

Persephone's Purpose

Princess Persephone has been taken over by sinister otherworldly forces and the king has been treacherously slain. It is up to the PCs to avenge these crimes and stop the bodysnatchers' schemes before more innocent lives are lost.

A Pathfinder 2e adventure for four 8th level characters

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Persephone's Lair



GM Introduction

An alien gosreg agent from the Dominion of the Black has arrived on Golarion to infiltrate the world. Ambitious and overconfident, it decided to start by taking over a small kingdom as its ruler. The king himself was too well protected and difficult to impersonate without detection for a time sufficient for the gosreg's nefarious purposes, so it targeted the king's adopted daughter, the elven Princess Persephone, instead.

Bargaining with a black dragon, the Gosreg had the dragon kidnap the princess and take her back to its lair. There, the gosreg kept Persephone captive to learn to mimic her well and sift through her mind to find out about the kingdom. Then it would replace the princess and do away with the king. The princess would be next in line to the throne. As the Gosreg had planned, a band of PCs came to defeat the dragon, the Gosreg's disposable ally, and rescue the "princess" without realising that the Gosreg had hidden away the real princess and taken her form. It accompanied them back to the kingdom amid much relief and jubilation from the populace.

Now infiltrated inside the royal court, the gosreg planned, once it had learned enough to rule (and subsequently ruin) the land, to murder the king without getting caught and then be declared the King's successor. However, the king grew suspicious of his "daughter", so the gosreg recruited an intellect devourer to take over the king's body while he slept in his royal chamber. This would buy a few more days' time for it to finish its research and it would now be easy to arrange for the controlled king to die in a publicly-witnessed apparent accident, with his broken body available for inspection as proof of his demise, while the devourer would escape unnoticed.

But the king's counsellor, a wise high priest of Abadar, also grew suspicious and the king's condition was soon revealed by his divine magic. The gosreg barely had time to escape to its lair to hatch a new plan.

The counsellor has found out where the "princess" is hiding, and has sent the PCs not to rescue her but to destroy her. It is assumed that the princess is now lost forever, taken over in the same way as was their beloved king. However, Princess Persephone remains alive and well, while the gosreg interrogates her to plan its next infiltration. The PCs must discover "Persephone"'s purpose and not make the same

mistake twice, slaying the princess by accident while allowing the false Persephone to go free. Given the only form of mimicry that has been witnessed so far has been that of the intellect devourer and not that of directly changing shape, this will be no easy task.

PC Introduction

You stand in the royal audience hall in trepidation over the reason for this summons. Lining the walls in their finery and shining armour, the King's guards stand to attention. They ignore your presence, but you are quite sure that any sign of suspicious behaviour on your part would cause them to leap into violent action. Such is the guards' duty at all times, but on this of all days, it would be unwise to provoke them. For today is the day that the King was murdered!

Presently, the King's counsellor enters the hall from a side door and walks purposefully to his habitual spot on the dais next to the throne. A small choking cough as he glances at the empty seat is the only sign he betrays of the grief he must be feeling at the loss of his liege.

He turns to face you and looks you all up and down, clearly unimpressed. His bushy grey eyebrows furrow in consternation and he grasps his holy symbol, a golden staff with a design in the shape of merchant's weighing scales set upon its head. You have heard rumours in the city that the counsellor is a powerful priest of Abadar, possessing divine magic that he employs in service to his king and to his god alike. Protecting the king was his personal responsibility. He failed. As he clears his throat to speak, you are not expecting a pleasant chat...

"You have been summoned here today to redress a grave error, one that cost the life of our dear king. For those of you who were not personally involved, let me elaborate.

"The king's beloved adopted daughter, Persephone, was lately abducted by a dragon, a great black beast dripping caustic acid from its toothy maw. Naturally, we sent a rescue team to the lair whose location we had quickly divined. This team of "heroes" – to be quite clear, I use the term ironically – boldly set out and promptly returned with the princess, feeling very pleased with themselves.

"The team were a motley crew, consisting of a Mousefolk called Midnight – why we ever trusted someone with such a suspicious name I do not know and we never even saw her clearly because she spent the whole time hidden from view

and popping up when we least expected it. Then there was an equally disreputable fox spirit called Shadow; this character never stopped showing off, darting about from one place the next, spinning in somersaults so we grew queasy even looking at her. Next was a human girl named... actually I can't remember, because she just read her magic books all the time and ignored us and when she did speak to us it was in a strange language called Pog. Finally, there was one different from the others, with a very nice name that had nothing to do with night-time or shadows or darkness. She said she was a former queen from the distant Kingdom of Arendel. I'm sure she was by far the best of the group and had nothing to do with returning some foul creature who only pretended to be the princess and who then murdered the king.

"The team provided no proof of the dragon's destruction, saying only that it had been rescued at the last moment by another dragon, and no motive for the kidnapping of the princess was forthcoming. At seeing his daughter returned, unharmed and surprisingly well after her apparent ordeal, our king was alas too relieved to question them in more detail.

"Soon afterwards, the king suddenly began acting strangely; he developed a cruel streak and seemed to have forgotten the workings of his court. Only the princess seemed not to notice and she spent much time in his company. Suspicious nevertheless, I divined that he was not the king at all but a horrid creature, like a walking brain, who had taken over his poor body. Wise and knowledgeable scholars name the species intellect devourers, creatures from an alien world. We destroyed the beast but there was nothing left of the king. The whole land mourns his loss...

"But I must not become distracted... Most horrifying of all, Princess Persephone was enraged at the intellect devourer's discovery and defended the creature. She escaped when the devourer was slain, if "she" even was our beautiful and kind princess. Yet 'tis strange that my divination magic did not reveal any intellect devourer lurking inside *her*.

