

DWARVEN FORGE<sup>®</sup>

# CAVERNS DEEP



Encounters 1-6

A Perilous Adventure for Character Levels 5-10

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## Encounters 1-6

### A Perilous Adventure For Character Levels 5-10

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Coming Soon... Encounters 7-15!



*“Lance the boil to fill the bog,  
Remake this muck as poison fog,  
To cursed Valoria you shall creep,  
On winds that blow from Caverns Deep.”*



# INTRODUCTION

*Welcome to Caverns Deep.* This is the second Dwarven Forge® full-length adventure (following the acclaimed Dungeon of Doom) utilizing the 5th edition of the world's most popular fantasy role playing game. The terrible tale of this adventure is played out in 15 interlinked encounters traversing sprawling caverns and outdoor areas, all specifically designed to use our Caverns Deep line of terrain. Each area of the caves or wilderness can be built exactly as described in the adventure, so what the players see on the table is exactly what the characters experience. The immersion is further enhanced by full-color player handouts, dynamic NPCs, and cinematic scenes, creating a game experience unlike any other.

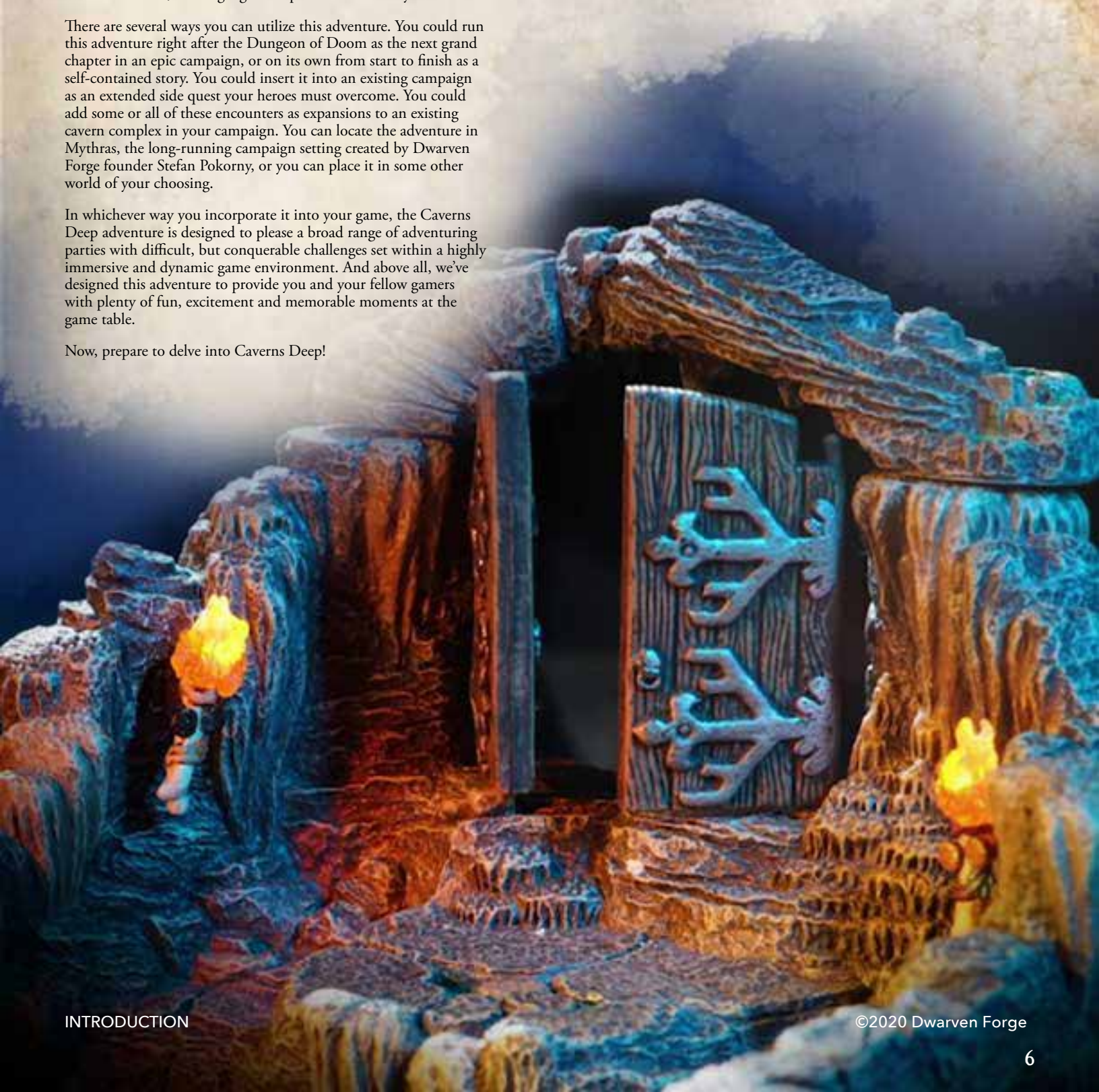
There are several ways you can utilize this adventure. You could run this adventure right after the Dungeon of Doom as the next grand chapter in an epic campaign, or on its own from start to finish as a self-contained story. You could insert it into an existing campaign as an extended side quest your heroes must overcome. You could add some or all of these encounters as expansions to an existing cavern complex in your campaign. You can locate the adventure in Mythras, the long-running campaign setting created by Dwarven Forge founder Stefan Pokorny, or you can place it in some other world of your choosing.

In whichever way you incorporate it into your game, the Caverns Deep adventure is designed to please a broad range of adventuring parties with difficult, but conquerable challenges set within a highly immersive and dynamic game environment. And above all, we've designed this adventure to provide you and your fellow gamers with plenty of fun, excitement and memorable moments at the game table.

Now, prepare to delve into Caverns Deep!

# STORY & SETTING

*Caverns Deep* is located under the Dreadhollow Forest, a dark and dense region far to the east of Valoria. Within these caverns Graemourna grows her cadaver cap mushrooms infused with the remains of Sysuul, the demigoddess defeated by heroes in the Dungeon of Doom adventure. Heroes in this adventure will explore the caverns, including ice catacombs and the tainted Underdome, and meet the many factions affected by Graemourna's machinations. The story culminates in a showdown against Graemourna at the stump of the ancient Spirit Tree in the Dreadhollow Forest.





## BACKGROUND FOR THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

The infamous and insidious illusionist, Zaltar the Prince of Phantasm, once again regrets making a deal with a powerful entity of ill repute. This time, he built a special summoning circle for a wicked hag known as Graemourna Fentangle. The circle gave Graemourna the power to magically ensnare living creatures and transport them into her lair, as well as allowing her to teleport minions from the circle to any destination within a hundred miles.

Suspicious of her motivations, Zaltar sent Doom the imp, his devilish familiar, into Graemourna's lair to spy on her activities. Doom returned with news that Graemourna appeared to be creating an eldritch plague of apocalyptic proportions. Doom returned infected with the disease and was incurable by any normal means. Zaltar immediately altered the magic of the summoning circle to limit its effectiveness: it can no longer teleport creatures out of the lair, and only works intermittently to bring them in. Now, certain that the hag will soon be aware of his meddling, Zaltar has summoned heroes to help him. Whether they agree to assist or not, he will send them into Graemourna's cave complex, hoping they will be able to thwart the hag's plans (and cure Doom's illness along the way).

## GRAEMOURNA'S STORY

Over the course of this adventure the player characters learn that Graemourna Fentangle is a powerful hag with plans to destroy Valoria, the greatest city in Mythras. Uncovering her history and motives increase the adventurers' chances of defeating her in the final confrontation. This section provides a short overview of the hag's origin story for the game master.

Abandoned in a wood not far from of the city of Valoria, a feral foundling was discovered by Elesra, a huntress who took her in and raised her as her own. She named the child Grae. But Grae showed no gratitude or love for Elesra for this act of kindness. Empathy and gratitude are alien concepts to those born hags. Grae despised her low station and looked up from the shadows with resentment at the tall towers and spires of the wealthy. Grae knew in her dark heart that she was destined to do many great and terrible things.

One day, while wandering in a city park, Grae happened upon a young girl who had fallen into a fountain and was drowning. Grae saved her, and the young hag found her first and only friendship. The girl, Kahna, turned out to be the daughter of an important noble family. Though the realm praised Grae for saving the girl, and Kahna's noble family invited her often to their home, Grae only pretended to accept their welcome; inside, she was overcome with jealousy. Kahna was rich and healthy, while Grae was poor and appeared sickly. Kahna had beautiful dark skin while Grae's was pockmarked and the dull gray tone for which her foster mother had named her. Kahna seemed not to notice their differences but Grae brooded in secret envy. Kahna's friendship might have warmed Grae's heart—but instead her resentment grew, ever growing in the face of her friend's "piteous" kindness. In the end, something sinister drew them closer than ever before.

On her thirteenth birthday, Grae looked upon Kahna and felt an uncanny tether between she and her friend. Her Hag birthright was beginning to manifest. Kahna's life debt from all those years ago was festering, molding.





It was a debt that had to be repaid—a life for a life. And payment was due. New powers were growing within Grae—abilities to collect what was owed. Ever so carefully, Grae tugged at the energy she felt between them, and in return she felt Kahna's strength become hers. Each day, she siphoned more of Kahna's vitality. Grae grew stronger, and her features changed. Others thought she looked uglier, but Grae found her new misshapen form beautiful. Kahna grew sicklier and frailer, but Grae could not stop herself.

Kahna's family hired a cleric, who divined that an evil fey creature was drawing away her life and beauty. Grae's visible transformation made it very easy to find the culprit. The family confronted Grae and called for her execution, but Kahna asked for mercy. Respecting the wishes of the victim, Grae was instead magically exiled from the city for life, sent back to the forest from whence she came. When Kahna died a few weeks later, Grae shed not one tear and smiled wickedly as she devoured Kahna's last gasp. Thus ended her first corrupted bargain with another creature.

Filled with hatred and swearing revenge for her exile, Grae renamed herself Graemourna and embraced what she was, what she had been since her birth: a Hag. In the tangled depths of the forest she explored portals to realms of shadow, bargained with wicked powers, and brewed vile concoctions, while experimenting on hapless creatures, allying herself with a diabolical coven, and plotting her return to Valoria. But this was not just about revenge. This was her chance to remake the realm in her image. A world for her, by her, and destroying that which has no place in it.

#### USING GRAEMOURNA'S PAST:

Adventurers will have a chance to learn about Graemourna's history in several places in the adventure, but you should feel free to share bits and pieces whenever it will be impactful.

The yorghrim, the Head of Security, Graemourna's notes and books, and even hallucinogenic visions from exposure to cadaver blight could all provide glimpses into the villain's story. Graemourna herself could tell her tale when she engages the characters. When Graemourna uses a human illusory form, it can be Kahna's appearance that she imitates.

### GRAEMOURNA'S REVENGE

The bitter hag has been formulating her plan (and stewing in her hatred of Valoria) for decades. Graemourna aims to infect the city of Valoria with a hideous fungus. This infection will kill everyone, destroy the beauty of the majestic city, and rapidly spread across the rest of Mythras. Ultimately, Graemourna is aiming to transform the landscape into a dismal wasteland where she can reign supreme.

**Caverns Deep:** Graemourna chose as her home an ancient network of caverns infused with energy from the forest above. The Caverns Deep were home to lizardfolk, dwarves and smugglers, but Graemourna slew them or drove them into hiding. She sealed the natural exits with walls of ice and summoned a blizzard to keep anyone from approaching. Within the caverns she now harnesses fell energies, using them to grow and empower her plague.

**Sysuulian Sludge:** Graemourna needed a source of great power and corruption with which to create the disease that would end Valoria. By chance, she learned that the wizard Zaltar had captured the demigod Sysuul within the Dungeon of Doom. Graemourna tried to bargain for Sysuul's soul, but Zaltar would not trust her with Sysuul's fate. So, the hag waited, and when she heard that heroes had bested the dungeon and defeated Sysuul, Graemourna collected the necrotic essence of the demigod's remains and used it to grow the cadaver caps (see below). Like Sysuul herself, this vile sludge is deadly and nearly unstoppable. Encounter 14 features a vast cavern filled with the Sysuulian sludge.

**Cadaver Caps:** Deep in the Shadowfell Graemourna discovered necrotic fungi capable of spreading and enhancing poisons and disease. Infused with Sysuulian sludge, the mushrooms parasitically infect living creatures with cadaver blight through contact or the release of spores. An affected creature's body blisters with red boils filled with infectious mucus and they die within days. Pseudopods emerging from the corpse quickly grow more cadaver caps. With this fungal plague Graemourna aims to destroy Valoria and overcome all of Mythras. The hag cultivates cadaver caps in gardens found in encounters 7 and 14.

**Dreadhollow Forest and the Spirit Tree:** Graemourna's caverns sprawl beneath a vast ancient forest known the Dreadhollow. Near the cavern's exit, the massive Spirit Tree extends its roots into the Elemental Chaos and the Feywild, creating a site of immense power. A fearsome being known as an apex primordial slumbers within the Spirit Tree. Graemourna killed the dryads that protected the tree, and contact with the Sysuulian sludge has now corrupted both the tree and the primordial. Graemourna aims to use the primordial to circumvent her magical exile. The Spirit Tree is found in Encounter 15.

**Chained Conduit Crystals:** The Spirit Tree's power caused a pocket of powerful Feywild crystals to grow beneath its roots. Dwarves mined five of these crystals and enhanced their innate magical properties through ritual magic. Graemourna stole these five crystals and bound the souls of defeated heroes to each crystal, further enhancing their power. The five crystals (in Encounters 2, 6, 7, 10, and 14) periodically fill with fey essence, then release waves of energy across the caverns. The energy causes the Sysuulian sludge and cadaver caps to grow and become more virulent. Prolonged exposure to this magical energy enhances the magical and bestial nature of living things. If the adventuring party can gather at least four chained crystals, they can gain information from the captured souls and disrupt Graemourna's plans.

Graemourna has lashed these glowing crystals with Fellsteel to the walls throughout Caverns Deep. Each crystal exists in two worlds simultaneously—the Feywild and the Prime Material—and can channel magical energy back and forth between both worlds. Graemourna uses the crystals as boosters to spread Feywild energy from the Heartshard to the cadaver cap toadstools growing throughout Caverns Deep and into the necrotic sludge of the Underdome.

Roughly every hour, the crystals blaze with green light and a wave of magical energy washes through the caverns. However, other events may cause the crystals to send out a wave of magical energy before the hour (these magic wave triggers will be annotated in the encounters). If these energies break over the group while they are in sight of a crystal, any adventurer currently infected by cadaver blight must make an Exposure check (see “Exposure Checks” on page 14).





If the crystal has not yet released its energy within the last half hour of its recharge, any character preparing to remove the crystal senses that power has reached some level of saturation. They realize it may be dangerous to remove the chains at this time. If they still remove the crystal, it will automatically release a 30-foot wave of energy. In addition, the harmful burst of energy described below is unleashed, regardless of whether dispel magic or a successful skill check have been employed. Anyone within 30 feet of the crystal must attempt a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. A creature in the area takes 25 (4d10 + 3) force damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one. This will count as an Exposure check event for everyone with cadaver blight within 30 feet of the crystal.

Once it has pulsed and through the first half hour of its recharging towards the next hourly pulse, the crystal is no longer vibrating as dangerously. A dispel magic spell safely undoes the chains, allowing the removal of the crystal. Succeeding on a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Thieves' Tools) check also allows a character to remove the crystal. Either failing at a check or simply using brute force to break the chains releases the crystal but also unleashes a burst of energy as if they attempted to release it when the crystal was within the last half hour of recharging the pulse; however, an Exposure check is not needed as the energy release is not sufficient to stir the spores within the infected.

After the chains have been removed, a creature can use its action to attempt to pry a crystal from a wall, requiring success on a DC 12 Strength check. If the creature uses mining tools such as a pick or shovel to perform this action, it gains advantage on the check. Once removed from the wall, the Feywild crystal no longer pulses with magical energy. If a character attunes to it, they can harness its powers. The players can opt to discard or keep the Fellsteel chains.

**Oath-bound Yorghrim:** Graemourna has bound the yorghrim warchief, Jarl Ansgar and members of his Clan Skölskyl into service when "curing" the jarl's beloved ailing wife Sunhild. The Clan must serve her a year and a day for their debt. The icy-blue warriors serve in many capacities in her scheme as muscle and oversight. Fealty is a core tenet of the yorghrim, and they are difficult to sway against their mistress. Even though all but the jarl have been transformed into another monstrous form, they have remained loyal servants to her.

**Heartshard:** Graemourna found a massive Feywild crystal in the Crystal Caverns (Encounter 13). Experimenting, she was able to bind a soul to it and bend it to her will. Graemourna has currently trapped Sunhild, queen of a powerful yorghrim tribe, forcing the fey creatures to serve her. Graemourna plans to use the heartshard to take over the apex primordial, allowing the hag to overcome her magical exile from Valoria so she can bring the plague to the city.

**Summoning Chamber:** Graemourna convinced Zaltar to create a teleportation circle that would snatch unsuspecting creatures from the surrounding countryside and deposit them in her lair for infection. The circle is also supposed to allow her to return the infected back to the wild, but the magic is not working reliably and at present only allows creatures to be brought in. Unbeknownst to Graemourna, Zaltar regretted giving her the circle and has caused it to malfunction in order to slow down her plot. The summoning chamber is found in Encounter 1.

**Unnatural Frost:** Worried that someone might come snooping, Graemourna has been casting *control weather* daily at dawn, creating a permanent blizzard around her region of the forest to ward off prying eyes and unexpected guests. The spell is cast as part of a powerful ritual using Graemourna's staff and the Runic Column found in Encounter 12.



## THE YORGHIRM

Graemourna has tricked a clan of powerful yorghrim, blue-skinned horned fey of arctic origins, into serving her. They act as her brute force and muscle. The yorghrim slaughtered the majority of the lizardfolk tribe living in the caverns as well as the bulk of the smugglers operating here. Of late the hag has been sending them into nearby villages to capture test subjects. Originally, this group of yorghrim were ruled by the married couple Ansgar and Sunhild; but when Sunhild sickened, Ansgar was stricken with grief and unable to rule capably. As a result, the tribe fell under Graemourna's corrupting influence, and now all but Ansgar have been transformed into hideous monsters. The tragic tale of the yorghrim is told in Encounter 6.

## MANX AND THE SMUGGLERS

Until recently, a band of more than a dozen smugglers used the caverns as a base of operations, sailing in and out through a hidden river entrance. The smugglers had a tenuous agreement with the lizardfolk, bartering weapons and goods in exchange for safe passage.

Graemourna froze the river entrance (found in Encounter 8), trapping the smugglers in the caverns. The band tried to attack her, but they were easily defeated. Only three terrified survivors remain. Manx the ratling rogue has been captured and can be found in Encounter 4. She will try to convince the characters to escort her to the savage gorge so she can get to the camp. Tiberious the tiefling wizard and Bronzo the human barbarian are holed up in the smuggler's cove (Encounter 9) and are working on a desperate plan to defeat the hag. If only they had allies!



## SKISS-RYSSA AND THE LIZARDFOLK

A large lizardfolk tribe has made their home in the caverns for generations. Graemourna placed cadaver caps near their homes, turning the lizardfolk into test subjects and using pestilence to dwindle their numbers.

The tribe's leader is the mighty lizardqueen Skiss-Ryssa. She has become convinced that only violence will appease the lizardfolk's gods and allow them victory over the hag. The tribe was once willing to parley and bargain with other sentient creatures (such as the smugglers and the dwarves) but now they use parley as a ruse to gain sacrifices for their Skullfeast ritual. War masks are important to the tribe and can be used against them or perhaps to temporarily gain their trust. The tribe keeps a few guards at the savage gorge (Encounter 8), with the rest of the tribe found at their shrine (Encounter 10).

## THE ROOTWALKERS

A large lizardfolk tribe has made their home in the caverns for The Spirit Tree's connection to the Elemental Chaos and fey realms have strengthened many beasts living in the caverns below. Cultists known as Rootwalkers were drawn to the caverns, undertaking deadly ritual hunts against the mighty lizardfolk. The cultists wore lizardfolk masks to honor their prey, and the lizardfolk respected them for this. Devoted to the hunt and the slaughter, the cultists eventually underwent transformations, becoming beastly creatures themselves. The Rootwalkers fought against the dryads, dwarves and lizardfolk, and over time few remained. The last of the Rootwalkers has succumbed to Graemourna's cadaver caps and can be found in Encounter 3.

## THE DWARVES

The dwarven artificer Lorm Stonebones tunneled into the cavern from a distant underground stronghold to mine the Feywild crystals that grew around the roots of the Spirit Tree. Descendants of the dwarves of the Erinthors, they were master craftsmen and held the rare knowledge of building a magical dwarven forge capable of smithing the legendary Dwarvenite. No dwarves remain, for they dug too close to the Spirit Tree and the dryads guarding the sacred grove slaughtered them for their intrusion. The ruins of their dwellings and workshop are in Encounter 5, while the dwarven forge is now being used by the yorghrim in Encounter 6.







## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Below are short summaries of each encounter in Caverns Deep.

**Introduction:** The adventurers hear rumors of kidnappings in the village of Arlen near the Dreadhollow Forest. As they investigate, they are approached by the enigmatic Zaltar. He has unique knowledge of the caverns and eventually teleports them into the caves (regardless of whether they accept his quest).

**Encounter 1 – Summoning Chamber:** The adventurers appear in a chamber used to draw unsuspecting creatures into the caverns. Feral blink dogs are feasting on the latest victims and intend to feast on the heroes as well. Signs of infection can be found here, hinting at the mysterious purpose of this dark place.

**Encounter 2 – Prison Passage:** A jail cell along a tunnel holds Mercer, a prisoner who suffers from a terrible infection. The characters can study his condition, as well as the strange mushrooms known as Cadaver Caps. The violet chained conduit crystal can be found here, and its effect upon Mercer should leave no doubt as to the dangers the heroes face.

