

The Murmuring Fountain



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The Murmuring Fountain



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What You Will Find Inside *The Murmuring Fountain*

Sometimes a raven not just a raven, and those who have lost everything may do more than come a-gently tapping upon your chamber door. A missing pet, a ghostly girl, a madman in the woods; what is the strand that binds them all together at *The Murmuring Fountain*? Can your heroes quell the ghostly emanations of a tragic haunting that threaten to sow madness and tragedy.

The Murmuring Fountain is a *Pathfinder Second Edition* adventure for 1st-level characters. It can be played on its own or in combination with *The Fiddler's Lament* to form a terrifying twosome of creepy adventures to introduce an element of horror in your campaign. The Legendary Games tradition is to combine rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none. This product is the latest in that tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Check it out and **Make Your Game Legendary!**



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THE MURMURING FOUNTAIN

The Murmuring Fountain is a short adventure designed to be set in any small gothic town where low-level PCs find themselves a-hunting. The adventure does not provide enough experience in and of itself for the PCs to increase in level, but it provides several challenges and rewards, including possibly acquiring a spectral pet who bonds with one of the PCs. It also adds an optional Lovecraftian tone to a campaign that weaves elements of horror into its storyline that can be expanded upon later in the campaign, or it can simply give PCs a side mystery to solve while other adventure opportunities come into focus.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Some years ago, the traveling merchant Antrellus Varagus sought to increase his wealth and notoriety beyond his modest local successes. He made contact with robed priests of the Yellow King, a strange mystery cult who promised him power and wealth beyond his imaginings in return for his cooperation in a blasphemous rite to their alien patron, a ritual his mind did not survive, nor did his unsuspecting wife. While Antrellus believed it was he who had sought out the priests, in truth it was they who sought him, or more specifically, her. Antrellus himself was entirely irrelevant to their nefarious plans. It was the sacrifice of his wife that was their true aim, and the dawning realization of his tragic miscalculation as he sat helpless and uncomprehending robbed the merchant of his sanity.

The cultists had discovered a secret Antrellus himself did not know; his wife Marisol had been a witch in her youth, and in her adventures had discovered certain elder secrets that so horrified her that she gave up adventuring, even dismissing her familiar, and left her old life behind, taking a new name and finding contentment and eventually love with Antrellus. The servants of the Yellow King, seeking that selfsame knowledge, uncovered her trail years later, and after a few delicate inquiries were rebuffed they worked through her foolish husband, plying him with gifts and promises to join their supposedly harmless devotional meetings and to bring his wife as a guest. Once they had the couple in their clutches, their eldritch chants

called many-legged tentacular abominations from beyond. Their experiments sought to inseminate body and mind with the larval spawn of these alien horrors, enslaving them to the will of the Yellow King and his priests and extracting their secrets either willingly or excruciatingly.

The spawn implanted within Marisol engrafted itself as expected, physically and psychically bonding her as she offered up her long-suppressed knowledge to her captors. Delighted at their success, they took her as their lobotomized bond-slave, a plaything for their cultic masters. Antrellus' implantation was less successful, seemingly stillborn within him, or perhaps hibernating in a prolonged gestation. While deemed an experimental failure, Antrellus was ultimately immaterial to their goals, and the psychic shock of the ordeal and the depraved violations he and especially his wife were forced to endure seemed to break the merchant's mind quite as effectively as any supernatural torment they could have devised. They left the town and abandoned the merchant to his fate, resolving to check back on him periodically to see if their experiment ever bore fruit, and year by year that blighted embryo has grown within him, a grotesque alien parasite that has slowly consumed what little was left of his sanity as it ripened toward maturity.

Fleeing into the swampy woodlands wild, the locals now know him as Antrellus the Mad, a phantom figure creeping around the outskirts of town, gibbering and ranting about the robed priests and the many-legged beast which he saw feed that night to any disbelieving townsfolk or traveler patient enough to listen to his demented ravings. Too pitiful to slay, and too deranged to drive away permanently, Antrellus has lingered near the town for a decade. As he has done no harm to any, the pitying townsfolk grudgingly tolerate his presence, though children and old women invoke his name as a bogeyman and sometimes utter rhyming chants of warding when they see him, though in truth he has been mostly harmless, though the time is now approaching when the horror within him will hatch.

Shortly before the murder of a significant NPC in the village (such as a mayor, professor, wealthy merchant, or similar personage likely to have a collection of odd and esoteric books and relics from their travels) and subsequent arrival of the PCs in town, Antrellus observed a group of yellow-clad travelers passing through the village, one asking questions about him. Believing that these priests were the same ones responsible for his wife's death years ago and that they had returned for him (it is left open to the GM to determine if they are in fact the same cultists),



he saw one of the travelers apparently talking with a raven in the town. While the raven is the pet of one of Lereia, one the local town children, Antrellus became convinced the bird is actually the cultist's familiar. After seeing the little girl talking with the bird as well, his paranoia has cemented the notion that the girl herself is a cultist in disguise, masquerading as the child. Obsessed with the animal and believing it to be constantly watching him, he tracked it and eventually captured it at its favorite roost by the Murmuring Fountain, tying it in a sack and stuffing the squawking package under the drain grate of the fountain's lower basin. What might otherwise have been a simple act of insane compulsion, however, has become something else as eldritch energies have seeped into the town from the burgeoning haunting of the nearby prison and caused the spirit of the murdered pet raven, named Eronel in life, to awaken, along with a darker haunting at the town's heart.

PART 1: AN UNWANTED GUEST

Optionally, at the town's funeral, the GM may choose to have Antrellus the Mad watching the procession from the distance, hiding among the tombstones. A PC

who succeeds at a DC 12 Perception check spots him. He may shout some strange phrase, such as "the beast has many legs, the beast has many legs" or "from Leng they will come, it is written, you will see," and any other persons present tell the PCs to disregard his insane ramblings and that he is a harmless and pathetic madman. When the unpleasantness begins with the local toughs, Antrellus quickly departs.

SUDDENLY THERE CAME A TAPPING AT MY CHAMBER ... WINDOW (TRIVIAL 1)

On the first night the PCs are in town, they may have befriended the daughter of the murder victim after the reading of the will, and perhaps one or more PCs are up late perusing one of the strange books in their collection, there comes a tapping at a chamber window. The PCs may attempt a DC 10 Perception check to hear the tapping, and then a subsequent check (DC 15) to determine which window of the house it is coming from. If they fail the check, they misidentify the window and go to the wrong one. They hear the tapping again and may make another check until they are successful,

should they wish to continue searching for the source of the continued tapping. PCs identifying the correct window may open the curtains to reveal a spectral bird of some sort which immediately flies away. A DC 10 Nature check identifies the bird as a raven. PCs also see the spectral bird (and may identify it) if they go outside to investigate the tapping. If pursued, the raven flees.

If PCs correctly identify the window where Eronel is tapping, they may spot Antrellus lurking in the shadows (DC 17 Perception, though he is concealed from creatures lacking darkvision or low-light vision), slinking away from the house.

Eronel, Ghost Raven Creature -1

N TINY UNDEAD GHOST INCORPOREAL SPIRIT

Perception +4; **darkvision**

Languages Common (can't speak any language)

Skills Acrobatics +5, Stealth +8

Str -5, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +0, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Phantom Noises Eronel can only use *ghost sound* to create sounds he could make in life, including tapping of his beak against solid objects, rustling feathers, and cawing. Each day, Eronel may utter a single word, repeating it up to three times throughout the day; the next day, Eronel may choose a different word.

