

THE NULLIFIER'S DREAM



AN ADVENTURE FOR 4 PCs
OF 5TH LEVEL BY JABARI WEATHERS

THE NULLIFIER'S DREAM

This adventure can easily be adapted anywhere in Midgard (though preferably near a ley line) but would work particularly well on the edge of the Tomierran Forest, on the outskirts of Bad Solitz or Reywald and near either the Archer's Walk, the Processional, or another unmapped ley line.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

After years of obsessive, curiosity-driven research, the elfmarked wizard Hecta Quisse was able to track down and claim a copy of the *Nullifier's Lexicon* in Kel Azjer. Needing some privacy to effectively study the tome of Void magic though—and to stay ahead of the Northlander Ragnarok cult voidspeakers, who wouldn't take their possession of the grimoire kindly—Hecta resettled in Dornig, securing a tower on the fringe of the Tomierran Forest: far enough away from the forest to stay out of notice of the church but close enough to tap into one of the more powerful ley lines for the mage's various topics of research.

However, Hecta's sanity prevailed, and the mage decided they had no taste for Void magic after all and drifted down other arcane avenues—traversing dreams. Under the urging of the sandman Vrali, promising much more valuable arcane explorations as a result, Hecta was convinced to sell the *Nullifier's Lexicon* to an ambitious Dornig

noble, Ferdiamé von Tressym. Unfortunately, during the subsequent months, seeing the horrible depravity unleashed by the noble's use of the grimoire, the wizard's guilt won out, and they stole the book back to enact a desperate plan to undo the damage caused—they would use the book to travel back in time to undo their mistake.

Hecta's spell succeeded, and they are now in their own past, just a few days before their present-day self will sell the *Nullifier's Lexicon* to Tressym. The wizard must prevent this from happening but also lost their spellcasting ability in the process. So they are desperate to find some adventurers right about now.

Ferdiamé von Tressym

Youngest of his name—a family who years ago bought themselves out of shame and into nobility within the Grand Duchy of Dornig—Ferdiamé von Tressym has turned his eye to more vigorous ambitions. Striking to make a name for himself and his sixteen years in the wake of his father Alexiamé's murder, he has undertaken a propulsive campaign to escape the doldrums of Reywald, leaving his mother, Kivra, in command of their estate. Taking his considerable fortune, Ferdiamé has started a mercenary company named the Celebration, which has earned a formidable reputation in the season of its existence. Having

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Open Game Content: The Open Content in this adventure includes the greed swarm monster and the *Nullifier's Lexicon* magic item.

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recently hired a number of mercenaries of considerable skill with the advisement of his bodyguard, the nobleite now looks to plant the roots of a stronghold on the edge of the Tomierran forest.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

At the outset of the adventure, it wouldn't be a surprise that the PCs reputation precedes them in the region. The following hooks can be used to draw the PCs into the forest and the shadow of Tressym's ambitions:

- **Exploited Town.** A village in the region has recently been raided by a small group of Tressym's mercenaries. Though they were left mostly unharmed, some of the folks recognize something must be done about the weight being thrown around by Tressym, and they will pay the PCs 20 gp to check in on the next village and warn them.
- **Invitation for Hire.** Tressym, through his recently hired tiefling mage, invites the adventurers to join his company, the Celebration. The invitation comes with considerable pay and an advance of 10 gp for each PC.
- **Sanity Prevailing.** The adventurers' patron is following leads suggesting a *Nullifier's Lexicon* is in the region and in the possession of a local wizard. The PCs are tasked with ascertaining the motives of the wizard and doing whatever's necessary to keep it out of the hands of the voidspeakers.

PART 1: THE RESCUE

A slight, bright, sandy-skinned and ginger-mopped elfmarked androgyne gallops toward and around the party on a handsome black steed as they cross paths on a road the group happens to be taking. They dismount hastily from the frightened horse, rolling roughly. Before the party can react, the figure entreats the group:

"You look capable. Help me! Do something about my tail, and not only will I compensate you all handsomely, I'll also provide ongoing work."

In hot pursuit of the stranger are four thugs doubled up on two warhorses. The back riders on each horse dismount and threaten the stranger.

Enter Hecta Quisse

The elfmarked stands of average height but holds an above average presence, even in their ramshackle state. They look worse for wear, not the least of which because of the bolt sticking out of their left shoulder. As they amble amidst the party—a key swaying from a chain around their neck—they gibber an unfocused thanks and start searching the numerous pockets of their colorful, cascading clothes.

"Hecta Quisse keeps their word..." they say, procuring a purse from some unknown fold in their cerulean jacket. Before they can hand over the cash and explain their needs, the stranger hits the ground—fainting.

Hecta takes a minute reviving or awakens if the PCs take the coin off their person. They don't quicken to anger, instead imploring the group to hear out their proposal, pointing out rewards they won't regret (all the while being careful not to relinquish their purse). If the PCs agree to hear them out, Hecta relinquishes the 100 gp to the group and suggests making their way to the nearest town or village to talk.

On the way, Hecta will explain to the group that they stole a horse to get away, escaping the bandits' campsite and hoping to find help to steal their master's most dangerous artifact before the insistent Tressym could get his hands on it. When pressed for details, Hecta is fuzzy, but if there's exceptional skepticism, they exclaim, "I've seen what he'll do!" and look earnestly aggrieved.

The Pillaging

Just off the road lies a dirt path into the forest, and a commotion roils ahead. A cul-de-sac village full of concerned folk watch as eight mercenaries harass the locals and load up a horse and wagon with the villagers' valuables. A rotund man shoves a small boy over a body—now a pin cushion for a volley of arrows. The boy moves back from his tormentor in apparent terror. The man beneath him lies still.

These mercenaries are part of Tressym's company. They are pillaging the locals for supplies. A successful DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check allows characters to sneak past the mercenaries (eight **thugs**), granting access to the rest of the village. In addition to the eight mercenaries working away,

four **wolves** can be seen pacing and trailing leashes. One of them sports a bloody muzzle.

If the group tarries too long, the mercenaries engage with the party:

One of the thugs marches up and asks with a drunkenly brash bark, “Don’t ye got somewhere to get gone?”

