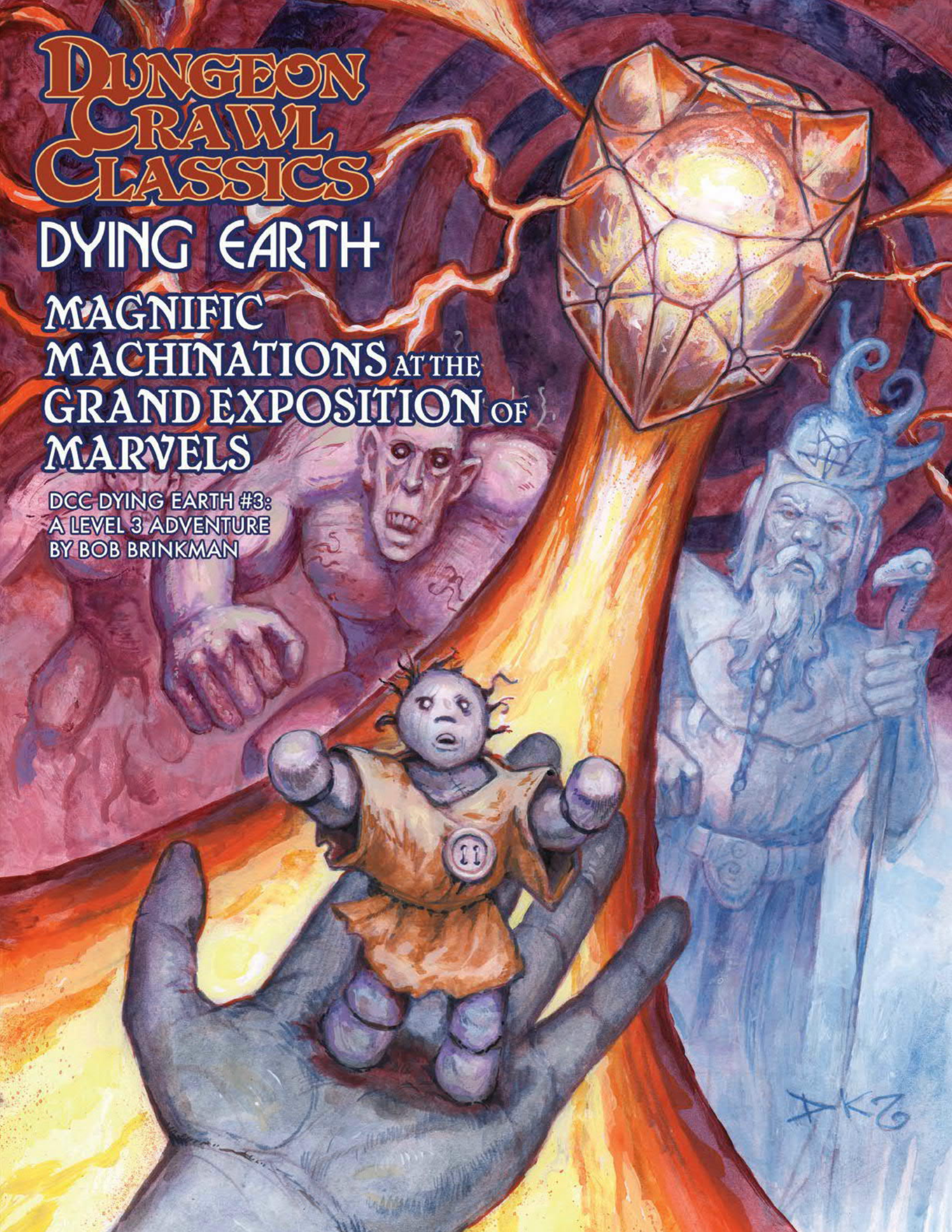


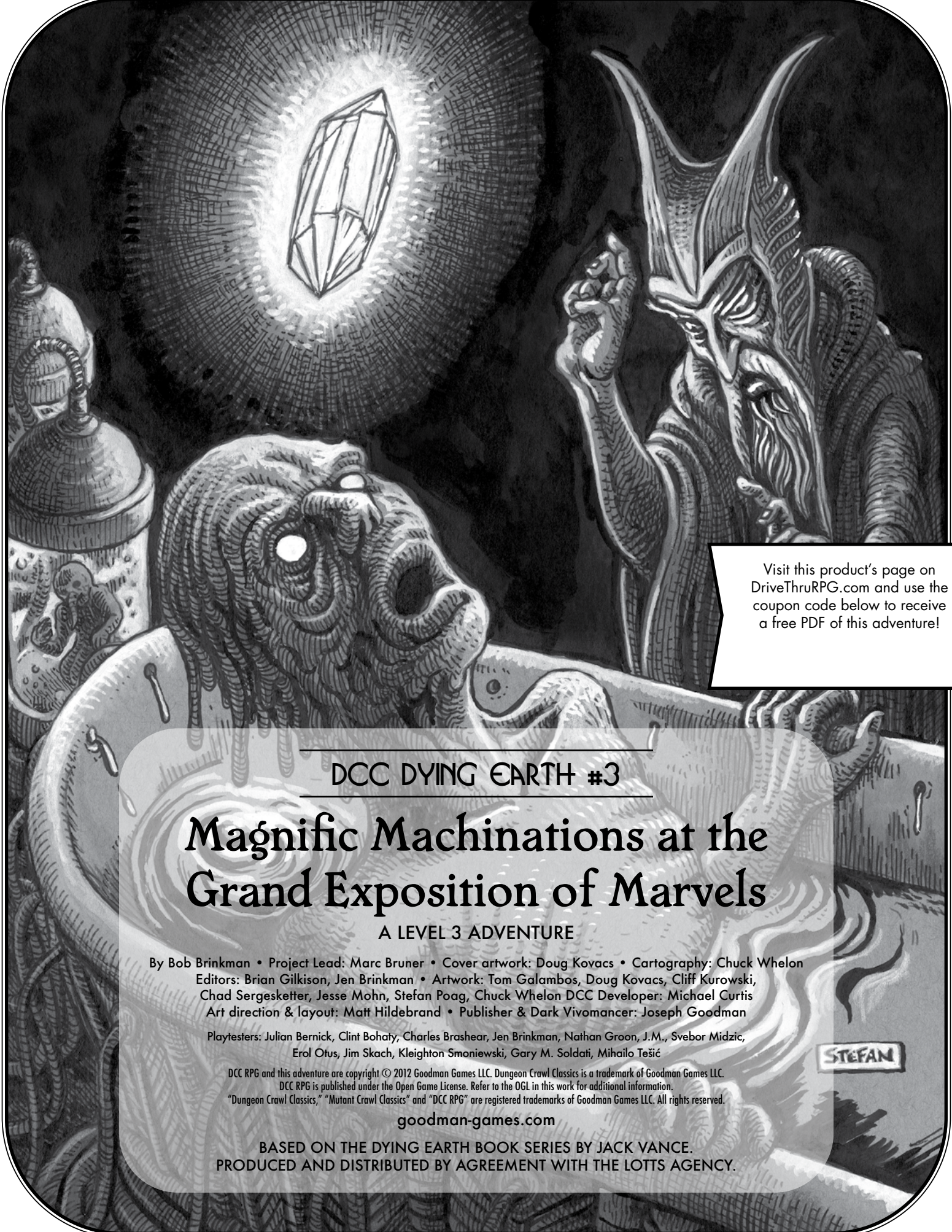
DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

DYING EARTH

MAGNIFIC MACHINATIONS AT THE GRAND EXPOSITION OF MARVELS

DCC DYING EARTH #3:
A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE
BY BOB BRINKMAN





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Magnific Machinations at the Grand Exposition of Marvels

A LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE

By Bob Brinkman • Project Lead: Marc Bruner • Cover artwork: Doug Kovacs • Cartography: Chuck Whelon
Editors: Brian Gilkison, Jen Brinkman • Artwork: Tom Galambos, Doug Kovacs, Cliff Kurowski,
Chad Sergesketter, Jesse Mohn, Stefan Poag, Chuck Whelon DCC Developer: Michael Curtis
Art direction & layout: Matt Hildebrand • Publisher & Dark Vivomancer: Joseph Goodman

Playtesters: Julian Bernick, Clint Bohaty, Charles Brashear, Jen Brinkman, Nathan Groon, J.M., Svebor Midzic,
Erol Otus, Jim Skach, Kleighton Smoniewski, Gary M. Soldati, Mihailo Tesic

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BASED ON THE DYING EARTH BOOK SERIES BY JACK VANCE.
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PROLOGUE

"There was a time," crooned Hazraadial, "before the War of the Wizards and Witches; an age of great innovation and discovery when the most bewildering wonders were commonplace." He raised a hand, forestalling questions while he took a slow sip of Angelius, with a face matching the demeanor of the wine.

His eyes narrowed as he gauged his audience. "Perhaps I will allow you a single glimpse of the treasure prior to presenting it during the festival." His feline grin widened as he drew forth a small box of ivory. Fingers deftly working the fine clasp, the magician gazed down into the sliver of exposed darkness—his smile froze as he closed the box with a snap. "Impatient rabble! Begone! You shall not see such a wonder before it is time!"

He slipped the empty box back into his voluminous robe while he reached for the nearby bell-chain.

INTRODUCTION



Magnific Machinations at the Grand Exposition of Marvels is a DCC Dying Earth adventure for three to four 3rd-level characters meant to put the craftiness of the players to the test as they seek to recover (or "re-steal") an item meant for the Grand Exposition of Marvels. The Grand Exposition, not held for a number of years, allows wonderworkers and tinkerers to show off their greatest creations, with a prize of 1,000 terces to the winner. Competitors come from across the land for a chance to impress Duke Orbal and be enriched.

The PCs seek to find the purloined item, bypass the protective measures in place, and return to their powerful patron, all before time runs out. Set upon a background filled with bloviating arcanists, sinister witches, and courtly manners, this will be no simple endeavor.

Because of the potentially open-ended investigatory nature of the first half of the adventure, there are a number of "moving parts". To assist in keeping track of them all, there is a rumor and fact tracker included at the end of the adventure. It is important that the players be given full agency as to how they carry out their investigation, as there is no single "right" path to discovering the whereabouts of the *Crystal of Ciz*. Should the judge feel that the players are taking too long or are pursuing inconsequential details instead of actual leads, they are encouraged to remind the players that events will continue to unfold whether the PCs are present or not.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND



Targuably, one of the greatest wizards of history lived during the Eleventh Epoch of the 17th Aeon, surviving even the War of the Wizards and Witches. Teus Treviolus is best known for his crafting of enchantments—even in an age of marvels, the works of Treviolus stood above all others. Many were his rivals, but few have ever been his equal.

The pinnacle of his craft was the creation of the *Crystal of Ciz*,

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Ashtark the Wizened, a dead magician

Bosworth, leader of local witch coven and confidant of Duke Orbal

Clishma-Claver, apprentice to Hazraadial, currently hiding from his master after stealing the *Crystal of Ciz*

Crum-by, a tiny, self-aware poppet animated by the power of the Crystal

Happney, Majordomo to Duke Orbal of Cuirnif, gatekeeper with little time for nonsense

Ermin, wife of Olivier, keeper of the kitchens at the Thirsty Otter

Gulch, an aged Cobalt Mountain witch

Hamish, aged doorman of Manse Ashtark

Hazraadial, a magician and rightful owner of the *Crystal of Ciz*

Ianjul, an elderly toymaker

Mombi, leader of the Cobalt Mountain coven; follows Kraan

Piepowder, leader of the merchants' guild

Singra, a young Cobalt Mountain witch

Vernicchio the Grandiloquent, a powerful magician staying at the Thirsty Otter Inn

Olivier, self-proclaimed "ossifier" and owner of the Thirsty Otter

an arcane artifact of power that allowed for the creation of vat-things like none seen before, or since. He claimed that it was due to his gifted "children" that he was able to create such marvels and wrest knowledge of strange spells from the void. Upon his disappearance, the *Crystal of Ciz* was the focus of numerous reality-bending battles before it was lost to history.

Crafted by Teus Treviolus, the *Crystal of Ciz* is capable of bestowing animation upon otherwise inanimate objects as well as greatly enhancing the creation of vat-things. It is powerful enough that it warps already existing vat-things. Unbeknownst to Treviolus, the Crystal powers itself with the phlogiston life force of living beings. Over the course of an aeon, the Crystal fed upon Treviolus, leading to the wizard being absorbed into the Crystal, his soul being devoured while enervating the Crystal's powers.

The shining diaglyph was passed from master to apprentice, from rival to rival, throughout history until its significance as anything other than a marker during a game of Zampolio was wholly forgotten. None of the magicians who have possessed the stone since have understood how to access its power, until Hazraadial managed to trigger its minor effect, coaxing a sugar bowl into dancing animation. Armed with a rudimentary understanding of its secrets, Hazraadial planned on presenting it tomorrow evening as part of the Ex-

position, in his quest for greater glory and fame. Hazraadial boasted to several “close confidants” who were equally indiscrete, and rumors reached the ears of many outside his inner circle, including those of Ashtark the Wizened, who vowed to steal it away and unravel its secrets. While he achieved the former a mere three days ago—leaving Hazraadial none the wiser—it is the latter that has led to disaster.

Ashtark, having long sought to unravel the mysteries of the creation of vat-things, paid Hazraadial’s apprentice to “acquire” the Crystal for him. The diaglyph was brought to him 48 hours ago and he used his understanding of existential patterns to activate the *Crystal of Ciz*, while failing to grasp the danger it truly posed. Ashtark’s bloody remnants are all that remain of this once gifted magician, a victim of his own hubris.

Fortunately, Hazraadial’s apprentice, Clishma-Claver, is as tight-lipped as his master. Thus, as he has enjoyed his reward of coin, tidbits of information were let slip—enough to set the market abuzz with gossip and send him into hiding to avoid the wrath of his master. As crowds have made the pilgrimage to be present for the Exposition, so too have rivals for possession of the *Crystal of Ciz*. Witches from the Cobalt Mountains wish to sacrifice the Crystal as part of a greater infernal pact, while the head of the local merchants’ guild covets the Crystal for its value and has already lined up a buyer. Left unchecked, the animated forces of Ashtark’s manse will spill out across the countryside, seeking to deliver further power to the Crystal until its integrity fails—spectacularly.

