

RAVENS OVER HOLLOWMOON

A 5E ADVENTURE OF LOST LEGACY AND REVENGE FOR
LEVEL 7-9 CHARACTERS

An "Upturned Card" Adventure

BY DAVID GOVE



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DMs note: This adventure contains references to refugees, horror (specifically torture) and violence themes which may be unsuitable for some players. Please use your discretion when using this module.

AUTHOR BIO

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power of TTRPGs to bring them together. “Ravens over Hollowmoon” is his first foray into published RPG writing.

Sources

The following texts were also used in the development of this adventure.

Baker, R., Bonny E and Stout, T. Lost Empires of Faerun (Wizards of the Coast 2005)

Forbeck, M and Noonan, D. Stronghold Builder's Guidebook (Wizards of the Coast, 2002).

James, B and Greenwood, E. The Grand History of the Realms (Wizards of the Coast 2007)

ADVENTURE OUTLINE

“Ravens over Hollowmoon” is a stand-alone adventure that can be inserted into a larger campaign. It is designed for four to seven 7–9th characters and is optimized for an average party level of 8. It should take about 4 hours of playtime to run.

The “Upturned Card” modules are a series of adventures centered around the fabled “Deck of Many Things”. Each adventure uses one of the cards as a springboard for a quest, in this case, the Throne card.

Introduction

A renowned adventurer known for their misfortune finally seems to have luck on their side. But luck is fickle and sometimes things may not be what they seem as you uncover an ancient tale of tragedy and cruel revenge.

BACKGROUND

Long ago, around the time of the Fall of Netheril, a small keep (Hollowmoon) was constructed as a small border fortress by a forgotten hero of Cormanthyr. Several years after its construction a group of elven refugees, escaping the remnants of Netherese power discovered the keep and holed up there, eluding their captors for a brief time. Unfortunately for them, the Netherese city of Thultanthar, later known as Shade, chose that time to migrate into the Plane of Shadow, and for some reason it took Hollowmoon with them.

The elves became subjects of the Raven Queen, evolving into her shadar-kai servants. They harboured a deep and bitter thirst for vengeance against the world of the humans and their empires, passing that bitterness down to the generations that followed.

They remain in Hollowmoon which seems to act as a gateway between the two planes. Explorers and wanderers happening upon the Keep find themselves trapped as it shunts them across to the planes to the Shadowfell. There they are captured by the shadar-kai and milked for their emotions forming the Sorrowsworn. Blackfrond, the shadar-kai leader, has been working to create more powerful Sorrowsworn and is also close to making the gateway between the planes more reliable, only needing a few more sacrifices.

Rathemar the Unfortunate is an adventurer of some reputation. He has had a lengthy career with fortunes that have been both shining and sour. He has also lost several companions in his adventures. Recently, he and

his party were exploring a forgotten tomb and uncovered a secret chamber. After defeating the tomb guardians, the group happened upon the legendary *Deck of Many Things*. Goaded on by his fellows and adrenaline, Rathemar drew the Throne card. His companions were not so fortunate and a few of them were killed or simply disappeared.

When Rathemar returned to civilisation from the tomb with wealth from the tomb, a messenger from a magistrate found the adventurer with information that he had inherited a keep on the edge of a foreboding wilderness.

DMs note: Although this adventure is set in the Forgotten Realms, feel free to make modifications to the background and details for your setting of choice.

OVERVIEW

The main sequence of this adventure is spread over three parts.

PART 1: FORTUNE FAVORS THE FOOLISH

The PCs meet Rathemar who explains his situation and provides the location of the keep he would like them to clear out for him. They may conduct some research, buy supplies, and then prepare to travel to the keep.

PART 2: WE FADE TO GREY

The PCs enter the keep and find it deserted but in remarkably good condition from the outside. Upon entering Hollowmoon the PCs are dragged to the Shadowfell. The party are attacked by a group of Sorrowsworn that have been released by the shadar-kai.

The PCs explore the Shadowfell version of the Keep, encountering some of the inhabitants and can learn what the shadar-kai have been doing to their captives. Exploration also reveals some clues to the history of the Keep and PCs may employ these to piece together some of the background information. In their investigation, the PCs find a puzzle in the basement. Solving the puzzle reveals the passageway to the ritual room.

PART 3: TWISTED RETRIBUTION

The PCs encounter Blackfrond and some other shadar-kai about to send a Sorrowsworn created from one of his latest victims through a planar gate to the Prime. After a battle, the party use the gate to travel back across the veil and return to Rathemar.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- Rathemar is a former mentor or companion who one of the PCs has since parted ways with. They have requested a meeting in a tavern about a job.
- A companion of one (or more) of the PCs has gone missing in the vicinity of Hollowmoon Keep. Now Rathemar is reported to be looking for adventurers to explore the area.
- If the PCs are of an academic bent, they hear rumours of the opening of a tomb by a group of adventurers. The tomb was supposed to house an artefact of great power, but most

importantly, some writings from the time of Cormanthyr and Netheril (or some other ancient powerful kingdom from your world's past). Rathemar was said to be one of the adventurers who made it out alive and they would like you to find out what he knows.

- Rathemar owes you a favour and you mean to collect!

Authors Note: This adventure can be set in a variety of locations and starting cities. Initially, I had the adventure starting in Hulburg and the Moonsea area. However, with only minor adjustments it could sit almost anywhere in the north-eastern part of the Faerunian continent, as far north as the Spine of the World and as far south as the Dragon Coast.



PART 1: FORTUNE FAVORS THE FOOLISH

The PCs are hired by Rathemar the Unfortunate to explore Hollowmoon Keep which he now owns. After talking with Rathemar, they travel to the Keep.

Adjust the details of this encounter with Rathemar as necessary to best suit your group and the adventure hook you have chosen. When you are ready to begin read or paraphrase the following text.

THE CALL TO ADVENTURE THE FURIOUS OWLBEAR

The Furious Owlbear tavern is quiet tonight with only a few patrons remaining in the taproom. The smell of tobacco smoke, sweat and cooking is intermingled with the taste of the sturdy ales and sharp wines. Of note are the many trophies around the taproom; a bulette plate, the head of a stone golem, a giant's axe but most prominent is a stuffed owlbear in a corner. It is said that the owner, Orgrymm Forgeborne, collected these trophies in his younger days but the specifics of each story seems to change with each telling.

When the party is settled, Rathemar approaches the group. He is well-mannered and clearly spoken and will order a round of drinks for the PCs. He also possesses a surprising magnetic personality (effectively Expertise with the Persuasion skill granted by the Throne Card)

From Basic Rules pg162: Deck of Many Things: Throne.

You gain proficiency in the Persuasion skill, and you double your proficiency bonus on checks made with that skill. In addition, you gain rightful ownership of a small keep somewhere in the world. However, the keep is currently in the hands of monsters, which you must clear out before you can claim the keep as yours

A short half-elven man with well-worn weapons and wearing leather armour approaches your table. Despite his sallow appearance, there is something about him you find striking.

"My name is Rathemar and I believe you might be able to help me."

"I recently returned from an expedition with some of my party when I was approached by a messenger from one of the local magistrates. It turns out that I've "inherited" a small keep that goes by the name of Hollowmoon – the documentation stated that the keep was constructed by a long distant ancestor – some Cormanthurian lord or warrior from long ago, but by some weird twist of law was rightfully mine. However, I suspect fate and the turn of those damned cards are responsible"

- A successful DC15 Intelligence (History) check reveals that he is also known as Rathemar the Unfortunate due to his poor luck with adventuring groups, few of them stay together for more than one or two expeditions. It is also rumored he is woeful at cards.

"I would like to take possession of the keep and can show you on a map where it is. I'd like you to clear it of any inhabitants, if any. I was told the place is currently unoccupied, but best to check with a first-hand account. I can provide you with a down payment of 100gp for your services and I figure you'll keep anything that you might find on any trespassers within. Providing that you've successfully explored and cleared the place, you can have another 500. What say you?"

"Normally, I'd do this myself, but the circumstances of my last expedition and taking possession of the keep demand I stay behind to deal with the most horrific adventure of all... bureaucracy."

DMs Note: It is advisable that the party have some method of being able to read Elvish (e.g. by language choices or using magic) as many of the clues require the PCs to translate documents.

DISCUSSION WITH RATHERMAR

- A successful DC10 Wisdom (Insight) check suggests he seems genuine about his story. He was informed by the messenger of the location but not much else. He can produce a copy of deed if asked – signed off by a magistrate/noble.
- He is happy to take on ownership of the keep as a base and a chance to stop wandering for a while. He doesn't know much about Hollowmoon Keep other than its location and that it hasn't been in anyone's possession as far as the records go back.
- If asked what his last adventure was or about those "damned cards", he will tell the group that they were exploring a tomb from some official or such from the Age of Netheril. After defeating the tomb guardians, they happened upon a secret room with a puzzle box. It contained a deck of ornate cards wrapped in a simple cloth. They all drew from the deck. Mertrus drew a card, kept it to and then teleported away without a word. Rathemar drew the Throne card. Declo drew two cards, the Gem card and then the Void card. Finally, Trimble drew the Skull and was slain by an Avatar of Death. The deck itself disappeared as Trimble fell. Rathemar returned with the body of Declo and has been using the wealth from the Gem card to locate his soul.
- If asked about any glyphs from the tomb, he can provide rubbings and some descriptions. Most seem to have a Netherese origin but are not of much significance if examined by a sage or expert. (DM note: You can give a one-time advantage to an appropriate skill check regarding Netherese magic or history)
- Upon a successful DC15 Wisdom (Insight) check, the weariness described seems to be from worry and regret. If pressed on the matter, he will say that he has lost friends recently in his explorations.
- If the initial Insight check was successful, a DC18 Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (Arcana) check can determine his sallow appearance may be due to some sort of curse or fell magic. If asked about the curse, he has been feeling unwell since returning from the tomb and has been getting progressively weaker but has attributed that to grief. (DM note: The wasting curse is due to his magical link to the Keep, although he just thinks he is tired. The longer the Keep remained linked to the Shadowfell, the more it saps his vitality until he simply wastes away.)

- A successful DC15 Charisma (Persuasion) check can have him raise his initial down payment to 200gp.

INFORMATION ABOUT TOWN

The party might decide to seek information about the Keep or Rathemar. Performing these checks should incur a 5gp and 1 downtime day cost per check to represent research fees, gratuities, buying drinks and donations. A roll of a natural 1 on any check will incur the PC who rolled it a cost of 1d4 additional downtime days as they follow a messy pile of dead ends. A roll of a natural 20 on any check will waive the gold and downtime cost.

The PCs may gain some information about the Keep itself from sages, temples or other travellers

- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) and/or (History) result reveals that the Keep is Elven in design and hails from the time of old Cormanthyr and Netheril. A result of 20 for either of those checks or 18 for both note that this is close to the time of Karsus' Folly (-339 DR) when the Weave was disrupted, and the Netherese Empire collapsed.

