## ADVENTURE PATH PLUG-IN



BY JASON NELSON & CLARK PETERSON with the Legendary Games Design Team

### Make Your Game Legendary!

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A mini-adventure designed to give 1st to 3rd level characters the chance to earn additional experience and trust within a gothic-themed Adventure Path campaign





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### CREDITS

Authors: Jason Nelson & Clark Peterson Design and Layout: Timothy K. Wickham Art: Colby Stevenson Cartography: Robert Lazzaretti Legendary Games Team Members: Clinton Boomer, Jason Nelson, Neil Spicer, Greg A. Vaughan and Clark Peterson

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# Welcome to Adventure Lath Plug-Ins!

This product is a part of our line of support materials for extended Adventure Path-style campaign play for use with Paizo's *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game*. When you see the "Adventure Path Plug-In" logo at the top of a Legendary Games product, you can expect it is designed to fit directly with the themes of a particular Adventure Path campaign. The all-star team of designers here at Legendary Games is committed to bringing you—the busy GM or player—the absolute best third party support for your Pathfinder campaign. To deliver on that commitment, we've assembled the best of the best of current gaming authors, designers and layout experts so that you can feel comfortable that Legendary Games products will be the most creative, rules-legal and well-designed content you can find. Though Adventure Path Plug-Ins all share a theme with a specific Adventure Path campaign, they are designed to be easily incorporated into your home game regardless of what campaign you may be running.

Adventure Path campaigns contain amazing plots and stories written by the industry's best authors. But those adventures have space restrictions for print publication that often leave space either for alternatives for the busy GM or chances for the GM to personalize his or her game. The first installment of the current Adventure Path has just these issues—PCs need more small chances to earn experience and gain trust within the town. GMs need short adventures or locations that can be easily plugged in to the current adventure without disrupting its overall story. This adventure, *The Murmuring Fountain*, fills that need and more, providing the PCs with experience and the chance to gain Trust as well as the chance for the party to gain a unique spectral pet which in and of itself provides another emotional link for the PCs to remain in the town, a story need that may not be sufficient to keep all game groups interested in remaining in town.



#### HEY, WHAT'S WITH THE NAMES?

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You will see us use phrases such as "Gothic Campaign" instead of the title of <u>a recent Adventure Path</u>. Or you may see us use the names "The Professor" or "The Professor's Daughter" instead of the proper names of specific characters from those adventures. There are legal reasons for this. While we can create compatible products under the Open Game License, we still have to be respectful of certain content that Paizo owns. Because we want to be very respectful of their content and work in partnership with them we use these "replacement phrases" for certain content. Plus, this helps the product have a more general appeal to those who may be running a home campaign that fits the same themes. In any event, we are 100% confident you know what we are talking about and will have no problem making the required connection. So enjoy *The Murmuring Fountain* in your gothic Adventure Path, set in a small gothic town, helping the Professor's Daughter and cleansing the unquiet spirits in the ruins of the local prison. See, that wasn't so hard, now was it.

# Fdventure Rackground

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

The cultists had discovered a secret Antrellus himself did not know; his wife Marisol had been a witch in her youth, and in her adventures had discovered certain elder secrets that so horrified her that she gave up adventuring, even dismissing her familiar, and left her old life behind, taking a new name and finding contentment and eventually love with Antrellus. The servants of the Yellow King, seeking that selfsame knowledge, uncovered her trail years later, and after a few delicate inquiries were rebuffed they worked through her foolish husband, plying him with gifts and promises to join their supposedly harmless devotional meetings and to bring his wife as a guest. Once they had the couple in their clutches, their eldritch chants called many-legged tentacular abominations from beyond. Their experiments sought to inseminate body and mind with the larval spawn of these alien horrors, enslaving them to the will of the Yellow King and his priests and extracting their secrets either willingly or excruciatingly.

