

Vigilant-Warden

December 21, 2022



Vigilant-Warden (It/Its)

Large construct, unaligned

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 133 (14d10 + 56)
- **Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	9 (-1)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	8 (-1)	1 (-5)

- **Damage Immunities** acid, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't adamantine
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
- **Languages** telepathy 60 ft.
- **Challenge** 13 (10,000 XP)

Acid Absorption. Whenever Vigilant-Warden is subjected to acid damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the acid damage dealt.

Berserk. Whenever Vigilant-Warden starts its turn with 60 hit

points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, Vigilant-Warden goes berserk. On each of its turns while berserk, Vigilant-Warden attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, Vigilant-Warden attacks an object, with preference for an object smaller than itself. Once Vigilant-Warden goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all its hit points.

Immutable Form. Vigilant-Warden is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. Vigilant-Warden has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. Vigilant-Warden's weapon attacks are magical.

Regeneration. Vigilant-Warden regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. Vigilant-Warden makes two slam attacks.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or have its hit point maximum reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. The target dies if this attack reduces its hit point maximum to 0. The reduction lasts until removed by the [greater restoration](#) spell or other magic.

Haste (Recharge 5-6). Until the end of its next turn, Vigilant-Warden magically gains a +2 bonus to its AC, has advantage on Dexterity saving throws, and can use its slam attack as a bonus action.

Legendary Actions

Vigilant-Warden can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. It regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If Vigilant-Warden fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Fire Breath. Ranged Spell Attack: +4 to hit, range 120 ft., four targets. Hit: 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Fluid Movement. The Vigilant-Warden can take the Disengage action as a legendary action.

Rockfall (Uses 2 Actions). Ranged Spell Attack: +9 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. A boulder-sized chunk of the ceiling rips free and flies at a target.

Vigilant-Warden was magically constructed by the ancient Anahksi people to serve as an eternally watchful jailer to guard the undead Queen [Wrot'idauth](#). It is the largest and most powerful guard they built, the others all being [gargoyles](#). While Vigilant-Warden is sentient, its inhuman mind does not process most recognizable emotions. After millennia spent guarding a prison without meeting anyone new, it treats people with an interested curiosity.

It does not hate Wrot'idauth but rather sees guarding her as its sole purpose. It does not understand any modern languages, but speaks and can hear others' thoughts. It frequently walks on all fours or lounges about in a catlike repose, but if it is attacked, it will stand upright on its hind legs to fight—though

it does not desire to fight anyone other than Wrot'idauth.

Wrot'idauth

December 21, 2022



Wrot'idauth (She/Her)

Medium undead, neutral evil

- **Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
- **Hit Points** 150 (20d8 + 60)
- **Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

- **Damage Vulnerabilities** fire
- **Damage Resistances** acid, cold, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered
- **Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison
- **Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

- **Languages** telepathy 30 ft.
- **Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

Incorporeal Movement. Wrot'idauth can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, Wrot'idauth has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Actions

Life Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 21 (4d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Create Specter. Wrot'idauth targets a humanoid within 10 feet of her that has been dead for no longer than 1 minute and died violently. The target's spirit rises as a [specter](#) in the space of its corpse or in the nearest unoccupied space. The specter is under Wrot'idauth's control. She can have no more than seven specters under her control at one time.

Dark Servants. If Wrot'idauth drops below 70 hit points, she uses a reaction to summon 2 [Shadows](#).

Legendary Actions

Wrot'idauth can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Wrot'idauth

regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn. Her Legendary Actions can only be used while she is in her lair.

Legendary Resistance (2/day). If Wrot'idauth fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Eldritch Movement. Wrot'idauth moves up to 30 feet without provoking an opportunity attack.

Tanglewood. Wrot'idauth can innately cast the [Entangle](#) (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit), requiring no material components.

Vegemight (Costs 2 Actions). Branches spring up and attack a target. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Millennia ago, Wrot'idauth was a powerful queen of the Naodh-Meer people. She had magical command over trees and was worshiped as a goddess, being buried in a sacred grove upon her death. She then returned to life as a murderous spirit and tried to conquer the neighboring Anahksi people. They defeated her and sealed her away in a tomb which they built in a demiplane, constructing [gargoyles](#) to guard her. Over millennia, the tomb's spells have weakened and she has regained much of her lost power, which she is using to escape.

Ssauri'yanik

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Ssauri'yanik (They/Them)

Medium humanoid (red [dragonborn](#)), Neutral Good

- **Armor Class** 13 (chain shirt), 16 with Barkskin
- **Hit Points** 27 (5d8 + 5)
- **Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)

- **Skills** Medicine +7, Nature +5, Persuasion +3, Religion +5
- **Damage Resistances** fire
- **Senses** passive Perception 13
- **Languages** Common, Draconic
- **Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

Divine Eminence. As a bonus action, Ssauri'yanik can expend a spell slot to cause its melee weapon attacks to magically deal an extra 10 (3d6) radiant damage to a target on a hit. This benefit lasts until the end of the turn. If the priest expends a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the extra damage increases by 1d6 for each level above 1st.

Plant Specialist. Ssauri'yanik has advantage on Intelligence (Nature) checks related to plants.

