



**SHADOW TOMBS OF  
KARETHOR**

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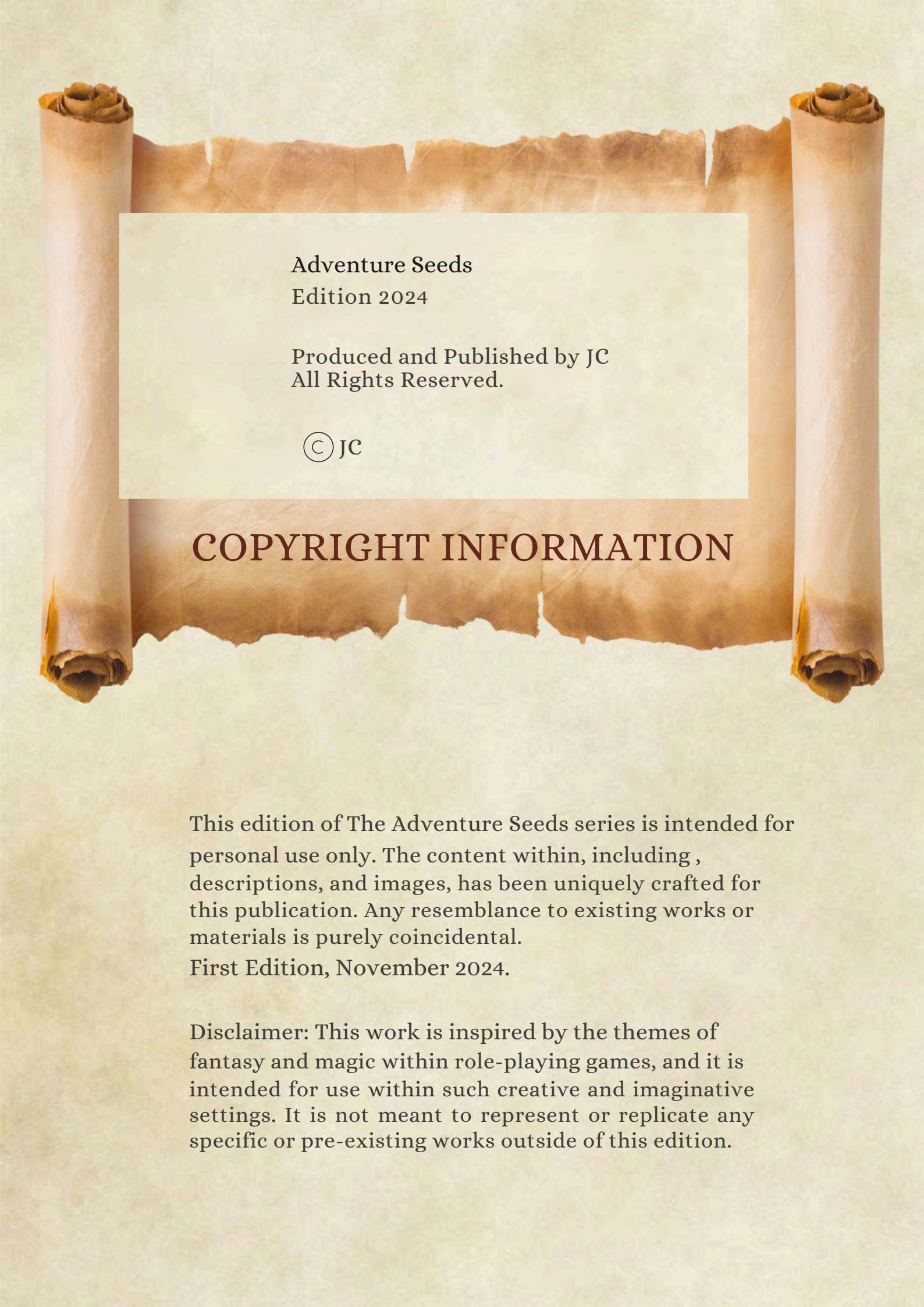
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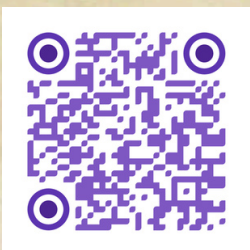
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# THE SHADOWED TOMBS OF KARETHOR

## ORIGINS OF THE QUEST

### DM GUIDANCE: SETTING THE STAGE

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To immerse the players, emphasize the mystery and weight of the quest. Frame the Shadowed Tombs as a place shrouded in dark history, but make the benefactor's offer intriguing enough to hook the adventurers. The stakes should feel personal and universal, tied to both their goals and the world's fate.

### THE HOOK

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The adventure begins in the sleepy village of **Duskmoor**, nestled on the edge of the **Shadowed Expanse**, a barren, misty wasteland whispered to hold the cursed tomb of Karethor. Strange happenings have plagued the village: livestock vanishing, chilling wails echoing through the night, and shadows moving unnaturally under the moonlight.

