

A HEROIC TIER ADVENTURE

AGE 12+

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

ENCOUNTERS™

AGAINST THE CULT OF CHAOS™



AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST-3RD LEVEL

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS™**, an exciting official **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** program. This adventure is a mini-campaign season designed to be played at your local Wizards Play Network location.

One of the goals of this **D&D ENCOUNTERS™** season is to try out a new format for adventure design. This season presents you with the opportunity to play out the elements of the story in a sequence that you and your players determine. In this sort of arrangement, the adventurers have more control over their choices during the season, and you have more freedom in tailoring *Against the Cult of Chaos™* to maximize the fun.

With this freedom, of course, comes responsibility. Since the encounters throughout most of the season do not unfold in a strict linear order, you must be ready to react to players' choices and actions. Many players and DMs consider this open-endedness to lead to a more enjoyable experience. It does, however, require the DM to spend more time in preparation before each session.

Some DMs might favor using a linear approach, since such adventures are generally easier to prepare and run. With this in mind, the text of each encounter includes a sidebar called "The Straightest Path." These sidebars tell you which clues to place in front of the players to run the season in a linear manner, thus reducing your preparation time but still enabling your players to experience the full scope of the story.

Playtesting D&D® Next

This season of **D&D ENCOUNTERS** includes an optional online component, which allows players and Dungeon Masters to convert their games to the **D&D Next** playtest. To participate, follow these five steps.

1. Talk to the players at your store and your **D&D ENCOUNTERS** organizer. Find out how many people are interested in playtesting **D&D Next** during this season, and how many want to continue playing 4th Edition. Gauge players' interest, and coordinate with other DMs to try to ensure that all participants (including you) have the opportunity to play in their preferred kind of game.
2. If you and your group will be using the **D&D Next** materials, visit dndnext.com and sign up for the playtest.
3. Download the playtest packet and review the documents, paying particularly close attention to the *How to Play* and *DM Guidelines* files.
4. Print out and read the *Against the Cult of Chaos* conversion notes. This file contains instructions, guidelines, and statistics to turn *Against the Cult of Chaos* into a **D&D Next** adventure.
5. Familiarize yourself with the adventure, and get ready to run some **D&D Next**!

PREPARING FOR PLAY

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS play kit provides all you need to DM this adventure, including poster maps of encounter areas and a sheet of tokens to represent monsters, adventurers, and battlefield effects. Follow the steps below to prepare for play.

Before you run Session 1:

- ♦ Read the **Background** and **Synopsis** to get a feel for the story.
- ♦ Read **Chapter 1: The Village of Hommel Lane**, pages 6–20. The characters will spend time in the village frequently during the season, and many of the locations in Hommel Lane serve as springboards to the encounters in the later sessions.

At the table of your first session:

- ♦ Be sure that each player has a character. Players can use one of the characters provided in the kit or can create their own personas using the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules.
- ♦ Give each player a D&D ENCOUNTERS Play Tracker. This sheet, found in the play kit, allows the players to track treasure and other information.
- ♦ Get a session tracking sheet from the organizer. Record all the players' DCI™/RPGA® numbers on it, along with your DCI/RPGA number. If you or any of the players don't have a DCI/RPGA number, ask the organizer for a membership card.

During the season:

- ♦ Typical playing time for one session is 90 minutes to 2 hours. Because of the open-ended nature of this season, sessions need not be played in the printed order, although they might be. "Temple of Chaos" will be the last session played, regardless of the order in which the other parts of the story played out.
- ♦ Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the game. As the DM, make adjustments to the adventure to maximize the fun for the players and yourself.

At the end of your first session:

- ♦ Make sure to remind the players to track any abilities that do not refresh after a short rest. They must use resources to heal between sessions. They can do so on their D&D Encounters Play Tracker or their character sheet.
- ♦ Turn in your session tracking sheet to the organizer. Make sure you've recorded all the DCI/RPGA numbers on it, along with names and the date of the event.

- ♦ Give out treasure and experience points. Make sure the players write down rewards on their D&D ENCOUNTERS Play Trackers or their character sheets.

A CHANGING CAMPAIGN

Since you can never tell who's going to show up to a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS session, you might have different players from week to week. Some players might have missed a session or two, and others might have played sessions with a different DM. That's fine.

Majority Rules: If some element of the adventure plot hinges on the adventurers making a decision in a previous session, and the players present are different during the current session, find out from all the players what decisions they made. Go with the majority, and if it's an even split, side with the most positive result. For example, if three of five players' characters at your table won the respect of the orc shaman in a previous session and two didn't, the characters are considered to have won his respect for the session this week.

Non-Linear Play: Since this season's encounters might be run in differing orders, movement of players between different DMs could cause a problem: one set of players might be ready to explore an area where another set of players already explored. With that in mind, we have included suggestions for optional encounters that the DM can create. This tactic allows the players to interact with a different encounter without being forced to replay one.

TREASURE

As the characters progress, they have the opportunity to gain treasure in the form of gold pieces, valuables, and magic items. The magic items in this adventure come from *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*™, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*™, and *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*™.

Awarding Magic Items: When the characters find a non-consumable magic item, the players can decide which character receives it. Usually, these decisions are easy, since certain items are better suited for certain characters. If this is not the case, assign the new item to a character who has no non-consumable magic items. If two or more characters lack non-consumable magic items, have each of those players roll a d20. The character belonging to the high roller receives the new item.

Selling Items: Since the entire season takes place in and around Hommel Lane, and none of the major players in the village have the funds available, the characters cannot sell magic items found during the sessions.

BACKGROUND

Miska the Wolf-Spider is a force of incomparable evil and chaos. During a long-forgotten war between law and chaos, the terrible creature was locked away in an extraplanar prison after slaying many powerful champions of law. For millennia, the creature threw himself at the walls of his prison, until the tiniest of cracks finally formed. Like chaos itself, Miska is not patient, and he is relentless.

Meanwhile, on this plane of existence more than two centuries ago, a group of pioneers founded the village of Hommel Lane (which the locals pronounce as if the two words were one). Settlers found incredibly rich and fertile soil in the area, bountiful forests to provide lumber, and iron ore in the nearby mountains. The area was uncivilized, however, and the settlers faced many threats. A village was created to act as a meeting place and sentinel, and it became a vital and vibrant hub for traders, miners, farmers, and artisans alike.

The leader of the pioneers, Haffron Hommel, led the construction of the village and a fortified keep. The villagers and surrounding farmers relied on Haffron's skill, bravery, and wisdom for ten years while the village grew. Then, one day while he was out patrolling the countryside, Haffron disappeared near the Caves of Chaos. No one knew what happened to him, but strange occurrences plagued the village for weeks after his disappearance: People became paranoid and distant, monster attacks increased, and villagers disappeared. Unbeknownst to the villagers, the crack in Miska's prison grew wider.

One day in late autumn of the same year, a trade caravan arrived to find Hommel Lane empty. Even the farms that served the village were deserted, with crops rotting in the fields and the livestock untended. Other than a few places that showed signs of small scuffles, investigators found no sign of war.

Brave (some might say foolish) citizens of surrounding lands arrived to slowly repopulate the village and reacquire the rich farmland. The population of Hommel Lane rose again, and the village thrived for a century. As the centennial of the disappearance of the original villagers approached, trouble slowly resurfaced. Villagers began acting strangely, bandit activity increased, and humanoids from the mountains to the east raided outlying farms with impunity.

On the day that marked exactly one hundred years since the village was found empty, Hommel Lane was attacked. Fortunately for the village, a large number of adventurers and soldiers had arrived shortly beforehand. The hostile forces—evil humans, monstrous humanoids, reptilian creatures, and even some of the villagers who seemed to go mad—were defeated in a bloody battle. The adventurers pursued the retreating forces: The evil humans were chased back to their forest moat house to the north, the monstrous humanoids

fled east to their mountain lairs, and the reptiles slithered and scurried back into the Fathomless Fens to the south.

Only the vile humans, attempting to hide in their fortified moat house, were fully defeated. Investigation of their hideout showed that these bandits and cutthroats served a master dedicated to an otherworldly force of evil and chaos. The moat house was heavily damaged and left to rot in the wilderness. Miska had given everything he could of his essence for the time being, and he went into hibernation for another hundred-year cycle.

As *Against the Cult of Chaos* begins, two hundred years have passed since the original disappearances, and the centennial of the failed attack on Hommel Lane approaches. The village's past has been largely lost to history, and the few who remember the attack simply assume that the threat is long vanquished; however, some bandit activity has been noticed recently, farms in the vicinity are reporting goblin sightings, and a few of the villagers are behaving in a peculiar manner. Those that are bolstered by Miska's power are preparing to attack again, and this time they hope to establish a permanent connection to the Wolf-Spider's prison plane.

Haffron Hommel's Tale

In ages past, long before civilization came to this part of the world, the humanoids that sought shelter in the Caves of Chaos feared the darkness. Sensing that the darkness shielded a great and terrible power, these simple creatures pleaded for the darkness to spare them, and also implored it to provide them with the power to destroy anything that threatened them.

Miska the Wolf-Spider, a chaotic creature of ultimate evil, heard them. Miska, however, had been imprisoned eons before on another plane. The prayers of the terrified humanoids created a small bridge between this world and Miska's prison realm. Miska sent bits of his essence through the crack, and some humanoids were able to use it to fuel supernatural abilities and to craft three items of power: the *Chaos Blade*, the *Death Circlet*, and the *Scroll of Final Words*.

Over the centuries, humanoids of all types took their turns wielding the power Miska offered, and the crack in Miska's prison grew wider and wider. At the same time, however, Miska's prison drains his power, forcing him to rest for a century between intervals of expelling his essence through the crack. The items of power provide Miska with a link to the world, even at times when he is not active.

It was two hundred years ago when Haffron Hommel, patrolling the area around the village that had been named in his honor, stumbled upon the Caves of Chaos at one of the times when Miska's power was at its strongest. He entered the Temple of Chaos and beheld the Chaos Mote, the terminus of Miska's power.

He recognized what it was and understood that he needed to sacrifice his life to keep the mote in check. Haffron's body was imprisoned in the Chaos Mote, but his soul escaped back into the world. Haffron's soul remains tied to the caves, conscious of the growing threat and frantically searching for a way to stop it.

Haffron's position gives him unique knowledge. He knows the items of power Miska has had created over the years. Hommel also knows that those of stout heart can use those items to seal Miska away, perhaps for good.

SYNOPSIS

In *Against the Cult of Chaos*, the adventurers must deal with a threefold threat: a spirit naga who is establishing a cult of followers through her ability to charm victims; a priest using the power supplied by Miska to lead bandits against the village; and finally, a dark priestess who lurks within humanoid-infested caves, attempting to create a permanent connection to Miska's prison plane.

Each of these threats is separate; however, the adventurers must deal with each of them at the same time as their investigations reveal the webs of deceit and danger.

The adventure begins as the characters accompany Sir Hadarai Moonbrook toward the village of Hommel Lane. Sir Moonbrook, an elf paladin who reveres the Lawbringer, received a missive from the Canoness Yeeday, leader of the Lawbringer's temple in Hommel Lane. The missive warned that something foul was afoot. The paladin gathered adventurers as quickly as he could to ride forth and battle the evil, whatever its form.

While the characters are on the road to Hommel Lane, a terrible force possesses Lord Moonbrook, forcing him and his retainers to attack the adventurers. Although the adventurers defeat the paladin, the evil essence remains within him, trapped by the paladin's resolve to keep the evil contained so that it cannot spread.

In the village, many residents have been charmed by a spirit naga called the Reptile God, and they now serve her as members of the Cult of the Reptile God. They capture other villagers and take them to the creature, hoping to turn the village into a mindless cult. Much of the kidnapping is done at the Golden Grain Inn, and the prisoners are routed through the Temple of the Lawbringer by a teleportation device, leading finally to the naga's lair deep in the Fathomless Fens. Devi, the acting head priest of the Temple of the Lawbringer, is a willing and active participant in this cult.

In the meantime, a cleric called Lareth the Beautiful, who channels the power of Miska, has created a shrine in the dungeon beneath an old moat house. The upper levels of the moat house contain the bandit army he

is slowly amassing to attack the village, and the lower dungeons hold his shrine and his most valued cultists.

Finally, the main threat resides in a Temple of Chaos housed deep in the Caves of Chaos. High Priest Inuggh, the main beneficiary of Miska's power, guards the Chaos Mote. This area of power is the terminus of the bridge between Miska's prison plane and this world. Inuggh directs all the pawns, including Lareth and the Reptile God, to start to spread Miska's influence into the larger world, hoping to give Miska the chance to break free into this world before he is forced into another hundred-year hibernation.

WHAT IS THIS ADVENTURE?

Against the Cult of Chaos is a strange mash-up of three classic D&D adventures: *The Keep on the Borderlands*, *Village of Hommlet*, and *Against the Cult of the Reptile God*. It also includes some story elements from another adventure, *Rod of Seven Parts*, specifically the story of Miska the Wolf-Spider.

This adventure combines the villages of Hommlet and Orlane into the single village of Hommel Lane, and turns the tower of Rufus and Burne into a version of the Keep on the Borderlands. It drops all of this into a nebulous setting defined in part by the conflict between the Queen of Chaos and the Lawbringer, two generic deities with no place in any known D&D world. It turns Lareth the Beautiful and the Reptile God into minions of the Cult of Chaos, and turns the relationship between the faith of the Lawbringer and the Old (druidic) Faith in the village into a more significant conflict. Like *Keep on the Borderlands*, the adventure's location is defined only as being at the far edge of civilization, two weeks' journey from an unnamed barony to the west, which an unnamed baroness rules.

If you and your players are familiar with the old adventures, we hope you enjoy this homage to their stories, locations, and villains. If not, we hope this piques your curiosity about the early days of D&D. In either case, take the adventure for what it is—a chance to explore a web of intrigue and evil in a generic D&D setting.

Tactical Placement: This adventure provides a sample tactical setup for each encounter, including the location of the monsters. Tactical maps for each encounter present only one way to set up the encounter. If it doesn't make sense to place monsters in the places indicated on the map, you can change the placement. The narrative of how your adventure is playing out should mandate character and creature placement.

SESSION 0: CHARACTER CREATION

The initial session of this D&D Encounters season is intended to allow players to create characters.

For this D&D Encounters season, players can create characters using any official 4th Edition materials, including options presented in *Dragon*® magazine.

A player who misses this session can create a character elsewhere or use one of the pre-generated adventurers provided in the play kit. Each player is responsible for bringing his or her character to each play session.

Race Options

A player can create a character of any race available in 4th Edition. First-time players should consider choosing from the races presented in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms* (dragonborn, drow, dwarf, eladrin, elf, half-elf, halfling, half-orc, human, and tiefling).

Class Options

Players can choose to play any classes available in 4th Edition. First-time players should consider choosing from the classes presented in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms* (cleric, druid, fighter, paladin, ranger, rogue, warlock, and wizard).

Character Backgrounds

Woven into the plot of *Against the Cult of Chaos* is an ongoing tension between two religions: the Lawbringer and the Old Faith. The Lawbringer represents justice, law, battle, commerce, strength, civilization, and order. The Old Faith represents nature, balance, magic, the primal energies, luck, fate, and the wildness of life.

During character creation, the player should make the choice of which religion his or her character is aligned with. (Most primal characters belong to the Old Faith.) A player can decide that his or her character follows neither, but doing so might detract from the fun of interacting with the NPCs in the season.

Advancement

Rather than receiving experience points, a character gains a level after playing in three sessions. So, if a player attends each session, at the end of the third session, his or her character advances to second level, and at the end of the sixth session, the character advances to third level. A player can still level up after three sessions of play, even if the sessions are nonconsecutive. Players record their character levels on their D&D Encounters Play Trackers. A player who participates in every session should end with a 3rd-level character.



SESSION 0: CHARACTER CREATION

Changing Characters

Players can switch characters during a D&D Encounters season. If a player wants to do so, he or she can bring a new character of the same level as that of the previous character. The new character can keep neither treasure nor equipment from the previous character.

Character Death

If a character dies during a session, the player has two choices. He or she can bring the same character back at the start of the next session, or start a new character of the same level.

CHAPTER 1: THE VILLAGE OF HOMMEL LANE

Hommel Lane stands at the edge of the civilized world, where danger is ever present. In response to strange happenings in the area, Canoness Yeeday, who leads the Temple of the Lawbringer in the village, has recently sent pleas for assistance across the land. Sir Hadarai Moonbrook, an elf paladin of the Lawbringer, is one of those answering her call. Characters who revere the Lawbringer have been asked to join his mission to the borderlands.

TO HOMMEL LANE

In the first session of this **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS** Encounters season, the adventurers journey to Hommel Lane to find a village plagued by strange happenings and beset by not one but three deadly threats.

In her message to Sir Hadarai Moonbrook, Canoness Yeeday provided no details of the trouble plaguing Hommel Lane. Druids of the Old Faith have divined a terrible imbalance between the forces of good and evil, law and chaos, in the area around the village. Characters who serve the Old Faith have thus been asked to join forces with the team led by Sir Moonbrook. A druid named Ramne Ashstaff tends the flock of Old Faith followers around Hommel Lane.

Characters who follow neither the Lawbringer nor the Old Faith can use one or more of the following hooks to join the expedition to Hommel Lane.

- ◆ Merchants who have been waiting for shipments of goods from Hommel Lane complain that deliveries are regularly subject to bandit attacks. By joining Sir Moonbrook's expedition, the adventurers can investigate.
- ◆ Two former adventurers, Lord Burne and Lord Rufus, oversee the protection of the area around Hommel Lane. The lords are always calling for adventurers to patrol the surrounding wilderness and strike at the monsters lairing there.
- ◆ Relatives of an adventurer live in or near Hommel Lane, but they have not been heard from in several weeks.

Read:

Sir Hadarai Moonbrook's armor gleams in the morning sunlight. This fact is not surprising, since his three squires have spent most of their evenings the last two weeks repeatedly polishing it. The long journey with the paladin should end at midday, with your arrival at Hommel Lane.

Since the moment you agreed to join the paladin of the Lawbringer on this journey, Sir Moonbrook has continually and loudly described the importance of your mission. Although his warnings of "unspeakable evil" and "the terrible blight of chaos unchecked" seem ominous, he has provided no exact description of this imminent threat to Hommel Lane.

In addition to your fellow adventurers and Sir Moonbrook's three human squires—Vivial, Robbek, and Jhaak—your traveling party is accompanied by a cart laden with farm implements and masonry tools. The cart's driver, a halfling named Wyndell, is a teamster based out of Hommel Lane, and he has spent much of the two-week journey acting twitchy. Wyndell has seen his wagon runs plagued by bandit attacks over the past six weeks. In fact, the halfling has let it quietly be known that any adventurers who can send the bandits packing will earn his gratitude and a reward.

The final member of your entourage is a young male half-elf named Carjo Merridie, whose "gran-gran" Vilma has lived in Hommel Lane for over a century. Carjo flirts constantly with Sir Moonbrook's squire Vivial, a young human female who tolerates his incessant chatter with the stoic perseverance that only a paladin in training can muster.

Allow the adventurers to introduce themselves and interact with the other members of the traveling party.

When you're ready to continue, read:

Taking a short break on the last leg of your journey, Sir Moonbrook stops the party before an ancient stone bridge, where a shallow creek spreads to a broad, clear pool. At the water's edge, the paladin removes his helmet, steps into the shallows, and bends down to refill his waterskin.

Suddenly, a dark vapor erupts from the water to completely envelop Sir Moonbrook. The armored knight rises stiffly, his eyes shining with dark malevolence. He points at his squires, who shudder as if caught in the throes of pain or madness. A raspy, sneering voice, echoing with an otherworldly tenor, comes from the paladin even though his lips do not move.

"You are too late," the voice intones. "This land and your lives belong to me now."

Continue with "Possessed Attack" on the next page.

POSSESSED ATTACK

Encounter Level 1

Setup

Sir Moonbrook (elf noble guard) (E)
3 squires (common bandits) (B)
Wyndell (W)
Carjo (C)

A physical manifestation of Miska's evil and chaos possesses Sir Moonbrook and his squires. They attack the adventurers without warning.

Arcana or Religion DC 8: A powerful malevolent force possesses Sir Moonbrook, and has seemingly spread to his squires as well.

Noncombatants

Wyndell and Carjo have no combat ability. During each of their turns (taken at the end of each round), they attempt to flee. If one or both are forced into combat, each has 10 for all defenses and a speed of 6. Either character is bloodied after being hit once, is

unconscious if hit a second time, and dies if hit a third time. Each character has one healing surge; if allowed to spend it, the character can withstand one additional hit before becoming bloodied, unconscious, or dying.

Tactics

If Wyndell or Carjo is closer to the enemies than the adventurers are in any given round, those enemies target the two noncombatants. Since Carjo begins the fight near one of the possessed squires, he is targeted if the adventurers fail to intervene.

Sir Moonbrook remains in the pool if possible, where he can shift in its difficult terrain.

If Sir Moonbrook drops to 0 hit points, he falls unconscious, and the force possessing him keeps his body alive. Additional damage done to the paladin has no effect and cannot drive out the malevolent force, but the adventurers can bind him before he regains consciousness.

Features of the Area

Light: By time of day.

Pool: The area of the shallow pool is difficult terrain.

The Spirit of Miska

At the end of the battle, the squires return to normal and can say honestly that they have no knowledge of anything that happened while they were possessed. All they remember is hearing a dark voice in their heads whispering the word "Haffron." This is the first name of the leader of the original settlers of Hommel Lane, as

Elf Noble Guard (E)	Level 3 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid	
HP 46; Bloodied 23	Initiative +6
AC 19, Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 13	Perception +3
Speed 7	Low-light vision
TRAITS	
Wild Step	
The elf ignores difficult terrain whenever it shifts.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.	
Effect: The elf marks the target until the end of the elf's next turn.	
⚔ Hobbling Strike (weapon) ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the elf's next turn.	
Miss: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the elf's next turn.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
⚔ Elven Accuracy ♦ Encounter	
Trigger: The elf makes an attack roll.	
Effect (Free Action): The elf rerolls the triggering attack roll and uses the second result.	
⚔ Engaging Strike (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An enemy that is marked by the elf and is adjacent to it shifts or makes an attack that doesn't include it as a target.	
Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 1 (triggering enemy); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of its turn.	
Skills Athletics +6, Acrobatics +9	
Str 11 (+1)	Dex 16 (+4) Wis 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 11 (+1) Cha 10 (+1)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Elven	
Equipment chainmail, longsword	

3 Common Bandits (B)	Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human	
HP 37; Bloodied 18	Initiative +6
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12	Perception +1
Speed 6	
TRAITS	
Combat Advantage	
The bandit deals 1d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to it.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.	
⚔ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.	
⚔ Dazing Strike (weapon) ♦ Recharge when the attack misses	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the bandit's next turn.	
Effect: The bandit can shift 1 square.	
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9	
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4) Wis 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1) Cha 12 (+2)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common	
Equipment leather armor, mace, 4 daggers	

the adventurers can learn with a successful DC 19 History check or when they arrive at the village and view the statue of Haffron (see area 7, page 14).

When Sir Moonbrook regains consciousness, the force possessing him interacts with the adventurers if they question the paladin. Use the points below to guide the conversation.

- ♦ **Who are you?** *I am the substance of nightmares. When you weak mortals stare into the darkness and beg for your lives, I am what answers.*
- ♦ **What do you want?** *You will all bow down before me and do my bidding, paving my way to conquer this pathetic realm.*
- ♦ **You don't seem that powerful.** *You see only the tiniest sliver of my magnificence. My armies grow, and my power expands to one day crash over this world like a tide.*

The force possessing the paladin answers other questions or comments by ranting about how it will crush its enemies and plunge the world into a thousand years of darkness, death, and fear.

Sir Moonbrook occasionally reestablishes control during the interrogation for a few seconds, during which time he relays the following.

