

THE UNLIVING LIGHT

BY
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I knew the Crypt of Lies. I was one of Elean Mera's followers, back before I was cleansed of her heresy. I returned to the Earthspurs more than once, but only to confirm that the entrances to the tomb remained sealed by the sentence of fate its heretic master deserved. Good luck to anyone else who seeks the site. Folk want to go digging into things best left buried, they'll earn the same cursed end as all the rest that perished there.

—Tazar Reed, priest and ranger of Kelemvor

A TWO- TO THREE-SESSION
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF
6TH TO 8TH LEVEL

INCLUDES TWO NEW MONSTERS,
TWO NEW SPELLS, AND
FOUR NEW MAGIC ITEMS

INTRODUCTION

The secret sanctum of a legendary necromancer and apostate of Kelemvor was thought to have been lost a generation ago, buried when an earthquake rumbled through the Earthspur Mountains. But a group of savvy adventurers won't let a little thing like the lack of an entrance dissuade them from breaking into the long-lost Crypt of Lies — and uncovering the secrets still hidden within.

This adventure is designed for a party of **four 6th-level to 8th-level characters**, and should provide enough play to fill **one to three game sessions**. For larger groups or characters of higher or lower level,

adjust the adventure using the suggestions provided in each encounter, or rebuild the encounters using the encounter-design guidelines in chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

This adventure features numerous noncombat challenges, including environmental hazards and problem solving. At your discretion, consider awarding experience to the characters for these challenges — especially if the players are perceptive enough to figure out that the adventure's combat challenges don't all require a fight to the death.



ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

More than fifty years ago, Elean Mera was a legendary adventuring archmage in the service of Kelemvor, god of the dead. A hunter of undead and a brilliant magical theorist, Mera retired after an eventful career, intent on creating a stronghold of magical research in Kelemvor's name. However, having spent her life dealing with death and undeath, Mera became obsessed with the ways in which magic could be used to prolong the miracle of life. In the end, she led a splinter group away from the core faith of Kelemvor, creating a sect dedicated to the notion that the god's central credo of "death as a beginning" was secretly a challenge to the faithful to bring power over death into mortal hands.

Declared a heretic by the church of Kelemvor and suspected (wrongly) of being involved in secret plots to extend life through undeath, Mera took her sect underground — literally. Beneath a range of sandstone hills along the shoulder of the Earthspur Mountains north of the River Vesper, she and her followers discovered a crypt complex abandoned by a long-dead cult. Using magic, the spellcasters expanded the natural caverns beyond the crypts to create a bustling and well-defended stronghold. Mera named this redoubt "the Crypt of Life," and pledged that the tyranny of death would be undone there.

Bounty hunters and rangers of the church who tried to find the site were thwarted — sometimes fatally — by a stone guardian said to watch over the crypt and the hills surrounding its secret entrances. Over the course of ten years, rumors regarding the research conducted by Mera and her acolytes spread through the settlements of the Moonsea and the Dragon Reach — rumors that spoke of the necromancer's quest to uncover the secrets of true immortality.

Then some forty years ago, disaster struck. A series of earth tremors felt from the Dragon Reach to the Eastling Reach tore through the sandstone foundations of Mera's underground fortress, collapsing many of its tunnels and chambers, and sealing its servants within. With their master and their home lost, many acolytes of Mera abroad at the time returned to the church of Kelemvor, telling of how the secret entrances that once led to the enclave had vanished overnight as the hills reshaped themselves.

In the aftermath of the destruction, the elders of Kelemvor's church spoke of Mera having been struck down by divine providence, and renamed her stronghold "the Crypt of Lies" — marking it as a suitable tomb for both the fallen necromancer and her heretical ideals.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As a straightforward dungeon infiltration, "The Unliving Light" can be set up in your campaign with any of the usual rumors of hidden wealth to be found in ancient crypts and long-lost caverns. If you don't want to set the adventure in the Earthspur Mountains, it can be placed in any remote location of hills in Faerûn or your own campaign world.

Depending on your campaign and your players, consider the following options.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

While traveling through the Earthspur foothills, the characters come across the ruins that mark the entrance point to the underground stronghold entirely by happenstance. If signs of an unfinished excavation don't pique the adventurers' interest, finding the symbol of Kelemvor might trigger half-remembered rumors of Elean Mera's legendary enclave.

MAP QUEST

One of the adventurers comes into possession of a fragmentary map showing a location in the Earthspur foothills. Such a map might be set up as treasure claimed in a previous adventure, or an NPC encountered by the characters might try to peddle it as a potential investment opportunity.

RUMORS AND LEGENDS

Long after Elean Mera is said to have perished along with her heresy, whispered tales suggest that she and her order survived the earthquake that tore through their sanctum. Knowing that feigning their own demise would leave them free to pursue their research in peace, the archmage and her followers have been diligently working all this time, kept alive by the powerful life magic they have learned to control.

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ABOUT THE ADVENTURE

Exploration



Problem Solving



Roleplaying



Humor



Combat



Lethality



Characters who hear these rumors might seek out the Crypt of Lies to learn the truth of what happened to Mera and her followers, or they might be tasked to do so by the church of Kelemvor. Alternatively, a character faced with the prospect of a loved one or mentor close to death from old age might hope to bargain with Elean Mera for the secrets of long life she and her followers are said to have discovered.

THE CRYPT OF LIES

As the history of the Crypt of Lies rightly suggests, the earthquake that took place four decades earlier collapsed all the once-known entrances to the complex, leaving it completely sealed against intrusion. The characters must make their own way inside, starting at a site above the stronghold's largest cavern, where a relatively thin dome of sandstone is all that separates the crypt from the world above.

The aboveground site marks the ruins of the long-lost cult temple whose priests once interred their dead in the caverns below. A crest of ruined stone wall thrusts up to twice the height of a human from the sandy soil like a wedge, casting long shadows at dawn and dusk. Bare patches beneath the wall where sand and rubble have been swept away by the wind reveal weathered granite flagstones marking the floor of a fallen hall or courtyard.

An initial search of the area reveals a number of rusted picks and rock hammers strewn about one particular flagstone, whose surface has been battered and chipped as if several creatures had been hacking at it. The strength of the two-foot-thick stone shows the futility of the attempt to break through it. A closer search and a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check reveal a weathered symbol of Kelemvor — an upright skeletal hand holding a set of balance scales — scribed into the stone.

MAKING AN ENTRANCE

Over the years, a few adventurers have managed to infiltrate the crypt by magical means that the characters might also make use of. Blindly teleporting down beneath the aboveground ruins with *dimension door* or other magic can bring the characters into the great cavern (area 1). Arranging to view the cavern first with *clairvoyance* greatly increases the chances of not appearing in midair or ruining the spell by setting a destination within a floor or wall, as does combining teleportation with levitation or flying magic. A *passwall* spell also makes for easy entrance to the cavern, if the characters have access to magic of that level.

Searching the ruins for a few minutes reveals that the gaps between the flagstones feature numerous cracks that extend down into the sandstone beneath, any of which are wide enough to allow a creature in gaseous form to reach the great cavern.

An exhaustive search of the ruins and the surrounding area takes a day or more, and turns up no sign of hidden entrances into the crypt.

DETAIL TEXT, MONSTERS, MAGIC ITEMS, AND SPELLS

To make the adventure as easy to run as possible, paragraphs containing key visual details are marked with a vertical rule on the left-hand side. This lets you focus on that text when you want to highlight or paraphrase those visual details for your players.

The *Monster Manual* contains stat blocks for most of the creatures found in this adventure. All the necessary stat blocks are included there or in the "Monsters and Magic" appendix. When a creature's name appears in **bold type**, that's a visual cue for you to look up the creature's stat block in the *Monster Manual* or the appendix.

Spells and equipment mentioned in the adventure are described in the *Player's Handbook* or in the "Monsters and Magic" appendix. Magic items are described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* or in the appendix.

HARD LABOR

Characters who continue the work of those who came before them can attempt to break their way down beneath the flagstones to create their own entrance into the crypt. As evidenced by the failure of the would-be explorers who abandoned their equipment here, mundane labor alone is not enough to lift or break through the thick granite slabs to get to the softer sandstone beneath. However, savvy characters can apply a bit of ingenuity to the task.

Magical effects that increase Strength might allow a number of characters working together to shift one of the slabs (each of which weighs nearly a ton). Alternatively, characters can dig beneath the foundations of the 12-foot-high ruined wall to bring a section of it smashing down onto the flagstones, providing enough force to crack the stones for easier removal. Using magic or engineering to drop larger rocks from a height (including from the top of the wall) onto the flagstones eventually produces the same result.

Characters who manage to crack or shift a flagstone can then use hammers and picks (including the rusting but still serviceable equipment on hand) to break up and remove the granite, then hack down through the 10 feet of sandstone beneath. With a few hours' labor, the characters can cut a rough, narrow shaft down through the ceiling of area 1, just wide enough for a Medium character to squeeze through. Widening the shaft requires the same amount of additional labor, and characters must take precautions against falling down the shaft as they hack away at its crumbling sides.

DESCENT INTO DARKNESS

The rough dome of the great cavern in area 1 is 30 feet high, with another 10 feet of sandstone above it. Unless they have access to magic that might aid their descent, characters can secure ropes to the heavier stones of the ruins and safely descend to the floor below.

FEATURES OF THE CRYPT

The following features are found throughout the underground stronghold.

Light. Unless otherwise noted, all areas of the crypt are dark for characters without darkvision or a light source.

Hewn Walls. Except where otherwise indicated, the crypt complex has been carved out of the red-and-brown mottled sandstone beneath the foothills by magical means. The walls and floors are continuous and relatively smooth, not carved from blocks or set with dressed stone.

Rubble. In many areas of the complex, sandstone rubble has fallen from the ceiling to create areas of difficult terrain.

Crumbling Stonework. The decaying sandstone from which the crypt is carved creates a potential hazard only in area 5, but the entire complex has the appearance of a site about to collapse in on itself. Use this to keep the players on edge, with chunks of stone dropping harmlessly from the ceiling at irregular intervals, cracks and depressions opening up underfoot, and so on.

Seeping Water. The earthquake that sealed off the crypt also cracked and disrupted its sandstone foundations. Rainwater now makes its way down through narrow fissures to drip from the ceilings of many chambers and corridors, and the underground stream that winds through area 3 from area 12 adds its own humidity to the air. The ever-present damp of the crypt contributes to the crumbling of its sandstone walls, and feeds the mold and fungus that has spread through much of the complex.