AC 15; **Fort** +2, **Ref** +8, **Will** +5

HP 6, negative healing, rejuvenation; **Immunities** death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 10 (except magical), all magical damage 5 (except force, *ghost touch* weapons, or positive)

Rejuvenation (divine, necromancy) Interring Eronel's remains and eradicating the hauntings of the Murmuring Fountain and the prison allow Eronel to move on to the afterlife.

Speed 5 feet, fly 25 feet

Melee [♦]ghostly beak +6 (agile, finesse, magical),

Damage 1d4 negative

Occult Innate Spells DC 16; **Cantrips (1st)** *ghost sound*

Developments: Attempts to harm, capture, or follow the raven are likely to be unsuccessful, due to its high Stealth and its ability to pass through solid objects while fleeing. The ghostly raven was drawn to the house

by the presence of Antrellus, his murderer, who was slinking around the manor after having seen the PCs at the burial.

XP Award: If the PCs follow the sound to the proper window and observe the raven, award the party 10 XP.

FLOWERS FOR THE DEAD (TRIVIAL 1)

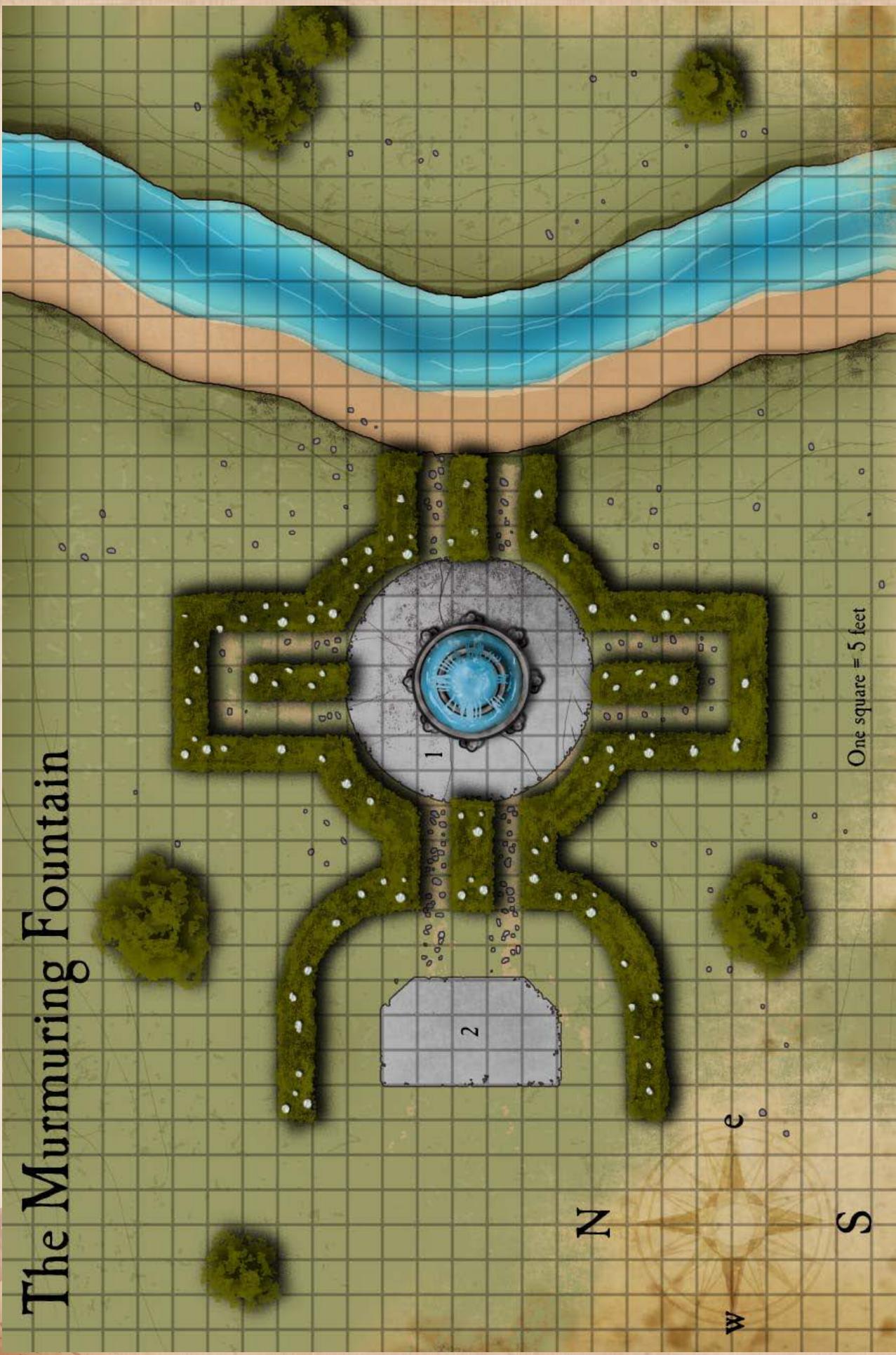
Once the haunting begins in earnest in the town and the bloody letters appear, the PCs likely begin roaming the town at night and may well take to guarding the memorial. This encounter can begin during one of their nightly patrols. Or, if they are not given to patrolling at night, they can hear local rumors of a ghostly girl who was seen in the vicinity of the Murmuring Fountain near the Memorial. If that does not move them, a young couple trysting (named Bryn and Mellum) sees her the next night while trysting near the fountain; fleeing in panic, they beg help of the town guards and the PCs to deal with this apparition.

The "ghostly" girl is, in fact, Lireia, the eight-year-old former owner of Eronel, the dead raven. Garbed in white, she comes to lay flowers at the well at midnight in his honor at the Murmuring Fountain, the raven's favorite perch in life. On the day of Eronel's disappearance, a scattering of his feathers found near the well seemed to indicate that her bird had been savaged by some town cat or perhaps an owl. Though her parents insisted the bird was only injured and would soon return, Lireia knew instinctively that her pet was dead and suspected it had been murdered. Unknown to her parents (who would be mortified), Lireia has been sneaking out of her house in her finest dress to conduct her midnight memorial and intends to continue it each night for a week. Note that Lireia may have been encountered by the PCs during daylight hours, skipping rope and singing local songs.

PART 2: THE MURMURING FOUNTAIN LOW 1

The Murmuring Fountain (1) is located in a small, overgrown garden in front of the town's Memorial (2). The garden's hedgerows of white roses have become wild and half-merged with the surrounding undergrowth from lack of tending, but lend a fey

The Murmuring Fountain



beauty to the memorial park, and it is popular for romantic rendezvous with a hint of danger. The pale gravel of the footpath is half-overgrown with grass, weeds, and wildflowers, while fountain and memorial alike show marks of weathering to accompany a patina of dirt and clinging moss.

The fountain itself is in two parts, a lower cruciform basin with four pools surrounding a central pillar. The 4-foot high pillar supports an upper basin 8 feet across and ringed by four stone gargoyles (1a) which sit at each of the ordinal directions (NE, SE, SW and NW) and support the basin's fluted lip, where water spills between the gargoyles into the lower basins toward a central drain and thence into the nearby river. Water bubbles a few feet in the air from the upper bowl, from which clean water can be drawn for drinking while the lower basins can be used for bathing or washing. The fountain is in disrepair, with several of the gargoyles having suffered large chips and broken stonework, though the basins are intact.

The Murmuring Fountain is so named for the strange, susurrant voices intermixed with the gurgling of the fountain water. No two persons listening to the strange murmurings ever agree on the words that seem to be spoken by the just barely indecipherable whispering voice. To one, it may seem the voice of a lost love, to another the voice of a hated rival. Despite local attempts at repair of the stone gargoyles, they quickly crack or suffer some sign of damage. Locals have given up trying to repair the fountain and nearly all believe it is haunted in some way.



