



THE AETHER CHRONICLE

The Official Aether Studios Zine

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to our first issue!

When I first became a patron of Aether Studios a couple years ago, little did I know what my future would hold. What started as a novice appreciation for quality tiles turned into so much more. The latest culmination? This newsletter: the Aether Chronicle.

In each newsletter, I hope to provide you with tools, stories, and art from the Aether Studios team and community. We will be sharing finished prints from social media, walking through a step-by-step painting tutorial, give you updates on Aether Studios Kickstarters and upcoming projects, fill you in on the recent releases you might have missed, provide a 5e adventure using Aether Studios terrain and miniatures, and finally - in classic Aether Studios form - offer some free models to the community.

Thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy this first of many issues to come.

- Jon Laager, Editor

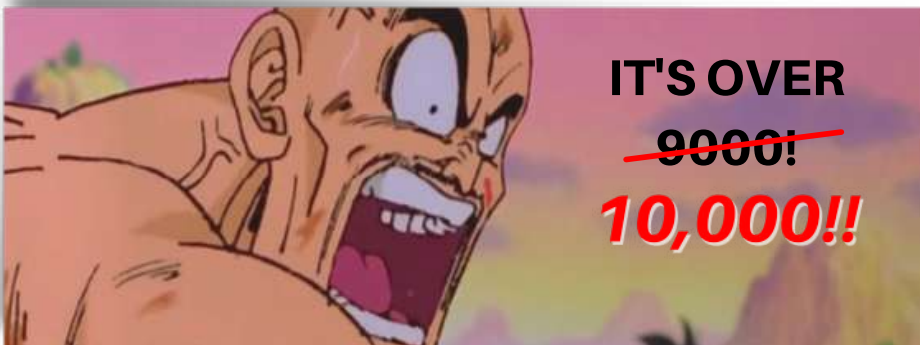
AETHER NEWS



Launched Our First FREE Kickstarter!

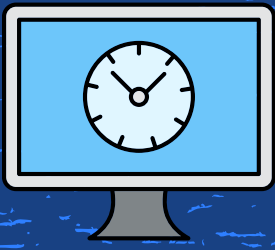
We launched our first entirely free Kickstarter this December: **Eggnog and Brains**. Honestly, we weren't completely sure what to expect. We knew that we wanted to cap off 2021 with a huge project to say thank you to all of our fans for making 2021 the best year yet for Aether Studios.

The majority of the funds went to Károly "Carl" Csúrgó as he and his wife are expecting a new addition to their family this spring! When we clicked the "Launch Kickstarter" button, we were hoping to end the campaign with \$5,000. When the campaign closed on December 23, we had almost **1,500 backers** and **over \$18,000** raised! Needless to say, our expectations were blown out of the water! We're currently working hard to get all these models published out to MiniHoarder, and we are already looking forward to planning next year's free Kickstarter! Truly, there could not have been a better way to cap of 2021.



Over 10,000 Models!

This year, Aether Studios has published over 10,000 models! We couldn't be prouder of this accomplishment, and we owe it to all the support you have given us! Without your support, none of this would be possible. We are beyond thankful for the opportunity to do what we love. Thank you all!

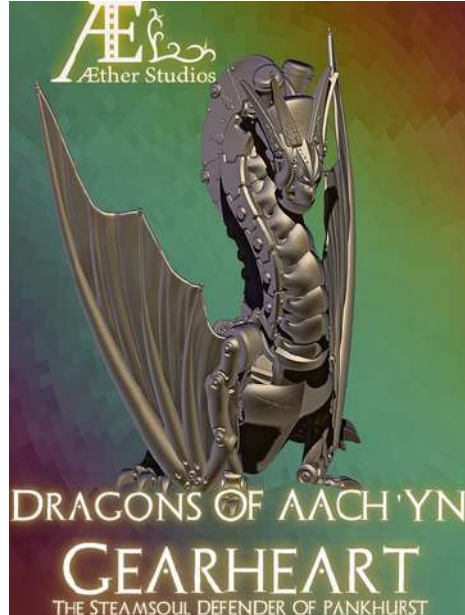
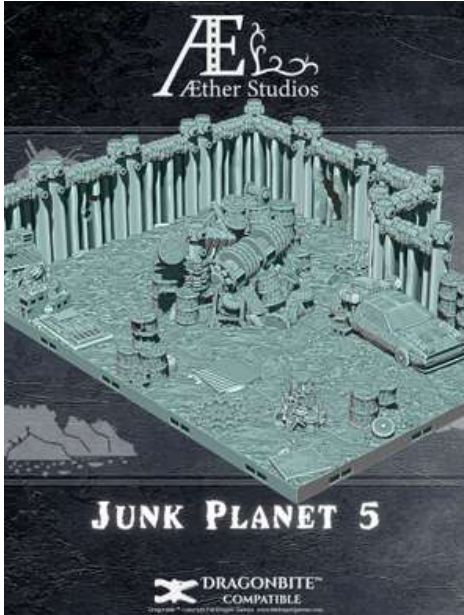


Recent Releases

Every issue of The Aether Chronicle will cover past Patreon releases from the last few months. Click the image to see the set images on MiniHoarder!

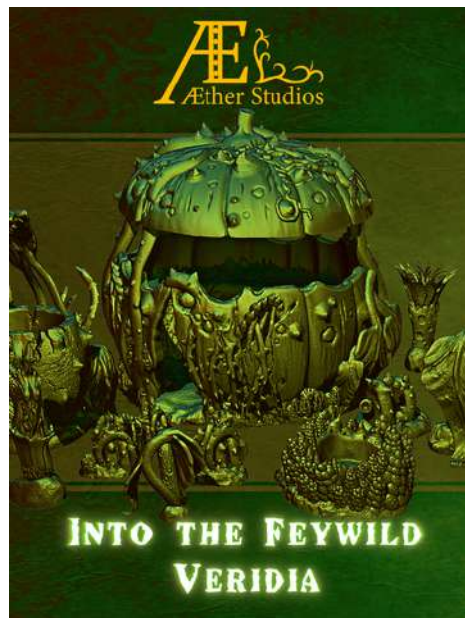
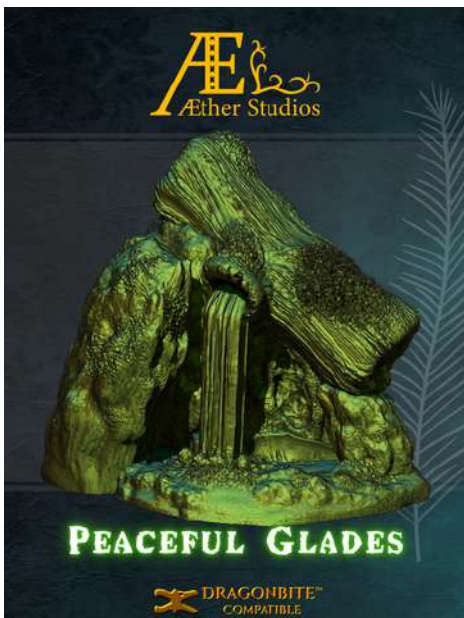
Free

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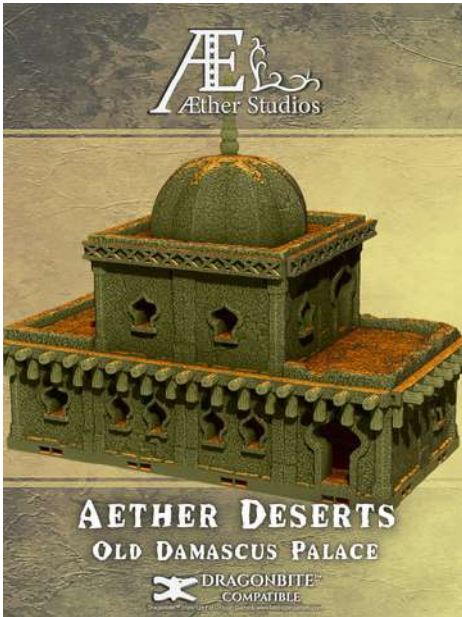


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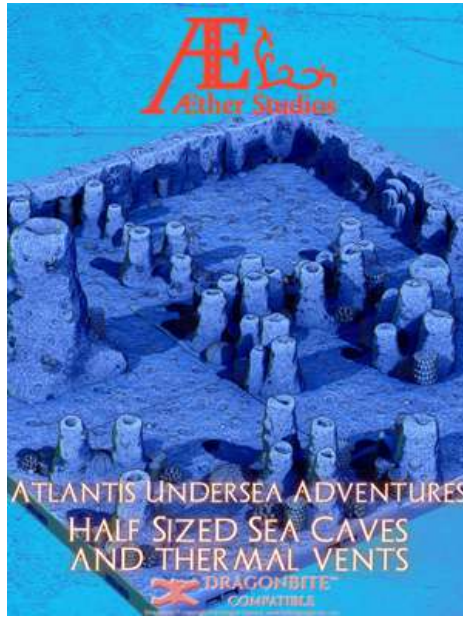
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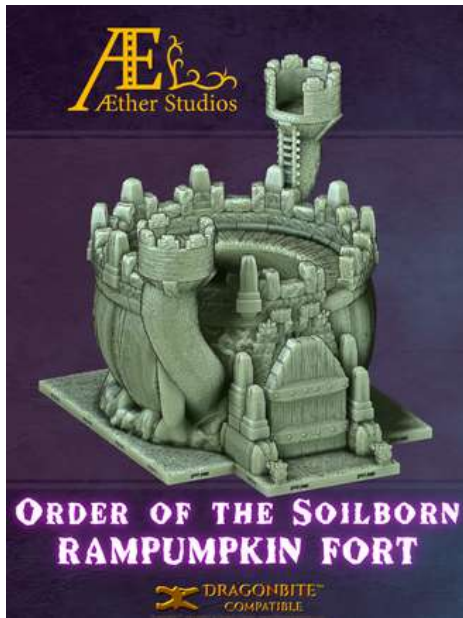


