

THE ONLY WAY TO BE SURE



CCC-COS-01



In the wilds of the Moonsea, no one can hear you scream.



**T H E
O N L Y W A Y
T O B E S U R E**



A small mining village near the edge of Thar goes silent

You are sent to investigate...

And discover that the truth is much worse than expected

A two- to four-hour adventure for Tier 2 characters

OPTIMIZED FOR APL 8

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CCC-COS-01 The Only Way To Be Sure

Adventure Primer

You still don't understand what you're dealing with, do you? The perfect organism. Its structural perfection is matched only by its hostility.

-Ash, from *Alien* (1979)

Background

When Phlan fell to the Cult of the Dragon, refugees from the city fled to nearby cities along the Moonsea. But a handful of determined miners headed north, setting up a makeshift home a few miles from the border of **THAR**.

Several years pass, and the village—**VINEFORD**—becomes home to around three dozen people. They mine from the nearby Moonwatch Hills, and caravans from a recovering Phlan and Melvaunt visit quarterly.

But the most recent caravans turned up something unsettling: all of the inhabitants of the village have vanished. While initial speculation is that the orcs of Thar captured them, the truth is more sinister.

Several years ago, a nautiloid crashed deep into the Moonwatch Hills, and Vineford's bailiff (and secret warlock), **RULF CURRIER**, soon formed a connection with the rogue illithid **QHIZALT**, the pilot of the nautiloid. Now under the sway of the mind flayer, Rulf convinced the entire town to flee right into the illithid's clutches.

Episodes

The adventure is spread over three to five episodes that take approximately two to four hours to play. These episodes are initially introduced by a Call to Action episode.

- **Episode 1: It's a Rescue Mission. You'll Love It.** While in Phlan, the adventurers hear of the disturbing disappearance of the people of Vineford. Tensions with Thar are high, so the party is asked to investigate. This is the **Call to Action**.
- **Episode 2: They Mostly Come Out at Night.** The characters travel to the border of Thar and investigate an abandoned Vineford. The clues they find in Vineford suggest there are villagers in need of rescue. This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Episode 3: Another Bug Hunt?** The party heads to the nearby Moonwatch Hills, where they find a crashed nautiloid buried in the hills and the captive villagers within. As bizarre creatures hunt them, the characters must help the captives escape. This is **Story Objective B**.

Bonus Objectives

This adventure includes two bonus objectives that the characters can pursue if they have additional time to do so—earning additional **advancement checkpoints** and **treasure checkpoints** in the process. These bonus objectives are found in this adventure's appendices, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: We Have to Stick Together.** An orc patrol from Thar keeps watch on Vineford from a distance. The party can find out what the patrol wants and, possibly, either befriend, evade, trick, or fight them. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 5**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Nuke the Site from Orbit.** The illithid poses a long-term threat for the region. The adventurers can deal with the mind flayer to stop it for good. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 6**.

Episode Sequence

Depending on your time constraints and/or play style and environment, this adventure will take approximately two to four hours to play.

How Will You Play?

The duration of your session depends on how much of this adventure you use. At the very least, your session will last approximately 2 hours. However, if you wish, you can provide a longer experience for your players by pursuing the bonus objectives.

Story Objective Only. To complete the adventure's main objective, the characters participate in Episodes 1 through 3 in order.

Bonus Objectives. You can extend this adventure by one or two hours by including opportunities for the characters to pursue the bonus objectives. The bonus objectives branch off from Episodes 2 or 3.

The party can interact with the orc patrol either before or after their journey into the mine in Moonwatch Hills; if the party resolves this interaction without bloodshed, the orcs may even be of help to the village.

The adventurers can also choose to deal with the warlock and illithid before or after the prisoners are freed...perhaps even during!

Mommy Always Said There Were No Monsters

The illithid Qhizalt always had an independent streak, and would relish any opportunity its elder brain gave it to follow tasks outside of the reach of the hive mind. After many years, Qhizalt was sent on a mission to help the colony. The mind flayer never returned.

With a stolen nautiloid and an unquenchable desire to engage in research (research that involved cutting lots of people up, naturally), Qhizalt explored the planes, honing its devious abilities and racking up an impressive collection of body parts and captives to experiment on at some later date. Then, the mind flayer did something dumb—it crashed its ship.

In the years since its nautiloid crashed into the Moonwatch Hills, Qhizalt has been busy. It realized that fixing the nautiloid was out of the question, so the illithid simply decided it would dig in, capture some beings from the surrounding region, and keep being creepy. Qhizalt initially isolated orcs on the Thar border and dragged them back to the ship, but when the Phlan refugees set up their village a few miles away, Qhizalt realized it would need to be craftier—lone orcs were one thing, but several dozen villagers would be trickier to subdue.

Enter Rulf Currier. Vineford's bailiff blended into his community well, but he had a secret—a creepy, eldritch secret. Early in his life, he was contacted by a cosmic entity that had some alien, unknown plans. Rulf made a pact with the being, and the generally upstanding bailiff spent the next 20 years subtly using his warlock abilities to help him with his job.

After the nautiloid crashed, the entity nudged Rulf to head off into the Moonwatch Hills. Long story short, Rulf bumped into Qhizalt and, before long, the two started working together. The illithid was able to tap into Rulf's worst impulses and convince the man to trick the villagers to head for the hills, literally.

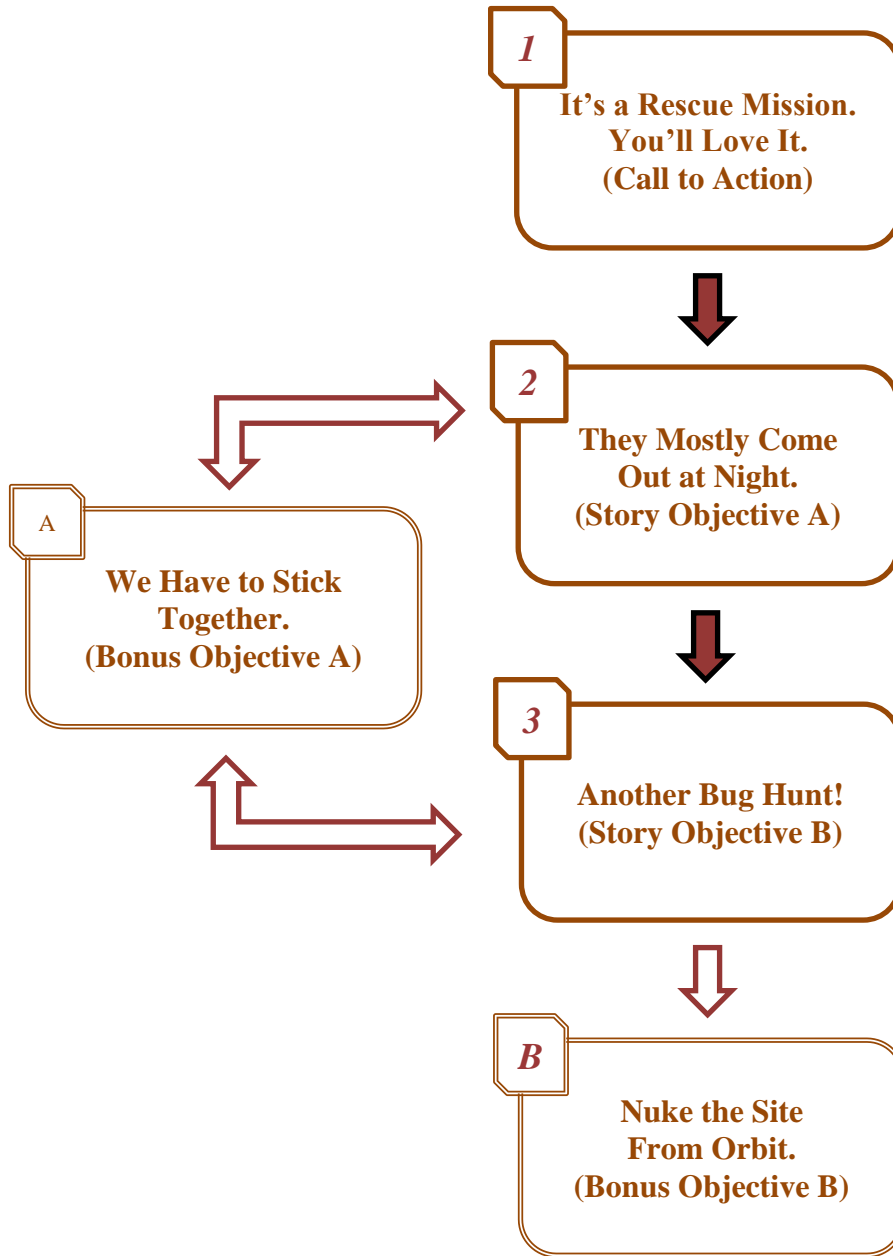
Rulf just needed an excuse. Using a made-up orc invasion as a threat, Rulf steered his friends and family into the tunnels in the Moonwatch Hills. Right into the arms (and tentacles) of the illithid and its experiments.

He's been wondering if that was the right choice ever since.



Episode Flowchart

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



Episode 1: It's a Rescue Mission. You'll Love It.

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

Scene A. Trained for Situations Like This

This adventure begins in the city of Phlan, on the northern shore of the Moonsea. The characters are gathered in the first-floor common area of the Laughing Goblin, a shabby-but-beloved tavern close to the docks. Feel free to have the party introduce their characters however you see fit.

