

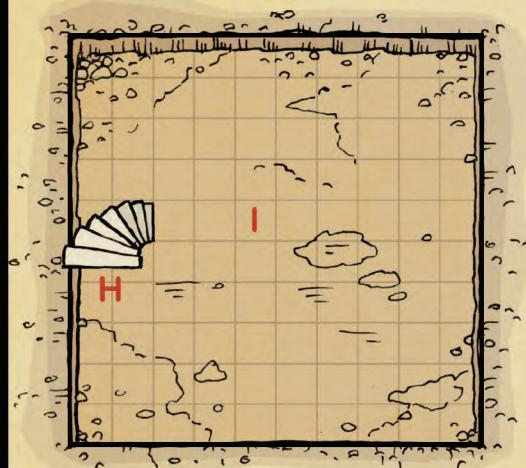
THE TERRIBLE REVENGE OF SIMPERING MALEXINEUSS THE PRETENDER

BY ED GREENWOOD



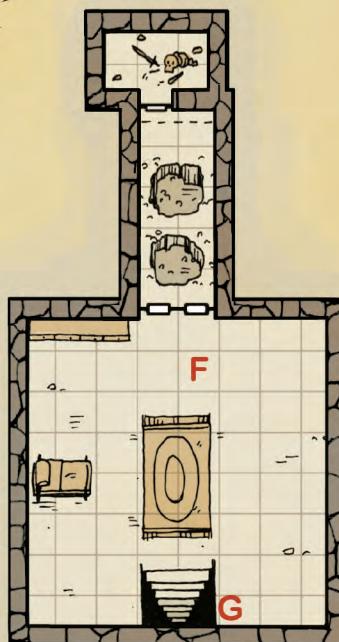
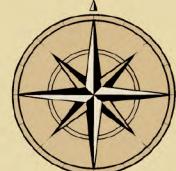
**GAMEHOLE
PUBLISHING**

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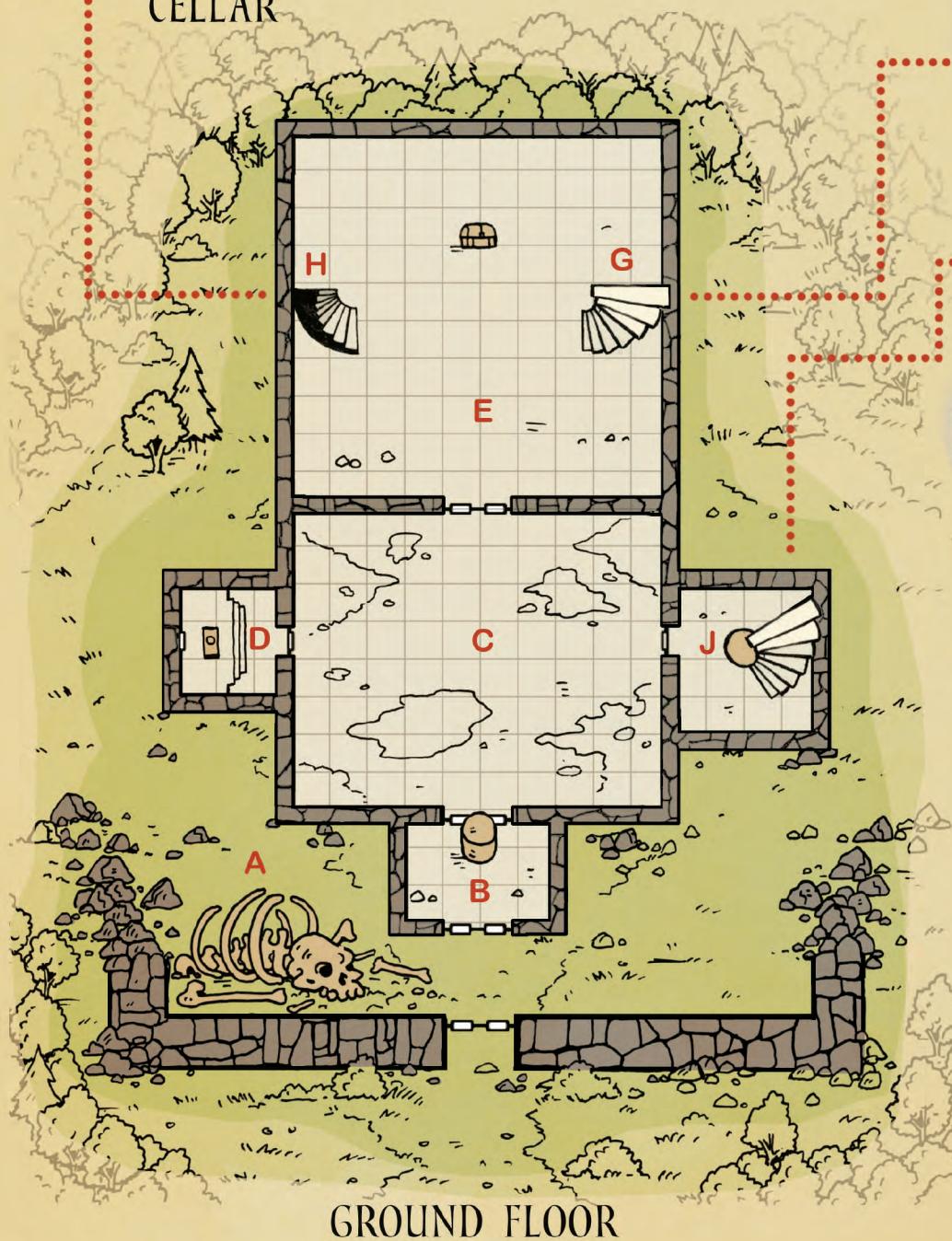


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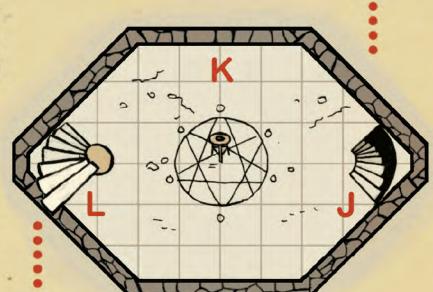
- A. Page 7
- B. Page 7
- C. Page 8
- D. Page 9
- E. Page 10
- F. Page 11
- G. Page 10
- H. Page 13
- I. Page 14
- J. Page 14
- K. Page 15
- L. Page 15
- M. Page 16



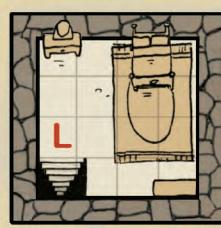
SECOND FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



SPELL CHAMBER



BEDCHAMBER



STOREROOM

One square = 5 feet

Brokentower and Environs

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THE TERRIBLE REVENGE OF SIMPERING MALEXINEUSS THE PRETENDER

Gamehole Publishing Module EG1

An Adventure for 4-6 Characters Levels 5-7

By: Ed Greenwood



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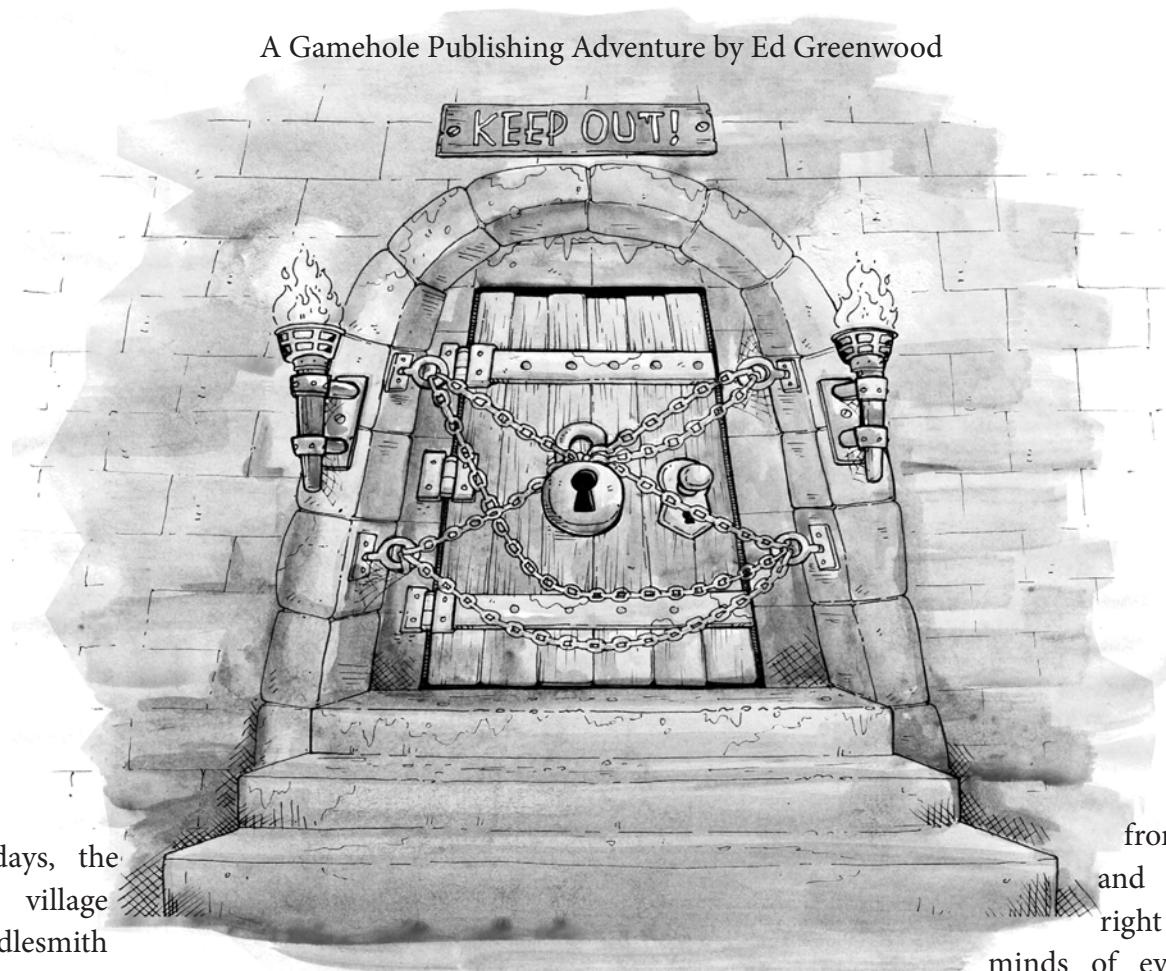
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THE TERRIBLE REVENGE OF SIMPERING MALEXINEUSS THE PRETENDER

A Gamehole Publishing Adventure by Ed Greenwood



These days, the waystop village of Middlesmith is no longer dominated by the three smithies for which it was named, though the Middul family still shoes horses and forges tools at their place down the lone side-road.

