains the following spells: *divination*, *commune*.

The blade of a +2 *voulge guisarme* (as halberd) rests in an ornate wooden box. An ancient portrait has been tossed near the box. A soiled silk loincloth is draped over the painting. Delicately embroidered in silver thread is the letter “T”. The loincloth secretes a confidence-inducing aura within a five-foot radius. Known by its nefarious former owner as the *charming garment*^{A2}, it was the property of an appropriately shunned gnomish resident of the Whisper Vale.



EPILOGUE

It is not an invasion. It is an exodus.

FINE

Following the destruction of the Mouthgate, the party is tasked with extricating itself from the Precipice and returning to the relative safety of Whisper. Upon arriving at Whisper, the characters' tales are met with disbelief until they display evidence of their veracity. Although fantastical, the party's tale is received with stunned silence, which is quickly followed by abject terror. Whisper's citizens turn to their elders for answers, who turn to the priest, their apprehension growing.

To the citizens of Whisper, tales of a distant menace seem secondary to a more proximate menace. They enthusiastically embrace the constable's suggestion that the party seeks the

temperance and strength for which Cleft is known. Their typical sense of complacency is unmasked by their unusual sense of urgency. Lialio steps forward to suggest the unspeakable. Anticipating Lialio's suggestion, the crowd quickly dissipates. Unfazed, Lialio remarks that the party's search for answers to inquiries about corruption might find truth in the most degenerate of souls. After all, if you want to learn about corruption, ask the degenerate: *Thopas*.

The logical path is the coward's road. It leads hundreds of leagues south to great stone walls.

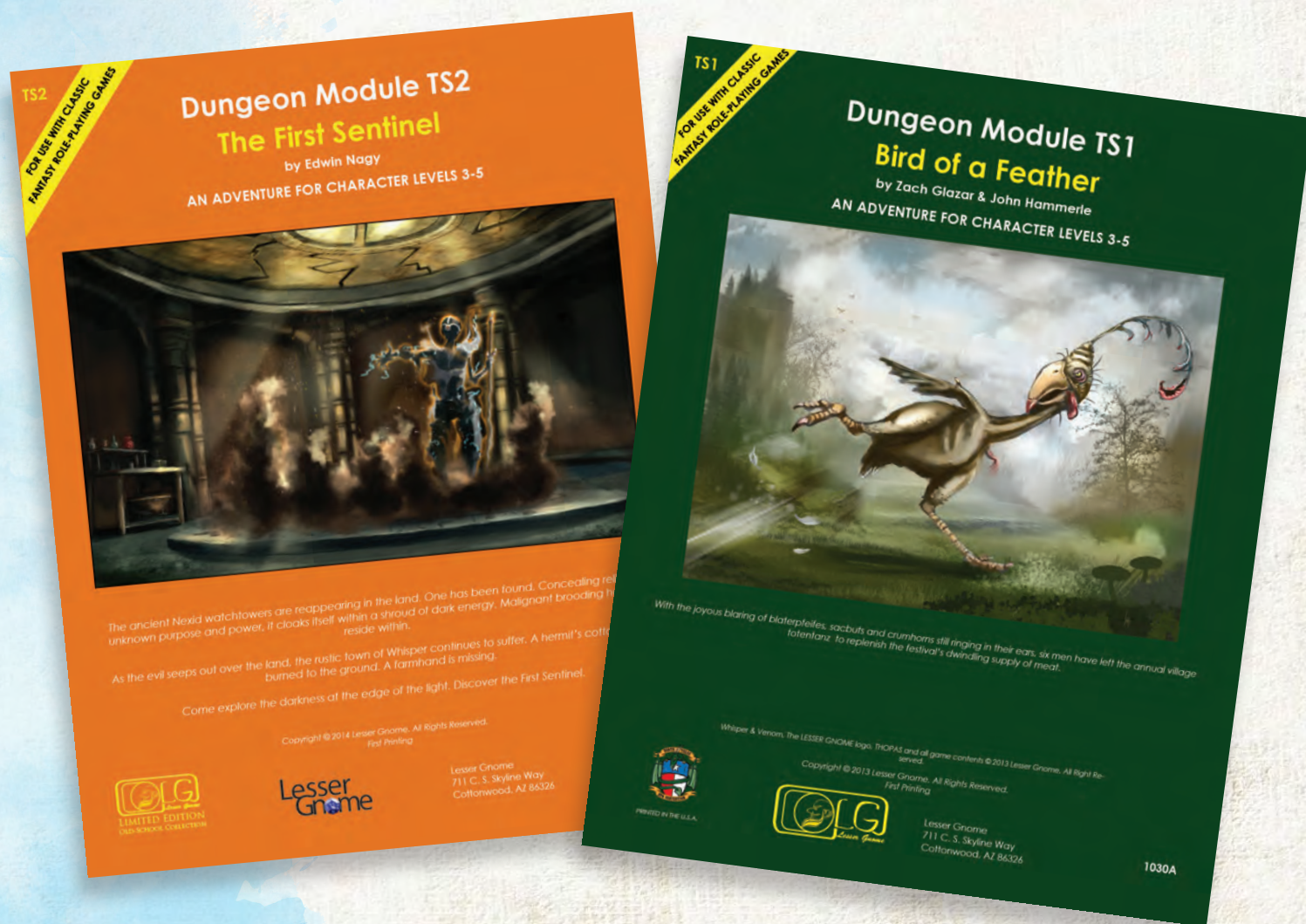
Should the party choose to seek answers, the ultimate answer lies with the most despicable individual. Asking around for messengers proves futile, and thus begins the short road to a diminutive illusionist. If confronted, characters are met with bile, derision, and vulgar insults (lots of these). His vitriol depleted, Thopas sighs, takes a seat, yawns, and slips back into his usual perfidy, finally deigning to listen. He stares ambivalently as the tale unfolds but remains silent to its conclusion. After some reflection, Thopas simply states ...

**“YOU'RE APPROACHING THIS ALL WRONG.
THE MOUTHGATE IS NOT AN ENTRANCE.
IT IS AN EXIT.”**

PART IV: ADVENTURES IN THE WHISPER VALE

This chapter contains two adventures that take place in the Whisper Vale. They loosely link the mysteries and lore within *Whisper & Venom* to the wider world of the Whisper Vale. Whether and how you decide to combine them with the exploration of the monastery is up to you, but they both involve some of the same characters and much of the same landscape. *Bird of a Feather* is the tale of a hunting trip gone awry, and the party is asked to deal with its consequences. *First Sentinel* is a darker murder mystery that provides some additional information on the coming of the Nexid. Both adventures are designed for a party of Tier 1 characters.

The new creatures, spells, and magic items from these adventures are in the appendices at the end of the book.





BIRD OF A FEATHER

BY ZACH GLAZAR & JOHN HAMMERLE

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

With the joyous blaring of blaterpfeifes, sacbuts, and crumhorns still ringing in their ears, a group of six men led by Talvas the Huntsman have left the annual village totentanz. They are the town's finest. Successful farmers, shepherds, and craftsmen, they are also husbands and fathers. These men have been charged with replenishing the festival's dwindling supply of meat.

The hunters tracked a herd of deer to a watering hole. It was an idyllic scene, with tall grasses marching down to a pool of cool water. The hollow that surrounded this watering hole was fenced in by a wall of thick, leafy trees and dense brush. As dusk fell, the hunters set up camp a short trek from the pond. They picked a spot on a grassy knoll near a convenient source of firewood — a heap of neatly arranged reeds. The reedy heap was indeed conveniently located. It is also delightfully and obviously flammable. These qualities never occurred to the angry, little fey who called this heap his home. Constructed of pilfered reeds, Rumpis considered his château his architectural marvel.

A HEAP OF TRAGEDY

Rumpis, the heap's owner, returned with dinner to his beloved "château" to find a sickening sight: Interlopers were trespassing on his doorstep. Rumpis cautiously approached and glared at the trespassers. As his dinner rotted, his ire grew.

The hunters began a long night of celebration right on Rumpis' front porch. He watched in horror as the sotted hunters took turns relieving themselves on his domicile. The hours passed slowly. Eventually, the desecrators succumbed to sleep.

Rumpis flung his fish at the hunters in disgust and stomped off.

THE BEST LAID PLANS

Following their night of revelry, the hunting party stirred. The men threw their trash on the nearby heap and set out for the watering hole. A herd of deer grazed serenely near the pond's shore.

The hunt's dashing leader raised his hand, and the party notched their arrows. Talvas froze. Across the pond squatted a short, ruddy creature clad in a loincloth adorned with feathers. It gesticulated with a twig and barked in a strange tongue.

Rumpis waved his majestic *wand of woe*^{A2} and solemnly commanded, "Deep mysteries of arcane power! Undo this day!" After a pause, he uttered, "Right this wrong!"

Never before had he dared to invoke the full power of the *wand of woe*, fearful of unleashing forces beyond his control. Rumpis waited nervously.



Suddenly, a rhacos broke from the trees and charged headlong into the herd of deer. The fey chuckled to himself at this unexpected turn of events. He moved to get a better view of the carnage.

Panic ensued, and arrows were loosed. The rhacos ripped into the nearest deer, shredding the poor creature with its indignant beak. Rumpis, who had mistaken the nature of the beast and the minimum safe distance, was swatted by a wayward talon. He was launched like a grimy shuttlecock onto the muddy shore of the pond. In its frenzy, the rhacos ignored the hunters. The uncooperative bird was not to be deterred as it slaughtered the harmless deer. The hunters kept a respectful distance as they admired the rhacos' trademark plume — a single grand feather protruding elegantly (and angrily) from the top of the annoyed bird's bald, wrinkled pate. Greed for a feather repurposed their mission.

Deer parts rained down upon the shore of the pond. Suddenly, two things happened: The party's second volley was loosed, and the pond's surface exploded in a fountain of spray and churning water as a murkbeast attacked. By the sheer volume of shots, several arrows actually found a mark. The rhacos, now aware of the threat posed by the hunters, charged the party. When the dust cleared, the furious rhacos fled for the tree line, accoutered with a few shafts as extra plumage. An unfortunate fey lay sprawled on the pond's bank. Three of the hunters lay dying.

The wounded rhacos retreated through the thick woods, and the homeless fey retreated into the pond — helped by the murkbeast. A young farmer at the rear of the party mortally gasped something about a brilliant opportunity lost. When pressed, he revealed that a rhacos plume has been known to fetch fantastic sums from such dignitaries as sovereigns, wealthy merchants, and goblin leaders. The only seasoned hunter in the group brooded over his comrade's words. Talvas knew that

drawing first blood on any beast traditionally gave him some claim on the kill.

Tradition is a fickle mistress in this area, and the party disbanded quickly as each succumbed. Talvas also realized the folly of going after the bird in his current state. An injured Talvas returned to town with his tale of woe and hope and his remaining comrades. All were grievously wounded.

PEASANTS NO MORE

So begins a crusade. Despite his excitement, Talvas realized a key point: No one is left with the skill to handle or track a wounded rhacos. Talvas is gravely wounded and incapable of leading an expedition.

The townsfolk are soliciting aid in plucking the valuable (and quite stylish) feather that protrudes delicately from the rhacos' head. Talvas nobly offers half the take in the event that the cob's feather is plucked. If successful, characters may choose to accept the hunter's offer or abscond with their prize.

SUGGESTED SCENARIOS

► Talvas the Huntsman limps into town. He is one of the few to witness a rhacos attack and live to tell the tale. He regales the party with the story of his deliverance from a wounded bird wearing a small fortune. In a flash, the vicious bird slaughtered three of his six companions.

► A woodwright living in a nearby cave is missing. People in the region are concerned. A reward is being offered for information on his whereabouts.





ADVENTURE LOCATIONS

A creature of habit, a male rhacos^{A1} (the rhacob) begins and ends his new route from his conjugal chambers in the Distaff (**Area 5**). He revels in the relative peace of his stroll, which offers a reprieve from the constant nagging of his mate, the rhac-hen.

His route covers a large area. His first stop is a lush meadow with a pond (the slagfältet, **Area 1**). The rhacob pauses for reflection, then strikes north through the dense woods. Passing through the woods, he comes to a meadow full of earthen mounds (the Diggs, **Area 2**). A reed sticks conspicuously through the top of each mound and a discordant melody fills the air. Perplexed, the rhacob edges around the meadow and slowly slinks back toward his mate's lair. Instinct compels him to stick to his path. But the rhacob moves slowly. He sniffs the air around him in the hope that unwary prey will give instinct an excuse to deviate from its routine.

In his frustration, the rhacob leaves a trail of destruction. A farrago of corpses (squirrels, shrews, beetles, etc.) clutter the path behind him. Trapped in a cycle of amorous violence, the rhacob spreads his misery everywhere (even to anthills). This wanton destruction disrupts the fragile balance in the region.

1. SLAGFÄLTET

Gently swaying trees fence a lush meadow. Trampled grasses and delicate flowers weave a carpet, which forms a natural bowl in the valley's floor. A pool of dark water in the center laps

quietly against its muddy bank.

It is pungent.

An idyllic scene conceals the remains of a recent massacre. Deer parts and blood draw swarms of scavengers to the slagfältet. This becomes apparent if the party quietly observes for two rounds. Stepping into the slagfältet triggers an explosion of activity. Blood-soaked vermin flee with a cacophony of screeches, hoots, and howls.

The shore of the pond is marred by the detailed profile of a small humanoid creature. The center of the depression hides a small shoe, slightly buried. A twig with a small skull on the tip is lodged in the shoe. This twig is Rumpis' *wand of woe*^{A2}. It is an adynamic magical item. It is so weak that its magical aura eludes detection 80% of the time.

Searching the slagfältet reveals partly decomposed and mostly eaten piles of deer parts. Walking through the grasses disturbs the vermin feasting on the remains of Talvas' encounter with the rhacob. They flee in all directions.

Any sounds alert the **murkbeast**^{A1} that lives in the pond.

Treasure: *wand of woe*^{A2}

2. THE DIGGS

A chorus of trills dance across a lush meadow. Reeds ripple from atop neat rows of earthen mounds as the sound washes over them. Distant notes respond from the other end of the meadow.

Slightly off-key trills lead to a placid meadow. The sound of discordant piping intensifies as characters approach the snortles'

glade. This warren of 50 **snortles**^{A1} is hyper-aware of intruders. Repeated visits from a scurvy neighbor have them on alert.

Unless characters attempt deliberate stealth, a bizarre scene unfolds. For a split second, silence reigns. Then a forest of reeds vanishes into small mounds.

Snortle colonies or “towns” are interconnected, underground lairs. Each lair is capped with an earthen mound. A simple reed peeks out of the mound; it is the defining characteristic of every snortle burrow. This portable flue is scavenged, with durability being the most desirable trait. Whenever a good one is found, it is prized and (generally) passed down as an heirloom or dowry, with one important exception: a special pipe known as the “doomsday reed.” It has always been a badge of office. However, recent events have elevated its status considerably. The snortle tasked with manning this fail-deadly device is the Cheget. He has been admonished to use it only under the most grievous circumstances. When winded, it heralds the region’s most bewildering act of mutual[ly] (attempted) dispersion (in the key of E major). This signal initiates an irreversible chain of events.

Coming within 30 feet of a mound trips the Cheget’s alarm. Clouds of dust burst from every burrow. Characters within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or suffer the effects of inhaling the doomsday spores. The spores send characters into a fit of wheezing and coughing for two rounds, during which they are incapacitated. If the party remains in the vicinity as the cloud dissipates (1d4 rounds), the warren evacuates. Snortles erupt from their burrows *en masse* and charge. They do not charge at anyone or anywhere in particular. Snortles run into each other, trip over their fallen brethren, and charge headlong into the woods. Some even avoid colliding with the encircling trees to reach the relative safety of the forest.

Characters witnessing this high-strung apocalypse must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw to avoid being astounded. (An astounded creature is amazed. You can assign a minor nuisance on characters or simply state that the characters are astonished by what they see.)

3. THE REED HOUSE

A heap of moist reeds sits near a recently used campsite. Discarded bottles are strewn about the site. A second pile of dry reeds has a fire pit of questionable construction beside it. Each reed is inscribed with thin, delicate ciphers. Many are cracked.

A thorough search of the heap turns up a curious ivory box with a locust-shaped clasp. The box is small and worn. A tiny scroll and a small leather pouch are inside. The pouch is filled with lavender dust. Light reflects from the granules in a scintillating array of colors. It is the world’s most intense purgative and should be used with caution.

The wreckage is abandoned.

Treasure: tiny *fey scroll*^{A2} containing the minor fey curse *bowel blockage*^{A2}; leather pouch containing 40 doses *lavender dust of evacuation*^{A2}

4. THE GRAVEOLENT

A pungent odor betrays the existence of a putrid pile. An archaeologist’s dream, it is a collection of filth dating far back.

REGARDING THE RHACOS

The rhacos is a solitary creature that establishes its territory and follows a regular routine. It is compelled to mate every 14.2 years. A rhacos mates for life, much to the dismay of every young male. Following their short interlude, the pair suffer together until after the first hatch. Inevitably, familiarity breeds contempt. Rhacos’ angst builds to a pitch, resulting in unadulterated combat. Following a final bout of vellicative violence, the mating season ends, and the male vanishes. He returns to his place as a feared apex predator for another 14.2 years.

A magnificent (and valuable) plume extends from the rhacob’s head. A female rhacos, the rhac-hen, bears a similar feather, but its value is considerably less. The plume of a rhac-hen is generally smaller, less colorful, and usually damaged.

A rhacos’ eggs are valuable to alchemists. Unfortunately, it is impossible to distinguish between a freshly laid egg and one on the verge of hatching. The likelihood of an hatching, during which the hatchling brandishes its minor indignant beak, is impossible to determine.

Concerted efforts have been made to refine a system for establishing the lethality of a rhacos’ egg. Alchemists have tried tapping on them but often lose a digit in the process. One enterprising novice tried shaking an egg while listening to it; he lost an ear. This technique never gained traction. Inevitably, egg collection fell to alchemists’ apprentices who never earn the title “alchemist” with 10 digits. Hence the local idiom, “He is less truthful than a 10-fingered alchemist.”

