

BORROWED TOMB

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST TO 3RD LEVEL

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BORROWED TOMB

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST TO 3RD LEVEL

BORROWED TOMB IS A PATHFINDER SECOND Edition adventure for three to six characters of 1st to 3rd level, optimized for a party of four 3rd-level characters. Strange disturbances have been emanating from the tomb of a monastic order—wailing voices and unnatural sounds that echo across the countryside at all hours. Local villagers fear the worst: awoken, vengeful spirits bent on retribution. In reality, a family of brown bears has taken shelter in the tomb during harsh weather, and their presence has disturbed the rest of the entombed monks. Rather than face hostile undead, the adventurers will find themselves mediating between distressed spirits who simply want their sanctuary restored to peace. Can the party find a solution that respects both the needs of the living animals and the eternal rest of the dead? This adventure takes place in Cartosia, but the names of people and places can be changed to place this adventure in any rural region across a variety of campaign settings.

BACKGROUND

Three centuries ago, the Order of the Turning Seasons established a monastery in the rolling hills of the Vethran countryside. These contemplative monks devoted themselves to maintaining the sacred balance between civilization and the natural world, serving as mediators when expanding settlements came into conflict with the spirits of the forest. Through their philosophy of the "Gentle Turning," they believed that harmony could be achieved by understanding natural cycles rather than dominating them through force.

The order's founder, Brother Verghan the Mediator, was renowned for his ability to commune with woodland spirits and negotiate peaceful resolutions to conflicts that might otherwise have resulted in bloodshed. Under his guidance, the monks developed rituals that honored both the needs of growing communities and the ancient powers that dwelt within the wild places. For over two hundred years, the order thrived, their monastery serving as a beacon of hope for those seeking to live in harmony with the natural world.

The order's decline came not through violence or catastrophe, but through the slow passage of time. As trade routes shifted and newer settlements grew beyond their borders, the monks' services became less essential. One by one, the aging brothers passed away, their bodies interred in the sacred tomb they had constructed beneath their monastery. The last monk died nearly seventy-five years ago, and the monastery fell into ruins, leaving only the sealed tomb as a monument to their legacy.

For decades, the spirits of the departed monks rested peacefully as the tomb's consecrated chambers remained undisturbed. Everything changed three weeks ago when a violent storm swept through the region. A massive oak, centuries old, crashed down upon the tomb's entrance, its weight cracking the stone seal and creating a breach large

enough for creatures to enter. A family of brown bears—a mated pair and their two young cubs—sought shelter from the continuing harsh weather and discovered the warm, dry chambers within.

The bears' presence has profoundly disturbed the tomb's spiritual equilibrium. Their natural behaviors—scratching at stone walls, leaving droppings, and the cubs' playful romping—have awakened several of the entombed spirits. While some monks remain merely annoyed, others have become hysterical, their wailing voices echoing through the stone chambers and across the countryside, creating the disturbances that now terrify local villagers.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are several reasons why the party might be compelled to investigate the tomb and discover the source of the supernatural disturbances. A few of these reasons are outlined below:

Family Legacy. Sima Sharpdown, a local herbalist, approaches the party with tears in her eyes. Her great-grandfather was one of the last monks of the Order of the Turning Seasons, and she has grown up hearing stories of their peaceful ways. The recent disturbances have convinced her that something terrible has befallen the sacred tomb, and she fears her ancestor's spirit is in torment. She offers the party her entire collection of elixirs (lesser antidote, lesser mistform elixir, lesser darkvision elixir, lesser serene mutagen, and minor elixir of life) and 20 gold pieces to investigate the tomb and ensure her great-grandfather and his brothers can rest in peace.

Sleepless Nights. Tavern keeper Bindad Dhuka hasn't had a full night's rest since the disturbances began. His inn sits closest to the tomb, and the nightly wailing drives away customers and leaves him exhausted. Desperate for relief, he offers the party free room and board for a month, plus 30 gold pieces, if they can silence whatever spirits are tormenting the area. He's convinced that grave robbers have angered the dead and fears the situation will only worsen.

