

DRAGONFIRE

MAGAZINE

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EDITOR'S EDICT

FEBRUARY 2025 - ISSUE 2

WELCOME BACK, ADVENTURERS, STORYTELLERS, AND SEEKERS OF THE STRANGE!

WITH THE SECOND ISSUE OF OUR MAGAZINE, WE CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY INTO THE DEPTHS OF FANTASY, HORROR, AND THE UNKNOWN. THIS MONTH, WE DELVE INTO THE PATH OF SHADOWS, UNRAVELING THE DARK LEGACY OF ALTHARID AND THE FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE THAT TEMPTS THOSE WHO SEEK POWER BEYOND THEIR GRASP. ALONGSIDE THIS GRIPPING TALE, WE BRING YOU NEW ADVENTURES TO CHALLENGE YOUR PLAYERS, FROM THE TREACHEROUS DEPTHS OF THE CRYPT OF KRAGAMAL TO THE EERIE MYSTERY OF THE SILENT CURE, A HORROR-LACED SCENARIO FOR CALL OF CTHULHU FANS.

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE TO BUILD THEIR WORLDS, THE EMBERVEIN FORGE TAKES CENTER STAGE AS OUR FEATURED LOCATION OF THE MONTH, OFFERING INSPIRATION FOR YOUR OWN TABLETOP SETTINGS. AND FOR OUR COMMUNITY OF CREATORS, WE SPOTLIGHT THE DUNGEON MASTER'S SECRET WEAPON ON YOUTUBE AND TABLETOP WEEKLY IN OUR PODCAST HIGHLIGHT.

AS ALWAYS, WE REMAIN DEDICATED TO BRINGING YOU CONTENT THAT FUELS YOUR IMAGINATION, WHETHER YOU'RE CRAFTING YOUR NEXT CAMPAIGN, EXPLORING ELDRITCH HORRORS, OR SIMPLY LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION IN THE PAGES OF GREAT STORYTELLING.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THIS JOURNEY WITH US. WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING YOUR THOUGHTS, EXPERIENCES, AND CREATIONS—REACH OUT TO US AT SUBMISSIONS@LUNITARPRODUCTIONS.COM AND LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD.

UNTIL NEXT TIME, MAY YOUR ROLLS BE HIGH AND YOUR STORIES LEGENDARY.

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THE PATH OF SHADOWS

BY ANDREW BABCOCK

The clearing hummed with latent energy as Maldrak's voice cut through the stillness, his words an intricate weave of power that shaped the air. Altharid knelt before the altar, his hands pressed into the cold, moss-covered stone, his mind straining to follow the ancient incantation. The syllables felt unnatural, twisting in his throat as he echoed Maldrak's chant.

"Again," Maldrak demanded, his tone sharp.

Altharid's voice steadied as he repeated the words. This time, the stone beneath his hands pulsed faintly, and the runes etched into its surface flared with a dim, otherworldly glow. He felt the energy rise, its presence invasive yet intoxicating. The power coursed through him, leaving a sharp ache in its wake.

"Better," Maldrak said, his approval begrudging. He stepped closer, his shadow falling over Altharid like a shroud. "But you hesitate. Fear has no place in these rituals. If you falter, the forces you call upon will devour you."

Altharid's jaw tightened, but he offered no response. He knew the risks all too well. Every lesson with Maldrak was a dance on the edge of a blade, a constant battle between control and chaos.

Days bled into one another as Altharid's training continued. Each ritual pushed him further, demanding not only precision but a willingness to abandon restraint. Maldrak's teachings were relentless, his methods ruthless. One evening, he led Altharid to the heart of the clearing where an ancient stone circle loomed, its pillars etched with jagged symbols that seemed to writhe in the torchlight.

"This ritual will require more than words," Maldrak said, placing a dagger in Altharid's hand. The blade was thin and jagged, its edge gleaming with an unnatural sheen. "A drop of your essence will bind the incantation to you. Without it, the spell will fail, and the backlash will—"

"I understand," Altharid interrupted, his voice colder than he intended. He pressed the blade against his palm, the sharp sting of pain eclipsed by the rush of energy that followed. The blood, dark and viscous, fell onto the stone, and the runes flared to life, bathing the clearing in a sickly green light.

The ritual's power surged, and for a moment, Altharid felt as if he were standing on the edge of a vast abyss. The air grew heavy, the whispers of the forest blending with his own thoughts, their cadence strangely familiar.

When the ritual concluded, Altharid's legs trembled beneath him, and he clutched the altar for support. Maldrak watched him with an intensity that bordered on predatory, his lips curling into a faint, enigmatic smile.

"You adapt quickly," Maldrak said, his tone laced with something unspoken. "But you must push further. The power you seek demands nothing less than complete devotion."

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Altharid sat alone by the fire that night, the forest's sounds a distant murmur. He stared at his hand, the cut from the ritual now a thin, pale line. The wound had already begun to heal, faster than it should have.

He clenched his fist, noting the strength that seemed to hum beneath his skin. His senses were sharper, the crackle of the fire louder, the scent of the earth more vivid. Yet, along with these changes came something darker—a faint echo of whispers at the edges of his thoughts.

They weren't like the whispers of the forest or the shadows that had pursued him. These were closer, more intimate, as if they were a part of him.

"Knowledge has a cost," he murmured, repeating Maldrak's words.

But he couldn't help wondering how high the price would be.

As the days passed, the whispers grew louder. They came to him during rituals, guiding his hands when he hesitated, feeding him insights that Maldrak did not teach. At first, Altharid dismissed them as echoes of his mentor's lessons, but their tone was different—softer, almost coaxing.

One morning, as the sun struggled to pierce the forest's thick canopy, Altharid found himself standing at the edge of the clearing, staring into the trees. He wasn't sure how long he had been there or why he had stopped. The forest seemed alive in a way he hadn't noticed before, its presence pulsing in time with his own heartbeat.

A faint rustle drew his gaze, and for a fleeting moment, he thought he saw a figure among the shadows. It moved with an unnatural grace, its form indistinct, and then it was gone.

"Do you feel it?" Maldrak's voice broke the silence, startling Altharid. His mentor stood a few paces behind him, his expression unreadable. "The forest watches us. It always has."

Altharid turned to face him, his unease carefully masked. "And what does it see?"

"Potential," Maldrak replied, his gaze sharp. "Or failure. The choice is yours."

Altharid said nothing, but the whispers in his mind grew louder, their cadence a haunting counterpoint to Maldrak's words.

He wasn't sure what the forest saw in him, but he knew one thing for certain—he was changing. And whatever he was becoming, it was something Maldrak had not anticipated.

The clearing felt alive, thrumming with a barely contained energy as Maldrak prepared the ritual. The air was thick with the acrid scent of burning herbs, the smoke swirling around the towering stones like restless spirits. Altharid stood at the edge, his gaze fixed on the complex circle of runes etched into the ground, their jagged lines glowing faintly in the waning light.

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“This is not for the faint of heart,” Maldrak warned, his voice carrying an uncharacteristic edge. “The energies you summon tonight will test every fiber of your will. Fail to control them, and they will consume you.”

Altharid nodded, his expression calm but inwardly steeled against the weight of the challenge. He stepped into the circle, feeling the runes pulse beneath his feet as if acknowledging his presence. In his hands, he held a ceremonial dagger, its blade adorned with intricate carvings that seemed to shift when he looked away.

Maldrak circled him like a predator, his eyes gleaming in the dim light. “Begin.”

Taking a deep breath, Altharid raised the dagger and began the incantation. The words rolled off his tongue, each syllable resonating with an ancient power that made the air vibrate. He felt the energy gather around him, heavy and volatile, like a storm waiting to break.

The runes flared brighter, their light casting wild shadows across the clearing. A sudden gust of wind howled through the stones, carrying with it faint whispers that clawed at the edges of Altharid’s mind. Sweat beaded on his brow as he pushed forward, his voice unwavering despite the mounting pressure.

Then came the final word, a guttural sound that tore from his throat and seemed to hang in the air. The energy surged, a wave of force that rippled outward from the circle, bending the light and shaking the ground. Altharid staggered but held firm, his grip tightening on the dagger as he channeled the power into the runes.

For a moment, everything was still.

Then the runes blazed white, and a burst of energy shot skyward, splitting the darkness with a deafening roar. Altharid fell to one knee, his chest heaving, his vision swimming. The ritual had succeeded, but the effort had drained him to the core.

“Impressive,” Maldrak said, his voice low and measured. “Few could have endured that.”

Altharid looked up, his breath ragged but his eyes alight with a quiet determination.

“You didn’t think I could.”

Maldrak’s lips twitched into a faint smile. “Perhaps I underestimated you.”

The time that followed was marked by a subtle but growing tension between mentor and pupil. Maldrak’s demeanor shifted, his once-imperious tone now tinged with a note of caution. He watched Altharid more closely, his eyes lingering on the younger man’s movements as if searching for cracks in his resolve.

During their lessons, Maldrak’s challenges grew harsher, his expectations higher. He seemed determined to assert his dominance, to remind Altharid who held the reins of their uneasy alliance.

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“You’re bold,” Maldrak said one evening as they reviewed a particularly complex spell. “But boldness without discipline is a blade without a hilt. It cuts both ways.”

Altharid met his gaze, his expression unreadable. “And yet boldness is what keeps the blade sharp.”

The words hung in the air, and for a moment, the firelight flickered between them like a living thing. Maldrak’s smile was sharp, but it didn’t reach his eyes.

“You’d do well to remember who taught you to wield it,” he said, his voice low.

Altharid inclined his head, a gesture of acknowledgment that carried just enough deference to diffuse the moment. But inside, his resolve hardened. He had learned much from Maldrak, but the time was fast approaching when the student would no longer need the teacher.

Late at night, when the clearing was silent and Maldrak’s watchful eyes were elsewhere, Altharid began to explore the corners of their encampment that his mentor had left untouched. He sifted through ancient tomes and crumbling scrolls, his fingers tracing the faded ink of forgotten knowledge. Each discovery was a puzzle piece, a fragment of a larger picture that Maldrak had withheld from him.

One night, hidden beneath a stone in Maldrak’s tent, Altharid found a small, leather-bound journal. Its pages were filled with notes in a language he couldn’t fully decipher, but their intent was clear. They chronicled experiments, rituals, and names—dozens of names—each one crossed out in red ink.

At the back of the journal, Altharid found something that sent a chill down his spine: a sketch of a runic sigil, identical to the one that now marked his hand. Beneath it, in Maldrak’s precise script, were the words: *The Key to Dominion*.

Altharid closed the journal, his mind racing. The sigil wasn’t just a mark—it was a tether, a conduit for something far greater. And Maldrak had known all along.

He returned the journal to its hiding place and stepped out into the cool night air. The forest seemed to whisper around him, its voice softer now, almost encouraging. Altharid stood at the edge of the clearing, staring into the darkness.

The path ahead was dangerous, but he had no intention of walking it blindly. If Maldrak thought to use him, he would soon learn that the blade cuts both ways.

For now, Altharid would play the part of the dutiful pupil. But the seeds of rebellion had been sown, and he would ensure they bore fruit.

The forest clearing was quiet, the stillness heavy with an almost sentient presence. Altharid moved cautiously among the towering stones, his gaze drawn to a patch of earth at the center

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where the soil was unnaturally dark, as if stained by something older than time. His fingers itched with curiosity, the whispers in his mind faint but insistent.

He knelt and brushed away the loose dirt, revealing the faint outline of a symbol etched into the stone beneath. It was unlike any of the runes Maldrak had shown him—its lines sharper, its geometry unsettlingly perfect.

As he dug deeper, his hands unearthed something cold and unyielding. A small, metallic object emerged from the soil, its surface smooth but marred with faint, glowing sigils that seemed to shift when he looked away. The artifact pulsed faintly in his hands, its weight disproportionate to its size, as though it carried more than just its physical mass. The moment his fingers closed around it, a jolt shot through him, and the world seemed to tilt. His vision blurred, replaced by a kaleidoscope of shifting shadows and jagged peaks. A temple loomed in the distance, its silhouette stark against a blood-red sky. The structure exuded menace, its spires twisting unnaturally as if defying the laws of nature. Voices murmured in the back of his mind, a chorus of fragmented words: *Seek. Ascend. The price is yours to pay.*

The vision ended as abruptly as it began, leaving Altharid gasping for air. He clutched the artifact tightly, his heart pounding as the clearing around him returned to focus. Whatever he had found, it was not meant to be buried and forgotten.

“Put it down.”

The command snapped through the air, sharp and unyielding. Altharid turned to find Maldrak standing at the edge of the clearing, his eyes locked on the artifact in Altharid’s hands. The older man’s face was a mask of fury and something else—fear.

“It was buried,” Altharid said, his voice steady despite the weight of Maldrak’s gaze.

“You didn’t tell me it was here.”

“Because it wasn’t meant for you.” Maldrak stepped closer, his movements deliberate.

“That relic predates everything we’ve studied, everything you’ve barely begun to understand. You have no idea what you’re holding.”

Altharid’s grip tightened instinctively. “I know it’s powerful. And I know you’ve been keeping secrets from me.”

Maldrak’s eyes narrowed, the tension between them crackling like a storm on the verge of breaking. “Power like that demands a price you cannot fathom. It will destroy you if you let it.”

“Then teach me,” Altharid challenged, his tone edged with defiance. “Or are you afraid I’ll surpass you?”

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Maldrak's expression darkened, his composure cracking under the weight of the accusation. "Surpass me? You don't even know what you're playing with, boy. That thing you hold—" He gestured sharply to the artifact. "It's a beacon. A calling to forces older and darker than either of us. Forces that would swallow you whole."

"And yet you left it here," Altharid shot back. "Why? Afraid of its power? Or afraid of what it might reveal about you?"

The silence that followed was deafening. For a moment, the two men stood locked in a battle of wills, the artifact's faint glow casting long shadows across the clearing.

Finally, Maldrak's voice softened, though his tone carried a warning. "You're treading dangerous ground, Altharid. Keep the relic if you must, but don't think for a moment you can wield it without consequence. It will demand more than you're willing to give."

Altharid's jaw clenched, but he gave no reply. He slipped the artifact into his satchel, his resolve unshaken despite Maldrak's words.

That night, the tension between mentor and pupil hung heavy over their camp. Maldrak's mood was a stormcloud, his words clipped and his gaze sharp. Altharid, for his part, kept his distance, his thoughts consumed by the artifact and the visions it had shown him.

The whispers in his mind grew louder, their cadence sharper, more urgent. They urged him to move, to seek, to uncover the truth that Maldrak seemed so desperate to hide.

As Altharid sat by the fire, the artifact pulsed faintly within his satchel, a constant reminder of the path he had chosen. Across the clearing, Maldrak's shadow loomed against the flickering flames, his presence a reminder of the danger that lay not just in the artifact, but in the man who sought to control its power.

The fracture between them was widening, and Altharid knew it was only a matter of time before it broke entirely. For now, he would play his part, biding his time as he unraveled the secrets of the relic and the temple it had shown him.

In the distance, the forest whispered, its voice a faint but undeniable promise: *The answers you seek are waiting. But the price will be steep.*

The clearing was eerily silent, the usual rustle of the forest absent as if the trees themselves held their breath. Maldrak stood at the edge of a new circle of runes carved into the earth, his form shadowed by the flickering glow of the torches. In the center of the circle was an altar, rough and ancient, its surface etched with deep grooves that glistened faintly in the light.

