



ONE PERFECT MOMENT

A Shadow of the Demon Lord Adventure for Novice Characters

It is widely known that the City of Set tolerates any religion, from the anodyne to the bloodthirsty. City law gives equal status to anyone of faith and every system of belief, regardless of its nature. Temples, churches, chapels, and ramshackle huts summon the faithful to worship, whether the old gods or the new, as myriad untold cults flourish and fade from memory with each passing day.

One of these cults, the Adepts of the Epiphany, has recently achieved some prominence. Originally born in the impoverished labyrinthine warrens of the city, it is now practiced widely in Set, in both the fetid basements of taverns and the elegant salons of private dwellings. The Adepts claim to bring a new kind of salvation to the righteous, one that calls for enlightenment through ritual devotion to carnal pleasure and the use of mind-altering drugs in order to achieve a state of blissful euphoria.

In the past few weeks, a sect has carried its own brand of the cult's teachings to the town of Granville, arriving in scarlet robes with rictus-like smiles and an otherworldly gleam in their eyes, which they claim reflects the pure joy they feel within. They bring good news and the promise of a brighter future... but there are rumors that they were cast out of the cult in Set for delving too far into

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forbidden knowledge. There are those who whisper that the cult members' frozen smiles mask a deeper, darker truth yet to be revealed.

One Perfect Moment is an investigation adventure written for a group of novice characters. The group completes the adventure when they uncover the truth about the sect and thwart their sinister plans.

THE ADEPTS OF THE EPIPHANY

The Adepts of the Epiphany claim to offer a unique opportunity to gain a higher level of consciousness and self-awareness. Unlike many other cults who preach escape from the world's misery through asceticism—an act the Adepts regard as akin to suicide—the Adepts teach that such a state can only be reached by achieving total euphoria, a state of absolute pleasure in which one can see with perfect clarity. As proof that their teachings work, they point to the awakening of certain mental powers demonstrated by their most successful devotees: the ability to peer into the future, anticipate danger before it occurs, and move objects by thought alone.

The attainment of such a state is difficult, if not impossible, without the aid of certain rituals devoted to fleshly pleasure, combined with the use of mind-altering substances, which the Adepts are more than happy to provide as gateway experiences for the curious. Those who seek the Adepts' wisdom are given a blend of secret drugs—opium combined with other mysterious, powerful substances—and

ready access to sexual partners: together, a heady combination few can resist.

Those few who can usually abandon the cult after sating their initial urges, either uninterested in or unwilling to dedicate themselves to the deeper mysteries the Adepts offer. Most, however, do not, finding themselves quickly initiated into an intense, never-ending cycle of ardent desire and insatiable need, an experience the Adepts call “the hunger for Truth.” These initiates soon become slavish acolytes of the cult, ambassadors who then work to lure even more newcomers into the cult's dark grip.

THE SECT

Five weeks before the adventure begins, the Adepts of the Epiphany arrived in Granville to make converts out of its people. They purchased a small farm on the town's outskirts and set out at once to evangelize among the locals. Led by Vance Swiet, the cult has enjoyed much success, their influence growing daily as people of all ages and backgrounds come to discover the indescribable pleasures offered by these strangers.

Back in Set, Swiet was a former priest of the New God, defrocked for heresy but actually cast out because of sexual liberties he often took with his congregants. He soon found acceptance and a perfect home among the Adepts' cult. His fit body, exceptional looks, easy manner, and melliflously deep voice enabled him to rise easily within the ranks of Set's new cult. But he soon desired and sought even greater pleasures than those initially offered by his new companions.

His opportunity came when he recruited Keyane Corvence, a merchant with a keen and incisive mind. Quiet and capable, she prefers to keep her beauty and her intelligence secret. She came to Swiet to learn the ways of the Adepts, and he inducted her personally. In time, they became regular lovers and decided they would explore the deeper mysteries together, an exploration that ultimately led to their expulsion from the cult. Swiet and Corvence gathered their disciples, traveled some distance, and finally settled in Granville.

Swiet and Corvence watch over all newcomers and acolytes alike, selecting likely pupils for advancement in the deeper mysteries of the Epiphany. They choose only the most attractive and most malleable, and of them only those whose appetites for pleasure and euphoria cannot be quenched by the simple sensations of the flesh. The leaders want seekers willing to reach beyond the jejune, common experiences enjoyed to the idle dabblers who come through their doors. They seek the true epicures of the flesh and mind.

