

A DRAGON FRIENDS ADVENTURE
FOR 2ND-LEVEL CHARACTERS

THE GRIBBITS DETECTIVE AGENCY PART II

WRITTEN BY
BENEDICT HARDIE
AND DAVID HARMON

ART BY
SIMON GREINER

DUNGEON
CARTOGRAPHY BY
JOG BROGZIN

EDITING AND
DEVELOPMENT BY
SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY



Mykon Drift, genius inventor and entrepreneur, has disappeared on the eve of his greatest ever product launch, and nobody seems to know why or where he's gone. Certain jaded onlookers might think this is for the best, for Drift is a disrupter in the truest sense, and the technomantic marvels he creates often wreak havoc on the guilds and economies of the Sword Coast.

But titans of industry like Mykon Drift don't just disappear for no reason, and his most loyal apprentice is willing to pay to find him. Unfortunately, that apprentice isn't willing to pay very well, so what they get is the Gribbits Detective Agency.

The Gribbits Detective Agency Part II is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for four 2nd-level characters. It is designed to follow on from [The Gribbits Detective Agency](#), and should be played in a single sitting.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the party, all members of the badly funded Gribbits Detective Agency, learning of the disappearance of the inventor Mykon Drift. The visionary creator of the *driftglobe* and other technomantic marvels, Drift currently bases his operations in Waterdeep, and is rumored to have been working on a new magic item—possibly his greatest yet.

That secret invention is the *autoscript*—a printing press built with a focus crystal capable of instantly translating thaumaturgical impulse (spells) into a dormant written form (scrolls). More than just a convenience, though, the *autoscript* would irrevocably unhinge the social order of the Western Heartlands, allowing the rarest and most powerful magical spells to be easily copied and replicated on an industrial scale by just about any old riffraff. Even better (which is to say, worse), unlike with traditional *spell scrolls*, an *autoscript spell scroll* can be used by anyone who can read Common—even characters with no spellcasting ability.

Realizing this, certain members of the Lords' Alliance made the difficult decision to abduct Drift and conscript him into their service to prevent the *autoscript* from falling into the wrong hands. Sympathetic double agents have been tasked with breaking up the Drift Consortium, while the inventor is to be held in a black site laboratory, creating technology purely for the benefit of the existing lords of the land. Mykon Drift has other ideas, however, and is planning his escape from the facility—if he can just get a little bit of help.

LOCATIONS

The Gribbits Detective Agency Part II follows on from—bear with us—*The Gribbits Detective Agency*, and is set within the timeline of the *Dragon Friends* podcast. As such, it takes place in and near the Dragon Friends' own peculiar version of Waterdeep—a harborside city that continues to thrive despite the misguided attention of a certain adventuring party. Interested Dungeon Masters can immerse themselves in this expanded universe at www.thedragonfriends.com or anywhere good podcasts are downloaded.

This adventure unfolds in three parts:

- **Act 1: A Corporate Affair** sees the adventurers visiting the stylish offices of the Drift Consortium, one of the fastest-growing mercantile operations in the city of Waterdeep. While at DriftCo, they investigate Mykon Drift's disappearance, interview key suspects, and hopefully escape without setting off too many alarms.
- **Act 2: The Black Site** sees the party leave Waterdeep to investigate a secret compound used by the Lords' Alliance to hold items and persons too dangerous to be allowed to enter general circulation. This black site is located deep underground beneath a lookout point a half day from the city. However, as the characters ruthlessly explore the site intent on rescuing Drift, they discover the inventor about to escape on his own. Infuriating.
- **Act 3: Sky High** takes place high above the Western Heartlands, as Mykon Drift escapes from the black site on his *autoscript* invention. Which has been jury-rigged to fly as a gyrocopter. And he has the characters in tow. This inaugural flight becomes a showdown between the characters and agents of the Lords' Alliance, who use the *autoscript's* scroll-generating properties to produce an insane amount of magic at an incredibly unsafe altitude.

KEY CHARACTERS

The following NPCs are central to the adventure.

Gribbits. All truly great detective agencies are headed by a cunning, inscrutable, and tough-as-nails veteran of the investigative arts. Our heroes do not work for such an agency, however, so what they get is Gribbits. A goblin lawyer turned middle manager, Gribbits serves in the Waterdeep underground finding work for an agency of low-level adventurers and informants. He is cowardly and pessimistic, and has a tendency to fall to bits at the slightest sign of bullying.

Mykon Drift. Few people have done as much to change the day-to-day lives of Waterdavians in as short a time as the human mage and inventor Mykon Drift. Aloof, impersonal, and unquestionably brilliant, Drift has a gift for invention that has seen the city flooded with life-changing and affordable magical trinkets. Even better (at least for him), this gift has so far kept enough money flowing in to keep Drift's many rivals in the city guilds at bay.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The following calendar highlights key backstory events and the timeline of the adventure.

3 Months Ago. Mykon Drift announces a date for his next product launch, and is secretly kidnapped by the Lords' Alliance.

2 Months Ago. Rowena Hollows is appointed vice president of the Drift Consortium and begins to quietly prep the company for dissolution.

1 Day Ago. Artie Stummer discovers Drift's disappearance and reports it to Hollows, who informs her masters.

Today. The Gribbits Detective Agency is engaged to find Mykon Drift, and Drift plans to make his escape.

Tomorrow. DriftCo is set to unveil the *autoscript* at the company's offices. The fate of the company hangs on a successful launch—which means the company will collapse if the *autoscript* and Mykon Drift fail to appear.

Rowena Hollows. The high-achieving half-elf vice president of DriftCo, Rowena is a relatively new hire. She's more of a lawyer and efficiency expert than a creative type, and has personally been responsible for managing the imminent product launch for Mykon Drift's newest invention. In truth, Rowena is a spy embedded in the Drift Consortium by the Lords' Alliance, and has been charged with putting an end to the disruptive start-up once and for all. Having ensured that the imprisoned Drift has no means to attend his own product launch and that the company has no prototype to unveil, Rowena is setting the launch up to be a public relations disaster of epic proportions. She believes this will both destroy DriftCo's reputation and help her prep the company for a speedy and inexpensive guild acquisition.

Arthur "Artie" Stummer. Artie Stummer is Mykon Drift's longtime personal apprentice. Nervous and fastidious by nature, he is both utterly impolitic and incapable of ambition. As such, he's a natural assistant, and has worked with Drift since magic academy, where they met in Artie's first and Drift's final year.

Molvano. An experienced operative of the Lords' Alliance, Molvano is the intendant and overseer of the Swallow's Head black site, where Mykon Drift has been secretly incarcerated. A forward-thinking administrator, Molvano quickly recognized that Drift would be far more valuable as an ally (unwitting or otherwise) than as a prisoner, and has set the genius inventor up in his own laboratory beneath Swallow's Head.

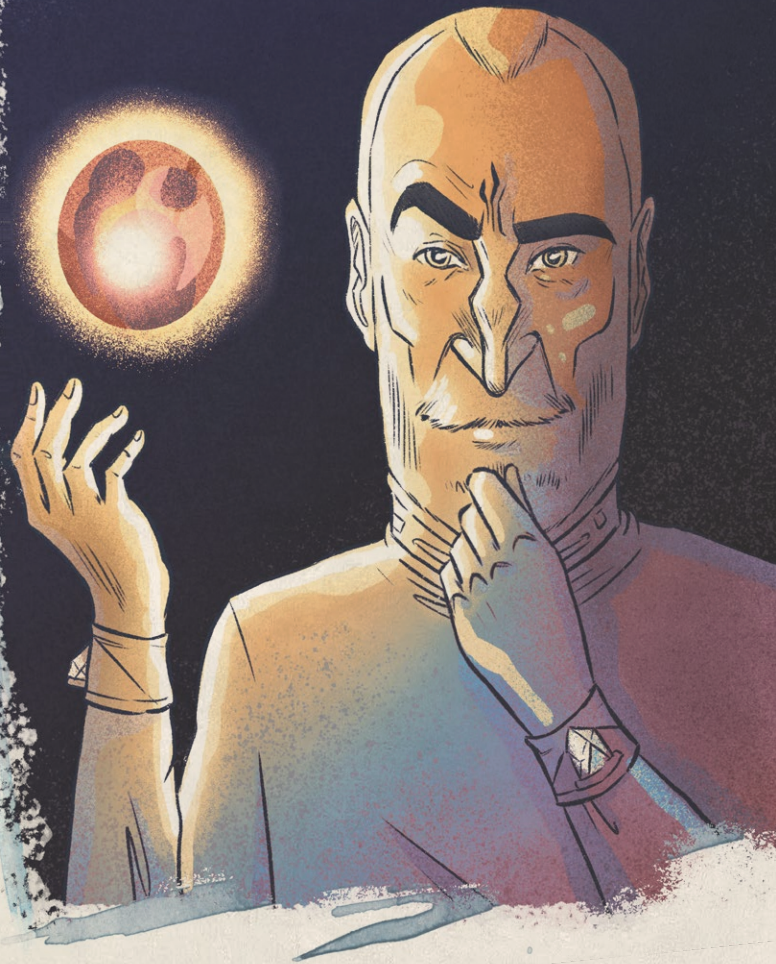
ACT 1: A CORPORATE AFFAIR

When you're ready to begin the adventure, read the following:

Far below the city of Waterdeep, in the subterranean markets of the Beggar Court, sits the squalid and poorly ventilated offices of the Gribbits Detective Agency. It is here that you have worked for some time as private investigators, undertaking missions too disreputable—or too insignificant—to trouble the powers-that-be in the city above.

