

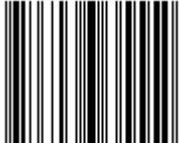
DRAGONFIRE

MAGAZINE

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Editor's Edict

March 2025 - Issue 3

Greetings, fellow adventurers,

With each issue of DragonFire Magazine, my goal has always been to deliver something exciting, engaging, and inspiring for our community of tabletop roleplayers, fantasy lovers, and creative minds. This magazine is a pure work of passion, something I pour countless hours into crafting—without charging a single coin and without any expectation of profit. It's a labor of love, driven solely by the desire to share and grow our collective creativity.

That being said, I want to address a topic that has come to my attention regarding the use of AI in this magazine's production. A third party had previously utilized AI to assist in creating some of the images found within these pages. Now that I am aware of this, I will continue to use AI but will take full control over its application.

Why continue using AI? The simple truth is that, at this time, I cannot afford to staff an artist to hand-create every image. Like many of you, I know that sometimes just getting through the day-to-day challenges of life can be a struggle. The time and energy I dedicate to this magazine are already immense, and AI allows me to enhance the visual presentation without compromising the integrity of my vision. But rest assured—every idea, every piece of content, every adventure and article within these pages is my own, not created by AI. My role is to craft and curate, to tell stories and build a world of imagination, and that will never change.

However, my ultimate goal has always been to involve more voices, more talents, and more creativity. I want DragonFire Magazine to be a place where writers, artists, game designers, and storytellers come together to share their work. That's where you come in. I am actively seeking more reader submissions—articles, columns, comics, short stories, homebrew modules, and any other creative content that would make this publication even more vibrant.

So, if you've got something you want to share, now is the time! Send in your work, and please include how you'd like to be credited and where people can find more of your amazing creations. Together, we can continue making DragonFire Magazine something special—a publication built by the community, for the community.

Thank you for your continued support, and may your adventures be legendary!

Yours in creativity,

Andrew Babcock

Editor-in-Chief, DragonFire Magazine



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The Path of Shadows

By Andrew Babcock

The jagged peaks loomed in the distance, their sharp silhouettes framed against a blood-red sky. Altharid moved with purpose, his cloak whipping in the biting wind. The sigil on his arm glowed faintly, a pulsing guide that illuminated the treacherous path ahead. It was the only light he trusted now, cutting through the deepening shadows that clung to the forest.

The terrain grew more hostile with each step. The ground beneath him was uneven, riddled with loose rocks that shifted dangerously. The trees, once towering and proud, became twisted and gnarled, their bark blackened as though scorched by an ancient fire. The air was thick, laden with the scent of damp earth and decay.

Altharid paused at the edge of a ravine, his breath visible in the chill air. The sigil flared, casting an eerie glow across the dark expanse. He scanned the depths below, searching for signs of movement, but the shadows were thick and unyielding. The whispers in his mind grew louder, blending with the distant rustle of leaves and the mournful cry of unseen creatures.

The artifact's influence was unmistakable now. Each step he took felt preordained, as if the relic had tethered him to the path. Yet the whispers unsettled him. They spoke in fractured phrases, urging him onward, but he could not ignore the undercurrent of malice in their tone.

“Forward,” he muttered, clenching his fists. The sigil pulsed in response, its light flickering like a heartbeat. As the hours dragged on, Altharid became acutely aware of the shadows around him. They were no longer passive observers lurking at the edge of his vision. They moved with intent, their forms coalescing into shapes that seemed almost human, though distorted and incomplete.

At first, they lingered at a distance, silent and watchful. But as Altharid descended into a narrow gorge, their presence became more aggressive. The shadows darted between the trees, their movements synchronized, their forms shifting like smoke. He could feel them steering him, subtly nudging him toward paths he hadn't intended to take.

The realization sent a chill down his spine. They weren't just following him—they were guiding him. “Why?” he whispered, his voice swallowed by the oppressive silence. The sigil on his arm flared again, brighter this time, as if answering his unspoken question. But the whispers only deepened, their voices overlapping in a chaotic symphony that made his head throb.

He stopped abruptly, turning to face the encroaching darkness. “What do you want?” he demanded, his voice echoing in the stillness.

The shadows did not answer, but the forest seemed to respond. The trees groaned, their twisted branches creaking as though bending under some unseen weight. The ground trembled faintly beneath his boots, and a low, guttural sound rose from the depths of the gorge.

Altharid's grip tightened on the hilt of his dagger. Though the weapon felt woefully inadequate against the forces at play, its familiar weight offered some comfort. He took a step back, his gaze darting between the shifting forms.

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The whispers grew louder as Altharid pressed onward, their cadence intertwining with the sounds of the forest. At times, they seemed to mimic the rustling of leaves or the distant trickle of water, making it impossible to distinguish reality from illusion. He found himself pausing frequently, unsure if the paths he walked were truly his own or if the shadows had led him astray.

Once, he stumbled into a clearing he swore he had passed hours ago. The remains of a fire pit sat at its center, the ashes cold but undisturbed. His own footprints circled the area, faint but undeniable. A surge of unease gripped him as he realized he had been walking in a loop.

“You’re toying with me,” he muttered, his voice trembling with frustration. The shadows at the edge of the clearing quivered, their forms momentarily solid before dissipating into the darkness.

The sigil on his arm burned hotter, its light flickering erratically. It pulled him toward a narrow trail at the far side of the clearing, its glow stronger than before. Altharid hesitated, his instincts screaming at him to turn back. But the vision of the temple burned in his mind, its spires etched into his thoughts like a brand.

With a deep breath, he stepped onto the trail, his resolve hardening. The shadows pressed closer now, their movements more deliberate. He could feel their eyes—or whatever passed for eyes—watching him, their intent palpable.

The trail narrowed as Altharid climbed higher, the terrain becoming more unstable. Loose rocks tumbled beneath his boots, and the wind howled through the jagged cliffs, carrying with it faint echoes of the whispers. He forced himself to focus, his eyes fixed on the faint light of the sigil as it led him forward.

The shadows seemed to feed on his doubt, their movements growing bolder with each faltering step. One darted across the path in front of him, its form a blur of black smoke that sent a shiver down his spine. Another lingered at his side, its outline vaguely human but distorted, its features twisted into an expression of malice. Altharid stopped again, his chest heaving. “You won’t stop me,” he said, his voice shaking but defiant. The sigil flared brightly, forcing the nearest shadow to retreat, its form unraveling into the wind.

But the respite was brief. The whispers in his mind coalesced into a single word, spoken in a voice that was neither human nor entirely alien: “*Soon.*”

Altharid’s breath caught, his resolve wavering for a moment. The shadows around him rippled with anticipation, their forms closing in like predators circling wounded prey.

The sigil burned brighter, its heat searing his skin, pulling him forward with an intensity that made his head spin. Gritting his teeth, he stumbled onward, the path ahead narrowing to a thin ledge carved into the side of the cliffs.

The temple was close now. He could feel its presence, a heavy, oppressive force that seemed to resonate with the artifact’s power. The shadows grew thicker, their whispers deafening, but Altharid’s resolve did not falter.

The forest and cliffs behind him seemed to collapse into darkness, leaving only the faint glow of the sigil to guide his way. The temple’s spires loomed in the distance, their jagged tips piercing the crimson sky.

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The temple was waiting. But so were the shadows.

Altharid stumbled through the last line of gnarled trees, their twisted branches clawing at his cloak as if reluctant to let him leave. The air was colder here, sharp and biting, carrying the faint metallic tang of blood and decay. He stood at the edge of a jagged valley, his chest heaving as he looked out over the expanse.

The temple loomed in the distance, just as it had in his vision. Its dark spires twisted unnaturally upward, piercing the crimson-tinged sky. The structure seemed both impossibly ancient and disturbingly alive, its surface glistening as though breathing. Shadowy tendrils curled around its highest points, dissipating into the air like smoke.

The terrain between Altharid and the temple was treacherous. Sheer cliffs lined the valley, their edges crumbling into narrow paths of unstable rock. Sharp ridges jutted out at unnatural angles, and deep fissures crisscrossed the ground, each one a gaping maw waiting to swallow the careless.

For a moment, Altharid hesitated. The whispers in his mind had fallen silent, leaving him alone with the oppressive weight of the temple's aura. He felt its presence in his chest, a heavy, suffocating force that pressed down on him with every breath.

The sigil on his arm pulsed, brighter and hotter than ever, its light cutting through the valley's gloom. The whispers returned, softer now, almost coaxing. They tugged at his thoughts, guiding his gaze toward the safest route forward.

"Always pushing," Altharid muttered, flexing his fingers. The sigil flared briefly, as if in response, and he began his descent.

Each step closer to the temple intensified the sensation of power radiating from it. The sigil's light illuminated the unstable paths ahead, but the terrain seemed intent on opposing him. Rocks crumbled underfoot, forcing him to move with caution. A single misstep could send him plummeting into the abyss below.

The whispers shifted, their tone more focused and precise. They pointed out hidden dangers—a loose ledge here, a disguised pit there. Altharid found himself relying on them, the sigil's heat and the eerie guidance in his mind steering him past obstacles that might have otherwise claimed his life.

Still, the path demanded his full attention. A jagged outcrop collapsed beneath him at one point, sending him sliding toward a fissure. He caught himself just in time, his hands scraping against the sharp rocks as the sigil burned fiercely, its light revealing a handhold above. Hauling himself up, he sat on the edge for a moment, catching his breath as his pulse thundered in his ears.

The temple seemed closer now, its presence a magnetic pull that left him both exhilarated and uneasy. The sigil's heat grew almost unbearable, but Altharid did not stop. He pushed forward, every instinct warning him of the danger ahead, yet unable to deny the allure of the power that awaited him.

Signs of past visitors began to emerge as Altharid moved deeper into the valley. The first was a decayed skeleton, its bones scattered across the rocks. The remains were clad in fragments of armor, rusted and brittle, with a weapon lying nearby—a blade snapped clean in two.

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Further along, he found more remnants: shattered shields, splintered staves, and abandoned packs. The air here was thicker, tinged with an acrid stench that made his stomach churn. One set of remains still clutched a weathered parchment in its skeletal hand. Altharid hesitated, then pried the brittle document loose.

