



AMAZING ENCOUNTERS & PLACES

VOL I

PREVIEW: THE SKY ISLES



Challenge your Party with the Sky Isles!



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QUICK INTRO

Amazing Encounters & Places is the first volume of a series of books which will provide you with drop-in, setting-neutral locations to enrich your game. Each of the eight locations, which are based on terrain environments, will feature six independent encounters which can be optionally tied together through an overarching plot. This preview features a mountain location in full.

Lore. A short, descriptive text which presents information about its background and important events.

Overarching Plot. While every encounter can be run on its own, an optional plot is suggested in case you want to give more depth to the location. This plot also contains an additional final encounter to provide closure.

Encounters. Six encounters are provided, each set in different areas of the location. For ease of use, all creatures, NPCs, and magic items are described within the encounter.

SCALING

Anytime you see a series of four numbers separated by “/”, it means that the presented information varies according to the tier of play. The first number represents tier one and the last one represents tier 4: T1 / T2 / T3 / T4. Find below some examples:

DC 12 / 14 / 16 / 18
50 / 100 / 500 / 200 gp
2 / 4 / 6 / 8 hit points

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THE SKY ISLES



Recommended Tier: 3

FEW HAVE EVER SEEN THE EARTH MOTES THAT make up the Sky Isles thousands of feet above the ground, but those fortunate ones will never forget the sight. Reaching this amazingly beautiful place is a challenge; a visitor must climb the tallest mountain and from there, make their way upward from one floating rock to another. Shining white clouds mostly obscure the land beneath the Isles, although a few openings allow stray sunbeams to reach the earth. The largest earth mote is home to the little village of Neverdark; surrounded by luminous clouds and other smaller earth motes, Neverdark is constantly illuminated. Brilliant sunlight streams through the crystal clear skies above the Isles by day, and at night moonlight and starshine bathe them in soft radiance.

SECULAR SECLUSION

Centuries ago, a small group of monks was looking to restart their lives after having had their monastery burned down by a bakeneko. Resembling black cats, bakenekos are sadistic neko yokais—cat demons—who

are especially fond of arson. Many monks tried to fight the fiendish, ash-covered cat to no avail. Many perished in the attempt, and their place of meditation and training—made primarily of wood—quickly succumbed to the vile powers of the bakeneko, who laughed while sowing chaos.

The survivors traveled far away from their homes with the goal of rebuilding. Having climbed to the top of the highest mountain they could find, they found that there was still a way to the skies—quite literally. Following this path took them to the bright floating isles touching the crystal clear skies. There, they settled, using as much stone and metal as possible for building materials instead of wood.

They created the Way of the Phoenix as part of the Clan of the Phoenix so they could be prepared if any similar evil would find them again. The training is brutal, involving being subjected to fire and resisting as long as possible. With time, the Phoenix Monks, as they called themselves, perfected the practice, learning not only to resist the fire's power but to turn it to their advantage.

NEVERDARK

Under the extreme dedication and discipline of the Phoenix Monks, Neverdark prospered. Their new home being unknown to most of the rest of the world surely helped. On rare occasions, the monks received visitors skillful enough to reach the Sky Isles. A few of these travelers wanted to stay and live there, which the monks didn't object to as long as the newcomers followed their rules and way of life.

The monks live and work on rice plantations as well as growing other types of vegetables and fruits. Game is rare, with only the occasional mountain goat reaching the Isles, so they rely on trout and eggs for their protein intake. The rocky cliffs that hug the village are rich in quality stone and ore. Most trees have been felled and used to make small kitchen utensils such as bowls and plates.

Few things threaten the village; only a single attack has occurred since the bakeneko tragedy. Around a decade ago, a blue dragon hunting for the rare winged leopards that inhabit these lands tracked one to the monks' home. The dragon tried to negotiate the monks' lives in exchange for the beasts, which resulted in a ferocious confrontation. Mounted on the very beasts the dragon wished to eat, the Phoenix Monks triumphed; a sanctuary around the dragon's bones commemorates the day they stood strong for their home.

STRONG VALUES

"The strong shall respect life with unending serenity." Because of what the founders went through in the past, Phoenix Monks made sure to pass on their history and values from generation to generation. This created a small society with strong ties, its members respecting and valuing each other. The rare acts of disrespect are severely punished by leaving the offender tied by their feet upside down, pointing at the clouds below the floating island.

Calm and patience are cultivated and are qualities that most monks possess and pride themselves on. They learn to hold anger, hatred, and fear in check, only to be released during a life or death fight, which makes them fearsome combatants.

Because of their past failure, they strive for success, which makes most of them intolerant to weakness and mistakes. Everyone is allowed to make grave mistakes... once. Further failures and errors will result in the monk in question being subjected to the Test of Truth. The price of failure is death, as Neverdark has no room for weaklings.



ISOLATED LOCATION

Unlike most of the other locations presented in this supplement, the Sky Isles are difficult to randomly come across. Because of this, the first three encounters are connected and linked, assuming that a party will find it precisely by chance. There are other ways to plug this location into your game:

The party hears about the winged leopards and learns that they can be found in the Sky Isles.

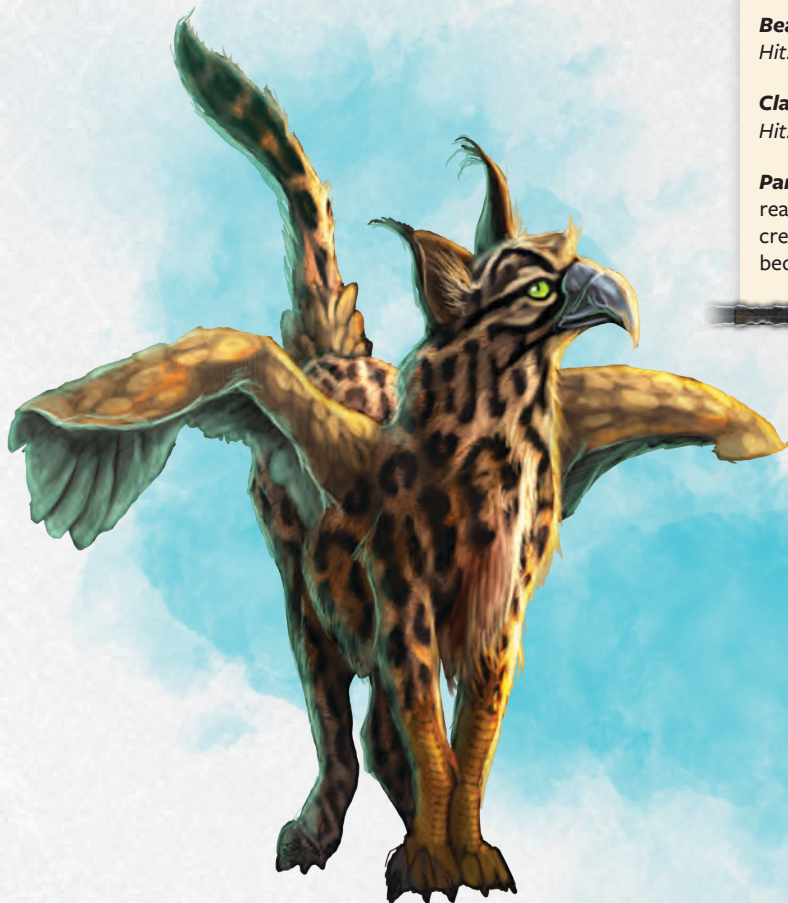
A Tier3/Tier4 party with flying resources could spot some shadows in the clouds or see the winged leopards flying towards the shadow. As a twist, similar to “The Way Up” encounter, the beasts could be under attack.

It can be used to enrich a monk’s backstory, having been the character’s training grounds.

The characters are preparing to face a powerful, fire-related foe and hear that the Phoenix Monks have mastered enduring burns, some even being able to control flames. Passing the Test of Truth could grant them the Fiery Blessing.

CREATURES AND NPCs

The stat blocks of the creatures which are used throughout most encounters are presented below:



WINGED LEOPARD

Large Monstrosity, Unaligned

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 60 (8d10 + 16)

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Challenge 2 (450 XP) **Proficiency** +2

Keen Senses. The winged leopard has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Magic Resistance. The winged leopard has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Pounce. If the winged leopard moves on the ground at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the winged leopard can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

Flyby. The winged leopard doesn’t provoke attacks of opportunity when it flies out of an enemy’s reach.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The winged leopard makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its claws.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Paralyzing Sting (Recharge 6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. The creature must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed until the end of the winged leopard’s next turn.

PHOENIX MONK APPRENTICE

Medium Humanoid (any race), Any Alignment

Armor Class 13 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +4

Skills Acrobatics +4, Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, plus any two of your choice

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Unarmored Defenses. When the apprentice is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, it can add its Wisdom modifier to its armor class (already included in the stat blocks).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The apprentice makes two attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Distracting Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage. The next attack made by the creature is made with disadvantage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Ki Senses (1/Day). The apprentice can take the Dodge action.

Ki Fighting (2/Day). The apprentice can make an unarmed strike.

PHOENIX MONK

Medium Humanoid (any race), Any Alignment

Armor Class 15 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Wis +4

Skills Acrobatics +5, Animal Handling +4, Perception +4

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Common, plus any two of your choice

Challenge 3 (700 XP) **Proficiency** +2

Unarmored Defenses. When the monk is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, it can add its Wisdom modifier to its armor class (already included in the stat blocks).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The monk makes two unarmed or quarterstaff attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Paralyzing Dart (1/Day). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

BONUS ACTIONS

Ki Senses (2/Day). The monk can take the Dodge or Dash action.

Ki Fighting (3/Day). The monk can make two unarmed strikes.

PHOENIX FIREPALM

Medium Humanoid (any race), Any Alignment

Armor Class 16 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 97 (15d8 + 30)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Animal Handling +5, Perception +5

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, plus any two of your choice

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency** +3

Unarmored Defenses. When the firepalm is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, it can add its Wisdom modifier to its armor class (already included in the stat blocks).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The firepalm makes two unarmed, quarterstaff, or fire channeling attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 11 (2d10) fire damage.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Stunning Strike (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage. The creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of the firepalm's next turn.

Fire Channeling. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 16 (3d10) fire damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Ki Senses (Recharge 5–6). As a bonus action, the firepalm can take the Dodge, Dash, or Disengage action.

Ki Fighting (Recharge 4–6). As a bonus action, the firepalm can make two unarmed strike.

REACTIONS

Deflect Missiles. The firepalm deflects or catches the missile when it's hit by a ranged weapon attack. When it does so, the damage it takes from the attack is reduced by 1d10 + 4. If it reduces the damage to 0, the firepalm can catch the missile if it is small enough for it to hold in one hand and it has at least one hand free. If the firepalm catches a missile in this way, it can make a ranged attack with a range of 20/60 ft. using the weapon or piece of ammunition it just caught, as part of the same reaction.

PHOENIX MAGE

Medium Humanoid (any race), Any Alignment

Armor Class 17 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 110 (20d8 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Int +8, Wis +7

Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Perception +7

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 17

Languages Common, plus any three of your choice

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP) **Proficiency** +4

Unarmored Defenses. When the mage is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, it can add its Wisdom modifier to its armor class (already included in the stat blocks).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mage makes two Unarmed, Quarterstaff or Fire and Ice Strike attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Fire and Ice Strike. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +8 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (3d10) fire damage and 13 (3d8) cold damage.

Spellcasting. The mage casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *mage hand, light*

3/day each: *mirror image, shield, gust of wind*

1/day each: *dispel magic, hypnotic pattern, wall of force*

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Ki Casting (Recharge 5–6). The mage casts a spell.

REACTIONS

Superior Reflexes. The mage adds 4 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the mage must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon. In addition, the mage can cast the *shield* spell as part of the same reaction.



MASTER PHOENIX MONK

Medium Humanoid (any race), Any Alignment

Armor Class 20 (unarmored defense)

Hit Points 162 (25d8 + 50)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +8, Con +8, Int +8, Wis +9, Cha +9

Skills Acrobatics +10, Animal Handling +10, Perception +10, Persuasion +9

Damage Resistances fire

Senses passive Perception 20

Languages Common, plus any two of your choice

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP) **Proficiency** +5

Unarmored Defenses. When the master is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, it can add its Wisdom modifier to its armor class (already included in the stat blocks). In addition, when the master makes a melee attack against a creature, it doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from that creature for the rest of the turn, whether it hits or not.

Ki-Empowered Strikes. The master's attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the master fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The master makes two Unarmed, Quarterstaff, or Fire Channeling attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage plus 22 (4d10) fire damage. If the target is a creature, it has disadvantage on its next attack.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Devastating Fire Strike (Recharge 5–6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage and 22 (4d10) fire damage. A creature subjected to this attack must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, it takes double the total damage.

Fire Channelling. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +9 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 22 (4d10) fire damage.

Paralyzing Dart (1/Day). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage. The creature must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

BONUS ACTIONS

Ki Senses. As a bonus action, the master can take the Dodge, Dash or Disengage action.

Ki Fighting. As a bonus action, the master can make two unarmed strikes.

REACTIONS

Deflect Missiles. The master deflects or catches the missile when it's hit by a ranged weapon attack. When it does so, the damage it takes from the attack is reduced by 1d10 + 4. If it reduces the damage to 0, the master can catch the missile if it is small enough for it to hold in one hand and it has at least one hand free. If the master catches a missile in this way, it can make a ranged attack with a range of 20/60 ft. using the weapon or piece of ammunition it just caught, as part of the same reaction.

Parry. The master adds 5 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the master must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The master can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The master regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Reposition. The master moves up to half its speed without provoking attacks of opportunity

Strike. The master makes a quarterstaff attack.

Stunning Strike (Costs 2 Actions). The master makes an unarmed strike. If it hits a creature, it needs to succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or become stunned until the end of the master's next turn.

Refuel (Costs 3 Actions). The master recharges its Devastating Fire Strike.



OVERARCHING PLOT — THE REENCOUNTER

Sethlok, the bakeneko who destroyed the Phoenix Monks' monastery centuries ago, has grown bored in recent years. Remembering the pleasure it experienced in the devastation, the fiend decided to find the monks again. Using its fiendish ties, it didn't take the neko yokai long to learn the monks' location.

