

RISE OF THE DROW

THE DARKNESS ARRIVES

A one-shot adventure for level 1 heroes.



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Revised Edition 2025 - Clever Roo's

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

RYBALKA IS A FRONTIER VILLAGE ON THE EDGE OF THE KLAVERK KINGDOM, IN A WILDERNESS POPULATED BY NATIVE TRIBES COLLECTIVELY KNOWN AS THE VIKMORDERE. The Rybalkan cathedral serves as a co-mingling center for these two cultures. The cathedral is presided over by a young priest of The Axiomatic General. Juriendor knows the importance of merging traditional Vikmordere ceremonies into local Klavek customs to ensure the survival of Rybalka. To help him keep this balance, Juriendor is the caretaker of an artifact known as the Moonshard.

For many years a tenuous balance has existed in this frontier village. Recently, the *Moonshard* detected a shift in the cosmic scales: A deity moving in the heavens, threatening to upset the balance of this realm. As the *Moonshard* became aware of the coming turmoil, the drow who serve this dark deity became aware of the *Moonshard*, and have taken steps to remove it from their path.

SCENE 1: RITUAL UNDERWAY

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure has been truncated to serve as a convention one-shot. There are 7 scenes to complete in less than four hours. Let the players know when they arrive that it will be a challenge to complete this adventure on time!

Note also that the adventure takes place (almost) entirely within the confines of the Rybalkan cathedral, into which an entire village of NPCs has been packed. Refer to Appendix II for a cast of characters you can use to bring early scenes to life.

When you're ready to begin, paraphrase the following.

On the longest night of each year, the frontier fishing village of Rybalka gathers in their cathedral to partake in the Vigil for Light to ward off the evil spirits of the nearby Dark Wood. This year, as the villagers made their preparations for the long night, storm clouds gathered and darkness descended mid-afternoon, hours before the village was ready.

As calm but harried villagers gathered loved ones and talismans and began the trek up the hill toward the cathedral, the shadows awoke in the forest and descended on Rybalka. Amidst sleet and hail, at the edges of torchlight, the shadows danced just out of vision. The cathedral ahead is bathed in a warm light from inside, you are the last to arrive. The ritual has begun!

SCENE 1: RITUAL UNDERWAY

The cathedral interior is awash in light: a glowing orb hovers in the rafters, casting its light over the chapel and out into the darkness. Acolytes usher those just arriving, you among them, to find a place to sit, kneel, or stand against the back wall. The high priest—a young lad named Juriendor—stands behind an altar on the dais, arms raised, eyes locked on the orb of light he has summoned.

Known in Town. The players' characters are an adventuring group known to the people and mayor of Rybalka. After the players are seated and have selected their characters, have them decide upon a clever name for their adventuring party. A rival (but friendly) adventuring party in Rybalka is known as Gryphonwind's Gatherers, named for their leader, Myharl Gryphonwind. A rival (and unfriendly!) adventuring group in the region, known more as mercenaries than heroes, is the Black Bear Company.

CATHEDRAL SMALL TALK

Juriendor and his acolytes have begun the ritual early, summoning a lantern archon to light the cathedral and calm the villagers. While the village settles in and joins in the chant, the players may take this opportunity to orient themselves and learn more about their character's surroundings. The benches closest to the doors are the only ones that remain free for the players' characters.

A character who succeeds on an appropriate **DC 12 skill check** learns one of the following pieces of information. Have each player make a single check, then incorporate what information they learn into whatever conversation or answer any NPC gives, as appropriate. Characters can use nearly any skill they can justify; allow them leeway to roleplay gleaning information, but after a failure of any skill check, nearby villagers notice the "disturbance" and focus on joining the ritual over interacting with the heroes. Even on a success, the villager imparting the information is polite, but quickly finds their seat in order to begin contributing to the chant. This scene should serve as an icebreaker but be sure to keep the game moving.

SCENE 2: TORCHES LIGHT THE WAY

The Ember Brazier. The smoldering, softly glowing coals on the altar are never allowed to be extinguished. The crackling is said to be the spirits of warriors long since passed from this world. There are truths to be seen in all flames, but the brazier is our reminder that the ancestors lend their light, comfort us, remind us of their trials and glories, and tell us that our struggles are not so different from theirs.

Rybalkan Customs. Juriendor serves a deity known as the Axiomatic General, but he is tolerant of all religions if they show the same respect. Mayor Igor shares Juriendor's beliefs that in order for Rybalka to survive, Vikmordere traditions must be incorporated into Klavek custom. Together they built this cathedral to resemble traditional Vikmordere architecture, but employ a Klavek style considered austere by the Klavek empire's nobility.

Origin of the Vigil. The Vikmordere that originally built this village held a ritualistic ceremony on this day, the longest night of the year, to ensure that the light returned in the morning. This is the first year in over a decade the Vigil for Light ceremony will be held in Rybalka; the villagers hope that the ceremony expunges the evils of the nearby Dark Wood. Juriendor adopted the vigil ceremony after experiencing annual attacks from the Dark Wood on this night.

Regarding the Ritual. The ritual begins by summoning a herald of light, a lantern archon. Its light bathes the cathedral and wards off the darkness. The chant strengthens the archon's presence here, lending the people's spirit to its own. The ritual takes hours, but by dawn the spirits of the villagers and the archon will be one, and the archon's light will push back the darkness, allowing the sun to shine once more.

The Moonshard. The high priest is in possession of an artifact called the *Moonshard*, used in the ritual to protect the village. Some say the *Moonshard* fell from the moon itself during a Vikmordere ritual hundreds of years ago. The light given off by the *Moonshard* is a distinct pale gray, as that of a misty dawn. It is both soothing and ominous to behold. The *Moonshard* sits—unnoticed except by those speaking of it—on the altar in front of Juriendor.

Townfolk Prayers. Individuals call out a prayer, interspersed amongst their chanting. It's common to say such an invocation when joining the chant, or when you've lost your place and need to rejoin. The townfolk speak in a mixture of Klavek Common and the Vikmordere tongue. Particularly devout villagers may call upon the Axiomatic General, the Ancestor Spirit, or even Juriendor to guide and protect them.

