



WHISPERS FROM THE DEPTHS

W*hispers from the Depths* is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for three to five characters of 7th to 9th level and is optimized for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 8. The characters are searching for a missing research party and investigate an isolated and hostile village near their last spotted location.

They uncover a mysterious cult, discover a hidden traitor, and must overcome enemies, both human and aberrant, in order to survive and report their findings. This adventure can be dropped into any campaign setting that has a coastline.

BACKGROUND

Aldous Fenström is a renowned scholar specializing in the Elder Gods and the communities that worship them. His interests are not purely academic, for Fenström hides a secret; he is a worshipper of the Elder Gods believing that through them he will gain more power and become one of their chosen priests. This was only amplified in his mind when he learned that he is descended from one of these communities. He discovered this when he researched his family after noticing physical changes in both himself and several of his family members. He eventually traced his bloodline back to the town of Cooper's Bay and its founder Elgin Cooper. Fenström is his direct descendent through the line of Cooper's eldest child, Isla Cooper.

Digging into its past, Fenström learned that the town was founded around two hundred years ago when Cooper started his fishing business and constructed housing for his workers. Over the years, the town grew, though they were never very

welcoming to strangers — not that many visited as its location was particularly difficult to reach via land. Elgin was a very public leader of the town for many years, until ill health forced him to retire and pass the torch to his son. To this day, an unbroken line of Coopers has been in charge of the town. What he also discovered through family records is that Elgin had an agreement with the deep ones that saw Elgin provide them with suitable sacrifices, and in turn they provided the town with an elixir that gave the townspeople perfect health. It wasn't until years later that Elgin realized the elixir had the effect of transforming the drinker into a Deep One around the age of sixty.

Fenström decided to travel to Cooper's Bay and see it for himself. He was accompanied on his journey by three of his students who believed it was a field trip for research. Upon reaching the town, Aldous found the people were sullen and morose. They ignored the most basic questions and feigned ignorance if pressed further. Many of them showed physical symptoms of transformation, though they denied this when mentioned. Expecting to be welcomed when he revealed his heritage, he was shocked when the townspeople rejected his claims as there could be no heirs from Isla as she "descended" before bearing children. They attacked him and his students, though Aldous escaped by turning invisible during the struggle and fled into the woods. Angry and confused, he spent the next two weeks spying on the townspeople and plotting his revenge. If they will not accept him, then he will destroy them. All he needs is a distraction...



ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters are approached by Aldous Fenström seeking help to rescue his captured students. While exploring the underground levels, they will discover the true history of the town, and encounter enemies both familiar and alien. They will have to survive it all and piece together the truth from many different sources in order to fulfill their quest.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters are travelling past a large forest when they are approached by Aldous Fenström. Read the following:

A disheveled figure emerges from the treeline and limps towards you, leaning on a staff. Once closer, you see it is a middle-aged man, his clothes dirty and stained as if he has spent considerable time sleeping outdoors. He stops 10 feet from you and holds his gloved hands up in supplication as he greets you.

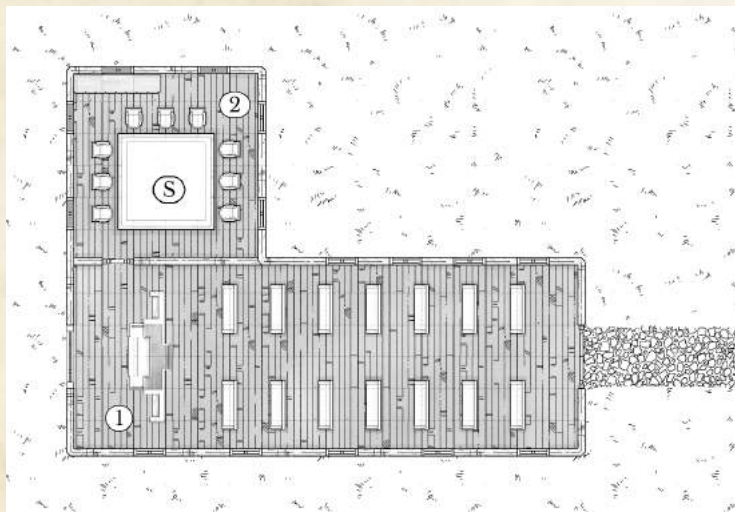
“Salutations, travellers, I apologize for my forwardness and my appearance, but my situation is dire. My name is Aldous Fenström, and I am a scholar. I was on a field trip with three of my students when we were attacked while making enquiries. I managed to escape but my students are still being held, and I cannot hope to rescue them on my own. Please, I beg that you would help me free them before it is too late.”

