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VILLAGE BACKDROP:  
SUURIN





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# VILLAGE BACKDROP: SUURIN

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*Suurin was supposed to be a halfling utopia, a return to the times before strife and prejudice; halfling burrows furnished in rich mahogany, cool streams and cobblestone bridges, green fields alive with laughing children. Unfortunately, these same green fields grow prodigious quantities of blue daffodil, a flower easily synthesized into the mind-numbing drug skez. Now, Suurin languishes under the control of drug racketeers who have transformed this haven into the skez capital of the realm. The roads are kept safe, not by city guards or peaceful inclinations, but by the iron fist of a crime lord who knows chaos is bad for business.*

## CREDITS

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**Design:** Jeff Gomez

**Development:** Creighton Broadhurst

**Art:** William McAusland and Maciej Zagorski (The Forge Studios).

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**Cartography:** Maciej Zagorski (The Forge Studios)

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## SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

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Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition Village Backdrop. Herein you'll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It's impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM's system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are wizards, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we've made no attempt to note their "class" leaving them simply as "female human" and so on.

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## SUURIN AT A GLANCE

**Ruler** Devia Brookshire

**Government** Overlord

**Population** 67 (51 halflings, 11 hobgoblins, 3 humans, 1 dwarf, 1 half orc)

**Alignments** LE

**Languages** Common, Goblin, Halfling

**Resources & Industry** Drugs (skez)

Suurin was supposed to be a halfling utopia, a return to the imaginary times before strife and prejudice; halfling burrows furnished in rich mahogany, cool streams and cobblestone bridges, green fields alive with laughing children. Unfortunately, these same fields grow prodigious quantities of blue daffodil, a flower easily synthesized into the mind-numbing drug skez. Now, Devia Brookshire—a drug racketeer—has transformed this haven into the skez capital of the realm. The roads are kept safe, not by city guards or peaceful inclinations, but by the iron first of a crime lord who knows chaos is bad for business.

### VILLAGERS

**Appearance** The halflings of Suurin are gaunt, weak, dirty and distracted. The hobgoblins are squat and musclebound, foul smelling but well groomed. All suffer from visible black veins in the eyes and face—a hallmark of skez consumption.

**Dress** The halflings wear dirty, torn clothing and pay little attention to their general appearance. The hobgoblins are always armed with swords and clad in hard leather armour.

**Nomenclature** *male* Corrin, Haldon, Rinad, Janvryn, Wilmin; *female* Anyra, Leris, Odivra, Uvilda; *family* Brookshire, Greenleaf, Housefur, Meadowood, Soulder.

### MARKETPLACE

When the PCs arrive in Suurin, the following items are for sale:

- **Drugs** blue skez (50 gp), crimson skez (75 gp), green skez (30 gp)

### VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Suurin, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Suurin produces copious amounts of the drug skez, which is distributed across the region.
- Devia, the crime lord of Suurin, was born and raised in the village. She left for the city at a young age and returned when her gang kicked her out.
- Devia employs hobgoblin mercenaries to protect her assets. She pays her employees well, but some of the hobgoblins have higher ambitions.

### WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Suurin, a PC may hear one or more rumours pertaining to the village and its surroundings. The PC can learn this information in a number of ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local tavern and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

#### D6 RUMOUR

1	Though Devia pays them well, Akarak and Bekarak may soon kill her and take her place.
2	Doric the barkeep spikes his drinks with skez to keep his patrons interested.
3*	Devia murdered her own father when she returned to Suurin.
4	Murgle the hobgoblin is in love with the baker's daughter and wants to save her from Suurin.
5*	Skez is highly explosive in large quantities. The factory could burn down at any minute.
6*	Devia's old gang is interested in acquiring Suurin. If Devia isn't amenable, they will take it by force.

\*False rumour

#### WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Suurin was founded in the good old glory days that everybody remembers but nobody can quite pin down. It was passed along as something of a halfling secret, a rural village of warm autumn days and cool summer nights. Halfling men smoked pipes at the Willowbreeze inn and halfling women squabbled over the details of old ma Notley's peach pie. Suurin's problems were rustic and supremely halfling: nothing serious, but just enough to keep the villagers occupied.