Townfolk Sayings

- 1 Spirits protect us!
- 2 Guide us through the darkness!
- 3 Protect us from the Dark Wood!
- 4 Bestow us with Light!
- 5 Ancestors! Bring forth the light for another year!
- 6 Heavens protect us!

Development. After an appropriate amount of time spent chatting with the villagers, just as the heroes quiet down and join the ritual, begin Scene 2.

EXITING THE CATHEDRAL

To ensure this adventure concludes within the time allotment, any heroes who insist on exiting the cathedral after this point leave the scene. They return after an appropriate amount of time missing half their current hit points, having survived an ambush by shadowy creatures that could not be injured by mundane weapons.

SCENE 2: TORCHES LIGHT THE WAY

A sudden gust of wind blows open the doors! The chill air howls, announcing the late arrival of straggling villagers. You recognize these as hunters who live near, but not within, Rybalka. More than half a dozen of them come striding in through the gale, torches held high, already chanting along with the ritual. Juriendor nods at their arrival, then closes his eyes to refocus his efforts.


The group of hunters is under the effects of a suggestion spell and has come into the cathedral to set fire to it, using their torches as weapons. The party needs to both remove the torches from the hands of the eight **crazed hunters** (♂16) and restrain them, at the same

SCENE 2: TORCHES LIGHT THE WAY

time as putting out the small fires that have already been started. See Fire Fighting 101.

The villagers all assume the hunters are nothing more than late arrivals, partaking in the ritual, until the hunters begin to set flame to tapestries and the like. Many of the locals recognize the hunters, some know them personally. The villagers object if the party deals with them too harshly, up to and including trying to stop blows that look like they are intended to kill.

This Doesn't Seem Right. As the hunters file into the room, they are indeed partaking in the ritual chant, if somewhat fervently, but insightful characters may notice something isn't quite right. A character who succeeds on a **DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check** notices that the hunters don't look at the orb of light that dominates the chapel, as do the rest of the parishioners. Instead, they seem focused on the tapestries that hang along the walls, between the windows. They also don't douse their torches, as one might do upon entering a well-lit building.

Initiative. The  in the chapel denote the locations the hunters set fire to tapestries with their first actions. If one or more characters get the drop on the hunters, they defend themselves with torches, but if they have not set at least one fire, that is their priority.

GM Note. Remind the players of the Knocking a Creature Out rule: Sometimes an attacker wants to incapacitate a foe, rather than deal a killing blow. When an attacker reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack, the attacker can knock the creature out. The attacker can make this choice the instant the damage is dealt. The creature falls unconscious and is stable.

Distraction Disguise. After a player subdues any hunter, have that character make a **DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check**. On a success they notice that one of the hunters is wearing a hastily assembled disguise that has partially come off. This ninth hunter appears more interested in causing a panic, brandishing a sword rather than a torch, waving it wildly amongst the villagers. Only the heroes who succeed on the Perception check notice this hunter, who appears to be a gray-skinned elf in

disguise. If he is noticed, he immediately uses dimension door to escape. If he goes unnoticed, he continues to send the congregation into a panic and by the time the eighth hunter is subdued, a dozen villagers have run out into the darkness, and he has made his escape. These Rybalkans are now missing (e.g. captured off screen).

Development. When the last hunter is subdued and the crowd begins to settle, loud noises from the bell tower alert everyone to a new danger. Immediately begin Scene 3.

FIRE FIGHTING 101

The early scenes in this adventure feature fire-starting opponents, who if left uncontested will eventually burn the cathedral down with panicking villagers still inside.

Scene 2. The hunters set fire to readily flammable tapestries in individual squares, which burn for 5 (2d4) rounds before spreading its flame to similar materials in adjacent squares. A fire that spreads twice has become too large to douse or smother all at once.

Scene 4. Spirits have set fire to the structure of the bell tower. These flames smolder against the slow-burning pitch that the bell tower is treated with; the flames spread, but only after several minutes. The bell deck structure itself was aflame for all of Scene 3, thus when the party begins Scene 4 the flames will spread within a few rounds, causing disaster (see Scene 4).

Fighting Fire. A character can douse or smother a small fire, or the flames of a single square, by spending an action. Encourage the players to be creative with how they smother or douse flames, especially if they think to use their environment to their advantage (smothering a burning tapestry by tearing it down, grabbing a holy water font to douse a flame, etc.).

Additionally, at the GM's discretion, the villagers will help to smother flames if it appears the heroes are ignoring that threat in favor of another.

SCENE 3: FLAMES BEGET SHADOWS

SCENE 3: FLAMES BEGET SHADOWS

Loud footsteps from above break the silence, as two men carrying injured compatriots stumble down the stairs from the bell tower. With the clerics at the front of the cathedral, the villagers scatter away, leaving the heroes the closest to the commotion. “Help!” Pleads one of the men, whom you recognize as a fellow adventurer.

These are what remains of Gryphonwind’s Gatherers, a friendly adventuring party. They were tasked with guarding the bell tower during the long night. They’ve descended to the chapel in their injured state because of an encounter with spirits of shadow and flame.

First down the stairs is Myharl Gryphonwind, carrying his unconscious gnome compatriot Goldsneezer. Following Myharl, Gregor Hawthorne carries the fourth member of their troupe, Thyron Warstriker who clings to life. The heroes may immediately assist the injured adventurers with a variety of skill checks to render aid and discover the nature of the attackers.

Diagnose. With a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check**, a character determines that both Goldsneezer and Thyron are at 0 hit points. With a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check**, a character also determines which patient is closer to death: Goldsneezer has failed two death saves, Thyron just one.

Stabilize. A character who succeeds on a **DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check** stabilizes either Goldsneezer or Thyron.

Examine. A character examines the wounds on any of the four adventurers with a successful **DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, determining the following: none of the wounds appear particularly deadly; instead, each has numerous scrapes and burns along with wan, necrotic flesh indicative of necromantic magic. With a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check**, a character also determines the wounds came from all directions, as though they were surrounded or engulfed. Any character examining Goldsneezer also notices the half-charred remains of a scroll in his hand; this scroll is identical to ones they may find later in **Area 2a** and **Area 2b**.

