

MYSTERY IN THE CHICKEN CHURCH

FREEBIE VERSION

LEVEL 4 ADVENTURE



**IMMERSIVE LOW-TIER ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE
FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST RPG GAME**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Credits.....	2
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Adventure Primer	5
Cultist Ambush.....	7
Thank You.....	13

This is a freebie version of the level-4 adventure, *Mystery in the Chicken Church*.

It includes the first two chapters of the full adventure.

If you like this content, consider purchasing the full product here.

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INTRODUCTION

BEFORE YOU BEGIN PLAYING

Consider the following guidelines:

- Read the adventure once or twice. Take notes of anything you would like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the game. Such notes could include, but are not limited to, ways to role-play an NPC, combat tactics for a creature, or the locations of important things. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and maps.
- Have all the material and accessories you would like to use to aid you in running this adventure. Such as flashcards, a DM screen, minis, dice, and battle maps.
- It is useful to have the player characters' names, race, class, armor class, and hit points in a separate and easy-to-see piece of paper or screen. It may also be important to note other things like backgrounds and personality traits.

PLAYING THE DUNGEON MASTER

You have the most important task. The DM is the table's narrator and organizer for a good game. You must take care of the narrative and adjudicate the party's actions. You transform the words on these pages into a living thing.

Here are a few guidelines to help you make this happen:

You have the Power. You make the decisions about the adventure progress and how the group interacts with NPCs, creatures, and the setting's elements. You are encouraged to improvise and change things. Each group is different and they will all have different needs and things they enjoy and things they don't like.

Give Them a Good Challenge. You are the judge of your group's experience. Give them a well-balanced challenge to keep them engaged. A good challenge does not necessarily mean combat. Try to feel out what your group is more interested in and try to give them what they crave. A role-playing situation like a tough negotiation, an interrogation, or calling a favor may be as intense as a full-blown battle.

Do not Stall. If the game starts to slow down because the players are unsure of what to do, feel free to provide hints, clues, or a helping NPC to nudge your group in the right direction. Players can get frustrated if they are unable to react to the adventure due to the lack of necessary information. Hints and clues may present themselves as "ideas" or "thoughts" the characters have. An alternative method is to introduce an NPC who will provide a veiled suggestion to the characters directly and serve as the "DM's voice"

CREATING AN ADVENTURING PARTY

This adventure does not rule out any combination of races, classes, or other features. There are no alignment requirements for this adventure but it is suggested that at least half the party is of good alignment. Otherwise, the incentives for finishing the adventure are curiosity and/or the promise of gold. Good-alignment is recommended for new players.

If you are playing with a new batch of PCs, ask the players why their heroes are together and acting as a team. Each player may choose one or two options from the following list to justify why they are together. This will help the game go smoother from the beginning and it will give them a few cues on how to interact with each other.

- Two characters are childhood friends. They come from the same city/town.
- One character saved the life of another PC a year ago.
- One character owes money to another.
- Two or more characters are currently employed as mercenaries.
- Two characters of the same race are relatives (siblings, cousins, etc.)

This list is not exhaustive. Players are free to invent reasons why they already know each other and work together.

As the DM, you are free to disregard this if your players are experienced enough. These instructions are designed to kick-start the game from the top and help new players get a hold of the group faster. A group of experienced players might meet each other and come up with reasons to work together on the fly with little to no difficulty.

ABOUT LINEARITY AND PLAYER AGENCY

This adventure includes several approaches that the adventurers may take and several variants in the conclusions of each chapter. These options are not exhaustive but there is a limited amount of information or options a module can include. This adventure, as written, is somewhat linear but the intention is not to constrain players' creativity and options. We have included what we believe are the most likely courses of action in the adventure. You may skip some encounters and activities. Do not limit the players' options.

ABOUT NOTATION

Some events or things described in this document express their odds of happening in this format: "1-in-6", "2-in-6" and so on. This means that the DM rolls a d6. Rolling the first number or less means that the event happens.