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

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

Shortly before murder of the Professor and subsequent arrival of the PCs in town, Antrellus observed a group of yellow-clad travelers passing through the village, one asking questions about him. Believing that these priests were the same ones responsible for his wife's death years ago and that they had returned for him (it is left open to the GM to determine if they are in fact the same cultists), he saw one of the travelers apparently talking with a raven in the town. While the raven is the pet of one of Lereia, one the local town children, Antrellus became convinced the bird is actually the cultist's familiar. After seeing the little girl talking with the bird as well, his paranoia has cemented the notion that the girl herself is a cultist in disguise, masquerading as the child. Obsessed with the animal and believing it to be constantly watching him, he tracked it and eventually captured it at its favorite roost by the Murmuring Fountain, tying it in a sack and stuffing the squawking package under the drain grate of the fountain's lower basin. What might otherwise have been a simple act of insane compulsion, however, has become something else as eldritch energies have seeped into the town from the burgeoning haunting of the nearby prison and caused the spirit of the murdered pet raven, named Eronel in life, to awaken, along with a darker haunting at the town's heart.

# Mini-Adventures

The following encounters and events can be inserted as the GM sees fit into the current adventure path.

## **An Unwanted Guest**

Optionally, at the Professor's funeral, the GM may choose to have Antrellus the Mad watching the procession from the distance, hiding among the tombstones. He can be spotted by a DC 12 Perception check. He may shout some strange phrase, such as "the beast has many legs, the beast has many legs" or "from Leng they will come, it is written, you will see," and any other persons present tell the PCs to disregard his insane ramblings and that he is a harmless and pathetic madman. When the unpleasantness begins with the local toughs, Antrellus quickly departs.



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## Suddenly There Came A Tapping At My Chamber... Window (CR 1/3)

On the first night the PCs are in the home with the Professor's daughter after the reading of the will, while they are perhaps up late perusing one of the Professor's strange books, there comes a tapping at a chamber window. The PCs may attempt a DC 10 Perception check to hear the tapping, and then a subsequent check (DC 15) to determine which window of the house it is coming from. If they fail the check, they misidentify the window and go to the wrong one. They hear the tapping again and may make another check until they are successful, should they wish to continue searching for the source of the continued tapping. PCs identifying the correct window may open the curtains to reveal a spectral bird of some sort which immediately flies away. A DC 10 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the bird as a raven. PCs also see the spectral bird (and may identify it) if they go outside to investigate the tapping. If pursued, the raven flees.

If PCs correctly identify the window where Eronel is tapping, they may spot Antrellus lurking in the shadows (DC 16 Perception for PCs with darkvision or low-light vision, DC 21 without), slinking away from the house.

### ERONEL, GHOST RAVEN CR 1/3

#### **XP 133**

N Tiny undead (incorporeal) Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +14

#### DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+1 deflection, +2 Dex, +2 size) hp 4 (1d8) Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2 Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4, incorporeal, rejuvenation; Immune undead traits

#### OFFENSE

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect) Melee corrupting touch +4 (1d4) Space 2-1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

#### **STATISTICS**

Str —, Dex 15, Con —, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 11 Base Atk +0; CMB +0; CMD 6 Feats Weapon Finesse Skills Fly +9, Perception +14, Stealth +13 SQ phantom noises

#### **SPECIAL ABILITIES**

- Corrupting Touch (Su) Eronel's touch inflicts 1d4 points of damage from supernatural aging (DC 11 Fortitude half).
- **Phantom Noises (Sp)** Eronel can use *ghost sound* at will (DC 10 disbelief), but is limited to creating sounds he could make in life, including tapping of his beak against solid objects, rustling feathers, and cawing. Each day, Eronel may utter a single word, repeating it up to three times throughout the day; the next day, Eronel may choose a different word.

**Developments:** Attempts to harm, capture, or follow the raven are likely to be unsuccessful, due to its high Stealth and its ability to pass through solid objects while fleeing. The ghostly raven was drawn to the house by the presence of Antrellus, his murderer, who was slinking around the manor having seen the PCs at the Professor's burial.

**Story Reward:** If the PCs follow the sound to the proper window and observe the raven, award the PCs experience as if they had defeated a CR 1/3 creature in combat.

