

GHOSTS OF SPARWELL LODGE

BY RON LUNDEEN



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INTRODUCTION

The exclusive Sparwell Lodge exemplifies a vanishing class of aristocratic club. The lodge has a long and glorious tradition, but time has eclipsed the martial glories of its members. Today's lodge members are content to relax, sip brandy, and swap stories of their more courageous ancestors. Sparwell Lodge occupies a stately but small manor in the wealthy district of a large city.

The most distinguished member of Sparwell Lodge today is Lord Yorick Thackeray, an indolent nobleman whose ancestors founded the lodge. Today, the Thackerays are more passionate about collecting weapons than wielding them. The lodge houses the large Thackeray weapon collection. On occasion, the lodge hosts a members-only luncheon to exhibit newly-acquired magic weapons. At noon on the day after this adventure begins, Lord Thackeray will introduce three new weapons to the lodge's collection, including a flail rumored to be *Silvershower*. *Silvershower*, a magic flail that conjures a pile of silver coins upon command, would be an illustrious addition to the collection. Unfortunately, the magic flail acquired by Lord Thackeray is not the real *Silvershower*.

The members of Sparwell Lodge have a viper within their midst. Houfin Ghent, a dwarf grifter and scoundrel, discovered that he qualified for admission to the lodge because his long-deceased

grandfather was a member. Ghent wasted no time ingratiating himself into the exclusive organization. For months, the greedy dwarf has awaited a truly valuable weapon to arrive in the lodge's collection so that he might steal it and live a life of luxury. Ghent received advance notice that the lodge has acquired *Silvershower* and he is prepared to take the legendary weapon by guile or force.

Although Ghent's target is *Silvershower*, the core of this adventure is a magical hatchet called *Vaporblade*. *Vaporblade* has been on display in the lodge for several months, and its true history is almost unknown. A genie smith created *Vaporblade* long ago and wished his creation to have a long and legendary history among mortals. The genie instilled within the hatchet a curse: when *Vaporblade* sits unused for more than three months, it begins conjuring vexwind elementals (a type of malevolent air elemental, described in Appendix 1) to bedevil the area. The genie intended these attacks to encourage heroes to pick up *Vaporblade* again, ensuring the weapon would never be at rest for long. The curse becomes dormant only when a mortal creature attacks an evil foe with *Vaporblade*. *Vaporblade* is so old that mortal history has forgotten its curse, but some genies remember its nature and know that trouble is sure to follow whenever *Vaporblade* sits unused.

Running Ghosts of Sparwell Lodge

This is an event-based, investigative adventure that occurs within Sparwell Lodge over the course of an evening and the following morning. Become familiar with the events of this adventure, as many events take place with or without the heroes' involvement and their consequences are only made apparent as the adventure unfolds. Appendix 2 contains a timeline of events. If play starts to drag, move quickly ahead to the next event impacting the characters.

This should play out as a haunted house story. You should provide descriptions of strange noises and odd shadows throughout, but a classic haunted house story also relies on gradual investigation of things that are not as they seem. The creatures that are making the noise and trouble may appear to be spirits, but the heroes learn that these creatures are actually rare elementals. The focus of the adventure initially seems to be *Silvershower*, but the heroes discover that *Vaporblade* is to blame.

This adventure is designed for four to six heroes of 4th level.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

This adventure is written to flow directly from an earnest plea from a servant in need. If your heroes need a more specific hook into this adventure, then a trusted NPC or organization informs the heroes that Archibald Topp of Sparwell Lodge has a problem, and the heroes are needed to solve the problem before the luncheon at noon the next day. You might even make one of the heroes a relation of Lord

Thackeray himself, directed to solve the problem expeditiously and discreetly to secure the stately relative's reputation and at last earn membership in the exclusive family lodge.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Other than the heroes, six characters are important to the plot of this adventure. They are:

Yorick Thackeray, a balding, older man and head of Sparwell Lodge. Lord Thackeray enjoys his luxurious lifestyle and has little to say to those he feels are beneath him. He only makes an appearance at the conclusion of this adventure, just in time for the luncheon.

Archibald Topp, steward of Sparwell Lodge and retired warrior-priest of the Warrior Maiden (or any similar Lawful Good deity of valor and chivalry). Topp is in his sixties but still quite fit and alert, with a polite and dignified manner. Topp oversees the lodge and the other servants. He is also responsible for the presentation of the weapons throughout the manor and researches the weapons' histories. Topp has been with Sparwell Lodge for more than twenty years and enjoys his work. Topp wears tidy clothes, large spectacles, and his old religious symbol.

Dalby Dragfoot, the middle-aged halfling bartender of the lodge. Dalby's dark secret is that he owes the villainous Houfin Ghent a great deal of money. Ghent controls the halfling with threats of exposure and poverty. Dalby let slip to Ghent that one of the new weapons is a flail called *Silvershower*. Although Dalby isn't aware of the *Silvershower* legend, Ghent had heard of this fabled weapon. Dalby is reluctant to spend much time at

the lodge, as a vexwind startled him badly two nights ago. Dalby is nervous and surly. He had never been pleasant, and his demeanor has worsened in recent days.

Floria Beeke, an elderly widow, is the busy and capable maid and head cook of Sparwell Lodge.

Houfin Ghent, a greedy and ruthless dwarf who recently gained membership in Sparwell Lodge. Ghent plans to acquire Silvershower by any means necessary. Ghent is a tall dwarf with a short iron-black beard and wild black hair that resists obvious attempts to grease it straight. Ghent is usually imperious and obnoxious, but he is skilled at false flattery. Ghent's statistics are found in Act 8.

Fatima, the assistant maid and cook of Sparwell Lodge. Fatima appears to be a shy girl of 13, but is actually a young janni in disguise. Fatima learned that *Vaporblade* rests in the lodge's collection and secured employment in the lodge to discover how to return *Vaporblade* to the hands of heroes (as she isn't a humanoid, Fatima can't suppress the curse by using it herself). She is well-intentioned but deceptive by nature, and prefers to keep her motives to herself unless necessary. Fatima disguises her regal posture and sparkling eyes with a meek bearing and downcast glances. Fatima doesn't speak unless spoken to, and even then she mumbles short answers while staring at her feet.

Fatima

Level 4

Unique N Small Elemental Genie

Female young janni

Perception +10; darkvision

Languages Common, Auran; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +10, Arcana +8, Crafting +8, Deception +11 (+13 to Impersonate), Society +10, Survival +10, Thievery +10

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +1, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +3

Items dagger, copy of key to *Vaporblade's* lock

AC 20; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10

HP 60; **Resistances** fire 5

Elemental Endurance Fatima can survive on any Elemental Plane for up to 48 hours, after which she takes 1 damage per hour until she leaves or dies.

