



Murders in the Shallows

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Murders in the Shallows is a Dungeon Architect supplement. When your players decide to travel down a path you did not expect, or they finish the main adventure with time left to play, you can use one of these maps to provide a reprieve while you create something more substantial for them to explore so that the fun does not end too soon.

Please keep in mind that a Dungeon Architect supplement provides a theme and a location but only suggestions for the types of creatures and rewards that may exist. You, the game master, must change these to suit the strength of your players' characters and adapt them to whichever fantasy role-playing system you are playing.

MURDERS IN THE SHALLOWS

There have been three murders in the Shallows, a seedier, low-income portion of the port city, this last week. The Shallows are known for their narrow streets, dirty alleyways, and dark corners. The storefronts have apartments over them. The cobblestone streets have lamplights at every corner, but the lamplighters rarely light more than a fourth of the lanterns.

Even though theft, assault, and murder occur more frequently in that area, three murders in a week are even more than the governor can allow. The constable was told to investigate the murders, but he has accomplished little.

The governor hears that the characters are in the area. She may have worked with them in the past or heard of their exploits, but regardless of how she knows them, the governor wants the characters to research the murders on their own. She is concerned that the constable's personal views toward the Shallows might interfere with his duties.

The governor will arrange payment with the characters. She is going to pay for their investigation with her own money. She will instruct the characters to work quickly but to keep their investigation as quiet and inconspicuous as possible.

She will provide the characters with the following information:

The first murder occurred five days ago at a dwarven silversmith shop on the outer edge of the Shallows. The proprietor, a dwarf named Dugheram, was found stabbed to death in his shop by Harriet Gold, his upstairs neighbor. The constable questioned the neighbor and reviewed the shop. A few items were stolen, but other valuable objects were left. The constable believes it was a theft gone wrong.

The second murder happened three nights ago. A cleric, Father Kleinshelm, was visiting a family in the Shallows who had become ill. He often used his spells to aid the sick and infirm. After healing the elderly parents, he bid the family good night and started his long walk back to the Shalmar temple. His body was found a few blocks from the family's house. He was stabbed to death on the street.

The constable questioned people in the neighborhood. They said it was a foggy night. No one saw anything definitive, but a witness suggested a man attacked the cleric. The cleric's silver holy symbol and bag with coins were not stolen. The constable believes it was a mugging and that the muggers must have heard something that scared them off.

The last murder happened two nights ago outside a rowdy tavern called the Riverfront. There were no witnesses. The body was found in the alleyway behind the tavern. The human corpse had no money or valuables on it. Nobody recognized him or could provide his name. The constable knows this is a violent area and thinks the man was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

The governor wants the characters to work as quickly and quietly as possible.

Information for the Game Master

Murders in the Shallows is an adventure about a lycanthrope that lives in the catacombs beneath the ruin of an old church in a port city. The monster had been lairing there for many years, feeding on people from the streets above. It kept its murders infrequent enough not to draw attention from the soldiers that protect the city and used rats to spy on potential victims and watch those that might do it harm.

Two weeks ago, an adventurer arrived at the city and discovered the lycanthrope's presence. The adventurer spoke to the constable's lieutenant, who ignored him, and then took matters into his own hands by purchasing silver weapons and trying to kill it. This attack led to a series of murders that eventually spurred the governor to act. She hires the characters to investigate the matter. The following is a timeline of events occurring before the characters' arrival.

The characters might require silver or magical weapons and spells to defeat the monster.

Fourteen Days Ago

A human visits the tavern, mentioning he arrived from a distant town and is an adventurer looking for a quest.

He is walking the streets at night and sees the lycanthrope with giant rats in an alleyway.

He immediately goes to the constable's lieutenant and reports it. The lieutenant says he will bring the matter to the constable but does not.

Thirteen Days Ago

He talks with the silversmith about silver weapons. He puts a rush on them. He stays in the city but cannot attack the monster because he has nothing that can hurt it.

Five Days Ago

He picks up the silver weapons from the silversmith. He is ready to fight the lycanthrope.

He goes into the bar. He hears about the old church and gets directions.