Bird of a Feather does not specify a gold piece value for a rhacos feather or its eggs. This is to provide you with the flexibility to assign values that meet your needs.

The graveolent’s strata is a record of sorts, linking a long period of activity in the area. Only a fool would delve into its secrets.

It is comprised of treasures such as fossilized bones, petrified offal, broken tools, and ceremonial icons — all unceremoniously discarded.

High above the graveolent, an **immature cinereous vulture**^{A1} is building an aerie. Attracted by the carnage left by the frustrated rhacob, the whelp surveys the valley with its keen eyesight. The cinereous vulture attacks anything that remains in the vicinity of the graveolent for more than one minute.

Treasure: partially completed illustration of large feather in tall grass; bag of 10 charcoal nubs (1 cp each)

5. THE DISTAFF

A sheer limestone wall towers over the surrounding valley. From below, it is difficult to discern the actual height; it seems to rise without end. The pathway to the wall reveals a breach. The entrance is surrounded with curiously etched symbols. Water beads and drips from an arch 11 feet overhead.

Once through the entrance, a dim tunnel winds 80 feet into



OVERLAND MAP



THE DISTAFF

1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



darkness. The tunnel is approximately eight feet wide. Rough limestone walls jut inward from either side, festooned with bits of flesh and rough hide. A point of light pierces the rock several hundred feet overhead.

6. THE MOAT

As the passageway widens, the air grows heavy with moisture. The natural rock walls, slick with algae and moss, slip into a calm pool. Small points of light delicately dart through the water. A dripping sound echoes off the walls.

The passageway opens into a chamber. Water drips from the damp ceilings and walls into a slight depression in the cavern's floor to form a pool. Measuring 60 feet wide by 18 feet long, the pool meets the chamber's walls to the north and south. A split oak log with intricate carvings of placid natural scenes and animals has been kicked aside. Crude etchings mar the wood, marking some act of violence. The water is shin deep.

As the chamber is dark, so is the moat. Small silvery fish (**kytyllen swarm**^{A1}) shimmer in the pool, their tiny points of light reminiscent of a clear night sky. These "stars" converge as characters approach the pool. As they enter the water, it glows and churns. Outside sources of light dance off the silvery shapes.

7. THE ALTARE

A tinge of salt greets the senses. Echoes reverberate off distant walls. A large outline of a female in white casts long shadows.

The ground slopes up from water's edge to a limestone cavern to the east. It is striped with veins of salt, quartz, and tin. This cavern once was filled with a large deposit of salt. Marks on the walls from chisels and picks suggest it may have been mined.

A tall halite is suspended between the ceiling and floor near the room's entrance. Carved by some long-forgotten fertility cult, it features an exaggerated female form. Over time, she has been refined to reflect the tastes of other visitors to the cave. Crude copper sconces line the walls. They do not appear to have been used for a long time. Long ago, these sconces would have lit a scene of Dionysian adulation.

A masterfully crafted rocking chair sits near the statue at an angle that provides the most picturesque view of her form. It is surrounded by charcoal nubs.

Treasure: eight aeruginous copper sconces (12 gp each)

8. THE NEST

This large cavern is mired in gloom. The air is damp and heavy. Great columns of salt rise from floor to ceiling amid large limestone boulders.

Roughhewn limestone walls enclose a large cavern. The distance between the farthest two points in this great cavern measures about 190 feet. Sound is elusive and distorted in this cavern, as echoes bounce off the walls.

In years past, this cavern was comfortable, well-lit, and dry. Copper sconces line the walls as they do in the altare (**Area 7**); however, these sconces appear to have been used recently.

Two massive columns of salt stretch from the cavern floor to

the ceiling. These free-standing veins are roughly five feet thick and opaque. Boulders of salt and limestone are strewn about the floor. Some are sculpted into tables. After shredding most of the furniture in this cavern to line their nest, the rhacos pair added a layer of avian filth. A thin knife with a dark mahogany handle is within the pile. This blade is a **+1 stiletto** (as **+1 dagger**).

Investigating the western wall reveals an alcove with a nest. Built of smashed furniture, feathers, and bones, it contains a clutch of 11 eggs in multiple shapes and sizes. The **rhac-hen**^{A1} waits by the nest. She is more daring and fierce in a fight than her mate. The **rhacob**^{A1} emerges from its private lair to protect his mate.

Treasure: eight copper sconces (12 gp each); 11 rhacos eggs (market value); **+1 stiletto**; tattered book with illuminations: *Saltaret Avis Fabulas* (an inscription inside the cover reads, "My Wanderer, Nature's gentle guardian keeps you safe for me.")

9. RHACOB'S REDOUBT

This chamber has an emotive odor. It is reminiscent of a field of defeat. A narrow limestone passage leads into a small chamber through the south wall of the nest (**Area 8**). This chamber reeks of cowardice. Dry urine, blood, and sweat betray the redoubt's purpose. Broken rotgut bottles and splintered casks of ale are scattered near the chamber's eastern wall.

A **dazzling corset of charm resistance**^{A2} is loosely wrapped around an armor stand.

Treasure: **dazzling corset of charm resistance**^{A2}

10. THE PANTRY

A trail of dried blood leads into a small cove, where it culminates in a large smear.

From the southeast corner of the nest (**Area 8**), a short, five-foot-wide tunnel leads to this chamber. The ceiling drops to a height of four feet. Shelves line each wall. Mushrooms, jars of preserves, and portraits are set upon the shelves. Many of the portraits are renditions of the view near the entry to the distaff (**Area 5**). The most prominent portrait depicts a small, skulking fey.

11. THE CACHE

Limestone has been chipped away in the shape of a square in the ceiling near the cramped rear (eastern) corner of the pantry (**Area 10**). A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching for concealed doors reveals an overhead wooden trapdoor in the rear of the pantry. At a height of four feet, the ceiling — and trapdoor — are easily accessible.

A quick climb through the trapdoor leads into a small limestone chamber with rough walls. The cache is roughly 20 feet across. The floors of this natural recess are angular and irregular. Barrels of ale complement an unusually large quantity of bottles of rotgut liquor. Hidden cleverly around an empty bottle's cork is a simple woven ring (**perdu band**^{A2}) that grants a sudden feeling of safety when first touched. There are 27 charcoal illustrations of a female idol with exaggerated features.

An empty crate is here.

Treasure: **perdu band**^{A2}; 27 indelicate portraits (market value)

EPILOGUE

**“NO LONGER WERE THERE INDIVIDUAL DESTINIES;
ONLY A COLLECTIVE DESTINY, MADE OF PLAGUE AND
EMOTIONS SHARED BY ALL.”**

— Albert Camus

Returning to town, the party is met with a sobering scene. The totentanz is over. Talvas the Huntsman and his companions succumbed to their grievous wounds. The town has lost its symbol of unity and community.

The townsfolk congregate to bury their leaders, husbands, and fathers. Some place heirlooms in the graves as tribute and step back with quiet dignity. Anguish and despair line the others' faces. Muffled sobs can be heard in the crowd.

An old crone stands apart, clearly disturbed. She steps forward: “Your gallantry is appreciated, but it brings fleeting comfort. We enter this world without, we leave this world without.”



ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FROM BIRD OF A FEATHER

TABLE 14: WILDERNESS WANDERING ENCOUNTERS

1d6	Encounter	Notes
1	Giant shrew (use giant rat)	First attack has advantage (buried)
2	Wolf	
3	Fey (choose one)	
4	Beggar (as commoner)	Woodsy Hobo with knowledge of local area
5	6 goblin bootleggers	Laden with rotgut booze, always open for business
6	Immature cinereous vulture (as giant vulture)	Lair located in the graveolent (Area 4); if killed, the graveolent is empty

TABLE 15: HEARSAY

1d8	Overheard
1	Something is slaughtering animals in the woods. It leaves behind a path of destruction. (True)
2	An odd but harmless old man lives in a cave near the battle site. (Partly true)
3	Eerie music in the forest is the song of a deadly banshee seeking revenge. (False)
4	The rhacob's vision would make a blind man grateful; this surly creature compensates with an acute sense of smell and attentive amorous aggression. (True)
5	A skulking fey has been spotted lurking. He is a mighty sorcerer. (Partly true)
6	The town gossip, Elizabeth, loves rumors. (True)
7	The Lady of the Cave has an irresistible allure. Young men are forbidden. (Partly true)
8	A deranged hermit has been stealing sheep for purposes of extispicy. (False)



A BAD TRIP TO THE DUMP

The previous resident of a nearby cave, a recluse and beloved woodwright, journeyed to the Graveolent every Wednesday around teatime. Sadly, this Wednesday would prove to be his last.

He whistled cheerfully as he took out the trash. An amateur ornithologist, he was always on the lookout for rare species of birds. His dreams were about to come true.

A magnificent feather crested the tall grass of a nearby meadow. Flush with excitement, the recluse paused. The feather disappeared, only to pop up a little closer. The man watched in fascination. The plume disappeared again. The birdwatcher pulled out his wooden canvas and steadied his hands.

Suddenly, waves of grass rippled from a point nearer still. The artist considered a larger canvas as he sharpened his charcoal. But it was too late. Suddenly, a rhacos charged from the grass.

The prisoner awoke to an overwhelming musky smell. This was his own comfy cave, sure enough, but the lights had gone out. Somewhere nearby, a disagreement was brewing. A series of apologetic grunts was interrupted by a loud, vicious shriek. The sound was bloodcurdling; she was displeased.

A rhacob dragged the captive to the pair's new nest to placate his mate. The rhac-hen was not inclined to be forgiving. She reinforced her feelings and glowered at the rhacob with disdain.

The doomed man slowly dragged himself toward the safety of his pantry. As her spurned mate withdrew to his own retreat, the rhac-hen returned to the meal crawling into the pantry.



THE BIRDS OF A FEATHER

This mating season, the raucous pair selected a wet cave with a narrow entrance. That the cave was occupied did not bother them; it only added to the charm. The savory meal complements the courtship.

The cave offered the new pair plenty of housewarming gifts. The tenant was a renowned woodwright. The cave beyond the entrance was elaborately furnished with intricate woodwork and fine carvings. They are adorned with delicate reliefs of nature scenes that include trees, rivers, and animals with tiny gemstone eyes. He would occasionally trade these items for small knickknacks or hard liquor (lots of this). His creations are admired and prized.

The rhacos made a nest of them — after shredding them with their talons. The new tenants then feathered their nest with the woodwright's bones (picked clean) and his favorite cloak.

The nest prepared, they got down to business. Intruders are usually welcome distractions from the frenzy of screeches, hooting, and thumping. It is anything but discreet; it is everything but submissive.

TABLE 16: RANDOM EGG DESCRIPTION AND HATCH TIME*

1d12	Color	Features**	Hatch %	Countdown
1	White	Vibrates	1	1d4 months
2	White	Causes tingle	10	1d10 days
3	Grey	Spots	25	1d6 days
4	Grey	Green speckled	30	1d6 hours
5	Yellow	Dirty	40	1d20 minutes
6	Green	Sticky	50	1d4 hours
7	Blue	Pockmarked	65	1d4 x 10 minutes
8	Deep blue	Soft	70	1d8 rounds
9	Purple	Rattles	75	1d4 rounds
10	Violet	Good smell	80	1d4 weeks
11	Black	Buzzing sound	85	1d8 minutes
12	Yellow	Repulsive smell	100	When touched

* Begins on touch

** Optional



THE FIRST SENTINEL

BY EDWIN NAGY

THE PREAMBLE

Færgo Cromworth is a retired adventurer who has been living outside of Whisper for several years. A loner by nature with a penchant for living off the land, Færgo has traded pelts to Percy the Cobbler and occasionally helped Norah gather flora. Recently, Percy noted that Færgo has been acting peculiar and even more secretive about his activities. About two months ago, Færgo purchased camping gear and metal hardware from Whisper's mercantile, using Percy as an intermediary.

The smoking remains of Færgo's cabin sit by the Meander River a half-day's ride north of Whisper. Leaving a charred body as a decoy, Færgo headed east into the mountains to secure his recent discovery.

About 10 miles east-northeast of Whisper is a long-lost but well-worn trail that leads up into the peaks near the southern tip of a high mountain chain. Færgo happened upon this trail about three months ago, and his erstwhile adventuring instincts kicked in. Several miles and a few thousand feet up into the mountains, the trail arrives at a barely visible tower. The tower shimmers like a heat mirage by day and becomes a hazy, gray shape at night. It is affected by the Corruption (see **Part II: Whisper & Venom**, *Game Master's Introduction*) and is slowly solidifying as its former tenants prepare to return.

At the top of the tower is Færgo's newfound prize — a captivating spyglass. The glass has enslaved Færgo and forces him to spy over the land for its Nexid masters. Similar towers may well exist along the Wall (a chain of mountains that defines the northern edge of the Whisper Vale).

Færgo has been coming to the tower regularly since he found it, but after having donned the *sentinel's helm*^{A2}, he now stays there awaiting the new masters. Under control of the Nexid, Færgo filled the summoning circle on the second level and brought forth a Nexid soldier and two Nexid odalisques. Recognizing his temporary status as a sentinel working for the Nexid, they have not killed him. When the Corruption reaches its full strength, the tower will solidify, and the summoning circle will become an easily opened portal between worlds. Destroying the Mouthgate (see **Area E14**) prevents (for now, anyway) further development of the tower's power. In the ancient days, and perhaps one day again, Nexid sentinels were stationed in the towers to watch the borders for months at a time. So far, energy has not been available to send a real sentinel to the tower.

AREAS OF INTEREST

- The trail from the farm whence Jarls Mitby was kidnapped is difficult to follow but should at least point toward Færgo's cabin. The trail could lead to the river just upstream of Whisper or be hoofprints leading north from the farm.
- The remains of Færgo's cabin and his unwilling decoy. A game trail heads east toward hunting grounds that eventually continue to the mountains.

► Færgo set traps along the path to the tower and left an alternate trail that leads through a cave imp lair.

► The tower itself contains four levels: Level 1, living quarters and current home of the Nexid; Level 2, the summoning circle, strange chemicals, a bizarre gassy pool and a random-effects table; Level 3, a Nexid spiritual and physical exercise area and current sleeping quarters of Færgo Cromworth; and Level 4, the roof where the spyglass and Færgo are found.

STORY CRUMBS

► Jarls Mitby once was accused of having an affair with the daughter of wealthy Whisper landowners. It turned out to have been the miller's son, but Jarls spent a week in the country until things blew over.

► Runem Milston, the miller's son, happens to be the town's best tracker and occasionally saw Færgo hunting in the hills east of his cabin.

► Færgo purchased new camping equipment for the first time ever from the local mercantile. He paid in coin instead of pelts.

► Norah the apothecary noticed that Færgo's herb garden has been untended for several months.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

► The party discovers Færgo's burned cabin and in parallel discovers that Jarls Mitby is missing. This scenario probably works best in a campaign setting where these events can happen with apparent independence and there is time and NPC support for hearing and tracking down rumors.

► Jarls Mitby is missing. Can the party find out what happened? This provides a fairly straightforward investigative scenario that can be played in one or two sessions.

► Who cares about old Jarls "Three-Fingers" Mitby? Rumors claim a mysterious tower is sometimes seen atop a distant mountain. Glints of light occasionally reflect from its top. What skullduggery is happening (perhaps the local wizards' guild has sensed some evil)? What treasure might be ensconced therein? Perhaps somebody is willing to pay for secrets discovered within the Laird's land. As a convention game or drop-in one-shot, start the party on a trail into the mountains and see what trouble they find.

FÆRGO CROMWORTH'S CABIN

This idyllic riverside cabin succumbed to a massive conflagration. The chimney is still standing, but the walls and roof were destroyed. A charred body on the stone floor appears to have been crawling toward the door of the building. Nearby trees are charred and barren. Although the fire appears recent, wandering the grounds makes it apparent that the garden has been ignored for at least a month. A small, serviceable rowboat is tied to a tree near the bank. The oars are in the boat, and if Færgo brought Jarls here by boat, some blood may be found splattered near the prow.

Buried in a lockbox under the hearthstone are two metal tins containing thick, gray grease, a set of fine thieves' tools, and a simple, well-wrought dagger. The stash can be found with a



successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

The body is, surprisingly, not that of Færgo Cromworth. The scorched body belongs to Jarls “Three-Fingers” Mitby, a fieldhand kidnapped the previous morning from a farm at the northeast corner of Whisper. Close inspection of the body reveals that its right pinky and ring finger are a few knuckles shy of complete.

While the party is within the smoky scent of the house, they are safe from 3 large **dire wolves** prowling around the cabin. If they spend any significant time outside (for example, if they decide to bury Jarls), the wolves attack.

Note: Setting this adventure around the full moon may be a nice red herring. Alternatively, perhaps in his current state Færgo is sensitive to the moon and left the wolves to guard his tracks.

Treasure: Two tins of restorative ointment, fine thieves’ tools (nonmagical, but give a +1 bonus to Dexterity checks made to pick locks and remove traps), and a +1 *dagger*.

THE TRAIL

A worn game trail weaves through the neighboring trees as it heads east from Færgo’s cabin. While heavily used and obviously maintained, it is cluttered with deadfall. The trail is easy to follow as it crosses the grassy lowlands and heads into the forested foothills of the mountains two days to the east. These secluded foothills, abundant with game, have become Færgo’s preferred hunting grounds. He set up feeding stations

for the deer and fenced in a small fishing pond. Several small campsites and hunting blinds are spread throughout the hills. Runem Milston came this way once in pursuit of game but an irate Færgo Cromworth sent him packing.

Note: The voyage from Færgo’s cabin to the mountains could be filled with fun adventures through a hitherto unexplored part of the world, or simply passed through, at your discretion. It would be good in either case to give a sense of isolation — a sense of being removed from the known, civilized world.