Speed 20 feet, fly 15 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +14 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+10 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +14 (agile, range 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+10 piercing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 21; **7th plane shift** (to Astral Plane, Elemental Planes, or Material Plane only); **2nd create food, invisibility** (x3), **speak with animals**; **1st create water**

Change Size ♦ (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation); **Frequency** once per day. **Effect** The janni changes a creature's size. This works as a 4th-level *enlarge* or *shrink* spell but can target an unwilling creature (DC 21 Fortitude save negates).

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The heroes arrive at Sparwell Lodge and meet the steward, Archibald Topp. Topp explains his predicament and asks for help; he shares what he knows of the haunting and asks the heroes to put a stop to it before the luncheon at noon on the following day. Topp introduces the other servants and provides a quick tour of the manor. While the heroes view the Music Room and its collection of magical weapons, a vexwind kills Mrs. Beeke. The investigation begins in earnest and the heroes are left in the lodge for the night.

In the evening, a vexwind appears in the library and plays a prank or two before leaving. In the middle of the night, Ghent sends Dalby and caligni thieves into

the lodge to steal *Silvershower*. Dalby never leaves the serving closet, where a malicious vexwind rigs a gruesome trap with his corpse. The heroes are likely to confront the calignis before they escape with *Silvershower*, foiling Ghent's attempt to gain the flail.

The next day, the heroes may obtain some clues about *Vaporblade* from Fatima, face another vexwind, and aid Topp with his research into the new weapons. As the luncheon begins, Ghent attempts to steal *Silvershower* personally. Fatima draws the heroes into combat with Ghent and his doppelganger allies, giving the heroes the opportunity to use *Vaporblade* against Ghent and lift the curse.

INTRODUCTION

Storm clouds roil overhead, threatening a downpour. The streets of this affluent section of the city are nearly deserted, though it is not yet sundown. As you approach the stately manor house, a second story window shatters and rains glass down upon the empty street.

Heroes that succeed at a DC 18 Perception check see a shadowy, man-sized form move back from the broken window, plainly trying not to be seen. This figure is a vexwind. Whether or not any heroes notice the creature, the front door immediately opens.

With a bang that echoes up the street, the manor door slams open. A wiry man with large spectacles and a thin fringe of hair pokes his head out and looks up and down the street. He eyes each of you, and looks up toward the broken window. "Did any of you see a...ghost up there just now? Oh, dear me. Looks like a fierce rainstorm

will break any minute, and I could very definitely use some assistance. Please, come in, come in!" The wiry man moves aside to let you in to the building. An ornate, engraved plaque by the door reads SPARWELL.

The man ushering the heroes into the building is Archibald Topp. He welcomes the heroes to the lodge and offers to take their outerwear. As he does so, a thunderstorm begins with a mighty crash and lasts for the duration of this adventure.

If eager heroes instead seek to investigate the broken window immediately, Topp explains that he's spent days chasing half-glimpsed forms around the lodge, but has never been able to catch one. If the heroes insist on taking a look in the Music Room, Topp escorts them upstairs, but the vexwind fled out of the broken window and over the rooftops of the city once the street below was clear.

Topp offers the heroes drinks in the den while explaining his problem. Dalby Dragfoot, frowning unpleasantly, makes up whatever drinks the heroes request. Topp waves the heroes into comfortable chairs, composes himself, and speaks.

- Topp explains the history of Sparwell Lodge and the role of Lord Thackeray as the manor's owner and head of the lodge.
- Recently, there have been some strange activities: broken windows (outward, if the heroes think to ask, as with the Music Room window), things moved around, and strange noises. The lodge is haunted.
- Tomorrow at noon, Lord Thackeray is hosting an exclusive luncheon for the lodge members. Topp is worried that the haunting will disrupt the festivities. Topp politely clarifies that the heroes aren't invited to the luncheon but, if the heroes

stop the haunting, he is sure that Lord Thackeray would want to thank them in person and grant his future favor.

- Topp is at wit's end trying to chase specters around the lodge and has fallen dreadfully behind on the luncheon preparations due to the haunting.
- Topp invites the heroes stay overnight at the lodge to stop the haunting.
- Topp offers to pay the heroes 10 gp each for their trouble. He is desperate for assistance, so can be easily talked into paying 20 gp to each hero, but this amount depletes his authorized funds as well as much of his own personal savings.
- Topp thinks highly of Lord Thackeray and considers all the lodge members to be respectable gentlemen and descendants of heroes. He points out the paintings of several deceased lodge members hanging in the den, including several similar-looking older men (each of them Thackerays) and a grim dwarf (Grelim Ghent, Houfin Ghent's grandfather).
- The lodge has four servants: Topp, the maid Mrs. Beeke, the serving girl Fatima, and the bartender Dalby.
- The lodge contains a den, dining room, and kitchen downstairs. Upstairs are two bedrooms, a library, and the Music Room, where the most valuable weapons of Sparwell Lodge are displayed. Topp offers the heroes a tour once they are finished with their drinks.

Topp answers other questions as best he is able. Unfortunately, Topp's knowledge is limited. For example, he doesn't know that Ghent is blackmailing Dalby or that Fatima is anything other than the shy girl she appears to be. Topp suspects the haunting is the work of spirits or poltergeists, but is clueless beyond that.

Additional Information

A hero can recall relevant information by making a Society check to Recall Knowledge. On a success, give the first fact below that the hero doesn't already know; on a critical success, give two facts. On a critical failure, the GM should invent a false fact.

- Aristocratic clubs like Sparwell Lodge once numbered in the dozens throughout the city. Each was the headquarters of a band of explorers or adventurers. Few such clubs remain these days, and those that do are often sagging buildings where old men meet to reminisce about glories of their grandfathers' grandfathers.
- Descendants of existing or former members are entitled to lodge membership, but they are usually more interested leisure than adventure.
- Sparwell Lodge had its share of heroic members in centuries past, including some bravos from the Thackeray family and their friends. The Thackeray family donated the manor that has housed Sparwell Lodge since its inception. Although members are technically equal, a Thackeray descendant traditionally heads the lodge.
- The Thackerays have a long history of collecting and displaying weaponry. The Thackerays display magical weapons in the lodge's Music Room, named for the ancient organ built into the wall of the room.
- Sparwell Lodge maintains a small staff. Sir Yorick Thackeray, the current head of the lodge, does not stay at the lodge often. He entrusts care of the building to an elderly and honorable steward, a halfling bartender, and a small cleaning and cooking staff.



ACT 1: TOUR OF THE LODGE

The manor house is almost six hundred years old. Sparwell Lodge has occupied the manor for four hundred years (Topp explains that Sparwell Lodge is the name of the club that occupies the building, and not properly the name of the manor itself). The four servants are usually the lodge's only occupants, as members rarely avail themselves of the manor's comforts these days. Even Lord Thackeray himself rarely stays at the lodge, preferring his family's country estates.

Rooms on the first floor are twenty feet high, and rooms on the second floor are ten feet high. Weapons of various types and sizes adorn the walls throughout the manor. The only rooms without weapons are pantry and the storage closet—even the library and the washroom have a few. All weapons are sharp or otherwise serviceable. They hang on sturdy hooks affixed to the walls and can be removed with a single Interact action. Not every hook is occupied; a few inconspicuous unoccupied hooks remain near the ceiling for future weapon acquisitions.

