

D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE

All of the scribes in Candlekeep are reporting eerie dreams, dreams in which the flying citadels of Ancient Netheril remain aloft among the clouds, with the modern skylines of Neverwinter and Waterdeep far below. These hazy visions all end the same way: with tremendous calamity as those fortresses smash down upon the defenseless metropolises.

What aid can be enlisted when such doom is on the horizon?

A 4-hour Adventure for 11th – 16th level Characters or 17th– 20th level Characters



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Those That Came Before*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system. This adventure is not part of any specific storyline, though it is assumed to take place after the events of the *Tyranny of Dragons™* and *Elemental Evil™* storyline seasons (seasons 1 & 2).

This adventure takes place almost entirely within the ruins of **Warlock's Crypt**. Located several days north of Baldur's Gate, this place has long been rumored to contain all manner of demons, devils, crumbling enchantments, and powerful undead.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 11th-16th level characters (optimized for 13th level) or three to seven 17th-20th level characters (optimized for 18th level)**, and is best experienced with five characters. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

This adventure should take approximately **4 hours** to complete.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure provides suggestions in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's APL. To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table.

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party	Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than		Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent		Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than		Average
5 characters, APL less than		Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent		Average
5 characters, APL greater than		Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than		Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent		Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than		Very strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or

appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

BEFORE PLAY AT THE TABLE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

PLAYING THE DUNGEON MASTER

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life.

To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

You're Empowered. Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure's spirit. This doesn't allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League, however; they should be consistent in this regard.

Challenge Your Players. Gauge the experience level of your **players** (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep the Adventure Moving. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling—play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

ADVENTURE PRIMER

With a secret like that, at some point the secret itself becomes irrelevant. The fact that you kept it does not.
--Sara Gruen, "Water for Elephants"

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For nearly all of known history, the library-fortress of Candlekeep has stood a silent vigil atop the bluffs of the Sword Coast. Secreted within its walls are tomes of valor and loyalty, but also vile records of dark magic and shameful secrets. The Great Readers – the highest-ranking members of the church of Oghma, the deity of knowledge – are tasked with recording events as they unfold. While they do not pass judgment upon these events, they are free to call for deeper investigation if they so desire. In rare circumstances they may do so, especially when “an event” is recorded; this occurs when more than one Great Reader records an event at the same time as another... and now all twelve of them have recorded a single event.

The Great Readers have all witnessed the destruction of every modern major city along the Sword Coast; they saw great, hovering citadels float gently in the breeze and then come crashing down on the helpless populace beneath. The only warning they could glean was a preponderance of worms and debris showering down from these flying fortresses – fortresses that have not been seen in the air since the destruction of the Netherese Empire nearly 2,000 years ago.

STORY BEAT: THE WRITHING BATTERY

The characters may learn that the lichs have been using a potent artifact called a “Writhing Battery” to power their research and rituals. This terrible object houses a fragment of the essence of Kyuss, the Worm that Walks. Kyuss is an undead god that has been torn into pieces, each jailed and locked away from the rest; should those pieces escape and reform, the destruction of the world would not be far behind.

The Battery corrupts everything that it touches, and it should be made clear that this device is one of the very few things in reality that terrifies the Netherese lichs of Warlock’s Crypt. It should not be treated lightly!

More information regarding the Writhing Battery can be reviewed in [DDAL00-01 Window to the Past](#).

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The adventure is broken down into three parts. The first part can be truncated for time-sensitive environments (such as conventions) by summarizing the events for the characters.

Grand Omens & Great Portents. The characters arrive at Candlekeep and meet with Pot and the Great Readers. They glean a dangerously small amount of insight about Warlock’s Crypt from the worried priest.

Warlock’s Crypt. The characters must first navigate the ruins of the ancient city before entering the lair of one of its resident lichs. Braving the obstacles and challenges reveals more details of the true villain’s identity.

Larloch’s Lair. After receiving a dire warning about the state of the lich Larloch’s lair, the characters must determine how best to deal with it. They meet a deadly guardian that has been gifted with obscene powers.

LOCATION AND NPC SUMMARY

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure:

Candlekeep is the largest library in all of the Forgotten Realms, and also serves as the center of worship for the faithful of Oghma, the deity of knowledge. It houses literature and magic from ages past as well as current days, and there is always a gathering of commoners outside waiting to be let in.

Warlock’s Crypt is a ruined site several days north of Baldur’s Gate along the Sword Coast. Originally known as “Orbedal”, it long ago flew amidst the clouds with the rest of the floating citadels of the Netherese Empire. Now, it is home to an untold number of demons, devils, undead, and worse. It is said that no mortal has ever returned from this place.

Rhaugilath (RAW-gill-AWTH). Male lich; lawful neutral. Although purportedly trapped within the ruins of Warlock’s Crypt, he seeks to spread his influence across Faerûn. Irrevocably bound to Larloch’s will.

Larloch (LAR-lock). Male lich; lawful evil. Larloch is the oldest creature to be found anywhere in Faerûn, and during his time he has developed an unfathomable number of plans and contingencies. Can take control of lichs and intelligent undead with only a thought.

Pot (PAHT). Pot – short for “Inkpot”, which is surely just another nickname – is a middle-aged human, presumably male. They worship Oghma and is incredibly nervous in social situations with adventurers, like a star struck fan meeting an idol for the first time.

Taemyln’zakka (TAYM-ill-IN zah-KAH). An ancient and bloated copper dragon, Taemyln’zakka long ago succumbed to the sultry call of Kyuss. Now serving as the paladin of the Worm God, this beast oversees Larloch’s efforts to work with the Writhing Battery deep within Warlock’s Crypt.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

At tier 3 and above, it is likely that the characters have developed quite a reputation. Characters should be given the **Faction Champion** adventure hook at a minimum, with others as you see fit.

Faction Champion. Your faction has determined that you are a trusted agent and have asked you to transport a sealed parcel full of valuable tomes, scrolls, and other writings to Candlekeep. The faction heads stress that the parcels are to remain sealed and should be surrendered to the acolytes of Candlekeep directly.

The Call of the Worm. Any character that has the *Favored of the Worm* story award is a suitable recipient for this adventure hook. They feel a subtle calling, pulling them to the Sword Coast; this summons increases in urgency whenever Candlekeep is mentioned or referred to. Their wounds pulse and thrum during those conversations, and their minds are filled with briefly flashing images of debris raining from the sky.

Catastrophic Events. It's no secret that Faerûn has been plagued with devastating events. One or more of the characters may have traveled to Candlekeep in an effort to research prophecies, to discover lost lore, or perhaps to learn the base motivations of giants, dragons, and the other menaces that have struck recently.

SAGA OF THE WORM

The *Saga of the Worm* storyline spans three adventures for D&D Adventurers League play:

- **DDAO-01 *Window to the Past*.** This was later published as [DDAL00-01 *Window to the Past*](#). Covers tiers 2, 3, and 4.
- **DDAO-11 *Those That Came Before*.** This was later published as [DDAL00-03 *Those That Came Before*](#). Covers tiers 3 and 4.
- **DDAO-21 *Trust & Understanding*.** Playable by tier 4 characters only.

These adventures may be played in any order, but will likely result in a better understanding and appreciation of the plotline if played in the order listed above. Differences between the DDAO and DDAL versions do exist, but are primarily centered on rewards being a bit more generous in the DDAO version though sometimes content must be trimmed, edited, or removed prior to global publication. For more information on these adventures and others, please refer to the [D&D Adventurers League Content Catalog](#) and [dmsguild.com](#).

GRAND OMENS & GREAT PORTENTS

Expected duration: 30-45 minutes

Depending upon your available playtime, this section can go long due to heavy roleplaying or perhaps even be skipped (just be sure to deliver a summary of the knowledge points to the characters in some other format). Be sure to read this section thoroughly prior to play so that you can keep the characters engaged while you provide story elements for them. If this is a time-sensitive play environment or if you have a group of players that are not focused on role-playing elements, feel free to summarize this section and move to **Warlock's Crypt** immediately.

There are not many opportunities for characters to interact with Candlekeep directly in Adventurers League play. Allowing them this opportunity can lead to some great character-building and character-defining moments later in their adventuring careers!

ARRIVAL AT CANDLEKEEP

Candlekeep is a fortress-library on the Sword Coast. Perched high atop a cliff, it overlooks the Sea of Swords and has stood for thousands of years. It is home to the highest-ranking clerics of Oghma and often houses visiting representatives from other knowledge-based churches as well. Contained within its many chambers is the sum knowledge of all life across Faerûn; events from the mundane to the extraordinary are included for the sake of completion. It is said that at least one copy of every work ever written is secured inside so that it may be preserved for all eternity.

The keep has gained fame over the years, and as a historical site it is not uncommon for crowds of commoners to gather – and where large groups of people can be found, so too can be found a variety of merchants and charlatans looking to make some easy coin. Brightly-colored tents hawking wares like “potions that are truly magical!”, “snake venom extract – it makes your hair grow back!”, and so on can be discovered. Use your creativity to populate six to eight tents in this manner to give the area some additional life. None of the goods for sale are magical, and the food is of carnival quality – tasty but ultimately not very good for an adventurer's body.

The line moves at a maddeningly slow pace, with the gates to the keep only being opened every few hours. The people that are waiting in line and seeking entrance all proudly talk about the gifts that they have brought to the keep; these gifts range from

rare first editions to farming journals from the Anauroch to sales ledgers of Mirt the Moneylender from Waterdeep (“They're authentic! THEY ARE!” the owner proclaims if pressed). Characters that used the **Faction Champion** adventure hook each have parcels that contain some or all of the following:

- **Emerald Enclave.** Crumbling rolls of papyrus covered in alien, unreadable glyphs and a chunk of amber that contains what appears to be an extraplanar worm inside.
- **Harpers.** Journal of a senior Harper agent named Turtle; this journal describes a trek from Mulmaster to the trade city of Almorel, a distant place near the Hordelands along the Golden Way.
- **Lord's Alliance.** A bundle of sharp-cornered accounting ledgers detailing the financial activities of one Zulkir Dar'lon Ma, a Thayan noble that currently resides in Mulmaster.
- **Order of the Gauntlet.** A detailed map of Phlan, citing guard rotation schedules and a small, folder note that simply says “Remember to look for magic first!”
- **Zhentarim.** An envelope stamped “triplicate copy” that contains heavily-redacted deployment orders for several agents; a map of Chult, the jungle peninsula far to the south of the Sword Coast; and a glass vial containing several cast-off worm husks.

The parcels may be opened by the characters, but the contents are open to interpretation. Some of them are links to earlier adventures but firm understanding of the contents is not important for this adventure. Be sure to make a note of any characters that opened their parcels, as this comes into play later in this section.

Once the characters have been in line at Candlekeep for nearly a full day, the gates open once more but this time a group of acolytes of Oghma come scurrying out. They ignore the inquiries of the people that have been (perhaps not-so) patiently waiting and come directly to the characters. An ink-stained acolyte steps forward and introduces himself as “Pot – I mean, Inkpot, they call me, and I, uh, I... I'm here to collect you. I mean, retrieve you. I mean, bring you into the Great Library. The Readers have summoned you!”

ROLEPLAYING POT

Pot is an acolyte of Oghma and has lived in Candlekeep for nearly his entire life. He is somewhat effeminate and may be perceived as male, female, or androgynous – but regardless of his presentation, he is awestruck by the arrival of famous adventurers. He is constantly covered in ink blotches of various colors, and can often be spotted with ink stains on his cheeks, temples, all over his robes, and through his hair. He is charismatic but completely inept in all things related to athletics, battle, or physical conflict.

The other acolytes refer to him as “Inkpot”, though it is likely that this is his true name. Whatever it is, he defers back to “Pot” as he finds it to be a friendlier name and “just not as stiff as the standard labels that everyone is given at birth”.

Quote: “Oh my – that’s... that’s really quite amazing! Tell me more?”

Pot excitedly greets each of the characters by full name, any additional titles that they may have earned (Sir, Zor, and so on for example), and their place of birth; regardless of how a character reacts, Pot’s information is entirely correct due to it being gleaned by the Great Readers. As the characters are ferried into Candlekeep by the very excited acolyte, they can learn the following:

- Candlekeep is nearly 2,000 years old.
- It has significant magical enchantments.
- It has weathered many attacks with little or no damage to the priceless knowledge inside, including one led by a lich and its armies just a few short years ago.
- It is the home of the most faithful and devout followers of Oghma (called the “Great Readers”), though the worshipers of Deneir, Gond, and Milil can often be found here as well.
- Most of the library’s other visitors are common folk, and they don’t get many adventurers.
- The Great Readers specifically asked for each of the characters, which Pot finds simultaneously exciting and terrifying – they never ask for visitors.
- For roleplay-focused games, consider adding other information about the history of Candlekeep. *The Sword Coast Adventurers Guide* is a great resource for this!