Fenström (CE human **mage**) explains that his students are being held in the nearby village of Cooper's Bay. If the characters agree to help, he can reward them with 1,000 gp each. They must hurry, as the village is several hours away and time is of the essence. During the journey, the characters can question Fenström and learn the following information:

- When they were captured, they were forced to drink a bitter potion before being separated. Fenström took advantage of being moved to escape his captors. This was four days ago.
- While trying to find his students, he managed to steal a copy of their holy text. He learned the people of Cooper's Bay worship the Elder Gods — specifically Mal'kthinoth. They refer to themselves as the “Children of Mal'kthinoth.”
- The villagers believe they are destined to live an eternal life in peace once they undergo their “Descent.” The drink the prisoners were given is a means of forcing this transformation. To stop this, they must perform a magic ritual before the transformation is complete. Fenström reveals that his skin is already becoming scaly, and his fingers are beginning to web.

WELCOME TO THE BAY

Cooper's Bay is not a welcoming place. It is surrounded on three sides by thick forest that stretches for several miles and a cliffside on the other. Within this Bay sits a dreary village of around thirty buildings arranged haphazardly. Most are rustic dwellings, and the church stands out in contrast, especially as



it sits near the edge of the village. The townspeople (**commoners**) walking about appear gloomy and wary, and even at a distance physical abnormalities can be seen. Bulging eyes, pallid scaly skin and hairlessness are all common traits among them. If approached, the townspeople are guarded and distrustful, refusing to answer any but the most basic of questions about the town. At any mention of deep ones, Fenström, or the missing students, the townspeople will gruffly deny any knowledge and rush away abruptly. This may draw the attention of the Children of Mal'kthinoth.

“That's where they're holding them,” says Fenström, indicating the church. “There's a hidden structure beneath it. That's where we need to get to, but there's always guards. Any suggestions?”

CHURCH OF MAL'KTHINOTH

1. HALL

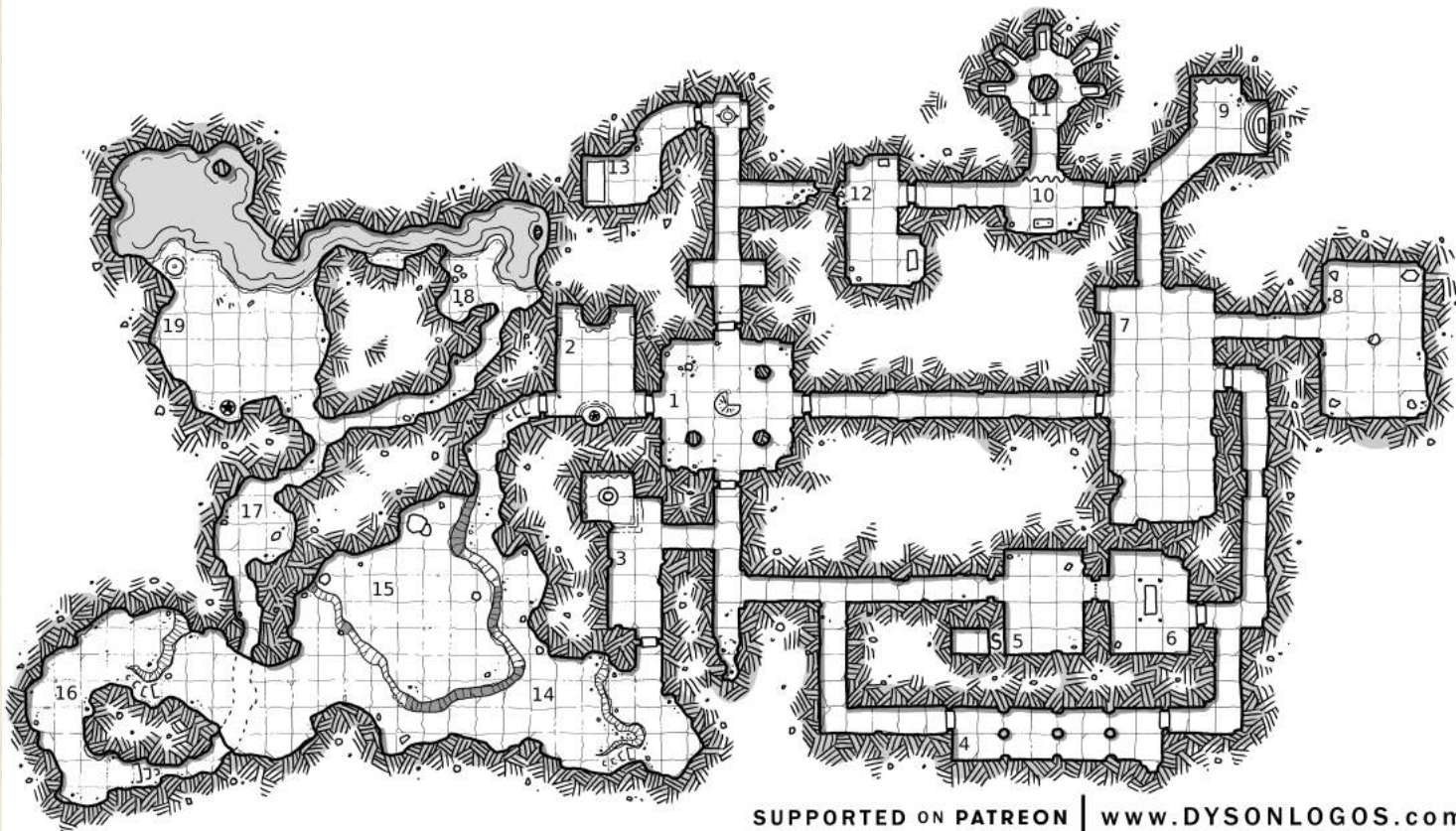
The church is an 'L-shaped wooden building. A double door entrance on the south wall leads into a large hall (80 feet long by 30 feet wide). Two columns of pews, separated by a wide aisle, are arranged facing the pulpit at the far end of the room. Idyllic murals of underwater life decorate the walls of this large hall. There is another door beyond the pulpit on the east wall.