Sacred Duty. Sister Larali, a traveling cleric of a nature deity, has arrived in the area after hearing rumors of the disturbances. She recognizes the tomb as belonging to the Order of the Turning Seasons and believes their sacred rest has been violated. She offers to sanctify one of the party's weapons, giving it the holy trait for 8 hours, and provide them with holy water (one vial each), plus 40 gold pieces from her temple's funds, if they will help restore peace to the defiled sanctuary. She warns that disturbed spirits of such a holy order could become dangerous if left unattended.

Adjusting the Rewards. If the party is 2nd level, reduce the above rewards by half and replace the mistform elixir with a cat's eye elixir. If the party is 4th level, double the rewards above and replace the lesser antidote with a moderate cheetah's elixir.

THE TOMB OF THE ORDER

The tomb of the Order of the Turning Seasons lies partially beneath the crumbled, barren ruins of their former monastery, its chambers carved into the hillside and reinforced with dressed stone. The original entrance was sealed with a heavy stone slab, but the recent storm has left its mark—a massive fallen oak has crushed part of the entrance structure, leaving a jagged opening where the seal once stood. Broken stone and splintered wood litter the threshold, and the gap is large enough for Medium-sized creatures to enter without difficulty. The brothers designed their final resting place to reflect their philosophy of balance, incorporating both natural cave formations and carefully crafted masonry. Unless otherwise stated, the tomb's features are described as follows:

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The tomb is constructed of fitted limestone blocks, worn smooth by centuries of age. Ceilings throughout the complex reach 12 feet in height, with graceful arches supporting the weight of earth and stone above. Floors are made of large, flat stones, though many now bear scratches and other signs of the bears' occupancy.

Doors. Doors within the tomb are made of thick oak, now warped and weathered with age. They have AC 15, Hardness 5, and 20 HP (BT 10). Most doors hang askew on rusted hinges and can be easily pushed open, though some may require a DC 15 Athletics check to Force Open if debris has accumulated behind them.

Light. The tomb relies entirely on whatever illumination visitors bring with them. The main entrance allows some natural light to filter into the first chamber during daylight hours, but the deeper chambers remain in complete darkness. Patches of luminescent moss grow in a few damp corners, providing dim light in a 5-foot radius.

Disturbed Spirits. The awakened monks manifest their distress in unsettling ways throughout the tomb. Characters may hear faint whispers or anguished moans echoing from empty chambers or glimpse translucent figures flickering in peripheral vision before fading away. The temperature drops noticeably in certain areas, and the sensation of gentle, ghostly hands may try to guide characters away from where the bears are resting. These manifestations are harmless expressions of the monks' collective anguish over their disturbed sanctuary.

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of the tomb:

I. ENTRANCE CHAMBER

Broken stone and splintered wood frame the tomb's violated entrance, where the massive fallen oak has crushed its seal, revealing a spacious chamber with a

large brass brazier at its center. Carved reliefs depicting seasonal cycles adorn the walls. At the far end of the chamber, opposite the entrance, stands a larger-than-life statue of a robed monk with arms outstretched in a gesture of peace and welcome. The wall behind this statue has partially collapsed, revealing a passageway beyond. The air carries a thick, musky scent, and deep scratches mark the stone floors and lower portions of the walls. Scattered across the chamber are tufts of coarse brown fur and other unmistakable signs of animal habitation.

This chamber once served as the tomb's ceremonial entrance, where the Order of the Turning Seasons would hold final rites for their departed brothers. The stone brazier was used to burn sacred herbs and incense during funeral ceremonies, its smoke carrying prayers for the deceased. The statue depicts Brother Verghan the Mediator, founder of the order, and was carved to greet visitors with his philosophy of peaceful coexistence.