Middlesmith is now best known for its well-respected Free House Inn & Tavern, that stands at the rural settlement's crossroads. In olden days, this inn was the favorite haunt of the renowned mage Ironkainen in his later, semi-retired years. Locals knew the truth behind the widespread rumors that Ironkainen never left the Free House: the stern old mage rented—and magically altered—the attic chambers of the inn, making them over into his own private chambers so he no longer needed to try to stumble home after too many tankards of strong and excellent sour ale. The Free House attic was already reputedly haunted, so Ironkainen let it be known that a terrible magical monster, the Gameleon, lurked there among the ghosts: a shadowy, tentacled thing that drank magic

from wizards, and memories right out of the minds of everyone else.

The Gameleon had slashing talons, and was a long and stealthily slithering scaled serpentine beast that could vanish into other-dimensional hiding through any opening—and emerge to pounce, unexpectedly, through any other “hole.”

At least one sneak-thief was found sliced to ribbons, and those bloody remnants tastefully arranged outside the closed doors that led up to the attic. As a result, Ironkainen’s private abode was thereafter left unmolested by thieves and the curious, and over time became known as “The Gamehole.”

The oldest Middlesmithers tell tales of the forests around Middlesmith being a-crawl with much “old and lurking magic,” and say Ironkainen came to stay in the hamlet because of that. Without the special spells he cast in The Gamehole, they insist, worse monsters than the Gameleon would be prowling the area right now, devouring and despoiling.

However, it has been decades since anyone has seen Ironkainen, and many younger Middlesmithers suspect the Gameleon is so much hoo-hah, and that Ironkainen just wanted to be left alone—or perhaps left alone with attractive young ladies he might entice up its steep stairs with a smile and generous offerings of ale and small delightful magics (worldly younger Middlesmithers like to tell stories of this sort).

Significantly, the current owner of the Free House, an affable retired adventurer known as Smiling Tim, refuses to say anything at all about the whereabouts or fate of the old mage, and keeps the doors of The Gamehole firmly locked....

The Coming of Malexineuss

Recently, the stories about Middlesmith being so strongly magical as to attract wizards have been bolstered by the sudden and unheralded appearance of a haughty, vain, and rather ugly mage who came to the village from afar, claimed its only vacant structure (Brokentower, an overgrown, long-abandoned knight's keep in the damp dark heart of the forest), and ever since has been aggressively and rather superciliously attempting to persuade every last villager to sell their land to him—swamp, worked-out farmland, or woodlot, regardless of what sort of hovel stands (or leans precariously) on it. This Sim-purarrynkh Ahsarexnu (now universally referred to by Middlesmithers as “Malexineuss the Pretender”) is a swift-spoken outlander whom the gods blessed with a nose as sharp as a goose’s beak twisted so as to stand on end, and as large as a blacksmith’s fist, not to mention beady eyes set beneath a bushy black uni-brow. He wears silken garments, flounces about like a courtesan trying to be languidly graceful, constantly bats his eyelashes when he speaks, is forever tilting his head to one side like an inquisitive seagull, and treats “unwashed villagers” with open contempt.

All of which has meant that despite his offers of abundant gold, he is heartily disliked by Middlesmithers, and not one of them has agreed to sell their land to him. “But this is where I WANT to build my grand estate, and retire!” he often rages when drink-

ing (white wines laced with lime, in a goblet filled with cranberries and cherries) at the Free House, and he stamps his foot and waves his graceful hands in exasperation. “You are all so TIRESOME! Take my money and give me your land and begone, taking your pigs and your stink with you! For here is where I wish to dwell! See, I have gold! More gold than you will ever see in all your lives! Why do you not take it? What is WRONG with all of you?”

Well, this last month, it seems that what is wrong with Middlesmithers is some sort of mysterious malady that is making everyone sick. Villager after villager has gone deep yellow, then half-blind, then unable to keep their balance, then too weak to grip and wield things, ere collapsing into delirium. This illness is hitherto unknown, and no goodwives’ remedies, druidic herbal treatments, or even hired-in magical cures are any help at all against . . . the Sickening.

It is suspected that the despised Malexineuss is responsible, because his repeated attempts to convince villagers to sell had escalated into bullying spellcastings that sent chicken coops and pig styes skyward, in shards and splinters. Castings that in turn were answered by volleys of rotten eggs, followed by the furious wizard being picked up by several farmers acting as one, and tossed head-first into a dung-pile.

The next day—the one before the first villager was stricken—was the last time anyone saw Malexineuss. That evening, over his wine at the Free House, he was heard to sneer to himself (increasingly, he’d taken to talking aloud to himself, and even arguing with himself—and losing), “Death ends even iron-hard stubbornness” and “the dead sell land dirt-cheap, haw haw.”

Dire Times

Now, a mere handful of villagers remain untouched by the Sickening. All attempts at healing have failed, and many of the earliest stricken lie near death, slipping in and out of consciousness. It seems the gods themselves have turned a blind eye to the fate of Middlesmithers. The village elders—Arken Middul the Smith, Halivarr the Moneylender, Tanhult the Tan-

ner, the Largehold farmers Beregrult and Lahandrar, and Smiling Tim—have met around Tanhult's sickbed and grimly decided to try something bold. Or as Smiling Tim put it, "desperate."

They have cleared out the local jail, conscripted the most likely "heroes" from the cells (the Player Characters), and charged them with saving Middlesmith. These prisoners are getting a chance at freedom, a clean slate, and to keep "what they choose to begin with" as well as any loot they may find in Malexineuss's tower—so long as they end the Sickening.

The locals firmly believe Malexineuss is the cause of the malady, but no magic has been detected in any of the victims or their food or water. The elders are certain that Ironkainen has left items of magical power in The Gamehole that can aid otherwise doomed Middlesmith. Reluctantly, Smiling Tim unlocks the doors to the mage's upstairs rooms....

Beginning

Once inside The Gamehole, the PCs find no lurking monster nor ghosts, but crowded, cozy rooms under the rafters, the largest chamber dominated by a massive table surrounded by chairs, and crammed with books, armor, potions, axes, swords, art, and maps (things the characters can take to use or consult on the adventure).

Some of these items are illuminated by flickering glows.

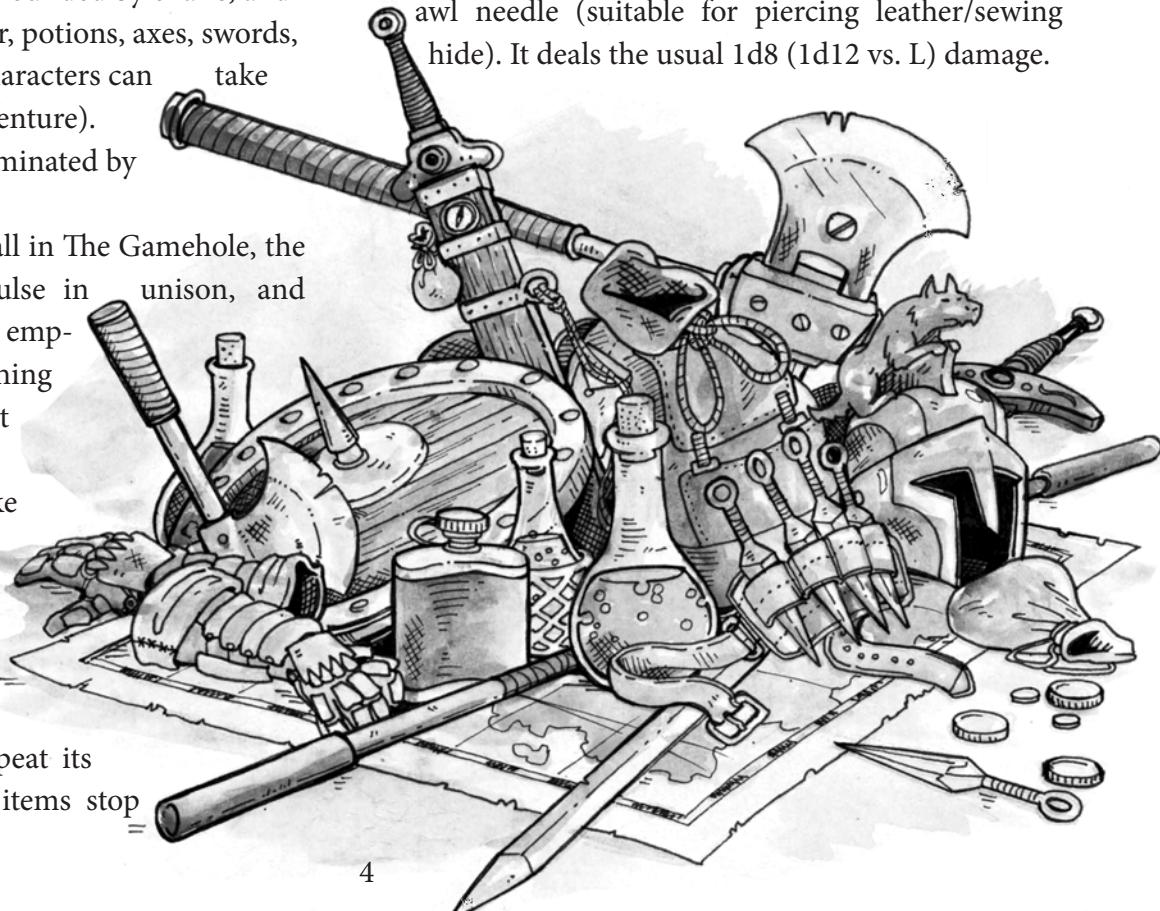
When the characters are all in The Gamehole, the glows around items all pulse in unison, and a booming voice out of the empty air says: "Select just one thing each, take it, and have a seat at the table."

