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VILLAGE BACKDROP: ALDWATER 2.0





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For centuries, the people of Aldwater have guarded and revered the wooden labyrinth holding the their ancestors' remains. Only the Spiritspeaker ever ventures inside, using an ancient relic to hold council with the dead. The wisdom of the council is vast, but not without fault, and for several years the advice of the ancestral spirits has done nothing to halt Aldwater's increasing plight. Each season, the fishermen and trappers bring back a little less, and the children grow up a little hungrier.

In desperation, the Spiritspeaker recently allowed outsiders to petition the ancestors with questions, in return for donations. The influx of strangers in search of answers to lost questions and ancient riddles has brought much needed income to Aldwater, but resentment and anger brews among those who feel their most sacred traditions have been violated.

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ALDWATER AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Leodus Breurk
Government: Magical
Population: 134 (125 humans, 1 gnome, 2 half-elves, 1 half-orc, 5 halflings)
Alignments: LG, CG, N
Languages: Bullywug, Common, Draconic
Resources & Industry: Fishing, hunting, trapping

For centuries, Aldwater has stood where the waters of Blackraven Creek run into the Deepmire Marshes. A fertile estuary, this intersection was once home to abundant fish and game. Though far from trade routes and civilisation, the villagers dwelled here in harmony with the surrounds for hundreds of years.

But there is more to Aldwater than meets the eye. When a wise shaman of the village died, the citizens determined their council was still needed. They placed the body on an island at the mouth of the creek, and devised a ritual to commune with the deceased's soul. Over time, the complexity of the ritual and the number of corpses grew. Now the island shrine has grown into a wooden labyrinth holding the remains of each generation's elders.

At regular intervals, the spiritual leader of Aldwater, Leodus Breurk the Spiritspeaker, enters the labyrinth to commune with his predecessors' mummified heads using an ancient relic called the *Crown of Eternal Council*.

While wise, the collective knowledge of the council is limited to what the individual members knew at the time of their death. The council's traditionalist advice has not been adequate to deal with a recent decrease in the populations of fish and marsh animals the villagers rely upon to survive. The villagers suspect this decrease is caused by subtle changes in the environment, but strange mutations in some of the animals hint at more sinister forces at work. Fear of hostile bullywug tribes and savage monsters has so far dissuaded the villagers from travelling deep into the Deepmire Marshes to investigate. Imaginations run wild, and the villagers are becoming desperate.

Faced with the prospect of starvation, Leodus Breurk made an unprecedented decision. When a wizard from the nearby village of Fulhurst Moors approached him seeking information about ancient sacrificial sites in the marshes, Leodus agreed to ask the ancestors for the information in return for a sizeable donation.

Since then, Leodus has petitioned the ancestors for advice on behalf of dozens of different strangers, and word is slowly spreading. Each new visitor brings much needed gold, which the villagers use to purchase food and better hunting equipment. They stave off starvation one windfall at a time.

However, many villagers feel the new practice is tantamount to sacrilege. A rift is growing in Aldwater, and there is no easy solution. Should the village sacrifice the dignity of their ancestors? Or must they starve?

VILLAGE LORE

A character may know something about Aldwater. Determine how knowledgeable the characters are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Aldwater lies at the mouth of Blackraven Creek, where it flows into the Deepmire Marshes.
- Aldwater's most prominent feature is the large wooden labyrinth set on an island in the middle of the village. The island is said to contain the remains of the villagers' ancestors.
- The spiritual leader of the village know a secret ritual to gain knowledge from the dead.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: Black hair and blue eyes are dominant among the villagers, most of who are below average height.

Dress: Most villagers wear loose fitted leggings and shirts, made from a light, quick-drying fabric. Scarfs are often wrapped around villagers' head to keep away the ever-present insects.

Nomenclature: *Male* Girnach, Henn, Luwain, Morion, Rhylf; *female* Elaida, Grisanna, Isuefar, Nilda, Shavinia; *family* Aralon, Blagant, Glerent, Melydd, Teigan.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Aldwater, a character may hear one or more rumours from the table below. The character can learn this information in several ways: by overhearing locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on.