As Pot brings the characters into Candlekeep, he animatedly describes the purpose of each chamber:

- Most visitors never get past the submission chamber. The value of a visitor’s gift is determined here, but almost all of them are worthless to the

acolytes. This chamber is a chaotic mess, full of piled books and abandoned scrolls.

- The second chamber is a sorting room. Any gift that is accepted by the acolytes is brought here and appropriately catalogued. Once the gift is studied, it is placed into its final resting place inside the library proper. This room is well-organized and smells of old, warm paper.
- The main chamber of the library is a maze of seemingly-overstuffed bookcases and display racks. All manner of written works can be seen here, from books to tablets to scrolls to enormous stone obelisks. When viewed from above, the storage racks are laid out in an outline of the holy symbol of Oghma, an open book.

Pot chatters to the characters as he leads them through the racks, urging dawdling characters to keep up or risk getting lost in the reading (he chuckles to himself on this). He eventually brings them to a staircase that climbs around the edge of the grand chamber, affording everyone a chance to look down at the top of the storage racks below and take in the gently-ordered chaos. Lining the walls of the staircase are alcoves every few steps; inside each alcove is a bust of a humanoid. Pot explains that these are the Great Readers throughout the years, and that they are now blessed by Oghma with the ability to look out over their accumulated work until the end of years.

As they reach the top of the stairs, Pot pauses before an empty alcove and a set of doors with no hinges or locks. Motioning to the empty alcove, he indicates that the gift parcels that the characters possess should be placed there so that their value can be judged (“Oh? Yes. The Readers said that you would be bringing a sealed parcel from your employer – er, faction master. Faction head. Yes. That. One at a time now, please!”) Unopened parcels slowly meld into the stone and disappear, granting that character access to the room beyond. Any parcel that was opened by a character sinks partially, but is then ejected forcibly over the railing and into the library below. Should this happen, Pot shakes his head and mutters that the enchantment must be acting up again; he then grants the character access to the chamber beyond but levels a quizzical gaze at the character.

THE GREAT READERS

Arrayed around the center of this chamber are 12 individuals. They are comprised of multiple races and sexes, and all are deeply focused – entranced, even – and surrounded by books. Before each individual is a floating tome and an animated quill that continually scratches out some event taking place elsewhere in the world. Pot motions for the characters to remain silent, then explains:

- The Great Readers are the highest-ranking members of the faithful of Oghma, and are tasked with recording events as they unfold across the world. They are also responsible for absorbing the sum total knowledge contained in the tomes of Candlekeep.
- The Great Readers cannot be interacted with during their trance, and are unable to be roused.
- Sometimes an “incident” is recorded in which two or three Great Readers write about identical topics. Somehow, all 12 of the Great Readers recorded... something. Pot hands each character a tome from a different Great Reader, and each of the tomes contains a variation of the following, save that each character’s tome sports a different skyline – all from the Sword Coast (Baldur’s Gate, Neverwinter, Luskan, Waterdeep, and so on):

The skyline of a familiar city greets you. The ink on the left page wriggles and moves, and you realize that it is in fact subtly animated. The image paces backward, and as the city’s lines become smaller you realize that something large is hovering above it.

A... mountain?

An upside-down mountain?

That makes no sense.

The image moves further back and angles around, and it is plain to see that another city rests atop the shorn-off and inverted mountain peak. The architecture is at once familiar yet ancient, and something in the back of your mind whispers “Netheril”. Sure, this makes as much sense as floating mountain tops.

Without warning, the stony spires shudder and shake. Debris rains down upon the city below, and a moment later the entire city is smashed and the Sword Coast is awash in devastation.

The page on the right clearly shows not only your name, but also the names of each of your present allies. And with them, a note: “These champions are to be given Article 6-59a.”

As the characters absorb the information that was recorded by the Great Readers, Pot produces a highly-polished teakwood box (“Article 6-59a!” he giggles nervously) with no apparent opening; it cannot be forced open, nor is it locked. Inlaid on top of it is a modified holy symbol of Mystra (“It signifies Mystryl, the deity of magic before Mystra.”), and neatly scribed around the edges are the names of each of the characters present. He explains that the box has been in their possession “for several years” and has been something of an oddity; it wasn’t until the Great Readers recorded the Incident that the box was assigned significance and brought out of storage. Pot is unsure of its origin, but says with certainty that the wood comes from an old-growth forest near the mountains north of Baldur’s Gate.

When one of the characters touches the box, it springs open. Contained inside the velvet-lined box are:

- A 10-inch by 10-inch ceramic tile emblazoned with the symbol of Mystryl and covered in ancient Netherese script. Additionally, there are small indentations around the edges of the tile equal to the number of characters present. The script reads “Contained inside this device is the power for the lesser classes to invoke the true and full power of apparition. Those that grasp this tile and participate in unleashing this power will be brought to the predetermined place post-haste.” The tile radiates strong conjuration magic and is covered in runes that indicate teleportation magic, but no amount of investigation can identify the destination of or full effect of any contained spell.
- Two vials of tier-appropriate *potions of healing*. These vials have had their contents reduced to a honey-like consistency, and may appear familiar to those that have participated in other Saga of the Worm adventures. As with those adventures, these potions can be quaffed or applied as a topical ointment at the user’s discretion.
- Beneath the two vials are several shed wormskin husks. As with the potions, these should look familiar to those that have participated in other Saga of the Worm adventures and can be confirmed as being the shed skins of the worms of Kyuss. Until the worms are seen in-person by a character, they cannot be identified as they are neither natural nor present in the known world, save for a small number of adventure sites.
- Once the vials and ceramic tile have been removed, ethereal script written in Common appears inside the box lid: “Follow the magic”. The first person to read it is immediately affected by a

modified *detect magic* spell (as if cast by a glyph) that lasts 24 hours and does not require concentration to maintain. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that this spell effect is rooted in ancient magic that is no longer available to modern wizards.

Pot indicates that the protections of Candlekeep are such that breaking the tile anywhere but in an approved space will cause the effect to fizzle (at best) or have “unanticipated effects” (which, he says, “is much, much worse but worthy of cataloguing”). He offers to take the characters to a study chamber elsewhere in the keep where they can prepare themselves for whatever may be coming – or going, as the case may be. He is plainly excited by the combined prospects of the characters, the Incident, and the mystery box finally being opened... catastrophe be damned.

Should the characters decide to enter one of the study chambers, Pot brings them ample, though basic, refreshments and provides plenty of pots of ink, piles of parchment, and quills. He asks them to record their processes and thoughts as they proceed, and confirms that anything they learn would likely be of great value to Candlekeep upon their return. He explains that he cannot accompany them but wishes them the best. As he leaves, he slides a wooden retaining bar into place on the outside and yells through the door “It’s for our safety – good luck! Just scream really loud if you need out!”.

The characters have plenty of time to perform whatever rites they need, though it should be impressed upon them that the acolytes will not release them quickly and that the Incident is fast approaching. Once they break the ceramic tablet, proceed to **Warlock’s Crypt**.

WARLOCK'S CRYPT

Estimated Duration: 120-180 minutes

Warlock's Crypt is the common name for the ruins of an ancient Netherese citadel named Orbedal. While it once flew the skies, it came crashing down to the ground due to Karsus' Folly in -339 DR. Since that day, the ruined city has been overrun with demons, devils, intelligent undead, and all other sorts of evil creatures. It is said that no mortal visitor has returned from this place.

Breaking the teleportation tile has caused a new experience: you feel as if you are being stretched impossibly thin, so that you exist in many places at once. You feel yourself being pulled out of Candlekeep and through the wilderness, traveling at a speed beyond imagination, only to slam back into reality amidst a pile of ruined buildings and collapsed bridges. A raspy voice scratches at edge of your hearing "follow the magic..."

The characters are standing in a plaza. A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check tells the characters that they have traveled several days journey to the north. If this check is successful, any character proficient in History can attempt a DC 20 check to recognize this area as Warlock's Crypt; if they do, feel free to summarize the information from the sidebar.

WARLOCK'S CRYPT/ ORBEDAL

When the Netherese Empire ruled much of Faerûn, they did so from the comfort of dozens of floating citadels. Orbedal was one such citadel, and was ruled by a benevolent wizard named Rhaugilath the Ageless. Magic was crafted, broken, and reshaped as per the whims of the Netherese and for many years the Empire flourished.

In -339 DR, a promising wizard named Karsus completed a ritual that should have elevated him into the role of god of magic. He was tragically successful; his reign lasted only a few moments and caused the complete collapse of modern magic and nearly tore apart the entire Weave itself. Karsus was cast out, and as the deities reacted to the emergency the Netherese Empire literally crashed and burned. The Empire was no more, torn asunder in an instant.

Rhaugilath was able to protect some of his people and did everything in his power to guide Orbedal to the ground. Without magic, though, his efforts were frustratingly weak; as the city crumpled into the ground near the Sword Coast he became trapped within the wreckage, never to be heard from again.

EXPLORING THE RUINS

Once the characters have had a few moments to orient themselves, they become aware of the muffled cries of dragons and demons not too far away. Allow them to make a Wisdom (Perception) check or ask them for their Passive Perception scores (the actual score is irrelevant) and describe the sound as coming from "hundreds of demons, if not more, that are likely no more than a half-mile away" or "dozens of dragons; their throaty roars indicating that they are fast approaching". Be sure to indicate the sounds are a bit muffled but quickly approaching.

Any character that is affected by detect magic can see an arcane mark on the ground that matches the symbol from the top of the wooden box that they interacted with in Candlekeep. They can also see a shimmering 10-foot-wide tunnel that leads away from this point and into one of the ruined buildings several hundred paces away. A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that this tunnel simply feels safe – at least, compared to what can be observed elsewhere.

If the characters do not have a clear plan of action within a few minutes of starting this section, describe the platoon of demons or the full flight of dragons entering the plaza. The creatures cannot detect the characters due to the protections that Rhaugilath has woven into this hidden path, but if any of the characters initiate combat or leave the protected area of the tunnel, they are immediately attacked as all of the protections fade. Consider allowing characters Insight checks or simply telling them about the danger of Warlock's Crypt; if the characters ignore these warnings, they are guaranteed to be swarmed and killed. For them, the adventure is over though you could also go "off book" and narrate (with dice rolls from the players) a harrowing escape through the ruins. If you do, advance to the next section but feel free to take hit points from the characters, apply levels of exhaustion, and ask them to mark off "appropriate resources" like magic item charges and spell slots.

The safety of the tunnel can be followed through the ruined buildings, through darkened alleys, into basements and destroyed scenic areas. Embellish the ruins as needed and proceed to the next section, but be sure to drive home the protections offered by the tunnel and the massive amount of evil and dangerous creatures that prowl this place.

ENTERING RHAUGILATH'S LAIR

In time, the characters come to a large building that has sunken into the ground. The same symbol that was embedded into the box in Candlekeep can be plainly seen here, so if the characters have been scrambling through the ruins without the protection of the tunnel they should still be able to identify this with ease. All that is visible of the building now is the massive stone dome that once served as a roof; it is easily 200 feet across but only gently curved and twenty feet tall.

A rough hole, 4 feet across, dives at angle into the ground and leads to the lower level of the buildings. It is roughly hewn and can be easily climbed down without ropes or tools, and descends sixty feet to an unlit area. Rhaugilath's protective tunnel terminates at the ground level entrance to the hole.

LICH LAIR MAP

The map for this section can be acquired via [drivethrurpg thanks to the fine folks from Heroic Maps](#). The version included in this adventure is intentionally low-resolution.

1. MAGIC CIRCLE

The ramp here once led up to a grand set of double doors, but now only leads to the base of an angled tunnel that leads up to the surface.

The magic circle inscribed on the floor is either no longer magical, or was crafted to only appear magical and was never truly enchanted. It is clearly old, and any character that is proficient in Arcana may attempt a DC 18 Intelligence (History) check. If successful, they can confirm that the runes and general design appear very similar to other ancient Netherese symbols that have been found elsewhere in the world.

There are 6 statues here, 3 along each wall. The statue in the southeastern corner has fallen and shattered.

- The statues are identical and appear to be Netherese wizards, their hoods drawn over their faces, all standing upon piles of coins and gems. Their robes are highly detailed and chaotically patterned.
- On closer inspection via roleplaying or a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the statues appear to be standing on piles of bugs – specifically, coiled worms. Their robes are patterned with insects, with worms in various positions comprising the chaotic shapes. Any character that has previously interacted with Spawn of Kyuss (such as those in the other *Saga of*

RHAUGILATH'S REVIEW

The characters have not arrived here by accident. Rhaugilath is a crafty creature and desires to gauge their effectiveness prior to meeting them for the review of their true purpose here. Consider the following as you run this section:

Traps as Monitors. Rhaugilath has constructed many traps under the guise of preventing visitors, but actually uses them to gauge the abilities of adventurers breaking into his lair. Rhaugilath walks a fine line and needs adventurers that are skilled - but not too skilled!