Spellcasting. Ssauri'yanik is a 5th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Ssauri'yanik has the following [cleric](#) spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): [Light](#), [Sacred Flame](#), [Thaumaturgy](#)

1st level (4 slots): [Cure Wounds](#), [Guiding Bolt](#), [Sanctuary](#)

2nd level (3 slots): [Lesser Restoration](#), [Spiritual Weapon](#),

Barkskin

3rd level (2 slots): Dispell Magic, Spirit Guardians

Actions

Breath Weapon. Ssauri'yanik can use their action to exhale fire in a 15 ft. cone. When they use their breath weapon, each creature in the area of the exhalation must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 2d6 damage on a failed save, and half as much damage on a successful one. After they use their breath weapon, they can't use it again until they complete a short or long rest.

Mace. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Traits

They have a chronic degenerative condition similar to Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, causing Hyperelasticity (IE 4) and Skeletal Flexibility (IE 3) and Dislocation (IE 3).

This red dragonborn is dedicated to helping others, an act of devotion that takes many forms, from curing wounds to providing support for people with disabilities. They love plants and herblore, which they use to make various tonics, smokables, and other medicines. Ssauri'yanik sells Potions of Healing and potions that replicate the effects of magic items for managing disabilities and traits. Their scaly skin has an elasticity to it and bruises easily.

Horror of the Shade

December 21, 2022



Horror of the Shade

Written by Theo Kogod

*In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.*

*Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.*

-“Invictus,” by William Ernest Henley

Running the Adventure:

Players:

“Horror of the Shade” is a one-shot adventure designed for a party of 4–6 characters of levels 5 or 6.

Fellow Travelers:

As caravan guards, the player characters will meet others

accompanying them on the road.

Kassios (He/Him): The charming caravan master is an impeccably dressed satyr with a waxed mustache who walks with a pronounced limp, using a well-polished cane (actually a cane-sword). He is partially deaf, uses a prosthetic bronze eye, and has a penchant for theatricality.

Ssauri'yanik (They/Them): This red dragonborn priest has dedicated their life to helping others. A skilled healer and herbalist, Ssauri'yanik uses their knowledge of plants and medicine to design specialized potions to heal injuries and help people manage their disabilities.

Tessaria (She/Her): A pragmatic gold dragonborn librarian transporting her book-hoard across the country, Tessaria possesses encyclopedic knowledge of history and myths. Her face and tone seldom reveal her emotions. She is sensitive to sound, and may verbally snap at others when she feels overwhelmed.

Background:

Millennia ago, the Naodh-Meer were a prehistoric matriarchy whose priestess-queens controlled trees and had transcended death. The Naodh-Meer were eventually conquered by the Anahksi, a patriarchal magocracy who torched the Naodh-Meers' groves and built huge stone structures in their place.

Both the Naodh-Meer and Anahksi have long since vanished. All that remains are the stony ruins they built and the depleted remnants of their magic.

In the present, the characters serve as caravan guards who make camp amid Anahksi ruins, once built to imprison the undead Naodh-Meer witch-queen Wrot'idauth by entombing her in a demiplane. But the magics holding her have weakened. Gargoyles

attack the caravan, and Wrot'idauth tries to escape during the fight. This triggers a magical defense which transports the ruins—and the caravan—into the prison dimension. To escape, the characters must either defeat the undead witch-queen, or else help her defeat the immortal stone guardians imprisoning her.

Introduction

The adventure begins as a caravan traveling through the hills prepares to make camp amid ancient ruins. The caravan master, a satyr named [Kassios](#), has hired the characters as guards.

To begin, read the following text:

You were recently hired by the satyr Kassios to help guard his caravan, along with other travelers who paid for safe passage. Bandit raids and heavy rains have made the main road too treacherous for safe travel, forcing the wagon train into the hills to find a new route.

It has been a slow, bumpy ride across uneven ground choked with roots and hardscrabble. Cracked granite columns and crumbling stone blocks pock the otherwise empty slopes. The darkening sky breathes chill, moist air through the hills, portending a coming storm. As evening approaches, you search for somewhere to take shelter when suddenly Kassios shouts, "There! Just what we're looking for!"

He points up the slopes with his cane. Amid toppled columns and broken masonry, a single building stands, its gable roof and marble walls seemingly still intact.

The caravan is composed of five wagons, each pulled by a pair of mules. There are roughly twenty passengers: mostly a mix of humans, dwarves, and halflings, plus two dragonborn. When the

caravan stops, Kassios asks the player characters to ensure the ruins are safe and check in with the paying passengers while he attends to the animals.

Black roots grow over the structure and much of the surrounding rubble, but there are no trees in sight. Players scouting the structure and surrounding area find no enemies. For more info, see section **A1: Ruins**. ([Horror of the Shade Map 1](#))

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (History) check reveals that the ruins were built by the lost civilization of the Anahksi. When examining the black roots, an unfamiliar, acrid odor is faintly detectable. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check points out that there are no nearby trees and that the roots are pushing up through the soil. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) or Intelligence (Arcana) check shows that these are unlike any known tree root and may possess slight necromantic properties. Players looking through the rubble who succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will discover a toppled six-foot statue of a horned, fanged humanoid with wings.

As the caravan unloads, both dragonborn take longer than the other travelers.

One of them, a red dragonborn in priest's robes named [Ssauri'yanik](#), examines a patch of roots. They are a healer and herbalist who makes potions from plants, but have never seen anything like this.