Assuming the party involves themselves in preventing this misconduct (with some pressure from Hecta to do so), they’ll have a chance to tend to two villagers: Bram Kervin, who’s fallen unconscious from his arrow wounds, and Hille Honwheaten, who’s leg has been bitten by one of the wolves at the command of the mercenaries.

The Book

The villagers offer the group food and shelter for the night as thanks for their rescue, if they’ll take it, or directions to the nearest inn if the party desires stronger alcohol than the small community can provide (though they offer good food and water for the journey). Hecta uses the attack to catalyze their request of the group, highlighting the urgency:

“This kind of monstrous conduct is why we have to steal my master’s book—from him, and by proxy from Tressym. The noble will lose his company if he approaches the tower aggressively, but that book yields far greater gain, and Tressym’s hands are the wrong ones for it to slip into. My master... has been asleep for some considerable time—he’s been traveling dreams!”

Hecta will elaborate on the artifact:

“It’s a dark thing, which you’ll most certainly feel before you see, but it wears the guise of a grimoire.”

A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, from anyone awake while Hecta sleeps nearby, notes Hecta suffering nightmares. The next morning, Hecta declares that they saw in a feverish dream that Tressym is planning to move on the tower in the next day or so.

PART 2: THE PLAN

In the morning, Hecta can provide details on the mercenary camp and the mage’s tower.

Tressym’s plan is to find and secure the perfect location to serve as the site of their stronghold. And he feels entitled

to take what he wants in support of that goal. The noble is well guarded, and his company has established a camp on a hill abutting the mage’s tower—the tower having been built directly into the north side of the hill. A path spirals up the hill and ends at the tower’s front door. Natural formations of rock have been worn into a stepped approach that transitions into the worked stone stairs at the front of the three-story tower.

But before concerning themselves with that, Hecta explains that they must first deal with the fortified camp in the woodland surrounding the hill and tower and that the hill itself is where the more threatening members of Tressym’s forces camp: two captains, a bodyguard, and a mage.

If the PCs press for more, Hecta can offer their opinions on tactics:

A Fight

“I can’t really recommend all-out conflict. I’m pretty vulnerable without my spellbook. I think I left it in the tower when I fled...”

“But if the lot of you are feeling confident, you could fight your way in. We’ll have to be wary though as the numbers aren’t on our side. We should also be wary of the trees. I’m certain I was fired on while escaping, so they’ve definitely got a keen watch on the tower. With all that said, if we subdue Tressym’s bodyguard, captains, and mage, we could easily scare off the rest of the company, in my estimation, and not have to worry about competing with them for the book.”

A Feint

“Sneaking into the tower unseen would be my preference. If memory serves, we could come from the north to the backside of the tower. If we can scope out any eyes in the trees and gouge them out quietly, we could climb up the north side of the hill, trying to stay out of view of the camp. Though we’ll have to stay low as we ascend the tower stairs, we should be able to keep out of view.

“There is also the possibility of climbing the tower’s north wall to the roof. From what I remember, my master mentioned something strange as a ‘natural security measure’ for any thief stupid enough to do so, but it may behoove us to be fools this evening.”

A Fake

“Disguises could work. We could borrow from the Celebrations supplies or from its patrols and then just walk through the camp without courting much attention. We’d have to subdue multiple members of the camp of high enough rank, of course, to not be questioned for approaching the tower ahead of schedule. I have a couple scrolls of disguise self if that would help. Oh, and we are sitting on top of a ley line.

“Whatever happens, we shouldn’t kill the noble turd. His name carries a lot of power, and if anything went sideways, Lady Tressym would be turning over the countryside with far more powerful forces for hire to track each of us down.”

PART 3: THE HEIST

Hecta can act as guide for the PCs and moves with instinctual confidence through the wood, toward the forested valley leading to the tower.

The Woods

Along the way, the PCs may encounter a group of alseids: four roughed-up **alseids** (see *Tome of Beasts*) circling a fifth, who lies unmoving save for labored, shallow breaths. One mourns their dying kin. Two others bicker in biting Sylvan through pain-tinged snarls. A fourth stands alert, looking around, ready for a fight. Two mercenaries lie very dead at her feet. If the PCs confront the alseids or are seen, read the following:

The agitated alseid’s head snaps up in the direction of the group, and she knocks an arrow, aiming her shortbow at the party, swearing in Sylvan.

“More marauders?! You took our prince and my brother’s life! What else do you want?” She looks at Hecta murderously. “Of course you brought them all here, hedge. You’ve rotted our deal!” She continues, ready to loose her arrow at a genuinely confused looking Hecta. “We shouldn’t have trusted you, shifter.” The other alseids turn their attention to your group, a few whispering, “N’aabri.” Hecta raises their hands innocently, looking ready to talk, flee, or piss. The rest of the Alseid, on guard as they are, seem uncertain that the group is associated with the Celebration.

Hecta starts to advocate for themselves. The PCs can deescalate the situation by explaining that they aren’t associated with the mercenaries or by offering to help the wounded. Any attempt to threaten the alseid sees them turn aggressive.

Throughout this negotiation, N’aabri (the alseid who did the talking) continues to circle and size up Hecta, sniffing

at them and scrutinizing them suspiciously. One of the bickerers joins in, occasionally hissing things in Sylvan like:

- “Didn’t realize the hedge had a sibling!”
- “He *sounds* near same as her, smells near the same too...”
- “You aren’t being tricky, are you, *hedge*?” (in Common)

If the PCs can tease out an agreeable rapport, the group explains that their prince—an **alseid grovekeeper** (see *Tome of Beasts*) named Sv’h’al—was kidnapped by the mercenaries, likely to be killed or worse, dehorned, his noble eleven-pronged crown to be bought and sold across the region. They mention that the prince is being taken to the “hire-mage” for safekeeping and request the group rescue him if they’re going into the valley. They offer official recognition to the party as “woodfriends,” saying that the designation would entitle the PCs to their small alseid tribe’s protection and guidance through this part of the Tomierran. One of the alseids prances off to find herbs to tend the wounded. The others wait here for their hopefully rescued prince.