Encounter: Church. Four **veterans** stand guard inside the church. They are hostile towards the characters, demanding that they leave the church as they are not welcome. They will attack if the characters refuse or try to enter the door on the east wall, if Fenström is present, or if the characters say they are cooperating with him.

2. OFFICE

A large square table is the most striking feature of this room. It has nine chairs arranged around three of its sides. A long cabinet sits on the far wall. The shutters in this room are all closed, and the room is lit by oil lamps hanging on the walls.





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Secret Door. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a spiral staircase hidden beneath the base of the square table. This is the entrance to the lower chambers. The table stands on rails set into the floor allowing it to be moved easily from above and below.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless noted otherwise, areas of the lower chambers have the following features:

Walls, Ceilings & Floors. The walls and floors of the chambers are natural stone worked to a smooth finish. The vaulted ceilings rise 15 feet.

Doors. Doors are made of solid oak and have an AC of 15 and 18 hit points, with immunity to poison and psychic damage. Any locked doors require a DC 12 Dexterity check by someone proficient with thieves' tools to open, or they can break the door open with a successful DC 15 Strength check.

Illumination. The chambers are brightly lit by torches hanging in brackets near the ceiling. The caverns are in darkness unless otherwise stated.

Caverns. The walls are natural stone, the floor is covered in loose dirt and sand, and the ceiling varies in height and is strewn with stalactites. The caverns are cold and the sound of the ocean echoes through them.

Wandering Encounters While the characters are exploring the lower chambers, you should roll a d20 each time they enter a room/corridor that does not have a keyed encounter to see if they meet any wandering cultists. They will have an encounter on a roll of 16 and above. Roll a d10 and check against the random encounter table below:

d10	Encounter
1	2 cult fanatics & 1 veteran
2	2 cult fanatics
3	1 veteran & 1 cult fanatic
4	3 cultists
5	1 veterans
6	2 cultists
7	1 cult fanatic
8	1 cultist
9	2 cultists & 1 cult fanatic
10	2 veterans

The following locations are keyed to the map of the Lower Chambers.

1. STAIRWELL

The staircase descends 100 feet before opening into a large square room supported by heavy stone columns, three of them intact and debris of a fourth scattered about.

2. VESTIBULE

This room is dominated by a 20-foot statue in an alcove on the south wall. It shows a bulging body covered in scales and topped by a snarling fish head with bulbous eyes, the open mouth revealing rows of razor-sharp teeth.



The back and neck bear large fins, sprouting like hideous plumage, which then flows down into an eel-like tail, coiled beneath it like a powerful spring. Two abnormally long arms end in webbed hands and viciously hooked claws. The statue bears the inscription “Father Mal’kthinoth.” A locked door leads west to **area 14**.

3. FONT ENTRANCE

The wall paintings in this room are badly faded but some murals remain. They seem to be underwater scenes of deep ones leading humans down towards a large city on the seafloor. A font stands on a raised dais in the northwest corner of the room. It is filled with saltwater. A locked door on the south wall leads to **area 14**.

