

Quests of Doom

ADVENTURES WORTH WINNING

Volume 1

5th Edition Rules,
1st Edition Feel



FIFTH EDITION
COMPATIBLE



NECROMANCER
GAMES

QUESTS OF DOOM

Quests of Doom

Volume 1

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Bugs
&
Blobs

The Noble Rot

By J. Collura

The Noble Rot is a location-based adventure for characters of 5th to 8th level. This adventure can be played in one or two sessions of reasonable length. It is a straightforward, haunted house-style adventure.

The story revolves around Le Chateau Gluant, a vineyard and winery of repute. Vintages of its famous white (chardonnay) and red blend (cabernet sauvignon) are sought throughout the land. Some vintages can bring up to 200 gp per bottle from the right buyer. A case (twelve bottles) of the wine in pristine condition can fetch up to 1,500 gp. Unfortunately, the winery fell upon dark days and the prized wine has not flowed from its cellars for a few years.

Approximately five years ago, the head winemaker, Malcolm Roth, hired Tobias Suey as an apprentice. Unfortunately for Roth, Suey was a member of the Cultus Limus (Cult of the Ooze). The Cultus Limus makes sacrifices to its demonic master Lumasz in her faceless form. Lumasz or “she who erases” is an ancient demoness who preys upon travelers by drinking their blood. She is the cause of nightmares, pestilence, infestation of pure water, and a bringer of disease, sickness, and death. Her worshipped form in Cultus Limus is that of a gigantic ooze.

Suey turned the field hands who tended the vines against the winemaker. Then the new cult turned its attention to the Gluant family. Eventually the cult members started preying on each other. With each sacrifice to the ooze, Suey’s power grew—until there was no one left but Suey.

The whim of demons is fickle. Suey was blighted and corrupted for his work. Now he deep in the cellars under the chateau as a minor ooze demon. His handiwork, however, remains. The chateau is now the abode of its former residents and workers, in undead form. Also slimes, molds, fungi, and other foulness festers in the fields, buildings, and cellars. The riches of the Gluant family remain undisturbed; would-be thieves and robbers quickly fall prey to the current residents. Besides normal valuables, cases of wine remain undisturbed and waiting to be plundered.

The title *The Noble Rot* refers to a few factors in this adventure. The first is the rot that befell the Gluant family in the form of the Cultus Limus. Another is actual *noble rot* disease that may aid the PCs in overcoming the challenges posed. The phrase also refers to a real-world gray fungus, *Botrytis cinerea*, which in the right conditions creates world-class dessert wines such as French sauternes. In the wrong conditions, it destroys grapes and is known as gray rot.

Notes for the GM

The Noble Rot is a straightforward location-based adventure. Each location operates fairly independently of the others. The slime in one area is not going to communicate with creatures in other areas. This is a good adventure for a new GM, because of its simplicity.

The GM is strongly recommended to make this adventure his or her own. For example, there are rooms in the upper Chateau that are available for the GM to script. Also a bit of knowledge about winemaking is not only recommended but also highly encouraged! For those of legal age, sampling some of the types of wines discussed in the adventure might help to bring certain scenes to life. Also, you may never look at certain wines the same way after the Crushing Room encounter.

So before you start rolling d20s, put the dice down, grab a goblet of wine (or grape juice) and read this adventure thoroughly before starting to play. Make notes, change names, understand the situation in the chateau, and take ownership of the adventure. It may be that instead of a winery, the chateau specialized in producing herbalist concoctions or poisons for an

assassin’s guild. Whichever way you play it, there are no wrong choices.

One final note is that the Author would caution against making this a brewery. There is a particularly vile and wretched brewmaster that may be found in a future Necromancer Games book that would take an exception to making a winery into a brewery.

Background

This adventure begins when characters enter the vicinity of Le Chateau Gluant. The chateau can be placed in any remote area. Obviously a small estate full of ooze and undead is unlikely to be right around the bend from a busy town. Thus a remote area is necessary.

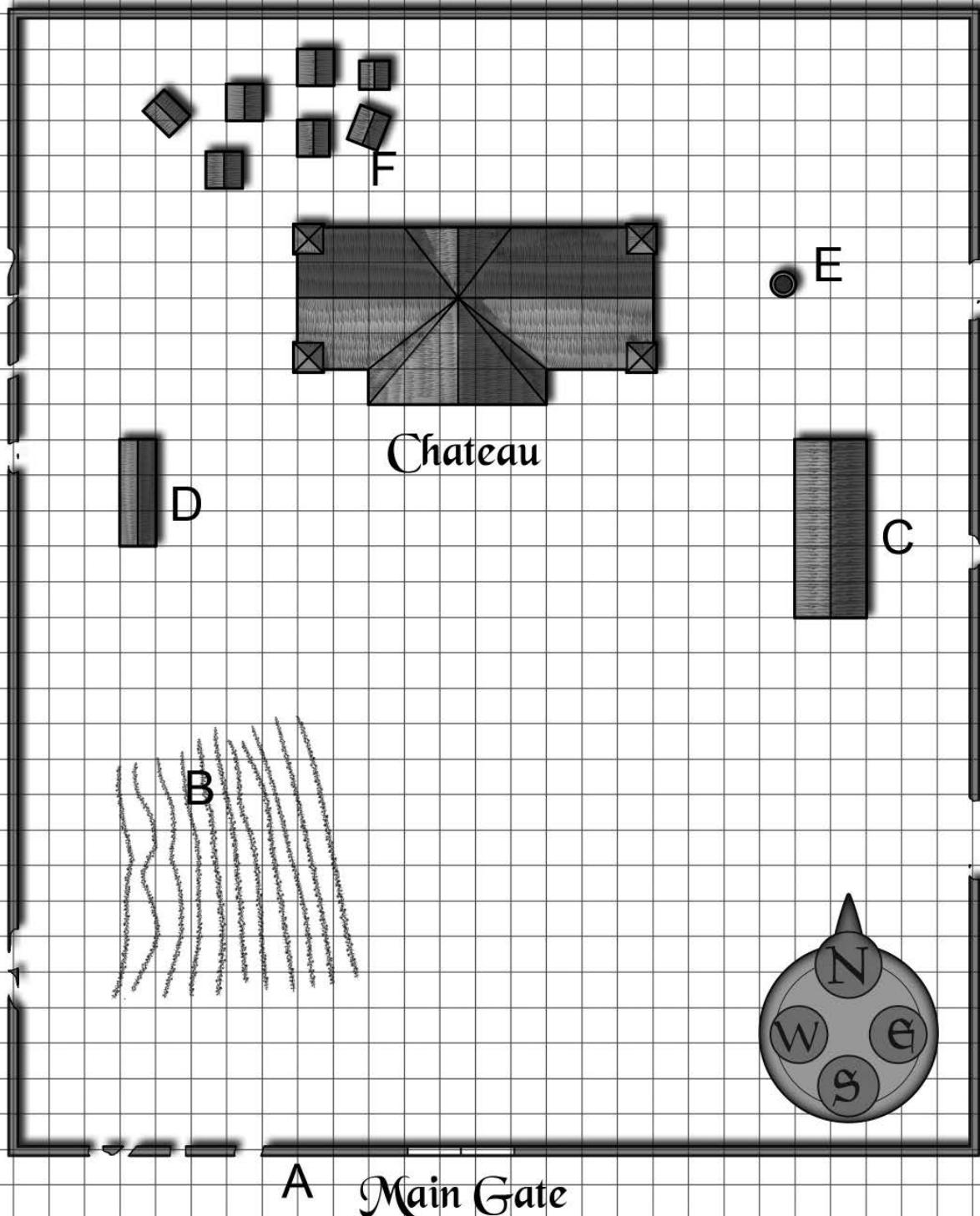
The climate and geography can be any temperate clime. It would not be

Rumors

1. The chateau has been abandoned for at least three years.
2. The chateau produced wines for over 200 years.
3. The red and white wines the chateau produced are equally prized.
4. The chateau sourced its oak barrels from a cooper who lived on the property.
5. The chateau is the hangout of a gang of highwaymen. [False]
6. Beware of the vines around the chateau. Some of them move like snakes.
7. The family that owned the chateau was very wealthy.
8. The Gluant family that owned the chateau were demon worshippers. [False]
9. The undead walk in the night around the chateau.
10. Under no circumstance should you open the old crushing tank.
11. Bring fire and oil with you. The dead and muck are both alive, but fear fire.
12. Brimstone (sulfur) is good for killing rot.
13. Some winemakers used sulfur to kill rot and preserve wine.
14. If you go to the chateau, bring a priest who can turn away the unliving.
15. Deep beneath the chateau are the cellars where the most prized wines were stored.
16. A cult of demon worshippers caused the downfall of the chateau.
17. The Gluant family collected silverwork and kept it hidden in their quarters.
18. A cult of demon worshippers met secretly in the caves below the chateau.
19. In one of the wine bottles, the Gluant family kept a djinn. [False]
20. There is a secret entrance to the caverns from the upper level. It is a ladder built into the walls.
21. If you find sulfur, be sure to not mix it with water. That will make a witches’ brew that can melt anything.
22. There was a cult called the Cultus Limus. The fall of the chateau appears to be its handiwork.

Noble Rot The Grounds

1 square - 20 feet



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logical to place a vineyard in an icy fjord or on a tropical island. A remote hillside location is ideal.

In some campaigns, it may be the adventurers are desperately seeking money. The liquid treasure in the cellars might be just the type of treasure that suits the GM better than the characters. Sometimes it's good to replace easily-spent gold with items that are not fungible so the GM has more control over the adventurers' cash flow. Each bottle found in this adventure is an opportunity for a side adventure, as characters seek out reputable (or disreputable) merchants to buy the wine. Some bottles have spoiled, and if the spoilage goes unnoticed, a wine merchant who bought faulty merchandise is likely to come looking for his money back—or possibly seeking bloodier revenge—and always at the worst possible time.

The chateau grounds have three areas. The first is a low wall and the vineyard. This also includes a few outer buildings where the former workers used to live and work. The second area is the chateau itself. This is a large manor house with three levels. The third area is the cellars, a cave system that expands into the bedrock below the chateau. Deep in the caves is the lair of Suey, the ooze demon.

The entire area is permeated with corruption and evil. Any attempt to detect evil registers evil all around, which is generally useless information.

The weather is up to you. It would be very appropriate for the chateau to be experiencing a mild storm with random lightning strikes. Visiting the chateau in the evening or night would also increase the ambiance of this haunted house.

Local knowledge about the chateau is sparse. Locals are aware that the chateau has not been producing its famous vintages for a few years. It is also rumored that something vile befell the chateau. But because of its remoteness, no one has bothered to check on it. The Rumor Table provides snippets of information about the chateau, with more useful pieces of information being higher on the table.

Adventure Hooks

The most obvious way to begin the adventure is also the easiest: the PCs simply happen upon the “abandoned” chateau as they’re traveling in a remote area. Perhaps it offers respite during a storm. Maybe the PCs are familiar with the wines of Chateau Gluant and want to explore the ruins for a bottle. If that doesn’t work for your campaign, several alternatives are offered below.

- Someone hires the PCs to recover a case of Chateau Gluant. This could be a merchant guild that is looking to make a small pile of gold, or it could be a benefactor who the PCs have worked with in the past and to whom they owe a favor.

- Characters hear a tragic story about someone who visited the chateau and was never seen again. This could be a farmer’s wife who made it to a walled town and is pleading passersby for assistance against whatever befell her husband. Or it might be a princeling and his retainers who went missing, or a distant relative of one of the characters.

- A third hook is that the PCs are on the run from the law, from a local band of thugs, or from the assassin’s guild or some other underworld element, and they need a remote spot to lay low until the heat blows over. This hook is particularly promising for unsavory parties. The chateau with its reputation for being haunted is a good hideout.

- Perhaps a cleric character has a vision of abject horror, along with instructions from his or her deity to destroy it and an inkling of where to find it. Alternatively, a priest at a local temple could have the vision but lacks the courage, stamina, or ability to do something about it.

Whatever the hook, be mindful of what motivates your players. Some players enjoy roleplay, some focus on combat, and some just want the loot. Use those desires to your advantage.

Noble Rot Disease

At many places throughout the adventure, characters will come into contact with various aspects of winemaking, including the vines, the barn, the crushing facility, and the wine itself. Everything inside the chateau

is overrun with the gray fungus that causes noble rot disease. This can be both an obstacle and an opportunity for the characters. There are no descriptions in the adventure of where or when characters must check to see whether they succumb to the disease. A good rule of thumb would be that at the end of every hour spent within the walls of the chateau, characters must make a successful DC 10 Con check or contract noble rot. You can make this check easier or more difficult, and make it more or less frequent, depending on how badly you want the characters to get sick.

A character who becomes infected with noble rot loses 1d3 points of Constitution, but he or she also gains 1d6 points in the prime attribute of their class (other than Constitution). Both effects last 2d6 + 12 hours or until the character is cured of the disease magically.

The signs of the disease are a gray pallor to the skin, profuse sweating, and terrible body odor. Everything the diseased character tastes, including water, is exceedingly sweet. The disease is not contagious from person to person. It can only be acquired by being in contact with the gray fungus.

There is no mundane cure other than to let the disease run its course. Magical cures work normally. A character who recovers from the disease becomes immune to it.

Descriptions and Searches

Each encounter begins with a description for the GM. This is not meant to be read aloud to the players. It lists the bare essentials for running the encounter with a few items of flavor. You should paraphrase this information to your players, using your own words and style.

Some encounters also include a paragraph labeled “Search.” This describes additional features or items that can be found by characters who invest a few minutes in an active search, not just a quick scan of the area.

A paragraph labeled “Fine” describes features that will be found only by the most diligent searchers. Characters don’t need to be Sherlock Holmes, but they do need to spend at least ten minutes conducting a thorough Search: You can call for a Perception or Investigation skill check during these searches if you like, but we prefer to rely on the players’ diligence and care in these cases rather than on their luck with dice.

The Vineyard

A. Outer Wall and Entrance

A simple cobblestone wall surrounds the entire estate and vineyard. It is only 4 feet high, so characters can climb over it easily at any location. The wall has fallen into disrepair. There are loose stones in many places and a few locations where the wall has collapsed completely. At the main entrance, a rusted signpost proclaims “L Ch t au Iuant—Vin Sup ior.” Many of the letters have fallen to the ground. There is also a side entrance that once had a wooden gate. All that remains of the gate are two rusty hinges. If, after you’ve described the dilapidated condition of the wall, anyone climbs it without first checking its solidity, then roll 1d6; on a 1 or 2, the wall collapses on that reckless character and does 1d4 bludgeoning damage.

Search: A stretch of wall can be found where some previous intruder scratched or chalked a dwarven rune onto the stone that signifies safe passage. This 40-foot section of wall is perfectly solid.

B. Living Vines

Originally the area within the low wall held orderly rows of vines. To the west were vines with varieties of red grapes (“black berries,” in the parlance of winemakers). This included cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc, and petite verdot. To the east were vines with varieties of white. These vines were exclusively chardonnay.

Today the vineyard is one tangled mass of grapevines and brush. Where once there were hand-pruned vines and cleared, gravelly rows, now there

THE NOBLE ROT

is only wild, unintended growth. The vines no longer produce the noble varietals. Instead the berries are putrid green. Some are shriveled while others are overly large. Instead of the sweet juice of what Galileo called captured or trapped sunshine, the berries contain a foul-smelling fluid similar to pus.

The chateau and its surrounding buildings can be reached only by plowing through the mass of vines. The low wall contained the sick vines within the property, but in some places, they grow up to 15 feet high.

To get through this extremely dense, tough tangle, characters must either use magic (*freedom of movement*, *gaseous form*, *flight*) or they must hack a path through. The plants won't burn; they're too slimy. A character cutting a path must have a suitable slashing weapon. The character can advance a number of feet per minute equal to his or her Strength modifier + proficiency bonus; for example, a 5th-level character with Strength 16 can advance 5 feet per minute. Hacking creates a path 2 feet wide.

Fine Search: Exceptional eyes may find the remains of former adventurers who tried to traverse the vineyard. Rusty weapons or an old, dented helm might be found, but the real prize is a sack of small, semiprecious stones worth 115 gp and a *potion of lesser restoration*.

Living Vines: For every 10 minutes characters spend in the vineyard, roll 1d6. On a result of 5 or 6, they are attacked by a living vine. These creatures are described fully in the "New Monsters" appendix at the end of the adventure. Whether each living vine has the remains of other adventurers and their belongings scattered around it is up to you.

(Living Vine: AC 12, 33 hp; +6 to hit, 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled [tendril], plus +6 to hit a grappled creature, 2d4 + 3 piercing damage [bite], plus automatic hits against up to 3 creatures grappled at the start of the vine's turn, 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage [constrict])

C. Barn

The barn is a rickety wooden structure. It is two stories tall. There are no windows. The roof of the barn is thick with a sickly green moss. The moss is actually a mass of olive slime. The olive slime won't move to attack the PCs—unless the barn itself collapses.

The barn has a single set of double doors. The doors are chained together with a fairly simple lock (can be picked with a successful DC 12 Dex check and a set of thieves' tools). Written in Common in blood (which may be difficult to see at night) are the words "DO NOT OPEN."

The inside of the barn used to house the tools and carts that were used in the vineyard. During the downfall, some of the field hands used the tools to fend off attack and carted away what they could as they escaped. The barn was left empty except for two draft horses. Later, the Cultus Limus members found having undead wandering around was a nuisance, so they rounded up the slime zombies and caged them in the barn.

Along with the **eight slime zombies** are what's left of the draft horses: **two slime zombie horses**. None of these zombies has had anything to eat for years, so they are lethargic when characters first enter the barn. The prospect of fresh meat quickly rouses them.

The barn is so near to collapse that fighting inside it is very dangerous; every melee attack and concussive spell has a chance to bring it down. Every attack roll that results in a 2–5 causes damage to the barn; a natural 1 on an attack roll is a critical hit against the barn. Roll damage normally for these attacks; when accumulated damage on the barn reaches 20, it collapses, doing 3d6 bludgeoning damage to everything inside. This also brings the olive slime on the roof down onto the combatants. Each character has a 1-in-6 chance of being hit directly by falling olive slime, and another 1d6 randomly-located patches of it drop into the ruins of the barn.

Search: A search of the barn will find a small crate in the corner of a former stall. In the crate are three vintages of the chateau Gluant red blend. The bottles have the famous red wax seal with the Gluant crest (the head of an eagle) emblazoned in the wax. Unfortunately, two are spoiled. One is obviously spoiled, with a large crack down the neck of the bottle. The other is not noticeable, as the crack is along the red seal. To the right

buyer, the unspoiled wine is worth up to 125 gp per bottle. The zombies and olive slime have no treasure, but one of the zombies has the key to the lock for Area D in a rotting pouch on its belt.

(Olive Slime Zombie x8: AC 9, 26 hp; +3 to hit, 1d8 + 1 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the olive slime smeared on it. If the olive slime is not noticed and removed within two minutes, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and is infested with olive slime; collapses into a full-strength pool of olive slime when slain)

(Olive Slime Zombie Horse x2: AC 8, 30 hp; +4 to hit, 1d8 + 2 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the olive slime smeared on it; if olive slime is not removed within two minutes, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and is infested with olive slime; collapses into a full-strength pool of olive slime when slain)

(Olive Slime: AC 11, 14 hp; +3 to hit, target creature must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the olive slime that dripped onto it; if olive slime is not removed within two minutes, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and is infested with olive slime)

D. Cooper House and Workshop

This modest three-room house and workshop is near the stable. It was the former home of the Gluant family cooper. The cooper is an important person in the running of any winery. The Gluants used fine oak from a nearby forest to make barrels for aging their wines. While most wines in the area were not aged, the Gluants developed techniques to control oxidation that could ruin the wine. A key factor in these techniques was the skill of the master cooper and his apprentices.

That is all in the past, as the master cooper was one of the first to be sacrificed to the demon. An apprentice named Rall betrayed him. This led to the deaths of the master cooper and his family. Rall was richly rewarded for his treachery; Suey slit his throat and practiced his power by raising Rall as a ghoul and then locking him inside the cooper's house and workshop.

The house has a double-door entrance with a normal lock (can be picked with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 10 Dex check). The key for this lock can be found on one of the zombies in Area C. The door is below an overhang that functioned as a porch for the residence. There are shuttered windows adjacent to the door on the side that served as the master cooper's residence. The shutters are stuck shut; they can be forced open with a successful DC 12 Strength check.

The door opens into the former cooper's workshop. The workshop was ransacked before Rall was locked up. There are a few metal tools, an anvil, and a brazier. Hanging from the ceiling are many loops of metal that the cooper used when forming his barrels. In one end is a pile of sawdust and wood scraps. Making their home in the debris pile is a **swarm of rats**.

Adjacent to the cooper's workshop is the large room where the cooper lived. All of the furniture was smashed to bits by Rall when he realized he was trapped. A single set of drawers survived. It is propped against one of the walls.

A small bedroom is connected to the cooper's room by a half-open door. This room contains a single chair and a bed with a moldy mattress. There is a misshapen lump on the bed, under a torn blanket. This is the rotting corpse of one of the cooper's adult sons. Rall is beneath the bed. He is almost certain to hear them in the main room, unless the characters take extensive precautions against making noise. When a character approaches within a few feet of the bed, Rall springs up and dumps the mattress and corpse onto the unsuspecting characters. This trick earns him tactical advantage on his initiative roll.

Search: Beneath the refuse pile in the workshop is a small sack of 20 cp. However, these are rare coins that could be sold to the right seller for

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100 gp! In the set of drawers in the family room are a silver mirror and a leaky flask of oil.