Caught between an angry wizard and greedy cutthroats, the PCs must unmask the thief, burgle the desired bauble, and deal with an unfolding disaster, all while avoiding alerting potential rivals.

Time is running out and, while a grateful magician is a good ally, a humiliated magician is a minacious foe.

VANCIAN GLOSSARY

Andelwipe: a vulgar pejorative.

Belch-wort: a bitter-leaved plant that, when brewed with nuxium creates a frothy, beer-like tea of immense potency (bordering on toxicity).

Birkwood: a wood used in the manufacture of swords.

Blister-bush: A plant akin to terrestrial poison ivy. The leaf-borne toxin is spread through skin contact and is easily passed by casual contact.

Dyssac: a liquor distilled from various wild-growing herbs, conveying a spicy, minty flavor, not unlike strega.

Eer-light: a sinister or eerie glow.

Garwort: a plant whose leaves are used to make thatch.

Grue: a dangerous forest-dweller, a cross between man, bat, and other night-wandering creatures.

Mangoneel: An edible species of eel, scarlet in color.

ADVENTURE HOOKS AND COMPLICATIONS



ere are some suggestions for introducing this adventure into an ongoing campaign with established PCs:

- The PCs are known to an associate of Hazraadial and, as luck would have it, they are in the area for the festival. He summons them to join in the preview of his entry, and then requests they take up the recovery of his property. As enticement, he offers a hitherto unknown spell in return for their efforts.
- While taking their evening’s repast, the PCs overhear a local merchant speaking of the theft of a magical bauble of great value that was to be unveiled at the Grand Exposition of Marvels in the town of Cuirnif. He then leans over the table and conspiratorially offers his companion 50 terces for procurement of the Crystal.
- Vernicchio the Grandiloquent has heard tell of some of the PCs’ prior undertakings. Learning that they have been spotted in Cuirnif, he dispatches a runner to invite them to join him at the Thirsty Otter. In addition to any reward, he will pay for their food and lodgings at the inn.

Despite the best intentions of the PCs to avoid additional trouble, there are a number of animus which may increase the PC’s difficulty in accomplishing their goals. The following complications may be introduced at the discretion of the judge:

- Devoured wizardly morsel: The PC finds himself instructed to aid Hazraadial so that his involuntary patron may resolve an old debt. Should Hazraadial not receive the stone in time for the Grand Exposition, such failure will have consequences.
- Sardonic wit: Piepowder, of the Merchants’ Guild, is well acquainted with the subject of the PC’s barbs. When first encountering Piepowder, have the PC make a Luck check, with success indicating that Piepowder is friendly toward the PC, as he dislikes the subject. Failure results in the PC and their companions being removed by any means that Piepowder may eject them from his presence (whether by guards, manipulation, or blatant falsehoods is at the judge’s discretion).
- Tactless buffoon: The Grand Exposition has drawn travelers from both far and wide. This includes citizens of the village the PC so offended. While they cannot arrest the PC, they will express their displeasure should the PC be found in the open. Any time the PC exits a building, have them make a Luck check; failure resulting in being spotted and pelted with a shower of stones and vegetables for 1 point of damage before the villagers scatter into the crowded streets.
- Vituperation curse: Any PC so marked will find themselves unwelcome at the camp of the Cobalt Mountain witches and will be targeted by the small coven while in the town. This takes the form of minor curses being cast in the PC’s direction. However, should the PC take

this opportunity to make appropriate amends (judge's discretion), the animus could be resolved, and the curse lifted. Such reparations should not be simple, and it should be quite humbling.

The judge will no doubt discern that a significant number of vat creations are detailed in the adventure, as befits the

nature of an artifact such as the *Crystal of Ciz*. As well, one or more of the PCs may themselves be vat-things. Interactions with vat-born NPCs and creatures may need to be adjusted accordingly, due to the vat-thing PCs' protean quintessence class feature, which allows PCs to automatically recognize other vat-born.

ADVENTURE START



he PCs have arrived in Cuirnif the morning before the Grand Exposition. The markets are bustling with travelers who have come to witness all the spectacle. The Five Owls Inn is packed to capacity, and a sea of tents, lean-tos, and yurts line the outskirts of the town. There has been great buzz about Hazraadial's anticipative (and failed) viewing. Should the PCs wish, they will have no trouble gaining admission to see Hazraadial.

If not, there are other interested parties in town seeking the *Crystal of Ciz* who can provide additional opportunities to set the PCs onto the trail.

LOCALES OF INTEREST BOSWORTH'S HOME

Despite the reputed power and political connections of the witch Bosworth, this home is a modest wooden structure with a simple garwort roof to repel the elements, and but a short distance from the Thirsty Otter. From the outside there is not much to indicate that the resident within is uncommon save for, perhaps, the abundance of herbs growing in window boxes. Bosworth is relatively easy-going unless threatened. Getting her to open up to the PCs could be difficult, unless there is a witch among the PCs. If there is

PERSONAE INTERACTIONS

Many of the personae encountered have listed goals and tells to aid in bringing the NPCs more fully to life. *Goals:* Judges should keep the NPC's goals in mind, and how the PCs may be perceived as being able to aid or hinder such motivations. If the PC seems able to favorably exert influence in favor of the goal, they receive a +2 bonus on Personality checks involving that NPC. Should they be seen as a threat to the NPC's goal, they receive a -1 penalty to Personality checks involving the NPC, while those seen as directly opposed to the goal suffer a -1d penalty.

Tells: These conversational ticks and quirks come into play when the NPC is lying or attempting to otherwise manipulate the PCs. Consistent use of these characterizations may allow the players to pick up on some NPC motivations without a roll of the dice.

Rhetorical deeds: Personality checks involving NPC interactions are subject to a wayfarer's rhetorical die which may greatly swing the outcome of any encounter.

a sympathetic witch, bound to the Murthe, Bosworth will be more cordial. She will invite the PCs to be seated and even offers them gingle-berry juice before opening up to the witch, directing her information to them, but not concealing it from the others. Otherwise it requires a successful DC 15 Personality check to gain her trust. If the party contains a witch sworn to Kraan, Bosworth will tell the PCs nothing.

Bosworth: Init +0; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4) or spell/curse; AC 10; HD 4d5; hp 10; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP curses, spells (+4 spell check), *transfer vitality*; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3; AL N; Crit II/d10.

Curses: (minor) *curse of discomfiture*, *curse of helplessness*; (moderate) *curse of amelioration*, *curse of everlasting tedium*. Spells: (level 1) *darkness*, *ensqualm*, *paralysis*, *second sight*, *word of command*; (level 2) *locate object*, *Spell of the Tireless Legs*.

What Bosworth knows:

- Bosworth is wholly unaware of the *Crystal of Ciz* but has had a warning from the Murthe of a potential for great disaster at the Exposition. Bosworth hesitates to warn the Duke for fears twofold. The first is a matter of optics; witches warning of a threat are often viewed as the source of the threat. The second is that of being wrong and appearing to have attempted to ruin the Grand Exposition. [TRUE]
- She is certain that the arrival of the Cobalt Mountain coven is the source of her impending dread. [FALSE]
- She will readily point out the location of the Cobalt Mountain coven's camp to those whom she trusts to remove them from the area. She is also aware that the members of the coven currently present in Cuirnif are a relatively small representation—a triumvirate of mother, maiden, and crone. She considers it a personal favor (worth introduction to Duke Orbal) if someone were to remove the Cobalt Mountain coven. She doesn't care about how it is done. [TRUE]

COBALT WITCH'S CAMP

In a vacant plot of land near the estate of Duke Orbal, a trio of simple wagons sit, "entriangling" a camp consisting of three simple lean-tos situated around a central cook fire. The wagons are humble, made of unadorned wood, and weathered by both elements and age. The mares cropping at nearby grass are similar—older (although obviously well cared-for) animals worn down by a lifetime of service. The witches are most often seen in the camp together, but patiently waiting will allow the PCs to question any of the witches individually. If questioned as a group, the witches are more insular,

not wanting to risk any loss of face within the group dynamic. Their tendency to keep quiet, and their utterance of terse, short answers makes their replies less useful. Personality checks made while questioning more than one witch at a time suffer a -1d penalty.

The witches will be fair in any dealings agreed to, keeping to the strictest letter of the agreement, not any intended spirit—demonic pacts teach one care in what one agrees to. Dealing falsely, or in bad faith, with any of the witches, will bring down that witch's most powerful curse. No matter how minor the breach of faith, the response from the witch will be immediate and without moderation. Should someone betray more than one member of the Cobalt Mountain coven, they will receive multiple curses as appropriate.

MOMBI (MOTHER)

Leader of a coven dedicated to the service of Kraan, the flaming-haired witch Mombi is suspicious of outsiders. She brought the triumvirate here in hopes of returning with some new marvel or wisdom to share with the coven. Haughty and sure of herself, her behavior has driven a wedge between herself and her predecessor, Gulch. Convincing Mombi to open up requires a DC 15 Personality check or a "donation" of 10 terces. Once satisfied with the "worthiness" of the PCs, Mombi will happily sell information: 2 terces for a yes or no question, 5 for an involved answer. Mombi will subtly, but noticeably, favor anyone present wearing the color blue versus those who do not. She will direct more comments toward them and, if they are her questioner, will give information at half-price.

Goals: Amass wealth and the power which accompanies it. Knowledge is power, power has a price.

Tells: Audibly sucks on her teeth.

Mombi: Init +0; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4) or spell/curse; AC 11; HD 3d4; hp 9; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP curses, spells (+4 spell check, sympathetic spells*), *transfer vitality*; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C; Crit II/d10.

Curses: (minor) *curse of doubt*, *curse of helplessness*; (moderate) *curse of prosopagnosia*.

Spells: (level 1) *darkness**, *ensqualm*, *paralysis**, *second sight*, *word of command*; (level 2) *locate object*, *Spell of the Tireless Legs*.

What Mombi knows:

- Duke Orbal is concerned that this Grand Exposition will end in personal embarrassment. It has been many years since the last, and that one ended ... poorly. [TRUE]
- There is a man hiding in an empty warehouse on the northeast corner of the market. [TRUE]
- Great magics are awakening, such as has not been seen in many generations. Power hangs over the Exposition like a storm cloud, preparing to unleash a peal of thunder. [TRUE]
- A local witch, Bosworth, recently came into possession of an item of great power. [FALSE]

SINGRA (MAIDEN)

With unruly, straw-like, pale orange hair going in all directions, the youngest of the witches *seems* docile and harmless. This façade has served her well, leading many to underestimate her. Appearing meek and dim, she has manipulated many secrets from those who would seek to question her, often learning much while giving away nothing. Gentle coaxing, and a DC 13 Personality check vs. DC 13 will get Singra to open up (if the questioner has red hair, showing possible kinship with the Cobalt Mountain-folk, the PC gains a +1d bonus on the check).

Goals: To lead the coven and, until then, to absorb as much knowledge as possible.

Tells: Looks away "in thought".

Singra: Init +0; Atk dagger +0 melee (1d4) or spell/curse; AC 11; HD 1d4; hp 2; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP curses, spells (+1 spell check, sympathetic spells*), *transfer vitality*; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +3; AL C; Crit II/d8.

Curses: (minor) *curse of doubt*.

Spells: *darkness**, *ensqualm*, *second sight*, *word of command*.

What Singra knows:

- A local witch seeks to do her, and her sisters, harm. [TRUE]
- A magician staying at the Thirsty Otter has a grudge against the Merchants' Guild and is vocal in his displeasure. [TRUE]
- One of the PCs is fated to die within a fortnight. [FALSE – but potentially a self-fulfilling prophecy]

GULCH (CRONE)

Gulch is the former leader of the coven, now appointed to the position of wisewoman and advisor to Mombi. Truthfully, Gulch is not interested in her role at all, and is bitter at having been forced to step down into the role of the Crone. Much like her master, she jealously shrouds her wisdom, only doling out secrets when she feels it to be in her interest. She is uninterested in material wealth, and woe be to any who would dare threaten her.

With shaven head showing only an orange and white fuzz of growth, and skin drawn tightly over her features, Gulch appears corpselike, her visage accompanied by foul temperament. She only gives straight answers to direct questions, and only if she benefits with knowledge that will continue to elevate her station (such as a new curse, or perhaps the written workings of a spell that she may trade later for even greater power). Once her interest is piqued, questions require a DC 20 Personality check, with the difficulty modified by the value of the benefit to Gulch:

- A piece of trivia: -1
- A piece of interesting trivia: -2
- A damaging secret about someone: -3

- A curse, unknown to Gulch: -4
- A damaging secret about the PC: -5
- A damaging secret about someone in power: -7
- Pages from a spellbook, containing a level 1 spell: -11
- Pages from a spellbook, containing a level 2 spell: -12
- Pages from a spellbook, containing a level 3 spell: -13
- Pages from a spellbook, containing a level 4 spell: -14
- Pages from a spellbook, containing a level 5 spell: -15
- Immediately pledging one's soul to Kraan: -20

Goals: To hoard wisdom.

Tells: None.

Gulch: Init +0; Atk dagger +3 melee (1d4) or spell/curse; AC 10; HD 5d5; hp 18; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP curses, spells (+7 spell check, sympathetic spells*), *transfer vitality*; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +2; AL C; Crit II/d12.

Curses: (minor) *curse of doubt*, *curse of helplessness*; (moderate) *curse of blight*, *curse of prosopagnosia*; (major) *curse of dotage*.

Spells: (level 1) *comprehend languages*, *darkness**, *ensqualm*, *flaming hands*, *paralysis**, *read magic*, *second sight*, *word of command*; (level 2) *locate object*, *scorching ray*, *Spell of the Tireless Legs*, *strength*; (level 3) *true name*.

What Gulch knows:

- Gulch knows everything that is going on. Between silent observations and scrying of events, she knows of the theft of the Crystal, where Clishma-Claver is hiding, where the Crystal is, what its powers are, etc. In the matter of the *Crystal of Ciz*, she is near omniscient, but her knowledge comes with a cost. The more knowledge is requested, the more she will demand up front (up to the dedication of PC's soul to Kraan — payable NOW).

