

DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS®

THE SEVENTH THRALL OF SEZREKAN

DCC #108: A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH



NYRWOOD

Overland Map

1 hex = 1 mile

Castle
Nyr



Hill and Altar

Player Start



SBP



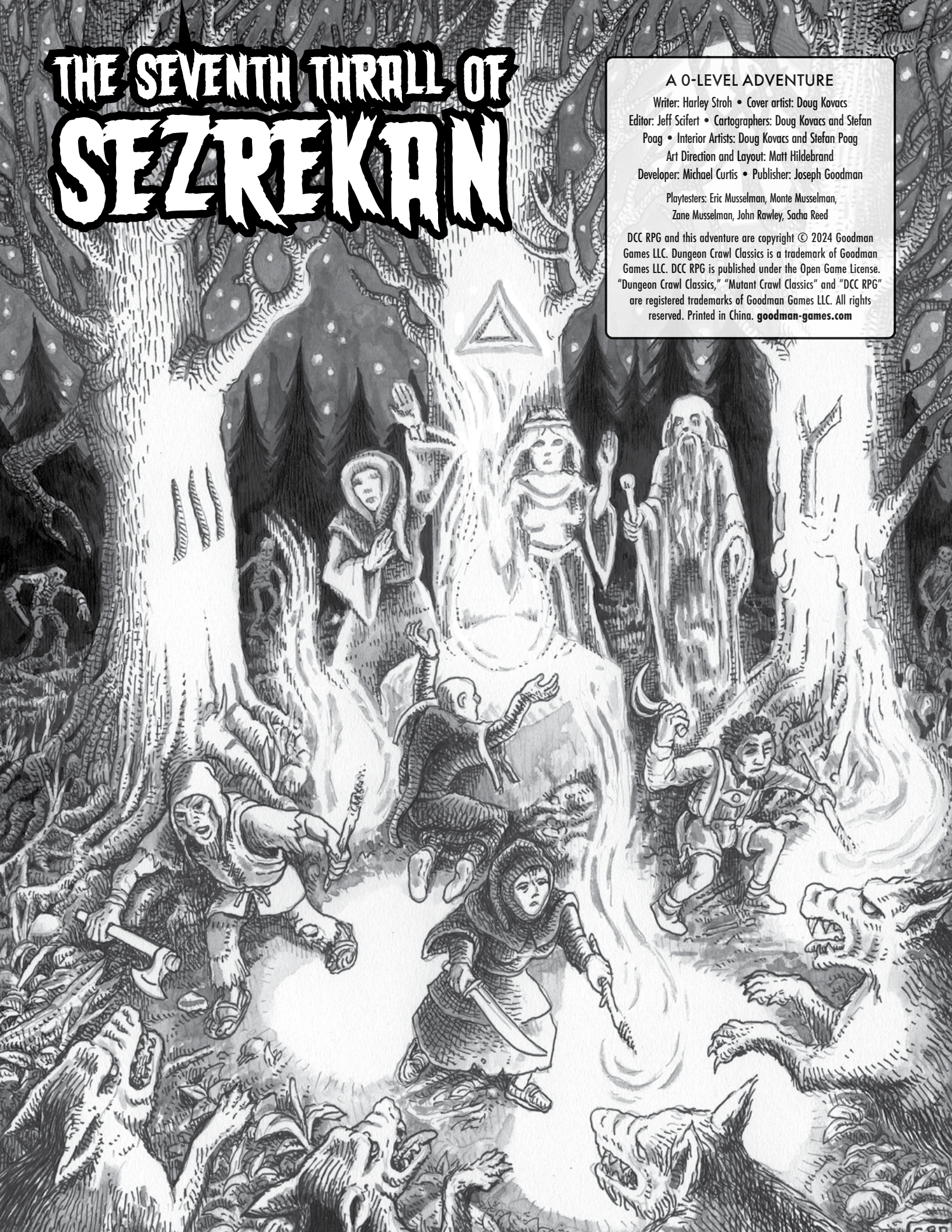
THE SEVENTH THRALL OF SEZREKAN

A 0-LEVEL ADVENTURE

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Remember when fantasy role-playing was new and unpredictable? When you didn't know what a monster might be able to do or how a wizard's spell might manifest? That time when inspiration came from classic sword & sorcery paperbacks, cheap comic books, and bad movies instead of the latest RPG sourcebook? Those days are back! *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG adventures return to those wild times when role-playing games were uncharted territory and even the dice were strange. Each adventure is designed to be exciting and mysterious, challenging you with monsters you've never before seen and magic you don't know if you can trust. Throw off the expectations of the ordinary and get ready for adventures undreamed of!

The Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan is an adventure designed for 10 to 15 0-level characters. Remember that each player should start with three or more characters. In playtest groups of 15 PCs, six or seven typically survive. The adventure can also be enjoyed by a party of 1st-level characters aided by 0-level hirelings.

The PCs begin as misfits, outcasts, and foundlings in the service of the Old Man of the Tower, a hermit and reclusive sage, ancient beyond reckoning, who makes his home in the heart of Nyrwood. A warband of obiesh—Chaos-corrupted mercenaries in the service of the Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan—sack the tower and abduct the ancient sage, leaving the PCs to die.

At the behest of the sage's familiar, the PCs launch a rescue, pursuing the obiesh back to the thrall's citadel. Faced with impossible odds, the PCs must decide how best to assault the stronghold. Whether the PCs choose force, guile, or stealth, each path presents its own challenges and rewards, as they attempt to save the Old Man of the Tower from the Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan.



BACKGROUND



f the thralls of Sezrekan, the being known as the Litch is the weakest and most desperate—and therefore one of the most dangerous. The Seventh Thrall appears as a skeletal warrior girded in armor from a forgotten empire. The thrall's eye sockets burn with a violet malevolence and the warlord speaks in a voice that rasps like the sound metal on stone.

Once a proud and mighty warrior-prince, the Litch mistakenly thought he could cheat a wizardling, and instead lost his soul to a young Sezrekan. Since that rueful day, the Seventh Thrall has been beholden to the Old Master, answering to the wizard's every whim.

The thrall leads a horde of unholy warriors: the obiesh. Older obiesh have been reduced to skeletons like their master. Younger converts might still have patches of rotting flesh and muscle clinging to their bones, while the very newest retain a disturbing imitation of life, with gaunt eyes, thin limbs, and distended bellies. Though the bulk of the horde are simple men-at-arms, the mightiest of the thrall's obiesh ride into battle astride drakes: featherless, spined, vulture-like creatures born from the eggs of corrupted rocs.

Both the thrall and the obiesh regularly renew their forces of un-life by pledging loyalty to Sezrekan and then drinking blood sacrifices from the *Ebon Chalice*. The Old Man of the Tower is to be their next victim.

PLAYER START

You are all in service of the Old Man of the Tower. An adopted family of foundlings, orphans, outlaws, and misfits, you are each in your own way unsuited for town life. Instead, you have made your home here in Nyrwood, toiling in the shadow of the sage's tower.

The tower is a simple stone affair, surrounded by a huddle of fields, thatched animal pens, and smoky hovels: your homes and workshops. It is a small, simple life, but in the warmth of the late-autumn sun, it seems enough.

Today, that life comes to an end.

Deafening shrieks shatter your reverie and chilling shadows pass overhead. A trio of mounted vulture-things swoop overhead, blotting out the sun. The lead rider, armored in furs and chain, and wearing a horned great helm, stabs the serrated tip of his long spear towards you and his mount gives a shriek.

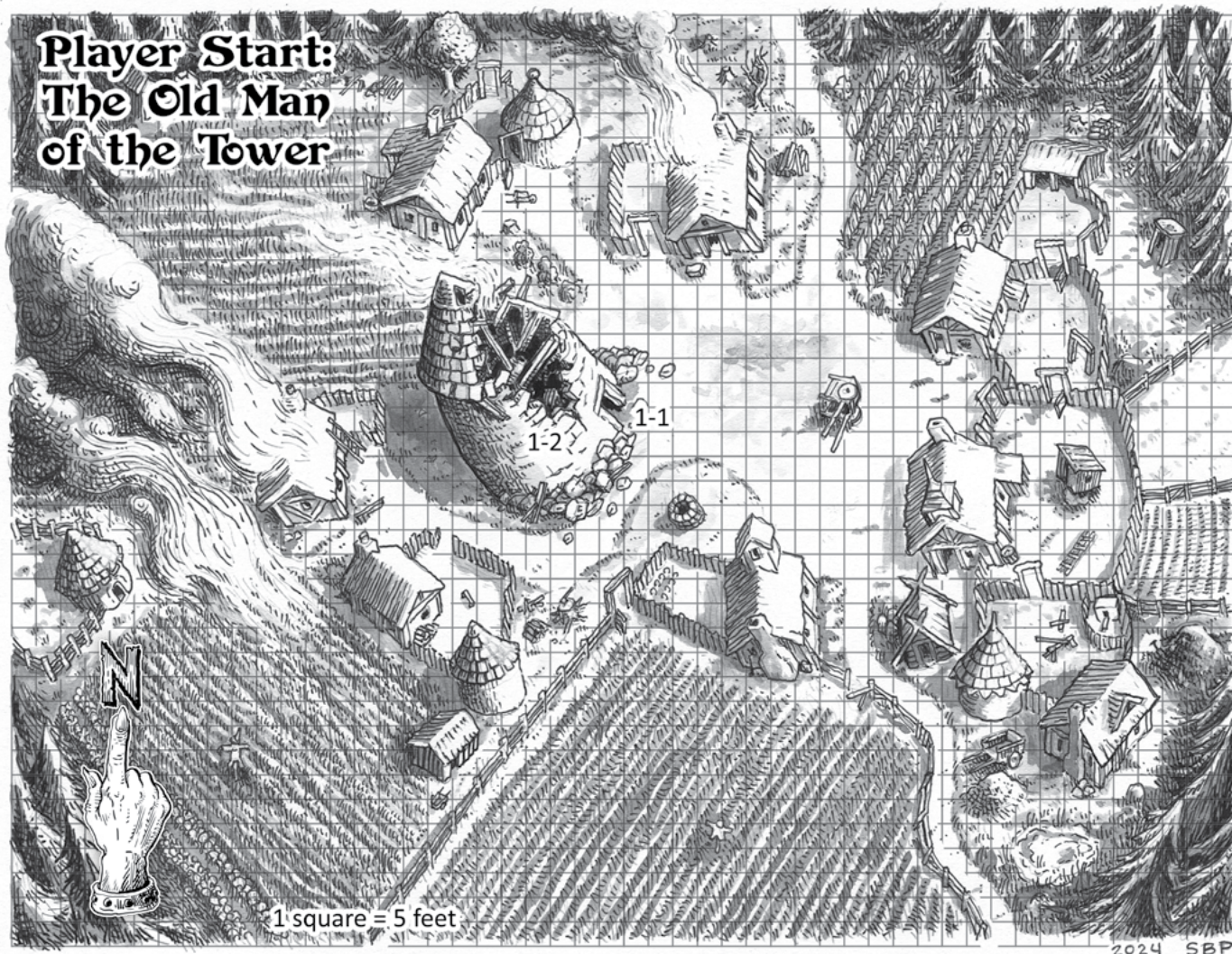
A pair of the riders wheel and dive out of the sky, the wind whistling over their wings, as their master alights atop the tower. Lances whistling, they dive towards you!

Show players **Handout A** and call for initiative. The two charging riders and their drakes go last in the initiative count, not reaching the PCs until the end of the round.

The sage's tower is barred from within, as it always is when the sage is occupied with an enchantment. The PCs can retreat into their hovels, flee, or fight, but it is clear that any attempt to stand against the drake-riders courts death.



Player Start: The Old Man of the Tower



A band of obiesh lurk just inside the forest bower, ready to rush the tower gate at their master's command. They pay no attention to PCs unless they attempt to prevent the obiesh from storming the tower.

Unless the PCs intercede, the battle for the tower unfolds as follows:

Round 1: The lead drake lands atop the pitched roof of the tower. The drake rider raises a horn to his lips and blows a mournful note, signaling to the obiesh hidden in the woods.

The remaining two drake riders charge the PCs, attacking any PCs that haven't sought cover, attacking at the end of the round.

Round 2: Sixteen obiesh foot soldiers charge from the woods, armed with hammers, axes, and a battering ram carved with a demon-head.

