

DARK IL



DARKOIL

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ORIGINS

The idea for this overstory stemmed from a single game. The party were in Kresk, and I had designed a session where a huge hoard of goblins were overrunning the city. The adventure was supposed to be about finding a safe way out of the city before it was destroyed. But instead of running, the party decided to turn and fight. They managed to find a bottleneck and stopped the hoard from advancing. They took refuge in an underground lair of an ancient cult (which didn't exist before the game started), and some sneaky manoeuvring let them capture the goblin's ship. They managed to win hearts and minds, and ended up as captains. This kind of player improvisation is what every DM hopes for, and it lead to a great campaign.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

WHO WANTS TO LIVE FOREVER? The Green Lord does. He's already a lich, but now he wants ultimate power: he wants to become a god. Gods guard their power jealousy, but he has a plan ...

This is a campaign overstory that tries to combine *Curse of Strahd*, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, and *Eberron: Rising from the Last War*, with a short detour through *Spelljammer*. The central theme is the search for everlasting life, and the curse it might become. Throughout the campaign, players should confront the theme of immortality. They should get to the critical decision points with a good understanding of their characters' feelings about everlasting life. Is it a prize to be fought over at all costs? An immoral pursuit? An unholy affront to the gods? Or a terrible curse that would drive anyone into unending madness? Characters may also undergo a change in their beliefs about evil: they'll begin by suspecting a group of goblins of dark deeds, but end up fighting for a free goblin state.

The Green Lord has three plans, each to be defeated (or not) by a plucky band of adventurers.

Barovia An argument is brewing between gods: should they be permitted to make mortals immortal? The Green Lord has convinced them that he should adjudicate by creating a test case. He has raised Barovia from the material plane and given Strahd von Zarovich eternal life. Now, the Gods look on to see what will happen. Of course, The Green Lord can't leave anything to chance, so sends in a group of adventurers to tip the scales.

Barovia to Saltmarsh When the Barovian plan goes wrong, the Green Lord tries to win new friends on the council of Gods. He plans to free the god Sekolah who has been banished to the phlogiston. He's made an alliance with Sekolah's followers, the Sahuigan, and is cooking up a way to let travel across the gulf of space to break through the crystal spheres that hold their god captive. When the players leave Barovia, they find themselves in the seaside town of Saltmarsh, and on the trail of a flying ship. Once again, they get mixed up in the Green Lord's plans.

Saltmarsh to Eberron The party chases the Sahuigan out into space. On the way back, they get a little lost, and crash-land on another Planet. But even here the Green Lord is plotting. He's forged a whole new race, and is once again ripping a land from the material plane to distract the gods whose power he covets.

The Green Lord need not appear in the first half of the campaign, and can just be a

Thanos-like spectre in the background. The important elements to thread through the games is Darkoil - a mysterious substance that has untold magical power - and the overall theme of eternal life as a gift and a curse.

The first run-through of this campaign took roughly 60 3-hour sessions and took player characters from 1st to 12th level.

This book is organised as follows. This introduction explains the history of a disagreement between the gods. Chapter 2 introduces the Green Lord, and Chapter 3 lore about darkoil. Chapter 4 includes an adventure for 1st level characters that can be used to start the campaign. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 include details of changes and additions to the settings of Barovia, Saltmarsh, Spelljamming and Eberron. Chapter 9 provides details and battlemaps for the Green Lord's castle in Karrlakton. Chapter 10 includes the diary of Merric Horseshoe, based on the final section of a run-through of the campaign from Spring 2019 to Summer 2020. The book closes with an epilogue that suggests ways of extending the adventure further.



ANCIENT EVIL

Long ago, a group of black serpents discovered a powerful source of magic. Intoxicated with power, they roved through the seas, tearing holes in the fabric of reality. Ammon, god of fossils, death and sleep was troubled to see such destruction wrought on his domain. He gathered his armies and fought the black serpents, covering the sea floor with their bodies. Asgoroth, god of dragons, was angered by this slaughter, but saw a rough justice in Ammon's actions and so did nothing. Why argue over dragons that are dead and gone forever?

But although the gods see all, sometimes the world can surprise them.

Thousands of years went by, and the bodies of the black serpents were buried under mud and stone. Crushed under immense weight, some turned into stone to become fossils. And some changed yet again into thick, black oil, trapped under the earth. Thousands more years passed, and lands rose from the sea, exposing new coasts for the waves to wash away. Over time, the bodies of the black serpents appeared once more, now as skeletal fossils and strange pools of shifting tar.

The dawn of mortal folk arrived, and they learned many secrets. The fossils were discovered, and many songs and stories told about them. Who were they? What were their deeds to demand being turned to stone? Finally, an archmage named Exethanter looked into the heart of a great fossil and saw a spark of life still remaining. She fed it with mortal lives dragon blood and suddenly it rose in a hideous, spectral form. It had grown ghostly scales and flesh once more, and it tried to leap away into the sea. But Exethanter had bound it to her, and it was forced to serve her wishes.

TROUBLE IN HEAVEN

The gods argued about what to do at this unexpected resurgence. Ammon argued that all creatures have the right to eternal sleep, and named the black serpents heretics for defying the death that he had commanded upon them. But Asgoroth was sworn to protect all dragonkind, and claimed that any god could confer immortality if they so chose. This drew other gods into the fray. Some saw their domains of death and the afterlife threatened by immortality. Some were offended at Ammon's attempt to limit their power. And others had simply been waiting for a chance to challenge their enemies. Two alliances formed: the **fossil gods** who believed that mortals had a right to sleep in death, and that the black serpents should be destroyed. Their greatest fear was that any mortal being who was given immortality would surely abuse that power and wreak havoc on the world, or even try to

rise up against the gods themselves. However, they were opposed by the **immortal gods** who believed that there should be no limits on their powers.

Although gods are powerful, they are also cautious. The Green Lord saw an opportunity, and a chance to win the immortality he craves. He suggested a test - an *interrogation* - to decide what should happen. The gods would confer immortality on a single mortal - *the interrogated one* - and trap them in a secure demiplane. Then they would wait, and watch. If the interrogated one tried to break free from their trap and strike at the gods, then Ammon would destroy the black serpents forever. But if the interrogated one chose to go to their death, then Asgoroth would claim the black serpents and the gods would be free to give everlasting life as they chose. Blinded by their own immortality, the gods did not see the Green Lord's trick - that they might wait a very long time.

And so, Count Strahd von Zarovich was tormented, tempted and made into an immortal terror. Meanwhile, the black serpents and the dark oil continued to sleep under the earth, waiting to rise once more.

The fossil gods believe that immortality is a curse for mortal beings, and a danger to the gods. They include:

- **Ammon:** Ammonite god of sleep and death.
- **Kelemvor:** LN, god of the dead. Their goal is to guard the dead.
- **Loviatar:** LE, goddess of pain. Pain means nothing without an alternative.
- **Lathander:** NG, god of life and renewal. Lathander makes his case a moral one: mortals have the *right* to sleep. But secretly he worries that immortality prevents people from getting to his domain in the afterlife, and would stop people from .

The immortal gods believe in the absolute sovereignty of gods, including the right to allow mortals to live forever. They include:

- **Dragon Gods:** Vain and arrogant, they feel that they should decide who can be immortal. They include Asgoroth (head of Draconic pantheon), and Azharul (one of the vestiges in the Amber Temple).
- **Shar:** NE, Goddess of Darkness and loss.
- **Talona:** CE, Goddess of disease and death.
- **The Archfey:** The archfey believes that the promise of immortality gives mortals something to strive for, and this gives fey power.

CHAPTER 2: THE GREEN LORD

The Green Lord, Efnisien, is a lich. He appears to be a young boy with sallow skin and large, ancient eyes. He dresses in green rags with a peaked green hat. In fact, he looks like a dark Peter Pan. And indeed, he is rumoured to steal away children in the night and take them away to his fairy court where he can never die.

Efnisien was born in Barovia, long ago when it was still part of the prime material plane. As a newborn, he was left at the gates of the Amber Temple and was raised by the monks there. He was treated harshly, forced to constantly clean the floors of the cold, echoing dungeon. In a bid for revenge, he sought out the forbidden lore hidden in the temple, and discovered the secret to becoming a lich. He lured some travellers into the temple, and sacrificed them on the altar. And so, as just a child, he started his transformation into lichdom.

He grew in power, and learned many more secrets, including how to travel through the faywild to other planes and planets. There he garnered a court of fairies to attend him, each believing that they would also be given the secret to eternal life. His court is now in Castle Karrlakton on Eberron. He is always suspicious of his courtiers, and fairies rise and fall out of favour on the smallest of whims. He is particularly afraid of plots against his life, and sees cloaks and daggers everywhere.

In order to protect himself, the Green Lord has spread the rumour about the phylactery that contains his soul. Supposedly, he enchanted it to transform into a random object and teleport to a random place on Eberron. He then cast a spell to forget all the details of this process, so that not even he knows where his phylactery is. In reality, it is proudly on display in his own personal museum to himself below Caslte Karrlakton.

The Green Lord wants to become a god. He thinks it is his right and fair reward for his harsh life and the power he has managed to gather. He is willing to manipulate people, cheat and steal to get what he wants. He is selfish, petty and prone to tantrums. Even after all this time, he has never really grown up.

LAIR ACTIONS

When in Castle Karrlakton, the Green Lord can use an action to call 10 (3d6) **fairy courtiers** (see chapter 9), who arrive in 3 (1d4 + 1) rounds.



THE GREEN LORD

Small undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 199 (21d8 + 105)

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	27 (+8)	21 (+5)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Con +12, Int +15, Wis +12

Skills Arcana +15, History +15, Insight +12, Perception +12

Damage Vulnerabilities cold, lightning

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses truesight 120ft., passive perception 22

Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the Green Lord fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The Green Lord has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Rejuvenation. The Green Lord's body turns to dust when they drop to 0 hit points, and their equipment is left behind. They gain a new body after 1d10 days, regaining all their hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 30ft of their phylactery.

Spellcasting. The Green Lord is a 20th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 23, +15 to hit with spell attacks). They have the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *magic missile*, *shield*, *sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *blur*, *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *counterspell*, *fireball*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *blight*, *confusion*, *polymorph*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *hold monster*, *scrying*

6th level (2 slots): *chain lightning*, *circle of death*, *create undead*

7th level (2 slots): *finger of death*, *forcecage*, *prismatic spray*

8th level (1 slot): *incendiary cloud*, *maze*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*, *time stop*

ACTIONS

Paralyzing Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 10 (3d6) cold damage, and the target must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw, or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Green Lord can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Green Lord regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Move. The Green Lord moves up to their speed.

Paralyzing Claw. The Green Lord uses their Paralyzing Claw.

Cantrip. The Green Lord casts a cantrip.

Frightening Presence (Costs 2 Actions). The Green Lord targets up to three creatures they can see within 30 feet of them. Each target must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the Frightening Presence for the next 24 hours.

CHAPTER 3: DARKOIL

Darkoil is oil created from the bones of black serpents who died millions of years ago along the Sword Coast. It appears within black basalt caves or in bubbling pools. When creatures approach darkoil, they begin to feel it pulling on their soul. If a creature comes within 20 feet of a source of darkoil or the fossil of a black serpent, the creature can see a spectral form of themselves being pulled out of their body. Within 5 feet the creature must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom save or take 6 (1d6+2) necrotic damage. Creatures touching the oil or fossil take 9 (2d6 +2) necrotic damage at the start of their turn. Darkoil consumes the souls of those who die in it. Creatures whose HP reaches zero from this damage have their soul dragged out of their body and absorbed into the oil or fossil.

Darkoil has a will and can flow against gravity and can possess creatures by seeping inside their skull. Any creature possessed by darkoil is driven mad and desires to destroy everything around it. It also gets a flying speed of 5 feet (not higher than 10 feet from the floor) and can cast a ball of oil as a ranged attack (120 ft). If the creature catches fire, it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage at the start of its turn and remains on fire. It can then cast ignited balls of oil as if casting *scorching ray* at 2nd level.

Darkoil can be collected and harnessed. When refined, it can animate golems and constructs such as 'horseless carriages'. The Warforged on Eberron were created by refining darkoil into a vapour and suffusing it into a construct body. However, the refining process releases an evil element into the world that poisons minds and distorts the landscape.

The draining of the Lizard marsh has revealed stores of new Darkoil. The black caves at Millford are another source, and the Warlock's Crypt in Trollbark Forest. On Eberron, there are several sources, including the lower caves of Karrlakton.

DARKOIL SERPENTS

The ancient black serpents left fossils buried deep beneath the ground. If draconic blood falls onto the fossils, they are reanimated as spectral darkoil serpents. They aim to return to their chaotic evil desire to wreak havoc on the material plane and get revenge on Ammon and his followers who trapped for so long. Darkoil serpents can be controlled (as if under a suggestion spell) by owning a shard of their fossil form.

BLACK SERPENT

Huge undead dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 195 (17d12 + 85)

Speed 40 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	7 (-2)	21 (+5)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)

Skills Perception +11, Stealth +7

Senses Blindsight 60 ft., Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 21

Languages Common, Old Draconic

Challenge 14 (11,500 XP)

Amphibious. The serpent can breathe air & water.

Spectral nature. The serpent can move through solid objects. Moving through a creature causes the creature to take 9 (1d6 + 6) necrotic damage.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the serpent fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The serpent can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes 3 attacks: 1 with its bite and 2 with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage plus 9 (2d8) necrotic damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Oil Breath (Recharge 5-6). The serpent exhales hot oil in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) necrotic on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The serpent can take 3 legendary actions. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The serpent regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The serpent makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Tail Attack. The serpent makes a tail attack.

Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions). The serpent beats its wings. Each creature within 10 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 13 (2d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage and 9 (1d6 + 6) necrotic damage and be knocked prone. The serpent can then fly up to half its flying speed.

THE DARKOIL CULT

For centuries, a select group has known of the power of Darkoil. Their symbol is an eye inside a diamond. There are six masters of Darkoil who keep the secrets and try to find out more about its power. They are extremely secretive about the cult, not even trusting their most loyal acolytes. The masters have an uneasy alliance, since they are all powerful people in their own right. But all realise the potential power of the Darkoil and so far see their interests aligned. The current masters are:

Skerrin Wavechaser: Head of the Scarlet Brotherhood of assassins who lives in the town of Saltmarsh. He sees himself as the natural head of the cult, and hopes to merge it into the Brotherhood.

Thereax Guldeer: Pirate captain of the Gnasher. She representative of the Serpent Pirates and her own master, Vigr Thrass (CE male human **mage**, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, p. 27).

Lord Jholusto of Crandon Manor: Leader of the Lizardfolk around the Lizard Marshes.

Hilda Stormbreaker: Inkeeper of the Inn at Kresk and secretly head of the thieves guild in Barovia.

Morwen Daggerford: Dutchess of Daggerford.

Jhassih Blackrock: Miller of Millford. A new, ambitious master. She represents the builders of the New Coast Way and hopes to become rich from the scheme.

The cult keeps various secret headquarters around the Sword Coast and Barovia. Each headquarters contains a well of darkoil and six chairs with the crest of their master. These include:

- The Black Rock cave, Millford
- A secret basement underneath the Daggerford mansion.
- The secret tunnels under the Inn at Kresk.
- An old headquarters under the tower at The Tangles near Whitesparrow (see Sly Florishe's Amazing Adventures).

THE NEW COAST WAY

The main tradeway along the Sword Coast runs from Waterdeep to Baldur's gate inland past Dragonspear castle. For a long time, part of this has lain in ruins, and crossing the fields of the dead risks meeting Trolls, Wyrms or Serpentfolk. Most trade and travel between Waterdeep and Baldur's gate happens by ship.

The Dark Oil cult is trying to open a new road hugging the coast and bypassing the fields of the dead. Duchess Morwen Daggerford is directing this public service. The Lizard marsh has been drained with help from the Lizard folk and Lord Jholusto. The Trollbark forest has been cleared, and the "New Coast

Way" is being built. It will cut out three days of travel between Waterdeep and Baldur's gate. It will link up a road down the coast from the Spine of the World, down Balckford road, the High Road, the New Coast road, the Old Coast road all the way to Athkatla.

The road will be tolled, which will be unpopular. Dutchess Daggerford plans to block the sea route using the Serpent Pirates and the inland route by inviting Strahd to take up residence in Dragonspear Castle.

SERPENT PIRATES

Over the last decade, a gigantic black serpent has been spotted along the coast of the Sea of Swords. This has made trade along the coast very difficult and trade ships are often lost. The darkoil serpent is controlled by a group of pirates calling themselves the 'serpent Pirates'. The Daggerfords are outwardly very concerned, since trade is their primary income. In reality, they are in league with the serpent pirates who are carrying out the attacks, since they make the New Coast Way the only safe route.

The pirates are lead by captain Vigr Thrass (CE male human **mage**, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, p. 27) of the *Dreadnaught*. He is obsessed with animating constructs, and is using Darkoil to create new bizarre machines. He is busy with his spells and has nominated Thereax Guldeer (LE **half-red dragon veteran**, *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*, p. 27) as his second in command. Guldeer will travel to Barovia to meet Strahd at the Ravenloft Summit.

THE RAVENLOFT SUMMIT

Strahd has invited representatives of the Darkoil Cult to a summit at Castle Ravenloft. Captain Guldeer, Dutchess Daggerford and Lord Jholusto attend. Guldeer sails them there on the *Gnasher*, navigated through the mists by a Vistana. They arrive at the port in Kresk and are taken via the Black Carriage to Castle Ravenloft. The summit may coincide with the dinner at Raveloft, or at Strahd's marriage to Tatyana, if that comes about. At the summit, they will discuss plans to control trade along the Sword Coast. Strahd is very interested in the practical details of the building of the road.

CHAPTER 4: KIDNAPPING AT DARKROCK

Millford appears to be a quiet town, but a dark secret lurks beneath. This is a 1-3 hour adventure for players of levels 1-3.

Adventurers might be called to Millford after rumours of people going missing, or sent to investigate a crime by Dutchess Daggerford.

MILLFORD

Millford is a backwater village on the Sword Coast. It used to be called Darkrock, after the ancient tower built from black basalt. However, the villagers are trying to rebrand it in the hopes that it will become an important stopping point along the New Coast Way. Their leader, Jhassih Blackrock has been made a Master of Darkoil, after the strange black liquid was found in the caves underneath Darkrock. She has been promised that much wealth and power will come her way. Many of the villagers have bought into the idea, perhaps slowly corrupted by the Darkoil itself, though a few are uneasy about the alliance with strangers.

On instructions from Dutchess Daggerford, the villagers have excavated the Darkrock caves and reinstated them as a headquarters for the Darkoil Cult. They have also discovered a fossil of a black serpent in the deepest cavern. The villagers have been instructed to lure travellers into the caves in order to 'feed' it with souls so that it will awaken. Their plan is to pretend that goblins have kidnapped some children in the hope that brave adventurers will try to save them.

On approaching the village, there is a large wooden sign staked into the ground saying 'Welcome to Millford, home of the Millford Inn'. The sign has been painted a light sky blue with bold white lettering. On a successful perception check, characters may notice that it has been very recently painted. With a perception of 15 or more, they can read what used to be written underneath: 'Darkrock' in a gothic script.

The village consists of the mill, the Millford Inn, an orchard of apple trees, a few wheat fields and some small thatched cottages for the farmers. The orchard and fields are bountiful and ready for harvest, despite it being unseasonal. The plants are growing with the aid of one of the green gemstones from the Wizard of Wines winery. It was a gift from Strahd to the villagers of Millford to buy their loyalty. A successful arcana check reveals there is some magic effecting the wheat, and a check of 18 or above will discover the gem buried in one of the fields. If a player digs up the gem and touches it, they are given a vision of Yester Hill (as if they have been transported

there), with Druids dancing around the effigy of Strahd. Dropping the gem will dispel the vision. If they players remove the gem from the fields, they can see the plants already start to wilt. The villagers are keen to keep the gem, and would offer money for its return (since they are unsure about facing the players in the village).

A huge stone circle lies to the North-East. Players who approach hear an echoing wind rise. At the centre of the circle is a fossil altar (see chapter 5), which gives a vision of a dark presence waiting beneath the ground.

Further towards the coast is a set of stone cottages where the fisherfolk live, lead by Liao Qao (LE female human **martial arts adept**).