The other, a gold dragonborn named [Tessaria](#), is carrying a heavy chest, causing her to move slowly. If someone tries to assist her, she thanks them but refuses. Tessaria has a [Sensory Processing Difference](#) (IE 2) and is sensitive to continuous high- and low-pitched sounds. The grind of wagon wheels on their axles took a toll. Her chest contains rare books, a warm robe, and a tea set, which help ease her nerves.



A1: The Ruins

The ruins are an ancient Anahksi structure with walls, ceiling, and floor constructed from granite and marble blocks. General features:

Walls: The walls are 4 feet thick and sturdy but a section of the eastern wall has collapsed.

Ceiling: 20 feet high. A massive marble slab forms the ceiling. Two more slabs above it form a gable roof.

Columns: Two rows of marble columns run down the center of the room.

Entrances: The post-and-lintel entrance has no doors. The only other way in or out is the eastern wall's gap.

Statue: A 10-foot-high statue depicts a seated man flanked by snarling horned beasts. Roots protrude from cracks under the statue, spreading across the floor toward the hole in the wall, creating difficult terrain in the northeast corner.

The ancient structure's walls and floor are constructed of massive, smooth stone blocks. Strange glyphs mark the stone lintel above the entrance. Two rows of marble columns run down the length of it to the very back, where a statue depicts a man seated and flanked by wild beasts, their eroded features polished and cracked from age. Dark twisted roots have pushed up through cracks in the paved floor, growing toward a large hole in the eastern wall, from which a damp breeze wafts in.

The glyphs are from the lost Anahksi language. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals similarities to the

Primordial words “Tomb” and “Queen.” Characters fluent in Primordial or who consult Tessaria roll with advantage. The Comprehend Languages spell deciphers the full text:

“This Tomb Holds the Undead Forest Queen.”

Players who examine the statue notice that the man is seated on a petrified tree stump. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the wild beasts flanking him have small horns and folded stone wings.

Kassios follows the characters inside as it begins to rain. The satyr starts a fire near the hole in the back wall using firewood he brought with him. This downtime offers a chance to get to know the NPCs.

Kassios regales his passengers with stories around the fire.

Tessaria prepares some tea, reading a dense book by firelight that confirms her suspicion that the ruins are of Anahksi origin. If asked, she may reveal that the Anahksi who built this were an ancient empire who wielded elemental magic.

Ssauri’yanik cuts a clipping off one of the black roots to study as they mix herbs for potions. If a character has a noticeable injury or disability whose symptoms seems to be causing pain or discomfort (or if they volunteer such information), Ssauri’yanik may inform the character that they have a potion that could help manage symptoms.

As night descends, it begins to rain, and a loud roar echoes among the hills.

Kassios unsheathes his sword-cane and orders the players to take up their posts as guards. Outside, four winged **gargoyles** descend from the sky, growling loudly, their rough granite wings and arms grinding with every movement. Two approach the front door

while two more attack the hole in the eastern wall. Sparse mosses and lichens dot their bodies, releasing a fetid earthy odor from being in the rain, and when a gargoyle is struck in combat, weapons and spells will occasionally impact the soft film of vegetation. They do not understand any modern language and cannot be reasoned with. They are guarding the ruins and intend to kill all trespassers.

Kassios fights with his sword-cane and has [Stiffness](#) (Legs and Feet) (IE 2). Tessaria or Ssauri'yanik might offer support through their breath weapons. Tessaria inserts earplugs at the start of combat. Ssauri'yanik has [Hyperelasticity](#) (IE 4) and [Skeletal Flexibility](#) (IE 3) and Dislocation (IE 3) and is cautious to avoid injury, but heals anyone who becomes seriously injured.

The other travelers try to flee to the back of the room to escape the monsters. Multiple travelers can squeeze together into a five-foot square, pressed close as they try to avoid the fray.

After the first gargoyle is killed, the two beasts flanking the statue at the back of the room begin to move, unfurling huge batlike wings and roaring loudly. These gargoyles are Small, and have 20 HP and 12 AC.

After a second gargoyle is killed, read the following:

As the gargoyle dies, you hear the bursting crack of ruptured stone from the back of the chamber. The statue explodes, dusting the room with splinters of shattered rock as a writhing tangle of black tree roots pushes up from below the floor. The remaining gargoyles react immediately, flying straight at the breach. They collide with a deafening crash and darkness flashes across your vision.

You recover a moment later to discover the gargoyles, tree roots, and broken statue have all vanished. In their place is a massive rent in the floor, the mouth of a passage. Outside the building, everything as far as you can see has been consumed by yellow glowing mists.

One Door Closes, Another Opens:

Any characters who were outside the building are instantly transported back inside.

The yellow mists outside shimmer and swirl, pressing against the building but not entering. From a distance, they smell faintly of burnt tin. The mists generate light for 30 feet and dim light for another 30. These are part of an ancient magical defense system created by the Anahksi to safeguard the structure and prevent the undead Naodh-Meer queen entombed below from escaping. It is impossible to see, hear, or scry anything through the mists, which cannot be dispelled. Teleportation spells such as [Misty Step](#) or [Blink](#) do not work normally within them. No one from outside can teleport in and no one inside can teleport out into the mists. If a character tries to teleport outside or travel to another plane, they feel a tingling pressure against their skin as their attempt fails. However, characters can teleport from one place to another within the main structure. This effect extends below the building into the passageway and rooms beyond, as characters can move about freely within any area on the map but cannot leave or enter a designated area using teleportation.