Mold and Vermin. Gray-white mold and fungus clings to the walls and ceiling of the crypt in sporadic patches, and is described in more detail in key areas. A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check or any close inspection of an area of mold or fungus notes the subtle, shifting movement of pale grubs, centipedes, spiders, and other vermin feeding on it and each other. Tracks in patches of dusty mold also show where rats have been feeding on the vermin.

Rats and Rat Holes. Cracks and fissures in the walls of many chambers and corridors have been burrowed out to create tiny tunnels through the stone. Hundreds of cave rats that dwell in the crypt use these passageways to move between areas. The sound of their movement rings out faintly in the darkness at all times, and characters using darkvision will see rats scurrying to and fro through their holes as the party explores. The creatures avoid trouble, scattering in response to bright light or the sound of approaching adventurers. However, see “Random Encounters,” below.

Ceilings. Unless otherwise indicated, the corridors and chambers of the crypt vary between 8 and 12 feet high.

Tapestries. Rotting tapestries hang from the walls and ceilings in many areas of the crypt. On the few that are still recognizable, arcane glyphs and Kelemvor’s symbol can be seen.

Doors. Doors within the crypt are made of wood banded with brass or iron, and were once precisely cut to the dimensions of their hewn sandstone frames. The shifting of those frames over long years has left those doors jammed if they are shut, requiring a successful DC 19 Strength check to force a closed door open. An open door requires a successful DC 14 Strength check to push closed again.

Secret Doors. Secret doors in the complex are carefully shaped and weighted slabs of sandstone

that pivot around a central axis. The tapestries that once concealed these doors have rotted away, leaving them easily found with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check.

EMPTY CHAMBERS

A number of chambers throughout the complex are not keyed to any description or encounter. Unless you wish to add hazards or encounters to the adventure, these partially collapsed areas feature only rubble, mold, and the rotted remains of indeterminate furnishings.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

As the adventurers explore the Crypt of Lies, they see evidence that the complex is infested with cave rats, which have long survived by feeding on the vermin that in turn feed on the mold and fungus found throughout the ruins. The rats are normally wary of intruders, and give the adventurers a wide berth. However, a significant number of the crypt’s rats have wandered too close to area 12 over time, becoming suffused with the unliving essence of the necromantic pool there.

Whenever the characters explore an unnumbered chamber, backtrack through areas they have already investigated, or are taking more time than you like to search or plan their next move, feel free to announce the appearance of 1d4 unliving **swarms of rats** emerging from the crypt’s ubiquitous tunnels.

Glowing white in the darkness, these unliving rats have a pale, corpse-like appearance, with blank white eyes and shredded fur, their bodies perpetually scoured and restored by radiant energy.

Driven to ravenous madness, an unliving swarm of rats fights until destroyed. It uses the normal statistics of a swarm of rats (see the *Monster Manual*), but it is chaotic evil and gains the following additional unliving features and traits. See the “Monsters and Magic” section for more information on the unliving template.

Damage Vulnerabilities necrotic

Damage Resistances radiant

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Reflected Healing If the unliving creature is subject to any spell or magical effect that heals hit points, it takes damage equal to the number of hit points that would normally be regained. One random living creature adjacent to the unliving creature then regains the same number of hit points, as if it were the target of the spell. It takes a successful melee spell attack to target an unliving creature with a touch-range healing effect.

Unliving Light The unliving creature glows with a pale radiance at all times, shedding blue-white light equivalent to a candle. The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide, and other creatures making Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot or notice the unliving creature do so with advantage.

AREAS OF THE CRYPT

The following areas are keyed to the dungeon map at the end of the adventure.

1. GREAT CAVERN

The ceiling of this sandstone vault arches 30 feet overhead, its hewn walls forming a rough circle cut

through by three arched passageways. Any exploration of those passageways shows two of them blocked after a few paces with fallen rubble where the sandstone passage has collapsed, while one is blocked by a smooth stone wall (see below). Large chunks of sandstone litter the floor of the cavern, fallen from the cracked and pitted ceiling.

When the characters descend from above, they arrive at the spot marked “1” on the map. A faint white glow can be seen to the southwest (from the stream in area 3), though the light is not bright enough to show any details of the surrounding cavern.

DEAD ADVENTURER

A desiccated and rat-gnawed body lies near the place the characters descend. A careful examination reveals that this unfortunate male half-elf died a few months ago from numerous internal injuries and broken bones (courtesy of the sandstone guardian in area 14), as well as marks on the ground showing that he dragged himself here from area 2.

The body wears leather armor and a cloak, two tarnished but usable shortswords, and a belt pouch holding 450 cp, 1,100 sp, two 50 gp gems, a *potion of gaseous form* (meant to have been used to leave the crypt), and three empty potion vials. A secret pocket in the armor can be found with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. Within it, the adventurer had hidden a *talisman of unlife* claimed from the crypt. See “Monsters and Magic” at the end of the adventure for more information on this new magic item.

GLYPHED MAP

In addition to the magic radiating from the potion and the talisman, a third dweomer can be detected beneath the body. A fragment of parchment is found there, visible only if the body is moved or if a character examining the body succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to note the map’s faint glow.

Gnawed around the edges by rats, the fragment is the remains of a magical map, set with a strange glyph that radiates abjuration magic and a sickly yellow light (see the handout at the end of the adventure). A character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check recognizes the glyph as similar to one that might be scribed in the casting of a *glyph of warding*. No other information can be gleaned from the glyph, though it presents no danger.

The glyphed map was commissioned by the dead adventurer to aid in getting past the glyph of warding in area 15, and it might assist the adventurers in doing the same. See that area for more information.

The parchment shows a rough plan of some of the dungeon, marking the path through the secret doors in area 6 and area 10, and warning of both the portcullis trap triggered in area 10 and the sandstone guardian in area 14. The players might notice that the magical glyph is roughly repeated at the location of area 15. Additionally, two circular squiggles on the map mark the location of the teleport dais in area 2 and the location of the lectern and the blocked teleport pad in area 16. See those areas for more information.



WALLED PASSAGE

The passageway to the east is blocked by an impassible 6-inch-thick wall of stone (created by the spell of the same name). If you wish to develop this adventure further, characters who break through or teleport beyond the wall can discover new sections of the crypt complex of your own devising. If not, the passageway has collapsed beyond the wall, forever hiding whatever threat the wall was meant to block away.

2. OSSUARY

In the southeast of the great cavern, freestanding walls built of sandstone blocks rise 10 feet above the floor to create a roofless room set with open archways on three sides. The archway along the northwest wall is filled with a haphazardly piled mound of skulls, backlit by a pale blue glow (see below). The side-entrance archways on the other two walls are clear.

BONE NICHES

The freestanding walls are 3 feet thick, and feature carved funerary niches that rise from floor to open ceiling on the inside of the room. Skulls and bones still fill many of these shelves, arranged in neat piles. However, a significant number of skulls have been cleared to create the pile at the northwest entrance — a project undertaken by Elean Mara in her madness. All the skulls bear the mark of Kelemvor scribed in black ink on their foreheads.



A close search of the skulls and a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that the markings were made within recent years, though most of the skulls are much older. With a successful DC 18 check, or with any Wisdom (Medicine) check made to examine the bones, a character notes that a few dozen skulls are of more recent vintage than the dead interred here centuries ago. These were the last of Elean Mera's followers.

TELEPORT DAIS

In the center of the ossuary, a low dais made of a thick granite slab pulses with a pale blue glow, shedding light as a candle and radiating conjuration magic. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the dais is a permanent teleportation platform, designed to send any creature that steps onto it to a specific location, and to act as a return portal from that same location.

FAULTY MAGIC

Any creature that steps onto the dais feels its magic activate — then takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage and is knocked backward to fall prone. A character with experience of teleportation might recognize this as the effect when teleport magic fails because the destination

EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

If you plan on opening up the walled passageway of area 1 to explore new areas beyond, consider having the wall of stone set with a magically locked door at its center, which resists any attempts to break through or pick it. Then have the key carried by Elean Mera in area 16, setting that information up for the characters with an adventure-hook rumor to ensure that the crypt will be the first part of your overall larger adventure.

is occupied by a creature or object (as is the case with this portal; see area 16).

3. WHITE STREAM

On the southwest side of the great cavern, a sluggish underground stream breaks through the sandstone as it flows northward, swirling in a shallow pool carved out from the cavern floor. The water is chalky white, with an oily sheen clinging to its surface.

The pool radiates faint necromancy magic that causes it to glow as a result of the dweomer leached out from the magical pool in area 12.

BROKEN JARS

The bank of the stream is littered with shattered earthenware jars. Any investigation shows their fragments stained white on the inside from having been filled with the water of the stream, though they haven't been used in long years. When the complex was occupied, acolytes collected the radiant-infused water for use in chambers beyond area 1's now-blocked-off tunnels.

CRUMBLING BANK

Any Medium or larger creature that steps within 5 feet of the edge of the stream or the pool causes the sandstone to crumble away beneath its feet. The creature must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw to scramble back from the edge, or falls into the water on a failed save.

CORROSIVE FLOW

Traces of radiant energy from the pool in area 12 are vented into the stream, turning its water to a slow-acting solvent. Any creature that touches the water notes its oily feel but otherwise suffers no initial effect. Starting 3 rounds afterward, the creature takes 1 radiant damage per round for 6 rounds unless the area of contact is washed with clean water or alcohol. A creature immersed in the water takes 1d6 radiant damage at the end of each of its turns, then takes 1d6 radiant damage at the end of each of its turns for 6 rounds after it exits. Being completely doused in clean water or alcohol ends the ongoing effect.

Any creature reduced to 0 hit points by the water's radiant damage does not die, but instead becomes an unliving creature with full hit points. See the "Monsters and Magic" section for more information on the unliving template. Objects suffer no effect from exposure to the water.

PUDDING POOL

The small pool alongside the stream is home to two unliving **black puddings**. These ghost-white oozes were transformed long ago by the radiant essence that washes down from area 12. An unliving black pudding has the statistics of a normal black pudding (see the *Monster Manual*), but it is chaotic evil and gains the following additional unliving features and traits.

Damage Vulnerabilities necrotic

Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning and piercing from nonmagical attacks

Radiant Essence The unliving black pudding's Corrosive Form and Pseudopod deal radiant damage instead of acid damage.

Reflected Healing If the unliving creature is subject to any spell or magical effect that heals hit points, it takes damage equal to the number of hit points that would normally be regained. One random living creature adjacent to the unliving creature then regains the same number of hit points, as if it were the target of the spell. It takes a successful melee spell attack to target an unliving creature with a touch-range healing effect.

