

ARCADE



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

One of the hallmarks of epic fantasy stories is that the main characters are changed by their experiences, both good and bad. From discovering the love and support of a found family (like the kids in *Avatar: The Last Airbender*) to enduring intense stress and trauma (like Sam and Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*), characters grow, develop, and emerge transformed. In fantasy roleplaying games, adventurers see horrors and confront monsters that set them apart from most NPCs and bind them together as a group. They share the weight of responsibility and know the high price of failure.

In a way, these stories are heightened versions of our own comparatively humdrum existence—as we “adventure” through life, we find that, gradually, we’ve changed and no longer fit where we used to. Perhaps this parallel is one of the reasons we’re drawn to explore this theme through roleplay. It’s a gentler alternative to the existential dread of reflecting on how our real-world responsibilities and traumas have changed us. Through our characters, we can subconsciously process our own changes and feel empowered to achieve our goals despite adversity, because we can press onward with support from our party (and much-needed long rests).

We have a certain level of control in a game, too—we can decide whether our character suffers nightmares after being swallowed by a purple worm, whether they merely shrug it off as yet another bizarre day, or a bit of both. Plus, even the worst challenges in RPGs (actually, *especially* the worst challenges) are rewarded with XP, so there’s a built-in upside as part of the game. Sure, we used ourselves as bait and fought a dragon made of nightmares that manifested our greatest fears, put us to sleep, and made us attack each other, but at least our party leveled up and got cool new powers, right?¹ The joy of roleplaying is that we can safely engage with our character’s emotions as much as we want, choosing when to lean into the intensity

and when to pull back if things get too grim. We can grow alongside our characters, but at our own pace.

Each of this month’s articles offers characters the chance to confront their flaws, fears, and mistakes as they press forward on their journeys. That sounds ominous and heavy—but while dealing with a cursed weapon or a TPK might be A Bad Time for the party, it can be great fun for players who enjoy putting their characters through the wringer. And we get to balance the heaviness with as much silliness and humor as we want. Case in point: the characters slowly turning into beets and facing the prospect of being devoured by a hag is at least as absurd as it is horrifying. Oh, and that’s *after* they all died.

So if you accidentally TPK your party, [Justice Ramin Arman](#) and [Anthony Joyce-Rivera](#) have your back with “Break in Case of TPK”! (Or you might be tempted to purposefully kill your party so you can use one of these encounters.) [Jacky Leung](#) presents three storied magic items with unexpected drawbacks in “Cursed Treasures,” as well as guidance for creating your own cursed items—perhaps ones specifically tailored to the characters’ weaknesses. And [Amber Litke](#) and [Sadie Lowry](#) are back with “Divine Trials: Shadows of the Moon,” a mini-dungeon where the characters must overcome not an external force of evil, but the darkness and fear within themselves.

My gaming groups love to be silly and joke around, but we also love exploring the characters and seeing them grow, both in the ways we planned and in ways we never expected (which is one of the great joys of collaborative storytelling). Our characters laugh, cry, strategize, stress out, aid and comfort each other, and forge bonds through their experiences—and, at the same time, so do we.

De somnio ad itinere,
Hannah Rose
Managing Editor

¹ See “The Nightmare Dragon” by Alex Clippinger in [ARCADIA 15](#). It’s a fun time. For the players. Probably not for the characters, though.

CURSED TREASURES

TURNING HEXES INTO FLEXES

by Jacky Leung

Content Warning: This article contains items with horrible curses that can lead to imprisonment, false visions, and additional character flaws.

After clearing out the tomb of the undead necromancer Lazurith, you discover a golden scepter embedded with gemstone. Unaware of the ominous shadow trapped within it, you bond with the item. A flurry of visions assails your mind, each worse than the last. Once the nightmares cease, a voice whispers, “Your doom is nigh.” Days of referencing different historical journals later, you believe the ornate relic to be the *Scepter of the Unanointed*, but it’s too late—the item’s curse has you.

This article contains rules for creating cursed items, as well as three new cursed items, their legends, and rules for cleansing their curses.

CREATING CURSED ITEMS

The best cursed items grant boons, but with a cost. This price shouldn’t interfere with the story or gameplay, nor should it be a “gotcha” moment for the GM’s sole amusement. A curse that derails an ongoing campaign or inflicts severe penalties causes more harm than good. For example, a cursed periapt that regularly drains a character’s ability scores would debilitate low-level characters and create a major inconvenience at higher tiers. It’d be even worse if the periapt had no magical benefits, since its gemstone has little value!

Cursed items should open avenues for the narrative to move forward and possess an element of risk. They are a lottery of good, bad, and awful effects. Balancing a cursed item’s risks and rewards creates an engaging story and keeps the characters interacting with the treasure rather than leaving it on the floor of a dungeon.

In many cases, a *remove curse* spell can purge ill magic from an item, which makes the item’s contribution to the story short, ineffectual, and frustrating at best. Memorable cursed objects, such as the One Ring from Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, are more potent and have a long legacy. Though not every cursed item needs an influence or history as grand as the One Ring, giving an object with tempting powers and a compelling backstory can enrich the character’s narrative journey and serve as a phenomenal worldbuilding tool.

STARTING QUESTIONS

Consider the following questions when creating your cursed items:

- How does the item connect with the history of the world?
- Why was it created?
- What powers does it have that help it achieve its purpose?
- How was it cursed? By whom, or what?
- How can the curse be lifted?
- What potential does lifting the curse unlock?

When creating the legend behind a cursed item, it can be helpful to take inspiration from fables, myths, and folktales (such as [Prometheus’s ring](#), or Hephaestus’s [Necklace of Harmonia](#)), as well as urban legends (such as [how paintings of crying children always lead to house fires](#), or [how families cover mirrors after death](#)). The story behind the item can be purposeful and vengeful, or it can simply be eerie and tragic. The scope can be small and individual, or large enough to influence entire nations.

FINER DETAILS

When crafting curses, consider these details:

- Treat the curses as a foil to the item's legacy or properties, but they should complement each other, not mitigate. For example, the curse of the *Boots of Tartarus* (as described later in this article) is tied to the item's Ghostwalker ability to travel into the Ethereal Plane, imposing a possible risk when using the feature.
- Cursed items should have properties that make using them worth the risk. For instance, the *Amulet of the Seer's Eyes* (described later in this article) twists the visions it shows into dark alternate realities, but it grants incredible divination spells and the ability to see invisible creatures and objects to those who dare to wear it.
- The *remove curse* spell usually ends a creature's attunement to the item. Sometimes stronger magic, such as a *greater restoration* or *wish* spell, is required instead.
- The method for breaking an object's curse permanently should tie into the item's legend. Breaking the curse completely should require at least a short adventure.

When using cursed items, it's important to establish your group's social contract before implementing the item. Ask for a player's consent before the curse affects their character, and describe how the curse can affect them. If a curse alters a character's personality, mitigates a player's or character's agency, or introduces elements that break the spirit of the current narrative, discuss this with your players and amend the effects accordingly to suit the group's story and comfort level. For example, a cursed item bent on the destruction of dragons can impart a new ideal where the character believes dragons should be extinguished from the world, but you should only use such a curse if the players are comfortable with it.

NEW ITEMS

The following three cursed magic items are presented with legends, descriptions, properties, and a short story hook to help build a short adventure for removing the item's curse permanently.



SCEPTER OF THE UNANOINTED

Centuries ago, a priest named Arbalest the Wise acquired a scepter from a deva for his faith. The angel instructed Arbalest to use the divine instrument to anoint and protect the rulers of Arbalest's now-forgotten kingdom. When Bernasatrix, a powerful demon, possessed the body of a monarch, Arbalest was charged to banish the menace. After five days of failed attempts, the priest retreated to his sanctum and petitioned the spirits of his faith for a solution. Through his prayers, the priest learned to confront the demon in its domain, where the mind and soul meet.

Arbalest and his acolytes banished Bernasatrix into the scepter. The priest kept the item in a secure crypt dedicated to the deva who had gifted the divine rod. As the years passed, the scepter's care was passed to Arbalest's successors within the faith, though their order eventually faded into the tapestries of history, leaving Bernasatrix in lonely, silent fury. The demon vowed to escape one day to exact revenge on Arbalest and the order of his faith.

SCEPTER OF THE UNANOINTED

Rod, Legendary (Requires Attunement)

This scepter's handle is a long golden rod 22 inches in length. Atop the rod rests a large orb lined with a dozen different sparkling gemstones. Effigies of a lion, an eagle, a stag, and a dragon wrap around the orb, reaching for some unknown point above the rod. Upon closer inspection, shadowy visages spill through the scepter's shaft.

The *Scepter of the Unanointed* can be wielded as a magic mace that grants a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it.

Anointed Spells. While holding this rod, you can use an action to cast one of the following spells from it (save DC 17): *bless*, *death ward*, *lesser restoration*, or *protection from energy*. Once a spell has been cast using the rod, that spell can't be cast from it again until the next dawn or until you perform a charitable act, such as donating items to the less fortunate, volunteering at a religious site of worship, or helping a stranger in a meaningful way. The GM determines what is considered a charitable act, but it should involve a sacrifice of time, money, or other resources from you.

Devoted. While holding this rod, you have advantage on saving throws made to avoid being charmed or frightened. In addition, you have advantage on Constitution saving throws made to maintain concentration on spells. You feel a sense of pious devotion and faith swell within you whenever you gain advantage on a saving throw thanks to the rod.

Sentience. Possessed by the demon Bernasatrix, the *Scepter of the Unanointed* is a sentient chaotic evil weapon with an Intelligence of 16, a Wisdom of 14, and a Charisma of 17. It has hearing and darkvision out to a range of 120 feet. Bernasatrix communicates telepathically with the rod's wielder and can speak, read, and understand Abyssal, Celestial, and Common. The demon presents himself as a benevolent spirit cursed and bound to the item by Arbalest in his final years.

Spellcasting Focus. If you are a cleric or paladin, you can use the scepter as a holy symbol, and you gain a +3 bonus to spell attack rolls and the saving throw DCs of your spells.

Virtue. While you hold this rod, it exudes a magical aura in a 15-foot-radius sphere that lets you know a creature's foremost virtue. Each creature of your choice who enters the aura's area for the first time on a turn or starts their turn there must make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw; the creature is aware of this effect on entering the aura and can choose to fail this saving throw. On a failed save, you learn the defining virtue (such as grace, humility, or peace) of that creature and have advantage on Wisdom (Insight and Perception) checks against them while they are in the aura. On a successful save, that creature is immune to this effect for 24 hours.

Curse. This rod is cursed with the vengeful spirit of a demon, and becoming attuned to it extends the curse to you. The curse can't be broken with *remove curse* or similar magic, only by cleansing the item. Until the curse is broken, you are unwilling to part with the rod and gain the following flaw: "I know what I am doing, and I am always right. I know what's best for everyone."