MOMENTS OF CLARITY

Members of the Adepts seek the moment of clarity, the epiphany that awakens their minds. Those who have achieved it might gain some minor benefit. Examples include the following, which can be assigned to cultists encountered.

Flash of Insight: The creature gains an insight into the immediate future. At any one point before the creature uses a rest that the creature would make an attack roll or challenge roll, the creature can use the insight to get an automatic success. Once the creature uses this talent, it cannot do so again until it completes a rest.

Minor Telekinesis: The creature can use an action to choose one unsecured Size 1/4 object within short range and move it up to 10 yards.

Blessing of the Epiphany: The creature makes challenge rolls to resist attacks with 1 boon.

Fire of Inspiration: The creature can use an action to cause a small flame to appear at a point within short range. The flame sheds light in a 5-yard radius for 1 minute before fizzling out. The flame can ignite flammable objects.

VANCE SWIET

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1 human

Perception 13 (+3)
Defense 10; **Health** 20; **Insanity** 3; **Corruption** 3
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 13 (+3),
Will 9 (-1)
Speed 10
Power 2

ATTACK OPTIONS

Sword (melee) +2 (1d6 + 2)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Prayer When a creature within short range makes an attack roll or challenge roll, Vance can use a triggered action to grant that creature a boon.

Flood of Pleasure Vance uses an action to cause sensations of intense pleasure to spread out in a 3-yard radius from a point he can see and reach. Each creature in the area that he chooses must get a success on a Will challenge roll or become dazed for 1 minute. Taking damage removes the affliction. Once Vance uses this action, he cannot do so again until he completes a rest.

MAGIC

Power 2

Telepathy[†] *share thoughts* (3), *mind stab* (2), *repulsion* (1)

Theurgy *denounce* (3), *blessing* (2)

[†] See the *Demon Lord's Companion*. If you don't have this supplement, replace these spells with *bewitch*, *charm*, and *compel* from the Enchantment tradition.

KEYANE CORVENCE

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 human

Perception 14 (+4)
Defense 12; **Health** 18; **Insanity** 4; **Corruption** 2
Strength 10 (+0), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 12 (+2),
Will 9 (-1)
Speed 10
Devoted to Vance When Keyane sees Vance take damage, she makes attack rolls with 1 boon for 1 minute. This effect is cumulative with itself.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Long Knife (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6)

HANDS OF THE ADEPTS

The cult employs 8 cult enforcers, called the Hands of the Adepts, as bodyguards and bouncers to haul away the rowdy or uncontrollable. They also carry out darker work for the cult: several of Granville's citizens initially expressed great concern about the cult, only to go suddenly quiet after receiving a visit from the Hands. Worse, some went missing after they refused to keep quiet.

CULT ENFORCER

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
Defense 12; **Health** 17; **Insanity** 1; **Corruption** 1
Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 10 (+0),
Will 11 (+1)
Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Club (melee) +2 (1d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Strangling Cord The enforcer makes a Strength attack roll against the Agility of one creature it can reach and is no more than 1 Size larger than the enforcer. If the target is already grabbed by the enforcer, the roll results in an automatic success. On a success, the enforcer loops the cord around the target's neck and tightens it, causing the target to take 1d6 damage and become grabbed for 1 round. A target grabbed in this way makes attack rolls to escape the grab with 1 bane.

THE DARK TRUTH

The Adepts of the Epiphany in Set might be an organization genuinely devoted to lifting mortals from their suffering through drug-addled orgies, but those in Granville have a far darker purpose, one that will lead to the spiritual destruction of their followers. The Granville sect exalts a sinister fiend that seduced and corrupted the sect leaders several months ago: Straggalith, an insidious demon that seeks entry into the world to feast upon mortals' unrestrained desires and frenzied ecstasies, in order to usher in a new age of darkness.

Swiet and Corvence unwittingly opened themselves up to the demon while secretly experimenting with cult mysteries and rituals that had been forbidden to them. Straggalith quickly enthralled them, as the pair eagerly bargained their souls away for the power to experience the deepest, darkest pleasures. Swiet and Corvence continued to commune with the demon through rituals and spells, receiving infusions of its vile shadow, which they would then mix with the drugs used to intoxicate their followers. Upon discovering their transgressions, the cult leaders expelled the pair.