Jhassih Blackrock (NE female human **commoner**) runs the mill and is the de-facto leader of Millford. She comes from a long line of millers from this village and is proud of this fact. Her husband, Madvor Blackrock works the mill and has worried about the future of the village for some time, though he prefers to keep out of the plotting. The party can find Jhassih at the mill, though she directs them to the Inn and excuses herself as needing to run the mill. A search of the mill's living quarters will turn up nothing unusual, since Jhassih is very careful. Jhassih wears a chain with a silver key that opens the cloakroom in the Darkrock caverns, though she keeps it out of view.

VILLAGE RUMOURS

The villagers will discuss some rumours with the players, though these are designed to manipulate them:

- Huge, black sea serpents have been attacking ships along the coast.
- Corgotin is an elf that often visits Millford, and apparently her bills are always settled by someone else.
- The wheat is growing strong this year - there may even be a chance of a third harvest.
- Vile goblins have been sighted along the road, with some stories that they are harassing travellers.
- There are dragons in Dragonspear castle that prey on trade caravans. This is a lie constructed by the Millford residents to divert travellers from the Tradeway.

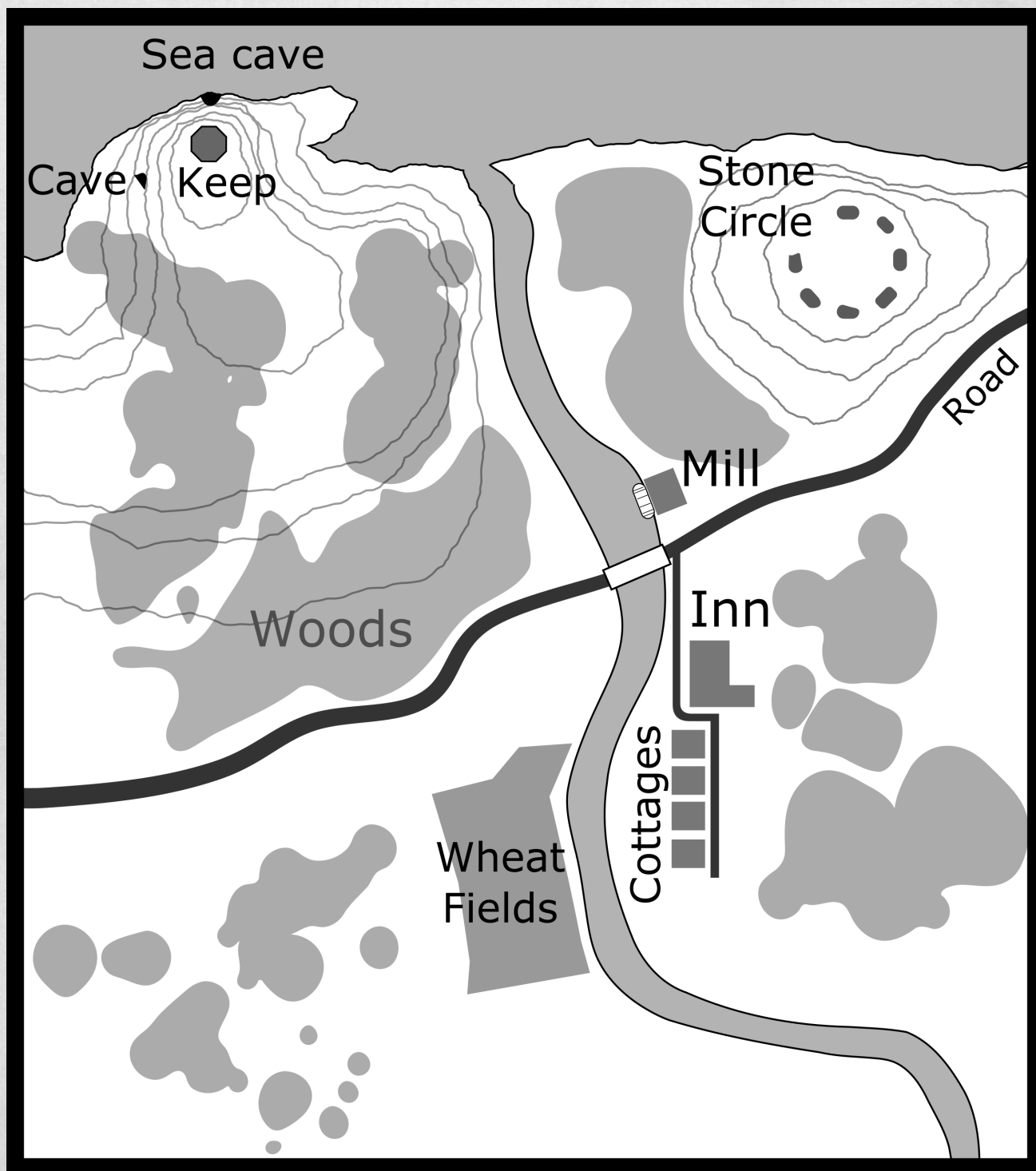


Figure 4.1: Map of Millford and the Blackrock keep

THE MILLFORD INN

The Millford Inn is an old farmhouse that has been recently refurbished. It has comfortable seating and a roaring fire, and boasts its own tiny brewery. In the hopes of hosting travellers from distant lands, it has invested in a surprising array of drinks, including beer from Neverwinter, Spirits from the Spine of the World (imbibers must succeed on a DC 10 constitution check or take 1d4 cold damage), and Liquors from Chult. There is also an array of warm food, though it comes served on miniature wooden shields bearing the arms of Millford. There are a few farmers and fisherfolk sitting near the fire, sullenly nursing tankards of the local cider.

The Inn host, Bharryl (NE female dwarf **commoner**), is welcoming and hospitable and very keen to please travellers. She is very proud of the Inn's new look and is excited about the new trade that will come her way. She's had a hard life, and can easily overlook the sacrifice of a few rowdy sell-swords for a bit of comfort.

The bartender, Harsid Swiftsong (LG male human **commoner**) is uneasy about the plan to lure strangers to the Darkrock. As the party enters the tavern, he has just been arguing with his husband Torvisk Swiftsong (LN male human **commoner**) in the kitchen. Torvisk serves as the cook and is a more self-centered fellow who would welcome some luxuries in his life. Harsid wants to call off the plot, but Torvisk has refused to change his mind. With a successful perception check or if they talk to him, players can see that Harsid is angry. With a perception check of 12 or more, they also see him tear a chain from his neck and throw it behind the bar. With a perception check of 18 or more, they can see that the chain has a silver key on the other end. If the party manage to recover the key (which will involve distracting Harsid), then they see that the handle is engraved with the emblem of the Darkoil cult (an eye inside a diamond), though the players won't know this connection. Ultimately, Harsid will not go against Torvisk and the other villagers, though he might give a warning hint to the players if they give him some indication that they are good people.

Sitting in a darkened corner, smoking a short pipe is a wood elf named Corgotin (NE female wood elf **ranger**). She is one of Dutchess Daggerford's fixers, and has been sent by Daggerford to make sure the plan is carried out and the serpent fossil is fed. She is a sullen character with no time for fools. She enjoys killing and her partnership with Daggerford is simply a route to more exciting opportunities to do so.

If you are using this adventure as a starting point, then the Inn can also contain a magical

'test of strength' construct. It's a crude wooden silhouette of a goblin on a lever next to a large metal box. If the goblin is attacked it is not damaged, but the number of damage points dealt is displayed via a mechanical number display. Corgotin might invite the players to challenge her in a test of strength, as a way of gauging their abilities. This might provide an opportunity to pickpocket Corgotin, and a successful attempt might yield a silver key like Harsid's.

CALL TO ACTION

The villagers' plan is to lure the players to the Darkrock, whittle their reserves with various trials, then finish them off in the caverns with Corgotin's help. After a short time at the Inn, Liow Qao will burst in, shouting 'Goblins have kidnapped the children!'. If the party can clam her down, she explains that goblins came while the fisherfolk were out fishing and kidnapped two young twins (Liow Xi and Liow Sua).

On hearing this, Corgotin will jump up and ask the party for help. She is keen to set out as soon as possible and entreats the players to join her on foot. On the way, she explains goblins most have most likely retreated to their 'lair' in the Darkrock. She explains that horses won't be any help, since the path to the Darkrock is steep and rocky. She explains that there are three routes into the Darkrock:

- The first is the front entrance. A path through the woods winds up to the ruined keep. There may be a way down into the caverns from there.
- The second is a natural cave in the South-West side of the hill.
- The final entrance is via a sea cave. It can be reached by boat at low tide. Players can convince the fisherfolk (who are also in on the plot) to lend them a boat or two. It is several hours until low tide, so this plan requires waiting.

Corgotin is familiar with the surrounding land, and answers any questions that don't reveal the traps of the keep or details about the dungeons beneath. She portrays it as a ruin that might shelter desperate bandits. She is mostly in favour of a frontal assault on the keep, but lets the players decide.

THE DARKROCK KEEP

1. FRONT ENTRANCE

If approaching the keep from the front or the natural cave entrance, Corgotin leads the players through the wood. Along the way there may be a sign to the “GOBLING HIDEOUT: KEP OWT”. A crafty player or a successful intelligence check might find this strange since Goblins are not known for their ability to read. On approaching the keep from the front, describe the setting:

A wind-bitten ruin stands on a rocky cliff. It was originally octagonal, but the cliff has retreated and now a large section of the seaward wall has crumbled into the sea below. The wind howls through the hollow shell and whips at the ragged remains of a black flag on the battlement at the front of the keep.

A magically animated crossbow on the 2nd floor shoots anyone who approaches the front door. The front door is wooden and jammed shut by age. A DC 15 strength check breaks it open. The keep has a series of rooms based around a central courtyard. The courtyard has a well. A DC 12 investigation check reveals traces of activity here recently: a hearth, some scattered food remains. Rotting wooden stairs give access to the 1st floor, but it is also easy to climb up any of the crumbling walls.

In a room to the East, there is a trap door that leads down to area 7.

2. FIRST FLOOR

The stairs take you to a landing and then continue up to the top of the battlements. On this floor, there is a dark room, and you can smell rotting flesh.

If the characters enter the room, they see a rotting corpse against the far wall. This is an inert **zombie** with 8 HP who attacks anyone that comes within 5ft. In one of the rooms to the West, there is a locked chest with 15gp.

3. SECOND FLOOR

The battlement looks down on the approach and the sea to the north. Lashed to the front of the battlements is a tripod with a crossbow sitting at the top. It spins towards you and fires.

The magically animated +1 crossbow whirls around on a spinning tripod and attacks anyone who approaches. It continues to be hostile to all creatures until the magic is dispelled, even if grappled and removed from the tripod.

4. CAVE ENTRANCE

If the players choose to take the cave entrance, read the following description:

From the cover of the edge of the wood, you look across a rocky field that rises into a steep cliff. You can see the battlements of a ruined keep at the top of the cliff. Corgotin points up to a black hole halfway up the steep slope. There is a narrow goat track that leads up to it.

The track up to the cave entrance is easy to traverse. If any characters stay behind in the wood, two villagers in black robes attack from behind as soon as the others are out of sight. When the characters reach the cave, read:

The hole in the cliff opens into a dank natural cave. The rock here is jet black and pocked and cratered with large holes. The throat of the cave disappears into darkness, but you can hear a cold breeze creeping out from it.

The rock is volcanic basalt. Three **Giant Wolf Spiders** are hiding in holes in the roof of the cave. They have been affected by the Darkoil and one of them is able to cast *suggestion*. They are territorial and attack anything that comes into the cave, attempting to use stealth to descend from the ceiling and surprise the party. After losing half of their hitpoints, they flee back into the holes in the rock and don't come out again.

A narrow hallway leads from the natural cave to area 7. Halfway down the hall there is a pressure plate. Stepping on this plate triggers a rope to pull taught, wrap around a leg and pull a character up through a narrow hatch in the ceiling to a chamber above. In the chamber, a magic light illuminates a sign painted on the wall: A red diamond shape with an eye in the middle. A scythe is released and swings towards the trapped character. They must make a DC 12 dexterity saving throw or take 7 (2d6) points of piercing damage.

5. SEA CAVE ENTRANCE

If the players choose to approach by sea, they can borrow boats from the fishing village and row West along the coast to the sea cave. If they leave immediately, the sea cave entrance is below the water line. If they wait a short while, the tops of the waves are crashing against the roof as they approach. The must time their approach to enter safely. If the party waits a few hours, they can row into the cave without problems.

The entrance opens out to a high, church-like cavern. The walls and ceiling inside this space are jet black and porous, creating strange echoes. The sound of the sea

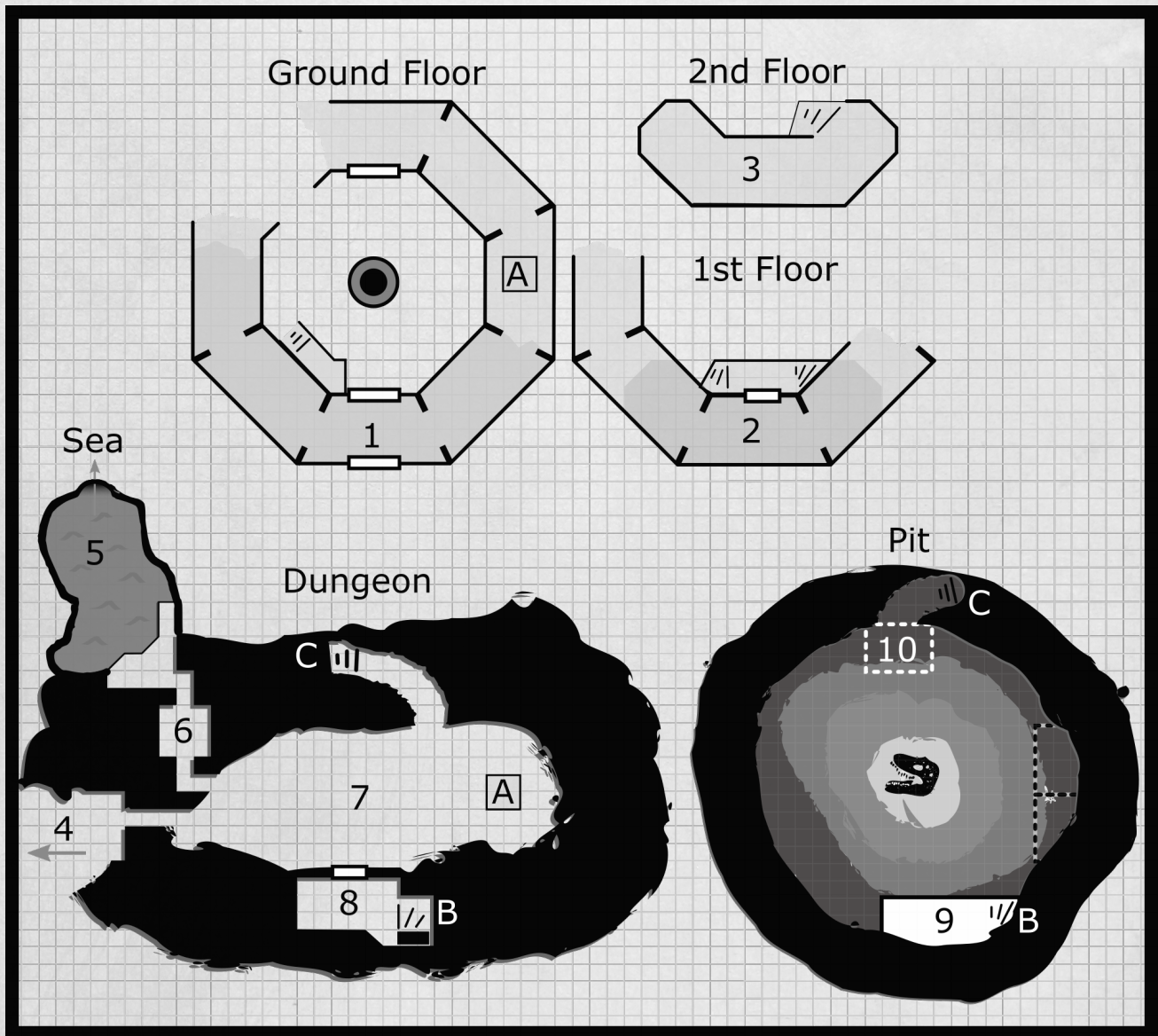


Figure 4.2: Plan of the Blackrock keep

drops immediately, replaced by an echoing of dripping water and wavelets lapping at the edges of the cave. On the far side of the cave, a stone jetty allows boats to dock. Beyond the jetty, a carved passageway leads further into the caverns.

This entrance is not used by the villagers, and hasn't been used in some time. A narrow passage leads to area 6.

6. PUZZLE ROOM

You enter a room with a grid of tiles placed on the floor. A single exit lies ahead of you and walking to it will require stepping on the tiles. At the other end is carved symbol of a diamond with an eye. Below this is an inscription carved into the wall: "The bold reply to death". Below this is a line of 11 dashes.

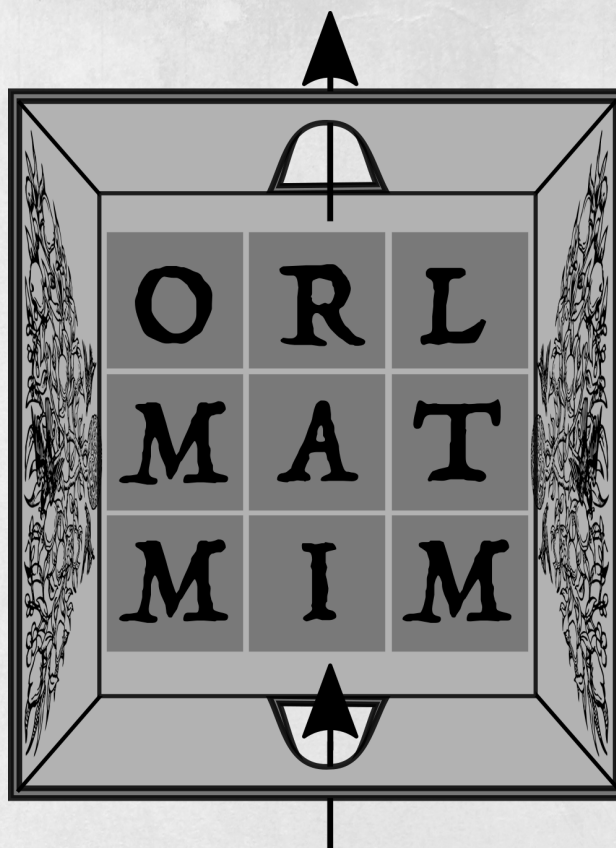
The tiles are 10ft square. There is a narrow space at the top and bottom of the room to allow characters to start and end in any column. There are traps in the walls that fire darts. Players that trigger the trap must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage. The trap is triggered if characters step onto the tiles in any order that does not spell out 'I-A-M-I-M-M-O-R-T-A-L', or stepping off the tiles without completing this sequence. In addition, when a character walks on any of the tiles except the 'I' and the 'A', they glow red and you hear whirring noises in the walls. After this, stepping back onto a glowing tile also triggers the trap. The trap fires as many times as it is triggered and does not run out of ammunition. The tiles and trap reset when someone steps off the tiles and exits the room, or is rendered unconscious.

7. DUNGEON

To the south is a metal door decorated with a silver tree with silver leaves. To the north is a passageway that curves around and descends further below. The silence is cut by high-pitched laughter echoing up from this direction.

To the north are stairs leading down to the pit (C). A perception check lower than 18 suggests this is a goblin laughing. On a DC 18, players realise that this is the sound of human pretending to be a goblin.

The door to the south can be opened by the key belonging to Jhassih Blackrock, picked with a DC 18 lockpicking check, or forced open with a DC 24 strength check. It leads to the Lord's room (area 8).



8. LORD'S ROOM

The door opens to reveal a small room with rows of black cloaks hung on pegs. In the corner there are narrow spiral stairs that lead down.

The cloaks are ordinary cultist cloaks. The backs have been painted with the diamond-eye symbol. The stairs (B) go down to the viewing gallery in the pit (area 9).

9. VIEWING GALLERY

The stairs descend into a large cavern. You are standing on a platform with a raised railing, standing 8ft above the floor of the cavern. There are two figures crouching by the railing, looking away from you, across the cavern towards another entrance. They appear to be a female human and a male lizardfolk, dressed in red cloaks that cover their heads and faces.

This platform is where the lords of Darkoil address their followers below. The figures are Jhassih Blackrock and Morwen Daggerford, two of the Lords of Darkoil. They are not expecting the party to approach from behind, and can be surprised with a DC 12 stealth check.