The writing was nearly illegible, but he could make out fragments: “...*the cost is too great... the shadows do not forgive... beware the spires.*”

Altharid’s gaze shifted to the temple. Its spires seemed taller now, their twisting forms shifting subtly, as if they were watching him. He swallowed hard and let the parchment crumble in his hand.

“You’ve claimed many,” he murmured to the temple, his voice low. “But not me. Not yet.”

The final stretch of the path was the most perilous yet. The cliffs narrowed to a razor-thin ledge, forcing Altharid to move slowly, his back pressed against the rock wall. The sigil on his arm burned with relentless heat, its glow painting the path ahead in stark relief.

At last, he reached a plateau—a jagged, rocky expanse that led directly to the temple’s gates. The structure towered above him, its dark surface pulsating faintly as though alive. The air here was oppressive, each breath a struggle against the weight of the temple’s presence.

The gates were massive, carved with intricate runes that seemed to writhe under his gaze. The sigil on his arm pulsed in response, and the whispers in his mind rose to a fever pitch. They urged him forward, promising answers, power, and something deeper—something that defied comprehension.

Altharid stood before the gates, his hand resting on the cool, obsidian surface. He could feel the power radiating from within, a storm waiting to be unleashed. The sigil burned brightly, and the whispers became a single, unified voice: “*Enter.*”

With a deep breath, Altharid pushed against the gates. They groaned under the weight of ancient mechanisms, opening slowly to reveal the shadowy depths beyond. He stepped inside, the air growing colder as the gates sealed shut behind him.

The temple’s entrance loomed before Altharid, a massive archway carved into the jagged stone of the valley wall. The runes etched into its surface glowed faintly, their pale light pulsing in time with the sigil on his arm.

The air around the entrance was unnaturally still, as if even the wind dared not disturb the ancient structure. Altharid’s breath came in slow, measured draws as he studied the carvings. The whispers in his mind grew sharper, their cadence almost urgent. The sigil on his arm burned hotter, guiding his gaze to the runes that lined the archway. Without thinking, he began to speak.

The words fell from his lips in a language he did not know yet somehow understood. Each syllable resonated in the still air, carrying a weight that made the ground tremble beneath his feet. As he completed the incantation, the runes blazed to life, their glow bright enough to cast jagged shadows across the valley.

With a deep, echoing groan, the massive stone doors began to shift. Dust and debris cascaded from their edges as they creaked open, revealing the dark void within. A blast of cold, stale air rushed out, carrying with it the faint scent of decay and something far older.

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Altharid hesitated, the oppressive weight of the temple's aura pressing down on him. The sigil flared again, its light piercing the darkness beyond the doors. The whispers urged him forward.

With a steadying breath, he stepped into the temple.

The darkness swallowed him immediately, the light of the sigil the only thing keeping it at bay. The air inside was colder, heavier, and thick with the weight of centuries. The faint echo of his footsteps carried down the twisting hallways, the sound unnervingly loud against the oppressive silence.

The first chamber revealed itself as the corridor widened into a grand, circular room. Massive pillars stretched toward a domed ceiling, their surfaces carved with intricate patterns of runes and jagged designs. At the center of the chamber, a wide mural dominated the far wall, its size and detail impossible to ignore.

Altharid approached the mural cautiously, the sigil on his arm glowing brighter as he drew near. The painting depicted a dark ritual: robed figures stood in a circle, their hands raised toward a central figure consumed by shadowy tendrils. Around them, a storm raged, the sky split by arcs of unnatural lightning.

As he studied the mural, Altharid's stomach turned. One of the robed figures bore an uncanny resemblance to Maldrak—his sharp features, piercing gaze, and commanding posture unmistakable. But what unsettled him more was the central figure. Though obscured by the shadows consuming them, the faint outline of their face mirrored his own.

"What is this?" he muttered, his voice echoing in the stillness. The whispers in his mind did not answer, but the sigil pulsed in response, its heat intensifying as if affirming his connection to the scene before him.

At the bottom of the mural, an inscription ran the length of the wall. Altharid knelt to read it, the sigil illuminating the ancient text. The words were fragmented, their meaning unclear, but one phrase stood out: "*Blood opens the way, and shadows reveal the path.*"

As he straightened, the chamber around him began to shift. The runes on the pillars flared to life, casting the room in a flickering, otherworldly light. Shadows spilled from the corners of the chamber, pooling in unnatural shapes that writhed and coalesced into tendrils snaking across the floor.

The whispers in Altharid's mind grew louder, their tone insistent. The sigil burned fiercely now, its light pushing back the encroaching shadows but doing little to dispel the oppressive weight in the air.

At the center of the chamber, a pedestal rose from the floor, its surface etched with runes similar to those on the mural. Altharid approached it cautiously, the shadows retreating slightly as he neared. On the pedestal was a shallow bowl, its edges lined with jagged, bloodstained grooves.

The meaning was clear.

Altharid clenched his fist, his thoughts racing. He had already sacrificed blood to the sigil once, and he knew the price it exacted. Yet there was no other way forward. The temple demanded its due, and the power he sought lay beyond.

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The shadows around the chamber began to shift, their movements growing more erratic. Tendrils of darkness snaked toward the bowl, merging with the blood and swirling together in a vortex of black and crimson. The pedestal trembled, the air crackling with energy as the shadows spread across the floor, forming a path leading to a doorway on the far side of the chamber.

Altharid gripped his hand tightly, stemming the flow of blood as the whispers in his mind grew softer, more focused. The sigil's heat lessened, though its light remained strong.

The doorway ahead pulsed faintly, its edges lined with shadowy tendrils that beckoned him forward. He wiped the blade on his cloak and stepped toward the path, the weight of the temple pressing down on him with each step.

The first chamber had revealed its secrets, but Altharid knew this was only the beginning. Whatever lay beyond that doorway would demand more than blood—and he wasn't sure how much he had left to give.

With a final glance at the mural, he stepped through the shadowy threshold and into the unknown.

The corridor beyond the first chamber was narrow, its walls closing in like the jaws of some ancient beast. Altharid moved cautiously, the sigil on his arm pulsing faintly to light his way. The air was thick, heavy with the weight of unseen forces. The whispers in his mind, though quieter now, remained a constant presence, their fragmented tones urging him forward.

The passage opened into a smaller, circular chamber, its walls lined with alcoves filled with broken relics—cracked pottery, shattered blades, and fragments of runes etched into stone. The floor was covered in a thin layer of dust, undisturbed for centuries, save for the faint footprints Altharid now left behind.

At the center of the room stood a pedestal of smooth obsidian, its surface untouched by time. Resting atop it was an amulet, a black gem encased in twisted metal, its edges etched with runes that glimmered faintly in the dim light. The artifact seemed to hum with a low, rhythmic vibration, its energy palpable even from a distance. Altharid approached cautiously, his gaze locked on the amulet. The sigil on his arm flared, its light matching the rhythm of the artifact's glow. A faint heat coursed through him, the whispers in his mind sharpening into coherent words: *"Touch it."*

His hand hovered over the amulet for a moment, hesitation flickering across his face. He could feel the weight of its power, an overwhelming force waiting to be unleashed. But the vision of the temple's spires and the promise of answers drove him onward.

With a deep breath, he grasped the amulet.

The moment his fingers closed around the artifact, a surge of energy tore through him, forcing him to his knees. The sigil on his arm burned white-hot, its light flaring so brightly that it illuminated the entire chamber. The whispers in his mind rose to a deafening crescendo, then fell silent, replaced by a single, commanding voice.

"You have been chosen."

Altharid's vision blurred, the room around him dissolving into darkness. Images flooded his mind—a temple bathed in blood-red light, its spires reaching into a storm-ridden sky. Shadows writhed around its base, their

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The voice continued, fragmented and cryptic: *“The sigil is the key. The temple... a prison... and a gateway. Harness its power, or be consumed.”*

The images shifted. He saw himself standing before the altar, the sigil on his arm glowing brightly. Tendrils of shadow reached for him, wrapping around his body, pulling him closer to the pulsating energy. His voice, though distant and distorted, echoed in his ears: *“I will not be a pawn.”*

The vision ended abruptly, and Altharid was thrust back into the chamber. His breath came in ragged gasps as the sigil on his arm dimmed, its heat subsiding. The amulet in his hand felt heavier now, its hum more insistent. Altharid pushed himself to his feet, his grip tightening around the amulet. Its glow pulsed faintly, and a soft, metallic voice resonated in his mind.

“The path ahead is treacherous.” The words were measured, distant, as if spoken from a place beyond time. *“The shadows seek to claim you, but the temple’s power can be yours—if you are willing to pay the price.”*

“What price?” Altharid asked aloud, his voice echoing in the chamber.

The amulet’s response was slow, almost reluctant. *“Sacrifice. The sigil binds you to the temple, to the force imprisoned within. To wield its power, you must embrace the darkness.”*

“And if I refuse?” Altharid pressed, his jaw tightening.

“Then you will fall as the others did. The shadows will consume you, and the force will remain unbroken. The choice is yours, Altharid.”

The sound of his name from the artifact sent a chill down his spine. He glanced at the sigil on his arm, now faintly glowing, its presence a reminder of the path he had already chosen.

The amulet pulsed again, its voice softening. *“You seek freedom from the chains placed upon you. The temple holds the answers you desire. But beware—the deeper you go, the harder it will be to return.”*

Altharid slipped the amulet into his satchel, its hum reverberating through the leather as if alive. The whispers in his mind returned, their fragmented tones laced with urgency. The sigil flared faintly, guiding his gaze to another passageway at the far end of the chamber.

With one last glance at the pedestal, Altharid steeled himself and stepped forward. The path ahead was dark, but the amulet’s presence—and the cryptic promise of the voice—gave him reason to continue.

As he descended deeper into the temple, he could feel the weight of the relics he now carried—the sigil on his arm, the artifact in his satchel, and the secrets of the temple all pressing down on him. The shadows whispered at the edges of his vision, their movements growing more deliberate, more hostile.

Whatever lay ahead would test him beyond anything he had faced before. But the promise of answers—and power—was too great to ignore.

The temple was not done with him yet.

