

DRAGONFIRE

MAGAZINE

Issue 24: May/June 2025



EDITOR'S EDICT

MAY/JUNE 2025 - ISSUE 4

Greetings, travelers of myth and mystery,

With each issue of *DragonFire Magazine*, I strive to craft something worthy of your time and imagination. As many of you know, this magazine is a labor of love—a one-person endeavor fueled by passion, creativity, and late-night inspiration. But as life tends to do, the days have grown shorter and the responsibilities heavier.

To maintain the level of quality you've come to expect—and that I demand of myself—I've made the decision to shift *DragonFire Magazine* to a bi-monthly release schedule. This will allow for deeper dives into the content you love: richer modules, more refined features, and stronger support for the indie TTRPG community. It wasn't an easy call, but it's the right one.

This May/June issue is the first under the new schedule, and I think you'll agree it's something special. We've continued our descent into darkness with *Lanterns Fade*, a Shadowdark-compatible horror zine that explores the cursed village of Duskmire in agonizing, flickering detail. You'll also find the next haunting chapter in *The Path of Shadows*, where Altharid's story winds deeper into the corruption of forgotten temples. I'm also thrilled to welcome Robert James as a guest artist this issue. His unique style brings eerie life to our horror features, and I couldn't be happier with how his work captures the creeping dread we were aiming for. I hope you enjoy the look and feel of this issue as much as I enjoyed building it.

As always, *DragonFire* remains a free, community-powered publication. I'm still calling for contributors—writers, artists, cartographers, and tinkerers of systems and settings. If you've got a weird tale to tell, a module to share, or an idea that just won't leave your brain, send it in. Let's build this world together.

Thank you for sticking with me on this journey. I may not be able to release an issue every month anymore—but when we do release one, it will be worth the wait.

Yours in shadow and light,

Andrew Babcock

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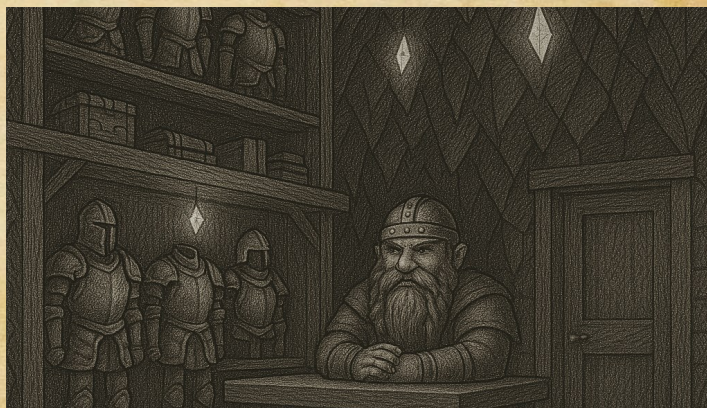
THE SHARDBOUND

VAULT

THIS MONTHS BUILDING OF

INTEREST.

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THE PATH OF SHADOWS

BY ANDREW BABCOCK

The chamber trembled with unearthly energy, the air thick and oppressive as Altharid stood before the altar. His arm was outstretched, the sigil on his flesh blazing with an intensity that made the surrounding shadows recoil. Above the altar, the writhing mass of shadowy energy pulsed and shifted, tendrils of darkness stretching and curling like the limbs of some ancient beast. Its presence was overwhelming, its gravity undeniable. The shadows gathered at the edges of the hall, forming a living wall of darkness. They surged and writhed, their movements synchronized as if driven by a single, commanding will. The whispers in Altharid's mind had grown into a deafening roar, their words overlapping in chaotic fragments. He could feel the weight of the entity's voice pressing against his very soul.

"The vessel has come," the voice intoned, deep and resonant, reverberating through the chamber like a thunderclap. *"Choose your path, Altharid. Will you claim the power that is your birthright, or will you falter, as so many before you have?"*

Altharid's breath was shallow, his body trembling under the immense pressure of the moment. The sigil on his arm burned hotter, its glow illuminating his features and the jagged stone of the altar before him. The air around him seemed to hum with anticipation, as though the temple itself awaited his decision.

Altharid's fingers hovered above the altar, his heart pounding in his chest. The sigil flared again, brighter than ever, urging him to act. The whispers in his mind coalesced into a single, unified command: *"Decide."*

"I didn't come this far to turn back," he said, his voice low but steady. His eyes narrowed as he stared into the shifting void above the altar. "But I'll decide on my terms."

With a deep breath, he placed his hand on the altar.

The moment his palm touched the cold, obsidian surface, the sigil on his arm erupted in a blinding burst of light. The shadows around the chamber screamed—a sound not of pain, but of fury and hunger. The entity convulsed above the altar, its tendrils lashing out wildly as the energy within the temple surged to life.

"I will claim the power as my own!" He exclaimed.

The sigil's glow spread across his body, its markings snaking up his arm and across his chest like living flames. The heat was unbearable, but Altharid didn't pull away. Instead, he felt the power coursing through him, overwhelming and intoxicating. The shadows recoiled, their forms bowing as if in reverence.

The temple itself seemed to react to his choice. The ground beneath his feet trembled, cracks spreading outward from the altar like veins. The shadows struck with ferocity, their tendrils lashing out in waves. Altharid fought back, wielding the sigil's power—or the amulet's guidance—with every ounce of his strength.

The entity's voice thundered through the chamber, mocking and commanding. *"You are bound to me, Altharid. You cannot escape your purpose."*

The battle raged, the chamber a storm of light and shadow. Altharid's breath came in ragged gasps as he pushed himself to his limits, the sigil flaring with each strike. The shadows were relentless, their forms multiplying, but the energy coursing through him—or his own willpower—held them at bay.

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Finally, with a deafening roar, the altar cracked. A surge of crimson light burst from its core, forcing the shadows to retreat. The entity's mass above the altar convulsed, its tendrils withdrawing into the darkness. Altharid collapsed to one knee, his body trembling with exhaustion. The sigil on his arm dimmed, its light flickering faintly as the energy within him subsided. The chamber was silent now, the shadows receded, but the oppressive weight of the entity's presence remained.

The sigil's new markings glowed faintly, their heat lingering on his skin. He felt stronger, his connection to the temple deeper than ever, but a faint, insidious whisper in his mind warned him of the price he had yet to pay. Altharid rose slowly, his gaze fixed on the cracked altar. Beyond it, a doorway had opened, its edges lined with faintly glowing runes. The passage led deeper into the temple, its depths shrouded in darkness. With a final glance at the writhing mass above the altar, Altharid tightened his grip on his dagger and stepped forward. The doorway sealed behind him with a low rumble, leaving him alone in the suffocating silence of the next corridor.

The whispers in his mind were quieter now, but their presence remained. The temple's challenges were far from over, and whatever lay ahead would test him in ways he couldn't yet imagine.

The chamber was a storm of chaos, the air vibrating with raw energy as the shadows swirled toward Altharid in relentless waves. The sigil on his arm pulsed violently, its light radiating in blinding bursts that illuminated the writhing mass of shadowy figures converging on him. The entity's voice thundered, both a command and a challenge.

"Show me your resolve, Altharid. Claim your destiny or fall before it."

Altharid felt the weight of the entity's demand pressing down on him, forcing his decision. The sigil burned hotter, searing his skin, as he stood at the brink of transformation. The shadows surged closer, their jagged forms brimming with malice.

With a guttural roar, Altharid gave in to the sigil's pull, letting its energy flow through him unrestrained. The pain was overwhelming, like fire coursing through his veins, but it brought with it a surge of unimaginable strength. The sigil's light erupted across his body, dark tendrils of energy radiating outward as his form began to shift.

His eyes burned with an unnatural glow, and his shadow moved of its own accord, elongating and twisting into monstrous shapes. The shadows that had sought to destroy him faltered, recoiling in fear as the sigil's power lashed out. Tendrils of dark energy whipped through the air, tearing into the shadowy figures and scattering them like smoke in the wind.

But the strength came with a cost. Altharid felt the entity's presence deepening within him, its voice louder, more commanding. *"You are mine now,"* it whispered, its tone both triumphant and ominous. The sigil's markings spread further across his body, a visible reminder of the pact he had made.

Altharid rose slowly, his movements fluid but unfamiliar, as though his body was no longer entirely his own. The sigil's markings glowed faintly, their tendrils spreading across his skin like veins of molten energy. His reflection in the obsidian altar revealed the changes—his eyes now burned with a crimson light, and faint tendrils of shadow coiled around his shoulders, responding to his emotions.

The entity's voice was quieter now, more intimate, as though it resided within him. *"You have taken the first step. The power is yours, but the price is yet to be paid."*

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Altharid clenched his fists, feeling the raw strength coursing through him. For the first time, the shadows seemed small—less like predators and more like prey.

The temple was far from finished with him.

The chamber fell silent, the echoes of the battle fading into an oppressive stillness. Altharid stood in the aftermath, his breath heavy, his body aching. The sigil on his arm pulsed faintly, its glow dimmed but steady. The shadows had receded into the cracks of the temple, leaving behind an air thick with the residue of ancient power.

As Altharid stepped closer to the second altar, the ground beneath him trembled. A sudden, sharp pain flared in the sigil, forcing him to his knees. His vision blurred, the chamber around him dissolving into a swirling haze of light and shadow. The sigil on his arm flared once more, and a voice, deep and resonant, whispered in his mind: *“See what was, and what will be.”*

The haze coalesced into fragmented images, scenes from a time long past. Altharid saw the temple in its prime—a vast, imposing structure, its spires untainted by the creeping shadows that now consumed it. Figures cloaked in dark robes moved through its halls, their voices raised in a haunting chant. At the heart of the temple, a great ritual was underway.

A massive entity, not unlike the one Altharid had just faced, writhed above an ancient altar. Its tendrils lashed out, restrained by glowing chains of light anchored to the walls. The air crackled with energy as the robed figures worked to bind the entity, their movements frantic but precise.

“They sought to imprison me,” the entity’s voice whispered, laced with contempt. *“They feared what I could do.”*

The vision shifted. The chains around the entity began to weaken, the light fading as the robed figures faltered. One among them—a tall man with sharp features and piercing eyes—stepped forward, raising his hands in a final, desperate gesture. Altharid’s breath caught as he recognized the man: Maldrak.

The ritual faltered, the energy spiraling out of control. The scene dissolved into chaos as the chamber collapsed, the robed figures consumed by the entity’s wrath. Only Maldrak remained, his form bathed in a dark light as he turned and strode toward a shadowy passage. His expression was resolute, his intentions unreadable.

The vision changed again, this time showing the temple as it was now—cracked and crumbling, consumed by shadow. The entity’s tendrils stretched beyond the altar, twisting through the halls, feeding on the ruins. Altharid saw glimpses of figures like himself—travelers, seekers, adventurers—each one falling before the shadows, their bodies left broken and their faces etched with terror.

The final image lingered: Maldrak standing at the edge of the altar, his hand outstretched toward the writhing mass above it. His voice, distorted but unmistakable, echoed in Altharid’s mind: *“You will finish what I began.”*

The vision shattered, and Altharid was thrust back into the present. He gasped, clutching his arm as the sigil’s light flared one last time before dimming. The altar before him was cracked and smoldering, its energy spent. The chamber was silent, save for the faint hum of the sigil.

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The amulet at his side began to vibrate, its voice breaking the quiet. *“The truth is before you, Altharid. The entity is not only a prisoner but a gatekeeper. Its purpose is to hold back a force far greater than itself.”*

Altharid frowned, his hand brushing the sigil on his arm. “A gatekeeper? What force could be greater than this?”

The amulet’s glow pulsed faintly. *“You will find answers in the temple’s depths, but know this: the sigil binds you to the entity, and its power will test you at every turn. It is both your greatest weapon and your greatest threat.”*

Altharid straightened, his grip tightening on the amulet. “And Maldrak? What was he doing here?”

The amulet hesitated, its voice softer now. *“Maldrak sought the same power you do. But his ambition consumed him. His presence lingers in the shadows of this place, and his goals are tied to the entity’s purpose. Be wary, Altharid. He may yet walk these halls.”*

The warning settled over Altharid like a weight. He glanced around the ruined chamber, the shadows at the edges of the room shifting faintly, as though listening. The whispers in his mind had grown quieter, but their presence was constant, a reminder of the bond he now shared with the temple.

At the far end of the hall, a new passage revealed itself, carved into the stone as if by unseen hands. The runes lining its edges glowed faintly, beckoning Altharid forward. The air beyond was colder, heavier, carrying the promise of greater challenges and darker truths.

The sigil on his arm pulsed in time with the runes, its light a faint but steady guide. Altharid stepped toward the passage, his resolve firm despite the uncertainty that lay ahead.

The amulet’s voice returned, one final warning before he disappeared into the shadows: *“The deeper you go, the less of yourself you may return with. Tread carefully, Altharid. The temple remembers all who enter.”*

The faint hum of the sigil on Altharid’s arm guided him toward the shattered altar, its surface still faintly pulsing with the energy of the recent battle. As he stepped closer, he noticed a jagged crack running down the center of the obsidian slab, leading to a dark cavity below. A faint breeze escaped the opening, carrying with it the acrid scent of age and something far more unsettling.

The whispers in his mind stirred again, faint but insistent, their tones shifting as though urging him forward. The sigil burned slightly warmer, casting a dim glow into the void beneath the altar. Kneeling, Altharid peered inside and saw a hidden passage—a staircase hewn from dark stone spiraling downward into the unknown.

With a steadying breath, he descended, the steps beneath him worn smooth by countless years. The air grew colder with every step, the temperature sinking into his bones. The architecture around him began to change, the stone walls twisting in unnatural patterns, as though the temple itself had been warped by the entity’s influence. Jagged runes etched into the walls glowed faintly, their light flickering as if alive, pulsing in time with the sigil on his arm.

The descent felt endless, the whispers in his mind growing louder and more fragmented. The tunnel twisted and turned, its path defying logic, until at last, it opened into a vast, dimly lit cavern. Shadows flickered along the jagged walls, their forms darting like predators at the edges of his vision.

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At the center of the cavern was a series of platforms suspended above an abyss so deep that the bottom was lost to darkness. The platforms shifted constantly, grinding against one another with the sound of stone on stone. Each was inscribed with intricate runic patterns that glimmered faintly, their meanings obscured by their complexity.

Altharid stepped cautiously onto the first platform, its surface steady beneath his feet despite its slow, grinding movement. The sigil flared in response, and the runes on the platform's surface lit up, casting a faint glow across the cavern. Ahead, the next platform moved closer, but its path was blocked by a jagged shadowy figure standing sentinel in its center.

The whispers in his mind shifted, their tones sharper, more direct. *"The path is one of balance. Knowledge and resolve will guide you. Failure will mean your end."*

As Altharid studied the platforms, he noticed patterns in their movements. Each shifted into alignment only briefly before breaking apart, leaving small windows of time to leap to the next. The runes glowed brighter when the platforms connected, their patterns flickering in sequences that seemed to mimic the sigil's pulses.

The first leap was easy enough—Altharid landed lightly on the second platform just as it clicked into place. But the shadowy guardian lunged the moment he touched down, its jagged limbs slicing through the air with lethal precision. Altharid ducked and rolled, narrowly avoiding its attacks. With a quick strike, he used the glowing edge of his dagger to sever one of its limbs, causing the creature to dissolve into smoke.

He didn't have time to celebrate. The platform beneath him began to tremble, its runes dimming. The sigil on his arm burned fiercely, and he realized it was reacting to the runic symbols. The whispers sharpened: *"Match the patterns. Align the sigil to the temple's design."*

Altharid knelt quickly, tracing the glowing runes with his hand. The sigil flared in response, its light casting sharp patterns onto the platform. Slowly, the runes adjusted, their glow synchronizing with the sigil. The platform steadied, allowing the next to move into alignment.

The process repeated itself on the next platform, each leap more dangerous than the last. The shadow guardians grew more aggressive, their forms larger and faster. Altharid fought them off with a combination of precision and brute force, using the sigil's power to enhance his strikes when his strength alone wasn't enough. But every use of the sigil drained him, leaving him weaker with each encounter.