An enigmatic figure named **Elyndra Nightveil**, a scholar and relic hunter, approaches the party in the village tavern, offering both knowledge and payment for their assistance. She speaks with urgency:

*"The Shadowed Tombs house a fragment of the Amulet of Shadows, a relic split across realms to prevent catastrophe. But the seals holding its power have weakened, and dark forces gather. If we don't act swiftly, its magic will fall into the wrong hands. I need your help to recover the fragment before it's too late. The rewards will be considerable, both in coin and in power. What say you?"*

### THE OFFER

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Elyndra promises the party **1,000 gold pieces**, as well as a rare magical item—chosen to suit the party's needs—upon successful retrieval of the amulet fragment. Additionally, she provides them with a **Shadowlight Lantern**, a magical device that illuminates a 30-foot radius in the tomb's

magical darkness and reveals hidden passageways.

### DM TIP: DESCRIBING ELYNDRA NIGHTVEIL

Portray Elyndra as a poised yet slightly haunted figure. Her dark hair is streaked with silver, and her violet eyes seem to hold knowledge of distant realms. She carries a satchel filled with maps and cryptic scrolls, hinting at her expertise. Use her to foreshadow the dangers ahead—mentioning curses, shadow creatures, and the ominous history of Karethor.

### THE STAKES

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The villagers of Duskmoor are too terrified to venture near the Shadowed Expanse, but they provide grim warnings. One elder tells the party:

*"Karethor was no ordinary man. He dabbled in shadow magic, wielding power that turned even his allies against him. The tomb is his prison now—but the whispers say his spirit lingers, guarding treasures no living soul should touch."*

If the fragment is not recovered, the party risks its discovery by a rival faction of cultists, who aim to reunite the shards and unleash the amulet's dark power.

### STARTING THE JOURNEY

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Before the party departs, they have a chance to gather supplies in Duskmoor. The Shadowlight Lantern is their key to surviving the tomb's unnatural darkness, but the DM can allow them to purchase or acquire other gear, such as holy water, healing potions, or items that deal radiant damage.

### OPTIONAL HOOK: RIVAL ADVENTURERS

Introduce a rival group also seeking the fragment, hired by a competing benefactor with less noble intentions. These rivals can act as future adversaries, heightening the tension and providing an ongoing storyline.

### DM DIALOGUE EXAMPLE

Use this dialogue to hook the party and set the tone:

*The tavern grows silent as Elyndra steps closer. “You’re not just chasing treasure,” she says, her voice low and serious. “You’re preventing calamity. The amulet fragment is a key—one that should never fall into the wrong hands. I know you’re capable, but beware: shadows cling to Karethor’s tomb. It will test you in ways few could survive.”*

With the stage set, the party is ready to venture toward the Shadowed Tombs. The journey begins.

## REALM DESCRIPTION: THE SHADOWED TOMBS OF KARETHOR

### DM GUIDANCE: BRINGING THE REALM TO LIFE

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The Shadowed Tombs are steeped in mystery and dread. Use vivid descriptions to immerse the players in the foreboding atmosphere. Stress the unnatural nature of the environment and the oppressive presence of shadow magic. Tailor your tone to invoke unease and curiosity.

### NAME OF THE REALM

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**The Shadowed Tombs of Karethor**

### DESCRIPTION

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The tombs lie at the heart of the **Shadowed Expanse**, a barren wasteland blanketed by an eternal gray mist. The air is thick with an unnatural chill, and the land is eerily silent—no birds, no rustling leaves, just the faint sound of distant whispers carried on the wind.

The entrance to the tomb is a crumbling mausoleum built from blackened stone, its surface etched with runes that faintly pulse with dark energy. Twisted, leafless trees surround the structure, their gnarled branches clawing at the mist. A sense of wrongness permeates the air, as though the land itself rejects the presence of the living.

### DM TIPS FOR ATMOSPHERE

- Describe the **senses**: the bitter cold, the metallic taste of the air, and the flickering shadows that seem to move just out of sight.
- Use **foreshadowing**: mention vague shapes in the mist or the sensation of being watched, but don't reveal too much.
- Play with **player perception**: hint that their light sources don't pierce the mist as effectively as they should, adding to the mystery.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE

*The mist thickens as you approach the Shadowed Tombs. The path beneath your feet is uneven, broken by jagged roots and patches of cracked stone. Ahead, the mausoleum looms, its iron gates hanging ajar. A soft, almost imperceptible whisper brushes past your ears—words too faint to understand. The runes on the mausoleum's stonework flicker faintly, casting fleeting shadows across the barren ground. The air is cold, so cold that your breath clouds before you. It feels as if the tomb itself is watching, waiting.*

## ENTRY DESCRIPTION: ARRIVAL AT THE TOMBS

### DM GUIDANCE: THE PORTAL AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS

---

The players arrive through a magical portal provided by Elyndra Nightveil. This should feel like a significant moment, transporting them from relative safety to the heart of the Shadowed Expanse. Use sensory details to establish the otherworldly nature of the tombs and set the tone for the adventure ahead. DM to DM. We are using the portal entry as it will allow you to drop the entire quest into a campaign that you are running as a major side quest. There is no significant journey to the Tombs so if you wish you can return to your original adventure easily.

