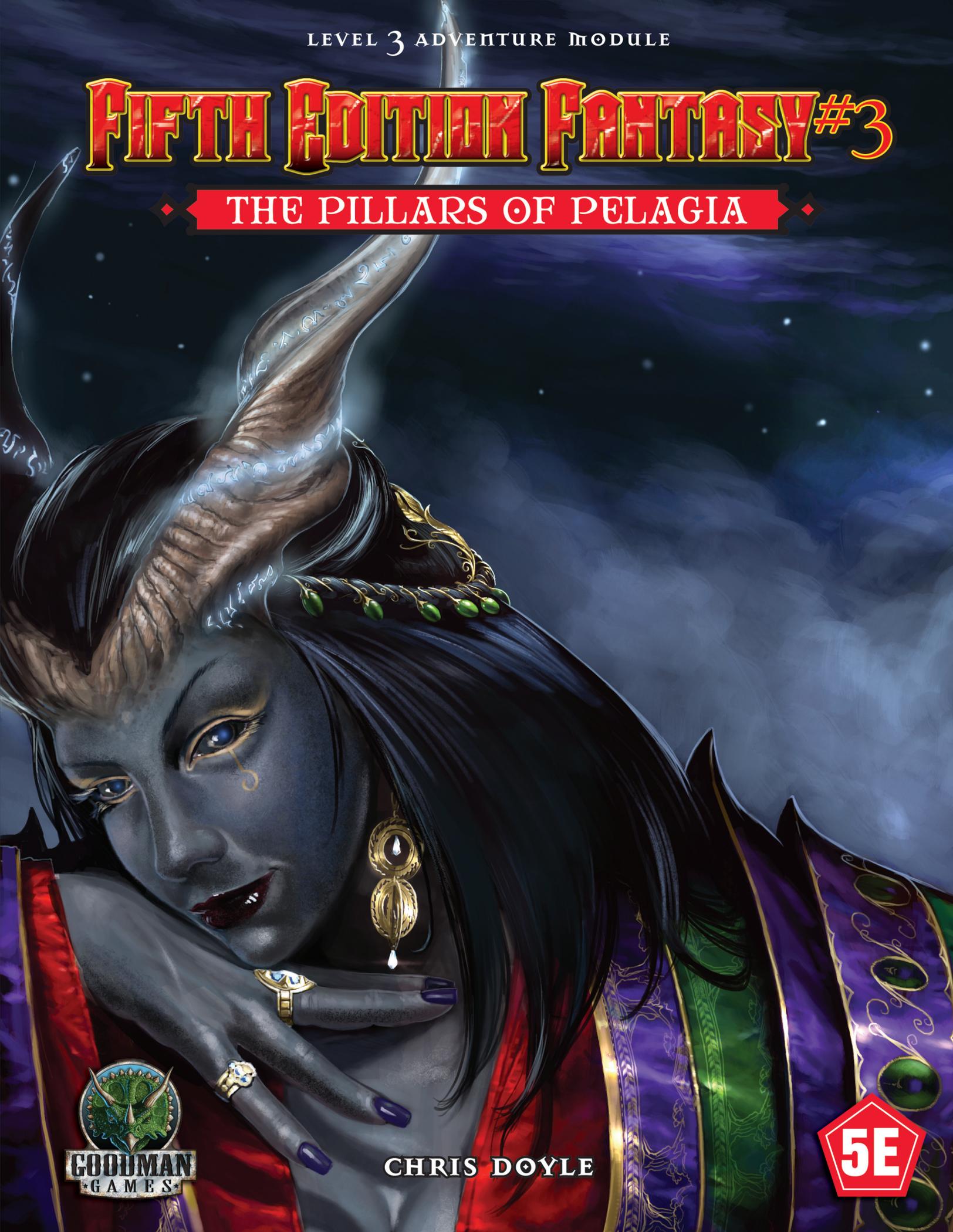


LEVEL 3 ADVENTURE MODULE

FIFTH EDITION FANTASY #3

◆ THE PILLARS OF PELAGIA ◆



CHRIS DOYLE



THE PILLARS OF PELAGIA

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THE PILLARS OF PELAGIA

By Chris Doyle

The Pillars of Pelagia is an adventure designed for use with the 5th edition of the first fantasy roleplaying game. It is intended for four to six 3rd-level characters and can be completed in a single session. Depending on the number of characters and the challenges overcome, the characters should gain one level by the end of the adventure. A variety of character classes is suggested to tackle the challenges presented herein, and since investigation and deduction are paramount in this adventure, a strong sword arm might not be the ideal solution to a situation. One of the characters should understand the Draconic language. The adventure is set along an isolated coast complete with majestic sea cliffs and a nearby small village.

In the year 2670 EC (530 years ago), the Devil-Lich Chalychia attacked and destroyed the elven city of Arovarel. Instrumental to her victory was an artifact called the *Shadowstone*. The *Shadowstone*, created by pow-

erful kraken sorcerers for their own diabolical schemes, was an immense ebony stone capable of enshrouding a five-mile radius of the surface world in constant dusk-like conditions. One year after her victory, a band of adventures led by the paladin Valinus destroyed the *Shadowstone* and routed the drow armies of the Devil-Lich. This short adventure is the story of how Chalychia (before she embraced undeath) acquired the powerful relic, and how a band of fledgling adventures discovered the secret to destroy it, setting the stage for her eventual defeat. It occurs about 20 years before the Devil-Lich attacks Arovarel, or the year 2650 EC. Although astute readers will understand the obvious back story tie-in with the 3.5 edition module *DCC #13 The Crypt of the Devil-Lich*, that adventure is not required to enjoy the challenges presented herein.

BACKGROUND

Along a remote sea coast are seven stone pillars that reach from the turbulent coastal depths to a height of several hundred feet. Although rumored to have been created by divine means, simple erosion and wave action sculpted the majestic formations. When the wind blows from a certain direction, it creates a soothing melodious trill that encourages passing whales to respond with song. The location has always