she spends most of her time in the mortal world, restoring the ruins of Old Sharandar and trying to keep her angry warriors in check. Her second in command, an arcane archer (Monster Vault) named Ollirien Mistcrow, happens to be one of those angry warriors. He holds authority when Winterwhite is absent, setting the stage for potentially significant problems.

Living Abatis
New Sharandar’s defensive wall is constructed of overlapping stems and branches shaped and sharpened to puncture and impale intruders. Unlike new barriers in the mortal world, this abatis is composed of still-living foliage, with its roots plunging deep into feywild soil.

POINTED MESSAGE
To climb the wall requires only a DC 11 Athletics check, but entering each square causes 5 damage. To climb the wall requires only a DC 11 Athletics check, but entering each square causes 5 damage. To climb the wall requires only a DC 11 Athletics check, but entering each square causes 5 damage.

Inner Fort
Even though most of New Sharandar is designed to defend against outside attack, the fort at the outpost’s heart has the opposite purpose. Built as a ring around a large courtyard, its inner walls feature heavily reinforced gates, an abundance of arrow slits, cauldrons of caustic plant venom, and similar fortifications. Built to guard against the portal to Toril, this fortress is home to New Sharandar’s military offices. Scores of fey soldiers occupy the stronghold at all hours, ready to act at a moment’s notice. Only a single gate—an oaken structure bound in mithral—provides access to the inner courtyard.

Courtyard Portal
Within the courtyard, the only growth taller than a blade of grass is a single mighty oak. This tree appears identical to the one that marks the Toril side of the portal (see “I Holie in the World,” page 177) and functions in the same way. Old Elven runes mar the tree, a testament to the attempts of the dark fey to reanimate and control the portal before the eladrin took it from them.

Temple of Leaves
The outpost has room for only a single temple. Even though the occupants naturally welcome to pay homage to whomsoever they’d like (within reason), priests and services are devoted to Coellorn. The shrine within the Temple of Leaves is a living hedge, carefully shaped to support the weight of holy texts and icons. The priests frequently con- vene, praying for the success and safety of the fey who seek to reclaim the ruins of Illefarn.

Even though New Sharandar is a military community, priests in the Temple of Leaves are accepted as leaders and hold nearly as much authority over the populace as their human official, any officers who report to Iliyanbruen. The highest-ranking member of this clergy is Emrae Firesky, a priest of Coellorn and a fervent supporter of Ollirien Mistcrowon’s faction that seeks vengeance against the entire Neverwinter region. Her calls for violence are making life difficult for Winterwhite—and, though Emrae is ignorant of this fact, providing a smoke-screen for the actions of her traitorous assistant, Addemios Three-Dawn (page 126).

Hidden Shrine
In a secret cellar beneath the attached dormitory where the priests dwell, magical crimson light illuminates a deep niche. Within it stands a shrine at which Addemios Three-Dawn and his fellow conspirators pray to their dark god. When Addemios manifests in the feywild, he does so as a clever trickster, the lord of lies and deceit, rather than as a dark tyrant. Unlike other trickster deities whose lies are designed simply to spread disorder or fulfill some sense of divine humor, Asmodeus lies in order to advance his worshipers’ positions and ploys to attain more power. His false- hoods are the whispers that set sister against brother, the accusations that turn political rivals into open enemies, and the temptations that entice the finest of people to succumb to corruption “just this once.”

Three-Dawn seeks to inflame eladrin aggression against the Neverwinter region, both to distract from the activities of the Ashmadai and the duergar and as a means of expanding Asmo- desus’s power over this area of the Feywild.

Dread Ring
In Neverwinter Wood’s densest region, where shadow-ows weigh on travelers like wet wool, something malign lurks. The thick forest ends abruptly; its border abutting a circular field of ash. Animals give wide berth to the site, and the surrounding forest land is blanketed in a chilling, breathless silence. Heavy, stale air—redolent with the tang of disease—resists any breeze, stubbornly squatting over the clearing.

A few hundred feet in from the perimeter, black stones rise from cracked, lifeless soil. Walls, pillars, spindly towers, and gaping gates form an uneven circle of nefarious import. This structure, a combi- nation of ritual focus and functional fortress, is one of Thay’s Dread Rings. Seاس ت، the lich regent of Thay, created the rings for use in a fell ritual in his quest to attain godhood. His efforts were thwarted, however, and this ring is now the center of Valyndra Shadowmantle’s regional efforts. Despite its stones having been broken, its walls hanging open, and its initial purpose going unfulfilled, the structure still holds more power than any sane person would want Thay to possess.