One platform required him to solve a complex runic sequence, the glowing symbols rearranging themselves as he worked to align them. Sweat dripped down his brow as he focused, the whispers in his mind guiding him through the steps. Failure meant the platform would collapse into the abyss below, taking him with it. At last, Altharid reached the final platform. It was larger than the others, its surface engraved with a sprawling network of runes that pulsed erratically. Three shadow guardians emerged from the darkness, their forms towering and jagged, their movements synchronized as they closed in on him.

The sigil flared brighter than ever, its heat searing his skin. The whispers in his mind rose to a deafening crescendo, their words overlapping in a chaotic symphony. Altharid clenched his fists, summoning every ounce of his remaining strength.

The fight was brutal, the guardians striking in tandem, their movements almost impossible to predict. Altharid ducked, dodged, and countered, his dagger glowing with the faint light of the sigil as he parried their attacks. One by one, he dispatched them, the final guardian dissolving into smoke with an ear-piercing screech.

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As the last shadow faded, the platform steadied. The runes beneath Altharid's feet pulsed in unison, their light growing brighter until a pathway formed, leading to a dark archway on the far side of the cavern. The sigil on his arm dimmed, its light steady but faint, its energy drained from the trial.

Altharid stood on shaking legs, his breath ragged. The whispers in his mind softened, their tones almost approving. *"You have passed the second trial. But the path ahead grows darker still."*

He wiped the blood from his dagger and stepped toward the archway. The air beyond was colder, heavier, and carried the faint scent of decay. The runes lining the passage glowed faintly, their patterns twisting as though alive.

With one final glance at the cavern behind him, Altharid disappeared into the shadows of the next passage, the temple's challenges far from over.

The air grew colder as Altharid moved deeper into the labyrinth, the passageways narrowing and twisting in unnatural patterns. The walls were smooth and black, carved with strange runes that pulsed faintly, as if alive. The sigil on his arm glowed in response, its light flickering in time with the faint hum that resonated through the stone.

The whispers in his mind were louder now, their fragmented phrases overlapping and chaotic. But amidst the noise, one word repeated with unsettling clarity: *"Maldrak."*

Altharid paused at a junction where the tunnel widened into a small chamber. Strewn across the floor were the remnants of another traveler—discarded belongings half-buried in dust. Among the detritus was a journal, its leather cover cracked and worn but still intact. Altharid knelt, brushing the dirt away and opening the journal with cautious hands.

The handwriting inside was precise and angular, the words written in a language that felt familiar yet foreign. As Altharid skimmed the pages, the sigil on his arm flared faintly, illuminating the text. The entries spoke of the temple's power, its labyrinthine nature, and the entity bound within. But what caught Altharid's attention was the name scrawled across the margins of several pages: *Maldrak*.

One passage stood out, written in jagged, hurried strokes:

"The entity is not merely a prison—it is a doorway. Through it lies power beyond comprehension, the means to transcend mortal limits and become as the gods themselves. The sigil is the key, but the temple resists those who seek to claim its secrets. The shadows are its guardians—and its warnings."

Altharid's jaw tightened as he read further. The writings hinted at Maldrak's purpose: not to destroy the entity, but to bind its power to himself. The entries grew more erratic, the words descending into fragmented thoughts: *"I can feel the shadows watching... they whisper my name... they know what I seek."*

The final page bore a single line, scrawled so forcefully that the pen had torn through the paper: *"I will ascend."*

Altharid closed the journal, his thoughts racing. Maldrak had been here, walking the same path, seeking the same answers. But where was he now? And had he succeeded in his ambitions, or had the temple consumed him?

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As Altharid moved beyond the chamber, the atmosphere grew heavier, the air thick with a suffocating tension. The runes on the walls pulsed erratically, their light dimming and flaring as if struggling to maintain their strength. The sigil on his arm burned hotter, its light casting long shadows that danced unnaturally along the walls.

The whispers in his mind shifted, their tone deeper and more resonant. At times, they almost resembled a voice—not the entity's, but something else. The words were faint, indistinct, but they carried a familiar cadence.

“Maldrak...” Altharid muttered under his breath, his eyes narrowing as he scanned the darkness ahead. The shadows around him began to change. They moved with greater purpose, their forms coalescing into shapes that were disturbingly human. One shadow lingered longer than the others, its jagged edges softening into the silhouette of a tall figure. For a fleeting moment, Altharid saw sharp features, piercing eyes, and a faint, mocking smile before the shadow dissolved into the air.

The sigil flared violently, its heat searing Altharid's arm. The whispers grew louder, overlapping into a cacophony that made his head throb. He pressed a hand to his temple, his vision swimming as the voice in his mind deepened, its tone rich with malice.

“You follow in my footsteps, Altharid. But you are unworthy.”

The voice was unmistakable. Maldrak.

Altharid staggered, his breath quickening as the shadows pressed closer. Their movements were deliberate now, circling him like predators sizing up their prey. The walls seemed to close in, the runes flickering weakly as though drained by the presence of the shadows.

“Where are you, Maldrak?” Altharid growled, his voice echoing in the oppressive silence. “What have you done?”

The voice chuckled, low and cruel. *“The same question you will ask yourself, in time. The sigil binds us, Altharid. You cannot escape it, just as I could not.”*

The shadows surged, their forms twisting and writhing as they filled the tunnel ahead. Altharid's grip tightened on his dagger, the sigil's light flickering as he prepared to defend himself. But the shadows did not attack. Instead, they parted, revealing a passage lined with glowing runes that pulsed in time with the sigil.

The voice faded into the distance, leaving only a final, chilling promise: *“We will meet soon, and you will see the truth of what you seek.”*

The tunnel ahead was colder, the air laced with a metallic tang that made Altharid's skin prickle. The sigil's light grew steadier as he stepped forward, though the weight of Maldrak's words lingered heavily in his mind.

The runes on the walls seemed to shift as he passed, their patterns twisting into shapes that resembled the sigil. The whispers in his mind softened, but their tone was different now—less chaotic, more deliberate. They felt like a warning, a reminder that the temple was far from done with him.

The tunnel opened abruptly into a cavernous hall, and Altharid froze at the sight before him. The chamber was dominated by a massive gate, its surface carved with intricate runes that pulsed with an otherworldly light. The gate stretched impossibly high, its spiked arches piercing the vaulted ceiling. A faint hum filled the air, a resonance that vibrated through Altharid's chest, growing louder with each step he took closer.

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The sigil on his arm burned fiercely, its glow casting eerie shadows along the walls. The whispers in his mind surged, their tones overlapping into a discordant symphony that both urged him forward and warned him of the danger ahead.

As he approached the gate, the amulet at his side began to vibrate violently. Its voice cut through the cacophony in his mind, sharp and unyielding. *"This is the core. Beyond this threshold lies the heart of the temple—and the truth you seek. But once you cross, there will be no turning back. The secrets here demand a price greater than you can imagine."*

Altharid hesitated, his gaze flickering between the glowing runes and the sigil that pulsed in time with the gate's energy. The weight of the amulet's warning pressed on him, but the whispers grew louder, more insistent. The choice was no longer his to delay. Whatever lay beyond this gate would determine the course of his path—and perhaps his fate.

As he reached for the gate, the air around him seemed to shift, the temperature dropping sharply. The shadows at the edges of the chamber stirred, their forms elongating and coiling like smoke. Altharid's breath caught as a voice, low and distorted, emerged from the darkness.

"Still so eager, Altharid. You've come far, but you remain blind to the truth."

The voice was familiar, yet twisted, its cadence mocking and cruel. Altharid's hand tightened around the hilt of his dagger as he turned toward the source. The shadows rippled, forming the faint outline of a tall figure. For a fleeting moment, sharp features and piercing eyes emerged from the void—a vision of Maldrak.

"You're dead," Altharid growled, his voice steady despite the unease creeping through him. "The temple claimed you, just like it will claim me if I fail."

The shadow laughed, a hollow, grating sound that echoed through the chamber. *"The temple claimed me, yes. But I was not consumed. I was transformed."* The figure leaned closer, the darkness around it thickening. *"You feel it, don't you? The sigil pulling at your soul, binding you to the entity. You are following the same path I did. And you will meet the same end—unless you have the strength to finish what I began."*

Altharid's jaw clenched, his thoughts racing. The distorted figure's presence was overwhelming, and the voice cut through his mind like a blade. The sigil on his arm flared again, its heat searing his skin as though reacting to Maldrak's words.

"Where are you, Maldrak?" Altharid demanded, stepping toward the shadow. "What did you become?"

The figure began to dissipate, its form unraveling into tendrils of darkness. The voice lingered, low and taunting. *"Come inside, Altharid. You'll see soon enough."*

The shadows receded, and the chamber grew still. Altharid turned back to the gate, his hand trembling as he pressed it against the cold, rune-covered surface. The sigil on his arm burned brighter than ever, its light merging with the glowing runes. The hum of energy intensified, rising to a deafening crescendo as the gate began to move.

With a deep groan, the massive doors creaked open, releasing a blast of frigid air that carried the acrid scent of ancient decay and raw power. The light from within was blinding, a pulsating glow of crimson and gold that spilled into the chamber like liquid fire. Altharid shielded his eyes, his heart pounding as he stepped closer.

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Through the crack in the gate, he caught a glimpse of the core. A massive, swirling vortex of energy dominated the space, its tendrils reaching out like the arms of some cosmic beast. The air shimmered with heat and power, and the whispers in his mind reached a fever pitch.

The amulet spoke again, its voice sharp with urgency. *“This is the heart of the temple, Altharid. The source of its power—and its curse. Once you step inside, the temple will demand its due. Choose wisely.”*

Altharid took a steadying breath, his resolve hardening. With the sigil burning brightly on his arm, he stepped forward, the light of the core consuming him as the gate swung shut behind him.

To be continued in the next issue....

Pagoria's Plight

or The Priest of Palgoria

A spooktacular one shot in honor of Halloween, but could be run anytime of the year. The small town of Pagoria is being terrorized by waves of monsters each and every night. The local priest, Father O'mally is trying to offer as much help and protection as he can. This could be placed into any world and played as a pass through town, even in the middle of another quest line or adventure.

An adventure for 4 to 5 3rd-5th level characters

by Andrew "Lunitar" Babcock

This was my first ever created for publishing module.

I hope you enjoy!

PAGORIA'S PLIGHT



Pagoria Proper

1: Father O'Mally's church

**2: Mausoleum and
Catacombs**

3: Pagoria's Keep

4: Dragonfire Inn

5: Witch's Cabin

PAGORIA'S PLIGHT

What the adventurers are walking into!

Ultimately, it is up to you the Game Master to decide how you bring you adventurers in, but I can give some suggestions:

Arrival at night:

If the party arrival is at night, they can walk in on the remaining town guards having a fight with some of the monsters, losing more than likely. The party rushes in and saves the day. When the monsters are defeated, then transform back into common townsfolk. Common, except they are dead now of course. The guards take them to the church to heal up and introduce them to the priest.

Arrival during the day:

The party is traveling through the forest on the road and come to the town of Pagoria. The town has some structural damage to some of the buildings. Claw marks, signs of fire, doors shattered, and more can be seen along the road in. People are bustling around carrying supplies and some are boarding up windows and reinforcing doors. The adventurers can ask around and are directed to the church and Father O'Mally.

Meeting Father O'Mally:

Both ways end up with the party meeting with the priest. The church is old and in need of repairs, but was once a grand and very ornate place of worship. The stone is green with moss and vines creep up the walls and wrap over the old slate roof. Several of the windows are boarded up or the once colorful panes have been replaced with clear glass. The entrance doors are still heavy and sturdy, they are open before the party.

Inside, at the front of the church stands an older man, maybe in his fifties wearing grey robes that look like they were once a brilliant white. The edges are frayed and some threads are loosely hanging on. The man himself has a full head of gray hair that is pulled back away from his face and tied back. He is handing out bread and meat to people sitting in the pews. He doesn't even notice the newcomers.

He wears no mark of any god or goddess, but does have a green globe on a chain around his neck. One of the people helping hand out blankets goes up to the priest and says something to him pointing at the adventurers. He walks over and introduces himself as Father O'Mally, priest of The Pagorian Church of the People.

If questioned about the incidents, he will explain everything. About a week or so ago, it was shortly after the collapse of the old bell tower of the church, monsters started coming at night, at first, only a few, but their numbers have grown with every night. Just in the last couple nights, the monsters turn into townsfolk when killed. It has to be a curse he explains, brought on by the people turning away from the gods and church.

He feels it is his fault for letting the flock stray to far. The priest before him always was able to bring enough people and tithes in to keep everything going, but the last 20 years were hard for the church. He motions to the church, it falls down around me more every day, but it is the only place the monsters won't attack. He has to keep going to bring salvation to the town once again. If they have no more questions, he must let them go as he has to prepare for the next attack.

PAGORIA'S PLIGHT

The Other Points of Interest:

The Witch

She lives just Northeast of the town in a small secluded cabin in the woods. The cabin is surrounded by garden beds full of herbs and plants. The witch herself is a younger woman, and quite attractive. If the adventurers talk with her, she will inform them that she is no witch at all. She is an alchemist and uses the herbs to make potions, oils and ointments. A wagon comes around once a month and her wares are sent to the bigger cities to supply shops. Everyone believes her to be a witch, because her aunt that was working here moved away for she was far to old to be secluded anymore. The townsfolk just figured she had used a spell to make her younger to trap the men of the village. She has no want nor need for any of the boys that call themselves men from town. If they have no other questions, she will get back to her duties. She has no idea what is going on with the monsters, they have let her be and she wants it to stay that way.

The Cultist Settlement

The "cultists" are just a group of families that no longer wished to remain under the authority or taxes from the town. They moved out here and started the rumors themselves about it being some cult. They are actually simple farmers and craftsman that wish to be left alone. They are very short and to the point, not wanting to talk to anyone. They have no clue about the monsters. Nothing has bothered them or their livestock as of yet.

The keep and the Lord

The lord of the keep was killed in one of the first attacks on the town. The keep itself still runs and the staff are still living inside. A cousin of the lord is suppose to be on his way to become the next lord, but with the troubles going on, most of the staff believe it will wait until after the problem is fixed. A small amount of guards are left also, they are trying to help as much as they can, but are stretched thin and lack resources.

The Mausoleum and catacombs

Oddly, both places seem untouched, well, except the recent committal of the lord of the keep. No signs of evil or foul doings here.

Ongoing Attacks:

Every night the attacks keep coming and are intensifying. Roll 1d4 at sunset every night to see how many attacks come. Then roll another 1d4 to see how many groups are in each attack, then roll on the random encounter table provided for the groups. In other words if you roll that there are 2 attacks with 3 groups, you would roll a dice 3 times on the encounter table and that will be one attack. The table will be at the end of the module.

The odd thing about the attacks, if the monsters are chasing people, they stop at the foot of the steps leading up into the church. During on such incident, the party might catch a glimpse of one of the monsters start to bow to the priest before he raises his hands and yells for it to be gone!

PAGORIA'S PLIGHT

Some of the monsters revert to townsfolk upon being killed, some just stay as the monsters they are. This is due to some being transformed and some just being summoned. It doesn't matter which they are, when they are killed, they are dead, unless they are resurrected.

What is really going on?

The father of the church O'Mally, has seen the townsfolk and surrounding flock turn away from the gods. He originally worshiped a good and divine deity, but an ancient evil demon has slowly corrupted him and given him powers and knowledge. Of course' O'Mally believes he is good and doing the right and just thing, right up until the end. He is using an amulet that he keeps hidden under his robes to transform people into these monsters so that his wayward flock will return to the church if for nothing else but salvation and protection. It started with him only turning travelers, vagrants and strangers, but he has been slowly using his own people so that he may cleanse them. When confronted, he will fully corrupt and become a demon, stats at the end of the module.

Random Encounter 1D4:

1—5 Skeletons

2 —5 Zombies

3 — 1 Vampire Spawn

4 — 2 Ghouls

VAMPIRE SPAWN

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 82 (1d8+33)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +3

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

Damage Resistance Necrotic; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing From Nonmagical Attacks

Senses Darkvision 60 Ft., passive Perception 13

Languages The Languages It Knew In Life

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. The vampire regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the vampire takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the vampire's next turn.