**Encounter 3 – Bestial Cliff:** A massive minotaur is the last of a cult known as the Rootwalkers. Succumbing to Graemourna's disease, it hungers for one last battle. An artificer's strongbox can also be found here, but the characters cannot open it until they find its counterpart.

**Encounter 4 – Webbed Lair:** Giant webs obscure one passage, while two yorghrim have an important prisoner in a sack. If rescued, the prisoner—a smuggler named Manx, a ratling rogue—requests that the heroes escort her to Encounter 8. Beyond the webs lurks Sunhild, a yorghrim transformed into a terrible beast.

**Encounter 5 – Cave of Ruin:** Once a dwarven workshop and dwelling place, this cave still holds valuable secrets. To claim them, the characters must face the corrupted remnants of dryads that the dwarves once angered.

**Encounter 6 – Covert War Camp:** The yorghrim clan is here, creating items for Graemourna's war using an ancient dwarven forge. Jarl Ansgar is the only one in yorghrim form, the other clan members having been transformed by Graemourna's cursed magic. If the heroes can learn Sunhild and Ansgar's tragic tale, they may avoid a battle and gain important information. The azure conduit crystal can be found here.

**Encounter 7 – Mushroom Grotto:** An angry and infected bulette patrols the growing site for thousands of mushrooms. The towering Corpsecrown fungus presents additional dangers for a party trying to cross the grotto to one of its many exits. The characters may traverse this area several times depending on the course of their explorations. An amber conduit crystal can be found here.

**Encounter 8 – Savage Gorge:** A bridge over a raging river presents an opportunity to meet the lizardfolk who have reasons to invite the characters to their "Skullfeast" ceremony. A concealed route leads to Encounter 9.

**Encounter 9 – Smuggler's Cove:** Manx's remaining smuggler crew is holed up here: Tiberious the tiefling wizard and Bronzo the human barbarian. A dangerous creature emerges from the river, giving the smugglers and heroes reason to work together. The smugglers have a plan for taking on Graemourna but need the characters' help. The second artificer's strongbox can be found here.

**Encounter 10 – The Shrine of Skiss-Ryssa:** Atop a towering pedestal awaits Skiss-Ryssa, the lizardfolk's ferocious warrior-queen. She and the gathered lizardfolk invoke the power of the tribal totem, hoping to sacrifice the characters for their Skullfeast ritual. The citrine conduit crystal can be found here.

**Encounter 11 – Hag's Den:** Graemourna's den is overflowing with strange and dangerous items she has collected over many decades. Graemourna is away casting her control weather ritual, giving the characters a chance to investigate. Information and power can be found here, but deadly traps lurk among the treasures.

**Encounter 12 – Ice Catacombs:** This massive cavern holds the Rimescrawl Pillar. The smugglers have a ritual to disrupt Graemourna's plans, if the frozen dead can be held off long enough and the ritual completed before she returns! Graemourna can be dealt a serious blow, but she will retaliate by flooding the caverns, forcing the heroes to race against time.

**Encounter 13 – Crystal Caverns:** Glowing crystals illuminate this chamber, and in the center is the massive Heartshard, which holds the spirit of Sunhild and is integral to Graemourna's plans to take over the Spirit Tree's primordial guardian. The Heartshard and Graemourna's gate-warden or "head of security" can both prepare the heroes for the final confrontation.

**Encounter 14 – The Underdoom:** Teleporters into this cavern split the party into dangerous side chambers on either side of a sea of black Sysuulian sludge. Floating driftstones allow a perilous journey over the deadly sludge as the characters work to defeat two floating eldritch eyes and stop Graemourna from conducting a ritual before she flees. The crimson conduit crystal can be found here.

**Encounter 15 – Dreadhollow Forest:** As the adventurers exit the caverns, they face the yorghrim jarl's brother. Faerie rings allow teleportation, while bramble patches entangle the unwary. Zaltar meets the characters and clears a wall of brambles. Beyond awaits the Spirit Tree—and Graemourna. Her defeat, however, is the final stage of her plan, allowing her soul to be placed into the unstoppable primordial slumbering below the Spirit Tree. Realizing that Graemourna has used the Heartshard to exchange her soul, the heroes must escape the primordial and enter the caverns once more. If they can use the Heartshard to exchange a soul for that of the primordial, Graemourna's soul will be trapped within the Heartshard and the heroes will be victorious.





# RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

The player characters need a reason to travel to the Dreadhollow Forest. Here are two plot hooks suitable for all characters:

### TRAVELING TO DREADHOLLOW FOREST

It is about a week's travel from Valoria to the forest. You may wish to extend the adventure by adding encounters as the PCs travel south or allow them to investigate a village or two. If they stop at the village of Arlen, they will likely encounter at least one inhabitant who saw a strange blue-skinned horned brute grab a villager and drag them into the woods.

Once you are ready for the adventure to begin, Zaltar will appear before the party as described in A Meeting with Zaltar, below.

## SCALING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure is suitable for 5th–10th level characters. Each encounter provides scaling information so that you may adjust the adventure to the average party level (APL) of your players.

Determining APL:

To find the average party level, sum the levels of all characters in the party, divide by the number of characters, and round up fractions of 0.5 or greater. A party with two level 7 characters and two level 8 characters would average 7.5, so you would use the APL 8 monsters and the first tier of DCs and damage.

Monsters:

When monsters are encountered, a table indicates the number and type of monsters that appear, based on the party's APL.



## EXPOSURE CHECKS

Graemourna has been conducting experiments throughout the caverns, creating many opportunities for the characters to become infected by cadaver cap mushrooms. Some areas are more dangerous than others, but even the air can carry tiny spores and expose the characters to cadaver blight! Whenever the characters take a long rest, or when the adventure specifically calls for one, the characters must make an Exposure check. If a chained conduit crystal pulses a magical wave and creates a spore release (see “**Chained Conduit Crystals**,” page 8), characters must make an Exposure check. Direct exposure to spore release or a creature deeply infected with cadaver blight may trigger an Exposure check in certain encounters.

**Exposure Check:** Each character exposed to infection must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. The DM may modify this DC up or down depending on the exposure circumstances or grant advantage or disadvantage on the check.

- Success allows the character to survive the exposure event without developing any symptoms—their immune system is so far fighting off the infection.
- Failure at the Exposure check means the character is succumbing to the cadaver blight within them and are infected. They develop a symptom. This is represented by drawing from the Infection Deck.

Note that even if a character succeeds at an Exposure check, they already have a dormant variant of cadaver blight within them. From the moment they started breathing in the air of the caverns, their system has begun slowly absorbing the deadly spores and the players will eventually die if a cure is not discovered! A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Medicine) check confirms this.

Players who become infected after an Exposure check must each then roll 3d4 plus Constitution modifier to determine the number of days it will take for the blight to kill them. Paladins and players who succeed on the first Exposure check roll 3d8 plus Constitution modifier to determine how many days it will take for the disease to kill them.

A *lesser restoration* spell will protect a creature from the next Exposure check or if exposed, they can remove an Infection Card of their choice.

## INFECTION DECK

Cadaver blight is a terrible magical disease. Anyone exposed to it contracts it and will usually die within days. See the information on cadaver caps in the Graemourna’s Revenge section above. As an infected body succumbs to the disease, it manifests symptoms. The symptoms vary due to variations in the energies the mushrooms have absorbed and in how the disease manifests in different individuals. Additional sources of cadaver cap spores or associated energies can cause the disease to worsen, manifesting additional symptoms. In rare cases, the symptoms can be helpful, but they are usually malign.

You can use the Infection Deck as a set of cards to randomly pull from or roll from an Infection Table to determine these symptoms (See Appendix D). The Infection Deck can also be found as a PDF at [Insert URL].

**Drawing from the Infection Deck:** When a character fails an Exposure check, they must draw one card from the Infection Deck, a deck of mutations both beneficial and horrid. Some effects are temporary, others permanent until a cure is found. In rare cases, they may draw more than one card or get to choose. Such exceptions will be noted along with the triggering circumstances.



The following optional rules can help you adjust Exposure checks for your particular group of players.

**Stacking the Deck:** Some cards may fit a particular situation better than others. You could remove some cards or build a smaller deck to reflect a specific Exposure check. Such a draw should be a rare occurrence and be an enjoyable experience for the players.

**Improving the Odds:** If the characters are having too much of a challenge, you can reward them after a success (for example, after they finish the ritual in the Ice Catacombs, or if they have searched for a cure among Graemourna’s notes). From that point forward, when a character fails an Exposure check, they pull two cards from the Infection Deck and pick which one they keep.

**Infection Card Limits:** If the characters have too many active exposures, you can limit the number of active Exposure checks to a number that seems more manageable. Whenever a character has to draw a card from the Infection Deck and is already at the maximum number, they may either choose one to discard or roll to determine which one they discard (your choice).

## RESTING WHILE WITHIN THE CAVERNS DEEP

Before the characters reach Encounter 12, they may take rests as often as they dare. However, resting after they have reached Encounter 2 is dangerous. The risk of developing a harmful infectious trait is likely to put a limit on how often the party takes a long rest. The characters discover this danger the first time they take any type of rest, at the completion of that rest.

**Short Rest:** Each character taking a short rest must make an Exposure check. This check is made at advantage.

**Long Rest:** Each character taking a long rest must make an Exposure check.

Once the party reaches Encounter 12 and completes the ritual, Graemourna begins to flood the caverns. The flood waters deepen steadily, leaving only 24 hours for the party to escape; realistically, there will be time for only one more long rest once the flooding begins.



# A MEETING WITH ZALTAR

Before running this encounter, make sure you have given the player characters the plot hooks presented in the **Adventure Seeds** section. Review the section **Background for the First Encounter** to familiarize yourself with Zaltar's motivations.

As the adventurers enter Dreadhollow Forest, Zaltar appears before the party. Read or paraphrase the following:

*After days of travel you have reached the edge of Dreadhollow Forest. Dark frost-covered trees greet you and the ground bears more than a foot of snow, though the warmth of spring lies upon the surrounding lands. More snow seems imminent from the blue-gray clouds above, and a moaning wind brings a merciless chill.*

Allow the PCs some time to ask questions or investigate their surroundings. The following skill checks provide a general guideline of what might be discovered:

**The Storm:** A DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check confirms that the storm is magical in nature, similar to but more powerful than a control weather spell. With A DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check a character senses another magical effect in the area. A detect magic spell can reveal that the immediate area is saturated with latent conjuration magic.

**Knowledge of Dreadhollow Forest:** With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (History or Nature) check, a character recalls that Dreadhollow Forest is a large dense wood thick with animals and more dangerous creatures. There are said to be areas that lead to the fey realms within.

**Searching for Tracks:** There are no signs of game or other creatures, except for a set of human tracks the snow has almost covered up. The tracks lead behind a nearby tree...

When appropriate, have Zaltar make his appearance:

*Stepping out from behind a massive conifer is a sorcerous figure dressed in fur-lined blue and red robes. With his staff he strikes the ground, sending snow flying. "Behold! What heroes have come in this time of need? Who comes to see Zaltar, Prince of Phantasm, to help right wrongs? Who will face the Caverns Deep and their myriad dangers?"*

Zaltar then waits, allowing the characters to introduce themselves.

**If Characters Have Met Zaltar Before:** Those characters recognize that Zaltar's greeting is similar to the one he used to greet them in the Dungeon of Doom. If heroes from that adventure are present, Zaltar apologizes for any misunderstandings resulting from that adventure. He was merely doing what he could, he insists, to stop Sysuul from gaining ultimate power and destroying all of Mythras! He then proceeds to discuss the matter at hand.





## WHAT ZALTAR SHARES

Provide the information below as part of a conversation, allowing the characters to respond and ask questions. Unless noted otherwise, a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that Zaltar believes the information he provides to be true, or at least true enough.

- Zaltar avoids a lengthy introduction, merely stating that he is an illusionist of great power, interested in the events of the land.
- It has come to Zaltar's attention that Graemourna, a powerful fey creature, now lives within Dreadhollow Forest. She lairs in an underground series of caverns known as Caverns Deep.
- Graemourna is the cause of this unnatural weather. She is also using fey creatures to kidnap innocents from the nearby village. (If asked, the fey are horned, blue-skinned horned brutes known as yorghrim.)
- Graemourna also has a means to pull unsuspecting people and creatures from the surrounding areas into her lair. (If a character thinks to attempt a Wisdom (Insight) check and succeeds at a result of 15 or higher, they can sense Zaltar is holding back information. He can be pressed to admit that he had a hand in creating a summoning circle for her but insists that he only did it because it would allow him to sabotage her later.)
- There are rumors that Graemourna has a menagerie of strange creatures that she has collected over a span of many years: both pets and experiments. Graemourna likes to surround herself with ugly and terrible things, and this motley monstrous collection is no exception.
- Seeking information, Zaltar sent his familiar to investigate Graemourna's lair. He presents Doom, a red imp that has patches of green tendrils and red boils all over his skin. Doom is visibly not happy in his floating prison, scratching himself and glaring at the players.
- Doom learned that Graemourna is performing experiments on creatures. Whatever she is doing, it involves a dangerous contagion.
- Zaltar is keeping Doom confined in an invisible bubble of force to prevent contagion. Zaltar did try unsummoning and summoning his imp (even killing him), but the imp each time remained infected by the magical disease.
- Zaltar has manipulated the magical device Graemourna is using to pull creatures into her lair. It will function only periodically and does not allow her to send infected creatures back out to the forest. (If asked, Zaltar will admit that no one can use the device to leave the lair, even if not infected.)
- Graemourna's wicked plans must be fully uncovered and stopped. Zaltar calls upon the heroes to investigate and end the threat. She is an evil threat and ridding the land of her would be a good thing.
- Zaltar is very interested in a cure and presses the adventurers to search for one. (A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that his primary concern is Doom's well-being.)
- Zaltar can manipulate the teleportation device to transport the heroes directly to Graemourna's lair and suggests doing so at once!
- Characters may get the sense that Zaltar either doesn't know or doesn't choose to share additional details, though you could reward clever questions or exceptional roleplaying with the following: Zaltar has heard rumors from as far as the Shadowfell that Graemourna is planning something big. The only way he could find out anything about her machinations was when he learned that she needed a summoning circle and he volunteered to create one for no favor in return. Graemourna was suspicious but she was in dire need and accepted, allowing Zaltar to build in a backdoor where he could send agents to find out what she was up to, and to find out why in that location. He will not reveal more about the importance of this location but it's clear something about Cavern's Deep is crucial to both Graemourna and Zaltar.





### THE EASY WAY OR THE HARD WAY

If the characters do not trust Zaltar, he does his best to convince them of the importance of stopping Graemourna's plan. She clearly plans some sort of contagion, is kidnapping villagers and experimenting on them, and is likely manipulating the weather to keep people away!

If he can't win over the characters he apologizes profusely and speaks a single word of power. Zaltar has prepared a powerful spell ahead of time and releases it, transporting the characters into Caverns Deep and the summoning chamber he unwittingly constructed for Graemourna.

Whether they accept willingly or not, Zaltar's teleportation magic takes them to Encounter 1.

### ALTERNATE INTRODUCTION

If you are seeking to place Caverns Deep within your world and would rather not use Zaltar, consider using this alternate intro to take them to Encounter 1, Summoning Chamber.

Instead of following tracks leading to Zaltar, have the PC's make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, they notice a humanoid figure traveling through the trees at a hurried pace. For any character with the "My Friend Mercer" story hook, they recognize the figure as Mercer.





The figure does not respond to any calls to stop or answer to his name. If the party does not immediately follow, he does leave footprints behind to track. Once you feel it appropriate, read or paraphrase the following:

*Following the figure through the thick forest, you pass into a small glade. A particularly frigid wind shoots through you as you see the figure before you. He sits crouched on the ground violently digging through the snow.*

The players can hear the figure muttering to himself, "It's here, somewhere. Somewhere...just have to find it, then all is well." Approaching Mercer or calling out to him will have him repeat the same phrase until the players come within 10 feet of him:

*The air turns static, and the howling winds that came before ease into a neutral stagnation within the clearing. The snow falls evenly, and peacefully. A faint numbness permeates your body, as the smell of ozone overtakes you.*

Before they have a chance to react to this information any further, the static picks up, and the area around them shifts to darkness. Just before they are whisked away, the form of Mercer dissolve into a grey mist and reforms into a copy of each person in the group.



# ENCOUNTER 1: SUMMONING CHAMBER







## ENCOUNTER 1: SUMMONING CHAMBER

Zaltar's teleportation magic transports the characters into the perilous Caverns Deep! Zaltar built the summoning circle for Graemourna, but recently weakened it so it functions less often and only allows creatures to be brought into the chamber. This prevents Graemourna from sending infected creatures into Dreadhollow Forest and the city of Valoria ahead of her attack.

Important creatures are taken prisoner and used for experimentation. Others are fed to her feral blink dogs. The characters arrive just as the blink dogs are finishing a meal.

**Darkness:** The summoning circle has an adverse effect. Anyone using it is momentarily blinded, regardless of racial abilities such as darkvision. Because of this, the characters will initially be unable to see. Once combat begins, their vision begins to return. They have disadvantage on all Wisdom (Perception) checks and attack rolls during their first round of combat and normal vision thereafter.

### TERRAIN TIPS:

Since the characters initially begin in darkness, you may wish to build this chamber on a Terrain Tray and bring the room out once the characters have a light source. You could also cover the room with black cloth, revealing it once the characters can see.

Read or paraphrase the following when you are ready to begin:

*There is a momentary jolt as the teleportation magic envelops you... and then nothing. Absolute darkness.*

*You feel a clammy chill, and a hard surface underfoot. Then you hear something. The sound of dripping water. A rustling movement in the distance... and the unmistakable sound of wet chewing.*





The characters begin on the summoning circle, a broad smooth area slightly raised above the surrounding cavern floor. Allow the PCs a moment to act (roughly one action per character) before their vision returns and the monsters attack (see **Monsters**).

**Cavern:** The chamber is a natural cavern, with rough walls covered in dripping limestone, phosphorescent lichens, and small (not harmful) fungi.

**Summoning Circle:** Etched in lead upon hexagonal blocks of glowing basalt, this summoning circle gives off a dim light in a 10-foot radius (alternating between an evil green color and blood red). However, note that the illumination will not be present at first due to the character's blindness. The summoning circle is ringed by candles, a cluster of purple crystals, a sacrificial bowl, a horn, and a heart on a plate. See **Treasure**. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check on the Summoning Circle will reveal strong conjuration magic and also confirm that the magic is intermittent, and finally, that the summoning circle cannot be used to return to the surface. Distribute **Handout 1-1: Summoning Circle**.

**Raised Shelf and Carcass:** The back of the cavern rises upwards, creating a series of raised shelves illuminated by two flickering torches. The feral blink dogs begin here, feasting upon a carcass they have dragged here. A DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check identifies the carcass as a hippogriff; it was recently brought here by the summoning chamber.

**Exit Passage:** The PCs can see a rough passageway partly obscured from view by a cluster of stalagmites, leading off into darkness. This leads to Encounter 2.

## MONSTERS

As the characters begin to move, the **Feral Blink Dogs** attack. See **Appendix A: New Monsters** for their statistics. Read the following and then roll initiative!

*Abruptly you realize the room is not dark. You are blind! Is this a side effect of the teleportation? Did Zaltar entomb you? No, there are your compatriots stumbling near you. It smells damp. Echoing sounds reverberate around you. It's hard to find each sound's source. Your vision is slowly recovering, and you begin to make out hazy details. You think that you are in a large cavern... and something is moving towards you. Panting breaths and padded footfalls. Dogs? Before you can focus on them, one of them vanishes and reappears closer to you. It's hard to keep a bead on them. They keep disappearing and reappearing.*



The blindness fades as combat begins. The characters may think these are blink dogs, which are normally good creatures. When the second round of combat begins, describe their feral appearance and savage nature. The PCs should be kept a bit disoriented throughout the combat—the feral blink dogs keeping their prey confused and disoriented with their constant teleporting and phasing.

**Tactics:** The feral blink dogs use their movement capabilities to focus on rear-rank or unarmored opponents, maximizing the use of pack tactics. They attack until defeated, driven mad by exposure to the chained crystals found elsewhere in the caverns.

The feral blink dogs will normally pursue characters beyond this chamber. However, they might be turned back or put off the scent by clever actions by the PCs.

APL	MONSTERS
5	2 feral blink dogs
6	2 feral blink dogs (increase AC by 1 and damage from all their attacks by 2)
7	2 feral blink dogs (increase AC by 2, hit points by 10, and damage from all their attacks by 5)
8	3 feral blink dogs
9	3 feral blink dogs (increase AC by 1)
10	3 feral blink dogs (increase AC by 2 and damage from all their attacks by 2)

If victorious, characters can investigate the bodies of the feral blink dogs.

A DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals strange green growths upon their hides. These could be signs of early infection by a disease, but if so, it has not progressed sufficiently to be identified or to be dangerous.

A DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check made either during the battle or after it confirms that these were once blink dogs. Exposure to something has increased their size and strength and changed them from good and intelligent creatures to savage, bloodthirsty beasts.

They will also notice branded on the inside of each dog's leg an ancient Sylvan rune. This would indicate that the blink dogs were at one time in service to a fey or elven creature. (The mark is of the yorghrim clan. This seal can be seen again in encounter 6 to help make the connection.) **Distribute Handout 1-2: Yorghrim Clan Symbol.**

## TREASURE

Several of the items surrounding the summoning circle are valuable or have unusual qualities:

**Purple Crystals:** The purple crystals have soaked in the circle's magic, allowing a character bearing them to use the spell *dimension door* once before their magic fades. Once the magic fades they are semi-precious stones worth 100 gp.