LIREIA, GRIEVING CHILD CREATURE -1

CG SMALL HUMANOID HUMAN

Perception +2

Languages Common

Skills Nature +5, Stealth +5

Str -1, Dex +2, Con +0, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +3

AC 12; Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +8

HP 6

Speed 25 feet

Developments: PCs watching near the well or memorial may see Lireia (Perception DC 10) approaching slowly and silently in her ghostly pale dress, white flowers clutched in her hands and her head reverently bowed. PCs may attempt a DC 10 Perception check (a character trained in Religion or Society gets a +2 circumstance bonus) to recognize her as a living girl (and one of the townsfolk they have seen) and not undead. PCs failing the check may well believe her to be the apparition the frightened townsfolk have described. Lireia may notice

PCs moving to attack (Perception +2); if she does, she shrieks in terror and drops her flowers. PCs may then make another Perception check as above to recognize she is not undead; characters about to make a melee attack may turn their blow aside, but ranged attacks cannot be recalled once PCs realize their error.

A young, innocent child, Lireia tells PCs the story of her missing pet raven and how she does not believe what everyone says, that her bird was killed by an animal. She thinks crazy old Antrellus did it. He always yelled strange things at her and her bird, and since Eronel disappeared Antrellus scurries away every time he sees her, like he is afraid of her, but he doesn't run from any of the other children. Through her tears, she implores the PCs to help prove he is a pet-killer. A PC can calm her down enough to persuade her to let PCs take her home with a successful DC 10 Diplomacy check. A second successful Diplomacy check (DC 14) persuades her to stop sneaking out at night, though she insists on leaving flowers for her bird at the well one last time.

Rewards: If the PCs recognize Lireia is not undead and do not harm her, award the party 30 XP. If they convince her to return home and interact with her horrified but grateful parents, award them +2 Trust. If the PCs harm Lireia and the town learns of that harm, they lose 2 points of Trust even if they heal her. If they kill her, they lose 6 points of Trust.

THE RAVENS' ROOST

(LOW 1)

As the PCs begin to leave the memorial with Lireia (either alive, or with her body if she has been accidentally killed), a screaming caw splits the night as a trio of bloodravens dive to attack Lireia or the PC carrying her or her body. Bloodravens are a rare but very large and aggressive breed of raven, hunted to extinction in the region. If they are not spotted by PCs (DC 16 Perception, though they are concealed from creatures lacking darkvision or low-light vision), they attack by surprise. The bloodravens do not appear naturally, but are generated by the haunt that has formed at the fountain due to Eronel's murder and the spiritual taint seeping out of the haunted prison.

Ravens' Roost

HAZARD O

HAUNT

Stealth +6

Description Torn raven feathers fall into the fountain.

Disable The body of Eronel must be removed from the fountain and his murder avenged, either by slaying Antrellus or by having Antrellus come to the fountain and apologize to Lireia, then burying Eronel in blessed ground and tossing a spadeful of earth from his burial plot into the fountain.

Murder's Call [D] (conjuration, occult); Trigger

A creature at the well moves more than 10 feet away from it. **Effect** The haunt summons three bloodravens.

Creatures: The bloodravens attack for 3 rounds or until slain and then disappear without a trace.

BLOODRAVENS (3)

CREATURE -1

N SMALL ANIMAL

Perception +6; low-light vision

Skills Acrobatics +6, Stealth +6

Str +0, **Dex** +3, **Con** +1, **Int** -4, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +1

AC 16; **Fort** +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

HP 6

Speed 10 feet, fly 60 feet

Melee [D] beak +6 (finesse), **Damage** 1d6 piercing

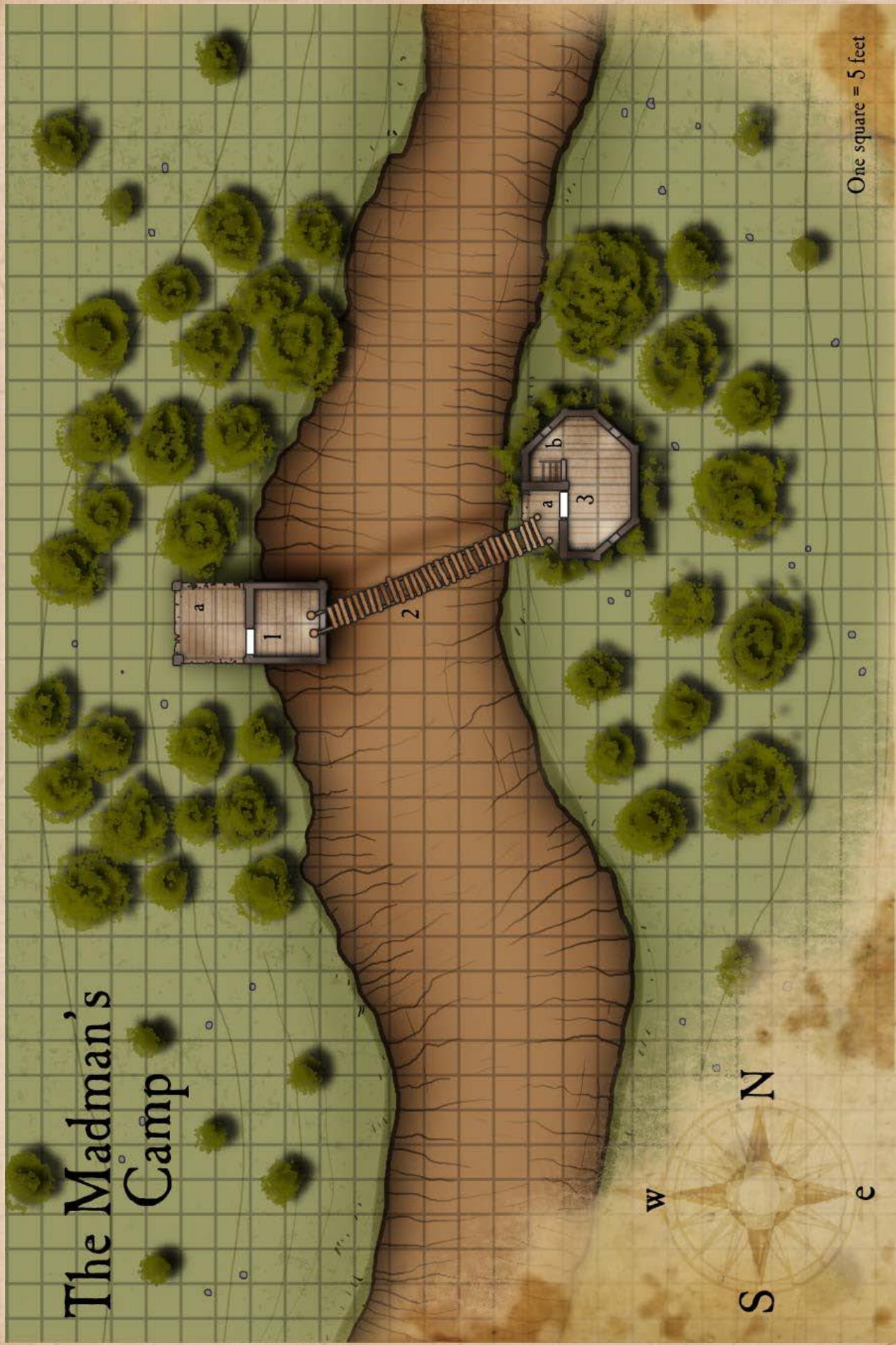
Melee [D] talon +6 (agile, finesse), **Damage** 1d4 slashing

Bloody Rake [D] **Requirement** The bloodraven's last action was a Strike with a talon that dealt damage

Effect The bloodraven opens a gash on the target's head that causes blood to trickle down into the target's eyes. The target must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex save or be dazzled until it uses an Interact action to clear its eyes.