Exile allowed Swiet and Corvence to step up their efforts to bring forth their master in a horrific ritual that will take place when shadows next cover Tarterus fully. In the dark of the night, the cultists will sacrifice their victims—initiates and outsiders alike—in their buried temple during a euphoric and violent orgy of sex, drugs, and bloodshed. This act will open a portal to the Void and allow Straggalith to fully enter the mortal world.

Only the innermost circle know of the plan and they will go to any length to keep their plot a secret from the locals, those people who will suffer first when the demon comes forth to claim its dominion.



GRANVILLE

The adventure takes place in a small town named Granville. Home to about six hundred people, mostly human, the community clings to the side of a major trade route and sees traders come and go all year long. The town consists of many buildings, over half of which are wooden homes of varying quality, with the rest being shops, taverns, and inns, all catering to the travelers who pass through. The most notable locations are described here.

Cassenault House: A three-story home stands on Granville's north side, towering over the lesser homes there. The building belongs to Loria Cassenault, a wealthy matron and one of the few remaining scions of a merchant family whose power and influence has waned over the last years. In addition to Cassenault, the home houses three servants who do their best to maintain the fading grandeur of the house and family.

Epiphany Farm: The Adepts of the Epiphany purchased a farm just outside of town. It consists of a farmhouse, barn, and several acres of poorly tended grain fields.

Frozen Sparrow Inn: An inn of middling quality standing near the center of town, it has two stories, a shingled roof, and a chimney at either side. The inn has ten rooms, with beds enough for thirty people, a kitchen, dining hall and bar, plus quarters for Jasper the innkeeper and his family (wife and three adult children).

Temple of the New God: The Cult of the New God, the dominant religion of Granville, has a small temple in the community. The priestess, a slim and charismatic woman named Jalee Wainwritt, runs the place with help from two acolytes, Saul and Tessa. All live on the grounds and tend to the community's needs. The temple is made from stone, has a bell tower that sounds the hour, and a great symbol of the New God over its double doors. The grounds include a graveyard and a small house shared by the temple's attendants.

Tropp House: A small, unassuming home not far from the Cassenault House is home to Kildare Tropp, the town mayor. Tropp is a red-faced, boisterous man with high blood pressure and a tendency to wring his hands when frustrated.

Whisper Trees: About a half-hour's walk down an old trail

from town stands Whisper Trees, a thick oak forest crisscrossed with trails. Locals believe wicked spirits haunt the woods and thus avoid it.

GETTING STARTED

You need to make a couple decisions before you run the adventure. First, place the town. You can put Granville anywhere you like, preferably close to where the characters had their last adventure, but it should be somewhere near a trade route.

Second, decide why the characters are here. The characters might have come to rest up, train, or stop en route to someplace else. Alternatively, you can adapt the town so that it is a place already important to the player characters. If, for example, you ran *Survival of the Fittest*, you could turn Granville into Fletcher's Rest. In any event, their reputation, unusual composition, or something else attracts the attention of Loria Cassenault, who dispatches an aging servant to fetch them.

THE ERRANT HEIR

The adventure starts when an old man summons to the group to attend Loria Cassenault at her home on the outskirts of town. Locals know her as a woman of some means thanks to her family's mercantile interests, but means that have been reduced of late by bad investments and worse luck. If the characters press for more information, they also learn that her niece Fallon stands to inherit the family fortune, though some suspect that the matron might change her will, "what with that young woman getting all tangled up with those strangers." The strangers are the Adepts of the Epiphany and if the characters follow up this line of inquiry, go to **The Strangers** entry under Investigation for more information.

THE JOB

If the characters go to the Cassenault house, a servant welcomes them at the door and leads them directly to Loria Cassenault, who waits for them in the sitting room. The woman wastes no time in revealing her problem: her niece Fallon has begun a spiritual journey that has taken her into the embrace of the Adepts of the Epiphany. At first, Cassenault shrugged off her enthusiasm as being nothing more than that of a young woman awakening her potential, but Fallon has become empty, vacant-eyed, and hardly spends any time in the house.

Cassenault's primary concern was out of the integrity of the business for Fallon was due to take over the family business upon coming of age. Thus, Cassenault sent agents to investigate the Adepts. They did not return. While they might have fallen fell victim to bandits or thieves, the timing of their disappearance seemed too coincidental to her.