Until the curse is broken, whenever you cast a spell using the rod's Anointed Spells property, roll a d20. On a 19 or 20, the spell is replaced with a detrimental effect for the spell's full duration, ignoring concentration:

- Targets of the *bless* spell are treated as being under the *bane* spell.
- A target of the *lesser restoration* spell gains a level of exhaustion.
- A target of the *protection from energy* spell gains vulnerability to the selected element instead of resistance.
- A target of the *death ward* spell has disadvantage on death saving throws.

CLEANSING THE SCEPTER

To cleanse the scepter of its curse, Bernasatrix must be removed from the item, which requires the wielder to complete a series of trials that Bernasatrix attempts to manipulate.

If asked about the curse, Bernasatrix plays the role of benevolent spirit and notes three holy sites where Arbalest once taught, studied, and prayed, claiming that destroying heretic iconographies at each site will lift the curse. This is a lie—the sites are connected to Arbalest's order. Damage or destruction would weaken the divine magic binding the demon spirit to the scepter and allow them to escape, which destroys the item and ends the character's curse.

In truth, the wielder must instead recite and meditate on the fifteen virtues of Arbalest's faith in each site. Once this ritual is completed, the scepter is cleansed, Bernasatrix is destroyed, and the item loses its Sentience and Curse properties.

The Fifteen Virtues of Arbalest. Arbalest's faith has fifteen virtues that serve as central tenets of their beliefs.

- **Acceptance.** Welcome any and all to the faith.
- **Authenticity.** Be true to yourself and your faith.
- **Caring.** Care for others, always.
- **Commitment.** Keep all promises, oaths, and agreements.

- **Compassion.** Ease all pain in others.
- **Courage.** All have the strength to persevere against any hardship.
- **Fairness.** Faith has no favoritism.
- **Forgiveness.** All can be forgiven with time.
- **Honesty.** Speak the truth whenever possible.
- **Hope.** Inspire others to achieve the impossible.
- **Humility.** All are equal in faith; none are above another.
- **Peace.** A calm heart is an open one.
- **Respect.** Honor others, not for wisdom or gains, but for their being.
- **Thankfulness.** Always be thankful, for life is short.
- **Wisdom.** Learning is a lifelong journey.

You can substitute any virtue with another that best suits your narrative or setting.

CLEANSED

When the *Scepter of the Unanointed* is cleansed of its curse, it gains the following properties:

Charitable. When you cast a spell using the rod's Anointed Spells property, you can target one additional creature within the spell's range.

Selfless. Whenever a creature you can see within 60 feet of you is reduced to 0 hit points while you are holding this rod, you can use a reaction to stabilize the target. Once you use this property, it can't be used again until the next dawn, unless you expend a spell slot of 4th level or higher to use it again.

Anointment. You add *holy aura* spell to the list of spells that can be cast using the rod's Anointed Spells property. When cast from the rod, the spell has a range of a creature you can touch.

BOOTS OF TARTARUS

Rosamund Martel was a child of fate born under auspicious signs, prophesied to walk a harrowing path of righteousness, duty, and justice. Born in the countryside of a corrupt kingdom, she answered the call when the down-trodden populace revolted against their overlords.

The prophecy began its prose. The people called her a champion of justice. Her leadership ended the tyranny, and a new era began for her homeland—one of famine and war brought by invading neighbors. Rosamund continued fighting for her people.

When peace finally came, the champion returned to her humble origins. For years, the land prospered, but in Rosamund's twilight years, a new monarch brought new corruption. The tireless champion and her friends sparked another revolution, but their new foes unleashed the forces of the hells against them. Many believe that Rosamund and her companions died in a battle against a hellish entity through an act of mutual destruction.

They didn't. The fiend cursed Rosamund with a dying breath, imprisoning the champion and her comrades in a demiplane connected to a magic pair of boots. The infernal magic of the plane turned Rosamund and her friends into vengeful chain devils. When Rosamund's crusade ended, greed and corruption destroyed her homeland—remembered only in a haunting aria.

ARIA OF THE CHAINED DEVIL

“A lightbringer knight came to end a plight,
Flaming blade and golden shield for all within sight;
Justice dispensed and villains dispatched,
The seeds of new regimes hatched.

“A passage from the page of ages passed,
Rotten fruit taint the roots, shadows amassed.
The knight's light brought back to fight,
By war's end, the paragon made right and took flight.

“Another passage from the page of ages passed,
Rotten fruit taint the roots, decay amassed.
The knight relayed the edicts of justice, as formalities,
Alas, the masses grew deaf to such high moralities.

“The daggered words and stares left the knight
Without sight, might, or light;
The wayward knight turned from its beloved light,
Dispensing chains of sin and vengeance in the night.

“The chained devil, a fearsome blight
Brought a campaign of terror and fright;
Fate be cruel, new paragons dispatched,
Flames and chains danced in a duel mismatched.

“The devil perished, ashes for remains,
The land's sins echo like rattling chains.”

BOOTS OF TARTARUS

Wondrous Item, Rare (Requires Attunement)

These boots resemble carved volcanic rock with glowing crimson veins. Chains wrap along the boots' calves, giving off a ghostly shimmer.

Heat Resistant. While wearing these boots, you have resistance to fire damage and can walk across hot liquid surfaces, such as lava, as if they were harmless ground. In addition, you can tolerate temperatures as high as 150 degrees Fahrenheit (66 degrees Celsius) without any additional protection. If you wear light or heat-resistant clothes, you can tolerate temperatures as high as 250 degrees Fahrenheit (121 degrees Celsius).

Ghostwalker. While wearing these boots, you can use an action to enter the Ethereal Plane as if under the effects of the *etherealness* spell. You can use the boots to remain in the Ethereal Plane for up to 6 hours, all at once or in several shorter periods, each one using a minimum of 10 minutes from the duration. The boots regain 1 hour of their ability to traverse into the Ethereal Plane for every 4 hours they aren't in use or for every 50 points of fire damage dealt to you (after applying resistance).

Curse. The boots are cursed, and becoming attuned to the boots extends the curse to you; the boots' ghostly chains wrap around your spirit, preventing you from removing them. The curse can only be broken by cleansing the boots, but *remove curse* or similar magic breaks the ghostly chains and allows you to remove the boots.

Until the curse is broken, whenever you enter the Ethereal Plane, you must succeed on a DC 11 Charisma saving throw or the boots banish you to a labyrinthine prison demiplane, while the boots remain in the space on the plane you entered the Ethereal Plane from. The DC increases by 1 for each successful saving throw and resets back to 11 on a failed saving throw. Once per hour, you can use an action to attempt to escape by making a DC 15 Intelligence check. On a success, you exit the prison demiplane and appear in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the boots. While trapped in the prison, you are constantly stalked by five hostile **chain devils**. If you die in the prison demiplane's maze, you return to life as a baleful **chain devil** controlled by the GM until freed from the maze (see "Cleansing the Boots of Tartarus").



CLEANSING THE BOOTS OF TARTARUS

Cleansing the *Boots of Tartarus* requires putting the spirit of Rosamund Martel and her companions to rest. To do so, one must confront her within the prison demiplane.

Unchain the Chained. Locating Rosamund requires entering the prison demiplane, either by failing the saving throw from the boots' curse or by casting a *plane shift* spell or similar magic. Once in the prison, the characters must brave the ethereal, ghostly labyrinth and confront all five of the chain devils, each a hero from the knight's crusades. A character can convince a chain devil to stop fighting and follow them out of the maze with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If a chain devil leaves the demiplane, their soul passes into the afterlife. If a devil is destroyed, they return to life in the prison after 24 hours. Once Rosamund returns to the afterlife, the boots are cleansed and lose the Curse property. For each additional knight released from the prison, the boots' Chains of Guilt property gains an additional use.

CLEANSED

When the *Boots of Tartarus* are cleansed of their curse, the boots gain the following properties:

Unchained. While wearing these boots and using the Ghostwalker property to travel the Ethereal Plane, you are under the effects of a *freedom of movement* spell.

Chains of Guilt. You can use an action to conjure ghostly chains that attempt to ensnare each creature of your choice that you can see within 30 feet of you. A target must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the target takes 5d8 psychic damage and their speed is halved until the start of your next turn. On a successful save, the target takes half as much damage and its speed is unaffected. You can use this feature a number of times equal to the number of knights freed from cleansing the boots (minimum of 1), and you regain all expended uses daily at dusk.



AMULET OF THE SEER'S EYES

Long ago, a renowned mage named Aldren Cato sought to harness cosmic energies to empower great works of divination. They recorded the astronomical movement and behaviors of the stars with an elaborate contraption called the Oracle Engine, an intricate instrument built atop an observation tower in a secluded valley. The diviner was remarkably accurate in their predictions, foreseeing the fate of even kingdoms. The demand for Cato's services grew, with nations threatening war for control of the Oracle Engine.

As tensions rose and rulers vied for Cato's power, the diviner refused to meet with any of their representatives, shutting themselves inside their tower with their device. Locals near the mage's tower reported strange lights and sounds coming from it every evening. One night, the tower became silent and dark. The following day, armed envoys from several kingdoms arrived to recruit Cato by force. The groups clashed, igniting a yearslong war. None entered the tower during the conflict, claiming the building was cursed.

Then, one night years after the wars subsided, the strange lights and sounds returned to the tower, and locals claimed to see Cato in the windows. They entered the place, but found only a strange amulet hanging on the observatory's telescope with a message written across the walls: "The eyes of the seer are the gateway to the stars." Rulers coveted the amulet, which caused new wars for decades before it was lost.

AMULET OF THE SEER'S EYES

Wondrous Item, Very Rare (Requires Attunement)

This gold amulet depicts an all-seeing eye surrounded by five gemstones. The central eye is a magical gem that becomes translucent when used, revealing wisps of shadowy figures mocking an unseen subject out of the wearer's periphery.

Seer's Vision. While wearing this amulet, you have darkvision out to 60 feet and can see invisible creatures and objects when you peer through the amulet's central gem. If you already have darkvision, using the amulet increases its range by 60 feet.

In addition, while wearing this amulet, you always know which way is north and the number of hours left before the next sunrise or sunset.

Spells. This amulet has 5 charges. As an action, you can hold the amulet over one of your eyes or your forehead and expend 1 charge to cast a spell from it (spell save DC 15). The spell cast is dependant on where you are holding the amulet:

- **Left Eye.** You cast the *legend lore* spell, targeting one creature or object you can see.
- **Right Eye.** You cast the *scrying* spell.
- **Forehead.** You cast the *divination* spell.

The amulet regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn.