There is a lot of loose wealth lying around in the manor: silverware, crystal decanters, gold trim, and so on. Remind larcenous heroes that Sparwell Lodge consists of influential nobles and that the heroes are here as investigators, not as thieves. Topp demands the heroes return any stolen items and threatens to report them to the authorities.

Each door in the lodge is a solid wooden door. The front doors, the back door, and the bedroom doors have good locks (requiring five successful DC 30 Thievery checks to Pick a Lock). Topp insists that the bedrooms remain locked when not in use. The staff leaves the front and back doors unlocked during the day, but lock these doors when they leave for the evening. Topp and Mrs. Beeke have keys to all of the door locks, as does Lord Thackeray.

Topp gives a full tour of the lodge, showing the heroes the rooms in the following order.

FIRST FLOOR

A. Den: Dark, rich mahogany outfits this huge room. Weapons of all types crowd the walls from floor to ceiling. A well-stocked bar runs along the western wall. Overstuffed chairs fill the rest of the room, arranged in small groups to provide an intimate atmosphere. Crystal chandeliers provide soft lighting. There are a dozen high-quality paintings on the east wall representing the most distinguished deceased lodge members. The majority of the portraits depict Thackerays over the centuries. All of the paintings but one portray humans, and the last depicts is an old dwarf, his unruly hair and beard shot through with gray. This portrait is labeled "Gremil Ghent" and a date 280 years ago.

Six Griffons Lodge

Ground Floor

- A. Den
- B. Foyer
- C. Dining Room
- D. Kitchen
- E. Pantry
- F. Washroom
- G. Serving Room
- H. Closet
- I. Guest Room
- J. Lord Thackeray's Bedroom
- K. Library
- L. Music Room



Upper Floor

One square
= 5 Feet



Cartography: Hugo Solis <http://butterfrog.deviantart.com/>

Handout 1: Note nailed near back door of lodge

G-

Hoap you get this befoar tonite. I dont no wats hapening here, but we have to tak. Im skard. I will meet you at the usuil time and the usuil plais.

Houfin Ghent is Gremil's grandson, but Houfin possesses none of the good nature of his ancestor. A low bench behind the bar allows Dalby to easily reach the top of the bar. Also behind the bar are several mundane notes Dalby has written to himself, with handwriting and poor spelling that match Handout 1.

B. Foyer: This impressive entry room is long and high. Weapons hang on all walls, and an ancient-looking breastplate hangs over double doors that stand open, revealing a large dining room. At one end of this foyer is a sweeping staircase that ascends to a second floor. Tucked back behind the staircase is the washroom door. As Topp shows the foyer to the heroes, Dalby leaves for the day with a grimace. Heroes succeeding at a DC 20 Perception check notice the halfling frown at someone back in the den as he leaves, although there is no one in the den at that time (Dalby actually frowns toward the portrait of Gremil Ghent, out of aggravation with Houfin Ghent). Dalby waves off any questions, mumbling about having a bad week and being anxious to leave the lodge for the evening. Topp reminds Dalby to be back early the next morning, reminding the surly halfling how important the luncheon is.

C. Dining Room: A large oak table, big enough to seat twenty, dominates this

room. Large chandeliers hang over the table. Weapons on hooks cover the walls here, and a suit of full plate armor rests on a stand in the far corner of the room. In the other corners stand large potted plants. On the initial tour, Mrs. Beeke is here polishing the table and chairs.

Topp introduces the heroes to her, but she is too busy to give more than a friendly nod of greeting.

D. Kitchen: This is a large and functional kitchen. Stoves, sinks, and hanging racks of cooking utensils fill the room. A narrow spiral staircase in one corner rises to the serving hallway on the second floor. A back door exits the manor and another door (slightly ajar) leads to a pantry. Fatima spends almost all her time here. Although polite and deferential, she is busy finishing baking cakes for the luncheon and has little time to talk. Tacked to the outside frame of the back door frame is Handout 1. Any hero stepping behind the lodge notices this note. Dalby takes down the note if it remains up at 1:30 a.m. when he comes by to break in. If the heroes show the note to Topp or Mrs. Beeke, they recognize Dalby's handwriting but don't understand what it means. By this time, Dalby is already gone for the day. A vexwind may trap the door between the kitchen and pantry at about 8:15 p.m. (see Act 3).

E. Pantry: Fruits, meats and grains fill this well-stocked pantry. Topp doesn't show the pantry on the initial tour, but indicates that it is there.

F. Washroom: This washroom has a large basin with water, various soaps, and a toilet. Only a few weapons hang in the washroom. Topp doesn't show the

washroom on the initial tour, but indicates the washroom as he leads the heroes up the main stairs.

SECOND FLOOR

G. Serving Room: This hallway contains narrow shelves to stack serving trays. Narrow spiral stairs lead down to the kitchen. This is the passage servants use to bring drinks and other refreshments up to guests in the Music Room and other second-floor rooms.

H. Storage Closet: Old furniture and broken weapons clutter this storage closet. Before 1:30 a.m., there is nothing particularly interesting in this room. Topp mentions it, but doesn't show it, on the initial tour. A vexwind traps this closet with Dalby's corpse at 1:30 a.m. (see Act 5).

I. Guest Room: Silks and fine wools titivate this bedroom. The bedroom also contains two large dressers, a soft rug, and a bed. Topp invites the heroes to use this room. The servants usually keep this room locked.

J. Lord Thackeray's Bedroom: This bedroom is the essence of opulence. Silk sheets drape a bed large enough to sleep six and exotic rugs cover the floor. The dressers and armoires are made of rare woods that give off a pleasant aroma. Serviceable weapons and a pair of steel shields adorn the walls. Above the bed hangs a battered old bastard sword, the first weapon Lord Thackeray used in battle many, many years ago. Topp unlocks this room to show it to the heroes, but locks it again afterwards. He prefers that the heroes not use this room, but does not protest too loudly if they do.

K. Library: Low shelves containing books and scrolls line this wood-paneled

room. In addition to the ubiquitous weapons, several dramatic paintings adorn the walls here. Under a large landscape painting sits an ornate rosewood desk piled with books and papers. A single window with a carved wooden frame decorates the south wall. The books that are here are overwhelmingly martial-related, including books on weapons, heroes, legends, and wars. Topp uses the library to research the weapons Lord Thackeray acquires. Topp prepares a display card for especially valuable weapons and places them in the Music Room. He hangs other weapons elsewhere in the manor. This research is Topp's favorite part of his job. In the back of a desk drawer is a *wand of restoration* (2nd). Topp occasionally uses this wand to stave off tiredness or other debilitating conditions. He doesn't mind if the heroes use it during their investigations.