D6 RUMOUR	
1	A gigantic frog-like monster lives in Deepmire Marshes's depths. Local bullywug tribes worship it as a god.
2	There is something strange about Terric Modan. He's got a secret he's desperate to hide.
3	Brexander Greenroot has been trying to catch a huge electric eel called Ol' Spark for years. His last disastrous attempt almost cost him his life, but the stubborn gnome has vowed to try again.
4*	Lanna Glengaine once persuaded Kerin Banell to sneak her into the Labyrinth of the Ancestors. What Lanna is up to is anyone's guess!
5	The last group of strangers who sought knowledge from the ancestors in the labyrinth sailed into the Deepmire Marshes afterwards. They haven't returned, and they are assumed to have fallen prey to the bullywugs infesting the swamp's inner reaches.
6*	The Council of Ancestors has cursed Leodus Breurk because he shares their wisdom with outsiders.

*False Rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **Brexander Greenroot's House:** Here dwells the village's most experienced marsh guide, and a vocal opponent of the Spiritspeaker's new policy.
2. **Guardian's Hall:** The warriors who guard the Labyrinth of the Ancestors and serve as the village militia dwell here.
3. **Hyle's Marsh Tours:** Hyle Merrin, a jealous marsh guide, runs tours from his waterfront hut.
4. **Juhani's Goods:** The semi-competent, often drugged, Juhani Munk runs the only real shop in the village.
5. **Labyrinth of the Ancestors:** This wooden maze contains the earthly remains of Aldwater's dead.
6. **Spiritspeaker's House:** This elegant and well-furnished building is home to Spiritspeaker Leodus Breurk.
7. **Smallharbour:** From Smallharbour the honest Kynell Lawain ferries hides and fish up the waterways and returns with trade goods from nearby settlements.
8. **Terric Modan's House:** Here dwells Terric Modan, orphan, outcast and budding sorcerer.
9. **The Roaring Dragon:** The newly established inn, which many locals jokingly refer to as "The Burping Lizard", is often busy.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Brexander Greenroot (location 1; CG male gnome ranger 3) guides travellers into The Deepmire Marshes.

Hollean Uthevere (location 6; N male human) owns the Roaring Dragon Inn and is the most vocal supporter of Spiritspeaker Breurk. He is proud and ambitious.

Hywain Glengaine (location 2; LN middle-aged male human fighter 4) captains the Labyrinth Guardians, and is loyal to the Spiritspeaker, even if he disapproves of his recent decisions.