Consulting with other adventurers, taverns and local merchants about town does not provide much knowledge about the keep but can tell them a few things about the surrounding area.

- A successful DC13 Intelligence (History or Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion) check confirm Rathemar's nickname as "the Unfortunate" due to his poor luck with adventuring groups.
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) or DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check finds information (e.g., public records, rumour mill) which says that people who have gone to that Keep go missing and are not heard from again.
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds information that people have been found murdered in that area over the years. They were presumed to be killed by monsters; torn and cut up as if by giant claws and teeth, and notably around the time of the full moon. Expeditions of hunters looking for lycanthropes after the attacks have not turned up anything or disappeared

PCs can feel free to buy what they want in town depending on where you have set the initial meeting. Most items from the Player's Handbook would be available – within reason. When they are ready they can set out for Hollowmoon Keep.

HOLLOWMOON KEEP

APPROACHING HOLLOWMOON

The journey to the keep takes approximately 3 days on foot, starting out on roads which soon move into wilder and drier terrain. This journey can include role-playing or combat encounters if the DM chooses.

Hollowmoon Keep is a simple stone keep with some elven stylings, sitting on dry and barren scrubland. Although the keep is still sturdy, many of the furnishings have decayed over the roughly 1900 years it has been abandoned. As the last inhabitants that had stayed for any length of time were the elven refugees, there is little semblance of order in the place. There are occasional signs of habitation since then, but it has been brief at best. Most of the time it is home to rats and other vermin.

Light: Depending on the time of day, the light that enters the place will have taken on a strange sepia tone but be otherwise normal.

Sounds and smells: There is an occasional scuttling sound of vermin but otherwise the place is deathly quiet. There is a dusty dryness in the air, as well as an underlying door of decay and mustiness.

As the PC's approach, read or paraphrase the following.

Hollowmoon Keep is a simple stone keep which has survived the ravages of time very well for its age. It is a simple two-storey square keep, about 130 feet and made up of deep grey stone with square towers on each of its corners. Arrow slits are visible from the towers, withered ivy climbs the walls in places and a few scraggy and skeletal trees are near it. A gravel road leads towards a large entranceway visible in the barbican. Both the inner and outer doors and portculli have collapsed and rest on the ground. As you look closer, you can see the faded elven stonework and style typical of that of ages past.

A single black bird is flying high in the air above the keep.

As the PCs come closer and look through the doorway or from above, more details will be visible. **Map A** (see **Appendix**) to assist in the description but remember

what they will see is the Prime Material Plane version of the Keep.

The interior of the keep is also made of stone with signs of wear, although the artwork is faded but still visible. Most of the wooden and other perishable structures within the Keep have rotted away over the ages.

The courtyard is a large open space covered with sickly grass and gravel. There are two faded white stone statues of elven guards in archaic armour at the north end of the courtyard. An ornate fountain sits in the middle of the area, its sides covered in a pallid moss.

A balcony overlooks the courtyard and is bordered by a broken stone railing. There are two weathered griffon statues on the front of the balcony. The balcony sits between the rooms on this floor and the one above.

The fountain itself is dry aside from some rainwater pooled at the bottom. A successful DC15 Wisdom (Perception) roll will note a couple of scratch marks in the stone wall near the entrance to Room 5 (cause by a Lost Sorrowsworn). The bird (a raven) flies away if approached or attacked.

DEVELOPMENT – ENTERING HOLLOWMOON

When the PCs enter Hollowmoon Keep, either by the front barbican or from above, they will have a round or two before they find themselves shifted to the Shadowfell as they enter the Keep grounds.

This effect can be detected with a *detect magic* or similar magic as a type of Conjuraton school magic relatively easily. Further investigation with appropriate divination spells and abilities may inform the PCs that this is a form of planar gateway.

About a round after the first PC enters the Keep and starts investigating, the rest of the group will also find themselves transported across to the Shadowfell and will appear in the corresponding point of the Hollowmoon-Shadowfell Keep (**Map A**).

PART 2: FADE TO GREY

The PCs find themselves trapped in the Shadowfell version of the Keep, finding the place is a lot more perilous than its partner on the Prime. They learn about the cruel experiments on previously captured visitors, turning them into Sorrowsworn. They may also learn about the history of the Shadar-kai in the Keep.

Map A, B and C are used in this section

LOST IN THE SHADOWFELL

On the Shadowfell

The Shadowfell is a realm of blacks, grey and white with any sort of colour pale and pallid. The sky is a black with neither sun nor stars providing any illumination.

Although it is a mirror for the Prime Material Plane, any landmarks and structures appear misshapen and unnatural. A melancholic atmosphere hangs over the Shadowfell like a miasma and there is a pervading feeling of despair, loss, and apathy. It is a place where creatures of gloom and bleakness thrive and is ruled by the uncaring but manipulative Raven Queen.

AN UNTIMELY ARRIVAL

When you are ready to proceed to this section, read or paraphrase the following.

Your vision starts to blur, and your head begins to swim. Your stomach heaves with nausea and you feel your balance shift.

As you fight to maintain your balance, you see that everything around you, including your companions, appear to have had the colour leached from them and now appear predominantly in shades of black, grey and white. The smell of decay and dust is replaced with a faint aroma of steel and blood.

A DC10 Charisma save is required by PCs or the character will suffer disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks for the next minute. The character can make the save with advantage if they have an extraplanar origin (e.g. Shadar-kai, Gith) or have an appropriate characteristic (e.g. Horizon Walker) that might mean they might be used to planar travel. An affected PC may make another saving throw at the end of each of their turns to negate this effect.

SORROWSWORN ATTACK

Give them a round or two to catch their bearings, then read the following.

You hear a hollow cry followed by light footfalls and sucking sounds from the eastern side of the courtyard. Before you know it, a single humanoid creature, gaunt and appearing terrified lurches towards you. It has four arms ending in spikes that scrape along the surrounding ground. It is accompanied by a group of small creatures made up of a stubby body ending in a mouth filled with teeth. With inhuman speed, they launch themselves towards you.

The PCs are attacked by a **Lost Sorrowsworn** and 6 **Wretched Sorrowsworn** from Room 5.

Light: The interiors of rooms and corridors are in darkness. Areas 10ft from the interior and exterior walls are in dim light.

Strategy and Tactics: The attackers don't use any semblance of tactics other than swarming a foe, but they will not attack each other unless compelled. They will try to keep to areas of dim light and darkness if possible, unless it means they cannot reach their prey. They will fight until killed when they dissolve into grey, inky shadowstuff and smoke.

Treasure: They carry no treasure.

EXPLORING THE KEEP

From: Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes (pp 60)

"The shadar-kai are bound to the Raven Queen, cursed to forever serve her in the Shadowfell. They dwell in places outside the Fortress of Memories, usually too terrified of the place to enter it willingly. In their communities they re-enact their old rituals and ceremonies, in a pale imitation of the days when they dwelled in the life and light of their now-lost kingdom.

When shadar-kai are in the Shadowfell, their bodies and faces are old and withered, displaying the full effects of the terrible magic that stripped them of their former elven beauty. To hide their visages, they often wear masks made of metal or wood, but even these coverings are melancholic in appearance."

The shadar-kai in the Keep wear white wooden masks with an expressionless visage on their face when they are carrying out their duties or during rituals. They are fatalistic and only display the merest hints of emotion. Their skin is heavily tattooed with ancient elven glyphs and imagery of the Raven Queen.

Dimensions and terrain

The rooms are made of dark stone and ceilings are 10ft high. Rooms on both floors have flat stone ceilings. Wooden structures are made of the strange types of wood native to the Shadowfell. Most of the stonework that may have been exposed to the elements show signs of wear, but close examination can make out some of the artwork. Most of the floors in rooms (aside from the stable) are covered in dark slate tiles. There are small vents for smoke to escape from the various fireplaces throughout the keep.

The doors are made of ironwood with brass bindings. The only rooms that have locked doors are the upstairs bedrooms. (Detailed in the text entries for the individual rooms)

Light: Only a few of the rooms on the upper floor have windows or skylights to the outside and most rooms are dark. Areas outside in the courtyard 10ft from the interior walls appear to be in dim light. Everything feels cold to the touch.

Sounds and smells: There is the sound of movement when the PCs reach the corridor in the north eastern part of the keep. although it is muted. There is a smell of ash, tinged with burnt metal in the air.

DM tips for running this chapter

Crafting an atmosphere of rising and mysterious horror might be helpful in getting the right feel to maintain suspense. Exploring the Keep will help the PC's unravel some of the depravity but also the story of the Shadar-kai, and their motivation. There are signs of more of the backstory scattered throughout the Keep. The use of audio and descriptive cues – lighting dimming, an object falling or creaking suddenly could add an element of depth/anticipation/horror to the sense of loss and despair in the Keep.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

1. BARBICAN

This simple stone gatehouse has sturdy interior and exterior ironbound doors with a bracket for a bar. There is also a heavy portcullis behind each door attached to heavy chains that go up into the roof. There are murder holes in the ceiling and a simple stone bench runs along the east and west walls. On the floor above (17e) are a pair of winches that operate the portculli. Trying to open the portculli from the inside will require a DC16 Strength check. The bar will need to be removed to open the doors from the inside.

2. COURTYARD

This large open space is covered with gravel. An ornate fountain, bubbling clear water is in the middle of the area, its sides covered in elven carvings.

There are two empty statue plinths at the north end of the courtyard, flanking an open archway. There are also doors to rooms on the east and west of the courtyard.

Empty torch sconces are around the courtyard, spaced about 20 feet apart. The balcony, its railing and the griffon statues (Room 27) can also be seen from here. The water in the fountain is clear and fresh, but bland and cool.

3. STABLES

This has stalls for up to six mounts and a rough stone trough on the east wall filled with tepid and stale water. Only two are currently occupied with shadowy **riding horses** (Normal riding horses with 60ft darkvision). There are various tools, saddles, bits and bridles in the back corner. There is also bedding for hounds in the north west alcove. (They are currently in Room 12 and 15.)

4. STORAGE

This room has a barrel of tepid water and a cabinet containing simple pulleys, chains, heavy ropes, and metal hooks.

5. HOLDING ROOM

This is the room which the Sorrowsworn attacking the party emerged from. It is where they are held after they have been made in the Transformation Chamber (Room 11) and until they can be sent through the arcane gate to the Prime Material Plane.

This room's main feature is a large cage with a massive lock on the door (DC 15 Dexterity to unlock or the keys hanging by the southern door). The cage door is open, and the cage is currently empty. There are misshapen footprints on the floor and a dozen 10ftlong metal poles with wire nooses.

6. BATHHOUSE

Both west and east bathhouses contain wooden benches, some metal hooks, a stone bathtub, and toilet at the end of each room. Thin towels hang on several of the hooks in each room.

- a. West – on the metal hooks are 2 sets of simple grey robes. In the folds of one of the robes is an obsidian pendant on a silver chain worth 25 gp
- b. East – on a shelf above the tub is a metal tin containing a tattoo needle, a hand mirror, and a small sharp pair of shears for cutting hair.