The first drake tears the roof off the tower, sending stones, wooden beams, and slate shingles crashing to the ground below; PCs in the open near the base of the tower must make Luck checks. On a failed Luck check, they are caught in the shower of debris, and suffer 1d5 damage (DC 10 Reflex save avoids).

The other drake riders circle around, setting up for another attack the following round.

Round 3: The obiesh foot soldiers reach the tower and hew at the gate.

The first drake rider settles atop the now open peak of the tower.

The remaining two drake riders charge any PCs in the open. The riders hesitate to attack PCs engaged in melee with obiesh foot soldiers, for fear of colliding with their allies. If there are no open targets, they wheel in the sky, the drakes shrieking with frustration.

Round 4: The obiesh foot soldiers continue to hew at the tower gate, sundering the gate by the end of the round.

The first drake rider dismounts and enters the tower from above.

The other two drake riders attack any PCs in the open. Again, the riders refuse to attack PCs engaged in melee with obiesh foot soldiers.

Round 5: The obiesh foot soldiers surge into the lower tower in a riot of violence and looting.

The first drake rider appears from the top of the tower, bearing the Old Man of the Tower over his shoulder. The drakes and their riders take wing, and fly north with their prize.

Round 6+: The obiesh foot soldiers spend the next hour looting the tower and setting fire to the outbuildings, before withdrawing to Castle Nyr.

Should the PCs give chase, it is a simple matter to follow the plodding tracks of the obiesh back to their dark citadel. (Similarly, if the PCs succeeded in defeating all the foot soldiers, they are still able to easily follow the obiesh foot soldiers' original tracks from their citadel to their tower.)

Obiesh foot soldier (16): Init -1; Atk axe +0 melee (1d6) or hammer +0 melee (1d6); Crit III/d6; AC 12; HD 1d8 (hp 3 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Drake riders (3): Init -1; Atk lance +0 melee (1d12) or short-bow +0 missile fire (1d6+1); Crit III/d10; AC 15; HD 3d8 (hp 12 each); MV 30' or 45' (as per drake mount); Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Drake (3): Init +3; Atk claw +0 melee (1d12) or bite +3 melee (1d8) [may attack while unmounted only]; Crit M/d8; AC 16; HD 3d12 (20 hp each); MV fly 45'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; AL N.

Area 1-1 - Sundered Gate: Read aloud or paraphrase the following if the PCs investigate the tower after it is sacked by the obiesh:

The once-mighty gate has been hacked into splinters leaving the heavy iron hinges hanging weakly from bent hinges. The tower's upper floor has collapsed, crushing the lower floors and nearly barring the way with rubble.

A narrow, rubble-choked column wends its way to the top of the rubble (area 1-2). Stones and planks slide and shift under hand and foot as the PCs climb the chimney to the collapsed floor, above. Climbers smell smoke and can hear fierce hissing, followed by cruel laughter, above.

Area 1-2 - Ruined Study: *The upper story of the tower stands in ruins. Immense beams and broken slates lay amid crushed tomes and scattered scrolls. Shattered beakers and weird globes drip glowing ichors into the rubble, and the occasional lizard or newt scampers about in newfound freedom.*

A trio armored figures stand off to one side, laughing and prodding their spears at something snarling within the rubble. Even from across the tower your stomach turns at the stink of their rotting flesh.

The obiesh are tormenting Anja, a winged-cat trapped in the rubble. The warriors take turns stabbing at Anja with their spears, delighting with every near miss. Distracted, they have no chance to notice cautious PCs and will fight to death if engaged.

The trapped familiar is easily freed with the lifting of a single beam. The rubble shudders, shifts aside, and the winged-cat springs free.

Anja is fickle, prideful, and independent (to the point of being resentful of needing the PCs' aid). The winged-cat is

also fiercely loyal, both to the Old Man of the Tower and her liberators, though loath to admit as much. She is able to communicate via telepathy with anyone she is touching, but prefers plaintive meows, hisses, and growls to make her feelings understood.

Finally, Anja can detect, unerringly, the direction to her master. This awareness functions like a compass, providing only the direction to the Old Man of the Tower, but no indication as to the best path or any dangers that lie in store. The familiar does her best to implore the PCs to join her in rescuing her master.

WHAT IF THE PARTY FORSAKES THE OLD MAN OF THE TOWER?

The PCs aren't compelled to follow the obiesh back to their citadel in a bid to rescue the Old Man of the Tower; it would be a poor game indeed if the players had no choice in the matter. However, it does make for more work on the part of the judge.

The next few days pass without excitement, permitting the PCs the freedom to begin repairs on their homes and the tower, if they so choose. This lull in activity offers a false sense of security however, as the forests and moors surrounding the tower teem with obiesh activity. PC scouts venturing into the dark woods discover the mutilated corpses of deer, rabbits, and other woodland animals, splayed out like ghoul-ish offerings. Each time PCs enter the woods call for a Luck check; on a failed check, the PCs encounter 1d12+5 obiesh foot soldiers.

Note: At the determination of the judge, cautious PCs may escape notice by the blundering half-dead obiesh. However, PCs that refuse to take precautions are certainly discovered and set upon by the roving bands.

A larger warband of 30 obiesh returns to the tower after 1d5+3 days. Discovering the ruins occupied, they immediately set about hunting the PCs. Their goal is to capture the PCs, bringing them to the master's dungeons (area 3-9) where they will eventually be broken and transformed into obiesh.

The rubble is littered with the detritus of the ruined study. PCs searching the rubble roll 1d20 modified by Luck on the following table:

Result	Searching the Rubble
0 or less	The rubble shifts beneath the PC. The PC plummets 20' then is crushed to death.
1-3	Alchemical explosion! 1d7 damage as a blast of multi-colored gas erupts from below (DC 15 Reflex save avoids).

- 4-9 Nothing found
- 10 Seven dried newts
- 11 Ceremonial short sword set with a ruby (50 gp)
- 12 Six glass marbles containing dead fae
- 13 Decanter of holy water
- 14 Healing salve, three doses (heals 1 HD per application)
- 15 Lucky sapphire ring (treat Luck score as 3 higher when making Luck checks)
- 16 A glowing dagger (illuminates as torch when held)
- 17 Flask of acid (1d12)
- 18 A bone wand capable of casting *enlarge* with a d24+4 spell check (7 charges)
- 19 Half-burned libram containing 1d3 1st-level spells
- 20+ Roll twice

Obiesh foot soldier (3): Init -1; Atk scimitar +0 melee (1d8) or spear +0 melee (1d8); Crit III/d6; AC 12; HD 1d8 (hp 3 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to cold damage; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Anja, the winged-cat: Init +3; Atk claw +2 melee (1d3) or bite +0 melee (1d4); Crit M/d5; AC 13; HD 1d7 (hp 5); MV 30', fly 45'; Act 1d20; SP telepathy (touch), detect direction to master; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +2; AL C.



INTERLUDE

In the aftermath of the battle, read or paraphrase the following:

The sun begins to set, silhouetting the ruined tower against the pines of Nyrwood. In the dying light you can still see the muddy tracks of the warband that lead along the rutted path, beckoning you into the darksome gloom.

If the PCs failed to save their own homes from the raid, the scene is far more sinister: the fires cast flickering shadows into the woods, and belch a black plumes of smoke across the evening sky.

PCs have the opportunity to gird themselves with equipment for the adventure ahead. Most common farm implements and animals can be found in the PCs' homes (if they survived the raid).

Judges can allow anything within reason but take careful note of especially cumbersome or noisy items. While it might seem clever to bring a crate of chickens to "check for traps," carrying that same crate as the PCs try to sneak through a sinister citadel is another matter.

AREA 2: NYRWOOD

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

Surrounding the sage's tower, and stretching leagues in every direction, are dense, ancient woods. The roads are few, overgrown, and rutted. Travel along the muddy tracks is a slow, ponderous affair, but at least there is little chance of becoming lost.

No sunlight pierces the moldering canopy. Shadows flit through the perpetual twilight, and phosphorescent witchlights glow and fade in the gloom. A dense carpet of rotting leaves covers the ground, and mossy veils hang from the thick limbs of ancient trees that will never know the blade of an axe. Humans feel distinctly unwelcome here, and even elves know that they tread on hallowed ground.

Fearing the woods, the obiesh foot soldiers travel solely by road, making the warband easy to track.

The PCs are aware of a village to the south, one Hirot, some three days off. The obiesh's tracks follow the road leading north and east, deeper into the woods.

It is 20 miles from the sage's ruined tower to Castle Nyr. On foot, traveling the muddy roads, it takes PCs 2 days to reach the citadel. The nights are cold and in the shades of the great trees the days are slow to warm.

Pursuit of the obiesh is punctuated by two encounter areas. Otherwise, the time spent traveling can be quickly narrated by the judge:

The ancient road picks its way through darksome Nyrwood. Icy mud sucks at your boots with every step, and the scent of rotting leaves hangs in the air. Great towering oaks and pines, draped with moss and lichen, press from either side, threatening to consume the road.

Occasionally the woods part to grant a glimpse of a dark citadel looming in the distance.

Area 2-1 - Thrall Hounds: As the PCs pass this area, call for Luck checks. (Elves and other PCs with a woodland occupation [e.g., herbalist, hunter, outlaw, shaman] receive -1d on the check, allowing them to attempt to roll with a d16.) PCs failing the check are oblivious to any danger. Those succeeding on the check note that the party is being followed.

Your sharp eyes catch a hint of movement deep within the woods: shadowy figures moving on four legs, like a pack of wolves or dogs, keeping pace with you and your companions.



PCs are able to discern little in the gloom. There is the occasional flash of luminescent green and the white of bared teeth, but it is impossible to accurately gauge just how many figures are following them.

The five hounds are massive, gaunt, and wolf-like, with luminescent eyes and slaving jaws that drip glowing yellowish-green ooze. Corrupted by the thrall, the hounds are 4' high at the shoulder and easily keep pace with the party, hanging back in the woods to either side of the road. Attempts to engage the hounds only cause them to withdraw further into the gloom, returning again when the PCs must eventually return to the road.

The hounds continue to follow at a distance until nightfall, when they close on the PCs.

The hounds announce their attack with ragged, mournful howls, inspiring panic in non-magical mounts, sending them galloping wildly down the dark road. PCs with suitable occupations (e.g., animal trainer, caravan guard, herder, hunter, mercenary, ostler, soldier, wainwright) can attempt Luck checks to rein in their own mounts, but anyone fighting from a fleeing pony or horse suffers -1d to action dice.

If the hounds succeed in separating the party, they fall upon the slowest PC, dragging the unfortunate soul into the woods to be devoured. The hounds pick off the PCs until one PC is slain per hound and the beasts are sated.

PCs hoping to escape the hounds find their options are limited. It is nearly impossible to outrun the hounds and those seeking shelter in the trees abandon their mounts to a grisly fate. The hounds return the following day, waiting for the PCs to descend from the trees, and follow their trail again until nightfall when the cycle begins anew.

The PCs' sole refuge is the Old God's altar (area 2-2); the hounds are repelled by the holy site and cannot approach the top of the hill.

If three or more hounds are attacking a single target, each receives +1d to their action dice. This bonus stacks with other bonuses (e.g., if the PCs lose their light sources and are functionally "blinded").

If a PC or their mount is laid low, hounds drag the victim into the woods to be devoured, while the remainder of the hounds pursue the next target.

Thrall hound (5): Init +2; Atk bite +0 melee (1d6); Crit M/d6; AC 10; HD 1d12 (hp 6 each); MV 45'; Act 1d20; SP howls inspire panic in mundane animals, pack bonus (3 or more attack single target, gain +1d to action dice); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; AL C.

Area 2-2 - Offerings to the Old Gods: *The baleful woods part to reveal a low, grassy hill topped by a trio of ancient oaks, their branches threaded together like the weave of a loom. At the center of the oaks is an altar cut from gray stone.*

To the north, an ominous citadel rises from the woods. Crimson lights flicker amid the gaping windows, and massive creatures take wing from atop the high towers.

Obiesh and the thrall hounds are unable to pursue the PCs up the hill. The hounds stalk back and forth, snarling with fury, before vanishing into the woods, never to return.

The three oaks are sacred to a circle of druids that once ruled these lands; while the druids' reign waned centuries ago, traces of their power still echo in the woods. The trunk of each oak is scored with one of three signs. (Show players **Handout B**. The runes in the handout are, left to right, Law, Neutrality, and Chaos, but leave it to the players to puzzle out their meaning and significance.)