When young Devia Brookshire ran away from home, it was quite the scandal. She was gone for a few years, got in good with some big gang in the big city, got kicked out and returned to Suurin with her tail between her legs. That should have been that, but she came back from the city with skez. One by one, Devia convinced the young folk to try the drug and one by one they became indentured to her. She cleared out her late father's burrow, hired a few alchemists and started mass producing the stuff from the nearby flowers. Out flowed the drugs and to Devia flowed the coin. Then came the hobgoblin mercenaries. Then came the overdoses, the murders and the fights in the streets.

Now, Suurin is a drug-addled mess. Gone are the carefree days of pie recipes and summer dances. In their place is a run-down village where drug addicts lie in the gutters and virtually all hope and laughter has died.



## NOTABLE FOLK

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

**Akarak and Bekarak** (location 3; LE male hobgoblin sergeant) Akarak and Bekarak are Devia's two gruff, taciturn and violent bodyguards. They lead a dozen other hobgoblin.

**Albrich Greenleaf** (location 5; N old male halfling) Albrich Greenleaf is one of the few not addicted to skez. He watched the addiction and death of all three of his sons and now does what little he can to subvert the drug trade.

**Devia Brookshire** (location 3; LE female halfling thief 2) Devia Brookshire is the source of Suurin's wealth and woes. She rules Suurin; a crime lord prodigy hopped up on skez and without a shred of moral conscience.

**Leylan Brookshire** (location 7; N male halfling) A close friend of Devia he was the first to become addicted to skez. For some time, he acted as her second in command. Now, he's just another skez-head starving on the street.

**Ragran** (location 2; LN female half-orc) Ragran is a hard working alchemist. She cares little for politics, and keeps her head down. After she accidentally blew up her last employer's laboratory, she's just happy to have a job.

## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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

1. **Blue Daffodil Fields:** Fields of dark blue flowers provide both natural beauty and the raw ingredients for skez production.
2. **The Factory:** Within the cramped factory, eight alchemists work in shifts to ensure skez production never stops.
3. **Brookshire Residence:** Devia runs all operations from her ancestral burrow (where she also stores her skez).
4. **The Barracks:** The hobgoblins' barracks is an orderly, foul-smelling enlarged burrow.
5. **Main Street:** Skez-heads stumble across the main street or sleep face-down in the mud beside the cobblestones.
6. **Greenleaf Residence:** Albrich Greenleaf considers himself the last bastion of decency in a corrupted village, and imagines his residence to be the last vestige of Suurin's glory days.
7. **Willowbreeze Bar:** A dark silence pervades this outdoor beer garden where skez is washed down with bitter beer.



## NOTABLE LOCATIONS

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### 1: BLUE DAFFODIL FIELDS

Atop the halfling burrows and in the surrounding countryside, blue daffodils grow in prodigious masses. They cover the land like an azure carpet, swaying gently to and fro in warm breezes.

Once upon a time, children flew kites in these fields and strapping halfling men offered rich bouquets to blushing halfling maids. Now, swarms of workers take to the hills every morning, brandishing sickles and carrying baskets. They rush to harvest as many of the flowers as they can, then return to the factory where they are paid in either gold or skez (most choose skez). Fights over prime growing areas are common.

Blue daffodils have an incredibly fast growth rate. If severed cleanly from their root system, blue daffodils regrow their flowers in a matter of weeks. Harvest continues year-round, both in blistering summer heat and frigid winter winds.

### 2: THE FACTORY

The factory is a warehouse of a burrow, once used for grain storage in the good old days. Now, it has been stripped of even the bare decorations it once possessed. The floor and walls, treated with rubber to prevent fire, are marred with scorch marks but relatively clean. Hot, humid air escapes from poorly constructed vents in the ceiling. Well-used alchemical equipment sits on four rows of long desks, and at these desks work the alchemists.

Of the residents of Suurin, eight are skilled alchemists. Five outsiders (three humans, one dwarf and one half-orc) were attracted by the offer of good pay and discounted drugs. The other three are native halflings.

Day in and day out these alchemists work in shifts of four, fuelling Suurin's only industry. Skez production is labour-intensive, but not very difficult. Once the blue daffodils are harvested, they are hand-separated into stamen, petals and anther. These distinct sections are processed through a litany of pipes and beakers, boiled or powdered and eventually distilled into the three different types of skez: blue, crimson and green. Once the skez is produced, it is carefully packed, categorized and then funnelled through a passageway to the back of the Brookshire Residence, where it is distributed by Devia herself.