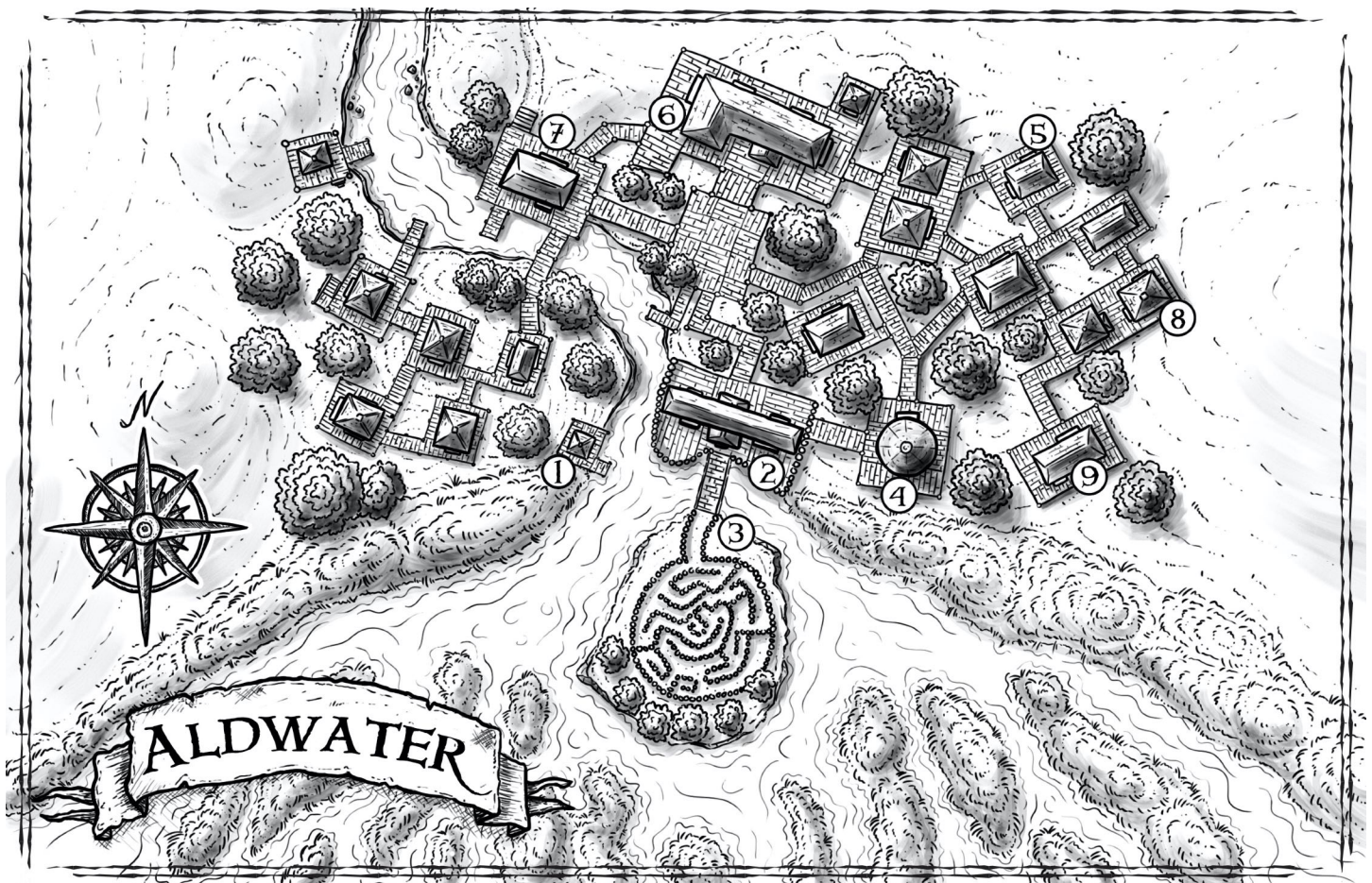
Kerin Banell (location 2; LN male human fighter 2) serves as the hot-tempered second in command of the Labyrinth Guardians.

Kynell Lawain (location 7; NG male human) operates the village's trading station.

Lanna Glengaine (location 6; NE female human) works as a barmaid and excels in inspiring volatile social situations. She is beautiful, but capricious.

Leodus Breurk (location 4; N male human cleric 7) makes difficult decisions affecting the entire community.

Terric Modan (location 5; CN male human wizard 4) goes to great lengths to conceal his growing powers.



LIFE IN ALDWATER

Life in Aldwater has never been easy, and it certainly hasn't helped that fish and animals are getting harder to find every season. The influx of income from visitors seeking to consult the ancestors has helped, but most members of the community still struggle to get by from day to day. No one in Aldwater is wealthy.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Most of Aldwater's inhabitants sail into the Deepmire Marshes in small boats and coracles each morning to fish and set traps. What they don't use for themselves, they sell to Kynell Lawain for him to trade with other settlements: mutton from Fulhurst Moors and deer from other nearby villages.

With the increase in visitors, more villagers are contemplating new ways of making a profit from the outsiders. Some have taken up various crafts, while others have noticed the demand for reliable guides who can navigate the Deepmire Marshes seems to be greater than Brexander Greenroot can handle. So far, though, no-one has been willing to take assignments involving travel further than a few miles into the marshes, due to fears of bullywug tribes, roving monsters and worse.

LAW & ORDER

The Labyrinth Guardians guard the Labyrinth of the Ancestors. They are also responsible for maintaining law and order in Aldwater, as well as defending it from outside threats.