Assuage. Myharl appears to be in shock, muttering, “Help!” and holding Goldsneezer’s eyes open. Myharl calms himself enough to speak if Goldsneezer becomes stable. Otherwise, a character can assuage Myharl’s stupor with a successful **DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check**, calming the warrior enough for him to deliver the lines that start Scene 4.

Infer. From the evidence collected, a character who succeeds on a **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check** concludes that Gryphonwind’s Gatherers were ambushed by spirits of shadow and flame. At the GM’s discretion, allow all players to review this creature’s statblock.

Development. Scene 4 begins when Myharl recounts the ambush. If the party does nothing to aid the adventurers, an acolyte breaks away from the group of villagers she was shepherding to assist. Thyron dies from the delay, but she manages to save Goldsneezer. Once Myharl recounts his tale he implores the party to ascend the bell tower and douse the flames.


SCENE 4: FIRE IN THE BELL TOWER


SCENE 4: FIRE IN THE BELL TOWER




"We were ambushed! The shadows themselves burst into flames! Spirits of shadow and flame! The bell tower burns!" Myharl notices the nearby villagers struggling to focus on the ritual. He steels his resolve, and leans in to whisper, "Please! They're setting fire to the belfry! If the gables burn through, the bells will come crashing into the chapel!"

The party must ascend the bell tower and douse the flames to prevent the bells falling, which in turn would cause the whole burning structure to collapse into the chapel. Use the room descriptions for all of **Area 2** that accompany the map on pages 10-11.

Race Against Time. The fire will burn through the supports holding the heavy bronze bells in 12 rounds. Begin counting rounds secretly when the players arrive in the dojo (**Area 2a**), where they see one of the bell ropes fall, coiling onto itself in a burning heap. It should take a character, moving 6 squares per turn, less than 6 rounds to reach the bell deck, but there are complications that may slow them down.

Spot Fires. From the burning bell rope in the dojo, to the bell deck itself, there are numerous lesser fires that threaten to consume the bell tower. These fires are marked  on the map on page 10. See Fire Fighting 101. While these flames, if left unattended, will eventually destroy the bell tower, they are but a distraction from the immediate threat that is the bell deck.

Spirits of Shadow and Flame. These summoned spirits are instructed to burn the bell tower to the ground. After ambushing Gryphonwind's Gatherers, they set to work burning through the slow-burning pitch that covers the structural supports that hold the bells aloft. With that work done, they begin to move about **Area 3** and **Area 2** starting select fires. At each spot marked on the map 

, there is a chance one of the spirits will be hiding within the flames, waiting to ambush anyone attempting to put out the fire (GM's Choice). There are a total of four **spirits of shadow and flame** (18); two are hiding in the shadows of the bell deck, marked ; the other two are hidden randomly in spot fires (marked  on the map).

Able Cables. The remaining bell rope is animated and loyal to the cathedral. A **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** notices that the cable sports prayer runes in bronze wire woven into them; once the heroes have noticed that the rope is enchanted, they can use an action and a **DC 13 Intelligence (Religion) check** or a properly roleplayed prayer to the Axiomatic General to make a rope coil around a hero and catapult them to a square of their choice one level higher than they currently are. While harrowing, this way of travel is safe, but if the rope is destroyed while holding a character, the hero does fall. At the GM's discretion, the rope can swing into action once per round at an appropriate moment to save or aid a character.

Shelves of Stuff. As noted in the descriptions of **Area 2a** and **Area 2b**, there are shelves of religious idols and artifacts lining the walls of the staircase. If the players haven't thought to inspect these shelves for useful items, consider pointing out a scroll or potion if a character stops to fight a fire along the stairs.

Development. Once the party has put out the four fires in **Area 3**, they have thwarted the immediate threat of the bell tower collapsing. If no spirits of shadow and flame remain to start new fires, they have plenty of time to put out any remaining fires in the bell tower. As the party completes this task, screams of terror heard above the chanting from the chapel alert them to a new danger. Begin Scene 5.

SCENE 5. CEREMONY CORRUPTED

SCENE 5. CEREMONY CORRUPTED

The bright orb of light that once soothed and enraptured the congregation now emits a dark aura, as though absorbing the meager light of the candle-lit chapel. It sporadically fires dark rays of energy into the crowd. Chaos has erupted amongst the villagers as they scramble for a place to hide in the chapel; a mass of panicking townsfolk presses to leave; the mayor stands firm against the doors, shouting for calm. You catch a glimpse of a bloodied Juriendor descending through a trap door upon the dais.

While the heroes were in the bell tower, Juriendor was attacked, and the ritual chant was corrupted. The **hooded lantern archon** (♣17), itself confused as to its sudden presence here, lashes out randomly as it searches for its summoner. Juriendor, following the *Moonshard*, has descended into the Reliquary.

Allow the players to react immediately to the situation, either to gain more information or to seek a solution.

The Moonshard. Any character glancing at the altar notices that the *Moonshard* is no longer in its place. Smoldering coals have been spilt from the brazier, indicating that it was not removed peacefully.

The Archon. A character who succeeds on a **DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check** recognizes that the orb is a corrupted archon known as a hooded lantern. At the GM's discretion, allow this player to review archon's statblock. Presenting a holy symbol and succeeding on a **DC 16 Intelligence (Religion) check**, or appealing to the archon's once pure nature with a **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check** makes the archon stunned for 1 round. While corrupted, the archon seeks to remove itself from this plane by eliminating those it perceives to be its summoners (the villagers); it continues to do so until stopped, its corruption is removed, or until the doors of the cathedral are thrown open, at which point it seeks its freedom elsewhere.

The Crowd. Any heroic actions the party takes suffices to quell the push for the doors, at least momentarily. Each time the hooded lantern

archon targets a villager (see below), there is a cumulative 10% chance the dozens of villagers in the rear of the chapel surge out the doors. Should this occur, these Rybalkans are now missing (e.g. captured off screen). A character can truly calm the crowd with a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)** or **Charisma (Intimidation) check**; this check is made with **advantage** if the mayor continues to hold the doors shut.