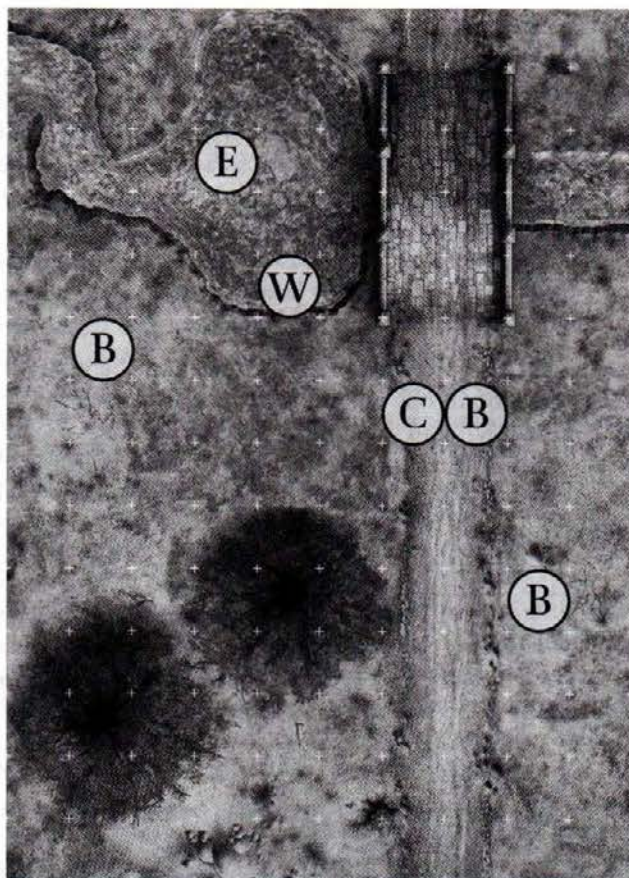
"The force within me is strong, and it grows stronger by the second. I contain it for now, but I don't know how long I can keep it trapped. Get me to Hommel Lane, to the temple..."

Conclusion

The adventurers can continue on to Hommel Lane without incident as they deal with the aftermath of the battle. If Sir Moonbrook's squires survive the combat, they are so badly shaken by the experience that they stay in Hommel Lane for only a day. They then depart to take word of the paladin's fate back to their temple.

The Paladin's Words: Sir Moonbrook's statement is intended to inspire the characters to go to the Temple of the Lawbringer (area 13) in Hommel Lane. No matter what methods the adventurers use to keep the paladin subdued after this encounter, the essence of Miska that possesses him continues to mock and taunt them. It can also drop hints or clues that the characters can use. For instance, if the adventurers are unable to discover the password to the moat house dungeon, the spirit inside Sir Moonbrook can reveal it in the hope that Lareth will then slay the adventurers.

Citizens of Hommel Lane: If Wyndell and Carjo survive, they gratefully invite the characters to stay with them in Hommel Lane. Wyndell and his family live in a house adjacent to the teamster's barn (area 10). Carjo is a guest of his grandmother Vilma in her cottage (area 17). If either character dies, the adventurers learn where to go to inform the relatives when they arrive in Hommel Lane.



A POSSESSED ADVENTURER

Rather than having Sir Moonbrook hold the evil essence of Miska alone, you might give one of the adventurers the opportunity to hold a portion of that essence. An experienced player who likes roleplaying challenges might find this enjoyable. In this case, the essence of Miska occasionally takes over the character, causing the adventurer to lash out verbally or physically.

The possessed character has an ongoing chance of being taken over by Miska and attacking the nearest creature. When the player of the possessed adventurer rolls a natural 1 on any d20 roll, the adventurer must make a basic attack against his or her nearest ally as a free action.

One benefit of this possession is that the possessed adventurer can gain insight into Miska's plans and knowledge, giving you a way to guide the flow of the campaign season. Miska can reveal important secrets that give the adventurers clear goals or provide clues regarding where to go next.

HOMMEL LANE

Hommel Lane was named for Haffron Hommel, a famous military captain and adventurer who had an illustrious career fighting bandits and the forces of evil and chaos in the borderlands. He helped found the village more than two centuries ago. His career came to an abrupt end when he vanished while patrolling the area between Hommel Lane and the dangerous Caves of Chaos to the east.

As the season progresses, the adventurers learn more regarding the mysterious disappearance and fate of Haffron Hommel.

As the adventurers approach Hommel Lane, read:

The dusty, rutted road is lined with close-grown hedges of brambles and shrubs. Here and there, it cuts through a copse of trees or crosses a narrow stream. To either hand, forest and meadow have given way to field and orchard. A small herd of cows grazes nearby, and a distant hill is dotted with white sheep. Barns and buildings stand to either side of the road, showing thatched roofs and stone chimneys with thin plumes of blue smoke rising from them. You have reached the outskirts of Hommel Lane.

As you draw closer, however, you see that many of the fields are still filled with crops, though it is well past harvest time. A number of farmhouses look suspiciously empty, their flower beds overgrown with weeds. The few farmers and laborers you see appear close to exhaustion, working feverishly to make sure that no crops go to waste.

Any attempts by the adventurers to talk to the farmhands working on the outskirts of the village are met with curt dismissals. Something is clearly wrong in Hommel Lane, but the characters need to enter the village to investigate.

Using the Village

Hommel Lane is an important part of *Against the Cult of Chaos*, and the village is used in a number of different ways.

- ♦ The information the adventurers uncover in the village in the initial session determines which of the forces threatening Hommel Lane they will investigate first—and what path the adventure takes as a result.
- ♦ Hommel Lane acts as a home base for the party during this season. The adventurers rest up here, and they can find many allies and foes in the village.
- ♦ Each location in the village contains clues, complications, or other secret information that moves the events of the season forward. Revealing these clues and secrets quickly can help players who are having trouble finding their way through the adventure. Revealing them more slowly can increase the tension

for players who are enjoying the mystery at the heart of this adventure.

- ♦ The village provides sites for two of the season's sessions. The Temple of the Lawbringer and the Golden Grain Inn hold enemies that the adventurers must deal with.
- ♦ Changes that take place in the village from one session to the next can provide a sense of the threats rising against these lands—and of the dark fate facing the people of Hommel Lane if the adventurers fail to act.

Path of Adventure

When the characters arrive in Hommel Lane, the path that their adventure takes is up to you. The adventurers can take on one of three foes to start with—the bandits and the Chaos Cult in the moat house, the Reptile Cult in the village, or the monstrous humanoids in the Caves of Chaos.

The sessions of this season are divided into three chapters. By choosing the order in which you run those chapters, you'll turn this D&D Encounters season into a unique mini-campaign.

The Chaos Cult

Lareth the Beautiful is a priest dedicated to chaos and evil. As he grows more powerful, he has begun to recruit bandits who serve his Cult of Chaos, whose headquarters is in an abandoned moat house close to Hommel Lane. The bandits raid merchant caravans, gaining wealth as they grow in number to become a small army. The bandits are less loyal than Lareth believes, however. They hope to corrupt and then rule the area, turning the village of Hommel Lane into the capital of a bandit-led territory.

The "Chaos Cult" section of this season consists of the "Explore the Moat House" and "Moat House Dungeon" sessions.

The Cult of the Reptile God

The spirit naga called the Reptile God lives in a lair beneath the Fathomless Fens, where she channels the dark power of Miska through the *Death Circlet* she wears. She uses her charm ability to turn victims into thralls that worship her and do her bidding. Those victims become members of the Cult of the Reptile God, and are sent back to their homes in the village with instructions to bring more victims before the spirit naga.

When the time is right, the Reptile God plans to have the cultists take over the village. The cult also employs the aid of several bullywugs—swamp-dwelling creatures of chaos that have been brought under the naga's sway.

The "Cult of the Reptile God" section of this season consists of the "Golden Grain Inn," "Temple of the Lawbringer," and "Cavern of the Reptile God" sessions.

The Caves of Chaos

The Caves of Chaos are honeycombed within a great ravine a half-day's journey through dense forest east of Hommel Lane. The caves teem with dangerous monstrous humanoids, though lately the lands around Hommel Lane have been kept relatively safe from these creatures by their inclination to fight each other. Now, Chaos Priestess Inugg, has unified the humanoids of the caves into a single dangerous force. These kobolds, goblinoids, orcs, and ogres now wait impatiently for Inugg to turn them loose on Hommel Lane and its surrounding lands.

The main thread of this adventure season is the growing threat posed by Chaos Priestess Inugg, who acts as a conduit for the power of chaos and evil that Miska provides. Inugg is ultimately behind the other threats that the adventurers must deal with before they can face off against her in the final session of this D&D Encounters season.

The "Caves of Chaos" section of this season consists of the "Scout the Caves of Chaos" and "Temple of Chaos" sessions. "Temple of Chaos" is the last session of this D&D Encounters season, and must be played at the end of the season. "Scout the Caves of Chaos" can be played directly before "Temple of Chaos," but it can also be played between or before the other two sections. (The "Straightest Path" approach to playing this season uses "Scout the Caves of Chaos" as a lead-in session to the other two paths.)

Events in Hommel Lane

As the adventurers return to Hommel Lane between sessions, they become aware of events unfolding in the village. Some of these events are clues pointing toward the larger plots the adventurers are investigating. Others provide background and character story that can make the adventure a richer experience for the players.

Many of the location entries for the village on the next few pages contain clues, secrets, and complications that can be used to shape the adventure. In addition, you can use any of the events detailed below to create a sense of the misfortune and uncertainty plaguing the village, and to help set up the next session of the adventure.

The Mayoral Election: A power struggle is currently unfolding for the leadership of Hommel Lane. Most people have followed the Old Faith for as long as anyone can remember, so a recent surge in the Lawbringer's popularity has led to problems. Making matters worse, a mayoral election is now pitting an

Old Faith stalwart against a recent convert to the Lawbringer, leaving villagers squabbling and suspicious.

Sibling Rivalry: Varick Becker (area 5) has been feuding with his brother Renn (area 1) for a couple of years because of their different religious affiliations. The two occasionally commit minor acts of vandalism against each other's farms. One night after the adventurers arrive in the village, Varick sends a farmhand to start a small fire in Renn's barn, but the fire burns out of control. A few cattle are killed.

Young Runaways: Varick's oldest daughter, Kess, is in love with Renn's adopted son Vallok. The two run away together one night after the fire in the barn. Since no one knows of their affair, both families fear that the two have been kidnapped.

Lost Leatherworker: Either before the characters have investigated the Golden Grain Inn, or during the "Golden Grain Inn" session, the leatherworker Ranson Klought (area 6) and his wife, Scira, go missing. Scira's brother, Kipp, is looking after the couple's three children, and he panics when they do not return from dinner at the inn. What really happened is that cultists at the inn grabbed the pair and imprisoned them in the Temple of the Lawbringer, where they are waiting to be taken before the Reptile God. They can be rescued there.

Missing Merchant: One night when the adventurers are in the Slumbering Serpent Tavern (area 16), they meet a traveling merchant named Felixo Hobbe. Wearing a cape and an outrageously large red chaperon (a hat with attached hood) over his bald head, Hobbe is friendly as he purchases drinks for the group and shares stories with them. He makes plans to meet for breakfast the next morning, but never shows up. His room at the Golden Grain Inn is empty. Bertram, the inn's owner, tells the adventurers that Felixo left long before sunrise, offering apologies but stating that his cargo needed to be moved quickly. A DC 20 Insight check reveals that Bertram is lying.

Poor Felixo has been taken to the lair of the Reptile God, and is eaten by the spirit naga before the adventurers have any chance to find him. His hat shows up in "Cavern of the Reptile God."

Castellan's Assistant: At some point before the characters undertake "Golden Grain Inn," Rhonnet Gho—the assistant to the castellan at the central keep (area 23)—disappears. Vared, the castellan, asks the adventurers to look into Rhonnet's disappearance, reporting that she had been running errands for him, then was planning to eat dinner at the Golden Grain Inn. The errands included having gems appraised at the pawnshop (area 11), then talking to the carpenter (area 3) about repairing furniture in the barracks.

If the adventurers investigate Rhonnet's disappearance, they learn that she made it to the Golden Grain Inn, but that no one saw her after that. Actually, she was kidnapped at the inn and is now in the cellar of the

THE STRAIGHTEST PATH

If you prefer to exercise some control when the players decide which approach to take through the adventure, place clues in front of the adventurers that take them to the caves first, thus allowing you to play "Scout the Caves of Chaos" next time. This path introduces the characters to Haffron early on and sets the tone for the rest of the adventure, but it involves less mystery.

Temple of the Lawbringer, awaiting transport to the lair of the Reptile God. See "Temple of the Lawbringer" for details.

Rumors

The following rumors and speculations can also be made use of during the adventure.

Abandoned Inn: The Inn of the Winsome Wench (area 7) lies abandoned. A fierce fight broke out there one night more than a month ago, during which everyone in the inn was killed. Though the Reptile Cult is in fact to blame, the cause of the battle remains a mystery to the rest of the village.

Foul Fire: After Renn's barn burns (see "Sibling Rivalry," above), a rumor spreads that the fire was of supernatural origin.

Lordless: Neither Lord Burne nor Lord Rufus has made a public appearance in the last couple of weeks, and rumors have begun to spread that they have disappeared like several of the other villagers. Some say that the two former adventurers have fled because they know that a great evil is about to overwhelm Hommel Lane.

HOMMEL LANE LOCATIONS

The numbered locations described below are shown on the Hommel Lane map. Many of these locations feature setups that can provide the adventurers with the incentive to undertake specific sessions of the campaign season.

In the first session, the way the characters explore the village and the clues they uncover will set the stage for which section of the adventure you choose to run first (see "Path of Adventure," page 9). If you have enough time in the first session, the players can uncover clues to all three threats to Hommel Lane and decide for themselves which path to take. If time is short, or if you prefer to play one particular path, you can point the players toward a specific source of information most easily in the following locations.

Chaos Cult and Moat House: Area 10 (teamster), area 11 (pawnshop), and area 14 (miller).

Cult of the Reptile God: Area 2 (Druet cottages), area 6 (leatherworker), area 7 (Inn of the Winsome Wench, if the optional encounter is used), and area 20 (Golden Grain Inn).

Caves of Chaos: Area 2 (Druet cottages), area 12 (herder), area 16 (Slumbering Serpent Tavern), and area 20 (Golden Grain Inn).

In addition to using the locations tied to specific paths as above, the druid Ramne Ashstaff in the sacred grove (area 15) can be used to direct the characters to any path of your choice.

1. Becker Dairy

Renn Becker, his wife, Avenna, their seven children (including adopted teenage son Vallok), and Avenna's mother, Harren, live in the house on this well-kept dairy farm. The family members are friendly to visitors, and will happily sell produce to those who ask.

Barn: An enormous barn behind the house serves as a shelter for cows and goats, as well as a storage area for the tools needed for milking and caring for the animals.

Complication: Renn Becker's family are stalwart followers of the Old Faith, a stance that has driven a wedge between Renn and his brother Varick. See area 5 or "Sibling Rivalry," page 10, for details.

2. Druet Cottages

Pierre and Genevieve Druet, an elderly couple, live here with two of their three sons, a daughter-in-law, and three young grandchildren. All of them are (or were) hunters and rangers who know the surrounding area well. They follow the Old Faith.

Clues: The middle son, Alahn, lives here with his wife Marieke and their three children. Alahn and Marieke retired from the adventuring life and settled here to help Alan's parents in their advanced age.

Alahn trusts no one initially, but when he meets the adventurers, he makes a secret sign that any primal character recognizes. Adventurers who acknowledge the sign gain Alahn's confidence.

He reveals to such characters that the carpenter and his family (area 3) mysteriously left their home one night and were gone for ten days. The carpenter and his wife returned a few weeks ago without their two teenage children, and have been acting strangely ever since. They converted from the Old Faith to the worship of the Lawbringer after their return, and they spend a great deal of time at the Golden Grain Inn. Although they say that their children are staying with relatives away from the frontier, Alahn is skeptical about this story.

The Druets' oldest son, Otis, left the village to investigate the monster-infested Caves of Chaos a few weeks ago. Lord Burne, one of the lords of the village, sent him

on this mission. Otis's delayed return has left everyone fearing that he is dead.

Secrets: The youngest son, Elmo, is a hulking brute, slow and halting in speech and overly fond of ale. His tipsy and jovial appearance, however, is a ruse designed to allay suspicion as he watches the happenings in the village on behalf of Lord Burne. He frequents the Slumbering Serpent Tavern (area 16) to observe newcomers and overhear gossip.

Path of Adventure: Talk of Otis's mission can focus the adventurers on the Caves of Chaos as the most obvious place to investigate the looming threats to Hommel Lane. This can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Scout the Caves of Chaos" next.

The adventurers might take an interest in the tale of the carpenter's missing children. This can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Cult of the Reptile God" next.

3. Carpenter

This rustic abode is the residence of the local carpenter, Ross, his wife, Clara, and their two children. They followed the Old Faith until recently, but now they claim to revere the Lawbringer. The carpenter and his wife keep to themselves. They tell everyone that their two children recently went to live with relatives in the more civilized barony to the west until the tension that has overcome the village is resolved.

Clues: Ross serves as Hommel Lane's furniture maker as well as a general builder. Characters who view his workshop can see a number of finished tables, chairs, and desks, all of fine quality, arrayed around the perimeter of the space. One table presently under construction on Ross's workbench is noticeably shoddy, as are a set of recently completed chairs. The characters might deduce that this poor craftwork is not typical for Ross, suggesting that he hasn't been himself lately.

Secrets: Ross and Clara go to the Golden Grain Inn (area 20) each night, where they secretly slip down to the basement to help smuggle prisoners through a secret tunnel into the Temple of the Lawbringer.

The carpenter and his wife are recent Reptile Cult initiates. Their teenage children, Warren and Tess, are alive in the lair of the Reptile God, where they await a gruesome fate if they aren't rescued in time.

4. Veon Farmstead

This large house and barn are in good condition, and the livestock in the fenced yard look strong and healthy. The widow Elicia Veon lives here, along with her three grown sons (Dhal, Erwin, and Blain), their wives, and eight children. Her husband died years ago, but the family has prospered. They all worship the Lawbringer.

Clues: The characters can easily see that although the family's crops and animals are well cared for, the flower beds around the house are neglected and

choked with weeds. The young adults go to the Golden Grain Inn each night after chores around the farm are done. Both of these facts might lead the characters to suspect that the family is not behaving normally.

In the barn, the wheels of the farm cart are covered with mud and ferns. A DC 13 Nature check confirms that the only nearby place the cart could have picked up such flora is the Fathomless Fens.

Secrets: The adult members of the family have been Reptile Cultists for nearly a year, and they help the spirit naga's bullywug allies subdue captives. They use the farm cart to return newly charmed cult members from the Fathomless Fens to Hommel Lane.

5. Becker Farm

The taciturn, middle-aged widower Varick Becker lives on this prosperous farm with his five children (the two oldest of which are daughters) and a long-standing servant laborer. He is the brother of Renn (area 1), and he converted to the worship of the Lawbringer two years ago, long before the Reptile Cult began its recent machinations.

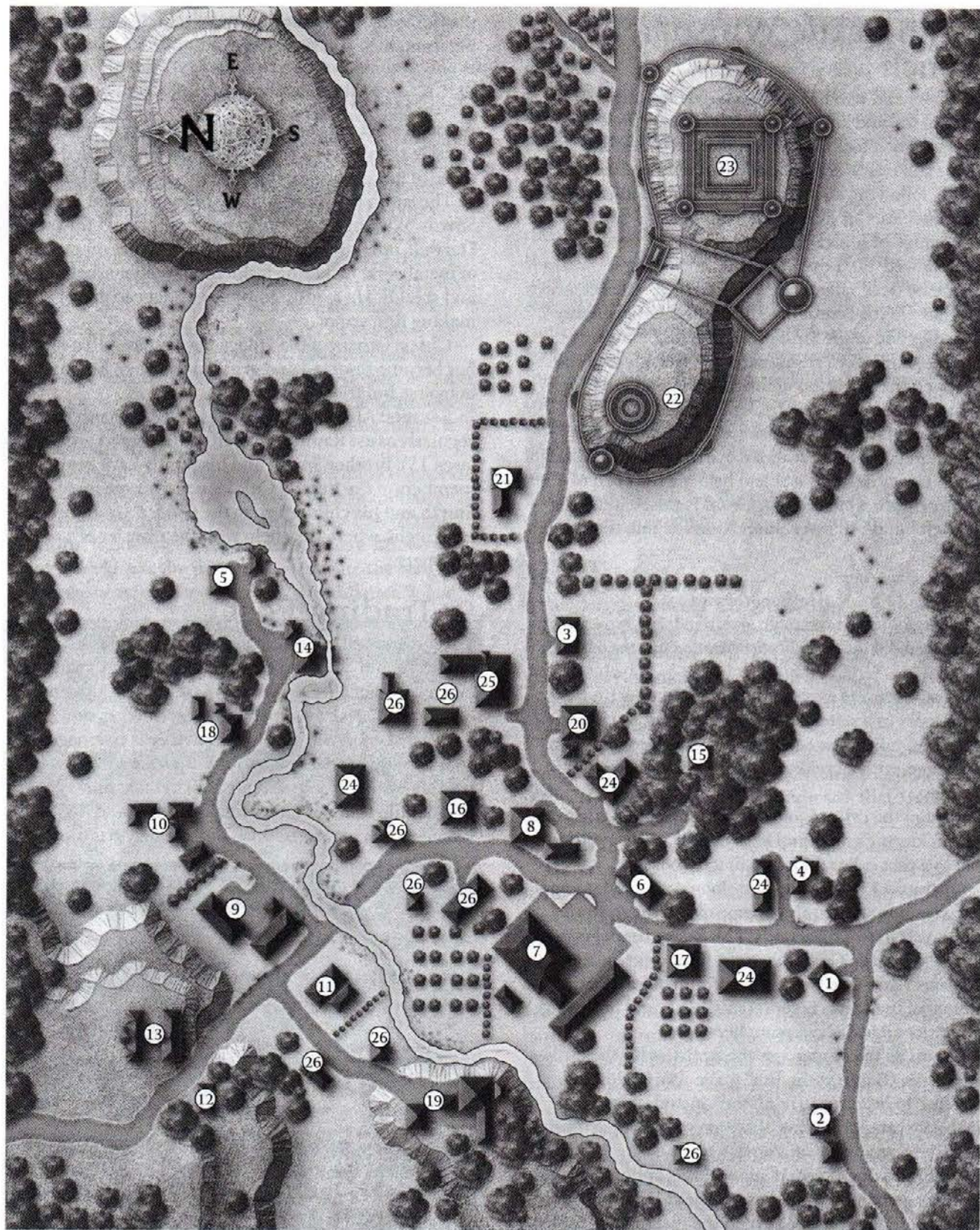
Complications: Varick is running for mayor of Hommel Lane, and he has the support of most of the Lawbringer's faithful. Previous mayors have all been adherents of the Old Faith, which Varick and his followers have blamed for the troubles of recent times. Varick says that someone with strong morals and a sense of justice should be leading the villagers. He has no idea that the Temple of the Lawbringer has become a cover for the Cult of the Reptile God.

6. Leatherworker

This building, bearing a leather hide tacked to the front door, is the home and business of the village leatherworker, Ranson Klought. With him live his wife, Scira, her brother, Kipp, and three young children. The family members keep to themselves, although they openly worship the Lawbringer and attend regular services at the temple.

Complications: Ranson and Scira are kidnapped from the Golden Grain Inn by Serpent Cultists while the adventurers are in the village (see "Lost Leatherworker," page 10).

Path of Adventure: Investigating the disappearance of Ranson and Scira can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Cult of the Reptile God" next.



7. Inn of the Winsome Wench

The doors and windows of this large building are boarded up, and several gaping holes mar the roof. Its sign has fallen face down in the weeds before the porch.

The inn has been abandoned for a little more than a month, following an attempt by the cult to kidnap the proprietor and his family. The attempt was foiled by the courage of several villagers, but in the fierce fight that followed, all those in the inn (including several cult members) were killed. The cause of the battle remains a mystery to the rest of the village, and has been dismissed as one of the ominous problems besetting Hommel Lane. As a result, no one has made any effort to reopen the inn or lay claim to the empty building.