The job isn't glamorous. It's not noble. It's not even very well paid. The offices are managed—very badly—by Gribbits the goblin, who has proven utterly incapable of providing you with regular work. So it's something of a surprise to check in this morning and discover a nervous-looking man in an apprentice's smock waiting with Gribbits in his office, a small sheath of papers gripped in his sweaty palms.

"Here come our mighty heroes now, Mr. Stummer!" says Gribbits, alternating between beaming at everyone present and flashing you furious glances when he thinks his guest can't see. "No doubt held back by some of our very important and of course top-secret work for the city. Now, Mr. Stummer. Tell my agents what you told me."



Gribbits (a chaotic good **goblin**) has been listening to Artie's story and hoping that any of the agency's operatives opportunely stumble in through the door. Artie Stummer (a lawful good human **commoner**) is something of a nervous wreck, having been up all night with no one to turn to. He explains the following to the party, making copious reference to the notes he's brought along:

- Artie works for the Drift Consortium, Mykon Drift's one-of-a-kind arcane workshop and manufacturer of all manner of simple magic items sold across the Sword Coast.
- Despite being Drift's longtime personal assistant, Artie has seemingly been sidelined recently, forced to work on minor projects away from the genius inventor for the last three months. This is clearly a snub, as the company is gearing up for a major product launch tomorrow.

MONSTERS AND MAGIC

All the monster and NPC stat blocks in this adventure can be found in the *Monster Manual* or the adventure appendix. When a creature or NPC name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue for you to look up the stat block in the *Monster Manual*, unless the text instead refers you to the appendix.

The names of spells and magic items appear in *italics*. Unless the text refers you to the adventure appendix, spells can be found in the *Player's Handbook* and magic items can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

- Artie has become increasingly concerned that something has happened to his mentor. Recent weekly all-staff meetings have been chaired by DriftCo vice president Rowena Hollows, and Drift has not been seen around the DriftCo technical campus in weeks.
- Mykon Drift's private offices have been locked down, with a company guard posted at the doors, since the launch was announced. Everyone can see Drift working late into the night through the frosted glass walls of the office, but he never comes out.
- Drift is known to go to ground during crunch times, so this behavior isn't completely out of the ordinary. But last night, Artie saw something that has made him fear for his boss's safety.

THE MISSING INVENTOR

The previous night, Artie was working late on his own projects when he saw a figure wearing Drift's iconic greatcoat heading down a corridor away from his private wing. Hoping to confront Drift and discover the reason for his own sidelining, Artie called out and ran to intercept him, grabbing at Drift's arm. As he did, he felt whirring mechanisms under the coat sleeve as the figure half turned in the low light, revealing a face that looked like a brass mask modeled after Drift's features. The figure barked at Stummer with what sounded like a pipe organ chord, and he fell back, alarmed. This allowed the figure to slip through a side door and back into Drift's private wing.

Artie is convinced that Drift has been kidnapped—or worse. He has filed a report of what he saw with the company's security force, but the guards seemed dismissive, suggesting that the apprentice might simply have been confused owing to too many late nights on the job. Fearing a conspiracy, Artie snuck out during his lunch break to the Beggar Court, having seen an ad for the detective agency on the wall of a nearby takeaway shop—a deal Gribbits has recently negotiated, and a fact that delights him.

Artie offers to pay the characters 150 gp each out of his personal expense account for proof of Drift's whereabouts, plus a further 250 gp as a group bonus if Drift is returned alive. He does not have the money on him and cannot offer an advance. He suggests they come by the DriftCo offices later that morning.

Artie is happy to answer any other questions the characters might have about Mykon Drift, DriftCo, or the company offices. If asked whether he suspects anyone else of being involved, he mentions that Hollows has been acting strangely, as have many of the DriftCo security guards. He also points out that Drift has many rivals—particularly the guilds of Waterdeep who resent his operation's lack of affiliation.

Artie claims to be unable to discuss the product launch, as he's been out of the loop on that project for months. He's happy to explain that it's a major event, and that Drift has promised in interviews that his new invention will revolutionize how people use magic forever. However, a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check or suitable roleplaying gets a little more out of him. Artie recalls that when he last worked with Drift, the genius inventor had been studying the

metamagical capacity of certain precious gemstones used in *rings of spell storing*. He also recalls the codename of the secret project: SCRIBE.

When the characters have learned all they can, Artie insists that he needs to get back before he's missed and his absence raises suspicions. Once Artie has left, Gribbits does his best to convince the party to take the case. He reminds them that DriftCo is one of the most wealthy independent outfits in Waterdeep, and even beyond Stummer's payment, it's likely that Drift will reward them handsomely, allowing the agency to buy exciting things for the office like pens or a new front desk.

When the characters are ready to start their investigation, continue with the next section.

ARRIVAL AT DRIFTCo

The Drift Consortium is almost impossible to miss as the characters head into Castle Ward. Consisting of four buildings and a tiny park, the gleaming technical campus sits just off the Street of Bells in the shadow of the Tower of the Order—home to Waterdeep's venerable Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors.

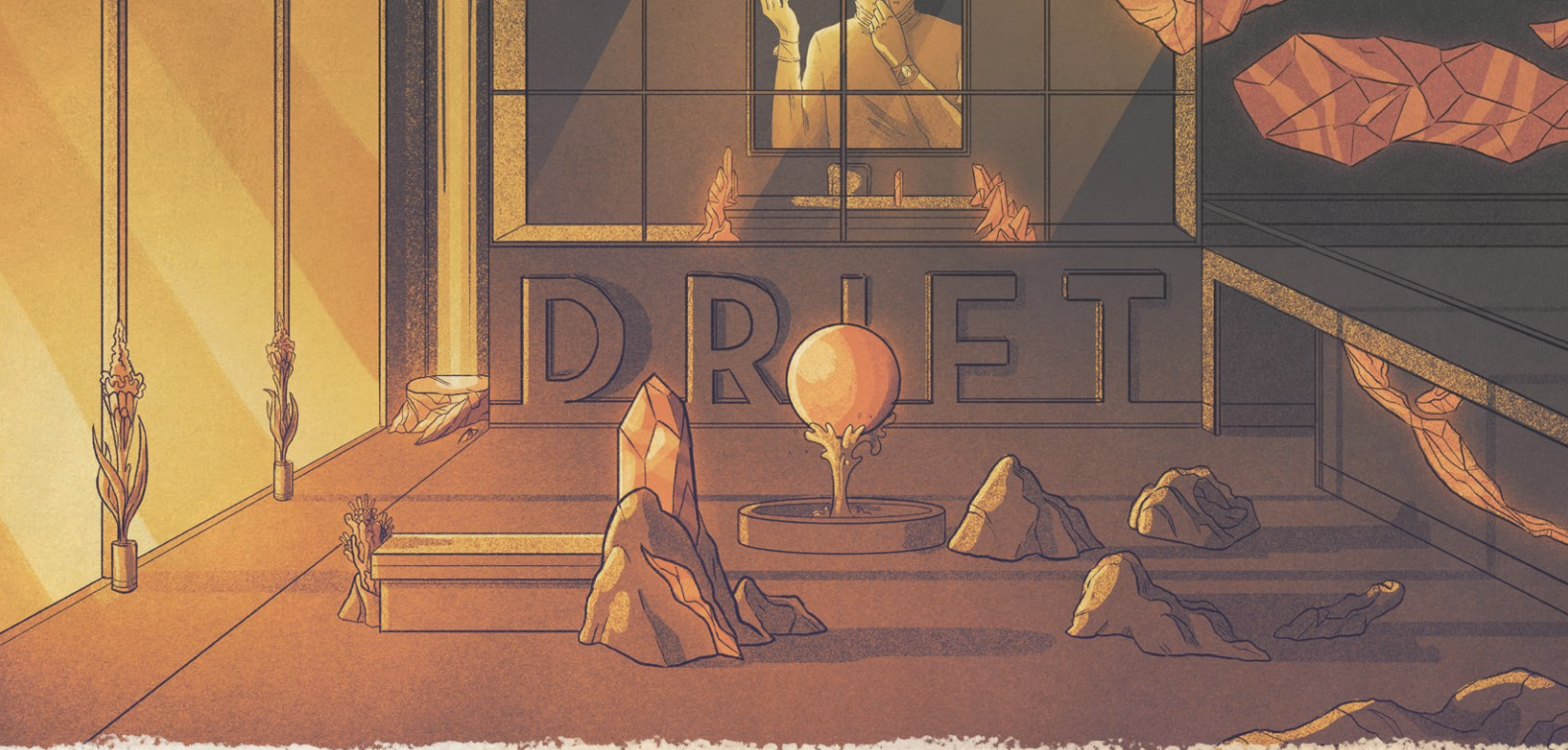
As the characters enter the lobby of the main building, read:

The marble-and-glass public lobby of Drift Consortium's flagship office was designed to be a direct challenge to the veiled and cloistered mysteries of Waterdeep's traditional magical colleges—and it shows. Everywhere you look, you see open-plan space. A gorgeous split-level mezzanine rises above you, covered in immaculately tended plants and offices. A giant central water-feature fountain is dominated by a massive floating *driftglobe* and a portrait of the company's founder, Mykon Drift.