Adventurers who approach the ring do so without their mounts, since typical beasts step into the circle

RAISING AN ARMY
Thayans collect corps of survivors, including Neverwinter’s graveyard, conflicts with Gray Wolf and Netherese enemies, and Illefarn’s burial grounds. It’s possible they also raid Ugthard rest sites. A character with connections to any of these factions might discover the body of a friend, rival, ancestor, or cultural hero that has been taken to become a soulless, shambling slave. Characters might end up in a race against time, struggling to retrieve bodies before they can be reanimated. Alternatively, it might be too late. Then a hero could feel com- pelled to destroy the undead mockery to allow the person’s body to return to its rest.

Characters might have other motivations, such as seeking a particular undead’s destruction as well. After all, not all undead are mindless, and a fallen champion could know an area’s defenses or other critical secrets that must be protected at all costs. The information could be more specific in nature, such as detailing the adventurers’ identities and abilities.

Although such creatures are exceedingly rare, the heroes might find a newly animated undead that still possesses some of its prior personality. They could attempt to convince the creature to fight against what it has become and reveal information it has about the Thayans. If the hero encounters an undead friend or loved one, consider applying a +2 penalty to his or her attack rolls and damage rolls against that creature (save ends), to represent an instinctive hesitation to stab or burn something with a beloved face. Once the character saves, he or she gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls against that target, representing rage over what’s been done.

LINGERING ESSENCE
In and around the Dread Ring, slabs of darkest magic lie—indeed, one of the dead dragon buried below and the ring’s essence.

Effect: Such areas take on the traits of both defiled ground and necrotic ground (Dungeon Master’s Guide 2). In addition, the power that has the arcane or the necrotic keyword scores a critical hit on a roll of 19-20. (A power that has both keywords scores a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.) Also, creatures near the ring take -1 penalty to saving throws against powers or effects that have the fear keyword.
of ash only if they are forced. Familiars, beast companions, and the like are apt to proceed, snarling or whispering, if their masters do.

Even within the unnatural oppression of Neverwinter Wood, the ring’s malignity stands out against the surrounding landscape’s. Characters who have training in Arcana automatically sense the magic in the broken walls of the Dread Ring (though they cannot tell its purpose). As their teeth chatter, their palms sweat, and their souls clench, even the most unobservant adventurers can tell this is a warped place.

**Boundless Carnage**

The Dread Ring’s fearful atmosphere isn’t the only sign that something is woefully amiss. The ring’s outer circle is cloaked in churned, blood-soaked soil and is littered with a smattering of broken weapons and body parts.

Prince Clariburnus’s Shadowv and their allies, primarily lycanthropic warriors from the Gray Wolf tribe, regularly attack the Dread Ring. Indeed, heroes might arrive during such an assault. To date, none of these attacks has so much as breached the ring’s outer defenses: The undead Thayan forces are too numerous. Nonetheless, the Netherese keep up the pressure, slowing Thayan efforts to a crawl and preventing Valindra from launching the extensive counterattacks she would prefer.

A DC 10 Nature check or Perception check is sufficient to determine that, given how churned up the battlefield is and the number of tracks and traces of combatants, there should be a lot more corpses around here. A result of 15 or higher on that check enables a character to surmise that the bodies were dragged inside the Dread Ring. Players might guess that Valindra’s minions are animating the dead (of both sides) to add to their workforce. It’s a pretty spot on guess.

**Flesh Factory**

Between the Dread Ring’s outer wall and its central tower lies a true chamber of horrors. Stone-and-steel slabs hold bodies and parts of bodies. Some are fresh, still bleeding and occasionally twitching; others are ancient, covered in grave soil, mummi- fied, or reduced to bone. More corpses, severed limbs, and disembodied heads hang on hooks around the room’s perimeter and are heaped in corners, awaiting use. Flasks and barrels contain blood, other bodily humors, and alchemical reagents used to render flesh soft and supple. Runes of necromantic magic adorn the walls, ceiling, and floor.

An array of iron sarcophagi and tall vats lines two walls. Takes a protrude through the stone coffins’ sides, ready to pump fluids through the body of any crea- ture placed within.

A portion of the Thayan’s undead force is animated elsewhere, through necromantic rituals, but the bulk of the raisings occurs here. This “factory” has been designed and enchanted to raise corpses far faster and in far greater numbers than spellwork alone. The laboratory’s staff includes undead creatures and spellcasters. One of Valindra’s lieutenants, a half-ore necromancer called Jawbone (use the half-ore death mage in Monster Manual 2), oversees their work. She has a misshapen jaw that hangs at an angle, slurring her speech. The teeth on the right side of her jaw have rotted away, and those on the left are rough and jagged.

**Writhing Walls**

The Dread Ring was crafted from dark stone. Large sections of it were damaged or destroyed when Szass Tam’s ritual was foiled, and little stone exists in the region to replace it. Even though the Thayans could quarry stone from the Crags and lug it through the forest, they have chosen an alternative method to patch up the worst gaps.

