

FATHOM EVENT EXCLUSIVE



CLOUD GIANT'S BARGAIN™



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

A 4-hour adventure for 5th - 7th level characters
and legal for Adventurers League Play

CLOUD GIANT'S BARGAIN™

The renowned adventuring company Acquisitions Inc. hires you to infiltrate a castle—but not just any castle. This is a flying fortress built by the cloud giant Count Stratovan, who is currently preparing to destroy the Sword Coast. Your mission is to meet with his son, who claims to want to prevent the war and establish peace between the giants and the small folk. If you can learn whether the son can be trusted, discover the secrets of the castle, and . . . well, survive, you too can earn acclaim with Acquisitions Inc.!

*A 4-hour adventure for 5th – 7th level characters
and legal for D&D Adventurers League™ play*

In Association with Acquisitions Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Can I . . . This seems like it might be an unexpected avenue of attack, and they are engaged with other opponents . . . Can I sneak attack with the chandelier?

—Patrick Rothfuss, playing the character Viari

The *Cloud Giant's Bargain* is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for three to seven characters of 5th–7th level, with the default encounter difficulty set for five characters of 6th level. This adventure is meant to be easy to run, providing guidance to assist new Dungeon Masters.

The adventure is set in a cloud giant's castle and in the city of Neverwinter, over which the castle flies. Neverwinter is in the Sword Coast, a tumultuous land located in the northwest of Faerûn in the Forgotten Realms campaign setting. Characters have the opportunity to become interns for the legendary adventuring company Acquisitions Inc. as they eliminate a dangerous threat to the Sword Coast!

THE D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

This adventure is official for D&D Adventurers League play. The D&D Adventurers League is the official organized play system for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Players can create characters and participate in any adventure allowed as a part of the D&D Adventurers League. As they adventure, players track their characters' experience, treasure, and other rewards, and can take those characters through other adventures that will continue their story.

For valid play, a player must have a character who has advanced to 5th–7th level through previous Adventurers League play. For more information on running this adventure as part of the D&D Adventurers League, see appendix A.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you show up to run this adventure for a group of players, you should do the following to prepare:

- Make sure to have a copy of the most current version of the *D&D Basic Rules* (available for free at dnd.wizards.com) or the *Player's Handbook*.
- 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 (nonplayer character) or a tactic you'd like to use in combat.
- Review the list of NPCs found in appendix B.
- Get familiar with the monster statistics in appendix C.
- Gather together any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure, such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, battle maps, and so forth.

BEFORE PLAY AT THE TABLE

Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information:

DM TIP: NAME TENTS

Create a name tent by taking a note card or similar piece of cardstock and folding it in half. Open the fold to a right angle, so that it forms a display tent when the edges are placed on the table. Give one to each player and have them write their character's name, race, and class on each outer side of the tent. This will allow you and the other players to remember character names and important details. Whenever possible, refer to players by their character names.

- Character name and level
- Character race and class
- Passive Wisdom (Perception)—the most common passive ability check
- Anything notable you might use to help you shape the adventure around the characters (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, and so on.)

ADJUSTING THE ADVENTURE

As you run the adventure, always feel free to make adjustments for smaller or larger groups and for characters of higher or lower levels than the adventure is optimized for. This is typically used mostly for combat encounters. You can also adjust the adventure depending on the players' needs. For example, if you're playing with a group of inexperienced players, you might want to make the adventure a little easier; for very experienced players, you might want to make it a little harder.

Five categories of party strength have been created for you to use as a guideline. Feel free to use a different adjustment during the adventure if the recommended party strength feels off for the group.

This adventure is **optimized for a party of five 6th-level characters**. To figure out whether you need to adjust the adventure, do the following:

- Add up the total levels of all the characters.
- Divide the total by the number of characters.
- Round fractions of 0.5 or greater up; round fractions of less than 0.5 down.

You've now determined the **average party level (APL)** for the adventure. To figure out the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table.

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

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

Average party strength indicates no adjustments to the adventure are necessary. For other party strengths, you can adjust encounters by increasing or decreasing the number of monsters or by adjusting the DCs of ability checks.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

As the Dungeon Master of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You help guide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you run a game for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure. Doing so is especially important and applicable outside of combat, but feel free to adjust the adventure for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time.
- Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group. Never being challenged makes for a boring game and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating one. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a chance to shine.
- Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately. Watch for stalling, since play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience. Try to be aware of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.
- Read-aloud text is just a suggestion. Feel free to modify the text as you see fit, especially when dialogue is present.
- Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to proceed. Players should be given clues and hints when appropriate so they can tackle puzzles, combat, and interactions without getting frustrated over lack of information. Doing so helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues.

In short, being the DM isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about facilitating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* has more information on the art of running a D&D game.

DM TIP: CONFIDENCE

If you are a new DM, it is perfectly normal to feel a bit apprehensive before your first session. Just remember: players need DMs to play. What you are doing is valuable and coveted. You don't need a perfect understanding of the rules or to have Chris Perkins' improvisational skills for players to have a great time. When in doubt, make decisions that you think the players will enjoy. The more often you run games as a DM, the easier it gets!

ACOLYTE BACKGROUND

A character possessing the acolyte background requesting spellcasting services at a temple of his or her faith may request one spell per day from the Spellcasting Services table for free. The only cost paid for the spell is the base price for the consumed material component, if any (see the spell details).

SPELLCASTING SERVICES

While in the city of Neverwinter, characters can obtain certain spellcasting services. The rules below help you play out such scenarios, and are required for Adventurers League Play.

Spell services generally available include healing and recovery spells, as well as information-gathering spells. Other spell services might be available as specified in the adventure. The number of spells available to be cast as a service is limited to a **maximum of three per day total**, unless otherwise noted.

SPELLCASTING SERVICES

Spell	Cost
Cure wounds (1st level)	10 gp
Identify	20 gp
Lesser restoration	40 gp
Prayer of healing (2nd level)	40 gp
Remove curse	90 gp
Speak with dead	90 gp
Divination	210 gp
Greater restoration	450 gp
Raise dead	1,250 gp

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure allows characters to interact with and potentially become members of the famous adventuring company Acquisitions Inc.!

Acquisitions Inc. is known to many from the hilarious sessions in which Jerry Holkins, Mike Krahulik, Scott Kurtz, and Patrick Rothfuss play D&D in front of live audiences with Chris Perkins, Dungeon Master Extraordinaire. *Acquisitions Incorporated: The Series* further details their antics.

In the PAX West 2016 live play game, the heroes of Acquisitions Inc. battled against the cloud giant Count Stratovan, who had claimed a powerful artifact (the *Rod of Seven Parts*) with the intent of destroying the folk of the Sword Coast.

In this adventure, the players are hired to deal with a threat directly related to the PAX live play event, as well as to *Storm King's Thunder*, a published adventure in which giants rise up against the civilized lands of the Sword Coast. The material in *Storm King's Thunder* is helpful, but not required to run this adventure.

A CHALLENGE FOR INTERNS!

Just prior to the live play battle, the cloud giant Count Stratovan who Acquisitions Inc. faced ordered his son to put his flying cloud castle into position over the city of Neverwinter, where it would eventually become the staging ground for a cloud giant attack. However, Count Stratovan's son Olthanas is not evil, and he has long held the small folk of Faerûn in high esteem. Distraught, Olthanas shared his desire to avoid war with Balakar, the majordomo who raised him.

The majordomo has promised Olthanas that she knows exactly what to do. Contacting adventurers on her master's behalf, she promises to arrange a meeting—but Olthanas has no idea that Balakar is setting a trap. The majordomo nurtures a deep hatred of the small folk, and hopes that exposing Olthanas's subterfuge before arranging his death will prompt the count to reward her.

Balakar's message reaches Acquisitions Inc., but those adventurers are already heading out to face Count Stratovan. In this time of dire need, they hire the first interns they can find and hope for the best. Now the characters get to find out if they have what it takes to succeed!

OVERVIEW

The adventure begins with the characters in the city of Neverwinter. A tavernkeeper tells them about a possible adventuring job, sending them to meet their new employer in a dark alley.

Ambush. An ambush awaits the adventurers, but it has been arranged by Bambra Gallagher, an employee of Acquisitions Inc., to assess the adventurers' capabilities. In both this and later challenges, the characters can impress Bambra, gaining titles and elevating their rank within Acquisitions Inc. Bambra provides the characters with a talking skull named Tulahk, who assesses their performance throughout the adventure and reports telepathically to Bambra.

Bambra shares the mission's details with the adventurers, which involves them sneaking into Olthanas's cloud castle, verifying that he is not evil, then negotiating the cloud giant's bargain. The party is provided with two choices for approaching and entering the castle.

The Cloud Castle. Either route into the cloud castle allows the characters to explore. The cloud castle is composed of three islands joined by bridges: the **Island of Contemplation**, the **Towers of Hospitality**, and the **Towers of Judgment**. While braving the castle's dangers, the characters can learn important information about Olthanas, Balakar the majordomo, and Count Stratovan.

Balakar's Endgame. When at last the characters reach Olthanas, they find him with Balakar—just in time for the majordomo to spring her trap. If the characters have explored carefully, they might anticipate the trap, thwart Balakar's plan, and gain a powerful ally. Successful heroes will also gain renown and titles with Acquisitions Inc.!

USING THIS ADVENTURE WITH *STORM KING'S THUNDER*

You can use this adventure as a lead-in to *Storm King's Thunder*. To do so, have Olthanas tell the characters about the Eye of the All-Father and the frost giant Harshnag. The characters can encounter Harshnag as they travel to the temple, continuing the adventure from that point.

This option is not available for D&D Adventurers League play.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The adventure begins on a cold and overcast day in Neverwinter. When the players are ready, read or paraphrase the following.

DM TIP: BOXED TEXT

The text enclosed in boxes is meant to be read aloud to players. However, it can be better to paraphrase boxed text in your own words, at a pace that fits the ongoing narrative. Watch the players. If they aren't paying attention, stop reading and just ask them what they want to do. Then relay the information in the boxed text as they make choices.

You step out of Driftwood Tavern—a dark, curio-laden establishment favored by the locals—onto a tumultuous street in the city of Neverwinter. Clutched in your hand is the scroll given to you by the tavernkeeper. According to her, a gnome by the dubious name of Bambra Gallagher wishes to employ heroes for a great adventure. Your employer awaits you at a side street off Dagger Way, a short walk from here.

You are not alone. Others have answered the call as well. You look at one another. Will this group have what it takes to succeed?

Ask the players to introduce their characters. This is a good time for you to make note of each adventurer's distinguishing characteristics.

DM TIP: PLAY TO THE CHARACTERS

Before play or during character introductions, write down anything notable you might use to help you shape the adventure around the characters (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, and so forth). The adventure becomes far more interesting to the players when their characters' personalities matter.

If the players desire, the characters can return to the tavern or ask around to learn more about their job prospects. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check reveals that Bambra Gallagher is a bard and trickster associated with the adventuring company known as Acquisitions Inc. Beyond that basic information, no other details regarding the mysterious gnome can be uncovered.

Once the characters travel to Dagger Way, read or paraphrase the following.

The streets grow quiet as you leave the busy area near Neverwinter's docks and make your way toward neighborhoods filled with shops and residences. The city is still recovering from cataclysm and hard times, and many houses remain boarded up and abandoned.

Neverwinter is famous for the river that flows through the city, originating from a volcanic mountain and warming the area year-round. Today, however, strong winds and overcast skies bring a chill to the air.

Dagger Way is deserted as you turn into the narrow dead-end alleyway where your meeting is to take place. Broken crates and piles of refuse line its shadowed walls. A robbed body lies on the ground some twenty feet away, partially concealed by a crate.

Allow the players a moment to consider their options or ask questions. Characters making Wisdom (Perception) checks have a chance to notice the following:

- With a check of 12 or higher, a character spots one of the hidden ambushers.
- On a result of 18 or higher, a character also notes that the body is a fake, made from clothing stuffed with rags and refuse.
- On a result of 20 or higher, a character spots a gnome peering out of a second-story window that looks out onto the alley.