Spider Climb. The vampire can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Vampire Weaknesses. The vampire has the following flaws: Forbiddance. The vampire can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of the occupants. Harmed by Running Water. The vampire takes 20 acid damage when it ends its turn in running water. Stake to the Heart. The vampire is destroyed if a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into its heart while it is incapacitated in its resting place. Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The vampire takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vampire makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the vampire, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus (2d6)necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the vampire regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the vampire can grapple the target (escape DC 13)

ZOMBIE

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8+9)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	3 (-4)	6 (-2)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Wis +0

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 60 Ft., passive Perception 8

Languages Understands All Languages It Spoke In Life But Can't Speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5+the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the zombie drops to 1 hit point instead.

ACTIONS

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

SKELETON

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (Armor Scraps)

Hit Points 13 (2d8+4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Vulnerabilities Bludgeoning

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Exhaustion, Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 60 Ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Understands All Languages It Spoke In Life But Can't Speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

PAGORIA'S PLIGHT

GHOUL

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Poisoned

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

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

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

FATHER O'MALLY

Medium humanoid, Evil

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +3, Religion +5

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Infernal

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Divine Eminence.. As a bonus action, the priest can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Spellcasting. The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

- Cantrips (at will): light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy
- 1st level (4 slots): cure wounds, guiding bolt, sanctuary
- 2nd level (3 slots): lesser restoration, spiritual weapon
- 3rd level (2 slots): dispel magic, spirit guardians

ACTIONS

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

SHADOW DEMON - FATHER O'MALLY

Medium fiend, Lawful Evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 127 (15d8 + 60)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Vulnerabilities radiant

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Amorphous. The shadow can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the shadow can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

Sunlight Weakness. While in sunlight, the shadow has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

ACTIONS

Strength Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Strength to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a new shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

LANTERNS FADE



SHADOWDARK COMPATIBLE HORROR ZINE



LANTERNS FADE

Lanterns Fade: A Horror Adventure for Shadowdark

When the lanterns fade, what will you become?

Welcome to Lanterns Fade, a horror-themed Shadowdark zine. Within these pages you'll find flickering light, creeping dread, and the slow unraveling of sanity in the shadow of something ancient. Designed for quick-start play with rich atmosphere, this adventure blends deadly encounters, narrative tension, and player-driven mystery.

Whether you are running a one-shot or a longer descent into darkness, Lanterns Fade is your candle in the void.

Contents

- Full-length adventure set in the cursed village of Duskmire
- Two new horror-themed classes
- Madness and sanity mechanics
- Random horror tables for improvisation
- Pre-generated characters
- Tips for running horror in the Shadowdark

How to Use This Zine You'll need the Shadowdark RPG rules to play, but otherwise, everything required for running this story is inside. You can drop Duskmire into any setting, or let it exist on the edge of the known world—a place forgotten by time and remembered by nightmares.

Light a candle. Dim the lights. Let the shadows whisper.

A Shadowdark-compatible horror zine by Andrew Babcock, Lunitar Productions

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Artwork by Robert James

LANTERNS FADE

GM TIPS FOR RUNNING HORROR IN LANTERNS FADE

Horror thrives on tension, uncertainty, and player vulnerability. Use the following techniques to keep the fear alive:

1. Pace with Purpose

- Use silence. Let scenes breathe.
- Don't rush to explain what something is—lean into ambiguity.
- Describe slow changes in tone, color, sound, and light.

2. Limit Information

- Show don't tell. Let players uncover clues piece by piece.
- Withhold monster stats or numbers. Say "something moves in the dark," not "you see two ghouls."
- Be vague until confrontation is necessary.

3. Make Light Precious

- Track torch time religiously.
- Emphasize the cost of magical light and its flickering failure.
- Let players fear the dark mechanically *and* narratively.

4. Use the Madness System Liberally

- Layer psychological stress on top of physical threat.
- Tie Madness results to character flaws or goals.
- Make recovery slow or require difficult choices.

5. Reinforce Isolation

- Play up the remoteness of Duskmire.
- NPCs should be unreliable or too scared to help.
- Phone lines don't work here—metaphorically and literally.

LANTERNS FADE

6. Make Every Encounter Count

- One monster in the right setting is scarier than a dozen.
- Don't overuse combat—threat and atmosphere go further.
- Let some things be unkillable or unknowable.

7. Use the Body

- Describe smells, textures, sensations: damp stone, burning flesh, cold breath.
- Make players uncomfortable with sensory detail, not gore.

8. Change Reality

- Shadows shouldn't behave.
- Clocks tick backward.
- NPCs claim conversations never happened.

Let players drive the story—but make sure the world pushes back. Horror is most potent when the players realize they are *not in control*.

Lanterns Fade is a love letter to the creeping dread that makes the torchlight feel warmer and the shadows more alive. It's a story of light's last stand, of ordinary heroes confronting unknowable horrors, and of the quiet voice that asks, "What if the dark is looking back?"

This zine is meant to be played by candlelight, to the sound of a crackling speaker or a creaking chair. Let it haunt you. Let it linger.

Stay Awhile in the Gloom

- Share your story: What did your players fear most?
- Create your own horrors using the tools inside.
- Reuse Duskmire, the Maw, or the Lighthouse as recurring elements in your world.

Keep the Flame Alive

We'd love to see your adaptations, hacks, and sessions. Tag your tales with #LanternsFade and join a chorus of whispered legends.

Light dwindles. Fear grows. But your story lives on.

Visit us at www.lunitarproductions.com

LANTERNS FADE

ACT I: ARRIVAL IN DUSKMIRE

Fog coils like serpents around your boots as you approach the village of Duskmire. The sun died hours ago, but the clouds hang low, smothering even moonlight. Lanterns along the muddy path flicker, their flames fighting to stay alive. The air smells of salt, rot, and damp wood. Ahead, the village squats beneath the shadow of a tall, black lighthouse perched on a sea cliff. Its light sputters—on, off, on again—like a dying heartbeat.

OVERVIEW

In this act, the players arrive in Duskmire and begin to uncover signs that something is deeply wrong. The village is slowly succumbing to a supernatural darkness, and the locals are afraid to speak of it. Torches burn out faster than they should. People whisper about a hunger that stalks the night.

Key Locations

1. FOGGRIP INN

Dimly lit, creaky floorboards, smells of boiled cabbage. The only place in town with rooms to rent. Owned by Old Merra a human female in her 60s. She is hunched with wiry white hair and mismatched eyes, one blue and one green. Her demeanor is nervous, but chatty when drunk. She will reveal the following information, but only after the adventurers buy her a couple of drinks.

- Used to be brighter here, years ago. The crops flourished and life was good.
- The lighthouse kept us safe. Not anymore, but she doesn't know why.
- The Shadows watch you. "Don't go out at night. Not without a lantern—and even then, you won't be safe for long."

2. CHAPEL OF THE LANTERN

The Chapel of the Lantern was once the spiritual heart of Duskmire, maintained by the now-defunct Order of the Eternal Flame. The villagers would bring offerings of oil and flame, believing that so long as the lantern above the altar remained lit, the darkness of the Maw would remain sealed. The chapel is now neglected and abandoned, its relics forgotten and its sanctity tainted. The last remaining priest, Father Harlon, lives in despair and drink, believing he failed his duty to contain the darkness beneath.

LANTERNS FADE

CHAPEL OF THE LANTERN (CONTINUED)

Father Harlon is unshaven, robes stained with wine. His demeanor is grieving, guilt-ridden. He babbles while drinking his wine incoherently. In moments of strung together sentences he says, "The Maw stirs. We should have sealed it tighter." "The others fled, I was the only hope."

Has a half-working holy relic: The Lantern of Saint Virel (burns with ghostly blue light, lasts 1 hour, wards off minor shadow creatures).

THE CHAPEL'S INTERIOR

- Altar: Carved from black stone, now cold. Contains a secret compartment holding old rite scrolls and notes on the Maw.
- Trapdoor beneath the altar: Hidden beneath a rotten rug. Locked with a ceremonial seal that glows faintly in moonlight. Leads to the crypts below and Act 2.
- Faded Murals: Show the eternal struggle between light and shadow; now chipped and defaced, with black paint obscuring the faces of saints.

3 KETT'S SHACK

Kett is the mute son of the lighthouse keeper (who vanished 6 months ago).

Communicates via drawings—usually disturbing scenes of people being dragged into darkness.

He is a gaunt teen, pale eyes, ink-stained fingers. He is startled easily, always watching shadows. His drawings depict events from Act II and III—he dreams of the Black Hollow. He will draw the Lighthouse's secret path (tunnel under the chapel).

KEY EVENTS OF ACT 1

1. Light Fails

- First night: PCs notice their torches burn out after 30 minutes instead of 1 hour.
- A lantern flame turns black for a moment before dying.

2. Disappearance

- A villager (named Toma) goes missing overnight. Screaming is heard in the fog.
- PCs find broken lantern glass and blood outside their window

LANTERNS FADE

KEY EVENTS OF ACT 1(CONTINUED)

3. First Encounter with the Shadowform outside the inn at night. PCs glimpse a shifting, malformed shadow watching them from their window. If approached, it melts into darkness.

Clues

- Pages in the chapel hint at a sealed crypt.
- Villagers speak of a "sickness in the light."

Toma's shoe found near the chapel—drag marks lead toward it.

ACT TRANSITION:

Once the party discovers the trapdoor under the chapel and learns of the sealed crypts, they can descend—triggering the transition into Act II: The Hollow Below.

ACT II: THE HOLLOW BELOW

Descent into the Crypt. The trapdoor groans as it opens, exhaling a breath of stagnant air and old stone. A narrow staircase spirals downward, swallowed by pitch blackness. Your torches shudder, their flames fighting to stay alive as shadows crawl along the walls like living things. Dust hangs thick in the air, and below, something waits.

OVERVIEW

The PCs explore the crypts beneath Duskmire's chapel and uncover the truth of the Umbral Maw's origins. This act blends investigation, creeping dread, and shadowy encounters as the players get closer to the source of the corruption.

Key Locations

1. The Chapel Crypt houses rows of crumbling coffins and faded frescoes of flame-bearing saints. Once blessed, now broken, their remains spilling out. A cracked holy seal on the back wall seeps oily black fluid. A hidden alcove behind a crumbled statue contains the Lantern of Eld Thorne (burns pure white light, but causes hallucinations when used too long). Two Hollowed Acolytes emerge from coffins (undead former clerics, drawn to party's light).

LANTERNS FADE

Key Locations (continued)

2. The Tunnel to the Lighthouse is a narrow, cracked, worm-eaten path with runes etched into the walls. Sections collapse behind the PCs, trapping them unless they find an alternate route back the way they came, but can continue forward. A section known as The Whispering Dark forces players to navigate in complete darkness for 3 turns. They can feel light touches brush them on their bodies while in the darkness. (PCs must roll INT checks (DC 10) to avoid walking in circles. Failing twice may result in madness. GMs choice.)

3. The Root Cellar is hidden beneath Father Harlon's old sermon chamber. It contains journals, ritual tools, and a partially burned book titled *The Final Flicker*. The journal details the founding of Duskmire and that it was based on a pact to keep the Umbral Maw sealed. It also states that the lighthouse was a beacon to suppress the Maw's hunger and keep it weakened.

Events and Encounters

1. Light Leeches, a swarm of tiny, bat-like creatures that attack light sources. They are found in the Whispering Dark and chapel crypt alcoves.

2. The Voice of the Maw constantly whispers temptations that can be heard by the players in moments of silence. Each PC hears something unique: promises of power, lost loved ones voices, secrets. Insight DC 14 to recognize the voice is not their own thoughts.

3. The Lantern of Eld Thorne (Relic)

- Emits bright light in 30 ft.
- Undead cannot approach within 10 ft.
- Every 5th turn used in succession: roll CON DC 12 or take 1d4 psychic damage and see a vision of the Maw.

ACT TRANSITION

Eventually, the PCs reach the inner sanctum of the crypt, where a sealed iron gate blocks the final tunnel to the lighthouse foundation. Activating the gate requires either they perform a purifying flame ritual using relics or they sacrifice a lantern or magical light source to the seal.

As the gate opens, a pulse of darkness shudders outward, extinguishing all flames for a full round, tentacles, hands and hair can be felt touching them in the darkness (GM's choice to have them roll for sanity save—and Act III: Into the Maw begins.

LANTERNS FADE

ACT III: INTO THE MAW

The party emerges into a hollow chamber beneath the lighthouse. The walls seem to breath, they are flesh-like and damp. Roots dangle from the stone above, twitching with unnatural life. A distant, rhythmic thrum pulses through their bones. Something ancient is waking. The light of their torches flickers low, as if unwilling to shine here.

OVERVIEW

The players enter the final stage of the adventure: exploring the desecrated lighthouse interior and descending into the Maw's lair, the Black Hollow. This act is a desperate race against encroaching darkness. The entity at the heart of the Hollow seeks to escape—unless the players intervene.

Key Locations

- 1. Lighthouse Interior has three levels, each in decay.

The ground floor is overrun by husk-creatures—former villagers warped by darkness (roll 1d12 for amount, or GM's choice).

The middle floor is Lighthouse Keeper's study. It contains glyphs of warding (some still active), cryptic notes, and a broken lens. It also contains the Keeper's Journal:

The book is stiff, the leather warped by salt air and the damp conditions. Pages are brittle and ink-stained, many torn or scratched through. Some entries are lucid. Others are frantic scrawls. Symbols—flames, eyes, and twisted spirals—mark the margins. And between the pages there is flakes of soot and dried wax.

Early Entries: Routine and Faith

- ♦ *"The flame holds steady today. Fog thickens as always, but the beam cuts through. No word from Dusk-mire, but the silence is peace."*
- ♦ Describes the ritual lighting of the great prism, believed to suppress "deep forces."
- ♦ Mentions the Order of the Lantern—now defunct—whose rituals involved daily oil offerings, incantations, and prayer to keep the Maw dormant.
- ♦ Drawings of lighthouse schematics with annotations on the light's reach and angles of reflection.

Mid Entries: Signs of Collapse

- ♦ *"The flame pulsed today. Not flickered—pulsed. I swear I heard it breathe."*
- ♦ Mentions dreams of black water rising and of "a mouth without a face" and "eyes behind glass."
- ♦ Notes that villagers complain of nightmares, odd weather, animals behaving strangely.
- ♦ The journal records attempts to increase the brightness of the flame with no success. Ritual oil burns too fast. Mirrors crack. Glyphs lose potency.

LANTERNS FADE

Final Entries: Despair and Madness

- ◆ *"The Maw is not sealed. It never was. We were a lantern in the wind."*
- ◆ Describes the failed last ritual: the sacrifice of the last high priest to reignite the flame, with his blood.
- ◆ Pages are bloodstained. One page is torn out violently—just jagged edges remain.
- ◆ The last full entry: *"I see it now when I sleep and when I wake. It's not a thing. It's a hunger. We fed it light and prayers and blood and stories and it waited. It waits still. The lantern dims. Soon, it will feast."*

Mechanical Effects

- ◆ If read fully, the reader must make a Sanity Save. On failure, they gain 1 Madness Point and have recurring dreams of the Maw.
- ◆ If burned, the light from the journal creates a momentary ward that prevents shadow-creatures from entering the room for 1 minute.
- ◆ If preserved, it can be used to replicate the sealing ritual (at a terrible cost) or to convince Father Harlon to help reignite the flame.

GM Notes:

The journal is a slow-burn reveal. Let players flip through it across multiple scenes or rests. You can even feed its pages to them piece by piece—via dreams, visions, or echoes from the Maw.

The top Floor is the lantern chamber, an enormous, cracked prism sits in its housing. The light here is weak and gray, pulsating dimmer and dimmer.

Clues & Encounters:

- Gibbering Husk Villagers: Attack those carrying light sources.
- Ward Glyphs: One remains active. If touched: CON save DC 14 or blinded for 1 hour.

2. The Black Hollow is a root-choked, twisting cavern beneath the lighthouse. It has veins of black ichor throb along the walls. The light here dims unnaturally. All flame sources last 1/4 duration.