(If a character tries to take something that isn't glowing, they can—but it will promptly teleport out of their grasp back to wherever they took it from, and the booming voice will repeat its command.) Once chosen, items stop

glowing, and when all PCs have selected, the remaining, unchosen items cease to glow. Except as noted, the items aren't themselves magical. They are all in great condition.

Here's the roster of glowing items PCs can take:

- **Buckler +1:** small round shield suitable for throwing, has one arc blunt for holding and the rest sharpened; can be made to glow like faerie fire (yellow-white hue) when grasped and willed to do so, radiance can be "turned off" the same way.
- **Set of 6 matched Daggers:** balanced for throwing, everbright-treated (won't rust), silver plating down the sides, each in its own sheath with adjustable buckle-strapping for affixing around forearms or calves. Each does the usual 1d4 (1-3 vs. L) damage.
- **Longsword:** a splendid-looking weapon with a flint (suitable for striking) set into the pommel, comes with scabbard and attached buckle-belt, everbright-treated (won't rust), scabbard has attached pouches for coarse and fine whetstones, small but very thick glass vial of (yes, flammable) sharpening oil, rags (three provided, rather oily), and a punch-awl needle (suitable for piercing leather/sewing hide). It deals the usual 1d8 (1d12 vs. L) damage.



- **Throwing/Hand Axe +1:** Dull black all over, this non-magical weapon has a hooked, scythe-like blade and a spur or curving hook on the back of its head. It does 1d6+1 (1d4+1 vs. L) damage.

- **Battle Axe:** comes with an adjustable baldric sheath, and deals the usual 1d8 damage.

- **Broadsword:** comes with a sturdy metal scabbard and very sturdy adjustable attached belts; does the usual 2d4 (2-7 vs. L) damage.

- **Map:** a foot-square board of thin oak with a parchment map glued down to it, that depicts several adjoining rooms . . . somewhere (not of anything useful in the adventure, though the players initially shouldn't know as much; the DM can use a randomly-sourced "dungeon" map—or create fun by having a map that "draws itself" as the adventure progresses, yet still has nothing to do with this adventure).

- **Belt Flask:** 1-quart capacity, of stainless steel, with a cork stopper; has a belt hook and a flattened back ring for threading a belt through, plus a tiny "push dagger" built into its thick bottom; is initially filled with clean, drinkable water.

- **Helm +1:** A "full metal brainbucket" blued steel helm treated so it doesn't shine, and fitted with a swing up/swing down visor. Wearer can breathe normally in any smoke (yes, that includes poisonous) and underwater, see through smoke and shadow as if the air is clear and well-lit, and clearly see wraith-like, insubstantial things. The helm doesn't aid in seeing in darkness, nor provide true sight, and doesn't even hint that illusions aren't real. These properties will have to be discovered through use; anyone "trying it on" will only sense that the helm is beneficially magical.

- **Metal Gauntlets:** These splendid reach-almost-to-the-elbow, cleverly articulated full-metal-coverage war-gloves gleam and shine and look fit for a king. The left one has a tight coil of thirty feet of waxed black cord stored in the inside upper "flare" of its cuff (held in place with welded-internal-mount straps), and the right one has a stick of chalk wrapped in

cloth, and a candle wrapped in cloth around a hollow bone to keep the candle from breaking, in a pouch affixed (internal-mount straps again) inside its upper cuff.

- **Ten Foot Pole:** A smooth-finished, straight pole of stout, fire-hardened ash with copper-shod ends that have tiny steel hooks jutting from them. The center of the pole has a copper "sleeve" affixed in place with wax, sealing in three (blank) pieces of parchment; if the seal is broken, water can get in but the sleeve can be slid along the pole to get at the parchments.

- **Potion of Extra-Healing:** This clear, colorless, sweet-smelling and -tasting liquid fills a stainless steel vial, cork-stoppered and wax sealed, that is graven with an image of two praying hands placed together (a local symbol for "healing"). It restores 3d8+3 lost hp if drunk all at once, or can be imbibed in three 1d8-hp-restoring doses (interior of vial is marked with "level rings").

Once all of the characters have taken an item and seated themselves at the table, the booming voice will say: "We shall begin at the source." and the table will glow blindingly, the room will melt away, and . . .

I. The Hollow

The table, and everyone seated around it, appears in a hollow in a dark forest (a clearing that's lower than the ground all around). Oak and maple trees of great age and size loom over the hollow on all sides. In the center of the (roughly 60 feet across) hollow, right beside the table, there's a spring of drinkable water that fills a little (7-foot across) pond and then runs off (about 20 feet) to sink into the spongy, moss-covered ground. Around this drinking hole are four OWL-BEARS, a baby and three adults, who will immediately attack the PCs (seeking to slay and devour; the baby will flee once an adult goes down, but otherwise they fight to the death).

Chairs work quite well as bludgeoning and hurled weapons, doing an owlbear 1d4+1 damage, but breaking into smithereens if used as clubs. If thrown, they don't break, but the owlbears may snatch them



up and use them on the PCs (as clubs or missiles). The table will remain where it arrives, and will survive all attacks and raging violence unscathed. Nothing can move it. The adventurers will notice that in huge glowing letters across its surface, where there was nothing before, there are now the words "Return To Me."

Owlbears: 42, 38, 36, and (baby) 19 hp. AC 5, 1d6 claws x 2 and 2d6 bite (beak), plus hug: on a claw hit of 18 or better, drags one victim against itself, hugs for 2d8 crushing damage per round until owlbear killed to end hug.

Three game trails (narrow paths) run out of the hollow into the deep, damp, mossy, thornvine-tangled forest. All are equally (lightly) used.

II. Stirge Pit Trail

This first trail leads to an obvious pit trap that's been sprung by a large dead two-headed dire bear; its mangled corpse lies at the bottom of a 10-foot-wide, 50-foot-deep hole, impaled on wooden spikes and infested with crawling giant maggots (yellowish-white bloated segmented worms the size of small dogs). Six STIRGES fly up from underneath the corpse to attack any PC who tries to get down into the pit or go around it and on along the trail, which winds for miles through the forest becoming fainter and fainter until the trail disappears altogether into a thicket of thornvine.

Stirges: 9, 8, 7, 7, 6, 6 hp. AC 8, attacks as 4 HD creature for 1-3 proboscis "sting," thereafter drains 1d4 hp-worth of blood per round until sated at 12 hp (satiation or killing only way to detach).

III. Fungus Trail

This trail meanders through some skunk-smelling areas of wet rotting logs infested with weird-looking, inedible, and glowing-in-darkness mushrooms that can creep very slowly away from loud noises and violent movements, but are harmless (their sole use is: if burned in flame, they blaze up into thick, choking purple smoke that expands rapidly to fill an area and utterly hides what's going on behind it), before it joins up with the third trail at location IV.

IV. Winding Trail

The third trail plunges into thick trees, winding among them as it climbs rising wooded ground to reach an old, crumbling, ivy-overgrown oval stone tower at location V.

V. Broken Tower

This is Brokentower, a former knight's keep. It looks long abandoned, with trees breaching the walls and its surroundings heavily overgrown. A recent fire has cleared (and charred) the area immediately surrounding its entrance, leaving an empty archway large enough for three horses to ride through side by side, opening into a scorched cobbled courtyard and an intact inner double door of similar size. What look like blackened branches and saplings, or perhaps gigantic bones, lie strewn about this courtyard.

A. Blackened Bones

The blackened things are bones, and will animate into a huge monster skeleton (the skeleton of a hill giant) if any living creature passes through the archway. This is a “scare intruders away” magic that causes the bones to float in midair in an assemblage resembling the way they’d fit together when inside the living giant. The skeleton will move menacingly to block intruders, reaching out with its arms, but can’t fight or do real harm. It can readily be knocked apart (its shards and splinters will slowly drift back together again, repeatedly if it’s knocked apart repeatedly, until no living creatures are in the courtyard . . . whereupon it will sag back into separate bones lying on the ground until the next intrusion).

B. The Way In

The intact double doors in the wall at the back of the courtyard are of wood entirely sheathed in overlapping and rather rusty iron. Each twelve feet tall and five feet wide, they look massive and rather battered, as if someone tall has recently and repeatedly bashed them with small, ineffective bludgeoning weapons. These doors are a trap: though they look firmly set into their hinges, any pull on them will cause them to fall over on you (if you know about this, you can simply stand to one side, pull, and let them topple past and crash down; the battered appearance of the doors is simply the result of repeated bouncing impacts with the cobbles). Each door weighs about as much as three large and heavy men in full plate armor, and smashes anyone they fall on (or glance off of) for $1d4+2$ damage.