MANSE HAZRAADIAL

Manse Hazraadial is a reputedly sized and lavishly maintained holding to the northwest, overlooking the main plaza as well as the Grand Exposition. During the day, servants bustle about, maintaining the grounds. In the evening, the grounds are patrolled by a handful of guards. Their role is to keep away the riffraff: beggars, supplicants, and mere curiosity seekers. Those who declare that they have business with Hazraadial, any time day or night, will be immediately escorted into the manse's grand parlor. Those with legitimate business find Hazraadial wide awake and alert at any time; those without legitimate business discover it foolhardy to draw the ire of a magician.

If questioned, the servants are certain that witchcraft is responsible, directing their suspicion toward a local group of witches led by a woman named Bosworth. She advises the Duke, and the servants claim that this is why she and her followers cast curses with near impunity. Given the chance, the servants will tell all sorts of wild tales of those who have been cursed by Bosworth's coven.

HAZRAADIAL

Hazraadial is an aged magician, and it shows. His smug face details a map of the passage of years, and few magicians would be so cocksure of their abilities as to debase themselves by searching for their own stolen property — it would diminish one's reputation to be seen running about like some sort of ... commoner. His pomposity is readily apparent in his choice of words and their inflection, but his desire for the return of the stone quickly reins in any disdain he holds for the PCs. The return of the Crystal is worth up to 500 terces to the magician, although he is open to non-monetary counter-offers (such as the teaching of a known spell to a single magician — possibly the rare *Ashtark's Autophagic Animation* [found in Appendix A]) so long as the haggling is done courteously and the stone promptly returned to him.

Hazraadial: Init +2; Atk dagger +2 melee (1d4) or dagger +4 missile fire (1d4); AC 12; HD 7d6; hp 28; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d16; SP memorized spells (as CL 7, see below), *force of will*, indefatigable will; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will N/A; AL C; Crit I/d10.

Indefatigable Will: Due to his long ages of existence and labyrinthine mental pathways, Hazraadial is immune to effects requiring Will saves.

Rote memorized spells: *chill touch* [17], *choking cloud* [19], *color spray* [12], *Ekim's mystical mask* [22], *enlarge* [18], *magic shield* [19], *Panguire's Triumphant Displasms* [15].

Other known spells: (level 1) *color spray* [12], *feather fall* [13], *flaming hands* [14], *magic missile* [31]; (level 2) *Ashtark's Autophagic Animation* [14].

What Hazraadial knows:

- While he will not disclose the properties of the *Crystal of Ciz* (idly mentioning how dangerous it is for the uninitiated to tamper with such things), he is perfectly willing to describe it. The Crystal, a diagraph carved from milky blue hemimorphite, has a faint glow and, if held, causes an "unpleasant sensation". [TRUE]
- Direct contact causes one's flesh to uncontrollably (and most certainly harmlessly) twitch for the duration of the contact. While unpleasant, this seems benign. [TRUE]
- Almost off-handedly, he will mention that his "young apprentice", Clishma-Claver has not been seen since leaving for the Thirsty Otter. [TRUE]
- Hazraadial believes Clishma-Claver far too stupid to have successfully purloined the Crystal but, begrudgingly admits that Clishma-Claver may have been involved. He describes his apprentice as a young sandy-haired andelwibe better suited for the simpler tasks of apprenticeship (scrubbing floors, scullery chores, and the like) rather than the instructional portion. Overfondness for drink has left the apprentice repeatedly suffering from apple palsy, unable to perform the simplest of chores without the loudest of whining. [TRUE]
- This is all, obviously, due to the apprentice's overfondness for drink. [FALSE]

THE GRAND Exposition

City of Cuirnif
100ft

MANSE HAZRADIAL

MERCHANTS GUILD

EAST WAREHOUSE

N

MARKET

BOSWORTH HOME

THE Thirsty Otter Inn

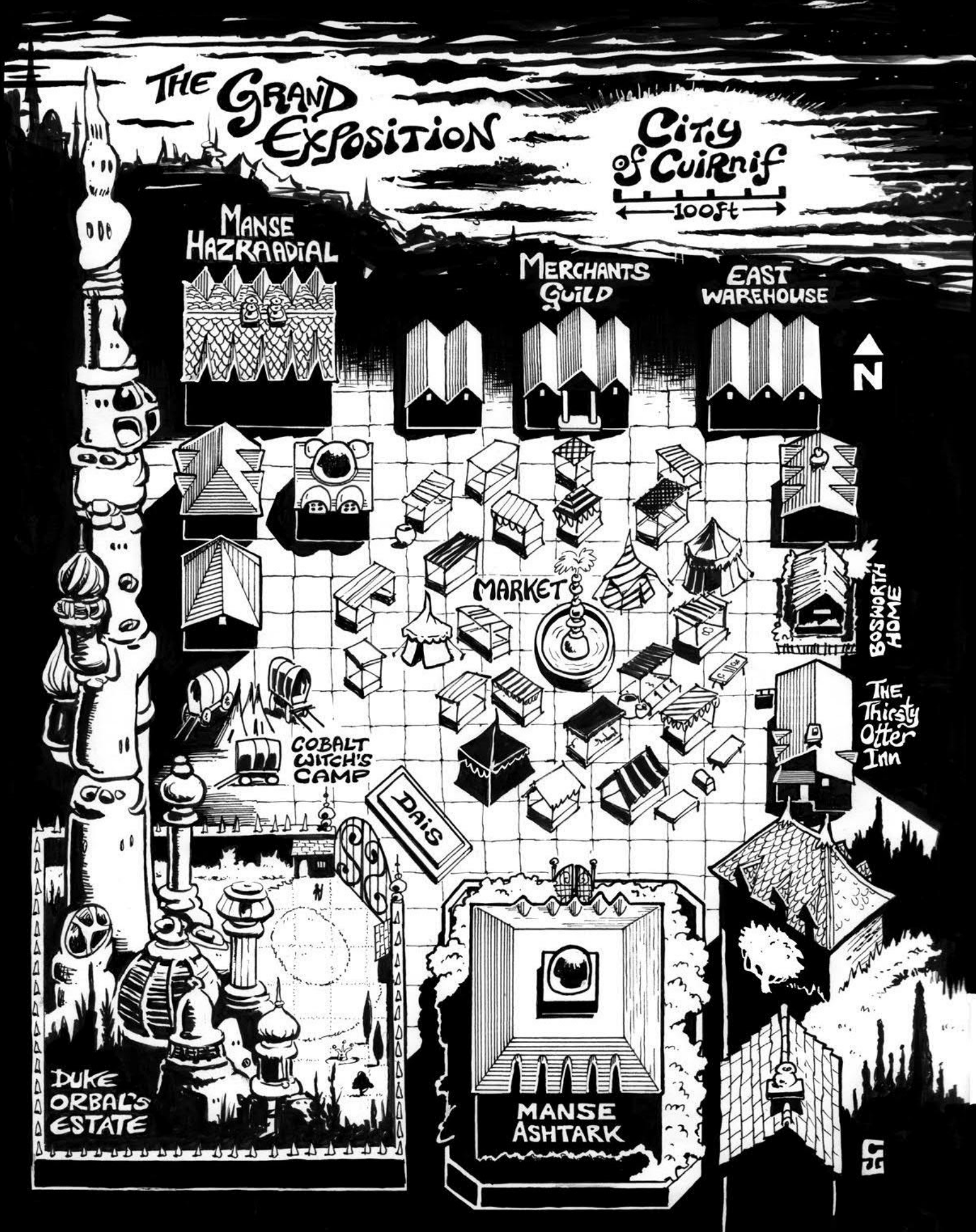
COBALT WITCH'S CAMP

DAI'S

MANSE ASHTARK

DUKE ORBAL'S ESTATE

55



MARKETPLACE

Centered around the plaza square's fountain, the marketplace is a riotous sea of multicolored tents and wooden stalls, and the hawking of merchants fills the air. Jewelry, pottery, freshly cooked mangoneel pies, and other "delicacies" are well represented here amidst the rows. Uniformed members of the Duke's guard patrol the market, eyes alert for thieves and pickpockets.

The merchants will happily show their wares to anyone who shows an interest (or pulse). Outsiders stopping to examine the wares of one will lead to nearby merchants gathering and politely stating that they are "next". It is the friendliest high-pressure environment one can imagine and disengaging from a group of merchants without being overtly rude requires a DC 15 Personality check. Even then, a successful Luck check is required to escape before spending a minimum of 2d7 groats on commemorative gewgaws and bric-à-brac.

If a PC is making a willing purchase (as opposed to being browbeaten into one), the merchant involved will happily share a little of the marketplace gossip—one tidbit to a customer of course.

What the merchants know:

- Three days ago, Hazraadial's apprentice, Clishma-Claver, came into some money and was spending freely. [TRUE]
- When questioned, he was cagey about the origin of his newfound wealth, instead speaking of his plans to travel. [TRUE]
- "This charm/ring/feather will lead you to him and it only costs...." [FALSE]
- Clishma-Claver's brother manages several of the merchant guild's warehouses. [TRUE]

Those with the fortitude to fully explore the marketplace note that one stall is closed, with no hawker to be seen. It is the tent of Ianjul the toymaker, known for his crafting of poppets and children's toys. Ianjul guards a secret, one he hopes to exploit in order to make a fortune.

IANJUL

The toymaker is a genial-looking man in his later years. With eyes blood-shot, and hair unkempt, his demeanor is suspicious as well as nervous. This disheveled appearance does not reflect the fastidiousness of the hand-crafted toys within the tent. At heart, Ianjul is not a cruel man, and keeping Crum-by here is both an act of protection as well as greed, his better nature warring with his desire for riches. A successful DC 5 Personality check will start the guilt-ridden man opening up about his secret. Ianjul is protective of Crum-by but, once he has explained his story, allows the PCs to speak to the poppet (for the price of 1 groat apiece).

Goals: To unravel the workings of Crum-by and become rich.

Tells: Looks toward an object draped with a cloth (Crum-by).

Ianjul: Init -3; Atk chisel -2 melee (1d4); AC 9; HD 1d5; hp 3; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref -1, Will -1; AL N; Crit I/d4.

What Ianjul knows:

- Two nights ago, the toymaker found a miraculous doll, unlike any he'd ever seen. One would almost think it to be alive. [TRUE]
- He brought the poppet back to his workshop, to see how it worked. There was no sign of the toy's owner. [TRUE]
- He is near to unraveling the mysteries of the poppet. [FALSE]

CRUM-BY

Once the beloved doll of Ashtark's daughter, Crum-by was packed away after her passing and forgotten about. A simple doll, made from sewn cloth filled with straw, and bearing only crude features and round hands and feet, it is clad in a pullover smock made of stained vellum. Crum-by has been traumatized by events it witnessed within the tower and refuses to return under any circumstances. It will speak freely to those who question it with kindness.

Goals: To unravel the mystery of its place in the universe.

Tells: Crum-by is wholly innocent, not yet having learned to lie. It is wholly open in its responses.

Crum-by: Init +2; Atk fists +4 melee (1d3-1) or bite +4 melee (1d2) or spell; AC 10; HD 3d3; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spell (*sleep* 1/day at result 18-19 as CL 1), immune to mind-altering spells, will not attack other creatures of the vats unless in self-defense; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +2; AL L; Crit I/d4.

What Crum-by knows:

- It awakened three days ago, packed inside a box. [TRUE]
- It does not know why it can speak, nor how it is "alive". [TRUE]
- There were large things, made of flesh, that awakened and descended from the floors above. [TRUE]
- After the screaming ended, the broken body of a man was dragged upstairs through the manse, followed by a splashing noise. [TRUE]
- Other things came up the stairs, made of wood and more akin to Crum-by. The creatures from above and below came to some form of truce. [TRUE]
- Upon discovering Crum-by, the creatures from below attempted to capture him but he managed to escape. They were unwilling to leave the manse in pursuit. [TRUE]
- There is a single servant remaining in the manse, allowed to live, in hopes that he will somehow provide freedom to "the others". Crum-by is uncertain why he remains. [TRUE]
- He "feels" that the hallways at the top are somehow dangerous. [TRUE]

With no other prospects, Crum-by will remain with Ianjul. Awakened by the *Crystal of Ciz*, the energies will only ani-

mate the doll for 1 weeks' time before its intelligence fades and it returns to being a simple toy.

MERCHANTS' GUILD

This squat building, flanked by warehouses, has an entranceway bounded by tall columns, the sole exterior decorative detail. Within is a labyrinth of byzantine paths that could only be designed via bureaucracy. Finding Piepowder's office without the detailed instructions provided by Vernicchio requires a successful Luck check by whomever is leading the way. Failure results in becoming lost for 1d3 hours, unable to even find an exit to the building.

PIEPOWDER

Corpulent, slovenly, and wearing boots made from the hide of a bearded thawn for which he paid a "princely sum" (actually counterfeits made of pincer lizard hide), Piepowder simply oozes smugly self-assured authority within his domain. While a bully, he is also wise enough to not directly interfere in the ways of magicians and would never openly move against one. If discovered, he will begrudgingly try to buy his way out of trouble, offering a golden centum (each, if pressed) to be left alone. If he thinks that PCs might be up for the task, he is "willing" to purchase the Crystal (haggling as high as 25 golden centums).

Goals: Wealth, he wants all of it.

Tells: Wringing his hands in his lap.

Piepowder: Init -2; Atk fist -1 melee (1d3 subdual); AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 4; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP bluster; SV Fort -2, Ref -2, Will +5; AL C; Crit I/d4.

Bluster: When angered, Piepowder angrily shouts meaningless phrases and retorts, causing fear (DC 12 Will negates).



What Piepowder knows:

- He has trafficked in "family heirlooms of indeterminate origin" in the past (fenced stolen goods). [TRUE]
- He received an offer of 50 terces from a longtime client, wanting a crystal possessed by Magician Hazraadial. [FALSE]
- He received an offer of (any number less than 50 golden centums) from a longtime client seeking the *Crystal of Ciz*. [FALSE]
- The magician Vernicchio offered him 50 golden centums to have the *Crystal of Ciz* "quietly procured – no questions asked". [TRUE]
- He couldn't find anyone willing to attempt to break into Hazraadial's Manse to steal the stone. He now fears retribution from Vernicchio. [TRUE]
- In the past, he has used concealed areas in the East warehouse to hide less than reputable merchandise but isn't hiding anything there currently. [TRUE]

ORBAL'S ESTATE

The opulent estate of Duke Orbal is surrounded by a high wall broken by a massive iron gate. Uniformed guards stand at the gatehouse and are seen moving about the well-manicured grounds. One cannot easily enter the grounds without an introduction and intruders found within the grounds are treated as assassins, executed on the spot under the Duke's authority. There are two guards at the gatehouse, three roaming the grounds, and ten inside the home itself.

