RAGING SWAN PRESS PLACES OF POWER: THE MUDDED MANSE





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Hidden in the dismal, swampy depths of the Salt Mire, the Mudded Manse is a well-kept secret among the wealthy and powerful, who travel here to rest and receive treatments for various afflictions. Built around a pit of bubbling mud, reputed to have miraculous cure-all powers, the secluded manse is well worth the trouble of a visit if one is afflicted with a terrible disease. Thanks to the powerful clientele frequenting the manse, a secondary trade in political information has developed, as the comfortable atmosphere encourages visitors to loosen their tongues.

Places of Power are short, richly detailed supplements that each present a flavoursome locale such as a remote temple, borderland fort or reclusive wizard's demesne. Ready to be plugged into almost any home campaign, each instalment can be used as a waystop on the road to adventure, the home of a powerful NPC or even as a mini-adventure site in its own right.

Designed for use with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game.

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THE MUDDED MANSE AT A GLANCE

Protected to the west by a river and along its other bounds by treacherous, crumbling cliffs leading up to the plateau on which it rests, the Mudded Manse enjoys further safeguards due to its remote location in the swamp. The people of the nearest settlement, Thornhill, regard the manse as a fearful place and rarely speak of it to strangers. The oddest feature of the manse is the bubbling mud underlying the plateau. The mud has healing properties, so the manse's proprietor, Vississi Leeai, has transformed the place into a hospice and spa where the rich or adventurous come to receive miraculous cures.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ruler Vississi Leeai

Population 21 (8 humans, 4 halflings, 3 half-orcs, 3 sylphs, 2 elves, 1 lizardfolk)

Alignments LN, N, NE

Languages Auran, Common, Draconic, Halfling

Resources & Industry Healing, restoration

Lore

A PC may know something about the Mudded Manse, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 20 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 20: Little known to the world, the Mudded Manse is a destination for those who have the protection necessary to reach the swampy location and the money to spend on its services, which include cures for diseases and other maladies.

DC 25: Vississi Leeai founded the manse thirty years ago, after she and an associate cleared out a lizardfolk tribe.

DC 30: The land on which the manse stands served as the stronghold of a powerful earth elemental in antiquity.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the residents are nothing more than ordinary individuals.

- Appearance Despite the omnipresent mud, the manse's residents are always clean; the staff are always cheery.
- Dress The staff dress in simple, white robes, but happily change to other colours to suit a client's desires.

Some of the inhabitants, however, are notable:

Aqalarian of the Grove (location 10; NE female elf druid)
 Aqalarian tends the plants in the grove behind the manse.
 Demben Indra (location 7; NG male halfling acolyte) Ever jolly,
 Demben ensures guests are comfortable.

- Pel Gort (location 1; LN female half-orc [see stat block]) A nononsense warrior, Pel watches over the only path to the manse.
- Sslaryss (location 3; N female lizardfolk shaman) Sslaryss oversees the recovery process for clients with dire illnesses.
- Vississi Leeai (location 2; NE female sylph) Founder and leader of the Mudded Manse.
- Xar Gort (location 5; N male half-orc thug) Pel's twin brother, Xar has served as masseuse since the manse opened.
- **Zev Kaldan** (location 4; N male human **priest**) Zev is responsible for high-profile guests in the private ward.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the Mudded Manse comprises locations of little interest to adventurers. A few locations, however, are notable:

- Main Approach: A barely visible trail leads to the Mudded Manse. A path flanked by twenty-foot-high cliffs funnels visitors through an area overseen by trained guards.
- Welcome and Mud Well: Vississi Leeai receives guests here and discusses available treatments and payment.
- Convalescents' Wing: Visitors who have been treated for grievous maladies rest and relax here in semi-privacy.
- 4. **Private Ward**: This room houses one or two guests who can afford the exorbitant fees for seclusion.
- 5. **Masseur**: Despite his appearance, Xar Gort's gentle touch removes all aches and pains.
- Mud Application: The primary draw for the manse, this room is where experts apply health-giving mud to patrons.
- Waiting Room: Retinue of clients who are not receiving treatment wait here for their employers.
- 8. **Quarters**: Most of the manse's staff remains on site; Vississi ensures the comfort of her staff in this crowded room.
- 9. Administration: Vississi Leeai's office and payment storage.
- 10. **The Grove**: This beautiful shaded area provides respite from the surrounding swamp's oppressive heat.
- 11. Mud Hole: Rarely, a mud elemental escapes from the hole.

