

WEDDING BELLS

01

Intrigue, Nobility, Politics

A noble family is planning a grand wedding, one that will cement an important alliance, and none may be allowed to interfere with this most splendid event.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- They are trusted acquaintances of either the happy couple or their families.
- They are at the wedding to meet an elusive noble or as a reward for past deeds.

Encounters:

- A drunken wizard's party trick turns dangerous when the summoned creature slips its bindings.
- A PC is chosen to be to be a courtier's champion in a duel of honor.
- The groom gets cold feet and attempts to flee the wedding, something he will surely regret if he gets away.
- A rival of the PCs is attending, and attempts to show them up in a challenge.
- A known political rival of the noble family sneaks in, but the PCs spot his disguise. Can they deal with him without making a scene?

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- One of the PCs catches the bouquet...
- The PCs are thanked for their aid, and given a rare map or other such information.

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SIDEQUEST DECKS:

POLITICAL & URBAN FANTASY

Need fantasy adventure ideas in urban areas or with political themes? Use our **SideQuest Decks: Political & Urban Fantasy**. Each card is a dynamic adventure!

Draw a card for an adventure outline. The outline includes backstory, ways to get the PCs involved, encounter possibilities, and follow-up ideas. The other side of the card is the most important map for that adventure. Use maps from other cards as needed.

Each adventure in this deck has a fantasy theme in an urban setting or with political plotlines.

SideQuest Decks are perfect for stocking a hex crawl or developing a side trek on the fly. You may even chain several together for an entire campaign!

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INTO THE HOUSE OF PESTILENCE

03

Investigation, City, Undead

A magical disease emerges near a walled town in the hills. The last reports are of the inhabitants sealing themselves in to prevent it reaching them.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- They need an artifact from a scholar who lived in the town.
- The lords of the land have offered a reward for any word of what has happened.

Encounters:

- The investigators must gain entry to the town... perhaps by scaling a wall at night or finding a secret tunnel.
- Once inside, the adventurers are met with slimy corpses, seemingly dismantled and remade into new forms. The intrusion spurs them to a mockery of life.
- Sounds of life emerge from an inn. Inside is a gory tableau of dead eating dead.
- Rotting undead haul an animal carcass up the street towards the head-man's dwelling.
- In the chief's house, the source is found: a great fiend gated to this plane controlling the undead horde.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The fiend may have allies seeking revenge.
- Sages will want more information about the affliction.

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REVEALING THE VIPER

02

Politics, Nobility, Investigation

One of the ladies of the court is a traitor, her treachery uncovered over the course of previous events.

However, without concrete proof and due to political allies, she is not in a position to be taken on.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The lady wishes for revenge for prior meddling. However, it will take some time to mobilize a response without drawing attention, which gives the PCs time to act.
- Letters from a now-deceased acquaintance detail grave suspicions, giving PCs enough information to reveal the person behind the killing.

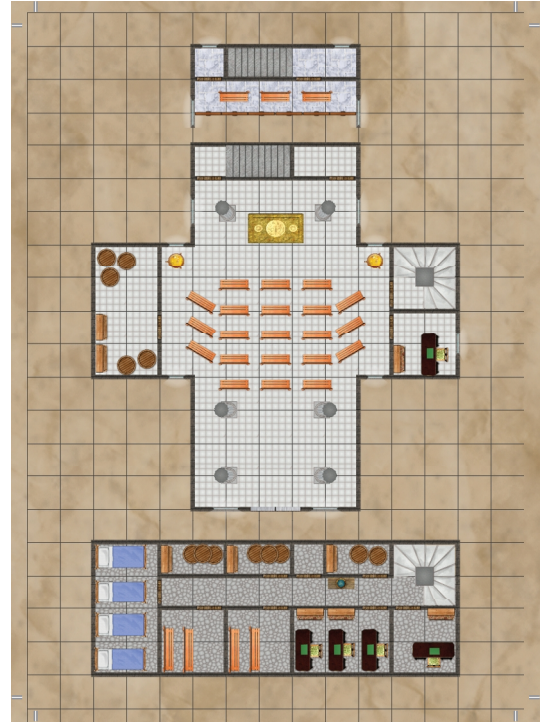
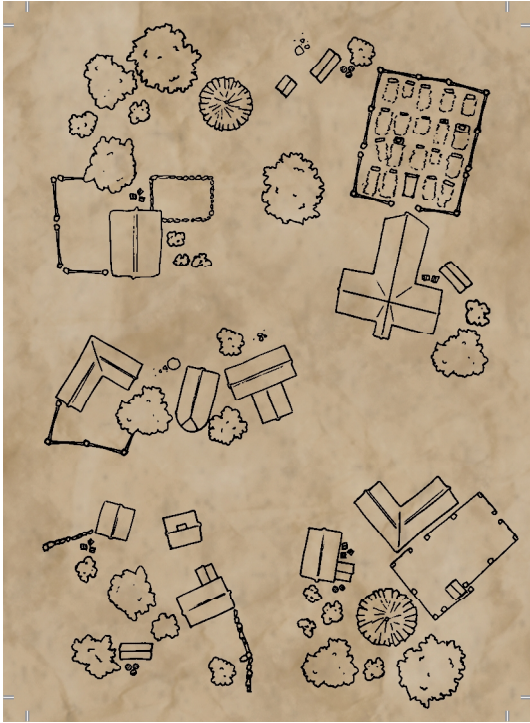
Encounters:

- Following up a lead means dealing with a shady spellcaster.
- The group's food and drink are poisoned, leaving them vulnerable to a gang of thugs.
- After returning from fruitful investigations, the party discovers thieves rooting through their belongings.
- Retrieving what they need means breaking into the lady's well-defended home.
- Summoned killers attempt to retake what was stolen.
- Before the court, the PCs may dramatically present their evidence.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The lady may get off due to a technicality.
- Her allies seek revenge.

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THE WRONG RITES

05

Investigation, Town, Occult

With their leader stripped of his title, a sorcerous cabal begin a ritual to claim his pact-granted power for their own, ignoring his protests that it is very dangerous.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The cabal's leader seeks out the group, explaining his predicament. He explains what is at stake.
- The entity the leader is bound to is set to play a crucial role in future schemes. The party seeks him out only to find the cabal in turmoil.

Encounters:

- The cabal have gone to ground to prevent interference. However, one member can be located by those that know their vices.
- Information given by the erstwhile informant is a trap.
- The would-be interlopers are offered information by a diviner, but at a hefty price.
- A few of the lower-ranking members of the cabal confront the party, believing them to be fools tricked by the jealous former leader.
- By the time the PCs get their information, it is a race to get to the ritual site before the rite begins.
- The angered power calls forth a dangerous servitor. The cabal and the adventurers must team up to defeat it.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The cabal owe the group dearly for their aid, as does the former leader.

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VAMPIRE HUNT

04

Investigation, Town, Shapeshifter

Rumors of a vampire have forced some people in town to form a gang and unearth all the bodies in the graveyard and stake them. The creature is actually a shapeshifter emulating a vampire.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A PC has a loved one buried in the graveyard and is deeply upset over the exhumation.
- PCs hear of problems at the cemetery while visiting.

Encounters:

- The party investigates the cemetery.
- A person is found murdered with an unusual wound.
- After that, people pair up when travelling. However, there are still cases where people are alone.
- Another town member is murdered with the same wound as they were returning from the outhouse.
- The number of suspects narrows as those who were paired up can vouch for each other.
- The shapeshifter continues to pose as various townspeople while hiding the bodies.
- Every time a body is found, there is a chance the shapeshifter hasn't had a chance to switch and is nearby and found out.
- The shapeshifter may also impersonate a PC, revealing its nature to that character.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Where did it get the idea to pose as a vampire?

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ROYAL RESCUE

07

Nobility, Politics, Invasion, Rescue

The queen was in a neighboring kingdom when it was invaded. Get her out safely.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Agents for the king approach the party asking the group to rescue the queen from the conqueror's guard. The agents can't do it themselves as they are known to the conqueror's people.
- If the PCs are already aiding the kingdom, a noble or knight assigns them to protect his newest war prize—the queen of the neighboring kingdom.

Encounters:

- The queen was bored with the king—she doesn't want to go back. She likes the conqueror and she'll avoid/double-cross rescuers. She knows magic.
- The PCs stumble on the queen's bodyguard who wants to assist. If she convinces him she wants to stay and he can't take her by force, he'll kill her.
- The conqueror's inner circle are worried the queen will distract him from taking the rest of the territory; they want to arrange an accident. PCs could help with this, or be the target (if they defend the queen).
- If they do not return to the king's territory in time, the pass will be closed with an avalanche. Then the only way through is an ancient tomb...

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- They've been involved in affairs that count as royal secrets. Surely someone wants them dead.

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SUPPRESS THE CHAMPION

06

Investigation, Prophecy, Cult

A rash of unrelated murders has a sinister pattern.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A friendly barmaid, merchant, or town official they just dealt with is murdered by hooded figures.
- Due to their reputation, the city guard enlist the PCs.