Guards (15): Init +2; Atk longsword +2 melee (1d8+1) or dagger +2 melee (1d4+1) or shortbow +1 missile fire (1d6); AC 14; HD 2d12; hp 18 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; AL L; Crit III/d8.

HAPPNEY

Those in the presence of the Duke's majordomo face the undeniable prodigiousness of his presence (Personality 19). Happney is iron-willed, with authoritative manner, and refuses to allow Duke Orbal to repeat past mistakes. It has been some years since the Duke last hosted a Grand Exposition of Marvels to cure himself of boredom of the mundane, while also seeking to increase his social standing among his peers. It backfired horribly due to the actions of a scoundrel who fled town with more haste than dignity. Despite the Duke's almost childlike desire to be entertained by the most marvelous of things, or perhaps because of it, Happney is highly suspicious and absolutely forbids access to his master. If told rumors involving the Grand Exposition, Happney will assume that this involves a plot to humiliate the Duke and will become distant, coldly blaming the bearer of the bad news. His wrath may be assuaged with the recovery of the stolen item and its return to Hazraadial. Since they brought it to his attention, he will ensure that Duke Orbal holds the PCs personally responsible for said recovery.

Goals: To protect the reputation of the Duke and to manage his household.

Tells: A tight-lipped grimace.

Happney: Init +0; Atk longsword +4 melee (1d8+1) or longbow +4 missile fire (1d6); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 12; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP inspire, retinue; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; AL L; Crit III/d8.

Inspire: When in Happney's presence, the Duke's guards receive a +1d bonus on all attack rolls.

Retinue: When meeting strangers, the majordomo is accompanied, at all times, by two members of the Duke's guard (see above)

What Happney knows:

- Nothing. [TRUE]

THE THIRSTY OTTER

Beyond a massive wooden door (requiring Strength 9 or greater to pull open), this venue is a popular watering hole for locals, carrying a positive reputation among travelers as well. Despite its age, heavily scarred table and bar tops, and rough appearance, the inn's clientele keeps the Thirsty Otter relatively safe and, when it cannot, the retired soldiers who serve tables are generally up to the task. Local thieves count the locale as "off-limits", preferring to have a place to drink and play Zampolio over the small gains from lifting a few coins from guests. It isn't that nothing ever happens here; just that when it does, it is swiftly resolved with overwhelming brutality. About twice a year, the battered corpse of a sticky-fingered newcomer is discretely carted out the back.

During the Grand Exposition, the inn is open around the clock, with Olivier manning the bar to the point of exhaustion. Finding a room here is possible, but finding a table requires a successful Luck check.

Thirsty Otter Area 1 – Main Hall: No matter the time of visit, the main hall of the inn is filled with celebrants drinking to the Grand Exposition. At any given time within the main hall there are 2d20+10 barflies, 1d7+5 wealthy visitors, and 1d3+2 servers.

Barflies: Init -2; Atk fist -1 melee (1d3-1 subdual) or chair -1 melee (1d6-1); AC 9; HD 1d4; hp 2 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort -1, Ref -2, Will -1; AL Varies; Crit I/d4.

Wealthy visitors: Init +2; Atk short sword +4 melee (1d6); AC 11; HD 2d7; hp 7 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N; Crit I/d4.

Servers: Init +2; Atk tankard +1 melee (1d3+2) or tray +1 melee (1d4+2) or headbutt +2 melee (1d3+1 subdual); AC 12; HD 2d8; hp 10 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +0; AL L; Crit III/d8.

VERNICCHIO THE GRANDILOQUENT

There is a 75% chance, at any time, that sitting in a chair near the fire is Vernicchio the Grandiloquent, sipping a small glass of dyssac. Used to staying in places of luxury (if asked, he prefers the Five Owls), he is loudly "laying low" here. He can be heard harassing a merchant, demanding a meeting with Piepowder. His demeanor has caused a few close calls with the locals, but they are loath to tangle with a magician.

He has flashed a serious amount of coin that, in most places, would get his throat cut.

Goals: Self-aggrandizement, acquisition of the *Crystal of Ciz*.

Tells: Strokes one side of his mustache.

Vernicchio the Grandiloquent: Init +0; Atk dagger -1 melee (1d4-1) or spell; AC 10; HD 4d4; hp 13; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP memorized spells (as CL 4, see below), *force of will*; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; AL C, Crit I/d10.

Rote memorized spells: (level 1) *cantrip* [14], *choking cloud* [17], *flaming hands* [22], *read magic* [18], *sleep* [14]; (level 2) *arcane affinity* (pyromancy), *scorching ray* [19].

Vernicchio is a man wholly in love with the sound of his own voice. He speaks slowly, picking his way through ever more grandiloquent turns of phrase, every line dripping with bloviation and self-puffery. His level of self-importance is reflected by his treatment of the "little people"—he can still be "impressed" by the capabilities of "lesser magicians", and a suitable show of talent could well win his trust. The casting of artful spells and minor spell effects, delicate uses of *cantrip*, or creative uses of other spells draw appreciation from him—he views gross displays of power gouache and unworthy of respect.

He is out of patience with Piepowder for failing to deliver the Crystal to him. During conversation, he will casually mention things like considering leveling the entirety of the marketplace as punishment for "his" boorishness. PCs willing to discretely procure the *Crystal of Ciz* for him will be rewarded handsomely. End of story. If Piepowder ends up taking the blame for it, even better.

What Vernicchio knows:

- Directions to the Merchants' Guild, and Piepowder's office within. [TRUE]
- Local witches are not overly fond of the coven visiting from the Cobalt Mountains. [TRUE]
- Piepowder was behind the theft of the Crystal, choosing to keep it for himself. [FALSE]

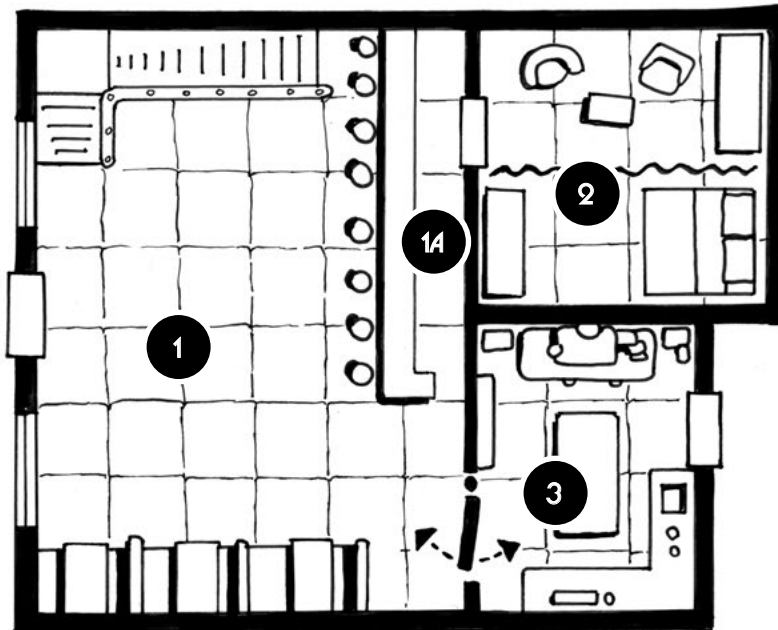
Thirsty Otter Area 1a – Bar: Eight stools line the bar where the innkeeper "holds court" with his inner circle of favored barflies. It is expected that any outsider sitting at the bar will give up his place to one of Olivier's regulars, a point the innkeeper will make clear should there be any question. Finding an empty seat at the bar requires a Luck check, while claiming it requires a DC 12 Personality check. Resting on the bar are several bowls of roasted parment nuts.

The door behind the bar leads to Olivier's living quarters and is kept locked (DC 10 Pick Lock check), Olivier and Ermin having the only keys. Behind the bar are several hooks, from two of which hang room keys.

OLIVIER "THE OSSIFIER"

The innkeeper, Olivier, is as heavily scarred as the bar he slowly wipes down—some would argue worse. Once well-muscled, his bald head sits atop a frame that long ago surrendered muscle to fat. A former guardsman of Duke Orbal,

THIRSTY OTTER INN



GROUND FLOOR

Olivier took a blade across the face in defense of his master, managing to single-handedly slay a pair of would-be assassins. His reward for service was the Thirsty Otter.

Goals: Lead a quiet life, avoid trouble when possible.

Tells: Briskly rubs his hand atop his head.

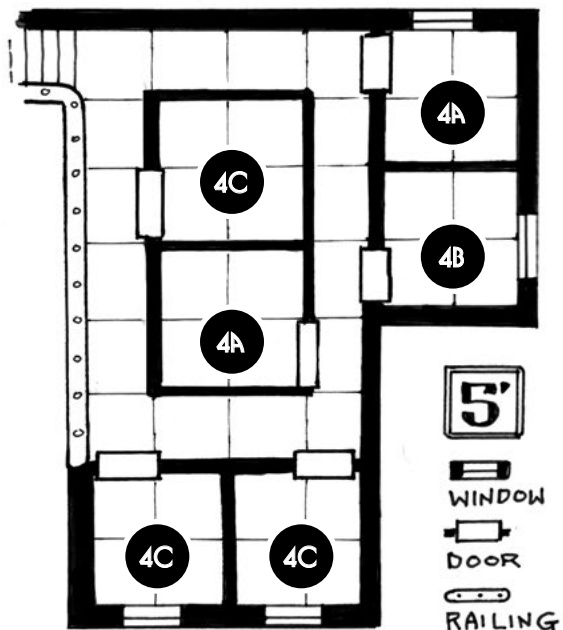
Olivier: Init +4; Atk fist +3 melee (1d3+2) or longsword +3 melee (1d8+3) or ceramic mug +2 missile fire (1d2 plus DC 10 Fort save or stunned for 1d3 rounds); AC 10; HD 3d12; hp 30; MV 25'; Act 1d20; SP popular; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; AL L; Crit IV/d16.

Popular: Any attack launched by (or against) Olivier immediately draws involvement of all staff present, as well as 2d5 barflies, immediately attacking the focus of Olivier's ire.

Olivier has his thumb on the pulse of all that happens within the tavern but is loath to disclose the activities of his regulars and their friends. A convincing argument, whether philosophical (DC 12 Personality check) or financial (judge's discretion), will get him to open up about recent events *if* the right questions are asked.

What Olivier knows:

- Clishma-Claver, Hazraadial's apprentice, hasn't been seen in three days. He was last seen having come in and spreading around a little more coin than usual and the fellow really cannot hold his drink. He was purchasing drinks for a few of the regulars and seemed uncommonly happy with himself. He mentioned leaving town. [TRUE]
- The apprentice is a man in his late 40s. [TRUE]
- A "noble" has come to visit Duke Orbal who is secretly an assassin who has killed someone close to the Duke. [FALSE]
- The head of the local merchants' guild, Piepowder, is a fat slob and overly full of himself. Olivier is certain that he has been involved in shipping stolen merchandise out of the region. [TRUE]



BALCONY FLOOR

- Local thieves had nothing to do with whatever is going on. They are "a good lot" who are more likely to honestly cheat you at cards than they are to cut your purse. [TRUE-ISH]

Thirsty Otter Area 2 – Living Quarters: This comfortable room, home to Olivier and his wife, is furnished with a sitting area and a curtained-off sleeping space. When not working in the kitchen, Ermin is here 50% of the time either knitting or sleeping and, when absent, she is likely visiting with friends elsewhere in town.

A locked strongbox (DC 15 Pick Lock check) beneath the bed holds the couple's life savings, 30 terces, as well as personal papers of no interest.

Thirsty Otter Area 3 – Kitchen: Small, neat, and well kept, the kitchen of the Thirsty Otter operates from sunup to sundown—no exceptions. When closed, both the double-hung door into the inn and the door leading outside are locked (DC 10 Pick Lock checks), with the door leading outside also being barred from within.

ERMIN

Work here mostly consists of making soup and slicing breads and cheeses. The fare at the Thirsty Otter is not luxurious but is at least of decent quality. A kettle on the stove brews belch-wort tea, while a nearby pot simmers with drist porridge. The kitchen is staffed by Olivier's wife, Ermin. If threatened, or attacked, Ermin seeks to escape while loudly summoning help.

Goals: To be successful and climb up the social ladder.

Tells: Her cheeks flush bright red.

Ermin: Init -1; Atk cheese knife -1 melee (1d4) or pot of scalding soup +0 missile fire (1d4, DC 14 Fort save for half); AC 9; HD 1d5; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; AL L; Crit I/d4.

What Ermin knows:

- A serious woman, and upstanding member of her local temple, Ermin knows nothing about the *Crystal of Ciz* and cares nothing for gossip of the current goings-on. [FALSE]
- A regular patron, Clishma-Claver, escaped his master (Ashtark the “useless”) and has resorted to sleeping in an old warehouse near the market. [TRUE]
- The Duke is close friends with a witch and counts her among his close advisors! [TRUE]

Thirsty Otter Area 4a – Occupied Rooms: Furnished with a bunkbed, wardrobe, side table, and mirror, each of these rooms is plain, but well kept. During the evening there is a 50% chance of the room being occupied by two wealthy visitors.

Wealthy visitors (2): Init +2; Atk short sword +4 melee (1d6); AC 11; HD 2d7; hp 7 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AL N; Crit I/d4.

If the room is searched, small trade goods and coin worth a total of 1d20+20 groats will be found amongst their personal belongings.

Thirsty Otter Area 4b – Vernicchio's Room: The quietest accommodation at the inn, this room costs an additional 1 groat per day (adding to Vernicchio's vexation while waiting for the Crystal). If Vernicchio is not found downstairs, he will be here, sleeping off his drink and disappointment. Never the most pleasant of people, he will be particularly rude if disturbed in his room without good reason (such as the Crystal).