L. Music Room: This grand room is a museum of magical weaponry. The floor is a plush, amber-colored carpet. In one corner squats an ancient organ, well-polished and at least as old the manor house. The large window overlooking the street is broken out. When the Thackeray family purchased this manor house centuries ago, this room was the music room. The Thackerays, more inclined to martial pursuits than music, soon sold off the instruments here. The organ is built into the manor's supporting walls, so the Thackerays kept it and continued to call this room the Music Room.

Nine weapons hang on display in this room and are held in place by good locks (requiring five successful DC 30 Thievery checks to open). Topp keeps the keys to the weapon locks, although Fatima made a copy of the key to *Vaporblade's* lock

without Topp's knowledge. Most weapons are accompanied by a neatly-written card explaining the weapon's powers and history. The weapons here are:

- *Mountainshot* is a +1 striking composite longbow.
- *Goblinsplitter* is a +1 dwarven waraxe.
- *Power Word* is a fighter's fork that requires further research, and so doesn't currently have a final card (see Act 6).
- *Soft Kiss* is a dagger of venom.
- *Vaporblade* is a +1 striking hatchet with a peculiar curse. *Vaporblade* already has a card, but further research provides valuable clues (see Act 6).
- *Tax Collector's Friend*, a +1 silver flail mistakenly considered to be *Silvershower*; the card currently identifies it as *Silvershower*. Successful research reveals the truth (see Act 6).
- *Wound Opener* is a +1 bastard sword that requires further research, and so doesn't currently have a final card (see Act 6).
- *Ghoul Harvester* is a +1 scythe with the same abilities as a *retribution axe*.
- *The Magpie* is a +1 striking hand crossbow.

When the heroes examine the weapons, give them Handout 2. While they're looking it over is a good time to begin Act 2.

Handout 2: Music Room Weapons

Nine weapons hang on the walls of the Music Room. Each is affixed to the wall with a lock and accompanied by a label. Three of the labels are plainly unfinished, as they are scrawled in a less precise hand.

Near an unstrung composite longbow:

Mountainshot – This enchanted bow, used by woodsmen and poachers alike, has been passed among hunters of the Direwood Forest since its creation.

Near a flat black dwarven waraxe:

Goblin Splitter – This axe, carried by the Stonegrinder Clan dwarves of the Gaunt Mountains for generations, has perhaps hewn more goblinkin than any axe in existence. Dwarven skalds attest over seven hundred kills from this weapon.

Near a trident with a handle wrapped in greenish leather:

?? - ?? some kind of skin? not evil...

Near a dagger ornately decorated with serpent scale patterns:

Soft Kiss – Forged for the elven assassin Triel Dreambringer. Dreambringer has not been seen for a decade, but the steward of Sparwell Lodge discovered this dagger in a burned building less than four blocks from the lodge.

Near a hatchet of a golden metal:

Vaporblade – Constructed ages ago by a genie smith, this magical hatchet has been associated with numerous heroes throughout its long history, including Kurtmek of Qilat.

Near a flail bearing a stylized silver coin as its head:

Conjuration. Silvershower - ? command word?

Near a bastard sword coated with a rusty patina:

?? Likely either Wound Opener or Sickness...other uncleanable swords? detects as evil but not as poison...

Near a scythe capped with a leering skull:

Ghoul Harvester – Despite its macabre appearance, this scythe was used by the famous paladin and undead hunter Ardivan for much of his career.

Near a hand crossbow of unusual workmanship:

The Magpie – Crafted by drow artisans and brought to the surface by the morlock slaver Glusch. Glusch fell to the gnome warrior Feblin and his comrades at the end of the last century.

ACT 2: MRS. BEEKE'S MURDER

This act begins when a vexwind kills Mrs. Beeke in the dining room while the heroes are upstairs on the tour with Topp. An ear-splitting shriek rips through the manor from the dining room. Heroes succeeding at a DC 15 Perception check also hear a heavy, meaty thud (Mrs. Beeke's body collapsing to the floor). On a critical success, the hero also hears light running footsteps (Fatima rushing to investigate from the kitchen).

A grisly scene awaits the heroes in the dining room. Mrs. Beeke lies near the west wall, her blood pooling from a vicious axe blow to the head. A bloody battle axe lies on the floor next to the corpse, and Fatima stands over her, mouth covered and eyes wide with shock.

Mrs. Beeke was slain by a bloodthirsty vexwind appearing moments ago in this room. The surprised Mrs. Beeke could do nothing but flail weakly at the creature. The vexwind then flew up to the ceiling, assumed its alternate form as a battle axe, and dropped onto Mrs. Beeke's head. The blow killed the old widow instantly. The vexwind is now waiting, in battle axe form, for a chance to cause more mayhem. Topp doesn't specifically recognize the battle axe, but he's not intimately familiar with each mundane weapon in the lodge's vast collection. The heroes may use the following skills in investigating this scene.

Diplomacy: On a successful DC 15 Diplomacy check, the hero recognizes that Mrs. Beeke's death surprises and horrifies both Fatima and Topp. Both of them liked the elderly woman. Fatima was the first to the scene not because she was responsible, but merely because she was closest when it happened. Both honestly believe this was a freakish accident of some kind. On a critical success, the hero realizes that Fatima seems to be hiding something personal, unrelated to Mrs. Beeke's death. (Fatima suspects a vexwind is involved somehow, but she isn't certain. She isn't willing to reveal her knowledge to the heroes at this time, and does not suspect that the battle axe is actually the vexwind itself.)

Medicine: On a successful DC 15 Medicine check, the hero realizes that Mrs. Beeke's muscles are weak and watery, as though some effect drained away her vitality just before she perished. On a critical success, the hero notes that the angle of the axe blow indicates that it was not swung at Mrs. Beeke, but rather came crashing directly down on her head from a height of 15 or 20 feet. It might have fallen off the wall in an unfortunate accident, although that doesn't explain her watery muscles.

Perception: On a successful DC 15 Perception check, the hero spies a pair of



empty hooks near the ceiling, from which the battle axe might have hung before falling onto Mrs. Beeke. On a critical success or close observation, the hero realizes the high hooks are actually a bit dusty, so the battle axe could not have been hanging there.

Survival: On a successful DC 15 Survival check, the hero notes that there are no signs of anyone other than the servants or the heroes in the dining room.

Topp is increasingly concerned now that the haunting has taken a life. He offers to prepare *talking corpse* in the morning to ask Mrs. Beeke's corpse what happened to her. He asks the heroes not to disturb the body. Topp also intends to escort Fatima home for the evening. Before he leaves, Topp gives the most honest-looking hero Mrs. Beeke's keys to the front door, the back door, and the bedrooms (he does not give them keys to the weapon locks in the

music room). He cautions the heroes to keep the doors locked.

THE AXE ATTACKS

The vexwind does not intend to attack right away. As long as the heroes seem to think it's nothing more than a weapon, it waits for a good moment to strike with maximum surprise. The battle axe reverts to its natural form and attacks upon the first to occur of the following, likely with a +4 bonus to its initiative for surprise:

- The heroes discuss whether the axe is sentient.
- The axe is alone in a room with only one hero.
- A hero tries to use the axe in combat.
- Mrs. Beeke's corpse identifies the axe as her killer under a *talking corpse* spell. This may not be until Topp returns in the morning (see Act 6).