OCTOBER 2021

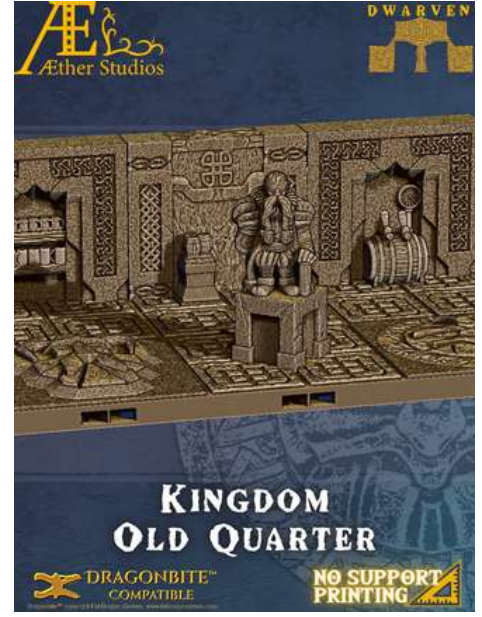
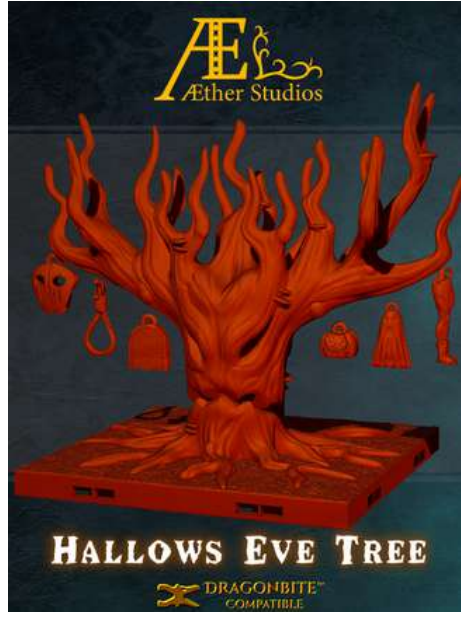
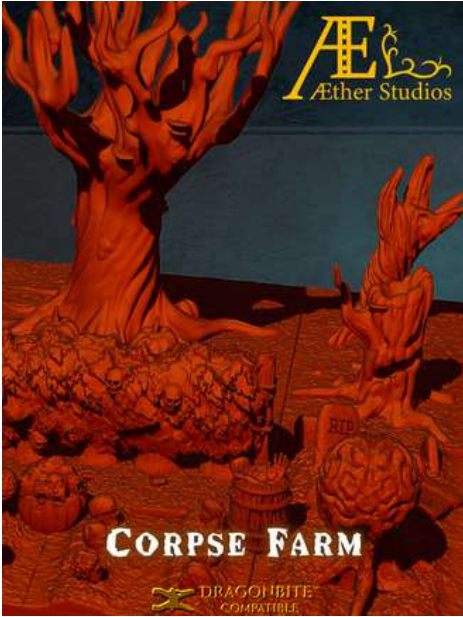
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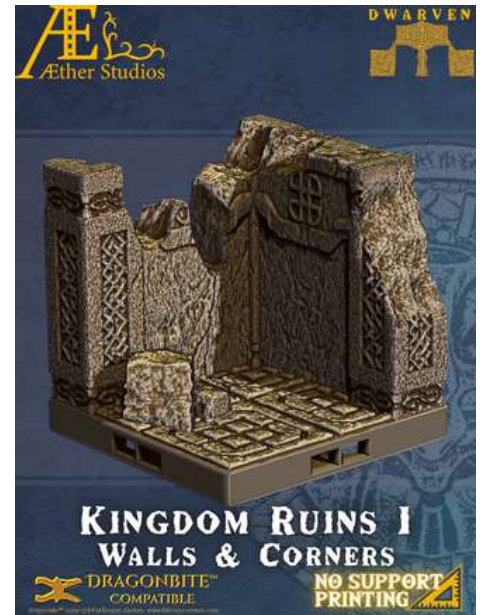
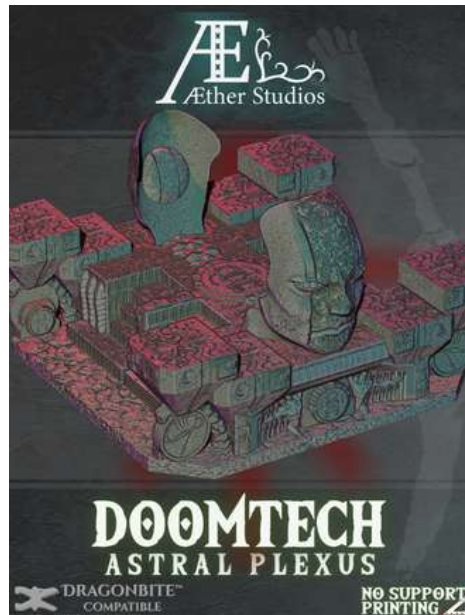
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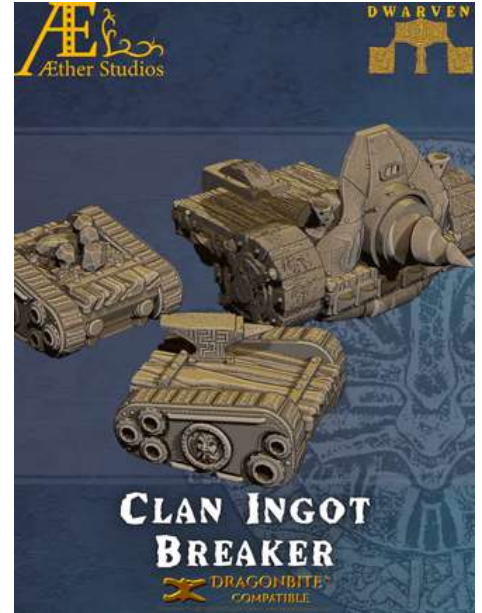
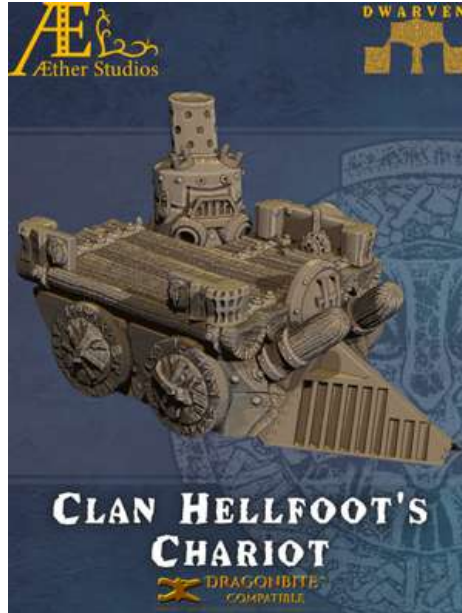
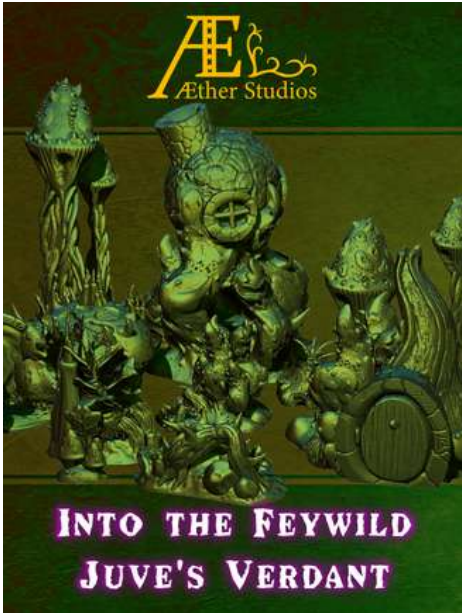
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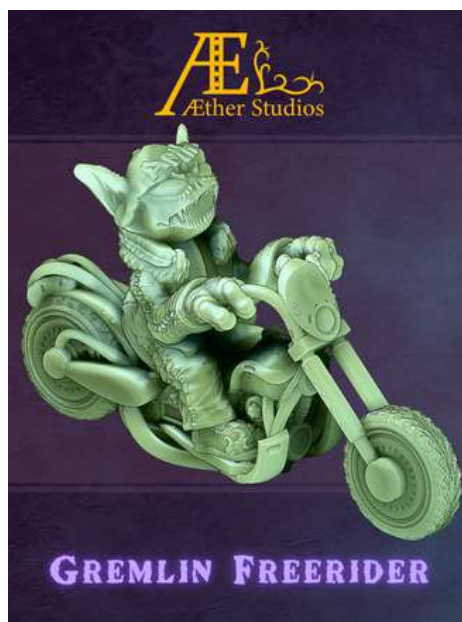


