

# Cliffhangers Adventures

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## Nest of Corruption

### *Episode One: Introduction to Intrigue*

*By Andy Collins*

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"Nest of Corruption" is a short **D&D** adventure for four 7th-level characters. The party may consist of any mix of classes. The adventure is a reasonable challenge for 6th- to 8th-level characters and may be set in any campaign world.



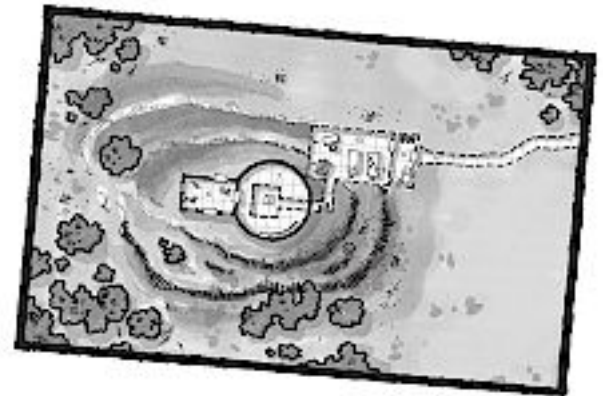
The adventure uses the "[Old Tower](#)" map found in the October section of the Map-A-Week archive.

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### Adventure Background

People have been disappearing from the town of Brindinford. At first, no one noticed or gave it any thought. But lately, the disappearances have grown more noticeable. Indeed, only a few days ago the eldest son of a wealthy merchant family went missing.

The disappearances are the work of a small band of yuan-ti led by a most unusual creature: a vampiric medusa named Kalivilya. This baneful monster "adopted" the yuan-ti that now serve her, treating them as wayward children despite their differing origins. For their part, the yuan-ti see Kalivilya as a kindred serpent soul and powerful ally.



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Loath to enter Brindinford for fear of discovery, Kalivilya has instead dispatched the human-appearing pureblood yuan-ti to obtain the warm-blooded food that she craves. Lately, however, the serpent men have gotten greedy, taking an occasional meal for themselves -- thus, the increased number of disappearances.

Brindinford is a large town that can be placed anywhere in your campaign. It is a trade center on a major river, and its food comes from small farming villages scattered in the nearby countryside; no fields are in the immediate vicinity. Forestation has been cleared in a radius of about a mile outside the town on the east side of the river, but much of the west bank is still heavily wooded.

The town of Brindinford originally appeared in the adventure *Speaker in Dreams* (though you don't need that adventure to run *Nest of Corruption*). If you don't want to detail Brindinford yourself, you can use the information in that adventure to flesh out the town. The town follows the rules noted for a town of its size in Chapter 4 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

**Brindinford (large town):** Conventional; AL LG and LE; 5,000 gp limit; Assets 1,200,000 gp; Population 4,807; Mixed (human 79, halfling 9, elf 5, dwarf 3, gnome 2, half-elf 1, half-orc 1).

*Authority Figures:* Baron Euphemes II, male human Ari5, LG.

## Hooking the Characters

If the characters have been to Brindinford before (for instance, if they adventured through *Speaker in Dreams*), they probably have one or more friendly contacts there that might invite their assistance in solving the mystery of the disappearing townsfolk.

Otherwise, the PCs might merely be passing through. If they seek someone here, that person (or a close friend or relative) has recently disappeared.

Finally, the PCs might have followed a trail of disappearances through several towns and villages (the swath left by Kalivilya's passage) to Brindinford, her latest haunt.

## Gathering Information

Player characters seeking to solve the mystery will likely need to ask around for useful information. A Gather Information check, a few hours of legwork, and 1d4+1 gp spent on drinks in the local taverns can elicit the following clues (any result gets that clue and all those for lower results as well).