The altar is a single stone, cleaved cleanly along its faces. At night the altar glows softly in the starlight.

Making an offering at the altar causes mists to coalesce at the base of the hill, fully encircling the PCs and obscuring the woods. Three robed figures emerge from the mists: a woman in blue, a man in red, and an androgynous figure in green. Specters of the hierophants that once ruled Nyrwood, the three represent druidic orders dedicated to Chaos, Law, and Neutrality, respectively. The aspects of Chaos and Neutrality both appear of indeterminate age, but the lawful hierophant—adorned in red robes stitched with golden berries—has a long white beard that tumbles down to his belt.

The druids silently approach each PC that made an offering. The druid matching the PC's own alignment draws a glowing rune upon the PCs' forehead (e.g., neutral-aligned PCs are approached by the neutral hierophant). The rune matches the PC's alignment, and is identical to the specific rune from Handout B.

PCs blessed by the druids can make a Luck check to avoid a calamity (e.g., to avoid being struck by a blow, or slipping and falling to their doom). On a successful check, the PC miraculously avoids their fate. Immediately call for a second Luck check; if successful, the PC retains the blessing. If the second Luck check fails, the blessing is lost. The blessing can be renewed in this way three times.

The PCs have just one opportunity to make an offering before Sezrekan notices them meddling with old foes. After the specters of the druids present their blessings, a deafening crack splits the sky and a bolt of lightning arcs earthward, shattering the altar, hurling stone shards across the hillside, and dismissing the specters.

THE DRUIDS OF NYRWOOD

The heretical druids of Nyrwood refused to believe that mere Neutrality could be the defining aspect of the natural world. Defying convention, the apostate druids embraced the whole of existence—the lawful ordering of day and night, and the seasons of the year, the unpredictable chaos of violence, and the balance of life following death.

The druids organized themselves into three orders, each dedicated to a single alignment, and each believing that all three aspects were necessary to represent the whole of nature.

A young Sezrekan infiltrated each of the orders in turn, mastering their secret rites and lore. The wizard then engineered the discovery of the Nyrwood heretics by rival druidic orders that believed in the strict primacy of Neutrality. As Sezrekan looked on, the opposing orders laid low the apostates of Nyrwood, eliminating his rivals, expunging their lore for all time, and clearing the way for his wicked plots.

CASTLE NYR

The collection of dark towers known as Castle Nyr stand atop a ridge of dark stone. The citadel looms over the surrounding forest, its high balconies and gaping windows flickering with baleful crimson light. The crack of whips and cries of pain ring out day and night, accompanied by thunderous crashes and mournful howls. Great beasts lair atop the highest towers, taking wing to swoop down low over the treetops, their bat-like wings hissing in the night air.

The Seventh Thrall is not the first warlord to inhabit the citadel. Indeed, the towers themselves are built atop a cave complex first used by the druids of Nyrwood for their holy rites. Some of those ancient byways still exist, and brave PCs can use them to slip into the citadel undetected.

Much of the upper citadel stands in ruin, and only a portion is accessible to the Seventh Thrall or the PCs. (Judges are, of course, encouraged to amend this truth later on if the party elects to take the citadel for their own, clearing out the rubble and exploring its lost chambers and chasms.) Except where noted, the chambers are lit by sputtering torches that spit and hiss in the sooty, damp air. The floors are sodden and pools of mud suck at boots; rain drips through the rotten ceilings where bats and ravens make their homes. Ropes, blackened by mold, hang about from long-abandoned pulleys, and empty barrels and crates have been put to use as makeshift furniture.

The cave beneath the citadel still clings to the ancient glamour of the druids. The natural caverns stand in stark contrast to the rough cut stone blocks and worn beams of the towers above. Below, the walls glow with a soft luminescence, and water collects in clear pools amid the glittering stalactites and stalagmites. While the air is cool, it is clean, and refreshing to the lungs.

There are three principle ways into Castle Nyr:

- The Druid Gate, a hidden portal opening to the forgotten caverns beneath the citadel (area 3-3)
- Through the Old Gatehouse, now home to the thrall hounds and their huntsman (area 3-4)
- The Demon Maw, the citadel's heavily defended main entrance (area 3-5)

Of the three entrances, the Druid Gate offers the fewest obstacles, but it will require careful play to discover the gate. Judges shouldn't feel obligated to channel the PCs to the Druid Gate; faced with certain death, clever players are sure to come up with creative solutions to surmount the Demon Maw's deadly challenges.

As a final note, the encounter areas assume that the party attempts to infiltrate the citadel at night. If the PCs assault the citadel during the daylight hours, adjust the exterior descriptions accordingly. (The citadel's dark, dismal interior remains unchanged.)

Climbing into the citadel: Scaling the rough stone walls, or sending Anja flying up with a rope, may appeal to the PCs; however, both are fraught with grave risk:

The scale and size of the citadel is enough to daunt all but the most experienced climbers, requiring no less than 10 DC 15 Agility checks or five successful DC 10 *climb sheer surfaces* checks. Worse is the exposure: PCs scaling the walls are in sight of defenders for 20 rounds as the climbers slowly pick their way up the walls. Characters hoping to scale the wall unnoticed must also succeed on a DC 10 *hide in shadows* check with each *climb sheer surfaces* check.

Hungry drakes (lairing in area 3-16) notice exposed PCs almost immediately, and circle above the PCs, calling out warnings to the obiesh archers lining the parapets. Roaring with delight, the archers rain down arrows, rocks, and blazing embers onto the climbers, fighting to see who can pick off the targets first.

Anja fares little better. She cannot carry more than 10 pounds of rope, far short of what is necessary to scale the mammoth walls, and rightly fears the drakes and the obiesh archers.

Area 3-1 - Causeway of Skulls: *A narrow stone road rises from the sodden forest floor towards a towering citadel. Skulls set on rusted spears line either side of the ramped causeway, leering at you in the gloom.*

High above, the citadel looms black against the sky, as if to blot out the stars. Periodically, great beasts hurl themselves from the tower peaks, and with a great shriek of wind take to wing.

The burned ruins of a gatehouse stand at the base of the citadel, its doors cast wide like a gaping maw. Just beyond the gatehouse rises a yawning stone archway, lit from within by crimson flames. Figures cavort in the firelight, casting long, hellish shadows into the night.

Show players **Handout C**.



The sloped causeway is roughly 20' wide, and runs up to the citadel. Astute PCs inspecting the skulls note faint witchlight glowing within the eye sockets. The skulls' eye sockets glow brighter the further the PCs proceed up the ramp, so that the eye sockets are flaring with crimson light by the time the party reaches the gate (area 3-5). Sadly, the obiesh are too distracted to take note of the warning—though the PCs won't know this.

Halfway to the citadel, a narrow footpath cuts off from the roadway. While the path is not hidden, PCs can easily miss the cutoff in the dark, doubly so if they are preoccupied with the skulls. PCs that are actively searching the sides of the ramp or hunting for alternative means into the citadel find the path with little difficulty.

Cut into the rock face, the side path is a scant 2' in width and the slightest misstep results in a precipitous fall to the base of the rocky slope, hundreds of feet below. Cautious PCs can pass safely, but a character attempting at their full speed or greater must make a DC 10 Reflex save or fall to their doom.

Area 3-2 – Perilous Way: *The narrow path wends its way along the cliff face—a sheer wall to one side and deadly drop on the other. The path rounds a corner; beyond you can make out flickers of firelight and the sound of cruel laughter.*

Around the corner are four derelict obiesh, hiding from their masters. They have set up a makeshift camp where the path widens to a 6' ledge, and are about to roast a live halfling on a spit over the fire. Two other halflings, bound and gagged, sit quivering against the cliff wall.

The obiesh are caught up in their meal preparations, and utterly unaware of the PCs, automatically granting surprise if the PCs attack. However, the narrow catwalk acts as a bottleneck, and only three PCs can cross to the wider ledge in a single round.

Fighting atop the ledge is dangerous. Any time a PC fumbles, or is struck by a melee blow, the PC must make a DC 10 Reflex save or plummet to the rocks below.

If the PCs succeed in freeing the halflings, the brothers swear their fealty to the party. Judges can use the halflings

to replenish lost 0-level PCs, or the three former captives can join the party as followers. Bonny companions, the halflings more than make up for their small stature with outsized confidence, grand boasts, and the unshakeable belief that fate is on their side.

If used as PCs, the players should roll up new 0-level halflings. As followers, use the stats listed below.

Derelict obiesh (4): Init -1; Atk scimitar +0 melee (1d8) or spear +0 melee (1d8); Crit III/d6; AC 12; HD 1d8 (hp 3 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Yarias, Oshire, Halstar (halflings): Init +1; Atk fist +0 melee (1d3) or by weapon; Crit III/d4; AC 11; HD 1d4 (hp 2 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1; AL N.

Area 3-3 – Druid's Gate: *The catwalk ends at a wide ledge. A massive stone portal is cut into the face of the cliff and inscribed with three runes. A solemn melancholy hangs over this place.*

Show players **Handout D**. Placed by the druids of old, the stone portal is set tight against the cliff wall and cannot be pried free by feats of strength or magic. The runes match those in area 2-2.

Touching a rune causes it to glow a soft blue; touching all three runes in the proper sequence causes the massive stone portal to grind open. However the correct sequence is tied to the alignment of the PC opening the door:

- **Lawful PCs:** Beginning at Law, proceed to Neutrality, ending with Chaos
- **Chaotic PCs:** Beginning at Chaos, proceed to Neutrality, ending with Law
- **Neutral PCs:** Neutrality, followed by either Chaos or Law, and then the final rune

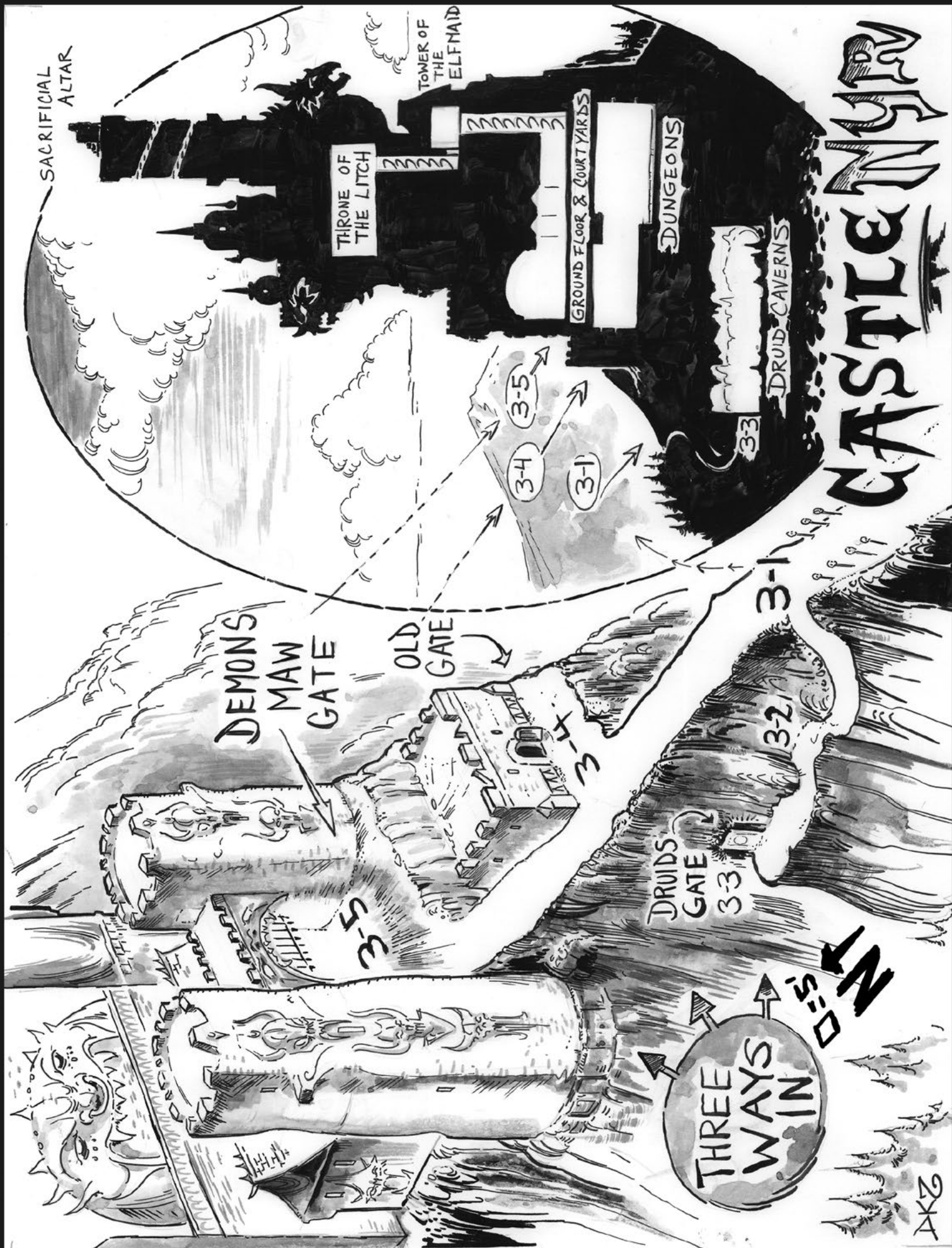
Failing to choose the runes in the correct sequence (specific to the PC's alignment) triggers a resounding crack, and the offending PC is struck by a bolt of blue that lances from the portal (1d6 Stamina loss, DC 13 Reflex save avoids). PCs reduced to 2 or less Stamina are blasted off the ledge to their doom. The loss is temporary and recovered as normal.