The Reliquary. The party has spent enough time in Rybalka to know that immediately below the chapel is the priest's living quarters (not depicted in this adventure), and below that the Reliquary. A character who succeeds on a **DC 13 Intelligence (History) check** knows that the trap door on the dais, normally used in certain ceremonies, leads to a stairway that descends directly into the Reliquary.

The Ritual. Clever players may think to "remove the hood" from the lantern archon by restoring the Vigil for Light chant. The exact method for this to succeed is left between the player(s) and the GM to decide, but for it to succeed the congregation must be made calm enough to continue chanting (see above). The chapel acolytes can be of help in restarting the ritual. Players improvising a chant and performing it at the table automatically successfully purify the archon. Otherwise, while the archon is stunned (see The Archon), a **DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check** can remove the hood, metaphorically and literally. The party's reward for restoring the ritual and cleansing the archon is the benefit of a short rest (gained immediately).

Development. This scene resolves in the wake of the player's actions to calm the villagers and defeat the hooded lantern archon. Begin Scene 6 when any player chooses to descend into the Reliquary. If the entire party sticks together to save the villagers from the archon before descending into the Reliquary, the acolytes reward the party with healing spells enough to restore them to full hit points.

SCENE 6: SHADOWS BEGET TERROR

SCENE 6: SHADOWS BEGET TERROR

The stairway down into the Reliquary is dark, unless the players bring a light source or take the time to light the torches along the way—there is a torch sconce approximately every 20 feet, but all but the first of the torches have been removed or ruined.

Yoflid is the drow agent responsible for stealing the *Moonshard*. While the party was engaged in the bell tower, Yoflid used a counter ritual to corrupt the lantern archon, and during the ensuing chaos stole the *Moonshard* off the dais. The heroes witnessed Juriendor chasing after the thief as Scene 5 began. Yoflid has laid a complex plan for his heist.

Counter Ritual Locus. The area Yoflid used to conduct the counter ritual that corrupted the lantern archon still gives off a faint violet aura, creating an area of dim light in a 15-foot radius around it. The light trickles through the catacomb alcoves.

A character who succeeds on a **DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check** while examining this area understands how it was used to corrupt the ritual. With a successful **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check**, a character also determines the locus is the source of the magic that is reanimating the mummified skeletons. A character witnessing the reanimation process reduces this to **DC 13**. A character who uses an action to “break the circle” disrupts its magic.

Ghoublin Ambush. While laying his plans in the forest surrounding Rybalka, Yoflid came upon a group of goblins in the woods—he slaughtered them all and transformed them into **ghoublins** (♂16). These creatures now skulk about the Reliquary, waiting to ambush anyone who descends from above.

A pair of ghoublins hide in the darkness and wait until the party is engaged with a mummified skeleton or two, then attack whichever character(s) they can get closest to. Two rounds later, if the fight is still going, two more ghoublins join the fray in the same manner. If the fight ends, the pair stalks the party from the shadows,

waiting to try again. There are eight ghoublins in total skulking about the Reliquary, but the party encounters them only two at a time.

A character who succeeds on a **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check** avoids being caught by surprise at the start of combat with ghoublins. The ghoublins enter combat with cryptic quips, such as, “*A good ghoublin serves, a good ghoublin stabs!*” and, “*Wait in the shadows he said, stab the light he said!*”

Glow Maggots. These maggots start glowing when touched in a 5-foot radius. There is a 50% chance that 1d3 are in any given room in the reliquary; they can be found with a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** or **Intelligence (Investigation) check**. The maggots are in hibernation and help stripping corpses of flesh. A **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check** identifies them and notices that they are ravenous and deadly to undead that have flesh, such as the ghoublins. They can be thrown at undead that still have flesh as a ranged weapon; an undead hit with a glow maggot takes 7 (2d6) radiant damage. The undead takes this damage at the end of its turn until it uses its action to remove the maggot.

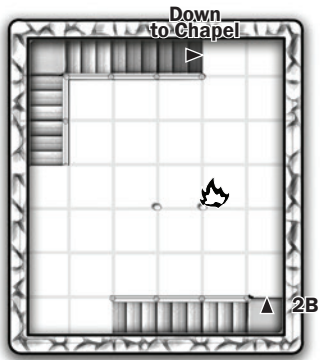
The Dead Rise. Yoflid also has reanimated the corpses that dwell in the Reliquary. Dozens of **mummified skeletons** (♂16) now roam the halls of the Reliquary, but they wander aimlessly and only seek to attack targets within 15 feet and quickly lose interest if a target moves out of that range. A party that descends into the Reliquary through the trap door on the dais sees several of these skeletons reanimating in the wake of Juriendor’s passage.

The counter ritual locus, softly glowing in the center of the Reliquary, is also the source of magic that is reanimating the mummified skeletons. A character who uses an action to “break the circle” disrupts its magic.

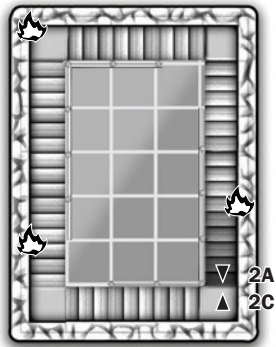
Bone Dust Explosion. The sarcophagi and burial urns contain incredibly fine bone dust and ash; opening one and spreading the contents creates a 15-foot-diameter sphere around the object; any open flame placed inside causes a detonation, dealing 14 (4d6) fire damage to all in the area, or half as much on a successful

