



ADVENTURERS
LEAGUE



TRUST & UNDERSTANDING

DDAL00-10 BY ALAN PATRICK

DDAL00-10



TRUST AND UNDERSTANDING

A Saga of the Worm Adventure

The shield dwarves of western Faerûn sometimes speak of a labyrinthine structure on the shores of a misty lake. Rumored to imprison an ancient creature that predates Faerûn's beginnings, the place has long been sealed. But now coins are showing up in bazaars and trader's booths that match the description of those minted by this citadel, and they are rightly concerned.

A Six-to-Eight-Hour Adventure for Tier 4 Characters. Optimized for APL 18.



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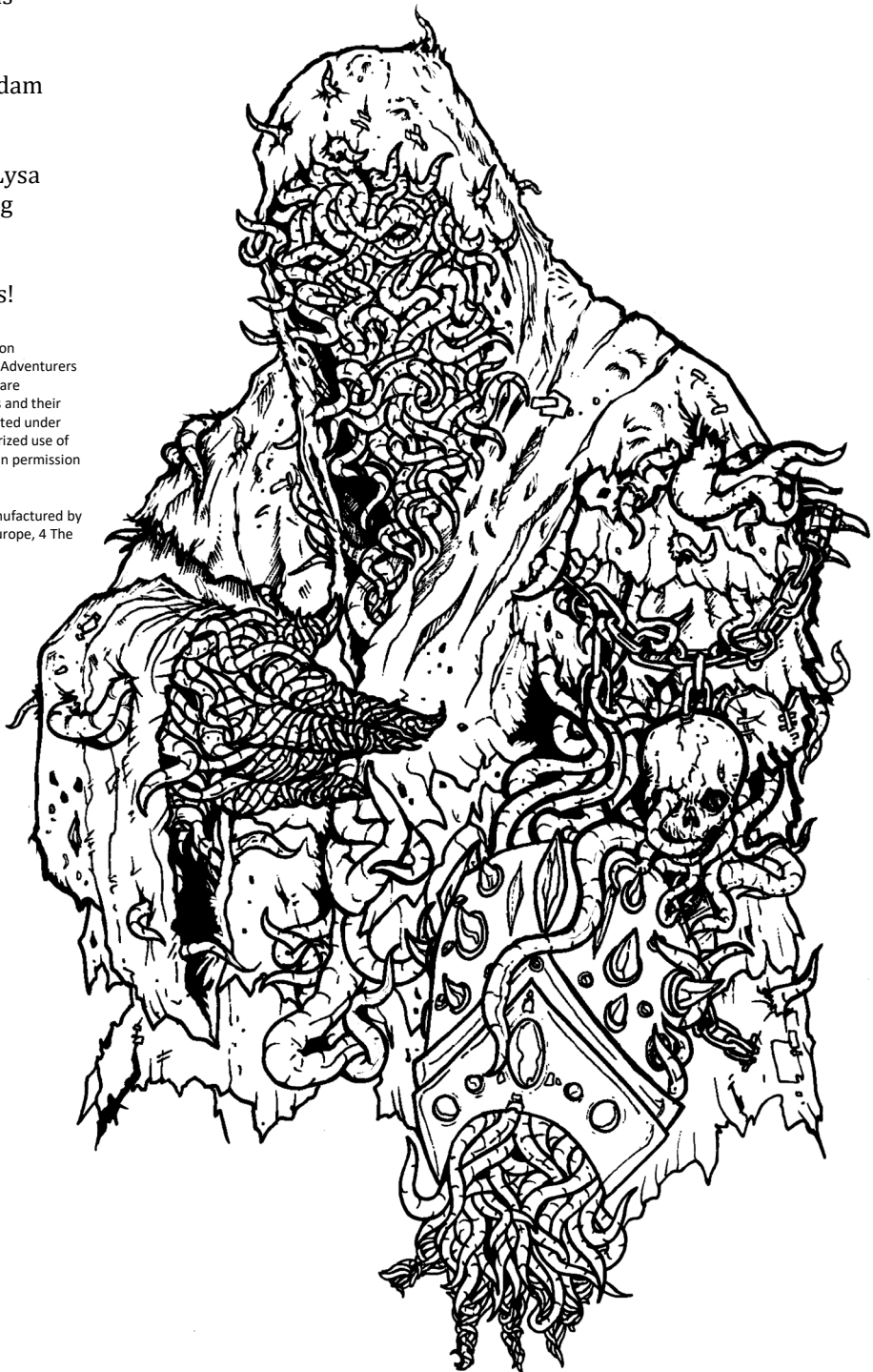
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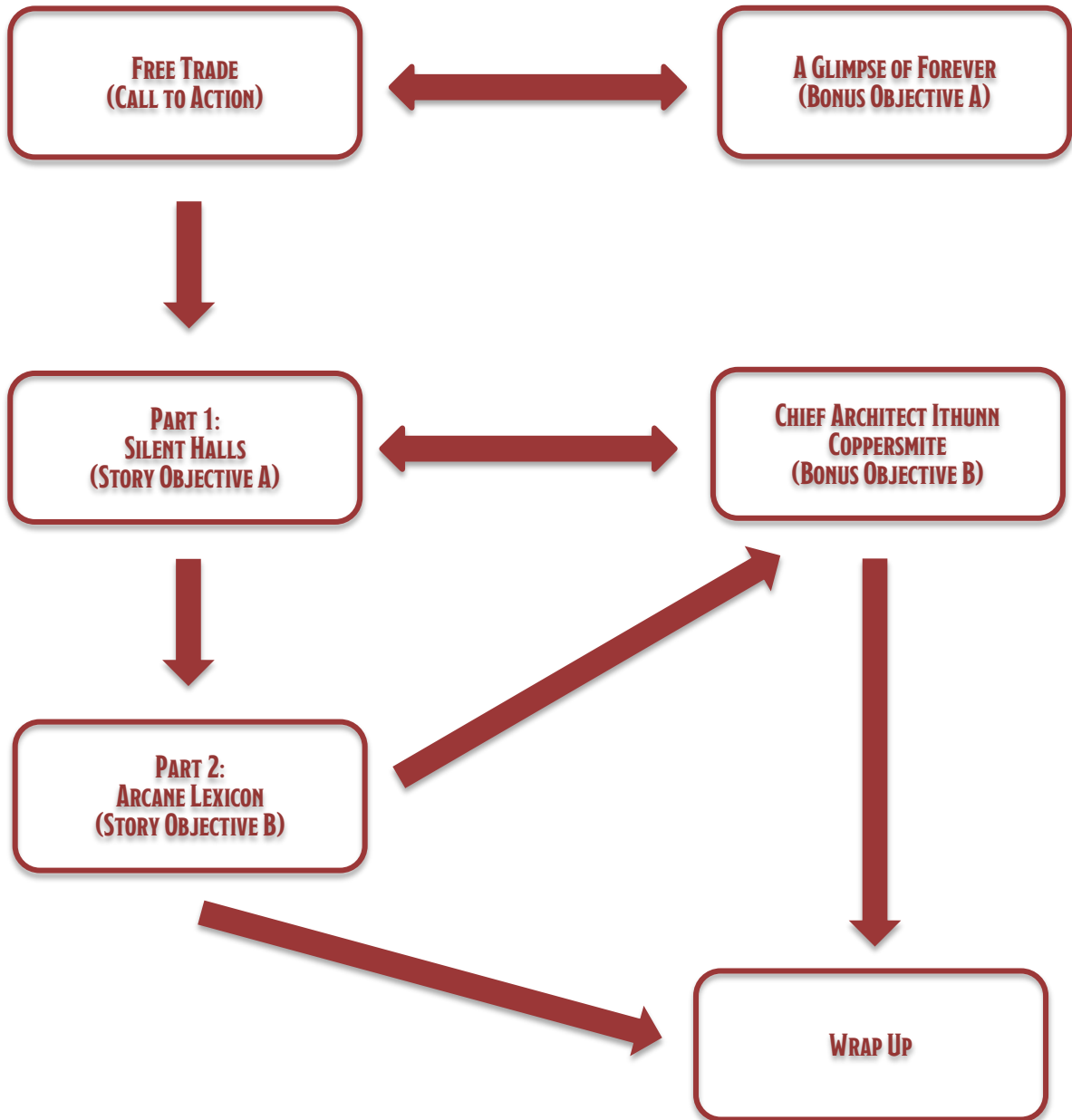
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ADVENTURE FLOWCHART

This section provides a basic demonstration of not only the flow of the adventure but also the outline of different paths that your players may take in reaching their stated objective.



ADVENTURE PRIMER

This adventure is designed for three to seven 17th—20th-level characters and is optimized for five characters with an average party level (APL) of 18. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

This adventure takes place in Almorel, a fortified oasis in the Hordelands, far to the east of Thay.

BACKGROUND

Far to the east of the principal kingdoms of Faerûn lies the trade city of **ALMOREL**. Governed by a merchant conglomerate, this place offers no home for the factions of the western lands. Here, coin is king and alliances are only as strong as the contracts that bind them. Nestled on the shores of the Lake of Mists along the **GOLDEN WAY** in the **HORDELANDS**, Almorel is built atop the remains of previous settlements and sports features of human and dwarven craftsmanship.

In the labyrinthine complex below the city there sits a massive crystal—a **WRITHING BATTERY**. Secured inside this shard is a fragment of the dead god, **KYUSS**. This crystal was locked down and secreted away from the world by arcanists from ancient civilizations, who banded together out of desperation.

Now, **DAE'LOMDEL NURUHUINE** has come to Almorel. Once a heroic adventurer, he succumbed to the poisonous, seductive might of Kyuss. Now a fervent worshiper of The Worm That Walks and bearing the title Harbinger of the Worm, Dae'lomdel works to erode the enchantments that bind the Writhing Battery to these silent halls.

NOTE. This adventure makes use of the material in DDAL00-01 *Window to the Past*, DDAL00-03 *Those That Came Before*, and DDEP00-01 *Red War*. Familiarity with those adventures is helpful but not required, as much of the core information about Kyuss and the Writhing Battery can be found in **appendix E**.

OVERVIEW

This adventure's story is spread over **three parts** and takes approximately **six to eight hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action scene. It also contains two **optional bonus objectives**—each taking **an additional hour** to play

- **Call to Action: Free Trade.** A fortune-teller shines some light on the dark history that has brought the characters to Almorel.
- **Part 1: Silent Halls.** The halls beneath Almorel have long lain silent, but why? This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Part 2: Arcane Lexicon.** The ancient arcanists stand in silent vigil, watching and waiting. This is **Story Objective B**.
- **Bonus Objective A: A Glimpse of Forever.** A divine summons brings the characters face to face with the Harbinger of the Worm. This bonus objective is found in **appendix A**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Chief Architect Ithunn Coppersmite.** While nothing lives in the dwarven halls, something—*someone*—still functions. This bonus objective is found in **appendix B**.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Every adventure starts somewhere. Presented here are many options for hooking this adventure into other D&D Adventurers League play opportunities.

GENERAL OR FACTION-BASED

As renowned tier 4 characters, they've gained allies in all manner of places. For this adventure, other allies have relayed information to them regarding signs of a dark and terrible power stirring near the Lake of Mists:

- The **Harpers** and the **Emerald Enclave** fear that Thay is involved, and that the Red Wizards are seeking a long-forgotten power in the Hordelands.
- The **Lords' Alliance** is concerned about a recent influx of dwarven coins. These coins are roughly 1,700 years old and appear to originate from one of the lost dwarf clans of the Firepeak Mountains, deep in the Hordelands. Oddly, they appear to be new and uncirculated—and investigation via *legend lore* has only revealed that the coins harbor complex, unstable magic and come from Almorel. The assorted lords are unsure of how many coins are now in the western lands, but they fear the latent enchantment magic in the coins.
- The **Zhentarim** and **The Order of the Gauntlet** don't have specific interests in Almorel but have heard rumors of a rhythmic thumping coming from belowground. They believe that these tales are

related to similar things recently seen in and near Mulmaster (DDAL00-01 *Window to the Past* and DDEP00-01 *Red War*) and near Candlekeep (DDAL00-03 *Those That Came Before*).

- The **Red Wizards of Thay** are preparing a small strike force of powerful spellcasters and knights for an expedition to the Hordelands. Rumors have escaped Thay-controlled Mulmaster that the dire wizards have learned of something dark and foul beneath the streets of the Almorel, something that yearns for freedom from ancient binding magics.

Any faction contacts that the characters have also drive home that Almorel is a town governed by a council of merchants – the factions of the western Forgotten Realms have no influence there.

PREVIOUS *SAGA OF THE WORM* ADVENTURES

The *Saga of the Worm* can be experienced in DDAL00-01 *Window to the Past* and DDAL00-03 *Those That Came Before*.

Agents of the Worm. Any character that has earned the **Favored of the Worm** story award has been experiencing vivid dreams in which they witness an impossibly huge clew of worms erupt from the soil of the Hordelands and immediately consume the entirety of a walled town on the shores of a misty lake. They are pulled ever east until they arrive in Almorel.

Beloved of the Worm. If all of the characters have earned the **Favored of the Worm** story award, they awake on the shore of the Lake of Mists. They have no memory of the last two days and are surrounded by the shed husks of the large worms often found in places where Kyuss and his followers are active. Their clothing is soaking wet and they don't receive any of the information in the **General or Faction-Based** entry.

CONNECTING TO THE HARDCOVER ADVENTURES

In some cases, the characters may not qualify or be interested in the above story hooks. Consider amplifying the danger of allowing Thay to pursue ancient powers unchecked.

- **Hoard of the Dragon Queen & Rise of Tiamat.** At one point, the characters may approach the Thayans with a request for diplomacy. Should they do this, the resultant *dream*-based inquisition could very easily initiate the events of this and other *Saga of the Worm* adventures.

- **Princes of the Apocalypse.** A *devastation orb* is being auctioned off in Yartar, and one of the eager bidders is a cultist of Kyuss. If accosted, the cultist explodes in a grotesque shower of worms, leaving behind only a strange pendant that pulses and throbs when pointed toward the Hordelands and Almorel.
- **Out of the Abyss.** Deep in the Underdark, a broken crystal obelisk is found inside a sealed chamber. Derro and duergar have scrawled graffiti and words of warning outside that place, warning would-be intruders of “the worm’s rage.” Now, all that remains are the shed skins of strange-looking worms and any that look upon the broken crystal dream each night about the Writhing Batteries.
- **Curse of Strahd.** The Mad Mage of Mount Baratok almost certainly knows something of Kyuss, given that the Worm That Walks has an established history with the mage’s home world.
- **Storm King’s Thunder.** Buried in the treasures of Iymrith’s hoard is found a single copper disk. Upon it is a symbol: a skull with entwined worms crawling out from it. This pendant is identical to the one found in Yartar (see *Princes of the Apocalypse* above).
- **Tales from the Yawning Portal.** There may be tomes in *Dead in Thay* that indicate a time in which the ancient Netherese sealed away a “walking worm; a horror of horrors” somewhere beneath the Hordelands.
- **Tomb of Annihilation.** One of Acererak’s tomes indicates the presence of a Writhing Battery in the Hordelands.
- **Waterdeep Dragon Heist & Dungeon of the Mad Mage.** *Dragon Heist* is a much lower-level adventure, but the Blackstaff is known to possess strange and esoteric lore. Similarly, Halaster, the Mad Mage himself, may—if he is feeling particularly pleasant—share knowledge that a dead god that refuses to stay dead is steadily thumping away, far to the east.
- **Ghosts of Saltmarsh.** Consider extending *Tammeraut’s Fate* using Kyuss instead of Orcus. That adventure is heavily rooted in the sea but could easily be adjusted to include references to the spawn of Kyuss needing to recover more Writhing Batteries before descending beneath the waves.

Whatever your decision, the characters should all be firmly aware that challenges await them in the wilderness of the Hordelands. The weight of responsibility hangs heavily upon them!

CALL TO ACTION: FREE TRADE (CALL TO ACTION)

Estimated Duration: 60–90 minutes

TIME-CONSTRAINED PLAY AND ALTERNATIVE STARTING POINTS

If you are playing this adventure in a time-constrained environment, such as a convention or other public venue, or if you wish to adjust the opening of this adventure based on the previous exploits of the characters, consider using the following pieces of guidance to expedite the experience:

- **Summarize the Call to Action.** You can summarize the events of the Call to Action by having the characters begin at Reader's home at the end of the Call to Action. She can deliver the information necessary to kickstart the adventure that is about to unfold.
- **Impending Apocalypse.** If all the characters have earned the **Favored of the Worm** story award, it's entirely possible that they've been drawn here with visions of Kyuss' glorious success in this area—grant them a vision of Almorel in ruins with worms everywhere, then have the characters all wake up in the upper reaches of the dwarven ruins at the beginning of part 2, surrounded by the shed husks (outer skin) of worms. This will require you to move the encounter with Reader to the end of the adventure, or potentially as a roleplay encounter in part 2 if the characters leave this environment instead of investigating further into the complex.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A

You may run Bonus Objective A any time before part 1 starts. In an ideal configuration, this would be used as a call to action in and of itself using one of the following options:

- The characters are teleporting somewhere and wind up at the obelisk instead.
- The gods move the characters to the obelisk as a warning—or a promise.
- A powerful arcane ally (such as the Blackstaff in Waterdeep or Rastol Shan in Mulmaster) places the characters in a trance.

SCENE A. ALMOREL

This scene is intentionally loose in structure. As the characters are exceptionally experienced, many of the residents and merchants will either fawn over them, attempt to sell them everything in their possession under the guise of "The item hides a secret magic, I promise!" or some similar behavior.

After 30 minutes, if the characters haven't yet discovered that Reader is watching them, consider

making her actions more direct and moving on to scene B.

For a more immersive experience, consider handing the Locales: Almorel section to the players, minus the Other Rumors section. As experienced adventurers, they are likely aware of at least some of the information presented there and can gather the rest in short order. Be aware that giving them this much information may greatly lengthen your game!

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Guards. The guards of Almorel (**veterans**) are skilled and travel in groups of three, with regular patrols through the interior of the town.

Clangor and Clamor. This is a busy town with a constant din. Merchants hawk their wares, children run in the streets, and livestock is plentiful near many of the homes. Near the dwarven buildings, the sound of hammers striking steel and copper is a common, heavy rhythm.

Light. After sunset, the town employs the use of lanterns along the main travel paths and the promenade between area 12. The Raumkremyl and area 19. The Mechnik's Estate.

CREATURES/NPCs

The people of Almorel are of various races, though most are human. The few dwarves that live in the area prefer to keep to themselves and generally reside near area 7. Minehead of Hammermaker the Small, area 10. Goldsmithers' Guild, or area 17. The Moneylenders Guild.

The Siremun Dwarves. There are numerous lost clans across the Forgotten Realms, and the Siremun are but one of them. Dwarves and those that delve into ancient histories may recognize them as the clan that worked with the Raumathar empire to build Almorel and other settlements, but rumor has it that they simply disappeared into the ground one day.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters should have some time to explore Almorel and interact with the merchants, but be sure to keep their focus on the mission.

Potential highlights include:

- **Area 4.** A table of merchants eagerly discuss the rare coins that they plan to purchase from area 6 when they are next in Almorel, if any remain.
- **Area 6.** One merchant has five coins left in stock. They cost 50 gp each (“Already discounted for your eminence!”) but can be haggled down to 35 gp. The vendor can share that their supplier is a half-elf from “who knows? Somewhere far away.”
- **Areas 10 and 17.** The dwarven coins are authentic and hail from the long-absent Siremun clan. They’re at least 1,400 years old and in perfect condition, as if uncirculated. The goldsmiths estimate between several hundred and a thousand of these coins have passed through here in recent weeks.
- **Area 25.** The dwarves are extremely reluctant to speak of any lost clan, and the Siremun in particular. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces them to open up, and they share that the Siremun were allied with the Raumathari people and, as legend has it, fortified the lower reaches of Almorel against some dire fiendish threat.
- **Any Tavern or Merchant Gathering.** The dwarven coins are an exciting topic, and word around town is that a few dozen are sold to local merchants each week. The supplier releases them “for a song” (nearly free), and is the half-elf mentioned in Area 6 above, but they never give their name. Some find the half-elf creepy or persistent, but few are willing to overlook what amounts to nearly free money. This supplier disappears after each sale and their whereabouts are currently unknown.