If a different PC touches the portal after one or more runes are lit up (for instance, if the party has one PC from each alignment touch their own rune), all three runes go dark, but none of the PCs are injured.

Note that if the halflings are followers, any attempt to get them to touch the runes by a PC forces a morale check. On a failure, they run away, never to be seen again.

Reward the first PC to correctly solve the puzzle by touching it themselves with 1 point of Luck. If they force a halfling follower to touch it to complete the test, they lose this option for Luck gain.

On the far side of the stone portal is an identical rune-puzzle. Once the door is opened it remains so until closed (again, by touching the correct sequence of runes, specific to the PC's alignment).



Area 3-4 – Ruined Gatehouse: *The darkened gatehouse stands in stark contrast to the blazing gate just beyond. The doors to the gatehouse hang open, so that the ruined building seems to leer like a gaping maw, black as a tomb.*

PCs approaching the gatehouse note the overpowering scent of urine and rot. The gatehouse is—initially—perfectly silent. Ten thrall hounds and their master lurk in the darkness at the back of the ruins.

Rubble, offal, and beds of matted furs lie scattered about the chamber. At the rear of the chamber is the huntsman's throne: several matted furs cast over barrels and crates. Behind the throne is a heavy oak door, bound in iron and barred from the gatehouse side.

The master of the hunt is a tall, gaunt elf, ancient beyond years, with stringy, ashen hair that hangs low over his hauberk. He carries a brooding air of melancholy about him, a resignation to the wickedness of the world. His huntsman's cloak, once forest green, is dark with grease and soot. He fights with a long spear and carries a carved hunting horn slung over his chest.

The huntsman waits for the PCs to enter the center of the chamber, before rising from his makeshift throne and sounding his mournful horn. Ten thrall hounds rise from their matted beds amid the rubble, their glow of their slaver jaws lighting up the gatehouse. Three more hounds appear behind the PCs at the entrance of the gatehouse. The huntsman raises his terrible spear to the party and demands their surrender.

Desperate to avoid combat, the party may try talking their way by the huntsman. No matter how ludicrous or far-fetched, the huntsman appears to accept their lies. The huntsman unbolts the great door at the rear of the chamber and permits the PCs to pass. However, the moment the PCs pass the huntsman slams closed the door and drives home the bolt, trapping the PCs in the oubliette (area 3-8).

In combat, the huntsman's aim is always to capture the PCs. He fights with the ironshod butt of his spear. There is no attack penalty, but subdual damage is one die lower than normal for the weapon (i.e., the spear deals 1d7 subdual damage). Opponents brought to 0 hit points via subdual damage collapse unconscious, and awaken, stripped of all gear, with but a single hit point in the Litch's dungeons (area 3-9). The hounds, held fast under their master's command, also fight to subdue, smashing PCs with their heavy paws.

In the north-west corner of the chamber, a small wooden cask is hidden beneath a mound of deer hides. Inside are the last remnants of the huntsman's former life: a mithril chain hauberk of elvish make (+6 AC, +0 check penalty); a silver dagger with an emerald set in its pommel (worth 100 gp); and a silver pendant, hung from a slender chain (fetching a mere 15 gp — but worth vastly more to any elf of royal blood).

Huntsman: Init +2; Atk spear +1 melee (1d8 or 1d7 subdual); Crit III/d10; AC 15; HD 1d12+3 (hp 8); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP elf traits; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; AL C.

Thrall hounds (13): Init +2; Atk bite +0 melee (1d6) or claw (1d6 or 1d5 subdual); Crit M/d6; AC 10; HD 1d12; Crit M/d6 (hp 6 each); MV 45'; Act 1d20; SP howls inspire panic in mundane animals, pack bonus (3 or more attack single target, gain +1d to action dice); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-5 – Demon Maw Gate: *Dancing crimson flames and shadows light the sloped ramp as it rises to a towering gate. Over three stories high and topped with a parapet, the stone gate is decorated with carvings of demons and devils that seem to writhe in the flickering light, beckoning you closer.*

A bonfire rages just inside the raised portcullis. A dozen gaunt guards lounge about, leaning on their spears and occasionally casting broken furniture or rotted beams onto the fire. Hooded archers lean out over the battlements above, passing jacks of wine back and forth.

The heavily-guarded gate presents no small challenge. There are 12 obiesh guards on the ground level, led by a champion, and another 6 obiesh archers on the parapets above.

The sentries, eager for a diversion, confront anyone approaching the gate. If the PCs kill four or more of the guards, the obiesh fall back, calling for the portcullis to be lowered. Dropping the portcullis takes 3 rounds; with a DC 18 Strength check or a successful Mighty Deed of Arms, a mighty soul can hold the gate aloft, but only for 1d3 rounds before the terrible weight comes crashing to the ground.

The obiesh are led by a skeletal warrior in full plate armor, ornamented with skulls set on long pauldron spikes. The champion delights in taking the heads of foes, even pausing for 2 rounds in the heat of combat to decapitate a downed foe and add the new trophy to his collection.

Faced with the potential of a deadly confrontation, PCs may opt to try guile, stealth, or any number of creative means of slipping past the guards. Use the following instances to help adjudicate the players' plots.

- The blazing flames make it almost impossible for the PCs to sneak past (DC 15 *hide in shadows* check, likely far beyond the means of 0-level PCs).
- PCs disguising themselves as obiesh have a chance, albeit slim, of passing (DC 13 Personality check, attempted by the first PC to approach the gate).
- Up to eight of the obiesh guards can be lured away from the gate, giving chase to retreating PCs, though the lazy obiesh are loath to pursue the PCs more than a few hundred yards.

Obiesh champion: Init +1; Atk morningstar +3 melee (1d8+3); Crit III/d10; AC 16; HD 4d8 (hp 21); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +3; AL C.

Obiesh guard (12): Init -1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d8+1); Crit III/d6; AC 12; HD 1d8 (hp 5 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Obiesh archer (6): Init -1; Atk short sword +1 melee (1d6) or shortbow +0 (1d6); Crit III/d6; AC 10; HD 1d8 (hp 3 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-6 – The Singing Spring: *A spring burbles from the wall of the cavern, dancing down the stones to form a small brook that seems to glitter in the dim light. The faint sounds of fairy bells ring in the air.*

The water from the spring is cool and refreshing. Sacred to the cults that once worshiped here, the waters still retain some of their ancient magics. A PC drinking from the spring roll 1d12 modified by Luck on the following table. The spring's blessing can only be received once before losing its potency.

Result Blessing of the Singing Spring

1 or less	PC is found wanting and receives no blessing.
2-4	PC gains 1d5 temporary hit points for the next 24 hours.
5	PC always knows if someone is lying.
6	PC has perfect aim (+1d to attack rolls with any missile weapon).
7	PC fathoms the mysteries of the cosmos, for a price. (PC can trade 2 points of any ability score for 1 point of Intelligence. This can only be done once.)
8	PC develops sinews of steel. (PC can trade 2 points of any ability score for 1 point of Strength. This can only be done once.)
9	PC gains catlike grace. (PC can trade 2 points of any ability score for 1 point of Agility. This can only be done once.)
10	PC is hearty and hale for so long as they live, gaining an extra +1d3 hit points each level hereafter.
11	PC may trade 1 point of Luck for 1 point of any other ability score. This can only be done once.
12+	Roll twice, re-rolling any 12s.

Area 3-6a – Pool: The waters have collected in a pool some 15' deep. The ceiling above narrows to a chute that dead ends in a thin crust of stone, just below area 3-11.

Ascending the chute is not an easy task, requiring three DC 15 Agility checks or a single DC 10 *climb sheer surfaces* check to reach the peak of the chimney, but any fall drops PCs back into the water, unharmed.

Area 3-7 – Pool of Bones: *The brook gathers here in a scintillating pool. In the center of the pool is a low, stone island. Atop the island is an ancient strongbox overflowing with sparkling coins and jewels. You can spy a torc among the treasures, as well as the jeweled pommel of a blade, a glittering shield, and what must be a circlet or crown. A soft glowing haze hangs over the treasure.*

PCs inspecting the pool immediately note that the base of the pool is thick with bones. Crouching at the water's edge, PCs can make out the jumbled remains of bulls, humans, and giants.

The treasures on the rock island are offerings left by the druids of old. Though centuries have passed, not a speck of dust or spot of tarnish has gathered on the trove.

PCs can pass safely to the island, but disturbing even a single coin of the treasure draws the wrath of the old order:

The waters surge, lifting up the bones, and a titanic dragon born of water and bone lifts its head from the pool. With a roar that shakes the cavern, the dragon arches high and then crashes down on the brazen thief.

The bone dragon is a terrible foe, with sharp teeth of splintered ribs and a breath of searing steam that strips flesh from bone. The dragon is intent on recovering its treasure; if the PCs drop the stolen loot or the thief is slain, the dragon collapses back into mere water and bone, sucking the loot, and the corpses of any would-be thieves, back into the pool.

The dragon can breathe its gout of superheated steam thrice during an encounter, targeting any 10' space within 30'. Any PC caught in the cloud suffers 1d12 damage (DC 15 Fortitude save to resist).

The dragon draws its powers entirely from the pool. If lured more than 35' distant from it, the creature collapses in a crash of water and clattering bones. The waters seep back to the base of the cavern, refilling the pool and permitting the dragon to reconstitute itself in 1d3 rounds. Similarly, if the dragon is somehow "slain", the waters come crashing down and return to the pool, only to reanimate in 1d6+2 rounds.