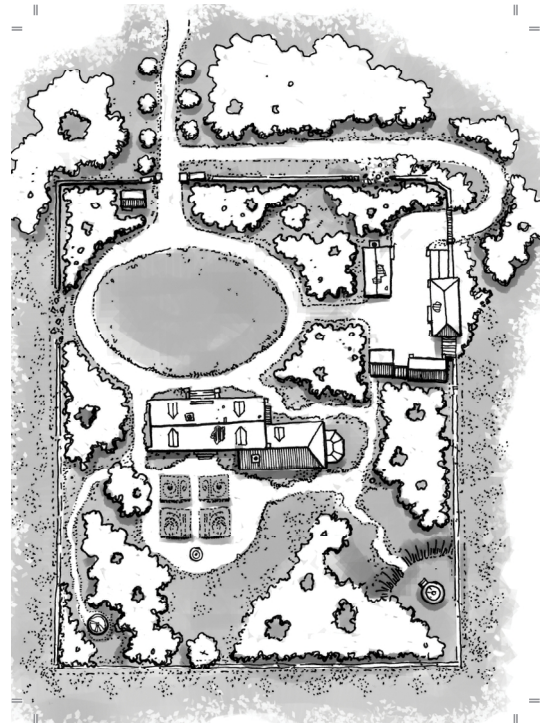
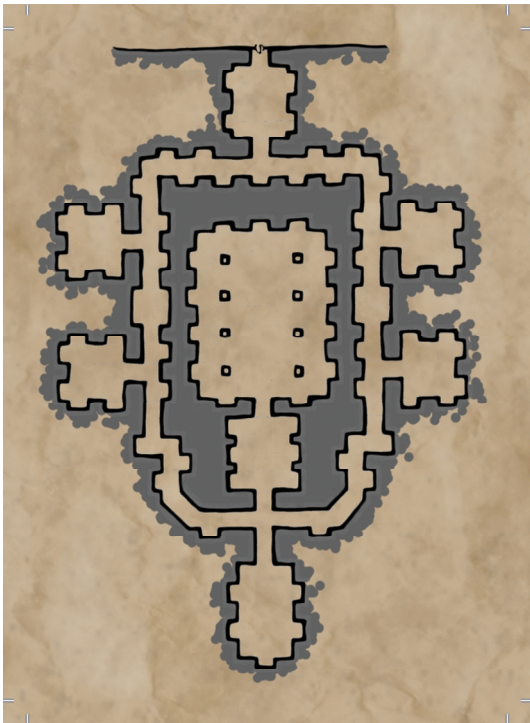
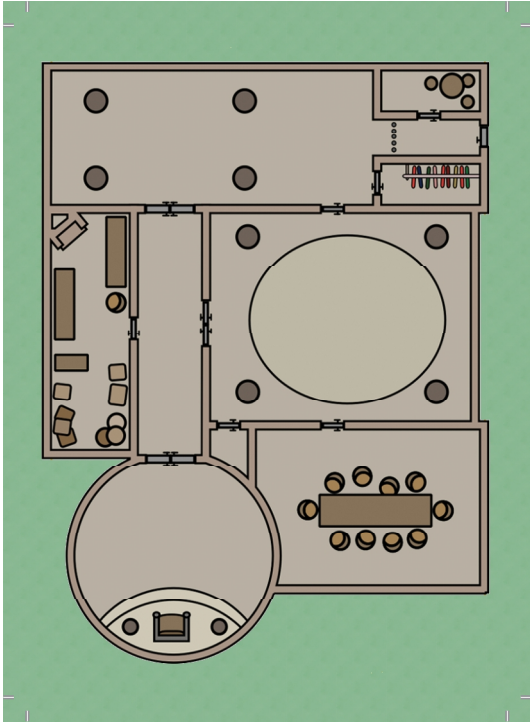
Encounters:

- At the tavern, the PCs overhear a frustrated scholar, who has tried to tell the rulers about how these murders relate to genealogy and prophecy, but he looks unkempt and crazy.
- The PCs discover that a symbol carved into the victims points to a cult that has traced a bloodline prophesied to yield a hero to slay their slumbering demon god. Now they are wiping out all threats.
- A lonely, mysterious genealogist knows of the cult, and has access to records that can help.
- A captured killer can reveal that Master Serel believes it is his destiny to wipe out the line the cult has traced for so long. Not everyone is a fanatic; if he were gone, the killings would stop.
- Gathering several targets in one place could force a confrontation with the killers, thinning their numbers.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- If a PC is of the bloodline, danger never really ends—but does the PC become the champion?
- PCs are connected to a number of random deaths by proxy, and no one believes stories of a killer cult...

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THE RUMOR MILL

09

Intrigue, City, Rumors

A magically enhanced rumor is ruining the reputation of a local authority figure. It is likely to destroy him or her if it spreads much further.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- They are hired to investigate how the rumor started.
- The rumor relates to something else that the party is interested in finding out about.

Encounters:

- A local pickpocket can be persuaded to tell them where the rumor started, if the PCs can catch him.
- A tavern brawl breaks out between those who believe and those who don't.
- Another investigator agrees to share some of his information, but he is being tailed.
- The PCs are given the chance to confirm the truth of the rumor.
- The fey creature responsible brings the fight to those investigating it.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The PCs are presented the opportunity to either destroy or save the perpetrator.
- The authority figure falls, or remains in power, due the PCs' actions.

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A DISPENSATION DILEMMA

08

Intrigue, Treasure

Returning triumphant from an expedition with an item of renown but useless to adventurers, the group are bombarded with requests to bequeath the item.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The item is of great historical importance. Nobles offer to buy it for their collections.
- The party is summoned to court over the item.

Encounters:

- The group are surrounded at court by those who wish to gain the item, each making promises.
- An attempt to steal the item ends in disaster.
- A dire threat is made against the party should they present the artifact to a certain group.
- A creature from elsewhere meets with the adventurers, seeking possession of the item. It does not take no for an answer...
- At a public gathering, a number of important figures push for a final decision to be made.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The faction who gains the item will grow in power and owe much to the adventurers.
- Rival groups may resent the PCs' decision and plot revenge.

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ON THEIR BEST BEHAVIOUR

11

Politics, Journey, Intrigue

An ambassador has been dispatched to a distant land. Those who travel with him must not cause an incident with an alien culture.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Having aided the emissary previously, and in trouble at home, the party are offered up.
- The ambassador is not fully trusted but is the most qualified. Therefore, proven aides must be assigned.

Encounters:

- Advice given to the aides proves to be false—leading to accusations of trying to cheat a merchant.
- A drink given to the ambassador is, in fact, a magical potion. The party must convince him that to attend a function under its effects would be a terrible idea.
- The servant who served the ambassador the potion is revealed as an exotic and malevolent spirit.
- With little notice, the ambassador must host a social function. Displaying exotic skills is a traditional entertainment.
- At the gathering, a guest gives a minor-seeming insult. To not respond with force would be a major sign of weakness, or so it would seem.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The local panjandrum seems to have taken a liking to the group, asking them to stay on.
- The lords back home will look kindly on the PCs' aid in protecting their foreign interests.

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LUCK OF THE DICE

10

Investigation, City or Dwarven Stronghold

A noble scion has lost a family heirloom to a dwarf in an underground gambling game. When the dwarf is accused of cheating, the syndicate running the game takes the heirloom for themselves.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The scion begs them for aid. He needs the item back before his clan elders notice it's missing, and promises to reward them.
- The dwarf hires the PCs to recover the item. He won't fair and square!

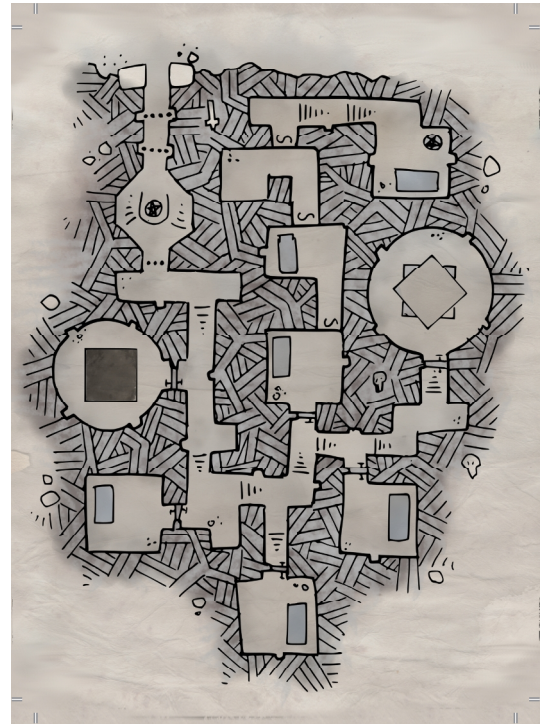
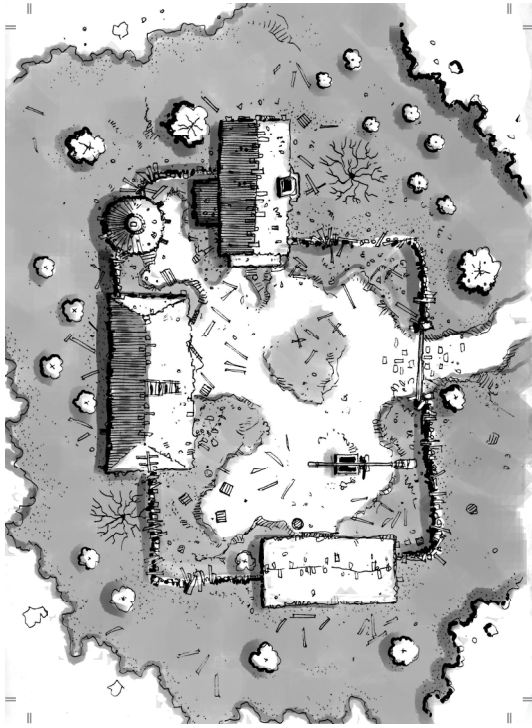
Encounters:

- The PCs check out the gambling den to gain information.
- The secret vault is in a bad area of town: a gang hassles the PCs.
- The outer layer of the vault is protected by complex traps and trained guards.
- A team working for the other side tries to stop the PCs from taking their prize.
- The inner vault is guarded by magical guardians.
- The other side confronts the PCs and states their case for being given the item.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Whichever way the PCs gain their reward, they gain a friend and a possible future enemy.