Once the characters have learned of the regular influx of Siremun dwarven coins, they notice a young woman of Shou descent pointedly watching them. She beckons them to follow and disappears around a corner. Regardless of how fast the characters move, she remains out of reach and quickly leads them to Reader’s Home outside the city walls. Proceed to **Scene B. Reader’s Home** when this happens.

SCENE B. READER’S HOME

Reader’s home is filled with all manner of knickknacks and arcane bits. From bird bones to decks of ornate cards to strange dice to crystal balls of various sizes, she’s got it all.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. This is a cozy home with two rooms and a small kitchen.

Enchantments and Sigils. Reader has woven countless protections into this place, both inside and out. See the Enchantments and Sigils section below.

Fortune-telling Gear. Cluttered shelves, crystal ball, mystic cards, animal bones, and other arcane detritus line a plethora of shelves. While not necessarily magical, many of the items do seem to possess some small level of power.

Tea set. An expensive, ornate tea set commands most of the center of Reader’s table. She proudly describes the set as an heirloom, given to her by one of her sisters when they left Shou Lung (Kara-Tur).

Light. The room is brightly lit by candelabras.

ENCHANTMENTS AND SIGILS

Reader’s home is heavily warded. If the exterior of the building is closely inspected, the characters see extremely fine sigils, wards, and words of power engraved into the wood. Any creature that is capable of casting *Mordenkainen’s magnificent mansion* immediately recognizes its presence here, though it has been significantly modified. It is permanent and can’t be dispelled, even via *antimagic zone*.

Among the sigils are the holy symbols of Amaunator and Lathander. These holy symbols show great variation and trace back from the current day all the way to how these symbols looked thousands of years ago when the empire of Netheril ruled the western lands.

Effects. Only a creature that has been directly invited by Reader may enter the building. Any creatures inside an extradimensional space or hidden on a creature’s body (such as a familiar in a pocket or the worm infection associated with the Favored of the Worm story award) isn’t granted automatic approval. Reader will not, under any circumstances, allow a creature with the **Favored of the Worm** story award to enter her home. Inside the building, the warding enchantments serve to prevent any spellcasting that she does not expressly permit; if a guest attempts to cast a spell, she politely asks them to not do so. If they

insist, she is open to discussing the matter but may not always permit it.

Story Award. Characters with the **Favored of the Worm** story award are unable to enter Reader's home; magic cannot break the protective wards. She explains that while they may be great heroes, they seem to be host to something that she hasn't invited in. She doesn't wish to be rude though, and offers them refreshments while they wait outside.

CREATURES/NPCs

Reader is a Shou woman and appears to be somewhere between 25 and 40 years old. Her true age is difficult to determine, and if questioned about it, she brushes the question aside saying, "Age does not beget experience." Characters that have met SEER, the spymaster for the Lords' Alliance (commonly met in the season 5 D&D Adventurers League content or DDEP06-03 *Hecatomb*), realize that the two of them look very similar.

What Does She Know? Reader knows that the characters are here for a divine purpose, having read of their coming "in the signs" (while pointing at the wide array of fortune-telling gear in her home).

What Does She Want? She wants to see the matter resolved, but also wishes to ensure that the characters know the ramifications of their actions and involvement.

DEVELOPMENT

Reader knows of the characters and their exploits. She offers a rare and delicious tea to those inside her home as part of an elaborate ceremony. For those outside, she provides a warm pot of tea and some light snacks in an effort to not be an unwelcoming host. She begins the conversation with them by celebrating a few of their past victories; she speaks with a familiarity that hints at her having deep connections on a global scale; whether this is due to "reading the signs" or because she is related to SEER in some form is something that she declines to discuss. She makes no secret of her loyalty to the Lords' Alliance, but doesn't profess to be a member.

As she enters the conversation in earnest, she lays out the following points in a direct, matter-of-fact manner:

- Dwarven coins have been arriving in the markets of Almorel in increasing numbers over the last several weeks. These coins are very old, but appear uncirculated. Several hundred have been reported.
- The merchants all cite the same supplier: a half-elf wearing a battered, golden breastplate. He speaks in a honeyed whisper but "feels malicious."
- A large number of shed skins have been discovered along the shores of the Lake of Mists. These skins aren't from a snake, but instead appear to be from a worm. She has a few saved in a glass jar and can show the characters; these match similar skins that may have been discovered in other *Saga of the Worm* adventures, or in Bonus Objective A.
- She believes that the coins are being harvested from the abandoned dwarf tunnels below Almorel.

She produces one of the dwarven coins, saying that she procured it for this very meeting. The coin is faintly magical and seems to have powers that interact with memory. The full extent of its powers is unclear, but Reader's theory is that if the coin were possessed by someone for long enough, they would either begin to lose their memories or they would lose the ability to create new memories.

Finally, she claims that the entrance to the dwarven halls lies within the Minehead of Hammermaker the Small (area 7 in Almorel). She believes that you can secure entry with little effort, and adds that discussing "the glory of Moradin" with the minehead's proprietor will earn you some dwarven respect.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A

If you haven't already given the characters a chance to experience **Bonus Objective A**, consider having Reader deliver them to the dreamscape by "sharing the vision."

SIREMUN MEMORY COINS

These dwarven coins are in pristine condition and pre-date the collapse of the Raumathar Empire in the region surrounding Almorel long ago. They possess a few magical qualities that defy the *identify* and *legend lore* spells, though using those spells reveals the divine marks of both Moradin and Kossuth.

Reader is aware of what the marks, and shares that the coins appear to be tied to this place—if removed more than a few miles from Almorel they appear to lose their magic, though returning to the town recharges them instantly.

PART 2: SILENT HALLS

Estimated Duration: 120–180 minutes

ABANDONED DWARVEN CONSTRUCTION

The Siremun dwarves have long since abandoned these halls, though some have chosen to stay in the vicinity of Almorel. The uppermost reaches of these halls have been repurposed by the residents of Almorel for use as cisterns and drainage (not quite sewers, but close) but, due to the magical protections that envelop this space, they have been unable to delve further. The map shows the area beyond what is explored by the residents of Almorel.

PREREQUISITES

The abandoned dwarven halls can only be reached through one of two ways:

- The characters started here.
- The characters met with Reader and she gave them the passphrase needed to bypass the arcane seals. (“The glory of Moradin”).

MAGICAL PROTECTIONS

Despite the halls being empty, the following effects are still present:

- **Hizagkuur.** The stone is entirely comprised of *hizagkuur*, and is subject to those rules.
- **Forbiddance (Semipermanent).** The outer complex (areas 1 through 8) is warded per this spell against fiends. The inner complex (areas 9 and 10) is warded per this spell against undead. The spells are permanent until the Siremun coins are removed from their vaults, which the Harbinger has been working to do—several vaults are already emptied. Inquisitive characters may determine that such an enchantment is beyond the ken of dwarven magic-users, though the Raumathari (and later, the Thayans) could

certainly do this. Characters that have earned the **Favored of the Worm** story award cannot rest anywhere in this complex as they feel a constant pull toward the **Arcane Lexicon** (part 3).

- **Geas (Permanent).** Any creature that is of CR 16 (for characters, level 16) or less that enters this space must succeed on a DC 28 Wisdom saving throw or be subject to a permanent *geas* that delivers the command “Return the way you came.” If they fail this saving throw, they must immediately make a second DC 28 Wisdom saving throw; on a failure, they are subject to a second *geas* with the command “Forget this place forever and never return.” Inquisitive characters may find signs of these spells in the stones or in magical auras; they recognize that the dwarves aren’t known for such spells, but the Netherese were capable of this type of arcane mastery. For this adventure, the star spawn are emboldened by the combination of the Harbinger’s presence and the call of the Writhing Battery and are immune to this effect.
- **Magical Permanence.** The *hizagkuur*, *forbiddance*, and *geas* effects cannot be destroyed except as noted. Ancient magics suffuse this place, and although effects like *antimagic zone* may interrupt them, these effects are omnipresent.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

This section isn’t intended to include combat. For martial-minded players, consider feats of strength rather than aggression.

EXPLORATION

Play up the descriptions of ancient but mostly untouched dwarven heritage. Insert some descriptions of signs of cohabitation with the elves of Myth Drannor and humans from Netheril and Raumathar.

SOCIAL

Nothing truly lives in these halls, so consider including more information about the history of the place, including how this may be a sacred place dedicated to Moradin and Kossuth.

AREA INFORMATION AND EXPLORATION

The map indicates a large number of rooms. For this adventure's purposes, the complex is devoid of life but not activity—and if you are using the Bonus Objectives, there may even be some lingering unlife! The characters should have a sense of this place being an incredible piece of dwarven history, feel free to add as few or as many details as your game requires. The following descriptions should be referenced but can, and should, be modified in a manner that delivers the game experience that you desire.

If you desire to expedite your game and condense the exploration of these areas, summarize the journey by narrating the passage through twisting tunnels, the discovery of the ruined gate (area 2) and emptied vaults (areas 3 and 7), and ultimately the discovery of the Harbinger (scene A), followed by the trek through the face in area 10 and scene B.

AREA 1. EXIT

The rough-hewn stone leads back to the relative safety of Almorel. The passage that links area 1 to area 10 is a one-way passage from area 10 only. On this side, it is simply a *hizagkuur* stone wall.

AREA 2. RUINED GATE

This brass-and-stone gate has been torn open, clearly blasted by magical energy. Ancient, ornate symbols of Dumathoin and Kossuth decorate the remains of the gate.

If Using Bonus Objective B. The gate still radiates faint magic; characters that have previously found a lich's phylactery (such as in the phylactery room near the end of *Tomb of Annihilation*) immediately recognize this as one such object.

Religion. Any character who attempts an Intelligence (Religion) check remembers that Dumathoin is the dwarven god of secrets, and Kossuth is a fire deity. On a result of 20 or higher, they also recall that Kossuth is still worshiped by the people of Thay, and was a central faith of the ancient Raumathar empire.

AREA 3. SMELTING CHAMBERS

If you are using Bonus Objective B, the information located in appendix B supersedes this text.

The main passage to these chambers has long since caved in, but a more recent excavation has cleared passage into the side of the area. The four

satellite rooms, as well as the southern rooms, were once used as vaults and there is thick dust outlining where piles of coins were placed until recently. The round chamber was magically reinforced and served as a slag pool or pit, and signs of damage to the stone walls can be plainly seen; the doors in the pit are merely designs in the stonework.

AREA 4. NOT-SO-ETERNAL REST

If you are using Bonus Objective B, the information located in appendix B supersedes this text.

This inner complex has been ravaged by the elements: rivulets of water have worn channels into the stone, for even mighty *hizagkuur* isn't immune to the dual ravages of time and nature. The western space is an embalming chamber, the northern space contains the caskets of honored dwarven dead (their bodies have long since been removed, though piles of dead, withered worms are scattered throughout), and the eastern rough-hewn cavern appears to be a natural formation.

For combat-hungry groups, consider adding an encounter with three or four **spawn of Kyuss**.

AREA 5. THE HARBINGER

Due to the significant number of passages present in this complex, the Harbinger is only here once the characters have completed their exploration of area 8. Additionally, the wall leading to the southern passages and areas 9 and 10 is solid and impassable until **Scene A. The Harbinger** has been completed.

Once the characters encounter the Harbinger here, proceed to **scene A** immediately.

AREA 6. THE FINAL EXCAVATION

The cave-in to the south completely blocks further travel. As the stone is all *hizagkuur*, it cannot be phased through, teleported past, reshaped, or otherwise defaced by magical or mundane effects. The excavation to the north is open, and allows free passage.

Ruined Bridge. Just to the west and thirty feet above the floor is a collapsed bridge that connects area 6 to area 7. Nothing prevents the characters from climbing or flying up if they desire.

AREA 7. HALL OF RECEPTION

The dwarves certainly weren't expecting to entertain guests in these chambers, as evidenced by the age-old (and currently) disarmed traps. Pits, blade throwers, and even a collapsing ceiling all appear to have been recently triggered or disarmed.

Additional Traps. If you so wish, you may insert additional traps into one or more of these chambers. For example, a Poisoned Tempest trap (a complex trap from chapter 2 of *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*) would work well in the central room with the table—just substitute the described statues for “four dwarven faces carved of stone line the walls” and require the characters to disable all four gas spouts. Alternately, you can use one of the traps from the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. These trap rules aren't included in this adventure.

AREA 8. TO FACE THE VOID

The roaring face of Dumathoin dominates the western wall. Within his gaping maw stands a dwarven hammer encrusted with rubies and garnets. The hammer is under the effects of an illusion but it, and the entire stonework face, have been cunningly enchanted with *Nystul's magic aura* to appear nonmagical.

Taking the Hammer. The jaws of Dumathoin slam shut if anything other than dwarven flesh passes through its teeth. If the jaws slam shut on a creature, they must make a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 99 (18d10) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the affected limb is disintegrated. Objects (including magic items) or creations of magical force that the jaws slam shut on are automatically disintegrated. Dwarves do not trigger the trap and may take the hammer freely.

Treasure. Once in hand, the hammer's illusion is revealed: it is a battle-worn hammer permanently stained by the ancient ichor of some fiend or undead terror. Even so, the hammer is a priceless relic of the Siremun dwarves. Whomever bears it is plagued with nightmares of armies of fell demons and devils clashing with swarms of robed arcanists. Occasionally, a rhythmic thumping is felt and the figures squirm, changing into worm-ridden skeletons and zombies that cease their activities to stare at the dreamer. Characters proficient in History recognize these visions as the last wars of Narfell and Raumathar which left both empires shattered, and those that have encountered the spawn of Kyuss recognize them despite there being

no historical record of Kyuss' involvement in those conflicts. Mechanically, this item counts as a trinket.

AREA 9. KOSSUTH'S OBELISK

Primordial runes flicker to life when a living creature approaches within thirty feet. The runes tell the tale of an unnamed wu jen (a wizard from Kara-Tur). This wizard tricked a sea dragon named Pao Hu Jen into becoming the mighty Dragonwall that separated the eastern kingdoms of Kara-Tur from the barbarians of the Hordelands. The obelisk hints that this also kept the “writhing waves” at bay, and that the spirit of that great dragon is all that prevents The Worm That Walks from devouring that realm. Characters that are proficient in both Arcana and History recall that the Dragonwall was breached just over a hundred years ago and the spirit of the dragon was released in a brilliant display.

Some may wonder what the purpose of Kossuth's Obelisk is; refer to area 2 for more information. Still, its placement on an island may signify that despite the alignment of the arcanists of the Raumathar, the Narfell, and the dwarves, there may not have been limitless trust. Allow the characters to draw their own conclusions based on the historical evidence available.

Treasure. Characters that study the story of the wu jen and that are proficient in Arcana realize that a single *spell scroll* of *geas* can be created by taking a rubbing of the runes. This spell scroll magically gains a faintly-visible face at the bottom that looks more than a little bit like Reader.

AREA 10. THE UNKNOWN DWARF

The massive face of a dwarf ascends some fifty feet up and into the ceiling. No stairwell connects to the lower sections where the water of the Lake of Mists cascades down, though there are plentiful handholds should the characters wish to climb up.

Once the characters have a clear line of sight on the face, they each see it a bit differently. To some (such as hill and mountain dwarves), it appears to be Moradin. To duergar, gnomes, and humans, Dumathoin. To others, it may be one of these or perhaps some undetermined bearded face. Ultimately, they should all realize that they see something different; magical investigation only reveals that powerful magic seems to be obscuring the identity, and the spells at play feel more protective than malicious. Nothing prevents them from walking through the open mouth and into the chamber beyond. Once they do, proceed to **scene B**.

SCENE A. HARBINGER OF THE WORM

Dae'lomdel, the Harbinger is here, slumped against the wall of the stone passage. With seemingly nowhere to go and having completely exhausted his resources, he has prepared to meet his god. Successfully completing this scene completes **Story Objective A** for the characters.

CREATURES/NPCs

The Harbinger is despondent and believes that Kyuss has abandoned him. He is close to death.

What Does He Want? He wants to die. Now that Kyuss has abandoned him, he believes that death is what he deserves for what he has done in the name of the Worm That Walks.

What Does He Know? He admits to giving in to Kyuss some time ago. He shares, in graphic detail, some of the atrocities he performed in the name of the Worm That Walks, including:

- betraying his allies in Warlock's Crypt and leaving them to be devoured by a great corrupted copper dragon in the depths of Larloch's laboratories.
- while visiting Mulmaster, he consumed two Red Wizards of Thay that bore Kyuss' blessings.
- a trip to an island off the coast of Chult that resulted in the slaughter of the ship's crew and recovery of another Writhing Battery.
- commanding spawn of Kyuss to destroy and devour an entire village in the Hordelands.
- recovering the Siremun coins and giving them to the merchants in the Almorel market; Kyuss told him that once he removed enough of these coins, the *forbiddance* spells would crumble. He estimates that he's delivered a thousand of those coins to the market over the last several weeks.

Finally, he knows that he is unable to leave the dwarven halls. He has succumbed to the dual *forbiddance* effects and despite the gates in **area 1**

being pulled down, he is unable to pass through them as doing so causes intense agony.

HARBINGER OF THE WORM STATUS

He is known as the Harbinger of the Worm, but Kyuss has all but abandoned him. While technically mortal now, he has the stink of undeath about him and is covered in black holes identical to those caused by the **Favored of the Worm** story award. His golden breastplate is dented and useless; even if repaired, it is merely a decorative piece. His clothes are tattered and he wears a frayed yellow and brown robe. He is alone with his memories now and sincerely desires to die.

His stat block is modified as follows:

- He has 10 maximum hit points, and 10 current hit points
- He has an AC of 8
- He can't benefit from healing, magical or otherwise
- He can be detected as if he were both a fiend and an undead creature, though mechanically he is a mortal human

DEVELOPMENT

The Harbinger has none of his actions or abilities, and is ready to accept his fate. He begs for "final release before the Worm takes him again." Healing, even via *wish* or Divine Intervention, can't restore him.

If he is still alive after five minutes, he dies and his body erupts in a shower of thousands of tiny worms. When one of these worms squeezes through the stones here, the wall fades away—this final lock required an undead creature to survive the *forbiddance* and pass into the halls containing areas 9 and 10. In their pride, the ancient wizards believed that their magics would prevent this.

TREASURE

Upon Dae'lomdel's destruction, the characters can recover a *spell scroll of antilife shell*.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

The Harbinger offers no resistance. Attacks against him have advantage and all damage dealt to him is maximized.

EXPLORATION

Dae'lomdel is unable to leave this place, as the *forbiddance* effects will destroy him soon. There are marks on the stone behind him that line up with the holes in his skin.

SOCIAL

The Harbinger sincerely seeks death as penance for his deeds; he is filled with shame and regret. He demands to be put to death, for once Kyuss takes him back he knows what he is capable of doing.

SCENE B. THE SILENT HALL

After passing through the dwarven face in area 10, the tunnels twist, turn, and descend. After climbing down a 100-foot-deep shaft, the characters find themselves in a short hall that leads to this slightly curved area.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. As indicated on the map.

Arcane Barriers. The archways that serve as entrances and exits to this place are surrounded by runes and protections (see below).

Silence. This chamber is permanently subject to the *silence* spell. Casting *dispel magic* at 7th level or higher, or any similar effect, temporarily suppresses the spell for 1 hour; not even *wish* can permanently remove this effect.

Stone. The stonework is impeccably worked *hizagkuur*, and has been untouched for centuries.

Writhing Rhythm. If the *silence* is suppressed, a rhythmic thumping can be heard. Once the characters enter the lower levels, the noise is ever present. This is primarily atmospheric, though it does prevent living creatures from taking a short or long rest in this place.

CREATURES/NPCs

When the second creature enters the curved space, the undead here, a number of tier four **wraiths** equal to the number of characters plus one, begin to stir. When the third creature enters, they strike!

DEVELOPMENT

When the undead begin to stir, the characters notice a frightening black ooze beginning to seep through the thin gaps between the stones. Any character that has played that adventure or that has a passive

Perception of 22 or higher isn't surprised when the wraiths attack.

The wraiths hunger greatly, but cannot leave this chamber. Their essences are bound to Kyuss and as such they cannot proceed to the upper regions (as they contain enough of a fiendish taint to be subject to that specific *forbiddance*) nor can they delve further in without a command from their master.

ARCANE BARRIERS

The archways have magical runes on the outer sides written in a mix of ancient Netherese and the lost Siremun Dwarvish (this isn't a distinct language, but a dialect that is readable if difficult to understand). Any character using a light source can see them plainly, but they are enchanted to be imperceptible to darkvision alone. They read:

Disturb not the silence. This bulwark holds fast against that which would devour our world.