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#### FLOWERS FOR THE DEAD CR 1

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

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

## **The Murmuring Fountain**

THE MURMURING FOUNTAIN

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The Murmuring Fountain (1) is located in a small, overgrown garden in front of the town's Memorial (2), described as location "O" on the Adventure Path's town map). The garden's hedgerows of white roses have become wild and half-merged with the surrounding undergrowth from lack of tending, but lend a fey beauty to the memorial park, and it is popular for romantic rendezvous with a hint of danger. The pale gravel of the footpath is half-overgrown with grass, weeds, and wildflowers, while fountain and memorial alike show marks of weathering to accompany a patina of dirt and clinging moss.

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





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

#### **CREATURES:**

### LEREIA, GRIEVING CHILD CR 1/8

XP 50

Initiative +1; Senses Perception -1 Small female humanoid (human) AC 12 (+1 Dex, +1 size) hp 2 (1d4-1) Skills Perception -1, Stealth +1 Str 6, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 10,Wis 9, Cha 12

**Developments:** PCs watching near the well or memorial may see Lireia (Perception DC 13) approaching slowly and silently in her ghostly pale dress, white flowers clutched in her hands and her head reverently bowed. PCs may attempt a DC 10 Perception check (characters with ranks in Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (religion) gain a +2 bonus) to recognize her as a living girl (and one of the townsfolk they have seen) and not undead. PCs failing the check may well believe her to be the apparition the frightened townsfolk have described. Lireia may notice PCs moving to attack (Perception -1); if she does, she shrieks in terror and drops her flowers. PCs may then make another Perception check as above to recognize she is not undead; characters about to make a melee attack may turn their blow aside, but ranged attacks cannot be recalled once PCs realize their error.

A young, innocent child, Lireia tells PCs the story of her missing pet raven and how she does not believe what everyone says, that her bird was killed by an animal. She thinks crazy old Antrellus did it. He always yelled strange things at her and her bird, and since Eronel disappeared Antrellus scurries away every time he sees her, like he is afraid of her , but he doesn't run from any of the other children. Through her tears, she implores the PCs to help prove he is a pet-killer. A Diplomacy check (DC 10) calms her down enough to convince her to let PCs take her home, and a second check (DC 15) persuades her to stop sneaking out at night, though she insists on leaving flowers for her bird at the well one last time.

**Rewards:** If the PCs recognize Lireia is not undead and do not harm her, award them experience as if they defeated a CR 1 creature in combat. If they convince her to return home and interact with her horrified but grateful parents, award them +2 Trust. If the PCs harm Lireia and the town learns of that harm, they lose 2 points of Trust even if they heal her. If they kill her, they lose 6 points of Trust.

## The Raven's Roost (CR 2)

As the PCs begin to leave the memorial with Lireia (either alive, or with her body if she has been accidentally killed), a screaming caw splits the night as a trio of bloodravens dive to attack Lireia or the PC carrying her or her body. Bloodravens are a rare but very large and aggressive breed of raven, hunted to extinction in the region. If they are not spotted by PCs (DC 16 Perception if PCs have darkvision or low-light vision, DC 20 without), they attack by surprise. The bloodravens do not appear naturally, but are generated by the haunt that has formed at the fountain due to Eronel's murder and the spiritual taint seeping out of the haunted prison.

CR 2

### The Raven's Roost

LE haunt (10 ft. by 10 ft. fountain) **Caster Level** 3<sup>rd</sup> **Notice** Perception DC 18 (to notice torn raven feathers falling into the fountain) hp 10; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour **Effect** When this haunt is triggered, a trio of bloodravens appears with a dreadful caw and swoops to attack any creatures in sight. In a dark subversion of Eronel's affection for Lireia, the bloodravens attack female children (or

creatures protecting them) in preference to other targets. The haunt can be fooled by illusions, including *invisibility*. The bloodravens function as *summon nature's ally II* and can be harmed by normal attacks

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

**Creatures:** Bloodravens (3) (hp 5) A bloodraven's statistics are identical to those of an <u>eagle</u> (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 118, advanced simple template 294), but it also has a +6 bonus to Stealth (+10 in dark conditions) and gains Blinding Critical as a bonus feat. They attack for 3 rounds or until slain and then disappear without a trace.