"I have gleaned the location of the lair where the imposter now lurks in hiding, no doubt hatching more evil plots. It lies not far from the original cave where the dragon took the princess. Find Persephone, determine her evil purpose... and destroy her – for I feel our true princess is already lost!

"Make all haste, for who knows how long the controlled princess will remain in her lair or what other beings she may take over and impersonate if given enough time? All in the

kingdom – to say nothing of your tattered reputations – depend upon your success!"

1. Cave Entrance

You search an area of undergrowth by a hillside in the location indicated by the king's counsellor, and soon you spy the object of your quest, strong double doors that bar an opening in the side of the hill. A large gnarled trunk of a tree covered in dense foliage and purple blossoms grows to the side of the door and would obscure the entrance from all but the most persistent of searchers.

The tree is a moonflower. If the PCs pass a Nature recall knowledge check on the "tree" (DC 26) they identify its nature beyond its 15-ft bite reach. Otherwise, as soon as anyone makes contact with the door, it attacks:

Suddenly the twisted trunk of the strange tree bends forwards towards you and you see that a gaping fanged mouth surrounded by leaves sits atop the trunk. Unnatural bulbous knots in the tree begin to glow with an unearthly light.

Moonflower

Creature 8

Uncommon N Huge Plant

Perception +16; darkvision

Languages telepathy 1 mile (other moonflowers only)

Skills Athletics +19 (can't Jump or Swim), Stealth +14 (+18 in thick vegetation)

Str +7, **Dex** +0, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

AC 24; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +10, **Will** +16

HP 120 (fast healing 10); **Immunities** electricity; **Resistances** physical 10 (except slashing); **Weaknesses** fire 10

Speed 20 feet

Melee ✦ bite +20 [+15/+10] (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d10+10 piercing plus [Grab](#)

Melee ✦ root +20 [+16/+12] (agile, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d8+10 bludgeoning

Light Pulse ✦✦ (evocation, light, primal, visual) 50 feet. The moonflower releases a pulse of bright light. Each non-moonflower creature in the emanation must attempt a DC 23 Fortitude save. The moonflower can't use Light Pulse again for 1d4 rounds.

Success The creature is unaffected.

Failure The creature is dazzled for 1d4 rounds.

Critical Failure The creature is blinded for 1d4 rounds.

Pod Prison ⇨ Trigger The moonflower has swallowed a creature; Effect The swallowed creature is wrapped in a tight cocoon and extruded from the moonflower's body into an adjacent square. The creature continues to be Swallowed Whole. It can't use Acrobatics to Escape a pod, but other creatures can attempt to Rupture the pod. The cocooned

creature takes half damage from any damage dealt to the cocoon. Once the cocoon is Ruptured, it deflates and decays.

Pod Spawn Should a Small or larger creature die within a pod prison, the pod transforms into an adult moonflower with full Hit Points after 1d4 hours of growth. The newly formed moonflower has its own consciousness, but some aspect of its trunk or blossoms resembles the creature that died within. The dead creature's equipment remains inside the new moonflower and can be retrieved if the moonflower is slain.

[Swallow Whole](#) ✦ (attack) Large, 2d10+10 bludgeoning and 2d6 acid, Rupture 21

Moonflower Combat Tactics

After the first bite attack, the moonflower's knots pulse with bright light, using the Light Pulse activity. On a subsequent successful bite after its first turn, it uses its grab action automatically to pick up and grab the PC and then on its first action of its next turn it will perform a swallow whole attack with no MAP with an Athletics check at +19 versus the PC's Reflex DC. Remember if it swallows whole, it will use its pod prison reaction at some point to extrude the creature from its body.

After the fight

The moonflower has no treasure, but swallowed PCs are released and PCs may try and free a cocooned PC before they die. If they do die inside the pod, a new Moonflower with coloration resembling the PC and a shape on its trunk that is reminiscent of the dead PC's face will "greet" the PCs on their exit.

The double doors are very strong and locked (Hardness 15, hp 120 (60), Force Open DC 30, Average Lock (4 successes at DC 25).

2. Entrance Chamber

The heavy doors creak open to reveal a torch-lit chamber beyond with walls and floor fashioned of regular stone blocks. There is a chill in the air and an opaque sheen seems to obscure the far end of the room. A disembodied voice greets you as you enter, echoing through the chamber. It is recognisable as that of the princess, but twisted to sound cruel, all semblance of sweetness now absent.

"Welcome, gallant heroes. Have you come to rescue me again? Perhaps, later on, I shall introduce you to some other guests of mine, with whom I think you will be very familiar... They should delay you enough for my requirements, for it will take me but an hour of your world's time to bring forth from

my home world an army of devourers to enthrall your paltry kingdom!

“But let us not get ahead of ourselves. First thing’s first. Enough chatter. Or rather, more chatter!”

The voice seems to repeat itself in multiple echoes and loses the princess’s distinct tones, gradually changing into a chaotic cacophony of confusing phrases that make no sense. You notice sections of the walls to either side scrape upwards to reveal a pale pink sludge seeping from underneath to collect into four separate 5-ft wide fleshy mounds covered in eyes and yammering mouths. It is these mouths that emit the nonsense gibbering.

Gibbering Mouters (4) **Creature 5**

N Medium Aberration

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Aklo

Skills Acrobatics +12, Athletics +13

Str +2, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -3, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +0

AC 21 all-around vision (can’t be flanked); **Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +10

HP 120; **Weaknesses** bludgeoning 5

Gibbering (auditory, aura, emotion, enchantment, incapacitation, mental, occult) Each creature that begins its turn within 60 feet of a gibbering mouter must attempt a DC 19 Will save. On a failure, they are confused for 1 round. On a success, they are temporarily immune for 1 minute.

