

THE SIX GRIFFONS HAUNT

Author

Ron Lundeen

Cover and Interior Art

Jeremy Thompson

Cartography

Hugo Solis



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INTRODUCTION

The exclusive Six Griffons Lodge exemplifies a vanishing class of aristocratic gentlemen's club. The lodge has a long and glorious tradition, but time has eclipsed the martial glories of its members. The remaining lodge members are content to relax, sip brandy, and swap stories of their courageous ancestors. The Six Griffons Lodge occupies a stately but small manor in the wealthy district of a large city.

The most distinguished member of the Six Griffons Lodge today is Lord Yorick Thackeray, an indolent nobleman from a family more passionate about collecting weapons than using them. The lodge houses the large Thackeray weapon collection. On occasion, the lodge hosts a members-only luncheon to exhibit newly-acquired magic weapons. At noon on the day after this adventure begins, Lord Thackeray will introduce three new weapons to the lodge's collection, including a light flail rumored to be *Silvershower*. *Silvershower*, a magic flail that conjures a pile of silver coins upon command, would be an illustrious addition to the

collection. Unfortunately, the magic flail acquired by Lord Thackeray is not the real *Silvershower*.

The members of the Six Griffons Lodge have a viper within their midst. The dwarf rogue Houfin Ghent discovered that he qualified for admission to the lodge because his long-deceased grandfather was a member. Ghent wasted no time ingratiating himself into the exclusive organization. For months, the greedy dwarf has awaited a truly valuable weapon to arrive in the lodge's collection so that he might steal it and live a life of luxury. Ghent received advance notice that the lodge has acquired *Silvershower* and he is prepared to take the legendary weapon by guile or force.

Although Ghent's target is *Silvershower*, the core of this adventure is a magical handaxe called *Vaporblade*. *Vaporblade* has been on display in the lodge for several months, and its true history is almost unknown. A genie smith created *Vaporblade* and wished his creation to have a long and legendary history among mortals. The genie instilled within the handaxe a curse: when *Vaporblade* sits unused for more than three months, it begins conjuring haunting elementals (described in **Appendix 1**) to bedevil the area. The genie intended these attacks to encourage heroes to pick up *Vaporblade* again, ensuring the weapon would never be at rest for long. The curse becomes dormant only when a mortal creature attacks an evil foe with *Vaporblade*. *Vaporblade* is so old that mortal history has forgotten its curse, but some genies remember its nature and know that trouble is sure to follow when *Vaporblade* sits unused.

SETTING AND SCALING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure is easy to drop in just about anywhere, as it occurs almost entirely within a manor house in the wealthy district of a large city. The best type of city is one without exceedingly rigorous law enforcement, so the PCs have good reason to perform the investigation on their own, but a police force intimidating enough to deter the PCs from stealing everything in the manor house that isn't nailed down during their investigations.

This adventure is designed for four to six PCs of 3rd or 4th level. Suggestions for running this adventure for PCs of lower or higher level can be found in **Appendix 3** on page 28.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

This adventure is written to flow directly from an earnest plea from a servant in need. If your PCs need a more specific hook into this adventure, then

an important NPC or organization informs the PCs that Archibald Topp of the Six Griffons Lodge has a problem, and the PCs are needed to solve the problem before the luncheon at noon the next day. You might even make one of the PCs a relation of Lord Thackeray himself, directed to solve the problem expeditiously and discreetly in order to secure membership to the elder relative's exclusive club.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Other than the PCs, six characters are important to the plot of this adventure. They are:

Lord Yorick Thackeray, a bearded old man and head of the Six Griffons Lodge. Lord Thackeray enjoys his luxurious lifestyle and has little to say to those he feels are beneath him. He only makes an appearance at the conclusion of this adventure, just in time for the luncheon.