Thirsty Otter Area 4c – Empty Rooms: These two rooms, while furnished and appointed the same as the other rooms, are considered the worst rooms available due to their proximity to the main hall below. At all hours, the raucous laughter and loud voices of the barflies can be heard here, making a “good night's rest” (as per healing rules) impossible.

WAREHOUSE

The interior of the warehouse is predominantly empty. A

few crates, long forgotten, sit in the center of the otherwise empty space. Close examination reveals that the crates are hinged to the floor and, with a small amount of effort, raise upward to reveal a hiding area below. Within this secret area hides Clishma-Claver.

CLISHMA-CLAVER

A worn looking man in his late forties, Clishma-Claver is not what one would commonly expect from a magician's apprentice. Despite being desirous of wielding great power, his progression with his studies has been sub-par, leaving him knowing only two spells—and not very well at that. Having had his master break his will long ago, it takes little to get him started talking (DC 7 Personality check) and even less to get him to hurriedly stop.

Goals: To get as far from Cuirnif, and Hazraadial as possible.

Tells: Forlornly wrings his hands.

Clishma-Claver: Init +0; Atk fist +0 melee (1d3 subdual) or spell; AC 10; HD 1d6; hp 3; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP memorized spells; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -2; AL C; Crit I/d8.

Rote memorized spells: *cantrip* [14], *Lugwiler's Dismal Itch* [14]

What Clishma-Claver knows:

- Ashtark hired him to steal the *Crystal of Ciz*, paying him 1 golden centum. [TRUE]
- He agreed to steal from his master because he was underappreciated for being such a wonderful and helpful apprentice. [FALSE]
- He stole the stone while his master, Hazraadial, was sleeping. [TRUE]
- He delivered the stone three days ago and went to the Thirsty Otter to celebrate. [TRUE]
- People started asking where he had obtained his sudden fortune, so he is laying low until he can find a ride with a departing merchant. [TRUE]

MANSE ASHTARK



anse Ashtark was never an opulent showplace, but its state of neglect and disrepair are obvious upon approach. Much of the grounds are overgrown with bull-thorn and blister-bush, making any attempts to surreptitiously approach difficult. Potential skin contact with blister-bush requires a DC 18 Fortitude save, with failure resulting in contagious blisters breaking out on the afflicted area (spreading by touch). Those so affected are at a -1 penalty to all die rolls involving mental acuity and will (such as spellcasting, Willpower saves, etc.) for 24 hours. Blister-bush spreads easily and if proper precautions aren't made to prevent its spread, it can easily infect others by touch. Any contact near the eyes causes burning irritation to

the eyes themselves, in addition to facial blisters, increasing the penalty on die rolls to -1d. A successful save reflects the PC avoiding contact. There is no immunity to blister-bush.

Ashtark's creations are not favorably inclined toward their now-dead creator. Despite this, the bond of the vat-born is not so simple as to be unwound by Ashtark's death. Never having been released, they find themselves trapped within the manse and are very protective of the manse and the vats above (that shall birth their brethren). Frustrated by the sheer determination of the manse's elderly doorman in refusing to grant them permission to leave, the guards have withdrawn to their appointed chamber (Area 1-5) and only emerge if sounds of intruders are heard from the front of the

manse, movement in the back half of the manse “obviously” being more of their brethren moving about. Should intruders be discovered, the guards immediately attack without pretense and fight to the death.

Area 1-1 – Entryway: *Once rich tapestries hang on the walls here, depicting scenes from the War of the Wizards and Witches. The displays of eldritch powers now droop forlorn and morose as the ravages of time have left them faded and frayed around the edges. There are two doors here, each once covered in gold leaf, most of which has flaked (or peeled) away. Additionally, there is a glittering white staircase that extends upward before spiraling even farther up into the darkness.*

The stairs here are made up of a non-slip surface, with tiny nubs that provide excellent traction for those ascending and descending. A quick glance at the stairs will note that there are hundreds of individual pieces covering each step but it is only on a close examination that the nature of the stair’s covering is revealed to be human teeth, hundreds upon hundreds of them per step...and humans only have 32 teeth.

Area 1-2 – Parlor: *Heavy stone walls are discolored where large and surely impressive portraits once hung, but now stripped away, leaving only a regretful reminder of the visages that once dominated the room. A heavy rug sprawls across the floor, while crude furnishings – certainly the cheapest that the marketplace could provide – squat atop it.*

Trapped within the room is the recently reanimated, desiccated corpse of a small, two-inch-long lizard. Having wandered into the manse and died twenty years before, it will stiffly attempt to escape rather than engage in combat. As a curiosity, if captured, it is worth 3 groats.

Reanimated anole corpse: Init -1; Atk bite +0 melee (1); AC 8; HD 1d3; hp 1; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP cannot inflict critical wounds; SV Fort -2, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N; Crit N/A.

Area 1-3 – Trophy Room: *Strange, misshapen figures stand on pedestals around the room, with thick layers of dust giving the immobile forms a ghostly appearance. While some of the creatures here are similar in size and shape to creatures found in nature, all are malformed – as if somehow incomplete.*

Close examination of the trophies here reveals that, despite appearing to be grue, bazil, and other dangerous fauna of the dying Earth, these creatures look more like they were molded and grown rather than having matured normally. Feathers are merely imprints made upon the flesh of the taxidermized form, as are scales and fur. There are all number of discrepancies, obvious to anyone passingly familiar with wildlife, that would have made these creatures non-viable prior to having been born, let alone grown to adulthood.

These creatures are, of course, the more advanced vat experiments of Ashtark the Wizen. While never having achieved his goal of replicating whole, viable life, he preserved and kept his attempts for study.

Area 1-4 – Doorman’s Room: *This small, forlorn chamber holds a threadbare chair with side table, a small wardrobe, and a sagging bed. There is no ornamentation of any sort.*

THE CRYSTAL OF CIZ

The *Crystal of Ciz* is a powerful item indeed, causing the flesh of any mortal holding it to twitch uncontrollably, but poses particular danger to vat-things. The nearer a vat-thing comes to the artifact, the more dangerous it is. Upon entering the tower, all vat-things must make a DC 15 Willpower save; failure indicates that the Crystal’s presence is warping the very energies of creation that birthed them. Vat-things who fail the save gain 1d3 points of Strength (to a maximum of 20) and lose 1d6 points of Personality (to a minimum of 1) – becoming more short-tempered and irritable.

Ascending to the 2nd and 3rd levels requires an identical check, and with each failure, the increasingly empowered vat-thing becomes more prone to outbreaks of blind rage. Should a vat-thing come into physical contact with the *Crystal of Ciz*, they automatically gain 2d6 points of Strength (to a maximum of 20) and lose 2d6 points of Personality (to a minimum of 1). Those whose Personality score is reduced to less than 3 enter a mindless rage and seek to kill all non- vat-born creatures that they encounter.

The stat losses and gains begin to fade once the vat-thing is distanced from the *Crystal of Ciz* by a mile or more. Once removed from its proximity, the vat-thing loses 1 point of Strength and recovers 1 point of Personality per hour, until both are returned to their original values.

HAMISH

If not found elsewhere, the ancient doorman will be found here, sitting patiently by the light of a small oil lamp. He is aware of what has befallen the master of the manse, but as the vat-born do not perceive him as a threat, he has been left undisturbed, allowed to carry out his duties and to answer the door to turn away would-be visitors. Hamish’s family has served in the households of magicians great and powerful for more than five generations, and have never set aside their duties to their manse – and the aged doorman has no intention of being the first. As doorman, he is the gatekeeper of the Ashtark Manse, and he will continue to carry out his role until his death; no amount of persuasion (mundane or magical) will convince him otherwise. To the chagrin of the lesser vat-born, as he is a servant, he is powerless to release them.

Goals: To faithfully serve the masters of Manse Ashtark, whomever they may be.

Tells: A stern glare, followed by harsh words.

Hamish, ancient doorman: Init -2; Atk fist +0 melee (1d3 subdual); AC 10; HD 1d10; hp 6; MV 20'; Act 1d20; SP harsh words; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +8; AL L; Crit I/d4.

Harsh words: While Hamish is ancient beyond belief, his presence belies the time when he was still a person of authority within the manse of a magician of great import. So powerful

is this aura of authority that his harshly intoned commands and rebukes carry near magical weight. Those so rebuked or ordered away must succeed at a DC 18 Willpower save or be forced to withdraw in shame from the old man's presence.

What Hamish knows: [All True]

- The master of Ashtark Manse was slain by the new masters of Ashtark Manse.
- Ashtark was killed the evening that a visitor named Clishma-Claver brought a package for the master.
- The new masters of the manse are the culmination of Ashtark's lifelong experiments.
- The new masters of the manse seem eager to leave but cannot do so without permission having been granted.
- As a servant of the manse, Hamish cannot grant permission for their departure.
- There are at least six strangely animated experiments within the manse, perhaps more.

Area 1-5 – Guard Room: *Decaying furnishings belie this as once having served as quarters for the servants of the house. The chamber is cramped with bunks, the manse's master having not allocated comfortable space – his means being wan or spent elsewhere.*

If not encountered before, by having been summoned by Hamish, the lesser vat-born serving as the manse's guardians will be found here, squatting among the squalid sagging bedframes and chairs.

Lesser vat-born (4): Init +1; Atk arm-blade +2 melee (1d8) and shield bash +2 melee (1d5); AC 15; HD 3d12+5; hp 25 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20+1d14; SP immune to mind-altering spells, will not attack other creatures of the vats unless in self-defense, shield bash; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; AL N; Crit M/d12.

Arm-blade: These guards have had their arms altered, warping them into a piercing blade and shield of gristle and bone.

Area 1-6 – Storeroom: *The air here is heady with the aroma of fragrant woods, a large stack of which have long since given up their moisture and value to decay. Diminutive bins on either side of the room hold small scrap pieces, looking to have been recently hewn, and still having some quality.*

Cursory examination of the large stack of wood will reveal it to be fake, merely a shell meant to conceal a secret door beyond. Even if not directly examined, a successful Luck check by any PC searching the room will reveal the same.

Area 1-7 – Servant's Workshop: *An ill-cared for wood-working shop contains varying sizes of humanoid figures, carved from exotic birkwood, and scattered about. Most are obviously quite old, the smooth, featureless figures ranging from several inches up to five feet in height. The wood of these figures is dried with age and large fissures run through them. On a far worktable though, a trio of two-foot figures sit, looking to have been carved more recently. These poppets have rudimentary spots for eyes, and a small carved slash for a mouth.*

These figures were crafted by lesser vat-born (currently sitting in Area 1-8) and animated by the power of the Crystal. They will not move unless touched, but if touched will react. If there is a true vat-thing present, the creatures will immediately imprint on it, raising their arms and hissing/croaking, "Daddy," repeatedly at varying degrees of volume. They crave being held by their parent and will reluctantly obey some commands, quieting (though not silencing) their cries, getting into bags, etc.

If no vat-thing is present, the creatures will imprint on the first being to touch one of them.

Wooden children (3): Init +0; Atk none; AC 12; HD 1d3; hp 2 each; MV 25'; Act 1d12; SP favored, piteous wail; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +1; AL N; Crit N/A.

Favored: These tiny, helpless creations are favored by higher powers, their existence a miracle. Those who would slay such a creature suffer an immediate and permanent loss of 1 point of Luck.

Piteous wail: If threatened or attacked, the terrified wooden children begin to wail in fear and pain – their cry reaching all but the most hardened of hearts. Creatures within 100' of the wooden children, upon hearing the cry and failing a DC 15 Willpower save, will immediately come to their aid. Such figures will seek to save, and then continue to protect, these helpless wooden creations. Vat-things suffer a -1d penalty on this save.

Area 1-8 – Journeymen's Chamber: *A single flickering candle lights this room where two sets of bunks against the far wall flank a single long table between them. Sitting on the bottom bunks are four tradesmen, similar enough in looks and stature to be closely related. As one, the four men turn to face the opening door.*

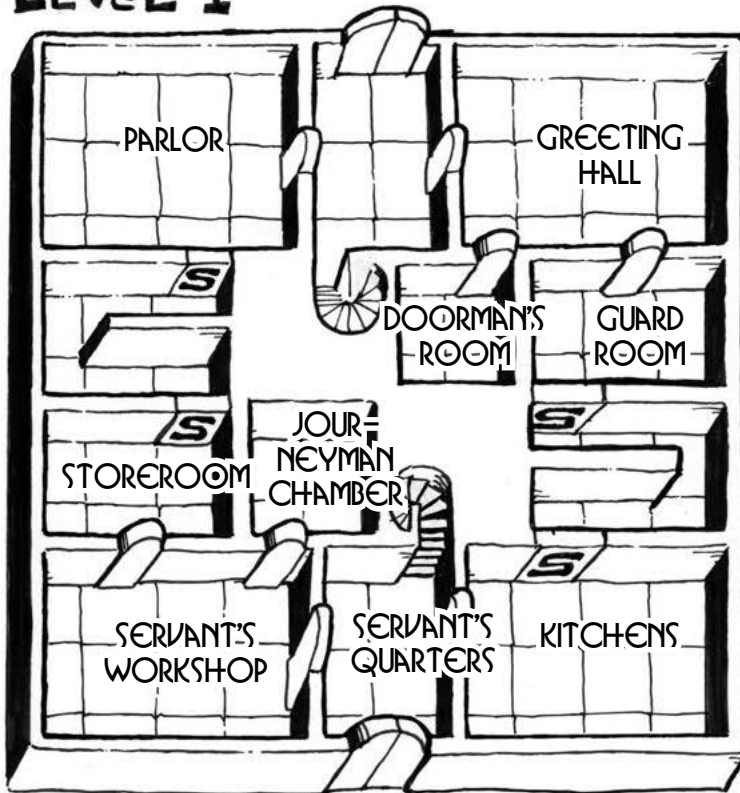
The "journeymen" are lesser vat-born, able to pass for human other than for their black teeth and strange mannerisms. They were the crowning achievement of Ashtark before they dragged him from the laboratory and tore him asunder. It was not until after that act of violence that they learned that Ashtark had wards in place to prevent his creations from leaving the tower.