The Valley

A quick scan shows a painterly scene in the middle of the valley where the trees seem to terminate in a respectfully framing circle. The lushly verdant hues of the forest and its grassy floor gradate into a supernatural vibration of turquoise, most concentrated on the hill. A path spirals up the outside of the hill, leading to a wide top where camp has been set: two large tents, a few smaller ones, and on the approach to the tower, a rather gaudy tent with blue and gold regalia that one could assume is Tressym’s. The path continues as weathered, stepped rocks up the backside of the hill before shifting with some suddenness into a zigzagging staircase with a lazy incline, leading to the landing of the tower itself.

The shape of the tower is odd. Four blocks of mineral, pulled from somewhere incongruent to the surrounding earth, hang precariously over the camp in a shape resembling a toddler’s building blocks. Its silhouette might simply be amusing were it not for the refractive blue facade, light playing at its edges—translucent like crystal. From high up, its shadow cloaks the trees of the valley’s nadir.

Tressym’s camp is in two core parts: the main camp on the hill at the base of the tower, where Tressym gives orders, and the outer camp, where much of the day-to-day takes place.

THE OUTER CAMP

The outer camp is a ring of tents under tree cover some 50 feet from the edge of the hill and another 100 feet from where the valley’s depth plateaus. Each tent dots the diameter of this roughly 300-foot area. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check scouting the healthily forested area ascertains that there are eight tents pitched. If the PCs

wish to investigate further, they'll also have to risk being spotted. There are enemy scouts about after all.

The PCs may discover the following in their scouting, with each being a different DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check:

- One mercenary from each tent patrols the wood, then goes into the main camp on the hill to check in before trading shifts with the next.
- If the group wishes to take the time, they'll see that the patrol shifts last 2 hours.
- There are four young mercenaries (**bandits**) to each tent in the outer camp.

THE TREES

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notes one of the taller trees ringing the camp is rigged for climbing. There are four such trees around the camp, each attended by a **scout** watching the camp. There are twelve **bandits** in total on patrol at a given time: four **scouts** in the trees and eight **bandits** ambling in pairs around the camp or, with a little luck, some may leave the valley for supplies.

THE BASE OF THE HILL

Up close, the hill's flora is radiant to behold, and it unusually draws the fauna of the surrounding forest in, despite the Celebration's occupation. The long shadow cast by the wizard's tower swims with refracted hues of sapphire, like the dancing play of light next to a pool of water. The camp bustles in contrast to the placating phenomenon like busy clockwork.

Two supply wagons rest on the east side of the hill's base, where a dirt path crawls from the forest floor to the north and spirals up and around the hill to its wide top. The path is interrupted at the north face of the hill by the tower. The riding horses hitched to the wagons are attended by a medic (**priest**) of gentle disposition. In turn, the medic is guarded by two **mastiffs**, whom he feeds occasional treats. Periodically, the dogs perk up and patrol the main camp, returning 10 minutes later. The medic, Ewighe, can be intimidated for information about the layout and people in the camp, but it's clear he isn't a martial threat.

Searching the supply wagons yields two ceramic flasks of alchemist's fire in the right wagon and a *potion of greater healing* in the left, along with general traveling provisions.

In the south portion of the base are hitched three **warhorses** and a conspicuously empty fourth hitching post.

Hecta quietly points out that that's where the stolen horse would be—which they suspect is Tressym's own.

THE CAPTAINS' TENT

At the end of the winding path is the captains' tent: a 10-foot-diameter sepia tent with a pointed gold top and a blue and gold flag. Inside, the PCs find two bedrolls (conspicuously pushed together), and if they're particularly unlucky, the occupants are there as well, between their duties as day captain (Prassis) and night captain (Juute). A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check notices if the tent is currently occupied.

Prassis is a **bandit captain** with an appropriately lithe frame for a human. In comparison to her, Juute is as graceful looking, but he's an exceptionally toned elfmarked **berserker**. Both are trouble for the PCs if noticed slinking around—especially in private quarters. Prassis and Juute have a 30% chance of being in the tent when it's not their respective shift. If the PCs are spotted, either captain can be bribed into silence for 200 gp (or 400 gp if both together)—immediately.

Otherwise, within the tent are a surprisingly classy selection of drinks and indulgences, a high-quality lute, and a collection of bladed weapons with sharpening accoutrement.

THE SUPPLY TENT

North of the captains' tent and west of the established merc's tent is the 10-by-20-foot supply tent. A bunch of tools, arms, armor, shields, and food are found here. The veteran patrol pokes their head inside as part of their route. If it is a common bit of adventuring equipment, the PCs likely can find one or two of it here (80% chance).

THE ESTABLISHED MERCS' TENT

There are 24 bedrolls for as many mercenaries here in this 20-by-15-foot tent, with a quarter of those filled at any given time—and these four **thugs** and two **scouts** don't play nice or fair in a fight. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) roll determines there are 18 more of these skirmishers patrolling the camp and surveying from the trees (12 **thugs** and six **scouts**). Expect two of the thugs to wander the inner campgrounds around the established mercs' and supply tents in hour-long shifts, two more to stick to

Tressym like glue in 2-hour shifts, and another three to be off in the woods somewhere or on some errand. Any others are often sleeping, eating, or drinking but most likely the former. You can use these extras as wildcards.

THE HIRE-MAGE'S TENT

The inside of this tent is much larger than the outside would indicate. And off to the right, Sv'hal, the alseid grovekeeper, dangles from the ceiling. He picks his head up to peer at you through a bruised eye. His hind legs are raised high like a lamb primed for butchery, front legs similarly suspended but much lower forward, keeping him off center. His arms are tied behind his back. Three tendrils of silk disappear into the tangled canopy above.

A pink haze of smoke obfuscates the interior, accompanied by a pleasant floral scent. The grass of the hill has given way to a wooden floor, and the canvas of the outside is replaced with vaulting silk canopies dyed in jeweled tones. A twin-sized bed with down pillows and a wine-colored comforter sits perfectly made at the far end of the tent opposite the entrance. A working altar sits off to your left, shimmering blue threads twirling over the workspace.

The hire-mage's tent on the outside is 5-by-5-feet square. Inside, it's a 20-by-10-foot shelter. An *alarm* spell on the entrance alerts the tiefling **mage** Riege, and she will come back to the tent within 30 seconds of it being triggered.