Growing portions of the ring’s interior walls are now composed of flesh and bone. Spellcasters anim- ated the walls, which have enough intelligence to retain simple programmed behavior. Now the undead walls are repairing and expanding themselves—the Thayans drag body parts within reach of the walls, and the walls do the rest.

**Halls of Madness**

Although it’s a fully functioning fortress, the Dread Ring was built primarily to use as an eldritch focus. Undead creatures—which have long since forgotten what it means to live—magically constructed it to channel arcane energy for a purpose beyond the ken of most mortals. Thus, elements of the ring’s architecture aren’t precisely what an objective observer would call sane.

Most hallways and chambers have odd angles and display disconcerting decorations but are otherwise normal. A significant minority make substantially less sense: Rooms have an uneven number of sides or walls that intersect at peculiar, sloping angles; corridors are abnormally cramped or excessively wide, make unnecessary turns, or lead to dead ends; and stairs are uneven and take travelers up and down multiple flights only to end on a ledge on which they began. Furthermore, some floors and walls have strange seams in them, as though made up of two pieces that were not properly fitted together. Strange light in vortices induces colors radiates through these gaps. Occasionally, alien scents and low sounds that resemble living beings’ moans accompany the light.

In a few spots, the architecture flat-out fails to follow the laws of physics. Doors open into rooms or passages located elsewhere in the ring; stairs go up but not down; and corridors are straight when traver- sed in one direction, but curved in the other.

**Great Excavation**

In the open center of the Dread Ring, scaffolds hang over the edge of a vast earthen pit. Scores of work- ers, living and undead, swarm across them. A dragon skull and several bones so large they beggar the imag- ination poke out from the soil far below.

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neither erases. Characters who attempt to use brute force to halt the excavation face dozens of undead, as well as Praddak, a battle wight (Dungeon Master’s Guide 2), whose job it is to oversee the excavation around the clock.

**WATCH YOUR STEP**

The excavation is an enormous project and requires equally huge tools. Convoluted scaffolding surrounds the site, buttressing stone and heaped earth, providing perches for workers, and supporting various crane-and-pulley systems. Its wood is rough, and splinters are plentiful. Its nails are loose and rusty, and the structure creaks and sways like a drunken hambone.

**Effect:** A creature on the edge of a platform (which might be anywhere from 5 to 20 feet across) or a narrow beam must make a DC 15 Acrobatics check each time he or she is hit in battle. If a creature fails the check, it falls prone. If it falls by 5 or more, the creature falls off or through the scaffolding to another level. (The depth of the pit is up to you.)

It requires a DC 11 Athletics check to climb the structure. Swinging on one of the framework’s many ropes allows a creature to move twice its normal speed but requires a DC 11 Athletics or Athletics check; any failure causes the creature to fall.

Characters who gain control over the pulley-and-crane system can make the following attacks as standard actions, if their enemies are in the proper positions. (Be sure to designate “danger zones” when setting up your battle grid.)

**Swinging Crane + Recharge 5 6**

**Attack:** Area burst 2 within 8 (creatures in the burst); the character's level + 3 vs. Reflex

**Hit:** The target is pushed up to 3 squares from the center of the burst and falls prone.

**Miss:** Half damage, and the target falls prone.

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**Valindra’s Sanctum**

Valindra Shadowmante occupies a suite in the Dread Ring, where she retreats to when she requires time for research, study, or plotting, or when she wants to avoid the lesser beings with whom she must keep company. The lich uses the suite’s largest room as a library and study. It contains a multitude of tomes on history, magic, and esoteric topics. (If you like the character to gain access to new rituals, or to introduce new wizard spells to your campaign, this is a good place to do it.) The library is immaculate and well preserved.

The same cannot be said for the suite’s other major room, Valindra’s bedchamber. The lich doesn’t need sleep, but she enjoys having a place to keep her wardrobe and other belongings. She spends time in this room meditating, preparing spells, and pondering plots without distraction. Covered in grave dirt, dust, mold, cobwebs, and insect carapaces, this chamber is beyond squalid. A musty stench emanates from it, and its ratty carpet sends up clouds of filth when anything crosses it. As an undead creature, Valindra has no aversion to dirt.

The same sanctum is one of the aforementioned areas that ignore the laws of nature and geometry. The suite exists in four areas of the ring at once, and only one room can be accessed at a time.

**Dread Spire**

The tallest surviving tower in the ravaged Dread Ring houses the Thayan forces’ war room, as well as an entrance to Valindra’s sanctum. It also includes a chamber cast in permanent shadow (even magic light sources provide only dim illumination) that serves as the Thayans’ portal to the Shadowfell. Through it, they acquire bodies from the Neverwinter graveyard and send and receive caravans from Surcross along the Shadowfell Road. Finally, the tower is home to the so-called Chapel of the Dragon, where Kroskas (page 127) and other Cult of the Dragon captives are forced to labor.