Unliving Light The unliving creature glows with a pale radiance at all times, shedding blue-white light equivalent to a candle. The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide, and other creatures making Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot or notice the unliving creature do so with advantage.

If any creature moves within 20 feet of the water, the puddings slip forth from the pool, creating an initial appearance of the glowing water seeping forward across the cavern floor. They attempt to sneak up on characters who merely move past the pool to gain access to area 2, or who come to the open doorway from within area 2.

In the aftermath of the fight, characters curious as to the strange nature of these glowing "white puddings" can investigate their foul remains. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Nature or Perception) check, a character discerns that the oozes appeared to be alive, but that they possessed unknown and unnatural magical qualities.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

For a larger or higher-level party, considering having a third unliving black pudding in the pool. For lower-level characters, have the oozes retreat when reduced to 20 hit points or fewer.

4. RUINED GUARDROOM

More walls of sandstone blocks create a smaller open room within the larger chamber of the ossuary. Rotting arrows and rusted shortswords hang from weapon racks shot through with mold and rot.

BLADE-SPIKED DOOR

A thick wooden door stands to the south, iron-banded and treated with creosote to prevent rot. Above its handle, the door is set with a built-in lock that was rusted and smashed through long ago. However, the door has been spiked shut from this side with dozens of broken and rusted sword blades. The open space at the broken lock allows a character pressing against the door to see beyond it. Scratch marks on the door also show where rats have been climbing it to squeeze through the

OLD STONE AND NEW

Areas 1 through 4 (the great cavern and its inner walls) are all old stonework, carved out and raised hundreds of years ago. The inner sections of the complex beyond area 4 are the more recent construction of Elean Mera's followers. A character who studies the walls in different areas and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (History or Investigation) check notes the differing ages of the stonework.

broken lock and move between the great cavern and the crypt beyond.

It takes a few minutes to remove the makeshift spikes, after which the stuck door can be pulled open with a successful DC 15 Strength check. Smashing through the spiked door requires a successful DC 23 Strength check or the application of 30 points of bludgeoning damage.

5. WARDED HALL

A flight of stairs rises 20 feet to a corridor beyond. Three wooden doors at the end of the hall are badly warped, and are cut through with holes along the floor where rats have gnawed their way from one side to the other.

The doors to areas 6 and 8 are closed. The door to area 7 is partly ajar, revealing darkness and a few dozen coins scattered within the doorway. The warping of all the doors is a side effect of the magical trap in this area (see below), which has gone off more than once in years past.

GLYPH OF WARDING

A concealed *glyph of warding* is scribed on the floor between the doors, discernible with a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Designed to be safely bypassed only by the spellcasters who once dwelled in the complex, the glyph triggers when any other humanoid creature moves within 5 feet of it, activating an explosive runes effect. Any creature in the corridor or on the top 5 feet of the stairs must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 5d8 thunder damage, or half as much damage on a successful save.

If the glyph is triggered, a shock wave courses through the already unstable walls and ceiling of the corridor, sending a harmless hail of dust and rubble to the ground. See the "Danger Overhead" sidebar when the doors to area 6 or area 8 are opened.

Even after the glyph is triggered, *detect magic* reveals a lingering dweomer in the area. The magic of the trap resets itself in 1d4 hours, meaning that creatures moving through this area a second time might trigger it again.

6. GUARDED SARCOPHAGUS

The door to this area is jammed shut and must be forced. See "Features of the Crypt," above, and the "Danger Overhead" sidebar.

The floor of this chamber is strewn with sandstone rubble fallen from the ominously cracked ceiling. To the west, an upright granite sarcophagus stands against the

wall, its plain stone slabs bound together with rusty iron bolts. A hunched, glowing figure stands on guard in front of the sarcophagus, his rotting armor revealing pale flesh cut through by bloody spurs of bone. The warrior's eyes are pale slits as he turns to the door and raises a tarnished longsword in rotting hands. A shrieking challenge issues from a jagged wound of a mouth, showing strings of flesh peeling away from bleeding gums and twisted teeth.

UNLIVING WARRIOR

The warrior Yinsaren was second-in-command to Elean Mara in the Crypt of Life, and one of the survivors of the earthquake that sealed off the complex. Granted the gift of unlife by the crypt's magic, Yinsaren has guarded this access point to the western side of the crypt for decades. He attacks in a murderous rage as soon as he spots intruders, neither speaking nor reacting if challenged.

Yinsaren uses the statistics of a **gladiator** (see the *Monster Manual*), but he is chaotic evil, wields a longsword instead of a spear, and gains the following additional unliving features and traits. See the "Monsters and Magic" section for more information on the unliving template.

Damage Vulnerabilities necrotic

Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Reflected Healing If the unliving creature is subject to any spell or magical effect that heals hit points, it takes damage equal to the number of hit points that would normally be regained. One random living creature adjacent to the unliving creature then regains the same number of hit points, as if it were the target of the spell. It takes a successful melee spell attack to target an unliving creature with a touch-range healing effect.

Unliving Light The unliving creature glows with a pale radiance at all times, shedding blue-white light equivalent to a candle. The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide, and other creatures making Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot or notice the unliving creature do so with advantage.

Despite his undead appearance, Yinsaren's unliving state means that he bleeds and shows signs of wounding when struck in combat. Any inspection of his body after he is slain shows human musculature, bones, and organs, but all horribly misshapen and suffused with the pale essence of unlife.

Any character who fights face to face with Yinsaren can attempt a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. A cleric or other character with knowledge of undead has advantage on this check. On a success, the character understands that Yinsaren is not undead, and that he is somehow subject to damage from healing magic.

DEATH FROM THE WALLS

Starting in the second round of combat, unliving **swarms of rats** pour out from gaps in the crumbling walls of the chamber, responding to Yinsaren's shriek. Have one swarm enter the fight each round, to a total number of swarms equal to the number of player characters.

DANGER OVERHEAD

The warped doors to area 6 and area 8 must be forced open (as does the open door to area 7 if it is closed again), but doing so causes a door's sandstone frame to shift and buckle. When any of the doors leading into area 5 are opened, roll a d6. On a result of 1 or 2, the doorframe shifts enough that a wide crack shoots through the ceiling of the area 5 corridor, causing it to partially collapse in a hail of sandstone. Any creature in the corridor or on the stairs must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 bludgeoning damage, or half as much damage on a successful save. Thereafter, area 5 is difficult terrain.

If the *glyph of warding* in area 5 has been triggered, the ceiling is weakened even further, and a rockfall results if the die roll is a 1, 2, or 3.

If opening the doors triggers two or more rockfalls, area 5 is filled with rubble to a depth of 2 to 4 feet and becomes dangerous to move through, requiring a successful DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failed check, a character slips and is caught by shifting rubble, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

An unliving swarm uses the normal statistics of a swarm of rats (see the *Monster Manual*), and gains the same unliving features and traits as Yinsaren.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Yinsaren and the swarms of rats should be a medium encounter for most parties. To adjust the challenge, reduce or increase the number of swarms that join the fray.

HOT PURSUIT

If the characters flee, the rats disperse but Yinsaren follows until destroyed (or until the party leaves the Crypt of Lies). It takes him 1d4 rounds to force open a door closed against him, or to get past the dropped portcullis in area 11. (Ignore any chance of the ceiling in area 5 crumbling if Yinsaren forces open the doors in that area.) If the characters get away from the warrior, have him reappear to increase the challenge of a later encounter.

SARCOPHAGUS DOOR

The blank face of the sarcophagus is cracked and gouged, as if repeatedly hacked at with heavy weapons. Any search confirms that the damage to the stonework was a failed effort to break the great coffin open.

A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check made to examine the sarcophagus reveals a secret door behind it, once concealed by tapestries and now blocked. Two characters who succeed on simultaneous DC 17 Strength checks can slide the sarcophagus along the wall to expose the secret door, which can then be opened to reveal stairs descending 10 feet beyond.

Unless the sarcophagus has been moved, the secret door cannot be opened from the other side.

TREASURES OF THE DEAD

If *detect magic* is used on the sarcophagus, two dweomers are noted within it. Opening the sarcophagus requires heavy hammers, crowbars, and 10 minutes of noisy effort. Using weapons or improvised tools, the task takes 1 hour. Once opened, the coffin reveals the

moldering bones of at least six humanoids (beloved followers of Elean Mera killed during the earthquake), rotted funeral wrappings, a *mask of Kelemvor*, and a *cloak of the void*. See “Monsters and Magic” at the end of the adventure for information on these new magic items.

7. ETHEREAL VAULT

Beyond the half-open door, an empty chamber is shrouded in dusty webs. An open archway to the east is obscured by the webbing but detectable from the door with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check. The floor is strewn with 4,500 sp and 700 gp, all spilled from a rotting wooden chest split open near the center of the room, and by the well-cleaned bones of dozens of rats. A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check or any close inspection reveals that many of the bones are fresh.

Faint conjuration magic radiates from the walls and floor here. With a successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check, a character senses the last vestige of a dead planar portal, once used by Elean Mera’s cult to research the timeless nature of many of the outer planes.

SPIDER HAUNT

Three **phase spiders** have made this area their home, drawn to the chamber’s lingering planar magic and feasting on the rats that infest the crypt. All the spiders become ethereal at any sight or sound of intrusion (including light in the corridor beyond or the activation of the glyph trap). When any creature moves past the midpoint of the room, the spiders phase back to the material plane and attack.

Focused on defending their lair, the spiders do not pursue if characters retreat or push past through the eastern archway. If two spiders are killed, the last spider phases back to the ethereal plane and stays there.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Add or remove one phase spider to increase or decrease the challenge of this encounter. Additionally, if the adventurers are having too easy a time dealing with this encounter, have all the spiders fight to the death.

8. RUINED LABORATORY

The door to this area is jammed shut and must be forced. See “Features of the Crypt,” above, and the “Danger Overhead” sidebar.

Shelves cut into the sandstone walls of this chamber are filled with dusty bottles, vials, pots, jugs, and other containers, most of which have cracked open and spilled. Alchemical and magical reagents once stored in these containers are strewn across the floor as a kaleidoscope of powders, crystals, and oils. Certain patches of reagents seem to shimmer and glow, despite clearly having been spilled long years ago.

The entire room radiates faint transmutation magic. On the south wall, an open archway can be seen behind badly rotted tapestries. Characters who move carefully can pick a clear path through the room to the archway. Any character who takes the Dash action while moving through the room, or who intentionally moves into an area strewn with reagents, is suddenly surrounded by

a cloud of shimmering gas as the reagents are disturbed.