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The air grew colder as Altharid ventured deeper into the temple, the narrow corridors giving way to cavernous halls shrouded in darkness. The light from the sigil on his arm barely penetrated the oppressive gloom, casting long, flickering shadows on the ancient walls. The whispers in his mind grew louder, their cadence more urgent, almost frantic.

He felt the change before he saw it. The atmosphere shifted, the air becoming dense and suffocating, charged with an unseen energy that made his skin crawl. The shadows at the edge of his vision began to move—not the subtle, flickering movement he had grown accustomed to, but deliberate strides, purposeful and menacing. Altharid tightened his grip on the dagger at his side, his senses on high alert. A faint rustling echoed through the hall, followed by a low, guttural growl that reverberated in his chest. The shadows were no longer content to follow—they were closing in.

As he rounded a corner, the corridor opened into a vast, circular chamber. The space was dominated by a raised platform at its center, surrounded by jagged pillars that stretched toward the unseen ceiling. The faint glow of the sigil revealed cracks in the stone floor, from which tendrils of shadow seeped like living smoke.

A figure emerged from the darkness ahead, larger and more defined than the others. Its form was humanoid but grotesque, its proportions warped as though shaped by a twisted hand. Its eyes glowed faintly, twin orbs of malice that locked onto Altharid with unsettling intelligence.

The whispers in his mind roared, their dissonant voices overlapping in a chaotic symphony. One word stood out among the cacophony: *“Test.”*

The shadow figure moved with unnatural speed, closing the distance between them in a blur of motion. Altharid barely had time to react, raising his dagger to block the creature’s first strike.

The impact sent a jolt up his arm, the force far greater than he anticipated. He stumbled back, the sigil on his arm flaring as the shadow pressed its attack.

Tendrils of darkness lashed out from the figure’s body, striking at him from all directions. Altharid dodged and weaved, each movement precise yet desperate. His breaths came in sharp gasps as he deflected another blow, the sigil’s light flaring brighter with each swing of his dagger.

“Draw on the sigil,” the whispers urged, their tone insistent. *“Use its power.”*

He hesitated, the memory of the artifact’s warnings fresh in his mind. But the shadow figure was relentless, its attacks growing more ferocious. With no other choice, Altharid focused on the burning mark on his arm, willing its energy to flow through him.

The sigil responded immediately. A surge of heat coursed through his veins, and the light from his arm exploded outward, forcing the shadow to recoil. Altharid pressed the advantage, slashing at the figure with his dagger, now glowing faintly with the sigil’s energy.

The creature roared, its form flickering and unstable, but it did not retreat. Instead, it adapted, its tendrils coiling around the blade and wrenching it from his grasp. Altharid stumbled, his heartbeat pounding in his ears as the shadow loomed over him.

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The symbol hung in the air for a moment before exploding outward in a wave of energy. The force struck the shadow figure, tearing through its form and scattering it into tendrils of smoke. The remnants lingered briefly, writhing in defiance before dissolving into the cracks in the floor.

Altharid collapsed to one knee, his chest heaving as he tried to catch his breath. The sigil's light dimmed, its heat subsiding, but the effort had left him drained. His body ached, his limbs heavy from the strain of channeling its power.

The chamber fell silent, save for the faint hum of energy that lingered in the air. The whispers in his mind were quieter now, their tone subdued but still present. Yet something about their cadence had changed—there was a new layer of intent, a subtle suggestion of satisfaction.

Altharid forced himself to his feet, retrieving his dagger from where it had fallen. The shadows were gone, but their presence lingered, a reminder of the force that lay deeper within the temple. He could feel it now, a pulsing energy that resonated with the sigil, drawing him forward.

The fight had shown him the extent of his growth, but it had also revealed the limits of his strength. The sigil's power was vast, but it came at a cost—one he was only beginning to understand.

As he stepped off the platform, he noticed faint markings on the floor where the shadow had been defeated. The runes were unfamiliar, but they pulsed faintly with the same energy as the sigil on his arm. They seemed to form a path, leading deeper into the temple.

The whispers in his mind returned, their tone softer but more deliberate. *“You are not alone,”* they said. *“The shadows are bound to the force within. They will test you, but they will also guide you—if you survive.”*

Altharid tightened his grip on the dagger, his resolve hardening. He had passed the first test, but the temple's challenges were far from over. The shadows were not merely obstacles—they were part of the temple itself, an extension of the ancient force that awaited him.

The path ahead was darker than ever, but Altharid pushed forward. Whatever lay at the heart of the temple, he would face it on his own terms.

Altharid stumbled into the vast chamber, his breaths ragged and his body aching from the relentless journey. The hall was unlike anything he had seen before—immense and oppressive, its walls lined with jagged, shadow-drenched spires that seemed to pulse with a life of their own. The air was thick with the scent of ancient decay and the crackling charge of untamed energy.

At the heart of the room stood a massive altar, carved from obsidian and veined with crimson light that flowed like molten lava. The sigil on Altharid's arm flared as he approached, its rhythm syncing perfectly with the pulsating glow of the altar. Above it hung an enormous, writhing mass of shadowy energy, its tendrils shifting and coiling in the air as though tasting the presence of the intruder.

The entity was overwhelming, its form defying reason and logic. Its core was a dark void, but faint glimpses of light within suggested a presence far older and more powerful than anything Altharid had encountered. The whispers in his mind surged to a crescendo, drowning out his thoughts with a single, repeated phrase: *“It is here.”*

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“What choice?” Altharid asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

The amulet pulsed, and Altharid’s vision blurred. For a brief moment, he saw two paths. On one, he stood before the altar, his arm raised as the sigil blazed with uncontrollable light. The shadows bowed before him, their forms merging with his as he claimed the temple’s power. On the other, he saw himself severing the sigil, the light on his arm fading to nothing. The shadows recoiled, and he fled the temple, battered but free.

“Claim the power of the entity,” the amulet intoned, *“and you will ascend beyond mortal limits. But you will no longer be your own. Sever the sigil, and you may escape, but you will leave behind the answers you seek—and the strength to face what lies ahead.”*

Altharid’s grip tightened on the amulet, his mind racing. He felt the weight of the decision pressing down on him, every breath a struggle against the enormity of the moment. He had come so far, endured so much, and the answers he sought lay within reach. Yet the price was higher than he had imagined.

As he hesitated, the shadows at the edges of the hall began to stir. They gathered slowly, coalescing into twisted, humanoid forms with glowing eyes and elongated limbs. Their movements were deliberate, synchronized, as though commanded by a single will.

The room darkened further as the shadows closed in, encircling the altar and blocking Altharid’s retreat. Their forms were endless, an army born from the entity’s essence, and their collective presence made the chamber feel suffocatingly small.

A deep, resonant voice echoed through the hall, shaking the very stones beneath Altharid’s feet. It was not the amulet, nor the whispers, but something far greater.

“The vessel has come,” the voice declared, its tone reverberating with power and menace. *“You stand at the precipice, Altharid. Will you embrace your purpose and ascend, or will you shatter beneath the weight of your weakness?”*

The shadows moved closer, their forms shifting like liquid darkness. Altharid could feel their malice, their hunger, but also something else—a twisted reverence, as though they awaited his decision with bated breath. The sigil on his arm flared again, brighter than ever, and the pain was searing. It was alive now, demanding action, its energy coursing through him like wildfire. He clenched his teeth, his mind a storm of conflicting thoughts.

“I won’t be a pawn,” he growled, his voice steady despite the chaos around him. “Not for you, not for anyone.” The entity’s voice responded, its tone mocking and amused. *“You have no choice, vessel. You are bound to the sigil. To the temple. To me. Your will is but a flicker in the shadow of eternity.”*

Altharid took a step toward the altar, his eyes locked on the writhing mass of shadowy energy above it. The whispers in his mind rose to a fever pitch, their chaotic voices merging into a single, desperate plea. The amulet hummed in his hand, its warmth a stark contrast to the cold dread that gripped him.

The shadows closed in further, their forms towering over him now, their movements synchronized like soldiers awaiting a command. The entity’s voice echoed once more, its words laced with finality.

The Forgotten Vaults of Kharzan



Adventure Level: Designed for 4-5 characters of 3rd-5th level

Deep in the annals of history, the name *Kharzan* was feared and revered. Once a powerful sorcerer-king who ruled over vast lands, Kharzan was obsessed with hoarding knowledge and magical relics, believing that arcane mastery would grant him immortality. He constructed a hidden vault beneath his fortress, a labyrinth of arcane traps and guardian constructs designed to protect his most valuable secrets and treasures. His empire flourished for centuries, but his greed for power led him to forbidden practices, including the study of necromancy and soul-binding rituals.

Legends tell of the fateful day when Kharzan's insatiable hunger for immortality reached its peak. Attempting a ritual that would bind his soul to his enchanted vault, something went horribly wrong. His fortress crumbled into ruin, swallowed by the earth as reality itself seemed to reject his dark ambitions. His name faded from the

annals of history, and the location of his vault was lost—until now.

In the present day, scholars and treasure hunters have begun to rediscover fragments of Kharzan's legend. A reclusive noble, Lord Aldric Vanth, has been quietly collecting texts on ancient arcane ruins and has hired the adventurers to investigate the long-forgotten vault. According to his research, an artifact of immense power—*The Staff of Forgotten Kings*—is buried within, capable of channeling necrotic energy on a scale unseen in modern times.

Yet rumors persist of those who have entered the ruins before. Some claim that Kharzan's spirit lingers, unable to pass beyond the veil, his wrath seeping into the very walls of his creation. Others whisper that his vault has become a breeding ground for restless dead and eldritch horrors. No one who has ventured within has returned.

Now, the adventurers must delve into *The Forgotten Vaults of Kharzan*, navigating its treacherous corridors, uncovering long-lost knowledge, and confronting the echoes of a sorcerer-king's ambition. Will they claim the treasures within, or will they fall victim to the ancient evil that still lingers in the darkness?

Dungeon Overview

This dungeon features 12 rooms, each with its own challenges, traps, or lore. The adventurers enter through a narrow tunnel that leads into the vaults. Throughout the dungeon, they will encounter spectral guardians, arcane traps, and ancient tomes detailing the sorcerer-king's forgotten reign.