Result	Clue
10	About a dozen people have been reported missing in the last month or so. Most were drunks or derelicts, so the city guard hadn't gotten very involved. The most prominent, Lionel Gildas, was the son of a local merchant family, which has gotten the authorities' attention.
15	Half of the missing people (including Lionel Gildas) disappeared in the last 10 days, suggesting that whoever or whatever is responsible is accelerating the violence.
20	Lionel Gildas was last seen two nights ago leaving the Stony Gaze Tavern in the company of a young woman. (The tavern is located in Eastgate, a rough-and-tumble part of town.)

**25+** The last three missing people were all seen in or near taverns in the Eastgate area of Brindinford.

No one the PCs talk to will know anything about the young woman last seen with Lionel Gildas, except that she had been seen in the Stony Gaze Tavern for a couple evenings before Lionel's disappearance. No one has seen the mysterious young woman since.

The young woman is actually a pureblood yuan-ti named Melina -- and she's responsible for the disappearances. Since she changes her disguise distinctly with each new victim, no one can link her with more than one of the missing persons.

Each time the PCs make a Gather Information check related to this mystery, there is a 25% cumulative chance they draw Melina's attention. (See "The Agent" for more details.

The PCs might stake out another tavern in the hopes of drawing the attention of who or whatever is responsible for the disappearances. There are seven inns and seven taverns in that district, and Melina has already hit three taverns. Melina will move to a new tavern each 1d4 days, each time in a new disguise. When she has exhausted the taverns in Eastgate, she'll move to a new area of town.

## The Agent (EL 5)

Eventually, the PCs either draw the attention of or track down Melina, Kalivilya's agent in Brindinford, the pureblood yuan-ti responsible for gathering food for the medusa. She currently resides at the Drake's Rest, a local inn, under the name of Saralinda.

If Melina catches wind of the PCs' investigation, she will target one of them as the next victim. Failing that, she aims simply to assassinate any character she can. **Creature:** Melina is a pureblood yuan-ti, one of three working with Kalivilya. To guard her identity, she wears a ring of mind shielding which protects her against *detect thoughts*, *discern lies*, and any attempt to magically discern her alignment. She uses a disguise kit to help her play the role of a human, giving her an average Disguise check of 20 (requiring a Spot check of 20 or better to see through).

**Melina, Pureblood Yuan-ti:** hp 27; see *Monster Manual*.

**Tactics:** Melina uses *suggestion* to lure potential victims to their death. She favors those who appear healthy but weak-willed (the better to resist Kalivilya's petrification but fall victim to her domination and Melina's *suggestion*).

If threatened, Melina prefers to flee, using *cause fear*, deeper darkness, or entangle to ward off attackers. If cornered, she lashes out with *polymorph other* (transforming the victim into a harmless snake). She can also take the form of a Tiny to Large viper.

**Treasure:** If the PCs defeat Melina and search her body, they will find a key to her room at the Drake's Rest, as well as a pouch with 17 sp and 15 gp. Hidden under her bed at the inn (Search

DC 15 to find) is a small bag of 225 sp and 185 gp, as well as a note:

***Melina,***

**Please ensure that all meals brought to the Crumbling Tower are strong and healthy (preferably weak-minded). They're no good to me cold.**

***Kalivilya***

## **The Cliffhanger**

A Knowledge (local) or Gather Information check (DC 15) reveals that the "Crumbling Tower" is a nickname for an abandoned outpost located a few miles southwest of Brindinford. Some townsfolk say some foul monster occupied the Tower recently, but a group of adventurers cleaned it out a month ago and then moved on to bigger challenges.

Actually, the adventurers were all slain by the occupants of the Crumbling Tower, then a few yuan-ti posed as the adventurers to report that all was well with the tower. No one in town is aware of this.

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# Cliffhangers Adventures

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## Nest of Corruption

### *Episode Two: To the Crumbling Tower*

*By Andy Collins*

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The adventure uses the "[Old Tower](#)" map found in the October section of the Map-A-Week archive.

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### Adventure Background

People have been disappearing from the town of Brindinford. At first, no one noticed or gave it any thought. But lately, the disappearances have grown more noticeable. Indeed, only a few days ago the eldest son of a wealthy merchant family went missing.

