

MARCH OF MADNESS

EPISODE 8

SHADOW MARCHES

Goldmire •

THE
CRAWLING
SWAMP

☐
Slug
Keep



BY ANDREW BISHKINSKYI

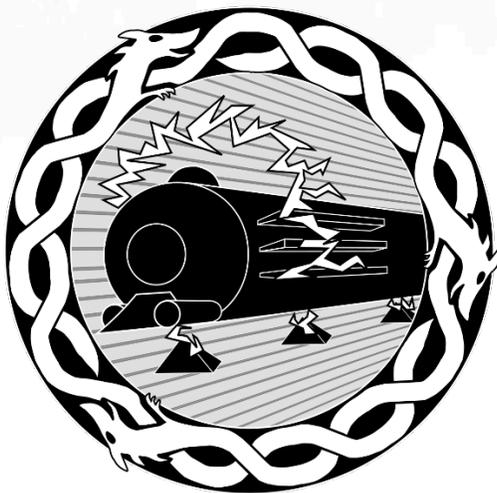
ACROSS EBERRON: CONVERGENCE MANIFESTO



MARCH OF MADNESS

BELOW THE SHADOW MARCHES LIES A GATEWAY TO MADNESS. IT MUST BE KEPT CLOSED AT ANY COST.

EPISODE 8 OF *CONVERGENCE MANIFESTO*



AN ACROSS EBERRON ADVENTURE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *March of Madness*, episode 8 of *Convergence Manifesto*, an Across Eberron adventure path. This adventure is the sequel to AE01-07: *The Silvered Edge of Twilight*, [available on the Dungeon Masters Guild](#) using characters and story elements introduced in the previous adventure. This adventure plays best when used in conjunction with the [Wayfinder's Guide to Eberron \(WGtE\)](#) by Keith Baker. If your players are unfamiliar with either the Eberron setting or the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, you may wish to use this set of [1st-level pregenerated characters, tailor-made for Eberron](#).

March of Madness is an adventure designed for five 5th-level characters to explore the diversity and themes of the Eberron campaign setting. In search of the latest artifact for Provost N. Faurious's designs, players will find themselves deep below the Shadow Marches, where a gateway to Xoriat, the Realm of Madness, lies. The seals keeping it closed are weakening and they must keep the gateway closed at any cost!

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Millennia ago, aberrations from Xoriat, the Realm of Madness were driven away from Eberron. The Gatekeeper druids—mostly orcs—placed powerful dimensional seals throughout Khorvaire to prevent the creatures of Xoriat from returning. This history, as well as the magic of the seals' creation, has since been lost to time, and even to the Gatekeepers themselves. Nonetheless, they continue to regard the seals' protection as their sacred mission and use their magics to maintain them. As they can't be rebuilt, the seals are slowly deteriorating.

Also millennia ago, to repair a breach in one of the seals at a settlement called Tjorda, a Sealguard Complex was built. An immortal guardian was tasked with attending to the repaired crack in the seal. Thousands of years later, the Gatekeeper druids rediscovered the sealed complex. Even without knowing its precise history, they ascertained its sacred nature and have guarded it from then on. Being sealed in to protect the site and commune with the inner guardian is considered a great honor.

Much of this history has long-since been forgotten. But 10 years prior to the adventure's start, Vilda Karrte—a relic hunter with her own agenda—tracks a Xoriat artifact called the *Spiral Well* to the complex. Turned away by the Gatekeeper, she forces her way inside, grievously injuring them.

Having discovered Vilda's journals, Provost Nigel Faurious, through the Clifftop Adventurers' Guild Handler Lhara, tasks the adventurers with recovering the *Spiral Well*.

Appendix E provides a more detailed timeline of the history of Xoriat and the Sealguard Complex.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

March of Madness is a dungeon-crawling adventure intended for 5th-level characters and designed to take approximately 4 hours of game time. Though there are no clearly delineated bonus areas, the characters need not explore every inch of the dungeon to succeed. The adventure is structured into three main scenes.

Scene 1 – The Gates of Madness. Not knowing what it is, adventurers arrive at the Tjorda Sealguard Complex and encounter Gatekeeper Vola, who tells them of the history and her holy mission. She is willing to let them inside, but not before testing their true motives.

Scene 2 – Method Among. Upon entering the complex, adventurers work to repower the seal guardian crystals. As they do so, they discover the history of the complex, stave off its unwelcome visitors and search for the *Spiral Well*. Eventually they find the now half-mad Vilda Karrte, who may be willing to make a deal to get what she wants.

Scene 3 – Into the Breach. Once the crystals are repowered, the adventurers enter the inner chamber and come face to face with madness itself.

While running the adventure, look out for the following formatting:

Text like this is intended to be read aloud or paraphrased for your players.

Sidebars like this contain rules reminders, reveal background Eberron lore, or point you to sources to learn more.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The action of *March of Madness* is mostly confined to a single dungeon complex in the remote swamps of the Shadow Marches, but the player characters will not find themselves alone. Below are the characters they encounter.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Gatekeeper Vola (VOLE-uh). A lawful good female orc Gatekeeper druid. Unusually tall for an orc female, Vola's thin muscular frame towers over most of Khorvaire's inhabitants. Though she is old by her race's standards, it is only the lines under her dark eyes that give away this age. Her body is gaunt and muscular—that of someone who has trained her entire life. Vola's leather armor is old, yet well kept. Her armament is comprised of the ceremonial pieces of the Gatekeepers, passed down through generations. Gatekeeper legends say that the black shield she wields is a scale of Vvaraak herself and her obsidian staff is adorned with the likeness of the black dragon's head. Though imposing, Vola's voice and manner have a serene, almost soothing quality to them. She is as holy as her calling.

Personality. I am utterly serene, even in the face of disaster. I connect everything that happens to me to a grand, cosmic plan.

Ideal. Common Good. The Gatekeeper druids serve a vital function that protects the unwitting world.

Bond. I will do anything to carry out my duties.

Flaw. I'm overly concerned with following established procedures and protocols.

Vilda Karrte (VIL-duh KART). A lawful evil human female warlock dedicated to the long-dead Closed Circle (see sidebar). As far as she knows, this is the same organization that has been in existence for centuries and the stories of its demise are just propaganda.

Vilda arrived in the Sealguard Complex looking for the *Spiral Well*, knowing only that it was a Xoriat artifact and hoping to gain further power from it. In truth, her delusions of grandeur are due to the insidious influence of otherworldly manipulation, hoping that Vilda would disrupt the seals in the complex.

After getting inside, Vilda was captured by the guardian of the seal and spent the first several years imprisoned in one of the cells. After the guardian left to enter the breach chamber, Vilda was able to escape her cell and wander the complex. Even though she is a cultist dedicated to the forces of Xoriat, the aberrant creatures here do not necessarily consider her an ally. She has been able to bend some dolgrims and dolgaunts to her will, but others she has had to fight off. The aberrations present seek to destroy the complex. Vilda seeks to recover the *Spiral Well* first—she also knows that the true power is inside the breach chamber.

She has been attempting various magics to repower the crystals without any success, as they require druidic magic, something of which she is incapable of grasping.

Personality. No one could doubt by looking at my regal bearing that I am a cut above the unwashed masses. Everything

is funny to me, and the most hilarious and bloody things leave me cackling with sadistic glee.

Ideal. Power. Knowledge is the path to power and domination.

Bond. By serving the greater powers of Xoriat, the Realm of Revelations, I will achieve power beyond any in this world.

Flaw. I'll gladly trade the worthless lives of others to achieve my ends.

THE CLOSED CIRCLE

Most modern-day spellcasters in Eberron know of the two major wizard circles, the Esoteric Order of Aureon and the Guild of Starlight and Shadow. Centuries ago, however, there was a third circle—the Closed Circle, dedicated to searching the foul and dark magic of the Dragon Below and the daelkyr.

The mages of the Closed Circle eventually took their research too far and became a threat to the innocent people of the Five Nations. In 641 YK, the Closed Circle was destroyed by the combined forces of the other two guilds of wizardry and the Church of the Silver Flame. However, even to this day, rumors persist of their forbidden lore persisting, waiting to be exploited by unscrupulous mages.

ACROSS EBERRON CHARACTERS

The following characters appear as framing devices, though they do not directly push the narrative of the adventure. They are recurring characters in the Across Eberron series, so if you intend to continue the path you may wish to spend time developing their characters early.

Guild Handler Lhara (LAHR-ah). Lhara is a shifter with white hair streaked with black. Her skin is pale, she has blue eyes, and wears an eyepatch over the left. She holds a middling position of authority within the Clifftop Guild. Lhara is the characters' handler inside Clifftop and is trying to increase the guild's coffers and reputation.

Personality: I am always calm, no matter what the situation. I never raise my voice or let my emotions control me.

Ideal: Clifftop Adventurers' Guild. The Guild is my home and its members are my family.

Bond: I will prove that Clifftop is the best group of skilled troubleshooters and that we can get any job done.

Flaw: I am very sarcastic, and it can be difficult for people to tell when I am being serious.

Provost Nigel Faurious (NIGH-jel FAR-ee-us). The Provost is very focused on his work and is often lost in thought. He seeks to prove his theories on planar bodies and is willing to spend the money required to build his strange device.

Personality: I am horribly, horribly awkward in social situations and have little patience for any conversation that doesn't have to do with my work.

Ideal: No Limits. Nothing should fetter the infinite possibility inherent in all existence.

Bond: My life's work is the study of planar bodies and their effects on Eberron. I must complete my work and be given the recognition I deserve.

Flaw: Unlocking an ancient mystery is worth every coin of my family fortune.

SCENE 1: THE GATES OF MADNESS

“My Revelations... will come to light.”

—fragment of Provost Nigel Faurious’s Convergence Manifesto

Read or paraphrase the following:

You arrive at the Clifftop Guild in Sharn, ready for another mission from your Guild Handler Lhara. There is no long briefing this time. Lhara doesn’t even flinch when she tells you that you’re going to the Shadow Marches and she doesn’t even know what this thing you’re supposed to get is. It’s always hard to read the white-furred shifter. She’s being paid, you’re being paid, so off you go fetch.

Here is what she does tell you: it’s called the *Spiral Well*. She’s not seen it, the Guild’s illustrious client Provost Faurious has not seen it. He’s tracked the journals of an explorer named Vilda Karrte, who apparently located it over a decade ago. Off she went to the Shadow Marches, to some kind of off-the-map ancient complex. Her trail dies there, probably buried along with her rotting body in a swamp someplace or long gone with her treasure.

That’s all very complicated. Your mission is simple: go to the complex, find the *Spiral Well*, bring it back. Get paid.

So just like that, you’re standing in the Crawling Swamp of the Shadow Marches, knee-deep in stinking muck, and staring at a broken stone door and a stair. Whatever secrets this place holds, they’re below.

ARRIVAL

The adventure begins with the party having arrived in the Crawling Swamp, a desolate patch of the Shadow Marches. They left from Sharn some time ago after purchasing any necessary supplies, and had ample opportunity to get to know each other, if they are not already long-time comrades

The adventurers do have some information about the mission. Lhara previously provided the following:

- Vilda Karrte was an arcanist obsessed with Xoriat. The Provost hasn’t been able to learn much about her, only that she traveled far and wide to obtain artifacts. She was on the trail of the *Spiral Well*, but to what end is unknown.
- Vilda’s last known location was in the middle of the Crawling Swamp, a particularly desolate and largely uninhabited area of the Shadow Marches.
- Vilda’s notes hinted at magical interference in the area.

What little could be learned during the party’s brief stop in Zarash’ak, the unofficial capital of the region, is this:

- Confirmation that there is nothing in the swamps. There haven’t been notable settlements out there for thousands of years and what was left of those is long sunk into the muck.
- No one in Zarash’ak has seen or heard of Vilda Kartte.
- There are some vague superstitions about the area—apparently the farther up one goes, the weirder things get.

THE SHADOW MARCHES

It is a place of fetid waters and thick, foul-smelling waters that stretch for days and seep into the thickest and sturdiest of boots. It is a place where blackish gnarled roots keep twisting and turn into horrors, both of the mind and of chaotic, slithering flesh.

