

TETHER

THE MYSTERY OF SKIRVIN MANOR



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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Characters who use a pseudonym have the name they are commonly known by in the adventure in parenthesis.

Major NPC	Description	Page
Rogger Blickor	Ghoul posing as a guest at Skirvin Manor	10
Constable Sarra	Law enforcement in Camor	5
Arrow Diamond	Adventurer and ghost-hunter, murdered by ghouls	10
Igil	Elven ranger	5
Lowen	Elven ranger	5
Nurse Joy	Ghoul posing as a nurse	10
Oaken	Former master of servants, now a specter	7
Roundabout Jen	Wanted rogue who disappeared in Camor	3
Esme Skirvin (Bianca)	Possessed caretaker of Skirvin	7
Petro Skirvin	Son of Phineas Skirvin, now a ghost	7
Phinaes Skirvin (Earvin Skinship)	Lord of Skirvin Manor	7
Marren Skirvin	Former lady of Skirvin Manor, now a ghost	7
Priscilla Skirvin	Deceased daughter of Marren and Phineas	7
Eflor Vale (Gogo)	Skirvin Manor's reanimated groundskeeper	9
Ishta Vale (Kerrin)	Skirvin Manor's cook and warlock of Vapul	8
Ludra Vale	Ghost possessing Esme Skirvin/Bianca	8
Vapul	Powerful ice demon	8

CREDITS

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INTRODUCTION

Forty years ago, almost all of the population of the village of Camor mysteriously vanished. Even then, the few that remained weren't willing to discuss what happened that night. Ghost-hunters and adventurers speculate whatever happened in Camor had something to do with the strange, old estate atop Camor Hill. Once known as *Skirvin Manor*, the inhabitants of the old home vanished, too. Only an old man named Earvin Skinship lives in the manor with his servants. And no one has actually seen him.

Occasionally, travelers caught in winter storms or exhausted from traveling through the thick forest surrounding Camor stay at Old Skirvin Manor. While they say the staff is friendly, they do feel that the place is haunted. At night, they can hear the laughter of a small child, tiny footsteps running through the balustrade. Others swear they saw the figure of a woman overlooking the courtyard from the second-floor ambulatory. And then there are those who hear heavy breathing from behind the walls.

Tether: The Mystery of Skirvin Manor is a Fifth Edition mystery adventure for four 3rd-level adventurers. The characters should reach 4th level by the end of the adventure. While the adventure can be custom built to support all types of adventurers, rogues and clerics will find their features especially useful. Also, there are a lot of Insight, Investigation,

and Perception checks required, so characters who have proficiency in those skills will also be valuable on the adventure.

There is no one way to solve the mysteries of Skirvin Manor. As the GM, be sure you read the entire adventure before running it, as there are many details and clues that the characters will need in order to progress.

STORY OVERVIEW

Hot on the trail of a wanted criminal with a sizable bounty on her head, the characters arrive in the sleepy, wooded village of Camor. While the citizens of Camor are quiet and reserved, it's clear that they may be hiding something. Certain clues point to Old Skirvin Manor just outside of town.

At Skirvin, the characters meet Bianca, the estate's caretaker. She and her staff of four handle the day-to-day operations of the manor as the manor's invalid proprietor, Lord Earvin Skinship, rests in his room on the second floor's eastern wing. Along with the characters, the Manor is hosting other guests who hope to avoid the coming blizzard.

Their first night in the manor, a ghost-hunter named Arrow Diamond is murdered, his headless corpse discovered in the snow. The blizzard prevents anyone from leaving. From there, the mystery begins to unravel.

What the characters don't realize is that other than themselves and one of the guests, all of the inhabitants of the old manor are members of a fiend-worshipping faction known as the Hand of Vapul. It has been 1,000 years since the Paladin Camor banished the Ice Demon Vapul to the Frozen Realm, and now his cult members hope to revive him with a ritual known as the Binding of the Three.

There are six plot threads and clue paths that the characters can follow to learn the secrets of the manor. All eventually lead to the discovery of the house's secret basement and inevitably a den of foul ghouls. This is where the Hand makes their final stand as they attempt to revive Vapul.

The characters must overcome the cult, halt the ritual, and defeat the ice demon Vapul before he can fully manifest himself. Failure could lead to the destruction of Camor, Knotside, and potentially the entire region—or even the *world*.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

To run this adventure, you will need access to the Fifth Edition rules and associates rulebooks.

Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.

In addition to the monsters included in the core rulebooks, you will also need to have the following items, provided in this document.

- Magic items from The Griffon's Saddlebag
- Monster stat blocks from IADnDMN
- Creature design by Paper Forge
- Map design work by CZE/Peku

When a creature's name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue pointing you to its stat block in the core rulebooks. If a stat block appears as part of this adventure set, the adventure's text tells you so.

Spells and equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the core rulebooks. Magic items are also described in the core rulebooks unless the adventure's text directs you to an exclusive item that comes with this adventure set.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this adventure:

hp = hit points	
AC = Armor Class	LG = Lawful Good
DC = Difficult Class	CG = Chaotic Good
XP = experience points	NG = Neutral Good
pp = platinum piece(s)	LN = Lawful Neutral
gp = gold piece(s)	N = Neutral
ep = electrum piece(s)	CN = Chaotic Neutral
sp = silver piece(s)	LE = Lawful Evil
cp = copper piece(s)	CE = Chaotic evil
NPC = nonplayer character	NE = Neutral evil

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure is likely to play out as follows.

Set during a particularly cold winter, the characters start in the city of Knotside. There, they are given a bounty on Roundabout Jen, an infamous criminal known throughout the region. Her trail leads to the town of Camor in the Amber Forest, due west of Knotside. After speaking to the townsfolk, one or more clues point towards Jen being at Old Skirvin Manor at the northwestern end of town. Once the characters reach Skirvin Manor, they, along with the manor's servants and two other guests, are asked to stay the night as a powerful winter storm quickly approaches. That same night, one of the guests—an eccentric ghost-hunter—is murdered.

From there, the mystery of Skirvin Manor begins to unfold. The characters will follow one or more of the six separate paths of clues that ultimately lead to the Manor's greatest secret: it is the home of a fiend-worshipping cult known as The Hand of Vapul. Unknown to the characters, the clock is ticking. If they fail to stop the Hand before they complete a ritual known as the Binding of the Three, a dangerous fiend will enter the world and wreak havoc in the region, damning it with eternal winter.

HANDLING INSIGHT CHECKS

A lot of the adventure involves interacting with the NPCs within the mansion. Likely, the characters will wish to use their proficiency in Insight to determine whether or not the NPCs are telling the truth. When such occasions arise, one or more characters can make Wisdom (Insight) checks. The DC for the Insight checks are contested by the NPC's Charisma (Deception) check. Instead of giving individual results for each character, add together the amount by which any successful characters passed the check, then subtract the amount by which any unsuccessful characters failed the check. Once you have this number, refer to the Group Insight Check Results table below to determine the outcome:

GROUP INSIGHT CHECK RESULTS

Total Check	Result
-3 or less	It seems like they're telling the truth.
-2 to 2	You can't tell whether or not they're telling the truth.
3 to 9	You suspect that they might be lying to you (telling the truth).
10 or higher	They are definitely lying to you (telling the truth).

Of course, you're free to use Insight checks as normal. Using this method, however, the characters will question among themselves who is telling the truth and who isn't. A low outcome, despite a few high rolls, can throw off the entire party. Only through one-on-one interrogation will an individual character get a good sense of who is lying and who is not.

DEALING WITH A SLOW-DOWN

Tether is a mystery adventure. And while there are plenty of combat opportunities, some players may find the adventure

slow-paced, especially if the characters are having difficulty solving puzzles or can't find the next step. Here are a few ways to handle this situation.

TOSS IN A RANDOM ENCOUNTER

Just like any good story, a character who "falls off the path" may find themselves the target of a monster or ghost. After all, Skirvin Manor is a cursed place. Each room has suggestions for a random encounter or supernatural event that can occur while there. Try to use these encounters sparingly, as too many can distract from the overall mystery.

ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

If the characters decide to wipe out all of the inhabitants of the mansion while the blizzard continues, then the ghouls and any living members of the Hand of Vapul will remain downstairs where they are theoretically safe. They realize that it's only a matter of time before Vapul returns. And Vapul won't take the actions of murderers and robbers kindly.

DROP A HINT

If the characters are really stuck and getting frustrated, don't be afraid to drop an obvious hint. For example, you can have Nurse Joy forget to lock the door to the ambulatory. Or Bianca can brush her hair aside, revealing the Mark of Vapul on the back of her neck. The characters might even catch a glimpse of Kerrin butchering a human arm while standing in the hallway.

LET THEM LEAVE

The blizzard is definitely meant as a way to keep the characters involved in the story, but it shouldn't railroad your characters into an adventure that they aren't interested in. If they're determined to leave, allow them. The blizzard is dangerous, certainly, but a party of well-equipped adventurers should be able to make it out and to safety.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure's default starting location is in the city of Knotside. However, any large settlements near a heavily forested mountain range will do.

To get things rolling, read or paraphrase the following introductory text to the players. It assumes that the characters are already known for their past deeds. Feel free to edit if necessary.

Thanks to your recent exploits, you find yourselves called into action once again. Roundabout Jen, the Scourge of Knotside, is wanted by the city's magistrate. Theft, murder, kidnapping, money laundering, and fraud are just a few of the ugly misdeeds on her impossibly long rap sheet.

The magistrate will pay 300 gold pieces to whoever can bring her corpse back to Knotside, or 1,000 gold pieces if she's brought back alive.

And you're in luck: Jen was seen just a day ago heading northwest into the Amber Forest. The local guard believes she'll probably stay in the village of Camor to wait out a nasty

incoming blizzard the diviners have forecasted.

If you can manage to catch her in Camor before the blizzard hits, chances are you'll collect on the bounty.

The promise of an easy reward should be enough to attract most of the adventurers. If asked about how dangerous she is, the magistrate explains that Jen is dangerous, but probably a pretty easy fight for a band of experienced adventurers.

Should the characters need more motivation for taking her on, here are a few things that the magistrate can mention to further whet their appetites:

- Jen carries a jewel-studded dagger with her initials, RJ, carved into the dagger's hilt. The dagger is easily worth 100 gp by itself.
- The last crime Jen committed was tearing the page out of a valuable book in the Knotside Arcane Library. The page contained a map that's rumored to lead to the long lost city of Hearth.
- Referencing one of the character's bonds, Jen may have unintentionally hurt one of the characters' allies, friends, or even a family member.

If the characters agree to tracking Roundabout Jen to Camor, they are given a brief description of her. Jen is a human female with short blonde hair and a scar on her lip. Both of her arms are heavily tattooed. She's known for dressing lavishly, often wearing purple and green scarves and sashes. She's dangerous with a crossbow and a dagger and is exceptional at blending into her surroundings despite her motley garb.





CHAPTER 1: ARRIVAL IN CAMOR

Camor hides among the tall, dark pines of the Amber Forest to the northwest of Knotside. Other than acting as a hub for foresters, not much else is known about Camor. For the most part, the hamlet keeps to itself. Decades ago, however, it was a fast-growing community and the home-away-from-home for many important Knotside politicians.

As the characters approach Camor, read:

Eventually, the road breaks through the trees and puts you before a small village tucked comfortably into the towering pines of the Amber Forest. This must be Camor. It's a small village certainly, but oddly well-developed. Cobblestones pave the way over an arched bridge crossing a creek. A fountain sits at the center of the town square, a weathered statue of an armored knight watching you as you approach. The plaque below the statue reads 'Sir Camor of Jost, Paladin of the Realm.'

The friendly waves and smiling faces you're accustomed to in Knotside are largely absent in the village. Instead, the

Camorians keep their heads down and say little. Even the few children you see seem to lack joy.

Thunder rumbles to the north beyond the Basilisk's Spine. A storm is moving in, a nasty blizzard just as the magistrate in Knotside mentioned. For a moment, you notice a hill some 500 feet away, atop which sits an old, crumbling manor surrounded by a sturdy, brick wall. The boiling, dark clouds of the coming winter storm frame its snow-capped rooves, giving it an ominous appearance.

The buildings in Camor are either made of sturdy stonework or they are half-timbered. The windows are thick, colored glass with lead frames. Strong, steel-bound doors and shutters decorate the outside. In the spring, the village is beautiful, decorated with bright-colored flowers and well-manicured shrubs and lawns.

Camor is surprisingly unfriendly towards outsiders, especially adventurers. It lacks an inn, and beyond a few general stores, there aren't a lot of supplies to be found. Most of the buildings in the town square are residential homes.

Other than lumber trade with nearby Knotside, Camor survives through communism; neighbors trade freely among each other and only create what's needed. If the characters ask for a place to stay, a few Camorians may offer up their barn or sheds for the night. Others mention that Old Skirvin Manor up on Camor Hill sometimes takes in travelers. Already two such travelers that came into town have headed that way.

Most Camorians don't practice religion, while others are admitted atheists (despite clear proof that gods exist). They do, however, maintain their spiritual connection with the forest around them. They leave offerings to the forest spirits at regular shrines places in the hollows of old, twisted pines.

There's a curiously high number of elves and half-elves that live in Camor, too. Interestingly, they dress and carry themselves like rugged humans. Some go as far to hide their ears under knitted caps. Either way, there seems to be no ill will between the mixed races.

The village's only drinking hole, The Falling Oak, is small and dark. The regulars are all lumberjacks; they're quick to throw dirty looks the adventurers' way as they enter. The bartender overcharges for drinks and only pours the cheapest beer. If the characters ask for anything else, the sour-faced, middle-aged woman replies, "We ain't got that."

CLUES TO ROUNDABOUT JEN'S WHEREABOUTS

If Roundabout Jen is in Camor, nobody's talking. Even given the ridiculous description of Jen's general appearance, either no one can or wants to give useful information. The only clue that the people of Camor do give the characters of Jen's presence in town is that at least two individuals were recently seen going to Old Skirvin Manor to seek refuge during the coming blizzard. Unfortunately, no one remembers what they looked like, how they dressed, or whether or not they were male or female.

CONSTABLE SARRA

If the characters press enough, eventually the town's law enforcement agent, Constable Sarra (N female half-elf **veteran**) approaches. Unlike most of Camor, Sarra is friendly and willing to help the characters find Roundabout Jen. She initially tells them that she isn't sure where Jen is. Given the description, though, she vaguely recalls seeing her.

"Oh yeah. All the purple. Real attitude on that one. Think I saw her head into the forest headed towards the Basilisk's Spine. It's likely she's trying to find a place to hideaway up there."

Sarra is lying. The moment Roundabout Jen stepped into town, Sarra recognized her from wanted posters. Knowing that Jen wouldn't be missed, she sent two of her rangers, Igil and Lowen to follow her. The pair caught up to Jen and incapacitated her. Then, they dragged the rogue to Skirvin Manor as an offering to Kerrin and Eflor Vale.

Sarra has been lying for the Vales for years. She has advantage on all Deception checks made to determine whether or not she is lying about Jen's whereabouts. With the storm fast approaching, the characters should try to seek shelter before it gets too bad. Of course, they are free to try to follow Jen's trail. Sarra won't stop them—so what if a few

nousy adventurers get killed in the storm, what's it matter to her?

THE MESSENGER

No matter which way the characters head, eventually a young boy approaches the group carrying a note. The note reads:

"Everyone here is lying. Follow the creek a half a mile north of the village and meet me at my wagon in one hour. I'll tell you everything."

The note is signed "a friend." The boy tells the characters that the note was given to him by a strange old woman. She paid him one copper piece, instructing the boy he had to wait at least thirty minutes to give it to the characters. That's all he knows.

The letter is from Alin. She worked as a servant in Skirvin Manor forty years ago, narrowly avoiding the Slaughter of Camor. She's returned to Camor on the anniversary, hoping to put a stop to the evil that resides within.

THE WAGON MASSACRE

If the characters decide to follow Alin's instructions, they simply need to travel north along the creek for half a mile. Flurries start to drift from the dark clouds above. The rumbling thunder intensifies. It takes about twenty minutes for the characters to reach Alin's wagon. Unfortunately, they weren't the first to arrive.

In a small clearing beside the creek, you discover the wagon described in the note. Unfortunately, it looks like you might be too late. The wagon's been tipped over, ransacked goods strewn all over the ground. Riddled with arrows, a packhorse lies dead in a pool of its own blood. And there, lying facedown in the creek water is an old woman. She has three arrows in her skull and five more in her back.

After Alin gave the message to the boy to deliver, Sarra's rangers, Igil and Lowen noticed her and followed. The pair asked only a few questions of the woman before opening fire. From there, they destroyed her encampment, working to make it look as if it was attacked by orcs. Unfortunately, they weren't able to finish the job before the characters arrived. Unless the characters were stealthy, the two rangers (LE male elf **scouts**) are hiding in the forest. After taking a moment to size up the characters, they emerge. If the characters got the drop on them, they see the two scouts still at the scene of the crime.

"Hail!" waves one of the rangers. He puts his bow away and bows his head. Judging by the way the two are dressed, they're from Camor.

"My name is Igil. This is my brother Lowen. I apologize for our stealth, but we thought you might be the orcs returning

to this camp to cause more havoc."

Igil then goes on to explain that the massacre was "clearly the work" of the Drakescale orc clan from the north.

"With the winter setting in, they're being pushed further and further south. I'm glad that adventurers such as yourselves are around. You can undoubtedly help us."

Igil does his best to ingratiate himself with the characters. Unfortunately, the pair have done a terrible job of staging the crime scene. Any character with proficiency in the Survival skill will immediately notice that the only tracks around the camp are the elves'. Furthermore, the arrows lodged in the horse and Alin's body have the same fletching details as the ones the two elves carry. Finally, Lowen has a bright purple scarf hanging from one of his pockets; it perfectly matches the description given of Roundabout Jen's clothing.