Fine Search: The cooper was a stingy man who hoarded his earnings. He stuffed his money into a secret alcove in the wall between his bedroom and the workshop. The cache can be found with an extensive search and a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check. The hiding spot behind a loose board in the paneling contains 196 gp in a flour sack.

(Rall [Ghoul]: AC 12, 22 hp; +2 to hit, 2d6 + 2 piercing damage [bite]; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 slashing damage and the target must make a successful DC 10 Con saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute or until it makes a successful save at the end of its turn)

(Swarm of Rats: AC 10, 24 hp; +2 to hit, 2d6 piercing damage, or 1d6 piercing damage if the swarm has 12 or fewer hp [bite]; can enter and remain in another creature's space and move through tiny openings)

E. Well

Outside of the chateau is a circular stone well. It has no bucket or pulley. There is a faint residue of magic around the well that can be detected with a successful DC 10 Int (Arcana) check. The well is 40 feet deep and has clear water at the bottom. If light is shined down the well, something can be seen twinkling under the water.

Climbing down the inside of the well should be easy because of the large stones lining it, but the stones are slimy and slippery; climbing down or up without a rope requires a successful DC 15 Dex check. Falling into the shallow water does one-half the normal falling damage.

The reflecting item under the water is merely a shiny tin cup. The water is fresh, however, and clear of any taint from the slimy evil infecting the

vineyard, thanks to the spell cast on it by a previous group of adventurers seeking a fresh water source. That's what caused the faint magical residue.

F. Huts

Behind the chateau are seven huts where field workers and other staff lived. Originally these had individual garden plots for the families of the workers, but the vines have taken over the entire area. Within the huts are meager possessions that are unlikely to interest any PC. Feel free, however, to flesh out this area and add extra monsters or traps to suit yourself and your players. Alternatively, if you don't want the players to waste time investigating an area where there's nothing to be found, the huts could all be collapsed, burned, or destroyed by some other means.

Chateau, Ground Floor

I-A. Entry

The chateau itself looks like a small castle. It is two stories tall and has tall, narrow windows that resemble arrow slits on all sides. Where a window is wide enough for a person to squeeze through, there are metal bars that make entry impossible for all but the smallest of PCs (Small characters of Str 9 or less, stripped of all armor and gear). There are small minarets and faux stone towers at each end. These towers don't serve any purpose other than decoration.

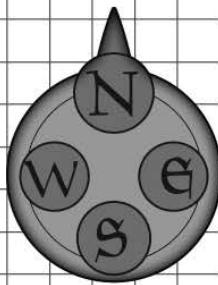
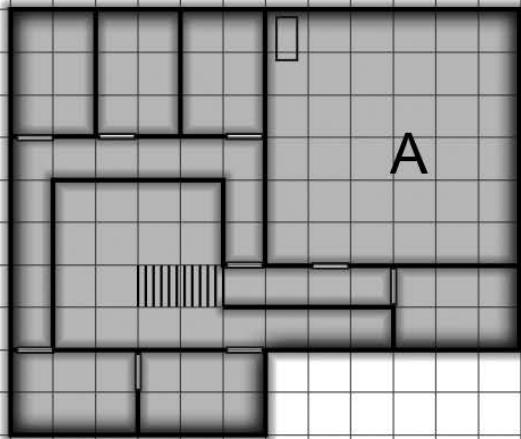
A row of six gargoyles perches along the front of the building. One **gargoyle** is alive, and the other five are stone carvings. The living gargoyle is impossible to distinguish, but a careful search of the bushes along the front of the building reveals the original stone carving that the gargoyle

THE NOBLE ROT

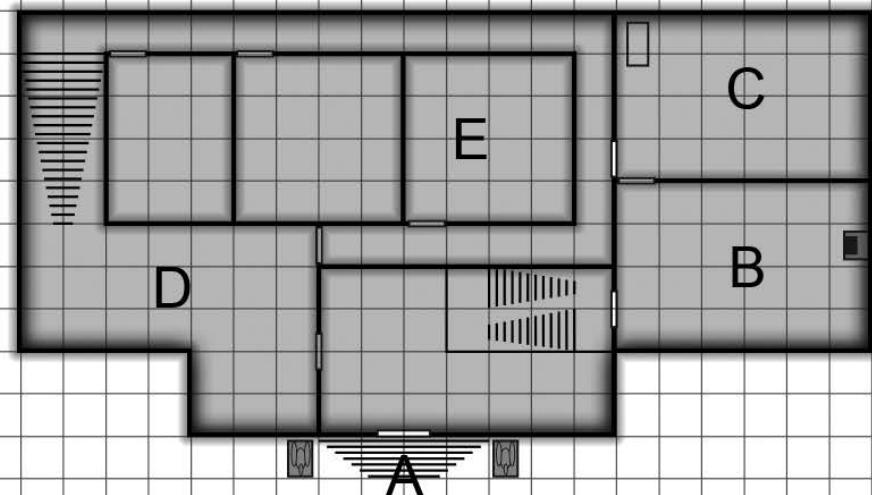
Noble Rot
The Chateau

1 square - 10 feet

Level Two



Level One



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toppled from the roof so it could take that spot. If the party contains a gnome character, the gargoyle is sure to attack and try to fly off with such a tasty morsel. The gargoyle has no treasure.

The main entrance to the chateau is up a set of wide stone stairs. On each side of the stairs are statues of griffons. They've been broken and defaced with filth and muck. The double oaken doors are unlocked. One is stuck tight, but the other opens easily.

Beyond the door is a two-story foyer. A curved staircase leads to the upper level. The staircase is rotten. There is a 1-in-4 chance that a character weighing over 200 pounds (most Medium characters in armor meet these criteria) crashes through the staircase, taking 1d4 bludgeoning damage. If the stairs break three times, the entire staircase collapses, causing 2d6 bludgeoning damage to everyone on it.

There is evidence of combat in the foyer: broken arrows, an axe handle, blood stains, and scorch marks. It was here that Master Gluant made his last stand before being dragged off to the sacrificial pit.

On either side of the foyer are double doors. One leads to the parlor (Area 1-B) and the other to the ballroom (Area 1-D).

Search: Beneath the stairs is a small room where the porter slept on a cot. The porter pilfered two bottles of the white Chateau Gluant wine. Both are in good condition (65 gp each to the right buyer).

(Gargoyle: AC 15, 52 hp; +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [bite] and +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 slashing damage [claws])

I-B. Parlor

The parlor adjacent to the foyer is in fairly good shape. There are long couches, a large marble bar, and numerous stuffed animals. The trophies include a buffalo head, a moose head, a complete brown bear, many rabbits, a woodchuck, and a beaver. This was a tasting room of sorts for the Gluants. Here they would entertain merchants and passing aristocracy. The trophies from Gluant's hunts would be the usual and boring conversation topics.

In the fireplace is a mostly-burned but still recognizable stuffed lynx. One of the less intelligent cult members tried to burn it for heat but gave up partway through when he discovered it didn't burn very well. Lurking in the ashes is a gray ooze. It quivers slightly when characters enter the room, causing the burned lynx and the ashes to move visibly. Any character who decides to stab their weapon into the ash might regret it.

Fine Search: Within the stuffed bear's head cavity are a couple of large rubies (75 gp each) that Master Gluant kept in case of emergency.

(Gray Ooze: AC 8, 22 hp; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 bludgeoning damage plus 2d6 acid damage and metal armor loses 1 pt. of AC; nonmagical metal weapons that strike the ooze gain a cumulative -1 penalty on damage and are destroyed if the penalty reaches -5).

I-C. Kitchen

Unlike most of the chateau, the kitchen saw service for many months after the fall of the Gluant family. The Cultus Limus used the kitchen as a commissary and meeting place. Thus there are a number of outdoor wooden tables and benches wedged into the room. The oven is fairly clean. The room has been cleared of any cleavers, knives, or means of making fire.

At one end of the kitchen is a crude dumb waiter. It has a 5 foot by 2 foot opening covered by a wooden door on sagging hinges. Alongside the door is another opening in the wall containing two ropes; pulling on one raises the dumbwaiter, and pulling the other lowers it. The shaft rises to the master's quarters (Area 2-A) on the floor above. The platform is currently between floors. The pulley is jammed with muck and both ropes are coated with slime, so it would take either a successful DC 15 Str check or 15 minutes of rather icky cleaning work to make the dumb waiter operational.

If characters free the pulley, the platform crashes down to this level. It's immediately followed by a gelatinous cube that was trapped in the shaft by the cult. The cube oozes through the opening like jell-o before bouncing back to its typical size and shape. Because it's entirely transparent, only those characters who make a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check see the ooze. Everyone else sees a human skeleton that appears to "float" through the opening and hover before them. It wears a silver necklace (10 gp) that also appears to float around its neck.

(Gelatinous Cube: AC 6, 84 hp; +4 to hit, 3d6 acid damage; can enter another creature's spaces as it moves, and that creature must make a successful DC 12 Dex saving throw or take 3d6 acid damage and be engulfed; engulfed creatures take 6d6 damage at the start of the cube's turns, are restrained, and can't breathe; an engulfed creature can escape or be pulled free with a successful DC 12 Str check)

I-D. Ballroom

The ballroom was once an architectural marvel. The entirely wooden structure, from the floorboards to the tall ceiling, was made without the use of a single nail, touch of cement, or stone. It was appropriately made of fine oak stained a rich, dark brown. A relief carving of the Gluants still stands proudly over a large marble fireplace. The ballroom cost the Gluants a small fortune.

Now, boards are leaned across the narrow windows, with benches and bookcases pushed against them to hold them in place. Ruined furniture is thrown about the room. A patina of dust covers everything. Some cultist thought it would be a good idea to burn a pile of furniture in the center of the room but it was extinguished by Suey, leaving a burn scar and a heap of smashed, blackened chairs.

Search: Disturbing the remains of the bonfire also disturbs a **swarm of rats** that made the pile their home.

(Swarm of Rats: AC 10, 24 hp; +2 to hit, 2d6 piercing damage, or 1d6 piercing damage if the swarm has 12 or fewer hp [bite]; can enter and remain in another creature's space and move through tiny openings)

Fine Search: There is a silver locket worth 20 gp under an overturned table. The locket contains a silhouette of the winemaker and his wife.

I-E. Winemaker's Quarters

Near the stairs to the cellar level are the winemaker's quarters. The door is locked and the key was dissolved into Suey the Ooze Demon, but the lock can be opened with thieves' tools and a successful DC 10 Dex check.

The room is covered in cobwebs and dust but largely untouched by the cultists. There is a large down bed, a desk, and a rickety wooden chair. The chair has a 5-in-6 chance of breaking if anyone sits in it.

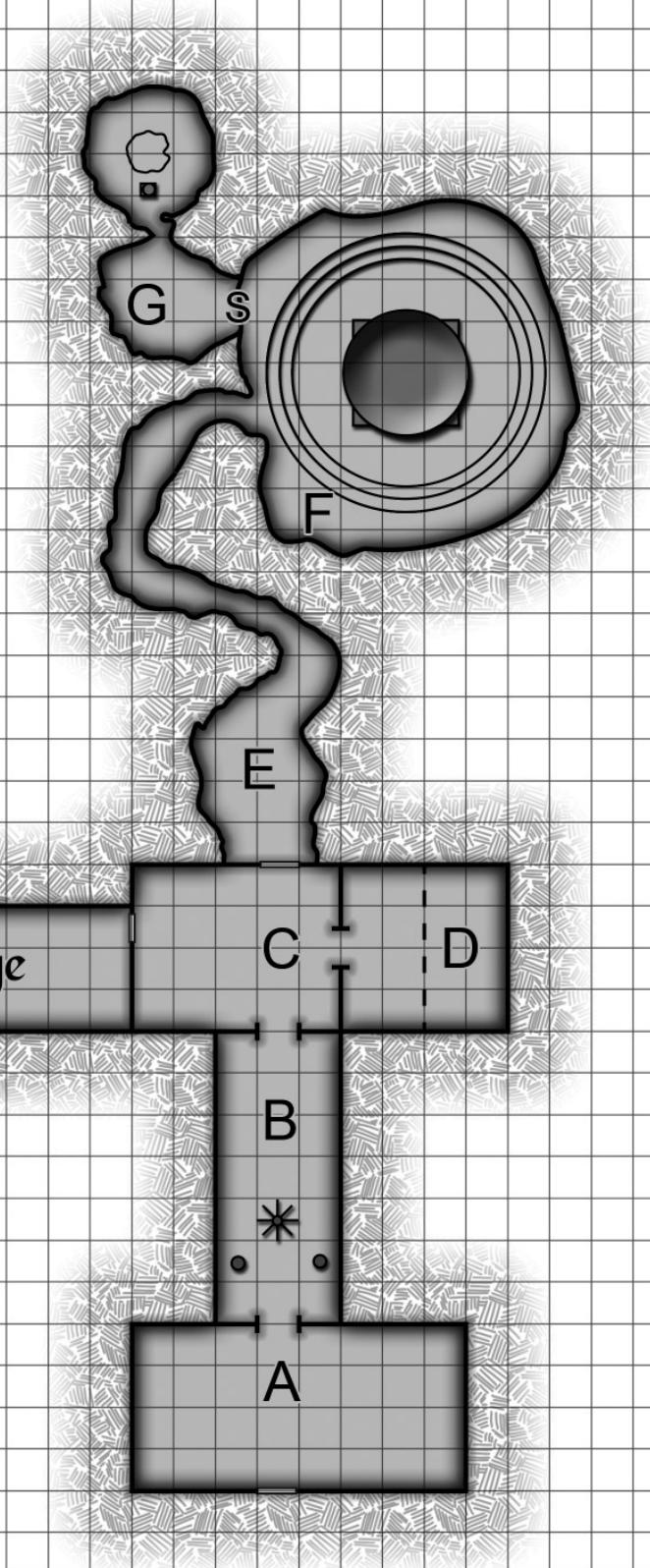
Suey used the room briefly during the early stages of the takeover, when he still had ideas of spreading chaos and terror across the surrounding countryside. A crude map of the surrounding area is pinned to the tabletop.

Search: The desk is locked (DC 10 Dex check to open) and is trapped with a poison needle (DC 15 Wis [Perception] check to notice and avoid). A character jabbed by the needle must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw against poison. If the saving throw fails, the character takes 2d6 poison damage immediately and must repeat the saving throw at the end of every long rest. If the saving throw fails, the character takes another 2d6 poison damage and does not recover any hit points or hit dice from that long rest. The poisoning ends when the character makes a successful saving throw or when it's neutralized by magic. Inside the desk is a diary written in Abyssal. The journal details how Suey tricked the winemaker to gain Gluant's confidence, then turned most of the workers to his cause and took over the winery. It ends with descriptions of how Suey turned

Noble Rot

The Cellar

1 square - 10 feet



QUESTS OF DOOM: BUGS AND BLOBS

on the cult members and killed them, one by one, until only he remained.

Fine Search: Under a floorboard is a large jug of Chateau Gluant wine. It is in pristine condition and to the right buyer is worth 200 gp

Chateau, Upper Floor

2-A. Master's Quarters

The master's quarters were looted after his demise. Most of the furniture has been shredded or torn apart. There is a large bed in the middle of the floor. It is at an off angle as if it was pulled to the center of the room and forgotten. The sheets are missing, as are three of the four corner posts. In the far corner are a small desk and a stool.

Sitting on the stool is a skeletal form with long, slimy, gray hair. The skeleton's back is to the entry. The form is the former Lady Gluant. She looks rotted and frozen. She holds a large silver brush as if she is brushing her hair. The cultists brought her body here after her demise. Suey positioned her doing what he thought was her favorite pastime. A close inspection reveals that bits of twine and wire are propping the body in position.

The dumbwaiter from Area 1-C terminates here. The opening is covered by two shutters. If the shutters are opened, the gelatinous in the shaft does nothing; it is a few feet below the opening. Anyone foolish enough to jump into the dark shaft gets what coming to them. There is no way to raise or lower the dumb waiter from this room.

Search: The silver brush Lady Gluant holds is worth 70 gp. On the back of the desk is a compartment that can be found only if the desk is pulled away from the wall. Inside is a large sapphire worth 50 gp.

Chateau Cellar

3-A. The Gathering Room

The rear entrance to the chateau is down an earthen ramp. The entrance is two large barn doors that easily slide open. Within the cobbled stone room, the field workers would bring carts of grapes for sorting. Ironically, the field workers and their wives would spend hours removing any grapes with the faintest taint or rot. Once sorted into large wooden baskets, the grapes would be taken through an archway to Area 3-B, the crushing room.

Currently there are a number of overturned carts and smashed baskets in this room. The smell of mold and must is more prevalent here than in the upper parts of the chateau or outside. In the corner of the room are four skeletal remains. This is a party of adventurers who succumbed to noble rot. The adventurers have a few torches, some moldy clothes, and a few rusty weapons.

Search: One of the dead adventurers is a halfling with a large satchel. Within the satchel are three bottles of white Chateau Gluant that are in fairly good shape (75 gp each).

3-B. The Crushing Room

This long, narrow room slopes downward 15 feet. Near the archway entrance are two large wine presses. The presses are wooden buckets that are 5 feet wide and 4 feet tall. A large metal plate hangs above the first bucket; an identical metal plate sits in the second bucket, unconnected to any ropes. Between the buckets is a capstan large enough for four men to turn. The heavy metal plates could be connected by hooks to pulleys and ropes so they could be raised and lowered by the capstan, one at a time. Juice squeezed from the grapes flowed through a spigot into a barrel, which could then be rolled down the long ramp to the barrel room (Area 3-C).

The metal plate that's hanging in the air above the first bucket won't move unless a rudimentary brake is loosened. Unless characters with a combined Strength modifier of +4 or more are holding the capstan, the plate smashes down, doing 5d6 bludgeoning damage to anyone in the bucket. At the same time, the capstan spins wildly and its long wooden handles do 2d6 bludgeoning damage to anyone who's standing next to it.

If the metal plate is lifted (with the capstan) from the second bucket, or its spigot is turned, or the bucket is smashed or cut open, then the wine slime lurking in the second bucket bursts out and attacks. This wine slime is pinkish in hue (it began its existence as a white zinfandel).

(Wine Slime: AC 8, 52 hp; +4 to hit x2, 3d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be intoxicated [poisoned] for 1 hour [pseudopod])

3-C. The Barrel Room

At the end of the long ramp in the crushing room is another stone archway that leads into the barrel room. At one time, dozens of barrels sat for years on racks in the storage area, gently adding notes of oak to the wine.

Unfortunately, with the cult drinking most of the wine and the damp conditions introduced by their activities, the barrels in the room have almost all spoiled into vinegar. While the vinegar is not acidic enough to do damage a weapon, it is very unpleasant tasting.

Search: If PCs search the barrels for good wine, they have a 1-in-20 chance of finding a barrel of acceptable wine. Only two barrels out of the 50 in the room are still drinkable. Each barrel could fill 300 bottles and has a value of over 30,000 gp to the right buyer! You can adjust this price up or down to suit your campaign. Finding an NPC who's prepared to spend that kind of cash on a barrel of wine should be a challenging quest in itself. It is possible that in the process of opening and tasting the barrels, PCs allow too much oxygen in, which oxidizes and ruins the wine by the time they find a buyer. A character who has a background in winemaking knows this automatically, and others can realize the risk with a successful DC 15 Int (Nature) check.

Set in the north wall of the room is a wide, heavily-rusted metal gate sealing off a natural cavern. A successful DC 15 Str check is needed to force it open.

3-D. The Bottling Room

In this room, aged barrels would be placed on a raised wooden platform so that bottles could be filled through a spigot. The bottles were sealed with wax in this room, but the master winemaker added the Gluant insignia later.

The room today has a few cases of smashed bottles sitting next to a couple of empty barrels on the platform. A few bags of cheap red wax sticks are nearby. The most important item here is the pile of yellow powder in the corner. A character with a background in winemaking or explosives recognizes it instantly as brimstone (sulfur); anyone else recognizes it with a successful DC 15 Int (Nature) or Wis (Medicine) check, but only characters with training in those skills can make the attempt.

A secret of the Gluant's winemaking was the slight addition of sulfur to the wines. The sulfur preserved the wine and acted as an antioxidant to prevent the ruining effect of oxidation.

Sulfur is toxic. A character who handles it carelessly (inhales it or gets it on exposed skin or in clothing) takes 1d4 poison damage per ten minutes of handling. It shouldn't be carried in the hands, pockets, a spare canteen, or anywhere it can filter into the character's clothing or food. Because of its toxicity, a handful of brimstone does 2d6 poison per round to all of the slimes and oozes in this adventure, including Suey. It's up to you how many handfuls the characters can safely take with them, but there's more than enough of it here to kill every slime and ooze on the estate.

THE NOBLE ROT

3-E. Natural Cavern Entrance

Beyond the gate in the barrel room is a natural cavern that winds deep into the bedrock below the chateau. The cavern is 10 feet tall. It has a worn path down the middle of the passage. A rancid stench wafts up from the cavern below. If the gate is forced open, **ten slime zombies** that are hidden in shadows along the uneven walls (DC 12 Wis [Perception] check to spot) lurch forward and attack.

(Olive Slime Zombie: AC 9, 26 hp; +3 to hit, 1d8 + 1 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the olive slime smeared on it. If the olive slime is not removed within two minutes, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and is infested with olive slime; collapses into a full-strength pool of olive slime when slain)

3-F. Temple of Lumaszu

The temple was a natural cavern that was crudely enlarged into a domed chamber that arches 40 feet above the floor. Many stalactites remain, dripping with toxic ooze. The sludge from the stalactites forms slippery pools around the floor. Normal movement is unimpeded, but any move over 10 feet during the distraction of combat requires a successful DC 12 Dex (Acrobatics) check to avoid slipping and falling prone. The denizens of this chamber aren't affected by its slipperiness.

