

Cliffhangers Adventures

The Light of Despair *Episode One: Spectres of the Past*

By Robert Wiese

The Light of Despair is a short adventure for four 5th-level characters. The adventure takes the characters from the high plateau of a semi-seaside community down a steep cliff and to a haunted lighthouse long disused. It is an acceptable challenge for characters of levels 4-6. It is not adaptable to lower-level characters due to the creatures involved, and higher-level characters would find it far too easy. It uses the [Lighthouse map](#) from the January 2001 Map-a-Week feature.



Adventure Background

The country of Oceanside rests atop a plateau some 300 feet above the sea. Steep cliffs drop off from the countryside to the sea; there are no beaches. Access to the sea is accomplished through the neighboring nations. Oceanside therefore has no sea trade of its own, as it has no natural harbors. At the foot of the cliffs, jagged reef beds prevent ships from approaching. Oceanside built a lighthouse at the base of the cliffs, on a small spur at the seaside of the reef beds, to warn ships away from the dangerous reefs, which extend almost a mile from the cliffs. Many a ship had been lost on the reefs before the lighthouse was built.

Just about one hundred years ago, a band of smugglers took over the lighthouse and killed the old keeper. The smugglers put one of their own in his place and used the lighthouse to signal their comrades. They also doused the light on bad nights when ships laden with particularly valuable cargoes sailed past, causing the ships to flounder on the reefs and sink. The smugglers then salvaged what they could. This went on for some time, until they made a fatal mistake. The smugglers believed that the final ship that passed them carried a rich load of gold, but in fact it conveyed a family and its possessions. The family was journeying to the neighboring country when their ship sailed too close to the cliffs,

Cliffhanger Features

The one constant throughout all of the episodes is the weather.

Weather: The DM should consider having one of two things happen during the story when it comes to weather: drizzle or sun. Using the sun makes the storms that the ghost calls forth even more impressive. However, setting a more horror-oriented mood with a gray day full of drizzle and a hint of chill to the air might be even more effective. Gauge it by how your players normally react to situations with their characters. You could even start with a sunny, brisk day and transition it into more gloomy, threatening weather as the PCs approach the lighthouse. Just keep in mind that the ghost has her own ways with the weather!

floundered on the reefs, and broke apart. The daughter of the house, Ferrina, a bright young girl of nine years, was sleeping when the ship wrecked, and she awoke to the terror of drowning. This experience caused her to return as a ghost.

When she became a ghost, she flew to the lighthouse, as it was the closest building. There, she terrorized the smugglers and drove them away, realizing that if the light had been lit her family would have been safe. The smugglers fled, and most died in the terrible storms that she brought down on them. A very few escaped, and one of them carried the key to the vault where the smugglers had stored their salvaged loot. The lighthouse quickly gained a reputation for being haunted, and any ship that approached found itself buffeted by storms and dashed to destruction of the reef.

Now, a hundred years later, one of the descendents of the smugglers has returned to the lighthouse to claim the treasure. The adventurers encounter him dying on the road, and they may find themselves swept into the adventure.

Character Hooks

The characters could have several reasons for being in the area:

- One of them could include a tale or song that the party's bard hears that involves a ghostly lighthouse haunted by a banshee or a storm goddess. This particular song could strike a chord with the bard, even going so far as to haunt his or her dreams until the bard seeks out the source of the tale.
- The heroes could also be asked by local authorities to investigate the local lore of the lighthouse and find out why it has been abandoned.
- The nearest town may need a boost to its trade and could ask the PCs to figure out the reason why the lighthouse is shunned. (Of course, the heroes are armed with some local lore regarding storms before they head on out.)
- Finally, the characters could be a victim of the storms that come up suddenly as they near the coastline where the lighthouse stands.

Spectres of the Past (EL 6)

The adventurers begin on the road, traveling through Oceanside for whatever reason you have given them previously in the campaign. They come across this scene:

You see ahead of you some equipment strewn across the road. It looks like something threw everything around, but from this distance it is hard to make out details.

When they get closer, go ahead and roll initiative for the NPC and the PCs. You can present the rest and then go into rounds after you've read it:

In the midst of the strewn traveling gear you see a body. It appears to be a male, probably human, with light brown hair, but as it is on its face you cannot tell for sure. A gaping wound in his back and the strewn and destroyed equipment tell you that he was attacked on the road, possibly robbed, and left for dead. Whether he is dead or not, you cannot tell.

This is Killis, a grandson of one of the smugglers. He is just about dead, but not quite. Three others attacked him and tore his equipment and clothing apart looking for the key to the lighthouse vault, but they did not find it. They are not far away, though.

When the characters approach Killis, he groans slightly. He is at -9 hit points and will die unless he stabilizes by himself on his initiative or is healed in some manner before he makes his stabilization roll., and he spends that whole time coughing and choking. He is coughing because when he was attacked, he swallowed the key to the lighthouse when the attackers were not looking. That is why they did not find it. If a character turns him over, he points toward the lighthouse (which the PCs can't actually see) and groans again before expiring.