10. THE PIT

You see ahead of you a roughly circular cavern. It is illuminated by a faintly pulsing red glow but the edges are in total darkness. In the centre of the hall, someone has been scraping the rock away to reveal a fossil of a huge dragon-like skull, its teeth still sharp and glinting. To the East you see set of cages built into the rock, with four small bodies huddled and chained inside. On the opposite side of the room there is a raised platform bearing a carved sign - a diamond with an eye at its centre.

The edges of the pit conceal 6 village **commoners** in black cloaks carrying daggers (if plausible, including some of the characters the players met at the Inn), and Corgotin. The cages include 4 goblins, tied and bound. The goblins will try to escape the keep if they are freed.

If the players approach from stairs C, a cage falls on top of them from above. A DC 18 dexterity saving throw is required to dodge out of the way before it falls. The cage is heavy iron, and requires a DC 19 strength check to lift. When the trap falls, the villagers and Corgotin attack. The cloaked Lords of Darkoil reveal themselves in the viewing gallery. If the party appear contained, Lady Daggerford makes a speech:

Give thanks, for our sacrifices have arrived. Their souls will feed our dark serpent. The New Way will open! Millford will prosper! Together we will grow in riches and power!

If the party is not contained, the Lords scream for the victims to be killed and sacrificed to the black serpents.

Any injured creatures start to feel their souls being pulled into the black serpent fossil. If any dragonborn blood falls onto the black serpent fossil, its eyes suddenly gleam with light and it transforms into a living black serpent. It feels no allegiance to the darkoil cult. Its spectral body whirls around the room as it ascends through the rock ceiling to escape. Anyone in the pit must make a DC 12 dexterity saving throw, or take 9 (1d6 + 6) necrotic damage as the body of the black serpent surges through them.

DEVELOPMENT

The most likely scenarios are either that the black serpent awakes and causes enough chaos for the party to escape, or that the party is killed. In the first case, the Lords of Darkoil blame the party for ruining their ritual, and seek vengeance. In the latter case, the party are brought back to life by the god Ammon and sent to Barovia to try to tip the scales of the interrogation.



CHAPTER 5: BAROVIA

Curse of Strahd provides a fantastic setting for starting a campaign. To embed it into the Darkoil plot, it needs a few tweaks.

STRAHD'S PLAN

Strahd does not know that he is a pawn in a battle between gods. After 400 years he has not become bored with life, but he is bored with Barovia. Having acquired the powers of Wizardry, he now feels ready to leave this domain and establish himself on the prime material plane. His plan is to find someone to replace him as dread lord of Barovia, which he believes will allow him to leave with his immortality intact. He then plans to establish himself as lord of Dragonspear castle on the Sword Coast, and has started to make powerful allies along the sword coast in order to put his plans in motion.

ENTERING BAROVIA

The backstory above suggests several ways for players to get to Barovia. The mini-adventure in this guide, *Kidnapping at Darkrock* suggests one way, but some alternatives could include:

- Aboard a ship from Saltmarsh, lost in a storm.
- Kidnapped in a pirate ship.
- The players might forge an alliance with the immortal gods, since Asgoroth wishes to free the black serpents under Strahd's control.

AMMONITE PENDANTS

If the players get to Barovia under the protection of Ammon, then they are given pendants of black ammonite fossils. Players who succeed on a DC 15 history check know these are called 'serpent stones' by some. On a DC 18 they also know that these are not truly petrified snakes, but ancient sea creatures (fossils) called ammonites.

The pendants offer protection against a character's **mortal enemy**. The mortal enemy should be a grave challenge for the character (ideally should be faced alone), and suited to their skills. When confronting their enemy, the pendant will start vibrating slightly and call out to the player, letting them know it offers protection. On accepting the protection, the player gains a bonus turn that the player can use at any point, and a powerful temporary effect suited to their enemy. Corgotin may make a good mortal enemy if using *Kidnapping at Darkrock*.



MORTAL ENEMIES

Class	Mortal enemy	Protection
Druid	Winter Splinter	Fireball at 5th level
Warlock	Lady Watchter	Hexblade
Wizard	Temple Arcanaloth	Twin spell (temp)
Ranger	Sabre toothed tiger	Bardic inspiration
Monk	Temple monks	Haste
Fighter	Izek Strazni	Giant Strength

If an enemy is defeated with the help of a pendant, then it turns white and is charged with magical energy. Strahd plans to use them to power a device that will transfer his curse onto someone else and forge a portal into the prime material plane. He wants the characters to defeat their mortal enemies, then bring him the charged pendants. Barovians are suspicious of the pendants and have many superstitions about them. NPCs like van Richten, Baba Lysaga, or Lady Watchter might know their true nature. If the players are under the protection of the immortal gods, they might be given similar artefacts, such as symbols of dragons.

DARKOIL IN BAROVIA

IMMORTALITY: GIFT OR CURSE?

Curse of Strahd already has themes related to immortality. Here are a few more ideas:

- The Vallaki festivals might include the 'festival of everlasting life' or 'day of eternal rest'.
- Lady Watchter says her cult is just a 'book club'. They are discussing a philosophical work, and she asks one of the player characters whether they believe that immortality is a good thing.
- Izek Strazni talks about not fearing death, but wanting to leave a lasting legacy. He believes making Vallaki safer is his life's goal.

SONGNOMES

Strahd has created minions to carry his messages. They are skeletal gnome-like creatures. They dress in ragged motely and they have two jaws, one below the other, allowing them to sing in a jagged harmony. They are often found to be singing songs about immortality. These songs could be weird renditions of real songs such as: *Live Forever* by Oasis, *The rider* by Nick Cave, *Who wants to live forever* by Queen, *Fame* by Irene Cara, *Forever Young* by Bob Dylan, *Oh sister* by Bob Dylan (the last verse might fit well), or *Live and let die* by Wings. In the fossil mines, they might sing *Dinosaur* by King Crimson or *Them bones* by Alice in Chains.

Songnomes have 3 hitpoints and can bite (+1 to attack, 1d4 piercing damage). Once they deliver their message, they cackle and crumble into dust. Songnomes might be wearing a jesters hat which remains after they crumble. They function as a *wand of wonder*.

FOSSIL ALTARS

Fossil altars are scattered around Barovia. Each altar is surrounded by druidic standing stones. The altar is a low, rectangular rock, jet-black with swirls of white ammonite fossils covering its surface. They emit eerie echoing noises. If a character touches one, then they are given a vision of part of the story of the black serpents. Each altar only gives one vision. Visions might include:

- Black serpents in the sea. They discover a black stone that grants them near invulnerability. Driven by greed, they start destroying everything they see.
- Ammonites fighting black serpents under the sea, and the sea floor littered with black bodies.
- The bodies of black serpents crushed under miles of rock.
- A confrontation between gods.

- Barovia lifting from the prime material plane, as Amon and Asguroth look on.

THE AMBER TEMPLE

The Amber Temple is a temple to secrets, and devoted to Amon. Long ago, it was run as a place of pilgrimage. Instead of the humanoid statue, there is a huge stone ammonite. It is hollow, and the Arcanaloth now hides inside, still surrounded by magical darkness. If the players enter the ammonite, they find themselves in a spiralling corridor. The space inside is magically warped so that, as they continue, the players get smaller. From the players' perspective, the sides of the corridor stay the same width apart, but the ceiling gets further away. Eventually, they reach the centre of the spiral, and see a fossil altar. A bright yellow knife has been driven into the altar, and it is oozing pink and cyan liquid. The knife has the power to disrupt magical effects. If the players remove the knife, the fossil altar's powers are restored. A manifestation of Amon as a gigantic ammonite appears through the altar. Any players inside the stone ammonite are pushed outside.

When Amon sees the adventurers, he hails them and thanks them for cleansing his altar. He then demands that they swear allegiance to him and help him ensure that Strahd chooses death. He offers them new protections via their fossil pendants: they can summon one of the dinosaurs trapped in amber to fight for them (a likely candidate at this stage might be to fight the black serpents protecting the glyph pillars at Castle Ravenloft, see below). Amon is vain and assumes that any mortal would follow his command without needing to know the reasons, so he does not necessarily explain the battle between gods. However, being vain, he also can't help but boast of his impending victory if players do ask. Amon can offer to become a new patron for a Warlock, replacing their current patron. A simple refusal will anger Amon.

Various other changes to the Amber Temple may also be made. On the approach to the temple there are huge pillars of amber with dinosaurs trapped inside. One of the side rooms can host a kind of museum mine-cart ride telling the story of the fall and rise of the black serpents. If the DM does not wish to give too much away, this could be done as a kind of shadow puppet show without words. The monks that used to run the temple were corrupted and finally were killed by Strahd and his acolytes. They have been reanimated as skeletal monks by the Arcanaloth, and might serve as a good mortal enemy for a monk character. The lich Exethanter was an archmage who first resurrected the dark serpents. If the players restore his memory, he

can recount this tale, though he now regrets bringing them back to life.

CASTLE RAVENLOFT

Strahd has resurrected 3 black serpents and possesses shards of their fossil forms, which gives him control over them. He keeps the shards on his person on a gold chain. The black serpents patrol the skies around Ravenloft and follow Strahd's instructions. They also attack anyone who tries to destroy the glyph pillars. These are four 100-foot high black marble obelisks at each corner of the castle. They are covered in arcane glyphs and form part of the apparatus for transferring Strahd's curse and opening a portal back into the prime material plane. The rest of the apparatus is in the throne room. It consists of Frankenstein-esque metal devices attached to two metal thrones. Strahd believes that this device will allow him to transfer his curse to someone else, making them the master of Barovia and allowing him to leave. He also believes that he will be able to keep his immortality.

KRESK

Kresk is now situated on a causeway in the sea, much like Mont Saint Michel. This allows the pirate captain to reach Barovia, allows the players to potentially leave Barovia by sea (arriving back in the material plane at Saltmarsh), and also lets fossils appear along the coast. On approaching the coast, you can describe it as follows:

The trail winds to a wind-bitten cliff. Once you reach the edge, you can see stone steps winding down to a stoney beach below. Out in the lapping sea stands a conical rocky island. Its base is neatly circled by stout stone walls that seem to repel the sea. Houses and grand buildings of stone stand inside the walls, clinging to the rock like barnacles. At the summit a huge abbey rises, its walls, stone buttresses and spires climbing into the air. At the top of the very tallest spire is a golden statue of an angel holding a sword against the blue sky. The dark outline of roofs and pinnacles seem to float like a ghostly palace on a cloud of mist. You see a crumbling causeway leading from the mainland up to the city walls, just managing to keep above the water. The surface of the causeway is covered in serpent stones. Some of them are enormous - as big as a wagon wheel.

Kresk is also slightly larger than in CoS, with an active guard and garrison. This is so I could run the adventure *The Shrivelled Woman* in Kresk. Kresk was once a profitable trade port, but now has very few visitors at all. The Abbot is an observer for the two warring factions of gods, sent by Chronopsis (Neutral Dragon God of Fate, Death and Judgement).

He wants to free the land of Strahd, and thinks that marrying him will release him from his curse. He will try to stop anyone who is trying to interfere with the interrogation set by the gods.

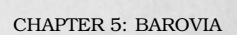
There is an Inn on the harbour side run by Hilda Stormbreaker (LE female human *bandit captain*). She is a meek, white-haired woman in her 60s. But secretly, she is also head of the thieves guild and a Master of Darkoil. Through the Inn's cellars there is access to the storm drains of Kresk, and through them she can get to the Darkoil headquarters: a small set of rooms underneath the city. One room is situated underneath a well in the city that lets in a pale light by which six chairs for each of the Masters of Darkoil can sit. There is a well of Darkoil here. Hilda provides intelligence for Strahd about Kresk. In return, Strahd has loaned her some of his collection of adventurer's logs: accounts of every adventuring party that has come to Barovia. Hilda keeps them in a den in the Inn's cellars, and reads them like trashy novels. Players who discover them might learn about St. Markovia or Mordenkeinen's attempt to overthrow Strahd. There is also the possibility that the players role-play these scenarios themselves.

FOSSIL MINES

Along the coast near Kresk, fossils have started to appear, and Strahd has been mining them to try to find more black serpents. People call this the 'bone mine'. Some of Kresk's citizens work here, and keep a camp on the cliffs for slaves.

The players might meet Mary Bellview, one of the Abbey's Bellview family. She is bundled up in many layers of frayed black cloth, and wearing a wicker bonnet that covers their face (based on real life fossil expert Mary Anning). She carries a wicker basket and a hammer. Mary lives at the Abbey, but works for Strahd. Her motivation is a fascination with the gigantic stone fossils, and is an expert on their variety and theories about where they came from.

Further into the cave, fossils appear in the walls. Dozens of songnomes scurry back and forth, overseeing 20 or so Barovian slaves who are helping to dig out the fossils. They are chained together and live in the cave, their souls being slowly sucked dry by the dark rock. They are being driven by slave-driver Dresda Blackwater. She came to Barovia with St. Markovia, but was corrupted by the vestiges at the Amber Temple. She has the ability to raise the ancient dead, and if attacked or if the players try to free the slaves, will raise one of the fossils in the cave to protect her. Roll on the table below to see which creature she summons:



FOSSILS

d6	Dinosaur
1	Plesiosaurus
2	Stegosaurus
3	Triceratops
4	3d4 Velociraptors
5	Spinosaurus
6	T-Rex

THE GNASHER

Captain Guldeer's ship, the *Gnasher*, is moored at the harbour at the seaward side of Kresk. The captain (with Lord Jhoulasto) have left for Castle Ravenloft, but the crew of 20 goblins and 3 kobolds remain. The crew are restless and if the players start any kind of disturbance, they spill out into the town causing a riot.

The *Gnasher* is in fact a **spelljamming ship**, capable of flight and travel into space. Captain Guldeer is unaware of this, as are the crew, since the ship has not been used as a spelljammer for many generations. The original name for the ship was the *Gun o' Sharn*, since it was originally from Sharn in Eberron. Over time, this name has been corrupted to *Gnasher*. Its sister ship, the *Rock o' Sharn* crash-landed near the port of Seaton (see *Ghosts of Saltmarsh*).

The narrative purpose of the ship in the overstory is to provide:

- a way to sail away from Barovia, and end up in Saltmarsh.
- a vehicle for adventures in Saltmarsh.
- a way of chasing the sahuigan spelljammers into space.
- a way to get to Eberron.
- a goal to chase in Eberron, once it is taken away from them by the Green Lord.

The DM should provide some way of obtaining the *Gnasher*, either during the adventure in Barovia or Saltmarsh. Obviously, this is a very powerful item to have. Note that the nature of the ship will not be immediately obvious. The players may learn of its ability to fly long before they figure out it can take them into space.

THE GOBLIN CREW

Following goblin tradition, the goblins are named after the first thing they bite.

THE GOBLIN CREW

d20	Name	d20	Name
1	Box (1st mate)	11	Soap
2	Flail	12	Table
3	Oak	13	Teat
4	Legwarmers	14	Mum
5	Teddy	15	Ice Cube
6	Wallet	16	Toothpicks
7	Chair	17	Coasters
8	Mop	18	Tomato
9	Carrot	19	Needle
10	Sponge	20	Thread

There are also 3 Kobolds aboard: Blythe, Gronk and "Captain Cook" the cook.

The goblins that run the ship have been on board for generations. They are tired of Captain Guldeer's punishing discipline, and might welcome a change of crew, especially if they are treated well.

The goblins are not aware of the ship's spelljamming abilities. But one of them might remember his grandfather hinting about it:

"You know, my grandfather told a lot of stories to us about ships: Chult junkers with dragon-wing sails; huge sloops out of Balder's gate filled with treasure; Tiny coracles for navigating the glimmersea of the underdark; Biremes that could span the moonshae isles or fleets of caravels cruising the sea of fallen stars. On dark nights he would talk of the flat-bottomed Drekar's hauling themselves up the black shale beaches of icewind dale. And sometimes, he would tell us of ships that could sail on the black sea. And when he did, he would look up, high above, into the night sky."

LEAVING BAROVIA

The players might leave Barovia on the *Gnasher*, though they will still require a vistana to guide them through the mist. The adventure on Eberron require some 50 years to pass between the characters leaving Barovia and getting to Eberron. The mists of Barovia are strange, and the characters might find that more time has passed outside of Barovia than inside it.

CHAPTER 6: SALTMARSH

The Sahuigan's god, Sekolah, the Great Shark-Father, has been banished for evil deeds. It's not easy to banish a god, so the Sekolah, the Caller from the Depths, has been cast outside the Crystal Spheres, doomed to swim through the phlogiston forever. However, the Green Lord has come to the Sahuigans with an offer. He will provide them with wondrous ships that can sail across the Black Sea beyond to free their god. In return, the Green Lord wants Sekolah, to take his side in the council of gods, and vote for him to ascend to ultimate power.

The Green Lord instructs the Lords of Darkoil to construct a darkoil refinery in the Styes. This will produce refined darkoil that is being delivered to the Sahuigan stronghold. There, the sahuigans are desperately trying to work out how to apply the oil to ships in order to turn them into Spelljammers. This isn't easy, since the darkoil's explosive nature leads to some failed experiments. The sahuigans need more ships, so have used darkoil to corrupt pirate captains, like the captain of the *Dark Pessimist*. These dark pirates now scour the coasts around Saltmarsh, looking for ships to capture and return to the sahuigan stronghold. To breach the crystal spheres, the sahuigans are also building a huge arcane drill. The drill head is a giant diamond stolen from the treasure vault on the island in the adventure *Isle of the Abbey*.

PORT OF SALTMARSH

The New Road is planned to go past Saltmarsh, promising new trade possibilities from the outside world. This prospect will divide the traditionalists and the loyalists.

THE EMPTY NET

Some sea shanties might add some flavour. If the player characters hang around in the Empty Net long enough, they might hear some older folk start drunkenly singing songs of the Scarlet Brotherhood. It recalls the loss of their town to the Keoland empire. Singing this song is tantamount to treason.

And we would not go in chains, so our blood ran free
And it flowed onto the land, and was washed into the sea
And the crimson tide will rise ...

A fairy lives in the chandelier of the Empty Net. Ms. Bell was once part of the Green Lord's court. But the Green Lord is suspicious and often casts out his followers on the smallest of slights. She was banished across the black sea

to Toril. She found herself washed up on the beach of Saltmarsh. Now she serves as the entertainer in the Empty Net. Every night, she comes out and sings a sad and haunting song (to the tune of *Bang bang*).

My tale is sad, it's one in which
I fell in love with a fairy lich
His love from me he did withhold
He stays young while I grow old
As a child he gained the power
He'd take to the sky in the midnight hour
He wore green and so did I
We'd steal children off into the sky
One of the girls we lead amiss
Dare to give my love a kiss
A harlot in a pettgown
I swore by my dust to take her down
I paid a captain with one hand
To come into our fairy land
My master fed him to a crocodile
And paranoid, put me on trial.
Pan pan, he shot me down
Pan pan, I hit the ground
Pan pan, that awful sound
My Green Lord shot me down.

Elsewhere in Saltmarsh, or perhaps aboard the *Gnasher*, some old salty dog might know this song, about spell-jamming on the Black Sea Beyond, though they might not know this is what it concerns.

Clear the airwaves, friends
Give me the channel I implore.
Let me speak across the distance now,
For after this I'll speak no more.
I was drifting across the flow,
My instruments betrayed my trust.
I came down amongst whirling rocks,
My engines dead and buried deep in dust
My tanks are dry, My air is leaking out.
Though you hear my words I'm far from shelter.
I'm beyond help and beyond doubt.
So stay your hands and send no rescue,
Hear my words and shed no tears.
All risk their lives on the black sea beyond
The oaths we take replace our fears.
But fear grips me now, duty done by death.
Approaching through the flashing mist
Comes the air for my last breath.
But grant unto me the last transmission
Leave me alone the radio
Turn off your sets and your receivers
Give me silence as I go.

THE SINISTER SECRET OF SALTMARSH

In the final part of the *Sinister Secret*, the smuggling ship might be one that is sent by the Sahuigan. *The Dark Pessimist* is a Warship. Its first mast is made of living briar from the Dreadwood, its second mast is made of canes grown on the plains of Avernus. The third mast is draped with dead warlock Storm Giants whose magic pulls the ship onward against the wind.

Its captain is a **Necromancer** and the ship is crewed by howler monkeys, chimpanzees, and orangutans who have been charmed and set to work. The hold conceals a gelatinous cube that is used to chew up the bones of their enemies.

THE STYES

The Styes are shrouded in smoke pouring from the darkoil refinery. The residents don't know the nature of the strange refinery, and seem to be held in a daze. The smoke from the refinery coats and animates the shutters, doors and any stray detritus, giving the impression of a constantly listless, living city.