The village's tight social structures serves as the most effective deterrent for crime; the occasional drunkard or thief is usually locked up in Guardian's Hall for a few days. For more serious crimes, the ancestors are consulted to determine punishment.

Outsiders are advised to be on their best behaviour while in the village, especially in regards to arcane magic. Casting spells in the village without prior warning or permission rapidly attracts the Guardians' attention. Anyone ignoring their warnings is likely to find themselves exiled.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

The people of Aldwater are traditionalists, and most of their rituals invoke the ancestors of old. The Night of Fireflies, Moonlight Dance and Eve of Remembrance all draw upon themes of ancestor worship.

Other traditions show respect for the marsh itself, or even the bullywugs. Mumbled rituals and prayers come with every catch of fish or harvest of wild berries, while many children's games centre around the mysterious bullywugs at the marsh's heart.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the characters experience as they move about Aldwater.

D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	From somewhere deep in the Deepmire Marshes, a thunderous croaking echoes through the night.
2	Two groups of visitors (possibly the characters and another group) wish to consult the ancestors. The group that makes Leodus Breurk the best offer gets their questions answered first, while the other must wait a week.
3	Lanna Glengaine flirts openly with one of the party, hoping to provoke one of her admirers into reckless action.
4	An empty boat is found floating in the Deepmire Marshes, with broken nets and traces of dried blood inside.
5	Hollean Uthevere offers a reward for trophies to decorate the Roaring Dragon inn. He pays extra for anything—bones, scales or trinkets—dragon related.
6	A young singer stumbles out of the swamp and tells how he was tricked and almost slain by a green hag in disguise.
7	A group of youngsters gather to taunt a large caiman.
8	A handful of gnomes stare into a campfire and nibble spotted (psychedelic) mushrooms.
9	Grey mist pours from the Labyrinth of the Ancestors, enveloping all of Aldwater in dense fog.
10	Hyle Merrins rows into Aldwater, scowling and bleeding. He had an unfortunate run-in with some bullywugs while hunting, but stubbornly refuses aid.
11	Kynell Lawain returns to Aldwater with a full raft of goods. Particularly valuable are coffee and steel daggers.
12	The Night of the Fireflies is upon Aldwater! Villagers lure thousands of fireflies with incense to the village and call out to forbearers' spirits.
13	Juhani Munk stumbles into the river and must be fished out. She's pale and delirious.
14	A rope of leeches explodes from the water and drags in an unsuspecting rabbit.
15	Three children play a rowdy game of "Find the Bullywug" in Blackraven Creek.
16	A small shipment of mutton and moonshine arrives from Fulhurst Moors.
17	An argument between Kerin Banell and Juhani Munk nearly comes to blows.
18	The respected mayor of Bleakflat arrives to commune with the Spiritspeaker. He arrives without baggage or companions, pays with odd coins and is gone by sunup.
19	A group of wealthy gamblers arrive in Aldwater, with hopes the council can predict the winner of the next big horse race.
20	Klaussa Greenroot riles up a small crowd, agitating them against "renting out the ancestors".

THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

Aldwater sits at the estuary where Blackraven Creek empties into the Deepmire Marshes. No major road reaches the village. Instead, the villagers must rely on a confused tangle of waterways to access the outside world.

Blackraven Creek flows from a cold, elevated north, and its waters smell of roots and peat. This slow-moving river becomes a mere stream as it rises through grassland and eventually moor. The waters become so narrow and shallow that those using rafts heading north must disembark and travel on foot after three days. From here, it's only a few more hours to Fullhurst Moors. As food stores diminish, Aldwater relies more and more on Fulhurst's mutton to survive.

To the east and west of Aldwater, trackless grasslands extend for weeks. The land is surprisingly barren, scattered with copses of willows but otherwise empty. In the spring, elk migrate north to the Bleakwoods by the village of Bleakflat. Beyond this, little of value can be found.

South of Aldwater, the expansive Deepmire Marsh is the best route to civilisation. To the unready, the marsh is an impassable swamp. To the skilled and informed, Deepmire is as traversable as a lake. Between patches of quicksand and dense vines, channels of mangroves line watery corridors—perfect for an agile canoe or light raft. These pathways exhibit their own strange circulatory

currents, and villagers like Brexander or Kynell can make extraordinary time using them.