been a favored spot to worshipers of Pelagia, and thus the name The Pillars of Pelagia was bestowed upon the unique geographic feature many years ago. The location attracted a powerful wizard (and devout follower of Pelagia) named Arcadianus. Desiring a remote location to pursue his arcane studies in peace, he used magic to augment the natural erosion of one of the larger columns, carving a tower inside the pillar (sometimes referred to as the sea tower).

Years before this story begins, Arcadianus led many allies on fabulous quests, including some to the bottom of the ocean via powerful magic. One of these was to the dark abyss of the ocean where a cadre of krakens created a

powerful artifact called the *Shadowstone*. Arcadianus never discovered the krakens' ultimate goal for this weapon, but he surmised the krakens were developing a nefarious plot. At the cost of two dear friends the relic was secured, and moved to his sea tower. The massive *Shadowstone*, nearly 15 feet long and about 8 feet wide, was placed in a submerged vault protected by enchantments. It took a short time for Arcadianus to discover how to activate and deactivate the relic, but many years of research were needed to discover the secret of how to destroy it. These secrets were documented in a book, and placed in a special extradimensional chest that's contents could only be summoned by a password known to Arcadianus. However, there was another method to open the chest...

When Chalychia Forlorna, an ambitious drow matron bent on bringing her armies to the surface world, learned of the *Shadowstone*, she knew she must have it. With such a powerful relic at the front of her army, she could establish a permanent base of operations on the surface to easily conquer the surrounding lands. Ever the patient one,

she spent years spying on Arcadianus (using her *crystal ball*, spells, and mundane methods) to learn about the wizard and his sea tower. Although Arcadianus often detected the magical eavesdropping, he assumed it was an old rival, and thought little of the intrusions. During this time, she cultivated an alliance with a band of aquatic drow and their koalinth (aquatic hobgoblin) allies. When the time was right, she sent her allies to attack the sea tower from the water. Once secure, Chalychia arrived via *teleporting* for a final showdown with Arcadianus. After a dazzling duel of magic, she prevailed and transported the subdued wizard and the *Shadowstone* back to the Underdark.