The refinery is run by Councillor Dory, who is in fact a sahuigan wearing the former councillor's skin (hence the need to keep humid). Mr. Dory, if captured, might rail against the players' attempts to stop his darkoil empire.

"You have no idea. No idea what this stuff is, what it could do. Nobody has any idea. All these councils, talking about nothing. Empires laying stones, not to connect people but to divide them. To keep them in their little crevice lives. No progress, no improvement. They march across the world while they declare that nobody can set foot outside their own lagoon. They've trapped everyone like fish in shallow barrel."

THE TEMPLE OF SEKOLAH

The temple is set in the reef from *Tammeraut's fate*. The *Tammeraut* can be re-skinned as the *Rock o'Sharn*, spelljammer and sister ship to the *Gun o'Sharn*. The ship is half-buried in the sand at the bottom of the reef. Swimming through the ship, characters can access a cave below. The cave is home to an **aboleth** who came to the sword coast many years ago on the *Rock o'Sharn*. The ship crashed while towing a darkoil tanker away from Toril. The aboleth grew up on this reef, raised by the ghosts of the ship. It admires the sahuigan: "The sea devils have so much ambition! To cross the black sea and rescue their own god! Now that's freedom!"

THE FINAL ENEMY

The sahuigan base is much the same, though is built on the side of an extinct volcano. A narrow passageway allows ships to sail into the flooded caldera. And there are many ships queueing up to be offered to the sahuigan. They are attempting to create their own spelljammer through the use of darkoil and guesswork. They hope to launch into space, reach the edge of the crystal shards, and break through using a giant diamond. The adventure is aimed at chasing the sahuigan into space. This could happen in a variety of ways. If the players have their own spelljammer, the sahuigan could keep retreating back to their ship and launch away, daring the players to chase. In our adventure, the players cooked up a plan to explode their way into the base using a cargo ship filled with explosive darkoil. I had the explosion blow the top off the whole volcano, which kept rising and became the sahuigan's ship. If the players do not have their own ship, they could try and stow aboard the sahuigan's ship.



CHAPTER 7: SPELLJAMMING

As the players launch into space, you can read the following, assuming that they are chasing the sahuagin ship in their own ship:

You can now see a blue disk of the world you live on curving away beneath you. Bands of fiery light appear streaking down the sides of the ship. But suddenly there's a sound like gems being crushed, and the lights fade, and the humming noise stops. The sahuagin volcano speeds away into the black sea beyond. But you can still see the gigantic gem twinkling.

The DM might want to set the context for the player's characters:

I want to to forget everything you know about space. For two reasons: First, your characters don't know anything about space. Secondly, space works differently in D&D, so don't overthink things. For example, you don't need to worry about running out of air.

When you look at the sea, all you see is the reflections on the surface. You can't see the depths underneath. You can't imagine how much stuff is under there. And if you've ever been to a coral reef, you'll know. It can look desolate on the surface, but there's so much going on underneath.

That's what it's like here. It's not just a black void: it's got huge fields of luminous gas like coral reefs stretching away from you. There are small asteroids drifting around. Some are very bright and you recognise them as the Tears of Selûne. There Some larger rocks of strange angles and in all kinds of colours. One you see looks like a gigantic crystal. And you can see life ...

Life here includes *Jammer barnacles*, *Holbags* (floating things like air balloons with tendrils at the bottom, dark brown and covered in spines), *Space basking shark*, *Black Rays*, and *Space krill* ("You see thin lines of light shifting, and you realise there's a huge creature very close to you. Dozens of long, minutely thin arms spread out like a huge spiders web, slowly gathering motes of air and scooping them towards a tiny mouth at the centre").

If the players are pursuing the sahuagin in their own ship, then you can take this opportunity to run some adventures from the *Spelljammer* series. Have their ship break down temporarily, allowing the sahuagins to get away. The players then need to track them across space, possibly with the help of some space-farers. For example, the players may come across the original *Spelljammer*, a vast Nautilus-like creature. The *Spelljammer* is marooned, and the players must figure out that she is giving birth to a baby-jammer.

THE CRYSTAL SPHERES

Remember that the souls of the evil dead march across the crystal spheres. The players might see some old faces. A particularly enterprising old enemy might even try to stow away onto their ship.

THE SAHUAGIN SHIP

The sahuagin ship is either a modified pirate ship, or a whole volcano blasted into space. If the latter, the players find a the volcano sticking limpet-like to the crystal spheres. There are clouds of swirling dust and mini-asteroids surrounding the volcano and a bright blue light at the centre. The giant diamond is cutting into the crystal barrier, and streaks of red glyphs are radiating across the face of the sphere.

The players can sail through the swirling rocks and dock the ship in a crevice at the top of the volcano. From there, they can fight their way down to the basement to disable the drill. Some suggestions for an entrance/airlock and drill room are below.

ENTRANCE

The party enters a room with 4 stone tablets recessed into intricately masoned stone pedestals that seem to rise right out of the ground. Each tablet has a word on the bottom, and a simple picture engraved on them. The players may make any checks they like, but various successful checks reveal the following:

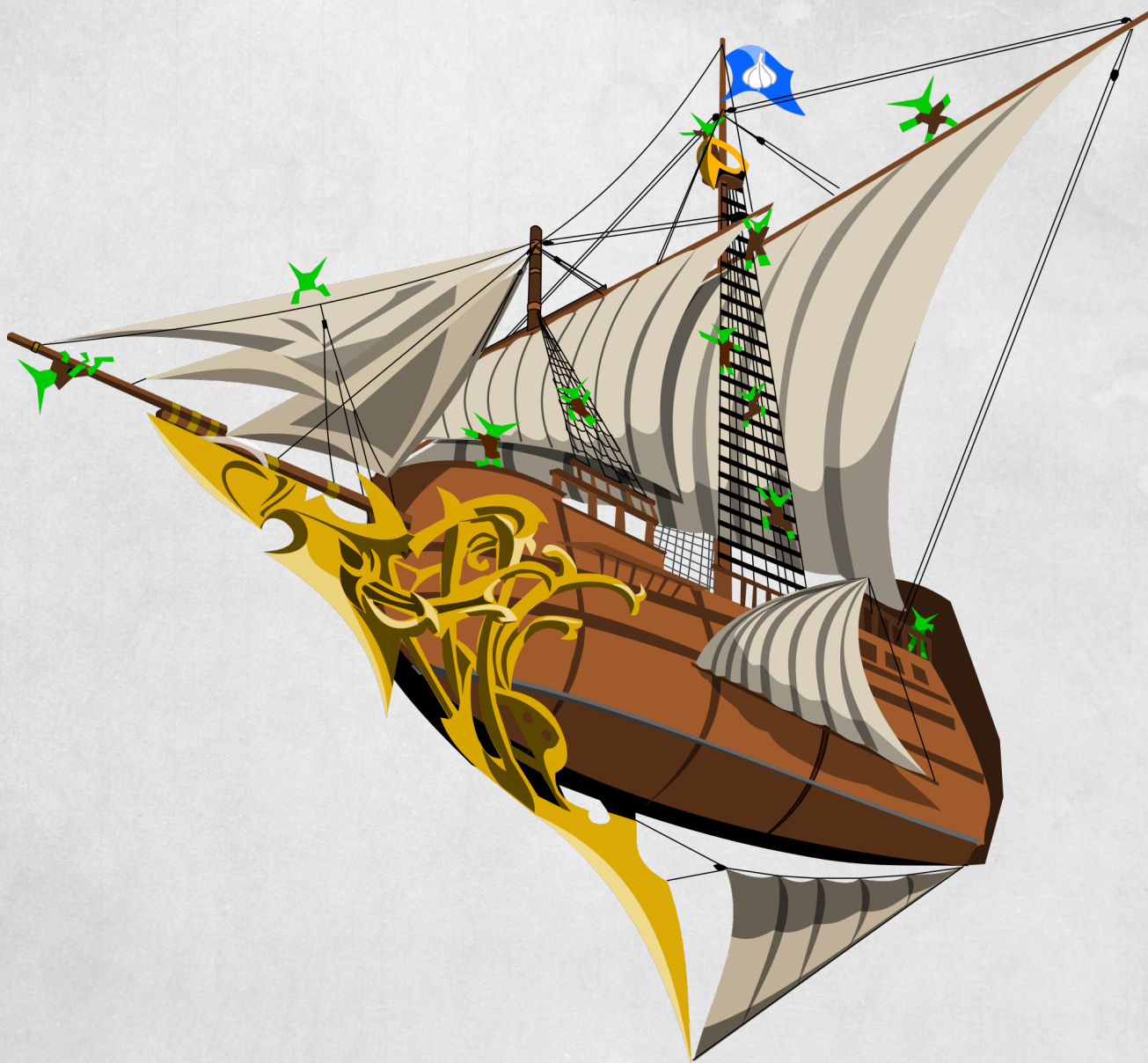
History: On the first tablet is graven YOTH in the Dwarven system, which stands for strength and resembles a forked truss in a mine shaft.

Religion: On the next is graven MIRIL in Elven, which stands for grace and resembles a willowy fountain with two rounded arcs of water.

Survival: Next over is the Draconic CROF which means treachery, and is the shape a knife takes as it swings down into an ally's back.

Insight: Last is ALFARD, first in the common alphabet, which symbolizes beginnings. It looks like a long road or ladder laid out before a traveler.

To activate a tablet, the players must make the right gesture in front of it. These are shapes in the form of the letters 'Y', 'M', 'C', and 'A'. Players get inspiration if they also do the song and dance. When all tablets are activated, a collection of stones in the wall fold away. This reveals a door which lets the party proceed into the main structure.



DIAMOND DRILL ROOM

This is a long corridor whose cross-section is a triangle, so there are two sloping roofs. However, the gravity in this room is constantly changing. The battlemat can represent the walls and floors like a 2D net, and switch which tiles are the 'floor'.

There are 3 **sahuagin blademasters** at the door, and a **sahuagin champion** in each room. A **sahuagin High Priestess** controls the drill. There are barrels of darkoil dotted around, and the priestess might summon a **Dark Serpent**.

Beyond the crystal sphere barrier, a huge shadow swims in the phlogiston. This is the god Sekolah, waiting to be let back into the material plane. If the drill is disabled or destroyed, he attacks the crystal spheres, but is repelled. The shock smashes the sahuigan ship into fragments, and the players must float between gigantic asteroids back to their own ship.

JOURNEY TO EBERRON

If the party escapes from the imploding sahuagin ship in their own spelljammer, they must make a survival check to see if they can navigate back to Toril. The DM can find some way for them to fail, and head towards Eberron instead. In this case, Eberron is in the same crystal sphere as Toril. If the party fails to stop the sahuagin, then they are sucked into the phlogiston and whisked away to Eberron in a different crystal sphere.

CHAPTER 8: EBERRON

The Green Lord's plans for Strahd has been foiled and the gods have returned to fighting amongst themselves over the interpretation of what happened. The Green Lord, desperate to regain his position, suggests that he re-runs the test. On Eberron, he creates the warforged and begins to raise Cyre from the material plane, creating the Mournland. There, he sets up the Lord of Blades as his new Strahd. The warforged are effectively immortal, and present another interrogation - will they make war on their neighbours, or will they choose the path of peace?

These events happen after the player's adventure in Barovia, which requires some 50 years to pass before the players get to Eberron. The mists of Barovia are strange, and the characters might find that more time has passed outside of Barovia than inside it.

CRASH-LANDING

On approaching Eberron, the players' ship hurtles through the *Ring of Siberis*, a cloud of razor-sharp dragonshards. Each player gets struck by a dragonshard and must roll randomly to determine which dragonmark they receive (see tables below). The players then get the background features related to these marks, regardless of whether their race aligns with the typical race.



DRAGONMARKS

d100	Mark
1-7	The Mark of Detection (House Medani)
8-14	The Mark of Finding (House Tharashk)
15-21	The Mark of Handling (House Vadalis)
22-28	The Mark of Healing (House Jorasco)
29-35	The Mark of Hospitality (House Ghallanda)
36-42	The Mark of Making (House Cannith)
43-49	The Mark of Passage (House Orien)
50-56	The Mark of Scribing (House Sivis)
57-63	The Mark of Sentinel (House Deneith)
64-70	The Mark of Shadow (House Phiarlan/Thuranni)
71-77	The Mark of Storm (House Lyrandar)
78-84	The Mark of Warding (House Kundarak)
85-91	The Mark of Death (House Vol)
92-100	Aberrant Dragonmarks (House Tarkanan)

DRAGONMARK LOCATION

d6	Location
1	Forehead
2	Arm
3	Chest
4	Back
5	Leg
6	Hand

The players' ship crash-lands south of Lake Galifar. Waiting for them, guided by a kidnapped Finder, are Gaff (male tiefling sorcerer) and Dana (female kenku assassin): servants of House Cannith. The players black out from the crash and are taken prisoner. Their ship is sold to the Green Lord and taken to Castle Karrlakton.

SHARN

The players are taken by lightning rail to Sharn. They are deposited in Highwalls, which functions as a kind of minimum-security prison for people who are too valuable to kill, but too dangerous to be totally free. The players are told they are now indentured to House Cannith, and can work off their debt as adventurers. Gaff and Dana meet them regularly, acting as liaison with House Cannith to give them dirty jobs to do.

The player's first job is to find out what is happening with the Warforged in the city. House Cannith employs many Warforged, but they are going missing. This leads into the *Forgotten Relics* adventure in *Eberron: Rising from the last war*.

Some extra lore about the warforged:

- Warforged do not have natural lifespans. They can keep living as long as their bodies are maintained.
- Warforged are commonly believed to be colourblind, and have a blind spot just behind their heads.

- Arcane plans for machines are called 'contours'.
- The warforged have started a religion, in which they believe that each warforged has a 'trace' - similar to a soul. They believe that living a good life will let them return to 'the silence' - a peaceful afterlife.
- The Lord of Blades is calling for warforged to come to the Mournland to form a new state of free warforged.

THE WARFORGED OPERA

The Warforged are starting to rise up against the houses that enslave them, lead by the Lord of Blades who is building a new free state for Warforged in the ruins of the Mournland. During *Forgotten Relics*, the players might meet various Warforged such as **Tom Render** (male Warforged bard), entertainer at the Cog Carnival. Tom might be playing some noir jazz while half-singing, half-croaking out some slick lines:

Good evening to all my manufactured friends out there.
How are we all running tonight? That bad, huh? Let me tell you - today I woke up and I couldn't tell what was stiffer, the bed springs or my spine.

Ah the constant Sharn showers
drip dropping through the towers,
through the stones, through the rooves,
through the small hours, through our grooves.

Rusting up what little parts we still got left after the pawn broker's taken their share. You know, I'd give my right arm to have my right hand back.

And what have we got to wake up to? Toil and trouble from our meathead friends. Let me tell you, I work over at Big Mac's bar, working in the kitchen away from view. So I play a little game, imagining a different kind of world. Oh, hour after hour of grilling sausage and steak, frying tender joints.

Putting meaty pork chops to the flame.

Torture and therapy - it's all the same.

And now we've got some meatheads in, Come to leer at the leavers, come to peer at the gears. Ah don't be shy, come on it, take a seat and take a peek. Throw a hoop, have a beer, hope the prices aren't too steep!

Tom Render is keen to see the warforged rise to an independent state, and isn't too worried about using violence to get his way. However, his hand is currently stayed by the Lord of Blades, who has allowed a different path to be attempted first. Vonnie ir'Cardwan is a famous opera singer (see p. 171 of the *Eberron* book). In reality, she is a warforged disguised as a human. She is trying to win the hearts of the people of Sharn, to make them more sympathetic to the Warforged cause.

A new opera is opening at the grand opera house on the Upper Menthis Plateau. The opera is based on legends and rumours about the Green Lord's involvement in the Great War.

It should be made clear to the characters that this is not necessarily the truth - just a romanticised idea of what people in Sharn think happened. Vonnie ir'Cardwan is the lead singer, playing the part of Lauren d'Cannith. The story is designed to be accompanied by songs from the band 'Chvrches', giving Vonnie ir'Cardwan the voice of Lauren Mayberry. Vonnie plans to use this opportunity to reveal who she truly is.

ACT 1: KARRLAKTON

The opera opens during the great war, with the Green Lord at Castle Karrlakton. He opens with a soliloquy about his desire to become a god:

Neither of mother nor of father was I formed, My creation was created out of nine elements: From fruit, out of fruits; From the fruit of god's beginning; From primroses and gossiping flowers; From wood and trees' pollen; From earth, from the soil.

I was in many forms before my release. I was a slim enchanted sword; I was a drop in the air; The sparkling of stars; A word inscribed; For a year and a half, a bridge for crossing three rivers; I was a raindrop in a shower; I was a shield in battle; I was a harp string enchanted nine years in water foaming. I was tinder in fire. I was a forest ablaze

I know all the levels between heaven and earth. I know why the hollow echoes, why death comes suddenly. Why silver glitters, and the brook runs dark. What breath is black and the liver full of blood. Why the buck has horns, why milk is white and holly green. But I don't know why we fade. Give me that secret. Give me the knowledge of godhood.

The Green Lord worries that his phylactery will be destroyed by dragon shards. Lauren d'Cannith, leader of House Cannith, approaches the Green Lord. As they meet, the opera sets up three MacGuffins for the players to chase across Eberron. The Green Lord asks Lauren "How did you evade detection by my sentinel, Belashyrra?". She answers "with the icon of Aundair". He asks "How did you get through the poisons of the Nightwood?". She answers "with potions brewed of mushrooms from the black pit". Finally, he asks "How do you plan to destroy my phylactery?". She answers "I could do it with dragonshards, but I have not come to kill you - I have come to make a deal".

Lauren offers to help The Green Lord by gathering up all the dragonshards for him to destroy. In return, she wants the power to create the warforged army that will win her the war.

ACT 2: THE CREATION OF THE WARFORGED

The Green Lord creates the first Warforged in a Frankenstein-like ritual. He names her *Runner*.

He then goes on to create a great factory for creating a warforged army, and creates the Lord of Blades - a terrifying machine that is sent out to harvest the souls of children that are needed in the ritual.

Runner is locked in the dungeon of the Castle and is almost forgotten. She laments her fate, but manages to break free. She steals the 'couthours' (plans) for the machine that created her, destroys the Green Lord's laboratory and escapes from the Castle. Lauren swears to the Green Lord that she will hunt down the fugitive, if she gives her an army. He agrees, and Lauren marshals her elite guard, singing *Broken Bones*.

Catch them and kill them
You're only hope is evil
I will not die, I will keep quiet
I will hold you high above.
You're on your own
Wait till dawn and then go.
No help here from heaven
You're not as real as I am.
I will wake up the dark eyes
Until your blood is out.
You're on your own.
I'm lying here,
Inside your sleep.
Keep yourself
Awake for this.
Wait till dawn and then go.

ACT 3: THE CHASE

Lauren chases Runner across Eberron. A surge of wild magic causes Lauren and Runner to share their dreams. Every day they play a planet-wide game of cat and mouse. Every night, they meet in the Dreaming Dark. The wit and resilience of the warforged impresses Lauren, and she realises that she is falling in love with Runner (singing Chvrches' cover of *Do I want to know?*).

During a storm, Lauren is separated from her guards and ends up taking shelter in the same cave as Runner. They sing a love song together (Chvrches' cover of *Stay another day*), but both are afraid that it will not last.

ACT 4: TRAGEDY

As Lauren sleeps, Runner finds a letter from the Green Lord revealing their plan to turn the warforged into an army. Runner swears to set the warforged free, and confronts Lauren, assuming last night's love songs were all just lies. Lauren is distraught, but Runner shows no mercy and sings Chvrches' version of *Cry me a river*.

Lauren's guards catch Runner, and she is mortally wounded. Lauren arrives to have Runner die in her arms. Lauren sings *Afterglow*.

All of the black and white, all of the contours
Are laid out before me now to leave a trace.
All of your words and mine, they keep returning
I'll find my own way back, back to the silence.
A life line to highs and lows to seeing the bright side
And I should know.
We wait for the afterglow, to cover the blind side
And I should know.
I've given up all I can.

The opera is supposed to finish with Lauren d'Cannith holding the plans for creating the warforged. But during the final act, Vonnie ir'Cardwan peels back her skin to reveal that she is in fact a warforged. She hopes that the audience will have their hearts melted by the story, and come round to seeing the warforged as a real people.

JOURNEY TO KARRLAKTON

They players should manage to leave Sharn and start planning their assault on Castle Karrlakton. They might leave amenably, or go on the run. On making some inquiries in Sharn, the players might discover more about the two MacGuffins that will help them get to the Green Lord: The icon of Aundair and Black Mushrooms. The locations of these items should be set up so that it is not totally obvious which prize to go for first, giving the players more freedom to choose what to do.