Cassenault is concerned and wants to make sure the future of her family's dwindling fortune is not at risk. She asks the group to investigate the Adepts and, if her niece is in danger, remove her from their clutches. She does not care what the group does otherwise—she simply wants to protect her family and her family's name, and offers a reward of 500 cp, payable when they have finished their investigation to her satisfaction.

If asked about the missing agents, Cassenault tells the group she hired a pair of investigators, Clyde DeBois and Caldwell Trent, two men from a nearby community recommended to her by friends. She put them up at the Frozen Sparrow Inn, and they still have a room there. She thinks they might have spoken to some of her niece's friends, young men and women who showed an interest in the Adepts but never joined them.

INVESTIGATION

The player characters have a chance to locate the cult, find Fallon, and find a way to retrieve her. If they do not reach her before the dark of the moon Tarterus, the cult begins its ritual and, if not stopped, the errant heir dies. The moon goes dark this night, and each step of the investigation takes one or more hours, as shown on the following table. The adventure begins at 9 o'clock in the morning.

INVESTIGATION LEADS

Lead	Time
The Missing Agents	1 hour
Forked Rock	2 hours
The Strangers	1 to 3 hours
Fallon's Friends	1 hour per friend
Spy on the Adepts	1 to 2 hours
Interview Fallon	1 hour
Interview Adepts	1 to 4 hours

The group can pursue any of the leads shown on the table in any order they want. From these leads, the group can discover the following clues:

- Cassenault's agents were murdered—possibly by thugs in the pay of the Adepts.
- The Adepts' teachings hold a deeper secret, one that might drive people mad.
- Fallon will not willingly leave the cult.
- Those who do attempt to leave the cult or speak about it to outsiders tend to disappear.
- The Adepts' farmhouse is far more spacious than it appears from the outside.
- Something is happening—something big—at the farmhouse in the immediate future.

COMPLICATIONS

Each lead has a potential complication to it—an added wrinkle you can throw at the player characters to vary up their investigations. Each complication takes 1 to 3 hours to resolve.

RELIGIOUS WARFARE

Some of the locals become sick of the Adepts' doings and come to smoke them out with torches and pitchfork. The group can intercept them or allow them to have a pitched battle at the site of the farmhouse. The Hands are sufficient to turn the townsfolk away, though at the cost of several lives. This causes most of the Adepts to retreat to the hollowed cavern they dug in the basement, and makes any interactions with the Adepts (including interviews with Fallon or the leaders) take twice as long to accomplish.

CELEBRATION

A group of 6 traveling Adepts (as **cultists**) arrives in town, called here through dreams, and they hold an impromptu celebration in the middle of town with some of the lesser initiates of the local Adepts. They have come to speak to Vance Swiet in the hopes of discovering what brought him here and how it was they came to be called. They know nothing of the sect leader's plans.

SPIES

After about an hour exploring the town, the character with the highest Perception score notices someone is shadowing the group's movements. If they attempt to confront their watchers, the watchers flee, only to return to watch again from a safe distance. The pursuit can take up to an hour. If the characters catch the 2 watchers (as **pickpockets**), they discover Cassenault hired them to make sure the group engaged in the business for which she hired them.

SPIES, PART 2

Hands of the Adepts—2 **cult enforcers**—follow the group at a greater distance, seeing who they talk to, and silencing anyone who could potentially expose the truth of their ritual. It takes a success on a Perception challenge roll made with 2 banes to notice these watchers.

THE MISSING AGENTS (1 HOUR)

Following up on the missing agents takes the characters to the Frozen Sparrow Inn. There, the group can confirm with the innkeeper (as **commoner**) that the agents stayed here and paid for their room for a week. The innkeeper hasn't seen them in a few days.

If the characters convince the innkeeper to let them examine the room or sneak into the room through illicit means, they find the room as the agents left it: two beds obviously slept in, a writing desk on which sits a half page of notes, and some personal effects worth 1 ss. Reading the notes reveals that the agents discovered the Adepts came from Set and were expelled from their order for having heretical beliefs. The notes also hint that the leaders, Swiet and Corvence, have a deeper secret, but the agents turned up nothing conclusive. Finally, on the edge of the page is a note that says "CHECK OUT FORKED ROCK."

Development: If the group follows this lead, they reduce the time it takes to investigate the Adepts of the Epiphany and Fallon's Friends by 1 hour.