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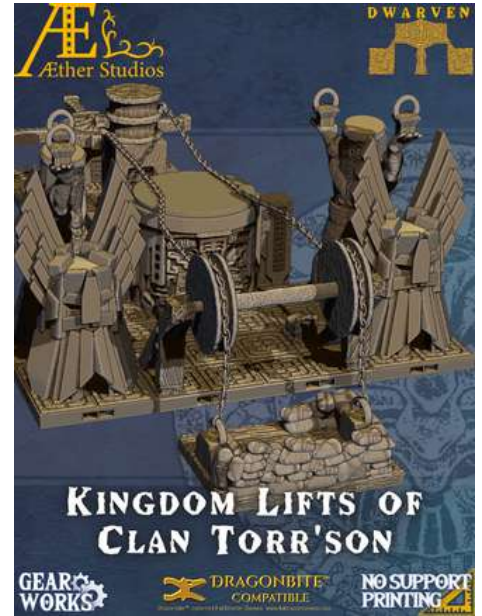
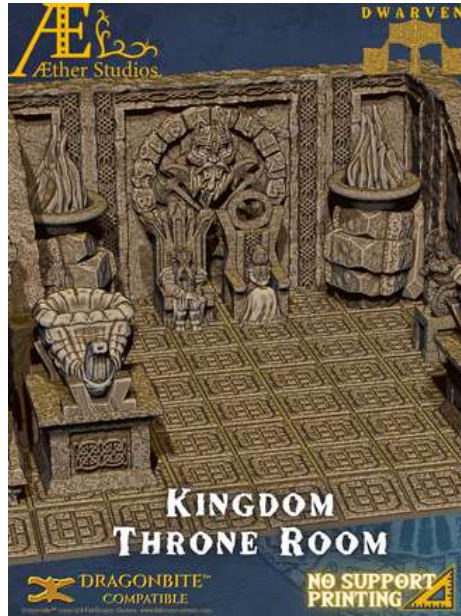
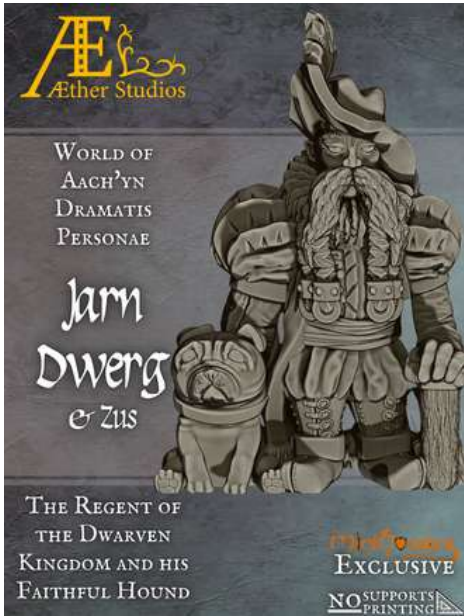
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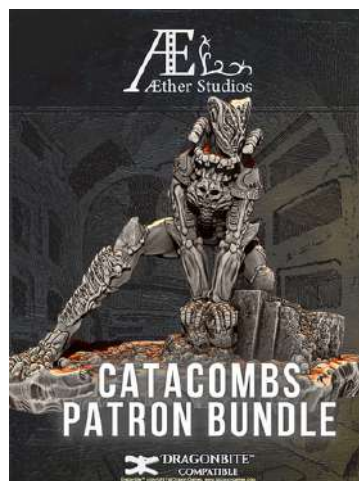
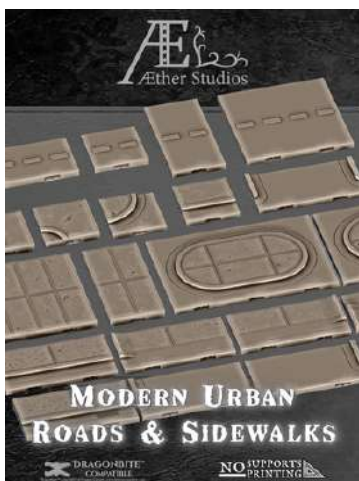
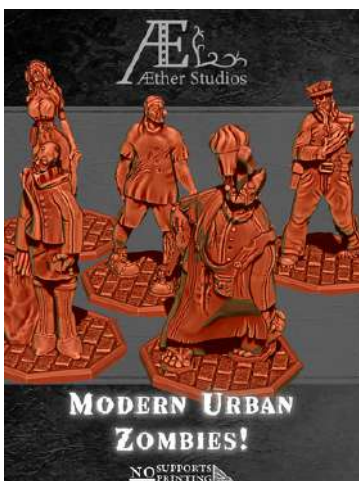
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20 QUESTIONS

For: Will Walker, Director of Aether Studios

In this 1st issue, I've been given the opportunity to ask the Director of Aether Studios 20 questions of my choice. Some are from me, but most are from the great community on the Aether Studios Discord. - JL

01 How did you get into this?

I was running a small returns business with a friend and we had a store model 3d printer (Makerbot Replicator Mini) come through. I took it home and started printing tiles that night. My search for more tiles led me to the old Fat Dragon Games forum. It was there that I met Colin and we discovered we both loved helping others get their setups just right. We also figured out that we worked very well together and we had a lot of ideas to explore. We've had a lot of fun building universe together and finding more people interested in our way of making art..

02 What is your favorite set to Create / Play In / Dream About?

I really like to create for different planes and environments. Fey, Shadow, Underwater are all favorites that I love working on when I have extra time. I started working with Nasos because I really loved his Feywilds style of art. I also love to play in weird and diverse realms and it moves the art forward.

03 What is your favorite TTRPG system? Least favorite?

Say what you want about 4th Edition D&D, it was very easy to implement ideas. 5th Edition is a bit more fun to play though and easier to introduce new players into the game. When I have nightmares, I dream about being chased by zombies in a very old system called All Flesh Must Be Eaten

04 When performing a ritual to summon a being not of this world, who/what would you be summoning?

I feel like maybe I could keep an Imp in line. Anything bigger and we're all in a whole lot of trouble.

05 Who do you like off Red Dwarf, and why is it Kryton?...

I think it might be Cat.

06 Do you think that 3D printers can be/should be household appliances, easy to operate for a novice with practical applications right out of the box?

Yes, and I am sure they will be sooner rather than later. The convenience will become apparent to many and as reliability and model-life are improved I think they will explode in popularity.

07 Favorite DnD character you have made/Played?

I played a half-orc paladin named Durk. He was awesome and unstoppable. 4e barbarians would lay waste to everything. Another favorite was a custom bard that only used magic missile combined with mage hand to slap enemies from across the room. He was a snail and it was pretty hilarious and fun to lay him..

08 When walking around your home, do you leave your phaser on stun, or kill..?

Power Level: Kill.

Stun Setting: Disabled.

Battery: Discharged.

09 If there was one feature that you could snap your fingers to install on all consumer grade printers, what would it be?

A robotic arm pops out from under the printer, removes the prints, and removes the tabs from Dragonbite tiles. It automatically collects the spare plastic and re-melts it with fresh pellets before respooling it.

10 If you could change one thing in the world, what would it be?

I'm not sure, but it would probably be something drastic and be hugely unpopular like spending the US Department of Defense budget on free chips and salsa for the world. You can't go to war if you can't eating the delicious salsa. I really love salsa.

11 Favorite/least favorite TV series? Movie series/type?

Star Trek is my favorite, Deep Space Nine is the best of them. I also tend to watch stuff depending on the kind of work I'm doing. When I'm working with Catacombs or Doomtech, I love to watch horror, even though I almost never watch it for pure entertainment. When it is a heavy production time, I will switch to something easily digestible. Adventure, disaster, and creature features are always rewatchable favorites. I also watch a ton of twitch.tv. As far as Favorite TV Show: I have probably watched more Archer than anything else while making stuff. Least favorite is reality or game shows.

12 What would you do.... for a Klondike bar?

I'd probably bust out a dozen tiles of an old favorite set. Junk Planet probably. But I'd want two sandwiches. Slappin' polygons is hungry work.

13 As a DM, what bribes do you accept?

Just remember and remind me of plot elements that I forgot; then vaguely suggest a way they might relate to the current story. Pretty much guaranteed you can get away with anything reasonable, and I'll probably toss some gold or magic items your way too. It will be so shameless that the other players will become visibly jealous.

14 Have you ever met anyone famous?

Yes. We had breakfast. He was the greatest actor in the history of the art, in the humble opinion of one ten-year-old. He basically co-starred in two of the most important and influential films ever made: Moonraker and The Spy Who Loved Me. Little did I know he would later go on to define 90s comedy just a few years later in Happy Gilmore. One of the nicest guys in the universe, Mr. Richard Kiel, and quite a nice breakfast we enjoyed in LA in '94.

15 Describe yourself in one word.

Thankful. So very, very thankful.

16 What's your most irrational fear?

I absolutely do not eat any food prepared from other species at the top of their food chains. No Squid, Gators, or Sharks, etc. Too many creature feature movies have left me concerned, quite irrationally, with being eaten alive. Best not to give them any reasons.

17 What is your favorite strange food combination?

Some people consider it a hate crime against mexican cuisine, but I love some shaved carrots in my salsa.

18 Describe your perfect pizza.

Light Sauce, Well Done, Pepperoni, Sliced Italian Sausage, Onions, Peppers.

19 Where do you draw your inspirations from for Aether Studios sets?

For art I just like to fill requests. Other artists at Aether Studios are driven more internally to create from scratch, and that is good. The inspiration comes to help others. To help a fellow DM clinch that unique X factor that transforms the game from good to unforgettable.