Bambra Gallagher has set up this ambush, hoping to test the adventurers' skills. The gnome hides and observes the combat from above, only emerging at its conclusion. Bambra hired criminals for this test, and has given them orders to attack and incapacitate anyone who enters the alleyway, avoiding death or permanent injury. Though the criminals have been well paid for their work, they are not inclined to put themselves at serious risk, and will flee the fight if it turns against them. At your discretion, they might also surrender if overwhelmed.

AMBUSH!

A local thug named Lyn Zee the Bold (**veteran**) and three of her thieves (**spies**) hide behind crates in the alley. If any character approaches the body or makes it obvious that the ambush has been spotted, the foes attack. If the characters approach the body without making Wisdom (Perception) checks, any character with a passive Perception of 11 or lower is surprised. If the characters refuse to approach, the ambushers leave cover and bring the fight to the party.

Tactics. Two of the spies remains behind crates and attack with ranged weapons. Lyn Zee the Bold strides forth to take on the party's most heavily armed combatant,

MONSTERS

Throughout this adventure, monster names are shown in bold. Statistics for those monsters can be found in appendix C, "NPC and Monster Statistics."

DM TIP: ENCOURAGE CLEVER IDEAS

Combat is more fun when characters swing from chandeliers, tip crates onto foes, or make the evil villain slip on a banana peel. When a player comes up with an idea to do something unusual in combat, look for ways to enable the request. A good rule of thumb is to require an easy to moderate skill check for the intended result. If the result would have a particularly strong impact on the combat, you can raise the DC, require the character to spend an action on the attempt, or both.

If the players need help realizing the possibilities of what they can do in combat, you can ask them to make very easy skill checks to notice some feature of the area that suggests a possible action. Or you can have their foes take advantage of such features to show the players what can be done.

while the other spy supports her, using the Cunning Action trait to reach Lyn Zee's target with the Dash action.

Alley. The dead-end alleyway is 15 feet wide and 40 feet long.

Crates. The alley is littered with large, empty wooden crates. These provide half cover (a +2 bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws) to anyone standing behind one. A crate can be climbed with a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Refuse. Three piles of refuse are strewn across the alleyway. Draw them in on your battle map if you are using one, or simply describe them as being near the characters. Anyone entering an area of refuse must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or slip and fall prone. A character who wants to maneuver a foe into a pile of refuse can attempt to do so once per turn (no action required) with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check.

BAMBRA GALLAGHER'S OFFER

When the foes have been defeated, read or paraphrase the following.

With a loud creak, the shutters of a second-story window open. A gnome dressed in a riot of colors tumbles out of the window, slides down a first-floor roof, bounces off a crate, and lands in the alley before you. She bows deeply with a flourish.

"Bambra Gallagher at your service," the gnome says in a nasal voice. "Or perhaps I should welcome you to ours!"

Bambra congratulates the characters and notes any specific moments during the fight that caught her eye. This could include things such as using terrain advantageously, spotting the ambush, identifying that the body was a fake, and so on. She also apologizes for any injuries suffered by the characters—but says she had to make sure they were qualified. If any characters ask for aid, she provides each wounded character with two *potions of greater healing*.

After pleasantries, Bambra shares the following information:

- She represents Acquisitions Inc., a world-renowned adventuring company. (If pressed, she admits to being an intern, but she hopes to soon become a full employee.)

- Acquisitions Inc. is owned by a group of intrepid heroes who are currently occupied by huge problems. Literally. A cloud giant named Count Stratovan is preparing to destroy most of the Sword Coast. The heroes (Omin Dran, Binwin Bronzebottom, Jim Darkmagic, and Viari) have gone off to deal with this threat.
- Early this morning, a missive reached Bambra. The author of the missive, Balakar, claims to be the majordomo acting on behalf of Count Stratovan's son, Olthanas. Olthanas wishes to meet with Acquisitions Inc. and work together to create peace between the small folk of the Sword Coast and giantkind.
- The missive asks representatives of Acquisitions Inc. to approach Olthanas's flying cloud castle in secret, for only he and his majordomo have friendly intentions. All other giants and their servants are bent on war.
- The central cloud island holding the Towers of Judgment where Olthanas waits is said to be well guarded, and the walkways that surround it offer no access from the air. However, two adjacent cloud islands offer easier approaches. Bambra has paid a mage to scry the cloud castle, confirming that these approaches seem sound.
- The first approach is an aerie set beside a cloud island known as the Island of Contemplation. Bambra will supply flying mounts for the party, but the characters will need to talk their way past—or eliminate—any guards.
- The second approach is by way of an outdoor garden on a cloud island known as the Towers of Hospitality. The characters can attempt what Bambra calls a HALFF drop (high-altitude/low-feather-fall) to descend into the cover of the garden and enter the towers beyond.

Bambra urges the characters to be cautious. Whatever approach they choose, they should investigate to try to learn more about the cloud giants before they meet with Olthanas. After all, Balakar's invitation could well be a trap. If all goes well, though, the adventurers will be heroes who help eliminate a major foe from the war with the giants.

Allow the characters to ask questions. You can provide any information you think Bambra would know, providing that doing so doesn't spoil the fun.

If the characters choose to enter the cloud castle by way of the aerie, Bambra provides each party member with a griffon mount. They are to return the mounts after they are done.

If the adventurers choose the garden approach, Bambra provides one of them with a rune-carved clay token that can be broken to allow its wielder to cast the *feather fall* spell. She will then fly the party above the cloud castle in a small dirigible.

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES

Once the characters have agreed to undertake Bambra's mission, the gnome formalizes their arrangement with Acquisitions Inc.

"Two more things for you," says Bambra, reaching into a side pouch. She pulls out a skull, which has two glass gems for eyes. "First, this is Instructor Tulahk! He will be our eyes and ears, monitoring your progress and assessing your performance. If you do well, you can win fame and power and become an Intern for Acquisitions Inc.! If you fail . . . well, you don't want to fail."

"Secondly, here are all the details regarding the exciting ways you can advance in our organization!" The gnome hands you a scroll, wrinkled and slightly bloodstained.

Roleplaying the Talking Skull. Instructor Tulahk is bitter and jaded, still furious at the magical mishap that reduced him to his current state. Sarcastic and sardonic, he enjoys ribbing the characters. However, he also takes responsibility for their tutelage and offers praise when it is deserved, if begrudgingly. The skull can levitate and fly, but Tulahk prefers to have a party member carry him.

DM Tip: The Skull is There for You!

Instructor Tulahk offers the potential for some comic relief and a way to communicate to the players when their actions please or disappoint Acquisitions Inc. Individual encounters tell you when the skull speaks up with specific information.

The skull is also a great way to give the players tips if they become stuck and don't know how to proceed. Tulahk can provide the players with hints, point out possible options, or help them recall information. Use this tactic sparingly, however, and only when the players really need the help.

The Scroll. Provide the players with player handout 1, "Rules for Interns of Acquisitions Inc." These rules provide a fun framework for how the characters are to be graded. Throughout the adventure, some encounters offer opportunities for the party to increase the characters' rank within Acquisitions Inc. and to earn titles for their exploits. Additionally, you might choose to assign characters other titles based on play.

THE CLOUD CASTLE

The characters can choose one of two options for reaching the cloud castle—flying on griffon mounts to the aerie (location C1 in the Island of Contemplation) or dropping out of an airship dirigible and using *feather fall* to land in the garden (location H1 in the Towers of Hospitality). Review the features below, then proceed to the approach the players have chosen.

CASTLE LAYOUT AND FEATURES

Olthanas is the lord and overseer of the cloud castle, by decree of his father. Though it normally flies alongside the count's own castle or other cloud islands controlled by the cloud giants, Olthanas has brought the cloud castle to Neverwinter on his father's orders. The soldiers who normally protect the cloud castle have joined Count Stratovan's battle, leaving only a few guards behind until they return.

The buildings comprising Olthanas's castle are spread across three main cloud islands, all connected by great arching walkways. A fourth small cloud island sits at the

intersection of the walkways, joining the islands. See the "Cloud Castle Maps" DM handout.

Island of Contemplation. This area contains a temple, a library, a map room, a gallery, and the aerie.

Towers of Hospitality. This area features barracks for the guards normally stationed on the cloud castle, dining halls and kitchens, a spa, gardens, and Majordomo Balakar's quarters.

Towers of Judgment. This area holds an observatory, a family tomb, a (false) treasure vault, Olthanas's quarters, and the audience chamber where Olthanas and Balakar await the party.

Cloudstuff. Each of the islands that support Olthanas's cloud castle are made of cloudstuff, magically solidified to support the weight of the structures they carry. This solidity extends only a small and varying distance from the structures of the castle, making walking around its exterior perilous. If the characters insist on doing so, make it clear through a few near missteps that continuing to do so will result in death.

Structures. The buildings that make up the castle are made from hardened cloudstuff, as solid as stone and with an appearance similar to marble flecked with silver and veined with gray. The walls of the castle are all warm to the touch.

All areas of the castle feature large windows and are sized for giants. Except where otherwise indicated, all chairs, beds, and other furnishings are likewise giant sized. Small and Medium creatures can scuttle under or hop over most such furniture with a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Climbing up to the top of a giant-sized table might require a lift from another character or a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Stairs in the cloud castle feature huge steps 3 feet in height. Small and Medium creatures treat those steps as difficult terrain.

Towers. Each circular tower in the castle is two stories high unless noted otherwise, with levels connected by spiral staircases. Towers that are unnumbered on the maps contain only unremarkable furnishings or serve as connectors between walkways.

Walkways. Arched walkways connect the various towers and islands that make up the castle. Each walkway features high walls along its edges to prevent falls.

Weather. Though the cloud cover below is dark and stormy, the weather around the castle is cool and sunny.

DM TIP: MAINTAIN THE IMMERSION

The features described here aren't just default text to be read and then forgotten. They are designed to be evocative, helping the players imagine what their characters experience. Come back to these features from time to time, and make notes in the margin of the adventure to customize them with your own ideas. Maybe the cloudstuff in a certain area is soft and bouncy to the touch, or reflects the light in strange ways. Looking through windows, the characters might catch a glimpse of Neverwinter far below, marvel at the tall towers on one of the other cloud islands, or see a cloud giant on a roc flying by in the distance.

ISLAND OF CONTEMPLATION

Characters can reach this island by flying to the aerie (area C1) or from another island along the walkway leading to the warded tower (area C4).

DM TIP: GOING OFF SCRIPT

The players might decide to go straight to Olthanas, or to land somewhere other than the default locations. You have to make the call as to whether you should let events play out as a result of that, or whether steering the players back on course will make for a better adventure. If you follow the players' lead, give them periodic chances to get back on course if they wish to do so. One thing to remember is that players often respond to something exciting, interesting, or profitable. If they try to fly directly to the Towers of Judgment, they might first pass by the map room on the Island of Contemplation and see in through its windows. But did one of the maps show Neverwinter and battle plans? Maybe they should take a closer look. And over there—are those jeweled masks in that gallery? Might be worth checking out...

Tulakh the talking skull can also act as your voice, urging the characters to follow the plan and citing the potential risks if they don't.

APPROACHING THE AERIE

If the players selected this option, read or paraphrase the following.

You soar up into the sky, each of you riding a magnificent griffon. The city of Neverwinter fades below you, quickly concealed by the dark clouds through which you fly. When you break through the cloud cover, you see the sun shining brightly, reflecting off pristine white clouds—and a massive cloud castle spread across three cloud islands.

Winged creatures can be seen flying near a tower extending out from one of the islands, marking the location of the aerie. Instructor Tulakh shouts over the howling wind. "Don't screw this up!"

As they approach the castle, Instructor Tulakh will remind the characters of their mission, adding a few new details:

- The adventurers' goal is to land in the aerie and either fight or bluff their way into the castle.
- Once within the castle, the characters are to seek out information determining whether Olthanas is truly seeking peace.
- Avoiding notice is important, for any giants other than Olthanas and his majordomo are expected to be hostile.
- Once they have determined Olthanas's intent, the characters are to proceed to his audience chamber—a huge tower on the farthest island.
- If Olthanas is friendly, the adventurers should pursue his offer of peace. If not, the cloud giant must die!