FORKED ROCK (2 HOURS)

Inquiries about Forked Rock with any local reveals that it is a spot just outside of town in a nearby wood, where an old, disused trail passes between a split boulder. People don't use that path anymore as it's

said there are wicked spirits in the wood, but anyone can give the group directions. It takes about an hour to get there.

What the locals don't know is that after the agents did some investigation about the cult, the Adepts dispatched a few enforcers to deal with them, luring them into the woods and then strangling them. If half or fewer of the group follows up on this lead, 2 **cult enforcers** pursue them and attack once the player characters are out of town.

The enforcers are disguised, dressed as locals, but they are newcomers to Granville and can be identified as belonging to the Adepts. If captured, the enforcers give up no information about their cult, but magic might convince them to reveal that they were sent to take the group out.

Finally, not far from the Forked Rock, searching characters can find the shallow graves of the two agents. Inspecting the bodies reveals the cause of death to be strangulation.

THE STRANGERS (1 TO 3 HOURS)

The group can gather information about the Adepts of the Epiphany.

Locals: Anyone in town can tell the characters that the Adepts have not been in the town for long—no more than five weeks—but have gained a large and devoted following, numbering forty members. People are dismayed by the cult's growth.

The townsfolk know the cult has acquired a farm a mile or so outside of town, which is always lit and active. Some say they have heard sounds of digging, but if so, no one has seen any mounds of dirt to give proof to the rumors.

The Mayor: The mayor can tell the characters he's in a legal bind. As far as he can tell, the strangers have broken no laws and present no threat, but they do seem to be *everywhere*, and now there are rumors that even more cultists are coming for some event at the dark of the moon.

The Temple of the New God: The local temple of the New God knows little about the cult, though Jalee Wainwright wrote to Set to find out more about the newcomers. She discovered from her superiors that Swiet was originally a priest of her faith who sought to uncover deeper mysteries and was defrocked for it—at which point he approached the Adepts.

FALLON'S FRIENDS (1 HOUR PER FRIEND)

Fallon had several friends who joined the cult with her but left soon after. These friends live around the town and characters spending at least one hour asking around town about her associates can turn up a several names. Each friend lives with his or her parents, and they are all young but not especially attractive or appealing. All are a bit unhinged from

their experiences. They are also quite cautious about what they say about the Adepts and to whom they say it. Getting them to talk requires some coercion, though if they learn Fallon might be in danger, they share what they know.

Bits and Pieces: The characters can learn bits and pieces from the various friends they interview. All describe a place of heavy smoke, dim light, naked flesh, and bountiful pleasure. Some stuck it out for a few days before they began to trust their intuition and fled. Others turned away as soon as they saw what was there. Some say one or two of their friends disappeared—these were young people who had been inducted into the next circle of mysteries and became disquieted by the experience. They mentioned their discomfort and suggested they might leave, but instead they disappeared altogether.

The Broken Girl: Veronica, Fallon's childhood friend, saw more and her mind has fractured as a result. Characters should learn of Veronica after talking with at least two of Fallon's other friends. Her family is unwilling to expose her to outsiders, but if pressed, they take them to her room, where the group finds the girl in bed, eyes wide. If asked about the Adepts, she moans and hugs herself, and then says, "But what it has tasted, it has found glorious. It breathes compulsion, and the desperate and self-deluded are its meat and drink. It has found a crack in the world, and it is forcing its way inside." She answers no other questions, but she might mutter more about cracks in the world and the yawning spaces.

The Vanished: If the group goes back to interview any of the other friends who spoke to them, they have vanished, taken by the cultists.

SPY ON THE ADEPTS (1 TO 4 HOURS)

The Adepts' remote farm headquarters, backs up against a small, rocky bluff. The place hums with activity night and day. Lanterns burn in the windows at all hours. Scarlet-garbed initiates work in the fields during the day, and wander in and out of the house at all times. Any character who watches for at least one hour can make a Perception challenge roll. On a success, the character notices some of the acolytes emerging from the house are dirty, smudged, and sweaty, as if they had been hard at labor. After a second hour of observation, a character can repeat the roll and, on a success, notice far more people enter the farm building than should be able to fit inside, suggesting either the place is incredibly cramped, or it has somehow been enlarged.

The Dead of the Moon: If the group watches the farm when the moon rises dark, they no longer see cultists emerging from the farmhouse. Instead, they see a steady stream of the faithful enter the house as the hour draws toward midnight—dozens of them

flock to the house, far more than it could possibly hold. Chants and moans emanate from windows. A great ritual is clearly taking place somewhere in the building.