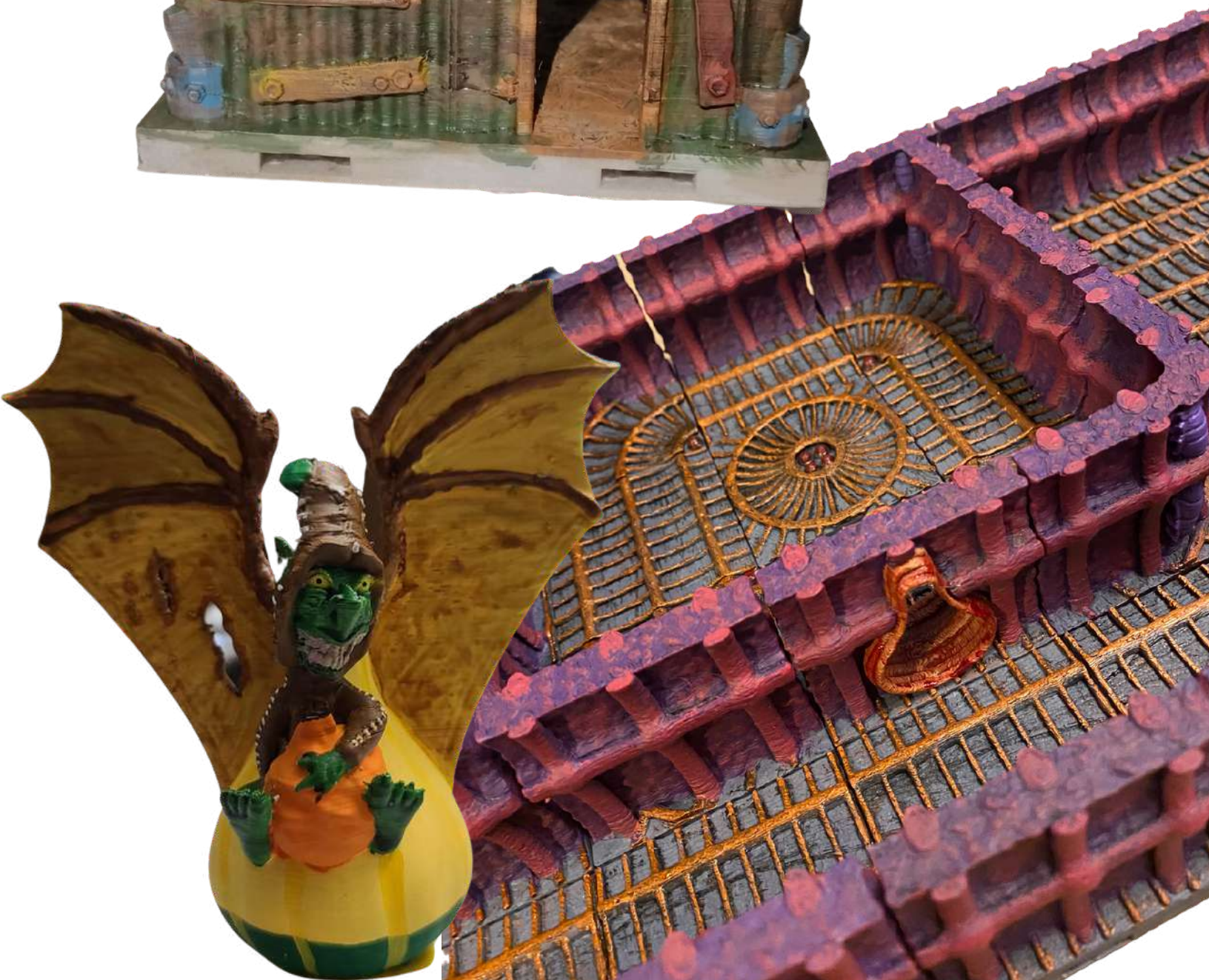
20 Tell us about how you planned out the development thus far?

I'd love to say there was a master plan behind it all, a glorious noble and focused intent. But we've adapted my original Aach'yn into the tiles rather than sculpted the tiles to match the world. It's better this way, with the art leading everything else. Plus, the stuff I wrote before isn't half as cool as the ideas that Colin, Nasos, Jeromy, Jake, Carl, Tia, Ben, Marc, Jason, and Jon have contributed to the lore. I am very, very glad for my wife Marina. Her encouragement is invaluable.

SHOW YOUR PRINTS SHOWCASE



Special thanks to all the artists who shared their finished creations on the Aether Studios Discord channel #show-off-your-prints!

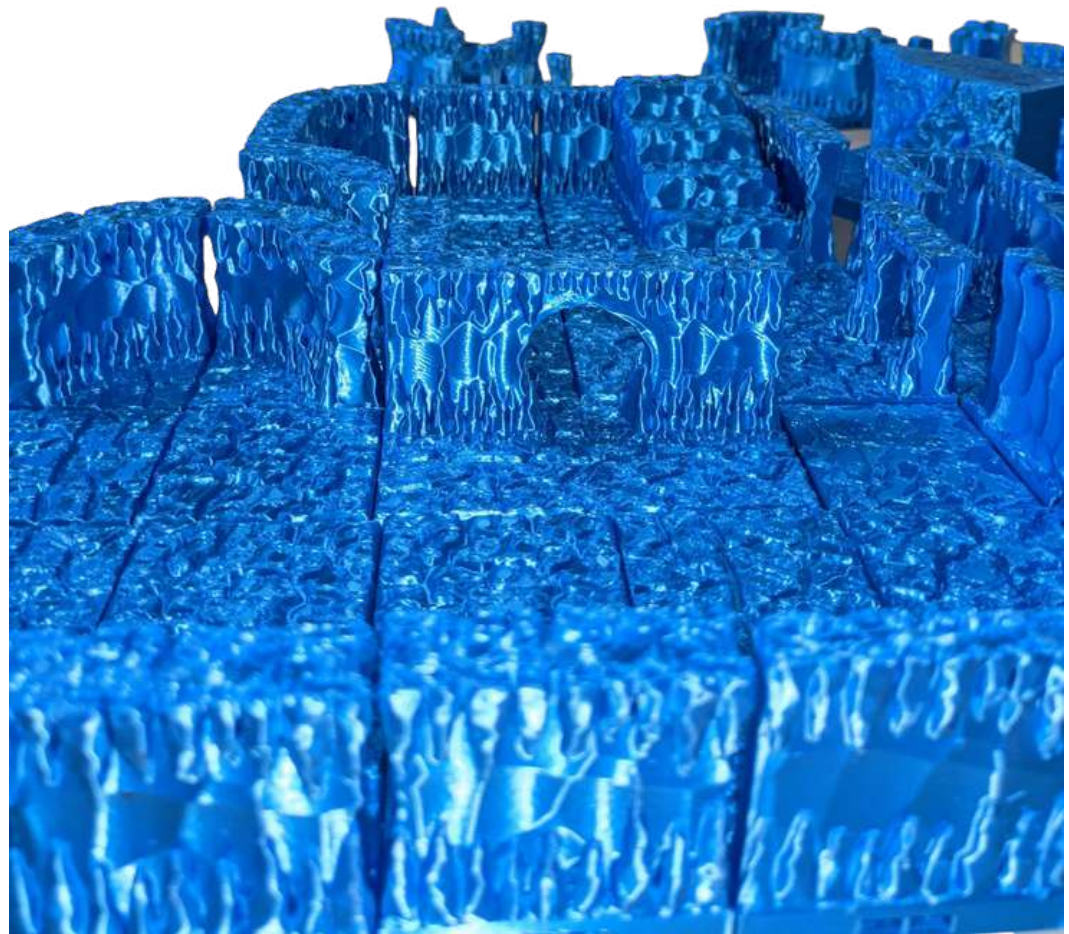


Artists: 40kaj, AlexbytheSea, Arcadius Prime, azhri1, Brian The Sarcastic, DarthMolen, drakir, Droid, HavenSOV, highland3r77, Jesters, Jimf, jlaager, Karithay, LogDog, MvdS89, OldJim, SquirrelsMasters, WiteNite, Zilith



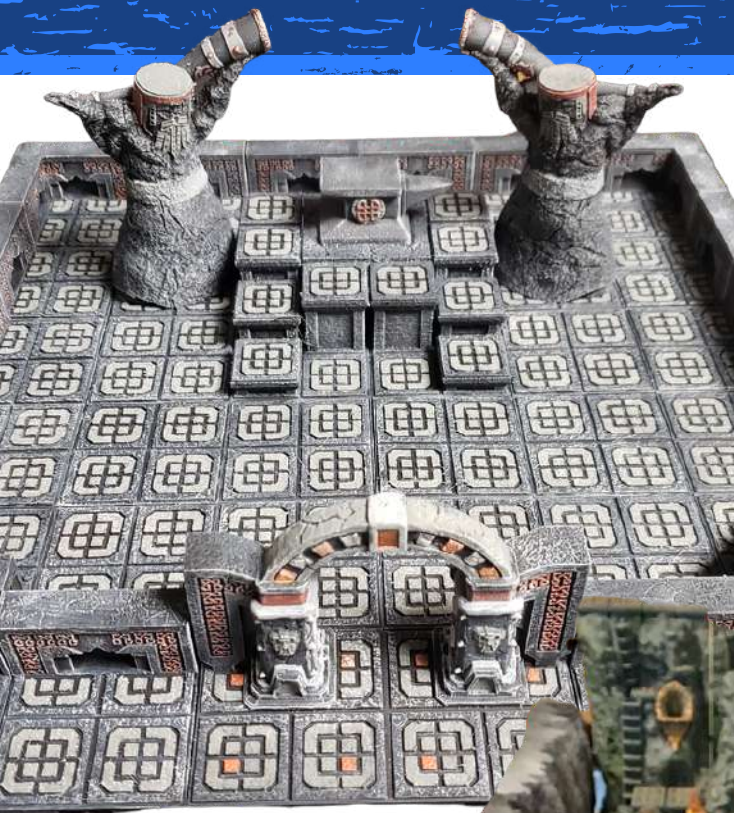
















PAINTING TUTORIAL

Painting Marble

by William J. (BJ) Altman



PREPARATION

Model: This technique works best on smooth surfaces: that starts by choosing a model that is relatively smooth, like Aether Studio's Seraphim, pictured throughout this tutorial. Depending on your model, you may consider sanding surfaces to smooth them down some.

