

CHARACTERS LEVEL 5

# THE MAZE **BENEATH** THE MAZE



**BROKEN X KNIVES** ADVENTURE





# THE MAZE BENEATH THE MAIZE

*“Be wary of blindly seeking adventure. Sometimes it finds you...” -Tarric the Elder*

## Introduction

This document is for the Dungeon Master. If you're a player, read no further! It contains a complete Dungeons & Dragons adventure. It provides everything you need including: character descriptions, lore, maps and monster stat blocks.

## Running the Adventure

The Maze Beneath the Maize is a 5th level adventure for four to five characters. If your group deviates, you will need to make adjustments. During the course of the adventure, the players may advance to 6th level. If you

## Revelations

This is a story with a mystery. Who built the maze and why? We've marked revelations about the mystery in the text with an exclamation mark so you'll be able to easily know when to reveal information to the players and when to keep it to yourself. Try not to reveal anything to the players that they couldn't get from in-game knowledge.



don't use XP for your players, it's recommended they level up at the end of the adventure. The adventure is set in the Forgotten Realms setting near the town of Stawford. Stawford is a sleepy little town with rich farmland between it and mines burrowing into the mountains to the north. We created Stawford as a blank slate for our adventures, so don't feel like you have to go in as a Forgotten Realms expert. And if you are a Forgotten Realms expert, please forgive any mistakes. But do let us know so we don't make them again.

## Background

More than two centuries ago, a red wizard

### DM'S NOTE

*Houn is part of our ongoing series, about the Aberrant Ancient. His actions led to the creation of the maze, and the players will meet him at the end of the adventure. You can find more details on Houn at: <http://www.brokenknives.com/blog/the-aberrant-ancient>*

by the name of Houn made a discovery that shook the foundations of magic on Toril. Yet, due to a considerable amount of effort on his part, it never saw the light of day. The exact nature of this discovery is unknown but it involves the location of the skeletal fragments of an ancient being. The weave, which governs all magic on Toril, reacts strangely to the frag-





ments. More information existed before Houn destroyed his research and fled Thay. His current whereabouts are unknown but many of his peers have attempted to track him down and steal his research for themselves.

To keep his trail muddled, Houn hid his research in a room at the end of a labyrinth and left a Guardian to keep it well secure. His trail grew cold over the years but he enhanced

each Guardian with slivers of the Aberrant Ancient's bones. This meant they could stay active for millennia. Houn built his labyrinth near Stawford where the latent magical energy from the fragment of the Ancient seeped into the soil. This gave rise to huge crop yields for the Therayle farm built atop it. The labyrinth would have probably been forgotten until the Sundering happened. The region now

### Houn and Chorin

This adventure tells the tale of Houn Blackhand and his assistant Chorin Therayle. Both wizards met while training in Thay. Despite the fact that Chorin was a western outsider when they were young, they soon became friendly rivals. Yet, due to his painstaking study and natural talent, Houn soon became the more powerful of the two.

Houn was an obsessive person. He kept copious notes, perfect accounting and extensive archives of information. He cataloged everything he could discover about the mysterious shards of bone. When Houn reported his findings to his superiors, the response was overwhelmingly positive. His mentor assigned Houn his former classmate, Chorin, as his assistant.

But the more Houn delved into the pieces of the Ancient, the more paranoid he became. He found his thoughts turning more and more to concealment. If not his mentor, surely his Zulkir would seize this power for himself. How could Houn keep it secure? He soon devised a series of complex methods to obscure his research, entrusting the

cipher only to himself and Chorin.

As more and more resources were siphoned into Houn's research, the two wizards began scheming. With the help of some of the funds, they purchased land a few miles outside of Thay. They then built a storeroom deep underground and sealed it, making it only accessible by portal. Chorin had the idea to purchase a plot of land in the west, near Stawford, where he was born. Here they hid the corresponding portal. That plot of land would eventually pass to his ancestor, Hugh Therayle.

The research went well and Houn and Chorin discovered how to manipulate the power of the Ancient's remains, greatly amplifying the magic through the weave. They also found that golems animated with fragments of the ancient were vastly more powerful than ones created by conventional means. All of this was of course hidden from Houn's superiors. To his mentor and the rest of the council, the usually stringent wizard seemed sloppy, uncaring and forgetful. Houn's regular reports became infrequent and full of redundant information. The Red Wizards called a conclave to question Houn and Chorin.





is in a state of disarray.

At the dead center of the chaos is the Therayle farmstead built on top of the labyrinth. The farm faces ruin and Hugh Therayle, the current owner, is at wits end trying to reestablish even a modicum of control over the disrupted land. Hugh has over forty laborers to reshape the land, and is one of the wealthiest farmers in the area. But when he saw the ancient doorway jutting up from the middle of his cornfield, he knew this wasn't the type of problem a plow could solve.

## Overview

The Maze Beneath the Maize is a stand-alone adventure that takes the characters into the wizard's paranoid machinations. The maze protects the information leading to the resting place of the Aberrant Ancient. Once the characters enter the maze, they'll need their wits as well as their might as they're attacked by malignant oozes see the party as a fresh meal. If they make it to the pit and defeat the ancient ooze dwelling there, they'll have everything needed to open the portal, assuming of course they don't meet a grim fate trying.

## The Adventure Begins

The adventure begins as the player characters arrive at Hugh Therayle's farmhouse.