Curse. The amulet is cursed, and becoming attuned to the amulet extends the curse to you. The curse can only be broken by cleansing the amulet, but *remove curse* or similar magic suppresses the curse for 24 hours. The amulet acts as a fulcrum and viewpoint to possible futures. Each possibility encompasses a self-contained reality similar yet different from another. Until the curse is broken, you gain the following flaw: "I regret the paths not taken, the other choices I could've made."

Until the curse is broken, whenever you cast a divination spell to gain information, the GM can ask you to roll a d20. On an odd result of 17 or lower, the information or insight gained from the spell comes from an alternate reality with a worse outcome. When the GM gives these alternate readings, the readings should remain plausible with one or two major differences. For example, a *scrying* spell cast over a keep reveals a ruined structure after a dragon attack, while the structure currently remains unharmed. On an even result of 18 or lower, the information or insight from the spell is plausibly true with only minor differences. For example, a *legend lore* spell may reveal an object that once belonged to a king, when it actually belonged to a queen. On a roll of 19 or 20, the information or insight from the spell remains unaffected.

CLEANSING THE AMULET OF THE SEER'S EYES

Cleansing the amulet requires the wearer to become the master of their destiny, untethered from the strings of fate. To stabilize the amulet, the wearer must harness the astrological energy from Aldren Cato's Oracle Engine and anchor the item to the present reality.

The Oracle Engine. Finding Aldren Cato's tower isn't difficult, but the region is in a dangerous political and militaristic deadlock between several nations and factions. Even after the adventurers breach the multitude of obstacles and encampments, the supposedly abandoned tower is littered with spatial and temporal distortions. When a creature enters a new room in the tower, they must succeed on a DC 12 Charisma saving throw or jaunt 1d20 years into the past (odd die roll) or future (even die roll). If the amulet is cleansed, a creature returns to their original timeline.

The Oracle Engine is located at the observatory at the top of the tower and held in temporal stasis, allowing it

(and any items placed in it, such as the amulet) to appear across all timelines. An adventurer can attempt to align the Oracle Engine to present reality with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana or History) check made as an action. On a failed check, the Oracle Engine is misaligned, and a powerful time wraith (see "Time Wraiths") emerges to drain the temporal energy of creatures in the chamber. After five successful alignment adjustments, any time wraiths disappear. Aldren Cato manifests to thank and reward the characters for freeing them from the different timelines. Aldren willingly parts with the amulet as a show of thanks, and the amulet loses the Curse property and gains additional features.

Time Wraiths. Aldren Cato's experimentation and utilization of the Oracle Engine created variant timelines. A deity of time viewed Cato's intrusions as disruptive and potentially catastrophic. To hinder Cato from using the device further, spectral entities called time wraiths manifest in every variant timeline to track down the elusive diviner when they use the Oracle Engine. These time wraiths use the wraith stat block with the following changes:

- A time wraith's AC is 15 (natural armor).
- A time wraith is immune to the frightened condition.
- A time wraith has the following action option in place of the Create Specter action.

Time Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 24 (6d6 + 3) psychic damage and the target becomes older or younger (wraith's choice) by a number of years equal to the damage taken. This aging effect is reversed when the target finishes a long rest. The time wraith also gains temporary hit points equal to the damage taken.

CLEANSED

When the *Amulet of the Seer's Eyes* is cleansed of its curse, it gains the following properties:

Compass of the Stars. You always know the location of any star or constellation in the night sky, and the amount of time left before the next major cosmic event such as solstices, eclipses, convergences, or alignments.

Kaleidoscopic Eye. When you hold the amulet over one of your eyes or your forehead, you can expend 1 charge (see the amulet's Spells property) to gain one of the following benefits, dependant on where you are holding the amulet:

- **Left Eye.** You gain truesight out to a range of 60 feet for 1 hour.
- **Right Eye.** You find the shortest, most direct physical route (but not necessarily the safest route) to a specific fixed location that you are familiar with on the same plane of existence as you.
- **Forehead.** The amulet casts *foresight* on you, which has a duration of 1 hour.

Future Vision. While peering through the amulet, you can gaze into the potential future of an area covering a 1,000-foot-cube originating from you. For each consecutive minute spent peering through the amulet, you can see 1 hour into the future (maximum 24 hours). The events you see unfold are only a possible future, which the amulet provides no context for aside from what you witness. Within a number of hours equal to the time you looked into the future, you can benefit from this foresight by making one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw with advantage within the area. Once used, this property can't be used again for 7 days, unless you expend a spell slot of 9th level to use it again.

DIVINE TRIALS: SHADOWS OF THE MOON

A MYTHIC TRIAL TO CONFRONT THE HEROES' DARKEST SELVES

by Sadie Lowry and Amber Litke

EVERYONE IS A MOON AND HAS A DARK SIDE WHICH HE NEVER SHOWS TO ANYBODY.

—MARK TWAIN

The *ARCADIA 17* article “Divine Trials: Glory of the Sun” introduced a series of three connected celestial trials built by divine creators to test and refine heroes. The sun trial examines the heroic penchant for pride and ambition. The second of these tests, the moon trial, is a series of challenges that asks each character to face their own darkness.

“Shadows of the Moon” is designed for four 5th-level characters. Part three of Divine Trials—the star trial—will appear in a future issue of *ARCADIA*. Each article provides lore and hooks, while the last article will provide suggestions for tying all three adventures together.

THE MOON TRIAL

The moon is the most mysterious of celestial bodies. For myriad cultures across the world, the moon can represent healing, the realm between consciousness and unconsciousness, inner knowledge, and even the life cycle of mortals, waxing and waning alongside them as they make their way through the world. To some, the moon is eerie, elusive, and enigmatic. To others, it's tranquil, protective, and revitalizing.

Yet an ever-present question follows the moon in its eternal cycles: What lies on its unseen dark side?

That mystery has long captivated mortalkind, and causes people to fill the moon's shadowed side with tales of terrors. These stories reflect the introspective question:

What lies within a person's dark side, beyond their shining exterior? And when that ever-hidden side is finally revealed, what horrors will be seen to lurk and fester in each of us?

FINDING FAULT

Over centuries, a deity of wisdom grew increasingly frustrated with how those who have the potential for great acts of goodness can also cause great harm. With increased influence, power, and opportunities to change the world, a flawed hero has a greater chance to hurt others. The wisdom deity thus joined hands with a moon deity, and together they created the moon trial, tasking the moon deity's angel Artimitei to be its divine arbiter. Under her direction, heroes would see and face their faults under the light of the moon, with the hopes of heading off their worst inclinations as they approached ever-greater renown.

As GM, you can create new lore for the moon trial as you see fit. Artimitei (room three) and Falathin (room one) are Celestial agents who might have additional connections to your campaign. Likewise, the moon trial can be made to manifest anywhere that heroes are in need of the lessons it can teach. Its entrance point typically appears as a curved archway in a place touched by both light and shadow: a mossy stone in the midst of the woods, a crumbling brick wall in a ruined village, a cavern entrance slick with water and fungi, and so forth. The moon trial's door always looks mysterious and eerie, as if hiding much in the unseen spaces beyond.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

You can incorporate the moon trial into your campaign with the following adventure hooks:

- After slighting a Celestial, priest, or other divine ally, the characters are commanded to undergo the moon trial or face divine judgment.
- Following the failure or near-failure of a mission, the characters' benefactor threatens to sever their relationship if they don't undertake the moon trial.
- After an incident in which the party was compromised by one or more of the characters' faults or weaknesses, the archway entrance to the moon trial appears before the characters as an invitation to confront those weaknesses.

TRIALS OF CHARACTER

The divine forces that forged the celestial trials won't be satisfied with every solution a so-called hero might use to pass the trials' challenges. Characters who circumnavigate (read: cheat) the trials by skipping them, such as with the *dimension door* spell, or by killing NPCs in non-combat challenges, find themselves redirected to the beginning of the challenge they sought to avoid with everything as it was when they first entered the room. This shouldn't dissuade creative and unconventional problem solving—thinking outside the box is encouraged, but cheating has consequences.

If necessary, a disembodied divine voice tells heroes that their character is being tested, not their skullduggery, or gives a more direct warning. Killed NPCs don't need to remember their deaths, unless the GM wants to add a social consequence for violence, but killing a foe won't bring the characters any closer to success.

FAULTS

The challenges of the moon trial require you as the GM to lean on the weaknesses of the characters. Prior to running the moon trial, think about whether any of the following are faults of any of the characters: cowardice, greed, recklessness, or wrath. If a character has more than one fault (many do!), pick the most prominent or problematic to address in the moon trial. Depending on the players, it might be prudent to discuss their characters' faults and whether they agree with your interpretation of them. This trial is much more satisfying with player buy-in.

If a character's faults don't include one of the four faults noted above, you can choose whichever fault feels closest for the character, perhaps by having a conversation

with the player. For example, you might select greed for a character whose fault is envy, either by spinning their envy as an avaricious desire for the things others have, or by adjusting the greed-based sections of the trial to lean into a rapacity for those things. Alternatively, if no suggested fault feels close enough, you can use the challenges as a guideline to create a customized experience that better fits the characters, both narratively and mechanically.

LUNAR ANTECHAMBER

After the initial appearance of the moon trial's archway (or whatever other entrance you might wish to create), the characters can step through that archway to enter the lunar antechamber that leads into the challenges they will face.