Rybalka Cathedral

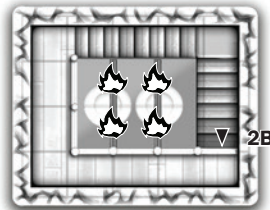
Bell Tower



AREA 2A
EXERCISE DOJO



AREA 2B
TOWER STAIR

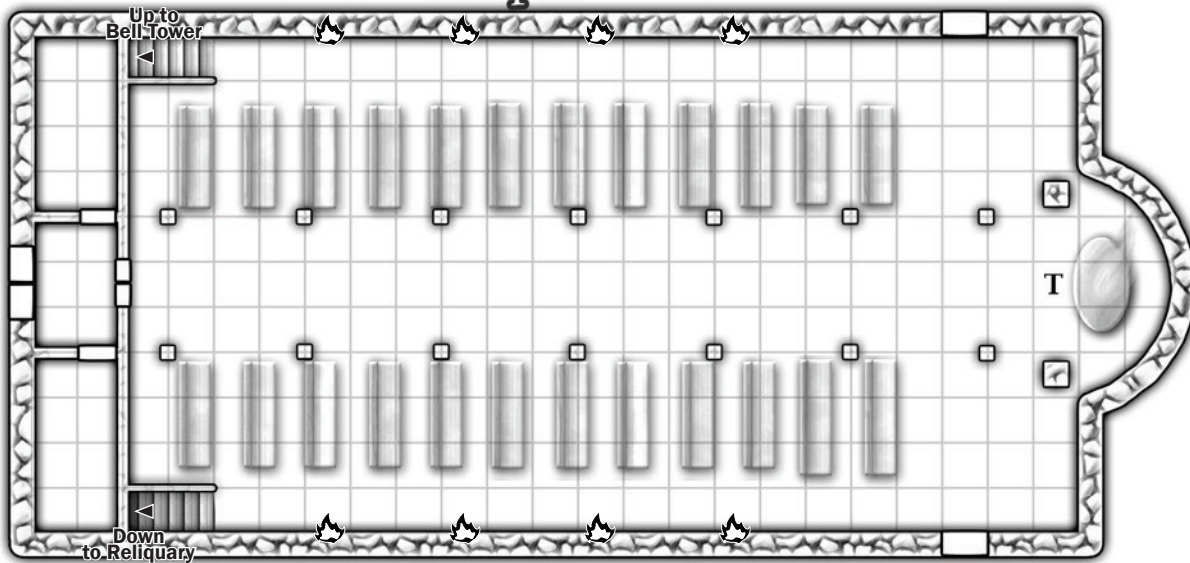


AREA 2C
BELL DECK



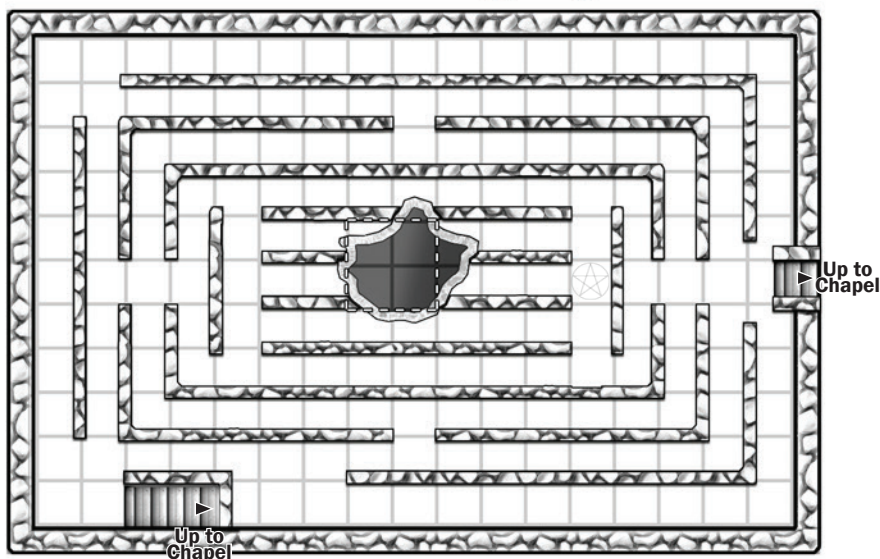
one square = 5 feet

Chapel



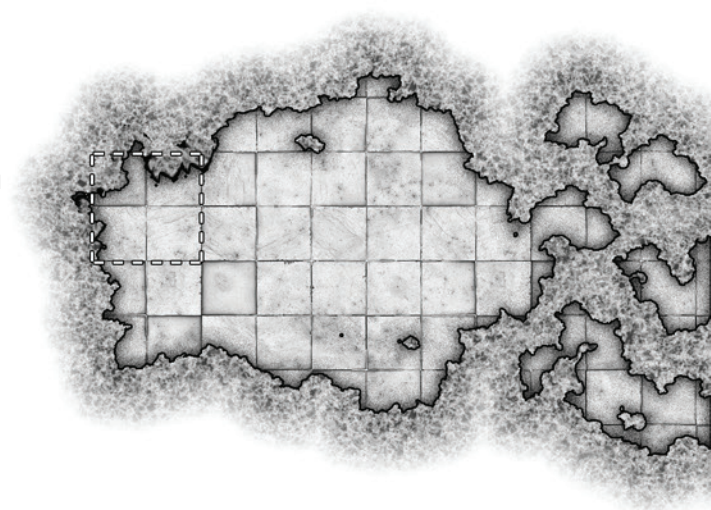
AREA 1

Reliquary



AREA 3

Collapsed Tunnel



AREA 1. THE CHAPEL

The chapel is awash in light from hundreds of candles and torches, illuminating the wooden columns and reflecting off the stained-glass windows. On the raised dais, an ornate wood and gold brazier holds a warm coal fire that casts the dais in an amber glow.

The benches and pews that make up the rows of the congregation are not secured to the floor. The entire village of Rybalka is packed into the cathedral. Unless the players make efforts to corral the crowd, treat the cathedral as difficult terrain.

AREA 2A. EXERCISE DOJO

A serene traditional dojo with polished floors, tapestries, a view overlooking Rybalka and the Dark Wood, training equipment, and bell ropes descending from the ceiling. A character who succeeds on a **DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check** can ascend the bell tower by climbing the ropes. Shelves beneath the southern stairs hold religious artifacts. Among them a character can find a useful item (see below) with a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** or **Intelligence (Religion) check**.

