

THE BLESSED SCHOOL: DUNGEON MASTER GUIDE

THE SETTING YOU'RE PLAYING IN IS NEW Londinium: a soot-choked metropolis in a late-Victorian age of brass, steam, and spellwork. Here, magic isn't a parlor trick or a forgotten myth — it's the soul of the Industrial Revolution. Engineers etch sigils into boilers and gears, bind aether into dynamos, and build machines that move with impossible strength. In the foggy streets, clockwork patrolmen stalk between gas lamps to enforce the law.

Most people in New Londinium don't cast spells directly. Instead, guild mages and artificers bind magic into engines, lamps, wards, and transit systems, so everyday life runs on machine-magic.

Natural spellcasters do exist, but they are rare, closely watched, and often pushed toward respectable work for the state, industry, or noble houses.

The players are among those rare casters, and each has chosen a riskier path: adventuring. Their motivations should come from the players, not the setting.

Players will investigate, solve puzzles, and fight monsters to survive this opening chapter. It runs as a 2-3 hour one-shot, but it is written to lead naturally into a larger campaign.

All encounters are designed for a party of 4 characters and 2-3 hours of play. The party begins at level 1 and reaches level 2 before the final chamber.

PACING AND DIFFICULTY CHECKPOINTS

These checkpoints exist to preserve tension, not punish smart play. Use these checkpoints to keep tension high without accidental TPKs:

- *Checkpoint 1 (after Pantry Rats):* If 2 or more PCs are below half HP, offer a short rest prompt and place one extra Potion of Healing in pantry clutter.
- *Checkpoint 2 (after Bradley/Ooze):* If resources are thin, give a short rest in the Cultist Hub before branching passages.
- *Checkpoint 3 (before Sacrificial Chamber):* If the party is worn down, reduce the number of active cultists by 1.
- *Checkpoint 4 (Ishtar phase):* If two PCs drop to 0 HP quickly, run Ishtar with one attack per turn for 1 round, then return to normal.

PLAYER SETUP

Confirm all players are ready for the adventure:

- Have the Player Guide print available (or summarize the setting)
- Have their Character Sheets complete and available (level 1)

- Keep the Headmaster's Note handout ready — you'll give it to the party in the opening tavern scene

Note: When you give the party the Headmaster's Note in the tavern scene, mention that it's addressed to the Blacklamp Tavern, hastily written, and slightly damp from the rain.

Once the players are ready, run the opening tavern scene. Then transition to White Blossom Plaza.



STARTING SCENE: THE BLACKLAMP

BLACKLAMP TAVERN

It is dead of night in New Londinium. You are winding down at the Blacklamp Tavern off White Blossom Plaza: perhaps drinking the local ale, perhaps playing mage-chess, perhaps just listening to the fire crackle. Then a rain-soaked runner pushes through the crowd, eyes wild with panic.

He scans the room for hardened faces and spell-marked gear, then presses a wax-sealed note into your hands. The paper is damp from the rain, and the ink looks rushed.

"Please," he whispers. "The headmaster says two boys are missing. He begged me to find someone discreet — someone capable — before morning. Please. Come now."



For each player, ask them to introduce themselves to the group:

- What's their name?
- What drives them to take work like this? (money, fame, justice, new magic, something personal)
- What scares them the most?

Note: Give the players the Headmaster's Note (handout print) now.

Let the party decide how they travel to White Blossom Plaza. They can spend a few coins on a Coach Automaton for a quick five-minute ride, or walk through the rain in heavy coats for a longer half-hour trek. Encourage a brief in-character chat on the way to set tone and decide their approach before arriving at the school.

SCENE 1: WHITE BLOSSOM PLAZA

Cold fog clings to the street as you step back out into the rain. White Blossom Plaza opens before you: slick stone, shuttered shops, and gas lamps hissing in the mist. The Blessed School looms ahead — an ornate Victorian facade of worn red sandstone arches, imposing and severe.