7. STORAGE

This room is for storage and contains food stuffs for the kitchen – bread, mushrooms, oils, dried meats and pale cheeses. There are also several bottles of bland wines in the cabinet at the end of the room.

8. CULTIST QUARTERS

This chamber is home to two of the cultists containing two simple wooden beds, a table and cabinet with personal effects. A search of the room finds 26gp (DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation)) and a labelled drawing of a brain.

9. CULTIST QUARTERS

This chamber is home to two of the cultists containing two simple wooden beds, a table and cabinet with personal effects. The table has a few papers on it, including attempts at poetry filled with lots of scribbles and rewrites. A fireplace that is still slightly warm is on the east wall. A successful search of the fireplace (DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation)) will find more remnants of the poetry.

10. VETERANS QUARTERS

This chamber is home to the two shadar-kai veterans and contains two simple wooden beds, a table and cabinet with personal effects. A fireplace that is still slightly warm is on the west wall. Under the southernmost bed is a small ancient painting of an elven child who looks remarkably like Rathemar (possibly a distant ancestor).

11. TRANSFORMATION CHAMBER

This room is a mad scientist-mage's laboratory with a hint of sadism. Captives are brought in after a period of captivity and torture and then, using a horrific machine, are 'milked' of their emotions creating Sorrowsworn. (If you imagine Count Rugen's machine in "The Princess Bride" with a touch of weird alchemy, steampunk styling and etheric Tesla coils, you're on the right track.)

NOTE: Some of the imagery that may be conjured in this room may be unsettling to certain players, particularly young gamers. Please use your discretion to adjust the descriptions accordingly.

When the PCs enter this rooms, read or paraphrase the following.

This room contains a worktable along the western wall with a range of strange machinery made of metal, leather, and glass suspended above it. There are several knives, probes and other quasi-surgical equipment also hanging above the table.

In the centre of the room is a large glass and steel cage with a sturdy lock which is attached to the strange machinery. Inside the cage, in loose restraints, is a male half-orc clad slumped in the cage in shredded and filthy clothing and sporting vile welts on his head and torso. He appears dead.

Covering the walls are a haphazard collection of paper drawings. There is a fireplace in the eastern side of the room which is still warm.

The cage is currently unlocked. There are scratches on the inside of the glass. The drawings are like those found in anatomy books, almost all being humanoids. There are also technical drawings of various iterations of the machine, as well as drawings of misshapen creatures (Sorrowsworn).

The dead man has several ugly red welts across the chest and sides of the head. His eyes and mouth appear to be wide open. The stench of body odour, viscera and vinegar is quite potent.

- If a character examines the drawings makes a successful DC15 Intelligence (Investigation or Arcana) check will determine that the device and drawing match up but there are sections of information that are missing. Scrawled in Elvish are notes “upstairs in the laboratory” and “From the library”
- A successful DC15 Wisdom (Medicine) check can determine that the man died from the torture and had something drained from him by the machine, but all his organs and most of his blood is present despite his wounds. He is only recently (last few hours) dead but appears to have had months of abuse.
- A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check can determine that the man has been drained of his emotions by the device. The check can be only be made after the PCs examine the drawings.
- A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) or (Investigation) check can determine that the emotions are used to create the Sorrowsworn. The check can be only be made after the PCs examine the drawings.

12. ASHENHAND’S QUARTERS

The door to this room is locked (Dexterity DC15 (Thieves Tools) to unlock, or Ashenhand’s door key).

When the PCs enter this rooms, read or paraphrase the following.

This room contains drab looking furnishings, with a table at the centre of the room with a pair of wooden chairs.

A single lithe figure leans over the table adjusting her clothing and a great black hound prowls at her feet. She quickly dons a white wooden mask and grabs the spiked chain. Both creatures leap to attack.

Strategy and Tactics: If she has not been alerted and joined a combat elsewhere in the Keep, Ashenhand (**Shadar-kai shadow dancer**) is leaning over the table preparing to go to the ritual. There is also a **shadow mastiff** by her feet. She will don her mask and leap into combat accompanied by the shadow mastiff but will also be shouting an alarm as she attacks. She may be heard to matter “So sad. Your doom will become our doom.”

Ashenhand will strike to subdue her opponents for capture. She recognises the danger posed by spell casters and will target them first.

The mastiff will also howl at the earliest opportunity not only to terrify their foes, but also to add to the alarm. If she manages to call out an alarm Gravenleaf and the mastiff from room 15 enter on the second round of combat.

Note that is possible to convince Ashenhand also to cease hostilities (DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check) with solid arguments but will attack anyone who tries to kill other shadar-kai in her view.

Description: Stone bookshelves sit against the north wall. The fireplace in the west wall is still burning with dim radiance. A weapons rack with a wicked two-handed scimitar, 2 glaives, a heavy crossbow and a spiked chain sits on the eastern wall. There is also a partitioned-off section at the end of the room. A pair of dog beds of rough straw are in the south west corner.

The bookshelf contains several texts on elven lore, fighting styles, and maps of the surrounding region of the Shadowfell (worth 100gp to a collector or sage). It also holds a prayer book to Shar, a similar prayer book to the Raven Queen and a few tiny crystal statues of animals (worth 100gp if intact).

The bedroom contains a poorly made wooden bed with rough blankets. The chest at the end is unlocked and contains clothing and a few of Ashenhand’s keepsakes and personal effects, including an assortment of needles and inks in a leather case (for tattooing).

Underneath the bed is a locked iron box (Dexterity DC15 (Thieves Tools) to unlock or Ashenhand’s box key) containing a journal written in Elvish, a pair of silver rings engraved with old, worn elven script reading “Forever under the Stars” (worth 50gp), a *Potion of Diminution* and an *Elixir of Health*.

The journal details some of the recent history of the Keep (**Handout 1**).

Treasure: Ashenhand is only carrying the key to her lockbox and Room 15. Other treasure is within the box itself.



13. PRISON

This room contains a large iron cage with manacles on the north wall. There is a hook for the keys by the door but no keys present (DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) to unlock or use the keys with Gravenleaf in the torture chamber in room 15). A slops bucket and small wooden bowl and spoon is in the cage. The smell of sewage and sweat permeates the room.

There is a single emaciated and unkempt male Gold dwarf in here. He has been physically and emotionally abused, wears filthy rags and is quietly weeping in the back of the cage. He is in deep despair but can acknowledge the PCs with a successful Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Use the following table to determine the results of the Persuasion check.

Check result	Information
0-12	No information - we're all doomed
13-16	My name is Thorvald Ironbound
17-20	<p>He was on a hunting expedition seeking some lycanthropes that had been reported in the area following some murders. He has lost track of time since he entered the Keep. Night was falling so they set up camp in the courtyard, and a storm was brewing so they retired for the night in one of the rooms. The half-orc Anoth was on watch when he woke the others, calling out that there was a shimmering. Before they knew it, they were set upon by shadar-kai and captured.</p> <p>He knows that Baris is dead but thinks Anoth and Taegra might be alive although are probably in the Torture room.</p> <p>(Taegra is but Anoth isn't - and his body is in the Transformation Chamber (Room 11))</p>
21-24	They take him to a room a couple of doors down the corridor and torture him physically and emotionally. He has seen about 5 or 6 different shadar-kai and occasionally one or two of the Sorrowsworn (He describes The Wretched and The Lost as best he can). He also hears them refer to a library and a laboratory upstairs.
25+	Their tortures seem to be geared towards enhancing their fear, despair, and hopelessness.

Thorvald would have the **scout** template but is currently carrying 4 levels of exhaustion and is on 3 hit points. A *Greater Restoration* spell may remove the exhaustion and healing can restore him to full hit points. However, the trauma he has suffered means he will not fight.

14. KITCHEN

This contains a central table for the preparation of food. Stone shelves line the north and south walls where crockery, pots, pans and foodstuffs are stored. There are also long stone benches that line the north wall. There is a small stonetopped box in the south west corner for holding meats. Finally, a secret trapdoor can be found by moving a hidden catch in the side of the shelving on the north wall. (DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) to find the catch) This opens to a set of stairs that goes down into a basement (Room 28).

15. TORTURE CHAMBER

NOTE: Some of the imagery conjured in this room may be unsettling to certain players, particularly to young players. Please use your discretion to adjust the descriptions accordingly.

When the PCs enter this room, read or paraphrase the following.

This room is permeated by the smell of a stale vinegar with tables with smatterings of blood and body fluids. There are a range of grisly torture implements hung on racks throughout the room. A dull sepia glow from the fireplace and the scattered candles dimly illuminates the room.

There are a group of 4 iron cages suspended from metal arms, just large enough to hold a medium-sized humanoid. The far cage swings lazily and a quiet murmuring can be heard.

A lone figure in a white wooden mask and grey robes stands with their back to you, observing a filthy human woman with scraggly blonde hair in the far cage. Two large black hounds pace silently in the centre of the room.

Gravenleaf (Male Shadar-kai **Warlock of the Raven Queen (Variant Archfey)**) is in this room tormenting a bedraggled female human (Taegra) captive in the left most cage.

Strategy and Tactics: If he spots the PCs, he will immediately call out an alarm and cast *False Life* on himself. If enemies get to melee range, he will use his *Blink*, *Dissonant Whispers*, *Hold Monster* or *Sleep* depending on the situation. If wounded significantly he will use *Dimension Door* to get out of the Keep. He also

has two **shadow mastiffs** with him. He takes care not to harm the prisoner as she is necessary for Blackfrond's experiments. If he manages to call out an alarm, Ashenhand and the shadow mastiff from Room 12 appear on the second round of combat. He will shout to Ashenhand if he sees her (in Elvish) "Capture them. And don't permit them upstairs."

Note that is also possible to convince Gravenleaf to cease hostilities (DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) check) with solid arguments but he will defer to Blackfrond who might take more convincing.

Gravenleaf carries keys to the Prison cage, each of the cages in this room and his bedroom (Room 18). Otherwise, it requires a DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) to unlock the cages. He carries no other treasure.

The woman in the cage is Taegra Sturndottir, another of the hunters who entered the keep a few months ago. She is rocking back and forth murmuring a prayer to Tempus but can acknowledge the PCs with a successful Charisma (Persuasion) check.

Use the following table to determine the results of the Persuasion check :

Check result	Information
0-10	Catatonic weeping
11-15	Her name is Taegra Sturndottir and she was on a hunting expedition seeking some lycanthropes that had been reported in the area following some murders. There were 4 in her group; Baris, another human, Anoth the half-orc and Thorvald the dwarf. She knows that Baris and Anoth are dead, but thinks Thorvald is still alive in the prison room. She has lost track of time.
16-20	The shadar-kai took her to a room a couple of doors down the corridor and held her there, but brought her here to torture physically and emotionally. She has seen about 5 or 6 different shadar-kai and occasionally one or two of the Sorrowsworn (She describes The Wretched and The Lost as best she can).
21-24	Their tortures seem to be geared towards enhancing their fear, despair, and hopelessness. Their leader is called Blackfrond and he is a powerful spellcaster. He is calculating, dispassionate and never raises his voice. Blackfrond talks a lot about his

captives being "his instruments of revenge for his ancestors suffering".