The character must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw to avoid contact with the cloud. On a failed save, the character suffers an effect from the “Alchemical Chaos” table. If a beneficial effect is rolled first on the table, characters are free to intentionally fail subsequent saving throws if the reagents are disturbed again — likely to their peril.

ALCHEMICAL CHAOS

d6 Result

- 1 The triggering creature and all other creatures within 10 feet gain 2d6 temporary hit points (roll once for all creatures).
- 2 The scouring cloud deals 1d8 acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage (your choice) to the triggering creature.
- 3 The triggering creature has advantage on saving throws for the next 1d6 minutes.
- 4 The triggering creature and all other creatures within 10 feet have disadvantage on ability checks for the next 1d6 minutes.
- 5 The triggering creature has advantage on the first attack roll made in any round for the next 1d6 minutes.
- 6+ A pulse of alchemical energy erupts across the chamber. Each creature in the area takes 2d6 acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage (your choice) + 1 extra damage for each previous roll that has been made on the “Alchemical Chaos” table.



Each time the table is used, add 1 to the roll as the random alchemical effects become increasingly dangerous. If this area is left undisturbed for a day, this effect resets and returning characters can roll on the table as normal.

9. ROTTING HALL

The corridors from areas 6 and 7 both end in doors opening into this room. Even with the doors closed, the sour stench of rot becomes stronger as the characters approach.

This area might once have been a well-appointed lounge or barracks. Now, its dozens of couches and small tables have collapsed into ruin, covered by a snow-white mold that spreads across thick carpets and once-rich tapestries hanging from the walls. Dead rats are scattered about the room, covered with and partially consumed by the mold.

Near the open archway of a wide corridor leading south, a desiccated hand is thrust out of a mound of mold that completely covers a humanoid body. A gleam of gold comes from a bracelet around the corpse's wrist, and its fingers are spread wide as if in warning.

The white mold extends a few feet into the corridor connecting area 9 and area 10, but has not yet spread beyond.

WHITE ROT FUNGUS

The white mold that fills this area is a hazard that feeds slowly on organic matter. Despite the mold's sense of menace, creatures can move through this area at normal speed without danger, as long as the mold makes no contact with the skin. If a creature touches the mold or takes the Dash action to move through the area (as the unfortunate adventurer did, and as the local rats have been slow to learn not to do), the mold discharges a cloud of white spores and the creature must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw.

On a successful save, the creature takes 3d6 radiant damage from the unnatural spores. On a failed save, the creature takes 3d12 radiant damage and becomes infected with a disease called white rot. One day after infection, the creature suffers one level of exhaustion that cannot be reduced by finishing a long rest. Each day thereafter, the creature's flesh begins to turn ash-white and it suffers another level of exhaustion that cannot be reduced by a long rest, eventually dying if the disease is not cured.

The cure for white rot is a vile elixir that is distilled from the fungus itself, requiring an hour's labor using an herbalism kit by a character proficient with the kit. A character who drinks the elixir is subsequently able to use a long rest to reduce the levels of exhaustion imposed by this disease. Determining the means of creating the cure requires study of the mold and a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check.

HANDY TREASURE

The macabre hand is the only thing in the room seemingly not touched by mold, as a result of the treasure it bears — a *periapt of health* that this unfortunate adventurer wore as a bracelet. Though

the character succumbed to the damage dealt by the spores and was subsequently engulfed, the *periapt's* power against disease has kept the white rot mold from covering it.

10. CONFERENCE HALL

This wide chamber is hung with rotting tapestries and set with a dust-shrouded table and six chairs. All the sturdy furniture has been well lacquered to avoid the rot infesting much of the other wood in the complex. Scraps of parchment litter the table and the floor, all well chewed by rats.

Any character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check can collect enough parchment scraps to recognize notes on the defenses of the crypt. No useful information can be gleaned from the notes, but the phrase "...the sandstone guardian..." appears more than once among the fragments.

The secret door along the west wall is easily detected from either side (a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check). However, only a check result of 22 or higher also notes two concealed pressure plates on the floor in front of both sides of the door. Unless a pressure plate is stepped on when the door is opened, doing so triggers a time-delayed portcullis trap in area 11. A pressure plate can be disabled with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools, but doing so means the trap can no longer be bypassed from that side. See area 11, area 14, and the "Sandstone Guardian" sidebar for more information on the portcullis trap.

11. PORTCULLIS TRAP

A mechanism built into the secret door in area 10 triggers a time-delayed portcullis trap at this spot in the corridor. Originally designed to trap would-be intruders for the sandstone guardian of area 14 to deal with, the trap activates 1 minute after the secret door is opened.

Tapestries once concealed the gap in the ceiling where the raised portcullis was hidden. These are now rotted away to leave the bottom of the gate clearly visible, but it cannot be seen until characters descend the stairs to this area. The area is easily searched, but the trigger mechanism the characters might expect (if they missed the pressure plates in area 10) is nowhere to be found.

Depending on whether the adventurers move past the portcullis before it falls, or whether they hold back from fear of it, the gate might block their access to area 12 or even trap characters on different sides of it. Additionally, the sound of the portcullis falling attracts the attention of the sandstone guardian in area 14. It can be heard approaching 3 rounds after the portcullis falls, then arrives 2 rounds after that. See the "Sandstone Guardian" sidebar for more information.

If any character is standing directly under the portcullis when it falls, have that character make a Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the character avoids the gate and can end up on whichever side of it they prefer. On a failed save, the character is struck by the gate and takes 2d6 bludgeoning

damage, then ends up on whichever side of the gate you determine.

Raising the portcullis high enough for a Medium or smaller creature to slip underneath requires a successful DC 20 Strength check. Up to three other characters can assist. The gate cannot be reset (its control mechanism is inside one of the nearby collapsed chambers), but it can be propped up if a suitably strong object is placed beneath it. (Any of the chairs from area 10 suffices for this task.)

12. NECROMANTIC POOL

A 30-foot-high vaulted ceiling rises over a circular pool edged with black marble, and filled with glowing white water that ripples and shimmers as it flows in a circular pattern. The wall above the pool has no edge or lip, and is clearly not meant to be climbed. A bridge with no edge or railing extends across the chamber, 10 feet above the water, and features a small platform jutting out over the pool at its center point.

The black marble walls and the white water radiate necromancy magic that glows with a pale white light. The effect is easily recognizable as similar to that seen in the stream in area 3, but is much stronger.

UNLIVING ESSENCE

With a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check made to study the pool, a character senses that its water is imbued with radiant energy channeled through a corrupted necromantic dweomer — the same magic that fuels the *raise dead* and *resurrection* spells. When the Crypt of Life was occupied, its spellcasters worked to control and direct the energy in the pool. But in the long years since the redoubt was lost, the magical energy here has built up to dangerous levels. This energy transforms creatures that linger in this area for a total of 30 or more days, imbuing them with immortality and madness as they take on the unliving template. See the “Monsters and Magic” section for more information.

If the check result is 17 or higher, a character also understands how the magic of the pool turns the water into a caustic reagent. Any creature exposed to the water takes 2d6 radiant damage at the end of any round in which it is exposed. A creature fully immersed in the white water (most likely by falling into the pool) takes 6d6 radiant damage at the start of each turn while it is immersed.

Any creature reduced to 0 hit points by the water’s radiant damage does not die, but instead becomes an unliving creature with full hit points.

DARK MAGIC

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check made to study the platform at the center of the bridge, a character senses how the energy coursing through this chamber heightens the effect of necromancy spells. Any such spell cast in this area is treated as if it were cast using a spell slot one level higher than the spell slot actually used.

Additionally, a necromancer who finishes a long rest taken entirely on the platform gains a +2 bonus to spell save DCs and spell attack modifiers for necromancy

DISPOSAL SERVICE

If the sandstone guardian (see area 14) kills any characters, it disposes of the fallen as soon as combat ends (including if it loses sight of surviving characters who flee from it). The golem drags the dead to area 12, stepping over the pool pit of area 13 (the aballin ooze there has learned that it cannot harm the golem, and ignores it). The guardian then hurls the body into the radiant pool, where it is quickly consumed if not rescued. Some of the gear carried by the character might be claimable by surviving adventurers. See area 12 for more information.

spells, which lasts until the end of the character’s next long rest.

FISHING EXPEDITION

Any dead organic material thrown into the 15-foot-deep pool (including corpses, leather, wood, and so forth) is consumed by the caustic white water within a few minutes. However, metals and other inorganic materials dumped into the pool are unharmed. If the characters determine some way to safely sweep the bottom of the pool from the bridge 25 feet above it, they can collect coins and gems that have been lost there — the wealth of dead adventurers tossed into the pool by the sandstone guardian. A total of 250 gp in coins and gems can be claimed this way with 10 minutes’ work.

AN UNPLEASANT SWIM

Exploring the pool is likely impossible for any creature not immune to radiant damage. However, divination magic might allow a glimpse of the mechanisms that control the flow of water here, including feeder pipes that draw water in and the valves that vent excess radiant fluid back into the underground stream to emerge at area 3.

In the unlikely event that the characters figure out a way to enter and search the pool (or if you wish to allow them to control the vents remotely so as to drain the pool), increase the loot found here to include a magic item of your choosing.

13. ABALLIN INTERSECTION

The junction point of three corridors is dimly lit by a faint white glow from area 12. Where the hallways meet, the floor slopes down into a broad puddle of clear water. As the characters approach, they can see that the puddle is actually a shallow pool filling a sinkhole where the floor of the corridor has fallen in.

DROWNING POOL

When any creature moves within 20 feet of the pool, the water suddenly begins to thrash, revealing itself as an **aballin**. This rare ooze infiltrated the crypt years ago by way of the water that seeps into the complex. See “Monsters and Magic” at the end of the adventure for more information on this new creature.

The aballin takes the form of living water as it sashes forward to lash out at prey. It pursues characters in any direction, but it will not move more than 40 feet from its sinkhole. If the ooze is slain, it collapses to spread out

across the floor, slowly draining away through cracks and fissures in the sandstone.

The bottom of the crumbling sinkhole is littered with the half-digested rat carcasses that are the ooze's normal diet.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

A single aballin should be an easy encounter for any group of 6th-level or higher characters. To increase the challenge, add a second aballin to the pool, or have two to four **gray oozes** (see the *Monster Manual*) clinging to the ceiling of the intersection. Those oozes wait to pick off characters distracted by combat with the aballin.