Near the building's east wall, low iron grates leak steady warmth into the rain. The air there carries a sour metallic smell that cuts through the coal smoke and wet stone.

Down the street, a brass patrolman ticks past, lantern eyes sweeping the fog without interest. Somewhere in the gears, something clicks like a clock striking the wrong hour.

A light behind the school's front door flickers on. You hear a low growl behind it...

Note: If players investigate the east wall, a quick Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 10) confirms the metallic smell is strongest around the low grates and that the masonry there is warmer than the rain should allow. If players ask staff about it, Briggs or Kaine says it seems to be coming from the kitchen, but the servants have checked repeatedly and found no spoiled food.

The door opens, and a servant with a barking dog answers the door, coat still wet at the seams from the rain. He ushers the party in without ceremony, asking them to wait 'here' for the headmaster to come. The party finds themselves in the Entrance Hallway.



GROUNDSKEEPER BRIGGS

An old, visibly tired man, roughly dressed and even more roughly spoken. He grunts to say hello, never looking up to the players. It's raining hard outside, and he insists they remove their dripping coats in the Mudroom off the entrance hall before going any further. He tells them to stay put while he fetches the Headmaster, then shuffles off.

ENTRANCE HALL

The Entrance Hall is vast, with a polished marble floor and a gothic-arched ceiling. Suits of armor and formal portraits line the walls. A Mudroom sits to the left (west).

Doors sit on either side of the hall, with a large arched doorway at the very back (north). The air is stuffy and smells of old wood.



If players inspect their surroundings, they find the suits of armor belonged to past noble patrons, and the portraits depict former deans of the school.

Briggs insists the party first go hang their coats and clean their boots in the entry-adjacent Mudroom (west). He says Kaine won't allow strangers further into the school with muddy tracks on the marble. If players try to leave without visiting the Mudroom, Briggs's command crackles down the hall in an eerie electronic voice from beyond the walls — part spellwork, part machinery — ordering them to follow instructions.

MUDROOM

This room features several open coat closets, each filled with hanging coats. Above each closet is a number indicating the grade. There is a closet nearest the door marked with "Visitors".

As players hang their coats, they spot something out of place: a crumpled note wedged at the very bottom of a closet, half-hidden beneath the boot tray. Any player who checks the visitors' cubby finds it without a roll.

The note reads: *I saw Alvin sneaking to the kitchen again... let's catch him there tonight and give him a good fright!*

Players can search the other closets for small items. Have them roll a D4 for each search, up to one time per player, before the headmaster calls them out of the Mudroom.

CLOSET SEARCH REWARDS

Roll Reward

- 1 20 Silver
- 2 A lover's note
- 3 Glass Marbles
- 4 A brass button stamped with the school's crest

Players will eventually be called out of the Mudroom by Headmaster Kaine if they linger too long.

ENTRANCE HALL (AGAIN)

HEADMASTER KAINE

Headmaster Kaine is a tall, white-haired, white-bearded man, with heavy wrinkles on his face and visible stress in his voice. He is dressed with a wet heavy jacket and scarf: it is clear he has just returned from the outside.

Headmaster Kaine welcomes the players and thanks them for coming so quickly. He explains that two students went missing only a few hours ago — noticed immediately at curfew headcount. Their beds are untouched. He asserts he has a reputation to keep, and is desperate for help.

He explains the children are young: Alvin is 11, Bradley is 12. Bradley is known to pick on Alvin. Headmaster Kaine would not have expected them to run away, certainly not together. Kaine says he sent for New Londinium's constables, but they dismissed it as a runaway and will not respond until morning. He needs

immediate and discreet help from capable adventurers to find these boys.

Headmaster Kaine explains the teachers have already checked the dormitories and classrooms: every other student is accounted for and asleep, but Professor Adelaide Merrow is also missing. He fears the situation will worsen before morning if it is not contained quickly. He asks the players not to disturb the west wing unless there's a clear lead — waking students will cause panic and rumors, damage the school's reputation, and risk families pulling their tuition. At this point, he does not suspect Merrow is the source of the problem; he believes she may be another victim.