She has heard him refer to "the refinement in designs in the laboratory upstairs"

Taegra would have the **scout** template but is currently carrying 4 levels of exhaustion and is on 3 hit points. A *Greater Restoration* spell may remove the exhaustion and healing can restore her to full hit points. However, the trauma she has suffered means she will not fight.

16. STORAGE

This room contains a range of metal and wooden tools, boxes of nails, rope, wire and glassware. It also contains 2 barrels of lamp oil at the end of the room.

17. GUARD TOWERS

a-d: Each of these towers contains a weapons rack with 6 spears, 4 longswords, 2 light crossbows and 400 bolts on its lower floor, and a set of stairs that leads to upper level of the tower. The second level of each of these towers is open and looks out to the surrounding lands. The level is defended by battlements. It also has a weapons rack with 6 spears, 4 scimitars, 2 light crossbows and 400 bolts. Cultists keep watch from the towers most of the time but during the ritual the towers are unoccupied.

e: The upper level of the barbican has several murder holes in the floor and pair of winches that operate the portcullis below.

18: GRAVENLEAF'S QUARTERS

The door to this room is locked (DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) to unlock) and the key is with Gravenleaf in Room 15.

This is Gravenleaf's bedroom. A bed, well-made with rough blankets rests against the north wall and stone shelving with grisly trophies (e.g., preserved hands, eyeballs in jars, etc) is on the southern wall. There is a small table with a chair and a warm fireplace in the eastern wall. On the table there is a text of writings from a devotee of Loviatar entitled "The Art of Agony. A release of suffering'. Within the book is a handwritten note (in Elvish) that states "**The darkness will always be greater than the light in all the worlds directions**" (This is a clue to the Puzzle Plinth in Room 28). An ink pen and paper sit next to it. There is also a shuttered window in the north wall.

A chest sits at the south end of the room. It is unlocked and untrapped. It contains clothing, personal effects and a set of tattooing needles. It has a secret compartment that can be located with a DC15 Wisdom (Perception)

check in the bottom with a bundle of papers (some surprisingly well-written poems and song lyrics about suffering and loss in Elvish) tied with a black ribbon. A platinum necklace of Netherese design is also here, worth 250gp.

19: BLACKFROND'S QUARTERS

The door to this room is locked (DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) to unlock) and the key is with Blackfrond.

There is a large iron four-poster bed in the northeast corner of the room with a small side table next to it. The bed is made, and the blankets are rough spun wool. The side table contains a simple drinking glass, a few scraps of parchment and an ink pen. Most of the parchment have scribbles, doodles, and three by three grids of numbers on them similar to Sudoku puzzles. (*In Sudoku puzzles, the objective is to fill a 9×9 grid with digits so that each column, each row, and each of the nine 3×3 subgrids that compose the grid contain all of the digits from 1 to 9.*) This is a clue to the Puzzle Plinth in Room 28.

On one of the scraps of parchment is a series of arcane designs and numbers. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggest they are working out methods to make the link between the Shadowfell and the Prime more stable.

There is a locked chest (DC 15 Dexterity to open or the key also with Blackfrond) at the end of the bed which contains personal effects, clothing, 2 bags of coins (263gp, 195sp), a scroll of lightning bolt, a scroll of arcane gate and a jar of Keoghtom's Ointment (3 uses).

The wooden wardrobe contains several pieces of simple clothing e.g., robes, cloaks, shoes all with an archaic design. Among the clothing is a *Cloak of Elvenkind* which stands out in its archaic elven design.

This room contains a solid wooden desk. The desk contains several papers, mostly mundane letters to other locations in the Shadowfell. In a desk drawer is a journal (written in Elven) which is detailed in **Handout 2**.

After the players read the journal a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check suggests that Blackfrond has a cold and amoral personality, born of hatred and fuelled by revenge. The "mission" is important, and any cruelties are justified due to the crimes perpetrated on him in the past. There are hints though, that he can be reasoned with.

The shelves around the walls contain small personal items and decorations. They seem to be items taken from his Prime Material Plane captives and are generally small trinkets that took his eye (nothing of value but you can be little creative if the players ask).

20: GUEST BEDROOM

There is a large iron bed in the northeast corner of the room with a small side table next to it. The bed is made, and the blankets are rough spun wool. The side table contains a simple drinking glass but nothing else. An empty chest sits at the end of the bed.

There is a cold fireplace on the north wall and a table with chair on the west wall. The table bears a bottle of fine elven wine (5 gp value) which is unopened.

21. MEETING ROOM

There is a large table in the center of this room with a canvas map. The map is of the Shadowfell around the vicinity of the Keep and might be worth 50gp to a scholar or interested buyer.

There is a glass skylight in the ceiling but only the dark grey Shadowfell sky can be seen through it.

22. MAGICAL LABORATORY

The table and walls of this room are covered in a range of papers, almost all arcane designs detailing machinery and anatomy. There are also arcane diagrams and calculations for extraplanar conjunctions and the use of portals between the Shadowfell and the Prime. A warm fireplace rests in the east wall. The shelves are bare except for a few pieces of glassware.

Examining the jumble of papers (all written in Elven) can glean the following information.

- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines that the machinery described is being used to drain the essence and emotion from beings and using them to create Sorrowsworn. So far only the Wretched and the Lost have been created, with recent success creating a Lonely Sorrowsworn. Plans exist on techniques to create Hungry and Angry Sorrowsworn as well.
- A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence (Investigation) suggests the more powerful Sorrowsworn are harder to control but he aims to try.
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check can determine the special attacks of the Sorrowsworn (See Appendix: Monsters)
- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggest that the Sorrowsworn disperse into shadowstuff when killed or not "fed" enough (which is why no bodies of the Sorrowsworn were found after they were sent to the Prime after their the murderous rampages).

There is a shelf on the north wall containing metal, glass and leatherworking tools, and spare parts for the transformation machine in Room 11. There are also several reagents in here and a sealed jar containing a grey semi-viscous goo that is cold to the touch. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check indicates that this comes from the Shadowfell. The check can be made with advantage if the PC is a Hexblade, Shadow Sorcerer or a Shadar-kai.

23. LIBRARY

This room contains bookshelves and a stone fireplace in the west wall. There are few old books on the walls which were tomes from the original group of elves that became stranded here. Reading through these books can provide the information in **Handout 3**.

There is also a faded painting of an elven city that adorns the north wall. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (History) check identifies it as from the first age of Cormanthyr with architecture from around -400DR. The check can be made with advantage if the PC is an elf or has some scholarly focus around elven history. A successful DC18 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (History) check identifies a constellation above the city of 4 bright stars and 5 dimmer stars in the shape of a hand. A subsequent DC15 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies it as corresponding to no constellations in the Faerunian heavens. This is a clue to the Puzzle Plinth in Room 28.

24. CHAPEL TO THE RAVEN QUEEN

This chapel contains low stone benches, a pale tiled floor and a simple circular black stone altar engraved with a raven's head. There is a candelabra containing a few partially used candles on the altar as well as a sharp ritual knife, and there are a few specks of blood on the altar.

On the eastern wall is carved in Elvish:

We offer our pain and passion to her.

*When the stars in all directions are
balanced*

And the Queen grants us her gifts

Pain and passion are our sacrifice

A successful DC15 Intelligence (Investigation) or DC18 Wisdom (Perception) check will note that the second line (*When the stars are balanced*) is more deeply engraved than the others. This is a clue to the Puzzle Plinth in Room 28.

There is a cracked glass skylight in the ceiling and only the dim Shadowfell sky can be seen through it.

25. GUARD ROOM

This room contains a wooden table and three chairs. There are some cups on the table with a tepid and bland tea, tasting vaguely of ashes. The guards are currently downstairs at the ritual.

26. BATHROOM

This room contains wooden benches, some metal hooks, a stone bathtub and a toilet (with chamber pot) at the end of the room.

27. BALCONY

The floor of this area is covered in sky blue tiles, cracked and weathered by age. It looks onto the courtyard and is bordered by a stone railing. There are two worn griffon statues on the front of the balcony.

28. BASEMENT

This rectangular section of this room contains barrels filled with water, oil and wine. There is a set of stone stairs that lead up to a secret trapdoor that opens into the kitchen (Room 14).

When the PCs enter the circular chamber read the following.

In the south east corner is a circular alcove containing a large cylindrical stone plinth carved with elven symbols and glyphs, although they seem to be done quite roughly. On the top of the plinth are engraved a series of stone plates featuring patterns of both solid and outlined stars and arranged in a three-by-three grid. One of the corner plates is blank.

You see around the upper edge of the plinth six similar plates, each with a series of stars engraved on them.

When the players have seen this show them **Handout 4**.

The correct solution is to press Panel F. This enables there to be 4 outlined (white) and 5 solid (black) stars in each row and column.

If they examine the plates on the top of the plinth, they appear quite solid. The ones around the sides of the plinth appear to be able to be pressed in. The plinth detects of magic (Abjuration, Conjunction and Necromancy).

- If Panel F is pressed in, there is a momentary pause and then all the PCs in the basement area are teleported to Chapter 3

- If any of the other panels are pressed, or any combination of panels is pressed, there is a click after about 10 seconds as that panel pops back out. The second time an incorrect panel is pushed, a 30ft burst of necromantic energy will burst forth from the plinth. All living characters will take 1d10 necrotic damage and must succeed on a DC12 Constitution saving throw or have their maximum hit points reduced by that amount. Subsequent failures will incur a similar effect but will add a cumulative 1d10 necrotic damage and increase the maximum hit point loss DC by 2. An *alarm* spell is also activated and will alert the ritual casters unless the person pressing the panel is an elf or half-elf.
- The *alarm* spell can be suppressed for an hour with a targeted *dispel magic* spell.
- The Necrotic burst effect can be suppressed for a single round with a targeted *dispel magic* spell.
- If the players are stuck, they may request skill checks for hints.
 - Intelligence (Investigation) DC15 or Wisdom (Perception) DC15 indicates that several finger marks in the shape of stars have been made in the blank panel
 - Wisdom (Perception) DC20 indicates that Panels B, E, F seem to be pressed more than the others
 - Intelligence (History) DC 15 indicates that there are several references to stars in elven lore – which might get them exploring the upper part of the keep.
 - Wisdom (Insight) DC15 indicates that this appears to be some sort of mathematical puzzle

The DM should then refer to the boxed text at the beginning of Chapter 3.



PART 3: TWISTED RETRIBUTION

In this encounter, Blackfrond is attempting to send a **Lonely Sorrowsworn** across to the Prime Material Plane to cause murder and havoc. The PCs will need to stop this from taking place and use the Portal to return home.

Dimensions The passage is 10ft high and is roughly hewn stone. The chamber is 30ft high.

Light There is no natural light aside from a few candles around the walls. The chamber is in dim light.

