

# DRAGONFIRE

MAGAZINE

ISSUE #1

FEBRUARY 2025



ISSN 3066-3555



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# EDITOR'S EDICT

WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL ISSUE OF DRAGONFIRE MAGAZINE, A NEW PUBLICATION CRAFTED WITH PASSION FOR ADVENTURERS, STORYTELLERS, DREAMERS, AND CREATORS LIKE YOU. IT IS WITH GREAT EXCITEMENT AND A TOUCH OF TREPIDATION THAT I PRESENT TO YOU THIS LABOR OF LOVE—A MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO EXPLORING THE BOUNDLESS WORLDS OF TABLETOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES AND RPGS ACROSS EVERY GENRE IMAGINABLE.

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LET'S SET THE WORLD ABLAZE WITH CREATIVITY, ONE ROLL OF THE DICE AT A TIME.

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**Submission: [submissions@LunitarProductions.com](mailto:submissions@LunitarProductions.com)**

# DRAGONFIRE

**PUBLISHER: LUNITAR PRODUCTIONS**

**EDITOR: ANDREW BABCOCK**

**ART DIRECTOR: JOSEPH LAWN**

# DRAGONFIRE

## THE TOMB OF SHADOWS

A QUICK SIDE QUEST OR ADVENTURE  
FOR FANTASY SETTINGS

PAGE 13



## THE SILENT DRIFTER

A HORROR (CTHULHU) BASED SIDE  
QUEST OR ONE OFF.

PAGE 15

## ARCANA'S HAVEN

THIS MONTHS BUILDING OF  
INTEREST.

PAGE 10



# IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ THE PATH OF SHADOWS (ORIGINAL FICTION)— 5
- ◆ IN THE NEWS— 19
- ◆ YOUTUBE SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH:
  - A HAVEN FOR TTRPG ENTHUSIASTS — 22
- ◆ PODCAST SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH:
  - EXPLORING WORLDS, ONE ROLL AT A TIME —23
- ◆ LEGENDARY LOOT — 24
- ◆ UPCOMING EVENTS — 25
- ◆ MODULE REVIEW OF THE MONTH:
  - THE CURSED CRONES OF THE ENCHANTED GROVE— 28
- ◆ ARTISTS CORNER — 30
- ◆ VENDORS — 31

# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

BY ANDREW BABCOCK

The wind howled through the jagged peaks, tearing at the tattered cloak of the lone figure trudging through the darkness. Thunder rumbled in the distance, reverberating like the growl of some vast and unseen beast. The traveler paused at the edge of a narrow ravine, his hood pulled low, casting his face into shadow. His breaths came quick and shallow, the effort to keep moving evident in every step. Yet, he dared not stop for long.

They were close.

Behind him, faint whispers rode the wind, sinister and unyielding. They were not the whispers of men, but something far more alien, a dissonance that grated on the senses and threatened to unravel the mind. He closed his eyes for a moment, steadying himself. The whispers had followed him for days, always just out of sight, always closing in.

Clutching his satchel tightly to his side, he leaped across the ravine, landing on the uneven ground with a grunt. The satchel swung heavily against his chest, its contents—ancient tomes and crumbling parchments—a reminder of why he could not falter. The knowledge he carried was his only weapon, his only hope.

Lightning split the sky, illuminating the rugged terrain. For a fleeting moment, his silhouette was thrown against the stormy backdrop—a figure shrouded in layers of worn fabric, hunched but determined. The light revealed no weapon at his side, no armor to protect him, only the burden of the secrets he bore and the fire that burned in his heart.

The pursuit had begun weeks ago, though it felt like an eternity. He had been one among many, a part of a collective of "like-minded" individuals bound by a singular purpose. But unlike the others, he had dared to question. To think beyond their rigid tenets. To seek freedom. His departure had not been quiet. The bonds that tied him to them were not easily broken, and their wrath was unrelenting.

He pressed onward, his boots sinking into the mud as the rain began to fall. Each drop stung like an accusation, as if the heavens themselves sought to weigh him down. The whispers grew louder, more insistent. He risked a glance over his shoulder, but the night concealed all.

# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

A flicker of light ahead spurred him forward. A cave, its entrance wide and yawning, promised momentary respite. He stumbled toward it, slipping on the slick ground, and collapsed inside. Darkness enveloped him, the walls swallowing the sound of the storm outside. Only his labored breathing remained.

From the depths of his cloak, he pulled a small, metallic figurine—intricate and covered in runes. With shaking hands, he pressed it to the cave floor, muttering a string of words in a language not meant for mortal tongues. The runes flared faintly, and a barrier shimmered at the cave's entrance before fading into invisibility. It would not hold them forever, but it might grant him the time he so desperately needed.

Slumping against the wall, he let his hood fall slightly, revealing the faintest glimpse of his features. Eyes gleamed with an unnatural light, betraying the truth he could not yet name aloud. His hands trembled as he opened his satchel and withdrew a tattered book. The pages whispered as he turned them, their ancient script pulsating faintly in the dim light of his makeshift sanctuary.

“I will learn,” he whispered to himself, the words a vow and a plea. “Whatever the cost, I will understand.”

The whispers outside grew louder, pressing against the barrier like a tide. He knew they would come for him, as they always did. But for now, he had this moment. A moment to breathe. A moment to prepare.

The storm raged on, a symphony of chaos and pursuit, and in its heart sat the cloaked figure, his fire undimmed.

Altharid was still free.

By the time the whispers faded and the storm gave way to dawn, Altharid emerged from the cave. The figurine, now dull and inert, had done its job, but he knew better than to linger. The air outside was heavy with moisture, the ground slick beneath his boots as he began his descent from the peaks.

# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

The journey was grueling. For days, he traversed through dense woods and rolling hills, avoiding well-trodden paths and populated areas. Each night, he found refuge where he could—a hollow beneath ancient roots, an abandoned shed—always moving, always listening. Hunger gnawed at him, and his water skin grew dangerously light, but the faint glimmers of distant smoke on the horizon offered hope.

When he finally saw the village of Trevast nestled at the forest's edge, he hesitated. The sight of civilization, of people, was both a comfort and a threat. Pulling his cloak tighter, he steeled himself and stepped forward, his figure merging with the shadows of the encroaching dusk.

The village of Trevast was an unassuming place, nestled in the shadow of a sprawling forest that seemed to stretch on forever. Its narrow streets were lined with humble homes, their walls weathered by years of storms and toil. Smoke curled lazily from stone chimneys, filling the air with the earthy scent of burning wood. To the weary traveler, it seemed a place of quiet refuge—a far cry from the chaos Altharid had left behind.

He entered under the cover of dusk, his cloak pulled tight, his face obscured. The villagers gave him wary glances but asked no questions. It was the kind of place where secrets were respected, and strangers were left to their own devices, so long as they caused no trouble.

Altharid's first priority was sustenance. He traded a scrap of knowledge—a deciphered rune—for a loaf of bread and a flask of water. The exchange drew curious looks from the local scribe, a wiry man named Orlin who seemed both intrigued and unsettled by the cloaked stranger's presence.

“You have an eye for the old tongues,” Orlin remarked, his voice cautious.

“An interest, nothing more,” Altharid replied, his voice low and measured. “I seek a place to rest and perhaps... read.”

Orlin hesitated before nodding. “There's an old study at the edge of the village. It belonged to a scholar years ago. No one's been there since he passed. Perhaps you'll find it to your liking.”

# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

The study was a modest building, its roof sagging under the weight of years. Inside, dust blanketed shelves crammed with books, scrolls, and strange artifacts. Altharid ran his fingers over the spines of the tomes, his mind racing. Here, in this forgotten corner of the world, was a treasure trove of knowledge waiting to be uncovered.

He set to work immediately, poring over texts deep into the night. The writings ranged from treatises on botany to speculative essays on the nature of the soul. Among them, he discovered fragments of something more—hints of rituals and spells long thought lost.

The more he read, the deeper his curiosity grew. These texts spoke of forces that defied the natural order, of power that could reshape reality itself. His hands trembled as he traced the faded ink of an incantation. The words called to him, resonating with something deep and unspoken within.

But the texts also carried warnings. The margins were littered with hastily scrawled notes, cautioning against misuse, hinting at the terrible price of ambition. Altharid's breath quickened as he read of scholars driven mad, of villages consumed by their experiments.

Still, he could not stop. Knowledge was a fire, and he was already burning.

Days turned into weeks, and Altharid's presence became a fixture in Trevast. The villagers grew accustomed to the cloaked figure who spoke little but always paid his dues. Orlin, for his part, became an unlikely confidant, offering insights into the texts and sharing tales of the scholar who had once owned the study.

“He was a good man, but... troubled,” Orlin said one evening, his voice heavy with memory. “He sought answers to questions best left unasked. In the end, the search consumed him.”

Altharid said nothing, his gaze fixed on the flickering candlelight. He understood too well the dangers of knowledge, but the allure was undeniable. Each page turned was another step down a path he could not abandon, no matter where it might lead.



# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

One night, as the forest whispered with the wind, Altharid found a hidden compartment in the study's desk. Inside was a single sheet of parchment, its ink shimmering faintly in the dim light. The words were not written in any tongue he had encountered, but he understood them all the same.

It was an invitation—or perhaps a challenge. A ritual, incomplete but tantalizingly close to revelation. Altharid's lips curved into the faintest hint of a smile.

Altharid stood at the edge of the village, staring into the dark expanse of the forest. Orlin's words lingered in his mind, a cautionary echo, but they only fueled his resolve. He had spent weeks among the villagers, learning their rhythms and their fears, but now the study's secrets had begun to lead him elsewhere. The parchment's strange script haunted his thoughts, its promise of power pulling him deeper into his obsession.

The ritual described on the parchment was incomplete. It hinted at something ancient, something that transcended the barriers of mortality and reason. The allure was undeniable. If the study had been a treasure trove, the forest was now the vault. Somewhere within its shadowy depths lay the answers he sought.

He slipped into the trees, his movements silent and deliberate. The forest was alive with the rustling of leaves and the distant cries of nocturnal creatures, but Altharid moved with singular purpose. The air grew cooler the deeper he ventured, and the underbrush seemed to close in around him, as though the forest itself sought to keep him from his goal.

Hours passed, and the moon cast its pale light through the canopy, illuminating a clearing ahead. At its center stood a crumbling stone structure, overgrown with moss and vines. The faint hum of energy emanated from it, resonating with the strange parchment still tucked within his satchel.

Altharid approached cautiously, his fingers brushing the runes etched into the ancient stone. They were older than anything he had seen in the study, yet they felt familiar. He traced their patterns, the lines and curves awakening something deep within him. The forest seemed to hold its breath as he pulled the parchment from his satchel and began to compare its markings with those on the stone.

The match was perfect.

# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

A surge of triumph coursed through him, but it was tempered by a gnawing unease. The warnings scrawled in the study's margins had not left him entirely. He knew the risks, but the temptation to proceed was overwhelming. The ritual's purpose was still unclear, but its power was palpable. With trembling hands, he began to piece together the fragments, murmuring the ancient words under his breath.

The air grew heavy, and the clearing was bathed in an otherworldly glow. Shadows danced wildly at the edges of the light, twisting and contorting into shapes that defied comprehension. Altharid's voice faltered for a moment, but he pressed on, his determination outweighing his fear.

As the final word left his lips, the ground beneath him trembled. The glow intensified, and the shadows converged at the center of the clearing, coalescing into a dark, writhing mass. Altharid staggered back, his heart pounding as the air filled with an unnatural chill. The mass began to take shape, its form shifting and unstable, and a low, guttural sound echoed through the clearing.

For a moment, Altharid considered fleeing. But then the dark figure spoke, its voice a chorus of whispers that pierced his mind. "You seek knowledge, traveler. Are you prepared to pay the price?"

Altharid hesitated, his breath hitching as the figure's words reverberated through him. The warnings, the dangers, the countless tales of those who had fallen to their own ambition—all of it paled in comparison to the promise of what lay before him.

He knelt, lowering his hood, and met the shadow's shifting gaze. "I am prepared," he said, his voice steady. "Teach me."

The shadow extended a tendril-like appendage, its touch cold and searing all at once. In that moment, Altharid's path was sealed. The forest sighed as though in mourning, and the shadows enveloped him, pulling him deeper into the unknown.

The forest spat him out into a clearing ringed with stones, each etched with glowing runes. Altharid blinked against the dim light, his body trembling from the ordeal. Before him stood a figure, cloaked and hooded much like himself, though their presence radiated power and menace. The air around them shimmered faintly, bending the light as though reality itself recoiled from their form.

# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

"You accepted the invitation," the figure said, their voice smooth yet sharp, like the edge of a dagger. "Few have the resolve to do so."

Altharid rose to his feet, his resolve steeling under the weight of the stranger's gaze. "I seek knowledge," he replied, his tone measured but firm. "And you hold the key."

The figure chuckled, a sound that carried no warmth. "Knowledge, yes. But knowledge has a cost. You've already paid the first price, crossing the threshold. Now the true work begins."

They gestured for him to follow, leading him to a stone altar at the clearing's center. The surface was worn and pitted, yet it pulsed faintly with energy. Around it lay the remnants of rituals long past—bones, fragments of crystals, and scorched metal.

"I am Maldrak," the figure said, lowering their hood to reveal a gaunt face, sharp and alien in its angles. Their eyes gleamed with a light that matched the runes. "You will call me your mentor, for now."

Altharid nodded, his curiosity overcoming his caution. Maldrak began to speak of ancient arts and forbidden practices, their words weaving a tapestry of power that ensnared Altharid's mind. Each lesson was a step deeper into a labyrinth of secrets.

But as days turned to weeks, Altharid began to sense an undercurrent to Maldrak's teachings—a darkness that sought to ensnare him. The rituals grew more dangerous, the cost of each spell higher than the last. And always, Maldrak watched him with an intensity that bordered on predatory.

"Why do you teach me?" Altharid asked one night, as the two sat by a flickering fire. "What do you gain from this?"

Maldrak's smile was a blade. "Power is a chain, young one. It must be shared to grow. But remember this: the chain can bind, as well."

# THE PATH OF SHADOWS

The warning lingered in Altharid's mind long after Maldrak's words had faded into the night. He knew his mentor had their own agenda, but the knowledge he gained was too valuable to abandon. For now, he would play the game, learning all he could while keeping his own ambitions veiled.

One day, the student would surpass the master.

To be continued in the next issue....

# THE TOMB OF SHADOWS



**Level Range:** 3-5

**Adventure Hook:** A mysterious map, sold by a desperate merchant in the market square, leads to the *Tomb of Shadows*, an ancient resting place of a forgotten warrior. Legends speak of untold riches guarded by a sentient shadow, but none who enter return. The adventurers, intrigued by fame and fortune, embark on this perilous journey.

## Room 1: The Antechamber

**Description:** The air grows cold as the players descend into the tomb. The walls are lined with faded frescoes depicting a great battle between a hero and shadowy creatures. A large stone door stands at the far end, inscribed with glowing runes.