The floor was roughly cut into a round theatre. Three concentric circles surround a central stage. Each circle is 5 feet lower than the next outer circle. The circles were where worshippers of Lumaszu congregated to observe their obscene rites.

A stone stage stands 5 feet higher than the lowest circle. The stage is a square platform 30 feet on a side. The stage is covered with arcane symbols and Abyssal script written in blood. Much of the script has been scuffed off or washed away by the dripping from above. Rising from the stage is a massive stone bowl, slightly larger across than the stage and nearly 5 feet tall. The bowl has no markings and appears to be hewn from the same stone as the stage.

Above the bowl hang long rusty chains. The chains are connected to a pulley high overhead. Near the wall in the northeast corner of the chamber is a rusted and inoperable winch. The cultists lowered their human sacrifices on chains into the bowl as ecstatic worshippers watched.

Within the bowl are the remains of the winemaker, the Gluants, the workers, a few adventurers, and most of the Cultus Limus. That is to say, the bowl contains a giant ochre jelly. The jelly grew with each sacrifice, but it hasn't been fed for years. This has the stats of a normal ochre jelly but maximum hit points and three pseudopod attacks per round, making it CR 3 (700 XP).

The ooze is semi-intelligent. When characters approach within 20 feet of the bowl, the ooze thrusts out a pseudopod and attacks someone. Brimstone or sulfur is the safest way to dispatch the ooze. The ooze would like characters to approach close enough for it to strike them with pseudopods. The bowl provides it with one-half cover from the highest level of the chamber and three-quarters cover from everywhere else, unless the ooze withdraws completely into full cover. If characters can still attack it while it has full cover (with *fireball* spells detonated above the bowl, for example), the ooze won't simply hide in its bowl and let itself be killed; it counterattacks to the best of its ability.

(Giant Ochre Jelly: AC 8, 72 hp; +4 to hit x3, 2d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage plus 1d6 acid damage [pseudopod]; lightning or slashing damage cause the jelly to split in half)

Search: A ten-minute search of the area finds tracks that lead to secret door to the hidden alcove (Area 3-G). The door is weighted to spring closed if it's not held open, and it's almost impossible to open from the

other side. Be sure to mention to whoever opens the door that it resists when pushed and that it will close again when they let go of it. Unless characters specifically look behind the door as they push it open, they won't realize that there's no handle on the other side. A simple spike will hold it open, or a quick search and a successful DC 10 Int (Investigation) check spots the latch that the cultists used to secure it. If the door closes behind the characters, it can be opened again only with thieves' tools and a successful DC 20 Dex (Sleight of Hand) check. Alternatively, it can be broken down with 50 points of bludgeoning or force damage.

3-G. Hidden Alcove

Beyond the secret door described in Area 3-F is this natural chamber. A narrow passageway wends down the middle between a forest of stalactites and stalagmites. The curve to the walkway prevents the tight northern passage from being seen from the secret door.

This entire room is coated with thick yellow mucus that decreases speed by half unless a character makes a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw. If failed, the character falls prone and is covered in the disgusting but harmless ooze.

Fine Search: Hidden under a foot of hardened mucus next to a wall is a bag of jewels. Inside the bag are many gemstones with a total value of 1,500 gp.

3-H. The Slime Demon

The final chamber is a circular room 30 feet across. The ground is level and the natural features of the cavern have been hewn away to a slick smoothness. At the entrance is a step down into a pool of slimy, yellow liquid. The slime is perfectly still. In the middle of the chamber, a small stone platform rises above the liquid. On the platform sits a golden idol (5,000 gp) representing a creature with the body of a human woman, the head of a lioness, donkey ears, and lower legs like a bird's.

At the feet of the idol are a number of offerings. The dust covering everything makes it apparent that these offerings were placed long ago. The offerings include a skull with a large ruby (150 gp) inside it, sacks of coins (750 gp), a *dagger +1*, two tomes (*Fine Wines and Winemaking* by Robin Peeker worth 115 gp, and *Fungi and I* by Jay Suchling), a golden wine goblet encrusted with semiprecious stones (500 gp), and a spellbook. The contents of the spellbook are up to you.

If anything touches the liquid, it slowly pulls away from the entrance. Over the next three rounds, it shifts and transforms into an anthropomorphic shape next to the idol. During this transformation, it has AC 10, but it also regenerates 20 hit points per round with no reduction for taking cold damage. After three rounds, the vestigial wings of the **slime demon** unfurl and it attacks. Complete stats for the slime demon can be found at the end of this adventure.

Anyone who carries away the idol is plagued by horrible nightmares for as long as they possess it (they must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw at the end of every long rest to gain any benefit from the rest). Additionally, the character makes saving throws against poison and disease with tactical disadvantage while they keep the idol.

(Slime Demon: AC 16, 105 hp; +7 to hit x2, 3d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage plus 1d8 acid damage [pseudopod] and the target must make a successful DC 13 Dex saving throw or take 1d8 acid damage at the start of each of the demon's turns until an action is spent scraping off slime [acidic slime])

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New Monsters

Living Vines

XP 450 (CR 2)
Unaligned Large plant
Initiative +2

DEFENSE

AC 12

hp: 33 (6d10)

Immunity: Psychic damage; charm, fright, prone, stun, unconsciousness

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft.

Multiattack: A living vine attacks once with a tendril, bites once, and constricts up to three times. It can grapple up to three targets and still make tendril attacks.

Melee Attack—Tendril: +6 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature).
Hit: 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled.

Melee Attack—Bite: +6 to hit (one creature grappled by the living vine). *Hit:* 2d4 + 3 piercing damage.

Melee Attack—Constrict: automatic hit (one creature already grappled by the living vine at the start of the vine's turn). *Hit:* 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage.

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 10 (+0),
Int 0 (-5), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 3 (-4)

Languages: None

Senses: Tremorsense 30 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate or tropical forests or hills

Organization: Solitary or patch (2-12)

Olive Slime

XP 0 (CR 0)
Unaligned Large plant (fungus)
Initiative +1

DEFENSE

AC 11

hp: 14 (4d10 – 8)

Immunity: Lightning, piercing, and psychic damage; charm, fright, prone, stun, unconsciousness

Vulnerability: Acid, cold, and fire damage

OFFENSE

Speed: 0 ft.

Melee Attack—Drop: +3 to hit (reach 30 ft.; one creature beneath the olive slime). *Hit:* target creature must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the olive slime that dripped onto it. If the olive slime is noticed and removed immediately, it has no effect. If the olive slime is not noticed and removed within two minutes, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and is infested with olive slime; see below.

STATISTICS

Str 1 (-5), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 6 (-2),
Int 1 (-5), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 4 (-3)

Languages: None

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Skills: Stealth +5
Senses: Tremorsense 30 ft.

TRAITS

Olive Slime Defenses: The armor class and hit points listed above are for a Large patch of olive slime in its native environment. Olive slime on a victim has the victim's AC and hit points equal to the number of Constitution points the victim has lost.

Olive Slime Infestation: Any amount of olive slime that remains in contact with a potential victim for more than two minutes charms the victim and alters his or her thinking patterns so that the host's main concern becomes feeding and protecting the olive slime—including keeping the slime hidden from companions. If anyone tries to remove the olive slime from the host, the host does whatever is required to protect the slime, whether it's running away or fighting back. As long as the host is alive and conscious, it will do everything in its power to protect the slime, including knocking out or even killing its friends. An infested creature suffers the following effects.

- It loses 1 point of Constitution immediately when the infestation begins and another 1d6 points of Constitution at the end of each 24-hour period, as the growing olive slime replaces the creature's skin, muscle, and organs with olive slime. The olive slime gains hit points equal to the number of Constitution points lost by the victim.
- The host must double its normal food intake or lose 1 extra point of Constitution after each 24 hours. Also, the host does not recover hit points or hit dice after a long rest if it didn't double its food intake.
- If the host's Constitution drops to 0, the host dies. Five minutes later, its body reanimates as an olive slime zombie. Olive slime can be burned, cut away, or frozen. Anything that damages the olive slime deals half damage to its host (before doubling for vulnerability in the case of acid, cold, or fire damage). Greater restoration ends the olive slime's charm effect for two minutes; during that time, the victim can cooperate with attempts to remove the slime.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Underground

Organization: Solitary or colony (2-5)

Olive Slime Zombie

XP 100 (CR 1/2)
NE Medium plant
Initiative –1

DEFENSE

AC 9

hp: 26 (4d8 + 8)

Immunity: Lightning, piercing, and psychic damage; charm, fright, stun, unconsciousness

Vulnerability: Acid, cold, and fire damage

OFFENSE

Speed: 20 ft.

Melee Attack—Fist: +3 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 + 1 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the olive slime smeared on it. If the olive slime is noticed and removed immediately, it has no effect. If the olive slime is not noticed and removed within two minutes, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and is infested with olive slime; see below.

STATISTICS

Str 12 (+1), **Dex** 8 (-1), **Con** 14 (+2),

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Int 3 (-4), Wis 6 (-2), Cha 4 (-3)

Languages: None

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Death Throes: When a slime zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, it collapses into a full-strength puddle of olive slime.
Telepathic Bond: A slime zombie is linked telepathically with the patch of olive slime that created it and with all other slime zombies linked to that patch of olive slime. This link has a maximum range of 20 miles. The slime zombie and olive slime must be on the same plane of existence.

Olive Slime Infestation: Any amount of olive slime that remains in contact with a potential victim for more than two minutes charms the victim and alters his or her thinking patterns so that the host's main concern becomes feeding and protecting the olive slime—including keeping the slime hidden from companions. If anyone tries to remove the olive slime from the host, the host does whatever is required to protect the slime, whether it's running away or fighting back. As long as the host is alive and conscious, it will do everything in its power to protect the slime, including knocking out or even killing its friends. An infested creature suffers the following effects.

- It loses 1 point of Constitution immediately when the infestation begins and another 1d6 points of Constitution at the end of each 24-hour period, as the growing olive slime replaces the creature's skin, muscle, and organs with olive slime. The olive slime gains hit points equal to the number of Constitution points lost by the victim.
- The host must double its normal food intake or lose 1 extra point of Constitution after each 24 hours. Also, the host does not recover hit points or hit dice after a long rest if it didn't double its food intake.
- If the host's Constitution drops to 0, the host dies. Five minutes later, its body reanimates as an olive slime zombie.

Olive slime can be burned, cut away, or frozen. Anything that damages the olive slime deals half damage to its host (before doubling for vulnerability in the case of acid, cold, or fire damage). Greater restoration ends the olive slime's charm effect for two minutes; during that time, the victim can cooperate with attempts to remove the slime.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Underground
Organization: Mob (1-20)

Olive Slime Zombie (horse)

XP 100 (CR 1/2)

NE Large plant

Initiative -2

DEFENSE

AC 8

hp: 30 (4d10 + 8)

Immunity: Lightning, piercing, and psychic damage; charm, fright, stun, unconsciousness

Vulnerability: Acid, cold, and fire damage

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Hooves: +4 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

Hit: 1d8 + 2 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the olive slime smeared on it. If the olive slime is noticed and

removed immediately, it has no effect. If the olive slime is not noticed and removed within two minutes, the creature loses 1 point of Constitution and is infested with olive slime; see below.

STATISTICS

Str 15 (+2), Dex 6 (-2), Con 14 (+2),

Int 2 (-4), Wis 6 (-2), Cha 4 (-3)

Languages: None

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Death Throes: When a slime zombie is reduced to 0 hit points, it collapses into a full-strength puddle of olive slime.

Telepathic Bond: A slime zombie is linked telepathically with the patch of olive slime that created it and with all other slime zombies linked to that patch of olive slime. This link has a maximum range of 20 miles. The slime zombie and olive slime must be on the same plane of existence.

Olive Slime Infestation: Any amount of olive slime that remains in contact with a potential victim for more than two minutes charms the victim and alters his or her thinking patterns so that the host's main concern becomes feeding and protecting the olive slime—including keeping the slime hidden from companions. If anyone tries to remove the olive slime from the host, the host does whatever is required to protect the slime, whether it's running away or fighting back. As long as the host is alive and conscious, it will do everything in its power to protect the slime, including knocking out or even killing its friends. An infested creature suffers the following effects.

- It loses 1 point of Constitution immediately when the infestation begins and another 1d6 points of Constitution at the end of each 24-hour period, as the growing olive slime replaces the creature's skin, muscle, and organs with olive slime. The olive slime gains hit points equal to the number of Constitution points lost by the victim.
- The host must double its normal food intake or lose 1 extra point of Constitution after each 24 hours. Also, the host does not recover hit points or hit dice after a long rest if it didn't double its food intake.
- If the host's Constitution drops to 0, the host dies. Five minutes later, its body reanimates as an olive slime zombie.

Olive slime can be burned, cut away, or frozen. Anything that damages the olive slime deals half damage to its host (before doubling for vulnerability in the case of acid, cold, or fire damage). Greater restoration ends the olive slime's charm effect for two minutes; during that time, the victim can cooperate with attempts to remove the slime.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Underground
Organization: solitary, pair, or herd (3-12)

Slime Demon

XP 2,900 (Challenge 7)

Chaotic Evil Huge fiend

Initiative +2

DEFENSE

AC 16 (natural armor)

hp: 105 (10d12 + 40)

Resistance: Bludgeoning and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Immunity: Piercing and poison damage; charm, disease,

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fright, poison, prone, unconsciousness

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

Multiattack: A slime demon attacks twice with pseudopods.

Melee Attack—Pseudopod: +7 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature). Hit: 3d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage plus 1d8 acid damage. The target must make a successful DC 13 Dex saving throw or be affected by Acidic Slime (see below).

STATISTICS

Str 18 (+4), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 19 (+4),

Int 5 (-3), **Wis** 9 (-1), **Cha** 10 (+0)

Languages: Abyssal, telepathy 90 ft.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Acidic Slime: Every hit by a slime demon leaves gobs of acidic slime on the target. A creature that fails a DC 13 Dex saving throw after being struck by a slime demon takes 1d8 acid damage at the start of each of the demon's turns until the creature spends an action scraping off the slime. The slime has no effect on weapons or tools.

Regeneration: A slime demon heals 10 points of damage at the start of each of its turns, unless it took cold damage since its previous turn.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary or pair

Wine Slime

XP 450 (CR 2)

Unaligned Large ooze

Initiative -2

DEFENSE

AC 8

hp: 52 (7d10 + 14)

Resistance: Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons

Immunity: Psychic damage; blindness, exhaustion, fright, paralysis, poison, prone, stun

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

Multiattack: A wine slime attacks twice with pseudopods.

Pseudopod: +4 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature). Hit: 3d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or become intoxicated (with effects identical to poisoning) for 1 hour.

STATISTICS

Str 14 (+2), **Dex** 6 (-2), **Con** 15 (+2),

Int 2 (-4), **Wis** 6 (-2), **Cha** 1 (-5)

Languages: None

Senses: Tremorsense 30 ft.

TRAITS

Amorphous: A wine slime can move through gaps as small as 1 square inch without penalty.

Split: If a Medium or Large slime takes slashing or fire damage, it splits into two new slimes, each one size smaller than the original and with half the original's hit points.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Subterranean

Organization: Solitary

Hidden Oasis – Temple of Thoth

By Matt Finch and Bill Webb

The *Hidden Oasis-Temple of Thoth* brings the characters to a hidden temple of Thoth, god of knowledge, magic, and travel, where they are confronted with a force of invading extra-dimensional locust creatures and the chance to get their hands on an ancient artifact. What band of heroes could resist the challenge? The adventure is designed for characters of levels 7 to 9.

Background

Deep in the desert sands of lie the ruined remnants of the Hidden Oasis-Temple of Thoth, once a thriving center of trade and magic, now abandoned and forgotten. If you are playing this adventure in the **Frog God Games** Lost Lands world setting, the temple is found in the Maighib Desert, 300 miles west of the Gorge of Osiris. This sand-swept region is far from the more familiar environs of Bard's Gate and the Stoneheart Valley, but the characters are brought here (and might even return from here) by magical means. Since the entrance to the adventure is a magical portal, the adventure can be used in any campaign without difficulty.

The Wax Plague

In centuries gone by, the Oasis-Temple of Thoth was a gateway between worlds, used by the priests of Thoth to travel between various strongholds and libraries of the god, even on different planes of existence and in strange, foreign worlds. Calamity struck, though, in the form of a deadly curse brought down on the temple by a desert-cult known as the Sickness Dancers. Their curse infected the entire oasis with a body-melting disease, the “wax plague,” so called because the features and the bodies of the afflicted run like melted wax as time passes. The priests of Thoth, dissolving into formlessness, cast mighty wards upon the temple to ensure that the plague would not spread through the planar portals and dimensional gates contained in the temple complex. A great dome formed over the oasis, coalescing from the very air as the dying priests chanted the mystic words of their final, greatest spell.

The Changing of the Priests

The creation of the quarter-mile dome over the entire temple complex prevented the wax plague from spreading across the sand and through the portals of many dimensions, but it could not save the priests of Thoth from the curse. Utterly changed in mind and body, they fought to maintain the temple, preventing it from being used by dark forces as a way to move from one plane of existence to another, from one world to another, from one dimension to another. Only the High Priest of Thoth retained his mind, for he was not human; the others of the priesthood could only follow his orders as best their broken minds could manage.

The Final Battle Looming

Now, after centuries, the last resources of the High Priest, Thoth-Antef, are failing. Thus far he has kept the ceaseless crawling of evil from traveling through the sacred gates he protects. His magic items are spent or worn out, and many of his priests have been killed in the frequent incursions by those who travel the far dimensions, intending malice and harm. Now, an ancient peril—sinister beings known as planehoppers—have broached the arcane wards of the Oasis-Temple from one of their own planes of existence. The planehoppers are an insectlike species with a bizarre caste system, exploring outward to find new colonies and slaves for the hive.

The Cry for Help

The high priest used his last of three commands to a genie, ordering it to deliver a letter to suitable adventurers. The genie's letter has already been rejected by several adventuring parties, and the genie is growing desperate. On a whim, it selects the characters for its next attempt to recruit help for the priests of the Oasis-Temple. As its own petty bit of vengeance for its long servitude, the genie will not offer a piece of information the High Priest forgot to order it to say. As a result, the characters will most likely not know that the High Priest of Thoth in the Oasis-Temple, Thoth-Antef, is a massive, transparent slug the size of a horse, with a brain suspended in the middle of its body. Or that the living priests of Thoth are now nothing more than barely-intelligent gelatinous cubes.

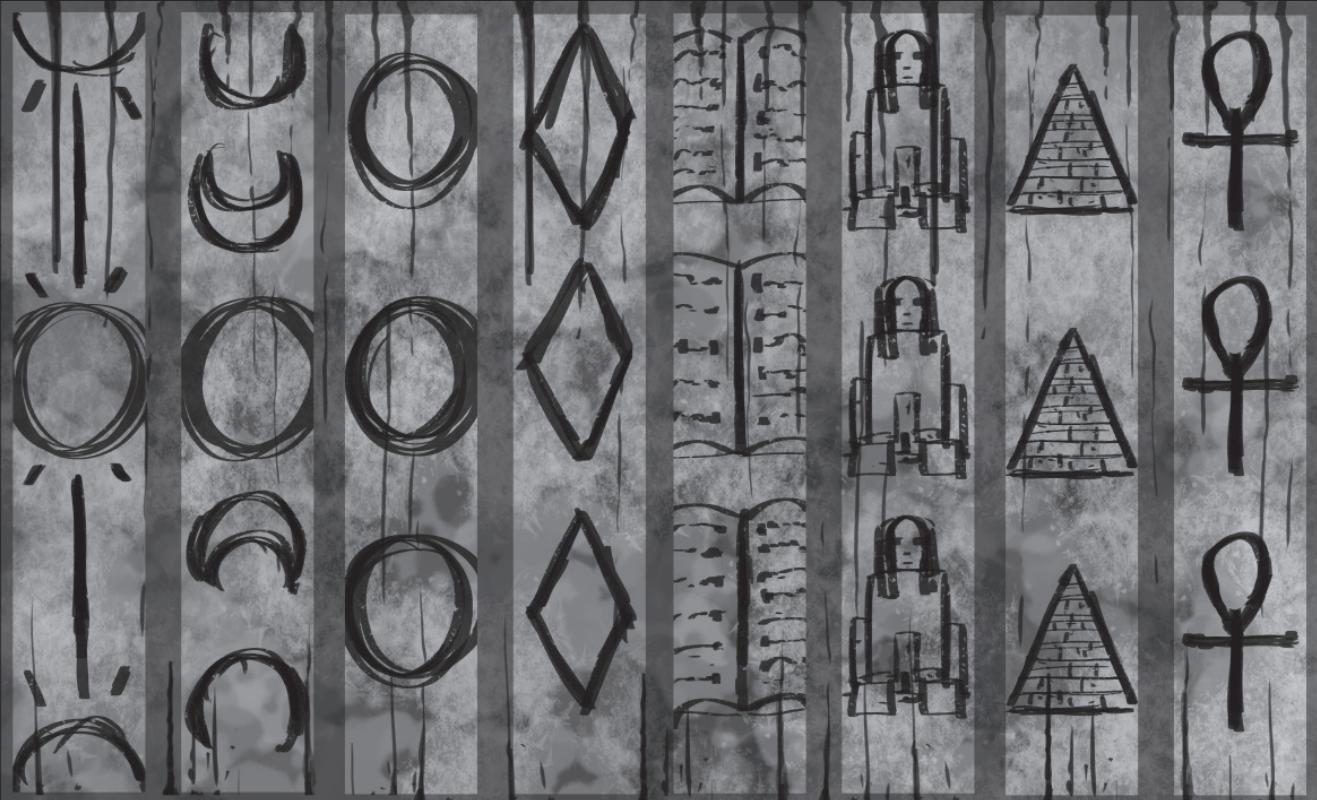
The Adventure Begins

A tall man dressed in desert robes approaches you and hands you a letter. He holds up three long, thin fingers, and says, “Ask three questions, and then you must give one answer.”