Before the characters can reach the aerie, they are approached by three **giant eagles** that circle around them, slowly drawing closer. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check confirms that the eagles appear to be an

alert system for the castle. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check or a DC 18 Charisma (Deception) check convinces the eagles that the characters have legitimate business at the castle, after which the creatures let the adventurers pass. Characters might gain advantage on the checks if they do something clever, such as offering food or a song to the eagles.

If the giant eagles are not pacified, they squawk loudly and attack. For this aerial combat, assume that the characters' griffons must focus exclusively on flying, so that they cannot make attacks. This gives the characters a flying speed of 80 feet during combat, and allows them to fight without worrying about falling off their mounts.

C1. AERIE

The aerie is the obvious landing spot for the adventurers as they approach by air.

An arched walkway joins this tower to the adjacent main tower of the Island of Contemplation. The aerie has no doors or windows. Instead, countless openings and perches dot its exterior, with flocks of birds circling around and through the building. Only one opening is large enough for your griffons to land, standing at the center of the tower and on the same level as the walkway.

The large opening contains a nest for a gargantuan roc, but fortunately, Count Stratovan called the creature to aid his assault and it is not present. However, a **chimera** sleeps in its nest not far from the walkway.

As they land in the aerie, the adventurers must each attempt either a DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) or Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to land quietly and hide the griffons in an adjacent stable while they disembark. Depending on the outcome of the checks, the following events might occur:

- If any character first fails the check, the chimera stirs but does not wake.
- If a second character fails the check, the chimera rolls onto its side, roaring quietly as if dreaming. Its dragon head belches its fire breath reflexively upon the party, but the creature does not wake.
- If more than half the party members fail the check, the chimera wakes and attacks. It focuses on the characters, ignoring their griffon mounts.

The players might devise other plans for avoiding the notice of the chimera. A sound plan might grant advantage on the adventurers' checks.

The players might also consider flying directly to area C2 or to other areas of the castle. If they do, Instructor Tulahk warns them that such areas are almost certain to be guarded or warded against such an approach.

SCORING

If the characters reach this point and manage to avoid combat with the eagles, the chimera, or both, they gain a rank! Instructor Tulahk praises or chides them accordingly.

C2. VESTIBULE

Giant-sized cloaks, boots, and riding gear line the walls of this tower between its interior and exterior doors. Stairs along the wall spiral upward to the second floor.

None of the items here are valuable. If the characters investigate the second floor, they find a cloud giant guard slumped over a desk. The giant appears to be sleeping, but examination reveals that he was poisoned. (Though the characters have no way to determine this until they investigate Balakar's quarters in area H6, the majordomo is responsible.)

C3. GALLERY

Paintings of giants, cloud castles, and creatures of the air fill this vast room. Several busts are displayed on stands, while colored and lacquered masks decorate a section of one wall.

Two doors set into curved sections of the walls lead into the exterior towers adjacent to this area, while three other doors lead farther into the castle.

Most of the paintings are quite old, portraying Olthanas's lineage and important moments in his family's history. None of the paintings illustrates battles or conflict.

With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) check, a character can identify the most recent paintings. These include a series of portraits of a young cloud giant coming of age—most likely Olthanas. In one painting, he is accompanied by an older female cloud giant in formal attire. At the boy's feet is a small white dragon—one that has surely grown larger over the years.

TREASURE

Four of the masks are decorated with gems and precious metals. Each is worth 250 gp.

C4. Warded Tower

The walkway connecting to this area leads to a small cloud island not shown on the maps, which in turn connects to walkways leading to area H4 on the Towers of Hospitality map and to area P1 on the Towers of Judgment map.

This tower is clearly intended as a place to greet visitors and envoys, decorated with a finely woven rug, a painting of a stern-faced cloud giant, a suit of human-sized armor, and a finely carved table and two chairs.

Anyone entering the area without saying the passphrase "Welcome" in Giant causes the room's **rug of smothering** and **helmed horror** (posing as armor) to attack.

TREASURE

The helmed horror's helmet is decorated with a large amethyst worth 200 gp.

C5. LIBRARY

Shelves, long tables, and enormous chairs fill this library, whose massive books are sized for giant hands. Stained glass windows between the bookshelves fill the room with colored light.

This room contains thousands of books, including works of fiction, poetry, and scholarly topics of interest to cloud giants.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check discerns that the cloud giants have a very organized library, with every checked-out book carefully catalogued in an enormous tome near the entrance. The entries can be reviewed by a character who can read Giant, or by suitable magic or a successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. They show that Olthanas has recently checked out books on resolving conflicts with family members. Majordomo Balakar has checked out books on Neverwinter, the geography of the Sword Coast, obscure Faerûnian legends, and the mass-battle tactics of famous giant generals.

TREASURE

A character who quickly scans the library shelves for valuable tomes and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check finds a book discussing the construction of cloud giant castles, worth 100 gp to the right buyer. A more thorough search of the enormous library would require more time than the adventurers have.

Two spell scrolls—of *confusion* and *Otiluke's resilient sphere*—are tucked into the library's section on arcane lore. Each can be found by a character sweeping the library with *detect magic* or by a character seeking magic in the library and succeeding on a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Each check is made with advantage if the characters have determined how the library is organized.

DM TIP: COMING BACK TO A FAILURE

Some of the knowledge that can be gained in the library is important, and it can seem a shame to have players miss out on learning the castle's secrets. At the same time, it is important for failure to be a real threat to the party. One option is to make note of failures that feel dissatisfying. Then, as play continues, look for an opportunity to circle back to the missed information. Perhaps the gargoyle in area C6 can make an offhand remark regarding how the library works, allowing the party's success with the gargoyle to undo that prior failure.

C6. TEMPLE

An enormous statue of a towering cloud giant fills the far end of this vaulted room, whose ceiling is hung with azure tapestries. Two rows of long pews face the statue, while alcoves along the walls are set with monstrous stone figures holding incense.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check confirms that the statue is Memnor, a deceitful god of evil cloud giants. Memnor is one of the children of Annam, father to all giants, who swore to restore the giants to their rightful place as rulers of the world.

Statue Trap. The statue of Memnor is a magical trap that can be detected with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Any creature other than a giant that touches the statue for the first time must make a Constitution saving throw, taking 27 (6d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Unexpected Conversation. One of the monstrous stone figures in the alcoves is a **gargoyle** that animates at a moment of your choosing. Unusually curious for its kind, it speaks to the characters in Common, asking who they are and why they have come. As long as they don't seem threatening to it or to its giant masters, the gargoyle reveals that the temple was built by Olthanas's father, and answers basic questions about the layout of the cloud castle. If the characters attack, the gargoyle responds in kind.

The gargoyle never leaves the temple, and it can share that Olthanas rarely comes here, though all the castle's other giants do. If asked specifically, the gargoyle confirms that Majordomo Balakar is frequently in the temple.

C7. MAP ROOM

Large maps of Faerûn dominate one side of this room, while charts of weather patterns and the skies cover the rest. Giant-sized tables fill the area, all of them covered with parchments.

The maps are the products of various ages, including several that have been created recently. Most are merely of historical interest or show distant lands. However, one table contains model clouds set on stands, each of which is positioned over a huge and well-detailed map of the Sword Coast. The map indicates the position of a cloud castle over Neverwinter and another closer to Waterdeep.

With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check made to search around this map, a character finds a parchment tucked beneath it. Written in Giant on the parchment are the words, "First we take over the Sword Coast, then the world!"

Any character who has seen the majordomo's handwriting (see area H6) can confirm that the parchment was penned by her.

TREASURE

With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character notices a ring under one of the chairs. Though presently giant sized, this *ring of resistance (cold)* magically fits itself to the wearer's finger.

TOWERS OF HOSPITALITY

Characters can reach this tower-studded cloud island by dropping out of a dirigible into the garden (area H1) or from another island through the walkway leading to the passage tower (area H4).

HALFF INTO THE GARDEN

If the players selected the option of a high-altitude/low-feather-fall approach into the garden, read or paraphrase the following.

After Bambra Gallagher steers her small dirigible up from the Neverwinter docks, you rise quickly into the sky. The dirigible is small—not much more than a rowboat secured to a balloon with some sort of gnomish contraption firing hot air into it. Bambra giggles and prances, clearly enjoying the flight.

As you enter the clouds above Neverwinter, your craft is shrouded in darkness for what feels like an eternity. When Bambra finally steers the craft out of the clouds, you are looking down upon a massive cloud castle spread across three cloud islands. The sun shines brightly here, reflecting off pristine white clouds.

Bambra jabs a finger toward the farthest island as she brings you in close to one of the nearer sets of towers. "That's the Towers of Judgment. Watch out for the observatory there. You'll be easy to spot if you don't time your landing just right. Now, here's the fun part! Jump out, and don't let go of each other. One of you must break the rune just before you hit the ground. Hide in the gardens, then enter and get your job done! Don't go splat!"

When the characters are ready, they can jump out of the dirigible. Bambra is a capable pilot, and ensures that they are directly over the gardens.

As you descend toward the gardens, you can see that the other cloud islands are nearly as large as the one beneath you. Thin walkways connect the nearer islands to the main island—where you suddenly spot an enormous telescope in the observatory, slowly rotating toward your position!

A dark cloud is not far from you. If you can angle toward it, you might descend behind its cover before the telescope fully swings your way.

Each character must attempt a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If more than half the characters fail the check, their presence draws the attention of the giants (see "Developments," below). If the characters take any action to create cover or concealment for themselves before leaping out of the dirigible, you might grant them advantage or even automatic successes on their checks.

Landing. As the characters near the ground, have the character holding the rune make an Intelligence (Arcana) check. Roll some dice, mutter, widen your eyes in horror, and then reveal that you're kidding. Regardless of what you rolled, the character breaks the clay rune to trigger its *feather fall* spell, and all the adventurers land safely in the garden.

Once they land, Instructor Tulahk will remind the characters of their mission, adding a few new details:

- The adventurers' goal is to use the foliage of the garden to slip into the castle unseen.
- Once within the castle, the characters are to seek out information determining whether Olthanas is truly seeking peace.
- Avoiding notice is important, for any giants other than Olthanas and his majordomo are expected to be hostile.
- Once they have determined Olthanas's intent, the characters are to proceed to his audience chamber—a huge tower on the farthest island.
- If Olthanas is friendly, the adventurers should pursue his offer of peace. If not, the cloud giant must die!

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters were spotted, a monster is dispatched to investigate. Add a **chimera** to encounter H1, having it appear whenever you think it would be the most fun.

H1. OUTDOOR GARDEN AND DOCKS

If they approach by air, the characters use this open platform as their landing area.

Towering trees and dense foliage cover this huge outdoor garden, which is cut through with trails and walking paths. Where the garden is open to the sky, broad landings jut out into empty air, set with huge ropes and cleats where airships visiting the cloud castle dock. A wall rises up from the other end of the garden, made of glass supported by thin cloudstuff columns. The center section is a gate, also composed of cloudstuff.

As the characters move through the trails, ask for a marching order. Have the first three characters attempt DC 16 Intelligence (Nature) checks. If the players have previously announced specific tactics regarding looking for danger, you can allow one or more characters to make the check with advantage.

With at least one success, the characters spot a large plant with long tendrils moving slowly in their direction. Once aware of this **shambling mound**, the characters can maneuver away from it and quickly leave it behind.

If the characters all failed their checks, they spot the tendrils too late and the shambling mound attacks the party.

Gate. The solid cloudstuff gate is locked, but can be opened with a DC 20 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools. If the characters cannot open the gate, the bars are just wide enough for Small creatures to slip through. Medium creatures must squeeze painfully through the bars while attempting a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a character takes 10 (4d4) bludgeoning damage while squeezing through to the other side of the gate.

SCORING

If the characters reach this point and manage to avoid combat with the chimera, the shambling mound, or both, they gain a rank! Instructor Tulahk praises or chides them accordingly.

H2. INDOOR GARDEN

A stone path connects the outdoor garden to two doors leading farther into the castle. Verdant planters, stunning garden beds, flower pots, and sparkling fountains fill the rest of this huge chamber.

A character inspecting the room can attempt a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to assess the path. With a success, the character notes a deviation in the path where the giants always step off it as they pass. This clue might allow the party to avoid the two black puddings concealed within a pool near the bend. If the characters are unaware of the **black puddings**, the oozes emerge and attack whenever anyone draws close.