Trade routes are accessible from the south and east limits of the Deepmire Marsh. Swamp paths lead around the perimeter to link up with merchant roads.

However, the Marsh is not without its perils. Caimans snap up unwary travellers, particularly the smaller folk who make for easy targets. Dog-sized spiders, hunting wasps and venomous lizards lurk in trees. Poisonous, flesh-eating vines hang from every limb.

A more pronounced danger is the large bullywug tribe dwelling in the centre of the marsh. These frog-people follow the old ways, worshipping animal gods and sacrificing any humanoid they come across. They rarely emerge from their muddy stronghold, but none who enter their domain ever return.

But the most insidious threat of the Deepmire Marsh is the strange decrease in fish and game. Even the villagers who know the Marsh well are stumped. Where has all the food gone? Unfortunately, the answer is a simple one, and not easily rectified: overfishing, overhunting and overpopulation. Aldwater is bigger than ever before, and the bullywug tribe is expanding. There simply isn't enough food to go around.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN ALDWATER

1: BREXANDER GREENROOT'S HOUSE

This wooden house was clearly built for someone of small size. Resting on a log platform where Blackraven Creek flows into the Deepmire Marshes, the hut provides direct access to the mire by way of a small dock. A shallow-keeled boat is moored to the dock.

Brexander Greenroot (CG male gnome ranger 3) lives here, but the house is frequently empty as he travels the Deepmire Marshes. Villagers say, only half in jest, the marsh is the rugged gnome's true home. Although many of the villagers often sail into the marsh to fish or set traps, Brexander is the only person in the village who is willing to act as a guide for outsiders venturing deep into the Deepmire.

Capricious and proud, Brexander firmly disapproves of "renting out the ancestors", as he calls it. Brexander traces his line back to Fezzlin, the founding gnome of Aldwater, and has no desire to see his ancestor sold to foreigners.

His daughter, Klaussa Greenroot (NG female gnome druid 3), is of a similar mind. She is more outspoken than her father, a foible that cost her the job of Spiritspeaker apprentice. Klaussa performs odd jobs around the village, using her green thumb and hunting experience to great effect.

Despite their concerns, both Greenroots are fundamentally good, if gruff, villagers. They refuse to take matters into their own hands, and hold out hope that Breurk can be convinced with words alone.

2: GUARDIAN'S HALL

This imposing long hall functions both as gatehouse to the Labyrinth of the Ancestors, and as garrison to the Labyrinth Guardians. A wooden palisade encloses the compound, ensuring access to the labyrinth is only possible by passing through the hall itself and over the hanging bridge.

Hywain Glengaine (LN female middle-aged human fighter 4) commands the ten men and women (LN human or gnome fighter 1) who serve both as protectors of the holy site and as militia and law enforcement for Aldwater. She is aided by Kerin Banell (LN male gnome fighter 2) her capable, but hot-tempered, second in command. Both warriors are highly sceptical of Spiritspeaker Breurk's new practice, but Hywain feels honour-bound to respect his authority.

Kerin, on the other hand, would likely openly defy the Spiritspeaker, if not for Hywain's restraining presence. For the moment, he contents himself with more "subtle" meddling. Kerin harasses and harangues visitors, annoys Hollean at the Inn and generally makes himself a nuisance to anybody who favours this ancestor tourism.

If left unchecked for too long, Kerin may pursue more violent means of ridding the village of foreigners.

3: HYLE'S MARSH TOURS

Hyle Merrin (CG male human ranger 2) is a man of many moods. Perpetually overestimating his own abilities, he swings from wild optimism to bitter grumblings depending on the day. When he feels successful and appreciated, he's thrilled and charming. When he faces up to a failure, he retreats into isolated misanthropy.

Hyle views himself as a competitor to Brexander Greenroot in his knowledge of Deepmire Marsh. While Hyle's skills are impressive, Brexander has repeatedly demonstrated his superiority. For years Hyle stomped around the village, annoyed whenever his peers would go to Brexander for a favour.