"You hesitate," Maldrak said, his voice carrying an edge of disdain as he watched Altharid approach.

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“I question,” Altharid replied evenly, his gaze sweeping over the altar and the runes surrounding it. “You’ve never spoken of this ritual before.”

“It wasn’t your time to know,” Maldrak said, folding his arms. “But the artifact you’ve claimed changes things. Its power calls to you, demands more of you. If you don’t answer, it will devour you.”

Altharid frowned but stepped closer, his eyes narrowing as he studied the sigils carved into the altar. They pulsed faintly, as though alive, their rhythm oddly synced with his own heartbeat.

“What’s the price?” Altharid asked.

Maldrak’s expression was unreadable. “Your blood will seal the pact. The sigil will bind the artifact to you, tempering its power. But understand this: the mark is permanent. It will amplify your strength, yes, but it will also change you. There’s no undoing it.”

Altharid’s fingers brushed the artifact tucked in his satchel, the faint warmth of its glow seeping through the leather. He thought of the visions it had shown him, the temple rising against a crimson sky, the whispers urging him forward.

“I’ll do it,” he said, stepping into the circle.

Maldrak’s lips curled into a faint smile, though his eyes held no warmth. “Good. Then let us begin.”

The ritual was unlike any Altharid had experienced. Maldrak guided him through the incantation, his voice low and resonant, weaving a spell that seemed to twist the very fabric of the air around them. Altharid repeated the words, feeling them settle into his chest like weights.

When the time came, Maldrak handed him a ceremonial dagger. Its blade gleamed with an unnatural light, the edge whispering faintly as if hungry.

“Your blood,” Maldrak said.

Altharid took the blade and drew it across his palm. The pain was sharp, but he did not falter. As his blood dripped onto the altar, the runes blazed with light, their glow spreading outward like ripples across a pond.

The energy surged, slamming into him with a force that drove him to his knees. His vision blurred, the clearing spinning as the power tore through him. He gritted his teeth, his hands gripping the altar as the sigils on its surface began to shift.

One by one, the runes coalesced into a single mark, a jagged, pulsating sigil that burned itself into the flesh of his forearm. The pain was searing, but it was nothing compared to the rush of power that followed.

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Altharid gasped, his body trembling as the energy settled. The mark on his arm glowed faintly, its pulse echoing the beat of his heart. He felt stronger, sharper, as though his very essence had been reforged.

But he also felt the weight of something watching him.

The days that followed were a blur of conflicting sensations. Altharid's strength had grown; his mastery of the rituals Maldrak taught him came with startling ease. His perception sharpened, allowing him to notice details he had once overlooked—the subtle changes in Maldrak's tone, the faint energy that lingered in the air after a spell.

But the mark on his arm was a constant reminder of the cost. It pulsed with its own rhythm, occasionally flaring with a cold, dark light. The whispers in his mind, once faint and fleeting, grew louder and more insistent. They spoke in a language he couldn't understand, yet the meaning behind the words pressed into his thoughts like the weight of a blade.

Shadows began to move at the edges of his vision. At first, he dismissed them as tricks of the light, but their presence grew more pronounced. They lingered longer, their forms indistinct but undeniably there.

One night, as he sat by the fire studying a tome, the shadows coalesced into a vaguely humanoid shape across the clearing. Its head tilted, as if observing him, before it dissolved into the darkness.

Altharid's grip on the book tightened, his breath hitching.

"You feel it, don't you?" Maldrak's voice cut through the silence, startling him.

Altharid turned to see his mentor standing at the edge of the firelight, his expression unreadable.

"They've noticed you," Maldrak continued, his tone almost... amused. "The mark isn't just a seal. It's a beacon. They know you now."

"Who are they?" Altharid asked, his voice low.

"Entities older than the forest, older than anything you can imagine," Maldrak said.

"They watch, they wait, and sometimes, they act. The mark ties you to them. Whether they'll aid you or destroy you remains to be seen."

Altharid glanced at the sigil on his arm, its glow faint but menacing. The voices in his mind swirled, their cadence almost hypnotic.

"I can control it," he said, more to himself than to Maldrak.

Maldrak chuckled, the sound cold. "Control is an illusion, Altharid. Power always comes with a price. The question is whether you're willing to pay it."

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Altharid said nothing, his gaze fixed on the shadows at the edge of the clearing. The mark had changed him, of that there was no doubt. But whether it would break him or forge him into something greater was a choice he intended to make for himself.

The forest whispered around him, its voice darker now, a low hum that resonated with the sigil's pulse. Whatever lay ahead, Altharid knew one thing: the path he had chosen was no longer his alone.

The air in the clearing was heavy with the scent of damp earth and burned herbs, the remnants of a ritual lingering like ghosts. Altharid sat at the edge of the circle, his back against one of the ancient stones. His eyes traced the patterns of his glowing sigil as it pulsed faintly on his arm. The whispers in his mind, now ever-present, had grown louder since the binding ritual, their cryptic cadence both a guide and a curse.

A faint murmur broke through his thoughts. At first, he thought it was another voice in his head, but this was different—clearer, more deliberate. Rising silently, Altharid crept toward the sound, his steps careful to avoid the fallen leaves and twigs that littered the ground.

Near the edge of the clearing, Maldrak stood with his back to Altharid, his cloaked figure barely illuminated by the faint glow of runes on a nearby stone. Before him, the shadows writhed unnaturally, forming the outline of a humanoid figure. Its features were indistinct, its voice a low, resonant hum that made the air shiver.

"The vessel progresses faster than anticipated," Maldrak said, his voice calm but tinged with something darker—excitement, perhaps. "The mark is binding well. His connection to the artifact deepens with each passing day."

The shadow's voice responded, a series of guttural whispers that Altharid couldn't fully understand but felt deep in his bones. Maldrak nodded as though comprehending every word.

"Yes," Maldrak said, "he is strong, stronger than I expected. But he's still naive, still unaware of his true purpose. When the time comes, he will serve as the perfect conduit."

The words struck Altharid like a physical blow. He pressed himself against the tree, his breath shallow, his mind racing. *Conduit?* The whispers in his mind seemed to hiss in unison, their tone now sharp and mocking.

Maldrak continued, his voice quieter now, but the venomous certainty remained. "The ancient force will rise again, and through him, I will hold the reins. The forest, the artifact, the temple—they are but tools. Altharid is the key."

The shadow murmured again, and Maldrak bowed his head. "When the time comes, I will summon you to complete the binding."

The figure dissolved into the darkness, leaving Maldrak alone. He lingered for a moment, then turned back toward the clearing. Altharid moved swiftly, slipping into the shadows and retreating

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to his place by the stones. His pulse thundered in his ears, but he forced his expression into calm neutrality as Maldrak approached.

“You should rest,” Maldrak said, his tone brusque but unremarkable. “The next lesson will be... demanding.”

Altharid only nodded, his gaze fixed on the firelight as his mentor walked past him. The glow of the sigil on his arm seemed colder now, its pulse a reminder of the chains he had unknowingly forged.

The night was long, and sleep did not come. Altharid sat by the dying embers of the fire, his thoughts a maelstrom. The weight of Maldrak’s words pressed on him like a crushing tide, each revelation sharpening the edge of his resolve.

He had known, on some level, that Maldrak was not a man to be trusted. The mentor’s secrecy, his manipulative lessons, the cryptic warnings—all of it had pointed to a greater scheme. But to hear it spoken so plainly, to know that he was being used as a vessel for something ancient and malevolent, made the whispers in his mind scream in protest.

And yet...

The knowledge Maldrak had given him was undeniable. Each spell, each ritual, each dark fragment of lore had strengthened him, molding him into something more than he had been. Without Maldrak, he would never have reached this point. Without Maldrak, he would not have the power to survive what lay ahead.

But how much further could he trust his mentor? How much more of himself would he lose before Maldrak’s plan reached its end?

The sigil on his arm pulsed faintly, as though sensing his turmoil. It whispered promises of power, of liberation, of vengeance. The artifact in his satchel felt warm against his side, its presence a constant reminder of the temple and the path it beckoned him to follow.

He stood abruptly, his gaze drawn to the forest beyond the clearing. Somewhere out there lay the answers he sought—the temple, the artifact’s purpose, and perhaps a way to sever the chains Maldrak had placed upon him.

But he wasn’t ready. Not yet.

Altharid turned back toward the camp, his eyes falling on Maldrak’s slumbering form.

The older man’s face was calm, almost serene, but Altharid saw the mask for what it was. Beneath the surface lay a predator, waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

For now, Altharid would play the role of the obedient student. He would learn, grow stronger, and uncover every secret Maldrak sought to hide. And when the time came, he would decide his own fate.

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The forest whispered around him, its voice low and haunting. Altharid clenched his fists, the sigil on his arm flaring briefly in the darkness.

He would not be a pawn. Not for Maldrak, not for the shadows, and not for the ancient force that loomed unseen.

When the time came, he would wield the power—not the other way around.

The clearing was alive with energy, the air vibrating with an almost oppressive force as Maldrak led the ritual. The ancient runes carved into the ground glowed with a pale, unnatural light, their sharp lines shifting as if alive. Altharid stood at the edge of the circle, his hood drawn low, his fists clenched as he watched Maldrak intone the incantation.

Each word Maldrak spoke seemed to pierce the fabric of reality, drawing the shadows around them closer. They writhed at the edge of the torchlight, their forms flickering with menace. The artifact in Altharid's satchel pulsed faintly, resonating with the sigils etched into the earth.

He couldn't stay silent any longer.

"What is the true purpose of this ritual, Maldrak?" Altharid's voice cut through the heavy air, sharp and accusatory.

Maldrak faltered for the briefest moment, his eyes narrowing as he turned toward his pupil. "Do not interrupt, Altharid. The energies I command here are fragile, and your interference could unravel them."

"I've seen enough to know that your plans extend far beyond teaching me," Altharid shot back, stepping closer to the circle. "You intend to use me—as a vessel, a pawn. You've been lying since the beginning."

The runes flickered, their light dimming as Maldrak's expression hardened. "You presume much, boy. You know nothing of the forces at play here."

"I know enough," Altharid said, his voice rising. "You've been grooming me for this moment, binding me to powers I don't fully understand, all so you can wield them for your own ends. You told me power comes with a price, but it's not your price to pay, is it?"

Maldrak's lips curled into a cold smile. "And what will you do, Altharid? Run back to the forest? Reject the knowledge you've gained, the strength you've built under my guidance? Without me, you are nothing."

Altharid stepped into the circle, his voice steady despite the storm of emotions swirling within him. "I am more than you think. And I won't let you decide my fate."

The air crackled with tension, the energy of the ritual faltering as the confrontation escalated. Maldrak's hands moved in a quick, practiced motion, weaving a sigil in the air that sent a surge

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of power toward the runes. The light flared, the shadows around the clearing quivering as if in anticipation.

“Step back,” Maldrak warned, his voice low and dangerous. “This ritual is delicate. If you interfere, you’ll doom us both.”

“I’m willing to take that risk,” Altharid replied, his voice a challenge. He reached into his satchel and withdrew the artifact, its faint glow immediately disrupting the rhythm of the runes. The shadows recoiled, their forms twisting in agitation.

Maldrak’s eyes widened, his composure slipping for the first time. “Fool! You don’t know what you’re doing!”

“Maybe not,” Altharid said, gripping the artifact tightly. “But I know I won’t let you use me.”

With a defiant shout, he hurled the artifact into the center of the circle. The impact sent a shockwave rippling through the clearing, extinguishing the torches and plunging the space into darkness. The runes flared one final time before shattering, their light exploding outward in a blinding cascade.

The shadows screamed—an unnatural, piercing sound that seemed to echo from all directions. They surged toward the center of the clearing, converging into a chaotic mass that writhed and lashed out, untethered from Maldrak’s control.

Maldrak staggered, his hands raised in a futile attempt to reassert dominance. “No! Obey me!”

The shadows turned on him, their forms twisting into jagged, predatory shapes. Maldrak’s voice was swallowed by the chaos as the clearing buckled under the weight of the unleashed energy. The ground cracked, the air thick with the acrid smell of burning earth. Altharid stumbled backward, shielding his face from the eruption of light and shadow. The sigil on his arm burned fiercely, its pulse erratic as the artifact’s energy coursed through him. He could feel the forest itself reacting to the chaos, the trees groaning as if alive.

He had to leave. Now.

With a final glance at the clearing—where Maldrak stood at the center, surrounded by the writhing shadows—Altharid turned and ran. The forest blurred around him as he sprinted, his breath coming in ragged gasps. The whispers in his mind screamed in dissonant harmony, urging him onward.

Behind him, the clearing was consumed by silence. The shadows fell still, their chaotic forms dissolving into the night. The light of the shattered runes faded, leaving only the faint glow of the moon filtering through the canopy.

THE PATH OF SHADOWS

When Altharid finally stopped, his legs trembling and his chest heaving, he collapsed against the trunk of a tree. The artifact was gone, and the sigil on his arm had dimmed, but its presence was still there—a reminder of the power he had claimed and the price he had paid.

Maldrak's fate was unknown, but Altharid knew one thing for certain: the path he had chosen was now his alone.

The forest whispered around him, its voice a haunting melody that promised both danger and revelation. Altharid tightened his cloak, his gaze fixed on the horizon. The temple from his visions loomed in his thoughts, its shadowy spires beckoning him forward.

The story was far from over.

Altharid ran through the dense forest, the damp earth soft beneath his boots and the canopy above blocking out the moonlight. His breaths came in sharp bursts, his heart pounding not just from exertion but from the searing pulse of the artifact's power. Though the relic was no longer in his hands, its energy lingered within him, coursing through his veins like liquid fire.

Suddenly, the sigil on his arm flared to life, its glow illuminating the surrounding trees in an eerie, flickering light. Altharid stumbled to a halt, clutching his forearm as pain lanced through him. The whispers in his mind rose to a deafening crescendo, their fragmented words overlapping in a cacophony of urgency.

The forest blurred around him, and his vision shifted.

He was no longer standing among the ancient trees. Instead, he found himself atop a jagged cliff, the air cold and thin. Below, shrouded in swirling mists, lay a sprawling temple carved into the mountainside. Its spires reached skyward like skeletal fingers, the stone dark and glistening as though slick with some unholy ichor. The air thrummed with power, and the faint hum of chanting voices echoed through the void.

"Come."

The word was soft but commanding, spoken in a voice that resonated deep within his chest. It wasn't the mocking whispers that plagued him—it was something deeper, older. The temple's image burned itself into his mind, vivid and unrelenting. He instinctively knew that this place held answers, but whether they would save or destroy him was impossible to tell.

As quickly as the vision came, it was gone. Altharid dropped to one knee, gasping as the sigil on his arm dimmed, leaving a faint, steady pulse. The forest around him felt darker now, the trees seeming to close in as if aware of the relic's awakening. He forced himself to stand, gripping the nearest tree for support. His path was clearer now, though fraught with uncertainty.

He had to reach the temple.

THE PATH OF SHADOWS

As he pressed forward, the forest came alive with movement. The shadows at the edges of his vision began to stretch and shift, their forms slithering between the trees with unnatural grace. The whispers that had been confined to his mind now echoed in the air around him, low and guttural, their tone filled with malice.

They were closer now, more tangible than ever.

Altharid quickened his pace, ignoring the ache in his legs and the burn in his lungs. He could feel the shadows closing in, their presence cold and suffocating. Branches clawed at his cloak, and the underbrush seemed to snag at his boots, as if the forest itself conspired to slow his escape.