**Sacrificial Bowl:** This sacrificial bowl has been used so often with the summoning circle that it has become an extension of it. For one time only it has the ability to swap a creature or object of Feywild or Shadowfell origin with its counterpart of the opposite plane. It will only be able to swap out a Tiny sized creature or an object no larger than 12 inches in diameter and 12 inches deep. It is activated when placing the object or creature in the bowl and using a 4th level spell slot. The bowl will crack after use. When *identify* is cast, distribute **Handout 1-3: Sacrificial Bowl** to the caster.

**Horn:** The pale curving horn is that of a yorghrim. Intricately carved, it is worth 50 gp to a collector. Anyone wielding or otherwise displaying the horn will be seen as strong and dangerous, gaining advantage on Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) checks against yorghrim. When *identify* is cast, distribute **Handout 1-4: Horn** to the caster.

**Heart:** The heart is that of a village champion. Eating the heart acts as a *potion of heroism*.

## CONTINUING

Once the monsters have been defeated, the adventurers may exit the room into the passageway and Encounter 2.

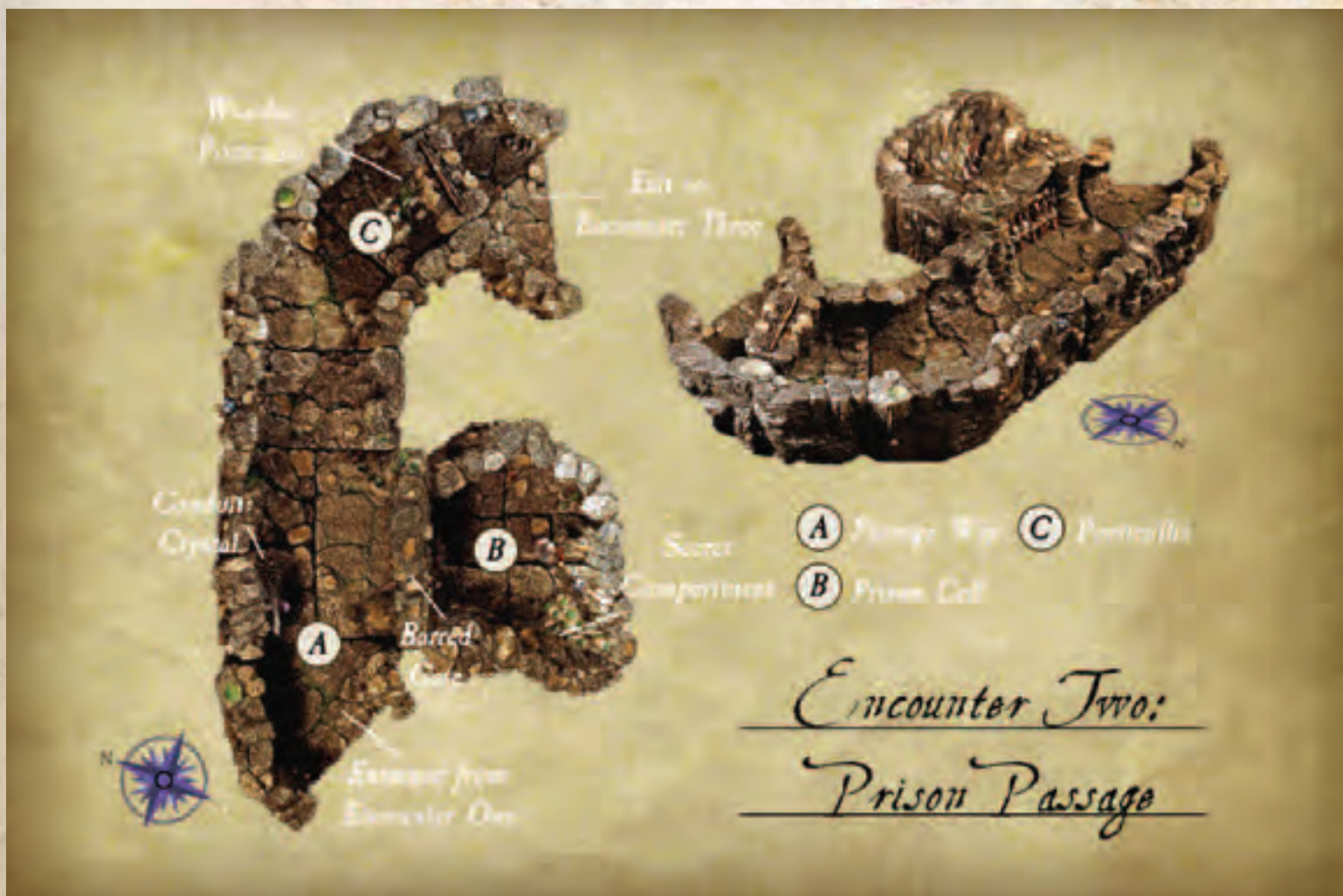




## ENCOUNTER 2: PRISON PASSAGE







## ENCOUNTER 2: PRISON PASSAGE

The adventurers initially enter this Encounter from the Summoning Chamber (Encounter 1).

A narrow passage (Area A) curves north. A side chamber (Area B) has been converted into a prison cell holding a prisoner named Mercer. Across from the cell is a chained conduit crystal, affording the characters a first look at the strange experiments Graemourna is conducting. The passage leads to Encounter 3, Bestial Cliff, but is blocked by a portcullis.

### A. PASSAGEWAY

If the characters lack illumination, phosphorescent growths in the puddles provide dim light, making the area lightly obscured. Adjust descriptions according to your party's light sources. Read or paraphrase the following as the party enters the passage:

*A damp passageway leads out from the summoning chamber. The walls curve inward as they rise, the narrow ceiling confining and restricting comfortable movement. Water drips from above, leaving phosphorescent puddles scattered across the floor.*

*Further ahead the passage curves out of sight, but closer to you, on the right, is a natural gap in the rock wall with a small chamber beyond. Its entrance is blocked by wooden bars lashed together with hide straps. Opposite the chamber is a large crystal chained to the wall, pulsing with green energy.*

*Something inside the chamber stirs. You hear someone exhale and in an addled voice mumble, "I'm telling you, I just don't know where it is."*



The characters can explore the different features of the passage, look into or interact with Area B, or continue on to Area C. If the characters are visible, or if they take an interest in the crystal or the chamber, the prisoner speaks with them.

**Phosphorescent Puddles:** A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check indicates that these contain harmless fungi primarily found in the Feywild. PCs can collect and bottle the glowing water as a natural dim light source; the glow will last for one hour.

**Wooden Bars:** The door resembles that of a prisoner's cell. See Area B if a character peers into the chamber or speaks to the prisoner. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check reveals that the wood is unusual. It is similar to the strong wood used by elves to craft tree homes, but this door has been crudely made and lashed together with animal hide and human skin.

## CHAINED CONDUIT CRYSTAL

The large crystal pulsing with green Feywild energy has been chained to a glyph-bearing stone disc and to the wall behind it. The crystal is warm to the touch and vibrates with power.

A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the crystal is a rare device used to channel energy from another plane and is known as a conduit crystal. The disc and chains either heighten the power channeled through the crystal or change that power in some way. The same check reveals that the chains are made of Fellsteel—metal found in the Shadowfell.

A *detect magic* spell detects the presence of transmutation magic, as well as a more unusual and unidentifiable raw magic.

A DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check further reveals that the energy flowing through the crystal is primarily from the Feywild, with some energy from the Elemental Chaos as well.

**Removing the Crystal Before It Pulses:** If the crystal has not yet released its energy (see Area B), any character preparing to remove the crystal senses that power has been slowly building within it to nearly the point of maximum saturation. They realize it may be dangerous to remove the chains at this time. If they still remove the crystal regardless of whether dispel magic or a successful skill check have been employed, it will automatically release a harmful burst of energy as described in Area B (page 26). In addition, the harmful burst of energy described in **Removing the Crystal After It Pulses** is unleashed, regardless of whether dispel magic or a successful skill check have been employed.

**Removing the Crystal After It Pulses:** Once it has pulsed and through the first half hour of recharging for the next hourly pulse, the crystal is no longer vibrating dangerously. A dispel magic spell safely undoes the chains, allowing the removal of the crystal. Succeeding on a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Thieves' Tools) check also allows a character to remove the crystal. Either failing at a check or simply using brute force to break the chains releases the crystal but also unleashes a burst of energy. Anyone within 30 feet of the crystal must attempt a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. A creature in the area takes 25 (4d10 + 3) force damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

If the characters ignore the crystal, or seek to destroy it, pick a character to receive a telepathic message: free me! The character can sense that this comes from the stone, but whatever sentence is within seems to be struggling yet unable to say more.

## TREASURE

The conduit crystal pulses with purple light once it is freed. See **Handout 2-1: Violet Conduit Crystal** for statistics. If a character attunes to the item, they awaken the soul bound within the crystal. If this happens, provide them with the **Awakened** version of the handout. As the personality within can help guide the characters, you may choose to have it speak to the characters, urging one of them to attune to it. The personalities within this and other conduit crystals can provide information when you need it, acting as your voice to guide the characters, provide information about Graemourna's villainy, or explain key parts of the plot.







## B. PRISON CELL

Poor Mercer is the most recent prisoner to inhabit this cell. When the first character moves within sight of the cell, read:

*“Woah, hey! Who are you?”*

*An emaciated male human in ragged clothing stumbles toward the bars, then stops as if seeing them for the first time.*

*He blinks and repeats the question.*

If the PCs peer through the bars, you can read the following description. Additional investigation requires entering the cell. The characters can interact with Mercer at any time (see the section below).

*The small prison chamber is filthy, the floor covered with all manner of detritus. Moss and mushrooms grow in the filth and up the walls.*

If the PCs peer through the bars, you can read the following description. Additional investigation requires entering the cell. The characters can interact with Mercer at any time (see the section below).

**The Cell Door:** The cell door is locked and warded. A DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals runes carved into the lock and bars, suggesting it is warded. Using a key (which the characters do not have) or picking the lock should avoid the ward. If not bypassed, a spell targets anyone trying to get through the door. If the creature interacting with the door was inside the cell, it is a *fear* spell. Otherwise, it is *phantasmal killer*. In both cases, the spell lasts for 2 rounds.

**Picking the Lock:** A DC 14 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check is required to unlock the door safely.

**Disabling the Ward:** A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check is required to disable the ward.

**Breaking Down the Door:** Brute force can break through the lock and wooden bars but will activate the ward unless it was disabled.

## INVESTIGATING THE CELL

**Lizardfolk Body:** A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies a decomposing lizardfolk body amongst the refuse. Little remains of the creature other than its bracelets and anklets, which are decorated with orange feathers (see **Treasure**). Black mushrooms now grow all over the corpse. Touching or disturbing the mushrooms exposes the characters and they must make an Exposure check (see **Appendix D: Exposure and Infection**).

**Hidden Nook:** A DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a stone in the wall that can be moved, revealing a hidden nook. Here Mercer has concealed the item he keeps forgetting about: an important note. See **Handout 2-2: Sage Mercer's Last Page**.

**Cadaver Cap Mushrooms:** Black and green mushrooms grow in patches around the cell, some of them larger than a human fist. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check identifies them as a form of infectious mushroom called cadaver caps. Smaller versions of these poisonous fungi have been known to grow in the Shadowfell and in the unseelie realms of the Feywild. These are far larger and seem to have grown rapidly. Distribute **Handout 2-3: Mushroom Lore – Cadaver Caps**.

## INFECTION

There is a chance for any character to become infected if they interact with the dead lizardfolk or the cadaver caps or speak closely with or touch Mercer. Each character that does one or more of these things must make an Exposure check at the end of this encounter. See Appendix D: Exposure and Infection.



## SPEAKING TO MERCER

Mercer has begun to lose his mind. Play him as strung out and wasted, his mind all over the place. He is non-violent, outgoing, and inquisitive. In between rambling and forgetting and getting sidetracked (“your armor is so shiny” or “what even are shoes, you know?”), he can share useful information. When you have shared 3–4 pieces of useful information, proceed with The Crystal Pulses event below.

• *How long have I been here? Who knows? What is a day without light? Wait, light? I remember... There was a flash! A bright flash of light, then dark. So, so dark. Like, do you know dark? What is dark without the night?* (He’s recounting getting teleported in here via the summoning circle.)

• *My name? My name is...mer... mer... murder! No, no... oh, yeah. Mercer! That’s me, Mercer, not murder...* (Anyone with the “My Friend Mercer” story hook immediately realizes that this is or used to be the brilliant sage mentioned by Dalthas the Quick. Charisma checks against DC 12 can help him recall he was a sage and remember Dalthas, though he recalls no specific details.)

• *That horned brute, just so rude. He sends his monstrous thugs to beat upon me and lock me here! But why? Why is he so sad? So, so sad... Does she make him weep?* (He is describing Jarl Ansgar, the transformed yorghrim, and the pact with Graemourna.)

• *The blizzards start every morning at dawn. Every day, always the same. Seemed suspicious, that’s what I came to study. The same blizzard every morning. Must be magical. Must investigate! But now, now I’m here, and no sign of the snow. No snow, no snow, oh no!* (He is describing Graemourna’s morning control weather ritual to create the continuous blizzard.)

• *I’m fine. Totally fine. I mean, right? What is fine anyway? I’m okay, totally okay. Except my back. My itchy, itchy back. Oooh, and the green! The green light burns and then I need to scratch some more. But I’m fine. Totally...* (He’s describing the effects of the infection.)

• *Shhhh! The stone talks. You know that, right? They can talk. There’s a little voice hidden in there. A tiny little man! Listen...!* (If a character succeeds on a DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, Mercer will add that he is talking about the crystals, like the one on the wall.)

• *I used to have a buddy. He was here when I came. Little green guy. Little lizzy bud. I miss my buddy.* (He’s referring to the dead lizard-folk in the cell with him.)

• *I keep forgetting where I put it. I need to find it. It’s important. I know I hid it here somewhere. All the notes! The magic snow! But where’s that hidey-hole...?* (He’s referring to his hidden journal.)

• *I haven’t eaten in a long time. I mean, other than these ‘shrooms. Now I’m even more hungry. So hungry!* (He ate some of the Cadaver Caps—not a good idea.)

**What Mercer Lost:** Mercer keeps forgetting something. He had something important, and he hid it in a crack in the wall when he was first captured. His torment has caused him to forget this, though he at times may allude to having lost something of import.

**Shackles:** Mercer has metal shackles around his wrists. They can be unlocked with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Thieves’ Tools or Smith’s Tools) check. They can also be smashed open, though this frightens Mercer and causes him to give off spores, causing an infectious event.

**Inspecting Mercer:** Inspecting Mercer reveals him to be undernourished. He also appears sick. A DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals he is actually really sick; he has abnormal breathing, bloodshot eyes, and has a reduced heart rate. Mercer keeps mentioning his back, and if someone helps him lift off his shirt, they will see that his back is covered with red-black patches similar to those seen on Doom, Zaltar’s imp. He also has some green-black tendrils among his hair similar to those seen on the feral blink dogs. This is a great time for an Exposure check, followed by the crystal pulsing!







## THE CRYSTAL PULSES

At the appropriately dramatic moment (and when it's okay for Mercer to die) read the following:

*The crystal on the wall begins to emit a humming sound, and the eldritch runes surrounding it glow with green flame! The crystal flashes brightly and a wave of energy washes across the room.*

*Your senses are magnified, and your hair stands on end. Mercer begins to wail.*

**Mercer Wailing:** The red and black patches on his back begin to stretch and grow, becoming large boils. Allow the characters a chance to react. The boils then explode, killing Mercer and showering anyone within 30 feet with infectious mucus and counting as an Exposure check event for everyone in the chamber or the passageway. If a character is not within 30 feet of Mercer or took precautions when the boils began to erupt, they gain advantage on the Exposure check.

## TREASURE

The dead lizardfolk wears anklets and bracelets of copper chased with silver, decorated with bright orange feathers. Anyone wearing them has to make an Exposure check (see Appendix D: Exposure and Infection) but will gain advantage on Charisma checks with lizardfolk.

## C. PORTCULLIS

A spiked portcullis blocks the way to Encounter 3. The wooden bars are made of the same Feywild wood as the prison cell, though these bars are thicker. A mechanism at the side of the door has a keyhole.

There are several ways the characters can interact with the portcullis.

Characters peering through the portcullis see a large dark chamber which slopes upward out of sight. The sound of something slowly bubbling, like a very thick soup in a very large pot, can be heard.

**Lift the Gate:** A PC can lift the heavy portcullis with a successful DC 16 Strength (Athletics) check; they can hold it just long enough to allow everyone to pass (including the one lifting it).

**Manipulate the Mechanism:** As there is no key, a DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check is necessary to manipulate the mechanism, temporarily engaging counterweights on the portcullis. If this is done anyone can easily lift the portcullis, and it stays up until the mechanism is released, at which time it slowly and silently closes again.

**Destroy the Gate:** Hacking and slashing eventually destroys the portcullis. It is also affected by acid.

Proceed with Encounter 3.



## ENCOUNTER 3: BESTIAL CLIFF







## ENCOUNTER 3: BESTIAL CLIFF

The adventurers enter this Encounter from the Prison Passage (Encounter 2).

A cave leading to Encounter 7, Mushroom Grotto, is situated on the opposite wall behind a wooden cave door. A second opening to the left leads to Encounter 4, Webbed Lair. To reach either of these exits, the adventurers must first scale the cliff and deal with the beast guarding this cavern.

### TERRAIN TIPS:

When you build the Bestial Cliff, make a note of the following features:

Keep the Artificer's Strongbox behind your screen until a character spots it in the alcove to the left of the entry passage.

Keep the Massive Minotaur miniature out of sight until a character gets a good look at it. The extent of the corruption afflicting this monster should be a horrifying revelation for the players!

### A. LOWER LEVEL

There is no light here, so adjust descriptions according to your party's light sources. Read or paraphrase the following as the party enters the cavern:

*A rocky cliff-face divides this cavern, separating the lower area where you stand from a higher section above, its size unclear in the darkness. At the cliff's foot, tendrils of mist drift over a pool of belching mud. Steep inclines on either side of the pool ascend to the upper level.*

The **tainted minotaur** guards the upper level of the cavern (see Area B) but it cannot be easily seen from below. The minotaur is attached to a wall of your choice in Area B, and does not activate until a creature steps into Area B. It doesn't venture into Area A unless the adventurers goad it down.

Ask the players to make the following checks:

**DC 14 Wisdom (Perception):** The character spots the shadow of a treasure chest in the alcove to the left (see "Artificer's Strongbox").

**DC 15 Intelligence (Nature):** The character discerns something unnatural about the mud pool. There is a chalky, alchemical stench rising from the mud and the lichens touching its surface have calcified (see "The Sludgerot Cistern").



## ROCKY INCLINES

The inclines ascending to the upper level of the cavern are wet and slippery. To scale the incline on the left from the lower level, a character must first inch around the slippery ledge next to the stalagmites (see “Artificer’s Strongbox”).

To traverse either incline safely, a character must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the character falls prone and must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, sliding to the bottom of the incline on a successful save, or falling into the mud pool on a failed one (see “The Sludgerot Cistern”). If a character uses the Dash action to traverse an incline, they have disadvantage on both these rolls.

## THE SLUDGEROT CISTERN

The pool contains rare, enchanted mud called Sludgerot which rots the flesh of any living creature that touches it. The viscous mire is 10 feet deep and lies under a gauze of mist.

When a creature enters the pool or starts its turn within its area, it sinks 1d4 feet and gains the restrained condition by the mud. On its turn, the creature can use its action to attempt a Strength check to escape. The DC is 10 plus the depth in feet that the creature has sunk into the mud. A creature on safe ground that is within 5 feet of a trapped creature can use its action to attempt a rescue, making the same escape check with advantage. (If a character is fully submerged, see rules of Suffocation in the Player’s Handbook.)

Any creature that ends its turn inside the area of the mud must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On the first failed save, the creature takes 13 (3d8) poison damage as their skin starts to rot. All subsequent saves they take 4 (1d8) poison damage. On a successful save they take half damage and do not succumb to poisoning. If this damage drops them to 0 hit points, they die and arise at the start of their next turn as a **zombie**.

## ARTIFICER’S STRONGBOX

This strongbox sits in the darkened alcove to the left of the entrance, hidden behind a screen of moist stalagmites. The treasure chest belonged to the long-dead dwarf artificer Lorm Stonebones and was hauled here by bandits after they excavated it from the ruins of his workshop (see Encounter 5, Cave of Ruin).

A slippery, 6-inch-wide ledge separates the outer flanks of the stalagmites from the enchanted mud pool. To enter the alcove from the lower bank, a character must either scale the stalagmites with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check or inch around the slimy ledge with a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Failing either of these checks results in the character slipping and plunging into the mud pool.

The strongbox is locked, and its lid is set with a complex mechanism of cogs and gears. Provide the players with **Handout 3-1: Sun Locks** when they get close enough to examine the strongbox. As shown on the handout, graven reliefs of radiant suns, wolf heads, and waves decorate the strongbox lid. An inscription under the mechanism reads “The Moon Turns the Tide.” Clasps are fitted to the edge of the strongbox, suggesting that the mechanism is designed to be bolted onto something.

When compared with the matching strongbox found in Encounter 9, Smuggler’s Cove, the two sets of gears form a puzzle that the players can solve to unlock both strongboxes.

**Unlocking the Strongbox:** The strongbox has four magical locks that cannot be picked and can only be unlocked manually by solving the puzzle (see Encounter 9, Smuggler’s Cove). Each strongbox is 3 feet long, 2 feet wide, and weighs 40 lbs. The strongboxes are magically locked and hardened to resist all forms of damage. Each use of a knock spell unlocks one of the four locks.

**Treasure:** When finally opened, the strongbox contains one half of a powerful magical machine called the Transmutation Engine (see Encounter 5, Cave of Ruin). When the adventurers open the strongbox, read:

*Opening the strongbox, you see a strange mechanical device shaped like one half of a giant horseshoe. Its iron surfaces are rimmed with bronze and covered in runes, cogs, and round glass windows. Inside, you see glowing, swirling magical energies.*

This strongbox also contains a ring of warmth, and a periapt of wound closure.