Killis: Male War1; CR 1/2; Medium-size humanoid (Human); HD 1d8+3; hp 7* (-9); Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); Atk +1 melee (1d6/19-20, short sword); AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Climb +1, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +5, Jump +1, Listen +2, Ride (horse) +4, Spot +2, Swim +2; Alertness, Run.

Possessions: Padded armor, buckler, short sword, key.

*Killis normally has up to 7 hp. At this point in time, he has only -9.

Examining his body, the PCs find that he was choking on a pewter key -- one of very old design. The rest of his gear, normal stuff for a traveler who also used to be a guard, is torn apart. Pouches are slashed beyond use, his backpack is shredded, and his clothing and armor is ripped at the seams. Someone was looking for something.

To get more information, the characters have to use *speak with dead* spells if he has expired. Either dead or alive, they can learn the following:

- He is Killis, and he was traveling to the old abandoned lighthouse at the base of the cliffs.
- He is the descendant of some people who used the lighthouse to store riches, and he has the only key to the vault.
- He thought he was the only surviving descendant.
- He does not know the full story of the smugglers and the ghost, so he cannot relate it. He can only say that his ancestors stopped using the lighthouse suddenly, because something came from the sea and killed most of them.
- Killis is at the end of his luck, and hoped that the treasure from the lighthouse would

make him rich (or at least no longer destitute). If asked what he did before he decided to come out here, he says nothing more than that he was once a guard.

Hopefully, the characters take the hint and go to the lighthouse. Should Killis have survived the encounter, he wishes to go along and offers part of his "inheritance" if they accept him. Keep in mind that the addition of Killis to the group can affect the PCs rewards.

Though they do not know it, the group is about two hours' walk from the cliffs, and the road they are on has a branch that runs along the cliffs. (If Killis is alive, he can mention the latter bit of information.) The cliffs are very scenic, and people like to go look at them (or down them). About an hour later, they run into the three ruffians who attacked Killis. Read the following if Killis isn't with the group:

Your walk on this road is interrupted as a woman steps from the brush and blocks your path. "Hold up, strangers. I know you saw a man lying in the road a ways back. He had something that belongs to me, and I want it. Just hand it over, and I won't have to hurt you." She looks very tough and is probably well able to make good on her threat via the greataxe she carries.

If the PCs have Killis with them, read this aloud instead:

Your walk on this road is interrupted as a woman steps from the brush and blocks your path. "Hold up, strangers. That man you have there has something that belongs to me, and I want it. Just hand it over, and I won't have to hurt you." She looks directly at Killis. "Again," she enunciates clearly. She looks very tough and is probably well able to make good on her threat via the greataxe she carries.

This is Marna, and she wants the key. If the characters play dumb, she comes out and say so. If they refuse, she raises her greataxe and looks menacing. That is the signal for her comrades to attack from ambush. See Tactics for more information on how the battle begins, and please note the potions that have been consumed just prior to the combat. If they attempt to talk to her or use any social-based or magical-based actions to get her to back down or calm her, allow them to do so. The second Marna suspects something on the part of the PCs (and she is quite hostile), she raises her greataxe.

Marna: Marna: Female human Ftr3; CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d10+6; hp 22; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (touch 11, flat-footed 16); Atk +7 melee (1d12+3/x3, masterwork greataxe); AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Jump +2, Ride (horse) +5, Swim +6; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Temporary Effects: Just prior to this encounter, Marna consumed her *potion of bull's strength*. While that is in effect, the following changes apply: Atk +9 melee (1d12+6/x3, masterwork greataxe); Str 19; Jump +4, Swim +8.

Possessions: +1 *chainmail*, masterwork greataxe, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, **potion of bull's strength* (consumed before the encounter starts).

Kurann: Male half-elf Rog3; CR 3; Medium-size humanoid (elf); HD 3d6; hp 10; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (touch 13, flat-footed 16); Atk +6 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork short sword); or +5 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, half-elf traits, traps, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +5, Bluff +3, Climb +6, Escape Artist +9, Hide +19, Jump +2, Listen +8, Move Silently +9, Read Lips +8, Search +9, Sense Motive +5, Spot +8, Tumble +9, Toughness, Weapon Finesse (short sword).

Sneak Attack: If Kurann's target would be denied his Dexterity bonus to AC (whether he actually has a bonus or not), or when he flanks his target, the rogue's attack deals +2d6 points of extra damage. If the attack scores a critical hit, this extra damage is not multiplied. Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet. With a sap or an unarmed strike, Kurann can make a sneak attack that deals subdual damage instead of normal damage. He cannot use a weapon that deals normal damage to deal subdual damage with a sneak attack. Kurann can sneak attack only living creatures with discernable anatomies. Any creature that is immune to critical hits is not vulnerable to sneak attacks. Kurann must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach a vital spot. He cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment or striking the limbs of a creature whose vitals are beyond reach.

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows Kurann to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, he takes no damage with a successful saving throw.

Half-Elf Traits: Immune to magic sleep spells and effects; +2 racial bonus to Will saves against enchantment spells or effects; low-light vision (can see twice as far as a human in low-light conditions); +1 racial bonus to Listen, Spot, and Search checks (already figured into the statistics given above).