## The Therayle Farm

Because of the high quality and quantity of crop yield, the farm has always been the subject of rumors. If the characters talk to the workers around the farm they hear the follow-

## Adventure Hooks

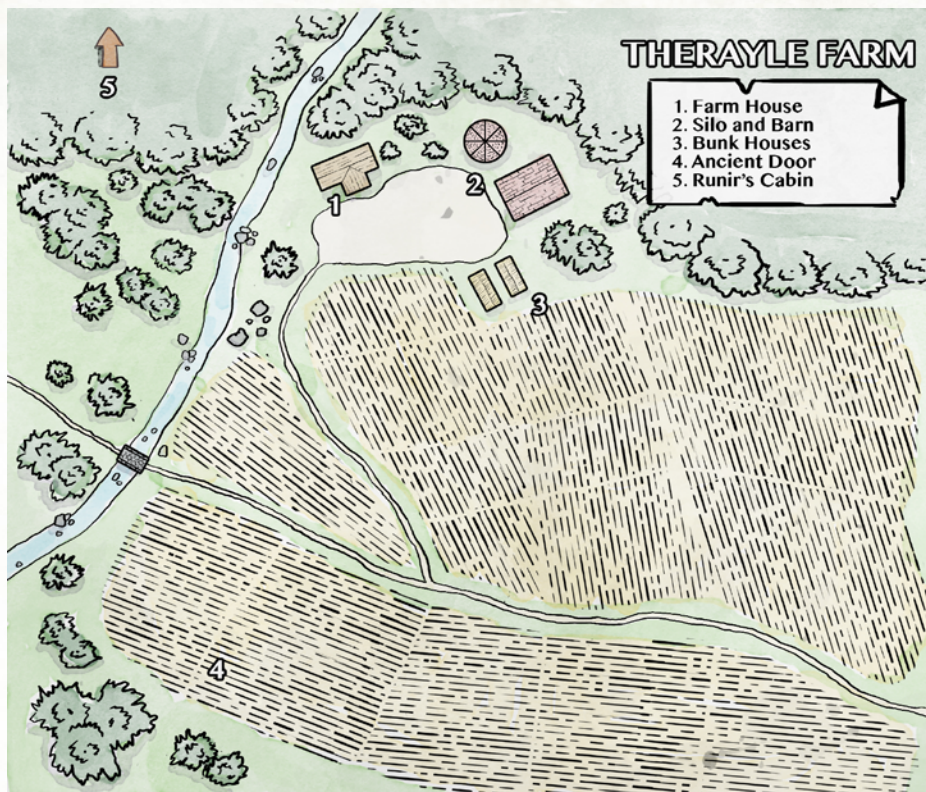
It's recommended that you work with your players to develop a strong and compelling reason why the party makes their way to the Therayle farm. Here are a few ideas that might help:

- Word has spread into the surrounding regions that Hugh Therayle, the wealthy farmer, is offering a 1000g purse for a simple task. He just needs some strong arms to kill a few slimes in a cavern beneath his farm.
- A wily merchant, by the name of Gregorio, that the players meet on the road has heard rumors of a great treasure. This treasure lies beneath some old farmland near Stawford. It's just waiting there for someone strong enough to claim it.
- A contact of one of the characters has heard some stirrings. One of his informants has trailed a Red Wizard to the small rural town of Stawford. There has to be something going on.
- While passing the Therayle farm, the characters meet some of the laborers. The laborers, who are taking a break from the heat of the day, detail the issues the farm has been facing. They also speak of the strange finds in the fields, and their employer's need for help.

### DM'S NOTE

For more on Gregorio, check out <http://www.dmsguild.com/product/180530/Gregorios-Traveling-Emporium-and-Menagerie>





ing:

- The farm was the product of an ancient pact between Hugh's ancestor and some outside group. No one knows what the terms of the agreement were. (Hugh's knowledge of this is described on page 9).
- The farm is haunted. A couple of seasons ago, three of the farmhands saw a lady in a blue dress wandering around the fields at night. She then disappeared into thin air, seemingly swallowed up by the land. (This is Nula, described on page 11).
- A beast wanders the farm at night. Several laborers have seen it. It appears to move unnaturally. Hugh has hired Runir Kundenir, an elven hunter, to kill it. (Runir is described on page 9).

### Hugh Therayle

Hugh is a practical man. He's not only a farmer but also a business man. Although he has plenty of other land now, his family built their fortune on this land. He's determined to not let the farm fail during his generation, yet he does realize he's out of his depth.

### READ TO PLAYERS

You knock at the door and a large man with a bushy black beard and piercing eyes answers. He takes a careful look at you before announcing "Ah, finally a group that looks like they mean business."

Luckily, he has plenty of coin to hire the problem out. He's spread the word far and wide about the ancient doorway. His offer is simple, "Clear out the area of anything dangerous and take good notes, so they can fix the sinkholes" and he'll give the party 1000g. He's fairly firm on this but a hard Persuasion (Charisma) check (DC 20) can increase it to 1100g. If the party agrees he'll provide a quality meal and coin for a bed at the inn for the night. In the morning he'll hand over a rough map of the area (see handouts in






Appendix C) and wish them luck.

When speaking as Hugh keep the following in mind:

- Hugh is a man who likes to get down to business. Years of hard work have left him intolerant of empty words. He indulges in basic pleasantries but hates small talk beyond that point. The exception is if you start talking about one of his two passions: growing crops and fine meals.
- Hugh is stressed out but tries to hide it with humor. He's worried the family farm will fail with him.
- Hugh knows there's something bad in the maze beyond simple oozes but he

doesn't want to let on it's bad. He's afraid the party will ask for more gold, or worse refuse the job.

- On Hugh's Mantle is a golden bracelet. If asked he'll mention it was found in the field by his father over forty years ago. He had it restored by an expert dwarven craftsman on a visit to Waterdeep a few years back. A successful history check (DC 15) will reveal it as a design of the people of Thay. 

### The Maze

This adventure doesn't lend itself well to theater of the mind style game play, at least not the maze portion. It's recommended you

### The Conclave

Houn spun a beautiful half-truth and admitted to his superiors that he had hit a dead end with traditional research but he had a plan. He requisitioned a massive divination ritual, requiring an agreement with Yaphyll, the divination Zulkir at the time. After weeks of negotiation, she reluctantly agreed to send five top-ranking Diviners to Houn's laboratory to search for the source. The ritual used a piece of the ancient fragment as a conduit and was ultimately successful. The location of the massive skull of the Aberrant Ancient was implanted into the minds of all the wizards. Then, Houn and Chorin activated the myriad of contingency spells they had set during the weeks of negotiation. None of the diviners left the

room alive.