Even with all its power, the bakeneko struggled to reach the Sky Isles to reconnoiter. Having finally reached its destination, Sethlok carefully spied on the monks, noting with amusement the ways in which the monks had adapted their way of life since the last time the bakeneko met them. Thrilled by the added challenge, the cat started crafting a plan to be the harbinger of chaos once more.

Sethlok, smarter than other creatures of its kind, intends to trick the Phoenix Monks into bringing about their own demise. By calling in favors earned over its long life, the yokai planted false information that convinced the monks that their ancient enemy had grown stronger and had located the monks' new

home. The second part of the plot involves deceiving the monks into believing that the Golden Phoenix, a fabulous creature from an old myth, could help them against the upcoming threat from the bakeneko. Ancient legends tell that this legendary being has the power to generate a fire so intense that it can defeat ancient red dragons and fire elementals, and even melt stone. The monks would think the phoenix would be the perfect means to end a bakeneko's life.

However, what the monks don't know—but Sethlok does—is that the Golden Phoenix has become corrupted, turning into a yokai itself, becoming a Yokai Phoenix. The bakeneko can already gleefully picture the monks' desperation at the sight of their home being reduced to ashes once more.

Kayden, the leader of the Phoenix Monks, is determined to stop Sethlok this time, resorting to desperate measures to ensure that their home will not fall again.

ENCOUNTERS OVERVIEW

Name	Description	Type	Location
The Way Up	Playful winged leopards perched atop earth motes	Exploration/Combat	A mountain top
The Skywalk	Bridge that takes people to Neverdark	Exploration/Combat	Earth motes
A Sight for Sore Eyes	Welcome to Neverdark!	Exploration/Combat/Social	Neverdark
Show Some Respect	A peaceful shrine, but not quite	Exploration/Combat/Social	Neverdark/Earth motes
The Hunt	The black goat is spotted and hunted	Exploration/Combat/Social	Neverdark/Earth motes
The Test of Truth	No room for weaknesses	Exploration/Combat/Social	Neverdark
The Fiery Incantation	An act of desperation	Combat/Social	Neverdark/Fireborn Monastery

The Way Up. While at the top of a mountain, the party comes across flying earth motes with a few winged leopards eating berries from bushes growing on one of them. The leopards look at the party and fly away if the characters try to approach, teasing the party to follow them as they move from one mote to the other.

The Skywalk. After climbing and reaching their way up, the party arrives at a green bridge made of floating stones. The challenge is to cross this puzzle-like bridge and reach the marvelous home of the Phoenix Monks.

A Sight for Sore Eyes. Upon arriving at Neverdark, the characters are welcomed by the spiritual leader, who states that they can stay only if they agree to their rules: “The strong shall respect life with unending serenity.” This encounter is very open and allows the party to explore the village, providing opportunities for all three pillars of adventuring: combat, exploration, and social interactions.

The Refreshing Shrine. While the party is visiting this gorgeous shrine and interacting with an NPC, one of the Neverdarkans is taken there to receive their punishment for an infraction. The party can watch the scene or try to intervene.

The Hunt. The characters hear about the famed black goat that has been spotted a few times, but no one has managed to kill it. The leader’s son, who tried and failed once, now feels confident that he can hunt it down. He invites the party to join him and get to know a bit more about the Sky Isles.

The Test of Truth. One of the Neverdarkans, or even one of the characters, is subjected to the test, which attracts the attention of the whole community. If a Neverdarkan is the one being tested, they’ll plead for one of the characters to act as their Champion in this incredible challenge.

Plot Encounter — The Fiery Incantation. This last encounter is when Kayden tries to use one of the characters in the sacrifice needed as part of the incantation, or where, failing that, he sacrifices himself. The goal is to summon the Golden Phoenix and control it to help in the fight against Sethlok. Regardless of the outcome of the ritual, Sethlok will strike the monks and the party can decide who they want to help.

THE WAY UP

Encounter Type: Exploration/Combat

Encounter Overview: While exploring a mountaintop, the party notices earth motes that had been hidden by clouds. Perched atop these floating rocks are beautiful winged leopards, who watch the party and act as if they want to play with the characters.

Encounter Location: Anywhere near the top of a mountain.

BACKGROUND

The earth motes that lead to the Sky Isles are usually hidden from sight by thick clouds, only becoming visible on rare occasions when strong winds blow the clouds away. The Phoenix Monks raise the winged leopards to be their mounts but allow them a lot of freedom to roam around. The leopards love exploring and playing in various places on these earth motes. If they spot people, they’ll want to interact and play catch with them.

Overarching Plot: Alternatively, the beasts have been instructed to attract possible travelers to Neverdark, as Kayden assumes that whoever manages to reach the Sky Isles should be great candidates for a role in the incantation.

THE ENCOUNTER

When the party is up in the mountains, read or paraphrase the following:

The clouds that surrounded the peak you’ve climbed are blown away by a strong wind, revealing several flying rocks covered with lush vegetation. A flock of birds takes off from one of them and on another you notice a couple of large, winged leopards, their yellow fur shining in the sunlight. They are staring at you, and they wave their tails up once, pause, and start waving them up and down.

Below are some checks the party may want to make when faced with this situation:

- A successful DC 11 / 13 / 15 / 17 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that this tail-waving usually means that a feline is happy.
- A successful DC 13 / 15 / 17 / 19 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a character to notice that the earth motes are connected by thick ropes.
- A successful DC 15 / 16 / 17 / 18 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check allows a character to gain the winged leopard's trust, allowing them to get close enough to touch the beast before it flies away (see below).

The creatures stick around until the party approaches them. If they don't, the winged leopards fly toward the party, whistling happily and acting as if they want to play. After a few attempts to interact, the winged leopards fly into the clouds among the earth motes. A successful DC 15 / 16 / 17 / 18 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that it's unusual that the beasts flew up, as they're already at the top of the mountain.

Since the winged leopard is a monstrosity, any beast-related spell such as *animal friendship* will fail. Attempting to communicate with them is difficult, although certain characters may realize that these creatures seem to be in a playful mood.

THE CHASE

Assuming that the creatures piqued the party's interest, the winged leopards allow the party to get close and then fly away while making whistling sounds and wagging their tails. Anytime the party is lagging behind, they'll land on a rock and patiently wait for them, waving their tails up and down.

Navigating the earth motes is not an easy task, but the Phoenix Monks have made this easier by setting up rope paths which greatly help. Ascending the ropes takes the form of a skill challenge. Each character must take one action on their turn, describing how they want to contribute to the group's success in this effort.

Success: The party reaches the top earth mote marked a J on the map, which is the one that leads to Neverdark (see "The Skywalk").

Condition: Succeeding four times in their group checks before failing three times. If half the group meets the set DC, it counts as a success.

Failure: One character falls; you can randomly determine which one, or pick the one that makes the most sense for the situation (see "Falling").



Condition: Failing three group checks before reaching the fourth success.

DC: 12 / 14 / 16 / 18

Possible Skills: Athletics, Acrobatics, Perception, Nature

Group Check: A success on a group check means that the party used their own abilities, skills, and knowledge to help each other to reach higher earth motes. A failure means that the party struggled and didn't progress further.

Falling: If a character falls, one of the winged leopards dives to save them, carrying them up to the bridge (the Skywalk) that leads to Neverdark, and waits with the character for the rest of the party to catch up.

USING THE MAP

Alternatively, if you prefer to run this in a more visual and direct way, the map below can help you. The platform on the southwest corner is the mountaintop and is considered ground zero for height calculation purposes. All earth motes are floating above it, and their current height is indicated on the map.

The winged leopards will wait for the characters at mote J, which leads to the Skywalk (see "The Skywalk" encounter). Without flying, there are two main ways to traverse from one mote to another:

Climb ropes (cr): while these could potentially help save time, some of the ropes are set in dangerous locations, where a mistake could mean a fatal fall. Climbing such ropes is also more difficult. Climbing such ropes requires a successful DC 15 / 17 / 19 / 21 Athletics check.

Suspended ropes (sr): these ropes are tied around tree trunks, or in some occasions, fixed by a small wooden pillar. Using these ropes to cross from one earth mote to another is slightly easier, requiring a successful DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Athletics check.

In case of a failure, allow a character to roll a DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a success the character manages to grab the rope before falling. If they fail a second time on the same rope, the character falls (see Falling under "The Chase").

THE THREAT

At any point during the climb, the winged leopards and the party may be attacked by flying enemies. Check the group's composition in the table below.

SCALING COMBAT

Tier	Level Range	Creatures
1	1-2	1 manticore*
1	3-4	2 manticores
2	5-7	1 chimera, 1 manticore
2	8-10	3 chimeras
3	11-13	3 chimeras, 3 manticores
3	14-16	1 adult blue dragon
4	17-18	1 adult red dragon
4	19-20	2 adult blue dragons

* If the party is at 1st level, remove the multiattack feature from the manticore

Their focus is the winged leopards—which will defend themselves—but the attacker(s) will engage the characters if they intervene in the hunt. The attacker(s) will flee if the situation goes against them. If the party helps the winged leopards, they are thankful and will allow any character to mount them. The leopards won't become their companions, though, and will only allow a character to ride until they reach Neverdark.

OUTCOMES

Some of the possible outcomes are listed here:

The group ignores the winged leopards.

The party attempts to follow them, succeeding in reaching the top mote.

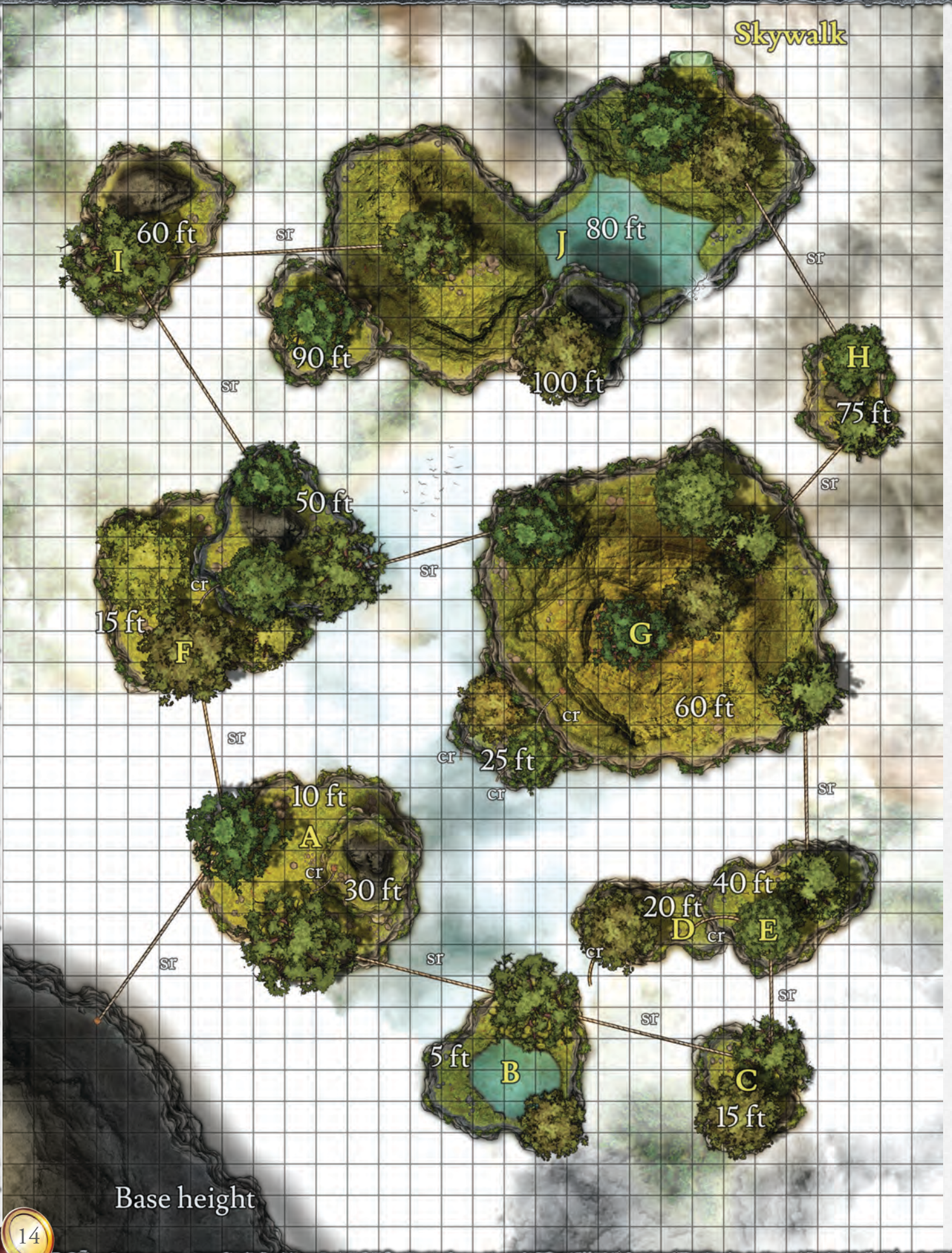
The party attempts to follow them, failing to reach the top without help.

The adventurers fight off the threat, saving the winged leopards.

REWARDS

If there is interaction with the winged leopards, award the group with XP for an easy encounter. If they reach the top on their own, award the group with XP for a hard encounter.

Skywalk



Base height

THE SKYWALK

Encounter Type: Exploration/Puzzle/Combat

Encounter Overview: After climbing and reaching their way up through the earth motes, the party arrives at a suspended green bridge that leads to a massive earth mote in the distance.

Encounter Location: Sky Isles earth motes

BACKGROUND

In order to protect themselves from unwanted intruders, the few monks who studied magic created a bridge that would ensure that only skilled people could reach Neverdark. Thus, the bridge offers challenges to people attempting to cross it.