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A DEMONOLOGIST'S DOWNFALL 13

Investigation, City, Cult

A prominent figure is implicated after a summoned demon's rampage. None will go before the court to speak for the accused, for fear of being tainted.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The accused is a prior employer so they may be tarred with the same brush if not proven innocent.
- Evidence in the party's possession, obtained by such means that it may not be directly revealed, assures them that the accused has been framed.

Encounters:

- The accused's sitting room is filled with summoning sigils and corpses. The PCs know to look past the obvious.
- A coded map leads the investigators to a ruin where sacrifices gathered, a place rife with unquiet spirits.
- The ruin's guardians, their crumbling stone bodies patched with dark earth, challenge the interlopers.
- In the sanctum sits a book, but as they approach, the demon reveals itself.
- Defeated, the demon gives them instructions to open the warded book without erasing the pages.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The true culprit is in court to watch the victim's downfall. The PCs must turn the tables on them.
- When the actual demonologist uses their magic to disappear, the court requests that the adventurers deal with the situation.

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CLEAR THEIR REPUTATION 12

Investigation, City, Reputation

It began with an off-hand remark, which turned to the questioning of facts. Although the questioner was satisfied with the answers, that disbelief has spread. People are doubting that the tales of the adventurers are actually true, and doubt turns to anger.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- As they enter the tavern, the bard sings a song, mocking their achievements.
- A letter from a former comrade arrives, asking pointed questions and expressing disgust.

Encounters:

- Questioning minstrels and nobles turns up the name of a famous and reclusive bard.
- A cryptic letter in an entertainer's possession is the key to the bard's whereabouts.
- The great songwriter calls upon his powers of illusion to misdirect the PCs as they approach.
- The entrance to the bard's mountain home opens only to those who can answer the riddles posed.
- Faced with angry critics, the bard and his handful of trusted followers harry the group in an attempt to drive them off.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The bard is forced to apologise, and offers to write them a new song in recompense.
- Tales of their exploits, no longer doubted, reach distant and interested ears.

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WHILE THE STARS ARE RIGHT 15

Sabotage, Cult, Unholy Ritual

Tonight is an astrological alignment, one that weakens the boundaries of reality in such a way that permits certain unholy rituals. However, a certain artifact is needed for these rites.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The PCs are entrusted with the artifact by its previous caretaker, who is dying of poison.
- The order that keeps the artifact safe simply do not trust anyone who has the required ability not to fall to temptation and use the artifact.

Encounters:

- Cultists scry for the PCs and attempt to ambush them.
- Summoned creatures search for the artifact.
- The building the PCs are in is set on fire to flush them out.
- The PCs are mistaken for evil cultists by another group trying to prevent the artifact's use.
- The magister of the cult assaults the PCs to claim the artifact.
- An imposter tries to convince the PCs to hand the artifact back, but it's a little too early.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The PCs are invited by the real guardians to take part in the ceremony which takes place during the opposite alignment, and which is far more beneficial.
- Retribution may be sought during the next alignment.

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DEAD MAN WALKING 14

Protection, Countryside, Necromancy

A famed necromancer is traveling through a particularly religious part of the country. Unfortunately his profession makes him a target for a great deal of animosity.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- They are hired by the necromancer in order to provide him with much-needed security.
- The necromancer is on business for another party, who assign the PCs to make sure that his mission is completed successfully.

Encounters:

- The party is chased out of town by an angry mob.
- A fanatical servant of the religion, such as a cleric, paladin or inquisitor, attacks the party for their perceived crimes. The necromancer responds by raising the dead.
- The necromancer's work leads to them protecting him from the undead as he performs a ritual.
- Angry townsfolk march on the PCs, intent on burning the necromancer.
- With the end in sight, the fanatical servant from before returns, or a higher ranking one blocks the way. This time, they are better prepared.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The necromancer reveals what he uncovered during the trip.

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THE KEY

17

Treasure, Summoning, Kidnapping

Treasure from a recent adventure makes the party a target after it is sold to a local jeweler who is ritualistically murdered the midnight after the sale.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Constable attempts to arrest the party for murder.
- The jeweler's relatives beg the PCs to avenge him, blaming them for his death.

Encounters:

- Investigation reveals the murdering thief was holed up in a nearby shrine the locals shun. He is not there, but they find wall art depicting their gem, and they discover it is a key to unlock a gate to another dimension. They also learn the location of the gate.
- Dark forces rally to support the thief, either to help take the gem or to slow pursuit as he races to the gate to use it.
- The thief kidnaps several innocents from a village along the way, to use as sacrifices.
- The ritual takes about twelve hours, during which evil forces protect the thief as he sacrifices his captives to open the gate.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The gem crumbles during the ritual.
- Envoys from the other dimension that are already in the world hunt the PCs.

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THE MYSTERIOUS ARRIVAL

16

Investigation, Nobility, Cult

A stranger arrives in court, bearing emblems of an ancient line. Many lords seek something from the stranger's past that they can use to manipulate him.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- In the employ of a powerful individual for another reason, they are asked to investigate as a favor.
- The stranger's emblems contradict some knowledge the PCs have previously uncovered.

Encounters:

- The newcomer claims to have come from a village deep in the hills. He didn't, but the party did see him enter a mysterious gate carved into the hillside.
- The gate will only open under certain conditions, which could be duplicated by cunning manipulation.
- Inside the gate lies a mortuary complex, warded with magic and filled with false treasures.
- A pair of ancient guardians, bound to preserve the tombs, confront intruders who enter an inner temple.
- The scion makes their presence known, asking if the adventurers will aid or oppose their plans to realize their destiny. They do not wish to fight, however.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- If they take the stranger's side, they will be embroiled in the quest to fulfill the bloodline's duty.
- If they oppose the stranger, then they have made a powerful enemy, but will have the backing of their current patron.

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STOP! THIEF!

19

City, Thieves

A valuable item is stolen from a PC. The PCs must find the lair to retrieve it.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The thief waits until a PC is alone and distracted, grabs a valuable item from a PC and runs for it.

Encounters:

- The thief makes a run for it. If he thinks he'll be caught, he tosses the item to a collaborator in the crowd.
- If the thief is captured, the PCs can question him to learn what group he is a part of. If he escaped, they can ask around.
- They find the rogue's headquarters, but it is abandoned. A trap is left behind!
- Mysterious "friends" tell the PCs of the real hideout's location.
- If the PCs take precautions, the fight at the hideout won't be overwhelming.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Were the friends from a rival gang, looking to move into the defeated group's territory?
- Perhaps the party's actions have caught the attention of the authorities.... do they want the PCs' help, or do they see the PCs as vigilantes?

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THE CITY BEYOND THE VEIL

18

Journey, Extraplanar Travel

When the stars align in certain ways—known only to hoary astrologers and maddened sages—a fabled city opens its gates. Only then can the daring attend the court of the powerful fiends that dwell within.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A cult of one of the entities is responsible for a number of nefarious activities against a PC's relative in that being's name. Legends suggest it can be made to offer recompense if formally petitioned.
- Many years ago, a deal was made. Now it is time to collect the mystical item that was created as a result and the PCs are asked to represent the mortal side.

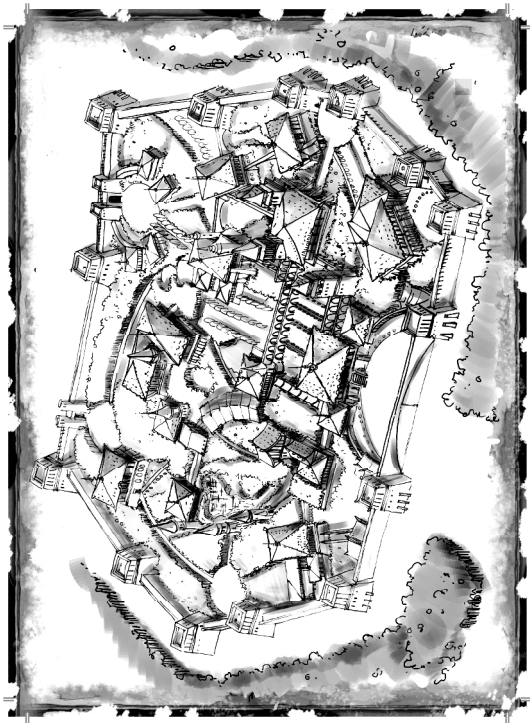
Encounters:

- One entrance to the city is reputed to lie on an island in a forest lake. The forest is home of cruel fey.
- As the group cross the lake, an eldritch fog gathers, and a serpentine creature strikes from concealment.
- Whilst the PCs wait for the appointed time, another group of adventurers land—rivals of the party.
- The gate manifests. The city within is labyrinthine and filled with temptations and traps for the unwary.
- The court progresses, following strange social customs that the attendees will have to deduce for themselves in order to be acknowledged.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- With the court over, the city vanishes from the world, until the stars are right once more.

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THE UNDERDOGS

21

Investigation, City, Organized Crime

A small artisan's guild is the target of threats and bullying tactics from a larger syndicate wanting to establish a monopoly on a trade.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The syndicate are up to a lot of other schemes, and the PCs know it. Defending the artisan's guild will just be a bonus.
- When the PCs are purchasing an item from one of the guild, the craftsman in question offers them a deal...