Unknown to Houn, Chorin performed a magical rite after the slaughter, transforming a corpse to appear as his double. After all, Chorin knew Houn was imbalanced. His jealousy and nervous derangement made him prone to outbursts and deeply suspicious of everyone, including Chorin. If Houn went down, Chorin didn't plan to be with him. After their crime, Chorin and Houn immediately began purging the records of their findings and took all ancient fragments with them. When the authorities in Thay came upon the gruesome scene the next morning they assumed that Houn had gone mad and killed not only the diviners but his assistant as well. When it was found that Houn had fled the city, a manhunt began. But it was too late, the two rogue wizards were long gone.





### READ TO PLAYERS

As you enter the ancient doorway, there's a musty odor in the air. The walls feel as though they're closing in on you, leading to a stifling feeling. Now you have your first choice, which way to go?

use one of several methods to help the players keep track of where they are and not feel too confused or overwhelmed.

- If you're playing with a digital tabletop that allows fog of war, you can use that feature. We provide a high-resolution version of the maze as part of this adventure.
- If you're playing at an actual table, you can use a combination of good notes by the players (by design, the maze

lends itself well to graph paper), and the "scraps of the map" handouts in Appendix C. Hugh provides the first fragment

### Environment of the Maze

Houn's maze is a dry and desiccated construction deep under the Therayle farm. The presence of the oozes keeps the halls very clean and sterile. A lack of moisture and insects makes the maze an almost clinical seeming place. Houn used magic to carve the maze giving the walls a seamless, smooth texture throughout. The maze is mostly dark, though a phosphorescent fungus that grows in dry environments flourishes in sections where he can find nutrients, such as in the presence of oozes or near the bodies of their victims.

### The Escape

Houn and Chorin made their way west to the Therayle farm to access their study and retrieve the research they had hidden there. Journeying through the maze they used the portal to enter the study below Thay. Once there, realizing that they had escaped Thay with knowledge of the Aberrant Ancient's skull, Houn was happy for the first time in ages. Chorin used the opportunity to kill him.

Taking the most important research, Chorin headed to the location of the Ancient skull entombed in the heights of the

Spine of the World.

The manhunt for Houn continued for years until the maze was discovered. But a massive guardian, powered by a shard of the Ancient, protected the portal. After the first few attempts were unsuccessful, the Red Wizards were fragmented and thrown into disarray during the Szass Tam incident. The tale of Houn and the strange magical effects he discovered was all but forgotten. The reference to the manhunt and the hinting of great power would occasionally entice a wizard to go searching for information on Houn but all lost the trail at the maze.





## Areas of the Maze

The following areas correspond to labels on the map of the maze on page 8.

### 1. Gelatinous Cube

The **Gelatinous Cube** at the end of this hallway has consumed a large clump of phosphorescent fungus. This fungus floats in the center of the cube giving off a faint glow and acting as bait for an unwary adventurer. The cube is invisible until touched, which gives the “floating” glowing clump the look of magical significance.

### 2. Brekken, deceased Wizard

Brekken was one of the first mages to enter Houn’s maze. He fell victim to its denizens, who have stripped him of both his possessions and flesh. All that remains are his bones and a small metal scroll case clutched in his skeletal fist. The case contains letters from his superiors in Thay giving permission to hunt down Houn. The letters name both the mysterious creator of the labyrinth and the poor deceased figure who clutches it. Additionally, the case contains a scroll of *Speak with Dead*.

### 3. Jaynsen, deceased Wizard

Jaynsen was the Red Wizard who battled







with the Guardian and defeated it but at the cost of his own life. He still wears scraps of his red robes and his body has become desiccated and nearly mummified by the environment of the maze. His personal effects are rotting away and the only useful item he possesses is the necklace around his neck,

the *necklace of pseudopodal avoidance* (See sidebar).

#### 4. Remains of the Guardian

Scattered bones and half melted, misshapen armor are all that remain of Houn's Guard-

### Hugh's Ancestor

Whenever Chorin bought the land he entrusted its care to his younger brother. It was his son who discovered how fertile the land was and started the farm. Since then it's passed from generation to generation. Most of the knowledge of Chorin has been forgotten, although if the players mention the name to Hugh he would know it as a family name (it is also his grandfather's name), although he wouldn't know about the wizard.

### The Ol' Elf (Runir Kundenir)

Runir lives in a secluded part of the woods

#### READ TO PLAYERS

*An old elf with long white hair opens the door. He has a scar down his right cheek and is dressed from head to toe in leather skins. He looks at you with a skeptical eye before asking 'Who're you?'*

to the northwest of the Therayle Farm. It's technically Hugh's land, but Runir has lived there since before Hugh was born. Runir is the huntsman of Stawford, responsible for meat production in a town of farmers and miners. Runir isn't very talkative. If asked about the

ancient doorway he'll respond that he has no intention of getting involved with "wizard business" and if they're smart, neither will they. If they press him, he'll tell them that when he was young, he saw two men magically carving tunnels beneath the land from the woods, but that's all he knows. If asked about the beast he was hired to kill, he'll say there's nothing remarkable about it, the laborers just have "loose tongues and empty heads."

When speaking as Runir keep the following in mind:

- Runir is 263 years old, but he's been near Stawford for most of his life.
- He's brusque and always seems a bit tired.

### Runir's Secret

He witnessed a village youth get murdered by Houn during the creation of the maze. He also knows that the Therayle family covered it up, but Runir saw it happen from the tree line. He's never told anyone about what he saw, and resents his cowardice regarding it. At this point he feels like it wouldn't do any good to mention it. Besides, he likes Hugh. Runir will never reveal this information to the characters. But a spell such as *detect thoughts* will reveal this secret.