The archways are filled with a series of layered magical protections. These behave similar to *wall of force*, though living creatures can freely pass through them. Magical effects cannot manifest if the barrier separates the caster from the target. For example, ranged magical effects like *fireball* and *magic missile* smash harmlessly against the barrier (likely with visually impressive, but nonharmful, results), and *Rary's telepathic bond* doesn't extend across the barrier; this includes effects like teleportation, *spiritual weapon*, and so on. Any spells that are currently active on a creature that crosses the barrier continue to function normally, though you may need to be creative in your adjudications. Casting *dispel magic* at 7th level or higher can also dispel the modified *wall of force*.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

The wraiths fight until destroyed. One additional tier four **wraith** arrives at the beginning of the third round and every two rounds thereafter.

EXPLORATION

The wraiths won't pursue creatures outside of this chamber as they are aware of the permanent *forbiddance* effects. Consider giving the characters a clue about how the wraiths shun the doorway if the fight is going poorly for them.

SOCIAL

While this is intended as a combat encounter, characters that can communicate with the dead quickly learn that these wraiths were once worshipers of Kyuss.

PART 2: ARCANE LEXICON

Estimated Duration: 75 minutes

A. SILENT WATCHERS

Once the characters enter the Arcane Lexicon, the hall behind them seals shut; this is a silent effect that begins near the Ring and travels inward, shutting off hallways and chambers until only the Arcane Lexicon remains.

Be sure to refer to the *hizagkuur* sidebar, as this area is constructed of that same material.

PREREQUISITES

This part can only be played after part 1 has been completed.

STORY OBJECTIVE B

In this part, the characters are presented with a dwarven tablet that offers multiple options. Choosing an option gives the information and encounter present in scenes B through G as described, and upon completion scene H begins. Once an option is chosen, the tablet disappears as its component keys are scattered to places unknown—players and characters that wish to know the full story will need to discuss these events with their allies that made different choices.

To complete **Story Objective B**, a character must survive both their chosen scene as well as scene H.

AREA INFORMATION

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (History) check reveals that this place is crafted of *hizagkuur*, and once identified, a successful DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the special properties as shown in the sidebar. (Note that the specifics of the dimensional shielding property aren't known beyond "The stones form a protective cocoon around the contents of this chamber.") Dwarves automatically succeed on these checks, as does anyone proficient in both Arcana and mason's tools. This area has the following features:

Ceiling. The ceiling is domed and 25 feet above the floor at its highest point.

Light. The area is lit by the soft magical light emanating from the stones. No shadows are present.

Sounds. The incessant thumping rhythm is louder here. Any characters that have the **Favored of the Worm** story award find the noise to be nearly

deafening, and they feel each beat as much as they hear it.

Alcoves. Each of the 12 alcoves houses a single statue. The statues can be described simply as "Four elves, four dwarves, and four humans all wear clothing that appears of ancient design and carry arcane implements and spellbooks."

Dwarven Tablet. A tablet covered in ancient dwarven runes floats in the center of the chamber. Upon it are 6 options. The characters may select only one of these options; when they do, proceed to the indicated scene.

- **[Destroyed].** These runes have been eradicated and cannot be read. Proceed to scene B.
- **Detection.** Proceed to scene C.
- **Dissent.** Proceed to scene D.
- **Doldrum.** Proceed to scene E.
- **Devastation.** Proceed to scene F.
- **Doom.** Proceed to scene G.

ENVIRONMENTS FOR SCENES B THROUGH G

Each of the following scenes takes place inside of a complex series of illusions. The following rules elements apply:

Moving and Interacting. The environment is hazy and fuzzy, and the voices and sounds echo hollowly around the space. The characters can quickly identify that this is a complex illusion, and the more they move and interact, the more activity unfolds all around them. The area outside of the map doesn't exist, and all attempts to move off the map (including summoning, teleportation, or *banishment*) fail. Until combat starts, the characters can't affect the other creatures or the environment.

Unfolding Action. As the characters explore the illusion, the narrative unfolds until combat begins.

Writhing Battery. Where present, the Writhing Battery has an AC of 22, 200 hit points, immunity to poison, psychic, and damage from nonmagical weapons, immunity to disease, and cannot be removed from this place. If the crystal is destroyed, one **aspect of Kyuss** emerges and joins the fray unless the characters have defeated it elsewhere in this part.

Victory. The scene ends and the characters transition to **scene H** immediately when all of the star spawn are defeated.

SCENE B. [DESTROYED]

The chamber swirls and shifts as the area sloughs away and is replaced with a scene of charnel horror.

VISIONS OF THE PAST

The characters stand in a pit and are surrounded by dozens (or more) of corpses that fill a large central pit. Robed figures stand around the upper rim. They are engaged in sonorous chanting as one of them moves like a shadow and cuts their throats with a wicked knife before kicking their bodies into the pit as well.

Unfolding Action. As the characters move around, the scene unravels before them. The cultists are all summarily killed and dumped into the pit, and the chanting becomes more and more vile in nature. The chanting is a mixture of archaic Common and an ancient dialect of Chultan. In particular, the terms “Kyuss,” “food,” and “offering” catch your attention. A rhythmic thumping from below the pile of corpses becomes louder with every passing moment; this noise is generated by the Writhing Battery.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. As indicated on the map.

Bloody Pit. The pit measures 20 feet on a side. There is a 15-foot rise between the top of the pile of corpses and the ledge above, and the bodies fill at least another 15 feet down. The further down a creature digs, the more rot and blood they are exposed to. This area is difficult terrain.

Sky. The sky above is clear and a huge orange moon hangs low in the sky. Characters proficient in either Nature or navigator’s tools, or those that have been to Chult, automatically identify familiar constellations – but matching the locations shown on ancient maps.

Light. The moon, stars, and torches provide dim light throughout the area.

CREATURES/NPCs

Once the characters have had a few moments and have fully realized where they stand, the final cultist’s face melts away to reveal a worm-infested skeleton with flaming eyes. This **spawn of Kyuss** looks directly at whichever character has been the most inquisitive and utters “Fresh meat for the worm” as three **star spawn larva mages** and two **star spawn hulks** emerge from the bloody pit.

DEVELOPMENT

As combat begins, a Writhing Battery violently erupts from the mass of bodies in center of the pit.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

Consider requiring all of the star spawn and the aspect be defeated before the characters can move to scene H.

EXPLORATION

If the characters delay, consider using the Writhing Battery’s emergence as the start of combat.

SOCIAL

Any character with the **Favored of the Worm** story award may speak with the star spawn a single time. If they do, craft an appropriately chilling response.

SCENE C. DETECTION

The chamber swirls and shifts as the area sloughs away and is replaced with the scene of a miner discovering the Writhing Battery.

VISIONS OF THE PAST

The characters stand in a natural cavern, extremely deep within the Underdark. A successful DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana, History, or Nature) check identifies this place as the Deepdark, where raw horrors are rumored to dwell and where the drow, duergar, and most other sentient races refuse to travel.

Unfolding Action. As the characters acclimate themselves to the area, they can watch a dwarven miner burst through a nearby wall. The dwarf takes stock of the chamber as a massive crystal fades into view in the center of the space. Something appears to be inside the crystal and writhes frantically as the miner draws near. A rhythmic thumping noise from the crystal emanates louder with every passing moment; this noise is generated by the Writhing Battery.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. As indicated on the map.

Cavern. The stone is wet and slimy, but not hazardous. The ceiling is 25 feet overhead.

Light. The area is in darkness. The characters must bring their own light sources.

CREATURES/NPCs

After some investigation, the dwarf lays her hand upon the crystal; this causes her body to unravel and she immediately becomes a **spawn of Kyuss**. Three other creatures emerge from a crack in the crystal: two **star spawn hulks** and one **star spawn larva mage**. Once they emerge, combat begins.

DEVELOPMENT

As combat begins, the Writhing Battery is already present in the chamber and possesses all the abilities shown in **appendix E**. After a living creature uses an action, an appendage of withered, worm-ridden flesh emerges from the Writhing Battery and attacks that creature if it is within 30 feet:

- **Tendril. Melee Weapon Attack:** +16 to hit, reach 40 ft., one target. **Hit:** 36 (5d10 + 9) magical bludgeoning damage. A creature that takes damage from this attack is affected by a burrowing worm (as per the **spawn of Kyuss** attack) unless they succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw.
- Each tendril has an AC of 14, 50 hp, and is immune to nonmagical damage. They cannot be removed from the Writhing Battery, but a critical hit automatically kills one.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

Add one additional **star spawn larva mage** or three additional **star spawn larva hulks**.

EXPLORATION

Exploration-focused characters may identify tiny arcane runes around the chamber. Undead creatures within 10 feet of a rune have disadvantage on all d20 rolls.

SOCIAL

Any character with the **Favored of the Worm** story award may speak with the star spawn a single time. If they do, craft an appropriately chilling response.

SCENE D. DISSENTION

The chamber swirls and shifts as the area sloughs away and is replaced with a scene of dwarven infighting.

VISIONS OF THE PAST

The characters stand in a dwarven meeting hall. Huge banners hang from the ceiling and spell out “The Glory of Siremun” in ancient dwarven runes.

Unfolding Action. As the characters move around, the scene unravels before them. A pair of dwarven sages passionately plead that “the crystal should be put back in the Deepdark where it was discovered” and “it is pure corruption given beautiful form.” Three other dwarves push back, citing evidence that the crystal houses arcane power that has already dramatically changed their forging techniques, and that the war machines they’ve created will push back “the invading orcs with nary a thought.” A rhythmic thumping from below the floor becomes louder with every passing moment; this noise is generated by the Writhing Battery.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. As indicated on the map.

Worm Piles. Any area occupied by a worm pile is difficult terrain. A character that begins their turn in one of these spaces or moves through becomes infected with rot grubs (see the spawn of Kyuss stat block) unless they succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw.

Light. The dwarves have cast *continual light* spells throughout the chamber.

CREATURES/NPCs

Once the characters have had a few moments to listen to the exchange between the dwarves, a band of orcs bursts through the hazy periphery. One of the dwarves transforms into a **spawn of Kyuss** while the remaining four become two **star spawn hulks** and two **star spawn larva mages**. The orcs collapse into piles of squirming worms as the Writhing Battery bursts through the floor.

DEVELOPMENT

As combat begins, a Writhing Battery has already burst from the floor. It possesses all the abilities shown in **appendix E**.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

Consider requiring all of the star spawn and the aspect be defeated before the characters can move to scene H.

EXPLORATION

If the characters delay, consider using the Writhing Battery’s emergence as the start of combat.

SOCIAL

Any character with the **Favored of the Worm** story award may speak with the star spawn a single time. If they do, craft an appropriately chilling response.

SCENE E. DOLDRUM

The chamber swirls and shifts as the area sloughs away and is replaced by a scene of red-robed wizards lounging in a richly appointed room.

VISIONS OF THE PAST OR PRESENT

The characters can quickly identify that they are standing in a building in Mulmaster. The windows offer an unimpeded view of the destroyed harbor and several still-open vents of elemental water and earth to the east (see DDEP2 *Mulmaster Undone*, DDEP00-01 *Red War*, and the *Adventurers League Content Catalog* for full details).

Unfolding Action. As the characters move around, the scene unravels before them. Four Red Wizards of Thay yawn about “bumbling heroes attacking Mulmaster; remember what happened last time?” and “if their own efforts don’t undo them, they’ll break the crystal and those wormkin will finish the task.” Starting with this, a rhythmic thumping from outside the tower becomes louder with every passing moment; this noise is generated by the *Writhing Battery* though it cannot be seen. The Red Wizards all bear black pockmarks along their arms and necks; signs that they have received the **Favored of the Worm** story award. They continue to wave away the efforts of the heroes while resting on the glory of Thay (certainly due to the might of Szass Tam) to see them through to ultimate victory. Once the characters have had a few moments to absorb the deriding comments of the Red Wizards and have identified their pockmarks, the building is rocked by a massive explosion. Shortly after, a band of fantastically equipped champions burst into the room from the yard outside.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. As indicated on the map.

Magic Circle. The magic circle on the floor is a customized *glyph of warding*; if a Red Wizard of Thay stands on it and uses their action to utter the command phrase “For the glory of Szass Tam!,” the stored *antilife shell* spell is cast, centered on the triggering Red Wizard.

Light. Bright light streams in through the windows.

CREATURES/NPCs

When the champions arrive, they fade out as the characters fade in and combat begins. The four Red Wizards (**archmages**) are confident of their victory and attack with glee; when defeated, they rise on their initiative count in the next round as **star spawn larva mages**.

DEVELOPMENT

Despite the sounds coming from outside the chamber, no *Writhing Battery* is present in this encounter. However, due to the *Battery*’s close proximity to the tower, the regional effects are still applied. Note that the *Battery* cannot be seen as there are buildings in the way, and the illusion doesn’t permit the characters to leave this part of the tower.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

For combat-focused groups, add one worm-infested **death knight**. This death knight may use the spawn of Kyuss’ **Burrowing Worm** attack.

EXPLORATION

Characters that have previously played DDEP00-01 *Red War* may note that this event wasn’t known to have happened. This should embolden the characters; grant them inspiration as they realize that this Mulmaster may not necessarily be *their* Mulmaster.

SOCIAL

Those that attempt to parley with the Red Wizards learn that the Thayans have been learning (at great cost) to bind the power of the Worm That Walks into their magic, but no cost is too great for Szass Tam.

SCENE F. DEVASTATION

The chamber swirls and shifts as the area sloughs away and is replaced with the streets of Almorel.

VISIONS OF THE PRESENT OR FUTURE

The characters stand in the streets of Almorel. The residents flee in terror from worm-infested undead horrors.

Unfolding Action. As the residents flee, many are consumed by worms and undead horrors. Some may be familiar faces, and Reader can be seen nearby screaming, “Our heroes have failed us! Save yourselves!” as she is pulled into a pile of pulsing worms. A rhythmic thumping from below the ground becomes louder with every passing moment; this noise is generated by the Writhing Battery.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Worm Piles. Any area occupied by a worm pile is difficult terrain. A character that begins their turn in one of these spaces or moves through becomes infected with rot grubs (see the spawn of Kyuss stat block) unless they succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw.

Light. The nearness of the Writhing Battery is beginning to affect the entire area; the space is suffused with a dim green light. This cannot be mitigated by anything except truesight.

Rhythmic Thudding. A sound like that of a heartbeat emanates from the ground. It shakes the

soil and jars objects loose; living creatures have disadvantage on concentration checks.

CREATURES/NPCs

Once the characters have had a few moments to observe the chaos that is unfolding, a massive blackened crystal bursts from the ground at an odd angle. Two **spawn of Kyuss** emerge from nearby buildings while three **star spawn hulks** and two **star spawn larva mages** pull themselves from the piles of worms.

DEVELOPMENT

As combat begins, a Writhing Battery has already burst from the ground. It possesses all the abilities shown in **appendix E**.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

Each time the Writhing Battery takes damage, an additional star spawn (to a maximum of the number of characters plus their allies) joins the fray. The star spawn are aware of this ability, and may use their action to trigger this effect themselves.

EXPLORATION

The characters can see that the earth within 10 feet the Writhing Battery is loose and unstable. Dealing 100 or more damage to the area with magic (such as *fireball*, *shatter*, and so on) or magical effects causes the crystal to sink back into the ground. If this happens, the Writhing Battery’s effects are negated for this scene.

SOCIAL

Reader can be rescued by the characters until initiative count 10 of the first round, after which she dies. Rescuing her requires at least one or more living creatures plunging their hands into the pile of worms and succeeding on a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check; creatures that participate are automatically infected as if by a spawn of Kyuss’ **Burrowing Worm** attack, but Reader joins their side as an **archmage** for this scene.

SCENE G. DOOM

The chamber swirls and shifts as the area sloughs away and is replaced with a scene of final devastation.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

The characters are in the wreckage of whatever city they are most bonded to. Waterdeep, Phlan, Mulmaster, Baldur's Gate, Almorel – choose a city that will play on their emotions.

Unfolding Action. As the characters move around, the scene unravels before them. No signs of life can be detected, and the only corpses to be seen are bare skeletons, their bones picked clean. Dead worms are smashed into the ground, buildings have crumbled. The silence is oppressive. As the characters explore, pepper in a small number of references to finding objects that belong to some of their closest allies – though the objects are destroyed, weapons bent, armor broken and showing bite marks, and so on. Occasionally, an oddly colored meteor streaks across the sky, leaving an oily swirl in its wake.

Chronomancy. The Siremun dwarves and their allies worked diligently to bend the lost magic of chronomancy into this illusion. This terrible future shows what would happen if the aspect of Kyuss were to be released. Characters that succeed on a DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana) check or that have at least one 9th-level spell slot recognize this magic, and that such vivid events are only able to be woven into the enchantments if they were seen firsthand.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Crumbling Buildings. Each building contains some reminder of what the characters fight for: moldering bones, broken heirlooms, trinkets that are known to be possessed by the characters' allies throughout their adventuring careers.

Light. Kyuss' presence here has long since turned the sun a sickly green. The area is bathed in dim light; darkvision and other modes of enhanced vision only work for undead creatures.

CREATURES/NPCs

After the characters have discovered the evidence that their allies have been destroyed, the **aspect of Kyuss** erupts from the ground along with two **spawn of Kyuss**. When the aspect takes damage for the first time each round, roll a die; add one **star spawn hulk** on an even result or add one **star spawn larva mage** on an odd result. A maximum of three star spawn creatures may be added to the encounter in this way.

DEVELOPMENT

In this scene, the Writhing Battery has already released the aspect of Kyuss. Its broken husk is terrifying to behold but it possesses none of the abilities shown in **appendix E**.

Victory. This scene requires an adjusted victory condition: in addition to the star spawn being defeated, the characters must also defeat the aspect of Kyuss.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

Add one more of each star spawn when the aspect arrives. Consider having the aspect reset to full hp on initiative count 20 for each of the first two rounds (be reasonable, but narrate this as "the aspect pulls worms from the ground," etc.). This encounter may be exceptionally difficult; refer to the Social pillar.

EXPLORATION

Incorporate reminders of Kyuss' power in the buildings. Death notes that decry the absence of the characters, soul-rending letters of regret between family members, perhaps even baubles from previous *Saga of the Worm* adventures. This encounter may prove difficult; refer to the Social pillar.

SOCIAL

The aspect of Kyuss will offer "salvation" to the characters each round as needed. Accepting salvation turns the character into a star spawn allied with Kyuss for the duration of the combat; if all characters accept salvation or die, craft a compelling, doom-filled narrative and return the characters to life for scene H. It's the future, but it doesn't have to be *their* future.

SCENE H. RESET

Prerequisite. This scene cannot be played until the characters have completed one of the previous scenes (B-G). Once this scene begins, the characters may not play a previous scene.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Map. Use the map from Scene A. Silent Watchers.

Reality Anchor. Nothing can be summoned or dismissed in this place, and teleportation effects only work here as long as they do not involve a space outside of this area. Dae'lomdel's abilities aren't affected, nor are the abilities of any character with the **Favored of the Worm** story award.

Hizagkuur. The stone here, as with other spaces in the complex, is composed of *hizagkuur*.

CREATURES/NPC

Zor **Dae'lomdel Nuruhuine** stands in the chamber, a cruel grin playing across his face as he draws worms from the floor and into himself. He coldly tells the characters that their efforts allowed him to bypass the final wards and gain access to the Writhing Battery. He is accompanied by two **star spawn larva mages**.

What Does He Know? Dae'lomdel knows that this is his opportunity to release an aspect of Kyuss and that the characters will spare no effort and waste no time in attempting to defeat him and his god. He is a zealot that wholly believes in his mission as the Harbinger of the Worm and is fully aware that Kyuss will consume him should he fail.

DEVELOPMENT

As combat begins, the Writhing Battery crashes up through the floor. It possesses all the abilities shown in **appendix E**. If the characters did not already defeat the **aspect of Kyuss**, it emerges from the crystal and joins combat on initiative count 25. If they already defeated the aspect, instead the Writhing Battery emits a necrotic pulse that affects every living creature within 200 feet every round as a lair action; affected creatures must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, they gain an additional level of exhaustion. This pulse extends through barriers, including stone and even *walls of force*.

Salvation. Any character that accepted an offer of salvation in scene G begins this scene returned to life, with no Hit Dice and with their maximum hit points reduced by half.