A PC wishing to shield Lireia from attack by the bloodravens may use the aid another action as usual, or may shield her body as a full-round action, granting double the normal bonus to her Armor Class.

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



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

A search of the fountain (DC 15 Perception, with a +2 bonus for PCs with ranks in Knowledge (engineering)) reveals that something is blocking the drain beneath the grate of the lower basin and that the grate itself has been recently disturbed. If the grate is removed by a DC 10 Strength check, the PCs discover a moldy brown sack roughly tied with cord. If opened, inside can be found the remains of a large bird, mostly bones, feathers and rotting flesh— Lereia's pat raven. Also in the bag is a gold signet ring (200 gp) belonging to Antrellus the Mad (DC 13 Knowledge (local) or Knowledge (nobility) reveals this information, as does a DC 18 Diplomacy check to gather information). A second check against the same DC reveals that Antrellus lives in the woods and is believed to have a hidden cabin somewhere south of the town.

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

**Rewards:** If Eronel observes any creature using aid another to protect Lireia, he forms an attachment to that PC and may manifest after the battle, seeking out the PC and hovering by their shoulder. If no character distinguished themselves in protecting Lireia, he gravitates to any character carrying or wearing Antrellus' ring. For as long as the character Eronel favors remains within 5 miles of the town, that character may treat Eronel as his familiar when outdoors at night. Eronel himself also gains the benefits of being a raven familiar (as a wizard of the bonded character's level). He follows his bonded character until the sun rises, at which point he disappears into the fountain until it sets again. Eronel refuses to go underground or to go inside buildings, and while unable to speak he can understand Common and can indicate yes or no to questions asked to him (within the bounds of his limited intellect).

## The Madman's Camp

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

#### **CREATURES:**

#### ANTRELLUS THE MAD

#### **XP** 600

Male middle-aged expert 4 N Medium humanoid (human) Init +0; Senses Perception +6

#### DEFENSE

**Defense** AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10 hp 22 (4d8+4) Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; +2 vs. witch hexes

#### OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. Melee morningstar +2 (1d8–1) Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d8/19-20)

#### **STATISTICS**

Str 9, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 2, Cha 3 Base Atk +3; CMB +2; CMD 12 Feats Alertness, Diehard, Endurance Skills Appraise +6, Bluff +3, Climb +3, Craft (carpentry) +6, Craft (traps) +8, Diplomacy +3, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +3, Knowledge (geography) +3, Knowledge (history) +3, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nature) +6, Knowledge (planes) +3, Perception +6, Sense Motive +5, Stealth +6, Survival +4 Languages Aklo, Common, Elvish Other Gear 10 crossbow bolts, guardian moppet (aliens)\*

**CR 2** 

\*This item is detailed in the <u>Treasury of the Macabre</u> by Legendary Games. If you do not have this product, substitute a <u>ring of sustenance</u> and ignore the listed save bonus against witch hexes.

**Developments:** Antrellus has grown progressively more paranoid with the passing of years and has taken to setting traps around his camp. Allow Antrellus a Perception check to notice the PCs once per minute they spend exploring the shack and its vicinity, or once per round of combat or moving up the rope bridge. Antrellus' base attitude is **unfriendly**, but if he notices creatures approaching his camp without hailing him first, he becomes **hostile**. He hides behind narrow-shuttered windows or cracked-open doors and peers out at those below, shouting for them to go away, to leave him alone, and that he's "ready for them this time." "You won't get me like you got her. My love, forgive me, but they won't get me like they got you." If attacked while sheltering in his treehouse, he gains improved cover (+8 cover bonus to AC, +4 to Reflex saves, improved evasion).