AS THE PASSAGE IS OPENED

When the PCs enter reveal the passageway after solving the puzzle read the following.

You find yourself standing on a rune circle with a similarly marked plinth to the one you just left. You see that you in a rough-hewn passageway, and you hear a dolorous chanting of arcane words intermingled with a mournful weeping, punctuated by strikes of metal on stone.

Pressing the same panel as the previous plinth will send the party back to Room 28.

A RITUAL OF TEARS

When the PCs enter the cavernous chamber (**Ritual Chamber Map**) read the following.

The corridor opens into a dimly lit chamber. Five lithe humanoid figures in rough spun robes and white masks are arranged around the room, engaged in ritual litanies. The one on the farthest side of the room is clearly leading the rite and is punctuating the cadence of the ritual with strikes of his staff on the ground.

Weeping comes from an ornate iron cage which hangs from huge chains in the middle of the room. Within the cage is a horrifically misshapen creature, vaguely humanoid in form but with spindly limbs that appear to come to barbed points. It furtively flicks its attention around, and you see the dark trails of black tears on its contorted face.

Beneath the cage is an arcane gate of metal and stone, carved with runes. It hums with eldritch energy and purple light as it pulses with every strike of the staff.

THE SHADAR-KAI

Standing around the room are 4 **shadar-kai cultists** and Blackfrond (**shadar-kai gloom weaver**). The cultists are spread around the room equally spaced about 30ft from the cage and Blackfrond is at the far end of the room.

Light: This room is dimly lit by candles unless the PCs have brought brighter light.

Strategy and Tactics: Blackfrond will immediately call on the cultists to continue the ritual and then will call for the veteran guards to attack.

In Round 1 he will cast *Armor of Agathys* (if possible) and may follow with other his innate spells to disrupt and confuse the group on subsequent rounds (e.g., *Bane*, *Compulsion*, *Confusion*) before entering melee range (He's pretty deadly in melee with the necrotic rider on his melee strikes). **Note that while the ritual is progressing, he will not use his 2nd and 3rd warlock slots and will restrict his spell to innate and cantrips only. However, once the ritual is disrupted, he will use the remaining warlock slots.** He also wields a **Staff of Charming** which he can use as a defense against enchantment spells. (See stat block and item description).

The other **shadar-kai cultists** continue the ceremony until they are attacked in melee.

The 2 **shadar-kai veterans** stand just inside the cavern by the entrance but out of view from the corridor. They will move to attack as soon as they see the PCs shouting an alarm.

Note that if possible, the shadar-kai will strike to subdue and won't kill downed opponents with the hopes of capturing them for Sorrowsworn stock.



CONCLUSION

OUTCOME #1

The PCs are successful in defeating the Shadar-kai and stop them sending any more Sorrowsworn across to the Prime. They can then return to Hollowmoon Keep and are able to meet up with Rathemar. He is eager to hear their story and will pay them the agreed sum. If told about the gate he says, "I know there are ways to fix that and some mages owe me a favour or three". He also adds that they will receive free lodgings and sanctuary (within reason) at Hollowmoon Keep for as long as he is in charge. (See **Story Award: Hollowmoon Sanctuary**) Rathemar's health also improves as the link between the Keep and the Shadowfell is severed.

OUTCOME #2

The PCs are unsuccessful in stopping the shadar-kai but escape. They can return to Hollowmoon Keep and can make further attempts to cross over after regrouping to try to stop the shadar-kai. When they inform Rathemar, he is eager to hear the story and will pay them the agreed sum, even if they were not successful. He says, "I'll have to take matters into his own hands". Rathemar goes to Hollowmoon Keep and isn't heard from again.

OUTCOME #3

The PCs are unsuccessful in defeating the Shadar-kai and are captured, and they are the next victims to be transformed into Sorrowsworn. It will take them several months, with appropriate rolls and role-playing to be transformed. They can witness the transformation of one of the other prisoners during this time to get them thinking. This turns the adventure into a prison breakout with an escape to the Prime.

REWARDS

EXPERIENCE POINTS

If you are using experience points rather than milestones

1. Total up all the combat experience for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat.
2. Award non-combat experience depending on the engagement with the social and exploration encounters. The maximum non-combat experience points per PC should be about the same as the combat experience.

MAGIC ITEMS

STAFF OF CHARMING

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a Bard, Cleric, Druid, Sorcerer, Warlock, or Wizard)

This staff is made of ebony and is bound by silver filigree. A single clear spheroid gem sits at the end of the staff.

While holding this staff, you can use an action to expend 1 of its 10 charges to cast *charm person*, *command*, or *comprehend languages* from it using your spell save DC. The staff can also be used as a magic quarterstaff.

If you are holding the staff and fail a saving throw against an enchantment spell that targets only you, you can turn your failed save into a successful one. You can't use this property of the staff again until the next dawn. If you succeed on a save against an enchantment spell that targets only you, with or without the staff's intervention, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge from the staff and turn the spell back on its caster as if you had cast the spell.

The staff regains 1d8 + 2 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff.

CLOAK OF ELVENKIND

Wondrous Item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This cloak is grey but has fine silver filigree of an ancient elven design. It also has the name "Hathemar" embroidered under the collar.

While you wear this cloak with its hood up, the cloak's color shifts to camouflage you. Wisdom (Perception) checks made to see you have disadvantage, and you have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide. Pulling the hood up or down requires an action.

POTION OF DIMINUTION

Potion, rare

When you drink this potion, you gain the "reduce" effect of the enlarge/reduce spell for 1d4 hours (no concentration required). The red in the potion's liquid continuously contracts to a tiny bead and then expands to colour the clear liquid around it. Shaking the bottle fails to interrupt this process.

ELIXIR OF HEALTH

Potion, rare

When you drink this potion, it cures any disease afflicting you, and it removes the blinded, deafened, paralysed, and poisoned conditions. The clear red liquid has tiny bubbles of light in it.

SCROLL OF LIGHTNING BOLT

Scroll, uncommon

A spell scroll bears the words of a single spell, written in a mystical cipher. If the spell is on your class's spell list, you can read the scroll and cast its spell without providing any material components. Otherwise, the scroll is unintelligible. Casting the spell by reading the scroll requires the spell's normal casting time. Once the spell is cast, the words on the scroll fade, and it crumbles to dust. If the casting is interrupted, the scroll is not lost.

If the spell is on your class's spell list but of a higher level than you can normally cast, you must make an ability check using your spellcasting ability to determine whether you cast it successfully. The DC equals 13. On a failed check, the spell disappears from the scroll with no other effect.

SCROLL OF ARCANE GATE

Scroll, very rare

A spell scroll bears the words of a single spell, written in a mystical cipher. If the spell is on your class's spell list, you can read the scroll and cast its spell without providing any material components. Otherwise, the scroll is unintelligible. Casting the spell by reading the scroll requires the spell's normal casting time. Once the spell is cast, the words on the scroll fade, and it

crumbles to dust. If the casting is interrupted, the scroll is not lost.

If the spell is on your class's spell list but of a higher level than you can normally cast, you must make an ability check using your spellcasting ability to determine whether you cast it successfully. The DC equals 16. On a failed check, the spell disappears from the scroll with no other effect.

KEOGHTOM'S OINTMENT

Wondrous Item, uncommon

This glass jar, 3 inches in diameter, contains $1d4 + 1$ doses of a thick mixture that smells faintly of aloe. The jar and its contents weigh $1/2$ pound. As an action, one dose of the ointment can be swallowed or applied to the skin. The creature that receives it regains $2d8 + 2$ hit points, ceases to be poisoned, and is cured of any disease.

STORY AWARDS

HOLLOWMOON SANCTUARY

Rathemar the Unfortunate is a well-known adventurer who has offered you sanctuary, food and lodging while you are in Hollowmoon Keep, in return for your help. He will assist the group in whatever way he can – within reason. He knows other adventurers and has access to titbits of lore. He can also act as the character's patron for further adventures. If the character abuses Rathemar's hospitality (DMs discretion) the award becomes invalid.

APPENDIX

CREATURE STATISTICS

CULTIST, SHADAR-KAI

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 9 (2d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (0)	11 (+0)	10 (0)

Skills: Deception +2, Religion+2

Damage Resistances Necrotic

Condition Immunities Sleep

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 1/4 (50XP)

Dark Devotion: The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened

Fey Ancestry. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Shadow Jump. As a bonus action, the cultist can teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. Both the space it teleports from and the space it teleports to must be in dim light or darkness. The cultist can use this ability between the weapon attacks of another action it takes.

ACTIONS

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

Staff of Charming (Excerpt)

If you are holding the staff and fail a saving throw against an enchantment spell that targets only you, you can turn your failed save into a successful one. You can't use this property of the staff again until the next dawn. If you succeed on a save against an enchantment spell that targets only you, with or without the staff's intervention, you can use your reaction to expend 1 charge from the staff and turn the spell back on its caster as if you had cast the spell.

GLOOM WEAVER (BLACKFROND)

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (17 with mage armor)

Hit Points 104 (16d8 + 32))

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Damage Resistances Necrotic

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhausted

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 9 (5000XP)

Burden of Time. Beasts and humanoids, other than shadar-kai, have disadvantage on saving throws while within 10 feet of the gloom weaver.

Fey Ancestry. The gloom weaver has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. The gloom weaver's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *arcane eye*, *mage armor*, *speak with dead*

1/day: *arcane gate*, *bane*, *compulsion*, *confusion*, *true seeing*

Spellcasting. The gloom weaver is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch* (3d8 damage), *eldritch blast* (3 beams, +4 bonus to each damage roll), *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*

1st–5th level: (3 5th-level slots): *armor of Agathys*, *blight*, *darkness*, *dream*, *invisibility*, *fear*, *hypnotic pattern*, *major image*, *contact other plane*, *vampiric touch*, *witch bolt*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The gloom weaver makes two spear attacks and casts one spell that takes 1 action to cast.

Staff of Charming. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands, plus 26 (4d12) necrotic damage.

REACTIONS

Misty Escape (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).

When the gloom weaver takes damage, it turns invisible and teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. It remains invisible until the start of its next turn or until it attacks or casts a spell

SHADOW DANCER (ASHENHAND)

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 71 (13d8+13)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Cha +4

Skills Stealth +6

Damage Resistances Necrotic

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhausted

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 7 (2900XP)

Fey Ancestry. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Shadow Jump. As a bonus action, the cultist can teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. Both the space it teleports from and the space it teleports to must be in dim light or darkness. The cultist can use this ability between the weapon attacks of another action it takes.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fanatic makes three spiked chain attacks

Spiked Chain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or suffer one additional effect of the shadow dancer's choice:

- The target is grappled (escape DC 14) if it is a Medium or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the shadow dancer can't grapple another target.
- The target is knocked prone.
- The target takes 22 (4d10) necrotic damage.

SHADOW MASTIFF

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	5 (-3)	12 (+1)	15 (-3)

Skills: Perception +3, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Piercing and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks while in Dim Light or Darkness

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 13

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450XP)

Ethereal Awareness. The shadow mastiff can see ethereal creatures and objects.