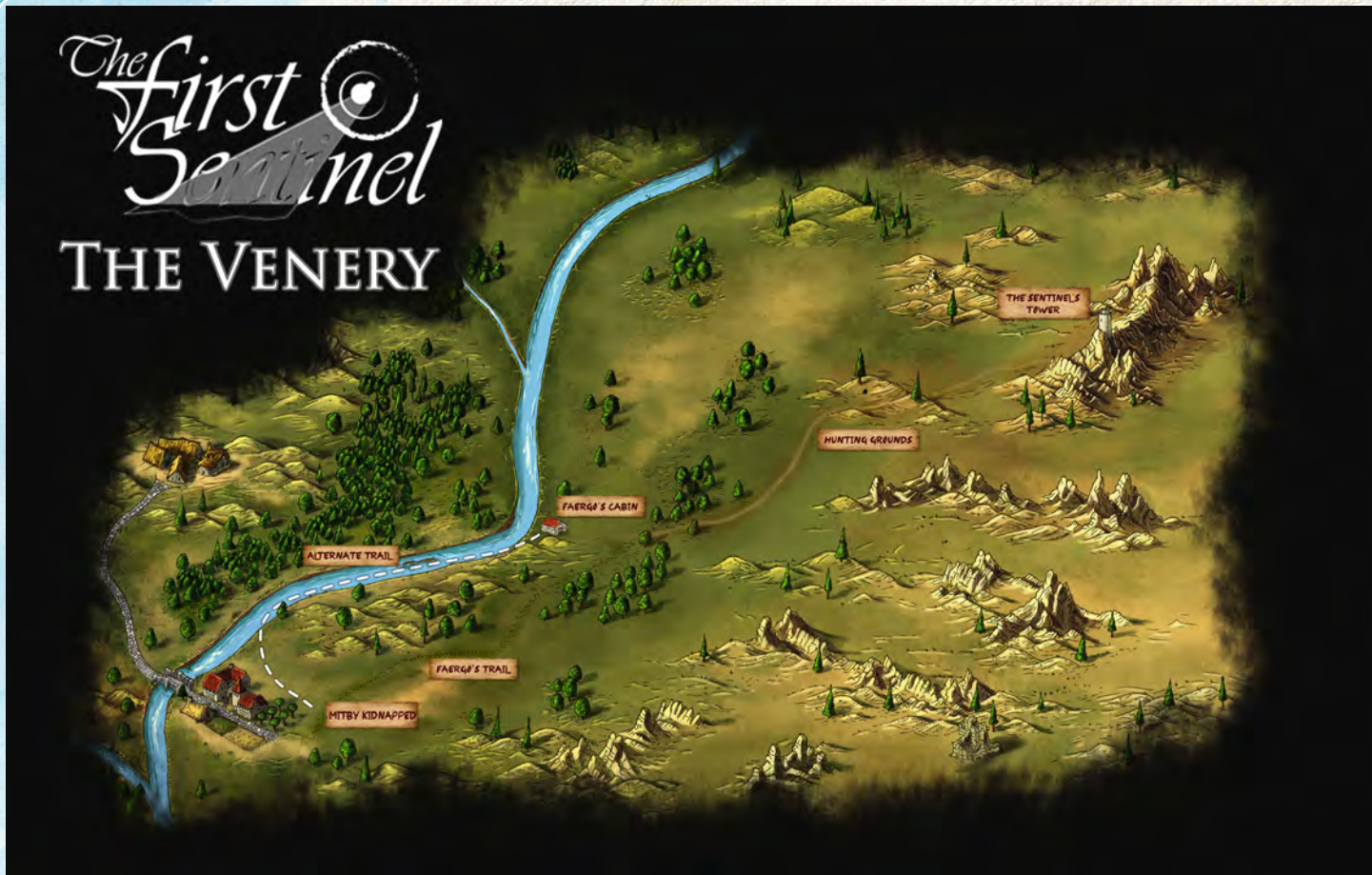
The random encounter tables from **Part III: Whisper & Venom** (General Wilderness followed by Foothills of the Vale) could provide some excitement along the way. The hunting grounds host bears’ dens and packs of prowling wolves, as well as the many animals they prey upon.

The mountains in question form a long high ridge with looming peaks at the northern and southern ends. The southern peak is the shorter of the two, but still rises a couple of thousand feet above the prairie. The trail approaches the mountains from the southwest and quickly becomes steep, narrow, and rocky. Sharp, flinty rocks make up this portion of the trail, and footing can be treacherous. About two strenuous hours up the mountain, Færgo’s trail splits. His preferred path leads directly up the cliff face. If searched with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, evidence is found on the cliff of piton holes in the one or two locations where Færgo was unable to free climb. Above the cliff, the trail continues to be quite steep. Hand-over-hand scrambling is necessary in many places. In one such place, Færgo set a trap. A section of rocks has been carefully loosened



The First Sentinel

THE VENERY



and replaced. There is a 5-in-6 chance that a normal-sized creature sets the rocks free (4-in-6 for small, and automatic for large). A failed DC 15 Dexterity saving throw indicates that the creature slides approximately 30 feet before becoming ensnared in a wiry scrub oak, suffering 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. Characters below may be able to jump clear of the slide, or they may help cushion the lead character's fall, in which case they each take 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage. Færgo likely hears the falling rocks and trains the spyglass to where the trail crests the rise. Beyond the rock fall, the trail continues for another hour before finally breaking out onto a barren mountaintop, elongated in the east-west direction. A hazy tower is barely visible toward the western end of the ridge.

The more apparent trail, and the one that Færgo would rather the worthy adventurers follow (if follow they must), continues from the base of the cliff and wraps around the mountainside. It meanders into a rocky box canyon, at the end of which is a small dark cave. Bones from small animals litter the ground outside the cave.

THE CAVE

At the end of an 80-foot box canyon, a dark, smelly opening leads into a 20-foot-deep cave. The walls are covered in slime and crystalline deposits, as there is a constant seep of groundwater from the roof. A three-foot-diameter tunnel is at the back of the cave, around a bend in the wall. No light can be seen from the tunnel, and the air is stagnant. An odor of rotting flesh and animal waste completes the invitation. Marks along

the cave floor are from something being dragged — or crawling — into the tunnel. They could be the trail of a certain human. The tunnel winds interminably horizontally and vertically, at times almost doubling back on itself like an inchworm. In places, the walls pinch in so that all but the smallest of gnomes feel constrained. Backpacks, and possibly sheathes, must be removed. There are places where a 10-foot pole can barely pass through. Tons of rock press down above the heads, backs, and legs of those willing to drag their bodies beneath it. And the smell does not diminish. When the characters stop, it is deathly quiet. If they pause long enough, they might hear an occasional drip echoing in the distance.

If the party persists, the tunnel eventually opens into a large cavern. The walls of the cavern are pocked with holes and narrow crevices, and small, sharp rocks are strewn about the floor. Once the party completely enters the cavern, the **cave imps**^{A1} set upon them. All told, there are four adults and five whelps. Their first action is to drop a large rock in front of the tunnel exit. This is followed by thrown rocks. Each imp pops up from its hidey-hole, tosses a rock, and scurries away. The imps can get from one hiding spot to another in the number of rounds shown on the map table. If their movement ends on a half round, they can attack (*i.e.*, half a round represents a single combat movement). The imps can move randomly or based on your decisions. Sudden light at any point in the encounter causes the cave imps to succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or freeze motionless for 1d2 rounds. The imps have no need to engage in melee combat except possibly to grab at the legs of the last escaping creature. Their holes are at various heights, mostly



IMP CAVERNS



	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1/2	1/2	1	1	1/2	2	1	1	1
2		1/2	1	1	3/2	1	2	2	2
3			1/2	1	3/2	1	2	2	2
4				1/2	3/2	3/2	3/2	2	2
5					1/2	1	2	2	2
6						1/2	3/2	3/2	3/2
7							1	1	1
8								1/2	1/2
9	Rounds to Move								1/2





out of standard melee range. All provide at least half cover. If necessary, they can escape through crevices in the cavern walls. Rotten remains of kids, squirrels, and other small mammals are in various pits in the floor, and 12 cp can be recovered from the charnel waste. Further digging within the cave may reveal some quartz seams from which several uncut amethysts may be removed. There is one human-sized exit from the cavern.

Treasure: 12 cp, 3d4 uncut amethyst worth 1d10 gp ea.

THE CHIMNEY

A natural alcove is in the northwest corner of the cave. A tortuous chimney rises 200 feet to daylight; the exit is a half-hour's hike below the mountain's peak on the north face. If any of the imps escape the encounter below, or if the characters' first entrance into the lair is from above, the imps throw rocks at the intruders from small crevices and may even try to pull or push climbing characters to their death. A DC 14 Dexterity saving throw is required to avoid falling after a successful melee attack by a cave imp. Falling damage is halved (1d3 bludgeoning per 10 feet) as outcroppings slow any falls.

Halfway up, the chimney becomes horizontal and broadens into a small cavern. Water droplets come down at infrequent intervals, and the overwhelming stench decreases slightly. Decomposing in the cavern are the chewed remains of a leather boot, a backpack, and most of a well-gnawed human skeleton. Inside the pack are three archaic daggers in greased metal sheathes (15 gp each), the remnants of a bedroll, and some corroded iron spikes fused together in a rusted sculpture reminiscent of a large caltrop. Above this area, the party is safe from the imps during daylight hours.

Note: Because of the hit-and-run tactics of the imps, it's quite likely that an imp is never seen during a character's initiative. If you have new players, you may want to introduce them to the idea of setting up reactions to attack or cast spells.

THE TOWER

By day, the tower appears as a hazy mist with no apparent detail. It is solid, however, and the door and its latch can be felt and opened. The thick metal outer door opens outward without any noise. By night, the tower can be seen more clearly, but is still slightly ethereal. If the party observes the tower by night, they might catch a glint from the spyglass as it circles the roof. Once inside, the tower appears normal, but the world outside appears as though it is coated in a greasy fog.

The tower has three interior levels and an accessible rooftop. It is round and has an enclosed spiral staircase that wraps around it all the way up, giving the tower double walls. The outer diameter is about 45 feet at the base and tapers to 30 feet at the top. The foot-thick walls form a crenellated parapet about waist-high above the roof. There are open archways into each level from the ramp.

RAMP

The ramp is about three feet wide and winds around the inner tower, rising one level with each revolution. It tops out with a



ladder to a trapdoor from the landing at the third level. The ramp is made of smooth gray stone with horizontal lines crossing it every two paces. Every sixth of a rotation, there is a round, fist-sized opening through the wall at about eye level. Outside, all is hazy and obscure. No wind or rain enters through the holes.

LEVEL 1

This is a large, open room made up as living quarters. The sound of running water can be heard within. Ungainly furniture constructed of an unknown metallic material fills the center — a bed, a stool, a table, and a desk. The furniture is cold and unpadded with awkward angles. These items were not built for people of this world. The perimeter walls alternate between closed metal cabinets and bare wall. Regularly spaced open shelves are offset a few feet from the walls. A spigot is constantly running into a basin and down through its pedestal. The water is cold, with tiny shards of ice in it, but the basin is warm and instantly melts the crystals. The sealed cabinets are mostly empty, although the one to the northwest contains books. The books are inscrutable, written in a sentinel's hand. These are the books of the last sentinel to serve watch at the tower. Another cabinet contains the sentinel's ring-mail armor with split sleeves that strap together. This cupboard also contains a tarnished copper bowl and a small, double-edged knife (1d3 piercing damage as a weapon, +1 vs. oysters and other small mollusks). All seem very alien. A large box made of a soft, white material sits on one of the shelves. Inside is an assortment of meat in a strong, clear, flexible wrap. The meat is edible and keeps without

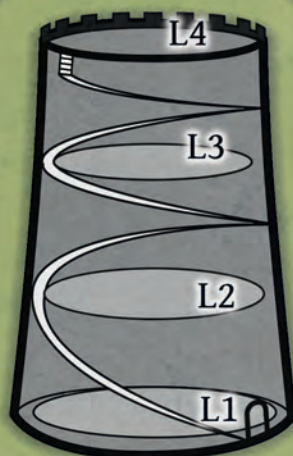


TOWER

Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Level 4





refrigeration for as long as it remains sealed. A **Nexid soldier**^{A1} and 2 **Nexid odalisques**^{A1} guard this room. While the Nexid may leave the room to pursue or set an ambush, they do not leave the tower.

Note: This encounter can have a lot to do with vision and can be disconcerting for the players. The combat cannot be seen from outside the tower, and those within the tower see only the haziest image of those without. The odalisques and the soldier can cast *darkness* and operate comfortably within it. Use the Nexid creatively; it is their tower, and they take every advantage.

Treasure: blackmetal ring mail (acts as +1), blackmetal longsword (nonmagical, but otherwise acts as a +1 weapon), seven Nexid books, copper bowl (2 gp), oyster knife (1 gp), preserved raw meat.

LEVEL 2

Another large open area. The floor has a raised 15-foot-diameter circular curb. Within the curb, an opaque brown fog awaits. This is the summoning circle. A blackmetal credenza stands by one wall. Inside are numerous containers of odd powders and liquids and some measuring containers. Careful observers note that several of the containers are not quite full, and that trace amounts of some of the powders are on the table. One empty, gray stone container is on the floor beneath the table. An ornate blackmetal bowl is inscribed on the exterior with Nexid writing and geometric patterns. The base of the bowl is thick, and the bowl itself is quite heavy. The interior of the bowl is covered with rough spikes. An alchemist can identify many of the chemicals, but the powdered blackmetal is a mystery. When properly combined with the correct incantations, the chemicals form a glowing brown fog that establishes a link between worlds. This connection (and the glow) lasts for approximately one hour, but the fog lasts for several days before being deposited as a dark orange powder. When improperly combined, the chemicals may

LEVEL 3

A bedroll and a backpack are against one wall. Færgo has been sleeping here. The floor has a series of complicated patterns inlaid with different-colored stones. There are various metallic sculptures — simple shapes like saguaros, poles, and one-legged tables. This is the exercise and meditation chamber for the sentinel. The patterns and sculptures do not respond to characters' actions, but if a Nexid sentinel walks the patterns, it relearns its spells. It can use the "sculptures" to practice combat moves of the ancient Nexid martial arts. The odalisques and soldier dare not enter this room, let alone use any of this equipment. Færgo, apparently, feels no such compunction. Another creature that feels no compunction is a **Nexid spider**^{A1} that slipped in unbeknownst to Færgo or the other Nexid during the summoning. This creature has a translucent body, allowing almost perfect camouflage, and four spider-like legs. Its head is under its body and sports a large open maw rimmed with vicious hinged and serrated teeth.

Treasure: Færgo's backpack contains two weeks of highly condensed rations, one flask of goblin rotgut (DC 12 Constitution saving throw or mild hallucinations and a pleasant sense of euphoria for 1d6 x 10 minutes), a knife, and some rope. Hidden at the foot of his bedroll is a pair of high-quality boots made by Percy of Whisper; they are not magical. The toe of the right boot contains 8 sp and a small turquoise crystal (5 gp).

ROOFTOP

The ladder climbs through a stone and metal trapdoor to the roof. The door is counterbalanced so it moves with a light touch. From here, the outside world is also shielded by a gauzy curtain of air. A monorail encircles the roof, running directly over the trapdoor. Mounted on it is the sentinel's seat. The seat is hard and folded over; it is mounted on a pole attached to the rail.

CHEMICAL INVENTORY

- ▶ A small ornate blackmetal box engraved with Nexid writing contains a very fine matte black powder. The grains feel sharp and heavy (4 pounds powdered blackmetal, about 3 inches x 3 inches x 1.5 inches).
- ▶ Small black leather bag with a reddish crystalline powder (6 pounds powdered corundum, about 3 inches x 3 inches x 3 inches).
- ▶ Small black leather bag with gravel composed of pink and red crystals (12 pounds promethium-nitrate gravel, about 4 inches x 4 inches x 4 inches).
- ▶ Quart-sized glass jar with a black stopper that is stiff, but soft, like pickled bone. Inside are silvery metallic chunks in a clear, oily liquid. The metal is soft, malleable, and ductile. If any are removed from their oil bath, they instantly flare up and burn with a bright white flame. If immersed in water, they bubble as hydrogen is released. If the material is subjected to air and water simultaneously, well, that hardly

bears thinking about. (6 pounds flaked cerium suspended in mineral oil, about 4 inches x 4 inches x 2 inches).

- ▶ Four small, gray stone containers with flat covers. The lids are sealed with a green, waxy substance. A faint hiss is heard when a seal is broken. Inside each are slivers of a bright silver metal that starts to turn green and brown in the air. The metal is quite malleable, and if ground is toxic and explosive. (20 pounds thulium slivers, stored under nitrogen; each container is 1 inch x 4 inches x 4 inches).
- ▶ One gallon thick, black, petroleum in a red glass jar with a glass stopper.
- ▶ One gallon of colorless, odorless, nonvolatile, syrupy fluid in a clear glass jar with a black stopper. Mildly corrosive rust remover (phosphoric acid solution).

All the containers are a little off, a little alien. The leather material does not seem to be organic. Nexid glass is stronger, more transparent, and has sharper edges. The gray stone is cold like marble and hard like granite but lacks any visible grain.



react as per the **Chemical Reactions Table**.

TABLE 17: CHEMICAL REACTIONS

1d100	Effect
01–29	Nothing apparent (other than those from individual components).
30–36	Room fills with caustic yellow smoke; 9 (2d8) poison damage, DC 14 Constitution saving throw for half.
37–42	Mixture is a gray putty that produces a noticeable heat. Creatures within 10 feet for more than 10 minutes lose all body hair over the subsequent 2–5 days.
43–48	Explosion; 10 (3d6) force damage within 10 feet, DC 15 Dexterity saving throw for half, combustibles ignite. Remaining ash is graphite powder.
49–54	Oily smog coats equipment and skin. AC improved by 1 until cleaned or it wears off (perhaps after a long rest).
55–59	Mixture flash crystallizes into a deep purple solid, expanding rapidly. Containers shatter. Crystal is brittle and can be worked into never-before-seen gemstones.