The disappearances are the work of a small band of yuan-ti led by a most unusual creature: a vampiric medusa named Kalivilya. This baneful monster "adopted" the yuan-ti that now serve her, treating them as wayward children despite their differing origins. For their part, the yuan-ti see Kalivilya as a kindred serpent soul and powerful ally.

In the first episode, the PCs tracked down a yuan-ti responsible for many disappearances and found out that she was bringing her kidnapped victims to a location called the Crumbling Tower, a few miles southwest of the town.

There is no known road or path through the forest to the tower, though the trail made by the yuan-ti can be found and followed with a Wilderness Lore check (DC 18 plus 1 per day the PCs spent in Brindinford) by a PC with the Track feat.

Even without this trail, the tower isn't hard to find.

### 5. Approaching the Tower

As the PCs come out of the woods, they get a good view of the old stone building. As described, they see a two-story round stone tower, its battlements deteriorating with age. No activity is

visible anywhere in the vicinity, and the tower's second-floor windows are boarded up. A Spot check (DC 10) notices the small, attached structure behind the main tower.

A character with the Track feat might find two different trails in this area. The first (Wilderness Lore DC 18 plus 1 per day the PCs spent in Brindinford) was left by yuan-ti moving back and forth to Brindinford. It leads to area 2. The second (DC 14) was made by the guardians of the tower (currently at area 3), and makes a wide ring around the tower.

If the PCs remain in this area for more than 10 minutes, the vampire spawn and shadow mastiff at area 3 will emerge from the woods and cross the clearing toward the PCs' position.

#### 4. Stony Remains

If the characters approach this area, a Spot check (DC 20) notices a bunch of rocks partially concealed in the underbrush.

This is where the yuan-ti dump the remains of those potential meals that fail to resist Kalivilya's petrification gaze. At first glance, it appears to be nothing more than a pile of rubble, but a Search check (DC 10) reveals that the "rubble" is actually composed of broken "statues" (three humans, an elf, and a halfling, all in common garb). If the PCs are searching for a missing friend, they might find their comrade's remains here (particularly if that character's Fortitude save is worse than his or her Will save).

If the PCs remain in this area for more than 30 minutes, the vampire spawn and shadow mastiff at area 3 will emerge from the woods at 5 (having circled from 3 to 5) and cross the clearing toward the PCs' position.

#### 3. Tower Guardians (EL 7)

**Creatures:** A trio of guardians -- two vampire spawn and a shadow mastiff -- walk a circular path counter-clockwise around the Crumbling Tower during all non-daylight hours, with the aim of scaring off potential intruders. They keep to the shadows when possible (Hide +10 for the vampire spawn, 90% concealment for the shadow mastiff). Should they come across any recent trail (Wilderness Lore +11 for the shadow mastiff when tracking by scent), they immediately attempt to hunt down whatever made the trail (though they won't venture more than a half-mile from the tower).

**Vampire Spawn (2):** hp 28, 25; see *Monster Manual*.

**Shadow Mastiff:** hp 30; see *Monster Manual*.

**Tactics:** If they spot intruders, the shadow mastiff immediately bays, alerting the yuan-ti at area 6. The vampire spawn, who are immune to this mind-affecting effect, attempt to slay anyone not panicked by this effect. During daylight hours, the vampire spawn stay in their coffins (in area 7) and the shadow mastiff keeps guard alone.

**Development:** If the yuan-ti at area 6 hear the mastiff's baying, they essentially can't be surprised by the PCs for at least the next hour (since they prepare themselves for potential intruders).

## 2. North Door

The yuan-ti keep this door barred (DC 25 Strength check to break down) whenever any of them are inside the building. The window around the corner is boarded up (though someone inside could peer out between the boards).

## 1. South Door

The yuan-ti keep this door unlocked and unbarred, though they block it with a heavy table if they fear intruders. The windows next to the door are boarded up (though someone inside could peer out between the boards).

## The Cliffhanger

The PCs stand at the base of the tower, in front of one of the two doors into area 6. If they encountered the guards from area 3, they have reason to believe that anyone inside the tower knows they're coming.

Things might be about to get a little rough.