Victory Through Failure. Be sure to record the number of traps that the characters successfully disarm as well as the number that they trigger. Rhaugilath will need this information later.

Scaling this adventure can be a tricky task. If the characters are too weak, they may feel that this adventure becomes a hopeless cause. If the characters are too strong, they may feel that they would be successful if they attacked Rhaugilath (or Larloch). It is imperative that you use Rhaugilath as both a narrative and a mechanical device, especially if time is running short!

Please consider the following guidance when scaling the adventure:

- **Very weak or weak party.** The characters should survive the first **wraith** encounter, but Rhaugilath emerges during the **death knight** encounter in the Grand Archive in a dramatic fashion (perhaps after one or more characters has been rendered unconscious) and defeats the enemies with little more than a narrated, magical “hand wave”.
- **Strong party.** If the characters are heavily reliant upon the use of 2-handed weapons and martial feats, the ceilings are only six feet tall; this grants disadvantage to all two-handed weapon attacks. If the characters are heavily reliant upon magic, consider using a “*charged counterspell*”; whenever a living creature casts a spell, roll a d20. On a roll of at least 10 + the spell level, the spell is countered by the enchantments of Rhaugilath's lair; for this effect, cantrips are considered to be 1st level spells and for each spell that is not countered, the DC drops by 1 (ie: 9 + spell level, then 8 + spell level, etc), with this effect resetting when a spell is countered.
- **Very strong party.** As strong party, and all healing effects are reduced by 50%. This is due to the strong necromantic effects of both the liches and the Writhing Battery.

It is imperative that Rhaugilath present himself before they find their way to his lair in the Ossuary. His goals do not include murdering these potential champions; rather, he is painfully bound to his lawful neutral alignment and believes that Larloch is on the precipice of a concept that is referred to as “too evil for its own good.”

the Worm adventures) immediately recognize them as being one and the same. Any character proficient with stone working or stonecutting tools can attempt a DC 24 Intelligence (Investigation) check (dwarves automatically succeed on this thanks to their **stonecunning** ability); if successful, the character determines that there is a finely crafted veneer over the statues. Beneath the thin exterior is an exquisite statue of a regal Netherese wizard. It can be safely assumed that each of the other statues is also hiding a Netherese wizard beneath the shell.

If any of the statues have their shell broken, a rhythmic sound not unlike a heartbeat can be faintly heard by anyone with a Passive Perception of 14 or higher. Any character with the **Favored of the Worm** story award or that has participated in another adventure from the *Saga of the Worm* storyline automatically hears it – and can identify it as being related to the nearness of a Writhing Battery or Dark Obelisk.

The western door is wooden and appears mundane, and is trapped. The double doors to the south are blackened iron and are not trapped.

WESTERN DOOR – THE SUN’S CARESS

If adjacent to the door, a creature can see the following phrase, written in Common: “Those that open this portal shall know the kiss of the desert.” Below it can be seen an engraved image of the sun, but its rays are harming the people below.

Trigger. If the door is opened from room 1, the trap is triggered. If the door is opened from room 11, the trap is not triggered.

Effect. When triggered, the door releases a blast from *immolation* (XGE). If this book is not available, use *sunburst* instead. The saving throw DC is 23.

Countermeasures. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a number of tiny runes along the hinges. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the spell contained inside, and a *dispel magic* spell cast at 5th level (*immolation*) or 8th level (*sunburst*) or higher disarms the trap for 24 hours.

2. HALLWAY

This long hallway holds six torch sconces, and although the sconces no longer hold physical torches they have *continual flame* spells inside of them instead.

The doorway leading east has neither handle nor hinges, and cannot be opened (even by magic). It is made of stone and has two shallow, humanoid-styled handprints at just about chest level for a human. If a living humanoid places their hands in the indentations, stony, unbreakable fingers curl over the humanoid’s hand immediately as the stones separate and the humanoid is pulled inside. This counts as opening the door, and it remains open for thirty seconds (5 rounds). Once this time elapses, the stones reform in the hallway; there is no immediately apparent way to open the door from area 3 back to area 2.

The stone door leading west has a carving of two stern-looking wizards on it, but it is unlocked. Any character with a passive Perception of 16 or higher notices that the wizards do not have hands.

The wizard statue at the end of hallway has a plaque that reads:

*Rhaugilath
the Lich-King
the Ageless
Lord and Ruler of Orbedal*

Any character that has a passive Perception of 16 or higher can see that the fingers of the statue are pointing at the western doorway.

3. TELEPORTATION CIRCLE

The magic circle inscribed on the floor here functions as a permanent teleportation circle, though it is only keyed to receive and cannot send. Furthermore, the magic has been enhanced with elements of abjuration. If studied, a character may make a DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana) check. If successful, they learn that the abjuration runes alters the usage of this teleportation circle by creatures that are not of Netherese origin. Any such creature that teleports into this area automatically gains one level of exhaustion and one indefinite madness (*DMG*, ch. 8), these effects can only be removed by death or a *wish* spell.

There are a number of stone sarcophagi here, but all are empty. They are exceedingly well crafted and were likely intended for a person of great wealth.

The western door, once sealed (see **area 2. Hallway**), can only be reopened by defeating the chain devil at the end of **area 4. Cerulean Hall**.

The northern door radiates an energy similar to that of a devil is an effect like **divine sense** is used.

Otherwise, it simply makes the skin crawl of anyone that comes near it but is otherwise harmless.

4. CERULEAN HALL

A tranquil blue light emanates from four flickering pillars of magical flame that is harmless to humanoids, bathing this place in a sense of calm and reflection. Six chain-wrapped chests are here, and a statue of a leering devil stands proudly at the far end, completely covered in chains.

The southern door swings closed of its own accord and does not bear a lock. However, once closed, magical writing in Common appears on it that reads: "Delve not into the treasures of ancient kingdoms, for their secrets sap your very will". If the characters decide to ignore this warning and open the chests (or if they fail to find the message entirely and open the chests), consult the section below.

Once the statue has been imbued with the lifeforce of the **chain devil**, it is nearly undetectable until it attacks (it has surprise on this unless detected by a paladin's **divine sense** ability). It is aware of the conditions of its prison and will wait until situations are optimal before it strikes – generally, it will wait until all the chests are opened. Once the chain devil attacks, it shatters the stone statue.

When the chain devil from the statue is killed, the western door in **area 3. Teleportation Circle** melts away into nothingness for 24 hours. If the chain devil is not killed but is instead dealt with in some other manner (perhaps via *planeshift* or some similar effect), no experience is awarded and thirty minutes later the western door in area 3 fades away.

TREASURE CHESTS

The chests are wrapped in unlocked chains. Instead, the danger of this room comes from opening any number of chests (as noted above). The creature is not present inside the statue until at least one chest is opened. The chests can be opened in any order, but the effects follow the list below.

Trigger. Each opened chest empowers the statue.

Effect. Each chest grants the chain devil statue additional abilities:

- **First chest.** When any amount of weight is placed on this chest, the chest shatters and releases a cloud of noxious vapors. The vapors are harmless at first but feel free to ask for a Constitution saving throw and simply say "Ok, that's what I needed to know" regardless of their answer. Five rounds later, the vapor coalesces into another chain devil

(this chain devil does not receive the benefits that the statue might).

- **Second chest.** The chain devil has maximum hit points.
- **Third chest.** The first attack that the chain devil makes each round inflicts maximum damage if it hits.
- **Fourth chest.** The chain devil gains the following bonus action:

Enfeebling Chains. *Melee Weapon Attack (each creature grappled by chains):* reach 0 ft., one target. *Hit:* automatic, and the grappled creature must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or gain a level of exhaustion.

- **Fifth chest.** The lifeforce of the chain devil moves from the door to inhabit the statue. The southern doorway slams shut and cannot be reopened (even by magic) until the chain devil is killed.
- **Sixth chest.** The chain devil has advantage on all of its melee attacks.

Countermeasures. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the chains around the chests are inscribed with hundreds of tiny conjuration and abjuration runes. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the chains on the chests are linked to the chains on the statue, and a *dispel magic* spell cast at 5th level or higher disarms the chain trap for that chest.

TREASURE

Each chest contains 1500 gp and another 500 gp worth of jewelry. All of the treasure contained inside is in perfect condition and originates from the time of the Netherese Empire.

5. THE TWINS

Two statues stand at the far western side of this chamber. Their hands have been removed and it is easy to spot the piles of worm husks scattered around their feet. If a character moves to investigate the statues, allow them to roll Perception or Investigation checks; the result is irrelevant as once they do this, you should simply describe that something is moving inside the arms. The doors slam shut and become magically locked as black ooze begins to drip out of the holes where the hands once were; characters that have previously played in a *Saga of the Worm* adventure immediately

recognize this as an indication that empowered **wraiths** are entering the room. At the end of the round, a number of wraiths equal to half the number of characters present take shape and attack! Once the wraiths are defeated the doors unlock once more.

6. STORE ROOM

It's possible that this room was once used to store foodstuffs, but it has not been used for that purpose for many years. The fireplace has been filled with stone and is no longer usable. Resting for more than 1 hour here provides no benefit, as the echoing, rhythmic thumping noise prevents true relaxation.

7. ACOLYTE CHAMBERS

Three destroyed beds and a dry-rotted footlocker can be seen here. They have not been used in many years. Any creature that attempts to rest here is plagued with thoughts of worms and haunted by the thought that something is watching them; creatures so affected do not gain the benefit of any rest in this place.

8. GUEST QUARTERS

Despite the cobwebs, this chamber could feasibly serve as an appropriate space for resting – if it weren't for the thudding, rhythmic noise. The bed looks comfortable enough and the shelves are lined with books about the Netherese Empire and how it operated. Many of the tomes are first-hand accounts about the lands that Orbedal once flew over, but all are written in Ancient Netherese.

After one hour in this room, more empowered **wraiths** enter from area 5.

9. RECEPTION HALL

This room was once used to entertain guests to this complex. The fireplace has a large amount of ash and soot, and although none of it is fresh the lingering smell of smoke remains in the air. The shelves are lined with rotting scrolls and it is clear that this place is no longer commonly used or visited.

The statues are of knights of the Netherese Empire. The armor is exquisitely detailed, though every joint has been sealed shut. The statues are actually **death knights** and although they register as undead when effects like **divine sense** are used, they are otherwise undetectable as creatures.

When the northern door is interacted with, the statues animate and they step down to attack. When reduced to half hit points, the armor shatters and swarms of rot grubs pour forth. This removes the death knight from combat and reduces its experience value by 50%.

10. GRAND ARCHIVE

This place is filled with hundreds of tomes detailed the Netherese Empire and countless variations of magic rituals and insights. All of these tomes are written in ancient Netherese, and if they are removed from this place by any means they have been enchanted to return to this chamber immediately. It is easily apparent that a character could spend years here and still not be able to consume all of the knowledge on these shelves.

For every thirty minutes spent in this room, empowered **wraiths** float in from the walls and doorways as per the details in area 5.

11. INTERSECTION

This oddly-shaped intersection has stairs that descend to both the north and south. The eastern door does not trigger the trap as noted in **area 1**.

The northern doorway is a one-way door that only opens from **area 13**. Even though it appears to have a handle and hinges, the door is magically held shut. A *dispel magic* spell cast at 5th level or higher will cancel the enchantment, but a *knock* spell alone is not effective.

The southern door is unlocked and sports a carved symbol of an open eye set into a blazing sun. On a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Religion) check, the characters can identify that the symbol appears to be an ancient form of the holy symbol of Amaunator.

12. VIEWING PORTALS

Three enchanted viewing portals have been placed here. They each radiate strong magical energy, and an identify spell or successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check notes that the energy is intertwined strands of conjuration, divination, and enchantment.

The eastern viewing portal shows a snowy landscape. Characters that have been to the Glacier of the White Wurm can easily identify it, and those with a passive Perception score of 16 or higher can see a hole in the ice. There are several lumps of snow and ice around the hole, and tattered ropes can be seen descending over the edge.

The southern viewing portal shows a misty lake and a strange-looking town. The town can be identified on a successful DC 20 Intelligence (History) check as Almorel, a large trading post along the Golden Way and far to the east of Mulmaster and the Moonsea. It is unlikely that characters have been there previously.

The western viewing portal follows a beholder as it lazily floats through a cavernous and well-appointed complex. It wears rings on most of its eyestalks and every so often casts what seems to be a nervous glance about the room, as if it knows that someone or something is watching it.

ENCHANTED PORTALS TRAP

The portals offer views of far-off locations which superficially offer insight and knowledge, but actually serves to weaken the will and break the mind of unintended viewers.

Trigger. At the end of each round that a living creature spends gazing into the portal, the trap is triggered. The traps reset each round and cannot affect a creature that has been subjected to it in the last 24 hours.