4. PRISON

This long chamber has three evenly spaced stone pillars, with several sets of manacles affixed to each with heavy iron bolts. There are two doors leading from this room, one on the west wall and the other the east. Both are locked.

Encounter: Prisoners. This room is guarded by two **veterans** who are not particularly attentive. Stealthy characters can take them by surprise. There are also three **deep ones** (see Appendix), each manacled to a different pillar. Tattered clothes cling to them and are strewn on the floor around them. If unchained, they will head to **area 19**, attacking anyone that tries to stop them. Once there, they will jump into the ocean and disappear.

Treasure: Shredded Clothes. Within the tattered remains of the clothes, the characters will find a journal belonging to one of the missing students. The last few entries of the journal indicate that Fenström was acting strangely since they got close to Cooper’s Bay, and that his skin condition had been getting worse. There is also a leather pouch containing 300 gp.

5. STOREROOM

The room is piled with crates and barrels of mundane supplies. A locked, iron-barred gate to the east leads to **area 6**. The walls are bare save for torch brackets. This room is in darkness.

Secret Room A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the torch bracket on the south wall hangs askew. Pulling on it causes a wall panel to slide up revealing the hidden alcove. Propped against the back wall are the skeletal remains of Elgin Cooper. A monogrammed gold ring (worth 200 gp) bears the initials “EC” and hangs loosely on a fingerbone. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals a stab wound in the back of the skull as the cause of death.

6. ARMORY

Racks of weapons and armor line the walls. A large wooden table sits in the middle of the room, surrounded by several stools. The exits are a door on the east wall and a locked, iron-barred gate that is shared with **area 5** on the west wall.

Encounter: All In. Seated around the table are two **cultists** and two **veterans** playing a heated game of poker.

Treasure: Stakes. The table has a total of 300 sp scattered across its surface from the card game.

CHILDREN OF MAL’KTHINOTH

The lower chambers are strictly off-limits to anyone that is not a cultist, so any trespassers will be attacked on sight. They will try to overpower and capture intruders initially, but if that proves difficult, they will switch tactics and use lethal force. Should the characters capture and interrogate any of the cultists, they can learn the following information with a successful DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) check:

- The missing students are being held in **area 4** of the lower chambers.
- Their transformation into deep ones is almost complete.
- There was a man called Fenström with them who claimed to be a direct descendant of Isla Cooper, but that’s impossible as she “descended” before she had any children.
- Fenström managed to escape while the others with him fought against the cultists. It was like he vanished into thin air.
- The *Book of Mal’kthinoth* is kept safe by the Beacon of the Church.
- The Beacon can usually be found in **area 12**.
- The caverns can be dangerous to pass through as there are monsters lurking within them.

7. GREAT HALL

The south end of the room holds two long wooden tables with benches on either side. The once-grand room now serves as a mess hall. There is some damage to the southwestern wall as it and parts of the ceiling have collapsed. Characters with a passive Perception of 12 or higher hear whispered voices and quiet snores coming from **area 8**.

8. LESSER GALLERY

Calming underwater scenes are painted on the stone walls of this room. Bunk beds are placed around the walls to make a dormitory for the gathered cultists. This room is in darkness.

Encounter: Resting. Two **cult fanatics** and six **cultists** are sleeping here. They will awaken at any noise above a whisper or if the room is lit.

9. SHRINE

A raised dais and an ornately carved coral bench sit against the eastern wall in this room. A vivid mural depicting a colossal deep one with an eels tail instead of legs is painted directly behind the bench. It towers over the underwater city depicted, and the deep ones that swim around it reverently.

10. CRYPT ENTRANCE

A simple bench sits in an alcove of the corridor across from a passage leading north that is obscured by velvet curtains bearing the crest of the Cooper family. A door is to the east, while to the west the corridor continues on.

Encounter: Guards. Two bored **veterans** lounge on the bench and “guard” this corridor.



11. CRYPT

A huge central column supports the flat ceiling in this room, and five ornate sarcophagi are placed in alcoves around the room. Each bears a name of the founding Cooper family (Elgin, Meredith, Isla, Aldous, and Derwent), and on the central column is the inscription “They have descended before us. They are our Beacons which guide our path.”

Hazard: Black Mold. Black mold has grown on the sarcophagi. Opening any of the sarcophagi causes the mold to release a cloud of spores that fills a 15-foot cube originating from the mold. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 17 (3d10) poison damage. Sunlight or any amount of fire damage instantly destroys black mold.