H3. HALL

Eight doors stand along all sides of this long, quiet hall.

The doors to area H10 are the largest and heaviest of the ones opening onto the hall. It takes a successful DC 20 Strength check to pull the doors open, but characters must first figure out some way to reach the door's handles, which stand 10 feet above the floor. The other doors all open easily.

The door to area H7 is warm to the touch, and features faint gaps around the doorframe through which wisps of steam flow.

The door to area H6 is carved from fine wood.

H4. PASSAGE TOWER

The walkway connecting to this area leads to a small cloud island not shown on the maps, which in turn connects to walkways leading to area C2 on the Island of Contemplation map and to area P1 on the Towers of Judgment map.

Giant-sized leather cloaks and boots line the walls of this tower between its interior and exterior doors. Stairs along the wall spiral upward to the second floor. One of the large wooden doors leads into the castle, while the other leads to a walkway extending toward the other islands.

None of the items here are valuable. If the characters investigate the second floor, they find a cloud giant guard slumped over a desk. The giant appears to be sleeping, but examination reveals that she was poisoned. (Though the characters have no way to determine this until they investigate Balakar's quarters in area H6, the majordomo is responsible.)

H5. STORAGE

This storage room contains mundane items necessary to run a castle, including cleaning supplies, repair materials, giant-sized tools, and foodstuffs packed into crates and barrels.

Unless the characters come up with interesting ways to use these items, they are of no value.

H6. MAJORDOMO'S QUARTERS

The door to Balakar's chambers is made of fine burnished wood, set with amber swirls that create the appearance of clouds. The door is locked, but can be opened with a successful DC 18 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools. The characters can also break down the door by inflicting 80 bludgeoning damage to it.

This tower is expertly decorated with luxurious furnishings, all giant-sized. A massive four-poster bed, side tables, and the frame and feet of a huge freestanding mirror are all beautifully carved from burl wood. The room is immaculately maintained, with curios and personal items placed very precisely.

Several paintings add color to the room. One depicts a cloud giant wearing a crown as he squeezes the life out of an elf. Another depicts cloud castles flying over a large city. One painting is of this very room.

The size of the room relative to the other towers suggests that it should have a second story. However, no stairs are present and the ceiling has no opening.

The mirror radiates magic if subjected to a *detect magic* spell, but no ability check or casual investigation can determine its function. Nothing else of importance or particular value is present on this lower level, with one exception. Anyone inspecting the painting of this room notices that it shows a staircase spiraling up to an opening in the ceiling, clearly leading to a second story.

Mirror Portal. The staircase in the painting can be accessed by moving the mirror so that it reflects the image of the painting. If this is done, the mirror's surface shimmers and becomes a portal allowing access to this "mirror room." While within the mirror room, the characters cannot leave this area or interact with any of its furnishings (which appear as shadowy illusions if touched). But they discover that the mirrored stairs are solid cloudstuff, allowing access to the second floor.

If the characters have trouble figuring out this puzzle, you can allow Wisdom (Perception) checks to notice that the heavy mirror has been moved across the floor multiple times, and Intelligence (Investigation) checks to determine that this movement consistently placed the mirror where it faced the painting.

SECOND FLOOR

When the characters access the second floor, they discover Majordomo Balakar's office. A huge desk dominates the chamber, spread with a number of everyday documents (supply registers and the like) bearing Balakar's name and signature. (Her handwriting can be compared to the parchment found in area C7, establishing a match.)

A hidden compartment can be found in one of the desk's drawers with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check made to search the desk. Inside are three glass vials, each of which is empty but holds traces of clear liquid. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check confirms that this poison matches that which was used on the cloud giant guards in areas C2, H4, and P4. A character proficient with a poisoner's kit has advantage on this check.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check to search the room locates a concealed peephole high up on the wall adjacent to one of the barracks towers of area H8. The majordomo uses this peephole to keep a close eye on Olthanas's grandfather (see area H7), whose quarters are in the adjacent tower.

H7. SPA

The door to this room is warm to the touch, and features faint gaps around the doorframe through which wisps of steam flow.

Hot baths filled with swirling water cover the floor of this steam-filled room. Through the steam, you can just make out stairs leading to a balcony. You also see an aged cloud giant sitting in one of the pools, the water up to his chest. He cocks his ear in your direction as he calls out in a shaky voice, "Who goes there? Balakar? Grandson?"

The characters can easily move back out of the room to avoid Olthanas's grandfather, Galadral, who has lost his keen sense of smell and is nearly blind. They might also attempt to fool the ancient giant by pretending to be someone else, making one or two Charisma (Deception) checks contested by Galadral's Wisdom (Insight) check. The old giant has a +3 Wisdom modifier but makes such checks with disadvantage.

If the characters converse with Galadral, he can confirm that Balakar is a pious follower of Memnor and that she has always hated the smaller races of Faerûn. He knows also that Olthanas has long hated war and admired the heroes of the small folk ("Far too much so, if you ask me").

If the characters attack him, Galadral uses the statistics of a **cloud giant** but attacks using a scrub brush [21 (3d8+8) *bludgeoning damage*] instead of a morningstar, and by throwing massive hunks of soap [21 (3d8+8) *bludgeoning damage*] rather than rocks. He makes all attack rolls with disadvantage. Additionally, if Galadral takes more than 100 hit points of damage, he passes out.

H8. BARRACKS TOWERS

The four barracks towers that open up off a central common room are all two stories tall and currently empty. With the exception of Olthanas's grandfather (see area H7)

DM TIP: HAVING FUN WITH ROLEPLAYING

You can have fun with this scene by letting Galadral's actions and reactions inspire the players to roleplay. If he is won over by the party's deception and takes them for fellow giants, you can still create the appearance that the ancient cloud giant is just about to discover their ruse. ("Wait a minute . . . you sound different! Do you have a cold?") Alternatively, Galadral might ask someone to hand him a giant-sized towel—an enormous mass of cloth that will be hard for the characters to move.

During the conversation, the old giant might prattle on about something that connects to a character's flaw, or might speak out against a character's ideal. Doing so gives the players a chance to react "in character" and can make for a memorable encounter.

and three guards on watch (all of whom have been killed by Balakar), the dozen cloud giants normally found here have all been called away by Count Stratovan.

All the doors are unlocked, revealing giant-sized furnishings beyond if they are opened. The tower adjacent to area H6 has a peephole concealed in its second level quarters, which are home to Olthanas's grandfather (see area H7). The peephole requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot from this side.

H9. KITCHENS

Several unlocked doors lead into this enormous kitchen. The furnishings here are sized not for giants but for their goblin servants. The area to the north serves as the goblins' sleeping quarters, and the doors into the dining hall (area H10) are unlocked.

This sprawling kitchen is filled with goblins, all of them lounging in chairs, munching on food, or napping on tables. Only a few are at work, wearing white hats and aprons as they pour ingredients into two large pots bubbling over an open fire.

The first goblin to spot you screams out a warning, in reaction to which the entire kitchen breaks into sudden chaos. The lounging goblins don aprons as they race back to work, running into each other and dropping pans and utensils in their panic.

The goblin that spotted you addresses your group in a sniveling voice. "Uh, I'm so sorry. We didn't know there were visitors."

A character can pass the party off as legitimate guests of the giants with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check. Such checks are made with advantage due to the trusting nature of the goblin servants. The characters can also attempt DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) or Charisma (Persuasion) checks to convince the goblins not to alert the giants to their intrusion. A bribe of 15 gp or more gives advantage on such checks.

The goblins have little information to share about the cloud giants, but they can relate that the garden has dangerous plants and that the dining hall has a dangerous pet.

DM TIP: FUN WITH GOBLINS

If the characters succeed at the ruse of being taken for guests of the giants, you might wish to assign fun personalities to one or two of the goblins, then have those goblins accompany the adventurers into the next few areas they explore as humorous tour guides.

If the goblins end up fleeing from the party, have them periodically appear in later encounters, perhaps hiding poorly under furniture or suddenly running wildly across a room.

If the adventurers attack the goblins or fail in their attempts to win them over, the goblins flee or hide themselves in the kitchen's many cupboards, correctly assuming that any heroes invading a cloud castle are more than a match for them.

H10. DINING HALL

As noted in area H3, opening the double doors into this room is a potential challenge. Gaining access to this area by way of the kitchen is much easier.

An enormous table, carved from a single block of pinewood over a hundred feet long, dominates this elegant dining room. Portraits of cloud giants line the walls between heavy drapes that cover all but thin portions of the windows, creating narrow beams of bright light. A fire burns brightly in a fireplace set between two doors at one end of the hall. Weapons and shields of human size are displayed above the room's great mantle.

Two battle-scarred **hell hounds** sleep by the fire, close to the kitchen doors. Count Stratovan once bested a fire giant in battle, took that giant's pets as his own, and proudly installed them in this hall. Characters entering this area can spot the fiends lounging by the fire with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. Characters who enter through the kitchen have advantage on this check. The hell hounds wake and attack if any character makes a loud noise, draws near, or attacks.

With two exceptions (see below), the weapons and shields above the mantle are all mundane gear bearing the marks of combat. Each piece is labeled with the name of some historical battle where giants were victorious against the small folk.

TREASURE

One of the melee weapons on display is of a type used by one of the party members. Crafted of black metal, stone, or wood (depending on the weapon type), it functions as a *sword of wounding* even if it is not a sword. One of the shields is a *sentinel shield* with the sentinel minor property. It bears the symbol of a large eye and glows faintly when any giant is within 120 feet of it.

TOWERS OF JUDGMENT

This cloud island is composed of an enormous central tower (the audience chamber, where Olthanas and Balakar await) ringed by four other towers. All the towers are

connected by arched walkways that pass through smaller connecting towers.

Characters will likely reach this cloud island from the walkways leading from areas C4 or H4, which connect at a small cloud island before leading to this island through area P1.

The characters have been instructed to approach this island only after they have discerned whether Olthanas is speaking truthfully about his intent to seek peace. However, the decision of when to approach is ultimately up to the players.

As with the other islands, only one guard (now dead) is stationed in the Towers of Judgment. After Count Stratovan called the other giants of the cloud castle away to do battle, Majordomo Balakar eliminated the remaining guards to allow the characters to reach the audience chamber. She plans to blame the adventurers for these deaths, just as she will blame them for Olthanas's death when it comes.

As the characters approach the Towers of Judgment, read or paraphrase the following.

Four magnificent towers rise out of the cloud island before you, gleaming in the bright sun. A fifth tower at the center of the island is three times as broad and soars even higher above you. Arched walkways extend between the exterior towers, encircling and connecting to the central tower by way of four smaller towers, all of them covered against the elements.

A single walkway connects one of the island's outer towers to the two adjacent islands. The wooden door of this connecting tower is bound in brass and carved to depict angels in flight.

SCORING

If the characters explored most of the Island of Contemplation and the Towers of Hospitality, Instructor Tulahk congratulates them on all that they have done and awards them one rank. He especially congratulates players who successfully addressed any of the bulleted criteria from player handout 1.

The characters also gain a rank if they have established that the majordomo is evil and that their invitation is part of a trap (by matching her handwriting to the note in the map room or finding the poison in her quarters), as well as discerning that Olthanas truly wishes for peace (through his grandfather's words in the spa, the gargoyle in the temple, or later on in area P5 in this section).

If the characters rushed through the exploration of the Island of Contemplation and the Towers of Hospitality in order to come here, Instructor Tulahk encourages them to not be so hasty, speculating that the other areas of the castle are sure to hold useful information.

P1. TOWER OF REMEMBRANCE

This chamber is fashioned from gray cloudstuff, with a huge white tomb at its center. That tomb seems to pull all of the available light into its surface, which is carved to depict a female cloud giant. Two side doors exit onto walkways.

This tomb is the resting place of Olthanas's mother. He is very fond of her, and it was she who taught him compassion for the smaller folk of Faerûn.

The tomb is far too heavy to move, but it can be opened with a successful DC 20 Strength check. Within are bones wrapped in fine clothing, but all of it quickly disintegrates and is blown away by the wind. Olthanas immediately becomes aware of the tomb being opened (see area P6).