ICON OF AUNDAIR

The **Icon of Aundair** is an ancient artefact that works as an **Amulet of Proof against Detection and Location**. It can be used to avoid detection by the Green Lord's sentinel, Belashyrra.

The icon is now used as a trophy for the annual Aundair cup. This is a kind of 'wacky races' competition, where a team builds a vehicle and enters a no-holds-barred race. The players can enter the race (making up one or more teams). Others in the race might include:

- **Hagatha Fisty** Mech warrior run by Hags.
- **Furryosa** Arcane oil truck run by Tabaxi.
- **The copper jet** Music-driven saucer driven by dragonborn musicians.
- **Chuck von Chunder and Retch the T-Rex** Chuck von Chunder is an Aarakocra Seagull who says "It's time to get T-Wrecked". He rides a T-Rex on roller skates with beer helmet.
- **Prehistoric Streak** Water-filled Chariot pulled by a Allosaurus, driven by a team of sahuagin.

The trophy is awarded by the king of Aundair, who is a giant ochre Jelly that has swallowed the royal sceptre.

BLACK MUSHROOMS FROM DARGUUN

Black Mushrooms give anyone who eats them immunity to the poisons of the Nightwood that surround Castle Karrlakton. Black Mushrooms are seen as illicit, and have been wiped out from many places by servants of the Green Lord. However, there are rumours that they might still be found in Darguun.

Thousands of years ago, Dargunn and Cyre were a single state, ruled by an ancient civilisation of goblins. The civilisation resembles the ancient Egyptians, with pyramids, advanced technology and a complex system of religious and civil organisation. This was in fact one of the first large civilisations in Eberron's history, and throughout Khorvaire there are ancient runs of pyramids and statues of goblins. By now, this history is mainly myth, and few believe that goblins could be capable of such an advanced culture.

In the present, Darguun is a fledgling goblin state formed during the treaty of Thronehold. On Eberron, goblins are not necessarily inherently evil. In fact, there's a lot of promise in Darguun, if they can hold their own. Other states are cautious, but frankly glad of some buffer between them and Mournland. But there are threats from inside, too. The country was recently ruled by dozens of warlords, and unifying them is a tricky business.

In the capital, the first Darguun police force is being set up to try to forge a civil peace. The players' inquiries about Black Mushrooms might lead them to **Ash** (female fairy courtier). Ash was previously part of the Green Lord's court, but thrown out for suspected treachery. She is now working for the Darguun vice squad, trying to stop the crime being caused by the sale of Black Mushrooms. Two rival gangs are the source of the problems: the 'The Hoodland Trust' and 'Barks and Recreation'. If the players can convince her that they can help, she asks them to go on a sting operation. The gangs have been smuggling Black Mushrooms across the border from the Mournland. She asks them to pose as buyers, go into the Mournland, do a deal with the gangs and report back on what they find.

The mission takes the players to Olkhaan, on the border with the Mournland. There, they are given a magic pen which dictates everything that happens in 30ft, if provided with paper, and 500gp to make the deal with the gangs. Ash nervously hopes that they are somehow able to recover the money. They are given directions to Whitehearth where the deal is supposed to take place.

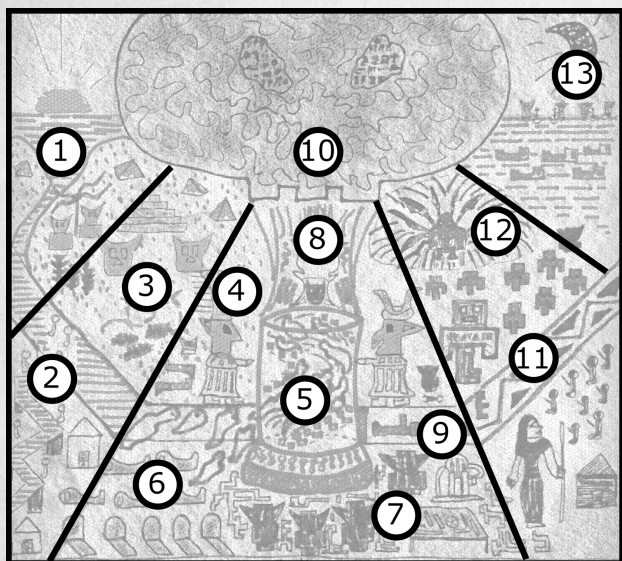
THE MOURNLAND

The borders to the Mournland are defined by a wall of thick grey mist that rises thousands

of feet into the air. It forms a canopy that hides the Mournland even from above. The area of the mist is a shadowy, muffled region devoid of life, sunlight, and sound. It should evoke similar feelings to the mists that surround Barovia. After a short period of walking, characters emerge on the other side of the wall, and into the Mournland itself.

To get to Whitehearth, the players must cross parts of the Mournland, which is not easy since space and time are warped in places. During their trip, a sand storm appears. In the heart of the storm, visibility is reduced to 15 ft and creatures take 1d4 slashing every round. Every 10 rounds, creatures take one level of exhaustion. The storm shifts the dunes, and reveals a cave in a buried cliff. Players may shelter here. It is a natural cave, but deeper in there appears to be a carved hallway. This opens up into a larger passageway. The passageway has hieroglyphs and depictions of goblins, left here from the ancient Darguun empire. A perception check reveals a crack along one wall, which leads to a secret door. Beyond, there is a larger room with sandstone walls covered in images and hieroglyphs.

The central image depicts part of the history of the Darguun civilisation and how they created the first warforged. Characters that succeed on a history check might get some help in interpreting the image. A DC 12 suggests that this is part of the history of ancient Darguun empire. A DC 15 reveals that the image should be read in radial segments counter-clockwise from the top left. On a DC 20, the player may select one item from the image, and the DM may provide the following interpretation. On a DC 24, the player may choose three items to be interpreted.



1. The Darguun empire living prosperously, goblins dancing under a festival tree.
2. A neighbouring human civilisation builds huge aqueducts and steals the source of Darguun's water.
3. Crops fail in Darguun (with large pyramids and sculptures in background).
4. Darguun priests gather to create ...
5. An arcane machine built by Darguun that creates warforged by ...
6. Drawing dead souls from the graves of Darguun's dead.
7. Goblin engineers building the arcane machine.
8. Dark ally that helps them build the machine.
9. Conveyor belt producing warforged.
10. Skull cloud that represents the potential dangers of the machine.
11. Darguun's warforged army meet in battle.
12. The Lord of Blades.
13. After the war, the goblins bury the warforged deep in the ground.

The Darguun believed the souls of the warforged were obtained from the dead bodies of goblins. However, they were actually just absorbing traces of darkoil through the sands, so the souls are the souls of black serpents. The machine itself and the 'dark ally' are based on the Soulmonger and the popular depiction of Acererak from *Tomb of Annihilation*, should the DM want to extend the adventure in that direction at any point.

The hieroglyphs at the bottom are in an ancient and forgotten language. If they can be read by magical means (e.g. through the *eyes of the runekeeper*), they may be translated

as "Behold the history of the army of metal. Forged in fear to return Darguun to its glory. Buried to keep Darguun from falling to evil."

At the back of the room, there is another tablet with writing in three languages - Darguun hieroglyphs, draconic and ancient elven. This is a kind of Rosetta stone, and would be very valuable to the new state of Darguun, since it proves the ancient claim of goblins to this land and could be used to translate other ancient texts. However, only the very top portion is still fixed to the wall. The rest has been hacked off and carried away. In its place is the remains of a very old painted sign - "Removed by the University of Karrlakton Department of Archaeology, by order of the Green Lord".

WHITEHEARTH

'The Hoodland Trust' turns out to be a group of squirrels who have become sentient due to the strange effects of the Mournland. Each squirrel has 2HP and a strength score of 1 (-5). They can talk, and behave like big crime bosses. In reality, they are unable to protect their hoard of Black Mushrooms in any meaningful way.

During their time in the Mournland, the players may encounter the Lord of Blades, and his following of warforged. He is very cautious, but not openly hostile unless attacked. He is keen to find allies to help him promote the warforged cause and encourage warforged to come to the Mournland. He is also no ally of the Green Lord. The rumours about him kidnapping children are fabricated, and in reality the Lord of Blades suspects the Green Lord of being involved in the things that happened to the Mournland. The Lord of Blades has dispatched a team of warforged rogues to investigate Castle Karrlakton. If the players get on his good side, he may share with them the possibility of an underground entrance to the castle, and even provide them safe passage through the Mournland to the border with Karrlakton in the north.



CHAPTER 9: KARRLAKTON

The purpose of placing the Green Lord in Karrlakton is so that the players have multiple choices about how to get there. Assuming they are starting in Sharn, and possibly pursued, they might choose to go through Thrane, around the coast to Valenar, or risk cutting through the Mournland. The castle may be placed elsewhere to make the journey more exciting.

KARRLAKTON VILLAGE

A small village serves the needs of the Green Lord up in the castle. The village also includes many farms, butchers and bakeries, all dedicated to supplying the castle. It is dominated by a toy factory and a University. The main purpose of the University is to research magic, collect powerful artefacts and come up with new designs for toys. The latter is the most important, assessed by the Recreation and Entertainment Framework. This involves regular conferences at the castle, where faculty must present their best work to the Green Lord.

At the centre of the village is a well. At 6 o'clock every day, villagers queue to drink a cup of water from the well. The well has been magically poisoned to produce a torpor and obedience to the Green Lord in anyone who drinks from it. Villagers are loyal, but also slightly fearful of the Green Lord.

There is a Golden Dragon Inn which is comfortable, though the staff are lacklustre and slow. At the bar of the Inn, players might find Billford, the bugbear jailer who keeps the cells at the Castle.

CASTLE KARRLAKTON

The Castle sits on top of a large column of rock that stands in the middle of a wooded plain. To get to the castle, one must climb a road that winds around a series of increasingly tall limestone karsts (isolated peaks like in Guilin) that are spanned by rope bridges. The final span is bridged by a slender stone bridge. On the way to the main gate, visitors will see a rainbow shimmering garishly to the South-West. This is a gate to the faywild.

The castle is full of **fairy courtiers**. These have the stats of a **Sprite**, though are chaotic evil, typically unarmed, can cast one dart of magical force (like magic missile) as an action, and have sharp teeth that do 2 (1d4) damage. The courtiers believe that the Green Lord may grant them eternal life, if they please him sufficiently. They are jealous and suspicious of each other, and will do anything to get into the Green Lord's favour. There is a strict hierarchy,

with favoured courtiers living in the spring garden, while those fallen out of favour live in the autumn garden, and those on trial are chained in the cells.

The Green Lord spends his time feasting, being entertained and imagining plots against his life. He relies on his sentinel Belashyrra to alert him to any unwelcome guests. If he becomes aware of their presence, he attacks them. The Green Lord uses polymorph, ideally to transform into creatures that the party have experienced in the course of their adventure, to try to inspire fear in them.

THE GREEN LORD'S MUSEUM

The Green Lord is convinced that he's lead a harsh life. As a testament to his suffering, he has constructed a museum. It is still under construction, but can be accessed via a natural cave at the foot of the column of rock that the castle stands on (the Hall of Toil, area 1). Visitors are supposed to sympathise with the Green Lord's story, and feel sorry for him. Progressing through the museum safely requires thinking about how the Green Lord wants his visitors to feel.

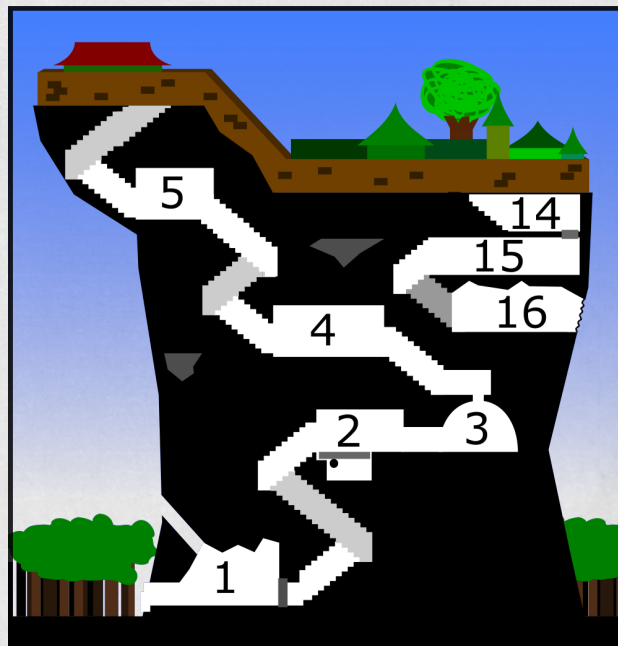


Figure 9.1: The lower levels of Castle Karrlakton.

1. HALL OF TOIL

You hear the sound of rats scurrying away as you enter a natural cave with a muddy floor. Above, light falls from a hole in the cave roof onto a strange statue in the middle of the space. A circle of copper spreads out, dented and pocked with puddles. In the centre, a copper statue of a

baby, lying on its back. From high above, a constant drip of water falls on the baby's cheeks. The constant stream has tarnished the copper green in places. Past the statue is a imposing set of double doors with ornate carvings built into the rock.

The child is a depiction of the Green Lord, who was abandoned at the steps of the Amber Temple in Barovia as a child. Investigating the door reveals the following:

Rough stone steps lead up to the doors, which are made of dense metal, and are firmly sealed. The carvings are divided into four panels which seem to depict a story: A child is left at the gates of a large building; the child grows up in dark underground corridors with unsympathetic monks; the child is made to wash the flagstones, altars and doors of the temple. The final panel shows a grim anger on the child's face as they scrub the steps. There is an inscription "Step closer, those who know servitude".

The doors are locked and there is nowhere to insert a lockpick. They may be forced open with a DC 25 strength check or by magical means. Investigating the rest of the cave reveals other items. One corner contains a discarded children's "jack-in-the-box" toy. Turning it all the way summons a **quasit** for two rounds. In front of the doors is a stone trough filled with water dripping from above and a harsh scrubbing brush. Tucked away in another corner is a stone chest. The chest is trapped with a poison needle, and contains ragged green clothes.

If the characters use the scrubbing brush or some other means to clean the floors, this reveals flagstones with an inscription: "What belongs to you, but other people use it more than you do?". If a player speaks their name to the doors, they open.

2. HALL OF SIN

Black Mushrooms growing overhead glow faintly and illuminate a long corridor stretching ahead. There are intricate murals on both walls depicting various scenes:

- The Green Lord working for the monks.
- The Green Lord reading a book by candle light, carvings of wisps of magic suggest a powerful spell.
- The Green Lord approaches a yellowish stone with a dark inky substance held within.
- The Green Lord lures a woman with long, tawny hair into the temple.
- The Green Lord plunging a dagger into her as she lies on an altar.
- The blood runs over the dark stone.

On the floor at this end of the corridor, there is a carved inscription: "Step closer, those without the burden of sin". At the far end, you can see a pedestal in the middle of the corridor, and a dark doorway beyond.

The murals show the Green Lord reading books from the amber temple, learning about the dead gods held within, approaching Vampyr and learning the secret of lichdom. The woman is a blood sacrifices required for the transformation.

The floor of the corridor is a stone see-saw trap. The floor is balanced on a pivot at the near end of the hall. Walking on the floor in front of the pivot does nothing since there is a solid floor beneath the near end. But putting weight on the other side causes the see-saw to pitch forward (unless there is sufficient weight on the near side), dumping anyone standing on it into a pit below. After this, the see-saw slams back to the horizontal position. It is 15ft fall to the bottom. At the bottom is a large **stone golem** shaped like a child's 'monkey clashing symbols' wind-up toy. It attacks anything in the pit, but cannot climb out.

The pedestal at the far end holds a locket. The locket contains a lock of long, tawny hair. It belonged to the woman who that the Green Lord used as a blood sacrifice. An arcana check of 20 or higher reveals that this is the Green Lord's phylactery.

3. HALL OF TRANSFORMATION

The room beyond is pitch-black. Those that can see in the dark or can illuminate the space see the following.

The room is circular with a domed ceiling, the highest point of which is 30ft above. There are more murals winding around the walls, up and up to the centre of the dome. Here at the very top there is a dark hole in the very centre, big enough to crawl through.

The murals depict various transformations that the Green Lord went through to become a lich: a slim enchanted sword, a drop in the air, the sparkling of stars, a bridge for crossing three rivers, a raindrop in a shower, a shield in battle, harp string, tinder in fire, a forest ablaze. In each panel, the element that represents the Green Lord is decorated with green emeralds. Touching the emeralds causes a three foot blade to jump horizontally out of the wall. Whoever touched the emerald must make a DC 12 dexterity saving throw or take 2d6 piercing damage. The blade remains in place after it is triggered. Players can trigger the element in each scene to create a set of stairs that wind up to the hole at the top. Crawling through the hole leads to the Hall of Triumph.

On the floor in the centre of the room is a bronze chest (trapped), containing a +2 sword and 100 emeralds.

4. HALL OF TRIUMPH

You crawl up a narrow well-like portal, and emerge in a room with rich murals on the wall. A strangely shaped table stands in the middle of the room. To the right, a sealed stone door blocks further progress.

See the battlemat below. The walls depict various scenes from Barovia. On the ceiling is a depiction of the gods arguing with each other, with the Green Lord laughing above them all. The door can be raised from the bottom with a DC 30 strength check. Otherwise it does not open.

Parts of the mural are not finished, and in the bottom right of the map is a box of tiles and plastering tools. At the bottom are shelves with old bottles containing various unidentifiable liquids. Anyone who drinks one should pass a DC 15 constitution saving throw or roll on the wild magic table. By the right wall is a cauldron that contains a sphere of annihilation. At the top left is a set of barrels containing acid. Wires run from these over to the table in the centre of the room.

The table is made of oak and is shaped like a map of Barovia, with depictions of places in Barovia burned into the surface. Little lights flash in various important points. At the head of the table is a chair designed to look like the Green Lord pulling up the table from the floor, as if he is raising Barovia from the prime material plane.

Standing on the table are little wooden miniatures, shaped exactly like the players' party. Casting any these into the sphere of annihilation causes a bell to ring. Once all miniatures have been cast into the cauldron, a deep gong sounds and the stone door raises, revealing the Green Lord's sentinel, Belashyrra. If the players are using a means of evading her detection, she is furious and immediately attacks. If she knows they are coming, she politely asks them what they think of the museum, and then asks them to leave. She attacks anyone who attempts to pass.

5. HALL OF MASTERY

Torches cast flickering light onto a floor gleaming with bones and gold coins. The walls have painted murals that look much more recent than the previous carvings. In the centre there is an ornate circular painting. At its centre the Lord of Blades is depicted.

See the battlemat below. The walls depict the Green Lord meeting Lauren d'Cannith, making a deal with her and creating the warforged. It also shows him beginning to raise Cyre from the prime material plane, causing the Mourning.

The circle is a magic circle binding the Lord of Blades. Defacing the circle or dispelling the magic releases him to be able to leave the Mourningland. A successful investigation check reveals that there is a secret door to the south, hiding stone steps that ascend up to a hatch in the floor of the Summer Palace in the Castle above.

CASTLE BATTLEMAPS

Various battlemats of the castle are provided below.

6. SPRING GARDEN

The four gardens of Castle Karrlakton are kept in different seasons by magic. The temperature and weather varies accordingly between the gardens. The main gate to the castle leads to the Spring Garden. There is a fountain, and various vegetables growing in planters. To the South-West, there is a huge oak tree whose branches are covered with tiny houses. These are the homes of the favoured fairy courtiers. In the North-West corner is a small cottage, home to Sprit Greenfingers (female lawful neutral **Spring Eladrin** with 68 hitpoints). Sprit tends the gardens (note the *changeable nature* Eladrin feature), but is reclusive and only interacts with the players if they begin messing up the garden.

The path leads to the Winter Garden to the North and the Autumn garden to the East.

7. WINTER GARDEN

The path leads from the spring garden to the South to the main palace to the North, and North-West to the kitchens. The pond is frozen over. There is a merry-go-round that has various taxidermied animals, all mouldering from disuse. If approached, the snowman will come to life and demand that players ride the merry-go-round. The ride does not function, but that doesn't stop the snowman demanding they have fun. It has the stats of a **Black bear**, but is vulnerable to fire and can cast *ray of frost* at will. It only attacks if provoked.