Reactive Gnaw \rightarrow **Trigger** An adjacent creature deals the gibbering mouter slashing damage. **Effect** The gibbering mouter’s wound opens into another maw. It makes a jaws Strike against the triggering creature.

Speed 10 feet, swim 20 feet

Melee \blacklozenge jaws +14 [+9/+4] (finesse), Damage 2d8+5 piercing plus 1d4 persistent bleed damage and Grab

Ranged \blacklozenge spittle +14 [+9/+4] (range 30 feet), Damage 4d6 acid and burn eyes

Burn Eyes A creature that takes damage from a gibbering mouter’s spittle must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude save or be dazzled for 1 round (or blinded for 1 round on a critical failure).

Engulf \blacklozenge DC 22, 3d8 piercing, Escape DC 22, Rupture 8

Gibbering Mouter Combat Tactics

The mouters continue their Gibbering throughout the combat and each PC must make its DC 19 Will save at the start of its first turn. On a critical fail (note Incapacitation

trait), they become [Confused](#) that round and each round thereafter if they continue to critically fail.

An occultism Recall Knowledge DC 20 check will reveal that they do not have the precision damage and critical hit damage immunity of many other oozes. They are in fact aberrations.

The mouters approach on their turns with engulf attacks, moving up to 20 ft to the closest enemy and stopping in the target’s space (it can engulf only one creature).

The sheen at the far end of the room is a permanent wall of ice created by the gozreg’s alien technology.

Wall of Ice

The mouters avoid the squares next to the wall of ice. The wall does 2d6 cold damage to anyone who starts their turn in these squares. Moreover, the ice spreads across the floor, melting at the edge as new ice forms, so that the floor is wet throughout the chamber and the 10 ft next to the wall is slippery. The ice counts as uneven ground. On uneven ground, PCs are flat-footed and each time they are hit by an attack or fail a save, they must succeed at a DC 25 Reflex save or fall prone. Moving across the ice requires DC 25 [Balance](#) checks.

Because of the ice, these mouters do not use ground manipulation.

After the Fight

When the mouters are defeated, the gibbering at last fades and the princess’s voice fades back in. “Oh, you defeated my friends. I shall miss their pleasant conversation. Got the message yet that everything just wants to eat you? That is the *only* thing your kind, and all other creatures on your miserable planet, are good for. Food for higher beings!”

The gibbering mouters have no treasure. The wall sections that hid them reveal narrow alcoves, beyond which is solid rock.

Wall of Ice Controls

To the east near the ice wall, the far wall of the alcove that concealed a mouter bears a console upon which are four buttons inscribed with runes. It appears that magic runes are a universal script and a DC 20 Arcana check or DC 25 society check will reveal they stand for “Water”, “Fire”, “Cold” and “Electricity”. The Cold and Water ones are glowing.

The wall of ice is actually a frozen waterfall created by alien magic from a line across the ceiling.

Water. Pressing this does nothing obvious. It switches off the water and PCs will note that the ice is very slowly receding from the ceiling as it melts from its lower edges. Eventually, after 10 minutes, it can be crossed, but will deal 6d6 cold damage in so doing.

Fire. A 10d6 DC 28 fireball explodes centred on the middle of the wall in a 20-ft burst. If the cold rune is switched on (already on unless the PCs switched it off), the damage is reduced to 6d6. The ice wall is now melted. If the water rune is on, the water becomes obscuring steam the next round that deals a further 2d6 fire damage if crossing it. Crossing on the following round after that will mean that no cold damage is suffered. If the cold button is still on, cold damage will be suffered thereafter and the ice wall will reform on the round after that if the water rune remains on. The fire rune turns off again after it is pressed, ready for another activation(!).

Cold. Turning this off switches off the cold and, if water is on, the line across the ceiling becomes a waterfall. It can be switched back on.

Electricity. Every creature in contact with water (e.g. a waterfall or the 10 ft of wet floor north and south of the wall) suffers 10d6 electricity damage DC 28 basic Reflex save. Like the fire rune, the electricity rune turns off again after it is pressed.

Timing the PCs

As mentioned in the gosreg's greeting, the PCs have been given a 1-hour time limit to track down Persephone. Note the time taken from now on but do not tell the PCs. Exploration activities such as searching or investigating typically involve moving at half speed x10 per minute, i.e. 125 ft per minute if speed is 25 ft. Make it take a whole minute for each combat and a minute to search a larger area like a room or cave area. Other activities such as talking or making decisions can be tracked by real time, rounding to the nearest whole minute. Clearly there will be time only for 1 Treat Wounds this adventure without the Continual Recovery skill feat.

3. Passage South

The passage south ends in a door. The door is slightly ajar.

Beyond the narrow opening, PCs have a very limited view of a dark passage running east and west. However, the door is stuck. To force the door open is only DC 5 (the players do not know this unless they investigate how stuck the door appears

to be), but if doing so by shouldering the door or kicking the door rather than by using leverage, a critical success on the Force Open check will not only open the door but momentum from the sudden release will move those PCs into the 10-ft square beyond where there is a pit trap.

Pit Trap Simple Hazard 8

Mechanical Trap

Stealth DC 28 (not possible to spot if stumble through door or door is not fully open)

Description A stone valve trapdoor covers a pit that's 10 feet square and 40 feet deep with spikes at the bottom.

Disable Thievery DC 24 to make the valve stuck closed

AC 10, Fort +15, Ref +15

Trapdoor Hardness 14, HP 100 (BT 50); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Pitfall ➔ **Trigger** A creature walks onto the trapdoor. **Effect** The triggering creature falls in and takes falling damage of 20 bludgeoning and is attacked by 2 of the spikes (+20, damage 2d10 piercing). That creature can use the Grab an Edge reaction DC 15 (DC 25 if stumbling from opened door) to avoid falling.