14. GUARDIAN'S CHAMBER

This oblong hall has the look of a shrine, with rotting tapestries along the walls nearest the entrance, and a domed end chamber whose walls are inlaid with mosaics barely visible under a thick layer of dust. A cracked granite dais is set beneath that dome. The rotted remains of benches litter the floor, and the whole place is redolent with the reek of mold.

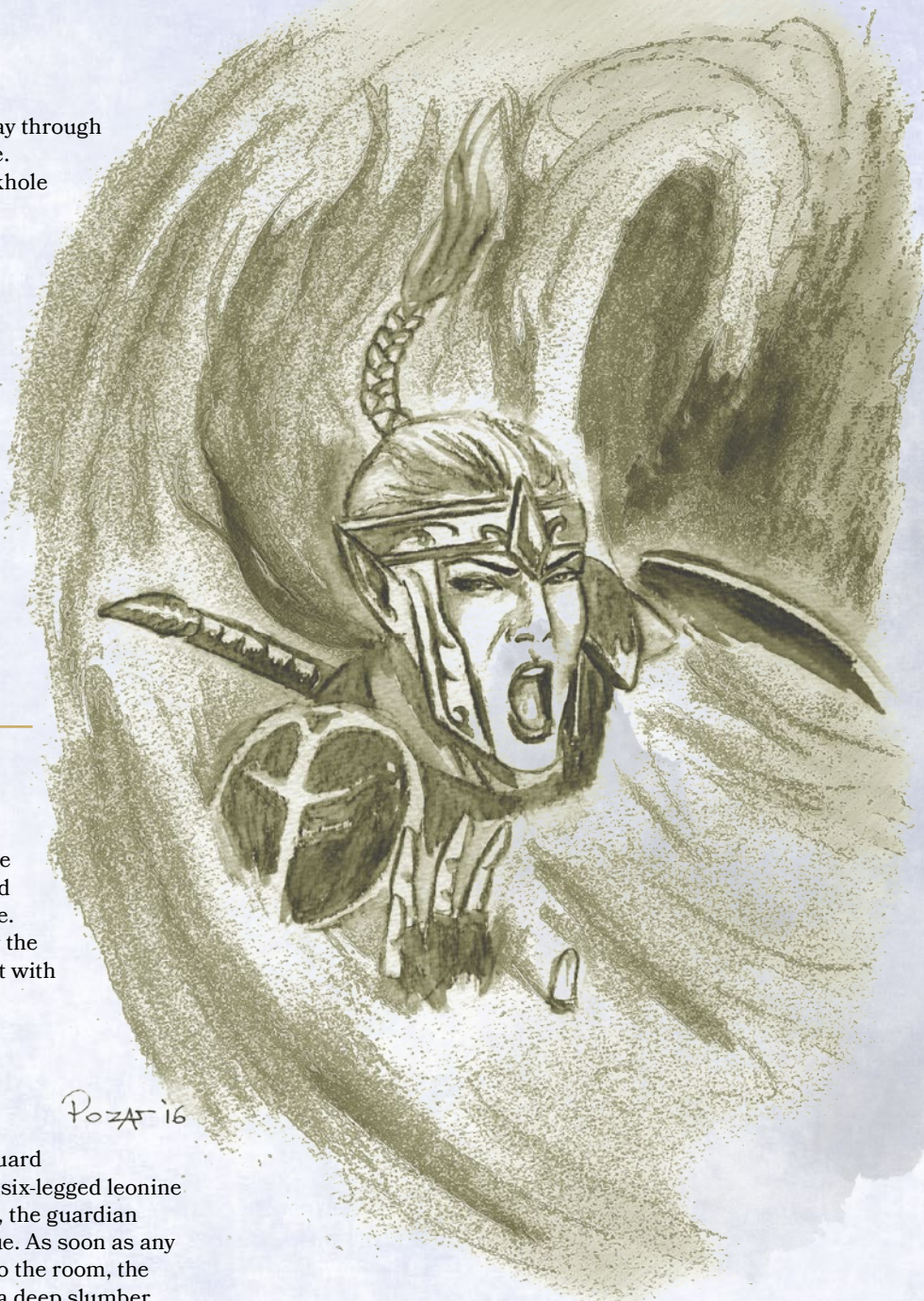
SANDSTONE GUARDIAN

If the characters have not already attracted the attention of the **stone golem** that is the crypt's sandstone guardian (see the sidebar), it is on guard in this area. Carved in the form of a six-legged leonine creature with an eyeless, blank face, the guardian rises from the dais like a dusty statue. As soon as any creature moves more than 5 feet into the room, the golem shudders as if awaking from a deep slumber, shakes off its coat of dust in a swirling cloud, and leaps to the attack.

JWELED MOSAICS

The dust that clings to the mosaics of the circular domed chamber lets only a hint of color come through. If the dust is cleared away, it reveals images of Kelemvor attended to by the mages and priests of the Crypt of Life.

Any character who inspects the mosaics and succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check realizes that some of their colored stones are gems that can be pried loose using a dagger or thieves' tools. A total of one hundred gems worth 10 gp each are set into the mosaic. For each 1 minute of work, a character can make a Wisdom (Perception) check to find and remove a number of gems equal to the result of the check.



ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

The sandstone guardian is a potent threat, particularly if it pursues the party into areas with other monsters or hazards. If the characters need incentive to try to run from the golem rather than fight it, have the creature slow to pursue them, and describe how it constantly turns its head as if it needs to focus as it follows them. After the golem loses sight of the characters and drops its pursuit, make sure the characters can hear it moving as it patrols so they can do their best to avoid it.

15. HALL OF DESTRUCTION

Three long-dead skeletons in rotted leather and moldering clothing are sprawled along this corridor, whose walls, floor, and ceiling are badly scratched and scarred. The skeleton closest to the door at the corridor's end is illuminated by sickly yellow light

SANDSTONE GUARDIAN

The **stone golem** known as the sandstone guardian is programmed to react to the sound of the portcullis in area 11 crashing down, as well as to respond to anyone entering area 14 where it is stationed. It attacks any intruders that it does not recognize as the long-dead mages and priests it once served, pursuing them anywhere within the complex. The golem moves at half speed through 5-foot-wide corridors. It can crash through closed doors as an action. If the portcullis in area 11 has been dropped, the guardian takes 1d4 rounds to lift the bars and shoulder its way past beneath the gate.

The sandstone guardian loses track of intruders that it cannot see for 3 successive rounds. In this event, it patrols the chambers and halls of the complex west of area 6 and area 10 in a random pattern for 10 minutes, then returns to its resting position in area 14 until it is disturbed again.

A character possessing a holy symbol of Kelemvor can present that symbol and attempt an Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check to intuit some command or gesture that might convince the golem the characters are its long-dead masters. (Persuasion is of no use against the magical construct.) Set the difficulty of the check from DC 18 to DC 22, depending on how well the character roleplays the attempt to command the golem.

pulsing from a visible magical glyph on the floor, which matches the glyph scribed on the map found in area 1.

MAP MAGIC

The magic of the map fragment from area 1 is activated when the characters enter this corridor. Unless the fragment is stored in an extradimensional space such as a *bag of holding*, the character in possession of it feels a tingling sensation from wherever the map is stowed. If the map is examined, the glyph scribed upon it is glowing more brightly than it was before.

GLYPH TRAP

Some forty years ago, Elean Mera placed a *glyph of warding* here as a visible caution to anyone seeking unauthorized access to her chambers. In the years since, the glyph continues to dissuade would-be looters, three of whom were killed when one of them attempted to disarm the magical trap. The glyph triggers when any creature other than Elean Mera moves within 10 feet of it. This includes any creature that teleports just inside the double doors, avoiding the glyph but potentially activating it against other creatures in the corridor.

The glyph on the map found in area 1 is attuned to the *glyph of warding*, a connection that can be noted with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check made by anyone examining the map in this area. Though it does not allow a creature to bypass the glyph, the map fragment grants

advantage on a single attempt to dispel or disarm the glyph, after which its magic fades.

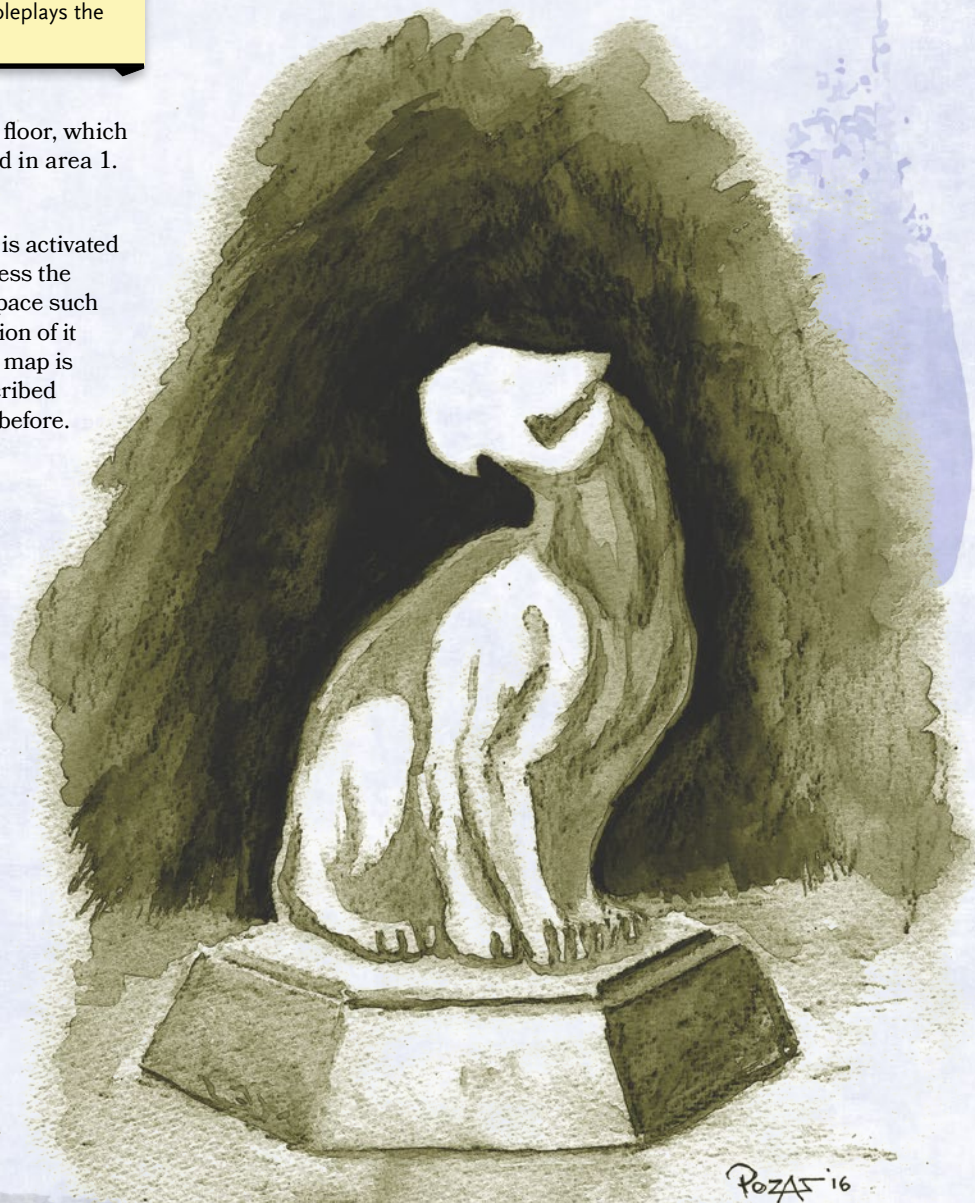
The glyph stores a *conjure barrage* spell, whose constrained cone starts at the glyph and extends down the corridor, filling the area with a storm of magically conjured arrows. Any creature in the area must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or take 3d8 piercing damage, or half as much damage on a successful save.