## B. UPPER LEVEL

Read or paraphrase the following when the party ascends to the upper level of the cavern:

*As you ascend to the upper portion of the cave, you can see in the gloom a soft and wet putrid mass of fungal growths from a portion of the far wall. The mushroomed mass begins to undulate and quiver, spores burst, and wet green-brown ichor oozes out from a bulging epicenter. A thundering roar bellows that would split eardrums if it were not muffled beneath the moss-like shroud.*

*Ripping free from the wall and taking most of the fungus with it, as if it were grown into the wall itself, a massive beast bounds out! It is humanoid in form but bears the head of a bull. Wet polyps and fleshy toadstools sprout from its infected flesh and its tongue lolls dumbly from its maw. Despite these infections, the beast looks angrier than the Nine Hells as it charges towards you!*

This **tainted minotaur** is the bestial form of a Rootwalker: a cultist who undertook deadly ritual hunts in the caverns beneath the Spirit Tree (see “**Setting**” on page 6). Spores from Graemourna’s cadaver caps have infected this once-mighty guardian of the grottos. Any lesser creature would have fallen to the infection long ago, but the minotaur rages on, driven by its hunger for carnage. It attacks any creature that dares to approach it. See **Appendix A: New Monsters** for statistics of the tainted minotaur.

**If the characters defeat the beast:** They will notice tattooed on the legs of the beast are the signature tattoos of the Rootwalkers—this design pattern of creeping roots always leads up from the feet and unwinds up their thighs (these will match the Cave Painting designs on the Rootwalker figures in Encounter 5, **Handout 5-3: Cave Painting**).

When the minotaur is slain, Graemourna’s unhallowed magic lures them toward the enchanted mud pit (see “Whispering Wind”).





APL	MONSTERS
5	Tainted minotaur (decrease hit points by 25, AC and all save DCs by 1, attack rolls by 1, and all damage rolls by 2)
6	Tainted minotaur (decrease hit points by 10, AC by 1, attack rolls by 1, and all damage rolls by 1)
7	Tainted minotaur
8	Tainted minotaur
9	Tainted minotaur (increase hit points by 15 and +1 to attack and damage rolls)
10	Tainted minotaur (increase hit points by 30, +1 to attack rolls, +2 to all damage rolls, and increase all save DCs by 1). Recharge for the Painful Roar is now 5-6.

**Treasure:** A lizard mask is hooked to the minotaur's belt, hidden from sight in the folds of its kilt. Any character who examines the mask and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (History) check recalls that some savage tribes indulge in rituals in which their hunters pursue their prey through labyrinthine caverns; when such prey includes sacrificial humanoids, the most vicious of these hunters transform into minotaurs. The wooden mask may prove useful when the characters encounter the lizardfolk tribe (see Encounter 8, Savage Gorge). It also bears minor enchantments. See **Handout 3-7: Lizard Mask**.

## WHISPERING WIND

Graemourna delights in the minotaur's torment and has woven black magic over its body to punish anyone who ends its suffering prematurely. When the minotaur dies, read the following aloud:

*A sudden gust of frigid wind howls, carrying an old woman's whisper, high-pitched and tinged with madness:*

*"Go you widdershins round the pool,  
Not once, not twice, but three times full.  
Dance this merry jig for me.  
And you will see what you will see!"*

All creatures must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed to circle the pool as instructed. The whispered rhyme encourages the characters to circle the mud pool three times in a counterclockwise direction. If one or more of the PCs does this, read the following when they reach the top of the cliff on their third circuit:



*Another breath of frigid wind carries the old woman's whisper to your ears:*

*"My pet you just did kill,  
An act that did me ill,  
Leap into my pool of mud,  
Feel the poison in your blood,  
Sloughing skin, endless thirst,  
Arise again to do your worst!"*

Any creature that failed the previous saving throw must now make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw at disadvantage. On a failed save, Graemourna's magic further compels them to hurl themselves from the cliff into the pool of gorgon mud! This compulsion lasts until the end of their next turn, after which time the character can attempt to escape the pool if they are still able.

## STONE CAVE DOOR

This door is formed from a huge slab of stone almost 10' in diameter. Only two creatures with a combined Strength score of 35 or higher can heave it open. When they do so, they see a malevolent green glow emanating from further down the passage and hear bestial gurgling. This passage leads to Encounter 7, Mushroom Grotto. If the party needs a challenge, or if you wish to dissuade them from traveling from this encounter to the Mushroom Grotto at this time, you could add an obvious patch of green slime (see "Dungeon Hazards" in chapter 5 of the Dungeon Master's Guide) just beyond the door.

## CONTINUING

From here, the characters can take the cave door to Encounter 7, Mushroom Grotto, or take the tunnel to the left to Encounter 4, Webbed Lair. As they're deciding which path to take, they hear muffled cries, grunting, and scuffling footfalls coming from the direction of Encounter 4!





## ENCOUNTER 4: WEBBED LAIR







## ENCOUNTER 4: WEBBED LAIR

This encounter assumes the adventurers enter from the Bestial Cliff (Encounter 3), though it is possible some parties could approach from the Cave of Ruin (Encounter 5).

In this encounter, the party finds two yorghrim in the form of two frost-rimmed bugbears struggling with a sack containing a ratling named Manx. She has limited information and much about her is a mystery, but she is willing to lead the party through the caves. If the PCs choose to explore a long passage strewn with enormous webs, they will find treasure and a dangerous spider await!

### A. ENTRANCEWAY AND INTERSECTION

The intersection is lit by magical light (but note below what happens if characters bring a torch or other fire source). The party immediately notices two yorghrim struggling with a sack, which obviously holds something alive. The party can better inspect their surroundings after resolving the situation, though you may wish to detail what they see as they move around during combat. Read or paraphrase the following as the party enters the passage:

*You leave the minotaur's lair behind you and after twenty feet the passage opens into an intersection. One crooked tunnel leads to the right and another, filled with enormous webs, to the left. Ahead, past piles of bones, is a jutting rock studded with stalagmites, and beyond it a fetid glowing green pool.*

*Two frost-rimmed bugbears stand in the center of the intersection, struggling with a large burlap sack. Something moves within the sack as though fighting to escape. A glowing metal orb hovers above the scene, lighting the area. The creatures have not yet noticed your approach.*

If the PCs act quickly, or are stealthy, they can surprise the yorghrim. If the party waits to see what happens, the yorghrim pull the sack towards the webbed passageway. A female voice can be heard, calling for the creatures to release her. If the PCs linger too long in indecision, one of the yorghrim happens to notice them and battle begins.



**Fire and the Green Pool:** If a character carries any open flame or casts a fire spell, the flame is pulled from its source or intended destination, streaking across the room and straight into the green pool, causing it to glow more brightly and, eventually, explode. See Area B for more details.

**Yorghrim:** These yorghrim have been transformed into the form of bugbears by Graemourna. Although they look like bugbears, it should quickly become apparent to the characters that there is something strange about these creatures. If they speak, their diction and phrases should be very un-bugbearlike (and they speak in ancient Sylvan). Their cold nature prevails even through the power of Graemourna's curse; thus, their bodies are coated in frost. If combat ensues, their abilities are very different from those of a standard bugbear. A *remove curse* spell or their death will revert them back to their true form.

They are dragging the sack to the webbed passage, as they must periodically feed the creature within. Players should be taken aback if the yorghrim start speaking to them initially in the ancient Sylvan tongue. When they see the players, they will drop their sack and in Sylvan say, "We no longer need the mongrel. The interlopers shall feed her! But first, we have to get them to the Jarl." Use the guidelines found in the **Dealing with the Yorghrim** section of **Encounter 6**. They are quick to battle characters (see the **Appendix A: New Monsters** section for statistics and tactics) but are only looking to stun the players. If spoken to in Sylvan or common, they will not parlay, but simply reply in either language, saying, "Sunhild is hungry. The ratling is spoiled meat. By our burning blood and fealty shall she feast on you! She does so love living meals." If the players kill the yorghrim, the creatures will revert to their yorghrim true forms. Give players **Handout 4-4: Transformed Corpses**.

**Sack:** Inside the burlap sack is Manxsennia Vinderslink III, who goes by the nickname **Manx**. She's a wily smuggler with attitude to spare, and she's a creature known as a ratling. She has rat-like features, including a tail, but walks upright. Though similar to a **wererat**, though she is not a shapechanger and does not suffer from lycanthropy (Manx the Ratling's statistics are in **Appendix A: New Monsters**. If the characters free her, see the **Speaking to Manx** section below.

**Bone Piles:** The two piles are difficult terrain and hold bones from many creatures, including a multitude of humanoid and beast skulls. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check indicates that the bones have been piled up here as trophies, and they bear long punctures and signs of being crushed by a serrated jaw. With a result of 14 or higher, the player recognizes the marks as similar to those made by giant spiders.

## SPEAKING TO MANX

Bruised but whole, Manx the ratling oozes attitude and charm. She will coyly and endearingly rub her whiskers to win someone over, or just as easily stare down a stubborn adventurer while arguing exactly why the party must do what she says. Her main agenda is to get the characters to follow her to "the bridge" (Encounter 9) though she can't tell them why (see Manx's Secrets, below). She's willing to go alone but prefers an escort. Manx does not have cadaver blight. She is very afraid of being exposed to waves of energy from the conduit crystals because she has seen it accelerate the cadaver blight infection.

Manx has a lucky wyvern tooth necklace (see **Treasure**) she can bargain with, and her belt pouches hold thieves' tools, wood-carver's tools, and the equivalent of a climbing kit. In addition to her necklace, she wears an iron choker around her neck. The choker bears no clasp or visible means of removal, and it is flecked with Dwarvenite, making it impervious to damage.

**Manx's Secrets:** Manx dodges questions about what she is doing here, how she was captured, or why she wants to go somewhere urgently. As will be learned in Encounter 9, Manx has a reason she can't tell the party more—Graemourna can eavesdrop on her through the iron choker she wears. With a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check a character senses that Manx is being honest, but fears sharing too much information.

Here are some talking points you can use:

- *"I'm Manxsennia Vinderslink III... I know that's a mouthful. Friends and foes alike call me Manx. I was about to free myself, but I appreciate your lending a hand!"*
- *"I'm a ratling. Surely, you've seen one of my kind before? Not to be confused with a wererat, honey. Our fur is much softer, and I don't usually bite," she says with a wink.*
- *"These horned blue creatures... yorghrim. They look like bugbears? It's all the same to me. Been avoiding them for a long time now. They captured me and wanted to feed me to some creature. I don't think it's just a pet. They spoke about it strangely. Almost... reverently. They even gave her a name. Sunshine...? Sunburst...? Sunhild! Desperate and stupid these yorghrim. Must have run out of better treats for their pet. I'm way too charming to eat. You're all better food...no offense."*
- *"Other yorghrim took my weapons. As sharp as my wits are, would you happen to have a blade you could lend me?"*
- *"It isn't safe to stay here too long. You don't want to get hit with the crystal energy. I know a safe place, and if you help me get there, I'll make it worth your while. My lucky necklace here is worth some serious coin."*
- **If the characters want to explore the webbed passage:** *"I don't like it that people get fed to that thing, but it seems reckless to go in there. Why don't we just leave it to starve to death." If players insist, she replies: "Okay, I'm sticking with you, but after you're done being foolhardy, we need to get going."*
- **If the characters don't agree to go with her to the bridge:** *"Trust me, this is in your best interest... especially if you touched those mushrooms. One way or another, I'm heading that way. If it won't be together, I wish you luck."*





## MONSTERS

**Tactics:** The yorghrim will both fight. When one of the yorghrim is reduced below 50 hit points, one of the two will try to hold the characters off while the other runs back to Encounter 6 to alert the camp. They communicate in an ancient dialect of Sylvan, though characters speaking Sylvan can understand them. If the yorghrim defeat the players in combat (they are fighting to stun), they will bring the characters as captives to Encounter 6 tied up in rope. They also leave Manx there trussed up securely for later feeding (the players can release her later and follow the encounter with this adjustment).

APL	MONSTERS
5	2 yorghrim
6	2 yorghrim (increase hit points by 15 and damage from all their attacks by 2)
7	2 yorghrim (increase their spellcasting DC by 2, hit points by 15, and damage from all their attacks by 5)
8	3 yorghrim
9	3 yorghrim (increase hit points by 15)
10	3 yorghrim (increase hit points by 20 and damage from all their attacks by 2)

## TREASURE

The yorghrim orb hovering by the yorghrim is crafted from glass and bands of Dwarvenite, a rare and very strong metal. It gives off light as a light spell (bright light in a 20-foot radius, dim light for another 20 feet) and follows one of the yorghrim around. If the yorghrim is killed, it hovers in place. It bears two words engraved in Sylvan, ylsora and eiloree. **See the Handout 4-1: Yorghrim Orb.**

Manx's wyvern tooth necklace came from a wild nautical adventure she had, where a wyvern attacked her on a ship. It functions as a special stone of good luck. **See the Handout 4-2: Manx's Necklace.**

## B. GLOWING ALGAE POOL

At the far end of the intersection is a softly glowing green algae-filled pool. The main feature of this area is how the pool interacts with open flame or magical fire.

Characters can step onto a rocky shelf or safely maneuver around a large stalagmite to get a better look. Nothing swims in the pool, and it has a strange alchemical smell. Characters can attempt to learn more about this pool.

**DC 13 Intelligence (Nature):** With a successful check, the character senses that this is not a natural pool. Something magical or alchemical has tainted or created it. The liquid is thick, like an oil, and the green color is not algae, but some kind of energy infused within the liquid itself.

**DC 15 Intelligence (Alchemist's Supplies or Arcana):** With a successful check, the character identifies the liquid in the pool as magical and capable of absorbing fire, though it likely can only store a limited amount of energy.

**DC 18 Intelligence (Religion):** With a successful check, the character recalls that the clergy of a deity of fire used to use an alchemical substance to absorb fire and then release it for dramatic effect during holy rituals.

**DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception):** With a successful check, the character notices a gleam of something metal at the bottom of the pool. A silvery canister awaits about 10' under water. See **Submerged Canister** below for details.

## FIRE ABSORPTION

Any flame or source of fire (even fire from a magical spell) is visibly pulled from its source or intended destination and sent streaking across the room and into the green pool. The pool then glows more brightly.

Each time this happens, track the average damage of the fire being absorbed. For example, a torch deals 1 point of fire damage. An 8d6 fireball spell deals an average of 28 points of fire damage.

**Explosion:** When the pool has absorbed 30 points or more of fire damage, the pool (Area B) and the intersection (Area A) are filled with green flame! Creatures in the area must attempt a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw. An affected character takes the number of points of stored fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

Once the pool has exploded, it ceases to absorb flame until one hour has passed.

**Submerged Canister:** Searching the bottom of the pool reveals a metal, fire-proof canister bearing the seal of the imp, Doom. In the canister is a page from Graemourna's Grimoire that the imp stole. Doom is familiar with the substance and thought that it would make the perfect hiding spot for anything he needed to tuck away until he was ready to teleport back to Zaltar. Unfortunately, he had to depart a lot quicker than intended and never got a chance to retrieve this. **Handout 4-5: Ripped Page from Graemourna's Grimoire.**



### C. WEB-FILLED PASSAGE

Above the passage entranceway is a roughly carved partial Sylvan word that could mean either “beloved” or “cursed.”

This passage is treacherous terrain, especially due to the fire absorption of the green pool. When the first creature reaches the halfway point in the webbed area, a spiderbeast will attack.

Read or paraphrase the following as the party peers down the passage or inspects the webs:

*A winding passageway leads into the ominous darkness, thick cobwebs hanging down like sinister curtains.*

*Just beyond the webs you glimpse a cocooned form, perhaps a body.*

The first 30 feet of the dark corridor is difficult terrain and lightly obscured, filled with stretchy and sticky strands of webbing.

**Moving Through the Webs:** A creature moving through the webs (regardless of how they do so) must succeed at a DC 14 Strength or Dexterity saving throw (creature’s choice) or become restrained. A creature stuck in the web can repeat the saving throw at the beginning of its next turn.

**Using Fire:** Any flame or magical fire is absorbed by the green pool (see Area B) unless the pool has exploded. Once the pool has exploded, every 15 points of fire damage clears one 10x10 section containing webs, allowing normal movement in that area.

**Cocooned Body:** A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, made at disadvantage due to the obscuring terrain, confirms that this is a humanoid body. If the party cuts open the cocooned to reveal the body within, hundreds of harmless white spiderlings scuttle out of the body. The human corpse is long dead but does have a pouch containing 3 *potions of greater healing* (see **Treasure**).

### SUNHILD THE SPIDERBEAST

This grotesque and ravenous monster has a dark story. The characters may learn her story if they speak to the yorghrim in this encounter or in Encounter 6. Killing Sunhild may affect Encounter 6, possibly enraging the yorghrim in the Covert War Camp, and could impact Encounters 13 and 14 as well.

**Sunhild’s Story:** Sunhild the Spiderbeast was once a beautiful and strong yorghrim. She and her husband Ansgar led Clan Skölskyl through many winters and summers before she caught a mysterious illness and began to die. Near despair, Ansgar foolishly turned to Graemourna the Hag and bargained with her. Graemourna provided Ansgar with a powerful healing potion. Though this saved Sunhild, the hag’s bargain required that, in return, the clan must serve Graemourna. Sunhild was ashamed of what her husband had done. Her heart broke, and this misery combined with the remnants of Graemourna’s potion slowly transformed her into a horrible beast. She retreated into a dark passage in the caverns, feeding on escaped prisoners or those the clan fed her out of shame. The clan does not know that the spider creature is now barely Sunhild at all. Unbeknownst to the yorghrim, Sunhild’s soul was extracted by Graemourna and can be found in Encounter 13. The removal of her soul has made it impossible for Sunhild’s body to be returned to its yorghrim form with a *remove curse*. Even in death her body’s spider-like grotesqueness will not revert back to true form (see **Killing Sunhild** below).

**Tactics:** The spiderbeast strikes when advantageous, most likely when the first character reaches the midpoint in the webs [See **Appendix A: New Monsters**]. If only a single adventurer is traversing the webs, she may allow it to pass and attempt to web it first and then strike. Sunhild uses her phasing and web walker abilities to stay away from the majority of the characters, working to pick off prey one at a time.

**Increasing the Challenge:** In addition to using the scaling information below, you can add 1-2 **swarms of insects** (spiders) if the party needs a greater challenge. The swarms can crawl out of the walls or drop from ceilings, appearing exactly where you need them to inflict maximum horror.

**Killing Sunhild:** When the spiderbeast has been slain, an eerie aura wraps around its corpse. Players in sight range will watch the spiderbeast form dissolve and reform for a few seconds into a beautiful and regal yorghrim woman, Sunhild’s true form. But with her soul entrapped elsewhere, her true form cannot properly manifest and this visage will quickly change again. The blue woman screams and then dissolves into a huge pile of slimy grubs. The grubs scurry away leaving nothing behind.





APL	MONSTERS
5	Sunhild the Spiderbeast (decrease hit points by 45, AC and all save DCs by 1, attack rolls by 2, and the bite's piercing damage by 15)
6	Sunhild the Spiderbeast (decrease hit points by 30, AC by 1, attack rolls by 1, and the bite's piercing damage by 10)
7	Sunhild the Spiderbeast (decrease hit points by 15, attack rolls by 1, and the bite's piercing damage by 5)
8	Sunhild the Spiderbeast
9	Sunhild the Spiderbeast (increase hit points by 15 and the bite's piercing damage by 5)
10	Sunhild the Spiderbeast (increase hit points by 35, all save DCs by 1, the damage of poisonous blood by 3, and the bite's piercing damage by 10)

## TREASURE

The cocooned body holds 3 tall and thin bottles made from frosted blue glass. Each holds a *potion of greater healing*.

## D. SUNHILD'S NEST

Flecks of Dwarvenite can be seen in the walls as the passageway ends in a large nest-like structure of wood, cloth, and bone. A few small blue-green mushrooms grow in the walls, but these are harmless.

## TREASURE

Searching through the nest uncovers 200 gp in mixed Valorian coins and a silver-chased metal flask worth 150 gp. Inside the flask is a small packet containing gray-black powder. This is *dust of disappearance*. Distribute the **Handout 4-3: Dust of Disappearance**.

## CONTINUING

If Manx is with the party, she urges the characters to follow her east in the direction of Encounter 5, Cave of Ruin. If the party managed to negotiate with the yorghrim, they also lead the party in this direction, toward Encounter 6, Covert Warcamp. Though less likely, the party could also retrace their steps south to Encounter 3, and from there access Encounter 7, Mushroom Grotto.



# ENCOUNTER 5: CAVE OF RUIN







## ENCOUNTER 5: CAVE OF RUIN

The adventurers can enter this Encounter from two directions: the cave leading from Encounter 4, Webbed Lair, or the cave leading from Encounter 7, Mushroom Grotto. A pair of mighty dwarven doors block the exit to Encounter 6, Covert Warcamp.

Decades ago, the dwarf artificer Lorm Stonebones tunneled in from a distant underground stronghold to mine the Feywild shards that grew around the roots of the Spirit Tree (see “**Story and Setting**” on page 6). The dryads of Dreadhollow warned the dwarves to leave the crystals alone, but the dwarves were stubborn. The dryads eventually murdered Lorm and his workers, but not before the dwarves had raised this workshop and its adjoining forge, where they worked on five of the stolen crystals, transforming them into items of power.

There is no light in this area, so adjust descriptions according to your party’s light sources. Read or paraphrase the following as the party enters the cavern:

*The tumbledown husk of a stone dwelling occupies much of the cavern floor. Its walls have crumbled, and its roof has long fallen, yet three adjoined rooms are still visible through the rubble. Despite the appearance of ruin, lit torches flicker on the walls. A pair of formidable metal doors are set into the cavern wall beyond.*

At this point, ask the players to make any of the following checks:

**DC 11 Intelligence (History):** A character recognizes the ruins as being of dwarven construction. Any dwarves in the party automatically succeed on this check.