### PORTAL ARRIVAL

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The portal is an ephemeral construct, shimmering with hues of deep purple and midnight blue, swirling with motes of silver light. As the party steps through, the world around them shifts violently. The warm glow of Duskmoor is replaced by an oppressive gloom. The air feels heavy, as though it's pressing against their chests.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE

*You step into the portal, feeling a sudden rush of icy wind that seems to pull you forward. The world twists and blurs, and for a moment, you lose all sense of direction. When the sensation fades, you find yourselves standing in a desolate wasteland. A gray mist blankets the land, clinging to your skin like damp cloth. The portal flickers behind you, then collapses in on itself with a soft sigh, leaving you alone in the silence of the Shadowed Expanse.*

### INITIAL ENCOUNTER: THE TOMB'S GUARDIAN

As the party approaches the mausoleum, they are stopped by a shadowy figure emerging from the mist. This is **Ravyn, the Forgotten Sentinel**, a spectral guardian bound to the tomb. She is not hostile, but her demeanor is cold and severe. Her presence serves to foreshadow the dangers ahead.

#### DM GUIDANCE: ROLEPLAYING RAVYN

Ravyn is an incorporeal being who once served Karethor but now guards the tomb as penance for her past sins. Her voice is ethereal, echoing slightly as she speaks. She tests the party's resolve, warning them of the perils within.

#### EXAMPLE DIALOGUE

*"Turn back, mortals," the figure intones, her translucent form flickering in the gloom. "This place is not meant for the living. The shadows will consume you, as they have consumed all who dared to tread here before. If you insist on entering, know that your strength alone will not save you. The tomb is alive with curses and traps—its master ever watchful."*

Ravyn will reluctantly allow the party to pass if they convince her of their noble intent or strength. She can also provide cryptic hints about the tomb's layout and the threats within.

### EXPLORING THE TOMB ENTRANCE

The mausoleum opens into a grand, decayed hall. The walls are carved with depictions of Karethor's rise to power, showing his mastery of shadow magic and the betrayal that led to his fall. The air grows colder as the players step inside, and the Shadowlight Lantern begins to flicker, revealing faintly glowing runes along the floor.

#### DM TIPS FOR EXPLORATION

- Encourage players to examine the carvings; they can reveal lore about Karethor and the tomb's history.
- The glowing runes can be a simple puzzle—players must align them with symbols found on the carvings to open the path forward.
- Use sound effects: faint whispers, creaking stone, and distant, echoing footsteps.

#### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE

*The mausoleum's gates creak as you push them open, revealing a hall lined with crumbling pillars. The air inside is colder than outside, and every sound you make echoes unnaturally. Along the walls, shadowy carvings depict scenes of a figure cloaked in darkness: Karethor, the shadow mage. The carvings seem to shift slightly when viewed from the corner of your eye, as though alive. The faint glow of runes along the floor pulses with an otherworldly rhythm, waiting to be deciphered.*

# JOURNEY TO THE MINION

## DM GUIDANCE: CREATING TENSION AND MYSTERY

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As the players advance deeper into the tomb, it's essential to build tension through environmental storytelling and encounters. The path to the minion should feel like an escalating series of challenges, both physical and psychological. Use sensory details, unsettling imagery, and traps or puzzles to keep the players engaged and wary.

### THE PATH FORWARD: HALL OF WHISPERS

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The Shadowlight Lantern reveals a narrow passage leading deeper into the tomb. The passage eventually opens into a vast chamber known as the **Hall of Whispers**. Here, the shadows take on a life of their own, curling and shifting in unnatural patterns. The air is thick with an oppressive silence, broken only by faint, unintelligible whispers that seem to come from nowhere and everywhere.

#### DM TIPS FOR SETTING THE MOOD

- **Describe the silence:** Emphasize how unnaturally quiet it is, making even the smallest sound from the players feel deafening.
- **Play with paranoia:** Mention shadows that seem to move or stretch toward the players, even though nothing attacks—yet.
- **Foreshadow danger:** Place remnants of previous adventurers—broken weapons, claw marks on walls, or old bloodstains—hinting at battles fought here.

#### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE

*The passage tightens before opening into a vaulted chamber of cold, smooth stone. At first glance, the room seems empty, but as the Shadowlight Lantern flickers, shadows writhe along the walls, twisting and coiling like living things. The whispers are faint but persistent, their cadence almost hypnotic. Every step you take sends echoes rippling through the silence, and for a moment, you swear you see movement in the corner of your eye—but when you turn, there's nothing there.*

### THE HALL'S CHALLENGES

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The Hall of Whispers serves as a gauntlet, testing the party's ability to navigate and cooperate. Present these challenges to build tension:

- **Shadow Phantoms:** Illusory figures made of shadow periodically flicker into existence, darting toward the party before vanishing. These cannot harm the players but can confuse and distract them.
- **Whispering Trap:** The whispers grow louder as the players proceed, tempting them with promises of power or secrets. If a player fails a Wisdom saving throw (DC 13), they feel compelled to linger, making them vulnerable to ambushes.
- **Falling Shadows:** Sections of the room are rigged to release heavy, solidified shadows that crash to the ground like falling stones, forcing players to make Dexterity saving throws (DC 14) to avoid damage (2d6 bludgeoning).

#### DM DIALOGUE: THE WHISPERS

Use cryptic phrases to tempt or unsettle the players. Here are examples:

- *"Why do you come? He sees you."*
- *"Power lies here, but not for you."*
- *"Run while you can, before the shadows take you."*

## REACHING THE MINION'S LAIR: THE SHADOW CRUCIBLE

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The Hall of Whispers eventually leads to a wide circular chamber dominated by a large, glowing pit of swirling shadows. This is the **Shadow Crucible**, where the party encounters **Vrenak the Shadewrought**, a powerful construct created by Karethor to guard the tomb.