In the open square in front of the inn stands a twenty-foot-tall weathered statue of a middle-aged human male wearing studded leather armor. In its right hand, the statue holds a shield bearing the crest of a flying griffon. A curved longsword is raised in the figure's left hand. An inscription is carved into the statue's pedestal.

Haffron Hommel

Village founder, adventurer, and friend. His bravery and wisdom did shine the light of civilization into the darkness.

If the adventurers explore the building, they find both floors in a state of complete disarray, as if a huge brawl had taken place within. A cellar door hangs on one hinge, with a creaky staircase leading down into darkness.

Most of the cellar is one large room, containing several moldering crates and kegs of sour wine. Two doors lead to a root cellar and a small tool room.

Optional Encounter: The gloomy root cellar has a foul, swampy stench, and opens up to a rough tunnel leading off in two directions. This secret tunnel connects the Reptile Cult's two most important locations in Hommel Lane—the Golden Grain Inn (area 20) and the Temple of the Lawbringer (area 13). Several bullywugs are stationed at a checkpoint here.

To run an encounter, use the statistics for the bullywugs from "Battle at the Inn" (page 34). Crates and barrels can become difficult terrain and cover, with stacks of crates providing elevation or the opportunity to tip them over onto enemies.

Path of Adventure: If you run this optional encounter, discovering the tunnel underneath Hommel Lane can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Golden Grain Inn" or "Temple of the Lawbringer" next. Unless you want to rework the "Golden Grain Inn" session extensively, have the bullywugs be absent from the cellar tunnel and make the door into the cellars of

the inn locked and impassable, so that the adventurers must enter the inn from the front.

8. Smyth

An open shed next to a house holds a forge and bellows. Outside the shed is a post with a horseshoe nailed to three of its faces, signifying that this is the local smithy.

The smith is a short, brawny human named Brother Smyth. With his two equally burly children, Lilli and Darwek, operating the bellows, Smyth does many kinds of metalwork, including fashioning weapons, helmets, and shields. He readily admits he is not capable of making fine armor.

Clues: Others in the village have noticed that Smyth has become reserved and gruff lately, when he was once outgoing and friendly.

Secrets: Although they profess the Old Faith and regularly assist Ramne Ashstaff in the sacred grove (area 15), Brother Smyth and his family have been members of the Reptile Cult for nearly three months. Smyth and his children go to the Golden Grain Inn each night, where they help with the transfer of prisoners.

9. Trading Post

This large wooden building has shutters on its many windows, and it bears a shield painted with a sword and a wheel of cheese. A warehouse stands adjacent.

Raynen Daval, a woman best described as slow and placid, runs the place. Her partner is Gremag, a talkative female halfling with sharp features and protruding eyes. Three assistants help the two move goods and handle transactions. Gremag dithers and fusses at Raynen and customers alike. Both traders truthfully

Raynen	Level 3 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, human	
HP 54; Bloodied 27	Initiative +0
AC 15, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 15	Perception +2
Speed 6	
TRAITS	
Sly Tactics	
Raynen has combat advantage against any enemy that is adjacent to at least one of Raynen's allies.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage.	
⚡ All-Out Attack ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞ ☞	
Requirement: Raynen must be bloodied.	
Effect: Raynen uses club. If the attack hits, the target takes 2d6 extra damage and falls prone. If the attack misses, Raynen falls prone and takes 1d6 damage.	
Skills Athletics +9, Streetwise +6	
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 9 (+0)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 11 (+1)
	Wis 12 (+2)
	Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment evil	Languages Common
Equipment club	

claim disinterest in religious or political issues, and are willing to deal with any customer who can pay.

Warehouse: This barn-like structure holds animals, saddles, and crates full of mundane goods.

Secrets: Raynen and Gremag serve the Cult of Chaos, reporting activity in Hommel Lane to a brigand courier and aiding other bandits who follow Lareth the Beautiful. They fence the goods the bandits steal, returning some of their profits to Lareth. The post's three assistants are bandits from the moat house.

Initiates into the Cult of Chaos come to the trading post to obtain robes before going out to the moat house.

Clues: Evidence found in "Explore the Moat House" implicates Raynen and Gremag in the activities of the Cult of Chaos. The traders deny it, insisting that they are being framed. Those claims don't ring true, because stolen goods sit in their warehouse, and the testimony in the journal of the bandit leader Enda Yate makes it clear that the traders are guilty.

Rather than face justice, Raynen is willing to provide information regarding the Cult of Chaos in exchange for her life. She tells the adventurers that Lareth the Beautiful resides in a dungeon temple beneath the moat house. She knows the password to activate the wall that blocks descent into the dungeon ("Annihilation"), and

Gremag		Level 2 Artillery
Small natural humanoid, halfling		
HP 30; Bloodied 15	Initiative +4	
AC 16, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 14	Perception +7	
Speed 6		
Saving Throws +5 against fear effects		
TRAITS		
Sly Tactics		
Gremag has combat advantage against any enemy that is adjacent to at least one of Gremag's allies.		
Sniper		
If Gremag is hidden and misses with a ranged attack, she remains hidden.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Dagger ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d4 + 4 damage, or 2d4 + 7 if the target is granting combat advantage to Gremag.		
🏹 Sling (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +9 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 7 damage.		
🕸 Hooked Net ♦ Encounter		
Attack: Close blast 2 (creatures in the blast); +6 vs. Reflex		
Hit: The target is restrained and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both), and it falls prone.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
🔄 Second Chance ♦ Encounter		
Trigger: An enemy hits Gremag with an attack.		
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The triggering enemy must reroll the attack and use the new result.		
Skills Acrobatics +9, Stealth +9, Streetwise +6		
Str 11 (+1)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 13 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 11 (+1)	Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment evil		
Languages Common		
Equipment leather armor, hooked net, sling, 20 sling stones		

she has a crate containing robes that the cultists wear. Each robe bears the gold-trimmed red circle of the Cult of Chaos.

Path of Adventure: Hearing about Lareth's presence in the area beneath the moat house and obtaining the password to enter the dungeon can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Moat House Dungeon" next.

Optional Encounter: If you have additional time at the end of the session in which the traders are revealed as cult allies, you can run an encounter in the traders' shop and the warehouse. Rather than capitulating at once, Raynen decides to attack the adventurers when confronted with the evidence of her and Gremag's wrongdoing. In addition to Raynen and Gremag, use common bandits (see "Possessed Attack," page 7) to represent the guards that the traders keep on hand.

To cover their escape, the traders might have deployed fire traps similar to those in "Explore the Moat House" (page 21).

If Constable Grover Ruskal (from area 21) is with the characters, he might turn against them.

10. Teamster

A wooden sign outside this weather-beaten building shows a cart and horse. The adventurers already know the halfling teamster Wyndell from their two-week journey to Hommel Lane. Wyndell's wife Treenie, a grown son named Murve, and five other young children live in the house.

If Wyndell perished in the season's initial encounter, someone in the village points the characters toward this place. The person who does so indicates that Treenie would want to know how Wyndell died. Treenie then becomes the source of the clues in this section.

Barn and Paddock: The barn to the rear of the main house and shop holds four wagons and two carts. Four drivers who work for Wyndell live in the loft when they are in the village. A dozen mules and six horses graze in a small paddock between the house and the barn.

Clues: Bandit attacks have hit Wyndell's business hard. On returning to Hommel Lane this trip, he found that another cart and driver had disappeared while transporting lumber from the forest to the north.

Path of Adventure: If the adventurers hear out Wyndell's suspicions, he tells them he is certain that the bandits have their hideout in a ruined moat house a four-hour march from the village. This can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Explore the Moat House" next.

After the adventurers find records of the bandit attacks at the ruined moat house, Wyndell can confirm that most of these attacks were against his wagons, but that none targeted goods belonging to the traders Raynen and Gremag (area 9).

If the adventurers return from the moat house to investigate the traders, Wyndell can confirm that the goods found in the moat house have been stolen from his carts. Some of the goods currently stored in the traders' warehouse are also Wyndell's.

11. Pawnshop

A sign on this sturdy new building shows three yellow circles indicating a pawnshop. The doors and shutters are reinforced. A guard named Errol Rocktyn and two large guard drakes protect the shop during business hours. The proprietor is a dwarf named Nira Haskali.

Nira has prospered in Hommel Lane, lending money and dealing with the clans of dwarves that mine the mountains to the east. She has a good reputation for fair dealing, although some people grumble about her willingness to profit from others' misfortune.

Nira lives in an apartment above the shop, while Errol and the drakes have lodging in the shop's rear storage room.

Secrets: Errol is associated with the Cult of Chaos. He is biding his time until the bandits eventually attack the village, at which point he plans to kill Nira and steal her wealth to turn over to Lareth.

Path of Adventure: If he has suitable cover for his actions (including the turmoil that will arise in the village if the Reptile Cult is overthrown by the adventurers), Errol carries out his plan early. After he flees to the moat house with his stolen loot, the adventurers can easily track him. This can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Explore the Moat House" next.

12. Herder

Several dogs guard the modest cottage of Black Jay, a grizzled human herder. Black Jay does not like company or strangers, and he says so to anyone who comes onto his property. This retired soldier is friendly with elves, however, having spent part of his military career stationed in an elven outpost.

Although Jay's own flock of sheep is small, he earns extra income from local farmers who pay him to guide their flocks to fertile grazing areas in fields far from the village.

Clues: Six weeks ago, Jay's wife and children disappeared while they were tending flocks to the east, toward the Caves of Chaos. He found signs that they were attacked and killed by goblins, and this misfortune has made him spiteful and reclusive.

Path of Adventure: If the adventurers convince him to talk to them (DC 12 Diplomacy), Black Jay shares his story and gives them directions to the Caves of Chaos. He also mentions Otis disappearing when he went to the caves, pointing the adventurers toward the Druet cottage (area 2) or Elmo in the Slumbering Serpent Tavern (area 16). Either story can provide the

characters with the incentive to undertake "Scout the Caves of Chaos" next.

13. Temple of the Lawbringer

A zealous priest and three acolytes officiate during services and attend the faithful of the Lawbringer in this impressive stone edifice. The doors to the temple stand open during daylight hours, but they are shut and barred with the setting of the sun. After normal operating hours, a few minutes of knocking brings an acolyte to open the door.

Devi, a young female human, works tirelessly here to spread the word of the Lawbringer. Her acolytes—Sister Euphema, Brother Abramo, and Sister Philla—assist her in maintaining the temple.

Canoness Yeeday left Hommel Lane suddenly over a month ago and has not returned, so Devi has taken over her duties. Devi says that the canoness went on a journey to search for the evil infecting the lands around the village. What Devi fails to mention is that the canoness is currently being held in the cave of the spirit naga, along with other prisoners.

Complications: If confronted with the possessed Sir Moonbrook, Devi truthfully tells the adventurers that she is not as capable as Canoness Yeeday. Although she can do nothing to drive out the spirit that possesses the paladin, Devi volunteers to keep him secured in an upstairs guest chamber, and to give the adventurers access to him whenever they wish.

Secrets: Devi has been a member of the Reptile Cult for a few months, and she has converted Brother Abramo and Sister Philla. Originally dedicated to the Lawbringer, the priest now forswears her former service in the advancement of the cause of the Reptile God.

Unlike most members of the cult, Devi was not charmed into service but changed sides freely when she was offered the power of the Reptile God and Miska. She now carefully maintains her facade as a kind and helpful person, speaking the truth as much as possible to escape scrutiny.

Devi recognizes that the power within Sir Moonbrook is a small fragment of the same essence that she serves in the form of the Reptile God. She wants to explore this power and see if she can absorb it herself.

14. Miller

A house attached to a river mill is home to Mytch Miller, his wife, Syrae, twin teenage children (Portia and Phogge), and three apprentices. The mill grinds the local farmers' grain into flour, while Syrae operates a small bakery out of her kitchen. The family members are followers of the Old Faith and pillars of the community.

Mytch is friendly enough, but recent events have made him suspicious of everyone. He is willing to spend only a little time talking to strangers, discussing the weather or his work.

Clues: It is well known that Mytch was going to run for mayor, but he abandoned his campaign. This confused the people of the village because he was originally favored to win. The reason for the miller's newfound reclusiveness is that his oldest son, Augin, has joined the bandits in the old moat house.

Complications: Portia and Phogge spend time in the Slumbering Serpent Tavern and the Golden Grain Inn when they can. In this way, the twins might meet the adventurers. Both are at a young and impressionable age, and either might become infatuated with one of the characters. This infatuation might lead one twin or the other to follow the party into a dangerous situation, putting innocents at risk.

Path of Adventure: If the adventurers mention Augin or press Mytch about dropping out of the race, he resists their questions. If they persuade him to talk (DC 12 Diplomacy or Intimidate), he breaks down and confesses his son's involvement with the bandits at the moat house. This can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Explore the Moat House" next.

15. Sacred Grove

A circular grove of willow trees marks this place of worship for the Old Faith. A carefully placed line of blue stones edges the path that leads into the grove, where the druid Ramne Ashstaff dwells in a modest hut.

For characters who follow the Old Faith, tradition dictates that they visit the druid soon after they arrive in Hommel Lane. Ramne is human and appears to be impossibly old and feeble, though his mind is keen.

When the adventurers first approach the druid, he welcomes them, and he is particularly kind to any followers of the Old Faith. He provides one *potion of healing* to the group if at least one character is a follower of the Old Faith. He offers no additional aid, fearing that the adventurers might be part of the strange happenings in Hommel Lane. He admits that his magic is not powerful enough to overcome Sir Moonbrook's possession.

Clues: Through patient observation, Ramne has gathered a significant amount of knowledge regarding the problems in Hommel Lane. At any time, the druid can drop hints to push the adventurers along a path you wish them to follow. Ramne can also point the way to specific locations you want the characters to visit.

Path of Adventure: If you want the characters to investigate the Reptile Cult, Ramne can tell them that his assistant, Smyth the smith, has been neglecting his druidic duties lately in favor of spending time in the Golden Grain Inn. This might inspire the characters to visit Smyth (area 8) or the Golden Grain Inn (area

20), providing them with the incentive to undertake "Golden Grain Inn" next.

If you want the adventurers to tackle the moat house, Ramne tells the characters about recent attacks on local caravans, particularly the wagons of Wyndell. The druid explains that his connection with the animals of the area leads him to believe that someone has reestablished a residence in the moat house. This clue should make the characters want to visit the teamster Wyndell (area 10) or go directly to the moat house, providing them with the incentive to undertake "Explore the Moat House" next.

If you want the adventurers to seek out the Caves of Chaos, Ramne reveals that goblins from the caves have become bolder in the last few weeks. The farms between Hommel Lane and the Caves of Chaos are being raided constantly, and Ramne believes that the goblins might be connected to the deaths of Black Jay's wife and children. This clue should point the characters toward Black Jay (area 12) or send them directly to the Caves of Chaos, providing them with the incentive to undertake "Scout the Caves of Chaos" next.

16. Slumbering Serpent Tavern

A large, colorful sign in front of this building depicts a red dragon at rest, with a plume of smoke rising from its nose. Several beds of flowers brighten the exterior of the tavern, which appears older than the other buildings in the village.

Belba Cralloon and her husband Ollwin own and operate the Slumbering Serpent, and they have a knack for making a weary traveler feel at home. Belba bustles down the porch steps at the first sign of customers, inviting them inside for a drink and a meal. Ollwin is more reserved, but still friendly as he serves food and drink and asks for news of the world outside Hommel Lane.

Clues: If the adventurers ask for a room, Belba sheepishly admits that the tavern has no rooms to rent and directs the party to the Golden Grain Inn. When the Inn of the Winsome Wench was destroyed, the Cralloons asked Ross, the village carpenter, to build an addition that would upgrade the Slumbering Serpent with travelers' rooms. Ross has so far failed to start the project, repeatedly claiming to be too busy.

Path of Adventure: Elmo Druet can often be found at the tavern. He acts the part of a drunken oaf, asking silly questions of the adventurers and trying to learn their business. If they make it clear that they are here to help solve the problems in Hommel Lane, Elmo lets slip that his brother Otis is an adventurer. He says Otis left the village a couple of weeks ago to investigate the Caves of Chaos, but never returned. This information can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Scout the Caves of Chaos" next.

17. Vilma's Cottage

This is the home of Vilma Merridie, an elderly female half-elf and Carjo Merridie's "gran-gran," whom he spoke of fondly on the trip to Hommel Lane. Flower gardens surround this quaint little home, which is sheltered by elm trees and features fancy curtains on the windows.

Vilma welcomes strangers and invites any visitors in for tea or wine, even though she is physically weak and unable to walk more than a few feet at a time. She takes in mending from her neighbors to earn a few coins, but lives mostly off the wealth her family accumulated over generations of farming. Having lived in the village for more than a hundred years, Vilma was here when the last attack occurred a century ago.

Complications: If Vilma learns that the adventurers saved her grandson during the journey to Hommel Lane, she offers them a place to stay and insists that they each take 20 sp and a piece of ribbon candy as a reward. She can also provide a complete history of the village, including details on the attacks a hundred years ago, and how current events are coming to resemble the past far too much for her liking. (Use the information in "Background," page 3, but do not reveal the place of Miska the Wolf-Spider in the adventure.)

If Carjo died, Vilma asks the characters to tell Ramne Ashstaff of his death.

Clues: Vilma does not get out much, but other villagers drop in frequently to make sure she is well. They gossip with her, which makes Vilma one of the best sources of local knowledge in Hommel Lane. Nevertheless, she knows nothing of the dark truth behind the recent unrest.

Vilma is surprised that so many people have converted from the Old Faith to the worship of the Law-bringer in the past few months. She knows that many converts spend a great deal of time in the Golden Grain Inn.

18. Hog Farm

The unmistakable smell of hogs greets the adventurers as they approach this farm. In addition to herds of pigs, a number of chickens and turkeys scratch and strut about the yard. During the day, a teenage boy watches passersby from the porch.

If anyone approaches, the lad runs inside, returning shortly with his father, Jophet. The recent troubles in the community have disturbed Jophet, and he tries to send any strangers on their way quickly.

Clues: Jophet isn't inclined to tolerate visitors or answer their questions. A friendly group might set his mind at ease (DC 20 Diplomacy or Bluff; DC 12 if anyone in the group professes the Old Faith). In this case, he breaks down and admits that his daughter Vaelle ran away from home a couple of months ago and



fell in with a bad lot. She returned to the village a few weeks past, with a couple of thugs and the miller's son, Augin. Jophet turned her away, and later heard that the ones who escorted her had been seen at the miller's (area 14).

19. Brewery

This imposing stone building with a barrel hanging from chains above the door is the home and workplace of the local brewer, Evyna, and her husband and young child. A nephew and his wife have recently come to help run the brewery in response to its success. These people follow the Old Faith.

The brewery features several vats on the main floor, as well as a few in the cellar. Side sheds hold ingredients. Three apprentice brewers dwell above the brewery, while the brewer's family lives in quarters attached to the main building.

Complications: The apprentices all practiced the Old Faith until one recently converted to the Law-bringer. The conversion has caused a bit of a stir within Evyna's family.

The brewer believes she knows what is best for the village, and she isn't afraid to let everyone else know it. With that mindset, she is running for mayor against

Varick Becker (area 5). Although Evyna is correct in many of her assertions, her outspoken behavior makes her unpopular, even with others who practice the Old Faith. She has gone so far as to blame Varick for the recent disappearances in the village, saying that he and other Lawbringer followers are intimidating those of the Old Faith.

20. The Golden Grain Inn

This large wooden inn was whitewashed at one time, but much of its paint has worn off. A corral and a stable are attached to the main building. The eaves of the roof are decorated with carvings of sheaves of wheat, while a sign showing a bundle of wheat and a pitcher of beer hangs over the door.

The owner and operator of the inn is Bertram Beswill. He tends bar during the busy times, greeting newcomers with a smile, a joke, and a mug of frothy ale. He tries to keep the conversation light and inconsequential.

Clues: If the adventurers ask about Ranson and Scira (see "Lost Leatherworker," page 10), the patrons at the inn claim that the couple left early to return home. (This fact appears true to patrons who are not cultists, since the couple was kidnapped early in the evening.)

Complications: At any given time, fifteen or more patrons are present at the inn. Of these, at least ten are members of the Reptile Cult. The cult members talk and answer questions when they are spoken to, but do not go out of their way to be welcoming. They prefer to sit back and let Bertram take the lead in dealing with outsiders who might pose a threat to the cult's activities.

The Golden Grain Inn is currently the only place in Hommel Lane with rooms for rent—a fact that Bertram takes advantage of as he kidnaps prospective members for the Reptile Cult. He tries to convince the adventurers to take separate rooms, going so far as to offer them low rates to entice them. If he can isolate one adventurer far from the others, he might send a few cultists to attack (use the human goons from "Golden Grain Inn," page 30). If the adventurer is defeated, he or she is knocked unconscious and held in the inn's cellar, awaiting transport to the Temple of the Lawbringer, then to the cavern of the Reptile God where the spirit naga lairs.

Path of Adventure: If the adventurers inquire about the other strange happenings in the village, Bertram claims that people are blowing things out of proportion. If the characters insist on pursuing the topic, he misdirects them by stating his belief that an evil growing in the Caves of Chaos is responsible. This information can provide the characters with the incentive to undertake "Scout the Caves of Chaos" next.

If the adventurers truly begin to snoop around and ask tough questions, the suspicious Bertram decides that it is time to take action. This puts the characters in a position to undertake "Golden Grain Inn" next.

21. Constable's Quarters

The village constable, Grover Ruskal, lives and works in this nondescript wooden building. Heavy shutters are closed over its windows, though the stout door usually stands open. Grover was an associate of Lord Rufus and Lord Burne during their adventuring days, and they have entrusted him with the responsibility of keeping the peace in the village. Grover exudes an air of quiet confidence. He listens carefully to those who come to him with problems, assuring them that he will check into their concerns with haste. In reality, he does as little as possible. Grover employs two deputies, Vahna and Barrina, who also live here.

Complications: Although Grover is not a member of the Cult of Chaos, he receives a hefty bribe each month to look the other way when it comes to the cult's crimes. He is willing to do whatever is necessary to allay suspicions directed at him. He might even attempt to jail the adventurers if they come too close to discovering his duplicity.

Optional Encounter: If the characters run afoul of the constable, they discover that he is a capable warrior not to be trifled with. His deputies fight by his side (use town guard statistics from "Lareth the Beautiful"). If he decides to arrest the party, Grover can also deputize a few citizens (use human goon statistics from that same session) or call a few soldiers (town guard statistics) from the central keep.

Constable Ruskal	Level 5 Controller (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 60; Bloodied 30	Initiative +3
AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 17, Will 18	Perception +3
Speed 5	Low-light vision
TRAITS	
Protected	
The constable gains a +2 bonus to all defenses while he is adjacent to an ally.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Longsword (weapon) ⚔ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage.	
⚡ Urge Hesitation (charm) ⚔ Encounter	
Attack: Close burst 5 (enemies in the burst); +8 vs. Will	
Hit: The target cannot take a standard action during its next turn.	
👑 Appoint Champion ⚔ At-Will	
Effect: Close burst 10 (one ally in the burst); the target makes a basic attack as a free action and can shift 1 square before or after the attack.	
🌟 Inspirational Authority ⚔ Encounter	
Effect: Close burst 10 (one ally in the burst); the target uses an at-will, encounter, or recharge attack power as a free action.	
Skills Diplomacy +10, Insight +8, Intimidate +10	
Str 15 (+4)	Dex 12 (+3) Wis 12 (+3)
Con 12 (+3)	Int 14 (+4) Cha 16 (+5)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common	
Equipment chainmail, light shield, longsword	

22. Lords' Tower

This stone tower is over fifty feet tall, with an entrance accessible only by ascending a curved flight of stone stairs to a detached landing ten feet above the ground. The outer door of the tower lowers to form a bridge between the tower and the landing. A number of arrow slits overlook the landing and the tower grounds.