The Laughing Goblin is packed. A lot has happened in Phlan over the last few years, and the people who have lived through it all have no hesitations when it comes to enjoying their lives. The food and drink at the Laughing Goblin are cheap and plenty, and the inn is warm and well-lit this time of year.

Area Information

This area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Laughing Goblin is large enough to hold several dozen customers. There are plenty of tables, chairs, and spaces at the bar to hold the large crowd gathered here.

Lighting. Lanterns hung throughout the inn provide plenty of light.

Sights & Smells. Patrons laugh and carry on, and the background noise makes it difficult to have a quiet conversation. Smells—cabbage soup, roasted meats, fresh bread—punctuate every opening of the door that lead to the kitchen.

NPCs/Creatures

One person stands out in the general merriment: a glum-looking shield dwarf sitting by himself in a corner. This is **Ulvar Honeaxe** (use the **scout** stat block if needed), and he's in the process of drinking himself silly. The dwarf is emotionally overwhelmed by his past few days and is hoping the alcohol will help subdue his dread.

Objectives/Goals. Ulvar wants the heroes to travel to Vineford and locate the missing villagers. If they don't approach him first, Ulvar will eventually make a point of talking to the party, and he is willing to use emotional appeals to get the party to help ("Them folks might all be dead, even the *little children*...that is, unless some *heroes* go and investigate.")

What Does He Know? As a merchant, Ulvar knows his route and his trade like the back of his hairy hand. He makes a trip to Vineford—a place small enough that it's not on many maps—twice a year to deliver goods. He knows he's the only merchant on contract to work with the villagers. (The dwarf also knows it's a dumb name for the village—there isn't a vine in sight!) He knows he was supposed to drop off supplies at the village a few days ago and pick up a shipment of ore to take back to Phlan, but the place appeared empty. Ulvar felt a wave of dread wash over him—one that was so intense that, after a preliminary look around, he fled back to Phlan as fast as he could. He's ashamed how easy it was to run like this. The whole situation was odd—Ulvar isn't the sort to scare. Ulvar knows that he didn't spot any corpses or even signs of violence. The dwarf is positive that something is amiss, though. The folks of Vineford aren't the sort to abandon their new home.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A. If you plan on using the additional content, Ulvar will mention that he's heard how the orcs and ogres from Thar have been known to cross over their border. Vineford is close enough that it could be a tempting target for a raiding party. Perhaps they were responsible?

Call to Action

Ulvar asks for the adventurers to locate the missing villagers of Vineford and then rescue them. If they need transportation, Ulvar will offer the use of his wagon and three donkeys: Fred, Olive, and Horace. He gently asks to make sure the donkeys return in one piece. Once the party accepts, proceed to **Episode 2**.

Treasure

To entice a reluctant party, Ulvar will offer the adventurers a *potion of heroism*. He laments not using it earlier.

Episode 2: They Mostly Come out at Night. Mostly.

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

Vineford

The adventures have reached the outskirts of Vineford. Will they be able to figure out where the missing people have gone?

Prerequisites

Players must participate in **Episode 1** before moving to **Episode 2**.

Story Objective A

The party will find clues in the village and nearby mines in the Moonwatch Hills that will lead them to a crashed nautiloid buried in the earth, where **Episode 3** takes place.

Area Information

This area has the following features:

Terrain. The northern shore of the Moonsea region is decidedly ugly, with short, nasty looking hills and peaks, scrubby grasslands, and seemingly endless marshland pocked with trees. The landscape becomes more and more barren as the party moves northeast. The path to the village is barely traveled.

Sounds & Smells. Everything smells like it's been left out in the rain for a few days. Stones tumble from craggy perches, broken tree branches sway and bang against rotting trunks in a rhythmic pattern, and the wind pulses with an eerie moan.

Scene A. The Road to Vineford

In this episode, the characters travel to Vineford and look for clues that will help them find the missing villagers.

The trip from Phlan to Vineford takes about a day and a half. The party will most likely leave early in the morning, so if they do they'll have a few hours to search the village before the sun starts to set. If, for some reason, they leave at a different point in the day, feel free to delay their trip to give them a small window of daylight for their search once they reach Vineford.

Scouting the Village

Vineford isn't much of a town—four buildings surrounded by nearly 20 tents and makeshift structures. It's easy to get into the town—a road cuts through the center of the few permanent structures, and there are no walls or barricades.

If the party wants to spend some time skirting the edge of the village, they can learn some clues with several skill checks.

Survival. A DC 12 Survival check reveals that a horse-drawn wagon recently went into the village and, not long after, went back out. These are tracks from Ulvar's wagon.

Animal Handling. Ulvar's donkeys aren't thrilled to be near the village again. Fred, Olive, and Horace have their hackles up as soon as the party gets relatively close to Vineford. Getting them to enter the village requires a DC 16 Animal Handling check.

Perception. A DC 16 Perception check informs the party that there are no immediate signs of life in the village. It's a brisk day, and the lack of any fire smoke is noticeable.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A. If you are using the additional content in the bonus objectives, the party might encounter a patrol of orcs from Thar who are hidden near the village. A DC 16 Survival check is needed to spot the patrol. They can also spot a tiny bit of smoke curling over a nearby hill with a DC 16 Perception check. If the party is especially thorough in scouting the area outside of the village (the surrounding woods and hills, for instance), they can make these checks with Advantage.

Confronting the Thar patrol is covered in **Appendix 5**.

Scene B. Vineford

Vineford consists of four buildings, a well in the town center, and a tent city on the eastern side on the village. See the map in **Appendix 3** for a visual reference.

Area Information

This area has the following features:

Terrain & Dimensions. Vineford isn't large—it's close to 150 feet wide, split evenly by a rough dirt road that runs through the center of the community, and about 300 feet long. The largest portion is taken up by tents, rickety outbuildings, and overgrown vegetable fields on the northeast side. All of the buildings are a single story.

Lighting. Unless noted in their individual descriptions, all of the buildings are dark inside.

Sounds & Smells. Vineford is eerily silent. If the party spends a few moments listening, they hear wind battering a bucket around near the well in the town's center.

There are several buildings and locations in the town the party can explore. Their descriptions follow.

Town Center

Well. A small well pokes out of the ground close to the temple of Tymora to the south. A number of buckets rest near the well; one is slowly being battered across the ground by gusts of wind. The wayward bucket is making its way south, toward the temple.

If anyone tries to descend into the well, the bottom is completely full of cool, clean water.

Tavern

Common Room. Tables and chairs are strewn around the room thanks to the villagers' hasty exit. Since the town evacuated in the early evening, several families were mid-meal when they ran; the remains of their dinners are set out on some of the tables. A DC 12 Wisdom (Investigation) reveals that the food (or what's left of it) has been sitting out here for more than a month.

Bar & Kitchen. Behind the narrow bar is a keg of a strong, barleywine-style beer; it's been slowly leaking (which is sad), so the floor is sticky.

A doorway behind the bar leads to the kitchen. It's small but well-stocked, and a wood-burning cooking stove sits in the corner. The melted remains of a pan sit on the stove. In the northeast corner of the kitchen is a trapdoor in the floor that leads to a storage area.

Storage Area. The trapdoor in the kitchen leads to a small larder carved into the earth. As soon as the characters open the door, a wave of pungent nastiness hits them—the smell of rot and death.

A short ladder leads down. Shelves line the walls in the small larder, all covered with dried foodstuffs. One shelf collapsed, and a pair of legs pokes out from the wreckage of boxes and jars. This is the body of Malvin Cheesebro, the late tavern-keeper—he expired as he fetched more beets (beets are popular in Vineford). A DC 15 Medicine check lets the party know he passed away from natural causes.

Playing the Pillars (Scene B. Vineford)

COMBAT

Though they're probably going to be on their guard, the party won't have any opportunities to get into combat as they search Vineford. They can always break some windows and try to explain it to the villagers later, though, if they want to be destructive.

EXPLORATION

The first person to enter the village will feel an intense pressure on their skull and hear a brief sucking sound, almost like the room is losing pressure rapidly. That character also briefly sees an image flash in their mind: that of the inside of the foreman's cabin (see **Episode 3, Scene A**).

SOCIAL

If the party has a way to communicate with the dead, they can talk to the corpse of Malvin Cheesebro. The tavern-keeper suffered a fatal heart attack as Rulf Currier deceived the townsfolk into fleeing. While he's not aware of Rulf's true role, he knows the bailiff spent an odd amount of time in the foreman's cabin near the mine.

Bailiff's Office

Front Office. This room contains a small desk and two chairs. A door leads to the small adjoining room that contains the cells. On top of the desk sits Rulf's journal (see the handout in **Appendix 8**).

Cells. The cells are empty and relatively clean, like they haven't been used in months.

Smithy

Forge. The inside of the smithy has a small forge on the wider side, an anvil, and several shelves full of functional blacksmithing tools.

Shrine to Tymora

Collapsing Wall. The rear wall of the shrine is in a partial state of collapse. If a character messes with this section, roll a 1d8—on a 1, the building collapses completely, causing 4d6 bludgeoning damage.

Shrine. A tiny entrance immediately opens into a circular-shaped main area that's about 15 feet in diameter. A crude, humanoid-sized statue to Tymora stands in the center, and it's knocked slightly off kilter by the collapsing rear wall.

At the base of the statue, a number of offerings are piled, mostly soggy scripts from the miners.