If made **indifferent** with Diplomacy, Antrellus can be coaxed out onto the balcony, which grants cover (+4 cover bonus to AC, +2 to Reflex saves) against those on the ground. He grudgingly admits that PCs are not cultists, but

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THE MURMURING FOUNTAIN

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insists that they are everywhere, that they have been through the town recently, that they are coming back for him. He repeats his tale of them and the "multi-legged horror" that took his wife. He says they tried to "put the worms in him," but that he keeps a now-ragged doll his wife made for the child they were planning to have. He says it is his good luck charm, and as long as he has it "they can't find me, and the worms can't get out." (If using the *guardian moppet*, the item possesses actual magical powers; if not, it is simply a nonmagical keepsake.)

If made **friendly** or **helpful**, Antrellus invites PCs to come up to his treehouse, which features a bewildering array of scrawled notes, map fragments, and strange equations scratched into or tacked up on the walls, beams, and ceiling of the shack, with a labyrinth of strings and threads tying them together in an incomprehensible network. Antrellus attempts to explain his careful observations the past decade since his wife's death trying to reconstruct the path of the Whisper Cult, their movements, and their secret crimes, desperate that no one believes him about their sinister plots, or even that they exist at all. He frequently strikes himself in the head as he explains, sometimes out of sheer frustration but also, as he says,

#### "... to stop the voices, I CAN'T TAKE IT MUCH LONGER!"

While much of his story is little more than paranoid rambling and obsessed perseveration about robed cultists, worms, and the "many-legged beast," there are enough legitimately useful observations recorded in Antrellus' shack to grant a +2 circumstance bonus to research checks about the town (though not about the prison or its prisoners) and to Knowledge (planes) checks made to identify outsiders for 1 week.

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

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

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

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







THE MURMURING

## 1. Shack (CR 3)

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

The front entrance to the shack is guarded at 1a by a <u>pit trap</u> (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 420); the trap is a CR 1 hazard and PCs gain experience for dealing with it. While there is no clear footing around the pit to safely approach the door, it is possible to climb along the front of the shack (DC 10 Climb check) to avoid falling in. If Antrellus is bringing a slain animal or other large object into the shack, he uses loose boards inside the shack to span it. There are two giant centipedes that live in the ground near the bottom of the pit. If a creature falls into the pit, there is a 50% chance each round that the disturbance attracts the attention of a giant centipede; continue checking until both centipedes emerge or all creatures exit the pit. The centipedes attack creatures they find in the pit and will climb out of the pit to pursue creatures on the ground above.

#### Creatures: 2 giant centipedes (hp 5, Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 43)

**Developments:** The rain barrels contain nothing but murky though drinkable water. PCs may break through the walls of the shack rather than entering by the door (break DC 15, hardness 5, hp 30); however, doing so has a 50% chance of causing the entire shack to collapse. The shack contains a rough oven built of river stones and mortar and an improvised smoker. Several barrels hold jerky of indeterminate origin, and the floor is scattered with rusty tools and numerous stained and worn sacks of burlap and canvas, as well as a hammer, hatchet, shovel, and a set of artisan's tools (Craft (trapmaking)) for building his traps. At the back of the shack is a large shuttered window with a bench beneath it, allowing egress to the rope bridge.

PCs wishing to climb to the rope bridge without going through the shack must climb along the side and back of the shack, which have fewer handholds than the front side (DC 15 Climb check), or down into the ravine (Climb DC 10), then back up the trees (DC 20) and the back of the shack (DC 15). PCs attempting to climb onto the shack's roof may notice it is unstable (DC 10 Knowledge (engineering) check); any Small or larger creature walking on it will break through and fall inside, suffering 1d6 points of damage.

## 2. Rope bridge (CR 1)

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

The rope bridge itself is not difficult to climb (DC 10); however, to dissuade trespassers Antrellus has trapped the bottom end with a <u>swinging axe trap</u> (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 420; the trap is a CR 1 hazard).

If the axe hits a PC, they may be knocked into the ravine (DC 10 Reflex save, or DC 15 Acrobatics or Climb check as an immediate action; player's choice). Those falling into the ravine take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage from the fall and end up 1d3 x 10 feet down a steep slope.