He goes to the catacombs and attacks the lycanthrope. He is wounded, but so is the monster, and it escapes.

Later that night, the lycanthrope murders the silversmith for making the weapons. The monster believes he will make more.

Four Days Ago

The adventurer goes to the cleric. He is afraid that he has contracted lycanthropy. He is cured and healed.

The cleric goes to the constable's lieutenant to support the adventurer's claim. The lieutenant says the constable will learn of this but does not.

Three Days Ago

The cleric goes and heals a family in the Shallows. The lycanthrope murders him on his way back to the temple. The monster knows the cleric is aware of its presence and does not want the cleric to speak with anyone else.

Two Days Ago

The adventurer visits the tavern. Customers see the silver long sword. He learns about the cleric's murder and decides to approach the constable himself. The lieutenant kills him and leaves his body in the alleyway.

Governor

The governor is an elven woman named Ja-nalan. She is middle-aged, for an elf, and has been governor of the port city for several years. Her political acumen has enabled her to maintain a good reputation with the city's lord, and her desire to help the citizens has built a solid reputation with the citizenry. People like and trust her. It is this desire to help that has drawn her attention to the murders and has led her to hire the characters to investigate them.

Constable

The constable is a human fighter named Artimus with several skill levels, average intelligence, and exceptional strength. He oversees the local soldiery that protects the Shallows and other portions of the city.

He is a decent, honest man but oversees many disturbances. He has limited resources and receives pressure from the lord to handle certain affairs. He has been placing an unequal amount of soldiers in the wealthier neighborhoods as a string of robbers has caused panic there.

He has attempted to solve the murders in the Shallows, but there is not enough information or leads to make any arrests. His lieutenant has withheld most of the necessary information.

He and the governor are friends. If he discovers that the characters are looking around the crime scenes, he will appear outraged and threaten them with criminal charges but never act on them. He wants the murders solved.

If the characters can collect sufficient proof to prove a person guilty of a crime, they will become involved and make the arrest.

Constable's Lieutenant

The lieutenant is a half-elf fighter named Regalen who attained a few skill levels. He has above-average strength, average intelligence, and a chaotic nature. He is second in command to the constable.

He has been taking bribes from the lycanthrope and hiding information concerning happenings in the Shallows from everyone, including the constable.

Two nights ago, when the adventurer spoke with him a second time about the lycanthrope and threatened to go to the constable and governor, he murdered the adventurer and put his body outside the tavern. He could not chance to have his corruption revealed.

Silver Smith

When the characters want to explore the scene of the first murder, which took place at the Silver Smith shop, they will need to find a way to enter the building. The front door and the door in the side alley are locked. The first-floor windows are boarded up.

There is a second floor, but that is an apartment rented by an old gnomish woman named Harriet Gold.

The streets are busy during the day, so attempting to enter the business in daylight will be reported to the constable. Soldiers will arrive within thirty minutes.

There is no one on the streets at night. The street-level storefronts are all dark. The apartments above the stores have windows that overlook the street but not the alley. Most windows have shutters, but a few are open. The majority of them are illuminated from within.

The alley is about twenty-five feet long and narrow and contains several old wooden crates and barrels, some with scraps of food. Rats scurry around the debris.

The lock on the door in the side alley can be opened with skill or by force. The latter has a chance of attracting attention and the arrival of the soldiers within an hour.

The silversmith shop has three main rooms. There is a showroom at the front. A storeroom for merchandise and cleaning equipment is in the middle. There is a room at the back where Dugheram did his work on decorating, etching, and monogramming. There is an assortment of tools here. A search of the area will also reveal a scrap of parchment with dwarvish runes that the soldiers overlooked. The parchment says - long sword, dagger, seven days.

Dugheram was murdered in the back room. The table and chair are broken. The wood debris covers some bloodstains on the floor. The constable's men removed all the remaining inventory from the shop.

If the characters speak with Harriet Gold, the upstairs neighbor, she will share some information with them.

Dugheram was a kind dwarf who always looked after her.