Encounters:

- When visiting one of the artisans, the PCs encounter some goons collecting protection money.
- Syndicate thugs are leaning on one of the guild members when the PCs come to check on him.
- Down at the docks, a shipment of raw materials is being interfered with.
- The syndicate sends a number of summoned creatures to remove the interlopers.
- The syndicate has kidnapped one of the craftsmen and a ransom has been posted.
- The syndicate official in charge of the operation decides to deal with the PCs personally.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The syndicate will likely be angry at the meddling in their affairs and seek revenge.

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AGAINST THE HIDDEN KINGS

20

Investigation, Conspiracy

When powerful conspirators turn their eyes on the party, the PCs must court powerful allies to survive.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Whilst thwarting an evil cult, they interrupt a meeting with one of the conspiracy.
- Rival adventurers that nearly beat them to their goal were furthering the ends of the conspiracy.

Encounters:

- The characters are met by a mysterious figure, who advises that they leave and never return. The signet they bear marks them as a conspirator.
- While relaxing, the party are arrested on preposterous charges. The captain responsible is wearing one of the signet rings.
- A secretive patron arranges for the charges to be dropped, but advises the party that they face an opponent with great political power.
- The group are given the opportunity to leverage past deeds and gain access to powerful individuals.
- If the adventurers can make allies with some powerful political cliques through promises, deeds or social leverage, they can become a difficult target.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The conspirators, impressed with the party's resourcefulness, send an agent to try recruit them.
- The allies made in the course of events have their own desires and secrets.

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A TIME FOR CELEBRATION

23

Investigation, City, Constructs

The threat is clear: the solstice festival will be attacked and the city plunged into chaos. Who the attackers are is unclear, but they must be stopped, and quickly.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- They are affiliated with the local authorities involved in organizing the festival.
- Having foiled the plots of mad cults in the past, the PCs are approached by the city guard.

Encounters:

- The information available leads to an alchemist's workshop. The occupants are jumpy and well armed.
- The workshop was part of the supply chain. The warehouse they are sent to is empty, save for a camouflaged and dangerous construct.
- On the day of the festival, a suspicious cart holds a similar construct, which attacks when discovered!
- Given directions by the cart driver, the group must race to stop a group of bombers lying in wait to ambush a decorative float.
- A figure fleeing the scene leads to a chase through the festival-ready city.
- As the opening ceremony reaches its peak in the background, the party corners the mastermind responsible for the attacks. The plotter is prepared.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The heroes are honored in one of the closing speeches by a dignitary.

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THE NIGHTMARE

22

Investigation, City, Extraplanar

The watch have yet to work it out. The creature slays all those who have read the manuscript, but there is no hint of a magical curse, no possible means of attack, and no witnesses.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- After obtaining the manuscript, the group is asked by a mad old beggar who needs the advice it contains.
- The party are the ones who brought the manuscript to the city, and the watch are suspicious.

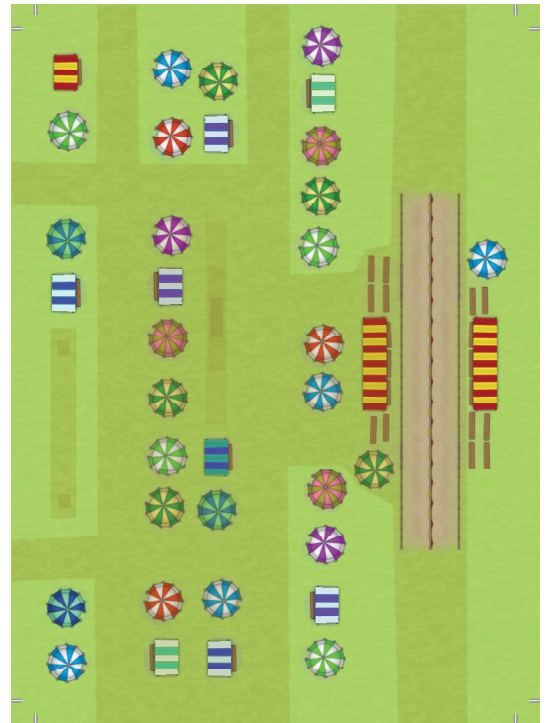
Encounters:

- The beggar describes a predatory creature, hunting and slaying those who read the manuscript whilst they dream. The group are given a potion which will allow them to share dreams.
- The probable next victim is an old scribe, who does not believe in the creature nor the draught.
- In the dream world, the sleepers must navigate the changing passages of the scribe's mind.
- Fragments of bad memories peel off from an innocuous object to attack the dreamers.
- The adventurers encounter a dark reflection, a shadow from their past. The nightmare uses control of the dreamscape to its advantage as it engages the party. The party can, with effort, do the same.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- With the creature dealt with, the manuscript's contents may be safely examined.

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A SECRETIVE SUMMONING

25

Investigation, City Sewers, Occult

A secret society have performed a summoning ritual. However, the creature has escaped into the sewers. The magic used is considered harmful, and any evidence of their involvement would be ruinous.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- An agent of the society needs a group of deniable assets to deal with the problem quickly.
- The PCs are low-level members of the society, or at least know a higher-up well.

Encounters:

- The sewers are a twisting maze. It is easy to lose the trail.
- An area of the sewers has been heavily trapped by a man who appears to have died of starvation.
- A wrong turn leads to a different monster hiding beneath the streets.
- The PCs interrupt some shady goings on.
- Sewer denizens mutated by the creature defend its location.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- In a dark pit, the summoned creature and its minions are beginning to invoke a greater entity. When the PCs arrive, it will monologue about what brought it here.
- The knowledge of what occurred makes for brilliant blackmail material on a number of powerful people.

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FLEETING GLIMPSE

24

Investigation, Party, Fey

At a grand party, the host finds herself entranced by a beautiful guest. The guest vanishes, but she cannot abandon her duties as host to search for them.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Attending the party to seek favor with the host, this is a golden opportunity.
- The group is attending the gathering under false pretenses in pursuit of a greater aim. The host knows this and uses it to force them into action.

Encounters:

- Gathering information at the party, they notice others infatuated with the guest. They see which exit the guest used.
- Trickster-creatures cause trouble for the group as they follow a trail of besotted individuals to a tavern.
- In the tavern basement, behind a curtain, are rooms in an exotic architectural style. Humanoid creatures guard the entrance, but do not impede passage.
- The guest sadly explains they are a prisoner in this place and that the doorway to the material world closes at midnight. The group are given with a token to take back to the host.
- The monstrous guards at the doorway attempt to prevent the group from leaving.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The host must be convinced the story is true.
- The host may foolishly seek to free the prisoner.

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FOR THE GRAND PRIZE

27

Contest, Quest Beginning

The tournament is prestigious, drawing competitors from near and far to the contests of skill and power. It is actually used for the government to find good mercenaries or to weed out troublemakers.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The contest's prize is a magical artifact the party needs to obtain.
- A ship they were supposed to board fails to arrive. A boring stay awaits until they learn of the tournament.
- The PCs are local kids looking to prove themselves.

Encounters:

- The first round is test of strength. (Tug of war, use a hammer to hit a target and make a marker move, etc.)
- Another test is to decipher a secret code.
- A riddle must be solved in the next contest.
- In a series of small performance pieces, individuals may show off their talents to a panel of judges.
- Dexterity is tested by dodging soft projectiles... like small fruits.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- A ceremony congratulates the winners. In the next crisis, the town leaders may turn to them for help.
- If the town/kingdom wishes to be rid of troublemakers, they may be sent on a fool's errand.

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WHAT HOLDS THE HOLD?

26

Investigation, Village, Infestation

A small holding (village) has become infected with a strange parasite which is taking control of the inhabitants.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The holding lies at a crossroads, giving an opportunity to meet an old acquaintance.
- The PCs are looking for a resident who may have an antiquity they require.

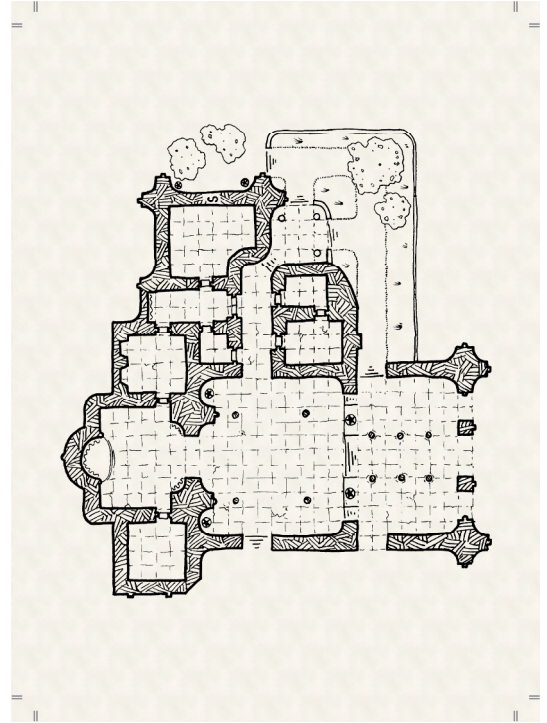
Encounters:

- Some of the residents exhibit odd behaviour.
- The party is approached by a worried parent seeking their child.
- Arriving at the child's last known whereabouts, a fairly accessible and usually safe place, they are set upon by feral mutants.
- The earlier behaviors reveal themselves as signs of infestation at the worst possible moment.
- The more intelligent mutants decide to lynch the PCs to prevent them from interfering. They exploit their local knowledge.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The holding has been irrevocably changed, with the PCs directly involved, and they will likely be involved in the aftermath.
- The infestation may have been triggered by the antiquity that brought them there.