Traps: Kurann can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a DC higher than 20. Finding a nonmagical trap has a DC of at least 20, higher if it is well hidden. Finding a magic trap has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it. Kurann can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. Disabling a magic trap generally has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it. If Kurann beats a trap's DC by 10 or more with a Disable Device check, he can generally study a trap, figure out how it works, and bypass it (with his party) without disarming it.

Temporary Effects: Just prior to this encounter, Kurann consumed his *potion of cat's grace*. While that is in effect, the following changes apply: AC 18 (touch 15, flat-footed 18); Atk +8 melee (1d6/19-20, masterwork short sword); or +7 ranged (1d6/x3, shortbow); SV Ref +8; Dex 20; Balance +7, Escape Artist +11, Hide +21, Move Silently +11, Tumble +11.

Possessions: +1 *leather armor*, masterwork short sword, shortbow, *cloak of elvenkind*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of cat's grace** (consumed before start of encounter).

Lorden: human Sor3; CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d4+3; hp 10; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (touch 12, flat-footed 10); Atk +0 melee (1d6-1, quarterstaff); or +3 ranged (1d8/19-20, light crossbow); AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +7, Craft (bowmaking) +5, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Move Silently +5, Spellcraft +5; Combat Casting, Dodge, Spell Focus (Evocation).

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/6; base DC = 12 + spell level or 14 + spell level for evocation spells): 0—*daze, detect magic, light, mage hand, ray of frost*; 1st—*expeditious retreat, magic missile, shield*.

Temporary Effects: Just prior to this encounter, Lorden cast *expeditious retreat* and *shield*, and consumed his *potion of invisibility* and *potion of sneaking*. While these are in effect, the following changes apply: Spd 60 ft.; AC 19 (touch 12, flat-footed 17); SQ *Invisibility*; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15; Move Silently +15; Sorcerer Spells Known (6/4).

Possessions: Quarterstaff, light crossbow, 10 bolts, *wand of magic missiles* (50 charges), *wand of summon monster I* (50 charges), *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of invisibility** (consumed before encounter starts), *potion of sneaking** (consumed before the start of the encounter).

Tactics: When Marna's companions attack, she closes to melee. When possible, she will work with Kurann to flank a PC, even if that is not the PC she is fighting. Note her enhanced abilities from consuming potions.

Kurann, the rogue, is hiding in the brush to Marna's right, about 25 feet from the PCs and a little behind. Characters looking at the brush during the confrontation can make Spot checks against Kurann's Hide skill to see him before he attacks. When he attacks, he fires arrows before Marna closes, and he moves into melee when she does. He tries to position himself so that he can flank PCs. Note his enhanced abilities due to potions.

Lorden, the sorcerer, is invisible and on Marna's left, about 20 feet from the PCs and directly abreast of them. He begins with wands, first summoning a monster using *summon monster I* as Marna speaks (so it appears when the combat begins). Then he fires magic missiles from his other wand and summons another monster should his first one die. Once the PCs close with him, he uses the wands and casts spells as the situation warrants. He casts defensively if needed.

Once these three are defeated, the PCs can question them (or question their corpses if they have *speak with dead* spells available). They can learn the following:

- These three descended from some smugglers that used the lighthouse below the cliffs as a base.
- Something happened, and a monster came from the sea and drove away the smugglers.

Most were killed, but a few escaped. They were to meet up on the shore, but the one with the key to the vaults did not show up. The survivors assumed he was killed.

- Just last year, small pieces of information led the descendents to believe that the smuggler bearing the key survived, and had descendents of his own.
- Marna and Kurann had just tracked Killis when he left for the lighthouse. They followed, ambushed him on the road, and searched him but did not find the key.
- They saw the PCs leaving the area where Killis' body was left, and thought that they might have found the key.

Cliffhanger

The PCs reach the cliffs. Far below, they can see the lighthouse. The day is calm, and a little overcast. The scene is peaceful. But what dangers could lurk in the lighthouse below?

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Cliffhangers Adventures

The Light of Despair *Episode Two: Dangers of the Cliffside*

By Robert Wiese

The Light of Despair is a short adventure for four 5th-level characters. The adventure takes the characters from the high plateau of a semi-seaside community down a steep cliff and to a haunted lighthouse long disused. It is an acceptable challenge for characters of levels 4-6. It is not adaptable to lower-level characters due to the creatures involved, and higher-level characters would find it far too easy. It uses the [Lighthouse map](#) from the January 2001 Map-a-Week feature.



Adventure Background

The characters found a dying man in the road, who had a key to an abandoned lighthouse. He was a descendent of smugglers that used the lighthouse for illicit activities, and he was going to claim their abandoned treasure. On the way there, other descendants attacked him; they wanted the key. Now the group of PCs stands atop the cliffs that form the border between Oceanside and the sea. Far below, the lighthouse awaits.

Dangers of the Cliffside (EL 5)

It is very unlikely that all the characters can fly down the cliff, so at least some of them have to climb. Whether they fly or climb does not materially affect the encounter in this part of the adventure.