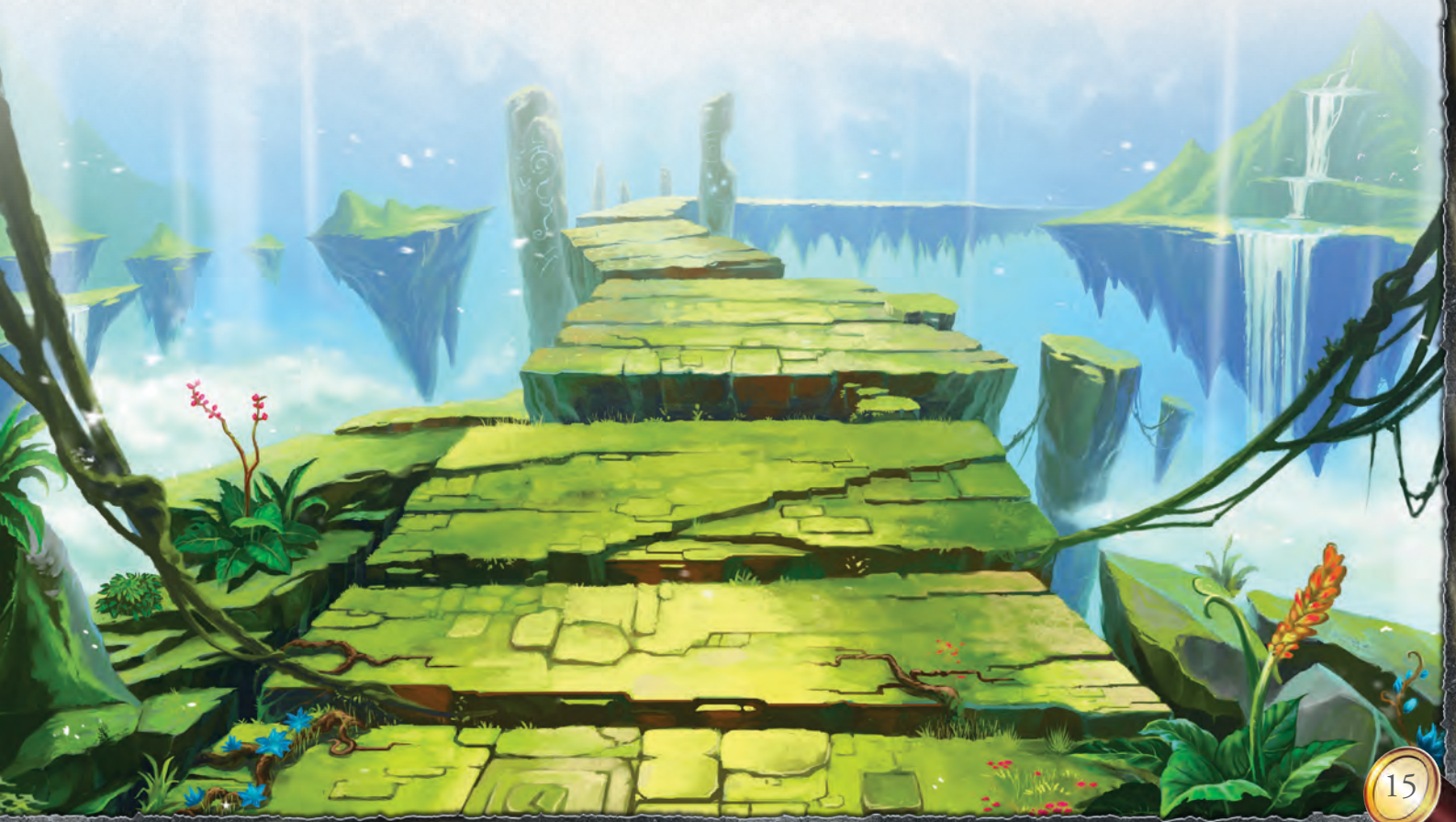
Overarching Plot: The monks, in an effort to increase their chances of attracting the type of people they need for the incantation, added a wooden sign that reads: "Ahead lies the shining Neverdark, with beauty beyond imagination. If you can reach us, we will welcome you. Good luck."

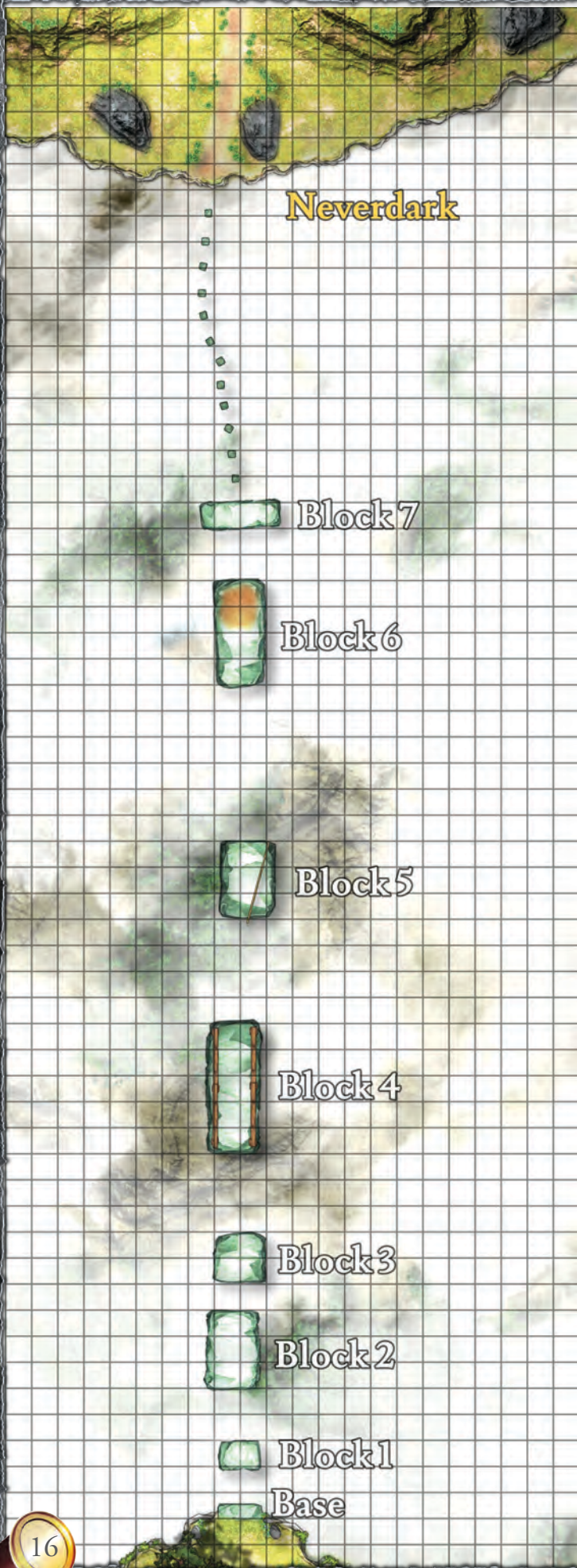
THE ENCOUNTER

At this point, the winged leopards interact with the party one last time, as if to bid them farewell before flying away to Neverdark. If any character has managed to befriend one of the creatures, the leopard accompanies that character, circling above and seemingly cheering as that character progresses towards Neverdark. Upon reaching the bridge at mote J, read or paraphrase the following:

Ahead of you, under the clear sky and above the white clouds, lies a bridge made of green stone blocks, floating like the rocks on which you currently stand. The bridge connects this earth mote to a massive island of green that has a tall mountain and streams. Even from this distance, you can spot buildings as well.

The bridge is made of seven blocks of green stone of varying lengths, all 10 feet wide. Each block is separated from the next by a gap, the width of which varies. Vegetation grows on the blocks and long, thick vines descend as much as thirty feet below the bridge level. At the base of the bridge is an inscription engraved in the rock that reads: "One step at a time." Any character who decides to spend a minute observing the bridge can attempt a DC 15 / 17 / 19 / 21 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, that character gains advantage in all checks to cross the bridge. The first time a character sets foot on the edge, Blocks 2 through 7 quickly sink, vanishing from view into the clouds.





THE BRIDGE

Each block behaves in a different way, and the way they work is explained below. If for any reason a character falls, allow that character to roll a DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the character plummets to the ground, thousands of feet below. On a success, the character grabs a vine and can climb back to the bridge by making a successful DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Strength (Athletics) check. A failure on such a check triggers the Dexterity saving throw above, once more. A second failure results in the character falling. Each block appears in sequence when the previous block is reached, rising from the clouds at impressive speed and stopping suddenly at the bridge level. Any time one character reaches a new block, the gap they just traversed fills with fast-rising stones, which make it possible for the rest of the party to safely cross and join that character.

BASE

Length: NA

Distance to Next Block: 10 ft.

Located 10 feet away from the base of the bridge, it can be reached by any character whose Strength score is greater than 10 by simply jumping to it. A character with a Strength score less than 10 must succeed on a DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Strength (Athletics) check to make the jump with a running start; without the running start, the check is made at disadvantage.

BLOCK 1

Length: 5 ft.

Distance to Next Block: 10 ft.

Repeat the same process as from the base to Block 1. As there is no space for a running start, any check is at disadvantage.

BLOCK 2

Length: 15 ft.

Distance to Next Block: 5 ft.

The following words are engraved in the stone: "Again. Trust your heart. Have a little faith. All will be well." Block 3 doesn't actually rise once Block 2 is reached. Its position is only 5 feet away from Block 2, and it will materialize under the character's feet when they are about to land.

Block 2 is covered with moss, which has allowed small blue mushrooms to grow. A successful DC 13 / 14 / 15 / 16 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals that these mushrooms are edible. If the result exceeds the DC by 5, the character also knows that the mushrooms have beneficial properties, and were used in the past by people who needed courage to take bold actions. There are five *emboldening blues* growing on this block.

EMBOLDENING BLUE

When consumed, this small, blue mushroom imbues the consumer with added courage, boldness, and confidence for one hour. In addition, the consumer gains the benefits of the *heroism* spell for one hour, gaining 4/8/12/16 temporary hit points. The mushrooms spoil 24 hours after being harvested.

BLOCK 3

Length: 10 ft.

Distance to Next Block: 15 ft.

For characters who can't make a 15-foot jump, this block can be pulled towards Block 4 by using a rope to a small pillar that stands at the southern edge of Block 4. Lassoing the pillar requires a character to make a ranged attack against an AC of 13. On a hit, the character can pull Block 3 towards Block 4 by making a successful DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Strength (Athletics) check.

BLOCK 4

Length: 25 ft.

Distance to Next Block: 20 ft.

The east and west edges of this block are protected by wooden parapets. A successful DC 12 / 14 / 16 / 18 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that the top part of the parapet is tied by ropes with knots that can be unknotted. The parapets can then be disassembled and their sturdy boards can be placed between Blocks 4 and 5 to create a makeshift bridge.

Crossing the board bridge requires a successful DC 12 / 13 / 14 / 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Guidelines on failures are mentioned above under "The Bridge." The parapet pillars are solidly fixed in the stone and can support up to 300 pounds, so the crossing character can tie a rope securely to a pillar and use it as a safety line. Once a character reaches Block 5, the impact of the rising stones filling the gap scatters the wooden boards and they are lost.

BLOCK 5

Length: 15 ft.

Distance to Next Block: 30 ft.

Lying on the ground is a 15-foot-long pole made of flexible bamboo. With a running jump of 15 feet, a character can double the distance of a long jump.

BLOCK 6

Length: 20 ft.

Distance to Next Block: 10 ft.

Once any character reaches the center of this block, one or more creatures rise at the northern end over a pool of mud and bar the way to the next block. Consult the table below to determine what creatures are encountered. The pool of mud is magic and emanates conjuration magic.

SCALING COMBAT

Tier	Level Range	Creatures
1	1–2	4 mud mephits
1	3–4	2 gargoyles
2	5–7	1 earth elemental and 4 mud mephits
2	8–10	1 clay golem
3	11–13	1 clay golem and 4 gargoyles
3	14–16	1 stone golem
4	17–18	1 iron golem
4	19–20	1 iron golem*

* This iron golem has twice the hit points and deals twice the damage of a standard iron golem.

BLOCK 7

Length: 5 ft.

Distance to Neverdark: 60 ft.

Engraved in the stone on the ground is the following message: "Almost there. Do not hesitate. Do not flinch. Chase after your goal. One step after the other. Go quickly into the air."

This block leads to Neverdark's earth mote and its gap is filled with 12 thin circular floating stones, each 1 foot in diameter. The distance from one such stone to the next is 4 feet. To cross this gap, a character must take the Dash action and leap from one stone to the other. Each time a stone is touched, it trembles and falls into the clouds below. If a character isn't dashing, they must roll a DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a success, they jump to the next one but if they don't start dashing, they must repeat the saving throw on each stone. On a failure, they fall to the ground far below.

Once a character reaches Neverdark, the last gap is filled with a rising stone, allowing safe passage for everyone else.

FLYING PARTIES

If the whole party has flying capabilities and they decide to fly to Neverdark, bypassing this whole challenge, run the combat described in "The Threat" under "The Way Up" encounter.

OUTCOMES

Some of the possible outcomes are listed here:

- The group doesn't manage to cross the bridge.
- The group struggles to cross the bridge.
- The group crosses the bridge without major issues.
- One or more characters fall.

REWARDS

If the party reaches Neverdark, award the group with XP for a deadly encounter.

A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES

Encounter Type: Social/Exploration/Combat

Encounter Overview: The party reaches the village of Neverdark and can explore this beautiful place, interact with its inhabitants, and explore its surroundings. Upon arriving, the characters are welcomed by the leader Kayden, who states that they can only stay if they agree to their rules: “The strong shall respect life with unending serenity.”

Encounter Location: Neverdark

BACKGROUND

The Phoenix Monks are excellent hosts to the worthy guests who can reach their secluded home. As long as the party agrees to follow the monks’ rules, they are welcome in Neverdark.

Overarching Plot: During the interactions and events described in this encounter, the party may notice subtle clues indicating that something could be off. While most of the monks agree with the Golden Phoenix plan, a small minority don’t. Even the dissenters, however, will not betray their fellows and will be hard to sway.



THE ENCOUNTER

Neverdark is a village with a few buildings scattered about the grassy lands of this massive earth mote and a few structures—including the monastery—built into the natural walls and heights of the tall cliff face that looms over the mainland. The party can reach the village proper by following a subtle, natural trail of earth and gravel that leads from the bridge to the settlement. After allowing the characters to look around for a few moments, read or paraphrase the following:

After a short walk on the much-appreciated solid ground of this enormous land mass, you can see ahead of you a beautiful field of lush grass. A stream twists through the grassland and splits near the edge of the mote, producing a few waterfalls that quickly become a soft rain above the clouds. A rainbow arcs close to a massive, multiple-level rocky hill with grass on top, and a monastery stands atop the middle platform, overlooking the village below.