A sudden rustle ahead made him freeze. His hand instinctively went to his side, though he carried no weapon. The sigil on his arm pulsed again, brighter this time, and the shadows recoiled slightly, their forms twisting in pain.

The whispers grew louder, now a discordant chant in a language he couldn't understand. They seemed to circle him, each voice distinct yet unified in purpose.

Altharid gritted his teeth and forced himself to move. The artifact's power surged within him, its presence like a burning coal in his chest, spurring him onward. The temple in his vision loomed large in his thoughts, its shadowy spires a beacon in the darkness.

But the shadows were relentless.

The sound of rustling leaves and snapping twigs grew closer, the air behind him heavy with their presence. His pulse thundered in his ears as he broke into a full sprint, weaving through the trees with desperation.

A voice, deeper and more commanding than the others, cut through the cacophony.

"You cannot escape us, Altharid."

The sound froze him in his tracks, the weight of the words pressing down on his chest like a physical force. He turned, his eyes darting through the darkness, but saw nothing.

"Leave me," he shouted into the void, his voice hoarse but defiant.

The shadows did not respond, but their presence grew heavier, the air around him thick and cold. He turned and ran again, his mind racing.

The forest began to thin, the trees giving way to rocky terrain that hinted at higher ground. Altharid didn't know how long he had been running, but his legs trembled with exhaustion, and his breath came in ragged gasps. The sigil on his arm flared again, casting brief flashes of light that illuminated the path ahead.

The whispers faded for a moment, replaced by an oppressive silence that made his skin crawl. He slowed, his senses on edge, and looked over his shoulder. The shadows were gone—no longer at the edge of his vision, no longer moving among the trees.

But the air still felt wrong.

THE PATH OF SHADOWS

From deep within the forest came a single sound—a low, resonant growl that reverberated through the ground. The sigil on his arm burned white-hot, and Altharid stumbled, clutching it as he fell to his knees. His vision swam, the image of the temple flashing before him once more, its spires looming impossibly tall.

“Come,” the voice whispered again, softer this time, almost inviting.

He forced himself to his feet, his resolve hardening even as his body screamed for rest. The shadows might hunt him, Maldrak might rise again, but he had to reach the temple. The forest around him grew darker, the air colder. The whispers returned, louder now, their cadence quickening as if urging him forward—or warning him to turn back. Altharid pressed on, his steps unsteady but determined.

Altharid stood silhouetted against the dark expanse of the forest, his path lit only by the faint, ominous glow of his sigil. The shadows swirl behind him, their forms growing more distinct, more menacing. The final sound is the faint echo of the deep voice, a single word that hangs in the air like a curse:

“Soon.”

To be continued in the next issue....

THE CRYPT OF KRAGAMAL



Recommended Party Level: 3rd-5th level

Setting: A cavern system beneath an ancient ruin

Hook

Legends tell of the Radiant Heart, a divine relic stolen by the kobold warlock Vekzith. Without it, the land above is plagued by monsters. The party is tasked with retrieving the Radiant Heart from the depths of Kragamal and ending the kobold menace.

1. The Entrance

Monsters: 2 Kobold Sentries (Monster Manual), 1 Basilisk (MM)

A ruined crypt marks the entrance to the caves. Down through the entryway and behind a closed door Kobold sentries and a caged basilisk guard the way.

- **Combat:** Fight kobolds and their beast if they can release it before they are stopped.
- **Stealth:** A hidden side tunnel offers a quiet approach. Perception check required to find it (dc14).

1A. Hallway – traps in hallway

1st trap - Pressure plate with falling boulders Dex save or 1d6 damage

2nd trap – Pit spike trap with drop away floor Dex save or 1d6 damage

3rd trap – Pressure plate with wall darts Dex save or 1d4 damage

2. The Ambush room

Monsters: 3 Kobolds (MM), 2 Winged Kobolds (MM)

The room is filled with broken crates and barrels. The kobolds dart back in forth through the wreckage attacking the players.

3. The Statue Room

This room has 4 statues that activate by several pressure plates towards the center of the floor. Once activated, the doors slam shut and lock. A poisonous gas starts emitting from the statue's mouths. The players have 10 rounds to solve the "puzzle" or the gas will kill them. They can shove objects into the mouths, have immunity to poison or any other creative way to not inhale the gas. Once the timer runs out, the gas is sucked out of the rooms and the doors open. Beware, on the way out of the dungeon, the room can be retriggered.

4. The Safe Room

This room is just a place to take a short rest. There are bedrolls and a fireplace in the room that looks like it has been used recently. A few empty crates and iron bars are scattered. The bars can be used to secure the doors. After a short rest, things can be heard scratching at the walls, If the adventurers stay there, the wall crumbles and 6 kobolds pile into the room.

5. The Shrine Room

Monster: Specter (MM) - Sir Edran, the Eternal Sentinel

The spectral paladin Sir Edran guards the path to the Radiant Heart. He believes he is still protecting the relics of the crypt.

- **Trial by Combat:** He tests the party's worthiness.
Moral Choice: Free his soul through persuasion or divine magic.

6. The Final Battle - Vekzith the Shadow-Touched

Monsters: Vekzith (Kobold Scale Sorcerer (MM) reskinned as a warlock), ?? Winged Kobolds (MM), ?? Kobold Minions (MM)
The warlock Vekzith has corrupted the Radiant Heart as a necklace, gaining shadowy wings and necrotic power.

- **Shadow Infusion:** Teleports in dim light.
Kobold Swarm: Reinforcements arrive each round. Roll 1d6 for number that show up and roll again for even or odd. Even it's Kobold minions, on odd it's Winged Kobolds

Upon defeat, the side room opens up and a treasure room is revealed.

Conclusion

Restoring the Radiant Heart returns balance to the land, but Vekzith's corruption hints at a greater darkness yet to be revealed.

THE CRYPT OF KRAGAMAL

VEKZITH THE SHADOW-TOUCHED

Medium humanoid (kobold), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 55 (10d6 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Cha +7

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Draconic

Damage Resistances Necrotic, Fire

Challenge 4 (1100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting (Warlock). Vekzith's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components: At will: Eldritch Blast, Mage Hand, Thaumaturgy 1/day each: Darkness, Mirror Image, Misty Step

ACTIONS

Shadow Infusion (Recharge 5-6): As a bonus action, Vekzith can teleport up to 30 feet in dim light or darkness. His next attack deals an additional 2d6 necrotic damage.

Corrupted Radiance (Recharge 6): Vekzith channels the Radiant Heart's corrupted power, forcing all creatures within 20 feet to make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 3d6 necrotic damage and be blinded for 1 round.

Multiattack: Vekzith makes two attacks with his Shadowbolt

Shadowbolt: Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 2d8 necrotic damage.

ACTIONS

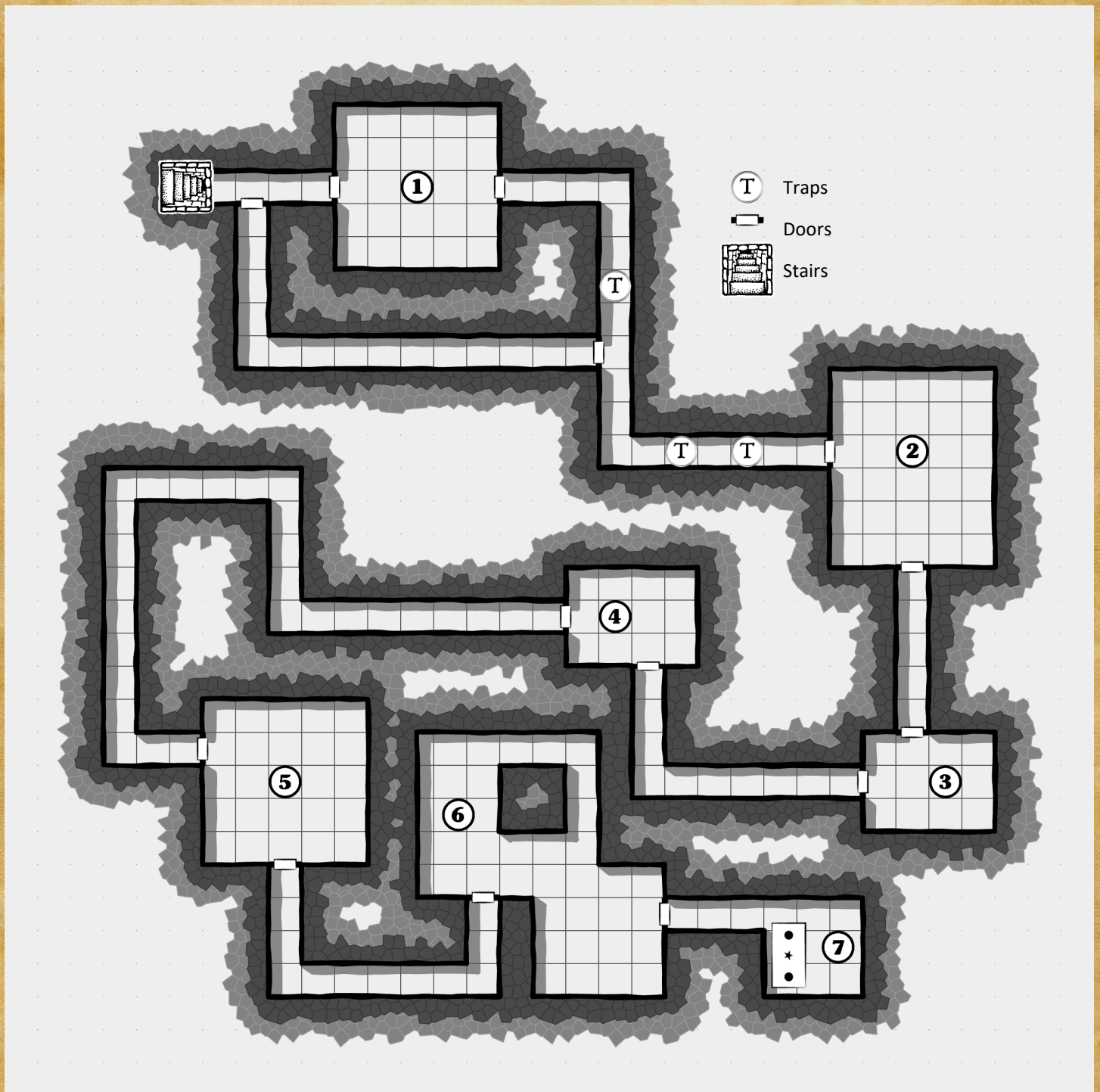
Vekzith can take one of the following actions at the end of another creature's turn(Once per Round):

Shadow Step: Teleports up to 20 feet in dim light or darkness.

Eldritch Rebuke: If hit by a melee attack, Vekzith forces the attacker to make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 fire damage on a failure.



THE CRYPT OF KRAGAMAL





The Silent Cure

System: Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition

Era: 1980s

Setting: A small, rural town in the United States

Theme: Body horror, paranoia, corporate conspiracy, and cosmic horror

Author: Andrew Babcock

The Silent Cure

Introduction: A Cure for the World, A Horror Unseen

There's something in the air in Ashwood Falls. The town, nestled deep in the heart of nowhere, has always been a quiet place—where neighbors watch out for each other and gossip spreads faster than the morning fog. But lately, the town feels... *off*.

The streets are still lined with familiar faces, but they linger too long in doorways, their smiles just a little too fixed, their eyes hollow with something unspoken. Conversations flow, polite as ever, but there's a pause where there shouldn't be, a sense of rehearsed normalcy that unsettles even the most rational minds.

It started a few months ago, when Dunwich Biopharma, a once-unknown pharmaceutical company, began distributing a miracle nasal spray called Respira. Marketed as a breakthrough in modern medicine, Respira claimed to cure sinus infections, the flu, pneumonia—even chronic respiratory diseases. It spread quickly through rural clinics and back-alley pharmacies, whispered about in hushed tones as a godsend for those who couldn't afford hospital care. No prescriptions. No questions. Just one dose, and you were healed.

But miracles have consequences.

What began as a whispered rumor among local doctors soon became a chilling pattern. Patients who took Respira never got sick again—but they also stopped acting like themselves. A husband who once doted on his wife now sits at the kitchen table for hours, unmoving, his food untouched. A child who used to cry at night now sleeps in eerie silence, staring at the ceiling as if waiting for something. An entire family found seated at their dinner table—stone-cold and stiff, as if frozen mid-meal—each of their wide, horrified eyes staring at nothing.

Some say it's a miracle. Others whisper about something else.

The truth is far worse than anyone could have imagined. Respira is not medicine. It is a living thing.

At the heart of the formula is a colony of microscopic parasitic worms, an ancient and unknown species designed not to kill—but to spread. These creatures burrow into the host's body, nestling deep within the nervous system, latching onto the very essence of what makes a person *them*.

In the early stages, hosts feel healthier than ever—stronger, sharper, more alive. But as the days pass, they begin to hear whispers—first in their dreams, then in their waking hours. At first, it's just a voice calling their name from another room. Then, they see their own reflection move before they do.

And then, they stop being in control.

They can still think. They can still feel. But when they reach out to grab something, their hand moves before they will it to. When they speak, it isn't them who decides what words come out. They scream internally as their own mouths betray them, whispering assurances that everything is fine.

And all the while, their eyes remain locked in an expression of sheer, unrelenting terror.

At the core of the infestation is The Broodfather, a grotesque, pulsating mass of ancient flesh hidden deep within the sub-basement of Dunwich Biopharma. It breathes in the dark, dripping with mucus, its flesh writhing with the movement of its young. The company's scientists and executives have already succumbed, their bodies mere shells for the hive mind that the Broodfather controls.

The infection is expanding.

Respira is already spreading beyond Ashwood Falls, making its way to small towns, isolated communities, underground pharmacies, and black-market medical distributors. The final stage of the plan is about to begin—soon, the parasites will no longer need to be *inhaled*. They will pass from host to host with just a breath, just a touch, just a single whispered word.

The Investigators' Role

The investigators have been drawn into the nightmare—whether through personal connection, corporate investigation, or sheer misfortune.

They must uncover the truth before it is too late. But in a town where everyone might already be infected, where even their closest allies could be working against them, the true horror is simple:

How do you stop something when you can't tell who has already become part of it?

Hooks (Ways to Draw the Investigators In)

1. **Missing Persons:** A local journalist investigating Respira has vanished. A family member or employer hires the investigators to find them.
2. **Personal Connection:** An investigator's relative has been using Respira and has started acting strangely—staring into the distance, whispering in their sleep, and reacting violently to attempts to take them to a doctor.
3. **Strange Sightings:** Reports of people acting oddly flood local radio stations. Eyewitnesses claim that their eyes seem full of terror, yet they speak calmly and insist they feel fine.
4. **Corporate Investigation:** A rival pharmaceutical company, suspicious of Respira's rapid success, hires the investigators to look into Dunwich Biopharma's secret formula.
5. **Local Legends:** Older townsfolk whisper about unnatural happenings near the pharmaceutical plant—strange lights in the woods, inhuman sounds from the basement, and people who go in but never come out.

Key Locations

1. Dunwich Biopharma Headquarters: The Heart of the Infection

A modest research facility on the outskirts of Ashwood Falls, Dunwich Biopharma does not stand out at first glance. The building is a two-story concrete structure, its exterior deceptively mundane, with a neatly maintained front lawn and a security gate that is rarely manned. The company sign—once pristine—is now slightly askew, as if someone had tried to tear it down but gave up. At night, the lights remain on, but no shadows move behind the windows.