1d100	Effect
60–69	Materials combine into thick warm paste that slowly cools to a kaolinic solid. Severe mechanical or electrical shock causes material to explode.
70–79	Materials combust in ultra-hot blaze. Container melts or burns. Table or counter likewise. Only pure black-metal remains of the mixture.
80–96	Light pink haze; DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or sleep for 1–2 hours. Sleeping creatures have dark dreams of Nexid society. Prematurely awakening a creature causes disorientation for 4–6 hours (–2 on attack rolls and ability checks).
97–98	Brown fog. Link to Nexid world opens for one minute; 2% chance of random Nexid creature coming through. There is a 50% chance that anyone remaining within five feet of the reaction suffers Nexid ensnarement in the floor of the summoning circle when link closes.
99	Green smoke in 15-foot radius. Constitution permanently decreased by 1.
100	Orange smoke in 15-foot radius and pink light. Strength permanently increased by 1.



Floating above the stool is a complicated set of plates, knobs, and switches. These are the controls for the location of the seat and spyglass. Hovering in midair, aimed out over the valley below, is a blackmetal spyglass. It has multiple barrels and sighting scopes; it does not appear like anything normally seen in the Vale. Færgo is typically found seated on the stool, his neck uncomfortably bent to bring his eye to the spyglass, his hands twisted to access the controls. He is wearing his leather armor and the *sentinel's helm*^{A2}. His longsword is strapped to his back. He is barefoot, and his feet are hooked around the stool to keep from sliding off.

FÆRGO CROMWORTH'S FUTURE

If the Mouthgate remains open (see *Whisper & Venom*) and Færgo is not rescued, he becomes corrupted through his close association with the Nexid. Especially when the moon is full and the connection to the Nexid world is at its strongest, Færgo loses his humanity. Already, he has closer ties to many animals than is normal. Soon, he ceases to feel any kinship with the humans or demi-humans that he lived among. His body develops a hunch as his spine curves over. His fingers stretch and curl. His eyes start to lose their color and the ability to see in the normal spectrum. Eventually, he loses his appetite for food but is not quite able to absorb nutrition as do the Nexid. He withers and collapses in on himself. Finally, he is absorbed into the Nexid and a new sentinel comes to the tower. A real sentinel.

If the Mouthgate is closed, Færgo suffers much the same

FÆRGO CROMWORTH

Færgo (**spy** with AC 16 from +2 *leather armor* and his sword, Strength 15, and a +2 *longsword* that provides a +1 bonus to AC, and no crossbow) is not evil and does not move to attack the party. However, he defends the spyglass and does not allow others to use it. He resists being removed from his watch. Removing the helm frees Færgo from the Nexid, but he has no memory of the most recent week (including the kidnapping). What he has seen through the spyglass also vanishes from his mind. He retains only select memories from the past few months. Færgo will be able to resume his prior life.

Treasure: +2 *leather armor*, +2 *longsword* (provides +1 bonus to AC), *sentinel's helm*^{A2}

fate as above (barring rescue or death), but the tower seeks out another victim after consuming him. And another. If the cycle is not broken, the tower and its surroundings slowly fill with leathery, broken, humanoid bodies. In time, either the connection with the Nexid fades out or a new gate appears, and with it, another chance for a Nexid sentinel.

In both cases, the soldier and the odalisques stand guard unaware of the passage of time. If the connection fades in a few centuries, they may learn what it is like to be separated from the minds and feelings of the rest of the Nexid. It will not be pretty.

APPENDIX 1: MALEVOLENT CREATURES

The following new monsters appear in *Whisper & Venom*.



ATTORAL

ATTORAL

In caverns and caves throughout the world, reptilian attorals thrive as omnivorous scavengers and hunters of small vermin. Cave insects, rodents, and carrion — and a variety of underground fungi — form their meager diet. They are skittish, opportunistic creatures that are fierce when cornered.

Attorals form colonies of 10 to 30 individuals, with a dominant pair (known as the broodsource) that are the only members of the colony that successfully breed. This is due to the broodsource destroying any nests built by their offspring. As attorals reach adulthood, they become significant rivals of the broodsource pair and are mercilessly slain.

Attorals are grayish in color, with six legs — similar in appearance to a basilisk. Unlike basilisks, they are slender and lithe of limb and body. Their six legs allow them to cling to any surface, like a gecko or a spider, and they are often found on cavern ceilings or in hidden alcoves.

They have darkvision but are nearsighted, which renders this ability nearly useless. To compensate for their poor vision, attorals possess acute hearing that is similar to a bat.

Clever, but with an animal intelligence, they are generally passive and flee if encountered. They build nests and hiding places with venomous sputum and regurgitated plant matter. This nesting material can be used in poisons; various humanoids harvest it for this very reason.

Their primary weapons consist of their two front claws and their poisonous venom. Adults also have a Viper Strike ability, which allows them to make sudden strikes from very small tunnels. These strikes never occur more than twice from the same ambush point. The broodsource has a blindingly fast leap that does significant damage to a single target. This occurs only when the broodsource is encountered in a nest chamber containing eggs or newly hatched offspring.

Leather workers highly prize prepared attoral hides due to their novelty fashion value. Properly treated and worked attoral hides are a fashion statement. They are treasured by rich fops and faux aristocrats for their elitist appeal. Attoral leather is used in everything from bookbinding to manufacturing codpieces. This is due to its resilience and the shine it retains after dyeing.

TABLE 18: ATTORAL VENOM EFFECTS

The venom effects have no obvious manifestation beyond a positive or negative sensation. Effects stack until they wear off or they are exhausted. A maximum of three active effects at one time is recommended during play (at your discretion). Offsetting effects (–/+ AC for example) are still tallied in the stacked effects. The most recent effect replaces the oldest effect.

1d20	Venom Effect
1–2	No effect
3	Extreme Focus: Spellcasters cast as if using 2 spell slots greater for three rounds.
4	Extreme Confusion: Spellcasters must succeed on a Concentration check when casting a spell. If it fails, the spell fizzles and the spell slot is used.
5	Armor Class +2 for four hours.
6	Armor Class –2 for four hours.
7	Next attack roll is treated as a natural 20.
8	Next attack roll is treated as a natural 1.
9	Next saving throw is made, regardless of roll.
10	Next saving throw fails, regardless of roll.
11	Character is stunned for three rounds.
12	Next hit against player rolls again.
13	Next hit against player misses.
14	Next hit against player does maximum damage.
15	Character loses 1d4 from maximum hit points until after a long rest.
16	Character gains 1d4 temporary hit points until after a long rest.
17	Rage: Character gets an extra attack per round for three rounds.
18	Coward: Character frightened for three rounds.
19	Berserker: Attack rolls made at +3 for four hours.
20	Anti-berserker: Attack rolls made at –3 for four hours.



ATTORAL (ADULT; BROODSOURCE)

ATTORAL, ADULT

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	6 (–2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Sensitive Hearing. The attoral has advantage on Perception checks that rely on hearing.

Spider Climb. Attorals can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Viper Strike. When an attoral makes an attack with surprise, it can make one Bite attack and retreat without provoking an attack of opportunity, and it can then attempt to hide as a bonus action.



Actions

Multiattack. The attoral makes two Claw attacks and one Bite attack against a single target.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Spit Venom. The attoral spits a stream of venom at one target within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d4 + 1) poison damage immediately and consult **Table 18: Attoral Venom Effects**.

ATTORAL, BROODSOURCE

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 34 (4d12 + 8)

Speed 50 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (–2)

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +7

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 16

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sensitive Hearing. The attoral has advantage on Perception checks that rely on hearing.

Serpent Leap. If the attoral broodsource moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a Bite attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing

damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Spider Climb. Attorals can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Viper Strike. When an attoral broodsource makes an attack with surprise, it can make one Bite attack and retreat without provoking an attack of opportunity, and it can then attempt to hide as a bonus action.

Actions

Multiattack. The attoral makes two Claw attacks and one Bite attack against a single target.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Spit Venom. The attoral spits a stream of venom at one target within 30 feet. Target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d4 + 1) poison damage immediately and consult **Table 18: Attoral Venom Effects**.



ATTORAL (YOUNG)

ATTORAL, YOUNG

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	8 (–1)	10 (+0)	6 (–2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Sensitive Hearing. The attoral has advantage on Perception checks that rely on hearing.

Spider Climb. Attorals can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Multiattack. The attoral makes two Claw attacks and one Bite attack against a single target.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Spit Venom. The attoral spits a stream of venom at one target within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d4 + 1) poison damage immediately and consult **Table 18: Attoral Venom Effects**.



BEAVER, GIANT

BEAVER, GIANT

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	2 (–4)	12 (+1)	5 (–3)

Saving Throws Dex +3

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Hold Breath. The giant beaver can hold its breath for 30 minutes.

Keen Hearing and Smell. The giant beaver has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Wood-Eater. The giant beaver deals double damage to creatures, objects, and structures made of wood.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Tail Slap (recharge 4–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.



B

BEE, GIANT; BEETLE, MONSTROUS

BEE, GIANT

Giant bees dwell in mounds or tunnel structures similar to anthills. Each hive has up to 100 members and a single queen. Alchemists and spellcasters prize the queen's royal jelly for its use in potent potions and as a material component in incantations.

Stories tell of giant bees being used by giants and other huge folk in the same manner as their diminutive cousins. Few believe these stories are anything other than fireside tales for children. The only evidence of this is the occasional corpse of a hill giant or ogre covered with bee stings and giants' legendary appetite for honey.



GIANT BEE

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)	10 (+0)	3 (–4)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Distracting Buzz. If three or more giant bees are within 10 feet of each other, a creature that casts a spell with a verbal component while within 15 feet of one of the giant bees must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or fail to cast the spell, losing the action but not the spell slot.

Actions

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage

BEETLE, MONSTROUS

The monstrous beetle is larger, more noxious, and significantly more aggressive than its common cousin. Monstrous beetles can be found nearly everywhere regular insects are found, though they prefer to make their lairs in abandoned buildings and caves. The only real requirement they have for a lair is that there is enough prey. They have voracious appetites and grow quickly, reaching an ultimate size of three to four feet in length.

Having only animal intelligence and brutal instinctive aggression makes their behavior predictable. Once a monstrous beetle detects a threat, it attacks by approaching slowly and sensing its environment with its antennae. Monstrous beetles retreat only if they are mortally wounded. If found in its lair, the monstrous beetle charges any opponent that comes within its detection range.

Monstrous beetles collect no treasures except by accident when building their nests.

MONSTROUS BEETLE

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 18 (4d6 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	1 (–5)	7 (–2)	3 (–4)

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Carapace cloud. When killed, a monstrous beetle releases a toxic cloud that fills a five-foot-radius sphere centered on its body. Creatures within the cloud must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for one minute.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Charge. The monstrous beetle moves up to 30 feet directly toward a target. If it has moved at least 10 feet, the target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or fall prone. The beetle may then make a bite attack as a bonus action.



BYRGH (BYRGH; BYRGH, PRIME)

BYRGH

The byrgh, or rubbish crab, is a crustacean that lives amid the filth of caves. Byrghs are usually found near cavern entrances. Unless in mortal peril, they never venture aboveground. Byrghs are generally found in groups of five to seven individuals sharing a single nest. The nests are made from whatever castoff items or refuse the byrghs can scavenge. Nests are normally three to five feet high, though very old nests are much larger. Large nests are rare.

Their carapace is a dull to dark brown. Their natural pigmentation is unimportant since, from the time they spawn, they use their glue-like saliva to attach whatever they can to their backs to form a curious armor. Byrghs have no preference as to what they attach to themselves so long as it is tough, light enough to manipulate with their claws, and not part of their diet.

BYRGH

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 + 1d3 (scavenged armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d6 + 6)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	1 (–5)	3 (–4)	5 (–3)

Skills Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Camouflage. A byrgh that is stationary in its native habitat is difficult to spot. Seeing one requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Actions

Multiattack. The byrgh makes two Claw attacks

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). The byrgh has two claws, each of which can grapple only one target.

They are not overtly dangerous as their instinct is to freeze in place when threatened. They rely upon their odd armor as camouflage. Without careful inspection, byrghs are not easy to recognize as anything more than a garbage pile. They are difficult to damage thanks to their armor plates, but their slow speed makes them fairly easy prey. Byrghs have the unfortunate (for them) reputation among subterranean races of being delicious, which keeps their numbers in check.

During their lifecycle, they rotate their armor plating. As they discard one component, they pick up another; they use the castoff bits to build up their nests. If undisturbed, a byrgh's nesting site can swell to huge proportions, the result of years of mindless scavenging. Any treasure found in a byrgh's nest is accidental, as they pick up whatever they find. It is not unusual to find tools, armor, and weapons among the warren of bones, rocks, and other filth.

BYRGH, PRIME

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 + 1d3 (scavenged armor)

Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	1 (–5)	8 (–1)	5 (–3)

Skills Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Camouflage. A byrgh that is stationary in its native habitat is difficult to spot. Seeing one requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Actions

Multiattack. The byrgh makes two Claw attacks

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). The byrgh has two claws, each of which can grapple only one target.

Sticky Saliva (recharge 4–6). The byrgh spits sticky saliva in a 30-foot line that is five feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 5 (2d4) acid damage and its speed is halved for one minute. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and its speed isn't halved. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



CAVE IMP (ADULT; WHELP)

CAVE IMP

Cave imps are scaled, monkey-like creatures. They have long slender limbs, sharp claws, and vicious fangs. They have long, prehensile, rat-like tails. Like many animals that live exclusively in the dark, this creature has developed excellent darkvision. Equal parts carnivore and coward, these imps fight from behind cover by throwing rocks to bash their victims. While not interested in treasure per se, they are attracted to shiny bits; their lairs often contain random pieces of jewelry and coins. If hungry and unable to trap a meal in their lair, they make nocturnal trips aboveground to capture rodents or anything they can kill while it sleeps.

CAVE IMP, ADULT

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 9 (2d6 + 2)

Speed 60 ft., climb 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	5 (–3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +6

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Spider Climb. The cave imp can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

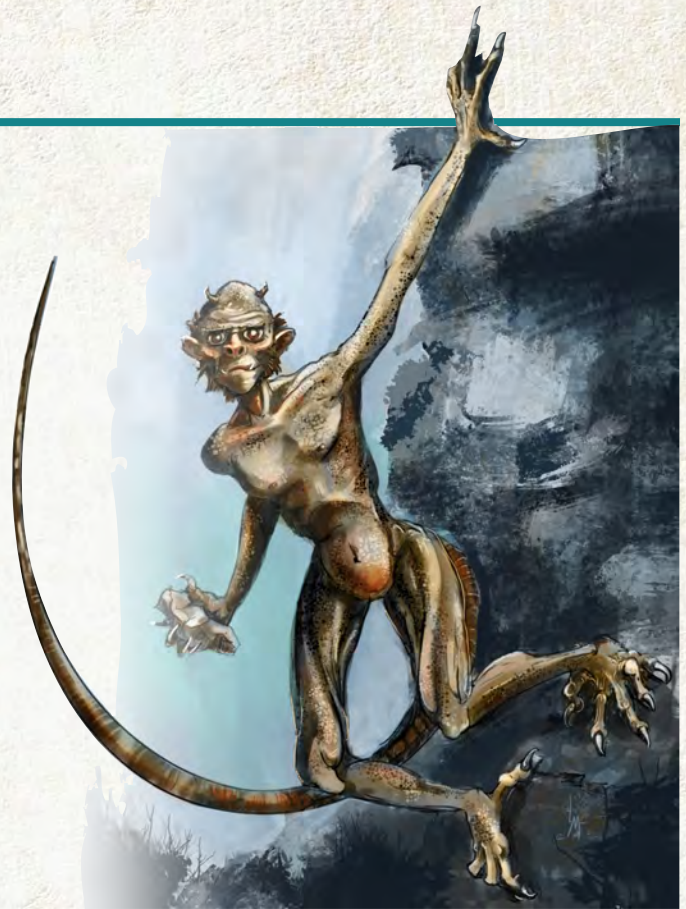
Actions

Multiattack. The cave imp makes two Claw attacks and one Bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage.



CAVE IMP, WHELP

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 3 (1d6)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (–1)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	3 (–4)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +1

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Spider Climb. The cave imp whelp can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Multiattack. The cave imp whelp makes two Claw attacks and one Bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, range 10/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 – 1) bludgeoning damage.



CINEREOUS VULTURE

CINEREOUS VULTURE

This giant solitary scavenger is rare. With an average length of 12 feet, it is capable of carrying livestock. It soars at magnificent heights and uses its sweeping binocular vision to scan vast tracts of land. Little is known of the behavior of these massive creatures. Assumptions about its habits are based upon observations of more common species. Wisdom dictates that any area that might contain corpses large enough to satiate one of these giants is best avoided.

As its name implies, the cinereous vulture has plumage that is

usually ashen (gray to black). It is rumored to nest in the shelves of inaccessible peaks.

Many interpret the appearance of a cinereous vulture overhead as a bad portent.

The cinereous vulture uses the **giant vulture** stat block.



GOBLIN, L'UORT

GOBLIN, L'UORT

Short tribal humanoids with colors that range from green to gray, goblins can be found virtually anywhere. Necessity dictates that they be close enough to established communities to raid, vandalize, or terrorize citizens, yet are able to retreat a safe distance. As they become a nuisance, they are inevitably driven out by sustained attempts at extermination. On rare occasions, when goblins pose a real threat, the original residents have been known to abandon their communities.

They wander in marauding bands consisting of 20 to 80 members that are led by a strong-willed chieftain. They do not have organized tactics or complex plans. Goblins use a mob tactic in combat and attempt to overpower adversaries with their numbers. They are effective thieves.

Exceptional goblin populations live very differently from their vagabond relations. The first is the rare confederation grown either of loyalty or fear that unites a clan into an effective and cruel group of marauders. Better armed than most and more dangerous than all their cousins, these bands sow fear and impose a real threat.