He was struggling financially. Harriet overheard him talking with a man about a loan who visited the shop. She does not know the man and does not know anything about the loan.

She will confess that she did not share all her information with the soldiers as they were loud and curt during their interactions with her, and she was afraid some information might besmirch her friend's reputation. She will share the following information with the characters:

The night before the murder, Dugheram sold a pair of silver weapons, a dagger, and a long sword to a human customer. Harriet saw them when she stopped by unannounced with some food.

Dugheram was upset, but Harriet thought it was about the weapons. The silversmith was not allowed to sell weapons in the Shallows.

Harriet thought it very strange. Dugheram never made or sold weapons before. She felt it had something to do with his financial issues.

She will also mention that the soldiers should do something about the rats. She has been seeing so many around, and she worries about what diseases they may carry.

Harriet does not know anything about the man with the loan. She knows the man who bought the weapons was human and not from the city. She did not get a good look at him and cannot give a good description.

Temple of Shalmar

The temple is on the eastern side of the Shallows. An iron fence surrounds the building, and some of the only grass growing in the Shallows surrounding it. There are a few decorative statues outside the building, but these are atypical to the lackluster appearance of the building. The temple's doors are never locked.

The temple is the home to a dozen acolytes. These men and women of various races make it their mission to administer healing and food to the sick, needy, and dying. Most of them are not clerics yet. A few are clerics of low level. There are extra beds in the temple for anyone who needs one.

The acolytes will speak with the characters and give them any information they might need to solve the murder of Father Kleinshelm. They will tell the characters they shared all this information with the constable.

Father Kleinshelm was a cleric of Shalmar. He was kind and selfless. Parishioners have been lighting candles and praying for the cleric since it happened.

The magic that he employed could cure diseases, poisons, and even severe wounds.

The lord asked him to administer to those outside the Shallows, but he refused. He felt as though he was needed here.

The people of the community gave him a silver holy symbol as a gift. The constable said it was not stolen and would be returned to the temple when the murderer was arrested.

There was a human man who met with Father Kleinshelm on the morning of his murder. The man has deep scratches. They spoke in confidence, but the Father asked the acolyte to retrieve a ceremonial bowl and cloth for curing sickness. The acolyte does not know the man's name, but they might recognize him if they saw him.

The acolytes will be as helpful as they can. They are deeply saddened by the loss of Father Kleinshelm.

The Riverfront

This tavern has a large common area overfilled with tables and chairs. Smoke fills the air. The patrons are loud and boisterous. A few iron firepots stand about the area, containing fires to illuminate the place. A long bar caters to a row of stools.

The Riverfront is known to be a dangerous place. Drunken fights occur frequently. The clientele is seedy and suspicious. There are rumors that members of the thieves' guild frequent the tavern.

The bartender is a human named Jebbin. He is in his early thirties with blond hair. He has a friendly attitude with customers and will talk with the characters, providing they give him a few coins for his time. Jebbin will provide the following information. He will tell the characters that he mentioned it all to the soldiers.

The man found murdered in the alley was not from here. He came in a few weeks ago claiming to be an adventurer.

He came in a few times and bought drinks but had not stopped by for a while.

Then, five days ago, he came in and started talking to some regulars about the old church that burned down many years ago. He said something about there being an adventure right here in the Shallows.

He stayed for an hour and then left about dinner time. I went to dump the garbage around midnight, and I found him lying dead in the alley.

He had a fancy long sword with him when he was talking to everyone. It was not with the body. Maybe he was killed over it? It did look valuable.

If the characters inquire about the old church, the bartender will tell them its location. It burned down a few decades ago. There is not much there.

Any of the regulars at the tavern will provide the same information that Jebbin did, and they will ask for a few drinks before they give it. But, there is one other tidbit of information that is new. One of the regulars will mention it.

The human had some fresh scars on him. A few were deep scratches, but one was a bite mark from some animal. He told me some cleric tended to the wounds. When I told him Father Kleinshelm died the night before, he became worried. He left pretty much right after that. He said he was going to talk to the constable.

If asked, the regular will collaborate Jebbin's knowledge of the long sword, and he will add that it had a silver blade. He will say he saw the blade himself. It looked valuable.