The Shadow Marches have no ruler, no unity and barely any cities. Clans and tribes and things for which there are no names in civilized tongues are what roam and settle here.

Thanks to the Mark of Finding, House Tharashk holds the biggest sway here, and so their city of Zarash’ak offers some comforts of civilization and serves as the unofficial capital. To the north of the city, beyond the river Glum, is the area known as the Crawling Swamp.

THE ENTRANCE

As they approach the ruined entrance of the complex, the party sees little of significance. Upon investigating, they can learn the following:

- **DC 15 Wisdom (Survival).** The muck no longer contains any evidence of footprints. However, as the party proceeds down the stairs, they do find some marks of Vilda’s passing—a dried muddy handprint on the wall, a footprint, etc. She was not stealthy on the way in.
- **DC 15 Intelligence (History).** The stone is beyond ancient, thousands and thousands of years old, with no discernable marks of construction.
- **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation).** The stone door leading below has evidence of a number of magical wards on it. All of these have been disabled and the door forcibly broken (by the *Bigby’s hand* spell). The damage is 10 years old.
- **Spellcasters only: DC 15 Arcana, using main spellcasting attribute.** If there are any spellcasters in the party capable of casting conjuration or teleportation spells (such as *mage hand* or *misty step*), they have felt their ability to cast these spells growing strained as they drew closer to the complex. On a successful check, they recognize that something in the area seems to be limiting their use of such magic. (Unbeknownst to the characters, there is a dimensional seal in the complex that has weakened over millennia, allowing the casting of some lower-level conjuration spells that it previously prevented.)
- **Detect Magic.** This spell confirms that overwhelming abjuration magic is still in effect, blocking teleportation, planar travel, and conjuration spells of 4th level or higher. However, the weaker presence of a second layer of abjuration magic is also in the area, barely discernable “behind” the more powerful aura. It is “modern” magic, though the exact nature of the spell is difficult to discern. (The true nature of this is a *private-sanctum*-like effect placed by Vilda that prevents magic communication. There is no way to discern this other than by actually trying and failing magical communication. The effect cannot be dispelled without knowing its exact nature—which is detailed in Vilda Kartte’s spellbook.)

THE DESCENT

The stone stair leads to another and then to another. Deeper and deeper down. The first few flights are filthy with the swamp muck. They eventually lead to another thick stone door. The door has a stone latch near the top. It is simple to open and a bit of brute force is all that's needed to push the door open, revealing another stair. It seems that the purpose of this door is to ward off the muck and wildlife, rather than anyone sentient.

Beyond the door are more flights of stairs—these much cleaner than the ones above. Several more flights down and there is another stone door. It is heavy, but not locked.

More than a hundred feet below the surface, the stone door grinds open, revealing a vast stone chamber. The chamber is rectangular on the side where the stair enters it, while the other side contains the base of a larger dome. Unwavering greenish light comes from the distance. A humanoid figure—indistinguishable before rising—stands from its cross-legged position.

“What is your purpose here?” echoes a deep female voice. The figure raises her hand and the green light brightens, suddenly bathing the room in bright daylight.

The brightness makes clear the figure's features even at a distance. The thin, muscular frame of the orc female is visible through the well-kept leathers of her armor. She is tall even by the standards of her race, and would appear lanky if not for her toned musculature.

On her back is a shield of pure blackness that seems to be made of a single piece of some strange material and an obsidian staff adorned with a dragon's head.

Her voice carries with the deep calmness of ocean waves echoing in a cavern.



THE GATEKEEPER

Once introductions are made, characters are able to notice two key things about Vola—these can be revealed over the course of conversation rather than before.

- **DC13 Wisdom (Insight).** Beneath Vola's serene demeanor is worry and desperation. Though very much on her guard, she is relieved to have visitors as they represent an opportunity to receive needed aid.
- **DC13 Wisdom (Medicine or Perception).** A spot beneath her leathers conceals a magical wound that does not heal. This was inflicted by Vilda Karrte a decade ago. Vola expends some of her magic each day to keep it from getting worse, yet it does not get better. Healing it is beyond the party's capabilities, but this helps explain Vola's weakening.

THE GATEKEEPER DRUIDS

The Gatekeepers are an ancient order of druidic initiates, aspirants, and acolytes dedicated to the protection of the material plane from extraplanar invasion. Founded millennia ago, it is said that the black dragon Vvaraak taught the magical secrets of druidism to the orcs so that they could protect the world from otherworldly forces. These orcs became the first druids native to Khorvaire.

While the Gatekeeper tradition started with the orcs, and many druids are orcs to this day, the teachings of Vvaraak are not exclusive to their race.

What Does Vola Know? Vola answers the party's questions, hesitantly at first, but once the characters show that they mean her no harm, she becomes more and more open.

- Vola is a Gatekeeper Druid. For hundreds of years, her order has protected this place, the Tjorda Sealguard. The Sealguard was built thousands of years ago by her order, the Gatekeepers. It is their sacred duty to protect it.
- Serving here is a great honor. A Gatekeeper is carefully chosen to spend 50 years—almost an entire orc life—serving here. Upon return, those who have served are treated with reverence and become elders.
- The Sealguard holds back the forces of darkness from the Realm of Madness, Xoriat. There is a dimensional seal nearby—perhaps in this very complex.
- Vola's duty is to guard the outside and to channel her Gatekeeper magic into the “outer seal.”
- She has never been inside (as going in would be breaking her vows), but she knows that there is another guardian there—an eternal being that uses their powers to maintain the magic of the “inner barrier.”
- The inner guardian is sentient, though it is “a different intelligence.” Those that are chosen to serve here are able to commune with the guardian. This allows them to learn much through visions and magical interactions. Over time, the Gatekeeper and the guardian become symbiotic, their powers feeding on each other to help maintain the barriers. The guardian has no name.

- Vilda Karrte came here almost a decade ago, seeking entry. Vola denied her entry. Vilda appeared to have left, but returned, only to attack Vola and then force her (by powerful mind-control magic) to let Vilda enter. Vola sealed the entrance and left Vilda to certain death inside.
- Since Vilda came, Vola has had to divide her magical energies between tending her injury and powering the barrier. Over time, she has felt the outer barrier weaken, and the inner guardian struggle and panic. Eventually, she lost contact with the guardian. She feels them there still, but she can no longer commune with them.
- Vilda also did something outside that prevents Vola from communicating with her order.

XORIAT, THE REALM OF MADNESS

Xoriat is a place unfathomable, a realm inhabited by the horrific daelkyr, who themselves appear as perfection by those that view them. In their strange realm, the daelkyr create, deconstruct, and re-create again nightmarish creatures to do their bidding.

Led by the daelkyr, these nightmarish creations in their many aberrant forms invaded Khorvaire over nine millennia ago. They were only driven back by the combined forces and might of the Dhakaani Empire and Gatekeeper druids. At the end of the war, the Gatekeepers, using ancient draconic magic, were able to create dimensional seals that would prevent the plane of Xoriat from ever being able to touch the material plane again.

Yet the magic of the seals' creation is long lost and the Gatekeepers' numbers have dwindled during their long vigil. The power of the seals wanes with every passing century, and the Gatekeepers struggle to maintain them.

CALL TO ACTION

Gatekeeper Vola is willing to allow the party entry if they commit to helping repower the inner barrier and, once they come out, if they will go to her druidic order and report on the happenings here.

To repower the inner barrier, she will grant them several vials of her life force. Vola believes it is enough to maintain the seal until help from her order comes.

Vola's Life Force. Life force is a substance that Vola creates by channeling her druidic magic into vials. It glows a bright green color. When opened, it flows like a liquid but is not wet. It's not quite alive, but it knows its purpose and when opened within 5 feet of a set of barrier crystals inside the complex, the substance moves toward the crystals through the air, repowering the crystals upon contact. The vials require an action to open and must be opened by a living creature native to the material plane.

Before letting the party inside, Vola wishes to learn something of their nature.

"Before you go, I wish to know," says the Gatekeeper, "What is your true purpose? What is your inner nature? Is it to hunt? To heal? To save? Find the answer inside yourselves." With those words, you feel yourself suddenly somewhere else.

TO HEAL, TO HUNT OR TO SAVE?

The Gatekeeper uses a series of visions to determine what the party's "true nature" is. The vision has no right or wrong response, though each response helps her understand the nature of the characters. The choice of action in vision is a group one. After reading out the situation, have the characters confer and decide how they would resolve the situation. As this is a vision, they are not expected to use skills or abilities. They are not physically present there or capable of casting spells. The goal is to make a decision on how they would act. To keep things on track, if the decision the party makes is too far outside the expected parameters, restart the vision and have them take a different approach. Details on possible outcomes are provided for each vision, and should not be shared with the players.

Based on the party's decisions, they will gain one of three possible **signs**. Their choices in each vision will eliminate one or more possible sign, until only one possibility is left. The party will then gain the remaining **sign**.

When the characters are ready, begin with the first vision:

VISION OF THE OLD HUNTER

You find yourself looking out across an open plain. The terrain is desolate yet idyllic. Streams run at your feet from distant snow-capped mountains. A majestic elk eats berries from a small bush in the distance. A cold wind brushes your face and you understand that it is cold, but do not truly feel it. You somehow know that it is springtime. Though you feel yourself there, you know also that you are not. You can feel your companions with you, though you do not see them. This is a vision.

Slumped against a leafless tree is an old hunter. They look malnourished and feeble. At their side is an old bow. The hunter notices you, raises their eyes and speaks hopefully: "I used to be a great hunter," they say, "but now I am old and weak and so very hungry. I see the elk and my mouth waters, yet I can no longer make the shot. If only I could eat, I would become strong again. Take my bow, strong friend, kill the deer, and let us feast on it!"

Potential Outcomes

The deer is not the only food available, as it is eating berries, which are plump and delicious and would provide sustenance. The hunter's age and hopelessness cannot be cured with just food, however. Feeding the hunter may **Heal** them, but it does not **Save** them from despair. Only by helping the hunter **Hunt** again, can the adventurers truly **Save** them. Under all circumstances, this vision should eliminate either the **Save** or the **Hunt sign**.

- If the deer is killed by the PCs, eliminate the **Save sign**.
- If the deer is killed by the hunter, eliminate the **Hunt sign**.
- If the hunter is left unfed or to die, eliminate the **Heal sign**.
- If the deer is NOT killed at all, eliminate the **Hunt sign**.

After the first vision, if more than one possibility remains, proceed to the appropriate vision.

VISION OF THE WATER (HUNT ELIMINATED)

You find yourself in a desolate wasteland. Dry roots and dead trees litter the landscape. It has been days since you came across fresh water, and your canteen is almost empty. You come across a small stream, only to find the water smelling of carrion and death. You know that it is fouled beyond any hope of use. Your mission compels you to go forward, yet you begin to doubt that your water supply will be sufficient. You find a human body by the river and discover that it is not dead, but passed out from dehydration. The human's eyes open slightly, and they whisper in a sickly dry voice: "The stream, it is poison... I could not resist it." You see them eyeing your canteen. "Some water, please, just a little." It is a heart-wrenching sight. You consider abandoning your mission and carrying the human back to the last water source—you know that if you do this, you must keep the water for yourself, lest your strength fade. If you simply give them water, you will ease their suffering for a time, but that is all. In the end, you have a mission and owe nothing to this human.

Potential Outcomes

There are three possible outcomes to this vision.

- Choosing to abandon the mission and carry the human to clean water commits the group to the **Save sign**.
- Choosing to give the human some water and leave them commits the group to the **Heal sign**.
- Choosing to abandon the human to their fate without helping them commits the group to the **Hunt sign**—this happens even if the **Hunt sign** had been eliminated by a previous choice.

VISION OF THE STAFF (SAVE ELIMINATED)

You find yourself standing in a grassy field. Dark blood stains the green grass and all around you are signs of battle. Beside you, lying injured on the ground, is your trusty wolf companion. Its gray fur is stained with blood and it whimpers in pain. In front of you is a monstrous creature of many mouths and sharp teeth. You see your faithful companion's blood dripping from the monster's horrific jaws. With your protector hurt, nothing stands between you and the creature. In your hands, you hold an enchanted staff. With it, you have the power to heal your companion or to strike at the hideous creature. You must decide quickly!