Spiritspeaker Breurk changed all of that. With an increase in visitors, Hyle has found himself a new breed of client. Hyle gladly gives tours of the Marsh, or shows visitors the ins-and-outs of spearfishing. He's made a good amount of money doing so, and is vehemently in favour of this continued business.

Hyle believes his incredible charm wins clients to his side. In reality, Brexander is gruff with outsiders, so the competition is rather one-sided.

While Hyle is misguided and a bit delusional, he is by no means evil or cruel. When push comes to shove, Hyle puts aside his misgivings or complaints and stands with the village.

4: JUHANI'S GOODS

The general goods store is only distinguishable from its neighbours by a freshly painted (and misspelled) sign daubed with the words, "Juhani's Gods". Juhani Munk (N female gnome) recently converted her home into a shop after kicking out her husband for adultery. Her husband's shoes were the first item sold. Now, she and her three sons run the only real shop in the village.

Juhani knows little about running a business, but luckily for her there's no competition in the village. While most villagers make their own tools, or purchase such items directly from Smallharbour, visitors have nowhere else to turn. Thus, Juhani has turned a tidy profit from a meagre start, and wholeheartedly approves of the new situation.

Despite her prominent position, this busy matriarch hides a secret. Many villagers occasionally partake of the marsh's psychedelic mushrooms, but Juhani consumes them morning, noon and night. While mostly lucid, Juhani occasionally slips into a waking dream. On one such occasion, she wandered in and out of the Labyrinth of the Ancestors without activating any alarms.

And the situation is deteriorating. Some visitors have brought harder, more addictive, drugs to the village, and Juhani was instantly enthralled. She buys whatever she can from visitors, and has started to lose more gold than she gains. If her habit is discovered, she would make an excellent cautionary tale to her peers about the dangers of the outside world.

5: LABYRINTH OF THE ANCESTORS

The Labyrinth of the Ancestors seems menacing and uncertain. Shrouded in perpetual mist, this wooden labyrinth occupies most of the small island at the mouth of Blackraven Creek. Accessible only by the hanging bridge leading from the Guardian's Hall, the labyrinth contains both magical and mechanical traps to keep the ancestors safe from trespassers. Leech swarms infest the surrounding waters, attacking any creatures getting too close.

Strange things happen when Spiritspeakers visit the labyrinth. Clammy mist coats every surface and deadens the sounds of the village.

CONSULTING THE ANCESTORS

The Spiritspeaker of Aldwater seeks advice from his or her predecessors by using the *Crown of Eternal Council* to perform a sacred ritual in the centre of the Labyrinth of the Ancestors.

When the ritual is performed, the heads of the deceased spiritspeakers animate, and are able to participate in discourse beyond the normal limits of *Speak with Dead*. The ancestors are still limited to the knowledge and mental capabilities they possessed in life, as specified by *Speak with Dead*.

The council may be asked to advise whether a particular action will bring a good or bad result. Treat this as an *Augury* spell with a 75% chance of a meaningful reply. The council don't actually see into the future, but base their answer on their collective experience and knowledge. Consequently, situations they would have little or no experience with have a lower chance of a meaningful reply. (The exact chance is at the GM's discretion).

The ancestors may also be asked specific questions about the surrounds, the village and other swamp-based questions.

Spiritspeaker Breurk charges outsiders a minimum of 100 gp to consult the ancestors on their behalf, and sometimes more, depending on the nature of the inquiry. Alternatively, he may accept payment in the form of services, if monsters or other marshy raiders beset the village.

CROWN OF ETERNAL COUNCIL

Aura Faint necromancy; **CL** 5th-level cleric

Weight 1lb.;

Small pieces of human bone and a few small onyx gems are set in the polished dark wood frame of this crown.

The wearer can cast *Speak with Dead* three times per day, but can ignore the maximum length of time the individual has been dead if the dead was a spiritseaker in life.

By performing a special day-long ritual, the wearer may permanently bind his physical body to the crown.

