

Campaign/Game: Return to the Keep on the Borderlands: D&D 5e **Date:** August 26th, 2021
Episode 4: The Hidden Temple
Campaign Date: Hallow 30th - 31st, 931 (Fall)

Characters

Azakai Brightwood, Half-Elf Warlock - 2 (Ryan)

Daspot, Dwarf Rogue - 2 (Colin)

Kieran Raelthorne, Human Bard - 2 (Dennis)

Micah, Gnome Ranger - 2 (Tyler)

Lucy Greycastle, Human Rogue - 2 (Tyra)

Rhogar, Dwarf Fighter - 2 (Peter)

Brother Martin, Human Sage - 1 (NPC)

Third, Human Warrior - 3 (NPC)

DM: Andrew

Log:

After a week of downtime, the Lucky Ones prepare for another adventure to the Caves of Chaos. Lucy finds another healing potion prepared this week, the handiwork of Mira her alter ego. During the downtime, Lucy spent some more time with Ferdinand Ronnik. While the keep is much too small for petty crimes because there is nowhere to fence stolen goods, it doesn't mean there isn't some skullduggery to get into. He hired Lucy to "send a message" to Caput Lum, a layabout farmer who has stopped paying taxes and left his wife and children.



Lucy broke into Caput's hut and knocked him out and tied him up. As he woke up, Lucy was above him, deftly sharpening her dagger with her face covered. She threatened him with a torturous death if he doesn't return to his family and start paying taxes to the keep once more. Caput is more than happy to comply.

Meanwhile, Kieran found himself in a strange sleeping arrangement after a bender. He awakened half-naked in a strange bed with vague memories of a crazy night of debauchery. Next to him, one of the Lum family peasant girls stirred. He vaguely remembers being in a ceremony of some sort. A marriage ceremony. "Who was the lucky bride and groom?" Kieran thought. Soon, the memories started flooding back. In a night of passion, the bard had committed matrimony! Kieran carefully dressed and crept silently past the Lum family to the door of the hut.

Earlier that week, Kieran had requested and been granted an audience with Lord Drysdale. There, Kieran negotiated a partnership of sorts and warned Drysdale about the threats against him. Kieran kept his eyes open for any strange events. For example, he was mildly surprised that Joclyn the tanner has decided to pack up and leave the keep unexpectedly just this week, despite the fact that he heard that she was making tentative plans to wed Quince the tailor

Daspot's dragon Bacon escaped again. This time the little red monster was caught stealing! Dubricus D'Amberville the scribe nabbed him trying to make off with an enchanted dagger. If Daspot hadn't been near, the wizard might have destroyed Bacon for experimental rare dragon parts. D'Amberville offered a deal for the dragon, but Daspot didn't take it despite being a little bit tempted.

Last night, Tomas the creepy adventurer rented a private room in the guild hall. Of course, Micah did a little eavesdropping. Soon, the bailiff Kendon Longstrider arrived to share a meal prepared by the gnomes Greeves and served by Peta. At first, there was an argument. Tomas expected to meet with the new castilian, but some sort of threat on Lord Drysdale's life changed things. After a row, the meal arrived. Tomas half-heartedly asked if a magical order could build a school nearby, but his pitch was dry and uninspired.



That very next morning, Jadale announced that Tomas and Kendon Longstrider, were both found dead in their beds after a night - poisoned by something they ingested. One of Drysdale's lieutenants has taken over the investigation of this killing, and has managed to accuse Tarlach the fisherman despite the fact that the meal was not a fish dish.

Lucy mentions to the other members of the Lucky Ones that Lord Ronnik the tax collector secretly tends a half-dozen plants on his roof named the Tears of Midnight. These plants only bloom after the sun sets, and its flowers can be made into a very powerful poison. Midnight Tears as the poison is called is odorless, colorless, and deadly if ingested. Micah confirms the deadliness and that victims suffer no effects until the middle of the night.

Azakai had more visions, and he pieced together what they mean. The last day of the tenth month is...tomorrow. As the sun goes down tonight the gears of the cosmos will turn. A lunar eclipse will occur in Kyor and a similar event in the Shadowfell - the Aurora of Hope - will paralyze many with a great radiant flash. That event will blind the Raven Queen temporarily and allow the halflings in Azakai's premonition to turn the weapon they possess against its maker. The Lucky Ones have until tonight's eclipse to retrieve the broken blade of Azakai's magic weapon or face an army of restless dead.