Vexwind

Creature 6

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Initiative Perception +16

Change Shape (as mundane battle axe)

ACT 3: LIBRARY TRICKS



Another vexwind appears in the library at about 8:00 p.m. This is a particularly intelligent vexwind with the alternate form of a lanky, dark-furred baboon. When this vexwind is confronted, it shifts to its natural form and escapes in the fastest possible manner, breaking a window if necessary, and fleeing upward into the stormy night.

As long as it remains undiscovered, the vexwind takes the following actions while in baboon form, making Stealth checks (at +15) while performing each opposed by Perception DCs of the heroes. Heroes on a different floor of the manor have their Perception DCs reduced by 5 for these checks.

- The vexwind moves some books around, piling them in a tall stack on the floor in the middle of the library. When the heroes examine the pile, give them Handout 3. The first letter of each title, reading upward, spells out the clue “Steel drawn, blood seeking.” This particular vexwind has an inkling about its summoning, but cannot articulate it any more clearly than in this cryptic clue.
- It moves down the hall and looks in the guest bedroom. If the guest bedroom is unlocked, it stuffs pillows and blankets under the sheets to make it look as if someone is sleeping there.
- It goes into the Music Room and looks around. Seeing the card for *Silvershower*, it remembers something from the library

about *Silvershower*. It decides to “help” the magical flail. The elemental returns to the library and picks up a silver inkstand and a silver engraved paperweight. It then returns to the Music Room and sets them on the floor in front of *Silvershower*.

- It descends to the kitchen via the serving hallway and engineers a hanging cleaver to swing down at the next person opening the door between the kitchen and the dining room. Treat this as a trap (see below) that hits the squares on both sides of the doorway when triggered.
- It returns to the library, breaks out the library window, and flees into the city. If the heroes do not encounter this vexwind at all, this escape is at 8:30 p.m.
- Add any other activities—either unnerving or dangerous—that you invent.

KITCHEN DOOR TRAP

Use the following statistics for the trap in the doorway between the kitchen and the dining room, if this vexwind is undiscovered long enough to set it. As the mechanism for this trap is more obvious from the kitchen side, any character opening the door from the kitchen side receives a free Perception check at +5 to spot the trap before opening the door.

Swinging Cleaver Trap

Hazard 5

Mechanical Trap

Stealth DC 24 (trained); DC 19 from the kitchen side

Handout 3: Library Stack

In the center of the library, a high pile of books has been stacked on the floor, one atop another. The titles read:

God-Kings of the South

Not in Our Wood: Tales of the Direwood Rangers

I, Too, Have Brought My Spear

Killing Blow

Elven Weapons, Volume 6

Elven Weapons, Volume 3

Silver Light

Deep Beneath the Waves: Undersea Adventure

Ogres!

Ocean Battles

Littlest Heroes: The Halfling People

Battle axes of the Northerners

Never Shall I Put Down My Blade

Warrior Hymns

Ancient Weapons

Ride Like a Cavalier: Secrets of Good Horsemanship

Demons among Us

Leaders of the Dwarves

Everything You Wanted to Know about Otyughs

Elven Weapons, Volume 4

The Hardest Road: The Gaunt Mountains Campaign

Swords of Valor

Description A cleaver on a ceiling-mounted spring swings down into the squares on either side of the door frame.

Disable Thievery DC 22 (expert) to release the cleaver safely

AC 22; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +7

Hardness 13, **HP** 52 (BT 26);

Immunities critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Falling Cleaver [reaction] (attack);

Trigger The door connecting the kitchen and the dining room is opened. **Effect** The blade swings down, attacking creatures on either side of the door frame.

Melee cleaver +19 (deadly 1d12), **Damage** 3d12+12 slashing

ACT 4: THIEVES IN THE NIGHT

At 1:30 a.m., calignis hired by Ghent—a stalker named Ztif and his two creeper lackeys—break into the Music Room to steal *Silvershower*. The thieves climb to the Music Room window under the cover of a *darkness* spell. If the heroes have fixed or blocked the Music Room window, they try to break another second-floor window to gain access. Ghent commanded Dalby to be part of this raid as well, but Dalby sneaks in through the storage room window and is killed by a vexwind there (see Act 5). The calignis aren't particularly surprised that Dalby doesn't join them, as they think the halfling hopelessly craven.

If the thieves enter the lodge undetected, have each hero attempt a DC 20 Perception check to hear the thieves (DC 25 if the heroes are on a different floor of the manor). On a critical success, the hero learns how many thieves there are.

The thieves search around for a minute or two to find *Silvershower*. As they don't read Common, they must examine the weapon cards closely. If the heroes relocated *Silvershower*, the thieves skulk around the lodge looking for it. If *Silvershower* is still in the Music Room, the caligni stalker uses his *chime of opening* to unlock the weapon (requiring a 17 or better on a d20 to succeed). Unfortunately for him, the chime can be clearly heard throughout the lodge. If the thieves can acquire *Silvershower* and escape by stealth, they do so. If discovered, they attack.

Ztif, Caligni Stalker

Level 4

CN Medium Caligni Humanoid

Perception +10; greater darkvision, light blindness

Languages Caligni, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +13, Athletics +8, Stealth +13, Thievery +11

Str +2, **Dex** +5, **Con** +2, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items black smear poison (6 doses), leather armor (6 doses), shortswords (2), *chime of opening*, 30 gp, note from Ghent

AC 21; **Fort** +10, **Ref** +13, **Will** +8

HP 60, death flame

Death Flame (light) When Ztif dies, his body combusts in a flash of white-hot flame. All creatures in a 20-foot burst take 5d6 fire damage (DC 21 basic Reflex save). Ztif's gear and treasure are unaffected by the flames and are left in a pile where he died.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ shortsword +13 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d6+7 piercing plus black smear poison

Occult Innate Spells DC 19; **2nd** *darkness* (at will), *obscuring mist* (at will); **Cantrips** (2nd) *detect magic*

Double Slice ♦♦ Ztif makes two Strikes against the same target, one with each of his shortswords. He combines the damage of any attacks that hit and applies precision damage, resistances, and weaknesses only once. Both attacks count toward his multiple attack penalty, but the penalty increases only after both attacks.

Encircling Command ♦ (auditory) Each caligni creeper within 30 feet of the stalker can

Handout 4: This note is written in the caligni language, except the word "SILVERSHOWER," which is printed in Common

Ztif-

Dalby seems disturbed by something strange going on at the lodge—ghosts or something like that. The cowardly buffoon is almost certainly exaggerating, but any "haunting" will provide you with excellent cover for your job. Enter the building through the smashed window if you can. Steal the flail called Silvershower. Its label looks like this: SILVERSHOWER. You can ring this chime to unlock the flail, but you may need to try two or three times. Do not steal anything else. The steward, Topp, may have trapped the other weapons. Come to think of it, he may have trapped Silvershower, too. Get that runt Dalby to pick it up for you, just to be safe. He plans to break in through the storage room closet. Come to the alley where we met for the other half of your payment the night after next. And watch out for "ghosts"!