**DC 10 Wisdom (Perception):** The character spots primitive cave paintings daubed on the cavern walls. These images depict tribal humans wearing lizard masks locked in combat against lizardfolk. Many of the paintings are overgrown with cave lichen; the character would have to move closer to get a proper look (see “Cave Paintings,” below).

**DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation):** A character notices that the interior of the stone dwelling is littered with the skeletal remains of dwarves.



## EVER-BURNING TORCHES

Characters who examine the torches discover that they give off no heat: these are illusory, ever-burning torches placed here by the dwarves to light their work. The torches lose their magical properties if they are removed from their brackets, but gain them back when placed in it again.

## CAVE PAINTINGS

The cave paintings were created by the lizardfolk tribe who live in these grottos and depict tribal human Rootwalkers fighting against lizardfolk warriors (see “**Setting**” on page 6). The lizardfolk tribe never settled in this chamber, yet it was a frequent scene of ritualized conflicts with the human tribal hunters who trespassed here. If an adventurer examines the paintings, provide the group with **Handout 5-3: Cave Paintings**. The paintings contain visual clues that can prove useful when dealing with the lizardfolk tribe in Encounter 8, Savage Gorge, or Encounter 10, Shrine of Skiss-Ryssa.

## FOLLOWING MANX

If the adventurers rescued Manx from Encounter 4, Webbed Lair, she whispers for the characters to be quiet and follow her around the right-hand wall to the tunnel leading to Encounter 7, Mushroom Grotto. Characters who follow her instructions and don't meddle with anything in the ruins can pass through without causing any trouble. However, as the Game Master you should try your best to lure the group astray! Hint at the treasures that could be buried under the rubble, or the mysteries that lie beyond the door. If the characters get caught up in danger, Manx plays it safe, letting the PCs take on the bulk of any dangers and helping only from afar. Even if your players don't explore now, they should feel compelled to return later! It is very likely the PCs will return here in search of the conduit crystal in Encounter 6, Covert Warcamp.

### TERRAIN TIPS: CAVE OF RUIN

When you build the Cave of Ruin, make note of the following features:

Hide the Gem Cache underneath the rubble of the Hidden Compartment in Area C: Ruined Living Quarters.

Keep the Ruined Ancient Doors behind your screen. If the adventurers use the Dwarven rune charge from Area B to blast the doors, you can swap in the ruined doors to portray their handiwork!

If you're using a smoke generator, have it ready to pump the freezing mist into the scene through the low arch in the left wall if the characters disturb the Gem Cache in Area C.

## A. RUINED WORKSHOP

Lorm Stonebones utilized this workshop to engrave and decorate the treasures he forged in these caverns. Read or paraphrase the following when an adventurer enters this section of the building:

*This derelict chamber was once a jeweler's workshop. Gnawed bones are scattered over the floor, metal-working tools hang from brackets in the walls, and workbenches lie splintered in ruin. A relief carved into one of the walls shows some sort of diagram, but it is covered in dust.*

The bones on the floor in here clearly belong to dwarves. If an adventurer searches the chamber, ask the player to make the following checks:

**DC 11 Wisdom (Perception):** The character spots an ancient tablet etched with Dwarven runes poking out of the rubble pile (see “Lorm's Tablet,” below).

**DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation):** The character notices two rectangular patches on the floor that are cleaner than their surroundings, indicating that a pair of chests once sat here. Scuff marks nearby suggest that they were recently dragged away, but the tracks become indiscernible after a few paces. Smugglers stole the Artificer's Strongboxes from here, and they now rest in Encounter 3, Bestial Cliff, and Encounter 9, Smuggler's Cove.

## CRYSTAL DIAGRAM

This relief is carved into the workshop wall. The diagram reveals the magical reactions that Feywild crystals undergo when exposed to various elemental stimuli. If an adventurer brushes the dust away, provide the players with **Handout 5-1: Crystal Diagram**. This knowledge proves useful when wielding the crystals, especially when channeling them to disrupt the magic of the Rimescrawl Pillar in Encounter 12, Ice Catacomb.

## LORM'S TABLET

This tablet is etched with Dwarven script. If an adventurer can read it, provide the player with **Handout 5-2: Lorm's Tablet**. The journal was carved by Lorm Stonebones himself and hints at the terrible spirits he and his comrades stirred up after mining the Feywild crystals. Lorm refers to the powerful items he hid inside his strongboxes and warns about the cursed gems buried in the secret compartment.

## IMPERFECT CONDUIT CRYSTAL

With a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, players will find in a carved-out notch in the wall of what appears to be an Azure Conduit Crystal. Provide the player with **Handout 5-5: Imperfect Conduit Crystal**. It is the same size and color as the perfect Azure Crystal in Encounter 6 but has a small fracture in the back. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check registers a faint remnant of magical energy as if a failed attempt was made to infuse something into it. It has no other properties.





## B. RUINED STOREROOM

This chamber was used to store mining gear. Read or paraphrase the following when an adventurer enters this section of the building:

*This storeroom lies in ruin. Splintered barrels and crates are strewn over the floor, alongside gnawed bones, heaps of rubble, and several silvery metal ingots. On the wall, a thick disc of metal covered in runes protrudes from a riveted iron plate.*

Anyone entering this chamber can easily identify the skeletal remains as dwarven.

### COLD IRON INGOTS

The ingots scattered over the floor are made from cold iron. Any character who touches an ingot discovers that they are unusually cool. A character can identify the metal as cold iron with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check and recall that it is a powerful weapon against fey creatures. Each ingot weighs 20 pounds and has a value of 200 gp. There are seven ingots in total. Adventurers who take the ingots can work them into weapons at the dwarven forge in Encounter 6, Covert Warcamp.

### DWARVEN RUNE CHARGE

This adamantine disk is 6 inches in diameter, 1 inch thick, and charged with entrapped magical force. The disk is magnetic and sticks firmly to any metal surface. Dwarven runes etched into the disk's face read: "Speak the word from more than thirty feet away." A central arcane rune can be deciphered as the command word "Azbezak" with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If this word is spoken aloud within 100 feet of the disk, it explodes, dealing 27 (5d10) force damage to all creatures within 30 feet of it. Any metal object that the disk is affixed to when it explodes takes 250 force damage from this blast. The party can use this item to blast through the dwarven doors (see Area D). Distribute **Handout 5-4: Dwarven Rune Charge**.





### C. RUINED LIVING QUARTERS

Read or paraphrase the following when an adventurer enters this section of the building:

*This chamber may have once been a living room, but most furnishings of note have long been lost to ruin. Piles of rubble from the collapsed ceiling litter the floor and bones are scattered everywhere.*

Any character entering this chamber identifies the bones as dwarven. A character inspecting the bones and succeeding at a DC 11 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Medicine) check realizes the bones are unnaturally well preserved. It is possible some magic preserves them.

#### HIDDEN COMPARTMENT

A shallow floor compartment hides beneath a pile of rubble. Any adventurer searching the room uncovers the compartment with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Characters who studied Lorm's Tablet (see Area A) can locate the compartment without making a check.

The concealed compartment lid has split under pressure, revealing a trove of sparkling gems within. These stones are expertly cut and decorated with silver and gold filigree or mounted onto fine chains. In total, there are 20 gems worth 100 gp each.

Lorm Stonebones mined the gems from these caverns and left them here in a vain attempt to prevent further attacks from the vengeful dryads of Dreadhollow. Anybody who disturbs the gems stirs up the dryad's ire (see "Dryads' Return").

#### DRYADS' RETURN

When Graemourna corrupted the Spirit Tree, she killed the vengeful Dreadhollow dryads and transformed them into restless shades. These once-beautiful guardians are now twisted phantoms of their former selves, obsessed with cruelty and vengeance. They soon arrive to vent their wrath on anyone who disturbs the gems in the secret compartment.

Read or paraphrase the following if the gems are disturbed:

*You feel a chill wind gust from nowhere in particular. Somehow it is familiar. Like an ill omen, a broken promise, or the moment you realize that luck has abandoned you.*

*Gray mist swirls from a low arch in the cavern wall, spreading its grasping tendrils across the floor. Smoky figures arise from the icy vapors: elfin women whose expressions twitch with rage. One of the figures whispers dark words and the bones throughout the outpost begin to tremble and knit together by themselves!*



The party must now deal with the undead or flee the area.

**Undead:** The adventurers face the **ghosts** of the dryads. Each round on initiative count 20, the ghosts raise more skeletons from the remains of Lorm Stonebones' comrades to fight alongside them. An initial number of skeletons emerge in round one, followed by more every round thereafter while the ghosts remain active. If the ghosts are destroyed, the skeletons disassemble and no more are raised. See the table below for the exact number of creatures for each APL.

**Freezing Mist:** The freezing mist spreads outwards from the archway at a speed of 20 feet per round. Any creature inside its area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw when they first enter the mist or start their turn inside it. On a failure, the freezing mist clings to them. A creature caught by the freezing mist takes 8 (2d4 + 3) cold damage upon failing the save, and again at the start of each of their turns thereafter. As an action during its turn, the creature may repeat the saving throw, brushing off the mist with a success. The mist dissipates when the ghosts have been defeated.

#### ADJUSTING THE CHALLENGE: DRYAD GHOSTS

If you wish to highlight the former nature of the ghosts, consider swapping some of the ghost's possession feature for the fey charm feature of a dryad. This can also add variety to the encounter.

In either case, keep in mind that both of these features can deny character actions and are especially strong when the party includes fewer than five characters. You can allow checks or good roleplaying to free a possessed/charmed character or give them an additional saving throw, or simply have the power end when the ghost suffers a particularly strong blow. Similarly, you can have fewer or no skeletons show up if the encounter doesn't need a higher challenge.

APL	MONSTERS
5	2 ghosts and 2 skeletons. An additional 2 skeletons animate at the start of each round while the ghosts are active.
6	2 ghosts and 4 skeletons. An additional 2 skeletons animate at the start of each round while the ghosts are active.
7	3 ghosts and 2 skeletons. An additional 1 skeleton animates at the start of each round while the ghosts are active.
8	3 ghosts and 4 skeletons. An additional 2 skeletons animate at the start of each round while the ghosts are active.
9	3 ghosts and 4 skeletons. An additional 2 skeletons animate at the start of each round while the ghosts are active. (Increase the attack bonus of all skeletons by +1)
10	3 ghosts and 4 skeletons. An additional 4 skeletons animate at the start of each round while the ghosts are active. (Increase the attack bonus of all skeletons by +2)

#### D. DWARVEN DOORS

These giant doors are dwarven in manufacture and built to withstand damage. They have AC 12, a damage threshold of 15, 250 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. The doors are superiorly locked, requiring success on a DC 25 Dexterity check made with thieves' tools to open.

Characters who open the doors can advance to Encounter 6, Covert Warcamp.

#### CONTINUING

From here, the characters can take the tunnels to Encounter 4, Webbed Lair, or Encounter 7, Mushroom Grotto. Characters who succeed in opening the dwarven doors can advance to Encounter 6, Covert Warcamp.



# ENCOUNTER 6: COVERT WARCAMP







## ENCOUNTER 6: COVERT WARCAMP

The adventurers enter this area through the massive dwarven doors from Encounter 5, Cave of Ruin.

Jarl Ansgar, warchief of the yorghrim Clan Skölskyl, has claimed this dwarven smithy as his war camp. The jarl waits inside with his mystic, Eskil the Sehir, and his ferocious brothers, Barnat the Berserker and Black Erik, as they prepare themselves for Graemourna's assault on Valoria. Before running this encounter, familiarize yourself with the yorghrim lore in the section "**Dealing With the Yorghrim**".

**Roleplaying Manx:** If Manx is with the characters, she fears the yorghrim and believes they are evil since they serve Graemourna. However, she has also seen that Graemourna can manipulate and corrupt beings into serving her. She follows PCs' lead.

The cavern is brightly lit by flames from the yorghrim's campfire and the red-hot dwarven forge. Read or paraphrase the following as the party enters the cavern:

*Waves of heat ripple out of this cavern from a blazing forge shaped like a monstrous stone bull. Nearby, fur bedrolls and a small arsenal of weapons lie scattered around a smoking campfire. A glowing crystal is embedded in the wall nearby.*

*Four figures guard the cavern: an umber hulk, a grimlock, a wereboar, and a blue-skinned, horned fey being rimed in ice, who stands beside the forge with a hammer in his hand. Seeing you, the fiends shout, "Nothing is more glorious than to die in battle for the clan. We shall never flee our enemies, nor fail to defend our jarl!" As they raise their point their weapons at you, the blue-skinned figure turns away to gaze sadly into the flames.*



At this point, ask the players to make any of the following checks:

**DC 12 Wisdom (Perception):** A character notices that the blue-skinned fey was hammering out a strange metal sphere on a runic anvil when the doors opened. This object is the casing for a fungal petard (see “Yorghrim Camp”).

**DC 14 Intelligence (Religion):** Two of the fiends wield slender longswords crafted from silver, and the other grasps a carved hawthorn staff. Such weapons are unusual for creatures such as these.

**DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana):** The icy figure belongs to a breed of fey called the yorghrim. These proud creatures are famed smiths who must remain near flames lest their flesh turn to ice. Each yorghrim nurtures a fiery passion inside its heart that keeps it warm when no other flames are present. Judging by its ornate battle dress, this one looks like the jarl of a yorghrim clan.

#### TERRAIN TIPS: COVERT WARCAMP

When you build the Covert Warcamp, make note of the following features:

Keep the secret room hidden behind your DM screen until the players have located and opened the secret door. When they open the hidden door, you can fly in the room with dramatic effect.

Keep the Orb of the Overlord hidden until players discover the trapdoor behind the secret door.

### A. MAIN CAVERN

The dwarf artificer Lorm Stonebones used this cavern to house his forge, but it lay long abandoned. In recent days, Graemourna’s yorghrim have claimed the chamber as their own. The following creatures are now present here:

- Jarl Ansgar, a **yorghrim jarl** (see **Appendix A: New Monsters for statistics**).
- Eskil the Sehir (appears as an umber hulk), Barnat the Berserker (appears as a wereboar), and Black Erik (appears as a grimlock), **yorghrims** who have been transformed to appear as ugly creatures by Graemourna’s magic. She has “beautified” all of the yorghrim to her standards. A *remove curse* spell or death will revert all yorghrim back to their true form.

The transformed **yorghrim** have the following modifications:

- Barnat the Berserker and Black Erik gain the following attack which they can use in place of Claw: Silvered Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.
- Eskil the Sehir (and additional druid if APL adjustment includes the second druid) can cast druid spells innately, requiring no material components. Eskil’s spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14). She can cast the following spells:
  - At-Will: *shillelagh* (this can be used instead of any claw attack, for 1d8+3 damage), *produce flame*.
  - 2/day: *faerie fire*, *thunderwave*, *flaming sphere*.

If one or both of the transformed yorghrim from Encounter 4 escaped and came here to warn their compatriots, they will be waiting for the players to arrive. They will demand that the characters not draw arms.

If the players were captured in Encounter 4, Webbed Lair and have not escaped along the way, they are tied up in rope at the start of the encounter. Ansgar will tell the two yorghrim from Encounter 4, Webbed Lair that they are needed to run patrols before dealing with the players. The two yorghrim from Encounter 4 leave.

If players are not captured when they first arrive and threaten or attack the yorghrim, roll initiative and run combat, adjusting based on the APL of the party as shown in the table below. This is a tough fight, but the monsters strike to stun instead of dealing killing blows, as the intruders could prove useful in unseating their cruel mistress Graemourna, and they want to question them. If combat ensues, the crystal on the wall pulses with green energy at the end of the first round (see “Chained Conduit Crystal”).

Use the guidance provided under “**Dealing with the Yorghrim**” below if the yorghrim capture the adventurers or the players seek a diplomatic solution. Characters who defeat the yorghrim here can learn their story from the parchments found by the campfire (see “Yorghrim Camp”).

APL	MONSTERS
5	Jarl Ansgar (1 yorghrim); Eskil the Sehir and Barnat the Berserker (2 yorghrim in the guise of other creatures). Except for the Jarl, yorghrim have 25 fewer hit points and a -1 to all attack rolls.
6	Jarl Ansgar (1 yorghrim); Eskil the Sehir and Barnat the Berserker (2 yorghrim in the guise of other creatures). All creatures have 10 extra hit points and a +1 to all attack rolls.
7	Jarl Ansgar (1 yorghrim); Eskil the Sehir, Barnat the Berserker, and Black Erik (3 yorghrim in the guise of other creatures). All creatures have a -1 to all attack rolls.
8	Jarl Ansgar (1 yorghrim); Eskil the Sehir, Barnat the Berserker, and Black Erik (3 yorghrim in the guise of other creatures).
9	Jarl Ansgar (1 yorghrim); Eskil the Sehir, Barnat the Berserker, and Black Erik (3 yorghrims in the guise of other creatures); add an additional druid yorghrim in the guise of a barbed devil.
10	Jarl Ansgar (1 yorghrim); Eskil the Sehir, Barnat the Berserker, and Black Erik (3 yorghrims in the guise of other creatures); add an additional druid yorghrim in the guise of a barbed devil. All creatures gain a +1 bonus to all attacks and a +2 bonus to all damage rolls.





## DEALING WITH THE YORGHIRM

Jarl Ansgar is consumed with grief due to the mysterious transformation that has afflicted his beloved wife Sunhild. He doesn't talk with the adventurers, so his mystic, Eskil the Sehir (umber hulk), speaks on his behalf. Throughout the negotiation, Barnat the Berserker (wearboar) fumes with rage, urging Eskil to slay the intruders.

To convince the yorghrim to lay down their arms, Eskil demands that each character reveal the "fire that drives their soul": an ideal, bond, or other personality trait that defines them as a person. Ask each player to write down their answer on paper before revealing it to the group. When everyone is done, collect the papers from the players and store them for later (see "Continuing"). Any character who speaks falsely about their drives must succeed on Charisma (Deception) check opposed by Eskil's Wisdom (Insight) check. If half or more of the characters convince her, Eskil asks Barnat and Erik to lay down their weapons. Failing that, she orders her comrades into battle and fights alongside them.

If satisfied, the yorghrim reveal the following:

- The umber hulk, wereboar, and grimlock that stand before the group are in fact yorghrim who have been cursed by Graemourna's black magic. All of the clan, save Jarl, have succumbed to her curse and have been transformed into some kind of horrid humanoid. She has jested to them that she has made them beautiful.
- The yorghrim are bound by oaths of loyalty to serve the hag for a year and a day. The four oaths of the yorghrim are core to their being and are unbreakable (see the yorghrim lore on page 5). While they can't betray the hag, they despise her and would do anything to help the adventurers overthrow her.
- The yorghrim are preparing to assault Valoria with fungal weapons containing spores from the cadaver cap toadstools.

It should be noted that Eskil is watching the players' body language and speech mannerisms to betray any lie as they as the conversation continues. All characters make a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check to notice that Eskil is watching them like a hawk.

Jarl Ansgar wears a medallion with the crest of his clan—a Sylvan rune which matches the leg branding on the feral blink dogs in Encounter 1, Summoning Chamber.

If the players found this symbol on the dead animals and mention it to Ansgar, he will mention that his prized hunting animals are now nothing more than rabid, pestilent monstrosities and curses under his breath. He will say no more, but it is clear that he has for the most part moved on from this personal loss.

If questioned further, the yorghrim reveal the backstory information listed under "**Setting**" on page 6. When roleplaying the yorghrim, try to weave their four oaths into conversation to foreshadow events in Encounter 14, The Underdome. The yorghrim also reveal circumstances of their plight:

Jarl Ansgar's passion for his beautiful wife and co-leader of his people, Jarl Sunhild, is the fuel for his heartflame. Without her love, the jarl would soon freeze up. Alas, Sunhild recently fell victim to a mysterious, wasting illness. No magic could cure it—including that of the great mage Zaltar—so in desperation, and against Eskil's advice, the jarl sought the aid of the hag Graemourna.

Graemourna promised Jarl Ansgar that she would cure Sunhild's illness on one condition: his clan swore fealty to her for a year and a day. Jarl Ansgar agreed and Graemourna gave Sunhild a magic potion that swiftly cured her of her disease. For the briefest of days, the jarl enjoyed his wife's love. He and his clan dutifully conquered Dreadhollow Grotto on Graemourna's orders and used it as a base to prepare her assault on Valoria.

Alas, Graemourna tricked Jarl Ansgar. Her potion cured Sunhild's illness, but the clan's fealty to the hag came with its own price, as her black magic corrupted the yorghrim sworn to her and transformed them into horrific forms: devils, monstrous humanoids, and other foul aberrations. Worse of all these forms was the one afflicting Sunhild, which changed her into the spiderbeast found in Encounter 4, Webbed Lair. Jarl Ansgar still loves her, and keeps her fed with living sacrifices, but his heart slowly turns to ice with grief for her plight.

When the group learns this, if the PCs killed the spider beast in Encounter 4, Webbed Lair, they must succeed on a group Charisma (Deception) check opposed by Eskil's Wisdom (Insight) check to hide their guilt. If half or more of the PCs fail this check—or if anyone directly admits to killing the monster—Jarl Ansgar flies into a rage and approaches the party with weapon in hand. Eskil holds back Ansgar and says in common, "You have one chance to explain this transgression!" A character who tries to talk him down gains one last chance to speak and may attempt a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, gaining the jarl's ear if the check succeeds and they promise to help (either to slay Graemourna or otherwise help the clan or Sunhild). Otherwise, the jarl assails the group. Oathbound to defend their jarl, the other yorghrim attack alongside him. However, if the yorghrim also learn that their clan comrades from Encounter 4 were killed, they don't seem to care that much. Eskil explains, "If they died honorably in combat, then nothing further needs to be discussed."