Unable to leave without permission, they are interested in "gaining their freedom" and will offer to aid would-be thieves in return for being released from their "slavery". Their leader will speak, moving and gesturing and always managing to keep his hands in front of his mouth; a DC 12 Intelligence check will notice the purpose of the obfuscatory gesticulations. The creatures are duplicitous and will direct their would-be rescuers to a route that will take them through the upper trapped hallways if possible. While they will not directly attack a fellow creature of the vat unprovoked, they have no qualms about sending one upstairs and through the traps.

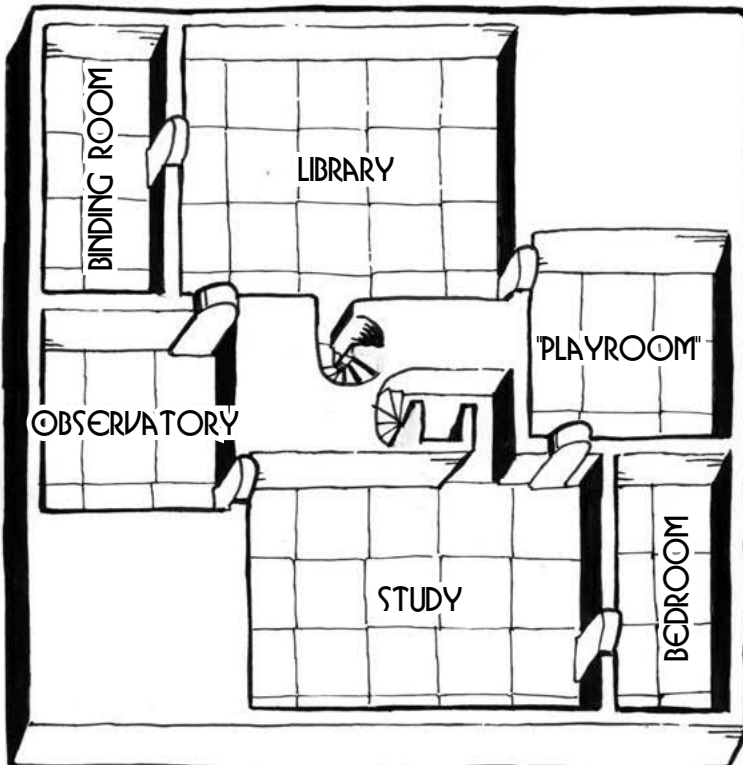
Lesser vat-born (4): Init +1; Atk crushing grasp +3 melee (1d5); AC 14; HD 3d12+5; hp 25 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to mind-altering spells, will not attack other creatures of the vats unless in self-defense; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +6; AL N; Crit M/d12.

Manse Ashitark

LEVEL 1



LEVEL 3



10' SECRET DOOR
 TRAP

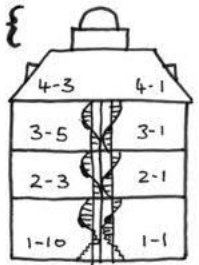
OBSERVATORY {

LEVEL 4 {

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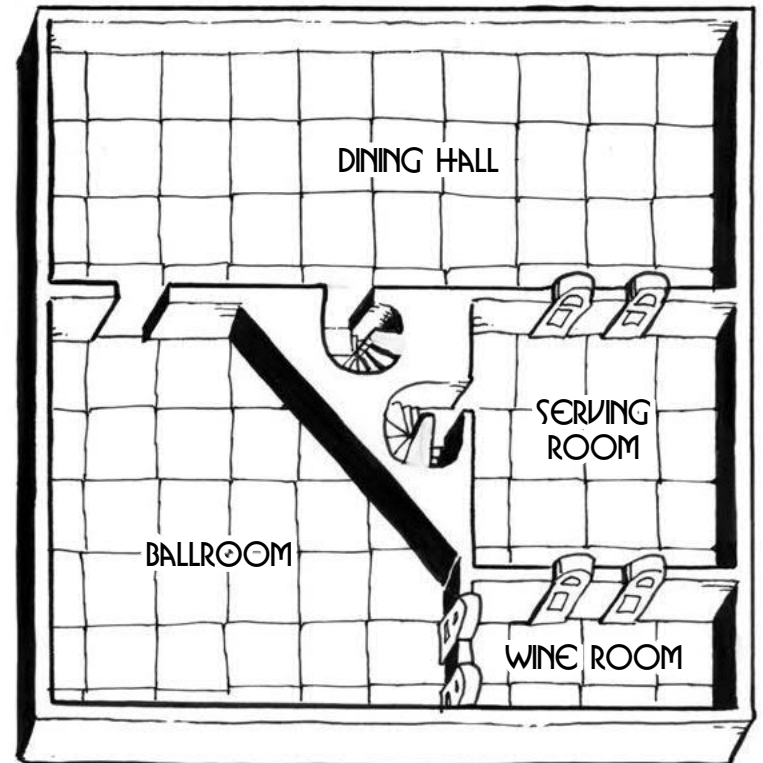
LEVEL 2 {

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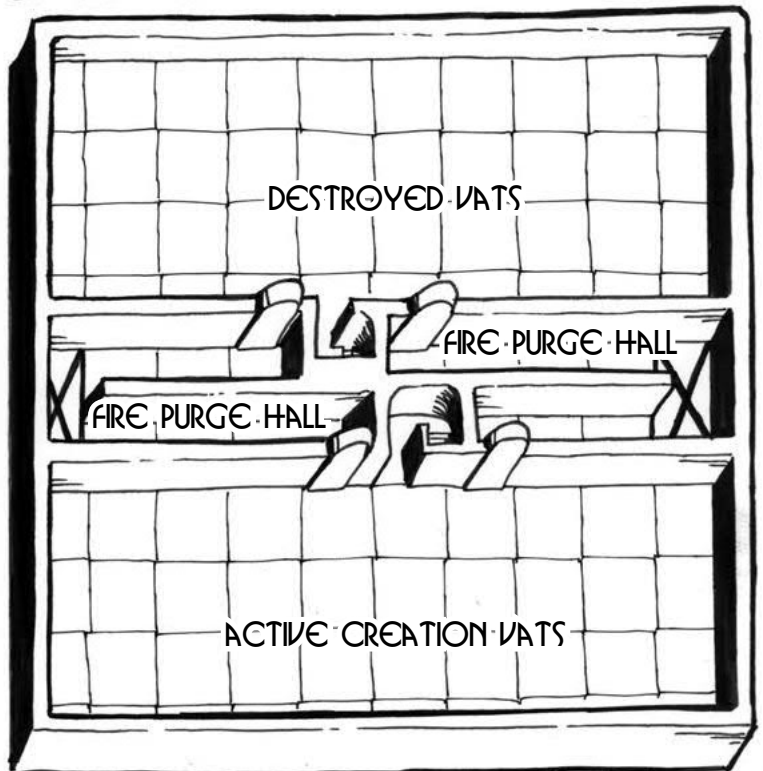


100'

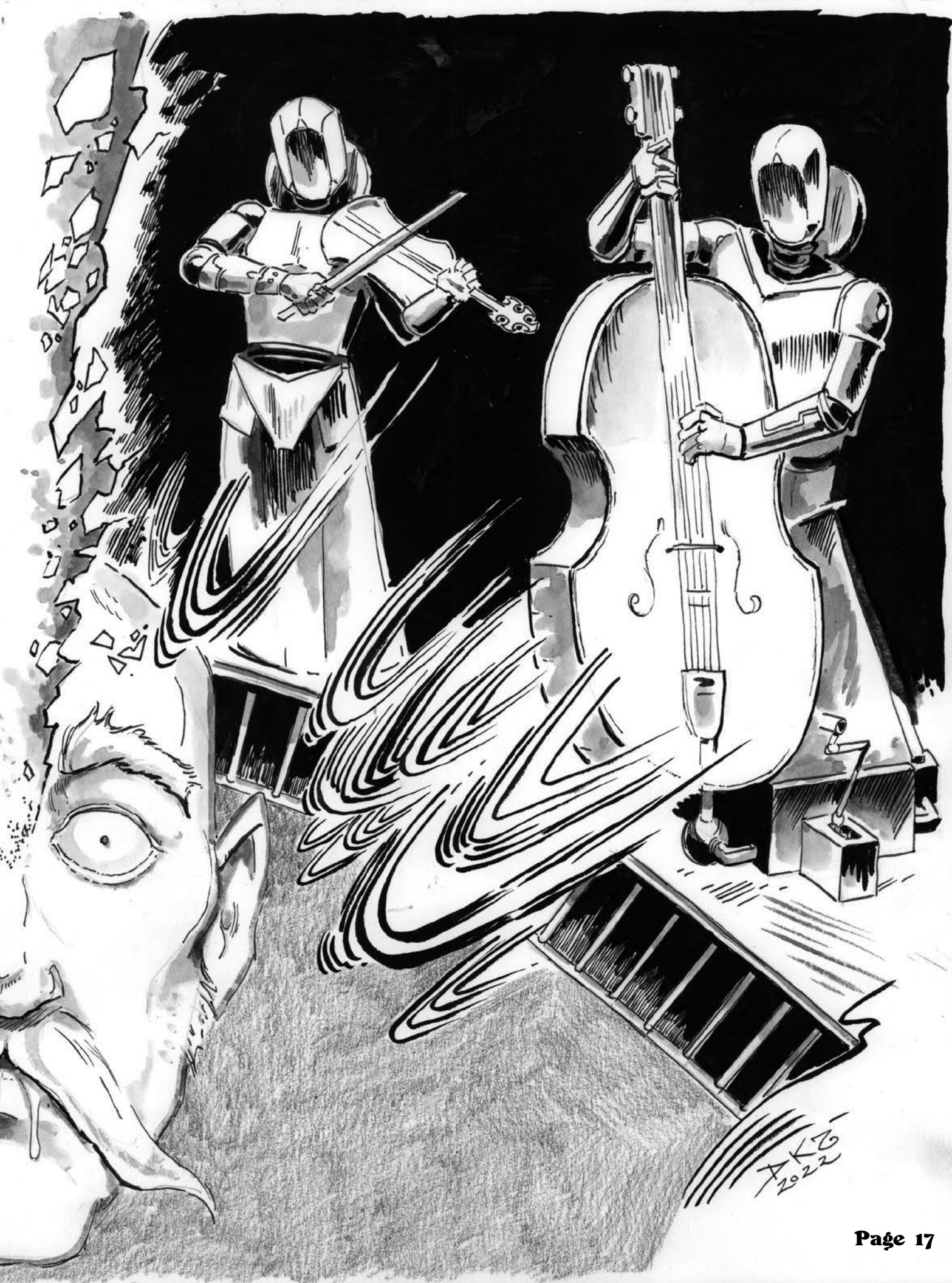
LEVEL 2



LEVEL 4







Area 1-9 – Secret Hallways: *This concealed hallway runs down to a sharp u-bend, doubling back on itself.*

With no effort to conceal them having been made on this side, the secret doors are plainly visible from inside these hallways.

Area 1-10 – Service Entrance: *This undecorated hallway looks much as it has for likely the last thirty years or more. Devoid of decoration, there is not even a threadbare rug to cover the bare stone floor of this entryway. The hallway is starkly plain with heavy, undecorated doors on either side of the hall, and a glittering white stairway that ascends upward into the darkness.*

The toothsome stairs here are identical to those in Area 1-1.

Area 1-11 – Kitchens: A trio of large woodburning stoves line one wall of this near-abandoned kitchen. A single dirtied bowl rests near a washbasin, and the faint odor of sluteberry mash wistfully hangs in the air.

For over a decade, the kitchen has only been used by Ashtark and his doorman Hamish. Hamish has prepared modest meals of simple soups with loaves of crusty breads with what meagre funds Ashtark provided him. Now, Hamish cooks for himself, the *Crystal of Ciz* providing all of the energies needed to sustain the vat-creations dwelling in the manse.

The first stove swings forward and opens into the concealed servant's hall beyond. No exceptional care has been taken to maintain the concealment of the hidden doorway and a cursory search of the stoves will reveal enough traces of the secret door (a faint breeze, a barely discernable seam, etc.) that no roll is required to discover it.

Area 2-1 – Grand Dining Hall: *The walls, rug, and ceiling here are of a currant color. A grand dining table, capable of seating twenty-four guests, dominates the room, its gleaming metal form matched perfectly by the sparkling perfection of the matching chairs situated around it. Unlike much of the manse, there is no dust here, and everything sparkles as if freshly cleaned.*

Both the rug and ceiling canopy are massive, vat-grown tongue-like things meant to emit digestive juices to dissolve any dropped food and scour the room clean without requiring servants to tend to things. Since the "awakening" caused by the *Crystal of Ciz*, the power of this creation is much stronger, and it is far more active. After one round it begins drooling, and acid drips from above dealing 1d12 points of damage (DC 15 Reflex save for half) while the "rug" begins to exude digestive slimes as well, eating through footwear two rounds later. Anyone foolish enough to remain immersed suffers 1d5 points of acid damage each round thereafter.

Area 2-2 – Serving Room: *Once used by servants to execute lavish dinners and parties, this room still retains the inventory of its function. Long wooden tables, used for the final plating of banquet items, run the near length of the room while the walls are lined with shelves holding place settings and flatware enough to easily provide service for two dozen or more guests. An archway in the west wall opens into the stairway, while pairs of doors exit to the north and south.*

Over the years, the quality of the service items has greatly diminished. Where once plates of delicate porcelain rimmed with gold would have been used, what remains are plain (and rather heavy) earthenware and flatware made from base metals. While still posh by the standards among the lower peasantry, there is little value to be found here. To a young magician seeking to establish their manse, each of the 24 settings is worth 12 groats.

Area 2-3 – Ballroom: *While the finely painted murals upon the walls have faded with age, there is no denying the past grandeur found in the ballroom. The curved ceiling, where not ruined by cracks and falling plaster, still shows signs of having once been artfully covered in frescos. To the east are a pair of doors, delicately painted so as to blend and be unobtrusive, while to the north is an exquisitely carved archway.*

The southwest corner holds a raised stage, where sit a quartet of musicians. The faceless players sit, holding their instruments, as if frozen in time. Even from across the room, the dust that covers their fine clothes is readily apparent. Now, the stage and its slender brass railing remain silent.