Tools: We'll be using a sea sponge, a large brush, and a relatively fine brush. Gloves will certainly help when you are using the sponge. A mixing surface is also necessary.



Color Scheme: You can use this technique to go from dark to light or light to dark. If you seek to replicate real marble, search for reference images and base your colors off that. For our demonstration, we will be creating a fictitious blue-black marble, so we will use black, dark blue, and white for the base marble itself. We will use a medium blue for edging and a medium and light blue for the veins. To help with those veins, we'll want a thinning medium. For most of this, I recommend craft paints.

Priming: If your model is the same color as your base coat, you do not need to prime it. If not or if you did any sanding, it is a good idea, just in case. In this demonstration, the pieces were printed in black, so no priming was needed.

1 BASE COAT

Even though the model is already black, the black of your primer or filament is probably slightly different from your black paint. Also, if you sanded your model and did not prime, then you will have some off-color areas. To account for these factors, we apply our black over any discolored areas and over any inside corners. You can paint the whole model if you like, as shown here. Where it is best to apply paint to the inside corners with a brush, it is good to dab the paint on other surfaces with your sponge to get a feel for working with it. Clean your sponge.



2 DARK BLUE

Apply your dark blue to your models with your sponge. Roll around outside corners to give continuity of color. You don't need to cover every part of it; 75% to 90% is fine. As you do this, you will discover that your sponge has difficulty painting those inside corners. It is good to jam the sponge into a couple of the corners to get paint there, but, overall, don't sweat it too much. We'll be using those areas you didn't get paint into. How are your fingers doing? Bet you're glad you're wearing gloves. You don't need to clean your sponge before starting the next step.



3 ADDING WHITE

A little bit of white goes a long way. Add a bit to your dark blue, and mix. Use your sponge to do the mixing. It is OK if the colors don't mix perfectly, that will add to texture. Sponge on your mixed paint. There's no perfect recipe for this. Go with what looks good to you. If an area looks too white to you, just sponge over it with some blue. Again, roll over outside corners. By now it will be even more apparent that the sponge has problems with inside corners. That's OK. Try to jam a bit of paint into some corners, but don't sweat it too much.

You can repeat this step multiple times with more and more white to make the marbled lighter. Whether you do or not, clean your sponge before continuing to the next step.



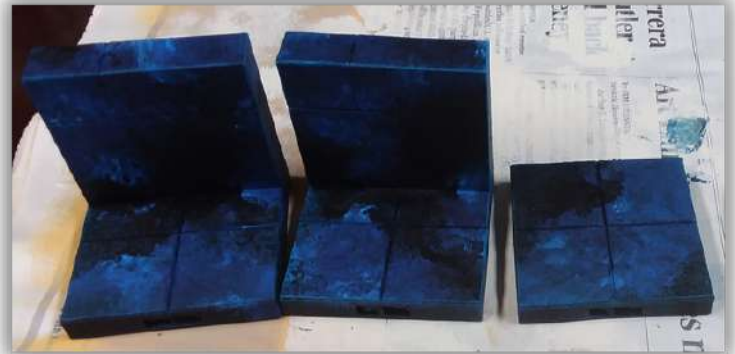
4 BASE COAT REDUX

At this point you are probably eyeballing those pesky inside corners and thinking "well that could look better". You'd be right. Let's fix that. Starting at those pesky inside corners, sponge on your base coat to give shape to the color sections. Apply as much or as little as you like. Clean your sponge. We're done with it.



5 EDGING (OPTIONAL)

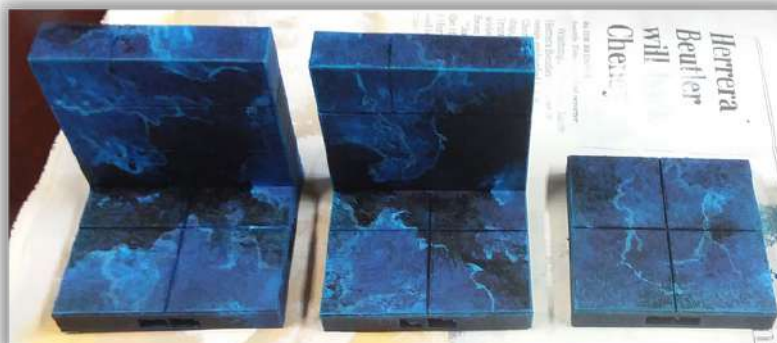
This part is optional. Use your medium blue to drybrush the edges of the pieces. This can give some definition to stairs and similar pieces. If you plan on doing this to one or pieces, then you need to do it to all of them.



6 FAINT VEINS

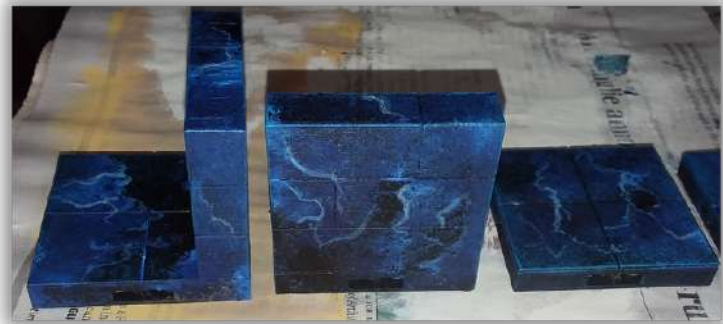
The veins in marble can be tricky. It is easy to accidentally make them look too fake. Thin down your medium blue with paint medium. Use this highlight the boundaries of your paints: where the black meets the dark blue meets the mixed blue meets those popping almost white areas. You don't need to do all of those boundaries, and you can even leave them now and then. If you feel you can do erratic veins by hand, paint normally.

A trick you can use is to instead hold your brush at the very bottom with only one finger and your thumb. You lose a lot of control this way, but it helps give your veins a more erratic pattern. While doing this, it is possible to glop on more paint than you intended. If that happens, just quickly dab it off.



7 BRIGHT VEINS

This is Step 6 all over again, except that you use a light blue and you don't do as many veins. Tracing some of your previous veins with the lighter blue will help them pop.

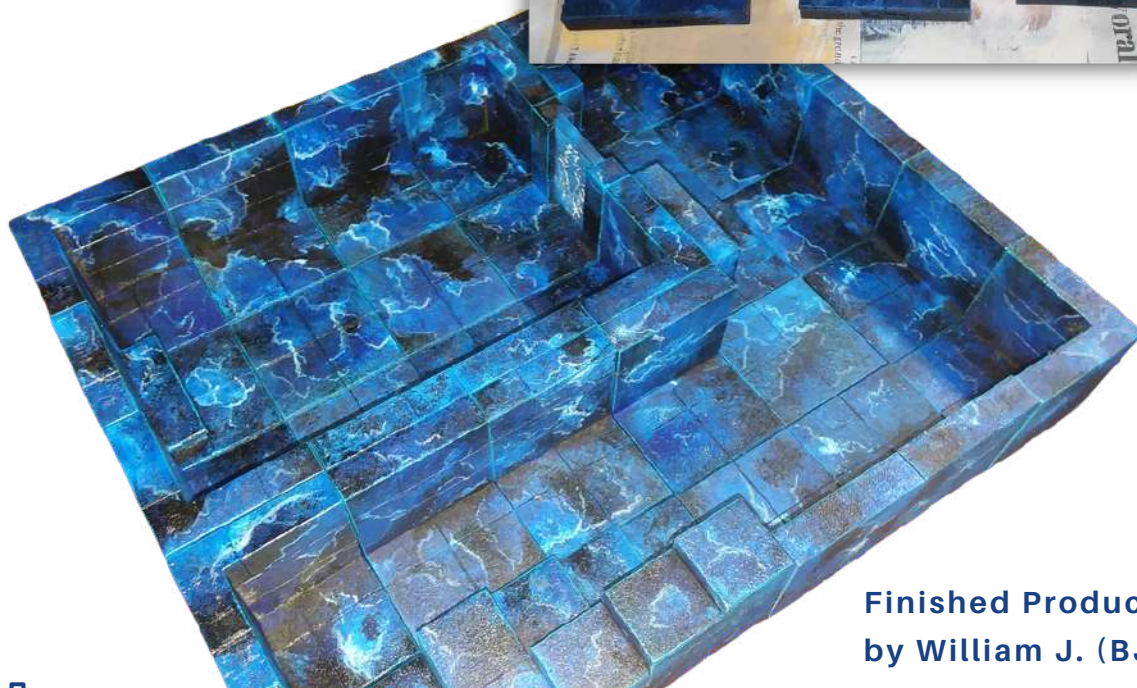
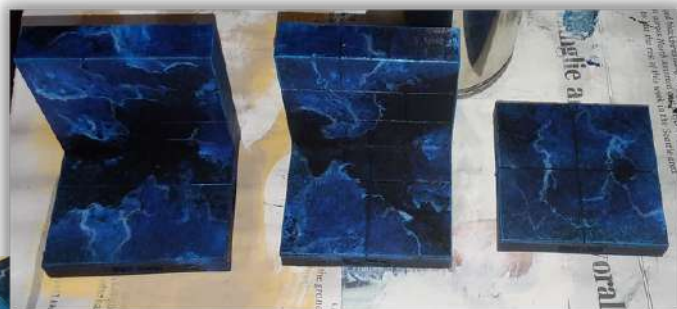


8 DETAILS (OPTIONAL)

Your piece may have carvings or an altar or something similar. Go ahead and paint those now. Silver embellishments works well with the blue-black marble.