Rulf has written "IT CALLS TO ME IT CALLS TO ME" on the shrine in blood. A character investigating this can easily learn that it's less than two days old. Nearby, a stuffed flumph toy soaked with blood rests.

Treasure & Rewards

Next to the shrine of Tymora are two *potions of healing* left as an offering. If the party has no qualms thumbing their collective noses at Lady Luck, they're welcome to take them.

Scene C. The Outskirts

The western side of Vineford is comprised of nearly 20 tents (some large enough for a family, the rest single-person tents), a small stable, several outhouses, and vegetable fields.

Area Information

This area features the following:

Tents. The villagers set up a tent city as they slowly planned for more permanent lodgings. The tents here vary in size and are arranged in several rough rows, have wooden floors, and are made from sturdy canvas. The elements have taken their toll over the past two months, though, and most of the tents are collapsed—save for one. Rulf is in that one.

Stable. The small building has several stalls inside, all empty. The few tethered horses chewed their way free, because horses aren't dumb.

Vegetable Fields. Several fields curve around the eastern side of the outskirts, three silent scarecrows keeping watch. They have gone to seed in the villagers' absence.

Outhouses. There are three single-occupancy outhouses at the far rim of the tent city.

NPCs

Lurking in his tent is **Rulf Currier** (a human **warlock of the Great Old One**), Vineford's now-former bailiff. He's a shabby mess right now, and looks like he hasn't slept in several weeks (and he hasn't!).

Objectives/Goals. Rulf was a decent man, once. But Qhizalt's influence was too much for the poor fellow, and a broken Rulf helped the mind flayer abduct the people of Vineford. Rulf is devastated by his recent actions, but is still uncertain he can break free from the illithid's influence.

The party's actions once they meet him will push Rulf in one direction or the other, which affects his goals. If they remind him of his duty to his fellow citizens, he tentatively agrees to help the adventurers with a DC 18 Persuasion check. If they repeatedly condemn him or treat with him in a hostile manner, he will attack.



Playing the Pillars (Scene C. The Outskirts)

COMBAT

If enraged, Rulf fights to the death. He targets other spellcasters first and uses the open space in the room as best as he can to his advantage.

EXPLORATION

Stealthy characters can approach Rulf's tent without alerting him. Since Rulf is spaced out, he makes Perception checks to notice the party with Disadvantage.

SOCIAL

A character who mentions the early entries of Rulf's journal in an effort to convince him to atone for his wrongs can make the Persuasion check to win him over with Advantage.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene, according to your group.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two of Rulf's spell slots.
- **Weak:** Remove one of Rulf's spell slots.
- **Strong:** Rulf increases his hit point total to 100.
- **Very Strong:** Rulf increases his hit points total to 130.
- **Deadly:** Rulf rolls Initiative with Advantage and increases his hit point total to 140.

Moving on to Episode 3.

The party should find enough clues to point them to the next episode in the mine. If, for some reason, they run into dead ends, don't be afraid to let them make some skill checks that use their talents to point them to the next section (like Survival to find some faint tracks, and so on).

Episode 3: Another Bug Hunt?

Estimated Duration: 60 to 75 minutes

No one understands the lonely perfection of my dreams. I found perfection here. I've created it. A perfect organism.

-David, from *Alien: Covenant* (2017)

The Moonwatch Hills

The adventurers have reached the Moonwatch Hills. Here, they will find the missing villagers...but also the parties responsible for their disappearance.

Prerequisites

The party will have reached the mines after gathering clues found in **Episode 2** or by learning about them from the orcs in **Bonus Objective A**.

Story Objective B

Locating the missing villagers and getting them to safety is **Story Objective B**. While it's likely the party will want to deal with the illithid, they only need to get the villagers to safety to effectively complete this portion.

Bonus Objective B

If using the additional content, the portal that leads to Qhizalt's chamber is on the upper floor of the nautiloid in **Scene B**. Otherwise, there is no portal on the second floor.

Magic Item Unlock

Please note that the magic item unlock can be found in two different places depending on whether the bonus content is being used. If only the Story Objectives are being used, the item unlock is found at the end of this episode. If the bonus content is being used, the item unlock will be found in the final battle at the end of Bonus Objective B.

Area Information

This area has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The Moonwatch Hills loom over the village, despite their relatively low elevation. The trail that leads from the village to the mine cuts through a sparse forest full of ugly undergrowth and, oddly, vines.

Scene A. A Hole in the World

Over the past two years, the Vineford miners made good progress digging for ore in the Moonwatch Hills. The mind flayer Qhizalt made a crude tunnel that connected his ship with the tunnel; after he captured the villagers, he used them to widen it.

Area Information

This area has the following features:

Foreman's Cabin. The single-floor cabin is close to the entrance of the mine. There is a single door facing the forest and several windows provide some light during the day. The structure, which is about 30 feet square, has a simple wooden floor and a few desks near the center. The desks contain payroll information as well as shift and ore shipping schedules.

Lighting. There are several well-maintained oil lamps on the inside of the cabin. Aside from the entrance, the mining tunnel is entirely dark.

Mine Entrance. The terrain at the mine entrance is even and well-trodden and can be traversed without difficulty. The tunnel is carved neatly into the Moonwatch Hills and extends about 50 feet before widening into a working space.

Working Space. The mining tunnel eventually expands into a room about 25 feet square. Here, the miners had planned on digging in several directions. Wheelbarrows are lined up against the wall, as are several picks and oil lamps. The western wall of this area is collapsed, revealing a roughshod tunnel.

Roughshod Tunnels. This impromptu crawlspace leads from the mine to the nautiloid buried in the Moonwatch Hills. The opening looks like it's been worked with tools, but in a hurried fashion. Any creature larger in Size than Small needs to crouch to fit. This tunnel runs about 100 feet to the entrance of the nautiloid.

Creatures

The wheelbarrows in the working area conceal two **swarms of cranium rats**. A faint violet light ebbs from behind the wheelbarrow, and perceptive party members (to the tune of a DC 15 Perception check) will notice the soft chittering and squeaking from the creatures. If no one bothers the rats, they stay behind the wheelbarrows.

The rats are not initially hostile, but scurry about in a panic if revealed. If the party does not do anything aggressive towards them after revealing them, the rats abruptly form a single-file line, squeak and chitter in an eerily rhythmic manner, then proceed to march down the tunnel that leads to the nautiloid.

If attacked, the rats respond in kind.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene, according to your group.

- **Very Weak:** Remove one **swarm of cranium rats**; also decrease their HP total to 30.
- **Weak:** Remove one **swarm of cranium rats**.
- **Strong:** Increase both swarms' HP total to 45.
- **Very Strong:** Add one **swarm of cranium rats**.

Scene B. The Nautiloid

The tunnel leads to the crashed nautiloid, where the illithid Qhizalt has been lurking for years. This spelljamming ship has served as a base and laboratory for the illithid and several other strange creatures.

Area Information

This area has the following features:

General Features. There is a subtle but powerful mental pressure that exerts itself on the party as soon as they approach the nautiloid; it persists until they exit back out through the tunnel and into the mine. Most of the chambers in the nautiloid have been damaged by the ship's crash to some extent; as a result, a number of fissures and tears dot the hull. While rubble from the hills has naturally filled in some of these gaps, it's possible to shimmy through some of the cracks.

Lighting. The ruined ship's interior is bathed in spooky, phasing illumination from unknown sources embedded within the remains of the hull.

Nautiloid Entrance. The narrow tunnel from the mines opens into a cavern that provides access to the nautiloid. The far wall appears to be made of some sort of dull, hollow-sounding metal. The angles of the architecture are just...off somehow. Everything about this room is alien. Wiry vines and twisted plants stick out from gaps in the plating, grown into bizarre shapes and formations. An open door in the hull leads to the ship's interior.

Central Area. The central area of the ship is egg-shaped. A ruined stairwell sits in the center of the room; it's filled with several tons of rubble. Two smaller staircases on both sides of the room ascend to the second level 20 feet above. The sliding doors at the top of the stairs that separate the two levels are locked and require a DC 15 check with Thieves' Tools to open, or a DC 16 Athletics check to force open. Solid metal doors on both long ends of the room lead to the Experiment Chamber and Body Shack. The ceiling is semi-translucent—the party will be able to see shapes of the eggs and villagers up there, but won't be able to tell what they are.

Playing the Pillars (Scene B. The Nautiloid)

COMBAT

Setting fire to the eggs on the upper level will cause all enemies to waste their actions for a round. But it also makes whoever set the fire the creatures' target once they come to!

EXPLORATION

Characters may want to use the cracks in the nautiloid's hull to get to the upper level. A DC 24 Investigation check will help them find the right passage.

SOCIAL

Talking to Newt can tip the adventurers off to which villagers are infected by the intellect devourers. Award them Advantage on their Initiative check if they play this scene well.

Body Shack. This room reeks of death. Dozens of corpses are stacked in the center of the room in varying states of decay—some, near the top, are villagers from Vineford, but the rest are orcs from Thar and travelers of various origins. The bodies are unrecognizable due to decay and the radically gross fact that all of their heads have been burst open from behind and are brainless.

Experiment Chamber. This chamber houses Qhizalt's various experiments. Three large glass cylinders line the rear wall. Bizarre creatures (DM's discretion) are floating inside, pallid and infected with illithid larvae. They're too far gone to be saved. A recently dead villager is strapped to a table near the door; Qhizalt was performing awful experiments on him before the man finally succumbed to his wounds.