The rent in the floor is roughly 10×10 feet and opens to a passage that winds deep below the earth.

Everyone from the caravan is clearly shaken. Kassios tries to

calm them, but the attack has ruined his good mood. He asks the players to explore the passage to neutralize any danger. If they resist, he offers to double their pay.

Either Tessaria or Ssauri'yanik can be persuaded to accompany the adventurers. The din of battle upset Tessaria, but she recognized the gargoyles as Anahksi Guardians, and is curious to learn more about the Anahksi ruins. Ssauri'yanik is interested in learning about the strange roots, and they want to provide medical support if the adventurers need it.

Anyone who tries leaving the building must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw when they enter the mists or when they begin their turn within them. On a failed save, they take 12 (2D8 + 3) psychic damage or half as much on a success.

([Horror of the Shade Map 2](#))

A2: The Passage

The passageway is 10×10 feet and runs hundreds of feet deep underground, its dirt floors snaking back and forth with roots running along its walls and ceiling. The air is stale, humid, and permeated by a moldy odor. The first 50 feet are dimly lit before it becomes dark.

At the end, there is an open doorway where a massive stone slab has been pushed out and shattered on the passage floor. Beyond is a dimly lit room.

Examining the slab reveals it was once an intricately carved door with a complex locking mechanism that involved several sliding stone facets. At some point, roots pushed the door off its hinges. Beyond this door is a room glowing with dim, eerie yellow light.

Players will not discover this until later, but the tunnels originally connected the building above to a demiplane that the Anahksi created by drawing power from the Astral Plane and the Elemental Planes of Fire and Earth. They used it to imprison their greatest enemy, the Naodh-Meer witch-queen [Wrot'idauth](#), locking her in a tomb with immortal stone guards. The roots breaking free during the fight above triggered a defense mechanism, pulling the tunnels and building into the demiplane.

The areas ahead have the following features:

Five-foot square stone blocks form the walls, floors, and ceilings.

Ceilings: 20 feet high. The ceiling is also 30 feet thick, eventually opening out into empty dimensional space.

Doors: Most doors are 8-foot-wide stone slabs that slide to one side along a groove in the floor.

Lighting: Darkness, except where yellow mists provide dim light.

Breathability: Every room allows for regular breathing. More than 30 feet beyond the outside of the structures in any direction, the pocket dimension does not allow for breathable air.

Anti-Teleportation: No one is capable of entering or exiting any room using teleportation. They also cannot travel to another plane. However, they can teleport from one area to another within a room.

Anti-Magic: The **Hall of Murals**, **Guardian's Chamber**, and **Bridge Across the Abyss** all are protected by a faint Antimagic Field. This was created to prevent Queen Wrot'idauth from escaping, but has degraded over the millennia. Anyone casting a spell in the affected areas must succeed on a DC 10 roll using their

spellcasting Ability + proficiency bonus or else the spell automatically fails.

B1: Trapped Chamber

Just inside the doorway lie the gargoyles who flew into the tunnel, smashed to rubble by the roots.

The smashed doorway opens into a wide room, dimly lit by a flitting yellow glow coming from a crack in the ceiling from which cool sterile air breathes into the chamber.

Strewn across the entryway lie scattered chunks of broken masonry, among which are the gargoyles' recognizable horned faces and wing fragments.

Dim yellow light filters in through a crack in the ceiling. Anyone looking up notices something shocking: despite the party traveling deep underground, the crack passes through just 30 feet of rock, beyond which they can see the starry night sky illuminated by much-closer clouds of the glowing yellow gas. The crack also allows fresh air into the room.

The roots that run from the eastern door to the western one pushed both doors off their hinges, completely shattering the latter. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check confirms that it is unusual for roots to not grow on the floor; DC 15, that they pushed down the westernmost door; DC 20 reveals wood fragments amid the broken gargoyles.

Two gargoyle guards used to sit on the plinths, which would sink six inches into the floor under the creatures' weight. The gargoyles departed, causing the plinths to rise up and thereby priming the trap. If there is any weight on the floor for more than a minute, all of the floor tiles lining the eastern and

western walls superheat, glowing red hot and causing the air above them to ripple with the scent of burnt ozone. Anyone who steps on these heated tiles or begins a turn on them must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 3D6 fire damage on a failed save or half of that on a success. After another minute, the next innermost rows of tiles heat up. After 3 minutes, the middle tiles heat.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the plinths can sink down six inches into the floor and reveal scrape marks left by the gargoyles' claws. Applying 40 pounds of pressure to both plinths at once causes them to sink down, disabling the trap. Alternatively, piling the rubble onto the hot floor tiles allows someone to cross over them unharmed.

The northern unbroken door can be accessed with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, forcing the heavy stone door off its hinges. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check can slide it open to one side along a hinge in the floor, while a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Investigation) check will uncover a simple mechanism in the floor, triggering the door to slide open along its hinge, leading to the **Mason's Room**. The already-open door leads to the **Gargoyles' Vigil**.

B2: Mason's Room

The door grinds to one side and dry stale air wafts out. Chalky dust coats the floors and a rubble heap is piled high in the northeast corner, beside which lies a stone slab.