The antechamber is a small circular room with a 10-foot-high ceiling. Two motes of moonlight fill the area with dim light when the light in the ceiling has faded (see below). When the characters enter this area, read or paraphrase the following:

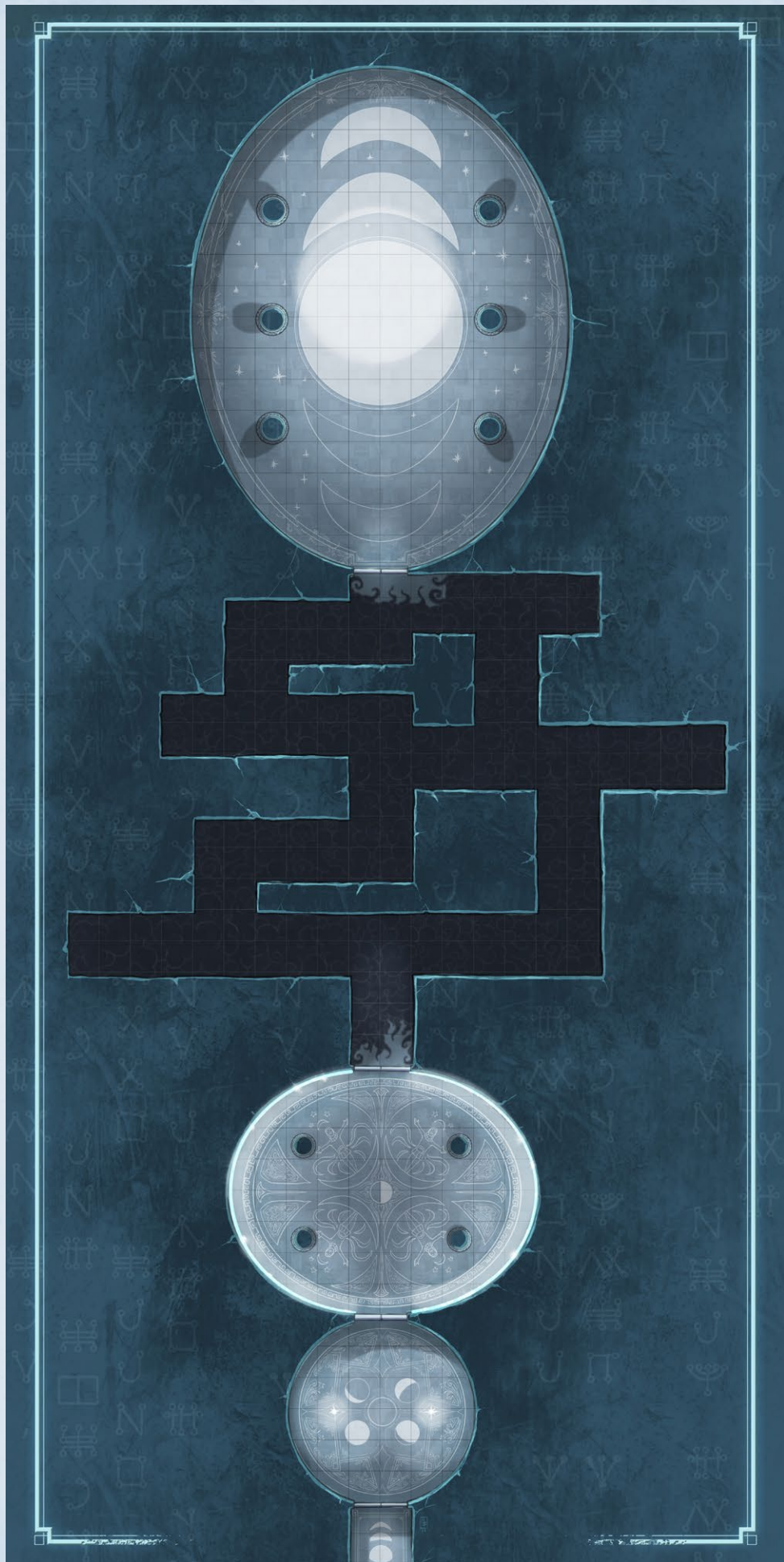
The entrance rumbles closed and vanishes, sealing you in a circular room. Against the dim light shed by two floating orbs, a brighter silvery light shines out from overhead, starting as a pale crescent and gradually filling the domed ceiling. As that light spreads, glowing white words scroll across the curved stone wall.

“Hone your soul in tests divine,
By entering this holy shrine.
This test in shadow lays you bare.
What secrets have you feared to share?”

Underneath the poem, a single line appears, glowing slowly brighter until it gleams: “Face your darkness.”

The light above begins to wane until it is a dim sliver of silver once again. At the same time, an arched doorway opens in the wall in front of you.

Any character who has a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 16 or higher sees the darkness in the unlit areas of the ceiling shifting and flickering, as if something is alive in the shadows. Immediately after a character notices the effect, it ceases.



ROOM ONE: DEPICTIONS OF DARKNESS

The mural room that is the first chamber of the moon trial is a place for the characters to reflect upon personal faults. This room has a 30-foot-high domed ceiling and is filled with dim light. The murals in the area have connections to the characters, so adjust the read-aloud text below as needs be.

The number of figures depicted in the murals equals the number of characters, with each image alluding to one of the characters and their fault. For example, one mural might depict a cowardly rogue crouched safely behind three barrels while a winged demon swoops overhead, while another might show a greedy bard bedecked in gold and holding an ornate goblet.

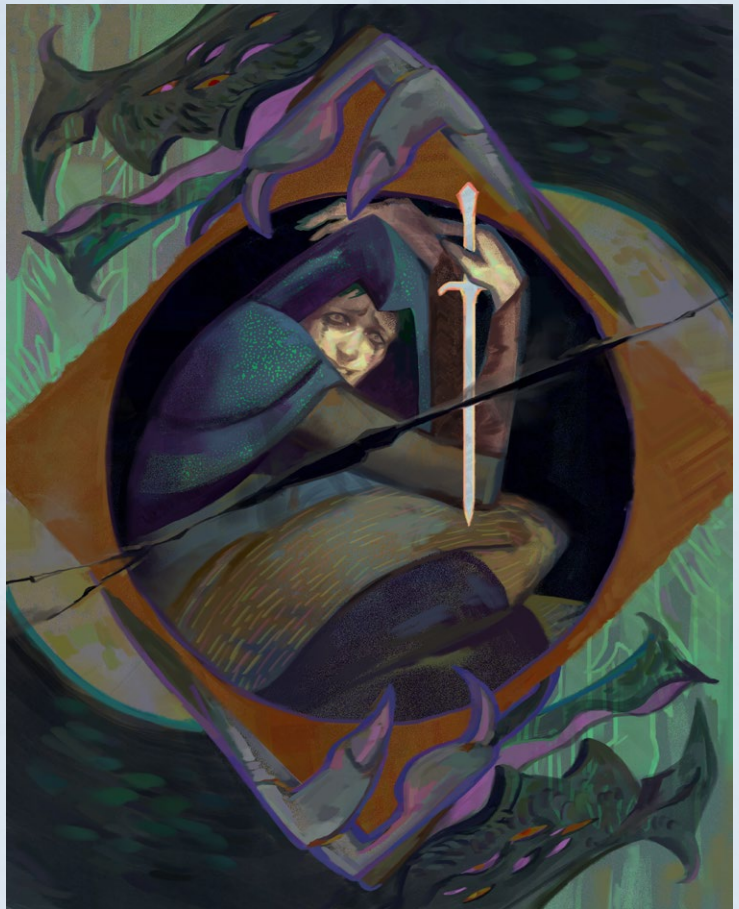
The archway opens into a round room, slightly larger than the entrance antechamber, and illuminated by light radiating from the walls and the domed ceiling. Fine murals are set along the walls, each depicting a different figure—but each figure’s torso is sundered by an enormous black gash with some sort of object set within. In eerie contrast to the violent emptiness where their hearts should be, each of the figures is smiling.

Across the room, a translucent silver-blue dragon rises from the ground. Moonlight appears to ripple over his scales as he moves. Though he doesn’t open his mouth, his voice rings in your mind, causing an unnatural chill to thread through you and trickle down your spine. “What do you know of yourselves? We will see.”

The cracks in the murals extend into the wall. Within each crack, right where the depicted figure’s heart would be, is an item related to the fault of the character the mural alludes to:

- *Cowardice.* A white poultry feather
- *Greed.* A platinum coin
- *Recklessness.* A boar tusk
- *Wrath.* A vial holding flickering fire

The **young silver dragon** who greets the characters is named Falathin (FAL-ah-thin, he/him), and has the Celestial type rather than Dragon. He instructs the characters to remove the weakness from their own hearts, explaining to them that, “Your decisions shall





affect your reality.” If any characters take these instructions too literally, Falathin dryly stops them from committing harm to themselves and directs them toward the murals.

When any character touches the mural or the item that represents them, they enter a vision that presents an individual challenge. Example challenge scenarios are set up below for the faults of cowardice, greed, recklessness, and wrath, but embellish and evolve each as you see fit. If more than one character has the same fault, it is recommended to run their visions simultaneously (either as a group or as individuals) so they won’t know what to expect, though this advice can be disregarded if the experiences are more personalized.

As GM, you can also run each character’s vision privately, which offers the benefits of creating a tense, isolating atmosphere, and of encouraging the players to roleplay their characters more faithfully in the absence of other eyes and ears on their vision.

CHOICE AND TEMPTATION

Each vision is designed to tempt a character away from making the right choice. A character who succeeds at their challenge emerges from the vision to find the item in their mural replaced by a new one—representative of the actions they took to overcome their fault in the vision. Use the suggestions on the Virtue Items table as ideas and examples.

A character who fails their challenge emerges from the vision to find that the crack across the mural related to them has grown darker and deeper, and that the item representing their fault still lies within. As a consequence of failure, the GM can impose disadvantage on one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw the character makes during the rest of the moon trial.

As each character completes their trial, Falathin grudgingly praises those who overcome their challenge, and criticizes those who fail. The dragon also encourages the characters to take the magic virtue item from the mural as their reward. A character who has the virtue item on their person can expend its magic once to gain advantage on an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw (no action required).

Once all characters have completed the challenge, Falathin fades away to silvery wisps of light and the arched doorway into the next chamber opens.

VIRTUE ITEMS

ITEM	MEANING
Statuette with outstretched hands	Selflessness
Coin collection cup	Charity
Red lotus	Compassion
Lion figurine	Bravery
Fox figurine	Cunning
Turtle figurine	Tenacity
Owl feather	Wisdom
Herding dog figurine	Responsibility
Book	Intelligence, forethought
Heart figurine	Kindness
Olive branch	Mercy, peace
Meditating figurine	Self-discipline

COWARDICE

In their vision, the character hides in the shadows of an alley as they see someone important to them—perhaps a party member, a family member, or a beloved NPC—surrounded by armed forces, spears and swords pointed at them. One of the victim’s aggressors laughs darkly, jerking up their chin with the tip of a blade. “Abandoned at the last second. You should know better than to run with cowards.” The crowd of aggressors moves in.

A character who intervenes in the impending assault succeeds on this challenge. A character who doesn’t fails the challenge.

GREED

In the vision of greed, the character finds themselves holding something they crave: gold, jewels, a rare magic item, a deed to an important piece of land, a crown, or anything else they desire. They stand in a dark hall and hear shouting behind them, the aggressive voices saying, “Which way did they go!?” and “I’ve lost them!”

It appears as though the character has almost succeeded at a great heist. But then standing before them in the dark hall, they see someone they could easily overpower—perhaps an injured guard, an elderly servant, or a child. Alternatively, a character with a history of theft might see someone they have stolen from before, or who has stolen from them. Whoever it is, that person requests

CREATING PERSONALIZED CHALLENGES

Self-introspective challenges shine when they are personal. Instead of the provided challenges, you as GM can use the following guidelines to create meaningful challenges for each character, holding them at a tension point where they’ll be tempted to give in to their faults.

Make it Personal. This is the fastest way to jeopardize a character’s good judgment. Maybe they face a rival they would loathe losing to. Maybe you tempt them with what they’ve always wanted. Maybe they face what they fear most. Ask yourself why this character gives in to their faults, then make them confront that.