Treasure: Sarcophagi. The sarcophagi contain no remains but are filled with gold and platinum jewelry worth 5,000 gp and 1,000 pp in total. There are also 350 gp worth of assorted gems.

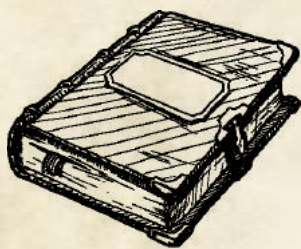
12. BEACON’S QUARTERS

This room has been repurposed into a living space for the Beacon. A bed, desk, and chest are the only furniture in the room. The only exit is the door on the east wall.

Encounter: The Beacon. The Beacon (LE human priest) is here being attended to by two of the **cult fanatics**. If the fanatics are killed or the priest is reduced to half his hit points or fewer, he will surrender and attempt to parlay. He will offer the characters treasure (the stash here and in the crypt) if the characters will spare his life. He has the key to the footlocker and the *Book of Mal’kthinoth* on his person. He also knows the following information:

- Elgin Cooper refused to honor the deal with the deep ones when he discovered the truth about the elixir.
- In retribution, the deep ones sank the ship carrying Elgin’s wife and daughter. This caused Elgin to snap and attempt to burn the town down as he believed everyone had to die because they were all destined to become those monsters.
- His son Aldous fought with him to stop him, and Elgin was killed in the struggle. Aldous then hid the body and came up with the lie that his father, mother, and sister had undergone the transformation and descended already to prepare the way for the townspeople.
- Aldous then began honoring the agreement with the deep ones again and he started the Church of Mal’kthinoth and became its first Beacon.

Treasure: Footlocker. The chest is locked but a successful DC 15 Dexterity check by someone proficient with thieves’ tools, or a successful DC 18 Strength check can open it. It contains 2,000 gp, one *potion of supreme healing* and one *potion of vitality*. It also contains Aldous Cooper’s journal which holds all of the information that the Beacon can tell.



13. KITCHEN

A rustic kitchen with a large counter and stove on the west wall and sacks of supplies stored against the south wall. The only entrance is the door to the east. Immediately outside this door is a shallow well of fresh water.

14. CAVERN

This sprawling natural cavern winds from the entrance to **area 2** in the north, down to the eastern steps leading to the entrance to **area 3**, before curving to the west from where the sounds of the ocean emanate. The area is dotted with stalactites and stalagmites. The ceiling is 40 feet above the floor.

Encounter: Ropers. Two **ropers** are hiding here among the outcroppings. They will attack any creature that comes in range and then attempt to drag their prey away to eat in comfort.

15. PLATEAU

This area sits 20 feet above the cavern floor. Stalactites hang from the ceiling and a few stalagmites climb towards the ceiling 20 feet above. Otherwise, there is nothing of interest here.

16. STAIRS

These roughly hewn steps seem very old and worn. They descend 15 feet before snaking back on themselves and descending another 10 feet and heading north in a narrow tunnel that passes under the cavern above.

17. STIRGE NEST

The tunnel blossoms into a cave, littered with small bones. The area smells strongly of ammonia. The sound of waves lapping a shore drift from the north.

Encounter: Stirges. Twenty **stirges** hang from the ceiling in this room. They will attack any creature that enters the cavern, retreating to the south only when half of them have been killed.

18. EAST COVE

The passage opens to a small, secluded beach but otherwise there is nothing of interest here.