Room Descriptions

Room 1 - The Grand Antechamber

- A vast chamber of blackened stone, its towering walls lined with eroded murals depicting Kharzan's reign in faded gold leaf. The high-vaulted ceiling is cracked, allowing thin beams of eerie blue light to filter in from unknown sources. Crumbling statues of armored warriors stand at attention along the walls, their hollow eyes seeming to follow intruders. A heavy sense of foreboding lingers in the stale air, and the faint hum of residual magic can be felt beneath the surface of the walls.
- Encounter: A spectral guardian—an ethereal Wraith wrapped in ancient regalia—glides forward, its voice a whisper of countless voices warning all who dare enter to turn back. If challenged, the wraith will attack, attempting to drain the life from intruders. It will retreat if the players uncover a hidden inscription in the murals detailing its true name.

The Forgotten Vaults of Kharzan

Room 2 - The Room of Whispers

- A room shrouded in unnatural gloom. The air is unnervingly still, yet the walls, carved with thousands of intricate runes, seem to hum with distant voices. Any sound made here echoes with an eerie distortion, twisting words into unintelligible whispers that coil around the mind. The stone floor is cold and damp, and a faint mist swirls at ankle height.
- Trap: If the adventurers speak above a whisper, they risk summoning 2 Shadows that emerge from the walls. These entities attempt to sap the strength of the party, growing stronger with each attack.

Room 3 - The Scribe's Study

- A ruined chamber littered with decayed scrolls and tattered books. The scent of ancient ink and rotting parchment hangs heavy in the air. A massive desk, its surface carved with arcane symbols, sits in the center of the room, flanked by two collapsed bookshelves. One bookshelf still stands, though it appears warped as if something tried to break free from within.
- Trap: A locked chest, booby-trapped with a poison dart mechanism (DC 14 Dexterity save, 2d6 poison damage on failure). If triggered, a faintly glowing rune on the desk pulses briefly before fading.
- Treasure: Inside the chest is a Scroll of Lesser Restoration and 50 gold pieces. Among the scattered pages, a hidden spellbook contains Detect Magic and Arcane Lock.

Room 4 - The Treasury

- A grand chamber with a vaulted ceiling, its floors covered in a thick layer of dust and long-forgotten coins. A massive iron door stands at the far end, its lock pulsating with arcane energy. The treasure within glows faintly, bathed in an unnatural golden light.
- Encounter: A Mimic disguised as an ornate chest. The mimic will wait until the adventurers attempt to open it before lashing out with its adhesive tendrils and biting maw.
- Treasure: 500 gold pieces, a Gem of Seeing, and a +1 Rapier. If the treasure is taken without disabling the arcane energy field (DC 18 Arcana), a loud alarm echoes throughout the vault, potentially summoning undead from deeper within.

Room 5 - The Prison Cells

- A damp and claustrophobic space lined with rusted iron bars. The walls bear the scratch marks of desperate prisoners long perished. The stagnant air carries a sense of despair, and faintly glowing chains dangle from the ceiling, flickering with spectral energy. The stone floor is littered with shattered bones and rusted manacles, remnants of those who suffered here.
- Encounter: A ghostly figure of a prisoner materializes in the corner of one of the cells. The spirit, an emaciated humanoid wrapped in spectral chains, mumbles cryptic warnings about Kharzan's betrayal. If the party attempts to communicate, the spirit responds but remains incoherent unless Detect Thoughts or a similar spell is used. If provoked, it transforms into a vengeful Specter and attacks, screaming about an unfulfilled debt.
- Puzzle: If the party examines the chains (Arcana DC 14), they discover that the spirit is bound by a forgotten curse. To free it, the party must perform a minor ritual by tracing runes in the dust (Religion DC 16). Doing so successfully banishes the spirit peacefully.

The Forgotten Vaults of Kharzan

- Treasure: If the players search the remains of the long-dead prisoners, they find:
 - A rusted key that unlocks a chest in Room 8.
 - A silver ring (worth 75 gold pieces) inscribed with forgotten noble sigils.

Room 6 - The Reliquary

- A circular chamber lined with alcoves, each containing the remains of Kharzan's most sacred relics. The walls are inscribed with ancient runes, faintly pulsing with forgotten magic. A massive stone pedestal stands in the center, atop which rests several glistening objects covered in dust. The air here is thick with power, making one's hair stand on end as if unseen eyes are watching.
- Encounter: The moment any relic is disturbed, three Spectral Guardians (Specters) materialize from the walls and attack, intent on preventing intruders from defiling Kharzan's artifacts.
- Treasure: A Cloak of Protection, a Potion of Greater Healing, and a Silvered Dagger that glows when undead are near.

Room 7 - The Cursed Stairs

- A long, spiraling staircase leads downward, its steps uneven and cracked. Strange symbols are carved into each step, glowing faintly with malevolent energy. As the party descends, they hear whispers that seem to originate from the very stone itself, urging them to turn back.
- Treasure: If properly examined (Investigation DC 14), one step contains a hidden compartment with a small onyx figurine of a forgotten god (worth 150 gold pieces).

Room 8 - The Guardian's Chamber

- A grand, domed chamber lined with obsidian pillars. The floor is made of smooth black marble, reflecting the dim torchlight eerily. At the center stands a massive Stone Golem, unmoving but imposing, its carved eyes cold and lifeless. Faint, arcane symbols pulse along its arms and chest, waiting for trespassers to invoke its wrath.
- Encounter: If any magical items from Room 6 or 9 are disturbed, the Stone Golem animates and attacks, relentlessly pursuing the thieves unless they can solve a puzzle on the far wall (Intelligence DC 18) to deactivate it.
- Treasure: The golem's defeat reveals a hidden recess in the floor containing a Ring of Spell Storing with a single charge of Misty Step.

Room 9 - The Vault of Kharzan

- A circular chamber of unnatural stillness. The walls, floors, and ceiling are made of black stone that absorbs light, making it difficult to see even with darkvision. At the center, a raised pedestal holds The Staff of Forgotten Kings, an ornate staff crafted of twisted metal and bone, pulsating with a dull, sickly green glow. The silence in the room is oppressive, almost suffocating.
- Encounter: The moment the staff is touched, the chamber is flooded with chilling wind, and the air fills with a chorus of wailing voices. A Wraith, the tormented essence of Kharzan himself, emerges from the pedestal alongside two Shadows, seeking vengeance on those who dare steal from him.

The Forgotten Vaults of Kharzan

- Treasure: The Staff of Forgotten Kings, a powerful necrotic artifact.

Room 10 - The Alchemical Laboratory

- The remnants of a ruined laboratory are scattered across this room, with broken glass and overturned tables littering the floor. A shattered cauldron lies in the center, surrounded by dried, long-forgotten substances that give off a faintly acrid smell. A few still-intact vials glow faintly on a nearby table.
- Trap: A failed Arcana (DC 12) check while handling the vials may trigger an Alchemical Explosion, dealing 3d6 fire damage to anyone within 10 feet.
- Treasure: A Potion of Heroism and a Book of Alchemical Secrets containing notes on rare potion recipes.

Room 11 - The Summoning Circle

- A large summoning circle is etched into the floor, filled with intricate runes that pulse with unstable energy. The walls of the room are covered in ancient inscriptions describing summoning rites in a long-forgotten language.
- Puzzle: Players who investigate and succeed on an Arcana (DC 15) check can properly activate the circle to summon a Celestial Ally for a single combat encounter.
- Failure: If mishandled, the summoning instead releases a Shadow Demon and an Imp that attack immediately.

Room 12 - The Final Resting Place

- A silent, sepulchral hall containing a single grand sarcophagus. The stone lid is adorned with the name of Kharzan's most trusted enforcer. The chamber is deathly still, and an unnatural chill lingers in the air.
- Encounter: If the sarcophagus is disturbed, a Revenant rises from within, seeking vengeance against those who trespass.
- Treasure: A Cursed Longsword, which grants +2 damage, +2 to hit but reduces the wielder's max HP by 1 each day it is used.

The Forgotten Vaults of Kharzan

Staff of Forgotten Kings

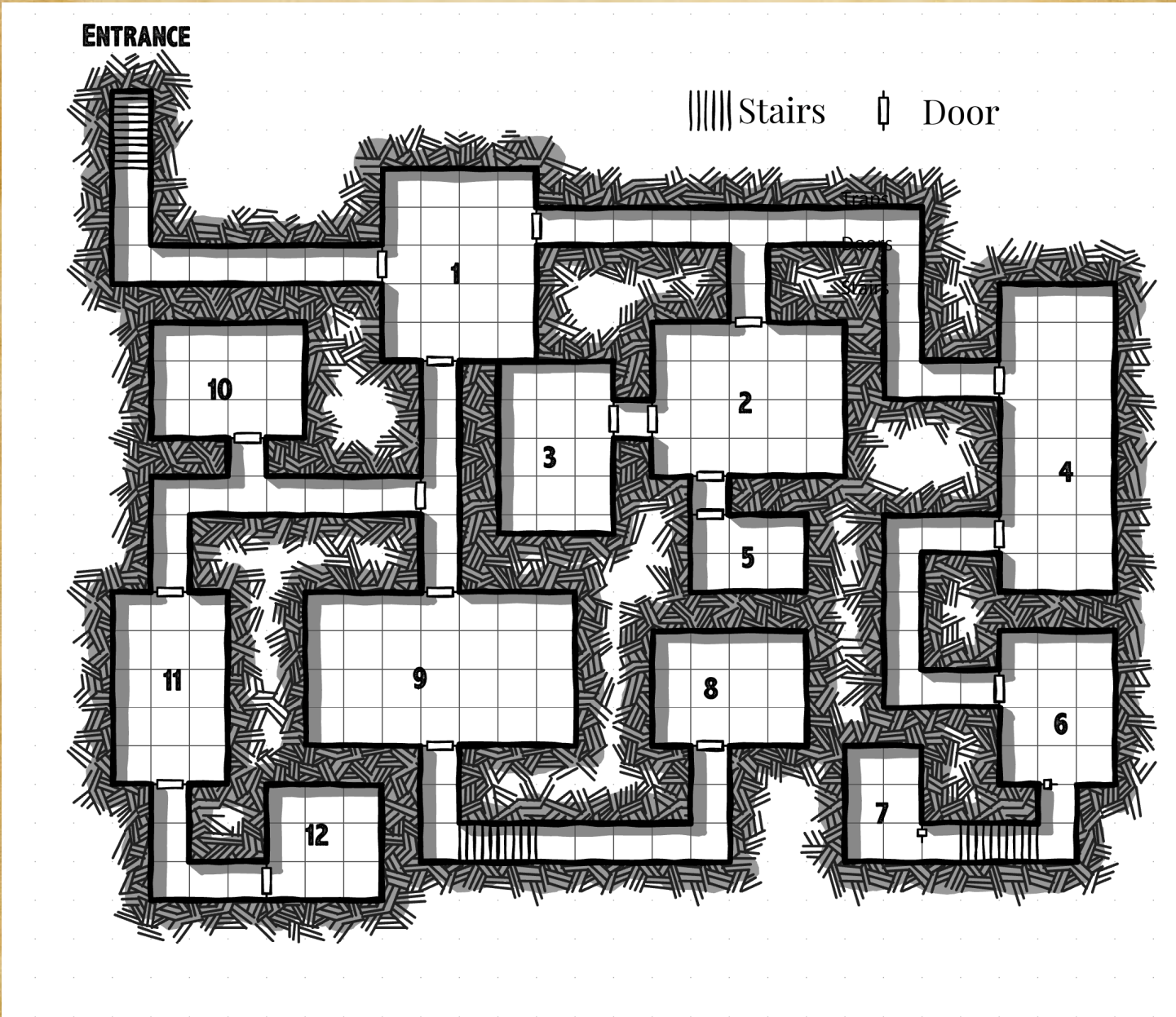
Wondrous Item, Legendary (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