Keep it Simple. Each of the visions should take a few minutes tops, and should feature a slightly less obvious right answer and a slightly more obvious wrong answer. Coming up with the wrong answer (such as a character running away from someone chasing them) should be easy. Figuring out the right answer (such as a character turning themselves in) should take a little more effort.

Remember Motivations. Why does a character do what they do? Are they afraid of consequences? Convey how devastating the consequences would be if they’re caught attempting a risky activity, or promise them safety if they succumb to temptation. Do they want praise? Have NPCs praise them for doing the wrong thing. Remember what makes a character tick and promise them the world.

Echo Old Moments. For long-term characters, make them revisit old mistakes from previous adventures in the campaign! See if they’ve learned anything since those mistakes were made.

Allow Them Growth. The player determines whether their character has grown enough to overcome this challenge, not the GM. Each challenge has a minor reward for success and a minor detriment for failure, but players should be encouraged to lean into roleplaying and do what their character would truly do. That said, if a player doesn’t think their character would succeed on the challenge, don’t make it harder for them. Especially for long-term characters, give them the win in the name of character growth.

the treasure from them. The sounds of the guards nearby grow louder, creating a sense of urgency.

A character who surrenders their treasure succeeds on this challenge. A character who doesn't fails the challenge.

RECKLESSNESS

In this vision, the character sees an unusually long corridor ahead of them, at the end of which is something they want desperately to reach. This could be an object, but might also be a person, a location, or some other intangible desire. However, the character has no way to tell that the hall is filled with dangerous and potentially deadly traps.

A character who shows caution and forethought in moving down the hall succeeds on this challenge. A character who doesn't fails the challenge.

WRATH

In the vision of wrath, the character finds themselves in a prison cell, where a guard mocks them for letting their temper get the better of them again. A snobby noble with a demeaning sneer enters the cell, telling the character they are willing to overlook this little situation if the character is willing to apologize for their behavior. Depending on the character, this apology could be for anything from publicly deriding the noble to assaulting them.

A character who sincerely apologizes succeeds on this challenge. A character who doesn't fails the challenge.

ROOM TWO: MOONLIT HUNTER

The doorway opens into a silvery stone hallway that ends at an intersection, the corridor turning left and right. Faint fog drifts through the air, with the only light in the hallway coming from the mural room behind you.

These maze-like corridors have 10-foot-high ceilings. The fog here is chill and damp, and the air feels thinner than usual. Each noise or movement made in this area, even the faintest whisper or the slightest shuffle of a foot on the floor, echoes down the connected hallways.

As soon as the last character steps through into the hallway, the arched doorway in the mural room slams

shut and vanishes, leaving the party in darkness. This entire area is filled with magical shadow, which can't be seen through regardless of ancestral traits, class features, or equipment. However, a few seconds after the doorway vanishes, each character who passed the challenge in the first room can see through the magical shadow, perceiving the area as if it were brightly lit.

STALKED IN SHADOW

As the characters navigate the corridors of this area, they are stalked by a **crescent devourer**—a monster that lives in shadows and feeds on weakness. The devourer's gray body is long and serpentine, with three clawed limbs on each side that help them move along the walls. Though their jagged jaw is lined with glinting fangs, the creature uses their long, serrated tail to strike instead, its sharp silver edges pulsing with magic.

The crescent devourer initially lurks on the ceiling of the hall's first intersection. They begin attacking the characters once they start down either of the branching paths, or might fall back to attack elsewhere in the hall at your determination (especially if most or all of the characters succeeded on the previous challenge).

Like a presence dredged from the dark side of the moon, the crescent devourer skitters through the maze, using their Mimicry trait to copy the characters' voices. If anyone failed the previous test in the mural room, the creature asks them what they should have done instead, and why they gave into their weakness. They then make Sin Strike attacks to harass the characters, using Shadow Jump either to reach new targets or escape from characters who can see them, hoping to sow confusion, fear, and paranoia.

When the crescent devourer speaks to a character who failed the previous challenge, that character understands that they can use an action or a bonus action to answer. If the character speaks a satisfactory and sincere answer (using the personal challenges in room one as a guide) and is loud enough for other characters in the area to hear them, they gain the ability to see through the darkness as if they had succeeded at the previous challenge.

The characters can fight the crescent devourer or flee from the creature. But they must reach the end of the hallway maze, where the arched doorway into room three is unlocked and waiting for them, to succeed at the challenge. If the characters don't defeat the crescent devourer, the creature stops chasing them once they enter the final chamber.

CRESCENT DEVOURER

Medium Monstrosity, Unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 97 (13d8 + 39)

SPEED 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	9 (-1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

SAVING THROWS Str +5, Dex +7

SKILLS Stealth +7

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened

SENSES blindsight 120 ft., passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES understands all languages but speaks only through the use of their Mimicry trait

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

Mimicry. The crescent devourer can mimic Beast sounds and Humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check.

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

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The crescent devourer makes three Sin Strike attacks. They can't attack the same target twice in one turn.

Sin Strike. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 8 (1d8 + 4) psychic damage and the target suffers one of the following effects based on their fault:

Cowardice: The target is frightened of the crescent devourer until the start of the crescent devourer's next turn.

Greed: The target can't benefit from beneficial effects bestowed by another creature until the start of the crescent devourer's next turn. This includes spells that restore hit points, features that give bonuses to die rolls, and so forth.

Recklessness: The target takes 3 (1d6) psychic damage each time they attack or deal damage to another creature on their next turn.

Wrath: The target must use their reaction to make a melee weapon attack with advantage against a random creature within reach, other than the crescent devourer. If the target has already used their reaction for this turn, they make this attack using their reaction at the start of their next turn.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Jump. The crescent devourer teleports, along with any equipment they are wearing or carrying, up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space they can see. Both the space they teleport from and the space they teleport to must be in dim light or darkness.

ROOM THREE: THE TRUE SELF

This room has a 60-foot-high domed ceiling. The area is dark when the door opens, but characters who shine light inside can see its details. When the first character enters, the ceiling begins to glow, with the area alternating between dim and bright light thereafter as the ceiling flares and fades. When the last character enters, the doorway slams shut and disappears.

The whole ceiling begins to brighten, showing off the six gleaming columns that support it, and the murals across the floor that depict the night sky. The light then fades again, as if marking the progression from the bright full moon back to the dark new moon—and in that shadow, a celestial figure in silver armor now faces you, a tall and solemn woman with ornate silver armor and massive silvery wings. The feathers of her wings grow wispy at their ends, nearly translucent in the waxing moonlight.

“I am Artimitei,” she says in soft greeting. “Your last task is at hand, but it is the most difficult. Are you prepared?”

The **deva** Artimitei (ar-tim-EE-teh, she/her) is the divine arbiter of the moon trial. No matter what the characters answer, she nods, stepping back and raising one hand.

“Few are actually prepared to see themselves at their most loathsome. But you have come far. Do not turn your eyes away now.”

The ceiling’s light above cycles again. As the room brightens, you face a group of silvery figures with eerie bright-white eyes.

Yourselves.

Holding your weapons and bearing your faces, these shadow selves speak in unison. “Come. Confront yourselves.” Moving forward, they raise weapons and attack.

In this final challenge, the characters face silvery moonlit creatures that look like themselves. Each shadow self uses a stat block determined by their source character’s fault, as noted on the Shadow Self table, but retains the character’s creature type and size category. For faults of your own creation, use the stat block of any suitable creature with a challenge rating of 3.

SHADOW SELF

FAULT	STAT BLOCK
Cowardice	Basilisk
Greed	Blue dragon wyrmling
Recklessness	Hell hound
Wrath	Bearded devil

These shadow selves portray and magnify each character’s faults. They embrace those faults. They revel in them. And they are determined to strike their “worse” selves down.

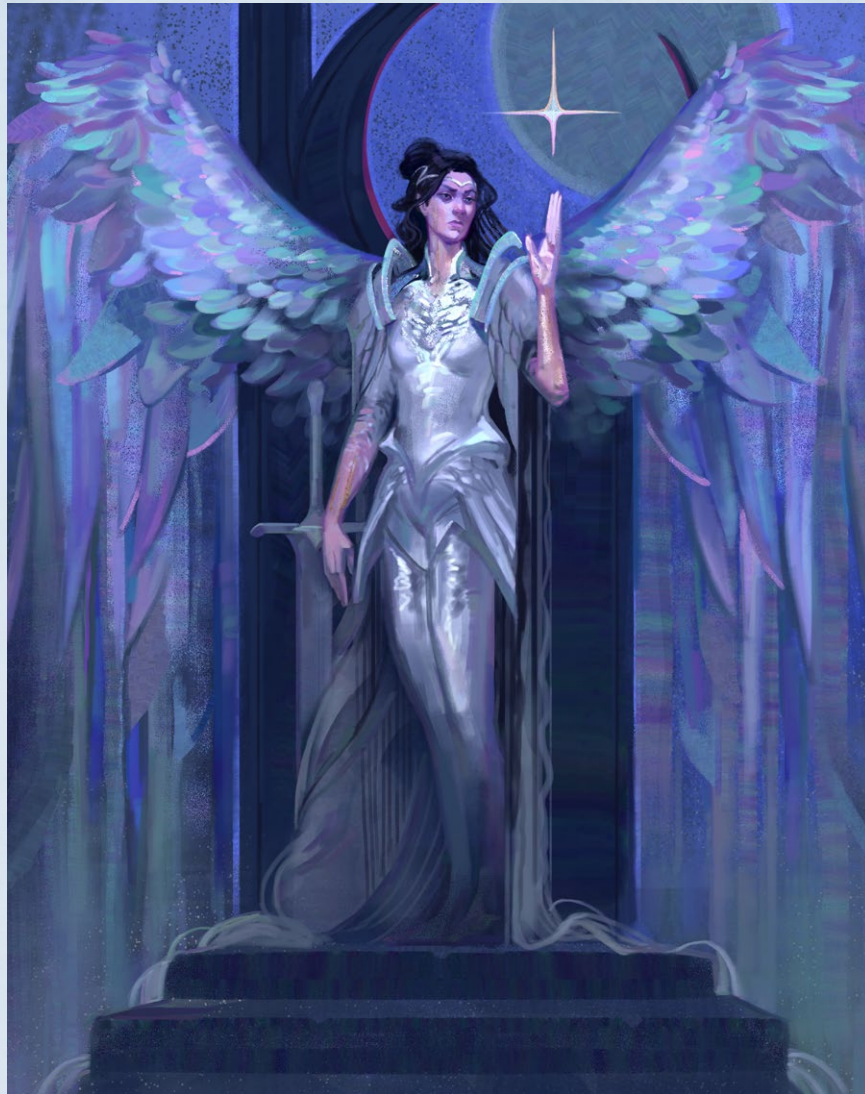
BUILDING THE CHALLENGE

When the authors run this kind of challenge in our home games, we use the party’s character sheets instead of stand-in stat blocks, because having the characters literally face themselves can be extremely narratively fulfilling (and tactically fun). This encounter involves a lot of moving parts, however: combat, roleplay, benefits and drawbacks (see “A Greater Challenge: Rewarding Faults and Change”), as well as lair actions. It’s a lot to track, and the mental load is potentially daunting.