Potential Outcomes

There are only two possible outcomes to this vision.

- Choosing to strike commits the group to the **Hunt sign**.
- Choosing to heal commits the group to the **Heal sign**.



THE SIGN

When the visions are done, Vola is unsurprised. She announces that it is the party's nature to Heal, Hunt, or Save (as appropriate for their actions in the visions).

"It is a bold choice and one not without consequence," Vola says.

With this, she bestows one of the **signs** below upon the party. The entire group gets the same effect and only one. This lasts as long as the party is in the complex. They are not able to enter the inner complex without a **sign**.

Use the player handouts in **Appendix D** to provide the party with the sign.

Sign of the Hunter. The Gatekeeper finds that they are hunters/killers. The sign is as follows:

- Each character's critical range is increased by 1 (if characters previously scored a critical hit on a roll of 20, they now do so on a roll of 19 or 20; if they previously scored a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20, they now do so on a roll of 18, 19, or 20).
- When characters cast a spell that deals damage, the spell save DC to resist the spell is 1 higher.
- The characters are unable to knock a creature unconscious when they reduce a creature to 0 hp with a melee attack; they may only kill or destroy the creature.

Sign of the Healer. The Gatekeeper finds that they are best suited to healing.

- Whenever the characters spend any hit dice to recover hit points, they recover the maximum possible value of hit points.
- Every character gains 5 special *goodberries* (as the spell). Each of these special berries restores 5 hit points as an action and can be administered to others. These berries last 24 hours.
- Whenever a character makes an attack roll, they roll 1d4 and subtract it from the result.
- Whenever a character casts a spell that deals damage, the spell save DC to resist the spell is 1 lower.

Sign of the Savior. The Gatekeeper finds great hope in the adventurers.

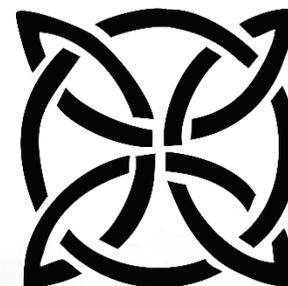
- Adventurers have advantage on all saving throws against Xoriat madness.

PROCEEDING

Vola, now confident in the party's nature and willing to trust them, permits them to enter the complex.

"This complex was purposely built without an entry door," says Vola in her even tone, "so that even if its guardians were lost, it would remain sealed—at least for a time. It takes a great amount of my energy to open a passage, even for moments. After I let you in, I will require rest to regain my strength and be able to open the way once again. You must be prepared to fend for yourself for a time. I can sense the strength in you and trust that you will return! Are you ready?"

There are no doors leading inside the dome. Vola magically opens a passage through the wall and is clearly strained to hold it open while the party goes inside. She is only able to open the passage once every 24 hours. She fully intends on opening it again when they are ready to leave.



SCENE 2: METHOD AMONG

Once on the other side of the pathway opened by Vola, the opening closes and the party finds themselves inside a long circular hallway that rings the dungeon. See **Appendix B** for a map of the Sealguard Complex.

AREA A - CORRIDORS

The corridors of the complex are made of thick stone but are otherwise nondescript. Through the corridors, adventurers are able to reach all the other rooms.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The featureless gray stone walls of the inner complex once must have been white. Thick dust and unidentifiable debris liberally cover the floor of the 10-foot wide corridor that leads both left and right from the entryway and symmetrically curves away in both directions. Though it is difficult to identify individual sounds, it not silent. There is an almost ethereal buzz inside, like echoes of drops of water, or fluttering wings, or a distant whisper.

A closed door adorns the immediate wall in front of the entrance passage. Following the curvature of the corridor, it is easy to spot two other doors along the same wall, each about 30 feet away in either direction.

AREA B – ENTRANCE TO BREACH CHAMBER

The door to this room is made of a heavy purple metal called byeshk, with a wheel that can be turned to lock it—but only from the outside (corridor side). It is not locked and can be swung open with ease.

Inside is a small room 10 feet wide and 15 feet long. At the far end in the middle of the wall is another door, identical to the entrance one. The inner door is magically protected and can't be opened by any means unless all five glyphs (see below) are active.

The Glyph Display. The east wall is adorned with five elaborate druidic glyphs arranged around a black circle. Of the glyphs, the rightmost one glows with a faint green light. Lit or not, the glyphs radiate divination magic, though their purpose can't be immediately ascertained. They show the status of the ward crystals. At the start of the adventure, 4 out of the 5 have gone dark and need to be repowered. If the adventurers return later, other glyphs may be lit. The glyphs have no specific translation, though a DC 13 Wisdom (Arcana) check reveals them to be protective glyphs. A character that understands druidic succeeds on this check automatically.

The Guardian's Reliquary. Along the west wall are an 8-foot-tall cabinet and a magically sealed chest. The cabinet is unlocked and mostly empty. There are latches inside it that used to hold two specific items. A character succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check is able to tell that the cabinet was built to contain a larger oval-shaped object (a shield) and a thinner but longer object (a staff). Beside the marks, there are some tattered remains of clothing—it's not possible to tell

anything from them other than that they are thousands of years old and have mostly fallen to dust (these are early hints that the guardian was once humanoid). At the bottom, there is a drawer that contains two byeshk shortswords (see Special Weapon Material: Byeshk sidebar).

SPECIAL WEAPON MATERIAL: BYESHK

This lustrous, purple metal is incredibly dense and heavy. It is mined from mountain ranges in western Khorvaire, typically the Byeshk and Graywall Mountains. It is often worn as jewelry and is considered a precious metal akin to silver, gold, or platinum.

Certain aberrant creatures have a distinct aversion to the metal and are resistant or immune to weapons that aren't byeshk. Druidic sects of the Eldeen Reaches, most often the Wardens of the Wood or Gatekeepers, trade with mountainous peoples for byeshk ore to make use of this susceptibility.

The Trapped Chest. The chest is trapped with an explosive glyph, which shows as evocation to *detect magic* and can be spotted with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Characters can attempt an Intelligence (Arcana) check: with a successful DC 13 check, they can learn its purpose, and with a successful DC 15 check, they are also able to disarm it. The glyph can be dispelled with *dispel magic*. When the chest is touched, the glyph erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 5d8 thunder damage on a failed saving throw or half as much damage on a successful one.



The Keys and the Spellshard. Inside the chest are two large metal keys that don't fit anything in this room, and a blue fist-sized crystal. Any character proficient in Arcana immediately recognizes it as a *spellshard* (*WGtE*). This *spellshard* was the last used by the guardian prior to entering the breach chamber. Touching a *spellshard* typically brings to mind the sensation of flipping through pages of a book in one's mind. However, instead of writing on a page, this *spellshard* conveys—in a flash of psychic energy lasting only seconds—a vision depicting key moments from the guardian's last years. The visions are from the guardian's point of view, so it is not itself seen. Holding onto the shard is mentally draining. A character touching the shard sees the following:

Upon touching the shard, a disorienting barrage of visions floods your mind, as if seeing years of events pass within a second. What you are seeing clearly takes place in this complex. You are moving with the speed of a quick-flying bird back and forward through different rooms that you don't recognize. Eventually, you see the room you're in now. You are looking at the glyphs on the wall—four of the five are lit, then one begins to fade and goes out. As it does, you hear in your mind a maddening scream somewhere in the complex. It becomes difficult to concentrate...

The character holding the shard must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they gain 1 level of madness. Regardless of the save, they may choose to let go, or to continue holding on to the shard, seeing the next part of the memory.

After the glyph goes out, there is another blinding spurt of quick movement, you're in another room—there are crystals here and you see a beam of energy coming from yourself. When it is done, you feel lightheaded, drained, you move slower, stumbling back to the glyph room. You see four of the five glyphs lit again. You look at the black dot in the middle—it is just a small dot of pure blackness, but it's almost as though you feel it pulsing, you feel yourself staring at it, unable to look away...

The character holding the shard must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they gain 1 level of madness. Regardless of the save, they may choose to let go, or to continue holding on to the shard, seeing the final part of the memory.

Suddenly it seems to be a different time. You see two glyphs lit and one blinks and goes out. Only one remains. The black dot in the middle has grown to a circle. Looking at it fills you with both dread and resolve. Time shifts again, and now all five glyphs are lit again, but the black circle remains. You see the inner door of the glyph room open and blackness beyond it. You see the open and empty stone cabinet. You see the open chest in the corner of the room, move toward it, then everything blurs. You see both yourself and not-yourself holding the spellshard. Then, the memory fades.

At the end of the memories, the character holding the shards must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, they gain 1 level of madness.

If a character chooses to let go of the shard before seeing all three memories, another character may attempt it, but must start over at the first memory. The memories are fleeting and unclear, and going through them more than once yields no additional information.

If paraphrasing or summarizing the memories, the key points in each are as follows. If players were unable to put some of the clues together, DC 10 ability checks of related skills (Insight, Arcana, Investigation) could help them make sense of the memories.

- The first memory shows that when a glyph goes out, this results in something horrible either entering the complex or happening within it.
- The second memory shows the guardian repowering a glyph with their own energy when it goes out. This takes place in some other room. It also shows that the black circle between the glyphs was once much smaller—this is ominous.
- The final memory shows that four glyphs were previously inactive, resulting in the darkness increasing. It ends with all five of the glyphs powered up, the inner door open, and the guardian placing the spellshard into the chest.

THE MADNESS OF XORIAT

Inside the Sealguard Complex, the adventurers may encounter the effects of Xoriat's maddening influence. When they do, they may need to make a saving throw against one of its effects.

In addition to places or events where Xoriat's influence is explicitly encountered, the madness of Xoriat has a way of entering the mind of the unwary. Adventurers must make a **DC 13 Charisma save** to resist this madness every time they finish a short or long rest while inside the dungeon.

A character gains a level of madness each time they fail a save against Xoriat's influence. The effects are as follows and are not cumulative unless otherwise stated (individual effects may overlap due to duration):

Level 1. Until the end of your next turn, you are unable to tell friend from foe as if under the effects of the *enemies abound* spell (*XGE*), except that advantage against or immunity to being frightened provides no benefit.

Levels 2 & 3. Roll on the Short-term madness table (*DMG* 259). Instead of 1d10 minutes, the effect lasts 1d4 rounds.

Levels 4 & 5. Roll on the Long-term madness table (*DMG* 260). Instead of lasting 1d10x10 hours, the effect lasts 1d10x10 minutes.

Level 6. Roll on the Indefinite Madness table (*DMG* 260). Only one flaw can be gained per adventurer.

Level 7 and beyond. Combined effects of Levels 2 and 4. Madness can be cured per page 260 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

AREA C – STOLEN KEYS

The door to this room is wide open. The room itself is twenty by twenty feet. Other than the entrance side, the three walls here are adorned with the same druidic glyph. A strange stone case stands against the far wall and the decaying remains of what looks and smells to once have been a creature litter the floor in the center of the room.

The Glyph. This corresponds to the first glyph in the glyph room—the glyph is dark (inactive).

The Remains. The floor is home to a number of scratch marks and stains. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers that these are no more than 5 years old. The remains are that of an akleu (see Area D), though unless this room is being encountered after that room, it's extremely unlikely that the characters have ever heard of one or are able to identify it. Identifying the creature requires a successful DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Otherwise, a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check can determine that the remains are about 5 years old and that parts of the body seem to be missing (the transparent parts of the akleu have actually deteriorated to nothing). The remains that are here are of internal organs, a sharp-toothed, almost shark-like jaw and of vicious claws. Some of the marks on the floor look like they've been made by these same claws. The character performing the medicine check must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or gain a level of madness.

The Stone Case. The large stone case looks to be built right into the far wall of the structure. It is magically sealed, but not trapped. There are four obvious keyholes on it and the two keys from the chest in the glyph room fit two of the holes. Given the magical nature of the keys, picking the lock proves to be impossible—the other two keys need to be found (these have been taken by the akleu in Area D).

Powering the Barrier Crystals. Inside the stone case are the barrier crystals. These are powered by druidic magic to project a barrier that contains the seal breach in the inner chamber (The map in Appendix B helps demonstrate how the complex functions.) Using Gatekeeper Vola's life force on the crystals re-powers them and the glyphs in this room. Additionally, doing so causes the first glyph in the glyph chamber to light up.

