

The D&D logo is rendered in a stylized, red, blocky font with a slight shadow effect, positioned at the top center of the cover.

CANDLEKEEP MYSTERIES

The Dungeons & Dragons logo is located at the bottom left of the cover. It features the words "DUNGEONS" and "DRAGONS" in a white, sans-serif font, separated by the iconic ampersand symbol. The entire logo is set against a red, brush-stroke-like background.

An anthology of seventeen mystery-themed adventures
for the world's greatest roleplaying game

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Candlekeep attracts scholars like a flame attracts moths. Historians, sages, and others who crave knowledge flock to this library fortress to peruse its vast collection of books, scribbled into which are the answers to the mysteries that bedevil them. Many of these books contain their own mysteries—each one a doorway to adventure. Dare you cross that threshold?

Candlekeep Mysteries is a collection of seventeen short, stand-alone D&D adventures designed for characters of levels 1-16. Each

adventure begins with the discovery of a book, and each book is the key to a door behind which danger and glory await. These adventures can be run as one-shot games, plugged into an existing Forgotten Realms campaign, or adapted for other campaign settings.

This book also includes a poster map of the library fortress and detailed descriptions of Candlekeep and its inhabitants.

Adventure authors include: Graeme Barber, Kelly Lynne D'angelo, Alison Huang, Mark Hulmes, Jennifer Kretchmer, Daniel Kwan, Adam Lee, Ari Levitch, Sarah Madsen, Christopher Perkins, Michael Polkinghorn,

Taymoor Rehman, Derek Ruiz, Kienna Shaw, Brandes Stoddard, Amy Vorpahl, and Toni Winslow-Brill.

AN ADVENTURE FOR 15TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

ALKAZAAR'S APPENDIX

WRITTEN BY ADAM LEE
DEVELOPED BY MICHELE CARTER & CHRISTOPHER PERKINS
EDITED BY MICHELE CARTER

THIS ADVENTURE REVOLVES AROUND A THIN book titled *Alkazaar's Appendix*, brought to Candlekeep by a renowned explorer named Alkazaar in 1363 DR, the Year of the Wyvern. This slim volume accompanied a thicker tome titled *Alkazaar's Thrilling Tales*, in which Alkazaar chronicled his numerous heroic exploits. He bequeathed these books to Candlekeep and also gifted the Avowed with a series of live storytelling sessions. The longer-lived Avowed remember these performances with fondness and have passed the stories on to the adjutants over the years. One story stands out from all the others, and the Avowed of Candlekeep wonder about it to this day: the tale of the lost golem, featuring the one adventure that Alkazaar could not complete. This story is told in *Alkazaar's Appendix*.



ALKAZAAR'S APPENDIX AND
ALKAZAAR'S THRILLING TALES

THE BOOKS

CANDLEKEEP MYSTERIES



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

The Joy of Extradimensional Spaces (1)- If you're going to be running Candlekeep Mysteries, you'd better find joy in extradimensional spaces, because they're going to be a recurring theme. This extradimensional space happens to be a permanent *Mordenkainen's magnificent mansion*. The characters take a portal into the mansion and because reasons they then have to wander through the mansion until they figure out the password to open the portal from this side and get back out. The letters that make up the password are scattered throughout the mansion, so the adventure has the character go on a magical home tour, complete with animated nuisances. Bonus