Inside the tower are the residences of the lords of Hommel Lane, Rufus and Burne, who came to the village more than ten years ago. A powerful wizard and fighter, respectively, both former adventurers served the baroness to the west for a long time, and were rewarded with a lordship and the right to rule the area around Hommel Lane in her name. The drudgery of rulership and bureaucracy quickly became too much for both former heroes to put up with. For some time now, they have left the day-to-day duties of governance to their trusted castellan, Varedd Zaborr (area 23).

Complications: A rift has recently formed between the two lords when Lord Rufus converted to the worship of the Lawbringer from his previous allegiance to the Old Faith. Lord Burne, foreseeing that the tension between the two religions might tear the village apart, expressed his reservations to Rufus, who took offense. The wizard left Hommel Lane in a huff a couple of weeks ago, supposedly to continue his arcane studies elsewhere. Lord Burne has not left the tower since then, choosing to sequester himself until he sees how things are going to turn out.

If the adventurers come to the tower seeking either lord, the guards at the front entrance direct them to the castellan (if the characters want to discuss matters of governance) or to the constable (for issues of law and order).

23. Central Keep

The soldiers and retainers who help govern the territory around Hommel Lane dwell in this great stone fortress perched atop a broad hill on the outskirts of the village. At the heart of the keep is the private residence and office of the castellan, Varedd Zaborr, and his assistant, Rhonnet Gho. As the castellan, Varedd is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the keep. He acts as a liaison between the village and Lords Rufus and Burne.

Varedd is a clever fellow who adventured with Rufus and Burne in their glory days and gained their trust with his bravery and common sense. He has the freedom to make important decisions and run the keep as he sees fit.

Complications: If the tower guards refer the adventurers to the castellan, Varedd sees them within an hour. He listens to what they have to say, and admits to having concerns of his own regarding recent events in the village—but he says that without the leave of Lords Rufus and Burne, he is unable to do anything about it.

If pressed to say where Rufus and Burne are, Varedd reveals only that Rufus is away from Hommel Lane on wizard's business and Burne is in residence in the tower and has left orders to not be disturbed.

Varedd tells the adventurers that they are welcome to investigate what's happening in the village, seeking clues about who or what is behind the strange disappearances and the bandit raids. If they want to report a specific crime, he directs them to Constable Grover Ruskal (area 21).

24. Warehouses

Visiting merchants and other travelers carrying goods in quantity can store such goods here. Each warehouse has locked double doors (DC 21 Thievery to open). Castellan Varedd Zaborr (area 23) and his assistant have the keys. Inside are several wagons and carts, along with boxes, barrels, and bales holding various food items, cloth, arrows, crossbow bolts, salt, and wine.

25. Boarding House

Farmhands and itinerant workers who have come to the village to assist with the autumn harvest live in this modest boarding house. A few have been converted to the Reptile Cult, spending each night at the Golden Grain Inn while their fellow farmhands sleep away a hard day's labor.

A shed nearby houses the animals, tools, and vehicles belonging to the workers.

26. Empty Buildings

These shops, residences, and farms are now abandoned. Their former occupants have vanished—all of them secretly killed or taken prisoner in the name of the Reptile God. None of the buildings contains anything of real value, and the constable's deputies (area 21) keep an eye on them to ensure that intruders stay away.

Conclusion

The adventurers' investigations in Hommel Lane determine which path they take through this D&D ENCOUNTERS season (see "Path of Adventure," page 9). By the end of the first session, the characters should have decided where their initial investigation will take them, or you can direct them toward a specific path. Tell the players which session they will be playing next time, and give them a sense of the location where events will unfold.

CHAPTER 2: THE CHAOS CULT

An ancient moat house near Hommel Lane was once the lair of evil humans—part of a force that unsuccessfully attacked the village a hundred years ago. A site dedicated to evil and chaos, the moat house was thankfully overthrown and its residents routed. For a century, the ruins have lain abandoned and rotting—but now a new evil rises in the wilderness.

EXPLORE THE MOAT HOUSE

This session is the first part of the “Chaos Cult” section of the adventure. The characters have most likely come here in response to rumors of bandit activity in a ruined moat house four hours north of Hommel Lane.

The Story So Far

If the adventurers have come here at the urging of the teamster Wyndell or the druid Ramne Ashstaff (area 10 and area 15 in Hommel Lane), remind the players of the rumors of bandit activity, and of those characters’ belief that the moat house is the bandits’ secret base of operations.

If this session is being run in reaction to the murder of Nira Haskali in the pawnshop (area 11 in Hommel Lane), remind the players of those events and tell them they have followed the trail of Errol Rocktyn (Nira’s duplicitous guard) to the moat house. (In this case, make Errol one of the sleeping cultists in “Moat House Dungeon,” page 26.)

If the adventurers learned of the moat house from the miller Mytch (area 14 in Hommel Lane), summarize that exchange and the information that Mytch’s son has fallen in with the bandits. (In this case, the son is currently out on a raid, and is not one of the bandits in the “Bandits of the Moat House” encounter.)

If you used another location or event to bring the characters here, summarize that information for the players as this session begins.

Moat House Approach

The heroes begin on the path leading up to the moat house’s front doors. As they come closer to the place (and eventually move inside), use the area descriptions on the next page and the tactical map on page 25 to fill in details for the players.

When the characters reach the site, read:

From Hommel Lane, the trip to the ruined moat house takes about four hours. After passing through forest for much of that journey, your path suddenly opens up to a broad clearing

THE STRAIGHTEST PATH

This session connects directly to “Moat House Dungeon,” which should be played next. See “Next Session” (page 26) for information.

and a crumbling stone keep. The second story of the keep has collapsed down to ground level, and a water-filled moat extends around the ruined building.

A wooden bridge over the moat is rotting but appears to be intact. The main doors hang off their hinges, looking as though they were smashed with a battering ram in the distant past. Human-sized footprints track up and across the bridge, its surface rutted with recent cart tracks.

Perception DC 12: Two large breaches have appeared in the moat house wall where its stones have collapsed. Each appears broad enough for you to easily pass through.

Perception DC 14: Two enormous frogs lurk near the moat house—one in a small pond alongside the bridge path and one in the moat.

The bandits are on guard against incursion, and they watch the approach to the moat house carefully. When the characters are first spotted inside the walls, continue with “Bandits of the Moat House,” page 23.

Breaches: The bandits are aware of these entry points and the weakness they represent in the moat house’s defenses. They have rigged each breach with a trap. Any creature that steps into a breach without first disarming the trap breaks a vial of alchemist’s essence hidden in the rubble.

Alchemist’s Essence Trap (Fire)

Level 1 Trap

Object

Detect Perception DC 19
HP 8

Initiative –

AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will –

Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

⚡ Attack (fire) ⚡ Encounter

Trigger: A creature enters the trap’s space, or the trap drops to 0 hit points.

Attack (No Action): Close burst 1 (creatures in the burst); +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + 3 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Effect: The trap is destroyed.

COUNTERMEASURES

⚡ Disable: Thievery DC 19 (standard action). Success: The trap is disabled. Failure (14 or lower): The trap attacks.

Guardians: Two giant thornskin frogs watch from the moat and the pond (area 1 on the tactical map), while a hidden dwarf conscript keeps watch from behind the arrow slit in area 2. The adventurers must succeed on a DC 12 group Stealth check to approach unnoticed. On a failed check, the frogs croak out a

warning, and the dwarf spots the characters as they approach. The bandits then gain a surprise round when the adventurers enter the moat house.

Treasure: If a breach trap is disarmed, its vial of alchemist's essence can be safely claimed.

1. Pond and Moat

The ground along the edge of the moat is low and marshy. Seeping water fills a small pond close to the path.

Two thornskin frogs live in the pond and the moat. Outside the moat house, these pets of the bandits attack only if they are attacked first. Otherwise, they enter the moat house to fight with the bandits after combat breaks out there. A fight with the frogs outside alerts the dwarf conscript in area 2.

2. Collapsed Tower

The upper stories of this tower have collapsed, but its lower floor is still intact. Arrow slits provide vantage points looking out in three directions.

The dwarf conscript Redye stands guard here. If he warns the bandits of the adventurers' approach, the bandits gain a surprise round when combat begins.

3. Lower Courtyard

This rubble-strewn courtyard is open to the sky, with steps to the northeast leading up to a second raised courtyard. Arrow slits are cut along the moat house's interior walls.

If the bandits are not already aware of their approach, the adventurers are most likely spotted when they enter the lower courtyard. Continue with "Bandits of the Moat House" on the next page.

4. Upper Courtyard

The upper courtyard has been cleared of rubble. A few chairs are scattered through the area.

5. Bandit Leader's Room

A feather bed, in better shape than the room it occupies, sits against the north wall of this chamber. A well-made desk and chair sit along the east wall. Beneath the desk is a large, iron-shod wooden chest with a lock.

The bandit leader, Enda Yate, resides in this room.

Desk: Enda's desk holds writing materials and a hastily scribbled journal, in which she talks about her life of shady dealings in the barony to the west of the borderlands. She has also detailed key events that have occurred since she came to the moat house (see "Conclusion," page 24).



Chest: The lock on this chest is false. Any attempt to pick the lock or break open the chest shatters a vial of acid onto the ledger inside, destroying it. A DC 12 Perception check reveals the nature of the false lock. The chest can be safely opened only through a secret panel in the back. The panel can be found with a second DC 12 Perception check, and requires a DC 12 Thievery check to open.

The ledger in the chest details the goods the bandits have stolen, as well as the payments received for those goods. Using this evidence in conjunction with records held by the teamster Wyndell, the adventurers can learn that the only business in Hommel Lane that the bandits have not directly affected is that of the traders Raynen and Gremag.

Treasure: Even if the acid trap is triggered, a pair of shoes of water walking can be salvaged from the chest.

6. Collapsed Stairs

This stairway once led to the second floor of the moat house, but the collapse of the upper floor has left it impassable.

7. Descending Stairs

A stair leads down, but the passage is blocked by a newly created stone wall. Sigils glow within the stones as you approach, indicating that some kind of magic is at work here.

A DC 8 Arcana check or Religion check reveals that this wall cannot be breached unless the proper password is given. None of the bandits presently in the upper level of the moat house knows the password. Raynen and Gremag, the traders in Hommel Lane (area 9), are the only individuals outside Lareth's inner circle who do.

8. Sleeping Quarters

This room contains a few simple cots and hammocks. Faded brown stains on the walls and floors indicate that a bloody battle was fought here some time ago.

The bandits use these rooms for resting. The door of each one can be barred from the inside, and any room holding an archer is barred when combat starts. A barred door can be opened with a DC 12 Thievery check, or broken open with a DC 19 Athletics check.

Each room contains the meager possessions of the bandits sleeping there, which amounts to 50 gp for all the rooms.

9. Storage

This area is filled with crates, barrels, and boxes marked with the seal of the teamster Wyndell from Hommel Lane.

The items stored here include food and common goods such as candles, lanterns, and clothing. If the adventurers return these goods to Wyndell (or his wife), each of them is rewarded with 20 gp.

10. Forbidden Room

The door to this room is closed and barred from the outside. Written in chalk in Common are the words "Sick room. Keep door locked."

If the adventurers enter, read:

The room beyond the barred door is a reeking shambles of filth, overturned cots, and smashed furniture. In a blur of movement, a near-naked human throws himself at you with an ear-piercing shriek. "Killy killy the silly silly!"

Three mercenary archers inhabit this room. They disobeyed the direct orders of Lareth the Beautiful, who placed a curse upon them. They are now insane, attacking without reason or mercy. Use the mercenary archer statistics block from the "Bandits of the Moat House" encounter, but these three can use only melee attacks.

These archers are too insane to answer questions intelligibly. If the adventurers have not obtained the information in Enda's journal or interrogated the other bandits, the mad ranting of the archers communicates the broad outline of the bandits' activities and their fear of Lareth.

BANDITS OF THE MOAT HOUSE

Encounter Level 3

Setup

Enda Yate, bandit leader (L)
Redye and Hue, dwarf conscripts (D)
8 mercenary archers (A)
2 thornskin frogs (F)

Regardless of how the characters enter the moat house, the bandits move at once into favorable fighting positions. If the adventurers were seen approaching, the dwarf conscript in area 2 of the moat house warns the bandits, who gain a surprise round when combat begins.

Tactics

The bandits hope to trap the adventurers in the lower courtyard, where the archers can fire at them from behind the arrow slits.

When combat begins, Redye moves from area 2 into the lower courtyard, hoping to strike at lightly armored targets at the back of the party. He also tries to cut off retreat to the bridge. Hue moves to the top of the stairs between the upper and lower courtyards to prevent adventurers from reaching the archers. Enda leaves her quarters to join the battle in the upper courtyard 1 round after she hears sounds of combat.

At the start of round 3, roll initiative for the thornskin frogs and bring them into the combat. They enter the keep through the main entrance.

If Enda is bloodied and both the dwarves are dead, the bandit leader surrenders unless at least half the adventurers are also dead or unconscious. She also surrenders if she drops to 10 hit points or fewer.

Features of the Area

Light: By time of day.

Arrow Slits: Creatures on opposite sides of an arrow slit have superior cover against each other. A creature that ducks down adjacent to an arrow slit can't be fired upon from that arrow slit.

Rubble: These areas are difficult terrain.

Conclusion

If she is left alive, Enda talks in the hope of securing her freedom. Other bandit prisoners refuse to talk unless threatened (DC 19 Intimidate).

If the adventurers agree to let her go, Enda wants a follower of the Lawbringer swear an oath to this effect, since a Lawbringer's oath is sacred. If the characters insist that she come back to the village to give testimony

Enda Yate, Bandit Leader (L) Level 3 Artillery (Leader)

Small natural humanoid, halfling

HP 38; Bloodied 19 Initiative +6
 AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 14 Perception +2
 Speed 6

TRAITS☼ **Natural Leader** ♦ **Aura 2**

Allies gain a +2 power bonus to saving throws while in the aura.

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4 + 4 damage, or 2d4 + 8 against a target granting combat advantage to Enda.

✂ **Throwing Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4 + 4 damage, or 2d4 + 8 against a target granting combat advantage to Enda.

⚡ **Tumbling Toss (weapon) ♦ Recharge** ☼ ☼

Effect: Before the attack, Enda can shift up to her speed and gains combat advantage against an enemy of her choice until the end of her next turn.

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 3d4 + 8 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS**Second Chance** ♦ **Encounter**

Trigger: An enemy hits Enda with an attack.

Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The triggering enemy must reroll the attack and use the new result.

Skills Acrobatics +11, Bluff +8, Stealth +11, Streetwise +8,

Thievery +11

Str 10 (+1) Dex 20 (+6) Wis 12 (+2)

Con 14 (+3) Int 12 (+2) Cha 14 (+3)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common

Equipment leather armor, 20 daggers

2 Dwarf Conscripts (D)**Level 2 Brute**

Medium natural humanoid

HP 47; Bloodied 23 Initiative +2
 AC 14, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 14 Perception +3
 Speed 5 Low-light vision

Saving Throws +5 against poison effects

TRAITS**Stand the Ground**

The conscript can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.

Steady-Footed

The conscript can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Gouge (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage. If the conscript scores a critical hit, the conscript can push the target 1 square, and the target falls prone.

Skills Dungeoneering +8, Endurance +9

Str 16 (+4) Dex 12 (+2) Wis 14 (+3)

Con 17 (+4) Int 11 (+1) Cha 11 (+1)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Dwarven

Equipment hide armor, gouge

against the traders and face judgment for her crimes, she eventually agrees, providing that the adventurers ask for leniency on her behalf. Enda is aware of the loyalties of Constable Grover Ruskal (area 21 in Hommel

2 Thornskin Frogs (F)**Level 1 Brute**

Medium natural beast (aquatic)

HP 35; Bloodied 17 Initiative +4
 AC 13, Fortitude 12, Reflex 13, Will 11 Perception +2
 Speed 4, swim 6 Low-light vision

TRAITS**Aquatic**

The thornskin can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Bite ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.

⚡ **Pounce** ♦ **Recharge** ☼ ☼

Effect: The thornskin shifts its speed and makes the following attack.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the target falls prone.

MINOR ACTIONS⚔ **Tongue Grab** ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 3 (one creature); +4 vs. Reflex

Hit: The thornskin pulls the target 2 squares.

Str 16 (+3) Dex 18 (+4) Wis 14 (+2)

Con 15 (+2) Int 3 (-4) Cha 9 (-1)

Alignment unaligned Languages –

8 Mercenary Archers (A)**Level 4 Minion Artillery**

Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +5
 AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 16, Will 15 Perception +8
 Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 5 damage.

✂ **Longbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +11 vs. AC

Hit: 6 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS**Scatter** ♦ **At-Will**

Trigger: An ally the archer can see drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (Free Action): The archer shifts 1 square.

Skills Stealth +10

Str 14 (+4) Dex 16 (+5) Wis 12 (+3)

Con 10 (+2) Int 8 (+1) Cha 9 (+1)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common

Equipment leather armor, short sword, longbow, 20 arrows

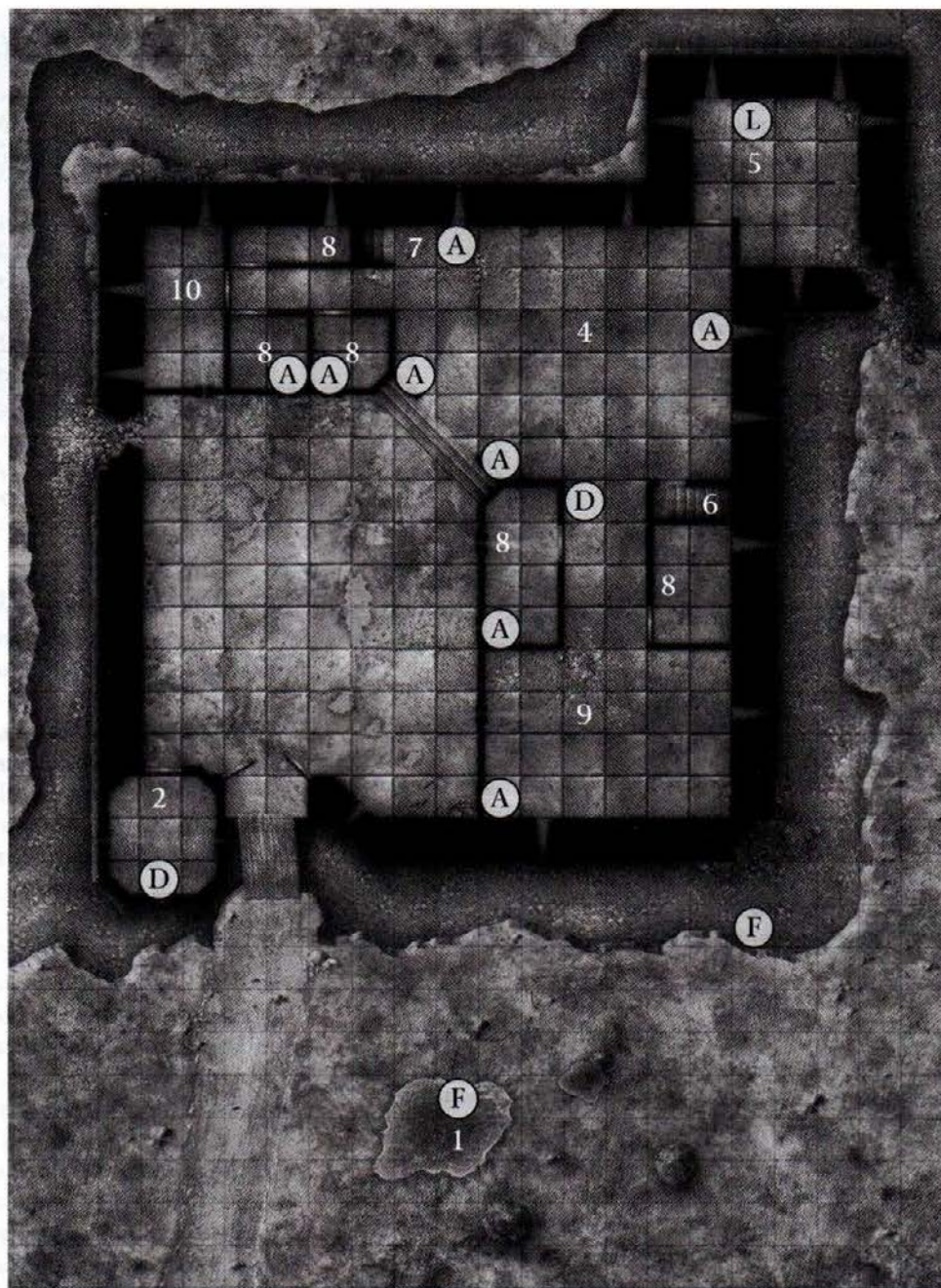
Lane), and she believes that he'll let her escape before any trial begins.

Enda and the bandits can reveal the following information, some of which is also contained in her journal in area 5.

- ♦ Enda was a petty thief in the more civilized lands of the western barony before she received an offer to lead a small army of bandits out here in the borderlands. The assignment sounded more profitable and less dangerous than what she was doing.
- ♦ Enda met with a "right nutter of a human" who called himself "Lareth the Beautiful." He told her that she was to recruit bandits and brigands to

conduct raids on caravans in the territory around Hommel Lane. Enda did so willingly.

- ◆ After the first few raids, Lareth insisted that the bandits either kill the people they robbed or bring them back as prisoners and turn them over to him. Enda was uncomfortable with the killing, but Lareth placed horrible curses on those who disobeyed him. She has complied since then, but her long-term plans are to gather enough forces to overthrow Lareth, then establish her own bandit-territory with Hommel Lane at its center.
- ◆ As far as Enda is concerned, Lareth leads a death cult for which her banditry is only a front. Numerous people wearing black robes bearing a gold-trimmed red circle have passed through the wall that blocks the stairs leading down into the dungeon.
- ◆ Enda does not know how to enter the dungeon, but she believes a secret password must be spoken. She and her bandits stay far from the stairs and the magic stone wall. She fears that unspeakable evil takes place down there.
- ◆ The goods that Enda steals are taken to the village and given to the traders Raynen and Gremag. They sell the contraband or arrange to have it taken elsewhere, with the profits split between the traders, the bandits, and Lareth.



EXPLORE THE MOAT HOUSE

Next Session

When this session is completed, the clues the adventurers uncover should lead them to question the traders in Hommel Lane. Faced with evidence of her crimes, Raynen confesses and provides the characters with the means to infiltrate the temple beneath the moat house (see area 9 in Hommel Lane).

If you have time, use the confrontation at the trading post to create an optional encounter to finish off this session. Otherwise, summarize the information above for the players and give them the setup to run "Moat House Dungeon" next.

MOAT HOUSE DUNGEON

This session is the second part of the "Chaos Cult" section of the adventure. The characters have most likely come here in the aftermath of the information they discovered in "Explore the Moat House," and with the password they learned from the corrupt trader Raynen (area 9 in Hommel Lane).

The Story So Far

From "Explore the Moat House," summarize the exploration and infiltration of the upper level of the moat house, the fight with the bandits, and how the characters discovered the existence of a cult in the dungeons beneath the moat house.

If the adventurers then confronted the corrupt merchants Raynen and Gremag in the trading post, remind the players of the pair's involvement with the bandits, how Raynen provided the password needed to enter the dungeon, and whether or not the characters obtained cultist robes to make infiltration easier.

If you used another location or event to bring the characters here, summarize that information for the players as this session begins.

Into the Dungeon

The leader of the Chaos Cult is a cleric named Lareth the Beautiful. Retracing their previous march, the characters arrive at the moat house, ready to do battle with Lareth's evil.

When the adventurers attacked the moat house, a number of bandits were out raiding. When they returned to find signs of battle and the upper level of the moat house abandoned, they quickly fled the area. Thus, the adventurers have access to the dungeon without having to fight their way through more foes.

The combat encounter can start at any point in this session. When it does, continue with "Lareth the Beautiful," page 28. If the battle starts because the characters failed to fool the cultists, then combat proceeds normally. If the cultists believe the party to be a group of cult initiates, the adventurers gain a surprise round if they choose to attack.

Read:

The stairway leading down is still blocked by a stone wall, the same magical sigils glowing upon it.