19. BEACH

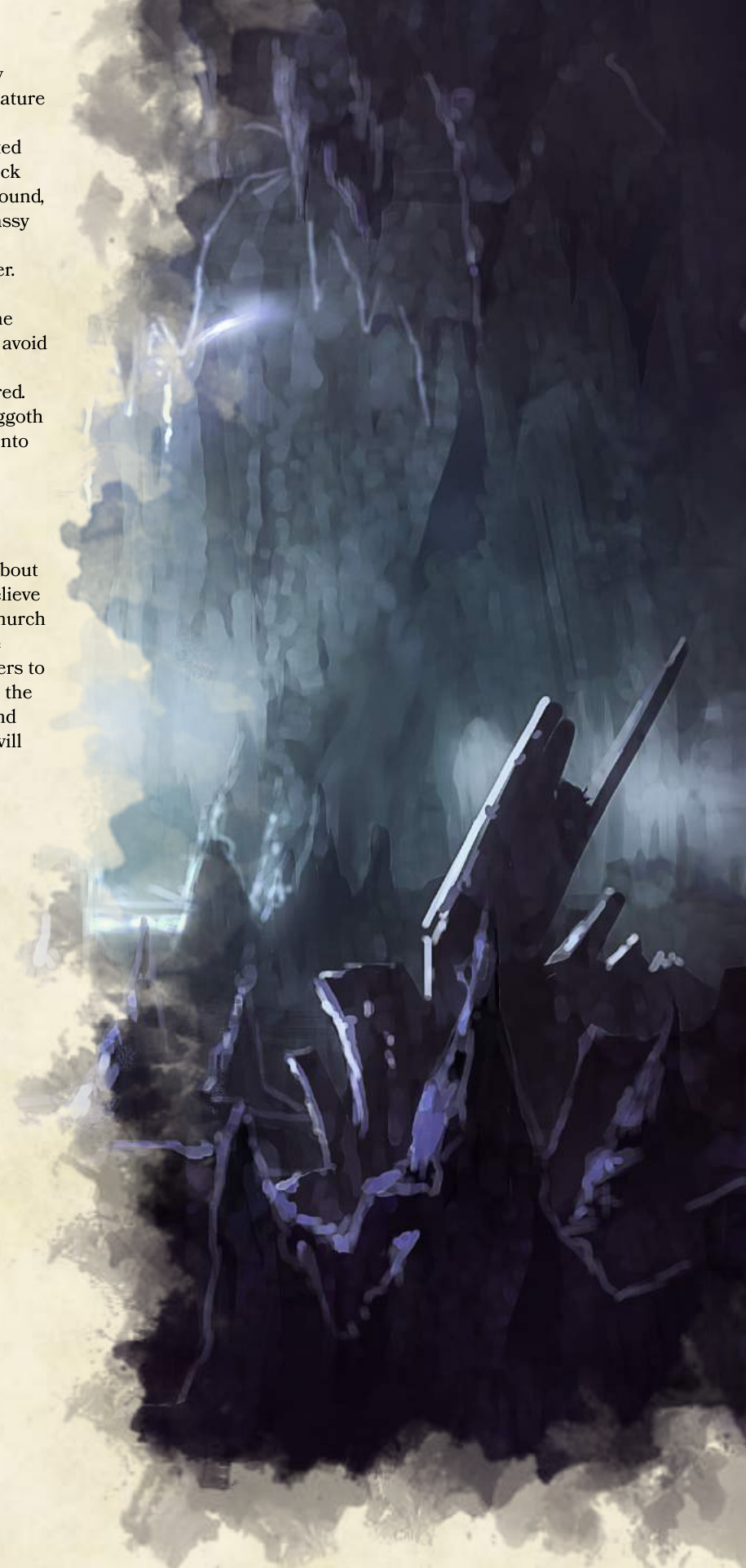
The passage opens into a large interior beach, the smell of the ocean filling the air. The dark water laps at the beach. A giant bronze bell hangs from a mount near the water’s edge. Against the south wall stands another statue depicting “Father Mal’kthinoth” (see **area 2**), though this one is even larger, standing 30 feet tall. Upon reaching the beach, the characters see Fenström as he finishes casting a powerful ritual on the beach, the ocean swelling in spiral waves as he does so. He has cast a ritual to summon creatures to destroy the town, believing he has the power to control them.



Encounter: Deep Ones. Fenström is being protected by seven **deep ones** (see Appendix) who will attack any creature that enters the area. Fenström laughs and thanks the characters for their help as he could never have completed his plan without the distraction they caused. He will attack the characters from range with his spells. On the third round, a huge glowing amorphous blob, covered in blinking, glassy black eyes and with myriad tendrils writhing from it (**shoggoth**, see Appendix) emerges from the roiling water. The shoggoth will attack any creature within range, preferring to use its Engulf attack wherever possible. The deep ones are smart enough to know this and will try to avoid the shoggoth whenever possible. If the shoggoth attacks Fenström, he automatically fails any saving throw required. He will plead for help during the attack. Should the shoggoth be reduced to 90 hit points or fewer, it will retreat back into the waters.

CONCLUSION

The characters can attempt to tell the people the truth about the church but most of the townspeople would rather believe the lie. Only if they have proof of the deceptions of the church (Elgin's remains and/or Aldous' journal) will they believe them. Otherwise, the people will simply ask the characters to leave town and never return. For their meddling though, the characters have drawn the attention of the deep ones, and whenever they find themselves in coastal regions, they will have the ever-present feeling of being watched.



APPENDIX

DEEP ONE

Medium humanoid, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 91 (14d8 + 28)

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +4, Cha +3

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances cold

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages Common, Void Speech

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Amphibious. A deep one can breathe air or water with equal ease.