The headmaster explains that staff are spread thin across the size of the campus and cannot cover every corridor at once. He asks the party to start first in the dining hall and kitchens: the children were last seen at dinner, and there have been worsening reports of an acrid, putrid smell from the lower halls with no clear source. It is still the most likely place to find evidence of what happened next.

If players ask Briggs or Kaine what has changed recently at the school, either of them can explain: a new World History teacher — Professor Adelaide Merrow — recently returned from an expedition to the Far Orient. Porters hauled in several heavy crates of old books for her this week, she has been ill for days, and her room was found empty tonight. If asked about the sour metallic smell, they say it seems to come from the kitchen, but the food stores were checked repeatedly and nothing is spoiled. The source of smell cannot be found.

Kaine and Groundskeeper Briggs lead the party into the dining hall. Briggs hands the party a ring of keys for the kitchen.

At the west door, leading to the dormitories and classrooms, Kaine turns a heavy key in the lock — a light clunk that gently echoes through the room — and pockets it. "If you force your way in there, you'll wake half the school," he says. "Start here, then the kitchens. Follow any lead you find. Briggs and I will return as soon as we've checked the west wing."

Note: This isn't a trap or a setup by the staff. Kaine is genuinely trying to keep sleeping students undisturbed and prevent panic. The dining hall and kitchen are the best leads because it's where the boys were last seen and where the acrid, putrid smell was reported.

DINING HALL



The room is remarkable at first glance: an intricate dining area with three rows of tables, benches, a vaulted ceiling, and tall colorful stained-glass windows. The tables are perfectly clean, with morning tableware already set for breakfast. If players ask, provide details of any items: they are all luxurious and expensive.

Players can look around and see a locked door west, leading to the dormitories and classrooms. There is another door east, smaller, and appears to lead to the kitchen.

There are silver cloches on the table at each seat. Given enough time, randomly select a player that hears whispers coming from one of the silver cloches. If any cloche is lifted, have the player roll a D8. They will see one of the following horrors for a moment, but no other player sees it and it disappears as quickly as it appears. Deal 1 damage.

On each reveal, the observer also glimpses one bloody letter on the cloche's underside in this fixed order: **I, S, T, H, A, R**. Each letter fades after a few seconds and is only seen by that observer.

The effects represent a psychic echo of what lies below the kitchen. Individual players cannot repeat the experience.

COVERED SILVER CLOCHE HORROR

Roll Horror

- 1 A live scarab beetle jumps at the player's face, then vanishes in a wet click.
- 2 A glass jar of floating eyes turns to stare at the player, then blinks out.
- 3 An abyss of total darkness opens under the cloche for a heartbeat, then seals shut.
- 4 A severed hand jolts awake and claws at the air before collapsing into nothing.
- 5 A vial of blood shatters and crawls toward the player like a worm, then evaporates.
- 6 A severed head full of worms hisses once in the player's ear, then disappears.
- 7 Three dead crows flap violently around the player, then drop and vanish.
- 8 A knot of snakes lunges at the player and dissolves into black mist mid-strike.

KITCHEN



The kitchen is an industrial kitchen from the turn of the century. Though clean and put away, players can feel warmth emanating from the coal stoves. Copper pots and pans are hanging up above. The same sour metallic smell from outside is unmistakable here, stronger than before.

Note: Call this out clearly so players re-associate the plaza clue with the kitchen area.

The players feel a faint draft brush past their ankles. The room is windowless. There is a door leading toward the pantry.

If players inspect the prep tables or staff lockers, a quick Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC 10) finds several kitchen aprons and name tags abandoned in haste, plus a work slate in Merrow's hand assigning late-night "special prep" shifts to kitchen staff. The player's do not know Merrow's hand-writing, but it can be known to not be the same as the Headmaster's hand-writing.