The scratches on the walls and floors clearly indicate large claws. A character who succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check notices fur clinging to the statue's base, suggesting its use as a scratching post. A character who succeeds on a DC 17 Nature check can identify the markings as belonging to bears—a family group consisting of at least one adult and younger cubs.

Brother Resher's Spirit. As the party examines the chamber, a translucent figure materializes near the central brazier. Brother Resher (thoughtful he/him [ghost commoner](#) from *Monster Core*, though he cannot attack and has no hostile abilities) appears as an elderly monk in simple robes, his spectral form flickering like candlelight. His demeanor is one of distress rather than malice.

"Please," he says, his voice echoing strangely off the stone walls, "you must understand—we mean no harm. We are not your enemies. A family seeks shelter here, as is their right by nature's law, but their presence disturbs our rest. We cannot find peace while our sacred spaces are... disrupted. Will you help us restore the harmony we spent our lives protecting?"

Brother Resher can explain the situation: the bear family entered seeking shelter and has been living throughout the tomb for several weeks. Their natural behaviors have awakened and agitated many of his brother spirits. He asks the party to find a way to encourage the bears to leave peacefully, and then to restore the damaged shrine in the chamber beyond so that all the spirits might return to their rest. In gratitude, he offers the party their choosing from the tomb's vault once their task is complete.

Resher can answer a few brief questions before his strength fades. He knows there are four bears—two adults and two cubs—who have made their den in the burial chambers. The cubs knocked over the sacred shrine to Brother Verghan, and until it's properly restored, the

founder's spirit cannot rest. The bears pose no deliberate threat, but they are wild animals protecting their young. Resher cannot communicate with them as the living members of his order once could, and his manifestation grows weaker with each passing moment.

"When you have shepherded out the bears," he adds, his voice growing fainter, "I will speak with you again to guide the restoration." As his form begins to fade, Brother Resher adds, "Manifesting this way requires great effort. I must conserve my strength, but know that we will be watching over you. Call upon us if you have great need."

The spirit disappears, though the party may sense they are not truly alone.

COMMUNICATING WITH BEARS

If a character casts *Speak with Animals* or otherwise gains the ability to communicate with the bear family, the following guidelines can help roleplay their perspectives:

Papa Bear. The largest and most territorial of the family, he speaks in short, gruff sentences and views the tomb as "his den now." He's primarily concerned with protecting his family and maintaining their secure shelter. "Good den. Safe. Dry. You leave." He's suspicious of the party but can be reasoned with if they demonstrate they mean no harm to his mate and cubs. He'll grudgingly admit the "stone-cold ones" (spirits) make him uneasy, but insists his family has claimed this territory. If convinced the party can provide a better alternative den or that staying here brings danger to his family, he might consider relocating. He uses [grizzly bear](#) statistics (*Pathfinder Monster Core*) with 67 HP.

Mama Bear. More practical and communicative than her mate, she's focused on the safety and comfort of her cubs. She acknowledges that the "sad voices in the walls" are distressed but sees the tomb as the best shelter they've found in a long time. "Cubs safe here. Walls strong. No rain inside." She's more willing to negotiate than Papa Bear and might agree to leave if provided with food for the journey or assurance of another secure den. She can explain that one of her cubs knocked over "the stone-thing" while playing, but doesn't understand its significance. She uses [grizzly bear](#) statistics (*Pathfinder Monster Core*) with 50 HP.

The Cubs. Playful and curious, they communicate in simple, excited phrases. They think the tomb is a wonderful playground with interesting smells and textures. "Scratchy walls fun!" or "Shiny rocks taste strange!" They're completely unaware of the spiritual disturbance they've caused and see the whole situation as a grand adventure. They can be easily distracted by games, food, or interesting objects, making them the easiest family members to manage during encounters. The cubs are considered non-combatants, but if needed for other purposes they are Small and have Perception +7, Athletics +8, Fort +9, and Will +5.