The group can try to free the prince, but they'll have to untie each of the three silk ropes with successful DC 13 Dexterity checks or cut or break them away (AC 15, 2 hp, and a DC 17 Strength check to burst). The ropes are designed to entangle, and if a creature fails any check or melee attack made on the ropes, they become restrained until they can escape the ropes.

Should Riege return, a successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check uncovers that the mage is none too fond of her employer, despite the handsome pay. She'll accept 500 gp and not only loose the princely grovekeeper and not expose the party but also escort the prince back to the wood herself. The captivity is something she evidently feels bad about, though not enough to skirt her pay, but if the party is sharp-tongued, she reveals that the money that Ferdiamé pays his men is in a chest in his tent and that the tent is also warded. With a 100 gp advance, she'll dispel the second ward. Otherwise, the group is in for a fight.

THE MAIN COOKFIRE

This isn't the only fire in the main camp, but it's the one with the best food and is the most centralized. It can be found behind the supply tent and left of the established merc's tent. A **commoner** named Dorley tends to it and the food, which apparently is delicious. For this reason, he sleeps in Tressym's tent, often awoken to make midnight snacks for the youth. The four **mastiffs** who patrol the camp make this a consistent stop in their route, and nearly as often, there's at least one or two mercenaries hanging out here and a few more making this a "point of interest" to check during their patrol. This is a high visibility point, and moving through it is not recommended. As such, Stealth checks are at disadvantage without the PCs justifying any equalizing factors.

TRESSYM'S TENT

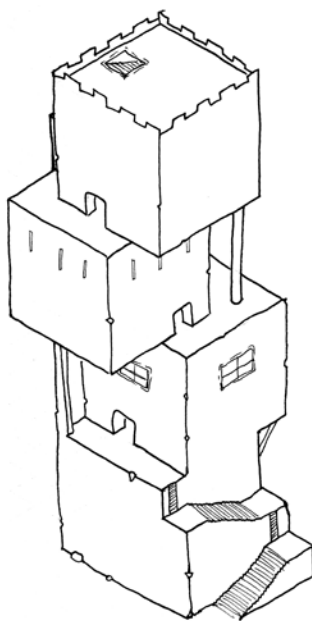
One tent in the campsite sits like a pimple on the face of the hill: a gaudy tent spun of blue and gold linens. It must be Tressym's. A shrill, youthfully cruel voice offers its confirmation of the noble accusation.

"Where is Desh?! They were supposed to be back from the tower six hours ago with a report of what's inside!" a very boyish voice pitches at someone unidentified with an accompanying pound—presumably a fist on wood. Tired replies advise patience in a reedy, deadpan voice.

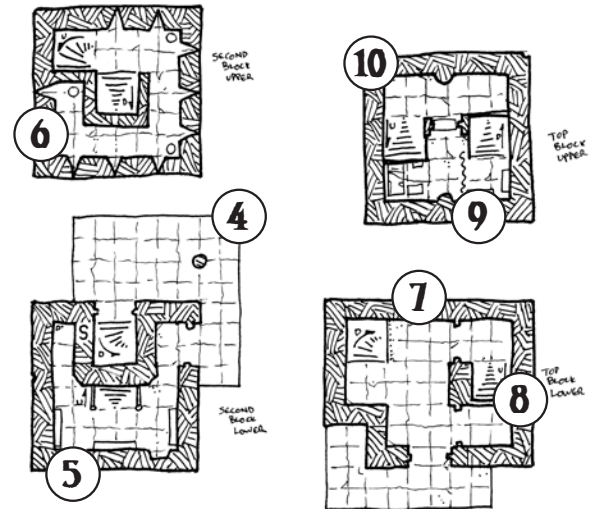
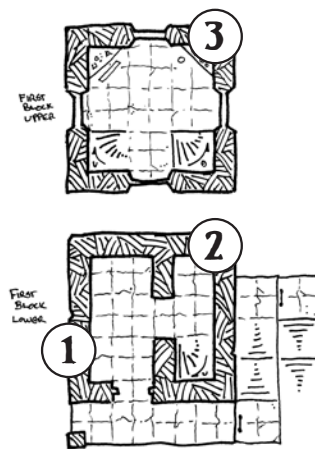
"We'll send another scout up the northside of the tower wall to check it out in a few hours. And as for the team you sent to gather resources, we'll send after them if another day passes without any word."

"Mildre! You told me we would be prepared to take this tower today! Figure it out—" retort's Tressym. Mildre, a formidably framed elfmarked woman erupts from the tent, lighting a pipe to highlight the consternation on her face. She trudges out into the camp.

The inside of the tent is made up like a city apartment as much as it is a lavish camping setup, complete with carefully crafted wooden furniture and an especially comfortable-looking cot adorned with furs and down pillows as well as royal blue silk sheets to match the **noble's** own calculatedly gaudy fashion sense. In the middle of the 20-by-10-foot tent is a decently sized war table with five chairs. Since even deep pockets can only hold so much, Ferdiamé has a rather sizeable chest containing 3,000 gp, but the vessel is extremely heavy and the size of a grown pig. His elfmarked bodyguard Mildre (**veteran**), presides over her post with a bought seriousness. Her cooperation could possibly be bought for the right price.



Top Block
Second Block
First Block
Base Block



The Tower

The party can make their way up the naturally formed steps that lead to those of the wizard's tower. Ascending the steps, climbing the two ladders on the tower's side, and making for the front door requires three successful DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) checks, the final being made at disadvantage (without some kind of direct mitigation) because of the elevated and very visible position of the front landing that leads into the tower. On a failure, the mercenary camp goes on alert.

THE FRONT DOOR

The front door—a handsome, iron-barred, wood-slatted door with a simple series of three triangular windows to peer through at eye level—is preceded by a humbly woven mat in jovial Gnomish. Despite the invitational guise, the door is locked.

A successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check opens the door. A DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check also opens the door but risks a vigilant mercenary in camp noticing. A DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check while standing on the welcome mat notes an unevenness and that something is underneath the mat: a key, identical to the one Hecta wears around their neck, right down to its bow, inlaid with a square bit of ceramic, sporting a black and white face on either side of the tile. Should the PCs not find this, Hecta will recall their key belatedly and open the tower door.