The climb up the walls of the pit is DC 30 if unaided.

4. Mysterious Alcove

The passage ends in a curved alcove. In the centre of the wall is a sphere of dark greenish glassy material.

Touching the sphere causes it to glow with a greenish light and the door to the south glows with the same light (it is now unlocked). The light remains on for 1 minute.

If attempting to destroy the sphere, it is as hard as stone (hardness 14, HP 30 (15)). If broken, the door cannot be opened by these means. The sphere can be repaired...

Back to the Pit

If PCs jump east-west sideways across the 10-ft pit, a nasty surprise awaits them. A sensor on the south wall of the pit detecting sideways movement causes a slashing blade to swing out horizontally from a narrow crack within the wall, cutting the target down and interrupting their jump.

Scything Blade Simple Hazard 10

Mechanical Trap

Stealth DC 24 (not possible to spot if looking from the other side of the open pit)

Description A giant blade hidden in a horizontal crack.

Disable Thievery DC 24 (trained) to disable the blade

AC 21, Fort +15, Ref +10

Blade Hardness 11, HP 88 (BT 44); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage

Scything Blade ↗ **Trigger** A creature passes (e.g. jumping or encounter mode moving) in an east-west or west-east direction within 5 ft of the south wall. **Effect** The blade swings across and the PC falls into the pit if the valve has not been stuck closed (grab an edge DC 25).

Melee ↗ scythe +26 (deadly 1d12), Damage 4d12+10 slashing

5. Mysterious Door

To the east the passage ends in a door in the south wall. This door is a blank surface of alien-looking stone material covered in veins of a dull green glassy hue.

The door is most easily opened by activating the sphere in the alcove. The veins on the door now glow brightly green and it can be pushed easily open.

If the sphere has been broken, the PCs will have to bash the stone down (hardness 14, HP 200 (BT 100)). In doing so, they will be interrupted by a servant of the Dominion of the Black brought to Golarion to help the gosreg in its mission.

Immature Gogiteth Creature 10

CE Medium Aberration

Perception +17; darkvision

Skills Acrobatics +15, Athletics +20, Stealth +19, Survival +13 (+22 to Track)

Str +4, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +1, **Cha** +0

AC 27 all-around vision; **Fort** +21, **Ref** +18, **Will** +16

HP 200; **Resistances** poison 10

Skittering Reposition ↗ (move) **Trigger** A creature that starts its move outside the gogiteth's reach moves into its reach.

Effect The gogiteth moves 10 feet. This does not trigger reactions.

Speed 40 feet; climb 30 feet

Melee ↗ jaws +22 [+17/+12], **Damage** 3d8+8 piercing plus Improved Grab

Melee ↗ leg +22 [+18/+14] (agile), **Damage** 3d4+8 piercing

Carry Off Prey The gogiteth can move at half Speed while it has a creature grabbed in its jaws, bringing the grabbed creature along.

Constrict ↗ 3d4+8 bludgeoning, DC 28

Skittering Assault ⚡ The gogiteth Strides three times. Once per Stride, it can attempt a leg Strike against a creature in its reach at any point during the Stride; it must make each attack against a different creature, but it doesn't apply its multiple attack penalty until after making all its Strikes. If any of the Strikes result in a critical failure, Skittering Assault ends.

6. Familiar Friends

You enter a large chamber of the same construction as the passages you have already explored. Its ceiling is 20-ft high. Spanning the whole room is a 20-ft wide pit, at the bottom of which is a pool of bubbling and spitting acid that glows dimly. The room is lit by a large 5-ft diameter chandelier suspended a little less than 10-ft above the room's floor.

On the other side of the room is a table at which are four lounging adventurers enjoying a round of drinks. As they spy you, they jeer and taunt and bang their mugs upon the table. You spot their familiar faces – yourselves!

These Doppelgangers are servants of the Dominion of the Black. Each has studied the PCs who previously rescued the “princess” and the Gosreg has further coached them. They have all studied as different character classes in addition. Select the doppelganger who best fits the play style of each PC; they take the form of that PC.

On the other side of the acid pool, they try and enter into a contest of throwing abuse, scorning their opposite number's abilities and reminding them of past errors.

Doppelganger Rogue Creature 7

Uncommon N Medium Humanoid

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common; two other languages

Skills Deception +15, Diplomacy +11, Society +8, Stealth +17

Str +3, **Dex** +4, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

AC 22; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

HP 90

End the Charade ↗ (attack); **Trigger** The doppelganger is transformed with Change Shape and another creature moves adjacent to it or takes a hostile action against it. **Effect** The doppelganger reverts to its natural form and can make a Strike against the triggering creature. If the creature was unaware the doppelganger was in disguise, that creature is flat-footed against this attack.

Speed 30 feet

Surprise Attack

Melee ↗ claw +16 [+12/+8] (agile), **Damage** 2d6+5 slashing + 2d6 precision damage vs flat-footed

Arcane Innate Spells DC 23; 3rd mind reading (at will), Cantrip (4th) electric arc

Change Shape ↗ (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation) The doppelganger takes on the specific appearance of any Small or Medium humanoid who it has seen and whose appearance it remembers. This doesn't change the doppelganger's Speed or its attack and damage

bonuses with its Strikes but might change the damage type its Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

Doppelganger Fighter Creature 7

Uncommon N Medium Humanoid

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common; two other languages

Skills Athletics +13, Deception +15, Diplomacy +11, Society +8, Stealth +12

Str +4, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

AC 24; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +12, **Will** +11

HP 110

End the Charade \supset (attack); **Trigger** The doppelganger is transformed with Change Shape and another creature moves adjacent to it or takes a hostile action against it. **Effect** The doppelganger reverts to its natural form and can make a Strike against the triggering creature. If the creature was unaware the doppelganger was in disguise, that creature is flat-footed against this attack.