9 SEAL IT

Polished marble shines. Use a gloss spray varnish. Here a "wet look" varnish was used.



Finished Product
by William J. (BJ) Altman

Editor's Note

A HUGE thank you to BJ for this absolutely incredible walkthrough. He has given me artistic inspiration many, many times through all of the wonderful paint schemes he has been so generous to share on the Aether Studios Discord. His purposeful use of colors and techniques are out of this world, and I am so thankful he agreed to write this walk through for our first issue. Thank you! -JL

AETHER ADVENTURES

The Festival Of Rub'aii

A 5e Adventure for a Level 1 Party

Editor's Note

As this is our first foray into including adventures in our newsletter (and frankly, the first foray into newsletters at all), I want to give a brief introduction to the content. Each newsletter will have an adventure: some may be simple 'one shots', while others may be multiple parts spanning multiple issues. These adventures are written for 5th edition, but they have not been play-tested. Feel free to alter for your personal use! We hope these ideas will help inspire some of your own and help bring laughter, suspense, and excitement to your table. -JL

SESSION SET UP

The adventure begins in Aethertowne. Being one of the major hubs in Aach'yn, there are a variety of reasons the party might have ended up here: looking for information, trying to find a specific magic item, or simply as a one-night skyship layover.

As the party begins to explore the city, dusk begins to overtake the sky, giving way to the light of the first evening stars. Suddenly, festive music begins to fill the air sourced from a few blocks away.

The closer the party gets to the music source, the more sensations they experience: the chill of the evening air against their skin mixed with the smoky smell of cooking fires as they sear the edge of chops, and the sounds of a familiar verse being sung by a tone-deaf tavern chorus.

As the party rounds the final corner, they are met with the source of all these sensations: the **Festival of Rub'aii**. Scores of festival goers can be found through the square - enjoying meat, brew, smoke, and company. Most are wearing the festive costumes: dark brown robes of Rub'aii followers, worn as costumes to mock the defeat of the Demon Prince of Fear and Suffering. However, there are a few who just cannot stomach wearing such horrendous garb - even if it is in jest.

FESTIVAL OF RUB'AII

Rub'aii, the Demon Prince of Fear and Suffering, is seen very differently among the races. Among most of the civilized world he is not worshiped, but rather the anniversary of his defeat is celebrated. Surviving another month, and living as a good citizen is all one needs to toast beverages and dine on better than average food. The Autarch calls Rub'aii his Archnemesis, the eternal (but oddly unseen) evil he struggles against. Rub'aii, the struggle, and the celebration are among the strongest pillars of supporting the Autarch's rule. Many see fear and suffering as the true evils of the world. They curse the name on Rub'aii on his feast day each month.

The Goblins, Gremlins, and wild Gnomes also celebrate the feast, but they treat Rub'aii as a mythic and faceless hero who stands against the forces of genocide and racial cleansing they fear the humanoids would bring. They honor Rub'aii by consuming those captured or stolen, and sacrifice those they cannot carry away for the full ritual.

FESTIVAL OF RUB'AII

"Praise to the fearsome Rub'aii!" the party hears behind them, followed by a thick, dry laugh. In turning around, they are met with a portly human man, dressed in an exquisite brown robe with a variety of silver embellishments throughout and a large golden amulet hanging from a golden chain around his enormous neck. Shadowing him to either side are two Aethertowne guards in full plate armor who go back to scanning the crowd after looking your party up and down, hands seemingly permanently attached to the shining hilts of their sheathed longswords. "Oh, come now. It was just a bit of fun. Come! Enjoy the celebration!" as he continues walking towards the next group of revelers with matching garb. A DC 12 History check will identify that the man is **Lord Vons**, an Assistant Governor of Aethertowne.

Moving around the square, there appear to be a variety of goods for sale including (but not limited to) expertly sewn dark brown robes (3gp), golden amulets with the sigil of Rub'aii inscribed on them (8gp), black stoles with the sigil of Rub'aii embroidered in dark silver at the bottom (2gp), as well as their counterfeit / second-hand equivalents for cheaper. Most common gear can also be purchased here, though merchants typically mark the price up a bit to make the effort of hauling their goods to the square worth the hassle.

A variety of foods and drink can also be purchased in the square, as well as some local pipeweed.

DM Note: feel free to add any vendors or other storyline seeds here - this is a great spot to add in things like that!

THE DRINKIN' CONTEST

A large handmade stage sits on the north side of the square, approximately 20' long by 6' deep: a long table spanning the length, with stools behind to match. A hand painted sign adorns the top of the stage which reads in peeling, red letters: "Rub'aii Festival Contest". Next to it, on a much smaller and clearly more quickly replaceable sign, it reads "Drinkin' Contest" in white.

In front of the stage, a small booth is manned by a male halfling with light brown shaggy hair wearing a soft white collared shirt, a dark blue vest with black stripes, and a mahogany overcoat with sleeve cuffs on top. As you approach, his eyes go wide, and he begins to call out "Step right up! Step right up! You all look like you might have what it takes!" as he reaches below the counter of his booth and pulls out from underneath a large mug with frothy foam overflowing and running down the wooden sides. "Care to partake in some healthy competition?" he asks as a smile crosses over his lips. "Buy in fee is only 1gp, and the winner takes home 10gp. What do you say?"

DM Note: if the players of your party would not have interest in this contest, it can easily be replaced by an eating contest of a local baker's specialty: Sugarpeel's Sweet Bread. Or - do them both in succession!



DRINKING CONTEST RULES



The drinking contest takes place over 5 rounds.

At the start of each round, each contestant (both NPC and PC) chooses a number of mugs they are planning to drink that round: up to 5 mugs.

All contestants then roll a d6. If the number rolled is higher than the number of mugs they drank that round, they are able to 'keep them down' and are able to add this number to their cumulative total.

If the number rolled is equal to or lower than the number of mugs they drank, they vomit up all of their contents and their cumulative total is set to 0.

Optional Rule: If the number rolled is equal to or lower than the number of mugs they drank AND the contestant A) is a dwarf, B) has a CON score of 14 or higher or C) has proficiency in CON saving throws, they are allowed a DC 13 CON saving throw in order to keep down half their cumulative total drinks.

The contestant who keeps the most number of drinks down after 5 rounds wins.



ANOTHER CONTESTANT APPROACHES

As any party members sit down for the competition, two dwarves approach the stand: a female dwarf with braided red hair wearing a red dress with silver embroidery and a large silver pendant hanging from a silver chain displaying the symbol for Heff, a Dwarven Aach'yn god, and a male dwarf in medium armor trailing her. The male dwarf whispers something to the attendant and begins to make his way to the competition stage. He stands at the chair next to one of the players, making an expressionless glare at the player. Suddenly, he steps aside, and the red-haired beauty takes a seat. "Never was one to pass on a competition of brew." She then extends her hand towards the player, alluding to the expectation of a hand-kiss. "Princess Ruby Tinleg. It is an absolute pleasure to meet your acquaintance." The male dwarf continues to stoically stand behind Ruby.

DM Note: The male dwarf is a guard of Prince Jarn Dwerg, and he has been assigned to protect Ruby during this outing as she is a consort of Prince Dwerg.

Ruby has a +4 to her CON saving throws. If Ruby wins the competition, she will gloat proudly for a bit, but if Ruby loses, her temper rears its ugly head, and she will make a scene. Regardless of outcome, after a minute or two, Ruby will offer to buy a round of drinks for the party, and the party should know it is extremely rude to turn down drinks: especially from a Dwarven "princess."



A FRIENDLY OFFER

As the party enjoys a drink with Ruby at a nearby table, a familiar guest approaches: Lord Vons. "Lady Tinleg! It is such a pleasure to see you again." as he bows his head and takes her hand to plant a kiss. "I saw you on the competition stage: you were absolutely marvelous." During their talks, it seems that Lord Vons' eyes are a bit shifty. A successful DC 15 Perception check will indicate that his eyes continually seem drawn to the Heff pendant hanging around her neck. After more pleasantries, Lord Vons offers Ruby a key to one of his manors on the other side of town and invites both Ruby and her companion over for a drink to discuss ways to strengthen the relationship between Aethertowne and Clan Dwerf.



DM Note: *Feel free to give the impression that Lord Vons seems very untrustworthy during this exchange.*

Ruby will gladly accept his offer, and she cannot be thwarted from going to the manor - regardless of any reason or Persuasion check the party offers. Though she has certainly enjoyed the company of the party, her heart and duty will always lie with cultivating relationships for the benefit of Clan Dwerf. Lord Vons gives her the key and says "I'm so glad to hear it. I have a few quick errands to run, but I will meet you at the manor afterwards. You can find the guest bedroom on the second level. Please make yourself at home." He bows to Ruby again, smiles towards the party, and exits the scene trailed by the same two Aethertowne guards.