## Necklace of Pseudopodal Avoidance

The *necklace of pseudopodal avoidance* has three charges. As an action, the wearer can use a charge to repel all oozes in a 30 foot radius. Oozes affected by the necklace behave as if they are under the effects of a fear spell (no saving throw). It regains these charges every morning at dawn. Of note: Sthoth, no longer a simple ooze, is immune to the necklace.

ian. The armor used to be *plate armor of etherealness* as per the item on page 185 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The Guardian used the armor to help move through the maze and confront those who invaded it. But years of abuse at the hand of acidic oozes and the last battle with Jaynsen have rendered it useless. The *glove of etherealness* (see Sidebar) is all that remains. If the players investigate the remains of the Guardian, they will notice a number of his bones are completely missing, including his skull and one entire arm. They will not find his aberrant shard in the remains. The missing bones and the shard are in the possession of Sthoth in area 5.

### 5. The Pit

The hallway ending at area 5 leads to the pit where the monster **Sthoth** makes his home. The room is a natural chamber about 40' wide. The walls have collapsed in places from the earthquakes that have plagued the area. In the center of the room is a 7' deep pit where Sthoth rests. Unlike the rest of the

maze, this room is wet, dank and has fungus growing throughout it. If a player falls in the pit, they take no damage, but it's covered in Sthoth's slime. When they enter the area or end their turn there they must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

### 6. The Urn

At the end of this hallway sits a large stone urn, unsealed with the lid lying on the ground beside it. The urn is decorated with indecipherable runes, made up of very loose, flowing shapes that look almost naturally occurring. The urn contains a small 2", one way portal linking to an unknown location. The urn is the source of the oozes and jellies within the maze. Every so often, an ooze slides through the portal, filling the urn. When the party comes upon it, the urn is filled with an ooze. Roll a d6 to determine what kind of ooze or jelly is in the urn. 1-2 **Habilis Ooze**. 3-5 **Ochre Jelly**. 6 **Gray Ooze**. The

## Glove of Etherealness

This glove is scorched and marred by magical fire and acidic oozes but somehow still functions. However, the glove has a much diminished effect when not matched with a fully functioning suit of armor. The glove allows the wearer to gain the effect of the *etherealness* spell for one round (6 seconds). Once used, the property of the glove can't be used again until the next dawn.





players must seal this urn to collect the reward from Hugh. Otherwise oozes will continue to plague the maze. To seal the urn requires an Arcana (Intelligence) check (DC 15) to translate the runes.

### 7. Fadith, deceased Wizard

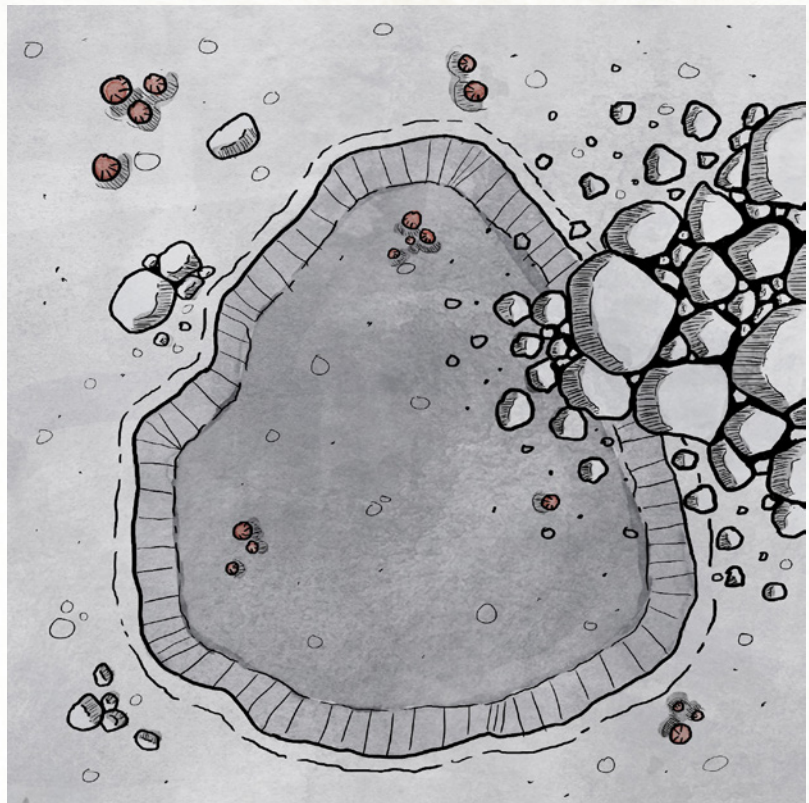
Fadith is Azar Zurn's apprentice. He entered the maze with Zurn and was killed by a Habilis Ooze which was then killed by Zurn. Fadith's body has acidic burns over most of it; and His clothing is still damp and touched by slime from his encounter. He has a piece of parchment in a small leather case with a section of map to the maze and a scroll of find traps. He wore a *ring of entanglement* (see sidebar) which remains on his burned and bloodied hands.

### 8. Nula, deceased Sorcerer

Nula found the maze somewhat recently. After stopping at the Therayle farm and

#### Ring of Entanglement

This wooden ring appears as a mass of vines and thorns. While wearing this ring, you can use an action to expend 1 of it's 2 charges to cast *entangle* from it using your spell save DC. Its charges replenish every day at dawn.



feeling the power of the *aberrant shard*, she ventured into the maze without preparation and nearly made it to the portal room before being attacked and succumbing to wounds. Her body and bones have been picked clean other than a silver necklace set with gems. The necklace is mundane but worth 250gp.