AREA D – AKLEU ASSASSIN

The corridor outside the door to Area D contains a large crack that goes across the corridor and into what can now be called a door. It's clear that the opening in the wall here was caused by this crack and not by construction. Built over the crack is a stone doorway. A successful DC 15 Intelligence check pertaining to knowledge of stone (Mason's tools, History, Investigation, etc.) tells that this stone structure, while also millennia old, was added on some time after the original complex.

The doorway may have once contained a door, but is now barricaded by pieces of stone, metal, and other materials that are difficult to identify. A DC 13 Perception checks helps note that the doorway used to have horizontal metal bars—like those of a cage or prison cell—but these have been broken or cut off.

Pushing back the barricade requires a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check—this creates a 3-foot opening that allows a Medium creature to squeeze into the room. If a character succeeds on the check by 5 or more, they fully push away the barricade. The barricade can also be broken down by brute force (AC 15, 60 hit points, immune to psychic and poison damage).

Inside the prison room, hidden on the ceiling, is an **akleu** (see Appendix A) who ambushes the party. The akleu here had attacked the guardian—who slew one of them—and stolen two of the guardian's keys, rendering him unable to access the crystals. With their mission partially complete, they barricaded themselves in this room.

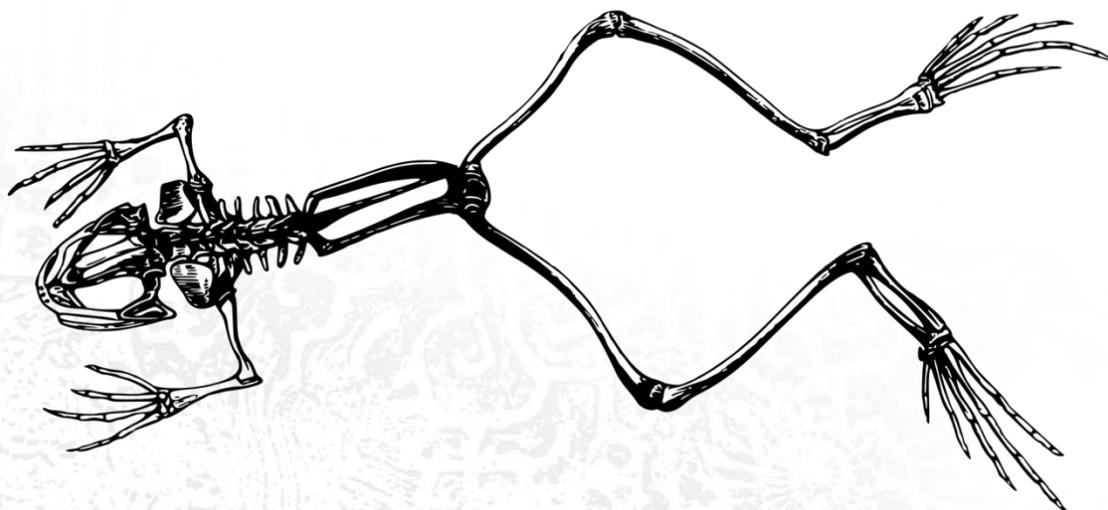
Upon encountering the monstrous creatures, each character must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain 1 level of madness. Characters immune to fear automatically succeed on this saving throw.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Weak or Very Weak Party: the akleu has a maximum of 75 hit points.

Strong or Very Strong Part: add 1 akleu.

Once the akleu are dead, the adventurers are able to find the two metal keys that access the stone cabinet in Area B.



AREA E – WIND TUNNEL

A soft knocking sound comes from this room. Fifteen feet into the room is a wall of bristling razor-sharp thorns, stretching from wall to wall and floor to ceiling. The side walls are each adorned with the same dark druidic glyph.

The source of the sound is not difficult to discern. Knocking against the thorned wall in several places—as though magically held aloft—are several disconnected bleached bones. Whether the bones once belonged to the same creature is impossible to tell, as they are too far apart and too few for any kind of coherent shape.

This room is 20 feet by 20 feet and devoid of enemies. The barrier crystals are unpowered and set against the far wall, though they are not visible behind the wall of thorns. The guardian has enchanted the room with two permanent magical walls that form a sort of trap.

While some suggestions are given here, there is no pre-designed method for navigating through the walls and DMs are expected to allow player ingenuity to create success.

The crystals themselves are blocked off by a continual *wall of thorns* located 15 feet into the room that stretches wall to wall and floor to ceiling. The wall otherwise functions exactly as per a *wall of thorns* spell cast at 6th level, though it is not limited in duration. If the *wall of thorns* is

successfully dispelled, it reforms after 1 minute. The wall is magical and regrows if damaged, but a 5-foot area of the wall can be destroyed for 1 round by dealing 20 or more points of damage to it from a single source (AC 10, damage threshold 20, immune to psychic damage, automatically fails saving throws).

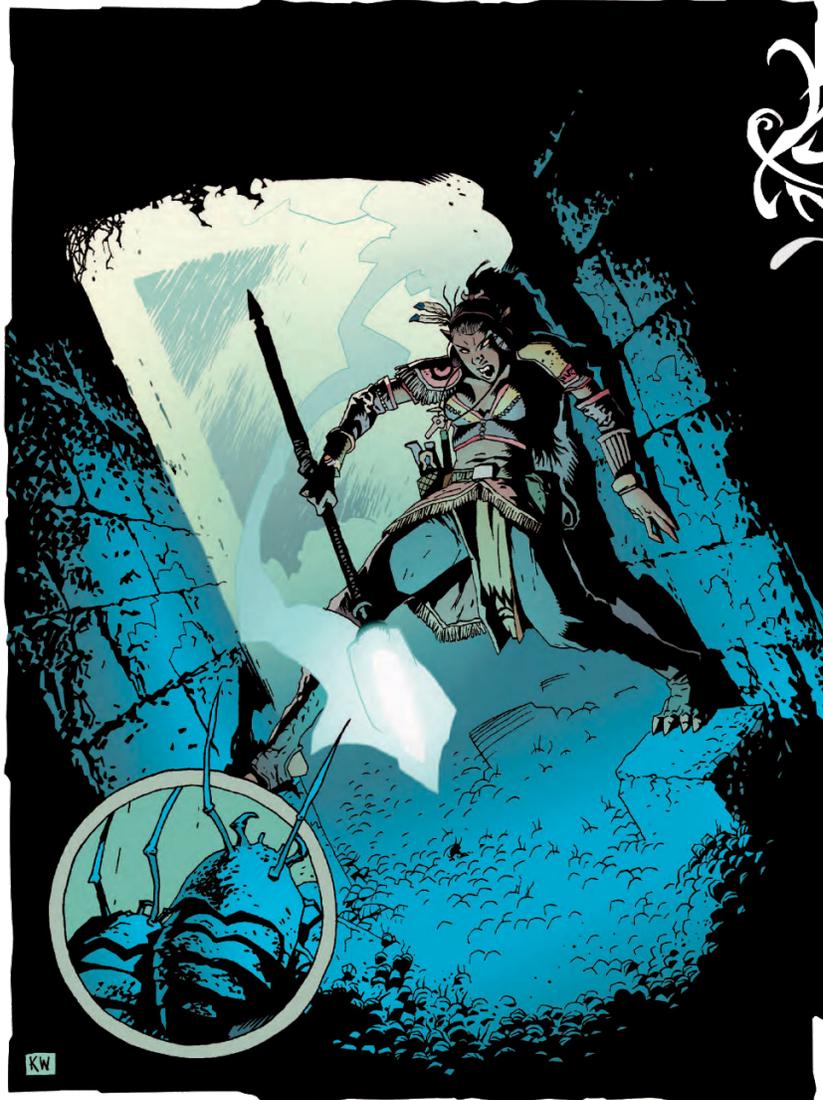
5 feet into the room is a completely undetectable veil of wind that blows inward toward the wall of thorns—the wind covers the entire 10-foot span between the veil and the wall of thorns. Any creature that enters or starts its turn in the area of the wind

created by this veil must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and pushed 15 feet into and through the *wall of thorns*. The veil of wind can be dispelled as though it was a 3rd level spell effect, but even if dispelled it reforms after 1 minute. Finding a way to secure themselves with ropes or other physical means should provide adventurers with advantage or other benefits for traversing the wind.

It should be evident to characters from having visited other such rooms that these rooms are all a standard 20 feet by 20 feet and that the *wall of thorns* is clearly blocking the last 5 feet of the room. They may also recognize this from the fact that typically the far wall is also adorned with the same glyph as the

side walls. If this is not evident to them immediately, they always have the option of leaving this room and exploring others first.

As with the other rooms, a glyph in Area B lights up once the crystals here are repowered with Vola's life force.



AREA F – EMPTY CELL

This room is another former prison cell. Its entrance is blocked by thick metal bars. There is a wheel to the side of the entrance door that can be turned to make the bars retract into the walls and allow access.

The room is empty and contains little of significance. It's a great example of what some of the other prison rooms looked like when they were intact. Bones of

unidentifiable aberrations can be found throughout the room. Whatever had been imprisoned is long dead.

There is a sort of crude mural on the wall. It depicts a procession of creatures—orcs, elves, goblins, hobgoblins, and bugbears among them—passing before a beautiful human and emerging as bigger, stronger, and more nightmarish forms as they pass. A DC 17 Intelligence (History or Arcana) check reveals that this is likely a depiction of a daelkyr.



AREA G – VILDA KARRTE

The door to this room looks to be made of the same stone as all the other doors of the original construction. It is actually an illusion put up by Vilda Karrte, with an *alarm* spell cast in the same place (if the alarm is tripped, it silently alerts Vilda). Attempting to interact with the door results in four **dolgrims** (see Appendix A) firing their crossbows from inside the room. The first time that the adventurers see the aberrations of this room, they must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain 1 level of madness (one total save, not one per dolgrim). They are Vilda Karrte's servants and the volley is intended to warn off other aberrant creatures. Vilda and her dolgaunt guards are safely inside. Once Vilda hears the Common spoken outside, she calls off the dolgrims and is happy to converse with the party.

Dealing with Vilda. Vilda has nothing that the party wants other than her magic powers and this relatively secured room where she can offer them a place to rest safely.

The adventurers, on the other hand, have what Vilda needs to repower the crystals. If they have already repowered some, she is aware of this. Vilda's first approach is to ally with the adventurers—offering them a safe place to rest. She may use the arguments of joining forces, wanting to escape, or lying about no longer wanting the *Spiral Well*. Vilda rolls Charisma (Deception) checks with a +7 modifier.

If the party sees through her deception, she is genuinely willing to give up the *Spiral Well* so long as the adventurers take her inside the breach chamber, stating:

“True power is in there and it is not in some trinket. You want the *Well*? You may have it! What I want is so much greater than you can fathom.”

If the adventurers make a deal with Vilda and they haven't yet activated all the other glyphs, her preference is to remain in the room and have them return to this room last to activate the glyph. They may take a long rest now or before activating the last glyph. Whatever the agreement, her servants remain in this room even if she follows the party. Vilda is unaffected by Xoriat's maddening influence (she is already too far gone).

If negotiations sour, or the adventurers just decide they simply cannot trust Vilda, they may choose to fight and/or kill her. The party will find **Vilda Karrte** (see Appendix A) a formidable opponent.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter always features Vilda, and she always starts with *true seeing* already cast. Any dolgrims that were killed on the way into the room should be removed from the encounter below.

Weak or Very Weak Party: 4 dolgrims. Vilda's 1/day spells are spent.

Average Party: 4 dolgrims, 1 dolgaunt, Vilda's 1/day spells are spent.

Strong Party: 4 dolgrims, 2 dolgaunts, Vilda also starts with *false life* already cast (8 temp hp)

Very Strong Party: 4 dolgrims, 2 dolgaunts, 1 dolgaunt ascetic, Vilda also starts with *armor of Agathys* already cast (25 temp hp).

AREA H – THE PULL OF MADNESS

The door leading to this area is missing, and there is once again a slightly newer stone doorway indicating that it was an added-on construction. Signs of missing metal bars are once again present. Anyone that looks into the room sees the scene described below and must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw. On a failure, the character steps into the room and then gains 1 level of madness.