Victory. This scene requires an adjusted victory condition: all foes must be destroyed, including the Writhing Battery and whatever it might contain.

RESET

When combat is resolved, the dwarven tablet is nowhere to be found. The previous scenes cannot be revisited, and any character proficient in Arcana or that succeeds on a DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check can confirm that the Silent Watchers will only permit a single interaction with the tablet for any living creature.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

Dae'lomdel wastes no time in attempting to use his *talisman of ultimate evil* to kill one of the characters. He takes great pleasure in using his **Hurl Through Hell** ability on paladins first and bards second; everyone else takes equal priority.

EXPLORATION

Nothing prevents the characters from fleeing the Chamber of the Silent Watchers – in fact, leading Dae'lomdel and the star spawn back to the *silence* zone in the Ring of Protection might be a significant aid if combat begins to go poorly! The enemies will alter their plans as appropriate if the characters attempt to lure them past the Ring though.

SOCIAL

If the characters are beginning to die, Dae'lomdel gloats and offers to let a single character escape with their life – if they agree to gain the **Favored of the Worm** story award while they watch the worms consume their allies. Creatures so consumed can only be raised via *true resurrection*, but Dae'lomdel does indeed let the final character leave this place alive.

WRAP UP

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

If the characters return to Reader, she is keenly interested in learning anything that they wish to share about the recent events – especially where the topic of Kyuss is concerned.

Her Purpose. If the characters haven't already determined it, Reader confirms that she is a Lords' Alliance agent. She shares that she was placed here several years ago at the behest of her sisters and was given the sole task of watching for the emergence of the ancient evil from below Almored. If anyone asks if she is SEER or somehow related, she merely says that she has many sisters but isn't aware of who this "SEER" is. If the matter is pressed, she holds fast to this statement but gives the air that she isn't being entirely truthful—exceptionally resourceful characters can perform their own investigations, and if you are so motivated you might share that Reader is a clone or simulacrum of SEER.

Holy Symbol of Kyuss. The characters may have acquired the holy symbol of Kyuss (a *talisman of ultimate evil*). If the characters bring this item into her home or even into close proximity to her, she senses its presence. She offers to "fence the amulet, as no creature in all the Realms should have access to such power" and assures the characters that her sources are "far removed from Faerûn." She can make no statement about any potential buyer, but assures them that the reward will be "mutually beneficial to all parties." She hints at having powerful extraplanar allies, though who they might be or where they are located is something that she is unwilling to share. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that she is genuine in her intention to rid the world of this vile item.

Should they agree to Reader's offer, she sends them a package roughly one month later. Inside is one *potion of invulnerability* per character and whomever surrendered the talisman also receives a carefully wrapped *Ioun stone (greater absorption)*.

There is no penalty for retaining the talisman, though the characters should be made aware of the item's effects – and that other powerful agents of evil may take a keen interest in them in the future. Note that if they keep the talisman, this *Ioun stone* will never be available to them.

GOING FORWARD

Reader is concerned that other shards of the prison of Kyuss may be discovered elsewhere in the world. She isn't immediately aware of where these might be located, but she has heard rumors of such things in the following places:

- **DDAL00-01.** In some ancient Netherese ruins along the Sword Coast
- **DDAL00-03.** Somewhere near Mulmaster
- **Undetermined.** Off the shores of Chult and heading toward far-off Maztica.
- **Undetermined.** At the bottom of a deep pool of purple water, surrounded by unfamiliar sigils and runes.

What the characters do with this information is for them to decide and is outside the bounds of this adventure

ADVENTURE REWARDS

The characters receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. Aside from advancement, these rewards are earned during the session.

CHARACTER REWARDS

The characters earn the following rewards:

ADVANCEMENT

Upon completing this adventure, each character gains a level. At their discretion, they may choose to decline advancement. Remind those that express an interest in this that they have a limit to how much gold they can earn per level; declining advancement means that they may reach a point where they earn no gold.

GOLD

Award each character gold for each hour of the session. Adventures typically features cues for this, but you can add it where you see fit. The maximum gold that you can award a character per hour is determined by their tier, as follows:

Tier	Hourly GP Award	GP Limit per Level
1	20 gp	80 gp
2	30 gp	240 gp
3	200 gp	1,600 gp
4	750 gp	6,000 gp

MAGIC ITEM(S)

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items; these items are described in **Appendix C**:

- Ioun Stone (Greater Absorption)
- Holy Symbol of Kyuss (Talisman of Ultimate Evil)
- Spell scroll of antilife shell
- Spell scroll of geas
- Spell scroll of heal

DUNGEON MASTER REWARDS

For running this adventure, one of your character gains a level. That character receives gold based on their tier prior to advancement:

Tier	GP Earned
1	80 gp
2	240 gp
3	1,600 gp
4	6,000 gp

You may also complete DM Quests for running this adventure. See the Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide for more information.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

Zor Dae'lomdel Nuruhuine (ZORE DAY-LAHM-dell NU-ru-HU-eeen-AY). Male half-elf (half-drow) male, 33. Dae'lomdel made his name on the waters of the Moonsea as a cutthroat with a bad reputation, though in truth he was... well, a pirate with a reputation that preceded him. Intensely loyal to his crew, he was honorable to a fault: during an ill-fated excursion to some ruins north of Candlekeep, he surrendered himself to Kyuss' agents in an effort to save his allies. The dead god welcomed his gift and perverted it, using the half-drow against his former friends and upon naming him Harbinger of the Worm, deployed him across Faerûn in a quest to recover as many Writhing Batteries as possible.

Personality: Swashbuckling bravado and arrogance, prone to taking rash actions. Though it's hard-earned, he's extremely loyal to anyone who becomes "crew."

Ideal: Self-worth is found in one's ability to take what they want by force or cunning.

Bond: Unwaveringly committed to members of my "crew" regardless of personal cost, risk, laws, etc.

Flaw: Unknowingly entered into a pact with a fiend. I realize my "powers" come from somewhere at a cost, but I don't care about that.

PLAYING DAE'LOMDEL

Dae'lomdel can be as complex or as simple as your game needs him to be. As a former player character in the D&D Adventurers League campaign, his original character sheet has been added to this adventure purchase. You are free to use any of the information found there in any way you see fit, with the following adjustments:

Magic Items. Dae'lomdel's items are still magical, but they cannot be retained by the characters after this adventure. These items are corrupted by Kyuss' terrible power, and may feel slimy, wriggling, or something else equally foul if handled by anyone other than the Harbinger.

Spells. Dae'lomdel's spells can, and should, be modified based on the abilities of the characters. Kyuss would empower his Harbinger to take on foes as appropriate!



Xian Shu (“Reader”). Female Shou human, 28. Xian Shu is commonly known as “Reader” in Almorel, on account of her reputation as a fortune-teller and reader of portents. She speaks multiple languages including, but not limited to; Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Infernal, Mulhorandi, both ancient and modern Netherese, and Shou. She is secretly an agent of the Lords’ Alliance; in truth, she is one of SEER’s simulacra though she won’t reveal this information willingly. Characters that have previously met SEER may easily believe that Xian is one of her younger sisters, or perhaps even a daughter—Xian neither confirms nor denies any relationship should they bring it up.

Personality: Reader is a calculating person, always looking for the next angle or vector in a relationship or situation.

Ideal: My goal in life is to ensure that the past stays buried and gone.

Bond: I am defined by the signs and portents that I perceive and translate.

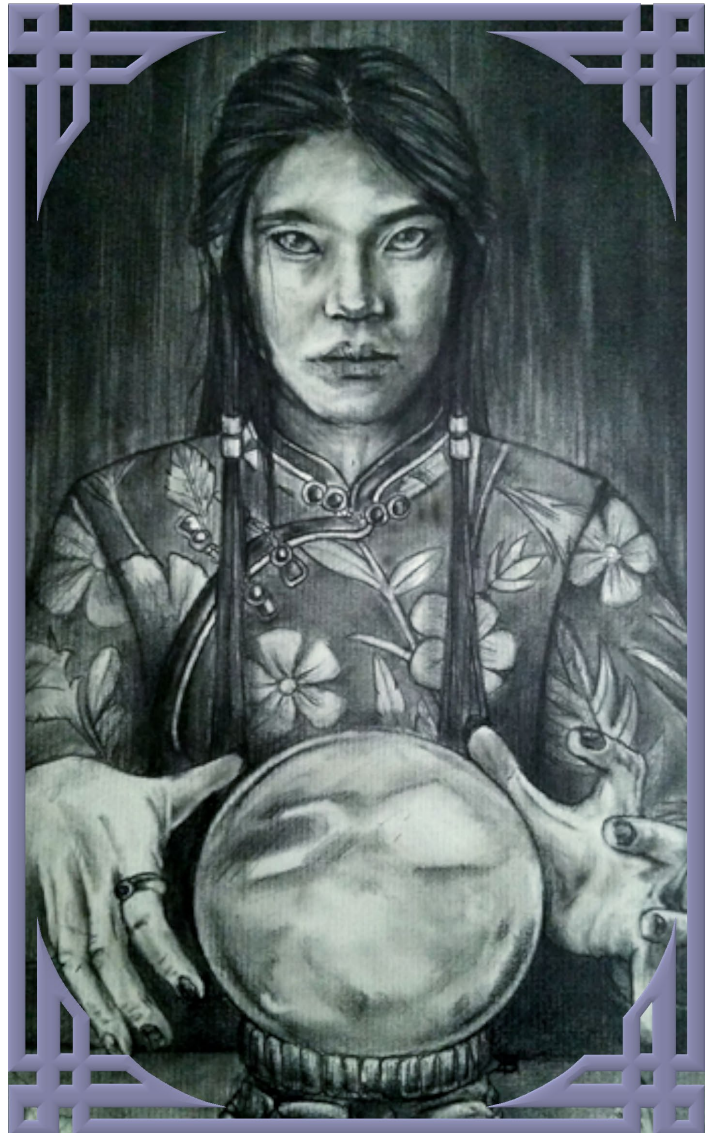
Flaw: I know that my power is limited, so I will continue to weave my webs until I am unapproachable – even if this means that I have to cut my allies from my life. I am safer alone.

PLAYING READER

Xian Shu’s—Reader’s—position in the story should be as more of an enabler rather than a solution. As a representative (and truthfully, a distinct version) of SEER, she possesses whatever abilities you believe that she needs. Her focus in Almorel is to spy and report, and as such her spells and abilities should be focused on enchantment and illusion.

History. She is a student of history and is proud of her heritage. She will speak highly of the courts of Shou Lung, though she changes topic quickly when asked why she is no longer there. She knows much of Almorel and can provide any of the information present in the **Locales** appendix. The additional rumors and adventure seeds in that appendix may seem attractive to the characters, and should she discover this, she is quick to remind them of the more pressing matter at hand.

Exposition. She can summarize any of the story hooks for the characters, and if you don’t have time to play Bonus Objective A, she can provide a tale of those events as well. Use her to push this adventure’s story points!



CREATURE STATISTICS

ARCHMAGE

Medium humanoid (human), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +13, History +13

Damage Resistance damage from spells; nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing (from *stoneskin*)

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any six languages

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Magic Resistance. The archmagi has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. The archmage is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The archmage can cast *disguise self* and *invisibility* at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *identify*, *mage armor**, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *mirror image*, *misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *fire shield*, *stoneskin**

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *scrying*, *wall of force*

6th level (3 slots): *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (3 slots): *teleport*

8th level (3 slots): *mind blank**

9th level (3 slots): *time stop*

*: *The archmage casts these spells on itself before combat*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

ASPECT OF KYUSS

Gargantuan fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 25

Hit Points 548 (25d20 + 260)

Speed 60 ft., burrow 120 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	16 (+3)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)	26 (+8)

Saving Throws Str +17, Dex +15, Wis +17

Skills Arcana +17, Perception +25, Religion +17

Damage Immunities acid, cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened, poisoned, prone, stunned

Senses darkvision 240 ft., truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 35

Languages Common, Ancient Netherese, Dwarvish, Elvish, Abyssal, Infernal

Challenge 25 (75,000 XP)

Discorporation. When Kyuss drops to 9 hit points or dies, his body is destroyed but his essence travels back to his prison inside the Dark Obelisk, and it is unable to take physical form for a time.

Innate Spellcasting (3/day). Kyuss can innately cast *divine word* (spell save 25). His spellcasting ability is Charisma, and he does not require any verbal, material, or somatic components when using this ability.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Kyuss fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Limited Magic Immunity. Unless he wishes to be affected, Kyuss is immune to spells of 6th level or lower. He has advantage on saving throws against all other spells and magical effects.

Magic Weapons. Kyuss' melee and ranged weapon attacks are magical.

Regeneration. At the start of his turn, every living creature within 100 feet must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or they lose 5 hit points and Kyuss regains 5 hit points.

Spawning. Kyuss may generate a rot grub swarm any time he is hit by a melee attack or other physical effect.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Kyuss can use Frightful Presence and make two melee attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +17 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d6 + 8) slashing damage plus 42 (12d6) necrotic damage. When Kyuss hits with this attack, the target must succeed on a DC 18 Con save or become infected with rot grubs (use the Burrowing Worm action effect of a Spawn of Kyuss, but the damage +3d6 higher). This damage ignores any of the target's resistances; if the target is immune to necrotic damage, they are instead merely resistant to necrotic damage for this effect.

Frightful Presence. Each creature and sentient magical item of Kyuss' choice that is within 240 feet of Kyuss and aware of it must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to Kyuss' Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours. If a sentient item is frightened in this manner, its additional abilities fail to function until it is no longer frightened.

Consume Material. Kyuss can consume non-living, biodegradable matter in an adjacent square. Small objects or corpses restore 3d6 hit points; medium objects or corpses restore 6d6 hit points and advantage on its next attack roll; large or larger objects or corpses restore 10d6 hit points and Kyuss gains 1 additional legendary action.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Kyuss can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Kyuss regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Claw. As per the action above.

Agitate Rot Grubs (Costs 2 Actions). Kyuss agitates his rot grubs. Any character infected with a rot grub must immediately succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or else become infected with another worm, as per the Burrowing Worm action of a Spawn of Kyuss.

DEATH KNIGHT

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 180 (19d8 + 95)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +9, Cha +10

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Magic Resistance. The slaad has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Marshal Undead. Unless the death knight is incapacitated, it and undead creatures of its choice within 60 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against features that turn undead.

Spellcasting. The death knight is a 19th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command, compelled duel, searing smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, magic weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic, elemental weapon*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, staggering smite*

5th level (2 slots): *destructive wave* (necrotic)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The death knight makes three longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage.

Hellfire Orb (1/Day). The death knight hurls a magical ball of fire that explodes at a point it can see within 120 feet of it. Each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. The sphere spreads around corners. A creature takes 35 (10d6) fire damage and 35 (10d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Parry. The death knight adds 6 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the death knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

LICH

Medium undead, any evil alignment

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 135 (18d8 + 54)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +10, Int +12, Wis +9

Skills Arcana +18, History +12, Insight +9, Perception +9

Damage Resistances cold, lightning, necrotic

Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common plus up to five other languages

Challenge 21 (33,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the lich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Rejuvenation. If it has a phylactery, a destroyed lich gains a new body in 1d10 days, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the phylactery.

Spellcasting. The lich is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). The lich has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, magic missile, shield, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, dispel magic, fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *blight, dimension door*

5th level (3 slots): *cloudkill, scrying*

6th level (1 slot): *disintegrate, globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death, plane shift*

8th level (1 slot): *dominate monster*, *power word stun*

9th level (1 slot): *power word kill*

Turn Resistance. The lich has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

ACTIONS

Paralyzing Touch. Melee Spell Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (3d6) cold damage. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The lich can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The lich regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Cantrip.** The lich casts a cantrip.
- **Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions).** The lich uses its Paralyzing Touch.
- **Frightening Gaze (Costs 2 Actions).** The lich fixes its gaze on one creature it can see within 10 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened for 1 minute. The frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the lich's gaze for the next 24 hours.
- **Disrupt Life (Costs 3 Actions).** Each living creature within 20 feet of the lich must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw against this magic, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

MUMMY LORD

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 97 (13d8 + 39)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	17 (+3)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +8, Int +5, Wis +9, Cha +8

Skills History +5, Religion +5

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 15 (13,000 XP)

Magic Resistance. The mummy lord has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Rejuvenation. A destroyed mummy lord gains a new body in 24 hours if its heart is intact, regaining all its hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within 5 feet of the mummy lord's heart.

Spellcasting. The mummy lord is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The mummy lord has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *sacred flame*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *guiding bolt*, *shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *silence*, *spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead*, *dispel magic*

4th level (3 slots): *divination*, *guardian of faith*

5th level (2 slots): *contagion*, *insect plague*

6th level (1 slot): *harm*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mummy lord can use its Dreadful Glare and makes one attack with its rotting fist.

Rotting Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the *remove curse* spell or other magic.

Dreadful Glare. The mummy lord targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. If the target can see the mummy lord, it must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or become frightened until the end of the mummy's next turn. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, it is also paralyzed for the same duration. A target that succeeds on the saving

throw is immune to the Dreadful Glare of all mummies and mummy lords for the next 24 hours.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The mummy lord can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The mummy lord regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Attack. The mummy lord makes one attack with its rotting fist or its Dreadful Glare.

Blinding Dust. Blinding dust and sand swirls magically around the mummy lord. Each creature within 5 feet of the mummy lord must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of the creature's next turn.

Blasphemous Word (Costs 2 Actions). The mummy lord utters a blasphemous word. Each non-undead creature within 10 feet of the mummy lord that can hear the magical utterance must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of the mummy lord's next turn.

Channel Negative Energy (Costs 2 Actions). The mummy lord magically unleashes negative energy. Creatures within 60 feet of the mummy lord, including ones behind barriers and around corners, can't regain hit points until the end of the mummy lord's next turn.

Whirlwind of Sand (Costs 2 Actions). The mummy lord magically transforms into a whirlwind of sand, moves up to 60 feet, and reverts to its normal form. While whirlwind form, the mummy lord is immune to all damage, and it can't be grappled, petrified, knocked prone, restrained, or stunned. Equipment worn or carried by the mummy lord remains in its possession.

SPAWN OF KYUSS

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 76 (9d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	18 (+5)	5 (-3)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Saving Throws Wis +1

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. The spawn of Kyuss regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or a body of running water. If the spawn takes acid, fire, or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the spawn's next turn. The spawn is destroyed only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Worms. If the spawn of Kyuss is targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away, and it loses its Burrowing Worm action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spawn of Kyuss makes two attacks with its claws and uses Burrowing Worm.

Burrowing Worm. A worm launches from the spawn of Kyuss at one humanoid that the spawn can see within 10 feet of it. The worm latches onto the target's skin unless the target succeeds on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. The worm is a Tiny undead with AC 6, 1 hit point, a 2 (-4) in every ability score, and a speed of 1 foot. While on the target's skin, the worm can be killed by normal means or scraped off using an action (the spawn can use this action to launch a scraped-off worm at a humanoid it can see within 10 feet of the worm). Otherwise, the worm burrows under the target's skin at the end of the target's next turn, dealing 1 piercing damage to it. At the end of each of its turns thereafter, the target takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage per worm infesting it (maximum 10d6). A worm-infested target dies if it drops to 0 hit points, then rises 10 minutes later as a spawn of Kyuss. If a worm-infested creature targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

STAR SPAWN HULK

Large aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (13d10 + 65)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	8 (-1)	21 (+5)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +1, Wis +5

Skills Perception +5

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Deep Speech

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Psychic Mirror. If the hulk takes psychic damage, each creature within 10 feet of the hulk takes that damage instead; the hulk takes none of the damage. In addition, the hulk's thoughts and location can't be discerned by magic.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hulk makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit the same target, the target also takes 9 (2d8) psychic damage and must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of the target's next turn.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Reaping Arms (Recharge 5—6). The hulk makes a separate slam attack against each creature within 10 feet of it. Each creature that is hit must also succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

STAR SPAWN LARVA MAGE

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 168 (16d8 + 96)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	23 (+6)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +6, Cha +8

Skills Perception +6

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Deep Speech

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The larva mage's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *eldritch blast* (3 beams, +3 bonus to each damage roll)

3/day: *dominate monster*

1/day: *circle of death*

Return to Worms. When the larva mage is reduced to 0 hit points, it breaks apart into a swarm of insects in the same space. Unless the swarm is destroyed, the larva mage reforms from it 24 hours later.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

Plague of Worms (Recharge 6). Each creature other than a star spawn within 10 feet of the larva mage must succeed on a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw or take 22 (5d8) necrotic damage and be blinded and restrained by masses of swarming worms. The affected creature takes 22 (5d8) necrotic damage at the start of each of the larva mage's turns. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

SWARM OF ROT GRUBS

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	7 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	2 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 6

Languages --

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny maggot. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* the target is infested by 1d4 rot grubs. At the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage per rot grub infesting it. Applying fire to the bite wound before the end of the target's next turn deals 1 fire damage to the target and kills these rot grubs. After this time, these rot grubs are too far under the skin to be burned.