Inside the falling doors are another, inner set of doors made of stone, and overlapped with a central flat pillar of stone that prevents them from opening. Graven into that central pillar is an array of five faces around a projecting central mouthpiece-fitted pipe, akin to a recorder or piccolo. Above the pipe is a face covering its ears, to the right of the pipe is a snarling Cyclops face, and below that is a mouthless face. To the left of the pipe is the face of a wizard wearing a high-collared robe, and below that is a face peering through the bars of a cage or prison cell. Touching or blowing into the pipe causes a softly whispering voice to emanate from the pipe, saying: “Only friends may enter. Push the faces in the right order, or be unwelcome. What you most desire comes last.”

Touching faces cause illusory magical images to form in midair in front of the doors, like holograms; players must interpret these to figure out the right order to push faces firmly and make them sink into the wall an inch or so (different from just touching them).

The images that come forth (and then fade, but will reappear whenever the faces are touched but not pushed in) are:

Covered-Ears Face: A stone wall (that doesn’t look like Brokentower or any wall familiar to any of the characters) cracks, then collapses and falls. Leaving a barrier of tumbled rubble, not a clear way past where the wall was.

Cyclops Face: A fully plate-armored (head hidden in helm, hands in gauntlets, shieldless, armed but with no sword or dagger drawn), human striding past, unimpeded. The Cyclops face is engraved on the breastplate of the armor.

Mouthless Face: Fresh red blood spattering copiously on a stone wall (that looks just like the overgrown stone walls of Brokentower). Spattering and then dripping down, more and more of it.

Caged Face: Bars, iron bars everywhere, almost blocking out the view of open wilderlands beyond them.

Wizard Face: Flashes of bright, weirdly hued light that become raging flames, forming a wall of fire.

The correct sequence is: anything that touches the **Cyclops** face last (because the armored figure in the illusion passes unimpeded; all the other images show barriers). So the PCs can try various patterns, but all results are determined by what they push last, as follows (and yes, there’s an endless supply of all these effects; exasperated DMs could make successive cages smaller, change the Lurker into different mouthless monsters, and scale up the lightning and blasting effects):

Touching the **cage** face last gets the toucher caged: a 20-foot-square but only 4-foot-high welded iron cage, flat iron plate top, bars for side walls, open bottom, magically appears and falls over anyone in front of the door, slamming down for $4d4$ damage (successful Dex Check for half damage, meaning character flung themselves flat and out of the way of a descending wall edge in time to get only a glancing blow); a successful Bend Bars/Lift Gates is necessary for a lone character to get out, but if other characters help, any total of 48 Strength or more will lift the cage

enough for trapped characters to crawl out under a raised edge).

Touching the **wizard** face last gets a 2d6 lightning bolt to erupt out of the pipe and dart at the toucher (aimed at wherever the toucher moves to, and swerving to strike just that character—plus any character touching that character; usual save for half damage applies).

Touching the **covered-ears** face last causes the pipe to emit a blast like that of the first effect (only) of a horn of blasting: 30-foot-wide but flaring cone, 120' long, all within it must save against magic: success means stunned for 1 round and deafened for 2; and failure means stunned for 2 rounds, deafened for 4, and take 1d10 hp damage.

Touching the **mouthless** face last causes a **LURKER ABOVE** to appear in midair just above the toucher, and instantly drop to enfold that character (and any other character touching that character at the time).

Lurker Above: 72 hp. AC 6, constrict for 1d6 hp/round and smothers enfolded prey in 1d4+1 rounds, fights until dead, constricted creatures can only use short weapons in-hand when enveloped.

Touching the **Cyclops** face last causes the central pillar to slowly rumble up into the doorframe, exposing the crack where the two doors meet (and enabling them to swing outwards and open when the pull-rings on them are tugged on by characters; they are heavy but counter-weighted, and move easily and quietly, stopping wherever they are let go of, rather than continuing to move with any momentum).

C. The Tower Hall

Once through the doorway, the PCs find themselves in a large, vaulted, high-ceilinged rectangular entry room (50 feet across and 40 feet deep) with three interior walls, each with a closed door in its center. An empty candle-wheel hangs above them from a rusty chain shrouded in cobwebs (and dead shriveled spiders the size of human fists).

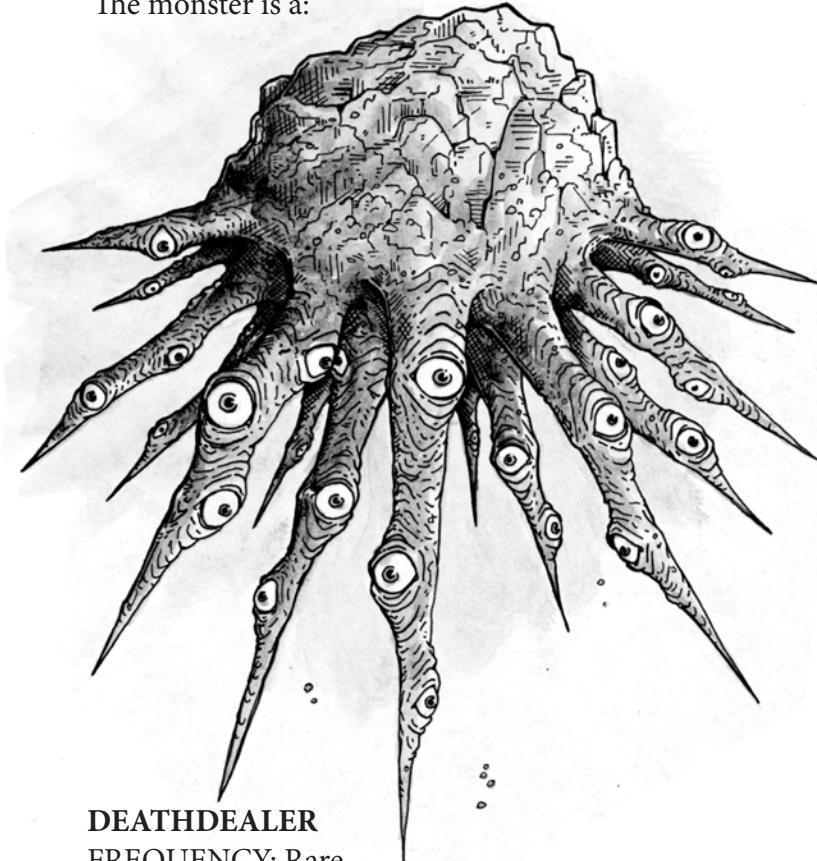
This and every room of Brokentower has walls of tightly-fitted, irregular, smooth-surfaced stone blocks, dark with old damp water-seepage stains.

The moment any player mentions their character is looking up, that PC will see what looks like a floating black curtain on the ceiling that is slowly peeling back to stage left, revealing lots of tiny glistening round things amid more darkness.

Otherwise, all of the PCs will notice the descending monster when it has entirely turned over to reveal its eye-studded spines, and is silently dropping down on them from above.

This guardian **DEATHDEALER** is a silent flying predator Malexineuss captured in a place distant indeed from Middlesmith, a “new monster” to the PCs. His spells keep it confined in the Tower Hall, and he keeps it hungry, so it will attack any living creature not wearing a warding talisman (Tlaggar and Malexineuss both wear one).

The monster is a:



DEATHDEALER

FREQUENCY: Rare

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 4/8 (spiny side)

MOVE: 2"/12"

HIT DICE: 5+5

% IN LAIR: 80%

TREASURE TYPE: J, K, L, M, N, Q (all ingested)

NO. OF ATTACKS: 9

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1-4 x8/4-16

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Spell reflection

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

INTELLIGENCE: Low (average)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

SIZE: L

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

ATTACK/DEFENSE MODES: Nil

This slowly flying flexible hemispherical predator lairs in stony ruins, caverns, and subterranean areas, resting with its mottled gray “stony” (AC 4) side away from the stone. When it senses nearby movement or hears sound, it stealthily rolls up one of its edges enough to expose some eyes. If it sees prey it thinks it can overcome, it will turn over in the air to put its spiny side downwards, and silently descend, to attack. A Deathdealer flies or hovers constantly. It resembles an upside-down spiny urchin (a bulging hemisphere of long, sharp black spines, flat on its stony top), each spine being studded with three small eyes (white sclera, yellow iris, scarlet pupil) spaced irregularly down its length. The number of spines a Deathdealer possesses varies from 16 to 42 depending on its size (they grow larger over time and the amount of prey consumed), but only 8 will be used for combat at any one time, and spines damaged or lost in an encounter won’t be “replaced in action” for 24 hours after the encounter.

These black thorny spines vary in length, and can be partially retracted into the Deathdealer’s body to protect them, or to add extra force to a thrusting re-emergence, but their maximum extended length is 12 feet. All of the spines bend in swivel joints at their bases, where they join the Deathdealer’s leathery black underbody, and halfway down their length is a swivel-joint elbow; they can move independently like a forest of blade-wearing swordarms, and the creature can aim and “stab” with them. If fighting a lone prey, the Deathdealer will “fold down around it” (not constricting or fully closing, but curving itself to form an inverted bowl) and stab with all 8 spines; if fighting more than one creature, the Deathdealer customarily engages each with 2-4 spines. Each spine parries and maneuvers, and stabs once per round.

The underbody of a Deathdealer can draw back iris-like in its center to reveal a many-fanged maw, but these creatures bite only in desperation, or when prey is immobilized or reduced to staggering helplessness by having been pierced repeatedly with its spines.

Any non-area-effect spell (not magic item discharge, or touch spell) cast at a Deathdealer is treated as if affected by a ring of spell turning (ichor from these creatures is used in the making of most rings of spell turning, and so is very valuable).

Malexineuss’s **Deathdealer** has 42 hp. It won’t willingly leave the Tower Hall, and will attack PCs persistently due to its hunger—but if brought to 6 hp or

less, it will break off combat and try to flee up out of the PCs’ reach, moving to inaccessibly lofty areas. Anyone who sends a spell at it will become a prime target to it, attacked before characters who don’t throw magic at it. It is as smart and as experienced as a cunning human backalley layabout.