Upper Level. The party can access the upper level by climbing the stairs and opening or bypassing the locked doors.

The remaining villagers from Vineford are here, around 25 in all. Most are collapsed on the floor in a catatonic state (see the following **NPCs** section for more information). The villagers are clumped amidst countless fleshy, egg-like containers that fill the upper level. Qhizalt was using these eggs to create intellect devourers that fit its whims. Only two of this batch have reached maturity and hatched—they took over two of the children in this room. The remaining eggs don't pose an immediate threat, but they are considered difficult terrain if anyone tries to move through them.

BONUS OBJECTIVE B. If you are using the additional content in the bonus objectives, the path to Qhizalt's lair is open here. Situated against the northern wall in a metal oval is an ebony portal rippling with a milky sheen. It is the gateway to the nearby cavern which Qhizalt has established as its lair over the last several years.

Treasure

One of the bodies near the top of the corpse pile in the Body Shack has a *potion of greater healing* stuffed in a pocket. The top of the potion is easily spotted by anyone in the room.

If NOT using Bonus Objective B: The party can find a *portable hole* in the wall of the upper level, within easy reach of the stairs.

Creatures/NPCs

The creatures in the nautiloid are out of sight, hiding as the party explores. A **gauth** hides in the small spaces between the ship and rubble surrounding it. Two **intellect devourers** reside in the heads of two of the children in the room, and a **gibbering moulder** hides beneath the pile of corpses in the Body Shack.

There are around two dozen villagers. All are conscious, but most will take some rallying before the party can lead them to safety—they have three levels of exhaustion. There are three children here—Delita, Prisl, and Rebekah, all between the ages of 7 and 12. Delita and Prisl have been taken over by the intellect devourers mentioned earlier. All of the villagers use the **commoners** statblock.

Objectives/Goals. The creatures on the ship want to destroy the adventurers, but will wait until the right moment to attack. They fight to the death.

The villagers want to escape by any means necessary. If Rulf is alive and helping the party, he will be quick to sacrifice himself to help the villagers escape.

What Do They Know? The villagers know that if they don't get out of here soon, they will die. Rebekah (her friends call her "Newt") knows that something is wrong with Delita and Prisl, but hasn't seen them taken over by the intellect devourers. She also knows that there are *other* creatures around, but doesn't know where they are.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene, according to your group. If Rulf Currier is helping the party, count him as a level 8 party member when calculating APL.

- **Very Weak:** Remove the **gibbering moulder** and replace the **gauth** with a **grell**.
- **Weak:** Remove the **gibbering moulder** and replace the **gauth** with a **mindwitness**.
- **Strong:** Add a **mindwitness**.
- **Very Strong:** Add a **mindwitness**, an additional **gibbering moulder**, and two more **intellect devourers**.
- **Deadly:** Add a **mindwitness**, another **gauth**, and a **mind flayer arcanist**.

Wrap Up: “I Knew You’d Come”

Supposing the adventurers are able to rescue the surviving villagers from the nautiloid (whether the material in Bonus Objective B is used or not), Vineford manages to return to some sense of normalcy. The town has not worn out much in the absence of its residents, and the villagers steel themselves to quickly refurbish anything that has fallen into disrepair. The fate of Rulf Carrier, if he survived, is up to you, dear DM.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A. If the party peacefully resolved the situation with the orcs in this optional encounter, the Thar patrol will carefully approach the villagers after they escape from the nautiloid and offer to help the townsfolk get back on their feet.



Adventure Rewards

At the end of the session, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include player rewards—magic item unlocks, story awards, or new downtime activities, as follows:

Advancement and Treasure Checkpoints

The characters receive one advancement and one treasure checkpoint for each completed **story objective** as follows:

- **Story Objective A:** Find where the missing villagers are located.
- **Story Objective B:** Get the villagers back to safety at Vineford.

The characters earn an additional advancement and treasure checkpoint for each **bonus objective** they complete, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A:** Resolve the situation with the orcs—either by defeating them or forming a temporary truce with them.
- **Bonus Objective B:** Find and stop the illithid Qhizalt and its plans.

Player Rewards

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

Magic Item Unlock

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

Portable Hole. This fine black cloth, soft as silk, is folded up to the dimensions of a handkerchief. It unfolds into a circular sheet 6 feet in diameter. This item can be found in **Appendix 9**.

Dungeon Master Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement and treasure checkpoints** and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the adventure’s **player rewards**.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (*Adventurers League Dungeon Master’s Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

Appendix 1: Locations & NPCs

The following NPCs and locations feature **prominently** in this adventure.

- **Ulvur Honeaxe (ULL-var HOWN-aks).**

Ulvur Honeaxe is a burly, middle-aged shield dwarf with a penchant for gusty conversation and brash laughter. He is an accomplished merchant traveler and always has a few quips suitable for any conversation. He also whistles incessantly.

Personality: *I try and keep it quiet around my peers, but I'm actually a wine-drinker.*

Ideal: *Freedom of commerce can't be stifled.*

Bond: *I'm a friend to all I meet—no one should be pushed away.*

Flaw: *I talk about helping people, but really, I'm just a coward.*

- **Rulf Currier (ROLF KERR-ee-err).**

Rulf Currier is a slightly pale human man in his early forties, without any close family or friends. A simple man who oversees the law in Vineford with efficiency, he is, in fact, a years-long warlock tied to the powers of the Far Realm. He likes dry cheeses and getting lost in the dark. By the end of the adventure, it's possible Rulf escapes from the influence of Qhizalt.

Personality: *I stare into the sky at odd hours of the day, never sure about what stares back.*

Ideal: *Everyone is a servant of someone else—no man or woman is their own.*

Bond: *Power is fleeting, but it is a temporary—and necessary—salve.*

Flaw: *My insecurity is so entrenched that I second-guessed my flaw.*

- **Gordyn Tinkler (GORE-din TINK-ler).**

Gordyn Tinkler is a Tharian half-orc with more than her fair share of military experience. She knows her lessers sometimes gab about her behind her back, but she keeps things in perspective. She's slow to speak, but has a lot to say once she gets going. It's possible the party can enlist her help in getting the people of Vineford back on their feet.

Personality: *I often wonder about our place in the world, but try to keep it simple.*

Ideal: *Caution and temperance are critical. Oh, also a big, step-off mace.*

Bond: *Too many of my kin have died for little reason, so I try to curb aggression.*

Flaw: *Go ahead—say something about my name.*

- **Qhizalt (KWIZ-alt).**

Qhizalt is a rogue illithid who, after having abandoned its ties to a distant elder brain, indulged a solitary journey of experimentation and arcana. It often talks to itself, half-aloud and half-mentally, making for odd, stuttering conversations if overheard.

Personality: *Why do something simply when it can be incessantly convoluted and redundant?*

Ideal: *There is only force of will, and also ambition, and also those little cat statues that wave.*

Bond: *I don't recognize any power above my own, except a very clever almiraj I met once.*

Flaw: *I have never flossed after consuming gray matter.*

- **Vineford.** A tiny mining burg north of the Moonsea, Vineford is nestled in the Moonwatch Hills and was established two years ago. There is routine, if sparse, trade with the bigger cities along the northern Moonsea. Vineford's primary export is iron ore and coal, which is mined aplenty from the nearby hills. The residents here—all refugees from Phlan—went missing after they were betrayed by their bailiff and then imprisoned by a mind flayer in the nearby hills.

- **The Mine.** Vineford's mine in the Moonwatch Hills is a neat and orderly little operation that provides abundant iron ore and coal for use by and export from the village. It has been slowly expanded into the depths of the hills, and is of unremarkable design and scope. Easy to navigate and deliberately simple in layout, the mine is not very dangerous, and is structurally sound. A rear shaft unwittingly connects to the exterior hull of a crashed illithid starship buried under the hills.

- **The Nautiloid.** When Qhizalt, the rogue mind flayer, crashed its nautiloid into the Moonwatch Hills, it ended up buried under several layers of rock and dirt until settling near a small set of natural caves. The ship is now a fraction of its former self. Still utterly alien in design and motif, anyone unaccustomed to an object of the Far Realm or overall illithid society will likely feel sick to their stomachs just entering the strange, metal hull of the craft, even years after its making landfall.

Appendix 2: Creature Statistics

Commoner

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)	10 (0)

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Actions

Club. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Gauth

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)

Speed 0 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	14 (+2)	63 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)

Skills Perception +5

Condition Immunity prone

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Stunning Gaze. When a creature that can see the gauth's central eye starts its turn within 30 feet of the gauth, the gauth can force it to make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw if the gauth isn't incapacitated and can see the creature. A creature that fails the save is stunned until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at the gauth in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

Death Throes. When the gauth dies, the magical energy within it explodes, and each creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

Eye Rays. The gauth shoots three of the following magical eye rays at random (reroll duplicates), choosing one to three targets it can see within 120 feet of it:

1. **Devour Magic Ray:** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or have one of its magic items lose all magical properties until the start of the gauth's next turn. If the object is a charged item, it also loses 1d4 charges. Determine the affected item randomly, ignoring single-use items such as potions and scrolls.
2. **Enervation Ray:** The targeted creature must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
3. **Pushing Ray:** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 15 feet directly away from the gauth and have its speed halved until the start of the gauth's next turn.
4. **Fire Ray:** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 22 (4d10) fire damage.
5. **Paralyzing Ray:** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
6. **Sleep Ray:** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or fall asleep and remain unconscious for 1 minute. The target awakens if it takes damage or another creature takes an action to wake it. This ray has no effect on constructs and undead.