Frenzied Rage. On its next turn after a deep one takes 10 or more damage from a single attack, it has advantage on its claws attack and adds +2 to damage.

Lightless Depths. A deep one is immune to the pressure effects of the deep ocean.

Ocean Change. A deep one born to a human family resembles a human child, but transforms into an adult deep one between the ages of 16 and 30.

Actions

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage.



SHOGGOTH

Huge aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 7

Hit Points 270 (20d12 + 140)

Speed 40 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
28 (+9)	5 (-3)	25 (+7)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)

Skills Perception +10

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities acid, poison, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Deep Speech

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Self-Luminous. The shoggoth emits dim light in a 5-foot radius.

Maddening Appearance. The first time a creature that can see the shoggoth starts its turn within 60 feet of the shoggoth, the creature must make a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the creature becomes frightened for 1 minute and gains a random form of long-term madness (see Chapter 8 of the DMG). The creature can repeat its saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened effect on itself with a success. On a successful saving throw, the creature is frightened until the end of its next turn. A creature that succeeds on its initial saving throw or the effect ends for it is immune to the maddening appearance of all shoggoths for 24 hours.

Actions

Multiattack. The shoggoth makes 1d6 spontaneous appendage attacks.

Spontaneous Appendage. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* Roll a d6 to determine the type of damage dealt.

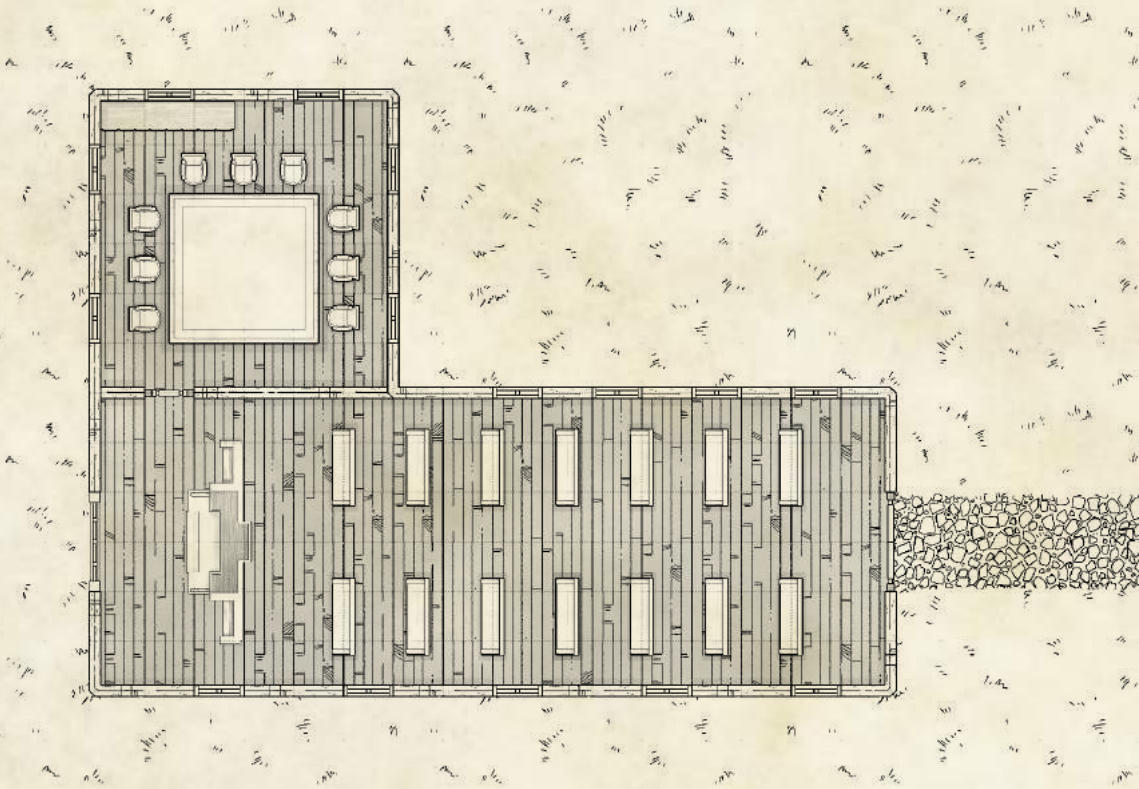
d6	Damage
1-2	19 (3d6 + 9) bludgeoning damage
3-4	19 (4d4 + 9) piercing damage
5-6	20 (2d10 + 9) slashing damage

Engulf. The shoggoth moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the shoggoth enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the shoggoth. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed save, the shoggoth enters the creature's space, and the creature takes 21 (6d6) piercing damage plus 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) slashing damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 21 (6d6) piercing damage plus 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage plus 21 (6d6) slashing damage at the start of each of the shoggoth's turns. When the shoggoth moves, the engulfed creature moves with it. An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 19 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the shoggoth. Also, a creature within 5 feet of the shoggoth that is not currently engulfed by the shoggoth can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the shoggoth. Doing so requires a successful DC 19 Strength check, and the creature making the attempt automatically takes damage from one of the shoggoth's spontaneous appendages (see above).