### 3: BROOKSHIRE RESIDENCE

Devia's (LE female halfling thief 2) ancestral home is her base of her operations. Despite her status, the burrow is more austere than visitors might expect, stripped bare of ornaments and trinkets. During the day, Devia sits at her desk in the entrance hall, flanked by the hobgoblins, Akarak and Bekarak (LE male hobgoblin sergeant). Here, she keeps diligent books on the sales and production of skez, and personally makes all sales and

organizes all trade caravans. A pouch of blue skez is always ready for a quick pick-me-up, and she dextrously snorts the powder without ever taking her eyes off her work.

In the evenings, Devia retires to her bedchambers, where she consumes green skez. Compared to the order of the entry hall and filing cabinets, Devia's personal chambers are a mess. Stained blankets and overturned stools litter the floor, and half-completed drawings hang from the walls. The blinds are always closed, so a sputtering ever-burning magical torch lights the dismal scene.

In a secret compartment beneath her bed, a safe contains her most prized possessions: half a dozen *potions of cure disease*. She consumes one of these at the start of each week lest the strains of addiction interfere too much with her work. In addition to hobgoblin and alchemist wages, much of her profits go to purchasing these expensive potions from a city merchant.

### 4: THE BARRACKS

The barracks is perhaps the most orderly and worst smelling place in Suurin. This reconverted burrow is the home to the hobgoblin mercenaries (nine LE male or female hobgoblin) led by Akarak and Bekarak (LE male hobgoblin sergeant). They patrol Suurin and ensure Devia's safety. (However disciplined they appear, Akarak and Bekarak are of middling loyalty, and may, one day soon, murder Devia and take her place.)

The underground mansion was once the family estate of the Meadowood family, a halfling dynasty known for rowdy parties and scandalous debauchery (at least, relative to most of Suurin). The Meadowoods were some of the first to fall prey to Devia's skez, and, before long, eagerly agreed to a life-long supply in exchange for their home.

Now, all pleasant halfling amenities have been stripped. There are no portraits of plump patriarchs, nor pantries filled with aged cheese. As befits a true hobgoblin barracks, every inch of the space is organized and infused with a foul smell. The small entry hall is fitted with three tables for taking meals and playing games of cards (always for gold or crimson skez). The east wing is lined with hard bunk beds. The west wing contains stores of bread and rotten meat, as well as locked chests with personal belongings, pay and skez stashes.

There are no lights in the hobgoblins' barracks. Given their ability to see perfectly in the dark, the mercenaries use this minor inconveniences as protection against snooping halflings. (In the past, a few addicts unsuccessfully tried to steal skez from the hobgoblins, but the resultant savage beatings ensured that virtually no halflings come anywhere near this place now.

## 5: MAIN STREET

The main street is a grey, dismal affair. It runs straight through Suurin along Breaker's Brook and down to the main road. Once, visitors could find halflings villagers about their daily tasks, children at play and donkey carts rolling over the cobblestones. Now, one must take care not to step on the drug addicts wallowing in the gutters.

Main street presents the strongest argument against the dangers of drug addiction. It is littered with trash and vomit, and often inhabited by unconscious skez-heads. The green grass and manicured flowers that once lined the road are trampled into the mud, and the only wagons are the drug-caravans which Devia sends out to major trade routes. From a visitor's first steps along main street to his last, everything is corrupted by the addictive pull of skez.

## 6: GREENLEAF RESIDENCE

The Greenleaf Residence is a small, shabby burrow which hosts a small, shabby halfling. Albrich Greenleaf (N old male halfling) is one of the oldest people in Suurin. At the ripe age of 70, he keenly remembers the good old days before Devia infested the town with her drugs. He also remembers the faces of his three sons as they grew up, started families, became addicted to skez and then died, one by one, in the streets.

Albrich considers himself the last bastion of decency in Suurin, but he has few friends and even fewer allies. When he needs food or new candles, he dons a rough black cloak and slinks through town in

an attempt to protect himself. Everybody recognizes him. Nobody cares.

Albrich has never tried skez and does what he can to disrupt its use. However, he can't do much. He's a paranoid old man who spends his days pacing about his cramped quarters, muttering to himself and lambasting other citizens. His energy is expended by hurling racial epithets at hobgoblins as they pass or spitting patronizing insults at skez-heads. Occasionally he'll stand in front of a drug wagon as it rolls onto the trade road, but he's roughly pushed aside every time.