MARKETPLACE

The following items and services are for sale:

Consumables potion of healing (50 gp), potion of greater healing (150 gp), mud of longevity (10,000 gp; works like the potion), mud of vitality (6,000 gp; works like the potion), spell scrolls (varying cost; any transmutation cantrip, 1st or 2nd level spell)

• **Spellcasting** Arcane and divine spellcasting of up to 7th-level.

EVENTS

D6

While the PCs are at the Mudded Manse, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

EVENT A murder of crows, numbering in the thousands, circles

1	the grounds for an hour, blotting out the sun.								
	Afterwards, they disperse in all directions.								
	An earthquake shakes the manse's foundations. Terrified								
2	clients flee the building as the employees attempt to								
2	calm them. Vississi determinedly clutches her staff as she								
	storms out the north exit.								
	Zev leaves the private ward in a panic, grabbing anyone								
3	who can help him, as mud used to treat acid scarring on a								
	guest has solidified and threatens to suffocate him.								
4	Aedwen Sirett arrives from Thornhill to ask Vississi to								
4	provide aid for villagers suffering from a deadly disease.								
	A powerful noble's envoy arrives and demands the								
	manse clear of patrons before her arrival, raising								
5	objections from clients. Vississi confers with the envoy								
	who whispers to her for a minute. The sylph offers full								
	refunds and insists everyone depart by tomorrow night.								
	Pel drags a pair of gnomes to the administrative office.								
	Equardrophors boar Vississi briefly ranting about spice								

6 Eavesdroppers hear Vississi briefly ranting about spies before telling the half-orc to take them to Aqalarian to deal with them.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While researching the Mudded Manse, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6 RUMOUR

1	You don't want to go to the grove when the druid's not around; some of the vines there would strangle you if it			
	weren't for his intervention.			
	The neighbouring lizardfolk believe the manse defiles the			
2*	swamp, and they are planning a massive assault to			
	destroy the building.			
3	Aqalarian has put feelers out for information about a			
5	powerful magic item that controls earth elementals.			
	This section of the swamp shares a thin border with the			
4	elemental plane of earth. It seems odd someone with air			
	elemental heritage would be drawn here.			
	Be careful what you say around the staff. Selling secrets			
5	is another way they generate revenue for the manse.			
	Vississi and Aqalarian are the sole remaining members of			
6*	an adventuring party that amassed a great fortune			
	before the group fell to deadly in-fighting.			

*False rumour



1: MAIN APPROACH

Three miles from the village of Thornhill a faint trail cuts through underbrush and fords the shallow, sluggish Mucktwist River. The trail continues through brambles and cloying mud before reaching a low, muddy plateau. At the turn where the trail rises, travellers can see a single-storey, mud-brick building. Before visitors can go further, they must answer Pel Gort (LN female half-orc [see stat block]) questions to her satisfaction. Pel and four archers (LN human **scout**) train their bows on arrivals while she interrogates them.

Other approaches are possible, but the way is treacherous. The mud comprising the plateau's cliffs falls is unstable (DC 20 Strength (Athletics)). The western access gradually leads up to the plateau, but stirges and lizardfolk infest that way. The east and north also present their own hazards, described below. Additionally, Pel has set another patrol of three archers to watch for troublemakers from the west. Pel is much more comfortable with a well-armed group who make their presence known, since most of the clientele are wealthy enough to afford the protection necessary to traverse hostile terrain. Those who try to sneak onto the grounds meet with harsh penalties.

2: Welcome and Mud Well

Once Pel has vetted guests, she sends one of her archers to alert Vississi Leeai (NE female sylph) to their arrival. A pair of guards (N human **knight**) stand inside the manse's entrance. The stone double doors are usually closed but unlocked. If the staff are aware of an incursion, they lock the doors (DC 20 Dexterity (thieves' tools) unlocks).