But Arcadianus' will was stronger than she expected, and in a fit of rage she killed the wizard before she recovered all the information about the *Shadowstone*, such as the secrets to its destruction. She (correctly) suspected that Arcadianus hid the information somewhere in his sea tower. Although she wouldn't mind spending years researching the abilities of the *Shadowstone* before its use, she sent a small group of koalinth led by an aquatic drow back to the sea tower to search for the information. The leader of this band, Solemaya, is a promising female aquatic drow cleric tempted with the prospect of formally joining House Forlorna if she successfully locates the secrets of the *Shadowstone*.

Solemaya is now in control of the sea tower, with a small group of koalinth. She has recovered a magic chest (actually, a *secure chest*; see appendix B for a description of this new spell), and determined that a command word is required to open it. But the command word died with Arcadianus, and she hasn't been able to find reference to it anywhere in the sea tower. In addition to the command word, there is another method to open the *secure chest*.

The *wind chime of Pelagia* is a magical device with four flute-like chimes, each constructed of unique materials and shaped like a different sea creature. It once rested in the open-air shrine at the top of the sea tower. Solemaya despoiled the shrine and sundered the *wind chime*, assuming it was but a useless religious trinket. Aware that the device could be used to open the *secure chest*, Arcadianus' familiar, a sea pseudodragon named Myricia, gathered the four chimes and hid them from Solemaya. The crafty little dragon eluded capture due to her diminutive size and knowledge of the sea tower's nooks and crannies. Hoping that help would soon arrive, Myricia has left clues to the whereabouts of the pieces, in the form

of cryptic Draconic passages. Although Solemaya found one such passage, she doesn't comprehend Draconic and dismissed its importance. Eventually, Solemaya learned the true purpose of the *wind chime*, and stepped up her efforts to capture the pesky dragon. While her koalinth allies failed again and again, Solemaya amused herself with one of Arcadianus' more interesting magical devices.

Recently, Solemaya finally captured the old wizard's cunning familiar. Solemaya suspects the familiar knows the command word, and is trying to extract it from the diminutive dragon.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

This adventure begins with the characters arriving at the cliff overlooking the Pillars of Pelagia (and thus the sea tower), which is area 1-1. Begin play with Beginning the Adventure below. It is the responsibility of the GM to devise an appropriate plot hook to get the characters to the sea tower and investigate the whereabouts of Arcadianus:

- The characters are hired by a resident of Waterton to investigate the whereabouts of a reclusive wizard named Arcadianus. The wizard typically frequents the nearby town to purchase supplies, including rare spell components, but has not been heard from in several weeks. A large order of expensive herbs and incense awaits pick-up from a local herbalist, initiating the request.
- The characters are hired by another wizard (named Lazlo, whose tower is a few days' travel to the west), to pick up a parcel from Arcadianus. When they arrive in Waterton, they learn of the wizard's lack of recent contact.
- The church of Pelagia hires/instructs the PCs to travel to the sea tower to investigate rumors of the wizard's disappearance. This hook works best if a cleric of Pelagia is in the party.

Quest: Investigate the Whereabouts of Arcadianus. Regardless of the hook used, the characters are sent to the sea tower expecting foul play of some sort. The GM needs to determine an appropriate reward for the task, suitable to the campaign.