A PC wishing to shield Lireia from attack by the bloodravens may Raise a Shield and give the circumstance bonus to her instead of to themselves, or may use two actions to shield her body with their own; they become flat-footed until the start of their next turn but give greater cover to Lireia (+4 to AC, Reflex saves, and Stealth).

The Madman's Camp



Developments: When the bloodravens attack, PCs may hear an answering caw echoing up from the fountain (DC 15 Perception). At the beginning of the next round, Eronel the ghost raven flies out of the fountain and fights to protect Lireia. It may attack the bloodravens directly or may Aid the attack roll of a creature protecting her.

After the battle, Eronel's ghost perches on the lip of the fountain and PCs can clearly hear the squawk of a raven calling "Murder! Murder! Murder!" Eronel's beak does not move as these words are uttered, but after using his *ghost sound* to create the words he plunges into the fountain (not disturbing the water's surface) and disappears.

A successful DC 15 Seek check to search the fountain (using Perception or Engineering Lore) to discover that something is blocking the drain beneath the grate of the lower basin and that the grate itself has been recently disturbed. If a PC Forces Open the grate (DC 10 Athletics check), the PCs discover a moldy brown sack roughly tied with cord. If opened, inside can be found the remains of a large bird, mostly bones, feathers and rotting flesh—Lireia's pat raven. Also in the bag is a gold signet ring (5 gp) belonging to Antrellus the Mad (a successful DC 15 Society or related Lore check reveals this information, as does a successful DC 16 Gather Information check). A second check against the same DC reveals that Antrellus lives in the woods and is believed to have a hidden cabin somewhere south of the town.

In the struggle to stuff the raven into the sack, the bird grasped the ring in its beak and pulled and clawed the ring from his finger, causing him much pain and damage to his hand. The ring was in the bird's mouth when it drowned, and the spectral form of the bird still seems to have something unidentifiable in its mouth. If the PCs remove the ring from the bag, the next time they see the spectral raven it will no longer seem to have anything in its mouth.

Rewards: If Eronel observes any creature targeting Lireia with an ability or spell to protect her, he forms an attachment to that PC and may manifest after the battle, seeking out the PC and hovering by their shoulder.



If no character distinguished themselves in protecting Lireia, he gravitates to any character carrying or wearing Antrellus' ring. For as long as the character Eronel favors remains within 5 miles of the town, that character may treat Eronel as his familiar when outdoors at night. Eronel is treated as if he were a familiar, so gains the minion trait, save modifiers, AC and Hit Points based on the PC's, and a speed of 25. He always has the flier ability and the PC may choose a single master ability each night when Eronel emerges for the first time. He follows his bonded character until the sun rises, at which point he disappears into the fountain until it sets again. Eronel refuses to go underground or to go inside buildings, and while unable to speak he can understand Common and can indicate yes or no to questions asked to him (within the bounds of his limited intellect).

PART 3: THE MADMAN'S CAMP MODERATE 1

Under the direction of the spectral raven (who can sense the direction of his murderer) or following rumors from the town, the PCs may venture into the southern woods. After an hour, they find a game trail leading deeper into the forest; a DC 12 Survival check (or DC 17 Perception) allows PCs to spot bare human footprints along the trail, left by Antrellus during his roamings to and from the town. Antrellus has a number of sleeping places, but this trail leads to his favorite campsite about 2 miles south of the town. Here he has constructed a rough lean-to shack 10 feet square and 5 feet high in the midst of a grove of cedars at the edge of a deep ravine. He has constructed a rope bridge across the ravine to a treehouse in a tall cedar, with the lower branches cut off to prevent others from climbing up towards him.

ANTRELLUS THE MAD

N MEDIUM HUMANOID HUMAN

Perception +8

Languages Aklo, Common

Skills Crafting +8, Deception +7, Stealth +7

Str +2, Dex +2, Con +3, Int +4, Wis -1, Cha -1

Items heavy crossbow (10 bolts), morningstar, leather armor, *guardian moppet* (aliens)

AC 16; Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +5

HP 36

Paranoid Rant [P] (auditory) **Trigger** A creature that is observed by Antrellus targets him with a spell or ability with the auditory or mental trait. **Effect** Antrellus rants madly and attempts to counteract the triggering spell or ability (+7 counteract modifier).

Speed 30 feet

Melee [♦] morningstar +9, **Damage** 1d6+2

bludgeoning (versatile piercing)

Ranged [♦] heavy crossbow +11 (range increment, **Damage** 1d10+4 piercing)

Stupefying Observation [♦] (auditory, emotion, enchantment, mental) Antrellus harangues a creature within 30 feet with an outlandish theory that startles the creature with its absurdity or its

CREATURE 2

GUARDIAN MOPPET

LEVEL 1

UNCOMMON MAGICAL ABJURATION

Price 10 gp

Usage Worn; Bulk –

A simple doll, crudely sewn from burlap, rags, and dark thread with bone button eyes and stuffed with old wool in the semblance of a child or kindly animal, dangles from a leather cord. When wearing this amulet, you gain a +1 item bonus to your saves vs. enchantment and necromancy focus spells. In addition, it gives you the concealed condition vs. any creature using scent to detect you. When worn and invested by a child, the *guardian moppet* can detect the presence of one menace that children fear: aliens (aberrations, creatures from another plane), bad people (giants, or humanoids with a subtype different from the bearer's, including shapechangers), bad spirits (fey, undead), creepy-crawlies (oozes, fungus, Tiny or smaller animals), or monsters (dragons, beasts).

Activate [P] Interact; **Requirements** You are a child and a creature of its type comes within 20 feet, the guardian moppet has line of effect to the creature (thus, solid barriers prevent its detection). It cannot be fooled by stealth, including magical *invisibility* or *silence*, but it cannot detect creatures that are astral, ethereal, or polymorphed; **Effect** The guardian moppet awakens you if asleep (with a silent mental alarm), or begins to weep and cry aloud if you are awake; you are protected by a *sanctuary* for 1 minute that affects only creatures of the chosen types.