Once their deception is obvious, the pair attack the adventurers, hoping to add them to the "orc's massacre." Fearful of reprisal by the Vales and Sarra, they fight to the death, even when it's clear they don't want to.

After one of the two are killed or both are reduced to half their hit points or less, they surrender, swearing to tell the truth. Here is what the two divulge:

- They were sent by Sarra to investigate the old woman. When she revealed that she was connected to Skirvin Manor's past, they had no choice but to kill her.
- Both are members of a forty-year-old sect known as Camor's Blind. Their purpose is to deter any trouble that comes into Camor, especially parties of adventurers.
- Usually, the Blind give misleading directions to interlopers. But sometimes, they offer "unlucky travelers" as offerings to the people who reside in Old Skirvin Manor.

- They don't know anything about Skirvin Manor. Neither have entered. In fact, they're not allowed to come within 200 feet of the estate's walls. They only deal with a hulking brute of a man that only comes out at night; they don't know his name, just where to meet him. They've nicknamed him "the Big Man."
- The meeting place is 300 feet outside of the Manor. There is a bell attached to a rope that the elves ring. Then, they wait for 10 minutes, after which, the Big Man arrives, takes their "catch" and hands them a bag of 10 gp. Lowen is carrying the bag of 10 gp.
- The last person that the elves caught was a human woman with blonde hair wearing all purple. Their description perfectly matches Roundabout Jen.
- All members of Camor's Blind are kept in the dark about the origins of Skirvin Manor. Their tenets have been handed down through generations. "No questions. No answers. Potential troublemakers must be dealt with." Sarra, the current leader of the Blind, sizes up everyone that comes into Camor. Most are sent on their way, but a few—especially those she feels "won't be missed"—are handed over to the Big Man.
- Among the woman's possessions, they discovered a diary. They offer it to the characters swearing it's all that know. The contents of Alin's diary are in Appendix C. The rangers beg that the characters release them. However, they share that they're more afraid of what the people in Skirvin Manor will do to them should they discover it was the two of them that revealed the Manor's secrets. If freed, the elves grab their possessions and head north away from Camor.

THE BELL

Should the characters go to the meeting point and ring the bell, nothing happens. Eflor, using his spyglass, sees that it's adventurers ringing the bell and not the brothers. He informs Kerrin, who then sends a message to one of her spies in Camor. An hour later, Constable Sarra is found dead in her office—poisoned.



CHAPTER 2: SKIRVIN MANOR

Black and bleak against the densely forested mountains of the Basilisk's Spine stands the 50-year-old Skirvin Manor. The moment it was built on Camor Hill by a wealthy Knotsider named Phineas Skirvin, the house was rumored to be cursed. Forty years ago, something happened at the Manor, but all historical evidence has been erased from the record books. Anyone that's gotten to close or asked to many questions either got turned around or vanished themselves.

Eventually, the characters will want to investigate Skirvin Manor. That's where the heart of the adventure begins.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PUZZLES

There are multiple puzzles all throughout Skirvin Manor along with a large number of red herrings. To help cut through the mystery yourself and see the most direct path for the characters to follow, refer to Chapter 4. Mystery Paths.

THE HISTORY OF SKIRVIN MANOR

Phineas Skirvin was a wealthy importer living in Knotside. Shortly after marrying Marren Groethal, daughter of one of his business partners, he commissioned the construction of a large house on a barren hill on the outskirts of the town Camor. At the time, Skirvin Manor was one of the most modern buildings ever created. It boasted a sturdy stone perimeter wall, its own chapel, greenhouse, and large kitchen. The entire estate could be managed by a staff of five. After it was built, Phineas hired a man named Oaken as the chief caretaker for the estate.

Two years later, Marren gave birth to their first daughter, Esme. Then, two years after that, their second daughter Priscilla was born. Finally, Marren gave birth to Petro, a son, three years after Priscilla.

One summer, the Skirvins met with tragedy. While Phineas was away on business, Priscilla, five at the time, was bitten by a poisonous snake while playing in the forest. The venom took hold fast; she died in the night. Unable to access Phineas' bank accounts, Marren could not pay a priest the requisite funds to revive her daughter. By the time Phineas' returned, Priscilla was more than ten days deceased. At that

point, Priscilla's soul had already passed on. They created a mausoleum for Priscilla, interring her on the estate.

Marren never forgave Phineas for his absence and mistrust of the family funds. Phineas, desperate to make amends to his family, retired, serving only as counsel at his old business. He settled permanently in his estate with wife and two surviving children.



LUDRA VALE

Two years passed. Marren barely said anything to Phineas. To take his mind away from his failing marriage, Phineas turned towards local politics—he would set his sights on becoming Camor's next mayor. Meanwhile, Oaken kept Skirvin Manor running without issue. After one of the older servants retired, Oaken hired a twenty-year-old woman named Ludra Vale to replace the retiree.

Immediately, Phineas felt a connection to Ludra Vale. Ludra felt the same, falling in love with the older gentleman. The two spent long nights talking to each other. Ludra told Phineas her plans of attending a university for spellcraft. Phineas told Ludra of his frustrations with Marren, his regrets, and his burgeoning career in politics. The conversations turned to intimacy, and intimacy turned to lust.

A few weeks after their tryst, Ludra started showing signs of morning sickness. Oaken, privy to his employer's affair, knew that a scandal could ruin Skirvin's future in local politics. Immediately, Oaken pulled Ludra aside and terminated the woman, threatening that if she returned he'd have her arrested.

Seven months passed. Lord Skirvin was treating donors to a dinner party in his home when Ludra returned, anxious to see her former lover. Pregnant and unemployed, she was desperate. Before she could make a scene, Skirvin intercepted her outside and tried to calm her down. Ludra threatened that she would spoil his political career if he didn't do something to help her. She grabbed at Skirvin's breast coat, tearing at the man's ascot; Oaken, defending his lord, pulled Ludra away. But Ludra slipped on the snow and hit

her head against the side of the manor well. Ludra's eyes rolled back into her head and she started to convulse. Panicking, Skirvin backed away. "No worries, m'lord," Oaken assured his shocked master. "I'll take care of this. Please, return to the festivities."

Skirvin stumbled away while Oaken handled Ludra—he pulled open the seal to the well and dragged her inside. One hundred feet Ludra Vale fell, down into the frigid water below. Oaken sealed the well.

ESME AND THE WATER FAIRY

The following summer, an older woman named Kerrin started working at the estate as a cook. The Skirvins found her friendly and talented. The other servants enjoyed her cooking, too, especially her beef stew which she served as the cool autumn winds started to sweep down the Spine. Unknown to the family and staff, Kerrin's real name was Ishta Vale—Ludra's mother. And she wanted revenge.

Ishta was a warlock of Vapul. While it's unknown if Kerrin knew about the estate's connection to her dark patron before her daughter started working for the Skirvins, she was bound and determined to use Vapul's might to destroy the Skirvins after the girl's death. Even a year later, Ludra's body laid at the bottom of the sealed well. Restless and angry, her soul was easy to wake.

As the snow started to fall that year, Esme Skirvin was often seen playing near the sealed well. She spoke to the well, almost as if she had an imaginary friend there. When the servants or her family would ask who she was talking to, she replied, "Oh, just my friend, Elle. She's a water fairy."

Then, one day, while she and Petro were playing, Esme slipped and tumbled into the open well, hitting the cold water far below. Immediately, the servants acted, calling for help. Lord Phineas himself descended into the well, rescuing his daughter. Before the servants pulled him and Esme up, Phineas thought he saw something dark and angry in the water—the ghostly face of Ludra.

Despite the tumble, Esme was uninjured. The girl was put into her room to rest while a local priest looked over her. Of course, Esme wasn't pulled out of the well alone. Ludra's ghost touched the young Skirvin, possessing her.

Oaken sensed trouble immediately. After all, *wasn't the well sealed?*

DEATHS IN THE FAMILY

Marren Skirvin was the first person Esme/Ludra killed. She slashed her mother's wrists as she bathed, then framed it as suicide. Phineas shrieked in agony as he held his dead wife in his arms. Esme watched in silence.

Next, Petro fell, tumbling over the balustrade railing onto the foyer below. The poor boy broke his neck, dying instantly. "An accident", Esme told her father

Oaken died next, slaughtered by Esme with a wood-chopping axe. Kerrin helped hide the body.

"Evil, Lord Skirvin," said the priest Skirvin had hired to watch Esme. "It permeates the entire estate. Three accidents in as little as a week. One wonders: is there a reason an angry spirit would target your family like this?"

Weeping, Phineas told the priest everything—his affair with Ludra, the murder, the cover-up, even the ghost he saw at the bottom of the well. Finally, he looked into the priest's eyes, begging, "Can you revive Marren and Petro?"

"Yes," assured the priest. "But only after I remove the curse on the manor."

Of course, the priest had no intention of removing the evil. The priest's true name was Eflor Vale, wife to Isha, father to Ludra.

"To perform the ritual, you will need to invite all who were here the same night the servant girl died." Phineas understood and reached out to his colleagues.

SLAUGHTER AT CAMOR

The day of the priest's ritual, all of the servants except Kerrin grew ill. Regardless, they worked diligently to make preparations.

Everyone who was present the night of Ludra's murder gathered in the estate chapel. Marren and Petro's bodies lied in state at either side of the priest as he began he ceremony. Grief-stricken Phineas knelt before the priest, begging Ludra for forgiveness.

"Confess to all your sins, Lord Skirvin," the priest commanded.

Phineas complied. All present heard him describe his relationship with young Ludra, her pregnancy, and subsequent murder. His colleagues lowered their heads in shame. The servants, still sick, gasped.

"Forgive me, Ludra."

The candles fluttered. Lightning crashed. The doors to the chapel slammed shut.

"No!" shouted Ludra through Esme. "I will never forgive you!"

Just then, the servants all screamed in unison. They crumbled to the floor of the chapel and started to change. Their hair fell out and their skin turned gray. Their eyes burned with hatred and their teeth turned to points. They

became ghouls.

The night before, Isha Vale cooked a special meal for the staff, her infamous beef stew, but this time with a secret ingredient: the remains of Oaken. The actual ritual the priest performed wasn't to exorcise Ludra's ghost but to change the cannibalistic staff into undead monstrosities.

All of the attendees charged for the door, shouting for help as the ghouls approached. But the doors wouldn't budge. Ferociously, the horrible creatures tore into Phineas Skirvin's political allies as the Lord watched.

"You killed our daughter, Skirvin. And you lied to the world. And now you suffer," proclaimed Eflor the Priest as his wife, Isha joined him. Skirvin snapped out of his shock and drew his rapier. He was able to run Eflor through before Ishta stopped him with a spell. Then, the ghouls turned to Skirvin, paralyzing the Lord of the Manor with their claws. They tore at his arms. They tore at his legs. As he screamed, they started eating him.

"No," Ishta barked at the ghouls, holding the body of her dead husband. "He doesn't get to die. He gets to *live*. He gets to live so he can continue to witness the horrors he brought upon this home and himself."

She set the ravenous ghouls free from the chapel. The former servants descended into Camor, committing horrible genocide on the Camorians. Meanwhile, Ishta and Esme treated Skirvin's amputated limbs ensuring he didn't bleed out. They removed his tongue and burned it on an altar to Vapul.

Almost forty years later, Skirvin still lives, bed-ridden, mind destroyed. Ludra maintains her incorporeal grip on Esme. Ishta still works in the kitchens, and even Eflor, revived by Ishta's dark magic, patrols the estate as a hulking, animated corpse named Gogo.



ARRIVAL AT SKIRVIN MANOR

When the characters finally approach Skirvin Manor, read or paraphrase the following.

Snow slowly drifts down onto the dark walls and rooves of the old manor house. Despite its foreboding appearance, overall, the manor and grounds are in fantastic shape. Just inside the perimeter wall, adjacent to the main building is a large chapel crowned with a bell tower. And before that a small, stone mausoleum with the name "Priscilla" written over the door. From one of the chimneys comes the smell of warm food.

If the characters approach the front door, they can knock or ring the bell. When they do, Esme Skirvin—who now goes by the name Bianca—answers. Esme, now in her late '40s is an attractive woman with long dark hair that boasts a single silver strand. She wears dark clothing with maroon accents, and often wears red poppies in her hair.

ROLEPLAYING BIANCA/ESME/LUDRA

Perhaps the most important NPC in the entire adventure, Esme is a deceptive character who drives the flow of the story. She is a human noble possessed by Ludra Vale, a **ghost matron** (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement). Esme has had the Bianca persona for so long, that she's grown accustomed to lying about it—she makes all Charisma (Deception) checks regarding her true identity with advantage.

Esme stays quiet most of the time, only answering questions when she's asked. She comes off as very shy and embarrasses easy. When she's no longer needed, she often excuses herself to take care of business in other parts of the estate, typically the ambulatory. Overall, she is very friendly and catering, perfect at playing the role of a servant.

If confronted aggressively, she breaks easily, sobbing and pleading. Only if attacked will she reveal her true nature. Even then, she flees instead of fights, preferably with her physical vessel. If truly pressed, Ludra will separate from Esme and slides into the basement where she can recuperate.

Ludra's is dedicated to her mother, Kerrin/Ishta and her father, Eflor, despite his crude, revived form. She also wants to keep Lord Skirvin's presence a complete secret and will do all she can to prevent trespassers from entering the ambulatory.

Should Ludra separate from Esme, Esme's soul is broken from forty years of possession. She only has enough time to explain a little of what has happened to her before passing away from exhaustion.

With the blizzard coming, Esme/Bianca wishes for the characters to stay the night, offering up the old servants quarters for them to stay in. The servants' quarters, while clean, has been empty for years.

WHERE IS ROUNDABOUT JEN?

The characters will likely wish to question Bianca/Esme about the presence of Roundabout Jen. Bianca thinks for a moment then mentions that the groundskeeper Gogo (the name by which Eflor now goes) intercepted a pair of elves

in the forest with someone with such a description. She assures that Gogo must have taken the wanted criminal to town to be handed over to Constable Sarra.

THE GUESTS

When the characters arrive, there are two other guests in attendance.

Arrow Diamond (LG male human **noble**) is a ghost hunter and occult scholar. He's been researching the lore of Camor and the Skirvin Manor for years, following the legend of an undead fiend named Vapul who was rumored to have been vanquished in the village 1,000 years prior. Somewhat eccentric and standoffish, Diamond is staying in the guest room on the first floor (area G12).

Rogger Blickor was one of the original servants of Skirvin Manor. Like the others, he was transformed into a **ghoul** by Kerrin's "Oaken-stew." He disguises himself as a world traveler and musician, haplessly strumming a lute during most hours of the day. Rogger wears a black tricorne hat with a long feather—it's actually a *hat of disguise* that helps mask his true, undead appearance. Any characters with a heightened sense of smell may catch the whiff of a corpse when standing near Rogger. Rogger claims he was sprayed by a skunk about a month ago.

THE STAFF

In addition to Bianca, there are three "staff members" who operate in Skirvin Manor.

Gogo/Eflor is the manor's **reanimated groundkeeper** (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement). When Lord Skirvin ran Eflor through with his rapier, he killed the old man. Kerrin used dark magic to revive Eflor, but only as a crude imitation of his former self. Eflor—now Gogo acts as the Vales' muscle, going by the name Gogo. The silent, grunting hulk lumbers around the chapel and outside of the manor with two **ghostly hounds**. If trouble arises, he and his undead canines handle it.

Kerrin is the old, friendly cook that hides away in the kitchens. Of course, she is secretly Ishta Vale, a **warlock of Vapul** (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement) and mother to Ludra Vale.

Nurse Joy, like Rogger, is a **ghoul** and she, too, was one of the original servants. Disguised as a medical practitioner thanks to a *hat of disguise*, Joy ensures that the locked-away Lord Skirvin is fed and lives.

OTHER INHABITANTS

The Vales and disguised ghouls aren't the only ones present in Skirvin Manor when the characters arrive.>

Six more **ghouls** are in the basement of the manor. Seen as "less tame" by the Vales, Joy, and Rogger, these ghouls aren't often permitted to come upstairs.

Roundabout Jen is actually in the Skirvin Manor, kept caged in the basement's dungeon (area B4). Since her capture by the elven rangers and Gogo, Jen's been slowly carved away by Kerrin and fed to the ghouls—and guests!

Lord Phineas Skirvin remains upstairs in his bedroom, locked away. The servants of the manor may occasionally mention him, but he is never seen. No one is allowed in the ambulatory. To hide his true identity, Bianca refers to Skirvin as Lord Earvin Skinship. She claims he purchased the manor after the original family vanished.

Marren Skirvin's ghost haunts different chambers of the manor. First, her presence can be felt in the upstairs bathroom (area T5). But she also plays the organ in the locked library (area T12). If confronted, Marren does not use her Possession feature. She will, however, use her Horrifying Visage and flee.

Petro Skirvin's ghost is seen all throughout the house, as well. Petro's ghost uses the normal **ghost** stat block except his size is Small and he does not have the Horrifying visage or Possession features.

Oaken continues to haunt his old job as a headless **specter** whose individual body parts don't entirely connect to his incorporeal body. If he is destroyed, he rejuvenates within one hour. Oaken can only be completely destroyed if his skull is found, then destroyed, and holy water is sprinkled on its remains.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Once the characters settle into Skirvin Manor, they're (mostly) free to go where they please. Bianca and Murse Joy spend most of their time in the ambulatory. Gogo never comes within 100 feet of any of the guests, preferring to stay outside in the blizzard. And Kerrin stays in the kitchen. The first night, Diamond examines all that he can, focusing primarily on the paintings and books lying around the house. Rogger is the only one that tries to ingratiate himself with the characters as his given role is to keep tabs on all of the guests. However, his immediate focus is more on Diamond who poses more of a threat than the adventurers (at least, for the time being).