This room was used by Anahksi masons building the tomb, who discarded broken masonry in the rubble pile. Several tools lie on a level stone slab that once served as a work table, caked

with dust. These can be discovered with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

These crystalline tools are completely unrecognizable, except for one, the Hammerspike, with a double-sided head formed from solid silvery crystal which resembles both a pickaxe and a hammer.

This tool counts as both a warhammer or war pick and can be used by a character proficient in either. A player can decide whether to deal 1d8 bludgeoning or piercing damage when attacking with it. The Hammerspike is versatile, increasing the damage to 1d10 when wielded two-handed. It deals an additional 1d6 fire damage against Undead and Plants.

B3: Gargoyles' Vigil

Two rows of gargoyles once stood here, but now the room is overgrown with dark roots which have smashed and smothered the bodies of the stone wardens.

This narrow room is completely choked and overgrown with a twisted knotwork of roots and black-leafed branches, growing out from an open door in the southeast corner. The gnarled pungent vegetation is so thick that you almost fail to see the hunched stone figures completely ensnared within tangles of wood.

Neither the roots nor the gargoyles pose any harm to the characters. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the gargoyles have been smashed by the roots and pose no threat. Some of them are held upright by branches and vines, and if they are disturbed, pieces of broken masonry will fall to the floor.

Anyone passing through the corridor must either make 3 successful DC 14 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks or else become restrained by entanglement in the roots. Breaking free of these restraints causes the wood to snap loudly, releasing a shower of dry leaves. The roots can be destroyed with fire or weapons. They have AC 15, 200 HP, and take 30 minutes to be burned through. Inhaling the smoke chokes a person with its caustic bitter stench and causes 7 (3d4) poison damage.

If Ssauri'yanik is with the party, they will note that the leaves look especially flammable. The dragonborn will also observe that the tree roots must have moved at an alarming speed to break the gargoyles in this way. If Tessaria is present, she is eager to learn what is in the next room at the far end of the hall. In either case, the NPC should urge players forward.

B4: Hall of Murals

As you enter this room, an excited frisson tingles across your skin. Eight brightly painted bas-reliefs run along the southern wall of this beautifully stunning hall. The statuesque murals were masterfully carved with lifelike detail, and seem to tell some kind of story.

More of the familiar black roots have burrowed into the room through holes in the ceiling and floor, but these seem much thinner than the others, growing feebly toward the direction of the hallway you just left. Another sealed door is in the southwest corner.

This is the first of three rooms affected by the depleted Antimagic Field, but over the centuries, the field has weakened significantly (see the Anti-Magic Field section listed before

entering B1). If Ssauroi'yanik is with the party, they will recognize that the roots look sickly (a result of the Antimagic Field stifling them).

The bas-reliefs are three-dimensional and brightly colored with high contrast, so a person with limited vision should have an easier time seeing them if the room is lit.



They tell the story of the ancient Naodh-Meer queen, Wrot'idauth, who used tree magic to return from the underworld, and how she was eventually imprisoned in this tomb by the Anahksi. In order, the bas-reliefs depict the following, which you can read aloud from the next two pages.

If Tessaria is present, she can explain the history of this story, identifying the woman as the Naodh-Meer Queen Wrot'idauth, who was worshiped as a goddess and magically controlled trees. She was buried in a sacred grove, but resurrected herself. She dominated her former worshippers before trying to conquer the neighboring Anahksi. In response, the Anahksi burned the Naodh-Meer groves and used gargoyles to bury her in this tomb.

The door is shut but not locked. A successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) or DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check causes it to slide to one side along a groove. Holding fire to the door opens it automatically. Anyone studying the paintings for clues can discern that the Anahksi used fire in their magic so fire might help open the door.

M1.

A woman stands, painted gold, crowned with a wreath of black tree branches. Before her, other gold-painted people kneel. A massive black tree towers over the woman, its branches and roots outstretched.

M2.

This bas-relief is similar to the previous one, but the woman has been painted the same black as the tree, whose trunk now bends low toward her, emulating a bow.

M3.

The woman no longer stands, but lies horizontally beneath the tree, the roots wrapping around her to form a coffin. The gold-painted people still bow, but now the tree stands straighter than ever, its branches pointing up toward the sky.

M4.

The woman rises up through the center of the tree, bursting out the top, her arms outstretched. The gold people who bowed in earlier panels turn away, cowering.

M5.

Hovering above a forest of gnarled black trees, the woman holds her arms outstretched, claw-like hands reaching toward a different group of humans on a distant hill. This new group is painted a shade of gray almost indistinguishable from the stone on which the relief was carved.

M6.

The gray humans brandish lit torches and flaming axes. Overhead, winged gargoyles fill the sky. Opposite them, the woman hovers above a copse of black trees.

M7.

Humans torch the forest, dark trunks flaming brightly while gargoyles restrain the woman.

M8.


Once again, the woman lies horizontal beneath the earth. A massive gargoyle looms over her, while several smaller ones holding torches form a circle around them both. Above ground stands a four-sided building, a clear depiction of the structure where you made camp earlier.

B5: Guardian's Chamber

This is the chamber of [Vigilant-Warden](#), an immortal guardian created by the Anahksi to prevent Wrot'idauth from escaping. This chamber is made of perfect polished marble that catches the light and magnifies sound, causing every heavy footfall and spoken word to echo.