Effect. When triggered, the viewer is subjected to a *feblemind* spell. The saving throw DC is 18 (tier 3) or 21 (tier 4).

Countermeasures. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check or Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that the enchantments are malicious. If a character is proficient in Arcana, they may attempt a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to determine how the trigger and effect work without being affected directly. A *dispel magic* spell cast at 8th level or higher disarms the trap for 24 hours.

13. CLINICAL LAB

Several tables can be seen here, and one of them has an inanimate skeleton atop it, held down by heavy leather straps. This place holds the trappings of a medical facility, complete with surgical tools, buckets, and heavy leather aprons for use as protective barriers (and to keep one's self clean).

The door in the southwest corner is a one-way door that leads to area 11.

The chains in the southeast can be operated to pull open the grate that covers the pit. The pit is fifteen feet deep and shows signs of recent use: deep claw marks have torn the stone asunder. Moisture can be seen beading up on the stones, and the pit smells faintly of acid.

To the east can be seen a raised platform with glowing lights on it. Steam and smoke curl up from several spots on the floor.

The Grand Archive can be seen to the west.

14. RUNIC POOLS

This entire chamber pulses with transmutation magic. The pools of liquid are actually pit fiends that have been transmogrified into a jelly-like state; nothing short of a *wish* spell can return them to their physical form. If the characters return one of the fiends to its previous form, the fiend promises to "save them for last" as it trundles off in the direction of Rhaugilath's ossuary, only to emit a soul-rending shriek a few moments later as it is destroyed (by Rhaugilath or other hidden wards at your discretion).

The blue pool smells like electricity and has a blazingly hot aura, the green pool smells like cranberries and is bone-chillingly cold, and the red pool smells like acid and has no discernable temperature-related aura. If liquid from the pools is mixed, the mixture explodes violently causing everything in a 20-foot radius to take 132 (24d10) force damage as raw magic tears through the area; a successful DC 22 Dexterity saving throw reduces this damage by half. If this radius overlaps a pool, repeat this effect. The liquid loses all magical effect if removed from the pool for more than two rounds.

On a successful DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana) check, it can be deduced that this chamber restructures the effects of transmutation magic. If a creature of Netherese origin and blood casts a transmutation spell in this room, the spell is treated as being two levels higher than normal but it consumes the normal spell slot.

A pair of grand, black iron double doors stand to the south at the top of a short flight of stairs. Both doors have decorative chains strung across them, and the symbol of Mystryl – and from the box in Candlekeep – is stamped into each.

15. OSSUARY

Until the characters have proven their worth (DM's discretion; please refer to the Rhaugilath's Review" sidebar at the beginning of this section) the door to this area cannot be opened or bypassed, even by a *wish* spell. Physical force is met with unbreakable resistance (including to weapons), and spell effects simply fail. Each time that these effects are witnessed, a hollow, mocking laugh rings through the crypt.

Once Rhaugilath summons the characters forward to join him (he isn't evil, but he may value his lawful neutral alignment a little too much), the doors can be opened as per normal. The chamber is festooned with all manner of arcane trophies, and chains are stretched between the pillars and walls. The throne at the far south of the room appears to be made of the bones of humanoids.

The lich carries himself with a regal air and is surrounded by all manner of floating spellbooks, shimmering wards, and other arcane paraphernalia. He summarizes their performance so far in his crypt with a detached, clinical voice and informs them that they may rest here for one hour before Larloch returns to investigate. He also has the following to share:

- “Why only an hour? Larloch already knows you're here. If you're still in this chamber after an hour, Larloch will assume that you're powerful enough to investigate personally – and you don't want that.”
- He describes Larloch's history as the oldest creature in all of Faerun. He coldly describes Larloch's ability to control all undead with nothing more than a thought, and that he enjoys controlling liches above all others – in fact, he sometimes gives them free will after a few centuries “just to see what they do with it”. Larloch is then described as having a contingency for every contingency, and was responsible for single-handedly shattering the wards surrounding Candlekeep. Rhaugilath also describes Elminster's efforts to stop Larloch by literally dropping a city on him (see DDAL00-02 *Lost Tales of Myth Drannor* and *The Herald*, by Ed Greenwood).
- More information about Larloch can be found in DM Appendix 2 and in various Forgotten Realms novels and older supplements, but it is unimportant – though if you have the time to research it, include it!
- Rhaugilath explains that he has been under Larloch's control for the last several centuries, but that control has recently become lessened as Larloch came into the possession of a very powerful artifact known as a Writhing Battery.
- This Battery was unearthed from far below Warlock's Crypt, and once the two liches began investigating it they realized that it contained an eldritch power that predates the fall of their beloved Netherese Empire. The characters may have additional input on what a Writhing Battery

contains, and Rhaugilath is keenly interested in learning more.

- He states that the more time Larloch spent with the Battery, the less control he seemed to have over himself. It was as if the Battery were taking control of Larloch without him knowing.
- Rhaugilath understands that if Larloch is allowed to draw more power from the Battery, all of the Forgotten Realms would be doomed once the power inside was released. Nothing – not even Larloch – would be able to hold back whatever is inside. He does add that he believes that other Batteries exist in the world “but that is a problem for another day and another set of champions that do number me among their own”.
- He does not care how the characters deal with the Battery (“Get rid of it, bury it, do what you have to do but do it efficiently and quickly before Larloch returns to see you!”), but he makes it very clear that the creature contained inside the Battery must remain there. “Do not harm the crystal, lest you release a beast that your world is ill-equipped to deal with.”
- Rhaugilath is willing to provide the characters with a map that takes the characters directly to Larloch's laboratory.
- He warns the characters that Larloch is known to ally with all manner of powerful creatures, and that this is often one-sided: Larloch's allies only tend to live a few centuries (“Ten at most, in my experience”) before they are consumed and turned into spell components.

Rhaugilath has no desire to lie or obscure the truth from the characters, but he is not seeking to serve justice for the sake of justice. Much of this is revenge, pure and simple, for revoking the lich's autonomy. That said, spells and effects only work on Rhaugilath when he allows them to – as this entire crypt is his lair and he has had thousands of years to prepare it, suffice it to say that the countless interwoven *contingency* spells, *symbols*, and *wards* all protect him in any manner that he desires.

If the characters ask about the worm-infested knights, Rhaugilath responds with: “Those foul creatures took up residence shortly after I took leave of Larloch when he took leave of his senses. Those creatures are bound to the Writhing Battery.”

Should the characters be willing to take on Larloch, Rhaugilath will firmly but politely inform them that there is no way that will happen. Their mission is to enter the laboratory, cause as much destruction as possible, and escape before Larloch

arrives. This should take less than one minute. He stresses that the Writhing Battery should be left alone, as whatever is held inside will surely offer a sublime prize for your loyalty.

If prompted for payment or if the characters ask for assistance, he considers their observed performance in his crypt so far. If they triggered any traps without disarming them, took damage in combat, or some other element unbecoming of a “true champion”, he will say something like the following:

“Sometimes I like my allies to... remain a little while longer. Like Rooster, here.”

Rhaugilath unclips a jeweled wand from his belt and casually tosses it to you.

“Rooster was an elf bard that found his way here some time ago. Wonderful stories. Not very good at staying alive, I’m afraid. I think he had a contracted a bad case of wild magic at some point, because his spells were never quite...”, he sniffs derisively, “right.”

“I’m all too happy to assist the correct champions. You have the skills to be here, for certain, and let us not fool ourselves: you’re not so skilled that Larloch has found it necessary to investigate firsthand what a living mortal is doing within these halls. Oh, he allows me my toys but he does like to witness the truly special ones.”

“Go on then, keep Rooster company. Keep whatever else you find in that horrid laboratory, too. Just be wary of taking so much that your escape is impacted.”

Rhaugilath makes it very clear that once the characters leave the Ossuary, they will not be able to return. Instead, he identifies a new escape route from Warlock’s Crypt and tells the characters that if they enter this lair again he will be forced to assume that they are seeking the release of a painless death.

When the characters are ready to proceed, Rhaugilath gives them the key phrase for the hidden door in area 16. Final Rest and bids them good hunting.

TREASURE

Rhaugilath grants the characters Rooster, his beloved *wand of wonder*.

16. FINAL REST

A rune-covered sarcophagus lies in the center of this room. It is very heavy and requires a DC 26 Strength (Athletics) check to move, as it is made of fiendstone. The sarcophagus appears to be empty, but the interior of the lid is actually a *mirror of life trapping*. The mirror has 11 empty cells and currently only contains an elf mage named Que’vellas. If freed, the mage reveals that he was trapped inside the mirror by “the warlock” and firmly believes that it is currently 255 DR; he came to the ruins on a mission to retrieve the Nether Scrolls from the Netherese ruins. He has no gear, no spellbook, and no spells prepared but uses the remaining stats from the **archmage** stat block. The hidden door to the southeast only reveals itself if the key phrase “Karsus, the fool” is uttered. It is magically locked and requires a cannot be picked, though it automatically unlocks for those that have the blessing of Rhaugilath or use the key phrase. If the door is targeted by *knock* or *dispel magic*, the spells are automatically countered by latent enchantments.

Treasure. If the *mirror of life trapping* is removed from the sarcophagus by any means, it loses all magic and becomes a mundane (though valuable) piece of antiquity worth 1,000 gp.

LARLOCH'S LABORATORY

Estimated Duration: 30-45 minutes

The characters follow Rhaugilath's map and traverse the underbelly of Warlock's Crypt. The Netherese ruins are identifiable and perfectly preserved here, but this isn't an excavation or sight-seeing trip: they're here to disrupt the laboratory of an ancient and powerful lich!

THE CLOCK'S A-TICKIN'!

Once the characters enter the laboratory, they have exactly ten rounds to complete their task and escape completely off the map. If they are still present or on the map at the beginning of the eleventh round, Larloch returns and you can narrate whatever soul-crushing defeat you wish. Roleplaying takes time – be sure to use your judgment on this!

MAKE IT CLEAR THAT STAYING FOCUSED IS KEY.

WORKSHOP OF HORRORS

The characters enter this place through the double doors in the northern hallway. Larloch's laboratory is set in the deep recesses of Orbedal's undercity, and the main hallway is either exquisitely crafted to look like the interior of a stone dragon's mouth and throat... or this is a petrified dragon. Let the characters ponder this as they open the doors.

As this scene unfolds the characters can only initially see what appears to be a functional arcane laboratory with a massive smoky crystalline obelisk standing in the center. The crystal is 20 feet on a side and nearly 30 feet tall, tapering to a point. A faint rhythmic thumping noise permeates the hallways, seemingly coming from the crystal itself.

THE DARK OBELISK & THE LABORATORY

Upon first viewing, the laboratory appears to be impeccably arranged and full of in-progress experiments. Cauldrons bubbling, glass jars are filled with bits of wriggling flesh, and chains extend from the walls to the massive, dark crystal. A rhythmic thumping seems to be coming from the crystal, though any characters that participated in another Sage of the Worm adventure can confirm that the sound, while similar, is not as sinister. The crystal is the same as found in those other adventures but curiously does not carry the standard aura of dread and no fleshy appendage can be spied within it. This effect is in truth an illusionary effect and nothing more.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Larloch's laboratory area is in a part of the city of Orbedal that was pushed underground when the citadel crashed down nearly 1800 years past.

Halls. The halls are less than 7 feet tall. This imposes disadvantage on any two-handed weapon attacks that are used by a creature in the hallway. Magical light emanates from the stones and mortar, providing bright light everywhere in a 10-foot radius.

Excavation. The excavation side is rough-hewn and unfinished. The cavern ceiling is 12 feet above, and no light (natural or otherwise) is found here.

Laboratory. The laboratory area is as-described elsewhere in this chamber for flavor. The ceiling reaches some 40 feet overhead to a marble dome that is covered in dangerous-looking cracks; this gives the room the feel of being inside a silo. Identical to the halls, ambient magical light is present.

Wards. Larloch has warded this place so that teleportation magic and counterspell only work when cast by undead creatures.

Once a character crosses the threshold and enters the central space of the laboratory as-noted on the map, the environment changes. The illusion melts away and the character can now see that the laboratory is a wreck – and more importantly, the crystal is broken and hollow. Allow the characters a few moments to enter the ruins and explore; feel free to describe the smoking remains, the splinters of crystal embedded in the walls, the evidence of worms spilling out from the crystal (thankfully dead, now) or any other horrific details that you would like to embellish.

When you feel that the time is right (preferably when the characters are already pleasantly on-edge), Taemylyn'zakka phases into existence, breaking the illusion of the collected laboratory for all present. The bloated dragon is coiled around the top of the crystal, some 25 feet above the ground. Read or paraphrase the following:

The creature that now resides atop the shattered crystal has a glorious air to it – but an air that is filled an unknowable amount of wrongness. Clearly it was once a copper dragon, but it has been... changed. Mutated.