Devia is aware of the nuisance, but cares little. If Albrich ever becomes a problem for business, she'll put an end to him. Until then, she's content to ignore the troubled halfling.

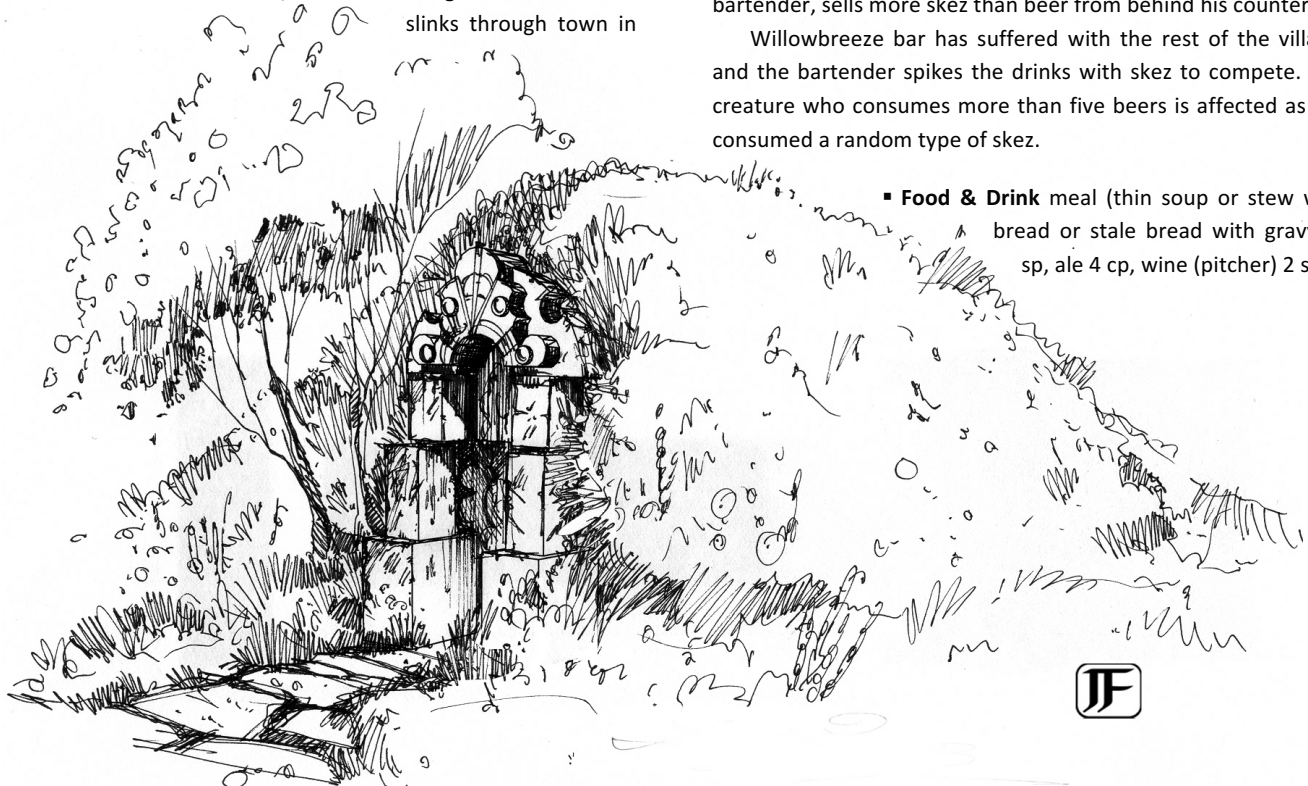
## 7: WILLOWBREEZE BAR

The Willowbreeze Bar is the oldest structure in Suurin, composed of the very first timber the settlers ever laid. It is more of a beer garden than an actual tavern: a large outdoor courtyard surrounded by dilapidated fences and serviced by a rustic bar. Paper firefly lanterns cast purple light on the rough chairs and tables. Over the whole establishment, a weeping willow drapes its long and swaying branches and a sense of merry contentment lives in the eyes of the inebriated patrons.