The *Staff of Forgotten Kings* is a blackened staff of polished obsidian, wrapped in strips of faded crimson cloth. Arcane symbols, flickering with an eerie blue glow, pulse along its length. The top is adorned with a skeletal hand clutching a dark, ever-shifting crystal. Legends speak of the staff as a relic of Kharzan's failed immortality ritual, imbued with the souls he sought to enslave.

Properties

- **Arcane Reservoir** – The staff has 6 charges and regains 1d4+2 charges daily at midnight.
- **Necrotic Conduit** – When you deal necrotic damage with a spell while holding this staff, you can expend 1 charge to reroll one damage die. You must use the new result.
- **Sovereign's Command** – As an action, you can expend 2 charges to cast *Dominate Person* (DC 17).
- **King's Requiem** – As an action, you can expend 4 charges to cast *Finger of Death* (DC 17). A creature killed by this spell rises as a Wight under your control after 1 minute.
- **Phantom Sovereignty (Curse)** – Attuning to this staff binds you to the echoes of Kharzan's will. Each time you expend all charges, roll a d20. On a 1, Kharzan's spirit attempts to possess you as if you failed a *Dominate Monster* (DC 19) saving throw. The effect lasts for 1 hour, during which time Kharzan may attempt to use the staff's abilities as he sees fit.

The Forgotten Vaults of Kharzan





A Problem at the Office

System: COC Compatable

Era: 1980s

Setting: An office building

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

Author: Andrew Babcock

A Problem at the Office

Something is off at the office at Mikatonic Innovations, a tabletop RPG company known for its bizarrely immersive horror game *Summon the Madness*, employees dedicate themselves tirelessly to game development. But lately, the workers have been exhibiting strange behavior: excessive brand loyalty, obsessive product evangelism, and an increasing desire to drink *Elderberry Energy*, a bizarre new beverage available only at the company's exclusive outlet store.

The office's head editor and fact-checker, Nick Winter, seems like a detail-obsessed corporate drone, but in reality, he is the mastermind behind a mind-controlling campaign aimed at converting the entire world into loyal servants. His plan? Create a game so immersive that it rewires the minds of its players, guiding them toward subservience to a mysterious, unseen entity lurking behind the company's true purpose.

Meanwhile, in the penthouse office above, the supposed CEO, Harold Blackwood, is nothing more than a figurehead. Once the lead designer of *Summon the Madness*, Blackwood has been reduced to a pawn in the grander scheme of Dunwich Holdings Inc., the parent company that owns Dunwich Pharmaceuticals—a name investigators might recognize from previous dealings with nefarious mind-control experiments.

Now, with deadlines looming and the company's newest expansion *Sanity's Demise* about to launch, something feels deeply wrong. Employees disappear overnight, executives speak in rehearsed, unsettling unison, and those who resist drinking Elderberry Energy find themselves fired, or worse, missing.

It's up to the investigators, whether they be new hires, journalists, or outsiders drawn into the mystery, to uncover the truth before the game's official launch. If they fail, reality itself may become just another setting in *Summon the Madness*—and everyone will be playing whether they want to or not.

Key Locations

1. **The Office Floor** – Rows of cubicles filled with eerily devoted employees, each muttering brand slogans and inserting keywords into conversations as though reading from a script.
2. **Nick Winter's Editing Suite** – A soundproofed office where Nick revises reality itself, ensuring that all media output follows the grand design.
3. **The Playtesting Room** – A sealed chamber where players of *Summon the Madness* lose themselves in the game—sometimes permanently.
4. **The Outlet Store** – The only place where one can purchase Elderberry Energy. Employees *must* drink it daily, and outsiders who refuse might be “corrected.”
5. **The Penthouse Office** – Harold Blackwood, once a genius game designer, now a shell of his former self. He knows more than he lets on but fears speaking out.
6. **The Printing Press** – The heart of the operation, where physical copies of *Summon the Madness* are imbued with eldritch influence.

Threats & Challenges

- **Mind-Controlled Employees** – Normal at first glance, but disturbingly synchronized in speech and actions.
- **Nick Winter** – The true architect of the horror, wielding his influence through text, speech, and the game itself.
- **The Benefactor** – An unseen entity tied to Dunwich Holdings Inc., whose name is never spoken aloud.
- **Reality Distortion** – As the investigators delve deeper, they begin to question whether they are inside the

Possible Endings

1. **Escape & Exposure** – The investigators expose the conspiracy, but the game’s launch has already begun. Can they stop its spread?
2. **Descent into Madness** – The investigators lose themselves in *Summon the Madness*, becoming NPCs in its eldritch grip.
3. **Corporate Takeover** – The investigators seize control, but at what cost? Are they still themselves, or are they merely new figureheads?
4. **Rewriting Reality** – With the right knowledge, the investigators could *edit* the narrative, but can they trust their own memories?

Apologies for the brevity of this horror module. While exploring potential options with a corporate entity, I encountered some unexpected roadblocks that impacted the development process. Unfortunately, this, combined with a tight deadline, meant that this module isn’t as detailed as the last few. However, I am currently working on something new, and I’m confident that the new segment here next week will be significantly stronger. I appreciate your patience and support—exciting things are on the way!

-Andrew

In The News

In Memoriam: Ernest Gary Gygax Jr.

On February 28, 2025, Ernest "Ernie" Gary Gygax Jr. passed away. Ernie was the eldest son of Gary Gygax Sr., co-creator of Dungeons & Dragons. At the time of his death, Ernie was suffering from heart and kidney failure. He was a notable figure in the gaming community, contributing to the legacy of tabletop role-playing games. [Tenkar's Tavern](#)

Industry News:

- **D&D and Magic: The Gathering Crossover:** Wizards of the Coast announced a new crossover supplement set in the plane of Lorwyn/Shadowmoor, blending elements of Magic: The Gathering with Dungeons & Dragons. The announcement was made during MagicCon Chicago, marking a significant event for fans of both franchises. [Polygon](#)
- **Invincible TTRPG Announcement:** Free League Publishing, in partnership with Skybound Entertainment, is developing a tabletop role-playing game based on the comic and Amazon Prime series "Invincible." The game, titled "Invincible – Superhero Roleplaying," will utilize the Year Zero Engine and is set to launch a Kickstarter campaign later this year. [Polygon](#)
- **Critical Role's Expansion:** Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Critical Role is expanding into various areas, including the development of a new video game set in their world of Exandria, upcoming live shows across

The Infinite Athenaeum

Tucked away in the folds of reality, hidden from the unworthy, lies **The Infinite Athenaeum**—a library beyond mortal comprehension, where knowledge is both treasure and temptation. To the casual observer, it appears as any grand, old-world library: towering wooden shelves, the scent of aged parchment, and the quiet rustle of turning pages. But those who linger will notice the oddities—books that rearrange themselves when unobserved, whispered conversations with no source, and spectral assistants gliding silently through walls.

Access is by invitation alone. One must submit a request to the Athenaeum's appointed offices in major cities, a process requiring patience, intellect, and a willingness to bare one's mind to scrutiny. The request form is long and methodical, testing not only the applicant's knowledge but their intent. Many apply; few are chosen.

Upon entrance, visitors find more than just books. Small, private reading rooms branch off from the main hall, each warded against intrusion. The air hums with arcane energy, and some claim the books themselves decide who is worthy to read them. Deeper within, past rows of tomes detailing forgotten histories and forbidden spells, stands a simple door. Upon it, a single brass plaque bears one word: Curator.



The Curator

None know the Curator's true origins. Some whisper that it is an ancient being who has outlived empires. Others claim it is a construct of knowledge itself, bound to guard the Athenaeum for eternity. Those granted an audience describe a figure draped in shifting shadows, its voice as soft as turning pages yet carrying the weight of countless ages. It asks questions more often than it answers, and those who seek forbidden knowledge may find the price of wisdom greater than they anticipated.

Treasures of the Athenaeum

- **Codex of the Unbound** (Priceless) – A tome that rewrites itself to answer the reader's most pressing question.
- **Whispering Quill** (350 gp) – A quill that transcribes thoughts directly onto parchment, though it sometimes records more than intended.
- **The Tome of Recollection** (500 gp) – A book that, when opened, reveals lost memories from the reader's past.

Mirror of Forgotten Names (1,000 gp) – A small, silver mirror that whispers the true name of anyone who gazes into it.

Rumors & Secrets

- **The Lost Index:** A hidden section of the library is said to contain books that should never have existed. Those who find it never return unchanged.
- **The Everwritten Manuscript:** A book that never stops writing itself, filling its pages with the events of history *before* they happen.
- **The Spectral Assistants:** Some believe they are the souls of scholars who failed the Athenaeum's trials, doomed to serve for eternity.