If the axe does not hit a PC, it has a 50% chance to sever one rope (increasing the Climb DC to 15) and a 50% chance to sever both ropes. A PC adjacent to the rope can try to catch it (DC 15 Reflex save); otherwise, the rope falls slack along the trunk of the cedar tree containing the treehouse. It can be used to help climb up to the treehouse if PCs can cross the ravine. PCs may cross the ravine using a grappling hook and their own rope, or they can climb down into (Climb DC 10) and back up out of (Climb DC 15) the ravine, which is 40 feet deep.

If Antrellus notices the PCs and is hostile, he will shoot his crossbow at any creature attempting to climb the rope bridge or cross the ravine. If Antrellus sees PCs approaching the base of the tree he will use a full-round action to pull up the rope if it has been cut. He will also attempt to cut the rope bridge while they climb. He can cut one rope with a standard action; once both ropes are cut, PCs must climb the tree or use their own rope to ascend to his treehouse.

### 3. Treehouse (CR 3)

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

**Combat:** Antrellus may parley with PCs from inside the treehouse (if hostile or unfriendly) or the balcony at **3a** if made indifferent or better. He prefers to shoot his crossbow at targets below, but will resort to his makeshift morningstar (a club with many long nails driven through it) if pressed closely. Inside of his shack, he has set up two <u>poisoned dart traps</u> (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rule-book* 420, though dosed with <u>drow poison</u> rather than <u>greenblood oil</u>; each is a CR 1 hazard). Antrellus can move through the areas of the traps without setting them off and he will try to lure PCs into following him and setting them off; however, his furtive glances at the traps and irregular movements may tip off PCs to the presence of the traps. Each round, a PC may attempt a DC 13 Sense Motive check to gain a +2 circumstance bonus to AC, saving throws, or skill checks made against Antrellus' traps for that round; a character with at least 1 rank in Sense Motive may automatically make this check as a free action, but other characters must use a move action to gain this bonus.

Antrellus will flee up the staircase at **3b** if pursued. If PCs are weakened, he will climb out onto the roof and lie in wait at the top of the stairs and shoot down at those ascending. If PCs are clearly too strong for him, he will let down a knotted rope ladder and try to flee into the woods.



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

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

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

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

## 4. The Thing Emerges (CR 4)

If Antrellus dies, the embryonic neh-thalggu maturing within his body is jolted into independent awareness. It extends its tendrils and begins absorbing his brain, extracting it from within. This takes 1d4 rounds, during which a character closely examining Antrellus may notice something moving inside his body (his head seeming to cave inwards, then his neck bulging, then something swelling within his torso) with a DC 17 Perception check or Heal check; creatures may attempt one check (against either skill) per round that they are adjacent to Antrellus' body. After this brain extraction has been completed, the abomination bursts forth from the unfortunate merchant's belly and attacks any creatures nearby, focusing its attacks on arcane spellcasters present (using Spellcraft to identify their spells). If PCs have avoided combat with Antrellus, this event may instead occur in the midst of their conversation with the madman or even after they have left. Likewise, if the PCs had too hard a time battling Antrellus, you might choose to delay the thing's emergence until after they have had a chance to recuperate, though they do have a chance to heal themselves during the 1d4 rounds that the monster is devouring Antrellus' brain. If the creature emerges later, it is able to recall Antrellus' interactions with the PCs and will use this knowledge to hunt them in the town, setting up an ambush at the Professor's residence or wherever else they might be staying.