Have the players roll a Perception check. The player with the highest result (if there is a tie, pick a single player at random) hears a faint cry — a boy's voice — coming from the pantry. No other player hears it.

Remind players that they can do a short rest to roll Hit Dice to heal again.

PANTRY



The door to the pantry is locked, but the keys Briggs gave the party open it. The pantry is a large room, with racks of cans and jars on shelves from floor to ceiling. The room remains unlit. Everyone now hears the faint cry of a boy somewhere deeper within.

If searched, have players roll a D20. The two players with the highest rolls each find one **Potion of Healing** (2d4 + 2 HP). All other players find jars of fruits and vegetables that do not help them immediately.

As the players move further into the room, rats jump onto their backs! Have players roll initiative, and fight an equal number of rats as there are players:

PANTRY RAT

Small beast, filthy

- **Armor Class** 10
- **Hit Points** 4
- **Speed** 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	11 (0)	9 (-1)	2 (-4)	10 (0)	4 (-3)

- **Condition Immunities** None
- **Languages** N/A
- **Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage.

The last rat is not killed, but instead runs off behind some shelves. Players can now clearly see a hidden door behind the racks, with a chewed-out corner where faint light spills through (and the sound of the crying boy). Players can do whatever it takes to move the racks and reach the door. Emphasize the door looks quite old, almost forgotten, but there is light coming from below. It is not locked.

SECRET TUNNEL



A chill wind blows against you as you open the hidden door. Beyond it, you see that the floor and ceiling are carved-out rock leading down at a steep slope. It is dark and cold, with a wall of acrid, putrid that suddenly hits the party. The rockwork feels older than the school itself, as if The Blessed School was built atop an older foundation...

The tunnel is only wide enough for players to move down it single-file. As the party descends, the acrid, putrid smell from the lower halls grows stronger and the boy's cries grow louder. Allow players to roll Religion or History (DC 12) checks, where they discover this rockwork appears from the early foundations of New Londinium.

At the end of the tunnel is an iron door. The door is sturdy and cannot be destroyed or pried open. A padlock with six wheels is keeping the door closed. Each wheel has letters of the alphabet etched on them, with the first wheel set to "I", but with the rest clearly not locked in. Broken pieces of a dark red wax seal are scattered on the ground. The seal was recently broken from the lock.



Players must use the hints they've seen so far to find the hidden six-letter name that unlocks the door: **ISHTAR**.

Note: The dining hall cloche visions now provide one bloody letter per reveal in a fixed sequence. Combine that sequence with other clues to reach **ISHTAR**. If needed, allow another hint here: on an Investigation check (DC 10), players find faint scratched letters on the iron near the lock — “ISH...” — enough to point them to the full name.

CULTIST HUB



You enter a grand chamber carved out of limestone. The room has a hexagonal layout, with each of the six walls decorated in ancient plaster murals that are long faded. The figures in each mural depict horrific scenes of torture, bodies bloated and disfigured. One mural shows a circle of figures raising a robed woman, with the phrase “*By young blood she is sustained*” scratched beneath it. Beside it is a date in Roman numerals: **XLIII** — the 43rd year AD, the founding year of New Londinium, a date any local would recognize.

The room is lit by a single oil lamp placed in the center, but it is bright enough to make the murals visible from afar.

Next to the lamp is a crying boy, kneeling with his back to you, curled into a ball. The boy’s clothing is torn; he is visibly pale and bleeding from one arm.

There are four doors: north, east, south, and west. The party entered from the west. This door remains shut unless Briggs opens it from the far side. The north door appears to be intricate, with some signage. The south and east doors are visibly ajar. If players pause to listen, they can hear chanting coming from the north.