For a pharmaceutical company that allegedly employs dozens of researchers, the parking lot is eerily empty.

First Impressions and Initial Clues

As the investigators approach, several details may unsettle them:

- The air smells wrong. A faint, organic musk lingers in the atmosphere—something like damp earth, mildew, and rotting fruit.
- No one greets them. There's a front desk, but it is unmanned. A receptionist's half-full coffee cup still steams, but there's no sign of the person who was drinking it.

- The walls hum faintly. At first, it could be mistaken for electrical buzzing, but after a few moments, it starts to sound almost like breathing.
- Security cameras follow their every move. But no one appears to be watching them.

Ground Floor: The Hollow Office

The lobby and reception area are unnervingly clean, with corporate posters celebrating Respira lining the walls. Slogans such as:

- *“A Breath of Life—Breathe Better, Live Longer.”*
- *“Respira: Science, Evolution, Perfection.”*
- *“Health Is Only One Inhalation Away.”*

Everything looks normal—too normal.

But a closer look reveals subtle inconsistencies:

- The phones are off the hook, their cords silently swaying as if someone had just let go.
- A coffee spill in the break room hasn’t been cleaned—but there are no footprints, as if the entire office was abandoned in an instant.

The office chairs are all facing the same direction—toward the entrance, as if whoever had been sitting in them had turned to stare all at once.

Points of Interest

- **The Employee Files:** A filing cabinet in HR contains employee records—many marked “resigned” with no further details. However, their cars, belongings, and even half-eaten lunches remain in the break room.
- **The Research Archives:** Locked behind a glass door, these contain documentation on Respira’s early development. Investigators can find initial reports of “unexpected behavioral changes” in test subjects.
- **The Security Room:** The surveillance footage is corrupted, but what remains shows employees behaving erratically—standing still for hours, turning in perfect synchronization, and walking backward out of rooms.

Second Floor: The Cold Corridors

The second floor contains executive offices, research divisions, and private testing labs. The atmosphere here is palpably wrong.

- The air is frigid. The AC hums at full blast, yet the vents expel air that is damp and smells of decay.
- The walls appear wet. At first glance, it seems to be condensation, but a closer look reveals that the moisture is seeping from within the drywall itself.

The doors are locked from the outside. As if someone had tried to trap whatever was inside.

Key Locations on the Second Floor

1. CEO’s Office: The Journal of a Doomed Man

- The office of Dr. Wallace Grieves, the CEO, is lavish but eerily untouched—a half-smoked cigar in the ashtray, a chair slightly ajar, but no sign of a struggle.

His private journal, hidden in a locked drawer, reveals his growing paranoia about Respira:

“They don’t blink anymore. Not even when I wave a hand in front of their faces.”

“Something moves behind their eyes. Like they’re seeing something I can’t.”

“It spoke to me last night. Through the vents. It knows my name.”

“I have to stop it. But I don’t think I’m me anymore.”

2. The Testing Labs: Experiments Gone Wrong

- Rows of containment pods, each filled with an amber-tinted fluid and containing half-formed humanoid figures.
- A one-way observation window looks into a sealed room, where something large and writhing is suspended in fluid—its “skin” pulsating as if breathing.

A clipboard near the exit reads:

Test Subject 23: Attempted removal of parasites from host. Subject unresponsive. Removal unsuccessful. Parasites exhibit extreme distress when separated from host body.

Test Subject 24: Subject severed from hive mind. Immediate neurological collapse. Catatonia confirmed.

Test Subject 25: Resistance experiment. Subject resisted control for 2 minutes before re-assimilation.

Subject repeated last words continuously: “I am not me, I am not me, I am not me...”

The Sub-Basement: The Nest of the Broodfather

Accessed via a hidden freight elevator, the sub-basement is the true heart of Dunwich Biopharma—the place where Respira’s secret was born.

As the investigators descend, the air grows thick and wet, the walls shifting from concrete to something else—something organic.

- The walls are pulsing. Thick, vein-like structures weave through the floor and ceiling, beating in slow, rhythmic pulses.
- The whispers are louder here. Not spoken words, but something deeper. The investigators don’t hear it with their ears, but in their skulls.
- The security team stands in the corridor—silent, motionless. If approached, they do not blink. Do not move. Then, all at once, they inhale sharply—and turn in unison.

At the far end of the corridor is a vast chamber, its walls made entirely of pulsing, undulating flesh.

And in the center, attached to the ceiling by grotesque tendrils of wet muscle, is The Broodfather.

- A grotesque, bloated mass of quivering flesh, its translucent skin writhing with movement from within.
- The scent of damp rot fills the air.

It breathes in slow, wet gasps—then speaks.

“Welcome. We are one. You are not. But soon, you will be.”

Key Details in the Nest

- The Original Respira Strain: Contained in sealed vials, labeled with the name “Project Advena”—Latin for *outsider* or *alien*.
- A Crude Human Shrine: A pile of discarded lab coats, identification badges, and security gear—the only remains of those who came before.
- The First Host: A mummified corpse, attached to the Broodfather by long, pulsating tendrils. Its face is frozen in a silent scream.

2. The Town of Ashwood Falls – A Town That Breathes

Overview

Ashwood Falls used to be a typical rural town—quaint, quiet, and close-knit. It was the kind of place where everyone knew each other, where kids rode their bikes until sundown, and the town sheriff spent more time breaking up bar fights than dealing with any real crime.

That was before Respira.

Now, something is deeply wrong.

The town is still. Too still.

The streets are clean, but empty. The stores are open, but silent. The townsfolk are friendly—but their smiles never reach their eyes.

And if the investigators stay long enough, they'll begin to notice something else.

First Impressions and Early Clues

As the investigators enter Ashwood Falls, they may experience the following unsettling details:

- The air is too crisp. It feels fresh, too fresh—as if something in the atmosphere has been purified beyond reason.
- There are no animals. No dogs barking. No birds singing. Not even the hum of insects.
- The townspeople don't cough. Not a single sniffle or sneeze, despite the cold wind rolling in.
- The people pause—just for a second—before responding to questions. As if they are listening for permission to speak.
- Their eyes linger too long. Watching. Assessing. Waiting.

1. The Town Square – The Hollow Center

At first glance, the town square is charming—a brick-paved plaza with a fountain at its center, surrounded by small shops and cafés. But something feels off.

- The fountain still runs, but the water is stagnant. It does not ripple, even in the breeze.
- The public benches are empty, yet covered in faint indentations, as if someone had been sitting there for hours and only just left.

Every door and window has a curtain pulled back, just slightly. As if someone inside is always watching.

Clues to Find

- A newspaper dated three months ago, with a headline about Respira's "miraculous breakthrough."
- A discarded shoe near the fountain—one of a kind, its mate nowhere to be found. Inside, a single bloody footprint.
- A child's drawing tacked onto a public notice board. It depicts the town square, but with everyone's faces scribbled out except for a single large eye hovering above them.

2. The Sheriff's Department – The Law Has Been Compromised

The Sheriff's Office is one of the few places in town that still has some semblance of activity. But that doesn't make it safe.

Inside, Sheriff Caleb Wyatt and his two deputies maintain the illusion of control. They still answer calls, still patrol the streets, still write reports—but there’s something deeply unnatural about their behavior.

- They never leave their desks unless necessary. They sit unnervingly still, hands flat against the table, only moving when spoken to.
- Their radio crackles with static more often than words. Occasionally, a single breath comes through the speaker, followed by an unintelligible whisper.
- Their eyes never blink at the same time.

Interacting With the Sheriff

Sheriff Wyatt will be polite, even helpful—at first. But the more investigators push about Respira, the more his answers become vague, evasive, scripted.

If pressed too hard:

- His deputies will rise from their chairs in perfect unison.
- All three of them will inhale at the exact same time.
- And the Sheriff will say, in a flat, expressionless tone: *"We all breathe together."*

Clues to Find

- A locked desk drawer contains old case files—including a missing persons report for a scientist from Dunwich Biopharma. The notes in the margins say: *"Case closed. Individual found. No further questions permitted."*
- The Sheriff’s appointment book has a repeating weekly meeting at Dunwich Biopharma. Every entry for the past two months is signed with a strange, spiraling symbol instead of a name.

3. The Ashwood General Store – Smiling Faces, Empty Eyes

The town’s general store is still open, still stocked, and fully staffed. The owner, Harvey Dunne, and his wife, Cynthia, greet every customer with the same rehearsed smile.

- The shelves are immaculately stocked, but no one is shopping.
- The canned goods are dust-free, yet some have expiration dates from over a year ago.
- **Harvey moves in a mechanical, deliberate way, as if performing a carefully rehearsed play.

Interacting With Harvey and Cynthia

They will answer basic questions politely, but if the investigators mention Respira, Dunwich Biopharma, or the Sheriff’s Office, their responses will turn strangely cryptic.

If asked about the infected, Harvey will tilt his head slightly and whisper, *"It’s better this way. The silence is better."*

If asked if he’s taken Respira, his wife will grip his wrist tightly—her knuckles turning white—before he responds: *"I don’t get sick anymore."*

Clues to Find

- A hidden receipt in the back office shows a bulk order for Respira—over 500 units. But it’s stamped with "No charge. Payment received."
- A journal under the counter contains a single unfinished entry:

"It’s inside me. It knows when I think about running."

"It knows when I..." (The writing trails off..)

4. The Church of the Breathless – A Twisted Salvation

The town's old chapel has become something else entirely.

- The wooden pews have been rearranged into a circle.
- The altar is covered in strange, spiraling carvings.

A low, rhythmic hum fills the space—like breathing, but not human.

The congregation is always present. They sit in silent worship, unmoving, their heads bowed in unison.

If the investigators disturb them:

- Every person in the room will lift their heads at once.
- Their eyes will be blank, their mouths slightly open.

They will breathe together, slowly, perfectly synchronized.

At the center of the room stands Reverend Eli Carter. He is not fully human anymore. His skin is too smooth, his veins pulse unnaturally, and his smile is too wide.

Interacting With Reverend Carter

He will welcome the investigators warmly, but his words feel empty, rehearsed, wrong.

If pressed about Respira, he will say:

“We are one. Soon, you will be too.”

Clues to Find

- A baptismal font filled not with water, but a thick, amber-colored fluid.
- A hidden book behind the pulpit, detailing cryptic rituals about “the joining.”
- A list of names, most crossed out. The last five names on the list? The investigators.

The Town as an Antagonist

Ashwood Falls is no longer a town.

It is a waiting room.

A waiting room for something else to take over.

No one runs.

No one hides.

They are waiting for the investigators to join them.

And if the investigators stay too long... they just might.

3. The Abandoned Farmhouse – The Last Refuge

Overview: The Last Safe Place (Or Is It?)

The abandoned farmhouse stands on the outskirts of Ashwood Falls, hidden deep within a grove of dead trees, its skeletal branches scratching at the sky like grasping fingers. It was once the home of Dr. Henry Maddox, a local physician who uncovered the truth about Respira—before he vanished.

Now, the farmhouse serves as a makeshift refuge for the last uninfected townspeople, though paranoia runs rampant among them. Anyone could already be compromised. No one trusts each other. No one sleeps. No one breathes too loudly.

First Impressions: The Echoes of the Past

From a distance, the farmhouse looks abandoned, a rotting wooden structure sagging under the weight of time. The front door hangs slightly ajar, swaying faintly in the wind, as if beckoning the investigators inside.

As they approach, unsettling details emerge:

- The windows are covered in thick sheets of newspaper—glued in place, not nailed. Every article is about Dunwich Biopharma and Respira.
- The ground is littered with discarded, dust-covered inhalers. Some are cracked open, revealing squirming, dried-out parasites inside.
- The air smells of mildew, rotting wood, and something else—something faintly metallic.

From the doorway, faint whispers drift out—but stop the moment someone steps inside.

Inside, the house is dark and claustrophobic, lit only by flickering oil lamps. The furniture has been pushed against the walls, as if to create more space in the center of the room. Every available surface is covered in frantic, handwritten notes.

Someone was trying to understand what was happening here. Someone was trying to fight back.

1. The Living Room – The Refugees' Camp

The living room has been converted into a makeshift shelter, but it is far from comforting.

- Five people sit in a circle, their backs pressed against the walls, clutching weapons. Their eyes are sunken, their skin pale and clammy, but they are still themselves—so far.
- Food supplies are running dangerously low. Empty cans and crumpled ration packets litter the floor. The smell of unwashed bodies and stale breath lingers in the air.
- The survivors speak in hushed tones, glancing at each other with suspicion. No one knows if someone among them has already been infected.
- A chalkboard leans against the fireplace, covered in tally marks. When asked, one survivor mutters: *“Days since we last lost someone.”*
The last tally is crossed out.

Clues to Find

A tape recorder sits on a table, playing a looped message from Dr. Maddox: *“They see through our eyes. They hear through our voices. If you feel like you’re being watched—YOU ARE.”*

A bloodstained notebook contains Dr. Maddox’s frantic scrawls:

“They aren’t just in the lungs. They burrow deeper. The brain. The spine. The soul.”

“The longer you breathe their air, the more they know about you.”

“The eyes... THE EYES! They show you the ones who are still inside. But for how long?”

2. The Kitchen – The Ritual of Silence

The farmhouse kitchen is frozen in time. A half-eaten meal rots on the table, plates covered in mold. A foul smell seeps from the sink, filled with standing, darkened water.

But the most disturbing sight?

- A row of dirty mason jars lines the counter. Inside each one is a human tongue, floating in cloudy liquid.

A message is carved into the wood of the dining table:

“It can’t control what it can’t hear.”

Clues to Find

- A kitchen knife with dried blood on the blade. Someone cut out their own tongue—but who?
- A faded Polaroid of the survivors, taken weeks ago. But one of the people in the photo is no longer here. No one remembers them.

3. The Upstairs Bedroom – Dr. Maddox’s Last Stand

The second floor of the farmhouse creaks with every step, the wood warped with age and water damage. The bedroom reeks of sweat, sickness, and something older—something rotten.

At first glance, it looks like a quarantined sickroom. But then the investigators notice:

- The mattress is soaked in dark stains.
- A rope hangs from the ceiling fan, frayed at the end.
- The window is smashed, but the glass is on the outside—someone tried to break out.

The closet door is nailed shut.

If the investigators open the closet, they find a desiccated corpse, its mouth stretched unnaturally wide. It died in a silent scream.

Clues to Find

- A revolver with one bullet left, clutched in the corpse’s hand. The chamber is filled with six spent rounds. But there’s no sign of the other bodies.
- Dr. Maddox’s journal, final entry circled in red ink: *“If I am still me, then who the hell is whispering my name?”*

4. The Basement – The Experiment That Failed

The basement door is chained shut from the outside. Someone wanted to lock something in.

Once inside, the investigators will find:

- Glass jars filled with dead parasites. Some are split open, revealing strange, embryonic growths inside.
- A decayed operating table. Straps dangle loosely from the sides, stained with old blood.

A body bag, unzipped just enough to see the face inside. The eyes are wide open, filled with terror.

Then, the air shifts.

The investigators will hear a wet, rattling breath—behind them.

Something is still alive down here.

The Survivors – Can They Be Trusted?

The survivors in the farmhouse are desperate, starving, and deeply paranoid.

- Not all of them are as uninfected as they claim.
- One of them has already begun hearing the whispers.
- One of them hasn’t blinked in over an hour.

If the investigators stay too long, they may hear a faint scratching sound coming from the survivors’ room.

Someone is clawing at their own skin.