**Features:**

- **Runic Puzzle:** The door is magically sealed. The runes represent an ancient language, requiring a DC 15 Arcana or History check to interpret. Players must rearrange the glowing runes into the word “Light” using an Intelligence-based skill check (DC 13).
- **Trap:** If the runes are mishandled, a burst of necrotic energy (2d6 damage, DC 14 Dexterity save for half) triggers from the door.
- **Treasure:** A hidden alcove (DC 15 Perception check) contains a *Potion of Healing* and a *Light Stone* (a fist-sized crystal that emits bright light for 10 feet and dim light for 10 more).

## Room 2: The Hall of Echoes

**Description:** A long hallway stretches ahead, shrouded in magical darkness. Faint whispers echo through the corridor, growing louder with every step. The sound disorients and unnerves those who enter.

**Features:**

- **Darkness:** The magical darkness cannot be dispelled but parts for the *Light Stone* from Room 1, creating a 10-foot radius of visibility.
- **Skill Challenge:** Players must make a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check to navigate safely, avoiding phantom traps. Failure results in triggering illusory traps that cause psychic damage (1d6 per failure).

**Shadow Minions:** Two shadowy figures emerge to attack the party. Use the Shadow stat block but lower HP to 12 each for balance.

**Treasure:** Defeating the shadows reveals an ornate key engraved with the image of a sun.

## Room 3: The Chamber of the Forgotten Warrior

**Description:** The final chamber is circular, with a raised dais in the center holding a stone sarcophagus. Shadowy tendrils coil from the walls, reaching toward the coffin. A ghostly warrior—the Forgotten Sentinel—emerges to defend the tomb, its hollow voice demanding, “Who dares disturb my rest?”

**Features:**

- **The Forgotten Sentinel:** Use the Wight stat block but add the ability to summon one Shadow per round until the sarcophagus is sealed.
- **Sealing the Sarcophagus:** Players can use the sun key to lock the sarcophagus, cutting off the shadowy tendrils and weakening the Forgotten Sentinel (reducing its AC by 2 and disabling shadow summoning).

**Environmental Hazard:** Shadow tendrils lash out randomly, targeting a player at the start of each round (DC 14 Dexterity save to avoid 1d8 necrotic damage).

**Treasure:**

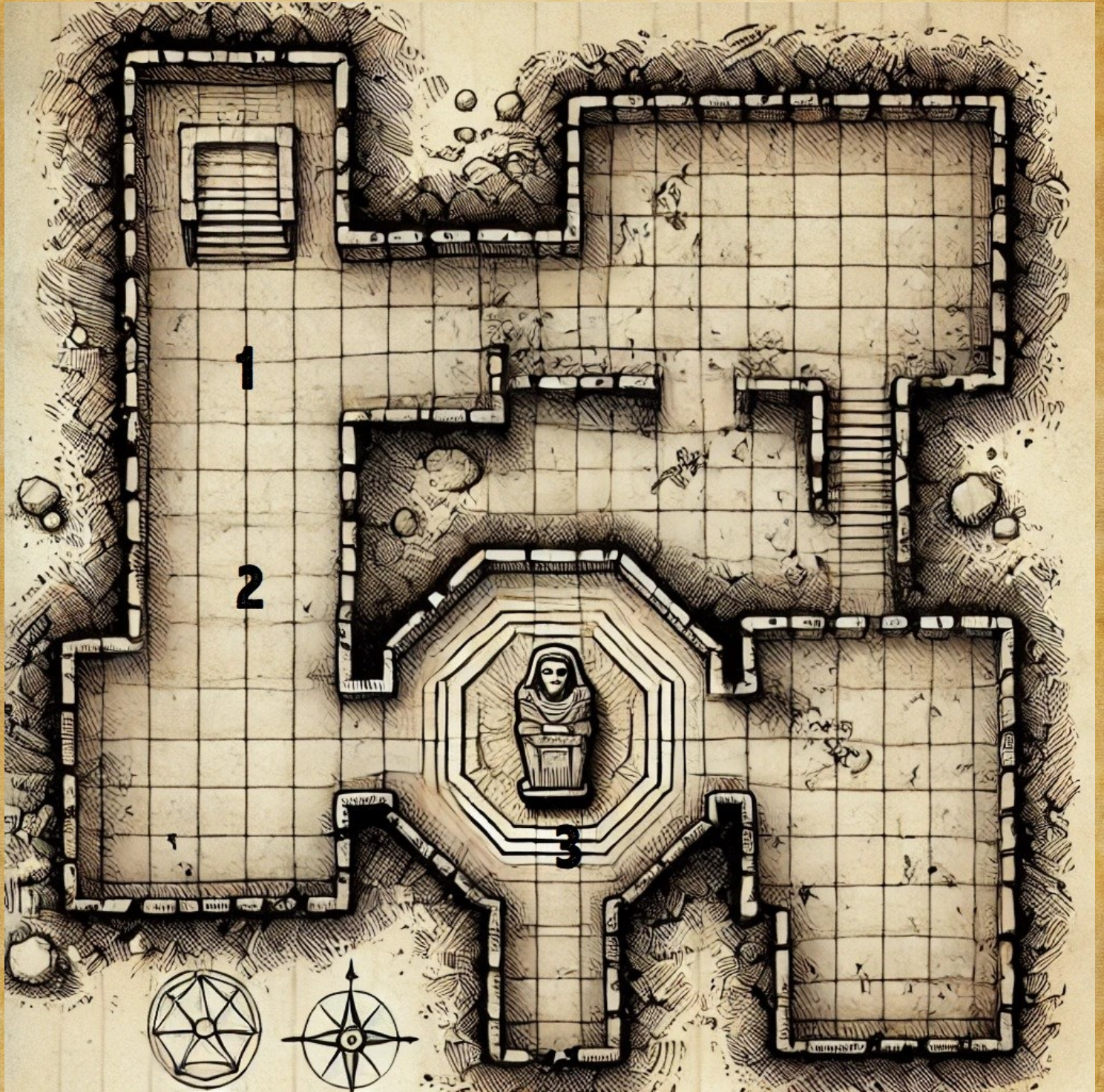
- Inside the sarcophagus is the *Blade of Dawning* (a +1 longsword that emits bright light and deals an additional 1d6 radiant damage to undead).
- The Sentinel’s helm is enchanted, granting the wearer advantage on saves against fear effects.

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## Conclusion

With the sarcophagus sealed and the Forgotten Sentinel defeated, the tomb’s oppressive shadows begin to fade. The adventurers emerge victorious, their names etched into the annals of legend. However, whispers of a deeper darkness beneath the tomb linger, teasing at future perils to come.

# THE TOMB OF SHADOWS



# THE SILENT DRIFTER



## Setting

A small, fog-shrouded coastal town (or lakeside community) just outside the investigators' current location. This "side-quest" can be inserted between major plot points to add flavor, intrigue, and a brief diversion into cosmic horror.

## Scenario Overview

A mysterious stranger has taken up residence in a rundown shack at the edge of town. Locals whisper about eerie lights and unsettling chanting late at night. Rumor has it that this individual—known only as "The Drifter"—arrived after a recent storm, bringing with them a sense of dread that seems to deepen with each passing evening.

The Investigators are asked to look into the Drifter's background and unusual behavior by a concerned local or friend. Their investigation will uncover an ancient cult's relic, potent curses, and a strange convergence of otherworldly forces on the verge of bursting forth into the world.