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

#### EMBRYONIC NEH-THALGGU CR 4

#### XP 1,200

CE Tiny aberration Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

#### DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 13 (+4 Dex, +1 insight, +2 size) hp 19 (3d8+6) Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +4 DR 5/magic; Immune confusion effects; SR 11

#### OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect) Melee 2 claws +9 (1d2), bite +9 (1d3 plus poison) Special Attacks poison, rend (2 claws, 2d2) Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 1st; concentration +3) 1st (4)—color spray (DC 12), shield 0 (at will)—acid splash, dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand

#### **STATISTICS**

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 13 Base Atk +2; CMB +4; CMD 13 (can't be tripped) Feats Arcane Strike, Eschew Materials<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Finesse Skills Fly +20, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +7, Knowledge (planes) +7, Perception +7, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +7, Stealth +16 Languages Aklo, Common SQ brain collection

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- **Brain Collection** (Ex) See *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* p. 197. However, an embryonic neh-thalggu is still forming its body, it must bud a new brain pod for each brain it consumes; this takes 1d4 rounds and the neh-thalggu is staggered during this time. It does not burst out of Antrellus' body until it has finished absorbing his brain. An embryonic neh-thalggu does not suffer negative levels for having less than seven stored brains, nor does consuming brains grant it additional hit dice or spellcasting ability (though it can access information that a consumed brain formerly possessed, at the GM's discretion).
- **Poison** (Ex) Bite; save Fort DC 13; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d2 Strength damage and staggered; cure 2 consecutive saves.

If enemies are close by, the neh-thalggu uses *color spray* to disable as many as possible; otherwise, it begins by casting shield before closing with opponents. If able to settle on an incapacitated creature without interference, it makes coup de grace brain collection attacks. Each brain it consumes grants it a +1 insight bonus to AC, concentration checks, and Knowledge checks. If enemies threaten it directly, it flies out of melee reach and casts shield resuming attacks with *color spray* above on enemies that resisted its initial assault. As a Tiny creature, it lacks reach and does not threaten attacks of opportunity, and to make melee attacks it must enter the square of its target, its movement provoking attacks of opportunity. Still, it may use Arcane Strike with its rending claws and poisonous bite to hamper enemies, especially arcane spellcasters, preventing them from fleeing while sapping their strength. If brought below 5 hit points, it flies into the forest to hide but will follow the PCs as able and plot a return attack to devour the brain of any arcane spellcaster that escapes. Once the arcane spellcasters in the party are eliminated, it will leave the town behind and seek more interesting prey; at the GM's option, this creature may be encountered in a later adventure featuring the Whisper Cult and their interactions with Lovecraftian horrors.

## **Return to the Fountain (CR 3)**

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

If PCs return to the Murmuring Fountain to complete the ritual, the ghostly raven accompanies them, perching on the fountain and cawing "Rest! Rest! Rest!" Approaching the fountain triggers the Ravens' Roost haunt; however, tossing the spadeful of earth into the fountain inflicts 3d6 points of positive energy damage to the haunt as it tries to form. If reduced to 0 hit points, the bloodravens are not summoned.

However, if the ghostly taint within the prison has not yet been expunged, the haunt's spiritual energies do not simply dissipate when the haunt is destroyed. Instead, these energies cascade over the fountain and create spirit-duplicates of the four gargoyles supporting the fountain. These spirit-gargoyles are similar to those created by *shadow conjuration* (DC 12 Will disbelief allowed when a creature is attacked; if any creature saves and disbelieves, they may grant a +4 bonus to the saving throws of other characters thereafter). Each spirit-gargoyle rolls a separate initiative, stepping out of the real gargoyle and attacking on their turn. The spirit-gargoyles will slowly take to the sky, hovering and attacking creatures within reach. These spirit-gargoyles appear only once, when the haunt is destroyed.

If you have the *Construct Codex* by Legendary Games, you could replace these shadow-conjured gargoyles with a single lesser Gothic gargoyle as an uncreated construct, awakened to life by the collapse of spiritual energies within the haunt.