The letter is a papyrus scroll, which (if tested) has a definite magical aura, but not an evil one. Eight strange runes are scribed across the top, almost like a decoration. The symbols are in order:

1. A sun
2. A moon
3. A circle
4. A diamond
5. A book
6. A sphinx
7. A pyramid
8. An ankh

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The rest of the letter, after the runes, reads as follows.

I, Thoth-Antef, once the High Priest of the Great Oasis-Temple of Thoth, beseech your help.

The Oasis-Temple of Thoth was once a thriving gateway to many worlds and dimensions, a place of study and rest, where travelers could exchange knowledge and trade.

Then came the Sickness Dancers. They brought the tallow plague, melting flesh and changing those it did not kill. The plague would most certainly spread into more planes of existence, peeling diseased new realities into the multiverse. To prevent this, we sealed the temple, calling on great forces to create a massive dome of spells and stone, woven into a net that the tallow plague could not sneak through. And so the plague died alongside us, leaving only the changed ones.

We have worked to protect the sealed sanctuary of Thoth, as the wards and protections have worn down through the years. The portals are constantly being tested by those who would venture through them looking for prey, or for new lands to conquer. Since the days of the temple's greatness, the worlds outside the gates have changed. Some are new and unmapped, some have gone bad. It would not be good for the portals to reopen all at once, as they once were.

The planehoppers of the Kharn Drauk are at the portals. My resources are spent. Aid me in keeping them back, and I will give you a great gift in the name of Thoth—the Scorpion of Sekhmet. Go to the arch and speak the words, "Orthanu, Thoth, Orhaptu."

—Thoth-Antef

The djinni's name is Periapses, and he is anxious to fulfill this last mission and be free. Nevertheless, he will fairly and scrupulously

answer the first three questions he is asked. After this, he simply asks the characters if they accept or decline. If they decline, he holds out his hand to take the letter back, since he cannot be free until he finds rescuers for Thoth-Antef. Unless he is specifically asked a question about the shape, form, condition, or appearance of the priests, he will not mention that the High Priest is a giant slug and the ordinary priests are reduced to semi-intelligent skeletons whose flesh has swelled into gelatinous cubes.

The characters may have some knowledge of Sekhmet, Thoth, and even the Scorpion of Sekhmet. If they do not, they might ask the genie.

Sekhmet is the healer of the gods, a woman with the head of a lioness. Her symbol is a sun disc with a serpent twined around it, and she is worshiped by healers. However, the goddess has a darker side as well. She came into being as part of a great vengeance of the gods upon humanity, and it was she who slaughtered the humans and drank their blood. In addition to her healing side, she is a goddess of retribution, pestilence, and searing heat. Her breath is the hot desert wind, and she slays her enemies with arrows of fire. In fact, it was Sekhmet who sent the Sickness Dancers to Thoth's temple, in retribution for taking two Scorpions.

Thoth is, as stated in the letter, a god of magic, travel, and knowledge. He has a human body with the long neck and head of an ibis (a bird similar to a crane or stork). In addition to being the messenger and record-keeper of the gods, Thoth is the creator of magic and of speech. His temples usually contain libraries, and are rumored to contain portals from one plane of existence to another.

The Scorpion of Sekhmet was thought to be legend, but the letter of Thoth-Antef certainly indicates that it might be a real artifact. It is said to be a hollow iron shell in the shape of a scorpion, large enough for several people to sit in. From inside, the scorpion follows the orders it is given, walking and even attacking things as directed by the controller. As the characters will discover, there are actually two of the scorpions in the Oasis-Temple.

If the characters speak the words, "Orthanu, Thoth, Orhaptu," they are immediately drawn into the Plane of Shadows (see below).

Realm of Shadows

You feel a sudden, powerful twist, and find that you are standing six feet from a ghostly image of yourself. It glows with what looks like reflected light, but this place is dark, with no visible source of light to reflect. It is the darkness of shadows, not the dark of night, but the sun seems to have disappeared. The only sign of it is the light that somehow reflects on those bright shadows of yourselves.

The “bright shadows” are the characters’ actual bodies, as seen from the shadow plane they have entered. They can see the reflected sun on the bodies because sunlight is indeed shining on them—but in the Material Plane, not here. If they want to return to the Material Plane, all they need to do is step into the images, and they will return. If they step into the wrong image, they will have switched bodies. The physical characteristics of the new body remain, but the mental characteristics will be those of the body’s new inhabitant.

The genie does not follow them into the Plane of Shadows. Once the characters say the magic words, the genie is freed from servitude and disappears.

Read the following when characters survey what is around them.

Everything appears in shades of gray rather than colors, and you can see vast, forbidding pyramids in the distance as black silhouettes against a dark gray horizon. Clouds roll like octopus ink in the strangely low sky of this place. Directly in front of you stands an archway.

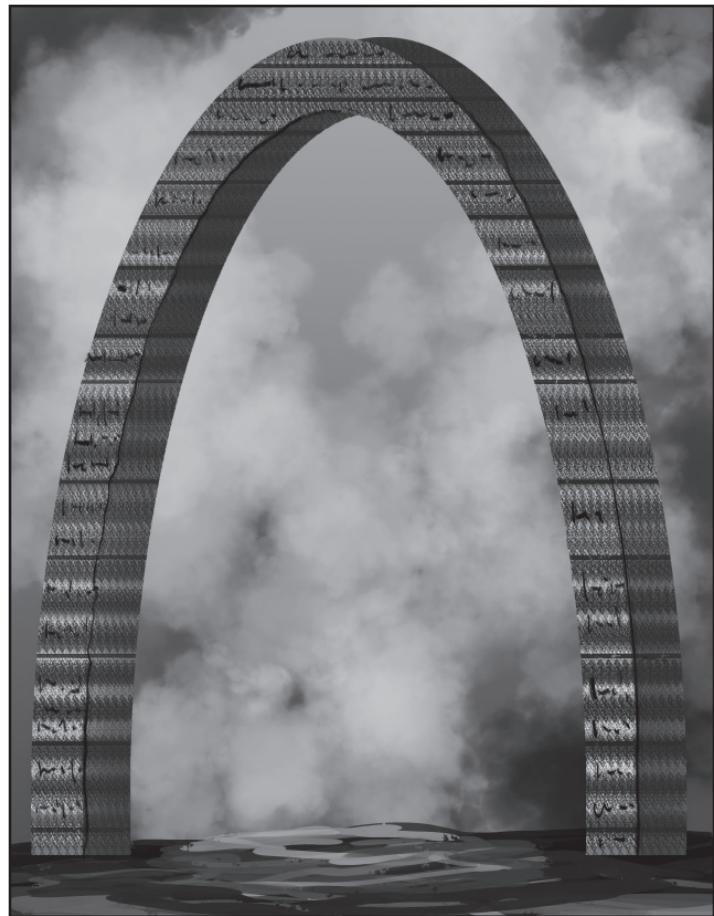
The characters might be discussing various possibilities at this point. Exploring the Plane of Shadow is a bad idea, although not impossible. This particular area is infested with shadows and other creatures of the dark, and explorers begin encountering them with some frequency if they set out from the archway in a random direction. The *Sword of Air* adventure from **Frog God Games** has a significant level of detail on the Shadow Plane. Most likely, even a determined expedition will turn back from this point. If not, then you’re running an adventure in the Shadow Plane and we at **Frog God Games** salute you as the type of referee who isn’t afraid to wing it!

Eventually characters should reach the point where they are ready to inspect the archway.

This is a strange, 10-foot-tall metal archway. It is smooth to the touch and feels slightly warmer than the ambient air. There is enough room in it for two humans to stand abreast. The metal itself has an odd-looking bluish tint and is covered in dozens of crisp, unweathered hieroglyphs and runes of a strange and ancient design. No rust or other damage appears to have affected the metal, although you somehow feel that it has been here for a long time.

Any attempt to damage the archway fails, short of cutting at it with a +4 or better magical weapon. Doing so creates a large, magical explosion, teleporting all within 20 feet to a random plane. The whole structure radiates strong conjuration magic, and the structure also seems unaffected by any magic cast at it.

This archway is in fact a *gate* to the Oasis-Temple of Thoth. Careful inspection of the runes reveals that eight of the symbols match those on the letter the characters received from the djinn. Speaking the words on the letter does nothing, unless first the symbols are touched in the order



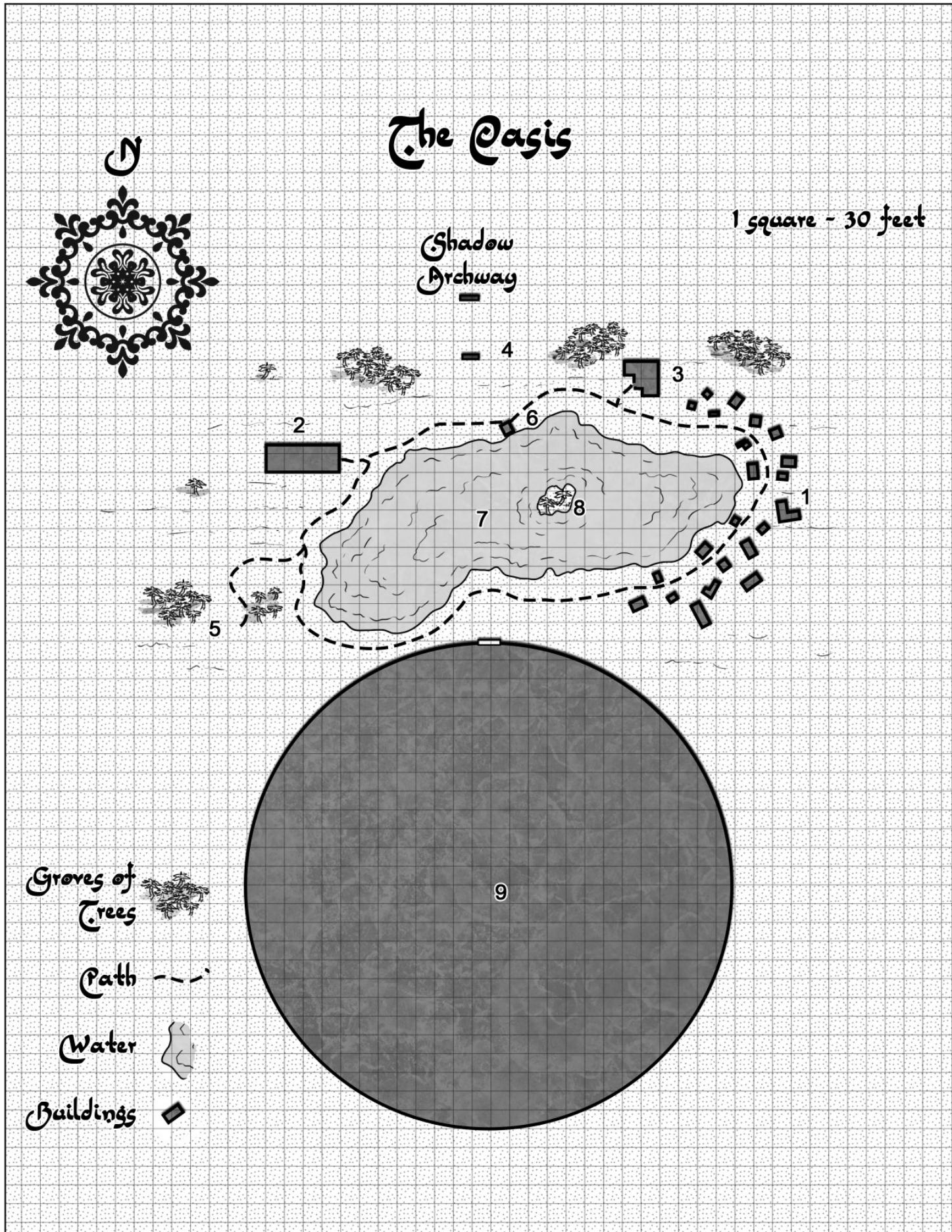
present on the letter with bare flesh. A creature desiring to use the gate must first touch each symbol from the letter where it's inscribed on the archway. Once touched, the runes glow a deep red. If touched out of order, the runes (all of them thus far touched) cease glowing. When all eight runes are touched in the correct order, the teleportal effects of the gate are activated. Speaking the activation words then causes the interior of the archway to glimmer with an opaque, silvery sheen. The sheen remains active for three minutes. Stepping through the archway while the sheen is present teleports the individual to the Oasis gate.

The Oasis

After stepping through the archway, the player characters find themselves in an entirely different place, having been teleported to a lush oasis in the desert. Behind them is a gate identical to the one that brought them here. To get back to where they came from through this gate, a character must touch the symbols from the letter in reverse order. Otherwise, the gate operates identically from both sides.

A large expanse of hot, green space now surrounds them. The area is covered with a myriad of palm, date, and olive trees, as well as a sundry of large grasses around its edge. Beyond the greenery, a vast expanse of tan, sandy desert can be seen in all directions. In the center of the oasis is a pool of water 200 feet wide and 650 feet long. The water of the lake is clean and clear, and quite safe, although it does contain a wide diversity of small invertebrates, insects, and fish. The lake is spring-fed, and the water is refreshingly cold (60 degrees Fahrenheit).

The temperature in the oasis ranges from high 80s at night to over 120 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, which is very uncomfortable for anyone wearing medium or heavy armor. Dotting the area are the remains of what appears to have been a village of perhaps 100 souls, although the fallen and ruined nature of the structures makes it clear no one has occupied the village for generations, if not centuries. The buildings are



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constructed of mud bricks. The roofs of palm fronds are long gone, and most of the buildings are at least partially collapsed.

Tiny jerboas (desert mice) hop around the fallen bricks and through the grass. Occasionally a dung beetle can be seen, rolling its load toward the north. A brick path leads in a circle around the lake. The path is completely safe, but if characters travel off the path through the brush, roll 1d20 per minute. Someone encounters a horned viper (poisonous snake) on a roll of 1, or a deathstalker scorpion (scorpion, but with more toxic venom) on a roll of 2. Both of these nasty vermin live around the oasis in large numbers. Because of the covering foliage, they surprise characters with passive Perception scores of 15 or less.

(Horned Viper [Poisonous Snake]: AC 13, 2 hp; +5 to hit, 1 piercing damage plus 2d4 poison damage, or half poison damage with a successful DC 10 Con saving throw [bite])

(Deathstalker Scorpion [Scorpion]: AC 11, 1 hp; automatic hit, 1 piercing damage plus 1d8 poison damage, or half as much poison damage with a successful DC 9 Con saving throw [sting]; if the saving throw fails, the character is poisoned and must repeat the saving throw every 24 hours until the character recovers or dies; the character recovers with a successful save, but consecutive failures result in incapacitation, paralysis, and death)

I. Random Houses

Characters almost certainly will investigate at least a few of the old houses. Most have only one or two rooms. They're made of mud brick and have no roofs. There are 22 of these huts within the oasis. None of them is of particular interest, but each contains 1d3 of the following items.

1. Horned viper
2. Pottery shard
3. Grave
4. Intact glassware or pottery
5. Rotted and brittle tools with copper fittings
6. Bone fragments and skeletal remains
7. Strange carving of a sluglike being (once only)
8. Golden cameo (once only, worth 20 gp)
9. Copper bead necklace
10. Copper knife (once only)
11. Amulet of stone or fired clay
12. Amulet or small statue with semiprecious stones (twice only)

Horned Viper: These creatures attack if they gain surprise. Otherwise they retreat from anything that notices them, disappearing into the brush.

Pottery Shards: These are worthless, but could at your convenience be used to convey clues or other relevant details about the slug (see below) or invaders.

Graves: These contain the mummified remains of a human (01-80%), a cat (81-90%), or some other animal (91-00%) of your choice buried under 4 to 6 feet of sand and marked by a stone marker. If a human corpse is indicated, it wears beads and jewelry worth 1d6 x 100 gp. Cats are typically covered in beaten gold worth 4d6 gp. Defiling the grave of a cat brings a 10% chance of being noticed by Bast, the cat goddess; If the violation is noticed, the desecrator must make a successful DC 12 Wis saving throw or have tactical disadvantage on all saving throws for two weeks.

Intact Glassware or Pottery: These containers occasionally (10%) are sealed and contain either grain (01-50%), wine (51-80%), cooking oil (81-90%), internal organs (yuck!, 91-99%), or gold dust (00%, worth 1d6 x 100 gp). The vessel itself is worth 1d6 x 1d10 gp if opened without being damaged.

Old Tools: Nothing of value.

Bone fragments: See "Old Tools."

Strange Carving of a Sluglike Being: This carving is 3 inches long and made from polished quartz. A reddish-white discoloration can be

seen inside its head, but what it is or how it was put inside the crystal is unanswerable. If divination spells are used on it, it radiates magic. A character carrying the carving has a +1 bonus on saving throws once attuned to the item.

Golden Cameo: This cameo can be of any relevant Khemitian god or goddess, or it could be a scarab beetle or cat if you prefer. It is worth 30 gp.

Copper Bead Necklace: This necklace has large beads not only of copper but also small seashells and semiprecious stones. It is worth 1d6 x 5 gp.

Copper Knife: This knife is both sharp and durable. It is a +0 dagger, +4 vs. extraplanar creatures. The bone handle is engraved with an image of Ptah, the creator god, as well as stars, moons, and other symbols.

Stone or Clay Amulet: Unusual but worthless.

Gemstone Amulet: Two of these can be found, with an equal chance for either. The first is in the shape of a scarab beetle and is carved from pure rose quartz (worth 50 gp). The second is a perfect sphere of an unidentifiable red mineral that feels slightly warm to the touch, but it's not magical. The sphere is a *charge crystal*, which is used to power a *Scorpion of Sekhmet*. It is fully charged. The scorpions are parked in the temple.

2. Granary

This large, mud-brick building is almost completely intact except for its wooden door, which has long since rotted away. This building and the temple have roofs of stone shingles. The building stands 20 feet high and measures 50 feet x 120 feet. The doorway is in one of the short walls, directly in the center of the wall.

Unlike most of the buildings here, this one is inhabited—by scorpions. The building contains thousands of normal-size scorpions and a nest of emperor scorpions that grow up to 3 feet long. These creatures lurk in the old granary to keep out of the hot sun. Normally they emerge at night to hunt in the open desert, but when characters approach within 30 feet of the structure, the scorpions perceive them as food and move out to attack. The swarms go unnoticed in the brush, but make a Stealth check for the emperor scorpions and compare it to the characters' passive Perception scores to determine whether characters notice the creatures or are surprised. A total of **10 emperor scorpions** and **three scorpion swarms** are here. They have no devious tactics, but they are very dangerous because they rush and overwhelm the closest target instead of spreading their attacks between targets.

(Emperor Scorpion [CR 1/2]: AC 12, 7 hp; +3 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage plus 2d8 poison damage, or half poison damage with a successful DC 10 Con saving throw [sting])

(Scorpion Swarm [CR 1]: AC 12, 22 hp; +3 to hit, 4d4 piercing damage plus 2d8 poison damage, or half poison damage with a successful DC 10 Con saving throw [sting]; 2d4 piercing damage plus 1d8 poison damage if the swarm has 11 or fewer hit points; the swarm can enter and remain in an enemy's space, and can only attack an enemy whose space it occupies)

3. Lugal's House

The lugal (chieftain) of the village once lived here. From the nature of the building, it is apparent that it was something of an important structure, as it is far larger than the other huts, with six rooms. The building itself is in the same dilapidated state as the others, but it has 10-foot-high walls. The structure contains a grand entry hall (40 feet long by 25 feet wide) that connects to five smaller rooms: four sleeping chambers and a kitchen. Sleeping chambers open to the sides of the entry hall, and the kitchen at the right side of the back wall. The rooms are all 20 feet square.

A carved stone chair sits at the far end of the grand hall, directly opposite the entrance. The chair is plain, without any carvings or paint. It is solid granite and weighs about 500 pounds. If the chair could be transported, its fine workmanship makes it worth 700 gp.

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The walls of the entry chamber are painted and carved with numerous hieroglyphs and pictograms. Careful inspection or translation (magical or mundane) of the writings reveals that most of the writings are prayers to various deities (Ptah, Ra, Horus), complete with curses and pleas for protection against the evil god Set. One prayer praises the god Thoth for sending a guardian to defend the village against the evils of the night god and his servants, and references the “guardian of the temple.”

The pictograms associated with this prayer show a gray circle within an oval; the inner circle is “lumpy,” rather like a brain. This is of course a reference to the slug-being in the temple. Other pictograms show the god Thoth teaching the people about many things, portraying their ascent from hunter-gatherer nomads to civilization, thanks to this deity of knowledge.

The Sarcophagus

If the chair is moved, it will be noted that the bricks under it are different from those covering the rest of the chamber; they’re larger, and there’s no mortar between the joints. If these bricks are pried up, a 3-foot-by-3-foot passage is revealed. The passage drops down to an 8-by-6-foot chamber with a 5-foot-high ceiling, containing a 7-by-3-foot stone sarcophagus; in other words, there’s not much room to move around. The sarcophagus isn’t centered in the chamber; there’s a 2-foot space on the right where Medium-size characters can almost stand upright.

Opening the sarcophagus is a challenge in these tight surroundings; there’s no room to use a pry bar. Wedges can be hammered in only along the right side, where there’s enough room to swing a hammer; that will lift an edge. From there, a successful DC 21 Str (Athletics) check is needed to lift the lid. The check must be repeated every round unless the lid is propped up with something very sturdy. Alternatively, with wedges inserted, ropes could be slung around the lid and up through the entry hole, allowing the lid to be lifted from above; this reduces the DC of the Str check to 16, and using pulleys reduces it to 11. Resourceful characters might come up with alternative plans; judge their success based on how cleverly they apply the principles of leverage in tight surroundings.