THE BLIZZARD

The blizzard finally hits in the evening, dumping snow and wind on Skirvin Manor, and continues for the next 48 hours. Blizzards aren't completely uncommon coming off the Basilisk's Spine, but this one is particularly deadly as it's powered by the dark magic of Vapul. The blizzard creates the following conditions outside (including the courtyards of Skirvin Manor).

Blinding Snow. While outside, everything is heavily obscured by the snow and wind. Creatures are effectively blinded.

Difficult Terrain. The snow that falls acts as difficult terrain for creatures. The first night, it costs 2 feet of movement per 1 foot moved, and by the second night, it's 3 feet of movement per 1 foot moved outside.

Extreme Cold. Creatures that aren't resistant or immune to cold damage or wearing cold-weather gear must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw the moment they're exposed to the cold. Failure results in the creature gaining one level of exhaustion. The creature must repeat this saving throw at the end of each hour they spend out in the cold.

Strong Wind. All ranged weapon attacks rolls are made at disadvantage. Open flames are extinguished as well, and flying creatures must land or fall.

ARROW DIAMOND'S MURDER

Sometime just after midnight the first night the characters stay, a **ghoul** emerges from the secret passage in Arrow Diamond's room (area G7). The two fight in the room briefly,

then both collapse through the window into the storm outside. Arrow fights valiantly, but as he is unable to see clearly in the blizzard, the ghoul gets the upper hand, killing Arrow, then removing his head. The ghoul then retreats to Priscilla's mausoleum (area G26).

If the characters arrive first, they find Diamond's axe, the *tether-tearer* in the snow. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals claw marks on his body. The claw marks are laced with a mild poison that numbs to the touch. The ghoul's tracks lead directly to the mausoleum.

Before the characters can enter the mausoleum, Bianca appears, horrified by the scene. With the blizzard imminent, she fears they won't be able to properly dispose of the body. Instead, she suggests they carry it to the woodshed to store until the proper authorities arrive.

Roundabout Red Herring. To distract the characters from the murder, Bianca mentions that Gogo has not yet returned from bringing Roundabout Jen to town. She suggests that Jen may have attacked Diamond and escaped. She "fears" for Gogo's safety.



THE BINDING OF THE THREE

The ritual to recall Vapul can happen one of two ways. The moment the characters discover the basement and ghouls' den (Area B2)—regardless of the time of day or night—they happen upon the ceremony. Otherwise, the ceremony happens at midnight the second night that the characters stay at the mansion.

During the ritual, all of the servants and ghouls that have survived begin the ritual to revive Vapul. See Chapter 3 for details on the ritual. Note that it's possible the ritual can happen without the characters ever being aware of the evils in the basement below.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless stated otherwise in the description, Skirvin Manor has the following features.

Ceilings. The ceilings in Skirvin manor are generally 15 feet high and braced with timbers.

Clues. Many of the rooms contain clues that a part of one or more of the mysteries of Skirvin manor. There are six mystery paths in all: **Disappearance of Roundabout Jen**, **Ghost House**, **Murder in the Night**, **the Old Man's Secret**, **Return of the Ice Demon**, and **Screams in the Chapel**, each detailed in Chapter 4. If you choose to ignore a mystery path, you can remove the clue from the room, or keep it as a red herring.

Doors. The majority of the doors throughout the manor are sturdy oak doors hung on iron hinges. They are all equipped with locking mechanisms allowing anyone inside a room to lock it with a twist of a latch. Any of the skeleton keys (see Chapter 4) can open a locked door. Otherwise, a character can burst open a door with a successful DC 17 Strength check, or a character with proficiency in thieves' tools can pick a lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check. Doors have an AC of 17, 25 hp (50 hp if double doors), and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Floors. Hardwood floors cover the majority of Skirvin Manor. The floors, especially on the first floor, feel quite drafty, despite the fireplaces lit throughout the house. Many of the floors have intricate woven rugs to compensate.

Light. Gas lamps, candles, and even the odd continual light globe are lit throughout the house, providing plenty of light (and plenty of long shadows).

Supernatural Occurrences. As described in the section on Game Slowdowns in the Introduction, strange happenings might occur as the characters investigate the mysteries of Skirvin Manor. You're free to use the events described or ignore them entirely.

Walls. Exterior walls are made of fieldstone masonry. Interior walls are plaster and timber. Almost all of the walls are thoroughly decorated—almost garishly so—typically with detailed paintings of the family (see Appendix B for details on the paintings) hung in every room.

Windows. Most of the rooms in Skirvin manor have windows. A window has an AC of 13 with 5 hit points, and they are immune to poison and psychic damage but vulnerable to bludgeoning damage.

GROUND FLOOR

The following areas correspond to the labels on the ground floor map of the house on page [num].

G1 - FRONT DOOR

When the characters arrive at Skirvin Manor, if they knock at the front door, Bianca answers. Read the following:

After a few moments, the large, black doors open, revealing a thin, pale-skinned human woman in her late 40s/early 50s wearing all black. She smiles warmly at you. "Hello, how may I help you?"

This, of course, is Bianca. She's quick to get the characters inside from the cold and immediately recommends they stay the night in the Manor as the storm approaches.

The front doors are much sturdier than the rest of the doors in the home. Breaking the doors open requires a DC 20 Strength check. The pair's AC is 18 with 75hp, immunity to bludgeoning and slashing. It can also be barred from the inside, which gives it an additional 25 hp and increases the DC to break it open by 5.

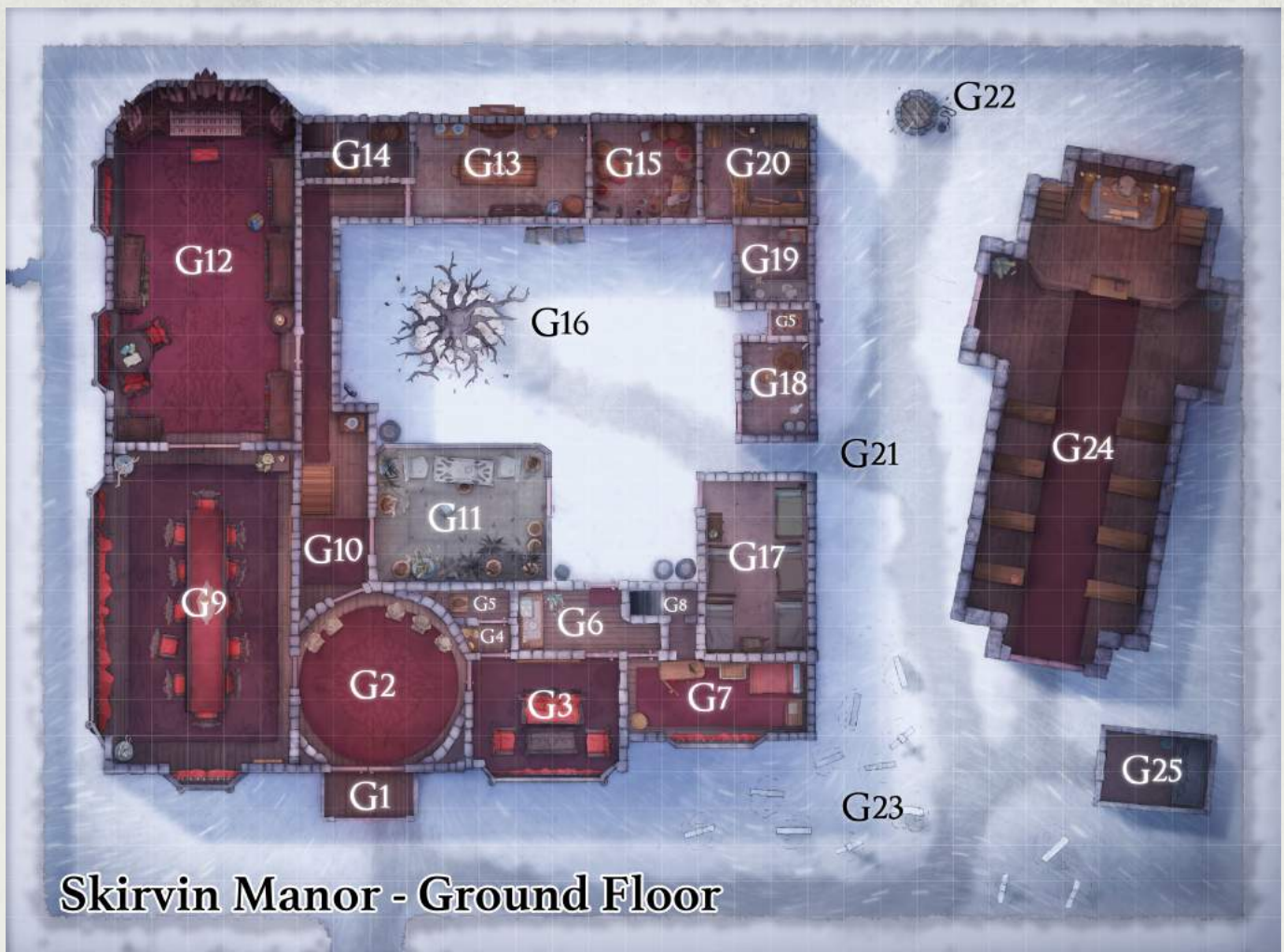
G2 - FOYER

This round room is flanked by three doors. 15 feet above you a railed balustrade overlooks the room. There are also five marble busts here. The westernmost bust is of a solemn-faced girl with pig tails. Next, comes a cheery-faced boy. A man with a stern look is the centermost bust followed by an attractive older woman with her hair pinned up. The final bust is of a girl with a bow in her hair.

Plaques under each of the busts read (from west to east): Esme Skirvin, Petro Skirvin, Lord Phineas Skirvin, Lady Marren Skirvin, and Priscilla Skirvin.

Murder in the Night. Priscilla's bust is not like the others. A character that succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check while examining the bust may notice





Skirvin Manor - Ground Floor

that the eyelids of the statue can be moved. If a character pulls down her eyelids (as if she were dead), it opens the statue's mouth, revealing her tongue. On her tongue is an octagonal slot. Placing the obol found in the guest room Diamond was staying in (area G7) unlocks the wardrobe from its position hiding the secret stairs (area G8).

Strange Occurrences. There is a chance that a character walking through the foyer may notice Petro's ghost on the balustrade (see the description of Petro's ghost earlier in this chapter). This may also play into the Ghost House mystery paths.

G3 - SITTING ROOM

A red sofa flanked by two red armchairs face towards a large bay window obscured by thick, crimson curtains. An intricately carved coffee table sits in the center. Behind the furniture is a massive painting of family: a well-to-do husband and wife, two daughters, and a young son.

Strange Occurrences. While in the sitting room, a shadow moves past the window—there's someone outside. If the characters pull open the curtains, there's nothing there. It was one of the ghouls from the basement moving around outside.

G4 - COAT CLOSET

Just a bunch of coats, hats, and umbrellas.

There is nothing of importance or value in the coat closet, although, if the characters need winter clothing, they can find all they need here (although, there's no guarantee it fits).

Strange Occurrences. If a character opens the closet alone, for a moment they see the ghost of a young boy who laughs, "You found me!" before disappearing. It was Petro's ghost playing hide and seek.

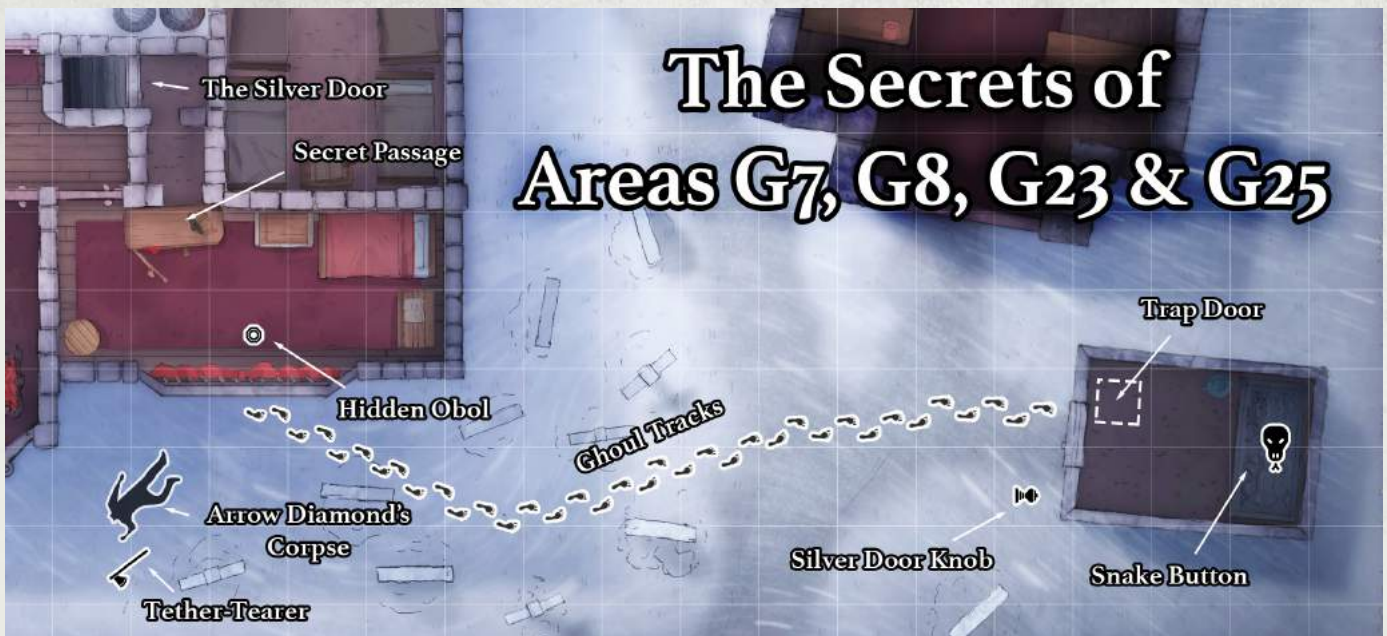
G5 - PRIVIES

These small, cold rooms are host to a wooden toilet seat with a clean chamber pot below it. Fresh herbs and flowers hang from the back of the door.

G6 - SERVICE ROOM

Supplies for tea are kept here to serve any who retire to the sitting room (Area G3). The door to the inner courtyard is kept locked by key (it's one of the few that doesn't have a latch mechanism).

Supernatural Occurrences. There is a chance—especially late at night—that a character may come across Oaken's specter putting together a tea set here. The specter looks as Oaken did, except that its head is missing, and its body parts



float apart from its body separately (representing the way he was butchered by Esme and Kerrin). Ectoplasmic blood drips all over everything. If Oaken's specter is destroyed, it rejuvenates within one hour. Oaken can only be completely destroyed if his skull is destroyed and holy water is sprinkled on its remains.

G7 - GUEST ROOM

Before Diamond's murder, the guest room is kept relatively untidy. Diamond keeps his possessions strewn about, with the exception of his axe, the tether-tearer, which he wears on his hip. His possessions include the contents of a scholar's pack and a burglar's pack. He also has a waterskin filled with holy water.

After Diamond's murder, read the following:

Diamond's room has been torn apart. The bed's mattress is shredded, stuffing and springs spilling from it. All of the cabinets and drawers in the room are open, contents tossed about. Cold air and snow drift inside from the destroyed window, the curtains flapping in the strong breeze.

It's likely that Rogger, one of the ghouls in disguise, appears on the scene before the characters do. Any obvious notes that Diamond had on Skirvin estate, Vapul, or his recent findings were put into a waste bin and set on fire by Rogger before characters could arrive. Of course, he suggests it was done "by whoever did this" and was "that way when he found it."

Among the rubbish, the characters find a jeweled dagger with the initials "RJ" in the hilt. The dagger was Roundabout Jen's, stolen from her when Eflor captured her and placed her in the dungeon. Rogger planted the dagger to make it seem like she was the murderer.

Murder in the Night. No matter what mystery paths your characters follow, Diamond is killed by the ghouls. However, clues leading to his murderer and eventually the secrets of the manor can be found with the Murder in the Night mystery path. While the characters have access to the room, a

character that succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices that the rug and floor of the room have been disturbed. Below one of the floorboards, Diamond hid an octagonal coin made of bronze wrapped in a torn piece of yellow fabric. A character that succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check will realize that the coin is an obol, placed into the mouth of the dead as payment to ferrymen in the afterlife.

The wardrobe against the northern wall of the room holds its own secrets. The wardrobe is completely empty save for a single, yellow dress, sized for a young girl. Part of the dress has been cut away. That's what Diamond used to wrap the obol under the floorboards. Behind the wardrobe is a hidden hallway that leads to the basement.

The wardrobe can't be moved. This should be the first indicator that it's hiding something. A character can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check revealing that the wardrobe is bolted to the wall, and that it's likely there's a hidden passage behind it. Thick steel bolts keep it locked firmly in place—it requires a DC 24 Strength check to pry open the door behind the wardrobe. There is no way to trigger the wardrobe's mechanism outside of placing the obol in the mouth of Priscilla's bust in the foyer (area G2).

G8 - SECRET STAIRS

Once the characters get past the wardrobe's secret door in Area G8, they discover a hidden passage between the walls.

Cold and dark, this hidden chamber is no more than 10 feet in length before it deadends. There is a solid iron door to the left. It appears to have no door handle. At the center of the door are nine tumblers with letters on them.

The door can only be opened by placing the silver doorhandle into it (see Area G26), and then the tumblers (see the diagram) must be set to "PRISCILLA." Once this is done, the door opens revealing the narrow staircase down to the basement Area B1.