Speed 25 feet

Attack of Opportunity

Melee \blacklozenge claw +18 [+14/+10] (agile), **Damage** 2d8+7 slashing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 23 +13; 3rd mind reading (at will), Cantrip (4th) produce flame

Change Shape \blacklozenge (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation) The doppelganger takes on the specific appearance of any Small or Medium humanoid who it has seen and whose appearance it remembers. This doesn't change the doppelganger's Speed or its attack and damage bonuses with its Strikes but might change the damage type its Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

Doppelganger Spellcaster Creature 7

Uncommon N Medium Humanoid

Perception +11; darkvision

Languages Common; two other languages

Skills Deception +15, Diplomacy +11, Society +8, Stealth +12, Arcana +11

Str +3, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +4

AC 22; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +12, **Will** +17

HP 70

End the Charade \supset (attack); **Trigger** The doppelganger is transformed with Change Shape and another creature moves adjacent to it or takes a hostile action against it. **Effect** The doppelganger reverts to its natural form and can make a Strike against the triggering creature. If the creature was unaware the doppelganger was in disguise, that creature is flat-footed against this attack.

Speed 25 feet

Melee \blacklozenge claw +14 [+10/+6] (agile), **Damage** 2d6+5 slashing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 25; 3rd mind reading (at will)

Occult Innate Spells DC 25, attack +15; 4th wall of fire, blink; 3rd fireball, magic missile, slow; 2nd acid arrow, invisibility, hideous laughter; 1st burning hands (x2), shocking grasp; Cantrips (4th) telekinetic projectile, electric arc, ray of frost.

Change Shape \blacklozenge (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation) The doppelganger takes on the specific appearance of any Small or Medium humanoid who it has seen and whose appearance it remembers. This doesn't change the doppelganger's Speed or its attack and damage bonuses with its Strikes but might change the damage type its Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

Doppelganger Priest Creature 7

Uncommon N Medium Humanoid

Perception +15; darkvision

Languages Common; two other languages

Skills Deception +15, Diplomacy +15, Society +8, Stealth +12, Religion +11

Str +3, **Dex** +3, **Con** +0, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

AC 20; **Fort** +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +17

HP 90

End the Charade \supset (attack); **Trigger** The doppelganger is transformed with Change Shape and another creature moves adjacent to it or takes a hostile action against it. **Effect** The doppelganger reverts to its natural form and can make a Strike against the triggering creature. If the creature was unaware the doppelganger was in disguise, that creature is flat-footed against this attack.

Speed 25 feet

Melee \blacklozenge claw +14 [+10/+6] (agile), **Damage** 2d6+5 slashing

Arcane Innate Spells DC 25; 3rd mind reading (at will)

Divine Innate Spells DC 25, attack +15; 4th harm (x2); 3rd heal (x3); 2nd inner radiance torrent, see invisibility, resist energy; 1st fear (x2), admonishing ray; Cantrips (4th) divine lance, shield, guidance.

Change Shape \blacklozenge (arcane, concentrate, polymorph, transmutation) The doppelganger takes on the specific appearance of any Small or Medium humanoid who it has seen and whose appearance it remembers. This doesn't change the doppelganger's Speed or its attack and damage bonuses with its Strikes but might change the damage type its Strikes deal (typically to bludgeoning).

Crossing the Acid Pool

The surface of the pool is 5-ft down and the pool is 10-ft deep. Immersion immediately does 2d6 acid damage and an additional 2d6 acid damage is suffered if still immersed in

acid at the end of each turn. Falling from the ledge or the chandelier makes the PC sink to the bottom of the pool (i.e. have to swim up 5 ft to surface)

To jump the 20-ft span of the pool requires a two action 25-ft jump, so the Athletics DC is 25 for a running long jump and if speed is lower than 25 feet it cannot be attempted. Allow a Grab an Edge reaction on the opposite side if a PC fails by 5 or less.

The chandelier is an Athletics DC 15 jump away from either edge of the pool. But it is trapped and will snap, sending the swashbuckling PC splashing into the acid (DC 35 Grab an Edge from here).

Doppelganger Combat Tactics

Once combat starts, the doppelgangers in PC form take defensive positions, using ranged attacks and waiting for the PCs to cross the acid. If the PCs seem happy to stay back, the rogue and fighter use their offensive cantrips, taking cover behind the table that they upend.

The first doppelganger to get badly wounded by a PC when in melee range will use their End the Charade reaction and the others do so at the same time, also taking strikes at any PC in melee range.

If badly losing, the remaining doppelgangers will try and surrender.

After the Fight

Surrendering doppelgangers if persuaded or coerced 2 steps from hostile to neutral may reveal details of the Gosreg's plots. They will tell the PCs that the Princess is still alive – the Gosreg impersonated her as the Doppelgangers have, rather than take over her body. But the PCs must hurry if they wish to rescue the princess; the Gosreg is even now calling in reinforcement intellect devourers from its nightmare planet Aucturn to play the same trick on the PCs that was played using “that foolish king”.

The Doppelgangers know of the tunnel in the acid pool and the south cave area next to the acid lake but not of the secret door from this room or the secret passage that bypasses the acid lake. They suspect that the gosreg has some hidden guardians in the cave south of the acid lake but have not seen them, only heard an unsettling whispering. They assume the gosreg's lair is somewhere north of the acid pool but have been ordered not to poke around and the acid has successfully dissuaded them.