8. AUTUMN GARDEN

A cold wind blows cold drops of rain through this garden. The ground here appears to be covered with leaves. On closer inspection, they are in fact dried fairy wings. A path leads around the edge of a short cliff, so that the section to the south is set lower than the rest of the castle grounds. The tree in the South-East corner is dried and dead, and covered in tiny ramshackle houses. These are the homes of the fairy courtiers who have fallen from favour. The river flows North to South, passing through a grate at the bottom of the Southern wall and falling from there to the valley floor below.



9. SUMMER GARDEN

Various herbs are planted here. On ingestion, roll on the wild magic table to determine the effects. The North-West path leads to the main palace. The Southern path leads to the Autumn garden. The ground rises towards the summer palace in to the North-East.

10. SUMMER PALACE

This section of the castle grounds is raised above the rest, and one can look down onto the other gardens. A single-storey pagoda sits on stilts in the middle of a lake. This is where the Green Lord goes to be tended by his fairy courtiers or entertained by various nervous guests. Courtiers may be feasting here, a typically rawcus affair. A treasure chest in the corner is open and full of 500gp. This is an open test of the courtiers' loyalty, and taking the gold immediately alerts the Green Lord via spell of sending. A trap door in the North East

corner leads down to the Hall of Mastery (area 5).

11. THRONE ROOM

Guests enter the waiting room from the winter garden to the South or the summer garden to the South-East. The waiting room also has access to the kitchens to the South-West. The interior is cold and damp, but the temperature rises as guests ascend the stairs to the throne room. Two huge fires heat the room, with long tables set for a huge feast. The throne is made of polished jade, and flanked either side by fossils of black serpents which have been carefully cut out of the rock and polished. They function as darkoil foissils, so any dragon or dargonborn blood that falls onto them causes them to become spectral black serpents.

A set of stairs ascend from the throne room to the Bed Chamber.

12. BED CHAMBER

This room has toys strewn about it, but is mainly for show. The Green Lord does not sleep, and has not been in this room for many years.

13. KITCHEN

The kitchen is frantic with the activity of five fairy courtiers, whose names are Bitter, Sweet, Salty, Sour and Umami. They are fighting over utensils and ingredients to make the best treats for the Green Lord. Double doors covered by large curtains lead to the winter garden. A short hallway connects the kitchen with the main palace to the East. Stairs lead up to the Bed Chamber (area 12), and down to the Cells (area 14).

14. CELLS

The cells contain dozens of fairy courtiers who are on trial for various imagined crimes against the Green Lord. The cells are run by a **Bugbear** named Billford. He is a gruff but efficient jailer who lives down in the village of Karrlakton. He is obsessed with crosswords. Although he cannot solve the puzzles, he enjoys creating new words that fit the spaces.

The furthest cell is open and empty of fairies, despite the other cells being crammed to the point of discomfort. A DC 15 investigation check reveals a secret door down to the Lower Cells (area 15).

15. LOWERCELLS

These cells are a space for more dangerous enemies of the Green Lord. The interior room has a permanent anti-magic field, preventing other spells from being cast. Billford has the keys to these cells. If the Green Lord has taken some of the party's ship crew hostage, they are being kept here in squalid conditions. Stairs descend again down to a set of double-doors that lead to the Dungeon (area 16).

16. DUNGEON

Long ago, Karrlakton was the site of one of the battles between the ammonites and the black serpents. The floor of this natural cave are covered with fossilised remains of both creatures. Pools of darkoil shift and squirm in various places, and there is a misty vapour drifting around the floor. In the upper chamber, the Green Lord has set up the arcane machine for creating warforged. The blue cylindrical device is sucking up wisps of the darkoil vapour, and is glowing with a pale blue light. Tubes connect the device to a stone altar with the unanimated body of a warforged, ready to come to life. In the South-West is a locked chest with contours for building the arcane device. At the far end of the cave is the

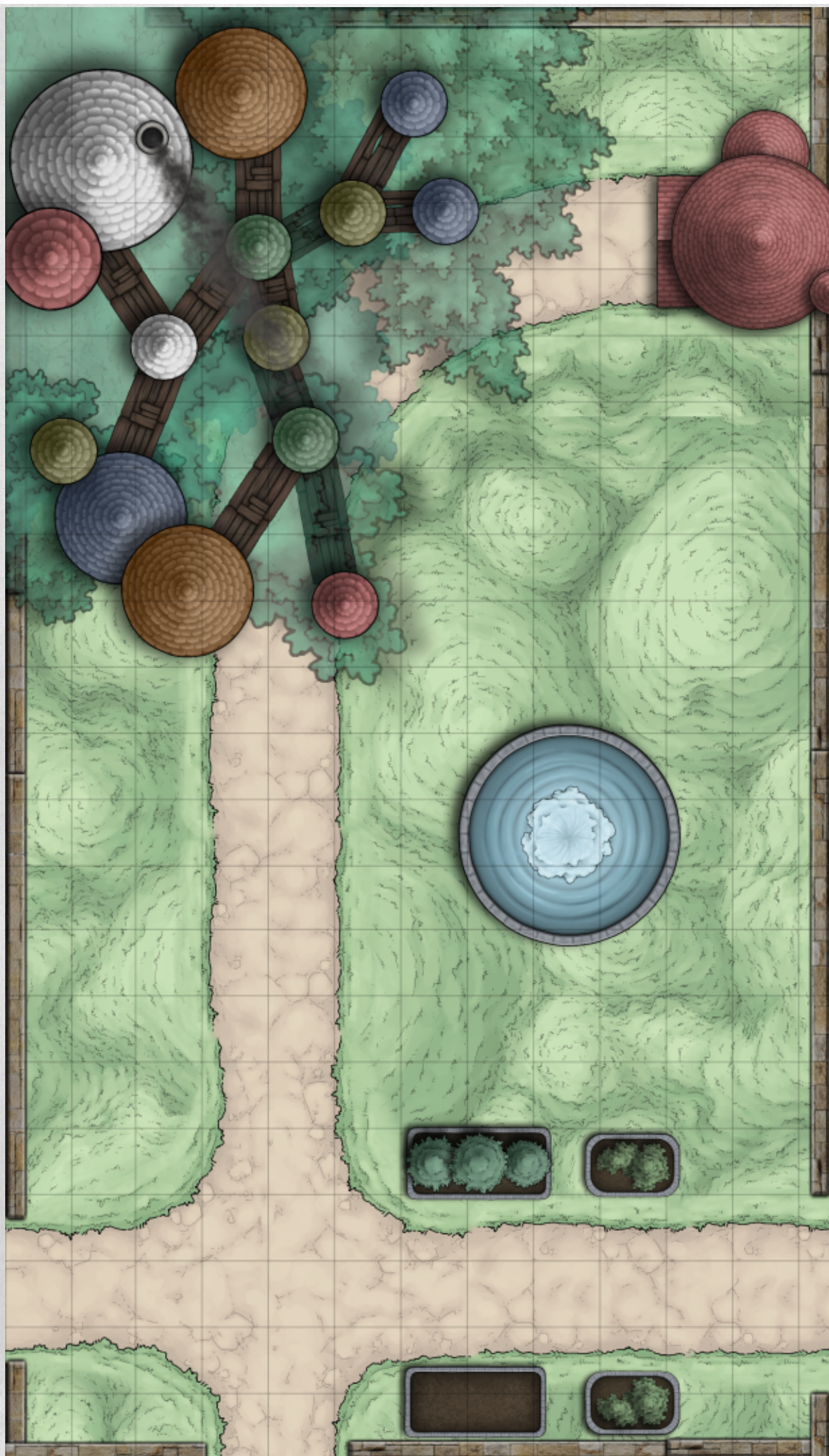


Gnasher (if it was taken from the players, otherwise it is another spelljammer ship). To the South-East, the cave continues on until it reaches an illusory wall. Beyond this, one would emerge halfway up the cliff that Castle Karrlakton stands upon. A character who is able to fly the spelljammer can take the ship out through this route.





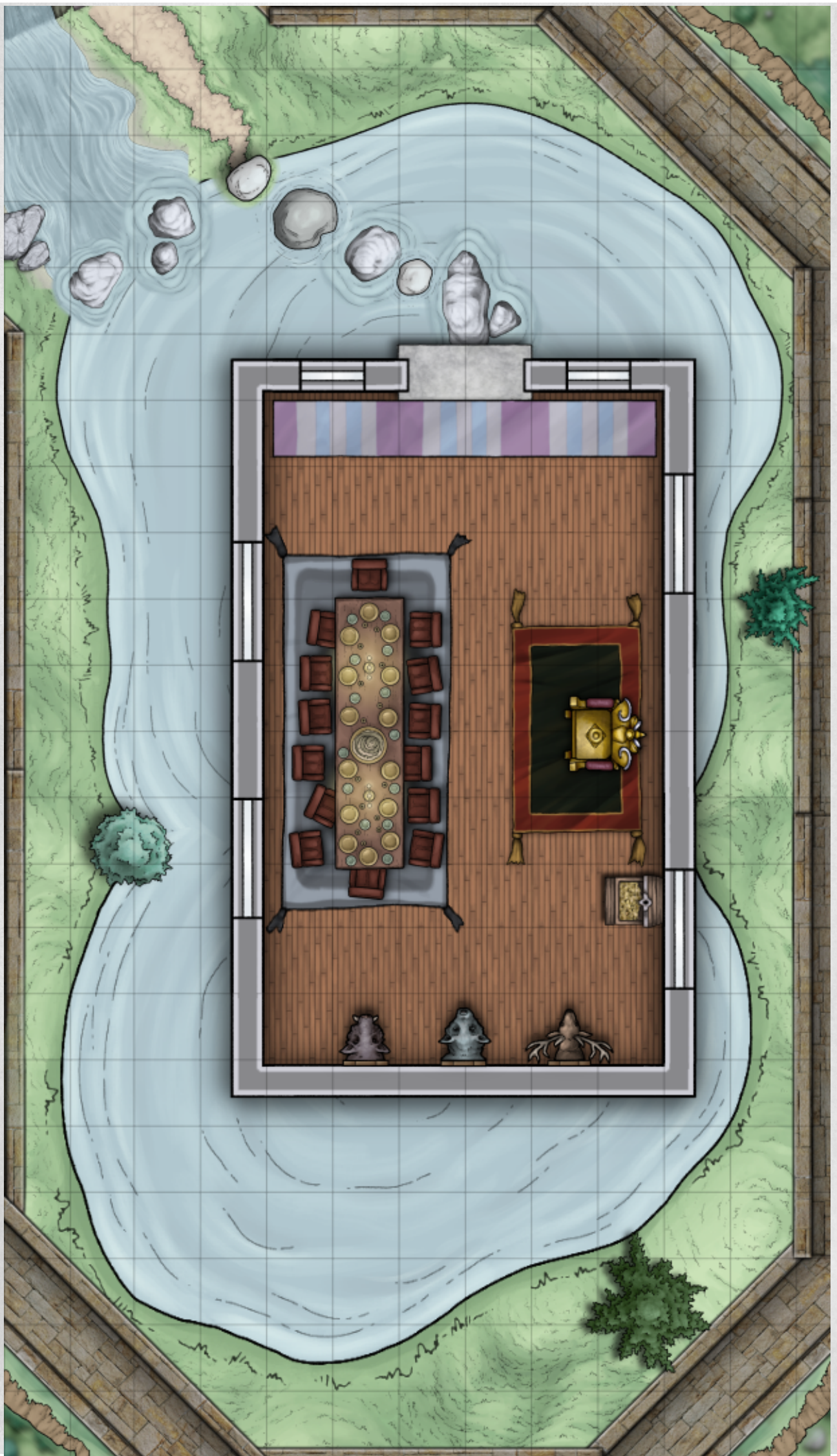


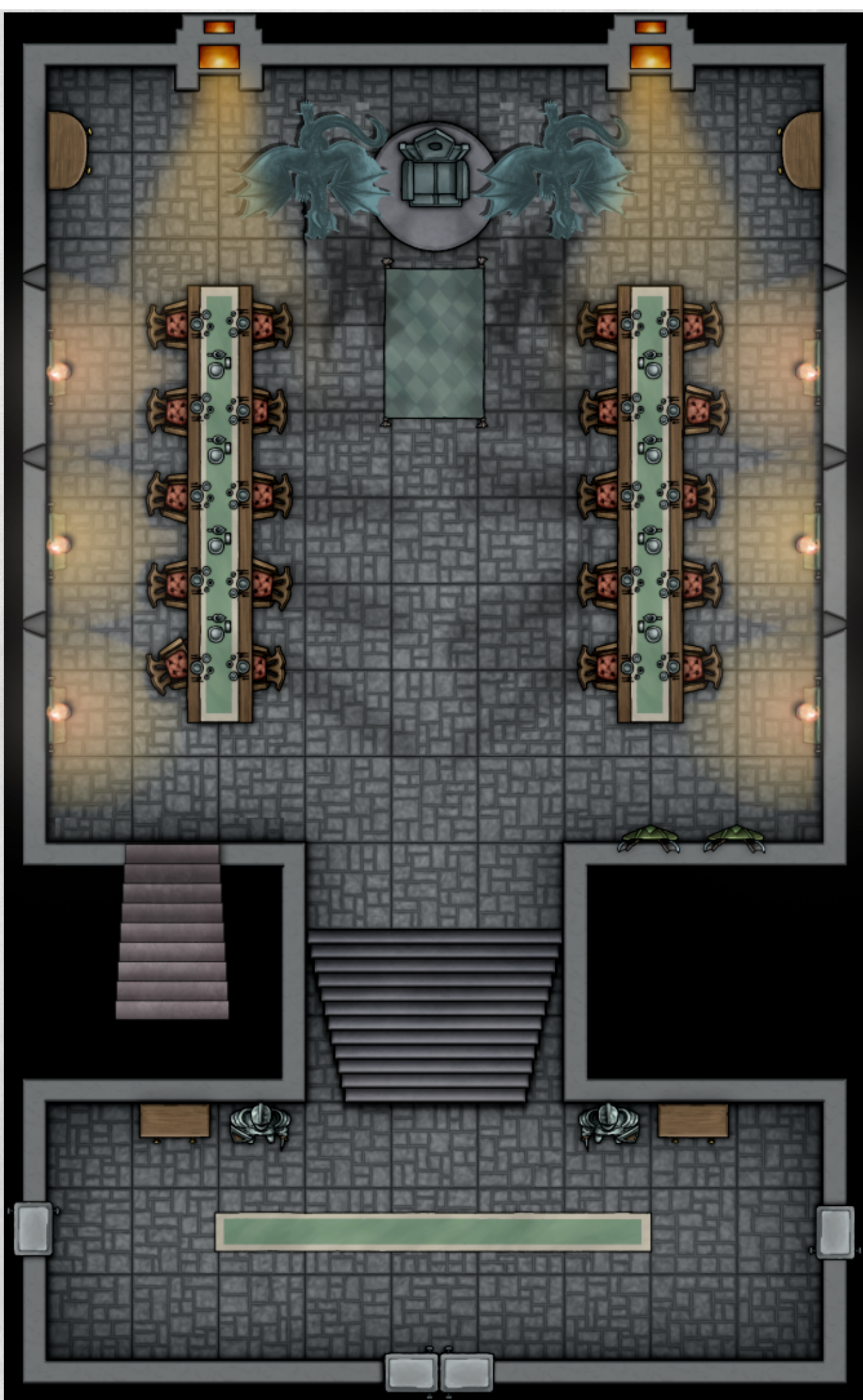




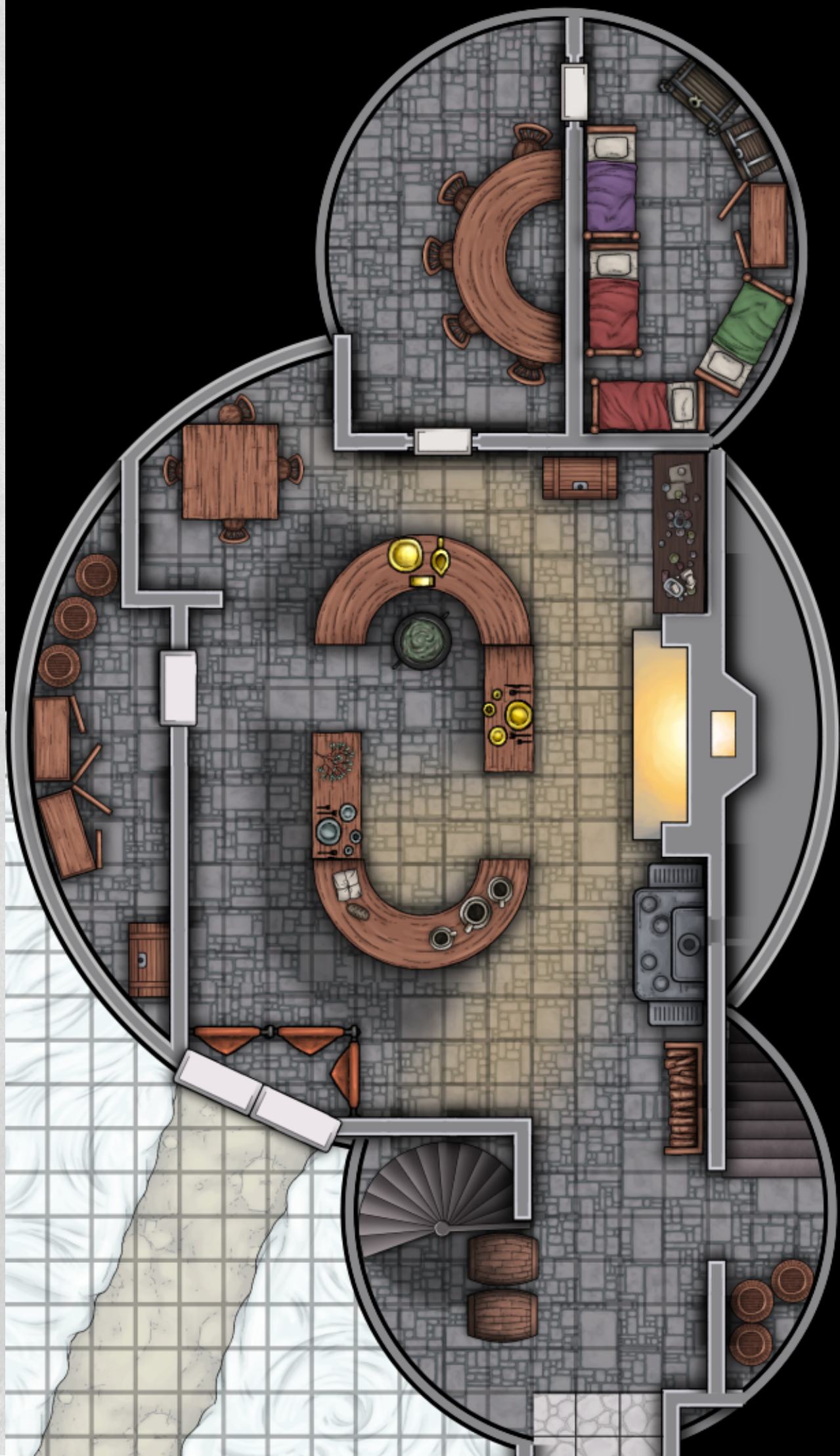


















CHAPTER 10: MERRIC'S DIARY

Here follows the true and accurate account of Merric Horseshoe as he journeys with his band of crime-fighting champions in the strange world of Eberron.

ARRIVAL IN EBERRON

Merric awakes on lightning train without equipment. Remembers crash landing on planet. Aberrant dragon mark on back. Bea, Deanna, Rob and Belmont all have jetpacks and are chasing after Gnolls with jetpacks. Dwt with Merric on the train along with two strangers, Gaff (a tiefling) and Dana. They appear to be holding us here and have our ship and goblin crew hostage. Dave killed by Gaff after he attacks them! Merric offered a magic sandwich by Dana because he's hungry. Sandwich poisons him after he takes a bite. Merric decides to keep the sandwich anyway. Train is heading to Sharn. Ice Cube the goblin is not with us, but is being held magically by Dana with a knife to his throat. He informs us that Sponge is not on the ship with him. Dana and Gaff are trying to blackmail us. Belmont doesn't like this, but he is outside the train and the train door is locked by Deanna to prevent him coming back in. Gaff offers Dwt a contract and the two of them disappear from train to a desert, possibly Avernus. Unbreakable contract made between Gaff and Dwt on behalf of our party with help of a Pit Fiend dressed in a pin stripe suit and wearing glasses. Contract is to work for them in return for release of goblins, our ship Manuka and Dave being brought back to life. Dave and Manuka returned to us immediately but we're still without our equipment and belongings. Dwt and Gaff return to the train and Belmont is let back inside.