### 9. Portal Room

The portal room is a large room split by a 20' deep chasm. A makeshift bridge made of hastily nailed together planks crosses the chasm near it's narrowest point. Players may

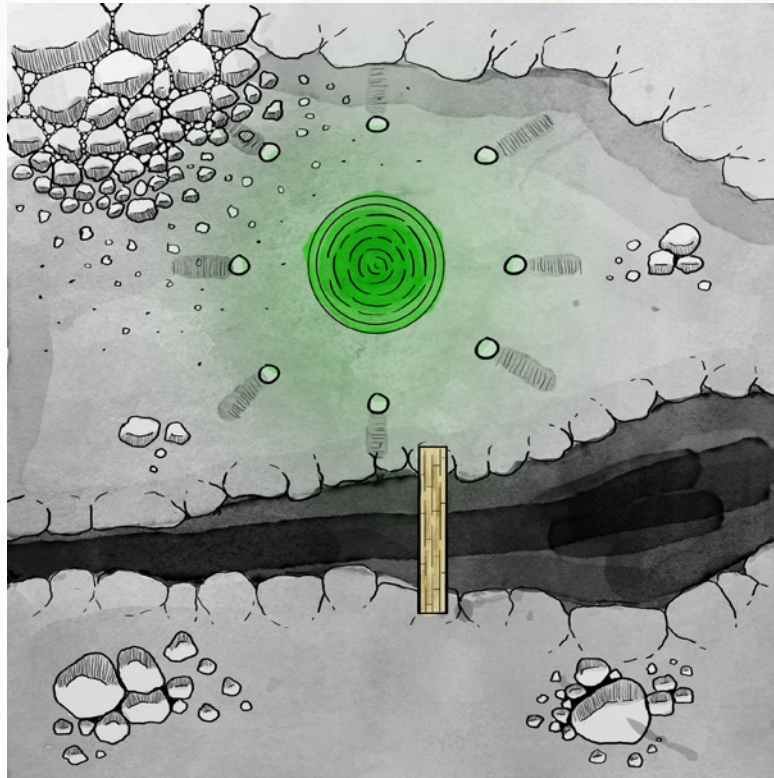
#### DM'S NOTE

*The Habilis Ooze is a new type of ooze that is able to adapt and integrate new sources of energy. It's stat block and powers are indicated on page 18.*





either jump the chasm with an Athletics (Strength) check (DC 15) or cross the bridge with an Acrobatics (Dexterity) check (DC 15). If they fail, they fall 20 feet, take 2d6 damage, and must climb to the top. Eight ornate pillars stand in a circle around a glittering green portal. The portal swirls with energy but will only transport the group if an *aberrant shard* is present. The recent earthquakes that unearthed the maze also caused rock falls in the portal room, collapsing the walls on one side. Azar Zurn occupies the room, studying the portal and attempting to activate it.



treasure chest on the maze without a number. If you don't have access to the *Dungeon Master's Guide* award 4d6 \* 10 GP worth of gold and gems.

### The Treasures

In the past, many red wizards had attempted to navigate through the maze to find Houn. Four of them met their fate in the ancient maze, and although the oozes have destroyed most of what they carried, some of it still remains. Roll on the **INDIVIDUAL TREASURE: CHALLENGE 5-10** listed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* on Page 136 whenever you see a

#### DM'S NOTE

*Sthoth was created over decades, whenever a Habilis Ooze happened to come across the corpse of the Guardian. He absorbed the fragment of the Ancient that had powered him and began warping into the creature he is today.*

### The Monsters

Oozes infest the maze. Ochre Jellies, Gelatinous Cubes and Habilis Oozes all wander the maze.

At the rock pit to the right of the maze lies Sthoth, the bearer of the aberrant shard.

Also Azar Zurn has made his way to the portal room. Zurn is a young, though ambitious, red wizard who heard about the ancient doorway and was cunning enough to realize this might be a lead on Houn. All monster stat blocks are provided in Appendix A or the *D&D Monster Manual*.

### Skulls

Whenever the characters come across a





## What the Dead Know



If the players have the spell or use a scroll to cast *speak with dead* they may want to interview the deceased wizards in the maze. The following is a list of facts and rumors the wizards know about Houn and the maze. Additionally, there are several items of recent history known only to Fadith. All of the rumors about Houn are false.

- A well respected Red Wizard Houn suddenly became introverted, distrustful and secretive. (Fact)
- Houn discovered a fount of magical energy he sought to harness and become more powerful than his brethren. (Fact)
- Houn fell in love with a beautiful mage from Waterdeep. She was struck with a sudden and deadly illness. He became obsessed with finding the cure. (Rumor)
- Houn purged all of his research before disappearing. (Fact)
- Houn fell victim to a magical plague and began wasting away. (Rumor)
- Houn completed the magical workings to make himself into a lich. (Rumor)
- Houn discovered something in the Spine of the World mountains. (Fact)
- Houn fell victim to a magical working he was attempting. He was obliterated

ed but fragments of him exist and are charged with magical energy. (Rumor)

- Houn constructed an elaborate system to obfuscate his travel. (Fact)
- Houn was hiding a source of immense magic power. (Fact)
- Houn killed several high ranking red wizards before leaving Thay. (Fact)
- 

## What Fadith Knows

Fadith knows only what was revealed to him by Zurn and what he experienced in the maze. All of the information Fadith knows is true.

- Azar Zurn is following a faint trail left by the wizard Houn.
- He heard of the doorway appearing on the Therayle farm and suspected it would help unravel the mystery of Houn.
- There are no records of Houn's work in Thay. The wizard purged them all. Azar Zurn discovered records of the manhunt for Houn.
- Zurn assumed that Houn had stumbled onto something important if the Red Wizards were hunting him.
- Fadith was killed by a Habilis Ooze when he wandered away from Zurn.
- Zurn believes something worse than the Habilis Oozes stalks the maze.

skull icon on the map without a number it indicates a combat might happen. The first time you come across such a skull roll a d4, the second time roll a d6, after that roll a d8 and compare to Table 1. This encounter is designed for four 5th level characters, if you have five 5th-level characters or four 6th-level characters add one to the result rolled.

Every 200 feet the adventurers travel they

have a chance of randomly encountering a Habilis Ooze or Ochre Jelly. Roll a 1d20, if you roll a 1 then they encounter a Habilis Ooze and on a roll of 2 they encounter two Ochre Jellies.