Gibbering Moulder

Medium aberration, neutral

Armor Class 9

Hit Points 67 (9d8+27)

Speed 10 ft., swim 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	10 (0)	6 (-2)

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Aberrant Ground. The ground in a 10-foot radius around the moulder is doughlike difficult terrain. Each creature that starts its turn in that area must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or have its speed reduced to 0 until the start of its next turn.

Gibbering. The moulder babbles incoherently while it can see any creature and isn't incapacitated. Each creature that starts its turn within 20 feet of the moulder and can hear the gibbering must succeed on a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature can't take reactions until the start of its next turn and rolls a d8 to determine what it does during its turn. On a 1 to 4, the creature does nothing. On a 5 or 6, the creature takes no action or bonus action and uses all its movement to move in a randomly determined direction. On a 7 or 8, the creature makes a melee attack against a randomly determined creature within its reach or does nothing if it can't make such an attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The gibbering moulder makes one bite attack and, if it can, uses its Blinding Spittle.

Bites. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 17 (5d6) piercing damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 10 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is killed by this damage, it is absorbed into the moulder.

Blinding Spittle (Recharge 5-6). The moulder spits a chemical glob at a point it can see within 15 feet of it. The glob explodes in a blinding flash of light on impact. Each creature within 5 feet of the flash must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of the moulder's next turn.

Grell

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 55 (10d8+10)

Speed 10 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (0)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6

Damage Immunities lightning

Condition Immunities blinded, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

Languages Grell

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The grell makes two attacks: one with its tentacles and one with its beak.

Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. Hit: 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The poisoned target is paralyzed, and it can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

The target is also grappled (escape DC 15). If the target is Medium or smaller, it is also restrained until this grapple ends. While grappling the target, the grell has advantage on attack rolls against it and can't use this attack against other targets. When the grell moves, any Medium or smaller target it is grappling moves with it.

Beak. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Guardian Portrait

Medium construct, unaligned

Armor Class 5 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	1 (-5)	10 (0)	14 (+2)	10 (0)	10 (0)

Damage Immunities poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, plus up to two other languages

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Constructed Nature. An animated object doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

The magic that animates an object is dispelled when the construct drops to 0 hit points. An animated object reduced to 0 hit points becomes inanimate and is too damaged to be of much value to anyone.

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

Innate Spellcasting. The portrait's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12). The portrait can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

- 3/day each: counterspell, crown of madness, hypnotic pattern, telekinesis

False Appearance. While the figure in the portrait remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal painting.

Intellect Devourer

Tiny aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 21 (6d4+6)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	11 (0)	10 (0)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities blinded

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

Languages understands Deep Speech but can't speak, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Detect Sentience. The intellect devourer can sense the presence and location of any creature within 300 feet of it that has an Intelligence of 3 or higher, regardless of interposing barriers, unless the creature is protected by a mind blank spell.

Actions

Multiattack. The intellect devourer makes one attack with its claws and uses Devour Intellect.

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Devour Intellect. The intellect devourer targets one creature it can see within 10 feet of it that has a brain. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence saving throw against this magic or take 11 (2d10) psychic damage. Also on a failure, roll 3d6: If the total equals or exceeds the target's Intelligence score, that score is reduced to 0. The target is stunned until it regains at least one point of Intelligence.

Body Thief. The intellect devourer initiates an Intelligence contest with an incapacitated humanoid within 5 feet of it that isn't protected by protection from evil and good. If it wins the contest, the intellect devourer magically consumes the target's brain, teleports into the target's skull, and takes control of the target's body. While inside a creature, the intellect devourer has total cover against attacks and other effects originating outside its host. The intellect devourer retains its Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as its understanding of Deep Speech, its telepathy, and its traits. It otherwise adopts the target's statistics. It knows everything the creature knew, including spells and languages.

If the host body dies, the intellect devourer must leave it. A protection from evil and good spell cast on the body drives the intellect devourer out. The intellect devourer is also forced out if the target regains its devoured brain by means of a wish. By spending 5 feet of its movement, the intellect devourer can voluntarily leave the body, teleporting to the nearest unoccupied space within 5 feet of it. The body then dies, unless its brain is restored within 1 round.

Mind Flayer

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (breastplate)

Hit Points 71 (13d8+13)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +7, Deception +6, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The mind flayer has Advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The mind flayer's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

- At will: detect thoughts, levitate
- 1/day each: dominate monster, plane shift (self only)

Actions

Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 15) and must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

Extract Brain. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the mind flayer. Hit: The target takes 55 (10d10) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the mind flayer kills the target by extracting and devouring its brain.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5-6). The mind flayer magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Mind Flayer Arcanist

Medium aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (breastplate)

Hit Points 71 (13d8+13)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +7, Deception +6, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Magic Resistance. The mind flayer has Advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The mind flayer's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

- At will: detect thoughts, levitate
- 1/day each: dominate monster, plane shift (self only)

Spellcasting. The mind flayer is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The mind flayer has the following wizard spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): blade ward, dancing lights, mage hand, shocking grasp
- 1st level (4 slots): detect magic, disguise self, shield, sleep
- 2nd level (3 slots): blur, invisibility, ray of enfeeblement
- 3rd level (3 slots): clairvoyance, lightning bolt, sending
- 4th level (3 slots): confusion, hallucinatory terrain
- 5th level (2 slots): telekinesis, wall of force

Actions

Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) psychic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 15) and must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

Extract Brain. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one incapacitated humanoid grappled by the mind flayer. Hit: The target takes 55 (10d10) piercing damage. If this damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the mind flayer kills the target by extracting and devouring its brain.

Mind Blast (Recharge 5-6). The mind flayer magically emits psychic energy in a 60-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or take 22 (4d8 + 4) psychic damage and be stunned for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Mindwitness

Large aberration, lawful evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10+20)

Speed 0 ft., fly 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (0)

Saving Throws Int +5, Wis +5

Skills Perception +8

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages Deep Speech, Undercommon, telepathy 600 ft.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Telepathic Hub. When the mindwitness receives a telepathic message, it can telepathically share that message with up to seven other creatures within 600 feet of it that it can see.

Actions

Multiattack. The mindwitness makes two attacks: one with its tentacles and one with its bite.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 16 (4d6+2) piercing damage.

Tentacles. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 20 (4d8+2) psychic damage. If the target is Large or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 13) and must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw or be stunned until this grapple ends.

Eye Rays. The mindwitness shoots three of the following magical eye rays at random (reroll duplicates), choosing one to three targets it can see within 120 feet of it:

1. **Aversion Ray:** The targeted creature must make a DC 13 Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the target has Disadvantage on attack rolls for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
2. **Fear Ray:** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
3. **Psychic Ray:** The target must succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence saving throw or take 27 (6d8) psychic damage.
4. **Slowing Ray:** The targeted creature must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target's speed is halved for 1 minute. In addition, the creature can't take reactions, and it can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn but not both. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
5. **Stunning Ray:** The targeted creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be stunned for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the start of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.
6. **Telekinetic Ray:** If the target is a creature, it must make a DC 13 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the mindwitness moves it up to 30 feet in any direction, and it is restrained by the ray's telekinetic grip until the start of the mindwitness's next turn or until the mindwitness is incapacitated.

If the target is an object weighing 300 pounds or less that isn't being worn or carried, it is telekinetically moved up to 30 feet in any direction. The mindwitness can also exert fine control on objects with this ray, such as manipulating a simple tool or opening a door or a container.

Orc

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (hide armor)

Hit Points 15 (2d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	11 (+0)	10 (0)

Skills Intimidation +2

Senses Darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Actions

Greataxe. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d12+3) slashing damage.

Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

Orc Blade of Ilneval

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (chain mail, shield)

Hit Points 60 (8d8+24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	11 (0)	17 (+3)	10 (0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +3

Skills Insight +3, Intimidation +4, Perception +3

Senses Darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Foe Smiter of Ilneval. The orc deals an extra die of damage when it hits with a longsword attack (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. The orc makes two melee attacks with its longsword or two ranged attacks with its javelins. If Ilneval's Command is available to use, the orc can use it after these attacks.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8+3) slashing damage, or 14 (2d10+3) slashing damage when used with two hands.

Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

Ilneval's Command (Recharges 4-6). Up to three allied orcs within 120 feet of this orc that can hear it can use their reactions to each make one weapon attack.

Orc Red Fang of Shargaas

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (studded leather armor)

Hit Points 52 (8d8+16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (0)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	9 (-1)	11 (0)	9 (-1)

Skills Intimidation +1, Perception +2, Stealth +5

Senses Darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

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

Hand of Shargaas. The orc deals an 2 extra dice of damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack (included in its attacks).

Shargaas's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the orc's darkvision.

Slayer. In the first round of a combat, the orc has Advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn yet. If the orc hits a creature that round who was surprised, the hit is automatically a critical hit.

Actions

Multiattack. The orc makes two scimitar or dart attacks.

Scimitar. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (3d6+3) slashing damage.

Dart. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (3d4+3) piercing damage.

Veil of Shargaas (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The orc casts darkness without any components. Wisdom is its spellcasting ability.

Orc War Chief

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 93 (11d8+44)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +6, Wis +2

Skills Intimidation +5

Senses Darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Gruumsh's Fury. The orc deals an extra 4 (1d8) damage when it hits with a weapon attack (included in the attacks).