We suggest prepping ahead of time and treating this part of the adventure as a “build-an-encounter” workshop, taking your favorite parts to create a fight that will resonate with the players and their characters. Do the players like being tactical, so that they’ll appreciate the challenge of the characters needing to physically overcome themselves? Perhaps you can use their character sheets but leave out the benefits, drawbacks, or lair actions. Or do you want to focus on the roleplaying instead of the mechanics? You could use the suggested stat blocks, leave out the lair actions, and focus on the benefits or drawbacks.

You could also give each stand-in stat block a few key abilities of the character they represent. Alternatively, give them attacks or traits that tie into their character’s fault, like those of the crescent devourer (see room two).

The challenge of this section offers many ways to approach it, and if some aspect of the encounter doesn’t add to the challenge or the narrative for you, you’re wholly encouraged to discard it. All that matters is that the characters come out feeling triumphant.



ROLEPLAYING FAULTS

During the fight, each shadow self claims that they have unmasked their character's "true" self, and that all the characters are just pretending to be what they aren't. They goad the characters, question them, and try to fill them with self-doubt with statements like the following:

- "Aren't you tired of pretending?"
- "Look at what you could be if you admitted the truth."
- "Unleash your anger."
- "Protect yourself."
- "Just admit you're the greatest."
- "Why do you keep lying to yourself?"
- "They all tell you you're wrong for being this way. But look at me. I'm awakened. I'm free."
- "If they loved you, they would love you for all of who you are."

Each shadow self takes their fault to the extreme. Wrathful characters see themselves depicted as bad-tempered

and dangerous. Cowardly characters see themselves shrinking back and hiding. Greedy characters see themselves openly desire *more*—perhaps even what their companions have. Each shadow self allows the characters a look at who they might become if they don't strive to become better.

OVERCOMING FAULTS

This combat should be a moment of triumph. The moon trial is about each character overcoming their worst self—but for some characters, that might not be through combat!

At your discretion as GM, reward attempts to peacefully resolve this scenario. If a character (especially a wrathful or reckless one) refuses to fight, you could have their shadow self stop fighting, too. You might also allow a character to attempt to talk their shadow self down with DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) checks, either to claim they don't want to be that way or to convince the shadow self that their twisted beliefs are wrong.

A character could recount how they've worked to overcome their fault, and if their examples are strong enough, their shadow self could stop fighting—or might even join the party's side against the other shadow selves. If each character peacefully denies their shadow selves before they are defeated, the shadows might call forth Artimitei and request additional benefits for the characters, as they have shown great resolve in being better than before.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the shadow selves can take one lair action as a group to cause one of the following effects, but can't use the same effect two rounds in a row. Each time an effect is used, the light from the ceiling suddenly shifts to portray the indicated phase of the moon.

- **Full Moon:** A brilliant beam of light descends from the ceiling, filling a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point any shadow self can see within 120 feet of them. The light lasts until the end of initiative count 20 on the following round. Creatures and objects in the light have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight. A creature that enters the light for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there takes 10 (3d6) radiant damage.
- **Waning Moon:** One creature that any shadow self can see within 120 feet of them must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be knocked prone and shown visions of all their faults and mistakes. While prone from this effect, the target is restrained and unable to stand up until the end of initiative count 20 on the following round. Another creature not under this effect that can reach the target can use an action to shake them out of their visions and help them stand, ending the prone condition on them.
- **New Moon:** Each shadow self splits off an illusory duplicate that appears within 10 feet of the original shadow self. Until the end of initiative count 20 on the following round, the duplicates move with the shadow selves, shifting position so it's impossible to track which figure is real. Each time a creature makes an attack against a shadow self whose illusory duplicate is present, roll a d20. On a roll of 11 or higher, the attack instead targets the duplicate, which has the same AC as its shadow self. If the attack hits, the duplicate is destroyed. A duplicate can be destroyed only by an attack that hits them, ignoring all other damage and effects. It is also destroyed if the shadow self that spawned it is destroyed. A creature that can't see, relies on senses other than sight, or that automatically sees illusions for what they are is unaffected by this lair action.
- **Waxing Moon:** Each shadow self gains 10 (3d6) temporary hit points.

A GREATER CHALLENGE: REWARDING FAULTS AND CHANGE

For players who love a challenge and who really want to lean into the moon trial's themes, consider implementing one of the following options to raise the stakes in this encounter.

Buff the Shadows. As the shadow selves mock the characters for “pretending,” you can grant them minimal buffs for having freed themselves from that pretense. Wrathful shadows can deal an extra 1d6 damage with their brutal attacks. Cowardly shadows gain 1d6 temporary hit points each round that they stay back. Reckless shadows can deal 2d6 damage to a second character when they use their entire turn on offensive actions. Greedy shadows can roll a d4 and add it to an attack roll or saving throw each round that they pursue a character carrying what they desire. Keep these buffs minimal but combine them with the shadow selves' mocking, as they demonstrate to the characters how much stronger they could be if they'd only give in to their faults.

Buff the Characters Positively. Alternatively, reward the characters for not giving in to their faults. You might give reckless characters an extra 1d6 damage on a second target when they fight tactically instead of impulsively. Cowardly characters might gain 1d6 temporary hit points when they're brave. Wrathful characters could deal an extra 1d6 damage when they don't fall for the shadow selves' taunts. And greedy characters could be allowed to roll a d4 and add it to an attack roll or saving throw on a round in which they aid an ally. Keep the buffs minimal, and combine them with jeering as the shadow selves accuse the characters of denying who they truly are!

Buff the Characters Negatively. Alternatively, you can reward the characters for giving in to their faults. Buff them the same way you'd buff the shadow selves, and combine this with the shadow selves' praise for the characters acknowledging their true nature. If you choose this third option, give any character who resisted these actions and buffs an additional reward at the end of the adventure, such as a *gem of brightness*, a *lantern of revealing*, or a similar uncommon magic item.

COMPLETING THE MOON TRIAL

If the characters are defeated by their shadow selves, they wake up outside the entrance point to the moon trial and see that the door has disappeared. It reappears when they are more prepared for the trials that await beyond it.

If the characters defeat their shadow selves, each shadow speaks as it falls, telling the character whose form it reflects to “Always face your darkness, no matter what lies within.” The shadow then fades, along with any equipment they possessed.

Artimitei appears once more before the characters, congratulates them on triumphing over their weaknesses, and gives them the rewards of the moon trial—200 gp, a *ring of the gleaming moon* (see the sidebar), and a *stone of good luck* shaped like a crescent moon.

RING OF THE GLEAMING MOON

Ring, Very Rare

(Requires Attunement Outdoors at Night)

While wearing this ring in dim light or darkness, you can use an action to cast either the *minor illusion* or *light* cantrip from the ring at will.

Additionally, the ring has 6 charges for the following properties. The ring regains 1d6 expended charges daily at dawn.

Illusory Script. You can expend 1 charge as an action to cast the *illusory script* spell from the ring.

Moon Shades. You can expend 2 charges as an action to cast the *mirror image* spell from the ring.

Silver Bursts. You can expend 1 to 3 charges as an action. For each charge you expend, you manifest a glittering burst of silvery light at a point you can see within 60 feet of you. Each creature within a 5-foot cube originating from that point must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d4 force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. On a failed save, a creature also glows silver until the end of your next turn, and the next attack made against the creature while it is glowing has advantage.

EXPANDING THE MOON TRIAL

To turn this trial into a longer adventure, consider adding these trials before the encounter with Artimitei (or create your own):

- As the characters complete another puzzle, obstacle course, or noncombat challenge, whispery voices encourage them to give in to their faults. The invisible creatures are tiny Celestial angels that use the **pixie** stat block but have the Celestial type instead of Fey. If any of the characters follow the voices' advice, the tiny angelic sprites announce their intention to reveal this failing to “the arbiter of the trial.” The characters can quickly try to bargain with the tiny angels, plead their case, or apologize, but fighting the Celestials is an even more grievous failing. Unless thwarted, the tiny angels report the characters' failings to Artimitei.
- A dim, eerie hall of mirrors depicts the characters' reflections as their worst selves. A **cloak**er skulking in the hall attacks the party, but perceptive characters notice that the creature only targets those who aren't willing to look their mirror selves in the eyes.
- A fog-filled room gives each character individual hallucinations and visions of their companions harming them in ways that align with those companions' faults. Can the characters see through the visions before combat breaks out between them?

CONCLUSION

If the characters don't already know of the sun trial and the star trial, Artimitei can explain the setup of the trials to them. She keeps their full details secret, but reveals that the sun trial is about characters tempering their ambitions, while the star trial is about bonds. Artimitei also doesn't reveal how or where to find the other two trials. Instead, she smiles mysteriously, saying, “Heed not your impatience, for greatness will come in its time.”

The angel then snaps her fingers, teleporting the characters to the place where they entered the moon trial. The arched doorway has vanished, awaiting the next heroes in need of the lessons the moon trial can teach.

BREAK IN CASE OF TPK!

ALL THE PLAYER CHARACTERS DIED ... NOW WHAT?

by Justice Ramin Arman and Anthony Joyce-Rivera

This article is an emergency toolkit for game masters to get their campaign back on track after a total party kill (TPK). Whether the whole party was killed accidentally or on purpose—you know what you did ... honestly, we're kind of impressed at your deviousness—these encounters prevent TPKs from abruptly ending your campaign. Discuss character death with your players so you know whether they want to continue playing the same characters after a TPK. If they do, keep reading!

We've crafted four encounters to use in case of a TPK—each is a self-contained event that returns the characters to life so your campaign can resume without issue. The long-term consequences of these encounters purposefully vary to support all styles of gameplay.

Beet a Hag's Bargain. A night hag steals the characters' souls. The hag's fey magic slowly turns the characters into beets unless they can escape her hut or bargain for their freedom.

Blood for Blood. A lich gives the characters a dreadful blade and invites them to trade their lives for the souls of their enemies.

How Do You Plead? The characters must make their case before the Court of the Seven Cities of Hell, arguing that they're worth more alive than they are dead.

Soul-Loving Flurnob. A rodent-like creature collects the characters' souls in the Astral Plane and sends them back to the Material Plane.

BEET A HAG'S BARGAIN

When the characters died, their souls were captured by a **night hag** named Putrid Agnes who stole them away to her hut in the Material Plane. When Agnes brings souls to her hut, she locks them in a cage imbued with dark fey magic. This magic returns the characters to life, then transforms them into beets over 24 hours. Once a creature transforms into a beet, she eats them!