## Sthoth and the Pit

Sthoth is similar in appearance to a large ooze but slightly translucent and purple colored. Within him, patterns ebb and flow,





TABLE 1

ROLL	RESULT
1	No Combat
2	No Combat
3	Ochre Jelly
4	Habilis Ooze
5	2 Ochre Jellies
6	Ochre Jelly and Habilis Ooze
7	3 Ochre Jellies
8	2 Habilis Ooze
9	Habilis Ooze and 2 Ochre Jellies

similar to the appearance of oil in water. His pseudopods carry a small sliver –a piece of the Ancient– pulses with green light. (See Appendix B). His body claimed bones of the guardian and Sthoth carries around the skull to serve as his head. Sthoth is intelligent for an ooze and can communicate telepathically with other oozes in the maze. He is slow to rouse and will not attack or take any actions until the adventurers get within fifty feet of the chamber.

### Azar Zurn and the Portal Room

Azar Zurn has close cropped brown hair with a goatee and intense green eyes that glow whenever casting. He is young but ambitious. Known as a prodigy by others of his order, he has a reputation for tackling problems others see as wastes of time and getting results. Whenever Zurn heard of the

### READ TO PLAYERS

A man in red robes is examining a swirling portal. He walks through and appears unharmed on the other side before turning calmly toward you and asking, “What business do you have here?”

ancient doorway appearing, he realized it was in the same area the manhunt for Houn went cold. Zurn doesn’t care about the characters unless they have the *aberrant shard* necessary to activate the portal. If they have the shard, he will offer them 1000g for it (but will go up to 2000g without much prodding). If they refuse, he’ll ask if they mind just allowing him to borrow it to activate the portal. Finally, as a last resort he’ll attack the party.

When speaking as Zurn keep the following in mind:

- He is intelligent and well spoken.
- He considers himself more clever than others until shown otherwise.
- He won’t start a fight unless necessary, and if he sees a fight is going poorly he will not hesitate to retreat.

### Zurn’s Tactics

Zurn is as ruthless as he is intelligent. He’ll target the party member with the lowest hit points or, if no one looks particularly bad off, the healer. Then pick off the members he deduces as casters before turning to the beefier members of the party.





## Resolution

Depending on what the characters chose to do there are different resolutions. Read the following to determine what happens.

### ***Did they go through the portal?***

If yes read “Through the Portal” on this page.

### ***Did they help Houn?:***

If yes: - Read “Helping Houn” on page 17. The characters end up in the woods about two days journey from Waterdeep.

If no: - The characters return through the portal and end up back in the Maze.

### ***Did they bargain with Azar Zurn, or did he come into possession of the shard?***

If yes: Azar goes through the portal and returns shortly. He returns holding Houn’s skull. He seems puzzled at first, then tosses it to the ground annoyed. Houn mislead Azar him into bringing his skull through the portal. However, it was a simple ruse to get Houn outside the warded storeroom. As soon as he’s in the maze, Houn will notice the players and, seeing them as a lesser evil than Zurn, telepathically ask for their help, pretending to be Chorin. If Azar is questioned, he’ll simply say the portal was a waste of time, but he thinks he can use the shard to find Houn.

### ***Did they seal the urn?***

If yes: When they return to the farmhouse Hugh gives them the reward agreed upon and

thanks them for the help.

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## READ TO PLAYERS

You step through the portal and find yourself in a plain room with no windows or doors. Shelves run along two walls of the room, heaped in faded, crumbling parchment. A simple wooden table and stool sits in the middle of the room. A mummified corpse in faded red robes sits on the stool, nicely preserved in the dry, cool room. A stack of dusty parchment written in a language you don’t understand lies on the table. On one of the pages you see an illustration of a skull, which doesn’t seem particularly interesting until you notice that the tiny speck next to it is a man on a horse. Written in common in the margins, you see two words: for scale.




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## Through the Portal

If the players enter the portal they will be transported deep below Thay to the sealed study built by Houn and Chorin. The study is a mostly empty 20 foot square room. Shelves line two walls and are heaped with dusty, tattered parchment, the remains of Houn’s research. A desk sits in the middle of the room and seated at the desk is a mummified corpse in faded red robes. The table is covered in papers like the shelves. All of the research left in the study is useless and can’t be used to find the location of the skull.

On the shelves the players find a scroll of speak with dead, a scroll of light and a scroll





**HABILIS OOZE**

of fabricate.

The room has no natural exits. Characters must exit via the portal which will only activate for a bearer of an ancient bone shard. When they exit, they find themselves no longer in the maze, but in a wooded area.

If the players cast speak with dead on the corpse they can have a conversation with the deceased Houn. If they do not have the ability to cast speak with dead, remember it is among the scrolls on the shelves. Houn is cagey and deceitful and will try to mislead the players about who he is and what he discovered. Do not reveal Houn's name or nature right away. Lead the players to believe he is Chorin for as long as possible. Refer to the notes that follow on how to play this encounter.

### **Playing Houn**

With his death, all of Houn's paranoid fears came to fruition. Portray him as deeply suspicious, dodging and questioning. Houn will avoid giving the players any useful information for as long as possible and will

avoid using any names that could clue them in. Houn's ultimate goal is to convince the players to undertake a dangerous mission to revive him, so that he can seek revenge on Chorin and take control of the powerful skull.

Houn will not mention that he knows the location of the skull unless directly asked. He will not mention the attack on the conclave of red wizards. He has no knowledge of the state the maze is currently in but assumes the players bested his Guardian if they found their way to the study.

Play Houn in a manner that obscures the fact that he isn't Chorin. At least at first. Make vague references to his distrust of Chorin "I should have known he would kill me, he became obsessed in his jealousy of me. I was always the better wizard, even when we were young." If he is asked who he is Houn answers vaguely like "merely a seeker of knowledge and power," or "a wizard of no small ability." If asked about his assistant Houn refers to him as a "snake in the weeds" or "that pitiful and wretched wizard".

If the players show Houn the fragment of the Ancient, he will reluctantly relate the story of his research. He will dodge questions about the nature of the fragment's potential power and suggest it just "disturbs the weave."

Houn won't dodge direct questions. If asked if he is Houn, he will admit it. If asked about the drawing of the skull, he admits that there may be more pieces of the Ancient still to be







discovered. Once he is found out, Houn will pressure the players to try and resurrect him. He will offer to guide them to find the skull. He will insinuate he can give them great power. This is no deception. Houn can, and will, gladly deliver on both of those offers in exchange for their help. The only thing he wants more than revenge on Chorin is the power of the skull. Houn will not beg though, he is too proud for that.