Shadow Blend. While in dim light or darkness, the shadow mastiff can use a bonus action to become invisible, along with anything it is wearing or carrying. The invisibility lasts until the shadow mastiff uses a bonus action to end it or until the shadow mastiff attacks, is in bright light, or is incapacitated.

Sunlight Weakness. While in bright light created by sunlight, the shadow mastiff has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

SORROWSWORN – THE LONELY

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 9 (5000 XP)

Psychic Leech. At the start of each of the Lonely's turns, each creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 10 (3d6) psychic damage.

Thrives on Company. The Lonely has advantage on attack rolls while it is within 30 feet of at least two other creatures. It otherwise has disadvantage on attack rolls.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Lonely makes one harpoon arm attack and uses Sorrowful Embrace on grappled opponents.

Harpoon Arm. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 60 ft., one target. Hit: 21 (4d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15) if it is a Large or smaller creature. The Lonely has two harpoon arms and can grapple up to two creatures at once.

Sorrowful Embrace. Each creature grappled by the Lonely must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. A creature takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In either case, the Lonely pulls each creature grappled by it up to 30 feet straight toward it.

SORROWSWORN – THE LOST

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 8

Languages Common

Challenge 7 (2900 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Lost makes two arm spike attacks.

Arm Spike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Embrace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 25 (4d10 + 3) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 14) if it is a Medium or smaller creature. Until the grapple ends, the target is frightened, and it takes 27 (6d8) psychic damage at the end of each of its turns. The Lost can embrace only one creature at a time.

REACTIONS

Tightening Embrace. If the Lost takes damage while it has a creature grappled, that creature takes 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

SORROWSWORN – THE WRETCHED

Small monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 10 (4d6 - 4)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	5 (-3)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing while in dim light or darkness

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 8

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50XP)

Wretched Pack Tactics. The Wretched has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the Wretched's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated. The Wretched otherwise has disadvantage on attack rolls.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage, and the Wretched attaches to the target. While attached, the Wretched can't attack, and at the start of each of the Wretched's turns, the target takes 6 (1d10 + 1) necrotic damage.

The attached Wretched moves with the target whenever the target moves, requiring none of the Wretched's movement. The Wretched can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement on its turn. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach a Wretched.

VETERAN, SHADAR-KAI

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 58 (9d8+18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (0)	11 (+0)	10 (0)

Skills: Athletics +5, Perception +2

Damage Resistances Necrotic

Condition Immunities Sleep

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700XP)

Fey Ancestry. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Shadow Jump. As a bonus action, the cultist can teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. Both the space it teleports from and the space it teleports to must be in dim light or darkness. The cultist can use this ability between the weapon attacks of another action it takes.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

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

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

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

WARLOCK OF THE RAVEN QUEEN, SHADAR-KAI (GRAVENLEAF)

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 60 (11d8+11)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	15 (+2)	13 (+2)	11 (+1)	12 (+1)	18(+4)

Saving Throws Wis +3, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +2, Deception +6, Medicine +2, Persuasion +2

Damage Resistances Necrotic

Condition Immunities Charmed, Sleep

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1800XP)

Fey Ancestry. The warlock has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Shadow Jump. As a bonus action, the cultist can teleport up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. Both the space it teleports from and the space it teleports to must be in dim light or darkness. The cultist can use this ability between the weapon attacks of another action it takes.

Innate Spellcasting. The warlock's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 15), requiring no material components:

At will: *disguise self*, *guidance*, *mage armor* (self only), *silent image*

1/day each: *conjure shadow creature* (variant *conjure fey*)

Spellcasting. The warlock is a 11th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *eldritch blast*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *vicious mockery*

1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots): *blink*, *blur*, *charm person*, *dimension door*, *dissonant whispers*, *false life*, *faerie fire*, *telekinesis*, *hold monster*, *misty step*, *phantasmal force*, *seeming*, *sleep*

ACTIONS

Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Misty Escape. (*Recharges after a Short or Long Rest*). In response to taking damage, the warlock turns invisible and teleports up to 60 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. It remains invisible until the start of its next turn or until it attacks, makes a damage roll, or casts a spell.

Summon Shadow Creature

This ability takes 1 minute to cast and is therefore unlikely to be used in this combat. If the party have been particularly careless in their approach and by some miracle Gravenleaf manages to cast this spell add 2 more **shadow mastiffs** to this encounter.



Warlock of the Raven Queen

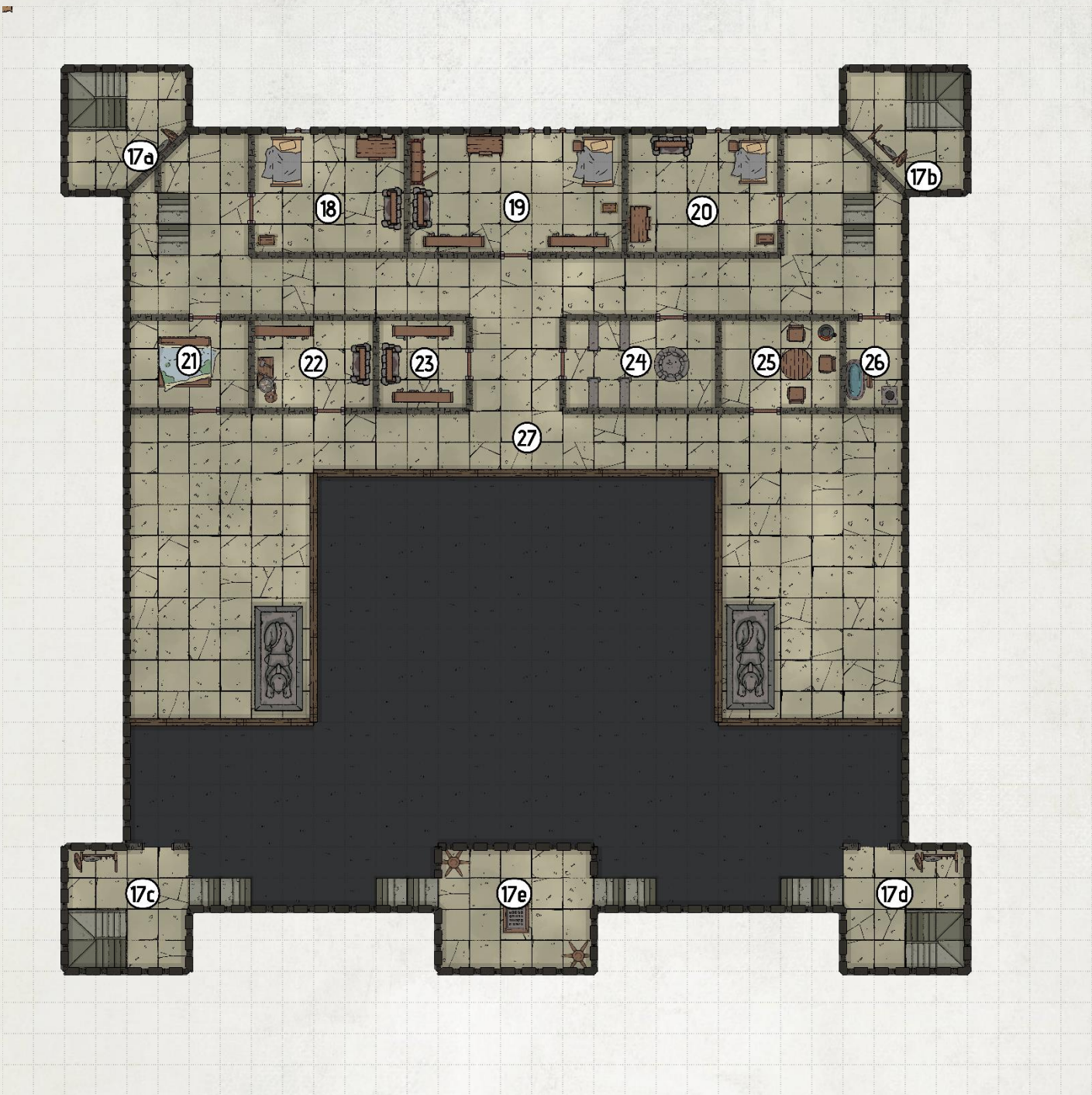
This is a modified Warlock of the Archfey from *Volo's Guide to Monsters* with a bit of more necromantic flavour.

APPENDIX

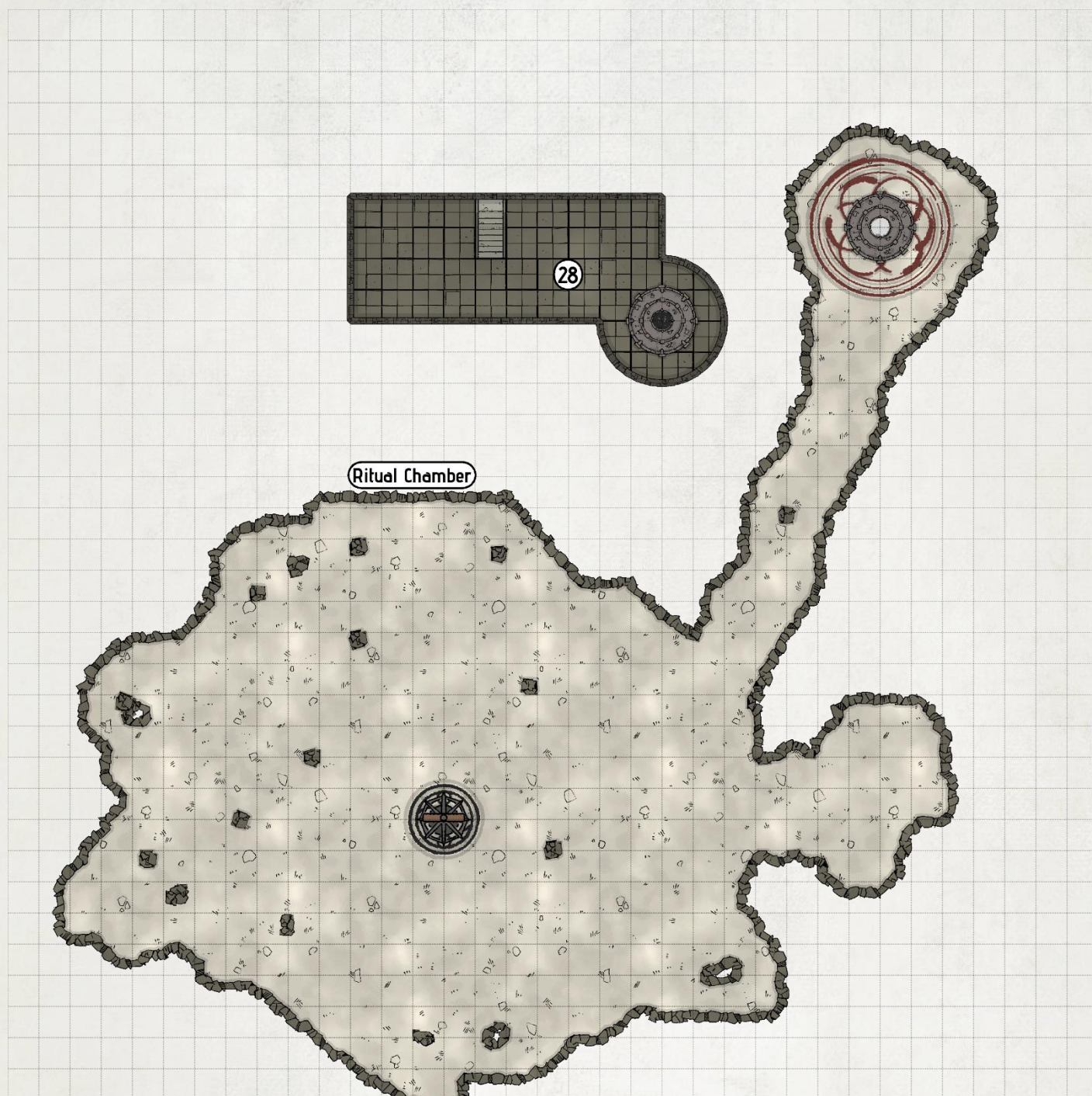
MAP A: GROUND FLOOR



MAP B: UPPER FLOOR



MAP C: BASEMENT



PLAYER HANDOUTS

ASHENHAND'S JOURNAL (HANDOUT 1)

The following information can be gathered by skimming through Ashenhand's journal (written in Elvish). It is a simple leather-bound tome with a neat and succinct style of writing.