Rooms:

- ◆ The Maw's Teeth: Narrow stone columns like fangs. Reflex saves to avoid crushing shifts.
- ◆ The Umbral Pool: Pool of dark liquid. Gazing into it triggers visions (WIS save DC 13 or take 1 Madness Point).
- ◆ The Cradle: Central chamber where the Umbral Maw rests in shadow.

LANTERNS FADE

FINAL ENCOUNTER: THE UMBRAL MAW

A manifestation of ancient hunger. It feeds on light, memory, and hope.

ENDING OPTIONS:

Option 1: Cleansing the Flame

You stand in the lantern chamber. Wind howls through the shattered glass, and the great prism above you trembles. With trembling hands, you raise the Lanterns of Saint Virel and Eld Thorne—pure flame in a sea of shadow. The room fills with bluish-white light, brighter than the sun, purging the gloom. The Maw below shrieks—not a sound, but a pressure, a scream inside your skull. As the light grows unbearable, you see the shadow shrivel like paper in a bonfire. The lighthouse shudders, and for the first time in years... the flame holds steady.

This is hinted at in the journals and notes they find along the way, or if you inspire Father Harlon, he can tell them how to do the ritual.

Requirements:

- Both relic lanterns must be present and lit.
- Three uninterrupted rounds of concentration from three different PCs.
- Group Wisdom check (DC 14) to maintain the ritual while resisting psychic backlash.

Outcome:

- The Umbral Maw is incinerated by radiant flame.
- The Black Hollow collapses into salt and ash.
- Duskmire is slowly restored, though never quite the same. Its people speak of light with reverence... and fear.
- All characters gain 1 permanent point of Inspiration or Advantage in future darkness-related checks.

Long-Term Consequence:

- The Maw is not *killed*, only banished. A shard of it may cling to a survivor.

LANTERNS FADE

Option 2: Sealing the Maw

The prism is cracked, but not broken. The journal speaks of an ancient rite: pain, sacrifice, and silence. As you place the prism, chant the words, and bleed into the sigil-etched stone, the lighthouse dims. The Maw surges upward—but cannot pass. The light flickers... and steadies. A scream echoes up the shaft, cut short. You fall to your knees. The seal closes. The darkness is held... for now.

Requirements:

- The Keeper's Journal must be intact.
- The cracked prism from the lantern chamber.
- A willing sacrifice: HP, Madness, or life.

Costs (choose one):

- One PC dies, body incinerated by ritual flame.
- One PC permanently loses a class feature or spellcasting ability.
- One PC gains 3 permanent Madness Points and becomes "Touched by the Maw."

Outcome:

- The Umbral Maw is sealed below the lighthouse.
- Duskmire continues to exist, watched over by new torchbearers.
- The lighthouse becomes a cursed shrine, drawing other seekers of forbidden knowledge.
- Survivors are viewed as heroes... or heretics.

Long-Term Consequence:

- In 100 years, the seal will fail. A new group must rise—or the Maw will feed again.

LANTERNS FADE

Option 3: Confronting the Maw in Combat

No more rituals. No more prayers. This time, the Maw will bleed.

From the cracked floor of the Black Hollow, it rises—tall as a spire, a roiling mass of eyes and mouths and curling tendrils of shadow. The air churns with unspoken words. Torches flicker and die. The Maw speaks in your minds, offering you salvation, surrender or die.

Battlefield Features:

- Pools of shadow move and reform each round (difficult terrain).
- Unstable lantern prisms scattered around can be shattered for bursts of radiant light (1d4 damage to the Maw, blinds it for 1 round).
- Pillars of bone and ruined stone provide partial cover.

Outcome:

- If defeated, the Maw collapses into a pool of black ichor. A faint flame flickers from the floor—signaling that the Hollow's grip has been broken.
- PCs gain powerful relics from its remains.
- The village is saved, though scorched by battle.

Long-Term Consequence:

- A true victory... but echoes of the Maw's whispers remain in one PC's dreams.
- The Hollow begins to heal. But a sliver of the Maw may have escaped elsewhere...

LANTERNS FADE

Option 4: Failure—The Maw Rises

The light sputters. The lantern shatters. The ritual fails. A scream, wet and bone-deep, rises from beneath the earth. Darkness bleeds up through the lighthouse floor like ink spilled into water. You run—there is no other choice. As you reach the surface, the sky is wrong. The stars are gone. The fog devours the village. You hear them—footsteps, whispers, laughter without mouths. Duskmire is gone. The light is gone. The world will dim, one flicker at a time.

Trigger:

- The PCs are defeated in combat, flee, or fail the sealing/cleansing attempts.

Outcome:

- The Umbral Maw rises. It does not walk—it *spreads*.
- Duskmire becomes a dead zone of eternal fog.
- All light sources extinguish permanently within a growing radius.
- The Maw becomes a myth, a spreading corruption infecting other places, people, and stories.

For the PCs:

- Some may survive... altered.
- Some may go mad.
- Some may be consumed—and become its emissaries.

Long-Term Consequence:

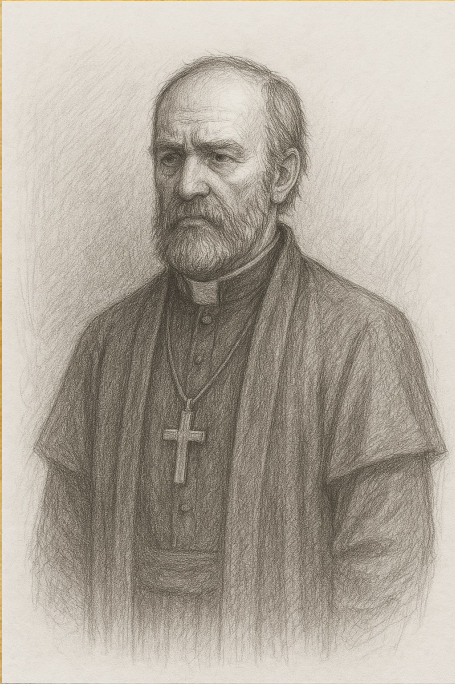
- The Maw is now a campaign-level threat.
- It begins to twist the world into a new, colder shape—one shadow at a time.

EPILOGUE

The Maw is Defeated

The first sunrise in weeks breaks over Duskmire. The fog begins to lift. But somewhere in the cold ocean wind, a whisper lingers—a promise that the dark never truly dies.

LANTERNS FADE



Father Harlon

Broken Torchbearer of the Lantern Faith

Medium humanoid (human), Lawful Neutral (but wavering)

AC: 11 (tattered vestments)

HP: 18 (3d8 + 3)

Speed: 30 ft

Saves: WIS +3, CHA +2

Languages: Common, Lanternscript (archaic)

Attacks

- **Rusted Mace:** +2 to hit, 1d6 bludgeoning
- **Burning Rebuke (1/day):** When struck in melee, the attacker must make a CON save (DC 13) or take 1d6 radiant damage and be pushed 5 feet back

Abilities

- **Flickering Faith (1/day):** Can cast *bless* or *cure wounds* (2d8 healing). However, each use forces a WIS save (DC 10) to avoid gaining 1 Madness Point due to his shattered belief.
- **Lightbearer's Instinct:** Father Harlon can detect undead or shadow creatures within 60 feet, but doing so causes him to tremble and speak in fragmented scripture.

Hollowed Acolyte

Undead Servant of the Maw

Medium undead, Chaotic Evil

AC: 13 (flesh like cured leather)

HP: 14 (3d8 + 1)

Speed: 30 ft

Saves: WIS +1, STR +2

Darkvision: 60 ft

Languages: Understands Common and Lanternscript but cannot speak

Attacks

- **Blighted Touch:** +3 to hit, 1d6 necrotic damage. On a failed CON save (DC 12), target's torch or lantern flickers (50% chance to extinguish for 1 round).
- **Ritual Brand (Recharge 6):** Channels corrupted faith. One creature within 30 ft must make a CHA save (DC 13) or be stunned until the end of its next turn as burning runes sear their vision.

Abilities

- **Aura of Withering:** Any living creature that starts its turn within 5 ft takes 1 necrotic damage (ignores resistance, cannot reduce below 1 HP).
- **Bound to the Maw:** When the Maw is nearby (within 120 ft), the Hollowed Acolyte gains advantage on all saves vs. fear and can take one extra action every 1d4 rounds.
- **Reverent Madness:** Immune to charm and fear; immune to madness effects





Husk Villager

Mind-drained victim of the Maw's whisper

Medium humanoid (undead-like), Neutral Evil

AC: 11 (toughened, corpse-like skin)

HP: 8 (2d6 + 1)

Speed: 25 ft

Saves: CON +1

Darkvision: 30 ft

Languages: Understands Common but speaks in broken moans and mimicry

Attacks

- **Gnashing Bite:** +2 to hit, 1d6 piercing
- **Clawing Hands:** +2 to hit, 1d4 slashing. On hit: Target must make a WIS save (DC 11) or be unnerved, granting disadvantage on the next attack roll

Abilities

- **Photophobic Flesh:** Disadvantage on all attack rolls made in bright light (including daylight and magical torches)
- **Hive-Woken:** If within 10 feet of two or more other husks, deals +1 damage and gains +1 to all saves
- **Echoed Memories:** At random, may mutter disturbing phrases from the villag-

Kett

Gravedigger, Gossip, and Keeper of Secrets

Medium humanoid (human), Chaotic Neutral

AC: 12 (patched leather coat)

HP: 10 (2d8 + 2)

Speed: 30 ft

Saves: DEX +2, CHA +1

Languages: Common, some Lanternscript, and the "dead language" (spoken softly to graves)

Attacks

- **Rusty Spade:** +3 to hit, 1d6+1 slashing (counts as improvised weapon)
- **Grave Dust Pouch (1/day):** Blinds one creature within 10 ft for 1 round (DC 11 CON save to resist)

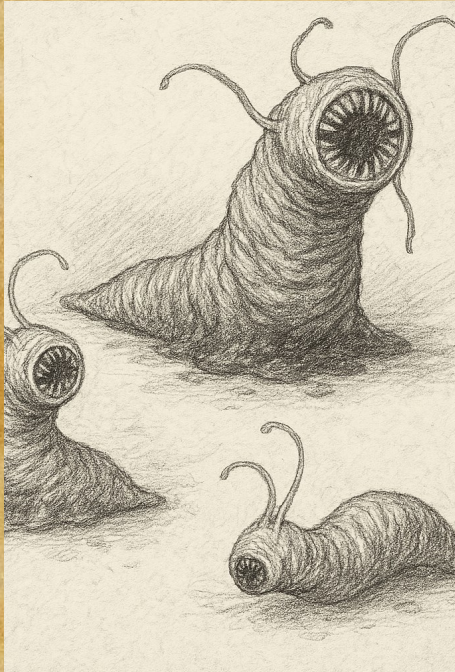
Abilities

- **Graveborn:** Has advantage on checks involving undead lore, local death customs, and graveyard terrain.
- **Can't Fool an Old Crone:** Immune to charm effects and has advantage on Insight checks against lies.
- **Whispers from the Dirt (1/day):** May "commune" with a grave she's dug—gaining one cryptic, useful piece of information (from GM).



LANTERNS FADE

LANTERNS FADE



Light Leeches

Shadow-feeding vermin born of the Maw's breath

Tiny aberration, Chaotic Evil

AC: 14 (slick, shadowy hide)

HP: 5 each (1d6 + 2)

Speed: 10 ft, Fly 40 ft

Darkvision: 60 ft

Saves: DEX +3

Languages: None (screeches faintly in "reverse" sound)

Swarm Behavior

Light Leeches rarely attack alone. They arrive in clouds—fluttering and swirling like bats—but silent. Unless startled.

Swarm Group: 1d4+1 Light Leeches

Each swarm dims light and bites at exposed flesh.

Attacks

- **Needle-Bite:** +3 to hit, 1d4 piercing
- On hit: the leech clings to the target and drains light from carried torches or lanterns (50% chance the light extinguishes next turn)
- A DC 11 STR check can remove it as an action

Abilities

- **Feed on Flame:** Automatically extinguishes any non-magical flame it touches after 1 full round of contact
- **Light-Slicked:** Disadvantage on attacks made against them in dim or dark light

Old Merra

Blind Seer of the Sinking Lantern

Medium humanoid (human), Neutral (leans Unknowable)

AC: 10 (threadbare shawl)

HP: 9 (2d6 + 2)

Speed: 25 ft

Saves: WIS +3, CHA +2

Languages: Common, Lanternscript, Whisper-Tongue (ancient dream-language)

Attacks

- **Wicker Cane:** +1 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning
- **Seer's Rebuke (1/day):** Causes a target within 30 ft to see a prophetic hallucination. DC 13 WIS save or become *frightened* until the end of its next turn.

Abilities

- **Eyes Like Ash:** Though blind, Old Merra sees perfectly within 30 feet—perceiving *fate* more than form. Cannot be blinded or deceived by illusions within that range.
- **Prophetic Whispers (2/day):** Offers a cryptic phrase that functions as *Augury* or *Identify*, depending on the question. Often confusing but accurate.



Shadowform

Fragment of darkness given unstable life

Medium aberration, Chaotic Evil

AC: 15 (liquid shadow form)

HP: 18 (4d8)

Speed: 30 ft, Hover 20 ft

Saves: DEX +3, WIS +1

Damage Resistances: Non-magical weapons, fire

Condition Immunities: Grappled, prone, blinded

Languages: None (emits warped echoes of the Maw's voice)

Attacks

- **Phantom Slash:** +4 to hit, 1d8 necrotic. On a hit, target must make a DC 12 WIS save or see a *false memory*—giving disadvantage on their next attack roll
- **Blinkstep** (*Recharge 5–6*): Teleport up to 30 ft into an area of dim or no light. Gain advantage on the next attack that round.

Abilities

- **Born of Gloom:** Shadowforms can emerge from extinguished light sources or the bodies of the recently slain (1d4 rounds after death in dark areas).
- **Flickerform:** Once per round, may force one attack roll against it to be re-rolled (before knowing the result).
- **Light-Vulnerable:** Takes 1d4 extra damage from magical light, radiant spells, or



The Umbral Maw

Eater of Light, Whisperer of Madness

Huge aberration, Chaotic Evil

AC: 16 (flesh like rippling obsidian)

HP: 85 (10d10 + 30)

Speed: 30 ft, Shadowstep 60 ft

Saves: WIS +4, CON +3

Damage Resistances: Necrotic, psychic, non-magical weapons

Damage Vulnerabilities: Radiant, magical light

Condition Immunities: Blinded, charmed, frightened

Languages: Telepathy 120 ft (sounds like overlapping whispers)

Attacks

- **Tendrill Lash:** +6 to hit, 2d6 + 3 necrotic. On hit: Target must succeed on a DC 13 CON save or lose their next torch/lantern light for 1 round (magical or not)
- **Mental Overwhelm** (*Recharge 5–6*): The Maw targets up to 3 creatures who can hear it. Each must make a DC 15 WIS save or become stunned until the end of their next turn and gain 1 Madness Point.

Legendary-Like Abilities

(Use 2 per round in any order at initiative count 20)

- **Devour Light:** Extinguishes all non-magical flames within 60 feet. Magical light sputters—roll a d6 for each source. On a 1–2, it goes out until reignited.
- **Spawn Shadows:** Summons 1d2 Shadowforms within 30 ft. They act immediately.
- **Collapse Will:** One target must make a DC 14 WIS save or begin reciting the Maw's scripture, becoming incapacitated for 1 round.

Other Abilities

- **Corrupting Presence:** Anyone starting their turn within 10 ft of the Maw makes a Sanity Save or gains 1 Madness Point.
- **Unnatural Form:** The Maw is difficult to look at directly. Melee attackers roll at disadvantage unless they succeed on a DC 12 INT save at the start of their turn.
- **Lightbane:** Takes double damage from the Lantern of Saint Virel and Eld Thorne if both are lit and within 30 feet.

Tactics

- Never speaks directly—always through dreams, visions, or other mouths
- Targets lightbearers first
- Uses Shadowstep to appear behind weaker characters or to isolate them
- Retreats only if forced back by sacred fire or a cleansing ritual

Description

The Umbral Maw is not a thing, but *absence given hunger*. Its form constantly shifts—a mass of mouths that chant backwards, eyes that blink out of sync, and tendrils that wrap around light like strangling vines. It doesn't breathe, bleed, or blink. It **remembers** you before you were born.