Kayden (referred to as they/they), in the company of four other monks, approaches the party. They are dressed in spotless white robes, the edges of the sleeves depicting furious red flames. Most monks here are bald, as hair is highly flammable. In their training, the monks learn not to fear fire, but they also learn to respect it. Characters with a passive Perception 15 or higher will notice that all five monks have subtle burn scars on various parts of the body, such as their hands, feet, face, neck, etc.

Kayden is older than the rest and once they reach the party, they join their palms in a greeting movement, slightly bowing while smiling. The other monks do the same. Kayden says in a tranquil voice:

“Brave travelers, we welcome you to our home. We apologize for any trouble or harm you may have experienced while traveling the path that led you here. We understand how Neverdark can be a difficult place to reach. I am Kayden, the spiritual leader of the Clan of the Phoenix. You are our most welcome and honored guests and you will be treated with utmost respect during your stay here. All we ask is that you return the same courtesy and agree to follow our guiding principle: ‘The strong shall respect life with unending serenity.’ Is this something you can agree with?”

If the party refuses, Kayden apologizes for their trouble to have come here for nothing and asks them to leave; since they have successfully reached Neverdark, the bridge is still intact for safe passage back. If they agree, Kayden accompanies them until they reach the village proper, briefly explaining the overall features of Neverdark (see below). Upon arriving at the village, Kayden says that they have business to attend to and wishes the characters a delightful stay.

Since these encounters can be adapted to parties of any level, an exact number is not provided for the Neverdark population. Assume that there are some dozens of monks of various levels of experience for tier 1, and increase that number for higher tiers, possibly reaching over a hundred monks. Most teenagers and adults are **phoenix monk apprentices**, while some could be **phoenix monks**, and a few are **phoenix firepalms**. If the party causes any trouble at Neverdark, they’ll be asked to leave. If they hurt anyone or destroy anything, the monks ask them to surrender and face the Test of Truth. Refusing to surrender results in a fight, with the majority of able monks helping to defend their own. It’s a fight few parties can hope to survive.

Overall, most people behave quite positively towards the party as Neverdark rarely gets visitors. Many Neverdarkans may potentially approach the characters and chat with them, asking some of the questions below, but not limited to those:

- Where are you from?
- How have things been below the clouds?
- How was the way up?
- Why are you here?
- What do you seek?

LOCATIONS

The main locations of Neverdark are briefly described below. Feel free to further enrich this village in any way you see fit. This is not meant to be a fully developed gazetteer, so the information presented here is the minimum needed to run the Sky Isles adventure. Besides the named location below, Neverdark includes rice fields to the west and some houses and other buildings in the center near the Shading Hill, as the Neverdarkans call the tall cliffs that the village hugs; other locations may be added as needed.

FAIR OF COLORS

Since Neverdark is actually a community, this market’s purpose is to serve the people. Here, the Neverdarkans can find vegetables, rice, fruits, meat, and eggs, among other goods. The place gets its name from the multi-colored stalls and the paper lanterns that complement the natural lighting from the star-filled night sky. One of the mages has *potions of healing* which they offer to visitors at double the usual price.

Overarching Plot: At this point, everyone in Neverdark is aware of the plan to fight off Sethlok. While in the market, the party can notice people reacting in different ways to their presence by making a successful DC 14 / 16 / 18 / 20 Wisdom (Insight) check. Most people seem to be curious and happy that



the characters have arrived, but a few show concern. If approached, none of these people will willingly reveal why they are really concerned; instead they prevaricate and tell the characters that they fear for Neverdark's safety, as the more people know about the Sky Isles's location, the higher the chances are that Sethlok will return. This is a half-truth, so if a character asks for an Insight check, roll the Deception check for the Neverdarkan with advantage. If asked who Sethlok is, they explain the information provided in the Background paragraph above. The characters can try to approach one of these people in a quieter location to ask for more details. If they succeed at a DC 17 / 19 / 21 / 23 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check, the Neverdarkan will explain in general terms that there are rumors that Sethlok will soon strike again and that Kayden needs the body of a powerful creature to perform an incantation that will allow them to summon the Golden Phoenix.

DOTTED STABLES

This is where winged leopards are tamed and trained, which is not complicated, given their docile nature. However, these creatures are very sensitive and will break free from their masters if the leopards feel that they can't trust them anymore. The stables and its staff handle fifteen **winged leopards**. They aren't for sale; the only way to acquire one is for the party to gain Neverdark's favor. Below are a few ways to do it:

- Helping Neverdark against Sethlok as part of "The Reencounter."
- Willingly take part in the Test of Truth and succeed.

TAMING A WINGED LEOPARD

For the first day, the tamer will help the character form a bond with the winged creature. The character must succeed on a DC 10 / 12 / 14 / 16 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check made with advantage because of the tamer's help. A failure means that the character must wait until the next day to try again. After the first success, the character must succeed nine times on the same check, being able to try once a day. Once the character attains ten successes, the character and the winged leopard have successfully bonded and the creature will allow the character to mount it.

SKY GROUNDS

This small arena made of thick glass reflects the shining skies and is a well-frequented spot in Neverdark. This is where Neverdarkans hone their fighting skills and master the art of the Way of the Phoenix. During daylight hours, the arena is usually occupied by combatants practicing their art.

FIREBORN MONASTERY

Located atop the central platform of the Shading Hill is the monastery where all Neverdarkans spend a good part of their childhood and teenage years studying the ways of the Phoenix. Even though Kayden is assisted by two **master phoenix monks** in the teachings of mind, emotions, and body, Kayden likes to be as involved as possible, and so they are.

Overarching Plot: Kayden is working on the incantation's preparation, so they'll be busy in their office working out the details. If the party visits the monastery, the master twins Aryana and Qaeth will attend them.

MEDITATION COURT

An open area surrounded by flowering hedges has a large brazier in its center with an everburning flame blazing silently. The partial roof of this place is made from dragon's bones, and a dragon's massive skull rests in the court. People come and go throughout the day to sit and meditate in the presence of the Majestic Flame or the Remembrance Skull. A creature who takes a short rest there gains 5 / 10 / 15 / 20 temporary hit points.

Overarching Plot: Most people here are meditating, oftentimes with their eyes closed, and in silence. However if the party walks around, they come across an old woman whispering some words as part of her meditation. Any character with a passive Perception of 16 / 18 / 20 / 22 or higher, or any character who succeeds on a DC 16 / 18 / 20 / 22 Wisdom (Perception) check hears the words "provide," "strength," and "difficult times." If anyone inquires about this, the woman becomes hostile at the profound disrespect shown by the party and refuses to further interact with them.

SHADING HILL

A multi-level rocky hill covered with grass, into which some buildings have been constructed. Its name refers to the welcome shadow it casts in this ever-bright place. While most Neverdarkans greatly enjoy the sun, many still like to walk under the protection of this cliff to get some cooler air.

ALL-SEEING TOWERS

Built on top of the Shading Hill, these towers house a few skilled individuals who operate ballistas and wield longbows with which they fire paralyzing arrows. The paralysis is caused by coating the arrowheads in a substance that the monks harvest from the winged leopards, a process so lengthy that they use their paralyzing missiles sparingly. Replace the Paralyzing Dart attack by a Paralyzing Longbow attack, as follows:

Paralyzing Longbow (5/Day). Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 200/600 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage. The creature must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

These monks' primary goal is to defend Neverdark from possible flying threats. The towers were constructed years ago after the blue dragon attack. Each of the three towers is staffed by a **phoenix firepalm** and a **phoenix monk**. The latter is trained to operate the ballista.

Overarching Plot: Because of the Sethlok threat, the number of monks in the towers is doubled and supplemented with a **phoenix mage**, whose goal is to focus on hindering the yokai's movement.

IMPORTANT NPCs

The population of Neverdark can be dozens to over a hundred people. You can decide the race predominance, if any, and anything about specific cultural aspects. In general, people are friendly, calm, and disciplined. Because of their training, failure is a liability. They are forgiving people when someone makes their first mistake, but can be very intolerant with repeated errors.

KAYDEN

LN, any gender/any pronouns/any humanoid race, master phoenix monk

Completely dedicated to their people, Kayden greatly prides themselves on the new life and home their people created. They live for the Clan and its people, having sworn to protect Neverdark with their life. No one has ever witnessed Kayden lose control over any situation, but the people are unaware of how worried Kayden is about a possible return of Sethlok.

Overarching Plot: When Kayden recently received word of Sethlok, through rumors planted by Sethlok itself, the leader started to look for alternatives, trying to keep the information only to themselves and the two masters. Kayden had almost given up hope of finding anything to counter the threat when they discovered a book in the monastery library that mentioned the fabled Golden Phoenix, a powerful being with flames so hot that they can kill fire elementals and melt rocks. Since then, Kayden has been obsessed with finding a way to summon this being to help the Clan, should the rumors about Sethlok's return be true. The spiritual leader of the Phoenix Monks is willing to do anything to ensure that the Clan will never be a victim of that neko yokai once again.

ARYANA AND QAETH

LN female (she/her) and male (he/him) human, **master phoenix monks**

These twins are Kayden's most trusted companions, the trio having a strong bond. They spend a good part of the day together and all seem to share the same opinions and ideas. Like Kayden, the twins have made the Clan their life focus. They live for the work, although they make a great effort to be with the people, their fellow companions, and interact with other Neverdarkans whenever possible.

Dancing is one of Aryana's passions, and she loves to practice her dance to the sounds of her brother's lute. Qaeth greatly enjoys playing it, and the twins often perform in the moonlight, gathering many Neverdarkans who drink tea and sing and dance with them.

Overarching Plot: While Qaeth agrees completely with Kayden's plans and ideas, Aryana is not as convinced. She expressed her concerns once but was reprimanded by the other two, so she now keeps her different views to herself, fearing the punishment she could receive if she insists on the topic.

THREYSS

LG male (he/they), any race, **phoenix firepalm**

Threyss is Kayden's son and the responsibility and stress of being the only son of the spiritual leader weighs heavily upon him. One of the best hunters of Neverdark, Threyss enjoys reading in his free time. He's embarrassed that he failed to bring back the famed black goat to Neverdark the last time it was spotted.

Overarching Plot: Kayden told their son about the plan, and Threyss is anxious to prove himself after having once failed the community with the black goat.

EVENTS

Below are some activities you can present to the party in order to give them an opportunity to learn more about the people and place.

FRIENDLY SPARRING

The monks are excited to receive visitors and challenge them to a fight at the Sky Grounds. This news spreads quickly and many Neverdarkans go there to watch. One of the monks promises to teach the party how to be strong against fire. The monk stat block depends on the party tier of play. In addition, since each tier of play has a wide range of levels, adjustments to their hit points and damage can be made. The monk provides a quarterstaff to the character, if they need a weapon. If a spellcaster would like to answer the challenge, use the "Spellcaster Character" column instead.

SCALING COMBAT

Tier	Melee Character	Spellcaster Character
1	phoenix monk apprentice	acolyte or priest
2	phoenix monk	mage
3	phoenix firepalm	phoenix mage
4	master phoenix monk	archmage

For melee combat, the rules are simple:

1. No lethal damage
2. No ranged attacks
3. The combatants must keep both feet on the battleground or they lose
4. Any combatant can surrender by kneeling and acknowledging defeat

For spellcaster combat, the first rule above is replaced by "No destructive spells," meaning that spells like *fireball*, *lightning bolt*, and other spells that could either harm the environment or hurt people, are forbidden. Also, rule 2 is excluded. Spellcasters will also wield quarterstaves.

Strategy: The monk tries to push the opponent out of the arena and moves around the battlefield to lure the opponent closer to the border and make it easier to follow this strategy. If the opponent isn't falling for this trick, the monk faces them head on while still trying to move around them.

If the character is victorious, the monk—whose name is Ylxa— offers to train with that character for two hours per day for seven days. Once this training is complete, the character gains the Fiery Blessing (see sidebar).

FIERY BLESSING

The character receives a boon that lasts for 10 days. During this time, the character gains resistance to fire damage. Once the boon has expired, the character gains the use of an *absorb elements* spell with no time limit. Once used, all benefits of the blessing are gone.



THE TOP OF THE WORLD

A teenager called Cassel, thrilled by the presence of outsiders, offers to take the party to the top of the Shading Hill, telling them that the view is mesmerizing. If the party isn't willing to climb up, the boy also mentions that there are some rare flowers up there, and while they aren't to be harvested in quantity, no one will notice if they take one each. Since people are generally not allowed to go up there, Cassel prefers to ascend through less-frequently used routes instead of taking the stairs.

If the party agrees to follow Cassel, he'll lead the way and climb to the top via the fastest route possible, which he's already very used to. To make things simpler, ask for an Athletics group check for each of the three platforms. A success means that the party reaches the next level, be it the next platform or the top. A failure means that the party struggled to reach the next level, each character taking bludgeoning damage from multiple falls equal to 2d6 / 3d6 / 6d6 / 8d6. The DCs for each platform are as follows:

- First platform: DC 12 / 14 / 16 / 18
- Central platform: DC 13 / 15 / 17 / 19
- Top: DC 13 / 16 / 19 / 22

Three watchtowers on the top platform complicate the ascent; besides climbing, the party must avoid being caught. Cassel warns the characters about this and takes the stealthier way. If the party doesn't take precautions to avoid notice or if they are spotted while trying to sneak up, the guards call the party to approach the tower. Cassel, knowing this is his fault, surrenders and defends the group, saying that he tricked them into going up. If a fight occurs, Cassel begs the party to stop and surrender.

Succeeding in a group Stealth check is enough for the party to reach the base of the tower located at the top, which allows them to avoid the notice of the watchtower guards. The monks stationed at the towers are more watching the skies, not the ground. Cassel is right; the view is beautiful. Read or paraphrase the following:

You feel literally at the top of the world. The brilliant, crystal clear sky above you, small earth motes floating past over white clouds that look like wool...you revel in the feel of the soft grass beneath your feet. As pleasant as it is to walk atop this hill, you know that venturing too far from the tower's base could reveal your position. A few feet ahead of you are bright red flowers which deliver a tantalizing scent to your nostrils.