The cliffs are 300 feet high at this point and are fairly level. There are sufficient handholds to climb down without ropes, but this is very difficult without a number of ranks in the Climb skill. Climbing the cliff without ropes requires a successful Climb check DC 20 (rough surface with some narrow handholds). With a rope, the DC on the Climb check is only 5, but there are no visible ledges on the side of the cliff to perch on, so they have to tie

Cliffhanger Features

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Weather: The DM should consider having one of two things happen during the story when it comes to weather: drizzle or sun. Using the sun makes the storms that the ghost calls forth even more impressive. However, setting a more horror-oriented mood with a gray day full of drizzle and a hint of chill to the air might be even more effective. Gauge it by how your players normally react to situations with their characters. You could even start with a sunny, brisk day and transition it into more gloomy, threatening weather as the PCs approach the lighthouse. Just keep in mind that the ghost has her own ways with the weather!

together 300 feet of rope to use this method all the way down or use pitons. A successful check allows a character to cover half their base speed in feet. Lots of checks are required, so you might want to have them make a check at the start, one at 50 feet from the top, one at 150 feet, and one at 250 feet. They have to make checks every round while under attack.

About 100 feet down the cliff, a cavern entrance opens up, though it is not visible from the top of the cliff. Inside the cavern lives a manticore that hears the characters on the cliff when they make their Climb check at 50 feet (unless the players specify that their PCs are taking care not to make noise and succeed). The manticore flies out of its cave upon hearing the PCs and fires a volley of spikes at the one(s) nearest his cave as he circles for another attack. He continues to use spikes until he runs out, and then tries to pull characters off the cliff with its claws. If it is reduced to 10% of its hit points, it flies off to heal. It is defending its home, but it is not suicidal.

Manticore: 62 hp; see *Monster Manual* page 130.

The manticore gets a +2 circumstance bonus to attack characters that are climbing, and climbing characters lose their Dexterity bonuses to AC (and any other bonuses lost when they lose their Dexterity bonus, like a monk's Wisdom bonus or a bonus from the Dodge feat). Characters injured while climbing have to make a Climb check when injured (DC appropriate to their method of climbing); failure means they fall at least 250 feet and take 20d6 falling damage (and probably die).

Characters can try to climb faster; see the description in the Climb skill in the *Player's Handbook* on page 65.

Assuming the characters survive this encounter, they can continue downward, or investigate the manticore's cave before continuing downward. The cave is large and smells rather like a lion lives there. They find it littered with bones and ruined armor and equipment. The PCs can discover three ruined backpacks with normal adventuring equipment (including climbing equipment if the characters need it), a total of 85 gp in coins, and two broken longswords. The manticore had not acquired very much treasure, as the equipment from his victims tended to fall to the water below.

Rest is probably needed, and the only places to rest are the manticore's cave or the top of the cliff. The manticore returns in 24 hours, so they should probably not stay too long. If it returns, it has a new arsenal of spikes for the day and has healed 9 hit points.

Crossing the reef bed to the lighthouse should not be hard. They can swim, or they can climb over the submerged reef, or the group could find something to use as a boat.

Cliffhanger

The characters have reached the island and stand before the lighthouse. Some of them might be dead or severely injured at this point. Will the lighthouse prove even more dangerous?

Cliffhangers Adventures

The Light of Despair *Episode Three: Spectre in the Present*

By Robert Wiese

The Light of Despair is a short adventure for four 5th-level characters. The adventure takes the characters from the high plateau of a semi-seaside community down a steep cliff and to a haunted lighthouse long disused. It is an acceptable challenge for characters of levels 4-6. It is not adaptable to lower-level characters due to the creatures involved, and higher-level characters would find it far too easy. It uses the [Lighthouse map](#) from the January 2001 Map-a-Week feature.



Adventure Background

The characters found a dying man in the road, who had a key to an abandoned lighthouse. He was a descendent of smugglers that used the lighthouse for illicit activities, and he was going to claim their abandoned treasure. On the way there, other descendants attacked him; they wanted the key. They reached the cliffs and climbed down, and had to fight a manticore along the way. Then they crossed the shallow reef bed and now stand at the entrance, ready to brave whatever drove the smugglers away.

Spectre in the Present (EL 6)

The lighthouse door has not been used in a hundred years, and it stands swollen shut due to the humidity. Opening it requires a Strength check DC 23 (strong wooden door). It is not locked. Unless the characters climb the side of the lighthouse to the lookout loft, this is the only way in. Climbing the lighthouse requires a Climb check DC 25 (it is not perfectly smooth), and this action attracts the attention of the ghost (see below).

As the characters wander the lighthouse, they draw the attention of Ferrina, the ghost. She meets them on the

Cliffhanger Features

The one constant throughout all of the episodes is the weather. Additionally, there are some constants throughout the lighthouse episode, which are included below.