Once per week, the wearer of the crown may use it to speak with all dead who are bound to the crown within a 30-foot radius. This session can last up to one hour, and there is no limit to the number of questions that can be asked.

Small shrines and memorial paintings decorate the labyrinth's innumerable twists and turns. At each dead end, a ritually butchered animal hangs impaled on a spike. The passageways morph and stretch as the Spiritspeaker progresses. It sometimes takes more than an hour to reach the centre of this tiny maze.

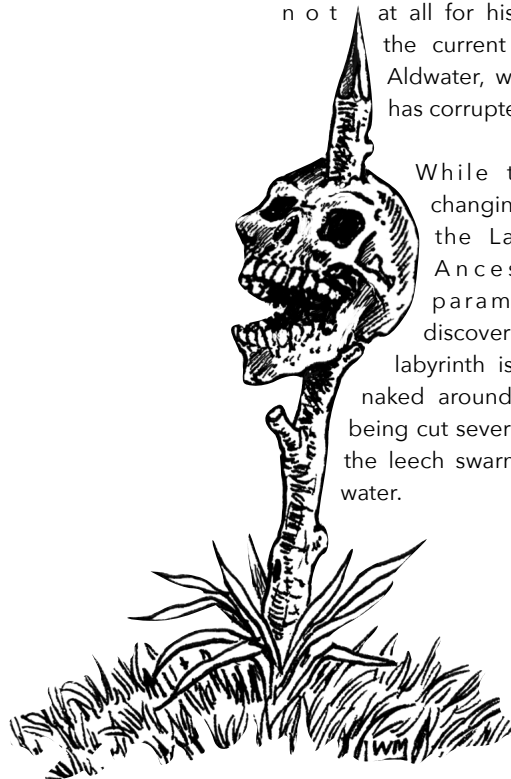
At the maze's centre, the mummified heads of the deceased Spiritspeakers are mounted in a circle facing inward. The preserved heads discuss and participate in the council when the Spiritspeaker performs the appropriate ritual.

Twenty-seven heads sit atop spikes in the inner circle. Along the wall, nine large rope bags contain the remains of heads too decomposed to be mounted. It is said that the greatest Spiritspeakers are preserved the longest, but in the end the marsh comes for them all.

The heads are not monolithic in their judgement, and are as divided as Aldwater when it comes to complex matters. Questions to the council normally result in sullen internal deliberation which can last as long as six hours. However, the council always reaches a final decision, and intones it together in a single voice. Notable deceased spiritspeakers include:

- Fezzlin Greenroot is a vocal ancestor, the village's first spiritspeaker and its only gnome spiritspeaker. His advice was so valued that his death sparked the Spiritspeaking ritual. While wise, he is also terse, angry and righteous.
- Breven Uthevere's head is immense, and must be held in place with two stakes. As loud and cheerful as he was in life, Breven can none-the-less flash to anger if his opinion is dismissed. A reckless adventurer, Breven usually suggests the riskiest path with the highest reward.
- Hoggrill Breuk is terse and sober. His measured opinions are infused with honour and duty. He cares not at all for his great-grandson, the current Spiritspeaker of Aldwater, whom he believes has corrupted the council.

While the times are changing, the sanctity of the Labyrinth of the Ancestors is still paramount. Anyone discovered in or near the labyrinth is forced to swim naked around the island after being cut several times to attract the leech swarms inhabiting the water.



6: SPIRITSPEAKER'S HOUSE

Decorated with images of life and death, this circular building is made from wooden planks of superior quality. The interior is neat and orderly, with rustic finery in abundance. Rabbit skin drapes hang from the walls. Meals are served with an ancient set of sheep-bone dinnerware.

Visitors are greeted in a parlour furnished with low comfortable chairs and a mosaic table depicting the Labyrinth of the Ancestors. Sweets and simple delicacies are offered before the meeting begins (candied cherries, pickled fish and smoked frog are standard), and the visitor is expected to offer food in exchange. Then, business begins. In recent months, more and more outsiders have become party to this intimate ritual.

