

5E

REALM OF THE RUNE KEEPER



FIFTH EDITION COMPATIBLE

Save a displaced village from a magical demiplane in this 5th-level adventure for the world's greatest roleplaying game

Realm of the Rune Keeper



Realm of the Rune Keeper is intended for four characters with an average party level (APL) of 5. Characters who complete this adventure should earn enough experience to reach approximately halfway to 6th-level. An otherworldly force has trapped a village in a demiplane of mazes and monsters. This campaign takes place in Arden in the Wildlands. Any party composition should be able to finish the adventure with intelligent play.

Background

Existing on the fringes of the material plane is a being of immense power, a deity powered by puzzles, riddles, and secrets. Known only as the Rune Keeper, it spends its time ever expanding its realm to protect its sanctum within. Occasionally, when the barrier between the prime material plane and its own is weak, its realm swallows up a village unintentionally. This is precisely what happened less than a fortnight ago to the poor village of Ramshead. Swallowed whole, all that remains is a rift in time and space where the village once stood. Unless someone can find and rescue the villagers trapped inside, they'll perish in the realm of the Rune Keeper.

Adventure Hooks

A Shimmering Light. The characters come across a rift in space and time where a village once stood. Seeing something inside, they decide to investigate it.

A Cry for Help. The characters are approached by a man who claims his village was swallowed by a magical vortex. He begs them to save his family who were sucked inside.

Otherworldly Riches. The characters heard tales of a magical realm that encroaches on their own occasionally, one filled with treasures beyond belief. Seeing the rift ahead, they embark to explore it for the loot it may contain.

The Rift

Ahead, a shimmering wall of mystical energy blocks the way. Barely visible within it is what appears to be the remains of a destroyed village.

The shimmering wall of energy is a magical portal the the realm of the Rune Keeper. Any creature that comes within 50 ft. of it feels the pull of the portal. They must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or else be pulled 10 ft. towards the portal. They must repeat this save each turn unless they willingly move towards it. Once a creature reaches the portal, they're pulled through into the remains of Ramshead.

Rune Keeper's Realm

The Rune Keeper's realm is an extraplanar space that exists outside of the prime material plane. The Rune Keeper can alter things such as gravity and physics here at will, although for the sake of sport he usually doesn't. He treats anyone who invades his realm as a contestant in a vast game with him as the game master. In lieu of an army, he uses puzzles, riddles, traps, and misdirection as weapons.

The Ruins of Ramshead

As the shimmering portal closes, you find yourselves in another world. The sky above, and below, is an endless void. The ground ahead is a series of islands floating in the nothingness. The ruins of what appear to be a small village dot the landscape. A path seems to lead ahead towards a large imposing structure.

The ruins are the village of Ramshead. Assorted shops, homes, and even an inn have survived their relocation. As the characters arrive, have them make DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) checks. Those who succeed notice humanoids watching them from the assorted buildings. These are the villagers who were trapped when Ramshead was sucked into the portal.

The inn and shops have been picked clean since the incident, so there's nothing of value left. The villagers themselves barely have enough to eat and are on the verge of starving. If the characters try to speak with them, they know the following.

- The village was sucked into a magical portal a fortnight ago
- The portal seems to be one way only.
- Anyone who has gone into the massive structure ahead has not returned.
- Unless someone finds a way to reverse the process, the villagers will run out of food and water within a few days.

The path ahead seems to wind and twist for an indeterminate distance, but it only takes an hour or so to reach the massive structure at the far end.



Entrance to the Fortress

Arriving at the massive stone structure, you find yourselves facing a 20 ft. tall stone door with no perceivable handle or hinge. Flanking either side of the door are four large gargoyles.

The **gargoyles** animate when anyone approaches the door. They speak the following riddle in unison.

I begin eternity,
And end space,
At the end of time,
And in every place,
Last in life,
Second to death,
Never alone,
Found in your breath,
Contained by earth,
Water or flame,
My grandeur so awesome,
Wind dare not tame,
Not in your mind,
Am in your dreams,
Vacant to Kings,
Present to Queens. What am I?

The answer is the letter "E".

The characters have three chances to guess the answer correctly. If they fail, the gargoyles attack. Once the gargoyles are defeated or the riddle is answered the doors swing open.

The Count Down

When the door opens it reveals a small circular chamber. In the center of the room is a pedestal with a switch on it. At the opposite side of the room is a large door covered in thirty strange symbols. The door cannot be opened by normal means.