Weather: The DM should consider having one of two things happen during the story when it comes to weather: drizzle or sun. Using the sun makes the storms that the ghost calls forth even more impressive. However, setting a more horror-oriented mood with a gray day full of drizzle and a hint of chill to the air might be even more effective. Gauge it by how your players normally react to situations with their characters. You could even start with a sunny, brisk day and transition it into more gloomy, threatening weather as the PCs approach the lighthouse. Just keep in mind that the ghost has her own ways with the weather!

ground floor, and summons a severe storm with her single remaining *wand of control weather* (see below). This takes 20 minutes to manifest, but the weather gets progressively worse throughout that time. The effects take the form of torrential rains, high winds (about 45 mph), and/or lightning and thunder (review the spell control weather on page 188 of the Player's Handbook) based on what season it is. The storm lasts for 35 hours unless Ferrina abates it sooner, and it covers an area with a radius of two miles centered on the lighthouse. Have lightning strike close to the lighthouse. The storm should heighten the mood and provide some obstacles, not become a weapon with which to kill the characters.

Ferrina never speaks to the characters. She was so horror-stricken by her death and return as a ghost that she simply does not speak. After she summons her storm, she uses *telekinesis* to throw things at them (1d4 or 1d2 damage, depending on the size of the object). Then she manifests with a fearful visage for a split second, appearing as a young girl drowned and dripping with water but with her face contorted with hate and terror. Then she disappears instantly and flies straight up to the light for a minute or two, letting the intruders, as she sees them, leave. You could use a false Will save here and there to terrify the players, if you want. If the group stays, she remains invisible and watches them curiously. Not many have stayed beyond the first set of actions she usually takes.

As the characters explore the lighthouse, Ferrina tries to scare them away unless they appear friendly and make overtures of peace toward her or act in a generally honorable manner. If she decides that they are not evil smugglers, she then uses her powers to help them understand what happened, but in ways that are scary or startling, but not harmful. For example, if she wants them to see an object lying on a dresser, she could hurl it at their feet rather than just levitate it. Her own appearance and expression does not change even if she decides to "help" the characters. See Tactics for further actions that she takes to get them to understand her story.

Lighthouse Rooms

All rooms have not been used in one hundred years, and they show it in the layer of dust and the general run-down appearance. The smugglers, the last occupants, were not neat, so there is a clutter of items scattered around each room.

15. Storage: The smugglers stored their loot in here. It served as a storage room for the lighthouse as well, and the PCs can find lighthouse equipment as well as treasure here. This room is locked, and the key they acquired in the first episode is required to open it from either side. The treasure is left for you to determine, but it should be mostly coins, jewelry, and art, and should total about 3,200 gp worth. There is a ledger of the ships that were salvaged, and what was acquired, in this room. The ledger shows when the smugglers sold things as well. The last

Conditions Inside the Lighthouse:

Unless otherwise noted, the rooms have a layer of dust, and the air is free of any scents of humanoid habitation (no cooking orders linger, for example).

Doors Inside the Lighthouse: Most of the doors (exceptions are noted) are sturdy wood doors with a weathered look to them. Roll percentile dice at each door to see if it sticks (25% chance to stick).

Wooden Doors: 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 10; AC 5; Break DC 18.

Light: Most rooms contain a rounded window that allows in daylight. If the room description states that the room has no window, it is pitch black when the door is closed. Rooms with doors to the outside can allow in daylight when the door is open.

entry lists a merchant vessel called the *Dimming Sun*, with no entry for the loot. This is the ship that Ferrina's family was traveling on.

14. Room of the Journal: The small room beyond this door was used to store maps and documents pertaining to lighthouse operations. There are several old books, some journals of the keepers. The last journal entry is normal ("all's well") and is dated 102 years ago.

13. Common Room: The characters enter the common room first as it's the one with the doors to the outside. Somone did repair work here on the large table in the center of the room. Four chairs, with one broken, sit around the table.

12. Kitchen: The lighthouse kitchen is small but functional, with a fire pit that vents through a pipe into the ceiling and out the window shown for this level on the elevation drawing. The pans are well used. The sparse food remains are long molded and now unidentifiable. Some knives and other utensils are scattered around.

11. Dining Room: The keepers seldom used the dining room, but the smugglers used it to count and log loot. The large table and eight chairs are in very good shape considering the environment.

10. Bunkroom: The room beyond the door served as a bunkroom for additional keepers or as a place for guests to sleep. The lighthouse occasionally took on additional workers in bad storm seasons, and harbor officials visited occasionally. Six beds are in bunk arrangement, with six chests.

9. Lavatory: A lavatory of sorts, this room contains a large bucket, a basin, and a pitcher. The bucket has dried stains inside; it was used as a toilet, and it has not been emptied in a long time. This room has no window.

8. Visiting Room: The visiting room has five comfortable chairs set against the wall, and a small table is lying on its side about where the number is on the map. A bookcase stands against the outside wall, but the books are lying on the floor in a moldering heap. Those that are salvageable contain material of general interest, and all books are at least one hundred years old. They are not valuable.

7. Bath Room: The bath room boasted a bath tub of metal, which is quite rusted. Anyone stepping in the tub will break out part of the wall. A rack for towels stands to one side, but it is empty.