The adventurers must speak the password ("Annihilation"), which they have most likely learned from the trader Raynen (area 9 in Hommel Lane) or from the spirit possessing Sir Moonbrook.

When the adventurers use the password, read:

The wall magically descends into the stairs with a grinding sound, revealing a gloomy corridor below.

THE STRAIGHTEST PATH

When the characters complete this session, they will have obtained the *Scroll of Final Words*—the second item of power that Haffron's ghost described to them in the Caves of Chaos.

Their triumph is short-lived when they return to Hommel Lane. More villagers have disappeared (use the "Lost Leatherworker" or "Castellan's Assistant" events from "Events in Hommel Lane," page 10), and all clues point to the Golden Grain Inn. Run the "Golden Grain Inn" session next.

The wall rises again in 1 minute. The sound of it moving is loud enough to alert the cultists below, so that entering the dungeon by stealth is not an option.

Sentry Challenge

After 50 feet, the corridor turns a corner into the passage depicted at the bottom of the map on page 28.

When the adventurers enter the area, read:

The walls of the passage ahead are decorated with sigils drawn in red and black chalk. Torchlight illuminates the hallway and the two figures standing sentry duty there. Both wield clubs and wear leather armor beneath cult robes.

One calls out to you in a gruff voice. "Come forward and show yourselves."

Unless the adventurers are wearing cultist robes, the guards shout out a warning to their fellow cultists and attack. If a battle begins at this point, the other cultists quickly join the fight. Adjust the read-aloud text for areas farther into the dungeon as appropriate.

If the adventurers are wearing cultist robes, read:

One robed figure assesses your cult garb and nods. "Fate smiles today. You have arrived in time to assist the master communing with the essence of That Which We Obey. We are about to learn what our final fates will be. Go speak to Timonen immediately."

As long as the adventurers do nothing to arouse suspicion, they can march past the cultists without trouble. Otherwise, one adventurer must make a DC 9 Bluff check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidate check to put the guards at ease. If the first check is failed, another adventurer can attempt a DC 13 Bluff check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidate check to allow the characters to get past the guards.

Prayer Room

After moving through the sentry passage, the adventurers must pass through an adjacent prayer room, dealing

not only with the cultists there but with the foul magic they worship.

When the adventurers pass through, read:

In the corner of this room is a table marked with the same red and black sigils as on the walls. Two cultists sit at the table with their heads bowed in silent prayer.

A DC 13 Arcana check or Religion check reveals that the table is imbued with an evil divine effect that can be felt by any good-aligned character. Each good or lawful good character in the party must make a DC 8 Endurance check. On a failed check, the character staggers to a stop and is stunned until the end of his or her next turn. If any character becomes stunned, the cultists attack.

Barracks

Beyond the prayer room, the adventurers can see two guards at a closed door, with living and sleeping quarters opposite.

When the characters approach the guards, read:

A set of bunks to your left marks a barracks, where a number of cultists are sleeping. Two guards ahead of you are watching carefully as you approach. Each wears chainmail and wields a halberd. The door between them is covered with red and black sigils.

The closer guard nods to you. "I am Timonen, and you are well met. Hail to That Which We Obey. Who sent you?"

When the characters can see the quarters, read:

Two connected chambers hold bunks on which four cultists are sleeping. At the end of each bunk stands a small footlocker. The far wall of the second sleeping area is stacked high with crates and barrels that bear the mark of the teamster Wyndell.

The two guards know little about the operations of the Cult of Chaos outside the moat house, so a DC 9 Bluff check is enough to fool them with a reasonably believable story. The adventurers have a second chance (a DC 13 Bluff check) if the initial check fails.

If the adventurers fool the guards, read:

Timonen nods again. "Knock at the master's door, then, but wait for him to invite you in if you value your sanity."

Lareth's Ritual

A few seconds after any knock, a deep voice booms out from beyond the door to Lareth's chamber. "Enter!"

When the adventurers enter, read:

As in the rest of the dungeon, this chamber has walls covered in red and black sigils. A bed and a wardrobe stand against the far wall, the wardrobe's full-length mirror catching your reflections as you enter. A font close to the door is filled with

silver fire that gives off light but radiates no heat. A large carpet covers the floor beyond it.

A man steps toward you wearing black plate armor that bears a gold-trimmed red circle—the same symbol seen on the cultist robes. He wields a silver scepter with an ebony head, carved in the shape of a creature that looks to be a cross between a wolf and a spider.

"I am Lareth," he says, "your new master. Your arrival is fortuitous. You can assist me in the ritual that will allow me to speak directly to That Which We Obey. Step to the carpet while I prepare. Do nothing unless you are told to."

Lareth is preparing to commune with Miska to learn the demon lord's ultimate plans for the Cult of Chaos and the area around Hommel Lane. Any disturbance from the adventurers produces a fierce rebuke from Lareth. At a second offense, Lareth calls on "loyal followers" to "slay those who interrupt this work."

If Lareth is allowed to continue, read:

After preparing the font holding the silver fire for his ritual, Lareth speaks. "I am about to contact That Which We Obey. When I begin the ritual, you will feel his power overwhelm you. Do not resist. Only those who witness the ritual will sense his majesty." Lareth then begins to chant.

The adventurers have 1 minute to act before the ritual begins. After that time, a wave of energy erupts from the font and the characters are stunned until the ritual is complete. This energy causes each adventurer to lose one healing surge.

When the ritual is completed, read:

From within the silver fire, a hazy, wolflike maw appears. The fanged mouth speaks in the same voice that also spoke through Sir Moonbrook.

"You have done well. Miska is pleased. Soon, you will be called on to set your forces against the village. Others who serve me shall join you, and Hommel Lane will fall. Then you shall rule in Miska's name, and you shall strengthen the connection to my prison until I can pass through the barrier. I shall rule this world, and you, Lareth the Beautiful, will know greatness like no other. Prepare your forces. I will contact you directly when it is time to move."

Lareth smiles as the image vanishes. Then he turns to you. "You see? The time is nearly at hand. Report to Timonen and Arthus for your duties. Consider their commands to be mine."

Any character who succeeds on a DC 19 History check or Religion check knows the story of Miska, as told in "Background" (page 3).

If the characters have made it through Lareth's ritual without their identities being compromised, the combat encounter begins whenever they decide to attack the cultists. The adventurers gain a surprise round when they attack. Continue with "Lareth the Beautiful" on the next page.

LARETH THE BEAUTIFUL

Encounter Level 4

Setup

Lareth the Beautiful (L)

Timonen and Arthus, town guards (G)

8 dark cultists (human goons) (H)

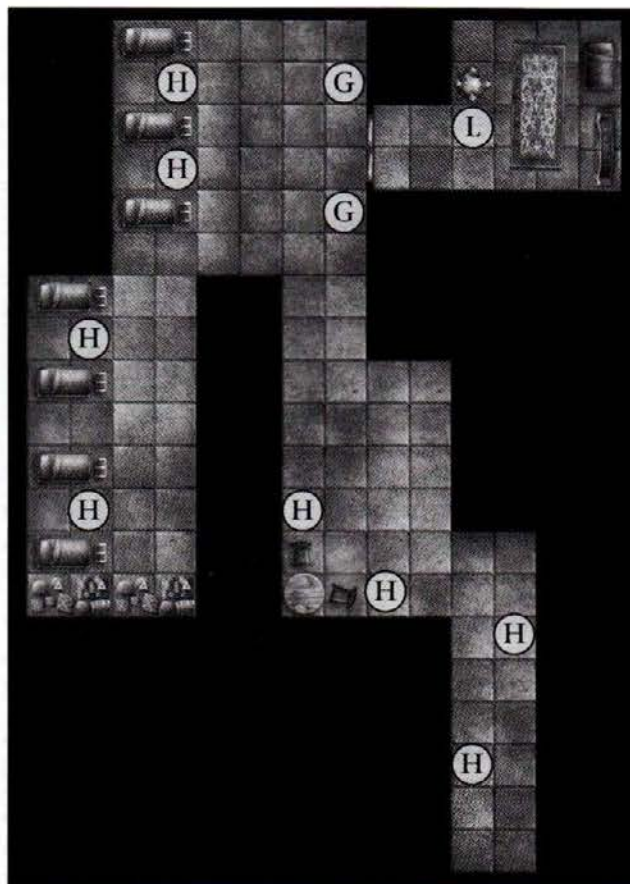
If the adventurers attack after or during Lareth's ritual, the priest's magic prevents sound from passing beyond his chambers. The guards and other cultists remain unaware of any combat in Lareth's chambers until the cult leader uses a minor action to end this effect.

Features of the Area

Light: Torches shed bright light throughout the area.

Bunks: The bunks in the two living areas are difficult terrain.

Font: As a standard action on his turn, Lareth can cause the silver fire in the font to radiate intense cold. Any creature not belonging to the Cult of Chaos that starts its turn within 2 squares of the font takes 5 cold damage.



Lareth the Beautiful (L) Level 4 Elite Controller

Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 104; Bloodied 52

Initiative +2

AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 17

Perception +9

Speed 5

Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Scepter (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead stunned until the end of Lareth's next turn.

⚡ Command (charm, implement, psychic) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Close blast 5 (enemies in the blast); +7 vs. Will

Hit: 1d8 + 6 psychic damage, and Lareth slides the target up to 2 squares.

⚡ Fearful Edict (fear, implement, psychic) ♦ Encounter

Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +7 vs. Will

Hit: 2d8 + 6 psychic damage, the target moves its speed away from Lareth as a free action, and then the target falls prone.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Wounded Curse ♦ Encounter

Trigger: Lareth is first bloodied.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): Lareth regains the use of fearful edict, and he uses it.

Skills Arcana +8, Bluff +11, Religion +8

Str 16 (+5)

Dex 11 (+2)

Wis 14 (+4)

Con 12 (+3)

Int 13 (+3)

Cha 18 (+6)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common

Equipment plate armor, light shield, scepter, Scroll of Final Words

2 Town Guards (G)

Level 3 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 47; Bloodied 23

Initiative +5

AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14

Perception +6

Speed 5

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Halberd (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the town guard marks the target until the end of the town guard's next turn.

🏹 Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage.

⚔ Powerful Strike (weapon) ♦ Recharge ⚡ ⚡

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

⚔ Interceding Strike (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Trigger: An enemy marked by the town guard makes an attack that doesn't include it as a target.

Attack (Immediate Interrupt): Melee 2 (triggering enemy); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.

Skills Streetwise +7

Str 16 (+4)

Dex 14 (+3)

Wis 11 (+1)

Con 15 (+3)

Int 10 (+1)

Cha 12 (+2)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common

Equipment chainmail, halberd, crossbow, 20 bolts

8 Human Goons (H)		Level 2 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +3
AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 11, Will 11		Perception +2
Speed 6		
TRAITS		
Mob Rule		
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Club (weapon) ⚔ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 5 damage.		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 11 (+1)	Wis 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0)	Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common		
Equipment club		

Tactics

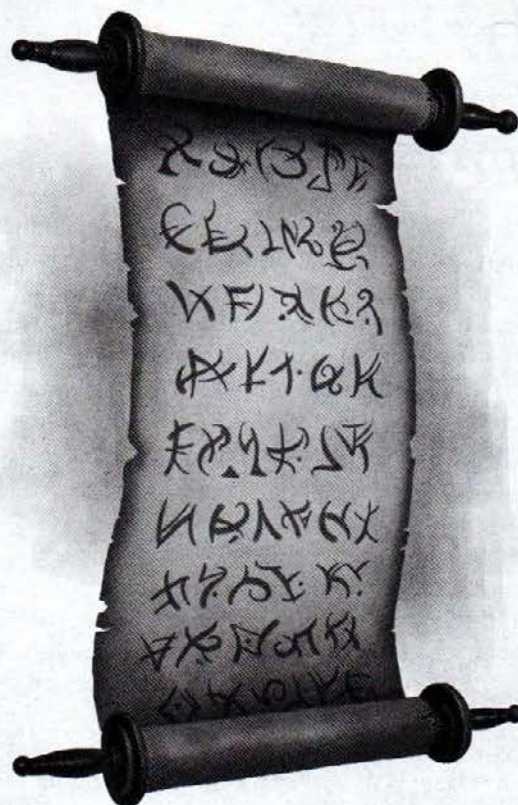
Lareth prefers to let his followers do the close fighting so he can use *command* from a distance to blast his enemies. If pressed into melee, he lashes out with *scepter* or *fearful edict* to take a foe out of the fight.

The sleeping cultists wake at the first sound of combat and enter the fray in the following round. Lareth's followers know nothing but fear of their master and the urge for destruction. They stay in the thick of melee as they fight to the death to protect this place.

Conclusion

If the adventurers were drawn into combat with the cultists before they could observe Lareth's ritual, notes and scrolls in Lareth's chamber provide information regarding Miska the Wolf-Spider and the planned attack on Hommel Lane. Any character who succeeds on a DC 19 History check or Religion check knows the story of Miska, as told in "Background" (page 3).

A scroll case clipped to Lareth's belt contains the *Scroll of Final Words*—a powerful magic item associated with Miska. The adventurers can feel evil radiating from the scroll, and any attempt to destroy it results



in failure. This scroll is one of the items needed in the final session to close the connection between this world and Miska's prison plane.

With Lareth and his followers vanquished, the characters can return victorious to Hommel Lane.

Next Session

Having completed the "Chaos Cult" section of the adventure, you must decide what section the characters will undertake next. See "Path of Adventure" (page 9) and "Hommel Lane Locations" (page 11) for guidelines.

Scroll of Final Words

Level 3 Rare

This scroll contains holy writing that forms into different sayings or magical phrases depending on the religion or magical affiliation of the bearer.

Enhancement Bonus: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d8 damage

Properties

- ♦ The scroll is a +1 *implement* that can act as a holy symbol, orb, rod, staff, tome, or wand.
- ♦ You gain a +1 item bonus to untrained skill checks.

Utility Power ♦ Daily (Free Action)

Trigger: You miss all targets with an encounter attack power of level 3 or lower.

Effect: You do not expend the use of the power.

Utility Power ♦ Encounter (Minor Action)

Effect: You gain a +1 item bonus to a d20 roll you make before the end of your current turn.

CHAPTER 3: THE CULT OF THE REPTILE GOD

The mysterious disappearance of villagers in Hommel Lane has a dark explanation—the Cult of the Reptile God. A spirit naga has set itself up to be worshiped in its lair deep in the Fathomless Fens, an expanse of swamp a few hours south of Hommel Lane. The naga's charm ability has allowed it to corrupt an increasing number of villagers to its service, and the number of kidnappings perpetrated by the cult grows ever greater.

GOLDEN GRAIN INN

Hommel Lane's Golden Grain Inn is one of two centers of Reptile Cult activity in the village. Cultists charmed to the spirit naga's service congregate here nightly, and numerous innocent villagers and travelers passing through Hommel Lane have vanished after a night at the Golden Grain.

This session is the first part of the "Cult of the Reptile God" section of the adventure. The characters have most likely come here to investigate the disappearance of villagers in Hommel Lane, and a mysterious connection between those disappearances and the Golden Grain Inn.

The Story So Far

If the adventurers have come here in response to the disappearance of the carpenter's children (see area 3 in Hommel Lane), summarize what the characters have learned regarding the disappearance and how the carpenter and his wife have been spending much time since then at the Golden Grain.

If the kidnapping of the leatherworker Ranson Klought and his wife Scira have brought the adventurers to the Golden Grain, remind the players of the details (see area 6 in Hommel Lane and "Lost Leatherworker," page 10), and that the two were last seen in the inn.

If you used the optional encounter in the cellar of the ruined Inn of the Winsome Wench, the characters have likely come here after discovering the tunnels linking the Golden Grain Inn with the Temple of the Lawbringer. Remind the players of any other details they might have heard regarding mysterious happenings around the inn.

If the characters have undertaken this session in response to having come to the Golden Grain as part of a previous investigation, summarize the events that led up to this point.

THE STRAIGHTEST PATH

This session connects directly to "Temple of the Lawbringer," which should be played next. See "Next Session" (page 34) for information.

If you used another location or event to bring the characters here, summarize that information for the players as this session begins.

At the Inn

If the characters are not already at the Golden Grain, use the description of area 20 in Hommel Lane (page 19) to set the scene. The read-aloud text below assumes that the characters have previously met Bertram Beswill, the proprietor, and as such Bertram is concerned that the adventurers' questions and investigations are about to expose the Reptile Cult. If the characters are coming here for the first time, adjust the text as necessary.

Read:

The Golden Grain is crowded but quiet tonight, and Bertram Beswill is in fine form behind the bar. He catches your eye as he tries to boost the mood of his customers.

"I tell you, I can remember when every night at the Golden Grain Inn was a party to end all parties. It didn't matter if you followed the Old Faith or worshiped the Lawbringer. Everyone could throw back a pint and celebrate a hard-earned bit o' silver and an honest day's work. We need to remember those days. A round o' the Old '63 on the house!"

A cheer goes up from around the room as people jump out of their chairs and head for the bar. Bertram continues speaking as he pours drinks for everyone. "We need a drinking contest. We need to play some darts. I want to see wee big Gertie arm wrestle one o' our new friends. Derek, pull out your lute and play us a drinking song. Ernesto, show off that tattoo you got when those orcs captured you. Here's to a life worth living."

As the patrons of the Golden Grain engage in various activities, the characters are encouraged to participate. If they don't want to follow along, Bertram pulls aside one of the adventurers for a whispered conversation.

"Listen, I know you want answers. I can tell you everything, but first you need to help me. Put these folks at ease with a bit o' frivolity, and distract those who might mean you and me harm. I promise I'll tell you what you want to know."

Although every bit of what Bertram says is true, a DC 20 Insight check reveals that he doesn't have the adventurers' best interests at heart.



An Impromptu Party

The celebration that breaks out at the Golden Grain Inn is meant to distract and incapacitate the adventurers before Bertram takes them into the cellar to capture them. Most of the patrons here are members of the Reptile Cult. Whether the adventurers choose to participate or not, the following activities occur. It's possible for different characters to undertake different activities at the same time.

Drinking Contest

Bertram breaks out the Old '63—a special blend of corn-mash whiskey and potato vodka with a dash of honey for taste. The proprietor offers a prize of 10 gp to the winner of the drinking contest.

Any number of characters can enter the contest, with each making a DC 8 Endurance check for the first drink. Each subsequent drink requires another check, with the DC increasing by 2. Two villagers take part in the contest (including one cultist), both of which have a +5 bonus to Endurance checks.

Any adventurer who fails a check is out of the contest. When combat first breaks out, the character takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

If the cultist in the contest fails a check, he is out of the contest and inebriated. Remove one human goon from the combat in the cellar.

Arm Wrestling

"Wee Big Gertie" is a brawny farmhand who stands less than five feet tall. The villagers claim that Gertie can throw any other farmhand as far as that person can throw a bale of hay.

Since Gertie has never lost an arm-wrestling match, she puts up a prized possession—a +1 dagger once owned by her mother, Big Wee Shirley. Gertie selects a strong, weapon-using character as her opponent, insisting that the character put up 25 gp as a prize.

To start the contest, Gertie gets a good grip on the adventurer's arm and makes an Intimidate check that the character can oppose with his or her own Intimidate check. Gertie has a +8 bonus to this check. The character who wins the check gains a +2 bonus to the first Strength check of the arm-wrestling match.

For each bout in the arm-wrestling match, the participants make opposed Strength checks. Gertie has a +3 bonus to the check. The first wrestler to win two bouts wins the match.

If Gertie wins, the losing adventurer suffers muscle strain. When combat first breaks out, he or she takes a -2 penalty to weapon attack rolls (save ends).

If Gertie loses, she gives up her +1 *dagger* and leaves the inn in a fit of anger. Remove one human goon from the combat in the cellar.

Dart Throwing

Svenna "Trip" Karzen is the champion dart thrower of Hommel Lane. She challenges a weapon-using character to a match, and is willing to wager up to 10 gp.

The darts match is made up of three alternating tosses, with the highest total score winning. Each toss consists of an attack roll using the thrower's Dexterity modifier and a +2 proficiency bonus for the dart. Trip's Dexterity modifier is +4, so her total bonus is +6. On a result of 15-20, double the score for that throw. On a result of 21 or higher, triple the score for that throw. Total the scores for all three throws to find the winner.

A trapdoor that leads to the secret room in the cellar is on the floor right in front of the dartboard. It opens when a dart hits the "triple 1" section of the board. A character who rolls a 1 on an attack roll during the contest accidentally hits the triple 1 and triggers the trapdoor. The door opens and closes with no one on it.

After the adventurer throws his or her last darts and moves adjacent to the board to remove them, Trip throws a dart in an attempt to trigger the trapdoor. If Trip's attack result is 21 or higher on this throw, she successfully hits the triple 1, and the trapdoor springs open. The character falls through the trapdoor and into the cellar's secret room, and the trapdoor quickly closes just a couple of seconds later.

A character who falls through the trapdoor takes 1d10 damage. Any other character who is not taking part in another activity sees the character disappear. Otherwise, roll DC 13 Perception checks for all the adventurers, to see if anyone immediately notices that the dart-throwing character has vanished. The other characters will notice the dart player's absence when their own activities have ended. If Trip is confronted, she claims her rival went outside to answer the call of nature.

Ernesto's Tattoo

Ernesto is an ordinary farmhand. When he drinks, he likes to tell stories about the time he spent as a prisoner of an orc tribe. The tribe eventually accepted him, and he was given a large tattoo on his back. Ernesto is not a cult member; nonetheless, he does behave in a somewhat suspicious manner. Because he is shy, he is willing to show off the tattoo to only one person at a time.

If a character expresses interest in looking at the tattoo, Ernesto insists that they both go into the kitchen to get some privacy. Inside, initially out of sight, are

four staff members, human goons working for Bertram. If the character viewing the tattoo has a passive Perception of 13 or higher, he or she notices the goons moving in to attack. Otherwise, they attack with surprise. Unless the character notices the goons and warns Ernesto, he is surprised as well, and one of the goons uses its first attack to knock the farmhand unconscious.

If the goons defeat the lone adventurer without the other characters being alerted, they take the character and Ernesto into the cellar for transport to the Temple of the Lawbringer. When the other adventurers investigate the cellar, they find the unconscious adventurer and Ernesto in the secret room.

If the adventurer wins the battle, remove two human goons from the combat in the cellar.

Fighting in the Inn

If a fight breaks out in the inn (most likely when a character goes missing during the darts match or after entering the kitchen), Bertram and his allies go on the defensive. Any villagers not part of the cult flee the inn at once, while the proprietor and his goons make a fighting retreat to the cellar to gain the bullywugs' aid. Continue with "Battle at the Inn" on the next page.

Into the Cellar

If nothing happens to inspire a fight in the inn, Bertram attempts to lure the characters into the cellar. If he was forced to ask the characters to play along with the celebrations initially, he approaches them again.

When Bertram makes his move, read:

With a serving tray in hand, Bertram slinks over to you through the crowd, leaning close to whisper in your ear.

"Go down the back stairs to the cellar," he says nervously. "I can tell you what you want to know there. Here, the wrong eyes might see us. I'll slip away in a few minutes to join you."

When the adventurers enter the cellar, read:

Boxes, crates, and casks are stacked around the damp stone walls of a large cellar. You see that one large pile of goods hides a passage leading into a separate room.

It takes only a moment for the adventurers to move the crates and access the secret room.

When the secret room has been accessed, read:

In the room beyond the crates, iron manacles are bolted into the walls and the floor, and a large sliding door stands closed across the way. In the center of the room, a table holds playing cards and a ledger filled with names, some of which have been crossed out or circled.

The bullywugs lurk in the tunnel beyond the sliding door, and they expect to hear a pass phrase spoken when anyone enters the cellar's secret room. If no pass

phrase is spoken, or if they hear someone fall into the room through the trapdoor above, the bullywugs enter at once and attack any creatures they find there.

When Bertram is sure that the adventurers have had time to find the secret room, he and his cult allies follow down the stairs to take them prisoner.

Continue with "Battle at the Inn."