There is a 2-in-6 chance of finding the hidden door.

This means that a person rolls a 1d6, on a result of 2 or lower, the hidden door is found.

ADVENTURE PRIMER



A place of unholy worship. They breed demon chickens, dark monsters from hell!

Local Farmer

WHERE TO ADD THIS ADVENTURE

Mystery in the Chicken Church is a tier-1 adventure optimized for level 4 characters. The adventure centers around the investigation of recent kidnappings near a well-traveled road. There was a recent murder in a small winery in the forest and now there is a dire need to investigate the area. The winery is close to a strange chicken-shaped church in the forest. Little to nothing is known of the church-goers.

The two main locations in the adventure are within a large forested area. Recommended locations:

Forgotten Realms. In the Westwood, near the Long Road. In between Waterdeep and Red Larch.

Eberron. In the King's Forest, in the wilderness in between Sharn and Breland's capital, Wroat.

Estimated Duration: 8 - 10 hours.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In a world of swords and shields, farmers are simple people that fear the unknown. They'd rather stay home and continue their simple lives in peace. When trouble comes, common folk quickly come up with the craziest stories and theories.

People of the region talk about the "Chicken Church". They only have but bits of information about it, each less believable than the other (see Rumors on page 8). Nevertheless, their unlikely descriptions and tales hide some truth. The place they call "Chicken Church" is indeed a place of worship. They're right to call it that way; the two-story building features a tower with a chicken-head top.

The unorthodox construction is the main base of operations of a cult. Their numbers have grown over the past few months and they've become a threat to the community and other neighboring towns. What's worse, they're breeding monsters beneath their chicken-shaped structure.

A recent event has unsettled farmers and villagers; the murder of the winery owner and their workers. A young boy passed by the place and saw a body on the ground, in front of the winery building. Despite his curiosity, he couldn't help but run and scream when he saw the fresh blood.

The poor common folk are so afraid they do not dare approach the place. What they ignore is that the people at the winery were former cultists who wanted out. They had a change of heart and decided to leave the cult. However, the Cult of the Holy Cockatrices doesn't leave loose ends.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY COCKATRICES

From all the absurd theories that the people in the region have about the "Chicken Church", the one about breeding evil chickens from hell has the most truth in it.

The Church of the Holy Cockatrices venerates the chicken-like monstrosities as if they were deities. The church has subterranean chambers where they built a hatchery. They have grown their cockatrice population at a worrisome rate since they started their questionable breeding process.

The church threatens nearby villagers and travelers to join their ranks or die to the sacred petrification of cockatrices. The outcome is usually a new cultist. But some folks are loyal to their values and beliefs. They are imprisoned and scheduled for a petrifying sacrifice ceremony.

PAYNE CLOVEN, THE CHOSEN ONE

The leader of the cult has the ability to “talk” to cockatrices. The monster birds respond to his command and voice. Payne calls this ability a gift. He claims it was granted to him in a dream where he had a premonition.

In his dream, a god-like cockatrice spoke to him. The feathered being told Payne it was his destiny to become the leader of an army of cockatrices, to build a cult and spread the Way of the Cockatrice. The cockatrice god revealed to him an abandoned building in the forest, he would fulfill his destiny there. His life changed after that ominous dream.

The morning after, he entered the forest with the clear objective of finding the place he saw in his dreams. He couldn't believe it when he found it. A structure in the rough shape of a bird. The building was abandoned, like the one in his dream. Payne was overwhelmed with awe.

Realizing he had a real communing experience with a god-like entity, he became obsessed with the thought that he was the chosen one. This thought only became stronger when he found his first cockatrice and noticed he could tame it. His ego tripled. Payne has become a mindless fanatic.

THE MISSION

Payne believes he has the power to take over the world. His method is simple. People can either join him or experience a holy petrifying death. Payne won't rest until he's taken over all the farming settlements and communities around the church. After that, he aims for a city, and then a whole kingdom. Someone must do something about the deluded megalomaniac who managed, somehow, to form a cult around his zealous love for cockatrices. However, be it fear or true loyalty, Payne's cultists will do anything to defend him and the Church of the Holy Cockatrices.



ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview of the chapters and how the adventure is most likely to play out:

1. Cultist Ambush. The adventurers end up at the murder-scene at the winery. The many clues at the place point the heroes in the right direction. A squad of cultists hides in the woods to attack undesired eavesdroppers.

2. The Church of the Cockatrices. After meeting with the guide or following the footprint track, the heroes arrive at the chicken-shaped church. Payne and his cultists attempt to capture any intruder they find.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Mystery in the Chicken Church may begin with one of the following adventure hooks:

MURDER! MURDER!

When the heroes arrive at a small town or settlement, a young boy runs by screaming: “Murder! Help!”. He looks scared and startled. He shivers and his eyes are watery. The boy goes directly to his parents' home. If the heroes approach to investigate, the poor boy can only say the words: “dead body”, and “winery”. His parents explain that he is talking about the winery a few hundred feet from there. They also mention two of the rumors that run around (see Rumors on page 8). If what the boy saw is true, what could've killed the people at the winery?

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

While the heroes travel the road minding their own business, they stumble upon a small wooden building. A sign reads: “Moe's Winery”. When the heroes approach, they see a dead body outside the building. This is the place where the cult murdered the winery owner and its workers. The adventurers must investigate the place to learn of what happened there. Regardless of their findings, a group of Payne's cultists patiently waits for the right time to strike. Will the heroes find the culprit of this horrible crime? Will they learn the truth about the winery owner's past?

DEMON CHICKENS! I SWEAR!

The adventurers rent a room in the local inn. Speaking with the barkeep or the regulars of the place, the heroes hear three of the rumors that run around (see Rumors on page 8). All of a sudden, a deranged man enters the place and warns everyone that demon-chickens from hell swarmed the land. He claims a group of hooded men attacked him and captured his two best friends. He describes an oversized chicken with a dragon's tail, a monstrous beak, and a serpent's tongue. He asks for the heroes' help and brings them to the winery. The man is a cultist in disguise...

CULTIST AMBUSH



Trust me, the road I know is free of cultists or monsters. I'll take you there safely.

Bardolf Beldevere, guide

The heroes arrive at the winery one way or another. There are two main objectives to take care of in this chapter. First, every area or room at the winery has a piece of information or clue for the heroes to understand what happened there. They can take their time searching thoroughly to locate all clues and join the pieces of the puzzle (see What Really Happened).

Second, Payne's cultists wait for the right opportunity to strike and capture the heroes. The many different choices that the heroes can take when they arrive at the place mean the fight can go in many ways too. The ideal outcome for the heroes is to defeat the cultists, find the guide, and march to the Church of the Holy Cockatrices. However, if the cultists were to come out victorious, they'll capture the heroes and the guide, and bring them as prisoners to the underground chambers of the church (see Development).

MURDER AT THE WINERY

The only thing villagers know about this crime is what the poor boy saw: a bloody corpse in front of the winery. The rumors of chickens-from-hell and hooded-cultists have stopped the locals' attempt to investigate; people are afraid.

With the exception of the **adventure hook** "What Happened Here?", the heroes can learn more information about the winery if they spend time asking someone about the place. If they do, they can learn the following:

- The owner's name is Moe.
- Two young adults worked with him, a brother and sister named Dane and Kinna.
- They had been acting distant for the past few weeks.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

If the heroes are clever enough and look in the right places, they might obtain enough clues and information to learn what happened at the winery. Moe and his two employees' ambitions and risks taken were too high and they paid the highest price. The three people at the winery had been dealing with the cultists of the Church of the Holy Cockatrices.

Being the main source of alcohol around, Payne became interested in the winery. As usual, he ordered his cultists to raid the place and give the people there the choice to join them or be petrified. Moe, Dane, and his sister Kinna, had no choice but to accept. They didn't want to die.