If any PC approaches any exit to the Tower Hall within their arm’s reach, aside from the five-faces doors the PCs all first came in through, a recurring illusion spell will manifest. (It isn’t Malexineuss’s finest work, but something that was cast here long before his arrival by an unknown mage, that at first annoyed him but that he then saw the usefulness of, and bolstered.)

A faintly chuckling shadow will drift down out of literally nowhere in front of the PC, and coalesce into an amorphous dark drifting mass, like a small cloud of smoke, that thrusts forward clawing skeletal hands and grinning skull faces. These are ghostly and insubstantial; they will drift after the PC, repeatedly rising up into the PC’s face to paw at the PC, chuckling faintly but repeatedly in a sinister and menacing manner.

Everyone will see these manifestations, but they follow and concentrate on the PC or PCs they first appeared to (if multiple characters approach various exits from the room, one of these “clouds of skulls and skeletal hands” will appear to each of them). The skeletal fingers and heads pass right through PCs, but chill them in doing so. They do no actual damage, are harmless, and once the PC “attached” to one such effect leaves the Tower Hall, the effect will follow them into the next area but start to fade, and after 6 rounds in the new area or the PC’s move into another area beyond that—whichever happens first—the effect will fade away entirely (and not return, for that PC, until at least 24 hours have passed, and thereafter the PC enters the Tower Hall again and approaches any exit from it except the five-faces doors).

The door in the wall of the Tower Hall on the PCs’ left opens into the Goblet Closet. The door in the center or back wall leads into the Back Hall. The door in the right-hand wall opens into the Spiral Stair Chamber.

D. Goblet Closet

The door on the left opens into a small (15-foot-square), windowless room with a glowing gold gob-

let sitting on a pedestal. (And a small closed wooden door behind it, in the back wall.) The door is a fake, and the goblet—looks like a tall brandy snifter; very large bowl—is real (and worth 250 gp), but is a rather obvious trap. The moment its weight is removed from the pedestal, the pedestal rises an inch or so, releasing a catch—and the ceiling falls. That ceiling is a **GE-LATINOUS CUBE**. (It will land on anyone inside the room unless they are right against the far wall with the false door.)

Gelatinous Cube: 20 hp. Touched creatures save versus paralyzation or be immobilized for 5d4 rounds; cube dissolves surrounded creatures 2d4-hp-worth/round (cube immune to electricity, hold and sleep and polymorph magics, fear effects, paralyzation; if it fails save against cold, it dissolves for only 1d4 hp/per round and is slowed to half movement rate). Suspended inside this cube are a standard all-metal mace, a normal dagger, 16 copper pieces, and 1 silver piece.

E-G. Back Hall

The door in the center rear wall of the Tower Hall opens into the Back Hall, a large square (50' x 50') windowless room (ceiling 60 feet up) with an open, rail-less stone stair curving up the wall on the character's left, and another descending down the right side wall into unseen depths. Right in the center of the room sits a small (1-foot-square) black iron chest, bound about with iron reinforcing strapping and corner-caps. It is latched closed, but lacks a lock.

Three **SKELETONS** brandishing swords and wearing rusty shields and helms guard this room, and will attack all intruders. The center skeleton has a strange blue-white spinning glow in its ribcage, where its heart once was.

Skeletons: 6, 6, 6 hp. AC 7, 1d6 sword attack, shields and helms are so rusty they crumble at PC attacks, immune to sleep, charm, hold and cold magics, attack until destroyed, these skeletons can't be turned or dispelled thanks to Malexineuss's unique animation spells; skeletons take half damage from edged and pointed weapons. The spinning glow is a spell reflection magic crafted by Malexineuss that sends magic directed at the central skeleton only right back at its source. It will also visibly "heal" the skeleton of (only) the first round of damage it suffers.

The chest is, of course, a trap. If left alone, nothing happens. If opened, it proves to be not only empty, but firmly bolted to the floor (four bolts sunk into the stone)—but the act of opening it opens a drop-hatch directly above it, in the ceiling 60 feet above, and down out of that swoops four flying black wraith-like things resembling blank-faced heads attached to shoulders of smoke that tail off into teardrop-shaped bodies, that dart around the room, highly maneuverable and seemingly very curious about the PCs. They will race up right in front of a PC, repeatedly, and hang there in the air in front of the PCs' face, just watching. If not touched, nothing else will happen, and they'll swoop away again, only to return in another charge, up to that PC or another one. They'll continue this until the PCs all depart the Back Hall, whereupon they'll fly back up to the small storage niche they came from, and its hatch will swing up closed again—and if not too damaged, the chest will close again, too.

These weird magical guardians are actually an unintelligent spell, not undead or monsters. They do nothing at all unless touched by magic or an item—including, of course, weapon attacks—which all have the same result: whenever one of these



swooping “faceless rushing smokemen” is contacted, a mouth will open in its featureless head and gout out 3 blue-white bolts. These are magic missiles dealing 1d4+1 hp damage each, that will fly at the source of the contact, dodging and turning if need be, to attack just as magic missiles from the spell of the same name do.

The stair up out of the Back Hall ascends 60 feet to a closed plain wooden door that lacks any lock, and has a ring-handle (that must be twisted to unlatch it; the door opens inwards, into Tlaggar’s Room). The stair down from the Back Hall descends 80 feet to the Well Cellar.

F. Tlaggar’s Room

(immediately see **What Tlaggar Does** on following page)

This 40-foot-square room is lit by a soft, continual yellow-orange faerie fire-like radiance emanating from the ceiling. The walls of the room are covered with whitewashed render (stucco) painted with random roses and stylized, curving wooden trunks, boughs, and branches of trees. In the center of the back wall of the room is a closed stout wooden door of dark oak boards with cross-strapping.

Along the left-hand wall (from the characters’ point of view as they stand in the doorway at the top of the stair) stands a simple wooden bed covered with overlapping quilts and a pillow.

(If examined, the bed will be found to be covered with three worn quilts and a sheet, over a straw ticking mattress and a pillow stuffed with old rags and clothes; inside the pillow is hidden a closed book: a spellbook containing the spells Comprehend Languages, Dancing Lights, Detect Magic, Identify, Light, Magic Missile, Read Magic, Shield, Unseen Servant, Write, Continual Light, Invisibility, Web, and 6 blank pages.) Under the bed is a stout metal chamberpot (squat widemouth jug with sturdy handle); it’s empty. Behind the chamberpot lies an open-ended scroll tube (made of a length of polished bone from a cow’s leg) with rolled-up scraps of parchment inside. If examined, these prove to be three drawings of beautiful and provocatively posed and smiling unclad human females (Tlaggar’s private entertainment cache).

In the center of the room is a woven cloth rug, on which stands a rather rickety wooden chair and a 2’ x 5’ trestle table—upon which rests several (3, plus a

torn-off half-sheet, the other half of which is missing) sheets of blank parchment and a wire stand that holds a bottle of black squid ink and three quill pens. Across the room from the bed, nigh the right-hand wall, stands a stout wooden pole with long, up-angled projecting arms. This clothes rack is almost hidden under three tunics, two pairs of breeches, and two ankle-length robes, all hanging on it. Among its four protruding wooden foot-braces sit two pairs of well-worn slippers, a muddy pair of wooden clog shoes, and a muddy pair of knee-high farmers’ (coarsely made of overlapping sewn-together oiled hide) boots. The door in the back wall lacks a lock; it opens by twisting a pull-handle (like the entry door of Tlaggar’s room) to release a catch in the frame, and opening away from the PCs, into the unknown space beyond—which in this case is a 10-foot-wide, 10-foot-high stone passage running straight away for thirty feet to a dark fabric curtain.

The first ten feet of this passage looks solid, but even a confident and casual PC should notice that there are three seams running all the way across the floor of the passage: one at the end of the ten feet, one ten feet farther on, and a thinner seam midway between them. This is an obvious pit trap; any weight put on this second 10-foot section of the floor will cause the floor to fold down as two stone slab doors, dropping anyone on them into a 20-foot-deep, stone-lined, empty (of all but old bloodstains) pit trap (1d4 falling damage) and staying open.

The next ten feet of passage look solid, but are in fact another pit trap, the entire ten foot floor slab hinged at the far end to drop at the touch of any weight. The moment that floor-flap is down, spilling anyone on it into another 20-foot-deep, stone-lined, empty pit trap (for 1d4 falling damage), the ceiling above this second pit trap will fall open as another ten-foot-square slab, to let down a large stone block on an ancient, rusty, and massive chain. It plummets down onto anyone in this pit trap, smashing for 2d6 crushing damage, then ratchets back up into the ceiling, hidden clockwork pulling its ceiling door closed again.

These traps all look—and are—far too old to be Malexineuss’s doing. All he’s done is replace the curtain at the end of this passage with a fresh one, two overlapping and gorgeous fabric hangings that resemble the entrance to a luxurious bedchamber.

Unfortunately for persistent adventurers, this curtain is yet another trap: it hangs five feet in front of a

stone wall pierced with an array of twelve holes, concealing that wall. Tugging on or disturbing the curtain in any way causes 12 ballista bolts (giant all-metal crossbow bolts that strike for $3d4+1$ damage each) to be shot out of the holes and down the passage straight across Tlaggar's room—and through anyone standing in the way. (Tlaggar knows about these deadly things, and will endeavor not to be so situated. He also knows that the lowest bolt fires three feet off the floor, and so will hurl himself flat to the floor if he can, if standing in danger.) After the bolts fire, the mechanism will noisily reset itself, ready to fire a second dozen-bolt volley if the curtains or the wires they hang on are disturbed, but that's all the ammunition they have. This wall can be unlocked with two different keys Malexineuss wears around his neck, and swung open as a door to reach a small room beyond where the metal ballistae stand, but the walls of this innermost chamber are solid.