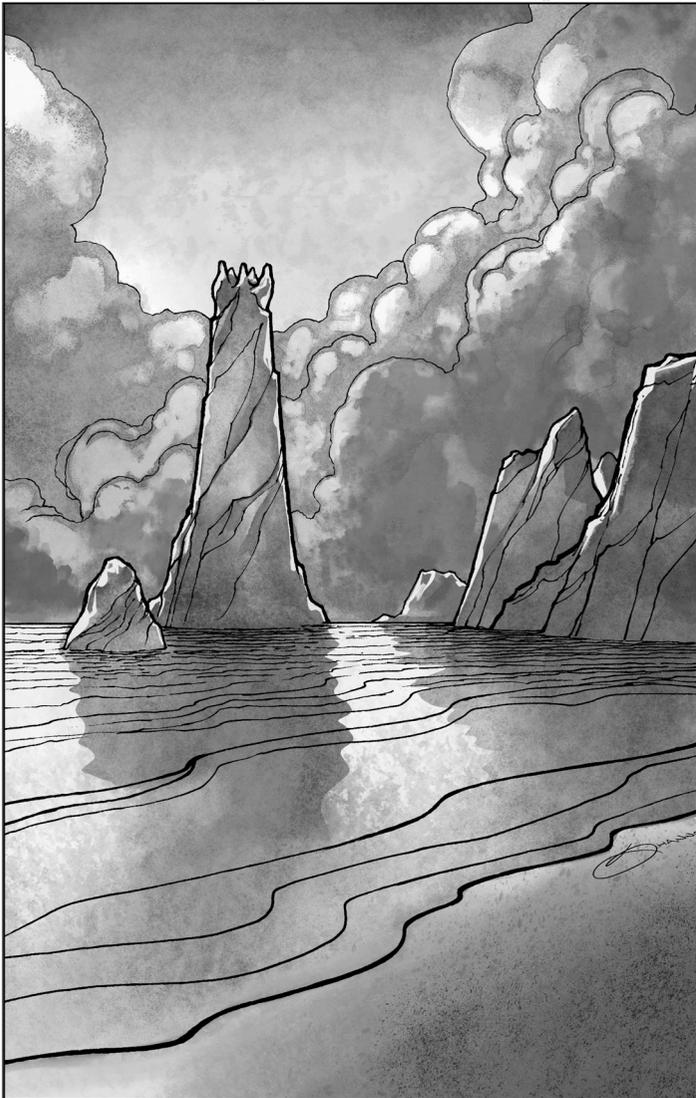
BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins as the characters are approaching the Pillars of Pelagia. Read or paraphrase the text below:

Leaving the safety of the road behind, your band heads west following a twisting game trail. Your band scales a rocky crag adorned with scraggy sprouts of weeds, each sporting tufts of fluffy cotton-like pods, poking out of the forlorn landscape. A steady, stiff breeze laced with a slight briny scent swirls about as you plod upward. Short on breath, you finally crest the rise, and are greeted by a more aggressive wind. Below, at least 200 feet down, is the rolling surf, crashing on protruding rocks, and the base of an eroded cliff.

Oddly, a sandy clearing is located at the edge of the precipice. A smooth white marble pedestal, shaped like a truncated pyramid, perhaps 4 feet high, is situated near the cliff's edge. Located a few hundred feet off shore is an eroded stone pillar, perhaps 100 feet in diameter, and rising to a height exceeding the cliff where you stand. The pillar's peak appears to be adorned with monolithic stones, almost serving as a natural crown.

The PCs are at area 1-1. When they approach the pedestal for a better look, proceed with the description below.



GENERAL FEATURES

Weather. The day is partly sunny with a brisk salty breeze that occasionally gusts.

Sound. Outside, the wind occasionally creates unusual sounds as the air is forced between rock formations. Inside the sea tower, the constant wind can still be heard.

Sea Tower. The interior walls of the sea tower were sculpted from the stone with magic, and then worked with tools for delicate features. Due to the proximity to the sea, the whole tower is drafty and damp, with the faint scent of salty air. Ceiling heights vary based on individual chambers, and lighting is specific to individual chambers as described in the text. Unless otherwise noted, doors are made of unadorned stone. Climbing interior walls of the sea tower require a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, while exterior surfaces require a DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.

AREA 1-1 – THE UNSEEN BRIDGE

(Reference handout #1 on page 40)

As the party approaches the pedestal, read or paraphrase the following:

The marble pedestal is about 5 feet wide at its base, but slopes up to 2 feet wide at its truncated, flat top. The top surface is smooth and plain, save for a slot 2 inches wide. Along the front of the pyramid is a similar horizontal slot, but about 4 inches wide. The marble under this slot is stained slightly yellow, as if a fluid oozed out of the opening. Faint runes are inscribed in a flowing pattern at the base of the pedestal.

Arcadianus saw a need to defend the entrance to his tower from the casual passerby. Thus an alliance with a **harpy** that lairs nearby, and he cloaked the bridge in *invisibility*. He later added the perfume dispenser as a way for expected guests to avoid the harpy.