- *My kin have been in this place for close to two millenia as far as the records in the library and the tales of our ancestors say. It's said that we were abandoned, but I truth we were displaced. My ancestors staved off the melancholy and ennui only by pledging themselves to the Raven Queen. What they would do to survive after all they had been through.*
- *The archwizards had followed us here those millenia ago. Although we struck at them in the past, the cost in those of the People was too high. I suspect our hatred for them and all they have wrought have sustained our small clan better than most of our ilk. Their city of Thultanthar still floats in the sky, reminder of their power and a focus for our pain. Their torment us with their cruel presence but I suspect we are beneath their notice.*
- *There was a great upheaval and the Netherese city disappeared from the sky. I hope they have ended up in the Abyss. Another intruder from the Prime appeared today and as they have always been, were dispatched readily. However, Blackfrond has some designs how they might be used in seeking retribution for our exile. He suggests capturing the next ones to test his theories. He spend so long in the laboratory upstairs trying to perfect his devices.*
- *The human filth we captured last week has told us that that Netherese city that tormented us for almost a score of centuries has fallen on old Myth Drannor and is no more. Blackfrond says it is no matter and we should continue the work. He says he is close to greater successes.*
- *Blackfrond's work harnessing the despair that this place breeds so well has been truly impressive. Creating those monstrosities borne out of their fears and doubts staggers me. He says they will make excellent ravagers to send out to the Prime. Our message will be loud and bloody (his words...not mine)*
- *A more powerful monstrosity was birthed today although it killed Silvermourn before we could get it caged. There are not many of us left. Blackfrond insists he can control them. But I am not so sure, and he will not listen when I tell him...*

BLACKFROND'S JOURNAL (HANDOUT 2)

The following information can be gleaned from reading through Blackfronds's journal. Most of these relevant entries span about 200 years. It is an ornate tome with several loose pages and comments in the margins neat and succinct style of writing.

- *I have lain awake again last night unable to find rest in sleep. Centuries of where we were the victims. Justice and blood. Justice and blood.*
- *The Netherese that have been the focus of our sorrow and venom have departed the Shadowfell. How, I do not know, but they are most proficient arcanists. But their departure has left a twist in the Weave. I have studied it and I believe I have a new weapon to use. The creatures I can create from the despair and melancholy that the Shadowfell feeds on can be harnessed. A success born of brilliance and circumstance. Our ministrations on the captives have born delicious fruit for the crimes suffered by my ancestors.*
- *After using the prisoner's "gifts" we have birthed and sent those wretched creatures across the Planes. I hope they feel well and with pain.*
- *Another group of intruders arrived recently. I've been able to develop a more potent creature with a few adjustments to the machinery. What I couldn't achieve in time!*
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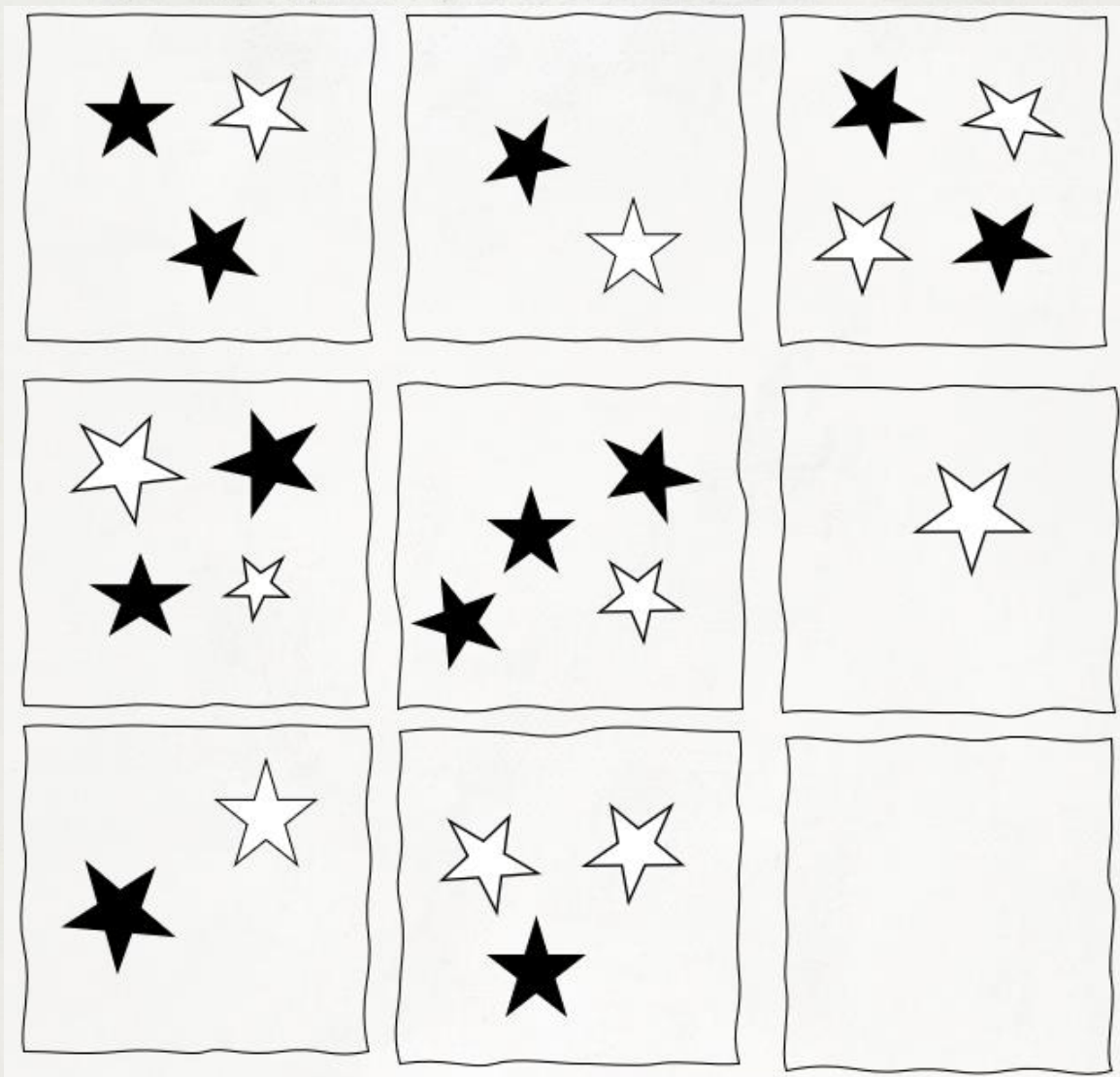
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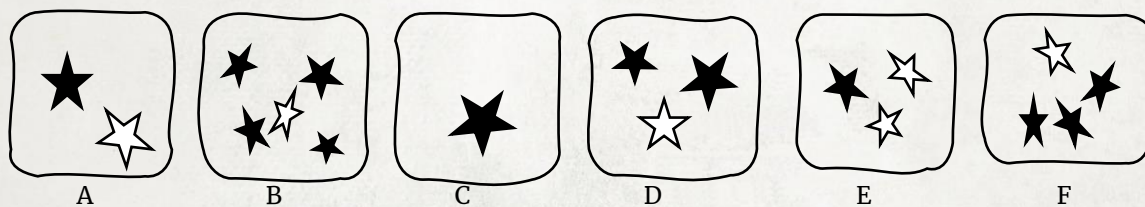
- *The original elves were refugees from a village (E'ldorei) displaced by the expansionist Netherese Empire at the height of their power.*
- *After wandering for some months, they found refuge in Hollowmoon Keep, granted by Iolas Rathemar, the elven hero who built it. They were starting to settle when they were shunted to the Shadowfell. (Shifted by the transition of the Netherese City of Thultanthar)*
- *Several elves succumbed to malaise and despair early on. Some of the survivors sought out the Raven Queen to whom they offered the service for their survival. She taught them the ways of the Shadar-kai and they returned to the Keep.*
- *They used their newfound abilities to defend themselves, but also to harass the inhabitants of Thultanthar, although their power was still too weak to cause them any real trouble.*
- *As the generations passed, they had periodic glimpses into the Prime when the Keep made occasional transitions and have some knowledge of the battle outside the gates during the Weeping War.*
- *Any strangers caught in the Keep when it transitioned them to the Shadowfell were captured and killed.*
- *The transition of the Netherese City of Thultanthar back to the Prime is recorded as having happened about a century ago.*
- *There are less and less children born to each generation. There were originally over a hundred refugees. Now there are only a handful left.*
- *They are currently in their 6th generation since the transition to the Shadowfell.*

STONE PLINTH (HANDOUT 4)