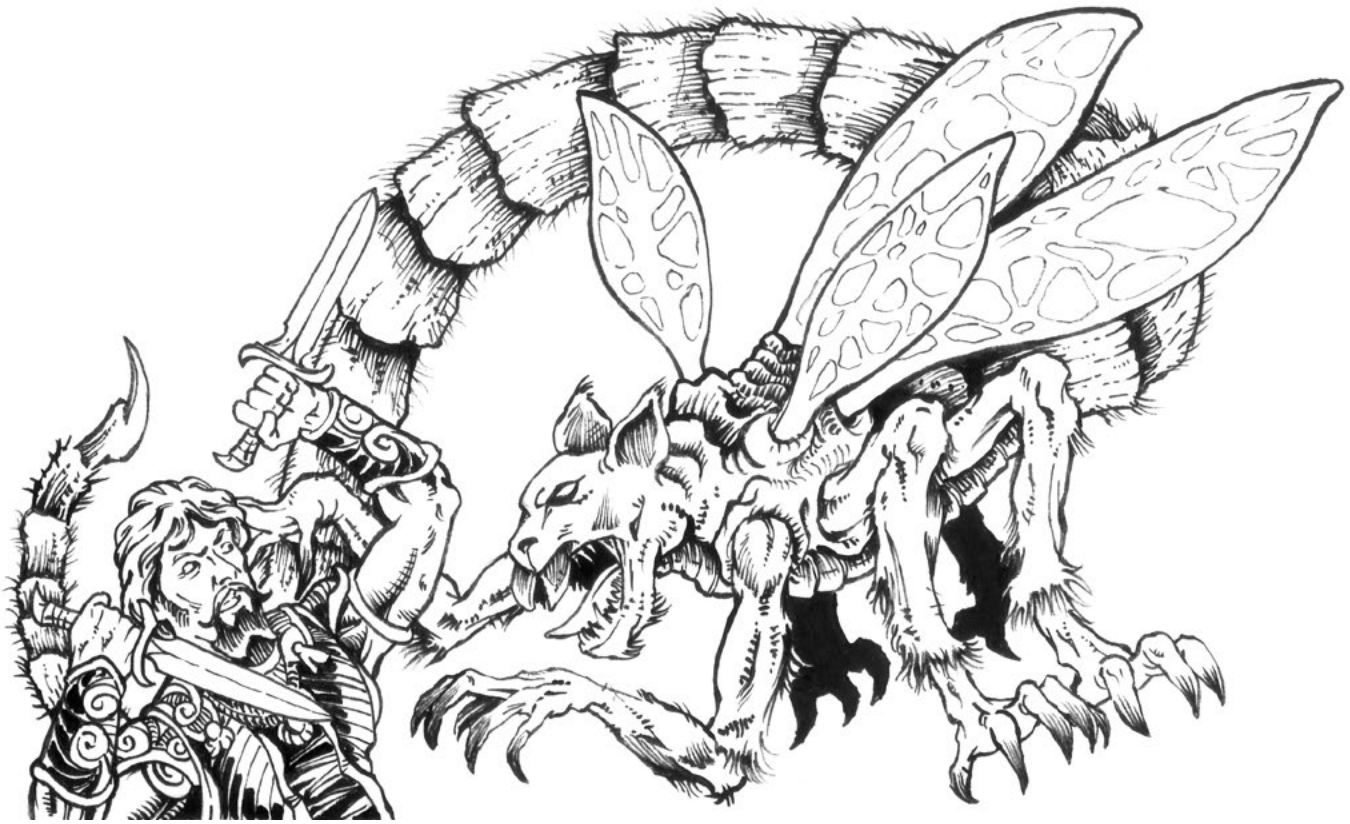
Sitting upon the stage is a quartet of automatons built by Ashtark in his youth during his earliest attempts at replicating life. Built of metal and wood, these were figures built to last, their smooth faces and forms having little in the way of extraneous decoration. Attached to their chairs and instruments, these figures have been awakened by the presence of the *Crystal of Ciz* but remain still unless approached. Should a PC approach the stage, the cellist's head will raise, and follow their progress while beginning to play a slow and discordant tune. Should a PC step onto the stage, the other three players (bassist, violinist, and violist) will join in playing the dissonant and uninviting music. Touching or otherwise directly interfering with the band results in their attacking.

Automaton musicians (4): Init +0; Atk *special*; AC 15; HD 4d10+2; hp 30 each; MV 0'; Act 1d16; SP cacophonic blast; SV Fort +3, Ref N/A, Will +3; AL N; Crit N/A.

Cacophonic blast: The automatons use a collective attack, unleashing a jarring wave of piercing sound. Rather than rolling individual attacks, their music melds together and the attack roll gains a +1d bonus for each additional member of the quartet involved in the attack (to a maximum of 1d30). All living creatures within the ballroom suffer 1d4 damage (per musician) and must make a Fortitude save (DC equal to the attack roll) or be incapacitated for a number of rounds equal to 1d6 minus the PC's hit dice (minimum 0). The effects of the incapacitation are not cumulative; victims are incapacitated for the longest remaining period from any failed check.

If their targets flee or otherwise disengage, the musicians will cease their audible assault, but they remain vigilant should the PCs return.

Area 2-4 – Wine Room: *This once proud wine room is filled with row upon row of empty racks, with only the occasional bottle to be found, none being of a worthy vintage, although they are at least palatable for those desperate enough. The racks' interior*



walls, and even the back of the door, have been scored by gouges where something has clawed and chewed at them.

Locked within are a pair of experiments gone awry—the baziline. Ashtark was unable to control them and so he immured them here and moved on to other things. Now, driven mad by the presence of the *Crystal of Ciz*, they are even more intractable than before and will immediately attack anyone entering the room, rushing at them, hissing and clicking, as they enter battle to the death.

Baziline (2): Init +3; Atk mandibles +2 melee (1d8) or sting +2 melee (2d4+2 plus poison); AC 15; HD 4d10+2; hp 36 each; MV 20' or fly 40'; Act 1d20; SP poison (DC 18 Fort save or -2d penalty to actions for 1d14 rounds); SP magical hybrid traits; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8; AL N; Crit M/d8.

As magical hybrids, baziline have infravision of 60' and have an improved critical threat range of 19-20. In addition, their sorcerous legacy grants them a natural defense against magic: they have a 25% chance to resist all magic, regardless of level or caster, and gain a +8 on Will saves against spells that do affect them.

The baziline were vat-crafted to mimic the fearsome basil, combining some of the most fearsome traits of the lowly wasp with the catlike grace of the felinodore while incorporating the tenacity of vat-grown beings. The baziline mimic a basil's furred insect form with six, mishappen arms.

Area 3-1 – Library: Ashtark's once great library, certainly a focal point of the manse, has been reduced to near ruin through neglect. Heavy covers hang from worm-eaten bindings and loose pages are scattered across the floor with no traces of their bibliographical origins. One or two volumes survive, their covers stained from repeated handling, the reader's oils marring once beautiful tomes to black.

Of the two surviving texts (*A Brief Overview of the Magical Writings of Pandelume*, vol. XXIII and *The Alchemical Basis for Phlogistonically Animated Creation*), both are treatises on the subject of creating vat-creatures, and are on the distant side of theoretical. Ashtark's crabbed handwriting fills the margins, and on a number of pages, whole passages have been scratched out with every available space filled with his mystical notations and angry corrections. Magicians studying them for years may glean great insights, but a quick glance through them is enough only to provide a headache and perhaps a sense of inadequacy upon the subject. So rare is the subject matter that any powerful magician would greatly prize these volumes and would pay dearly to possess them.

The door in this room that would open into the observatory (Area 3-3) instead opens up into the empty chamber (Area 3-3a) which spatially coexists with the domed chamber.

Area 3-2 – Bindery: Cover boards, thread, loose vellum, and gluepots are stored here, along with several book-presses. Nothing here appears to have been used in years.

The glues have all dried from age and neglect, the vellum is stained by mildew, and the coverboards are warped. There is nothing here of value.

Area 3-3 – Observatory: The four walls of this room are made of a transparent substance, allowing the light of distant stars and galaxies to filter in, providing dim light. In the center of the chamber is a telescopic device of some kind, mounted on a metal pole. Even in the dim starlight, the device glistens with an unnatural sheen.

The observatory is located in a cupola atop the manse, Ashtark's magics making the displacement possible. Those within the room looking back will see through the open door but, other than that, see only strange galaxies and stars.

The telescope is a fusion of vat-grown flesh with a well-crafted optical device. The copper sides are lined with pulsing veins and in place of a lens on the large end, there is an unblinking eye, staring outward. Pressing one's eye to the device activates the device, allowing it to extend and painlessly fuse itself to the observer's face. The telescope's massive eye will blink, changing to that of the user's; stars will flash through the user's field of vision allowing them to see all number of strange constellations and galaxies. Magicians and witches succeeding on a DC 18 Intelligence check will have the realization that they are looking toward Earth from another corner of the universe. Ending one's use of the telescope is a simple matter of pulling one's face away, but the individual will feel a tugging around their eye socket. If they continue, they must make a DC 12 Fortitude save; those who fail feel the tearing of the flesh around their eye, inflicting 1 point of damage and leaving them with mismatched eyes. On a successful save, the telescope blinks once, its eye returning to its prior color as the telescope pulls away from the user's face.

Area 3-3a – Empty Room: *This fifteen-by-fifteen-foot stone room is entirely devoid of contents and decoration other than wisps of scintillation that flicker about in the dark and otherwise empty room.*

The magical energies visible here are a harmless byproduct of the observation dome occupying the same space, transdimensionally. While colorful, they offer no weal or woe to the PCs.

Area 3-4 – Abattoir: *Whatever this room once was, it serves that purpose no longer. The air is thick with the coppery reek of blood and the walls, floor, and ceiling, are thickly stained with browning, clotted gore. Bits of bone, flesh, and hair are strewn everywhere, like some sort of meaty confetti.*

It was here that Ashtark's research came to a violent end as his creations, invigorated and maddened by the *Crystal of Ciz*, rose up and tore him into bloody gobbets. Exhausted from his day's experimentation and caught by surprise, the magician had no time to defend himself from the rage of the greater vat-born (now lurking among the vats of Area 4-3).

Area 3-5 – Study: *With walls lined with short bookcases filled with slender volumes, this study holds a broken down, overstuffed chair; beside it, a paltry stack of loose pages lies piled on small side table. An oil lamp rests on a second table in the corner, with the burning wick set to high and black smoke tracing upward.*

The volumes lining the shelves are Ashtark's daily diaries. While they do mention some of the projects he has been working on, such as creating living flesh that is merely a facet of a creature (such as the vat-grown teeth that line the stairs) these commentaries do not provide practical instruction on how to accomplish such feats. The pages atop the side table are a small number of pages devoted to his research, ending abruptly with a thick (and still sticky) blob of ink cementing the last pages together

The old chair is filled with a non-sentient vat-creation and will mold itself to the form of whomever sits upon it, providing perfect comfort and support. What is hiding beneath

the chair is not nearly as forgiving—although it is nearly as harmless. The tiny wooden homunculi in hiding will attack if approached, repeatedly stabbing at the feet and ankles of their prey with their crude spears fashioned from broken bits of bone.

Wooden homunculi (6): Init +3; Atk chicken-bone spear -1 melee (1); AC 12; HD 1d3; hp 2 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP immune to mind-altering spells, will not attack other creatures of the vats unless in self-defense; SV Fort -2, Ref +6, Will +0; AL N; Crit I/d3.

Area 3-6 – Disused Bedroom: *Not sizeable enough to be the master bedchamber of the manse, this room appears to have been once used for favored guests or relations. An aged bed sags against one wall, the bedclothes moth-eaten and faded. A large wardrobe is pressed against the wall facing the door, darkness all that can be seen within its partially open depths.*

If not encountered in the marketplace, Crum-by will be here, cowering within the wardrobe in fear of the vat-born and what harm they may visit upon him, the most intelligent of the animate creatures within the manse. If approached by a PC taking care not to frighten it, Crum-by will tell them of Ashtark's violent murder at the hands of his creations (see Marketplace for details on the specific information Crum-by can provide), and warn them of the corrupting powers the *Crystal of Ciz* has over vat-created creatures (including vat-things).

Crum-by: Init +2; Atk fists +4 melee (1d3-1) or bite +4 melee (1d2) or spell; AC 10; HD 3d3; hp 6; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP spell (sleep 1/day at result 18-19 as CL 1), immune to mind-altering spells, will not attack other creatures of the vats unless in self-defense; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +2; AL L; Crit I/d4.

Area 4-1 – Ruined Laboratory: *The heady scent of potentially explosive fumes assails your nose as you approach.*

This serves as a warning to the PCs of the explosive gases that have built up in this room. If the PCs ignore the warning and enter the chamber with open flame (such as a torch) jump directly to Rounds 4-5 of "Escaping the Manse". If the PCs take appropriate precautions, continue.

The floor here is covered with an inch of viscous slime that still leaks from ten damaged creation vats of disparate sizes. Partially formed creatures are visible through massive rents in the metal sides, likely made with the axe lying on the floor amidst the wreckage. The pooled liquid runs down the stairs below. Two doors lead out of this room.

When Ashtark realized that his creations were being driven mad by the *Crystal of Ciz*, he made the decision to destroy all of the creation vats. He started here but made it no further. The greater vat-born learned of what he was doing and pursued him downstairs, where he was torn limb from limb.

Area 4-2 – Fire-trapped Hallways: *This hallway runs down to a sharp u-bend, doubling back on itself. At the bend, engraved into the wall, is the phrase "pyromancy is a practice for lesser minds". Along the ceiling are hundreds of tiny metal nozzles.*



The halls are trapped and rigged with nozzles that spray a highly flammable alchemical mixture that ignites upon contact with air. The traps trigger via the pressure plates at the halfway points of the hallways, far enough along that any escaped creation of the vat is incapable of escaping the purging flames. If triggered, the hallway becomes an inferno, unleashing 4d8 fire damage (DC 13 Reflex for half) on anyone within. The phrase “pyromancy is a practice for lesser minds”, if spoken aloud, deactivates the trap for 10 minutes.

Area 4-3 – Active Creation Vats: Six monumental vats tower ponderously over all else in this room. Eer-light flickers across strange, twisted pairings of nerve tissue and cable connecting each of the vats to a wire pinfold between the central pair of cisterns. Contained within the fine mesh is a thumb-sized crystal, glowing brightly and pouring eldritch power outwards into the massive vats – likely fueling whatever is gestating within. Two formidable beings, each towering twelve feet tall, weightily wend between the basins, their misshapen but muscular forms foreshadowing the power contained within.