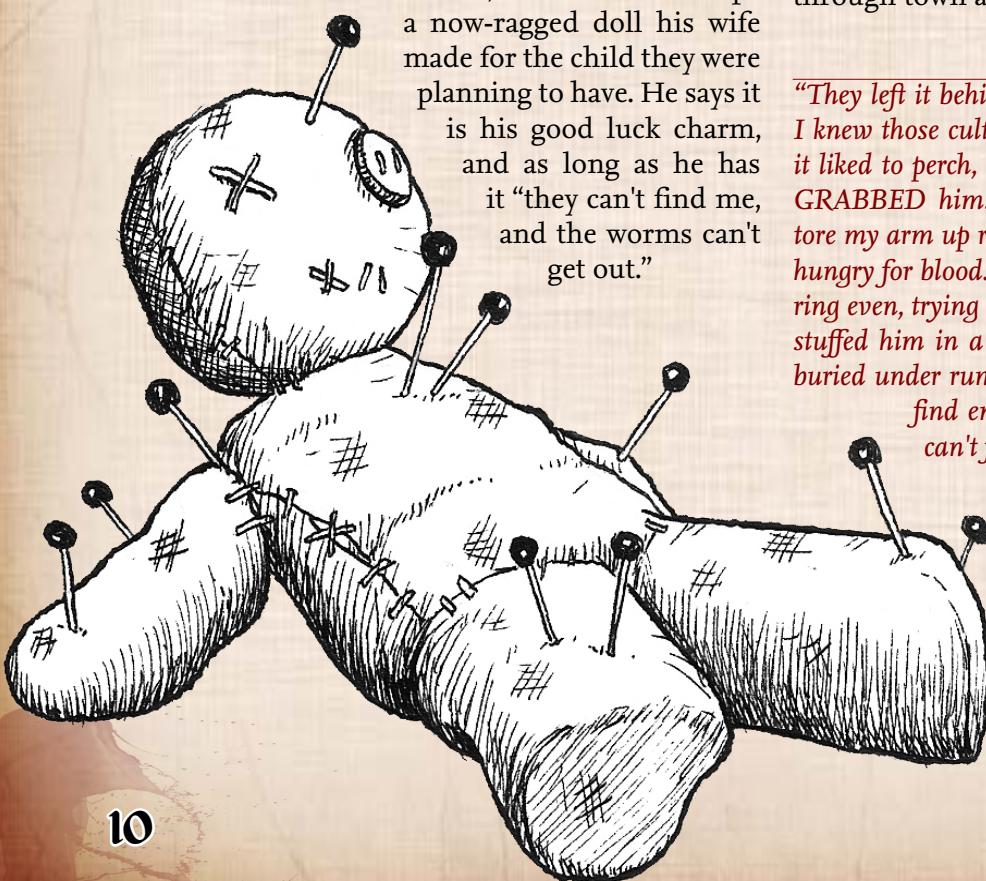
strange potential. The target must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or be stupefied 1 for 1 round (2 rounds on a critical failure). The target is then immune for 24 hours.

Rewards: Antrellus carries a *guardian moppet*, which he invests every day.

Developments: Antrellus has grown progressively more paranoid with the passing of years and has taken to setting traps around his camp. Allow Antrellus a Perception check to notice the PCs once per minute they spend exploring the shack and its vicinity, or once per round of combat or moving up the rope bridge. Antrellus starts with the **unfriendly** condition toward the PCs, but if he notices creatures approaching his camp without hailing him first, his condition changes to **hostile**. He hides behind narrow-shuttered windows or cracked-open doors and peers out at those below, shouting for them to go away, to leave him alone, and that he's "ready for them this time." "You won't get me like you got her. My love, forgive me, but they won't get me like they got you." If attacked while sheltering in his treehouse, he has greater cover (+4 circumstance bonus to AC, Reflex saves, and Stealth).

If his condition changes to **indifferent**, Antrellus can be coaxed out onto the balcony, which grants standard cover (+2 circumstance bonus to AC, Reflex saves, and Stealth) against those on the ground. He grudgingly admits that PCs are not cultists, but insists that they are everywhere, that they have been through the town recently, that they are coming back for him. He repeats his tale of them and the "multi-legged horror" that took his wife. He says they tried to "put the worms

in him," but that he keeps a now-ragged doll his wife made for the child they were planning to have. He says it is his good luck charm, and as long as he has it "they can't find me, and the worms can't get out."



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If his condition changes to **friendly** or **helpful**, Antrellus invites PCs to come up to his treehouse, which features a bewildering array of scrawled notes, map fragments, and strange equations scratched into or tacked up on the walls, beams, and ceiling of the shack, with a labyrinth of strings and threads tying them together in an incomprehensible network. Antrellus attempts to explain his careful observations the past decade since his wife's death trying to reconstruct the path of the Whisper Cult, their movements, and their secret crimes, desperate that no one believes him about their sinister plots, or even that they exist at all. He frequently strikes himself in the head as he explains, sometimes out of sheer frustration but also, as he says, "to stop the voices, I CAN'T TAKE IT MUCH LONGER!"

While much of his story is little more than paranoid rambling and obsessed perseveration about robed cultists, worms, and the "many-legged beast," there are enough legitimately useful observations recorded in Antrellus' shack to grant a +1 circumstance bonus to Recall Knowledge about the town (though not about the prison or its prisoners) or about creatures from another plane for 1 week.

If asked about the raven, Antrellus insists the raven was watching him, spying on him, and it looked just like the raven one of the cultists had when he passed through town a week ago.

"They left it behind for a spy! I knew that bird saw me, and I knew those cultists would come back, so's I watched where it liked to perch, right on the fountain. Then I snuck up and GRABBED him! Oh how that bird scratched and pecked, tore my arm up real good, like it was possessed or something, hungry for blood. It near snapped my finger off. Snatched my ring even, trying to carry it off to its masters. But I fixed him, stuffed him in a sack and drowned him to boot. If they're buried under running water, it makes it so the wizards can't find em, see? Their magic don't work. And if they can't find the bird, they won't know the bird found me! It won't be doin' no spyan' now! Hah!"

No amount of persuasion can convince Antrellus that Eronel was not the same raven as the one he saw with the cultists.

NOTE: If Eronel appears in ghost form, or if Lereia is present, Antrellus will cry out in terror and become enraged, attacking the PCs for bringing doom with them to his “safe place” and fighting to the death.

1. SHACK (LOW 1)

Perched on the edge of a deep ravine, this rude lean-to shelter is roughly constructed, with clapboard and scrap wood nailed or lashed together with rusty nails, tattered ropes, and woven branches and vines. Its far end hangs out over the ravine, propped on tree stumps. Rain barrels catch water from an improvised gutter on one side of the shack.

The front entrance to the shack is guarded at 1a by a hidden pit (*Pathfinder Core Rulebook Second Edition*); the trap is a Level 0 hazard and PCs gain experience for dealing with it. While there is no clear footing around the pit to safely approach the door, it is possible to Climb along the front of the shack (DC 20 Athletics check) to avoid falling in. If Antrellus is bringing a slain animal or other large object into the shack, he uses loose boards inside the shack to span it. PCs can find some nearby branches to make a bridge to cross the pit, which requires a DC 10 Acrobatics check to Balance.

There are two giant centipedes that live in the ground near the bottom of the pit. If a creature falls into the pit, there is a 50% chance each round that the disturbance attracts the attention of a giant centipede; continue checking until both centipedes emerge or all creatures exit the pit. The centipedes attack creatures they find in the pit and will climb out of the pit to pursue creatures on the ground above.

HIDDEN PIT HAZARD O

MECHANICAL, TRAP

Stealth DC 18 (or 0 if the trapdoor is disabled or broken)

Description A wooden trapdoor covers a pit that's 10 feet square and 20 feet deep.

Disable Thievery DC 12 to remove the trapdoor

AC 10; Fort +1, Ref +1

Trapdoor Hardness 3, Trapdoor HP 12 (BT 6);

Immunities critical hits, object immunities,

precision damage

Pitfall ↗ Trigger A creature walks onto the trapdoor.

Effect The triggering creature falls in and takes falling damage (typically 10 bludgeoning damage). That creature can use the Grab an Edge reaction to avoid falling.

Reset Creatures can still fall into the trap, but the trapdoor must be reset manually for the trap to become hidden again.