The once-lithe beast is now bloated, its dulled scales even missing in some places. A pitted, bony plate has replaced most of its face, and grotesque spines have erupted from its limbs. Worms fall freely from its mouth, a mouth filled with broken teeth and a lolling tongue that somehow does not impede the thing's statement:

"I've been expecting you. Step forward and accept the blessings of Kyuss."

Before further dialog takes place, a weakly fluttering thumping noise comes from inside the broken crystal. Any characters that have earned the **Favored of the Worm** story award must succeed on a DC 16 or 18 (tier 3 or tier 4) Wisdom saving throw; if they fail, they drop any items they are holding and move to stand 10 feet from the nearest edge of the broken crystal. Those that can see inside the broken crystal can easily spot the still-undulating piles of worms and bits of discarded flesh; this is where the thumping is coming from.

The dragon has the following bits to offer the characters:

- (if any characters are close to the crystal) “Reach out, take your prize. Kyuss’ kiss will show you the way.”
- (if any characters move away from the crystal or begin to make threatening sounds or actions) “Hear us out before you seal your fate, I implore you.”
- Its name is Taemylyn’zakka. It was once a copper dragon, but is now “the paladin of the Worm that Walks”.
- It praises the wisdom of Kyuss, and how the worm god reached out many years ago and showed it the true future. This future includes true divinity for the faithful of the Worm that Walks: life is a lie as it leads to death, and death is the ultimate lie as it becomes nothingness. Only in undeath is true divinity found.
- It calmly explains that it has been assisting Larloch’s efforts to use the crystal for the lich’s ongoing research. It continues on to explain that the lich was overreaching and triggered an unanticipated explosion, which destroyed the lab and drove the lich away.
- If asked about what was inside the crystal, it grins (dripping worms to the ground in the process) and says flatly: “An aspect of Kyuss – what else?”

Any characters that wish to touch the crystal and receive the blessing of Kyuss may do so – they immediately receive the **Favored of the Worm** story award as worms surge out of the crystal and burrow into their flesh (no saving throw).

If the characters are too defiant or make aggressive actions, the beast sighs and enters combat. Once combat begins, be sure to track how many rounds pass: at the beginning of the 10th round Larloch will return, and at the beginning of the 11th round the lich simply slaughters each character still present.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Consider the following guidance:

Distant Threat. The dragon stays on top of the crystal for the first round, preferring to use its acid breath weapon immediately and relying on the wards in the chamber to protect it through any initial volley. Remember that it is 20 feet up the crystal, and that any living creature that contacts the crystal immediately gains the **Favored of the Worm** story award.

Smite. As a paladin, the dragon has the ability to smite its foes. If it hits with a melee attack, it may choose to smite. If it does, it spends hit dice (reducing its hit points instead of using spell slots) to inflict an additional $3d10 + 1d8$ (increasing to $+1d10$ if the target is a living creature) radiant damage per hit die spent in this manner. If it gets a critical hit with its bite attack, it automatically uses this smite. This smite is characterized as worms pouring from the dragon into the victim, and the victim must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become infected with rot grubs (see the Swarm of Rot Grubs bite attack).

Reinforcements. Each round, 1 **death knight**, 2 **wraiths**, or 3 **spawn of Kyuss** arrive and block passage back to the exit. At tier 3, these creatures only become aggressive if affected by an action or spell from one of the characters, though they will take opportunity attacks if the characters provoke them. At tier 4, these creatures enter combat initiative the round after they arrive.

Modified Lair Actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the dragon takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects:

- The dragon chooses a point that it can see within 120 feet of it. Stone spikes sprout from the ground in a 20-foot radius centered on that point. The effect is otherwise identical to the *spike growth* spell and lasts until the dragon uses this lair action again or until the dragon dies.
- The dragon chooses a 10-foot-square area on the ground that it can see within 120 feet of it. The ground in that area turns into a 3-foot-deep mud. Each creature on the ground in that area when the mud appears must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or sink into the mud and become restrained. A creature can take an action to attempt a DC 15 Strength check, freeing itself or another creature within its reach and ending the restrained condition on a success. Moving 1 foot in the mud costs 2 feet of movement. On initiative count 20 on the next round, the mud hardens and the Strength DC to work free increases to 20.
- Once per day, the dragon can cause a 40-foot diameter *antimagic shell* to emanate from the broken crystal. This effect is otherwise identical to the spell of the same name and lasts until initiative count 20 of the next round. (the dragon typically uses this in the second round of combat, once the characters have “grown confident”).

The characters should be rewarded for creative thinking in this encounter, as the dragon is a formidable foe. If the characters are struggling to come up with viable plans, consider encouraging them to spend their action deep in thought; if they do, they may recall that the ceiling above is deeply cracked and that burying the crystal (and the dragon) should be sufficient to count as a success in the mission. That said, if this happens too early there's always a chance for the very angry dragon to claw its way out and track them down. You have many options to make this combat very cinematic and climactic!

Once the dragon is destroyed and/or the crystal disposed of, the assembled reinforcements simply cease to exist – the characters can make good their escape. Larloch is sure to arrive soon!

TREASURE

Anything that the characters recover from the wreckage of Larloch's laboratory is of value to the scribes of Candlekeep and would almost certainly be worth a significant amount on the open market. This is addressed in the conclusion and story awards.

CONCLUSION

The characters are assumed to flee from Warlock's Crypt as quickly as possible. If they are following the map that Rhaugilath provided, their way is clear and they can reach the more welcoming wilderness of the Sword Coast in a few short hours. If they are not following that map, feel free to describe hordes of demons, an entire flight of dragons, and armies of undead that they nearly collide with as they scramble for safety. Adding in a reference to a horrible subterranean dragon roar wouldn't hurt, either.

If the characters wish to return to Candlekeep and divulge their findings and stories to Pot, he debriefs them at a rate of one person per day and with a group session at the end. Any character that provides a full breakdown of events and does not obscure or withhold anything earns the **Favor of Candlekeep** story award. If someone withholds a part of their story, Pot is still thankful and offers them a standard cut of the monetary reward but no story award.

During Pot's group session (or elsewhere, if the characters fled to some remote location and do not wish to talk to the scribes again), a large box arrives for them. It is emblazoned with the sigil of Mysteryl and is made of the same wood from the box that Pot handed the characters earlier in this adventure.

Contained inside is a note, a sack of Netherese trinkets, and either a glass rod (tier 3) or a plush, gray robe. The note reads:

Champions,

Your efforts have brought both gladness and amusement to this old heart. I have plumbed the depths of your abilities and weighed your value, and you have been found to be not immediately wanting.

You are adequate.

For someone not of the Empire, I am certain that you can plainly see the value in this high praise.

However, I can easily see that you need the enclosed, for it offers you protection that I cannot – not directly. Use it in good faith.

May the Empire fly again soon,
Rhaugilath the Ageless
Overseer of Orbedal

TREASURE

So long as the characters returned to Pot, they are thanked for their efforts in the form of a crate full of manuscripts that Pot claims are "Duplicates only; you are free to do with them as you see fit." The tomes are heavy, old, and rare; they are worth 1,500 gp (at tier 4, this value increases to 2,500 gp).

The sack of Netherese trinkets that Rhaugilath sent are in exceptional shape and were clearly once intended for use by royalty or the incredibly wealthy (for the Empire, these are often the same people). The collection is comprised of letter openers, tableware made of mithral, dragonbone dice. Should the characters choose to sell it, the collection is easily worth 5,000 gp (at tier 4, this value increases to 7,500 gp) per person.

If the characters picked up items from Larloch's laboratory, it is assumed that they surrendered these items to Inkpot during their debriefing. If they did not surrender them, no merchant on Faerun is willing to purchase them as they can feel the raw evil emanating from those trinkets.

The characters also receive either a *rod of alertness* full of eyeballs (tier 3) or Rhaugilath's personal *gray robe of the archmagi* (tier 4). Under no circumstances do they receive both.

REWARDS (TIER 3)

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

EXPERIENCE (MIN/MAX XP: 11,500/13,500 EACH)

Total up all combat experience earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

COMBAT AWARDS

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Chain Devil	5,900
Death Knight	18,000
Spawn of Kyuss (tier 3)	5,900
Swarm of Rot Grubs	100
Taemylyn'zakka	27,500
Wraith (tier 3)	5,900

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Keeping faction parcel sealed	200
Respectfully interacting with Rhaugilath	500
Giving full debrief to Inkpot	1,000

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 11,500 **experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 13,500 **experience points**.

TREASURE

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

TREASURE AWARDS

Item Name	GP Value
Cerulean Hall coins	1,500
Cerulean Hall gems	500
Final Rest mirror	1,000
Candlekeep books	1,500
Netherese trinkets	5,000/person

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

POTION OF SUPREME HEALING

Potion, variable rarity

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SPELL SCROLLS

Scroll, variable rarity

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

ROOSTER (WAND OF WONDER)

Wand, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

Rhaugilath's efforts to record the history of the Netherese Empire sometimes incorporated some unsavory elements... such as the transmutation of a chaos sorcerer into this elegant wand. Covered in swirls, whorls, dizzying patterns, knobs, and clicky bits, it thrums and hums in your hand. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

ROD OF ALERTNESS

Rod, very rare (requires attunement)

This slender crystal rod is topped with flanged head made of obsidian, and tipped with horrifically sharp silver needles. The center seems to be filled with a curious liquid, within which several free-floating eyes can be spotted. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

STORY AWARDS

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award.

Favored of the Worm. Any character that became worm-infected during this adventure earns this story award. Their flesh is covered in small black pock marks; even illusion magic does not disguise their presence. These characters feel a bond with insects and bugs (worms specifically) and feels a kinship with undead creatures even though they may not be friendly.

Favor of Candlekeep. Inkpot and the scribes of Candlekeep are extremely grateful for your stories and account of your time in Warlock's Crypt. In return, they have offered to teach you ancient Netherese as an immersion course; if you would like to learn ancient Netherese, you must spend 120 downtime days at Candlekeep doing nothing other than working on your knowledge of this language. If you are not interested in learning ancient Netherese, you may instead choose three *spell scrolls* of up to 5th level (tier 3) or 7th level (tier 4) for free from an approved Adventurers League resource.

PLAYER REWARDS

For completing this mission, the characters earn downtime as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG)*.

DM REWARD

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG)*.

REWARDS (TIER 4)

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

EXPERIENCE (MIN/MAX XP: 20,000/27,000 EACH)

Total up all combat experience earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

COMBAT AWARDS

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Chain Devil	13,000
Death Knight	18,000
Spawn of Kyuss (tier 4)	13,000
Swarm of Rot Grubs	100
Taemylyn'zakka	27,500
Wraith (tier 4)	13,000

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Keeping faction parcel sealed	200
Respectfully interacting with Rhaugilath	1,000
Giving full debrief to Inkpot	2,500

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 20,000 **experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is 27,000 **experience points**.

TREASURE

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

TREASURE AWARDS

Item Name	GP Value
Cerulean Hall coins	1,500
Cerulean Hall gems	500
Final Rest mirror	1,000
Candlekeep books	2,500
Netherese trinkets	7,500/person

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

POTION OF SUPREME HEALING

Potion, variable rarity

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SPELL SCROLLS

Scroll, variable rarity

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

ROOSTER (WAND OF WONDER)

Wand, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

Rhaugilath's efforts to record the history of the Netherese Empire sometimes incorporated some unsavory elements... such as the transmutation of a chaos sorcerer into this elegant wand. Covered in swirls, whorls, dizzying patterns, knobs, and clicky bits, it thrums and hums in your hand. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

GRAY ROBE OF THE ARCHMAGI

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a sorcerer, wizard, or warlock)

Originally crafted during the height of the Netherese Empire, this robe is a warm gray color and very plush. It is stitched with silver thread and the back is covered by Rhaugilath's arcane sigil mixed with the sign of Mystryl. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

STORY AWARDS

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award.

Favored of the Worm. Any character that became worm-infected during this adventure earns this story award. Their flesh is covered in small black pock marks; even illusion magic does not disguise their presence. These characters feel a bond with insects and bugs (worms specifically) and feels a kinship with undead creatures even though they may not be friendly.

Favor of Candlekeep. Inkpot and the scribes of Candlekeep are extremely grateful for your stories and account of your time in Warlock's Crypt. In return, they have offered to teach you ancient Netherese as an immersion course; if you would like to learn ancient Netherese, you must spend 120 downtime days at Candlekeep doing nothing other than working on your knowledge of this language. If you are not interested in learning ancient Netherese, you may instead choose three *spell scrolls* of up to 5th level (tier 3) or 7th level (tier 4) for free from an approved Adventurers League resource.

PLAYER REWARDS

For completing this mission, the characters earn downtime as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG)*.

DM REWARD

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG)*.

APPENDIX. MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

CHAIN DEVIL (KYTON)

Medium fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 85 (10d8 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +7, Wis +4, Cha +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Infernal, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the devil's darkvision.