P2. DRAGON'S DEN

Though the other three small, covered towers that connect the walkways around the central tower are empty, this one is sometimes occupied. As the characters approach, roll a die. On an even result, the **young white dragon** that lairs here is present. On an odd result, the dragon is away hunting.

DM TIP: CHANCE

Sometimes an element of unpredictability can be fun. However, you are free to choose whether the dragon is present in this area rather than rolling. If the characters defeat or wound the dragon now, the fight in area P6 will be easier. If the dragon is encountered only in area P6, that final fight can become deadly if the characters are low on resources. Especially if your party is composed of new players, having them encounter the dragon now can be a good idea.

You can also leave it up to the players to decide. If they discern the type of creature living here or decide to keep an eye out for it, roll a die each time they leave any area of the Towers of Judgment. On an even result, they see the dragon descend from the sky to enter area P2. It then stays there until the characters attack or until it is summoned by the majordomo in area P6.

A foul stench comes from this small tower. Animal bones litter the cracked and weathered floor.

Dragon Tactics. If the dragon is present, it lurks high above the floor, clinging to buttresses beneath the ceiling. If at least one character has a passive Perception of 15 or higher, the dragon does not gain surprise.

Once combat starts, the dragon uses its breath weapon, then descends to do battle. It tries to fly away (provoking opportunity attacks) if it is reduced to below half its hit points. If it does so, it retains any damage it suffered when it appears again in area P6.

If the dragon is absent when the characters come here, a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that the floors, walls, and scattered bones have been subjected to extreme cold. A successful DC 15 Intelligence

(Arcana) check confirms that this is the lair of a young white dragon.

P3. VAULT

The stout, locked metallic doors leading into this tower can be opened only with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools. Using brute force to bash through the doors would take hours, and Instructor Tulahk can warn the characters that doing so is likely to alert anyone in the central tower or the observatory.

A small balcony extends out from the door of this tower, overlooking a floor some forty feet below. Every square inch of that floor is covered in treasure—chests spilling over with gleaming gold coins, shields, axes and hammers, scimitars and other blades, backpacks stuffed with potions, and more. A narrow walkway connects your balcony to another balcony and a door along the opposite wall.

Though it appears to be a rich treasure trove, this area actually hides a number of deadly threats.

False Treasure. All of the wealth at the bottom of the tower is either fake (painted wooden discs instead of coins, worthless art, and so forth) or a magical illusion that is easily noted by anyone interacting with it. If the characters interact with the illusion by touching it or dispelling it, they can see that a couple of the chests and weapons appear to be real. However, these are actually two mimics and two **flying swords**. They attack at once if anyone ventures down to the floor.

Hidden Guard. An invisible imp also lurks in this area, hovering over whichever walkway is opposite the balcony where the characters are. When the time is right, or if the characters ignore the treasure, the imp accesses a control panel set into the wall. Any character sees the wall pop open just to the side of the door opposite theirs. A button is depressed, causing both doors in this area to close and lock before the room's trap activates.

Deadly Trap. When the trap is triggered, the walkway across the room splits at the halfway point along a hidden seam. The balconies and each half of the walkway then begin to magically retract into the walls, a process that takes 3 rounds. If the flying swords have not already attacked, they soar upward when the trap is triggered, engaging the characters as they scramble along the retracting walkway.

If the trap hasn't been disabled by the end of the third round, the last of the walkway vanishes. Characters without access to flying magic fall 40 feet (taking 4d6 damage) and are attacked by the mimics.

While the trap is active, the doors cannot be opened by any means. For characters who drop down to the floor (intentionally or otherwise), climbing back up without the aid of a rope requires a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.

The characters have several options for disabling the trap and safely fleeing this area:

- The panel on the opposite side of the tower remains visible, and can be targeted by ranged weapon attacks. A character who succeeds on an attack against AC 22 suc-

cessfully hits the button and stops the walkways from retracting.

- A character can attempt a Strength (Athletics) check to jump across to the other half of the walkway and reach the button. The DC for this check is 15 in the first round that the walkway retracts, increasing by 5 each round thereafter.
- Savvy players might suspect that a second panel must be concealed on their balcony for the trap to be fully effective. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check spots the panel. With an action, any character can open it and push the button to stop the walkways.

Pushing either panel's button a second time opens the doors and causes the walkways and balconies to extend to their starting positions.

The imp curses loudly if the characters don't all fall into the pit, but it remains invisible. Unless it is somehow detected and attacked, it escapes as quickly as possible.

P4. OBSERVATORY

Open arched doorways lead into this tower.

A massive telescope fills the inside of this domed tower, resting upon a mechanical stand covered in clockwork gears. Huge rectangular windows currently stand open, allowing the telescope to look outward.

The lifeless body of a cloud giant guard is sprawled beneath the telescope, but the body cannot be seen until a character approaches the device. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that the guard was poisoned. If the check result is 18 or higher, the character making it confirms that this death occurred after the party's arrival at the cloud castle.

The telescope has complex controls, but a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check allows the characters to get it partially working. Allow the characters to look into three rooms of their choice in any part of the cloud castle except the audience chamber, providing them with rough visual details of those areas. The telescope then stops working and cannot be restarted.

P5. OLTANAS'S QUARTERS

Both doors to this tower are locked, but each can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools. The doors can also be broken down with a successful DC 15 Strength check, but Instructor Tulahk warns the characters that the sound will be heard by anyone in the audience chamber or the observatory.

The two stories of this regal chamber are decorated with delicate and beautiful furnishings, including gem-studded chandeliers and wind chimes, jeweled mirrors, and a bed frame created from wispy clouds. This must be Olthanas's private residence.

Olthanas's belongings include many books detailing the fanciful heroic deeds of Faerûn's small folk, including lords from cities along the Sword Coast.

A diary can be found under the pillow if any character thinks to search the bed, or will be noticed by a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check during a thorough search of the room. In several entries, Olthanas talks of worrying about his father's worship of Memnor and his desire to attack the Sword Coast. He writes of wondering what can be done to create peace, and of his resolution to ask his majordomo for help.

TREASURE

Jewelry, fine cloth, and other valuables worth 1,000 gp can be found here. However, if Olthanas is alive at the end of the adventure, he demands that any of these personal items claimed by the characters be returned.

P6. AUDIENCE CHAMBER

Each of the walkways leading from the small connecting towers to the audience chamber ends at an exterior balcony. From the balconies, unlocked doors lead onto an elevated viewing balcony inside the tower.

You stand upon a viewing balcony some fifty feet above the audience room below. Two cloud giants are there, looking up at your arrival. The younger giant, seated upon a throne, must be Olthanas. Dressed in serene blues and wearing a silver choker, he has a calm disposition that belies his massive size. The older giant standing beside the throne must be Balakar, the majordomo who summoned you here. Tall and dressed in dark colors, she narrows her eyes as she looks you over.

Several of the adventurers' previous choices while exploring the cloud castle can potentially affect the tone of the conversation between the characters and the giants. As the castle's master, Olthanas has a magical connection to it that makes him aware of these actions, and he reacts negatively to any of the following events:

- The characters opened his mother's sarcophagus (area P1).
- The characters stole any of his possessions (area P5).
- The characters loudly broke into Olthanas's quarters (area P5) or the vault (area P3).
- The characters killed his grandfather (area H7).

Though the young giant's instinct was to respond at once to any such affronts committed by the adventurers, Balakar convinced him to wait for the party to come to him, wanting to give the characters more time to engage in activities that would anger Olthanas. Based on the characters' actions, Olthanas's attitude might range from being pleased to see them, to reserved, worried, or deeply distrustful. Use the following suggestions to guide how he might greet the adventurers:

- "You did come! I knew you would!"
- "You are surely great heroes. Let me see your little weapons. Oh, I am sorry, I did not mean to offend!"

- "I am glad you answered my majordomo's summons. But given your actions in my home, are you truly heroes?"
- "How do I know I can trust you? Do your actions here represent the true nature of the small folk?"
- "I thought I called forth heroes! Only the wise counsel of my majordomo has quelled my rage. Explain your actions at once!"

Balakar the majordomo bides her time. Depending on Olthanas's disposition, she either builds mistrust or reinforces it. Use the following suggestions to guide how she might respond to the adventurers:

- "If you don't mind my asking, how did you get past our guards? We employ some fine and brave cloud giants."
- "Poisoned, you say? No cloud giant would use poison. A coward's weapon, and simply not our style."
- "My master risks much if he vies for peace with your kind. How do we know it won't result in his ruin? That you won't turn against him and leave him to face the wrath of the count?"

Give the characters ample time to respond to Olthanas and Balakar.

If the characters share proof of the majordomo's culpability. Olthanas initially cannot believe their claims, then orders Balakar to surrender. The majordomo activates Olthanas's choker (see below), blows a whistle to call the dragon, and attacks.

If Olthanas turns against the party, Balakar urges him to fight, but the young giant does so only reluctantly. The majordomo watches for 1 round, then activates the choker, calls the dragon, and attacks the characters.

Choker Trap. The silver choker Olthanas wears is a gift from Balakar—and a deadly magical trap. When the majordomo activates it remotely (no action required), the choker begins to constrict around Olthanas's throat, driving him to his knees. He becomes incapacitated and will die in 5 rounds unless the choker is removed in one of the following ways:

- The choker's magic fails if the majordomo is defeated (either killed, incapacitated, or forced to surrender).
- Characters can attack the choker (AC 16, resistance to all damage, 60 hit points) with weapon attacks in an attempt to destroy it. However, any attack that misses the choker has a 50 percent chance of dealing its damage to Olthanas.
- With any combination of two successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) checks or DC 18 Dexterity checks made using thieves' tools, one or more characters next to Olthanas can unclasp the choker and remove it.
- A successful dispel magic spell cast against the choker causes it to open. The choker's magic is treated as a 6th-level spell (DC 16).

The Majordomo. Balakar wades into battle, overconfident of her capabilities and not particularly concerned about tactics. She can easily be goaded into attacking certain characters or maneuvered into a position that is advantageous for her enemies.

White Dragon. The white dragon from area P2 appears on the third round. If it was previously hurt, but not killed, it appears on the fourth round of combat. The dragon was enslaved as a wyrmling and trained by the cruel major-

domo, before being gifted as a pet to Olthanas. It initially follows the majordomo's orders.

When the dragon appears, Olthanas tries to call to it and ask it to help him, even as the majordomo commands it to attack. The dragon's uncertainty is clear, and the characters are free to exploit it. Successful Charisma (Persuasion) checks can turn the dragon to the party's side. This is a place where player ingenuity and roleplaying can shine.

If the characters don't convince the dragon to stop following Balakar's orders, it can still be driven off. If it takes damage equal to half or more of the hit points it had when it entered this fight, it flees the battle.

SCORING

If the characters defeat Balakar and save Olthanas, Instructor Tulahk grants them a rank and is overjoyed by their accomplishments. He instructs everyone to create a personal and highly marketable slogan.

DM TIP: ADJUSTING THE CHALLENGE LEVEL

This combat has all the trappings of an epic battle, and is potentially deadly when played by the numbers. But even though a cloud giant and a young white dragon have a good chance of defeating five 6th-level adventurers, this encounter is not intended simply as an exercise in combat.

The point of the encounter is to act as a crucible of pressure, forcing the characters to find the keys to victory. These include making their initial arguments, roleplaying humility if they have inadvertently angered Olthanas, breaking the choker, and turning the dragon against the majordomo. If the characters fail to pick up on these goals, Instructor Tulahk can nudge them in the right direction.

Unlucky dice can always turn against characters, however, allowing them to be overwhelmed. Defeat is always a possibility in DUNGEONS & DRAGONS—but that's what makes victory so sweet.

RESOLUTION

If the characters defeat Balakar and save Olthanas, the young giant agrees to withdraw from his father's mad plans. Over the course of the war, he meets with other giants, convincing good cloud giants to leave the battle. This has a vital impact on the war, and the heroes are celebrated for their actions.