6. Large Bedroom: The bedroom contains a four-poster bed with rotted curtains and a moldy straw mattress. A dresser stands to one side, and a table with a mirror sits on the opposite side of the bed. A few pieces of clothing remain; they have been attacked by moths and are now very useless. The head of the smugglers used this room too, and there is a map of the reefs is on the dresser. It is not very detailed, but it's accurate for what it shows. (This was the keeper's bedroom, but it'd take magic of some sort to determine this.)

5. Barrel Room: Nine barrels, three of them containing lamp oil, stand in a grouping in this

room. Player characters can find lens parts and implements to start fires if they look. Two beds have been set in the corners (where smugglers slept). Under one of the beds is a skeleton (non-animate) -- the remains of one of the smugglers. When Ferrina first appeared, he hid here and refused to come out.

4. Bad Bathroom: This room was converted into a second toilet room, but it was hardly ever used because the bucket was seldom emptied, and the smugglers did not like the smell. They did use it to wash and shave. There is a mirror set above a basin, and a pitcher lies broken on the floor.

3. Small Bedroom: This is where the assistant keeper slept, when there was one. The lighthouse usually had two keepers, but just before the smugglers came, the assistant left and was not replaced. The party sees a small canopied bed, a dresser, a mirror, and a table. One of the smugglers slept here, and his clothing is scattered around the room like it was tossed in a windstorm.

2. Bunkroom: The smugglers converted this bunkroom into additional sleeping space. Five bunk beds and ten chests line the outside wall. Some rotted cloth and old personal effects are in the chest, but it's nothing really exciting.

1. Light: The light is an inventive combination of a bright flame and a large mirror array. The keepers would burn oil in a bowl, and mirrors above would reflect the light back and forth until it was very bright. Then it would be reflected at the main lens and out into the night. The light is still functional, though one of the mirrors cracked in a storm about 53 years ago. The outer walkway is open to the outside.

The Ghost

Ferrina: Female human Ari4/Adp1; CR 6; Medium-size undead (incorporeal); HD 4d12 plus 1d12; hp 32; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 14 (touch 14, flat-footed 12); Atk +5 melee touch (1d4, corrupting touch); SA Corrupting touch, frightful moan; SQ Incorporeal subtype, manifestation, rejuvenation, telekinesis, turn resistance +4, undead traits; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 11, Dex 14, Con -, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +7, Hide +10, Innuendo +6, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +5, Listen +16, Perform +5, Read Lips +5, Search +9, Sense Motive +6, Spot +16; Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes.

Corrupting Touch (Su): A successful hit with this attack deals 1d4 points of damage to a living target. Ferrina can use this attack only when manifested.

Frightful Moan (Su): Ferrina can moan as a standard action. All living creatures within a 30-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 14) or become panicked for 2d4 rounds. This is a sonic, necromantic, mind-affecting, fear effect. A creature that successfully saves against the moan cannot be affected by Ferrina's moan for one day.

Incorporeal Subtype: Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic

weapons, spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities; immune to all nonmagical attack forms; 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source (except for force effects, such as magic missiles, and attacks made with ghost touch weapons); can pass through solid objects (but not force effects) at will; attacks ignore natural armor, armor, and shields (though deflection bonuses and force effects work normally); moves silently (cannot be heard with Listen checks unless desired).

Manifestation (Su): Ferrina can become visible but remains incorporeal. However, she can strike with her incorporeal touch attack in manifested form. When manifested, she remains on the Ethereal Plane but can be attacked by creatures on both the Material and the Ethereal Planes. In this form, her spells (except touch spells) work normally against targets on both planes.

Rejuvenation (Su): If Ferrina is "destroyed," her spirit reforms itself in 2d4 days with a successful caster level check (1d20+5) against DC 16. Ferrina can be put to final rest by taking her remains and those of her family to their final destination.

Telekinesis (Su): Ferrina can use telekinesis once per round as a free action, as cast by a 12-HD sorcerer.

Turn Resistance (Ex): Ferrina is less easily affected by clerics or paladins. When resolving a turn, rebuke, command, or bolster attempt, the creature receives a bonus of +9.

Undead Traits: Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death, effects, necromantic effects, mind-influencing effects, and any effect requiring a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects; not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain; cannot heal damage if there is no Intelligence score, (though fast healing and regeneration work normally); negative energy heals; not at risk of death from massive damage, but destroyed at 0 hit points or less; darkvision 60 ft.; cannot be raised; resurrection works only if creature is willing.

Adept Spells Prepared: (3; base DC = 9 + spell level): 0—*light* (3).

Possessions: *Wand of control weather*, pencil sketches of family and ship in a sketchbook.

Wand of Control Weather: The wand of control weather contains only 5 more charges of *the control weather* spell. It was one of two that Ferrina's mother had created and carried with them on the ship. Ferrina had been looking at them in secret just before the ship ran aground. (She had been fascinated by the shifting cloud carvings on each wand and loved to watch them, and she often went off by herself to look at the wands.) The wand was created from wood and is traced with delicate carvings of clouds. When held, the clouds shift, and occasional flashes of lightning within the carvings make the wand glow silver for a few seconds. When not held, the wand's carvings remain static. The market value is 50,000 gp.