BATTLE AT THE INN

Encounter Level 2

Setup

Derek Desleigh (veteran assassin) (A)
Bertram Beswill (common bandit) (C)
2 bullywug brutes (B)
6 human goons (G)

Tactics

Bertram and Derek come down the stairs after the adventurers, but they wait to coordinate their arrival with a bullywug attack. Both use their ranged attacks in the first round from across the cellar, then enter melee together to flank a single target for combat advantage. Both cultists are skilled at focusing their attacks to drop a single foe, then moving to the next target.

Half the human goons follow Bertram and Derek into melee in the first round, with the other half following on the second round. They fight close together to keep the defensive advantage of their *mob rule*.

Veteran Assassin (A)	Level 4 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human	
HP 54; Bloodied 27	Initiative +7
AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 16, Will 15	Perception +4
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and if the target is granting combat advantage to the assassin, the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
🏹 Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage.	
⚡ No Escape (weapon) ♦ Recharge ⚡ ⚡	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature granting combat advantage to the assassin); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends) and falls prone.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
👉 Flanking Step ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The assassin can shift 1 square into a position that allows the assassin to flank an enemy.	
Skills Athletics +10, Bluff +8, Stealth +10	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 17 (+5) Wis 14 (+4)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 13 (+3) Cha 13 (+3)
Alignment evil Languages Common	
Equipment longsword, crossbow, 10 bolts	

CAPTURED

If the adventurers are defeated, they are not killed. Instead, they are taken to the Cavern of the Reptile God as prized prisoners. See "Next Session" on the following page.

Common Bandit (C)	Level 2 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, human	
HP 37; Bloodied 18	Initiative +6
AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12	Perception +1
Speed 6	
TRAITS	
Combat Advantage	
The bandit deals 1d6 extra damage against any creature granting combat advantage to it.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.	
🗡 Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and the bandit can shift 1 square.	
⚡ Dazing Strike (weapon) ♦ Recharge when the attack misses	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the bandit's next turn.	
Effect: The bandit can shift 1 square.	
Skills Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9	
Str 12 (+2)	Dex 17 (+4) Wis 11 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 10 (+1) Cha 12 (+2)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common	
Equipment leather armor, mace, 4 daggers	

6 Human Goons (G)	Level 2 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +3
AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 11, Will 11	Perception +2
Speed 6	
TRAITS	
Mob Rule	
While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 5 damage.	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 11 (+1) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0) Cha 13 (+2)
Alignment unaligned Languages Common	
Equipment club	

Features of the Area

Light: Lanterns shed bright light in both cellar rooms.

Boxes, Chairs, Barrels: These areas are difficult terrain.

Table: It costs 1 extra square of movement to hop up onto the table.

2 Bullywug Brutes (B)

Level 1 Brute

Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)

HP 34; Bloodied 17

AC 13, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 11

Speed 6, swim 4

Initiative +2

Perception +0

TRAITS

☼ Rancid Air (poison) ♦ Aura 2

Any enemy that spends a healing surge in the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.

Aquatic

The bullywug can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.

Nature's Release (healing)

Any attacker that scores a critical hit against the bullywug regains 3 hit points.

Swamp Walk

The bullywug ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Spear (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC

Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage, plus 1d6 extra damage against a prone target.

⚔ Bullywug Rush ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼ ☼

Requirement: The bullywug charges and makes the following attack instead of a melee basic attack.

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +4 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d6 + 6 damage, plus 1d6 extra damage against a prone target, and the target falls prone.

Miss: The bullywug takes 3 damage and falls prone.

Skills Athletics +8

Str 16 (+3)

Dex 14 (+2)

Wis 10 (+0)

Con 14 (+2)

Int 6 (-2)

Cha 8 (-1)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Primordial

Equipment leather armor, spear

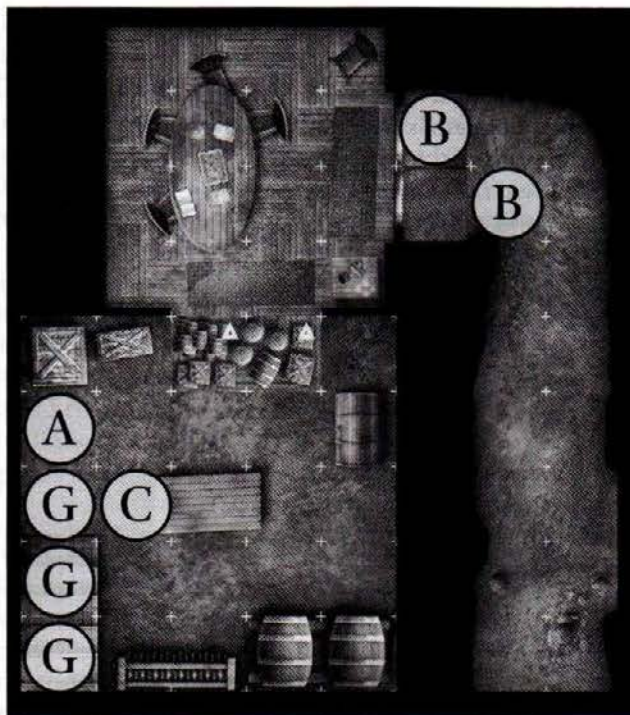
Conclusion

In the aftermath of combat, the adventurers can uncover the full scope of the cult's dark activities in the inn.

Ernesto: If Ernesto survives, he is mortified at his unwitting part in the attack on the adventurers. By way of an apology, he offers the adventurers a gift that the chieftain of the orc tribe gave him—a *potion of clarity* (level 5).

The Ledger: The ledger holds the names of people who have been transported through the tunnel. Those who have no other markings alongside their names are still with the naga. Those crossed out have been killed and eaten by the naga. The names that are circled denote people who were charmed by the naga and are now active cultists. Any villager who is not a cultist can verify the names of the missing citizens.

Secret Tunnel: Cart tracks show that a great deal of traffic has been moving recently through the tunnel under the inn. The tunnel passes under the Inn of the Winsome Wench (see area 7 in Hommel Lane for a possible optional encounter), and then splits to end at two different points.



The first endpoint is an iron door below the Temple of the Lawbringer (though the characters will not know this fact at first). The door is well built and barred from the opposite side, and cannot be broken down or smashed open. The second endpoint is a trapdoor that opens out of the ground near the entrance to the Temple of the Lawbringer. Anyone following these tunnels can determine that they have been built to facilitate secret travel between the temple and the Golden Grain Inn.

Next Session

When the adventurers have completed this session, they will be in a position to follow the secret tunnel to the Temple of the Lawbringer. Run "Temple of the Lawbringer" next.

If the adventurers are defeated in this combat, all is not lost. Recognizing the value of such powerful characters to the Reptile God, the cultists keep the characters alive and move them to the spirit naga's lair. Run "Cavern of the Reptile God" next, when the characters will have a chance to free themselves. Then run "Temple of the Lawbringer," with the characters determined to overthrow that last bastion of cult activity in Hommel Lane.

CORRUPTED PRIESTS

Encounter Level 3

Setup

Priestess Devi (D)
Abramo and Philla, deathlock wights (W)
3 bullywugs (B)
Garath (G)

The adventurers descend the spiral staircase to the cellar beneath the Temple of the Lawbringer, where prisoners of the Reptile Cult are held for transfer to the spirit naga's lair.

When you're ready to start, read:

At the bottom of the stairs, two shrines to the Lawbringer stand against the walls of a large stone chamber—except that where the crossed swords of the Lawbringer should be, two mummified snakes hang. Between the two shrines stands a set of wooden shelves holding tomes, flasks, and what appear to be religious artifacts.

Sister Philla kneels before the shrine nearest to you, while Brother Abramo prays before the other. Next to Abramo stands a short, bulbous human almost froglike in appearance. He wears green chainmail and a green shield, and he holds a warhammer with a snakelike head.

Priestess Devi (D) Level 4 Artillery (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 42; Bloodied 21 Initiative +2
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 17 Perception +4
Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d4 + 4 damage.

☠ Venomous Words (poison, psychic) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +9 vs. Will. This attack does not provoke opportunity attacks.
Hit: 2d6 + 6 poison and psychic damage.

☠ Shadow Snakes (poison) ♦ Recharge ☠ ☠

Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 6 poison damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage (save ends both).

MINOR ACTIONS

☠ Toxic Order (poison) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied

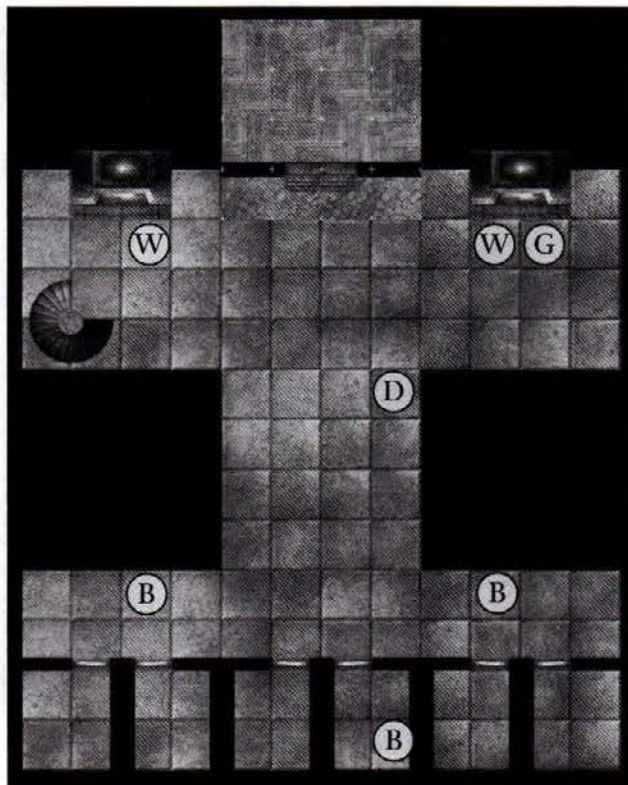
Effect: Close burst 5 (one ally in the burst); Devi slides the target up to 3 squares, and the target gains 10 temporary hit points. Until the target has no temporary hit points, its melee attacks deal 5 extra poison damage.

Skills Arcana +9, Religion +9

Str 11 (+2) Dex 11 (+2) Wis 15 (+4)
Con 12 (+3) Int 14 (+4) Cha 18 (+6)

Alignment evil Languages Common

Equipment robes, dagger, snake staff



Priestess Devi suddenly runs up from a wide corridor to the south. "Thank the Lawbringer you are here!" she says, clearly frightened. "We are being invaded by terrible swamp creatures. That fiend conjured them forth!" She points at the squat figure before the shrine.

2 Deathlock Wights (W) Level 4 Controller

Medium natural humanoid (undead)

HP 54; Bloodied 27 Initiative +4
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 17 Perception +1
Speed 6 Darkvision

Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic;

Vulnerable 5 radiant

STANDARD ACTIONS

⚔ Claw (necrotic) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 necrotic damage, and the target loses a healing surge.

⚔ Grave Bolt (necrotic) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

☠ Horrific Visage (fear, psychic) ♦ Recharge ☠ ☠ ☠

Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +7 vs. Will
Hit: 1d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the wight pushes the target up to 3 squares.

MINOR ACTIONS

☠ Reanimate (healing) ♦ Encounter

Effect: Ranged 10 (one destroyed undead creature of level 6 or lower that is not a minion). The target regains hit points equal to one-half its bloodied value. It can stand up as a free action.

Skills Arcana +10, Religion +10

Str 10 (+2) Dex 14 (+4) Wis 9 (+1)
Con 14 (+4) Int 16 (+5) Cha 18 (+6)

Alignment evil Languages Common

Insight DC 13: *Devi is lying. The froglike human is an ally of hers, and seems willing to play along with her deception.*

If Devi is caught in the lie, she smiles and speaks: "So, you are not as idiotic as I first thought. Bravo to you." She nods to the human before the shrine. "You should leave, Garath. Tell the Reptile God that it shall have more sacrifices shortly." Mumbling as he goes, the froglike figure steps into the shrine—and disappears right before your eyes. Devi turns and runs back down the wide corridor.

Perception DC 13: You hear enough of what Garath says to recognize the words from an inscription on the shrine—and that he spoke them out of order.

Perception DC 20: You can hear Garath's mumbled words clearly, realizing that they are an inscription on the shrine being spoken backward.

If the adventurers believe Devi's lie and either attack Garath or move to the south, she and her wight allies have combat advantage for their first attacks.

Tactics

Preferring to remain at a distance, Devi moves to the south to use *venomous words* while she hides behind the advancing bullywugs. If she is forced into melee, she uses *dark dagger* to slide an opponent into a cell, then slams the door shut to lock it (see "Features of the Area").

The bullywugs use *leap* to stay in front of the adventurers, keeping foes away from Devi.

Sister Philla and Brother Abramo have given their lives in the service of Miska and the Reptile God, and are now deathlock wights. They use *horrific visage* before the bullywugs enter combat, and *reanimate* each other if they fall in battle. If any adventurer enters a square next to a shrine, the wights try to immobilize that character with *grave bolt*.

All the enemies here fight to the death.

Features of the Area

Light: Lanterns fill the area with bright light.

Corrupted Shrines: These shrines to the Lawbringer have been corrupted to serve the needs of the Cult of the Reptile God. Any creature that does not worship the Reptile God takes a -2 penalty to saving throws while adjacent to a shrine.

On each shrine are carved the words "Giver of Law, may your word be established in all worlds." It is common knowledge among followers of both religions that this maxim is spoken before any formal prayer is uttered to the Lawbringer.

Relic Shelves: The iron door blocking the tunnel to the Golden Grain Inn is concealed behind this large set of shelves (Perception DC 20). The door is barred from this side. Most of the items on the shelves are mundane, but any search reveals two vials of *holy water* (level 6).

Meditation Cells: The doors to these cells are open unless a cell contains prisoners (see "Conclusion"). A DC 13 Thievery check reveals that the normal locks have been reversed to operate from the outside, and that the doors lock automatically if shut. If locked, a door requires a DC 20 Thievery check to open.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of combat, the adventurers have a chance to fully investigate the cellar shrine.

Devi's Gambit: The characters might refrain from killing Devi if they believe there's something to be gained from interrogating her or turning her in.

If she is knocked unconscious when reduced to 0 hit points, then restored to health, Devi tries to convince the characters that the same essence that possessed Sir Moonbrook also possessed her. A DC 19 Insight check is needed to see through her lie. If the adventurers believe her, Devi is as helpful as possible, volunteering to take them through the portal. In truth, she believes

3 Bullywugs (B)		Level 1 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)		
HP 26; Bloodied 13		Initiative +6
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12		Perception +2
Speed 6, swim 4		
TRAITS		
☼ Rancid Air (poison) ◆ Aura 2		
Any enemy that spends a healing surge in the aura is weakened until the end of its next turn.		
Aquatic		
The bullywug can breathe underwater. In aquatic combat, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against nonaquatic creatures.		
Nature's Release (healing)		
Any attacker that scores a critical hit against the bullywug regains 3 hit points.		
Swamp Walk		
The bullywug ignores difficult terrain that is mud or shallow water.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ Spear (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage.		
🏹 Javelin (weapon) ◆ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage.		
⚡ Leap (weapon) ◆ Recharge ☼ ☼ ☼ ☼		
Effect: The bullywug jumps up to half its speed, gaining a +5 bonus to all defenses during this movement. It then makes the following attack.		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, or 3d6 + 6 if the target is granting combat advantage to the bullywug, and the target cannot attack the bullywug during the bullywug's next turn.		
Skills Athletics +7		
Str 14 (+2)	Dex 18 (+4)	Wis 14 (+2)
Con 10 (+0)	Int 10 (+0)	Cha 8 (-1)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Primordial		
Equipment spear, 4 javelins		

that she can kill the adventurers with the help of her powerful allies in the Reptile Cult.

If Devi is turned over to the castellan (area 23), Varedd Zaborr doesn't believe her possession story. Unless the characters intercede, she is eventually executed for her crimes. If the characters enable her to escape custody, she flees Hommel Lane and does not return.

Prisoners: If this section of the adventure is run toward the end of the season, you will likely have made use of the cult kidnapping events (see "Events in Hommel Lane," page 10). In that case, three prisoners might be found unconscious in the cells—the castellan's assistant, Rhonnet Gho; the leatherworker, Ranson; and his wife, Scira. Because Rhonnet is an official of the keep, her testimony is beyond reproach. The events she has witnessed ensure that any claims the adventurers make regarding cult activity in the village are believed.

Teleportation Shrines: The shrines act as one-way teleportation devices, transporting creatures directly to the spirit naga's lair—the cavern of the Reptile God. When the essence of Miska finally escaped Sir Moonbrook, the paladin retained that being's thoughts and knowledge. Even as Devi and her cultist acolytes left him dying shortly afterward, Moonbrook managed to leave a clue telling the adventurers how to trigger the teleportation shrines: "Pray backw[ard]."

To activate the teleportation magic in a shrine, a character must speak the pass phrase, which is an inversion of the phrase inscribed on the shrine: *Worlds all in established be word your may, Law of Giver*. When either shrine is activated, up to ten creatures can make use of its teleportation magic. Both shrines then become inactive for 10 minutes before they can be used again.

Next Session

When the adventurers have completed this session, they have control of the teleportation shrines in the temple cellar, and they have observed the mysterious Garath making use of a shrine when he vanished. The shrines provide direct access to the lair of the Reptile God. Run "Cavern of the Reptile God" in the next session.

CAVERN OF THE REPTILE GOD

This session is the third part of the "Cult of the Reptile God" section of the adventure. The characters have most likely come here in the aftermath of "Temple of the Lawbringer," having gained access to the cult's teleportation shrines.

The Story So Far

From "Temple of the Lawbringer," summarize the discovery that Priestess Devi and two of her acolytes were secretly agents of a dark cult, and how the cellar shrine of the temple contained two teleportation devices used by the cult for transporting prisoners to an unknown destination.

If the adventurers were captured in "Golden Grain Inn," they have been brought here as prisoners. They must fight to regain their freedom, then to slay the spirit naga and save the villagers that the creature holds in thrall. Adjust the scenario as necessary.

Lair Entrance

Making use of the teleportation shrines in the Temple of the Lawbringer, the adventurers find themselves alone and underground. The tunnel has no light except for what the adventurers bring.

Read:

You step through the teleportation shrine, emerging in a hot and humid tunnel of damp earth. You see no sign of any mechanism that would allow you to teleport back to the Temple of the Lawbringer. Whatever their purpose, the shrines appear to be a one-way link.

From ahead comes the sound of lapping water, over which faint moans and cries of pain and fear can be heard. As you make your way cautiously forward, the passage gives way to the black waters of a large underground lake. The shore before you is a rocky ledge, on which rest a sturdy raft and a long pole. The voices you hear are louder now, and seem to be coming from the unseen far shore.

The adventurers must make their way across the water to face the Reptile God in combat. Continue with "Wrath of the Reptile God," page 40.

Narrow Escape

As the lair of the spirit naga collapses in the aftermath of combat, the adventurers must keep the prisoners safe while they navigate a maze of tunnels that lead out into the Fathomless Fens. Each of the characters must attempt to deal with a different situation, selected from those below.

THE STRAIGHTEST PATH

When the characters complete this session, they will have obtained the *Death Circlet*—the third item of power that Haffron's ghost described to them in the Caves of Chaos. Freeing the item from the Reptile God's control releases Haffron's spirit from confinement. Run "Temple of Chaos" next.

Describe a situation, then let the players elect a character to handle it. Ask the player of that character to describe what the character does, then call for a DC 13 skill check and describe the results. A character can gain a +4 bonus to the check by making extra effort and spending a healing surge. The most likely skills for each situation are included in the description.

Whenever a check fails for a given task, the characters must make a DC 13 group Endurance check. On a failed check, the rigors of the escape cost each character a healing surge.

Make sure that each character deals with at least one crisis. Run through situations until the adventurers have succeeded at six of them, or until you run out of situations. At that point, the adventurers reach the surface with their surviving charges in tow. If any prisoners die, Warren, Tess, and Canoness Yeeday are the last among them to perish.

Alternative Passage: A crack appears in the ceiling, revealing a passage up to another tunnel. This passage is a shortcut (Dungeoneering or Insight). On a failed check, the crack slams closed unexpectedly, killing a prisoner.

Collapse: The tunnel the group is in threatens to collapse. A nearby alternative route is stable and can provide shelter from the cave-in (Dungeoneering or Nature). On a failed check, a prisoner is caught in a cave-in and dies. Failure by 5 or more means that two prisoners perish.

Falling Rock: Rocks fall from the ceiling toward a prisoner, who must be pushed out of the way (Acrobatics) or rescued after the rock falls (Athletics). On a failed check, the prisoner dies of his or her injuries.

Fissure: The tunnel floor cracks and breaks away to reveal a deadly crevice. A prisoner falls and grabs the edge, but must be pulled to safety (Athletics). On a failed check, the prisoner falls and dies.

Overwhelming Terror: Fear overcomes two prisoners, who collapse and refuse to continue. They must be convinced to fight for survival (Bluff, Intimidate, or Diplomacy). On a failed check, one prisoner rejoins the party but the other bolts off into the darkness and is lost when the tunnel collapses. Failure by 5 or more means that both prisoners flee in terror and quickly perish.

Separation: A prisoner takes a wrong turn when no one is looking. The adventurer must carefully call out to guide the prisoner back onto the correct path

(Diplomacy or Perception). On a failed check, the prisoner is lost and perishes.

Sudden Flood: Water rushes into the tunnel, washing two prisoners down into a sinkhole. An adventurer must swim through the black water to rescue the prisoners (Endurance). On a failed check, one prisoner is saved but the other perishes. Failure by 5 or more means that both prisoners are lost in the flood.

Swamp Gas: A pocket of noxious swamp gas fills the escape route ahead. An adventurer must recognize the danger (Dungeoneering or Nature) to warn the rest of the party. On a failed check, the lack of breathable air kills one prisoner.

Tunnel Fork: The tunnel branches in two directions ahead, even as the passage behind the party begins to collapse. An adventurer must quickly decide which is the safe route ahead (Perception or Dungeoneering). On a failed check, two prisoners bringing up the rear are lost when the tunnel collapses.

Conclusion

The death of the spirit naga breaks the stranglehold that the Cult of the Reptile God has over the village of Hommel Lane. Citizens formerly charmed by the naga have their minds and memories restored to them, and will eventually be able to return to their normal lives.

When the adventurers and any surviving prisoners make the three-hour trek back to Hommel Lane from the Fathomless Fens, Canoness Yeeday tells of what the characters did in the naga's lair. The adventurers' actions—for good or ill—affect how the villagers treat them. If the characters avoided killing cultists and saved most of the prisoners, they gain many new friends in Hommel Lane. If a significant number of cultists and prisoners died, the villagers remain grateful that the threat of the Reptile God is ended, but the adventurers are treated coolly until they have another chance to prove themselves.

Next Session

Having completed the "Cult of the Reptile God" section of the adventure, you must decide what section of the adventure the characters will undertake next. See "Path of Adventure" (page 9) and "Hommel Lane Locations" (page 11) for guidelines.

WRATH OF THE REPTILE GOD

Encounter Level 3

Setup

The Reptile God, spirit naga (S)
Garath, reptile priest (G)
Wight (W)
Canoness Yeeday (Y)

If the heroes let Devi accompany them, or left her unrestrained in the temple, add her to the enemies in this battle and give her one-quarter of her full hit points.

The only way to move to the far side of the cavern is to cross the black lake.

When the adventurers can see the far shore, read:

A group of bound prisoners huddles together on another rocky ledge ahead. In their midst, an enormous creature rises up like the proud monarch of a hellish land. Its serpent-like body has a head resembling a human female, its mouth full of sharp teeth. The creature writhes in fury as it sees you, its pale head bobbing beneath a circlet set with seven gems.

"Only fools come before me willingly," shrieks the monster. "But even fools can serve me, either as minions or as a meal."