There are brief moments when this room looks normal. Bricks and walls and not much else. But suddenly, for a fleeting moment, things shift and the room looks like endless blackness and within, writhing forms of nightmarish tentacles and oozing maws of teeth gaping and threatening to devour. And then, it's all gone and the room looks normal once again. On the far end of the room, suspended 10 feet in the air is a skeleton, still wearing a pack.

The skeleton belongs to a long-dead adventurer that somehow ended up here centuries ago. From a distance, the pack looks to have something inside.

Chaos Web. This room is home to a version of the **chaos web** trap (see sidebar). This trap is not visible and not intended to be disarmed, but can be navigated. The only possible objective in this room is the skeleton's pack. Without going into the room, this can be retrieved by simply using a grappling hook or other mundane solutions.

Adventurers can also choose to skip this room. A pre-rolled table for the chaos web's effects is attached in Appendix C.

Treasure. The adventurer's pack contains treasure: 150 gold and two *potions of clarity*.

POTION OF CLARITY

Potion, uncommon

When you drink this blue potion, it reduces your madness level by 1 and immediately ends the effects of any short-term or long-term madness that you are suffering.



THE CHAOS WEB

Complex Trap (level 5-10, moderate threat)

The chaos web occupies the entire area of the room (horizontally and vertically). Each 5-foot square of the web triggers an individual trap. It can only trigger once per round and resets at the start of the next round unless the effect is ongoing. If the effect is ongoing, that square does not activate again until the creature under the effect has left the square. The web is three-dimensional.

Trigger. A creature is subject to the web's effect upon entering a square for the first time on a turn—this includes involuntary movement or teleports—as well as when starting its turn in the square. Inanimate objects and unconscious creatures do not trigger the web's effects. The effects are determined by a d100 roll each time.

Effects:

1-25: The creature is hit by a 1st level *chaos bolt* spell (XGE).

26-50: The creature is hit by a 1st level *ray of frost* spell.

51-75: The creature rises 10 feet, not triggering any additional web effects, and is suspended midair as if under the effects of the *levitate* spell. The levitation effect lasts as long as the creature remains in that square—even if the creature falls unconscious. This is considered to be an ongoing effect for that square.

76-100: The creature is teleported 10 feet in a random direction (see direction guide below). This triggers the web effect in the square that the creature arrives in. If the creature ends up falling as a result of the teleport, it triggers the effects of any squares it passes through.

Determining Random Direction:

Step 1. Roll a D6. On a 1-2, the direction is diagonal down. On a 3-4, the direction is on the same plane. On a 5-6, the direction is diagonal up. (In the event that the creature is on the ground, treat down as the same plane).

Step 2. Roll a D8 for direction, with 1 being straight ahead and 2-8 being all the other squares clockwise.

Wild Magic

If the chaos web's *chaos bolt* hits a Wild Magic Sorcerer, trigger a wild magic surge on the sorcerer. If a Wild Magic Sorcerer uses Tides of Chaos to gain advantage on a saving throw against any of the chaos web's effects, trigger a wild magic surge on the sorcerer.

Safe Spaces

The web has 2 safe spaces. These spaces are always on the ground level of the web and are marked on the chaos web map. They can only be spotted by someone that has the appropriate senses as described below or as gaps by someone using the *detect magic* spell.

Countermeasures

The web itself is invisible and has no corporeal form. It can be perceived visually through the *see invisibility* spell or truesight. When viewed thusly, the web's strands are purple.

The *detect magic* spell picks up a myriad of evocation, conjuration, enchantment, divination and transmutation auras as well as “pure chaos.”

A DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check by a character with either *see invisibility*, *truesight* or *detect magic* allows that character to notice the safe areas in the web within the range of that spell.

Dispel magic disables individual squares of the web for 1 minute. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check after casting *dispel magic* on any part of the web allows the caster to determine that the web eventually repairs itself.

AREA I – GLYPH TRAP

The door to this room is locked, and the door is trapped with an explosive glyph. This glyph is identical to the one in the glyph room (Area B). If the adventurers have visited that room and have begun to put together the workings of the complex, they may be able to ascertain that this room corresponds to the one glyph that was powered and that the glyph on the door was placed by the guardian—ergo, it does not need re-activating or entering. Allow adventurers to make a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) or Intelligence check to put these together.

The glyph shows as evocation magic and can be spotted with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Characters can attempt an Intelligence (Arcana) check: with a successful DC 13 check, they can learn its purpose, and with a successful DC 15 check, they are also able to disarm it. The glyph can be dispelled with *dispel magic*. When the door is touched, the glyph erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 5d8 thunder damage on a failed saving throw or half as much damage on a successful one.

Room Interior. The druidic glyphs in this room are active and correspond to the fourth glyph in the Area B. There is a set of crystals against the far end of the room that is protected by a *wall of force*. Each of the 5-foot squares immediately outside the *wall of force*'s area is another glyph that functions exactly as the entry one.

There is nothing else to locate here.

AREA J – HUNGRY BLACKNESS

This room is filled with utter blackness that cannot be dispelled. Creatures fully within the blackness are blinded. Mundane light fails to pierce the blackness. Regardless of source or spell level, magical light entirely in the area of blackness illuminates only a radius of 5 feet from its source and is dim light. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the nature of the blackness as similar to that the *hunger of Hadar* spell—unpierceable by darkvision or other special senses, even those which normally pierce magical darkness.

Hiding in the room—indistinguishable from a wall—is a **cloaker** (see Appendix A).

The room contains bones of a number of non-humanoid creatures and among these remains—on the far side of the room—are three sealed vials of strange-looking liquids. Upon examination, the vials appear to be made of odd alien materials. They contain 3 potions native to Xoriat. These potions can be identified as having effects similar to regular potions, except when they are consumed, their alien nature requires the drinker to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or gain 1 level of madness on a failure.

The black potion provides the same effect as a *potion of heroism*, the green potion provides the same effect as a *potion of hill giant strength*, and the orange potion provides the same effect as a *potion of greater healing*.



AREA K – HORRORS OF HISTORY

The door to this room is not locked but is physically barred from the outside with a couple of large metal bars. Opening it is not difficult and requires a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. Removing the bars makes noise as they are removed—the creature making the Strength check must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check or (unbeknownst to them) be noticed by the creatures inside.

Inside the room are **3 flying horrors** (see Appendix A). The soft rhythmic fluttering of their dark wings can be heard through the door with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If the party has not been stealthy, one or more of the flying horrors ready their Frightening Screech ability, which they use upon the party's entry then attack.

Additionally, the first time any of the adventurers see a flying horror, they must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or gain 1 level of madness.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter consists of 3 flying horrors. Add or subtract 1 flying horror for parties stronger or weaker than average.

The Crystal Cabinet. On the far side is a glass cabinet containing the crystals. It has a mundane lock that can be picked with a DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves' tools) check or broken off with a DC 15 Strength check. The crystals can be repowered with Vola's life force.

The Chest of History. An ornate chest sits in the corner. This chest is locked. It contains several more *spellshards*. These are traditional in use and do not cause madness. They contain several tomes on the history of the complex and of the settlement of Tjorda that had once stood here. The following can be learned from them:

- The first shard tells of the town of Tjorda, the Dhakaani Empire's major trading center with the orcish tribes of the Shadow Marches more than 10,000 years ago.
- During the Xoriat Invasion, the town was ground zero to the inexplicable and abrupt formation of a Xoriat manifest zone. It was wiped entirely off the map by aberrant hordes.
- When the forces of Xoriat were driven back, the Gatekeeper druids—mostly orcs—placed a *dimensional seal* in this area.
- A century after that, the seal was partially breached and this complex was built to contain the breach.
- Another half-century later, a second breach occurred. Several secondary chambers were created as prisons for aberrations.
- After this time, the seal needed continuous magical upkeep.
- One of the tomes contained within the spellshard is titled *The Tome of Sacrifice*. It speaks about the ultimate sacrifice made by one of the druids with the help of a master druidic spell contained within a black spellshard—apparently, its magic dated back to the Scaled Apostate, the black dragon Vvaraak herself.
- It seems that the ritual transformed a willing Gatekeeper into the eternal guardian. A DC 12 Intelligence (History or Arcana) check notes that black spellshards are unheard of.

REVISITING AREA B – THE UNBARRED GATE

Once all the crystals have been repowered, returning to the glyph room, the adventurers find that all five of the druidic glyphs are glowing. The door is no longer sealed.

Opening the heavy interior door reveals pure blackness beyond. It's not emptiness—it seems almost corporeal—and it is. Inside is a heavy black substance, neither water nor air, tasteless and weightless, but immovable. Touching it feels like being enveloped in some internal organ, only without the wetness or the mess.

The black substance is unknowable. It cannot be interacted with in any way, destroyed, moved, or lit. Darkvision is of not help with seeing through it, as it is made of corporeal blackness. The only thing one can do is move through it—which it allows. Anyone touching the substance for the first time must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw or gain 1 level of madness. The substance is difficult terrain and requires 20 feet of movement to go through to the other side. It leads to the chamber beyond.



SCENE 3: INTO THE BREACH

Once through the unfathomable blackness, the adventurers find themselves in a small anteroom with a pair of double doors in front of them. This small area allows all the adventurers to emerge from the blackness before entering the breach chamber.

The doors spring open as soon as all the characters and Vilda (if she's present) have come through the blackness. They can't be closed again until the encounter is resolved. If any character touches the door, they spring open before the remaining party members arrive.

Read or paraphrase the following:

The large double doors that lie beyond the incomprehensible blackness swing open with hurricane force and reveal a large oval chamber. Buzzing with otherworldly energy in the room's center is a black pulsing tear in reality itself. The rift is twenty feet high and periodically, grotesque tentacled shapes and a desolate gray landscape can be seen within the darkness.

Hovering a few feet off the ground in front of the black fissure is a nightmarish creature of glistening pink flesh. Its elongated arms and legs end in sharp claws and its leathery wings beat in an unnervingly steady rhythm that echoes in the bare chamber.

The creature turns its several snakelike heads toward you, speaking in a unified gurgling voice like the bubbling of thick liquid.

"Imposters! I will wipe you from the face of this world!" it screeches and moves menacingly in your direction.



SCENE 3A: THE BREACH CHAMBER

The breach chamber has been corrupted by the influence of a daelkyr trapped in Khyber, which has drawn near to the underground complex. The daelkyr itself has not been able to completely break the seals, but its corrupting influence has seeped through above into the complex. The daelkyr has been unable to destroy the guardian, however, it has been able to weaken it and drive it partially insane with its visions and the warping of reality.

The daelkyr designs are inscrutable, but it seems to be luring others to this chamber to have them kill the guardian. To this end, it is warping perception in the chamber. To the guardian, any who enter appear as aberrations and anything they say sounds like a threat. To those that enter, the guardian appears as an abomination and when it speaks, the words are twisted to be threats and calls to battle.

Roll for initiative as soon as the **eternal guardian** (see Appendix A) sees the characters.

THE NATURE OF THE ILLUSION

The daelkyr's illusion in this chamber is altering reality itself and can only be seen through with truesight—which is not expected to be possessed by the party. Illusion and transmutation magic can be detected, but not dispelled. Figuring out that the abomination is actually the guardian is not required, but can be done by putting together at least three specific clues throughout the encounter and then making a special check. This is detailed in the Saving the Guardian section below.

DM Tip: be sure to review the possible clues before starting the battle!

Upon entry to the chamber, every character must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or gain a level of madness.

Vilda Karste. If Vilda is with the party, she has truesight and is able to see that the creature is actually the guardian. Upon realizing that it's hostile toward the adventures, she urges them to kill it—even offers to assist.

"The abomination, it's all that stands in our way! I stand with you against this fiend!"

A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check at this point reveals that Vilda seems particularly eager for blood.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

The encounter always features the eternal guardian (to avoid spoilers for players, it's suggested that DMs refer to it as a "Daelkyric Abomination" until the truth is found out.)

Weak or Very Weak Party: the Daelkyric Abomination has a maximum of 90 hit points and does not have access to its 1/day spells. Modify Memory is the only lair action used.

Average Party: The Touch of Madness lair action is unavailable and the Subtle Influence lair action can only be used to grant attacks to player characters.