In the following weeks, they worked harder than ever to meet Payne's ridiculous requests on top of their usual work. They didn't want to raise any suspicions so they didn't stop providing villagers with wine. But they were sleeping three or four hours, eating little, this couldn't last. In the end, Moe and the siblings decided to stop working for Payne. They wanted out. The cult's leader took that as treason and ordered his men to kill them and use them as bait to attract more potential sacrifice subjects.

GETTING A GUIDE

After the confrontation with the cultists at the winery, Bardolf appears. He is a man who knows the lands well and works as a guide. He is aware of the rumors and wishes to help. Bardolf can become a travel companion or a prisoner companion. If the heroes beat the cultists, Bardolf introduces himself when it's safe. If the cultists win the battle, they soon find Bardolf hiding spot too and capture him. He becomes the adventurers' cellmate (see Development).

BARDOLF BELDEVERE

Chaotic good, human (age 52)

Bardolf (**scout**) works as a guide; the vast green lands look all the same and it is easy to get lost. He lives in one of the villages nearby and is aware of the rumors. He wishes to help if he can and that's why he was eavesdropping at the crime scene, to learn something useful.

He knows the territories well and knows a path that leads to the Church of the Holy Cockatrices safely. However, Bardolf calls the building "Chicken Church" like all people.

Manner. Bardolf walks with a pretty wooden cane. However, he doesn't need it to walk. His limping is fake and he sometimes forgets to do it.

Ambition. Bardolf wants to see the chicken-shaped church up-close. He's curious about the demon-chickens.

EXPLORING THE WINERY

The heroes are free to investigate the winery in any order they wish. Each area contains a clue or a piece of information that might be useful to them. There is no expected chronological order attached to these clues.

The group of cultists hiding in area A2 would rather surprise the heroes when they're inside the house. However, if the party splits, it would be convenient to attack an isolated target. As the DM, you have the power to handle this encounter as you think is best (see area A2 for details on the encounter and Development for the outcome).

GENERAL FEATURES

The following descriptions of areas A1 through A10 correspond to Moe's Winery map.

Roads. The roads look heavily transited. Many people come to the winery often every day. Tracks and footprints are hard to follow on the road.

Trees. The thick and large cedar trunks. The apple trees planted in rows next to the winery are ripe for harvest.

Corpses. The bodies aren't all in the same place but share similar wounds and cuts. They were killed with the same kind of slashing weapon.

Flora. Dandelions dance with the wind along with the high grass. The cedar trees east of the cabin are a nice contrast to the smaller apple trees in the orchard.

Winery. The porch of the winery is stained in red. The wood swelled from the blood. The window next to the main door is broken and has blood marks too. The main door is closed, the same as the cellar. The chimney exhaust doesn't release any smoke. The place is calm and silent.



Roll on the following table when the adventurers ask villagers or the guide about the recent crime or the strange chicken building, ignore repeated results or just pick one:

d8 Rumors About the Winery Crime

- 1 A villager claims he once saw three hooded men in the forest. They started walking toward him so he ran home to hide. He doesn't go to that part of the forest since.
- 2 A woman sadly describes how her lover started behaving differently and talking about a cult. One day he left and never came back from the forest.
- 3 A farmer claims one day he lost a mule. He spent the day looking for it and found it a few miles away from his farm, in the forest. It had turned to stone. He came back to town to bring witnesses but didn't find it again.
- 4 A drunk guy describes he was in the forest a few days back. He says he doesn't know how he ended up there but he swears on his mother that he saw two men and a large chicken-pet kill another man.
- 5 The barkeep says Moe at the winery had been acting strange. He looked stressed and irritated. Plus, he evaded all questions regarding his altered state.
- 6 A person claims he heard Dane and Kinna, the workers at the winery, arguing a few days back. He doesn't recall well but he believes he heard the word cockatrice.
- 7 An explorer staying in town says a group of bandits tried to attack him a few nights back. He says the men had a monster-chicken with them. He ran and escaped.
- 8 A friend of Dane's says they spoke two days ago. He noticed Dane was afraid of something but wouldn't say what. He adds that Dane muttered "I don't wanna turn to stone, man!" before leaving.