The Doppelgangers carry between them 115 gp, a topaz, 4 potions of Moderate Healing (3d8+10) and 4 potions of Moderate Acid Resistance (resistance 10 for one hour). The last items were distributed by the gosreg so the doppelgangers can swim to the cave beyond when necessary.

Tunnel under the Acid Pool

At the bottom of the pool, invisible from floor level but visible from the surface of the pool, is a 5-ft diameter tunnel in the north wall that leads to a larger acid pool in a natural cave. The floor of the cave under the acid rises gently up to surface above the acid a further 15 ft to the east (if a PC tries to climb out of the pool by scaling a wall, they must end their swim move action adjacent to the wall and then take a new climb action but if they do so where the cave floor gently slopes up above the acid, PCs can finish their swim action on the first dry land square).

The Secret Door

This is discovered only if specifically looking for such on a DC 25. Its opening mechanism is a rune-inscribed button hidden in the stonework of the south wall.

7. Whispering Death

The secret door grinds slowly upwards into the ceiling, revealing a rough rocky tunnel heading east and sloping downward to a cavern lit faintly by a greenish light coming from an underground lake of acid to your left. Nothing stirs in the grotto but you hear - or think you can hear - a faint whispering.

Two brain collectors, more servants of the Dominion of the Black, guard this cavern from a nook to the south out of sight from the secret door. They may detect approach beyond the first 20 ft of the sloping passage or creatures reaching the cave floor section between the two cave pools. If the PCs are Avoiding Notice, roll vs. their Perception DC of 28. They will automatically notice opening of the secret cavern door to the north.

They are Avoiding Notice themselves, and PCs will have to make perception checks vs. their stealth DCs of 27.

If it seems they have not been spotted, they both turn invisible on detecting foes.

Acid Trap

In the centre of the cave, a 10-ft square mound of loose rocks and bits of broken stalactite conceals an acid pit. The floor gives way under the weight of a small or larger creature.

Acid Trap

Simple Hazard 8

Mechanical Trap

Stealth DC 26

Description Loose rocks cover a deliberately weakened floor over an acid pool 3 ft below the floor level. The pool is separate from the larger pool and the acid is more concentrated.

Acid Pool ➤ **Trigger** A creature walks over the loose area.

Effect The triggering creature falls in and takes 4d6 acid damage and a further 4d6 acid damage at the end of each turn in the pool. That creature can use the Grab an Edge reaction DC 24 to jump to adjacent solid ground. It is a complete move action to crawl out from the pool to an adjacent square.

Acid Trap Treasure

In the bottom of the pool, which is only 5-ft deep, has been dropped a scroll tube. This discarded item happens to be made of an acid resistant ceramic-like material commonly used by the Dominion of the Black. Inside is a scroll of dispel magic and summon elemental, both heightened to 6th level. The PCs could summon a 7th level elemental, such as a shaitan (who could help with the wall of stone).

Brain Collectors (2)

Creature 8

Uncommon CE Large Aberration

Perception +18; darkvision

Languages Abyssal, Aklo, Common, Draconic, Protean, Undercommon; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Acrobatics +17, Arcana +18, Athletics +16, Lore +18 (all subcategories), Occultism +21, Stealth +17

Str +6, **Dex** +3, **Con** +5, **Int** +4, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

AC 26; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +13, **Will** +18; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 140; **Immunities** confused; **Weaknesses** brain loss

Brain Blisters A brain collector has seven brain blisters on its back that it uses to house stolen brains. A brain collector without all seven blisters full is stupefied with a value equal to the number of empty blisters.

Brain Loss If a brain collector takes 30 damage from a critical hit or takes 25 mental damage, it must succeed at a DC 26 save (Fortitude for critical damage or Will for mental damage) or one of its brain blisters is destroyed.

Speed 25 feet, fly 30 feet

Melee ➤ jaws +20 [+15/+10], Damage 2d12+6 piercing plus brain collector venom

Melee ➤ claw +20 [+16/+12] (agile), Damage 2d8+6 slashing

Occult Spontaneous Spells DC 26, attack +18; 4th confusion, phantasmal killer (2 slots); 3rd dispel magic, haste, paralyze (3 slots); 2nd humanoid form, invisibility, mirror image, paranoia (4 slots); 1st mindlink, ray of enfeeblement, true strike, unseen servant (4 slots); Cantrips (4th) dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, prestidigitation

Brain Collector Venom (poison) Saving Throw DC 26 Fortitude; Maximum Duration 6 rounds; Stage 1 1d6 poison damage and enfeebled 1 (1 round); Stage 2 1d6 poison damage, enfeebled 1, and slowed 1 (1 round); Stage 3 2d6 poison damage, enfeebled 2, and slowed 1 (1 round)

Collect Brain ➤ (manipulate) The brain collector collects a brain of a creature that has been dead for no more than 1 minute. It can then use an Interact action to secure the brain in one of its empty brain blisters.

Brain Collector Combat Tactics

If undetected and invisible, the brain collectors fly while Avoiding Notice to melee range (use a +4 greater cover bonus because there is no specific bonus to sneaking when invisible). Casting spells makes a sound so they would become hidden in that circumstance. They use these +21 stealth Avoiding Notice checks for their initiative, making a jaws strike. Then when they become visible they follow up with their detected tactics as below.

If detected, they start with confusion, perceived as a building up of the whispering into an unbearable crescendo in the target's mind, and phantasmal killer and then when in melee range they mix strikes with haste, then mirror image.

The brain collectors know to avoid the acid pit trap and can fly in the square over it, enticing enemies to enter the area to reach up and attack them in melee.

If they have lost a brain, they will interrupt all other actions to take a brain from a freshly dead creature.

They fight to the death, giving no quarter.

After the Fight

The brain collectors have no treasure.