Archibald Topp, steward of the Six Griffons Lodge and retired warrior-priest of the Warrior Maiden (or any similar Lawful Good deity of valor and chivalry). Topp is in his sixties but still quite fit and alert, with a polite and dignified manner. Topp oversees the lodge and the other servants. He is also responsible for the presentation of the weapons throughout the manor and researches magical weapons to ensure they aren't fakes. Topp has been with the Six Griffons Lodge for more than twenty years and enjoys his work. Topp wears tidy clothes, large spectacles, and a holy symbol. Topp is a Lawful Good 5th-level cleric. He generally prepares defensive spells or spells to help him with his duties in the lodge (such as *comprehend languages*, *make whole*, and *locate object*).

Mrs. Floria Beeke, a kindly old widow and the maid and head cook of the Six Griffons Lodge. She is a busy and capable servant.

Dalby Dragfoot, the middle-aged halfling bartender of the lodge. Dalby's dark secret is that he owes the villainous Houfin Ghent a great deal of money. Ghent controls the halfling with threats of exposure and poverty. Dalby let slip to Ghent that one of the new weapons is a light flail called *Silvershower*. Although Dalby isn't aware of the *Silvershower* legend, Ghent had heard of this fabled



Archibald Topp

weapon. Dalby is reluctant to spend much time at the lodge, as a haunting elemental startled him badly two nights ago. Dalby is nervous and surly. He had never been pleasant, and his demeanor has worsened in the last several days.

Houfin Ghent, a greedy and ruthless dwarf who recently gained membership in the Six Griffons Lodge. Ghent plans to acquire *Silvershower* by any means necessary. Ghent is a tall dwarf with a short iron-black beard and wild black hair that resists obvious attempts to grease it straight. Ghent is usually imperious and obnoxious, but he is skilled at false flattery. Ghent's statistics are found in **Act 8**.

Fatima, the assistant maid and cook of the Six Griffons Lodge. Fatima appears to be a shy girl of 15, but is actually a young janni in disguise. Fatima learned that *Vaporblade* rests in the lodge's collection and secured employment in the lodge in order to find a way to return *Vaporblade* to the hands of heroes (as an outsider, Fatima can't



Fatima

suppress the curse by using it herself). She is well-intentioned but deceptive by nature, and prefers to keep her motives to herself unless necessary. Fatima disguises her regal posture and sparkling eyes with a meek bearing and downcast glances. Fatima doesn't speak unless spoken to, and even then she mumbles a short answer while staring at her feet.

FATIMA, YOUNG JANNI CR 3

XP 800

N Small outsider (native)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +11

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+6 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 size)

hp 27 (6d10-6)

Fort +4, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

Resist fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 20 ft. (perfect)

Melee dagger +8/+3 (1d3+1/19-20)

Ranged dagger +11/+6 (1d3+1/19-20)

Special Attacks change size

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

3/day—*invisibility* (self only), *plane shift* (willing targets to elemental planes, Astral Plane, or Material Plane only), *speak with animals*

1/day—*create food and water*, *ethereal jaunt* (for 1 hour)

RUNNING THE SIX GRIFFONS HAUNT

This is an event-based, investigative adventure that occurs within the Six Griffons Lodge over the course of an evening and the following morning. The GM should become familiar with the events of this adventure, as many events take place with or without PC involvement and their consequences are only made apparent as the adventure unfolds. **Appendix 2** contains a timeline of events. If play starts to drag, move quickly ahead to the next event impacting the characters.

This should play out as a haunted house story. You should provide descriptions of strange noises and odd shadows throughout, but a classic haunted house story also relies on gradual investigation of things that are not as they seem. The creatures that are making the noise and trouble may appear to be spirits, but the PCs learn that these creatures are actually rare elementals. The focus of the adventure initially seems to be *Silvershower*, but the PCs discover that *Vaporblade* is to blame.

TACTICS

Before Combat If combat seems inevitable, Fatima casts *invisibility* on herself.