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THE HEIGHT OF FASHION

29

Investigation, Nobility

A simple brooch starts a fad among the nobility. Suddenly all eyes are on the originators of this fashion—not all friendly to the newcomers.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The original brooch that sparked the trend is a magical item recovered during a previous quest.
- Coming from outside the normal circles, the heroes were asked to attend a social gathering to add interest for the bored nobility. It worked.

Encounters:

- A major social gathering clashes with a previous engagement, which may cause friction in the party.
- While going about their other business, the party are stalked by an obsessive fan.
- A dashing rival attempts to trick them into making fools of themselves.
- After rushing to answer a desperate summons, the party find themselves consulted for fashion advice by a wannabe socialite.
- An odd religious sect with some very bizarre practices, who previously wore similar garb, claim that the PCs are members.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The trend begins to die down, leaving the originators back where they started.
- A new fad sweeps through high society, this time not so innocently introduced.

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STUBBORN AS THE DEAD

28

Investigation, Necromancy

A spirit, driven to suicide by lies, refuses to be resurrected. Unfortunately the person is a vital part of something greater. If only he or she can be convinced to return...

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Only the deceased's fresh blood can mend an item binding an evil force. A wizard seeks the PCs help.
- With the last member of the bloodline dead, a wizard PC senses the evil is able to throw off its bindings.

Encounters:

- To commune with the spirit, the adventurers must find an article from a corrupt wizard's possession.
- They must prove that the love letters from the ghost's beloved to another are indeed fake. The local thieves guild would be the place to find a forger.
- A simple lead turns out to be a trap, an informant shedding their skin to reveal a monster beneath.
- They track down the forger, who attempts to flee.
- The forger tells the party about a mystic oath he swore. When they reveal their involvement, a group of creatures appears to eviscerate the forger.
- With the last member of the bloodline dead, a wizard PC senses an evil is able to throw off its bindings.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- With the spirit's agreement, the resurrection ceremony may be performed.
- The resurrected person's bloodline must continue.

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NOT ALL TREASURES ARE WORTH IT

31

Protection, City, Dragon

A group of thieves has stolen a small number of dragon eggs.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A diviner alerts the party to the problem and gives them a way to find the eggs.
- The party hears of the theft through mutual contacts and hears of a dragon destroying the countryside.

Encounters:

- The diviner or a contact points out one of the thieves. He can be followed or interrogated.
- The party has to infiltrate the thieves' hideout. An underground stream muffles noise.
- The stream also hides an inner chamber where the eggs are kept.
- Allies of the thieves hunt down the party.
- The eggs must be returned to the mother without the mother mistaking the characters as the thieves.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The town council owes the PCs a favor.
- The thieves guild makes plans for vengeance against the PCs.

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DECEIVED

30

Shapeshifter, Investigation, Town

The PCs are in a small town that features an famous potion-master. His shop is known to also have a few magic items. A shapeshifter has killed the potion-master and taken his place. He is attempting to sell off as much as possible, then run to the next scam.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The PCs have need of a some potions or wish to see what items the potion-master has available.
- The potion-master is known to hire adventurous types to find rare ingredients. The PCs need something to do and think of approaching the potion-master.

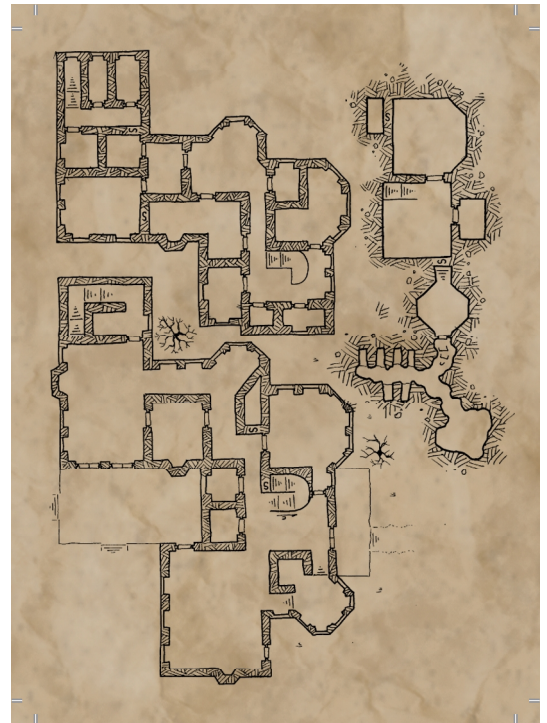
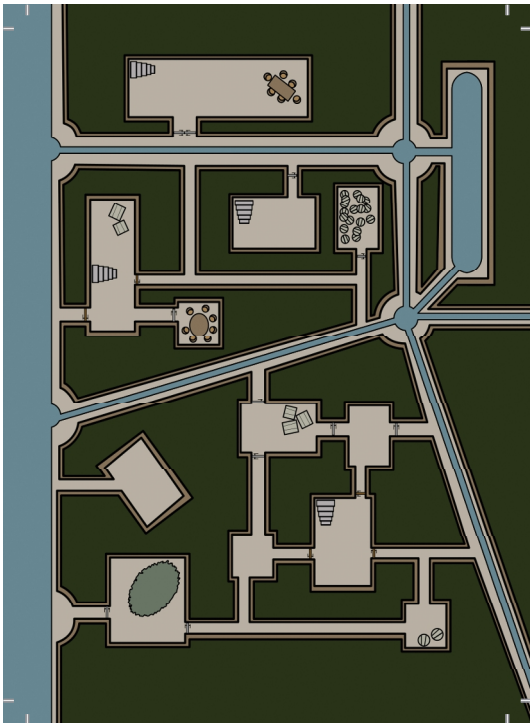
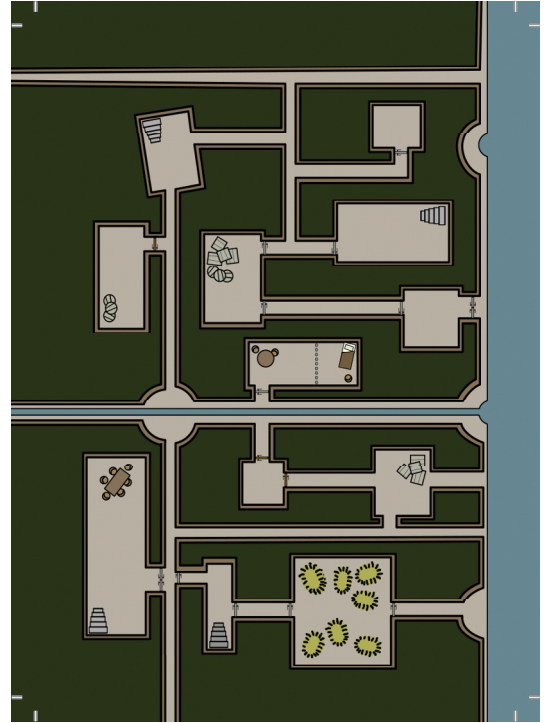
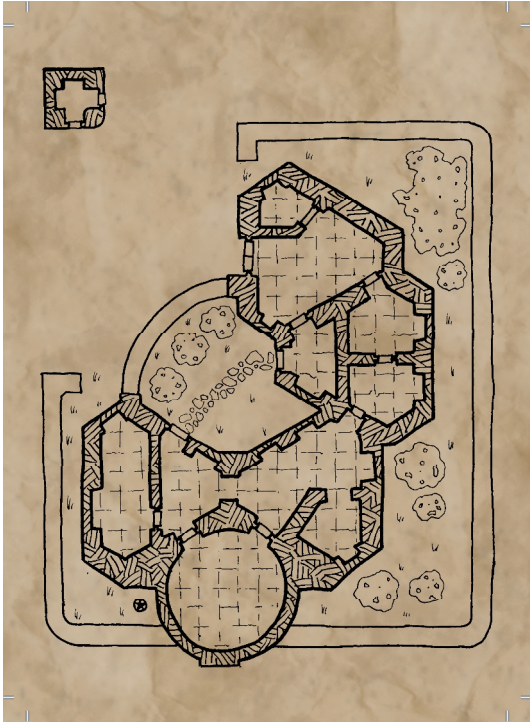
Encounters:

- The PCs notice a damaged bookcase and shards of pottery in the shop. The potion-master blames the debris on a careless barbarian.
- Something the PCs want is not in stock. He offers to make it, if they pay up front. The PCs can easily negotiate for half.
- When they return, the PCs notice his stock of potions and items is very low. (He can't make them himself.)
- If he promised to make something and the PCs return, he'll tell them he needs one more day. If they give him time, he escapes that night.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Where is the real potion-master?
- Where did the shapeshifter come from? Did he wander from nearby or did an item conjure him here?

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FIRE! FIRE!

33

Protection, City, Sabotage

A clan of goblins (or similar humanoids) have infiltrated and mapped out the city sewers...

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The PCs are awoken in their homes or a city inn by the commotion outside.
- Alternately, the PCs may hear a rumor of the creatures' plans and track them down.