The Reptile God (S)	Level 5 Elite Controller
Large immortal magical beast (reptile), spirit naga	
HP 126; Bloodied 63	Initiative +5
AC 19, Fortitude 16, Reflex 17, Will 18	Perception +8
Speed 6, swim 6	Darkvision
Resist 10 poison	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Tail Slap ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, and the naga slides the target up to 3 squares.	
🌀 Word of Pain (psychic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
👊 Double Attack ♦ At-Will	
Attack: The naga makes two basic attacks.	
☠️ Poison Spray (poison) ♦ Recharge ⏏ ⚡	
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +7 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d8 + 6 poison damage.	
Miss: Half damage.	
MINOR ACTIONS	
👁️ Hypnotize (charm, gaze) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one slowed creature); +8 vs. Will	
Hit: The target is dominated (save ends).	
Miss: The target is dazed (save ends).	
Skills Arcana +10, History +10, Insight +8	
Str 15 (+4)	Dex 16 (+5)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 16 (+5)
	Wis 12 (+3)
	Cha 18 (+6)
Alignment chaotic evil	Languages Common, Supernal
Equipment Death Circlet	

Perception DC 13: Garath, the frog-like humanoid who fled the Lawbringer's temple, huddles among the prisoners. He is trying to escape notice.

Features of the Area

Light: None on the lake. Phosphorescent fungi fill the naga's cavern with dim light.

Lake: The underground lake is 10 feet deep, its water cloudy and black. Anything below the surface is totally obscured.

Raft: The raft is 3 squares long and 2 squares wide. A long pole allows one of the raft's passengers to push it across the water. Each round as a standard action, one character using the pole can make an Athletics check to move the raft. It moves 1 square for every 5 points of the check result, up to a maximum of 6 squares.

Prisoners

Twelve helpless prisoners surround the spirit naga's starting position. Some have been charmed by the creature to stay willingly at its side. Others have so far not been overcome by the naga's charm, but are too weak to move. The jumble of bodies makes the naga's starting position and all squares within 2 squares of that position difficult terrain. The prisoners provide cover against ranged attacks that originate outside their area. Any close or area attack that includes the naga's starting position automatically kills innocent prisoners.

Canoness Yeeday: One of the prisoners on the ledge with the naga is Canoness Yeeday, the leader of the Lawbringer's temple in Hommel Lane. When she

Garath, Reptile Priest (G)	Level 3 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, human	
HP 44; Bloodied 22	Initiative +1
AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 16	Perception +4
Speed 6	
TRAITS	
☠️ Vile Presence ♦ Aura 2	
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Warhammer (poison, weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
🙏 Prayer of Constriction (poison, psychic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. Will	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
First Failed Saving Throw: The target is instead restrained (save ends).	
👁️ Curse of Poisoned Eyes (poison) ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Close burst 2 (enemies in the burst); +6 vs. Will	
Hit: Ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends), and the target is blinded until the end of Garath's next turn.	
Miss: Ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Skills Arcana +7, Bluff +7, Religion +7	
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 12 (+2)
	Wis 16 (+4)
	Cha 8 (-1)
Alignment evil	Languages Common
Equipment chainmail, light shield, warhammer	

realizes that combat is imminent, she begs the adventurers not to harm the prisoners. She is so weak that she cannot fight or move. All her defenses are 10, and she has 10 hit points remaining. Twice during the battle as a standard action, she can call on the Lawbringer to allow one character within 5 squares of her to spend a healing surge and regain 1d6 additional hit points. If Yeeday does so, Garath senses her use of the Lawbringer's power and attacks her if he can.

Warren and Tess: The carpenter's children (see area 3 in Hommel Lane) are among the prisoners.

Felixo Hobbe: When the combat is over, the characters find the large red hat of Felixo Hobbe (see "Missing Merchant," page 10) on the rocky ledge. The other prisoners confirm that Felixo was killed by the naga.

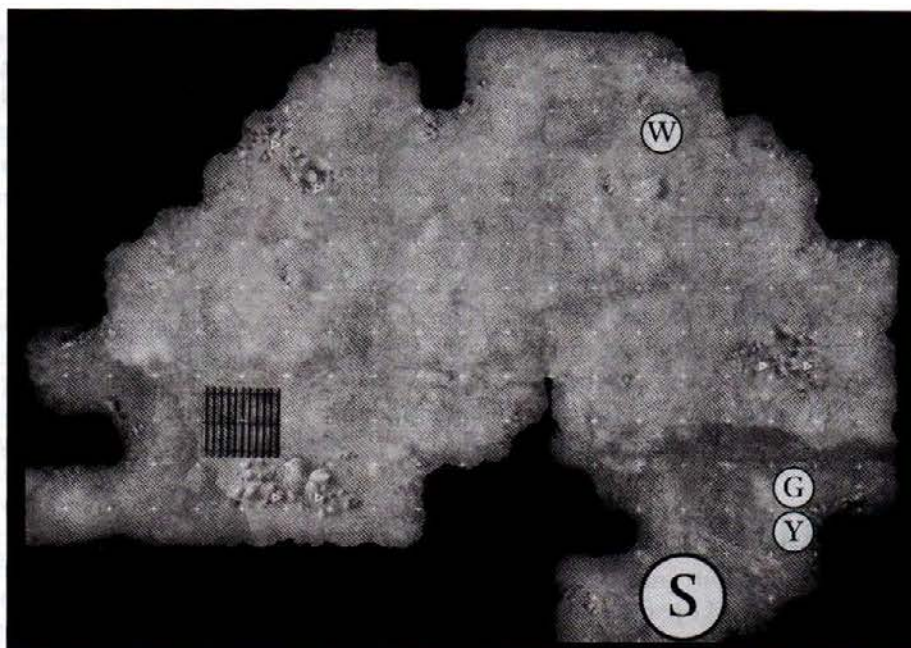
Tactics

The Reptile God attacks as soon as it sees the adventurers. The naga uses *double attack* to slide enemies out of position with *tail slap*, and *word of pain* to reach foes attacking at range. A powerful foe slowed by *word of pain* is quickly targeted by *hypnotize*.

When any adventurer moves to within 2 squares of the prisoners, Garath stands up on his turn and attacks. If he has gone unnoticed until that point, he has combat advantage during his first turn. He wades into melee with *warhammer*, and uses *prayer of constriction* against adventurers who press the Reptile God in combat.

Knowing that the prisoners make good cover, both the Reptile God and Garath avoid hurting them.

Wight (W)		Level 5 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		
HP 62; Bloodied 31		Initiative +7
AC 19, Fortitude 18, Reflex 17, Will 16		Perception +0
Speed 7		Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
④ Claw (necrotic) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d6 + 4 necrotic damage, and the target loses a healing surge.		
Effect: The wight shifts up to 3 squares.		
Skills Stealth +10		
Str 18 (+6)	Dex 16 (+5)	Wis 6 (+0)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 10 (+2)	Cha 15 (+4)
Alignment evil		Languages Common



The wight is unseen beneath the water as the heroes approach the far shore. When combat starts, it attacks any characters on the boat or in the water. It doesn't care if the naga has dominated a potential target.

Treasure

The naga wears the *Death Circlet*. If Yeeday is still alive at the end of this encounter, she warns the characters that the item is an evil artifact. As soon as an adventurer removes the circlet, mocking laughter emerges from the item. The walls of the lake cavern begin to collapse, and the characters must lead the prisoners to safety. Continue with "Narrow Escape," page 38.

Death Circlet

Level 5 Rare

This black circlet has seven green gems set in it. They are dull and dead, as if any magical power they once held has been spent.

Head Slot 1,000 gp

Utility Power ♦ **At-Will** (Minor Action)

Effect: Choose one bloodied creature you hit with an attack this turn. You learn that creature's current hit point total.

Utility Power ♦ **At-Will** (Free Action, 1/Turn)

Trigger: You kill a living creature with an attack.

Effect: One of the seven gems captures the creature's soul. A gem can hold only one soul at a time and glows with a green radiance while it contains a soul. A dead creature cannot be returned to life while its soul is captured in this manner.

Utility Power (Healing) ♦ **Encounter** (Minor Action)

Requirement: Three or more of the seven gems must each contain a soul.

Effect: You regain hit points equal to 5 + one-half your level, and two gems release their souls.

Utility Power ♦ **Daily** (Minor Action)

Requirement: All seven gems must each contain a soul.

Effect: On your next damage roll, maximize the results of up to four of the dice you roll. All seven gems release their souls.

CHAPTER 4: THE CAVES OF CHAOS

Hidden in the dense forest east of Hommel Lane, the walls of a remote ravine are cut through with ancient caverns. The monstrous humanoids that dwell here—kobolds and goblinoids, orcs and ogres—have long wasted their resources fighting each other, and have not been a serious threat to the village in a hundred years. Now, however, a dark presence in the Caves of Chaos has convinced the monsters of the caves to unite, and the people of Hommel Lane are in grave danger.

SCOUT THE CAVES OF CHAOS

This session is the first part of the “Caves of Chaos” section of the adventure. It can be played independent of the follow-up session, “Temple of Chaos” (see “Path of Adventure,” page 9). The characters have most likely come here after hearing rumors of monsters from the caves attacking outlying farmsteads, or of previous expeditions sent out to investigate the caves and failing to return.

The Story So Far

The adventurers might have come here in response to hearing how Otis Druet was sent to investigate the Caves of Chaos three weeks ago and has not been seen since. Summarize the meeting with the Druet family or with Otis's brother Elmo in the Slumbering Serpent Tavern (area 2 or area 16 in Hommel Lane).

If this session is being run because the characters spoke with Black Jay (area 12 in Hommel Lane) regarding the deaths of his wife and children, remind the players of that meeting and Black Jay's belief that goblins from the caves were responsible.

The adventurers might have been convinced to investigate the caves by Bertram Beswill in the Golden Grain Inn (area 20 in Hommel Lane). Bertram hopes to put them off the trail of the Reptile Cult—or to kill them for good measure. Summarize Bertram's conviction that the monstrous hordes of the Caves of Chaos are the best explanation for the disappearances that plague Hommel Lane.

If you used another location or event to bring the characters here, summarize that information for the players as this session begins.

Approaching the Caves

The characters begin this session at the end of the half-day's journey from Hommel Lane to the ravine where the Caves of Chaos are found.

Read:

Taller mountains about the hills said to hold the Caves of Chaos, but somehow the hills seem more imposing. Thick, twisted trees spread across them, seemingly nourished by fear and hate instead of sunlight. Ahead, the forest gives way to a clearing that quickly turns into a ravine with walls towering a hundred feet high.

The entrance to the ravine is roughly two hundred feet across. Its far side, some four hundred feet away, is closed off by another hundred-foot-high wall of rock and dirt. Cave openings riddle the walls of the ravine, some at ground level and others higher up. Its rocky floor is littered with the bones of forest animals and larger creatures, including humanoids.

With certainty, you know that you have found the Caves of Chaos.

Haffron Hommel

As the adventurers take in the sight before them, the ghost of Haffron Hommel attacks. He doesn't realize that the adventurers have come to the caves to fight the evil growing here.

When Haffron attacks, read:

Without warning, a ghostly human form appears behind you, its wild eyes and disheveled hair giving it a look of madness. Hefting a shield bearing the crest of a griffon in flight and wielding a curved longsword in its left hand, the phantom figure screams a battle cry as it attacks. “Die, servants of chaos! You shall not live to help your foul master this day!”

Haffron's ghost targets the nearest adventurer (+10 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 damage). All his defenses are 15, and he has 45 hit points. He is insubstantial and takes half damage from any attack.

Call for initiative after Haffron's surprise attack. Haffron has a +0 modifier to his initiative check.

If anyone tries to convince the ghost that he is wrong about the characters, take the player's roleplaying into account and ask for a Bluff check or Diplomacy check: DC 9 for a convincing or true story, DC 13 for a muddled or untrue story, or DC 20 for an outlandish lie.

Characters who have seen the statue of Haffron in Hommel Lane recognize the warrior by his distinctive sword and the griffon crest on his shield. If anyone speaks Haffron's name or succeeds on a check to convince the ghost to cease hostilities, Haffron stops his attacks.

If the characters reduce Haffron to 0 hit points, he vanishes but reappears at the end of this session, at which point he recognizes the truth of their intentions.

If the adventurers convince Haffron to stop fighting, read:

In a voice like swirling wind, the ghost speaks again. “Why have you come to this place of evil and chaos? Are you champions? Do you seek to strike a blow for goodness and law?”

Use the following points to guide the conversation between Haffron and the adventurers.

- ◆ Haffron Hommel, in this ghostly form, has been trapped at this location outside the ravine for longer than he can remember. (In truth, it has been more than two hundred years.)
- ◆ Haffron was patrolling the area when he saw hooded figures entering one of the caves. He followed, coming at last to a foul temple at the far end of the ravine—a site dedicated to an unholy force of evil and chaos.
- ◆ An area of terrible power has been established in the temple—a Chaos Mote. Appearing as a huge, cracked silver sphere, the mote allows cultists to harness the raw power of chaos. Haffron slew a number of the temple's priests, but he saw that the power of the mote was growing. To stop the power from increasing, he sacrificed himself, throwing his body into the Chaos Mote. Doing so must have killed him, because his ghost reappeared here, outside the Caves of Chaos.
- ◆ Haffron's ghost cannot enter the ravine or any of the caves, nor can he leave this place and approach the village or outlying farms. He is doomed to haunt this location until he is freed.
- ◆ Occasionally, the most powerful of the evil creatures in the caves manage to kill Haffron in his ghost form, but he always reawakens in this location.
- ◆ Haffron believes that his soul is trapped here by three powerful items tied to the evil essence that plagues the land. The first is a weapon called the *Chaos Blade*, which rests in one of the caves. He can feel it growing more powerful with the passing of each day.
- ◆ A few weeks ago, Haffron encountered a group of adventurers, including a warrior from Hommel Lane named Otis. Since the adventurers were planning to enter the caves anyway, Haffron sent them to seek the *Chaos Blade* and watched their progress. After they entered a specific cave, bedlam broke out and monsters attacked them in droves. Otis never returned, but Haffron felt the binding magic of the *Chaos Blade* strengthen soon after that.
- ◆ Two other items of power, equal in strength to the *Chaos Blade*, were taken from the caves recently—a golden circlet and a scroll. Haffron overheard cultists talking about taking one relic to the moat house, but he does not know the location of the other. These other items and the *Chaos Blade* must be found before he can be released and the power in the Caves of Chaos defeated. These objects act as a link between this place and the evil power of Miska in his extradimensional prison, and that link must be severed.

- ◆ Haffron knows that the Caves of Chaos hold a variety of savage humanoids: orcs, kobolds, goblins, hobgoblins, and worse. Though these creatures usually war against one another, they have recently managed to forge a truce and appear to be working together. It's impossible for a small group of adventurers to defeat the entire cave's population. Instead, the heroes must find the *Chaos Blade* and escape.
- ◆ Haffron can point out the cave that Otis and his friends entered.

After speaking with Haffron, the adventurers can enter the ravine of the Caves of Chaos in search of the *Chaos Blade*.

Getting In

The adventurers' goal of obtaining the *Chaos Blade* becomes a greater challenge when a battle breaks out against the now-allied monsters that guard these caves. The combat in this encounter can occur at any time. When it does, continue with "Securing the *Chaos Blade*," page 45.

The characters must make a DC 13 group Stealth check to sneak into the cave. This check automatically succeeds if they wear cultist robes from the moat house (see "Moat House Dungeon") or from the trading post (area 9 in Hommel Lane). With a successful check, the adventurers safely reach the cave in which Otis and the *Chaos Blade* can be found. On a failed check (or if no check was attempted), as the adventurers reach the cave, they are attacked by wave one of the monsters in this session's combat encounter.

The monsters here know that no one is supposed to remove the *Chaos Blade*, on orders from Chaos Priestess Inugg. Even if the characters approach the cave safely, if they subsequently remove the blade or set off a trap near the blade (see below), wave one attacks.

Traps

The first trap protecting the *Chaos Blade* is an alarm, shown as a red rectangle on the tactical map. If a Medium or larger creature enters the trigger area, a fine mesh buried beneath the dust and dirt of the passage is disturbed, causing a number of bronze bells connected to the mesh to clatter.

A successful DC 13 Perception check spots the mesh. Three successive DC 13 Thievery checks allow a character to cut the lines to the bronze bells. A character can also attempt to jump over the trigger area, but must make a DC 13 Stealth check as part of the jump. On a failed check, kobolds deeper down the passageway hear the jumper, and wave one of the monsters moves in to attack.

If the characters are detected here, read:

From deeper in the tunnels, an excited squeaking and yipping rises. A war horn sounds out, dampened by the cave but still loud enough to echo out and across the ravine. Shouted voices are heard in the nearby caves.

The second trap, shown as the blue square on the tactical map, is more insidious. A crumbling cavern ceiling is suspended by cables attached to tripwires. Even if the adventurers notice the trap, they remain at risk of a cave-in when they attempt to disable it.

Falling Ceiling Trap	Level 1 Trap
Object	
Detect Perception DC 19 HP 10	Initiative –
AC 12, Fortitude 12, Reflex 5, Will –	
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, forced movement, all conditions, ongoing damage	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
◀ Attack ▶ Encounter	
Trigger: A creature enters the trap's space, or the trap drops to 0 hit points.	
Attack (No Action): Close burst 1 (creatures in the burst); +4 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Miss: Half damage.	
Effect: The trap is destroyed, and the area becomes difficult terrain due to rubble.	
COUNTERMEASURES	
▶ Disable: Thievery DC 19 (standard action). Success: The tripwires are cut and the trap is disabled. Failure (14 or lower): The trap triggers.	

Finding Otis

Otis is at the spot marked O on the tactical map (see page 47).

When the characters can see Otis, read:

Sickly red light illuminates a gore-spattered grotto ahead. The light emanates from the hilt of a blade buried in the chest of a burly human male dressed in scale armor. The warrior is slumped lifeless against a pile of rubble at the back of the chamber, the hilt's light pulsing with the eerie rhythm of a heartbeat.

Heal DC 9: The gore in the grotto represents the demise of more than just this warrior. Many creatures have died here.

When an adventurer moves near Otis, read:

The slumped figure suddenly sits up and screams, "Run! Doom approaches!" Then he flops back down onto the rock with eyes wide, his labored breathing forcing bloody spittle from his lips.

If the adventurers have been lucky or skillful enough to make it this far without attracting attention, Otis's scream is enough to alert the nearby monsters. Wave one moves in to attack—at the same time that the

THE STRAIGHTEST PATH

After the characters complete this session, the ghost of Haffron Hommel will have given them the broad outlines of the adventure and told them of their need to claim three ancient relics whose magic provides a link into the world for Miska the Wolf-Spider. The adventurers now possess the first relic—the *Chaos Blade*—but they must reclaim two more before they can challenge the dark forces that are attempting to free Miska from his extradimensional prison.

The first of those two items is held by a cleric of the Chaos Cult who has taken over an ancient moat house north of Hommel Lane. Run "Explore the Moat House" next.

characters have to start figuring out how to get Otis's blade away from him.

Otis and the Chaos Blade

When the characters interact with Otis and the *Chaos Blade*, use the following points as guidelines.

- ▶ A character who can see Otis and who succeeds on a DC 19 Arcana check as a minor action can deduce that he has intentionally bound himself to the sword that should have slain him. Now, the *Chaos Blade* protects him as it slowly drains his life. The character also discerns how to manipulate the magical energy of the blade to remove it from Otis's body. (This check can be retried later, either by the same character or a different one.)
- ▶ Otis knows that if he endures the pain the blade is causing him, and if he continues to feed his life force to it, it cannot be forcibly removed from his body. He wants to keep the blade locked down this way.
- ▶ Otis relinquishes the sword only if presented with an explanation of how the characters plan to use it to defeat evil, along with a successful DC 13 Bluff check or Diplomacy check as a minor action. If the explanation is farfetched or unreasonable, a DC 20 check is required. On a failed check, Otis distrusts the characters too much to relinquish the blade, but they can continue to attempt to change his mind.
- ▶ To remove the blade without Otis's consent, two different characters must make successful checks with any of the following skills in which they have training: Arcana, Nature, or Religion. Both checks must be made during the same round in squares adjacent to Otis. A check's DC is 20 if it's made as a minor action, or 13 as a standard action.
- ▶ Otis can be picked up and carried, but he is heavy and burdensome. With a successful DC 13 Athletics check as a minor action, a character can carry Otis at half speed for that round. If the check succeeds by

5 or more, the character can move at full speed. On a failed check, the character cannot carry Otis that round. Two adventurers can work together to carry Otis, with one aiding the other and the two of them moving at the speed of the character who attempts the check. See the "Escape the Caves" section for more information.

- ♦ If the characters attack Otis while the blade is bound to him, he has defenses of 15, 45 hit points, and takes half damage from any source. Whenever Otis is attacked, the *Chaos Blade* erupts in a flare of angry red light and the attacker takes half the damage he or she deals to Otis. If Otis dies, the blade can be pulled free.

If the blade is removed while Otis is alive, three successful DC 19 Heal checks must be made on him within 1 minute or he dies. He has one healing surge when he is found, so any magical healing also prevents him from dying and restores 11 hit points. Without the *Chaos Blade* sustaining him, he has AC 15, other defenses of 10, and 10 hit points out of a total of 45 (before spending his healing surge). Otis can move (speed 5) but he is so weak that he cannot fight.

SECURING THE CHAOS BLADE

Encounter Level 4

Setup

16 kobold tunnelers
5 orc savages
4 goblin cutters
1 ogre
4 hobgoblin grunts
Otis (O)

This combat encounter begins whenever the adventurers attract the attention of the monsters near the cavern in which the *Chaos Blade* is found.

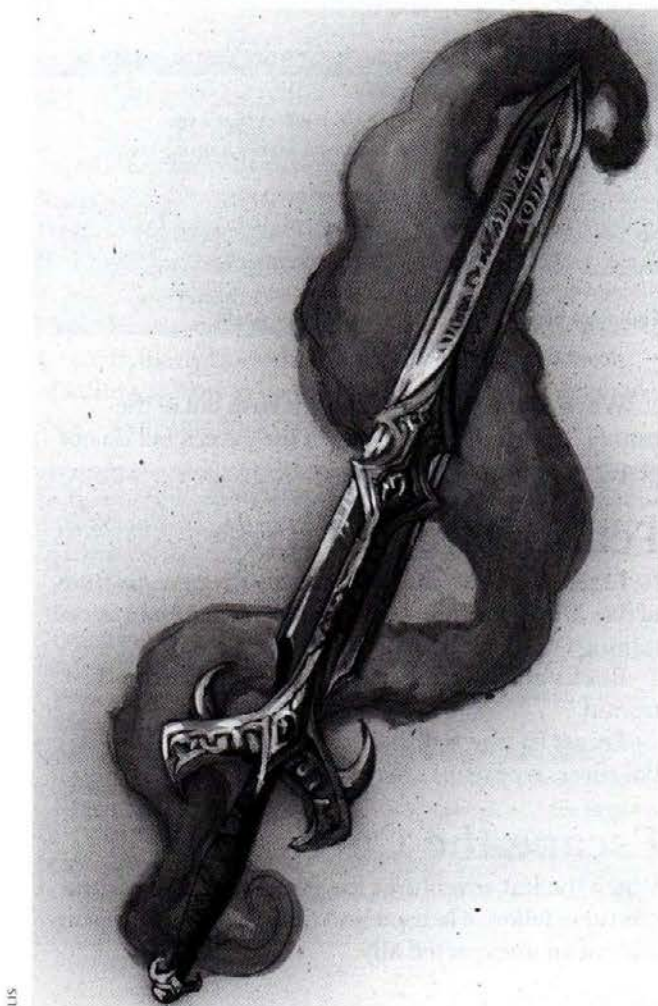
The monsters in this encounter attack in waves, appearing at the edges of the tactical map. The fight becomes progressively harder the longer the characters stay in it, but defeating the monsters is not their goal. The adventurers must focus on locating and securing the *Chaos Blade*, then escaping before they are captured.

Tactics

When the monsters are alerted, wave one attacks to kick off the first round of combat. A new wave enters in every odd-numbered round after that. The adventurers' goal after obtaining the *Chaos Blade* is to flee the area by leaving the tactical map. When a character leaves the map, the monsters turn their attention to any adventurers still on the map.