Even after the glyph is triggered, *detect magic* reveals a lingering dweomer in the area. The magic of the trap resets itself in 1d4 hours, meaning that creatures moving through this area a second time might trigger it again.

16. MASTER'S CHAMBERS

Bookshelves line the walls of this area, heaped high with decaying tomes. The rest of the room once contained fine furnishings, but these have all been rotted down to worm-eaten fragments and thick beds of mold marked by countless rat tracks.

In the eastern part of the room, a stone lectern pulses with a pale blue-white glow, adding to the light shed by



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the figure who stands behind it. Once a wizard to judge by her rotting robes, the creature's pale, oozing skin is stretched tight across a deformed skull and gnarled hands. Those hands rise in response to the appearance of intruders, and an incantation erupts from the figure's twisted mouth.

ELEAN MERA

The legendary necromancer has not set foot outside her chambers or the necromantic pool of area 12 since the last of her followers died — the survivors of the earthquake slain by her own hands as the magic of unlife drove her mad.

Mera uses the statistics of an **archmage** (see the *Monster Manual*), but she is chaotic evil and has the following changes to her spell list:

- Cantrips:** Replace *fire bolt* with *chill touch*
- 2nd level:** Replace *misty step* with *death armor**
- 3rd level:** Replace *fly* with *bestow curse*
- 4th level:** Replace *banishment* with *blight*
- 5th level:** Replace *wall of force* with *Grimwald's graymantle**
- 7th level:** Replace *teleport* with *finger of death*

Spells marked with an asterisk are new spells introduced in the “Monsters and Magic” section.

Elean Mera also has the following additional unliving features and traits. See the “Monsters and Magic” section for more information.

Damage Vulnerabilities necrotic

Damage Resistances radiant

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Reflected Healing If the unliving creature is subject to any spell or magical effect that heals hit points, it takes damage equal to the number of hit points that would normally be regained. One random living creature adjacent to the unliving creature then regains the same number of hit points, as if it were the target of the spell. It takes a successful melee spell attack to target an unliving creature with a touch-range healing effect.

Unliving Light The unliving creature glows with a pale radiance at all times, shedding blue-white light equivalent to a candle. The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide, and other creatures making Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot or notice the unliving creature do so with advantage.

As with Yinsaren in area 6, Elean Mera's unliving state is likely to be mistaken for undeath, but any injuries dealt to her in combat open up bleeding wounds.

Any character who fights face to face with Mera can attempt a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check. A cleric or other character with knowledge of undead has advantage on this check. On a success, the character understands that Mera is not undead, and that she is somehow subject to damage from healing magic.

NO MERCY

Elean Mera unleashes *cone of cold* against intruders, then activates *death armor*. She uses *Grimwald's graymantle* or *blight* against spellcasters, or *bestow curse* or *finger of death* against martial characters. Having long taken her rest in area 12, she has a +2 bonus to spell save DCs and spell attack modifiers for her necromancy spells.

If the characters fall back, Mera follows, hoping to force them into area 12 to maximize the effect of her necromancy spells. If the characters escape by way of the teleport pad beneath the lectern (see below), she lingers in a state of frenzied madness for 1d4 rounds before following to area 2. Mera does not pursue characters who flee the Crypt of Lies.

THE THREAT OF MEMORY

Elean Mera retains the power of speech even in her madness. As she fights, she shrieks erratically about how the adventurers will never steal the secrets of the Crypt of Life, which she will die to protect. A character who talks to the necromancer and succeeds on a DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check can temporarily convince Mera of her state of magical unliving and madness. This causes her to be stunned for 1 round, after which her tortured mind shuts down as she attacks again. Until she is destroyed, Mera ignores any further attempts at communication.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

The unliving Elean Mera is a potentially deadly foe for even a party of 8th-level characters. If the adventurers are lower level or short on resources, you can downgrade this

encounter by limiting Mera to casting specific spells only once, and ignoring the +2 bonus to spell save DCs and spell attack modifiers for her necromancy spells.

At the same time, make sure the characters understand that destroying the necromancer isn't necessarily their goal. Doing a smash-and-grab to steal Mera's valuable spellbook and beat a hasty retreat is a perfectly reasonable tactic for surviving a fight the party might otherwise not win. (Just try to make sure the adventurers don't toss the book into a *bag of holding* as they flee; see "Mera's Spellbook" below and "Monsters and Magic" at the end of the adventure for more information.)

Though Mera doggedly pursues them, characters who reactivate the teleport pad in the study to reach area 2 might figure out that they can disable the teleport dais in that area by the same means the study portal was deactivated. Placing any suitably large object on the dais (including piling up skulls or chunks of sandstone rubble) can prevent Mera from teleporting into area 2, forcing her to blindly seek the characters on foot while they regroup or make their escape from the crypt.

LECTERN PORTAL

Any character paying attention to the map fragment found in area 1 might guess that the lectern corresponds to the spot marked by the circular swirl in this area (see the handout at the end of the adventure). A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notes that the pale blue glow illuminating Mera doesn't come from the lectern, but from a granite slab set into the sandstone floor beneath it. This slab is a teleport pad identical to that seen in area 2. Any creature stepping onto this portal normally appears in area 2, while a creature stepping onto the area 2 portal appears here.

In the aftermath of the crypt being sealed off, Mera dragged the lectern over top of the portal, preventing it from being used from the other side. Any character who succeeds on a DC 17 Strength check can drag the lectern aside or knock it over, exposing the teleport pad on the floor to create an alternative exit from this area.

MERA'S SPELLBOOK

Any character who inspects the lectern sees the spellbook that Elean Mera was reading there. *Detect magic* or a few minutes of close inspection reveals that the spellbook is also a magic item in its own right. See "Monsters and Magic" at the end of the adventure for more information on the *book of shadow spaces*. Mera's book currently contains no wands or scrolls stored within it.

Decades of mold and mildew have ruined many of the spells once inscribed in the book, leaving only six spells of your choice from among Mera's prepared spells (see the archmage statistics block and "Elean Mera," above). A wizard wishing to use the book as a spellbook can spend 50 gp on reagents and materials and spend one tenday to clean and restore the damaged pages so that they can be scribed again with new spells.



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CRUMBLING BOOKSHELVES

The tomes and scrolls on the bookshelves are mostly rotted and worthless. Characters who spend time examining the readable fragments can learn the information presented in "Adventure Background" if that information wasn't made part of the adventure hook. Other notes fill in the details of Mera's research, allowing the adventurers to understand what happened to her, explaining the function of the different areas of the crypt, and granting them the knowledge of unliving creatures presented in the "Monsters and Magic" section, below.

(Some of the notes also mention "my brave captain, Yinsaren, made immortal" if the characters have any curiosity about the unliving warrior's identity; see area 6.)

Three magical dweomers can be detected within the mass of rotting tomes and scrolls. Focusing on the magic or succeeding on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check while searching the shelves reveals a *spell scroll*

of arcane eye, a spell scroll of bestow curse, and a spell scroll of eyebite, all badly stained but still usable.

Characters who take a few minutes to sift through the moldy morass on the shelves can also collect 200 gp worth of ornamental gold bosses and clasps that once adorned the most valuable of the books stored here.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

In the aftermath of the adventure, the characters can decide what to do with the knowledge they have gained of the Crypt of Lies and its secrets. If word of the magic held in the necromantic pool gets out, it will likely draw debased cultists to the site, seeking the power of unlife or the knowledge of how to create unliving servants. Followers of Kelemvor might also focus their attention on the Crypt of Lies, but with the intent of destroying the pool and its corrupt magic. If the characters want to destroy the pool, the means by which they might do so is left to your determination, and could involve a side quest or a follow-up adventure to obtain the powerful magic necessary for the job.

Depending on your campaign, the Crypt of Lies might provide setups and hooks for new adventures. Additional scraps of lore found in the enclave might include hints of significant magical breakthroughs made by Elean Mera and the mages and priests who followed her. Perhaps true immortality was nearly in her grasp before disaster struck and her experiments corrupted her.

Alternatively, it might be revealed that Yinsaren or one of Mera's other followers was secretly a cultist of Myrkul, the god of death, and was actively corrupting the research in the Crypt of Life to create more effective ways of creating powerful undead. Signs found in the enclave, or using *Speak with Dead* on Mera or Yinsaren, might suggest that this lore had already been passed on to the cult before the enclave was lost. This cult might then be revealed as the secret source behind recent undead attacks in other parts of Faerûn, or could be engaging in longer-term plots to tip the balance of power between Myrkul and Kelemvor for all time.

COLOPHON

Scott Fitzgerald Gray (9th-level layabout, vindictive neutral) is a writer of fantasy and speculative fiction, a fiction editor, a story editor, and an editor and designer of roleplaying games — all of which means he finally has the job he really wanted when he was sixteen. Since 2004, Scott has worked on upwards of two hundred RPG rulebooks, supplements, adventures, and articles for Wizards of the Coast and other publishers, including all three core rulebooks for fifth edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. He shares his life in the Canadian hinterland with a schoolteacher, two itinerant daughters, and a number of animal companions. More info on Scott and his work (some of it even occasionally truthful) can be found by reading between the lines at insaneangel.com.

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The aballin is adapted from the third edition D&D *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn*.