Actions

Multiattack. The orc makes two attacks with its greataxe or its spear.

Greataxe. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (1d12 + 4 plus 1d8) slashing damage.

Spear. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (1d6 + 4 plus 1d8) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Battle Cry (1/Day). Each creature of the war chief's choice that is within 30 feet of it, can hear it, and not already affected by Battle Cry gain Advantage on attack rolls until the start of the war chief's next turn. The war chief can then make one attack as a bonus action.

Warlock of the Great Old One

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8+28)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Wis +4, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +4, History +4

Damage Resistances psychic

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Orcish, telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The warlock's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma. It can innately cast the following spells (spell save DC 15), requiring no material components:

- At will: detect magic, jump, levitate, mage armor (self only), speak with dead
- 1/day each: arcane gate, true seeing

Spellcasting. The warlock is a 14th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following warlock spells:

- Cantrips (at will): chill touch, eldritch blast, guidance, mage hand, minor illusion, prestidigitation, shocking grasp
- 1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots): armor of Agathys, arms of Hadar, crown of madness, clairvoyance, contact other plane, detect thoughts, dimension door, dissonant whispers, dominate beast, telekinesis, vampiric touch

Whispering Aura. At the start of each of the warlock's turns, each creature of its choice within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or take 10 (3d6) psychic damage, provided that the warlock isn't incapacitated.

Actions

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

Swarm of Cranium Rats

Medium swarm, lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 36 (8d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (0)	15 (+2)	11 (0)	14 (+2)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

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

Senses darkvision 30 ft.

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Illumination. As a bonus action, the swarm can shed dim light from its brains in a 5-foot radius, increase the illumination to bright light in a 5- to 20-foot radius (and dim light for an additional number of feet equal to the chosen radius), or extinguish the light.

Innate Spellcasting (Psionics). The swarm's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13). As long as it has more than half of its hit points, it can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components:

- At will: command, comprehend languages, detect thoughts
- 1/day each: confusion, dominate monster

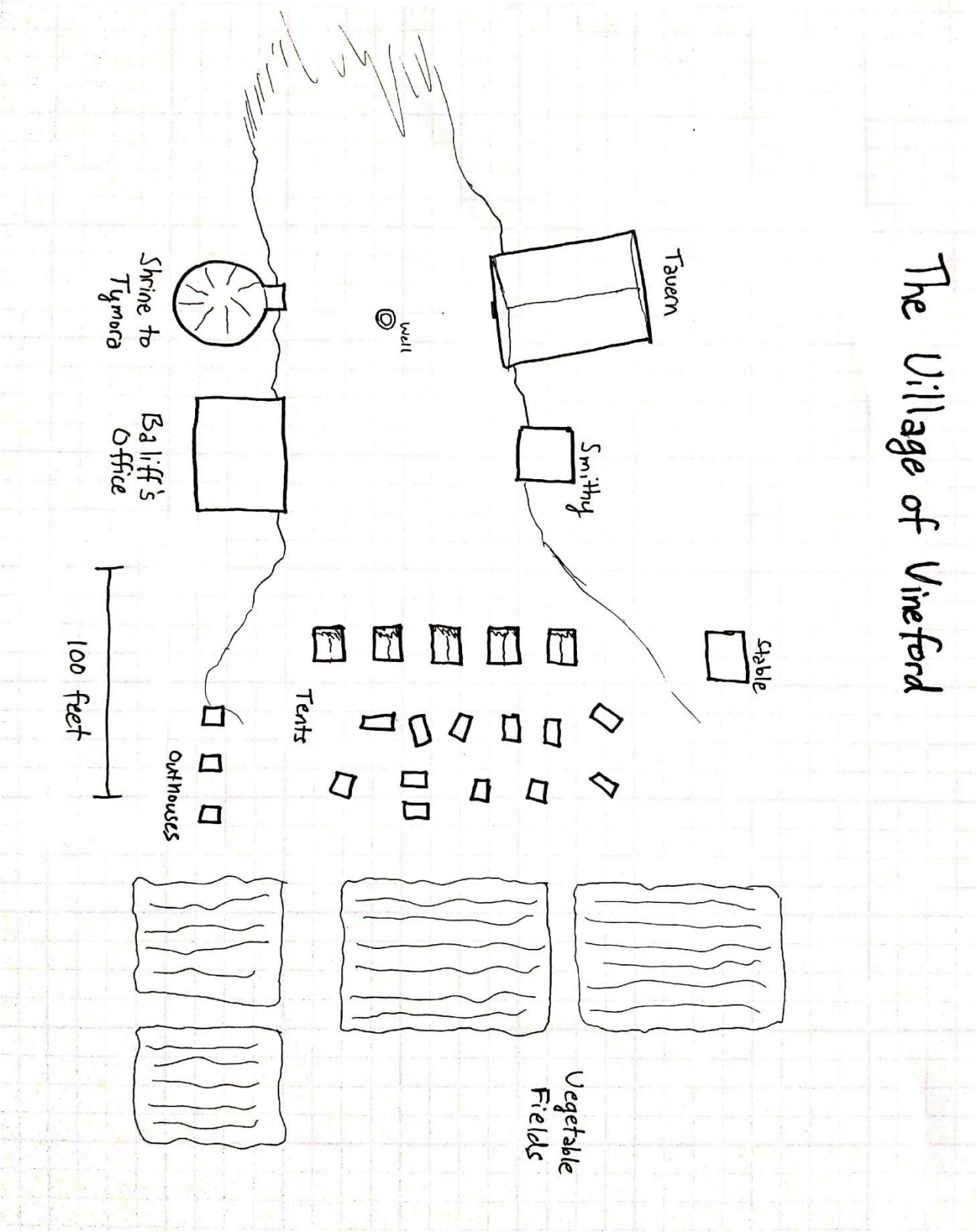
Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny rat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Telepathic Shroud. The swarm is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as to all divination spells.

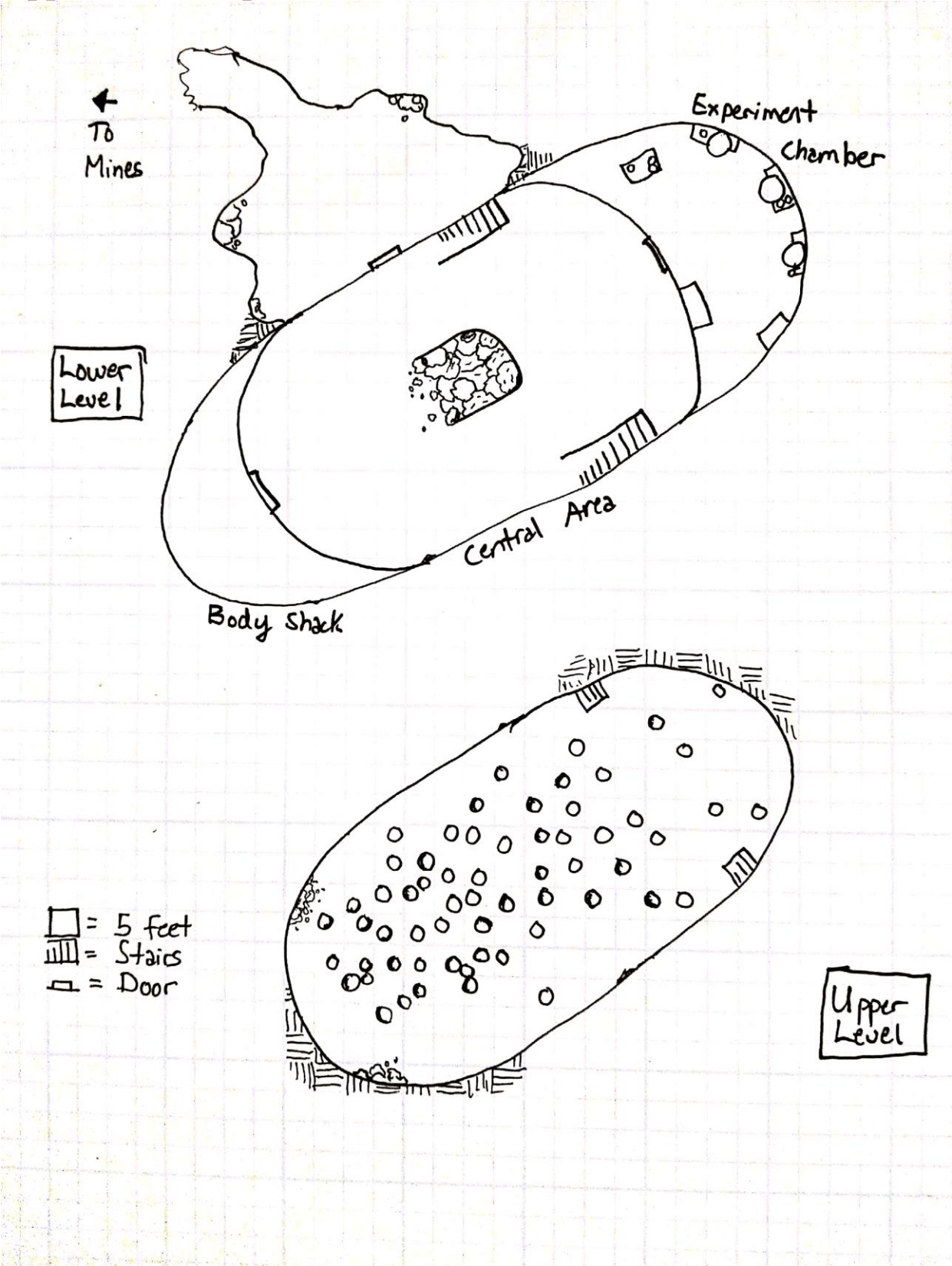
Actions

Bites. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. Hit: 14 (4d6) piercing damage, or 7 (2d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Appendix 3: Map of Vineford



Appendix 4: Map of Nautiloid



Appendix 5: We Have To Stick Together (Bonus Objective A)

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

How About Some Orcs?