Adjusting the Statistics. If the party is 1st level, the bears are [black bears](#) (*Pathfinder Bestiary 2*)—Papa having 38 HP and Mama having 26 HP—and the cubs have Perception +5, Athletics +6, Fort +8, and Will +2. If the party is 3rd level, the creatures have [elite adjustments](#).

2. CONNECTING PASSAGE

This narrow stone corridor extends deeper into the tomb, its walls bearing the same fitted limestone construction as the entrance chamber.

This simple corridor serves as the main thoroughfare connecting the tomb's entrance to its inner chambers. What was originally constructed as a hidden passage has eventually revealed itself as structural weaknesses failed over the passage of time. There is nothing of particular interest here.

3. SHRINE CHAMBER

This expansive square chamber is littered with rubble from a once-prominent statue that has collapsed to the floor. The chamber's walls are adorned with carved reliefs depicting various monks mediating between humans and forest spirits. A stone altar dominates the west wall, its surface scattered with ritual implements—ceremonial bowls, incense burners, and carved wooden tokens. A young bear cub, no larger than a large dog, sniffs curiously at the scattered statue pieces, occasionally pawing at the carved stone fragments.

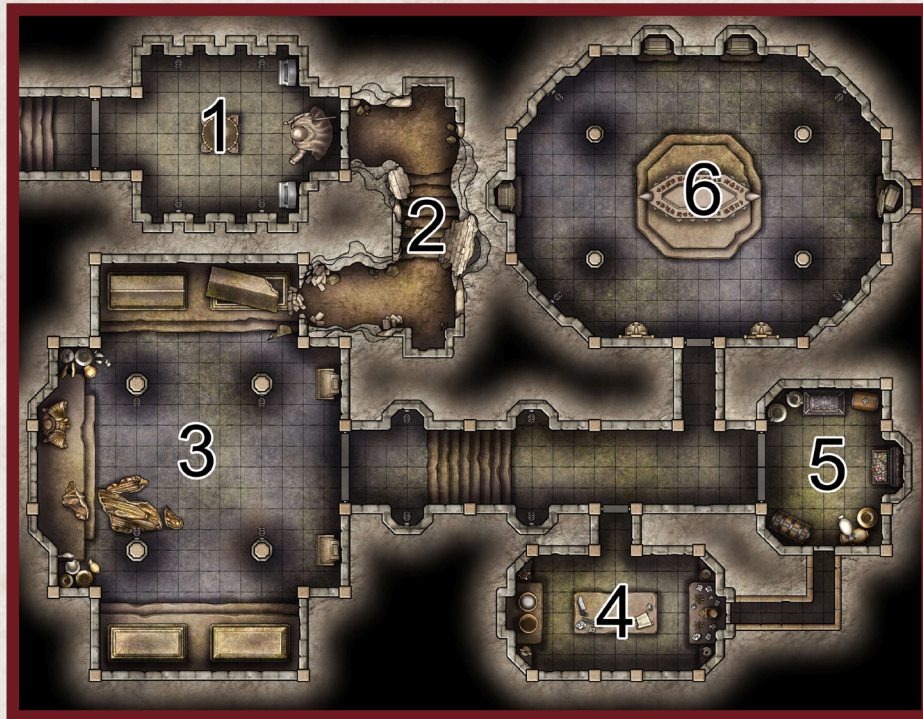
This chamber was the Order's most sacred space, where they performed rituals of mediation and balance. The statue of Brother Verghan once stood as the room's centerpiece, but now lies shattered—a victim of the bears' exploration. The altar itself remains intact, though some ritual items have been scattered by curious paws. Four total sarcophagi line the north and south walls; a single sarcophagus has been partially smashed open by debris that has fallen from the ceiling, revealing a glimpse of the skeletal corpse inside.