Rhogar reports about a fact he's found while keeping watch in alternating shifts with Sabine regularly this week. Just last evening, he identified Mendel the Merchant's caravan passing back to the North. The wagon appeared to be loaded down with equipment. Spears, shields, and a

barrel of ammunition. Interestingly, the merchant didn't stop at the keep. As dusk fell, he disappeared into the forest at the ambush point but never returned to the North road.

Over the past week, Micah had been scouting out the Caves of Chaos in hopes of finding the location of the bandits who had stolen the chest of fine blue china and flatware meant for the Tsar of Bizancio. The gnome had identified Worm leaving and returning to Cave J on two occasions. With that in mind, heroes head toward that particular cave in search of the Hidden Temple.



As the heroes approach, they overhear three bandits talking about some sort of ceremony that is scheduled to happen soon. The Lucky Ones charge in, isolating the bandits and making quick work of them. Lucy pushes into the next room and sees "The Worm" standing over what appears to be a noblewoman cowering from him. "Save me!" she cries and the other bandit curses audibly. As "The Worm" is engaged, Lucy quickly realizes that the noblewoman is instead a bandit captain herself and the battle is joined. The bandits are neutralized and the female bandit captain surrenders herself by tossing away her dagger.

The heroes begin to pull all the goods the bandits had stashed back to their cart. Meanwhile, undead skeletal guards appeared further up the hall along with sounds of an alarm. Daspot and Kieran moved items while Micah, Rorgar, Lucy, and Azakai dealt with the new threat. In the shuffle the female bandit produces a hidden dagger and stabs Third nearly to death. She escapes into the valley of the caves heading for cave K. Daspot witnesses her cutting her bonds and pulling out some sort of amulet as she enters.

As the heroes leave with the bandits' loot, they discover a cache of amulets of Nerull. All take one to wear. The Lucky Ones take a few hours to return to Restwell Keep with their gains, leaving Micah and Azakai to keep an eye on the next cave. The heroes reunite just as dusk falls. Overhead in the night sky, the moon begins to turn blood-red and darken as its light begins to darken. The eclipse has already begun! With their newly-acquired amulets of Nerull worn by everyone but Azakai, the Lucky Ones head into the mouth of Cave K - the site of the Hidden Temple.

A gauntlet of zombies at the entrance proves to be a frustrating challenge because they are so hard to destroy. The zombies include several of the bodies of the bandits the Lucky Ones handed over to Mendel the Merchant. They are backed up by more agile skeleton warriors who move south to engage Azakai and defend themselves against those who attack them. Both Third and Brother Martin are killed in the melee. Fortunately, the party is free to run right by the zombies once the skeletons are all smashed to bits by Rorgar's mighty hammer.

Kieran explores a side room and finds a library filled with books both valuable and sinister evil. A young girl with a severe haircut in a black shift calls out "Finally! It's about time you made it. Let's get out of here!" Arpad introduces herself as the kidnapped daughter of Asham the cooper. Kieran makes sure to see that the young woman escapes the Caves of Chaos, and puts her in charge of the wagon.

As the heroes turn the corner, they are confronted by a unit of halflings. Hesselwhite and company, a group of militant halfling crossbowmen open fire punishing the Lucky Ones as they proceed toward the source of the changing deeper within the complex. Rhorgar chases one halfling into a museum of some sort describing how the great god of death Nerull took a mortal bride, forced her to accept him and his rule, and then presided "happily ever after" as the king and queen of the underworld. Azakai mentions that this telling of the dead daeva Nerull's history is apocryphal and that this bride instead usurped Nerull to take his power and become the Raven Queen.

The halflings fight on, and Lucy falls unconscious. Bacon the dragon accidentally pours the potion of fire resistance into her rather than a healing potion. She stabilizes, and is a little annoyed at the little beast's antics.



After encountering a second ambush, the halfling bandits try to lock themselves in a side chamber. Happy to be free of these miscreants, the Lucky Ones move forward into the final chamber of the Hidden Temple of Nerull where they hear a dire ceremony going on. Two halflings preside over a bloody dark ritual where three human cultists mix fresh bloody organs with dirt in a wooden cistern for some evil reason. A host of undead skeletons and zombies stand watch led by a glistening, green undead ghoul.