On the other side of the wardrobe door is a latch that temporarily removes the steel bolts holding it in place, allowing a character to step out into Area G7.

Strange Occurrences. It's possible that there is a **ghoul** waiting here, having been alerted by the wardrobe's opening.

G9 - DINING ROOM

This impressive dining room seats twelve at a massive, dark-stained oak table. Above you is a balcony with a gallery of expertly painted paintings. At the north end of the room, a pair of double doors

If and when the characters agree to stay the night in Skirvin Manor, they're served a delicious meal of beef stew and red wine by the Manor's eccentric cook, Kerrin. Joining them for dinner is Rogger, Bianca, and Arrow Diamond. This is the perfect opportunity for the characters to get to know the NPCs of Skirvin Manor.

The doors to the library (Area G12) are kept locked.

Ghost House. While the characters are at dinner and at regular intervals, organ music can be heard coming from the adjoining library (Area G12). It's the ghost of Marren Skirvin playing a sad melody. Bianca, if questioned about it, lies, explaining that the organ in the library is magically enchanted to play at certain intervals. Unfortunately, they haven't taken the time to disenchant it.

G10 - MAIN HALL

The main hall connects most of the manor's downstairs. The doors to the greenhouse (Area G11), library (Area G12), and kitchen (Area G13) are kept locked.

Disappearance of Roundabout Jen. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals blood on the small table behind the staircase. When Gogo was pulling Jen towards the kitchen, she bled onto the table and on the rug. Noticing the blood on the red rug is a little more difficult, requiring a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

G11 - GREENHOUSE

Other than a few herbs and evergreen plants, most of the greenery in this greenhouse have withered for the winter. Snowdrifts pile on top of the glass, including the roof and exterior door. The first night of the blizzard, pushing the door open requires a DC 13 Strength check. The second night, the DC increases to 16.

Skeleton Keys. The warlock Kerrin/Ishta Vale hides her key in the greenhouse. The key itself is hidden at the bottom of one of the plants' pots. Her key is the most protected of the three. Touching it without saying the phrase "Praise Vapul" activates all of the plants in the greenhouse to attack, acting as **thorny strangler vines** (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement). They continue to attack until destroyed, someone speaks the phrase "Praise Vapul", or the triggering creatures leave the greenhouse.

Like Bianca's skeleton key, there are no obvious clues that point to its location. No amount of torture or non-magical interrogation will cause Kerrin to reveal the location of her key.

G12 - LIBRARY/PARLOR

This grand room probably once doubled as a parlor and library. However, it's clear that it's sat empty for years. An impressive pipe organ dominates the northern end of the room, thick dust covering its keys.

Due to Marren's ghost frequenting this room, Bianca and the others have decided to keep it "off-limits" to guests at the manor. "Lord Skinship prefers to keep this room locked as it was his private study before he grew ill," she'll lie.

Ghost House. If the characters break into the room while they hear Marren playing the pipe organ, they catch a brief glimpse of her. She bleeds spectral blood from her wrists onto the keys and turns to the characters. She then speaks in a slow, groaning tone, inaudible.

Later, while Marren isn't present, they discover Petro's ghost in this room (usually in the mornings just before midday). Petro sits at the table by the window, crying. Looking up through spectral tears, he says, "Mommy used to help me with my letters. She would tell me what to write and I would write it. But now I never see her anymore." Once he's finished speaking, he vanishes.

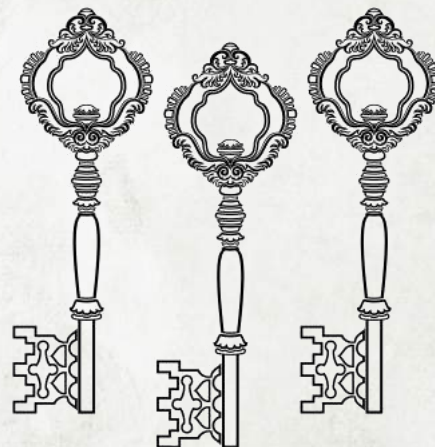
Examining the table, the characters find the *orator's quill* (see the Magic Items of Skirvin Manor supplement). Its activation word is written on the side of it—"Petro Skirvin." Its best use in this adventure is to record the words Marren Skirvin says when she appears. Sped up, she says aloud, "BEG A DEAD FACADE."

While it may seem meaningless at first, the phrase actually refers to different notes on the organ. If the notes are played into the organ—B-E-G-A-D-E-A-D-F-A-C-A-D-E—a hidden compartment at the base of the organ opens, revealing a narrow staircase down to the basement (Area B3).

Supernatural Occurrences. While helpful, Marren can also turn quite bitter. She can command the books of the library to come to life and attack as two swarms of **possessed books** lead by a **possessed spellbook**.

G13 - KITCHEN

At first glance, the Skirvin's kitchen doesn't seem out of the ordinary. It has all the tools Kerrin needs to prepare meals for the servants and guests (and ghouls, of course).



Secrets of Area G12



To get into the kitchen, the characters will need to distract or kill Kerrin (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement). Kerrin is pretty protective of the kitchen and will do her best to shoo away snoopy characters. Failing that, she'll summon Eflore and his ghost hounds to handle them, especially if they start unraveling the secrets of the manor.

There are a few times each day where she will leave the kitchen. Before each meal, she goes into the greenhouse to collect herbs. And after each meal, she uses the privy across the courtyard. No matter which way she goes, she locks the kitchen behind her and is gone for exactly 15 minutes. If the characters wish to break into the kitchen without being noticed by Kerrin, set a timer in the real world for 15 minutes. The players have exactly 15 minutes in real time to sneak in and get out before they are caught. In this time, they can do a quick search of the kitchen, making a (Wisdom) Perception check. Refer to the Searching the Kitchen table to determine what they find.

Kerrin always keeps the doors locked when she's away.

Disappearance of Roundabout Jen. The moment that the characters enter the kitchen, they must quickly search it. Have the characters make a passive Perception check. Depending on the result, they find one or more items in the kitchen as shown on the Searching the Kitchen table below.

Treasure. Roundabout Jen's signet ring is worth 10 gp. The tome of dark rituals contains the following rituals within its pages: *augury*, *commune*, *contact other plane*, *detect magic*, *divination*, *feign death*, and *gentle repose*. There is also a *tote of tricky treat sugarbombs* in one of the cabinets (see the Magic Items of Skirvin Manor supplement).

SEARCHING THE KITCHEN

Perception
Check Result

9 or lower	The characters find nothing.
10-14	A stockpot boils over the fireplace. Looking in the stock reveals the bones of a human leg. A character that has proficiency in Medicine can make a successful DC 10 Wisdom check to reveal that they're human. They were Jen's, Kerrin having severed the limb and served it.
15-19	The characters discover the bones. In addition, hanging on one of the pot hooks is a brass signet ring with the initials "RJ" for Roundabout Jen. Kerrin removed it and set it aside while butchering the woman's arm.
20+	Along with the other objects, behind the dishes on the stoneware cabinet is the outline of a secret compartment. A DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a latch that unlocks it. Inside, Kerrin keeps a book bearing the mark of Vapul on the cover, its pages written in Abyssal. The book is a tome of dark rituals.

G14 - WATER BARRELS

When the well "ran dry" 40 years ago, the Skirvins started purchasing tuns of water from Camor to supply the mansion. Gogo also collects snow for Kerrin to boil and keep.

The iron door here is magically locked. It can be opened when the Abyssal word for "open" is spoken aloud. (It's likely that the characters notice at some point that Kerrin curses under her breath in Abyssal.) Until the *arcane lock* is dispelled, the DC to break it open or use thieves' tools to pick the lock is 25. The door itself is like any other door in the house in terms of AC and hit points, except that it also has immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage caused by nonmagical weapons and resistance to fire.

G15 - ABATTOIR

The first time the characters enter the abattoir, read the following:

Cold cuts, slabs of meat, and more hang from hooks in this cluttered meat locker. A table in the southeastern corner of the room is covered in fresh blood. You'd suspect it was animals' blood if you didn't automatically notice a severed human hand covered in tattoos amidst the gore.

The hand is Roundabout Jen's. Kerrin kept it to make stew for later.

Supernatural Occurrences. While the characters are in here, the room grows remarkably cold, almost as if they were standing outside. Suddenly, in one of the collection bowls, a severed head wearing an eye patch appears, gurgling on his own blood. It's Oaken's specter. Like Oaken's headless body, the head is dangerous, using telekinetic attacks to harm any living creature it comes across. Treat Oaken as a **poltergeist**, except make the following changes:

- Oaken is not invisible—attacks can be directed at his head.
- Remove Oaken's forceful slam attack.
- If Oaken's head takes 10 or more damage or any radiant damage, he instantly disappears.

G16 - INNER COURTYARD

The courtyard is covered in snow, the blizzard's winds pounding against the manor. However, frequent travel between different parts of the manor creates easygoing paths. The inner courtyard doesn't suffer from the difficult terrain conditions explained earlier in this chapter.

Kerrin keeps the door to the kitchen locked as well as the door to the greenhouse.

The Old Man's Secret. The characters might see Nurse Joy watching them from the southern ambulatory (area T10). For a brief moment, her eyes seem to glow. She then turns away from the window, closing the curtains behind her.

Return of the Ice Demon. The map inside the *tether-tearer* shows a spot in the courtyard with the mark of Vapul. Brushing away the snow there, the characters discover stones arranged in the mark. Digging there reveals a human skull. Where its right eye should be is solid bone. This is Oaken's skull (see Chapter 4 on details on how to activate Oaken's skull).

Screams in the Chapel! The treasure map in Petro's room (see Area T4) shows an "X" just to the east of the large tree



in the courtyard. Characters who dig there (takes 2 rounds) find a black candle wrapped in burlap. This is one of the Candles of Vapul, used to open the secret passage under the altar in the chapel

Supernatural Occurrences. Marren's ghost occasionally looks out the windows of the ambulatory above the inner courtyard.

G17 - SERVANT'S QUARTERS

Five neatly made beds clutter this small, cold, austere room.

Before they turned into ghouls, this is where the servants slept. Bianca offers this room as a place for the characters to stay during the blizzard.

The Return of the Ice Demon. Oaken's eyepatch is kept in a drawer in the table at the southern end of the room. Placing it on his skull temporarily revives him (see Chapter 4 for details).

Supernatural Occurrences. When a character is alone all but one of the characters are asleep, a figure bursts in through the door outside. They appear to be ill, clawing at their throat and wrenching. Before the character can help, the person tears away their own flesh, revealing a horrible ghoul beneath. The apparition then ends, almost as if nothing had happened.

G18 - SERVANT'S BATH

This cold room is used for taking baths during the warmer months.

G19 - SCULLERY

Dirty dishes are brought here. Sometimes, Kerrin is here washing the dishes, using heated water from the kitchen.

G20 - WOOD STORAGE

Usually, this door is kept locked. Wood for the fires and other household tasks are kept here. A staircase leads up to the servant stairway on the second floor (Area T8). After Arrow Diamond is murdered, his headless body is dragged here for safekeeping. Sometime between the night of his murder and the second murder, his body disappears—Kerrin and the ghouls drag it downstairs for feasting (and to destroy evidence).

G21 - OUTER COURTYARD

The narrow courtyard that runs between the house and chapel is piled with snow.

Supernatural Occurrences. The ghost of Ludra Vale occasionally walks past the well where her corpse is kept. Before anyone can get close enough to stop her, she vanishes.

G22 - SEALED WELL

Forty years ago, Ludra Vale was pushed into the manor's well by Oaken. The lid was then placed over top and sealed permanently. Removing the lid requires a DC 13 Strength check.

The well is 100 feet deep and its stone walls are covered in ice. Without a rope, climbing the well requires a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check at the start of a character's

movement. If the check fails by 4 or less, a character fails to move but doesn't fall. But if the check fails by 5 or more, the character loses their footing and falls the rest of the way, taking 1d6 damage for every 10 feet that they fall.

G23 - FAMILY GRAVEYARD

These snow-covered gravestones lack epitaphs and markings of any kind. The graves actually mark the bodies of those who were killed during the Slaughter of Camor.

Murder in the Night. Following Arrow Diamond's death, the footprints of a humanoid lead from the crime scene to the mausoleum (Area G25). *Tether-tearer* lies in the snow.

Supernatural Occurrences. Some nights, the spirits of the dead Camorians rise from the graves. They can be seen from any window that faces the graveyard as well as by any character that is outside. The twelve **ghosts** aren't malicious, but they do exude a frightful presence. Any creature that starts its turn within 30 feet of the ghosts and can see them must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute.

G24 - CHAPEL

Both sets of double-doors leading into the chapel are bound with thick chains and a lock that can be opened with one of the skeleton keys (see Chapter 4). The lock can be picked with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check by someone with proficiency in thieves' tools. Alternatively, the chain itself can be broken one of two ways. It can be burst with a successful DC 22 Strength check. Or it can be attacked. The chain has an AC of 19, 10 hp, and is immune to bludgeoning and psychic damage. Fortunately, the blizzard outside masks most of the sounds made by characters attempting to break into the chapel.

Once the characters are in the chapel proper, read or paraphrase the following:

The interior of—what you can only guess—this once beautiful chapel is in ruins. The pews are cracked and broken, blanketed by thick cobwebs. Bloodstains, blackened with age, paint the floors suggesting some long-forgotten crime. On the wood, stone, rugs, everywhere are treacherous claw marks created by something likely not human.

Other than the bodies of the Camorian politicians being removed, the chapel was left the way it was following the Slaughter of Camor.

Encounters. Unless already killed somewhere else, the **reanimated groundskeeper** Gogo/Eflor and his two **ghostly hounds** reside in the chapel. Knowing that entering the chapel reveals many of the mysteries of Skirvin Manor, Gogo defends the chapel without hesitation. Unless the characters were quiet about entering the chapel, he attempts to hide before he attacks.

Also, the spirits of those who died in the chapel 40 years ago are angry and wish to cause harm to any who enter. There are three **poltergeists** that attack.

Screams in the Chapel. An old hymnal sits atop one of the pews. One of the hymns has been bookmarked. The hymn is a clue to opening the sarcophagi in the chapel basement. It reads:

*Come with me, brothers and sisters
Down into the dark
By our sleeping sister Jane
From her bed, we shall embark.*

*First goes brother Michael
A hero and brave knight
Then goes Amory the scribe
Many books did she write.*

*Soon follows Erin
People called her a witch
Then pugnacious Lord Tyrus
Famously fat and rich.*

*Next is Mark the Priest
Who protected us with words
And finally the Druid Misha
She so loved her birds.*

*Come with me, brothers and sisters
Down into the dark
By our sleeping sister Jane
From her bed, we shall embark.*

Along with the hymnal, there is another important secret hidden in the chapel that assists in both the Screams in the Chapel and Murder in the Night mystery paths. The altar hides a secret door. There are two candlesticks on either side of the altar. If the two candles of Vapul are placed into the candlesticks, a trap door opens. Stairs lead down into the secret basement below the chapel (Area B8). The secret door is difficult to notice, requiring a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) to find. Thick, steel rods keep the trapdoor in place until the candles are set into their proper place or the trap door is opened from within the basement. A character can pry it open with a successful DC 24 Strength check.

G25 - PRISCILLA'S MAUSOLEUM

Priscilla, the youngest of the two Skirvin daughters, was interred in this mausoleum. A plaque over the stone door reads "PRISCILLA." Following the murder of Arrow Diamond, footprints lead to the closed door of the mausoleum. The mausoleum's door is heavy, but given a proper push by any character with a Strength score of 10 or higher it opens.

Murder in the Night. In its haste, the ghoul dropped the silver door handle into the snow to the right of the door. The silver door handle acts as a key to the secret door in the guest room (Area G8).

Inside the mausoleum, wet footprints lead first to Priscilla's sarcophagus, and then to the northwestern corner of the room to the right of the door. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the footprints are humanoid-like and bare.

The carving on Priscilla's sarcophagus depicts many animals surrounding the deceased girl Priscilla. One of the animals is a snake with its mouth open. A closer look—a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check—reveals that there is a finger-sized hole in the snake's mouth. A character can place their finger into the hole; if they do, the snake bites down. The character must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the character takes 9 (2d8) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 hour; on a successful one, the character takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. After one round, the snake releases its grip on the character. Suddenly, the door to the mausoleum shuts and a trap door in the floor of the northwestern corner opens. The trap door remains open until the mausoleum door opens again. Through the trap door, the characters find a tunnel that leads to the chapel basement (Area B9).



Secrets of Area T3, T4, and T6



TOP FLOOR

The following areas correspond to the labels on the top floor map of the house on page 21.

T1 - BALUSTRADE

This balcony overlooks the foyer from the first floor.

Both the door to the ambulatory (Area T10) and the office (Area T11) are locked.

Ghost House. If a character is following Petro's ghost—or if they're just walking along the balustrade—they hear a disembodied voice yell, "I want my mommy!" Petro, invisible, then shows the character. Have the character make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed saving throw, they tumble over the railing and down to the foyer (Area G2) taking 7 (2d6) damage from the fall. On a successful saving throw, they feel something shove them into the railing, then hear his footsteps run down the hall. He runs downstairs to the library and disappears. Listening at the door, they hear him crying from within.

The Old Man's Secret. If the characters are upstairs investigating and are standing on the door to the balustrade, it's likely they hear the moaning of "Lord Earvin Skinship." Before they can react, Nurse Joy steps out from the ambulatory (Area T10) and locks the door behind her. She says nothing to the characters before walking away.

T2 - GALLERY

This luxurious balcony overlooks the dining room below.

Covering the walls are intricately framed paintings of what could only be the family that once lived here.

T3 - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

This hallway runs the length of the upstairs, connecting the balustrade to the children's bedrooms and the master bathroom. There is a large window that faces east at the end of the hallway.