If a target infested by rot grubs ends its turn with 0 hit points, it dies as the rot grubs burrow into its heart and kill it. Any effect that cures disease kills all rot grubs infesting the target.

WRAITH

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the wraith has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Specter. The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

SCALING THE MONSTERS

The creatures provided in the *Monster Manual* and other resources are not a sufficient mechanical challenge in this adventure, but they are an appropriate thematic challenge. What follows are the suggested changes to those creatures:

- **Spawn of Kyuss; tier 4 (levels 17 - 20).** Hit points 166 (19d8 + 86), Strength is 20 (+5), immune to non-magical weapons and fear, resistant to fire, cold, acid, lightning, thunder; once per day may choose to succeed on a failed saving throw, has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Burrowing Worm's Dexterity DC is 13, a worm-infected target takes 13 (4d6) necrotic damage per worm (maximum 20d6), and the claw attack becomes +10 and deals 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 13 (4d6) necrotic damage
- **Swarm of Rot Grubs; tier 4 (levels 17 - 20).** Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft., immune to slashing and piercing weapon damage; for the purposes of this adventure, the effect of a Swarm of Rot Grubs' bites action stacks with the effects of a Spawn of Kyuss' burrowing worms action and vice versa.
- **Wraith; tier 4 (levels 17 - 20).** Hit points 158 (19d8 + 78), Dexterity is 20 (+5), immune to non-magical weapons and fear, resistant to fire, cold, acid, lightning, thunder; has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Life Drain's Constitution DC is 18, and Life Drain becomes +10 and deals 31 (6d8 + 5) necrotic damage

For the purposes of this adventure, the effect of a **Swarm of Rot Grubs'** bites action stacks with the effects of a **Spawn of Kyuss'** burrowing worms action and vice versa.

CREATURE AFFILIATIONS

For the purposes of the Saga of the Worm adventures, the star spawn creatures are considered to be allied with, or perhaps part of, Kyuss. Effects that come from the Writhing Battery or Kyuss himself affect these star spawn, even if the effect would normally only affect undead. Similarly, effects like a **star spawn larva mage's** *Plague of Worms* ability do not affect allied undead, such as the **spawn of Kyuss**.

MISSING CREATURES

You may find that some creatures are missing. These creatures aren't considered mechanically important (though they are likely narratively important!) and have thus been omitted.

MAPS

ALMOREL

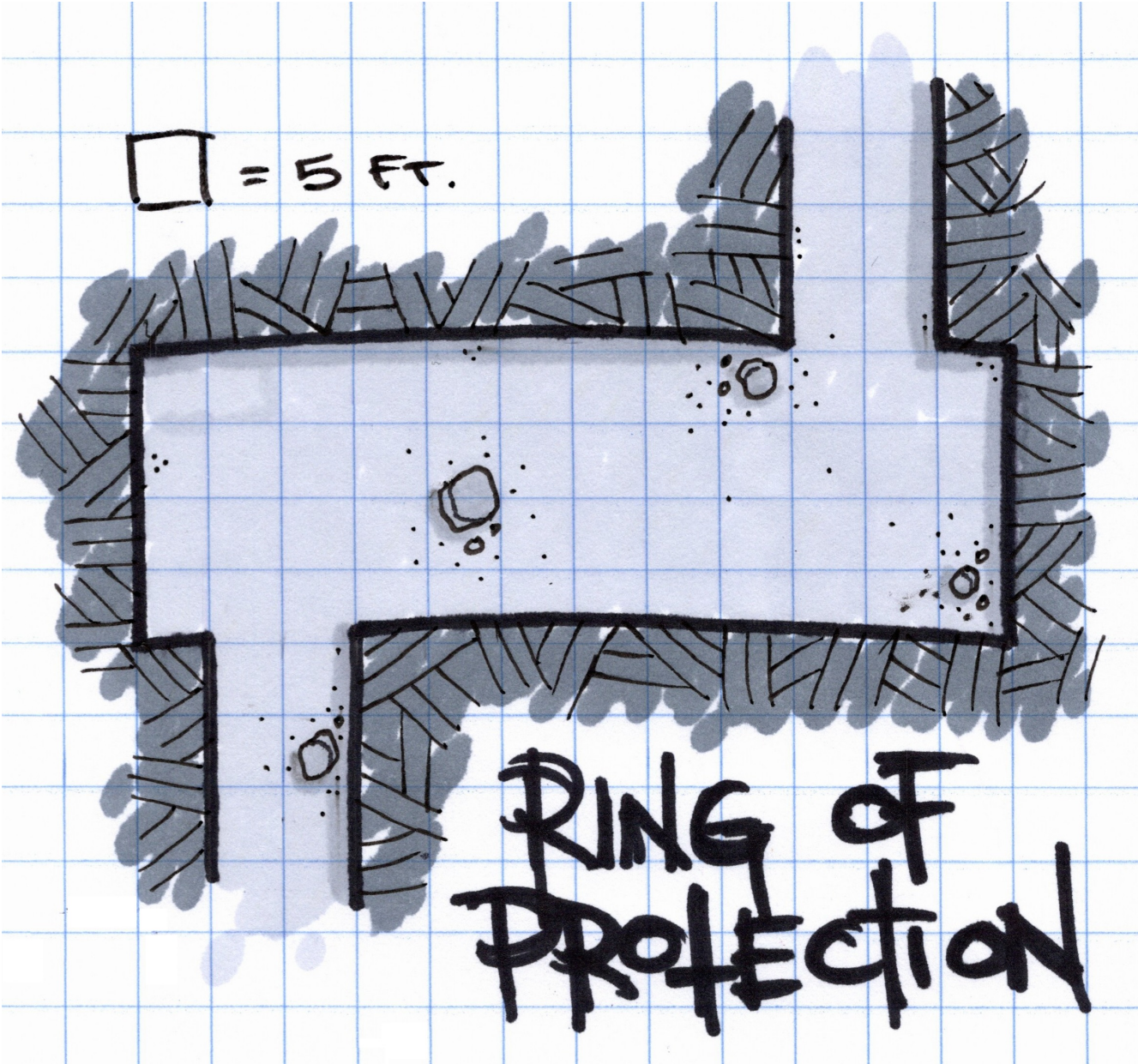


PART 1

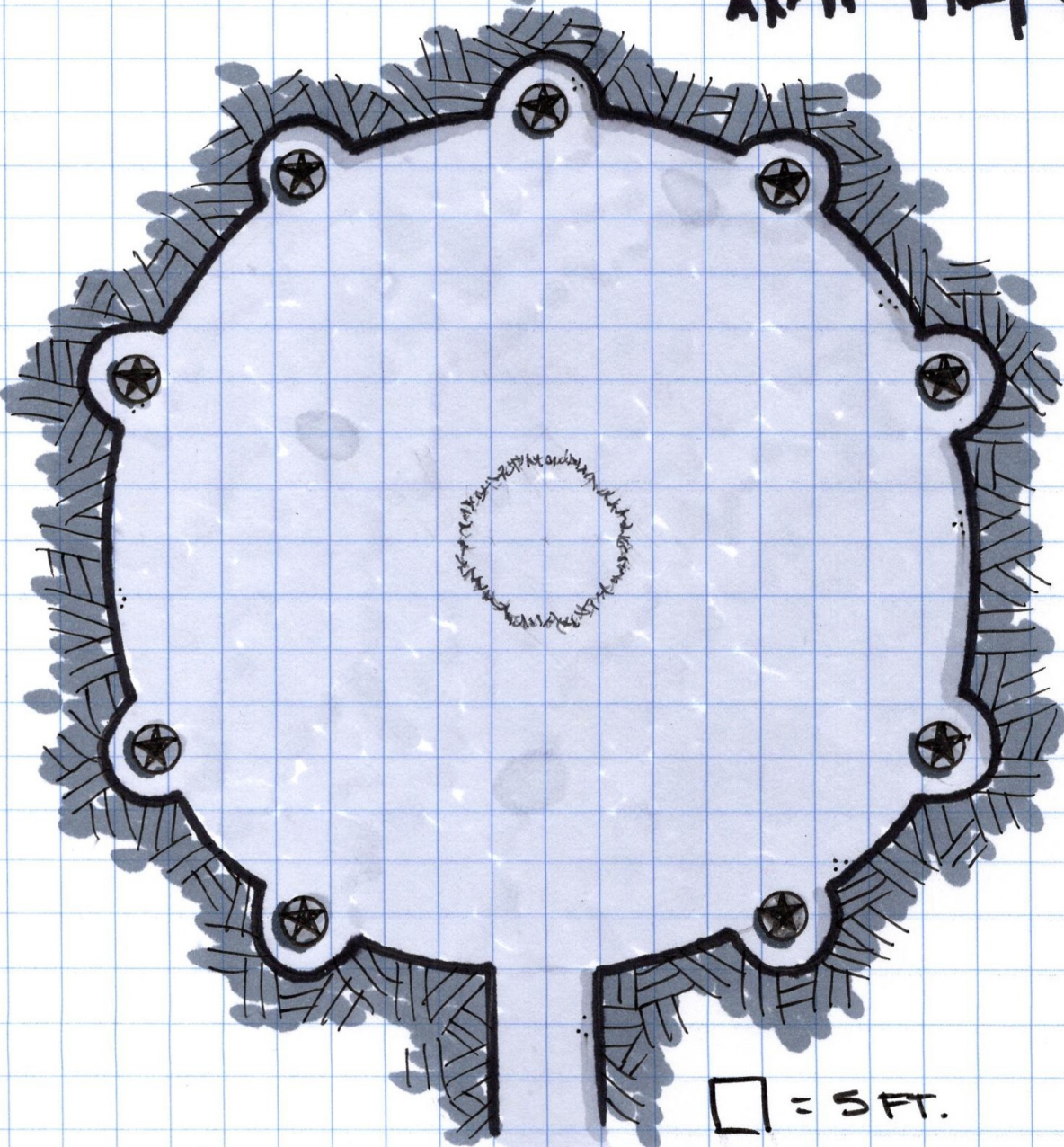
This map is also used for Bonus Objective B.



PART 1, SCENE B



SILENT WATCHERS



PART 3, SCENE C. DETECTION

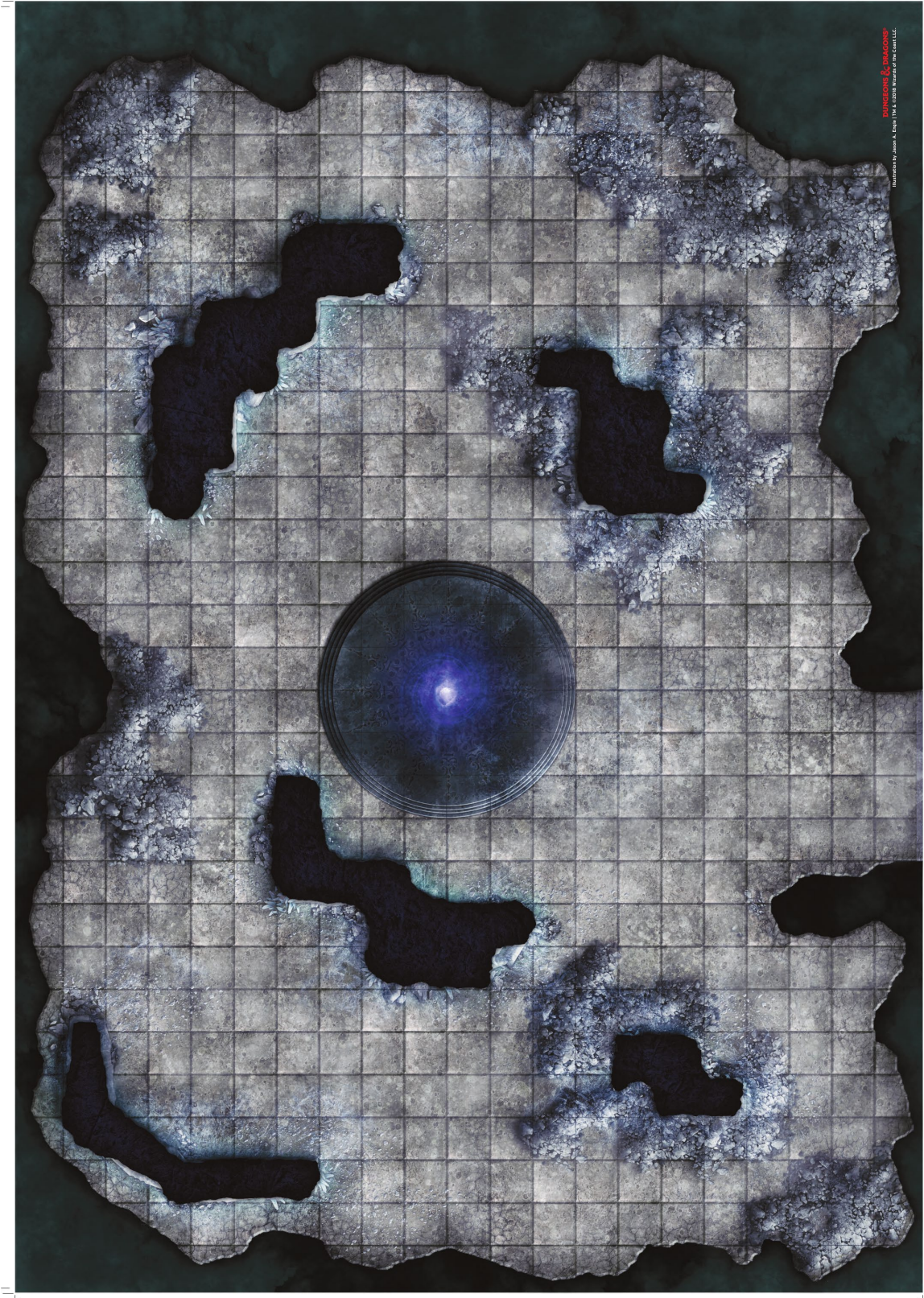
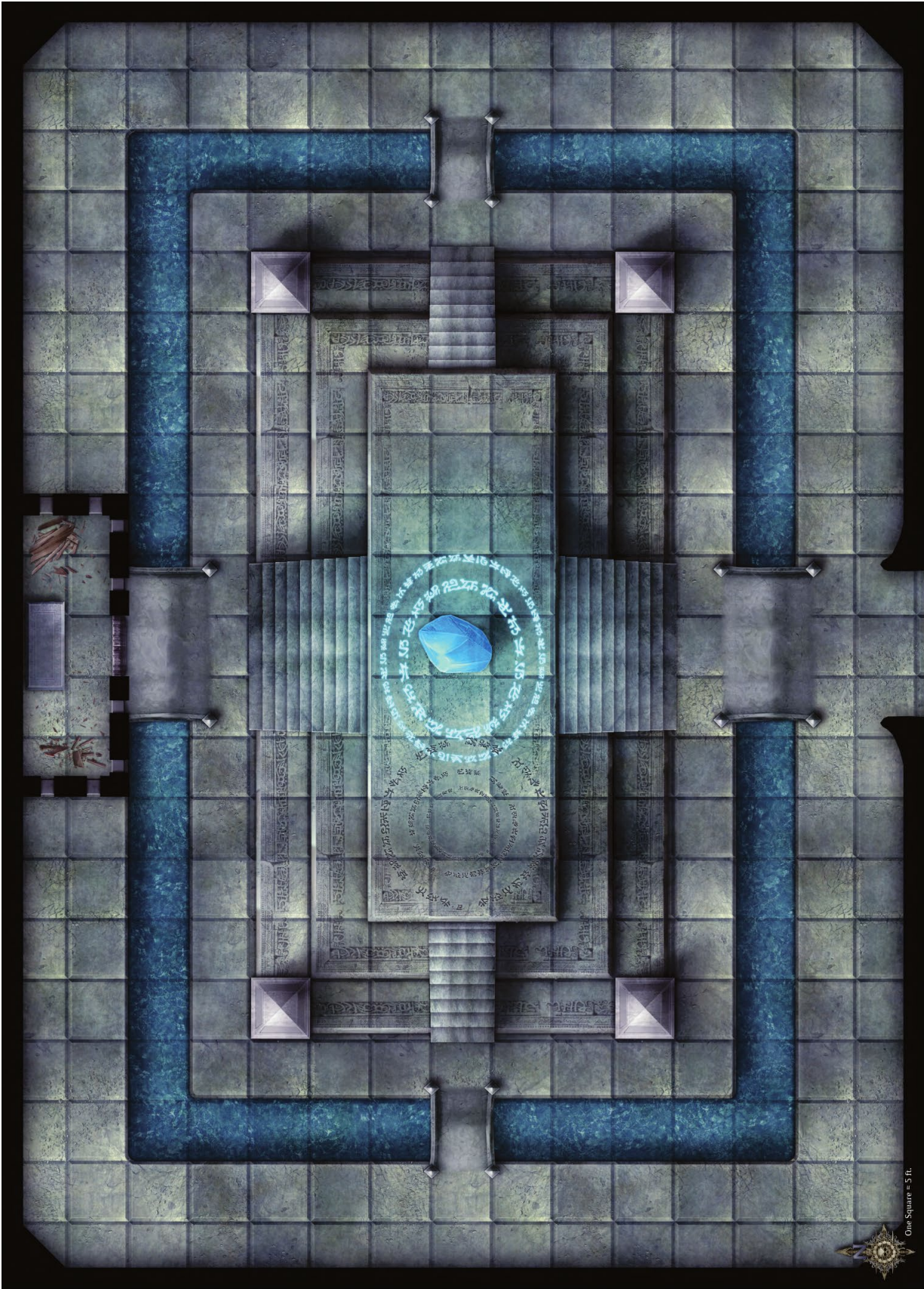