The chamber is dimly lit by the crucible's eerie, pulsing glow. The walls are inscribed with runes that emit faint black smoke, twisting and reforming every few seconds. The air here feels heavier, as though the shadows themselves are pressing down on the party.

### DM NARRATIVE: THE SHADOW CRUCIBLE

*As you step into the chamber, the temperature drops sharply, and your breath clouds before you. The pit of shadows at the room's center pulses rhythmically, casting faint, flickering light across the walls. Strange runes carved into the stone shift and change, their forms never staying the same for more than a moment. From within the crucible, a deep, resonant hum begins to grow louder. Suddenly, the shadows coalesce, and a towering figure emerges—a construct of pure darkness, its eyes glowing like twin embers.*

### PREPARING FOR THE ENCOUNTER

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The battle with Vrenak is the party's first major test in the tomb. The construct is a physical and magical threat, capable of manipulating the shadows in its environment. Ensure the players have a chance to prepare by investigating the room and potentially discovering weaknesses in the runes or crucible.

### DM GUIDANCE FOR COMBAT

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- Make use of the **environment**: Shadows in the room should move unpredictably, obscuring vision or creating hazards.

- **Balance the difficulty**: If the players are struggling, have the shifting runes weaken Vrenak briefly, giving the party openings to strike.
- Emphasize Vrenak's **imposing presence**: He doesn't speak but emits deep, guttural growls that shake the air.

The encounter with Vrenak will be detailed in the next section, including his appearance, tactics, and stat block. Let me know when you're ready to proceed!

# ENCOUNTER WITH A POWERFUL MINION: VRENAK THE SHADEWROUGHT

## DM GUIDANCE: BUILDING THE ENCOUNTER

Vrenak is a menacing, shadowy construct created by Karethor to guard the Shadow Crucible. This encounter should feel like a turning point, testing the players' combat strategy and ability to adapt to environmental challenges. Use vivid descriptions to highlight Vrenak's terrifying presence and the dynamic battlefield of the crucible chamber.

## APPEARANCE

Vrenak is a towering, humanoid construct of pure shadow, standing nearly 10 feet tall. Its body is featureless and ripples with darkness, but its eyes burn with an intense crimson glow. When it moves, its limbs stretch and reform like liquid shadow, leaving tendrils of darkness in its wake. Runes etched into its chest pulse faintly, their light dimming and brightening in rhythm with the Shadow Crucible.

## EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: VRENAK'S MANIFESTATION

*The hum of the crucible grows louder, reverberating in your chest. Suddenly, the shadows at the pit's edge surge upward, twisting and folding into a massive, humanoid form. Two blazing crimson orbs snap open where its eyes should be, casting an eerie glow across the room. The creature's body ripples like smoke caught in a storm, and with every step it takes, the shadows around it seem to quiver. Without a word, it raises an arm, the darkness extending like a blade as it advances.*

## BEHAVIOR AND PURPOSE

Vrenak is a relentless guardian bound to the Shadow Crucible. It has no will of its own and exists solely to prevent intruders

from proceeding deeper into the tomb. It does not speak, but its movements are deliberate and imposing, conveying an unshakable resolve.

## COMBAT TACTICS

Vrenak uses both physical attacks and shadow-based abilities, exploiting the environment to its advantage. The DM should emphasize its supernatural agility and the unpredictability of its shadow manipulation.

- **Opening Moves:** Vrenak begins by slashing at the nearest player with its shadow blade, testing their defenses.
- **Environmental Hazard:** As the fight progresses, Vrenak uses its control over shadows to obscure the battlefield, creating areas of magical darkness.
- **Desperation Phase:** When reduced to half its hit points, Vrenak channels energy from the crucible, causing shadow tendrils to lash out at all nearby players.

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

1. **Shadow Blade:** A melee attack that extends its arm into a sharp, shadowy blade. Deals slashing and necrotic damage.
2. **Darkness Pulse:** Vrenak creates a 20-foot-radius sphere of magical darkness centered on itself. Only the Shadowlight Lantern can pierce this darkness.
3. **Tendril Whip:** When damaged, Vrenak releases shadow tendrils that lash out at all nearby players. Each creature within 10 feet must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 14) or take necrotic damage.
4. **Crucible Surge:** When Vrenak's health drops below 50%, the Shadow Crucible emits a surge of energy, restoring 10 hit points to Vrenak unless the players disrupt the crucible.

## WEAKNESSES

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- **Radiant Damage:** Vrenak is vulnerable to radiant damage, and such attacks cause the runes on its chest to flicker erratically, weakening its attacks for a turn.
- **Shadowlight Lantern:** The lantern reveals Vrenak's true form within the darkness, preventing it from using its magical darkness to hide.

## ENVIRONMENT: THE SHADOW CRUCIBLE CHAMBER

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The chamber itself is an active participant in the battle. The Shadow Crucible pulses with dark energy, and the walls seem to shift and ripple, making it disorienting for the players.