Magic Resistance. The devil has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The devil makes two attacks with its chains.

Chains. Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14) if the devil isn't already grappling a creature. Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and takes 7 (2d6) piercing damage at the start of each of its turns.

Animate Chains (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Up to four chains the devil can see within 60 feet of it magically sprout razor-edged barbs and animate under the devil's control, providing that the chains aren't being worn or carried.

Animated chain is an object with AC 20, 20 hit points, resistance to piercing damage, and immunity to psychic and thunder damage. When the devil uses Multiattack on its turn, it can use each animated chain to make one additional chain attack. An animated chain can grapple one creature on its own but can't make attacks while grappling. An animated chain reverts to its inanimate state if reduced to 0 hit points or if the devil is incapacitated or dies.

REACTIONS

Unnerving Mask. When a creature the devil can see starts its turn within 30 feet of the devil, the devil can create the illusion that it looks like one of the creature's departed loved ones or bitter enemies. If the creature can see the devil, it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of its turn.

SCALING THE CHAIN DEVIL

This adventure can be played at multiple tiers but uses the same basic layout and creature selection. As such, the creatures need to be adjusted to provide an appropriate challenge across those tiers. What follows are the suggested changes, and although they are not cumulative you are encouraged to use your best judgement when applying these changes.

Tier 3 (levels 11 - 16): hit points 119 (14d8 + 56), Strength is 20 (+5), immunity to fear, Chains becomes +9 to hit and 18 (4d6 + 4) damage, and all of the chain devil's chain attacks and animated chains are treated as magical damage

Tier 4 (levels 17 - 20): hit points 163 (19d8 + 78), Strength is 20 (+5), add the Mage Slayer feat (*PH*, ch. 6), resistance to non-magical weapons, immunity to fear, Chains becomes +10 to hit and 18 (4d6 + 4) damage, and all of the chain devil's chain attacks and animated chains are treated as magical damage

DEATH KNIGHT

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 180 (19d8 + 95)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	11 (+0)	20 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Wis +9, Cha +10

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Magic Resistance. The death knight has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Marshal Undead. Unless the death knight is incapacitated, it and undead creatures of its choice within 60 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against features that turn undead.

Spellcasting. The death knight is a 19th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *compelled duel*, *searing smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *magic weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *elemental weapon*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *staggering smite*

5th level (2 slots): *destructive wave* (necrotic)

ACTIONS

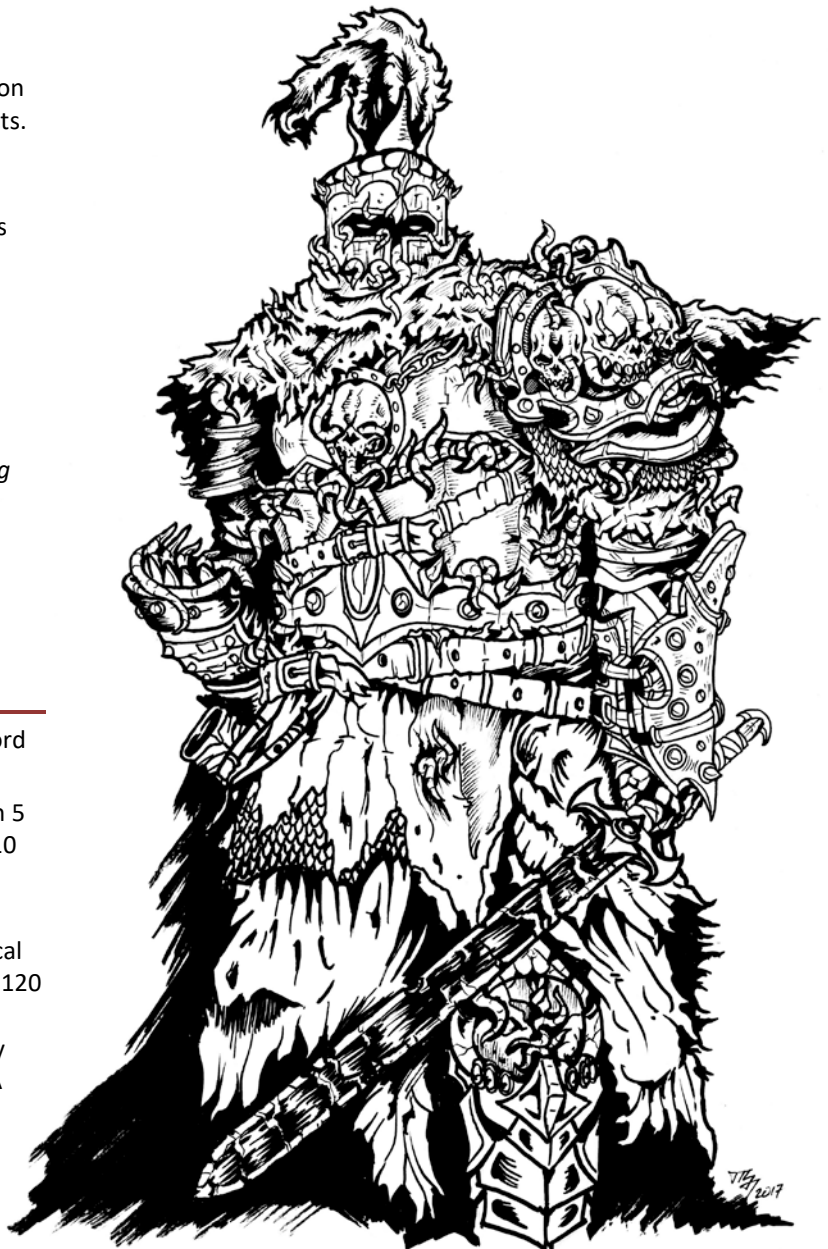
Multiattack. The death knight makes three longsword attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage, or 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage.

Hellfire Orb (1/Day). The death knight hurls a magical ball of fire that explodes at a point it can see within 120 feet of it. Each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw. The sphere spreads around corners. A creature takes 35 (10d6) fire damage and 35 (10d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Parry. The death knight adds 6 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the death knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.



SPAWN OF KYUSS

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 76 (9d8 + 36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	18 (+5)	5 (-3)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Saving Throws Wis +1

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Regeneration. The spawn of Kyuss regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or a body of running water. If the spawn takes acid, fire, or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the spawn's next turn. The spawn is destroyed only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Worms. If the spawn of Kyuss is targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away, and it loses its Burrowing Worm action.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The spawn of Kyuss makes two attacks with its claws and uses Burrowing Worm.

Burrowing Worm. A worm launches from the spawn of Kyuss at one humanoid that the spawn can see within 10 feet of it. The worm latches onto the target's skin unless the target succeeds on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. The worm is a Tiny undead with AC 6, 1 hit point, a 2 (-4) in every ability score, and a speed of 1 foot. While on the target's skin, the worm can be killed by normal means or scraped off using an action (the spawn can use this action to launch a scraped-off worm at a humanoid it can see within 10 feet of the worm). Otherwise, the worm burrows under the target's skin at the end of the target's next turn, dealing 1 piercing damage to it. At the end of each of its turns thereafter, the target takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage per worm infesting it (maximum 10d6). A worm-infested target dies if it drops to 0 hit points, then rises 10 minutes later as a spawn of Kyuss. If a worm-infested creature targeted by an effect that cures disease or removes a curse, all the worms infesting it wither away.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

SCALING THE SPAWN OF KYUSS

This adventure can be played at multiple tiers but uses the same basic layout and creature selection. As such, the creatures need to be adjusted to provide an appropriate challenge across those tiers. What follows are the suggested changes, and although they are not cumulative you are encouraged to use your best judgement when applying these changes.

Tier 3 (levels 11 - 16): hit points 124 (14d8 + 61), Strength is 18 (+4), resistant to non-magical weapons, once per day may choose to succeed on a failed saving throw, Burrowing Worm's Dexterity DC is 12, a worm-infected target takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage per worm (maximum 15d6), and the claw attack becomes +8 and deals 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage

Tier 4 (levels 17 - 20): hit points 171 (19d8 + 86), Strength is 20 (+5), immune to non-magical weapons and fear, resistant to fire, cold, acid, lightning, thunder; once per day may choose to succeed on a failed saving throw, has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Burrowing Worm's Dexterity DC is 13, a worm-infected target takes 13 (4d6) necrotic damage per worm (maximum 20d6), and the claw attack becomes +11 and deals 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 13 (4d6) necrotic damage

For the purposes of this adventure, the effects of a Spawn of Kyuss' **Burrowing Worms** action stacks with the effect of a Swarm of Rot Grubs **Bite** action and vice versa.

SWARM OF ROT GRUBS

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 5 ft., climb 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	7 (+2)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	2 (-4)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

Senses blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 6

Languages --

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny maggot. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* the target is infested by 1d4 rot grubs. At the start of each of the target's turns, the target takes 1d6 piercing damage per rot grub infesting it. Applying fire to the bite wound before the end of the target's next turn deals 1 fire damage to the target and kills these rot grubs. After this time, these rot grubs are too far under the skin to be burned.

If a target infested by rot grubs ends its turn with 0 hit points, it dies as the rot grubs burrow into its heart and kill it. Any effect that cures disease kills all rot grubs infesting the target.

SCALING THE SWARM OF ROT GRUBS

This adventure can be played at multiple tiers but uses the same basic layout and creature selection. As such, the creatures need to be adjusted to provide an appropriate challenge across those tiers. What follows are the suggested changes, and although they are not cumulative you are encouraged to use your best judgement when applying these changes.

Tier 3 (levels 11 - 16): speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft., resistant to slashing and piercing weapon damage

Tier 4 (levels 17 - 20): speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft., immune to slashing and piercing weapon damage

For the purposes of this adventure, the effect of a Swarm of Rot Grubs' **Bites** action stacks with the effects of a Spawn of Kyuss' **Burrowing Worms** action and vice versa.

TAEMYLYN'ZAKKA, PALADIN OF KYUSS (ANCIENT COPPER DRAGON)

Gargantuan dragon, lawful evil

Armor Class 21 (natural armor)

Hit Points 350 (20d20 + 140)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	12 (+1)	25 (+7)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	19 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Con +14, Wis +10, Cha +11

Skills Deception +11, Perception +17, Stealth +8

Damage Immunities acid

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 27

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 21 (27,500 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the dragon fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon can use its Frightful Presence. It then makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (2d10 + 8) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 17 (2d8 + 8) bludgeoning damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dragon's choice that is within 120 feet of the dragon and aware of it must succeed on a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the dragon's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Breath Weapons (Recharge 5–6). The dragon uses one of the following breath weapons.

Acid Breath. The dragon exhales acid in a 90-foot line that is 10 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 63 (14d8) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Slowing Breath. The dragon exhales gas in a 90-foot cone. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save,

the creature can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the creature can use either an action or a bonus action its turn, but not both. These effects last for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a successful save.

Change Shape. The dragon magically polymorphs into a humanoid or beast that has a challenge rating no higher than its own, or back into its true form. It reverts to its true form if it dies. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying is absorbed or borne by the new form (the dragon's choice).

In a new form, the dragon retains its alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, Legendary Resistance, lair actions, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores, as well as this action. Its statistics and capabilities are otherwise replaced by those of the new form, except any class features or legendary actions of that form.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The dragon can take 3 legendary actions. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn, and the dragon regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Detect.** The dragon makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.
- **Tail Attack.** The dragon makes a tail attack.
- **Wing Attack (Costs 2 Actions).** The dragon beats its wings. Each creature within 15 feet of the dragon must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw or take 15 (2d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. The dragon can then fly up to half its flying speed.

ADJUSTING TAEMYLYN'ZAKKA

This dragon requires several adjustments for this adventure: **Bolstered body.** The dragon has 520 hit points and blindsight to a range of 120 ft. It is undead.

Festering bite. The dragon deals an additional 14 (4d6) necrotic damage on a bite attack. Any living creature bitten must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become infected with rot grubs (see the Swarm of Rot Grubs bite attack).

Wormy breath. The dragon's acid breath weapon can only be used once per long rest, and deals an additional 49 (14d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The acid is peppered with half-melted rot grubs, and any living creature that takes damage from this breath attack must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become infected with rot grubs.

WRAITH

Medium undead, neutral evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 67 (9d8 + 27)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

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

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the wraith has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

ACTIONS

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Specter. The wraith targets a humanoid within 10 feet of it that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a specter in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under the wraith's control. The wraith can have no more than seven specters under its control at one time.