AREA 2B. TOWER STAIR

Shelves of religious idols and artifacts line the walls of this steep staircase. A character can find a useful item (see below) amongst the artifacts with a successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** or **Intelligence (Religion) check**. The woven reed railing is an ornate handhold for climbing the stairs, but it lacks true architectural strength. Any character attempting to stand upon it or use it to tie off a rope is in for a surprise when the railing breaks 1d3 rounds later.

d8 Useful Items

- 1 *potion of climbing*
- 2 *potion of heroism*
- 3 *scroll of locate object*
- 4 *scroll of create or destroy water*
- 5 *scroll of shield of faith*
- 6 *potion of greater healing*
- 7 *scroll of spiritual weapon*
- 8 *scroll of sanctuary*

*Each character can obtain one item from the Useful Items table in each Area. If a character looks for a specific item, allow them to obtain that item without rolling on this table.

AREA 2C. BELL DECK

Massive bronze bells sway from stout timbers 40 feet above the dojo. The window shutters clamor against the storm winds.

AREA 3. THE RELIQUARY

This reliquary houses the remains of warriors and skalds of the ancient Vikmordere, as well as the Klavek soldiers that fought them. There was once a prominent stone slab at the center of the reliquary; now, there is a pit in the floor.

Reliquary Useful Items. As Area2b, replace *create or destroy water* with *protection from evil and good*.

CONCLUSION

DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Note that an explosion automatically alerts Yoflid.

Tunnel Beneath the False Altar. At the center of the Reliquary, there is a stone slab used to hold the recently deceased prior to internment in the catacombs. Or at least, there was such a slab, until Yoflid enacted his plan wherein a **tunnel spider** (🕷️19) granted him access to the Reliquary directly through this table. In situ, the spider's silhouette matches that of the stone slab enough to fool anyone hurriedly approaching the area in the dim light, as Juriendor did. The young priest now lays unconscious in the tunnel below (see Scene 7), after succumbing to the wounds inflicted by the spider.

Once the tunnel spider reveals itself, the heroes see a faint, pale light emanating from the hole in the Reliquary floor. Astute players will recognize the curious light given off by the *Moonshard*.

Development. This scene resolves in the wake of the player's actions to explore the Reliquary and defeat the tunnel spider. Begin Scene 7 when any player descends into the collapsed tunnel. Any remaining ghoublins seek to remain hidden within the catacombs, to prey on the living at a later time. The mummified skeletons continue to wander aimlessly until the counter ritual locus is disrupted.

GM Note. The *Bone Dust Explosion* and *Glow Maggots* can help parties strapped for resources deal with the threats faced here. If the heroes are struggling, allow for checks to think of either option.

SCENE 7: DARKNESS ARRIVES

It is entirely possible the party arrives in this scene without any clue as to who is responsible for stealing the *Moonshard*. Upon first glance into the tunnel, they see a gaunt male drow holding the artifact, and four drow warriors.

When the heroes arrive in the tunnel, Yoflid is poised to make his escape, having just received a report from his agents responsible for causing chaos and capturing villagers amidst the heist. There is opportunity for banter here, between the players and the villain, but even if Yoflid loses an initiative roll off, his first action is to quaff his

potion of gaseous form and make his escape with the *Moonshard* through the collapsed tunnel.

Just Prior. If, somehow, the party employs stealth or other means of bypassing the tunnel spider, they overhear a conversation between Yoflid and his four **drow agents** (👤16). The four relate how they ensorcelled the late arriving hunters and summoned the shadowflame spirits. If any villagers fled the cathedral, the drow also relate having captured, "... dozens of sacrifices for the Matron." Yoflid instructs the drow to subdue and collect any pursuers, along with Juriendor, before returning to, "the Folly." The drow pass between them a wand of dimension door to allow the raiding party (and any captives) to escape the tunnel.

On Juriendor. Juriendor rushed into the darkness of the Reliquary, chasing after Yoflid and the *Moonshard*. After he ran afoul of the tunnel spider, it deposited him in its new lair, where he remains unconscious. The drow raiders arrived just after to give their report to Yoflid.

Development. Regardless of whether the heroes have a loud conversation with the drow from the Reliquary down into the tunnel, or they somehow manage to stealthily ambush Yoflid, the ghoul makes his escape, instructing his agents to subdue or eliminate the party. The drow are not shy about using the wand and their innate magic, but if the fight turns against them, they do not hesitate to join Yoflid in escaping.

CONCLUSION

Juriendor, the mayor, and any other surviving NPCs the party has interacted with catch up with the heroes just as this fight ends. If any villagers fled the cathedral, they are now missing and presumed captured. The notion that drow are to blame for all this is a cause for grave concern. As for the *Moonshard*, it is gone and Rybalka is less safe than it once was. Will the heroes pick up the trail of the missing villagers, in the hopes it will lead them to the *Moonshard*?

The story continues in *Rise of the Drow*!

APPENDIX I: GM ADVICE

This section holds various bits of advice and reminders for running this adventure. The *Darkness Arrives* is meant to serve as an introduction to the *Rise of the Drow* sandbox setting/campaign. This version has been heavily modified from the original to facilitate running this adventure in a four-hour session at a convention.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

You will need to bring with you the materials you need to run a successful, engaging game. This can be printed maps, dry erase battle mats and minis if you like to represent the world in a tactile way, or tokens and card handouts if you run a more dramatic theater of the mind game. While we will have a supply of these things for emergencies, we will not supply these extras for every table.

You should have a copy of this adventure and dice to run the game. We will provide a printed copy of all the materials in the appendices. Again, we will have backup supplies in case of emergencies, but we won't be able to supply dice and battlemats for every table.

VISION IN DARKNESS

Much of *Rise of the Drow* takes place in dark environments. In this adventure, from Scene 6 onward the only light sources present are those the heroes provide or obtain. The presence or absence of light in an environment creates three categories of illumination: bright light, dim light, and darkness.

Bright light lets most creatures see normally. Even gloomy days provide bright light, as do torches, lanterns, fires, and other sources of illumination within a specific radius.

Dim light, also called shadows, creates a lightly obscured area. An area of dim light is usually a boundary between a source of bright light, such as a torch, and surrounding darkness. The soft light of twilight and dawn also counts as dim light. A particularly brilliant full moon might bathe the land in dim light.

Darkness creates a heavily obscured area. Characters face darkness outdoors at night (even most moonlit nights), within the confines of an unlit dungeon or a subterranean vault, or in an area of magical darkness.