FIRST DAY IN SHARN

We head to Sharn on the lightning train. We find out that Patrick the Modron has opened a new bar in Sharn called "The Salt Marsh" with a sign of a giant mounted warrior on a skeletal horse and wielding a spectral blade. Gaff has several boxes of dragon scales on the train. We're sent to High Walls and given "hospitality" badges that can give us free food when shown. High Walls seems like a gilded prison. The badges are from House Cannith. We meet a Turtle called Yoppa, serving soup. He is a former artisan. Also meet a Kenku (magpie) called Sparkles who takes us to our room. Once alone, Belmont tries to contact Sponge who we know is not on the ship, but there's no reply. Merric and Deanna finding a strange device (like a phone) and manage to call someone called Vonni who says she's an opera

singer. Merric also finds some paper and a pen so starts writing a letter to his wife.

Deanna talks to the guards of High Walls and finds out we have a curfew till 5pm. The guards are large, frog-like creatures. Guards mention it's difficult to earn money in High Walls. Rob agrees to do a favour for one of the guards and cover his night shift because it's that guard's birthday. He's given a guard uniform and an old sword. While looking around, Belmont learns about the Dark Lanterns (a secret police), House Ghallanda (house of hospitality who run hostels for travellers), a crime syndicate called the Daask (Gnolls on train are from there). Dwt finds a crystal ball in our room which shows a forest with a mountain castle when she looks into it. Dwt is drawn into the vision and is psychically wounded.

Bea climbs up the highest tower of High Walls to get a better view of the city. She finds a nest with a tiny owl which follows her and becomes her pet acting as a lookout. She overhears the guards talking amongst themselves about Warforged wanting scrap metal. Belmont is asking questions with people bearing the same dragon mark as him. He learns that Eberron was created by a war with 3 dragons (one is the planet's core, another is the land and the third is the sky). Belmont's mark is the lost mark of death, the thirteenth house. Aberrant dragon marks (like Merric's) give erratic powers and anyone with the mark is treated as an outcast. Bea returns from her climb and introduces Ozzy the owl, it says hoot. Dwt shows the rest of us the crystal ball and Belmont senses a powerful Fey evil presence from it. Deanna thinks it is a scrying device.

Meanwhile, Merric is exploring the city and is following his nose which leads him to a bakery. It's run by a Warforged called Fred and Merric buys 6 sticky buns (one for each of his party). The baker recommends visiting the Cog carnival and asking for a Tom Render to get in with a discount. Merric eats all the sticky buns on the way back. Back in High Walls, Deanna is talking to Yoppa who tells her about famous opera writer called Luca Zayora who wrote opera about a warlord prince. Later at night, Rob does the guard shift. While on patrol he hears a voice "give it back to me". He sees a ghost of a Gnome who wants the sword that the guard had given him. The ghost has a mark on his hand that matches the sword pommel. Rob refuses so ghost possesses him. The Gnome is called Firison and wants to use Rob to kill the head of the Sharn city watch.



OUR FIRST JOB

Next day, we get a job from Gaff to investigate missing Warforged who haven't turned up for their work. Gaff thinks that the Daask are involved and we also learn that someone called Devan is planning to be the head of House Cannith. We go to the Cog carnival (as recommended by Fred the Baker) to begin our investigation. Once there we speak to various Warforged in the bar. One called Bakup tells Merric to "look for breakwall" and "listen for the sound of sharpening knives". Another called Folder advises Dwt to go to the Temple of Silence, a religious place for the Warforged. Rob told to go to the Burning Ring by Dialer for information on the Head of the City Watch. Belmont speaks to Cole, a very nervous Warforged with a missing arm, who talks about an underneath place called the Cogs (possibly magic items there). Cole lost a friend called Razor and tells Belmont about a kidnapped child with a dragonmark who is being used as blackmail by the Daask against one of the Eberron houses. There is an assassination attempt against Cole by fireball spell through the window but it fails to kill her and she runs out of the bar, accusing us. Belmont attempts to put out the fire. Rob jumps out of the broken window and sees Cole running away, escaping into a passing carnival crowd. Merric joins Rob outside and notices graffiti on the wall – "Warforged Out". Rest of our party join us and we head in direction Cole went. We notice her running towards a group of Gnolls who appear to be armed. More Gnolls then appear on the balcony of a building and start shooting at Cole with bows or crossbows. Deanna finds a nearby ironmongers called Doobies (he also sells snow globes) which she starts looting for items we can use to fight the Gnolls. Belmont finds another owl in a dustbin when he takes the lid to use as a shield. There's a wolf-like female wearing a purple cloak and green leather. She has a human-looking face and is ordering the Gnolls. She attacks Rob. Deanna hands out iron pokers which she looted from the ironmongers and makes herself a boomerang using shelf brackets. Rob incapacitates the Gnolls leader but Cole loses both her eyes to the Gnolls' attacks despite our attempts to protect her and then shuts down. Merric secures the captured wolf leader with some rope. We find a purse and a toy wooden unicorn on her. The unicorn has a dragonmark on it. Rest of Gnolls are dealt with and we loot their bodies for weapons (Merric gets a telescopic spear). Deanna is unsuccessful in reviving Cole.

Our actions get the attention of local kids who recognise Merric from the sign on Patrick the Modron's bar. Deanna casts Enlarge on Merric to impress the kids. They tell us that

the dragonmark on the unicorn is for House Oreon. We put the captured wolf leader in a dustbin (not the owls) along with Cole's body and head to Patrick's bar "The Salt Marsh". Once there we find lots of Eberron residents dressed like us. Patrick doesn't recognise us and thinks we are role-players pretending to be Merric's party ("Bell-boy", "Dee", "Bear-face", "Dangle" and "the Robber"). We hire a private room and take captured Wolf leader inside. Her name is Hound and she was hired by the Daask to find Warforged. They are blackmailing House Oreon by stealing their children and using the Warforged to loot the Cogs. House Oreon operate the transport network and there are tensions between them and House Cannith. Garro is Hound's line manager and their headquarters is an abandoned train station near High Walls. The captured child is called Kadon and he is being kept in the Cogs. There is a secret entrance down to it through a broken lift which is protected by a medusa contraption. Rob also learns that the Head of the City Watch is called Lincoln and that he'll be attending the opera.

After questioning Hound, Merric is sent out of the private room (so the others can secretly kill Hound without him knowing) into the bar. He finds several Sharn newsletters with various titles – Dawn of Disease, Assassins on the Loose!, Do They Know the War is Over?, Is Your Neighbour a Cyran Invader?, At the Mercy of Mercenaries, Enigma of the Diamond Voice. Our hospitality badges start flashing to tell us our curfew is up (Merric thinks this means dinner time!). After leaving Patrick's bar, we encounter the opera singer Vonni who is secretly kissing a shifter from Everice called Luna. We talk to Luna while Vonni is signing autographs. She gives us tickets to the opera. We later meet an old woman who talks to us about the Green Lord stealing children. She gives us a card and tells us to call her if we go after the Green Lord.

Back at High Walls, we meet Gaff and tell him of our findings. Gaff looks in the crystal ball that Dwt found and sees a vision of a fiery place. Because we completed our first job, our items are returned to us by Dana. Gaff accidentally reveals to Bea and Deanna that they've given away our ship. Dwt and Belmont notice that several of our returned items are cursed so Gaff and Dana can track us. They can dispel the curses but Gaff and Dana would know.

SAVING THE BOY

We sneak out of High Walls to rescue Kadon the boy and head to the Cog gate. We find the broken lift and use it to go down a cavern to the lowest level (100) and end up in a pool of lava. Dwt uses Maelstrom spell to turn the lava hard like rock and the lift is fixed into the

rock. There's a group of Gnolls guarding cells containing several Warforged and a young boy. Rob sneaks in and kills one of the guards. Belmont, Dwt and Deanna kill another 2 Gnolls, but Dave's Thunderwave is as ineffective as a fart. One Gnoll is left holding a slate book which Merric takes, there is a picture of a Warforged on the front. A Warforged in one of the cells shouts "Corey!" and points to the walls of the cavern. We free the child and Warforged but then get attacked by a giant eyeball scorpion called "Corey" while making our way back to the lift. 6 more "Corey" come through the walls to attack each of us, but as they are fiends they recoil from Belmont's amulet. Bea finishes off the first Corey. We then all escape up the lift after it is freed from the rocks by the Warforged.

WHAT THE GOBLINS GOT UP TO

5 Goblins (Sponge, Mop, Bowl, Teddy and Oak) and George see the Drunken Sailor being towed away by a zeppelin. They are in a marsh about to hunt crocodiles for food by using George as bait. Mop creates an illusion of a third arm on George to confuse the crocodile as they grapple it. The crocodile is killed and the goblins cook and eat part of it. They then use the teeth to make necklaces. During the night they have difficulty sleeping due to marsh lights which George is unable to stop from glowing. Sponge tries to offer them crocodile teeth as payment but that doesn't work and Mop creates an illusionary tent to sleep in.

The next day, the Goblins follow a path through the swamp in the direction they saw the ship taken, with George following carrying the crocodile carcass. They find footprints and follow them to a woodland where Oak finds an enclosure with goats inside where they meet an old Halfling woman. The Goblins assume this is Merric's wife. Her name is Moira Greenwood and she invites them into her home. She tells them she has no husband so the Goblins think she believes that Merric is dead. Moira has a pet pangolin called Piggy and a dog called Willow which she treats as an equal. George dumps the half-eaten crocodile carcass in her pantry and Moira feeds the Goblins soup, bread and cold crocodile. She tells the Goblins there is a Halfling village nearby with lots of prosperous Goblin clans. The village landlord is called Thomas Bovril of Efar who agreed to take on refugee families but then went back on his word. In punishment for this, Moira (a sorcerer) tainted his food however she then lost her magic focus and believes this was stolen by his sons. The Goblins agree to find this for her without harming anyone in the process.

Thomas Bovril and his family go to bingo every Wednesday night and it just happens to

be a Wednesday, which presents a perfect opportunity for the Goblins to get into their house and retrieve the magic focus. They have a deaf butler, a half-Orc cook called Bricks who likes her drink and a steward called Loader who guards the house with his shortsword. Apart from the front and back doors, other possible entrance to the house is up a drainpipe and through one of the windows. Goblins plan is for Mop and George to distract butler at front entrance by pretending George is a cookie salesman. Oak, Teddy and Bowl will distract the cook and steward at the rear entrance while Sponge climbs up the drainpipe. Mop creates an imaginary cookie cart but since George can't talk he also has to use a spell to throw his voice which causes the cart to disappear then reappear when he's not talking. The vanishing cart causes the butler to have an "episode" so he lies down. Bowl and Oak distract the cook with garlic brandy and try to persuade her and Loader to have a party without much luck. While the rest of the Goblins are distracting the staff, Sponge tries to acrobatically climb up the drainpipe and fails. He succeeds on the second attempt, somersaulting through the window into the boys bedroom. Sponge finds nothing in their bedroom but in the master bedroom he finds Moira's purse then signals to the rest of the Goblins he found it so they can execute the escape plan. On hearing this, George runs away so Sponge (after climbing down the drainpipe) and Mop head after him. We return the magic focus to Moira. She uses the focus plus items belonging to their fellow Goblins and Deanna to scry for them and finds out they are in Karrnath at Castle Karlakkton (Goblins) and Sharn (Deanna). Moira tells the Goblins they can call Deanna by phone.

MEETING BOOK

It started with an introduction to Chris's character Book the goblin, a linguist trying to figure out the history of the ancient goblin empire on Eberron. He's been living above a blacksmiths shop, run by Blathangela, a character who approached you asking about missing children. Book works as a kind of taxi driver, driving a floating gondola. Gondolas here work by trapping a steam elemental and harnessing its power. On his way to work, he sees the Opera House, and a very strange ship moored on the very top of its dome, a ship with five elemental rings.

Book picked up two shadowy strangers who turn out to be Gaff and Dana on their way to see Merric's crew. They find them just emerging from the cogs with Caden. With a swift action, Deena shrinks Caden and hides him. There's some confrontation between Dana and the Belmont/Dwt axis, and Dana suddenly sweeps Dwt into her cloak. Dwt

disappears for a second, emerging very calm and subdued.

Gaff asks about progress, and the crew is able to bluff effectively. After their captors leave, Book offers the crew a ride up to House Orien to return Caden. House Orien is in the floating district above the city, and one of the most powerful houses on the continent. House Orion run the lightning rail and transport monopoly. At the gate, the guards are somewhat suspicious, but a crowd of superstitious unicorns recognise Caden and the crew is welcomed into the house. Alden d'Orien, Caden's father, is overjoyed to have his son back. He was being blackmailed to send Warforged to help the Daask. The party entrust him with a version of events: they've had some of their goblin friends kidnapped. On hearing this, Book gets very interested and asks to join the crew to find them. Alden is exhausted, and still somewhat suspicious of the party, so asks them to return in two days. He promises them help in whatever way he can, though being indentured is a legal condition that not even he might be able to dispel.

The crew sneak back into Highwalls, and receive a voice message from Moira and the goblins, saying that the other goblins have been captured and taken to Karrlakton, a fortress on the other side of the continent (See mini map below, and more detailed map here).

The crew must now figure out a plan to escape Sharn, get to the goblins and rescue them. In the meantime, the Opera awaits...

AT THE OPERA

We're planning to find Sponge, George and the other Goblins and rescue the other Goblins in Karlakkton. Before that we are going to the opera and head out on a shopping trip for suitable clothes. Merric buys a new cavalry captain outfit (it's red with epaulettes) and barding for Daffodil. Belmont has a flaming crown. We arrive at the opera on Book's gondola which is parked next to a ship with 5 rings which is unusual as most ships have 1 ring. We meet the captain of the ship, Tiller, who's come from a mission near the Demon Wastes. We ask him for passage on his ship to Nightwood or Lake Galifar, which he says will cost us 5,000 gold pieces.

We head into the opera building for the show and meet Luna the shifter. Merric buys an opera programme. Vonni is playing Lauren di Cannith in a play set in a castle like Karlakkton and she's speaking with the Green Lord. During the play she mentions passing through the Nightwood using black mushrooms. In the second act, she tells the story of the creation of the Warforged (1st one is called Runner) who became self-aware and stole dragon shards to aid their freedom and

escape. Lauren di Cannith falls in love with Runner.

While the show is going on, Rob (possessed by the Gnome ghost) sneaks into the opera box containing the Captain of the City Watch to assassinate him which causes panic amongst the audience. Belmont tries to distract the audience with his dancing and flaming crown. The show continues despite this and, during the last act, Vonni removes her "face" to reveal she is a Warforged. This astounds the audience and ends the opera.

Now we're about to commandeer the 5 rings ship...

THE FIVE RING SHIP

After the opera, we all head up to the roof where the ships are parked (except for Rob) to steal the five ring ship in order to rescue our Goblin crew. The five rings are air, fire, ash, radiance and steam. Dwt tells the crew that their captain is dead even though he's not and Merric tries to commandeer the ship using his sheriff's badge, with no luck. The crew start making bets amongst themselves as to whether we can fly their ship and solving the riddles to do so. Deanna finds out there are 5 riddles to correctly answer for the password.

Air. Forty white horses on a red hill. They champ, they stamp, and then stand still. Fire. Two men drink poisoned Iced Tea. One man drinks his fast and lives. The other man drinks his slow and dies. How is this possible? Ash. When one does not know what it is, then it is something. When one knows what it is, then it is nothing. Radiance. A curved stick and a straight twig means red sap and a snapped trunk. Steam. What has two hands on its face but no arms? We eventually give the correct answers (Merric thinks the answer to Steam is glue) and take control of the ship. Deanna brings Luna on board the ship against her will. Luna is still shocked at the revelation that Vonni is a Warforged. Dwt sees Vonni being taken into custody. Now we have the ship we begin to take off. Dwt and Book are jointly steering the ship.

Back in the opera building, the ghost Gnome that had been possessing Rob has left him and the opera security are trying to apprehend him. Rob manages to escape them, rushes to the roof and catches hold of a rope we lower for him. Five opera guards and a monk appear on the roof after him. The monk manages to board our ship, but we restrain him then throw him overboard. He descends safely to the ground thanks to Feather Fall. As we head higher into the air above Sharn we are pursued by two red dragons. Luna says they are from one of the Houses and not the Sharn police. The five ring ship is too fast for them and we escape.

Our new ship is called Fate Amenable to

Change and has a harpoon launcher at the rear and a mangonel catapult at the front. Apart from our party and Luna, there is only one of the original crew left on the ship, a female called Troy who is "ready for adventure". Our plan is to rescue the Goblins in Karlakkton, but we need to go to the Black Pit and Gathering Stone for mushrooms and an icon to help us get entry (Merric's opera programme has information on this). Before that, we are heading to Moira Greenwood, where George and the free Goblins are. So that Gaff and Dana don't know where we are headed, we remove their trackers and harpoon them onto a passing lightning train using magnets.

THE BLACK PIT

We head to Moira's cottage near Lake Galifar to meet up with the free Goblins (Sponge, Mop, Bowl, Oak and Teddy) and George. Luna is suspicious of George because he is a Warforged. Book is getting to know the other Goblins. Moira invites us into her cottage for a meal of raisin fruitcake, tea and cold crocodile sandwiches). She tells us about the Green Lord and that we need to destroy his phylactery which is designed to change shape and teleport to random locations. Even the Green Lord does not know where it goes. Moira tells us the mushrooms we need are found in Darguun by the Gathering Stone and that the icon is at the Black Pit (not the other way round as in Merric's opera programme). We thank Moira for her hospitality and leave with the Goblins and George. We head to Black Pit city in the Black Cap mountains to find the Icon. We learn that it is shaped like a cylinder of triangles and is linked to a competition. Dwarfs in a bar tell us about this grand (wacky) race competition over some shots. Merric and Book gain the Augury spell ability after drinking the Dwarf shots.

In the starting pit for the Grand (Wacky) Race there are the competitor's vehicles, which must be either pulled by dinosaurs or mechanically operated. To enter the race, we need to build a vehicle constructed for either speed, traction, steering or durability. The winner of the race is awarded the Icon which is being held by a skeleton that has been swallowed by a gelatinous cube. The cube is the King of Black Pit city. We decide to enter as three separate teams.

- Book & Dwt – giant walking robot called Yeagermeister, built for durability
- Rob & Bea – chariot pulled by velociraptors called Prehistoric Streak, built for speed
- Deanna, Belmont & Merric – pod racer that looks like two horses and a chariot, also built for speed. Called "Between a rocket and a hard pace"

The race is won by Prehistoric Streak. The Jelly King presents Rob and Bea with the Icon which we can use to face the Sentinel.

THE GATHERING STONE

We're still in the Black Pit City eating, drinking and fraternising after the race. Dwt meets with some other, copper Dragonborn musicians who had also been in the race and live in the north of the Eldeen Reaches. They give her a dark sapphire medallion which glows whenever dragons are near. Dwt then plays her harmonica with the other Dragonborn musicians. Deanna dances a ceilidh then falls asleep from drinking too much. Dwt's new medallion glows which means a dragon is close. Two red dragons have come looking for us near the Black Pit (our ship is hidden). We take that as a sign to leave quietly. Book and the other Goblins go ahead to ready the ship while the rest of us get lost in the city evading the dragons. Once at the ship, we fly off in the direction of Darguun with only two rings active so we look like a cloud.

The Gathering Stone is a market near Rhukaan Draal for hiring mercenaries and supplies. We hide our ship in the sand dunes with George guarding it. In the marketplace, Goblin market sellers are trying to sell their wares and fruit to our Goblins. Dwt and Deanna search for mushroom sellers, Book starts asking the Goblin sellers questions about black mushrooms. Rob overhears someone alerting the local police, so we decide to slip away.

Meanwhile, Belmont is looking for Goblin hangouts. He finds a back alley, fromage sunbed lounge where he makes discreet enquiries with the elderly, female shopkeeper. After being paid for information, the shopkeeper blows up balloons then offers Belmont the choice of two boxes – red or blue. Belmont chooses the red box which has a giant penis inside. The shopkeeper attaches this penis to two balloons then the room begins to fill with melted cheese and a Bugbear appears to sing along music. The Bugbear produces a table with a screen and playing board with counters, inviting Belmont to play. Belmont feels confident about getting information. . .