Defeat & Aftermath



Shadowdark is about tension—and in *Lanterns Fade*, light isn't the only thing running out. Sanity is just as fragile.

Sanity Saves

When exposed to unsettling horrors, psychic whispers, or total darkness, a character must make a Sanity Save: Roll 1d20. If the result is greater than your current HP, you gain 1 Madness Point.

GM may also call for a Sanity Save:

- When reduced to 0 HP by a shadow creature
- When directly targeted by the Umbral Maw's voice
- After witnessing the death of an ally in the dark

Madness Points: Madness builds over time. At certain thresholds, effects trigger.

- 3 Points: Gain a Short-Term Madness (roll 1d6)
- 6 Points: Gain a Long-Term Madness (roll 1d6)
- 10+ Points: Gain a Permanent Affliction (GM's discretion or roll)

d6 Short-Term Madness (lasts 1d6 rounds)

1. Cannot speak coherently—only whispers or screams
2. Refuses to enter darkness; must stay in lit areas
3. Tries to destroy the nearest light source
4. Paralyzed with fear (lose actions unless attacked)
5. Recites disturbing verses in an unknown tongue
6. Flees blindly into the dark (as fear effect)

d6 Long-Term Madness (lasts until cured or 1d6 days)

1. Gains phobia of fire and flame
2. Sees dead companions even if they're alive
3. Thinks all torches are illusions
4. Cannot sleep in the dark; suffers exhaustion if forced to
5. Hears the Maw whispering during every silence
6. Laughs uncontrollably when in danger

Reducing Madness: Madness Points can be removed by:

- Resting in sacred ground (1 point per day)
- Completing a cleansing ritual (requires relics and a holy site)

Magical effects (like *remove curse*, at GM's discretion)

Characters who survive and recover may keep scars from their madness—quirks, habits, or altered beliefs.

LANTERNS FADE

Random Horror Tables

d12 Flickering Light Events

1. Shadows stretch twice as long as they should.
2. The flame pulses in sync with a PC's heartbeat.
3. A face flickers in the firelight for just a moment.
4. The torch hisses like it's being smothered.
5. The flame splits in two, casting double shadows.
6. The fire briefly turns blue.
7. A moth immolates itself with a scream.
8. Your light glows brighter as something draws near.
9. The torch sputters, then steadies—nothing changed, yet everything feels wrong.
10. A chill wind snuffs out the flame, then returns it.
11. Your shadow acts out of sync with your movement.
12. The flame forms a symbol before returning to normal.

d8 Eldritch Corruption Effects

1. You no longer cast a shadow.
2. Your reflection no longer moves when you do.
3. You hear whispers when holding a flame.
4. Your veins glow faintly in the dark.
5. Eyes in paintings seem to follow you.
6. Your heartbeat skips whenever you're near the Maw.
7. You crave raw meat at night.
8. In total silence, you hear a woman singing.

Random Horror Tables

.d20 Creeping Horrors (Atmosphere or Encounters)

1. A lantern floats down the road—no bearer.
2. Wet footprints lead away from your bedroll.
3. A villager stands motionless in the fog for hours.
4. Fingers drum under the floorboards.
5. Your pack is heavier—but nothing inside changed.
6. Teeth fall from the mouth of a dead man—still warm.
7. Something watches from the rafters.
8. You hear digging below your feet.
9. Your torch flares as you speak a name.
10. An animal speaks to you in your mother's voice.
11. The moon appears wrong—closer, angrier.
12. The dead in the crypt whisper your name.
13. The sea sings in a language no one knows.
14. A child's toy appears where none existed.
15. Blood drips upward from a wound.
16. The fog moves like it's breathing.
17. A crow lands near you with too many eyes.
18. A villager cries for help, then vanishes when approached.
19. A robed figure appears in every crowd shot—always the same spot.
20. Something *inside* your lantern is tapping to get out.



These characters are balanced for 3rd level Shadowdark play and come pre-equipped with starting gear, unique roleplaying hooks, and class features tailored for horror. They may survive the Maw. They may become part of it.

Use them well.

LANTERNS FADE

ShadowDark

NAME
Brannok Cleft

STR
16 / +3

INT
9 / -1

ANCESTRY
Dwarf

DEX
10 / 0

WIS
11 / 0

CLASS
Fighter

CON
13 / +1

CHA
8 / -1

LEVEL
3

XP
/

HP
24

AC
16

TITLE

ALIGNMENT
Lawful Neutral

BACKGROUND

DEITY

ATTACKS
Rusted Battleaxe: +5 to hit, 1d8+3 slashing (versatile 1d10+3 two-handed)
Shove: STR check to knock target prone (useful with brute strength in tight spaces)

TALENTS / SPELLS

Second Wind (1/day): Regain 1d10 + 3 HP as a bonus action

Weapon Mastery: Brannok can reroll damage dice of 1s with axes

Stubborn Fortitude (Dwarf Feature): Advantage on saves against poison and fatigue (Madness saves at GM's discretion)

GEAR

GP SP 10 CP

1. rusted battleaxe (Family heirloom)
2. chainmail armor
3. 3 torches
4. flask of oil
5. Heavy Dwarven Boots
6. Pouch
7. a lucky stone carved with runes
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

FREE TO CARRY

Traits

- Grumpy, blunt, and suspicious of anything not stone or steel
- Talks to his axe like it's a person
- Terrified of fog (won't admit it)
- Believes proper torch care is *sacred* dwarven tradition

Backstory

A dwarven mercenary sent to check on failing trade routes through Duskmire. Brannok expected rot, bandits, maybe a plague. What he found was silence, fog, and something that *watched*. He isn't here to save the village—he's here to survive. And if survival means breaking open some cursed skulls, so be it.

LANTERNS FADE

ShadowDark

NAME

Maelin Virel

STR

9 / -1

INT

11 / 0

ANCESTRY

Human

DEX

12 / +1

WIS

15 / +2

CLASS

Gravewalker

CON

10 / 0

CHA

8 / -1

LEVEL

3

XP

____ / ____

HP

12

AC

10

TITLE

ALIGNMENT

Neutral Good

BACKGROUND

DEITY

ATTACKS

Dagger (melee or thrown 20 ft): +1 to hit, 1d4 piercing

TALENTS / SPELLS

Spirit Bell Pulse (1/day): All undead within 30 ft must make a DC 12 WIS save or be stunned until the end of their next turn

Whispers of the Dead (1/day): Ask up to 3 questions of a corpse as if casting Speak with Dead

Corpse Sense: Always aware of the nearest corpse within 60 ft (even through walls)

Spirit Veil (1/day): Turn invisible for 1 minute while remaining still in dim/dark light

Death Bargain (1/day): When reduced to 0 HP, roll 1d6:

1–2: Rise with 1 HP, gain 2 Madness Points

3–4: Rise with 1d6 HP, lose voice for 24 hrs

5–6: Rise with full HP, haunted by a spirit (GM discretion)

GEAR

GP ____ SP ⁶ ____ CP ____

1. Spirit Bell

11. _____

2. Bone Dice

12. _____

3. Tattered Funeral Shroud

13. _____

4. Dagger

14. _____

5. 1 Torch

15. _____

6. vial of sanctified oil

16. _____

7. pouch

17. _____

8. _____

18. _____

9. _____

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____

FREE TO CARRY

Traits

- Haunted eyes
- Whispers in her sleep (other voices)
- Sleeps near graves out of comfort
- Shudders in direct sunlight

Backstory

A descendant of the Lantern Faith and one of the last who still dreams in their tongue. Haunted since childhood, Maelin was drawn to Duskmire by visions of the Maw and flickering lanterns buried in ash. She's not sure if she's meant to stop the darkness—or become its vessel.

LANTERNS FADE

ShadowDark

NAME

Nell Gorse

STR

9 / -1

INT

11 / 0

ANCESTRY

Halfling

DEX

18 / +4

WIS

10 / 0

CLASS

Thief

CON

12 / +1

CHA

13 / +1

LEVEL

3

XP

____ / ____

HP

13

AC

14

TITLE

ALIGNMENT

Chaotic neutral

BACKGROUND

DEITY

ATTACKS

Shortsword: +5 to hit, 1d6+4 piercing

Thrown Dagger (range 20/60): +5 to hit, 1d4+4 piercing

Sneak Attack (1/round): Deal +1d6 damage when attacking with advantage or if target is adjacent to an ally

TALENTS / SPELLS

Cunning Action: Dash, Disengage, or Hide as a bonus action each round

Thieves' Reflexes: Add +2 to initiative rolls

Trap Sense: Advantage on saves against traps and hazards (GM's discretion)

GEAR

GP 1 SP 5 CP ____

1. Shortsword

11. _____

2. 2 Throwing Daggers

12. _____

3. Leather Armor

13. _____

4. 10 Lockpicks

14. _____

5. 50' silken rope

15. _____

6. vial of soot

16. _____

7. small lantern with green glass

17. _____

8. piece of chalk

18. _____

9. coin pouch

19. _____

10. _____

20. _____

FREE TO CARRY

Traits

- Talks too fast when nervous
- Always looks for exits
- Hums lullabies from her childhood during tense moments
- Surprisingly empathetic toward the cursed or broken

Backstory

Raised on the edge of society, Nell made her way as a pickpocket and lockbreaker. She never meant to find herself in a cursed village—she was just running from something worse. But now that she's seen the dark *underneath* things, she can't look away. She stays not for the coin... but for the people.

LANTERNS FADE

ShadowDark

NAME
Syris Duskwatch

STR
8 / -1

INT
15 / +2

ANCESTRY
Elf

DEX
14 / +2

WIS
11 / 0

CLASS
Occultist

CON
12 / +1

CHA
13 / +1

LEVEL
3

XP
/

HP
11

AC
13

TITLE

ALIGNMENT
Neutral

BACKGROUND

DEITY

ATTACKS
Dagger (1d4 piercing)

TALENTS / SPELLS

Dark Insight: Knows 3 spells, drawn from forbidden lore

Forbidden Ritual (1/day): Cast any spell from a known list by performing a 10-minute ritual. WIS save (DC 10 + spell level) or gain 1 Madness Point

Mind-Tether (1/day): For 1 minute, link minds with a creature. Always know its location and thoughts (1d4 psychic damage/round if it resists)

Magic Missile (auto-hit, 3 darts of 1d4+1 force damage)

Detect Magic (sense auras within 30 ft for 10 minutes)

Shadow Bind (homebrew): Restrain target with shadow tendrils; DEX save DC 13 or be restrained for 1 minute (save at end of turns)

GEAR

GP SP 7 CP

1. Occult Grimoire
2. Cold Flame Torch Burns blue
3. Dagger
4. Vial of pale ink
5. Quill
6. Mirror shard in velvet pouch
7. pouch
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

FREE TO CARRY

Traits

- Emotionally detached, scientific curiosity
- Keeps precise journals of dreams
- Doesn't blink when talking
- Avoids sunlight; prefers overcast days

Backstory

Once a scholar at a coastal university, Syris became obsessed with ruins predating recorded history. After finding a symbol of the Maw etched into a submerged temple, they were expelled for blasphemy. They came to Duskmire not to help, but to witness. If the world is unraveling, Syris wants to see the thread.

LANTERNS FADE

ShadowDark

NAME
Syris Duskwatch

STR
8 / -1

INT
15 / +2

ANCESTRY
Elf

DEX
14 / +2

WIS
11 / 0

CLASS
Occultist

CON
12 / +1

CHA
13 / +1

LEVEL
3

XP
/

HP
11

AC
13

TITLE

ALIGNMENT
Neutral

BACKGROUND

DEITY

ATTACKS
Dagger (1d4 piercing)

TALENTS / SPELLS

Dark Insight: Knows 3 spells, drawn from forbidden lore

Forbidden Ritual (1/day): Cast any spell from a known list by performing a 10-minute ritual. WIS save (DC 10 + spell level) or gain 1 Madness Point

Mind-Tether (1/day): For 1 minute, link minds with a creature. Always know its location and thoughts (1d4 psychic damage/round if it resists)

Magic Missile (auto-hit, 3 darts of 1d4+1 force damage)

Detect Magic (sense auras within 30 ft for 10 minutes)

Shadow Bind (homebrew): Restrain target with shadow tendrils; DEX save DC 13 or be restrained for 1 minute (save at end of turns)

GEAR

GP SP 7 CP

1. Occult Grimoire
2. Cold Flame Torch Burns blue
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- 19.
- 20.

FREE TO CARRY

Traits

- Emotionally detached, scientific curiosity
- Keeps precise journals of dreams
- Doesn't blink when talking
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Backstory

Once a scholar at a coastal university, Syris became obsessed with ruins predating recorded history. After finding a symbol of the Maw etched into a submerged temple, they were expelled for blasphemy. They came to Duskmire not to help, but to witness. If the world is unraveling, Syris wants to see the thread.

LANTERNS FADE

ShadowDark

NAME

Targen Hollow

STR

14 / +2

INT

11 / 0

ANCESTRY

Human

DEX

10 / 0

WIS

16 / +3

CLASS

Cleric - Forgotten Flame

CON

13 / +1

CHA

9 / -1

LEVEL

3

XP

____ / ____

HP

17

AC

15

TITLE

ALIGNMENT

Lawful Neutral

BACKGROUND

DEITY

ATTACKS

Warhammer (versatile): +4 to hit, 1d8 +2 bludgeoning (1d10+2 two-handed)

Sacred Flame (Cantrip): DC 13 DEX save or take 1d8 radiant damage (no attack roll)

TALENTS / SPELLS

Spellcasting (3 spells/day):

Cure Wounds (2d8+3 healing)
Bless (Add +1d4 to attack/save rolls, 3 creatures)
Sanctify Light (custom): Wards an object or creature in radiant fire; shadow creatures have disadvantage attacking them for 1 minute

Channel Radiance (1/day): As a bonus action, Targen flares his holy symbol. All undead or shadow creatures within 30 ft must make a DC 13 WIS save or flee for 1 round.

Torchbearer's Vow: While holding a lit flame, Targen has advantage on saves vs. fear and madness

GEAR

GP ____ SP ⁴ ____ CP ____

1. Warhammer
2. Chainmail
3. Crimson Tabard
4. Holy Symbol
5. Tinderbox
6. 6 torches
7. Flask of oil
8. prayer cloth
9. charcoal
10. 1 vial of sacred wax
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

FREE TO CARRY

Traits

- Weathered and scarred; voice like burning oak
- Prays out loud when angry, silent when hopeful
- Keeps his holy symbol hidden most of the time
- Terrified of failing a second time

Backstory

Once a lantern-bearer in a crumbling order, Targen was one of the last to leave Duskmire before the fog came. Wracked with guilt and bearing a fractured faith, he has returned to reclaim the fire—or be consumed by it. He does not expect to leave again.