If the players succeed at talking the jarl down or keep Sunhild's death hidden, they learn that the yorghrim are now in despair, bound by their oaths to uphold their bargain with the hag, even it means their own ruin. Any character who promises to slay Graemourna awakens Jarl Ansgar from his reverie, and he offers to craft the group weapons fit for the task (see "Dwarven Forge"). But that is all that he can do for them. Any other assistance would go against their sworn oath to serve Graemourna. Eskil argues that even arming them is a potential breach of fealty, but Ansgar (in an ancient Sylvan tongue) reminds his counsel that these adventurers are unlikely to defeat Graemourna no matter how they are armed and he is only bolstering false confidence to them in a venture that is surely doomed. All of the yorghrim get a chuckle at this idea. The yorghrim remain here while the characters hunt down the hag.





## CHAINED CONDUIT CRYSTAL

The crystal protruding from the cavern wall is one of the grotto's five conduit crystals (see "Cavern Features" on page 5). Every hour, the crystal blazes with green light and a wave of magical energy washes over the cavern. You can time the first energy wave for dramatic effect. If these energies break over the group, any adventurer currently infected by cadaver blight must make an Exposure check (see "Exposure checks" in **Appendix D: Exposure and Infection**). As these yorghrim are not infected by the blight, they are unaffected by the crystal's pulse. Refer to "**Chained Conduit Crystals**" on page 8 for the pulsing effects and removal of the crystals.

The yorghrim will also be minding the crystal, but on a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check, players will notice that the yorghrim do not watch the chained crystal all the time. They can take this opportunity to distract the yorghrim during parlay, so that one or two players can attempt to remove the Azure Conduit Crystal and replace it with the damaged one from Encounter 5 if they have it in their possession. The normal rules for removing the perfect crystal still apply. The imperfect crystal may be swapped on a DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. When successfully in place, the imperfect crystal will glow, but not build up in energy. Only a discerning eye will know that a false crystal is in its place. The yorghrim will eventually notice something is wrong with the replaced crystal after the hourly pulse does not occur at its due time. But they will not take action as they care not for Graemourna's machinations. They only obey her direct instructions (guard the crystal) and it is not their job to maintain the functionality of the crystals, even if they were tampered with beyond their notice. If the players get caught making the switch, the yorghrim are duty-bound to stop them, and the players will have to find another way to obtain the crystal.

The conduit crystal pulses with blue light once it is freed. See **Handout 6-2: Azure Conduit Crystal** for statistics. If a character attunes to the item, they awaken the soul bound within the crystal. If this happens, provide them with the **Awakened** version of the handout. As the personality within can help guide the characters, you may choose to have it speak, urging them to attune to the crystal.

## DWARVEN FORGE

The dwarven forge roars with magical flames that burn at a greater heat than normal fire and require no fuel. To modulate the heat, a creature must know the required Dwarven command phrases, which are etched into the surface of the forge in arcane runes. To decipher the runes, a creature must understand Dwarven and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

The runic anvil imbues magic properties into any weapon that is worked at the forge. To craft something at the forge and anvil, a creature must be proficient with Smith's tools, understand the forge's command words, and have enough workable metal for the desired creation. Characters who meet these requirements can attempt to craft magic weapons. Crafting a weapon with a +1 magical bonus requires success on a DC 10 Wisdom check made with Smith's tools. If the check result beats the DC by 5 or more, the weapon has a +2 magical bonus, and if it beats it by 10 or more, the weapon gains a minor magical property of your choosing (see the Dungeon Master's Guide Special Features section in Chapter 7). There is enough steel and silver next to the forge to craft 4 standard metal weapons, 8 light metal weapons, or 2 two-handed metal weapons.

Jarl Ansgar is a master weapon's smith and knows how to operate the forge and can craft weapons for the group if befriended, so long as no cold iron is involved as their fey-blood forbids it. Weapons that the jarl crafts always have a +2 magical bonus and a special feature.

If the players think to use the cold iron ingots from Encounter 5, Cave of Ruin, they can craft weapons to which the hag is especially vulnerable. In this case, any character who does not already meet the requirements to use the forge can craft cold iron weapons at disadvantage if Jarl Ansgar oversees the crafting.

## YORGHHRIM CAMP

Three thick fur bedrolls are spread out on the cavern floor next to a blazing campfire. While the flames burn, any creature that enters the campfire space for the first time on a turn or starts its turn inside it takes 9 (2d8) fire damage.

The following weapons are laid out around the camp: 5 javelins, 2 silvered longswords, 1 silvered greataxe, and 8 fungal petards. A fungal petard can be thrown up to 30 feet as an action and explodes on impact, showering poisonous spores in a 10-foot radius. Any creature caught in the spores takes 11 (2d10) poison damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or contract cadaver blight (see "**Cadaver Blight**" on page 95) and be forced to immediately make an Exposure check. The yorghrim are duty-bound to defend these items and warn the characters against touching them on pain of death.

The bedrolls contain some of the yorghrim's personal belongings, including a parchment letter from Zaltar's imp Doom concerning the curse afflicting Jarl Ansgar's wife Sunhild. Provide the players with **Handout 6-1: Doom's Letter** if they find the parchment.



## SECRET DOOR

If given access, any character who searches the rear of the cavern and succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers the secret door. However, this is a very difficult thing to do. The yorghrim know about the secret room but are duty-bound not to reveal its presence. The room is pretty small and in the open view of the yorghrim. It will be easily noticed that the players are looking for it. Either Barnat or Erik will be standing in front of it as well, deliberately guarding against players searching for it. They will need to find a way to overcome these obstacles before successfully finding the secret door. To operate it, the character must push the hinged section of the wall inwards, exposing the secret room beyond (see Area B). If a character discovers the room, and if the yorghrim catch them in the act, they will warn the character not to open it on pain of death.

It is more likely that players will come back to this secret chamber later, after they have discovered the second half of Graemourna's Grimoire in Encounter 11, Hag's Den (**Handout 11-5: Second Ripped Page from Graemourna's Grimoire**) which will let players know what is in the room and give players the information that Graemourna cheated the yorghrim in her oathbinding. When Ansgar learns that the hag ripped Sunhild's soul from her body and trapped it into the heartshard he will rage at this breach of their pact. He will say that their fealty to her is over and allow players to enter the second room.

### B. SECRET ROOM

- The dwarf artificer Lorm Stonebones used this cavern as his secret treasury. Read or paraphrase the following when an adventurer enters this area:

*A narrow chamber lies beyond the secret door, empty save for a large wooden trapdoor in the rocky floor.*

The trapdoor is easily opened and contains Graemourna's secret weapon in the coming war against Valoria: a fungal bomb so powerful it is dubbed the "Orb of the Overlord." The yorghrim have hidden the weapon inside this cavern for safekeeping prior to the invasion and have strict orders to keep it from falling into enemy hands.

### ORB OF THE OVERLORD

The Orb of the Overlord is a 2-foot wide crystal sphere encircled by an ornamental dragon. Inside the sphere, glowing green gas swirls and flares. The orb is key to Graemourna's plot to bring ruin to Valoria and she plans to shatter it inside the city at the height of her assault. The object is bulky and somewhat heavy, weighing in at 225 lbs. It has AC 8, 15 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Distribute **Handout 6-3: Orb of the Overlord**.

Players rolling successfully on the following checks will learn:

**Intelligence 15 (Arcana):** The crystal has runic seals to prevent seepage. You have to break the actual crystal to release the contents inside.

**Wisdom 14 (Tinker's Tools):** They notice that there is an intake to add more of this substance to the canister in the dragon's mouth. The connection is for something specialized that's not in the room. From wear and tear, it seems like the intake has been used frequently and over a long time. Nothing can be released this way.

**Intelligence 14 (Jeweler's Tools):** The crystal containment sphere is semi-fragile and it will not take much to cause the sphere to burst (DM can reveal AC/HP).

**Intelligence 17 (Alchemy Kit):** The resin on the intake valve in the dragon's mouth is a crystalized version of the gas. Examination shows this to be an exceptionally toxic and deadly substance: it is reminiscent of the blight found within Mercer. It is spore-based with something more.

**Intelligence 13 (Nature):** The resin comes from a fungus that is not natural.

Any player who casts detect magic on the orb will reveal that it has faint energy signatures from both the Feywild and Shadowfell.

If the orb is destroyed, it releases an explosion of noxious gas in an 80-foot radius. Any creature caught in the blast must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 135 (30d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much poison damage on a successful one. In addition, any creature that fails its save is infected with cadaver blight (see "**Cadaver Blight**" on page 95). The gas persists once released, expanding outwards by 10 feet every 5 seconds until it reaches a radius of 300 feet or a wind of at least 10 miles per hour blows it away, at which point it dissipates. Any creature that enters the area of the gas on its turn or starts its turn inside it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) poison damage on a failed save and contracting cadaver blight.

### CONTINUING

The only exit from this cavern leads back to Encounter 5, Cave of Ruin. If the yorghrim are alive when the group leaves here, take some time to study the answers that the players made to Eskil's questions. Any weaknesses identified here should be exploited when the characters confront Barnat the Berserker and Black Erik in Encounter 15, Dreadhollow Forest. At your discretion, if the yorghrim are slain, Graemourna could draw these secrets out from their dead bodies.



# APPENDIX A: NEW MONSTERS





# ENCOUNTER 1: NEW MONSTERS

## FERAL BLINK DOGS

Graemourna's conduit crystals release waves of energy channeled from the unseelie fey realms. Exposure has transformed a pack of blink dogs, enhancing their strength. It has also made them feral, stripping them of their intelligence and desire to do good.

Feral blink dogs fight as a pack, using their high mobility to harry weak opponents first. They use their instincts and teleportation to elude the blows of their strongest foes.

Feral blink dogs lack the rich golden hide typical of blink dogs. Instead, their hide is purple-black, and sharp green-tinted bones protrude from their spines. Green tendrils have begun to appear on some of their legs, necks, and jaws from exposure to Graemourna's experiments, though their infection is not yet communicable.



### FERAL BLINK DOG

*Medium fey, neutral*

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 40 (6d8 + 10)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	19 (+4)	13 (+1)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

**Skill** Perception +5, Stealth +8

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Blink Dog, understands Sylvan but can't speak it.

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The dog has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing and smell.

**Pact Tactics.** The dog has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the dog's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 16 (2d8 + 6) piercing damage.

**Teleport.** The dog magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 40 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. Before or after teleporting, the dog can make one bite attack.

### REACTIONS

**Phasing Dodge (Recharge 5-6).** When a creature within five feet hits the dog with a melee attack, the creature must reroll the attack. If the second roll is still enough to hit the dog, then the dog takes half damage and then teleports 20 feet.



# ENCOUNTER 3: NEW MONSTERS

## TAINTED MINOTAUR

Rootwalkers once stalked the Caverns Deep beneath the Spirit Tree, ritually hunting the lizardfolk and other prey. Now the last Rootwalker, transformed into a minotaur, has become infected with cadaver blight. It lusts for a final battle with worthy opponents.

**Transformed Rootwalker.** The Rootwalkers hungered for the hunt, their tribe delving into labyrinthine caverns to pursue fearsome prey. Rootwalkers often wore masks representing their prey, honoring that which they hunted. The most vicious of the hunters underwent a ritual to transform themselves into minotaurs.

**Tainted by Cadaver Caps.** Spores from Graemourna's cadaver caps have infected this once-mighty hunter of the grottos. Any lesser creature would have fallen to the infection long ago, but the minotaur seeks a final battle, driven by its hunger for carnage.

**Pustulent.** The minotaur's hide is covered in fungal growths, spore-heavy toadstools, and skin pustules that are ready to burst. Any creature harming it risks exposure to the disease, and the minotaur's charge creates a cloud of spores upon impact.

**Whispering Wind.** Graemourna delights in the minotaur's torment and has woven black magic over its body to punish anyone who ends its suffering prematurely. When the minotaur dies, an enchanted wind carries Graemourna's revenge. See the encounter text.





## TAINTED MINOTAUR

*Large monstrosity, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 99 (9d10 + 36)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)

**Saving Throws** Con +9, Wis +7

**Skill** Perception +8

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

**Languages** Common, Abyssal

**Challenge** 10 (5,900 XP)

**Charge.** If the tainted minotaur moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with its fungi-covered horns on the same turn, the target takes an extra 12 (2d8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

**Pustulent.** The tainted minotaur is covered in fungal growths and blistering pustules. A creature that touches the tainted minotaur or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 6 (1d8 + 2) poison damage and must make an Exposure check (see Appendix D: Exposure and Infection).

**Reckless.** At the start of its turn, the minotaur can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls it makes during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

### ACTIONS

**Greatclub.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

**Fungi-Covered Horns.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 19 (3d8 + 6) piercing damage, and the target and every creature within ten feet of the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 6 (1d8 + 2) poison damage.

**Painful Roar.** (Recharge 6) The tainted minotaur roars and shakes its body, flinging spores everywhere. Any creature within 40 feet that can hear it must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or be frightened for the next hour or until the minotaur is dead. At the end of its turn, a frightened creature may make another saving throw to shrug off the effects of this fear. In addition, a cloud of spores is released in a 15-foot radius centered on the minotaur. A creature within the area of effect or entering it for the first time must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 12 (2d6 + 6) poison damage and immediately make an Exposure check. The cloud lasts 1d4 rounds and creatures outside the cloud treat anything inside the cloud as heavily obscured.





## ENCOUNTER 4: NEW MONSTERS

### YORGHHRIM

These noble savages roam the tundra of the Feywild in nomadic clans. When they raid the Material Plane, they usually do so in service to a greater power.

**Cursed by Ice.** In an ancient age, a powerful archfey cursed the yorghrim people to slowly freeze to death. Creeping frost rimes their blue-tinged flesh, causing them to seek out sources of warmth wherever they reside.

**Fiery Passions.** All yorghrim nurture a unique, burning passion in their hearts that keeps the cold at bay. This “Heartflame” could be a bond to another being or to an unusual ideal, object, or locale. Whatever its source, each yorghrim needs this passion to stay alive.

**Legendary Smiths.** The drive to find warmth has long caused the yorghrim to gravitate to foundries and forges, making them expert smiths. Yorghrim weapons and armor are renowned across the realms.

**Oathbound.** Yorghrim abide by four unwavering oaths that define them as a people. These are:

- *Oath of Courage:* Nothing is more glorious than to die in battle for the clan. We shall never flee our enemies, nor fail to defend our jarl.
- *Oath of Honor:* Our choices reflect who we truly are. We cannot hide from ourselves.
- *Oath of Persistence:* We finish what we start. Like the unyielding glacier, we persist until we are successful.
- *Oath of Requitat:* All debts, both of gratitude and of vengeance, must be repaid. Recompense or retribution must be delivered swiftly, before the day is done.

Many of the yorghrim in Caverns Deep have been transformed into the form of other creatures by Graemourna. Although they look like a different creature roughly their size (i.e. bugbears), it should quickly become apparent to the characters that there is something strange about them. If they speak, their diction and phrases should be very unlike the creature they appear to be (and they speak in ancient Sylvan). Their cold nature prevails even through the power of Graemourna’s curse; thus, their bodies are coated in frost. If combat ensues, their abilities are very different from those of the creature they appear to be. A remove curse spell or their death will revert them back to their true form.





## YORGHIRM

*Medium fey, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (chain shirt and shield)

**Hit Points** 67 (9d8 + 27)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	11 (-0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

**Skill** Perception +5, Survival +5

**Saving Throws** Wis +5, Con +6

**Damage Resistances** fire

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common, Sylvan

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The yorghrim's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13). The yorghrim can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *produce flame*

3/day each: *V*

**Magic Resistance.** The yorghrim have advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Heartflame.** Each yorghrim has a burning passion that keeps it alive. If the source of its passion is lost or destroyed, it loses its innate spellcasting and gains vulnerability to cold. Until its heartflame is rekindled, the yorghrim's hit point maximum is reduced by 1 for every hour that passes.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The yorghrim makes three melee attacks with its Silvered Longsword.

**Silvered Longsword.** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Freezing Chant.** The yorghrim chants an ancient curse of frost and targets one creature within 30 feet that can see and hear the yorghrim. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become frozen to the spot and stunned. The frozen creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts one hour or until the yorghrim dies, is on a different plane of existence from the target or ends the effect as a bonus action. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to any yorghrim's Freezing Chant for the next 24 hours.



# SUNHILD THE SPIDERBEAST

Sunhild the Spiderbeast was once a beautiful and strong yorghrim. She and her husband Ansgar led Clan Skölskyl through many winters and summers before she caught a mysterious illness and began to die. Near despair, Ansgar foolishly turned to Graemourna the Hag and bargained with her. Graemourna provided Ansgar with a powerful healing potion. Though this saved Sunhild, the hag's bargain required that, in return, the clan must serve Graemourna. Sunhild was ashamed of what her husband had done. Her heart broke, and this misery combined with the remnants of Graemourna's potion slowly transformed her into a horrible beast. She retreated into a dark passage in the caverns, feeding on escaped prisoners or those the clan fed her out of shame.

**Accursed Transformation.** Sunhild has become a spiderbeast. Her body is like that of a bloated phase spider, while her head bears an eerily human face made ominous and horrid by compound eyes and a spider's mouth, complete with chelicerae that do poison damage.

**Lacks a Soul.** A hag's bargain is dreadful. Unbeknownst to the yorghrim clan, Sunhild's soul was extracted by Graemourna and can now be found entrapped in Encounter 13. As a result, the spiderbeast has no personality and has lost much of its intelligence, now possessing only a spider's cunning. It moves in an eerie and detached manner, mechanically focused on eating anything brought to its lair. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Nature) check reveals this detached, puppetlike aspect.



## SUNHILD THE SPIDERBEAST

*Large monstrosity, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 195 (13d10 + 124)

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Skill** Perception +9, Survival +9

**Damage Resistances** psychic

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

**Languages** Understands Common and Sylvan but can't speak

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Ethereal Movement.** As part of its movement, the spiderbeast can magically shift from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane, ignoring solid objects, creatures, or other hazards on the Material Plane as it moves. The spiderbeast must end its movement in the Material Plane.

**Poisonous Blood.** When the spiderbeast is hit by an attack and takes damage, any creature within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d4 + 3) poison damage.

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

**Web Sense.** While in contact with a web, the spiderbeast knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

**Web Walker.** The spiderbeast ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

## ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 24 (4d8 + 6) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking 36 (5d10 + 9) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

**Web (Recharge 5-6).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. Hit: The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 17 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 13; hp 15; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).



# MANX THE RATLING

Manx, a wily smuggler with attitude to spare, is a creature known as a ratling. She has rat-like features, including a tail, but walks upright. She is much like a wererat, though she is not a shapechanger and does not suffer from lycanthropy. She oozes attitude and charm. She will coyly and endearingly rub her whiskers to win someone over, or just as easily stare down a stubborn adventurer while arguing exactly why the party must do what she says.



## MANX THE RATLING

*Medium humanoid (ratling), chaotic neutral*

**Armor Class** 14 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 30 (6d8 + 3)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

**Skill** Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Common, Elvish

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Cunning Action.** On each of her turns, Manx can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Keen Smell.** Manx has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

**Sneak Attack (1/Turn).** Manx deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of Manx that isn't incapacitated and Manx doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Manx makes two melee or ranged attacks.

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

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

**Hand Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.



## ENCOUNTER 6: NEW MONSTERS

### YORGHHRIM JARL

Yorghrim clans leaders are entitled Jarl. Often, leadership is shared between two betrothed Jarl. Jarl Ansgar's passion for his beautiful wife and co-leader of his people, Jarl Sunhild, is the fuel for his heartflame. Without her love, the jarl would soon freeze up. Alas, Sunhild recently fell victim to a mysterious, wasting illness. No magic could cure it—including that of the great mage Zaltar—so in desperation, and against Eskil's advice, the jarl sought the aid of the hag Graemourna.

Graemourna promised Jarl Ansgar that she would cure Sunhild's illness on one condition: his clan swore fealty to her for a year and a day. Jarl Ansgar agreed and Graemourna gave Sunhild a magic potion that swiftly cured her of her disease. For the briefest of days, the jarl enjoyed his wife's love. He and his clan dutifully conquered Dreadhollow Grotto on Graemourna's orders and used it as a base to prepare her assault on Valoria.

Alas, Graemourna tricked Jarl Ansgar. Her potion cured Sunhild's illness, but the clan's fealty to the hag came with its own price, as her black magic corrupted the yorghrim sworn to her and transformed them into horrific forms: devils, monstrous humanoids, and other foul aberrations. Worse of all these forms was the one afflicting Sunhild, which changed her into the spiderbeast found in Encounter 4, Webbed Lair. Jarl Ansgar still loves her, and keeps her fed with living sacrifices, but his heart slowly turns to ice with grief for her plight.







## YORGHIRM JARL

*Medium fey, lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (chain shirt and shield)

**Hit Points** 80 (11d8 + 33)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+4)	15 (+2)	17 (+3)	13 (+0)	15 (+3)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Wis +5, Con +6

**Skill** Perception +5, Survival +5

**Damage Resistances** fire

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common, Sylvan

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Innate Spellcasting.** The yorghrim's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13). The yorghrim can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *produce flame*

3/day each: *heat metal*, *flame blade*

**Magic Resistance.** The yorghrim has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Heartflame.** The yorghrim has a burning passion that keeps it alive. If the source of its passion is lost or destroyed, it loses its innate spellcasting and gains vulnerability to cold. Until its heartflame is rekindled, the yorghrim's hit point maximum is reduced by 1 for every hour that passes.

### ACTIONS

**Reposition.** As a bonus action the Jarl can command their forces to maneuver the battlefield. Each ally of the Jarl may move half of their movement in addition to their normal movement rate on his turn. This movement this still provokes opportunity attacks.