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# Cliffhangers Adventures

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## Nest of Corruption

### *Episode Three: Into the Nest*

*By Andy Collins*

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The adventure uses the "[Old Tower](#)" map found in the October section of the Map-A-Week archive.

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### Adventure Background

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The disappearances are the work of a small band of yuan-ti led by a most unusual creature: a vampiric medusa named Kalivilya. This baneful monster "adopted" the yuan-ti that now serve her, treating them as wayward children despite their differing origins. For their part, the yuan-ti see Kalivilya as a kindred serpent soul and powerful ally.

In the first episode, the PCs tracked down a yuan-ti responsible for many disappearances and found out that she was bringing her kidnapped victims to a location called the Crumbling Tower, a few miles southwest of the town. In the second episode, they made their way to the tower and encountered the medusa's guardians and outer defenses. Now they stand at the door to the Tower itself.

#### 1. South Door

The yuan-ti keep this door unlocked and unbarred, though they block it with a heavy table if they fear intruders. The windows next to the door are boarded up (though someone inside could peer out between the boards).

#### 2. North Door



The yuan-ti keep this door barred (DC 25 Strength check to break down) whenever any of them are inside the building. The window around the corner is boarded up (though someone inside could peer out between the boards).

## 6. Front Room (EL 7)

**Creatures:** Two pureblood yuan-ti named Vethek and Tyrra, keep guard in this room. In addition to normal gear, Vethek wears a *ring of protection +1* (granting AC 17) and Tyrra wears a pair of *slippers of spider climbing*. Each carries a *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

**Pureblood Yuan-ti (2):** hp 29, 24; see *Monster Manual*.

**Tactics:** If they see any unfamiliar individuals approaching (through the windows), or if the shadow mastiff's baying alerts them, the two yuan-ti block the door with a table (DC 18 Strength check to open) and move to area 7. Vethek takes up a defensive position in the doorway, while Tyrra uses her slippers to perch above the doorway and attacks anyone coming through.

If surprised, the yuan-ti fight defensively, falling back to area 7 if possible.

**Development:** If a fight occurs in area 6, the residents of the lower level may hear it (DC 15 from area 9, DC 20 from area 10). Reduce these DCs by 5 if the fight occurs in area 7. Though the residents won't come to the aid of their guards, they will be ready for the PCs when they approach.

If the vampire spawn are currently residing in area 7, they will assist the yuan-ti as needed.

## 7. Tower

The two-story tower is largely unused. Chunks of rubble and piles of rotting planks and timbers lie about the chamber. A stone staircase leads up along the south wall to a landing, though the upper floor has completely collapsed (the rubble has been cleared and removed). The roof above is in disrepair but relatively intact.

**Creatures:** During daylight hours, the vampire spawn detailed at area 3 reside here in their coffins, which are concealed under a pile of rotting timbers along the north wall. They can operate normally anywhere within the Crumbling Tower during daylight, since all windows are boarded up.

**Vampire Spawn (2):** hp 28, 25; see *Monster Manual*.

## 8. Trap Door to Cellar (EL 4)

The trap door leading to the cellar area -- a simple stone plug with an iron pull ring -- is hidden beneath a pile of rocks, but a Search check (DC 15) reveals it.

**Trap:** The stone plug allowing access to the cellar is trapped with a contact poison on the iron

pull ring. Bypassing the trap is simple -- simply lift the plug using one of the fragments of metal lying about. This requires a DC 12 Strength check to open (two characters can work together if needed).

*Poison (malyss root paste)*: Type contact DC 16; initial damage 1 Dex, secondary damage 2d4 Dex; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

## Cliffhanger

As they open the trap door, the characters get a whiff of brimstone, mixed with the unmistakable smell of snakes. Many, many snakes.

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# Cliffhangers Adventures

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## Nest of Corruption

### *Episode Four: Descent*

*By Andy Collins*

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In the first episode, the PCs tracked down a yuan-ti responsible for many disappearances and found out that she was bringing her kidnapped victims to a location called the Crumbling Tower, a few miles southwest of the town. In the second episode, they made their way to the tower and encountered the medusa's guardians and outer defenses. In the third, they penetrated the well-defended tower and opened a trap door in the floor. The smell of snakes rises from the floor.