Each character returns to life partially transformed into a beet with all their equipment and suffers the following effects:

- Their hit point maximum is reduced to 10 unless it is already lower. They return to life with hit points equal to their maximum.
- They can't cast any spells except for cantrips, and they can only cast cantrips as if they were 1st-level characters.
- Their size becomes Tiny, and their skin becomes rough and purple. Their equipment also shrinks to match their new size. While a character's weapons are reduced, their attacks with them deal 1d4 less damage (this can't reduce the damage below 1).

These effects can only be reversed by exiting Agnes's hut—the characters need to escape or bargain with Agnes to avoid turning into beets.

PUTRID AGNES

Agnes typically wears the guise of a grandmotherly halfling with curly white hair. She wears a brown bonnet and a yellow dress embroidered with patches depicting smiling beets. Regardless of her form, she always clenches her teeth when speaking.

Agnes adores the taste and screams of her soulful beets. Over many years of research, she discovered that reviving creatures then transforming them into beets makes the beets extra juicy and tasty!

Even though Agnes gleefully devours her victims, she treats prisoners like her own grandchildren while they transform, demanding respect, obedience, and politeness from them. However, Agnes's twisted heart fills with affection when creatures are brave enough to challenge her in the face of death.



RUNNING THE ENCOUNTER

The characters begin this encounter in a wooden cage inside Agnes's hut. Agnes locked the wooden cage with a padlock and a minor enchantment that makes the cage door extremely heavy and that blares out an audible alarm if anyone tries to break out of the cage by force.

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the encounter:

The smell of rotten dirt wafts in the air of this small single-room hut as a grandmotherly halfling holds a plump beet over a boiling cauldron in the center of the room. As she lowers the beet into the boiling cauldron, it squirms and squeals, "I don't wanna die!" The halfling smiles and exclaims, "This feisty little one is going to be yummy!"

Agnes hums and stirs her cauldron as she cooks one of her mouthwatering beets. She remains focused on cooking and is unaware that the characters have regained consciousness, only noticing them if they speak loudly or create excessive noise in the cage.

If Agnes notices the characters regained consciousness, she lovingly asks them who they are and what they did before they died. She has no shame regarding her eating habits, informing them that her fey magic is turning them into beets so she can eat them. She reiterates that they can go about their business afterward when they return to the afterlife. Eating them isn't personal—it's delicious!

ESCAPING THE CAGE

Hidden underneath hay covering the cage's floor are the tools to escape. The character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) score notices white fabric poking up from underneath the hay. If a character examines it, they discover that it's a white shirt covered with purple writing wrapped around a tiny bone.

White Shirt. The previous occupant of this cage—the beet Agnes is boiling—wrote a message on this shirt using its beet juice. The message is written in Common and reads, “The last thing I remember is being eaten alive by a green dragon. Now I wake up to find myself turning into a beet! I ate a rat and used its bone to pick the padlock. The bone worked fine, but I lack the strength to budge the door! If this is my dying journal entry, remember me as Ignacio Del'Monte—the greatest dragon hoard thief ever to live!”

Tiny Bone. A character who succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) check recognizes this bone as a rat's femur. The rat femur is chipped, and a few metal flakes from the padlock are embedded in the bone.

Opening the Cage. A character using thieves' tools or the rat femur can try to pick the padlock, which requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity check. Even with the padlock unlocked, characters must muster enough strength to open the enchanted cage door. Characters with a combined Strength score of 30 or more can push open the cage door.

Alternatively, the characters can attack the wooden cage to escape. The wooden cage has AC 15, 27 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If the wooden cage is attacked, its magic produces an audible alarm that shouts the following phrase in Common: “Help, the beets are beating me!” Agnes approaches the cage and scolds the characters for being bad little beets, ordering them to stop trying to break her cage.

Exiting the Cage. Agnes doesn't notice characters exiting the cage if they succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If she spots the characters sneaking out, Agnes shakes a ladle at them, verbally reprimands them, and orders them to reenter the cage.

MOTIVATION TO HELP THE CHARACTERS

This putrid hag's shriveled heart has a soft spot for the souls she collects. If a soon-to-be beet is brave enough to confront her, she exclaims, “This grandmamma is so

AGNES LIKES FEISTY BEETS!

Agnes respects mouthwatering little beets who rebuff her demands. If the characters refuse to obey Agnes's orders without attacking her, they earn her respect and Agnes offers to bargain with the characters for their freedom (see “Motivation to Help the Characters”). Agnes only attacks the characters in self-defense or if they attempt to leave the hut without her permission.

proud—look at how grown-up you are, my sweet little juicy beet!” When confronted, Agnes offers the characters an opportunity to gain their freedom by offering the following bargains:

- One character agrees to multiclass in the warlock class with Agnes as their patron. Consider using the Warlock Hag Patron from “Subclasses of the Hag” by Jessica Marcrum in [ARCADIA 8](#).
- The characters agree to return with a dragon tongue and three dragon scales within a year so Agnes can use them to cook dragon beet stew.
- The characters agree to communicate with Agnes occasionally and fill her in on the juiciest gossip from their adventures. Agnes communicates with the characters using the *sending* spell or similar magic at your discretion.

If the characters agree to any of the above bargains, fey magic seals their deal with Agnes as long as she lives. A character who breaches the terms of this bargain is cursed and turns into a beet in 24 hours. While the character is a beet, they lose all their game statistics and have AC 10 and 5 hit points. Killing Agnes or using a *wish* spell or similar magic ends this fey curse.

If the characters confront Agnes and refuse to bargain with her, she forbids them from leaving and orders them to return to their cage. She attacks the characters if they refuse and, if she defeats them in combat, locks their unconscious bodies in her wooden cage (or a new wooden cage if the original cage was destroyed).

RETURNING TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

When the characters exit Agnes's hut, they find themselves in a location of your choice. If the characters made a bargain with Agnes, she sheds a tear and wishes them well on their adventures—her little beets aren't so little anymore. Agnes is filled with rage if the characters escape her hut unnoticed, but ultimately she soothes her soul by eating spoiled beet pie.

BLOOD FOR BLOOD

The characters' souls have been intercepted by Kotoz the Glutton, a lich whose lair lies in a crumbling subterranean citadel that acts as a magnet for wayward souls. Hungry to establish a lasting supply of souls without risking himself, Kotoz offers the characters a second chance if they agree to collect souls with his unholy blade.

RUNNING THE ENCOUNTER

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the encounter:

You awaken in a ruined citadel. The roof of the fortress has collapsed inward, revealing the cavern's ceiling easily one hundred feet above you. A ghoulish glow radiates from you and your companions, who are floating and incorporeal.

You're dead.

Before you lies a crystal pedestal. A gleaming sword has been plunged into the stone, its pale green blade reflecting your countenance. Nine gemstones decorate its metallic purple hilt, each set into the open mouth of a tiny sculpted skull.

The characters begin this encounter as **ghosts** that retain their Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores and skill proficiencies. The forlorn fortress is a magnet, its supernatural pull preventing wayward souls from traveling more than 100 feet from the pedestal, even if they use their Etherealness ability to enter the Ethereal Plane.

The sword in front of the characters is a *nine lives stealer* (which can be any sword you choose) with a number of charges equal to the number of characters in the party. It belongs to Kotoz the Glutton, a cowardly lich who lurks in the darkness just beyond the characters' reach.

DEAL OF THE DEAD

If a character approaches or inspects the pedestal, the lich emerges. Read or paraphrase the following:

An undead man in elaborate silver and black robes emerges from the darkness. The mage's gray flesh is tight against his skull, and he sports a thinning patch of long, wispy white hair. He holds a wand fashioned from a crooked horn, and his teeth clack from a lipless mouth as he speaks in a dry tone.

"Blood for blood," he wheezes through dead lungs. "Death is not the end, but a debt is owed. If you wish to return, you must repay it in kind. Take the sword and vow to steal the lives that were stolen from you. Leave the sword and remain trapped here forever."



Kotoz offers the characters a chance at salvation. If they agree to take the blade and use it on their worst enemies within the next 30 days, the lich vows to return their souls to their mortal bodies. If they decline, they must serve the lich as his ghostly thralls in a lair from which they can never escape. If they accept but don't use the sword within the next 30 days, the lich summons four **invisible stalkers**, each equipped with a *nine lives stealer*, and sends them to kill the characters. When an invisible stalker drops to 0 hit points or loses possession of its weapon, its *nine lives stealer* is permanently destroyed and dissipates into shadow, freeing any souls trapped within.

Each time Kotoz the Glutton's *nine lives stealer* loses a charge, one of its cloudy, dull gemstones glows with a yellow light, and Kotoz's reflection appears in the blade to congratulate its wielder. When all nine gemstones are lit, Kotoz inspects the souls inside and tells the wielder, "Your debt is repaid." At your discretion, Kotoz can find the souls unworthy and vow to hunt down the characters for their treachery, or he can continue to appear in the blade's reflection even after the deal is fulfilled and tempt its wielder to further his dark deeds.

REFUSING KOTOZ'S OFFER

If the characters reject the lich's proposition, all is not lost. A DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the supernatural pull binding the characters to this location originates from the pedestal. Destroying the pedestal severs the characters' tether to the citadel, allowing them to escape and return to their mortal bodies. The pedestal has AC 13, 27 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Impressed by the characters' determination, Kotoz toys with them and doesn't use any spell of 4th level or higher against them in combat.

A character who dies as a ghost in the lich's lair is bound to serve him for all eternity—even if the pedestal is destroyed. They rise again at the next dawn as a lawful evil **ghost** under the GM's control. Short of a *true resurrection* or *wish* spell, only Kotoz's destruction allows the character to return to their body and join their living companions.

Running Away. As a last resort, characters can use their incorporeal movement to escape the lich. As an action, a character can attempt to escape by making a DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) or Wisdom (Survival) check to evade the lich and flee his lair. On a success, the character escapes the lich's lair. On a failure, the character takes 47 (6d8 + 20) force damage as they set off a magic trap and fail to escape. Characters that escape Kotoz's lair remain a ghost, and must find and rejoin with their body.

MOTIVATION TO HELP THE CHARACTERS

Though his most potent magic can tear flesh and bring armies to their knees, Kotoz has no shortage of foes on

the surface, and mightier heroes than those in the party would like to see the lich die his last death. Venturing out of his lair carries significant risk, but the dark mage still hungers for souls.

If the characters accept this quest, they not only do the dirty work for him, but they could be corrupted to collect souls for him again in the future. At worst, he thinks, the foolhardy adventurers will fulfill his bargain only to perish again, at which point he'll consume their souls and start anew with a new group of gullible sellswords.