Strong Party: Add one **tsochar** (see Appendix A).

Very Strong Party: Add two **tsochar**, the Daelkyric Abomination has a maximum of 198 hit points.

LAIR ACTIONS

The daelkyr influencing this combat takes one of the following actions on initiative count 20 (losing ties). At the start of battle, the actions are intended to make the party believe that they're being caused by the guardian, but as the fight progresses, they may begin to aid the party in slaying it.

- **Modify Memory.** The daelkyr casts the *modify memory spell* (spell save DC 21), targeting one character of its choice—do not inform the character of the DC and if the character fails, do not inform them that they have failed. If they fail, provide them with the **Memory Handout** (see Appendix D). (You may wish to roll this saving throw in secret—if you do so, be sure to take into account any advantage against charm effects that the character might possess.) If the character passes, they feel as though they hear a voice whispering in their mind, but cannot make out what it was saying.
- **Subtle Influence.** The daelkyr allows one creature of its choice to immediately use their reaction to make one melee or ranged attack. If this is used on a player character, it's communicated as "you see a sudden opportunity."
- **Touch of Madness.** This option cannot be used in the first round of combat. The daelkyr assaults the mind of one character with maddening images. The character must make a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw or gain 1 level of madness.



SAVING THE GUARDIAN

It's important to note that it may not be possible to save the guardian and that failing to save it **does not** constitute a failure in the adventure.

The daelkyr hides its influence well, but there are clues to recognizing that something is amiss. Once the group succeeds in gathering three of these clues, they are able to perform a special check to put them together. The clues are as follows.

- **Vilda's Bloodlust.** Vilda's unnatural eagerness to help destroy the "abomination" is one clue that something is not right. This clue is gained by succeeding on the Insight check when she offers to help.
- **Modified Memory.** If a character has their memory modified by the daelkyr and shares this new memory with the group, other characters may perform a DC 15 Wisdom (History) check to examine their own memories. If any of them succeed, they identify that the main discrepancy between the memories is that Vola never warned them of a specific monster, and only referred to another guardian inside the complex.
- **The Guardian's Damage.** Any character taking damage from the guardian's melee attacks recognizes it as radiant. If they recognize this as odd, they may attempt a DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check to recognize that it is extremely unusual for an aberration to deal radiant damage with its physical attacks.
- **The Guardian's Spells.** All of the guardian's spells are on the druid spell list. After the guardian casts at least two different spells, a character may attempt a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check to identify the spells as druidic magic. A druid automatically succeeds on this check.
- **The Guardian's Flesh.** The first time a character strikes the guardian with a melee attack from within 5 feet, they can attempt a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check. Characters that have previously hit another aberration with a melee attack have advantage on this check. Upon a success, the character notices that the abomination's flesh does not respond as they would expect from its appearance. This may be more difficult to notice by a character with madness. The DC of this ability check increases by 1 for every level of madness that the character performing the check has.

Once the adventurers have successfully figured out at least 3 of the clues, they may attempt an Intelligence (Insight) check to figure out what's happening. The DC of the check is equal to 13 + 1 for every level of madness that the character performing the check has. On a success, they gain an understanding of the true situation. However, figuring it out has no effect on the illusion affecting the guardian itself—it continues to attack.

The only way to stop (and save) the guardian is for a character to reduce it to 0 hit points with a melee attack and choose to subdue it rather than kill it. This option is not available to groups with the **Sign of the Hunter**.

If the party figures out what is happening and visible stops attacking the guardian in an attempt to save it, Vilda and any remaining tsochari attempt to destroy the guardian. Most tsochari abilities are ineffective against it (which is why they were not able to kill it), but they attempt nonetheless. It's up to the party to stop or allow this.



SCENE 3B: THE GUARDIAN'S FALL

If the eternal guardian is knocked unconscious or killed, the daelkyr's illusion fades. Read or paraphrase the appropriate text below.

If the guardian is killed:

You strike a fatal final blow to the abomination and as it staggers, booming otherworldly laughter explodes in the room. It goes on and on, echoing in the chamber even as you see the creature you've murdered fall to the ground—its shape changing from the vile pink-fleshed monstrosity to a humanoid shape with translucent golden skin. In the creature's right hand is an obsidian staff with the head of a dragon, and strapped to their left arm is a black shield. Tied as a necklace around its neck is a simple rope that holds a black spellshard. This is the eternal guardian spoken of by the Gatekeeper.

In the far end of the room is a shelf containing several artifacts related to the Xoriat Invasion and the daelkyr. One of these is the *Spiral Well*.

If Vilda is still alive, she smiles brightly, having completed her mission. She offers to allow the party to take anything they want from here if they agree to leave her be in here. Her true intent is to destroy the *dimensional seal* buried far below this chamber and allow the daelkyr to enter the world—though she does not openly share this.

If the party disagrees, she attacks them. There are no further adjustments for fighting Vilda Karrte, nor does she have any help.

The guardian is dead and their part-ethereal body begins fading from existence soon after they are killed. When examined, their body has vaguely orcish features, though faded from millennia spent in this celestial form.

The group is able to recognize that the black *spellshard* can be used for a ritual of creating a new guardian.

In addition to the *Spiral Well*, the adventurers find the following treasure: *staff of the Gatekeeper*.

Proceed to **Scene 3C**.

If the guardian is knocked out:

As you strike to knock out the creature, a disgusted hiss fills the room and you feel as if an otherworldly presence has departed. The shape of the vile pink-fleshed monstrosity changes to that of a humanoid with translucent golden skin. In the creature's right hand is an obsidian staff with the head of a dragon and strapped to their left arm is a black shield. This must be the eternal guardian spoken of by Vola.

The guardian heals themselves after 1 hour and wakes. Healing magic can rouse them earlier, though it is not required for the party to wake it.

When the guardian wakes, they see the party and communicate with them telepathically. They can no longer speak or formulate words, and their communication is a jumbled stream of images from the past 10,000 years. The images sent to the party have a calming, serene quality—the guardian is grateful. They indicate that the *spellshards* should be given to Vola, to give to her people and recover their history.

Adventurers that save the guardian receive the **Blessing of the Eternal Guardian**—this blessing grants them a +1 bonus on any saving throws against spells or other effects originating from a daelkyr or the powers of Xoriat. This blessing is permanent and may carry forward into future adventures.

The Guardian allows them to take the *Spiral Well*, but not any of the other Xoriat artifacts. The adventurers are also awarded with the *staff of the Gatekeeper*.

Proceed to **Scene 3C**.

STAFF OF THE GATEKEEPER

Staff, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This staff is made of one large bone. Its head is carved and painted into the visage of the black dragon Vvaraak. The dragon's eyes glow with a purple light whenever the staff is within 150 feet of an aberration.

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff. It has 10 charges. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff vanishes in a flash of light, lost forever. The staff regains 1d6+4 charges when the following druidic ritual is performed.

Druidic Ritual. After successfully completing a long rest, the attuned creature may choose to imbue the staff with some of their life force, expending one of their hit dice to do so. In addition to regaining charges, communing with the staff in this fashion allows the attuned creature to invoke the staff's power and choose for it to act either as a tool of hunting or a tool of healing. This choice lasts until the ritual is performed again after a long rest. If the attuned creature is a druid, performing the ritual allows them to use the staff for both healing and hunting.

Tool of Healing. While holding this staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and spellcasting ability modifier: *cure wounds* (1 charge per spell level, up to 4th), *lesser restoration* (2 charges), or *mass cure wounds* (5 charges).

Tool of Hunting. When you hit with a melee attack using this staff, you can expend up to 2 of its charges. For each charge you expend, the target takes an extra 1d6 force damage.

SCENE 3C. RETURN TO THE GATEKEEPER

With the guardian dead and taking Vilda's deal. If the adventurers take Vilda up on her offer and leave her in the room, once they exit the complex to meet Vola, they see a vision of Vilda alone in the breach chamber, with a dark form emerging from the breach and entering her body. Her eyes turn perfectly black and the vision ends.

With the guardian dead. If the adventurers take the black *spellshard* gem and bring it to Vola, she hesitates, but recognizing the threat, she then volunteers to undergo the transformation. The party is able to help her perform the ritual over their next long rest and she transforms into a new eternal guardian. She asks the party to seek out her people and have them send a new Gatekeeper. She asks for the history in the other *spellshards*, if the characters have them, to also be taken to her people.

With the guardian alive. Vola thanks the adventurers and asks that they go to her people and inform them of the happenings and send a replacement Gatekeeper early.

SCENE 3D. RETURN TO LHARA

Sharn's familiar towers are a welcome sign after what you've seen on this mission. Lhara's casual manner and business-like demeanor are almost unnerving. Can she even imagine what was at stake? What could have been lost? What still might be? She takes the artifact. She gives you the money. Her eyes pause for just a few seconds longer than they should and Lhara gives a knowing nod. Yeah, she's been there and seen that. It's a small comfort, but a comfort nonetheless. This is the chosen life.

The characters receive their payment from Provost Faurious passed along by Lhara, totaling a tidy sum of 500 gold each.

THE CONVERGENCE MANIFESTO

With the *Spiral Well* retrieved for the Provost's purposes, a new mission for the Clifftop Adventurers' Guild is soon to be commissioned. If the players wish to continue on with the *Convergence Manifesto* storyline, their next mission will be detailed in [AE01-09: *Weathering the Storm*](#).



APPENDIX A: BESTIARY

AKLEU

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 20 (+5) | 16 (+3) | 13 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 11 (+0) |

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +6, Wis +5

Skills Acrobatics +11, Perception +8, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't byeshk

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Daelkyr, Undercommon

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Assassinate. During its first turn, the akleu has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the akleu scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the akleu can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Transparency. The akleu's transparent body makes it difficult to target by sight. Attack rolls against it have disadvantage and it cannot be targeted by spells that require the target to be seen. If it is hit by an attack, this trait is disrupted until the end of its next turn. This trait is also disrupted while the akleu is incapacitated or has a speed of 0. Attacks from creatures that possess senses that do not rely on sight – such as tremorsense or blindsight, or that have highly developed smell or hearing – such as granted by the keen hearing or keen scent traits, are not affected by this trait.

Evasion. If the akleu is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the akleu instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The akleu deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the akleu that isn't incapacitated and the akleu doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The akleu makes one claw attack and one bite attack.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

CLOAKER

Large aberration, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d10 + 12)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 17 (+3) | 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) |

Skills Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Damage Transfer. While attached to a creature, the cloaker takes only half the damage dealt to it (rounded down) and that creature takes the other half.

False Appearance. While the cloaker remains motionless without its underside exposed, it is indistinguishable from a dark leather cloak.

Light Sensitivity. While in bright light, the cloaker has disadvantage on attack rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Multiattack. The cloaker makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, and if the target is Large or smaller, the cloaker attaches to it. If the cloaker has advantage against the target, the cloaker attaches to the target's head, and the target is blinded and unable to breathe while the cloaker is attached. While attached, the cloaker can make this attack only against the target and has advantage on the attack roll. The cloaker can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can take its action to detach the cloaker by succeeding on a DC 16 Strength check.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Moan. Each creature within 60 feet of the cloaker that can hear its moan and that isn't an aberration must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened until the end of the cloaker's next turn. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the cloaker's moan for the next 24 hours.

Phantasms (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The cloaker magically creates three illusory duplicates of itself if it isn't in bright light. The duplicates move with it and mimic its actions, shifting position so as to make it impossible to track which cloaker is the real one. If the cloaker is ever in an area of bright light, the duplicates disappear.

Whenever any creature targets the cloaker with an attack or a harmful spell while a duplicate remains, that creature rolls randomly to determine whether it targets the cloaker or one of the duplicates. A creature is unaffected by this magical effect if it can't see or if it relies on senses other than sight.

A duplicate has the cloaker's AC and uses its saving throws. If an attack hits a duplicate, or if a duplicate fails a saving throw against an effect that deals damage, the duplicate disappears.

DOLGAUNT

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 14 (+2) | 19 (+4) | 12 (+1) | 13 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 11 (+0) |

Saving Throws Dex +6

Skills Acrobatics +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't byeshk

Senses blindsight 360 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Undercommon, tentacle sign language 30 ft.