A second population of goblins inhabits a village in a fair northern vale. Tied economically to their neighbors, the L'uort goblins gave up roaming and raiding for trading booze and profiteering. Though not trusted, these goblins have become a part of the Whisper Vale's economy.

Goblins favor shortswords and spears in combat while donning leathery armor (of varying quality). They speak a guttural language with as many dialects as there are tribes. Some are even capable of crude interaction in the Common tongue.





L'UORT GOBLIN

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Hearing. The L'uort goblin has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Rotgut-Obsessed. If the L'uort goblin hasn't consumed one pint of Attoral Rotgut within the past four hours, it is poisoned, gains one level of exhaustion, and loses its climbing speed, Keen Hearing, and Spider Climb traits until it consumes one pint of Attoral Rotgut.

Spider Climb. The L'uort goblin can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Bonus Actions

Attoral Rotgut (recharge 5–6). Most L'uort goblins carry a flask of liqueur distilled with corrupted attoral venom. Before, during, or after a fight, a L'uort may take a swig from its flask. For the next round, the L'uort goblin is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and it also receives one of the effects from **Table 19: Attoral Rotgut Effects**.





GOBLIN, L'UORT (CHIEF [LALRECH]; LIEUTENANT)

L'UORT GOBLIN CHIEF (LALRECH)

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (half plate)

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Hearing. The L'uort goblin chief has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Rotgut-Obsessed. If the L'uort goblin chief hasn't consumed one pint of Attoral Rotgut within the past four hours, it is poisoned, gains one level of exhaustion, and loses its climbing speed, Keen Hearing, and Spider Climb traits until it consumes one pint of Attoral Rotgut.

Spider Climb. The L'uort goblin chief can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

+2 Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Reactions

Redirect Attack. If a creature the goblin chief can see targets it with an attack, the goblin chief chooses another goblin within five feet of it. The two goblins swap places, and the chosen goblin becomes the target.

Bonus Actions

Attoral Rotgut (recharge 5–6). Most L'uort goblin chiefs carry a flask of liqueur distilled with corrupted attoral venom. Before, during, or after a fight, a L'uort may take a swig from its flask. For the next round, the L'uort is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and it also receives one of the effects from **Table 19: Attoral Rotgut Effects**.

L'UORT GOBLIN LIEUTENANT

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 18 (4d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Hearing. The L'uort goblin lieutenant has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Rotgut-Obsessed. If the L'uort goblin lieutenant hasn't consumed one pint of Attoral Rotgut within the past four hours, it is poisoned, gains one level of exhaustion, and loses its climbing speed, Keen Hearing, and Spider Climb traits until it consumes one pint of Attoral Rotgut.

Spider Climb. The L'uort goblin lieutenant can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Reactions

Redirect Attack. When a creature the L'uort goblin lieutenant can see targets it with an attack, the goblin chooses another goblin within five feet of it. The two goblins swap places, and the chosen goblin becomes the target.

Bonus Actions

Attoral Rotgut (recharge 5–6). Most L'uort goblin lieutenants carry a flask of liqueur distilled with corrupted attoral venom. Before, during, or after a fight, a L'uort goblin lieutenant may take a swig from its flask. For the next round, the goblin is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and it also receives one of the effects from **Table 19: Attoral Rotgut Effects**.



GOBLIN, L'UORT (SHAMAN)



L'UORT SHAMAN

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 19 (4d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Attoral Fetish. As a bonus action, the L'uort goblin shaman raises a fetish made from parts of an attoral. The shaman targets a L'uort goblin it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see or hear the shaman, the target is affected by the fetish until the start of the shaman's next turn.

Blood. The target regains 5 (2d4) hit points.

Fang. When the target hits with a melee weapon, the weapon deals an extra 2 (1d4) poison damage.

Scale. Melee attack rolls against the target have disadvantage.

Sinew. The target's walking speed increases by 10 feet.

Keen Hearing. The L'uort goblin shaman has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Rotgut-Obsessed. If the L'uort goblin shaman hasn't consumed one pint of Attoral Rotgut within the past four hours, it is poisoned, gains one level of exhaustion, and loses its climbing speed, Keen Hearing, and Spider Climb traits until it

consumes one pint of Attoral Rotgut.

Spellcasting. The L'uort shaman is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at-will): *mending, resistance, sacred flame*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, create or destroy water, healing word, inflict wounds, sanctuary*

2nd level (2 slots): *blindness/deafness, enlarge/reduce, spiritual weapon*

Spider Climb. The L'uort goblin shaman can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Bonus Actions

Attoral Rotgut (recharge 5–6). Most L'uort shamans carry a flask of liqueur distilled with corrupted attoral venom. Before, during, or after a fight, a L'uort shaman may take a swig from its flask. For the next round, the L'uort shaman is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and it also receives one of the effects from **Table 19: Attoral Rotgut Effects**.



GOBLIN, L'UORT (TABLE 19: ATTORAL ROTGUT EFFECTS TABLE)



TABLE 19: ATTORAL ROTGUT EFFECTS

The heady liqueur brewed by L'uort goblins is highly addictive and highly unpredictable. Over the long term, a creature's Strength, Intelligence, and Wisdom tend to increase, while its Charisma goes down. The creature becomes misproportioned and paranoid. A creature that drinks Attoral Rotgut regularly for three days must take a draught every four hours or be poisoned and receive one level of exhaustion. The addiction can be cured with one week of abstinence or a *lesser restoration* spell.

In the short term, the effects are equally dramatic. A creature that imbibes a gulp of Attoral Rotgut is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage on the following round and receives an effect from the table below. Different effects are additive, but only one instance of a specific effect is present at a time.

1d10	Effect
1	Rage. For the next three rounds, the creature makes all melee attacks with advantage. The creature has disadvantage on ranged attacks and is unable to cast spells or use spell-like effects. All attacks against the creature have advantage. If the creature does not see an enemy within melee range, it attacks the closest creature.
2	Toxic Sweat. The creature exudes a 10-foot aura of toxic sweat for the next minute. Any other creature that comes within the aura on its turn or starts its turn within it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the beginning of its next turn. At the end of the minute, the imbibing creature falls unconscious for 10 minutes.
3	Poisoned Brute. The creature has 18 Strength for 10 minutes unless its Strength is already higher. For the same duration, it is poisoned.
4	Immunity. The creature is immune to fire and cold damage for one minute.

1d10	Effect
5	Focused Sight. The creature has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight and scores a critical hit on a 19 or 20 with ranged attacks for one minute. All attacks against the creature have advantage for the same duration.
6	Healing. The creature heals 2d4 + 2 hit points.
7	Poison. The creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 2d4 + 2 poison damage.
8	Hallucinations. For one hour, the creature hallucinates and is unable to properly discern reality. The hallucinations are auditory, visual, and olfactory. All skill checks are made with disadvantage, and the GM may describe the world as seems appropriate.
9	Near Death. The creature has disadvantage on any death saving throws for the next 24 hours.
10	Antimagic. The next spell used within 60 feet of the imbiber fizzles.



KYTYLLEN SWARM

KYTYLLEN SWARM

If you're a shrimp, this beast is your worst nightmare. Kytyllen swarms are composed of potentially thousands of tiny, ravenous fish. Each fish reaches a maximum length of one-eighth of an inch. Kytyllen have unwieldy sharp teeth that become troublesome as they age. Kytyllen eventually reach a stage where the fish cannot close its mouth. A small illicium dangles from the front of its forehead. It is a frequent source of irritation when the swarm becomes agitated. This unfortunate appendage often becomes an unintended lunch.

KYTYLLEN SWARM

Small swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 14 (4d6)

Speed Swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (–5)	6 (–2)	7 (–2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Senses passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Nibbler. Any non-metal material worn by a creature in the same space as a kytyllen swarm takes 1 slashing damage at the end of the creature's turn. Similarly, exposed skin takes 1 slashing damage at the end of the creature's turn. A creature covered in cloth or soft armor feels a tickling sensation and must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or suffer fits of giggling while it remains within the swarm's space.

Swarm. The kytyllen swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the kytyllen swarm can move through any opening large enough for a tiny fish. The kytyllen swarm cannot regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.



MURKBEAST

MURKBEAST

Murkbeasts are a cross between a giant leech and a huge crustacean. They ambush prey like a crocodile and use a lamprey-like mouth to suck the victim's blood to weaken it. Even if prey withdraws, the murkbeast can survive for an hour on land as it locates wounded victims to drag to its watery lair.

Murkbeasts have no treasure except what their victims had on their persons. Such items are scattered about their lair.

MURKBEAST

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	1 (–5)	10 (+0)	5 (–3)

Skills Stealth +5 if in water

Senses blindsight 60 ft. in water, darkvision 60 ft. out of water, passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Ambush Predator. If the murkbeast surprises a target and then hits it with a Claw attack on the same turn, the target has disadvantage on its next ability check made to escape the murkbeast's grapple.

Hold Breath. While out of water, the murkbeast can hold its breath for one hour.

Underwater Camouflage. The murkbeast has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made while underwater.

Water Breathing. The murkbeast can breathe only underwater.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13) if it is a Medium or smaller creature and the murkbeast doesn't have two other creatures grappled.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the murkbeast attaches to the target. While attached, the murkbeast doesn't attack. Instead, at the start of each of the murkbeast's turns, the target loses 5 (1d4 + 3) hit points due to blood loss.

The murkbeast can detach itself by spending five feet of its movement. It does so after it drains 15 hit points of blood from the target or the target dies. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the murkbeast.



NEXID ODALISQUES

NEXID ODALISQUES

Nexid odalisques are messengers and scouts for the Nexid. They are short, approximately three to four feet tall, though some individuals can be taller. Nexid odalisques are covered in a hideous, dark, scaly hide. They avoid natural light as much as possible. When illuminated, their skin resembles a combination of obsidian and leather. They cannot fly, but they can leap great distances and glide with their delicate, bat-like wings.

Nexid odalisques are controlled in the most vicious fashion imaginable. The slightest infraction against the command of a Nexid of a higher caste is punished with a brutal sacrifice. This painful sacrifice rips their bodies apart and returns their dark energy to the Nexid core.

Nexid odalisques are armed with dark-bladed daggers or small staves. In combat, they also use their sharp claws against exposed flesh or light armor in lieu of their weapon, giving the Nexid odalisques two attacks per round.

Nexid odalisques commune in their own tongue and communicate through the dialect of different castes of their Nexid masters. They bear their miserable lives with the knowledge that pain ultimately awaits.



NEXID ODALISQUES

Medium fiend (Nexid), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (–1)	14 (+2)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Nexid

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The Nexid odalisque's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell

attacks). The Nexid odalisque can cast the following spells without requiring any material components:

At will: *detect thoughts*

3/day each: *darkness*, *inflict wounds*

Leap. As a move action, a Nexid odalisque can leap up to 60 feet, ignoring difficult terrain and Small or Medium creatures and other obstacles in its path without provoking an opportunity attack.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Nexid Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Nexid Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning



NEXID SOLDIER

Nexid soldiers are the overseers, taskmasters, and low-level warriors in their stratified, caste-based society. They are usually encountered in groups of two to eight soldiers but may be tasked individually to complete missions that require stealth.

They are cruel and apparently fearless, according to the few who have encountered them. The weaker races in the Nexid social strata follow their commands unquestioningly. They value loyalty to the Nexid's upper castes — and to their dark goddess above all. They are often the willing victims of sacrifice so their living energy can be harnessed. This sacrifice is ordered to further the purposes of the Nexid lords.

They fight with long, curved blades similar to a scimitar. These are crafted in such a way that the weapon gives a +1 to hit and +1 damage even though it is nonmagical. They wear what looks like scale-mail armor made from the same dark metal as their blades.

The only wealth the Nexid soldiers amass is what they can wear on their person as a show of status. Indication of rank within their groups is represented by their weapon; swords and whips are the most common, with officer types carrying a flail made of dark mineral. Every group (six or more) has one officer with two additional hit dice. The officers can be identified by a thin black metal choker that acts like a *ring of protection*.



NEXID SOLDIER

Medium fiend (Nexid), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (scale armor)

Hit Points 15 (2d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Skills Stealth +4

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning, poison

Condition Immunities frightened

Languages Nexid

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Variable Darkness. The Nexid sheds darkness in a five- to 30-foot radius. The Nexid can alter the radius as a bonus action.

NEXID WEAPONRY

Nexid weaponry is forged using the sacrificial sorcery that is the root of their power. Even the blades and blunt weapons carried by the weakest castes have at least a +1 to hit and +1 damage granted to the wielder.

They can be used in normal fashion by non-Nexid. Their use has no detrimental effects on others who wield them, and they have no need of recharge.

Actions

Nexid Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used two-handed.

Heal Self (recharge 5–6). The Nexid soldier heals itself for 3d8 hit points.

Gate Nexid (1/day). The Nexid calls either a Nexid odalisque or a Nexid soldier to a square it can see within 30 feet.



NEXID SPIDER

NEXID SPIDER

The Nexid spider is an otherworldly predator. With its four crab-like legs and cavernous bottom-side maw, it is creepy indeed. A nearly transparent gray, at least until coated in the juices of its meal, the spider is very difficult to spot. If it strikes successfully with its two claw attacks, it pulls its prey in for a bite attempt. Its main body is covered with broad-spectrum eyespots that allow it to see otherwise invisible creatures. It can also see in the infrared and ultraviolet spectra. Lacking a mind that is in any way recognizable, the spider is immune to any sort of mind-affecting spells, including those aimed at animals or insects (e.g., *charm*, *sleep*, *Speak with Animal*, *Animal Summoning*). The creature does not make a web or otherwise build any sort of lair.



NEXID SPIDER

Medium aberration, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8 + 8)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	5 (–3)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, unconscious

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Chameleon Skin. The Nexid spider has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide.

Mental Stability. The Nexid spider is immune to the effects of mind-altering spells.

Actions

Multiattack. The Nexid spider makes two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage. If it hits with both Claw attacks against a single target in the same round, it can make a Bite attack as a bonus action.

R RHACOS (GENERAL)

RHACOS

An apex predator of the forests, grasslands, and river valleys of the northern world, the rhacos is feared. It is hunted with varying levels of success. A single rhacos can easily devastate even a large hunting party. The rhacos does not fear humanoids; therefore, it is difficult to pinpoint with any real accuracy who is the hunter at any given moment.

They are not hunted for their value as a delicacy as rhacos meat is, to put it delicately, not delicious. Their eggs, however, are considered an epicurean treat and collected whenever possible. The principal purpose for hunting these dangerous predators is fashion. They have a long, delicate feather (or, on rare occasion, multiple feathers) protruding from the top of

their heads. These are prized by haberdashers that cater to the wealthy. A single undamaged feather from a rhacos can fetch hundreds of gold pieces from the right buyer.

In combat, the rhacos attacks with a swift kick from its powerful legs and a peck from its sharp beak. It can swing its long neck wildly with its beak wide open, causing great slashing wounds to the unfortunate victim.

Rhacos are blue gray in color with elongated necks and long, narrow legs. Their beaks are as large as a man's head, and their claws can be nearly as long as short-bladed daggers. The mysterious rhacos is a creature of habit. It finds points of interest (to the rhacos) and establishes a patrol, which it follows unflinchingly. Once bound to its course, the rhacos deviates only in combat.



RHACOS, GENERAL

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (−3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the rhacos moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a beak attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Actions

Multiattack. The rhacos makes one Bite and one Kick attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing.

Indignant Beak (recharge 5–6). *The rhacos sweeps its beak around in a circle.* Each creature within five feet must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) slashing damage on a failure or half as much on a success.



RHACOS (RHACOB; RHAC-HEN; HATCHLING)

RHACOB (MALE RHACOS)

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (–3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the rhacob moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a Beak attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Actions

Multiattack. The rhacob makes one Bite and one Kick attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing.

Indignant Beak (recharge 5–6). The rhacob sweeps its beak around in a circle. Each creature within five feet must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) slashing damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

RHAC-HEN (FEMALE RHACOS)

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 39 (6d10 + 6)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (–3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Trampling Charge. If the rhac-hen moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a Beak attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Actions

Multiattack. The rhac-hen makes one Bite and one Kick attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing.

Indignant Beak (recharge 5–6). The rhac-hen sweeps its beak around in a circle. Each creature within five feet must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) slashing damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

RHACOS, HATCHLING

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 10 (natural armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d6 + 2)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	4 (–3)	8 (–1)	8 (–1)

Senses passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) slashing.



SCAVENGER, GAUNTSWEPT

Fierce pack hunters and carrion feeders, Gauntswept scavengers are prized by lawless clans of brigands throughout the world as guard animals and vicious pets. Scavengers are similar in size to a war dog but are far more vicious. They look reptilian but behave more like wolves or hyenas. They are aggressive beasts that roam the cold plains of the Gauntswept in packs of 20 to 35 individuals.

Packs of Gauntswept scavengers single out a weak individual from a herd and take turns attacking their prey. After a savage, persistent series of attacks, their quarry usually collapses from exhaustion. It is then swarmed by the pack — sometimes before its worn body hits the ground. Always hungry, Gauntswept scavengers never rest in a single place. They remain around successful kills where they rest, mate, then move on to the next hunt.

Prized as pets by the aggressive and chaotic clans of the grasslands, Gauntswept scavengers must be captured at a young age. These tribes often trade such prizes — for great rewards. Once tamed, they become fiercely loyal to a single individual; wandering bands of brigands or marauders often have one individual act as a handler to better put them to cruel use.

GAUNTSWEPT SCAVENGER

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	6 (–2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Grassland Camouflage. The Gauntswept scavenger has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in grassy terrain.

Pack Tactics. The Gauntswept scavenger has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the scavenger's allies is within five feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The Gauntswept scavenger makes one Bite and one Claw attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing.