AREA 1: KITCHEN

Entering the tower brings the group into a modest kitchen—downright humble compared to the tower's arresting facade. The cozy space shifts from kitchen to reading nook with the wall opposite the front door filled with three shelves full of impressive books from wall to wall and a series of mapping drawers above them that reach to the 15-foot ceiling. Next to the right wall, adjacent to the gap leading farther into the first floor, is a comfy looking purple chair stitched of suede and subtly embroidered. The surface of the seat is worn pale. Lining the limestone interior walls are three unlit sconces: one of them hangs over the sink, the other two flank the open doorway, affixed to the heavy wood of the empty doorframe in the middle of the right wall and halfway through the room. Immediately to the left of the door is an iron stove, built into the southwest corner of the room, with a glowing cauldron hanging within. Some stacks of wood for burning sit next to it on the left wall as well as an overfull sink brimming with what looks like valuably fey-wrought glassware, kept in various stages of cleanliness.

Coatrack. On the right wall, immediately next to the front door, are four coat hooks with three empty cloaks (see *Tome of Beasts*) hanging, and they will begin to drift behind the group, engaging them if they decide to get sticky fingers.

Witch's Brew. The cauldron itself pulses with an eerie glow, and further investigation reveals a shy witchlight (see

Tome of Beasts) practically hiding inside of the cauldron. It trails the party.

Mapping Drawers. These are filled with not only maps but indeed—mimic maps (see *Tome of Beasts*)! One open drawer should send enough of a message to not trust the rest.

Handsome Rug. Sitting in front of the map wall is an ornate and expensive-looking Siwali rug, 6-by-9 feet in area, near the left wall, the word *adrift* handsomely embellished into its surface. (*Adrift* is the command word for the carpet of flying found later.)

The Puzzling Tile. The most peculiar adornment is the 10-foot square of tile inlaid in the sandstone floor, itself a grid of sixteen evenly sized square tiles arranged in a simple four-square pattern of moonlight white and navy. On the ceiling in the passage, mirroring the placement of its sibling pattern in the floor, is another 16-tile grid of alternate arrangement.

A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check shows a faint engraving in Common, handsomely done in the white tiles on the floor's pattern:

*"I end where you begin," says the first white cluster of squares.
The second, "Seek this end to be let in."*

(There are similar but subtly different tiled patterns on the floor and ceiling of each level of the tower. See Area 8: Tile Puzzle below.)

AREA 2: DINING ROOM

A cat the size of a greyhound lies curled around the diminished candle on the worn, circular wooden table at the northern end of this long room. It purrs in its lazy sleep, but something feels calculated and theatrical about its nap. Its indigo fur rises and falls gently, catching impossible moonlight refracting from somewhere in the tower. The guardian seems to be begging for disturbance.

Across from the open doorway in the middle of the floorplan is a shelf full of stoneware, topped with the most handsome pieces, which resemble the fey-worked stuff in the sink across the way. The far wall of this narrower room houses a round table that is accompanied by four wooden chairs and topped with a **Bastet temple cat** (see *Tome of Beasts*) who seems to have sworn a lazy allegiance to this place. The group can try to sneak up the stairs spiraling up the southeast corner of the tower to the next floor without disturbing it, but Stealth checks are at disadvantage. Even so, as long as the group behaves, the cat seems docile enough, and it seems to take a shine to Hecta.

AREA 3: ARCANE STUDIO

Two more guardian cats lounge around this arcane studio, of which the northeast and northwest corners sport elaborate desks laid into the corners. The former holds alchemical stuff and is flanked by shelves, drawers, and cubbies full of rare components while the latter is piled with maps to somewhere and nowhere and with diagrams of other esoterica. A rolling wooden chair sits between the two workstations. Evidence of a busy mind often rolling between them decorates the wood floor.

Windows in the middle of each 30-foot wall of this room stretch 5 feet tall and 10 feet across, letting in ample natural light for study. The south window is at a perfect eyeline for a keen **scout** from across the camp, so the group needs to make Stealth checks (at advantage if they are aware of this) to cross safely or risk inviting investigation from outside.

AREA 4: BACK PATIO

The stairs in the left corner of the studio ascend through double doors, leading outside to a back patio of sorts with an overhanging ceiling made from the back lip of the top block of the tower. Its precarious wood support can be seen driven through a point on the right side of this strange, sapphire patio. Stranger is the floor and its arrangement—mostly of the blue jewel tones like outside of the front door.

Looking at the left corner of the landing, a 6-by-9-foot carpet of flying lies incognito, set for a long-ended tea.

High Watch. Beyond the right corner of the landing, some 20 feet away, a Celebration **scout** watches the landing dutifully from a tall tree set as the northern post.

AREA 5: STORAGE

A U-shaped room greets the group. Shelves full of supplies and fashioned arcane implements adorn the storage space, and Hecta beholds it all with an expression shifting between wonder and recollection.

The three shelves on the outside walls bear minor magical tools for use, but the real catch are the two unlocked chests filled with **greed swarms** (see *Tome of Beasts 2* or **Appendix**) at the right of the stairs going up and down the left hall in the far northwest corner of the room. The sound the swarms make will draw the Bastet temple cats of the tower immediately. If the commotion lasts for more than a few moments, it will alarm of the camp below. Conspicuously, the swarms do not target Hecta, even if the cats do seem more suspicious of them after the PCs' supposed infraction.

AREA 6: WARDROBE

Up the stairs and to the right is a hallway of wardrobes, mirrors, and open-faced closets that line the inner and outer walls of this floor, displaying a vast and colorfully adventurous wardrobe. Immediately at the left of the prior stairs are stairs leading up. For the first time, the lavish azure of the tower's outside seeps into the interior of the structure, spanning across the floor.

With a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check, the group can discern while walking through the space that Hecta's current clothes are from this collection. Hecta will even comment that their master is rather fashionable, whether or not the PCs investigate.