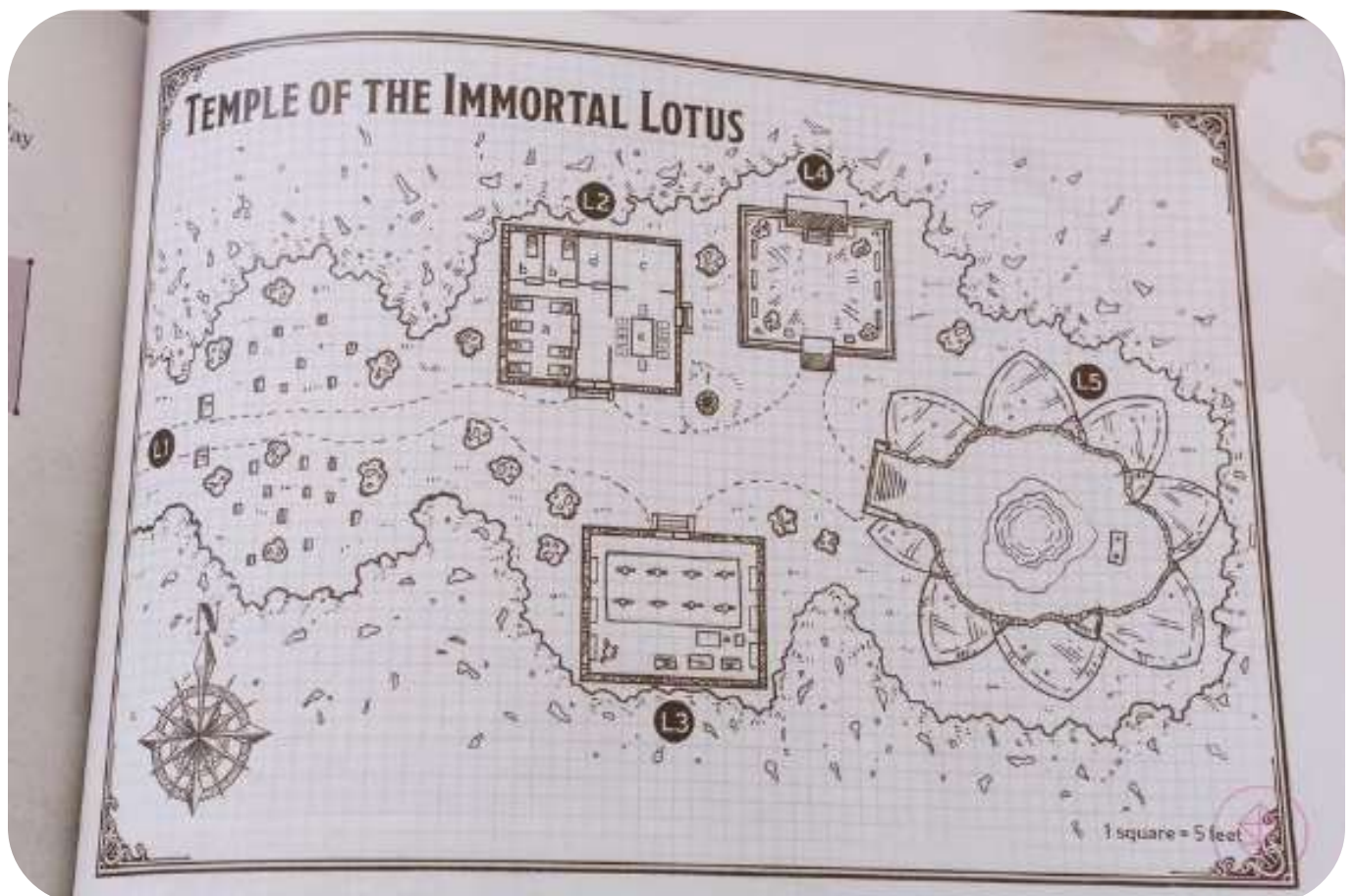
points for having a “swarm of animated books” monster with a “Book Club” attack.

Mazfroth's Mighty Digressions (2) – The discovery of a shapechanger disguised as a book (who attacks a researcher) sends the characters in search of the source of such malfeasance. A succession of interviews leads the characters to a pack of jackalweres, who have been defrauding customers by selling them shapechanger facsimiles of rare and expensive books. The jackalweres are given a sympathetic motivation (they are trying to raise money to resurrect a dead mentor), and the adventure seems to look down on adventurers who try to resolve this situation through force. Unfortunately, the guidance on

resolution seemed a bit muddled, as there is conflicting information on resolution would take place – on one page it says their leader will hand over the real books as reparations, while on the next it says that the jackalweres will fight to keep the real books if the adventurers are unwilling to compromise. And one of the suggested compromises is for the characters to simply pay for the real books, which would require an amount of money that 2nd-level characters will never have.