## Hook

- **Requested Favor:** A friendly local NPC (perhaps an old friend of the investigators, or someone they helped on a previous case) seeks their aid. They describe the Drifter's strange conduct: pacing the shore at night, speaking in hushed tones with unseen entities, and leaving odd symbols scratched into wooden posts.

**Missing Pet or Child:** A frightened villager reveals that their

dog—or perhaps a child—disappeared and was last seen near the Drifter's shack. The townsfolk are too afraid to investigate themselves.

## Key Locations

### 1. The Old Pier

○ **Description:** A rotting wooden structure that creaks ominously with the tide. Lanterns flicker in the fog, providing minimal light.

○ **Clues:** Deep cuts etched into the pier's pilings form disturbing symbols related to a local sea-dwelling or lake-dwelling deity. Investigators with relevant Mythos or Occult skills can glean that these carvings are connected to an esoteric rite of calling.

○ **Encounter:** Strange footprints that vanish at the water's edge. PCs may notice a low chanting from beneath the pier if they visit at night.

### 2 The Drifter's Shack

○ **Description:** A small, ramshackle building of warped wood and salt-stained walls. Tattered curtains hide much of the interior from prying eyes.

○ **Clues:**

✦ Journals or letters describing a "Key to the Depths," referencing an ancient relic rumored to control or communicate with amphibious creatures or cosmic entities.

✦ A rusted lockbox containing sea-polished stones carved with forbidden sigils.

✦ A single photograph of the Drifter standing with robed figures in front of a stone altar.

✦ **Encounter:** The Drifter may be lurking within, unnaturally quiet. Observant investigators might hear faint, wet breathing when nobody else is visibly present.

### 3 Hidden Cave by the Shore

○ **Description:** Accessible only at low tide or by boat, this cave is partially submerged in dark water and exudes an unwholesome, briny stench. Flickering torchlight reveals an ancient altar standing in a narrow chamber.

**Clues/Encounter:** The carved altar, caked with barnacles, stands in the center. Investigators may find the missing pet or child, alive but in a catatonic state, behind the altar. The place is suffused with a strange energy that saps the will of intruders (require POW rolls to resist mental fatigue or mild hallucinations).

**Clues/Encounter:** The carved altar, caked with barnacles, stands in the center. Investigators may find the missing pet or child, alive but in a catatonic state, behind the altar. The place is suffused with a strange energy that saps the will of intruders (require POW rolls to resist mental fatigue or mild hallucinations).

### Key NPCs

#### 1. The Drifter

- **Appearance:** Gaunt and pale with stringy hair. Eyes sometimes reflect a milky green sheen in dim light.
- **Personality:** Eerily silent, occasionally whispering cryptic statements about “the Depths” or “the Coming Flood.”
- **Goal:** Has come to the town to enact a ritual to summon (or commune with) a powerful entity from beneath the waves. Senses the investigators may oppose this plan and works to undermine them quietly.

#### ○ Maude Pemberton (Concerned Local)

- **Appearance:** Middle-aged villager who runs a modest diner. Visibly exhausted and anxious.
- **Personality:** Polite yet desperate for help—her nephew disappeared near the Drifter’s shack two nights ago.
- **Goal:** Begg the investigators to bring the Drifter to justice or at least find out if her nephew is still alive.

#### ○ Sheriff Theodore Marsh

- **Appearance:** Stocky, with a weather-beaten face and a distrustful demeanor.
- **Personality:** Uncooperative at first. He suspects something is amiss but fears rocking the boat.
- **Goal:** Wants to keep the peace; secretly hopes the investigators can resolve the issue quietly, as the Drifter’s possible ties to an ancient local cult terrify him.

### Possible Events

#### 1. Nighttime Ambush

- The investigators, while watching the shack or the pier, may witness strange figures emerging from the water—either monstrous hybrids or enthralled locals—trying to abduct someone (perhaps even a PC) for the Drifter’s ritual.

#### ○ Sinister Dream Visions

- If the investigators spend the night in town, they experience vivid nightmares of sinking into dark waters, hearing distant chanting, and glimpsing a titanic form stirring below. Each investigator must roll SAN (Sanity) for recurring nightmares.

#### ○ Confrontation in the Cave

At low tide or a climactic moment, the investigators track the Drifter to the hidden cave. There, they witness the final stages of an ancient summoning ritual. Dark shapes thrash and writhe in the water—maybe Deep Ones or something even worse.

### Climax

- **The Ritual:** The Drifter attempts to use the relic (Key to the Depths) to complete the summoning. If investigators fail to stop him, a monstrous entity (perhaps a small fraction of a Great Old One’s power or an aquatic horror) emerges, threatening the town.
- **Saving the Missing Victim(s):** The investigators must rescue any captives. If they disrupt the ritual in time (destroying the relic or subduing the Drifter), the cosmic force may retreat, leaving ominous signs of future peril.

### Rewards/Consequences

- **Potential Boon:** Recovering the Key to the Depths might offer dangerous but useful occult knowledge.
- **Possible Allies:** Locals, relieved to be freed from the Drifter’s influence, provide lodging, resources, or future leads in gratitude.
- **Lingering Doom:** The investigators’ interference may only delay the next attempt at summoning. The deeper horrors slumber still, watching the investigators with newfound malice.

### SANITY IMPACT

- Witnessing the Drifter’s unnatural nature, carved symbols, or the monstrous entity can call for SAN rolls.
  - Rescuing a missing child or pet might grant a small SAN reward.
- Observing the final confrontation with a true horror from the depths can inflict significant SAN loss on failure.

### Conclusion

“The Silent Drifter” is a self-contained side quest that introduces cosmic, waterborne horror and a foreboding glimpse into local cult activity. It can be inserted into an ongoing campaign to hint at broader Mythos threats lurking beneath the surface—and to remind the investigators that the unnatural can appear anywhere, at any time, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. Below you’ll find a collection of optional “Keeper Tips,” story hooks, and small expansions you can fold into **The Silent Drifter** scenario. These ideas are designed to help you tailor the adventure to your group’s interests, broaden the lore, or infuse the investigation with extra tension and atmosphere.