This Months Youtube Spotlight



The DM Lair

<https://www.youtube.com/@theDMLair>

The world of Dungeon Mastering is vast and often overwhelming, with countless rules, homebrew mechanics, and player personalities to manage. For DMs seeking guidance, inspiration, or just a bit of camaraderie, The DM Lair stands out as a beacon of wisdom in the ever-expanding multiverse of online RPG content.

Run by Luke Hart, The DM Lair is a YouTube channel dedicated to helping Dungeon Masters improve their game through practical advice, ready-to-use homebrew content, and engaging discussions about Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition. With a strong focus on making game preparation easier and sessions more engaging, Luke delivers weekly videos packed with insight, humor, and years of experience behind the DM screen.

One of the greatest strengths of The DM Lair is its structured yet accessible approach to DM advice. Unlike channels that meander through long-winded explanations, Luke keeps his content concise and to the point, ensuring that even the busiest DMs can quickly find useful information. His videos cover a broad range of topics, including:

Encounter & Adventure Design: Crafting balanced and engaging encounters, designing compelling villains, and structuring memorable adventures.

DM Advice & Best Practices: Handling difficult players, managing session pacing, and keeping the game fun for everyone at the table.

Homebrew & Mechanics: Custom monsters, traps, and magic items that DMs can implement directly into their games.

Live Streams & Community Engagement: Regular Q&A sessions, where Luke answers viewer-submitted questions with his characteristic mix of experience and humor.

In addition to video content, The DM Lair also provides supplementary materials such as free downloadable PDFs and paid content via Patreon, making it a valuable resource for DMs who want to enhance their campaigns with minimal effort.

What makes The DM Lair shine in a sea of RPG content? It boils down to three key factors:

Practicality Over Theory: Luke focuses on what works at the table rather than getting bogged down in theoretical mechanics or niche rule debates. His advice is immediately actionable, making it easy for DMs to integrate into their campaigns.

Engaging & Approachable Style: Luke's delivery is professional yet casual, making viewers feel like they're getting advice from a seasoned DM friend rather than a textbook. His no-nonsense approach is refreshing and easy to digest.

Consistent Quality & Updates: With regular uploads, The DM Lair keeps up with the evolving landscape of 5e, ensuring that its advice remains relevant and useful.

While The DM Lair excels at providing streamlined DM advice, it may not cater as much to those seeking deep, lore-heavy storytelling techniques or highly cinematic game styles. Additionally, while Luke's efficiency is a strength, some viewers might prefer longer, more in-depth discussions on certain topics rather than quick-hit advice segments. I personally love the format. For Dungeon Masters looking to level up their skills without drowning in overly complex theory, The DM Lair is an invaluable resource. Whether you're a new DM learning the ropes or a veteran looking for fresh inspiration, Luke Hart's insights, humor, and practical guidance make this channel a must-watch.

Rating: 9/10 – A wellspring of actionable DM advice that delivers consistent quality with an engaging, no-nonsense approach. If you run D&D games, The DM Lair deserves a spot in your YouTube subscription list!

This Months Podcasts Spotlight



The Vintage RPG Podcast

<https://www.vintagerpg.com/category/podcast/>

Few things in the tabletop RPG community evoke as much excitement as delving into the past—revisiting classic modules, uncovering forgotten treasures, and rekindling the magic of the golden age of gaming. Enter The Vintage RPG Podcast, a show dedicated to exploring the history, lore, and impact of some of the most iconic (and sometimes obscure) role-playing games ever created. Hosted by Stu Horvath and John “Hambone” McGuire, this podcast blends deep knowledge, humor, and enthusiasm into an engaging listening experience that speaks to both seasoned veterans and newcomers to the RPG hobby.

At its core, The Vintage RPG Podcast is a love letter to tabletop gaming’s rich history. Each episode, Stu and Hambone take listeners on a journey through legendary games, supplements, and rulebooks, shining a spotlight on classics such as Dungeons & Dragons, Call of Cthulhu, and RuneQuest, as well as lesser-known gems that may have slipped through the cracks of history. Their discussions are not just about nostalgia; they provide insightful commentary on how these games influenced modern tabletop design and culture.

One of the podcast’s strongest elements is the chemistry between its hosts. Stu, the founder of Vintage RPG, brings a scholarly depth to the discussions, offering historical context and analysis of RPG evolution, while Hambone injects an infectious enthusiasm and humor that keeps the show lively and accessible. Their dynamic makes even the most esoteric topics feel engaging, ensuring that whether they’re discussing the intricacies of early D&D modules or the bizarre world of 1980s gaming oddities, listeners remain hooked.

While the podcast is rooted in vintage RPGs, it doesn’t shy away from covering modern games inspired by classic aesthetics. Episodes often highlight new indie RPGs, OSR (Old School Renaissance) titles, and contemporary releases that capture the spirit of old-school gaming. This balance keeps the show relevant, demonstrating that while gaming’s past is worth celebrating, the future is just as exciting.

Episodes typically run between 20 to 40 minutes, making them digestible and easy to fit into a commute or a painting session at the hobby desk. The sound quality is excellent, and the editing is tight, ensuring that each episode is a polished and immersive experience. The conversational style keeps things casual, yet the discussions are always informative and well-researched.

For anyone with a passion for tabletop role-playing games, The Vintage RPG Podcast is a must-listen. Whether you’re a veteran dungeon master looking to relive the magic of early D&D, a collector hunting for rare and forgotten books, or a newcomer eager to learn about the roots of the hobby, Stu and Hambone provide an entertaining and educational experience that never fails to captivate. The podcast captures the heart of what makes RPGs so special: storytelling, creativity, and a shared love for the games that shaped the industry.

With its engaging hosts, well-researched content, and appreciation for both past and present RPGs, The Vintage RPG Podcast is a shining gem in the world of gaming podcasts. So grab your dice, pull up a chair, and let

Legendary Loot

Abyssbound Plate

The *Abyssbound Plate* is a grim relic forged in a pact between mortal ambition and the dark forces of the Abyss. Legends say that the first wearer of this armor was a devout cleric named *Kalis Vrynn*, who ventured into the depths of the Abyss to confront a demon lord threatening to spill into the material plane. Knowing that he could not survive the encounter with mortal strength alone, Kalis made a terrible bargain: he would be granted the power to defeat the demon lord, but his soul would forever be tied to the darkness. When the battle was over, Kalis emerged victorious, but twisted—the man who returned wore this armor tainted with shadows that moved as if alive.

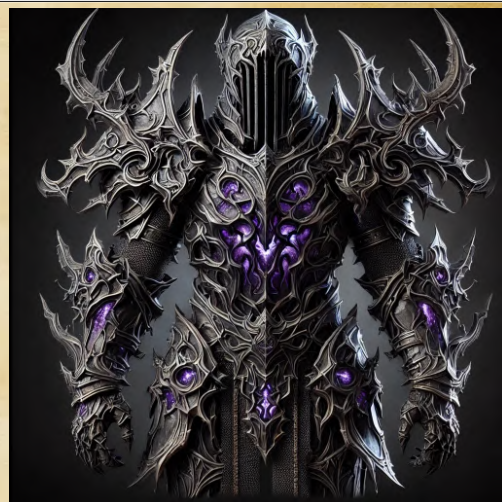
The armor became a symbol of sacrifice and corruption, marking those who wield it as beings who walk a fine line between life and death. Shadows cling to the wearer, and whispers of the abyss constantly brush against their mind, promising power at the cost of their humanity. Over time, the it has found its way into the hands of warlocks, fallen clerics, and others who seek to wield the power of death without regard for the consequences.

Though the armor offers formidable protection against necrotic forces, it carries a grim curse—those killed by the wearer cannot be brought back unless by the most powerful magic, such as a *Wish* or divine intervention. The souls of the fallen are claimed by the Abyss, lost to darkness. The armor's aura of shadows not only blinds enemies but also forces those within it to confront their worst fears, leaving them vulnerable to the wearer's dark magic.

- **Armor Class:** 18 (Heavy Armor)
- **Weight:** 65 lbs
- **Requires Strength 15**
- **Disadvantage on Stealth checks**
- **Attunement required by a non-good aligned creature**

Effects

- **Abyssal Resilience.** You have resistance to necrotic damage. When you take necrotic damage, you can use your reaction to force the source to make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, they take half the necrotic damage they dealt to you.
- **Aura of Shadows (1/Day).** As an action, you summon a 10-foot radius aura for 1 minute:
- **Blinding Darkness:** Creatures in the aura must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the start of their next turn.
- **Dread Manifestation:** Creatures that fail the save are also frightened until the aura ends.
- **Shadow Step:** While in dim light or darkness, you can teleport up to 30 feet as a bonus action.
- **Soul-Binding Curse.** Creatures you kill cannot be revived except by *Wish* or divine intervention.
- **Whispers of the Abyss.** You have advantage on Intimidation checks but disadvantage on Persuasion checks. At dawn, make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, you gain one level of exhaustion.
- **Dark Pact.** When you reduce a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack, you regain hit points equal to half your level (minimum of 1). Each time you do, roll a d20. On a 1, you lose 1d4 maximum hit points, restored only by a long rest in consecrated ground.
- **Cursed.** Once attuned, the armor cannot be removed except by *Remove Curse*. If you die while wearing it, your soul is