Bathrooms. At the far end of this winding room is a mirrored door connected on two hinges. Opening it with the right handle leads to a serviceable privy that smells of patchouli. The left handle leads to a cozy washroom that is a fit match for the tower's eccentric exterior. The spatial impossibility speaks to clever arcana.

AREA 7: LIVING ROOM

The stairs ascend straight into a living room with another round table set for tea and coffee and a few books of leisure sitting on one stool. Three portraits resembling people identical to Hecta adorn the north wall. They vary in fashion and subtly in guise of gender: the leftmost portrait presenting more "feminine," the middle resembling Hecta as the party knows them, and the rightmost a more "masculine" portrait. As the group passes by Hecta, the middle portrait asks in familiarly honeyed intonation—

"Which relative is oldest of us three? If you're here to visit, you must know me."

A successful DC 14 Intelligence (History) check reveals that the fashions of all three portraits are an anachronistic pastiche. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the portraits show comparably little sign of weathering or cracking. Finally, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check (with advantage if players home in on the exactness of Hecta) reveals that the figure in each bears the same face—down to the freckle. All three of these are portraits of one and the same person.

Should the group guess otherwise, the PC who assumes as such is pointed to the southside open doorway by the middle portrait, where sits an outside landing with no rail. It is cloaked in an illusion, showing a hallway beyond the open portal with a door at the end with a tile grid like the ones throughout. A PC looking onto the landing must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw to see through the illusion. On a failed save, the target is compelled, as the *suggestion* spell,

to follow the hallway and may end up walking off the side of the tower and taking 12d6 bludgeoning damage from the plummet to the camp below.

Personal Writings. The library nook in the southeast corner is guarded by another **Bastet temple cat** (see *Tome of Beasts*).

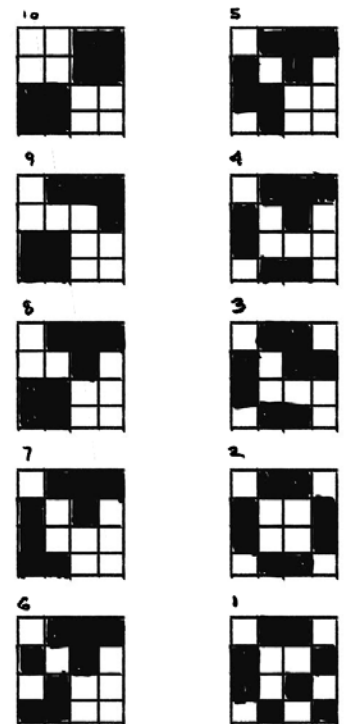
Outside Landing. The outside landing, when not disguised with illusion, is decorated with a **swarm of ravens** who demand to be fed if the PCs set foot outside on this floor.

AREA 8: TILE PUZZLE

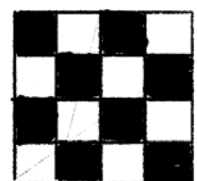
A flight of stairs leading to a wide, oak door. Laid in its surface, a puzzle made of 16 ceramic tiles, half the size of the floor displays and checkerboarded in arrangement alternating between dark and light tiles on each row. At each of the nine points where four corners join is an opening that seems to invite a key. Below that is a radial display resembling a clockface with only ten hours displayed, the last decorated with a pair of comedy and tragedy masks. Below the clock is yet another pattern, matching the arrangement to that of the tiles on the tower's first floor.

Tile Puzzle. To solve the puzzle, the arrangement of the top grid must match the bottom. The grid is manipulated with either the key that Hecta carries or the one under the tower welcome mat being pushed into one of the nine junctures. This lifts that juncture of four tiles out of the door, and the selection of tiles can be turned either right or left.

The group gets ten rotations or less to match the bottom pattern or else the door mechanically resets itself as a violent crack goes off from a crushed thunderstone within the mechanism—with the abrasive consequences. The proper sequence is the reverse of the tiles displayed throughout the tower, with the ceiling tile on this floor being the first of the turns to make. The door is flanked by cascading decorations laid in the doorframe showing the sequence in reverse, five steps per side (see diagram below: the "start" is the configuration that is in front of you on the door and the others are numbered in descending order,



START



so 10 is the configuration from the ground floor's mosaic). The alarm of a failure draws the attention of the tower's guardians, the mercenaries outside, and the wizard himself. The group will have 1d10 + 6 rounds before **Mildre**, **Prassis**, and **Juute** ascend through the tower accompanied by four seasoned mercenaries (**thugs**). If they don't come back, Tressym sends *many* more of his forces up to find them.

The group can also attempt to carefully dismantle the door with a successful DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. Tinkering with a few steps of the puzzle will give advantage to this approach, but failing the check triggers the thunderstone trap as well. After the puzzle is solved, or failed, the following transpires:

"Wait," Hecta says to the group. "I can't go in. It's me. The wizard is... was me. You're all going to have to get the book without me. If I see myself, I don't know what will happen. I don't know of a magical precedent for this situation, and I don't know what happens if I, as you know me, drive my past—er, present-self mad, but I suspect it would be gravely dangerous. Look for the grimoire under my pillow and, if you're able to do so, destroy it. I'll wait here, out of sight."

If the group failed the puzzle, a disgruntled present-Hecta opens the door, robed in silks embroidered to resemble ornate moth wings, looking ready to cast. *She* asks the party why they've come to the tower, being vaguely surprised that its deterrents hadn't warded the group off. The sound of following mercenaries struggling with the cats, cloaks, and greed swarms heightens her suspicions.

AREA 9: BEDROOM

Read the following only if the party has not sounded alarm:

Hecta's bedroom is bifurcated by a curtain that seems to shift in colors of night and dreams, but it is sheer enough to show that behind it, apparently in bed, there are two figures sleeping. One snores, the other does not.