### 8. Trap Door

Beneath the trap door (detailed in Episode Three) is an empty chamber with a five-foot-wide tunnel leading off to the east. If the PCs have alerted the denizens of this lower level, the snake that lives in the tunnel (area 9) will be here, ready to strike at any PC who shows his face above the opening. If it successfully grapples a character, it pulls the character down into the chamber below.

If the snake is here, it completely fills the room below the trap door. Thus, it can only be fought through the trap door (giving it significant cover).

## 9. Tunnel (EL 7)

**Creature:** A fiendish giant constrictor snake lives here. If it heard the PCs above, it has moved to area 8.

**Fiendish Giant Constrictor Snake:** Huge magical beast, hp 60; as giant constrictor snake plus smite good 1/day (+11 damage to good foe), darkvision 60 feet, cold and fire resistance 15, DR 5/+2, SR 22, Int 3; see *Monster Manual*.

## 10. Dark Nest (EL 10)

**Creatures:** Kalivilya, a vampiric medusa, lives here with her consort, a halfblood yuan-ti named Sevastrin. Sevastrin's halfblood features include a snake head (grants poisonous bite attack) and scales instead of skin (+4 to natural armor).

**Sevastrin, Halfblood Yuan-ti Rog 3:** hp 51; see below.

**Kalivilya, Vampiric Medusa:** hp 39; see below.

**Tactics:** If they have heard the sounds of fighting, the two denizens of this room ready for battle. Sevastrin hides in the southwest corner, attacking the second PC into the room (or the first if only one enters), while Kalivilya pulls an animal from her rust-colored *bag of tricks* and then stands in the northeast corner of the room, employing her gaze attacks against entering PCs.

Sevastrin's blindfold protects him from Kalivilya's petrification gaze, though it grants all targets 100% concealment (50% miss chance) against his attacks. However, his Blind-fight feat allows him to reroll his miss chance percentile roll one time to see if he actually hits (melee only), and those attacking him in melee don't get the normal +2 bonus to attacks granted to invisible creatures. Since he has uncanny dodge, he also retains his Dexterity bonus to AC even when attacked while blindfolded. If Kalivilya is slain, he immediately removes his blindfold (a move-equivalent action) to negate the penalties.

If either Sevastrin or Kalivilya is defeated, the other seeks to flee (either via the trapdoor or the escape tunnel at area 12).

## 11. Kalivilya's Resting Place

The bed in the corner of the map is actually a coffin used by Kalivilya. Note that the door between area 11 and area 12 is trapped (see below).

**Treasure:** In addition to their gear, the monsters here have a stash made up of various items taken from their victims. A large sack in the corner holds 238 cp, 188 sp, 57 gp, 12 pp, and four various small pieces of jewelry worth 25 gp each.

## 12. Escape Tunnel (CR 4)

This earthen tunnel winds into the forest to the east, coming out in a hollowed tree about 300 yards from the tower.

**Trap:** The door between area 11 and area 12 is trapped to guard against intruders from this side. When the door is opened, a pair of sharpened stakes coated in large scorpion venom juts up from the dirt floor on this side of the door.

**Poisoned Stakes:** CR 6; +5 melee (2 attacks for 1d6 plus poison); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 25). Large scorpion venom: Type Injury DC 18, Damage 1d6 Str/1d6 Str.

Should the PCs trigger this trap from the other side, they may still step on the stakes, though a Spot check (DC 12) will allow the PC to notice the danger.

## Cliffhanger

If you want this adventure to lead to more intrigue, perhaps the PCs find a clue among the stolen possessions of the kidnap victims suggesting that one of them was part of a crime ring in the city. Or maybe Kalivilya was in correspondence with other evil forces regarding a potential alliance, such as the illithids of the Underdark city of Ilkkool Rrem or even demons from the Abyss (perhaps the fiendish snake at area 9 was a gift from such potential allies).