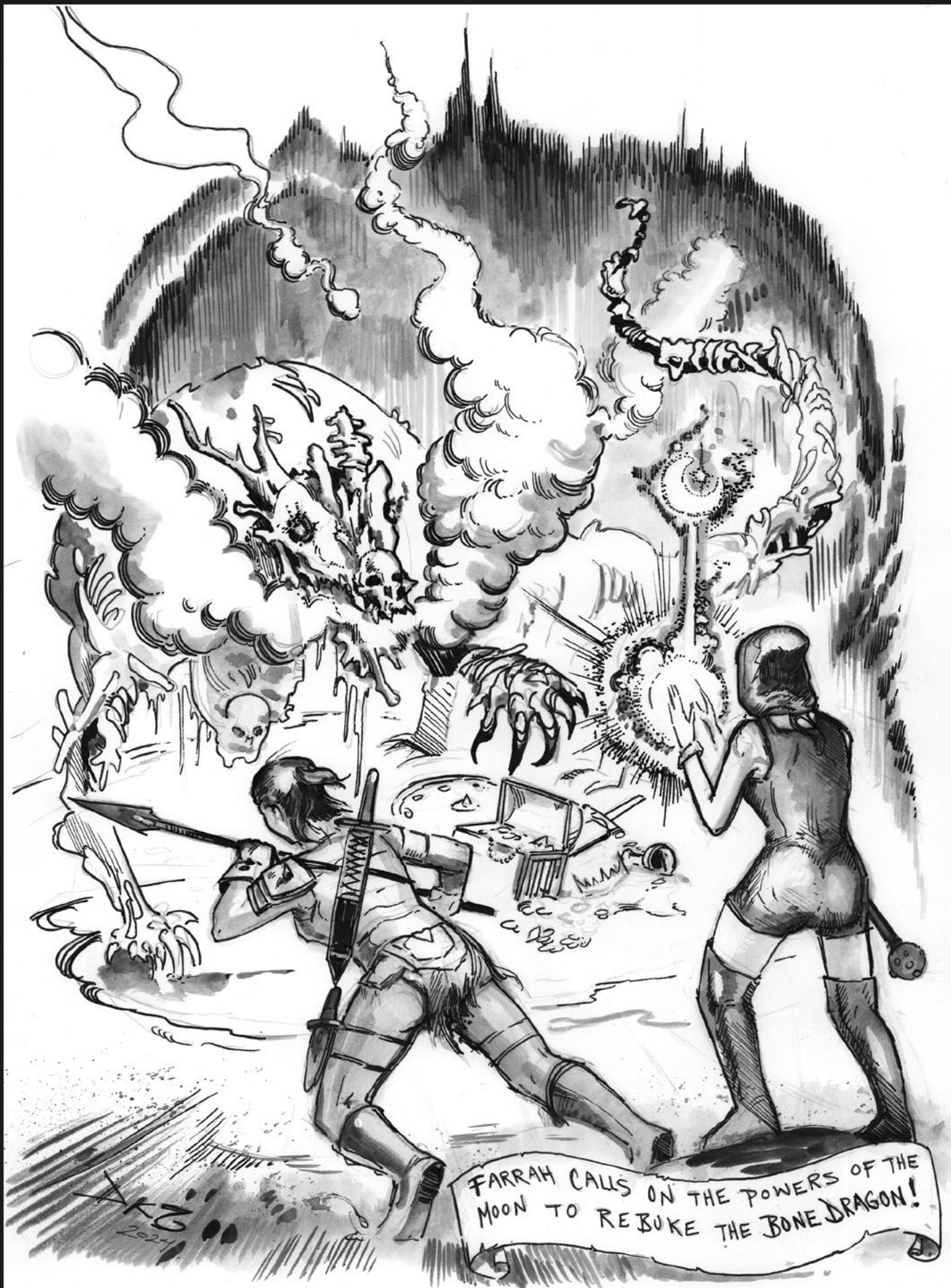
The coffer and its treasures are far too cumbersome to be carried at once unless four or more PCs work in tandem. It is far easier – though no less dangerous – to steal individual items.

The overflowing coffer contains:

- 620 sp, stamped with the signs of the three druidic orders
- 1d30+10 jewels, each worth 1d20 gp
- *Rüatanfir*, a magical short sword with an emerald set in the pommel (see sidebar).
- A twisted silver torc decorated with golden oak leaves. Sacred to the druids, the torc grants the wearer the ability to lay on hands (3/day as a cleric of the wearer's level+1).
- A scarred wooden shield with a gleaming brass boss (gifted by a halfling lord)
- A simple iron circlet set with a large black tourmaline. When held to the light, one can discern a seven-pointed star inscribed within the jewel. Servants of Sezrekan will go to any length to recover the crown.

In the back wall, behind the pool, is a cave exiting the chamber. The cave is 13' up the wall, and wends its way to a slim crack opening onto the stairs just above the obiesh dungeons.

Bone dragon: Init +0; Atk bite +5 melee (1d10) or breath weapon; Crit DR/d14; AC 12; HD 15d12 (hp 95); MV 35';



Act 1d20; SP breath weapon (3/encounter; 1d12 damage; range 10' cloud within 30' (DC 15 Fort save to resist)); SV Fort +15, Ref +10, Will +17; AL N.

RUATANFIR (MAGICAL SHORT SWORD)

Rüatanfir is a magical short sword of dwarven make with an emerald set in the pommel.

INT 10; AL L; Bane: humans (+1d damage to humans); Communication: None; Special Purposes: none; Special Powers: Increased damage (1d8+1), Extended critical threat range (attacker scores criticals at 1 more result on the die [e.g., if normally score criticals on 19-20, now score on 18-20]).

Area 3-8 – The Oubliette: *The rough stone steps are crusted with mold and lichen, and damp cobwebs cling to your face and hair as you descend in the gloom. The steps and passageway both terminate before the mouth of a gaping pit that plunges down into darkness.*

Thirty feet wide at its mouth, the slick-walled pit narrows as it descends, and is a mere 5' wide at its base located 75' below. (The actual floor is deeper still, but covered in masses of bones from the pit's previous victims.) Climbing the smooth walls is difficult for anyone without aid (DC 15 *climb sheer surfaces* check), leaving those trapped in the base of the pit succumb to dehydration and madness.

There is no obvious way out below, and the huntsman and his hounds guard the exit at 3-1. The sole means of escape is going up: directly above the center of the pit is a latched grate, black with grease and grime.

PCs will need some ingenuity to reach the grate safely. Failing any clever plan, they can attempt to reach the grate with a running jump, a dangerous ploy born of desperation. PCs leaping for the grate must make a DC 13 Agility check to seize hold of the grate; on a failed check, the PC likely falls to their doom at the base of the pit (5d6 damage).

PCs seizing hold of the grate discover it opens down, into the pit. Weakened with age, the latch gives way and the grate swings open with a terrifying jolt, showering the PC with flakes of rust and grime. From here the PC can climb up into the abandoned guardroom, above.

The guardroom is nearly pitch black, but PCs fumbling about discover an ancient rope and a windlass, once used for lowering prisoners into the pit. Though the rusted teeth of the windlass groan in protest, the rope is easily lowered into the pit and then can be swung to allies waiting below.

The noise of the windlass risks drawing the attention of the massive gaoler in area 3-5. Call for a Luck check; on a failed check, the gaoler investigates. (Note that the half-ogre is expecting the grate to be closed, and that—in the darkened gloom—a clever PC might easily lure the gaoler to his doom.)

If he is defeated here, the PCs don't encounter him again in area 3-10.

Half-ogre gaoler: Init -1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d10+1) or club +1 melee (1d4+1); Crit III/d10; AC 12; HD 3d12 (hp 13); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-9 a-d – Dungeon Cells: *Four cells line the chamber walls. The doors are secured with crude locks and pierced by slim windows set with rusted iron bars. Cries of suffering ring from the cells, and emaciated hands claw at you through the narrow windows, desperate for freedom.*

PCs peering through the windows quickly note that only two of the four cells are occupied (possibly three cells, if any PCs have been captured). Otherwise the cells are largely identical: the stone floors are matted with moldy straw, and the walls are black with slime and mold. Skeletons in manacles and neck irons hang from the walls, and brazen rats skitter at the edge of the torchlight.

The occupied cells are all locked with large crude locks (DC 7 *pick lock* check to open; PCs craning their arms through the bars of the cell to pick the lock from *inside* the cell must succeed on a DC 11 *pick lock* check). The keys to all the cells hang from the gaoler's belt (in area 3-8 or area 3-10).

Time has taken its toll on the stout bars guarding the doors' windows. They can be ripped free or bent aside with a DC 15 Strength check—though each attempt risks drawing the attention of the gaoler (successful Luck check by the PC to avoid notice).

Area 3-9a – Empty Cell: Captured PCs will be imprisoned here. Without weapons, armor, or gear, it will take a great deal of ingenuity and no small amount of Luck to carry the day. A careful search of the cell reveals that one of the skeletons chained to the wall still wears a dwarven signet ring (worth 15 gp for the jewels, but vastly more if it is returned to the royal family).

Area 3-9b – Occupied Cell: Four prisoners from a nearby village. They have overheard guards celebrating the capture of a powerful sorcerer, and believe that the magician is being held in a tower at the top of the citadel. The villagers have managed to construct a long shiv of bone and rusted iron (treat as dagger).

If the party has suffered grievous losses, players can use the villagers to bolster their ranks of PCs, rolling new 0-level PCs. Otherwise, their stats are:

Villager (4): Init +0; Atk fist +0 melee (1d3 subdual); Crit III/d4; AC 9; HD 1d4 (hp 1 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1; AL N.

Area 3-9c – Empty Cell: The stone floors are matted with moldy straw, and the walls are black with slime and mold.

Area 3-9d – Occupied Cell: A short, dwarf obiesh with a matted beard and grease-stained skin that is just beginning to rot sits within. Ralispar was imprisoned for defying the Litch's wishes; if released, the dwarf is a faithful henchman for the remainder of his days, changing his name to “-sworn”



(i.e., if released by an elf, he renames himself “Elfsworn”). The dwarven obiesh is able to guide the PCs through the maze-like citadel, but knows nothing of the druid caves beneath the citadel or their mysteries.

Ralispar, dwarven obiesh: Init +0; Atk fist +1 melee (1d3+1 subdual); Crit III/d6; AC 12; HD 1d8 (hp 5); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-10 – Guardroom: *An enormous, barrel-bellied giant, with massive iron-plated tusks and horns, sits bare-chested before a brazier filled with blazing coals. The giant is roasting a large hock over the fire, and each snarling bite sends bloody juices coursing down his forested chest.*

The half-ogre gaoler fights with an enormous scimitar that is rightly a two-handed weapon when wielded by PCs of lesser size. He also carries a bloodied club for subduing prisoners. The club hangs from his belt alongside a ring of massive keys that open the cells in area 3-9.

The gaoler is slow to suspect parties coming from above, mistaking them for obiesh. Parties emerging from the dungeons however have no such luck; the gaoler immediately leaps to the attack the instant the PCs reveal themselves, hurling the pork hock at the party before closing for melee.

The gaoler is no fool; reduced to 7 hp or less, he attempts to flee to area 3-12 to rally his companions. Failing this, he casts aside his weapons and pleads for his life, offering (falsely) treasure in return for his life and freedom.

Whips, skull vices, and branding irons hang about the walls, but there is little of note unless the PCs are looking for torture implements.

A matted pallet of animal skins occupies one corner of the chamber. Hidden in the straw, beneath the pallet, is a small carved wooden box carved with a crude demon head. Inside is a black opal wrapped in stained velvet—one of the five fabled *wizard-banes*. (The half-ogre has witnessed the fate of the obiesh, and their slavish reliance upon the Seventh Thrall for un-life. He has no desire to become the living dead, and retains the stone for protection.)

WIZARD-BANE (MAGICAL ITEM)

This brilliant, luminescent gemstone possesses the power to nullify magic; any living creature touching the stone instantly senses the jewel’s malevolent hunger. Feared by magicians and devils alike, the touch of the stone nullifies any creature’s magical powers for 1d5 rounds (DC 20 Willpower save to resist). Un-dead creatures sustained by magic (e.g., the obiesh and their master, the Seventh Thrall) are instantly slain on a failed save.

The stone can be used five times before the brilliant luminescence goes dull, rendering the jewel a dead, gray stone.

Half-ogre gaoler: Init -1; Atk two-handed scimitar +1 melee (1d10+1) or club +1 melee (1d4+1) or hock -1 missile (1d3+1); Crit III/d10; AC 12; HD 3d12 (hp 13); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-11 – Hidden Pit: *A narrow passageway branches off from the main hall, before ending at a pile of rubble. The ceiling has collapsed, and a mound of rotting beams, stones, and slate, bars the way.*

The stone floor here has been reduced to a thin crust. Eaten away by the wickedness of the Seventh Thrall’s magic from above, and the glamour of the druids below; the slightest additional weight cracks the stone, causing the floor to give way in a natural pit trap.

Unless parties are being exceptionally cautious (e.g., loudly tapping on the stone with a staff or pole), PCs inspecting the rubble pitch down the chute into the pool in area 3-6a (DC 15 Reflex saves avoids). PCs don’t take any damage from the fall, but on a failed Luck check, any lanterns or torches carried are extinguished by the plunge into the waters below.

Area 3-12 – Great Hall (and Beyond): *A pair of oak doors are flung wide, to reveal a great hall, half-lit by a dozen braziers. Laughter and curses resound from within, as near two scores of obiesh lounge about, drinking, dicing for loot, and sharpening their blades. A sooty haze hangs in the air, mixing with the stink of rot, moldering hides, and dried gore.*

No less than 50 obiesh reside in the quarters in the hall, sleeping atop pallets of hides and straw. At any point, 1d16+25 are present, pulling at jacks of sour wine, dicing for petty coins, and trading insults to the delight of their companions.