TREASURE

If Balakar is searched, the characters discover a small tome bound in golden feathers in her pocket. The book tells the tale of a powerful demon named Miska the Wolf Spider, who helps the forces of chaos take over world after world. Miska is finally defeated by elemental lords known as the Wind Dukes, who use a powerful rod to imprison or destroy the demon. This shatters the rod, with each of its seven parts scattering across the planes of existence. The fragments of this legendary *Rod of Seven Parts* are said to be powerful artifacts in their own right, which can be combined to channel even greater power. This tome is offered to the characters by Olthanas, and is worth 300 gp.

If Olthanas survives (and after the characters return any wealth liberated from his quarters), he offers the party 1,000 gp in art objects and jewelry as thanks for their efforts to aid him and his cause. Much of this wealth

consists of objects belonging to his father that Olthanas no longer wishes to keep. Additionally, the characters can keep any other treasure or magic items claimed in the adventure, many of which were Count Stratovan's trophies.

In the aftermath of the adventure, the owners of Acquisitions Inc. review the characters' final ranks. If they have attained the rank of Grand Intern, the characters each receive a set of plain gray robes that go with that rank (worth 1 sp). They also receive a coupon good for 50 percent off purchasing the deluxe version of those robes, for a final cost of only 200 gp (and with the robes valued at 100 gp).

If the heroes attained the exalted rank of Sub-Employee, the owners of Acquisitions Inc. (Omin Dran, Binwin Bronzebottom, Jim Darkmagic, and Viari) meet with them in person. It's a little awkward, but still special.

REWARDS

For Adventurers League play, make sure players note their rewards on their adventure logsheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards are listed per character. Give all characters in the party non-combat experience awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Name of Foe	XP per Foe
Veteran	700
Spy	200
Giant Eagle	200
Chimera	2,300
Helmed Horror	1,100
Rug of Smothering	450
Gargoyle	450
Shambling Mound	1,800
Black Pudding	1,100
Mimic	450
Flying Sword	50
Imp	200
Young White Dragon	2,300
Cloud Giant	5,000

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP per Character
Avoid the magical trap in the temple (area C6)	500
Avoid falling into the vault (area P3)	500

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **4,500 experience points**.

The **target** total award (for a party of five 8th-level characters) for each character participating in this adventure is **6,000 experience points**. The characters should earn exactly the target amount if the party strength is average

(meaning you did not make any adjustments to the combat encounters) and they successfully completed all objectives.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **7,500 experience points**.

TREASURE

At the completion of the adventure, the characters receive the following treasure to be divided up among them. Characters should attempt to divide treasure evenly whenever possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can randomly determine who gets it if the group cannot decide.

Permanent magic items are divided according to a system. See the "Permanent Magic Item Distribution" sidebar.

TREASURE AWARDS

Item Name	GP value
Four masks (area C3), total	1,000
Helmed horror's gem (area C4)	200
Books (area C5 and area P6), total	400
Olthanas's valuables (area P5) or offered replacements (area P6)	1,000

RING OF RESISTANCE (COLD)

Ring, rare, (requires attunement)

You have resistance to one damage type while wearing this ring. The gem in the ring (tourmaline) indicates the type (cold).

WEAPON OF WOUNDING

Weapon (any), rare, (requires attunement)

Hit points lost to this weapon's damage can be regained only through a short or long rest, rather than by regeneration, magic, or any other means.

Once per turn, when you hit a creature with an attack using this magic weapon, you can wound the target. At the start of each of the wounded creature's turns, it takes 1d4 necrotic damage for each time you've wounded it, and it can then make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, ending the effect of all such wounds on itself on a success. Alternatively, the wounded creature, or a creature within 5 feet of it, can use an action to make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, ending the effect of such wounds on it on a success.

SENTINEL SHIELD

Armor (shield), uncommon

While holding this shield, you have advantage on initiative rolls and Wisdom (Perception) checks. The shield is emblazoned with a symbol of an eye.

The shield also has the sentinel minor property. It glows faintly when any giant is within 120 feet of it.

SCROLL OF CONFUSION

Scroll, rare

See the spell description in the *Players Handbook*.

SCROLL OF OTILUKE'S RESILIENT SPHERE

Scroll, rare

See the spell description in the *Players Handbook*.

DOWNTIME

Each character receives ten **downtime days** at the conclusion of this adventure.

DM REWARDS

You receive **1500 XP**, **750 gp**, and **ten downtime days** for running this session.

PERMANENT MAGIC ITEM DISTRIBUTION

D&D Adventurers League has a system in place to determine who is awarded permanent magic items at the end of a session. Each character's logsheet contains a column to record permanent magic items for ease of reference.

- If all the players at the table agree on one character taking possession of a permanent magic item, that character gets the item.
- In the event that one or more characters indicate an interest in possessing a permanent magic item, the character who possesses the fewest permanent magic items gets the item. If there is a tie in the total number of permanent magic items owned by contesting characters, the item's owner is determined randomly by the DM.



WELCOME TO ACQUISITIONS INCORPORATED!

(This letter does not constitute employment with Acquisitions Inc.)

You have been given the extraordinary opportunity¹, through your great fortune, to win acclaim and recompense² from the world-renowned adventuring company Acquisitions Inc.!

Your Instructor will assess your performance strictly, upholding the highest standards for the quality we expect from prospective interns. Your instructor will grade you on the following:

- Skill at arms
- Mastery of magic³
- Creativity and thinking outside of any boxes—surprise us!
- Courage and wisdom
- Love
- Creation of merchandising opportunities
- Ability to coin slogans and catchphrases
- Ability to complete your assigned mission:

Determine whether cloud giant is honest, create everlasting peace

Your instructor will use a highly innovative and sophisticated⁴ scoring system to assign points for your experiences. As you perform heroic feats of heroism and score these points of experience, you might⁵ advance in rank. The following ranks are possible:

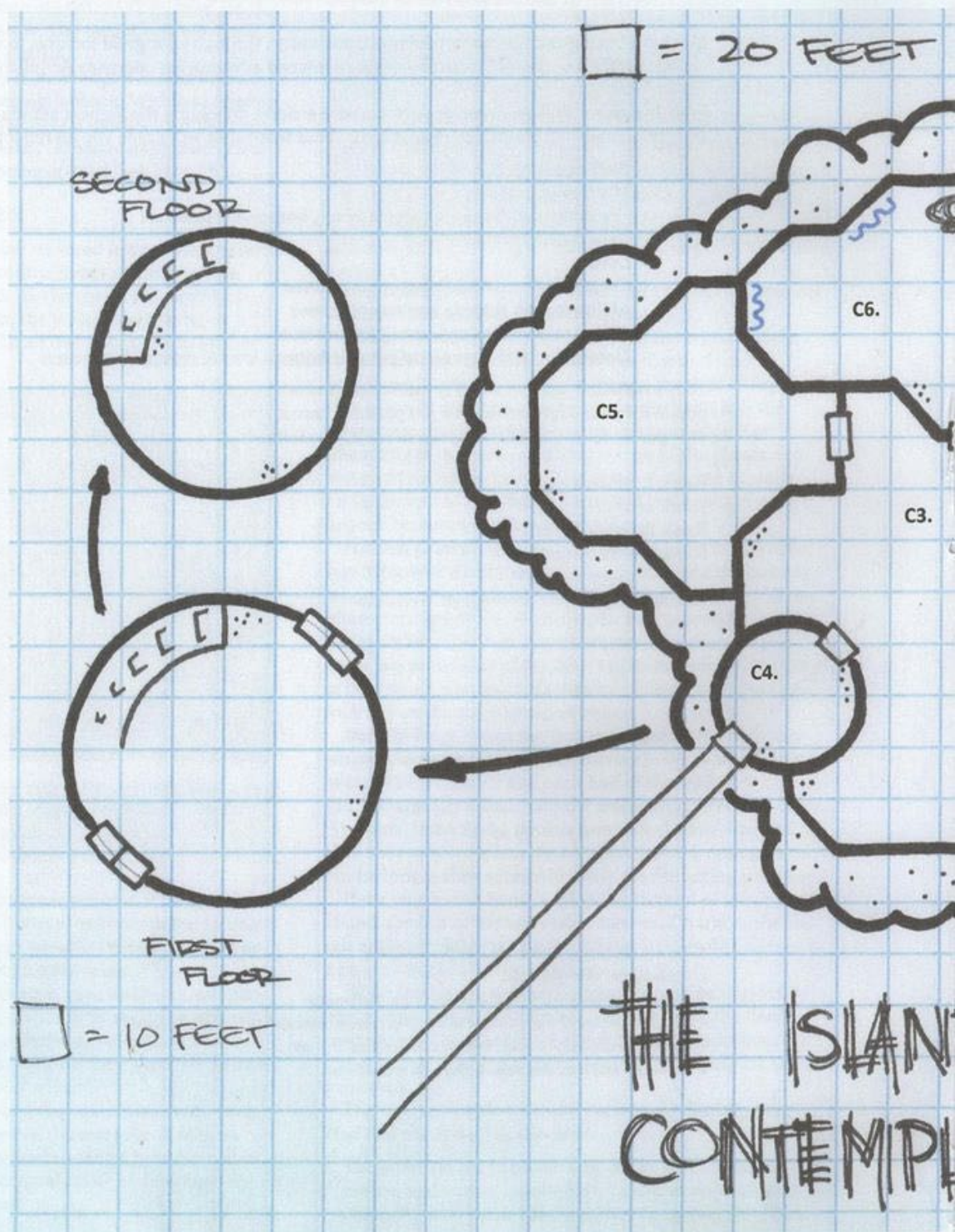
Rank 1: Sub-Intern
Rank 2: Intern
Rank 3: Grand Intern
Rank 4: Sub-Employee

Membership has its privileges!⁶ Welcome!

1. We will notify your next of kin (5cp per member).
2. Probably not money exactly.
3. "Thievery is just another kind of magic."—Jim Darkmagic
4. This is a spelling of sophisticated that is even more sophisticated than "sophisticated."
5. At the instructor's discretion; bribery not encouraged (wink)
6. Privileges may look suspiciously like new, unpaid labor.

DM HANDOUT: CLOUD CASTLE MAPS

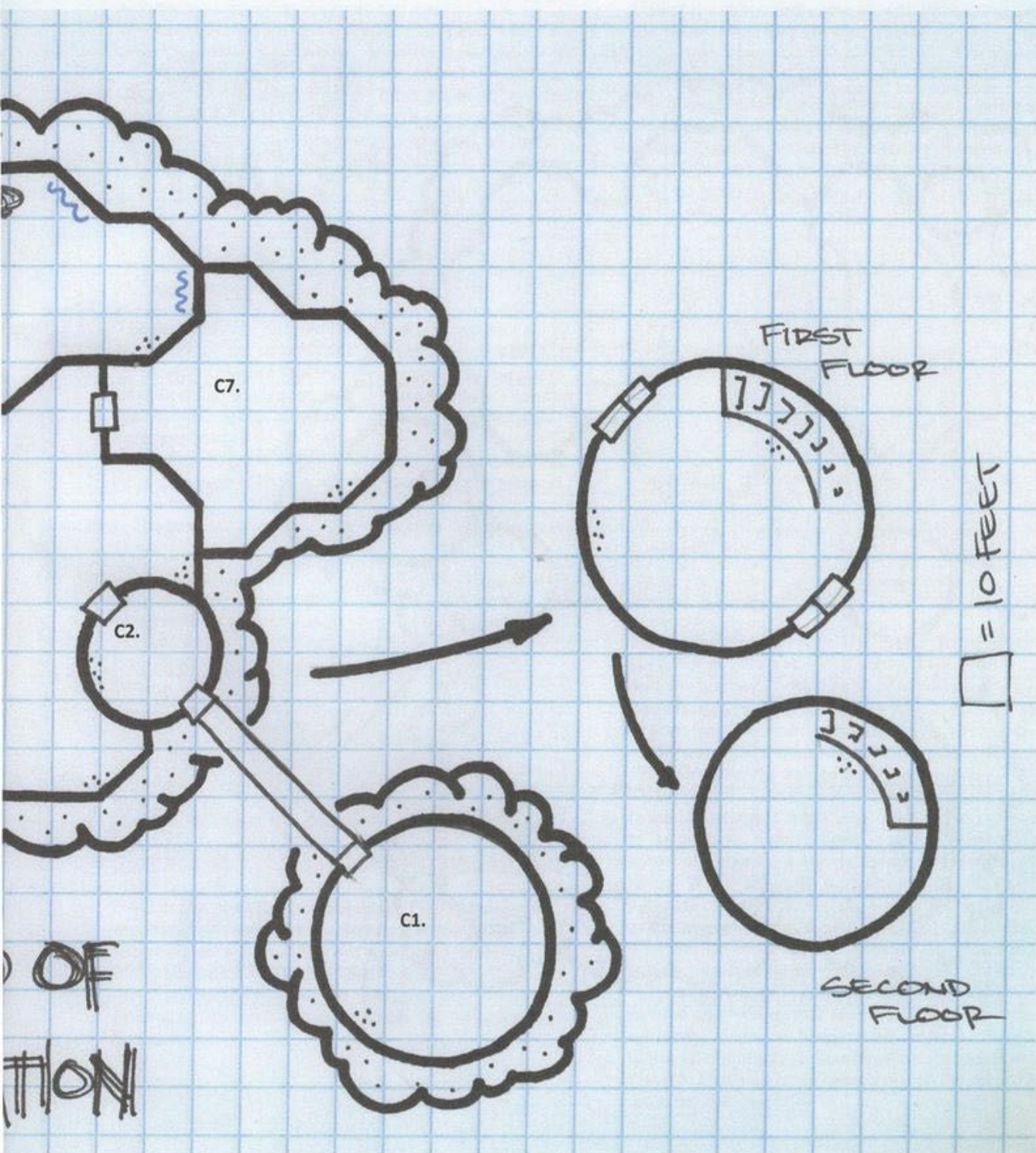
The three islands that make up the cloud castle connect by way of walkways that come together in a central featureless island (not shown on the maps). Characters should begin the adventure at either area C1 or area H1.