## Keeper Tips & Expansions

### 1. Heighten the Atmosphere

- **Weather & Environment:** Intensify the coastal (or lakeside) vibe with rolling fog banks, distant thunder, and cold salt-laden breezes. Describe how everything feels damp, the windows are always streaked with condensation, and wooden structures ooze brackish water underfoot.
  - **Sensory Details:** Layer on eerie sounds (creaking docks, faint dripping), occasional brine-scented gusts, and that subtle “wet breathing” emanating from dark corners. If you want a more visceral feel, let the PCs catch glimpses of fleeting shapes moving under the water’s surface.
  - **Mystery Connections**
  - **Local Lore:** Perhaps the Drifter’s cult is connected to older rumors about the area: fishing accidents, drowned sailors that never washed ashore, or cryptic references to a “Sunken Temple” in half-forgotten diaries.
  - **Tie-Ins to Ongoing Campaign:** If you’re running a larger Mythos campaign, you could link the cult to broader cosmic threats. Maybe the relic (the Key to the Depths) is one of several “keys” scattered across the region, or it resonates with an artifact the PCs have encountered in a previous scenario.
  - **NPC Depth**
  - **Expanding Maude Pemberton:** Give her a small personal quirk—maybe she’s a compulsive tea drinker who soothes her nerves by constantly fiddling with a chipped teacup. Or perhaps she’s hiding an old journal that references her grandfather’s brush with this same cult decades ago.
  - **Sheriff Marsh’s Dilemma:** Make it clear he knows more than he initially lets on. Maybe there’s an unspoken pact between local authorities and the ancient cult—he’s torn between maintaining a status quo and ensuring no outsiders stir up old horrors. If the PCs dig deeper, they might discover Marsh is having nightmares, too.
  - **Escalating Tension**
  - **Town Grows Hostile:** If word spreads that the PCs are investigating the Drifter’s affairs, some townsfolk may grow defensive. Are they enthralled by the cult? Paid off? Or simply terrified that meddling outsiders will awaken something best left undisturbed?
  - **Strange Phenomena:** Incorporate odd occurrences around town—fish washing up on shore, domestic animals suddenly acting erratic, or nightly power surges that flicker lights at the worst moments.
  - **Investigative Hooks**
  - **Library Research or Local Archives:** The PCs might discover old newspaper clippings or weathered church records about a similar figure—the “Silent Walker” or “Drowned Preacher” who appeared generations ago. The Drifter’s arrival could be a recurring phenomenon tied to the same cosmic cycle.
  - **A Missing Fisherman’s Log:** Possibly an old sea captain’s log details a previous expedition to a forbidden reef or underwater ruins. Clues in the log tie directly to the Drifter’s relic and the same horrifying entity.
  - **Alternate Climax Variations**
  - **Confrontation on the Pier:** Instead of the final showdown in the cave, maybe the Drifter tries to perform the summoning from the rotting pier itself at midnight. Storm winds howl, waves crash, and grotesque shapes rise from the depths.
  - **Underwater Pressure:** If your group is comfortable with underwater or submersible exploration, the Drifter might have taken the Key to a deeper underwater shrine. PCs may have to follow with diving suits or a rickety diving bell to stop the ritual in its final stage—a tense, claustrophobic confrontation.
  - **Aftermath & Consequences**
  - **Subtle Corruption:** If the PCs destroyed the relic, perhaps they didn’t destroy it completely. Pieces of the Key to the Depths might retain foul energies, haunting whoever keeps them.
  - **Long-Term Effects:** Even if the Drifter is defeated, local fishermen note that the waters seem “livelier” now—creatures previously unseen are caught in nets, and glowing algae surfaces at night. The investigators’ success could merely delay the inevitable, foreshadowing an even greater cosmic event.
- Adapting to Different Tones**
- **Classic Pulp:** Ramp up action sequences. The Drifter might have scaly-skinned henchmen or enthralled townsfolk to provide more direct confrontations. Think chase scenes on slick piers, midnight shootouts in the fog, and dramatic rescues from rickety wooden scaffolding inside the cave.
  - **Slow-Burn Horror:** Emphasize psychological dread and slow reveals. Minimize direct threats early on but fill each encounter with mounting unease—scratching noises at windows, cryptic warnings from half-crazed locals, footprints that vanish into the surf. By the time the investigators find the missing child, the sense of doom is overwhelming
- Optional Rewards & Twists**
- **A Secret Ally:** Introduce a town elder who despises the cult. Perhaps they offer the investigators cryptic advice or a protective talisman. Or they might betray the PCs in a desperate attempt to appease the entity if things go sideways.
  - **Occult Knowledge:** If the Key to the Depths is recovered, allow a Mythos-savvy PC to study it. While it confers a small advantage in future investigations (like a one-time bonus to certain Lore rolls), it corrupts the holder, inflicting subtle madness or a recurring compulsion to return to the water.

**A Warning from the Deep:** Even if the PCs succeed, they might receive a final, chilling message—like the dream-voice of a slumbering god that whispers, “We are not done.” It’s an invitation to expand upon this watery threat in future adventures.

### Running “The Silent Drifter” Seamlessly

#### 1. Beforehand:

- o Establish that the area has been plagued by unsettling rumors or small omens of something “off.” This primes your players to get curious and invest in investigating strange goings-on.

- o Introduce Maude Pemberton (or another concerned NPC) as an existing acquaintance or potential confidant, so the request for help feels personal.

#### o During:

- o Keep track of the tide cycle if you plan on using the Hidden Cave. This can add tension, forcing the group to time their approach carefully or risk being trapped by rising waters.

- o Balance mundane red herrings (e.g., a fisherman who’s just a shady smuggler) with genuine horrors so that not every hint leads directly to cosmic madness—this makes the real signs stand out more eerily.

#### o After:

- o Offer closure for the townsfolk if the PCs succeed. Perhaps they’re hailed as unsung heroes who saved an otherwise forgotten place from an unspeakable evil.

Alternatively, if the PCs only partially succeed—or fail—the scenario might end with lingering dread, missing persons still unaccounted for, and a sense that the Drifter’s visit was merely a preliminary step in something much larger.

### Final Thoughts

“The Silent Drifter” works well as a compact yet evocative side quest that plunges investigators into brine-soaked cosmic horror. By adding personal stakes, fleshing out NPCs, and heightening the mood, you can make the scenario truly memorable. Whether your campaign’s focus is on the creeping dread of the Mythos or on more action-oriented pulp heroics, the Drifter’s ritual and the lurking horrors beneath the waves can provide a thrilling and unsettling detour—one that reminds the players how dangerously close the cosmic unknown really is.



# IN THE NEWS

## **Free League and Two Little Mice Partner to Bring "Outgunned" to Global Audiences**

In early December 2024, Swedish tabletop gaming powerhouse Free League Publishing announced an exciting collaboration with Italian game studio Two Little Mice. This partnership aims to bring the cinematic action role-playing game *Outgunned* to a wider audience. Inspired by classic action and heist movies, *Outgunned* offers players the chance to dive into high-octane adventures filled with explosive stunts, daring escapes, and intense showdowns.

The game is set to deliver a fast-paced, narrative-driven experience, blending Two Little Mice's creative design expertise with Free League's global distribution capabilities. With its engaging themes and dynamic gameplay, *Outgunned* is poised to become a must-have for fans of action-packed role-playing games.

## **Daggerheart Pre-orders Now Open with Exclusive Limited Edition Box Set**

In December 2024, Darrington Press, the publishing division of *Critical Role*, unveiled the highly anticipated cover and limited edition box set for their upcoming tabletop role-playing game, *Daggerheart*. Scheduled for release in Spring 2025, *Daggerheart* promises an immersive and dynamic gaming experience designed to captivate both new and veteran players alike.

The limited edition box set features exclusive content and stunning artwork, making it a must-have for collectors and fans of the *Critical Role* universe. Pre-orders are now open online, offering early access to this exciting addition to the TTRPG landscape.

## **.Acid & Steel: A Dive into the World of Ashes and Ghosts**

Unveiled on December 18, 2024, *Acid & Steel* invites players into the hauntingly evocative world of *Ashes and Ghosts*. This unique tabletop role-playing game explores a dualistic realm where an acid hell clashes with a steel heaven, blending gritty storytelling with otherworldly aesthetics.

With its rich lore and striking setting, *Acid & Steel* challenges players to navigate a landscape filled with peril and intrigue. Designed for those seeking a fresh and atmospheric TTRPG experience, this game is set to captivate audiences with its darkly imaginative narrative and immersive gameplay.

## **Superhero/Cyberpunk TTRPG: Heroes and Villains Clash in a Dystopian Future**

Revealed on December 23, 2024, this exciting new tabletop role-playing game takes players to Carbon City in the year 2115, a sprawling dystopian metropolis teetering on the brink of chaos. In this cyberpunk-inspired world, technology, corruption, and ambition collide as heroes and villains wage war to determine the city's destiny.