Illustration by James A. Foye III © 2020 Wizards of the Coast LLC

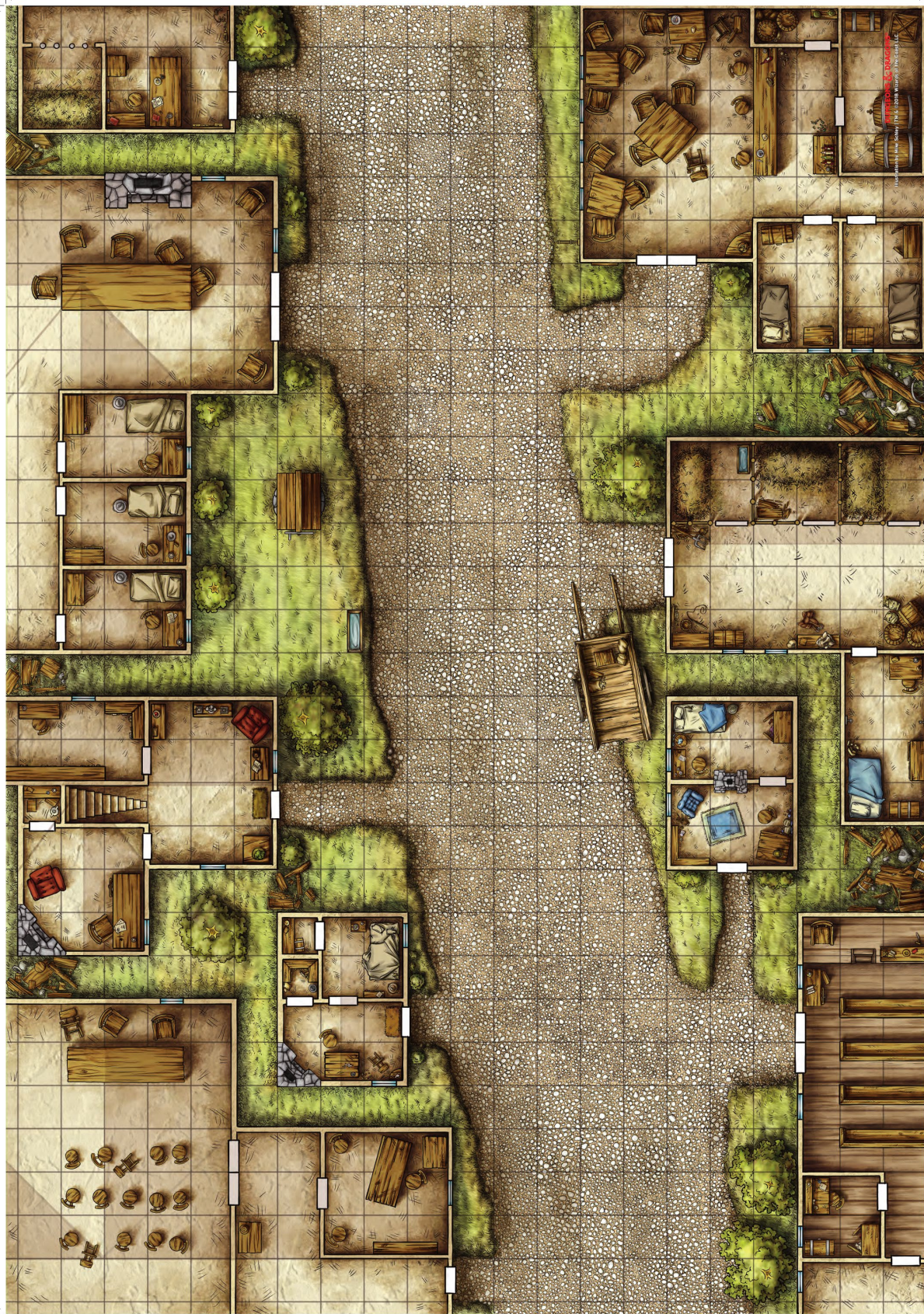
PART 3, SCENE D. DISSENTION



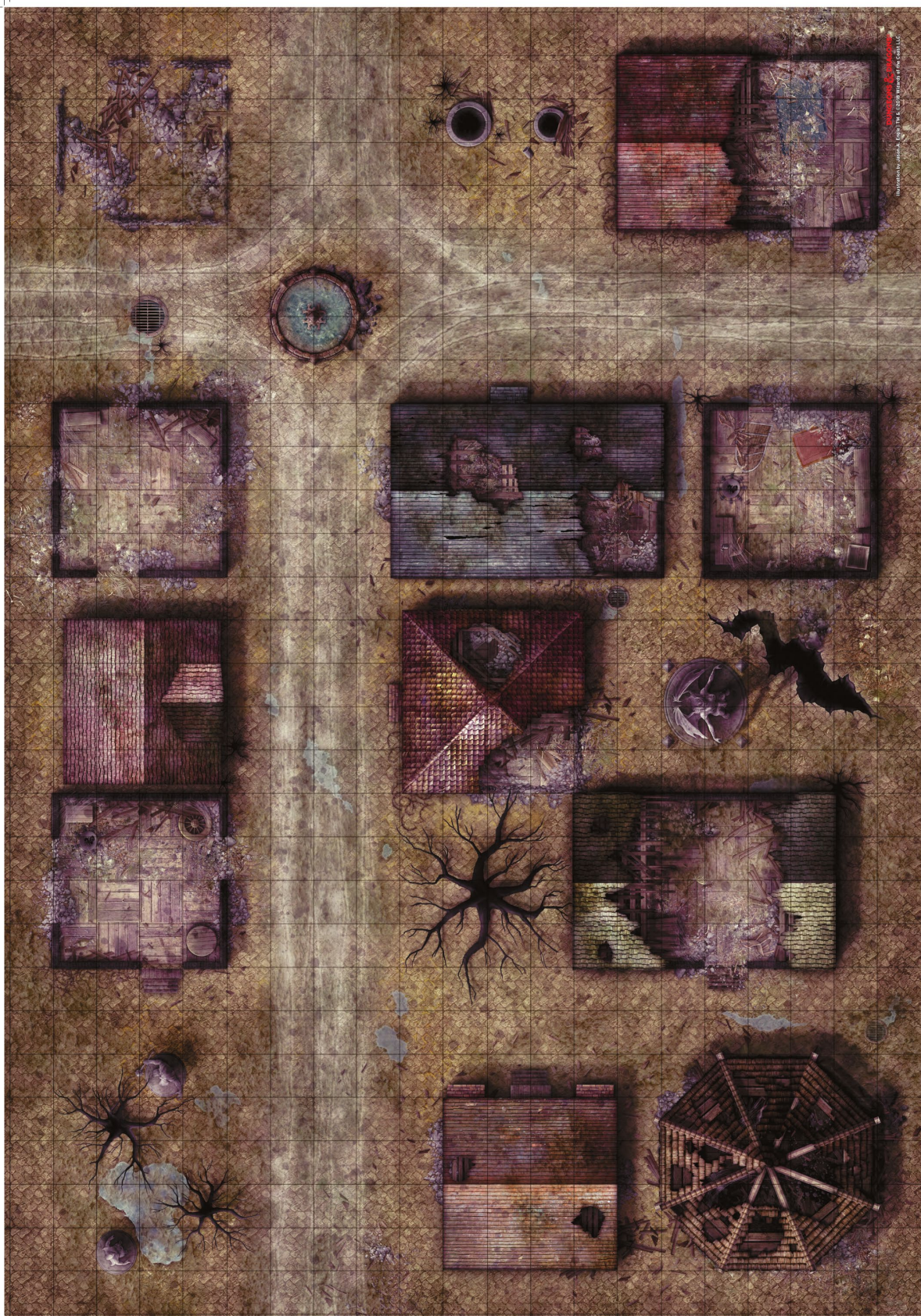
PART 3, SCENE E. DOLDRUM



PART 3, SCENE F. DEVASTATION



PART 3, SCENE G. DOOM



APPENDIX A: A GLIMPSE OF FOREVER (BONUS OBJECTIVE A)

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

SETTING

This is a nonstandard location in that it takes place entirely within a dreamscape. Even so, the danger is real!

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this Bonus Objective. It can be run any time before the characters enter the dwarven tunnels beneath Almorel, and is suggested to take place when the characters are asleep—potentially prior to the call to action.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A

The characters must learn of the Harbinger's involvement and what happens when the Writhing Battery is freed or broken.

THE DREAMSCAPE

Inside a stuffy dreamscape, a cracked, crystalline obelisk juts angrily from the ground. A rhythmic thumping not unlike a heartbeat emanates from it.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. Each hex is approximately 5 feet across, though you're welcome to increase to 10 feet if needed. It should be sized in such a way that the characters feel uncomfortable.

Dark Obelisk. This Dark Obelisk is significantly larger than any others that the characters may have previously discovered. On closer inspection, the characters find open doors leading inside and passages leading around the interior (see below). The Writhing Battery is enshrined and locked in the center; it isn't immediately accessible.

Doors and Vestibule. The doors are open, and the vestibule is covered in gravel. When close, the gravel is identifiable as dead worms in various states of decay and the doors have clearly been destroyed—blasted in by magic.

Rhythm. Any character that has played DDAL00-01 *Window to the Past* or DDAL00-03 *Those That*

Came Before automatically recognizes the sound—it is the sound of a fragment of the dead god Kyuss flailing against the interior of a Dark Obelisk. More information about this divine prison can be found in **appendix E**, or referenced in those adventures. Felt as much as it is heard, the sound disrupts concentration and perception (these are descriptive effects, not necessarily mechanical). This noise gives the entire area a palpable sense of evil.

Wards. The wards in the spaces marked A, B, C, and D can each be destroyed by casting *dispel magic* at 9th level. Alternately, they can be defaced through lesser magics or even by using a weapon to scratch them out, but doing this causes them to reappear in 1d6 rounds. Once a ward has affected a creature, it doesn't recharge until that effect is no longer active; once the effect is removed, it recharges in one minute.

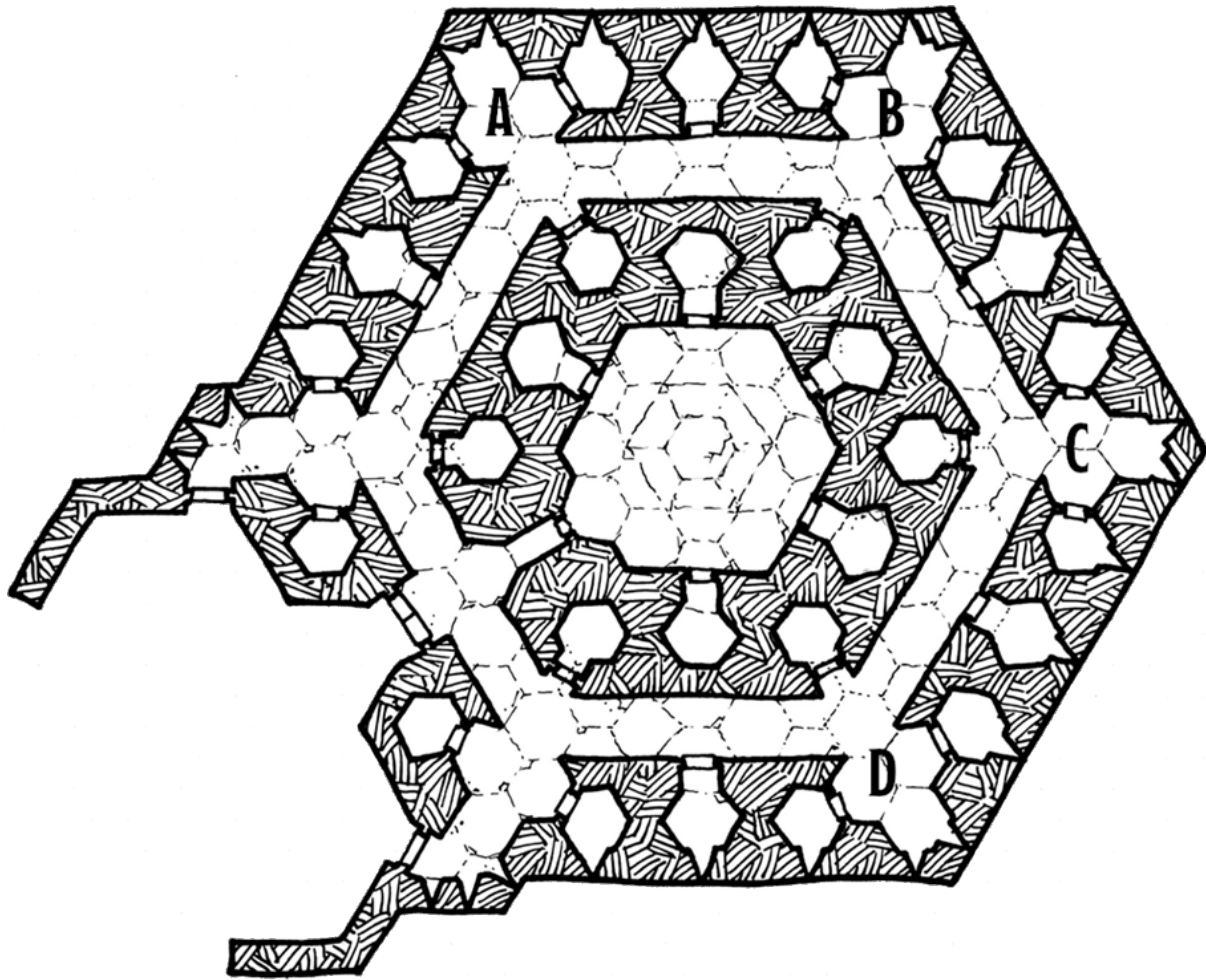
EXPLORING THE DREAMSCAPE

This Bonus Objective should be run in a free-form manner, allowing and encouraging the characters to use their abilities, spells, and items in creative and inventive ways.

- The environment outside the walls doesn't exist—it looks similar to the grey nothingness of the Astral Plane, but on rare occasions the vibrant strands of the Weave itself can be spied, always just slightly out of focus.
- If the characters can imagine a tool, foe, or threat, it manifests a few rounds later. No effect or item originating from here will travel back with them or persist into the waking world, but damage suffered certainly will.

If your characters are seeking a much stronger challenge for this adventure, consider this option:

Tangled Psyches. When the Harbinger's worm surge erupts in the final room, the characters find that their psyches have been intertwined. Each player hands their character sheet and logsheets to the player sitting on their left; no magic or effect can undo this, but leaving the dreamscape resets everyone to normal.



CREATURES/NPCs

No creatures other than Dae'lomdel are currently present. Dae'lomdel's statistics are presented on his character sheet, and once encountered he claims to be here in an effort to "stop the beating of the Writhing Battery"; he can share any of the information in **appendix E** as well.

Dae'lomdel's History. He has been trapped here for an indeterminate time, likely a few days. He is dehydrated and hungry, but will recover in time. He will speak freely about interacting with other Writhing Batteries in places like Warlock's Crypt, beneath the Glacier of the White Wurm, off the coast of Chult, and other remote locales. He claims to be hunting The Worm That Walks. Despite his comments, a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that he is hiding something: that he is hunting The Worm That Walks not for retribution, but for a more

sinister purpose—he seeks to free the ancient deity. If attacked, any damage or effect suffered causes him to shriek with fury as his form breaks apart into its component worms that slither away in every possible direction.

DEVELOPMENT AND EXPLORATION

The area outside the Dark Obelisk (any space not indicated on the map) doesn't exist. The characters may perceive natural features in the distance or even believe that they know where they are (feel free to describe the Sword Mountains near Waterdeep or some other familiar landmark), but no matter how long they travel toward it, every time they look behind themselves they see that they've traveled exactly no further from where they started.

Escape. If at any time a character wishes to escape and "wake up" or something similar, they begin to take on an increasingly ethereal, phantomlike appearance; after one minute, they completely fade away and wake up. Taking damage, receiving any

kind of physical interaction, or deciding to not escape cancels this process. Once a character has escaped, they can't revisit this Bonus Objective.

Hallways. The hallways are littered with worm corpses; many are desiccated and leathery, but a few have been smashed. Anyone proficient in Survival quickly identifies that the smashed ones are in the shape of a humanoid boot print, and only a few minutes old. Most of the worms are only a few inches long, but there is a disturbingly large number of corpses that measure a foot or more in length.

Center Doors. Until the wards marked A, B, C, and D are destroyed, the center doors can't be opened or bypassed.

Ward A. Flickering runes dance along the wall here in a mix of ancient languages including ancient Netherese, Raumathari, and the Siremun dialect of Dwarvish. When a creature first views the runes, they must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or suffer the effects of the *flesh to stone* spell.

Ward B. The holy symbol of Dumathoin is displayed atop an open spellbook—a common sigil used by the dwarves that swore fealty to ancient Netheril. When viewed for the first time, a creature must succeed on a DC 18 Intelligence saving throw or suffer the effects of the *feblemind* spell.

Ward C. **Dae'lomdel** is here, caught in a permanent *hold monster* effect due to the ward's magic. Once he is freed, he resumes his quest to deactivate the wards and thus reveal the Writhing Battery.

Ward D. A tiny porcelain horse floats in the air. It is delicately crafted and likely of significant age. Touching or jostling this ward in any causes the exterior to shatter immediately, releasing a *true polymorph* effect on whatever creature is nearest (it doesn't require line of sight, as it magically seeks out this target). The target must succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or it takes on the form of a tiny, fragile toy shaped like a horse.

THE WRITHING BATTERY

The Writhing Battery in the center of this place beats with frenetic energy. It can't be reached or revealed until all four wards have been destroyed.

Dae'lomdel is Alive. If Dae'lomdel is alive, he shrieks with glee and throws himself at the crystal's exposed face as soon as he can. Upon contact, his body breaks apart into its component worms and he is absorbed into the crystal. The thing in the crystal thumps one more time and thrashes into the crystal,

cracking it—and then stops entirely. Silence fills the air. Inspection shows that the crystal is empty.

Dae'lomdel is Dead or Defeated. If Dae'lomdel is already defeated or not present, the thing in the crystal gives one final, hideous thud and cracks the edge of the crystal. Inspection shows that something vaguely tentacle-like is slumped against the crystal's face; it is no longer moving and silence hangs heavily in the air.

After a few moments, the stones rumble and shake as green and black worms push their way through the stones all around the area. The wave of creatures appears to be unending, and the side chambers eventually fill and spill into the hallways. From the outside, the entire building is soon covered in the wriggling horde. Allow the characters to interact with this as they see fit, but none of them are in any real danger (mechanically speaking, that is. You're welcome to fluff this in a way that raises the stakes for the scene without actually damaging the characters).

After a few moments of this grotesque display, the characters are pulled away and return to the waking world. They each find that a few shed worm skins have returned with them, and perhaps even a smashed worm or two as well.

WORM SURGE

For groups that want a more significant challenge, consider this option:

Looming Catastrophe. When the worm surge spreads across the party, their bodies become infected with Kyuss' spawn and they each gain the **Favored of the Worm** story award. Each day at dawn, the characters gain a permanent failed death saving throw unless they succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, and when they die, they rise one minute later as a **spawn of Kyuss**. The DC for this saving throw is increased by 1 at the end of each hour spent resting. Assume that the characters need only spend one day to reach Almorel. This effect is only removed when the Writhing Battery in Almorel is destroyed later in this adventure.

MOVING FORWARD

Exceptionally pious characters may believe that their god has saved them; similarly, extremely capable magic-users may claim that their magic has saved them. Allow them their stories and personal accounts, and reveal that each character finds a small symbol of Lathander in one of their pouches upon waking. This symbol has no value, but does have the word "Almorel" stamped upon the back.

APPENDIX B: CHIEF ARCHITECT ITHUNN COPPERSMITE (BONUS OBJECTIVE B)

Estimated Duration: 1 hour

SETTING

For the purposes of this Bonus Objective, the descriptions and contents of many rooms in areas 3 and 4 are adjusted.

PREREQUISITES

This Bonus Objective can be completed at any time, including after the events of part 3, but before the wrap-up section.

BONUS OBJECTIVE B

The characters must discern a way for the Chief Architect to permanently join her ancestors. At a minimum, her body must be retrieved and her coffin repaired; she also expects assistance with restoring any broken sections of *hizagkuur* and wishes to rid the complex of the taint of Kyuss.

CHANGES TO ITHUNN'S STAT BLOCK

Chief Architect Ithunn Coppersmite uses **lich** statistics with the following modifications:

- She is a construct, not undead.
- When she uses **paralyzing touch** or **disrupt life**, she deals either magical bludgeoning or lightning damage (her choice each time) instead of the listed damage type.
- **Formed from Hizagkuur.** As an extension of *hizagkuur*, Ithunn has all of the same immunities and resistances as that material in addition to her normal ones. She can't be separated from the *hizagkuur* by any means, including magical; effects that would teleport her, grant flight, or similar effects fail. This replaces **Turn Resistance**.
- **Phylactery.** The entire complex serves as Ithunn's phylactery. As long as any of the *hizagkuur* remains, she cannot be truly destroyed and regenerates a new body in 1d10 minutes instead of 1d10 days.



SCENE A. THE SLAG PIT (AREA 3)

Chief Architect Ithunn Coppersmite is bound to this abandoned place. It is both her duty and her doom to watch over these halls until such time as the agents of the Worm have been destroyed.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Dimensions. As indicated on the map.

CREATURES/NPCs

Chief Architect Ithunn Coppersmite (female dwarf golem, using **lich** statistics with the modifications in the sidebar), considers the entire dwarven complex to be her lair, save for the space behind **Area 10**.

The Unknown Dwarf. Her time here hasn't been kind to her though, and she is little more than bones wrapped in cleric robes.

What Does She Want? Ithunn's sole purpose is to ensure that The Worm That Walks is unable to escape this place. Refer to the **Development** section for more information.

What Does She Know? In life, Ithunn was a high-ranking cleric of Dumathoin, serving her community in the Firepeak Mountains to the southeast of Almorel. A little over 100 years ago she was commanded by her god to assume the duties of the Chief Architect. Only when she arrived in Almorel did she become fully aware of what this task would require: that she would become one with the very stone until such time as her watch is concluded. Since that day, she has survived in this place and reinforced the magical wards when needed.

She knows the Harbinger is in the halls, and this angers her. She has so far been unable to find them, and she is unsure of who or what the Harbinger is—just that the coins that anchor the *forbiddance* wards are being stolen. Dumathoin has told her that the Harbinger's arrival marks the end of her watch, and

that she must defeat them in order to join her ancestors.