During Combat Fatima avoids melee and uses her change size ability on allied warriors.

Morale If reduced below 20 hit points, Fatima flees using *ethereal jaunt* or *plane shift*.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 19, **Con** 8, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 21

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Dodge, Improved Initiative

Skills Bluff +12, Craft (clothing) +11, Disguise +12, Fly +23, Perception +11, Ride +13, Sense Motive +11, Stealth +17

Languages Common, Aquan, Celestial; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ elemental endurance

Gear kitchen knife (treat as dagger), copy of key to *Vaporblade's* lock

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Change Size (Sp) Twice per day, a janni can magically change a creature's size. This works just like an *enlarge person* or *reduce person* spell (the janni chooses when using the ability), except that the ability can work on the janni. A DC 13 Fortitude save negates the effect. The save DC is Charisma-based. This is the equivalent of a 2nd-level spell.

Elemental Endurance (Ex) Janni can remain on the Planes of Air, Earth, Fire, or Water for up to 48 hours at a time. Failure to return to the Material Plane before that time expires causes a janni to take 1 point of damage per additional hour spent on the elemental plane, until it dies or returns to the Material Plane.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs arrive at the Six Griffons Lodge and meet the steward, Archibald Topp. Topp explains what he knows of the haunting and asks the PCs to put a stop to it before the luncheon at noon on the following day. Topp introduces the other servants and provides a quick tour of the manor. While the PCs view the Music Room and its collection of magical weapons, a haunting elemental kills Mrs. Beeke. The party's investigation begins in earnest and the PCs are left in the lodge for the night.

In the evening, a haunting elemental appears in the library and plays a prank or two before leaving. In the middle of the night, Ghent sends Dalby and dark folk thieves into the lodge to steal *Silvershower*. Dalby never leaves the serving closet, where a malicious haunting elemental rigs a gruesome trap with his corpse. The PCs are likely to confront the dark ones before they escape with *Silvershower*, foiling Ghent's attempt to gain the flail.

The next day, the PCs may obtain some clues about *Vaporblade* from Fatima, face another haunting elemental, and aid Topp with his research into the new weapons. As the luncheon begins, Ghent attempts to steal *Silvershower* personally. Fatima draws the PCs into combat with Ghent and his doppelganger allies, giving the PCs the opportunity to use *Vaporblade* against Ghent and lift the curse on the lodge.

INTRODUCTION

Storm clouds roil overhead, threatening a downpour. The streets of this affluent section of the city are nearly deserted, though it is not yet sundown. As you approach the stately manor house, a second story window shatters, raining glass down upon the empty street.

PCs that succeed at a DC 18 Perception check see a shadowy, man-sized form move back from the broken window, plainly trying not to be seen. This figure is a haunting elemental. Whether or not any PCs notice the creature, the front door immediately opens to reveal Archibald Topp.

With a bang that echoes up the street, the manor door slams open. A wiry man with large spectacles and a thin fringe of hair pokes his head out and looks up and down the street. He eyes each of you, and looks up toward the broken window. "Did any of you see a...ghost up there just now? Oh, yes. I did. Looks like a fierce rainstorm will break any minute, and I could very definitely use some assistance. Please, come in, come in!" The wiry man moves aside to let you in to the building. An ornate, engraved plaque by the door reads SIX GRIFFONS.

The man ushering the PCs into the building is Archibald Topp. Topp welcomes the PCs to the lodge and offers to take their coats and cloaks. As he does so, a thunderstorm begins with a mighty crash and lasts for the duration of this adventure (see the **Environment** chapter of the *Core Rulebook*).

If eager PCs instead seek to investigate the broken window immediately, Topp explains that he's spent days chasing half-glimpsed forms around the lodge, but has never been able to catch one. If the PCs insist on taking a look in the Music Room, Topp escorts them upstairs, but the haunting elemental fled out of the broken window and over the rooftops of the city as soon as the street below was clear.