Tactics: Ferrina tries to communicate with the PCs if they do even one honorable or good thing while she watches them. If they don't do something specific but merely search for stuff, she continues to watch. Should she see them do one dishonorable or evil thing, she'll start attacking, and the chances that the PCs kill her off instead of trying to understand her become very high in

this latter circumstance.

Ferrina will first show the PCs a sketchbook of pictures that she had also carried with her during those last fateful minutes of life. The sketches are a bit runny with water streaks, but mostly understandable. Ferrina had a steady hand at drawing, so the pictures should evoke some sympathy with the PCs. If not, they should provide clues at the very least. Here are some of the pictures that Ferrina points out specifically:

A. Mother at the Mirror: Ferrina drew a picture of her mother (though the PCs don't necessarily know that right off) brushing her hair at the mirror. The PCs can see the back of her head in the foreground, and they see the mother's face in the mirror. There is a resemblance to Ferrina, though the mother's gaze is relaxed and thoughtful instead of evocative of fear.

B. Father Leans Against Mast: A man with some of the same features as Ferrina (her father, though the PCs don't necessarily know that right off) stands leaning against a mast. He is holding a book and reading it. There is a sailor in the background moving across the deck.

C. Calm Skies: Ferrina drew a sunset or sunrise with part of the ship framing it. This image has some color to it since Ferrina wanted to catch some of the hues.

D. Brother and Sister: An early adolescent boy with features exactly like Ferrina's sits holding a candle, and a younger girl with some features similar to Ferrina plays with a doll on the floor. There's a rat peeking into the picture on the right. They were probably in a ship cabin.

The other pictures are quick sketches of parts of a ship and some of the sailors, including one sketch from a distance that has the words *Dimming Sun* featured. She probably drew this latter sketch as she was waiting to board the ship.

Cliffhanger

The characters have a problem. To claim the treasure, or the lighthouse, or both, they must lay the ghostly child to rest forever. But this path lies underwater, and other dangers await them there.

Cliffhangers Adventures

The Light of Despair *Episode Four: The Spectre Fades*

By Robert Wiese

The Light of Despair is a short adventure for four 5th-level characters. The adventure takes the characters from the high plateau of a semi-seaside community down a steep cliff and to a haunted lighthouse long disused. It is an acceptable challenge for characters of levels 4-6. It is not adaptable to lower-level characters due to the creatures involved, and higher-level characters would find it far too easy. It uses the [Lighthouse map](#) from the January 2001 Map-a-Week feature.



Adventure Background

The characters found a dying man in the road, who had a key to an abandoned lighthouse. He was a descendent of smugglers that used the lighthouse for illicit activities, and he was going to claim their abandoned treasure. On the way there, other descendants attacked him; they wanted the key. They reached the cliffs and climbed down, and had to fight a manticore along the way. Then they crossed the shallow reef bed and entered the lighthouse. There they met the ghost of Ferrina, and now have to do something to send her to her final rest.

The Spectre Fades (EL 5)

For Ferrina to be laid to rest permanently, the characters have to find the remains of her family (including her own remains) and take them to their final destination. To do this, they have to go out to the wreck of the *Dimming Sun*, which rests 1/3 of a mile seaward from the lighthouse in 40 feet of water. The ship has been largely broken up by the reefs and so does not reach closer than 15 feet below the surface (at the one remaining partial mast).

Cliffhanger Features

The one constant throughout all of the episodes is the weather.

Weather: The DM should consider having one of two things happen during the story when it comes to weather: drizzle or sun. Using the sun makes the storms that the ghost calls forth even more impressive. However, setting a more horror-oriented mood with a gray day full of drizzle and a hint of chill to the air might be even more effective. Gauge it by how your players normally react to situations with their characters. You could even start with a sunny, brisk day and transition it into more gloomy, threatening weather as the PCs approach the lighthouse. Just keep in mind that the ghost has her own ways with the weather!

The bodies of Ferrina's family are trapped under a small longboat on the stern, where they took

shelter. The longboat is held in place by the mizzenmast, which fell and pinned it. Ferrina's body is in her cabin, floating freely, though she still grips a wand and her sketchbook closely to her skeletal form. (The sketchbook will disintegrate if opened out of water.) A spar that speared her through the walls killed her, but the spar has broken off (part remains in her body). There are no other bodies on the ship, as sharks got them.

To get this far, they have to swim the 1/3 mile or find something they can use as a boat. There might be enough scrap wood to make a raft, at your discretion. The storm that Ferrina started in the last episode is probably still in full force when the characters go out on the sea. If the characters indicated that they are going to the wreck to recover the bodies, Ferrina abates the storm. If the characters do anything with the bodies but plan to take them to their destination, the storm resumes its full force.