A1. SOUTH ROAD

Heavy transit (footprints and tracks mark all the road).

Leaves (scattered, from the cedar and apple trees).

The adventurers arrive from this road regardless of the adventure hook that brought them here. From this point, the heroes can see what's described in General Features. If they wish to learn more about something in particular, they must approach and investigate the area in question.

Not on my Watch. There is a slight chance that the heroes notice the danger to come the moment they step into the crime scene. A highly-observant hero (DC 18 Perception) sees the reflection of sunlight on a dagger of a cultist hiding in area A2. If this isn't enough to draw the heroes' attention or put them on their guard, they're up for a surprise.

A2. CEDAR TREES

Thick trunks (the cedar trees are decades old).

Ropes (attached to some tree branches at the tops).

Tall and large cedar trees stand on both sides of the east road. Dry leaves fill the road and their surroundings with dry vegetation. It creates a beautiful view in the Fall.

Is that a Person? If the heroes come close to the cedar trees, they might become aware of the cultists hiding on top of the trees. If they look close enough (DC 15 Perception), they notice some of the green colors at the top of the trees are robes. The cultists attack once they're spotted.

PAYNE'S CULTISTS

Green robes (to camouflage with their surroundings).

Cockatrice medallions (made of steel, bathed in silver).

These men wear dark green robes that hide most of their bodies. They swing their scimitars menacingly.

The group of four **cultists** and three **thugs** hide in the tree-tops of the cedar trees, waiting for the right timing.

Reaction. The cultists' intention is to surprise and ambush the heroes. They wait for the heroes to spread out and become isolated. If the heroes enter the building as a group, that can also be a good opportunity to attack.

A3. THE WATER WELL

Old (eroded blocks of stone and moth-eaten wood).

Bucket and pulley (attached to the wooden beam).

The water well provides the winery with fresh water. Dane used to be in charge of hauling water to the winery.

Blood Money. Approaching the well or pulling the pulley's ropes causes the heroes to notice a loose brick on the inside. Removing the brick reveals a small compartment that contains a leather pouch. In it, there are 100 gp and three cockatrice medallions like the ones the cultists wear.

A4. APPLE ORCHARD

Fresh apples (ripe, juicy, and red with yellow hues).

Sweet smell (from the dozen apple trees and their fruit).

Twelve apple trees stand in three rows as if soldiers of a platoon. The fruit looks ripe and ready for the taking.

The apple trees look magnificent. Moe and the siblings took good care of them. It seems that they were about to harvest these apples. A closer look reveals someone was interrupted while picking them; a turned basket with apples lies beside a tree with fewer apples on the lower branches.

Hidden Note. Buried in a mound of dirt beside a tree, Kinna hid a note. It is addressed to her parents. She asks for their forgiveness and says she regrets her stupid decision.

A5. CABIN'S YARD

Corpse (Moe's body lays motionless on the ground).

Blood trail (from the corpse to the door, it goes inside).

The lifeless body of a man lies on the grass. Dry blood draws a trail from it to the door of the winery.

There is nothing to be done for Moe, he's dead. His body has been here for a few hours. The heroes might learn a thing or two if they inspect the body closer.

Set Up. If the heroes spend a minute to inspect Moe's body, they find a small key. They also notice that the body was dragged from inside the house to here. Someone carried the body to place it here on purpose (If the cultists haven't been discovered, they might take advantage of the heroes' distraction with the body and attack them by surprise).

A6. CABIN'S MAIN ROOM

Cold atmosphere (from all the blood and two corpses).