Giant Centipedes (2)

CREATURE -1

N, MEDIUM, ANIMAL

Perception +6; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +2, Stealth +6

Str -1, Dex +3, Con +1, Int -5, Wis +1, Cha -4

AC 15; Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +2

HP 8

Speed 30 feet, climb 30 feet

Melee ♦ mandibles +6 (finesse), Damage 1d4-1 piercing plus giant centipede venom

Giant Centipede Venom (poison); Saving Throw DC 14 Fortitude; Maximum Duration 6 rounds; Stage 1 1d6 poison damage (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d8 poison damage and flat-footed (1 round) **Stage 3** 1d12 poison damage, clumsy 1, and flat-footed (1 round)

Developments: The rain barrels contain nothing but murky though drinkable water. PCs may attempt to break through the walls of the shack rather than entering by the door (Force Open DC 20 [cannot critically succeed], hardness 10, hp 30, broken threshold 15); however, doing so has a 50% chance of causing the entire shack to collapse. The shack contains a rough oven built of river stones and mortar and an improvised smoker. Several barrels hold jerky of indeterminate origin, and the floor is scattered with rusty tools and numerous stained and worn sacks of burlap and canvas, as well as a hammer, hatchet, shovel, and a snare kit for building his traps. At the back of the shack is a large shuttered window with a bench beneath it, allowing egress to the rope bridge.

PCs wishing to climb to the rope bridge without going through the shack must Climb along the side and back of the shack, which have fewer handholds than the front side (DC 22 Athletics check), or down into the ravine



(Athletics DC 10), then back up the trees (DC 15) and the back of the shack (DC 22). PCs attempting to Climb onto the shack's roof may notice it is unstable (DC 10 Engineering Lore check or DC 15 Perception [trained only] check); any Small or larger creature walking on it will break through and fall 10 feet to the floor inside.

2. ROPE BRIDGE (Low 1)

A pair of ropes links the back of the shack to a tall cedar across a deep ravine, where a ramshackle treehouse can be dimly seen amidst the higher branches, though the lower branches have all been hacked off.

The rope bridge itself is not difficult to Climb (DC 10); however, to dissuade trespassers Antrellus has trapped the bottom end with a swinging axe trap.

SWINGING AXE

MECHANICAL, TRAP

Stealth DC 15

Description An axe swings down at anyone who steps foot on the rope without first disarming it.

Disable Thievery DC 14 to unhook the string from the rope bridge to the hook holding the axe.

HAZARD O

AC 12; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +3

Hardness 5; **HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Chop [P] (attack); **Trigger** A creature puts any weight on the rope bridge. **Effect** An axe swings down to attack the creature and possibly cut the ropes.

Melee Axe +8, **Damage** 1d8+1 slashing plus the character must succeed at a DC 13 Reflex save or may be knocked into the ravine and fall 20 feet. A character that critically fails takes a -2 circumstance bonus to Grab an Edge (DC 15).

If the axe misses its target, it has a 50% chance to sever one rope (increasing the Climb DC to 15) and a 50% chance to sever both ropes. A PC adjacent to the rope can use Grab an Edge (DC 15) to try to grab the rope; otherwise, the rope falls slack along the trunk of the cedar tree containing the treehouse. It can be used to help climb up to the treehouse if PCs can cross the ravine. PCs may cross the ravine using a grappling hook and their own rope, or they can Climb down into and back up out of the ravine (Climb DC 15), which is 20 feet deep.

If Antrellus notices the PCs and is hostile, he shoots his crossbow at any creature attempting to climb the rope bridge or cross the ravine. If Antrellus sees PCs

approaching the base of the tree, he uses three Interact actions to pull up the rope if it has been cut. He also tries to cut the rope bridge while they climb. He can cut one rope with an Interact action followed by a Strike action; once both ropes are cut, PCs must climb the tree or use their own rope to ascend to his treehouse.

3. TREEHOUSE

(LOW 1)

A ramshackle platform sits in the upper branches of a tall cedar, some 30 feet above the ground. The lower branches of the tree have been pruned and scorched to prevent regrowth, but the treehouse itself is shrouded in greenery. The rope bridge ends at a small balcony, where a door leads within.

Combat: Antrellus may parley with PCs from inside the treehouse (if hostile or unfriendly) or the balcony at 3a if made indifferent or better. He prefers to shoot his crossbow at targets below but will resort to his makeshift morningstar (a club with many long nails driven through it) if pressed closely.

Hazard: Inside of his shack, he has set up two poisoned nail traps. Antrellus can move through the areas of the traps without setting them off and he tries to lure PCs into following him and setting them off; however, his furtive glances at the traps and irregular movements may tip off PCs to the presence of the traps. Each round, Antrellus makes a Deception check and compares it against each PC's Perception DCs. If he fails, a PC may realize something is odd, though they will need to use a Seek action to attempt to detect the traps. If he critically fails, the PC can ignore the expert proficiency rank requirement to detect the traps. A PC that is expert in Perception instead gets a +2 circumstance bonus to his Perception check.

Poison Nails (2)

HAZARD O

MECHANICAL, TRAP

Stealth DC 15 (expert)

Description Several nails, coated with poison, stick up from the floorboard, though are hidden by old leaves.

Disable Thievery DC 14 to safely bend over or hammer out all the nails without getting stuck.

AC 19; Fort +9, Ref +1

Hardness 5; **HP** 20 (BT 10); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Nail Stick [♦] (attack); **Trigger** A creature walks onto the poison nails. **Effect** Poison-coated nails jab the creature's feet. The creature must attempt a DC 13 Reflex save.

Success The target is unaffected

Failure The target suffers 1 piercing damage plus lethargy poison (*Pathfinder Core Rulebook Second Edition*).

Critical Failure The target suffers 1d4 piercing damage plus lethargy poison and takes a 10-foot penalty to its Speed.

LETHARGY POISON ITEM 2

UNCOMMON, ALCHEMICAL, CONSUMABLE, INCAPACITATION, INJURY, POISON, SLEEP

Price 7 gp

Usage held in 2 hands; Bulk L

Activate ➤➤➤ Interact

Lethargy poison is commonly used in hit-and-run tactics by drow and others who want their victims alive; the ambusher retreats until the poison sets in and the victim falls unconscious. Further exposure to lethargy poison does not require the target to attempt additional saving throws; only failing an saving throw against an ongoing exposure can progress its stage.

Saving Throw DC 18 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 4 hours; **Stage 1** slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** slowed 1 (1 minute); **Stage 3** unconscious with no Perception check to wake up (1 round) **Stage 4** unconscious with no Perception check to wake up (1d4 hours).

Antrellus flees up the staircase at 3b if pursued. If PCs are weakened, he climbs out onto the roof and lies in wait at the top of the stairs and shoots down at those ascending. If PCs are clearly too strong for him, he lets down a knotted rope ladder and tries to flee into the woods.

Rewards: Antrellus has few possessions of value, but a search of his treehouse turns up a magnifying glass, steel mirror, hourglass, and merchant's scale that he uses to 'test' things that he finds for signs of aberrant star-spawned taint. He keeps a small box with 15 sheets of parchment and 7 bottles of ink to record his findings and scrawl his journals.

Over the past decade, Antrellus has collected a strange miscellany of 'lost' objects from the townsfolk, gathering and studying them to see who might be a cultist in disguise and then discarding them into a battered crate (though a dozen broken items and bits are incorporated into his addled tapestry as he insists they are vital clues to the secret cultic conspiracy, if only he could find the missing piece that links them all together!). Though dusty and scratched, returning these lost items to the townsfolk gains the PCs 2 points of Trust. In addition, they may gain a monetary reward (made up of small gifts and rewards) equal in sp value to the result of a single Society check (other party members can Aid), representing their ability to return lost items to their proper owners.

Befriending Antrellus impresses the townsfolk as a show of pity and generosity of spirit and gains the PCs 2 points of Trust from the townsfolk. To gain this Trust, however, they must convince at least three members of the town council or other named NPCs in town that they did so (requiring a DC 15 Diplomacy check (if they actually did befriend him) or a DC 20 Deception check (if they did not). PCs can gain this Trust for being kind to Antrellus even if he is later killed.