The boy is Bradley. He was trying to scare Alvin in the middle of the night. If players approach or interact with the sobbing boy, he starts speaking: “St-st-stay away, don’t hurt me, stop hurting me, SHE did this, SHE put this in me.” If players try to speak to the boy, he keeps repeating, “It was just a joke. She made me eat it.” If players try to see the boy’s face or touch him, the following is to be read:



As you face or touch the boy, his head snaps up unnaturally and makes direct eye contact with you. “SHE MADE ME EAT IT!” His eyes glaze over and turn pitch black, as though liquid fills them from the inside. He jerks upright — rigid — and you hear bone crack. His left eye starts growing large. Too large. It rolls out like a sack being overfilled with water, swelling until it bursts and black, sappy liquid pours out. You hear the boy scream until his voice drowns in liquid as it continues to grow in volume. The boy is engulfed and transforms into a black ooze. It attacks the closest player first.



Have players roll initiative. The black ooze monster fights first.

SMALL BLACK OOZE

Medium ooze, amorphous

- **Armor Class** 8
- **Hit Points** 16
- **Speed** 10 ft., 10 ft. climb

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

- **Condition Immunities** None
- **Languages** N/A
- **Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 1d4 + 1 bludgeoning damage, and 1d4 acid damage. If the target is wearing nonmagical metal armor, its armor is partly corroded and takes a permanent –1 penalty to the AC it offers (this penalty applies only once).

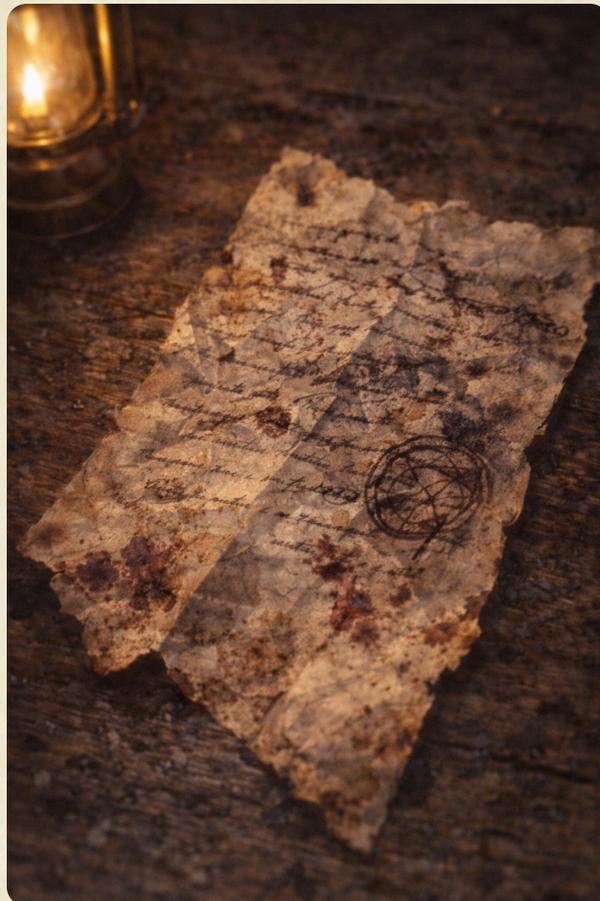
Once the monster is defeated, the black ooze breaks apart and sluices away across the stone. In the slick puddle, the boy is revealed, unconscious but breathing. A quick check shows he is stable and not in imminent danger. He is pale, with some cuts, breathing shallowly.

How the party handles Bradley:

- **Escort choice:** If the party tries to backtrack through the west door, it opens from outside and Groundskeeper Briggs appears with a lantern. He offers to carry Bradley to the infirmary, and offers to fetch help. He urges the party to continue exploring to find the remaining boy.
- **Carry with cost:** A character can carry Bradley, but that character’s speed is halved. While carrying him, the party has disadvantage on group Dexterity (Stealth) checks.
- **Secure-and-press-on:** The party can spend about a minute to barricade Bradley in the hub with blankets and the oil lamp. A successful Wisdom (Medicine) check (DC 10) keeps him stable while they continue. On a failure, he is still alive but remains in obvious distress.