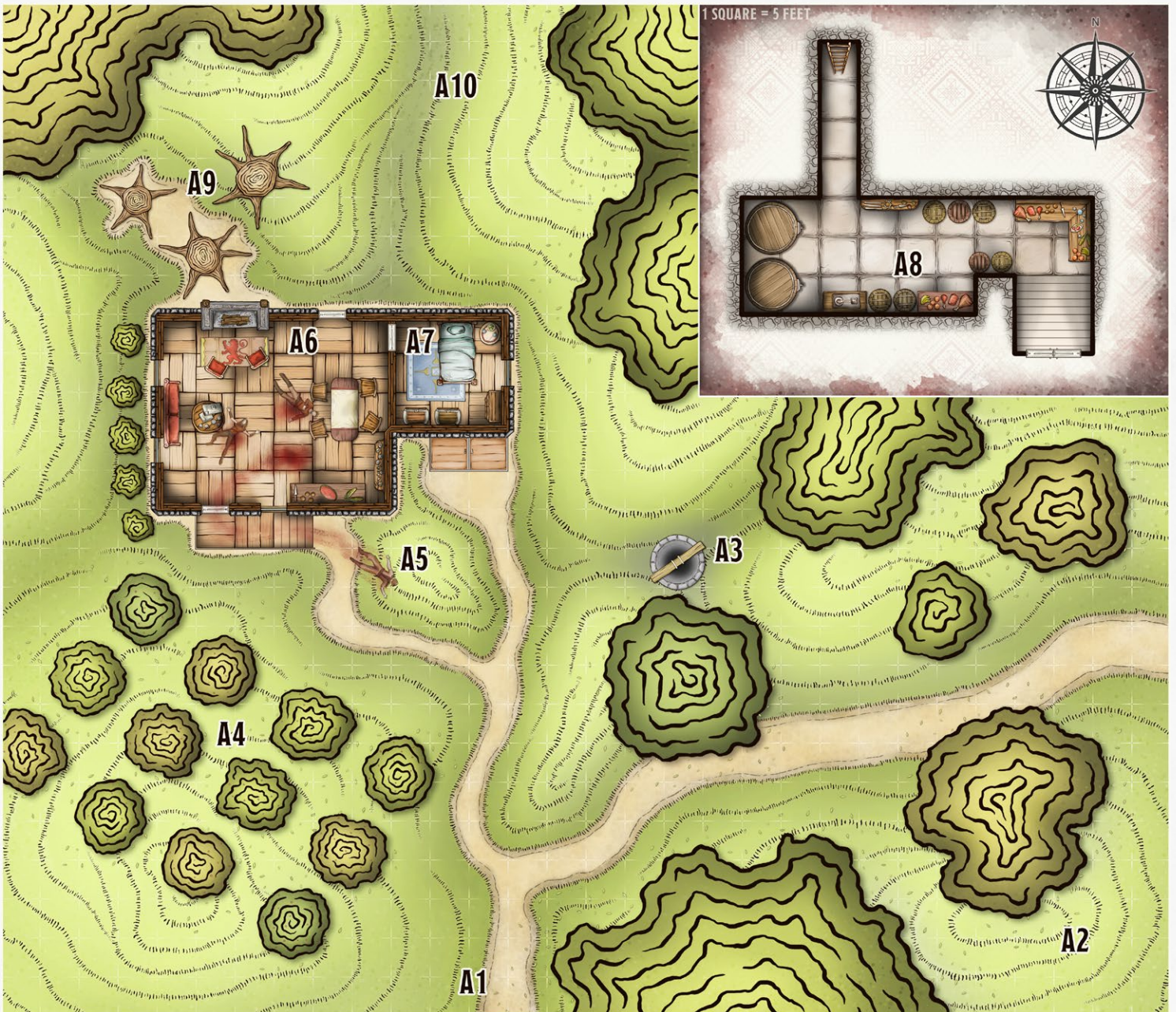
Furniture (stained with blood, mostly undamaged).

The bodies of a young woman and a man lay motionless on the floor. Their pallid faces look alike.

There are two seats in front of the hearth, a large sofa with a circular table, a bookshelf by the east wall, and a wooden table with four chairs. None of the furniture looks damaged or messed with. The food on the table is untouched too.