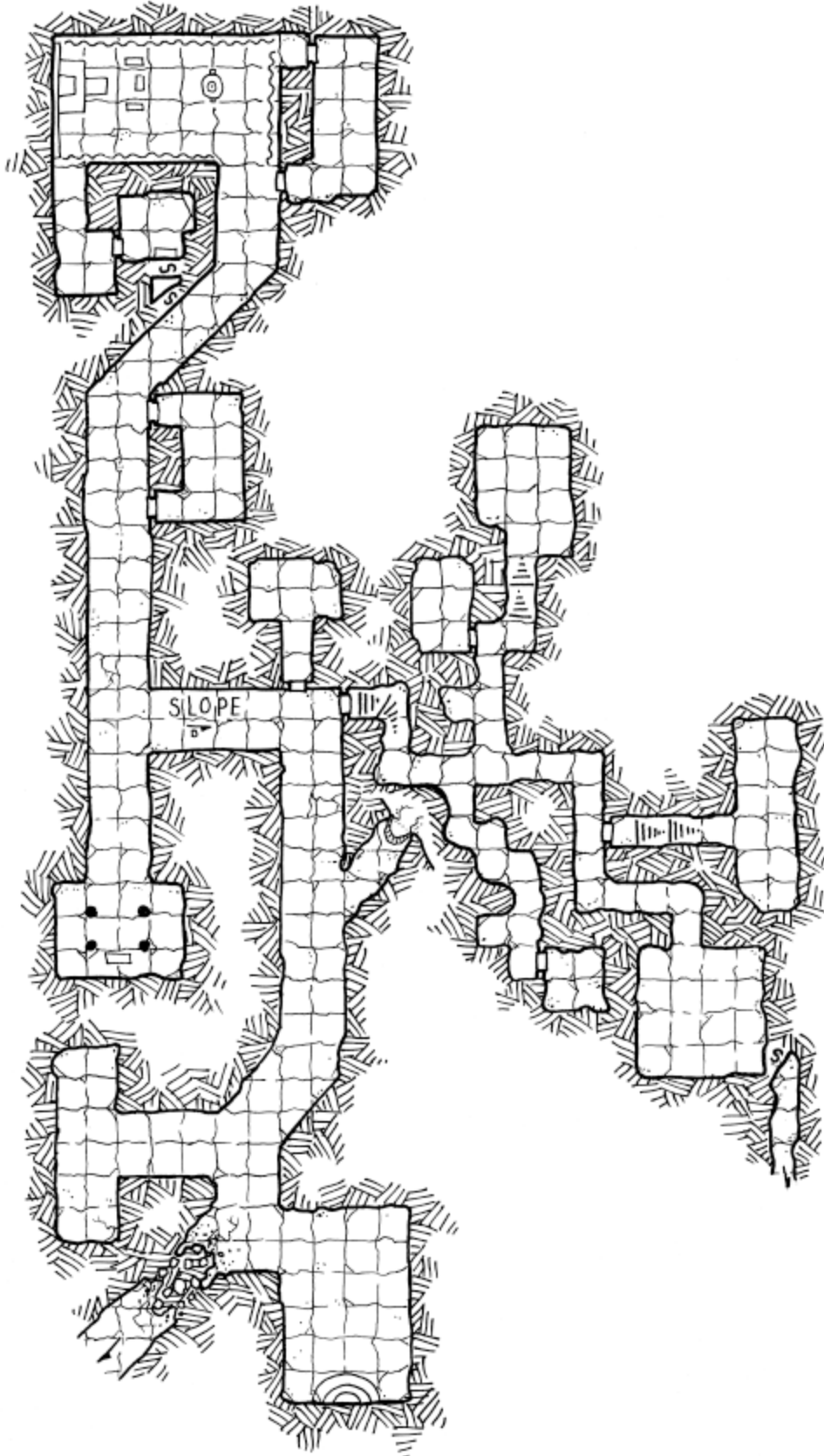
Kieran and Lucy sneak ahead. They find two live sacrifices chained in a side room. They recognize one as Cob the Hunter, while the other is some sort of pacifist from the North with severe Stockholm Syndrome. The heroes attack! Rorgar closes in and crushes the skeletons with his hammer and aiding Lucy, killing off the ghoul once it paralyzes her temporarily.