Skeleton Keys. A character that looks out the window may notice that the snow on the roof in front of the northeastern dormer (Area T8) has been recently disturbed as if it has been brushed away. Although they can't tell from where they are, it's where Nurse Joy hides her skeleton key.

T4 - PETRO'S BEDROOM

Although it's been converted into a guest room with a proper size bed, it's clear that this was once the room of a small child. Toys still decorate furniture surfaces. A hand-drawn treasure map is pinned to the wall just by the door. There's even a tiny pair of boots propped by the wardrobe.

This is the room where Rogger claims he is resting. However, he's never to be found here, even late at night.

Ghost House. There are two instances where Petro can appear in his old bedroom. First, as the characters are walking down the hall towards the bedrooms, they hear his laughter from within. When the door is opened, they find nothing inside. However, some of his toys decorate the floor and bed. Then, if a character spends the night in the room, they awaken to the sound of a child asking, "Can we practice my words now, mommy?" When they look around for the voice, they see Petro running out of the room into the hallway.

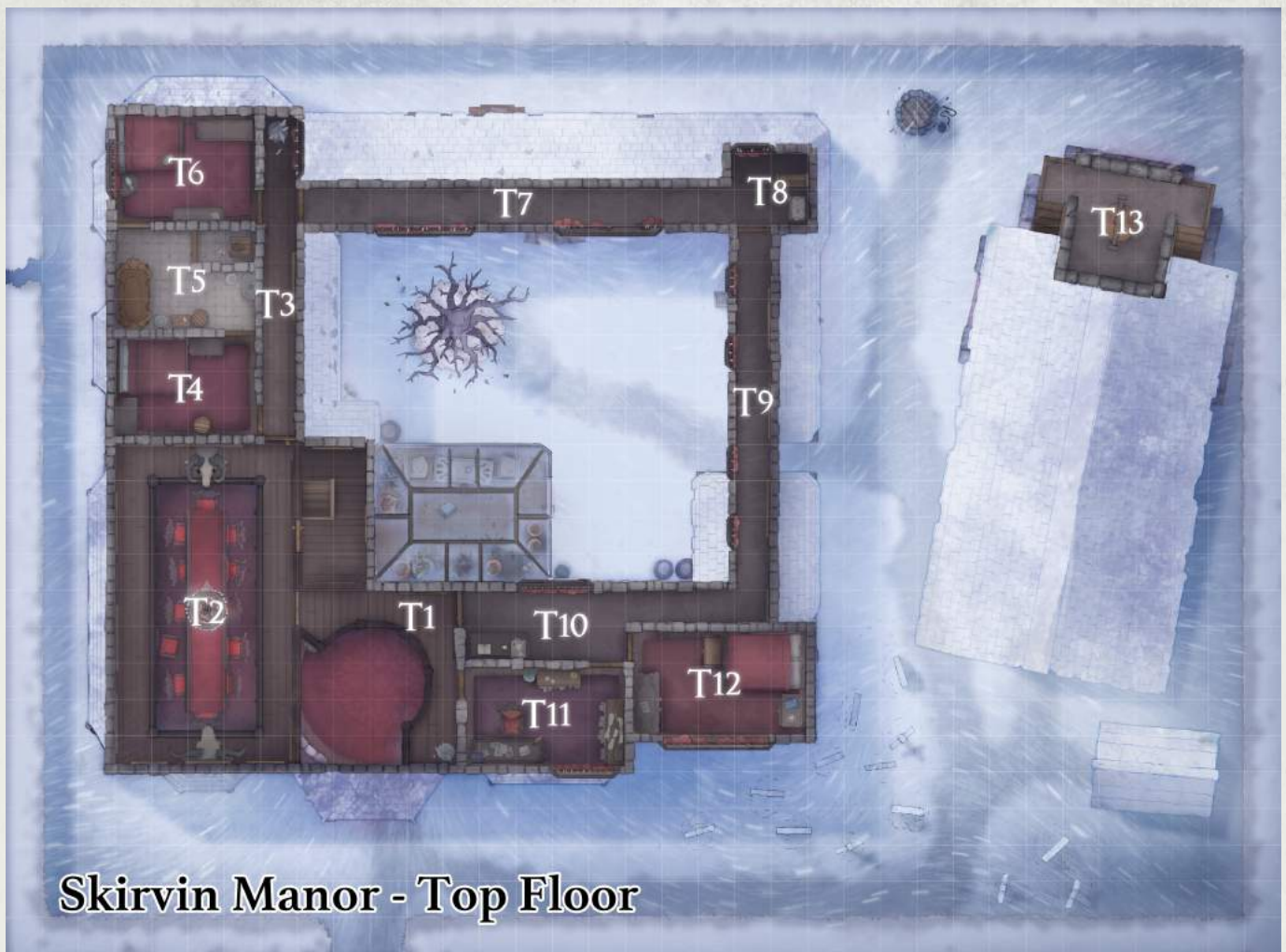
Screams in the Chapel. The treasure map is a rough drawing of the house. In the courtyard, just in front of the old tree, is an X. Digging there reveals the right candle of Vapul is hidden (see Area G16 for additional details).

T5 - MASTER BATH

A massive copper tub dominates this luxurious bathroom. It smells of flowers, incense, and other sweet smells.

This is the room where Esme Skirvin (possessed by Ludra Vale) killed her mother 40 years ago. She made it look like a suicide.

Ghost House. If one or more characters are in the master bathroom, the doors lock and the room becomes extremely cold. Suddenly, the characters notice that there is water on the floor mixed with blood. In the bathtub is the still, pale form of Marren Skirvin, her wrists bleeding. She mouths something: the only sound that comes out is a groaning, croaking sound, almost like someone speaking in slow-motion. Before the characters can attack her or communicate her, she vanishes.



Skirvin Manor - Top Floor

T6 - ESME'S BEDROOM

This guest room was probably once a child's room. Stuffed animals and top the furniture surfaces. On the desk, a rainbow-colored abacus still sits. The wardrobe is slightly open, revealing a young woman's clothing.

Bianca/Esme still calls this room her own, although she's often tending to Lord Skinship in the ambulatory.

Screams in the Chapel. There are five articles of clothing hung in the wardrobe; each belonged to Esme. The clothing actually acts as a combination lock. Sliding the hangers from left to right in a set pattern unlocks a secret compartment in the bottom of the wardrobe. The compartment hides the left candle of Vapul.

The abacus on the desk is a clue. Its beads have been permanently glued into place. The combination of the wardrobe matches the positions on the abacus (see the player's handout in Appendix C). The combination is 3-left, 2 right; 1-left, 4-right; 0-left, 5-right; 4-left, 1-right.

The wardrobe was expertly crafted and magically sealed. Noticing the secret compartment requires a DC 17 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Breaking it open requires a DC 22 Strength check. The entire wardrobe can be broken, too: it has an AC of 20, 50 hp (threshold 5), and is

resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons, and immune to poison and psychic damage.

Skeleton Key. Bianca/Ludra keeps her skeleton key hidden, realizing that if she's killed or harmed and has the key on her, it gives her killers immediate access to the ghoul's den. She keeps the key in her old bedroom behind one of the stones in the wall near the door. Typically, she uses the end of her silver hairbrush to move the stone out of the way; hence scrapes on the end of the brush's handle.

If Ludra is severed from Esme, Esme will reveal the location of the key to the characters. Otherwise, there are no clues that point towards its secret location. If a character happens to search the wall directly to the right of the bedroom door, they can find the hidden stone with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Otherwise, it's difficult to notice with a cursory glance.

T7 - AMBULATORY NORTH

The ambulatory passages are cold, poorly lit, and not nearly as well furnished as the rest of the Old Skirvin Manor.

This passage is always locked.

Supernatural Occurrences. The ambulatory is particularly well-guarded by the evil undead that infests Skirvin Manor. There is a chance that one of the **ghouls**

from the basement snuck into the ambulatory to "stretch its legs." It might even be the same ghoul that killed Arrow Diamond. When noticed, it attacks immediately, fighting until its hit points are reduced to half or more. Fleeing, it slams doors behind it, locking them as it goes.

T8 - SERVANT STAIRWAY

Leading up from the wood storage below, this old servant stairway allowed the Skirvin's servants to work without disturbing the residents.

The door leading to the eastern ambulatory is kept locked at all times.

Skeleton Keys. Nurse Joy keeps her key hidden just outside of the window. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals water around the window sill; melted snow. The window is easily opened. From there, a character can see disturbed snow on the roof. With a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check a character can find the skeleton key tacked to the underside of one of the roof tiles.

T9 - AMBULATORY EAST

Similar to the other ambulatory halls, this area is cold and poorly lit. However, there are three paintings here that deliver clues to the locations of the three skeleton keys (see Appendix B for details on the paintings).

Supernatural Occurrences. Occasionally, the ghost of Marren Skirvin can be seen walking along this hallway gazing at the paintings. She vanishes before she can be confronted, although, if you're running the Ghost House mystery path, she makes the same slow-motion groaning sound she does when encountered elsewhere.

T10 - AMBULATORY SOUTH

The south ambulatory is very well-protected by Nurse Joy and Bianca. The door is always kept locked. Unless the characters are quiet, it's likely Nurse Joy hears them coming and prepares by locking the door to Lord Skirvin's room and hiding.

The Old Man's Secret. If the characters heard moaning from the balustrade (area T1), then the moaning intensifies once they reach the ambulatory; it's coming from the door at the eastern end of the hall.

T11 - OFFICE

This old office is littered with papers, scrolls, and other old objects. A fine layer of dust covers everything and cobwebs are in every corner.

No one has set foot in Skirvin's office in years. Characters can discern certain elements of Skirvin's past here.

- Banners and pins reading "SKIRVIN FOR MAYOR OF CAMOR!" are kept in his desk and pinned to the walls.
- There is a love letter from Ludra Vale. It reads, "Phineas, my love. I have never known passion such as the passion I know with you. Hopefully, we can meet again soon. May nothing short of death ever come between us."
- There is an accounting ledger kept locked in a drawer.

Treasure. A quick look around the room and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a disturbance in the carpet. If someone pulls back the carpet a little, they find a locked trapdoor (DC 13 Dexterity with proficiency in thieves' tools to unlock). Within the trapdoor is a steel combination safe. The combination is long lost, but a character can open it by making three DC 15 Perception (Wisdom) checks in a row. Within the safe are a bag of 100 gold pieces and a wand of magic missile.

T12 - MASTER BEDROOM

The door to this room is always kept locked by Nurse Joy, even if she's inside. The first time the characters enter the room, read or paraphrase the following.

The smell; that's the first thing you notice. Like human waste mixed with rot. It's dark in here, too, the windows covered with an additional layer of blackout curtains. Thousands of tiny hash marks deface the walls and ceilings. From the large bed, you hear something moaning, groaning, crying. There seems to be something hiding under the covers.

Once the characters feel brave enough to pull back the sheets, read:

He has no legs. He has no arms. Other than a soiled loincloth, the old man is completely nude, writhing under tight leather restraints. Small gashes mark nearly every inch of his skin—some fresh and still bloody, some scabbed over, many turned to scars. Gasping, the poor soul reveals he has no tongue. "Kuh muh!" he begs, staring at you through the tears in his lidless eyes.

This, of course, is the tortured form of Lord Phineas Skirvin who has been held a prisoner in this room for 40 years. Nurse Joy keeps him stuck in the bed using the paralyzing agent in her ghoulish claws.

The Old Man's Secret. If the physical torture wasn't enough, Joy keeps a copy of tome of dreams beside the bed which Nurse Joy forces him to read each night. Having read it to him for forty years, Skirvin's own nightmares have since imprinted on the book. Once the character finishes reading the book, they fall into a slumber and have a nightmare. Each round they are asleep, they catch a glimpse at Skirvin's past:

- **Round 1 - Meeting Ludra Vale.** Ludra Vale is hired. Lord Skirvin, younger, introduces himself to the young woman. It's clear there is an attraction.
- **Round 2 - Skirvin's Affair.** Ludra and Skirvin meet and make love in Priscilla's Mausoleum.
- **Round 3 - Oaken Fires Ludra.** Oaken informs Lord Skirvin that he fired Ludra. He tells Skirvin that their little "secret" is safe with him.
- **Round 4 - Ludra Threatens Skirvin.** Ludra and Skirvin meet outside near the old well during a party. Oaken strikes Ludra in the back of the head with a log. He then tells Skirvin he'll take care of the situation. Skirvin, terrified, leaves as Oaken drags Ludra's body to the well.

- *Round 5 - Marren's Suicide.* Skirvin weeps as a physician informs him that Lady Marren has committed suicide. While listening, he notices his daughter Esme, seemingly unaffected by the news.
- *Round 6 - The Priest.* Skirvin begs a priest to raise the bodies of his dead son and wife who both died within the last 48 hours. The priest tells Skirvin that he won't be able to do it until the Manor's curse is removed. Skirvin confesses his involvement in the murder of Ludra Vale. The Priest then agrees to help.
- *Round 7 - The Slaughter of Camor.* After killing the priest, Skirvin watches in horror as the chapel is overrun by ghouls who kill all of Skirvin's political colleagues. Esme approaches carrying an axe. In Ludra's voice, she says, "Hello, my love," then attacks with the axe.
- *Round 8 - The Prisoner.* The revived priest places the limbless Skirvin into the bed while Esme (as Ludra), Kerrin, and ghouls watch. Esme, in Ludra's voice, tells him that he will stay there forever and suffer for what he's done. Kerrin marks the wall with a knife. "Day one," she

cackles. Beyond this round, the dream repeats.

While a character is asleep experiencing Skirvin's past, it might be a good time for Nurse Joy to reveal her true nature. The characters must fight her and two more **ghouls**.

T13 - BELLTOWER

An "easier" way to get into the locked chapel is by scaling the bell tower. The parapet surrounding the bell tower (area T12) is 30 feet high. Climbing the bell tower without ropes and grappling hooks requires a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check thanks to the ice on the stone. The doors leading into the staircase of the bell tower have not been locked. From there, the characters can easily descend the stairs into the bell tower.

Treasure. In a satchel kept in the tower is a small spyglass Gogo used to spy on the grounds as well as anyone ringing the bell. The spyglass is rusty and cracked; it's worth only 100 gp when sold to an expert in spyglass repair who can salvage the lenses.



SECRET BASEMENT

The following areas correspond to the labels on the basement map of the house below. The walls, ceilings, and floors of the basement are made from hewn stone, occasionally supported by timber. It's always cold and damp here.

B1 - SECRET STAIRS

The stairs from the silver door behind the wardrobe (Area G7) leads into this small chamber.

B2 - GHOUL DEN

See Chapter 4 for a full description of the events in this room.

DOORS TO THE GHOULS' DEN

The four doors that lead into the Ghouls den (Area B2) are made of iron and decorated with the mark of Vapul. In addition to being tough to break open and pick on its own, its been arcane locked to prevent intruders. Only one of the three skeleton keys can surpass the enchantment open the door without trouble. Otherwise, it requires a DC 35 Strength check to break each door down and a DC 35 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to pick one of the locks. When opened, it sends an alarm to Kerrin, Bianca, Nurse Joy, and Gogo; each one arrives in 1 to 4 rounds.

B3 - SECRET PASSAGE

The stairs below the secret compartment in the organ (Area G12) leads to this passage.

B4 - DUNGEON

The first time the characters enter this chamber, read:

A small, trembling voice calls out in the darkness, "Hello? Please. Can someone help me. Please..."

Six four-foot-tall animal pens are secured to the hewn stone walls. Various bones—obviously humanoid—litter the cages. In the third cage from the left, however, a human woman wearing dirty purple and green clothing lies. She's missing her left leg and left arm. She looks ill with infection.

"Please help," she begs.

A large cleaver stained with blood hangs against the wall directly across from her cage.

Since Gogo captured her, Jen's been held captive in this small dungeon. Periodically, Kerrin comes downstairs to remove a piece of Jen's body to bring it back upstairs and prepare it for her infamous stew.

Unlike the other cages, Jen's cage is chained shut. Being an accomplished rogue herself, she already picked the lock once and nearly go away. The chain was the first defense against that happening followed by Kerrin removing all of the fingers on her remaining hand. The chain can be broken with a successful DC 22 Strength check, or the lock can be picked with a DC 15 Dexterity check using proficiency in thieves' tools. The cell door has an AC of 19, 20 hit points, and is immune to poison and psychic damage. Loud sounds attract one of the ghouls from the door leading to Area B5 who immediately attacks.



Normally, Jen would have the statistics of a **spy**. However, her injuries have made her into a noncombatant. Desperate to escape this hell, she offers double the reward of her bounty—2,000 gp.

Should the characters find themselves captured, knocked unconscious, or you need a "get-out-of-TPK" card, they might find themselves locked up here.

The door leading into Area B5 is kept locked.

B5 - PASSAGE

This winding passage connects the dungeon to the ghouls' den (Area B2). The passage into Area A6 is boarded over.

B6 - WELL BOTTOM

One hundred feet below Skirvin Manor's grounds, this long-abandoned well is nothing more than a solid block of ice. But you're not alone. Against the wall rests a long-withered skeleton. In its dying moments it grappled its stomach, protecting something.

Here lies Ludra Vale and her unborn triplets. No matter where Bianca is, Ludra will break her hold on the woman and rush to defend her remains, potentially freeing Bianca for the first time in years. Ludra, a **ghost matron** with three **wispsborn** (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement) fights until destroyed, viciously attacking. To end her curse and instantly destroy her, her bones must be sprinkled with holy water or burned. Doing either instantly destroys her, even if she has hit points remaining.

In addition to climbing back up the well itself, a rough tunnel leads back up to Area B5. Climbing up the tunnel is extremely difficult. A character must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to climb up without a rope, and unless the creature has a climb speed, it counts as climbing. Furthermore, the ice makes the climb slippery, making it difficult terrain.