If someone flips the switch on the pedestal, the symbols begin to glow one at a time and the room begins to shake. It takes thirty seconds for all of them to light up. When they do, the door swings open harmlessly and the shaking stops.

The Mirror

This next room is a cluttered library with a large mirror on one wall. A door at the opposite end of the room is sealed shut and three arcane runes hover above it. If anyone tries to open the sealed door, the runes explode and anyone inside the room must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw taking 4d10 fire damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

If someone looks in the mirror, have them make a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check. If they succeed, they notice that three of the books on the wall opposite the mirror are missing. Removing these books causes the arcane runes on the door to disappear.

Once all three runes have disappeared or detonated, the door opens.

The Path

The hallway beyond contains a variety of pressure plates, all identical, laid out three across and twelve long. The walls are lined with stone faces with open mouths. The pressure plates lie flush with the floor so there's no way to jam something under them to keep them from depressing or to disable them. Every time a character moves down the hallway, roll the die that corresponds with how fast they're moving.

- Run: 1d4
- Walk: 1d6
- Tip-Toe: 1d8
- Crawl: 1d10

On a roll of a 1 or a 2, they trigger a trapped plate and darts shoot out of the mouths on the wall. The character must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw taking 4d10 piercing damage on a failure or half as much on a success.

Once someone makes it across the hallway without setting off the trap, the other characters can follow the same path.

At the far end of the hall, another door stands slightly ajar.

The Inner Sanctum

This room seems to sit at the center of the realm. Above and below, the past rooms and the ruins of Ramshead can be seen. On a platform in the center of the room sits a giant creature with the body of a lion, the wings of an eagle, and the face of a man.

"Greetings mortals" the creature begins "and welcome to my inner sanctum. I am the Rune Keeper, and this is my realm you've found yourself in. Now tell me why I shouldn't immediately destroy you?" he says with a smirk.

The creature is a **gynosphinx** and this its lair. It's not openly hostile to the characters and views them more as a source of amusement. If attacked, it will cast *banishment* on the attacker, sending them back outside the rift they used to enter its realm and barring them from re-entering it before then engaging the characters in combat as below. If the characters play to its ego or attempt to bargain for the release of Ramshead and its people, it makes them the following offer.

"Interesting, I haven't had any company in quite awhile... at least none with brains to match their brawn. I'll make you a deal, solve three riddles and I'll release the village outside and allow you to exit my realm. Fail, and I'll eat you. What say you?"



If the characters agree, the Rune Keeper gives them the following riddles.

1. It wears a leather coat to keep its skins in working order. Escorts you to other realms, without a magic portal.
Answer: Book.
2. Feed me and I will live, give me a drink and I will die.
Answer: Fire.
3. It has a golden head. It has a golden tail. It has no body.
Answer: A gold coin.

If they refuse or if they can't get the answers right in a reasonable amount of time, the Rune Keeper attacks. He casts *banishment* on the biggest threat and then uses *shield* to protect himself from attacks. He tears into the characters with his razor sharp claws.

Once they've all been reduced to 0 hp, the Rune Keeper banishes them all from his realm. Should they survive their death saving throws, they awaken outside the rift and unable to re-enter it.

If they manage to reduce the Rune Keeper to 68 hp or less, or if they answer its riddles correctly, it casts *greater invisibility* and flies up and out of reach.

"Well done! I haven't had fun like that in quite awhile!" the creature's voice echoes from somewhere above. "Choose one of the chests by my throne. Then, I'll send you and your little village back where you belong. I hope we meet again!"

There are three chests by the throne: a copper one, a silver one, and a gold one. They contain the following.

Copper. This chest contains a *dancing sword* and 50,000 cp.

Silver. This chest contains *boots of levitation* and 5,000 sp.

Gold. This chest contains a *cloak of displacement* and 500 gp.

If the characters try to open multiple chests, they slam shut and they get nothing as they're cast out of the Rune Keeper's realm. Otherwise, once they loot one of the chests they get shunted out of the Rune Keeper's realm along with Ramshead. When the swirling magic of the Rune Keeper fades, they find themselves in the town square of Ramshead surrounded by surprised and ecstatic villagers.

Aftermath

With the Rune Keeper amused and/or dealt with, the village of Ramshead is returned to its original location and the characters are treated as heroes by the townsfolk. They're rewarded with 500 gp by the town mayor and promised free room and board any time they need it. The Rune Keeper returns its demiplane to the Astral Sea, off to visit another world, and another realm. The characters might even run into it again in the future.



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