- **Wake-for-clue:** If a character stabilizes Bradley with Medicine or restores any hit points to him, he wakes briefly and whispers, “Alvin is with the chanting woman... north door.”

If players search the chamber, they can find a torn scrap of parchment, sticky with dried blood, shoved under the oil lamp. It reads: “*The first vessel failed. The second must remain pure until the binding.*”



Note: If the party is struggling, treat this room as a safe place for a short rest (the chanting to the north continues, but the cultists don’t investigate).

SOUTHERN PASSAGE: PASSAGEWAY

This cramped passage stinks with the wet, pungent scent of mildew. Black mold grows in tangled veins across the walls and parts of the floor. Despite the smell, it looks like it might be safe to travel through. It appears to lead to a larger lit room.

SOUTHERN PASSAGE: COLUMBARIUM



Burning torches in iron sconces line the walls of this room, lighting it brilliantly. At the room's center lies a squat stone altar, its top covered in recently spilled blood. A channel in the altar funnels the blood down its side to the floor where it fills grooves that trace some kind of pattern or symbol around the altar. The walls are covered in nameplates of what appear to be past headmasters of this institute. One of the plaques is smashed, with an empty space behind it now visible.

In blood, on the floor, you can make out: "Blood is not enough. Five ichors to feed the seal."

If players investigate the smashed portrait, they realize there is a dark film covering whatever lies behind it: as though it's a portal covered in black. They cannot see past it. If players are brave, and attempt to put their hands inside, they can get **Bonecutter (one-handed sword, +2 to hit)** or **Cape of the Mountebank (ability to blink)** (have them roll a D2 to decide).

EASTERN PASSAGE: MAUSOLEUM



Players enter a hallway that turns in an L-shape to the right (southward). There are flickers of light coming from around the corner, but no noises, no smells.

At the corner is a simple floor-plate trap that shoots out a single dart at ankle height. Players can try to detect it (Perception, DC 12), dismantle it (Dexterity, DC 10), or jump past it (Athletics, DC 10). Otherwise, the trap deals 1d4 poison damage if triggered. The trap resets automatically, with machinery behind the wall audibly whirring and clicking for each shot.

There are two more identical traps down this hallway. They also reset automatically.

Note: At level 1, this can be very challenging. If your players are low on HP, consider making each dart trap deal a flat 1 damage. Also consider lowering the DC by -2 per attempt, to encourage repeated tries.

As the players round the corner and are past the three trap, read aloud:

This hallway has a series of tombs lined down its length. Against the back-most wall are three stone sarcophagi. Each has a carved visage of a beautiful woman. One sarcophagus lid is partially open.

Before the three sarcophagi is an altar. Several candles are burning. At the center of the altar's surface is a carving of a beautiful woman who seems more asleep than dead. As you approach, you see that this carving in stone is covered in blood. A channel leading from this carving funnels the blood down its side to the floor where it fills grooves that trace some kind of pattern or symbol around the altar.

In blood, on the floor, you can make out: "Bile rots. Blood wakes. Wine binds. Water remembers. Fire transforms."

If players inspect the open sarcophagus lid, they can see it was recently moved as cobwebs and dust have been brushed aside. Inside they will find items they can take: a scroll of **Vitriolic Sphere (AOE Damage Scroll Spell)**, and **Silver Chainmail (+1 AC)**. They can see an embossed name, but worn down enough to make it impossible to read. With a bit more effort (Investigation, DC 15) they will be able to read **ISHTAR**.

NORTHERN PASSAGE



A damp heavy limestone door blocks the northern passage. Embedded at chest height is a circular ritual seal: five shallow basins arranged evenly around a glowing central sigil. Each basin is carved with a worn icon, and thin channels connect the basins to the center.

The stone is stained with scorch marks and residue from repeated failed attempts. The air is cold. Faint chanting leaks through beyond the stone.