The obiesh are led by a towering commander in blued scale mail, a former warrior-queen whose flesh is just beginning to slough off in rotting bits. The commander fights with a spiked flail or two-handed sword, as the mood suits her. At the sight of the PCs, she immediately calls for their surrender. Failing this, she marshals her troops, and takes the PCs by force.

The once-impressive hall is given over to filth. Greasy soot stains the vaulted ceiling and the cut-stone floor is littered with rotting foodstuff, broken gear, and discarded casks of wine. Massive tapestries—now black with mold—still adorn the walls, alongside trophies taken from forgotten foes. PCs looting the ancient trophies for gear find 1d3 longswords, 1d6 spears, and 1d3-1 two-handed swords, in addition to 1d10 shields. All the weapons and shields are serviceable, albeit ancient.

The Brazen Hold: At the back of the chamber are a pair of bronze doors. The doors open onto a landing and stone staircases leading to passageways that connect to nearby towers and staircases that lead down into the forgotten levels of Castle Nyr. While beyond the scope of this humble adventure, judges are encouraged to map and stock the citadel and dungeon levels if the PCs choose to inhabit and explore Castle Nyr. How deep the levels go none can say, but just as the Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan will not be the last to inhabit the citadel, nor were the druids of Nyrwood the first.



Obiesh warrior-queen: Init -1; Atk spiked flail +3 melee (1d7+2) or two-handed sword +1 melee (1d10+2); CR III/d10; AC 15; HD 5d8 (hp 27); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +3; AL C.

Obiesh footsolder (20+1d16): Init -1; Atk scimitar +1 melee (1d8+1) or javelin +0 missile fire (1d6+1); CR III/d6; AC 9; HD 1d8 (hp 5 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-13 - Passage: *The filthy passageway is unlit, save for blazing light emanating from beyond a pair of great oaken doors. Raucous shouts and cruel laughter accompany the light, along with the telltale rasp of armor and blades.*

As the PCs enter the hall, a band of drunken obiesh stumble from the great hall (area 3-12), and stagger towards the gate (area 3-5).

Incautious PCs risk being spotted by the warriors. Call for a Luck check by the PC at the head of the party. On a successful check, the PC spies the obiesh in time to usher their companions into the shadows, avoiding notice. The party can safely wait for the drunken obiesh to pass, move on ahead of them, or ambush the obiesh as they see fit. On a failed check, the party is spotted. The drunken obiesh shout to their comrades in area 3-12 and give chase.

For parties attempting to escape the obiesh, the only way out is further into the citadel, across the catwalk (area 3-15) and into the Litch's tower (area 3-14).

Drunken obiesh (6): Init -2; Atk scimitar -2 melee (1d8-2); Crit III/d6; AC 9; HD 1d8 (hp 5 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref -3, Will -3; AL C.

Area 3-14 - Sword and the Elf-Maid: *An archway opens into a narrow stairway that rises to a lone turret. Loopholes pierce the walls, casting slender rays of cold starlight across the stone floor.*

In the center of the barren chamber is a statue of an elf-maid. A sword is buried in the stone, as if someone tried to cleave the statue in two. Viscous ooze seeps from the wound, collecting in a black, tarry pool on the floor.

Show players **Handout E**. The statue was carved at the founding of Castle Nyr to honor the druidic orders of old. Sezrekan commanded that the statue be destroyed, but to the Litch's great torment, to date, no obiesh has succeeded in harming the statue.

Even the Litch's own fell sword—enchanted by his dark master—only became trapped in the stone when the Seventh Thrall lashed out in frustration. Now the blessed statue and the unholy blade are locked in a war pitting good against evil.

No follower or servant of Sezrekan can draw *Brightbane* from the stone. But those unsullied by the Old Master discover that the sword slides free at a touch.

Brightbane instantly bonds to the PC that frees it from its marble prison; regardless of class, the bonded PC is able to wield the longsword without penalty.

BRIGHTBANE (+1 LONGSWORD)

Brightbane is a magical longsword formerly wielded by the Litch.

INT 10; AL C; Communication: None; Special Purposes: none; Special Powers: corruptive augmentation (see below), wielder agnostic (all bonded wielders are considered trained).

Corruptive augmentation: Initially the sword provides but a mere +1 to hit and damage, but its power grows every time the wielder fumbles in melee. On a fumble roll of a natural 1 in combat, *Brightbane* triggers a corruption (Roll 1d7 modified by Luck to determine the specific level of corruption: [0-3] major corruption; [4-6] greater corruption; [7] minor corruption; [8+] wielder escapes unscathed) and then roll on the corruption tables (p. 116-119, DCC RPG) to determine the specific type of corruption.

For each corruption inflicted upon the wielder, the weapon yields more of its power:

Corruptions	<i>Brightbane</i> magic
Starting	+1 attack and damage
1	+1d to damage (i.e., sword deals a base 1d10 damage)
2	+1d attack (i.e., wielder rolls a base 1d24 when attacking with the sword)
3	+1d to damage, plus a unique power of judge's choice
4	Extended critical threat range: wielder scores criticals against 3 more results on the die (e.g., if normally scores criticals on 20, now scores on 17-20)
5	+1d to damage, plus a unique power of judge's choice

Effects are cumulative. The wielder continues to gain corruptions with each fumble, but no additional powers are yielded after the fifth corruption (though PCs may hear legends that those in the service of Sezrekan do gain additional powers, growing forever more terrible in their might).

Area 3-15 - Catwalk: *The high catwalk is but a spear's span in width. A bitter wind shrieks between the towers threatening to send you pitching to the darkened courtyard far below. A pair guards stand watch on the far side of the catwalk, braced against the wind with their wickedly hooked polearms.*

Unless a great hue and cry have been raised (e.g., other obiesh are clearly in pursuit), the guards are huddled against the icy wind and paying little attention to their duties. PCs



daring to charge across the slender catwalk are granted a surprise round.

In battle, the obiesh wield their long glaive-guisarmes to great advantage: the tight confines of the catwalk favor weapons with long reach, granting the obiesh (and anyone else wielding a polearm or similar sized weapon) +1d to initiative checks.

However, long weapons are also a liability. A strong and daring PC can seize hold of the pole with successful attack (AC 10) or Mighty Deed of Arms and leverage an obiesh off the catwalk with a successful contested Strength check (+0 modifier).

Otherwise, any time a creature or PC fumbles, or is struck by a melee blow atop the narrow catwalk, the creature or PC must make a DC 10 Reflex save or fall to their doom.

Securing the Catwalk: The doors on the west side of the catwalk can be barred in the event of a siege, sealing off the Litch's tower. The great wooden beams, however, were burned for heat long ago. PCs hoping to secure either of the doors will need to be creative to seal the portals. There is little on the catwalk that can serve to bar the doors, unless the PCs use the obiesh's polearms or their own weapons.

However, just beyond the obiesh, inside the tower, there are sufficient fallen beams and rotting rope to secure the portal.

It takes several minutes to sunder a barred portal from without. Obiesh pursuing the PCs are stymied for 1d24+10 rounds as they look to their commanders for orders. Once rallied, however, they use their overwhelming numbers to quickly hammer down a barred portal.

Obiesh (2): Init -1; Atk polearm +1 melee (1d10+1) or scimitar +1 melee (1d8+1); Crit III/d6; AC 12; HD 1d8 (hp 5 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-16 - Eyrie: *The winding stairway rises to the collapsed peak of the tower. Open to the dark skies, the tower floor is filled with shorn tree branches, crushed bushes, and scores of bones.*

The eyrie nest is home to the four drakes kept by the Litch and his drake riders. The nest fills the tower floor and spills up to the lip of the crumbling walls.

Forgotten among the refuse, bones, and debris are treasures from the drakes' many victims. However, searching the nest is not without risk. Each round, call for a Luck check by the PC with the highest Luck score. On a failed check, a drake returns to the nest. If it spots the PCs, the drake shrieks a cry, calling an additional 1d2 drakes that arrive after 3 rounds.

Hiding from the drakes amid the nested branches and fallen beams is not difficult, and readily accomplished with a DC 5 *hide in shadows* check. However, escaping the nest is far more challenging; the slightest movement or noise catches the drakes' attention. Hidden PCs hoping to sneak out of the eyrie must succeed on a DC 12 *sneak silently* check to evade the drakes' notice.

In combat, the drakes hoist would-be thieves into the air and drop them to the bailey, hundreds of feet below. On a successful claw or bite attack, the drake seizes hold of the PC and hoists them into the air. A PC can escape with a DC 15 Reflex save; the drake also releases the PC if struck by a blow. Otherwise, the following round the drake drops the PC to their doom.

The shrieking drakes withdraw from the battle if reduced to 10 hp or less.

PCs searching the detritus of the nest have a chance of discovering treasures of value. Call for a Luck check; on a successful check, roll 3d5 on the following table.

3d5 Roll Eyrie Treasures

3*	A wand resembling a blackened twig with its tips capped in bronze. Grants user ability to cast <i>magic missile</i> with a 1d24+CL spell check (13 charges)
4*	A pair of soft-soled boots of elven make that grant +3 to <i>sneak silently</i> checks
5*	Three bandages saturated with a healing salve that heals 2 HD when applied to wounds
7-8	Roll 1d5: (1) handaxe; (2) club; (3) shield; (4) mace; (5) battleaxe
9-10	Scattered coins and gems: 1d30 sp; 1d14 gp; 1d5-1 gems (worth 1d50 gp each)
11-12	Roll 1d5: (1) javelin; (2) sling; (3) spear; (4) longsword; (5) two-handed sword
13*	A flask containing blue oil. When applied to flesh, a target's skin hardens, becoming immune to non-magical, physical damage for 1d7 rounds.
14*	A ring granting its bearer -1d to Luck checks (5 charges)
15*	A gleaming shield adorned with the symbol of Justicia (or another lawful god) and granting an additional +2 AC against attacks by chaotic-aligned foes.

*If result is rolled a second time, treat as result 11-12.

Drake (up to 3): Init +3; Atk claw +0 melee (1d12) or bite +3 melee (1d8); Crit M/d8; AC 16; HD 3d12 (20 hp each); MV fly 45'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; AL C.

Area 3-17 – Throne of the Litch: *The vast chamber is lit by a single brazier, burning fitfully before a lonely stone throne. Moldering trophies and ragged tapestries hang from tall pillars that support the collapsing ceiling. They flicker red in the dying light. The smell of rotting flesh and wood smoke hangs in the air.*

The Litch and his retinue are at the tower's peak (area 3-21). At present, the chamber's sole occupant is a hag, shuffling about quietly in the darkness. Unless the PCs take precautions (including extinguishing light sources before approaching the chamber), the hag immediately notes their approach and conceals herself behind a column.

Mother to the Litch, the hag is ancient beyond reckoning. Utterly devoted to her son, she waits for the opportunity to attack a lone PC and hurls herself out of the darkness, raking her foe with her filthy nails. On a successful sneak attack, she claws out the target's eyes, blinding them (DC 10 Reflex save to avoid), before springing back into the shadows.

The hag has the ability to scurry up the columns and walls, and across the ceiling, as deftly as any spider, and hides among the shadows and rotting tapestries. This, compounded with the size of the chamber, makes it difficult to corner the hag.

The hag must hide herself before making a sneak attack, and receives +5 to hide checks. PCs must attempt either a contested Intelligence check (vs. +2) or a Luck check (player's choice) to spot the hidden hag.

The hag wears a glowing seven-sided star of Sezrekan on a leather cord around her neck that allows her to regenerate 1d3 hp per round. Even if her body is dismembered, each of its parts continues to act of its own accord so long as she wears the talisman. The hag can only be permanently slain by damage caused by fire or magic – acts which destroy the talisman.

If the PCs somehow manage to recover the talisman without slaying the hag, they discover that it only functions for devotees of Sezrekan, and even then, only if the Old Master finds value in their service. PCs hoping to benefit from the talisman quickly find themselves at the patron's every beck and call.

Hag: Init +1; Atk claw +0 melee (1d3 plus sneak attack (DC 10 Reflex save avoids blindness)); Crit III/d4; AC 16; HD 1d12 (6 hp); MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP *spider climb* (as per result 20), +5 sneak attack and hide, regenerate (1d3/round); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; AL C.