Book of the Raven (3) – This book provides a map, but nothing much to flesh out the using the map to get to Chalet Brantifax. But, then, there isn't much going on at Chalet Brantifax either. It has a few (lawful good) residents. It

has a shadow crossing, but no reason to use it and a random fight and get treasure on the other side. It feels like a location without a purpose – there's no mystery to solve and no conflict except for the fight with the undead in the Shadowfell. As you can tell, I found myself rather disappointed with this one.



A Deep and Creeping Darkness (4) – This tome describes the fate of a small town that saw small-scale disappearances follow a large mine collapse with many fatalities, until the remaining inhabitants simply fled. After a stop at a different town where some of the survivors live (for clues and a side quest), the DM will need to conjure their best creepy-vibe descriptions as the characters search through the decaying ruins of the ghost town. The perpetrators here are monsters (meenlocks) who are able to transform others into their species when their victims are inflicted with sufficient mental anguish. The mine disaster gave them an in-road here, and

this adventure climaxes in the mine as the characters deal with a set-piece battle in a room the meenlocks have trapped with dynamite.

Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme (4) – Shemshime's Bedtime Rhyme takes place entirely in a basement library of Candlekeep as the characters and some NPCs are quarantined while infected with a contagious curse. The curse forces everyone to hum the tune of a nursery rhyme (one of the old Brothers Grimm style tales, where the family are maimed or killed one by one). Personality is emphasized as all of the victims are trapped in relatively close quarters. The characters must discover what unleashed the

curse, figure out the missing last verse of the nursery rhyme, and then be able to extrapolate from that to figure out how to end the eponymous Shemshime before it's too late.

The Price of Beauty (5) – A search for a missing library acolyte leads the characters to a beauty and health retreat (another trip through a portal). The book here (dedicated to Sune, the goddess of beauty) provides a nice set-up for the adventure, including a magic mirror that hands out grooming advice. Of course, it wouldn't be much of an adventure, so the health spa can't just be a nice – if expensive – resort out in the woods where you can get some exercise, massages,

and waxing (yes, there's now an official D&D price for high-end waxing). The spa is run by a coven of hags in disguise, making less-than-fair deals in exchange for vitality and beauty. Figuring out what's going on may require one of the characters to go through the process, and there are several opportunities for characters to mistake the hags victims for enemies. This was my favorite adventure in Candlekeep Mysteries, with a unique setting, interesting characters, and a real sense of a mystery to solve.