One of the halfling cultists turns, and lowers her hood. It is none other than Chendera, the former chaplain of Restwell Keep and fake Priestess of Avandra! Kieran blinds two of the three cultists before engaging Chendera in mortal combat. Daspot supports by firing arrows from hiding back the passage. Azakai enters the fray and trades magical attacks with the warlock cultists, killing one with his blade enchanted by the Raven Queen. The battle begins to turn. Lucy slits the throat of one of the blinded cultists. Micah and Kieran have locked Chendera up in close combat, and have the upper hand despite the swirling swarm of tiny demonic imps conjured by the priestess of Nerull. The battle ends abruptly when the second halfling cultist, the wizard Nabuzir is forced to stop the dark ritual and casts a fireball scorching all the undead, and killing most of the Lucky Ones along with the cultists and Chendera.

Only Daspot and Lucy survive the fireball, fleeing into the night from the halfling wizard. Lucy because of the potion Bacon offered her and Daspot simply for being in the right place at the right time. While losing Kieran, Micah, Rhogar, and Azakai was a shame, the attack managed to foil the cultists' plot to build an army of undead and turn the blade of the Raven Queen against her.

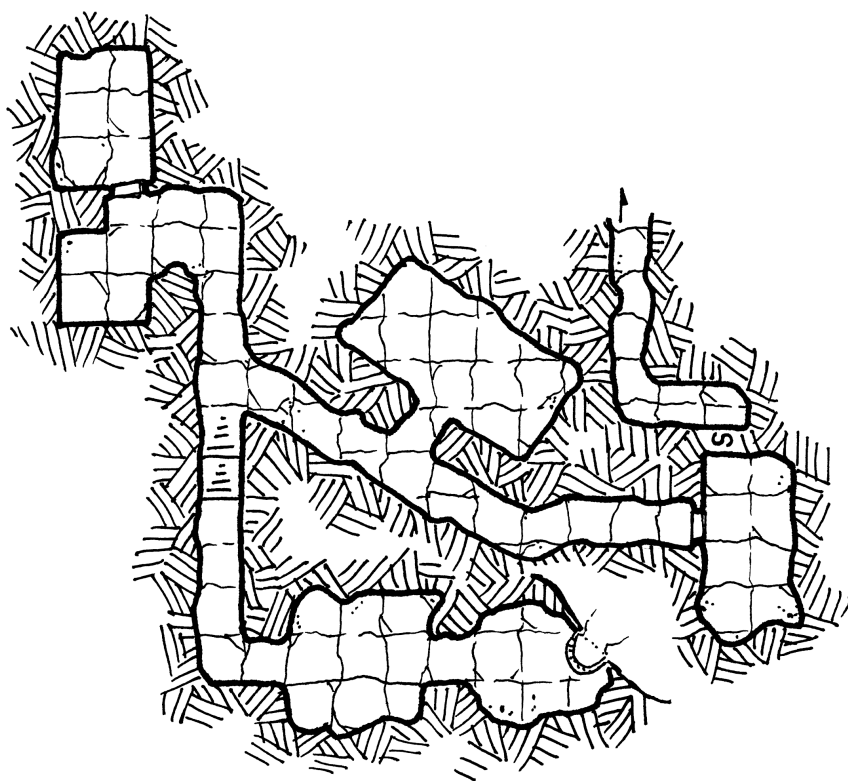


Shrine of Evil Chaos (Cave K)



DISASTER! WE FOUND A TOMB BURIED BENEATH
A HEAVY STONE DOOR THAT WE IDENTIFIED AS
CAVE K. WE MOVED THE STONE, SNUCK IN, AND
HEADED TO THE RIGHT AND DOWN A SLOPE. WE
ENCOUNTERED SEVERAL ROOMS OF SKELETAL
UNDEAD, BUT MANAGED TO GET TO A SHRINE OF
THE FALLEN DAEVA NETRULL. THERE, UNDEAD
COMPOSED OF DRY BONES ROSE FROM A STONE
SARCOPHAGUS AND ATTACKED, TEARING OUT
FIGHTER TO BITS AND SLAUGHTERING THE
CLERIC. THE FEW OF US THAT ESCAPED VOWED
NEVER TO RETURN AGAIN TO THE CAVES OF
CHAOS.

Gnoll Lair (Cave J)



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THE GNOLLS OF CAVE J ARE AGGRESSIVE AND
JINGOISTIC, SUPERIOR TO THE DEMONSPAWN.

WATCH OUT IF THEY START CHIRPING IN THEIR
DEMONIC DIALECT, THEY ARE CASTING SPELLS TO
BEWITCH YOU AND KILL YOU EASIER!