**Multiattack.** The yorghrim makes three melee attacks with its Silvered Longsword.

**Silvered Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.


**Freezing Chant.** The yorghrim chants an ancient curse of frost and targets one creature within 30 feet that can see and hear the yorghrim. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become frozen to the spot and stunned. The frozen creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts one hour or until the yorghrim dies, is on a different plane of existence from the target or ends the effect as a bonus action. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to any yorghrim's Freezing Chant for the next 24 hours.



# APPENDIX B: HANDOUTS







## Summoning Circle

After a thorough check of the circle and the materials within it, you deduce the following information:

- The circle itself has been placed upon a ley line crossing—an area of great magical power.
- There's a powerful Feywild energy present not only upon this circle but coming from within the caverns beyond.
- This circle seems to be a conjuration conduit—it interrupts any teleportation magic cast within range and teleports them into this cave. However, it does have a faint connection to something else that can't be pinpointed but seems to be a "master key" of sorts. Anyone in possession of this "key" could bypass the circle's trap function.
- It appears that dark rites have been performed here recently based on the bowl of blood and human heart. The rite seems to be fey in nature and some sort of transmutation.



## Clan Symbol

*A clan marker signifying ownership*



# *Sacrificial Bowl*

This sacrificial bowl has been used so often with its associated summoning circle that it has become an extension of it. For one time only it has the ability to swap a creature or object of Feywild or Shadowfell origin with its counterpart of the opposite plane. It will only be able to swap out a Tiny sized creature or an object no larger than 12 inches in diameter and 12 inches deep. It is activated when placing the object or creature in the bowl and using a 4th level spell slot. The bowl will crack after use.





## *Yorghrim Horn*

The pale curving horn is that of a yorghrim. Intricately carved, it is worth 50 gp to a collector. Anyone wielding or otherwise displaying the horn will be seen as strong and dangerous, gaining advantage on Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) checks against yorghrim.





# *Violet Conduit Crystal*

## *Violet Conduit Crystal – Unattuned*

### *Wondrous item, unique (requires attunement)*

Larger than a human fist, this crystal vibrates with the power of the Feywild and pulses with purple light as if it were alive. Learning more about it and discovering its powers will require attunement.

## *Violet Conduit Crystal – Attuned*

### *Wondrous item, unique (requires attunement)*

Once you attune to the crystal, it speaks to you, revealing that bound within is the soul of Rhydwen, a noble-born cleric who was tricked by Graemourna. Though Rhydwen's soul has lost much of his former memory, he recalls being bound to the crystal and that he had companions. They may have also been captured or may still be alive. He urges you to give selflessly to others, that your teammates may be strong for the coming battle against Graemourna.

The crystal grants you 3 charges, and it regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn. Unless noted otherwise, expending a charge does not cost an action. If you have Channel Divinity as a class feature, you may expend a charge to regain one expended use of Channel Divinity.

Regardless of your class, you may expend two charges from the following list. This spell is cast as a bonus action, even if it normally takes an action to cast the spell. Spells: cure wounds, aid, heroism, and shield of faith. As an action on your turn, you may expend a charge to regain a spell slot of up to 3rd level and instantly cast a non-damaging spell with it that heals, restores, protects, or bolsters one or more allies. As a reaction, you may also expend a charge on your turn to protect a creature you can see. Any attack rolls made against the protected creature are at disadvantage and the protected creature gains advantage on all saving throws until the start of your next turn. Finally, you may expend a charge to gain inspiration.



# Sage Mercer's Last Page

I don't understand.

My journal is gone only this page remains. I... I think I remember eating the rest of my journal. Clearly my mind succumbs to greater forces. Little ink remains and I fear my sanity comes and goes. And the hunger...

I am a sage. I followed the Ley Line of the Deep into Dreadhollow forest. A blizzard raged. It dwindled over the course of the day. But the next morning, as the sun rose, it returned with a fury. And the next day the same. It was not natural. I pressed into the heart of the wood. found the remains of a tree like nothing I've seen before. I could feel the residual power. The energy still clung to its roots. Deep under the earth.

Tremendous power...

Then they found me. The blue-skinned fey. They took me below the earth. Darkness and pain awaited.

Their master, it was her... the pain. She did things...

Mushrooms and crystals...

I ate it. I ate my journal. I tasted knowledge! I...

The crystals! They are the key! The conduit... Take them, use their power to... I can't remember. A heart! The smaller ones have souls. The heart may as well! The...

So hungry... I must hide this page. Lest I feast upon it.

Tell Daltha the Quick in Valoria of my fate!



## *Mushroom Lore: Cadaver Caps*

These are a form of infectious mushroom called cadaver caps. Smaller versions of these poisonous fungi have been known to grow in the Shadowfell and in the unseelie realms of the Feywild. These are far larger and seem to have grown rapidly.

Seeing these strange mushrooms reminds you of an old elven rhyme about deadly fungi from the Shadowfell:

*Whence journeying in the dark Wold  
let not the mushroom's spores take hold.  
For there is no flight  
from the deathly blight  
decaying into rot and mold.*

*Your lungs shall be reduced to pap  
and your brittle bones will snap.  
With a skin of boils  
and blood that roils  
for treading on the cadaver cap.*



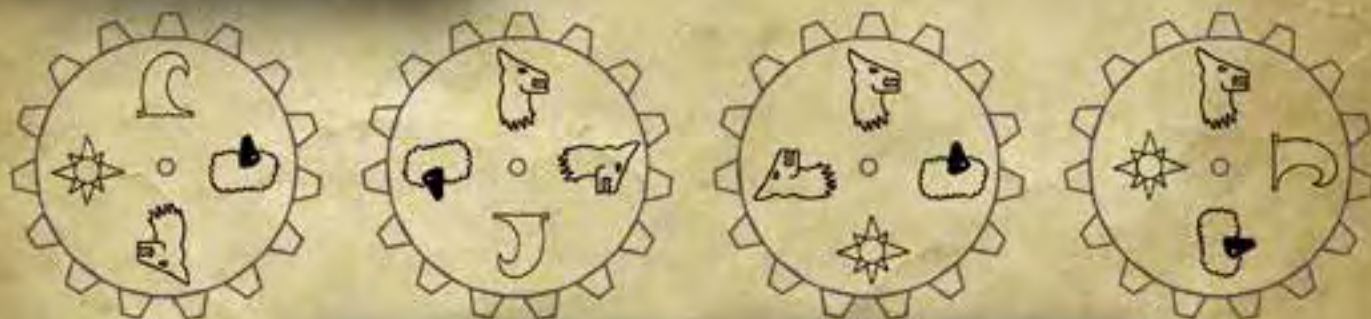
## Sun Locks



The strongbox has no visible handle or locks. Four iron cogs are set into its lid, graven with images of radiant suns, wolf heads, and waves. An inscription under the mechanism reads

*"The Moon Turns the Tide."*

Clasps are fitted to the edge of the strongbox, suggesting that the mechanism is designed to be bolted onto something.



THE MOON TURNS THE TIDE

## Ring of Warmth

*Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)*

*This brass ring is set with garnets and inscribed with dwarven runes signifying fire, hearth, and comfort.*

*While wearing this ring, you have resistance to cold damage. In addition, you and everything you wear and carry are unharmed by temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit. Finally, you gain advantage on any Wisdom (Survival) checks you make in a cold environment.*





# *Periapt of Wound Closure*

*Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)*

This silver and gold pendant is shaped like a dwarven beard. It bears an inscription.

"May you always be healthy, and never lose your beard again to the forge's fire."

While you wear this pendant, you stabilize whenever you are dying at the start of your turn.

In addition, whenever you roll a Hit Die to regain hit points, double the number of hit points it restores. Finally, you become fluent in Dwarven and can write it in an ornate calligraphic script.





# Handy Haversack

## *Wondrous item, rare*

At first appearances, this stained and patched leather backpack appears to be falling apart. However, it has incredible strength. No matter what you do, it always appears to be old and soiled, and always smells like a wet dog. A small brass plaque inside the haversack bears the name of its original owner: Lorm Stonebones.

This backpack has a central pouch and two side pouches, each of which is an extradimensional space. Each side pouch can hold up to 20 pounds of material, not exceeding a volume of 2 cubic feet. The large central pouch can hold up to 8 cubic feet or 80 pounds of material. The backpack always weighs 5 pounds, regardless of its contents.

Placing an object in the haversack follows the normal rules for interacting with objects. Retrieving an item from the haversack requires you to use an action. When you reach into the haversack for a specific item, the item is always magically on top. The haversack has a few limitations. If it is overloaded, or if a sharp object pierces it or tears it, the haversack ruptures and is destroyed. If the haversack is destroyed, its contents are lost forever, although an artifact always turns up again somewhere. If the haversack is turned inside out, its contents spill forth, unharmed, and the haversack must be put right before it can be used again. If a breathing creature is placed within the haversack, the creature can survive for up to 10 minutes, after which time it begins to suffocate.

Placing the haversack inside an extradimensional space created by a bag of holding, portable hole, or similar item instantly destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other.

Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it and deposited in a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes.

The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened.





## *Oil of Sharpness*

Potion, very rare

*This clear, gelatinous oil sparkles with tiny, ultrathin silver shards. The oil can coat one slashing or piercing weapon or up to 5 pieces of slashing or piercing ammunition. Applying the oil takes 1 minute. For 1 hour, the coated item is magical and has a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls.*



## *Potion of Greater Healing*

Potion, uncommon

*You regain 4d4 + 4 hit points when you drink this potion. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated.*



## *Potion of Speed*

Potion, very rare

*When you drink this potion, you gain the effect of the haste spell for 1 minute (no concentration required). The potion's yellow fluid is streaked with black and swirls on its own.*





## *Lizard Mask*

*Wondrous item, uncommon.*

This weathered wooden mask is carved and painted to depict the visage of a fearsome lizard. A simple leather thong allows the wearer to tie it around their head. This mask belonged to the last of the Rootwalkers, savage cultists who wore masks of the prey they hunted. The masks signified a respect for that which was hunted, and an attempt to honor and understand its nature.

When you secure the thong around your head, the mask securely affixes to your head. You may remove the mask with an action.

While worn, you gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) checks related to smell.

In addition, you may cast the spell *augury* without the need for material components.

Once cast, the power cannot be used again until the next dawn.

You recall that certain pagan human tribes indulge in rituals where their hunters don animal masks and enter labyrinthine caverns to hunt down prey: usually troglodytes, savage animals, or other subterranean horrors. However, when such hunters prey on human sacrifices, the most vicious of them transform into savage minotaurs. In these berserker forms, they savagely claim dominion over their tribes' hunting grounds. The bravest warriors sometimes return to hunt down the sacred minotaur: for the rewards are great if they return to their elders with proof of its demise.

Lizardfolk who dwell in the Caverns Deep know the history of the Rootwalkers.

While wearing the mask, you gain advantage on any Charisma checks when interacting with these lizardfolk.





## *Yorghrim Orb*

*This orb is crafted from glass and bands of Dworvenite, a rare and very strong metal.*

*Engraved in Sylvan on the globe is the command word yisora, meaning "radiance that banishes darkness." Uttering the command word once causes it to produce light as a light spell or to cease doing so.*

*A second word, ellore, means "follow" and causes the orb to start or stop following the person around.*

## *Manx's Lucky Necklace*

While on a boat at sea, Manx the smuggler once faced a wyvern and lived to tell the tale. She strung one of the wyvern's teeth on a leather cord, and insisted the necklace was lucky. Somchow, she was right. The necklace acts as stone of good luck (luckstone) with an additional benefit.

### *Stone of Good Luck (Luckstone)*

*Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)*

While this polished wyvern's tooth is on your person, you gain a +1 bonus to ability checks and saving throws. If it is worn around your neck, you cannot get seasick.

In addition, as a bonus action you may gain inspiration. Once gained, this benefit may not be used again until the next dawn.





A silver-chased metal flask holds within a small packet containing gray-black powder. The flask itself is worth 150 gp.

## *Dust of Disappearance*

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

Found in a small packet, this powder resembles very fine sand. There is enough of it for one use. When you use an action to throw the dust into the air, you and each creature and object within 10 feet of you become invisible for 2d4 minutes.

The duration is the same for all subjects, and the dust is consumed when its magic takes effect. If a creature affected by the dust attacks or casts a spell, the invisibility ends for that creature.





# *Transformed Corpses*





Ripped page from...

# Graemourna's Grimoire

...I did engage. I trust not this rage.  
His kind I despise the most. they are a devious host.  
Bewishers who cower in their duplicitous tower!  
Keepers of secrets shall soon have regrets!  
They will die to my delight most horribly from my baleful blight.  
From their bones and corpse-brains I will plunder for my gains.  
Until then I employ this Zaltar to make a summoning altar.  
And though copying his spells-craft without blink.  
I suspect the craft of this link.  
Be it accident or assault. I cannot lay finger on the fault.  
I will pull and claw til I find the flaw.

Without the aid of a dower, one smells cavernous power.  
The ley lines stitch and exude. to my utter delight.  
Magic floods beyond the gate. enough to ruin and desecrate.  
I shall be in utter bliss when I cast his world into abyss.  
My cold gray heart...



# Crystal Diagram



*Amethyst  
Conduit Crystal*



*Azure  
Conduit Crystal*



*Amber  
Conduit Crystal*



*Citrine  
Conduit Crystal*



THIS IS THE LAST TESTAMENT OF  
LORM STONEBONES.

GRAND ARTIFICEER OF DOR-KURJITHAL.

HEED MY WARNING, LEST YOU STIR UP  
THE SAME WICKED WRATH THAT MY  
GREED UNLEASHED.

THIS WORKSHOP IS NOW MY TOMB.  
DO NOT LET IT BE YOURS TOO!

WE DUG UP FROM THE SAFETY OF OUR  
DEEP HOLDS TO MINE THE FEYWILD  
CRYSTALS THAT GROW IN THE ROOTS  
OF THE SPIRIT TREE. NEITHER IN ONE  
WORLD NOR THE OTHER, THE STONES  
HELD THE POWER TO WARD MAGICAL  
ENERGY AND BEND IT TO MY WILL.  
OH, THAT I HAD LEFT THEM ALONE!

THE FEYWILD CRYSTALS WERE SACRED  
TO THE DRYADS OF DREADHOLLOW. AS  
WE BEGAN TO MINE AND WORK THE  
STONES, THE DRYADS CAME TO US,  
DEMANDING THAT WE RETURN TO  
THE DEPTHS. I DEFIED THEM, AND  
ONE-BY-ONE, MY COMRADES BEGAN  
TO DISAPPEAR. EVERYONE WHO TOUCHED  
THE STONES WAS DESTINED TO SUFFER  
THEIR WRATH.

MY BROTHER BORI HIGED ME TO RETURN  
TO THE DEEP. YET MY GREED OUT-  
WEIGHED MY PERIL. USING MY BLAST  
DISKS, I HAD UNEARTHED THE HEART-  
SHARD—THE GREATEST CRYSTAL  
OF ALL—AND I WAS DETERMINED  
TO STEAL ITS POWER.

THE MACHINE I CREATED WAS MY  
GREATEST WORK: MY TRANSMUTATION  
ENGINE. A DEVICE POWERFUL ENOUGH  
TO DISINCORPORATE ANY MAGICAL  
ARTIFACT AND EXTRACT ITS POWER.  
THE DEVICE WAS SO DANGEROUS THAT  
I HAD TO SEPARATE IT INTO TWO PARTS  
AND STORE THEM IN SEPARATE  
LOCKED STRONGBOXES.

WHILE I OBSESSED OVER MY MACHINE,  
BORI TRIED TO MAKE PEACE WITH THE  
DRYADS. HE OFFERED TO RETURN THEIR  
CRYSTALS, REWORKED WITH ALIGREETT.

BUT THE WITCHES DID NOT ACCEPT.

THEY MURDERED BORI AND DRENCHED  
THE CRYSTALS WITH HIS BLOOD.  
I BURIED THE CRYSTALS HERE, UNDER  
THE WORKSHOP, LEST ANYONE ELSE  
DOOM THEMSELVES BY TOUCHING THEM.

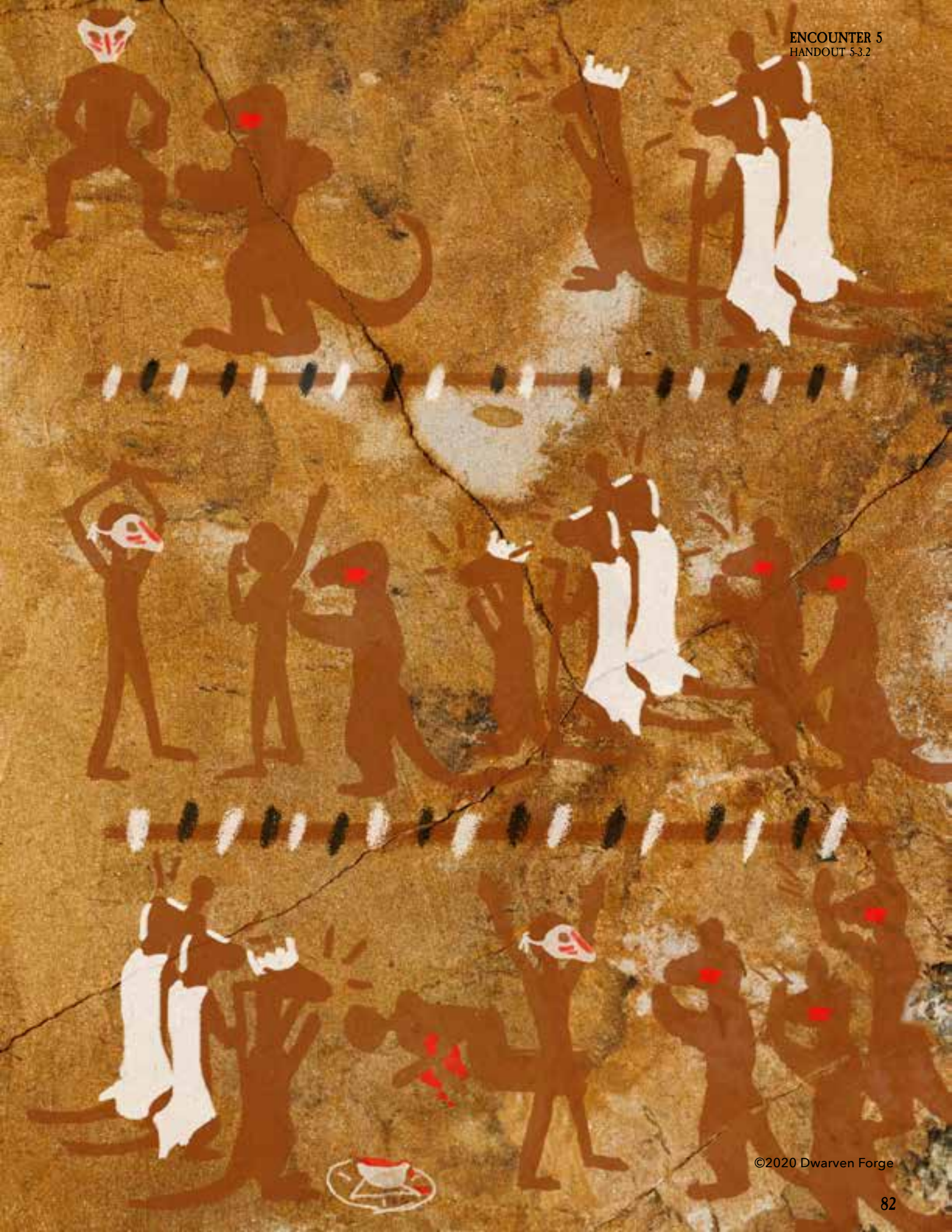
THE DRYADS DO NOT WANT THEIR  
STONES BACK. THEY WANT THE  
SOULS OF THOSE WHO STOLE THEM.

NOW, THE WITCHES SING TO  
ME FROM THE TUNNELS.  
MOCKING ME. THEY WILL  
COME SOON AND  
WHEN THEY DO  
THEY











## Dwarven Rune Charge

*This adamantite disk is 6 inches in diameter, 1 inch thick, and charged with entrapped magical force. The disk is magnetic and sticks firmly to any metal surface.*

*Dwarven runes etched into the disk's face read: "Speak the word from more than thirty feet away."*

*A central arcane rune can be deciphered as the command word "Azhezak" with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If this word is spoken aloud within 100 feet of the disk, it explodes, dealing 27 (5d10) force damage to all creatures within 30 feet of it. Any metal object that the disk is affixed to when it explodes takes 250 force damage from this blast.*



## Imperfect Conduit Crystal

*An Imperfect Azure Conduit Crystal.*

*It is the same size as an undamaged conduit crystal, but Azure in color. It has a small fracture in the back.*

*Costing Detect Magic will register a faint remnant of magical energy as if an attempt was made to infuse something into it. It has no other properties.*



## *Doom's Letter*



Greeting and Salutations, Eskill the Seer!

You had pressed me to look into a remedy for the terrible affliction plaguing Jarl Sunhild. I have consulted my vast library, but the answer eludes my arcane understanding, which means there must be no cure.

I have heard that you are seeking other alternatives in removing Jarl Sunhild's malady. Do as you must, but I must caution you:

Do not bargain with the hag Graemourna. Dealing with a hag only ends in tragedy. Believe me when I say that if you make a pact with that hag, it will lead only to more dire consequences.

I trust you will heed my words.

Good luck with all of that,

## *Zaltar*

Prince of Phantasm



# Azure Conduit Crystal

Wondrous item, unique (requires attunement)

## Unattuned:

Larger than a human fist, this crystal vibrates with the power of the Feywild and pulses with blue light as if it were alive. Learning more about it and discovering its powers will require attunement.