Players can create dynamic characters, choose their allegiances, and navigate a city filled with danger, intrigue, and high-tech wonders. With its blend of cyberpunk grit and superhero drama, this TTRPG promises thrilling action and immersive storytelling for fans of both genres.

# IN THE NEWS

## **BARGE Quickstart: A Bold New TTRPG System Arrives**

Released on December 19, 2024, *BARGE* introduces an innovative tabletop role-playing system inspired by popular games like *Dicey Dungeon*, *Battle Brothers*, and *Magic: The Gathering*. This fresh approach blends tactical gameplay, strategic decision-making, and creative storytelling to deliver a dynamic and engaging experience.

The *BARGE Quickstart* offers players a chance to dive into the system's unique mechanics and rich potential, making it the perfect entry point for newcomers and veterans eager to explore this exciting new addition to the TTRPG landscape.

## **Hellgreen: A Jungle Delving RPG – Adventure Awaits in a Cursed Wilderness**

Announced on December 23, 2024, *Hellgreen* is a solo tabletop role-playing game that plunges players into the heart of a cursed jungle. Combining elements of exploration, resource extraction, and survival, this game challenges adventurers to navigate treacherous terrain, uncover hidden secrets, and endure the jungle's relentless dangers.

With its immersive setting and focus on individual storytelling, *Hellgreen* offers a thrilling and introspective journey into an unforgiving wilderness, perfect for those seeking a unique solo TTRPG experience.

## **OriginPath: Learn Pathfinder 2E While Building Your Character**

Introduced on December 13, 2024, *OriginPath* is a revolutionary tool designed to streamline the character creation process for *Pathfinder 2nd Edition*. Seamlessly blending education and gameplay, *OriginPath* guides players step-by-step through building their character while teaching the core rules and mechanics of the game.

Perfect for newcomers and veterans alike, this intuitive tool enhances the *Pathfinder* experience, making it easier than ever to dive into the rich world of tabletop role-playing.

## **Dungeons & Dragons Pinball Machine Brings Fantasy Adventure to Arcades**

Wizards of the Coast, in collaboration with Stern Pinball, has unveiled *Dungeons & Dragons: The Tyrant's Eye*, an immersive new pinball machine that combines fantasy storytelling with arcade excitement. Featuring a striking animatronic dragon and captivating voice work from renowned actors like Michael Dorn and members of *Critical Role*, the machine brings the magic of D&D to life.

Packed with dynamic gameplay and iconic D&D themes, *The Tyrant's Eye* promises to be a hit with fans of the tabletop game and pinball enthusiasts alike..

# Arcana's Haven



Nestled in the heart of an old, winding street in any town you prefer, *Arcana's Haven* has been a beacon of mystical allure for centuries. The shop was founded by Seraphina Arcturus, a reclusive sorceress and collector of magical artifacts. Legend has it that Seraphina was gifted a mysterious enchanted chest by an otherworldly patron in her youth. The chest, when opened, revealed an endless supply of magical curiosities, each with its own story. With these treasures, she decided to open a shop that would serve both the magically gifted and the curious alike.

The shop itself is said to be alive, subtly rearranging its shelves and cases to guide patrons toward the items they need rather than what they want. Over the years, *Arcana's Haven* has become a sanctuary for adventurers, scholars, and mystics seeking rare tomes, potent elixirs, and artifacts of great power. The shop's walls are adorned with remnants of Seraphina's own adventures—maps of forgotten realms, an ancient staff, and a clockwork owl that acts as the shop's eternal sentinel.

Rumors persist that Seraphina never truly left the shop. Some say her spirit lingers within, subtly guiding those who wander in. Others claim she discovered a way to prolong her life through arcane means and lives in the hidden upper floors, crafting new wonders and guarding secrets too dangerous to be unleashed.

The shop is now run by Kellen Thorne, Seraphina's distant descendant. Kellen is a skilled enchanter and alchemist with a knack for storytelling. He continues Seraphina's legacy by curating the finest magical items and helping patrons uncover the mysteries behind them. Despite his cheerful demeanor, Kellen is rumored to be the guardian of the shop's deepest secret—a vault that contains artifacts so powerful they could tip the balance of the world.

## Unique Features:

**Everchanging Shelves:** Items shift position based on the energy of the customer.

**The Whispering Lanterns:** Lanterns hanging in the shop whisper hints and riddles to guide seekers.

**The Enchanted Chest:** The original chest from Seraphina's story still resides behind the counter, sometimes dispensing unexpected items.

**The Clockwork Owl:** Known as *Hoot*, this mechanical companion watches over the shop and warns of potential threats. *Arcana's Haven* is more than a shop—it's a place where stories unfold, destinies are shaped, and the unknown beckons.

# THIS MONTHS YOUTUBE



## SPOTLIGHT

SETH SKORKOWSKY

<https://www.youtube.com/@SSkorkowsky> — <https://skorkowsky.com/>

### A Haven for TTRPG Enthusiasts

In the ever-expanding world of tabletop role-playing game (TTRPG) content on YouTube, S. Skorkowsky's channel stands out as a beacon of creativity, insight, and passion. With a focus on immersive storytelling and gameplay, Skorkowsky delivers content that appeals to players, Game Masters, and Keepers alike. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or a curious novice, this channel offers something for everyone.

At its core, S. Skorkowsky's channel is a celebration of TTRPGs, with a particular emphasis on horror-based systems like Call of Cthulhu and classic fantasy staples like Dungeons & Dragons. The videos delve into a wide range of topics, from detailed analyses of various game systems, modules, and mechanics to practical tips for crafting memorable sessions. Skorkowsky shares his expertise in creating engaging narratives, developing rich characters, and building immersive worlds, all while maintaining a light-hearted and entertaining tone. The channel also highlights key moments from popular modules, providing invaluable advice for Game Masters on running scenarios effectively. Additionally, Skorkowsky offers commentary on common RPG experiences, infusing humor and relatability into his content.

What sets S. Skorkowsky's channel apart is its balance of humor and depth. Skorkowsky's personable and engaging delivery makes even the most complex topics accessible. His deep appreciation for storytelling is evident in every video, inspiring viewers to approach their games with the same level of care and enthusiasm. For fans of Call of Cthulhu, the channel is particularly valuable, offering nuanced critiques and guidance for Keepers aiming to create terrifyingly memorable campaigns. However, the advice often transcends specific systems, making it applicable to a variety of genres and playstyles.

The channel's strengths lie in its comprehensive coverage, engaging presentation, and the practical, relatable insights Skorkowsky brings to his content. His years of experience in the TTRPG world lend credibility and depth to his advice, ensuring that viewers walk away with actionable takeaways. Furthermore, the emphasis on horror-based RPGs adds a unique niche appeal, particularly for fans of immersive and atmospheric gameplay.

Despite its many strengths, there are areas where the channel could grow. Some viewers might wish for a more consistent upload schedule to satisfy their appetite for content. Additionally, occasional exploration of lesser-known or unconventional RPG systems could broaden the channel's appeal and showcase Skorkowsky's versatility as a storyteller and reviewer.

S. Skorkowsky's channel is a must-watch for any TTRPG enthusiast. It strikes the perfect balance between being informative and entertaining, offering viewers a mix of humor, expertise, and inspiration. Whether you're delving into the chilling mysteries of Call of Cthulhu or rolling dice in a classic Dungeons & Dragons campaign, you'll find a wealth of knowledge and enjoyment here. With its engaging content, practical advice, and clear love for the craft, it has earned its place as a favorite among RPG fans. Don't just take our word for it—roll the dice and see for yourself!