INTERVIEW FALLON (1 HOUR)

If the group wants to talk to Fallon, they need to go to the farmhouse and ask for her. The initiates welcome the characters to the reception area on the first floor and usher Fallon in. Her eyes are blank and her actions slow, almost as if drugged. She laughs thickly at almost anything they say—she's clearly under the influence of something.

She tells the group she is happy here, that she is close to unlocking the mysteries of the Epiphany, and that she doesn't care about the family's business, "What is money compared to enlightenment?" She murmurs, "None of this will matter anyway because the truth is coming to the world for *everyone*." When she says this, other cultists smile gently and remove her from the room. They provide no further information, and Fallon resists any further questions.

Attacking the Cultists: The player characters might decide to move directly against the cult, an effort that is most likely doomed to fail given the cult's superior numbers. In addition to the two leaders and the Hands, there are **40 cultists** who have all come under the cult's influence. These characters fight to protect the leaders and resist efforts to break them up. However, the followers are all impaired thanks to their drug use, with banes to nearly any action they might take. If the characters somehow manage to defeat the cultists, proceed with the Conclusion.

INTERVIEWING ADEPTS (1 TO 2 HOURS)

If the group goes to the farm during the day, either Swiet or Corvence are happy to talk to them. One is always in the office, ready to deal with issues, while the other is in the cavern supervising the setup for the ritual. They are friendly but bland, and they always offer the player characters the opportunity to come witness the teachings of the cult themselves. If the characters take them up on it, they lose four hours to sex and drugs in the basement ritual chamber. At the end of this time, characters participating in the event gain 1 Corruption and become impaired until they complete a rest.

If the group comes after sunset, neither of the leaders will be available.

The leaders have simple answers for every piece of evidence the group has accumulated. They insist they are being framed, that someone is intent on making them look evil and misguided, and suggest the group look into Cassenault's business dealings for a reason why she might want the group involved. They deflect any question by claiming conspiracy against them.



Investigating the Conspiracy: If the characters follow up on the cult's leaders' suggestion to investigate Cassenault, they uncover the truth about her family's history. Cassenault's ancestors made their fortune in slavery and smuggling, using their wealth to buy up the lands around, including the land on which the Adepts reside. Cassenault, if pressed, admits she wants to regain her ancestors' lands but insists she is not behind the outrage at the cult's activities. Discovering this information takes at least 1 hour.

EPIPHANY NECTAR

The Adepts of the Epiphany use a special drug that combines opium with a noxious substance originating from the Void. Any creature that ingests it experiences intense feelings of pleasure that last until the creature completes a rest. During this time, the affected creature is impaired. When the creature removes the affliction, it gains 1 Corruption. Each dose sells for 1 cp, and knowingly selling or giving the drug away earns the character 1 Corruption if he or she has 2 or fewer Corruption.

THE DEAD OF THE MOON AND THE RITUAL

The ritual begins at nightfall and concludes at midnight, when the shadowed moon reaches the zenith. If the Adepts are allowed to complete the ritual, the demon Straggalith will come forth to usher in a new age of evil that will plunge the lands all around into darkness.

How the ritual plays out and whether the Adepts have a chance to complete it depends entirely on the group's decisions. The following information assumes the characters make their assault on the farmhouse at night. Modify the entries as needed to accommodate the story. Also, there are **40 cultists**, including Fallon, and **8 cult enforcers**, so be sure to reduce this number by any slain during the adventure.



value determined by you, but doing so would certainly cause the characters to acquire Corruption as well as the attention of the Inquisition.

At night, 4 cult enforcers guard the farmhouse door. Inside, 6 impaired cultists fight to prevent the group from reaching the Sanctum.

THE SANCTUM

Stairs that lead down to the basement reveal a large comfortable space with a number of supporting columns. The cultists call this the Sanctum. A polished wooden floor holds up couches, divans, and a number of feather-stuffed blankets. Scarlet fabric hangs along the walls. Behind the fabric on the far wall, a hidden passage leads to the Inner Sanctum. Careful examination reveals dust and mud tracks on the wood floor, no matter how carefully the cultists clean it.

Normally, the Sanctum is the site where the orgies take place. This night, however, the room is empty.

WHAT IF THE CHARACTERS JOIN IN?