The secret door in the north wall is discovered on a DC 24 check if approaching within 10 ft or searching the walls.

8. Acid Lake

If the PCs have reached here from the submerged tunnel:

You surface in a stinging acid pool within a dimly lit natural cavern. Fortunately the rocky bottom of the pool slopes up not far ahead to a low rocky ledge above the level of the acid.

Once the PCs reach the ledge, either by climbing up from the acid tunnel (note that the brain collector encounter (area 7) will occur here) or by moving through area 7 after the brain collector encounter, they see the second larger pool.

You see a large pool of faintly glowing green acid stretching out before you. The sickly light reveals a low ledge 30 ft away on the far side leading to a cave beyond. Even safely outside the pool, there is an acrid smell in the air that burns your lungs.

PCs may get to Persephone's lair by swimming through or flying over this acid lake or by discovering the secret door in area 7 and using the side passage.

9. Secret Tunnel

This 10 ft wide natural rocky tunnel heads east and then north, narrowing ahead to 5 ft width in places. There are pools of green acid in small pockets on the floor and the air tastes brackish on your tongue.

There are no encounters here.

10. Persephone's Lair

The entrance to this area can be reached from the acid lake or secret tunnel.

You have reached a wider cave area just north of the acid lake. The natural-looking rocky passage further north is blocked by an artificial-looking vertical wall of blank stone. Approaching, you experience an unpleasant nagging feeling, like an unwanted and unsettling alien presence tugging at your mind.

The PCs are experiencing the gosreg's unsettled aura that incurs -1 status penalty to Will saves when this close or closer to the gosreg.

Wall of Stone

The gosreg's thoughtsense has automatically detected the PCs and it has cast a wall of stone. The 10-foot-by-10-foot section of wall has AC 10, Hardness 14, and 50 Hit Points, and is immune to critical hits and precision damage. It can also be dispelled (counteract level 5, DC 30; failure still dispels if spell level is 6 or higher).

Once the PCs have breached the wall, the following scene greets them.

Beyond the wall is a natural cave roughly 30 ft in diameter and rising 30 ft to the lofty ceiling. Towards the centre of the cave, on either side of a pedestal, are not one but two

Persephones looking plaintively at you. You notice a series of alien-looking controls on the pedestal and in front of it is what looks like a summoning circle that has already been partially activated. It appears nearly ready to call in some creature from an alien world.

In almost perfect unison, the Persephones speak.

"Quick! There is not a moment to lose. This foul imposter is about to summon a horde of minions from the alien planet?"

As they speak, each looks to the other in consternation, and again they speak in unison. "Wait! *They* are the imposter! Can you not tell?"

If the PCs took less than 1 hour since entering the cave complex, intellect devourers have not yet been summoned and one of the Persephones is genuine.

If they took longer than this, the real Persephone has already been taken over by an intellect devourer and the one about to be summoned is the second such creature.

Spot the Difference

The gosreg has cast undetectable alignment and has an item that masks detect magic.

Perception checks for sense motive will be DC 32, with wrong result on a critical failure. Adjust up for difficult checks or down for clever PC determinations.

- i) If the PCs wait for an intellect devourer to appear, it will attack the real Persephone (whereupon the gosreg will exclaim sarcastically to the devourer in the PCs minds, "Great timing, fool! Next time use some intellect instead of devouring it!") or it will attack the PCs if the real Persephone has already been taken over. Thus the PCs will avoid an error but will have a tougher fight.
- ii) The gosreg was closer to the control pedestal when they entered if the PCs think to take note.
- iii) In an effort to show off its knowledge of the kingdom, the gosreg may let slip some fact about the kingdom that occurred after the princess was kidnapped by the dragon.
- iv) The gosreg has thoroughly researched the princess's past through her mind and in fact readily recalls more facts about her past than the flustered princess does. The question is though, who can verify? PCs may use sense motive to determine who is more confident in answering and they are the gosreg.
- v) The gosreg's primary purpose is self preservation. The princess's primary purpose is stopping the summons

through the pedestal. If the PCs move to destroy the pedestal, the gosreg will think quickly and say, "Wait! It's a bluff. The summoning will take place regardless of whether the pedestal is destroyed or not!" But obviously a princess would not know how an alien pedestal works.

- vi) If the "real" Persephone is already an Intellect Devourer, it will perform quite poorly at all these questions and then suddenly attack the PCs when it realises the game is up. The gosreg will try and maintain its guise. After a while, a second intellect devourer will appear and attack the PCs. If the gosreg is rescued in this way and the PCs discover months later that the kingdom has descended into chaos with an invasions of alien beings, consider this a suboptimal ending.

The Pedestal

The pedestal is indeed the control device for the summoning of intellect devourers from the planet Aucturn. It has hardness 5 and HP 30 (BT 15) with typical object immunities.

Gosreg

Creature 11

Uncommon CE Medium Aberration

Perception +21; darkvision, thoughtsense 60 feet

Languages Aklo, Common, Undercommon; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Deception +24, Diplomacy +22, Occultism +23, Society +19, Stealth +23

Str +3, **Dex** +6, **Con** +3, **Int** +6, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +7

Thoughtsense (divination, mental, occult) The gosreg senses a creature's mental essence as a precise sense with the listed range; it cannot sense mindless creatures with thoughtsense.

AC 31; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +23, **Will** +22; +1 status to all saves vs. magic

HP 195; **Immunities** confused; **Resistances** mental 10

Unsettled Aura (aura, mental, occult) 30 feet. Gosregs project a field of discordant energy that unsettles the minds of thinking creatures. Any non-mindless creature within 30 feet of a gosreg takes a -1 status penalty to Will saves.