Island of Contemplation

Map notes: Structure is on a cloud island, joined to central tower by long arching walkway coming out of C4, which is an entry room with a rug and chairs. Short arching walkway connects C2 to C1. Cloud island is only slightly larger than the building. All rooms are made of magically hardened opaque cloudstuff, similar in appearance to white marble, flecked with gray. Round areas are towers,

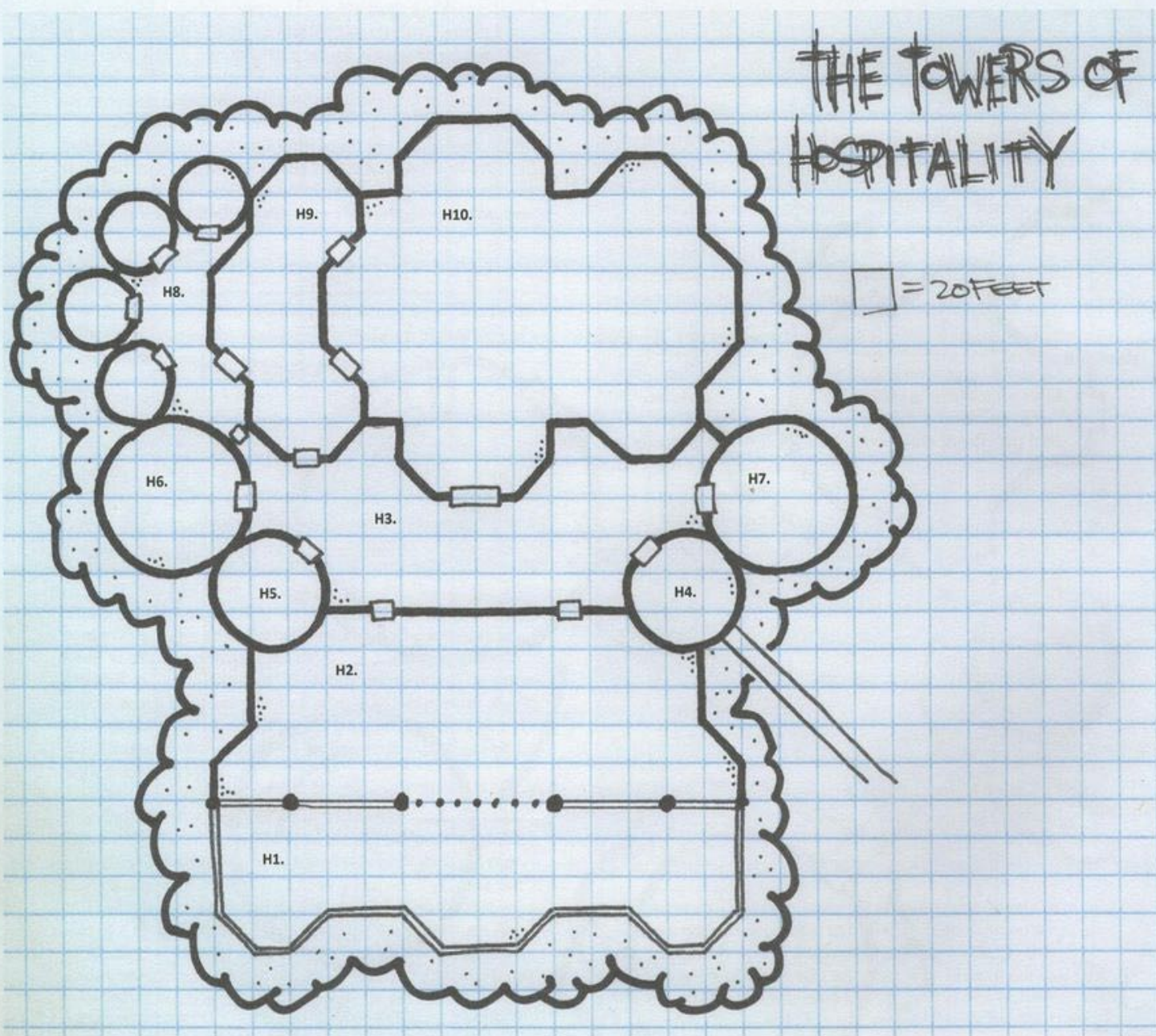
with two levels joined by circular stairway. (It is not critical to depict both upper and lower stories, though it would be nice to do so). All rooms have windows. Scale is for giants (maybe each square is 20'). C6 has a huge statue of a giant at the end opposite the doors, with blue tapestries leading from the door to it and two rows of pews on either side.



Towers of Hospitality

Map Notes: Similar to Contemplation. Round towers are again each two-story, with circular stairway, except for H7, where stairs lead to a narrow balcony with cushions. Area H7 is a spa, with pools of hot water on lower level. Area H9 has servant quarters to the north, past the open divider (which could have a curtain partition). H6 is a luxury apartment and includes a tall mirror, but no stairs

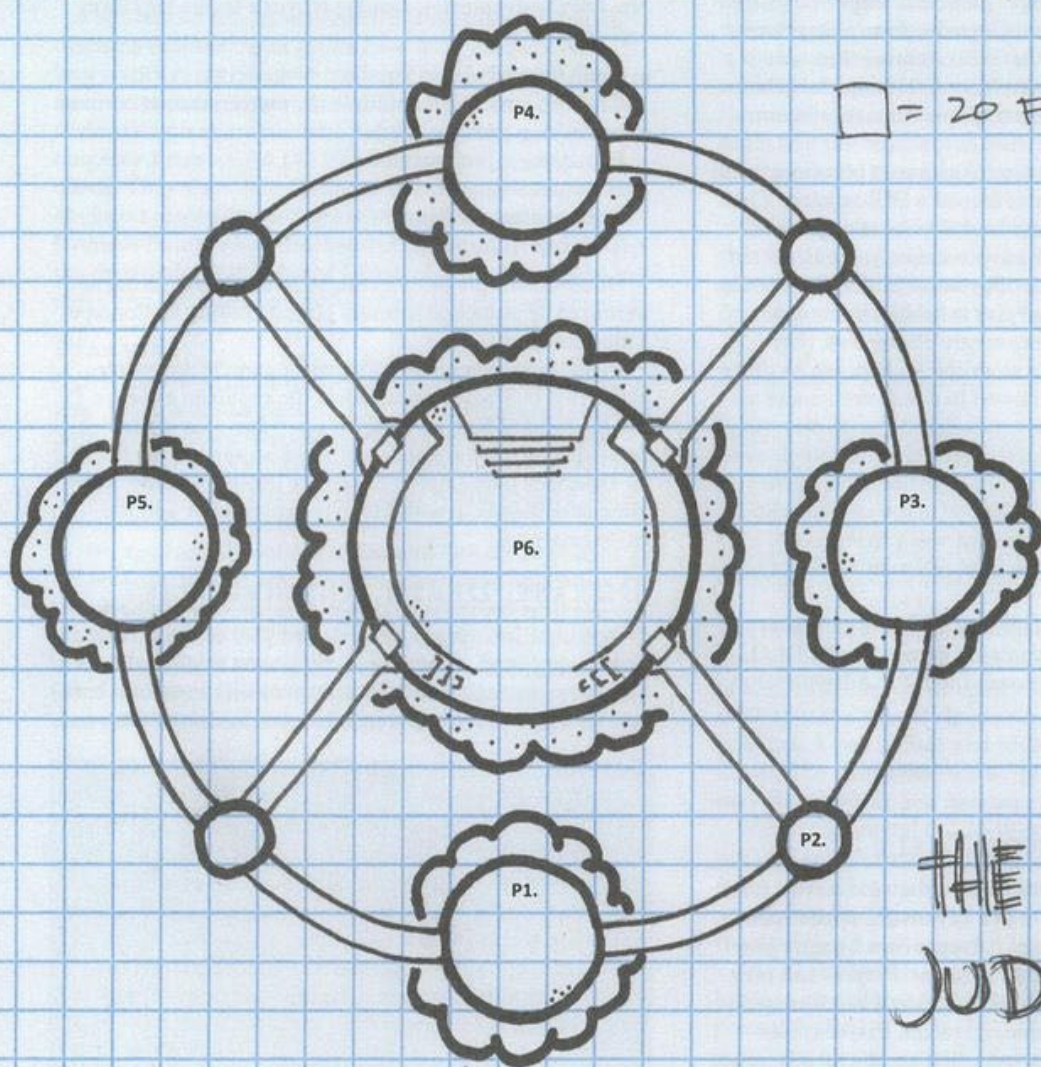
between the upper and lower level. The H8s nice guest chambers. H1 is a garden with dense foliage and trees and winding paths. A gate separates H1 and H2, with potted plants in H2. H2 is still fairly dense, with pools and sitting areas and a stone path down the middle and leading to the doors to H3. H4 is a simple guard room, the upper story only a catwalk.



Towers of Judgment

Map Notes: Each of the round structures is a tower. P6 is the enormous central audience chamber of Olthanas, with a raised throne, art, and stairs leading to a walkway/viewing areas. The viewing areas lead out to balconies and arched walkways lead from them to small connecting towers. P2 is the den of a small dragon. The medium towers all have two levels, but doors are only on the upper area, connecting to the walkways. P1 holds a sarcophagus

for a female cloud giant. P3 has heaps of coins, chests, and treasure at the bottom, and only two balconies and a walkway on the second level. There are no stairs between the levels of P3. P4 is an observatory with a large rotating telescope. Stairs down are only for servicing the telescope's clockwork mechanism. P5 are Olthanas's private chambers; 2-story with regal furnishings, including a bed made of clouds.



APPENDIX A: RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE AS PART OF THE D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

This adventure is official for D&D Adventurers League play. The D&D Adventurers League is the official organized play system for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Players can create characters and participate in any adventure allowed as a part of the D&D Adventurers League. As they adventure, players track their characters' experience, treasure, and other rewards, and can take those characters through other adventures that will continue their story.

For valid play, a player must have a character who has advanced to 7th–9th level through previous Adventurers League play.

If you're running this adventure as a part of a store event or at certain conventions, you'll need a DCI number. This number is your official Wizards of the Coast organized play identifier. If you don't have a number, you can obtain one at a store event. Check with your organizer for details.