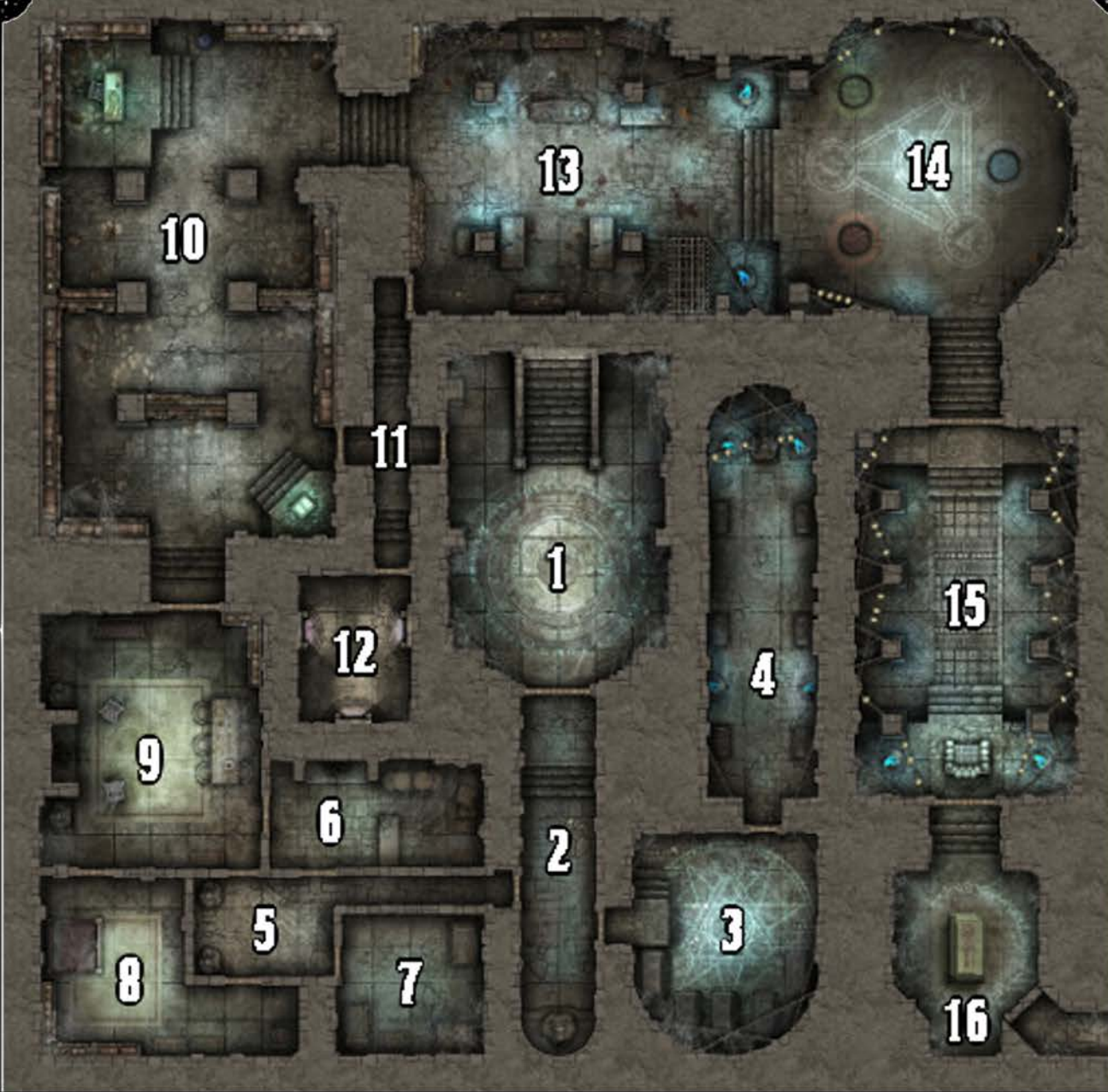
SCALING THE WRAITH

This adventure can be played at multiple tiers but uses the same basic layout and creature selection. As such, the creatures need to be adjusted to provide an appropriate challenge across those tiers. What follows are the suggested changes, and although they are not cumulative you are encouraged to use your best judgement when applying these changes.

Tier 3 (levels 11 - 16): hit points 116 (14d8 + 53), Dexterity is 18 (+4), immune to non-magical weapons, once per day has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Life Drain's Constitution DC is 16, and Life Drain becomes +8 and deals 26 (5d8 + 4) necrotic damage

Tier 4 (levels 17 - 20): hit points 163 (19d8 + 78), Dexterity is 20 (+5), immune to non-magical weapons and fear, resistant to fire, cold, acid, lightning, thunder; has advantage on saving throws versus magic and magic effects, Life Drain's Constitution DC is 18, and Life Drain becomes +10 and deals 31 (6d8 + 5) necrotic damage



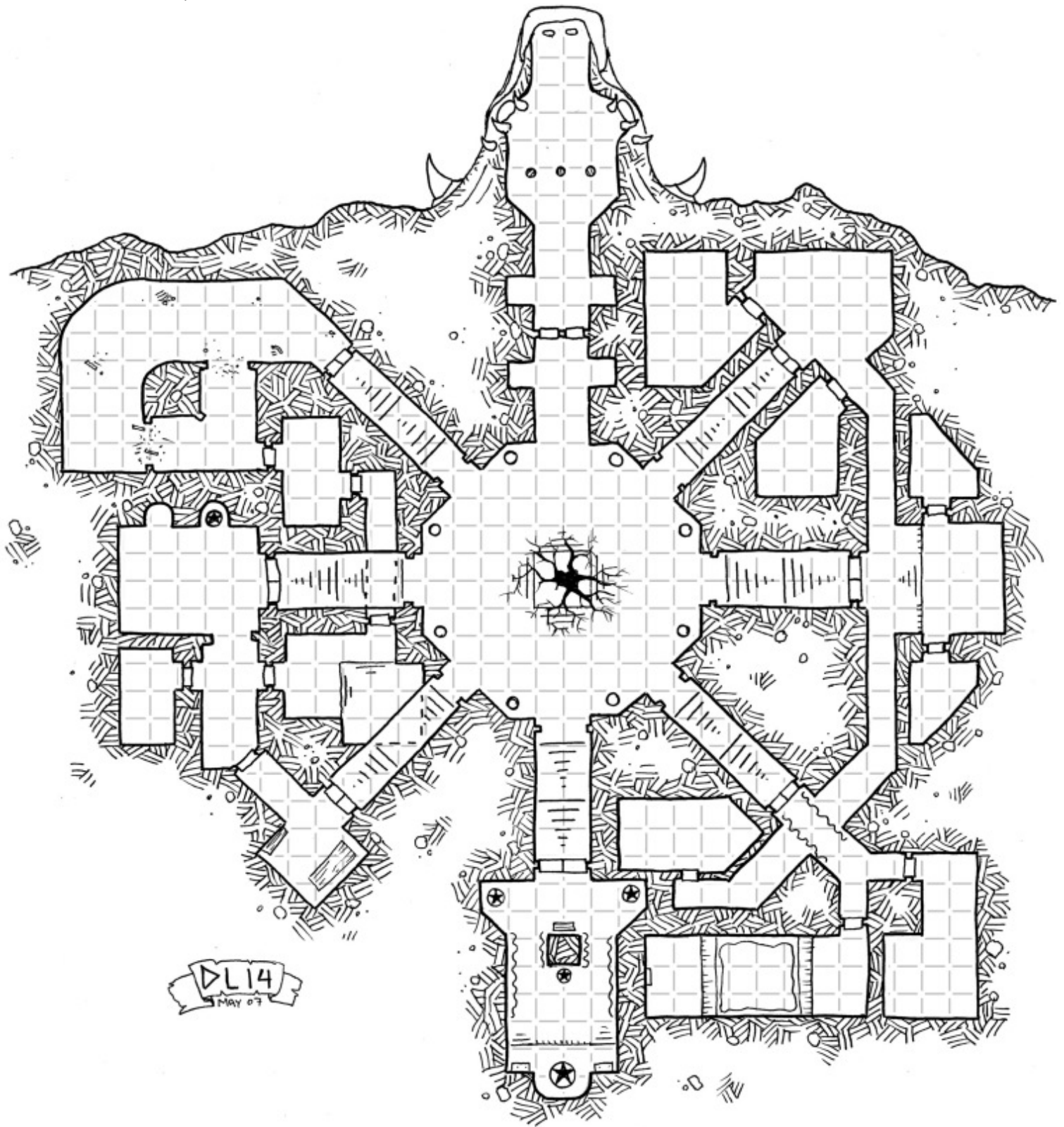


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|---|----------------------|----|------------------|----|--------------|
| 1 | MAGIC CIRCLE | 7 | ACOLYTE CHAMBERS | 13 | CLINICAL LAB |
| 2 | HALLWAY | 8 | GUEST QUARTERS | 14 | RUNIC POOLS |
| 3 | TELEPORTATION CIRCLE | 9 | RECEPTION HALL | 15 | OSSUARY |
| 4 | CERULEAN HALL | 10 | GRAND ARCHIVE | 16 | FINAL REST |
| 5 | THE TWINS | 11 | INTERSECTION | | |
| 6 | STORE ROOM | 12 | VIEWING PORTALS | | |

RHAUGILATH'S LAIR
ORBEDAL

MAP APPENDIX 2: LARLOCH'S LABORATORY

ONE SQUARE = 10 FEET



PLAYER APPENDIX: MAGIC ITEMS & AWARDS

PERMANENT MAGIC ITEMS

ROOSTER (WAND OF WONDER)

Wand, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

Rhaugilath's efforts to record the history of the Netherese Empire sometimes incorporated some unsavory elements... such as the transmogrification of a chaos sorcerer into this elegant wand. Covered in swirls, whorls, dizzying patterns, knobs, and clicky bits, it thrums and hums in your hand. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

ROD OF ALERTNESS (TIER 3 ONLY)

Rod, very rare (requires attunement)

This slender crystal rod is topped with flanged head made of obsidian, and tipped with horrifically sharp silver needles. The center seems to be filled with a curious liquid, within which several free-floating eyes can be spotted. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

GRAY ROBE OF THE ARCHMAGI (TIER 4 ONLY)

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a sorcerer, wizard, or warlock)

Originally crafted during the height of the Netherese Empire, this robe is a warm gray color and very plush. It is stitched with silver thread and the back is covered by Rhaugilath's arcane sigil mixed with the sign of Mystryl. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

STORY AWARDS

FAVORED OF THE WORM

Any character that became worm-infected during this adventure earns this story award. Their flesh is covered in small black pock marks; even illusion magic does not disguise their presence. These characters feel a bond with insects and bugs (worms specifically) and feels a kinship with undead creatures even though they may not be friendly.

FAVOR OF CANDLEKEEP

Inkpot and the scribes of Candlekeep are extremely grateful for your stories and account of your time in Warlock's Crypt. In return, they have offered to teach you ancient Netherese as an immersion course; if you would like to learn ancient Netherese, you must spend 120 downtime days at Candlekeep doing nothing other than working on your knowledge of this language. If you are not interested in learning ancient Netherese, you may instead choose three *spell scrolls* of up to 5th level (tier 3) or 7th level (tier 4) for free from an approved Adventurers League resource.

DM APPENDIX 1: THE DARK OBELISK

THE DARK OBELISK

Kyuss has long been entombed within the Dark Obelisk, but this prison has moved several times over the eons. Only one portion of the Dark Obelisk is present in the world at any one time; the bulk of it remains deep within Carceri. It is certain that agents of the Worm – not to mention the Worm himself – are granted phenomenal and dire powers when in proximity to it. The environs surrounding any portion of the Dark Obelisk are festooned with dead bodies, squirming insects, foul green worms, and groups of Spawn of Kyuss.

Every world has its own version of the legend of Worm that Walks. If scholars look deep enough into the history of their lands they may find references to great periods of arcane study or even a purported “enlightened time” in which society and culture hit heights before an inevitable collapse, and many of these stories include references to newly discovered power sources and powerful fonts of arcane might. In truth, these events are often due to the Worm’s promises of might and lore. While the Worm cannot enter the world directly, his agents work tirelessly to bring aspects of his prison – the Dark Obelisk, sometimes known as the Writhing Battery – to powerful mages and sorcerers in the hope of finding a way to release him once more.

LAIR ACTIONS

While within 1,000 feet of the Dark Obelisk and on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Kyuss and his Spawn take a lair action to cause one of the following effects; the same effect cannot be used two rounds in a row and only a single lair action may be used in any turn regardless of the number of Spawn of Kyuss present (including Kyuss himself):

- Each unoccupied space adjacent to Kyuss or a single Spawn of Kyuss is filled with a rot grub swarm (maximum 6 new rot grub swarms).
- Any number of swarms explode. Any creature sharing a space with or adjacent to the Swarm must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (6d6) necrotic and acid damage (half damage on a success).
- **(Kyuss only)** Kyuss raises a corpse that he can detect as a Spawn of Kyuss. The new Spawn retains all its former memories, but loses all abilities it once knew and instead gains the

abilities listed in the “Spawn of Kyuss” entry. Nothing short of a *wish* spell will restore the Spawn its former life. The Spawn is loyal only to Kyuss and will follow his commands without hesitation.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The presence of Kyuss and the Dark Obelisk is often a portent of terrible things to come. Insects are more aggressive and plentiful, undead are drawn to the area, and Kyuss’ horrific Spawn can often be found in great quantities in these areas. Additionally, necrotic effects become more and more potent as the Dark Obelisk brings in more faithful followers.