Finally, the way into Area B6 is sealed. A character can break it open with a successful DC 18 Strength check. Otherwise, the seal has an AC of 18, 20 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. Breaking the seal attracts the attention of three ghouls from the ghouls' den (Area B2) who wait to ambush the characters in the passage beyond (Area B5).

B7 - SECRET PASSAGE

After solving the riddle of the Sarcophagi, the characters can find their way to this secret tunnel which leads to the ghouls' den (Area B2).

B8 - FAMILY SARCOPHAGI

The trap door below the altar in Area B25 leads into this basement as does the secret tunnel below Priscilla's Mausoleum (Area B9). There is a button on the wall by the staircase that reopens the trapdoor (it shuts automatically after a few minutes).

This dark, earthen basement hides a few rotting crates and six adult-sized stone sarcophagi. The stench of death and mold



consumes you.

All of the sarcophagi in the chapel's basement are fake. Refer to the diagram for the placement of each sarcophagus and its short description.

Characters with a combined Strength score of 18 can remove one of the stone lids. The sarcophagi are empty except for a lever on inside floor of the sarcophagus. When the levers are pressed in the right order, the southwestern sarcophagus (Sleeping Jane) slides revealing the secret passage (Area B7).

The order of the levers is as follows: the knight, the scribe, the witch, the lord, the priest, and the druid.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that Sleeping Jane's sarcophagus hides something. Another DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that it's trapped. It requires a successful DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to disarm the trap, then another DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools to trigger the mechanism that opens the secret passage. If the trap goes off, the room fills with poison gas. Each creature in the room must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 2d8 poison damage on a failed saving throw and becomes paralyzed for 1 minute on a failed saving throw, or takes half as much damage and doesn't become paralyzed with a successful saving throw. If all the characters are paralyzed, three of the ghouls from area B2 arrive and drag the characters off to the dungeon in area B4.

B9 - SECRET PASSAGE

Just below Priscilla's mausoleum is a narrow, low passage. It leads to Area B8. A trap door leads back up to Area G25.



CHAPTER 3. THE BINDING OF THE THREE

Once the characters solve the clues that lead to the secret basement of the Manor and collect one or more of the skeleton keys, they can enter the Ghoulish Den (area D2). No matter how the characters find their way into the basement, they arrive just as the surviving members of the Hand of Vapul are beginning the Binding of the

Three. This chapter details the final battle and incorporates any changes that might need to be made.

THE GHOULS

There are eight total **ghouls** in Skirvin Manor including Nurse Joy and Rogger. If the characters have killed any ghouls while searching the house, subtract any ghouls they killed from the eight. At the very least, there should be four ghouls present. The ghouls fight until destroyed; they will risk anything to ensure the ritual continues.

If the characters are in possession of Oaken's skull (see Return of the Ice Demon in chapter 3) the ghouls fear it. As an action, a character can present the skull to turn the ghouls; the character can do this even if they don't possess the Channel Divinity: Turn Undead class feature. Each ghoulish within 30 feet of the character that can see Oaken's

skull must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the ghoulish is turned for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. While turned by Oaken's skull, the ghoulish is paralyzed as it cowers in fear of its former master.

BIANCA/ESME/LUDRA

Unless the characters killed Bianca or severed Ludra's grip on the girl, she is the centerpiece for the ritual. She stands at the center of the ghouls' coffins, bathed in blood. Kerrin reads from her tome (if she still has it), activating the Binding of the Three.

The first round of combat, Vapul starts to take over Ludra's form, joining Esme and Ludra. Refer to the section "The Return of Vapul" section below to determine Vapul/Ludra's statistics.

KERRIN/ISHTA VALE

Summoning Vapul is Ludra's mother, Kerrin. Unless her tome was stolen, she reads from the book. Nothing will stop her from reading, even if she takes damage.

The ghouls and Eflor work to protect her from the characters so she can complete the ceremony.

THE GROUNDSKEEPER

Unless he has already been destroyed, the **reanimated groundskeeper** Gogo/Eflor appears during the second round of combat and attacks with his **ghostly hounds**. He attacks even if the characters have stopped the ritual, hellbent on destroying them.

THE RITUAL'S PARTICIPANTS

Depending on how the characters arrived at this point, different combinations of characters may participate in the Ritual of the Three.

To perform the binding of the three, there must be a living host, a dead host (ghost or specter), and someone to perform the ritual. The hierarchy for each role is below. If a particular NPC is dead when the characters reach this point, refer to the next NPC in the hierarchy.

Living Host: Esme Skirvin, Roundabout Jen, Phineas Skirvin, an unnamed **commoner**

Dead Host: Ludra Vale, Marren Skirvin (against her will), Petro Skirvin (against his will), Oaken, a **ghost** of one of Lord Skirvin's colleagues

Summoner: Kerrin, Eflor, a **ghoul**

THE RETURN OF VAPUL

No matter who the catalyst for Vapul's return ends up being, he enters the fray during the first round of combat, crawling from the open mouth of his host (likely Bianca). Unless he and his host are destroyed, on each subsequent round of combat, Vapul regains a portion of his power. By the fifth round, Vapul's full form emerges and he can no longer be banished.

Details of his powers and abilities per round are described in detail below:

- **Round 1.** Use the host's stat block, except change the host's hp to match **Vapul's** (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement) and it can cast any of Vapul's at-will innate spells (using his spell DCs).
- **Round 2.** Vapul starts to emerge from the host's screaming mouth. Continue to use the host's stat block the same way as above, but it gains Vapul's Chill of the Grave trait; Vapul's ability to cast *fog cloud*, *sleet storm*, and *wall of ice*; and Vapul's Freeze! action. She also gains all of Vapul's saving throw proficiencies, skills, resistances, immunities, and senses.

- **Round 3.** Vapul takes over at this point. Vapul's movement is 0 while he tries to escape the host. He can use all of his abilities except for his *cone of cold*, *ice storm*, and *freezing sphere* spells, Cold Front action, and all his Legendary Actions.
- **Round 4.** The same as round 3, except Vapul gains access all his spells and his Cold Front action.
- **Round 5.** Vapul returns! By the fifth round, **Vapul** fully emerges at full strength. He has all of his traits, actions, and legendary actions.

DEFEATING VAPUL

The characters have exactly five rounds to stop Vapul. Failure to stop him in time releases his full might, creating a challenge that the characters are unlikely to handle. At that point, their only resource is to escape.

To stop Vapul before he emerges, the characters have two ways. First, they can stop whoever is performing the ritual—be it Kerrin or Bianca herself. The second option is to kill the host while Vapul is emerging. Either method causes Vapul to retreat back to his frozen dimension.

Once Vapul is defeated, his evil taint leaves the manor. Any remaining ghouls are instantly destroyed, bursting into green flame. Eflor falls apart, crumbling into a pile of insect-ridden dust. Kerrin loses her magic, reverting to a weak, old woman. And Ludra's ghost is destroyed, dissipating into nothing.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

Once Vapul and his cult are destroyed, the ghosts of Skirvin Manor are freed of their curse. If Lord Skirvin is still alive, he joins his wife, son, and daughter as apparitions in the courtyard. Temporarily visible, they wave to the characters, thanking them for their assistance in ridding Skirvin Manor of the evil that's tainted it for so long.

If Roundabout Jen is still alive, the characters can choose to let her go—after all, she is missing a leg and an arm—or turn her into the magistrate in Knotside to collect the bounty. Although a criminal, Jen, if freed, she lives up to her promises and pays the characters 2,000 gp. Furthermore, she promises that she will forever be in the character's debt.

This may be the first of many ghost-hunting adventures for the characters. In fact, clues left by Arrow Diamond lead the adventurers to Rivertown, a wealthy trade town to the west, where he once lived. Of course, Rivertown is about to have its own problems with a demon.

But that's a story for another time...





CHAPTER 4: MYSTERY PATHS

The adventure has multiple methods of discovering the secrets of Skirvin Manor, finding the secret basement, and defeating the evil that resides within the old house. What follows are the most popular solutions to the puzzles. Each lists recommended scenes and beats for you to follow. You are free to incorporate one, some, or all of these solutions into your adventure.

Be sure to fully read and understand each of the solutions and the area of the house that they reference before running the adventure.

MYSTERY PATHS

Mystery Path

Adventure Theme

Disappearance of Roundabout Jen	A violent and disturbing horror story following the disappearance of a young woman.
Ghost House	A very atmospheric Victorian ghost story with plenty of mystery and puzzle solving.
Murder in the Night	Purely a murder mystery with lots of puzzle solving.
The Old Man's Secret	A disturbing story with difficult moral quandaries. Lots of story background offered.
Return of the Ice Demon	A fast-paced, combat-heavy story best for players who like tough fights.
Screams in the Chapel	Good mix of all the previous themes with ghosts, puzzles, combat, and exploration.

DISAPPEARANCE OF ROUNDABOUT JEN

Roundabout Jen is a career criminal and rogue. She's wanted by the magistrates of Knotside. They're willing to pay 1,000 gp alive or 300 gp dead. Jen was passing through Camor when two elf scouts working for the Cult of Vapul ambushed her. They took her to Skirvin Manor as an offering to the Vales and their ghouls. She's now kept in the dungeon. This particular thread is violent—suggestively and otherwise—and may disturb some players.

MYSTERY HOOK

While at the scene of Alin's death (see Chapter 1), one of the characters might notice that one of the elves is carrying one of Roundabout Jen's trademark purple and green scarves. If defeated, the elves reveal that they knocked Jen unconscious and took her to Skirvin Manor.

SCENE 1. ARRIVAL AT SKIRVIN MANOR

The characters arrive at Skirvin Manor (Chapter 1) and meet Bianca. The characters might have questions for Bianca, the Vales, and the other guests regarding Jen.

Here are the answers that the NPCs offer regarding the whereabouts of Roundabout Jen:

Arrow Diamond (telling the truth): "I heard the woman, Bianca, greeting the rangers at the door. I couldn't really see what they were doing, but they dragged someone into the hallway and carried them to the hall. I don't remember seeing the groundskeeper get involved. In fact, I haven't even seen this groundskeeper they keep talking about."

Bianca (lying): "Yes, the rangers from Camor brought the woman here. We immediately recognized her for who she was. Our groundskeeper, Gogo, delivered her back to Constable Sarra in chains. I'm glad to see that horrible woman brought to justice."

Kerrin (lying): "I don't know anything about any woman. I just work in the kitchen."

Rogger (lying): "I've just been wandering around. Didn't see anything."

SCENE 2. FINDING GOGO

The characters never get a chance to find this "Gogo" that Bianca keeps referencing. Gogo/Eflor actually moves between the locked and hidden areas of the Manor, especially the chapel.

SCENE 3. BLOOD IN THE HALL

At some point, one of the characters might notice blood on the floor in the main hallway (Area 10). Tracking the blood, it leads to the manor's kitchen (Area 13).

SCENE 4. GETTING INTO THE KITCHEN

Kerrin is almost always in the kitchen; she refuses to let anyone to enter that isn't one of the Hands of Vapul. If necessary, she will even bar the door. And then, if the characters press too much, she'll command Eflor to attack. To get into the kitchen, the characters will need to distract or kill Kerrin. There are a few times each day where she will leave the kitchen. Before each meal, she goes into the greenhouse to collect herbs. And after each meal, she uses the privy across the courtyard. No matter which way she goes, she locks the kitchen behind her and is gone for exactly 15 minutes.

SCENE 5. THE STORE ROOM AND ABATTOIR

The characters can then explore the rooms adjacent to the kitchen, the water store (area G14) and the abattoir (Area G15). It's likely that the characters will have to hide in either of the rooms when the timer runs out and Kerrin returns. Clues eventually point to Roundabout Jen being somewhere on the premises.



SCENE 6. ENTERING THE DUNGEON

The iron door in the water store (Area G14) is magically locked. It can only be opened when the Abyssal word for "open" is spoken aloud. Otherwise, the door cannot be opened unless it is dispelled. It's likely that the characters notice at some point that Kerrin curses under her breath in Abyssal.

SCENE 7. FINDING JEN ROUNDABOUT

Jen is held in a cell in the dungeon (Area B4). When the characters find her, she's had one of her arms and one of her legs removed—Kerrin's been feeding her to the guests and ghouls. Loud sounds attract one of the ghouls from the door leading to Area B5 who immediately attacks.

Scene 8. Getting to the Ghoul Den After saving Jen, the characters may follow the passage to the ghoul den (Area B5). The door is locked, requiring one of the skeleton keys—refer to the section "Skeleton Keys" below. Once in the den, they must face Vapul's Resurrection as detailed in Chapter 3.

GHOST HOUSE

The ghosts of Petro and Marren Skirvin try to warn the guests of the manor about the evil that resides within. This thread relies heavily on the atmosphere and plays like a ghost story with light puzzle solving.

MYSTERY HOOK

When any of the characters are wandering outside in the inner courtyard or on the northern end of the outer courtyard, they notice someone watching them from one of the windows. It's the ghost of Marren Skirvin. They could also hear Marren's organ playing in the parlor/library (Area G12).

SCENE 1. MARREN'S GHOST

Once the characters notice Marren the first time, she continues to appear. Below are some of her appearances: in the bathtub in Area T5, in the library in Area G12, looking at the paintings in Area T9, or near the well in Area G22. She always says something, it but it's in slow motion and inaudible without magic or an innate ability such as mimicry.

SCENE 2. PETRO'S GHOST

Like Marren, Petro's ghost can be found at different parts of the house. Here are some of the locations Petro appears: in the foyer (Area G2), playing hide-n-seek in the coat closet (Area G4), in the parlor (Area G12), on the balustrade (Area T1), or in his old bedroom (Area T4). Petro hints that he's trying to communicate with his mother but can't understand her.



SCENE 3. WHAT IS MARREN SAYING?

Each time the characters run into Marren's ghost, she says something that they cannot understand, almost as if she's speaking in slow-motion. The characters may wish to recreate the sound and speed it up to understand what she's saying. They can do this with a minor illusion cantrip or similar magic. If they lack the magic to recreate the effect, there is an orator's quill in the library that can record audio onto the page. It turns out that Marren has been saying "BEG A DEAD FACADE."

SCENE 4. BEG A DEAD FACADE

"BEG A DEAD FACADE" references the notes on the organ: B-E-G-A-D-E-A-D-F-A-C-A-D-E. If a character plays the notes into the organ, a compartment below the organ opens up, revealing a trapdoor down into the basement (Area B3). From there, the characters will need a skeleton key to open the door as described below. After they get through the door, they must stop the Ritual of Vapul, detailed in Chapter 3.

MURDER IN THE NIGHT

Arrow Diamond is a ghost-hunter investigating Skirvin Manor and the Slaughter of Camor. He discovers a part of the secret but is killed in the night while fighting a ghoul. This thread involves a lot of puzzle-solving.

MYSTERY HOOK

Late at night, a ghoul sneaks into the room Diamond is staying in and attacks him. Details of his murder and how the NPCs react are detailed in Chapter 2. The characters should find clues leading them either to the Mausoleum (Area G25) or Diamond's room (Area G7).

SCENE 1. INVESTIGATING THE MAUSOLEUM

Within the mausoleum, wet footprints stop at the sarcophagus then end at the hidden trapdoor. The characters should find the silver door handle dropped in the snow. It's one of the two keys used to open the door to the secret stairs (Area G8).

SCENE 2. INVESTIGATING DIAMOND'S ROOM

The characters may want to investigate Diamond's room where the fight occurred. When they arrive, they discover Rogger in the room. All clues Diamond had regarding the manor have been destroyed by Rogger who claims to have found it that way. As long as the characters stay in the room, Rogger sticks around to "help" them. All of Diamond's possessions are spread around. Any coins he had were stolen by Rogger to give the illusion that it might have been a bandit. The presence of Jen's dagger under the bed further corroborates Rogger's story.

Under the rug in the room, Diamond removed a floorboard and hid something below it. Within is an octagonal obol wrapped in yellow fabric.

SCENE 3. THE MISSING SISTER

Using one of the paintings as clues (or just searching on their own) they notice that pulling down the eyes on Priscilla's bust in the foyer (Area G2) opens her mouth. Inserting the obol unlocks the secret door behind the wardrobe in Area G7.

SCENE 4. THE WARDROBE AND THE SILVER DOOR

After the coin has been placed in Priscilla's mouth, the wardrobe in the guest room unlocks and opens slightly, revealing the secret passage behind it. The door blocking the stairs remains locked. Oddly, the door lacks a doorknob, but it has a hole where one should go. To open the door without springing the alarm downstairs, the characters must perform two tasks. First, they must insert the silver doorknob they found in the snow. Then, they must turn the tumblers on the door to read "PRISCILLA."

SCENE 5. TO THE GHOUL DEN

Once the silver door is open, characters can descend into the basement, appearing just before the door leading to the ghoul den. They will need one of the skeleton keys to go inside (see below). Once through the door, they must stop the Binding of the Three ritual as detailed in Chapter 3.

RETURN OF THE ICE DEMON

Hints of Vapul's legacy are found everywhere in the Manor. Following this threat, the characters will discover that Bianca and the Vales hope to revive the fiend. This thread is combat-heavy, good for players who enjoy a good fight.

MYSTERY HOOK

Following dinner the first night, if any of the characters speak with Arrow Diamond, they learn a bit about why he is there. He explains that he is an archaeologist who believes that the Skirvin Manor is built on the site of an ancient battle. Specifically, Diamond details the history of Vapul and his battle with the Knight Camor 1,000 years ago. Diamond also believes that around 40-50 years ago, something horrible happened in the village of Camor, but it was covered up. He's

determined to find out what it is.