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ jaws +21 [+16/+11] (finesse), **Damage** 2d10+7 piercing plus 1d10 mental

Melee ♦ claw +21 [+17/+13] (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d8+7 slashing

Melee ♦ "dagger" when in princess form +21 [+17/+13] (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d4+7 slashing

Occult Innate Spells DC 30, attack +22; 6th phantasmal calamity, phantom pain; 5th mind probe, sending, subconscious suggestion, synaptic pulse; 4th nightmare,

suggestion (×3); 2nd undetectable alignment; Cantrips (6th) mage hand, telekinetic projectile

Change Shape ♦ (concentrate, occult, polymorph, transmutation) The gosreg reverts to its natural form, its regal head transforming into huge jaws with a series of tusks that attempt to bite a PC in reach. Make a strike at the same time as transforming, with the target flat-footed if they did not suspect the "princess" was a shape-changer.

Mind Bolt ♦♦ (illusion, mental, occult) A gosreg concentrates its field of discordant mental energy and projects it into the mind of an enemy within 60 feet. The target takes 6d6 mental damage (DC 30 basic Will save). On a critical failure, the creature is also confused for 1d4 rounds.

Intellect Devourer

Creature 8

Uncommon CE Small Aberration

Perception +16; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet

Languages Aklo, Common, Undercommon; can't speak any languages; telepathy 100 feet

Skills Athletics +14, Deception +20, Diplomacy +16, Occultism +17, Society +17, Stealth +18

Str +2, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

AC 26; **Fort** +14, **Ref** +16, **Will** +18

HP 130; **Immunities** blinded, controlled, emotion, possession

Speed 35 feet

Melee ♦ talon +18 [+14/+10] (agile, finesse), **Damage** 2d10+5 slashing

Occult Innate Spells DC 27; 4th confusion, globe of invulnerability; 3rd soothe (×3); 2nd gentle repose, invisibility (at will; self only), paranoia (at will); Cantrips (4th) daze, detect magic, read aura

Body Thief ♦♦♦ (manipulate, necromancy, occult, possession) The intellect devourer reduces in size and burrows into the brain of a creature dead for no longer than 1 day. At the start of the intellect devourer's next turn, the body revives at its maximum Hit Points, controlled by the devourer. The intellect devourer is conscious and can sense everything the possessed body could. Any effect that ends the possession kills the host body with the same effects as Exit Body. The intellect devourer can't use any of the host creature's spells with Body Thief but can use its own spells. The host body slowly decays while inhabited by the intellect devourer, becoming uninhabitable after 7 days unless preserved with gentle repose or a similar effect.

Exit Body ♦ (move) **Requirements** The intellect devourer is controlling a body with Body Thief; **Effect** The intellect devourer leaves its host body, which dies instantly and is no longer a suitable host for any Body Thief ability. The intellect devourer appears at full size in an adjacent space.

Ravage ♦♦ The intellect devourer makes two talon Strikes against a paralyzed, restrained, or unconscious creature, using the same attack modifier as its highest attack modifier. These Strikes gain the death trait. If Ravage kills the target, the intellect devourer may use Body Thief against it as a free action.

Stolen Identity While an intellect devourer uses Body Thief, it gains the ability to understand and speak all languages known by the host, as well as knowledge of the host body's abilities, identity, role in society, and personality. However, it does not gain the specific memories or knowledge of the host body.

Princess Persephone **Creature 5**

NG Medium Elf Humanoid

Perception +14

Languages Common, Elven, Gnome

Skills Deception +15, Diplomacy +15, Legal Lore +11, Occultism +9, Performance +11, Society +11

Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +2, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +4

Placate A princess is well versed in soothing agitated nobles. Their calming voice gives them a +2 circumstance bonus to Deception and Diplomacy checks when dealing with members of the nobility.

Items dagger, fine clothes, small harp

AC 21; **Fort** +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +15

HP 56

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ dagger +11 [+7/+3] (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), Damage 1d4+2 piercing

Ranged ♦ dagger +11 [+7/+3] (agile, thrown 10 feet, versatile S), Damage 1d4+2 piercing

Gosreg Combat Tactics

If the Gosreg was completely caught off guard, it rolls perception for initiative with a -4 penalty for hesitating in maintaining its guise.

If it realises it is about to get caught and is in melee range, it rolls deception at +24 instead, starting with a change shape jaws attack against the potentially flat-footed target as it transforms from princess form, revealing its true mouth.

When the gosreg transforms:

The "princess" transforms horrifically. A massive brain bursts out of her head and her legs shorten to stumps while the arms elongate into prehensile tentacles. Beneath the giant brain, the face transforms into the mouth of a giant lamprey with large tusks. This new mouth, bigger than the princess's whole head, suddenly lunges at you.

If the gosreg is out of melee range, it casts phantasmal calamity still in princess form, projecting a mental image of Golarion being overrun by mind-eating aliens. Then it casts mind bolts. If PCs close to melee range, it changes shape with a jaws attack as above and on later rounds combines a jaws attack with a spell.

Intellect Devourer Combat Tactics

The devourer will attack a single chosen target with confusion and talons until brought to unconsciousness, at which point it takes a full round to Ravage, and with Body thief as a free action.

When controlling another creature, on its next turn after the body thief, the creature regains full hp, stands up and will use the intellect devourer's spells or the creature's melee attacks (e.g. Persephone's dagger).

Real Princess Combat Tactics

The real Princess will use her dagger to defend herself or attack the control pedestal. The gosreg had given it to her as a prop to make her seem less defenceless, knowing that the princess posed no real threat to it.

After the Fight

The dying creature impersonating the princess falls and, as it does so, it speaks a last warning in your minds. "Ha! You think you have won. This is but the beginning. The world of Aucturn shall hold illimitable Dominion over all..."