The flagstones of its floor can be lifted to reveal a shallow storage niche containing only mildewed blankets wrapped around an unlabeled stainless steel vial (cork stoppered and wax sealed; a Potion of Healing that restores $2d4+2$ lost hp if imbibed).

The ceiling slabs of this inner chamber can also be removed, to reveal a small hidden room above. It is empty of all but the scattered bones of a human skeleton (that will whirl up as if to become a standing skeleton if anyone enters or looks up into the space, but then collapse with a sigh again; not undead, just the bones of some long-dead unfortunate that are under a feeble experimental enchantment of Malexineuss's). However, solid stone surrounds both this room and the ballista armory below; there's no way up or onward from this point.

What Tlaggar Does

Tlaggar has heard the PCs coming up the stair, and has just made himself invisible when they arrive. He'll try to slip out past them and down the stair, so as to be able to attack them with magic missiles when the survivors of the traps try to leave again. If detected, he will try to fight his way onto the stair and web the doorway closed to give himself time to flee into the forest and get away. He will use his web spell and magic missiles in the fighting, if need be.

If captured or overcome but not killed, he will beg for his life and eagerly tell the PCs all he knows about Malexineuss's defenses and vile water-poisoning (he doesn't know the precise proportions of the ingredients, but knows everything else, having been ordered to gather the ingredients and help Malexineuss prepare them).

Tlaggar will urgently tell the PCs about the traps beyond the door at the back of his room, not wanting to be killed if they walk into those traps and get enraged with him for not warning them.

Tlaggar Helvard: AC 7 (cloth robes, Dex 17 AC bonus) and 14 hp, CN human male Magic-User 4th level, Spells: 3,2: memorized Magic Missile x3; Web (other slot was Invisibility, just used).

Tlaggar wears ankle-length robes; a plain copper triangular ("chevron" shaped) talisman around his neck (that keeps Malexineuss's monsters from attacking him); a belt festooned with small material component pouches and a dagger in a sheath that's sleep poisoned (Tlaggar and Malexineuss are immune to this poison, which is of Malexineuss's making, but the first two slashes and stabs of this dagger



will force a save against poison on the target, or instant collapse into a 1d4+2 hour sleep will result); a baldric with an empty “backpack” satchel (used for fetching things like firewood for Malexineuss); underwear (tied-waistband muslin shorts); and soft-hide-soled slippers.

Tlaggar fears Malexineuss rather than respecting him or being truly loyal to him, and is not a devious or nasty person by nature, though he is secretive. He knows about the monsters of Brokentower, but no details of traps or the like, because he’s been ordered to keep away and not spy on his master or areas he’s been told to steer clear of, and out of fear has obeyed.

H. Well Cellar Stair

These steep, damp stone steps descend 80 feet from the Back Hall to open directly into the Well Cellar (no door). The stone block walls lining the stair give way to solid rock in the lowest thirty feet of the descent.

However, 40 feet down, at the midpoint of the descent, stony-looking tentacles will suddenly shoot up in a waving wall right in front of the foremost PC, appearing to sprout from the step—and will then attack.

This is a THULMAIR, another of Malexineuss’s installed guardian monsters from afar (i.e. it’s a “new monster” to all of the PCs). It won’t reveal itself to items tossed or tumbling down the stair, spells sent down the stair, or missiles, just to the advance of characters not wearing one of the chevron talismans (that can be found around necks of both Tlaggar and Malexineuss). It will fight until destroyed or until PCs retreat, never budging from its spot on the stair.

A Thulmair looks like stone, and has a very hard grayish hide that it can turn soft as it wills, and so “flow” up and down stairs and along the ground. It habitually finds a spot with traffic, such as a passage or stair, and spreads itself out on the floor, thinning itself and seeking areas of bad lighting, so it can take passing creatures by surprise, thrusting six stone-hued tentacles up into the air with surprising speed and then lashing out with them as if they ended in fists. It pummels foes with solid blows, seeking to batter them to death or helplessness, then “flows” over them, covering them, and opens many tiny biting mouths in its hide and eats (“nibbling” for 4d6 hp per round). It will only open its mouths when atop immobile creatures; otherwise, its mouths will never

be seen.

A thulmair explodes when slain, bursting into a deadly 20'-radius sphere of stony shards (creatures within 10' suffer 2d8+1 hp damage, no saving throw; those between 10' to 20' away take 2d6 damage, but are allowed a save vs. petrification or polymorph for half damage).



THULMAIR

FREQUENCY: Rare

NO. APPEARING: 1

ARMOR CLASS: 5

MOVE: 3"

HIT DICE: 7+7

% IN LAIR: Nil

TREASURE TYPE: Nil

NO. OF ATTACKS: 6

DAMAGE/ATTACK: 2-8 x6

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Dying burst, nibbling

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Nil

MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

INTELLIGENCE: Low (average)

ALIGNMENT: Neutral

SIZE: L

PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil

ATTACK/DEFENSE MODES: Nil

I. Well Cellar

(There are two immediate responses to PCs entering this chamber; please read below right away.)

At the bottom of its steep 80-foot descent down into cold dark dankness, the rail-less stone stair from the Back Hall opens out directly into this large room (there's no door).

The unlit room is damp and carved entirely out of solid bedrock. It is 50 feet square and it 20 feet high. The stair enters the center of one wall and a 8 foot diameter circular stone well (surrounded by a 3 foot high, 1 foot thick wall) stands in the exact center of the room.

Above the well, a cylindrical stone pulley-spar juts 10 feet down from the ceiling, ending in a pulley that has rope through it, one end descending into the well (ending in a bucket currently hanging partway down the shaft, which is 70 feet down to icy-cold, clear drinkable water), and the other to a long coil on the floor beside the well, that's tied to a massive ring-bolt set in the floor. (There are 160 feet of stout rope in all and the ring-bolt is solidly affixed to the stone floor.)

The room is otherwise bare, except that two large (6-foot-tall, 4-foot-diameter-at-widest) closed wooden barrels stand upright in one corner.

The moment more than one PC enters the room (or only one enters but then starts to leave), the hungry monster that Malexineuss recently placed here (and hid with an enchantment that will fade away when the monster attacks) will shoot out strands to try to snare the adventurers.

The monster is a ROPER, and it's wrapped around the pulley-spar and hanging head downwards (it can't be made to peel off and fall down the well until it's dead, and in its gizzard are only 6 platinum pieces). It will attack furiously and its strands can reach everywhere in the room and 20 feet up the stairs. It will pull the top off one of the barrels to free a cloud of 8 STIRGES to attack the PCs while they're fighting the Roper (there's nothing else in the barrel except a black-gooey mass of tangled sticks; a "stirge nest" or floor for the creatures, atop several feet of foul-smelling black goo, which is stirge dung). The upper half of the stirge barrel has some narrow gaps between its boards (which is how the stirges can breathe), and so can't be used to store anything liquid or small and granular.

The second barrel is identical in appearance, but is

still watertight, and contains no stirges or their mess. Instead, it's full of drinkable water, a backup supply should something happen to the well. If tipped over, it won't split or leak; it will have to be pried open or attacked for at least two blows from a weapon to do that. Being full of water, it is heavy and if set to rolling, it has enough momentum to "steamroll" a creature or shatter itself on the well-wall and send splintering barrel-staves and water everywhere. A combined Strength of 60, and at least three minutes of grunting and sweating, is required to lug it up the stairs.

Roper: 66 hp (10 HD). AC 0, 5d4 bite, shoots 6 sticky strands up to 50' foot, strand hit causes prey weakness (poison: lose half of Str in 1-3 rounds), strands drag prey 10 feet closer every round, but can be broken on an Open Doors roll. Immune to lightning, take half damage from cold, but is -4 on saves versus fire.

Stirges: 9, 8, 7, 7, 7, 7, 6, 6 hp. AC 8, attacks as 4 HD creature for 1-3 proboscis "sting" thereafter drains 1d4 hp-worth of blood per round until sated at 12 hp (satiation or killing only way to detach).

The severed head of a dead warrior (whose body is elsewhere), encased in a metal helm, will silently rise from behind the barrels the moment a PC enters the chamber. It will float in midair until the Roper attacks, then begin to swoop around the chamber, hovering annoyingly beside PCs and apparently watching them intently. This is an unfinished magical experiment of Malexineuss's, and is only a harmless distraction, not undead (and it doesn't yet have any powers; a deft PC might be able to catch it and wrest the intact, good-condition metal helm off; the magical flying is cast on the head, not the helm). If not destroyed or confined by the PCs, it will follow the PCs throughout Brokentower (and at the DM's option, out into the forest and beyond).

There is no other way out of this room (visible or otherwise) aside from the stair.

J. Spiral Stair Chamber

The door in the right-hand wall of the Tower Hall opens into the only safe way upwards (the route Malexineuss uses, but discourages others from using with a spell).

This smallish, square (20' x 20') windowless room contains a plain wooden chair with a plain wooden

table beside it. Two pairs of muddy boots are under the table, and an unlit, half-full (oil and wick) metal storm lantern sits on it, with two weather-cloaks draped over the table edge beside the lantern (they're both unpleasantly damp). There's no means of lighting the lantern in the room. The room also contains a clouded polished metal mirror hanging on a wooden peg on the wall (rectangular, and about the size of a smallish man's armor breastplate).

If the table and chair are both examined closely, slots will be found on their undersides that have tiny wooden pieces wedged into them. If pulled out, the hiding place of a key will be revealed; each slot contains one key (to nothing in this adventure).