That evening, Diamond is killed by a ghoulish in his room (see Chapter 1). In addition to the mystery of his murder, other clues lead to the presence of Vapul and his followers.

SCENE 1. TETHER-TEARER'S SECRET

Not only is Diamond's axe a powerful weapon against the undead, but it holds a secret compartment in its handle. When the characters first take it, a successful DC 13 passive Perception reveals that the knob at the base of the handle has been slightly unscrewed. Within are some of Diamond's notes that didn't get destroyed. The notes are a crude drawing of the Mansion (see Appendix C). He's marked a location on in the inner courtyard with the sign of Vapul.

SCENE 2. THE COURTYARD

Following the map, the characters can brush away the snow over the area Diamond marked. There, they find stones in the ground laid out in the pattern of the mark of Vapul. If they dig below the mark, they discover Oaken's buried skull. Soon after, the corpse tree (see the Monsters of Skirvin Manor supplement) attacks.

SCENE 3. OAKEN'S EYEPATCH

A box of Oaken's possessions can be found in the old servant's quarters. Among his possessions is an old eyepatch. If the eyepatch is placed on Oaken's skull, it temporarily brings Oaken's spirit into the skull. The skull speaks the following warning:

*My soul returns in this time of darkness and despair
I am cursed to speak only the truth, to tell you what I know
You are granted five questions, and I will grant five answers
After that, I can return to my eternal rest.*

From there, the characters can ask Oaken's skull up to five questions. Oaken knows all of the secrets of the manor including its full history, the nature of the Hand of Vapul, and more.

SCENE 4. BIANCA'S MARK

Eventually, the characters may recognize that Bianca bears the same mark of Vapul seen on Diamond's notes and on the ground. When confronted, Bianca tries to brush the characters off as being insane. If they continue to press her, Ludra reveals her true self as a ghost matron, angrily attacking the characters. Ludra fights until her hit points are reduced by half or more, or her tether is torn by tether-tearer. She and the three children immediately retreat.

Once Bianca is free of Ludra, she reveals that her true name is Esme Skirvin and that she has been the unwilling vessel of Ludra for forty years. Ludra forced Esme to kill countless people over the years, including her own mother and brother. Free of the curse, Esme's life force fades. Before she dies, she explains that the only true way to defeat Ludra is to destroy her body which still lies at the bottom of the sealed well.

SCENE 5. THE WELL

Following Esme's guidance, the characters head to the sealed well. Realizing the danger the characters pose, Eflor the reanimated groundskeeper and his ghostly hounds attack the characters. Once Eflor is defeated, the characters can remove the seal. A crowbar easily pries it off (one can be found in



the wood storage), or a successful DC 17 Strength check.

The seal has an AC of 17, 10 hit points, and is immune to poison and psychic damage. From there, the characters must descend into the well which is 100 feet deep and frozen at the bottom. At the bottom, Ludra attacks, defending her bones. This time, she's joined by her three wispy children.

SCENE 6. SECRET PASSAGE

Once the characters are in the Secret Passage, they must retrieve one of the skeleton keys to open the door leading to Area B2. After they get past the door they must stop the Hand of Vapul (see Chapter 3).

THE OLD MAN'S SECRET

There's something unusual about the ambulatory upstairs. It's obvious that Bianca and the other members of the staff are hiding something. Of all the mystery threads, this one is by far the most disturbing (although it lacks true gore). However, it's great for players who are interested in the history of the adventure.

MYSTERY HOOK

A mysterious woman wearing all white occasionally descends the staircase from upstairs and heads for the kitchen. Returning from the kitchen, she carries a tray with a bowl of cold porridge. After going back upstairs, she enters the ambulatory's south entrance by the balustrade (Area T1). The staff refers to her as "Nurse Joy." They claim that she is taking care of the sick owner of the house, Lord Earvin Skinship.

SCENE 1. MOANING IN THE AMBULATORY

If the characters are upstairs investigating and are standing on the door to the balustrade, it's likely they hear the moaning of "Lord Earvin Skinship." Before they can react, Nurse Joy steps out and locks the door behind her. She says nothing to the characters before walking away.

SCENE 2. BREAKING INTO THE AMBULATORY

Three of the doors leading into the ambulatory are locked: the one in the balustrade (Area T1), the one in the office (Area T11), and by the Servant's Stairway (Area T8). Nurse Joy carries the key on her on a chain (but not her skeleton key).

In this thread, the ambulatory is magically trapped with an *alarm* spell that signals Bianca and Kerrin. They arrive within 3 rounds to investigate.

SCENE 3. THE OLD MAN'S ROOM

Lord Earvin Skinship is kept in the bedroom (Area B12). He has no arms, legs, or tongue, and is permanently bed-ridden. Skinship is actually Lord Phineas Skirvin who's been kept a prisoner in this room for the last 40 years, punishment for the murder of her daughter, Ludra.

Unless the characters have a way to magically regenerate his tongue or communicate telepathically, Skirvin cannot speak with them. However, he motions to a book on his nightstand.

SCENE 4. SKIRVIN'S NIGHTMARES

With the book in their possession, a character can sleep next to it and see into Skirvin's nightmares. Each round that the character sleeps, the scenes that tormented Skirvin unfold. See Chapter 2 for details on Skirvin and the tome of dreams.

SCENE 5. CONFRONTATION

Once the members of the Hand of Vapul learn that the characters have stolen the book and discovered Skirvin, they attack. Nurse Joy, who is revealed to be a ghoul, and two other ghouls attack the characters. Where the ghouls attack the characters depends on the proximity to one of the secret entrances down into the basement. For example, if the characters are near the kitchen, the ghouls attack from the water storeroom. In their haste, they leave the door open, circumventing any traps or special keys required to find the exit.

SCENE 6. FINDING THE SKELETON KEY

This thread, more so than any other, makes finding the skeleton key a time-sensitive matter. Once the creatures who live in the house learn that the characters are onto them, they will begin the ceremony. The characters have 30 minutes in real-time to search the house, find the key, and stop the ceremony (see Chapter 3).

SCREAMS IN THE CHAPEL

This story thread invites the characters to explore the mysterious chapel on the Skirvin Manor grounds. Following the clues, they're lead into the basement of the chapel and eventually discover the ghouls that live below the property. The main villain of this story is Eflor, the Death Priest of Vapul and eventually Vapul. This path has a little bit of everything from combat, to ghost stories, to puzzle solving.

MYSTERY HOOK

While exploring the grounds, the characters notice the massive chapel. Its doors are chained on all sides. Bianca explains that it's dangerous to go in there as the chapel is falling apart. She also warns that it's cursed as the old family that once owned the manor were killed in there.

In the middle of the night or early in the morning, one or more of the characters wake up to what sounds like dozens of people screaming through the blizzard. Following the sound, they're lead to the chapel. Once they touch the chapel doors or any part of the chapel the screaming stops.

SCENE 1. BREAKING INTO THE CHAPEL

After the screams, the characters may wish to sneak into the Chapel itself to investigate what's going on. If any of the Cult of Vapul see the characters trying to break in, they first try to convince them to stop. The characters can enter either by breaking the chains on the doors or climbing into the bell tower.

SCENE 2. EXPLORING THE OLD CHAPEL

Once the characters are inside the chapel (area G25), they find the place in ruins, left almost as it was 40 years ago following the Slaughter of Camor. It's likely they confront Gogo, the reanimated groundskeeper and his two ghostly hounds here. To add to the danger, you can also have three poltergeists, spirits of the dead Camorians, attack. Following combat, the characters should discover the hymnal. A search of the altar also reveals that it's likely a secret door.



SCENE 3. FINDING THE CANDLES OF VAPUL

To open the altar, two candles must be placed into the altar at the same time, then twisted. Both are hidden in the house. One of the paintings in the gallery acts as a clue to where the candles are located.

Left Candle. The left candle is hidden in Esmé's old room hidden in a secret compartment in her wardrobe. To unlock the compartment, the hangers act as a combination lock, clues given by the abacus on her desk. Once the hangers are slid into the right positions, the compartment unlocks revealing the candle (see Area T6 for additional details)

Right Candle. Within Petro's room is a treasure map that crudely represents the house (Appendix C). Finding the X on the map and digging there reveals where the candle is hidden (see Area T4 for additional details).

STEP 4. OPENING THE ALTAR

Once the candles are placed into their proper positions and turned, the altar slides revealing a staircase that descends into the chapel basement (area B8).

SCENE 5. THE SEVEN SARCOPHAGI

All of the sarcophagi in the chapel's basement are fake. See Appendix C for detailed descriptions of the lids of the sarcophagi. At the bottom of each one is a lever. When the levers are pressed in the right order, the southwestern sarcophagus (Sleeping Jane) slides revealing a secret path that leads to the ghoul den. From there, they must open

the door with a skeleton key (see below). Then, they must battle Vapul and his minion as detailed in Chapter 3.

SKELETON KEYS

Regardless of the mystery path you and the characters choose to follow, to enter the ghouls' den (Area B2) and confront the Hand of Vapul, the characters must possess one of the three skeleton keys in the house. Each of the three keys opens all four of the doors leading into the den. And each skeleton key is carefully hidden by its owner.

What follows are details on how to locate one or all of the three skeleton keys.

BIANCA'S SKELETON KEY

Bianca/Ludra has hidden her own skeleton key, realizing that if she's killed or harmed and has the key, it gives her killers immediate access to the ghouls' den. She keeps the key in Esme's old bedroom behind one of the stones in the wall near the door (detailed in Area T6).

KERRIN'S SKELETON KEY

The warlock Kerrin hides her key in the greenhouse. The key itself is hidden at the bottom of one of the plants. Her key is the most protected of the three. Touching it without saying the phrase "Praise Vapul" activates all of the plants in the greenhouse to attack.

Like Bianca's skeleton key, there are no obvious clues that point to its location. No amount of torture or non-magical interrogation will cause Kerrin to reveal the location of her key.

NURSE JOY'S SKELETON KEY

Nurse Joy, the ghouls' disguise who cares for Phineas Skirvin/Earvin Skinship, hides her key in the ambulatory. If a character looks outside the east-facing window in the upstairs hallway (Area T3) looks towards the outer wall of the tower containing the servant's staircase (Area T8), with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check they notice that the snow on the roof tiles have recently been disturbed.

If the characters make it into the servant's stairs (Area T8), it's clear the window has been opened within the last day. See Chapter 2 for details.

FAILING THE ADVENTURE

It's possible that the characters may lose this adventure.

The Binding of the Three ritual has one of three triggers: the characters arrive in the basement at any time, the characters catch onto the presence of the Hand and the Hand

is aware, or the characters fail to learn anything before midnight the second night they are in the manor.

With the **first trigger**, the characters have three rounds to stop Vapul before he fully forms. Once formed, the characters are far outmatched by the full power of the demon prince and should immediately escape. Otherwise, they may face certain death.

The **second trigger** happens when the Hand of Vapul becomes aware that the characters wish to stop them. They immediately lock themselves below the house and start the ritual. Although at least one of the secret passages is left open, the characters must still find one of the skeleton keys to enter Area B2 and put a stop to the ritual. The player have 30 minutes of real-time to have their characters get into the basement. As soon as they enter B5, the clock stops and they have 5 rounds to stop Vapul's return, as normal.

Finally, the **third trigger** occurs if the characters fail to learn anything about the Hand of Vapul after two days have passed. The Hand starts the ritual 30 minutes before midnight the second night the characters stay in the manor. Again, the players have 30 minutes of real-time to stop the ritual.

The latter two situations happen without the characters even knowing about it. When the timer starts, read the following:

Suddenly, the entire house jolts as if hit by a colossal boulder. Furniture slides, paintings fall off the walls, fragile antiques break. From there, the entire place starts to shake.

Spectral, blue light pours of the basement. If the characters are inside, they can see it rising through the floorboards. If they are outside, it starts bursting through the snow—particularly the courtyard. All of the undead of the manor that hasn't been destroyed attacks in a frenzy: the **corpse tree** comes to life in the courtyard, twelve **specters** rise from the family graveyard, Oaken's **specter** rises once more, even Petro and Marren's **ghosts** join the fray.

If the characters can't stop Vapul before the clock runs out, the house erupts in blue light and cold, dark Abyssal energy. If the characters are still at Skirvin Manor, they must all make DC 18 Dexterity saving throws. On a failed saving throw, a character takes 4d8 bludgeoning damage plus 4d8 cold damage and is knocked prone. On a successful saving throw, a character takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone.

As they recover, they see the demon prince of Ice and Death, Vapul, rise from the destruction, renewed and vengeful.

APPENDIX A: PLAYER OPTIONS



ether: the Mystery of Skirvin Manors introduces the demon Vapul and his cult, the Hand of Vapul. Leading the Hand is the devious Kerrin, a nasty, old warlock, who can bend the power of ice to her will. If you are interested in having similar option for characters in your campaign, here are the details for the Ice

Demon Otherworldly Patron.

OTHERWORLDLY PATRON

At 1st level, a warlock gains the Otherworldly Patron feature. The following Ice Demon option is available to a warlock in addition to those normally offered.

ICE DEMON

You derive your arcane powers from an ice demon, a chaotic evil being who wishes nothing more than to cover the world in ice and snow. Vapul, the demon featured in this adventure, is one such ice demon, however, there are others like Vapul whom your character could serve. mysterious figure.

Those who take power from ice demons control the might of frost and cold. Ice demon followers are emissaries for cold death, acting as its ambassador in the material planes. Naturally cold creatures such as frost giants and white dragons revere and respect the ice demon's warlocks, mostly out of fear of their wrath.

ALIGNMENT RESTRICTION

Those who follow the whims of the ice demon may not be of lawful or good alignments.

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

The ice demon grants you an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

ICE DEMON EXPANDED SPELL LIST

Spell Level	Spells
1st	<i>fog cloud, mage armor</i>
2nd	<i>gentle repose, gust of wind</i>
3rd	<i>protection from energy, sleet storm</i>
4th	<i>control water, ice storm</i>
5th	<i>cone of cold, dominate person</i>

TOUCH OF THE ICE DEMON

Starting at 1st level, when you cast the *mage armor* spell and target yourself, the armor appears as a thin sheen of ice that surrounds your body. In addition to the armor provided by the spell, you gain the following benefits for the duration:

- You can ignore difficult terrain created by ice or snow.
- You can tolerate temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit without any additional protection. If you wear heavy clothes, you can tolerate temperatures as low as -100 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Whenever you take cold damage, the amount of damage that you take is reduced by an amount equal to your levels in this class (to a minimum of 0). If you have resistance against cold damage and take cold damage, this benefit is factored in after your resistance reduces the damage by half.

COLD-BLOODED

At 6th level, in addition to the other benefits you gain from your Touch of the Ice Demon feature, you also gain the following benefits:

- You know the *ray of frost* cantrip. This cantrip does not count towards the total of cantrips you know.
- You gain resistance to cold damage.
- You can tolerate temperatures as high as 150 degrees Fahrenheit without any additional protection.
- Whenever you cast a spell that deals cold damage, you can add your Charisma modifier to one of the damage rolls of that spell against one of its targets.

ICE HEART

At 10th level, your connection to your ice demon patron arms and protects you further. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. In addition, whenever a creature makes a melee weapon attack against you while standing within 5 feet of you, the creature must make a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failed saving throw, the creature takes 2d6 cold damage and has disadvantage on its attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature takes half as much damage and suffers no further effects.

FLASH FREEZE

Starting at 14th level, when you hit a creature with a ranged spell attack that deals cold damage or a creature fails its saving throw against one of your spell that deals cold damage, you can use this feature to partially freeze the creature; the creature is restrained. A creature restrained by this feature must make another Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns. If it successfully saves against this feature two times, the effect ends. If it fails it saves two times, the creature dies and becomes a frozen statue until it thaws.

\columnbreak

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you complete a long rest.

APPENDIX B: PAINTING CLUES

Many of the mysteries of Skirvin Manor may not be immediately obvious, even to the most observant and clever players/characters. Fortunately, the presence of the positive ghosts who inhabit Skirvin Manor—Marren and her son Petro—has affected the manor's many paintings, each offering up clues to those who could end their eternal curse, stop the Vales, and defeat Vapul.

When the characters are stuck or can't seem to find the next step, have them suddenly notice one of the paintings described below. The Paintings Location table lists each of the rooms that contains paintings and the number there are in each.

There are 22 paintings in all, 19 of which are described below. You're free to give details to the remaining three paintings that better match the characters' current scenario.

PAINTINGS LOCATION

Room	# of Paintings
G3 - Sitting Room	1
G9 - Dining Room	3
T1 - Balustrade	2
T2 - Gallery	11
T3 - Upstairs Hallway	1
T9 - Ambulatory East	4

PAINTING DESCRIPTIONS

When describing one of the paintings, use the suggested description.

DISAPPEARANCE OF ROUNDABOUT JEN

The following clues point help during the Disappearance of Roundabout Jen mystery path.

BOWL OF FRUIT STILL-LIFE

If the characters fail to notice the blood spilled in the hallway, this painting perfectly recreates the scene.

This simple still-life oil painting depicts of a bowl of fruit sitting on a counter in what looks like a long dark hall. Oddly, there appears to be a drop of blood on the bowl.

WORKING IN THE GREENHOUSE

If you read the following, this gives the characters a hint as to the time they can successfully sneak into the kitchen without Kerrin noticing.

In this painting, an old woman toils away in what looks like a greenhouse, her back to you. She looks very similar to the woman who works in the kitchen. To her right is a grandfather

clock, its little hand pointed at the 8 and its big hand at the 9.

OPEN

If the characters have trouble opening the door in the storeroom (Area A14), this clue helps them find the correct password. Any character who can read or speak Abyssal reads that it says "OPEN".

This unique print shows a tall iron door surrounded by barrels. A plaque at the bottom of the painting reads something in an unusual language.