Greater vat-born (2): Init +3; Atk crushing grasp +5 melee (1d8+3); AC 18; HD 6d12+5; hp 45 each; MV 35'; Act 2d20; SP rending blow, immune to mind-altering spells, will not attack other creatures of the vats unless in self-defense; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +8; AL N; Crit M/d20.

Rending blow: If successful in striking a foe twice in a round, the vat-born have grasped their foe and attempt to tear them limb from limb, dealing an additional 1d14 damage.

ESCAPING THE MANSE

Removing the *Crystal of Ciz* from its installation causes it to throw massive showers of sparks through the room, igniting the fluids within the vats, the hangings on the walls, and (in 10 rounds) the fumes of the spilled fluids in Area 4-1. The resulting fireball will engulf the entirety of the manse, burning hotly enough to begin melting the stone of the structure while the tooth-lined stairs crackle like infernal popcorn. If the greater vat-born have not been slain, they will do everything possible to prevent the PCs from escaping with the Crystal, including blocking the stairs with their massive bulk.

Due to the structuring of the manse’s stairs, moving from one level to the next requires one full round of movement. PCs will be prevented from leaving the manse until they have granted permission for any surviving vat-born to leave as well -- releasing the creations out into the world.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Round 1 | Spark shower: PCs within Area 4-3 take 1d4 damage (DC 10 Ref save for half). |
| Rounds 2-3 | Blazing vats: PCs within Area 4-3 take 2d6 damage (DC 12 Fort save for half). |
| Rounds 4-5 | Room ablaze: PCs within Area 4-3 take 3d8 damage (DC 14 Fort save for half). Fire everywhere: PCs elsewhere on the 4th floor take 2d4 damage (DC 10 Fort save for half). |
| Rounds 6-7 | Melting stone: PCs upon the 4th floor take 4d10 damage (DC 16 Fort save for half). Exploding teeth: PCs upon the stairs suffer 1d5 damage as tooth fragments explode upward. Dripping stone ceiling: PCs upon the 3rd floor take 2d10 damage (DC 14 Ref save for half). |
| Rounds 8-9 | Melting stone: PCs upon the 4th floor take 5d12 damage (DC 18 Fort save for half). Exploding teeth: PCs upon the stairs suffer 2d5 damage as tooth fragments explode upward. Dripping stone ceilings: PCs upon the 2nd and 3rd floors take 3d10 damage (DC 16 Ref save for half). |
| Round 10 | Ka-boom: The 4th floor of the manse ceases to be, destroying everything and anyone present. Backdraft: PCs on the stairs take 6d14 damage as the stairways become columns of flame before flaring out. Ruination: The manse collapses upon itself in a roar of fracturing stone and raging flames. Those not on the stairs or unable to reach a door are slain instantly. |

EPILOGUE

After escaping the tower, the PCs may find themselves in possession of the *Crystal of Ciz* (and potentially a number of other things of interest). All of the personæ involved will be good to their word as to the reward for giving them the Crystal. Other items, such as Ashtark's research materials, would be highly sought after, should they be recovered and offered—easily bringing in as great a reward as the Crystal itself. The PCs may collect their reward and haggle for new rewards for other items recovered. Ashtark's notes, while incomplete, could easily bring as large a reward as the Crystal and—in the right hands, with enough time—potentially lead to the replication of Ashtark's other creations.

Of course, anyone the PCs double-cross will be greatly aggrieved and hold a bitter grudge, leading to the entire party suffering an animus from one of the following possibilities (judge's discretion; see Chapter III of the *Player's Libram* for details).

- Hazraadial: Bauble-thief
- Gulch: Vituperation curse
- Mombi: Vituperation curse
- Piepowder: Piepowder's wrath (new): Word of the betrayal has been spread among merchants far and wide. When dealing with a shopkeep there is a chance that the PCs may be recognized, resulting in price increases ranging from slight to outright gouging depending on the level of desperation shown by the PCs.
- Vernicchio: Acerbic underling



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APPENDIX A

RUMOR AND CLUE TRACKER

| LOCATION | WHO | INFORMATION |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Bosworth's Home | Bosworth | There is potential for great disaster at the Exposition [TRUE] The Cobalt Mountain coven is the source of that disaster [FALSE] The location of the Cobalt Mountain coven's camp [TRUE] |
| Cobalt Witch Camp | Mombi Mombi Mombi Mombi Singra Singra Singra Gulch | The Duke fears that the Exposition will end in embarrassment [TRUE] Someone is hiding in a warehouse on the NE corner of the market [TRUE] Great and ancient magics are awakening [TRUE] A local witch, Bosworth, recently acquired an item of great power [FALSE] A local witch seeks to do her, and the coven, harm [TRUE - Bosworth] A guest at the Thirsty Otter has a grudge against the merchants [TRUE] One of the PCs is fated to die within a fortnight [FALSE] ANY AND ALL CLUES AND RUMORS, for the right fee |
| Manse Hazraadial | Hazraadial | The <i>Crystal of Ciz</i> is a diaglyph that faintly glows and feels "unpleasant" [TRUE] Direct contact with the Crystal causes one's flesh to uncontrollably twitch [TRUE] Clishma-Claver, has not been seen since going to the Thirsty Otter [TRUE] Clishma-Claver could not have stolen the Crystal, but may have been involved [TRUE] This happened because of Clishma-Claver's fondness for drink [FALSE] |
| Marketplace | Merchant Merchant Merchant Merchant Ianjul Ianjul Ianjul Crum-by Crum-by Crum-by Crum-by Crum-by Crum-by Crum-by Crum-by Crum-by | Hazraadial's apprentice, Clishma-Claver came into some money three days ago and was spending freely [TRUE] Clishma-Claver wouldn't reveal the source of his newfound wealth, but spoke of his plans to travel [TRUE] "This charm/ring/feather will lead you to him and it only costs..." [FALSE] Clishma-Claver's brother works for the Merchants' Guild, managing several of their warehouses [TRUE] Two nights ago, the toymaker found a doll that one would think is actually alive [TRUE - Crum-by] He brought the toy to his workshop, there has been no sign of the toy's owner [TRUE] Ianjul is near to unraveling the mysteries of the poppet [FALSE] Crumby awakened three days ago, inside of a box [TRUE] The doll does not know why it can speak, or why it recognizes objects and concepts [TRUE] There were other things like itself, but larger and made of flesh, that awoke shortly after it did [TRUE] The flesh things came from somewhere above where it had awakened [TRUE] After the screaming ended, the broken body of a man was dragged through the manse and upstairs [TRUE] Other creatures came from below, they were made of wood. They forged a truce with the things above [TRUE] Upon discovering him, the creatures from below tried to capture Crum-by but could not follow him outside [TRUE] There is a single servant left in the manse, kept alive in hopes he will provide the creatures their freedom [TRUE] It "feels" that the hallways upstairs are somehow dangerous [TRUE] |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Merchants' Guild | Piepowder | <p>Piepowder has trafficked in family heirlooms of indeterminate origin in the past (fenced stolen goods) [TRUE]</p> <p>Piepowder received an offer of 50 terces from a longtime client seeking a crystal in the possession of Hazraadial [FALSE]</p> <p>Piepowder received an offer (< 50 golden centums) from a longtime client seeking the <i>Crystal of Ciz</i> [FALSE]</p> <p>The magician Vernicchio offered Piepowder 50 golden centums in return for having the <i>Crystal of Ciz</i> "procured" [TRUE]</p> <p>Piepowder couldn't find anyone willing to break into Hazraadial's manse and now fears Vernicchio's retribution [TRUE]</p> <p>In the past, Piepowder has used hidden areas in the east warehouse to hide things, but he has nothing there now [TRUE]</p> |
| Orbal's Estate | | No information. |
| The Thirsty Otter | <p>Vernicchio</p> <p>Vernicchio</p> <p>Vernicchio</p> <p>Olivier</p> <p>Olivier</p> <p>Olivier</p> <p>Olivier</p> <p>Ermin</p> <p>Ermin</p> <p>Ermin</p> | <p>The location of the Merchants' Guild, and the location of Guildmaster Piepowder's office within [TRUE]</p> <p>The local witches are not overly fond of the visiting Cobalt Mountain witches [TRUE]</p> <p>Master of the Merchants' Guild, Piepowder, was behind the theft and has chosen to keep the Crystal for himself [FALSE]</p> <p>Clishma-Claver was last seen three days ago, spending more money than normal [TRUE]</p> <p>Clishma-Claver mentioned preparing to leave town [TRUE]</p> <p>A "noble" visiting Duke Orbal is secretly an assassin and has killed all who have attempted to speak to the Duke [FALSE]</p> <p>The head of the Merchants' Guild, Piepowder, is a fat slob involved in the fencing of stolen merchandise [TRUE]</p> <p>Local thieves had nothing to do with this theft, they're a good lot [TRUE-ISH]</p> <p>Ermin is a serious woman who knows nothing about the theft and doesn't care for gossip [FALSE]</p> <p>A regular patron, Clishma-Claver, escaped from his master (Ashtark the "useless") and is sleeping in an old warehouse [TRUE]</p> <p>Duke Orbal is close friends with a witch and counts her among his close advisors [TRUE - Bosworth]</p> |
| Warehouse | Clishma-Claver | <p>Ashtark hired him to steal the Crystal, paying 1 golden centum [TRUE]</p> <p>He stole from his master because, despite being a wonderful and helpful apprentice, he was unappreciated [FALSE]</p> <p>He stole the stone while his master, Hazraadial was sleeping [TRUE]</p> <p>He delivered the stone three days ago, and went to the Thirsty Otter to celebrate [TRUE]</p> <p>People started asking about his newfound wealth, so he is laying low until he can leave town [TRUE]</p> |



ASHTARK'S AUTOPHAGIC ANIMATION

| | | | | |
|---------------|--|------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Level: 2 | Range: Touch | Duration: Varies | Casting Time: 1 week | Save: None |
| General | <p>Ashtark spent his entire life attempting to rediscover ways to animate the inanimate. The untimely death of his wife and daughter drove his pursuits to the point of mania, ignoring all else. One of the greatest successes in his endeavors was a method by which he could bring clay figures to a semblance of life, holding memories of the deceased and acting as they once would have.</p> <p>To perform this grim ritual, the caster must spellburn 1 point of Personality (not impacting the spell result) before taking into themselves some of the materia of the one they wish to see faux-revived, devouring flesh and sinew in order to draw out the essence of the departed. Through this funerary feast the caster comes to truly know their subject in ways no mere mortal could ever fathom. Once completed, the caster focuses the essence of the departed into a 12"-tall clay figure which, upon successful completion of the rite, will animate. The caster, should they choose, may select a lower result on the spell table.</p> | | | |
| Manifestation | <p>Roll 1d3: (1) the caster exhales vapor, which takes the form of the face of the deceased before merging with the clay figure; (2) caster whispers the deceased's deepest secrets and their words transform into fibers which bind themselves to the clay figure, animating it like a marionette; (3) the clay figure, no matter how crudely formed, takes on the exact features of the deceased for the duration of the spell.</p> | | | |
| Corruption | <p>Roll 1d6: (1-3) caster's flesh takes on a corpselike pallor, turning a bluish gray, resulting in the permanent loss of 1 point of Personality; (4-5) a miniature version of the deceased's face emerges from the back of the caster's head, staring vacuously; (6) the caster permanently contracts Grave Shakes via their cannibalistic actions. This magical affliction causes loss of fine motor control, inflicting a -1d penalty to all actions requiring fine manipulation (such as spellcasting).</p> | | | |
| 1 | <p>The awakening feast is a failure and the caster automatically suffers corruption <i>and</i> wizardly objurgation. The caster may not attempt this ritual again with the same corpse.</p> | | | |
| 2-13 | <p>The awakening feast is a failure and the caster may not attempt this ritual again with the same corpse.</p> | | | |
| 14-15 | <p>The clay figure awakens with memories of the last day of the deceased's life. Unable to speak, only communicating with gestures, it remains animated for 1d4+CL minutes. The likelihood of the figure cooperating with the caster is no greater than when the target was alive.</p> | | | |
| 16-19 | <p>The spirit of the deceased awakens the clay figure, and it holds memories of the last week of their life. The animation allows for rudimentary speech, although the voice is so quiet as to barely be discernable. No matter the deceased's disposition in life, they must answer at least one question posed to them by the caster. The animation lasts for 1d6+CL hours before the figure shatters into small shards.</p> | | | |
| 20-21 | <p>The figure, imbued with the essence of the deceased, rises and perfectly reenacts the actions of the last 1d10+CL minutes of their life. This animation lasts for the duration of the reenactment, at which time the figure collapses to dust.</p> | | | |
| 22-25 | <p>No longer a mere oracular device, the figure becomes fully aware and possessing memories of the deceased's last month of life. The figure is capable of behaving as the departed, limited only by their lack of recollection beyond the past 30 days. This lack of memory leaves the spirit in confusion for 1d6-CL turns before it may cogently act. This animation lasts for 1d10+CL hours before the figure hardens and becomes immobile.</p> | | | |
| 26-29 | <p>The figure, imbued with the essence of the deceased, rises and perfectly reenacts the actions of the last hour of their life. This animation lasts for exactly one hour, at which time the figure returns to its unshaped state.</p> | | | |
| 30-31 | <p>Awake and possessed of a number of years of memories equal to the caster's level, the clay figure is able to answer questions about its life experiences and opinions while behaving in a very lifelike fashion (using the departed's physical mannerisms with startling clarity). The figure can attempt to refuse answering any question, but must make a DC 10+CL Will save to do so, treating the figure as having equal force of will as to that which was possessed in life. The figure remains animate for 2d7+CL hours before turning to stone.</p> | | | |
| 32+ | <p>The clay figure awakens, containing the perfectly captured psyche of the deceased. This is no mere copy, but their soul recaptured and placed into the form—fully aware of their memories and surroundings, and possessing all of their knowledge, biases, grudges, affinities, and appropriate class abilities. The figure remains animate for 24 hours and may attempt to use that time to complete any unfinished business it had in life, after which, the figure vanishes.</p> | | | |



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