**ECHOES OF THE WYRM**

Lorraghath’s life essence and energy have leached into the environment like a poison, twisting and corrupting the land around his desecrated grave. Certain Dread Spire locations and the excavation site have become acid-based fonts of power (Dungeon Master’s Guide), acidic mire, and acid-based elemental spouts (The Plane Below).

In addition, some areas abruptly grow magically dark at seemingly random intervals. Such squares are heavily obscured.

**SCRY, SCRY AGAIN**

It would take weeks for even the most intelligent adventurers to figure out how to properly use the machine. However, you might choose to reward a bit of trial and error. If a character makes a successful DC 23 Arcana check, you could supply the party with a brief glimpse of Evernight, Gauntlgrym, Xin- lenal, or one of the other important and magically potent locations presented in this chapter. Characters won’t be able to acquire much in the way of details, but they might see enough to prepare for an impending threat.

**Theme Tie-In**

Valindra’s library can be a powerful enticement. If a renegade Red Wizard character gained access, he or she could study Thay leaders’ methods. Elves and dwarves might learn locations of lost outposts or uncover information that aids in the search for Gauntlgrym. An Oghma’s faithful character could sig- nificantly add to the temple’s archives. Furthermore, characters could unravel the fate of Neverwinter’s old ruling families, the specifics of Szass Tam’s scheme to attain godhood, the truth about Neverwinter’s destruction, or any other secret you care to share.

**Observatory**

An enormous contraption, larger than some houses, fills the ring’s uppermost chamber. This orery has hundreds of moving parts on dozens of metal trunks, limbs, and branches. The entire device rotates, with each part revolving around the parent structure at its own speed. Balls of various hues, crescents of iron, and lenses of meticulously cut and polished glass decorate the ends of the protrusions.

This is Valindra’s observatory, where she charts celestial movements above Toril, the Shadowfell, and the Feywild. When the stars and the mechanism’s limbs are in proper alignment, Valindra uses the device’s lenses to scry throughout the three worlds.

The observatory is never left unattended. Soldiers—living and undead—stand guard, and another of Valindra’s lieutenants always occupies the room. Lurrens, formerly a wizard, is now a preserved brain in a reinforced container (see “Brain in an Armored Jar,” Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead). He continuously observes the whir and turn of the heavens, manipulating the device telekinetically. Lurrens watches for the device to reveal secrets and portentous star alignments. Then he alerts Valindra to them.

During combat, any creature pushed or otherwise forced into the grinding, rotating machine falls prone, is restrained, and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).
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During combat, any creature pushed or otherwise forced into the grinding, rotating machine falls prone, is restrained, and takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends both).

**ECHOES OF THE WYRM**

Lorrugaith’s life essence and energy have leached into the environment like a poison, twisting and corrupting the land around his desecrated grave. Certain Dread Spire locations and the excavation site have become acid-based fonts of power (Dungeon Master’s Guide), acidic mire, and acid-based elemental spouts (The Plane Below).

In addition, some areas abruptly grow magically dark at seemingly random intervals. Such squares are heavily obscured.

**Valindra’s Sanctum**

Valindra Shadowmantle occupies a suite in the Dread Ring, where she retreats to when she requires time for research, study, or plotting, or when she wants to avoid the lesser beings with whom she must keep company. The lich uses the suite’s largest room as a library and study. It contains a multitude of tomes on history, magic, and esoteric topics. If you like the character to gain access to new rituals, or to introduce new wizard spells to your campaign, this is a good place to do it. The library is immaculate and well preserved.

The same cannot be said for the suite’s other major room, Valindra’s bedchamber. The lich doesn’t need sleep, but she enjoys having a place to keep her wardrobe and other belongings. She spends time in this room meditating, preparing spells, and pondering plots without distraction. Covered in grave dirt, dust, midlew, cobwebs, and insect carapaces, this chamber is beyond squalid. A musty stench emanates from it, and its ratty carpet sends up clouds of filth when anything crosses it. As an undead creature, Valindra has no aversion to dirt.

The same sanctum is one of the aforementioned areas that ignore the laws of nature and geometry. The suite exists in four areas of the ring at once, and only one room can be accessed at a time.

**SCRY, SCRY AGAIN**

It would take weeks for even the most intelligent adventurers to figure out how to properly use the machine. However, you might choose to reward a bit of trial and error. If a character makes a successful DC 23 Arcana check, you could supply the party with a brief glimpse of Evernight, Gauntlgrym, Xinlenal, or one of the other important and magically potent locations presented in this chapter. Characters won’t be able to acquire much in the way of details, but they might see enough to prepare for an impending threat.