SNAGWORT, HANGING

SNAGWORT, HANGING

Hanging snagworts are a strange combination of a dungeon plant mingled with clusters of slime-covered tendrils that dangle at the end of a thick, rope-like strand. A snagwort can lash out at creatures within 10 feet by swinging its ropy strand. If this attack scores a successful hit, the tendrils affix themselves to the target with a strong adhesive.

The initial attack causes no damage, but the bond caused by the vegetative glue is virtually unbreakable except by magical means. Once the snagwort is dead, the glue loses its adhesive properties in 1d6 hours. The dead snagwort remains attached to the character for quite a while, causing great inconvenience due to its hefty weight of 40 pounds. While the snagwort is alive, it can neutralize the glue at will. Once the snagwort attaches to an opponent, the plant can smash the victim against nearby surfaces without needing to make further attack rolls in following rounds.

If a snagwort is attacked with missile weapons and no enemies



are within range, it flattens itself against a ceiling or behind cover. This usually gives it half or three-quarters cover. A lone snagwort can easily be killed with missile weapons, provided the party maintains a safe distance.

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HANGING SNAGWORT

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	1 (–5)	8 (–1)	6 (–2)

Skills Athletics +8, Perception +1, Stealth +5

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Sticky Situation. When the hanging snagwort dies, its glue remains for one hour on any creature hit by its clutching

tendrils. The creature has disadvantage on ability checks and saving throws made to escape a grapple until the glue is removed. A creature, including the target, can take its action to remove the glue by succeeding on a DC 14 Strength check. Alternatively, the glue can be dissolved by *universal solvent*.

Spider Climb. The hanging snagwort can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Grapple. The snagwort makes a melee weapon attack at +6 to hit against one creature within 10 feet. On a hit, the creature is grappled (escape DC 18). A snagwort can have only one creature grappled at a time.

Crush. The snagwort does 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage to a creature it has grappled.

Hide. While not grappling a creature, the snagwort coils itself against the ceiling, giving itself three-quarters cover.



SNORTLE

Rustic relatives of halflings, snortles are burrowing nomads. Standing three feet tall, they have a ruddy complexion and dark, usually matted, hair. Snortles have their own language, which consists of a limited pilfered vocabulary. Snortles communicate warnings and short messages via reed pipes (which they collect obsessively). Whenever a good reed is found, it is prized and (generally) passed down as an heirloom or dowry, with one exception: the “doomsday reed.” It is a badge of office. The snortle who mans this fail-deadly device is the Cheget, who is admonished to use it only under the most grievous circumstances. When winded, it heralds the most bewildering act of mutual[ly] (attempted) dispersion (in the key of E major).

Coming within 30 feet of a mound trips the alarm. Clouds of dust burst from every burrow. Characters within 30 feet must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or suffer the effects of inhaling the doomsday spores. The spores cause characters to wheeze and cough for two rounds, incapacitating them. If the party remains until the cloud dissipates (1d4 rounds), the warren evacuates. Snortles erupt from their burrows *en masse* and charge. They do not charge at anyone or anywhere in particular. Snortles run into each other, trip over their fallen brethren, and charge headlong into the woods. Some even avoid colliding with the trees to reach the relative safety of the forest.

Characters witnessing this high-strung apocalypse must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw to avoid being astounded. An astounded creature is amazed. (You can assign a minor nuisance on characters or simply state that the characters are astonished by what they see.)

Snortle tribes eke out a hardscrabble existence in woodland glades and remote grasslands throughout the northern world. Living in tribes consisting of seven to 63 members, they communally gather food, reeds, and other necessities.

SNORTLE

Small humanoid, neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 5 (1d6 + 2)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (–2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 – 2) bludgeoning damage.



SPINY HORROR

Spiny horrors are dark-furred animals weighing approximately five pounds, with a large number of long, jointed spines protruding from their bodies. They are predators that jump to the attack (able to move and attack as per a charge without incurring any benefits or penalties). They cluster like large bats. Because of their spines, at first glance spiny horrors are often mistaken for large spiders.

When attacking, a spiny horror digs its spines (a maximum of four per round) into its prey and bites with its small, sharp teeth. As many as 20 horrors may swarm a single Medium opponent.

Spiny horrors are normally found in subterranean areas; however, packs occasionally find their way into cities, where they can become a serious menace with their fast rate of reproduction.

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SPINY HORROR

Tiny beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 3 (1d4 + 1)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (–5)	10 (+0)	3 (–4)

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages None

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Artful Dodger. The spiny horror does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Standing Leap. The spiny horror’s long jump is up to 20 feet, and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. The spiny horror makes one Bite and up to four Spine attacks against a single creature.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing.

Spine. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d2) piercing.



TOAD, GIANT CAVE

TOAD, GIANT CAVE

The giant toad is akin to its smaller relatives, the main difference being that the giant versions eat you whole while their distant relations do not.

The giant toad is a solitary predator that inhabits the vast network of underground lakes and rivers that extend throughout the deep places of the world. They are always ravenous and, thanks to subterranean ecosystems, never in a position to be picky about their prey.

The giant toad spits its long, sticky tongue at its prey. If the target is Human or smaller, the tongue retracts into the mouth, the victim in tow. Digestive juices start their work unless the victim manages to extricate itself from the toad's jaws. While within the giant toad's digestive tract, victims take 50% of all damage inflicted on the giant amphibian.

Giant toads carry no treasure, save what their victims bring with them. Such spoils, if any, can be found in the creature's scat.



GIANT CAVE TOAD

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	2 (−4)	10 (+0)	3 (−4)

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amphibious. The giant cave toad can breathe air and water.

Keen Smell. The giant cave toad has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Standing Leap. The giant cave toad's long jump is up to 20 feet, and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. The giant cave toad makes one Bite attacks and two Claw attacks. Alternatively, it makes one Barbed Tongue

attack, uses its Reel, and makes two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Barbed Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 30 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the giant cave toad can't use its barbed tongue on another target.

Reel. The giant cave toad pulls a creature grappled by it up to 25 feet straight toward it.

Swallow. The giant cave toad makes one bite attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the giant cave toad, and it takes 14 (4d6) acid damage at the start of each of the giant cave toad's turns. A giant cave toad can have only one creature swallowed at a time.

If the giant cave toad takes 15 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the giant cave toad must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within five feet of the giant cave toad. If the giant cave toad dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.



UNDEAD CYCLE (RESTLESS)

UNDEAD CYCLE

Restless: Restless are undead animated corpses of souls trapped in a purgatory. The path to their cursed existence began with the unfortunate circumstances of their death. Their burial preparations were either forgotten or ignored. The rites that prepared their souls for separation from their material bodies were thus denied them. The failure to find peace in the afterlife animates their bodies as vessels of mindless rage and aggression toward the living. They have no will of their own but exhibit extreme cunning, a slight shadow of the sentience of their former selves.

Restless have no particular corporeal features in common beyond those they bore in life. The necromancy that sustains them does not halt the decomposition process.

Restless wield any available weapons; otherwise, they attack with their rotten limbs. Once the decomposition of the body is complete, the souls of the restless are lost forever. A corporeal energy remains, however. Such energies soon coalesce to form the next stage of the undead cycle: the malice.

The Malice: The malice is the second stage in the undead cycle. Powerful, hate-filled, and possessing deadly magical

powers, a malice is a dangerous opponent.

This entity sheds its weak, restless sinews and gains a focused and evil preternatural mind. Self-aware and wrathful, the malice is always solitary and ever watchful for opportunities to drain the life energies from any unfortunate victims that cross its path.

The malice cannot be surprised. It immediately lets out a low-pitched, malevolent wail and attacks anything that enters its lair. All characters within earshot of the malice must successfully save vs. spells or be held completely immobilized for three combat rounds by the malice's aura of dread (similar in effect to the magic-user spell *hold person*). It despises and feeds on life — using any weaponless hand to wrest the lifeforce (1d8 hp of damage) from any being it successfully strikes.

A malice also gains the use of magic-user spells as it evolves within the undead cycle. They can learn any spell but, while on the attack, tend to favor cold or lightning-based spells.

If defeated, the negative energy of the malice dissipates in an icy blast, causing no damage.

After gaining a hideous self-awareness completely unconnected to its once mortal self, the malice steps ever closer to the next level in the cycle of the undead.

RESTLESS

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	7 (–2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silver, necrotic, poison

Damage Immunities cold, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages as in life

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Putrescent Flesh. A creature that touches the restless or hits it with a melee attack while within five feet of it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the restless's Putrescent Flesh for 24 hours.



Undead Nature. The restless doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing.

Spit Putrescence (recharge 6). The restless spits its rotten innards in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails this saving throw is subjected to the restless's Putrescent Flesh trait.



UNDEAD CYCLE (MALICE)

MALICE

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silver, cold, lightning

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages as in life

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Vigilant. The malice cannot be surprised.

Spellcasting. The malice is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It can cast the following spells:

Cantrips: *acid splash*, *chill touch*, *ray of frost*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *bane*, *burning hands*, *inflict wounds*, *guiding bolt*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *hold person*, *ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic*, *fear*

Undead Nature. The malice doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Actions

Multiattack. The malice makes one Longsword attack and one Spectral Grasp attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing.

Spectral Grasp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) necrotic and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Shriek (recharge 6). Up to three creatures of the malice's choice that are within 60 feet of it and that can hear it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be restrained by fear for one minute. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is instead paralyzed for one minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



APPENDIX 2: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

BLESSED VESSEL

Wondrous item, relic

This item is similar in shape and form to a chalice. If the proper prayer is said while holding the vessel, it fills with a special holy water three times per day. If the holy water is used to wash the wounds of a character, it has an effect identical to a *cure wounds* spell cast with a 1st-level spell slot. Each character who sips from the vessel gains the effects of the spell *bless* for four hours (up to seven characters per filled chalice).

NOTES

- ▶ Ashby, the priest in Whisper, knows the correct prayer and can share it with characters at your discretion.
- ▶ *Chants and Missives* in the observatory (**Area A10**) includes the prayer as well.
- ▶ The *blessed vessel* acts as the key to the secret compartment in the prior's chamber (**Area A11**).

CHARMING GARMENTS

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement and washing)

The *charming garments* are the tool of unscrupulous lotharios and ambitious courtiers who come into possession of them. While wearing these garments, your Charisma is raised by 2 points, benefiting all interactions requiring encouragement or influence. In addition, you can cast *charm person* once per week with a save DC of 15.

DAZZLING CORSET OF CHARM RESISTANCE

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This item provides you with fashionable resistance to charm spells, silver-tongued rogues, and a variety of persuasive schemes. You have advantage on saving throws to resist these effects while wearing it. In addition, once per week you may initiate an enchantment that prevents your target from verbally interacting with you for one hour (useful against unwelcome callers). Its secret nature allows for a comfortable fit under any armor and most formal gowns.



DISCIPLE'S DALMATIC

Wondrous item, relic (requires attunement by a good-aligned druid, paladin, or cleric)

The Meanderbrook Monastery prior wore this garment during rituals and prayers. It is valuable to the surviving members of the monastic order, fetching 3,500 gp at a minimum. While wearing the *disciple's dalmatic*, you gain +2 to your armor class. You may heal a target once per day for up to 20 hit points with an effect that mirrors the ability of holy warriors to lay hands on the wounded. The *disciple's dalmatic* can be worn in addition to any armor.

The *disciple's dalmatic* is a long, flowing robe with golden, velvet seams. During ceremonies, a royal blue stole is worn with it at all times. The stole is kept tucked neatly into a pocket within the inseam. The stole is nonmagical and of little value when not paired with the *disciple's dalmatic*.

DUST OF EVACUATION

Wondrous item, common

Dust of evacuation is one of a number of fey powders designed for mischief. When poison is too much and taunts do not fit the situation, fey miscreants employ their dusts with glee. You can use an action to throw a dose of this powder on one target within five feet of you. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or spend the next 24 hours incapacitated by bodily functions. A *remove curse* or lesser restoration spell ends the effect. One sachet can contain up to 40 doses.

FEY SCROLL (BOWEL BLOCKAGE)

Wondrous item, common

Bowel blockage and other related minor curses are found on tiny scrolls or employed by fey enchanters. The *bowel blockage* curse has the exact opposite effect of the *dust of evacuation* (see above). You can use an action to read this scroll while choosing a target you can see within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or feel the incapacitating effect for 12 hours. The curse takes 1d6 hours to incubate before the full effect is realized. Cursed characters suffer a -2 penalty on attack and damage rolls as a result of the distracting pain while affected by its enchantment.

Any scroll that contains the *bowel blockage* curse can be understood with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Characters who read elvish or another fey language have a 50% chance of using the scroll to full effect. *Remove curse*, *lesser restoration*, or *dust of evacuation*^{A2} negate its effects.



LUCKSTONE/CURSED LUCKSTONE

Wondrous item, rare

This small, curious stone is the subject of many bedtime fables. The enchantment on these attractive stones arouses the curiosity of those who come across them. A successful DC 14 Wisdom saving throw must be made to keep from immediately pocketing the *luckstone*. If possible, the finder tries to keep his new treasure a secret.

Once a stone is in your possession, a feeling of confidence and trust in your ability subtly increases. Until the stone is properly identified, the Game Master should adjust any roll by up to 10% to change any important game outcome — including attack rolls and saving throws — at the most opportune time once per day. Once the character is aware of the *luckstone's* benefits, the decision for adjusting a roll shifts to the player, although the stone is still limited to being used once per day.

Luckstones are indistinguishable from the cursed variety except by powerful spells or study by accomplished alchemists. They change a roll's outcome by 10% as well, but in a direction unfavorable to the owner. The timing of the *cursed luckstone's* effect is entirely up to the Game Master. Any character attempting to throw or give the cursed stone away can do so, only to find that it reappears magically on their person in a hidden place (such as a pocket, pouch, or quiver) within three rounds. A *remove curse* spell allows the owner to be rid of the stone for good.

L'UORT ELIXIR

Potion, uncommon

Found in flasks carried by members of the L'uort goblins, this elixir is the secret to the tribe's transformation. When you ingest this foul-smelling and worse-tasting liquid, you gain an immediate sensation of power. This sensation is justified, as the first use of the elixir has the following effects for one hour:

- ▶ Armor class improves by 1
- ▶ Gain +1 to attack rolls
- ▶ Have advantage on saving throws to resist the effects of poison

This increase in power comes with a price. Any character who continues to use the elixir after the third dose experiences a painful withdrawal that can be relieved only by further use of the elixir. In this debilitated state, characters suffer 1d4 hp of poison damage per day over the course of three days. Additionally, the creature is poisoned during the same period. A *remove curse*, *lesser restoration*, or similar spell or spell-like effect removes the detrimental effect.

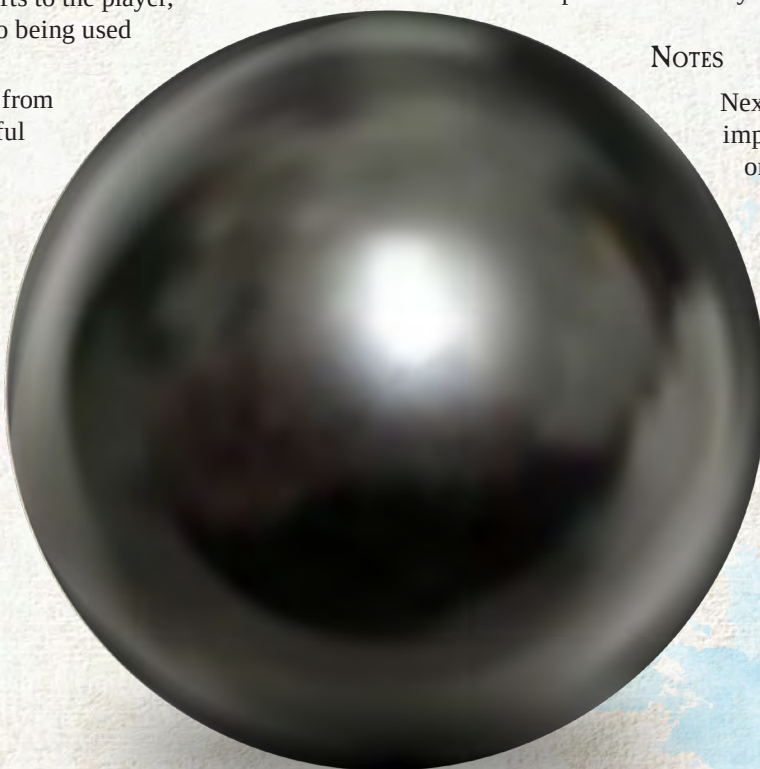
NEXID ORB

Wondrous item, very rare

Varying in diameter from nine inches to four feet, the *Nexid orb* is an inscrutable instrument of the Nexid. They can be destroyed using force or spells, but doing so releases any effect the orb is imbued with. The shards of a shattered orb retain a strange ability to leech the will of those who are in possession of them who are not of Nexid origin. Thus, the bearer of a Nexid shard suffers a –2 penalty when making any saving throw. That detrimental effect increases to a maximum of –3 after 24 hours in possession of any shard.

NOTES

Nexid Orbs can be used to imprison unsuspecting enemies on command of a Nexid from a caste above Nexid odalisque. Creatures imprisoned in this manner can be freed only through magical means, as brute force destroys anything immured within the orb. The Game Master can assign a residual negative effect after any amount of imprisonment.



ORBIS DOLOR

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

The *orbis dolor* is a small sphere enchanted for the purpose of defending its owner. It improves your armor class by 2, so long as it is either carried in hand or in a bag, backpack, etc. Its powers are bound to the lifeforce of its owner and cannot be transferred to another except upon death. Its link to its owner is established upon initial contact.

Once per day, the orb can create a shockwave with a 40-foot-radius that pushes attackers who fail a DC 15 Strength saving throw back 10 feet and knocks them to the ground. In order to activate this function, you must be holding the sphere in your hand and sense danger. It can be triggered by false alarms or noncombat threats. This function works based on the instinctive alert state of the person or creature to whom it is bound. Additionally, during the encounter where the knockback power is unleashed, any adversary that attempts to cast a spell within the ring of combat must succeed on a Concentration check or the spell fizzles and the spell slot is lost.