Encounter: Curious Cub. The young bear (Pip) is fascinated by the statue fragments and shows no immediate fear of the party. Characters have several options for dealing with the cub:

- A successful DC 13 Nature check to Command an Animal to gently coax the cub with soothing words and gestures
- A successful DC 13 Survival check or DC 11 Bear Lore check to lure the cub with food scraps or interesting scents
- A successful DC 17 Performance check to draw the cub's attention using sounds, games, or movements
- A successful DC 15 Stealth check to carefully work around the cub and move past it, avoiding sudden movements that might startle it

Escalating Danger. If the party spends more than five minutes in this chamber, makes excessive noise, or critically fails any check, Mama Bear (Ursa) arrives from the preparation

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chamber (area 4) to investigate, with her other cub in tow. Once she appears in this context, all future skill checks to manage either Ursa or her cubs take a -2 circumstance penalty as she becomes protective and agitated.

Adjusting the Challenge. If the party is 1st level, the reduce the DCs by 1. If the party is 3rd level, increase the DCs by 2.

4. PREPARATION CHAMBER

This rectangular chamber features a central stone table laden with ritual implements—ceremonial bowls, a ceremonial blade, scrolls, and carved tokens used in the Order's burial rites. Recessed alcoves line the walls, each designed to hold burial goods and sacred items during the preparation of the deceased. The air here is heavy with the scent of the bear family, and tufts of fur cling to the stone surfaces.

This chamber served as the preparation space where the Order's monks would ready their departed brothers for final interment, arranging burial goods and performing the necessary rituals. The central table held the tools of their sacred work, while the wall alcoves stored precious items meant to accompany the dead.

Mama Bear has claimed this space as a nursery for her cubs, appreciating its warmth and security. If the party has not already attracted her attention elsewhere in the tomb, she is here, resting near one of the wall alcoves, while a second cub tumbles playfully around the base of the central

table, occasionally batting at the ritual implements with curious paws.

Encounter: Protective Mother. Mama Bear and her second cub (Tumble) have made this chamber their primary resting area. Unlike her mate, Mama Bear is more approachable but becomes immediately defensive if she perceives any threat to her young. Characters can attempt the following to draw the bears out of the tomb:

- A successful DC 15 Nature check to Command an Animal to demonstrate peaceful intentions through body language and gentle movements
- A successful DC 15 Survival check, DC 13 Bear Lore check, or DC 17 Perception check to Sense Motive to offer food or otherwise show understanding of bear behavior to gain her tolerance
- A successful DC 19 Perception check to use calming sounds or non-threatening gestures to ease her wariness
- A successful DC 19 Intimidation check to establish dominance to make her back down

Ursa will not leave her cubs voluntarily; they follow along behind her in all instances as they're able to.

Adjusting the Challenge. If the party is 1st level, the reduce the DCs by 1. If the party is 3rd level, increase the DCs by 2.

Secret Door. Characters who make a successful DC 20 Perception check notice a secret door in the east wall behind one of the tables. It connects to the treasure room (area 5).

5. VAULT

This irregular chamber serves as the Order's treasury, its walls lined with wooden chests, ceramic urns, and iron-bound barrels. Shelves carved into the stone walls hold an assortment of religious artifacts, ceremonial items, and preserved scrolls.

This vault housed the Order's accumulated wealth and most precious religious artifacts, collected over their centuries of service. The monks were never wealthy, but they received many gifts from grateful communities whose disputes they helped resolve. The chamber remained sealed and undisturbed by the bears, who showed no interest in the metallic scents and unfamiliar objects within.

Treasure: The Order's Legacy. The vault contains the following wealth:

- 180 silver pieces
- A collection of religious art objects worth 40 gp total
- Mundane valuable items worth 20 gp: fine silk vestments, rare spices for ceremonies, and quality crafting tools used in temple maintenance
- An *animal staff* sits in a place of honor atop a shelf

Adjusting the Treasure. If the party is 1st level, the *animal staff* can only cast *summon animal* and is worth only 70 gp, and the religious art is worth only 10 gp. If the party is 3rd level, replace the silver with 75 gp. If there are exactly three PCs, remove 40 sp. If there are exactly five PCs, add 40 sp. If there are exactly six PCs, add 80 sp.