The flowers are called invigorating flowers. A flower can live up to 24 hours once harvested unless it's placed in a vase filled with water, in which case they live for

one week. Any creature that consumes its petals gains the benefit of an *aid* spell until their next long rest. However, instead of increasing the creature's hit points by 5, the creature gains 5 / 10 / 15 / 20 hit points.

There are no challenges in descending back to the village; they just must return via the same route.

WELCOME PARTY

Some of the Neverdarkans suggest to Aryana and Qaeth that they should throw one of their parties to celebrate the arrival of visitors, to which the twins agree.

Rumors of the fete quickly spread and the characters hear about it. People begin preparing tents and bringing food to the Sky Grounds. The twins arrive about an hour later and ask one of the Neverdarkans to escort the characters to the gathering if they aren't there yet. Refusing the invitation is seen as an act of disrespect.

Qaeth plays his lute while Aryana dances, and many people in the audience join in the singing and dancing also. All kinds of food are served, from delicious ripe fruits to meats and rice balls. Various teas round out the refreshments.

During the party, many Neverdarkans will approach the characters and interact with them. Some will ask them questions, some will invite them to dance, etc. If you haven't yet run Friendly Spar, this is an opportunity to do so.

Overarching Plot: A character who tries to scan the audience by making a successful Wisdom (Insight) check can notice similar reactions to the ones listed in the "Fair of Colors." However because of the festive nature of the situation, the DC is 16 / 18 / 20 / 22.

OUTCOMES

As this is a very open encounter in which the party is free to explore Neverdark on their own, the outcomes are unpredictable.

REWARDS

If a character wins the Friendly Spar fight, award the group with XP for a hard encounter. If they reach the top of the Shading Hill, award the group with XP for a medium encounter. If they positively interact with the monks at the Welcome Party, Aryana gives them a gem worth 250 / 500 / 1,000 / 2,000 gp. Also award the group with XP for an easy encounter.



SHOW SOME RESPECT

Encounter Type: Social/Exploration/Combat

Encounter Overview: While the party is visiting this gorgeous shrine, having the opportunity to interact with an NPC, one of the Neverdarkans is taken there to be punished for an infraction. The party can watch the scene or try to intervene.

Encounter Location: Neverdark

BACKGROUND

Considered a place for more solitary meditation as it's much less crowded than the Meditation Court, the Refreshing Shrine is equally attractive for the cooling spray from the waterfall. When the party arrives, they find only a single monk there, praying in silence. But a commotion shatters the tranquil scene when a Neverdarkan is brought to the shrine to receive the punishment reserved for those who disrespect the Clan's values.

Overarching Plot: If the party climbed the Shading Hill with Cassel and avoided detection, Kayden asks one of the monks, Yeghel, to help them with a situation to lure the party into making a mistake. Yeghel, eager to help the tribe but not completely thrilled about the plan itself, goes to a public place and starts a discussion—which quickly escalates—with an elderly monk, to force a situation in which people will witness Yeghel's disrespect. Once he is tied upside down, if the party takes the bait, Yeghel will plead for help.

THE ENCOUNTER

The Refreshing Shrine is an open cave within the Shading Hill, a hollow cylinder with no roof or solid ground, surrounded by waterfalls. In the center is a small earth mote with a shining shrine built atop it, which can be reached by traversing floating tiles. If a creature rests for 10 minutes within the shrine and comes in contact with the mist from the waterfall, they regain 1d4 / 2d4 / 3d4 / 4d4 hit points and are cured of the poisoned condition and any of its effects. The main hooks to trigger this encounter, which requires the party to be in the secluded shrine, are listed below:

1. The characters hear about the special properties of the Refreshing Shrine and may decide to investigate.
2. Sometimes winged leopards like to fly through the waterfalls and the party may spot a trio of the creatures teasing each other while flying towards the hill. Once they see the characters, they'll tease them instead, and then fly toward the shrine as if to lead them there.

Once the party arrives, the leopards fly up and out of sight.

3. The party hears the news that someone violated the Clan's rules and that proper punishment will be meted out.

If hooks 1 or 2 are used, read or paraphrase the following once the party reaches the shrine:

Soon after entering, you spot a small, white gazebo built atop a tiny earth mote which can be reached by stepping across floating stone tiles. Surrounding this gazebo are many waterfalls, their sound acting as a calming white noise. You see a person kneeling in the center of the gazebo, with their back toward you.

The person praying is a Neverdarkan named Layssa, and meeting her can go one of two ways:

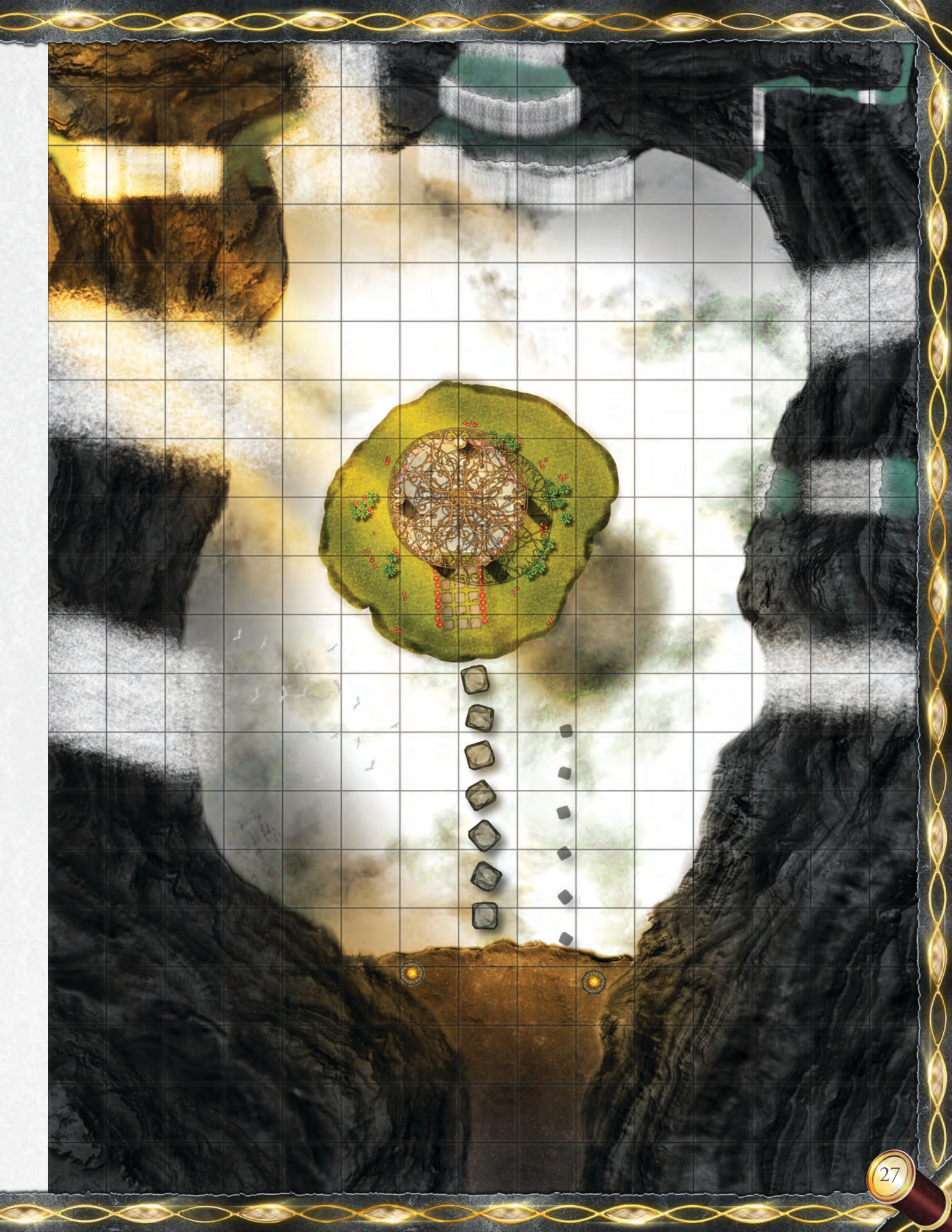
Standalone Encounter: She's praying to their god, thankful for the prosperity of their community. If interrupted, she's surprised but happy to finally see the visitors that her people have been talking about. She happily chats with the characters.

Overarching Plot: If following this plotline, she's praying for forgiveness as she's not proud of what Kayden has asked their people to do with the visitors. In this situation, if interrupted, she seems wary and nervous, but she'll never betray the Clan. Instead, she tells the characters a half-truth, mentioning the rumors of Sethlok's return.

If hooks 1 or 2 were used, after a brief roleplay with Layssa, a group of monks arrive carrying the offender; if hook 3 was used, skip the interaction with Layssa and proceed with the encounter. This person to be punished could either be Cassel if they were spotted during the "Top of the World" encounter under "A Sight for Sore Eyes," or it could be Yeghel. If anyone is meditating in the shrine, the monks ask for them to leave, and take the offender to the center of the shrine. One of the monks states that the offender has failed to live up to the Clan's standard, having committed an act of profound disrespect, and gives a rough outline of the offense (either climbing the forbidden hill or disrespecting the elderly).

The monks proceed to grab one of the chains affixed to the edge of the central mote, tying it to the offender's feet. The prisoner is gagged, then the monks throw him over the edge, where he remains suspended upside down for a day.

If the party tries to intervene, they are warned once to stand back. If the party persists, the monks attack unless one of the characters offers to take the offender's place. Consult the table below for the composition of the group of monks.



SCALING COMBAT

Tier	Level Range	Creatures
1	1–2	3 phoenix monk apprentices
1	3–4	1 phoenix monk and 2 phoenix monk apprentices
2	5–7	4 phoenix monks
2	8–10	1 phoenix monk firepalm and 2 phoenix monks
3	11–13	2 phoenix monk firepalm and 2 phoenix monks
3	14–16	2 phoenix monk firepalm and 1 phoenix mage
4	17–18	1 phoenix monk firepalm and 1 master phoenix monk
4	19–20	2 master phoenix monks

If a fight breaks out, one of the Neverdarkans goes to notify Kayden. Assuming that the party doesn't kill any monk in the process, they're forgiven, but warned that such a situation shouldn't happen again.

OUTCOMES

Some of the possible outcomes are listed below:

- The party ignores the Refreshing Shrine.
- The group goes there but doesn't interrupt Layssa.
- The characters interact with Layssa.
- The party witnessed the punishment without interfering.
- The party interferes somehow.

REWARDS

If the characters interact with Layssa, award the group with XP for an easy encounter. If they save Cassel/Yeghel from punishment, award the group with XP for a hard encounter. If they deal with the monks without killing any of them, award the group with XP for a deadly encounter.

THE HUNT

Encounter Type: Social/Exploration

Encounter Overview: The characters hear about the famed black goat which has been spotted a few times but nobody has managed to kill it. The leader's son, who tried and failed once, feels confident that he can now hunt it down. He invites the party to accompany him and get to know a bit more about the Sky Isles.

Encounter Location: Sky Isles earth motes, north of Neverdark

BACKGROUND

On rare occasions, black mountain goats venture through the earth motes when they come close enough to each other for them to make the jump. Stories recorded by the monks' ancestors tell of the delicious taste of the meat of the black goats. This creature has been spotted once in recent years and Threyss, Kayden's son, attempted to hunt it down but failed. One of the children has just spotted it again and word quickly spread through Neverdark.

THE ENCOUNTER

Soon everyone has heard of the appearance of the black goat, and Threyss promises the community that this time he'll bring it back to Neverdark for a feast where everyone can taste this rare delicacy. If the characters are present when Threyss addresses the Neverdarkans at the fair, he invites them to tag along. He insists that he doesn't need their help but that it's a good opportunity for them to get to know more about the isles and also for him to get to know them better. He also mentions that there could be some *emboldening blue* mushrooms there.

According to the children, the beast has been spotted north of the village, on the biggest earth mote after the one Neverdark was built on. To reach that place, they need to traverse through some smaller motes, similar to "The Way Up" encounter, but the earth motes on this side have rope bridges that the monks have built.

During their way there, Threyss asks questions about who they are, why they are there, how things are at the ground level, etc. If the party asks him what he knows about the goat, he can tell the party only a few things:

- The black goat is really fast.
- It can vanish from view and jump long and high distances.
- Its senses must be extremely sharp, as it's difficult to surprise it.
- Legends say its meat is delicious beyond belief.

Once they reach the proper mote, he slows his pace and grabs his bow, signaling for you to stay behind him. He starts looking for tracks, carefully scanning the

wilderness ahead to try to spot the creature. He walks forward very slowly.

Any character can decide to help, though Threys becomes angry when he realizes that the party is taking action that could potentially interfere with his hunt. He informs them that they're on their own and that he's going to find the creature before the party does. Threys is a **phoenix firepalm** with the following changes to his stat block:

- His Wisdom score is 16
- He has a +6 bonus to the Survival skill
- His bonus to the Animal Handling and Perception skills is +6
- He wields a longbow and has one paralyzing arrow, gaining the attack below:
- **Paralyzing Longbow.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 200/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the paralyzing arrow is used and the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or become paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

If Kayden learns that he took a paralyzing arrow to hunt a goat, Threys will probably be faced with the Test of Truth, but he's counting on no one finding that out.

Finding the **black goat** (see below) requires two successful DC 15 / 17 / 19 / 21 Wisdom (Survival) checks. If the party achieves two success before Threys does, on the second success, read or paraphrase the following:

After following goat tracks bigger than the ordinary, you finally spot a large goat with black fur and horns. It's atop a tall rock eating apples from a tree.

At this point, if the party doesn't immediately hide, the goat spots the characters. Roll for initiative as the goat attempts to flee. Check "The Chase" section below. Else, allow the party to take action against the surprised goat. If they don't kill it, check "The Chase."

If Threys rolls two successes before the party does, he'll hide, aim, and attempt to hit the goat with a paralyzing arrow. In this case, read or paraphrase the following:

After following goat tracks bigger than the ordinary, you finally spot the goat but see that Threys got there first. He's just shot an arrow at the creature and is running after it.