**Creatures:** Shadow-conjured gargoyles (4) Statistics are as normal for gargoyles except as noted below:

### Shadow-Conjured Gargoyles (4)

**CR** #

#### XP 1,200

CE Tiny aberration Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +7

#### DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 natural); AC 10 if disbelieved hp 8

DR 2/magic

#### OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

**Melee** 2 claws +7 (1d6+2), bite +7 (1d4+2), gore +7 (1d4+2); 20% damage if disbelieved

**Rewards:** Eliminating the haunting of the Murmuring Fountain gains 4 Trust for the PCs.



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

# Rios

JASON NELSON, started professional RPG writing in 2002 with the Save My Game and Behind the Screen gamemastering advice columns for Wizards of the Coast, then broadening into writing adventures for Dungeon ("Practical Magic" and "Man Forever") and several articles for Dragon. In 2008, he made the final four in Paizo's inaugural RPG Superstar competition, and since then has been a regular contributor to Paizo's adventure paths, including End of Eternity for Legacy of Fire, War of the River Kings for Kingmaker, and The Hungry Storm for Jade Regent. In addition to adventure writing, Jason has co-authored 10 Pathfinder Chronicles and Companion sourcebooks and has written major sections of the Ennie-award winning Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign setting, Gamemastery Guide, Advanced Player's Guide, Bestiary 2, Ultimate Magic, and Ultimate Combat. A devoted Christian, husband, and father, and a proud gamer since 1981, Jason loves to bring hardcore old-school stylings alongside inventive new creations to his contributions to Paizo and is excited to be bringing the same high-concept, high-action, high-adventure attitude to Legendary Games.

CLARK PETERSON, founded Necromancer Games, Inc., and has the distinction of being the first person to make use of the Open Game License and release content compatible with Third Edition with his free, ENnie-award winning adventure, The Wizard's Amulet. Clark produced a number of key third party products for Third Edition, from the famed Creature Collection and Relics and Rituals with Sword and Sorcery Studios, to the indispensible Tome of Horrors series. He wrote a large number of classic "First Edition Feel" adventures, from to The Tomb of Abysthor and Bard's Gate to Rappan Athuk, the world's deadliest dungeon crawl. Clark has had the pleasure of working with Gary Gygax on Necropolis, Flying Buffalo on The Wurst of Grimtooth's Traps and the honor of bringing Judges Guild's Wilderlands of High Fantasy and City State of the Invincible Overlord to the Third Edition rules. An expert on the Open Game License, Clark has been a tireless supporter of open gaming. Clark is also an outspoken advocate for the classic "old school" heart of gaming. A friend and supporter of Paizo since its inception, Clark served as a judge for several years on Paizo's RPG Superstar competition. Legendary Games is Clark's latest venture-an all-star team of authors and designers assembled to bring you the best third party support for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game.

TIMOTHY K. WICKHAM, some college students go to Cancun for Spring Break, while others discover Role-Playing Games. Tim... belongs to the second group. After finishing his education he moved to the Pacific Northwest for the coffee and stayed for a career. When he's not pushing the limits of the Print/Pixel divide he enjoys long walks with his 90 pound "puppy" and culinary alchemy with his wife, Kate. At this very moment he is engrossed in the latest Design Problem (ahm, 'Challenge') and is honored for the opportunity to give form to the fiction at your game table.

**ROBERT LAZZARETTI started as an intern at Game Designers Workshop where he** basically took on illustrating all of the maps because no one else in the art department really enjoyed drawing them. After working on *Dangerous Journeys, Traveller, Twilight* 2000 and *Challenge Magazine* for a couple of years, He was hired by TSR to join the Cartography Department. Almost immediatly, he was put to the task of designing maps for the new Planescape setting. Rob has created maps for almost every Role playing game world over the past 18 years.

COLBY STEVENSON is a freelance illustrator who resides deep within the forests of Connecticut. His attraction to dark worlds and the diabolic creatures that reside in them has dragged him into the realm of RPGs headfirst! Completing numerous private commissions for avid Pathfinder gamers, Warcraft fans and everything in-between, he soon moved onto Paizo Publishing's web fiction illustrating such stories as *Lord of Penance* and *Guns of Alkenstar*. Colby has now found himself locked within the dank, dungeons of Legendary Games conjuring up images and nightmares for the gaming world to feed upon. When not drawing dragons, succubi or elves, Colby can be found working on Music/Audio Production or reciting quotes from such films as Aliens and Star Wars. ENDARY GAMES



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