Brother Resher's Final Appearance. Once the bear family has been safely relocated and the shrine restored, Brother Resher manifests one final time in this chamber. His form appears more solid and peaceful than before, the spiritual disturbance finally calmed.

"You have done well, friends. The balance is restored, and we can rest at last." He gestures toward the vault's contents. "Please, take what you will from our treasury—it is yours by right of service. All except..." His ghostly hand hovers over the ring of animal influence. "This ring has served our Order for three centuries, helping us speak with the forest's children. Though we are gone, its purpose is not yet ended. Perhaps one day, when the world has greater need, another will come who can continue our work."

Brother Resher explains that the ring must remain as part of the tomb's spiritual guardianship, but all other treasures are theirs to claim. With a final bow of gratitude, his spirit fades for the last time, and a sense of profound peace settles over

the entire tomb. He does not offer treasure if any of the bears are seriously injured or killed.

Secret Door. Characters who make a successful DC 20 Perception check notice a secret door in the south wall. It connects to the preparation chamber (area 4).

6. VERGHAN'S TOMB

This grand octagonal chamber serves as the final resting place of Brother Verghan the Mediator. A raised stone platform dominates the center of the room, upon which rests an ornate sarcophagus. Smaller alcoves line the walls, each containing the remains of the Order's most revered members. The air here carries a stillness, broken only by the deep, rhythmic breathing of a massive brown bear who has claimed the platform as his resting place. The bear lies sprawled across the sarcophagus itself, his great bulk obscuring the impressive stone monument.

This chamber represents the spiritual heart of the tomb, where Brother Verghan and the Order's most honored members were laid to rest. The raised platform was designed to elevate the founder's remains above all others, symbolizing his role as the Order's guiding spirit. Papa Bear has chosen this location specifically for its elevated position and defensive advantages, able to survey all approaches to his domain.

The sarcophagus shows signs of Papa Bear's prolonged occupancy—claw marks on its edges and worn stone where he regularly lies. However, the tomb's spiritual protections have kept the actual remains undisturbed. Once Papa Bear is dealt with peacefully, characters who examine the sarcophagus closely find that it bears an inscription in Common: "Here lies Verghan the Mediator, who taught that understanding builds bridges where force builds only walls."

Low Encounter: Territorial Papa Bear. Papa Bear is the most formidable member of the family and views this chamber as the heart of his territory. He will not retreat easily and becomes immediately aggressive if approached too quickly or threateningly. Characters can attempt the following to draw Papa Bear out of the tomb:

- A successful DC 17 Nature check to Command an Animal to project calm authority while respecting his territorial nature
- A successful DC 17 Survival check or DC 15 Bear Lore or Forest Lore check to appeal to his practical needs with substantial food offerings or territorial concessions
- A successful DC 21 Performance check to use confident but non-aggressive displays to earn his grudging respect
- A successful DC 21 Intimidation check to force him to retreat through displays of superior strength

Any failed Intimidation attempts, critically failed Performance attempt, or hostile actions will cause him to attack, treating the party as a direct threat to his family's safety.

Adjusting the Encounter. If the party is 1st level, the reduce the DCs by 2. If the party is 3rd level, increase the DCs by 1. If there are six PCs, Mama Bear comes to fight alongside her mate if he is attacked (even in self-defense).

RESTORING THE SHRINE

Once the bear family has been safely relocated from the tomb, Brother Resher manifests again in the shrine chamber to guide the restoration of Brother Verghan's toppled statue. His spectral form flickers as he gestures toward the scattered stone fragments.

"The statue cannot be rebuilt as it was—such work is beyond mortal hands. But Verghan's spirit does not require perfection, only reverence. Gather the pieces with care and arrange them upon the altar in a manner that honors his memory. Speak words of respect for what he stood for—mediation, balance, the harmony between all living things. Light the sacred incense if you can find it among the ritual implements. The shrine will sense your intent, and if your hearts are true, Verghan's spirit will find peace."