Above and around you, scribes, mages, and seers zip around on what appear to be small and silent technomantic scooters, a variety of colorful lanyards around their necks. Small teams are erecting banners and other decorations ahead of tomorrow's launch event, overseen by a quick-moving gnome in a tidy white shirt. Amid all the bustle of employees and contractors, it's easy to slip inside.

Notionally, the ground floor of the main DriftCo building is open to the public, though guards and lobby assistants expect any visitors to have a good reason for being there. The space is dominated by a flagship DriftCo store, where common and uncommon magic items are available for purchase at whatever cost is appropriate for your campaign (and where *driftglobes* are available at a 10 percent discount). The lobby also features a small cafe, bathrooms, and an improbable number of beanbag chairs and ping-pong tables.

A fortified security office stands to the north of the lobby (see "Security!" below for more information), and a small employee services stand allows DriftCo employees to borrow the technomantic scooters mentioned above to zip around the campus. Any character with a magical



background or who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes that the scooters are powered by an ingenious reconfiguration of the *Tenser's floating disk* spell.

The private open-plan office space above the lobby is kept more secure, and requires access via a set of stairwells guarded by members of the consortium's security guards. See "Security!" on page 7 for their statistics.

GNOME IN CHARGE

The lobby is minded by a genial receptionist named Phafflebee (a lawful good gnome **commoner**). Having been put in charge of decorations ahead of delivery of the new product, he's incredibly excited about it—and is willing to tell just about anybody how it's all going to look. The product itself hasn't been delivered yet—though a small circular stage and a folded velvet sheet suggests it's expected to be the size of a large cart.

Phafflebee is distracted enough by the celebrations to be easily manipulated. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check or suitable roleplaying convinces him to part with a set of contractor or press lanyards to allow access to the secure floors above.

If the characters decide to announce themselves formally as members of a detective agency, Phafflebee turns a sickly color and decides this is above his pay grade. He quickly summons a guard to take the characters to security chief Laella Banknote, "to discuss any concerns you might have." (For more on Banknote, see "Boardroom" on page 6 and "Security!" on page 7.)

SECOND FLOOR

Once the characters find a way upstairs, they can progress into the heart of the building.

ARTIE STUMMER'S OFFICE

If the characters try to visit Artie in his second-floor office, the place is empty and his desk is a mess of papers, tools, and partially deconstructed *driftglobes*. A

successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check made while searching the desk reveals a memo instructing Artie to head to an impromptu evaluation that very afternoon with Rowena Hollows in the boardroom.

If the characters spend too long at Artie's desk, a **goblin** janitor named Spiddle comes by to do a quick afternoon clean, and is curious to know what they're doing there. Spiddle is a frustrated amateur inventor. If he mistakes the characters for executives, he immediately pitches them his plans for a *slop bucket of devouring*. ("It's self cleaning!")

ROWENA HOLLOW'S OFFICE

The vice president's office is attended by her private secretary, a neutral elf **commoner** called Demeter Sook, who is very good at his job and utterly loathed by every other employee on the floor. Demeter idolizes Rowena, believing that she is everything the company needs to attain true success. Between him and anybody unfortunate enough to be stuck in a conversation with him, Sook is quick to opine that a consortium like this one needs a CEO with business and guild experience, not a dreamer like Mykon Drift.

Sook can take a message for "Miss Hollows," but informs the characters that she's engaged in a private meeting in the boardroom ahead of tomorrow's launch. He does his best to politely block the characters from entering the office, and calls security if needed.

If the characters manage to get into Rowena's office, they stand to discover quite a lot. Her neat desk contains a ledger detailing DriftCo's assets. A successful DC 14 Intelligence check made to scan it reveals that much of the ledger is arguably undervalued—almost like she's setting up the company for easy acquisition.

Rowena's private safe is locked, but can be opened with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. It is also protected by a built-in magical alarm effect attuned to Rowena. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character notes a faint magical glow

around the safe's door seal. If the safe is opened, Rowena is alerted. She excuses herself from her current business and heads quickly to her office, picking up an escort of two security guards en route.

Treasure. The safe contains a key to Drift's private office, 32 gp, two vials (one empty; one containing a dose of essence of ether poison), a *spell scroll* of *modify memory*, and a letter from someone named Molvano:

Rowena,

I have taken possession of the prototype, and my new guest, at our facility at Swallow's Head. You and your man have exceeded expectations. All that is left now is to keep the trail dark and anticipation high until the product launch.

In the aftermath of such a huge public debacle—with no founder's appearance and no prototype unveiling—DriftCo will never recover. In a month or two, a quick angel acquisition can put one of the more civic-minded guilds back in control of Drift's rogue inventory, as it always should have been.

Have no doubt that your work here has played a major part in upholding the peace—not just in Waterdeep but across the Sword Coast.

Molvano.

Any character who has spent significant time around Waterdeep, or who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check, knows that Swallow's Head is an old overgrown lookout point along the coast north of the city. The name 'Molvano' doesn't ring any bells, but the characters will learn more in act 2 of the adventure.

THIRD FLOOR

Characters who continue on upward (with or without security on their tail) eventually reach the third floor.

DRIFT'S OFFICES

Mykon Drift's private offices on the third floor face the staircase leading up to it, but their front wall and door are made of frosted glass. Through the glass, anyone coming up the stairs can make out a faint figure moving around the spacious office, and working on what appears to be a device the size of a large cart.

The door is protected around the clock by a single security guard, who is under instructions to let nobody enter. Such is the risk of corporate espionage or sabotage this close to the launch. The dwarf **thug** has suffered a recent malfunction with his wrist-mounted magical *messaging stone* (see "Security!" below) but has not yet had a chance to get it replaced. With the guard out of the way, the locked door can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or with the keys found in Rowena Hollows's office or taken from Banknote.

THE IMPOSTOR INVENTOR

The figure behind the frosted glass is actually a specially crafted technomantic construct (use the **animated armor** stat block), obtained by Hollows to play the part of Drift. Every couple of days, the construct sneaks out to have its programming adjusted by Hollows or Sook. The 'prototype' it works on is one of Drift's workstations, upturned with a sheet over it to give the impression of bulk.

If the characters manage to access the office, the construct is working in Drift's cloak with its back to them. Though it cannot speak, it tries to maintain its disguise for as long as possible before attacking. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher hears a faint ticking that grows louder as they approach 'Drift.'

Once the construct has been destroyed or incapacitated, any character who examines it discovers a five-pointed symbol engraved at the base of its neck. This can be recognized as a sign of the Lords' Alliance by any character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check or who has the noble or sage background. Beneath the mark in a tidy printed script are the words: "MADE & MANUFACTURED AT SWALLOW'S HEAD." Any character who has spent significant time around Waterdeep, or who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check, knows that Swallow's Head is an old overgrown lookout point along the coast north of the city.

On the back of one of the creature's hands is a small maker's mark resembling the letters "MV." Someone has scratched "GRG" underneath it, possibly with a nail. (See part two of the adventure for more information on those responsible, Molvano and Greg.)

Characters who make a thorough investigation of the office discover signs of a struggle, with a shattered tea set swept under another desk. (Drift was drugged by Hollows before being bundled by her and Demeter Sook out of the building in a trunk.)

BOARDROOM

The third-floor boardroom is of an elegant modern fishbowl design, making it easy to see Artie Stummer being interviewed by VP Hollows (a lawful evil half-elf **spy**) and security chief Banknote (a lawful neutral female human **bandit captain**) at a vast table. With a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character can see that Artie appears a little agitated, though his back is to the window.

If the characters linger outside the boardroom and aren't somehow hidden from view, Banknote walks up to the window and shuts the blinds. A moment later, she emerges to ask what they're doing there, then calls a guard to come and escort the party out of the building. (See "Security!" below for more information on Banknote.)

If the characters bluster or force their way in to see Rowena, the field operative deflects all questions and feigns ignorance if any talk is raised of Mykon Drift being missing. She is more than capable of protecting herself, and she carries a *veteran's cane* (see the appendix) that turns into a shortsword rather than a longsword.