After chugging the rest of her drink (which is now her second mug), she will rise to give her goodbyes to the party. Ruby will then leave for the manor, with her dwarven guard following closely.

DARK RUMORS

After about 10 minutes, another familiar face shows up at the party's table: the halfling announcer from the drinking contest. "Oi! Surprised to see you all here - didn't think you'd be able to stomach even one more drink after what I saw out there" as he chuckles and extends his hand to the party: "I never introduced myself: I'm Tobias. Tobias Barleybrook." He quickly takes Ruby's empty seat to sit down and asks as he looks around "so... where IS Lady Ruby? I sort of hoped to give her the old Barleybrook charm and see what it could buy me tonight" as he chuckles.

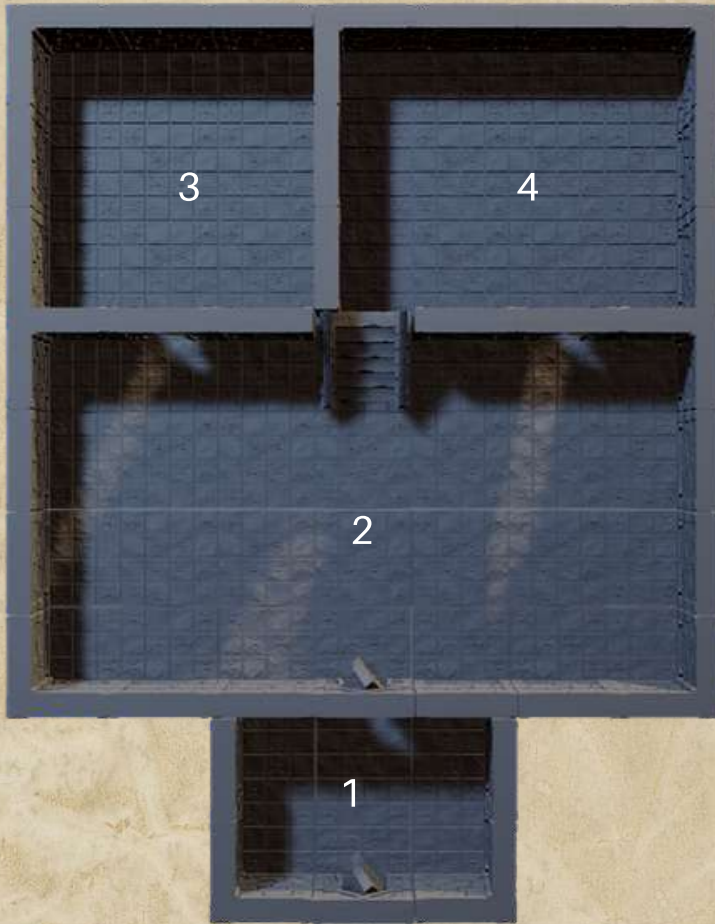
Assuming the party explains that she just left and the circumstances she left under, Tobias' face would go a bit worrisome. "Hmm.. really? Honestly, I probably wouldn't have gone to that side of town. Normally, not a huge issue: it's actually a pretty classy part of Aethertowne. But..." his eyes quickly scans the room "...there have been some crimes - some violent crimes - in that area the last couple months. Nobody's been charged yet, but I've got my hunches who its been." Tobias leans in close to the party and says "... it's those damn Chosen. Bunch of crazy loons. Always going on about the Sheperd and some whacky thing."

"Anyways" as he leans back out "regardless of who is doing it, there's definitely something... nefarious going on in that part of town. Well..." as he smirks again "... at least more violent than the usual nefarious business that happens behind closed doors there." He looks over the weapons that the party has on them and says, "might not be anything, but also might be worth making sure Ruby and her guard dog got there ok."

Assuming the party does follow after Ruby, after about 30 minutes of walking, they find themselves at the entrance of Lord Vons' manor.

LORD VONS' DARK MANOR

LEVEL 1



LEVEL 2



KEY

1. Entrance
2. Great Room
3. Kitchen
4. Library
5. Guest Bedroom
6. Master Bedroom

Tile Count

All tiles from this adventure come from Lord Vons' Dark Manor set. You can replace any of the straight walls or corners with tiles with windows, and you can also add doors to the kitchen and the library if you would like to! Just substitute accordingly.

2x2 Straight Walls: 29

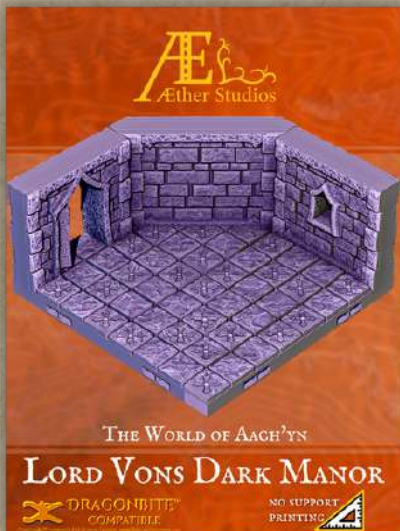
2x2 Corners: 17

2x2 Floor: 23

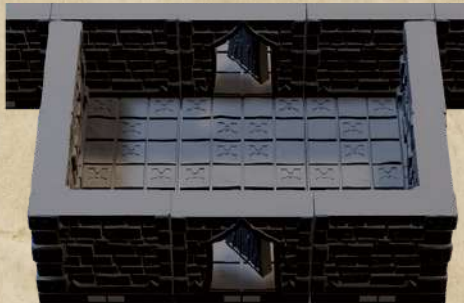
2x2 Doors: 4 (Made up of: 2x2 Door Frame, Door, Door Lintel)

2x2 Doorways: 2

2x2 Stairs: 1



1. ENTRANCE



The manor is a two-story building with exquisite exterior brickwork and a red tile roof. To the left and right of the protruding entrance are a variety of hand trimmed hedges, shrubs, bushes, and trees. The front door of the manor is a large oak door with reinforced iron supports with a large quality lock on the front. Currently, it is unlocked (though would be a DC 15 to lockpick). Because of the separation of the front door and the door leading to the great room, no noise can be heard from listening at this door.

Inside, there are a variety of coat hooks and unlit oil lamps for use. The following door is also unlocked, but currently closed. If the party listens at this door for noise, they are able to hear the sounds of battle.

2. GREAT ROOM



This room is very large, and it can be used to host a variety of functions. Vaulted ceilings span the room with exposed timber rafters supporting a candle chandelier in the center. A large central staircase leads up with the second floor with an open archway to each side leading to different rooms.

On the left side of the great room is a long dining table with place settings for 16, while a grand piano with listening area takes up much of the right side. In both corners closest to the entrance sits a square oak table surrounded by a trio of couches - an ideal spot for a quiet (or private) conversation.

A number of figures in dark brown hooded robes are beginning to surround a familiar female dwarf: an injured Ruby Tinleg holding a short sword defensively in front of herself. Scattered throughout the room are a half dozen still bodies, red covering the floor below them. In front of Ruby stands a lifeless, hunched over dwarf warrior clutching a battle axe in one hand and a blue dagger in the other - both covered in fresh blood of the freshest corpses scattered in front of him. Ruby looks to the party with relief and a glimmer of hope, unable to speak any words as her eyes flash back to the hooded figures in front of her.

A few of the cultists turn to the party, their faces concealed from the shadow of their hoods, and the shimmer of their short swords glimmering in the little light available in the room. Though Ruby's guard disposed of a good number of the cultists, there are still six cultists facing the party: one of which wearing a much more embellished robe. Five of the six are **cultists** while the remaining one uses a modified **cult fanatic** stat block with the following changes:

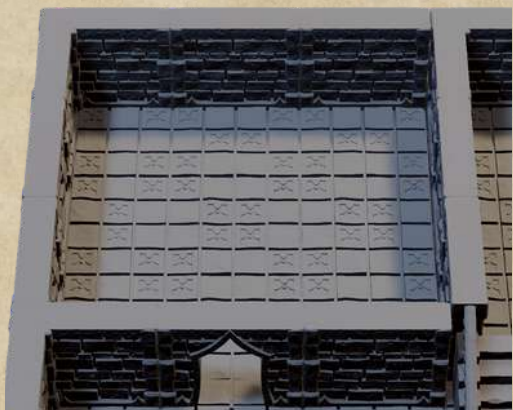
- The cult fanatic's current HP is 25 as Ruby's guard did land a parting blow to him before he died
- This cult fanatic has already used up all of his 2nd level spell slots fighting the guard and Ruby

Ruby uses the **Noble** stat block with the following changes:

- Her max HP is 22, she is currently at 10.
- Her CON score is 18 (+4)

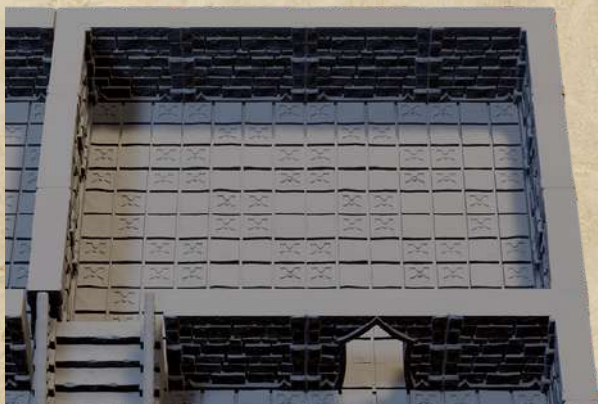
DM Note: Once the battle has concluded, refer to the **OUTCOME** section of this adventure.