If Antrellus is killed, the PCs gain 1 point of Trust as some in the town always believed him a menace that would have finally snapped sooner or later; better that he did it in the presence of those able to deal with him rather than around someone vulnerable. If they bring the body of the alien thing inside him (see next session), they gain 3 additional points of Trust for freeing Antrellus from this thing inhabiting him and also destroying the monster.

PART 4: THE THING EMERGES SEVERE 1

If Antrellus dies, the embryonic brain collector maturing within his body is jolted into independent awareness. It extends its tendrils and begins absorbing his brain, extracting it from within. This takes 1d4 rounds, during which a character closely examining Antrellus may notice something moving inside his body (his head seeming to cave inwards, then his neck bulging, then something swelling within his torso) with a DC 17 Perception check or Medicine check; creatures may attempt one check (with either skill) per round

that they are adjacent to Antrellus' body. After this brain extraction has been completed, the abomination bursts forth from the unfortunate merchant's belly and attacks any creatures nearby, focusing its attacks on spellcasters.

If PCs have avoided combat with Antrellus, this event may instead occur in the midst of their conversation with the madman or even after they have left. Likewise, if the PCs had too hard a time battling Antrellus, you might choose to delay the thing's emergence until after they have had a chance to recuperate, though they do have a chance to heal themselves during the 1d4 rounds that the monster is devouring Antrellus' brain. If the creature emerges later, it is able to recall Antrellus' interactions with the PCs and will use this knowledge to hunt them in the town, setting up an ambush at an ally's residence or wherever else they might be staying.

Erupting in a spray of gore from the shattered torso of the slain madman is a thing out of nightmares, almost like a shell-less crab with too many legs with a fanged maw dripping with greenish venom. Tiny winking eyes cover its body and limbs, but most horrifying of all, within a distended, pulsating, translucent rubine sac on the creature's back is a glistening human brain.

EMBRYONIC BRAIN COLLECTOR

CREATURE 4

Rare CE Tiny Aberration

Perception +11; **darkvision**

Languages Aklo, Common; **telepathy** 40 feet

Skills Acrobatics +12, Occultism +12, Stealth +12

Str -1, **Dex** +5, **Con** +3, **Int** +2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +1

AC 21; **Fort** +8, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11

HP 65

Speed 5 feet, fly 30 feet

Melee [♦] jaws +12, **Damage** 2d10+1 piercing plus embryonic brain collector venom

Melee [♦] claw +12 (agile), **Damage** 2d10+1 slashing

Occult spontaneous spells DC 18; attack +14; **2nd** (2 slots) *mirror image, paranoia; 1st* (3 slots) *ray of enfeeblement, true strike; Cantrips* (2nd) *dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand*

Embryonic Brain Collector Venom (poison); **Saving Throw** DC 18 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration**

4 rounds; **Stage 1** 1d4 poison and clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 1d4 poison, clumsy 1 and slowed 1 (2 rounds); **Stage 3** 2d4 poison and paralyzed (1 round)

Devour Brain [»»] (attack); **Requirement** The brain collector is adjacent to a paralyzed, immobilized, or unconscious target. **Effect** The embryonic brain collector tries to pull the brain out of a creature's skull and devour it. The creature must make a DC 18 Fortitude save. If the creature is killed as a result of this attack, the brain collector eats its brain and gains 1d8 temporary HP per Level of its target.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 2d10+1 piercing damage.

Failure The creature takes 2d10+1 piercing damage and is wounded 1; if the creature already has the wounded condition, its wounded condition value increases by 1.

Critical Failure The creature takes 4d10+2 piercing damage and is wounded 2; if the creature already has the wounded condition, its wounded condition value increases by 2.

The brain collector begins by casting *mirror image* before closing with opponents. It tries to bite as many foes as possible, hoping to paralyze them with its poison so it can attempt to

devour their brains. If brought below 5 Hit Points, it flies into the forest to hide but follows the PCs as able and plots a return attack to devour the brain of any spellcaster that escapes. Once the spellcasters in the party are eliminated, it leaves the town behind and seeks more interesting prey; at the GM's option, this creature may be encountered in a later adventure featuring the Whisper Cult and their interactions with Lovecraftian horrors.

PART 5: RETURN TO THE FOUNTAIN MODERATE 1

After dealing with Antrellus, PCs who peruse his notes learn about 'haunts of vengeance,' and with a DC 15 Occultism or Religion check can piece together the means for laying the fountain's haunt to rest. Traveling to the town's cemetery, a DC 15 Deception, Diplomacy, or Intimidation check allows them to purchase a plot for Eronel for 1 sp; if they have accumulated Trust of 10 or more, no check is needed.

If PCs return to the Murmuring Fountain to complete the ritual, the ghostly raven accompanies them, perching on the fountain and cawing "Rest! Rest! Rest!"

Approaching the fountain triggers the Ravens' Roost haunt; however, tossing the spadeful of earth into the fountain disables it.

However, if the ghostly taint within the prison has not yet been expunged, the



EPilogue

haunt's spiritual energies do not simply dissipate when the haunt is destroyed. Instead, these energies cascade over the fountain and create spirit-duplicates of the four gargoyles supporting the fountain. Each spirit-gargoyle rolls a separate initiative, stepping out of the real gargoyle and attacking on their turn. The spirit-gargoyles slowly take to the sky, hovering and attacking creatures within reach. These spirit-gargoyles appear only once, when the haunt is destroyed.

SPIRIT-GARGOYLE

UNIQUE, CE, MEDIUM, BEAST, MAGICAL

Perception +6; darkvision

Languages Common

Skills Acrobatics +6, Athletics +6, Stealth +6

Str +2, Dex +1, Con +2, Int -2, Wis +1, Cha -2

AC 16; Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +6

HP 12; **Resistances** physical 2 (except silver)

Clawed Feet [D] (attack); **Trigger** The spirit-gargoyle

is Flying, and a creature moves into an adjacent square below it. **Effect** The spirit-gargoyle makes a claw Strike against the triggering creature.

Speed 20 feet, fly 30 feet

Melee [♦] jaws +6,

Damage 1d6+2

piercing

Melee [♦] claw +6

(agile), **Damage** 1d4+2

slashing

Spectral Charge

[♦♦] The spirit-

gargoyle Flies

up to twice its

speed and can move

through the space of

a creature. The creature

takes 2d6 negative damage

(DC 16 basic Reflex save).

CREATURE O

Once Eronel's remains have been interred and the haunting of the Murmuring Fountain has been eradicated, the ghost raven is puzzled at why he remains a ghost. The next time he appears, however, he uses *ghost sound* to utter "Prison! Prison! Prison!" He has realized that, until the hauntings at the prison are resolved, he will be unable to fully rest. As soon as the prison is cleansed of its hauntings, however, Eronel's ghost is truly freed and able to slip off to the afterlife. However, the next morning a raven with a single white feather flies to Lireia's windowsill and perches on it, tapping at her window until she opens it and then hopping inside as if it were his own home. She adopts the raven as her new pet and names it Eronel, believing it to be her beloved pet come back from the dead, and she will try to find the PCs before they leave the town to thank them for all they have done for her and her beloved bird, whose curious eyes regard the PCs with a knowing warmth and appreciation.