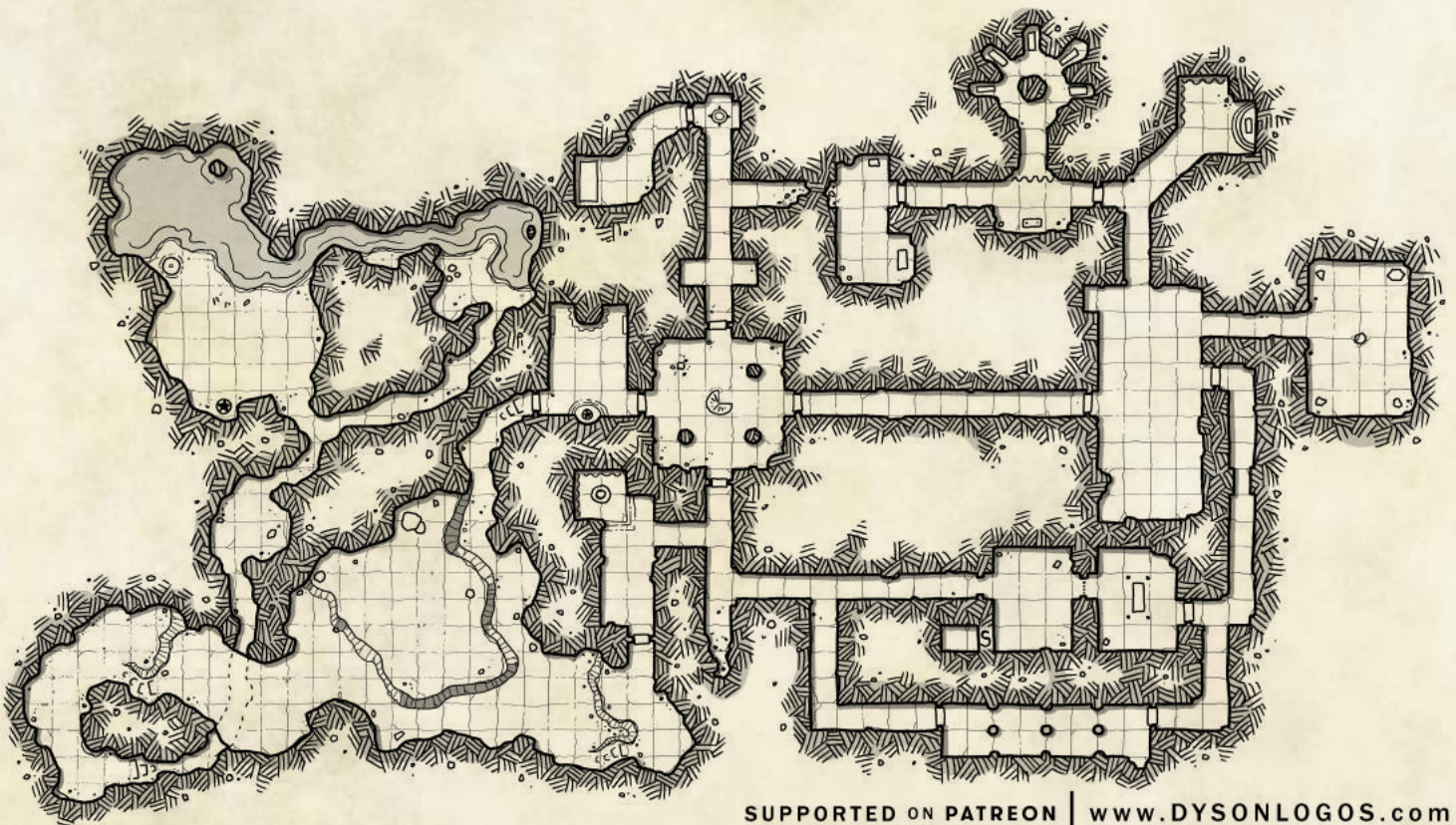


PLAYER MAPS

CHURCH OF MAL'KTHINOTH



LOWER CHAMBERS



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