In this episode, the party interacts with the orc patrol that's stationed near Vineford.

Prerequisites

This episode can take place at any point after

Episode 1.

Bonus Objective A

Resolve the situation with the orc patrol—either through violence, trickery, or diplomacy.

Area Information

Dimensions & Terrain. The orcs' sparse camp is perched on the edge of a rocky overhang a half mile from Vineford. Patchy grass dots the landscape around the camp, with the occasional sad tree. There is plenty of cover should combat erupt.

Creatures/NPCs

Gordyn Tinkler, an older half-orc, is keeping watch on Vineford with the scouts in her patrol.

Objectives/Goals. Due to some recent disappearances of their kin, the orcs are convinced that something bad happened to the villagers—they want to make sure that it doesn't continue or spread into Thar.

What Do They Know? Gordyn and her orcs know that Vineford is a peaceful place. They bumped into it after straying over the border last year. They check in periodically to see how it's grown (it hasn't grown much). The orcs know that a number of their kin have disappeared from this area over the years. While they don't suspect the villagers, they're still concerned. The villagers' disappearance spooked them when their patrol passed by yesterday. They haven't spotted any bodies and are in the process of forming a plan to explore the village when the party arrives.

Scene A. Eyes in the Sky

Approaching the orcs can lead to several different outcomes depending on what happens.

Resorting to Violence

If the party ends up attacking the orcs or making Gordyn overly suspicious, the orcs are quick to respond with violence. Gordyn is an **orc war chief** with the following change:

- Gordyn and her patrol are all Neutral in alignment

The other 7 members of the patrol are a variety of elite orcs: 2 **Orc Blade of Ilnevals**, an **Orc Red Fang of Shargaas**, and 4 plain, boring **Orcs** (don't tell them we said that).

The orcs are all skilled combatants. They use the surrounding terrain to their advantage, and they quickly spread out (to avoid area effect spells or attacks) and use cover as much as possible. The orcs initially target spellcasters or healers while also keeping melee combatants occupied. They have no qualms about killing downed opponents.

Adjusting the Scene

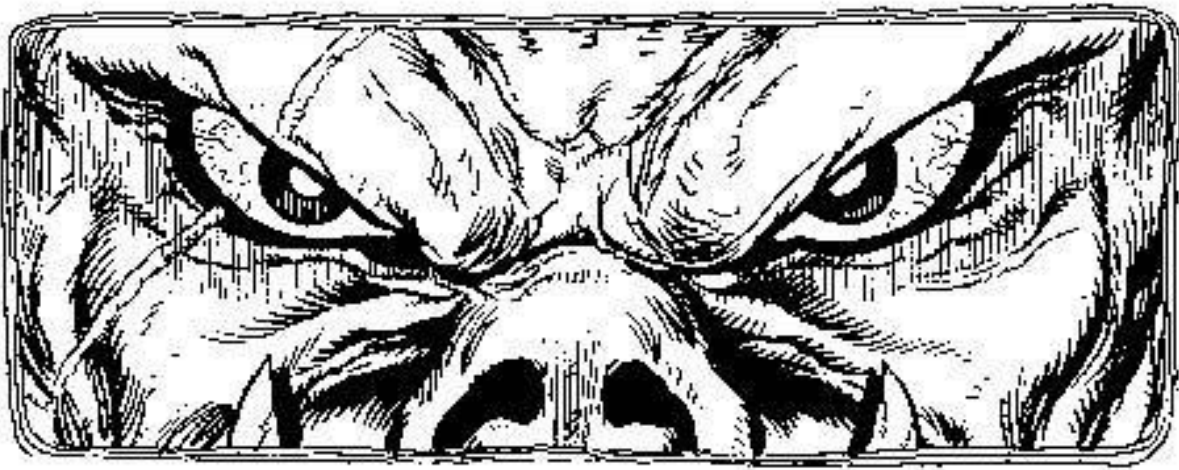
Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene, according to your group.

- **Very Weak:** Remove an **Orc Blade of Ilneval**, the **Orc Red Fang of Shargaas**, and two **Orcs**.
- **Weak:** Remove an **Orc Blade of Ilneval** and the **Orc Red Fang of Shargaas**.
- **Strong:** Replace 2 **Orcs** with an **Orc Blade of Ilneval** and an **Orc Red Fang of Shargaas**.
- **Very Strong:** Same as Strong, but replace the remaining 2 **Orcs** with an **Orc Blade of Ilneval** and an **Orc Red Fang of Shargaas**.

A Less Violent Way

As long as the party doesn't approach her encampment in a threatening manner, Gordyn is willing to hear the characters out. A DC 17 Persuasion check will convince her that the party doesn't mean harm. It's a little more difficult to trick Tinkler; a DC 20 Deception or Intimidation check will also work.

The orc patrol can point the party to the mines; while the orcs didn't see the villagers head that way, they at least know of the mines and that they could house several dozen people, and that the people of Vineford are now in the process of looking for a vein of ore in a different part of the Moonwatch Hills.



Playing the Pillars (Bonus Objective A)

COMBAT

If the party initiates combat, they could be in for a tough fight, regardless of their APL. The orcs will gang up on spellcasters and slippery, rogue-types as they're able. The orcs also aim to incapacitate, but will kill (and hit downed party members) if they must.

EXPLORATION

The party can sneak up on the orcs and observe them, though they have several lookouts posted around the camp (Perception +3, Stealth +5). If they spend more than an hour observing them, the party gets the gist that the patrol isn't responsible for the villagers' disappearance. If left alone, the orcs show up in the village at the end of **Episode 3**.

SOCIAL

The orcs aren't here to cause problems, so if the party makes an effort to be reasonable, the orcs will be reasonable back at them. The orcs all speak Common, but will switch to Orc if anyone in the party speaks to them in their language.

Appendix 6: Nuke the Site from Orbit (Bonus Objective B)

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

We Heard You Like Tentacles

In this episode, the party hunts down Qhizalt, the illithid behind the Vineford abductions.

Prerequisites

This bonus material only happens if the adventurers go through the portal on the upper level of the nautiloid in **Episode 3**.

Bonus Objective B

Find Qhizalt, stop it, and escape the Moonwatch Hills.

Magic Item Unlock

If you are using this bonus content, the magic item mentioned in **Episode 3** is instead found at the conclusion of this portion.

Scene A. Qhizalt's Lair

The players bound through the ebony portal in the nautiloid and end up nearby in a gross, dank cave deep under the Moonwatch Hills.

Area Information

This area has the following features:

General Features. The illithid cave is slimy, wet, and unsettlingly macabre. Corpses are strewn through the lair. This area is thoroughly alien—Faerun splashed with shades of the Far Realm.

Lighting. There is no natural light in this cave.

Entrance. Once players venture through the portal, they find themselves in a small chamber of rough-hewn rock that immediately leads into a winding tunnel.

Tunnel. This long, snaking corridor is 20 feet wide by 200 feet long. It slowly curves to the right, where it eventually opens to Qhizalt's chamber. A thick mist obscures the ceiling, from which drips ichor.

Glyph Traps. Qhizalt has installed two *glyphs of warding* along this long passageway. Both glyphs require a DC 15 Investigation check to notice, and both require a DC 15 check with *dispel magic* to deactivate.

The first glyph covers the entire floor of the corridor just beyond the halfway point of the tunnel. If a creature who is not an Aberration steps on the glyph, it will cast *bestow curse* at 5th level. The first character to spring this glyph needs to pass a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. If they fail, they must pass a Wisdom saving throw at the beginning of each round or lose their action. This curse lasts for 8 hours or until *remove curse* is used.

The second glyph is installed on the right wall of the corridor near its end point, just before it leads to Qhizalt's chamber. It is triggered when a command word (DM's discretion) is spoken aloud. If the mind flayer speaks the word aloud, the glyph will immediately cast *Evard's black tentacles* on the floor of the corridor immediately in front of it. Qhizalt keeps the use of this glyph in its proverbial back pocket for defensive combat, especially if intruders are all standing in the target area.

Qhizalt's Chamber. The tunnel leads to a large, roughly circular chamber. Like the tunnel, the ceiling is concealed by some weirdo mist. The chamber is filled with stone tables, half-baked experiments, unidentifiable objects in jars, and half-rotten body parts. The room smells oddly of both bleach and decay. A relatively fresh corpse is propped up near the rear wall; behind it, the wall is covered in the illithid script, Qualith.



Creatures/NPCs

Qhizalt, a **mind flayer arcanist**, lurks in this chamber. The Qualith on the wall functions as a **guardian portrait**. Two **intellect devourers** blend in with the various gross experiments in the room.

The Perfect Organism

Qhizalt isn't your ordinary deranged mind flayer. Make the following change to its statblock:

- Qhizalt's alignment is chaotic evil.