-Ghent

Step. Each creeper can benefit from Encircling Command only once per round.

Sneak Attack Ztif deals 1d6 extra precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Caligni Creepers (2)

Level 2

CN Small Caligni Humanoid

Perception +8; greater darkvision, light blindness

Languages Caligni

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +4, Stealth +10, Thievery +8

Str +0, **Dex** +4, **Con** +3, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items black smear poison (3 doses), dagger

AC 19; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

HP 30, death flash

Death Flash (light) When the creeper dies, their body combusts in a flash of bright light. All creatures in a 10-foot emanation must succeed at a DC 17 Fortitude save or be blinded for 1d6 rounds. Creatures with light blindness who successfully save are still blinded for 1 round. The creeper's gear is left in a pile where they died. The light has no effect within magical darkness.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ Dagger +10 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4 piercing plus black smear poison

Ranged ♦ Dagger +10 (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4 piercing plus black smear poison

Occult Innate Spells DC 15; **2nd darkness** (at will); **Cantrips (1st)** *detect magic*

Sneak Attack The creeper deals 1d6 extra precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

The caligni stalker carries a note from Ghent. The note is primarily written in the Caligni language, but the word "SILVERSHOWER" in the middle of the note is in Common. If the heroes can read the note, provide Handout 4.

Ghent keeps an eye out for Dalby and the caligni that evening. When they appear without *Silvershower*, or if they don't appear at all, he deduces that their mission was a failure.

ACT 5: DON'T LOOK IN THE CLOSET

This act occurs any time after 1:30 a.m. A dangerous trap greets the first hero to open the storage closet door.

Just before Dalby entered the storage closet through the window, a vexwind appeared in the closet. The creature quickly murdered the hapless halfling. The vexwind rigged Dalby's corpse with some wire and a broken mop handle in a ghastly prank to make the body stumble a few zombie-like paces forward when the closet door opens. Discovering that Dalby was carrying a red *elemental gem*, the vexwind folded this item into the corpse's fist and smashed it. This didn't fully release the living wildfire within it, but suspended its summoning. The vexwind realized the broken gem would fall out when the artificially animated corpse toppled over. Satisfied, the vexwind fled out the closet window.

Any hero opening the storage room door encounters Dalby's bloody, battered corpse tottering clumsily forward, his hands balled into fists. The heroes may initially think this corpse is a combatant, but it instead functions as a trap. Dalby's corpse has an Armor Class of 6 and can take 15 Hit Points before collapsing. Two rounds after the corpse lurches forward, if still in one piece, its wires give out and it collapses awkwardly onto the floor.

When Dalby's body collapses, either from damage or simply from falling over, the shards of the broken *elemental gem* fall

out of its fist and complete the summoning. The living wildfire is uncontrolled and doesn't function as a minion, although it still vanishes after 1 minute. Identifying that the corpse's fist conceals a dangerous broken magic item and working quickly to keep the fist closed requires a successful DC 19 Arcana or Perception check, followed by a successful DC 19 Acrobatics or Thievery check. The *elemental gem* can't be recovered in any case, but keeping the fist closed around its pieces lets the heroes dispose of them harmlessly.

Living Wildfire

Creature 5

N Medium Elemental Fire

Perception +10; darkvision, smoke vision

Languages Ignan

Skills Acrobatics +13

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** -2, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Smoke Vision The living wildfire ignores the concealed condition from smoke.

AC 22, **Fort** +11, **Ref** +15, **Will** +10

HP 80, explosion; **Immunities** bleed, fire, paralyzed, poison, sleep; **Weakness** cold 5

Explosion (fire) When the living wild fire dies, it explodes, dealing 3d6 fire damage to each creature in a 10-foot emanation (DC 19 basic Reflex save).

Speed 50 feet

Melee ♦ tendril +15 (agile, finesse, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d6+6 fire plus 2d4 persistent fire

Ranged ♦ fire mote +15 (range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 2d6+3 fire

Heroes examining Dalby's body notice the following:

- Dalby now wears black and carries infiltrator thieves' tools, rope, and a padded grappling hook. He's plainly equipped for thievery, not for work.
- Someone in the closet with Dalby battered him to death.
- Dalby's muscles are weak and watery. A successful DC 15 Medicine check reveals that he was drained before he was killed.
- The small window in the back of the storage closet is open. A successful DC 15 Survival check reveals how long the window has been open, based on the rain on the sill (Dalby opened this window at 1:30 a.m.).

ACT 6: MORNING IN THE LODGE

Sparwell Lodge is busy in the morning. The heroes can freely continue their investigations, but research with Topp is likely the best use of their time.

Topp arrives at 7:45 a.m. He first consults with the heroes regarding the events of the evening. This is a good opportunity for the heroes to recount any clues they have and any conclusions they have drawn. If the heroes mention Ghent's name, Topp confirms that Houfin Ghent is a lodge member and that Topp expects Ghent at the luncheon. Topp opines that, although Ghent may be behind the night's burglary, Ghent seems unconnected with the haunting. Topp then withdraws to the library for the rest of the morning to perform urgent last-minute research (see Research, below).

If the heroes have not yet discovered the vexwind hiding as a battle axe, Topp first questions Mrs. Beeke's corpse with a *talking corpse* spell. The spell grants Topp three questions. Unless the heroes have suggestions, his first questions are "what killed you?" (the corpse replies, "a ghost of mist and wind") and "where did your killer go?" (the corpse replies, "it's pretending to be an axe"). This discovery causes the vexwind to attack (see Act 2), and Topp doesn't get to his third question.

Three workers hired by Topp arrive at 9:00 a.m. to repair windows and any other collateral damage to the manor. A vexwind appears in the Music Room at

9:20 a.m. in its alternate form, a giant rat. The surprised workers call for help. When anyone threatens the rat, the vexwind assumes its natural form and attacks.

Vexwind **Creature 6**
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Initiative Perception +16
Change Shape (as giant rat)

Fatima arrives at 10:30 a.m. to prepare the food for the luncheon and clean the dining room. She shyly asks the heroes about their night in the lodge and praises their heroism. She determines the heroes may be worthy to carry *Vaporblade* and lift the curse, but she does not approach the heroes directly unless absolutely necessary (that is, until Act 7). If the heroes ignore Fatima, she surreptitiously leaves a key to *Vaporblade's* lock somewhere the heroes will run across it. If a hero makes an effort to spend time with Fatima, she hints that the hatchet in the Music Room "suits" the hero and encourages the hero to learn more about it (such as by research in the library).

Dalby doesn't arrive at all. Unless the heroes reported Dalby's fate, Topp fumes about the "irresponsible little louse" as the morning progresses.