- **Shadow Surges:** At the end of every other round, the crucible emits a surge of energy, causing random tendrils of shadow to lash out across the room. Players must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw (DC 13) or take 1d8 necrotic damage.
- **Shifting Runes:** Players who take an action to examine the runes on the walls can make an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 15) to identify a weak point in Vrenak's connection to the crucible, temporarily disabling its healing.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: THE DYNAMIC BATTLEFIELD

*The crucible flares with a sudden burst of light, and tendrils of shadow erupt from its edges, lashing wildly across the room. The walls seem to shimmer and shift, the runes twisting into new, unreadable patterns. It feels as though the chamber itself is alive, intent on aiding its shadowy guardian.*

## DEFEATING VRENAK

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Once Vrenak is defeated, its body dissolves into wisps of shadow, leaving behind a faintly glowing crystal shard—a piece of the Shadow Crucible's core. This shard may be useful later in the tomb. The crucible itself

dims, its energy temporarily spent, allowing the party to continue their journey.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: VICTORY

*With a final, desperate lunge, Vrenak collapses, its shadowy form unraveling into dark wisps. The crimson glow in its eyes fades to nothing, and the hum of the crucible grows faint. As the last remnants of the construct dissolve, a shard of glowing crystal drops to the ground, pulsing weakly with shadowy energy. The chamber grows still, and the path ahead seems to beckon you forward.*

## STAT BLOCK FOR VRENAK

## THE SHADEWROUGHT

### VRENAK THE SHADEWROUGHT

*Large construct, neutral*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 85 (10d10 + 30)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +4, Con +5

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

#### TRAITS

**Shadowy Form.** Vrenak can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch without squeezing.

**Magical Darkness.** As an action, Vrenak can create an area of magical darkness (20-foot radius) centered on itself. This darkness lasts

for 1 minute or until dispelled. Only the Shadowlight Lantern can pierce this darkness.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Vrenak makes two Shadow Blade attacks.

**Shadow Blade.** Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

**Hit:** 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

**Tendril Whip (Recharge 5-6).** Shadow tendrils lash out from Vrenak, affecting all creatures within 10 feet. Each creature must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (2d8) necrotic damage.

#### REACTIONS

**Crucible Surge.** When reduced to 50% of its hit points or below, Vrenak draws energy from the Shadow Crucible, regaining 10 hit points. This effect is nullified if the players disrupt the crucible by succeeding on an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 15).

## SIDE QUEST: THE ECHO OF ELYRA

### DM GUIDANCE: ADDING DEPTH AND CHOICE

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Side quests provide opportunities for players to explore additional narrative threads, gain useful resources, or immerse themselves in the world's lore. The **Echo of Elyra** side quest introduces a ghostly NPC with a tragic backstory. It's optional but rewarding, giving players insight into Karethor's past and potentially a powerful artifact to aid them.

### CHARACTER INTRODUCTION: ELYRA, THE FORGOTTEN QUEEN

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Elyra is the ghostly remnant of Karethor's betrayed queen. She lingers in the tomb, trapped by the magic of the Shadow Crucible. Unlike the tomb's other inhabitants, Elyra is not hostile—unless provoked. She appears pale and radiant, a stark contrast to the oppressive darkness around her. Her translucent form shimmers faintly with silver light, and her voice carries a sorrowful, melodic tone.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: MEETING ELYRA

*As you step into a smaller, side chamber branching from the Hall of Whispers, the air grows warmer, and the ever-present darkness seems to lift slightly. A figure materializes before you, her form pale and translucent, her movements graceful despite the faint chains that bind her wrists. Her voice echoes softly, filling the chamber like a mournful song.*

*"Intruders... no, perhaps saviors. I am Elyra, queen of a kingdom long forgotten, doomed to remain here by the one I once called husband. Will you hear my plea?"*

### QUEST DESCRIPTION: FREEING ELYRA

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Elyra explains her tragic tale. Once queen to Karethor, she was betrayed when her husband's obsession with shadow magic consumed him. Seeing her as a threat to

his power, Karethor bound her spirit to the tomb as a guardian, trapping her even in death.

Elyra offers to help the party by revealing secrets about the tomb, including traps and alternate routes, but she asks for their aid in return. To free her, the players must retrieve a shard of her shattered soul, hidden in the **Sanctum of Chains** deeper within the tomb.

### THE SANCTUM OF CHAINS

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This chamber is a hidden, heavily warded room, accessible only by solving a riddle inscribed on its door. The Sanctum holds Elyra's soul shard, locked in a shadowy cage. The room is protected by magical traps and a minor shadow elemental.

### DM GUIDANCE: RIDDLE AND TRAPS

The door to the Sanctum bears the following riddle:

*"I am not alive, but I grow; I don't have lungs, yet I need air; I don't have a mouth, and yet I drown. What am I?"*

- **Answer:** Fire. The players must light three braziers near the door in the correct sequence to open it.

Once inside, they must navigate:

- **Shadow Snare Traps:** Triggered by stepping on faintly glowing runes, these traps restrain players in shadowy tendrils until they succeed on a Strength saving throw (DC 13).
- **Shadow Elemental Encounter:** A minor shadow elemental guards the soul shard. It fights defensively, using the darkness of the room to obscure itself.

### REWARDS: ELYRA'S GUIDANCE AND THE TEAR OF ELYRA

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Once the players retrieve the soul shard and return it to Elyra, she merges with it, breaking her chains. Grateful, she blesses the party with valuable aid:

1. **Elyra's Guidance:** Elyra shares critical information about Karethor and the tomb:

- The layout of the Shadow Labyrinth, the next major area.
- The locations of traps and hidden passages.
- Karethor's greatest weakness: his binding to the Shadow Crucible.