Death armor is adapted from the third edition D&D supplement *Magic of Faerûn*. *Grimwald's graymantle* is adapted from the third edition D&D *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*.

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APPENDIX: MONSTERS AND MAGIC

This adventure introduces a number of new monsters, monster templates, magic items, and spells.

MONSTERS

See the *Monster Manual* for general information on creatures, templates, and reading the monster stat block.

ABALLIN

Also known as “living water,” aballins are fluid monsters that entrap and drown creatures that venture within their reach. While in a passive state, an aballin resembles a large puddle of seemingly normal water, devoid of fish or other living creatures. Anyone looking down at the aballin might notice coins, jewelry, or other metal effects of the monster’s past victims resting beneath its surface.

Though it resembles an elemental creature of water, an aballin is composed of a weak but viscous acid. A creature that drowns within the ooze is digested over the course of up to 30 days, depending on the size of the meal.

ABALLIN

Large ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 6

Hit Points 90 (12d10 + 24)

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	9 (-1)	6 (-2)

Damage Immunities cold, fire, lightning; piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Collateral Damage. Any attack made against the aballin that would deal piercing or slashing damage deals half damage to any creature trapped within the aballin by its Drowning Engulf.

False Appearance. While the aballin remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a pool or puddle of clear water.

Water Form. The aballin can enter a hostile creature’s space and stop there, after which it can use its Drowning Engulf. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Water Magic Vulnerability. A *create or destroy water* spell can be used to target the aballin and destroy water, dealing 1d6 bludgeoning damage for each spell slot level used to cast the spell. A *control water* spell can be targeted against the aballin, forcing it to release a character trapped by its Drowning Engulf.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and the aballin can use its Drowning Engulf against the target as a bonus action.

Multiattack. The aballin makes two pseudopod attacks against different creatures.

Drowning Engulf. The aballin uses this ability when it enters the space of a Medium or smaller creature or hits such a creature with its pseudopod attack. The affected creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the aballin. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw.

On a failed save, the creature is engulfed within the aballin. An engulfed creature is restrained and immediately begins to suffocate (see chapter 8 of the *Player’s Handbook*.) While engulfed by the aballin, a creature cannot hold its breath or make use of spells such as *water breathing*. When the aballin moves, the engulfed creature moves with it.

An engulfed creature can escape by succeeding on a DC 15 Strength check as an action. A creature that escapes enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the aballin.

If the aballin successfully engulfs a creature while it already has a creature engulfed, the first creature is ejected into a random space within 5 feet of the aballin. The aballin can also eject an engulfed creature as a bonus action.

UNLIVING

Necromancy encompasses the forces of life and death, unleashing the power of dark destruction even as it restores mortality to the fallen. Under certain conditions, extreme exposure to the magic of life can render a creature into an immortal state of unliving — but that immortality comes at the cost of agony and madness, as body and mind are endlessly eaten away and restored by raw magical power.

Unliving creatures sometimes arise as the result of failed experiments meant to heighten magic that raises the dead, slows the effects of aging, or seeks control over the power of immortality. Exposure to extreme levels of radiant energy can also transform creatures into the unliving, setting them on a path of mad destruction.

Ever Living, Always Dying. Unliving creatures occupy an in-between state of existence. Not undead, but likewise not truly alive, they are animated by raw magical power that corrupts them to evil and madness.

Unliving creatures take on an appearance of decay and abnormal growth as their bodies are continually eaten away and restored by the magic coursing through them. Digits and teeth are often oversized, grown out to gnarled claws and razor-sharp fangs. Their appearance often sees them mistaken for undead. However, an unliving creature carries no stench of death, and reacts to attacks in the same manner as a creature of its original type, showing visible wounds, bleeding if it is cut, and so on.

UNLIVING TEMPLATE

Any living creature can be transformed into an unliving creature. Because of the madness that accompanies the transformation, an unliving creature is always under the

control of the DM. The creature retains all its original statistics, and gains the following features.

Type. The unliving creature's type changes to monstrosity. It does not age, and it no longer requires air, food, drink, or sleep.

Alignment. The unliving creature is chaotic evil.

Senses. If the original creature has any sort of vision, the unliving creature has darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.

Damage Vulnerabilities. The unliving creature has vulnerability to necrotic damage. If the creature had immunity or resistance to necrotic damage, it loses that immunity or resistance.

Damage Resistances. The unliving creature has resistance to radiant damage, and resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. If the creature had vulnerability to radiant damage or to bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, it loses that vulnerability.

Radiant Essence. If the unliving creature has any natural attacks that deal acid, cold, fire, lightning, or necrotic damage, those attacks deal radiant damage instead.

Reflected Healing. If the unliving creature is subject to any spell or magical effect that heals hit points, it takes damage equal to the number of hit points that would normally be regained. One random living creature adjacent to the unliving creature then regains the same number of hit points, as if it were the target of the spell. It takes a successful melee spell attack to target an unliving creature with a touch-range healing effect.

Unliving Light. The unliving creature glows with a pale radiance at all times, shedding blue-white light equivalent to a candle. The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made to hide, and other creatures making Wisdom (Perception) checks to spot or notice the unliving creature do so with advantage.

MAGIC ITEMS

General information on magic items (including rules for rarity and attunement) can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

BOOK OF SHADOW SPACES

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement by a wizard)

A *book of shadow spaces* is a large tome bound in black leather and oiled steel, and features a thumb-sized black pearl set into its front cover. If you can attune to this item, you can use it as a spellbook and an arcane focus. Additionally, the inside back cover of a *book of shadow spaces* is an extradimensional space that can hold up to five magic scrolls or wands for safekeeping. As an action, you can touch a wand or scroll to the inside back cover, causing it to vanish into the book. Drawing a specific wand or scroll from inside the book is also an action.

As an action, you can touch the black pearl on the book's cover to cause the book to fold up within its own extradimensional space, leaving the pearl behind. While you hold the pearl, you can use it as an arcane focus,



CLOAK OF THE VOID

and you can use a bonus action to produce one wand or scroll stored in the book, which appears in your hand ready to use.

As an action, you can bring the book forth from the black pearl again. The book must be manifested to place wands or scrolls within it.

Placing a *book of shadow spaces* or its black pearl inside an extradimensional space created by a *bag of holding*, *portable hole*, or similar item instantly destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it and deposited in a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can't be reopened.

CLOAK OF THE VOID

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This cloak is woven of a dark fabric that seems to draw in the shadows around you, which pool at your feet when you first don it. While you wear the *cloak of the void*, you have advantage on saving throws against spells, and any spell you cast from the School of Necromancy has its spell save DC increased by 1.

Curse. Attuning to this cloak extends its curse to you until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. While you are cursed, you cannot remove the *cloak of the void*, and must wear it at all times. Whenever



TALISMAN OF UNLIFE

any healing spell is cast on you, the curse causes the spell to instead target a randomly determined creature within 15 feet of you.

MASK OF KELEMVOR

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This smooth, bone-white, half-face mask was created by the followers of the Lord of the Dead to aid them in their work of bringing relief to the dying and those they leave behind. While you wear the mask, you have advantage on Wisdom (Insight) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

In addition, you can cast *Speak with Dead*. This property of the mask can't be used again until the next sunset.

TALISMAN OF UNLIFE

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

First crafted by a long-lost order of necromancers, this talisman grants you resistance to radiant damage but imposes vulnerability to necrotic damage.

Second Life. If you are reduced to 0 hit points but not killed outright while wearing the talisman, you can drop to 1 hit point instead. Additionally, if you can see the creature whose attack reduced you to 0 hit points, that creature takes 3d6 radiant damage. This property is suppressed if you are reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that deals necrotic damage. You can't use this property again until you finish a long rest.

SPELLS

See the *Player's Handbook* for information and guidelines for spells and spellcasting.

The following spells are available to wizards. At your determination, they might also be available to sorcerers and warlocks in your campaign.

DEATH ARMOR

2nd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a paste made of exotic herbs, ground bones, and onyx worth 50 gp, which the spell consumes)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You are surrounded by a crackling black aura that flares each time you are attacked. Any creature that hits you with a natural weapon or a handheld weapon must make a Constitution saving throw, taking 4d6 necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Creatures attacking you with ranged weapons or reach weapons are not subject to this effect, but creatures making natural attacks with reach are.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 2nd.

GRIMWALD'S GRAYMANTLE

5th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a miniature skull carved of bone)