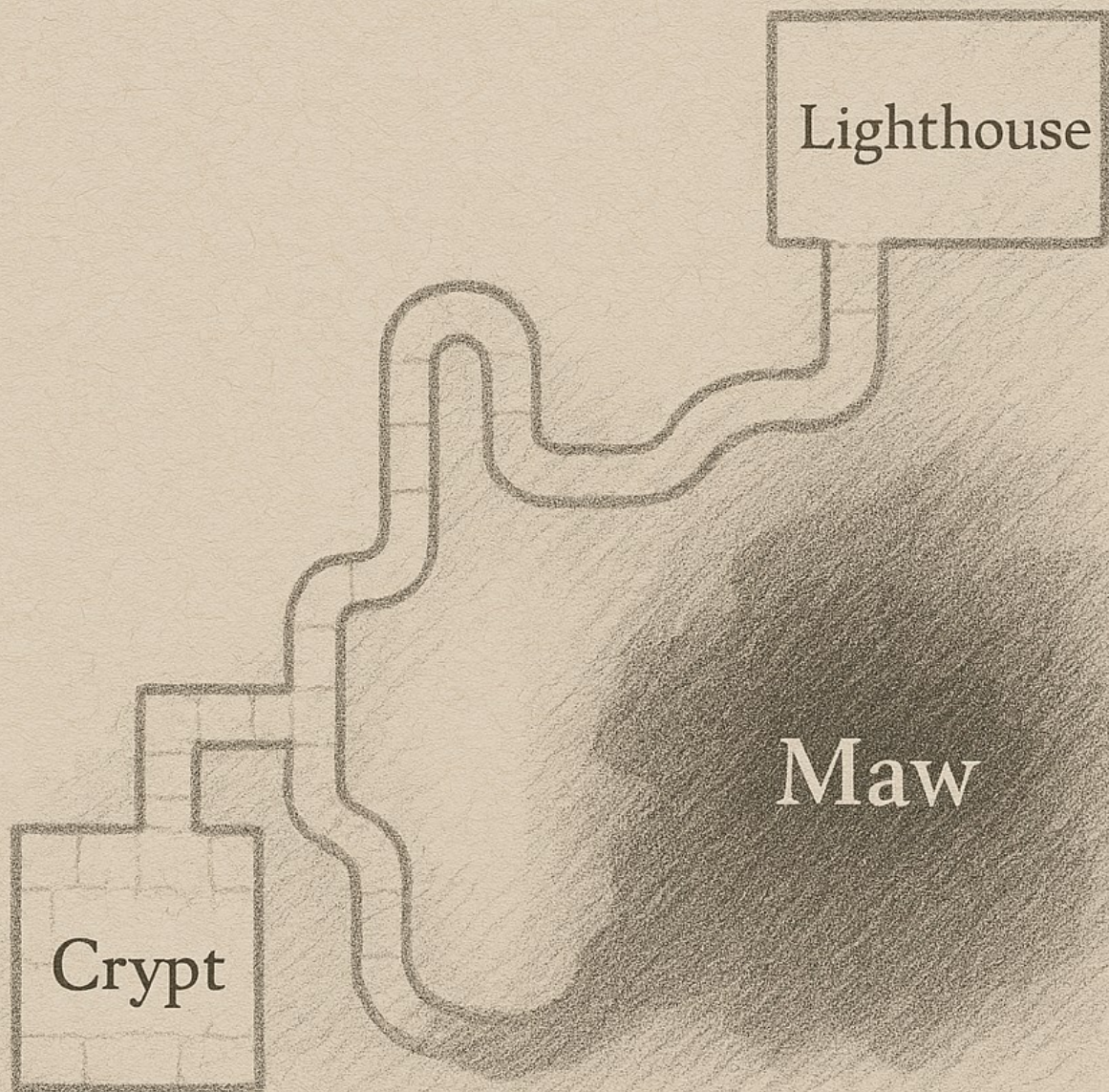
LANTERNS FADE

DUSKMIPE

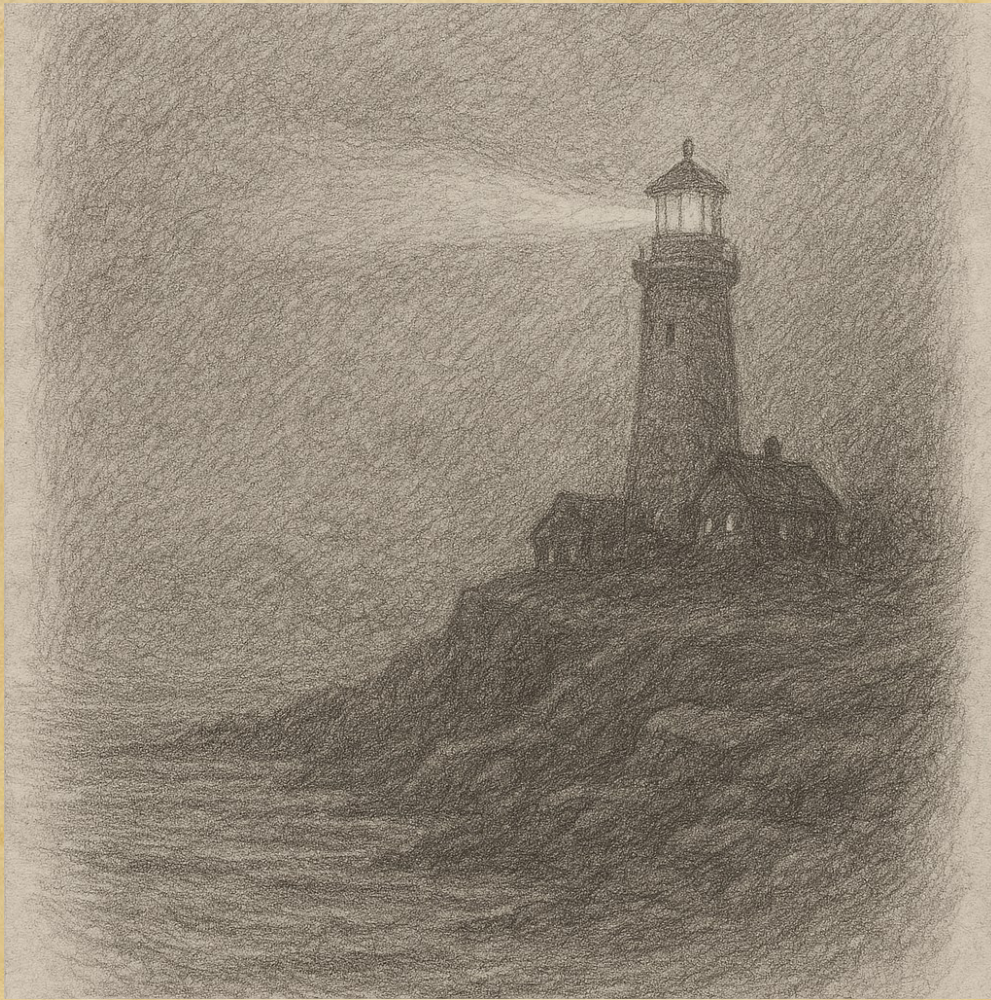


LANTERNS FADE

CRYPTS



LANTERNS FADE



The darkness is watching

Lanterns Fade is a full-length horror adventure for Shadowdark RPG, plunging players into the cursed village of Duskmire—where light fails, the dead whisper, and something ancient stirs beneath the lighthouse.

Inside this zine:

A complete, dread-soaked adventure for levels 3–5

Two new horror-themed classes: the Occultist and the Gravewalker

Lightweight madness mechanics and sanity rules

Over 40 random horror prompts and tables

Pre-generated characters ready to face the dark

Guidance for running terror-filled sessions in Shadowdark

LANTERNS FADE

IN THE NEWS

As the spring sun creeps higher in the sky, the world of tabletop role-playing games is blooming with fresh announcements, long-awaited releases, and exciting shifts both indie and industry-wide. From pulp action epics and Martian colonization to a renaissance of folk horror and Japanese classics, the last two months have brought more than a few surprises. Here's a look at the most compelling updates from the TTRPG world in April and May 2025.

Outgunned Adventure: Cinematic Mayhem Hits the Table

If you've ever longed to channel your inner Lara Croft or Indiana Jones, *Outgunned Adventure* might be your next obsession. This pulp-action TTRPG from Two Little Mice and Free League Publishing uses the "Director's Cut" system to deliver fast-paced, cinematic storytelling. It's not just about treasure hunts—players navigate stylish stunts, dramatic failures, and over-the-top escapades, with the optional *Fall of Atlantis* campaign module adding ancient ruins and supernatural mysteries to the mix.

Terraforming Mars RPG: From Eurogame to Epic Campaign

The Red Planet gets a narrative twist with the *Terraforming Mars RPG*, now funding on BackerKit. Adapting the hit board game into a TTRPG, players take on generational roles in humanity's push to settle Mars. With a d6 pool system and a reputation-based progression mechanic, the RPG emphasizes exploration, political intrigue, and societal development over time. It's a deep, ambitious project that aims to retain the strategic nuance of the board game while embracing the creative freedom of tabletop storytelling.

Wares Blade: A Japanese Classic Returns

LionWing Publishing has once again dipped into the archives of Japanese TTRPGs to bring English-speaking audiences a long-lost gem. *Wares Blade*, originally published in 1993, blends high fantasy and mecha-infused science fiction. With tactical, war-game inspired mechanics and a percentile-based system, it offers a uniquely crunchy and nostalgic experience. A remastered and localized edition is slated for later this year, promising to honor the game's legacy while refining its mechanics for modern play.

The Crooked Moon: Folk Horror Finds New Roots

Fans of unsettling rural horror should keep an eye on *The Crooked Moon*, a 5E-compatible setting from the team behind *Legends of Avantris*. Taking cues from Appalachian folktales, plague lore, and grim fairy tales, it paints a picture of a dark countryside haunted by forgotten things. The setting emphasizes suspicion, dread, and survival—perfect for groups looking to explore the eerie spaces between superstition and reality.

IN THE NEWS

Legend in the Mist: From the Makers of City of Mist

Son of Oak is back with *Legend in the Mist*, a new fantasy TTRPG that reimagines character abilities through narrative “tags.” If *City of Mist* was noir with a mythic twist, *Legend* is full-on fantasy myth-making, with mechanics that reward creative thinking over mechanical optimization. The system is fluid, rule-light, and already drawing attention for its potential as a storytelling-first experience.

Media Expansions: TTRPG Stories Take New Forms

- Dimension 20’s *Fantasy High* was adapted into a Webtoon webcomic, giving fans a new way to relive (or discover) the iconic actual play campaign.
- Aabria Iyengar unveiled *Private Nightmares*, a gritty World of Darkness actual play series focused on personal horror and trauma. It’s the latest from *Project Ghostlight*, which seeks to platform independent horror stories.
- Critical Role (yes, again) announced *Age of Umbra*, a grimdark limited series using their own system. This signals a broader push into system-native storytelling.

Industry Insight: Challenges and Innovations

The TTRPG industry isn’t all dice and daydreams—real-world pressures are shaping development and distribution alike:

- Tariffs on imported materials have made printing significantly more expensive for small U.S. publishers. Many are shifting to print-on-demand or regional partners.
- Designers and layout artists are experimenting with tools like *Typst* to streamline visual presentation for indie books and zines.
- Wizards of the Coast remains tight-lipped about its evolving digital plans, but rumors swirl about internal reorganization, especially concerning its Virtual Tabletop initiative.

Indie Spotlight & Community Projects

- The Build a Better World TTRPG Jam launched in April, challenging creators to design systems rooted in hope, growth, and constructive storytelling.
- Cairn got a shot of usability with 20 new pregenerated characters from Dustatron—ideal for conventions, demos, or drop-in sessions.
- Humblewood: Beyond the Canopy, the sequel to the woodland fantasy setting, is on track for digital delivery by late summer, with physical books to follow.

The Shardbound Vault

They say it appears only in the hush before a storm, when the wind stills and the clouds bruise black with thunder. Others claim to have found it down alleyways that didn't exist the day before. But wherever it manifests, *The Shardbound Vault* is unmistakable: a dark, crystalline structure with jagged edges that shimmer like shattered glass, pulsing faintly with arcane energy.

No one ever sees it being built, and no one sees it leave.

Within, the Vault is cool, silent, and dimly lit by floating shards of softly glowing crystal. Armor of all shapes and sizes rest in obsidian alcoves, each one uniquely designed, many unlike anything seen in the waking world. Faint whispers echo between the suits—not words, but impressions: memories of battle, flickers of fear, or the thrill of triumph.



At the heart of the Vault, behind a jagged black counter, stands **The Vaultkeeper**—a towering figure clad in mirrored plate. No one knows their name, nor have they seen what lies beneath the helm. Their voice, when they speak, comes as a chorus of echoes, like many versions of the same person speaking at once. They do not barter. They *offer*. And once the offer is accepted, it *cannot* be undone.

Treasures of the Vault

- **Glimmermail of the Echoing Step** (950 gp) – Light armor that lets the wearer briefly shift out of phase, allowing one step to pass through a solid object once per day. Comes with unsettling afterimages.
- **Shardplate of Reflection** (2,000 gp) – Medium armor made of mirrored crystal; once per long rest, it reflects a spell of 3rd level or lower back at its caster.
- **Chronoguard Breastplate** (3,800 gp) – Heavy armor that gives the wearer a one-time ability to *delay* incoming damage for 6 seconds (1 round), though it all hits at once later.
- **Mask of the Vault** (Not for sale) – Said to grant insight into possible futures—but those who gaze into its reflection for too long are never quite the same.
- **Binding Sigils & Echo Runes** – Minor enchantments sold separately (250–750 gp) that alter the weight, voice resonance, or ambient aura of armor.
- **The Vaultkeeper Knows You** – A few claim that The Vaultkeeper greeted them by name, spoke of things only they knew, and offered armor that matched not their *needs*, but their *fate*.

The Shardbound Vault

Rumors & Secrets

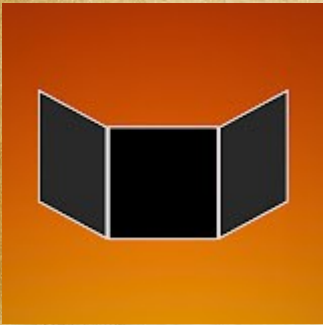
- **The Vault Remembers** – Some say the armor in the Vault isn't crafted... it's recovered. From fallen warriors in other times, places, or *realities*.
- **The Vaultkeeper Knows You** – A few claim that The Vaultkeeper greeted them by name, spoke of things only they knew, and offered armor that matched not their *needs*, but their *fate*.
- **Echo-Shards** – Fragments of armor left behind by past buyers sometimes turn up in odd places—under pillows, inside closed books, or clutched in the hands of the dead.

The Exit Changes – You never leave through the same door you entered. And sometimes... you're not entirely sure you're in the same *world*.

For those who dare to walk the line between defense and destiny, *The Shardbound Vault* is more than a shop—it's a test. Of will, of fate, and of whether the armor you wear *protects you... or defines you*.



THIS MONTH'S YOUTUBE SPOTLIGHT



BONUS ACTION

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

In the crowded halls of YouTube's Dungeon Master guild, one name continues to rise in popularity among those who live and breathe d20s: **Bonus Action**. This dynamic and insightful channel has carved out a respected niche in the world of *Dungeons & Dragons* and tabletop role-playing games, offering content that's as entertaining as it is educational. Whether you're prepping your first session or you're a seasoned DM with a shelf full of modules, Bonus Action has something to sharpen your game.

What makes Bonus Action stand out isn't flashy effects or cosplay wizardry—it's the practical, no-nonsense advice grounded in actual gameplay experience. This is the kind of channel that helps you *actually run* a better game.

In the video "There Are Actually 8 Ways to DM D&D," the creator breaks down different Dungeon Mastering styles in a way that's approachable, thorough, and eye-opening. From narrative-driven storytelling to tactical combat-focused sessions, viewers are encouraged to explore what kind of DM they want to be—and how to get there.

Another gem, "DnD Tricks DMs Use To Engage Their Players," dives into those subtle, clever techniques that keep a table immersed. Whether it's dramatic pacing, in-world consequences, or manipulating metagame expectations, Bonus Action arms you with tools to keep your players hanging on every word.

Beyond advice, Bonus Action takes a skeptical and critical look at the products flooding the D&D ecosystem. A perfect example is the video "I Got Beautiful D&D Dice To See If They're A Scam." Rather than simply unboxing sparkly math rocks, the channel evaluates quality, functionality, and—most importantly—value. It's a refreshing take in a space where aesthetics often trump substance.

The video "DnD Accessories I Wish I Bought Sooner" is another crowd-pleaser. It's a perfect blend of genuine enthusiasm and buyer's wisdom, helping players avoid gimmicks and invest in gear that actually improves the experience.

Bonus Action doesn't just broadcast—it engages. With an active presence on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and a thriving YouTube community tab, the creator regularly interacts with viewers, sparks discussion, and shares hot takes on D&D news and trends.

It's not just about building views—it's about building *community*. From discussing terrain setups to spotlighting the best DMs on YouTube (like Brennan Lee Mulligan and Matthew Mercer), Bonus Action amplifies the broader TTRPG scene while remaining grounded in its own unique voice.

In the ever-growing world of TTRPG content creators, Bonus Action earns its spot at the top with practical wisdom, honest reviews, and a genuine love for the game. It's the kind of channel that makes you want to pick up your dice, gather your party, and dive back into adventure—with a few new tricks up your sleeve. Whether you're looking to run smoother sessions, engage your players on a deeper level, or avoid wasting gold on dice that look better than they roll, Bonus Action delivers.