Who Are You, Again? If the characters avoid attracting Banknote's attention, they see Artie Stummer emerge from the boardroom a short while later. He has been

interrogated by Hollows, who has cast *modify memory* on him to remove all recollection of his encounter with the construct. As a byproduct of this, Artie can make no sense of his memory of the meeting at the Gribbits Detective Agency. If the characters talk to him, either as he leaves the boardroom or back in his office, they find him agitated and confused, and acting as though meeting with the characters was some sort of sinister dream. If they press Artie, he panics and calls security.

SECURITY!

If the characters overstay their welcome at the DriftCo office one way or another, they are likely to attract the attention of security chief Laella Banknote and her guards. Banknote is an aristocratic-looking lawful neutral female human **bandit captain** whose hair hangs in a shining golden braid, and whose *wand of magic missiles* is hidden inside her sleeve.

At any given time, a force of ten guards patrols the five buildings of the DriftCo campus. These guards are recognizable by their no-nonsense haircuts, sharp slim-line robes, and dark, anonymizing eyewear. They use the **thug** stat block but carry hand crossbows instead of heavy crossbows:

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

The guards maintain constant communication with each other thanks to an ingenious set of wrist-mounted *messaging stones*. Each stone is a rare magic item that allows its bearer to cast the *message* cantrip at will. If used to communicate with another creature also bearing a *messaging stone*, the stone has a range of 1,000 feet, allowing the guards to communicate with each other and with the central security office from any area of the campus.

Given the imminent launch of DriftCo's secret new product, Banknote is keen to deal with any interlopers discreetly—meaning she wants to avoid City Watch oversight or interference. However, she won't hesitate to call for backup if real violence breaks out.

WHAT BANKNOTE KNOWS

Banknote is not actually part of the conspiracy to abduct Drift, and has so far been suckered by Hollows. She does her best to keep the DriftCo campus safe, but if confronted with evidence of wrongdoing, she asks the party to stay where they are and heads off alone to confront Hollows. Unfortunately, the VP responds by modifying Banknote's memory using the scroll in her office, convincing the security chief that the characters are corporate saboteurs trying to steal the *autoscript*. This leads to a lockdown and a building-wide hunt for the party.

Banknote's desk at the security office contains a magical device that monitors all communications through the guards' *messaging stones*, which is staffed at all times. It also holds a family lithograph featuring Banknote, in a macaroni-encrusted frame engraved 'to Mother' that looks suspiciously freshly made.

Treasure. If Banknote is killed or incapacitated, any search of her turns up a master key that opens any door on the campus (including Drift's private office), 20 gp in a

pouch under her jacket, and a locket of her blue-skinned son Lionshield, who is a very good boy indeed.

NEXT MOVES

Once the characters have ascertained that Drift has been abducted, they should have enough clues to go to Swallow's Head—a remote and picturesque lookout a half-day's ride out of the city, and the site of the adventure's second act.

ACT 2: THE BLACK SITE

The subterranean fortress known as 'the black site' is concealed beneath the old lookout at Swallow's Head, just north of Waterdeep. There, the Lords' Alliance keeps numerous controversial items and individuals hidden away from the general public, safely out of sight.

When the characters arrive, read the following:

A half-day's ride brings you to Swallow's Head—what was once a picturesque lookout over the Sea of Swords, but which has long been reclaimed by the local flora. These days, the conical top of the lookout plateau is ringed by a dense border of untended pine trees and brambles. Those brambles are thick stemmed, razor sharp, and rise over eight feet high to top the plateau like a crown of thorns.

The area appears completely inaccessible to would-be vista-seekers, and the scene is eerily still, save for the wind in the pine needles and the occasional crow or scurrying critter. Other than the expansive foliage, the place is empty—desolate even—and completely devoid of buildings or structures. If there's meant to be some kind of facility here, it's very well hidden.

The bramble thicket and the pine trees completely surround the plateau, limiting access to the top of the old lookout. However, any character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check notices that there's more to the brambles than meets the eye. The thick, spiky vines are not plants at all, but are entirely artificial—some kind of charcoal compound lined with copper cables, constructed in tangled knots, and somehow anchored to the tree line beyond them.

Attempting to cut through the brambles is a slow, painful process. Characters who attempt to do so for 10 minutes feel as though they've made little to no progress. Anyone who continues hacking after that gains one level of exhaustion before realizing that the brambles' unique artificial makeup makes them immune to most normal forms of assault, including fire and damage from non-magical weapons.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check made to search the perimeter of the bramble thicket reveals that a number of scattered pine trees have a series of small niches cut into their trunks.

If the characters are somehow able to push through the brambles or make it past them in some other way, they find the top of the lookout a desolate if tranquil slope.

Roughly 120 feet across, the site is absolutely devoid of any interesting features.

A WATCHER IN THE TREES

At some point during the characters' investigation of or attempt to get to the top of the lookout, any character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check suddenly notices a figure watching the party, wedged into the branches of a nearby tree. The figure is happy to sneak forward and introduce himself as Hax Bon Tieren—a half-elf thief and conspiracy theorist, obsessed with uncovering the secrets of the Lords' Alliance. Hax uses the **spy** stat block and wears a *cloak of elvenkind*, and can share any of the following information:

- Hax arrived at the lookout earlier that morning, and has been watching the characters since their arrival. Though he was initially waiting for them to leave, it has since become clear that they do not work for the facility.
- He is convinced that a secret compound lies below the lookout, and happily shares his theories with anyone who will listen. ("These black sites, man, every city has one, man...")
- Hax is in the process of attempting to access the black site, hoping to retrieve proof of its existence for his newsletter. However, he warns the characters that "you have to be crazy to try to get inside."
- Earlier that morning, Hax witnessed a human and a tiefling using a two-key system to activate and retract a section of the brambles, allowing access to a hidden door cut into the rock of the plateau. (This was Molvano, the facility's intendant, and his apprentice, Greg Duveé, though Hax does not know this.)
- The keys were used simultaneously on opposite sides of the bluff, with one of the figures shouting a countdown sequence allowing both to synchronize their key turns.

If the characters can convince Hax that their cause is aligned with his, he is happy to accept their help to get into the black site. Having investigated the keyhole Molvano used, Hax has used his thievery skills to craft two keys he believes will fit the niches. But with no way to activate both keys at the same time by himself, he has been forced to watch and wait.

GETTING INSIDE

Ten magical keyholes are embedded in trees every 35 feet around the hem of the plateau, each capable of providing access to the black site at a specific time of day.

Though Hax doesn't yet know it, the underground black site complex revolves constantly within the sinkhole in which it was constructed. The interior entrance passages (there are two, on opposite sides of the complex) align with each pair of access trees for a few short minutes throughout the day. Two individuals on opposite sides of the bramble thicket have to turn their keys simultaneously to open both entrances to the underground complex. Missing that window of time means finding the next tree in the rotation and waiting.

Hax has been waiting long enough that he's observed the keyhole niches in specific trees begin to glow from time to time. He has thus determined which set of trees

THE SWALLOW'S HEAD BLACK SITE

The black site at Swallow's Head is one of a number of such facilities dotted around the major cities of the Sword Coast. Designed to be run by a small crew of caretakers, the site is currently inhabited by its intendant, Molvano, and by his apprentice, Greg Duveé. Both spend their time cataloging, archiving, and monitoring and feeding prisoners. They also occasionally release the odd perilously dangerous magical artifact or dissident into Lords' Alliance custody.

The black site's unique design resembles four ring-shaped levels linked by curved stairwells, as seen on the map on page 9. The complex is built inside an excavated sinkhole shaft, with the secret behind its rotation found on the lowest level.

Access to the levels within the black site is dependent on the entrance used, with most levels connected only to the levels two above or below. When the characters enter by way of the administration level at the top of the complex, they then descend down two floors to the cell level. Descending two floors again reveals the golem level at the base of the complex. From there, the characters can ascend one floor to Molvano's level, then two more floors to the storage level (where Hax Bon Tieren entered).

In addition to its confusing alternating-level structure, the curved interiors of the black site conceal a central cylindrical chamber, which rises through all the other levels and is accessible only through a hatch in the golem level. This hidden space is where Mykon Drift is located.

Light. The interior of the complex appears dark when the characters first enter, but is illuminated as they explore. *Driftglobes* in sconces line all the corridors, lighting up when anyone approaches them and dimming again after they pass. Each room is likewise lit by *driftglobes*.

is set to trigger next. He gives the party one of his keys and heads around the plateau. As he does, he warns them not to lose the key, which he suspects will be required to leave the black site. Hax then swiftly disappears around the brambles, firmly but gently dissuading anyone from joining him if they suggest it.