She doesn't know that the Harbinger has protections and wards of his own, and that the blessings of Kyuss prevent her (and all Chief Architects) from detecting his actual location or presence via magical means—though she believes that she'll "know him when she sees him."

DEVELOPMENT

Ithunn is a curmudgeonly old dwarf and trusts nobody. When the characters enter the Slag Pit, she bellows a challenge to them in Dwarvish, calling them tomb robbers, thieves, and similar such derogatory terms. If the characters don't respond quickly, she magically tears 10 huge chunks of stone from the ceiling and animates them as per *animate object*, promising "more where this came from." She is defensive and doesn't wish to engage in combat unless absolutely necessary.

Peaceful Interaction. The characters may choose to parley with her in a nonthreatening manner. If they do, she engages them cautiously but with interest; if she detects any malicious intent or duplicity, she fights to preserve herself and these halls. Should the characters prove themselves to not be the Harbinger, she asks them to assist with the following tasks:

- **Restoring the Vaults (Scene B).** The vaults on the southern end of the Slag Pit have been damaged. She asks for the rubble to be cleared.
- **Repair the Sarcophagus (Scene C).** The Chief Architect's sarcophagus in area 4 has been pillaged, likely by the Harbinger. She asks for it to be repaired and for help reconsecrating that space.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

COMBAT

If pressed, Ithunn is capable fighter. She has all the statistics of a lich with the noted modifications. If destroyed, she reforms in 1d10 minutes.

EXPLORATION

Fleeing from here or leaving after she challenges them gives Ithunn the impression that the characters are up to no good. See the Social pillar.

SOCIAL

In time, Ithunn is wise enough to determine that none of the characters are the Harbinger, though if antagonized she may choose to harangue them throughout the complex.

SCENE B. RESTORING THE VAULTS (AREA 2)

Two of the southern vault chambers have experienced cave-ins, and Ithunn has asked the characters to restore them. This scene takes place in the damaged central and eastern vault chambers in area 2.

AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

Non-Interactive. The damage from the cave-in is extensive. Ithunn can coach the characters, but she cannot directly handle the stone herself due to the enchantments laid upon both it and her; if she attempts to do so, she merges with the stone briefly and extremely painfully.

Clearing the Rubble. Allow the characters to describe and narrate their actions, and take into mind that any materials to be disposed of would have to go somewhere—and Ithunn *really* hates having a messy space. Clearing the rubble shouldn't take long but clever tactics should be rewarded with inspiration.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the characters clear the first room and begin on the second, the broken *hizagkuur* mistakenly

believes that the characters are threats to be dealt with.

CREATURES/NPCs

The bravest warriors and hardiest clerics of the Siremun clan were committed unto the stone upon their deaths and several are now released as two stalwart defenders (**death knights**) and one high cleric of Dumathoin (**mummy lord**). These creatures have a neutral alignment and are constructs, not undead. Ithunn and her spells are incapable of affecting the *hizagkuur*-spawned defenders, though she seals the chamber so that they don't rampage into the halls. She implores the characters to put the dwarves to rest, and quickly.

TREASURE

Once the characters have resolved the *hizagkuur*-spawned defenders and have cleared the rubble from the vaults, Ithunn shows her gratitude by producing a tome of dwarven lore. This tome describes the summit between the Siremun clan, the human empires of Raumathar and Netheril, and the elves of Cormanthyr.



SCENE C. REPAIR THE SARCOPHAGUS (AREA 3)

The sarcophagus that contains the form of the Chief Architect has been destroyed. Ithunn suspects that the Harbinger is responsible, but cannot investigate closely due to interference from the *hizagkuur*.

AREA INFORMATION

The final resting place of the Chief Architect has been disturbed, but the other sarcophagi are untouched. Everything here is constructed of *hizagkuur*, and one of the latent enchantments woven into that stone prevents Ithunn from viewing the contents of her own tomb. The debris from the destroyed lid is scattered across the floor, and an iron ladder descends into darkness. No remains can be seen.

DEVELOPMENT

A simple 20-foot-by-20-foot room lies 15 feet below this chamber. The walls are covered in dwarven glyphs, and show the full Siremun clan bloodline. Ithunn's mortal remains have been torn asunder and cast across the room, her ancient form now in five pieces. A close inspection reveals tiny bite marks and burrow-like holes identical to those caused by the **Favored of the Worm** story award, though it is clear that these marks were made after her death.

Once the characters have had a few moments to investigate, a mocking laugh echoes across the complex as a solid mass of worms and teeth emerges from the narrow passage leading down, blocking passage back to the chamber above. The characters can pass through this mass if they wish (though the mass will chew through armor and clothing as if they were nothing), but doing so causes the character to earn the **Favored of the Worm** story award immediately (if they don't already have it), and at your discretion they may also earn a new character flaw: "Uncomfortably fond of invertebrates such as worms." Alternately, the worms can be blasted out (to extreme visual effect) by spells. The mass has an AC of 10, 400 hit points, immunity to all conditions and to poison damage, and no effective attacks; any character who enters a space occupied by the mass of worms takes 55 (10d10) magical piercing damage; the character must also succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 minute.

Trap. At the same time as the worms emerge, a crushing walls trap is set off in the tiny lower room. Prior to its deployment, the trap can be spotted with a

successful DC 28 (Perception) check and disarmed with a successful DC 30 Dexterity check by a character using thieves' tools. Once it has deployed, it can't be disarmed but a successful DC 30 Dexterity check with thieves' tools will delay its effects for one round. After the trap has been delayed twice, additional checks are made with disadvantage. A crushing walls trap causes all four walls in this area to move inwards at a rate of 5 feet per round. This causes creatures to squeeze together until no space is left, at which point they are restrained and grappled, and take 121 (24d10) points of bludgeoning damage per round. The trap resets after one hour.

The characters can satisfy Ithunn's request by clearing the worms, recovering her remains, and repairing her sarcophagus. Failing to do any of these disappoints but doesn't anger her.

SHAPING THE ENCOUNTER

Consider the following suggestions:

- **Melee-focused Groups.** On initiative count 20, the solid mass of worms ejects one **star spawn hulk** into the chamber if none are present.
- **Magic-focused Groups.** The solid mass of worms ejects a **star spawn hulk** into the chamber at the end of round one, then a **star spawn larva mage** at the end of round two.
- **Exploration-focused Groups.** The walls shudder as an uncountable number of worms begin to emerge from every available surface. In addition to the danger of the trap, these worms are smashed and nearly liquified; the space is filled with this vile goop at a rate of 1 foot deep per round. If submerged, creatures risk suffocation (as this isn't water, common spells and effects like *water breathing* don't resolve this hazard).

Any star spawn created by the solid mass of worms can't leave this chamber.

TREASURE

Ithunn is ecstatic that the sarcophagus has been repaired, but has no understanding that the remains are hers. She again states that she has been here for roughly 100 years, even though the corpse appears to be many times that age. Ultimately, she says, "Perhaps reality is different for the Chief Architect. Dumathoin will set me right when it is my time to understand," and offers the characters a *spell scroll of heal*.

This reward is offered as long as the characters made an honest effort to recover her remains, even if they ultimately abandoned them to the worm-infested mire below.

APPENDIX C: CHARACTER REWARDS

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items; it's suggested that you print off enough copies of this page to be able to give one to each of your players (crossing off rewards they didn't receive during the session)

STORY AWARD: FAVORED OF THE WORM

Any character that became worm-infected during this adventure earns this story award. Their flesh is covered in small black pock marks; even illusion magic does not disguise their presence. These characters feel a bond with insects and bugs (worms specifically) and feels a kinship with undead creatures even though they may not be friendly.

HOLY SYMBOL OF KYUSS (TALISMAN OF ULTIMATE EVIL)

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a creature of evil alignment)

This platinum disc has the holy symbol of Kyuss on its face: a skull with intertwined worms emerging from the eyes, nose, and mouth. The worms appear to move ever so slightly. This item symbolizes unrepentant evil. While in possession of this item, you must spend 5 downtime days between every adventure in meditation, lest your soul and body be consumed by Kyuss; if you are consumed, you are immediately and permanently retired from D&D Adventurers League play.

A creature that is neither good nor evil in alignment takes 6d6 necrotic damage upon touching the talisman. A good creature takes 8d6 necrotic damage upon touching the talisman. Either sort of creature takes the damage again each time it ends its turn holding or carrying the talisman.

If you are an evil cleric or paladin, you can use the talisman as a holy symbol, and you gain a +2 bonus to spell attack rolls while you wear or hold it.

The talisman has 6 charges. If you are wearing or holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 charge from the talisman and choose one creature you can see on the ground within 120 feet of you. If the target is of good alignment, a flaming fissure opens under it. The target must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the fissure and be destroyed, leaving no remains. The fissure then closes, leaving no trace of its existence. When you expend the last charge, the talisman dissolves into foul-smelling slime and is destroyed.

This item is found on **Magic Item Table G** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

LOUN STONE (GREATER ABSORPTION)

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This lavender and green stone has been fashioned into the shape of a strange dragon; it has a long, sinewy neck, a body like a serpent, four stout legs, and two long whiskers that almost look like a mustache. This is what the dragons of far-off Shou Lung in Kara-Tur look like. While this marbled object orbits your head, you can use your reaction to cancel a spell of 8th level or lower cast by a creature you can see and targeting only you.

Once the stone has canceled 50 levels of spells, it burns out and turns dull gray, losing its magic. If you are targeted by a spell whose level is higher than the number of spell levels the stone has left, the stone can't cancel it.

This item is found on **Magic Item Table I** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SPELL SCROLLS OF ANTILIFE SHELL, GEAS, AND HEAL

Scroll, very rare

These spell scrolls bear the words of indicated spell, written in a mystical cipher. If the spell is on your class's spell list, you can read the scroll and cast its spell without providing any material components. Otherwise, the scroll is unintelligible. Casting the spell by reading the scroll requires the spell's normal casting time. Once the spell is cast, the words on the scroll fade, and it crumbles to dust. If the casting is interrupted, the scroll is not lost.

If the spell is on your class's spell list but of a higher level than you can normally cast, you must make a DC 15 ability check using your spellcasting ability to determine whether you cast it successfully. On a failed check, the spell disappears from the scroll with no other effect.

APPENDIX D: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 17th-20th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 18**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

Welcome to the D&D Adventurers League! [You can learn more about this global organized play campaign on our website.](#)

NEW TO THE SAGA OF THE WORM STORYLINE?

The Saga of the Worm is a series of connected (but not sequential) adventures covering tiers 2, 3, and 4. Each adventure allows the characters to interact with bits of history and lore that are not otherwise thoroughly explored in the past several decades of Forgotten Realms content, and all feature strong themes of horror and suspense. They can be acquired at dmsguild.com.

- DDAL00-01 Window to the Past. Tiers 2, 3, and 4.
- DDAL00-03 Those That Came Before. Tiers 3 and 4.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character's adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure

checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These are updated at the conclusion of the session.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

When combat is a possibility, the adventure will provide a sidebar that helps you to determine the best mix/number of opponents to provide them with to create an appropriate challenge. While you're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience and consideration.

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party	Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than		Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent		Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than		Average
5 characters, APL less than		Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent		Average
5 characters, APL greater than		Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than		Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent		Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than		Very strong

APPENDIX E: THE DARK OBELISK, AKA THE WRITHING BATTERY

THE DARK OBELISK

Kyuss has long been entombed within the Dark Obelisk, but this prison has moved several times over the eons. Only one portion of the Dark Obelisk is present in the world at any one time; the bulk of it remains deep within Carceri. It is certain that agents of the Worm—not to mention the Worm himself—are granted phenomenal and dire powers when in proximity to it. The environs surrounding any portion of the Dark Obelisk are festooned with dead bodies, squirming insects, foul green worms, and groups of Spawn of Kyuss.

Every world has its own version of the legend of Worm that Walks. If scholars look deep enough into the history of their lands, they may find references to great periods of arcane study or even a purported “enlightened time” in which society and culture hit heights before an inevitable collapse. Many of these stories include references to newly discovered power sources and powerful fonts of arcane might. In truth, these events are often due to the Worm’s promises of might and lore. While the Worm cannot enter the world directly, his agents work tirelessly to bring aspects of his prison – the Dark Obelisk, sometimes known as the Writhing Battery – to powerful mages and sorcerers in the hope of finding a way to release him once more.

LAIR ACTIONS

While within 1,000 feet of the Dark Obelisk and on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Kyuss and his spawn take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the same effect cannot be used two rounds in a row and only a single lair action may be used in any turn regardless of the number of Spawn of Kyuss present (including Kyuss himself):

- Each unoccupied space adjacent to Kyuss or a single spawn of Kyuss is filled with a rot grub swarm (maximum 6 new rot grub swarms).
- Any number of swarms explode. Any creature sharing a space with or adjacent to the swarm must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) necrotic and 10 (3d6) acid damage (half damage on a success).
- **(Kyuss only)** Kyuss raises a corpse that he can detect as a spawn of Kyuss. The new spawn retains

all its former memories but loses all abilities it once knew and instead gains the abilities listed in the **spawn of Kyuss** entry. Nothing short of a *wish* spell will restore the spawn to its former life. The spawn is loyal only to Kyuss and will follow his commands without hesitation.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The presence of Kyuss and the Dark Obelisk is often a portent of terrible things to come. Insects are more aggressive and plentiful, undead are drawn to the area, and Kyuss’ horrific spawn can often be found in great quantities in these areas. Additionally, necrotic effects become more and more potent as the Dark Obelisk brings in more faithful followers.

- While within 500 feet of the Dark Obelisk, healing magic is only half as effective while necrotic magic is twice as potent (double duration or twice the number of dice for a spell’s effect). This does not stack with the effects of the mythal.
- Intelligent, living creatures must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw when they first see the Dark Obelisk. On a success, the creature is frightened for one minute. On a failure, they are paralyzed for one minute and frightened for one minute after the paralyzed effect ends. Creatures may attempt this save at the end of each of their turns.
- Intelligent undead creatures within 1 mile of the Dark Obelisk have advantage on saving throws versus spells and effects.



art: Ian Wallace

APPENDIX F: ADVENTURE INSIGHT

The information contained in this appendix is purely optional, but reflects some of my own experiences running the adventure in my public games. Consider this to be insight, akin to a “behind the scenes” piece.

STORYTELLING TACTICS

This adventure may take a number of directions based on how the characters interact with the information that they’re given. They’re in a remote environment where the traditional faction influences are not only rejected but in most cases illegal thanks to the ruling council. They’ve been given the tale of an impending doom that will bubble up from below the city streets. They’ve been made aware that artifacts from ancient times, possibly connected to the sealed-away evil, have been leaving the city for weeks and headed to all corners of the Forgotten Realms.

The characters should feel like they have impactful ownership of the adventure’s events. Allow them to explore Almorel and the tunnels, to research its history and lore for a small while. If they take too long, consider having the worms bubble up from the ground and insert some **star spawn larva mages**, tier 3 or 4 **spawn of Kyuss**, or similar creatures for an urban encounter as the Worm that Walks draws closer to consuming the entire region.

Ultimately the characters should be able to learn more about some of the lost history of the Forgotten Realms – and justify some of their fears about the other adventures in the series. If they haven’t yet played those adventures, the end of this adventure provides ample opportunity to create those hooks.

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

The running theme for this adventure is the freedom of choice. The characters arrive in Almorel and may choose how to proceed; if they dally or move slowly, Kyuss and the Harbinger make their presence known by consuming more and more citizens until nothing remains. If the characters move quickly or recklessly, they risk setting up a chain of events that might enable other villains to pick up where the Harbinger left off. These elements and more can be easily woven into your narrative.

The Harbinger is perhaps the most important feature of the adventure. In truth, Dae’lomdel Nuruhuine is the (un)living embodiment of the freedom of choice: this former zor was once a player’s character. Dae’lomdel had explored the depths of *Window to the Past* and in so doing had earned the blessings of Kyuss, and not long after found himself facing down multiple worm-infused deathknights and wraiths in *Those That Came Before*. It was an act of final desperation, a wriggling hope that crawled to mind, and the zor uttered a short prayer to Kyuss:

“*I give in to you*”, he whispered.

The other players were stunned. Their ally was gone in an instant, consumed by the newly-appeared worms. Their foes were gone, and the tomb was once more silent as the worms devoured first the hero and then themselves. Dae’lomdel would go on to oppose his former allies later in the adventure and unbeknownst to him at the time, would feature strongly in some additional content that may yet one day bubble to the surface... but hints to his foul exploits and dark achievements are here in this very text.

Dae’lomdel had the freedom to choose to fight the agents of Kyuss or to give in. And now, here he is: surrendered and sundered, and yet both more and less than he once was. Play his tragedy to the characters and share in the difficult choice that awaits them all.

LOCALES: ALMOREL

The trade town of Almorel is situated upon the Golden Way, the main economic artery between the western reaches of Faerûn and the far-flung region of Kara-Tur. It is near the middle of the inhospitable Hordelands and occupies a fortified spot high atop the eastern bank of the Lake of Mists.

ALMOREL

Population: 4,850 (including area farms)

Government: Plutocracy, managed by Mechnik Thistlesteel (LN female rock gnome **bard**) and the gospoda

Defense: the town guard

Commerce: trade; import taxes on caravans

Organizations: Isad, Verv, Khod; moneylenders, goldsmithers, gospoda; the western factions have no formal presence here

Religions: Chauntea, Deneir, Gond, Ilmater, Mitra

Common terms in Almorel and surrounding villages:

- **Gospoda.** Town council; all merchants
- **Isad.** Fisherman's guild
- **Khod.** Lumberman's guild
- **Mechnik.** Leader of a town or settlement
- **Starosta.** The elders that serve on the veche
- **Verv.** Farmer's guild

1. DROGOS FARMSTEAD

For generations, the name "Drogos" has evoked a sense of pride. These fields are flush with juicy fruits and vegetables, and some say that the fertility of the soil is due to druidic magic. Drogos the Elder was indeed a half-elf druid but is long gone from this world; his descendants now tend this land and keep his name. Drogos the Ninth, the current groundskeeper, is a cantankerous half-elf druid that could pass for human by appearance and dwarven by temperament.

2. THE LANTERN-HOUSE (LIGHTHOUSE)

This stark white building is crafted of what appears to be a single chunk of stone. Clearly the work of dwarven artisans, it stands tall on the rocky bluff over the Lake of Mists and guides ships past the sharp stones just below the water's surface and into the docks. It is said that the magical light at its peak will only be extinguished when the last of the Raumathari people has left this world.

Close inspection of the lighthouse's exterior reveals that the stone is dwarven *hizagkuur*. It bears

markings identical to those found upon Durlag's Tower, near the Wood of Sharp Teeth on the Sword Coast far to the west.

HIZAGKUUR

This complex is crafted of *hizagkuur*, a very special stone enchanted by powerful priests of the dwarven pantheon. This curious stone cannot be made by non-dwarves and loses its properties if removed from the area for more than an hour. It is quite powerful and has the following qualities:

Spell Reflection. Spells cast upon the stone reflect back upon the caster (target the caster instead of the stone).

Dimensional Shielding. The stones form a protective cocoon around the contents of the chamber. If a spell or effect would cause a creature to teleport (including spells like *misty step* and *banishment*), that spell's effect is changed, and that creature must make a DC 24 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the character is teleported to the center of the chamber. If the saving throw fails by 10 or more, they are also restrained by unbreakable magical bonds (escape can only be achieved through *dispel magic* or a successful teleportation effect).

Reality Anchor. Creatures are unable to phase through the stone, even if they are normally incorporeal.

Quasi-Sentience. Characters that use telepathy can feel the personalities of ancient dwarven heroes, priests, and people of great power contained within the stone. This is comforting for dwarves but can be disconcerting for non-dwarves. Communication with these spirits isn't part of this adventure, but you are encouraged to be creative!

Tough. *Hizagkuur* is immune to nonmagical damage and cannot be reshaped or disintegrated.

3. CHERMINOV FARMSTEAD

A large variety of rare herbs grow here with little encouragement from the farmers that have taken residence in the buildings. In keeping with tradition, and to retain ownership of their familial holdings, the Cherminovs name their firstborn child Andrei, which has at times led to some confusing situations when the child isn't male.

4. THE GOLDEN BRIDLE (CARAVANSARY)

The Golden Bridle is a long-standing caravan supply shop in Almorel. Nearly every caravan that travels to or from this region stays here for at least one night. It has had many different owners, and is currently operated by Wu Chen (female Shou human

commoner) and Dariel Jarlslayer (male mountain dwarf **scout**).