Someone is trying to tear something out of themselves.

Someone is losing the fight.

What Happens If the Investigators Stay?

The farmhouse seems like the last refuge.

But the longer they stay, the more it becomes clear that it is just another trap.

- The whispers get louder.
- The survivors become eerily still, their breath synchronized.
- The investigators begin to forget things. Did they already check the basement? Or was that a dream?

And then, one of the survivors speaks—but their mouth doesn't move.

"It's okay. You can breathe now."

The Farmhouse as a Psychological Trap

- The investigators can never be sure if they are truly safe here.
- The survivors may be their only allies—or their worst enemies.
- Something in the basement still moves.
- Someone among them isn't human anymore.

Final Note

The farmhouse is not a sanctuary. It is a slow death, disguised as safety.

And by the time the investigators realize this,

it might already be too late.

Encounters & Challenges

1. The Infected Townsfolk – The Silent Prisoners

Overview: The Horror of Consciousness Without Control

The most terrifying thing about the infected is that they are still in there.

They are not mindless zombies, nor do they stagger through the streets like the undead. They walk, talk, and smile just like they always have. They remember their lives.

They just can't stop themselves from following the will of the hive mind.

Beneath their calm voices and pleasant expressions, they are screaming.

And their eyes show it.

Stages of Infection: How It Progresses

The transformation is slow, insidious, and inevitable once a person breathes in Respira. The infected do not realize they are changing until it is far too late.

Stage 1: The False Cure (*First 24 Hours*)

- The host feels incredible. A rush of energy and clarity makes them feel healthier than ever.
- No more colds, no more headaches, no more fatigue. The immune system seems supercharged.
- They laugh about it. “*Maybe this stuff really is a miracle, huh?*”

Clues to Notice:

- They never cough, sneeze, or even clear their throat.
- They sleep less, yet never seem tired.
- They don’t blink as often as they used to.

Stage 2: The Whispering Mind (*2-5 Days*)

- The host begins hearing faint whispers. At first, they mistake it for radio static, wind through the trees, or distant voices.
- The whispers start saying their name.
- Their reflection in the mirror begins moving slightly out of sync.
- They start having vivid dreams of something breathing in the dark.

Clues to Notice:

- They pause slightly before answering questions, as if listening.
- They sometimes move before they intend to. (Grabbing a cup of coffee before they’ve decided to, reaching out for something they didn’t mean to.)
- They avoid talking about Respira, Dunwich Biopharma, or the town’s recent changes.

Stage 3: The Silent Prison (*6-10 Days*)

- They are still fully aware. They feel everything, remember everything.
- But they are no longer in control.
- Their body moves on its own, their mouth speaks words they did not choose.
- They can no longer resist—only observe.

Clues to Notice:

- Their smiles seem slightly forced.
- Their movements are eerily smooth, their breathing perfectly even.
- If confronted, they may suddenly stop moving altogether, only to ‘reboot’ seconds later.
- They do not react to pain. They will continue talking even if stabbed, burned, or injured—only the eyes will show terror.

The Infected as an Enemy: The Horror of Normalcy

Unlike traditional monsters, the infected are not aggressive at first. They are subtle, calm, and everywhere.

They will not immediately attack the investigators.

They will watch them.

They will test them.

If the investigators begin asking the wrong questions or acting suspiciously, the infected will close in, slowly, subtly.

“Are you feeling alright? You seem stressed. Maybe you should sit down.”

“You’ve been working too hard. Why don’t you take a breath?”

“It’s okay. We all breathe together.”

At first, the pressure is psychological. Then, it becomes lethal.

Encounters With the Infected

1. The Marketplace Test (*Low Threat, High Paranoia*)

Location: The general store, pharmacy, or diner.

- The investigators enter a seemingly normal business. People shop, eat, talk—but there is no real life here.
- As they browse or order food, everyone slowly stops moving.
- They turn, one by one, and stare.
- If the investigators act normally, after a few seconds, everyone resumes their business as if nothing happened.
- If an investigator looks scared, backs away, or tries to leave too quickly, one of the employees will step forward and say:

“You don’t have to be afraid. You’re safe here. Why don’t you stay?”

How to Escape:

- If the investigators keep their composure, they will be allowed to leave.
- If they panic, refuse to answer questions, or mention the infection, the doors will suddenly lock.

2. The Unnerving Dinner Invitation (*Escalating Threat*)

Location: The home of a friendly townsman.

- A well-meaning (or seemingly normal) townsman invites the investigators to dinner.
- The meal is already set, steaming, waiting for them.
- The host insists they eat first.
- As the investigators eat, the host watches them closely, waiting.
- Every time an investigator lifts a fork or takes a bite, the host breathes in deeply.
- After a few minutes, they ask:

“Do you feel it yet?”

How to Escape:

- If the investigators refuse to eat, the host’s expression never changes—but their grip tightens on the knife beside their plate.
- If they eat and fail a CON check, they feel a sudden itch in their throat—was something in the food?

3. The Mass Awakening (*High Threat, No Escape Without Violence*)

Location: The town square, the sheriff's office, or any large public space.

- The investigators do something to break the illusion of normalcy. They expose an infected, kill one of them, or say something they shouldn't have.
- The response is immediate.
- Every single infected in the area inhales sharply, as one.
- Then, they all turn, in perfect unison, and smile.
- The crowd moves toward the investigators—not rushing, not lunging—just walking, slowly, without hesitation.
- The exits are cut off.
- And somewhere in the back of the crowd, a deep, gurgling voice whispers through dozens of throats at once:

“You've been breathing our air this whole time. It's already inside you.”

How to Escape:

- Immediate combat will break the illusion completely—the infected will turn fast, violent, and merciless.
- If the investigators hold their ground but do not act aggressively, the infected will encircle them, waiting for them to surrender.
- A successful DEX or Stealth check may allow them to slip into a side alley or building before the circle fully forms.

The Infected as a Living Trap

The infected are not a traditional enemy. They are a walking, talking, breathing nightmare.

They do not attack immediately.

They do not chase.

They simply exist, in greater numbers, closing in from all sides.

Until there is nowhere left to run.

“It's okay. We all breathe together.”

Sanity Effects of the Infected

- Realizing someone is infected but cannot stop themselves from obeying: 1d4 SAN loss.
- Watching someone transition from free will to total submission: 1d6 SAN loss.
- Hearing someone speak—but their mouth doesn't move: 1d8 SAN loss.
- Seeing an entire crowd turn in unison and watch you: 1d10 SAN loss.

Final Note

The infected are not mindless killers.

They are something much worse.

They are people.

They know what's happening to them.

And they can't stop it.

And soon, neither will the investigators.

2. Corporate Enforcers – The Armed Hand of the Hive

Overview: Silent Killers in the Service of Something Else

The corporate enforcers of Dunwich Biopharma are not your standard hired security. They are not just guards.

They are vectors of infection.

Some are fully compromised, already part of the hive mind, moving with eerie synchronization and an unnatural calm. Others are still themselves—barely—fighting against the whispers in their heads, struggling to remain in control as their own hands betray them.

But whether consciously or unconsciously, all of them are working toward one goal:

To protect the Broodfather.

To ensure the infection spreads.

To eliminate anyone who might interfere.

And they never breathe too hard.

Because if they do, you might see the worms writhing behind their teeth.

Composition of the Enforcers: Who They Are

The Three Types of Enforcers

1. The "Clean" Operatives (Still Human, But Compromised)

- They still believe they are working for Dunwich Biopharma, unaware of the full horror.
- They think they are protecting trade secrets, dealing with corporate espionage, or silencing whistleblowers.
- However, they have all been exposed to Respira.
- Some have begun hearing whispers, feeling their limbs move slightly before they intend to.
- They are trained professionals, but a successful Psychology roll can reveal their growing paranoia.

Clues to Their Infection:

- They pause slightly before responding, as if listening to something.
- Their movements are deliberate but slightly off—like they are trying too hard to act normal.
- If they inhale sharply, their eyes momentarily fill with terror.

2. The Controlled (Fully Infected, Maintaining the Illusion)

- These enforcers still act human. They joke, they smoke cigarettes, they pretend to be normal.
- But their minds are already gone.
- They will converse with investigators in a way that seems perfectly normal—until something feels off.
- They will not react to pain. They do not sweat, do not flinch, do not hesitate.
- When the time comes, they will move in eerie synchronization and attack without warning.

Clues to Their Infection:

- They all breathe at the same time.
- They blink at the same time.

If killed, worms begin pouring from their nose and mouth, writhing toward the nearest living host.

3. The Hollow (Post-Human, Purely Hostile)

- These are the enforcers who fought too hard and lost.
- They are no longer pretending to be human. Their flesh is beginning to split, revealing twitching parasites beneath.
- Their faces may still form words, but it is not them speaking anymore.
- Their bodies have been repurposed—flesh stretched unnaturally, bones contorted, movement jerky and insect-like.
- They do not stop moving. Ever.

Clues to Their Infection:

- They move before they think.
- If they open their mouth, something writhes inside.
- They can no longer close their eyes.

How the Enforcers Operate: Their Methods

The corporate enforcers do not simply attack head-on. They have resources, strategy, and a purpose.

1. Gaslighting & Psychological Warfare

Before resorting to violence, Dunwich Biopharma wants to keep things quiet.

The enforcers will discredit the investigators, manipulate them, make them doubt reality.

They may:

- Approach the investigators casually, insisting that they're confused, exhausted, paranoid.
- Produce falsified reports claiming that Respira is perfectly safe—even offering scientific papers that make it look legitimate.
- Send in “concerned citizens” (actually infected operatives) to insist that the investigators are “dangerous outsiders” and should be removed from town.

Example Encounter: The Friendly Warning

- A well-dressed enforcer meets the investigators at a diner.
- They sit down, order coffee, and smile.
- *"You've been asking a lot of questions. That's dangerous in a place like this."*
- They slide a file across the table, full of completely fabricated but highly detailed information proving that the investigators are mentally unstable.
- They laugh, offer a handshake, and say: *"You're going to wake up one morning and wonder if any of this was real. Take our advice. Go home."*

If the investigators refuse:

- The enforcer sighs.
- Everyone else in the diner stops eating.
- Every head turns toward the investigators.
- *"You really should have taken our advice."*

2. Silent Takedowns & Containment

If psychological warfare fails, the enforcers will attempt to eliminate the investigators quietly.

Ambush Tactics

- Dunwich Biopharma owns the town. The enforcers have full access to buildings, alleys, and back roads.
- They will not strike in public—instead, they wait for the perfect opportunity.
- If the investigators sleep in a hotel or safe house, one of them will wake up just in time to see a shadow moving toward them—silent, surgical blade in hand.

Example Encounter: The Vanishing

- The investigators stay at a motel.
- One of them wakes up, alone.
- Their partner is missing—their bed still warm.
- The only clue?
 - The room door is still locked from the inside.
 - The bathroom mirror is missing their reflection.
 - The words "DON'T BREATHE" are scrawled onto the ceiling.

3. The Final Strike: Full Elimination

If all else fails, the enforcers will escalate to open conflict.

- They arrive in black SUVs, stepping out in perfect synchronization.
- Gas-masked operatives wield aerosolized Respira, trying to force the investigators into exposure.
- If one of them gets grabbed, they will be forcibly restrained—and held down as a mask is pressed over their face.

Example Encounter: The Final Warning

- An enforcer captures one of the investigators.
- The next morning, the others wake up to find their missing companion sitting in a chair in their hotel room.
- They are completely unharmed.
- They smile.

“I see it now. It’s okay. Just breathe.”

If the investigators check their companion’s eyes, they see the truth.

They are still in there.

And they are screaming.

The Corporate Enforcers as a Nightmare in Human Form

- They are not just guards.
- They are already lost.
- They do not want to kill you.
- They want you to join them.
-

Sanity Effects of the Enforcers

- Watching an enforcer fight their own body before losing control: 1d6 SAN loss.
- Seeing an enforcer speak with their mouth closed: 1d8 SAN loss.
- Realizing an enforcer has been following you for hours—without blinking: 1d10 SAN loss.
- Watching a captured friend smile and say, “It’s okay now. I understand.” 1d10+2 SAN loss.

Final Note: They Are Waiting.

The enforcers are not just obstacles.

They are a warning.

They were once just like the investigators.

And soon, they will be again.

“You don’t have to fight. Just breathe.”

3. The Broodfather (Final Confrontation) – The Heart of the Hive

Overview: Facing the Source of the Infection

The Broodfather is not just a creature. It is an event. A phenomenon. A manifestation of something older than human memory.

It is not of this world, nor bound by its rules.

The investigators' journey has led them to this final confrontation—deep beneath Dunwich Biopharma, in the Nest, a place that is no longer a laboratory but a living thing.

The air is thick, humid, wrong. The walls pulse with slow, rhythmic movement.

The investigators are not alone here.

And then, it speaks. *“I have been waiting for you.”*

The Approach: Entering the Nest

The Broodfather's lair is not just a physical space—it is a psychological battleground. The investigators must descend through the sub-basement of Dunwich Biopharma into a place that has been twisted by its presence.

1. The Descent

- The elevator is broken. The only way down is through a rusted service stairwell that leads into complete darkness.
- The air gets warmer. Wetter. Harder to breathe.
- A rhythmic sound echoes from below. It is not mechanical. It is breathing.
- The walls shift under their touch. The concrete is gone. It has been replaced by something organic.

Psychological Effects of the Descent

- The investigators begin hearing whispers—not spoken aloud, but inside their heads.
- They feel their own heartbeats slowing, syncing with something else.
- They may see their reflections move independently in any metallic surfaces.

2. The Threshold: Entering the Chamber

At the bottom of the stairwell, the investigators find a vast, cavernous space. It was once a containment chamber, but it has been transformed.

- The walls are no longer walls. They are pulsing masses of flesh, twitching with each breath the Broodfather takes.
- Bioluminescent tendrils dangle from the ceiling, swaying like inverted lungs.
- The ground is slick, pulsing with each step.
- There is no door. There is only an open, circular maw, leading into the heart of the hive.

If the investigators hesitate, they will hear their own voices calling to them from inside.

“Come. Come closer. You are already here.”

The Broodfather Revealed: Its Presence, Its Horror

At the center of the chamber hangs the Broodfather, suspended by a network of thick, pulsating tendrils that stretch into the walls, floor, and ceiling. It is not a single organism, but a mass of writhing, translucent flesh, shifting and reshaping constantly.

Its Appearance: What Should Not Be Seen

- Its form is incomprehensible, flickering between corporeal and ethereal.
- Its surface is translucent, revealing writhing, coiled parasites beneath its flesh.
- It has no mouth, yet it speaks.
- It has no eyes, yet it sees.
- The air around it distorts, as if it exists between dimensions.

When the investigators look directly at it, they feel their thoughts slipping.

“I am not separate from you. You are part of me. You always have been.”

The Broodfather's Influence: The Psychological Battle

- The closer the investigators get, the more their bodies betray them.
- Their muscles twitch involuntarily.
- Their breathing slows, syncing with the hive.
- Their own voices begin whispering doubts.
- One investigator may suddenly speak, but not in their own voice.

The Battle: A Fight Against a Living Mind

The Broodfather is not a traditional enemy. It does not fight with claws or teeth. It fights with control. With inevitability.

Phase 1: The Hive's Defense

- The chamber shifts around them, reshaping itself.
- The walls close in, pulsing, breathing.
- From the shadows, malformed creatures emerge. These are people—or what is left of them.
- They attack without hesitation, but their eyes beg for release.