3. KITCHEN



A large table island makes up the center of the kitchen with a variety of shelving around the perimeter. In one corner sits a wood burning oven, along with a water basin for dishes. Everything appears to be put away in its place, though there isn't much food to be found: a half loaf of bread, a small chunk of yellow cheese, and two muffins are about all - short of raw cooking ingredients.

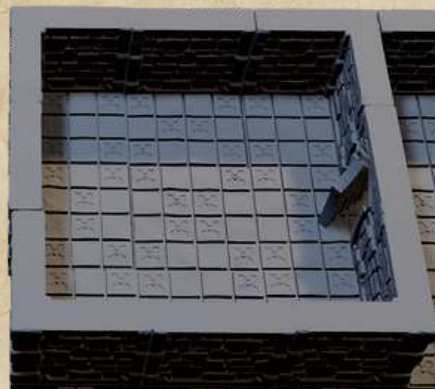
4. LIBRARY



Large floor-to-ceiling oak bookshelves line three of the four walls. The other wall holds an enormous, hand-drawn map of Ach'yn. In the center of the room is a rather large working desk without much clutter on it. A successful DC 12 investigation check will produce a blank letter with the wax seal of Lord Vons on it.

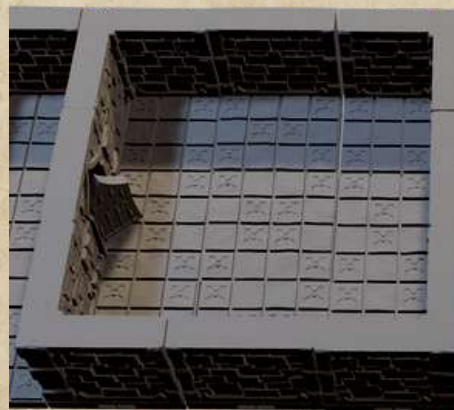
There are two other reading chairs with high backs and rich mahogany felt cushions located in the room: one on each side. A few unlit oil lamps can also be found scattered throughout the library for late night reading.

5. GUEST BEDROOM



The guest room has two full sized beds with fresh sheets, pillows, and fur blankets. At the foot of each bed is a chest. Sadly, neither of these chests has anything valuable in them.

6. MASTER BEDROOM



This bedroom door is locked (DC12 Thieves Tools check to unlock the door). Inside, there is a large four poster King bed with hand-sewn lace canopy. There is a small desk in the corner which has nothing of interest, and a locked chest at the foot of the bed. A successful DC20 Thieves Tool check will unlock it.

Inside, there are three rings (50gp each), a jeweled amulet (60gp), and two potions of healing.

OUTCOME

All cultists will fight to the death. They will accept nothing less than victory, so it will be near impossible to capture one alive. If the party can somehow accomplish this, they can learn the following from the cultist:

- They are a member of "the Chosen": a new religious order which recently started popping up around Aach'yn praising a leader known as the Sheperd
- Only the Sheperd is worthy of being praised; all other gods in Aach'yn are false and lesser gods
- Ruby was selected to be sacrificed due to her Heff amulet

If Ruby survives, she will give the party her absolute gratitude, and she will gift the magical dagger her guard was fighting with (**the Algid Lament**) as a token of her appreciation. She will then ask to be accompanied to the nearest guard station for safety reasons. If she dies, the party will be able to loot this magic item if they wish - along with the mundane armor and weapons from the guard and the cultists.



The cultists carry very few material possessions on their person, short of small amulets with a symbol resembling a Sheperd's hook. However, the cult fanatic is carrying something unique: a wrapped scroll which appears to be some sort of scripture. It is hand-written and tied with simple string. Upon opening it, it reads:

For wolves so desire to feast upon the mutton of the weak, on our fallen brethren clutched in the jaws of esurient evil.

For when we are alone, we are but lambs: blind and without direction or power, lost in the tall grasses of our own green pastures, mere prey to the mutts of the land.

But behold: the Sheperd will lead the lambs from walled pastures to enlighten them to the strength of their flock. Wolves must bow at his feet, tear off their fur, and accept the innocent wool of the Chosen to be granted His grace. For a wolf to the Sheperd is as insignificant as a rock to the stars.

For the Sheperd. For His Chosen.

RETURN OF LORD VONS

At some point after the conflict is done, Lord Vons unexpectedly comes back into the scene with his two Aethertowne guards at his back: gasping at the scene of violence around him then to the party. "What have you DONE?! You spilled blood in my manor?! And a guest of Prince Dwerg himself?!"

DM Note: Allow Lord Vons to enter at the most inconvenient time you feel fit. That may be while the party is trying to break into the master bedroom, while they are searching the dead cultists for loot, or while searching Ruby's or her guard's bodies for loot (there's one in every party...)

If Ruby is alive, she will be able to help the party quickly resolve the issue and provide the truth. If she is dead, the party will have to do some quick thinking to talk their way out of this mess.

Check out our next newsletter to see what twists and turns this adventure takes next! Does Lord Vons believe them? Is Lord Vons involved at all? Or maybe Tobias is to blame??! And who ARE the Chosen, anyways? And this Sheperd - he sounds like a frightening character. Some answers, more questions - next time! - JL

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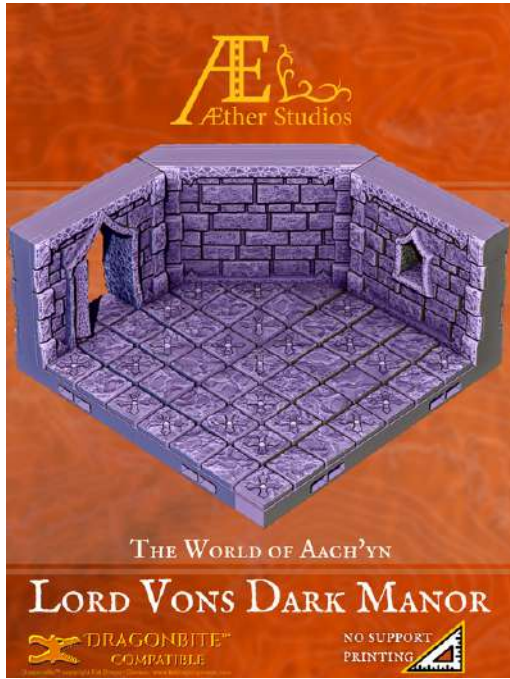
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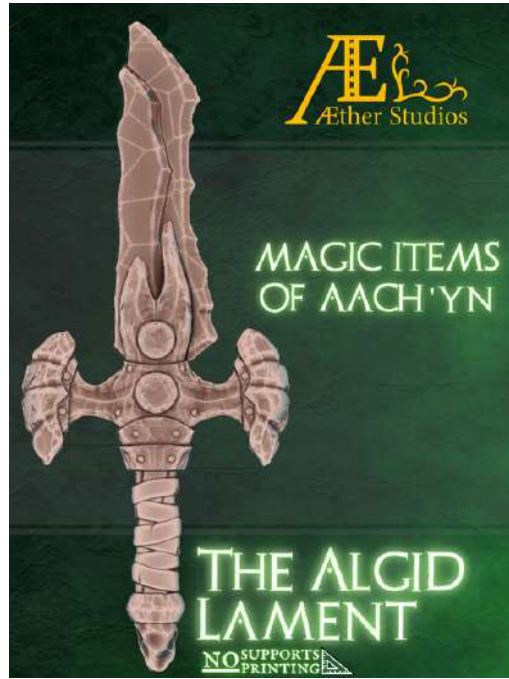


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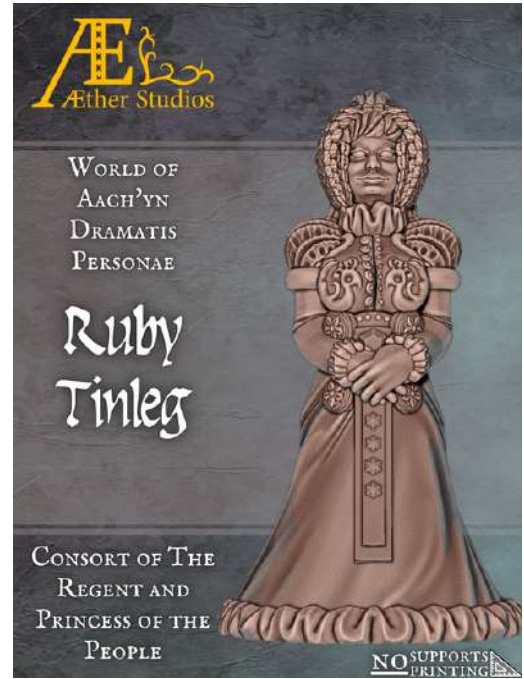
Lord Vons' Dark Manor

These tiles make up the interior of Lord Vons' Dark Manor: the location in the Aether Adventure where Ruby Tinleg and her guard are attacked by cultists.



The Algid Lament

The Algid Lament is a frozen dagger currently in the possession of a Clan Dwerg guard who is (... or "was"?) in charge of keeping Ruby Tinleg safe.



Ruby Tinleg

"Princess" Ruby Tinleg: consort of the Regent Prince Jarn Dwerg who shows up in Aethertowne to enjoy the 'uneventful' Festival of Rub'aii.

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