The bodies of Dane and Kinna were left where they died. A large bloodstain marks where Moe died; the blood trail to his body ends here. The wooden flooring is swollen from the blood it has sucked. A strong iron smell fills the room.

Carved Message. If the heroes inspect the area for a minute, they find a message carved on the floor of the cabin, on the wood. The message was crudely carved with a knife. It reads: "No loose ends, traitors". This is a clear clue that Moe and the siblings had dealings with the cult.



A7. MOE'S BEDROOM

Cozy (comfortable bed, soft linens, soft blue rug).
Furniture (undamaged). **Wardrobe** (mundane clothes).

Moe's room has a bed, a small wooden table, a shelf by the wall, and two wooden chests. The blue rug matches the soft green bedsheets. The bowl by the bed has apples.

Treasure. There are 35 gp and three bottles of expensive apple cider marked "Payne's" (300 gp).

Secret Compartment. Moe built a secret compartment within one of the chests. The key to open it is in his pockets. Inside, he stored a message written by Payne Cloven. The cryptic message says "I hope our offer has been considered. Be sure that the Holy Cockatrice will be pleased with more sacrifices were you to refuse." There are also 150 gp in assorted coinage in a box that reads "Winery Treasury".

A8. CELLAR

Warm (the temperature is high in this windowless place).
Wine smell (tuns and casks of apple wine stored here).

Dried meats and fermenting wine fill the cellar with exotic smells. There is enough food here to eat for weeks.

Treasure. The food stored here is equivalent to 25 days' worth of rations. Expensive salts and spices can be sold to a merchant (125 gp), and there are six casks of apple cider (75 gp each), and two tuns of apple wine (400 gp each).

Hidden Robes. If the heroes spend time searching the place thoroughly, they notice an empty cask that contains clothes. Three green robes like the ones the cultists wore.

Secret Exit. North of the cellar, there is a ladder that leads to the tree stumps (area A9).

A9. TREE STUMPS

Cutting Stump (shows thousands of axe cuts marks).

Leaves (Scattered, from the cedar and apple trees).

Moe used to chop wood on one of these tree trunk stumps. The logs were used as fuel for the hearth. There are some of the logs he chopped inside the house.

Secret Tunnel. If the heroes spend some time investigating this area, they find a secret passage. There is a trapdoor hidden by one of the tree stumps. Lifting it reveals a tunnel that descends to the cellar (area A8).

A10. FOOTPRINTS TRAIL

Recent (the tracks are fresh and easy to follow).

Grass (patches of it are bent down, stepped on).

A tracker can notice human footprints of at least four individuals. The fresh tracks show the way to the Church of the Holy Cockatrices. The heroes can find this trail by themselves, or with the help of Bardulf the guide. They could also be dragged on it as prisoners. It all depends on the outcome of the fight (see Development).

Bardulf's Hiding Spot. The old man hides here while the confrontation happens. He introduces himself once it's safe. His fate depends on the heroes' success. Otherwise, he'll become a prisoner and will be put in a cell in the underground chambers of the church along with the heroes.

DEVELOPMENT

Depending on the outcome of the fight at the winery, there are two possible endings for this chapter.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

The heroes beat the cultists and meet Bardulf, the guide. After investigating the area and learning everything they can from Moe and the siblings' bodies, they follow the trail and Bardulf's instructions to reach the "Chicken Church".

After following the trail an hour, the heroes and the guide arrive at their destination, the Church of the Holy Cockatrices. They must work out a plan to proceed and stop the evil cultists! There's no time to waste!

OH NO! WE'RE PRISONERS!

The cultists win the battle and have taken the heroes as prisoners. The adventurers are out of combat but they see Payne's men find Bardulf and bind him too. The cultists call for reinforcements with a horn and more of them arrive with horses and a wagon.