The five icons are worn, but readable:

- A black rotting skull
- A red droplet
- A golden-red chalice
- A blue wave
- A red flame

The engraved channels all converge at the central sigil, which pulses faintly like a heartbeat.

Note: This seal does not respond to words, geography, or brute force. It opens when the basins are fed with the correct five symbolic “ichors”.

THE FIVE ICHORS

- **Bile** (corruption/decay): rat bile, ooze residue, rotten food scrap, bitter liquor
- **Blood** (life/mortality): a small drop of blood (1 HP, optional), existing blood, animal blood
- **Wine** (communion/will): wine from the dining hall, ale or spirits, vinegar
- **Water** (purification/memory): water from a waterskin, condensation, tears
- **Fire** (transformation): a lit candle set in the basin, a coal ember, a lantern flame briefly touching the groove

Feedback: Each basin reacts independently. A correct ichor causes the basin to warm or glow and its channel to light toward the center. An incorrect substance curdles or evaporates. The central sigil brightens as the party progressively fulfills each of the Ichors correctly.

Completion: When all five Ichors are correctly solve, the central sigil glows and the slab moves slowly aside, exhaling cold air from the tunnel. The players are not detected by the chanting group further down the tunnel.

Optional failure: If the party repeatedly tries to force the seal using only blood, the door rumbles and cracks, splitting into two, allowing the players to move past through the rubble. Remove the party’s chance to sneak into the finale (the cultists are alert) and begin the next scene with a violent surge of miasma (-1 HP per player).

When the seal breaks, read aloud:

As the party continues down the hallway, they are met with an exhale of dead-cold air infused with stomach-wrenching miasma. The chanting becomes audible, and you can now hear it clearly: “She, who is forever dying, imbued with fresh blood of those crying, we call upon her to come back through this vessel we offer. COME! COME OUR LORD! ARISE ISHTAR!” The chant now repeats “Arise Ishtar” over and over again. You can see down the long hallway that there is no door to the next chamber — it opens directly into it.

Milestone: Once this door is opened — whether by correct completion or optional failure — all player characters level up to 2.



If the party opened the seal cleanly, they can approach this hallway undetected until they enter the next room. If they triggered the optional failure above, the cultists are already alert.

SACRIFICIAL CHAMBER



An unnatural red-purple shade fills this chamber. A cloud keeps all details hazy and corners of the room hidden. Near the room's center, you see a worn marble altar with the same features seen in the other two altars: carved funnels, filled with blood, of unknown shapes and symbols.

A mummified corpse dressed in robes is lying at the center of this altar. Four hooded figures, in the same robes, are facing the corpse and chanting "Arise Ishtar." They are adults, and as they turn you recognize them: kitchen staff from above, still wearing butcher aprons and scullery sleeves beneath their ritual robes. Their faces are pale and unfocused, as if sleepwalking. One stands a half-step forward from the others. Even through the haze, you catch glints of jade bangles and lacquered beads at her wrists and throat — jewelry from the Far Orient. The others glance to her between verses, following her pace like puppets. She ladles blood from a pool at the bottom of the altar, pouring it back onto the mummified corpse. The corpse appears to be absorbing the blood, as its skin becomes more lifelike by the passing second when blood flows over it.

Off in a corner is what appears to be a boy. He is slumped on the ground, bound, breathing shallowly, and barely conscious.

Players can try a sneak attack against any number of the cultists, as they are focused on ladling Ishtar back to life. They can even sneak past to get to the boy, but will catch the cultists' attention if they interact with him.

Note: The lead cultist with Far Orient jewelry is Professor Adelaide Merrow. She uses the same stats as the other cultists. The other cultists are kitchen staff enthralled by her influence, not willing zealots. Merrow recruited them first because they had ready access to knives, blood, and the school's rooms.

If players use nonlethal attacks against the kitchen-staff cultists, those staff collapse unconscious and survive. If Merrow falls, surviving enthralled staff break from the trance and attempt to flee in fear.