Encounters:

- The creatures separate into several groups of a few creatures each. Each group opens a sewer entrance, throws some oil and a few torches at nearby flammable buildings, then goes back down the sewer to the next entrance.
- The PCs may try to help with the nearest fire. They'll see separate fires 1-2 blocks in each direction.
- Then they'll hear reports of other fires throughout the city. If the PCs don't recognize the situation, they may spot a creature spying from a sewer entrance.
- They may alert the town guard, but the PCs will be encouraged to hunt down the troublemakers.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The lair may have a goblin king, shaman, lieutenants, or other boss-monsters.
- The city will be in the PCs' debt.

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ABOVE THE LAW

32

Mystery, City, Bounty Hunt

A powerful noble has been found guilty of a grave crime. Bringing the noble to justice, however, may be a difficult feat.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Despairing of their constables' inability to deal with the situation, the local marshal posts a bounty.
- The noble's crimes affected the PCs, directly or indirectly, giving them a personal involvement.

Encounters:

- The guards at the noble's gate have little fear of the law, feeling their master will protect them. They must be taught the error of their ways.
- The PCs are being scryed on, giving the guards inside a tactical advantage.
- A dangerous prisoner offers to cause a distraction, if he is allowed to go free.
- The noble's arcane advisor summons monsters to interfere in what would otherwise have been a simple fight.
- The final approach has been hastily barricaded, and possibly trapped.
- The noble and his bodyguards await the PCs. They are very strong, but are they loyal?

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Returning him to the marshal, the PCs may be asked to participate in the trial.

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POWER CORRUPTS

35

Investigation, City/Manor, Corruption

A lord has grown into a tyrant, driving his people into the dirt to advance his agenda and brutally striking down those who dissent.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The people of the land cry out for saviours, how could a group of adventurers refuse?
- The lord's activities have attracted the attention of powerful people, who believe they see the signs of a darker purpose behind his actions.

Encounters:

- Thugs and bullies in guardsmen's uniforms prey on the townsfolk.
- The servants tell the PCs of a hidden passage, but can they be trusted?
- A priest prepares a sacrifice before an unholy altar in a hidden chapel.
- Creatures touched by places beyond stalk the gore-splattered halls.
- The tyrant, drawing from the dark power he has pledged himself to, summons up retainers from beyond and deals with the threat of the PCs personally.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The PCs are saviours of the people, a position with much responsibility as the townsfolk seek guidance.
- The tyrant's belongings include correspondence, including something about an orb.

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GETTING A-HEAD

34

Investigation, City, Crime Bosses

A power vacuum is created when the kingpin of a criminal cartel is murdered. Finding the kingpin's head might help assess who is at fault.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The kingpin had sworn to reveal the location of a mythical ruin in return for an item currently in the PCs possession.
- Rival cartels run the city from the shadows, and the murder represents a shift in the balance of power. The party has an acquaintance in one cartel.

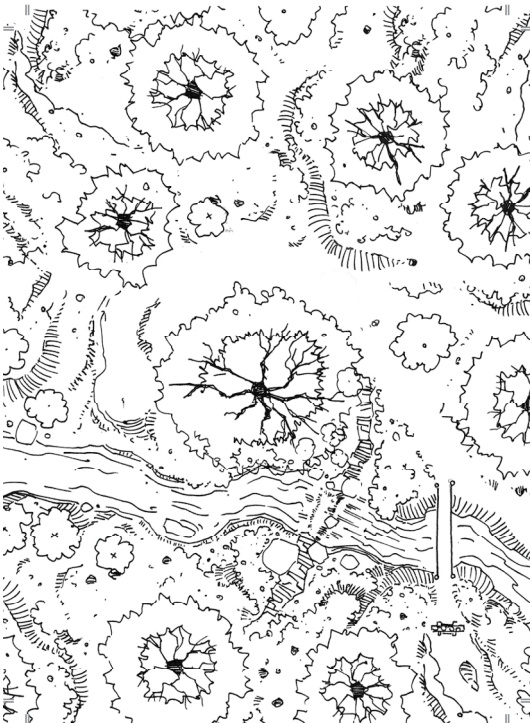
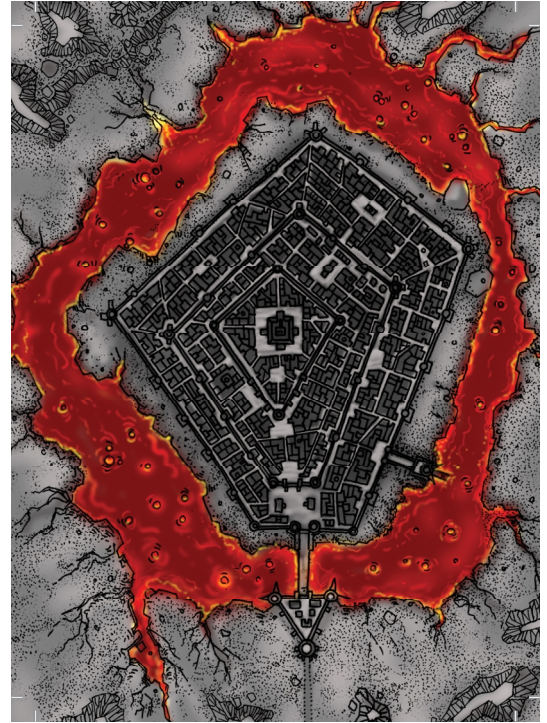
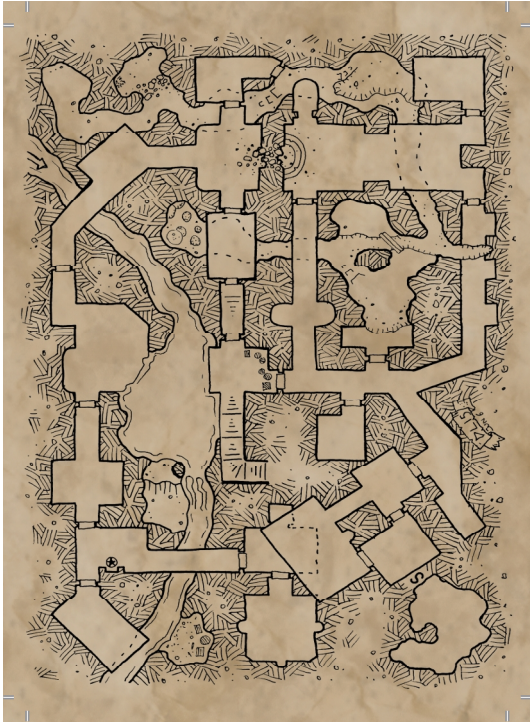
Encounters:

- When questioning an informant, the adventurers find themselves in the middle of a bar fight.
- In an attempt to dissuade the investigators, a group of hired goons attack the party.
- The source's information leads them to a rich assassin. When they defeat his guards, they are informed that the head was thrown into the sewer.
- Descending into the sewers, the adventurers disturb a nest of its denizens.
- A disgusting creature has claimed the head, treating it as a friend.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- When subjected to the correct magics, the head may answer a number of questions.
- Which faction does the party help, if any?

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THE CHANCELLOR

37

Search, Extraplanar

Folk gather from far and wide to hear the proclamations of the high chancellor at the annual ceremony known as the giving of the law. A pity, then, that the high chancellor appears to have vanished.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Charged to aid with security for the ceremony, they have little choice but to find the chancellor.
- They were the last people to speak with the chancellor, in private. This could lead to some very awkward questions.

Encounters:

- On the chancellor's desk is a puzzle box. Solving it opens a rift, through which warm air and the scent of blood waft.
- Hellish beasts prowl the unnatural landscape.
- A glowing figure stands in an amphitheater surrounded by a group of angry devils, clearly in need of aid.
- With the chancellor in tow, the party must escape through the portal.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The party must decide whether to reveal the chancellor's secret or not.
- Knowing his secret, the party will be a prime choice for any secret tasks the chancellor requires performing.

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THE USUAL RITE

36

Hunt, City, Occult

Beneath the city the Thing sleeps, entombed. Its fitful slumber is ensured by a ritual, worked but once a generation, which pacifies it and allows its power to be used for the benefit of its captors.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Due to previous experiences, the party is in a uniquely advantageous position to perform the rite.
- To perform the rite is a great honor, to refuse would be highly insulting.

Encounters:

- As the Thing stirs, horrors flee from its nightmares into the waking world.
- The twisted passages beneath the city are filled with strange and deadly hazards.
- The ritual implements must be collected from shrines in the passages.
- Before great verdigrised doors, a pair of unsleeping constructs await.
- The PCs are assailed by the stray thoughts of the Thing on the stairs to the deepest chamber.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- In a great ritual circle, the Thing sleeps. The ritual must be performed while fending off the flock of horror monsters that attempt to devour the intruders.
- With the binding complete, the power that it provides may be used for the benefit of the PCs.

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THE PUPPET MASTER

39

Political, Blackmail, Nobility

A sorcerous lord maintains a stranglehold over a region's political structure through trickery, blackmail, and malevolent magic.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A noble ambassador begs the PCs for aid.
- A neighboring realm had noticed the problem and hires the party to investigate.

Encounters:

- The PCs may bump into a sage who knows a spell to lift the magical bonds... Removing an enchantment from a minister allows the party to gain more info.
- The party learns another noble is being blackmailed. They figure out a way to avoid/diffuse the past sins.
- More information is revealed once the party finds the sorcerer has been cheating a wealthy merchant and the merchant tells all.
- When the sorcerer's plans begin to unravel, he hurries to secure power. He sends a hit squad against those working for a puppet ruler and rushes a coronation ceremony for himself.
- The party must storm the ceremony. How easy that is (how much help they get) depends on how many nobles they have freed from the evil lord's influence.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The kingdom may need new advisors, whether they are the PCs or vetted by the PCs.
- The sorcerer gained his power from something...