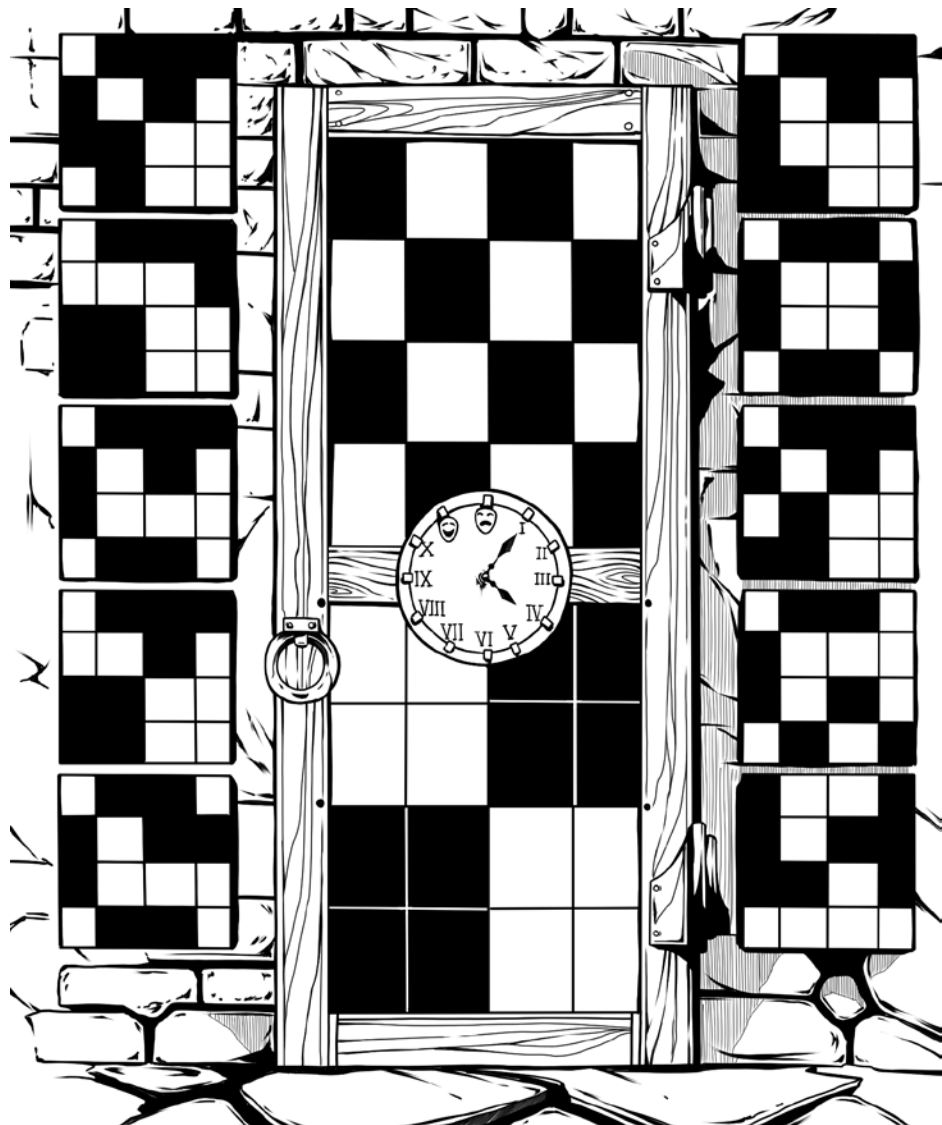
The *Nullifier's Lexicon* is under present-Hecta's pillow. The group will have to make Stealth checks at advantage against the unconscious **mage** and her guest. Parting

the curtain reveals a **sandman** (see *Tome of Beasts*) holding her tenderly, sniffing the dreams from her ears in its own pleasant unconsciousness. A successful DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check removes the grimoire from under the occupied pillow without alerting the sleeper.

There isn't much of an opportunity for the group to take in the space if they've sounded Hecta's alarm, but she leads them into her room, interrogating their presence as she goes.

AREA 10: STUDY

Opening the door to this room reveals a dimly lit room filled with astrological supplies, the corpse of Tressym's missing **scout**, and the **death butterfly swarm** (see *Tome of Beasts*) that killed him. If the group survives the swarm, they'll be able to access the roof for a possible exit down the outside of the tower, using the scout's climbing gear.



Nullifying the Future

Should they botch the theft, they'll have to talk their way to the book. They can choose to involve future-Hecta, getting them to explain this strange heist to their past self. If they do so, present-Hecta will explain that the sandman—Vrali—had convinced them to let Tressym purchase the *Nullifier's Lexicon* from them only hours from this point in time, with the rationale being that the boy had exquisite dreams and ambitions that would make wonderful arcane explorations for the two of them to galivant through in the realm of dream. Future-Hecta, seeing where things would fall in the remaining months and being unable to stop Tressym's ambitions directly, once buffeted by the reality-shifting book, opted to do something about it and stole the book back.

Using the book, future-Hecta returned to this point of time, but they'd lost many memories of their own arcane skill in the process, some of which have evidently returned and others not. What they do remember are the nightmares of Tressym's atrocities—which they are personally responsible for, by giving Tressym the means of power. One thing complicates this negotiation if both Hectas are present: if they touch, both Hectas takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage from this arcane anomaly, each round of contact. Should this happen enough to kill them, they will fall to dust, becoming blue sands of time.

However the negotiation goes down, the push and pull is between Vrali's will and future-Tressym, with the players as unfortunate arbiters. If they are able to convince present-Hecta, she turns over the book, but ideally, they've just stolen it instead and brought it back to future-Hecta who then explains their journey detailed above.

Escape

There are four ways out of the tower. The first is to climb from the parapets down the north face to escape into the wood. The second is taking the *carpet of flying* and using it to sail away into the woodland and far away from the camp. (Future-Hecta notes the activation word is *adrift*.) The third is to sneak back through the camp, which the group may want to do in order to rescue the **alseid grovekeeper**, and finally, if Vrali hasn't been put off by the negotiations for the book, the group can convince the sandman to *planeshift* them out of the tower and back into this plane somewhere far away—but they'll only do it for the price of the PCs dreams and nightmares.

CONCLUSION

After completing this heist for future-Hecta, the group will find their reward. If future-Hecta survived, they present the group with a small purse—full of 10,000 gp. “Perhaps I'll see you all in due time,” they say as they

wander off to the future.

If future-Hecta *died* in the adventure, the group will still find a purse among their things with the same pay and a handwritten note in common saying the above.

APPENDIX

All of the new game elements in this adventure are presented here.