April Cons

Awesome Con 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Walter E. Washington Convention Center Washington, DC
Brickonomicon 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Hilton Knoxville Airport Alcoa, TN
Furry Down Under 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Crowne Plaza Surfers Paradise Surfers Paradise, Queensland, Australia
Game On Expo 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Phoenix Convention Center Phoenix, AZ
HauntFest Georgia 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Terrapin Beer Co. Athens, GA
Midwest Gaming Classic 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Baird Center Milwaukee, WI
OKiCon Tulsa 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Marriott Tulsa Hotel Southern Hills / Ruffin Event Center Tulsa, OK
Spookala 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Florida State Fairgrounds Tampa, FL
Steel City Con 2025	April 4-6, 2025	Monroeville Convention Center Monroeville, PA
Animangapop Liverpool 2025	April 5, 2025	Liverpool Guild of Students Liverpool, UK
CycloneCon 2025	April 5, 2025	Centenary University Hackettstown, NJ
Fandom Fest of Southwest Michigan 2025	April 5, 2025	Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Benton Harbor, MI
Old School Comic Show 2025	April 5, 2025	Douglas N. Everett Arena Concord, NH
Stratford ComiCon 2025	April 5, 2025	Best Western Plus The Arden Park Hotel Stratford, ON, Canada
Virginia Beach Anime-Fest 2025	April 5, 2025	Crowne Plaza Virginia Beach Town Center Virginia Beach, VA
Armageddon Expo Christchurch 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Te Pae Christchurch Convention and Exhibition Centre Christchurch, New Zealand
Brick Fest Live Richmond 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Greater Richmond Convention Center Richmond, VA
Cape Anime 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Drury Plaza Hotel Cape Girardeau Conference Center Cape Girardeau, MO
FACTS 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Flanders Expo Ghent, Belgium
Hill Country Comicon 2025	April 5-6, 2025	New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center New Braunfels, TX
Mid Valley Comic Art Expo 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Oregon State Fair & Exposition Center, Jackman-Long Building Salem, OR
Portsmouth Anime & Gaming Con 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Portsmouth Marriott Hotel Portsmouth, UK
Salon National Des Collectionneurs 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Espace Saint-Hyacinthe Saint-Hyacinthe, QC, Canada
SC Comicon 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Greenville Convention Center Greenville, SC
Southwest Comic Book and Creator Showcase 2025	April 5-6, 2025	Ramada Plaza by Wyndham Albuquerque Midtown Albuquerque, NM
Canton-Akron Comic Book, Toy and Nostalgia Show 2025	April 6, 2025	St George Serbian Orthodox Church Canton, OH
Charlie's Epic Con 2025	April 6, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Fort Myers at Bell Tower Shops Fort Myers, FL
Kids Con New England (New Hampshire) 2025	April 6, 2025	Sheraton Nashua Nashua, NH
NJIT Minicon 2025	April 6, 2025	New Jersey Institute of Technology Campus Center Newark, NJ
Furcationland 2025	April 10-13, 2025	Holiday Inn Portland-By The Bay Portland, ME
Squatchcon 2025	April 10-13, 2025	Vern Burton Community Center Port Angeles, WA
Texas Furry Fiesta 2025	April 10-13, 2025	Sheraton Dallas Hotel Dallas, TX
Dairycon 2025	April 11-12, 2025	Fond du Lac County Fairgrounds, The Rec Center Fond du Lac, WI

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April Cons

C2E2 2025	April 11-13, 2025	McCormick PlaceChicago, IL
Comic-Con Prague 2025	April 11-13, 2025	O2 UniversumPraha, Czech Republic
Costume-Con 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Hilton MilwaukeeMilwaukee, WI
Creation Boston 2025	April 11-13, 2025	The Westin Boston Seaport DistrictBoston, MA
El Paso Comic Con 2025	April 11-13, 2025	El Paso Convention And Performing Art CenterEl Paso, TX
InterGalactic ConQuest 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Scottish Rite Masonic CenterSacramento, CA
Kalamazoo Comic-Con 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Kalamazoo County Expo CenterKalamazoo, MI
SCG Con Denver 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Colorado Convention CenterDenver, CO
Sekaicon 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Cherry Valley HotelNewark, OH
VGM Con 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Crowne Plaza Minneapolis WestPlymouth, MN
Woods Flock 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Fall Creek Falls State Park, Newton Ford Bunk Group LodgePikeville, TN
Yellow City Comic Convention 2025	April 11-13, 2025	Amarillo Civic Center ComplexAmarillo, TX
Horror Con Scotland 2025	April 12, 2025	Scottish Event CampusGlasgow, UK
Kingston ComiCon 2025	April 12, 2025	Royal Canadian Legion Branch 560Kingston, ON, Canada
Kingston Independent Comic Expo 2025	April 12, 2025	Old Dutch ChurchKingston, NY
Platform 9 3/4 Wizarding Market 2025	April 12, 2025	River City RailwayJacksonville, FL
Anime Ultra 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Rolling Oaks MallSan Antonio, TX
Anime-nia 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Fresno FairgroundsFresno, CA
Brick Fest Live Hartford 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Connecticut Convention CenterHartford, CT
Edinburgh Anime & Gaming Con 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Sheraton Grand Hotel & Spa, EdinburghEdinburgh, UK
Elfia Haarzuilens 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Castle de HaarHaarzuilens, Netherlands
Fangaea 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Handlery Hotel San DiegoSan Diego, CA
HanaCon 2025	April 12-13, 2025	CongressCentrum Wienecke XI. HannoverHannover, Germany
Midwest Toy and Comic Fest Decatur 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Decatur Civic CenterDecatur, IL
Minnesota Brick Convention 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Eagan Civic ArenaEagan, MN
STAPLE! 2025	April 12-13, 2025	St. Edward's University, Mabee BallroomAustin, TX
Supanova Comic-Con & Gaming - Gold Coast 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Gold Coast Convention & Exhibition CentreBroadbeach, Queensland, Australia
TimminsCon 2025	April 12-13, 2025	McIntyre Community CentreTimmins, ON, Canada
Vaca-Con 2025	April 12-13, 2025	Ulati Community CenterVacaville, CA
QuadCon St Charles 2025	April 13, 2025	Steel Shop Athletics & EventsSt Charles, MO
South Bend Anime-Fest 2025	April 13, 2025	Hilton Garden Inn South BendSouth Bend, IN
Las Vegas Fur Con 2025	April 17-20, 2025	Alexis Park ResortLas Vegas, NV
Anime Ottawa 2025	April 18-20, 2025	EY CentreOttawa, ON, Canada
AnthrOhio 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Hilton Columbus DowntownColumbus, OH
Armageddon Expo Wellington 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Sky StadiumWellington, New Zealand
KokoroCon 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Crowne Plaza NottinghamNottingham, UK
Middle East Film and Comic Con 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC)Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Minicon 2025	April 18-20, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Bloomington - Minneapolis SouthBloomington, MN
MTAC 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Sheraton Music City Hotel/ Embassy Suites Nashville AirportNashville, TN
Puerto Rico Comic Con 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Puerto Rico Convention CenterSan Juan, Puerto Rico
SacAnime Roseville 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Roebbelen Center @the GroundsRoseville, CA
Sakura-Con 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Seattle Convention CenterSeattle, WA
WeebCon Texas 2025	April 18-20, 2025	Irving Convention Center at Las ColinasIrving, TX
Fantastic 2025	April 18-22, 2025	Novotel Lyon Bron EurexpoBron, France
AniFest 2025	April 19, 2025	Torrance Cultural Arts CenterTorrance, CA
Animangapop Exeter 2025	April 19, 2025	Exeter PhoenixExeter, UK
CoMo Retro Game Convention 2025	April 19, 2025	Northeast Event CenterColumbia, MO
JohnsonCity Anime-Fest 2025	April 19, 2025	Holiday Inn Johnson CityJohnson City, TN

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April Cons

LouisvilleCon 2025	April 19, 2025	Triple Crown PavilionLouisville, KY
Mobile Bay Anime Festival 2025	April 19, 2025	Daphne Civic CenterDaphne, AL
My-Con Spring 2025	April 19, 2025	Avanti Palms Resort and Conference CenterOrlando, FL
The AniMeet 2025	April 19, 2025	Mulungushi International Conference CentreLusaka, Zambia
Wicked Comic Con 2025	April 19, 2025	The Westin Boston Seaport DistrictBoston, MA
Brick Fest Live Indianapolis 2025	April 19-20, 2025	Indiana Convention CenterIndianapolis, IN
Pine State Expo 2025	April 19-21, 2025	Holiday Inn by the Bay - PortlandPortland, ME
Calgary Expo 2025	April 24-27, 2025	Stampede ParkCalgary, AB, Canada
Anime St. Louis 2025	April 25-27, 2025	St. Charles Convention CenterSt. Charles, MO
DaveCon 2025	April 25-27, 2025	Crowne Plaza Suites Msp Airport - Mall of AmericaBloomington, MN
East European Comic Con 2025	April 25-27, 2025	RomexpoBucharest, Romania
Erie Culture Fest 2025	April 25-27, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Cleveland - WestlakeWestlake, OH
Huntsville Comic & Pop Culture Expo 2025	April 25-27, 2025	Von Braun CenterHuntsville, AL
iMagicon 2025	April 25-27, 2025	North Dakota State Fair CenterMinot, ND
Lvl Up Expo 2025	April 25-27, 2025	Las Vegas Convention CenterLas Vegas, NV
Rising Phoenix Game Convention 2025	April 25-27, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Boston - MilfordMilford, MA
South Texas Comic Con 2025	April 25-27, 2025	McAllen Convention CenterMcAllen, TX
The Nostalgia Con Denver 2025	April 25-27, 2025	Colorado Convention CenterDenver, CO
WizardCon 2025	April 25-27, 2025	Four Points by Sheraton KalamazooKalamazoo, MI
Furry Weekend Holland 2025	April 25-28, 2025	Kasteel de BercktBaarlo, Netherlands
Anime in the Park - Lake David Park 2025	April 26, 2025	Lake David ParkGroveland, FL
Concinnity 2025	April 26, 2025	Milwaukee School of Engineering, Dwight and Dian Diercks Computational Science HallMilwaukee, WI
Halfway 2 Halloween 2025	April 26, 2025	Marley Station MallGlen Burnie, MD
Harumatsuri 2025	April 26, 2025	Nikkei National Museum and Cultural CentreBurnaby, BC, Canada
Rock & Roll Steampunk Fair 2025	April 26, 2025	Washington Borough Veterans ParkWashington, NJ
Sudbury ComiCon 2025	April 26, 2025	George Armstrong Community Centre & ArenaGreater Sudbury, ON, Canada
UmiKo 2025	April 26, 2025	Osnovna šola KoperKoper, Slovenia
Anime Tyler 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Holiday Inn Tyler - Conference CenterTyler, TX
Brick Fest Live New Jersey 2025	April 26-27, 2025	New Jersey Convention and Exposition CenterEdison, NJ
Castle Point Anime Convention 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Meadowlands Exposition CenterSecaucus, NJ
CK Expo 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Chatham-Kent John D. Bradley Convention CentreChatham, ON, Canada
Collect-A-Con Houston 2025	April 26-27, 2025	George R. Brown Convention CenterHouston, TX
Cornwall & Area Pop Event 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Benson CentreCornwall, ON, Canada
Delaware Train Show & April Fools Toy Show 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Nur Shrine CenterNew Castle, DE
FicZone 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Feria de Muestras de ArmillaGranada, Spain
Four State Comic-Con 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Hagerstown Community College ARCCHagerstown, MD
Game Central Station Shop & Swap 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Athens Sports ArenaAthens, GA
Manchester Anime & Gaming Con 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Sugden Sports CentreManchester, UK
Quiet Corner Sci-Fi & Comic Experience 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Woodstock Fair GroundsWoodstock, CT
Sci-Fi Scarborough 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Scarborough SpaScarborough, UK
Screamiverse Expo 2025	April 26-27, 2025	Berglund CenterRoanoke, VA
Super Jersey Comic Expo 2025	April 26-27, 2025	The Dome at Adventure CrossingJackson Township, NJ
Charleston Anime-Fest 2025	April 27, 2025	Embassy Suites by Hilton Charleston Airport Hotel & Convention CenterNorth Charleston, SC
Niagara Video Game Swap 2025	April 27, 2025	Port Dalhousie Lions ClubSt. Catharines, ON, Canada