Skill Challenge: The Restoration Process. Restoring the shrine requires the party to accumulate 4 Seal Points before they acquire 4 Offense Points. Earning points is a 1-minute activity with the concentrate trait and requires a skill check. Unless noted otherwise, use the following outcomes for these skill checks.

Critical Success The PCs gain 2 Seal Points as the spirit is calmed and can't use that skill again to earn Seal Points.

Success As critical success but the PCs gain 1 Seal Point.

Failure The PCs gain 1 Offense Point as their fumbling attempt comes off as disrespectful.

Critical Failure The PCs gain 2 Offense Points.

Characters can choose the skill each time from the following options, each representing a different aspect of showing proper reverence:

- A trained DC 18 Religion check to understand the spiritual significance of the shrine and speak appropriate prayers during the restoration
- A DC 17 Arcana or Nature check to carefully examine the ritual implements to identify the proper incense and arrange the altar correctly
- A DC 18 Performance check to conduct the work as a proper ritual, speaking words of reverence and moving with ceremonial purpose
- A trained DC 20 Occultism or Religion check to sense and channel the spiritual energies that bind Verghan's essence to the shrine
- A DC 19 Society check to recall knowledge of the Order's traditions to ensure the shrine is honored according to their original practices
- A DC 19 Perception check to Sense Motive to understand what the Order valued most and reflect those principles in your actions

Adjusting the Challenge. If the party is 1st level, the reduce the DCs by 1. If the party is 3rd level, increase the DCs by 2. If there are not exactly four PCs, change the required number of successes to match the number of PCs (so 6 Seal Points would be required for six PCs).

Failure Consequences: Low Encounter. Each individual skill check can be repeated only if failed. If the party accumulates 4 Offense Points, the party's inappropriate approach disturbs Verghan's spirit before the restoration can calm him.

The founder's ghost (as [ghost commoner with weak adjustments](#); *Pathfinder Monster Core*) manifests in a state of confused rage, believing the party to be tomb robbers defiling his sacred space. He can summon a [cunning fox](#) spirit (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3) once per day as a three-action activity; it has the summoned trait, so he must spend an action to Command it each turn. The ghost fights until reduced to 0 Hit Points, after which it dissipates and the party can attempt the restoration process again with fresh skill checks.

Adjusting the Encounter. If there are exactly three PCs, the founder can't summon a fox spirit. If there are exactly five PCs, the founder is accompanied by a cunning fox without the summoned trait. If there are exactly six PCs, founder is accompanied by two cunning foxes without the summoned trait. If the party is 1st level, the founder's base resistances are reduced to 2 and the cunning fox has [weak adjustments](#). If the party is 3rd level, the founder uses standard [ghost commoner](#) statistics, although he has the summon activity if there are exactly four PCs, and the cunning fox has [elite adjustments](#).

Success. Once 4 Seal Points are collected, the arranged stone pieces begin to glow with soft, warm light. Brother Verghan's peaceful spirit briefly appears to nod his approval before fading, and a sense of profound calm settles over the entire tomb. Brother Resher expresses his gratitude and directs the party to the vault for their promised reward, as long as no bears were killed.

AFTERMATH

The resolution of this adventure depends largely on how the party approached the bear family and whether they successfully restored Brother Verghan's shrine. If the bears were relocated peacefully and the shrine properly restored, the spirits of the Order finally find their eternal rest. The nightly disturbances cease, bringing relief to local villages and allowing normal life to resume. The bear family, if treated kindly, may establish a den elsewhere in the region and remember the party's compassion—potentially coming to their aid in future wilderness encounters.

Should the party resort to violence against the bears or fail to restore the shrine properly, the consequences vary. Killing the bears, while ending the immediate disturbance, leaves the spirits in continued agitation over the desecration of their peaceful philosophy. Local druids or rangers may learn of the slaughter and hold the party accountable. If the shrine remains unrestored, Brother Verghan's angry spirit may eventually manifest as a more permanent threat, requiring future intervention.



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