This room is built all of glinting marble, its pristine surfaces so clean they reflect the light. A pair of arched doors are set in the eastern wall, one carved from a single piece of jade, the other of obsidian. Between them, a massive statue of some sphinx-like beast lies on its belly. Then, it

raises its muzzled head. "New people," says a gravelly voice, echoing inside your skull. "I have not seen new people in such a long time."

Vigilant-Warden communicates telepathically. It harbors no ill intentions. If the players attack, it refrains from fighting back for one full round of combat, at which point it heals any damage it sustained, reknitting its body back together. It has no quarrel with these newcomers, who are the first people it has seen in millennia (though it has no idea how much time has passed). It readily answers any questions characters might have, glad for the opportunity to talk and share knowledge. 

Vigilant-Warden's sole purpose is keeping Wrot'idauth from escaping. While the creature is sentient, its inhuman mind is incapable of feeling boredom or loneliness despite the years. It harbors no personal malice toward the Naodh-Meer queen, but is wholly committed to preventing her escape, which it acknowledges probably means destroying her – something it would have attempted if it could.

With the Antimagic Field weakened, Wrot'idauth has regained much of her former power. She sent out the tree roots to burrow her free and destroy the remaining gargoyles jailing her. But so long as any of the Antimagic Field remains intact, she can neither escape nor harm Vigilant-Warden. And so long as she stays where she is, it cannot reach her.

Vigilant-Warden can provide the following information to players:

- It and the other gargoyles were built by the Anahksi to guard the tomb of Queen Wrot'idauth, an undead Naodh-Meer witch who tried to conquer the Anahksi people.
- The yellow mists, gargoyles, and Antimagic Field were

designed to keep Wrot'idauth from escaping and to stop anyone who might free her.

- The magic used to make this place is weakening. This has allowed Wrot'idauth to regain much of her power and make numerous escape attempts, sending out roots to attack her guards and try to dig free.
- The tomb is part of a demiplane the Anahksi created by drawing power from the Astral Plane and the Elemental Planes of Fire and Earth.
- The above-ground building has been pulled into the demiplane by magical security measures.
- Unless Wrot'idauth is slain, the tomb's magical defenses will not let the players or the rest of the caravan leave.
- Her body was once locked in a tower, which she has since turned into her lair. The tower can be reached through the doors in the eastern wall.

Vigilant-Warden asks the players to help it by destroying Wrot'idauth, which will allow them to go free and make the world safer. If they demand that the guardian free them, it will say it has no power to do so. If they agree to help, both doors behind it slide open at its command.

If anyone asks why the two doors are different colors or why both lead to the same place, Vigilant-Warden does not know, but says it is appreciative that the doors gave it something to look at.

B6: Bridge Across the Abyss

A platform connects to a narrow stone bridge that stretches across a black empty void of space, surrounded by huge floating rocks and more swirling yellow mists. These mists are the only form of illumination, providing dim light.

Read the following:

A sturdy platform extends from the wall behind you, which you now realize was carved into a massive cliff. The walkway abruptly drops off into empty space, a fathomless noiseless black void stretching far above and below. Boulders float aimlessly by, and the only lights are the yellow glow of gaseous clouds and the pinpricks of distant stars.

A narrow bridge juts straight out from the platform, reaching across the void and connecting to another landing that hovers motionlessly in space. A colossal towering tree rises from it, dark twisting branches faintly illuminated by the shimmering mists. The canopy extends higher than any oak you have ever seen. Far more daunting are its twisted roots, some of which sink out of sight into the endless night below even as others reach across the abyss, burrowing into the side of the cliff.

The bridge is 90 feet long, 5 feet across, and 5 feet thick. It counts as difficult terrain. After a player moves ten feet or more across the bridge, everyone needs to roll initiative.

A character who wishes to cross at their full speed must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On failure, they trip and are knocked prone. If they fail by more than 5, they fall off the bridge. Characters can use any relevant teleportation spells or abilities to attempt to cross the bridge, but cannot travel to another plane (as with the Blink spell) or teleport more than 30 feet into the air. If a player falls, they can try teleporting back to safety.


Every round, a boulder flies into one of the people crossing the bridge, striking on Initiative 20, +7 to hit, 13 (3d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage). The target must succeed a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If they fail by more than 5,

they are knocked off the bridge.

Anyone who falls off the bridge will drift slowly out into the void at a speed of 15 feet per round. They can use their action to cast a spell, throw a rope to their companions, or try to get back to the bridge some other way. After two rounds, if a player has not managed to stop drifting away, they exit the thirty-foot area of breathable air, passing into a freezing extraplanar expanse of endless astral darkness. A character without flying can survive for one round in this void before they drift helplessly away and die.

On the far side of the bridge is another stone platform. The vague outline of a stone tower can be seen through the bark of the tree that has overgrown it. The front door remains uncovered.

B7: Shade's Lair

The floating platform has a small landing where characters can recoup after their crossing. The tower that stood here once held **Queen [Wrot'idauth](#)** prisoner. When she regained her magical abilities, she grew this huge black tree, which has since enveloped the entire tower. The stone archway to enter is still visible, and granite blocks poke through gaps in the gnarled dark trunk. 

When players walk through the arch, read the following:

Within, the tree is hollow, a reminder that this was once a stone tower. But now bark, roots, and branches grow along its entire length, crisscrossing and covering everything. A fetid stench of decay and tree sap fills your lungs. On the floor opposite you is a massive marble sarcophagus, its lid broken. A gaunt humanoid woman floats beside it, toes hovering a few

inches above the ground. Inky hair frames her grim translucent face. A crooning voice speaks in your head, sending a shiver running through you. "You are not Anahksi. Who are you?"