Vississi greets all welcome arrivals and offers to show them around the spa. The first stop is a well set in the northeast corner of this room. Light grey mud bubbles at the bottom of the fifty-foot-deep well, and a pristine stone bucket rests on the well's shelf. A pleasant fragrance emanates from the well.

Vississi is awake at all hours to welcome guests to the spa. On rare occasions when she sleeps or prepares spells, she delegates greeting duty to Aqalarian, who despises it.

The doors leading to the waiting room to the northeast are usually unlocked, unless the manse is under attack. One of the guards at the front doors gently dissuades anyone from moving

IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

A PC suffering from an exotic and seemingly incurable disease could discover the restorative properties of the mud at the Mudded Manse and must negotiate with Vississi for the fee. Alternatively, the party repels an attack by rampaging mud elementals and traces them to the Manse. into the convalescents' ward. The stone door leading to the administration office is closed and always locked, even when Vississi conducts business in the office. Only she and Aqalarian have keys (DC 30 Dexterity [open lock] opens).

3: CONVALESCENTS' WING

One of the advantages to the Mudded Manse's location is that higher profile officials suffering from horrific maladies can ostensibly go on holiday, while receiving a cure out of sight of their subjects. In keeping with the manse's policy, guests in this area are afforded privacy, protected by thick linen sheets that form bays in this room.

The lizardfolk Sslaryss (N female **lizardfolk shaman**) helps ensure privacy by keeping traffic to a minimum while tending to each guest in turn. Tired of patching up her tribespeople's wounds after unnecessary skirmishes, she won Vississi over and joined the staff five years ago. Much to the surprise of the spa's clients, she has an excellent bedside manner. Her calm bearing and healing prowess speed up the recovery process. Her abilities are so well appreciated she often must turn down offers to become the departing guest's personal physician.

4: PRIVATE WARD

For guests who value their privacy and solitude, Vississi converted the former kitchen into a private room, for which guests pay handsomely. In the rare instance of two demands for seclusion, the sylph uses *stone shape* to fashion a wall separating the room into two chambers.

Zev Kaldan (N male human **priest**) exclusively sees to the care of his charge(s), begrudgingly bringing in Sslaryss for consultation if something drastic happens. Otherwise, the bard spends his days entertaining guests with stories or music, or in response to other requests made by his charges. Discretion is his watchword; despite whatever secrets accidentally slip from guests into Vississi's clutches elsewhere in the manse, nothing said in Zev's presence spreads any further. In his duties, he sometimes finds himself the recipient of devastating secrets that could topple kingdoms.

DAILY LIFE AT THE MANSE

A typical day sees the guests waited on by staff, who see to their treatments and courses of relaxation. Vississi, when she is not handling the spa's daily business, makes sure to stop and check in on each guest to ensure they feel welcome and have everything they need. Low-ranking staff make liberal use of *prestidigitation* to ensure the building remains sparklingly clean. Most clients who use the private ward leave within a week, since they cannot afford to tarry here. Thanks to the place's charms and the promises of seclusion and secrecy, many royals and obscenely wealthy clients make this an annual destination.

5: MASSEUR

Three massage tables, along with a bath, fill much of the room; Xar Gort (N male half-orc **thug**) oversees them. Twin brother to Pel, Xar realized he had little aptitude for combat, but surprised everyone in his adventuring group with his ability to massage away the aches and pains of battle, eliminate fatigue and bring relaxation before another day of exploration and fighting. As fortune would have it, Xar's adventuring group found the manse. Vississi recognized the half-orc's talents and offered him job.

Xar works with clients waiting for their mud treatments and has a two-person team (halfling **commoners**) assisting him. He also dabbles in alchemy, creating liniments that decrease the severity of exhaustion by one step. He sells them for 100 gp per bottle, half of which goes to the manse. Any given creature may only benefit from one of these potions once in any given week.

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR VISIT

There is a wide variety of reasons to come to the Mudded Manse, with the magically-infused mud offering a plethora of strange effects to the guests. To quickly determine a guest's reason for visiting the Mudded Manse, roll on the following table or choose a fitting motivation.