Topp offers the PCs drinks in the den while explaining his problem. Dalby Dragfoot, frowning unpleasantly, makes up whatever drinks the PCs request. Topp waves the PCs into comfortable chairs, composes himself, and explains his problem.



- Topp explains the history of the Six Griffons Lodge and the role of Lord Thackeray as the owner of the manor house and head of the lodge.
- Recently, there have been some strange activities: broken windows (outward, if the PCs think to ask, as with the Music Room window), things moved around, and strange noises. The lodge seems to be haunted.
- Topp is at wit's end trying to chase specters around the lodge and has fallen dreadfully behind on the luncheon preparations due to the haunting.
- Tomorrow at noon, Lord Thackeray is hosting an exclusive luncheon for the lodge members. Topp is worried that the haunting will disrupt the festivities. Topp politely clarifies that the PCs aren't invited to the luncheon but, if the

PCs stop the haunting, he is sure that Lord Thackeray would want to thank them in person. Topp assures the PCs that influence with Lord Thackeray can be very valuable.

- Topp invites the PCs stay overnight at the lodge to uncover the source of the haunting.
- Topp offers to pay the PCs 100 gp each for their trouble. He is desperate for assistance, so can be easily talked into paying 200 gp to each PC, but this amount depletes his authorized funds as well as much of his own personal savings.
- Topp thinks highly of Lord Thackeray and considers all the lodge members to be respectable gentlemen and descendants of heroes. He points out the paintings of several famous departed lodge members hanging in the den, including several similar-looking older men (each of them Thackerays) and an old blond dwarf (Grelim Ghent, Houfin Ghent's grandfather).
- There are four servants in the lodge: Topp is the steward, Mrs. Beeke is the maid and cook, Fatima is the serving girl, and Dalby tends bar.
- The lodge contains a den, dining room, and kitchen downstairs. Upstairs are two bedrooms, a library, and the Music Room, where the most valuable weapons of the Six Griffons Lodge are displayed. Topp offers the PCs a tour once they are finished with their drinks.

If the PCs want to know more information about the lodge or its staff, Topp answers those questions as best he is able. Unfortunately, Topp's knowledge is limited. For example, he doesn't know that Ghent is blackmailing Dalby or that Fatima is anything other than the shy girl she appears to be. Topp suspects the haunting is the work of spirits or poltergeists, but is clueless beyond that.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Once they have entered the Six Griffons Lodge, the PCs can recall helpful information by making the following checks. Remember that Knowledge checks with a DC of 10 or less can be made untrained, so any PC might obtain the first result listed under each skill.

Knowledge (history):

10+: Aristocratic gentlemen's clubs like the Six Griffons Lodge once numbered in the dozens throughout the city. Each was the headquarters of a band of explorers or adventurers. Few such clubs remain these days, and those that do are often sagging buildings where old men meet to reminisce about glories of their grandfathers' grandfathers.

15+: The Six Griffons Lodge had its share of heroic members in centuries past, including some bravos from the Thackeray family and their friends. These adventurers called themselves the Six Griffons. The Thackeray family donated the manor that has housed the Six Griffons Lodge since its inception. Although members are technically equal, a Thackeray descendant traditionally heads the lodge.

20+: The Thackerays have a long history of collecting weaponry. Weapons festoon the walls of the Six Griffon Lodge. The Thackerays display magical weapons in the lodge's Music Room, named for the ancient organ built into the walls of the room.

Knowledge (local):

10+: The Six Griffons Lodge is mostly a collection of idle gentlemen long past their prime. Descendants of existing or former members are entitled to membership, but these youths are usually more interested leisure than adventure.

20+: The Six Griffons Lodge maintains a small staff. Sir Yorick Thackeray, the current head of the lodge, does not stay at the lodge often. He entrusts care of the building to an elderly and honorable steward, a halfling bartender, and a small cleaning and cooking staff.