Clues to Defeating Them:

- The infected do not react to pain—but they hesitate when they see reflections of themselves.
- If an investigator holds up a mirror or reflective object, the infected may freeze, whispering in fear.

Phase 2: The Broodfather's Whisper

The Broodfather does not move. It does not need to.

Instead, it reaches into the minds of the investigators.

- Each investigator suddenly hears a loved one's voice.
- They see visions of home, of safety, of warmth.
- They feel a powerful urge to kneel, to surrender, to let go.
- If they fail a SAN check, they will lower their weapons... and step closer.

"Why fight? The air is already inside you. You belong here."

Clues to Breaking Its Influence:

- The Broodfather's whispers cannot lie—but they can twist the truth.
- If an investigator concentrates on a single memory, a single moment of defiance, they can resist.

Phase 3: The Flesh Awakens

When the investigators resist, the Broodfather changes.

- The pulsing mass above them shudders, convulses.
- Tendrils erupt from the walls, reaching for them.
- The hive mind screams—a sound that isn't heard, but felt.

The Final Choice: Three Ways to End It

1. Destroy the Broodfather's Core (*Violent Resolution*)

- Hidden beneath layers of flesh and parasites is a pulsating, black mass.
- If the investigators strike it, the Broodfather howls in rage, convulsing violently.
- The chamber begins to collapse, the infected screaming as their minds are severed.
- The investigators have minutes to escape before the entire lair is buried.

2. Sever the Hive's Connection (*Psychological Resolution*)

- The investigators realize the Broodfather is not controlling them—it is being fed by their fear, their uncertainty.
- If they reject the whispers, focus their minds, and refuse to be controlled, the Broodfather begins to wither.
- The infected collapse around them, freed but catatonic.
- The Broodfather fades, shrieking in confusion, unable to exist without a connection to the hive.

3. Join the Hive (*Tragic Ending*)

- o If an investigator succumbs to the whispers, they stop fighting.
- o They walk forward, step into the mass, and vanish.
- o The others watch in horror as their friend turns, their face calm, their eyes filled with silent terror.
- o The remaining investigators flee, knowing that they have left someone behind.

The Aftermath: What Comes Next?

If the investigators destroy the Broodfather, the infection dies with it.

But if they failed, if even one investigator was lost, the infection will spread again.

And someday, somewhere, the Broodfather will return.

Because it is not just a creature.

It is an idea, a breath, a whisper in the dark.

And it is already inside you.

Final Note: The Horror of the Broodfather

- It does not chase you. It waits for you.
- It does not attack. It makes you surrender.
- It does not kill you. It makes you part of it.

Because this is not a battle.

It is assimilation.

"You are breathing it in right now. And soon, you will understand."

Mythos Influence & Sanity Loss

- Witnessing an infected person struggle to communicate: 1d4 Sanity Loss
- Realizing a loved one is infected: 1d6 Sanity Loss
- Encountering The Broodfather: 1d8+2 Sanity Loss
- Being partially infected but resisting: 1d10 Sanity Loss
- Hearing your own name whispered from the darkness: 1d4 Sanity Loss

Conclusion: The Silent End or the Final Breath?

The investigators have seen the truth. They have walked the breathing halls of Dunwich Biopharma, watched as the town of Ashwood Falls collapsed into silence, and stood before the Broodfather itself, feeling its presence seep into their minds.

But what happens now?

Did they stop the infection, or did they simply delay the inevitable?

Final Resolutions: The Paths That Remain

The fate of the world—and the investigators—depends on their choices. The story does not end when they leave the Nest. The infection does not simply vanish. It lingers, in breath, in whispers, in the spaces between thoughts.

There are no perfect victories. Only choices.

1. The Infection Dies Here... Or Does It? (*Victory, But At What Cost?*)

If the investigators destroyed the Broodfather, the Nest collapses in on itself, crushing the writhing mass of parasites beneath tons of concrete and flesh. The town of Ashwood Falls slowly unravels, its people collapsing into catatonia, suddenly freed from the hive mind.

But the aftermath is grim:

- The survivors are left broken. Those infected but still aware may never recover.
- The investigators have been exposed. They will always wonder if something still lingers inside them.
- Dunwich Biopharma is still out there. The people funding the company do not die so easily. They will find another way.

And in their final moments in Ashwood Falls, as they stand among the wreckage, as they take one last deep breath of clean air, they may hear something very faintly, very distantly, in the back of their minds...

"...we are not gone."

2. The Spread Is Contained, But Not Stopped (*Pyrrhic Victory, The Infection Will Return*)

If the investigators exposed Dunwich Biopharma, shut down production, but did not destroy the Broodfather, then the infection slows but never truly ends.

- The company burns all evidence, silencing any remaining witnesses.
- The media covers it up, twisting the events into a localized health crisis.
- The investigators are discredited, hunted, or disappear.
- Respira will reappear. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But it will come back, under another name, in another town.

And one day, the investigators may wake up with a dry throat, reach for a bottle of nasal spray... and hesitate.

They will never be sure if the infection is truly gone.

Because it isn't.

3. The Investigators Escape... But the Infection Spreads (*Doomed Ending, The World is Already Lost*)

Some threats are too big to fight. If the investigators choose to run, to survive at any cost, to leave Ashwood Falls behind and warn the world, they may think they've won.

But the truth is much worse.

- Respira is already out there. Other towns. Other cities. Other victims.
- The Broodfather is still alive. Still growing. Still waiting.
- The investigators may already be infected.

Maybe weeks later, one of them pauses mid-sentence, as if hearing something.

Maybe one of them catches their reflection blinking just a second too late.

Maybe one of them wakes up in the middle of the night, staring at the ceiling, whispering words they do not understand.

And then, one morning, one of them will wake up... And they will smile.

Because it never needed to chase them. They were already breathing it in.

4. One of Them Has Joined the Hive (*Personal Horror, The Infection Wins Through Them*)

If one of the investigators succumbed to the whispers, if one of them was taken, then the infection has won, no matter what.

- Maybe they were left behind in the Nest, their body now just another voice in the hive mind.
- Maybe they walked away with the others, pretending to still be themselves, hiding what they have become.
- Maybe they don't even realize they have changed. Not yet.

But one day, they will hear it.

One day, they will understand.

And when they do, they will call the others.

They will smile, their eyes full of silent, endless terror.

And they will say: *"You don't have to fight anymore. Just breathe."*

And the cycle begins again as they become the new Broodfather.

Final Thoughts: What Remains of the Investigators?

No matter what path they chose, **the investigators are never the same.**

- **They will always doubt reality.**
- **They will always hesitate before inhaling too deeply.**
- **They will always wonder if they are still themselves.**

Because even if they escaped, even if they won...

They can never be sure.

Was that a normal breath?

Or was it the first breath of something else?

Sanity Loss: The Final Reckoning

The final confrontation leaves **permanent scars** on the investigators' minds. The following SAN losses apply depending on how the story ends:

- Destroying the Broodfather but suffering exposure: 1d10 SAN loss (permanently haunted by the infection's memory).
- Escaping while the infection spreads: 1d12 SAN loss (knowing they doomed the world).
- Watching a friend succumb to the hive mind: 1d10+2 SAN loss (the worst kind of helplessness).
- Hearing the whispers again, weeks later: 1d6 SAN loss (realizing it may not be over).
- Realizing they have already changed: Immediate 1d20 SAN loss (their last moment of free thought).

The Last Breath: The Horror of Inevitability

This is not a horror story about a monster to be slain.

This is not a battle to be won.

This is not a nightmare that ends when the sun rises.

This is a disease. A whisper. A breath in the dark.

And now, it is part of them.

"It was never about stopping it. It was about how long you could hold out before you became part of it."

Because in the end, the Broodfather was never hunting them.

It was simply waiting.

And now, it is inside them, too.

Closing Question for the Investigators:

If the investigators survived, weeks or months later, they may wake up to a realization.

They do not remember falling asleep.

They do not remember dreaming.

They feel completely calm.

And then, as they look in the mirror, they will ask themselves the question they have dreaded since Ashwood Falls:

"Am I still me?"

And somewhere, in the back of their mind, a voice they do not recognize will whisper:

"Not anymore."

THE END.

FINAL HORROR: WHAT LINGERS AFTER THE GAME?

Even if the investigators destroy the Broodfather, something remains.

- Infected characters will sometimes find themselves humming a tune they do not recognize.
- They will sometimes wake up standing in front of a mirror.
- They will sometimes hear breathing when no one else is there.
- They will always wonder if they are still themselves.

Because this was never a fight.

It was never a choice.

It was always waiting for them to understand.

"You are already part of me."

This Title is also available at my website and Itch.io if you want a nice and neat pdf of it:

<https://lunitarproductions.com/my-ttrpg-modules/>

<https://lunitar.itch.io/the-silent-cure>

CORPORATE ENFORCERS (SILENT GUARDS OF DUNWICH BIOPHARMA)

The Enforcers of the Hive, Some Unaware of Their Fate

STR	CON	DEX	INT	POW	SIZ
65	70	60	55	40	55
APP	EDU	SAN	HP	MOV	
50	55	0-35	12	9	

COMBAT

Pistol (.38 Revolver): 350%, 1d10 damage

Tactical Baton (Bludgeon): 55%, 1d6+1 damage

Chokehold (Grapple): 50%, STR vs. STR roll, suffocates target in 3 rounds

Respira Aerosol Deployment: A successful ranged attack (50%) forces a target to inhale Stage 1 Infection (Hard CON roll to resist).

ABILITIES & EFFECTS

You Are Outnumbered: Enforcers never act alone. A lone enforcer will stall for time while others circle in unseen.

You Don't Have to Fight: Enforcers will always try to manipulate, coerce, or convince investigators to surrender before resorting to violence.

The Last Breath Is the Deepest: If an enforcer is mortally wounded, they will inhale sharply before dying—releasing a final cloud of spores. Any investigator within 5 feet must make a CON roll or advance one stage in infection.



THE HOLLOW (THOSE WHO LOST THEMSELVES COMPLETELY)

The Bodies Are Human, But The Minds Are Not

STR	CON	DEX	INT	POW	SIZ
80	80	70	20	10	60
APP	EDU	SAN	HP	MOV	
20	20	0	15	10	

COMBAT

Unnatural Speed: The Hollow may act twice per round.

Clawing Grasp: 60%, 1d6+1 damage (STR vs. STR to resist being held down).

Spinal Stab: 50%, 1d8 damage, bypasses armor.

ABILITIES & EFFECTS

They Don't Stop Moving: If reduced to 0 HP, The Hollow keeps attacking for 1d3 rounds before collapsing.

They Can't Close Their Eyes: Looking into their staring, glassy eyes requires a SAN check (1/1d4 SAN loss).

The Voice Is Still In There: A Hollow will sometimes speak in its original voice—crying, begging, pleading for help—even as it attacks.



THE BROODFATHER (THE END OF INDIVIDUALITY, THE BEGINNING OF THE WHOLE)

It Does Not Fight. It Waits for You to Surrender.

STR	CON	DEX	INT	POW	SIZ
0	100	0	90	90	200
APP	EDU	SAN	HP	MOV	
10	90	0	50	0	

COMBAT

The Broodfather does not move. It does not strike. It does not chase. It does not have to.

Instead, it uses:

Whispered Submission: Forces a POW vs. POW contest. If the investigator loses, they freeze in place for 1d4 rounds, hearing only the words: “Breathe. Just breathe.”

Tendrils of the Hive: The walls come alive, attacking with +40% on all grappling checks.

Loss of Self: Each round an investigator is in the Broodfather’s presence, they must make a Hard SAN check (1d10+2 SAN loss if failed).

ABILITIES & EFFECTS

You Were Already Here: The Broodfather warps reality in its chamber. Investigators may experience visions, false memories, and doppelgängers of themselves.

If You Dream, You Belong to Me: Any investigator who loses 16 or more SAN in its presence must make a final roll: If they fail, they willingly step forward—joining the hive forever.

You Have Already Breathed Me In: Every turn, if an investigator has been exposed to Respira for more than three days and fails the CON roll, they will hear:

“You were never free. You never had a choice.”

And then, they will inhale deeply and go still.



THE INFECTED TOWNSFOLK (THOSE WHO SMILE BUT NEVER BLINK)

The Silent Prisoners of Their Own Bodies

STR	CON	DEX	INT	POW	SIZ
45	60	45	60	20	50
APP	EDU	SAN	HP	MOV	
55	50	0	10	8	

COMBAT

Unarmed Attack (Clawing or Grappling) 35%, 1d4 damage

Strange Synchronization If three or more infected attack the same target, they move with perfect unity, giving +10% to their attack rolls.

Resistance is Futile: This creature gains advantage on any check involving putting things in its nose.

ABILITIES & EFFECTS

We All Breathe Together: If an infected is injured but not killed, they will stop, turn, and whisper in unison:

“It doesn’t hurt anymore.”

Their bodies continue to function, even as bones break or flesh is torn.

The Eyes Show the Truth: A Psychology roll will reveal pure terror behind their eyes, trapped inside their own bodies.

You’ve Already Been Breathing It In: If an investigator fights in close quarters with an infected for more than 3 rounds, they must make a Hard CON roll or suffer Stage 1 infection.

IN THE NEWS

The world of tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs) has been abuzz with exciting developments in the past month. From major releases and crowdfunding projects to critical campaign conclusions, here's a look at what's shaping the industry.

Daggerheart Set for May 20 Release

Fans of role-playing games can mark their calendars for May 20, 2025, as *Daggerheart*, the highly anticipated TTRPG from Critical Role's publishing arm, Darrington Press, is set to launch. Designed to offer a fresh take on fantasy role-playing with an emphasis on narrative-driven mechanics and accessibility, *Daggerheart* aims to provide a new experience for both longtime players and newcomers. With its innovative dice system and player-driven storytelling, the game is expected to be a strong competitor to *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Pathfinder*.

Fallout TTRPG Bundle Offers an Immersive Post-Apocalyptic Experience

Humble Bundle is currently offering an expansive package for *Fallout: The Roleplaying Game*, published by Modiphius. For just \$18, players can access 17 digital products, including the *Winter of Atom* campaign, which takes players to post-apocalyptic Boston. This bundle, available until March 13, is compatible with *Alchemy's* RPG platform, making it easier for fans to engage with the setting in an interactive, digital format.

Gundam Assemble: A New Miniatures Game in the Works

Bandai Spirits has announced *Gundam Assemble*, an upcoming tabletop miniatures game featuring iconic mechs from the *Gundam* franchise. The game emphasizes strategic unit placement and objective-based missions, combining classic wargaming elements with the detailed model kits Bandai is known for. While no official release date has been set, the announcement has generated significant excitement among both miniature wargaming and *Gundam* fans.

IN THE NEWS

Critical Role Concludes Third Campaign, Leaving Fans Eager for More

The third campaign of *Critical Role* recently concluded, marking the end of another epic adventure for the beloved actual-play series. This campaign showcased the group's signature blend of deep roleplay, intense combat, and intricate world-building. The finale has sparked discussion about the future of *Critical Role* and its influence on the broader TTRPG community. With the campaign wrapped up, fans eagerly await news of what's next for Matthew Mercer and his cast of players.

Phase Shift Games Introduces "Widget's Workshop"

Phase Shift Games has announced *Widget's Workshop*, the latest installment in its innovative "drop-style" game series. Scheduled to launch on BackerKit's crowdfunding platform on March 13, *Widget's Workshop* aims to deliver a unique blend of strategy, puzzle-solving, and engaging mechanics. Phase Shift Games is known for its creative approach to game design, and this latest project is expected to continue that trend.