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The dolgaunt makes two tentacle attacks. In place of any attack, it can attempt to grapple an opponent up to 10 feet away.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Vitality Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target that is incapacitated, restrained, or grappled by the dolgaunt. *Hit:* 3 (1 + 2) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the dolgaunt regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.



DOLGAUNT ASCETIC

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 50 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 16 (+3) | 19 (+4) | 15 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) |

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +6

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't byeshk

Senses blindsight 360 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Undercommon, tentacle sign language 30 ft.

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Mental Focus. If the dolgaunt ascetic is charmed, frightened, or stunned at the start of its turn, the condition ends but it cannot make a multiattack for that turn.

Unfettered Stride. The dolgaunt ascetic can move along vertical surfaces and across liquids on its turn without falling during its movement. It is immune to fall damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The dolgaunt ascetic makes four attacks: two unarmed strikes and two tentacle attacks. In place of up to two attacks, it can attempt to grapple an opponent up to 10 feet away.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Vitality Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target that is incapacitated, restrained, or grappled by the dolgaunt. *Hit:* 3 (1 + 2) piercing damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the dolgaunt regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the dolgaunt ascetic can issue a special command or warning whenever a non-hostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear (or perceive, in the case of tentacle sign language) and understand the dolgaunt. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the dolgaunt ascetic is incapacitated.

Reactions

Parry Missiles. The dolgaunt ascetic reduces the damage taken from a ranged attack by 21 (1d10 + 16).

DOLGRIM

Small aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (5d6 + 5)

Speed 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 14 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 8 (-1) | 9 (-1) | 6 (-2) |

Saving Throws Wis +1

Skills Athletics +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks that aren't byeshk

Damage Vulnerabilities psychic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Undercommon

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Double Actions. At the start of combat, a dolgrim rolls initiative twice, gaining a full turn (action, bonus action, and movement) on each resulting initiative count. It regains its reaction at the start of both turns in a round.

Dual Consciousness. A dolgrim has two brains, giving it advantage on saving throws to avoid being charmed or stunned.

Extra Arms. A dolgrim has four arms, giving it advantage on grapple checks against Small or smaller creatures.

Actions

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

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

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.



ETERNAL GUARDIAN

Medium celestial, lawful good

Armor Class 18 (natural armor, shield)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 40 ft., fly 50 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 22 (+6) | 15 (+2) | 17 (+3) | 12 (+1) | 23 (+6) | 14 (+2) |

Saving Throws Str +10, Wis +10, Cha +6

Skills Insight +10, Perception +10

Damage Immunities poison

Damage Resistances fire, radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

Senses blindsight 120 ft., Passive Perception 16

Languages all

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Flyby. The eternal guardian doesn't provoke an opportunity attack when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Etherflesh. The eternal guardian's body has been transformed to be partly ethereal. The guardian is immune to the ravages of time and cannot become physically younger or older, is immune to any diseases that would physically afflict it. It is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form. It cannot be affected by the abilities of parasites that inhabit corporeal bodies such as intellect devourers, bore worms, or tsochar.

Innate Spellcasting. The eternal guardian's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). The guardian can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *moonbeam*, *earth tremor** (as a 5th-level spell)

1/day each: *heal*, *bones of the earth**

* These spells can be found in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

Magic Resistance. The eternal guardian has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If the eternal guardian fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Actions

Multiattack. The eternal guardian makes two melee attacks.

Staff of the Gatekeeper. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 22 (5d8) radiant damage.

FLYING HORROR

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 9 (-1) | 20 (+5) | 12 (+1) | 2 (-4) | 15 (+2) | 16 (+3) |

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +7

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages None

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Fear Frenzy. The horror has advantage on attack rolls against frightened creatures.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the horror has disadvantage on attack rolls and on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 14 (4d6) psychic damage.

Frightening Screech (Recharge 5-6). The horror screeches. Each creature within 30 feet of it that can hear it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of it for 1 minute. The frightened creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the horror's Frightening Screech for the next 24 hours.

VILDA KARRTE

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 9 (-1) | 14 (+2) | 13 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 15 (+2) | 11 (+0) |

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +4, Deception +7, History +4

Damage Resistances psychic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Undercommon, telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

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

At will: *detect magic, jump, false life, mage armor* (self only), *speak with dead*

1/day each: *eyebite, true seeing*

Spellcasting. Vilda is a 14th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She regains her expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. Vilda knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, eldritch blast, guidance, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*
1st–5th level (3 5th-level slots): *armor of Agathys, arms of Hadar, crown of madness, enemies about**, *contact other plane, detect thoughts, evard's black tentacles, dissonant whispers, dominate person, synaptic static**, *vampiric touch*

* These spells can be found in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*
Whispering Aura. At the start of each of Vilda's turns, each creature of her choice within 5 feet of her must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 10 (3d6) psychic damage, provided that Vilda isn't incapacitated.

Actions

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



TSOCHAR

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) | 14 (+2) |

Skills Athletics +9, Perception +5, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities poison

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't byeshk

Condition Immunities poisoned, prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Daelkyr and Undercommon but can't speak, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Damage Transfer. While it is grappling a creature, the tsochar takes only half the damage dealt to it, and the creature grappled by it takes the other half.

Actions

Multiattack. The tsochar has four tentacles and makes one attack with each free tentacle, up to four.

Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the tsochar hits the same creature with at least two of its tentacles in the same turn, the creature is grappled (escape DC starts at 15 and increases by 1 at the end of each turn the target remains grappled by the tsochar, up to a maximum of 19).

Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The tsochar requires two tentacles to maintain the grapple. When grappling a creature, the tsochar can inflict one of the following effects on it using a bonus action:

— **Paralyzing Poison Injection.** The target takes 7(2d6) poison damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. This condition has no effect on any attacks or saving throws made by the tsochar using Wear Flesh (see below).

— **Take Spells.** Starting on the second turn of grappling a creature, the tsochar can cast one spell available to that creature, using that creature's spellcasting resources. The spell uses the caster's spell save DC and spell attack bonus, but the tsochar is considered the caster of the spell for targeting purposes. The tsochar is unable to use this effect if the grappled creature is protected from possession, such as by a *protection from evil and good* spell.

— **Wear Flesh.** Starting on the third turn of grappling a creature, the tsochar can choose to begin boring its way into the creature's body. The process is agonizingly painful and the creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) piercing damage. If the creature remains grappled by the tsochar at the start of the tsochar's next turn, it takes control of the creature's body.

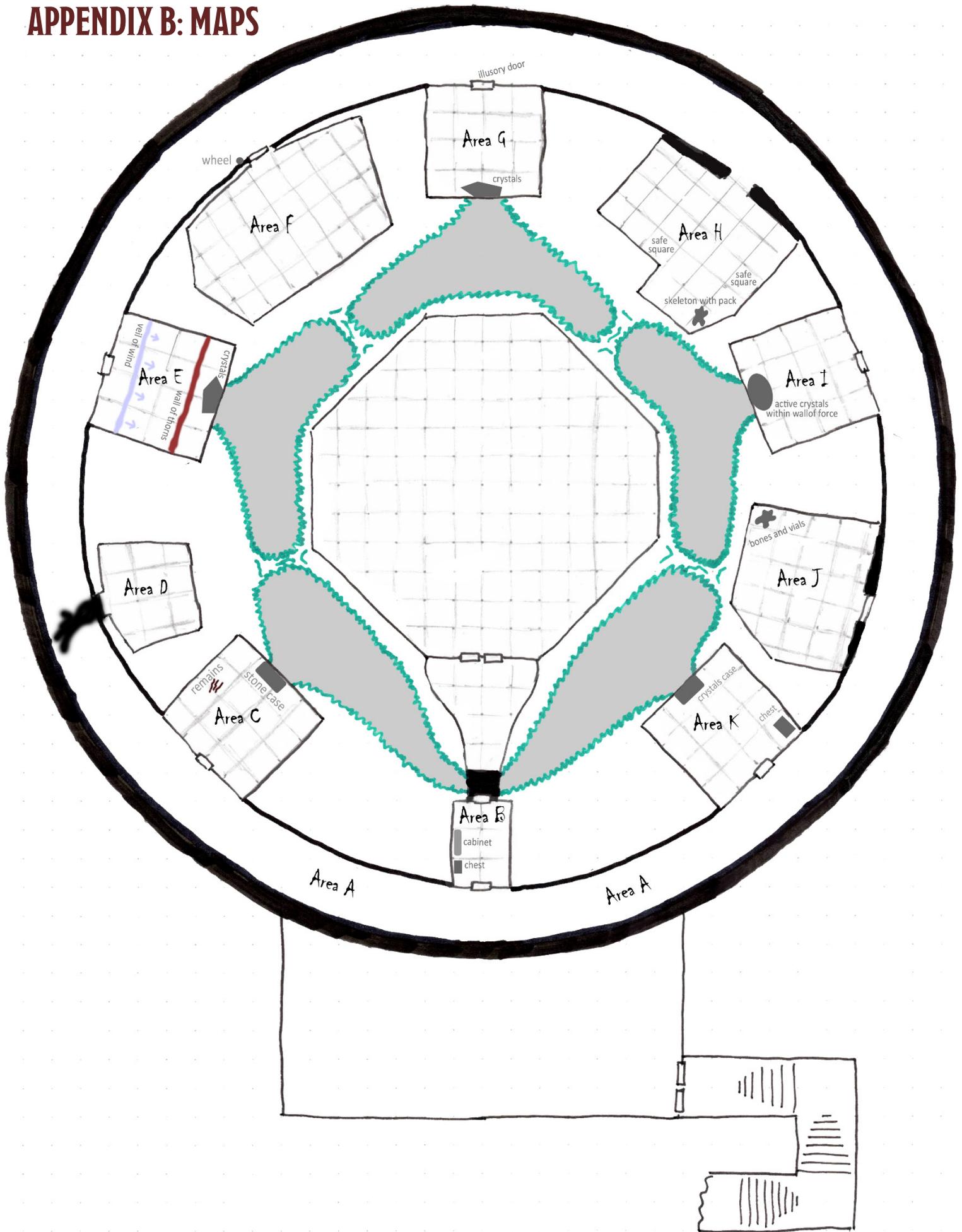
While inside a creature, the tsochar has total cover against attacks and other effects originating outside its host. The tsochar retains its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as its understanding of Daelkyr and Undercommon, its telepathy, and its traits. It otherwise adopts the target's statistics. It knows everything the creature knew, including spells and languages. A *protection from evil and good* spell cast on the body drives the tsochar out. By spending 5 feet of its movement, the tsochar can voluntarily leave the body, appearing in an unoccupied space of its choice within 5 feet of the body.