# THIS MONTHS PODCASTS



## SPOTLIGHT

<https://howwerollpodcast.com/new-to-how-we-roll/>

### **Exploring Worlds, One Roll at a Time: A Review of *How We Roll Podcast* By Andrew Babcock**

For fans of immersive storytelling and tabletop role-playing games, *How We Roll Podcast* offers an exceptional audio journey into the realms of fantasy and horror. Specializing in actual play sessions of *Call of Cthulhu* and *Dungeons & Dragons*, the podcast captivates listeners with gripping narratives, dynamic character interactions, and expertly crafted sound design. Each episode invites the audience to sit at the proverbial gaming table, experiencing the thrill of dice rolls that can spell triumph or disaster.

One of the podcast's standout features is its commitment to storytelling. The hosts and players skillfully balance humor and drama, creating rich, believable characters that draw you into their world. The *Call of Cthulhu* campaigns, in particular, shine with their Lovecraftian dread, bringing to life the existential horror and creeping madness that fans of the genre crave. On the flip side, their *Dungeons & Dragons* adventures brim with creativity, combining high-stakes battles with moments of genuine camaraderie and levity.

Technically, *How We Roll Podcast* is a cut above the rest. The audio quality is consistently excellent, with clear dialogue and ambient soundscapes that enhance the atmosphere. The hosts' dedication to engaging storytelling is evident in their seamless editing, ensuring episodes flow smoothly without losing the organic charm of tabletop gaming. This makes the podcast equally accessible to seasoned TTRPG players and newcomers curious about the genre.

Overall, *How We Roll Podcast* is a must-listen for fans of actual play podcasts or anyone seeking an engaging blend of storytelling and adventure. Whether you're diving into the mythos of *Call of Cthulhu* or the sprawling worlds of *Dungeons & Dragons*, this podcast delivers an experience as thrilling as any game night.

# LEGENDARY LOOT

## Amulet of the Forgotten Oaths

Wondrous Item, Very Rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster or paladin)

### Description

This amulet is crafted from a single shard of blackened crystal wrapped in faintly glowing silver filigree. Inscribed on its surface are barely legible, ancient oaths sworn by long-forgotten heroes. The crystal emits a soft, haunting hum when held close to the ear.



### Powers

- **Echoes of Valor** Once per long rest, the wearer can invoke the amulet to call upon the spirit of a forgotten hero. For the next minute, the wearer gains advantage on all saving throws and their attacks deal an additional 2d8 radiant damage.
- **Binding Resolve** The wearer can channel the amulet's power as a reaction when an ally within 30 feet is reduced to 0 hit points. The ally is instead reduced to 1 hit point, and the wearer takes damage equal to half their own hit points. This damage ignores resistances and immunities.
- **Forgotten Magic** While attuned to this item, the wearer gains access to one spell of 5th level or lower that they do not already know. The spell must be from the Abjuration or Enchantment schools. The chosen spell can be cast once per day without expending a spell slot.

### Curse

The amulet binds itself to those who swear false oaths. If the wearer knowingly breaks a promise or oath while attuned to the amulet, they take 6d6 psychic damage, and the amulet's powers are suppressed until the wearer completes an act of penance (determined by the DM).

### Lore

Legends say the Amulet of the Forgotten Oaths was created by a grieving god to honor the vows of their mortal champions. The crystal within contains echoes of those champions' souls, and they lend their strength to those deemed worthy. However, the god cursed the amulet to punish those who treat oaths lightly, ensuring that its power would only serve the truly resolute.



# FEBRUARY CONS

[LUMACON 2025](#) Petaluma, CA

[SSA+S TORACON 2025](#) Sarasota, FL

[LITTLE ROCK ANIME FEST 2025](#) Little Rock, AR

[LOUISIANA RETRO CON WINTER 2025](#) Gonzales, LA

[QUADCON CHAMPAIGN 2025](#) Champaign, IL

[BOWMANVILLE COMICON 2025](#) Bowmanville, Canada

[COMIC VERSE 2025](#) Sacramento, CA

[RICHMOND ANIME-FEST 2025](#) Richmond, VA

[COMIC-CON: THE CRUISE 2025](#) Tampa, FL

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[SANGAWA PROJECT 2025](#) Pittsburgh, PA

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[NEWMARKET COMICON 2025](#) Newmarket, ON, Canada

[BIG LICK COMIC CON 2025](#) Roanoke, VA

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[COMIC BOOK & NON-SPORTS CARD SHOW 2025](#) Annandale, VA

[EAST BAY COMIC-CON 2025](#) Concord, CA

[TULSA ANIME-FEST 2025](#) Tulsa, OK

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# FEBRUARY CONS

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[PENSACON 2025](#) Pensacola, FL

[BEYOND COMICON 2025](#) North Miami Beach, FL

[MISSOURICON 2025](#) St. Louis, MO

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[MISSOURI COMIC CON 2025](#) Springfield, MO

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# FEBRUARY CONS

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[COMIC BOOK & NON-SPORTS CARD SHOW 2025](#) Annandale, VA

[PETERBOROUGH COMICON 2025](#) Peterborough, ON, Canada

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[STAR TREK: THE CRUISE 2025](#) Departing from Miami, FL

[GDAKON 2025](#) Gdańsk, Poland

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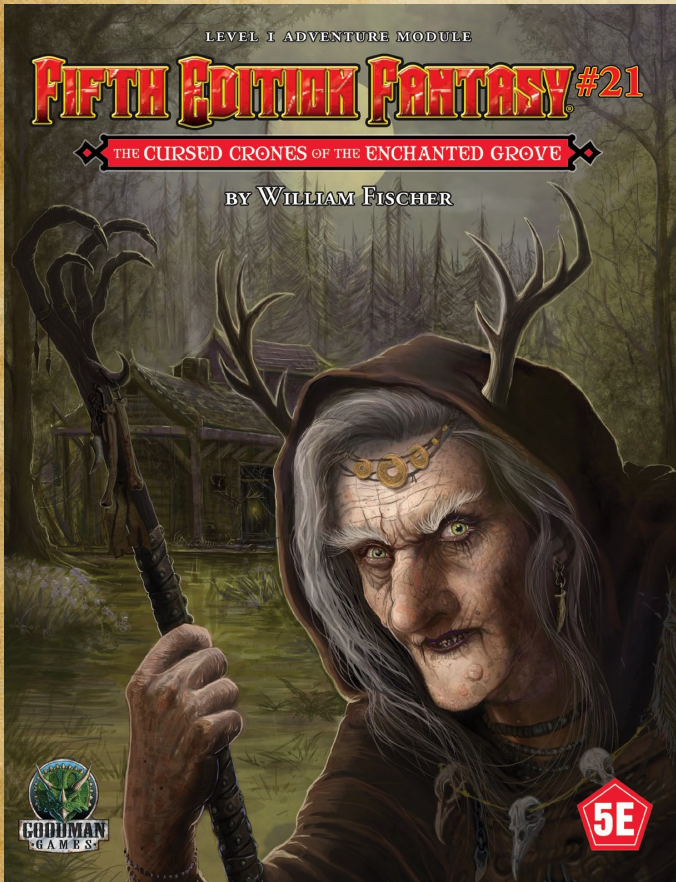
[HORROR REALM 2025](#) Pittsburgh, PA

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THANKS TO FANCON.COM FOR COMPILING THE  
INFORMATION!