At least, that's the way things used to be. Now, it's more of a skez-den than anything else. Stoned halflings sprawl on benches and against wooden posts. Silent hobgoblins play tense hands of cards on sticky tables. And Doric (NE male halfling thief 2), the bartender, sells more skez than beer from behind his counter.

Willowbreeze bar has suffered with the rest of the village, and the bartender spikes the drinks with skez to compete. Any creature who consumes more than five beers is affected as if it consumed a random type of skez.

- **Food & Drink** meal (thin soup or stew with bread or stale bread with gravy) 3 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.





## LIFE IN SUURIN

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Life in Suurin is dreary and hopeless. Once a pleasant halfling utopia, the village has been completely ruined by skez.

### TRADE & INDUSTRY

Everything in Suurin revolves around skez. Most villagers are paid meagre wages to collect blue daffodils, wages which are then promptly spent on the drug. The few shops still in business, namely the Willowbreeze bar and a handful of general stores, operate only with Devia's permission.

Even though Suurin is utterly consumed by the skez trade, it sees virtually none of the revenue. Skez is a time consuming, low profit drug, and all of the coin goes directly to Devia. Unfortunately for Devia, running a drug operation is expensive work. The hobgoblins and alchemists demand pay, and Devia must sometimes bribe do-gooders and roving bandits to look the other way. The rest of her profits go into her personal stash of addiction curing *potions of cure disease*. Far from growing fat off the proceeds, Devia struggles to stay afloat on the back of a dying village. When the system collapses altogether, she'll have angry hobgoblins and mobs of addicted citizens to face.

### LAW & ORDER

Devia tolerates no lawlessness and punishes wrongdoers with brutal swiftness. The streets are patrolled by pairs of hobgoblin mercenaries. Equipped with short swords and leather armour, these guards stand at twice the height of their halfling subjects. With brawn and training impossible to match, there is no defying these enforcers. However, Devia's "laws" extend only to her own business protections. She cares little for theft or even murder, as long as it does not interrupt production.

### EVENTS

While the PCs are in Suurin, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D6	EVENT
1	The PCs spot a halfling corpse floating in a river eddy. Closer investigation reveals a knife wound to the back.
2	A halfling villager, drugged out of his mind, attacks the PCs with a sharpened rock. He is weak but bloodthirsty.
3	A piece of alchemical equipment explodes in the factory, and the alchemists emerge coughing and stoned.
4	Two daffodil harvesters draw blood over an unpicked flower patch.
5	At the Willowbreeze Bar, a stoned halfling warbles a haunting ballad of lost innocence.
6	Hobgoblins publicly whip a skez thief. The punishment gets out of hand and the halfling is killed.

### SK EZ

Three variants of skez are synthesized in the factory, all in prodigious quantities.

#### BLUE SKEZ

*This highly refined skez is sold in small pouches of blue, crystalline dust. The user gains a muddled sense of focus, but finds himself worn thin when the effects end.*

Users inhale this severely addictive drug.

**Price** 50 gp; **Effect** For 1d4 hours, the user gains a +2 bonus to Intelligence, but is fatigued and extremely sensitive to bright lights.

**Aftermath:** The user is exhausted and loses 1d2 points of Wisdom and 1d4 points of Constitution. For each night's rest, the user regains 1 point of Wisdom and 1 point of Constitution (or 2 points of each with a day of complete rest).

#### CRIMSON SKEZ

*Crimson skez is sold as hard red nuggets reminiscent of dried blood clots. When chewed, the drug tightens the nerves and imbues a feeling of heightened awareness.*

Users ingest this moderately addictive drug.

**Price** 75 gp; **Effect** For 1d4 hours, the user cannot become fatigued and gains a +2 bonus to saving throws made to resist magical mental control. If the subject fails a saving throw against such a spell effect he instead flies into an insane rage and attacks the spellcaster (gaining a +2 bonus to hit and damage) for a number of rounds equal to the level of the spell cast.

**Aftermath:** The user is exhausted and loses 1d4 points of Wisdom and 1d4 points of Constitution. For each night's rest, the user regains 1 point of Wisdom and 1 point of Constitution (or 2 points of each with a day of complete rest).

#### GREEN SKEZ

*Green is the least processed of all skez, and produces a lethargy and addictive depression not dissimilar to alcohol. It takes the form of thin green sheets which can either be smoked or dissolved on the tongue.*

User inhale or ingest this moderately addictive drug.