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FALSE COLORS

38

Politics, Borderland, Military

When tensions turn to violence on the borders between kingdoms, there are some who would rather the true cause remain hidden. War, it would seem, would be greatly in their interest.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The presence of the PCs contributed to the flare-up. One of the proponents of peace considers them personally responsible.
- When the travelers find a murdered patrol, not all the evidence adds up.

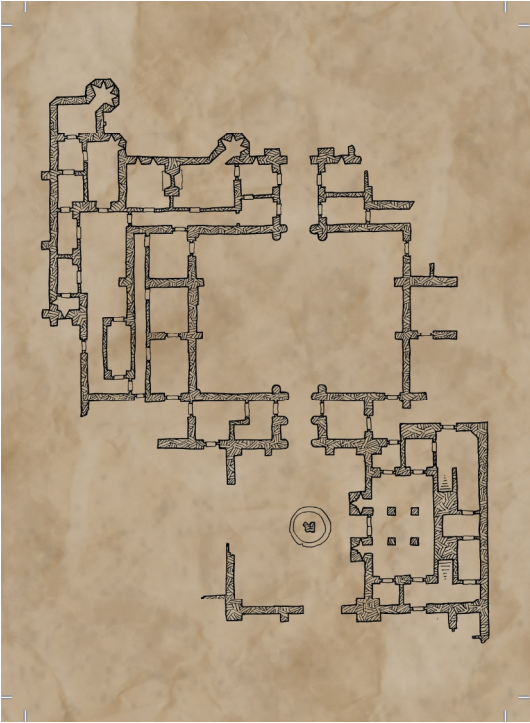
Encounters:

- Examining the site reveals tracks leading to the hills.
- A couple of scouts are stationed on a ridge above the road, and must be avoided or taken by surprise.
- A band of mercenaries rest and treat their wounded in a hidden encampment.
- The mercenary captain and his lieutenants do not look kindly on being disturbed.
- Orders and emblems implicate the pro-war faction of a false-flag effort that includes the patrol's murder.
- At the war council, the pro-war faction leader challenges the PCs before the gathered dignitaries, demanding they explain their actions.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The plot to create strife in the kingdom may be part of a hidden villain's greater scheme.
- The PCs may be asked to attend larger peace talks.

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STOCK TAKE

41

Investigation, City/Shop, Summoning

A merchant unknowingly purchases an item that summons creatures. He left it open.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A merchant has a little bit of trouble. Some of his recently purchased wares have turned out not to be quite what he expected. His shop is now overrun with elementals.
- The merchant is a friend of theirs, or at least someone they have dealt amicably with, and he offers them a favor for a favor.

Encounters:

- The front room is host to a battle between elementals.
- Seemingly oblivious to the chaos, a customer enters the building and is immediately attacked.
- Industrious creatures work to harmonize the shop with their element.
- A pack of feral outsiders chases through the building.
- An intelligent elemental has set up its own little shop in the back room.
- In one of the rooms is an earthenware vase, from which the elementals continue to emerge. The glyph-inscribed lid lies on the other side of the room from it.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- There are likely some outsiders who have escaped and are ravaging nearby locations.

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COURT INTRIGUE

40

Cult, Nobility, Summoning

The king's adviser leads a cult attempting to summon a great evil from right under the palace.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The party is invited to stay at court after earning a reputation elsewhere.
- The PCs are at court after finishing a king's favor.

Encounters:

- The adviser makes a strange blessing at a formal dinner the PCs are attending. Dancers at the dinner seem to perform an arcane ritual.
- The party's rooms have guards to keep the PCs from leaving.
- At night the PCs are attacked in their rooms. The assailants appear through secret doors.
- The PCs encounter a trap in the secret corridors if they investigate.
- The party notices a strange mist throughout the castle at night and a glow in the courtyard.
- A ritual takes place in the courtyard, led by the adviser, to summon an extra-planar creature. Many are there voluntarily. Some, including the king, seem to be in a trance.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Who was part of the plot, and who was hypnotized? Does it matter?
- How does the cult seek revenge?

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FOREIGN DEVILS

43

Protection, City, Outsiders

When a group of foreigners arrive, their very presence causes panic. The hysteria must be dealt with before it leads to mob violence.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Having arrived with the outsiders, the group has been linked with them in the eyes of the people.
- Being outsiders, the PCs may get themselves into trouble voicing support for the newcomers.

Encounters:

- The arrival of the outsiders is met with unrest. The watch come down heavy on those who get unruly, further fuelling tensions.
- When one of the outsiders visits a bar, a fight breaks out and spills into the streets.
- One of the local merchants supplying the newcomers has their shop blockaded by angry locals.
- A trade deal between the outsiders and local nomads threatens to become violent when a mob arrives.
- When a sect leader attempts to gather vigilantes to purge them, the outsiders prepare to respond with overwhelming force. The situation must be defused before a catastrophe occurs.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Their stay over, the fiends leave with little warning.
- The group offers to take the adventurers with them to their next, exotic destination.

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A TRAIL OF THE TWISTED

42

Investigation, City

It began suddenly, a whole village mutated into bizarre mockeries of life. Then it happened again. The villages lay along the same road, and there are reports of a traveler who stopped in each village. The next settlement along the road is quite a bit larger than the previous two...

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The survivors have banded together to hire adventurers to do what the guards haven't.
- The town in question is where the PCs are currently staying.

Encounters:

- A warped creature appears in a public place, causing panic.
- Distrust of strangers turns to violence.
- A number of traders are enjoying a jug of wine, then suddenly contort into monsters in front of the PCs.
- A maid from one of the mansions on the hill is being pursued by mutants.
- Inside the mansion are more advanced examples of the wizard's handiwork.
- The fleeing wizard will attempt a variety of tricks to escape to cause trouble another day.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- There are a great many people who wish the wizard brought to justice, and boundless prestige bestowed on those that do so.

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ZENU

45

Investigation, City, Cult

There is a new mystery cult in town. It doesn't seem bad so much as just weird, but a lot of folk have gotten quite worried about it.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The parents of one of the converts, a devout couple, ask the party to intervene.
- PCs with a religious bent may wish to rescue those who have been misled.

Encounters:

- A meeting with the cultists proves fruitless as only the newest initiates are present.
- An opportunity to explore the cult's temple presents itself.
- The deeper initiates have given themselves up for the cult, and attack intruders with a frenzy.
- Guarding the inner sanctum are some of the deepest initiates, who have received strange powers from the mystery.
- In the inner sanctum, the magister lies dead, having cut his own heart out. His occult implements reveal the nature of the cult.
- The magister's sacrifice summons up hideous demonic creatures that threaten to destroy the town.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The cult has spread to other areas, hiding behind a veneer of respectability.

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SAVE OR KILL THE PRINCESS

44

Princess, Werewolf, Hunt

A princess was bitten two weeks ago by a werewolf. Yesterday (the first night of the full moon) she transformed, attacked several people in the palace, and escaped. The king's ransom is double if she's brought back alive.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Any tavern near the troubled king's castle has people gathering to mount an expedition. Silver is all around, nets prepared, people are tense. PCs are welcome to join in the expeditions. A town guard organizing the hunt can explain.
- A scratched-up beauty staggers out of the woods, bloody and frantic, with memory loss. Everyone is out to get her!

Encounters:

- They find a cottage retreat where a powerful cleric retired long ago. He has the power to cleanse her of the curse of lycanthropy, if told of the situation.
- Rebels are looking for the princess, to use her as a weapon against the king. They will try to recruit or kill anyone who crosses their path.
- If she finds out she killed her mother, the queen, she will want to turn herself in to the church to be killed, and she'll escape protectors to do it if she must.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The king wants the original lycanthrope found and slain painfully, and he'll pay top coin.

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DEAD AND DISAPPROVING

47

Nobility, Intrigue, Regicide

A ruler married a forbidden mate from a nomadic tribe, and now dead ancestors are rising to cleanse the bloodline.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- They meet refugees on the road who stop mid-afternoon to build fortifications, expecting undead at night. Do they go on, or stay with the group?
- Allies among the nomads ask for their help protecting a newly-married queen in a nearby kingdom, who they suspect is in grave danger.

Encounters:

- Pragmatic patriots are going to murder the pretty young queen for the good of the kingdom. PCs can help or get out of the way, but if they learn too much then they better help.
- The king is in love and willing to let his kingdom burn. He is looking for outsiders who don't care about the law to hire as his queen's bodyguard. Top secret: she is pregnant, that is why the dead are rising.
- The king's little sister is exasperated and ready to murder him so she can take the throne and placate the ancestors. If he were to step down and go away, (or die!), the crisis ends.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The restless ancestors won't rest again unless they are convinced all is well. A quest is needed. Can the PCs help?

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THE HUNTED

46

Protection, Battlefield, City

Refugees approach the city with tight lips and haunted eyes. The lord can not turn away his charges, but what drove them here may hunt them still.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A strange soothsayer accosts the party in an alleyway before the refugees even arrive, speaking of the secrets the travelers bring with them.
- The lord is counselled by a number of sages who convince him to have the group investigate and make sure no harm comes to the city.