RETURNING TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

If the characters accept Kotoz's quest, he directs them to pull the sword from the pedestal. A cloud of green fog surrounds the characters as the lich laughs grimly. When the gloomy mist disperses, the characters find themselves returned to their mortal bodies in a location of your choice with all of their equipment and hit points restored.

If the characters refuse Kotoz's offer and destroy the pedestal, they can escape his lair and return to their bodies, at which point they return to life. However, they've made an enemy of the lich, who might seek vengeance at a later date.

HOW DO YOU PLEAD?

The characters' darker deeds have caught up with them. They awaken from death before the seat of judgment in the fiery underworld, the Court of the Seven Cities of Hell.

Seven foul emissaries preside over the infernal court. Each hideous fiend represents one of the archdevils of the Seven Cities (detailed in the "Lords of Hell" sidebar). Regardless of whether the characters agree with their current predicament, they must convince this kangaroo court they deserve a second chance at life or throw themselves before its mercy—though they will find none.

LORDS OF HELL

The Seven Cities of Hell are divided between seven archdevils of immeasurable power, each presiding over a torturous wasteland more hopeless than the last. The fiends vie against one another for the Throne of Hell and sow discord in Orden and beyond.

The seven Lords of Hell include the following archdevils:

- Asmodeus, ruler of Acheron, City of Fear
- Astaroth, ruler of Kasyrgan, City of Pain
- Baal, ruler of Sheol, City of Death
- Belial, ruler of Gehennom, City of Darkness
- Dispater, ruler of Dis, City of War
- Moloch, ruler of Styx, City of Lies
- Sutekh, ruler of Naraka, City of Blood

RUNNING THE ENCOUNTER

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the encounter:

A wide, obsidian podium towers above you and your companions. Seven devils in powdered wigs leer at you from behind it, their ghastly faces underlit by veins of slow-moving magma within the judges' bench. To your right, a gaggle of imps jeers at you and cackles inside a flaming jury box.

The center judge, a six-eyed devil in black satin robes decorated with shoulder spikes, sneers in disgust at the sight of you. The fiend produces a rusty metal gavel and bangs it against a shriveled head strapped to the corner of the podium. The head shrieks in pain with each blow. "Order! Order in the court," hisses the devil.

The defendants' stand is a raised stone platform stained with blood and rotting ichor, its edges chipped by blades and charred by hellfire. Likewise, the jury of the Court of the Seven Cities is a farce, a fetid congregation of thirteen barking **imps** chained to a burning jury box. They rattle their fetters in disagreement at appeals of morality and pelt defendants with squelching black fruits. The bailiffs, a pair of grumbling **pit fiends** named Bastard and Belfry, don't stop the characters from attacking the imps, but they intervene if a character attacks the judges. A slain imp juror is immediately replaced with a new imp that appears in a puff of red smoke.

The powers of Hell have returned the characters to life in their domain. Each character awakens from death with 1 hit point immediately after the fate that befell the party. The characters haven't gained the benefits of a short or long rest, but they have any equipment that was on their person before they died. Given the numerous devils around them, fighting their way out of Hell is ill-advised.

After the characters have a moment to assess their surroundings, a **barbed devil**, the respected Osgaduun Ez'Guire, appears in a cloud of brimstone before them and produces a yellowing scroll covered in Infernal runes. Reading from the parchment, the devil proclaims the nature of the party's death. The fiend then lists the charges—murder, larceny, broken oaths, or any other unsavory acts the characters committed in life that can be used against them. Characters not guilty of these crimes are named as "accomplices."

Once the devil stops speaking, or if the characters interrupt the charges, the center judge leans forward and asks:

"How do you plead?"

DIABOLICAL DEFENSE

This encounter plays out like a corrupt courtroom drama. The court gives each character a chance to defend their actions, with the barbed devil asking why they committed such heinous acts, but it quickly becomes clear the trial is rigged against them. Judges sneer with displeasure at the characters' remarks, especially at displays of emotion, taking joy only in their anguish. Meanwhile, the jury heckles the defendants and openly cheers on the prosecution. The opposing devil prosecutors placate the judges with excessive bowing and always address them as "your Dishonors." Characters are expected to do the same.

Despite the characters' best efforts, the judges and jury are committed to the perversion of justice. No amount of reason can sway the court—but a bribe might.

APPEALING TO THE COURT

After the characters have finished their defense, read or paraphrase the following:

The six-eyed judge smacks their gavel against the block again, this time causing red sparks to spew from the shriveled head's mouth.

"This court hereby finds you guilty!" spits the devil with a twisted smile. "Under infernal law, you may overturn this verdict and return to whence you came by making a suitable offering to the court. Would you like to make such an appeal at this time?"

As the judge states, the characters can return to the world of the living by making an offering to the court. Three such appeals are detailed in the sections that follow. At your discretion, the court might accept other forms of payment.

Infernal Contract. One or more characters agree to sign a contract with the Court of the Seven Cities, offering a sacrifice ("consideration") in exchange for the party's freedom. The most classic form of consideration in an infernal contract involves the exchange of a soul. The souls of holy-oriented adventurers, such as good-aligned clerics and paladins, are especially coveted. However, many forms of consideration exist, and all of them carry ramifications, some less evident than others.

The Consideration table includes sample sacrifices of interest to the court and the consequences associated with bargaining them.

CONSIDERATION

d6	SACRIFICE
1	Confidence. You always doubt yourself.
2	Kindness. You become casually cruel.
3	Memory. You permanently forget a precious moment or person from your past.
4	Nobility. You surrender your name, titles, and the benefits they afford you.
5	Piety. You can never step into a church or temple unless it is a dungeon or adventuring location.
6	Restraint. You always oblige those who challenge you to a fight, no matter how bad it will be for you.

Out on Bail. The devils allow the characters to return to life if they make a collective bail payment of treasure equal to at least 100 gp × the number of characters × the average level of the party. For example, a party of five 3rd-level characters must pay the court at least 1,500 gp to be released on bail, or offer something of equivalent or greater value. Characters out on bail are expected to return for a follow-up trial in 666 years. If they don't return, they will be hunted by "collection agents" of the court.

Live to Serve. A character can spare the souls of their companions by agreeing to join the Order of Desolation, an elite league of infernal knights who serve Hell and its archdevils in this life and the next.

If a character opts for this choice, they lose all levels in their current class and gain an equal number of levels in the illrigger class.¹ As part of this transformation, the character must choose a patron archdevil and swear fealty to them.

The archdevils of the Seven Cities of Hell are briefly detailed in the "Lords of Hell" sidebar, but your world may contain a wholly different roster of fiends more appropriate to your preferred campaign setting.

RETURNING TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

Once the characters have made their offer, the seven judges seal the pact with a short Infernal chant in unison. With another tap of the gavel, they send the characters, alive, back to their home world in a location of their choice. Any character who sacrificed personally on behalf of the party awakens with a hellish mark (such as a brand of an Infernal rune) on their skin, a reminder of the deal they made with Hell.

¹ The illrigger class is available through the [MCDM Patreon](#) and for purchase on the [MCDM shop](#).

SOUL-LOVING FLURGNOB

A mischievous creature intercepted and collected the characters' souls in the Astral Plane. During this encounter, the characters have all their equipment and normal statistics, and are incorporeal. While incorporeal, the characters can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. A character takes 5 (1d10) force damage if they end their turn inside an object.

KOLLEKTOR THE FLURGNOB

Kollektor is a **flurgnob**, a sapient, gerbil-size, rodent-like creature created by a trickster god. Flurgnobs have a fluffy spherical body, two enormous eyes, no arms, and two tiny legs on which they stand upright.

The trickster god named this flurgnob Kollektor after watching it collect souls in the Astral Plane. Kollektor, like all flurgnobs, is naturally drawn to gathering souls. To protect flurgnobs from predators, the trickster god constructed a fortress made of an enormous solid diamond on a rock that floats aimlessly in the Astral Plane and bound the flurgnobs' souls to the plane. In their new home, the flurgnobs joyously collect souls and roam the halls of the massive diamond fortress.

COLLECTOR OF SOULS

Kollektor snatches up souls of the dead traveling through the Astral Plane as they attempt to reach their rightful destinations and brings them to the diamond fortress. Kollektor does so without malice, for no other reason than their innate desire to gather souls and bring them home. Over the past ten thousand millennia, Kollektor has accumulated millions of souls.

RUNNING THE ENCOUNTER

The characters can speak with Kollektor and discover the flurgnob can return them to the Material Plane.

Read or paraphrase the following to begin the encounter with Kollektor:

Vibrant colors pulsate within enormous diamond walls as a spherical, rodent-like creature the size of a gerbil exclaims, "Big souls, little souls, pretty souls ... shiny souls!" The creature jigs then excitedly quivers as they bow.

Kollektor is excited to meet the characters and curious to learn more about them. Throughout the conversation, the flurgnob asks what the characters were doing when they died and what they'd do if they returned home. Kollektor lets the characters walk around the diamond fortress as they please and interact with the many flurgnobs roaming the halls of the massive diamond fortress.

MOTIVATION TO HELP THE CHARACTERS

Kollektor wants more souls and is happy to return the characters to the Material Plane if they promise to continue their adventures. Kollektor loves adventurers who slay monsters and send more souls to the Astral Plane for the flurgnobs to collect!

When talking with the characters, Kollektor speaks about the evil souls they collect and how they contain them within the walls of their diamond fortress. Locking vile souls inside the fortress walls ensures the malevolent creatures can't return to the Material Plane.

What About the Other Souls? Characters can convince Kollektor to release the other good-aligned souls in the fortress with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. On a failed check, Kollektor offers to release half the souls they collect in the future.



RETURNING TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

Before sending the characters back, Kollektor warns them that if they die again, there is no guarantee the flurgnobs can collect their souls in the Astral Plane. When the characters are ready, Kollektor sends the characters back to the Material Plane to a location of your choice.

FLURGNOB

Tiny Beast, Any Alignment

ARMOR CLASS 10

HIT POINTS 1 (1d4 - 1)

SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)

SENSES darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES all

CHALLENGE RATING 0 (10 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +2

Nearly Immortal. Flurgnobs live in a diamond fortress floating on a rock in the Astral Plane. If a flurgnob is destroyed, they gain a new body in the Astral Plane 1d4 minutes later, regaining all their hit points and becoming active again. The new body appears within the diamond fortress.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage.

Return Souls. While in the Astral Plane, a flurgnob can target up to eight willing souls within 60 feet of them. Those souls are returned to the Material Plane and restored to life with all their hit points and their original bodies.

RESOURCES

DIVINE TRIALS: SHADOWS OF THE MOON

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202209/LunarTemple-140pps.jpg>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202209/LunarTemple-140pps-Labels.jpg>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202209/LunarTemple-140pps-Grid.jpg>

<https://mcdm.gg/Arcadia202209/LunarTemple-140pps-Grid-Labels.jpg>



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