2. **The Tear of Elyra** (Magic Item): A translucent, tear-shaped pendant containing a fragment of Elyra's restored essence. While worn, it grants the following benefits:

- **Passive Effect:** Resistance to necrotic damage.
- **Activated Effect:** As a reaction, the wearer can absorb a necrotic attack, converting the damage into healing equal to half the damage dealt (once per long rest).

#### **DM NARRATIVE: ELYRA'S RELEASE**

*Elyra takes the soul shard from you, her translucent form flickering as she holds it close. A brilliant light fills the chamber as her chains shatter and dissolve into motes of shadow. Her voice, now clear and strong, carries a note of gratitude.*

*"You have done what none before could. My torment is ended, and I owe you my freedom. Take this," she says, holding out the pendant. "It is a piece of me—a reminder that even in the darkest of places, light can endure. Use it well, for Karethor will not fall easily."*

#### **OPTIONAL OUTCOME: REFUSING ELYRA'S REQUEST**

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If the party chooses not to help Elyra, she warns them of the dangers ahead but provides no further assistance. The chamber grows colder as she vanishes, her sorrowful voice fading into the darkness:

*"So be it. May your strength alone be enough to end his reign."*

Without Elyra's guidance, the players face greater challenges navigating the Shadow Labyrinth, as traps and hazards are harder to detect.

# JOURNEY TO THE FINAL BOSS: TRAVERSING THE SHADOW LABYRINTH

## DM GUIDANCE: BUILDING SUSPENSE

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The Shadow Labyrinth serves as the tomb's most dangerous and disorienting section. Use vivid descriptions and strategic encounters to emphasize the psychological and physical toll on the players. The labyrinth should feel alive, with the shadows shifting and warping reality to mislead and challenge the party.

## THE SHADOW LABYRINTH

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The labyrinth is a sprawling network of twisting corridors and dead ends, built to confuse and exhaust intruders. Its walls are made of black stone veined with faintly glowing runes, and the air is heavy with the scent of damp earth and decay. Shadows move unnaturally along the walls, creating the illusion of paths where none exist.

### DM TIPS FOR SETTING THE TONE

- **Desperation:** Describe the players' mounting frustration as they encounter paths that loop back or abruptly end.
- **Manipulation:** Use illusions, such as phantom doors or hallways, to deceive the players.
- **Ambient Sound:** Mention distant footsteps, whispers, or the sound of stone grinding against stone, suggesting unseen movement.

## EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: ENTERING THE LABYRINTH

*The air grows heavier as you step into the Shadow Labyrinth, the faint light of the Shadowlight Lantern casting long, wavering shadows against the walls. The corridors seem to stretch endlessly in all directions, their black stone veined with glowing, shifting runes. Whispers echo faintly, their source impossible to pinpoint, and every step you take seems to be swallowed by the oppressive silence that follows.*

## LABYRINTH CHALLENGES

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The labyrinth is not just a maze but a test of the party's wits, perception, and endurance. Include the following obstacles to create tension:

- **Illusory Pathways:** Some corridors appear open but dissolve into darkness as the players approach, forcing them to backtrack.
- **Shifting Corridors:** Sections of the labyrinth rearrange themselves when the players cross specific thresholds, creating disorientation. Have players make an Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check (DC 14) to notice subtle clues about the shifting paths.
- **Shadow Stalkers:** A group of shadowy creatures silently follows the party, attacking when they are most vulnerable. The players must succeed on a Perception check (DC 15) to notice the stalkers before the ambush.

## DM DIALOGUE: FORESHADOWING THE STALKERS

*"You hear faint, shuffling sounds behind you, though every time you turn to look, there's nothing there. The shadows in the corners of your vision seem darker, thicker, as if something is watching from just beyond the light of your lantern."*

## **PUZZLE: THE RUNES OF PASSAGE**

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Deep within the labyrinth, the players encounter a wall of glowing runes blocking their path. The runes form an intricate puzzle that requires deciphering to proceed.

- **The Puzzle:** Players must align a sequence of runes to match a phrase written in an ancient language. A successful Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Insight) check (DC 15) reveals the meaning of the runes: *“The light reveals all truths.”*
- **Solution:** Shining the Shadowlight Lantern directly on the wall causes the runes to rearrange, opening a hidden passage.

### **DM NARRATIVE: SOLVING THE PUZZLE**

*As the lantern’s light touches the wall, the runes shift and twist, their faint glow intensifying until they form a cohesive pattern. A low rumble echoes through the labyrinth as the wall slides aside, revealing a narrow corridor beyond.*

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**

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As the party progresses, the labyrinth fights back, presenting dangers that sap their strength and resources:

- **Suffocating Shadows:** In certain areas, the shadows become tangible, clinging to the players and reducing visibility to 5 feet. Players must succeed on a Constitution saving throw (DC 13) or gain a level of exhaustion.
- **Pitfalls:** Hidden traps cause sections of the floor to collapse, leading to spiked pits below. Players must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 14) to avoid falling and taking 3d6 piercing damage.