Area 3-18 – Nave: *The demi-chapel is dominated by an enormous egg resting atop a pitted stone altar. The egg is encrusted with gore and bile, and draped with broken and desecrated holy symbols.*

Several small braziers heaped with burning coals and incense surround the egg. A sickly-sweet miasma hangs in the air, stinging your eyes and burning your lungs with each stuttering breath.

The nave is used to transform roc eggs (stolen from area 3-19) into the vulture-like drakes. The braziers warm the egg and maintain the clouds of incense that suffuse the nave with corruption.

The shell of the egg is worn thin, and the slightest disturbance causes the shell to break, spilling a wave of vile green albumin into the nave, followed by the glistening, flailing body of a 16' long brooding.

The albumin inflicts minor corruptions on any living creature it touches (DC 13 Reflex save to avoid). Roll 1d16 modified by Luck any time a PCs flesh comes into contact with the fluid.

Result Corruption

- 1 Skin color changes to a deep blue
- 2 Small horns grow on forehead
- 3 Hair turns bone white
- 4 Feet transform into cloven hoofs
- 5 Grows thick bear-like fur
- 6 Fingers elongate into claws, and PC gains an attack for 1d5 damage
- 7 Skin becomes ashen and pallid
- 8 Legs become goat-like
- 9 Grows antlers and they can an attack for 1d6 damage
- 10 Skin transforms into reptilian scales (+2 AC)
- 11+ PC is (remarkably and boringly) left unscathed.

The broodling cannot survive long outside its egg. It flails about violently before dying in 1d4+2 rounds. Any PC struck by the blind attacks is knocked prone into the corrupting albumin (DC 7 Reflex save avoids).

Corrupted broodling: Init -2; Atk wing slap -3 melee (1d4) or tail slap -3 melee (1d4); Crit M/d4; AC 7; HD 3d6 (9 hp, dies in 1d4+2 rounds); MV 0'; Act 2d20; SV Fort -1, Ref -3, Will -1; AL C.

Area 3-19 - High Balcony: *An enormous chain is bolted into the stone floor and runs out through an open archway. Each massive link is as thick as your waist and stained with gore.*

The rusted links shift and grate across the floor as something moves on the dark balcony below.

An ancient roc roosts on the balcony, imprisoned by the Litch. Used to breed the corrupted drakes, it has been years since the giant eagle has darkened the skies.

The roc is stitched into an eyeless hood of boiled leather and is tethered to the chain by a great iron shackle. Blinded by

the hood, it mistakes the PCs for obiesh, and withdraws, hissing, to the end of its chain.

The roc's shackle is secured with a forged pin that was heated and then beaten into place. Freeing the roc requires 10 rounds of hammering or a single DC 17 Strength check or successful Might Deed of Arms.

The roc is intelligent and able to understand Elf, Druidic, and the Common tongue, though it can only communicate in Druidic and its own language of mournful calls and cries.

The roc is easily large enough to carry the entire party on its back. If freed and unhooded, the roc regards the PCs with gratitude then leaps from the balcony, unsteadily taking to wing. (If the party confronts the Litch in area 3-21, the roc returns to take its revenge on its tormentors.)

Imprisoned roc: Init +1; Atk talon +8 melee (1d24+4) or bite +12 melee (1d16+4); Crit M/d10; AC 15; HD 5d12 (32 hp); MV fly 70'; Act 2d24; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +8; AL N.

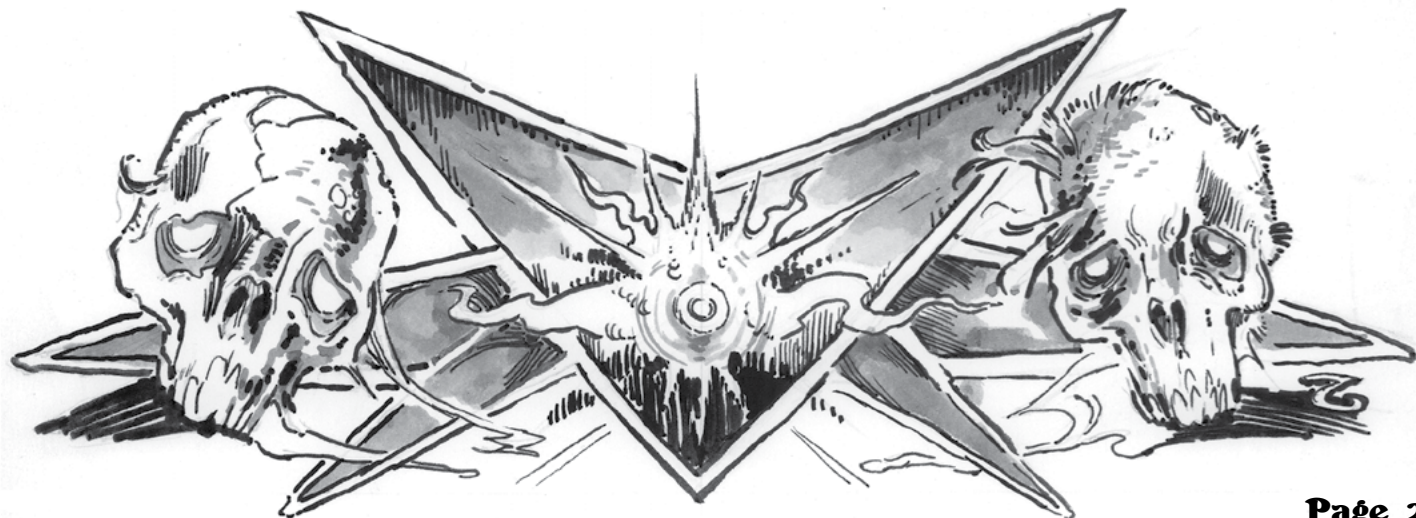
Area 3-20 - Perron: *A catwalk cuts across the open air to a stone spire that rises even further into the sky. A narrow staircase circles the spire, rising to a platform high above. The skies darken as you climb, blotting out the moon and the stars, and distant thunder rolls, threatening a coming storm.*

PCs ascending the spire are buffeted by the icy wind. The steps are a scant 5' in width, allowing brave PCs to bottleneck foes above or below. Extremely desperate PCs can climb down onto the supporting arches, hang, and drop to the next set of stairs, some 15' below (DC 15 Reflex save or PC loses their balance and pitch from the steps, pinwheeling hundreds of feet to the roofs and courtyards below).

Area 3-21 - The Litch: *The exposed stairs open to a stone platform high above the citadel. The ground spins hundreds of feet below and icy wind buffets your clothes and howls in your ears, threatening to pitch you into the abyss.*

The Old Man of the Tower lays atop a simple altar, his legs and feet are bound with leather straps. At the head of the altar stands a towering skeleton in full armor, bearing a gleaming axe in one fist and a black chalice in the other.

A motley retinue of warriors watch intently from all sides, while a larger, more fearsome drake than previously seen circles overhead.



THE EBON CHALICE

Carved from a single piece of black onyx, drinking from the unholy Ebon Chalice can confer great powers upon the imbiber, and even eternal life, albeit in the service of Sezrekan.

The powerful boon conferred by the chalice depends upon the relative power of the sacrifice offered up to Sezrekan. Round the sacrifice's HD down to the nearest die on the die chain, and roll on the following table.

Example: A PC quaffs the steaming blood of a 9 HD ogre. Rounding down the dice chain, the player rolls 1d8 on the table below.

Roll Boon

1	Sezrekan mocks the PC's paltry sacrifice and draws on 1d24 of the PC's own hit points as punishment for wasting his time. If the PC survives, they can recover the lost hit points as normal.
2	+1 HD for 1 hour
3	+1 HD and +1 to action dice for 1 hour
4	+2 HD and +2 to action dice for 1 hour
5	+2 HD and +3 to action dice for 1 hour
6	+2 HD and +1d to action dice for 1 day
7	+2 HD, +1d to Fortitude saves, and +1d to action dice for 1 day
8	+2 HD, +1d to Fortitude saves, and +1d to action dice for 1 week
9	+2 HD, +1d to Fortitude saves, and +1d to action dice for 1 month

Results 10 and higher: The mighty PC is assigned a personal quest by Sezrekan. The boons last so long as—and only as long as—the fickle warlock is pleased by his minion's progress.

10	+2 HD, +1d to action dice, +1d to Fortitude saves
11	+3 HD, +1d to action dice, and +2d to Fortitude saves
12	+3 HD, +2d to action dice, and +2d to Fortitude saves
13	+4 HD, +2d to action dice, and +2d to Fortitude saves
14	+4 HD, +2d to action dice, and +3d to Fortitude saves
15+	+5 HD, +2d to action dice, and +3d to Fortitude saves

Willingly partaking of the chalice is a wicked act, certain to offend any god, devil, or patron, other than Sezrekan.

Boons earned from sacrifices never stack, but a PC may certainly attempt to win better blessings with additional offerings.

If the PC reaches the end of their natural lifespan while under the Old Master's geas, or if they would have been slain—save for the additional Hit Dice—the PC is barred from the gates of death, so long as they maintain the boon with additional sacrifices.

The PC's flesh and muscle decay as if they were dead. If ever the boon is permitted to lapse, or if ever the PC is reduced to 0 hit points (including hit points from the boon), the PC dies.

Arcane power crackles across the sky like lightning, and the drake shrieks with delight at the dark deeds to come.

The armored skeleton is the dread Litch, Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan; the six warriors are his captains-at-arms, masters of the obiesh.

The Seventh Thrall is sacrificing the Old Man of the Tower, calling out in prayer before decapitating the sage and draining his life blood into the *Ebon Chalice*. Sanctified by the Sezrekan's malefic will, the Litch and his retinue will each drink from the unholy cup, reaffirming their loyalty and receiving the gift of eternal life.

The PCs may attempt to interrupt the sacrifice at any time. Anja is driven to save the wizard, and must be restrained lest she howl her fury, revealing the PCs. Otherwise, the Litch and his obiesh are intent on their ritual and automatically surprised.

Parties disguised as obiesh with prisoners are mistaken as loyal soldiers bearing additional sacrifices. The Litch pauses in the ritual long enough for the fake prisoners to be marched to the altar for sacrifice.

Combat atop the tower is fraught with peril. PCs can attempt to hurl foes from the tower with a contested Strength check

(the obiesh warlords receive +2 to their checks). Caught off guard, the obiesh are not as clever, and fight defensively until rallied by their master.

The circling drake, however, suffers no such indecision, swooping down to pluck PCs from the top of the tower. In the chaos of melee, the drake suffers -1d to its attacks, and on a fumble accidentally knocks an obiesh to their doom.

Finally, for his part, the Seventh Thrall is not to be deterred. Unless somehow physically restrained, he continues with the ritual over the course of 4 rounds:

- **Round 1:** The Litch finishes the prayer.
- **Round 2:** The Litch cleaves the wizard's head with a single terrible blow, causing Anja to wail in agony and stunning the winged cat for 1d3 rounds.
- **Round 3:** The Litch catches the wizard's blood in his unholy *Ebon Chalice*.
- **Round 4:** The *Ebon Chalice* glows with violet light as the Seventh Thrall holds it to the thundering skies, and then drinks with relief, his life force rejuvenated once more.
- **Round 5:** Now radiating violet light, nigh-immortal, and imbued with superhuman strength, the Seventh Thrall strides into combat.





With the shrieking drake above and the revived Litch below, the PCs' fate is nearly sealed. Defeating the Litch will depend on creativity and good fortune:

- **Wrestled from the Tower Top:** The Litch and his obiesh can be hurled from the peak of the tower with a contested Strength check (once the ritual is completed, the Litch receives +4 to Strength checks). Howling with impotent fury, he plummets to his doom hundreds of feet below.
- **Druid's Blessing (area 2-2):** The Seventh Thrall cannot harm any PC that still possesses a Druid's Blessing. Attacks automatically miss at the last instant by some miraculous feat of Luck. Each "miss" counts as one use of the blessing.
- **Brightbane (area 3-10):** Any PC wielding the Litch's own sword inspires mindless fury in the Seventh Thrall. Forsaking all else (including completing the revivification ritual) the Litch charges the PC, sweeping aside allies and foes alike, to reclaim his blade. Quick-thinking PCs can use this to their advantage, luring the Litch to the tower's edge.
- **Hag's Talisman (area 3-13):** As with *Brightbane*, the sight of his mother's talisman causes the Litch to halt his ritual and attack.
- **Defeat of the Obiesh:** If the PCs somehow defeat all the six warlords, the Seventh Thrall calls for his drake, and escapes into the darkness to return at a time of the judge's choosing.