There's no downbound stair in this room, but at the back of the chamber a spiral stair ascends. At the ceiling, it vanishes into a magical glowing cloud: an opaque mass of roiling, flickering orange-tinged-with-emerald green smoke, from which ghostly whispering voices speak, repeatedly, saying things like:

“Worship the wizard.”

and:

“It is death to disobey Malexineuss The Terrible.”

and:

“Turn back while you still can.”

and:

“This way lies death.”

and:

“You are doomed . . . doomed.”

and:

“Surrender and live; continue on and you shall die horribly.”

The cloud won't dissipate, no matter what the PCs do. It is one of Malexineuss's unique spells, intended to make intruders retreat and encounter the monsters and traps he's furnished Brokentower with. It has the following effects on all PCs (not Malexineuss or Tlaggar) who pass through it (if they successfully save versus magic, rolling for each effect separately, that effect will only last for one round; otherwise, all effects last until the character leaves Brokentower):

- The PC's body, clothing, weapons, and gear all glow with a soft amber faerie fire light.
- Any PC who casts a spell (successful or otherwise, and every time) will levitate helplessly up to strike the ceiling (1 hp damage), then fall from ceiling to floor as the levitation abruptly ends (1-2 hp damage, odd/even roll).

- Any item that is magical (or has magic cast on it, or contains magic) will begin to pulse with a continuous flashing purple radiance.
- Any one item of PC clothing or gear (one per character; determine randomly) will begin to melt away, disintegrating entirely in 1d6+1 rounds.

If adventurers ascend through the cloud, they will reach the Spell Chamber.

K. Spell Chamber

This hexagonal stone-walled room has 20-foot-long walls, with the stair entering in one corner and another ascending spiral stair directly cross the room in another corner (this stair has no magical cloud, but is surrounded by tiny tinkling bells hanging on fine wires; it's impossible to climb it without disturbing enough air to make the bells chime, warning anyone in the room above—Malexineuss's Bedchamber—of your approach).

The ceiling of this room is thirty feet up, all sorts of faint, overlapping and mystical-looking symbols and runes have been chalked on the floor at various times, and there are scorch marks and dye-stains everywhere (walls, floor, and ceiling).

There's a small three-legged wooden stool sitting alone on the floor of this otherwise empty room.

When PCs enter, the stool will rise into the air and hover there, menacingly. If any PC touches it, it's just a stool. If PCs ignore it, nothing will happen. However, if any PC casts a spell at it, hits it with any missile or thrown item, or starts climbing the stair hung about with bells, the stool will race at that PC, and when it reaches them, burst as a 10-diameter, 3d6 hp-damage fireball.

L. Malexineuss's Bedchamber

The spiral stair hung with the hundreds of tiny bells ascends 20 feet above the ceiling of the Spell Chamber, directly into this bedroom (no door at the top of the stair) in the highest point of Brokentower. The bedroom is 20 feet square, and has a canopied fourposter bed jutting out from one corner, air heavy with perfume, a wardrobe full of outrageous lingerie in another corner (that Malexineuss himself likes to wear in the privacy of his own home), and a floating glowing globe light fixture that hovers at the ceiling (with Malexineuss's spellbook balanced on top of it)

and moves only in accordance with Malexineuss's concentrated will.

Along another wall is a dressing table strewn with feather boas and hand-mirrors, a small forest of glass perfume bottles. A luxurious lounge-chair is drawn up to this table.

A plainer, sturdier wooden table sits in another corner, and on it are ewers and bowls of water, and heaps of roots and toadstools (see below).

M. What Malexineuss Does

Malexineuss himself is lounging in bed eating chocolates from a glazed clay jar. He has a large, narrow, "sharp" nose, beady eyes, a bushy black uni-brow, a habit of constantly batting his eyelashes when speaking, a tendency to tilt his head to look sidelong at people, a habit of flouncing, and he usually speaks quickly, loudly, and with sneering contempt. Abed, he is barefoot and sockless, and wears daringly-cut diaphanous silk robes made for a bosomy woman (sans underwear).

Malexineuss has been forewarned by the bells and the stool-fireball in the room below, and the moment he sees any intrusion by the PCs or anything they throw, he finishes casting a wall of force spell to wall his bed off from the rest of the room (leaving a foot-wide gap at the top to direct his spells through; PCs will have to get through that gap to reach him, if they can't bring the spell down; it lasts 19 minutes (1 turn plus 9 rounds).

Nevertheless, Malexineuss will still be horrified to see the PCs—not a few foolish strays, but formidable foes!—and will fight them from behind his wall, not caring what happens to anything in his room. He is somewhat hampered by being alone, and not having even a dagger easily to hand. His weapons are his spells and his long sharp fingernails (the nails on the smallest fingers of each hand are clipped to sleep-poisoned points; struck PC's must save against poison or collapse instantly into a 1d4+2 hour-long sleep).

Once behind his wall of force, Malexineuss will hurl magic missiles (each spell generates 5 of the blue-white streaking bolts, each dealing 1d4+1 hp damage) at the most formidable-looking or dangerous-acting PCs until those spells are all gone.

Then he will do one of two things: if the PCs are aggressively trying to reach him or casting spells, he'll lightning bolt them, climbing one of the posts of his fourposter and lying on the canopy to do so.

If the PCs are obviously stymied by his wall of force, Malexineuss will take a round to concentrate his will and move the glowing globe from the center of the room to the safety of his side of the wall of force (to get his spellbook to safety). This should tip off the PCs to the presence of the gap at the top of the wall that they can use to get at him.

The moment his spellbook is safe, Malexineuss will cast a wall of fire at the far end of the room (where the stair the PCs used comes up) and then move it towards his wall of force, to "sweep over" the PCs. Then he'll push it back through them again in the next round, only to pull it back over them a round later (and so on, repeatedly).

His hold, charm monster, and web spells will thereafter be used to immobilize individual PCs before he drops his wall of force and either flees or uses his sleep poison on immobilized PCs, before fetching a dagger from Tlaggar to finish them off. Or so the battle will go if he can proceed as he pleases; the PCs will almost certainly have other ideas.

Malexineuss's fourposter is a grand wooden bed with curving, upswept ends and four stout turned posts that sport many decorative bulges and flaring ridges (that make them very easily climbed), and support a rigid wooden panel canopy (enshrouded in belling-out silks on its underside, and a silk-encased thin mattress on its upper surface). The sides of the canopy have projecting railings that side-curtains for the bed slide along (two curtains on each side, sewn around metal pull-rods down their side edges). All four posts flare into wide wooden rings to support the canopy (which is sturdy enough to support five or six brawling humans, and large enough to easily support four sleeping humans at once) but also pierce through the canopy (holding it in place, so it can't slide and topple) and thrust up towards the ceiling, which is four feet above the canopy. All four posts project a foot above the canopy, ending in polished wooden pointed "spire" finials.

All of the finials lift off their posts to reveal carved-out cylindrical storage spaces inside the posts (the finials have peg-shaped bottom ends that fit these spaces, but there's storage space below each finial).

Each storage space has a homespun cloth bag in it with a leather-thong drawstring top. The contents of these bags are as follows:

- PCs' left foot-end of bed (i.e. closest to PCs): the bag contains Malexineuss's "ready money" of 6 cp, 4 sp,

39 gp, and 7 pp.

- PCs' right foot-end of bed (i.e. closest to PCs): this sack holds three spare "plain copper chevron" warding talismans that prevent the monsters of Broken-tower from attacking the wearer (or even approaching too closely; a PC wearing one can by careful movement force a monster to back away into a desired area or even doorway, so yes, the beasts can be herded and shut away), plus a plain brass ring (a ring of water walking).

- PC's left head-end of bed: this bag contains three unlabeled, identical stainless steel vials (cork stoppered and wax sealed; each is a Potion of Healing that restores 2d4+2 lost hp if imbibed) and a fourth vial, otherwise identical, labeled "Antidote." If drunk, it acts as a neutralize poison potion.

- PC's right head-end of bed: this sack is home to a slender rectangular walnut-wood box, dark-stained and polished soft, an unattached lid that lifts off the bottom to reveal a foot-long, tapering stick of polished (ash) wood with a word engraved on its butt: "Hazaram." This is a wand of lightning, and "Hazaram" is its command word. It has only 5 charges left (1d10 hp "shock" when hitting as melée weapon, uses 1 charge; 6d6 lightning bolt but treat all 1 rolls as 2s, uses 2 charges).

The entire ceiling of Malexineuss's bedchamber, four feet above the canopy of his bed, is covered by a pattern of diamond-shaped stone tiles. Not even very careful close scrutiny will reveal that one of them, directly above the PC's-left bedhead post finial, can be slid lengthwise to free it from lips on two of the adjacent tiles that hold it in place, to reveal a semi-circular stone latch in the ceiling. If this is pulled, a catch is released and a cluster of four tiles immediately to the PC's right of the latch (in other words, above Malexineuss's bed) will swing down on hidden hinges like a door, to reveal an opening a little larger across than a lean adult human's torso. This is the way into a 10'-diameter, 4'-tall circular secret storeroom above Malexineuss's bedchamber.

In the storeroom is a latched but lockless wooden strongchest (flat-topped brassbound rectangular wooden chest with rope handles at both ends) that contains small sacks of flour and walnuts and dried cranberries (a food cache). The walls of this small area have loose stones in them that aren't easily spotted unless a search of the walls is made; behind these stones are small storage niches

filled with small muslin bags of coins—lots of coins: 28 sacks of 50 gp each.