Darkvision. Within a specified range, a creature with darkvision can see in darkness as if the darkness were dim light, so areas of darkness are only lightly obscured as far as that creature is concerned. However, the creature can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray. Most importantly, dim light allows creatures to hide, so even a character with darkvision will want a source of illumination in darkness.

NPC OVERLOAD

Having Juriendor, the mayor and some other characters involved in these scenarios is purely to enhance the sense of camaraderie and loyalty of Rybalka's citizens. Have fun with the various scenarios and throw in some unexpected twists to keep the players on their toes, but don't bother with tracking background, cinematic combat between villagers and hunters or skeletons.

Just remember that NPCs are meant to be background characters. You don't need statblocks or more than a few notes about their personalities. They can be the stars of their own show in the cinematic action of the background, but inside the cathedral the players are the heroes.

Don't forget to use Gryphonwind's Gatherers as you see fit! Once they've served the purpose of starting the excitement in the bell tower, they can easily assist the heroes upon request or continue to cinematically showcase dangers as they appear. Depending on how the heroes are faring against the hooded lantern archon, these NPCs could join the fight or perhaps they thought themselves heroes while the party was in the bell tower, and they now need the help of the true heroes yet again.

APPENDIX II: NPCS

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FOR RISE OF THE DROW IN GENERAL—AND ESPECIALLY FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS ONE-SHOT—NO STATISTICS ARE NEEDED FOR FRIENDLY NPCS. If the NPC should be competent at an attempted action, the action succeeds. If a situation calls for randomness to determine an NPC's cinematic action, a simple 50% chance will suffice. These NPCs are assumed to have access to equipment, class features, and privileges of rank as appropriate and as needed to facilitate dynamic roleplaying without stealing the player characters' spotlight.

CUAL BEARTOOTH HUMAN HUNTER
"The Dark Wood is only dark to those who don't respect its ways. Many Klaveks don't respect anything."

Cual was born amidst the strife that is known amongst the Vikmordere as the Klavek invasion. But as the boy grew into a man, he saw acts of brutality on both sides of the war. Today, he makes his living as a scout and hunter all across the peninsula. He has grown fond of this new Rybalka, and has begun spending more time there.

HIGH PRIEST JURIENDOR HUMAN PALADIN
"The Axiomatic General is a god of thought and consideration, as much as war. And it is on the other side of war that peace is found."

Juriendor is a tall man clad in armored priest's robes. He joined the militaristic priesthood of the Axiomatic General at the astoundingly young age of 12. Six years later, he is the youngest high priest of any deity in all of Klavek.

BELLA ROSTOV HUMAN SOLDIER
"It is by my blood and that of my brethren and sistren that his empire can now claim this land. Yet where are the roads? The silk merchants? The palaces and gardens? The King has lost interest in this place, but I'll be damned if I'm giving it back."

Bella is a veteran of the Klavek military, having served with distinction during the kingdom's expansion into the Serpent Lake region. These days she serves as master-at-arms for the fledgling Rybalkan Militia, an outfit loyal to the village and its people, rather than some far off king.

LANDON BUGG HUMAN ODDBALL
"Oh yes it's a fascinating example of mid-cyrillic post-docent native wood carving. Absolutely stunning for its simple complexity, don't you think?"

Bugg is an oddly diminutive fellow. The proprietor of the oddly small—and oddly decorated—Bugg Odds & Inn styles himself a collector of rare artifacts. He is oddly particular regarding his collection, but more than happy to talk at length about it. From his rose-quartz spectacles to his blue silk slippers, everything about Landon Bugg is... odd.

MAYOR IGOR LEONID HUMAN NOBLE
"Rybalka has so much religion, the Spirit Poles have started walking around!" —Igor's favorite joke referencing Juriendor and Sulwotik, both men of faith and tall of stature.

Mayor Leonid is a heavy-set man who proudly carries a Klavekian war maul over his shoulder. Igor has popularized the ushanka, wearing the hat so often it has become associated with a position of authority in the village. The mayor is fond of pithy, yet not terribly useful, aphorisms. *"You can never tell what a dwarf is thinking."*

NATHASHA KALVAKA HUMAN ACOLYTE
"It is a testament to his resplendent dedication to the Axiomatic General that Juriendor has achieved so much for one so young. But he is quite young."

Natasha is the most senior of Juriendor's acolytes. The fact that she is over twice his age crops up frequently in her conversations about the high priest.

QUORRON DWARF BLACKSMITH
"There is not a mystery in this realm that cannot be solved with careful consideration, deliberate action, and warm ale. I think humans too often skip the first two."

Quorron hails from Embla, the dweorg trade city of the Underworld. For the last 30 years he has kept busy at his forge and seldom makes time for frivolous friendships amongst the hot-headed and insular humans of Rybalka, the lone exception being Landon Bugg. He finds the gnome-like human most entertaining.

APPENDIX II: NPCS

SAGE YURI STATEL

HUMAN WIZARD

"That which cannot be seen, heard, or felt can still kill you. I've smelled Sulwotik's spirits from afar, I've no wish to discover their potency up close."

Called "Greycloak" by the native Vikmordere, the gray-haired Yuri serves as Rybalka's omniscient information broker and sage. Unbeknownst to the villagers—and a secret from even Mayor Leonid—Yuri is an agent for King Tokolvor Klavek XIII and has been assigned to monitor the frontier for signs of outsider aggression.

SULWOTIK

HUMAN SHAMAN

"Don't be an idiot."

Prior to colonization, Sulwotik was the shaman of this lakeside village of craftsmen, fishermen, and woodworkers. Sulwotik sees the invasion of the Klavek Kingdom as an unavoidable change foretold by the Ancestor Spirit. He believes it is up to him to show the newcomers the ways of the forest, the lake, and the spirit.

GRYPHONWIND'S GATHERERS

MYHARL GRYPHONWINND

human, 1st level fighter, lawful neutral

hp 1 (max 14)

Myharl is unusually tall for a human, bald-headed—except for a long, braided goatee—with dark skin and a muscular, handsome physique. Where there is political intrigue or social change, Myharl sees the chance for coin. His quick-wit and silver-tongue have gained him a loose alliance with some of the local trappers and hunters, but deep within he is steadfastly dedicated to only one faction—himself.