If the PCs freed the great eagle from area 3-12, it returns now, swooping down low over the spire. While the roc cannot overcome its fear of the Litch, it can attack the drake or the obiesh, or even catch falling PCs as they plunge from the tower.

Players are sure to come up with clever (and oftentimes complicated) ways to defeat the Litch. Judges should strive to adjudicate the PCs' plans fairly, even if it means the Litch is easily defeated. A cunning plan, well executed, is worthy of praise. High atop the Seventh Thrall's citadel, with foes on all sides, defeating the Litch is its own reward.

Litch, the Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan (pre-transformation): Init -1; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+2); Crit IV/d12; AC 18; HD 5d12 (hp 15); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +3; AL C.

Litch, the Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan (post-transformation): Init +3; Atk longsword +6 melee (1d8+6); Crit IV/d12; AC 18; HD 5d12 (60 hp); MV 30'; Act 1d24; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3; AL C.

Obiesh warlord (6): Init -1; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+2) or spear +2 melee (1d8+2); Crit III/d10; AC 15; HD 5d8 (hp 10 each); MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will +2; AL C.

Drake: Init +3; Atk claw +2 melee (1d14+2) or bite +3 melee (1d10+2) [may attack while unmounted only]; Crit M/d12; AC 16; HD 4d14 (27 hp); MV fly 45'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; AL N.

The defeat of the Litch wreaks havoc upon any surviving obiesh:

If the Litch flees or abandons the tower, his warlords and any other obiesh rout. Panicked by the loss of their master – and fearing the end of their extended un-lives – the obiesh flee for the stairs. Those that are too slow pitch from the perron steps. Panic washes through the rest of the citadel, causing the obiesh to retreat from Castle Nyr. The surviving obiesh are rallied by the Seventh Thrall weeks later.

Slaying the Seventh Thrall robs the obiesh of the unholy forces that sustain them. The cursed warriors collapse to the ground; those that have outlived their natural lives die instantly, flesh and muscle melting from their bones. Obiesh that were only recently accepted into service, and not fully dead, rouse themselves in 1d30 rounds, fully living once again, and stumble off in a daze, bereft of any memory of what took place during their time in the service of Sezrekan.

THE AFTERMATH

Even if the PCs triumph against the Litch, it is likely that the Old Man of the Tower is slain before he can be rescued.

The death of her master frees Anja and when the winged-cat recovers she takes a moment to consider her future. If the PCs have treated her fairly and worked to protect her, she casts her lot with the party. However, if the PCs treated the winged-cat poorly, or risked her life without cause, she strikes out on her own, never to return.

If, against all odds, the PCs succeed in saving their former master, he begs one last favor: an escort back to his former tower. Arriving at the tower, the PCs discover a pair of druids awaiting his return. The two have come to take their brother to their sacred groves for his convalescence.

Before the three depart, the Old Man of the Tower commands a strongbox to be raised from beneath the earth. Inside are two relics, gifts for the party:

- **Silvered Scythe:** The scythe permits spellcasters and their ilk to harvest mistletoe and other natural material spell components without lessening their potency. Components harvested by the scythe never succumb to rot or age. If a player can make a case for a material component, and their PC is able to collect them, the scythe-harvested component grants +1d to a spell check. The component is always consumed with the casting, even if the spell check fails.
- **Whetstone of Miteras:** Used to sharpen a blade (a task taking 1d3 hours), the whetstone grants +1d to damage inflicted in the next combat encounter. After the encounter, make a Luck check; on a successful check, the blade retains its edge for the next encounter.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Regardless of whether the Old Man of the Tower lives or dies, the defeat of the Litch and his obiesh leaves Castle Nyr abandoned. The citadel is the PCs to claim or quit as they see fit.

The lower levels and the other towers (all reached through the Brazen Hold in area 3-12) offer untold foes and treasures, remnants of the citadel's previous occupants. An entire campaign can be built off the exploration of the lower levels and the secrets buried within.

As the PCs establish their hold over Castle Nyr, they are sure to draw attention from nearby villages. This begins with peasants and mercenaries seeking protection and employment respectively, and then neighboring warlords and princelings, investigating the upstarts in their midst. How the PCs choose to respond will determine whether these rivals become foes, allies, or both. Perhaps the next time Castle Nyr is assaulted, it will be the PCs at the head of a detachment of roc riders defending against a sprawling horde of rapacious foes.



APPENDIX A: PLAYER HANDOUTS



handout A



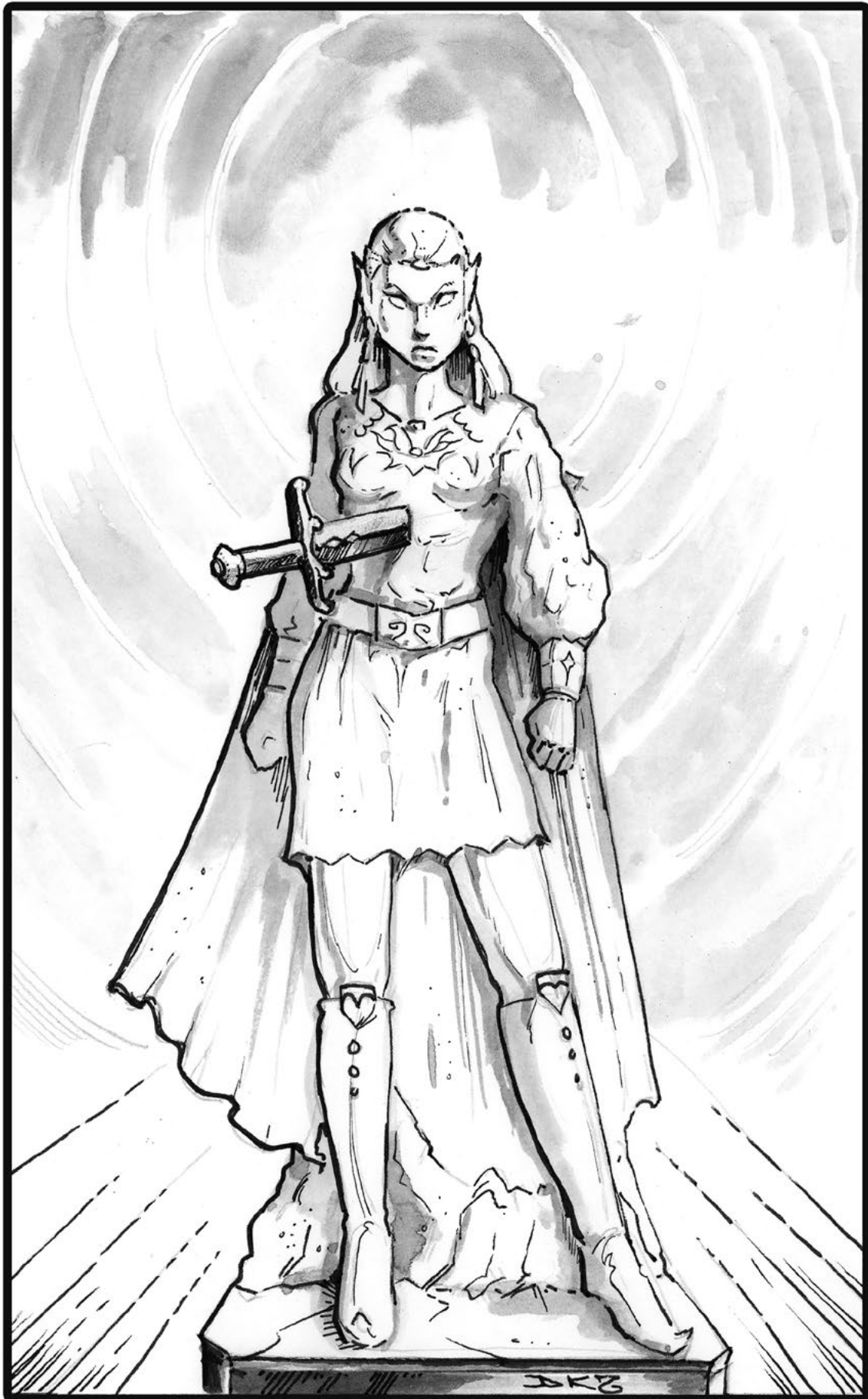
handout B



handout C



handout D



handout E



handout E

THE PHLOGISTONIC EYE SEES ALL!

Behold! Once again it is time for the unrelenting gaze of the Phlogistic Eye to peer across the multiverse. It perceives all, knows all! Watch as it peers mercilessly into the soul of writer Harley Stroh to strip him of his secrets and lay *The Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan* bare before the multiverse!

As a child, I delighted in the tidbits of Greyhawk canon handed down by Pluffet Smedger, the Elder. Hints of lore, forcibly dredged from regional encounter tables, and cross-referenced with place names and characters in the *Dungeon Masters Guide* made it that much easier to believe in these imaginary worlds.

It never dawned on 8-year-old Harley that these worlds were still being created. (I confess to imagining there was a vault in Lake Geneva with an exhaustive catalog of all the TSR's worlds.)

Nor did it occur to me that I could contribute to their creation and take a hand in making these worlds my own. It would be decades before the veil fell away and I came to appreciate the truth that every judge is a game designer and author. Not only can judges and players take a hand in world design, but our games are infinitely better when they do.

Done well, an adventure is at once fresh and immediately recognizable, offering judges a clear inciting incident, and a dramatic conclusion. But the very best adventures also leave more questions than they answer, reserving the most tantalizing secrets for the judge to decide.

The Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan was inspired by Doug Kovac's cover: seven unique villains, each in service to dread Sezrekan. Studying their portraits, it is easy to imagine their internecine struggles, one thrall trying to outdo their peers as they vie for the attention of their dread master. Whereas the Litch seeks power through conquest, cruelty, and the addictive powers of the Ebon Chalice, it is easy to imagine that the other thralls would resort to deception and cunning, en-

chantment and illusion, or vice and blackmail. Each has their own unique schemes, powers, and foibles, that – taken together as a whole – begin to capture the protean wickedness of the mad mage.

Working from Doug's skeletal warrior, my mind wandered to the concept art of Disney's *The Black Cauldron*, and from their beautiful stills to the image of Camelot that adorns the cover of the classic *Pendragon* RPG. Working from these bones I began to flesh out the adventure.

Harkening back to my childhood love of Pluffet Smedger (Castle Nyr is an obvious tribute to the Nyr Dyv, which was itself was Gygax's nod to Lake Superior), we intentionally sank bits of *Sezrekan*'s own history into the module – offering judges tenterhooks in which to hang their own adventures.

And while I don't know whether or not *The Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan* will be judged a good adventure, I can say with confidence that we left tantalizing threads for ambitious judges looking to make it their own. The most obvious being the north exit from area 3-12. This unmapped portion of the citadel likely opens to hitherto undiscovered

dungeons beneath Castle Nyr.

But Harley, you might cry, what about the other six thralls? What about the specters, the sabertoothed lion, the bearded quasit, and the armadillo demon?

Here, too, friends, we leave the best, most tantalizing secrets to you. I invite every judge to join me in studying Doug's painting, and come up with their own backstories, histories and plots. And if you do happen to create a thrall (or six!) of *Sezrekan*, I hope you'll share then with the rest of us.

I, for one, cannot wait to study your lore.

*The creation of more dire minions to work the will of Chaos across the multiverse is something the Phlogistic Eye approves of. Wise advice, Harley Stroh, so you shall be spared... for now. The Phlogistic Eye shall return in future *Dungeon Crawl Classics* adventures!*



Author Harley Stroh

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THE SEVENTH THRALL OF SEZREKAN

DCC #108: A LEVEL 0 ADVENTURE
BY HARLEY STROH

You've served the Old Man of the Tower, a reclusive sage, for many years, tending to his holdings and content with your role as lowly servant to a powerful master. That all changed one bright day when the servants of the Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan, that infamous wizard, descended upon the Old Man's tower and thrust it into ruin. Now, you and your fellows must lay down your tools and take up weapons to rescue your former master from the clutches of Seventh Thrall. Can you infiltrate the diabolical Castle Nyr and overcome the forces that stand against you?

The Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan is a 0-level funnel adventure perfect for starting a new DCC RPG campaign. The party will find themselves challenged to the utmost by the Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan and his minions. Will they emerge as victorious adventurers or just another casualty of The Seventh Thrall of Sezrekan?

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