Final Rating: 5/5 Inspiration Dice

THIS MONTH'S PODCASTS SPOTLIGHT



The Ultimate RPG Podcast

<https://oneshotpodcast.com/interview-discussion/the-ultimate-rpg-podcast/>

Hosted by the charismatic and insightful James D'Amato, *The Ultimate RPG Podcast* dives deep into the heart of tabletop role-playing, offering players and game masters alike tools, ideas, and inspiration to enhance their storytelling. Known for his work on the One Shot Podcast Network and as the author of the "Ultimate RPG" book series, D'Amato brings a unique blend of humor, empathy, and expertise to each episode.

James D'Amato is no stranger to the tabletop community. A veteran podcaster and accomplished game designer, he's best known for founding the One Shot Podcast Network, a hub for actual play and RPG discussion shows. His "Ultimate RPG" books—including *The Ultimate RPG Character Backstory Guide* and *The Ultimate RPG Game Master's Worldbuilding Guide*—are popular resources among TTRPG fans. With this podcast, D'Amato continues his mission to help gamers build richer, more immersive worlds and characters. *The Ultimate RPG Podcast* is structured around thought-provoking conversations, practical advice, and creative exercises aimed at deepening listeners' understanding and enjoyment of TTRPGs.

The show features:

- **Expert Interviews:** D'Amato regularly brings on guests from across the gaming and creative writing industries to share their perspectives on storytelling, worldbuilding, and game mechanics.
- **Writing and Character Prompts:** Drawing from his book series, James offers mini-exercises to help listeners develop more nuanced characters and settings.
- **Listener Engagement:** Episodes often involve community questions, shared stories, and listener-submitted prompts.
- **Creative Challenges:** Unique episodes explore alternative formats or imaginative scenarios, pushing the boundaries of what an RPG podcast can be.

This podcast is perfect for anyone who wants to move beyond dice rolls and delve into the narrative depth of tabletop gaming. D'Amato's passion for collaborative storytelling is clear in every episode. Whether you're designing a new campaign setting, fleshing out a player character's tragic backstory, or looking for new tools to engage your table, *The Ultimate RPG Podcast* has something to offer.

What sets it apart is the emotional intelligence and inclusive lens James brings to the table. He approaches TTRPGs as a form of shared art, encouraging empathy, creativity, and personal expression. It's not just about the game mechanics—it's about the people at the table.

The Ultimate RPG Podcast is a standout in the ever-growing sea of tabletop-related media. With its focus on storytelling, character depth, and community engagement, it offers a rich resource for gamers of all experience levels. Whether you're a GM prepping for your next arc or a player seeking inspiration, this podcast will help you elevate your game.

The Ultimate RPG Podcast is that it's a heartfelt, insightful, and incredibly useful companion for anyone passionate about storytelling in tabletop games. James D'Amato brings both warmth and wisdom to the mic, making each episode feel like a conversation with a thoughtful mentor who genuinely wants to help you become a better storyteller. It's a must-listen—not just for tips and prompts, but for the inspiration it offers to keep pushing your creativity at the table. Tune in on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or your favorite platform—and bring your imagination.

LEGENDARY LOOT

Mantle of the Mirror Veil

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

“Every spell cast in malice may yet return like a dagger flung at a mirror.”

— *Sylvarius the Veiled*

Description

This shimmering cloak is woven from enchanted silk that subtly ripples like disturbed water. It reflects not just light but also the intent of those who would do the wearer harm. Fine silver thread outlines arcane symbols across its surface, glowing faintly when danger draws near. The mantle carries the legacy of Sylvarius the Veiled, who used its powers to survive duels without ever casting a single offensive spell.



Properties

- **Spell Reflection.** When you are targeted by a spell that requires a spell attack roll (not a saving throw), you may use your **reaction** to attempt to reflect it back at the caster. The caster must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw** or be affected by their own spell as if they had cast it on themselves. You must be aware of the spell being cast, and you can use this feature **once per long rest**.
- **Enhanced Insight.** You have **advantage on Wisdom (Insight) checks** while attuned to the cloak.
- **Veil of Intent.** While wearing the mantle, you can cast *detect thoughts* once per day without expending a spell slot. The DC for this spell is 15.
- **Cursed Curiosity (Optional Rule).** After every 7 days of continued attunement, the wearer must succeed on a **DC 13 Wisdom saving throw** or become **paranoid** (as if under the effect of the *confusion* spell during social interactions) for the next 24 hours. This effect fades with a remove curse spell or by willingly unattuning from the item for 48 hours.

Lore

Legends say Sylvarius never attacked—he simply waited. In every duel, his opponent’s magic rebounded with terrifying precision. Many believed he had made a pact with some unknown force, but none could prove it. After his disappearance, the mantle has been found again and again, always drawn to those who value cunning over might.

DM Tips

- The *Mantle of the Mirror Veil* works best in campaigns focused on intrigue, mage duels, or high-stakes negotiations.
- Consider having the cloak subtly influence a wearer’s mind over time—encouraging suspicion and isolation.
- Ideal for bard, rogue, sorcerer, or warlock characters who rely on guile and timing rather than brute strength.

*“I didn’t strike him. I didn’t **have** to. He cast the spell... and then screamed as it turned on him. The veil shimmered, and he was gone.”*

— *Last known words of Inquisitor Falmar, Mage-Hunter of the Council*

JUNE/JULY CONS

Cleveland Comic Book and Nostalgia Show	June 1, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Cleveland -
Peterborough ComiCon 2025	June 1, 2025	Peterborough Curling ClubPeterborough, ON, Canada
PokeKon 2025	June 1, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Fort Myers at Bell Tower ShopsFort Myers, FL
Trenton Charity Comic Con 2025	June 1, 2025	Trenton Central High SchoolTrenton, NJ
FurCamp Michigan 2025	June 5-8, 2025	Lake Michigan Recreation AreaFree Soil, MI
The Hollywood Show 2025	June 6-7, 2025	Los Angeles Marriott Burbank AirportBurbank, CA
AFA Indonesia 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Jakarta Convention CenterJakarta, Indonesia
Midwest Hunters Convention 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Donald E. Stephens Convention CenterRosemont, IL
OtakuFest 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Miami Airport Convention CenterMiami, FL
Phoenix Fan Fusion 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Phoenix Convention CenterPhoenix, AZ
SaltCON Summer 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Davis Conference CenterLayton, UT
StratosFur 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Houston Marriott WestchaseHouston, TX
The Nostalgia Con Anaheim 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Anaheim Convention CenterAnaheim, CA
WeebCon Indy 2025	June 6-8, 2025	Indiana Convention CenterIndianapolis, IN
Anime Maryville 2025	June 7, 2025	Foothills MallMaryville, TN
Cryptids and Paranormal Conference 2025	June 7, 2025	Our House Restaurant and Banquet FacilityFarming-
HanaCon 2025	June 7, 2025	Silver Spring Civic Building at Veterans PlazaSilver
NexusNippon Mini-Con 2025	June 7, 2025	Morehead Conference CenterMorehead, KY
QuadCon Burlington 2025	June 7, 2025	Westland MallWest Burlington, IA
3 Rivers Comicon 2025	June 7-8, 2025	David L. Lawrence Convention CenterPittsburgh, PA
Anime Conclave 2025	June 7-8, 2025	New Orleans Marriott Warehouse Arts DistrictNew Orleans, LA
Augusta Brick Convention 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Columbia County Exhibition CenterGrovetown, GA
Brick Fest Live Miami 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Miami-Dade County Fair & ExpositionMiami, FL
Copenhagen Comics 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Valby-HallenCopenhagen, Denmark
Doki! Doki! Anime Market 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition CentreSingapore
Exeter Anime & Gaming Con 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Mercure Exeter Rougemont HotelExeter, UK
KimoKawaii 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Lone Star Convention & Expo CenterConroe, TX
Lilac City Comicon 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Spokane Convention CenterSpokane, WA
Louisville Horror Con 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Triple Crown PavillionJeffersonstown, KY
Nococon 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Watertown Municipal ArenaWatertown, NY
Rhode Island Anime Con 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Rhode Island Convention CenterProvidence, RI
Toronto Comic Arts Festival 2025	June 7-8, 2025	Toronto Metropolitan University, Mattamy Athletic CentreToronto, ON, Canada
Albany Anime-Fest 2025 Postponed	June 8, 2025	Crowne Plaza Albany - the Desmond HotelAlbany, NY
Robo Toy Fest 2025	June 8, 2025	Marriott Convention CenterBurbank, CA

JUNE/JULY CONS

Animate! Columbus 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Greater Columbus Convention CenterColumbus, OH
AnimeCon UK 2025	June 13-15, 2025	National Exhibition CentreBirmingham, UK
Game Con Canada 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Edmonton EXPO CentreEdmonton, AB, Canada
HellmouthCon 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Torrance High SchoolTorrance, CA
Hentai Matsuri 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Handlery Hotel San DiegoSan Diego, CA
Kameha Con 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Atlantic City Convention CenterAtlantic City, NJ
LFG Con 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Los Angeles Marriott Burbank AirportBurbank, CA
Norcon 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Universitetet i Oslo, RealfagsbiblioteketOslo, Norway
Sci-Fi Valley Con 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Blair County Convention CenterAltoona, PA
Sonic Neon Summit 2025	June 13-15, 2025	Grand Sierra Resort and CasinoReno, NV
Acworth Comic Con 2025	June 14, 2025	Acworth Community CenterAcworth, GA
Game Con 2025	June 14, 2025	Northwest State Community CollegeArchbold, OH
Southside Comic Book Show 2025	June 14, 2025	Tinley Park Convention CenterTinley Park, IL
Tulsa Nostalgia Con 2025	June 14, 2025	Gateway Tulsa Event CenterTulsa, OK
ATG Expo 2025	June 14-15, 2025	Waco Convention CenterWaco, TX
Collect-A-Con Dallas 2025	June 14-15, 2025	Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center DallasDallas, TX
Little Island Furcon 2025	June 14-15, 2025	One FarrerSingapore
QuadCon Davenport 2025	June 14-15, 2025	NorthPark MallDavenport, IA
Space Coast Comic Con 2025	June 14-15, 2025	Wickham Park Community CenterMelbourne, FL
TouhouFest 2025	June 14-15, 2025	Torrance Cultural Arts CenterTorrance, CA
VidCon 2025	June 19-21, 2025	Anaheim Convention CenterAnaheim, CA
Furry Weekend Los Angeles 2025	June 19-22, 2025	Hilton Los Angeles AirportLos Angeles, CA
Anime Festival Orlando 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Rosen PlazaOrlando, FL
Argentina FurFiesta 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Abasto Hotel Buenos AiresBuenos Aires, Argentina
Cosplay America 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Embassy Suites by Hilton Raleigh Durham Research Tri-
Metrotham Con 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Dalton Convention CenterDalton, GA
Mississippi Comic Con 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Mississippi Trademart CenterJackson, MS
Muse Con 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Palm Springs Convention CenterPalm Springs, CA
OffKai Expo 2025	June 20-22, 2025	San Jose McEnery Convention CenterSan Jose, CA
OMG!Con 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Owensboro Convention CenterOwensboro, KY
Soonercon 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Embassy Suites by Hilton Norman Hotel & Conference Cen- terNorman, OK
Southern-Fried Gaming Expo 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Renaissance Atlanta Waverly Hotel & Convention Center / Cobb Galleria CentreAtlanta, GA
Washington State Summer Con 2025	June 20-22, 2025	Washington State Fair and Events CenterPuyallup, WA

JUNE/JULY CONS

Dothan Anime-Fest 2025	June 21, 2025	Dothan City Civic CenterDothan, AL
Finn-Con@MDC 2025	June 21, 2025	Miami Dade College - North CampusMiami, FL
Anime Ultra Mini Mini Con 2025	June 21-22, 2025	Rolling Oaks MallSan Antonio, TX
Fire & Ice RGX 2025	June 21-22, 2025	Roebbelen Center @the GroundsRoseville, CA
Leeds Anime & Gaming Con 2025	June 21-22, 2025	Leeds Marriott HotelLeeds, UK
PoniExpo 2025 Postponed	June 21-22, 2025	Delta Hotels Phoenix MesaMesa, AZ
Sugoi Pop Con 2025	June 21-22, 2025	Fishkill Recreation CenterFishkill, NY
Supanova Comic-Con & Gaming - Sydney 2025	June 21-22, 2025	Sydney ShowgroundSydney, New South Wales, Australia
TORG Gamers Market 2025	June 21-22, 2025	Cedar Point Sports CenterSandusky, OH
Wie.MAI.KAI 2025	June 21-22, 2025	Stadthalle FlörsheimFlörsheim am Main, Germany
Akron Summit Comic-Con 2025	June 22, 2025	Summit County FairgroundsTallmadge, OH
Albany Anime-Fest 2025	June 22, 2025	Crowne Plaza Albany - the Desmond HotelAlbany, NY
Belleville ComiCon 2025	June 22, 2025	Quinte Curling ClubBelleville, ON, Canada
Mullica Hill Toy Show 2025	June 25, 2025	Gloucester County 4-H FairgroundsMullica Hill, NJ
Games for Change Festival 2025	June 26-27, 2025	Parsons School of Design The New SchoolNew York, NY
Narrativity 2025	June 26-29, 2025	Crowne Plaza Minneapolis WestPlymouth, MN
PortConMaine 2025	June 26-29, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Portland, MESouth Portland, ME
Black Hills Con 2025	June 27-29, 2025	The MonumentRapid City, SD
JAFAX 2025	June 27-29, 2025	Amway Grand Plaza Hotel / DeVos PlaceGrand Rapids, MI
Planet Funk Con 2025	June 27-29, 2025	RiverCenterDavenport, IA
PopCon Indy 2025	June 27-29, 2025	Indiana Convention CenterIndianapolis, IN
SunnyCon Anime Expo 2025	June 27-29, 2025	St. James Park, Newcastle United Football GroundNewcastle-
TooManyGames 2025	June 27-29, 2025	The Greater Philadelphia Expo CenterOaks, PA
Volunteer Valley Comic Con 2025	June 27-29, 2025	Morristown LandingMorristown, TN
Animangapop Cardiff Summer 2025	June 28, 2025	Future Inn Cardiff BayCardiff, UK
605 Pop Culture Con 2025	June 28-29, 2025	Sioux Falls Convention CenterSioux Falls, SD
Anime ID 2025	June 28-29, 2025	Expo IdahoBoise, ID
AnimeVerse Kansas City 2025	June 28-29, 2025	KCI Expo CenterKansas City, MO
Brick Fest Live Columbus 2025	June 28-29, 2025	Greater Columbus Convention CenterColumbus, OH
Norwich Anime & Gaming Con 2025	June 28-29, 2025	University of East Anglia Students UnionNorwich, UK
Supanova Comic-Con & Gaming - Perth 2025	June 28-29, 2025	Perth Convention & Exhibition CentrePerth, Western Australia, Australia
HuntsvilleCon 2025	June 29, 2025	Embassy Suites by Hilton HuntsvilleHuntsville, AL
Wilmington Anime-Fest 2025	June 29, 2025	Hotel Ballast WilmingtonWilmington, NC
Anime Expo 2025	July 3-6, 2025	Los Angeles Convention CenterLos Angeles, CA
Anthrocon 2025	July 3-6, 2025	David L. Lawrence Convention CenterPittsburgh, PA
CONvergence 2025	July 3-6, 2025	Hyatt Regency MinneapolisMinneapolis, MN
Fan Expo Denver 2025	July 3-6, 2025	Colorado Convention CenterDenver, CO
Japan Expo 2025	July 3-6, 2025	Parc des Expositions de VillepinteParis, France