GOLDSNEEZER

gnome, 1st level wizard, chaotic good

hp 0 (max 6)

Goldsneezer sports crazed blue and green hair, is overly excitable, and periodically sneezes extremely fine, valueless fool's gold, the result of his very first experiment (the smell of which still lingers around him). He desperately wants to acquire a rare alchemical component only found in a dangerous part of the Underworld, and joined the Gatherers in order to have company on this precarious quest.

GREGOR HAWTHORNE

human, 1st level ranger, neutral good

hp 1 (max 10)

Tall, brooding, intuitive, and fearless, Gregor considers himself a crusader—he is consumed with ensuring evil beings are returned to Hel and vanquishing whatever created them.

THYRON WARSTRIKER

human, 1st level paladin, lawful good

hp 0 (max 10)

The holy warrior has long flaming red hair and a dark scar on the right of his face, which has blinded his eye. Thyron is searching for his brother—a fallen paladin who escaped into the Underworld—and is determined to convert him back or execute him. He feels that Gryphonwind, despite his motives, is trustworthy enough to help him.

Crazed Hunter

Medium humanoid, any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed Walk 30ft.

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

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Actions

Torch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage, plus a 50% chance of dealing 1 (1d2) fire damage. When this attack deals fire damage, the target must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the target catches on fire. While on fire, at the end of each of the target's turns it takes 1 (1d2) fire damage. The target can use an action to smother the flames and avoid additional fire damage.

Set to Flame. The crazed hunter sets to flame a tapestry—or similar flammable material, such as draperies, woven totems, or parchment—in an adjacent square. That square is aflame for 5 (2d4) rounds before the fire spreads to similar materials in every adjacent square. A fire that spreads twice has become too large to douse a single square at a time. (See Fire Fighting 101 🧯 5.)

Drow Agent

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 13 (3d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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

Skills Arcana +2, Acrobatics +4, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Elvish, Undercommon

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Special Features

Fey Ancestry. The drow has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drow to sleep.

Actions

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must roll to resist drow poison; the DC is 13.

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:*

+4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must roll to resist drow poison.

Spellcasting. The agent casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 11):

At will: *dancing lights*, *mage hand*

1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *magic missile*

Bonus Actions

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

Drow Poison (Injury). A substance that is both a corrosive toxin and potent sedative, the formula for the drow poison is a closely guarded secret. A creature subjected to drow poison must succeed on a **DC 13 Constitution saving throw** or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

Ghoublin

Small undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 10 (3d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	9 (-1)	8 (-1)	6 (-2)

Skills Stealth +6

Damage Immunities poison

Damage Resistances necrotic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Special Features

Surprise Attack. The ghoublin deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage if the target of its attack is surprised.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (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.

Thorn Dart (4). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 10/20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Bonus Actions

Nimble Escape. The ghoublin can take the Disengage or Hide action as a bonus action on each of its turns.

Hooded Lantern Archon

Tiny celestial, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 76 (17d4 + 34)

Speed fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (-4)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +6

Damage Resistances radiant, necrotic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, petrification

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages all

Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Special Features

Magic Resistance. The hooded lantern archon has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack. The hooded lantern archon makes two dark ray attacks.

Dark Ray. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft./360 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) necrotic damage and the target is subject to weeping touch.

Spellcasting. The archon casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12):

At will: *false life*, *detect evil and good*

Weeping Touch (Recharge 6). The hooded lantern archon touches another creature. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the target is paralyzed for 1 round.

Fate Action

At initiative 20 each round, the archon targets an NPC with a dark ray. At the GM's discretion, the archon may instead target a character with a dark ray on initiative 20.

Mummified 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)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsense 15 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages

it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Special Features

Reanimation. Upon being reduced to 0 hit points, a mummified skeleton collapses into a pile of bones, as expected. However, 2 (1d4) minutes later, the skeleton reanimates. It continues to reanimate as long as the *Reanimation Locus* remains intact. A Locus is a rune-sigil, inscription, totem, crystal, or similar fixture occupying a space within 1 mile. The GM determines the Locus and how it can be discovered and destroyed. (👁 9)

Sanctified Corpse. The remains this skeleton was created from came from a holy place, weakening the necromancy that animates it. It makes attacks with disadvantage.

Actions

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Spirit of Shadow and Flame

Medium fiend, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 17 (5d6)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Perception +1

Damage Vulnerabilities cold

Damage Immunities fire, necrotic

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Ignan

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Special Features

Fiery Exit. When the spirit of shadow and flame is reduced to 0 hit points, it explodes in a burst of shadowflame. Each creature within 5 feet of it must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 3 (1d6) fire damage and 3 (1d6) necrotic damage, or half as much on a successful one.

Fumish Guise. When the spirit remains motionless in an area of dim light it is invisible. While motionless in bright light, it is indistinguishable from ordinary flames.

Regeneration. The spirit regains 6 hit points at the start of its turn. If the spirit takes cold or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the spirit's next turn. The spirit dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate. At the GM's discretion, dousing a spirit reduced to 0 hit points with a gallon of water, or with two hands full of snow also suppresses the spirit's regeneration until the start of the next turn.

Actions

Shadow Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:*

+4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) necrotic damage.

Gout of Flame. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) fire damage.

Shadowflame (Recharge 6). The spirit exhales a 15-foot cone of shadowflame. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) fire damage and 3 (1d6) necrotic damage, or half as much on a successful save.

Tunnel Spider

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (7d10 + 7)

Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.,
passive Perception 12

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Special Features

Ambuscade. The tunnel spider can burrow just under a rock or earthen surface and remain motionless. While doing so, it is indistinguishable from a normal surface and gains advantage on attack rolls against surprised targets.

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

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

Trap Door. The tunnel spider can create a 10-ft.-deep pit trap when it breaches through a rock or earthen surface it is burrowing through. Any creature within 5 feet of the pit trap when it is created must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or fall into the pit, taking 3 (1d6) falling damage and landing prone.