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Module Review of the Month

(D&D)

By Andrew Babcock



The Seatower Breakout

Baldur's Gate has always been a city teeming with opportunity, corruption, and intrigue, and *The Seatower Breakout* capitalizes on these themes in an exhilarating heist-style adventure. Designed for *Dungeons & Dragons* 5E characters of levels 3-5, this module offers players a high-stakes mission filled with deception, danger, and double-crosses. Whether you're a Dungeon Master looking to inject some fresh excitement into your campaign or a player seeking an adventure where brains matter as much as brawn, *The Seatower Breakout* delivers.

Unlike standard dungeon crawls, this adventure challenges players to infiltrate Baldur's Gate's infamous Seatower of Balduran by getting arrested. From the moment they accept the job, every decision matters—how they get caught influences their starting conditions inside the prison, their potential allies and enemies, and even their escape routes. Will they pick a fight with the city's notorious Flaming Fist? Or will they orchestrate a masterful deception that lands them in the prison under false pretenses? The flexibility of this setup makes *The Seatower*

Breakout an adventure with immense replayability.

The prison setting is an interactive sandbox where players must navigate gang politics, corrupt guards, and survival behind bars. It leans heavily on social intrigue, rewarding groups that use persuasion, bribery, and alliances to their advantage. However, should things take a turn for the worse, the module provides ample opportunity for combat—including a climactic confrontation with Warden Valeria Toren, a formidable final boss with a no-nonsense attitude and brutal combat abilities.

Adding to the tension is the prisoner they were sent to extract: Thalgrim Oathbinder, a former Flaming Fist commander with secrets that turn the entire mission on its head. Just as the players think they have the upper hand, they discover that their employer, the silver-tongued Lucian Vael, may have had other plans all along. The twists and betrayals keep players on their toes, ensuring that no escape attempt is ever straightforward. *The Seatower Breakout* accommodates multiple approaches, making it ideal for groups with diverse playstyles. Those who enjoy tactical combat can stage an all-out prison riot, while stealth-focused groups might prefer sneaking through underground tunnels. The adventure also provides rich opportunities for puzzle-solving and exploration, particularly for those who take the time to interact with the various factions inside the prison.

The adventure's structured five-chapter design ensures a satisfying progression, culminating in an intense escape sequence where players must outmaneuver guards, rival prisoners, and even their own employer. The

Module Review of the Month

D&D

By Andrew Babcock

The Seatower Breakout Continued-

From a Dungeon Master's perspective, *The Seatower Breakout* is remarkably well-organized. It includes clear scene breakdowns, NPC motivations, faction dynamics, and multiple adventure hooks to seamlessly integrate it into an ongoing campaign. The appendices provide stat blocks, magic items, and rewards, making it easy to run without additional prep time.

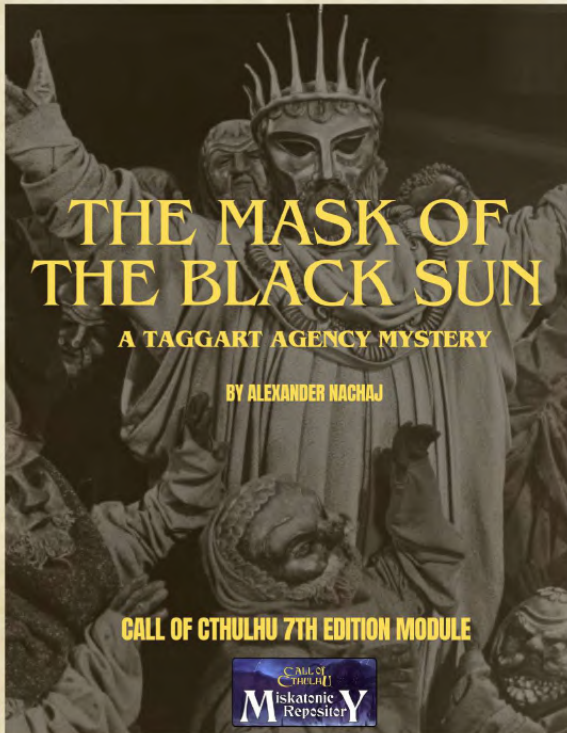
One of the module's strongest elements is its pacing advice. It encourages DMs to maintain tension by layering in environmental hazards, time-sensitive challenges, and NPC-driven complications. The section on alternate endings ensures that choices made throughout the adventure have lasting consequences, giving DMs plenty of material for future story arcs.

The Seatower Breakout is a masterfully crafted prison heist adventure that offers equal parts strategy, roleplaying, and heart-pounding action. It's an engaging, non-linear experience that rewards clever thinking, making it a must-play for any D&D group looking for a challenge outside the typical dungeon crawl.

With its dynamic setting, compelling NPCs, and narrative depth, *The Seatower Breakout* earns a 9.5 out of 10—a rare gem among D&D adventures that deserves a place at any gaming table. Whether your players emerge as cunning escape artists, tragic casualties, or the new underworld kingpins of Baldur's Gate, one thing is certain: no one leaves the Seatower unscathed.

<https://www.dmsguild.com/product/513864/The-Seatower-Breakout>

Module Review of the Month



The Mask of the Black Sun

A Call of Cthulhu 7th Edition Adventure

Few games capture the slow descent into cosmic horror like Call of Cthulhu, and *The Mask of the Black Sun* is a shining—if not eerily flickering—example of what makes Chaosium’s RPG thrive. Penned by Alexander Nachaj, this one-shot investigation set in the 1920s blends classic noir detective work with occult horror, culminating in a tightly woven, suspenseful experience that will leave players questioning the very nature of reality.

Set in Salem Falls, New Brunswick, this adventure steps outside the well-trodden streets of Arkham and London, trading them for a thriving Art Deco metropolis clashing against the rugged Canadian wilderness. This choice of setting is a refreshing shift, offering a unique atmosphere of industrial ambition overshadowed by something ancient and unspeakable.

Players take on the role of newly hired investigators at the struggling Taggart Agency, a once-reputable detective firm now scraping by on menial cases. The setup is instantly engaging: a wealthy widow seeks help recovering

a stolen Balinese artifact—the Mask of the Black Sun.

But, as any seasoned Keeper knows, no job in Call of Cthulhu is ever as simple as it seems.

Nachaj weaves a story that starts as a classic detective mystery and gradually spirals into occult horror. The stolen mask is no mere antique, but an artifact tied to dark resurrection rituals, and the thieves—two desperate brothers—have already put it to terrifying use. What follows is an intricately structured investigation leading players through encounters with rival detectives, socialites, suspicious caterers, and increasingly bizarre clues. One of the adventure’s greatest strengths is its modular design. Investigators can pursue different leads at their own pace, using logical deduction, social manipulation, or brute force to uncover the truth. The NPCs—ranging from the embittered but charming Mike Taggart to the dangerously ambitious Mrs. Parlee—feel dynamic, with personalities that shift based on player interactions.

While the adventure leans into its investigative roots, it does not shy away from action. The Manzer brothers, twisted by their misuse of the mask’s power, offer genuinely unsettling encounters, and by the climax, the horrors lurking in the ruined Manzer house are straight out of a Lovecraftian nightmare.

For Keepers, *The Mask of the Black Sun* provides clear guidance and modular handouts to maintain flow. It includes multiple paths to success, detailed notes on how to pace the investigation, and a variety of character reactions and consequences depending on player choices.

The competing detective agency subplot adds an extra layer of tension. The Drake Agency’s operatives aren’t just rival investigators—they could become allies, obstacles, or outright enemies, adding a human element to the horror.

The Mask of the Black Sun

The Mask of the Black Sun is a well-paced, atmospheric adventure that highlights the best of Call of Cthulhu: tense investigations, unsettling horror, and player-driven storytelling. The unique setting, multi-path structure, and layered mystery make it a standout module, especially for Keepers looking to introduce new players to the game.

While the core investigation is structured, the sandbox approach allows groups to tackle leads in their own way, fostering emergent storytelling. Seasoned investigators will appreciate the unfolding cosmic horror, while newcomers will find themselves drawn into a mystery that balances accessibility with depth.

Final Score: 9/10

Pros:

- A rich, immersive setting with a unique atmosphere
- Engaging mystery with multiple paths to resolution
- Strong NPCs with dynamic interactions
- Perfectly paced horror escalation

Cons:

- Some moments may require a Keeper with experience in handling open-ended investigations
- The final encounter, while intense, might be overwhelming for unprepared players

For Keepers looking to blend noir detective work with creeping eldritch horror, The Mask of the Black Sun is an absolute must-run. Whether your players walk away triumphant or trembling in fear, one thing is certain—they'll never forget the night they stared into the abyss of the Black Sun.

More info on this module:

<https://www.anachaj.ca/the-mask-of-the-black-sun-call-of-cthulhu-game-module-now-out>

https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/474628/The-Mask-of-the-Black-Sun?affiliate_id=3881117

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Create A Backstory



Unfortunately , we didn't get any submissions last month, so let's try again. 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.



DRAGONFIRE

MAGAZINE