RESEARCH

Topp is grateful for any research assistance in the library. His first priority

is to research the recent acquisitions (*Power Word*, *Wound Opener*, and *Silvershower*, in that order) and prepare display cards. Topp revises his research if the heroes suggest differently, particularly if the heroes convince him that a weapon could be responsible for the haunting.

Researching a weapon requires the following exploration activity. Heroes may aid one another or attempt research independently. Topp also engages in this activity, with his +11 Library Lore skill.

Research Weaponry

Concentrate Exploration Linguistic Manipulate

You choose a weapon and search through the library materials for information about it. Make a DC 19 Arcana, Society, or relevant Lore (such as Library Lore or Weapons Lore) check. This research takes one hour.

Critical Success You learn up to 2 pieces of information about the weapon you chose.

Success You learn 1 piece of information about the weapon you chose.

Failure You learn no information.

Critical Failure You get on the wrong track and confuse information. The next check to research this weapon has a -2 penalty.

Research into the weapons that already have cards (with the exception of *Vaporblade*) reveals nothing new. Successful research into the new weapons reveals the single piece of information available for each. *Vaporblade*, however, has 3 pieces of information available.

Power Word: This weapon passed through the hands of several warrior-priests throughout the last century, including the legendary anarchist Thren Mageslayer. Thren wrapped the weapon's hilt in wyvern hide. *Power Word* is a fighter's fork.

Wound Opener: The half-fiend Furgut brought *Wound Opener* from the lower planes centuries ago and with it slew the legendary paladin Rajani. A lesser demon stole the sword but lost it a few years later among some orc-infested lands. *Wound Opener* is a +1 bastard sword.

Silvershower / Tax Collector's Friend: The flail here isn't *Silvershower*. The real *Silvershower* has a cluster of coins as a head, not a single stylized coin. This is *Tax Collector's Friend*, a +1 silver flail forged by a zealous priest of the God of Civilization.

Vaporblade: Research uncovers a legend about a plague of shapechanging elemental creatures called vexwinds bedeviling the town of Qilat after the warrior Kurtmek retired there six centuries ago. Kurtmek's son took several of his father's weapons, including *Vaporblade*, to battle gnolls outside the city and the haunting of Qilat suddenly stopped. The researching character also knows that there is further information to be found upon additional research into this weapon.

Research reveals other vexwind plagues throughout history. *Vaporblade* appears in each case, usually by description but not name. In each case, the peculiar haunting stopped once someone used *Vaporblade* in battle. The researching character also knows that there is further information to be found upon additional research into this weapon.

The curse on *Vaporblade* is designed to encourage its continual use. Vexwinds appear in the area around *Vaporblade* once it is lies unused for three months. This curse cannot be removed by any normal means: using the hatchet to spill the blood of an evil creature is the only way to suppress its curse.

ACT 7: CONFRONTATION WITH GHENT



As noon approaches, Topp becomes increasingly restless if the heroes have not discovered how to stop the haunting. If the heroes determined that *Vaporblade* is key, Topp asks the heroes to stay to discuss this with Lord Thackeray after the luncheon.

Despite all the heroes have done for Topp, he insists that they are not lodge members and therefore not welcome at the luncheon. Topp does not want to lose face (or worse, his job) by permitting non-members to attend a lodge function. He permits the heroes to stay in the lodge during the luncheon, but asks the heroes to stay out of the foyer, den, and dining room. If the heroes have not yet suppressed the curse, Topp begs them to complete their investigation as soon as possible.

Houfin Ghent arrives at noon with several other lodge members. If the heroes alerted Topp to Ghent's villainy, Topp promises to keep an eye on Ghent and report him to Lord Thackeray. Unfortunately, Ghent can easily sneak past the harried steward.

Some of Ghent's fellow lodge members are not who they appear, but are doppelgangers intending to help Ghent steal *Silvershower* before the luncheon gets underway (alternatively, if Ghent somehow already learned that *Silvershower* is a fake, he plans revenge on the heroes).

This climactic confrontation with Ghent may occur throughout the upstairs

of the lodge, so it is important to know where the heroes are and what each of the NPCs intends to accomplish.

Topp: From the arrival of the first lodge members, Topp does not leave the den. He does his best to keep the lodge members distracted in the event of a combat elsewhere in the lodge, as he is afraid of ruining the luncheon.

Fatima: Fatima realizes that Ghent intends trouble. She retreats to the pantry, turns invisible, and searches out the heroes to reveal the truth to them so they can use *Vaporblade* to stop Ghent. She tells the heroes that she took the job at the lodge to seek champions capable of using *Vaporblade* and suppressing its curse. Fatima found no one worthy among the servants or among the indolent lodge members, but the heroes have shown their mettle over the previous night. Fatima tells the heroes that she believes wounding a villain like Ghent with *Vaporblade* will suppress the curse plaguing the lodge with malicious elementals. If the heroes need it, she produces a key to the lock holding *Vaporblade* in place. As long as the heroes attempt to use *Vaporblade* against Ghent, Fatima aids them as best she can.

Ghent: Ghent and his allies leave the den and make their way to the Music Room. Ghent approaches the Music Room from the main staircase with one of his doppelganger allies (disguised as a feeble

old man determined to finish a meandering lecture on chivalry to Ghent). If Ghent encounters the heroes, he declares their meddling at an end, draws his starknives, and attacks.

Ghent's doppelganger allies: The first of Ghent's two doppelganger allies accompanies Ghent. The second doppelganger moves into the kitchen, assumes Topp's appearance, and ascends the servant's staircase to the upstairs hall. Pretending to be Topp, this doppelganger provides poor tactical advice, encourages the heroes to turn *Silvershower* over to Ghent, and otherwise tries to confound the heroes. Once combat breaks out, the doppelganger disguised as the feeble old man feigns surprise at Ghent's violence and flees among the heroes, where he Ends the Charade, providing Ghent with flanking if possible.

Houfin Ghent

Creature 5

Unique LE Medium Dwarf Humanoid

Perception +14; darkvision

Languages Caligni, Common, Dwarven

Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +13, Deception +9, Intimidation +9, Society +9, Stealth +11

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +3, **Int** +0, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

Items high-fashion fine clothing, lesser elixir of life, *invisibility potion*, leather armor, +1 *starknives* (2), infiltrator thieves' tools

AC 22; **Fort** +13, **Ref** +14, **Will** +11

HP 75

Call on Ancient Blood (reaction) **Trigger** Ghent attempts a saving throw against a magical effect. **Effect** Ghent gains a +1 circumstance bonus to saving throws for the triggering saving throw and until the end of the turn.

Speed 20 feet

Melee ♦ starknife +15 (agile, deadly d6, finesse, magical, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+8 piercing

Ranged ♦ starknife +15 (agile, deadly d6, magical, thrown 20 feet, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+8 piercing

Hunt Prey ♦ Ghent designates as his prey a single creature that he can see and hear or that he is Tracking. He gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks when he Seeks his prey and a +2 circumstance bonus to Survival checks when he Tracks his prey. He also ignores the penalty for making ranged attacks within his second range increment against his prey. Lastly, his multiple attack penalty for attacks against his hunted prey is -3 (or -2 with an agile weapon). Ghent can have only one prey designated at a time.