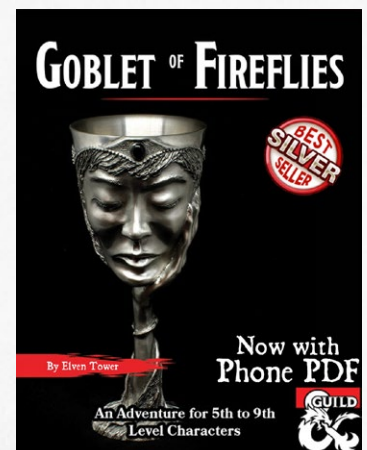
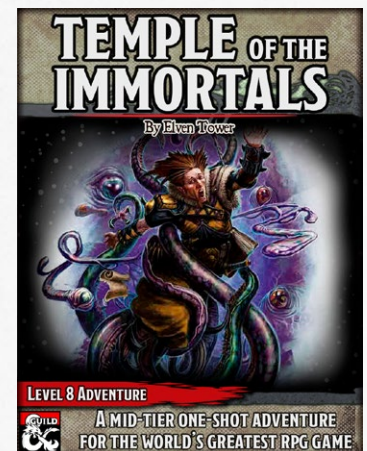
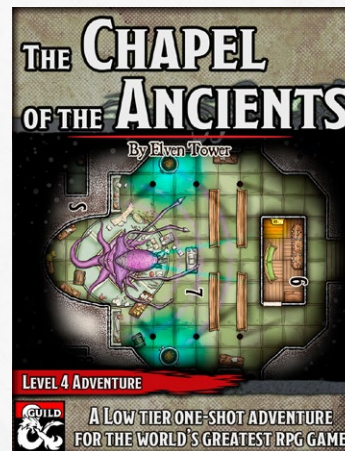
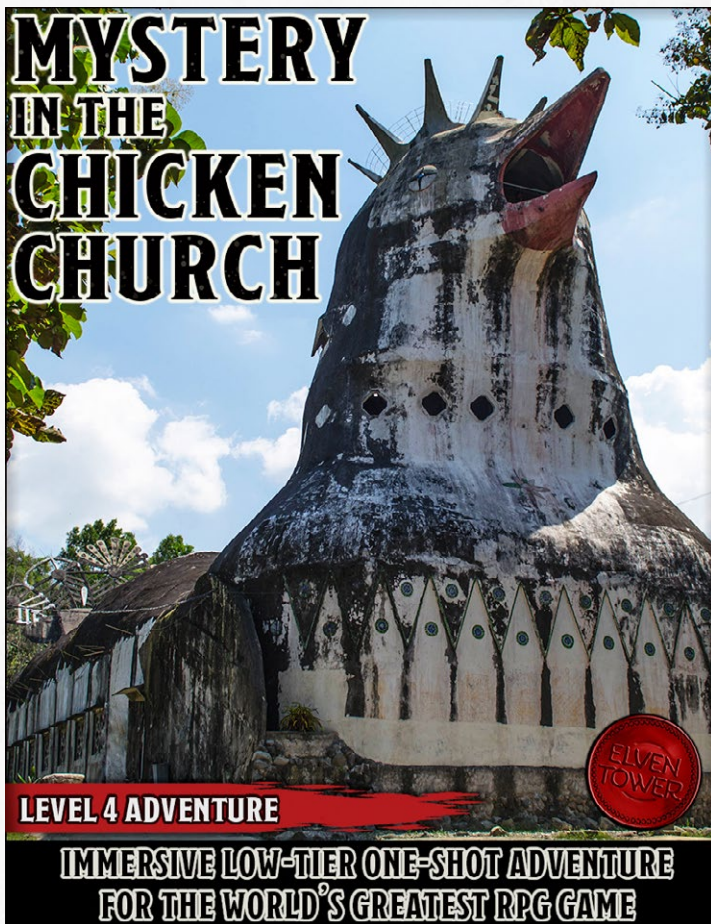
The adventurers and Bardulf join Merek, another prisoner in the church's cell block (area B20). They are going to have to work their way out of the cells and retrieve their possessions before facing the cult's leader.



THANK YOU

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