Beyond the parlour lie the private study and living quarters of the village's current spiritspeaker, Leodus Breurk (N male human cleric 7). Traditionally, the spiritspeaker's apprentice and successor also resides here, but that position is currently vacant.

Leodus, a tall man with greying black hair and beard, usually displays a civilised and hospitable demeanour. It is clear he takes his responsibilities as leader of the village very seriously. Leodus carries himself with the air of a man used to making hard and often unpopular choices. While he outwardly maintains confidence about his decision to open up the labyrinth, it privately torments him.

7: SMALLHARBOUR

Smallharbour serves as a depot and trade station for goods moving in and out of Aldwater. Though no major roads reach Aldwater, larger paths can be accessed either upstream several miles, or to the southeast along the swamp.

Either way, goods must be sent to these trade routes by boat, then loaded onto caravans or traded directly on the road. Several small, sturdy boats are moored outside the trade station for this purpose. Without the building, large crates and bundles of hides are stacked along with a couple of full burlap sacks. The distinctive scent of dried fish and raw hides is unmistakable.

Kynell Lawain (NG male human), a good-humoured man with sharp grey eyes and a few missing teeth, runs regular shipments up Blackraven Creek and down into the swamps. In nearby Fulhurst Moors, he sells the fish and hides the villagers catch in the marsh, and returns with mutton, peat and wool.

Kynell's longer trips to the south are made with more gravitas. He leaves for a week or two at a time, then returns with manufactured tools, iron and glass.

Kynell maintains a unique status in village. A large amount of goods and gold travel through him, and he is trusted to be honest and take only his appropriate cut. Luckily, Kynell is genuine to a fault. He would never betray his fellow villagers.

8: TERRIC MODAN'S HOUSE

The single resident of this nondescript hut is Terric Modan (CN male human wizard 4), a lanky man in his early twenties with birthmarks across his face. Terric leads an unassuming life, and does his best to hide his growing sorcerous powers from his superstitious neighbours. This is getting increasingly difficult, however, as the aberrant taint in his blood is beginning to manifest physically.

Terric is not a native to Aldwater. Instead, he is the son of two adventurers who moved here to retire. When Terric was 14, his parents ventured into the swamps to parley with the bullywug tribes. They never returned, and Terric has lived alone ever since.

This budding sorcerer is treated with kindness and respect, but he is still an outcast. While he approves of the new rules regarding the labyrinth, his opinion is mostly ignored by the others. Terric wants to leave Aldwater, but is too frightened to enact such a large change on his own.

Terric's aberrant magics are starting to taint the nearby animals. Some now have strange blemishes similar to Terric's own birthmarks. While the villagers have yet to link Terric with the food shortage, Terric silently blames himself (though he is blameless). Should the villagers uncover this connection, they would likely seek alternate solutions before expelling the sorcerer entirely. However odd Terric acts, he is still a citizen of Aldwater.

9: THE ROARING DRAGON

Recognising early that allowing outsiders to consult the ancestors would bring new visitors to the village, Hollean Uthevere (N male human) used his life savings to construct this large inn. More stylish than one would expect in a marsh village, the Roaring Dragon is obviously meant to cater to wealthy outsiders, who often have to spend several days waiting for the Spiritspeaker ritual to begin.

- **Food & Drink:** Meal (boiled caiman eggs, frog legs, seared fish) (4 sp), watered moonshine (2 cp).
- **Accommodation:** Two-bed chamber (14 sp); common room (4 sp).

Since the terrain around Aldwater is poorly suited for camping in the wild, Hollean has no qualms about charging a premium for rooms and meals. Both cost more than standard rates, but the quality reflects the high price. Hollean keeps the prices of drinks low in order not to alienate the locals, but many of them still resent his vocal support of Leodus Breurk's decision to allow outsiders to consult the ancestors.

The fair, raven-haired Lanna Glengaine (NE female human) works as a barmaid. As the daughter of Hywain Glengaine, she does not actually need the job, but it allows her to interact with interesting visitors, and provides her with many opportunities to use her natural charms and manipulative skills for her own amusement. Both Kerin Banell and Terric Modan nurse rather obvious infatuations with her.

OGL V1.0A

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