D20 MOTIVATION

1	Cure an embarrassing disease contracted from an affair.					
2	Procure sensitive information.					
3	Meet up with co-conspirators.					
4	Magically change sex. (d4: 1-2: temporarily; 3-4: permanently)					
5	Magically change race. (d8: 1-2: human, 3: Hafling, 4: gnome, 5: dwarf, 6: elf, 7-8: other)					
6	Cure a crippling disfigurement.					
7	Capture a living slyph.					
8	Purchase specific mud for master.					
9	Receive a Five Winds mission briefing from Vississi.					
10	Visit a relative.					
11	Long-time treatment for trauma.					
12	Honeymoon.					
13	Diplomatic mission from the elemental earth lords.					
14	Incurable disease.					
15	Hereditary curse.					
16	Meet up with an illicit affair.					
17	Purchase contraband.					
18	Discuss a theological insight that may be heresy.					
19	Assassinate another guest.					
20	Kill Vississi and burn the manse to the ground.					

6: MUD APPLICATION CHAMBER

The whole purpose of the Mudded Manse coalesces here. While the mud has power in and of itself, it requires clerics to unlock that power. Two trusted staff members (sylphs, use stats of **air elemental**), add spells such as *lesser restoration* and *remove curse* to the mud before applying it to a client; the mud grants an additional save against the effect, which is made at advantage. For more powerful afflictions, Sslaryss imbues the mud herself.

An endowed application of mud persists for one hour after it has been enchanted. In exceptional cases, and after taking an extortionate fee, allow the mud to leave the premises. This usually is done to save the life of a well-known client who has succumbed to his or her infirmity before reaching the manse.

Sslaryss has engaged in some debate with Vississi about using the mud to return patients to life, mostly by appealing to the sylph's greed, but Vississi has adamantly refused to allow it. PCs who have lost a compatriot may be able to convince Sslaryss to attempt it (DC 30 Charisma (Persuasion) succeeds). She makes no guarantees, but is genuinely curious about the results.

ORT									
Medium humanoid (human, orc), lawful neutral									
Armor Class 16 (breastplate) Hit Points 67 (9d8 +27) Speed 30 ft.									
DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA					
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)					
 Saving Throws Str +4, Con +5 Skills Athletics +4, Intimidation +1 Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive perception 11 Languages Common, Orc Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) Deadly Accuracy. When Pel scores a critical hit with a bow, she can roll one of the weapon's damage dice one additional time and add it to the extra damage of the critical hit. Pinning Shot (short or long rest recharge). Pel can restrain opponents with her arrows. When seh deals piercing damage to a creature adjacent to a solid object, it must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained until the end of its next turn. 									
Melee or or 20/60, ge 6 (1d8 to make a Ranged V	Ranged V one targe +2) pierc melee att Veapon Au	<i>Veapon At</i> et. <i>Hit:</i> 5 ing dama tack. ttack: +5 t	(1d6+2) c ge if used o hit, reac	or piercing with two h 150/600					
	umanoid (ss 16 (bree 67 (9d8 +) ft. DEX 17 (+3) rows Str +- etics +4, Ir rkvision 60 common 4 (1,100 × curacy. W an roll or onal time hit. hot (short ents with ge to a cree a DC 13 I ne end of i ck. Pel ma Melee or or 20/60, ge 6 (1d8 to make a Ranged V	umanoid (human, or ss 16 (breastplate) 67 (9d8 +27) ft. DEX CON 17 (+3) 16 (+3) rows Str +4, Con +5 etics +4, Intimidation rkvision 60 ft., passi common, Orc 4 (1,100 XP) curacy. When Pel s an roll one of the bonal time and add hit. hot (short or long r ents with her arro ge to a creature adji a DC 13 Dexterity he end of its next tu ck. Pel makes two at Melee or Ranged V or 20/60, one targ ge 6 (1d8 +2) pierc to make a melee at Ranged Weapon At	umanoid (human, orc), lawful ss 16 (breastplate) 67 (9d8 +27) ft. DEX CON 17 (+3) 16 (+3) 15 (+2) rows Str +4, Con +5 etics +4, Intimidation +1 rkvision 60 ft., passive percept Gommon, Orc 4 (1,100 XP) curacy. When Pel scores a cr an roll one of the weapon' onal time and add it to the of hit. hot (short or long rest recharding ents with her arrows. Where ge to a creature adjacent to a a DC 13 Dexterity saving thr he end of its next turn. ck. Pel makes two attacks. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attor or 20/60, one target. Hit: 5 ge 6 (1d8 +2) piercing damaged to make a melee attack. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to	umanoid (human, orc), lawful neutral ss 16 (breastplate) 67 (9d8 +27) it. DEX CON INT WIS 17 (+3) 16 (+3) 15 (+2) 13 (+1) rows Str +4, Con +5 etics +4, Intimidation +1 rkvision 60 ft., passive perception 11 common, Orc 4 (1,100 XP) curacy. When Pel scores a critical hit wan roll one of the weapon's damage onal time and add it to the extra damage in thit. hot (short or long rest recharge). Pel case ents with her arrows. When seh deate to a creature adjacent to a solid obje a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be the end of its next turn. ck. Pel makes two attacks. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to for 20/60, one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) or					