Inside the sarcophagus is a wooden coffin carved in the portrayal of a kingly-looking individual, with unfamiliar hieroglyphic writing. The writing can be deciphered magically or with a successful DC 20 Int (History) check; it states “*Disturb not the rest of the Lugal, lest you join the dust of the desert forever.*” The lid is sealed with a waxy, fragrant resin (myrrh).

If the myrrh is removed and the seal broken, every character in the sarcophagus chamber or standing next to the opening in the chamber above must make a successful DC 15 Con saving throw or be affected by mummy rot (loses 3d6 hit points every 24 hours and can’t regain hit points by any means until the curse is lifted). Characters in the chamber below have tactical disadvantage on the saving throw.

Inside the coffin is the mummified corpse of the lugal. He wears a bone

Mace of Rot Grubs

This magical mace is carved from meteoric iron and contains a large chunk of amber at its tip. A prehistoric insect is trapped in the amber; because no one alive has ever seen such a bug, it can be recognized only with a successful DC 20 Int (Nature) check.

The mace functions as a magical +1 mace. If its command word is spoken, then the next time it strikes a living target, the mace implants a single rot grub in the target’s flesh. This power can be used once per day. The rot grub causes 1 piercing damage at the start of each of the infected character’s turns until it is killed or removed. During the first two rounds of infection, the rot grub can be killed with fire or cut out with a slashing weapon; a torch inflicts 1d6 fire damage to the infected character, while cutting inflicts 1d2 slashing damage. After the end of the second round of infection, the rot grub has burrowed too deep for these simple measures to work, and it can be killed only with magic, such as a *lesser restoration* spell.

and lapis necklace under a baked clay death mask. The lugal has been dead for over 600 years. The death mask is painted with his image (worth 20 gp), and the necklace is woven with gold thread (300 gp). Wrapped inside the mummy is a long rod of meteoric iron, topped with a large piece of amber that has an insectlike creature trapped inside it. The rod is a +1 mace of rot grubs. Its command word is utterly forgotten and lost in time; it can be recovered only through magical means of your choosing.

4. Alabaster Wall

Unlike the other structures present in the oasis, this 30 foot long, 4 foot high wall is made of alabaster blocks. The wall is intricately painted and carved, with hundreds of inscriptions and pictograms. Trying to decipher all of them would take weeks, unless one knew what they were looking for. Should the player characters inquire about the runes present on the letter, or if they look for any references from the lugal’s house associated with a “temple guardian” or “Thoth,” they can locate what look like several inscriptions of a large, sluglike creature providing food, teaching people how to grow grain and work metal, and fighting a battle against insectlike minions of the evil god, Set.

5. Sphinx

This statue stands 10 feet high, and is inscribed on both sides with ancient writing that can be deciphered with a successful DC 20 Int (History) check or with a *comprehend languages* spell. At its base are the words, “*Those who seek the gods must show the wisdom to see them first.*” Translation of the writing on the sides of the sphinx reveals two riddles that allow the player characters to select the correct icons to activate the gate on the island and gain egress into the collapsed temple. On one side the writing reads:

*I am what all men seek, yet many will never gain
I serve the wise, and punish the foolish
I make men strong, yet strengthen only their minds
Without me all things that wither to dust are forgotten*

The answer is knowledge—associated with Thoth, the god of knowledge.

The riddle on the second side reads:

*I protect the wise, and slay the evil
I am not a god, yet protect them and their house
I serve the teacher and teach the servants*

The answer is the guardian—the sluglike creature depicted in the lugal’s house as well as on the alabaster wall.

Armed with these bits of knowledge, characters should be able to enter the Temple of Thoth.

6. Boathouse

This rickety wooden structure sits on stone piles near the edge of the lake. The wood is old and brittle and cannot support more than 30 pounds of weight. Anything stepping on the remaining portions of the wooden, over-water deck in excess of 30 pounds crashes through the structure into 1d6 + 2 feet of water after a 6-foot fall (no damage). It also creates a great deal of noise, alerting the beasts in the lake that dinner has arrived.

Adjacent to the structure, an ancient boat still floats, wedged between two of the support columns that hold up the structure. The boat is 20 feet long and 4 feet wide, and holds up to eight human-sized creatures. It’s old and dry, but it was treated with lacquer and oils, so it still floats, although it’s alarmingly fragile.

7. Lake

The lake is over 200 feet across and four times as long. Its edges are completely vegetated with thick growths of bulrushes and other aquatic

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plants. Frogs, crawfish, and insects are present everywhere, creating a great deal of noise at night. Many species of fish live in the lake. These fish are extremely colorful and create darting patterns as small schools react to stimulus (like splashing or swimming).

The lake itself is spring fed, and is cooler by far than the surrounding air. It is over 100 feet deep in the center, with its edges dropping off rapidly from the shore. The water is clear to a depth of about 20 feet, and rocks can be seen dotting the shallows.

Also living in the lake are **six crocodiles** and one **giant crocodile**. They only attack if the water is disturbed (e.g., by splashing and other noisy activity). Skilled, unarmored swimmers have a 50% chance of attracting 1d3 crocodiles. Boating across gives only a 10% chance of attracting crocodiles. Use your judgment about how much noise the party makes, unless players indicate they're trying to be quiet. If they say they're being extra careful about handling and paddling the fragile boat, that's a good reason to assume they aren't making much noise, either.

If crocodiles attack, 1d3 show up initially. They are joined by one more every other round until all six are involved. At the start of the crocs' second turn after the last one arrived, all six turn and swim away. Characters then see an immense shape swimming toward them under the water. If they're still on the lake five rounds later, the giant crocodile arrives and attacks.

(Crocodile: AC 12, 19 hp; +4 to hit, 1d10 + 2 piercing damage and the target is grappled and restrained)

Giant Crocodile: AC 14, 85 hp; +8 to hit, 3d10 + 5 piercing damage and the target is grappled and restrained [bite], and +8 to hit, 2d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage and a creature must make a successful DC 16 Str saving throw or be knocked prone [tail])

8. The Island

This 60-foot-diameter island sits near the center of the lake, and rises about 4 feet above the water. The island is heavily vegetated (like the rest of the oasis), and a large grove of olive trees stands near its center, completely obscuring vision beyond a few feet. Access to the center of the island requires moving through this heavy vegetation, although the scorpions and snakes present in the rest of the oasis are absent here (there were no frogs to carry them across on their backs). In the center of the olive grove is an archway, similar to the one that brought the player characters to the oasis in the first place. The area is so overgrown that unless a major ruckus is made, anyone on the island is ignored by the crocodiles.

The archway is a gate to the inside of the temple of Thoth. It requires the same speaking of words as the previous two archways, but the runes present on those two are not present here. Only by touching the symbol of Thoth and the symbol of the guardian (two symbols among hundreds inscribed on this archway) and then speaking the activation words from the letter can this gate be activated. Once activated, its surface shimmers, and anyone stepping through is teleported into the Old Temple.

9. The Old Temple

This building is a vast dome, over 250 yards across. The walls are made of monolithic blocks of stone, and the domed roof appears to be metal of some kind—an impossible feat of architecture without the use of tremendous magic. As you draw closer, you can see that the entire building shimmers with some kind of energy. It almost seems to ripple like slow-moving water. Enormous double doors 20 feet tall stand open, and you can see two desiccated corpses just inside the dome, people who apparently died while trying to push the doors closed.

The entire domed temple is protected by the field of magical force invoked by the priests more than a century in the past. Although the characters can see into the temple through the open gates, they cannot get in. Touching the force field is unpleasant, and it is an impenetrable wall. The characters cannot touch the doors, the bodies inside, or even the wall, since the field is placed about 1 foot to the outside of the temple's structure. Walking around the temple tells the characters that there are no entrances other than this one. There are no breaks in the walls, although some of the stones look a bit crumbled.

The characters will likely try peering into the temple to see as far as they can, but the force field does not prevent this. They can see 120 feet (4 hexes) into the unlit shadows, but beyond that all is darkness. What they see is a broad hall leading in, the walls on the sides painted with pictures from top to bottom. There is a double row of columns, rising high to the dome above, beginning not far beyond the point where the hallway opens to the wide chamber. The double line of pillars goes farther than they can see into the building, disappearing into darkness.

Oasis-Temple of Thoth

A. Portal to the Outside World

When the first of the adventurers comes through the portal into the Oasis-Temple, this is where the character arrives. The character is looking southward, and the first, immediate items of interest are statues of the ibis-headed priests.

You reappear in a dimly-lit place, with a vast, open space in front of you and large figures looming behind you. Suddenly one of them moves. Roll initiative.

Just kidding. It's actually just a statue, but it shifted mechanically when the portal activated.

The figures looming over the character are three statues: ibis-headed priests of Thoth. This is the first Lotus-Portal of Thoth the characters will encounter. The movement was one of the ibis heads moving from the "on" position to the "off" position. Until the heads are reset to the right positions, the gate will not function.

Characters will encounter this portal-statue arrangement—three ibis-priests standing behind a lotus platform—in several places throughout the Oasis-Temple. See the sidebar for general information about their functioning and construction.

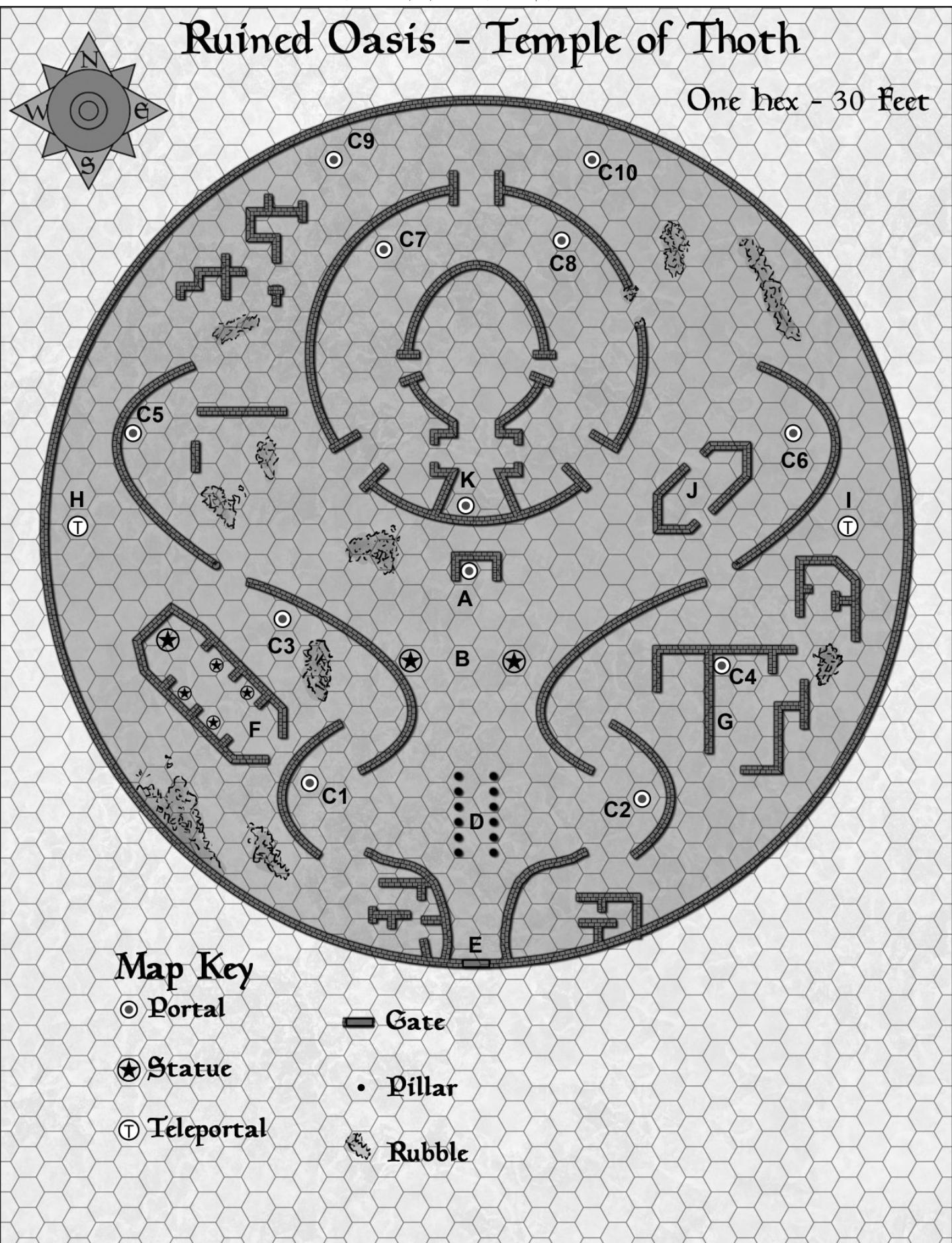
Once characters get a look at the surroundings and get over whatever surprise the statue gives them, the following describes what is seen looking south from the Lotus-Portal.

Somewhere overhead is a ceiling, although it's so high that it's barely visible. A hundred feet or so ahead of you are two massive statues, which have their backs turned to you. Beyond them, you can make out two parallel lines of incredibly tall columns that seem to reach all the way to the high ceiling of this epically-proportioned place. Far to your left and right are curving walls that must rise to the top of the chamber.

At this point, Thoth-Atef, the High Priest, makes contact with the characters' minds, but it will be a weak nudging at the characters' consciousness. He begs them to come to **Area B**, and to hurry.

Ruined Oasis - Temple of Thoth

One hex - 30 Feet



QUESTS OF DOOM: BUGS AND BLOBS

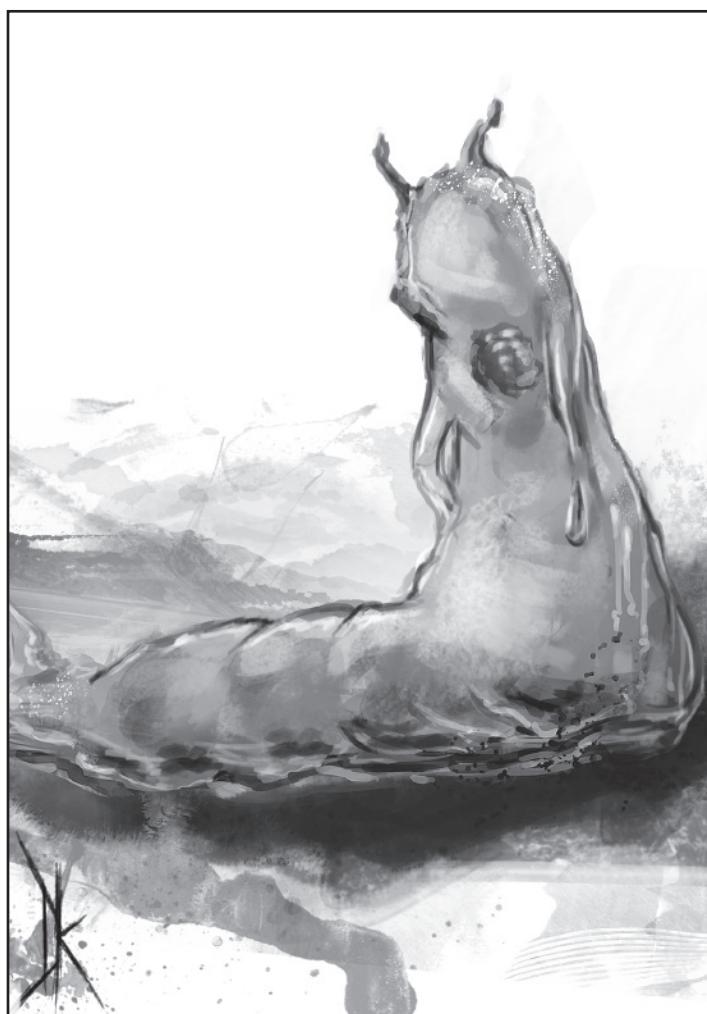
B. Statues of Thoth and Sekhmet

These two south-facing statues are 50 feet tall, with a diameter of 10 feet. One is of a man with the head of an ibis, holding a scroll in one hand and a quill in the other hand. The other statue is of a lioness-headed woman wearing a red dress and holding four scorpions in her clasped hands. Between the two statues is a massive, translucent slug, 20 feet long. It is reared upward so that the front half of its body is upright, and you can see a brain pulsing in the almost-transparent flesh of its chest.

The translucent slug is Thoth-Atef, high priest of Thoth. He is a giant slug of P'Nakh; a rare, largely benevolent example of his kind, having no knowledge of his home plane. He was hatched in a forgotten basement under a temple of Set in a long-destroyed city, and was given no knowledge of his forebears. If the characters kill him, they will face the assault of the planehoppers without assistance from the changed priests and they may have significant trouble getting back to their homeland. Nevertheless, given the tendency of some characters to slaughter anything that looks monstrous, it's a definite possibility.

Thoth-Atef communicates telepathically with the characters, informing them that he is the high priest of Thoth, and he means them no harm. He thanks them for answering his plea and begs them to stay and help him fight off an invasion of the evil planehoppers. He explains that he will reward them with a great artifact held here in the temple if they assist.

Of course, any adventurer worth his or her salt is likely to distrust a giant slug with a pulsing red brain, so the creature allows itself to be



examined with divination spells if the party wishes to do so. If characters attack him, he uses his mind blasts to quiet some of them while he tries to persuade others that he means no harm. He is being entirely truthful, and he truly does need the party's assistance.

Thoth-Atef explains that his power has weakened over the centuries, and he has spent so much of his energy holding back the invasion that he is near death. He further explains that the player characters can use two artifacts—*scorpions of Sekhmet*—to assist in the battle. Finally, he tells them that not only can he instruct them on the use of the scorpions, but that should they succeed in fending off the invaders, as a reward they can take one of the machines with them, along with a fully charged power crystal (the fuel for the scorpions).

Should they persist in attacking him, he fights to the best of his ability. If slain, it takes the player characters one month to figure out how to effectively use the scorpions, and they must fight the planehoppers without the aid of the gelatinous cubes or the amazing mechanical/magical scorpions.

Should all else fail, Thoth-Atef offers the party the temple treasure as well, a total of five small chests of iron.

- The first chest holds a green linen sack with a carved ivory comb (32 sp) and an elegant silver and pink necklace. The necklace has lengths of delicate silver chain connecting clusters of pink pearls set between pairs of rose quartz beads. There are nine such groups of gems on this necklace (1,335 gp).

- The second chest holds a polished oak box (8 sp). Inside the box lie two pieces of jewelry. A shimmering necklace with a triple strand of silver holds a sparkling rose quartz oval set in a silver frame. From this hangs a lustrous gray pearl. Beside this a faceted stone of deep burgundy (garnet) is held in a plain silvery frame (platinum). The stone, an oval the size of a lady's thumbnail, hangs on a double chain of platinum. The whole necklace is worth 1,530 gp.

- The third chest contains a small black wooden box. Inside, on linen padding, rests a silver pendant strung on a set of five thin silk cords. The pendant is roughly diamond shaped but its frame is made of swooping lines rather than straight. In the center of the frame dangles another

Lotus-Portals of Thoth

There are several of these portals throughout the Oasis-Temple of Thoth. They all look the same, and they are all portals to different dimensions, realities, and planes of existence.

An unbroken lotus-portal is a single marble statue of a large, flat lotus blossom on the ground, with a 5-foot diameter. Three priests with ibis heads stand behind the lotus. The heads are mounted on a metal armature, allowing them to be pivoted on the neck to look up or down. The center head moves directly up-down, and the ones at the sides look either in and down at the lotus, or up and sideways at the sky.

The correct placement of the statue heads, in order to make the gate function, is to have the central priest looking down at the lotus and the two priests at his sides looking up and sideways. When the heads are pointed in the correct directions, a blue haze forms in the bowl of the lotus flower. Anyone stepping into the flower and remaining there for a full minute will emerge from some sort of portal on the far side. Not all of the destination portals resemble the lotus-portals.

Once the gate has been used, the armature inside the statues will move the heads back into one of the "off" positions.

At the present time, all but two of the lotus-portals are broken, either by invaders or by the priests of Thoth themselves, before the Oasis-Temple fell to the wax plague of the Sickness Dancers. The gates could conceivably be repaired, but the details of such repair would lie with the Game Master. It would certainly require assistance from powerful priests of Thoth, possibly all the way from the city of Hermopolis.

Giant Slug of P'nahk

GIANT SLUG OF P'NAHK

XP 1,100 (CR 4)

CE Large fiend

Initiative –1

DEFENSE

AC 11 (natural armor)

hp: 76 (9d10 + 27)

Saving Throws: Con +5, Int +6

Resistance: Piercing and slashing damage; acid damage

Immunity: Bludgeoning damage; blindness, deafness, prone

OFFENSE

Speed: 20 ft.

Multiaction: A giant slug of P'nahk bites once and crushes once, or uses its mind blast.

Melee Attack—Bite: +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 2d10 + 4 slashing damage.

Melee Attack—Crush: +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 2d10 + 4 bludgeoning damage and the target is knocked prone, grappled, restrained, and smothered (see below).

Area Attack—Mind Blast (recharge 6): automatic hit (range 60 ft. cone; creatures in cone). Hit: every creature in the affected area must make a successful DC 14 Int saving throw or be affected by the insanity of P'nahk (see below). Characters with Int 16 or higher have tactical disadvantage on the saving throw.

STATISTICS

Str 18 (+4), **Dex** 8 (–1), **Con** 16 (+3),

Int 19 (+4), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 4 (–3)

Languages: Abyssal, Deep Speech, Primordial

Skills: Arcana +6, History +6, Stealth +3

Senses: Tremorsense 60 ft.