If the arrow hits, check for the paralysis; if it fails its saving throw, Threys cuts its throat and claims his prize. Otherwise, check "The Chase" below.

Overarching Plot: Even though not being happy with the plan, Threys obeys Kayden's orders and forces a situation which will put him through the Test of Truth. Hence, he misses the attack on the goat on purpose.

THE CHASE

The goat will attempt to run in the opposite direction, going back to the mountains north of the Sky Isles. It only engages in combat if cornered, fighting until it is killed.

The stats block below is aimed at Tier 1 play. For every Tier above 1, multiply the creature's hit points by the current tier of play so the chase doesn't end too fast.





BLACK GOAT

Large Fey, Unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 30 (4d10 + 8)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Saving Throws Str +5, Dex +5

Skills Perception +5

Senses passive Perception 15

Challenge 1 (450 XP) **Proficiency** +2

Charge. If the goat moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with a ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Sure-Footed. The goat has advantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws made against effects that would knock it prone.

Fey Jump. The goat can double the distance or height for any of its jumps.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

REACTIONS

Vanish. When missed by an attack, the goat can become invisible until the end of its next turn.

The party can find 1d4 *emboldening blues* by succeeding on a DC 14 / 16 / 18 / 20 Wisdom (Survival) check.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the party hinders Threys, hunts the goat on their own, or if the goat escapes, the monk is angry at the party, knowing what awaits him. Any of these scenarios is a failure for Threys, so he departs for Neverdark ahead of the party.

OUTCOMES

Some of the possible outcomes are listed below:

- The party ignores Threys.
- The party follows Threys's lead on the hunt.
- The group hunts the goat themselves.
- The goat escapes.

REWARDS

If the characters interact with Threys before reaching the goat, award the group with XP for an easy encounter. If the party hunts the goat on their own, award the group with XP for a hard encounter. If the party helps Threys without hindering him, award the group with XP for a deadly encounter.

THE TEST OF TRUTH

Encounter Type: Social/Exploration/Combat

Encounter Overview: One of the Neverdarkans, or even one of the characters, is subjected to the test, which attracts the attention of the whole community. If the person being tested is a Neverdarkan, they'll plead for one of the characters to act as their Champion in this incredible challenge.

Encounter Location: Neverdark

BACKGROUND

The Test of Truth was created long ago to ensure that the members of the Clan of the Phoenix would be as capable as possible to defend the people from a possible return of Sethlok. When a Neverdarkan fails, for instance, one of the tests from the Way of the Phoenix, they're treated with sympathy and are supported to grow and improve before taking the test again. Should they fail a second time, however, they're subjected to the Test of Truth. They are given the opportunity to practice for a week before this ordeal, if they wish. This trial offers a Neverdarkan a third chance to prove that they won't be a weak link if the Clan is ever challenged again. In this test, mind and body are tested. Any Neverdarkan who succeeds in meeting its challenges emerges stronger, smarter, and more prepared to face adversities. Those who fail are "embraced by the clouds and grounds below"; i.e., they die.

If the party didn't hinder Threys and he managed to bring back the black goat, a monk named Fayril is brought forth for the test after having been caught for a second time falling asleep on guard duty at the All-Seeing Tower. Fayril and his wife recently had a baby and he hasn't been sleeping well because the newborn has been sick. Fearing that this sickness could be seen as a weakness, he and his wife have been trying to manage the situation themselves.

Overarching Plot: Threys is subjected to the test as part of Kayden's plan.

THE ENCOUNTER

Regardless of who is being tested, once back from the hunt, or at any time you feel appropriate in Neverdark, read or paraphrase the following:

A mass of people has gathered around the Sky Grounds, and you hear the words "Test of Truth" repeated many times by the crowd. Some people look excited, while others seem concerned.

If the characters ask people in the crowd about the test, they can learn the information mentioned in the Background (above) about the Test of Truth.

A short time later, a man, accompanied by Kayden, Aryana, and Qaeth, is brought up. All four enter the Sky Grounds and Kayden addresses the public, saying loudly:

"My fellow brothers and sisters, I stand before you, saddened by the obligations my position requires of me. I take no pleasure in such situations, but we all know that we are only as strong as the weakest link. This man must prove his worth to the Phoenix so that his past failures can be buried in the past and he can be reborn as a new man...a strong Neverdarkan. Let the trial begin!"

At this point, the one facing the ordeal invokes the Phoenix Champion rule, which states that another person can undergo the trial on behalf of the violator, believing in the violator's potential to learn and become a strong link. If the champion fails, both the champion and the person they're defending suffer the same fate. On a success, the champion assumes responsibility for mentoring the person; should the person commit another violation, both the champion and the offender are sentenced to death. Thus far, this latter eventuality has never occurred.

If Fayril is the one to be tested, he is desperate and unprepared; if it's Threys, he is following Kayden's plan. They use the following arguments to invoke the Phoenix Rule:

- Fayril: He admits having personal issues which led him to fail his duty. He whispers the truth about his baby to the party and pleads for their help.
- Threys: He claims that the reason he was unsuccessful in hunting the goat is because the party got in his way, so they should be the ones being tried.

A character can agree to become the champion or the party may decline to become involved. If the party elects not to help, the offender goes through on their own. Regardless of who is to be the Tested One, a phoenix mage approaches them with a scroll and asks them to kneel. The mage recites the words of power for about a minute, then gives them a sprig of an herb and commands that they eat it. Upon consuming this sweet herb, the person's mind is gripped by strong hallucinations and they become unaware of their surroundings. The trial has three parts: Stillness, Reflection, and Courage. The crowd can see all movements and hear the words of the person undergoing the ordeal. If the Tested One dies in their visions, they die in the real world. Under ordinary circumstances, the leaders of the Clan take the body to the edge of the earth mote and, saying a few words in honor of the deceased, throw it over. If you are following the Overarching Plot, the body is used in the incantation to summon the Golden Phoenix.

STILLNESS

The goal of this trial is to assess the Tested One's behavior under pressure. The Tested One sees an unending rocky wasteland, with dark and angry skies above. A wooden sign reads: "Haste is the enemy of perfection." A paved path leads to a dark cave 100 feet ahead with a stone archway at the entrance. Lightning strikes the ground violently, shaking it. A child appears in the cave opening, waving to the Tested One and shouting, "Come quickly! Hurry up!"

Ask the Tested One to roll initiative. The lightning acts on initiative 10. If the Tested One walks instead of running (i.e., without taking the Dash action), they reach the cave safely; however, describe how close the lightning strikes each round. If they Dash, they must succeed on a DC 13/15/17/19 Dexterity saving throw or take lightning damage equal to a quarter of their maximum hit points. Upon reaching the cave, the Tested One is transported to the next phase.

REFLECTION

The Tested One is now in the center of a huge, empty arena. If a character has assumed the role of champion, a reflection of themselves appears before them. This reflection has the same stat block as the character. The reflection states: "You shall not prevail. I am you. I know your every thought." Then it attacks the character.

On the first turn of every round, the character must succeed on a DC 13 / 15 / 17 / 19 Wisdom saving throw or else the reflection will have the benefit of a *foresight* spell until the end of the character's next turn.

When defeated, the reflection holds an iron key to their neck, which opens a gate in the north of the arena, transporting the character to the next stage.

COURAGE

The arena gates take the Tested One to a fiery wasteland with volcanos in the distance and rivers of lava nearby. Beside the Tested One are close friends; these could be monks or other members of the party. Not too far away is a massive demon guarding a purple portal. There seems to be no other way out. The companions look at the Tested One and say: "Look! The exit! Let's take down that beast and leave this place!" The goal of this test is to see if the Tested One is willing to die for their companions, fighting alongside them.

They rush towards the demon, which is a **balor**; if the character is of tier 3 or 4, the balor has double hit points and deals double damage. The only way through the portal is by sneaking past the demon while the companions fight it. However, if the character does that, the balor puts its hands through the portal and

grabs the Tested One, saying with a harsh and raspy voice: “Leaving your friends for dead? You could be one of us!” It smiles before attempting to crush the Tested One. If they survive, they see their companions’ bodies lying on the ground. The portal closes and they have to face the demon on their own, which will almost certainly result in the character’s death. If instead, they stay and fight the demon alongside their companions, let the character fight for a round. If the character receives a blow that would be fatal, or at the start of the second round, the hallucinations end and the participant has passed the Test of Truth.

DEVELOPMENTS

If a character has taken the NPC’s place in the trial and fails, the leaders attempt to take the body to be used in the incantation to summon the Golden Phoenix. If the party interferes, or tries to bring the character back, Kayden reminds them that they have agreed to follow the rules of the trial. If the party persists in their efforts to reclaim the body, the monks will fight the party, which is likely to result in defeat for the characters as other monks from the crowd will join the fight. If the party loses, they keep the characters unconscious but alive at the base of the mountain, near “The Way Up.” The character who died in the trial had their body consumed by the incantation.

If they succeed on the trial, Kayden offers the party a ruby worth 500 / 1,000 / 1,500 / 2,000 gp and a magic item of your choosing, the rarity depending on the party’s tier, as shown in the table below.

Magic Item	
Level Range	Rarity
1–2	Uncommon
3–4	Rare
5–7	Very Rare
8–10	Legendary

Overarching Plot: Instead of going through the Test of Truth, Kayden summons the party to the monastery and explains the situation, asking for their help in dealing with Sethlok. He explains everything, including the part about needing a body for the incantation. He understands that they may not be willing to sacrifice one of their group for them, so he tells them that he’ll sacrifice himself, asking Aryana and Qaeth to execute the incantation.

OUTCOMES

Some of the possible outcomes are listed below:

- The party ignores the commotion.
- The party helps and one of the characters participates in the trial.
- The character wins the trial.
- The character fails the trial, dying. The party abides by the rules.
- The character fails the trial, dying. The party refuses to allow the monks to take the character’s body away and they fight the monks.

REWARDS

If the characters agree to help, either by becoming a sacrifice or by offering to fight Sethlok, award the group with XP for a hard encounter. If the character wins the Test of Truth, award the group with XP for a deadly encounter. In addition, if Fayril was the original target of the test, he offers the party one of his family heirlooms, a *ring of protection*.

THE FIERY INCANTATION

Encounter Type: Social/Combat

Encounter Overview: This last encounter is when Kayden tries to either use one of the characters in the sacrifice needed as part of the incantation, or where, failing this, they sacrifice themselves. The goal is to summon the Golden Phoenix and control it to help in the fight against Sethlok. Whether or not Kayden succeeds, Sethlok attacks the monks and the party can decide who they want to help.

Encounter Location: Fireborn Monastery

BACKGROUND

Having been tricked into believing the famed Golden Phoenix could be of help against the bakeneko, Kayden has researched a way to bring forth the phoenix under their control. To achieve this, they must perform a powerful incantation that requires the body of a powerful sentient being to be mixed with the ashes of a volcano. This creates a huge bonfire that summons the legendary Golden Phoenix.

THE GOLDEN PHOENIX

Use this information in case any character tries to discover information about the Golden Phoenix. By making a successful DC 17 / 18 / 19 / 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check, a character learns a piece of information below. If the result exceeds the DC, for each point of difference add one additional piece of information from the list:

- The fabled Golden Phoenix is said to produce a fire so hot that it can melt even stone.
- The Golden Phoenix is a unique creature said to inhabit the depths of the Elemental Plane of Fire, its lair set in a huge gold deposit.
- Legends tell that this creature's flames can even kill fire elementals.

What most people do not know is that the Golden Phoenix fought a powerful Demon Lord who sought to enlist the phoenix to their ranks. The demon managed to defeat the phoenix, turning it into a yokai under its control. Sethlok knows this and has used that knowledge to sow a crisis that will bring even greater chaos to the monks' home.

THE ENCOUNTER

All that Kayden needs is the body component. Depending on what has previously transpired, Kayden could obtain the body of one of the characters. As this is unlikely, Kayden invites the party to the monastery's courtyard and explains everything they know to the party, asking for their help.

If no good candidate offers themselves as a sacrifice, Kayden sees no alternative to sacrificing himself, designating their son to assume the position of leader of the Clan once they're gone. If the party thinks of a viable alternative, Kayden eagerly embraces it.

The party won't have major reasons to be suspicious of the Golden Phoenix situation, but if for any reason a party wants to dissuade Kayden from summoning the phoenix by assuring them that the party can provide the help they need, they must succeed on a DC 20 / 22 / 24 / 26 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

If the characters are successful in convincing Kayden to rely on them instead of summoning the mythical creature, the monk tells the party that they know Sethlok's tactics and that the yokai will surely wreak havoc in the village before getting tired enough to actually stop and fight. Kayden suggests that the party should try to lure Sethlok to the courtyard to give them and the other monks time to make sure that everyone is safe and secure. Kayden will regroup with the party at the courtyard once things in the village are taken care of. According to the mages' divination spells, Sethlok is to strike on the following day.

THE INCANTATION

If the summoning incantation is used, either Kayden, or Aryana and Qaeth, will execute the rite. The monks spend the rest of the day preparing for Sethlok's coming. The party is free to do so as well.