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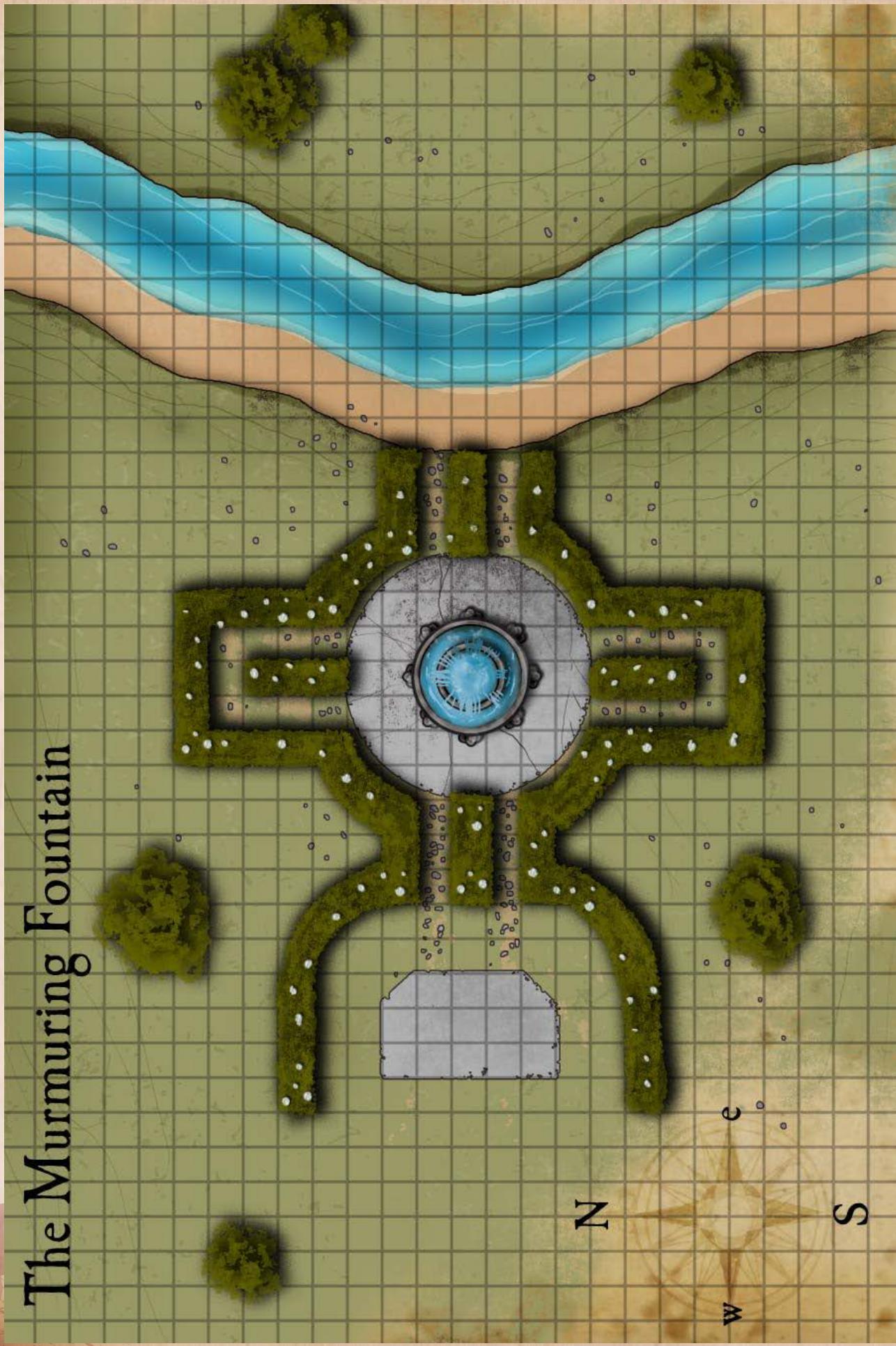
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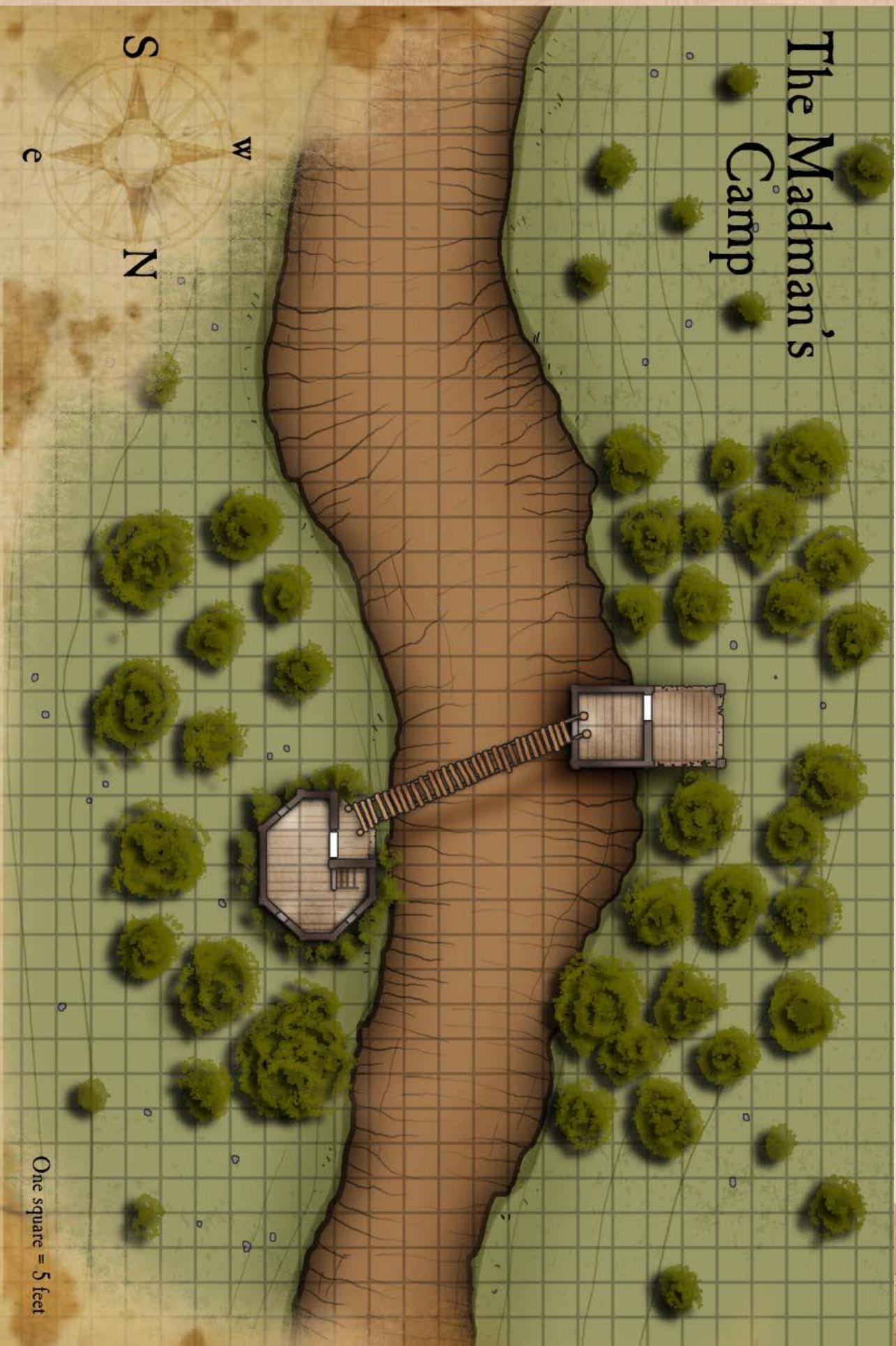
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The Murmuring Fountain



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