Difficulty: Run 4 cultists here by default (including Merrow). For hard mode, run 5 cultists.

CULTIST

Medium humanoid, cultist

- **Armor Class** 12
- **Hit Points** 6
- **Speed** 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	12 (+1)	10 (0)	10 (0)	11 (0)	10 (0)

- **Condition Immunities** None
- **Languages** N/A
- **Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6) slashing damage.

When the final cultist is brought to the brink, the leader — the one with Far Orient jewelry — turns her scimitar onto her own throat, smiling with eyes wide open, and cuts it in one clean stroke. She collapses over the mummy, spilling her blood across it. If the leader is already dead, the last remaining cultist does the same. The air remains still for a second, until a sudden shrill scream is heard.

Ishtar arises!



She has absorbed enough blood to reconstitute enough of her body. She is disfigured; holes in her chest reveal hanging organs, her jawbone clearly visible, patches of hair mixed with raw, bleeding flesh. She speaks: "Do not *dare* challenge me, children of Abraham. You are mortals, and I am forever! I was reborn today, and I will be reborn every day at this school with their delicious pupils. I've finally come back to the ultimate fountain of youth!"

As she says this, players can see her arms somehow growing longer, her fingers extending out and sharpening to points, her smile growing unnaturally as rows and rows of sharp teeth are revealed.

ISHTAR (WITCH)

Medium humanoid, witch

- **Armor Class** 10
- **Hit Points** 22
- **Speed** 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (0)	12 (+1)	10 (0)	10 (0)	11 (0)	10 (0)

- **Condition Immunities** None
- **Languages** N/A
- **Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Multi-attack. Ishtar is quick, and can make two attacks per turn: one with her bite and one with her claws. She may not attack the same player twice in the same turn.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage. **Claws.** Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4) slashing damage.

When Ishtar is first reduced to 0 hit points, she does not die immediately. In her death throes, she staggers toward the boy and grabs him, holding him up. The boy is still unconscious, pale, and sickly. She screams, “Back away, children of Abraham, or I’ll slit this child’s throat!”

Have each player make a heroic attack: ask what they do to finish the monster. Have each player roll a D20 and resolve the finishing sequence from lowest roll to highest. If the action is reasonable, it succeeds. Those final blows together are what destroy the creature.



As the witch dies, you hear Headmaster Kaine and Groundskeeper Briggs stumble into the room, both with a look of shock and horror. You hear Kaine utter, with utter disgust in his voice, “No, this can’t be — she did it, didn’t she? Adelaide!” He vomits. Briggs runs to the boy, quickly checking and covering him with blankets.

CONCLUSION



THE BLESSED SCHOOL

“Cultists? In this century?” says Headmaster Kaine. “They’ve been wiped off the face of the earth during the last Queen’s Inquisition on the Continent. Surely there were none of them left... but I’m wrong, you’ve proven that this kind of magic lingers on forever, doesn’t it? Damn them all. These catacombs were sealed generations ago — used once for symbolic rites, never blood. Someone reopened them without my knowledge.”

Kaine admits what he now knows: Professor Adelaide Merrow, the new World History teacher who recently returned from the Far Orient, led the summoning. She arrived with crates of old texts and relics, asked probing questions about the school’s oldest foundations, fell ill, and vanished from her quarters tonight. She started with the kitchen staff first — easy to isolate, close to the lower halls, and trusted to move through the school at odd hours — then bent them to her rites. She led a summoning, perhaps seeking new powers, or fell prey to the lies of a lich-queen from long ago in the Far Orient...

Alvin and Bradley, the boys you rescued, are now resting at the school’s infirmary. Letters have been sent to fetch their families, and Kaine recognizes his school’s legacy may end with this terrible event, even with this positive outcome.

You all did well, removing one more evil from this world. For it, you have Alvin and Bradley’s thanks, as well as 50 gold to split amongst yourselves, and a growing reputation in New Londinium!