PERDU BAND

Wonderous item, common

A *perdu band* is woven intricately with tiny green vines that adjust to fit your finger.

When commanded, this band grants you the ability to hide in shadows. The only requirement is a shadow. You can use an action to expend a charge, and while you remain immobile and silent within the shadow, you are effectively invisible. You can remain in a hidden state until physical exhaustion forces involuntary movement. When crafted, a *perdu band* is imbued with 2d6 charges. When you use the last charge, the band disintegrates into dried plant powder.



QUILL OF CORRESPONDENCE

Wondrous item, rare

A useful tool in communicating, the quill can be a double-edged sword. The *quill of correspondence* grants you the ability to write in any nonmagical language. The resulting missive is quite understandable to a native speaker. The quill, however, in no way acts as a translator beyond direct transcriptions, so nuance and idiom are likely to be misinterpreted — sometimes with terrible consequences. Depending on the degree of difficulty of the target language and/or the amount known of the culture with which you are attempting communication, there is a base 10% chance of having key phrases be “lost in translation.” Failure in communication can occur to the extent that the opposite meaning of the missive is communicated. This chance of miscommunication increases with your degree of unfamiliarity with the language or culture. The scaling chance of failure, and the potential effects of miscommunication, are to be determined by the Game Master.

The communicative properties of a *quill of correspondence* can also be used to communicate with illiterate beings. The quill grants you the ability to write phonemes that can then be read aloud to an audience. Any listener that hears the spoken translation has a 20% chance of understanding the basic meaning of the communication.

THE SENTINEL'S HELM

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

The blackmetal helm is imbued with Nexid powers. The helmet has three eyeholes equally spaced around it. One is just a hole that allows for normal vision. The second grants you truesight to 210 feet. The third has a small ring around it that mates with the eyepiece of the spyglass. The spyglass can be activated only while wearing the *sentinel's helm*. The helmet also grants immunity from mind-affecting spells. Once donned, the helmet can be removed from its living wearer only through *remove curse*, *wish*, or similar magic. Each week that the helm is worn, you must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw to avoid becoming the next sentinel under Nexid control.

THE SENTINEL'S SPYGLASS

Wondrous item, very rare

The outside world is clear and vibrant through this spyglass. Depending on how the controls are set, you can see in the infrared, ultraviolet, or visible bands, and can even see into the very high-energy bands. This may well cause insanity for those unaccustomed to seeing the world in so many different “colors.”

Some of the wavelengths allow invisible creatures to be seen, and others reveal alignment auras. Several locations are programmed into the control panel (see **Spyglass Viewing Locations Table**). Note that these views are in real time and dynamic.

TABLE 20: SPYGLASS VIEWING LOCATIONS

1d100	Location
01–06	The Nexid Gate cavern beneath Meanderbrook Monastery — looking out through the mouth (see <i>Whisper & Venom</i>).
07–21	A very cold treasure pile deep in the Gauntswept, surrounded by scintillating stalagmites and rainbow-colored running water.
22–45	A view through stone pillars, high up above a barren plane. There are a few bluffs hazy in the far distance.
46–55	A group of lizard folk relax near a frozen marsh. Daytime: They are sipping drinks and obviously enjoying the sunshine. Nighttime: Most of them are asleep, while a few stand guard, weapons to hand.
56–70	This view is mostly blocked. Close examination may reveal that a giant's leg fills the eyepiece, hiding an ornately carved ice wall. (Note: If rolled a second time, the leg may be gone, and the wall exposed to view.)
71–80	An ancient battlefield covered in skeletons and half-buried items of stone and steel.
81–90	A courtyard with large statues of soldiers facing down the viewer. At the top of the view are four draconic necks and heads seen from below and behind. A desiccated tree is among the statues.
91–95	An ornate but slovenly chamber complete with a fountain. There is a 5% chance of catching a scurilous gnome peeing in the fountain and a simultaneous 15% chance of a small fey creature sitting forlornly in one corner.
96–100	Deep space. Swirling galaxies and millions of stars. Or whatever your universe has out in the great beyond. One star appears to be the focus, however. One large, lonely, red star coming out from behind the darkness.

Note: Any additional areas may be added or substituted into this table to entice players toward other parts of your land; although the distance will not be obvious, combining the direction with some locational clues should get them there.

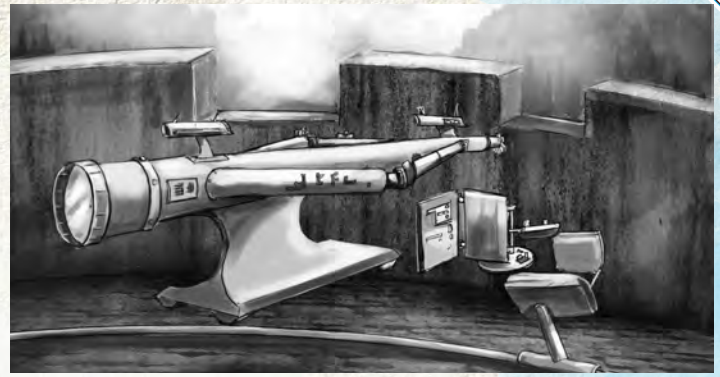


TABLE 21: SPYGLASS SPECTRA

1d100	Spectrum	Effects
01–10	Visible	The view is sharp, and colors are oversaturated.
11–20	Infrared	This spectrum shows heat variation using false color. Cold objects appear dark blue or black, warm objects green, and hot objects may be red, yellow, or even white. In general, creatures and objects tend to be hazy, and shadows and heat sources confuse the image even more.
21–30	Ultraviolet	Under the ultraviolet lens, objects are seen in monochrome, if at all. In order for this to be effective, there needs to be a source of ultraviolet light around (the sun being the brightest, but the moon can reflect enough to see by).
31–40	Invisible	Invisible objects and creatures can be seen against a muted backdrop of the normally visible. Edges and points are limned with a peach light.
41–50	Alignment auras	A nine-point color wheel may be developed. Appropriately colored auras hover around creatures and objects with strong associations.
51–70	Roll twice, ignoring repeats	With two or three spectra, the various images overlap, and possibly flicker. Most viewers develop a headache and slight confusion after only a few minutes. Some may become mesmerized. Lengthy viewing may cause dizziness and a DC 14 Constitution saving throw to avoid passing out for 1d4 rounds.
71–90	Roll thrice, ignoring repeats	
91–100	All five spectra	Combining all five spectra causes the viewer to doubt their hold on reality. While some images may be recognizable, as in a surrealist dream, nothing is sure. A concerted effort to make sense of the scene results in a 50/50 chance of permanently gaining or losing a point of intelligence.

Note: Some areas may be uninteresting under various spectra. Feel free to describe these as black or void, or to select another spectrum that is more interesting.



WAND OF WOE

Wand, common

This magical item looks like a twig; its origin and purpose are shrouded in mystery.

The wand quivers randomly. It exerts a telekinetic effect in

the direction in which it is pointed. The target feels a poking sensation. The *wand of woe's* range is five feet. Its effect is broken on contact. The wand's magic can be used thrice per day and renews each day at noon. It is an adynamic magical item. As such, its magical aura eludes detection 80% of the time.

Rumpis is determined to reclaim his *wand of woe* at any cost.

APPENDIX 3: SPECIFIC ENCOUNTER MECHANICS

All of these encounters or mechanics were designed to streamline play balance and to allow you to make a better determination as to whether they fit your game. The important encounters are broken down by the section in which they occur in *Whisper & Venom*.

AREA A

A6. ORCHARDS

The rhacos is listed as a random encounter and can easily be skipped by low-level parties. Based on the extinct “terror birds” of South America, the rhacos proved to make a fun surprise to players. The encounter was designed to be difficult to highlight the natural dangers of the surrounding woodland.

AREA B

B2: THE HALL OF MOURNING

Encounter Mechanic: When the pile of six inanimate bodies is approached, two bodies rise as 2 **restless**^{A1} and attack any party member in the chamber. After three rounds, another pair of **restless** animate and seek out characters — even after they leave the room. The final pair follow suit after another three rounds.

Note: This can be useful in play balancing by increasing the number of restless that rise at a time and/or increasing the number of rounds between the corpse animations. In playtests, the increase in time between groups rising led to a total party kill on one occasion when a pair of restless showed up at an inopportune moment in the chamber containing the malice (Area B9).

Then a second pair showed up.

AREA E

E4. THE DARK FOREST

Encounter with the Prime Byrgh: The prime picked up a magical device called the *orbis dolor*, which triggered when it sensed an adrenaline effect on its bearer. As the byrgh is not intelligent, the device activates once it detects any threat from the party.

Thus, the natural fear instinct of the prime triggers the knockdown wave that emanates from the orb.

Although the item description gives a time limited effect, the playtests allowed for a single repeat of its power once at the initiation of the next combat. This made the subsequent encounters (usually with one of the broodsource) slightly easier.

E11. THE GAUNTLET

This long tunnel is surrounded by a web of very small tunnels that barely allow the pair of attorals to slither from ambush point to ambush point.

This encounter can be handled in two ways:

► Choose four points in the 200-foot length of the chamber and have the two-round Viper Strike ambushes occur at these locations.

Use the following mechanic:

TABLE 22: GAUNTLET ENCOUNTER MECHANIC

Step	Mechanic
1	Determine distance to ambush point (3d20 feet)
2	Determine direction of Viper Strike (1d12 result = clock position)
3	Determine Viper Strike target (your choice)
4	Resolve damage
5	Repeat until total number of feet (Step 1) is greater than or equal to 200 feet

Upon entering the tunnel, roll 3d20 to determine distance (in feet) to the first ambush point, followed by a d12 that determines the clock position of the ambush point of origin (i.e., a roll of 12 equals an attack from 12 o'clock [straight overhead]; a roll of 4 equals an attack from 4 o'clock [lower right], etc.). The following table is provided for use if planning the encounter is better suited your style:

TABLE 23: EXAMPLE TABLE

Attack Number	Ambush Distance (3d20 feet)	Cumulative Result (in feet)	Clock Position (1d12 result)
1	28	28	6
2	33	61	3
3	30	91	11
4	32	113	9
5	38	151	7
6	41	192	4
7	19	Attoral retreat	End

After two combat rounds, the attoral retreats until the next ambush. It does not re-engage if brought below 5 hit points.

This mechanic repeats until the combined dice roll equals or exceeds a distance of 200 feet. If the attorals are not defeated, subsequent journeys require a repeat of this mechanic.

At your discretion, the attorals can continue to attack even if the characters decide to exit the gauntlet via the tunnel located in the northwest corner of the Precipice near the exit.

The type of attack (venom, strike, or both) is at your discretion. The playtests used all three options depending on party level and player experience.

TABLE 24: BLANK TABLE

Attack Number	Ambush Distance (3d20 feet)	Cumulative Result (in feet)	Clock Position (1d12 result)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

E14. NEXID ANTECHAMBER

The Nexid orbs that remain in the broken half-circle each contain a Nexid odalisque. As written, they are released once every three rounds if the orbs are not attacked or destroyed by other means. The mechanic for their destruction was intentionally left vague so you could use your systems preferred rules for attacking unusual targets (such as weapon damage or item saving throws).

This final encounter can be balanced for parties in many ways to lead to a challenging encounter. Examples that were tested were:

- ▶ Changing the speed between Nexid odalisque release
- ▶ Changing the number of Nexid odalisques that appear. Done either by the number that appear with each orb or stipulating that the destruction of an orb releases a Nexid odalisque, as opposed to destroying it.
- ▶ Increasing the number of Nexid soldiers that appear near the end of the encounter or increasing the power of its self-healing ability.

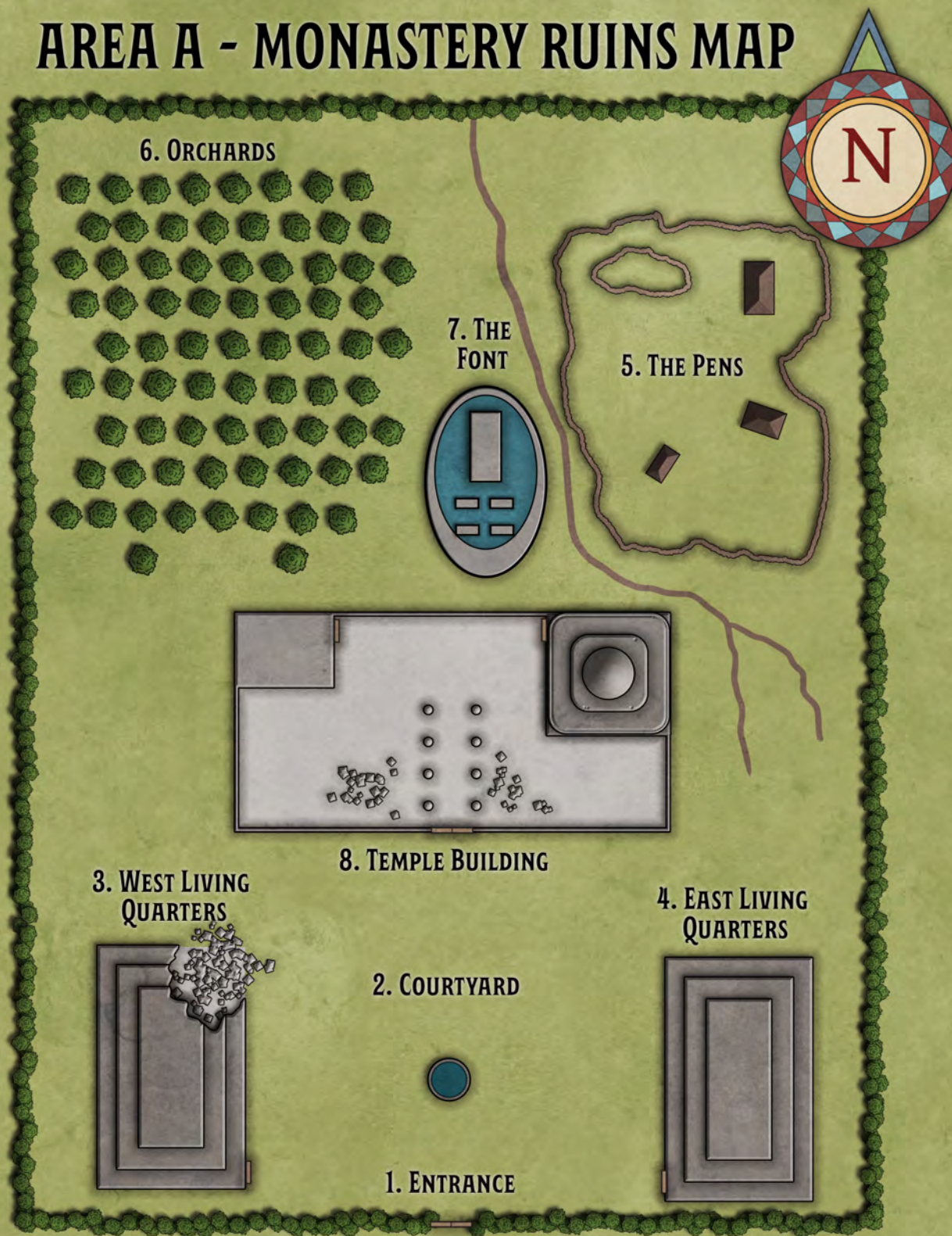
FINAL THOUGHTS

The above strategies are simply for consideration. **Whisper & Venom** was designed to be difficult with the understanding that the skill of the Game Masters running it made that decision easier. We are confident that you will make **Whisper & Venom** your own and that your campaigns will be as varied in every aspect as the playtests.