## Attuned:

Once you attune to the crystal, it speaks to you, revealing that bound within is the soul of Ek-Boshek, a wizard-rogue who was the last of the Gryphon's Wrath adventuring company defeated years ago by Graemourne. Ek-Boshek cared greatly about magical secrets. You may ask Ek-Boshek to tell you of one treasure found in Caverns Deep. Your DM may provide a description and, if they so desire, give a hint regarding its location. Ek-Boshek believes all that happens in life is according to a complex plan laid out by an enigmatic being known as Azmekidom. Ek-Boshek does his best to encourage worship of this being, suggesting that any good fortune is clearly due to Azmekidom. He urges caution and preparation in order to best Graemourne.

- Once you have attuned to the crystal, you may use its charges to create the effects outlined below. The crystal has 3 charges, and it regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

- You may expend 1 charge as an action, gaining the effects of the spell *blur*. You may instead gain this effect as a bonus action if you expend an additional charge.

- You may expend 1 charge as an action, gaining the effects of the spell *invisibility*. You may instead gain this effect as a bonus action if you expend an additional charge.

- You may expend 3 charges as an action, gaining the effects of a greater invisibility spell. Finally, you may expend a charge as a free action to gain inspiration.







## *Orb of the Overlord*

*The object is bulky and somewhat heavy,  
weighing in at 225 lbs.*

*It has AC 8, 15 hit points, and immunity  
to poison and psychic damage.*



# APPENDIX C: ENCOUNTER MAPS



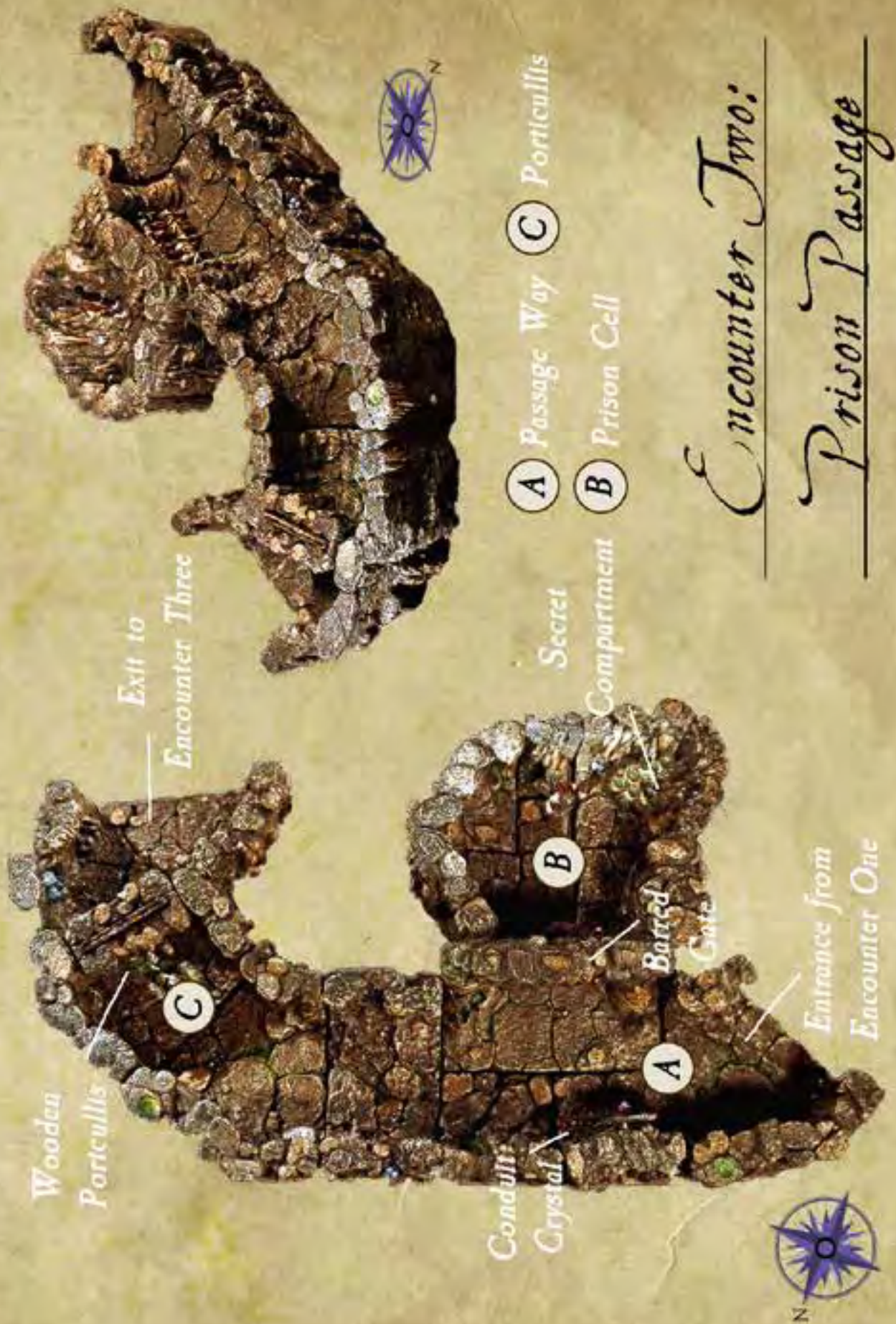


Exit to  
Encounter Two



## Encounter One: Summoning Chamber









A Lower Level

B Upper Level

*Encounter Three:*

*Bestial Cliff*





- A** Entrance & Intersection
- B** Glowing Algae Pool
- C** Web-Filled Passage
- D** Sunbird's Nest

*Encounter Four:*

*Webbed Lair*







A

Ruined Workshop

B

Ruined Storeroom

C

Ruined Living Quarters

D

Dwarven Doors

*Encounter Five:*

*Cave of Ruin*





**A** Main Cavern

**B** Secret Room

*Encounter Six:*

*Covert Warcamp*



# APPENDIX D: EXPOSURE & INFECTION





## EXPOSURE!

Graemourna has been conducting experiments throughout the caverns, creating many opportunities for the characters to become infected by cadaver cap mushrooms. Some areas are more dangerous than others, but even the air can carry tiny spores and expose the characters to cadaver blight! Whenever the characters take a long rest, or when the adventure specifically calls for one, the characters must make an Exposure check. If a chained conduit crystal pulses a magical wave and creates a spore release (see **Chained Conduit Crystals**, page 8), characters must make an Exposure check. Direct exposure to spore release or a creature deeply infected with cadaver blight may trigger an Exposure check in certain encounters.

**Exposure Check:** Each character exposed to infection must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. The DM may modify this DC up or down depending on the exposure circumstances or grant advantage or disadvantage on the check.

- Success allows the character to survive the exposure event without developing any symptoms—their immune system is so far fighting off the infection.
- Failure at the Exposure check means the character is succumbing to the cadaver blight within them and are infected. They develop a symptom. This is represented by drawing from the Infection Deck.

Note that even if a character succeeds at an Exposure check, they already have a dormant variant of cadaver blight within them. From the moment they started breathing in the air of the caverns, their system has begun slowly absorbing the deadly spores and the players will eventually die if a cure is not discovered! A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Medicine) check confirms this.

Players who become infected after an Exposure check must each then roll 3d4 plus Constitution modifier to determine the number of days it will take for the blight to kill them. Paladins and players who never fail an Exposure check roll 3d8 plus Constitution modifier to determine how many days it will take for the disease to kill them.

A lesser restoration spell will protect a creature from the next Exposure check or if exposed, they can remove an Infection Card of their choice.

## RESTING WHILE WITHIN THE CAVERNS DEEP

Before the characters reach Encounter 12, they may take rests as often as they dare. However, resting after they have reached Encounter 2 is dangerous. The risk of developing a harmful infectious trait is likely to put a limit on how often the party takes a long rest. The characters discover this danger the first time they take any type of rest, at the completion of that rest.

**Short Rest:** Each character taking a short rest must make an Exposure check. This check is made at advantage.

**Long Rest:** Each character taking a long rest must make an Exposure check.

Once the party reaches Encounter 12 and completes the ritual, Graemourna begins to flood the caverns. The flood waters deepen steadily, leaving only 24 hours for the party to escape; realistically, there will be time for only one more long rest once the flooding begins.

## INFECTION!

Cadaver blight is a terrible magical disease. Anyone exposed to it contracts it and will usually die within days. See the information on cadaver caps in the Graemourna's Revenge section above. As an infected body succumbs to the disease, it manifests symptoms. The symptoms vary due to variations in the energies the mushrooms have absorbed and in how the disease manifests in different individuals. Additional sources of cadaver cap spores or associated energies can cause the disease to worsen, manifesting additional symptoms. In rare cases, the symptoms can be helpful, but they are usually malign.

You can use the **Infection Deck** as a set of cards to randomly pull from in the subsequent pages ready to be printed and cut out. Or, if preferred, you can or roll from the **Infection Table** on page 102 to determine these mutations.

### Infection Deck

**Drawing from the Infection Deck:** When a character fails an Exposure check, they must draw one card from the Infection Deck, a deck of mutations both beneficial and horrid. Some effects are temporary, others permanent until a cure is found. In rare cases, they may draw more than one card or get to choose. Such exceptions will be noted along with the triggering circumstances.

The following optional rules can help you adjust Exposure checks for your particular group of players.

**Stacking the Deck:** Some cards may fit a particular situation better than others. You could remove some cards or build a smaller deck to reflect a specific Exposure check. Such a draw should be a rare occurrence and be an enjoyable experience for the players.

**Improving the Odds:** If the characters are having too much of a challenge, you can reward them after a success (for example, after they finish the ritual in the Ice Catacombs, or if they have searched for a cure among Graemourna's notes). From that point forward, when a character fails an Exposure check, they pull two cards from the Infection Deck and pick which one they keep.

**Infection Card Limits:** If the characters have too many active exposures, you can limit the number of active Exposure checks to a number that seems more manageable. Whenever a character has to draw a card from the Infection Deck and is already at the maximum number, they may either choose one to discard or roll to determine which one they discard (your choice).



14-16

## CADAVER COUGH

BANE



Your respiratory system is filled with black spores, fatiguing you with every cough.

Before rolling initiative on each combat, attempt a DC 15 Constitution saving throw:

- **Success:** no effect for that combat.
- **Failure:** you gain two levels of exhaustion, which is recovered at the end of combat.

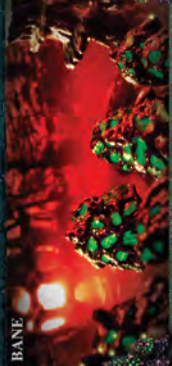
DWARVEN FORGE

INFECTION DECK

17-19

## CREEPING DEATH

BANE



You can't shake the feeling that you have a horrid illness within you.

If you perform an Action during your turn:

- DM rolls a d8 and tracks the result in secret

At the end of every turn, attempt a DC 15 Constitution saving throw:

- **Success:** Effect ends for this combat; DM adds the results of all d8s rolled, which you take as damage. This damage cannot be resisted.
- **Failure:** you gain two levels of exhaustion, which is recovered at the end of combat.

DWARVEN FORGE

INFECTION DECK

29-31

## FUNGUS AMONG US

BANE



Small withered white fungi cover your skin. With each wound they soak up the blood you shed, becoming a gruesome crimson and black color.

Whenever you are below half of your hit point total, creatures who are friendly to you gain the **frightened** condition while they are within 20 feet of you.

DWARVEN FORGE

INFECTION DECK

20-22

## POISONED BLOOD

BANE



Cadaver caps have infected your blood, turning it into poison.

The first time you take damage in any combat, attempt a DC 13 Constitution save:

- **Success:** Effect ends.
- **Failure:** Become poisoned. While poisoned, if you hit a creature with an unarmed attack or grapple a creature, the target must attempt a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the end of your next turn.

You may repeat the saving throw at the end of your turn.

DWARVEN FORGE

INFECTION DECK

35-37

## FINDING MY ROOTS

BANE



Root-like fungal tendrils begin to grow out of your legs.

In any turn where you don't move, the tendrils attach themselves to the ground and you become **restrained**. You can end this effect with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check made as a bonus action, or by inflicting 5 or more points of damage to the tendrils.

The tendrils have AC 8 and fail all saving throws.

DWARVEN FORGE

INFECTION DECK

23-25

## FUNGAL SHROUD

BANE / BOON



Thin hairy black fungi grow from your skin and weave through your hair, growing back rapidly if you try to remove them.

At the start of every combat, attempt a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw:

- **Initial Success:** Creatures have disadvantage on their attacks against you until the end of your next turn.

- **Failure:** You have disadvantage to all attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks.

You may repeat the saving throw at the end of your turn.

DWARVEN FORGE

INFECTION DECK

38-40

## PLEASING AROMA

BANE



Short nubby lavender-colored mushrooms sprout from your limbs, exuding a pleasing scent.

Any beasts or monstrosities (and other creatures the DM decides would like the smell) find you delicious and attack you preferentially.

DWARVEN FORGE

INFECTION DECK



## FUNGAL-BORN WEAKNESS

BANE



*Violet fungal patches cover your skin, weakening your body's defense.*

Roll 1d6. You gain **vulnerability** to the following damage type:

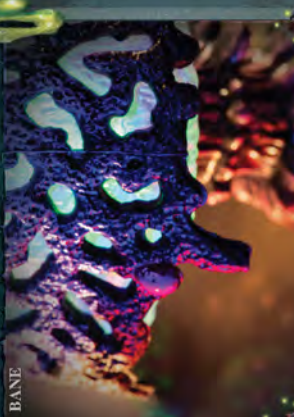
1. Acid
2. Bludgeoning
3. Cold
4. Fire
5. Lightning
6. Poison

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

## WEAKENED IMMUNITY

BANE



*You develop allergies to fungi and your body's ability to fight off infection and poison weakens.*

You gain disadvantage against any saving throws related to plants, fungi, or poison, as determined by your DM. You also gain **vulnerability** to poison damage.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

## COLONIZING SPORES

BANE



*Spores within your body keep trying to attract other types of fungi, turning you into a host for as many fungi as possible.*

Whenever you draw from the infection deck, you now draw twice.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

## CHAOTIC SPORES

BANE/BOON



*Two spore colonies fight over your body, trying to colonize it.*

When you are hit by an attack that is a critical hit, or whenever you are reduced below half your hit points, the spores within you battle everything in a 15-foot radius.

Roll a d6.

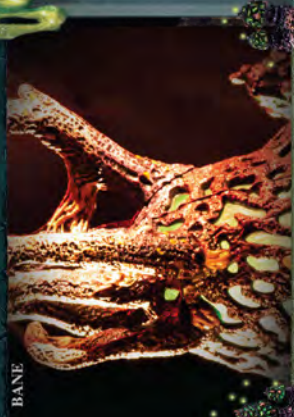
- **Odd:** Creatures in the area take 1d10 poison damage.
- **Even:** Creatures in the area heal 1d10 hit points.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

## ITCHING GROWTHS

BANE



*A blue-black mold forms patterns across your face. The mold itches, making it harder for you to rest and recuperate.*

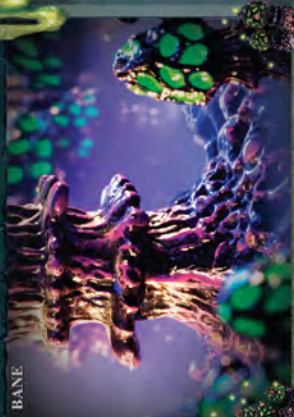
Whenever you spend a Hit Die to heal, subtract 1d4 from the total. A result of 0 or lower indicates you do not regain any hit points (you cannot take damage from this feature).

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

## ABSORBING GROWTHS

BANE



*Your skin is covered in blue-white patches of growth.*

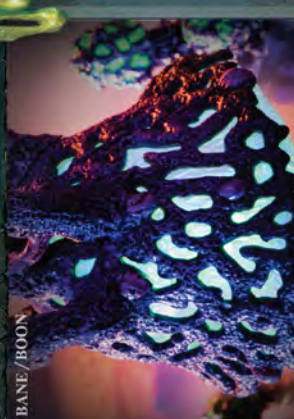
When you are subjected to a damage type, you gain **vulnerability** to that damage type. If you are affected by a different damage type, the previous **vulnerability** ends and is replaced by **vulnerability** to the new damage type.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

## GLOWING OILY EYES

BANE/BOON



*Your eyes lose their color and an oily black substance swims within them.*

In darkness, your eyes glow and you gain **darkvision** out to 120 feet.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

## WARTS AND ALL

COSMETIC



*Patches of large green warts appear all over your body.*

When you exert yourself, the warts leak a green slime.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK



# NECROTIZING FLESH 10

COSMETIC



*Your flesh slowly and progressively desiccates and turns a pale gray. You emit a faint aroma of death.*

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# OILY EYES 41-43

COSMETIC



*Your eyes lose their color and an oily black substance swims within them.*

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# SPORE BELCH 44-46

COSMETIC



*Periodically you can't help but belch, releasing a small cloud of yellow-black spores each time.*

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# FUNGAL EARS 47-49

COSMETIC



*You develop two fungal growths (you decide where) that look like ears. They twitch and move, constantly swiveling toward the source of the loudest sound within audible range.*

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# SPORE SNOT 50-52

COSMETIC



*Your nose constantly drips a spore-filled fluid. The fluid is utterly disgusting but harmless.*

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# COLORED VEINS 77-79

COSMETIC



*Your bloodstream is filled with purple-black infection, engorging and discoloring your veins.*

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# VIOLET BLOOD 80-82

COSMETIC



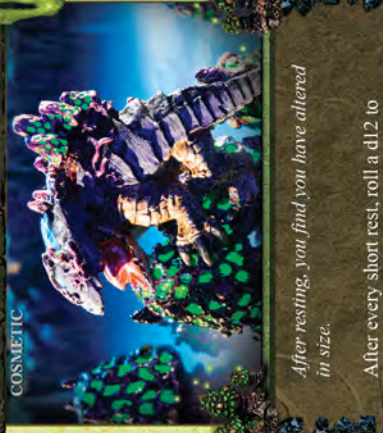
*Your blood is now a bright violet color, staining anything it touches and creating a garish display whenever you take damage.*

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# ERRATIC GROWTH 83-85

COSMETIC



*After resting, you find you have altered in size.*  
After every short rest, roll a d12 to determine the number of inches your height changes. Then, roll a d6.  
• **Odd:** Grow that many inches.  
• **Even:** Shrink that many inches.  
(When the player removes this infection, they adjust back to their original height following a short or long rest)

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK



# 89-91 PULSING SKIN

COSMETIC



Your skin pulses with color, as if illuminated from within. The colors vary, depending on your mood.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# 92-94 FUNGAL HAIR

COSMETIC



Your hair falls out, replaced by thin long trumpet-like mushrooms. Periodically they emit a different scent, matching your mood.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# 11-13 CUSHIONING WARTS

BOON



Soft brown leathery warts cover your skin.

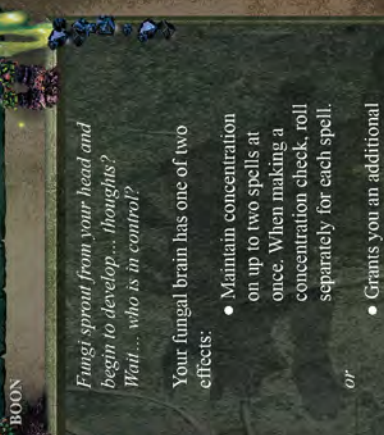
Your armor class increases by +1 while this infection affects you.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# 26-28 FUNGAL BRAIN

BOON



*Fungi sprout from your head and begin to develop... thoughts? Wait... who is in control?*

Your fungal brain has one of two effects:

- Maintain concentration on up to two spells at once. When making a concentration check, roll separately for each spell.

or

- Grants you an additional action on your current turn.

Once you have used either benefit, you cannot do so again until you have taken a long rest.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# 53-55 DISGORGE SPORES

BOON



As a bonus action you can open your mouth and disgorge a horrific torrent of sickly sticky spores upon an adjacent creature. The target becomes **restrained**. At the end of each of its turns, the target may attempt a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, ending the effect on a successful save.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# 59-61 FUNGAL-BORN STRENGTH

BOON



Light blue fungal patches cover your skin, bolstering your body's defense.

Roll 1d6. You gain **resistance** to the following damage type:

1. Acid
2. Bludgeoning
3. Cold
4. Fire
5. Lightning
6. Poison

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# 47-49 FUNGAL FORTITUDE

BOON



Spores in your body act as a filter, preventing some types of fungi and diseases from infecting you.

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK

# 95-97 FUNGAL POUCH

BOON



A strange pouch-like space appears somewhere on your body (you choose).

DWARVEN FORCE

INFECTION DECK



## INFECTION TABLE

As an alternative to hand-picking from a deck of cards at random, you can alternatively roll from the infection Table. Roll 2 d10 for percentile score and consult the table below. Then give them the card from the Infection Deck. If more than one party member gets the same infection, the characters share the card and keep track of which mutations they are infected with.

**Rolling from the Infection Table:** When a character fails an Exposure check, they must make a roll from the Infection Table, a list of mutations both beneficial and horrid. Some effects are temporary, others permanent until a cure is found. In rare cases, they may roll more than once or get to choose. Such exceptions will be noted along with the triggering circumstances.

The following optional rules can help you adjust Exposure checks for your particular group of players.

**Beating the odds:** Some mutations may fit a particular situation better than others. You could remove some mutations or build a smaller table to reflect a specific Exposure check. Such a roll should be a rare occurrence and be an enjoyable experience for the players.

**Improving the Odds:** If the characters are having too much of a challenge, you can reward them after a success (for example, after they finish the ritual in the Ice Catacombs, or if they have searched for a cure among Graemourna's notes). From that point forward, when a character fails an Exposure check, they roll twice from the Infection Table and pick which one they keep.

**Infection Mutation Limits:** If the characters have too many active exposures, you can limit the number of active Exposure checks to a number that seems more manageable. Whenever a character has to roll from the Infection Table and is already at the maximum number, they may either choose one to discard or roll to determine which one they discard (your choice).





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