7: WAITING ROOM

A lush and brightly decorated waiting room serves the retinue and guards of the guests who come to the Mudded Manse. Here, Demben Indra (NG male halfling **acolyte**) works tirelessly to ensure everyone is comfortable. A stocked bar covers the southeast wall, and a small stove used by Demben to brew tea and coffee stands in the northwest corner. Another pair of halflings (halfling **commoner**) provides spa amenities, including manicures, pedicures and hair styling. While most guards gruffly refuse such services, attendants used to courtly life welcome them. Guarded doors to the north lead outside.

8: QUARTERS

While Vississi has considered expanding the building to accommodate more staff, she has not done so at Aqalarian's request. Thus, over a dozen people share this cramped space, overloaded with bunkbeds and chests (to hold their belongings). Staff who do not mind sleeping in the muggy climate and receive insect repellent from the druid camp out between the building and the grove.

9: Administration

If the services requested are atypical, Vississi takes the discussion of such requests here. She is polite but firm when it comes to negotiating prices, and never leaves a client alone here. PCs who break into the office must bypass a *lightning bolt* to access her desk, which contains correspondence from an organization referring to itself as the Breath of Five Winds. The letters caution the sylph to bide her time and watch for earth elemental incursions.

10: THE GROVE

Aqalarian (NE female elf **druid**) tends this grove and rarely interacts with guests or staff. The aloof elf sometimes must greet newcomers when Vississi is otherwise occupied, and she does her best to grit her teeth and put on a good show. She much prefers to stay here where she can mould her pets, a trio of **vine blights** she feeds with trespassers and the occasional stray lizardfolk. The vines are docile while she is in the grove.

11: MUD HOLE

Mud bubbles up from this hole. Worse, the hole spews out the occasional mud elemental (**earth elemental**) which fortunately does not attack anyone on the grounds. The elementals wait at the nearby cliff, acting as incidental protection against trespassers, but occasionally wander out into the marsh. While the sylph grumbles about the creatures, she seems afraid to act against them.

VISSISSI AND THE FIVE WINDS

Vississi Leeai is an agent of the Breath of Five Winds, a mysterious organization with the purpose of destroying earth elemental presences in the world. Vississi associated herself with various adventuring groups, guiding them toward her goal of defeating earth creatures and cults springing up around the worship of powerful earth elemental nobles. Upon discovering the plateau from which a mighty earth elemental ruled and where it met its end, the Breath of Five Winds dispatched Vississi to exploit the area and ensure the elementals would never return to power. With her trusted companion, Aqalarian, she exploits the elemental corpse's residual power to amass wealth.

Appearance: Vississi has long, flowing hair that flutters in a breeze that is not always there. She has piercing grey eyes that flash emerald green when she becomes angry.

Distinguishing Features: A tattoo of five differently coloured swirling winds behind her right ear marks her as an agent of the Breath of Five Winds.

Personality: When dealing with clients, Vississi is pleasant and charming. However, her demeanour becomes nasty toward trespassers and earth-based casters.

Mannerisms: Regardless of the situation, Vississi always makes sweeping gestures. She makes bombastic display when

casting her spells.

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EVERYTHING is better with tentacles



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