## NPC Statistics

**Sevastrin:** Male halfblood yuan-ti Rog3; CR 8; Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+7, 3d6+3; hp 51; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 22 (touch 12, flat-footed 22); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+3/18–20, +1 *scimitar*) and +6 melee (1d6+1 plus poison, bite); or +13/+8 ranged (1d8+2/[TS]3, masterwork mighty (Str bonus +2) composite longbow with masterwork arrows); SA Poison, psionics, sneak attack (+1d6); SQ Blindfolded, darkvision 60 ft., evasion, spell resistance 16, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +10, Will +10; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 16.

**Skills and Feats:** Balance +2, Bluff +8, Concentration +11, Craft (bowmaking) +10, Craft (trapmaking) +10, Diplomacy +5, Hide +11, Intimidate +5, Jump +2, Listen +15, Move Silently +8, Search +8, Spot +15, Tumble +5, Wilderness Lore +8; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

**Blindfolded:** Whenever in the company of Kalivilya, Sevastrin wears a blindfold to protect himself from her petrification gaze. This grants all his targets 100% concealment, though his Blind-fight feat counteracts some of that.

**Poison (Ex):** Bite attack, DC 14, Damage 1d6 Con/1d6 Con.

**Psionics (Sp):** At will -- *detect poison, alternate form, chameleon power, produce acid, aversion*

(as Sor6)

*Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 scimitar, masterwork mighty composite longbow (Str bonus +2), masterwork arrows (20), potion of bull's strength, potion of cure serious wounds, gold ring (120 gp).*

**Kalivilya:** Female vampiric medusa; CR 9; Medium-size Undead; HD 6d12; hp 39; Init +8, Speed 30 ft.; AC 23 (touch 14, flat-footed 19); Attacks +11/+6 ranged (1d8+3/[TS]3, mighty [Str 16] masterwork longbow) or +9 melee (1d6+3 plus energy drain, slam) and +5 melee (1d4+1 plus poison, snakes); SA blood drain, domination, energy drain, petrifying gaze, poison; SQ Alternate form, children of the night, create spawn, damage reduction 15/+1, fast healing 5, gaseous form, resistances, spider climb, turn resistance +4, undead traits; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +11, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 19, Con --, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 19.

*Skills and Feats:* Bluff +21, Diplomacy +6, Disguise +13, Hide +12, Intimidate +8, Listen +12, Move Silently +19, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +21; Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Martial Weapon Proficiency (composite longbow), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Finesse (snakes).

**Blood Drain (Ex):** Can permanently drain 1d4 Con per round while pin is maintained.

**Domination (Su):** Gaze attack, 30 feet, Will save (DC 17); as *dominate person*.

**Energy Drain (Su):** Living creatures struck by Kalivilya's slam attack suffer 2 negative levels.

**Petrifying Gaze (Su):** Turn to stone permanently, 30 feet, Fortitude save (DC 13).

**Poison (Ex):** Snakes, Fortitude save (DC 13); Damage 1d6 Str/2d6 Str.

**Alternate Form (Su):** Can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action.

**Children of the Night (Su):** Can call forth 4d8 dire rats, 10d10 bats, or 3d6 wolves as standard action (1/day), arriving in 2d6 rounds and serving for 1 hour.

**Create Spawn (Su):** A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by Kalivilya's energy drain or blood drain attack rises as a vampire spawn or vampire.