# MODULE REVIEW OF THE MONTH

By Andrew Babcock



"*The Cursed Crones of the Enchanted Grove*" brings a classic blend of fantasy, tension, and creativity to the tabletop, offering a delightful experience for both new and seasoned adventurers. Designed for 1st-level characters, this Fifth Edition Fantasy module takes players deep into the mysterious Cradle Wood to unravel an ancient and bitter feud between the Grimjaw sisters, a coven of green hags. The adventure is infused with a sense of urgency, magical intrigue, and rich storytelling, making it an excellent choice for Dungeon Masters looking to captivate their players.

At its core, the story of *The Cursed Crones* revolves around Goodie Grimjaw, a hag who defied her wicked sisters to protect the creatures of the forest. Her spellbinding conflict with her sisters, Gertie and Grizzie, forms the backbone of this narrative. The module weaves a tapestry of moral ambiguity as players uncover the events that led Goodie to betray her blood ties to shield the inhabitants of the Cradle Wood from her sisters' cruelty. This nuanced approach to storytelling elevates the adventure, presenting antagonists who are more than just obstacles to be overcome.

One of the most striking features of the module is its emphasis on variety. Players will encounter a blend of combat, problem-solving, and roleplay opportunities as they navigate the enchanted forest. Encounters are thoughtfully crafted to test different skills, from negotiating with the eccentric This-That-and-The-Other—a three-headed fey serpent—to outwitting Grizzie's animated bear traps. The inclusion of a whimsical yet strategic mini-game, wizard-serpent-stone, provides a refreshing departure from traditional mechanics, encouraging players to think outside the box.

The adventure's structure is both modular and flexible, offering multiple hooks to draw characters into the story. Whether they are cursed by one of the Grimjaw sisters, pursuing arcane knowledge from Lipniko's hidden library, or simply curious about the mysterious sleeping giant in the town square, players have the freedom to approach the narrative in their own way. This open-ended design ensures that each group's experience feels unique, while also promoting replayability.

The magic of *The Cursed Crones* lies not just in its narrative but also in its atmosphere. The Feywild-inspired setting of Cradle Wood is brought to life through evocative descriptions and clever mechanics. Random encounters with speaking animals, strange sounds, and enchanted creatures add a layer of unpredictability that feels true to the fey theme. These elements immerse players in a world where the mundane and the magical intertwine seamlessly.

# *The Cursed Crones of the Enchanted Grove*

However, the module is not without its challenges. Combat can be intense for low-level characters, particularly when facing formidable foes like Graniteback, the giants' pet cave bear, or Grizzie Grimjaw herself. Dungeon Masters may need to carefully manage pacing and resources to ensure their players aren't overwhelmed. While the time-sensitive nature of the adventure heightens the stakes, it could also rush players through pivotal moments of exploration or roleplay. Allowing for slight adjustments to the 24-hour deadline might help preserve the balance between urgency and player agency.

Despite these minor concerns, the rewards in *The Cursed Crones* are well worth the effort. Enchanted items like the everflame candle and magical scones provide creative solutions to challenges, while potential allies like Goodie Grimjaw and Graniteback add depth and dynamism to the experience. Each encounter feels purposeful, driving the story forward while offering opportunities for character growth and player ingenuity.

In the end, *The Cursed Crones of the Enchanted Grove* succeeds in delivering a whimsical, dangerous, and deeply engaging adventure. Its blend of compelling storytelling, creative challenges, and atmospheric setting make it a standout module for Dungeon Masters seeking to create a memorable journey for their players. By addressing a few minor balancing issues, this already strong adventure could become an essential addition to any fantasy campaign.

For those ready to venture into the heart of the Cradle Wood, this module offers a spellbinding blend of mystery and magic, where every choice could mean the difference between triumph and calamity. Prepare your party, pack your enchanted scones, and step into the grove—adventure awaits.

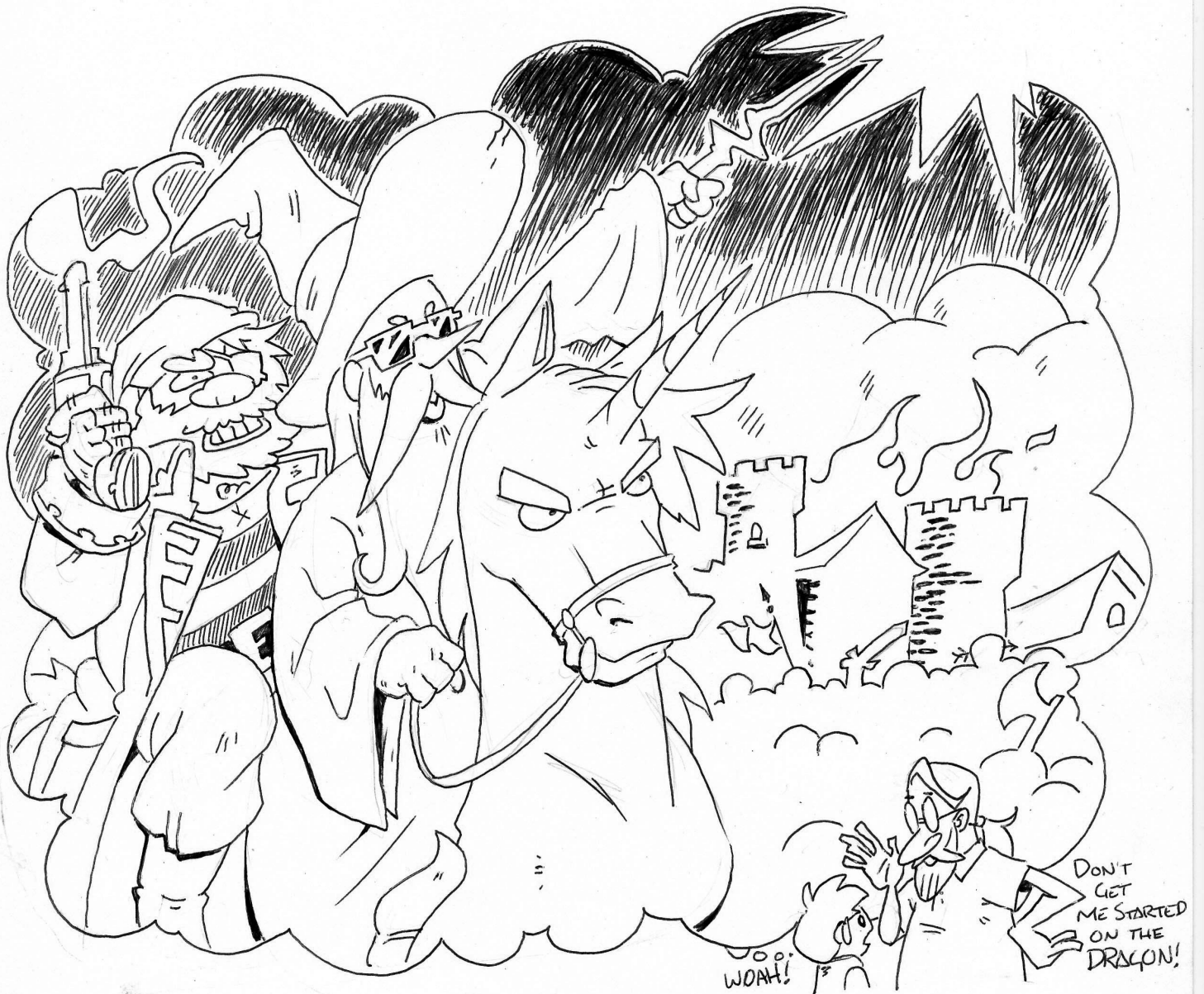
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# ARTIST CORNER



By Joseph Lawn

# VENDORS



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# DRAGONFIRE

MAGAZINE