Pedestal. Show the players the illustration on Player Handout #1. The runes on the truncated pyramid are in eldritch symbols and can be deciphered with a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check. They read:

*Platinum in the slot,
so she bothers you not.*

Arcadianus devised this “vending machine” from observing a similar one used to dispense holy water in a temple dedicated to Myna. Any coin put into the top slot (it doesn’t need to be platinum; the wizard added that in

DON'T LISTEN

If the characters think to plug their ears against the harpy's Luring Song, a suitable material grants advantage on the saving throw. Candle wax, heavy fabric, or cotton (such as the tufts found on the weeds approaching the clearing) are all suitable items.

an effort to generate more funds) travels down the chute and triggers an elaborate gear system, which tips a crystal vial holding perfume. The perfume exits the horizontal slot on the front of the pyramid, hence the staining. Unless captured in a receptacle, a DC 15 Dexterity check is needed to "catch" the perfume, if unaware. If triggered subsequent times, the perfume is easily caught.

The pyramid radiates magic, because an *alarm* spell (cast by the harpy Morella) has been placed on it.

The perfume is not valuable, but the harpy disdains the stench of such a pleasant fragrance. She will not attack a character (in melee) that has had the perfume splashed on him. If forced to attack an anointed target, she has disadvantage to hit. Of course, this doesn't affect using her Luring Song.

Instead of using a coin, the dispenser can be triggered with a DC 17 Dexterity check. At the back of the pyramid is a concealed access panel, requiring a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check to locate and deduce how to open. It then takes a DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to open by using the correct sequence of panel manipulations. Inside, below a complicated clockwork gear assembly (that sports the trademark of the Clockwork Academy) is a crystal vial (worth 175 gp) holding several drams of perfume. There is also a small metal box holding several coins (4 sp, 11 gp, 15 pp). Frustrated PCs could always smash the pyramid with a bludgeoning weapon (40 hit points, but immunity to slashing and piercing weapons), but this destroys the crystal vial.

Bridge. There is a 200-foot-long rope bridge that spans the ocean, leading to a doorway into the sea tower (area 1-2). The bridge is attached to two thick poles on a ledge about 5 feet below the cliff edge. If the characters are aware of the ledge, such as by tossing a few handfuls of sand on it, it's an easy task to climb down. But to confuse guests, Arcadianus enchanted the ledge and bridge with a permanent *invisibility* spell. The bridge is wood and rope, and sways a bit when crossed. If cautiously crossed, it's safe. But if a character attempts to cross the *invis-*

ible bridge while running, or during combat, he needs to make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, or fall prone. If a target rolls a 1 on this check, the target falls off the bridge.

If the PCs throw a handful of sand on the bridge, it reveals a 10-foot section. That is the whole purpose Arcadianus transported several tons of sand to the clearing: so it can be used by guests to safely cross the bridge. Due to the high winds, the sand blows off the bridge in about an hour, and it is safely concealed again.

Arcadianus has a loyal bridge keeper, a juvenile harpy named Morella. Her mother lived in a nearby sea cave for decades. When Arcadianus first arrived and desired to settle in the Pillar, he struck an accord with the venerable harpy (who has since passed on) to train her daughter in wizardry. Arcadianus kept his end of the bargain, and although Morella never progressed as a prodigy she acquired minor arcane talents.

The *alarm* spell is triggered when a target approaches within 20 feet of the pedestal. The mental *alarm* alerts Morella, who arrives after 3 rounds. She flies to an altitude of 60 feet, and observes the characters for a few rounds. If they place coins in the slot and anoint themselves with the perfume, she spies on them but lets them use the bridge. If they attack her, destroy the pedestal, or attempt to cross without using the perfume, she attacks. She starts by casting *blade ward*, and then uses her Luring Song action. Note that while targets use the Dash action to move to her, they are granted a second saving throw to avoid falling off the cliff. She remains aloft about 60 to 90 feet away from the characters, using her *fire bolt* cantrip as needed. If reduced to 8 hit points or less, she flees to a