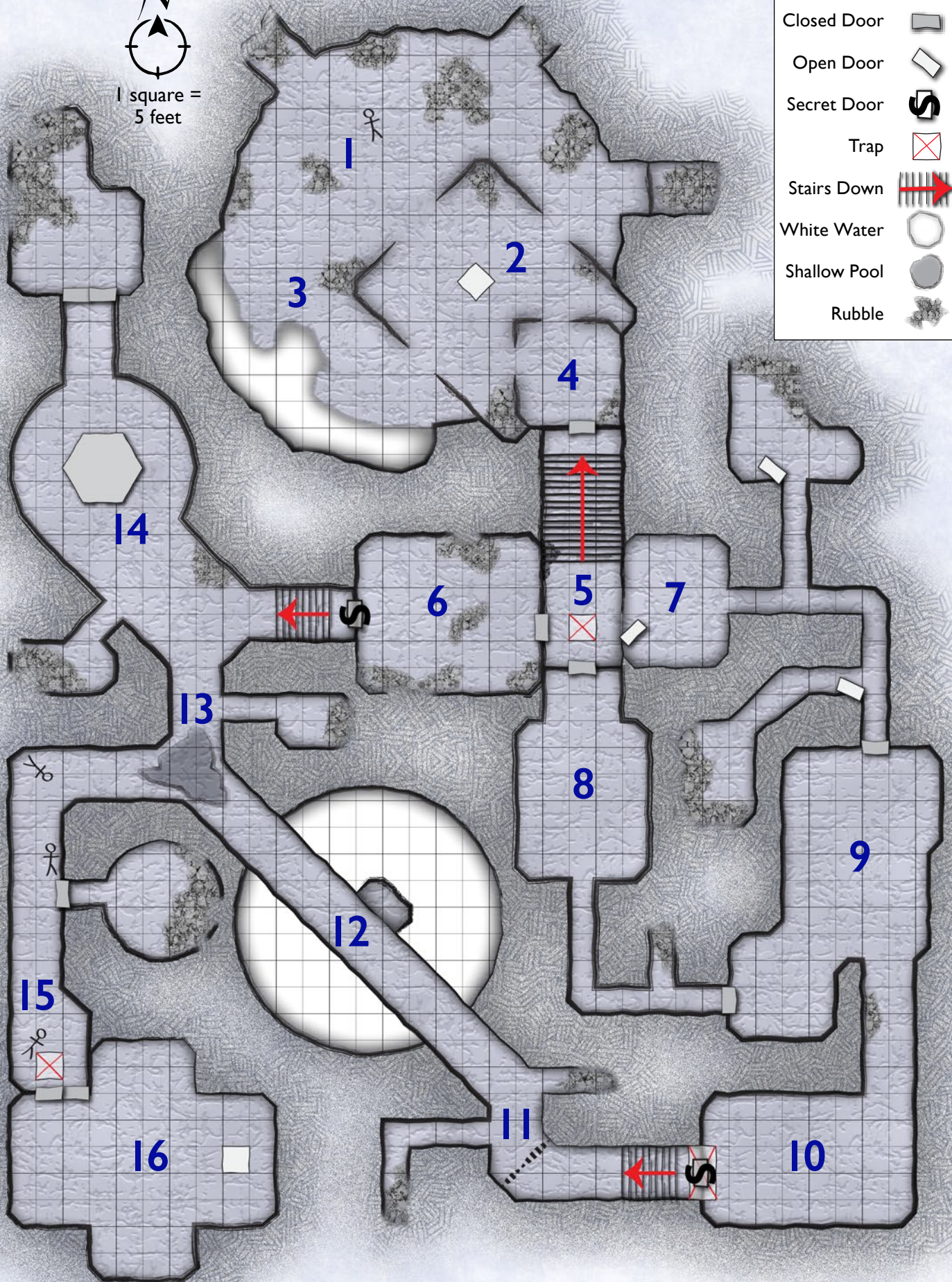
Duration: 1 minute

You create a pulse of sickly gray energy and hurl it toward a target within range, wrapping that target in a glowing skull-shaped field. The target must make a Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target cannot regain hit points by any means until the spell ends, including by nonmagical means or by making use of a *cure wounds* spell, a *potion of healing*, a *ring of regeneration*, and so on. Additionally, the target cannot undo any reduction to any of its ability scores, including by the use of magic such as *greater restoration*. However, *greater restoration*, *lesser restoration*, and similar magic can cure diseases or remove conditions from the target normally, and the target can gain temporary hit points.



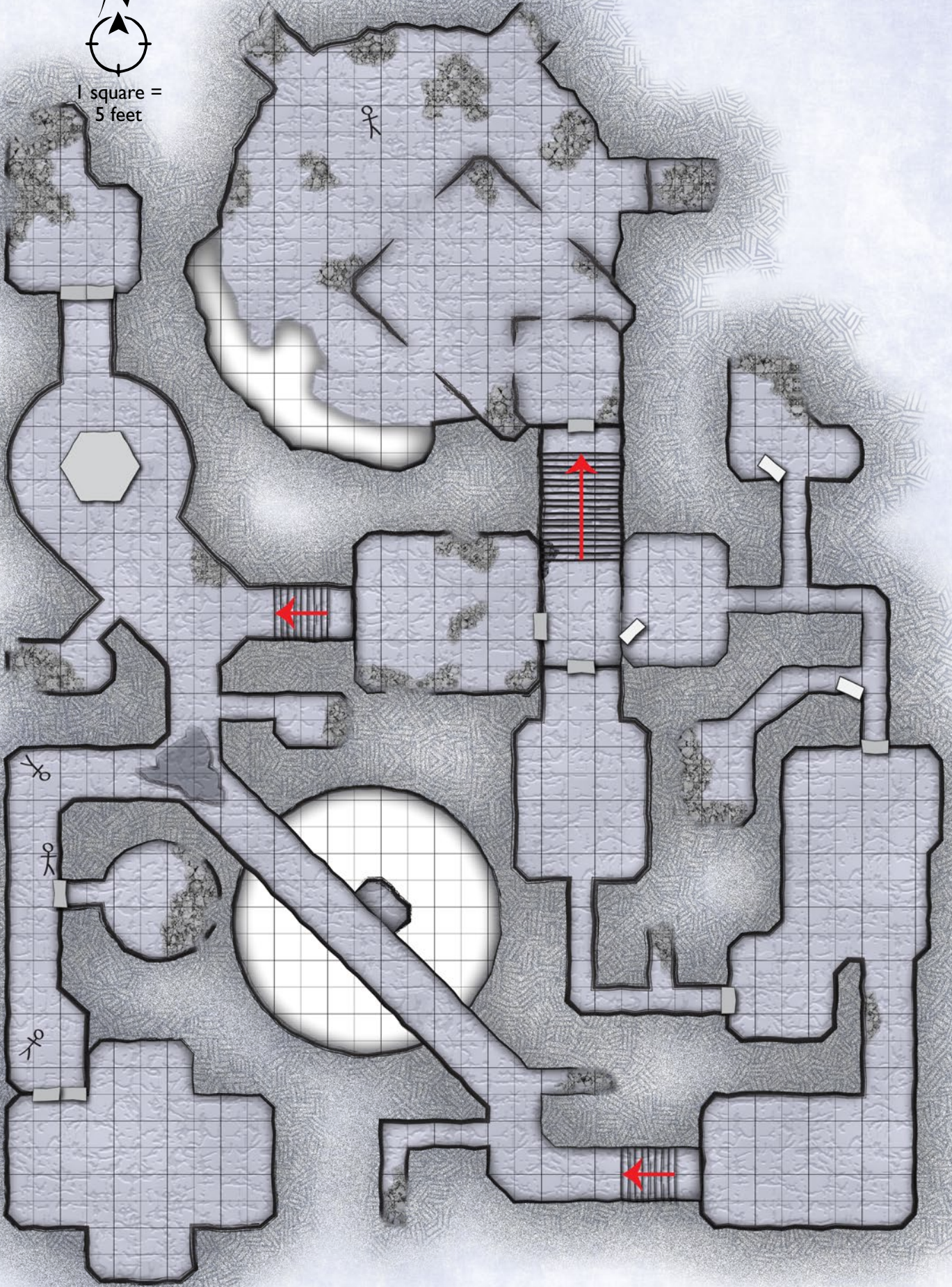
1 square =
5 feet

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Closed Door	
Open Door	
Secret Door	
Trap	
Stairs Down	
White Water	
Shallow Pool	
Rubble	

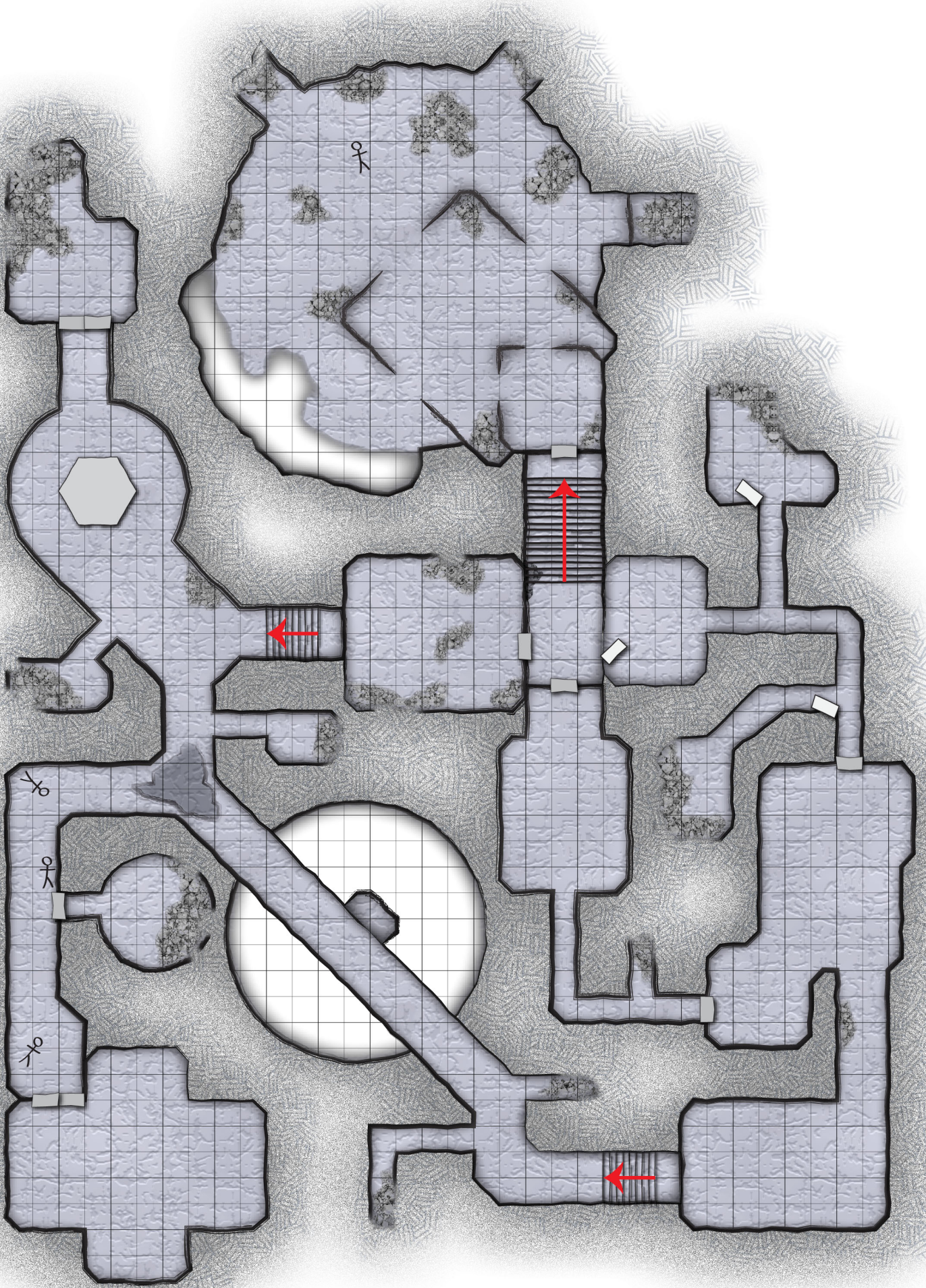




1 square =
5 feet







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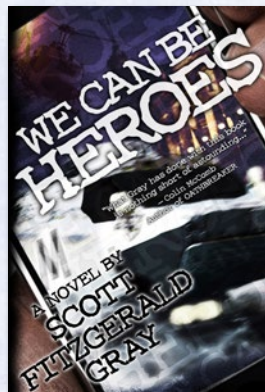
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