## **ARRIVAL AT THE THRONE CHAMBER**

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After navigating the labyrinth, the party reaches a towering set of black iron doors engraved with depictions of Karethor’s

conquests and the rise of his shadow magic. The doors exude a faint, pulsing energy, and the air grows colder as the players approach.

### **DM NARRATIVE: THE THRONE CHAMBER DOORS**

*The iron doors stand impossibly tall, their surface etched with scenes of a figure cloaked in shadows commanding armies and twisting the fabric of reality itself. The engravings seem to writhe and shift as you look at them, and a deep, resonant hum emanates from the metal. As you push the doors open, a wave of icy air washes over you, and the faint sound of chanting echoes from the darkness beyond.*

The stage is set for the final confrontation with Karethor. The Throne Chamber awaits, its dark master ready to meet the intruders.

## ENCOUNTER WITH THE FINAL BOSS: KARETHOR, WRAITH LORD OF SHADOWS

### DM GUIDANCE: SETTING UP THE CLIMAX

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The encounter with Karethor is the culmination of the players' journey through the Shadowed Tombs. This battle should feel epic, with the environment playing as much of a role as the boss himself. Emphasize Karethor's imposing presence, his mastery over shadow magic, and the palpable sense of danger in the room. Use his dialogue and abilities to remind the players of his power and malice.

### APPEARANCE

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Karethor is a towering, spectral figure shrouded in roiling shadows. His form is only partially corporeal, his skeletal visage barely visible beneath the swirling darkness. A crown of broken bone rests atop his head, and his tattered robes ripple as if caught in an ethereal wind. His hands end in long, shadowy claws that drip with dark energy, and his voice echoes with the weight of centuries.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: KARETHOR'S MANIFESTATION

*The chamber is vast and oppressive, the faint light of the Shadowlight Lantern barely piercing the gloom. At its center, a jagged throne of black stone rises from a dais of swirling shadow. As you approach, the shadows coalesce into a monstrous figure. A skeletal face peers out from the darkness, its empty sockets glowing with an unnatural crimson light. A low, menacing voice echoes throughout the room:*

*"Fools... You tread where none should. This tomb is my domain, and here, your light shall falter."*

## BEHAVIOR AND PURPOSE

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Karethor is a wraith lord, fully aware of the party's presence and intent. He views them as both a threat and an opportunity—a chance to test his power against living beings once more. He fights strategically, using the environment and his shadow magic to disorient and overwhelm the party.

## COMBAT TACTICS

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Karethor's tactics evolve throughout the battle, making him a dynamic and challenging foe.

- **Opening Moves:** Karethor summons shadowy minions (two **Shadow Servitors**) to harass the party while he attacks from range with necrotic spells.
- **Mid-Battle Strategy:** As the fight progresses, Karethor moves to the shadows, using his **Shadowmeld** ability to teleport across the room, targeting weaker players.
- **Final Phase:** When reduced to 50% hit points, Karethor channels energy from the Shadow Crucible to unleash his most devastating ability, **Shadow Nova**, threatening the entire party.

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

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1. **Shadowmeld:** As a bonus action, Karethor teleports to a space within 60 feet that is in dim light or darkness.
2. **Necrotic Grasp:** A melee attack that deals necrotic damage and reduces the target's maximum hit points by 5 until they complete a long rest.
3. **Summon Shadow Servitors:** Karethor summons two Shadow Servitors (use **Shadow Elemental** stats) to aid him in combat. These servitors fight until destroyed.
4. **Shadow Nova (Recharge 5-6):** Karethor releases a burst of shadowy energy in a 30-foot radius. All creatures within range must make a Dexterity saving throw (DC 15) or take 24 (6d8) necrotic damage and be blinded for 1 minute.
5. **Legendary Actions:**
  - **Drain Vitality:** Karethor targets one creature within 30 feet, forcing them to make a Constitution saving throw (DC 16). On a failure, the target takes 14 (4d6) necrotic damage, and Karethor regains hit points equal to the damage dealt.
  - **Move:** Karethor uses his Shadowmeld ability.

## WEAKNESSES

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- **Radiant Damage:** Karethor takes double damage from radiant attacks, and radiant spells interrupt his ability to use Shadowmeld for one round.
- **The Shadow Crucible:** Players who succeed on an Intelligence (Arcana) check (DC 15) can discern that Karethor's power is tied to the Shadow Crucible. Disabling the crucible weakens his **Shadow Nova** ability, halving its damage.

## ENVIRONMENT: THE THRONE CHAMBER

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The throne chamber is an active and perilous battlefield. Its features include:

- **Shadow Tendrils:** Tendrils of shadow erupt randomly, forcing players to make Dexterity saving throws (DC 13) or take 2d6 necrotic damage.
- **Flickering Light:** The Shadowlight Lantern's radius is reduced to 15 feet due to the oppressive darkness, making visibility a constant challenge.
- **The Shadow Crucible:** Located behind Karethor's throne, the crucible pulses with dark energy. Players can attempt to disrupt it by succeeding on a Strength or Arcana check (DC 15), weakening Karethor's abilities.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: THE DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

*The chamber itself seems to writhe with malice, the shadows shifting and twisting unnaturally. The Shadow Crucible behind Karethor glows faintly, its pulses sending ripples of dark energy through the air. Shadowy tendrils lash out unpredictably, and the light of your lantern struggles to hold back the encroaching gloom.*