Wave One: Five kobold tunnelers attack from the passage opposite Otis, and three come from the trees

16 Kobold Tunnelers		Level 1 Minion Skirmisher
Small natural humanoid (reptile)		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +5
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
① Javelin (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 4 damage.		
② Javelin (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 4 damage.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Shifty ♦ At-Will		
Effect: The kobold shifts 1 square.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Narrow Escape ♦ Encounter		
Trigger: A close or an area attack hits or misses the kobold.		
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The kobold shifts up to 3 squares.		
Str 8 (-1)	Dex 16 (+3)	Wis 12 (+1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 9 (-1)	Cha 10 (+0)
Alignment evil		
Languages Common, Draconic		
Equipment leather armor, 3 javelins		



5 Orc Savages	Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. AC 16, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 12 Speed 6	Initiative +3 Perception +1 Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
① Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.	
② Handaxe (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC Hit: 6 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Savage Demise	
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points. Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.	
Str 16 (+5)	Dex 13 (+3) Wis 9 (+1)
Con 13 (+3)	Int 8 (+1) Cha 8 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common, Giant	
Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes	

4 Goblin Cutters	Level 1 Minion Skirmisher
Small natural humanoid	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. AC 16, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 11 Speed 6	Initiative +5 Perception +1 Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
① Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC Hit: 4 damage, or 5 damage if the goblin has combat advantage against the target.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Goblin Tactics ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: The goblin is missed by an attack. Effect (Immediate Reaction): The goblin shifts 1 square.	
Skills Athletics +5, Thievery +5	
Str 14 (+2)	Dex 17 (+3) Wis 12 (+1)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 8 (-1) Cha 8 (-1)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Goblin	
Equipment leather armor, short sword	

Ogre	Level 6 Brute
Large natural humanoid (giant)	
HP 90; Bloodied 45 AC 18, Fortitude 20, Reflex 17, Will 16 Speed 8	Initiative +5 Perception +3
STANDARD ACTIONS	
① Greatclub (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +11 vs. AC Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage.	
② Rock (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +11 vs. AC Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.	
Str 21 (+8)	Dex 14 (+5) Wis 11 (+3)
Con 20 (+8)	Int 4 (+0) Cha 6 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil Languages Giant	
Equipment greatclub, 4 rocks	

4 Hobgoblin Grunts	Level 3 Minion Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. AC 19, Fortitude 18, Reflex 16, Will 15 Speed 6	Initiative +5 Perception +2
TRAITS	
Phalanx Soldier	
While at least one hobgoblin ally is adjacent to the grunt, it gains a +2 bonus to AC.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
① Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC Hit: 5 damage.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Hobgoblin Resilience ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: The grunt is subjected to an effect that a save can end. Effect (Immediate Reaction): The grunt makes a saving throw against the triggering effect.	
Skills Athletics +7, History +3	
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 14 (+3) Wis 13 (+2)
Con 15 (+3)	Int 10 (+1) Cha 9 (+0)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Goblin	
Equipment leather armor, longsword, light shield	

farthest from the cave mouth. They try to block the adventurers' escape while they wait for stronger monsters to show up.

Wave Two: Five orc savages charge into the cave from outside, allowing the kobolds of wave one to fall back to make ranged attacks.

Wave Three: Four goblin cutters enter the fray and move into flanking positions. They know the ogre is on his way, so they want to slow the adventurers down. One round before the ogre arrives, one of the goblins announces its imminent appearance to goad the characters.

Wave Four: The ogre arrives. Any kobolds or goblins positioned between it and the adventurers are picked up and thrown (treat them as ammunition for the ogre's rock attack) as the creature closes for melee.

Wave Five: Four hobgoblin sentries from a nearby tunnel entrance arrive to shore up the attack or to chase escaping characters.

Wave Six: Eight more kobolds rush out of the tunnel. They fight ferociously in the cavern but do not chase escaping characters.

Features of the Area

Light: Cave entrance and outside the cave, by time of day. Dim light from the Chaos Blade in the cave containing Otis. Elsewhere in the caves, none.

Rocks and Shrubs: These areas are difficult terrain.

Trees: Foliage is difficult terrain and provides partial cover. Tree trunks are blocking terrain.

Escape the Caves

When the last adventurer leaves the tactical map, the monsters follow. Their pursuit is slowed by the appearance of an unexpected ally.

If the characters did not engage with Haffron Hommel previously, adjust the read-aloud text accordingly.

As the characters try to escape the ravine, read:

An unearthly violet energy suddenly pours into the ravine from its deepest point, setting your skin crawling. The voices of hundreds of savage humanoids rise in the Caves of Chaos, all of them chanting the same word over and over: "Miska!"

Your pursuers join the chant, even as they are suddenly slowed by a spectral apparition. Along the path behind you, the ghost of Haffron Hommel appears again.

Haffron stands between the characters and the monsters, deterring further pursuit with his ghostly blade. At this point, the adventurers can make their way safely out of the ravine. If they decided to flee the combat and carry Otis with the sword still in him, the blade can be automatically removed from him once he is well away from the Caves of Chaos.

Conclusion

If the adventurers now have all three items of power tied to Miska (the *Chaos Blade*, the *Death Circlet*, and the *Scroll of Final Words*), Haffron is freed from his binding, and his ghost returns to Hommel Lane ahead of the adventurers. See "Temple of Chaos" for more information.

If any of the items of power have not yet been found, Haffron tells the characters that they must seek them out. He promises that he will join them back in Hommel Lane when the last item is recovered. Until that time, he must remain here.

The *Chaos Blade* is a +1 *magic weapon* much like a *lifestealer weapon*. The blade influences its wielder to be particularly bloodthirsty, avoiding mercy in favor of killing. It likes to be left in a foe that is near death to slowly consume that creature's life force.

Chaos Blade

Level 4 Rare

When you strike your enemy, a small measure of your foe's life force is absorbed by this weapon and directed into you.

+1 longsword 840 gp

Enhancement Bonus: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d12 necrotic damage

Properties

Whenever you kill an enemy with this weapon, you gain 6 temporary hit points.

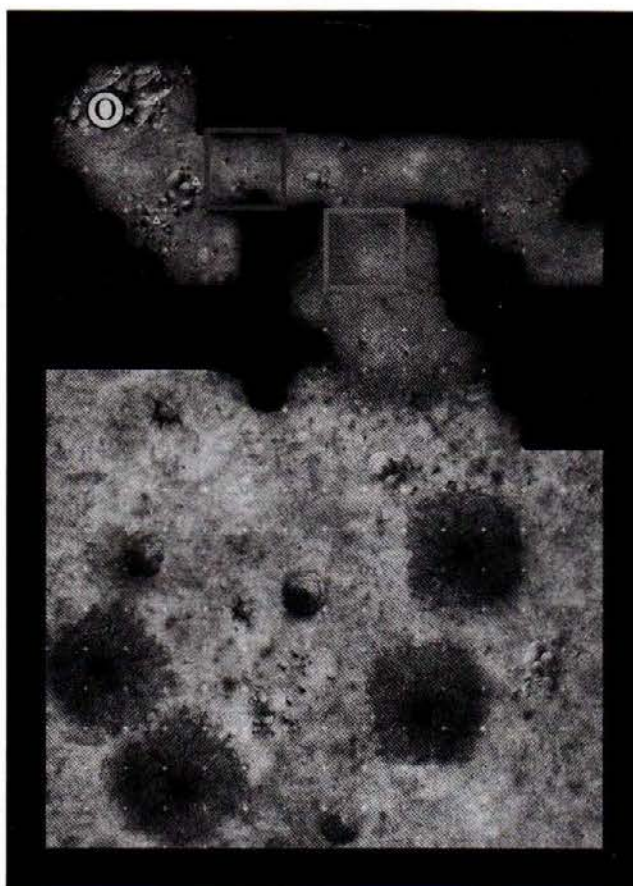
Attack Power (Healing, Necrotic) ♦ **Encounter** (No Action)

Trigger: You hit an enemy with an attack using this weapon.

Effect: The target takes 5 extra necrotic damage, and you regain 5 hit points.

Utility Power ♦ **Encounter** (Minor Action)

Effect: You cause the blade to take the shape of any heavy blade. Its typical form is that of a longsword.



Miska!

Once the characters have heard the chanting that preceded their escape from the ravine, anyone who succeeds on a DC 19 History check or Religion check knows the story of Miska, as told in "Background" (page 3). Haffron also knows the story of Miska, and he can relate it if someone asks him about the name.

If he has not already done so, Haffron also explains what happened to him when he disappeared, so that the characters will recognize the Chaos Mote when they see it.

Next Session

This first part of the "Caves of Chaos" section of the adventure can be played before or after either of the other sections. You must decide what section of the adventure the characters will undertake next. See "Path of Adventure" (page 9) and "Hommel Lane Locations" (page 11) for guidelines.

TEMPLE OF CHAOS

This is the final session of the season. The adventurers cannot defeat the forces of chaos until they have the *Chaos Blade*, the *Death Circlet*, and the *Scroll of Final Words* in their possession. The characters can take an extended rest before beginning this session.

The Story So Far

Depending on the order in which you play the three sections of this adventure, the characters are coming back to Hommel Lane in one of the following ways.

- ◆ The bandits and the Chaos Cultists of the moat house have been broken up and scattered. Local caravans and merchant wagons are safe again, and the evil in the moat house has been vanquished.
- ◆ The Cult of the Reptile God is no more. Its spirit naga master is destroyed, and the villagers formerly under the foul creature's control have their minds restored.
- ◆ The adventurers have returned from an initial foray to the Caves of Chaos, during which they claimed the powerful weapon known as the *Chaos Blade*. They also learned from the ghost of Haffron Hommel of the Chaos Mote—the most significant threat to Hommel Lane.

Hommel Lane in Turmoil

The adventurers return to the village, ready to rest up before their final assault, and find a community in distress.

Read:

By the time you return to Hommel Lane, the place is in an uproar. At the heart of the village, a crowd has gathered around Haffron Hommel's statue. The mayoral candidates and the castellan are among them.

Despite calls for order, everyone is talking excitedly and pointing to where the statue's granite face has seemingly been reshaped to bear a smile it never had before. Then suddenly, Haffron's voice emerges from solid stone, deep and bold. "It feels incredible to be whole again, even if I cannot move!"

Several villagers shriek, a couple of others fainting. A group of children run up to hit the statue's feet with sticks and clubs. "Stop that! Stop that now!" bellows Haffron. "You might chip me!"

The castellan finally succeeds in calling for order, then turns to the members of your group. "I trust that someone can tell me what's going on?"

The characters can explain what is happening, with Haffron filling in any missing details. Two of the threats to Hommel Lane have been destroyed—the Chaos Cult in the moat house, and the Cult of the Reptile God in the village itself—but forces in a dark temple in the

Caves of Chaos are amassing an army of savage humanoids to attack the village.

The adventurers have collected three items of power that help to maintain a link between the world and Miska, the powerful demon lord who is mustering the army. The three items, if taken into the Temple of Chaos, might be able to break the link between Miska and this world.

Uniting the Village

Haffron needs the powers of Hommel Lane to aid him. If Canoness Yeeday is dead, Sister Euphema or a new priest has taken her place. Adjust the read-aloud text accordingly.

When the characters have explained the situation, read:

Haffron speaks again. "I see that we have two forces of power here: the Lawbringer and the Old Faith. I think I know a way to get these adventurers into the Temple of Chaos at the caves, but we need to work together."

The druid Ramne and Canoness Yeeday appear suddenly thoughtful, as if hearing Haffron's voice in their heads. They nod in agreement to some compact, and then both religious leaders gather their respective followers, asking them to join in prayer. Chants and songs fill the air, first competing with each other and then joining in near-perfect harmony.

As the prayers end, the canoness and the druid look to the statue. For a moment, nothing happens. Then the stone form of Haffron Hommel steps down off the pedestal, dust falling in its wake. The statue stretches, turns to look down at you, and says, "What are you waiting for? Let's go be heroes!"

In case the assault on the Temple of Chaos fails, the leaders of the village require that any people who can fight must stay back to defend Hommel Lane. It is up to the adventurers and Haffron to finish the task.

On the trip back to the Caves of Chaos, the statue of Haffron tells the adventurers his plan.

Read:

"When we arrive, I'll enter the ravine and kill as many enemies as I can. This distraction should allow you to move directly to the Temple of Chaos, in the farthest cavern. When I enter the ravine, you wait until the fight has begun. Then sneak into the foul temple and put an end to this misery."

Haffron reminds the characters that their goal is the Chaos Mote, which appears as a huge, cracked silver sphere.

When Haffron enters the ravine, read:

At the end of your journey back to the Caves of Chaos, the towering statue of Haffron Hommel enters the ravine. Waves of angry humanoids throw themselves at him, Haffron slaying indiscriminately with his stone sword and giving you the

distraction you need to sneak past the fray. By moving along the edges of the ravine and among the twisted trees, you eventually emerge over a cave high up on a switchback trail. A gold-trimmed red circle, the sigil of the Cult of Chaos, has been painted above the entrance.

No guards bar your entry to the cave, and you travel up a passage that turns from a natural tunnel into a corridor of worked stone. The walls of the corridor are decorated with the red and black sigils familiar from the moat house dungeon. Though they are unreadable, looking at them fills you with a feeling of vile dread. Ahead, the passage opens into a wider room.

When the adventurers enter the temple, continue with "Priests of Chaos."



PRIESTS OF CHAOS

Encounter Level 6

Setup

Inugh, Chaos Priestess (I)

2 chaos acolytes (A)

8 zombie shamblers (Z)

Haffron's skeleton

As the adventurers enter the temple, they can start anywhere in the central corridor on the map.

When the characters can see the area, read:

An alcove to your right has a closed stone door in its back wall, while a large room opens up ahead and to your left. Red and black curtains cover the walls, each emblazoned with the symbol of chaos. An outsized throne of red-veined black stone stands against the far wall, with three altars in front of it. A huge silver sphere with a dark crack in its side floats in front of the altars; this must be the Chaos Mote.

Two chanting humanoids in regular cult robes flank the sphere. Another cultist, a raven-haired woman wearing finer robes and jewelry, watches from the high seat. Every few moments, she intones a vile incantation and sparks of silver light shower off the sphere.

As you linger to assess the situation, the priestess suddenly glances to the corridor where you stand. She smiles and says, "The final sacrifices and items of power have arrived, as the Wolf-Spider told us they would. Slay these intruders, so that we can mete out destiny."

The spirits of the temple watch and whisper to Priestess Inugh, so that the priests cannot be surprised.

Tactics

On her turn, Inugh calls forth her zombie minions, which arrive at the start of the second round. She uses chaos curse each round against the party's strongest melee combatants, knocking back weaker foes with staff or mind-scrambling chant.

The zombies and the acolytes try to stay between the adventurers and Inugh as the fight unfolds, so that the priestess remains unharmed.

The skeleton first appears from the crack in the chaos mote during its turn in any square you choose adjacent to the mote. These are the bones of the dead Haffron, which have been animated by the mote. Each round, the skeleton moves from the mote, attacks, and is teleported back into the mote at the end of its turn into the square nearest the target the skeleton attacked. Only the skeleton can enter the mote. When inside the mote, the skeleton has superior cover.

Features of the Area

Light: Lanterns fill the temple with bright light.

Chaos Mote: The silver sphere is the conduit through which Miska is attempting to gain his freedom. Any creature not belonging to the Cult of Chaos that enters a square adjacent to the mote or starts its turn there takes 5 damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

As long as the Chaos Mote is active, Inugg, her two adepts, and the skeleton regain 1 hit point at the start of each of their turns, even if dropped to 0 hit points.

Triple Altar: The three rectangular altars near the throne are imbued with the magic of evil and chaos. These altars channel the power of the Chaos Mote, a fact that is obvious to any character who has training in Arcana, Nature, or Religion.

A character adjacent to an altar can attempt to negate its magic with one of the three items of power—the *Chaos Blade*, the *Death Circlet*, or the *Scroll of Final Words*. As a standard action, the character makes a DC 9 Constitution check, Wisdom check, or Charisma check while touching the altar with one of the items of

power. The DC increases to 19 if the attempt is made as a minor action. On a successful check, the altar is deactivated.

An altar is susceptible to one attempt at negation per round. Each item of power can render only one altar inert.

Inugg, Chaos Priestess (I) Level 6 Elite Controller

Medium natural humanoid, human

HP 140; Bloodied 70 Initiative +4
AC 20, Fortitude 18, Reflex 18, Will 20 Perception +9
Speed 6

Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1

STANDARD ACTIONS

① Staff (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, and Inugg slides the target up to 2 squares.

⚡ Mind-Scrambling Chant (charm, psychic) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and Inugg slides the target up to 3 squares.

Miss: Inugg can slide the target 1 square.

⚡ Word of Diminution (polymorph, psychic) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied

Attack: Ranged 5 (one cursed creature); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + 7 psychic damage, and Inugg shrinks the target to one-quarter of its normal size until the end Inugg's next turn. While in this form, the target is slowed, weakened, and has vulnerable 5 to all damage.

MOVE ACTIONS

Chaos Jump (teleportation) ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞

Effect: Close burst 5 (one cursed creature in the burst); Inugg and the target teleport, swapping positions.

MINOR ACTIONS

⚡ Chaos Curse (charm) ♦ At-Will (1/round)

Attack: Close burst 5 (one enemy in the burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target is cursed until the end of Inugg's next turn. While cursed, the target is slowed and takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and damage rolls against Inugg.

Skills Arcana +10, History +10, Religion +10

Str 10 (+3) Dex 12 (+4) Wis 12 (+4)
Con 14 (+5) Int 15 (+5) Cha 19 (+7)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common

Equipment robes, staff

2 Chaos Acolytes (A)

Medium natural humanoid, human

Level 4 Brute

HP 66; Bloodied 33 Initiative +4
AC 16, Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 15 Perception +4
Speed 6

STANDARD ACTIONS

① Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 8 damage.

⚡ Abyssal Chain (fire) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Ranged 3 (one creature); +7 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + 5 fire damage, and the acolyte pulls the target up to 2 squares, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.

Humbling Combination ♦ Recharge if neither attack hits

Effect: The acolyte uses *abyssal chain*. If the target is then adjacent to the acolyte, the acolyte uses *mace* against it. If both attacks hit, the target falls prone.

Skills Intimidate +8, Stealth +9

Str 17 (+5) Dex 15 (+4) Wis 14 (+4)
Con 16 (+5) Int 11 (+2) Cha 12 (+3)

Alignment chaotic evil Languages Common

Equipment robes, mace

Haffron's Skeleton

Medium natural animate (undead)

Level 3 Soldier

HP 45; Bloodied 22 Initiative +6
AC 19, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 15 Perception +3
Speed 6 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic; Vulnerable 5 radiant

STANDARD ACTIONS

① Longsword (weapon) ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 3 damage.

Str 15 (+3) Dex 17 (+4) Wis 14 (+3)
Con 13 (+2) Int 3 (-3) Cha 3 (-3)

Alignment unaligned Languages —

Equipment longsword

8 Zombie Shamblers (Z)

Medium natural animate (undead)

Level 5 Minion Brute

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +1
AC 17, Fortitude 18, Reflex 15, Will 15 Perception +1
Speed 4 Darkvision

Immune disease, poison

STANDARD ACTIONS

① Slam ♦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Deathless Hunger ♦ Encounter

Trigger: The zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, but not by a critical hit.

Effect (No Action): Roll a d20. On a 15 or higher, the zombie is instead reduced to 1 hit point.

Str 18 (+6) Dex 8 (+1) Wis 8 (+1)
Con 15 (+4) Int 1 (-3) Cha 3 (-2)

Alignment unaligned Languages —

Conclusion

The adventurers' mission here is not complete until they have destroyed the Chaos Mote by deactivating all three altars (see "Features of the Area").

When the final altar is deactivated, read:

The Chaos Mote ripples, gives off a shower of sparks, and begins to shrink. The skeleton controlled by its foul magic falls to pieces.

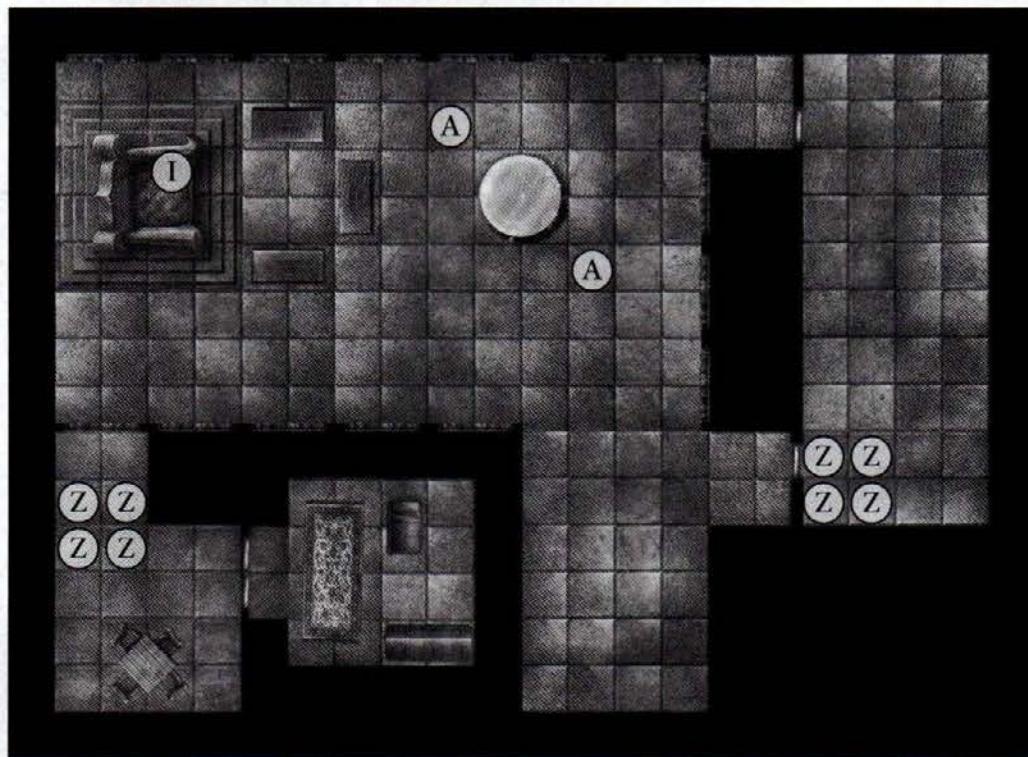
At the same time, Haffron's ghost appears and gives a shout as he flies toward the crumbling bones. "That's my skeleton," he calls happily. "I have unfinished business with it." With a pop, the mote implodes and Haffron is gone, his laughter echoing in the chamber.

When the adventurers exit the cavern, they find the ravine full of slain monsters and Haffron Hommel's inert statue at the center of it all. At the various caves, the surviving creatures are fighting among themselves, reverting to the conflict that was going on in the Caves of Chaos before the cult intervened. The characters can escape the ravine without attracting attention.

EPILOGUE: TRIUMPHANT RETURN

When they return to the village, the adventurers find the residents of Hommel Lane fearfully awaiting word of the battle. When they are told of the adventurers' victory, all the villagers take to the streets. Lord Burne emerges from his tower, joining his people to celebrate as the adventurers are showered with gratitude and gifts.

Lord Burne approaches the group to personally thank them for their heroism, conferring on each the title of Knight of Hommel Lane. He invites the adventurers to remain in Hommel Lane, settle down, and perhaps even run for mayor. . . .



STAND AGAINST EVIL

An ancient evil stirs in the Caves of Chaos, chipping away at its prison, while the forces of chaos converge on the nearby town of Hommel Lane. Monstrous raiders, marauding bandits, and missing villagers portend a terrible fate for Hommel Lane and the rest of the world, if unchallenged.

Against the Cult of Chaos™ is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Roleplaying Game adventure designed for the winter 2013 season of the D&D ENCOUNTERS™ official play program. The adventure is an homage to three classic D&D adventures: *The Keep on the Borderlands*, *The Village of Hommlet*, and *Against the Cult of the Reptile God*. The adventure comes with two full-color battle maps, a series of ready-to-play encounters, and information on the D&D ENCOUNTERS program.

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