D&D Adventurers League play is broken up into storyline seasons. When players create characters, they attach those characters to a storyline season, which determines what rules they're allowed to use to create and advance their characters. Players can continue to play their characters after the storyline season has finished, possibly participating in a second or third storyline with those same characters. A character's level is the only limitation for adventure play. A player cannot use a character of a level higher or lower than the level range of a D&D Adventurers League adventure.

For more information on playing, running games as a Dungeon Master, and organizing games for the D&D Adventurers League, please visit the D&D Adventurers League home at:

www.dndadventurersleague.org

BEFORE PLAY AT THE TABLE

Players that have characters outside the adventure's level range **cannot participate in the adventure with those characters as part of official Adventurers League play** and must use a pregenerated character. Players can play an adventure they previously played or ran as a Dungeon Master, but not with the same character. Players must track their character's progress using an official adventure logsheet (available at dndadventurersleague.org).

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 Player's 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. Alternatively, 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.

DOWNTIME AND LIFESTYLE

At the beginning of each play session, players must declare whether or not they are spending any days of downtime. The player records the downtime spent on the adventure logsheet. The following options are available to players during downtime (see the D&D basic rules or the *D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide* for more information):

- Catching up
- Crafting (exception: multiple characters cannot commit to crafting a single item)
- Practicing a profession
- Recuperating
- Spellcasting services
- Training

Other downtime options might be available during adventures or unlocked through play, including faction-specific activities.

In addition, whenever a character spends downtime days, that character also spends the requisite expense for his or her lifestyle. Costs are per day, so a character who spends ten days of downtime also spends ten days of expenses maintaining his or her lifestyle. Some downtime activities help with lifestyle expenses or add lifestyle expenses.

DISEASE, DEATH, AND RECOVERY

Sometimes bad things happen, and characters get poisoned, diseased, or are killed. Since you might not have the same characters return from session to session, here are the rules when bad things happen to characters.

DISEASE, POISON, AND OTHER DEBILITATING EFFECTS

A character still affected by diseases, poisons, and other similar effects at the conclusion of an adventure can spend downtime days recuperating until such time as he or she resolves the effect to its conclusion (see the recuperating activity in the *D&D Basic Rules*).

If a character doesn't resolve the effect between sessions, that character begins the next session still affected by the debilitating effect.

DEATH

A character who is killed during the course of the adventure has a few options at the end of the session (or whenever arriving back in civilization) if no one in the adventuring party has immediate access to a *raise dead* or *revivify* spell, or similar magic. A character subject to a *raise dead* spell is affected negatively until all long rests have been completed during an adventure. Alternatively, each downtime day spent after *raise dead* reduces the penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks by 1, in addition to any other benefits the downtime activity might provide.

Create a New 1st-Level Character. If the dead character is unwilling or unable to exercise any of the other options, the player creates a new character. The new character does not have any items or rewards possessed by the dead character.

Dead Character Pays for Raise Dead. If the character's body is recoverable (it's not missing any vital organs and is mostly whole) and the player would like the character to be returned to life, the party can take the body back to civilization and use the dead character's funds to pay for a *raise dead* spell. A *raise dead* spell cast in this manner costs the character 1,250 gp.

Character's Party Pays for Raise Dead. As above, except that some or all of the 1,250 gp for the *raise dead* spell is paid for by the party at the end of the session. Other characters are under no obligation to spend their funds to bring back a dead party member.

Faction Charity. If the character is of level 1 to 4 and a member of a faction, the dead character's body can be returned to civilization and a patron from the faction ensures that he or she receives a *raise dead* spell. However, any character invoking this charity forfeits all experience and rewards from that session (both those earned prior to and after death during that session) and cannot replay that episode or adventure with that character again. Once a character reaches 5th level, this option is no longer available.

APPENDIX B: IMPORTANT NPCs

Bambra Gallagher, Gnome Intern

A bard and intern for Acquisitions Inc., Bambra is tasked with recruiting the adventurers and sending them to meet with Olthanas. She received the cloud giant majordomo's message, but does not know if it is a trap.

Balakar, Cloud Giant Majordomo

The steward and confidante of the young cloud giant Olthanas, Balakar sent the missive to Acquisitions Inc. and promised her master she would help secure peace. In actuality, Balakar aims to confront and slay the adventurers when they reach Olthanas, then kill him and make it look as though the adventurers were responsible. She then plans to win favor with Count Stratovan by revealing his son's treacherous dealings with the small folk of Faerûn. She is sure the count will allow her to rule the cloud castle in the aftermath.

Olthanas, Cloud Giant Pacifist

Olthanas grew up reading stories of humans, elves, and other "lesser races" who fought against the great dragons. When his father Count Stratovan announced war against the small folk, Olthanas was horrified. He confided in his majordomo, and believes that Balakar will help him find adventurers who can help negotiate terms for peace.

Tulahk, Talking Skull Instructor

A sarcastic and sardonic instructor for Acquisitions Inc., Tulahk takes his job of grading potential employees very seriously, all the while remaining bitter over the magical accident that robbed him of his life and body. Despite his dark demeanor, Tulahk recognizes that to be a ca-

pable instructor he must offer his interns praise. From time to time.

APPENDIX C: NPC AND MONSTER STATISTICS

BLACK PUDDING

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 7

Hit Points 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities acid, cold, lightning, slashing

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

Languages —

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Amorphous. The pudding can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Corrosive Form. A creature that touches the pudding or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) acid damage. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal or wood that hits the pudding corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If its penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal or wood that hits the pudding is destroyed after dealing damage.

The pudding can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical wood or metal in 1 round.

Spider Climb. The pudding can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 18 (4d8) acid damage. In addition, nonmagical armor worn by the target is partly dissolved and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

REACTIONS

Split. When a pudding that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new puddings if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new pudding has hit points equal to half the original pudding's, rounded down. New puddings are one size smaller than the original pudding.



CHIMERA



CLOUD GIANT

CHIMERA

Large monstrosity, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114 (12d10 + 48)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	19 (+4)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +8

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages understands Draconic but can't speak

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The chimera makes three attacks: one with its bite, one with its horns, and one with its claws. When its fire breath is available, it can use the breath in place of its bite or horns.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Horns. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 10 (1d12 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon head exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 31 (7d8) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

CLOUD GIANT

Huge giant, neutral good (50%) or neutral evil (50%)

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 200 (16d12 + 96)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	10 (+0)	22 (+6)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +7, Cha +7

Skills Insight +7, Perception +7

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Giant

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Keen Smell. The giant has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Innate Spellcasting. The giant's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *fog cloud*, *light*

3/day each: *feather fall*, *fly*, *misty step*, *telekinesis*

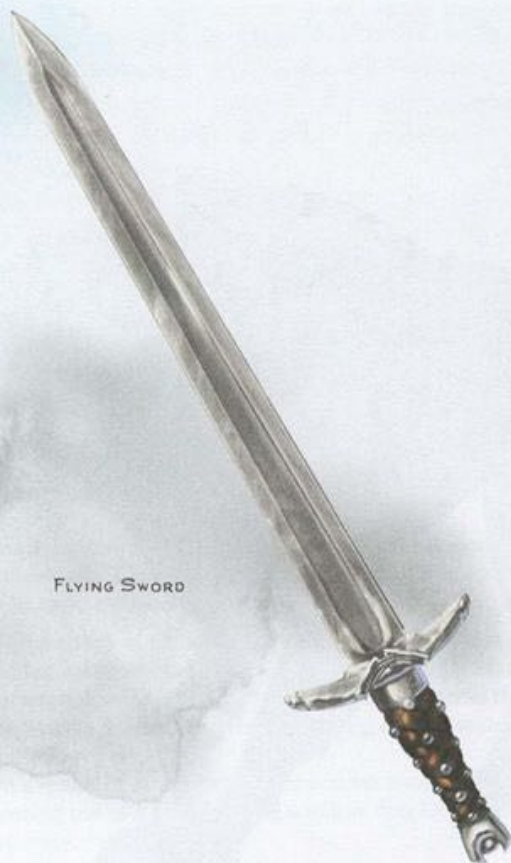
1/day each: *control weather*, *gaseous form*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant makes two morningstar attacks.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) piercing damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +12 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d10 + 8) bludgeoning damage.



FLYING SWORD

FLYING SWORD

Small construct, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 17 (5d6)

Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)	5 (-3)	1 (-5)

Saving Throws Dex +4

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius),

passive Perception 7

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The sword is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by dispel magic, the sword must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

False Appearance. While the sword remains motionless and isn't flying, it is indistinguishable from a normal sword.

ACTIONS

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage.



GARGOYLE

GARGOYLE

Medium elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (7d8 + 21)

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantite

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Terran, Common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

False Appearance. While the gargoyle remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an inanimate statue.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The gargoyle makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.



GIANT EAGLE



HELL HOUND

GIANT EAGLE

Large beast, neutral good

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 26 (4d10 + 4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	8 (–1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Giant Eagle, understands Common and Auran but can't speak them

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Sight. The eagle has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The eagle makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

HELL HOUND

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (7d8 + 14)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (–2)	13 (+1)	6 (–2)

Skills Perception +5

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages understands Infernal but can't speak it

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. The hound has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The hound has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the hound's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6). The hound exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



HELMED
HORROR

HELMED HORROR

Medium construct, neutral

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantite

Damage Immunities force, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius),

passive Perception 14

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

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

Spell Immunity. The helmed horror is immune to three spells chosen by its creator. Typical immunities include *fireball*, *heat metal*, and *lightning bolt*.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The helmed horror makes two longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands.



IMP

IMP

Tiny fiend (devil, shapeshifter), lawful evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 10 (3d4 + 3)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Insight +3, Persuasion +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Infernal, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Shapechanger. The imp can use its action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a rat (speed 20 ft.), a raven (20 ft., fly 60 ft.), or a spider (20 ft., climb 20 ft.), or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the imp's darkvision.

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

ACTIONS

Sting (Bite in Beast Form). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Invisibility. The imp magically turns invisible until it attacks or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the imp wears or carries is invisible with it.



MIMIC

MIMIC

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	5 (−3)	13 (+1)	8 (−1)

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Immunities acid

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Shapechanger. The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

Grappler. The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.



RUG OF SMOTHERING

RUG OF SMOTHERING

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 33 (6d10)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (−5)	3 (−4)	1 (−5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Antimagic Susceptibility. The rug is incapacitated while in the area of an *antimagic field*. If targeted by *dispel magic*, the rug must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall unconscious for 1 minute.

Damage Transfer. While it is grappling a creature, the rug takes only half the damage dealt to it, and the creature grappled by the rug takes the other half.

False Appearance. While the rug remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal rug.

ACTIONS

Smother. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* The creature is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, blinded, and at risk of suffocating, and the rug can't smother another target. In addition, at the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.



SHAMBLING MOUND

SHAMBLING MOUND

Large plant, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 136 (16d10 + 48)

Speed 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Resistances cold, fire

Damage Immunities lightning

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, exhaustion

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Lightning Absorption. Whenever the shambling mound is subjected to lightning damage, it takes no damage and regains a number of hit points equal to the lightning damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shambling mound makes two slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Medium or smaller target, the target is grappled (escape DC 14), and the shambling mound uses its Engulf on it.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Engulf. The shambling mound engulfs a Medium or smaller creature grappled by it. The engulfed target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe, and it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the mound's turns or take 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the mound moves, the engulfed target moves with it. The mound can have only one creature engulfed at a time.

SPY

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 27 (6d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Deception +5, Insight +4, Investigation +5, Perception +6, Persuasion +5, Sleight of Hand +4, Stealth +4

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages any two languages

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the spy can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Sneak Attack (1/turn). The spy deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spy that isn't incapacitated and the spy doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spy makes two melee attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

VETERAN

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 17 (splint)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +5, Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.



YOUNG WHITE DRAGON

YOUNG WHITE DRAGON

Large dragon, chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d10 + 56)

Speed 40 ft., burrow 20 ft., fly 80 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +3, Con +7, Wis +3, Cha +4

Skills Perception +6, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities cold

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Ice Walk. The dragon can move across and climb icy surfaces without needing to make an ability check. Additionally, difficult terrain comprised of ice or snow doesn't cost it extra movement.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.
Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Cold Breath (Recharge 5–6). The dragon exhales an icy blast in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (18d8) cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



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