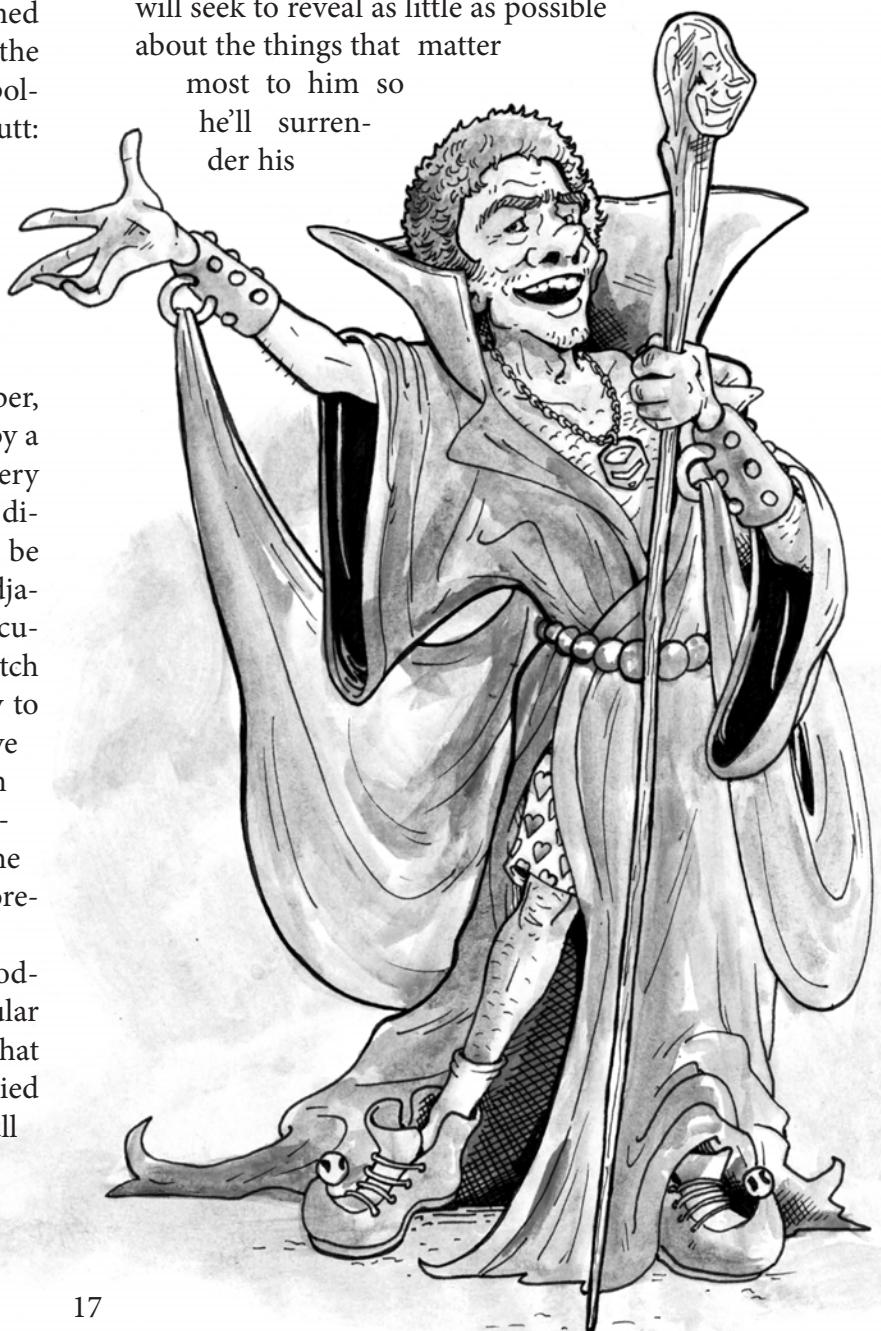
The Essential Malexineuss

Malexineuss is an exhibitionist and hedonist, who loves sensual pleasures of all kinds, from sexual to devouring rich chocolate to rolling around naked in soft furs. He loves to act outrageous, to prance and speak loudly and pose, drawling and flirting and saying provocative things. He blows kisses, sneers, mimics people to their faces, and sings little ditties.

He's a bully who tries to push people into obeying him or giving in to him—but is also a coward and a lickspittle, who toadies to those he sees as stronger; if the PCs defeat him, he will genuinely fawn and be servile towards them. At the same time, he will seek to reveal as little as possible about the things that matter

most to him so

he'll surren-
der his



spellbook but say not a willing word about his “special” spells, yield up his “ready money” but not his big cache hidden in the ceiling, and so on).

Greed and power are Malexineuss’s main motivations; he must have more, and he must push people around. After that, enjoying his “pleasures” is something of daily importance, and that can include anything from rolling around moaning on furs while he gorges himself on sweets or chocolate, to buying the company of multiple ladies and then lazily doing nothing but lie there while they caress him.

Malexineuss has a vicious side, and delights in killing people with his spells or better still his monsters, but dislikes “soiling his hands” with direct combat, or for that matter hard work of any sort.

To succeed in their mission, the PCs mustn’t slay Malexineuss until they’ve talked with him, but the DM has no obligation to remind them of that.

Malexineuss the Pretender: AC 6 (silk robes without footwear or underwear, *Bracers of Defense AC6*) and 32 hp, CE human male Magic User 9th level, Spells: 4,3,3,2,1: memorized *Magic Missile* x4; *Detect Invisibility*, *Strength*, *Web*; *Hold Person* x2, *Lightning Bolt* (9d6); *Charm Monster*, *Wall of Fire*; sole 5th level spell was *Wall of Force*, just cast.

Spellbook contents: *Affect Normal Fires*, *Charm Person*, *Comprehend Languages*, *Dancing Lights*, *Detect Magic*, *Identify*, *Jump*, *Light*, *Magic Missile*, *Read Magic*, *Shield*, *Spider Climb*, *Unseen Servant*, *Write/Continual Light*, *Detect Invisibility*, *Invisibility*, *Knock*, *Levitate*, *Locate Object*, *Rope Trick*, *Strength*, *Web/Clairaudience*, *Dispel Magic*, *Feign Death*, *Fireball*, *Hold Person*, *Lightning Bolt*, *Monster Summoning I*, *Tongues*, *Water Breathing*/*Charm Monster*, *Monster Summoning II*, *Wall of Fire*, *Wall of Ice*, *Wizard Eye/Animate Dead*, *Cone of Cold*, *Feeblemind*, *Hold Monster*, *Monster Summoning III*, *Stone Shape*, *Telekinesis*, *Teleport*, *Wall of Force*.

(Malexineuss’s experimental spells and “special” spells are well hidden out in the forest, in a box with a deadly poisonous spider in it, and he’ll die before revealing where they’re hidden.)

Malexineuss wears his daringly-cut diaphanous silk robes; and has a plain copper triangular (“chevron” shaped) talisman around his neck (that magically wards off all of the monsters he’s installed in Bro-

kentower). Lying within reach on the bed is his belt (festooned with small material component pouches), and under the bed are his underwear (mauve silk shorts); and a pair of soft-hide-soled slippers.

Malexineuss will cower before the PCs if they conquer him, and beg to serve them as their slave forevermore. With his dying breath, or after he is subdued, he’ll boast about just how he created the Sickening.

Malexineuss has been tainting the water sources villagers draw their water from (ponds, streams, the maws of their pumps) with a mixture of toadstools and forest roots he knows of (but no villager is familiar with: the right proportions of boiled bogwort root, powdered flower of five-leaf swampseal, and the boiled essence of fairytail toadstool, blackbarb toadstool, and thlickmurr toadstool {note: these are all imaginary plants}). This tasteless, soluble mixture causes their internal organs to all act up, the brain most of all . . . and the symptoms will all die away if affected persons stop drinking tainted water, and are bathed in, and ingest, pure water again. A few individuals will be slow to succumb or even naturally immune. Malexineuss has been sneaking out at night and adding his poison to village water sources; when he stops doing so, the villagers will slowly begin to recover.

Endgame

The PCs can either walk back through the forest to reach Middlesmith, or return to the table and be teleported back into The Gamehole, in the Free House Inn & Tavern.

If the PCs can honestly tell the village elders waiting in the inn below that they have defeated Malexineuss and learned how to end the Sickening, they will be set free, pardoned for all of their past crimes and allowed to keep the items they chose in The Gamehole and anything they gained during their adventure. It’s time for triumphal feasting and drinking!

The elders will have in their company Thurandlon Haumradorr, an outlander priest (of any good-aligned healing and justice deity the DM desires). Thurandlon will be using detect lie spells on the PCs when the elders question them as to what they saw and did, but he will be quite willing to aid PCs with cure serious wounds or even raise dead, for free (Middlesmith’s coffers will pay). If the PCs try to deceive the elders, they will be sternly denounced, overcome with spells, and returned to jail.



YOUR ADVENTURING CAREER HAS NOT GONE AS PLANNED. INSTEAD OF WEALTH AND FAME, YOU FIND YOURSELF IN JAIL IN A SMALL NOWHERE TOWN CALLED MIDDLESMITH. FATE HAS SERVED YOU ONE CRUEL TWIST AFTER ANOTHER. YOU ARE AT ROCK BOTTOM. HOWEVER, JUST WHEN YOU ARE ABOUT TO DECIDE THAT THE ADVENTURING LIFE IS NOTHING BUT TROUBLE AND NOT FOR YOU, YOU LEARN OF AN OPPORTUNITY. YOU HEAR THAT MIDDLESMITH HAS BEEN RAVAGED BY SOME SORT OF SICKENING. THIS SICKENING HAS TAKEN MOST OF THE TOWN.

ALL EFFORTS AT TRADITIONAL AND DIVINE HEALING HAVE FAILED. IN DESPERATION, THE TOWN ELDERS HAVE TURNED TO YOU. YOU HAVE BEEN OFFERED A NEW BEGINNING, A CHANCE TO CLEAR YOUR SLATE AND A REWARD. ALL THAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS FIND A CURE FOR THE SICKENING AND SAVE THE TOWN.

HOW HARD CAN THAT BE?



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