JUNE/JULY CONS

Animaritime 2025	July 4-6, 2025	Fredericton Convention Centre / Crowne Plaza Fredericton-
Animecon World 2025	July 5-6, 2025	Jyväskylä PaviljonkiJyväskylä, Finland
AVCon 2025	July 5-6, 2025	Adelaide ShowgroundWayville, South Australia, Australia
Columbia Anime & Video Game Expo	July 5-6, 2025	Jamil Shrine TempleColumbia, SC
Ganbatte 2025	July 5-6, 2025	TCU PlaceSaskatoon, SK, Canada
Glasgow Anime & Gaming Con 2025	July 5-6, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Glasgow CentralGlasgow, UK
SilFur 2025 Cancelled	July 5-9, 2025	ibis Styles Wrocław CentrumWrocław, Poland
Ironweld 2025	July 9-13, 2025	Four Points by Sheraton Wakefield Boston Hotel & Conference CenterWakefield, MA
Beauty and the Beast 2025	July 9-16, 2025	Hampton Inn New Orleans French Quarter Market AreaNew Orleans, LA
A.G.E. Con 2025 Cancelled	July 11-12, 2025	The ROBLake City, SC
G-Fest 2025	July 11-13, 2025	Hyatt Regency O'Hare ChicagoRosemont, IL
GalaxyCon New Orleans 2025	July 11-13, 2025	New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention CenterNew Orleans, LA
Shore Leave 2025	July 11-13, 2025	Wyndham Lancaster Resort and Convention CenterLancaster, PA
Texas Battle Bowl 2025	July 11-13, 2025	Bush Convention CenterMidland, TX
TFcon Toronto 2025	July 11-13, 2025	Hilton Mississauga/MeadowdaleMississauga, ON, Canada
Bruce County Comicon 2025	July 12, 2025	Southampton ColiseumSouthampton, ON, Canada
Charlie's Collectors Con 2025	July 12, 2025	Tropical Lodge 56 F & AMFort Myers, FL
First Coast Comic Con 2025	July 12, 2025	University of North Florida, Adam W. Herbert University CenterJacksonville, FL
Frankfort Anime-Fest 2025	July 12, 2025	Capital Plaza HotelFrankfort, KY
AnimeVerse Pasadena 2025	July 12-13, 2025	Pasadena Convention CenterPasadena, TX
Indonesia Weekend Anthro Gathering 2025	July 12-13, 2025	ibis Styles Serpong BSD CityKabupaten Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia
Nashville Horror Con 2025	July 12-13, 2025	Farm Bureau Exposition CenterLebanon, TN
Odessa Geek Fest 2025	July 12-13, 2025	Ector County ColiseumOdessa, TX
Retro Expo 2025	July 12-13, 2025	Plano Event CenterPlano, TX
Savannah Comic Con 2025	July 12-13, 2025	Savannah Convention CenterSavannah, GA
Shikkaricon 2025	July 12-13, 2025	DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Hotel Philadelphia WestPlymouth Meeting, PA
SMASH! Sydney Manga and Anime	July 12-13, 2025	ICC SydneySydney, New South Wales, Australia
The Uncanny Experience 2025	July 12-13, 2025	Minneapolis ClubMinneapolis, MN
ToonFusion Albuquerque 2025	July 12-13, 2025	Expo New MexicoAlbuquerque, NM
Buckeye Comic-Con 2025	July 13, 2025	Aladdin Shrine CenterGrove City, OH
Louisville Anime-Fest 2025	July 13, 2025	Holiday Inn Louisville East - HurstbourneLouisville, KY
Rochester Anime-Fest 2025	July 13, 2025	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel RochesterRochester, NY

JUNE/JULY CONS

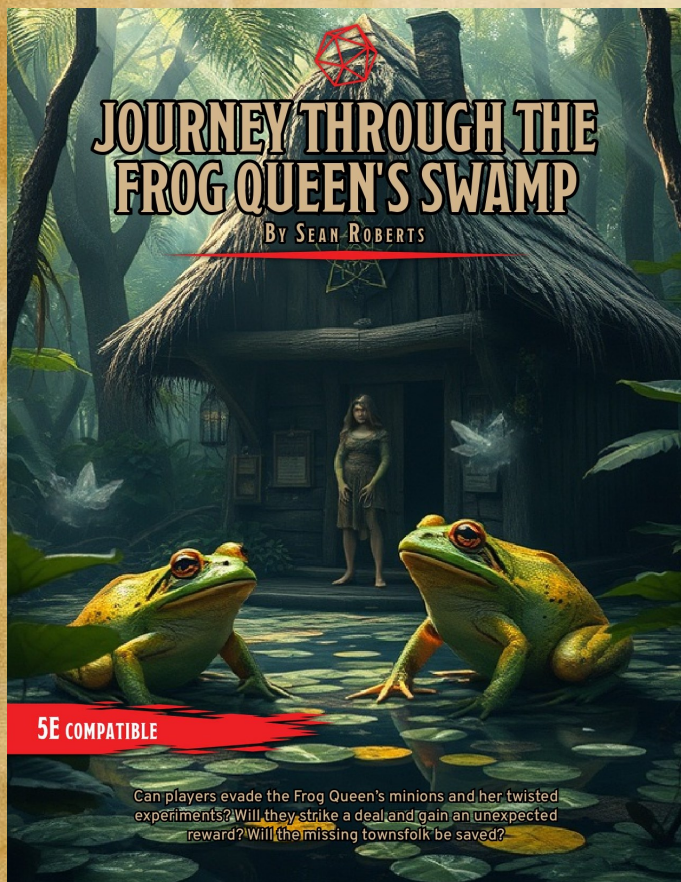
Eufuria 2025	July 17-19, 2025	Albany Capital CenterAlbany, NY
ConnectiCon 2025	July 17-20, 2025	Connecticut Convention CenterHartford, CT
Fur-Eh! 2025	July 17-20, 2025	Wyndham Edmonton Hotel and Conference CentreEdmonton, AB, Canada
Tekko 2025	July 17-20, 2025	David L. Lawrence Convention CenterPittsburgh, PA
ATL Comic Convention 2025	July 18-20, 2025	Georgia World Congress CenterAtlanta, GA
Billings Fun Con 2025	July 18-20, 2025	MetraParkBillings, MT
Brasil FurFest 2025	July 18-20, 2025	Sheraton Santos HotelSantos, SP, Brazil
Delta H Con 2025	July 18-20, 2025	Houston Marriott WestchaseHouston, TX
Dokidokon 2025	July 18-20, 2025	Radisson Plaza Hotel at Kalamazoo CenterKalamazoo, MI
Florida Supercon 2025	July 18-20, 2025	Miami Beach Convention CenterMiami, FL
Hyper Japan 2025	July 18-20, 2025	OlympiaLondon, UK
Realm Makers Expo 2025	July 18-20, 2025	DeVos PlaceGrand Rapids, MI
Anime Ultra 2025	July 19-20, 2025	Rolling Oaks MallSan Antonio, TX
Casper Comic Con 2025	July 19-20, 2025	Ford Wyoming CenterCasper, WY
Hershey Comic Con 2025	July 19-20, 2025	Holiday Inn Harrisburg (Hershey Area) I-81Grantville, PA
Really Cool Comic Con 2025	July 19-20, 2025	Dort Financial CenterFlint, MI
Shreveport Anime-Fest 2025	July 20, 2025	Hilton Garden Inn Shreveport Bossier CityBossier City, LA
TineeCon 2025	July 20, 2025	Hilton Garden Inn Springfield, NJSpringfield, NJ
Awoostria 2025	July 24-27, 2025	Arcotel Wimberger WienVienna, Austria
Comic-Con International: San Diego	July 24-27, 2025	San Diego Convention CenterSan Diego, CA
GalaxyCon Raleigh 2025	July 24-27, 2025	Raleigh Convention CenterRaleigh, NC
Retro Matsuri 2025	July 25-26, 2025	Grappone Conference CenterConcord, NH
Animelowa 2025	July 25-27, 2025	Hyatt Regency Coralville Hotel & Conference CenterCoral-
Aurawra 2025	July 25-27, 2025	ParkRoyal ParramattaParramatta, New South Wales, Australia
Classic Game Fest 2025	July 25-27, 2025	Palmer Events CenterAustin, TX
Metrocon 2025	July 25-27, 2025	Tampa Convention CenterTampa, FL
Time Traveler's Weekend 2025	July 25-27, 2025	Billie Creek VillageRockville, IN
AugustaCon Summer 2025	July 26, 2025	Columbia County Exhibition CenterGrovetown, GA
Central Alberta Fanfest 2025	July 26, 2025	Ponoka Jubilee LibraryPonoka, AB, Canada
Lakeland Anime-Fest 2025	July 26, 2025	RP Funding CenterLakeland, FL

JUNE/JULY CONS

MiniComi 2025	July 26, 2025	Roundhouse Community Arts & Recreation Centre North Vancouver, BC, Canada
Anime Impulse Bay Area 2025	July 26-27, 2025	Santa Clara Convention Center Santa Clara, CA
MegaCon Live Manchester 2025	July 26-27, 2025	Manchester Central Manchester, UK
Mid-Maine Comic & Toy Con 2025	July 26-27, 2025	Thomas College, Alfred Athletic Center Waterville, ME
World Boardgaming Championships 2025	July 26 - August 3, 2025	Seven Springs Mountain Resort Champion, PA
StarCon 2025	July 27 - August 3, 2025	Star Island Rye, NH

MODULE REVIEW OF THE MONTH (D&D)

By Andrew Babcock



Journey Through the Frog Queen's Swamp By Sean Roberts

Deep in the heart of a magical forest lies a mystery wrapped in fog, frogs, and moral quandaries. *Journey Through the Frog Queen's Swamp*, penned by Sean Roberts, is a compact yet rich 5th Edition D&D adventure designed for 4–6 characters at 5th level. It offers a blend of survival, strange science, and eerie atmosphere perfect for a single intense session or a two-night game with a slower group.

From the opening scenes in the logging town of Little Ivywood, players are drawn into a living world where danger creeps slowly in from the edges—rumors of disappearances, ominous river travel, and something lurking in the mire. The module is anchored by its namesake antagonist: the eccentric and unsettling Frog Queen, a rogue alchemist whose experiments toe the line between madness and misunderstood genius.

The structure of the adventure is strong and well-paced. The core travel mechanic—choosing between fast, moderate, or slow river travel—injects a layer of strategy and consequence rarely seen in short-form modules. This decision shapes the exhaustion system, encounter timing, and player tension beautifully.

Encounters are varied and flavorful. From a crocodile ambush and a poacher's hut to bizarre frog kidnappings under the cover of darkness, the adventure balances environmental storytelling with just enough combat. Optional encounters (snakes, wolves, eels) are thoughtfully included, allowing DMs to customize the session's tempo.

The standout element is the Frog Queen herself. Not merely a villain, she is a morally gray character with motives rooted in twisted curiosity rather than malice. Her swamp glade is packed with story potential: unsettling transformations, cursed elixirs, and an encounter that can end in battle, uneasy alliance, or tragedy.

The PDF is clearly laid out and DM-friendly. Sidebar notes provide great advice on modifying tone and pacing. Read-aloud text is abundant and immersive without being excessive. Stat blocks and original magic items—like the Staff of the Frog Queen—are well balanced and add tangible rewards with narrative consequences.

One of the cleverest mechanics is the elixir of darkvision—a tempting but cursed potion that might grant characters improved sight at the cost of slowly transforming into frogs. It's the kind of reward that keeps players guessing and roleplaying long after the swamp has been left behind.

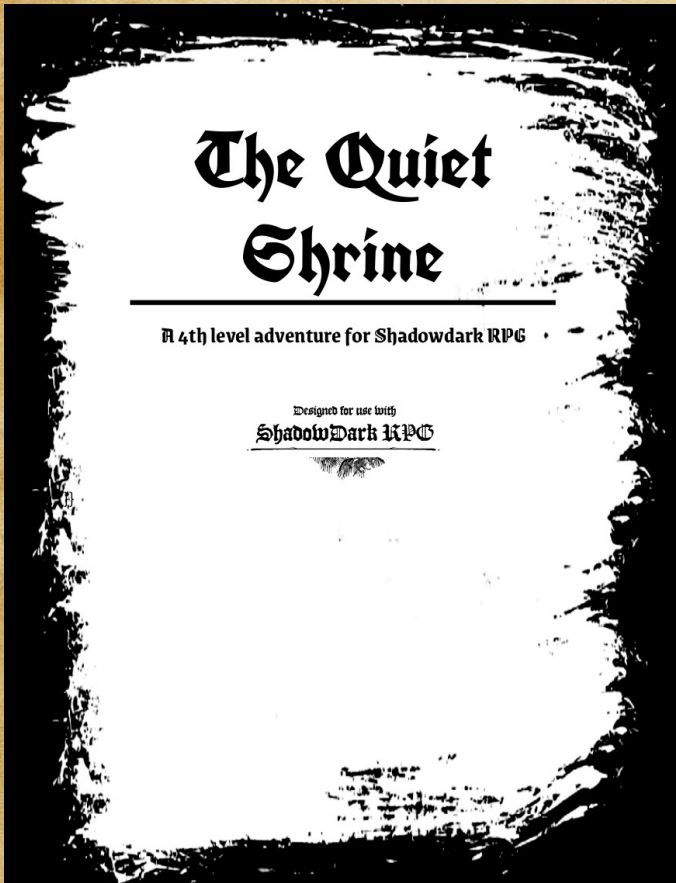
Journey Through the Frog Queen's Swamp is a delightful dive into weird fantasy. It's a rare module that offers equal parts combat, exploration, and ethical dilemma, wrapped in a distinct narrative voice. Whether your players choose to face the Queen, make a deal, or flee her domain entirely, they're guaranteed a memorable session.

Final Score: 8.5/10

A well-crafted one-shot with strong roleplay hooks, flexible pacing, and a unique antagonist. A must-try for DMs who like their adventures strange, slimy, and full of surprises.

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/en/product/521235/journey-through-the-frog-queen-s-swamp>

MODULE REVIEW OF THE MONTH (SHADOWDARK)



The Quiet Shrine

“Strike in silence, stand in stone.” That ancient mantra echoes through the crumbling, haunted chambers of *The Quiet Shrine*—a haunting and tightly crafted dungeon delve designed for the Shadowdark RPG. Written and illustrated by Dougal Cochrane, this 4th-level adventure is more than a simple crawl through dwarven ruins; it’s a masterclass in atmospheric storytelling, reward-based exploration, and tone-perfect Shadowdark design.

Set in a desecrated shrine to Ord, dwarven god of knowledge and balance, the adventure drops players into a solemn mountain valley haunted by tremors, sacred oaths, and the monstrous fallout of a long-dead war. The once-holy site has become a hunting ground for Cave Brutes—massive insectoid predators drawn by noise and blood—while the duergar who unearthed the place lie scattered and torn. Within these halls of reverent silence, players must navigate deadly traps, sacred rituals, and cryptic clues if they wish to reclaim the relic known as Ord’s Arbiter.

Cochrane’s use of Shadowdark’s design ethos is exemplary. Rooms are lean yet rich with implication—whether it’s the ashen corpses around the Sacred Well, the cryptic presence of a Water Elemental, or the climactic confrontation in the Tomb of Thordran Gemwarden. Traps are clever, puzzles require real player thought, and exploration is rewarded with meaningful lore and treasure.


The writing is clean and evocative. Environmental storytelling does much of the heavy lifting: bound-mouthed dwarves, tapestries in silver thread, and the ever-present sense that loud noise might bring the roof down—or worse.

Standout Features

- **Tone & Theme:** Silence is not just a flavor—it’s a mechanic. From cursed deafening statues to traps triggered by speech, the adventure leans into its theme with conviction.
- **Dungeon Ecology:** The Cave Brutes and the desecrated shrine feel organically connected. Players who act like brash dungeon crawlers will get punished. Those who heed the shrine’s clues? Rewarded handsomely.
- **Memorable Set Pieces:** From the Weird Water Serpent who offers cryptic aid, to the optional confrontation with the Cave Brute Matriarch, there’s no shortage of iconic moments.

Final Verdict

The Quiet Shrine is everything a Shadowdark dungeon should be: dangerous, evocative, and laced with forgotten history. It rewards reverence, punishes arrogance, and brings dwarven mythos to life in a way that feels both fresh and rooted in old-school sensibilities.

 **Final Score: 9/10**

An atmospheric gem of a dungeon—perfectly tuned for the Shadowdark system and dripping with somber, subterranean flavor.

<https://www.drivethrurpg.com/en/product/521855/the-quiet-shrine>

VENDORS



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