THE TOP SURFACE OF THE PLINTH HAS THESE TILES AND ENGRAVINGS



SYMBOLS ON THE PANELS ON THE RIM OF THE PLINTH

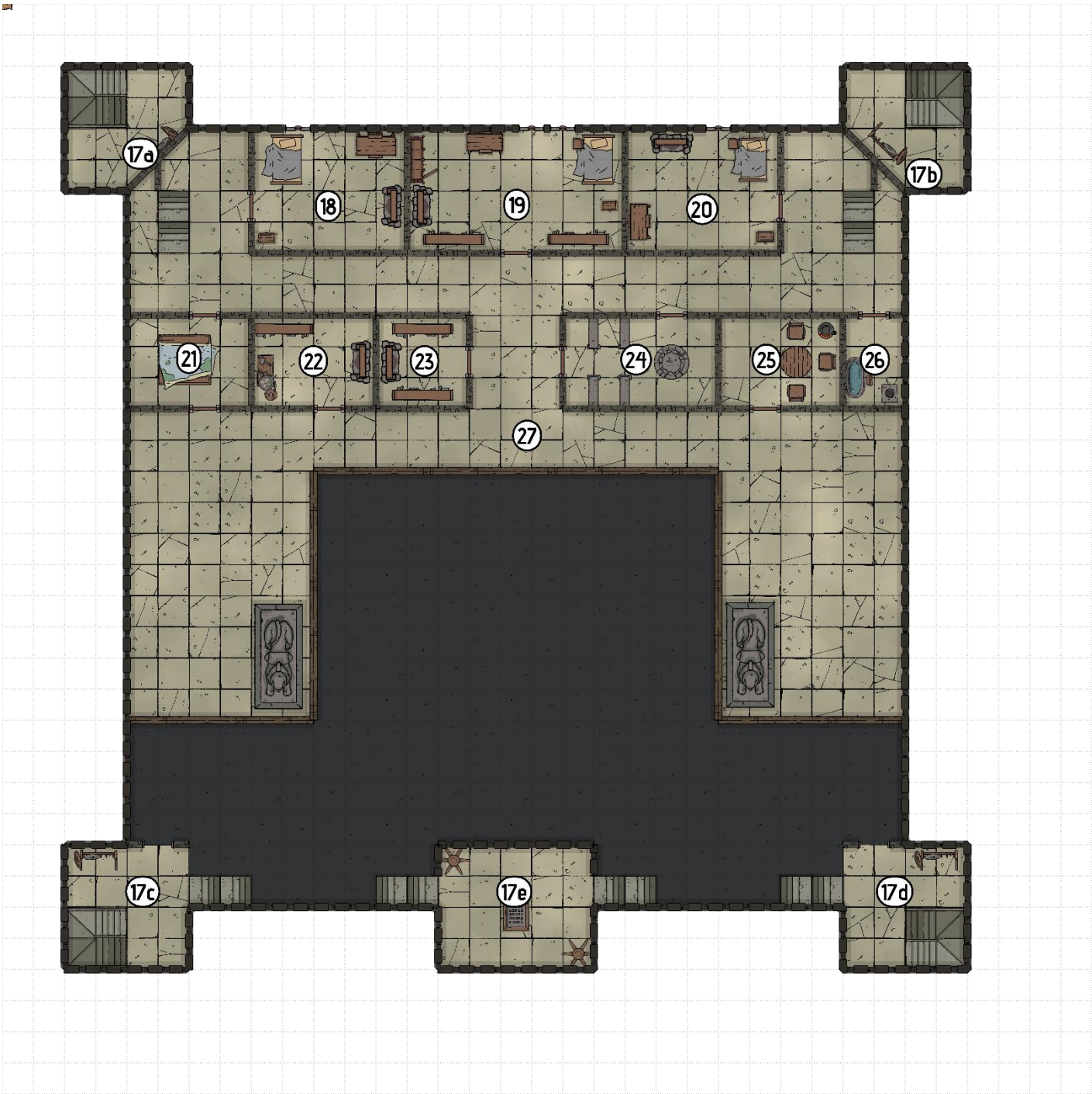


APPENDIX

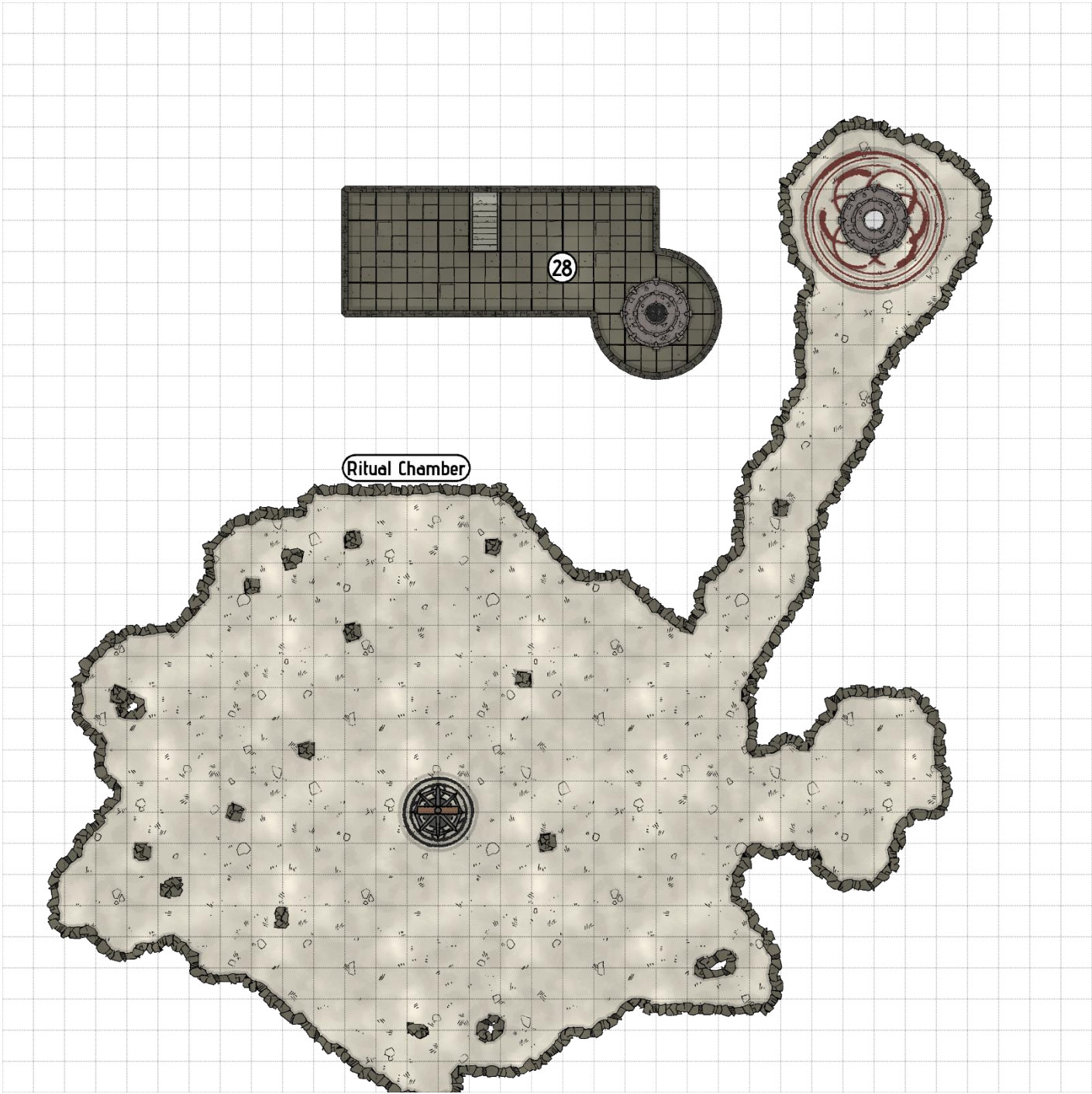
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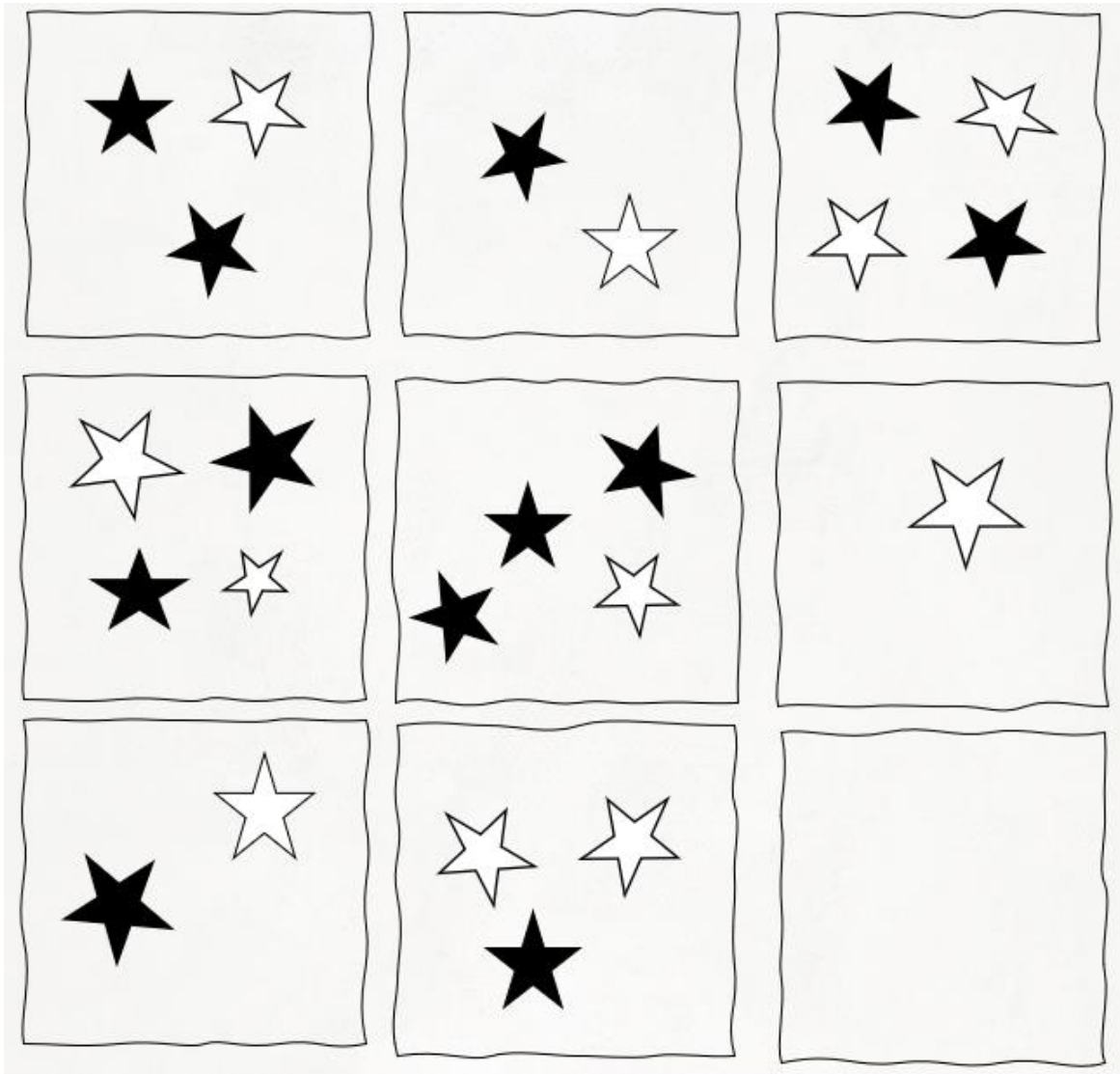
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