THE STORE ROOM DOOR

If the characters have trouble opening the door in the storeroom (Area A14), this clue helps them find the correct password. Any character who can read or speak Abyssal reads that it says "OPEN". If no character understand the words, a character with an Intelligence score of 13 or better can remember the word and phonetically speak it.

This unique print shows a tall iron door surrounded by barrels. A plaque at the bottom of the painting reads something in an unusual language.

GHOST HOUSE

The following paintings help the characters solve the riddles of the Ghost House mystery path.

PETRO WRITES WHAT MOTHER SAYS

This painting helps the characters understand how to use the orator's quill to record what Marren is saying.

In this beautiful painting, a young boy sits in the foreground writing with a rather ornate feather quill. In the background, seated at-what-looks-like a large pipe organ is a handsome woman wearing a dark blue dress. It looks like she is saying something to him.

The plaque reads "Petro Writes What Mother Says"

MARREN PLAYS THE ORGAN

Once the characters have the words Marren speaks, this paintings clues them in to its purpose.

A woman wearing a dark blue dress sits at a large pipe organ in this painting. She is sight-reading the sheet music for a song titled "Beg a Dead Facade."

MURDER IN THE NIGHT

The following painting clues help characters with the Murder in the Night mystery path.

UNDER THE RUG

This painting points the characters to the bronze obol hidden in Arrow Diamond's room.

What an unusual painting: it shows a red rug over a hardwood floor. Half tucked under the rug is what looks like some sort of bronze coin.

THE LOST SISTER

Armed with the obol, this painting instructs the characters what to do next.

A young girl in a yellow dress lies on a cold, stone slab. Her eyes are closed and mouth is open: on her tongue rests an octagonal, bronze coin. She appears to be dead.

THE SILVER DOOR

After the wardrobe opens, the characters will find the silver door. This clue helps solve both riddles of the door: the missing door knob and the name Priscilla.

In this painting, a little girl in a yellow dress stands before a tall silver door. Oddly, the girl is holding what seems to be the door's handle in her hands. The plaque below reads "Priscilla and the Silver Door"

RETURN OF THE ICE DEMON

The following paintings refer to the Return of the Ice Demon mystery path.

THE AXE AND THE MAP

Once the characters have tether-tearer, this clue helps them find the map hidden in its handle.

This brightly colored painting showcases an axe lying overtop of a neatly drawn map.

ALAS, POOR OAKEN

The map within tether-tearer points the characters to the courtyard. This painting assists them if they have trouble finding Oaken's skull.

In this painting, a man with long, black hair and an eye-patch is shown digging in-what-looks-like the courtyard of a large manor house—possible this one. But what's he digging up?

LUDRA AND THE WELL

If the characters haven't learned about the well yet, this painting will help.

A mousy young woman wearing a servant's dress sits at the edge of a well. It looks like she is waiting for someone.

THE OLD MAN'S SECRET

Only one painting is related to the Old Man's Secret mystery path.

THE NURSE

This painting eludes to Nurse Joy's true nature.

A woman wearing all white stands near a window, her back turned towards you in this painting. She looks slightly over her shoulder—but there's something unusual about her eye. Its almost animal like.

SCREAMS IN THE CHAPEL

These paintings reference the puzzles in the Screams in the Chapel mystery path.

THE HYMNAL

This painting eludes to Nurse Joy's true nature.

This painting depicts an open red hymnal. While the words of the chosen page are unreadable, you can make out the title: "Song of the Seven." It looks like the book is sitting on a church pew.

LET THIS SONG SHOW YOU THE WAY

Once the characters have the hymnal, this painting shows them how to use it.

In this painting, a priest stands at the center of seven sarcophagi. He reads from a red hymnal. The plaque under the painting reads "Let This Song Show You the Way"

THE SKELETON KEYS

There are three paintings in the eastern ambulatory. If the characters have trouble finding any of the skeleton keys, use these paintings for this description:

These three side-by-side paintings depict three different keys. One is surrounded by vines. One is placed within a cubby of a stone wall. And the third is framed by a snow-covered window.

APPENDIX C: PLAYER HANDOUTS

HANDOUT 1: MESSAGE FROM "A FRIEND"

Everyone here is lying. Follow the creek a half a mile north of the village and meet me at my wagon in one hour. I'll tell you everything.

A friend

HANDOUT 2: ALIN'S DIARY

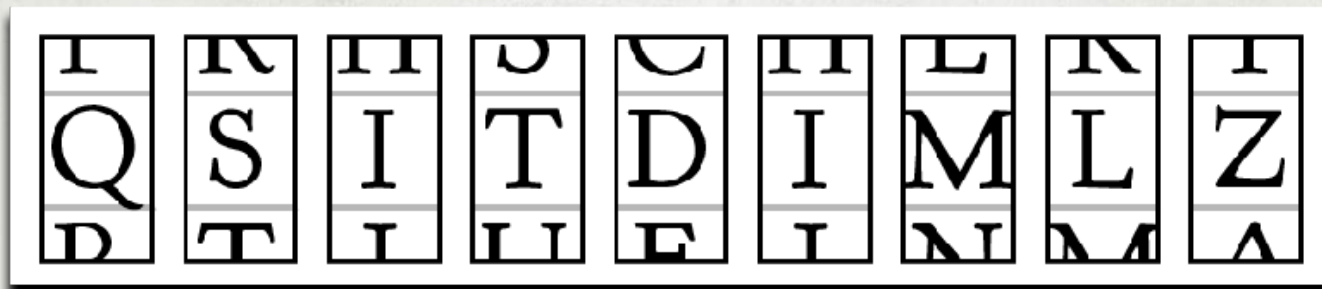
I've started this memoir to recount the important events of my life. While I have not accomplished much in my 60 years, I can at least share with the world the terrible things I saw when I worked at Skirvin Manor forty years ago in hopes that it can help set right the evils that occurred within those walls.

I worked at Skirvin Manor for two years. In my time there I witnessed much. Lord Skirvin, while a kind man to the servants, was unfaithful to his wife, Marren. He had an affair with a young woman there by the name of

Ludra, one of the other servants. I would often catch them leaving the tomb of Skirvin's deceased daughter, Priscilla fixing their clothes and agreeing not to speak of what happened between them.

Then one day Priscilla disappeared. I know not what happened to her. What I do know is that one night she returned to the manor, flustered, some seven months after leaving. She was visibly pregnant and demanded to see Skirvin. Oaken, the master of the servant

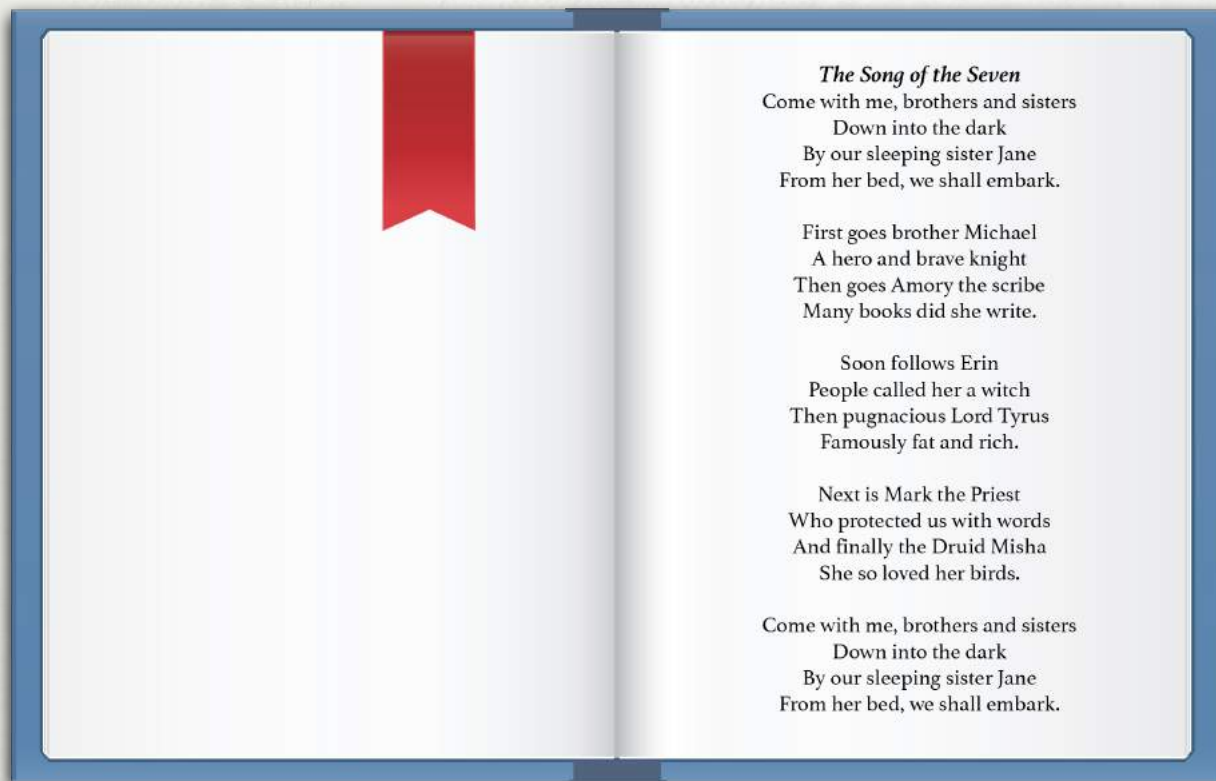
HANDOUT 3: SILVER DOOR TUMBLERS



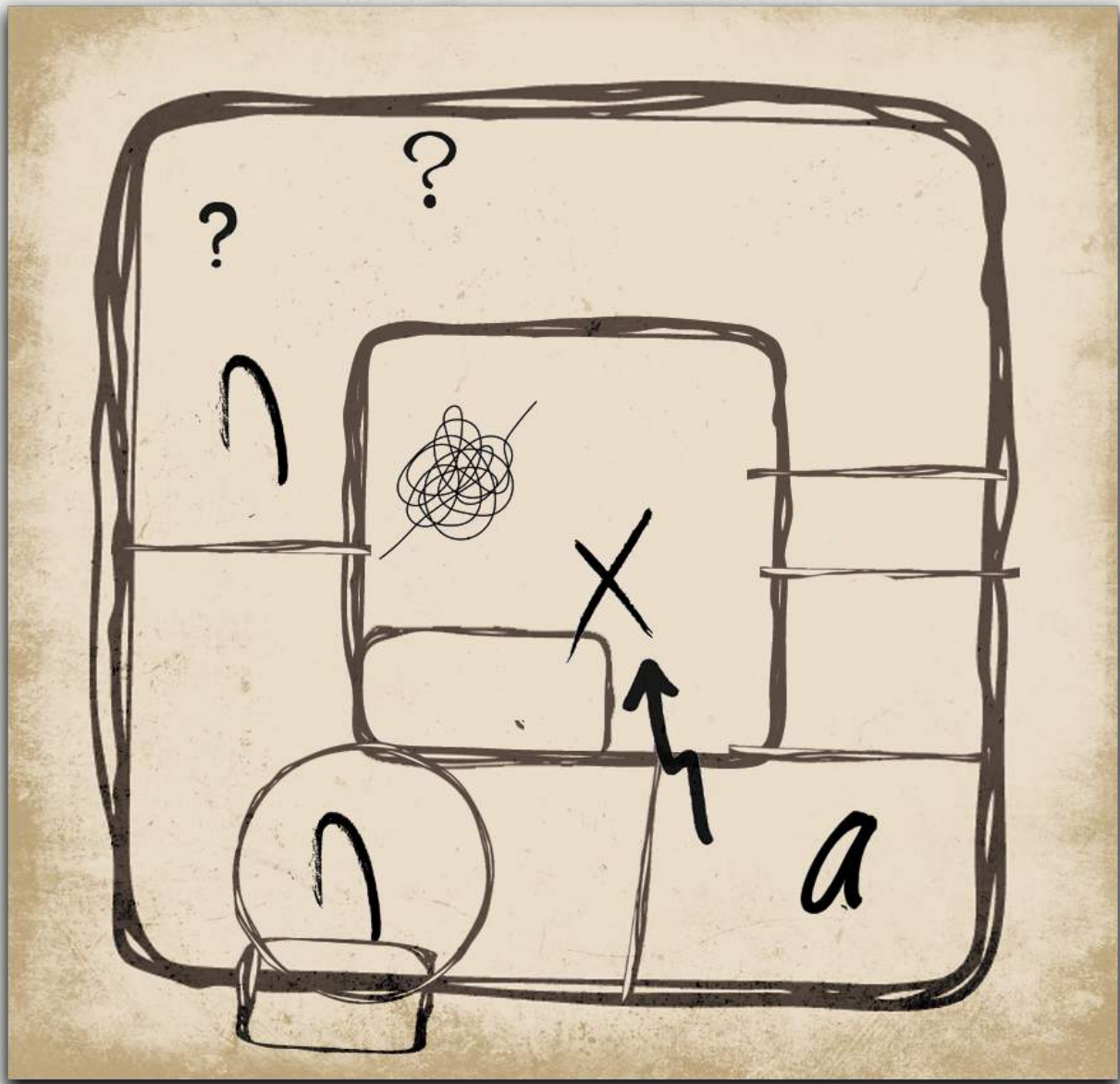
HANDOUT 4: BEG A DEAD FACADE

BEG A DEAD FACADE

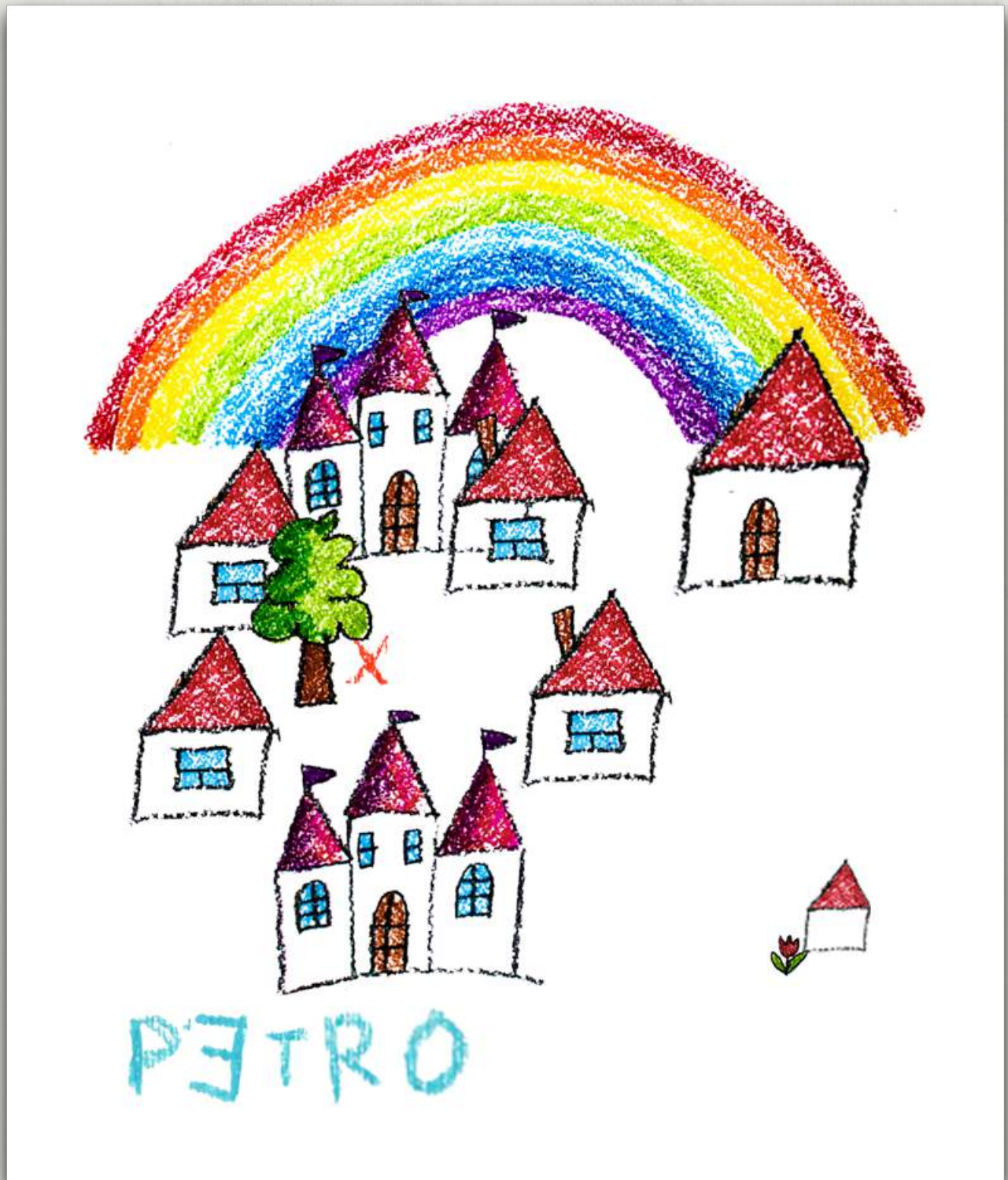
HANDOUT 5: THE SONG OF THE SEVEN



HANDOUT 6: TETHER-TEARER'S MAP



HANDOUT 7: PETRO'S MAP



HANDOUT 8: SARCOPHAGI DESCRIPTIONS

A fat man wearing a crown dressed in luxurious garments.

A woman in the forest surrounded by many birds.

A woman holding a quill in one hand and a bottle of ink in the other.

A man holding a sword and shield dressed in full plate armor.

A woman sleeping, her eyes closed and hands behind her head.

A woman wearing a pointed hat with a cat at her feet.

A man wearing clerical vestments and holding a religious tome.

HANDOUT 9: ESME'S ABACUS