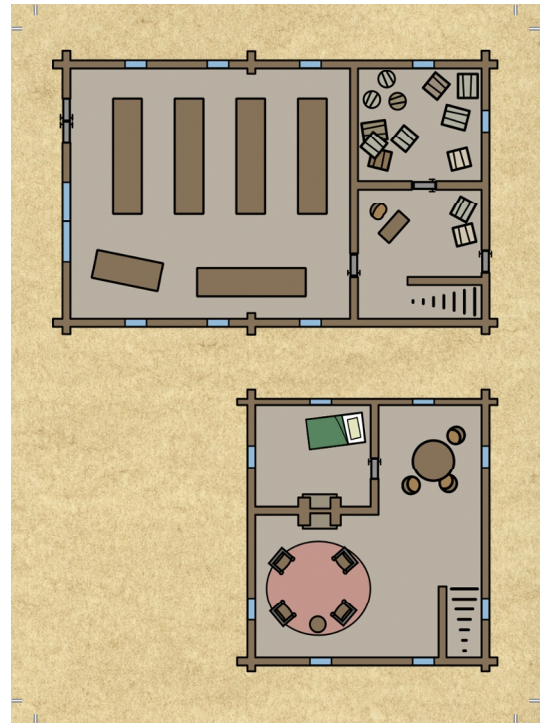
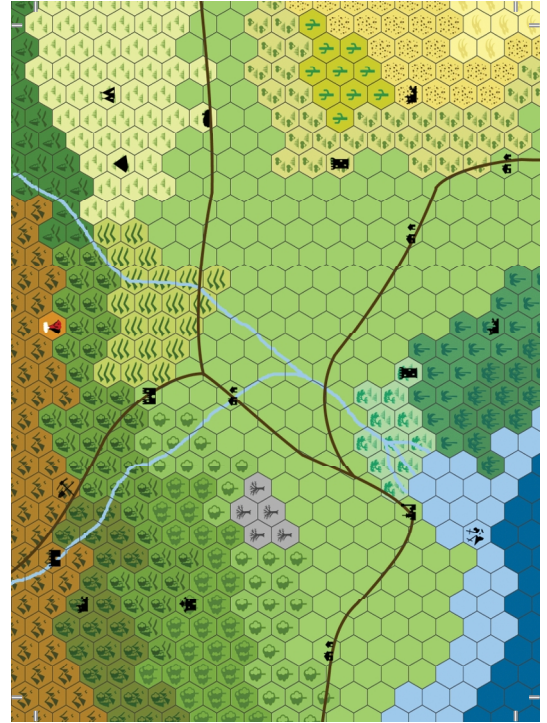
Encounters:

- The refugee camp is attacked, and the PCs gain a fleeting glimpse of the retreating beasts.
- News quickly spreads, with the locals convinced that the refugees have brought a curse down upon the city and demanding something be done.
- The party have a chance to interview one of the survivors of the attack. The description gives them some hints as to how to arm themselves.
- A trio of the creatures attack during the night. The defenders are prepared this time, however.
- The wounded creature can be tracked back to the lair they have created nearby.
- A showdown occurs with the fiendish pack leader.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The origin of the creatures remains a mystery, but perhaps not for long.

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SEEING JUSTICE DONE

49

Protection, Journey, Criminal

An infamous criminal has been captured in an out-of-the-way location. The lords of the land wish for her to stand trial in the capitol, but many simply wish for vengeance.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Those who were instrumental in her capture seem fit to escort her to the capitol safely.
- The PCs are known to be righteous sorts, people that can be trusted with such a duty, and thus are asked to perform the task.

Encounters:

- A lynch mob forms, trying to dispense their own brand of justice.
- During a late watch, she attempts to convince one of the PCs that she isn't all that bad.
- Another adventuring party, seeking a dead-or-alive reward from another province, sees the party as easy pickings.
- Allies of the criminal, or those wishing to ingratiate themselves, attempt to free her during the night.
- A scheduled stopover turns into a hostile environment.
- A trio of holy warriors bar the PCs' path. The criminal offers her aid in the battle.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The trial is held with all the expected pomp and ceremony.

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YOUTH'S FOLLY

48

Investigation, Village, Caves

When their master refuses to aid a village in defeating a monster, a young apprentice takes the master's magical staff and heads to the hills.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- The master is very worried about his student's well-being. He asks others to follow.
- The PCs wish to defeat the creature dwelling in the hills to protect the village.

Encounters:

- The creature is attended to by a number of hangers-on who have spread out, searching for something.
- In the village, a number of locals explain the events that led to the apprentice's disappearance.
- The creatures lead a greater beast to attack the village.
- The encampment surrounding the monster's lair is primitive, badly planned, and flammable.
- The monster, being rather intelligent, attempts to negotiate with the PCs. The terms are unreasonably harsh.
- The headstrong apprentice, reinvigorated by the prospect of rescue, decides to confront the monster. A fierce battle ensues.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The apprentice learns the error of their ways, for which the master is truly grateful.

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FLAVOR OF THE WEEK

51

Investigation, City, Merchant

A local merchant has become the focus of a strange cult of personality. Many who knew him before find this unusual, and would like to find out specifics.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A business rival, with a mixture of jealousy and curiosity, asks the adventurers to find out the secret behind the merchant's new-found charisma.
- The merchant is a prior acquaintance of the PCs, and his change of attitude causes them to worry.

Encounters:

- The merchant has closed his shop and is now taking private appointments only.
- Looking through the goods for sale, the group spots a strange object covered in writing. The owner insists that it is there by mistake and is not for sale.
- When speaking to the merchant, something takes control of him, threatening and insisting the PCs go.
- Researching the object reveals that it is host to a spirit that makes twisted bargains, and suggests a method of exorcism.
- Armed with their new-found knowledge, the party can call out the spirit and bid it to leave.
- The merchant watches as his benefactor reveals itself in order to do battle with the investigators.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Unnerved by their experience, the merchant rededicates himself to doing things the right way.

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A DANGEROUS PRESENT

50

Investigation, City, High Magic

It was a glorious gift, presented before an assortment of nobles and foreign dignitaries. A slightly more pressing issue is that it was a trap, one which has flung all present into deadly peril.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- They are the honor guard of an attendee, a politically powerful figure whose aims match theirs.
- Having returned triumphant from a heroic endeavour, they were given the gift to present to the lord by a merchant, who couldn't attend. Unfortunately.

Encounters:

- All present are transported to a floating island, surrounded by ruins. Creatures emerge to prey on the new arrivals.
- A dignitary from a distant nation believes they can reverse the magic. They need time to work.
- Several intelligent but twisted creatures harass the stranded travelers.
- A hotheaded lord accuses the emissary working on the escape of being an aide to those responsible. The issue escalates as people pick sides.
- A lying creature takes on human form and throws accusations, fostering strife until it is confronted.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- Once the gift has been reverse-engineered, it can be deactivated, returning the survivors home.
- The merchant has fled, but there is a trail.

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AN EXAMPLE IS MADE 53

Mystery, Nobility, Murder

A corrupt lord has been grotesquely murdered, his body draped over the fountain in the square. Though many had the motive to do so, who was actually capable of this? And who might they target next?

Getting the PCs Involved:

- A neighboring regent, fearing that they may be next to be targeted, sends the PCs to seek the killer.
- The party were originally hired by those who had been wronged by the lord to bring him to justice.

Encounters:

- A political prisoner of the former lord relates a tale of a previous attempt, the culprits never found.
- Looking into the conspiracy is misunderstood by some. They waylay the party, suspecting them of trying to impose an order as corrupt as the last.
- One of the suspects seems to know something, but those around them rally to their defense.
- Another victim is discovered, however they seem to have been an innocent.
- Sickened by the new killing, the lead suspect comes to the party and tells them of the killer's location.
- The assassin has modified themselves using a variety of abhorrent, magical techniques. Now it is obscenely powerful but insane.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- A new regent must be appointed, perhaps the PCs or their allies are appropriate for the job.

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SIDE EFFECTS MAY INCLUDE... 52

Investigation, City, Magic

When a number of recreational potions turn out to have some rather problematic side effects, alternative means must be pursued.

Getting the PCs Involved:

- When the son of an important member of the community exhibits strange symptoms, the adventurers are asked to find out what is going on.
- A criminal guild is not happy when the side effects disrupt part of their underground fighting circuit. The PCs have a relationship with the group.

Encounters:

- Gathering information leads to a handful of sellers who get their supply from the same person.
- Confronting the dealer and their goons in a drug den secures a lead on the potion-maker.
- An illicit alchemist works out of a hidden workshop, which is defended by augmented guardians.
- Looking at the potions, the alchemist realises that someone has experimented with the recipes. Their assistant blurts out that they made improvements.
- The apprentice panics, using various clever alchemical tricks to evade pursuit.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- The apprentice is repentant about their actions, and will offer to help cure the side effects.
- Problems caused by the primary effects—such as addiction—still plague those who indulged.

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SIDEQUEST DECKS:

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THE HANGING 54

Protection, City Occult

An evil sorcerer was captured, tried, convicted, and scheduled for the headsman's axe. But the sorcerer has friends...

Getting the PCs Involved:

- Perhaps the sorcerer sacrificed someone related to the PCs or they have previously crossed paths.
- The execution is the talk of the city. The PCs will hear about it if they are in town.

Encounters:

- The PCs may spot some suspicious looking characters in the crowd, perhaps lizardmen in robes or other minor allies of the sorcerer.
- The sorcerer's rescuers will come. The group can be led by a dragon, outsider, or fellow powerful sorcerer.
- Perhaps the rescuer is a foe known to the PCs or an upcoming villain.
- The sorcerer is freed if the PCs fail to prevent his escape. Otherwise, the PCs play a primary role in foiling the plot.

Follow-up Adventure Ideas:

- In either case, the PCs will have a new foe or two.

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