Any player characters who accepted the Adepts' invitation to participate in one of the initiation rituals are also invited to attend the greater ritual that is to occur this very night. If they accept, the characters are ushered inside—though they must leave their weapons behind—where they are drugged and given every pleasure they can imagine to keep them insensate until the time comes to sacrifice them. By midnight, characters participating in the debauchery are defenseless until they complete a rest.

THE FARMHOUSE

The farmhouse where the Adepts have made their headquarters has two stories—the top floor, full of bunks and sleeping quarters—and the main floor, which holds the reception area, the dining hall, the kitchen, the storage room, and offices for the leaders. A safe in the office holds a bag of 500 cp, 1d3 random enchanted objects, and the cult's stash of drugs. There are enough doses here to keep a cult of fifty members or so high for months. Characters who make off with the stash might sell it for a tidy sum, with the ultimate

THE INNER SANCTUM

The passageway leads to the Inner Sanctum. Small pockets in the hall hide 2 cult enforcers who spring out to surprise the group if they come this way. Once past the guards, the group finds a room set aside for more advanced pleasures—pain, dominance, and bloodletting. Instruments of torture fill the room, and at any given time, at least six eager practitioners (cultists) try to invoke the moment of clarity. They do not respond well to having their meditations interrupted and attack any non-cultists entering the room. A secret door leads from this room into the Cavern of the True Sanctum. Characters examining the walls find the door as do any characters who get a success on a Perception challenge roll made with 1 bane.

THE TRUE SANCTUM

The secret door opens onto a massive limestone cavern with a massive ravine cutting the chamber in two. The cultists have been erecting masonry along the walls, trying to make this a presentable ritual space, but the work is still incomplete, and the cavern and cave system beyond extend a great deal farther.

A large altar dominates this space. Two pillars stand guard at either end of the altar, carved with horrific and hypnotic runes. From the tops of each flicker baleful lights, and the closer the ritual draws, the more these lights resemble eyes. Between the pillars is a strange rippling area of shadow. This is the heart of the cult.

On the night of the ritual, the pillars cast strange light across writhing yards of naked flesh, as the cultists engaged in a horrific orgy. One by one, Swiet and Corvence draw worshippers to the altar, where the demon can drain the victim's life, which also causes the light from the pillars to intensify. Once the demon has devoured the soul, the cult leaders toss the empty shells into the great ravine. At the last moment of the ritual, Fallon steps to the altar, disrobes, and offers herself for her final epiphany. Once Fallon dies, Straggalith (as a **large demon**) manifests from the shadow between the pillars and destroys the cult leaders before lurching up and out of the farmhouse to begin its foul work destroying the community, the region, and the world beyond.

If the characters arrive before midnight, assume there are 6 cultists here for each hour before the appointed time. If the group attacks, the cultists shake off their lethargy, empowered by the demon, and attack the group. Cultists make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon. If the battle turns against the cultists and the ritual looks as if it will fail, Swiet and Corvence attempt to escape by the fastest and safest available route.

CONCLUSION

The adventure can end in several different ways.

Recruit the Locals: The group might shut the cult down with the aid of the local law. The characters can muster up a dozen or so of the town watch and guards (as **patrollers**) to help them. Against a superior force, Swiet and Corvence flee, taking their money and drugs with them. Those who fell under their influence will slowly return to normal, although they will never be fully free of the corruption and debauchery they experienced.

Kidnap Fallon: The group could kidnap Fallon before the ritual. She fights, but her strength is weak. Over the course of several hours, she suffers withdrawals, becoming defenseless. At midnight, if she is not closely watched, she takes her own life by slashing her throat.

Disrupt the Ritual Before It Begins: The group could stop the summoning before it starts by dismantling the altar, killing the enforcers, or otherwise making the ritual space unsafe. As with the first outcome, Swiet and Corvence escape through the great cavern.

Confront the Demon: The group can also disrupt the ritual as it happens. This is the most dangerous of outcomes for too much delay might allow Straggalith to enter this world. If this happens, the demon harvests the souls of the corrupt and hateful, killing everyone and everything it can. Even if the demon does not manifest fully, it pours its strength into the faithful, and they fight to their dying breath to protect its manifestation as described under **The True Sanctum**.

The Cultists Escape: If Swiet and Corvence escape, they will never forget those who ruined their plans. In addition to plotting their revenge, they might attempt another summoning—this time with better defenses. The demon's hold upon them is strong, and it will never allow them to accept defeat as long as they live.