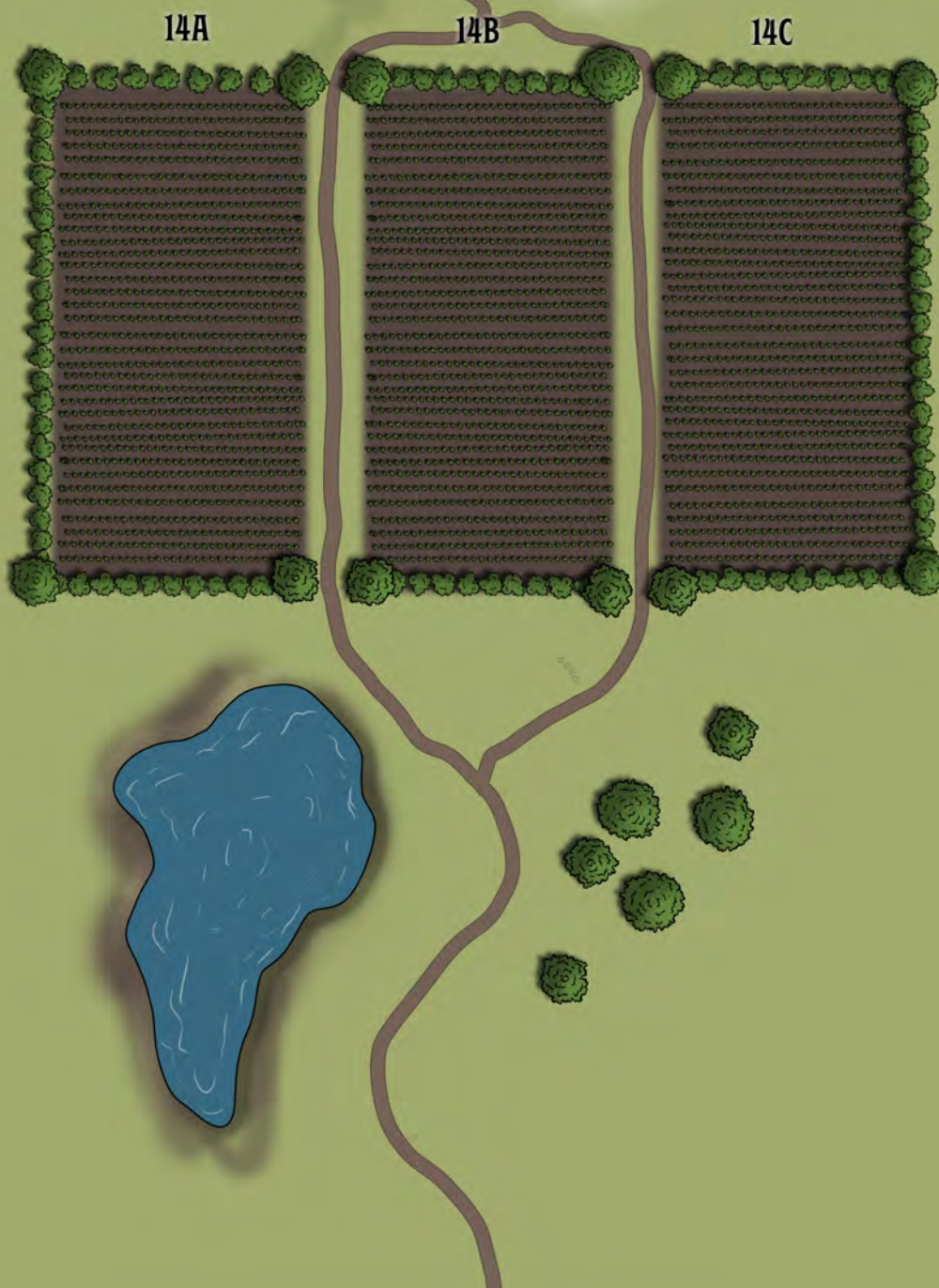
APPENDIX 4: ADVENTURE MAPS

AREA A - MONASTERY RUINS MAP



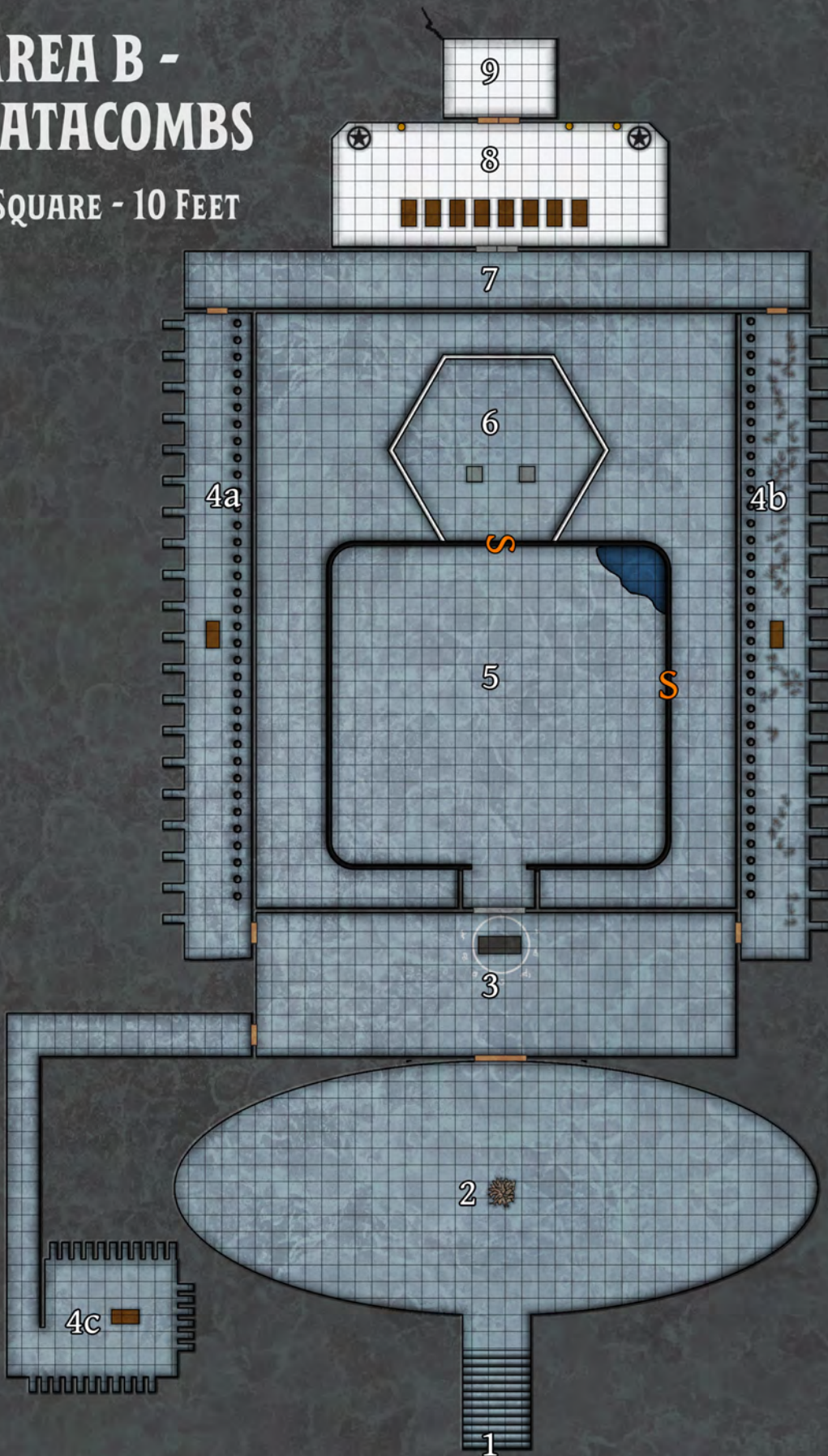
AREA A - MONASTERY RUINS MAP 2

AREA C
GOBLIN LAIR ENTRANCE



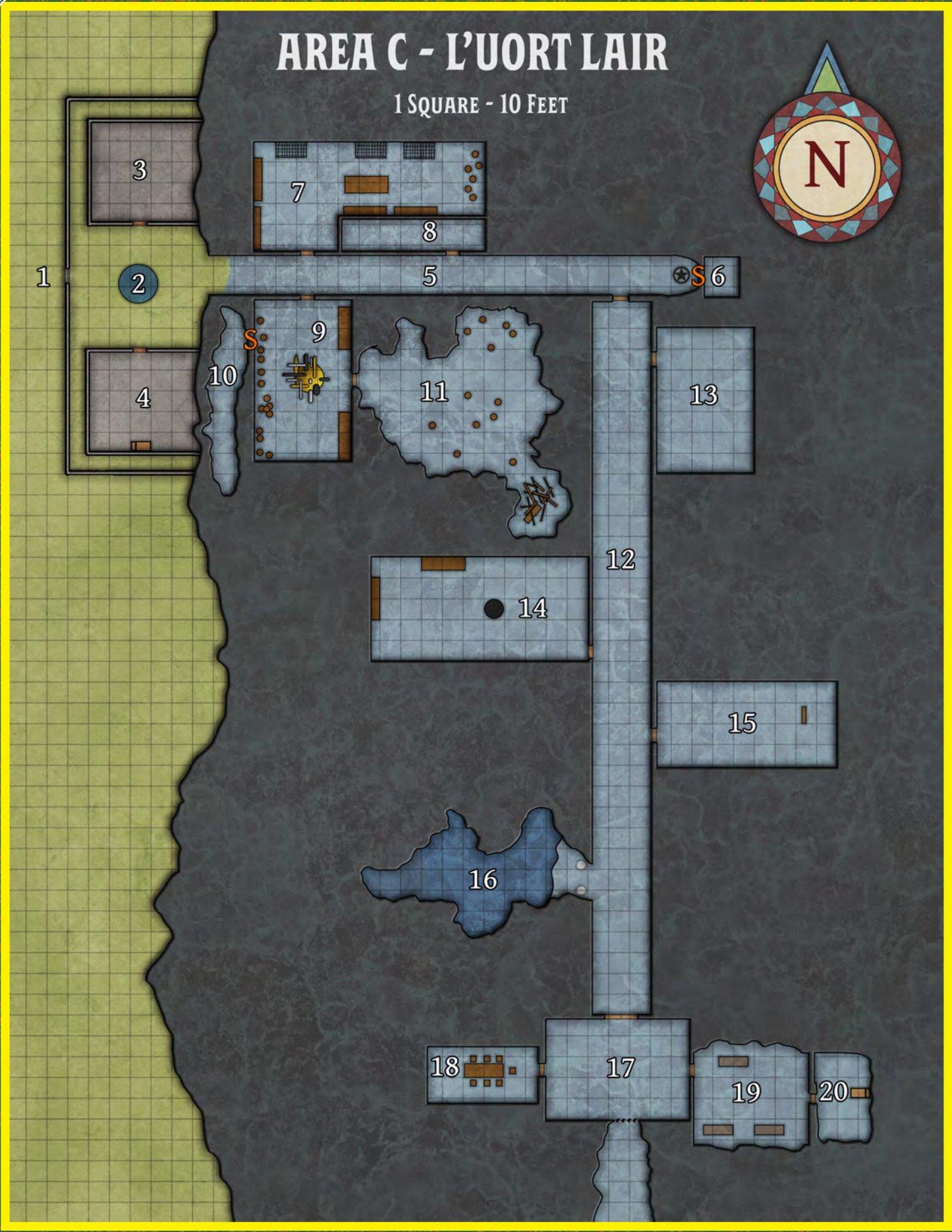
AREA B - CATACOMBS

1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



AREA C - L'UORT LAIR

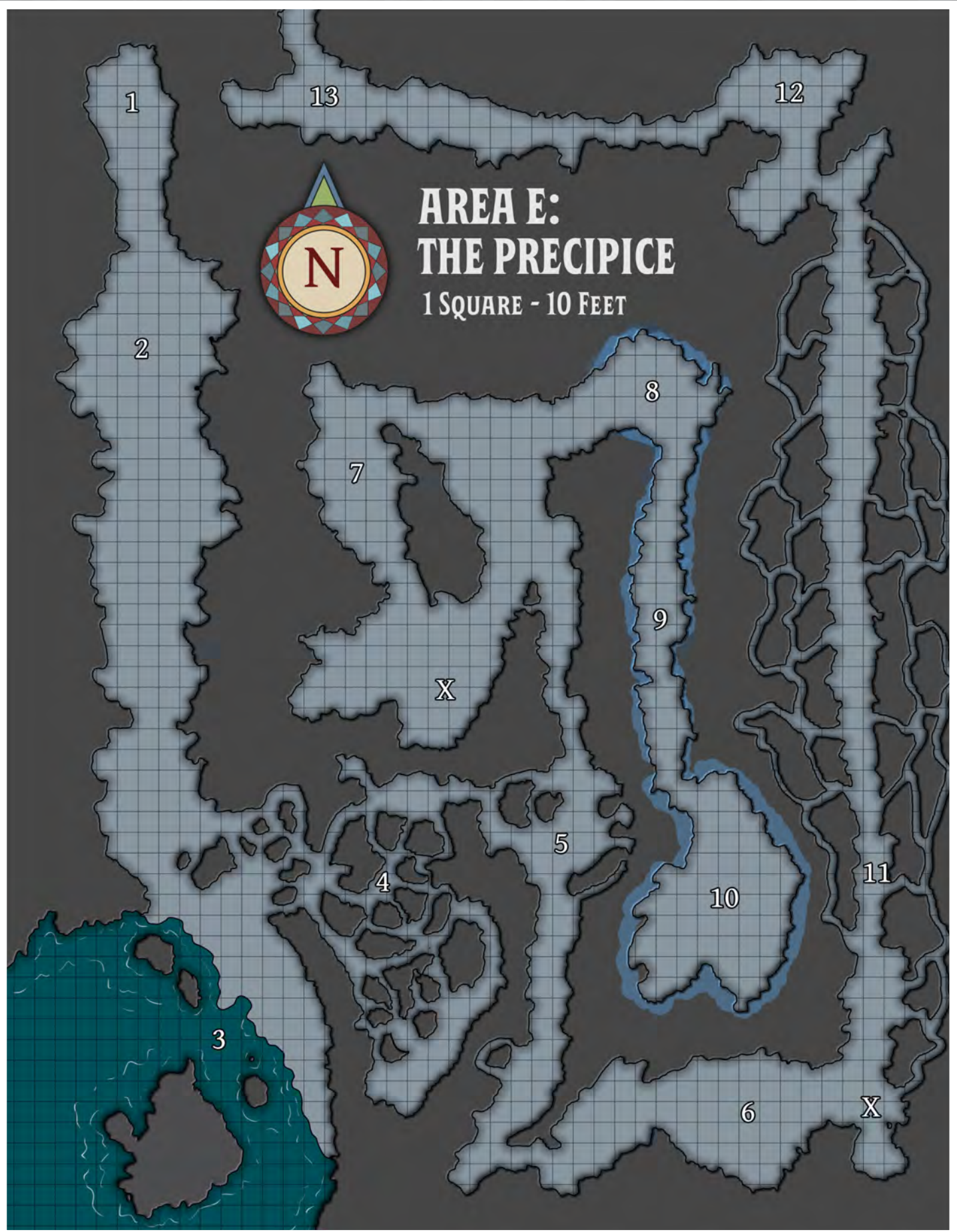
1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



AREA D: THE SUBTERRANE



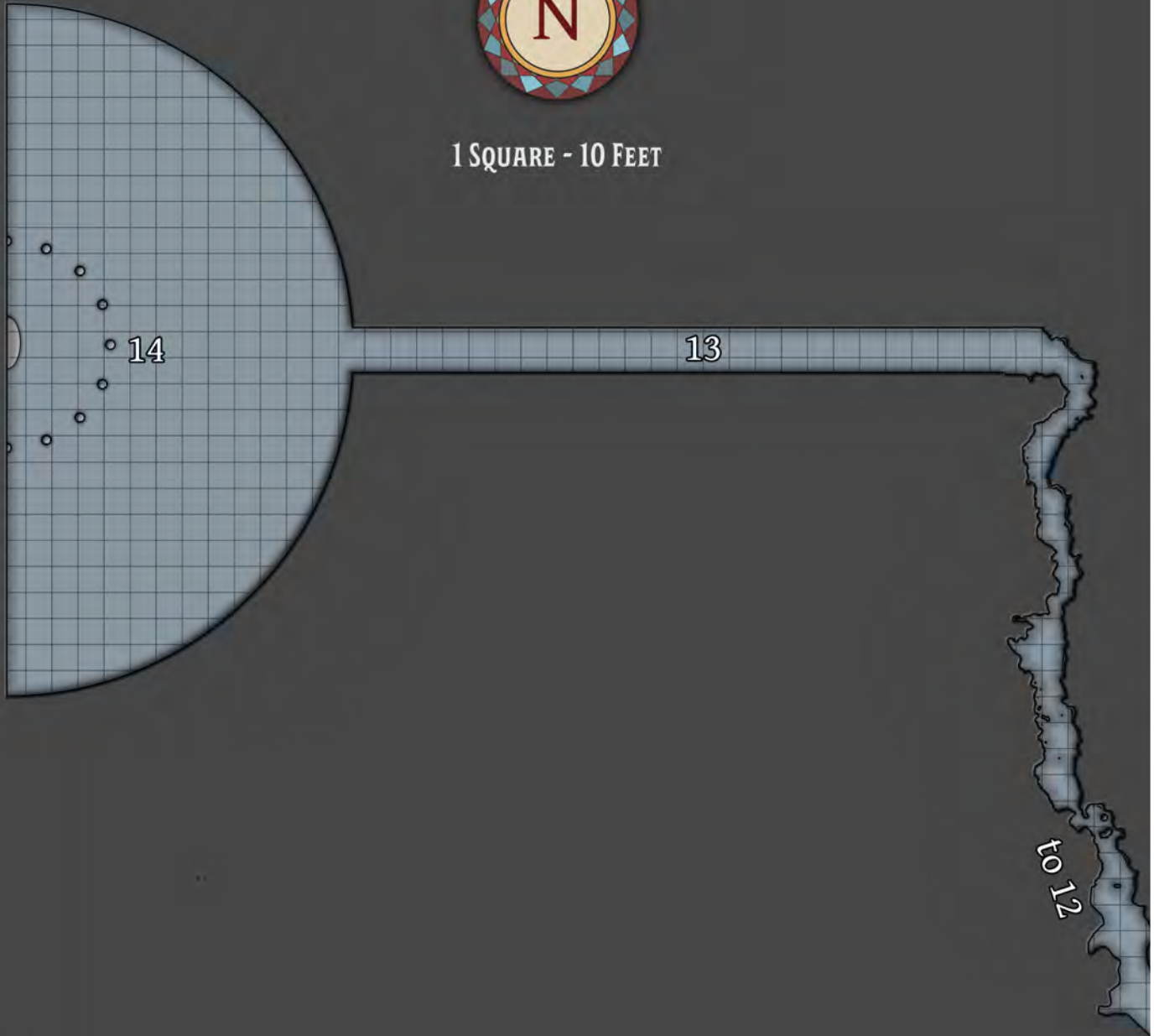
1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



AREA E - NEXID ANTECHAMBER



1 SQUARE - 10 FEET



OVERLAND MAP



THE DISTAFF

1 SQUARE - 10 FEET





IMP CAVERNS

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1/2	1/2	1	1	1/2	2	1	1	1
2		1/2	1	1	3/2	1	2	2	2
3			1/2	1	3/2	1	2	2	2
4				1/2	3/2	3/2	3/2	2	2
5					1/2	1	2	2	2
6						1/2	3/2	3/2	3/2
7							1	1	1
8								1/2	1/2
9	Rounds to Move								1/2

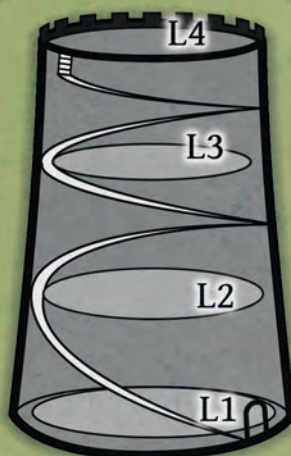


TOWER

Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Level 4



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