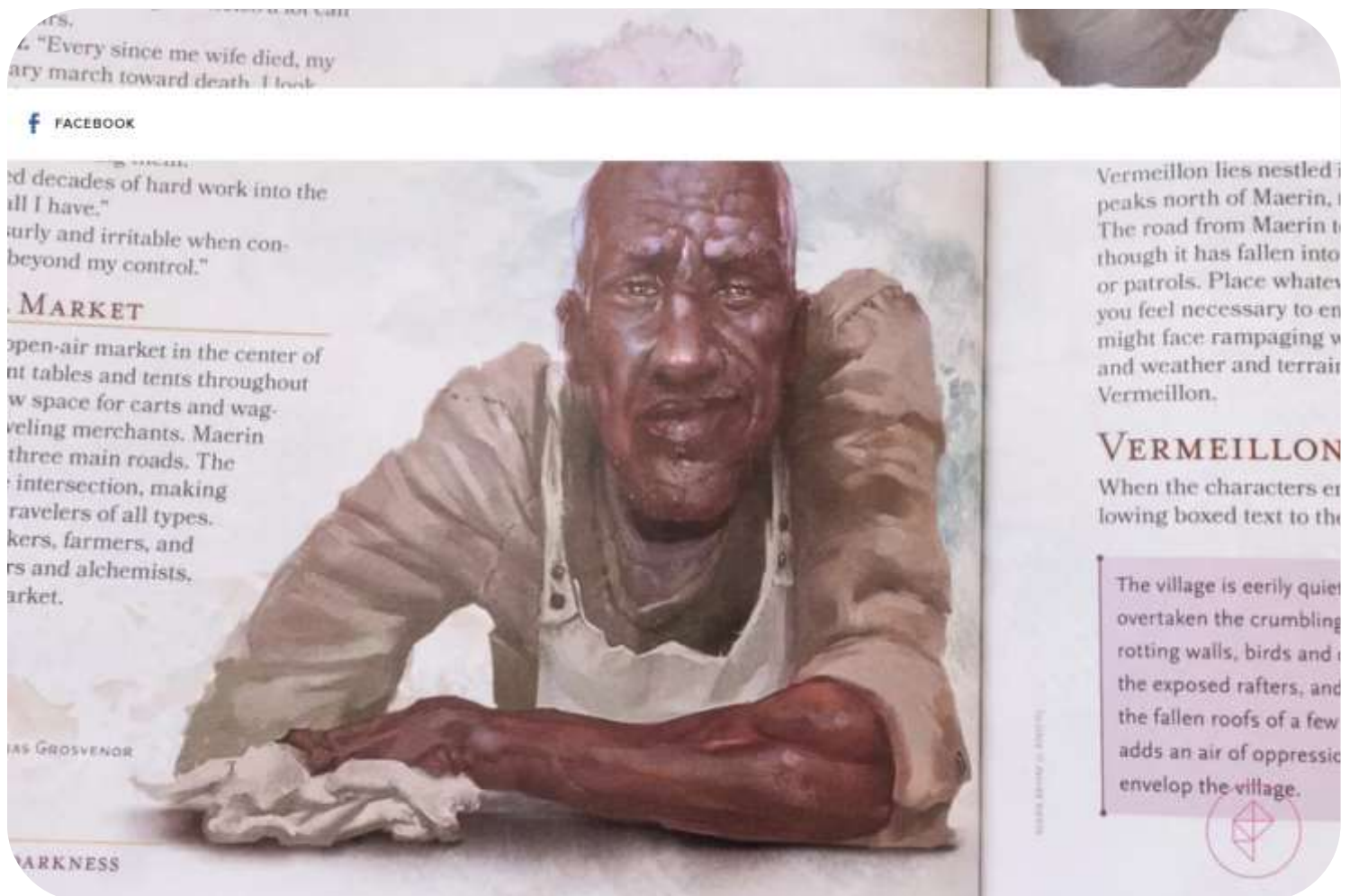
Book of Cylinders (6) – A prophecy has come to pass, and the adventurer's must determine what has befallen the frogfolk village that supplies Candlekeep with fish. Something pretty gruesome, it turns out, as most of the frogfolk have been driven out of their village by yuan-ti. Many people were left to the tender mercies of the yuan-ti, including the frogfolk egg pools (this is where the whole being-forced-to-watch-your-children-being-eaten thing come in). The yuan-ti are here because they're conducting a ritual sacrifice at a nearby temple, so the characters can walk in on another scene from a horror movie – and possibly stop it. Overall, *Book of Cylinders* is well out of mystery and into straight-up horror territory.

Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor (7) – The ghost of murdered Sarah emerges from her journal and (if the characters have any heart) they will end up looking into the circumstances of her death. The opening is a bit awkward, as it posits a ghost who has had her tongue removed and yet is somehow able to verbally communicate detailed information. But the ensuing investigation is good, as the characters must sleuth their way through Waterdeep to discover leads on what happened in Yellowcrest Manor five years ago. Their path will eventually lead them to the Temple of the Burned Tongue Cult. Said cult being led by the former master of Yellowcrest Manor, who removed the tongues of and then killed his family and his servants

(including Sarah) as part of an otherworldly pact for power. Sarah of Yellowcrest Manor is relatively full of NPC interaction, given all of the victims, loved ones of victims, and hangers-on that the big bad has collected. Several of them might be used again in a campaign, but the most notable one is the cult master himself, as in the adventure as written he is very likely to escape and will, one imagines, seek vengeance on the party.

Lore of Lurue (8) – This adventure has a distinctive premise, as the characters must play through the story told in the book. It's reminiscent of a video game, where the characters can see the woods around them, but can't actually leave the clearing except on

the one path that leads exactly where they need to go to experience the next part of the story. The story itself tells of encroaching corruption of the beast lord, Malar, and the eventual purification of an avatar of Lurue (the unicorn-like deity of the forest).