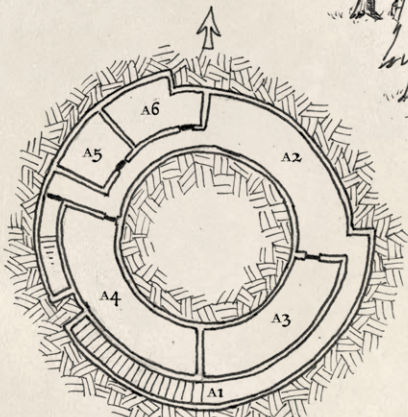
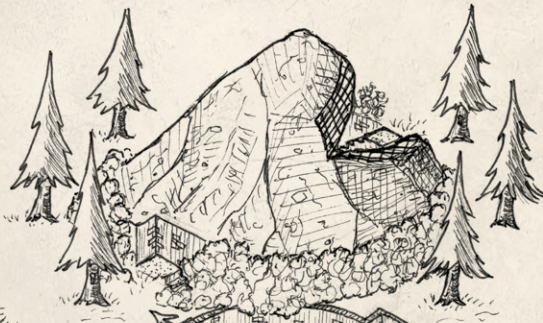
After a short time, the niche in the tree nearest to the characters begins to faintly glow, and they hear Hax's voice calling out a countdown. When both the party's and Hax's keys are turned together, the brambles coil inward, parting in a wedge to reveal a narrow set of descending stairs among the stones. The access is already slowly narrowing as the staircase rotates past, and is accessible only for two minutes.

ADMINISTRATION LEVEL

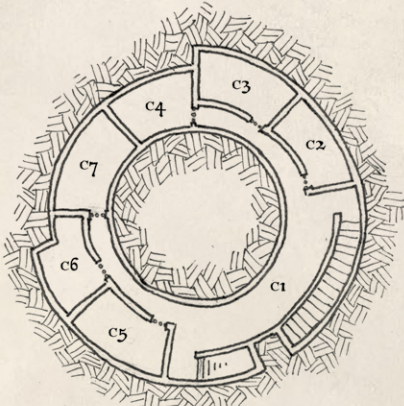
The topmost level of the black site is the complex's administration wing.

A1. BLACK SITE ENTRANCE

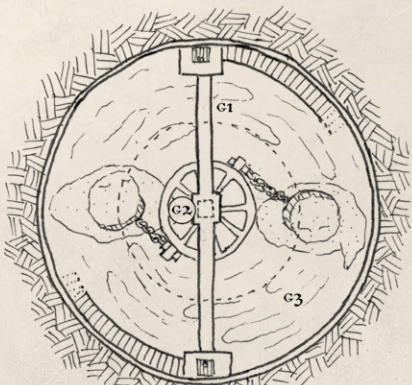
From the lookout, the stairs lead down to a dark, curved corridor with smooth stone walls. A niche set into the wall just inside the entrance takes the same key as the trees outside, retracting the brambles and allowing characters to exit the facility. The space rumbles constantly as the complex slowly rotates, and occasional strange creaks and thumps resound throughout. (As the characters descend deeper into the complex, these sounds grow louder.)



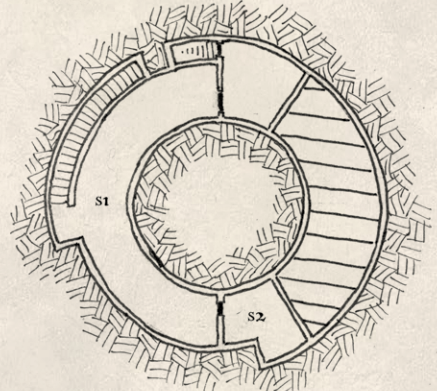
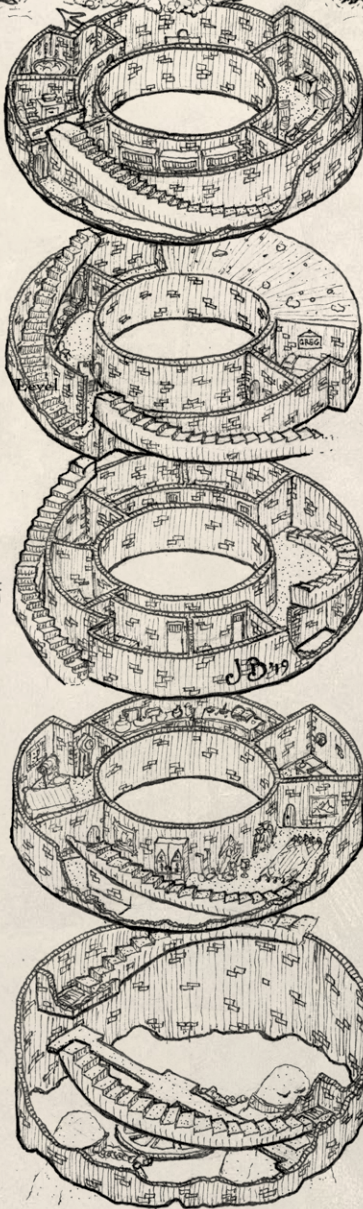
Administration Level



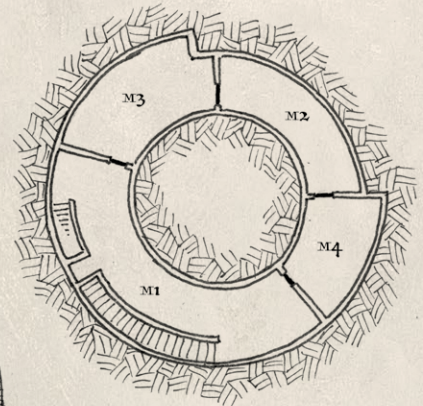
Cell Level



Golem Level



Storage Level



Molvano's Level



Drift's Sanctum

A2. BLACK SITE ADMINISTRATION HALL

The curved stairwell corridor opens up to a curved workspace that appears unattended. A desk with a bell on it stands at the center of the hall, and a number of wooden doors stand closed where the room narrows to a corridor at the far end.

Any character who looks over the desk spots a simple iron key sitting on a blotting pad. The key unlocks the door to area A3.

A3. TRAP ROOM

A locked wooden door is set with a grilled window, revealing what lies beyond to anyone who steps up. The door can be opened with the key from area A2, jimmied open with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced with a successful DC 13 Strength check. The room beyond resembles a storage locker filled with shelves, most of which are stacked with small chests and boxes. On one shelf near the door, an incredibly tempting-looking sheathed longsword glows faintly blue. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character also spots a hidden portcullis just inside the doorframe.

The setup appears too good to be true, and is something of an office in-joke. Touching any item in the room causes a magical alarm to sound out and the steel portcullis to drop just inside the door. This traps any intruders with two **piercers** hanging just above the shelves. The portcullis can be lifted with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, or by one or more characters with a combined Strength of 20 or higher.

All the boxes and chests are empty. The longsword is a decorative replica owned by Greg, made of cheap metal and infused with a persistent glowing charm. If used in combat, it functions as a longsword but breaks the first time it hits.

If the characters end up trapped here, or if they hang around after setting off the alarm, Greg arrives after 10 minutes. Unless the characters make their presence known, he assumes the alarm is malfunctioning and attempts to reset it, then feeds the **piercers** sandwiches.

A4. LIBRARY OF BANNED TEXTS

The magically locked door to this area can be opened with the keys Greg or Molvano carry, jimmied open with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced with a successful DC 15 Strength check. Within the library, a small reading desk features two ergonomic kneeling chairs (which Molvano likes for some reason). The shelves are piled high with tomes of old black magic, new tech magic, cultist ravings, and vexing amateur erotica.

Unhappy Assistant. Greg Duveé is reading in the library on his lunch break when the characters first enter. A chaotic neutral tiefling **acolyte**, Greg is the assistant to Intendant Molvano. If alerted to the characters' presence (if they made an undue amount of noise before or while breaking in, for example), Greg is sweating bricks when they appear, crouched behind an upturned reading table and waving his *wand of polymorph* at the door. If caught unawares, he'll be wedged uncomfortably into one of the chairs, reading an unnecessarily steamy fantasy novella.

Greg is nervous, erratic, and mostly hapless. He can, however, activate a magic remote control he carries to shut down the magical defensive field holding the manticores in area C2. (See "Cell Level" for more information.) That monster will sweep the complex, murdering everyone it finds. Greg knows he'll have to clean up afterward, though, so he uses the button only as a last resort.

Greg is trying his best to be a good apprentice, but if captured or charmed, he quickly spills the beans on the black site facility, including:

- Its purpose (a holding site for the Lords' Alliance)
- His job (looking after the prisoners)
- His boss (Molvano)
- His dreams (graduation at a proper magical academy and a nice, quiet job in the city)

He can also tell the characters that Mykon Drift arrived at the black site three months ago. The inventor was initially held on the cell level, but Molvano moved him two months ago to a secret location somewhere else in the facility. Greg suspects that this secret location must be inside the core of the complex, but has no idea how it is accessed.

Greg carries a heavy key ring bearing keys that open all the locked doors in the facility outside of Molvano's level, plus the key that allows access to the site.

A Little Light Reading. Characters who spend 10 minutes searching the library find meticulous notes kept by Mykon Drift outlining various trial experiments with something called 'the *autoscript*.' (The notes are unclear as to the particulars of this device.) Searching characters also find the original blueprints for the black site, which show the setup of the levels, reveal the secret room Mykon is held in, and show how that level is accessible from the basement catwalk.