The monks explain that they can begin the incantation only after Sethlok shows itself. At this point, the monks believe that Sethlok will be drawn to the courtyard to stop the monks from summoning. Once Sethlok appears (see "Sethlok has Arrived" below) and the party arrives at the courtyard, read or paraphrase the following:

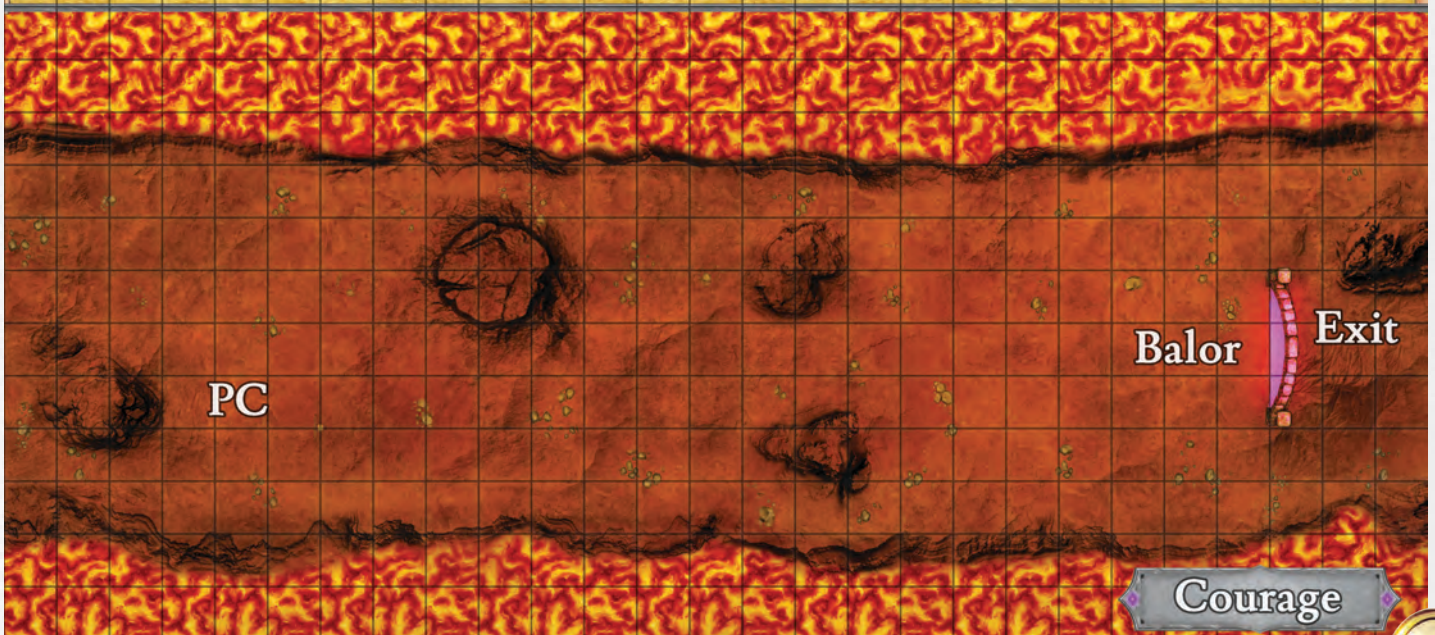
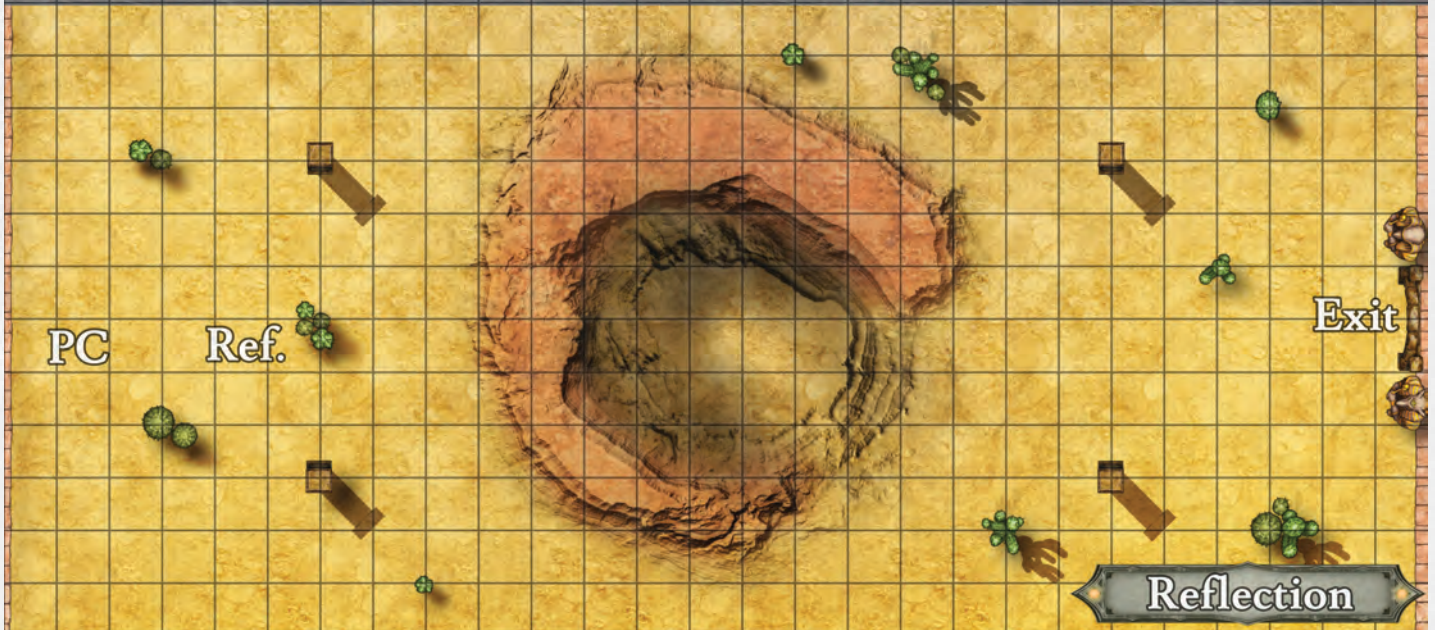
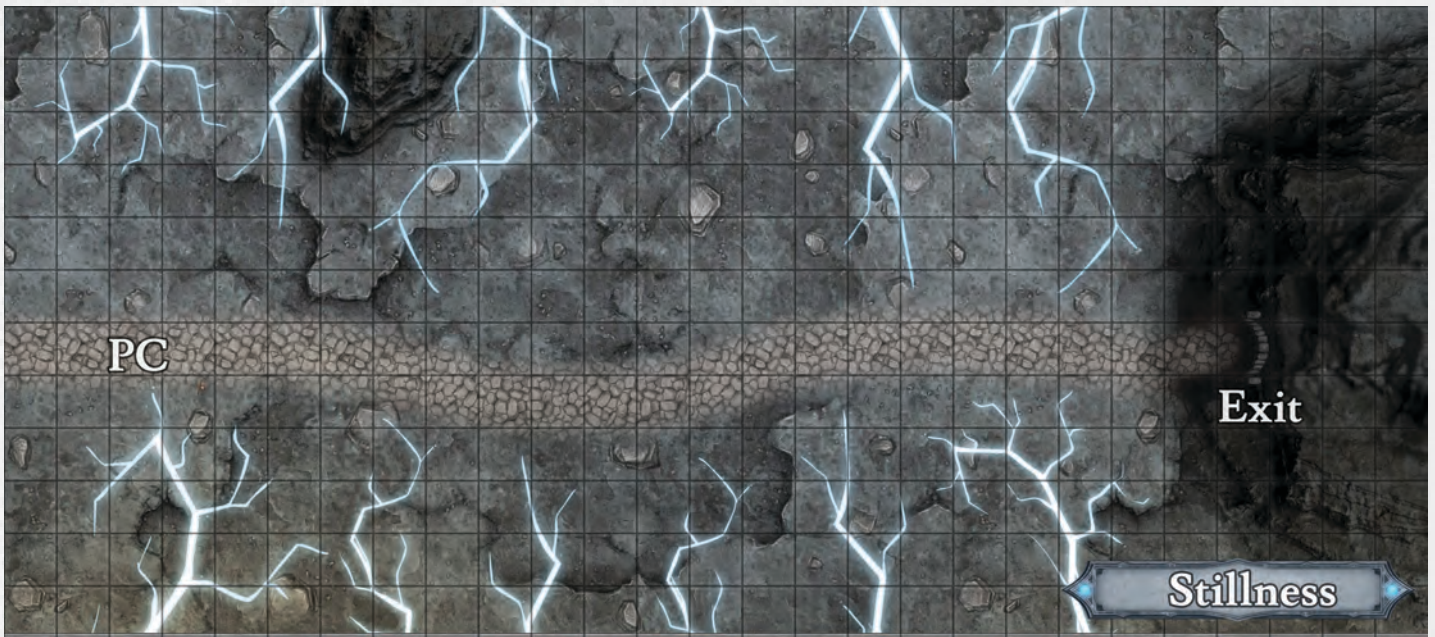
The sky darkens as the ancient words are recited and chanted. The body of the chosen sacrifice lies in a massive brazier which is lit during the incantation. After a few moments, the ground shakes, the brazier breaks, and a gigantic flaming bird with dark feathers emerges from the ground. It emanates dark energy as it flies up to the center of the courtyard.

At this point, Sethlok arrives as well, laughing as it sees its plan unfold as expected. Skip to "The Fight."

SETHLOK HAS ARRIVED

If the party is in the village, read or paraphrase the following aloud, or just describe screams, fire and smoke:

The silence created by the tension and anticipation of the arrival of the dreaded yokai is broken as nearby vegetation catches fire. The fire quickly spreads, and you briefly see a four-legged figure near the flames before it vanishes.





The bakeneko looks for opportunities to set things on fire and teases anyone trying to fight it. If the party engages, the yokai's attention focuses on them and it tries to assess the party's power.

If the party tries to lure Sethlok to the monastery, the yokai gladly takes the bait, as it's overconfident. On the way there, it starts more fires whenever possible. Some monks attempt to hit the cat with paralyzing darts, though the monks have been instructed not to waste resources or put themselves in danger trying to go after the bakeneko. Instead, they are to defend themselves and their families.

THE FIGHT

If lured to the courtyard, the bakeneko assesses the situation and plays safe, hiding whenever possible. There, it unleashes its most powerful resources as it knows it's outnumbered and surrounded. Sethlok is a **bakeneko** (see below) with an Intelligence score of 16. While it wants to have its fun while destroying the monks' home, if the incantation didn't

take place it's fighting alone, so the yokai won't risk itself too much. Sethlok attempts to set fire to as many things as it can to create a more advantageous battlefield. Its focus is on whichever foe seems most dangerous, whether by damage or battlefield control.

The first time the bakeneko is spotted in plain sight, read or paraphrase the following:

You finally spot the dreaded creature: a cat the size of a dog, with ash-encrusted black fur and gleaming eyes; it's walking its hind legs and has a smug smile on its face. It laughs, saying: "Burn, fools! BURNNNNNN!"

If the bakeneko is reduced to 25 percent of its hit points, it attempts to flee the scene while using the fire as cover.

If the phoenix has been summoned, it fights with those who summoned it. Use the **yokai phoenix** (see below) stat block. At this point, Sethlok lets the phoenix cause chaos while it uses its Pyrokinesis to spread fire around the battlefield; it uses no other action or legendary action unless provoked. The

phoenix uses its Fiery Hurricane whenever possible, oftentimes choosing to recharge it with Refuel. The phoenix fights until killed; if that occurs, Sethlok flees.

USING THE MAPS

The Monastery Courtyard map has four versions, as described below:

- Without the incantation
- With the incantation set up, but not executed
- With the incantation set up, and the fire damage from Sethlok
- With the incantation executed, and the fire damage from Sethlok and the yokai phoenix

Find below the stat block for the bakeneko and yokai phoenix at the recommended tiers. For the other tiers, refer to the Appendix below.

DEVELOPMENTS

If the characters fought beside the monks, the survivors are eternally grateful and offer to teach each character the Fiery Blessing with a permanent effect, a process which would take 1d4 + 1 days. The leader also offers

NEKO YOKAIS

Neko Yokais, the bakeneko included, are creatures from Japanese folklore and they were first introduced to 5e by 2C Gaming through the [Total Party Kill Bestiary Vol 1](#). Make sure to check out the amazing content 2CG put out!

If a character tries to obtain information about Sethlok, they learn the following information upon succeeding on a DC 20 / 22 / 24 / 26 Intelligence (Arcana) check: the bakeneko is a cat-like fiend that possesses the ability to control flames.

BAKENEKO (TIER 3)

Medium Fiend, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 180 (24d8 + 72)

Speed 40 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+3)	14 (+2)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Con +9, Wis +8, Cha +12

Skills Deception +12, Perception +8, Stealth +11

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 17 **Proficiency Bonus** +6

XP 18,000

Firebred. The bakeneko is heavily obscured while within 5 feet of a space, creature, or object that is on fire.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the bakeneko fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Pyrokinesis. The bakeneko can magically control flames it can see within a 120-foot radius, granting it the following benefits:

- When the bakeneko deals fire damage to a creature or object, it can choose to ignite it. Anything ignited in this manner takes fire damage at the end of each of the bakeneko's turns equal to 7 (3d4). Anything ignited in this manner can only be extinguished by being completely immersed in water.
- As a bonus action on each of its turns, the bakeneko can spread flames from a creature or object that has caught fire. This effect fills each 5-foot square on the ground within 5 feet of the target with fire, dealing fire damage to each creature and object in the affected area equal to 11 (2d10). When a creature ends its turn in an affected area or moves into a space on fire in this manner for the first time on a turn, it takes fire damage equal to 11 (2d10).

Toxicology. Whenever the bakeneko is subjected to poison damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bakeneko makes one attack and casts two spells, at least one of which must be a spell it can cast at will. The bakeneko can forgo making one of these attacks to instead take the Hide action.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 38 (6d10 + 5) piercing damage; the target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or take 22 (5d8) poison damage, and the bakeneko magically regains hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

Spellcasting. The bakeneko casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 19):

At will: *firebolt*, *poison spray*

3/day: *burning hands*, *scorching ray*, *flaming sphere*

2/day: *cloudkill*, *fireball*, *fire shield*, *wall of fire*

1/day: *firestorm*

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The bakeneko can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The bakeneko regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Agile Escape. The bakeneko moves up to half its speed without provoking attacks of opportunity and can attempt to Hide **Swift Fire.** The bakeneko casts a cantrip.

Venomous Fart (Costs 2 Actions). The bakeneko generates a poison gas cube of 5 feet on the sides on the square it's standing, regaining 27 (6d8) hit points.

YOKAI PHOENIX (TIER 3)

Gargantuan Fiend (Demon), Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 22 (natural armor)

Hit Points 330 (20d20 + 120)

Speed 20 ft., fly 100 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	16 (+3)	22 (+6)	2 (-4)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +11, Cha +12

Damage Immunities fire, poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages —

Challenge 20 (20,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +6

Abyssal Heat. The fire generated by the phoenix is extremely hot, capable of melting even stone. The phoenix ignores its targets' damage resistance and immunity to fire.