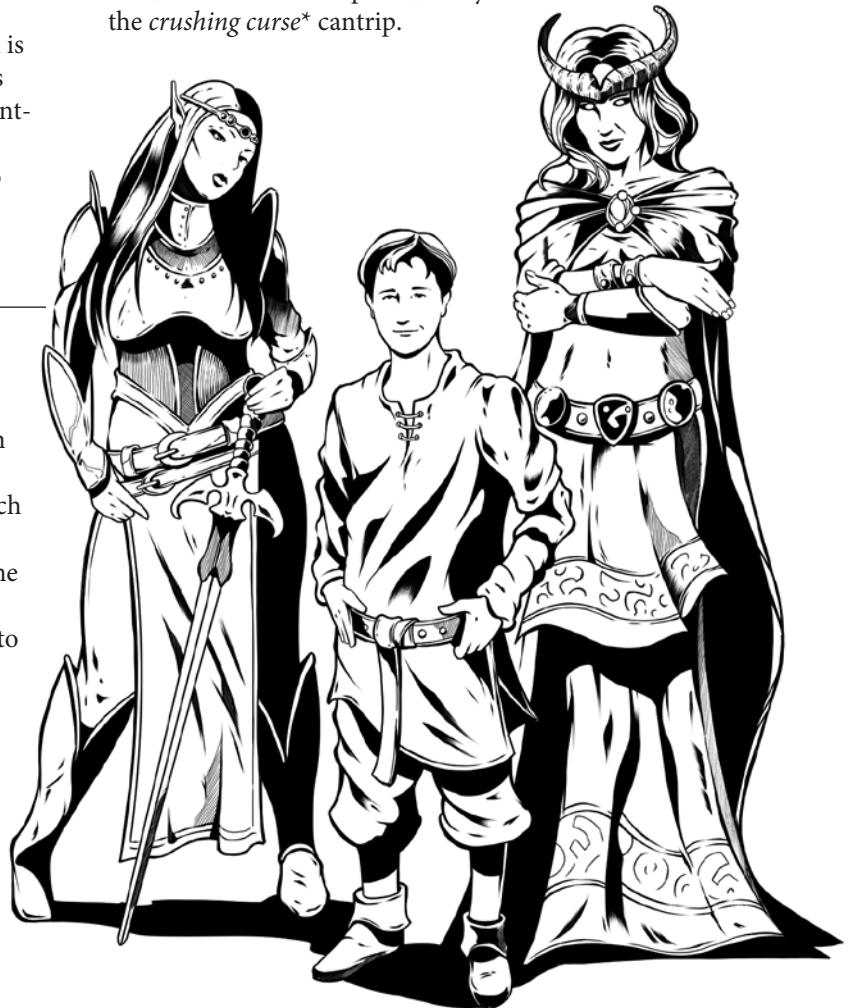
Magic Items

These items may prove useful to resourceful adventurers. (The *Nullifier's Lexicon* is reprinted from *Midgard Worldbook* for your convenience.)

NULLIFIER'S LEXICON

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This book has black leather pages with silver bindings and a silver front plate. Void Speech glyphs adorn the front plate, which is pitted and tarnished. The pages are thin sheets of corrupted brass and are inscribed with more blasphemous glyphs. While you are attuned to the lexicon, you can speak, read, and write Void Speech, and you know the *crushing curse** cantrip.



By intoning certain passages from this book, you can cast the following spells: *conjure voidborn**, *dominate monster*, *life drain**, *shatter*, and *thunderwave*.

You can cast a spell once from the *Nullifier's lexicon* without difficulty. For each successive casting, you take a cumulative 1d6 necrotic damage. This resets when you finish a long rest.

Finally, you can spend 1 minute pronouncing a complicated passage in Void Speech to rearrange reality to your will. State your general intention when you make the pronouncement ("strike down my enemies," "repair the damage the dragon did to me," etc.). The GM decides the form this alteration of reality takes, but the effect of any wizard, cleric, or Void magic spell is appropriate. When the effect occurs, you suffer 5d10 necrotic damage, and you can't use this ability again for 7 days.

*indicates a spell contained in *Midgard Worldbook*

Monsters & NPCs

There are many foes that seek to block your progress. (The greed swarm is reprinted from *Tome of Beasts 2* for your convenience.)

GREED SWARM

The sound of metal clinking against metal becomes a deafening cacophony as a swirling cloud of coins mindlessly hunts for more valuables to absorb into its ever-expanding mass.

Located in densely populated areas, the greed swarm is solely focused on increasing the size of its hovering collection of valuables. Able to differentiate between objects of value and worthless junk, the swarm stalks streets and sewers alike. Its movements are erratic; the cloud swells and contracts in quick succession, repositioning itself in jerky, stilted bursts of motion.

Bad Penny. The swarm consists of normal, mundane valuables animated by a magical master coin. Often mistaken as a standard regional coin, this master coin is created in a dark ritual to serve as a vessel for pure, ceaseless avarice. If the master coin is destroyed or separated from the swarm, the remaining coins return to their normal inert state and fall to the ground.

All that Glitters. The master coin cannot exert its power without a large enough supply of valuables to control in close proximity. Bank and vault owners who fail to screen incoming coinage for latent magical properties may find themselves in need of adventurers to discreetly quell a storm of their accumulated wealth. Wishing wells and public fountains are also common homes for greed swarms.

Construct Nature. The greed swarm doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

GREED SWARM

Medium swarm of Tiny constructs, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (–2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	1 (–5)	9 (–1)	1 (–5)

Damage Vulnerabilities force

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The swarm is incapacitated while in the area of an antimagic field. If targeted by dispel magic, the swarm must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

Deafening Clatter. A creature in the swarm's space is deafened.

False Appearance. While the greed swarm remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal pile of coins and valuables.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny object. Except for Gather, the swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Coin Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the greed swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) bludgeoning damage, or 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Coin Barrage. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Gather (1/Day). The swarm magically gathers up to 100 gp worth of coins, gems, and other small, valuable objects within 60 feet of it, adding them to its mass. It regains 7 (2d6) hit points and has advantage on its next attack roll. A creature wearing or carrying such valuables must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or its valuables fly toward the swarm, joining the mass.

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