The search also turns up a scroll case whose contents radiate magic to a *detect magic* spell. However, claiming the case risks awakening a magical tome that was used decades ago to imprison a warlock who betrayed the Lords' Alliance. The tome is wedged between the scroll case and a very badly written (and inexplicably banned) treatise on bunions. A character moving the scroll case must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or accidentally disturb and awaken the book. The magical tome uses the **flying sword** stat block with this change:

- Instead of its longsword attack, it casts either the *create bonfire* cantrip (DC 13; see the appendix) or the *fire bolt* cantrip (DC 13).

Remember that just about everything in the room is flammable.

Treasure. The scroll case holds a *spell scroll* of a random 2nd-level spell.

A5. KITCHENETTE

This area is a thoroughly gastronomically uninspiring galley kitchen. Here, the adventurers can uncover Greg's sandwiches, Molvano's leftover casserole, tea and biscuits, some outdated magazines, and an uncomfortable sofa.

A6. DISSOLVING ROOM

The heavy stone door to this area slides open on a pulley system, revealing a suit of *demon armor* hanging from a chain and resting partially submerged in a pool of bubbling liquid. Some time ago, the Lords' Alliance captured a pod of four **gray oozes**, and have set the creatures up here to attempt to dissolve the armor. It is not known how long this process will take, due to the qualities of the metal. While within the pool, the oozes cannot be detected. They become agitated and attack if anyone enters the pool or tries to take the armor.

STAIRWELL

As the characters descend the featureless stone stairwell at the far end of the level, the rumbling sounds of the complex are joined by an inexplicably deep thudding, keeping a slow and steady beat. The stairs descend two levels to the cell level.

CELL LEVEL

The third level down of the black site contains the cells where enemies of the Lords' Alliance are held.

This entire area is covered by an overlapping series of shimmering magical fields. One set of fields double-locks the door and wards the bars of each cell, causing them to glow a faint blue. While this field is active, a cell door can be opened only with the keys carried by Molvano or Greg, or with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. If this field is deactivated, a cell door can be opened with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced with a successful DC 13 Strength check.

Each cell also contains a selective antimagic field that functions as the spell of the same name, to contain dangerous magical prisoners.

A successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check made to study any of the cells confirms the function of the fields. Both Molvano and Greg carry remote controls that can activate and deactivate any of the fields. Figuring out the remote control without assistance requires a successful DC 12 Intelligence check.

C1. CELL BLOCK CORRIDOR

Most of this level is given over to a curving corridor set with doors and barred gates at regular intervals.

C2. MANTICORE CELL

Behind a barred door locked and protected by magic prowls a **manticore**. It bares its teeth if anyone approaches, and repeats one whispered phrase: "You're mine." While the magical protective field is active, it prevents the manticore from breaking the door down or attacking targets outside the cell with its tail spikes. If the field is dropped, the manticore can easily force the door open and escape.

C3. SEA HAG CELL

This unlocked door features a cutout panel. If the adventurers look inside, they see a despondent old woman sitting on a bench, muttering softly to herself. This creature is actually a **sea hag** who was the first prisoner of the black site, and her spirit is now seemingly broken. She has forgotten most of her history, including her name. Because Molvano has so effectively broken the

hag, he does not bother locking the cell or turning on its antimagic field.

If the characters speak with her, the hag can reveal that she misses being able to talk to the young man in the cell next door. Very imaginative chap. But the ugly dragon-cat on the other side only ever says the same boring phrase. If encouraged to leave, the hag is more interested in heading to the kitchen in search of food than doing any real damage, but she is more than capable of defending herself if attacked.

C4. EMPTY CELL

The door to this unoccupied cell is open. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check made to search the cell reveals a white glob on the ceiling—actually a paper spitball that can be unrolled and read. It says "Moving down, moving up. New digs on the shoulders of giants. MD." Mykon Drift was held in this cell for a few weeks, befriending the hag next door before he was transferred to the secret workshop (see "Drift's Sanctum" on page 12).

C5. GHAST CELL

This cell features an unlocked door with a cutout panel. Any adventurer who looks into this shadowy room sees a human-sized figure tethered to a heavy bench by a 10-foot chain, the other end of which is attached to a steel collar around the figure's neck. The figure—a **ghast**—has a bag over its head and is presently catatonic. It attacks if anyone enters the cell and either addresses or touches it. If the ghast moves more than 10 feet, its speed is halved as it is forced to drag the bench along behind it.

C6. INTELLECT DEVOURER CELL

This solid iron door is locked but not magically protected, and features a sticky note written in Greg Duveé's shaky hand: "MOLVANO ONLY! (DANGEROUS MIND FLAYER)!" Thankfully, Greg has miscategorized the creature inside the cell, which is only an **intellect devourer**, sleeping harmlessly in a wooden cage. Molvano is studying the intellect devourer in an attempt to understand memory modification magic. The intendant was here just an hour ago, and has left a page of notes and half an apple. While he studies the intellect devourer, Molvano has deactivated the room's antimagic field.

Treasure. Molvano also left behind a sheath of six *autoscript scrolls of protection (aberrations)*. Any character who studies the scrolls notes that their lettering is eerily precise. In fact, they look more like they were printed than transcribed.

C7. HOODLUMS CELL

The door to this cell is locked and magically protected, and features a cutout panel. Inside are three teenage boys, utterly terrified. Questioning them reveals that they threw eggs at Molvano's house in Waterdeep the previous night. All of them were hit with a *sleep* spell and woke up in the cell with Molvano laughing at them. He still hasn't said how long he plans to hold them.

STAIRWELL

As the characters descend the stairs at the end of this level, the grinding vibration of the complex grows louder than ever, and the floor now seems to shake with each

deep thud. After descending two levels, the curving stairs end at a hatch in the floor. It is unlocked.

GOLEM LEVEL

The bottom level of the black site complex reveals the source of the site's endless rumbling—and a precarious crossing to reach the rest of the site.

G1. SUSPENDED CATWALK

Once the adventurers step through the hatch at the bottom of the cell level stairwell, read the following:

As you drop down through the hatch, you find yourself on a platform leading to a narrow iron catwalk with semiregular handrails, which spans a vast sinkhole. The entire complex must have been constructed within this natural shaft, deep below the earth. Oddly, the wall of the sinkhole appears to be slowly moving past the catwalk platform. As you look down into the murky half-light of the chasm below, you can see why.

Nearly a hundred feet below the catwalk, two gargantuan iron golems stand with downcast heads, facing in opposite directions. Colossal yokes around the necks and shoulders of the titans are attached to the buttressed foundation columns holding up the black site structure. As each golem plods forward with heavy steps, the whole complex slowly turns.

The iron catwalk is 120 feet long and 2 feet wide, and stands 90 feet above the sinkhole floor. At the opposite end of the catwalk is another platform, ladder, and hatch leading up to Molvano's level.

The dizzying sway caused by the titans' movement makes traversing the catwalk a nerve-racking but not impossible task. A character can cross the catwalk with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, made with advantage if the party has access to suitable climbing gear. A character who falls can grab onto the girders and struts below the catwalk with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A character faces almost-certain death on a failed save, if not from the 90-foot fall then from being crushed under the golems' feet.

If the adventurers linger too long in this area, you can decide to have Molvano come down from his level, having dealt with Hax Bon Tieren (see area M1 on page 13).

G2. UTILITY HATCH

Halfway along the catwalk, it widens to a 20-foot-square ledge with no handrails, exposing the characters to the prodigious drop below. Above this area is a concealed utility hatch in the ceiling, leading to Mykon Drift's secret workshop (see "Drift's Sanctum").

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a keyhole-sized glowing niche in the ceiling 10 feet above the catwalk. The niche appears similar to those seen in the trees around the plateau, and takes the same key. Molvano fits his key to it using a *mage hand* spell. Accessing the door otherwise requires characters to somehow

ascend to the hatch while succeeding on a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid tumbling off the catwalk.

G3. THE TITANS' MILL

What's down below? Only the grim circular march of the titanic iron golems, knee-deep in mud and crushed stone. This grinding rotation slowly erodes the sinkhole even further, causing the complex to sink incrementally deeper. Each decade, mages and laborers serving the Lords' Alliance are able to add an extra floor to the top of the black site complex.

The two golems have no reason to interact with the adventurers, though that won't stop them from stepping on someone unfortunate enough to fall from the platform. If necessary, each golem uses the **iron golem** stat block with these changes:

- It is Gargantuan.
- It has 299 (26d12 + 130) hit points.

DRIFT'S SANCTUM

The hidden core of the black site complex is the (temporary) home and laboratory of the kidnapped inventor Mykon Drift. When the adventurers ascend the hatch at area G2, read the following:

The hatch opens up into a cramped and impossibly tall cylindrical space, broken up by ladders and balconies into a multi-tiered inventor's workshop. Rows of tools and parts hang on hooks along the walls, accessible by grabber poles and thin, rickety ladders. Shelves and platforms built into the walls house prototypes of strange devices, all in various states of construction—and which tower above you in a way that feels incredibly impractical from a health and safety standpoint.