Corrupted Rebirth. When the phoenix dies, it explodes. Each creature within 30 feet of it must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw, taking 26 (4d12) fire damage and 26 (4d12) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't worn or carried. After 1d4 months, the phoenix is reborn in a volcano located in the Abyss.

Corrupting Aura of Fire. At the beginning of the phoenix's turn, roll a die. If the result is an odd number, the aura is fiery until the start of the phoenix's next turn. On an even result, the aura is corrupted. Any creature within 10 feet of the phoenix takes 19 (3d12) fire damage if the aura is fiery or 13 (3d8) necrotic damage if the aura is corrupted.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the phoenix fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Negative Energy. Any creature that takes necrotic damage from the phoenix must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or have its maximum hit points reduced by the necrotic damage taken. The phoenix regains hit points equal to this reduction.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The phoenix makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (3d10 + 7) piercing damage plus 19 (3d12) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes fire damage equal to 13 (2d12) at the start of each of its turns.

Talon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 20 (3d8 + 7) slashing damage and 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 23). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The phoenix can have up to two grappled targets, at which point it can't make talon attacks until it's not grappling two creatures anymore.

Fiery Hurricane (Recharge 5–6). The phoenix hovers in place, beating its wings violently, causing a fire storm. All creatures in a 30-foot cube originating from the phoenix must make a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw. They take fire damage equal to 58 (9d12) on a failure and half as much on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The phoenix can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The phoenix regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Flyby. The phoenix flies up to half its speed and doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Full Aura (Costs 2 Actions). The phoenix activates both corrupting and fiery aura effects simultaneously.

Refuel (Costs 3 Actions). The phoenix recharges its fiery hurricane.

OUTCOMES

Some of the possible outcomes are listed below:

- The party falls in the battle, waking up the next day in a partially destroyed Neverdark.
- The party manages to convince Kayden to cancel the incantation and fight Sethlok themselves.
- The group follows the plan and fights the phoenix.

REWARDS

If the characters manage to interrupt the summoning, award the group with XP for a hard encounter. If they defeat either Sethlok or the Yokai Phoenix, award the group with XP for a deadly encounter. If they defeat both of them, award them double the amount of XP for a deadly encounter.



APPENDIX: BOSSES

BAKENEKO (TIER I)

Medium Fiend, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 40 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +4, Cha +6

Skills Deception +6, Perception +4, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +2

Firebred. The bakeneko is heavily obscured while within 5 feet of a space, creature, or object that is on fire.

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If the bakeneko fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Pyrokinesis. The bakeneko can magically control flames it can see within a 120-foot radius, granting it the following benefits:

- When the bakeneko deals fire damage to a creature or object, it can choose to ignite it. Anything ignited in this manner takes fire damage at the end of each of the bakeneko's turns equal to 2 (1d4). Anything ignited in this manner can only be extinguished by being completely immersed in water.
- As a bonus action on each of its turns, the bakeneko can spread flames from a creature or object that has caught fire. This effect fills each 5-foot square on the ground within 5 feet of the target with fire, dealing fire damage to each creature and object in the affected area equal to 3 (1d6). When a creature ends its turn in an affected area or moves into a

space on fire in this manner for the first time on a turn, it takes fire damage equal to 3 (1d6).

Toxicology. Whenever the bakeneko is subjected to poison damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bakeneko makes one attack and casts three spells, at least two of which must be a spell it can cast at will. The bakeneko can forgo making one of these attacks to instead take the Hide action.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +13 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 51 (8d10 + 6); the target must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or take 27 (6d8) poison damage, and the bakeneko magically regains hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

Spellcasting. The bakeneko casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 22):

At will: *firebolt* (5th-level), *poison spray* (5th-level)
3/day: *burning hands*, *scorching ray*, *flaming sphere*
3/day: *cloudkill*, *fireball*, *fire shield*, *wall of fire*
2/day: *firestorm*

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The bakeneko can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The bakeneko regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Agile Escape. The bakeneko moves up to half its speed without provoking attacks of opportunity and can attempt to Hide

Swift Fire. The bakeneko casts a cantrip.

Venomous Fart (Costs 2 Actions). The bakeneko generates a poison gas cube of 5 feet on the sides on the square it's standing, regaining 36 (8d8) hit points.

NOTE: if the party is at 1st-level, remove the Multiattack from the tier 1 bakeneko.

BAKENEKO (TIER 2)

Medium Fiend, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 120 (16d8 + 48)

Speed 40 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Con+6, Wis +5, Cha +8

Skills Deception +8, Perception +5, Stealth +7

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Abyssal, Common

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Firebred. The bakeneko is heavily obscured while within 5 feet of a space, creature, or object that is on fire.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the bakeneko fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Pyrokinesis. The bakeneko can magically control flames it can see within a 120-foot radius, granting it the following benefits:

- When the bakeneko deals fire damage to a creature or object, it can choose to ignite it. Anything ignited in this manner takes fire damage at the end of each of the bakeneko's turns equal to 5 (2d4). Anything ignited in this manner can only be extinguished by being completely immersed in water.
- As a bonus action on each of its turns, the bakeneko can spread flames from a creature or object that has caught fire. This effect fills each 5-foot square on the ground within 5 feet of the target with fire, dealing fire damage to each creature and object in the affected area equal to 5 (1d10). When a creature ends its turn in an affected area or moves into a

space on fire in this manner for the first time on a turn, it takes fire damage equal to 5 (1d10).

Toxicology. Whenever the bakeneko is subjected to poison damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bakeneko makes one attack and casts two spells, at least one of which must be a spell it can cast at will. The bakeneko can forgo making one of these attacks to instead take the Hide action.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage; the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) poison damage, and the bakeneko magically regains hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

Spellcasting. The bakeneko casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *firebolt*, *poison spray*

2/day: *burning hands*, *scorching ray*, *flaming sphere*

2/day: *cloudkill*, *fireball*, *fire shield*, *wall of fire*

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The bakeneko can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The bakeneko regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Agile Escape. The bakeneko moves up to half its speed without provoking attacks of opportunity and can attempt to Hide

Swift Fire. The bakeneko casts a cantrip.

Venomous Fart (Costs 2 Actions). The bakeneko generates a poison gas cube of 5 feet on the sides on the square it's standing, regaining 18 (4d8) hit points.

BAKENEKO (TIER 4)

Medium Fiend, Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 16

Hit Points 240 (32d8 + 96)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	22 (+6)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Con +10, Wis +9, Cha +14

Skills Deception +14, Perception +9, Stealth +13

Damage Immunities fire

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, Abyssal

Challenge 24 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +7

Firebred. The bakeneko is heavily obscured while within 5 feet of a space, creature, or object that is on fire.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the bakeneko fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Pyrokinesis. The bakeneko can magically control flames it can see within a 120-foot radius, granting it the following benefits:

- When the bakeneko deals fire damage to a creature or object, it can choose to ignite it. Anything ignited in this manner takes fire damage at the end of each of the bakeneko's turns equal to 10 (3d6). Anything ignited in this manner can only be extinguished by being completely immersed in water.
- As a bonus action on each of its turns, the bakeneko can spread flames from a creature or object that has caught fire. This effect fills each 5-foot square on the ground within 5 feet of the target with fire, dealing fire damage to each creature and object in the affected area equal to 16 (3d10). When a creature ends its turn in an affected area or moves into a

space on fire in this manner for the first time on a turn, it takes fire damage equal to 16 (3d10).

Toxicology. Whenever the bakeneko is subjected to poison damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bakeneko makes one attack and casts two spells, at least one of which must be a spell it can cast at will. The bakeneko can forgo making one of these attacks to instead take the Hide action.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, range 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage; the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 9 (2d8) poison damage, and the bakeneko magically regains hit points equal to the poison damage dealt.

Spellcasting. The bakeneko casts one of the following spells, using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 16):

At will: *firebolt*, *poison spray*

2/day: *burning hands*, *scorching ray*, *flaming sphere*

2/day: *cloudkill*, *fireball*, *fire shield*, *wall of fire*

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The bakeneko can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The bakeneko regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Agile Escape. The bakeneko moves up to half its speed without provoking attacks of opportunity and can attempt to Hide

Swift Fire. The bakeneko casts a cantrip.

Venomous Fart (Costs 2 Actions). The bakeneko generates a poison gas cube of 5 feet on the sides on the square it's standing, regaining 18 (4d8) hit points.

YOKAI PHOENIX (TIER I)

Large Fiend (Demon), Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d10 + 32)

Speed 20 ft., fly 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	2 (-4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +6, Cha +7

Damage Immunities fire, poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 13

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +3

Abyssal Heat. The fire generated by the phoenix is extremely hot, capable of melting even stone. The phoenix ignores its targets' damage resistance and immunity to fire.

Corrupted Rebirth. When the phoenix dies, it explodes. Each creature within 30 feet of it must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 6 (1d12) fire damage and 6 (1d12) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't worn or carried. After 1d4 months, the phoenix is reborn in a volcano located in the Abyss.

Corrupting Aura of Fire. At the beginning of the phoenix's turn, roll a die. If the result is an odd number, the aura is fiery until the start of the phoenix's next turn. On an even result, the aura is corrupted. Any creature within 10 feet of the phoenix takes 6 (1d12) fire damage if the aura is fiery or 4 (1d8) necrotic damage if the aura is corrupted.

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If the phoenix fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Negative Energy. Any creature that takes necrotic damage from the phoenix must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or have its maximum hit points reduced by the necrotic damage taken. The phoenix regains hit points equal to this reduction.

ACTIONS

Beak. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus fire damage equal to 6 (1d12).

Talon. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage and 3 (1d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a Small or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 18). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The phoenix can only have one grappled target.

Fiery Hurricane (Recharge 5–6). The phoenix hovers in place, beating its wings violently, causing a fire storm. All creatures in a 30-foot cube originating from the phoenix must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. They take fire damage equal to 19 (3d12) on a failure and half as much on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The phoenix can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The phoenix regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Flyby. The phoenix flies up to half its speed and doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Full Aura (Costs 2 Actions). The phoenix activates both corrupting and fiery aura effects simultaneously.

NOTE: if the party is at 1st-level, remove the Multiattack from the tier 1 yokai phoenix.

YOKAI PHOENIX (TIER 2)

Huge Fiend (Demon), Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 172 (15d12 + 75)

Speed 20 ft., fly 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	2 (-4)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Wis +8, Cha +9

Damage Immunities fire, poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +4

Abyssal Heat. The fire generated by the phoenix is extremely hot, capable of melting even stone. The phoenix ignores its targets' damage resistance and immunity to fire.

Corrupted Rebirth. When the phoenix dies, it explodes. Each creature within 30 feet of it must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (2d12) fire damage and 13 (2d12) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't worn or carried. After 1d4 months, the phoenix is reborn in a volcano located in the Abyss.

Corrupting Aura of Fire. At the beginning of the phoenix's turn, roll a die. If the result is an odd number, the aura is fiery until the start of the phoenix's next turn. On an even result, the aura is corrupted. Any creature within 10 feet of the phoenix takes 13 (2d12) fire damage if the aura is fiery or 9 (2d8) necrotic damage if the aura is corrupted.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the phoenix fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Negative Energy. Any creature that takes necrotic damage from the phoenix must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or have its maximum hit points reduced by the necrotic damage taken. The phoenix regains hit points equal to this reduction.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The phoenix makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** 11 (2d4 + 6) piercing damage plus fire damage equal to 13 (2d12). If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes fire damage equal to 6 (1d12) at the start of each of its turns.

Talon. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 19). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The phoenix can have up to two grappled targets, at which point it can't make talon attacks until it's not grappling two creatures anymore.

Fiery Hurricane (Recharge 5–6). The phoenix hovers in place, beating its wings violently, causing a fire storm. All creatures in a 30-foot cube originating from the phoenix must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw. They take fire damage equal to 26 (6d12) on a failure and half as much on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The phoenix can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The phoenix regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Flyby. The phoenix flies up to half its speed and doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Full Aura (Costs 2 Actions). The phoenix activates both corrupting and fiery aura effects simultaneously.

YOKAI PHOENIX (TIER 4)

Huge Fiend (Demon), Typically Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 24 (natural armor)

Hit Points 525 (30d20 + 210)

Speed 20 ft., 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27 (+8)	16 (+3)	24 (+7)	2 (-4)	22 (+6)	25 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Wis +13, Cha +14

Damage Immunities fire, poison, necrotic

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

Challenge 24 (62,000 XP) **Proficiency Bonus** +7

Abysal Heat. The fire generated by the phoenix is extremely hot, capable of melting even stone. The phoenix ignores its targets' damage resistance and immunity to fire.

Corrupted Rebirth. When the phoenix dies, it explodes. Each creature within 30 feet of it must make a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw, taking 32 (5d12) fire damage and 32 (5d12) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The fire ignites flammable objects in the area that aren't worn or carried. After 1d4 months, the phoenix is reborn in a volcano located in the Abyss.

Corrupting Aura of Fire. At the beginning of the phoenix's turn, roll a die. If the result is an odd number, the aura is fiery until the start of the phoenix's next turn. On an even result, the aura is corrupted. Any creature within 10 feet of the phoenix takes 26 (4d12) fire damage if the aura is fiery or 18 (4d8) necrotic damage if the aura is corrupted.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the phoenix fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Negative Energy. Any creature that takes necrotic damage from the phoenix must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw

or have its maximum hit points reduced by the necrotic damage taken. The phoenix regains hit points equal to this reduction.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The makes two attacks: one with its beak and one with its talons.

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 30 (4d10 + 8) piercing damage plus fire damage equal to 26 (4d12). If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes fire damage equal to 19 (3d12) at the start of each of its turns.

Talon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d8 + 8) slashing damage and 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 25). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. The phoenix can have up to two grappled targets, at which point it can't make talon attacks until it's not grappling two creatures anymore.

Fiery Hurricane (Recharge 5–6). The phoenix hovers in place, beating its wings violently, causing a fire storm. All creatures in a 30-foot cube originating from the phoenix must make a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw. They take fire damage equal to 78 (12d12) on a failure and half as much on a success.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The phoenix can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The phoenix regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Flyby. The phoenix flies up to half its speed and doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Full Aura (Costs 2 Actions). The phoenix activates both corrupting and fiery aura effects simultaneously.

Refuel (Costs 3 Actions). The phoenix recharges its fiery hurricane.

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