The rest of us are still in the marketplace being shadowed by children and followed by two adult Goblins. Trying to lose them, we head into a court dominated by a goblin statue and use a triceratops pulling a cart full of fruit as cover to evade them. We cut the reins of the cart, causing the fruit to spill out and the triceratops breaks free. The triceratops stomps off to eat some meat for the first time in his life due to stress. We escape while the distraction takes attention off us. In the confusion, Book takes the opportunity to start following the Goblins that were following us. As we're

heading down an alleyway, we pass the sunbed lounge that Belmont is in. He notices us and comes out to join us which causes the cheese to flow out of the shop and into the street when he opens the door. Book has followed the Goblins on to the rooftops as the rest of us find ourselves in a dead end. We're trapped by many uniformed Goblins with crossbows who try to arrest us. Merric shows them his badge, and Dwt and Belmont persuade them we are working undercover. They believe we are the Scarlet Inspectors and pretend to arrest us so they can take us to their headquarters.

At the Goblin police headquarters, we meet a tiny fairy officer called Ash who is smoking a large cigar. They tell us about their plans to catch two gangs (Hoodland Trust and Barks & Recreation) illegally trading in black mushrooms. Ash wants our help to infiltrate a secret shipment near Olkhaan village to confiscate it. Dwt checks their evidence locker and finds a floating quill which writes whatever the last person wants. Dwt also gets her cloak turned into an invisibility cloak by Ash.

Ash leads us through a secret tunnel to the other side of the Gathering Stone near a river. It is now dusk. We meet a group of goblins with a caravan of ostrich camels (they're nocturnal and meat eaters, some have humps). Our Goblin crew, Luna and Troy head back to George and the ship while the rest of us complete this undercover mission. Bea is given a map to our destination. Ash joins us and during the journey to Olkhaan on the border with the Mournlands she tells us about her time in the Green Court.

INTO THE MOURNLANDS

When Dwt asks Ash about getting an audience with the Green Lord, she is told about a toy fair at his castle because he likes toys. Ash also tells us about his different courts based on seasons and that she was banished from the courts. We reach the market of Olkhaan on our camel ostriches. Merric purchases stake-out snacks and the rest of the party buy disguises. We meet Jimmy Long-johns, the Goblin officer on duty. He wants us to transport mysterious boxes to the Hoodland Trust (Dwt finds out they are full of weapons using ghostly gaze). Goblin insiders called "Petal" and "Honey" will meet us and we're told a secret and elaborate handshake to greet them. Before we head into the Mournlands we are stopped by Luna who had followed us from the Gathering Stone. We allow her to join us and she purchases supplies for crossing the desert.

The plan already starts going wrong when we discover that there are two Bugbears called Baby and Deer (Bugbears are named after the first thing they eat) instead of Petal and Honey and they are searching the belongings of

everyone leaving Olkhaan. We do our best to hide the boxes and Merric confuses the Bugbears by flashing his badge (now an undercover badge) and giving the secret handshake meant for Petal and Honey. With the help of Dwt's suggestion spell, the Bugbears let us go and we head into the Mournlands.

It is very misty, and Bea discovers the ground is covered with undead bodies (zombies) that are armoured and carrying weapons. We try to avoid stepping on them but Luna trips over one and this alerts them to our presence. A bone-armoured knight with red sparkling eyes is spotted nearby and he asks where we're going and whether we seek vengeance. We decide not to inform him of our secret mission but he does invite Belmont to join his undead army of vengeance. Belmont declines and then the zombies attack!

Dwt banishes the bone-armoured knight yet it doesn't stop the zombie attack. Deanna casts the grease spell which causes ten zombies to fall down, then sets fire to the grease and burns them. We kill several more zombies and Bea uses her amulet to paralyse the remaining zombies with turn undead. Merric and Book get our caravan moving again to continue the mission, and while the bone-armoured knight is banished.

We eventually emerge from the mists and head to a place called Greenfields where Belmont finds a mechanical marmoset that he gives to Deanna. A sandstorm is approaching and Luna (who has been to the Mournlands before) advises us to find shelter. We find a cave and inside there are paintings on the wall. Book is fascinated by this cave painting, especially of a green figure with red blades which he believes is a Warforged, and thinks it shows a history of the Goblins and Warforged. Book finds ancient goblin hieroglyph inscriptions along with convenient translations into ancient common and dwarvish, however part of the inscription has been removed by the University of Karlakkton on authorisation of the Green Lord. We remain in the cave, waiting for the sandstorm to pass.

THE FUN FAIR

Magic in the Mournland has enlarged half of our party and shrunk the other half. The shrunken members of our party travel on the shoulders of the larger ones, but the effects soon wear off. We're heading to what appears to be an amusement park which Luna and the ostrich camels are wary about entering. It's too long to go around so we enter the park. Inside there are melted merry-go-rounds, abandoned tents and rollercoasters. Merric enters the Kingdom of Sweets where he helps himself to a load of sweets. He sees a floating sword inside a giant gelatinous cube and, thinking this is

edible, cuts off a slice of the gelatinous cube and puts it in his bag of sweets. He then tries to grab the sword out of the gelatinous cube using a pair of tongs, but is almost absorbed into the cube if it wasn't for the help of Belmont, Bea and Deanna pulling him out.

Outside, Ozzy the owl spots some Gnolls stealing the weapon crates from our caravan. He warns Bea that they are escaping into the amusement park and the Gnolls have split up into three groups. Belmont and Bea chase the Gnolls into the ghost train, Dwt and Book go after the Gnolls on the rollercoaster, and Deanna, Rob and Merric enter the fun house to find the Gnolls in there. Luna and Ash remain with the ostrich camels.

The Rollercoaster – The Gnolls are in one of the carts racing along the rollercoaster so Dwt and Book jump into another cart. They release a red lever that controls the carts and chase after them. Dwt uses the gust of wind spell to push the Gnolls cart back towards them. The Gnolls decide to attack and jump into Book and Dwt's cart. Dwt attempts to grab the weapons box off the Gnolls. When they pass a red lever, Book reaches for it to make an emergency brake. The cart screeches to a halt and the Gnolls are catapulted out of the cart and onto the tracks. Dwt also falls out, but the box has remained in their cart. She manages to get back in and they continue to ride their cart around the rollercoaster, including through a boggy part where they get their pictures taken, before returning to the beginning running over the Gnolls still on the track and killing them. Book did not enjoy the rollercoaster.

The Ghost Train – Belmont and Bea can hear the Gnolls in the building. They enter the train carriage which looks like a bed. Instead of riding on the beds, Belmont decides it is better for them to hide under them. The carriage enters the building and while under the beds, Belmont and Bea hear a recording and catch glimpses of images that seem to tell the tale of the Green Lord and the Warforged. Luckily, Belmont's decision to hide under the beds means they avoid the giant, swinging blades that appear. The carriage continues on the tracks to an upper level where Belmont and Bea split up. Bea enters the hall of mirrors, she uses her augury spell to locate the Gnolls and shatters the mirrors with her arrows when she shoots at them. Belmont investigates the hall of blades, finding many inscriptions about the Lord of Blades. He can hear Bea attacking the Gnolls in the adjacent hall but can't find a way through to her. He continues down the hall, eventually finding a crate. One of the Gnolls escaping from Bea runs past and Belmont beheads him. Bea follows moments later to find Belmont in

possession of the weapons box.

The Fun House – Waiting for Deanna, Rob and Merric outside the Fun House is a skeleton with a mullet who introduces himself as Patrick and beside him are two Gnolls. Patrick tells us we must enter the fun house one at a time to search for the weapon box that the Gnolls hid in there by collecting one of 8 prizes, but we're only allowed to collect two prizes at a time. Merric attempts to question the Gnolls but they aren't forthcoming. Deanna enters the house first, collecting prizes 3 and 8. She finds a cockerel using prize 8 as a nest. After she exits, Patrick informs that this is the power prize. Merric goes in next and, ignoring the rules, grabs prizes 7, 5, 4 and 6 in that order. Because of the extended time that Merric took, Rob has limited time so has to move fast. He skips across the ball pit, leaps up to the platform into the cannon and is fired up to collect prize number 1. There is no time to collect prize 2. After Rob exits, Patrick hands out our prizes. Rob wins a knife and fork set made of mithril and the Stiletto of the Infiltrator. Merric gets a Glutton's Fork and a bottle of sunlight. Deanna is given a Vest of Haste and the Ring of the Grammarian. Finally, we are awarded the weapons box.

THE HOODLAND TRUST

Before returning to the caravan, Merric enters the Kingdom of Sweets again and, with the help of the party, they chop up the gelatinous cube and retrieve the sword being kept inside. Turns out it's only a plastic sword but Merric keeps it anyway for his nephew. We then head out of the amusement park and pass through a forest that's full of squirrels to the meeting place for the weapons drop-off with the Hoodland Trust. No-one is there. Instead, a goblin head is rolled towards us followed by a pair of boots and we find ourselves surrounded by a gang of many squirrels (a scurry) led by a large, rotund squirrel who orders us to drop the weapon crates. Their leader tells us they're changing the agreement and keeping the mushrooms as well. Deanna is having none of this and uses Mage Hand to grab the leader. Book lights a fire under the weapon crates to warn away the rest of the squirrels. They back off, concerned about their nest eggs. Deanna is already helping herself to the mushrooms that are in nearby barrels, but Belmont persuades the squirrels that it would be better to trade them for the weapons as previously agreed. The squirrels accept this and stand down. Belmont gives the squirrel leader a sword and in return is knighted as "Sir Nutcracker". Bea's owl then warns us that a large group of Warforged are approaching. Fifty of them, including Tom Render and Vonni (who Luna notices) and led by the Lord of Blades.

THE LORD OF BLADES

The Lord of Blades confronts us, asking if we're here to parley or fight. Considering there's 50 Warforged we choose to parley. Merric hands out the sweets he took from the Kingdom of Sweets and the Warforged use the gelatinous cube to rub themselves. In return, they give Merric a can of oil which he uses to rub on himself, spilling some. The spilled oil causes Belmont to slip and fall. Bea is on the lookout for dragons and smells a faint scent. Dwt still has her invisibility cloak on and is snooping around amongst the Warforged. Deanna and Belmont are trying to convince the Lord of Blades that we are opposed to the Green Lord and mention that we have helped the Warforged in the past. Dwt finds Warforged carrying strange maps that may be of the Mournland and one Warforged has a map of Karlakkton. The Lord of Blades can see Dwt even through her invisibility cloak and calls to her. Realising the cloak is useless, Dwt takes it off. She asks about the map of Karlakkton which leads to the Lord of Blades telling the tale of the seven Warforged rogues.

THE STORY OF THE SEVEN ROGUES

Seven Warforged rogues (Imager, Query, Killswitch, Directory, Searcher, Dash and Grepper) are walking through a forest and find the entrance to a cave. Sitting around the entrance, by a pool of water, are six fairies who appear to be guarding it. Wanting to get into the cave, the rogues decide against Killswitch's plan to attack the fairies and pull off their wings and instead Imager creates a distraction using Mage Hand to draw the fairies away. They enter the cave, checking for traps and avoiding those they find. Directory finds a bottle of small red pills. She takes the bottle. Inside the cave, there is a copper statue of a small child with water dripping on to it and a mural of a child growing up in service to a Dark Master. There is also a door, a chest and a large box with a rotating handle. Grepper disarms the chest trap and finds a magic key inside when she opens the chest. The rogues figure out a way to open the door and head further into the cave, avoiding more traps on the way.

In the next room there is another mural of the same child. It shows him looking after a library and finding a special book there as well as the sacrifice of a mother and child. Query finds an amber necklace at the end of the mural which Searcher later picks up. As the rogues follow Query down a corridor, the floor starts tipping up. Imager, Killswitch and Searcher fail to hold on as the floor tips and they slide down toward a pit. Grepper had tied herself to the door with a rope and the other rogues had managed to hold on to the walls. Directory and Query throw another rope down

to the group in the pit while Grepper and Dash try to balance out the floor but without any luck. Imager and Searcher grab the other end of the rope that is thrown down to them, but Killswitch fails to do so and falls onto spikes in the pit. Imager and Searcher are too heavy for the rope and also fall into the pit along with Directory. Grepper and Dash then lower themselves into the pit. Down in the pit, there is an Iron Golem which Killswitch immediately attacks. The Golem is damaged by Killswitch then picks him up and hurls the rogue against the wall. While Directory and Dash distract the Golem and Killswitch is trying to stab it from behind, Searcher and Imager climb up the rope towards Query followed by Grepper. The Golem attacks Directory but is pinned in place by her javelin. The rest of the rogues then climb out of the pit although Killswitch is very reluctant to leave the Golem alive.

Now out of the pit, the rogues enter a domed room that is covered in murals. Each one shows the transformation of the child with certain items on the murals coloured in green. At the centre of the room is a chest which Grepper opens with the magic key she found. Inside are magic items. The rogues intentionally activate the traps in the room and find that they are bladed steps to the roof. At the top of these steps is a large room with a model of what appears to be Barovia (Merric's band of adventurers). It appears that the Green Lord is opposed to the model adventurers so Grepper smashes them. An alarm bell rings, and a door opens revealing the Sentinel (Balyshyra) in a pink dress.

Balyshyra and her floating eyes enter the room to find the rogues studying the table map. Imager tips over a large cauldron and rolls it towards her, but she deflects it with her magic. Query attacks Balyshyra as a feint then runs to the potions cabinet on the wall opposite the table map. Query drinks one of the potions which increases her strength. Grepper uses an oil flask to set Balyshyra alight while Dash investigates a group of barrels in one of the corners. Inside he finds large copper rods dipped in acid with wires running to the table map. Dash removes one of the copper rods to use as an improvised weapon.

Meanwhile, Directory joins Imager behind the cauldron and tries to draw the attention of Balyshyra's eyes. Balyshyra zaps a blue ray at Directory but Searcher manages to deflect it using mirror tiles he found in a box. While she's distracted, Killswitch and Imager grab the cauldron and lift it over her head, but she teleports away and appears on the table map. She blasts Imager with a death ray from her eyes, but the ray is deflected by Query who has covered herself in mirror tiles. The

deflected rays hit one of Balyshyra's eyes and burn it to a crisp. A thrown vial of acid from Grepper misses Balyshyra and hits the table map instead, burning the model of Castle Ravenloft. Dash hides under the table map with his copper rod, carefully cuts a hole in the table and uses the rod to electrocute Balyshyra. Searcher throws a mirrored tile at one of Balyshyra's eyes cutting it down as Killswitch attacks her, although he misses her. Balyshyra uses multi-ray to zap everyone nearby. Directory is seriously wounded and Grepper is incapacitated. Query's mirror tiles deflect the ray onto Killswitch but he manages to dodge the ray as does Searcher.

Directory goes to the potion cabinet and drinks a yellow potion which causes her to forget everything that's happened in the past two days! Imager has been blinded by the death ray so he crawls towards a door and enters the next room. He stumbles across some bones on the ground by the door and a magic staff which he takes. His eyesight slowly returns and he sees that this next room is also covered in murals and there is a figure that looks like the Lord of Blades painted on the floor. Not knowing where she is or how she got here, Directory also runs into the room. Imager resets her memory by hitting her over the head. As his eyesight returns to normal, Imager starts taking eye pictures as records of the room. He believes that the mural of the Lord of Blades is a binding ritual and that there is a link between the Green Lord and House Cannith.

Back in the other room, Balyshyra jumps off the table and heads towards the same door that Imager and Directory went through. Query and Dash attack in an attempt to stop her but she dodges them. As Imager and Directory return to the map room, another multi-ray from Balyshyra blasts out. Everyone but Imager manages to dodge these. One of the rays hits the barrels and acid starts spilling out onto the floor. Query attacks Balyshyra and slices another floating eye, Killswitch and Dash join her in the attack. In retaliation, Balyshyra lashes out at the Warforged attacking her, seriously damaging Query and dispatching Killswitch. Dash deflects her death ray onto the mural of Strahd but Query is hit and knocked unconscious.

Grepper has managed to reboot herself while Balyshyra is fighting the other Warforged. Searcher is by the potions cabinet and drinks one which causes him to hover. Imager has transferred a copy of the eye pictures he took in the other room to Searcher. Dash retreats from his fight with Balyshyra to hide under the table again so she chases after Directory, grapples her then throws her across the room and the force of the hit causes Directory to

shut down. With the eye pictures from Imager transferred to his memory files, Searcher floats down the hole they originally came up. Grepper joins him, briefly stopping to collect Directory's memory file. Imager casts Chromatic Orb and hits Balyshyra with a ball of lightning. This distraction allows Dash to come out of hiding and he escapes with Grepper, Searcher and Imager.

The remaining Warforged retreat back along the corridors towards the exit, disarming the seesaw trap as they go. They emerge outside next to the pool of the waters to find that the fairies have returned to their post. The fairies immediately attack, focussing on Imager which allows the remaining Warforged to escape. Back in the map room, Query has managed to regain consciousness just in time to escape the spilled acid that is spreading towards her. She takes the memory file from the nearby body of Killswitch and she heads down the hole towards the exit from the dungeon. She comes across Balyshyra chasing after the rest of the Warforged party. Killswitches memory file urges her to attack and she surprises Balyshyra who is without many of her floating eyes. Query does serious damage to Balyshyra but it is not enough and Balyshyra kills her.

Back in the present, at the Warforged camp in the Mournlands, the Lord of Blades finishes his story about the seven rogues. The surviving members of that party (Searcher, Grepper, Imager, Dash and Directory with a new body consisting of two wheels and her memory file stick) emerge from the crowd and come towards our party. Searcher shows us the amber pendant he took. Belmont immediately recognises this as his wife's pendant! The rest of our party have barely managed to get over their shock of learning that Belmont is married when a familiar and ominous voice calls out "Tatiana"...

THE (VERY BRIEF) RETURN OF STRAHD

The ground splits open and an ominous voice calls out "Tatiana!" Strahd the Vampire lord we faced before and defeated emerges from the ground, partly on fire and muttering to himself as he tries to hide from us in the ruins. Merric offers to help him and provides him with water to douse the flames. The rest of our party are less forgiving especially Belmont. Bea immobilises Strahd with the Icon of Ravenloft and Deanna casts a spell to enclose Strahd in stone, leaving gaps for Strahd to speak and one to his heart for Belmont's stake. For the benefit of the Warforged when they ask who Strahd is, Merric retells the story of our adventures in Barovia using puppets with Belmont adding some further details. The Lord of Blades wonders if Strahd could be considered an asset to the Warforged's cause and proceeds to tell us about their plans for



the Mournlands. The Lord of Blades asks Strahd three questions – “Did he choose to be a Lord of Dread?” Strahd answers no. “Was he truly immortal?” “No, only gods are.” Does he want to live forever and avoid death?” “Yes.” Merric believes that Strahd deserves a second chance but Belmont is very much opposed to this idea and stakes Strahd in the heart, then throws holy water on him. Dwt also casts Black Mark on him, and the party throw the encased Strahd into a deep well. Strahd attempts to escape by turning into mist but Belmont has trapped him in a magic circle which prevents this. Before he is finally buried, the party (minus Merric) kill Strahd for the last time and bury his body deep in the earth. After the death of Strahd, Belmont insists on the return of his wife’s locket from Searcher. Belmont learns from the Warforged that his wife was sacrificed by the Green Lord in order to create Barovia and that he was not responsible for his family’s death. Searcher gives the locket to Belmont.

TO KARLAKKTON

The Lord of Blades leads us north towards Karlakkton and we leave the rest of the Warforged behind as well as Luna who decides to stay with them. We make our way out of the mournland, and towards the lair of the Green Lord. Luck be with us.

CHAPTER 11: EPILOGUE

STRAHD AT DRAGONSPEAR CASTLE

Dragonspear castle is rumoured to be haunted, and Strahd plans to install himself there and see that the rumours are given substance. As an experienced tactician, he will be cautious at first, perhaps using one of his alter-egos as a cover (e.g. Vasili von Holtz). But eventually he will not be able to resist declaring his presence to the world.

If Baba Lysaga survives, she will try to follow Strahd to the prime material plane. She will try to join Granny Nightshade's coven in the Dreadwood (see *Ghosts of Saltmarsh* p. 22), or maybe she will 'become' Granny Nightshade.

SALTMARSH

Characters from Saltmarsh are already woven into this adventure, and players may be motivated to hunt down the rest of the Masters of Darkoil, leading them to the Scarlet Brotherhood and the Lizard Marsh. Part of the conflict with the Saughin could involve them forming an alliance with black serpents.

DARKOIL IN THE FORGOTTEN REALMS

The lizardfolk have been hard at work learning how to refine darkoil so that it can animate constructs. They have essentially created the motor car in the Forgotten Realms. This promises to change the economics of the Sword Coast dramatically. However, the refining process creates poisonous fumes that turns the country grey like Barovia. This has the potential for an eco-warrior/Pratchett theme adventure where a party sets out to destroy the factory creating these monstrosities, possibly located in the lizard marsh or dreadwood.