Candlekeep Dekonstruktion (9) – In a story that I can't help but think should be transposed into a tale about how goblins got from Pathfinder to Starfinder (except that they hate books), this adventure features an attempt to rocket launch one of Candlekeep's buildings into space. Stonky and his cult have decided that books are better than people, so they're going to take a bunch of books into outer space and just stay there. As you might guess, this is the most slapstick of the Candlekeep Mysteries, heightened by the barnyard-animal-themed names of most of the characters involved (the tower they're trying to rocket into space is known as the

Barn Door). Characters who act quickly should be able to halt the launch without a great deal of difficulty (beating up the bad guys won't help; they need to figure things out on their own). But they do need to act quickly. D&D is often like a video game RPG, where you have an unlimited amount of time for side quests and exploration, unless there's a literal countdown on the screen. Well, in Kandlekeep Dekonstruktion, there's a timer right there in the lower right hand corner, so make sure the players see it. I could see the wrong group of players letting the timer run down before they even enter the Barn Door (although that might be better fate than entering the building and then being launched into space with it).

Zikran's Zephyrean Tome (10) – A trapped genie needs to be rescued from his evil master. After a jaunt to the master's old lair (try to keep this part quick, DMs – not a lot is going on, and there are enough rooms to let it drag on too long), the characters head to the Cloud Peaks. There they shall be plagued by seemingly-random encounters with yeti and winged kobolds before arriving at the ruins of a cloud giant keep. Insightful characters might proceed fairly directly to the final battle, while others may decide to pick fights with the ghosts of the former inhabitants (or, rather, are willing to get in fights in order to loot the place). And there will be a final battle, because that evil mad archmage is not going to just release the

genie when the characters present such convenient targets for his crystal-powered elemental cannon.

The Curious Tale of Wisteria Vale (11) – Wisteria Vale is another demiplane-in-a-book, one that the characters are asked to enter for the purpose of curing the curse on the former Harper agent who was imprisoned there. As said cure involves being stabbed with a crystal dagger and said agent does not agree that his crusade against the Harpers is inappropriate, some negotiation may be in order. But first the characters will have to deal with the beholder, who has stumbled into the realm (believing it to be a dream) and somehow warped the demiplane to center

around him, rather than the idyllic existence intended for its original prisoner. The highlight of Wisteria Vale is a set of connected extradimensional rooms that are hidden in paintings (yes, the characters travel to a demiplane and then into an extradimensional space off of that demiplane). One contains the characters' target, while the others contain foes or a mysterious banquet with magical foods both fair and foul. Notably, it is entirely possible that the characters are able to get out of this one without ever facing the beholder, as they can get to their target without doing battle and then the demiplane dissolves if he is cured.

The Book of Inner Alchemy (12) – Zikran's Zephyrean Tome was heading in this direction, but with the Book of Inner Alchemy the adventures in Candlekeep Mysteries start to lean towards more traditional combat-focused missions. Here the characters will beat up some evil monks in order to retrieve stolen pages from a book that contain the secrets of immortality.

The Canopic Being (13) – The Canopic Being does have an epic boss fight (also golems and the various immunities they possess), but it's also got some mystery, some cool environmental challenges, and some great locations. The characters find their names on a list of people who will voluntarily sacrifice

themselves to help create a potent mummy lord by serving as living canopic jars for its organs. That's the sort of thing one needs to look into, and so the characters set off to investigate. The supposed wannabe mummy lord is the high oracle of Savras (the god of divination), a being who everyone insists is just wonderful. They're invited to visit and portal off to (yet another) demiplane, this one rather Egyptian-themed. There they will encounter a trick sarcophagus, a room full of mirrors, and a zero-gravity face-off. They'll also need to figure out how to permanently stop the oracle who led them here, or else she can resurrect the next day. That's the final mystery they need to solve, and it may be complicated by squeamishness about cutting

open the mummy's innocent assistant in order to retrieve the mummy's heart (don't worry, the assistant will be fine – it's just that the players might not realize that).

The Scrivener's Tale (14) – At its core the Scrivener's Tale is a drive towards an epic confrontation with the Princess of the Shadow Glass (but first, more golems), but the character's first have to figure out that this is what they need to be driving towards. And they're going to be doing it while the scrivener's curse consumes them, granting drawbacks and benefits as their bodies are covered in text. In the possibility of defeating the Princess of Shadow Glass (and thus ending the curse) lies the possibility of

unleashing her on the world, and thus the character's enemies may also include her foes. The ultimate battle takes place in the library in the Haven of the Red Quill, where the adventurer's must – having assembled the knowledge to name and summon her – defeat the archfey in battle and then complete a ritual to end her permanently.