Dungeons & Dragons 2024 Monster Manual Release Announced

Wizards of the Coast has officially announced the release of the updated *Monster Manual* for Dungeons & Dragons, scheduled to launch in 2024. This new edition promises revamped creature stat blocks, expanded lore, and new terrifying foes for Dungeon Masters to challenge their players with. Featuring updated artwork and enhanced usability, the *Monster Manual* aims to bring fresh inspiration to campaigns of all levels. This marks another major step in the evolution of 5th Edition, reflecting the game's ongoing growth and refinement.

The past month has proven that the TTRPG landscape is more vibrant than ever. With groundbreaking new releases, exciting crowdfunding projects, and major campaign milestones, 2025 is shaping up to be an incredible year for tabletop gaming.

The Embervein Forge



Tucked into the heart of the city, where the air is thick with the scent of molten metal and burning coal, lies *The Embervein Forge*—a blacksmith's sanctuary of fire, craftsmanship, and whispered legends. From the moment one approaches, the rhythmic clang of hammer on steel rings through the streets, drawing adventurers, warriors, and the curious alike.

The two-story stone workshop is marked by streaks of emberstone, veins of glowing ore that pulse with heat even in the dead of winter. Beneath its awning, a display of finely crafted weapons and armor glints in the flickering forge-light, while inside, an enormous enchanted crucible burns blue-white, allowing the creation of weapons both mundane and magical.

The walls are lined with racks of masterfully crafted blades, engraved shields, and mysterious blueprints, hinting at long-lost techniques. A spiral staircase leads to the blacksmith's private quarters, rumored to contain tomes filled with forbidden smithing knowledge.

The Master of the Forge, Galdric "The Embervein" Thorne, a burly, soot-streaked craftsman with an ember-like glow in one eye, is a legend in his own right. Once a forger of weapons for kings and warlords, he now works only for those he deems worthy. His apprentices, Anira Duskbell, a tiefling enchantress, and Hagan Oakfist, a half-orc with dreams of glory, keep the shop running while crafting their own legacies.

Treasures of the Forge

- **Inferno Brand Sword (450 gp)** – A longsword that briefly ignites with fire when swung.
- **Runed Horseshoes (200 gp per set)** – Grants +10 ft movement speed to mounts.
- **Blackened Warhammer of Thunder (1,200 gp)** – A hammer crackling with latent thunder energy.

Custom Engraving & Enchantments – Special inscriptions and runes, some with minor magical effects.

Rumors & Secrets

The Embervein Forge is more than a shop—it's a vault of hidden knowledge. Some say Galdric possesses blueprints for a legendary weapon lost to time. Others whisper of Anira's secret project, a weapon forged for a war yet to come. And then there's the matter of the *Whispering Steel*—metal that carries the voices of the damned.

For adventurers seeking steel and stories, *The Embervein Forge* is a place where weapons are born, legends are made, and secrets wait to be uncovered.

THIS MONTH'S YOUTUBE SPOTLIGHT



BOB WORLD BUILDER

<https://www.youtube.com/BobWorldBuilder>

The Dungeon Master's Secret Weapon

Tabletop role-playing games have seen an unprecedented surge in popularity, with Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) leading the charge. However, as the game continues to evolve, so too does the wealth of content designed to support both novice and experienced players alike. Among the digital sages guiding this growing community, Bob World Builder stands as a beacon of insight, creativity, and accessibility.

Bob World Builder, a YouTube channel dedicated to enhancing the TTRPG experience, has gained a dedicated following through its informative and engaging content. Whether you're a Dungeon Master crafting your next unforgettable campaign or a player seeking to refine your role-playing skills, Bob offers something for everyone.

Bob World Builder is not just another rules explainer—it's a channel focused on improving gameplay in meaningful ways. A stand-out feature is the channel's commitment to exploring alternative mechanics, house rules, and lesser-known role-playing systems.

One of the most compelling videos, "12 Fun Initiative Methods for D&D, DCC & More!", explores alternative ways to handle initiative—one of the more debated mechanics in tabletop RPGs. By offering creative and engaging solutions, Bob encourages DMs to think outside the standard turn order, adding a fresh dynamic to combat encounters.

For those looking to expand their TTRPG repertoire beyond D&D, the video "I Tried 15 RPGs to Save YOU Time! (and for Fun)" provides a thorough exploration of different systems. Instead of sticking solely to the mainstream, Bob dives into various role-playing games, evaluating their mechanics and storytelling potential. This review-style content is invaluable for players seeking to branch out from traditional fantasy settings.

Another standout video, "Make Any Monster EXCITING in D&D, DCC, & More!", offers strategies for breathing new life into creatures that have become routine encounters. By integrating narrative tension and unexpected twists, Bob provides Dungeon Masters with the tools to transform even the most mundane adversary into a memorable challenge.

One of the strengths of Bob World Builder is its accessible and welcoming presentation. Bob's teaching style is clear, concise, and friendly, making even the most complex game mechanics easy to grasp. His passion for storytelling and game design is evident in every video, and his ability to distill game theory into digestible, engaging content is a key reason for the channel's success.

Beyond videos, Bob engages actively with his audience through community posts, discussions, and updates. This interactive approach fosters a sense of camaraderie, allowing viewers to feel like active participants in the ever-expanding world of tabletop gaming.

In a crowded landscape of gaming content, Bob World Builder stands out by focusing on what truly matters—enhancing the RPG experience. Whether through insightful rule adaptations, reviews of lesser-known games, or strategies to make encounters more thrilling, Bob provides an essential resource for players and Dungeon Masters alike.

For those looking to deepen their understanding of TTRPGs, innovate their game mechanics, or simply enjoy high-quality content that celebrates the magic of role-playing games, Bob World Builder is an absolute must-watch.

Final Rating: 5/5 Fireballs

THIS MONTHS PODCASTS



SPOTLIGHT

<https://tabletopweekly.com/>

Rolling the Dice on Tabletop News: A Look at Tabletop Weekly By Andrew Babcock

"Tabletop Weekly" is a podcast produced by Solarian Games, offering a weekly roundup of tabletop gaming news, reviews, and expert discussions. Whether you're a dedicated role-playing game (RPG) fan, a strategy board game enthusiast, or someone looking for recommendations on the latest releases, this podcast provides insightful content with engaging commentary from industry professionals and passionate hosts.

Solarian Games is an established name in the tabletop gaming community, known for its commitment to promoting innovative and immersive gaming experiences. The hosts of "Tabletop Weekly"—a knowledgeable team of designers, reviewers, and industry insiders—bring a wealth of experience to every discussion. Their combined backgrounds in game development, RPG storytelling, and competitive play allow them to offer unique perspectives on all aspects of the hobby.

"Tabletop Weekly" is an invaluable resource for gamers, featuring a diverse range of content, including:

- **Industry News:** Updates on upcoming releases, major expansions, crowdfunding projects, and the latest trends in tabletop gaming.
- **Game Reviews:** In-depth analysis of board games, RPGs, and card games, offering honest evaluations and recommendations.
- **Expert Interviews:** Conversations with game designers, publishers, and notable figures in the gaming industry, providing behind-the-scenes insights.
- **Gameplay Mechanics Deep Dives:** Discussions on game design, storytelling techniques, and strategies for enhancing the player experience.

Community Spotlights: Showcasing creative homebrew content, player-generated expansions, and unique approaches to tabletop gaming.

For anyone passionate about tabletop gaming, "Tabletop Weekly" serves as a one-stop source for insightful discussions and entertaining content. The hosts' enthusiasm is infectious, and their ability to explain complex game mechanics in an engaging and accessible way makes the podcast a valuable listen for both beginners and seasoned players alike.

One of the standout features of "Tabletop Weekly" is its deep dive into world-building, storytelling, and character development—key aspects that define immersive tabletop RPG experiences. Whether you're a game master seeking inspiration or a player looking to refine your approach, there's always something to learn from each episode.

"Tabletop Weekly" is a must-listen podcast for anyone invested in the world of tabletop gaming. With its expert interviews, industry insights, and engaging reviews, the show consistently delivers high-quality content that enriches the gaming community. Whether you're searching for your next great board game, staying informed on gaming trends, or simply enjoying in-depth conversations about the hobby, this podcast has something for everyone.

For more information, visit their official website or tune in on your favorite podcast platform.

LEGENDARY LOOT

Frostbite Bow: Relic of the North

A weapon forged from the heartwood of the *Everfrost Yew* and strung with the sinew of an ice drake, the *Frostbite Bow* is a relic of winter's wrath. Created by the frost elves, it was wielded by *Sylvara Icewhisper* to repel fire giants threatening the Northern Glaciers. In a climactic battle, she unleashed its power, sealing the pass with an unbreakable *Wall of Ice* and vanishing into legend.

Powers and Abilities

- **Chilling Arrows:** Deals an extra 1d10 cold damage, slowing enemies.
- **Frozen Impact:** On a critical hit, the target's speed drops to 0 until the wielder's next turn.



Wall of Ice: Once per long rest, summons a 20-foot-radius barrier of ice for battlefield control.

Roleplaying & Narrative Hooks

More than just a weapon, the *Frostbite Bow* changes its wielder, instilling a love for the cold and a resistance to heat. It refuses to be wielded by those lacking patience and discipline, making it an ideal relic for thoughtful warriors and archers.

- **The Frozen Hunter:** A legendary archer hunts criminals in the tundra using the *Frostbite Bow*.
- **Defender of the Wilds:** Druids seek the bow to protect a sacred grove from destruction.
- **The Winter's Curse:** A wielder slowly transforms as frost clings to their skin and breath.

The Icy Fortress: An enemy general seals a fortress with a *Wall of Ice*; the party must break through.

Game Master Tips

The *Frostbite Bow* rewards strategic play, encouraging movement control and precision. Prolonged use might lead to unintended effects—dreams of frozen wastelands or a creeping numbness. Whether a boon or a curse, its power awaits only the worthy.

Will your heroes master the bow's icy might, or will they be consumed by its chilling grip?

MARCH CONS

Event Name	Date	City	State
Cobourg ComiCon 2025	March 1, 2025	Cobourg	ON, Canada
Marietta the Gathering 2025	March 1, 2025	Marietta	GA
Panama City Comics Mini Con 2025	March 1, 2025	Panama City	FL
StingrayCon 2025	March 1, 2025	Jacksonville	FL
WreckCon 2025	March 1, 2025	Atlanta	GA
Bomb City Con 2025	March 1-2, 2025	Amarillo	TX
Brick Fest Live Novi, Michigan 2025	March 1-2, 2025	Novi	MI
Collect-A-Con Los Angeles 2025	March 1-2, 2025	Los Angeles	CA
Evansville Horror Con 2025	March 1-2, 2025	Evansville	IN
Happy Valley Comic & Collectibles Convention 2025	March 1-2, 2025	State College	PA
QuadCon Davenport 2025	March 1-2, 2025	Davenport	IA
Zolocon 2025	March 1-2, 2025	King of Prussia	PA
Furcamp 2025	March 1-4, 2025	Ribeirão Grande	SP, Brazil
Belleville ComiCon 2025	March 2, 2025	Belleville	ON, Canada
Buckeye Comic-Con 2025	March 2, 2025	Grove City	OH
SW-FloridaCon 2025	March 2, 2025	Fort Myers	FL
Dark Force Fest 2025	March 2, 2025	Parsippany-Troy Hills	NJ
JoCo Cruise 2025	March 2-9, 2025	Departing from	Fort Lauderdale, FL
Wisconsin Esports Summit 2025	March 2-3, 2025	Milwaukee	WI
VancouFur 2025	March 5-8, 2025	Richmond	BC, Canada
Anime Milwaukee 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Milwaukee	WI
Banzaicon 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Columbia	SC
Bewhiskered 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Durham	NC
Fur the 'More 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Herndon	VA
MinamiCon 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Southampton	UK
NorthEast ComicCon & Collectibles Extravaganza 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Boxborough	MA
SCG Con Charlotte 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Charlotte	NC
TFcon Los Angeles 2025	March 6-8, 2025	Burbank	CA
Erie Anime-Fest 2025	March 7, 2025	Erie	PA
Local Play 2025	March 7, 2025	Glen Burnie	MD
Pop Madness 2025	March 7, 2025	San Antonio	TX
ACEcon 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Palm Harbor	FL
Colorado Cosmic Con 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Colorado Springs	CO
Elite_Comics11 Expo 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Queens	NY
FantastiCon Toledo 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Toledo	OH
Louisiana Comic Con 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Lafayette	LA
Midland Mall Comic Con 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Midland	MI
Mississippi Anime Fest 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Jackson	MS
QuadCon Madison 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Madison	WI
Raleigh Toy & Collectible Show 2025	March 7-8, 2025	Raleigh	NC
Collective Con 2025	March 13-15, 2025	Jacksonville	FL
conAgeddon 2025	March 13-15, 2025	Boston	MA
EvilleCon 2025	March 13-15, 2025	Evansville	IN
Hauntlanta 2025	March 13-15, 2025	Buford	GA
Indiana Comic Convention 2025	March 13-15, 2025	Indianapolis	IN
HCLS Fan Fest 2025	March 13-15, 2025	Bay St Louis	MS
GalaxyCon Richmond 2025	March 27-30, 2025	Richmond	VA
Nor'easter 2025	March 27-30, 2025	Springfield	MA
Big River Comic Convention 2025	March 28-29, 2025	Hannibal	MO
90s Con CT 2025	March 28-30, 2025	Hartford	CT

CREATE A BACKSTORY

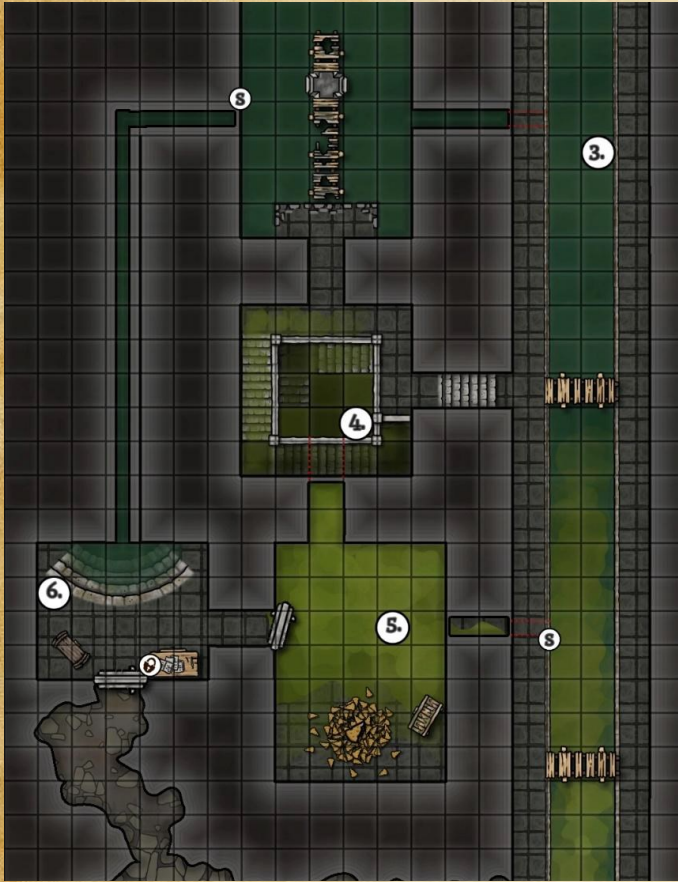


Welcome to a new create a backstory section. Each month we will take a reader submitted piece of artwork and you, the readers will be able to create a backstory or story for the image. Email the story to backstory@lunitarproductions.com or submit it on the Discord server. The stories will be posted on the webpage and discord and you the people will vote on what you thought was the best and we will publish that story in a future issue! The power is in your hands. If you want to submit art, include the artwork you have the rights too and how you want your credit listed such as name and a way to contact you if you want and send it to submissions@lunitarproductions.com.