Rats

If the characters are vigilant during the investigations, they have a chance of noticing rats in the area. The chance is higher if a ranger, monk, or thief is present or if a character possesses keen awareness or perception. The rats are spies for the lycanthrope. They will report what they see to the monster.

The characters may use the rats to lure the monster out, or they may track the rats back to the church to find the monster's lair.

The Assassination Attempt

If the characters talk with Harriet Gold, the acolyte, and the bartender, the lycanthrope will become concerned and want them dead, but it will not want to fight them itself. It will tell the lieutenant that it will make his corruption known unless the characters are killed. Or, if the characters approach the lieutenant with probing questions, he will become worried that this corruption might be revealed, and he will want the characters dead.

Either way, the lieutenant will try to poison the characters. He will invite them to a meal to discuss the events and serve them poisoned drinks.

There is a chance the characters might notice the taste or

smell of the poison before consuming enough to render them unconscious. This chance is affected by their perception and knowledge of poison (thieves and assassins should get a bonus). Rangers and monks (who are not surprised easily) might see something in the lieutenant's demeanor that gives them pause. If all else fails, the characters will get a saving throw vs. the poison.

The poison will only make them unconscious, but the lieutenant will kill them if they all succumb. If only one or two characters succumb, the lieutenant will pretend that his drink was also poisoned. If three characters succumb, the lieutenant will attempt to kill the remaining character.

If the characters survive and the lieutenant is captured or killed, they can start to unravel some of his involvement.

If captured, he will lie and say he was working with the thieves' guild and hiding information to avoid admitting his conspiracy with a monster.

If he is dead, the authorities will search his residence and find the silver long sword and silver dagger.

Any thief in the group can talk with the local guild thieves and learn that they never had any dealings with the lieutenant. The thief character will be fairly convinced by this information.

The Old Church

If the characters speak to the governor about the old church, she will tell them the following information.

It had been a ruin for almost a decade. I have tried to tear it down and build something for the community, but the high priests have not given their consent.

Father Kleinshelm was making strong overtures with the church to allow my plans to proceed. I believe he was making some progress.

The old church is in the Shallows on a piece of ground surrounded by streets and alleyways. A small piece of ground surrounding the building had grass and flowers but is now dead and barren.

The church has only three standing walls with arched windows, but the stained glass has long been broken. There was a second floor, but only the vague outline of it remains. The bell tower collapsed, and the bell lies buried in the rubble of stone and wood.

The governor has been trying for many years to tear down the building and build a small park or fountain, but the land does not belong to the city and cannot be modified until the high priests of the church grant their approval. As of now, they have not.

As the characters approach the ruined remains, they will notice rats scurrying around the exterior grounds and fleeing into the ruin.

There is not much in the old church to explore. Not a single room has all of its walls intact. Stone and wood debris cover the floor. But, if the characters spend time investigating the ruin, they will find a portion of the floor covered by debris that they can still access through an opening. The floor under the debris has a trap door.

The characters will notice immediately that the trap door is newer and not part of the original church. They will also realize that it opened recently. Any character with tracking ability will notice human footprints in heavy boots.

The trap door leads down underneath the church into the catacombs (room 1).

The Catacombs

The catacombs are fifteen feet below the church. They are cramped, dark corridors that lead to rooms where bodies are interred into the walls. The catacombs are also the lair of a lycanthrope, a bunch of giant rats, and a swarm of ordinary rats.

Characters will need a light source (or darkvision) to navigate the corridors. Upon arrival, the rats will immediately inform the lycanthrope of the characters' arrival.

Because of the corridors' narrow confines, a marching order should be determined as only one character may fight at a time in certain areas.

Room 1

The hole overlooks a 5-foot corridor fifteen feet underground. The stone walls are coarse and covered with mildew. The corridor is covered with leaves and dried mud. The air is musty and damp.

The corridor is the only entrance the characters will initially have to the catacombs. The characters will hear the distant squeaking and movement of rats to the west.