Queen Wrot'idauth communicates telepathically, as her language has been lost to time. She is vain and vicious, and will attack at the slightest provocation, but these new people offer a potential opportunity, and she is curious to learn if she can use them. The Antimagic Field has prevented her from crossing the bridge and defeating Vigilant-Warden, and so long as it lives, she cannot leave here.

She admits to wielding powerful magic and having warred against the Anahksi, but insists that the Anahksi massacred her people and unjustly imprisoned her. She tries to convince players to help her defeat Vigilant-Warden, saying that if it is destroyed, both she and the characters will finally be free. This is half-true. While the Anahksi did eventually conquer the Naodh-Meer, Queen Wrot'idauth had initially attempted to conquer them, which prompted the war and led to her confinement.

If she convinces the players to attack Vigilant-Warden, she will join them. If the characters fight her, she will not surrender and abandons all attempts to communicate.

Anyone trying to fly or climb up the tree's interior can ascend 80 feet before branches block their way.

Resolution:

Killing either Wrot'idauth or Vigilant-Warden will free the players. In either case, when they kill their opponent, whatever structure the players are in will begin shaking, there will be a flash of bright warm light, and then they will find that the structure has been magically transported outside the pocket

dimension and right next to the original building where they sought shelter, just as the dawn peaks over the hills. The rain has stopped, leaving behind the scent of wet grass in the crisp morning air.

Other rooms and elements from the dungeon dot the landscape.

If Queen Wrot'idauth is slain, Vigilant-Warden looks fondly at the players and offers a final word of thanks before crumbling into rubble, having fulfilled its purpose.

If Vigilant-Warden is killed, Wrot'idauth revels in her freedom, vowing to avenge herself upon the world. Now returned to her full power, she causes five massive black trees to sprout out of the earth, then teleports away.

Kassios and any other surviving members of the caravan greet the adventurers, grateful for their return, and very ready to leave this place and continue their journey.

Bugbear

December 21, 2022



Medium humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (hide armor, shield)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Skills

Stealth +6, Survival +2

Senses

darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages

Common, Goblin

Challenge

1 (200 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bugbear hits with it (included in the attack).

Surprise Attack. If the bugbear surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

Morningstar. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Javelin. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage in melee or 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage at range.

Antlers of the North Winds

December 21, 2022



Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This headband has 3 charges. While wearing it, you can expend 1 charge as an action to fly at a speed of 30 feet for 1 hour. You must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of each hour of flight or gain one level of exhaustion. The headband regains 1d4-1 expended charges daily at dawn.

Crafted by Santa himself, with the help of his elves, as a gift for Tommy, a young boy with cerebral palsy that limited his mobility. Tommy had always dreamed of flying like Santa's reindeer.

Santa and his elves worked tirelessly to create the perfect pair of antlers that would grant Tommy the ability to fly, imbuing them with powerful magic. On Christmas Eve, Santa delivered the antlers to Tommy, who was overjoyed to finally be able to fly like his hero.

Tommy used the antlers every day, flying around his neighborhood and bringing joy to all the children he met. As word of Tommy's magical antlers spread, Santa began to receive requests from other children with disabilities for their own pair of antlers.

And so, Santa and his elves continued to craft the antlers, granting the gift of flight to countless children with disabilities.

Their parents also appreciated the gift, because although the children would sometimes use them to get into trouble, flying wore their energetic children out, making bedtime easier.

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Ranger

December 21, 2022



[Ranger](#) (3rd Level)

Medium humanoid (reindeer), lawful good

Cisgender Man (He/Him)

Armor Class 16 (studded leather armor, shield)

Hit Points 28 (3d10+6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 16 (+3)

DEX 12 (+1)

CON 14 (+2)

INT 10 (+0)

WIS 16 (+3)

CHA 10 (+0)

Skills: Animal Handling +5, Nature +2, Perception +5, Survival +5

Senses: passive Perception 15

Languages: Common, Sylvan

Challenge: 1/2 (100 XP)

Spellcasting. Rudolph is a 3rd-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Rudolph has the following ranger spells prepared:

1st level (3 slots): [Jump](#), [Longstrider](#), [Speak with Animals](#)

Natural Explorer (Tundra). Rudolph has advantage on Initiative checks and Wisdom (Survival) checks made in tundra terrain. Additionally, difficult terrain in tundra doesn't slow his group's travel.

Favored Enemy (Humanoids). Rudolph has advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks to track humanoids, as well as on Intelligence checks to recall information about them.

Natural Antlers. Rudolph can make an unarmed strike with his antlers, dealing 1d4+3 piercing damage.

Reindeer's Nose. Rudolph's nose shines brightly in the dark, shedding bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet. He can light or extinguish it at will using a bonus action.

Actions

Multiattack. Rudolph makes two attacks with his longbow or his natural antlers.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 1d8+1 piercing damage.

Antlers. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 1d4+3 piercing damage.