The ground floor where you stand holds workbenches, a stool, and a small cot, with what looks to be a bathroom opening up to one side. Even as you get your bearings, a tall figure emerges from that bathroom—with a small snub-nosed pistol in hand.

"I don't know who you are or what you've done with Molvano, but it doesn't matter. I'm not staying. I've got a product launch to get to."

The figure is, of course, Mykon Drift (a neutral good human **noble**). He doesn't look particularly imprisoned, having somehow managed to source the equipment and supplies to continue creating all manner of technomantic devices—including the small brass pistol he's currently holding. If it comes down to combat, the pistol gives Drift the following attack:

Technomantic Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

CHATting WITH MYKON DRIFT

Drift is surprisingly genial once the characters identify themselves, and is happy to share the following information with his would-be rescuers:

- The last thing he remembers at the DriftCo campus was losing consciousness in his office after drinking tea brought in by Rowena Hollows's secretary, Demeter Sook. He then woke up in a black site cell with Molvano watching over him. Drift can confirm that Rowena is working for the Lords' Alliance, who are behind his kidnapping.
- Soon after his internment, Drift was able to cut a deal with Molvano to be moved from the cells to this workshop. As part of that deal, he is meant to be designing prototypes for inventions to cement the authority of the Lords' Alliance. In actual fact, he's been planning a rather daring escape.
- The device that DriftCo is promising to imminently launch is the *autoscript*—Mykon Drift's greatest achievement. A technomantic printing press, the *autoscript* can print magical scrolls that allow any character to cast spells.
- Over the past two months, Drift has been modifying his *autoscript* to fly, attaching telescoping rotary blades and a rudimentary engine to the chassis to create a working gyrocopter. It's been tricky work, as Molvano regularly comes to test the device, but Drift is good at hiding his improvements.
- The inventor has been planning to fly straight up out of his workshop by blasting through the thin crust of the plateau above, but the existence of the magical defensive fields spread across the cell level has stymied those plans. If even a single antimagic field is activated, he fears that passing through that level will interfere with the *autoscript's* technomantic engines, crashing the gyrocopter.

EXPLORE OR ESCAPE?

Drift knows that both Molvano and Greg carry remote controls that can deactivate all the antimagic fields on the cell level. If the characters did not obtain Greg Duveé's remote control (see area A4), Drift asks them to either return to the hapless apprentice, or to continue on through the last two unexplored levels of the black site in search of Molvano.

If the characters have already stolen a remote control and can deactivate all the antimagic fields, Drift is ready to go.

The inventor grabs a pair of smoke-tinted goggles from his desk and orders you all to follow him as he climbs nimbly up a ladder toward a platform set partway up the workshop wall. Upon the platform sits a deviously complicated machine covered in tubes, pistons, and delicately whirring mechanisms—the *autoscript*! In one hand, Drift holds a heavy lead-lined tube. With the other, he fastens the goggles around his head. "Find something to hold on to," he advises as he straps himself in to the craft's only seat. "Things could get a little rocky."

The adventure then proceeds with "Act 3: Sky High."

MOLVANO'S LEVEL

The next level up from the bottom of the black site is Molvano's private level—a richly decorated space dotted with beautiful items and compelling art pieces.

M1. MOLVANO'S HALL OF FINE THINGS

Characters who ascend through the hatch at the far end of the catwalk on the golem level discover that the rumbling sounds of the complex are magically silenced. It's a great relief.

The characters find themselves in a comfortably appointed curving hall, set with partially open doors at either end. Fine furnishings and accoutrements give this area the look of a swanky study. Next to a fireplace is a scene that immediately demands attention.

A small curio cupboard stands open, a lock pick still hanging in its lock. Standing in front of the cupboard is the rigid body of Hax Bon Tieren, encased in ice, and with his face set in a horrified expression. A small two-wheeled cargo trolley waits beside him.

A voice suddenly rings out from the door farthest from the stairs. "Greg, what took you so long? Take our new guest to cell three, will you?"

Moments later, Molvano enters from his private residence (area M3), eating a grapefruit with a spoon. Molvano is a lawful neutral human wizard. Statistics for him can be found at the end of the adventure.

Treasure. The dozens of curios in the cabinet are mostly worthless porcelain figurines, but a quick search turns up 2d4 of them worth 50 gp each. One figure of a smiling boy is trapped with a magical curse that paralyzes a target under a layer of ice, as Hax has just experienced.

Molvano carries a heavy key ring bearing keys that open all the locked doors in the facility, plus the key that allows access to the site.

M2. MOLVANO'S LABORATORY

The far side of this level is the cozy laboratory where Molvano works (and where he hangs out even while not working when he needs to get away from Greg). A big comfy chair with an adjustable reading stand sits by a fireplace. In the center of the room, a **rug of smothering** lies in wait, programmed to attack anyone but Molvano who treads on it.

Most of the items and tools here are more academic than practical, but a character who searches the lab can assemble a set of tinker's tools. Molvano's diary is also here, which details how Drift was interred in the black site, his eventual transfer from the cells to "a workshop more suitable to his talents and station," and a small doodle showing how to access the workshop from the catwalk (see area G2).

M3. MOLVANO'S RESIDENCE

Molvano's tasteful quarters are dominated by a bed and an automatic massage chair of his own design. A wardrobe stands along one side of the room, its contents betraying a thorough lack of imagination in fashion and style. A side table holds an experimental artillery turret Molvano has been working on, which is thankfully out of order.

M4. MOLVANO'S GAMES ROOM

Fantasy ping-pong, fantasy darts, and fantasy twister are all on offer here. A construct resembling the construct seen at the DriftCo office idles at one end of the ping-pong table. It has wheels instead of feet, a ball-pivot waist, and a ping-pong bat clutched in its hand. The construct defends itself if attacked, using the **animated armor** stat block.

STAIRWELL

At the far end of area M1, a curved stairwell rises two levels to the black site's main storage hall.

STORAGE LEVEL

The second level down from the top of the complex is taken up by storage space and Greg's modest apprentice's quarters.

S1. STORAGE HALL

Opening up off an antechamber at the top of the stairs, this curved hall appears similar to the administration hall (area A2), and is outfitted with an identical desk and bell. Deliveries of rations and supplies are brought in to the complex through this area, which holds boxes of office supplies, dried food, toiletries, and other practicalities for long-term underground living.

S2. GREG'S "ROOM"

More of a cell, this small, windowless space holds only a small cot and an unfinished game of solitaire laid out on the floor. Any character who searches the area finds Greg's sketchbook under the cot, containing ideas for terrible inventions and a depressing amount of insight into a lonely young mind.

STAIRWELL

Opening up off the middle of the storage space, a curved stairwell rises two stories to end at a wall of brambles that moves slowly past as the complex rotates. This is the black site entrance opposite the entrance that led to area A1, and was used by Hax Bon Tieren. As in area A1, a key niche built into the wall retracts the brambles and allows characters to exit the facility.

ACT 3: SKY HIGH

When Drift activates his *autoscript* gyrocopter, read the following:

Twisting the lead-lined tube, Drift pulls it apart to reveal a red gemstone that begins to shine brightly. The inventor slams the gem into a housing bay at the tail of the *autoscript*, which groans and begins to whirl to life. The magical-spell-scroll-printer-turned-vehicle groans as bladed wings pop out of cunningly concealed armatures built into its printing press. The crystal begins to pulse with power as the engine revs up, the machine unsteadily lurching as you all hang on for dear life. Drift reaches out and taps a sequence of runes on a wall-mounted device that resembles a catapult loaded with a magazine of heavy wax-capped vials. The device flings its payload into the air—and an earth-shattering 'boom' cracks the ceiling asunder.