**Gaseous Form (Su):** As a standard action, Kalivilya can assume gaseous form at will, as a Sor5.

**Resistances (Ex):** Cold and electricity resistance 20.

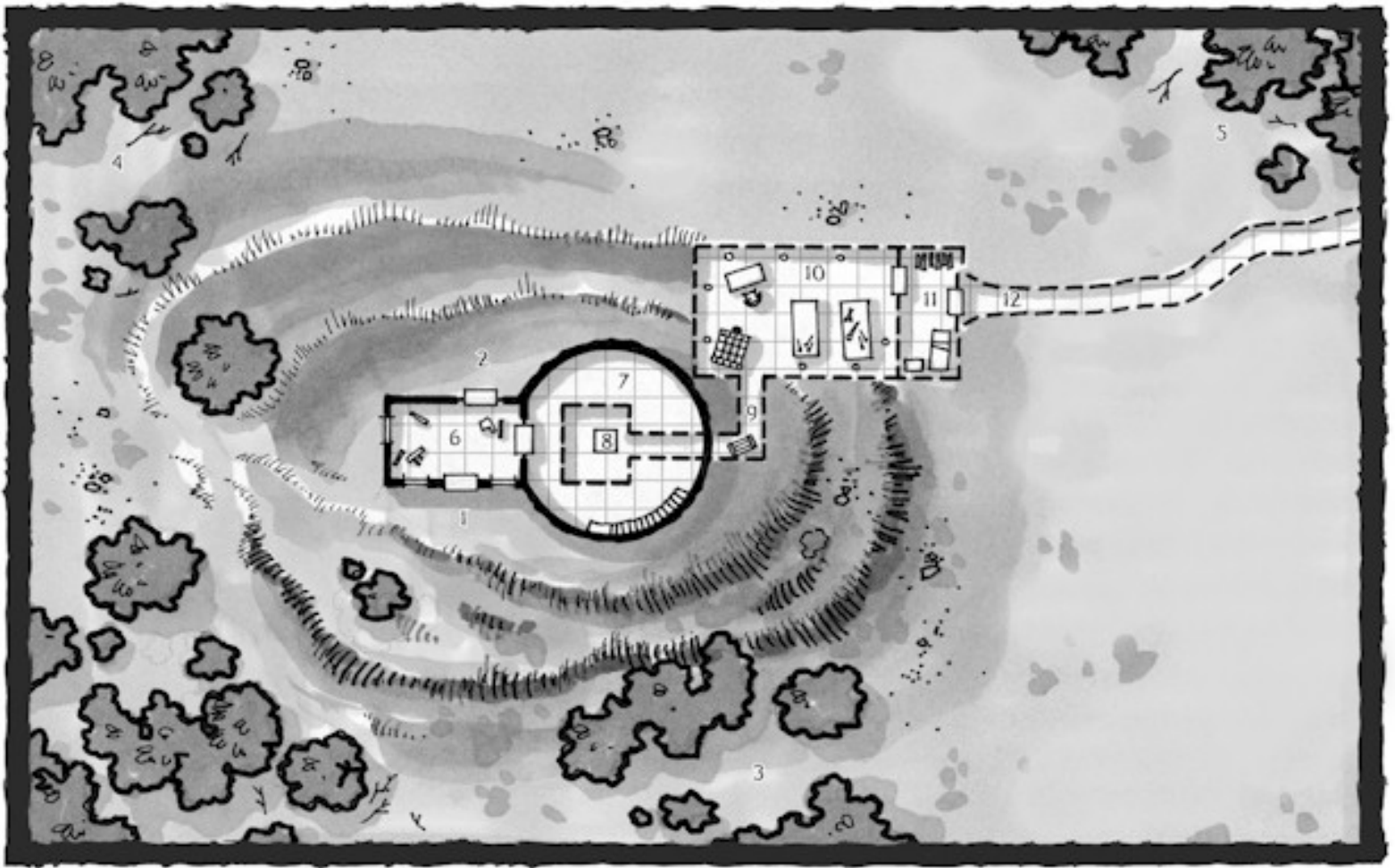
**Spider Climb (Ex):** Can climb sheer surfaces as though with a spider climb spell.

**Undead Traits:** Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death, effects, necromantic effects, mind-influencing effects, and any effect requiring a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects; not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain; cannot heal damage if there is no Intelligence score, (though fast healing and regeneration work normally); negative energy heals; not at risk of death from massive damage, but destroyed at 0 hit points or less; darkvision 60 ft.; cannot be raised; resurrection works only if creature is willing.

*Possessions:* Masterwork mighty (Str bonus +3) longbow, *bag of tricks (rust)*, *potion of haste*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

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