TRAITS

Insanity of P'nahk: A giant P'Nahki slug can produce a momentary mental blast that transmits subliminal images of the nightmarish realm of P'nahk. All creatures in the affected area that fail a DC 16 Int saving throw recall these images and must roll 1d4 to determine how they are affected (see below). In addition, affected characters repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns; the effect ends with a successful save (indicating the character managed to forget the images). Characters with Int scores of 16 or higher are peculiarly vulnerable to this attack; they make the saving throws with tactical disadvantage.

1d4	Effect
1	Paralyzed; the character strikes back instinctively with a melee attack or a cantrip (as a reaction) against anything that attacks him or her, but can take no other action and can't move.

1d4	Effect
2	Paranoid rage; the character attacks its nearest allies.
3	Self loathing; the character drops any held items and claws at his or her body, inflicting 1d4 slashing damage per round.
4	Awe of P'nahk; the character drops all held items, falls prone, and grovels in worship of the slug and all things P'nahki. The character is paralyzed.

Smothering: When a giant slug of P'nahk hits a creature with its crushing attack, it drops its body onto the creature, pinning it to the ground. Treat this as being grappled and restrained, but the creature must also make an immediate DC 14 Con saving throw. A successful saving throw indicates the creature inhaled a lungful of air before being trapped; a failed saving throw indicates the air was forced from the creature's lungs and it is suffocating. A suffocating creature can act normally for a number of rounds equal to its Con modifier (minimum of 1 round). Once those rounds expire, the creature drops to 0 hit points at the start of its next turn and it must make death saving throws.

Telepathy: Giant slugs of P'nahk are telepathic, so they can communicate with all creatures within 100 feet.

Transparency: Because of its transparent body, a giant slug of P'nahk always has tactical advantage on Stealth checks and it can attempt to hide anytime it is lightly obscured, such as when it is in dim light.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any, but especially ancient ruins and underground

Organization: Solitary or pair

P'Nahki slugs are massive creatures with bodies so transparent that they are almost invisible. The only part of the slug's anatomy that can be clearly seen is its disturbingly human-looking brain, which appears at first glance to be floating in the air. Their soft, thick hide gives them excellent protection against melee weapons.

These creatures originated in a forgotten place called P'Nahk; whether this was an alien city now in ruins, a lost world, or an entirely different dimension is not known. It's entirely likely that even the slugs themselves don't know the full answer to the mystery of their origin.

The giant slugs of P'Nahk are highly intelligent, although this intellect is seldom put to use in a way that can be related to human motivation or logic. They are most commonly encountered in remote subterranean realms or in the ruins of ancient civilizations, where they sift through the rubble in search of forgotten tomes and lost relics. They have been known to possess startling knowledge about the distant past and about magical artifacts, if one can persuade them to share.

QUESTS OF DOOM: BUGS AND BLOBS

diamond-shaped piece of silver, in which is set a gleaming black opal the size of a man's thumbnail (1,790 gp total).

- In the next chest lies a polished, flat box with a reddish hue (2 gp). Inside the box, a small piece of pink silk (1 gp) is wrapped around a multi-strand necklace of hundreds of tiny freshwater pearls with accents of color provided by small, faceted garnets and rose quartz (2,522 gp total).

- The final chest holds a blue silk pouch (2 gp) with a double-strand necklace made of small matching garnet beads (2,246 gp). Instead of a pendant, the necklace is accented with a cylindrical silver filigree slide.

Ci-10. Broken Portals

A white marble lotus-flower rests on the floor like a petaled bowl 5 feet across. Three statues of ibis-headed men stand behind the lotus, holding hands. The one in the center looks into the sky, and the other two look down at the lotus.

These ten portals have been deactivated or in some cases physically broken by the priests of Thoth to prevent the wax plague from spreading through them into other realities or planes of existence. When the planehoppers invade the temple, their interdimensional tunnels emerge at these portal locations; see the section on "The Planehopper Assault" for details.

D. Columns

A double colonnade, six pillars long, proceeds from south to north. The pillars are massive, 10 feet in diameter, spaced 20 feet apart, and rising over a hundred feet to the domed ceiling. They are painted with scenes of fabulous beasts and people with animal heads. The paint is quite faded, and you cannot make out details without stepping closer.

Most of the scenes feature the ibis-headed god Thoth, to whom this temple belongs. He is shown sitting in front of souls in the underworld, apparently asking questions and writing down the answers on a scroll in his lap. He is also shown stepping through portals that apparently have one world on one side, and another world on the other.

If the characters spend 10 minutes checking the pillars for details, or almost immediately if they are specifically looking for pictures of lotus flowers, they find an interesting picture. It shows Thoth standing on a white lotus flower, with three other ibis-headed people—possibly priests or priestesses—standing behind him. The central priest is looking down at the lotus, and the others look upward and to the sides.

E. The Gate

Two dried-out human bodies lie next to a huge pair of doors that the dead men were apparently trying to close when they died. The doors are covered in thousands of pictograms and runes, but many of them have been hacked and damaged.

The two bodies are priests of Thoth who died in the early days of the plague. Investigation will find that their flesh was starting to melt and change when they died. What they were melting into cannot be guessed from the dried-out corpses. Anyone versed in medicine or anatomy can tell that the melting was fatal, and that the edges of the melted areas seem to be a bit translucent. It is also possible for character with some sort of

medical background to discern that the melting of the flesh resulted from a disease.

The runes and symbols on the door are all focused on the god Thoth, who is shown in many of his different functions as a god of Khemit. In particular, he is shown in his capacity as a traveler and as one who teaches. Studying the door allows the characters to find a series of pictures that show the same scene, one on top of the other, all the way down one part of the door. The scene is simple: Thoth stands in front of a person wearing an ibis medallion, holding his hand over the person's head. The last of these pictures is strange, because instead of a person wearing the ibis medallion, it is some sort of formless shape with a circle in the center. It does have the ibis medallion draped around it, though.

The figure being blessed by Thoth is of course the High Priest Thoth-Antef, whose species is far from human.

F. Chapel of the Other Gods

This is an enclosed area the size of a cathedral. A statue at the very back of the long chamber holds aloft a disk of bright white light, which illuminates the entire area. The statue is almost too bright to make out the details, but from the shape of it, it looks like a statue of the god Ra, since it is a hawk-headed man. The 60-foot-wide aisle leading to the statue of Ra has four side-chambers, 20 feet or so deep. These also contain statues, although the shadows from Ra's blinding sun disk make them hard to see from the entrance of the room.

This temple contains statues of gods other than Thoth. The statues here allowed visiting priests and dignitaries to give offerings and blessings to their own patron deities. The large statue at the back of the temple is Ra. There are four other statues in alcoves along the side walls of this temple: Isis, Osiris, Sekhmet, and Set.

- The *statue of Isis* shows a woman holding an ankh, her hair arranged on her head in a shape that looks like a chair, or perhaps a throne.
- The *statue of Osiris* shows a man holding a shepherd's crook and a flail, wearing a tall crown with two ostrich feathers. His skin is painted green.
- The *statue of Sekhmet* depicts a woman with the head of a lioness. The entire statue is painted red, as if with blood.
- The *statue of Set* is an enormous, coiled, black snake.

G. Storehouse

A few large support walls remain from what must once have been a warren of smaller rooms and chambers. There are remnants of a fallen staircase, and some toppled statues.

In this area, in addition to the broken portal of Thoth, there is a great deal of potentially usable material. If the characters are willing to scavenge, they can find the following:

- Huge quantities of clay bricks and wall fragments
- Smaller quantities, but still several tons, of cut stone (blocks that are 1 ft. x 1 ft. x 2 ft.)
- 30 wooden beams (sound and not rotten)
- 200 wooden beams in various stages of rot
- 30 covered, sealed clay drums of water (40-gallon containers with 20 gallons of water remaining in each)
- 30 covered, sealed clay drums of flammable oil (40-gallon containers with 5 gallons remaining in each). This oil will burn, but it's not as volatile as alchemist's fire or explosive like gasoline; it can't be used to make bombs.
- 30 covered, sealed clay drums of olive oil (40-gallon containers with

HIDDEN OASIS - TEMPLE OF THOTH

30 gallons in each).

- 1 ton of cloth, rotted
- 16 dried-out human bodies (priests of Thoth or temple guests)
- No rope

H. Teleportal

A pattern of colorful, bird-shaped tiles is set into the floor to create a huge circle 30 feet in diameter.

This circle of tiles is a teleportal. Anything stepping onto it (including one of the scorpions of Sekhmet) will instantly be teleported to **Area I**.

I. Teleportal

This is a circle of fish-shaped tiles, 30 feet across.

This circle of tiles is a teleportal. As with the opposite teleportal, anything stepping onto it (including one of the scorpions of Sekhmet) will instantly be teleported to **Area H**.

J. Garage

Inside this long chamber, you can see two giant scorpions made of metal. Each one is 15 feet long, and they have bodies that are taller and wider than the proportions of a real scorpion.

These are the artifacts guarded by the temple, the Scorpions of Sekhmet.

Scorpion of Sekhmet

The Scorpions of Sekhmet resemble iron scorpions, 15 feet long, with a thick body and a proportionally short tail, weighing 11,000 pounds. They are vehicles created by the goddess Sekhmet, granted to six of her most devoted warrior-servants in the distant past. Two of these artifacts have, over the centuries, fallen into the hands of the Priests of Thoth, who stored them in Thoth's great Temple-Oasis. There is a hatch on the right side, allowing people to enter. Each of the scorpions can hold up to four people (provided that no one is much larger than a human). The hatch can be locked from the inside (treat as a *wizard lock* spell if anything tries to force it open when locked). It takes a full round for a single person to enter or leave the hatch. Each of the four seats has a periscope that can be raised to see what is happening outside.

Being gifts from a goddess, the scorpions are effectively immune to any sort of attack that can be mounted by mortals. They can run out of power and become inert. They are not water or gas proof, and just because the vehicles can't be hurt doesn't mean the people inside can't be.

Seating

Each scorpion has four seats, arranged roughly in a Y pattern. The left seat controls the legs (movement forward and backward), the right forward seat controls steering (turning left/right) and the claws, and the rearmost seat controls the tail. The seat located directly behind and between the two forward seats (at the junction of the Y) is positioned so its occupant can assist the occupants of the forward seats in their tasks. It takes 1 round to get into an empty seat, and it is not possible to switch seats if all seats

are occupied. In that case, someone must get out of the scorpion to make room for others to swap positions. It takes one round to climb out and one round to climb back in.

Defenses

A scorpion is heavily armored, but it has openings so those inside can see out and launch attacks with spells or personal weapons. Creatures inside the scorpion have three-quarters cover against attacks from outside. The cover bonus (+5) applies to all saving throws, not just Dex saves.

Everyone inside the scorpion is immune to fire, cold, and lightning. Sonic attacks (like the song and the chirp abilities of planehopper Channelers) affect those inside the scorpion normally, although the carapace grants its bonus to saving throws.

Charge Crystals

Charge crystals power these artifacts. These crystals act as a fuel source for the scorpions, and appear as perfectly cut rose quartz crystals that glow slightly in the dark and are pleasantly warm to the touch. Currently, one scorpion has 26 charges left and the other has 55 charges left. The crystals found in the oasis (the gemstone amulets) are fully charged charge crystals (1000 charges each). When a charge crystal reaches 0 charges, the scorpion ceases all functioning. Crystals can't be recharged by any known (mortal) means.

Operations

The scorpions have physical limits on what they can do, and the more the characters push the limits, the harder it is to make the device do exactly what they want. To keep track, the character in charge of movement must move the scorpion one hex at a time, and the other characters (turning, clawing, firing) can interrupt at any time to turn the scorpion, make an attack with the claws, or fire a sun-bolt from the tail.

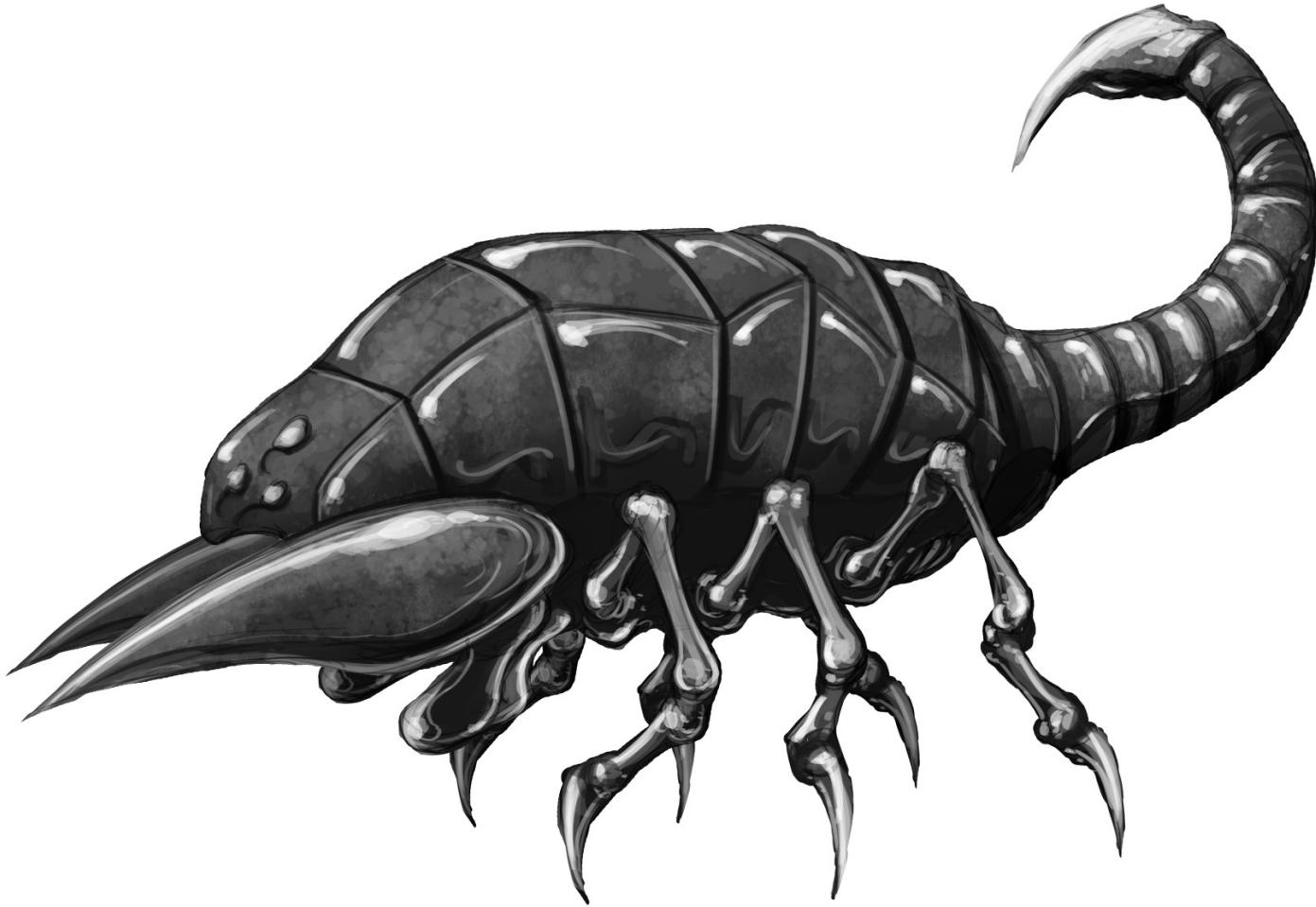
Movement and Turning (seats 1 and 2)

Each 100 miles of overland movement uses 1 charge of a charge crystal. Tactical movement uses no charges unless characters push the speed over 90 feet per turn (move 4 or more hexes). Movement requires checks as follows:

- **Moving up to 90 feet per turn (1–3 hexes):** Automatic success.
- **Moving 120 feet per turn (4 hexes):** After the scorpion moves 3 hexes, the character controlling the legs can try to move one more hex. The character makes a DC 11 Wis (Animal Handling) check. If the check succeeds, the scorpion moves the extra hex and can keep moving (see below). If the check fails, the scorpion doesn't move, and it can't move any farther this turn. Rolling a natural 1 or 20 has no special effect. Moving this extra hex costs 1 charge from the crystal.
- **Moving more than 120 feet per turn (5–8 hexes):** The character controlling the legs makes a DC 11 Wis (Animal Handling) check for each additional hex the scorpion tries to move. These checks are made with tactical disadvantage. Success allows the scorpion to move 1 hex, and it can keep going if desired. Each extra hex moved costs 1 charge from the crystal. Failure ends the scorpion's movement for this turn. A natural 20 is a success, and if the scorpion tries to move another hex, the next roll won't have tactical disadvantage. A natural 1 means the scorpion stops moving and a roll must be made on the Legs Critical Failure table, below. A scorpion's maximum speed is 8 hexes/turn (240 ft./turn, or about 27 mph).

- **Turning:** After each one-hex move, the scorpion can rotate 60 degrees (one hexside) left or right. Steering is controlled by the character in the right forward seat (operating the claws), not the character controlling the legs. These two need to cooperate to maneuver the scorpion effectively. If the scorpion moves more than 3 hexes, the right-seat occupant must make a successful DC 11 Wis (Animal Handling) check to turn the vehicle; failure indicates the vehicle doesn't turn in this hex, but it can try again if it keeps moving. If the roll is a natural 1, however, a roll must be made on the Legs Critical Failure table, below.

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Attacking with Claws (seats 2 and 3)

Claw attacks do not use up charge crystals. Claws can be used to attack or, with a bit of care, to lift and manipulate large objects. The attack roll for a claw attack is an Int (Nature) check, with the operator's Strength modifier added as an extra bonus, against the target's AC. Lifting objects requires a simple DC 11 Int (Nature) check.

- **1st Claw Attack while Stationary:** Int (Nature) check + Str modifier (reach 15 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 2d10 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled.

• **2nd Claw Attack while Stationary:** Int (Nature) check + Str modifier, made with tactical disadvantage (reach 15 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 2d10 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled. If the target was already grappled by the scorpion, there is no tactical disadvantage on the attack roll. A natural 1 means the claws become entangled with each other and no claw attacks are possible for one round.

- **1st Claw Attack while Moving:** Int (Nature) check + Str modifier (reach 15 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 2d10 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled. A natural 1 means a roll must be made on the Claw Critical Failure table. Only one claw attack can be made on turns when the scorpion moves.

Vengeance of Sekhmet (seat 4)

The tail of the scorpion launches a bolt of true sunlight to a range of 450 feet (15 hexes). It can fire in a 120-degree arc forward (60 degrees to the left and right of straight ahead, or across its three front hexsides). It cannot fire to the rear or flanks. These sunlight bolts only affect creatures that are not Lawful (any Chaotic or Neutral alignment, and unaligned). To fire the Vengeance of Sekhmet, the operator must make a successful DC 11 Dex (Sleight of Hand) check. If the check fails, the operator failed to manipulate the highly sensitive controls in the precise manner needed to

activate the weapon.

The Vengeance of Sekhmet can be fired every other round, and it uses 1 charge of a charge crystal per shot.

- **Fire while Stationary:** automatic hit (range 450 ft. line; all creatures in line). *Hit:* 6d6 radiant damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw.

- **Fire Tail while Moving:** automatic hit (range 450 ft. line; all creatures in line). *Hit:* 6d6 radiant damage, or no damage with a successful DC 10 Dex saving throw.

Command Position (seat 3)

Originally, the third seat (at the junction of the Y) was the commander's seat. The person in seat 3 can take over the legs, the claws, or the steering, as needed. Alternatively, this person can control just the second claw, allowing two claw attacks to be made against different targets without the second one having tactical disadvantage. The person in this seat can also aid one of those tasks by taking a Help action, per the normal rules for helping.

Legs Critical Failure Table

1d10	Problem
1-4	Scorpion stalls and moves no further this round. Next round, the scorpion can move only 60 feet (2 hexes) automatically; moving farther requires Wis (Animal Handling) checks.
5-6	Scorpion flips over. It can be righted on its next turn if the character controlling the legs makes a successful DC 11 Wis (Animal Handling) check, but it can't move that turn.

HIDDEN OASIS - TEMPLE OF THOTH

1d10	Problem
7-8	Scorpion skitters out of control. Move it 1d8 hexes in a random direction.
9	Fire in the mechanisms. Someone outside the scorpion must spend 1d3 rounds putting out the fire. On the third and all subsequent rounds, everyone inside the scorpion takes 1d6 fire damage if the fire is still burning. The scorpion can continue its normal activities while the fire is burning and someone on top is putting out the fire; it's just on fire while doing so.
10	Scorpion flips over and rolls. Each character inside must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be knocked unconscious for 1d6 rounds. Roll 1d6 to see how many times the scorpion rolls; it lands on its feet if the roll is even, or on its back if the roll is odd. If on its back, it can be righted on its next turn if the character controlling the legs makes a successful DC 11 Wis (Animal Handling) check, but it can't move that turn.

Claw Critical Failure Table

1d10	Problem
1-4	No claw attacks are possible until the round after the claw operator makes a successful DC 11 Int (Nature) check.
5-6	One claw is disabled and unusable. It can be fixed if the claw operator makes a successful DC 20 Int (Nature) check.
7-8	One claw is disabled and unusable. It can be fixed if the claw operator makes 3 successful DC 20 Int (Nature) checks.
9	One claw is permanently disabled (chopped in half by the other claw).
10	Both claws are permanently disabled (the operator manipulated them so they miraculously cut each other in half).

K. The Gate of Hermopolis

A white marble lotus-flower rests on the floor like a petaled bowl 5 feet across. Three statues of ibis-headed men stand behind the lotus, holding hands. The one in the center looks into the sky, and the other two look down at the lotus.