### DEFEATING KARETHOR

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Upon his defeat, Karethor's form collapses into a swirling vortex of shadow, and the Shadow Crucible shatters, its energy dissipating. The amulet fragment lies within the debris of the throne, glowing faintly with a soft, silvery light.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: VICTORY OVER KARETHOR

*Karethor lets out a final, inhuman wail as his form begins to unravel. The shadows cling desperately to his skeletal frame before dissolving into wisps of darkness. The Shadow Crucible erupts in a blinding flash, sending shards of black stone across the chamber. As the light fades, the air grows still, and on the shattered throne lies a fragment of an ancient amulet, glowing faintly. The oppressive weight in the room lifts, and for the first time, silence feels like peace.*

## KARETHOR, WRAITH LORD OF SHADOWS

*Large undead, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 136 (16d10 + 48)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Wis +4, Cha +8

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** poison, cold

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Abyssal

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

### TRAITS

**Incorporeal Movement.** Karethor can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. He takes 5 (1d10) force damage if he ends his turn inside an object.

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If Karethor fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Karethor makes two Necrotic Grasp attacks.

**Necrotic Grasp.** Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

**Hit:** 18 (4d6 + 4) necrotic damage, and the target's hit point maximum is reduced by 5 until a long rest.

**Shadow Nova (Recharge 5-6).** Karethor releases a burst of shadow energy. Each creature within 30 feet must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 24 (6d8) necrotic damage and be blinded for 1 minute.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Karethor can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn.

**Drain Vitality.** Karethor targets one creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) necrotic damage, and Karethor regains hit points equal to the damage dealt.

**Move.** Karethor uses his Shadowmeld ability.

**Shadow Grasp.** Karethor targets one creature he can see within 60 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained by shadowy tendrils for 1 minute.

## CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION: RETRIEVING THE AMULET FRAGMENT

### DM GUIDANCE: BRINGING THE STORY TO A SATISFYING CONCLUSION

The defeat of Karethor should feel like a hard-won victory, with the players' actions bringing light to a realm cloaked in shadow. The resolution allows the party to reflect on their triumph while preparing for the next step in their journey. Use sensory details and cinematic descriptions to heighten the impact of their success.

### FINAL BATTLE AFTERMATH

As Karethor's form dissolves and the Shadow Crucible shatters, the oppressive atmosphere of the tomb begins to lift. The once-ominous Throne Chamber is now eerily silent, with faint beams of light piercing the gloom from cracks in the ceiling. The glow of the amulet fragment beckons the players toward it, a symbol of their perseverance.

### EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

*The air feels lighter now, the once-thick shadows retreating into the walls. The faint glow of the amulet fragment casts soft silvery light across the shattered throne. A sense of peace, long absent from this place, begins to settle. The whispers that plagued the tomb are gone, replaced by an almost reverent silence. As you approach the fragment, its light intensifies, and for a brief moment, you feel the warmth of victory.*

### RETRIEVING THE AMULET FRAGMENT

The fragment rests amidst the broken remains of Karethor's throne, radiating a soothing, silver light. As the players touch it, they feel a surge of energy, as though a piece of the world's balance has been restored.

**Effect of Retrieval:** The fragment grants the party a fleeting vision of the amulet's original form, showing it whole and radiant before shattering into pieces. They glimpse other fragments scattered across realms, hinting at the journey ahead.

### LOOT AND REWARDS

In addition to the amulet fragment, the party finds two magical artifacts among the remains of the throne chamber.

#### LOOT DESCRIPTIONS

##### 1. **Shard of the Shadow Crucible**

*Wondrous Item, Rare*

A shard of the shattered crucible, now inert but still holding traces of its dark power. While attuned, the bearer gains resistance to necrotic damage. Once per long rest, the shard can absorb a necrotic spell cast within 30 feet, nullifying its effects and granting the user temporary hit points equal to half the absorbed spell's damage.

##### 2. **Karethor's Shadow Mantle**

*Cloak, Very Rare*

This dark, tattered cloak was imbued with shadow magic by Karethor himself. While wearing it, the user can use an action to cast *Invisibility* (self only) once per day. Additionally, they gain advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in dim light or darkness.

### PORTAL OPENING

As the players secure the fragment, a low hum fills the chamber. The silvery light of the fragment expands, forming a swirling portal of shadow and light. The portal flickers, revealing glimpses of a new realm—lush and vibrant, in stark contrast to the Shadowed Tombs.

### **EXAMPLE DM NARRATIVE: THE PORTAL AWAKENS**

*The fragment's light flares, filling the room with a radiant glow. Shadows and light swirl together, coalescing into a portal that hovers above the shattered crucible.*

*Through the portal, you glimpse a new realm—a land of rolling green hills and golden sunlight, a stark contrast to the oppressive gloom of the tomb. The hum of the portal grows louder, inviting you forward. The tomb falls silent once more, the chapter here closed. The journey continues.*

### **CLOSING THE CHAPTER**

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With the amulet fragment secured and the portal beckoning, the players are left with a sense of accomplishment and anticipation. The Shadowed Tombs are behind them, but the journey ahead promises new challenges, dangers, and discoveries. There is of course the matter of the reward! I sometimes tease players by not mentioning it to encourage them to step forward. DMs choice.