5. ROTBURG

Dozens of tiny domiciles have been cobbled together from whatever spare materials people have been able to find. Over the years, these buildings became more permanent but rarely any safer or sturdier. Many of these structures are now two or three stories tall and secured by ropes to each other or lashed to the ground in the hopes of finding some kind of anchoring system. Most of the residents prefer to work in a no-questions-asked capacity and are commonly runaways, expatriates, or asylum seekers. It is common knowledge that this place is a cheap source of hardworking laborers.

6. THE MONDAY MARKET GROUND

The Monday Market Ground has an atmosphere of open-air festival chaos regardless of the time of day. Frantic customers and merchants buy and sell goods of all types, often in large quantities for reduced prices. Every so often, a vendor may proclaim that they have an extreme discount on some highly desired product but only in limited quantities; such events are known as “Black Mondays” and more than one foolhardy customer has been trampled by the crowd during the ensuing rush.

7. MINEHEAD OF HAMMERMAKER THE SMALL (SMITHY)

The dwarves of Almorel keep the entrance to the mines and tunnels below the city locked down and secure from prying eyes. The original miners and crafters wove complex enchantments into the minehead to prevent anyone without dwarven blood from passing through. In days long past, a dwarf by the name of Hammermaker the Small (male mountain dwarf **commoner**) erected a forge and foundry here and closed up the entrance to the minehead with heavy blocks of granite. Hammermaker is old and quite infirm now, but still spends his days near his forge—often yelling at his tools in a mix of Dwarvish and Orc.

8. CONVENT OF MITRA

The placard proclaims this building to be protected by Mitra, the Kara-Turan goddess of friendship, contracts, warmth, light, and growth. Many worshipers are still receiving spells from her despite

some concern that she went missing long ago—not a single prayer or plea for divine intervention has been answered in many decades. Some scholars assume that, on some grand scale, Amaunator, Lathander, and Mitra may actually all share power and form in some regard.

9. TEMPLE OF CHAUNTEA

Bedecked in dried bundles of wheat and corn, this humble building serves as both a market and place of worship for the faithful of Chauntea. Those that revere the goddess of agriculture find that this place provides a calming atmosphere and plentiful food in trade for providing counseling and sharing one’s knowledge of farming or animal butchery.

10. GOLDSMITHER’S GUILD

Even though this building isn’t an actual temple dedicated to Waukeen, the goddess of trade, her holy symbols are proudly emblazoned on the main doors. Upon close inspection, holy symbols of Vergadain, the dwarven god of luck and wealth can also be seen. A handful of skilled artisans and apprentices can sometimes be found here, but more often than not the building is locked and empty. No one individual claims ownership of this place, but Elder Jaco Tirst, a dwarven goldsmith, manages the guild’s daily activities. Some residents of Almorel say that Jaco has been here as long as gold has been in the ground.

11. HOUSE OF THE DRAGOMEN

The lizardfolk of Chult have taken up residence in this bark-sided building. A plume of woodsmoke can always be seen rising from the chimney set into the thatched roof. The small walled garden features a weed-choked hot spring full of fauna native to the jungle peninsula.

Those that bring exotic plants and assorted animal skins can exchange them with the lizardfolk for stone or wood carvings, brilliantly colored geodes, and discussions of how best to cook and serve various types of meat.

12. THE RAUMKREMYL

This impressive round ziggurat is built of magically treated wood and painted black, earning it the nickname, “the Black Citadel.” Standing almost forty feet tall, it has served as the seat of power for Almorel since the days of the Raumathar empire and is one of

the last easily visible reminders of the power that empire once held. Several chambers are inside, including chambers for the gospoda and the mechnik to meet in and receiving chambers for merchants that need to hash out trade disagreements. There are rumors of a secret room full of seized magic artifacts and chests of coins and gems taken from merchants that couldn't—or wouldn't—pay the taxes that Almorel demands.

13. THE HANGING PLACE

In days past, the mechnik would place criminals and miscreants in hanging cages until they died from dehydration, carrion birds, or worse. Today, these cages are empty but serve as reminders of what once took place here. During times of celebration, the gospoda hangs brightly colored streamers and garlands from the cages.

14. THE HERRANGMAN

To call this place ostentatious is to undersell it by a large margin. Situated on a small rise overlooking the Lake of Mists, the building's exterior incorporates materials imported from ancient sites and cultures. The interior sports artifacts of antiquity, such as Netherese vases and finely detailed tapestries from beyond the Dragonwall far to the east.

The name of the building is derived from its last, singular, owner: Boyar Herrangman, an extremely well-to-do nobleman that made multiple fortunes by way of trade between Kara-Tur and Waterdeep. Upon his death several decades ago, the estate passed into the city's ownership as the Boyar had no known descendants. The mechnik may decide who is permitted to stay here, but recent years have seen an increase in the number of reports of the building being haunted by a ghostly figure. No one has been injured, but wherever it is sighted, all the plants in the vicinity have died.

15. INN OF THE CROOKED STAFF

As one of the classiest and most expensive establishments in Almorel, the Inn of the Crooked Staff often has at least one of their ten rooms available for rent. The daily rate is 10 gp and includes a generous dinner and a robust drink menu, and they have a very strict "Armor and weapons? No service" policy. The proprietor is a dusky-skinned elf named Brandythistle (lawful neutral nonbinary **archmage**) who communicates entirely through conjured sigils

and sounds. The premises are maintained by *unseen servants* and the food is magical in nature. It is said that Brandythistle can provide a *heroes' feast* service for those willing to pay, though some residents of the trade town are convinced that their cost isn't money at all—instead, the elf seeks the recovery of some legendary gem from their home in Malatra, the jungle far to the south.

16. THE VERDANSKY FIEF

The Verdansky family has a long and proud lineage, tracing itself back to the early days of Thay. Today, this compound is still in their possession, though they eschew much of the mindset of their home nation as they haven't set foot there in many decades. Instead, the Verdansky Fief busies itself with overseeing the daily operations of the city, from organizing the lamplighters to ensuring that the streets remain free of clutter and refuse.

17. THE MONEYLENDERS' GUILD

Kol Barrelstave, a bubbly middle-aged female dwarf, serves as the head of the Moneylenders' Guild. She and her team handle currency exchanges, the validation of foreign monies, and the appraisal of gems and rare magical items. Beneath her exceedingly friendly demeanor lurks a viciously keen business mind, and everyone knows that deals with the Moneylenders' Guild are only made in their favor.

18. THE FALLOW FIELD TAVERN

This large venue can easily seat a hundred or more patrons and often features live music from traveling minstrels, or on rare occasion, a visiting conjuror. The fenced grounds can be reserved for private parties. It is an employee-owned organization, with all decisions made by taking an open vote from amongst those that work here. This has led to the Fallow Field Tavern becoming both a more open and more inclusive space that welcomes all travelers regardless of origin, but also one that is mired down in internal politics behind closed doors.

19. THE MECHNIK'S ESTATE

The Mechnik of Almorel has historically lived in this complex. Multiple buildings and a high wall mark it as quite secure, and the private section of the river offers excellent recreational fishing opportunities for guests and residents. Over the years, the buildings

have been expanded and rebuilt, and much of the area is under constant construction or reinforcement.

The flat roof above the guest chambers can easily see into the enclosed space of the Fallow Field Tavern, and is commonly used by the mechnik to view whatever private concert or show is being enjoyed there.

Mechnik Thistlesteel rarely emerges from her chambers except to travel through the promenade and into the Raumkremyl for official Almorel business. The residents often treat a sighting of her as a harbinger of bad luck.

20. THE BALIAKA HALL

Bards and entertainers from all over the world stop here to exchange stories, learn new skills, and practice their talents. The Hall serves breads, cheeses, and wines from many different cultures but nothing more, and basic musical instruments from every corner of Faerûn can be found for sale.

21. FIEF OF THE LESSER LORDS

The members of the gospoda (town council) reside in these secured apartments during their yearlong service to the city.

22. THE TRADER'S REST (CARAVANSARY)

Well-to-do merchants often come here first when visiting Almorel. The high walls and private security (five orc and five human **berserkers** from the Hordelands) offered by The Trader's Rest provide a peace of mind that is uncommon when traveling along the major trade routes. Entry requires a letter of recommendation from a current customer as well as a nonmonetary gift worth 2,500 gp or more. No coin or other money, including gems, is allowed on the premises which makes it a prime space for the barter and trade of magic items and artifacts.

23. THE GREAT SCHOOL OF DENEIR

Over centuries of trade, countless books and informational materials have been abandoned in Almorel. Over time, those materials were gathered into a single building which would eventually become the Great School of Deneir. Contained inside these walls are many rare and valuable tomes as well as countless pieces of mundane lore and records.

The majority of the building is open to all that would pay homage to the god of literature.

Glyphscribe Ellerond (nonbinary mountain dwarf **priest**) oversees the records room and is especially fond of the enchanted tomes in the basement that actively record every transaction, be it verbal, material, or something else, without fail. The Glyphscribe is joyful in their service and dreams of one day ascending to the position of Chosen of Deneir.

24. THE GOPODA-VECHE

The governing council of Almorel used to operate out of this fortified structure. Inside, lords and dignitaries would meet with their peers and with merchants from around the known world, with all in pursuit of building stronger futures for themselves. Times have changed and this place now contains higher-end merchant spaces, including booths and stalls along with a few locked shops dedicated to the purchase, sale, and trading of gems, coins, and other valuable goods. The merchants here are rarely present outside of the middle of the day, and never on restdays or holidays.

25. THE DWARVEN MIR

A stone building once squatted here, but now only its footing remains. What was once the floor that supported the booted feet of the Siremun dwarves now serves as the plaza grounds, and the external walls have long since been incorporated into the buildings nearby. Despite exposure to the elements and heavy traffic, dwarven sigils can still be spotted in the stones underfoot.

The merchants of Almorel have refused to establish a presence here, instead opting to ensure that this reminder of the long-lost Siremun clan be reserved for them. During holiday periods, dwarven crafters and merchants are encouraged to set up shop here. Dwarven troubadours and performers (often acrobats or jugglers) can be found here nearly every day of the year.

26. THE POLE

While the origin of the name is uncertain, the building's purpose is well known: The Pole serves as Almorel's jail. A dozen tiny cells are located in the building's basement, where prisoners who have been incarcerated await their trial at the Raumkremyl before the mechnik and the veché.

27. GOND SOBOR (TEMPLE)

An imposing, hard-edged building built of nested stones occupies this space. Quiet whistling and muffled clanging noises can be heard from inside, and an oversized anvil in the center of the building serves as both altar and workbench. The interior walls are covered in sheets of copper and feature collections of polished steel rivets in the shape of the holy symbol of Gond.

Chief Engineer Demarais (male human cleric of Gond and former Red Wizard of Thay **transmuter**) is perpetually smudged with soot and leaves a trail of metal shavings as he travels the temple grounds. He speaks openly of his transition from his former life as a transmutation specialist into the full embrace of his faith in Gond. Though he has only openly worshiped Gond for less than a decade, his tireless pursuit of new and radically different invention practices has given him much credit amongst his peers.

28. ILMATER'S GROUND (SHRINE)

Marked with nothing more than a pair of stone benches engraved with the holy symbol of Ilmater, this park is dedicated to the observation of the faith of Ilmater. The stiff grass has a few hardy white flowers, and travelers passing through Almorel often pause here to gather their thoughts or meditate before continuing their journey.

29. "BREAKER" KOCHETNIK'S HOUSE

The residents of Almorel treat "Breaker" Kochetnik's House with equal parts reverence and snickering. It is widely accepted that he was the best sailor and fisherman in all of Almorel some time ago, and that his vessels routinely came back laden down with near-impossible amounts of salmon and sturgeon. However, it is also rumored that he went missing when he ran afoul of what would become known as Breaker's Rocks, a submerged reef that lies just to the north of this very house.

30. THE EAST GATE AND TAX HOUSE

All inbound goods must be assessed and catalogued by the tax collectors of Almorel before they are allowed to enter the city; this ensures that trade is appropriately tracked, and guarantees protection for the merchant while providing income for the city. Outbound goods aren't assessed when leaving Almorel.

31. DACHA OF THE FISH

The riches that the Lake of Mists provides are sometimes offset by the occasional loss of life due to storms, hideous monsters that lurk below the waves, or simple illness. The Dacha of the Fish serves as both the guildhall for the fisherfolk and as the pension house for their widows.

32. THE CHERNACHA (ARMORY AND BARRACKS)

Sometimes called "the Little Black Citadel," the Chernacha squats upon the eastern wall, looking out into the unforgiving Endless Wastes. The town guard musters here morning, noon, and night, and they call this building home while serving their yearlong (or longer) service to the town.

33. HOSPICE OF WU THE MAD (INN)

Wu the Mad was once a royal advisor in Shou Lung. Upon his expulsion from that place, he traveled west and settled in Almorel, in time opening this tremendously popular tavern and restaurant. Some visitors are overjoyed to have meals ready and waiting for them upon arrival even without notifying the establishment in advance. The descendants of Wu now run this place and often host Fai Chen and his assorted franchised merchants.

34. THE RED STURGEON

The unmistakable scent of smoked fish wafts out of this run-down tavern. The Red Sturgeon is the lowest-cost tavern in the entire town and often contains clientele that greatly value their anonymity—and the fact that the building is lit solely by a small number of greasy candles certainly helps.

Despite the unsavory characteristics of their main building, their smoked fish is savored by travelers and residents alike. Nearly all of their income comes from the sale of these foods, though some people staunchly believe that the tavern is a recruiting ground for those seeking to expand the might of the barbarian tribes of the Hordelands.

35. BATU THE LAME

Batu was a nomad from the Endless Wastes that sold his services as guide and translator to those that could afford him. After his passing, a few intrepid individuals elected to follow in his footsteps. These people use disguises and magic to appear like him (to

varying degrees of success) in the hopes that the peoples of the Hordelands and the Endless Wastes continue to treat “Batu” as friend, not foe, and allow the guide and their entourage to pass unchallenged.

36. THE LEAVING HOUSE (CARAVANSARY AND WAREHOUSE)

The perpetually dirty Leaving House is poised on the eastern edge of Almorel’s reach. Caravans from the Endless Wastes and beyond often stop here, usually out of necessity, as the dangerous trek has drained their resources. It is a place of loud patrons and high spirits, be they from people preparing to head far to the east or from those that have just returned.

37. THE MILLS

Wood and grain mills line the end of the river that feeds into the Lake of Mists. These mills are busy throughout the year as they process not only the goods from the region, but also the materials that traders bring in from remote regions all over the world.

The lumber mills are kept busy enough by local timber, with white oak, walnut, and pine being commonplace. A few carpenters call these buildings both home and workshop, and their work is sturdy but not so fine that there is much of a global demand for their wares.

The granaries keep and grind corn and wheat in generally equal amounts. These grains are more commonly used for livestock feed as opposed to being used as ingredients for finer meals.

OTHER RUMORS

As with any settlement, many wild stories exist about the place's location and history. In addition to some of the potential story hooks given in the above sections, the following rumors may be encountered by the characters during their visit to Almorel:

NIGHT OF INFINITE ARROWS

Though seemingly missing from the predictions of Alaundo the Seer, a long-standing and little-known prediction for Almorel and the surrounding area is this:

*And the night shall see such rain,
Sharp-tipped and virulent,
Nipping as the asp does at the hero's heel.
Neither soul nor soulless shall survive.*

This has commonly been interpreted as a final assault from the great khans of the Hordelands as they sweep west, just as they broke through the Dragonwall to the east not so long ago. Some dissenting opinions instead believe that this isn't about the barbarian hordes, but rather a reference to the gods themselves sending a cataclysm down upon the city when the horrors from the dwarven tunnels below the city finally emerge to the surface. Whatever the truth is remains to be seen.

THE NIXIE DEEP

The fishermen that ply their trade upon the surface of the Lake of Mists sometimes speak of bewitching, green-skinned enchantresses that live in the water and lure weak-willed sailors to their doom. Some of the stories involve men throwing themselves overboard and slipping beneath the waves, while others swear that the nixies attack small vessels and drown men for daring to sail too close to their homes.

RETURN OF THE RAUMATHAR

One local legend speaks of the return of the Raumathar empire. Not long after the town's founding, the war between Raumathar and Narfell swept across the region and little was left in its wake. The town was eventually rebuilt, and the dwarves brought forth a dire warning from the depths:

*When the Golden Harbinger comes calling,
the Red Empire shall be reborn
with burning eyes and tattered robes.*

The reference to the "Golden Harbinger" is a curious one; neither the ancient Raumathar nor the great rulers of Kara-Tur were particularly obsessed with gold, choosing instead the might of arcane power. However, the Raumathar empire would eventually form the early stages of Thay, so many believe that the "Red Empire" links these two great nations. What the dwarven warning actually means isn't fully known, and the dwarves of Almorel discard any conversations on the topic, calling such matters "old miner's tales and nothing more."

WRECK OF THE LITTLE DRAGONFLY

Some say that a brilliantly decorated vessel lies almost completely intact at the bottom of the Lake of Mists. Divers haven't been able to discover its location, but those that have piloted a spelljamming vessel previously can feel a familiar arcane tug when they gaze upon the lake.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

THANKS & APOLOGIES

I've walked with the Worm. I've spread his tales throughout the United States and beyond – I've made it into Canada and sales of the previous adventures have gone global. People are keen to experience this bit of Forgotten Realms history and are now faced with just a little more insight. And I couldn't have done any of this without all of you!

In *Window to the Past*, we saw the power-hungry Thayans seeking lost arcane might at any cost. This adventure was an open sandbox (in a sense), allowing the characters to run towards the perception of danger or to proceed carefully and learn just what they were faced with.

In *Those That Came Before*, we saw the price of power. From a mechanical perspective, the adventure focused on “playing your alignment” for both the characters as well as the NPCs.

And now in *Trust & Understanding*, we come face to face with the cost of having freedom of choice but failing to consider the consequences of those choices. The cost of unquestioning loyalty. The value of preserving the past.

Everyone will experience these adventures differently. For many they will simply be a way to experience some high-stakes dungeon-delving, but some of you will lay these impactful moments at the feet of your players and experience those moments with them. Story over mechanics, for sure; the narrative can become the true antagonist in an instant – and in that instant, your players and their characters become the bulwark against which the Worm that Walks crashes and flails.

The core storyline is now complete. This series was never intended to be linear, nor was it intended to conclude in an “epic final showdown” – instead, I challenge DMs to explore their own stories and work such elements into their future games.

Finally, my sincere thanks and apologies to Shane Morrison. He was Dae'lomdel's player, and his stunning acceptance of Kyuss' gift in *Those That Came Before* caught me by surprise, but he was sincere in his desire. Afterwards, we worked together to craft what you hold in your hands (iPad, laptop, whatever). Here's a sample of one of our early discussions:

DAE'LOMDEL, THE HARBINGER

The Gold Dwarves of the region hid a series of tunnels below the earth in a place that would come to be known as Almorel. Rumor has it that they established great works of arcane engineering - constructs that are more than golems but less than alive - in an effort to contain a massive (but unspecified) demonic influence.

Dae'lomdel has been in the city for a few weeks but the enchantments have rebuffed him due to his status as the Harbinger of the Worm. For our purposes in this adventure he has retained most of his half-elven countenance though his skin has a dull gray tone to it now. Although he is an experienced adventurer, he knows that the protections in the dwarven halls are more than a match for him as he has already been rebuffed—but this intrepid band of adventurers may be just the thing. He will ply them with stories of an open gate to Carceri through which an abyssal horde has been traveling; he will challenge them with the glory of becoming legend as they clash blades and spells with those that would seek to destroy this town and all of the lands beyond!

In truth, the enchantments are in-place because the dwarves discovered long ago what the Netherese discovered in Dekanter and later below Orbedal: that a Writhing Battery—a piece of the Dark Obelisk—resides here. The statues, formerly some of the most capable casters from the three races, were placed here to stand eternally vigilant against the Worm That Walks. The mere presence of the characters risks destabilizing the already sensitive enchantments, but with Dae'lomdel well ahead of them they must act one way or another.

Whatever the characters decide, Dae'lomdel takes this opportunity to take his full Harbinger form; he may flee, he may triumph, but he will have an impact on everyone's stories.

Ultimately the adventure got dramatically rescoped, as traveling to Carceri wasn't something that felt right once we knew that *Descent to Avernus* was on the horizon. There's still a LOT of great lore in the ruins of Raumathor and Narfell, so who knows...

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