Room 2

The corridor ends in a chamber. Slabs with skeletal remains wrapped in cloth are carved into the walls. The remains appear to be centuries old.

The bodies were ancient clerics of the temple. Their remains have small items like rings, necklaces, and chains, but nothing valuable.

Room 3

Burial niches in the walls contain the remains of skeletal clerics. A stone staircase ascends in the southwest corner. The stairs lead to the church above, but wood and stone debris block it completely. Stone and wood cover a lot of the floor as well.

This room was the original entrance to the catacombs. The stairs are blocked. Several hours of hard labor can remove the debris. If the characters examine the rubble, they will notice several large holes leading to the surface, which allow rats to come and go.

If the characters examine the burial niches, they will discover a few of the bodies have chains, necklaces, and holy symbols, but nothing of value.

Room 4

The corridor opens into another burial chamber, this one with skeletal bodies wrapped in quilts of silk, exposing only their faces.

When the characters enter this room, **many giant rats** will attack them from the north. These giant rats are not afraid of fire and cannot be chased away. They will fight until slain.

There are nine bodies here that were the church's more prestigious clerics. If the characters want to examine the bodies, they must cut open the silk coverings. The bodies have an assortment of expensive items like holy symbols and rings. One or two of them have armor or a weapon, which could be enchanted.

Any character that cuts open the covering must make a saving throw vs. disease or contract an illness that stops natural healing for 2d4 weeks unless cured.

Room 5

A wide chamber, this room has nine burial niches carved into the walls, each one holding a body wrapped in cloth.

This room is the burial area for nine knights. The bodies are clad in metal armor and have weapons. Some of them were signet rings or necklaces. There are some items of value here, but these items might be familiar and could incur the wrath of family members who recognize them if they are sold.

Room 6

The corridor opens into a room with nine urns and vases sealed with wax. The containers sit on small shelves carved into the walls.

When the characters enter this room, a **swarm of rats** will attack them. The swarm is not afraid of fire and will continue to attack and chase the characters until killed.

The containers hold the ashes of cremated clerics. The vases and urns might be valuable.

Room 7

Through the bars of the portcullis, you see a wooden coffin resting on a small raised dais. The wood is rotten. Broken pieces of debris are strewn about the floor.

The portcullis is cemented into the stone. It cannot be opened or lifted. Only an exceptionally strong character can bend the bars to allow entrance.

The coffin contains the remains of a high-level cleric wrapped in ceremonial cloth. The bones appear gnawed on. The cloth is tattered. The body may have some treasure or items of interest.

Room 8

A wooden coffin sits on a raised dais within a narrow chamber blocked by a portcullis. The coffin is broken and rotted. Scraps of cloth, a few bones, and splintered wood lie about the floor.

The portcullis is cemented into the stone. It cannot be opened or lifted. Only an exceptionally strong character can bend the bars to allow entrance.

The coffin contains the remains of a devout parishioner. There is nothing of value on the body, but it is clear that rats have gnawed on the bones and defiled the corpse.

Room 9

You enter a burial chamber. The bodies have been removed from their burial niches, and their bones lie on the floor. A pile of gold and silver coins and a few objects lie in the room's northwest corner. Stone debris completely blocks a corridor that would have continued to the east.

This room is the lair of the **lycanthrope**. It may appear as a wounded human and try to dupe the characters or be transformed and ready to attack. If the monster becomes very wounded, it will try to parlay its money in exchange for its freedom or flee the catacombs and enter the city to hide in the alleyways.

The game master should determine the treasure in the room. Some could be items with rewards for their return.

The Ending

The characters may believe the lieutenant is responsible for the murders and never discover the lycanthrope. If this happens, the governor will pay their fee as she believes they are accurate. The lieutenant's actions will deeply sadden the constable, and he will thank the characters for discovering the corruption. In this case, the lycanthrope continues its killing until stopped by the constable or the characters summoned back to help.

It is also possible that the characters kill the lycanthrope but are duped by the lieutenant's poisoning. In this case, the governor rewards the characters, and the lieutenant escapes punishment. Since the lycanthrope was paying him, not the thieves' guild, his corruption will end with the monster's death.