### **Helping Houn**

If the players decide to help Houn. He will suggest that they remove his head for ease of carrying him along with them. Once they step through the portal and into the woods, he will describe to them to an area with a hidden lock box that contains a ring that allows the wearer to speak with dead once per day. It also contains 1000g in a bag of holding. At this point, Houn explains that the store-room was warded, trapping his spirit and body within and that by bringing him outside he will be able to begin to make “arrangements” for his resurrection. This concludes the adventure. The story of Houn and Chorin and the Aberrant Ancient will continue in *The Bones of the Wizard* and *The Skull Upon the Heights*.





## Appendix A: Monsters

### Habilis Ooze

The Habilis Ooze is a unique creature that has the ability to adapt to nearly any environment. These oozes are blank templates until they encounter outside stimuli, at which point they gain new abilities.

#### Habilis Ooze

*Medium ooze, unaligned*

---

#### Armor Class 7

**Hit Points** 75 (10d8 + 30)

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

---

**Damage Immunities** acid, slashing

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

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. passive Perception 8

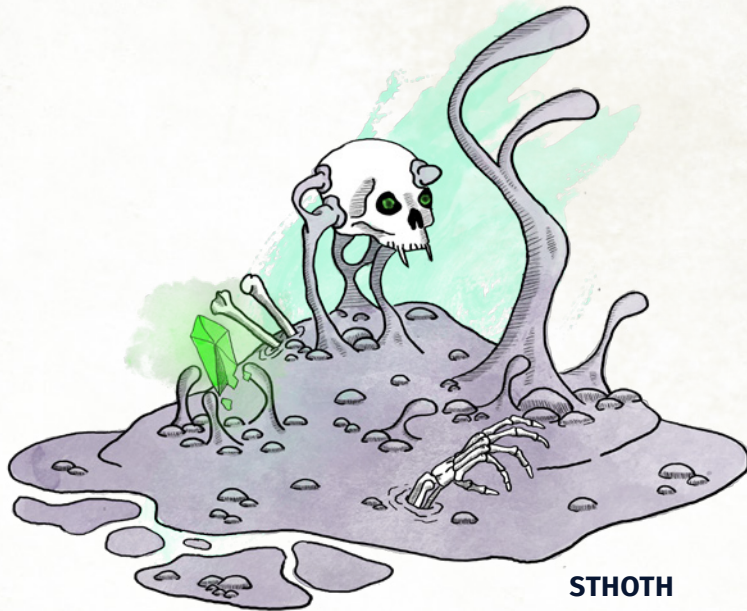
**Languages** -

**Challenge** 4 (1100 XP)

---

**Amorphous.** The Habilis Ooze can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

**Natural Adaptation.** When a Habilis Ooze is hit by any type of damage, after taking damage they gain resistance to that damage type at the beginning of their next turn. In addition,



they gain the ability to deal damage of that type.

#### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) bludgeoning damage + 12 acid damage or any other type of damage the Habilis ooze can deal.

#### Sthoth

*Large ooze, unaligned*

---

#### Armor Class 7

**Hit Points** 102(12d10 + 36)

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	5 (-3)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

---

**Damage Immunities** acid, slashing

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

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. passive Perception 8

**Languages** -

**Challenge** 7 (2900 XP)





**Amorphous.** Sthoth can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

**Natural Adaptation.** When Sthoth is hit by any type of damage, after taking damage he gains resistance to that damage type at the beginning of his next turn. In addition, he gains the ability to deal damage of that type.

#### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) bludgeoning damage + 12 acid damage or any other type of damage Sthoth ooze can deal.

#### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Sthoth can take 3 legendary actions, using the Aberrant Surge option below. He can take only one legendary action at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Sthoth regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Aberrant Surge.** Roll a d4.

- 1: Nothing happens
- 2: A pulse of green light emanates from Sthoth. Everyone in a 20 ft. radius must make a DC 12 Constitution save or be blinded for 1 minute. Creatures can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on a success.
- 3: A beam from the skull Sthoth carries shoots out and hits a target. That target must make a DC 12 Constitution save or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending

the effect on a success.

4: Sthoth makes a Pseudopod attack against a target within range.

#### Azar Zurn

*Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (16 with mage armor) Hit

**Points** 60 (11d8 + 11)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+1)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Arcana +7, Deception +5, Persuasion +5,

**Stealth** +6 Senses passive Perception 11

**Languages** - Common, Draconic, Infernal, Thayan

**Challenge** 6 (2300 XP)

**Special Equipment.** Azar carries three scrolls: speak with dead, greater invisibility and detect thoughts

**Spellcasting.** Azar is a 11th level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability in Intelligence (spell save D 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at-will): *fire bolt, minor illusion, prestidigitation and chill touch.*

1st level (4 slots): *shield, magic missile, mage armor, charm person*

2nd level (3 slots): *alter self, misty step, mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, haste, fireball*





4th level (3 slots): *Evvard's black tentacles*, *polymorph*  
5th level (2 slots): *wall of force*, *conjure elemental*  
6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability*

#### ACTIONS

**Rapier.** Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

#### Gelatinous Cube

*Large ooze, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 6

**Hit Points** 84 (8d10 + 40)

**Speed** 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	3 (-4)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

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

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Ooze Cube.** The cube takes up its entire space. Other creatures can enter the space, but a creature that does so is subjected to the cube's Engulf and has disadvantage on the saving throw. Creatures inside the cube can be seen but have total cover. A creature within 5 feet of the cube can take an action to pull a creature or object out of the cube. Doing so requires a successful DC 12 Strength check,

and the creature making the attempt takes 10 (3d6) acid damage. The cube can hold only one Large creature or up to four Medium or smaller creatures inside it at a time.