Objectives/Goals. Qhizalt has really enjoyed its creepy fun time in the Moonwatch Hills, so it wants to dispatch the party as quickly as possible so it can get back to experimenting.

What Does He Know? Qhizalt knows that adventurer brains are a delicacy. It knows that ruthlessly dealing with the heroes is the best way to ensure its long-term survival. It does its best to surprise them using the *portable hole* it has in its possession.

Adjusting the Scene

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene, according to your group.

- **Very Weak:** Replace the **mind flayer arcanist** with a **mind flayer**, and reduce the mind flayer's HP to 50; additionally, remove both **intellect devourers**
- **Weak:** Replace the **mind flayer arcanist** with a **mind flayer** and remove one **intellect devourer**.
- **Strong:** Increase the total number of **intellect devourers** to five; also increase Qhizalt's HP total to 85.
- **Very Strong:** Same as Strong, but also include a **mindwitness**.

Wrapping Up the Scene

Once Qhizalt reaches a quarter of its-health it will use its Reaction to trigger a "self-destruct sequence" of sorts. Over the years, the mind flayer has slowly rigged much of its operation with well-hidden explosive *glyphs of warding*. These glyphs will entirely destroy the illithid's complex—the cavern and crashed nautiloid—once and for all. Once activated, the glyphs will detonate after eight combat rounds. Once the eight-round countdown begins, a sudden, hollow thrumming sound will kick up around the whole cave and slowly build to roaring pitch as the arcane wards overload and explode.

If players manage to escape to the mines, they avoid any damage. Otherwise, they are caught in the blast and take 10d8 fire damage without a saving throw. Survivors (or corpses) within the blast radius will find themselves in a heap of rubble left from the collapse of a small portion of the Moonwatch Hills. Both the nautiloid and Qhizalt's inner sanctum are destroyed.

Treasure

If using this bonus content, the *portable hole* used by Qhizalt can be unlocked by defeating him.

Playing the Pillars (Bonus Objective B)

COMBAT

Qhizalt is hiding inside of its *portable hole*, which is unfolded creatively under the corpse in this room. When the time is right, the mind flayer will exit the hole...right *through* the corpse's chest.

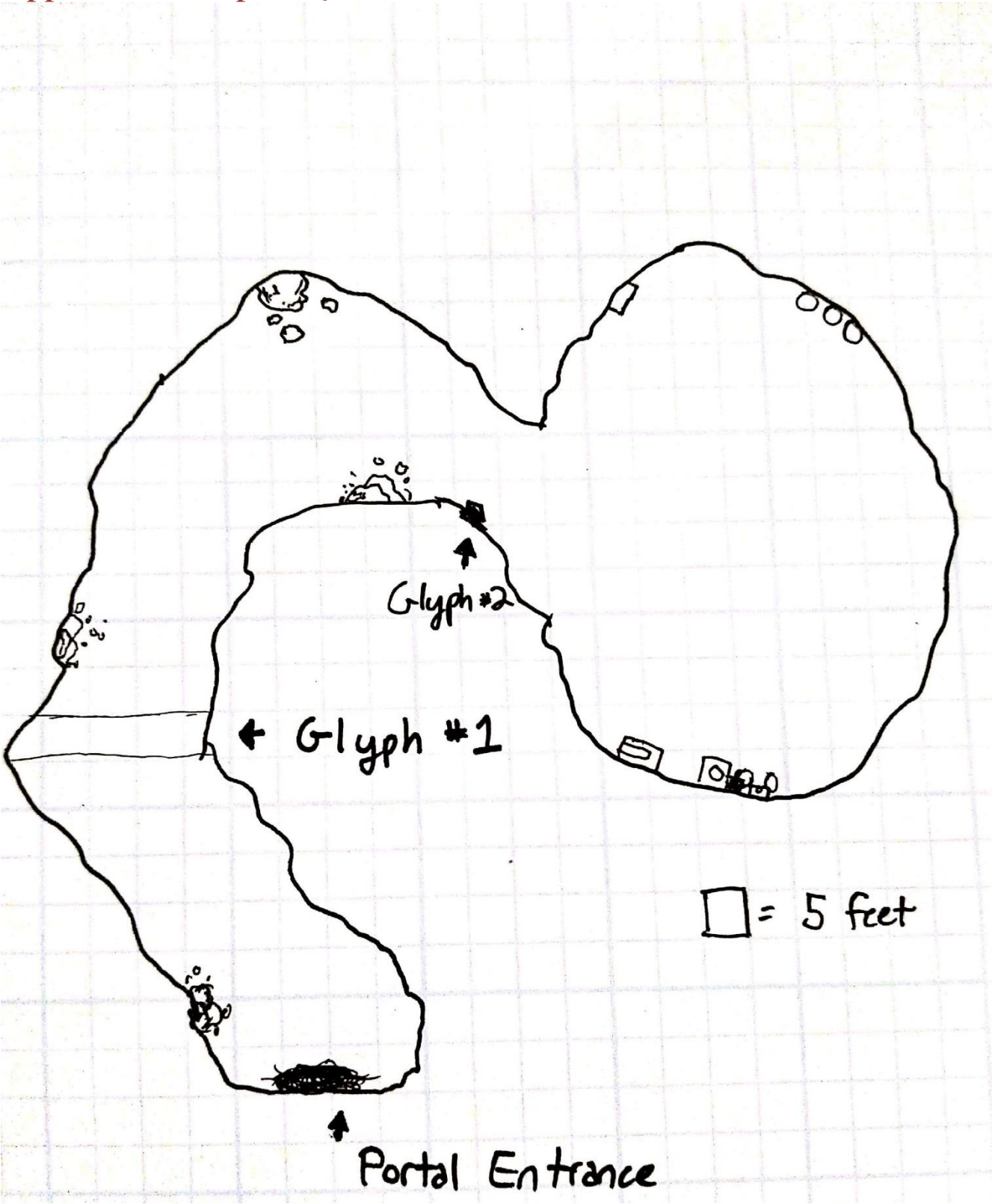
EXPLORATION

If Rulf Currier ended up helping the party, he can possibly pass along some detail of Qhizalt's creepy sanctum—where the glyphs are in the tunnel, or the nature of some of the mind flayer's companions.

SOCIAL

Look, some characters might try to talk their way out of this one. Reward outstanding roleplaying here as you see fit.

Appendix 7: Map of Qhizalt's Lair



Appendix 8: Rulf Currier's Journal (Player Handout)

Clarity today—finally! It's not just the turning of the season or the fresh start in Vineford, but something inside me—a confidence. It's like someone in my head cheering me on as I settle into this new land with my friends.

That voice whispered in my ear again today. It was soft, and paternal. It sounded like father, but then it was all scrambled up. Atonal. Another dream, is all. I wonder if I'll ever see him again, or, for that matter, hear that voice.

That's it. This presence has been with me for years now, but I didn't know it. Now I know it. Know it, yes. Know it for certain. The others don't know. Nor do they notice. The tricks. The power. The subtle influence. It is mine. It is... its. His? Hers? No. It.

No sleep for a week. Gods, these headaches. No. No gods. It.

Look around. They will all betray you. Flee screaming into the black hills. Yes, flee. Flee. Run. You resist. You cling to your life as if it actually matters. You will learn, Rulf. Yes. Go now. Into the hills. It's buried like a vein.

Do I have to take them all? It's not my fault. It's not my fault. I'm sorry. It's not my fault. So many. All of them. Bury them in it. Deep and dark. That word again. Qhizalt. *Iilth wah, uhn'agth fhssh za*. That's right. All of them. But...why?

Beneath the shadow of the darkened spire, there is no light, no mercy, only void, and the chaos within. It is there. It is there. It is there. I hear it again, like before. All those years, and it is there.

Art credit: Patrick E. Pullen

Appendix 9: Magic Item

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

Portable Hole

Wondrous item, rare, Table D

8 treasure checkpoints (tier 2+)

This fine black cloth, soft as silk, is folded up to the dimensions of a handkerchief. It unfolds into a circular sheet 6 feet in diameter. Any creature inside of the hole hears a slight slurping sound in the distance; the sound can never be located.

You can use an action to unfold a portable hole and place it on or against a solid surface, whereupon the portable hole creates an extradimensional hole 10 feet deep. The cylindrical space within the hole exists on a different plane, so it can't be used to create open passages. Any creature inside an open portable hole can exit the hole by climbing out of it.

You can use an action to close a portable hole by taking hold of the edges of the cloth and folding it up. Folding the cloth closes the hole, and any creatures or objects within remain in the extradimensional space. No matter what's in it, the hole weighs next to nothing.

If the hole is folded up, a creature within the hole's extradimensional space can use an action to make a DC 10 Strength check. On a successful check, the creature forces its way out and appears within 5 feet of the portable hole or the creature carrying it. A breathing creature within a closed portable hole can survive for up to 10 minutes, after which time it begins to suffocate.

Placing a portable hole inside an extradimensional space created by a Bag of Holding, Handy Haversack, or similar item instantly destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it and deposited in a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened. This item is found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Appendix 10: Dungeon Master Tips

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 5th-10th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 8**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

New to D&D Adventurers League?

[About the D&D Adventurers League](#)

New to the Annual Storyline?

[Waterdeep](#)

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure’s level range. Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play too but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first one if they’re outside its level range.

Preparing the Adventure

Before you start play, consider the following:

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

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

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

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

Adjusting this Adventure

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

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s average party level (APL). This adventure is optimized to APL 8. To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

Determining Party Strength

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