Reindeer Stampede (1/day). Rudolph can use an action to summon a stampede of [reindeer](#) that rush forward in a straight line, dealing 3d6 bludgeoning damage to all creatures in a 30-foot-wide, 60-foot-long line. Creatures in the area must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Personality

Rudolph is a jovial and friendly individual, always eager to help those in need. He is fiercely protective of the tundra and its inhabitants, and will go to great lengths to defend them from threats. Despite his outgoing demeanor, Rudolph can be quite solitary at times, preferring to spend his time in the wilds rather than in crowded cities.

Background

*Rudolph the Red-Nosed Ranger
Had a bright red glowing nose
Though some would underrate him
He could track through blowing snow

Rudolph knew he looked different*

*But his friends, they didn't care
So they set out together:
Elven bard and rogue bugbear*

*Through the darkest haunted crypt,
Dungeon, or cursed glade,
Rudolph set the world alight
Shining hope into the night*

*Rudolph and all his party
Grew their legend, champions three
Each using their unique gifts
Every quest was victory!*

Rudolph grew up in a Santa's village at the North Pole, where he learned the ways of the [ranger](#) from his mentor, Cornelius. He has always had a strong connection to the land, and can often be found wandering the frozen wastes in search of adventure. Rudolph's red nose, which glows brightly in the dark, has proven to be a useful tool in his travels, often illuminating paths that would otherwise be hidden from view. Despite his love for the tundra, Rudolph sometimes longs for a more settled life, and often finds himself torn between his duty to protect the land and his desire for a family and home of his own.

Peppermint Tiger

December 21, 2022



Large monstrosity, chaotic good

Armor Class

14 (natural armor)

Hit Points

39 (6d10 + 6)

Speed

40 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Skills

Perception +4, Stealth +4

Senses

darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages

—

Challenge

2 (450 XP)

Peppermint Scent. The peppermint tiger exudes a strong peppermint scent, which can be detected within 30 feet. Any creature that enters this range must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or become charmed while within range. The charmed

target can repeat the saving throw if the tiger deals any damage to it. A creature that succeeds on the saving throw is immune to the tiger's Peppermint Scent for 24 hours.

Pounce. If the tiger moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, the target must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the tiger can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Snow Camouflage. The peppermint tiger has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide in snowy terrain.

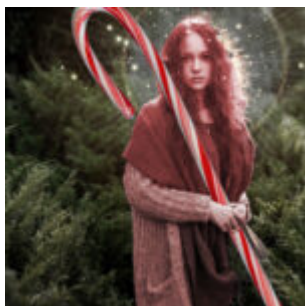
Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Holly

December 21, 2022



[Druid](#)

Medium Humanoid ([Elf](#)), Neutral Good
Cisgender woman (she/her)

Armor Class

12 (16 with [barkskin](#))

Hit Points

27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed

30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)

Skills

Medicine +6, Nature +5, Perception +6

Senses

passive Perception 16

Languages

Common, Druidic, Elvish

Challenge

2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. Holly is a 4th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following [druid](#) spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): [Druidcraft](#), [Produce Flame](#), [Shillelagh](#)

1st level (4 slots): [Create Or Destroy Water](#), [Thunderwave](#)

2nd level (3 slots): [Barkskin](#), [Flaming Sphere](#), [Hold Person](#),
[Moonbeam](#), [Pass without Trace](#), [Spike Growth](#),

Blindness [IE 4]. Holly's vision is impaired to the point that it is absent completely, and she has learned to navigate the

world with no reliance on her eyes, depending on other senses instead. She has a -4 on sight-related attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws including ranged combat beyond 10 ft. but a +4 bonus when using other senses to compensate, not because they've become stronger, but because she's learned to use them more effectively. In addition:

She does not have disadvantage to hit invisible creatures.

She is proficient in the use of a stylus for reading and writing.

Fey Ancestry. She has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Wild Shape. Holly can use her action to magically assume the shape of a beast that she has seen before (max CR 1/2, no flying speed). She can use this feature twice. She regains expended uses when she finishes a short or long rest. She prefers [wolf](#), [elk](#), or [reef shark](#).

Actions

Candy Cane Quarterstaff. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit (+6 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage with shillelagh or if wielded with two hands.

This staff also reduces the IE of the Wisdom (Perception) check penalty by 1 to detect objects within 5 ft.

This staff has 1 charge. On a successful hit, she can expend 1 charge as a bonus action to cause an additional 3D6 cold damage. The staff regains its expended charge daily after a long rest.

Background

Holly was born with a rare condition that left her unable to

see. She has always been a curious and adventurous spirit, and has spent her life exploring the arctic world and learning its secrets. She enjoys spending time in Santa's workshop, but all the tools reverberating off the walls can be disorienting to her, so she prefers getting outside and can comfortably navigate the tundra on her own.

Holly loves the smell of the pine trees, the brisk wind, and the majestic sound of ice cracking, but she's also learned to recognize the sounds of the threats that roam the landscape as well and has often saved Santa's village with advance warnings of approaching threats.

During the Christmas season, Holly is particularly attuned to the magic of the season, and uses her powers to spread joy and cheer to those around her. She is a valued member of her community, and is respected and admired for her wisdom and strength.

Reef Shark

December 21, 2022



Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 0 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +2

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages --

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Pack Tactics. The shark has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the shark's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Water Breathing. The shark can breathe only underwater.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Description

Smaller than giant sharks and hunter sharks, reef sharks inhabit shallow waters and coral reefs, gathering in small packs to hunt. A full-grown specimen measures 6 to 10 feet long.