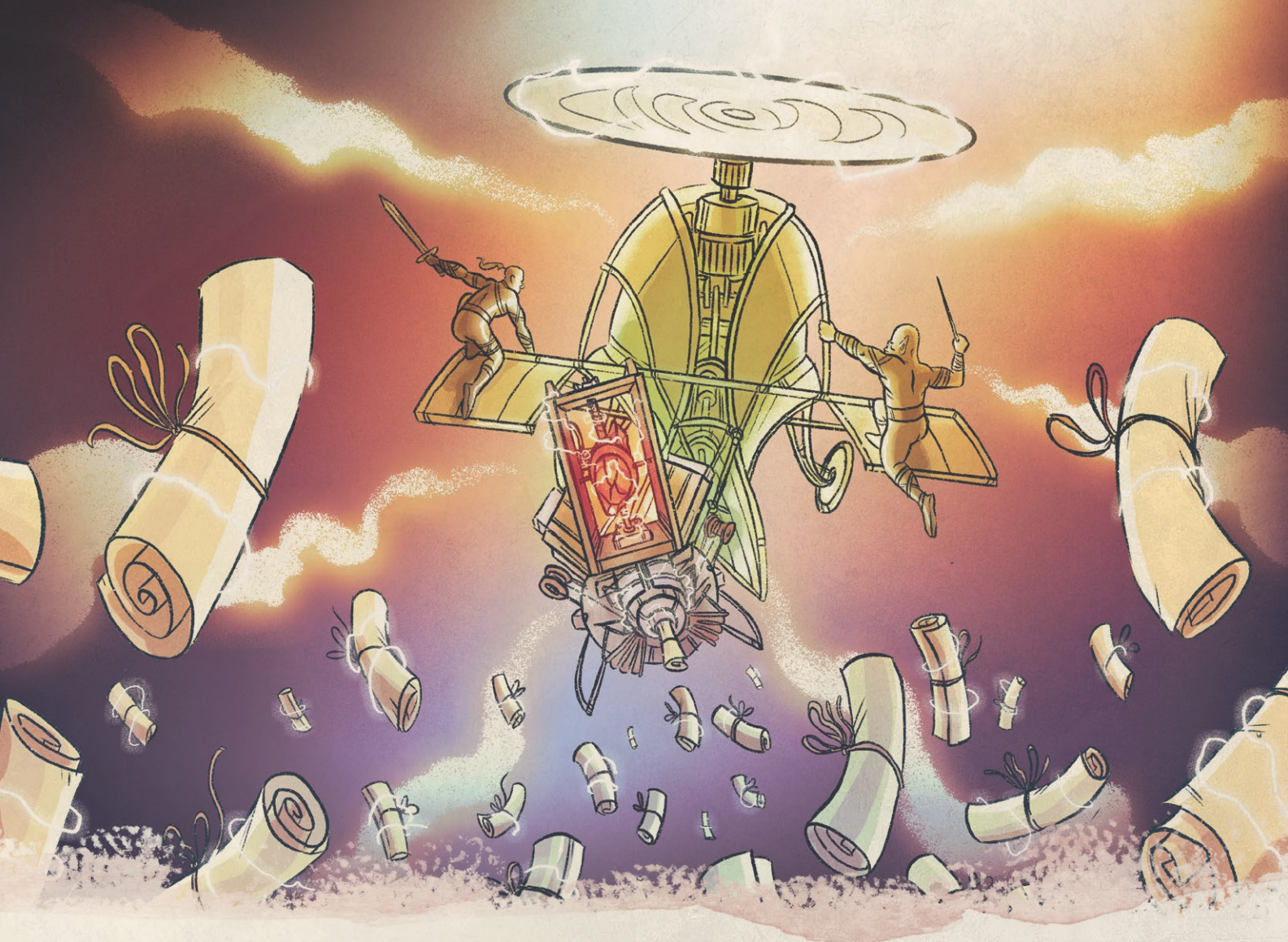
With a high-powered whine, the *autoscript* gyrocopter takes to the air, the power of its rotary wings whipping loose papers into a storm below you. The contraption flies through the ruined roof of the facility and bursts out into the world above—whereupon it becomes clear that you are not alone.

A small squad of Lords' Alliance soldiers on horse and foot have arrived at the bluff at the worst possible time. All of them react in shock to the *autoscript* gyrocopter's appearance—and three of the figures manage to grab onto the craft as it rises past them! All three immediately regret that decision as the vehicle lurches in protest, bobbing alarmingly in the sky but dragging the boarding party along for the ride.

"Too much weight! Deal with them!" Drift shouts. Racing down the trails of the bluff below you, the remaining soldiers give chase.

Drift is busy flying the *autoscript*, so it's up to the characters to deal with the two **thugs** and the **acolyte** who have made their way on board. The jury-rigged gyrocopter is not made for this many passengers, and is bobbing so low to the ground that the rest of the squad of six **scouts** can easily give chase. If the characters haven't dealt with the hangers-on first, the scouts following draw close enough to begin firing longbows after 1d4 rounds. They try not to hit Drift or damage the *autoscript*—which means more attacks on the characters, of course.

Fighting on board the flying *autoscript* is not easy. Any character hit by an attack must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to hang on, unless having taken appropriate means to anchor themselves to the device. In his pilot's seat, Drift is considered anchored. A character who falls might be snagged by any ally who succeeds on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Or they might fall, taking damage according to how high off the ground they are.



ACTIVATING THE AUTOSCRIPT

The large, dimly pulsing crystal at the back of the *autoscript* is the focus for the device. Whenever a spell is cast into the crystal, armatures and actuators spin to life as the technomantic press gets to work. The following round, 2d6 *autoscript* spell scrolls of the same spell are spat out into the air, any one of which can be grabbed with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check.

The acolyte in the boarding party knows of the *autoscript*'s capabilities, and uses their first action to cast *guiding bolt* into the focus crystal. In response, the Lords' Alliance thugs attempt to grab the scrolls to blast the characters.

The *autoscript*'s gyrocopter form is a large, well-built device, but it can be attacked easily enough. It has AC 15, 30 hit points, resistance to piercing and slashing damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If it takes 15 damage, the *autoscript* can no longer print scrolls. If it takes 30 damage, it falls from the sky.

Once the last foe on board has been defeated, Drift kicks a lever by his foot and the *autoscript* lurches high into the safety of the cloud cover, leaving any remaining ground-based pursuers behind.

AN UNNECESSARILY FLASHY ARRIVAL

Assuming that the *autoscript* emerges from the chase in flying order, Mykon Drift navigates his craft over the walls of Waterdeep to a landing bay above the DriftCo building, allowing the characters to disembark. (If the copter crashes, you decide what alternative means the characters can use to get Drift back to the city.)

From his vantage point, Drift gazes down at the assembled employees, arcanists, and media types all waiting for the reclusive inventor. With a wave and a dip of his goggles, Drift kick-starts the copter and soars down to the stage as a band plays the DriftCo company theme song. While it seems impossible that the entire episode was planned, you can't help but feel that this is only going to further solidify Drift's personal and executive brand.

A cough behind the characters reveals a security guard making the rounds. They politely but firmly report that the area is off limits, and ask the characters to follow them to the launch party downstairs. Lacking VIP access, the adventurers can enjoy a drink and some

canapes but aren't able to see Drift again, as the inventor disappears shortly after his keynote concludes.

AFTERMATH

When the characters return to Gribbits, read the following:

Gribbits the goblin is waiting for you when you arrive back at the detective agency, a satisfyingly large bag of money and a scroll case sitting on the desk in front of him. "Great job everyone. This came from Mr. Drift's office a few minutes ago." Gribbits clears his throat, leafing through a letter. "He says ... uh ... 'Thanks my friends, true like minds, visionary foresight, blah blah blah, brave enough to break the law for the greater good, armed soldiers, no doubt governmental retribution ... it, uh ... goes on like this for a page and a half."

Gribbits scans forward, his eyes widening in growing alarm. "Drift says he's going to go for a little trip, and that this is for our service and to cover any civil inconveniences his rescue and the inevitable official backlash might cause us." Gribbits puts the letter down carefully, a little wide eyed. "Are we in ... some kind of trouble with the government?"

The characters might well be. It's hard to tell if anyone got a look at their faces, or would recognize them if they saw them again. But raiding a Lords' Alliance outpost is likely to have repercussions. For now, however, all the characters can rest easy in the knowledge that the world is ... well, probably not that much safer. And if anything, the *autoscript* has pretty dire military implications. But to what purpose did the Lords' Alliance hope to put Drift? Was Hax Bon Tieren working alone? How many more facilities like Swallow's Head are out there? For the answer to questions such as these, tune in to the thrilling finale of the Gribbits Detective Agency!

TREASURE

The bag contains 1,000 gp. The scroll case contains 2d4 random *autoscript spell scrolls* of 1st to 3rd level.

LEVELING UP

Having successfully explored the black site and rescued Mykon Drift, the characters reach 3rd level. And with that, the adventure is done.

The Dragon Friends: Alex Lee, Ben Jenkins, Edan Lacey, Michael Hing, and Simon Greiner

Editing, Development, and Layout for *Dragon+*:
Scott Fitzgerald Gray

APPENDIX

This section features a new stat block, spell, and magic item featured in the adventure.

MOLVANO

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 13 (*mage armor*)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Skills Arcana +5, History +5

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. Molvano is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm*, *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *scorching ray*, *sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *magic mouth*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fly*

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage.

SPELL: CREATE BONFIRE

Conjuration cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a bonfire on ground that you can see within range. Until the spell ends, the magic bonfire fills a 5-foot cube. Any creature in the bonfire's space when you cast the spell must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 fire damage. A creature must also make the saving throw when it moves into the bonfire's space for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there.

The bonfire ignites flammable objects in its area that aren't being worn or carried.

The spell's damage increases by 1d8 when you reach 5th level (2d8), 11th level (3d8), and 17th level (4d8).

MAGIC ITEM: VETERAN'S CANE

Wondrous item, common

When you grasp this walking cane and use a bonus action to speak the command word, it transforms into an ordinary longsword and ceases to be magical.