**Price** 30 gp; **Effect** For 1d4 hours, the user is fatigued but gains a +4 bonus to Charisma, but is particularly susceptible to illusions (suffering a -4 on saving throws against such effects).

**Aftermath:** The user is exhausted and loses 1d4 points of Wisdom and 1d4 points of Dexterity. For each night's rest, the user regains 1 point of Wisdom and 1 point of Constitution (or 2 points of each with a day of complete rest).

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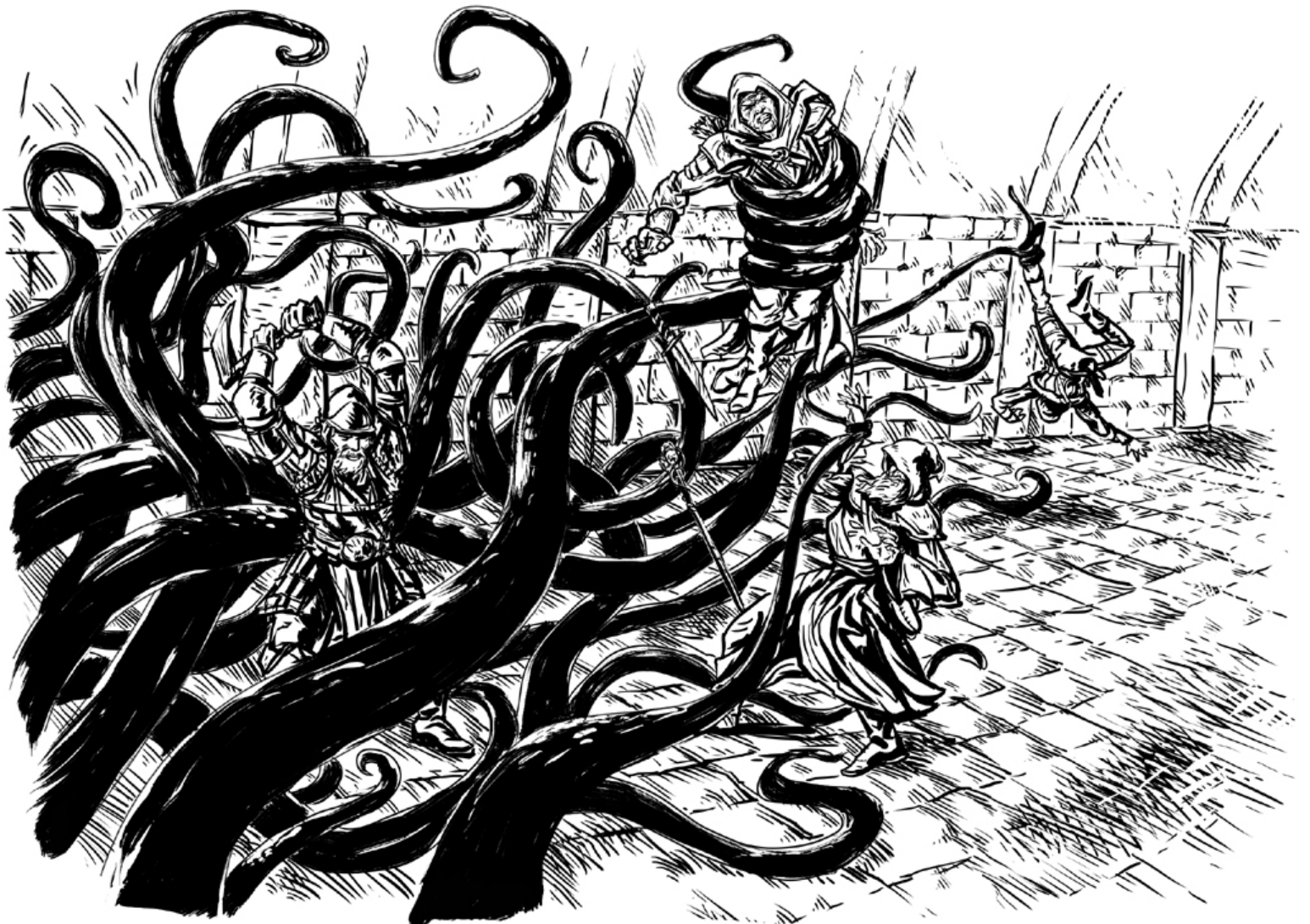
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