This gate leads to the city of Hermopolis, a major city in the Material Plane. More importantly, as far as Thoth-Antef is concerned, Hermopolis is the seat of the Temple of Thoth. If the planehoppers get through this portal in force, the entire presence of Thoth's priestly hierarchy on this world will be threatened. Defending this gate has been Thoth-Antef's main priority during his centuries of defending the ruined temple from those who manage to get through the gates from the outside.

Thoth-Antef's Briefing

Provided the characters give him a chance, Thoth-Antef briefs the characters on the following points.

- Thoth-Antef is the last high priest of Thoth in this temple. He will

City of Hermopolis

The city of Hermopolis is a major city of Lower Khemit. With a population of 115,000, the seat of the High Temple of Thoth, a major library called the Thocaenum, and a major university at the temple, Hermopolis is a center of learning and sophistication known throughout the Kingdom of Khemit. Its university produces scholars highly sought by the Royal Court of Khemit and by administrators throughout the kingdom, and its library rivals the one at Pharos, though its content is more religiously oriented. It sits at the confluence of the River Stygian and the seasonal Bakhari tributary. During flood season, the river is a muddy expanse over 2 miles wide in which tens of thousands of storks and flamingos cavort and feed, creating a cacophony heard more than a mile from the banks.

quickly explain that a plague struck the temple and that the priests closed it off magically to keep the plague from spreading through the temple's magic portals into other dimensions. The plague killed many and turned the rest into gelatinous cubes that never die of old age. He himself has not reached the natural end of his lifetime and was not affected by the plague. If the characters inquire further, he can tell them about the Sickness Dancers and that this was centuries ago, and other details from the background, but these details will be of little interest to most players.

- The attackers are a species known as "planehoppers," because not only do they resemble locusts, but they behave like locusts too, ravaging the worlds they invade and enslaving entire populations. Their own word for themselves is not pronounceable. They have been psychically drilling through the substance of the planes of existence, and they are at the verge of breaking through one of the portals of the Oasis-Temple. He doesn't know which one of the portals. Unless the characters use some divinatory powers of their own, they will not know that the planehoppers are working through three portals at once until the drilling breaks through.

- Thoth-Antef himself is already so stricken by his efforts to hold back the planehoppers that he can no longer do much more than broadcast the characters' instructions to the changed priests. He can still bite, but using a mind blast leaves him needing a week's rest.

- There are four former priests" in the temple: the lucky (or perhaps unlucky) servants of Thoth who were changed into **gelatinous cubes** by the wax plague instead of being killed by it. As long as the characters

Changed Priests of Thoth

When the wax plague infected all the priests of the Oasis-Temple of Thoth, the first infected were the priests most vulnerable to the plague, and these died before the true horror of the wax plague showed itself in them. The priests who were not killed by the disease were the unlucky ones, for they were irrevocably and horribly changed.

The changed priests are now immortal gelatinous cubes, the final stage of the curse brought to Thoth's temple by the Sickness Dancers. The priests' skeletons still hang motionless inside the translucent flesh of the cube: flesh that was once their own. Around the neck of each skeleton shines the necklace of Thoth's priesthood, the symbol of an ibis.

For all intents and purposes, the changed priests are gelatinous cubes, but they have Intelligence 3 and they can "hear" the voice of Thoth-Antef through the necklace. They follow his orders to the best of their limited abilities. They can be told to go places in the temple, and they understand and obey. They can be told to attack, and they can be told to wait in a particular place. Their reduced mental abilities cannot handle anything more complex.

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have Thoth-Antef to communicate mentally with the cubes, they can give the cubes instructions. The original skeletons of the changed priests are visible in the gelatin of the cubes, and they are wearing holy symbols of Thoth. Without the holy symbols, they can't "hear" Thoth-Antef's mental commands.

The player characters can decide where Thoth Antef and the changed priests start the battle (e.g. the players decide where all the allied pieces start).

(Gelatinous Cube: AC 6, 84 hp; +4 to hit, 3d6 acid damage; can enter another creature's spaces as it moves, and that creature must make a successful DC 12 Dex saving throw or take 3d6 acid damage and be engulfed; engulfed creatures take 6d6 damage at the start of the cube's turns, are restrained, and can't breathe; an engulfed creature can escape or be pulled free with a successful DC 12 Str check)

The Planehopper Assault

The main event of this adventure is a battle to keep the planehopper horde (their scouts, anyway) from taking control of the Oasis-Temple of Thoth. Should the planehoppers capture the temple, they will fortify it and use it as a staging area for the imperialistic expansion of their hive into many planes of existence, including the Material Plane.

Time

From the point when the characters arrive, the planehoppers will arrive in 72 hours (three days). Assuming Thoth-Antef survives meeting the characters, he predicts that the time frame is 30 to 80 hours. Thus, the first phase of the adventure inside the temple is preparation for the assault. It may be that the characters want to root around in the wreckage, build traps, and make complicated plans. If not, and they just want to let the battle roll, let it roll. Don't force the pace to slow down if players want to jump straight into the fight.

If they want to prepare, emphasize that they don't know exactly how much time they have. Give them the player map and let them plan. Experienced referees know that whenever players are given a map and a lot of stuff to work with, no final plan will ever emerge until you announce that they have (for example) two minutes before everything begins, ready or not. An hour of real time is more than enough time to give them; 30 minutes is probably better.

Where the Planehoppers Emerge

Once 72 in-game hours have passed, roll 1d10 to see which portal the planehoppers break open. Find the numbered location on the temple map (C1-10) that correspond to the die roll; that's where the planehoppers open their first breach. The portal initially used by the characters to enter the Oasis-Temple is not one planehoppers can invade through because it doesn't connect to a dimension the planehoppers can tunnel from.

Timetable and Psychic Shockwave

The first effect when a planehopper tunnel breaks through into the temple's reality is a blast of magical and psychic energy. This is the outward explosion of all the planar residue being pushed in front of the psychic tunneling, like rubble in front of a drill bit. The drill bit itself packs quite a wallop when it suddenly breaks through into the Material Plane. Any physical other than the portal that is in the portal's hex or one of the surrounding six hexes disintegrates. If a living creature is in one of those hexes, it takes 6d10 force damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw.

From that point on, things happen according to the timetable below.

Round	What Happens
1	Randomly determined portal explodes with the force of psychic tunneling (Breach #1).
2	1 laborer, 1 overseer, and 1 channeler emerge from Breach #1.
3	2 laborers emerge from Breach #1.
4	3 warriors emerge from Breach #1.
5	2 laborers and 1 warrior emerge from Breach #1. Randomly determined portal explodes with the force of psychic tunneling (Breach #2).
6	1 overseer and 1 channeler emerge from breach #1. 2 warriors, 1 overseer, and 1 channeler emerge from Breach #2.
7	1 warrior emerges from Breach #1.
8	1 warrior emerges from Breach #2.
9-17	Nothing emerges, no new breaches formed.
18	Randomly determined portal explodes with the force of psychic tunneling (Breach #3).
19	1 overseer and 1 channeler emerge from Breach #3.
20	3 warriors emerge from Breach #3.
21	3 warriors emerge from Breach #3.
22	1 governor emerges from a randomly determined breach (roll 1d3), carried by 4 laborers.

Battle Roster of the Planehoppers

These planehoppers are a reconnaissance-in-force, led by a governor in charge of three overseers, 10 warriors, six channelers, and nine laborers. Since they are exploring, no investigation will follow their disappearance; at least, not for some time.

Breach #1	Breach #2	Breach #3	Random Breach
Overseer x2	Overseer x2	Overseer	Governor
Channeler x2	Channeler x2	Channeler	
Warrior x4	Warrior x3	Warrior x6	
Laborer x4			Laborer x4

Planehoppers

The planehoppers are an intelligent insectlike species with a bizarre caste system. They are rapacious conquerors relentlessly expanding their strange empires across many dimensions and planes of existence. Their sprawling cities, with high spires, curving ramps, and countless thousands of inhabitants, can cover entire worlds and moons in the realities and dimensions that the planehoppers have seized.

The basic form of a planehopper resembles a locust without wings, but with an upright torso section. Thus, they are similar to centaurs in shape: a large, grasshopperlike, horizontal segment with four legs, supporting an upright torso segment with two arms, and the head-segment atop the torso. All the castes of planehoppers share this underlying body form.

Planehopper eggs are either male eggs or queen eggs, laid in a ratio of at least a hundred to one. Originally, perhaps, there was no more differentiation between the males than this, but a caste called the "vivisectors" developed at some distant point in planehopper history to

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adapt young planehoppers to the hive's needs. The vivisectors use surgical procedures—a combination of their innate magic, instinct, learning, and tools—to shape young planehoppers into members of the various male castes. The vivisectors do not hesitate to practice their arts upon other species conquered by the planehoppers, with varying degrees of success.

Planehoppers communicate by telepathy among themselves, in a symbolic language that can actually be transcribed onto paper and translated by use of a *comprehend languages* spell. Most overseers can vocalize speech quite easily in more than one language, but most members of other castes do not bother to learn the art. Being able to speak aloud is not considered an honorable achievement, although it is a necessary one if the hive is to communicate with the slaves it employs, or trade with civilizations that are currently too strong to enslave or pillage.

Raiding parties are usually led by a single governor. Queens only arrive once the raiding party secures an area. Planehoppers are implacable enemies of the antlike formians.

Different castes of planehoppers are described below.

Planehopper Channeler

XP 25 (CR 1/8)

LE Large fiend

Initiative +1

DEFENSE

AC 14 (natural armor)

hp: 38 (4d10)

Immunity: Psychic damage

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Area Attack—Chirp: Automatic hit (range 60 ft. line; creatures in line). **Hit:** 4d6 + 1 thunder damage, or half damage with a successful DC 11 Dex saving throw.

Area Attack—Repulsion: Automatic hit (range 60 ft. cone; creatures in cone). **Hit:** 2d6 + 4 force damage and the target must make a successful DC 14 Str saving throw or be pushed 60 feet; if it strikes a solid object before it's been pushed the full 60 feet, it takes 1d6 damage per 10 feet that the distance was shortened.

Area Attack—Song: Automatic hit (range 60 ft. radius centered on the channeler; creatures in radius). **Hit:** 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, or half damage with a successful DC 14 Wis saving throw. A creature that fails the save also drops everything from its hands and is stunned (failed by 1-5 points) or driven to attack its closest ally (failed by 6+ points); a creature that's stunned or attacking allies repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, and recovers on a successful save. Planehoppers are immune to this effect.

STATISTICS

Str 10 (+0), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 18 (+4),

Int 5 (-3), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 6 (-2)

Languages: Telepathy (with other planehoppers only)

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Chirp: This projection is a needle-thin line of cohesive sound emanating from the channeler.

Planar Excavation: This emanation digs through the fabric of different planes of existence or dimensions. It creates a funnel from one reality into the next, and it is through these tunnels that the planehoppers spread their rapacious empires, conquering and enslaving the civilizations they find on the far sides of their constant tunneling. The amount of time needed to excavate a planar crossing is entirely up to the GM; it can take minutes or years, depending on prevailing conditions, on



the proximity of the planes being joined, and on whether it's being commanded by an overseer or a governor.

Repulsion: This psychic emanation is a 60-foot cone of physical pressure that slams all living beings away from the channeler. Creatures weighing up to one ton each are affected.

Song: A channeler's song is actually a psychic frequency rather than a true sound, but it "sounds" like a high-pitched whistle in the minds of creatures who are subjected to it.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any land

Organization: Always part of a large, mixed force; usually 1 per overseer or governor

Planehopper channelers resemble warriors but they have much larger heads and long antennae. They are able to receive mental bursts from an overseer or a governor and amplify that energy into a much more powerful, focused projection. The channeler itself is not exhausted or depleted by focusing mental power, but the originating governor or overseer has limited stamina (represented by recharge rolls). More than one governor or overseer can focus mental power through a single channeler, but the channeler can serve as a conduit only once per round, no matter how many overseers and governors are nearby.

Planehopper Governor

XP 200 (CR 1)

LE Large fiend

Initiative -1

DEFENSE

AC 14 (natural armor)

hp: 38 (7d10)

Saving Throws: Int +6, Wis +5, Cha +5

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Immunity: Psychic damage

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft., levitation

Psychic Attack—Chirp (recharge 5, 6): see Channeler for attack specifics

Area Attack—Repulsion (recharge 5, 6): see Channeler for attack specifics

Psychic Attack—Song (recharge 5, 6): see Channeler for attack specifics

STATISTICS

Str 8 (-1), **Dex** 8 (-1), **Con** 10 (+0),

Int 18 (+4), **Wis** 16 (+3), **Cha** 16 (+3)

Languages: Telepathy 60 ft.

Skills: Insight +5, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft.

TRAITS

Levitation: A planehopper governor is unimpeded by difficult terrain.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any land

Organization: Solitary, and always part of a large, mixed force

A planehopper governor is mostly brain. It looks like a giant locust head floating in the air, 5 feet in diameter, with spindly legs and a rudimentary body dangling beneath it. The head's carapace is too small to contain the massive brain, so the back is split open like flower petals, allowing the pulsing yellow brain to overflow the cranium. Six whiplike antennae emerge directly from the brain and undulate slowly in the air.

Governor planehoppers can levitate to a height of 30 feet, but they cannot move horizontally without help. They are usually assisted by two to four laborers, who push the governor where it directs.

Governors are the commanders of a planehopper horde. They can communicate telepathically with overseers at a distance of 1 mile, with channelers at distances up to 500 feet, and with other castes of planehoppers and other types of creatures at a range of 60 feet. Their telepathy is blocked by a half-inch of lead.

Planehopper governors cannot attack: they have no natural weapons. They can, however, amplify and focus their mental energy through a planehopper channeler (see the description of channelers for details) to attack or to create pathways between dimensions. The governor must be within 500 feet of the channeler to use this power.

Planehopper Laborer

XP 100 (CR 1/2)

LE Large fiend

Initiative +0

DEFENSE

AC 15 (natural armor)

hp: 19 (3d10 + 3)

OFFENSE

Speed: 40 ft.

Melee Attack—Claws: +4 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

Hit: 1d10 + 2 slashing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 14 (+2), **Dex** 11 (+0), **Con** 12 (+1),

Int 6 (-2), **Wis** 8 (-1), **Cha** 4 (-3)



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Languages: Telepathy (with other planehoppers only)

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any land

Organization: Crew (2-12) or as part of a large, mixed force

A planehopper laborer is the basic, fundamental form of male planehoppers. They resemble locusts without wings, but with an upright torso section. They are similar to centaurs in shape and size: a large, grasshopperlike, horizontal segment with four legs supporting an upright torso segment with two arms and a head-segment atop the torso.

Planehopper laborers are the bottom rung of the planehopper hierarchy. They are sentient but dull-witted, easily fooled if not mentally linked with a member of one of the higher castes. Left to themselves, they will happily drink and gamble away their money, psychologically incapable of seeing themselves as oppressed. The uncontrolled celebrations of worker planehoppers have leveled entire blocks of captured cities.

Workers are able to communicate telepathically with other planehoppers, but not with members of other species. Although they have organs that can vocalize words, most worker planehoppers never learn a spoken language at all, since they have no contacts beyond their own hives. Planehopper workers are not combatants; their most effective attack is to drop any tools and fling themselves at an enemy, scratching with their short claws. In some cases they might be ordered to do exactly this, simply to delay or block the enemy. Actual fighting, though, is left to the warriors and the channelers.

Planehopper Overseer

XP 200 (CR 1)

LE Large fiend

Initiative +1

DEFENSE

AC 15 (breastplate)

hp: 51 (6d10 + 18)

OFFENSE

Speed: 40 ft.

Multiattack: An overseer planehopper attacks three times with shortswords, or it can use one of its psychic attacks.

Melee Attack—Shortsword: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d6 +3 piercing damage.

Area Attack—Chirp (recharge 6): see Channeler for attack specifics

Area Attack—Repulsion (recharge 6): see Channeler for attack specifics

Area Attack—Song (recharge 6): see Channeler for attack specifics

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 17 (+3),

Int 10 (+0), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 12 (+1)

Languages: Telepathy (with other planehoppers only)

Skills: Perception +2

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Hive Mind: Overseer planehoppers make Perception checks with tactical advantage, because they have the benefit of being linked to many planehoppers' senses at once. What one sees, they all see.

Leap: An overseer planehopper can make a horizontal jump of 30 feet.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any land

Organization: 1 per 4 warrior planehoppers



Overseers are the squad- and platoon-level officers of a planehopper fighting force. They have a mental link with all the warrior planehoppers under their command: each warrior can see what the overseer sees and what all the other warriors see. This hive-bond between overseers and their warriors is what makes the planehoppers such a terrifying threat to civilization whenever they appear through their planar gates. Fortunately, the link is not unlimited: an overseer cannot link to more than four warriors at a time, and warriors cannot switch in and out of different overseers' control. Once established, the link lasts until the planehopper's death. New warriors can be added to a squad to replace casualties, but none can leave once bonded to a particular overseer.

In addition to four warriors, an overseer can control a single channeler. As long as the overseer is not more than 500 feet from the channeler, it can command the channeler to project its chirp, repulsion, or song; see the entry on channelers for details about these attacks.

Planehopper Warrior

XP 450 (CR 2)

LE Large fiend

Initiative +1

DEFENSE

AC 15 (breastplate)

hp: 51 (6d10 + 18)

OFFENSE

Speed: 40 ft.

Multiattack: A warrior planehopper attacks once with a pike or twice with longswords.

Melee Attack—Pike: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit:

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1d10 + 3 piercing damage.

Melee Attack—Longsword: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d8 +3 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 17 (+3),

Int 10 (+0), **Wis** 8 (-1), **Cha** 6 (-2)

Languages: Telepathy (with other planehoppers only)

Skills: Perception +1

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Hive Mind: Warrior planehoppers make Perception checks with tactical advantage, because they have the benefit of being linked to many planehoppers' senses at once. What one sees, they all see.

Leap: A warrior planehopper can make a horizontal jump of 30 feet. If it makes a pike attack immediately after jumping, it has tactical advantage on the attack roll and a hit causes an extra 1d10 damage.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any land

Organization: Squad (1-4), platoon (4-24), or as part of a large, mixed force

Warrior planehoppers are more intelligent than the workers; their thought processes are quite alien, but they are approximately as intelligent as the average human. Planehopper warriors are telepathically tied to a governor in the same way that the workers are connected to overseers. Each one shares perception, through the queen, with all the other warriors she commands.

Planehopper warriors wear breastplates and plumed helmets into battle, and they fight with weapons, favoring pikes and swords.



Demons & Devils

Ra's Evil Grin

By Bill Webb and Clark Peterson

Ra's Evil Grin challenges adventurers of at least 11th level who are seeking a powerful magic item—the *globe of Arden*. If a different item suits your campaign better, another appropriate powerful item can be substituted as the final objective. This dungeon culminates in a battle with Dendorandra, a lesser marilith known as a dark daughter.

As a lead-in to this adventure, the GM may use a map from another treasure hoard showing the location of the *globe* (detailed more fully in “**The Legend of the Globe of Arden**,” below) or a priestly tome describing Arden, the long-dead avatar of Ra, and the wondrous powers of an unknown artifact called the *globe of Arden*. Such a tome might mention that the *globe* emits rays as intense as those of the sun, destroying all they touch. In any event, characters should need to consult with sages and oracles to determine the location and history of the *globe* and dungeon. A sage could also provide a map to the dungeon’s location, referenced in the “**The Legend of the Globe of Arden**,” below. We set the dungeon on a small, remote island far across the sea, but you can relocate it to suit your campaign.

This dungeon provides numerous puzzles, a few traps, and only two monsters. Those monsters, though few in number, should challenge and threaten even the most combat-hardened party—particularly after the party encounters all the vicious creatures that inhabit the Island of the Globe.

The Legend of the Globe of Arden

Using divination or consulting sages uncovers the following information about the god, Arden, and the *globe of Arden*. GMs should read this information to their players.

In days long past, the people of the eastern lands worshiped the sun god, Arden. Legend says that the gods of darkness destroyed Arden during divine combat. Arden’s followers gathered their slain god’s remains and stored them in his temples.

Legends tell that one such relic, the *globe of Arden*, was in fact the left eye of the god himself—ripped from its socket by Tsathogga, a vile frog-demon, during Arden’s final, hopeless battle. The eye retained the power of the sun; demonic servants of Tsathogga, attempting to steal it, were disintegrated by the power it contained. Priests of Arden eventually recovered the eye, which had solidified into a sphere seemingly made of cloudy, white glass, and renamed the divine artifact the *globe of Arden*.

With Arden’s destruction, his following waned. Yet the preserved relics—elements of his divine being—prevented Arden’s foes from overcoming his temples. What the relics could not prevent was the treachery of Asari, a high priest of Arden at the temple where the *globe* was stored. Asari grew jealous and bitter over his loss of personal power, which followed the destruction of his deity. With his spell powers failing and followers dwindling, he entertained the overtures of the frog-god Tsathogga, who promised to restore Asari’s earthly power. As his final act of betrayal, Asari stole the *globe of Arden* from the temple’s inner sanctuary and fled before the other priests detected his treachery. He delivered the *globe* to the demon-priests who took the relic and hid it in a foreign and unpopulated land—a remote island, legends say—in a structure designed to hide the *globe* from Arden and his followers. Rumors suggest that the demon-priests of Tsathogga, a god of water and darkness, fashioned the complex’s entrance to mock Arden, a god of air and light. Legends also caution that Asari, the fallen priest, received great rewards from the gods of evil: renewed earthly power and the gift of unlife. The followers of

Arden, greatly reduced in number and power, were unable to recover the *globe*, and it fell out of all human reckoning.

After the passage of countless years, the sands of the eastern deserts have long since consumed the civilization that once thrived there, while men and elves inhabit what were once the unpopulated foreign lands of Arden’s time.