Alkazaar's Appendix (16) – Alkazaar had many completed quests, but it's time for the characters to finish the one he never could. The book shows the characters how to open a portal to a golem, the legendary Sapphire Sentinel, which wishes to be reunited with its Netherese master. Alkazaar, however, was not looking to help the golem out, but rather

hoped that helping the golem find its master would lead to the discovery of an ancient Nether Scroll. This adventure is, at its core, an escort mission. Conveniently, there is someone nearby the golem who has an idea where to go and can guide the party there. The party – after tackling with a purple worm – learns that there is a Nether Scroll, but that the golem's master is sealed in eternal sleep with the scroll in order to keep at bay a powerful evil dragon. Reminiscent of the Princess of the Shadow Glass, the party's efforts to accomplish their mission create the risk that a great evil (in this case, an adult blue dracolich) gets exactly what it wants. With the golem – and possibly a dragon turtle buddy – in tow, the party will have to

travel to the master's tomb and battle the dracolich. From there, however, there are different ways the party can resolve things, as allowing the golem to join its master and take him off to Elysium means the Nether Scroll is lost (and it is a doozy of a magic item), while retrieving the Nether Scroll will age and kill the ancient mage.

Xanthoria (17) – The final adventure of Candlekeep Mysteries is a quest to defeat a lichen lich who has unleashed a saprophytic plague on the world. There is, of course, an epic battle at the end. And there are some greatest battle hits to warm the party up first – fungal beholders, mummy lords, purple worms (plus a fungal death knight and a

fungal demon). But there's also some psychological horror along the way, as the characters will learn more about how the druid fell from grace – up to and including torturing her closest friends. To finally defeat the fungal lich requires the death of the one friend who survived – and the players are the ones who have to convince her to let herself die. Ouch. Right in the heart strings. As you might expect from a fungal lich, there's also a lair with a lot of mold and slime everywhere, so expect a lot of environmental hazards as the party makes its way through the lich's lair..

Overall, I think that running the “all the mysteries” campaign is eminently feasible, although it's a shame that the adventures at

level 2-3 are seemed among the weaker offerings – I'd like things to kick off with a bang as much as possible. If you only wanted to go partway, the Lore of Larue at level 8 might be a good stopping point, as Kandlekeep's Destruktion has a significantly different tone than most of the rest of the book, and many of the adventures past that point because more combat-focused (you'd miss the excellent Canopic Being that way, however).

From a DM's perspective, these adventures require relatively less mechanical preparation, but they may require more management during the session. There may be long stretches without combat, which can be

relatively easy with some luck and the right group, but can also results in groups getting bogged down in discussion as employing a search-kill-loot-search loop isn't going to advance the plot much. DMs should be ready to provide nudges as needed (remember, the object for people is to have fun, not strategize for half an hour while missing the seemingly obvious clue right in front of them). Creating the right ambiance will be helpful as well. Some of the adventures call for a particular tone in general (such as some of the more horror-focused ones), but overall there's a lot of suspense being aimed for here as adventures shift from peaceful scenes of discovery to shocking revelations. It will probably be too much work to figure out

soundtrack options, but you'll at least want some variation in your own tone and presentation.

As noted earlier, Candlekeep Mysteries is a great offering for D&D 5E because it's doing something that has a much different tone from a more typical dungeon crawl, and it's nice to see the game explore more thematic space. The Candlekeep Mysteries will require a bit of a different skill set from the DM to really be good, because there's a lot more about mood and a lot less about tactical combat than usual. But groups looking to expand their D&D horizons will find a lot to like in Candlekeep Mysteries.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

GRAEME BARBER has worked as a scientific and commercial archaeologist, deployed multiple times overseas with the Canadian Armed Forces, and done wet site archaeology. He's currently living a quiet life in the interior of British Columbia, where he enjoys diving and being a dad.

Writer for the