**Transparent.** Even when the cube is in plain sight, it takes a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot a cube that has neither moved nor attacked. A creature that tries to enter the cube's space while unaware of the cube is surprised by the cube.

#### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (3d6) acid damage.

**Engulf.** The cube moves up to its speed. While doing so, it can enter Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Whenever the cube enters a creature's space, the creature must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a successful save, the creature can choose to be pushed 5 feet back or to the side of the cube. A creature that chooses not to be pushed suffers the consequences of a failed saving throw. On a failed save, the cube enters the creature's space, and the creature takes 10 (3d6) acid damage and is engulfed. The engulfed creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the cube's turns. When the cube moves, the engulfed creature moves with it. An engulfed creature can try to escape by taking an action to make a DC 12 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes and enters a space of its choice within 5 feet of the cube.





### Ochre Jelly

*Large ooze, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 45 (6d10 + 12)

**Speed** 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15(+2)	6(-2)	14(+2)	2(-4)	6(-2)	1(-5)

**Damage Resistances** acid

**Damage Immunities** lightning, slashing

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

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Amorphous.** The jelly can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

**Spider Climb.** The jelly can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

#### ACTIONS

**Pseudopod.** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) acid damage.

#### REACTIONS

**Split.** When a jelly that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new jellies if it has at least 10

hit points. Each new jelly has hit points equal to half the original jelly's, rounded down. New jellies are one size smaller than the original jelly.





### Appendix B: Aberrant Casting

If casting a spell within 30 ft. of Sthoth (or the *aberrant shard*), the caster must roll 2d6 and consult the following table.

TABLE 2

ROLL	RESULT
2	The spell fizzles and the slot is consumed.
3-4	The spell functions as if you cast it in a slot one lower. If this would lower it to below its minimum slot the spell fizzles.
5-9	The spell deals an additional 1d6 of damage if the spell deals damage or heals an additional 1d6 if it heals.
10-11	The spell functions as if you cast it in a spell slot one higher.
12	You cast the spell, but the slot is not consumed.

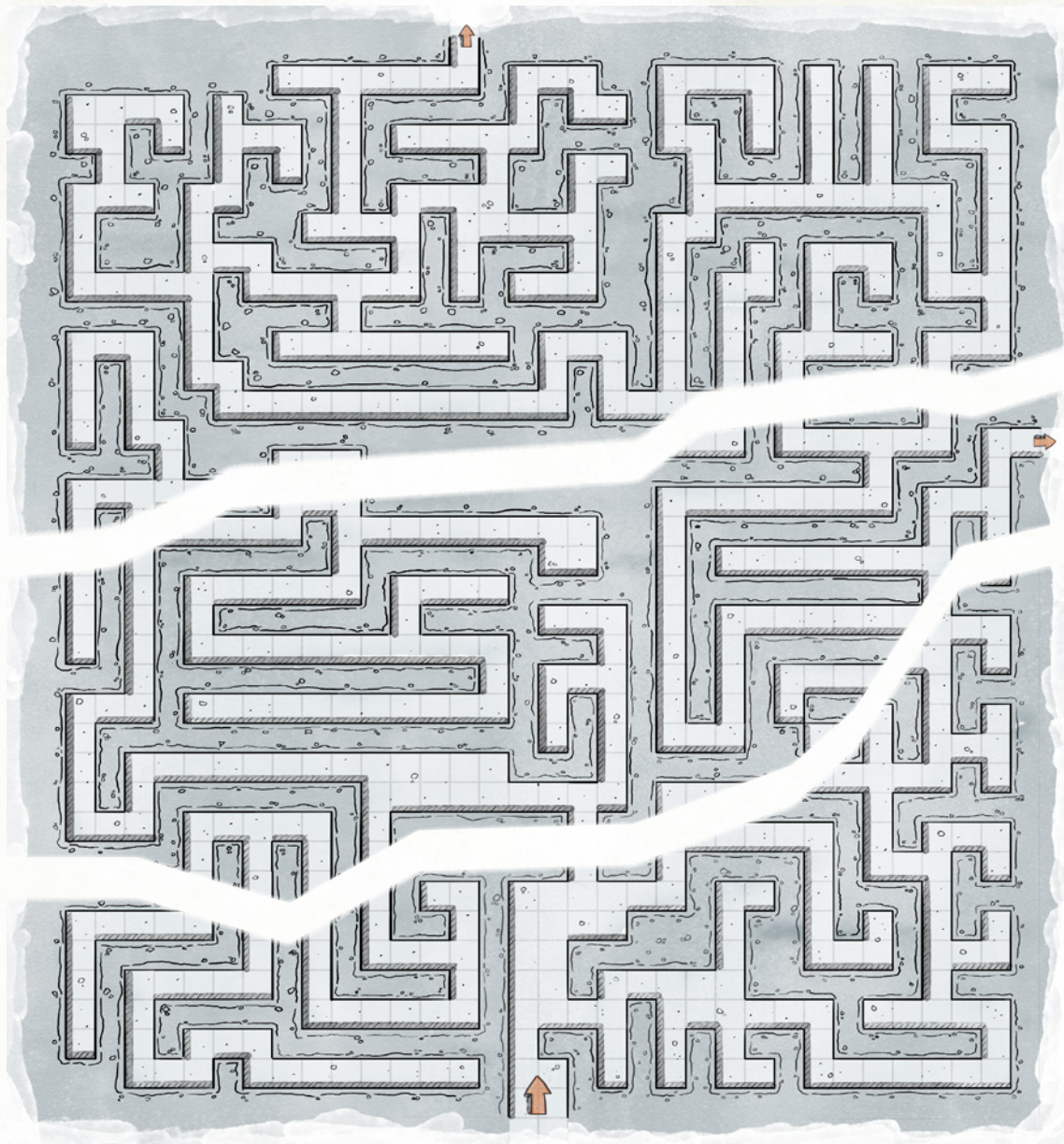




### Appendix C: Player Handouts

Give these scraps of map to the players to assist them in navigating the maze.

To download the maps from this adventure visit: <http://www.brokenknives.com/maze-beneath-maps>



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