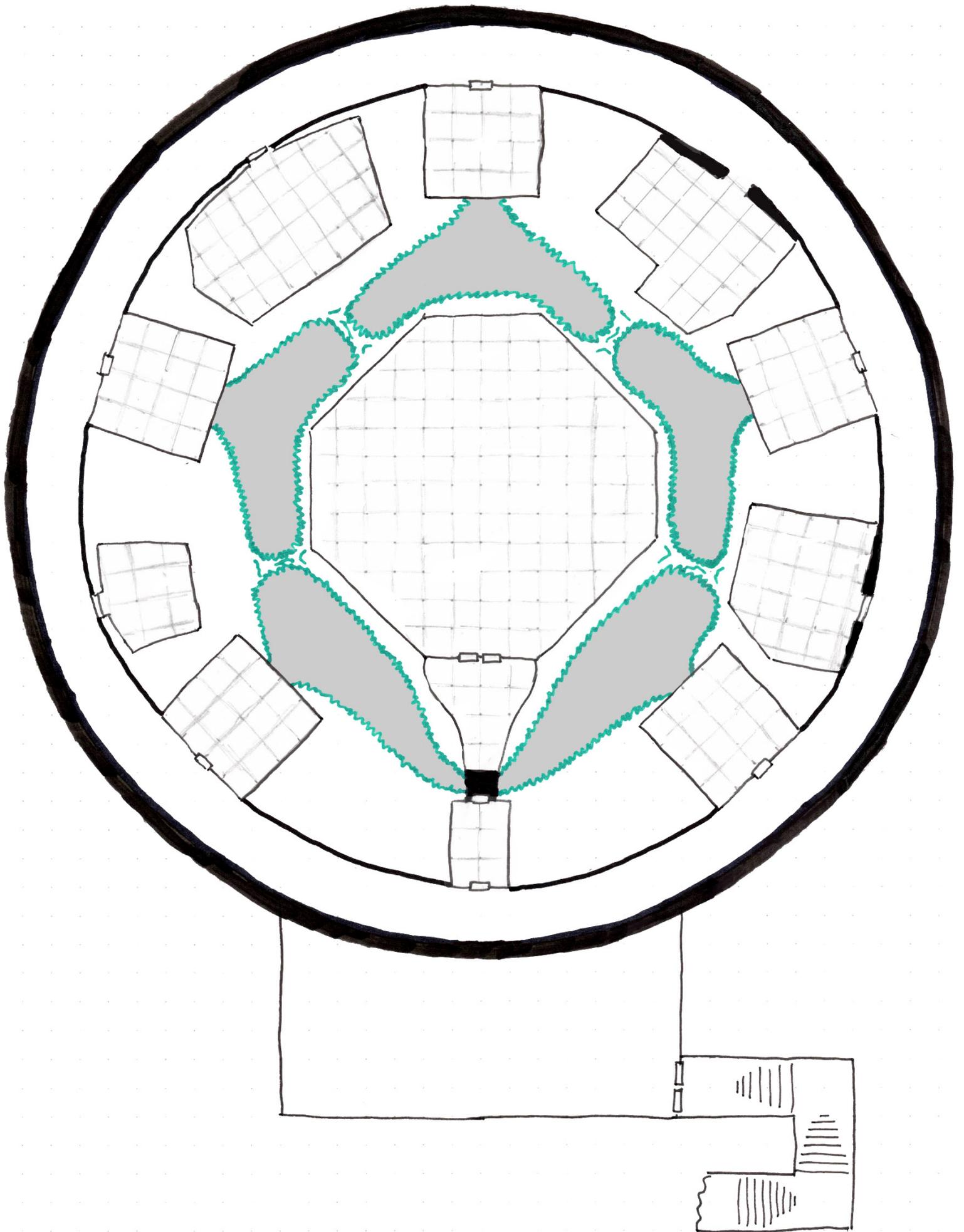
If the host body dies, the tsochar can use its action to hollow out the victim's nervous system. It then animates the body, effectively acting as the nervous system of the dead host. This functions like a *polymorph* spell cast to transform into the victim's exact form, except that the tsochar can remain in the victim's form for up to a year, and it leaves the victim's corpse behind when it chooses to end the effect. The tsochar can remain in this form indefinitely, but once it abandons the form, it cannot reanimate the body.

— **Inflict Agony.** If the tsochar has succeeded in using its Wear Flesh ability, it can use its bonus action each turn to deal 14(4d6) psychic damage to the host without damaging itself.



APPENDIX B: MAPS





APPENDIX C: CHAOS WEB TABLE

Instead of spending time rolling for individual effects for the chaos web trap each time a character triggers it—which may bog down gameplay—the first fifty random results have been pre-rolled for you and displayed here.

| | D100 | Effect | Direction 1 | Direction 2 | Damage | Type | Bounce? |
|----|------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|--------|-----------|---------|
| 1 | 6 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 11 | lightning | no |
| 2 | 26 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 8 | cold | NA |
| 3 | 97 | 10ft Random Teleport | Same plane | 5 | NA | NA | NA |
| 4 | 45 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 5 | cold | NA |
| 5 | 54 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 6 | 55 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 7 | 30 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 8 | cold | NA |
| 8 | 79 | 10ft Random Teleport | Down (or same plane) | 6 | NA | NA | NA |
| 9 | 32 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 7 | cold | NA |
| 10 | 63 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 11 | 42 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 8 | cold | NA |
| 12 | 67 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 13 | 16 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 12 | thunder | no |
| 14 | 28 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 8 | cold | NA |
| 15 | 23 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 16 | thunder | no |
| 16 | 33 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 1 | cold | NA |
| 17 | 22 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 12 | poison | no |
| 18 | 31 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 3 | cold | NA |
| 19 | 23 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 17 | lightning | no |
| 20 | 22 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 12 | thunder | no |
| 21 | 51 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 22 | 66 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 23 | 54 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 24 | 37 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 5 | cold | NA |
| 25 | 90 | 10ft Random Teleport | Down (or same plane) | 3 | NA | NA | NA |
| 26 | 24 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 12 | psychic | no |
| 27 | 19 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 8 | acid | no |
| 28 | 7 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 10 | force | no |
| 29 | 34 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 4 | cold | NA |
| 30 | 42 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 5 | cold | NA |
| 31 | 68 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 32 | 96 | 10ft Random Teleport | Same plane | 3 | NA | NA | NA |
| 33 | 8 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 17 | lightning | no |
| 34 | 26 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 7 | cold | NA |
| 35 | 47 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 8 | cold | NA |
| 36 | 61 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 37 | 69 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 38 | 1 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 15 | poison | yes |
| 39 | 78 | 10ft Random Teleport | Down (or same plane) | 1 | NA | NA | NA |
| 40 | 92 | 10ft Random Teleport | Same plane | 5 | NA | NA | NA |
| 41 | 45 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 4 | cold | NA |
| 42 | 98 | 10ft Random Teleport | Up | 4 | NA | NA | NA |
| 43 | 58 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 44 | 96 | 10ft Random Teleport | Same plane | 7 | NA | NA | NA |
| 45 | 32 | Ray of Frost 1 | NA | NA | 8 | cold | NA |
| 46 | 20 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 7 | acid | no |
| 47 | 60 | Levitate 10ft up | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| 48 | 82 | 10ft Random Teleport | Down (or same plane) | 5 | NA | NA | NA |
| 49 | 96 | 10ft Random Teleport | Up | 8 | NA | NA | NA |
| 50 | 5 | Chaos Bolt 1 | NA | NA | 18 | force | no |

APPENDIX D: PLAYER HANDOUTS



SIGN OF THE HUNTER

- YOUR CRITICAL RANGE IS INCREASED BY 1 (IF YOU PREVIOUSLY SCORED A CRITICAL HIT ON A ROLL OF 20, YOU NOW DO SO ON A ROLL OF 19 OR 20; IF YOU PREVIOUSLY SCORED A CRITICAL HIT ON A ROLL OF 19 OR 20, YOU NOW DO SO ON A ROLL OF 18, 19, OR 20).
- WHEN YOU CAST A SPELL THAT DEALS DAMAGE, THE SPELL SAVE DC TO RESIST YOUR SPELL IS 1 HIGHER.
- YOU ARE UNABLE TO KNOCK A CREATURE UNCONSCIOUS WHEN YOU REDUCE A CREATURE TO 0 HP WITH A MELEE ATTACK; YOU MAY ONLY KILL OR DESTROY THE CREATURE.



SIGN OF THE HEALER

- WHENEVER YOU SPEND ANY HIT DICE TO RECOVER HIT POINTS, YOU RECOVER THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE VALUE OF HIT POINTS.
- YOU EACH GAIN 5 SPECIAL GOODBERRIES (AS THE SPELL). AS AN ACTION, ONE OF THESE SPECIAL BERRIES CAN BE CONSUMED OR FED TO ANOTHER CREATURE TO RESTORES 5 HIT POINTS. THESE BERRIES LAST 24 HOURS.
- WHENEVER YOU MAKE AN ATTACK ROLL, YOU MUST ROLL 1D4 AND SUBTRACT IT FROM THE RESULT.
- WHENEVER YOU CAST A SPELL THAT DEALS DAMAGE, THE SPELL SAVE DC TO RESIST YOUR SPELL IS 1 LOWER.

MEMORY HANDOUT

YOU FEEL YOUR MEMORY SUDDENLY BECOME VERY CLEAR. YOU REMEMBER COMING HERE, YOU REMEMBER MEETING THE GATEKEEPER. YOU DISTINCTLY REMEMBER HER WARNING YOU OF THE DANGEROUS CREATURE THAT WAS BEING HELD INSIDE – THE CREATURE YOU NEEDED TO KILL IN ORDER TO CLEANSE THE COMPLEX. YOU REMEMBER HER WARNING – THAT THE CREATURE MIGHT MESS WITH YOUR MIND AND MAKE YOU FORGET THE MISSION. AND YOU REMEMBER HER DESCRIBING THE CREATURE AS HAVING LEATHERY WINGS, PINK FLESH, AND MANY SCREECHING HEADS.



SIGN OF THE SAVIOR

YOU GAIN ADVANTAGE ON ALL SAVING THROWS AGAINST XORIAT MADNESS.

APPENDIX E: DM REFERENCE - TIMELINE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

This is provided to help answer player questions arising in the adventure that are not explicitly answered by the text.

Divination spells, *Speak with Dead*, or other unusual checks or abilities may result in the pursuit of knowledge beyond what is provided in the adventure. Thus, the full history of the Sealguard Complex may be useful.

Given the millennia of time that have passed, it's also entirely possible that this information is may not be available to players at all.

Events largely forgotten by history:

- Circa 9,000 years ago: Xoriat invasion, dimensional seals placed.
- Circa 8,000 years ago: Partial breach of the dimensional seal at Tjorda, formerly a settlement in this area. A short time later, the creation of the containment complex called a "Sealguard" around the breach was finished, and the breach successfully re-sealed with this method.
- Circa 7,500 years ago: The second breach attempt. The Tjorda Sealguard Complex held back Xoriat during what would have been a coterminous phase, though some corruption gets through and begin eating away at protective crystals that power the protective barrier around the seal. A short time later, prison chambers are added onto the structure, within the sealed area, to contain some Xoriat creatures that passed through during the second breach.
- Circa 7,400 years ago: Presence of residual Xoriat energy continues undermining the complex, one Gatekeeper makes the ultimate sacrifice and uses a rare and powerful black spellshard to transform into an "eternal seal guardian," giving them long life and magical energies. This allows the guardian to remain inside the complex and actively work to maintain the inner barrier around the seal breach.

Events during recorded history:

- 3,000 years ago: Over time, the magic of the guardian's transformation, much like that of the dimensional seals themselves is lost, even to the druids. The Gatekeepers no longer remember the still-living seal guardian as one of their own—for millennia they've only known it as the eternal guardian. But it lives and maintains the inner barrier, while a Gatekeeper druid maintains a vigilant watch on the exterior of the complex.
- 2,500 years ago: A third breach attempt occurs. The seal holds, though damage is done. From this point, it requires the constant attention of both—the (mortal) Gatekeeper druid outside and the (seemingly immortal) seal guardian inside the complex—to constantly power the inner barrier.
- 2,499 years ago: It becomes a sacred honor for a specially trained Gatekeeper druid to take their place as the Gatekeeper of the outer barrier, using their magic to maintain the barrier. Each such Gatekeeper serves for 50 years and then "retires" to return home and live as a respected elder.
- 30 years ago: Gatekeeper Vola, the current Gatekeeper, begins her duties.
- 10 years ago: Vilda Karrte comes to the complex, looking for an ancient relic and seeking entry. Having been denied entry, she attacks the Gatekeeper, forcing Vola to let her past the outer barrier and injuring her in the process. Vilda never comes out. Prior to attacking the Gatekeeper, Vilda places a ward on the complex, preventing the Gatekeeper from contacting her people.
- 10 years ago through current day: Gatekeeper Vola—despite grievous injuries—continues to perform her duties, though as her life force fades, so does the strength of the outer barrier. This, in turn, affects the inner barrier, causing the eternal guardian to be assaulted by the influence of the Realm of Madness.
- Sometime in the past 5 years: The eternal guardian, unable to keep up with the corruption, decides to seal off access to the crystals that power the inner barrier. Hoping that another guardian might come after, they leave ways for those of this world to access the crystals. Sensing a powerful presence at the heart of the breach, the eternal guardian makes a final, fateful decision to enter the inner chamber and attempt to destroy it. At this point, Gatekeeper Vola loses all contact with the guardian and feels the barriers further weakening.
- Recently: Provost Nigel Faurious discovers Vilda Karrte's journals, detailing her discovery of a Xoriat artifact called the Spiral Well and its likely location.