- While within 500 feet of the Dark Obelisk, healing magic is only half as effective while necrotic magic is twice as potent (double duration or twice the number of dice for a spell’s effect). This does not stack with the effects of the mythal.
- Intelligent, living creatures must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw when they first see the Dark Obelisk. On a success, the creature is frightened for one minute. On a failure, they are paralyzed for one minute and frightened for one minute after the paralyzed effect ends. Creatures may attempt this save at the end of each of their turns.
- Intelligent undead creatures within 1 mile of the Dark Obelisk have advantage on saving throws versus spells and effects.

BROKEN OBELISK

The Dark Obelisk – sometimes referred to as a Writhing Battery – in this adventure is broken and no longer provides the benefits or powers listed. This text is included for roleplay- and history-hounds that wish to delve into it.



art: Ian Wallace

DM APPENDIX 2: ADVENTURE GUIDANCE

STORYTELLING TACTICS

To breathe the right amount of life into this adventure, a Dungeon Master must be prepared to adjust mechanics and tactics very quickly. The roleplay sections – first with Rhaugilath and later with Taemylyn'zakka – can begin to drag if there is not a decided 'point' to the interaction. These creatures have goals and desires and drives and personalities, and they should be incorporated into the discussion! Combat in this adventure can be very swing-y if the dice rolls are to be blindly trusted; the characters should know that they are in a dangerous place, and while the DM is encouraged to play up the horror of being consumed by minions of the Worm that Walks, they should not cross into the dreaded "DM vs. Player" mindset that is so easy to do.

Much like DDAL00-01 Window to the Past, I ran this adventure nearly 100 times between October 2016 and November 2017. A lot of players got to take a peek into some pretty dark corners of Forgotten Realms lore, and I even got to speak with Ed Greenwood about the wellbeing of his misguided children Rhaugilath and Larloch.

Here are some tips that I learned while running this adventure. I hope that you can use them to run awesome games for your players:

- Pot (Inkpot) may or may not be an avatar of Oghma. Never say never, but he certainly knows more than he is letting on.
- Rhaugilath is lawful neutral to the core. He believes that there is a finite amount of good and evil that can exist in the world at any one point, and that Larloch's efforts will artificially inflate the amount of evil. Rhaugilath cannot abide by this and will use this group (or another) of champions to see that Larloch's efforts are disrupted.
- One of my players referred to Rhaugilath as "the worst manager I've ever had" and that this "was basically one big job interview". That player wasn't wrong. Rhaugilath is cold and calculating, and has no time for feelings, emotions, or sass. He is focused on ensuring that the characters are powerful enough to face down the protector of the Battery but not so powerful that Larloch feels the need to show up and wipe the slate clean.
- Larloch is the boogeyman of the Forgotten Realms. He is the oldest creature in existence, predating even every one of the dragons. As he is a lich, this

presents a number of mechanical issues: to resolve the majority of them, Larloch is never actually present in this adventure. If the characters are present when he returns, treat their slaughter as a montage of events. It should be visceral, shredding, and full of the biggest, brightest, most explosive and painful magic possible.

- No joke: Elminster actually had to drop a city on Larloch... to slow him down. This destroyed the remains of Myth Drannor. If Elminster couldn't affect Larloch with magic, it's safe to assume that the characters can't. ***Drive this home to the characters.***
- The Battery is already destroyed in this adventure. The characters are free to enter its husk, though, to see what happens (spoiler: they die. They die horrible, horrible deaths that can only be resolved by *wish*).

PLAYING YOUR ALIGNMENT

Two liches are mentioned in this adventure, and while they are clearly not friendly towards each other (and one of them is only marginally friendly to the characters), it is important to take a moment to talk about alignment.

Alignment is a label that characters take most often because it imparts a specific ability or set of powers, rather than using it as a roleplaying tool. This adventure seeks to step on those toes by including a lawful neutral lich: Rhaugilath.

"Lawful neutral" essentially means that the law and code of the land is inviolable, with any personal feelings or observations ignored. Rhaugilath is a perfect fit for this because although he has good desires he is magically bound by Larloch to remain neutral. This compulsion locks him to a lawful code but doesn't negate his acidic wit nor does it lessen his disdain for people not of Netherese blood. Because of this, Rhaugilath has come to believe that a finite amount of "good" and "evil" exists in the world and has taken it upon himself to ensure that Larloch's actions do not tip the scales too far to one side.

Larloch, on the other hand, is strictly lawful evil. He too is bound by his code of ethics but is very self-serving. His desire to bring about the return of Mystryl as the goddess of magic will cost the world much, and although Larloch is aware of this he does not care. It is simply that nobody else is capable of the mantle that he desires this, and he will sacrifice

or destroy anything that attempts to keep him from his self-appointed task.

Just because Larloch cannot be mechanically 'hurt' in this adventure does not mean that the loss of his laboratory and the Writhing Battery wouldn't be a devastating blow. Truly, it would! But it's also important to note that once the Battery is gone the lich may realize that the artifact was corrupting his judgment and clouding his vision...

... and I don't know about you, but the thought of a lich that aggressively wants to thank me is almost as terrifying as the thought of a lich that aggressively wants to end me.

DREAMS OF EMPIRE

Sure, this adventure features a great writhing worm god and massive, bloated dragon paladin... but the real gems here are the liches. They are born of an empire that is not understood by modern characters and, in truth, has no place in the modern Forgotten Realms – but their passion and fervent belief is what keeps them going, day after day. This theme of empire building is the foundation of the adventure: Rhaugilath wishes for a new Netheril, Larloch wishes to for a new (old) goddess of magic, the dragon wishes for a future with only one god, and the characters likely wish for their legacy and heroism to be known.

RHAUGILATH

Where Rhaugilath desires to see Netheril rise to prominence once more, to lead the people of the Realms into a new and enlightened age no matter the cost, Larloch's goal is at once simpler and infinitely more complex: he desires to return Mystryl to her place as the goddess of magic.

ROLEPLAYING & UNDERSTANDING RHAUGILATH

Rhaugilath, the Ageless. Former Sorcerer-King of Orbedal in ancient Netheril and reported to be nearly 2,000 years old (first reports begin around -450 DR). Rhaugilath always sought to provide the best possible life for those that lived in his floating citadel and imposed strict laws to keep order and peace established. Voluntarily underwent the process of becoming a lich to ensure that his people would receive fair and standard leadership for as long as he would exist – but alas, Karsus' Folly would soon see the entire Netherese Empire come crashing (literally) to the ground. Rhaugilath would spend over a thousand years trapped in the wreckage, not hurt enough to disincorporate back to his phylactery and not strong enough to use magic to make good his escape from the mess. Larloch uncovered him in approximately 1050 DR and after a climactic magical battle Rhaugilath was bent to the will of the elder lich. He maintains his gifts as a

dreamwalker and extraordinarily powerful transmuter, reportedly working at Larloch's behest (though sometimes of his own free will) to send messages and visions of the ancient Empire to various individuals around the world via dreams, and has been developing new ways to turn demons and devils into building supplies (as the liches view these creatures as a never-ending supply). Rhaugilath strives to break Larloch's control but is bound by magic to take no direct action that would contradict Larloch's efforts.

LARLOCH

Larloch is unwilling to accept that the Weave has been irrevocably changed and has tried on numerous occasions to force Mystryl to take shape. He has participated in sinister rituals, crafted horrible, reality-shaking magic spells, and has cut deals with some of the world's worst and most powerful arcanists. He cares not for Netheril nor for any other established nation, and would sacrifice all of Faerun for just one more minute in the company of his beloved goddess. It is his belief that the Writhing Battery and what it contains can be used as a tool to bring his dead goddess back to life.

ROLEPLAYING & UNDERSTANDING LARLOCH

Larloch, the Shadow King. Former Sorcerer-King of Jiksudir in ancient Netheril and reported to be over 2,000 years old (first reports begin around -680 DR). No flesh remains but he clothes himself in finery and robes, and always has a veritable cloud of ioun stones orbiting his form. Before the fall of the Empire thanks to Karsus' Folly, he ruled over eastern Faerun (with keen interest in the development of Narfell and Raumathar). In 1374 DR more than 200 of his liches assaulted the Knights of Myth Drannor, but Larloch arrived later and dismissed the attack as "silly" and "utter pointless" as he would never sanction actions against those that revere Mystra or Mystryl. In 1487 DR he sought to become the new deity of magic by draining the wards of Candlekeep and used that energy to power an attempt to shatter the mythal of Myth Drannor; he was defeated by Elminster and was driven away when the human mage slammed an entire Netherese floating city into the ancient lich. Larloch has an unknowable number of contingencies and prepared spells ready to fire, with many of them requiring no action or spell components to complete. His arsenal of magical items is largely comprised of artifacts from ancient times and many have been furthered bolstered through his own research and experimentation.

The information above was drawn from numerous resources, including *Hoard of the Dragon Queen*, *Netheril: Empire of Magic*, *Chronomancer*, several versions of the Forgotten Realms boxed sets, and more. The Netherese provide a lot of menace even in their absence; essentially, they are a font of

inspiration for cruelly-intentioned Dungeon Masters!

My thanks and sincere apologies to Wolfgang Bauer and Steve Winter of Kobold Press for their work on *Hoard of the Dragon Queen* and their decision to include Hazirawn in that adventure.

COMBAT TACTICS

Similar to [DDAL00-01 *Window to the Past*](#), this adventure features combats that are superficially simple. Although the wraiths play a lesser role here, there should still be enough of a resource drain on the characters hit points, spell slots, magic item charges, and so on that their continued efforts should be a calculated decision.

Here are some of the tactics that I used while running combats for my players in this adventure:

- If the characters are struggling in the second combat encounter, consider having Rhaugilath make his presence known by destroying the other monsters. The lich does love a grand entrance, and after all – he brought the characters here for a reason.
- One quick way to adjust combat while still keeping with the adventure theme is to replace a death knight with a spawn of Kyuss when half of the knight's hit points are gone. Describe the armor rotting and falling away, and the interior of the plate mail as being completely filled with juicy worms and maggots that reform into a brown-and-yellow robed creature. Using the new stat block (with lower armor and reduced combat effectiveness) can improve player and character morale considerably, while still delivering a heck of a narrative visual!
- Although there is no way to release Kyuss in this adventure, the dragon serves as his paladin. Paladins can smite when they hit with melee attacks (including bites). Go big on this fight – the dragon is effectively a solo creature!
- Feel free to drop some rot grub swarms here and there. They don't add much to the experience but can add a lot of visceral "Ew, that's gross!" impact during combat at the table!

AUTHOR'S NOTES

THANKS & APOLOGIES

The Saga of the Worm adventures have been a ton of fun to design and run at dozens of conventions and gamedays over the last few years. Window to the Past was the Adventurer League's introduction to the smarmy Zulkir of enchantment and his dubious mission to a lost research facility, and now we get to explore the ruins of Warlock's Crypt – a place that has not really been detailed in any Wizards of the Coast product in the past.

The purpose of the series isn't about exploring lost ruins (even though doing so is basically the bread and butter of a D&D game, amirite?) but more about exploring the topics and rules that make the game really 'tick' for me as a Dungeon Master and designer.

Window to the Past explored difficult roleplaying choices and delved pretty deep in niche lore, offset by the pervasive themes of horror and resource management.

Those That Came Before uses the phrase "play your alignment", a phrase that every Dungeon Master has had to use with their party at least once, in an interesting way. Liches are typically the pinnacle of evil, but Rhaugilath... isn't. He's self-centered and cold, condescending and cynical but he adheres strictly to his neutral alignment. In old Forgotten Realms lore he was actually lawful good, but a slip to lawful neutral isn't out of the question after so many centuries trapped underground and bound to what is essentially the boogeyman of the Realms: Larloch.

I've had a blast sending minions of the Worm that Walks against thousands of players, either at my table or by hearing the exploits of players all over the world that play these adventures with their local Dungeon Masters. Part 3 of this saga is already "in the wild" as it were, and I'll be running it at conventions all over the United States during 2018.

What does the future hold? I don't really know. After this trilogy wraps I think I'll be ready for a new theme and direction, but for now:

thump-thump, thump-thump

Alan Patrick
Community Manager
D&D Adventurers League
December 20th, 2017

RESOURCE LINKS

Art:

[John Latta](#) (Rhaugilath, death knight, Kyuss)

[Jian Wei](#) (cover)

Cartography:

[Heroic Maps](#) ([Rhaugilath's Lair](#))

[Dyson Logos](#) ([Larloch's Laboratory](#))