This month's artwork has been submitted by Joseph Lawn.

MODULE REVIEW OF THE MONTH (D&D)

By Andrew Babcock



Cheese Goblins – A Delightfully Cheesy Dungeon Romp

Dungeons & Dragons modules come in all flavors, from dark and brooding epics to lighthearted romps that revel in their absurdity. *Cheese Goblins*, a Level 2 adventure by Infinite Initiative and Thirsty Tiger Tales, firmly lands in the latter category—delivering a delightful, chaotic, and utterly ridiculous experience. But don't be fooled by its whimsical premise; this adventure packs enough creativity, challenge, and flavorful fun to make it a worthy addition to any DM's toolkit.

The adventure takes place in a bustling trade town suffering from an unusual crisis—its cheese is disappearing. Merchants and tavern owners alike are at their wits' end as an underground colony of mischievous cheese-obsessed goblins plunders their dairy stocks. But these aren't your ordinary goblins. These creatures, armed with teleportation magic and an arsenal of revolting cheese-based attacks, serve a grotesquely gluttonous ruler: the Sewer Mermaid, a once-beautiful siren now bloated from years of gorging on stolen cheese.

The players are thrust into the mystery through a variety of engaging adventure hooks, whether it be tracking the source of mysterious bile puddles around town, investigating the theft of tavern stores, or catching a goblin in the act mid-feast. No matter how they enter the fray, the chase quickly leads them into the labyrinthine sewers below, where the real adventure begins.

The sewer lair is a fantastic showcase of creative dungeon design. From its collapsed bridge chamber requiring careful traversal to its cheese-slicked stairwells, the adventure provides a variety of challenges beyond simple combat. The environment itself is as much an obstacle as the enemies, with players having to balance, leap, and sometimes wade through *questionable* liquids to make their way forward.

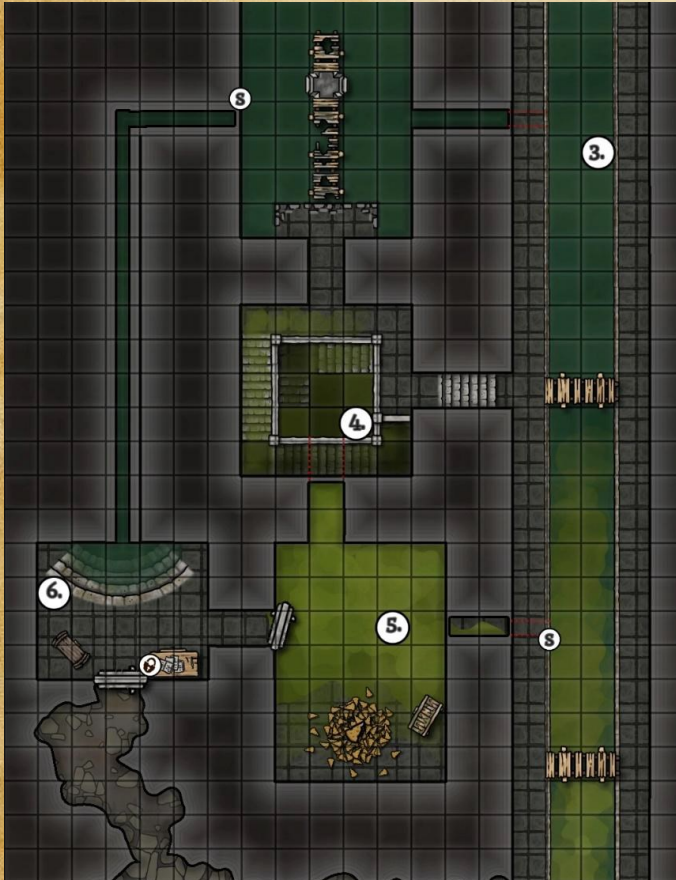
Encounters are well-balanced for Level 2 adventurers, offering a mix of skill-based challenges, sneaky stealth options, and outright battles with the pesky cheese goblins. The Main Sewer serves as a patrol zone, with goblins engaging in antics while the players strategize how best to approach them. However, it all builds up to the Sewer Mermaid's Den, where the players must confront the adventure's final boss—a truly disgusting, cheese-powered abomination.

The Sewer Mermaid is a highlight, both mechanically and narratively. She's slow but tough, wielding a variety of cheese-based magical effects, including summoning minions, belching out noxious dairy clouds, and even devouring cheese to heal herself mid-fight. This makes her a uniquely dynamic enemy, and the battle is bound to leave players with an unforgettable (and stomach-churning) memory.

MODULE REVIEW OF THE MONTH D&D

By Andrew Babcock

Continued-



What makes *Cheese Goblins* truly special is its commitment to theme. The adventure leans fully into its absurd premise, from the *cheese puke* attack of the goblins to the puzzle chest in the treasure vault that requires players to press cheese symbols in the correct order. The humor is ever-present, but it never undermines the mechanics or the challenge, making for an adventure that is both engaging and laugh-out-loud funny.

The Cheese Goblin stat block itself is a work of brilliance, granting these little nuisances a teleportation trick that allows them to leave behind slippery puddles of cheese bile, turning an already treacherous sewer into a playground of hazardous goo. And their sticky fingers ability? Perfect for snatching items from the party mid-battle.

Cheese Goblins is a fantastic addition to any D&D campaign, especially for groups that enjoy a touch of humor in their adventures. It provides a well-structured, low-level dungeon crawl with plenty of player choice, environmental hazards, and unique enemy mechanics. The Sewer Mermaid is a particularly memorable boss, and the adventure's replayability is strong, as creative DMs could easily tweak or expand the dungeon.

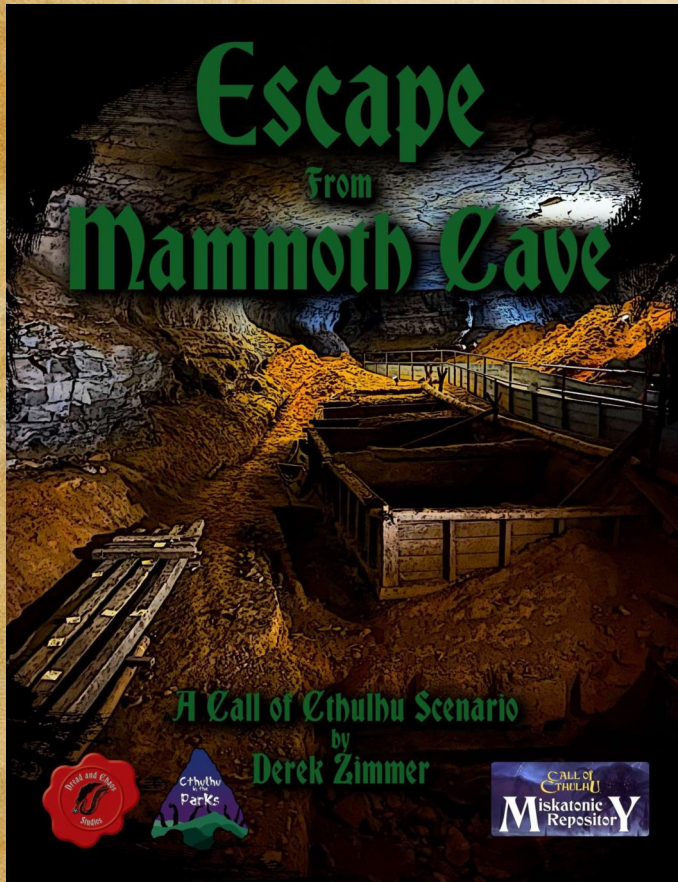
While some might find the premise a little too silly for their taste, for those willing to embrace the madness, *Cheese Goblins* delivers an unforgettable experience dripping with personality. Whether run as a standalone one-shot or inserted into a larger campaign, this adventure is sure to leave players laughing, strategizing, and possibly swearing off cheese forever.

Rating: 9/10 – A Gouda Time for All!

<https://ko-fi.com/infiniteinitiative/shop>

MODULE REVIEW OF THE MONTH (COC)

By Andrew Babcock



Escape from Mammoth Cave

In the vast, twisting caverns of Kentucky's Mammoth Cave, an ancient horror lurks beyond the veil of reality. *Escape from Mammoth Cave*, the latest entry in the *Cthulhu in the Parks* series by Derek Zimmer, takes players deep into one of America's most iconic natural wonders—only to trap them in a desperate, mind-bending race for survival. This Call of Cthulhu scenario blends historical accuracy, eerie atmosphere, and cosmic horror to create an unforgettable one-shot adventure that is as thrilling as it is deadly.

Set in August 1926, the scenario begins innocently enough: the investigators join a guided tour through the sprawling underground labyrinth of Mammoth Cave. Players are introduced to real-world cave formations, mining remnants, and eerie historical sites, all while following a well-researched and immersive script. But as is tradition with Call of Cthulhu, the descent quickly takes a sinister turn. The investigators' guide disappears, and a mysterious stone—The Devil's Looking Glass—becomes the focal point of a horrifying reality warp.

From there, the adventure plunges players into an atmospheric nightmare where perception is unreliable, corridors

shift, and an unseen entity known as *The Beast of Mammoth Cave* twists both time and space. The deeper they go, the harder it becomes to escape. And even death is not the end.

One of the most striking mechanics in *Escape from Mammoth Cave* is its approach to death. Unlike traditional scenarios where a fallen investigator is simply gone, this adventure refuses to let players go so easily. Instead, those who perish are inexplicably returned to life—but with something missing. With each revival, they deteriorate further, both physically and mentally, until they are ultimately claimed by The Beast. This mechanic creates a creeping inevitability, a ticking clock that pushes players toward escape while filling them with dread over what they might become if they fail.

Zimmer masterfully crafts an experience that is both claustrophobic and surreal. The cave itself is a character in the story, shifting unpredictably, pulling investigators back to the Devil's Looking Glass in a way that feels like a cruel joke played by an uncaring cosmos. Light is a scarce resource, making perception checks fraught with penalties. Some of the most memorable moments come from simple yet horrifying discoveries—names scrawled in a familiar hand, a corpse that is eerily identical to an investigator, or an old map revealing the terrifying truth that time itself has unraveled.

This scenario leans heavily into survival horror, emphasizing escape over combat. The investigators are hopelessly outmatched by the supernatural forces at play. Attempts to fight back are often futile, and running is the only viable strategy. The chamber progression mechanics add tension—every step forward is met with resistance, and failing a luck roll might see players dragged back into the abyss for another round of psychological torment.

Escape from Mammoth Cave

Escape from Mammoth Cave is a gripping, nightmarish journey into the heart of the unknown, perfect for Keepers looking to run a one-shot that is both deeply atmospheric and intensely nerve-wracking. The blend of historical realism with cosmic horror is executed beautifully, and the unique death mechanics add an unsettling edge to the experience.

While the linear structure may not appeal to all groups, and some investigators may feel railroaded at times, the scenario makes up for it with its incredible immersion, historical depth, and ever-present sense of doom. For players who enjoy *Call of Cthulhu*'s signature blend of mystery, horror, and helplessness, this is a must-play adventure.

Rating: 9/10 – A Claustrophobic, Unforgiving Descent into Madness

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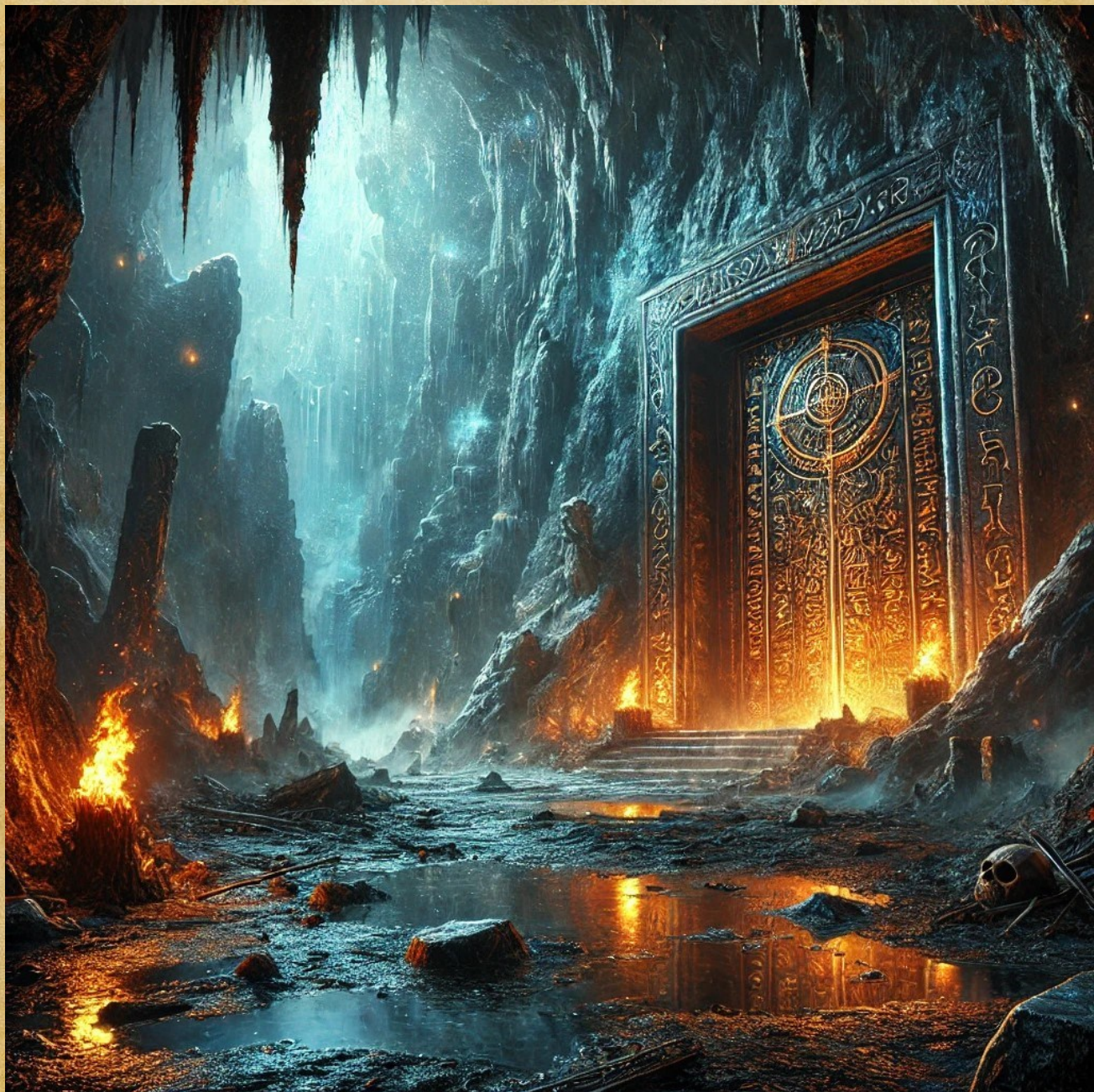
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