The danger here is from sharks that swim around the wreckage looking for fish to eat. There are three sharks, and the PCs have to deal with them somehow. The sharks are not automatically aggressive; they swim around the wrecks in full view for 10 minutes or so. During this time, the Animal Empathy skill and the *calm animal* spell are options for preventing a fight, but once the PCs are at the wreck for more than 10 minutes, the sharks attack. Review the underwater dangers rules on page 85 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

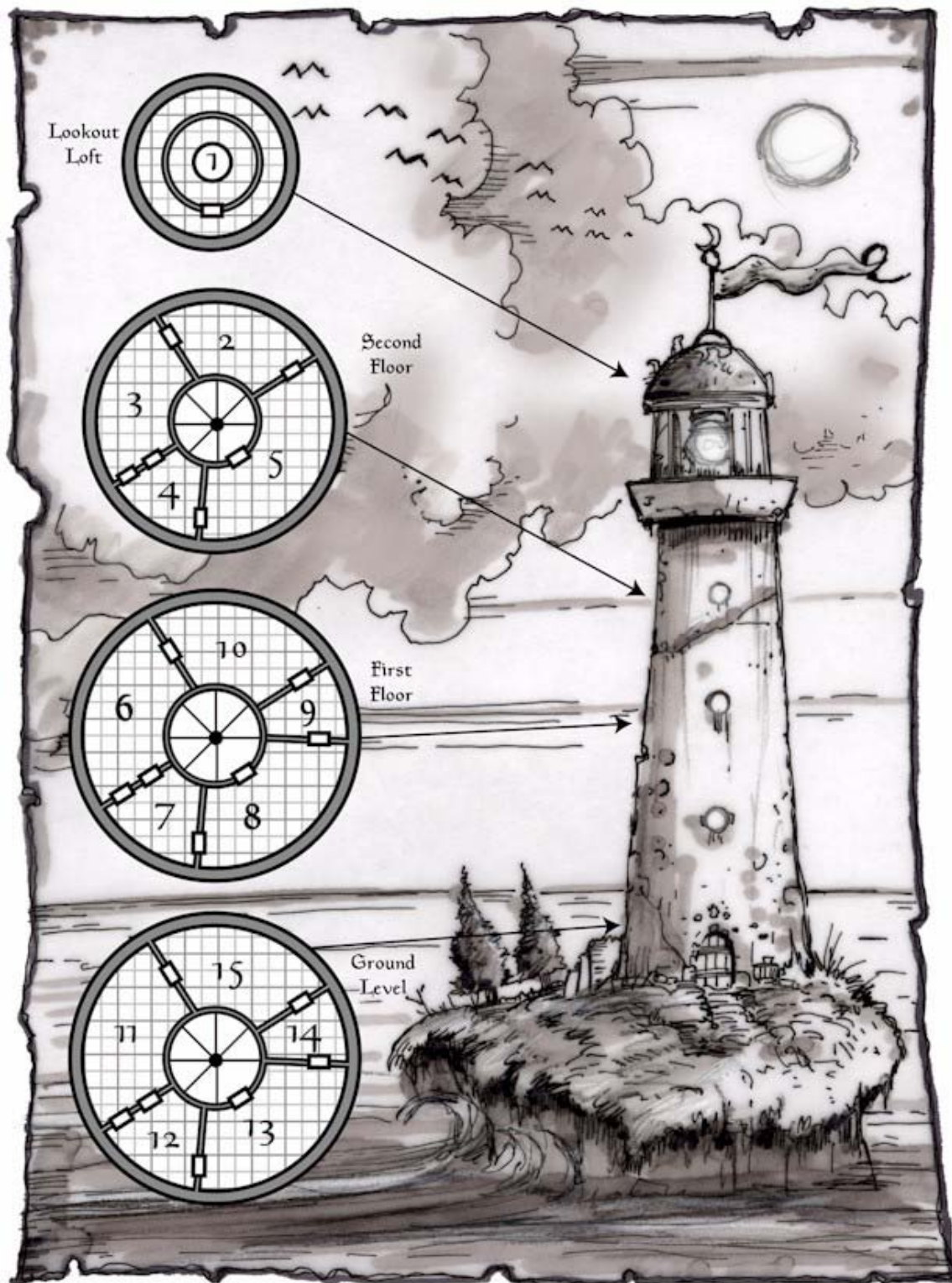
Shark, Large (3): hp 38, see *Monster Manual* page 200-201.

The cabin where Ferrina is found is the one that the whole family used, and there are some documents remaining to help the characters determine where the family was going and what they were planning to settle there. The documents, on parchment, don't tear if they are kept underwater and handled carefully, but if they are taken out of water they should be treated as very wet paper.

When the remains enter the harbor of the city they intended to travel to (and you get to decide where that is, but don't make it too far away), a quiet sigh escapes Ferrina and she dissolves into light and mist and dissipates. No one will be there to see her do so, but she does. The remains can then be buried anywhere. The PCs can keep the wand with no fear of retribution at this point, as well.

The Cliffhanger Ends

With the ghost gone, the lighthouse eventually becomes functional again, and the characters journey elsewhere to seek adventure. Or, you might allow the characters to keep the lighthouse as their base of operations, but the surrounding countries would like it to fulfill its purpose, and contest the characters' claim to it if they don't agree to staff it and have the light operated nightly.



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