Sneak Attack Ghent deals an additional 1d6 precision damage to flat-footed creatures.

Twin Takedown ♦ **Frequency** Once per round; **Effect** Ghent makes two starknife Strikes against his hunted prey. If both Strikes hit, combine their damage for the purpose of resistances and weaknesses.

Doppelganger (2)

Level 3

Uncommon N Medium Humanoid

Perception +7; darkvision

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

Skills Deception +11, Diplomacy +11, Society +8, Stealth +8

Str +3, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

AC 18, **Fort** +5, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

HP 50

End the Charade (reaction) (attack); **Trigger** The doppelganger is transformed with Change Shape and another creature moves adjacent to it or takes a hostile action against it. **Effect** The doppelganger reverts to its natural form and can make a Strike against the triggering creature. If the creature was unaware the doppelganger was in disguise, that creature is flat-footed against this attack.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ claw +10 (agile), **Damage** 2d6+5 slashing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 21; **3rd** *mind reading* (at will)

Change Shape ♦ (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation) The doppelganger takes on the specific appearance of any Small or Medium humanoid who it has seen and whose appearance it remembers. This doesn't change the doppelganger's Speed or its attack and damage bonuses with its Strikes but might change the damage type its Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

RUNNING THE CLIMAX

At its best, this final fight is a running battle on multiple fronts all across the second floor of the lodge. Several of the combatants are not who they appear to be, including Fatima and the doppelgangers. This final fight is intended to be difficult. Fatima is a good tool for you in this combat. If the heroes fare poorly, she can provide significant assistance. If the heroes are doing well, she should help them less. Fatima should be used to bolster the heroes, as indicated in her tactics, not steal their spotlight.

Reward the heroes, narratively and mechanically, for proper use of *Vaporblade*. The first time a hero uses it to strike Ghent, the blade lets out a sigh and all free vexwinds are instantly drawn back into the weapon. This rush of energy into *Vaporblade* also heals the wielder of all Hit Point damage. Note that the doppelgangers, though mercenary, are not evil and therefore wounding them cannot suppress *Vaporblade's* curse.

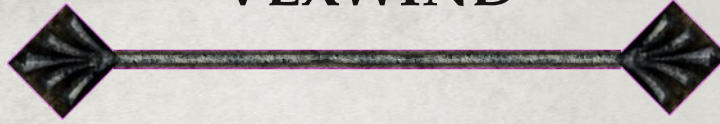
CONCLUSION

When the combat ends, Topp arrives upstairs along with Lord Thackeray. If the heroes suppressed *Vaporblade's* curse, or if they have not suppressed the curse but know how to do so, then Topp and Lord Thackeray are grateful. Lord Thackeray invites the heroes to take *Vaporblade* with them, ostensibly because he feels the heroes will put it to continuous use, but also to get the cursed item out of his lodge.

If the heroes have not discovered how to stop the haunting, Fatima drops her disguise and presents the solution, apologizing for her misdirection. Topp and Lord Thackeray remain grateful for the heroes' assistance for stopping Houfin Ghent, but do not feel any obligation to reward them further.

THE END

NEW MONSTER: VEXWIND



Vexwinds are a malevolent type of air elemental rarely seen on the Material Plane. They are made of swirling but dense vapor. A pair of menacing eyes look out from within their misty form. Genies know of vexwinds and sometimes call upon them to teach mortals a rough lesson. Vexwinds delight in playing cruel jokes, often involving murder, on mortals. Vexwinds prefer to fight victims that are cornered and alone, but do not shy away from a fight with a larger group.

Each vexwind can transform into a single alternate form: animals or humanoids are common, but some vexwinds take the form of inanimate objects or even patches of inky darkness.

Vexwind

Creature 6

Rare NE Medium Air Elemental

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages Auran, Common (can't speak any language)

Skills Acrobatics +15, Deception +11, Intimidation +11, Stealth +15

Str +3, **Dex** +5, **Con** +1, **Int** -2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

AC 25; **Fort** +11, **Ref** +17, **Will** +14

HP 95; **Immunities** bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep

Swift Draft (reaction) (move) **Trigger** A creature misses the vexwind with a melee Strike. **Effect** The vexwind Flies up to 10 feet. This movement doesn't trigger reactions.

Speed fly 50 feet

Melee ♦ squall +10 (finesse), **Damage** 2d8+7 bludgeoning plus weakening touch

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, polymorph, primal, transmutation) The vexwind can take on the appearance of one specific object or creature smaller than it is. A vexwind that becomes a creature doesn't change its Speed or its attack and damage modifiers with its Strikes, but it might change the damage type its Strikes deal. A vexwind using change shape can't use its weakening touch.

Weakening Touch A creature damaged by a vexwind's squall must succeed at a DC 21 Fortitude save or be drained 1 for 1 day. On a critical failure, the creature is drained 2 for 1 day. Vexwinds prefer to drain their victims before killing them in some gruesome way.

TIMELINE

Prior to the adventure:	Three vexwinds have already appeared in the lodge, playing tricks and wrecking items before fleeing. One appeared two days ago, one yesterday, and one earlier this morning.
5:50 p.m.	Introduction: A vexwind appears in the Music Room, breaks out the window, and withdraws. Once the street is clear, it escapes out the window. Topp ushers the heroes into the lodge and presents his problem. A thunderstorm begins.
6:00 p.m.	Act 1: Dalby Dragfoot leaves for the day. Topp takes the heroes on a tour of the manor, ending with the Music Room.
6:20 p.m.	Act 2: A vexwind kills Mrs. Beeke in battle axe form and remains in this form until discovered. Topp leaves with Fatima.
8:00 p.m.	Act 3: A clever vexwind appears in the library. It plays a series of tricks but flees if confronted.
1:28 a.m.	A vexwind appears in the upstairs storage closet as Dalby Dragfoot enters through the window. The vexwind kills Dalby and rigs up a gruesome trap with his corpse (Act 5) before fleeing.
1:30 a.m.	Act 4: Ghent's caligni thieves arrive to steal <i>Silvershower</i> .
7:45 a.m.	Act 6: Topp arrives to survey the damage to the lodge and question Mrs. Beeke's corpse. If the battle axe has not yet done so, it attacks. Topp begins his last-minute research in the library.
9:00 a.m.	Workers arrive to repair the manor.
9:20 a.m.	A vexwind confounds the workers and attacks when confronted.
10:30 a.m.	Fatima arrives, and provides further direction to the heroes if necessary.
Noon	Act 7: Guests begin arriving, including Ghent. Topp sends the heroes upstairs. Ghent sneaks upstairs to steal <i>Silvershower</i> . Fatima encourages the heroes to use <i>Vaporblade</i> against Ghent. The heroes confront Ghent and his doppelganger minions.
12:10 p.m.	Conclusion: Lord Thackeray meets with the heroes.

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