Across the ages, however, an ancient map that allegedly depicts a possible location of the island on which the *globe* was hidden still survives. The coastline of that distant land bears a strong resemblance to an area of the currently civilized world, though no other maps refer to this island, nor have sailors spoken of it. The map also features these cryptic words, written in a long-forgotten language:

*On an island within an island,
Beyond a door that is not a door,
Shielded by the grin of the hated sun,
Lies the globe of Arden, the eye of a dead god,
Stolen long ago by the traitor Asari.*

Perhaps this map holds a key to locating the ancient and powerful *globe of Arden*...

It’s unlikely that player characters know much about Arden; those with training in History can attempt a DC 21 Int (History) check to recall vague references from ancient texts; they know just enough to be tantalized. They really need to consult with specialists or with divine oracles to get more substantial information.

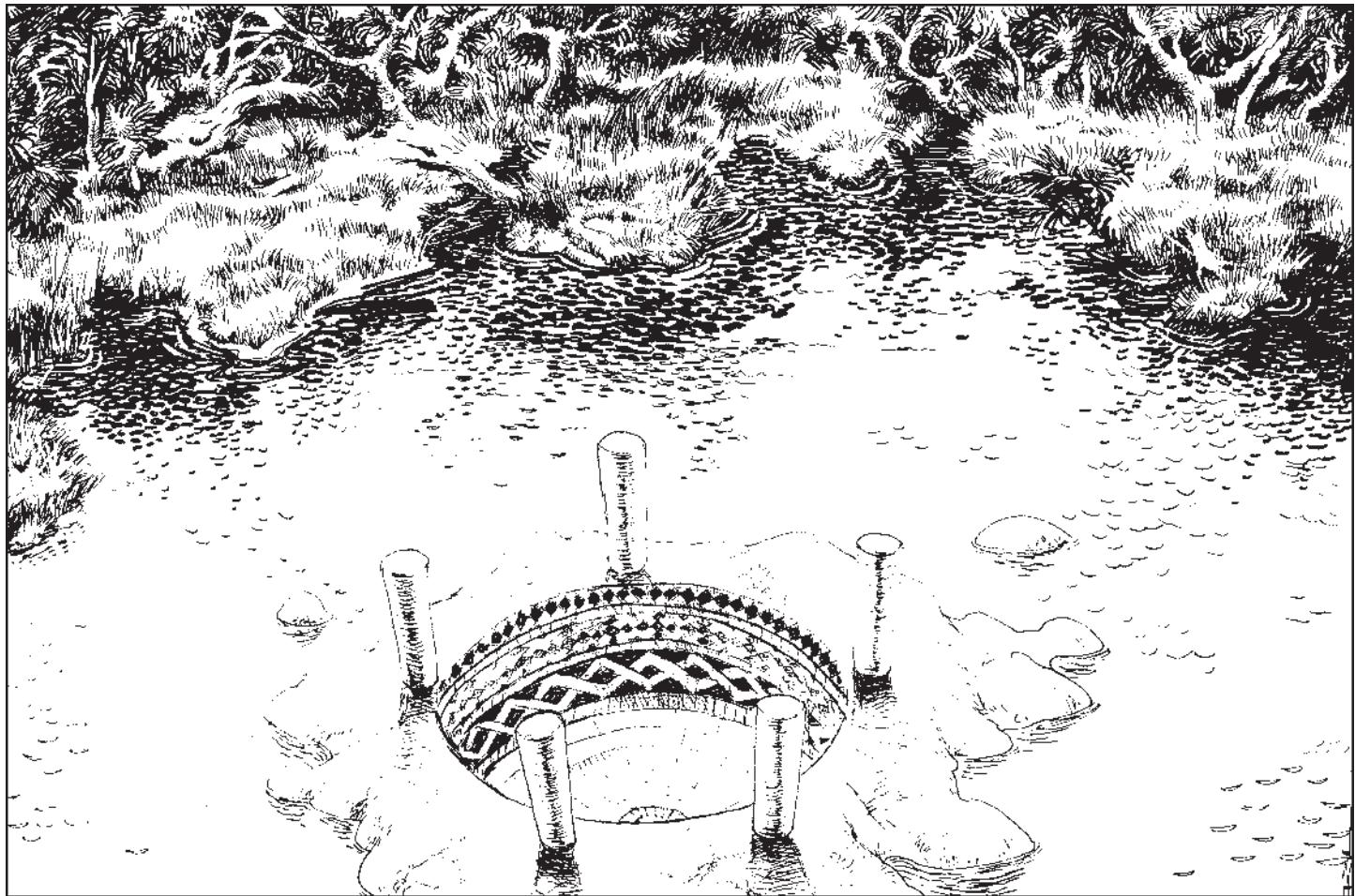
Arden was once worshiped on this plane of existence as a lesser avatar of the sun god, Ra. He was commonly depicted as a hawk-headed, muscular man, wearing a short skirt of precious metal and jewels. He projects searing beams of sunlight from his eyes. His staff is tipped at one end with a bronze sphere representing the sun and emblazoned with an ankh, and at the other end with a bronze hawk head. Arden also wields a bronze short sword. Evil deities—including Tsathogga the frog-demon—murdered and dismembered Arden, but his worshipers gathered and treasured his remains as relics. All of this happened so long ago that it has been ages since Arden was worshiped by anyone; the fact that he ever even existed is all but forgotten.

Arriving at the Island of the Globe

The party may have acquired the ancient map from a previously looted treasure hoard or from the sage who related the *globe*’s legend. Obtaining the map might also constitute an adventure in its own right. Such an adventure is encouraged, though not detailed here. The map depicts an island located south of normal trade routes, off the coast of a sparsely populated area north of a southern jungle. In the **Lost Lands** campaign Setting of **Frog God Games**, this island lies at the edge of Great Oceanus, the main world-ocean of the planet, just north of where it becomes the Razor Sea in the vicinity of the Razor Coast. For more information on this area, see **Razor Coast** by **Frog God Games**. Thick jungle and swampland cover the island. A large mountain, rising from the center of the island, is reflected in the waters of a lake to its south. Within that lake, a stone outcrop rises above the water’s surface. On that inner island lies the entrance to the dungeon.

This module presumes that characters have gained the map and traveled

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overland to a coastal city near the island. From the denizens of this city, skirting the northern border of a vast jungle, PCs can hire a boat to convey them to the island. GMs should spend multiple game sessions detailing this epic journey, foreshadowing trials yet to come.

If you wish to avoid the above trek, you may instead simply begin the module with the PCs having arrived at the island of the globe, passed through the perils of the island and found the inner lake and the rock outcrop on which the dungeon entrance is located. If so, proceed to “**The Dungeon Entrance**,” below.

The Dungeon Entrance

Once characters reach the lake’s central island on the Island of the *globe*, they immediately notice a depression ringed with 10-foot-tall, rune-covered stone pillars—the only evidence of humanoid presence on the island. The pillars, heavily worn, have endured the passage of what must have been millennia. The runes are no longer legible. The pillars surround a deep hole, 30 feet in diameter and nearly 20 feet deep. Approaching the edge of the depression, more evidence of humanoid craftsmanship can be seen: the depression, lined with reflective tiles, has thousands of crystal beads set into its surface. PCs descending into the depression notice an inscription encircling a tiny ruby set in black stone. The inscription, shimmering in the sunlight, reads:

“Beware the noontime sun if you know not the puzzle behind RAS EVIL GRIN, which is tossed in the center of stone.”

Everyone perceives the inscription as being written in their native language. Strangely, the inscription has not eroded over time.

You should write out the inscription and demonstrate how it fully encircles the small ruby; carefully capitalize all the letters of “RAS EVIL GRIN” to assist the PCs in solving the puzzle. If the party does not solve the puzzle by noon, determine whether anyone remains in the depression

when the sun reaches its zenith.

At noon, the sun’s intense rays strike the central ruby and trigger the trap: the ruby-refracted light bounces around the reflective, bead-encrusted depression, instantly heating it to an incredible temperature. Any person in the depression when the trap is triggered takes 3d6 fire damage per round spent in the depression. The intensified sunbeams lance around the depression for five rounds, after which the sun’s angle changes and the heat rays subside. The only way to defeat this effect and enter the dungeon is to solve the puzzle of RAS EVIL GRIN. Tsathogga’s priests created this trap to mock Arden, the sun god—harnessing the power of the sun to destroy those followers of Arden attempting to liberate the *globe* hidden within the dungeon.

Solving the Puzzle:

“RAS EVIL GRIN” is an anagram for “A SILVER RING.” Once characters figure this out, the rest of the solution should follow easily from the riddle. The PCs need only “toss” a silver ring in the “center of stone”—that is, place a silver ring inside the letter “O” of the word “stone,” since that letter is the center of the word “stone.”

Helping the Players Along:

If players can’t figure out this puzzle, encourage them to read the inscription closely. A successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check allows someone to notice a fine, silvery dust in the letter ‘O’ of the word ‘stone.’ Failing to grasp this obvious a clue, the PCs don’t deserve the *globe* of Arden.

The Gems and Beads can’t be pried out or removed in any way. PCs attempting such a theft must make a DC 15 Dex saving throw, adding +1 if they’re using a magic tool or weapon and +2 for each magical plus on the weapon. If the save fails, the item breaks.

Opening the Phase Door:

Having solved the puzzle, the players must still wait until noon. If characters have properly placed a silver ring in the “O” of “stone,” then

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when the sun reaches its zenith, a small crystal cylinder rises from the floor of the tiled depression. The noon sunlight strikes the ruby set in the depression's center, and a dazzling beam of energy immediately shoots from it, striking the crystal cylinder and refracting into a multicolored shower of light. This rainbow strikes the far wall of the depression and creates a shimmering doorway—a *passwall* effect that penetrates 10 feet of solid stone and opens into the catacombs below.

Once it's created this way, the *passwall* door remains for 24 hours (until noon on the next day). No other means can create such a doorway or allow entry into the dungeon. At that time, the cylinder drops back into its housing and the depression again heats like an oven. Any characters still inside the dungeon complex are trapped there until someone outside reopens the magical passage. Teleporting out is impossible, even to a known teleportation circle. It's up to the GM whether characters could escape by traveling through the Astral or Ethereal Planes; we recommend against it. Only the *globe of Arden's disintegrate* power is capable of blasting through the enchanted stone back into the circular pit, where the stone there is only 10 feet thick.

The Dungeon of the Globe

The *passwall* penetrates 10 feet of solid stone, extending from the depression to this location. From this point, characters can return to the depression. When living matter passes through the *passwall* passage, an *alarm* spell triggers in **Rooms 3** and **9**, alerting Asari and Dendorandra, respectively, to the presence of intruders.

I. The Shifting Hallway

When characters first come to this area, what they see is the corridor making a 45-degree turn to the east followed almost immediately by a 90-degree turn to the north. There's no obvious clue that the corridor extends to the south.

The floor leading north, however, large scrape marks, as if a huge stone block had been dragged over the hallway's paving stones. Anyone entering this corridor recognizes that a block within this corridor shifts, and anyone who spends 10 minutes (three minutes for a dwarf) inspecting the stonework can figure out that the "sliding block" is essentially the entire southern wall of the corridor, which is carved to resemble fitted stones but is actually a single, massive block. Apparently, it is rigged to slide from south to north, but how?

Stone Trigger:

Characters can find a stone trigger or button set in the north wall, about 4 feet up the wall at "A" on the map, with a successful DC 13 Int (Investigation) check. The "button" is a 1-foot-square stone block set flush with the wall. Pushing it inward sets the blocks in motion. The button resets itself, flush to the wall, in one round. Pushing the button a second time causes the blocks to move in the opposite direction. If the blocks are moving when the button is pushed, the blocks stop for one round, then move backward to their last position. There is no limit to the number of times the button can be pushed, but there is a 1% chance (non-cumulative) each time the button is pushed that the button sticks and the mechanism malfunctions.

The pressure plate at area "D" also triggers the blocks, as described in **Room 2**, below.

Shifting Blocks:

Once the trigger at "A" is pushed, two blocks in the corridor shift. Block **B** is 10 feet wide, 10 feet high, and 60 feet long. It moves from its southern position (marked on the map with the letter B and a solid outline), sliding 10 feet per round northward until it has cleared the three-way intersection. The block's stopping position is marked with the letter B and a dashed outline.

Block C, positioned south of block B, is 10 feet by 10 feet by 20 feet. Unlike block **B** which slides north and south, block **C** moves up and down.

Initially, block **C** fills the corridor at the area marked C. When the button is pushed, the block rises until it's flush with the ceiling. This takes five rounds; unless someone looks around the corner at A the moment block **B** is clear, characters won't know what was making the grinding sound to the south, because block **C** is fully risen to the ceiling before block **B** finishes traveling to the northern half of the hallway.

The blocks always move in tandem. They are always either "closed" (blocking the southern half of the hallway) or "open" (allowing access to **Chamber 2**).

Finding Block C:

If characters venture down the hallway when the blocks are in the open position, someone might spot block **C** (it takes a successful DC 20 Wis [Perception] check). Characters who search the southern 20 feet of the corridor specifically for shifting stonework find it with a DC 10 Int (Investigation) check. They can note automatically, however, that the scrape marks from **B** don't appear on the last 20 feet of the corridor, but there is a lot of stone dust where the floor meets the walls.

Getting Caught:

If someone triggers the pressure plate at area "D" (see **Room 2**, below), the blocks return to the closed position. If the blocks are in the closed position when the plate is triggered, there is no effect. It is therefore possible that characters may be caught between the moving blocks if the plate is triggered when they are trying to escape the room.

After triggering the pressure plate (see below), characters hear the sound of stone grinding on stone, which they recognize (having just heard it a few minutes ago) as block **B** scraping down the corridor. If a player immediately says, "I'm running for the exit," then their character is in motion immediately. If players hesitate, they can make DC 12 Dex saves to see whether their characters react instinctively or waste a few precious seconds thinking about the situation.

The southern half of the corridor from room 2 to the three-way intersection is 60 feet long. Most characters can cover this distance in a single round by dashing. They might have started somewhere inside room 2, however, which means they won't quite get out of the southern corridor during the first round. And if they hesitated, they can't dash; they wasted their "action" deciding what to do, and all they're left with is a normal move. Block **B** will seal off the exit to the northwest corridor a few moments into the second round. Characters who can reach the gap in a single move (without dashing) can dive through by making a successful DC 12 Dex check—but if this check fails by 5 or more (the adjusted roll is 7 or less), the character gets caught between the corner and the moving stone and takes 1d100 bludgeoning damage. Low damage on this roll indicates the loss of a few fingers or toes; high damage indicates they were cut in half or ground to paste between the wall and block **B**. Anyone who doesn't get out and doesn't get killed is cut off by block **B** moving south, and will be pushed back toward room 2.

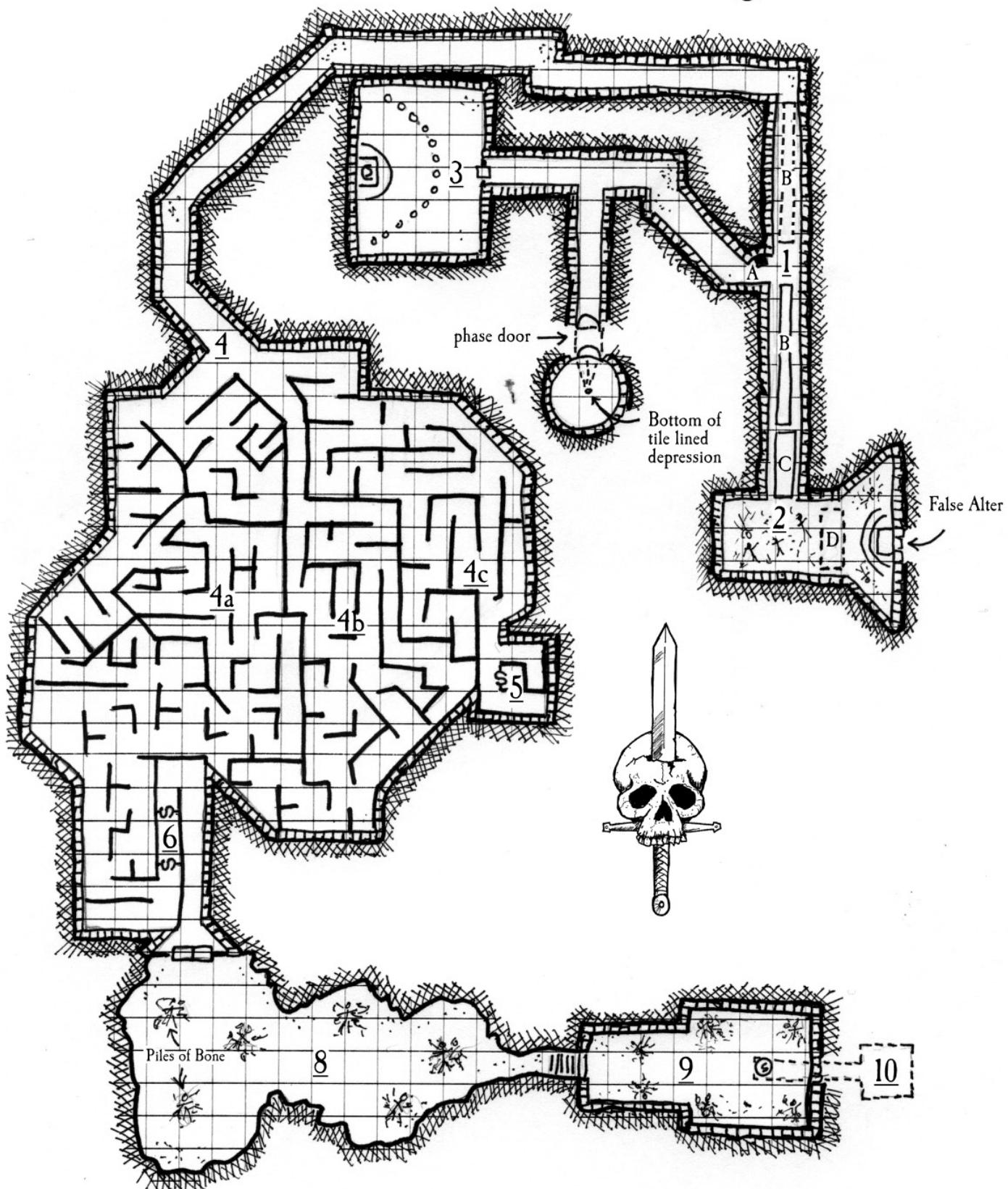
The second source of danger in this situation is being caught between block **B** moving south and block **C** descending from the ceiling; characters might not even know about block **C** if they didn't search for it previously. The corridor is 10 feet high and block **C** descends 2 feet per round. It drops to 8 feet of clearance on the first round (when characters probably are racing north), drops to 6 feet of clearance on round 2 (when characters realize they've been cut off and trapped), and drops to 4 feet of clearance on round 3 (probably the point at which characters turn around and head back toward room 2 to get away from block **B**). Small characters can still move under block **C** with no difficulty, but Medium characters must make a successful DC 10 Dex (Acrobatics) check to move at full speed; failing the check means they treat the floor under block **C** as difficult terrain. On the fourth round, characters of any size can only crawl. If anyone is still under block **C** on the fifth round, they take 1d100 bludgeoning damage; you can interpret the result colorfully to indicate how much of themselves they dragged out before the block crushed everything under it.

Caught in the Middle:

It's possible that someone, seeing the ceiling descending and block **B** cutting off their escape to the north, might decide to take the chance that

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The "Ra's Evil Grin" Dungeon



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when both blocks stop moving, there's enough dead space left between them for a character to survive. They are wrong. Block B doesn't stop moving until it's tight up against block C. Anyone caught between them is crushed to death.

Stopping the Blocks:

Physically preventing the blocks' movement is impossible, but pushing the stone "button" at A stops them for one round, then reverses them. They don't actually stop moving until the end of the current round, however, so it's possible for someone to still be killed or seriously injured on the round the button is pushed.

All that's needed for the party to survive this trap is a single character escaping back to the northwest corridor, to push the button and reopen the exit from room 2. Players who keep their wits about them should have no trouble with it. Those who panic might pay a high price.

2. False Globe and Block Trap

Dozens of skeletons are piled in this room. Several wear scraps of rusty armor; all have parts missing. Writing and hash marks scratched on the walls seem to indicate that some people might have been trapped here for a long time. Some bones show tooth marks.

These skeletons are the remains of adventurers who came to retrieve the *globe*, but also of servants of the priests of Tsathogga who were entombed here after they finished constructing the labyrinth that houses the *globe*, so that no one could learn its hiding place.

False Globe:

At the eastern end of the room, an altar sits atop a platform. Symbols of the demon frog-god Tsathogga adorn the platform, the altar, and the walls

behind it. A glowing globe sits upon the altar. Cautious PCs might feel as though this quest has proved too easy, and their suspicion is warranted; this is a trap. The globe, enhanced with *Nystul's magic aura*, radiates evocation and abjuration magic. Some of that comes from the false aura, and some of it comes from the **glyph of warding trap** on the globe; the *glyph* is detectable with a successful DC 16 Int (Arcana) check.

The trap is triggered by moving the globe or by trying and failing to dispel the *glyph*. It unleashes a *chain lightning* spell that strikes the character who set off the trap and the three closest characters. Each of them takes 10d8 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 16 Dex saving throw.

Pressure Plate:

Located in front of the altar at area D on the map is a pressure plate (noticeable with a successful DC 17 Int [Investigation] check or a DC 22 Wis [Perception] check). A weight of 100 or more pounds triggers the blocks in the corridor to the north, as described in the description of Room 1.

3. Evil Chapel

The door opens to reveal an evil chapel with an altar carved in the form of a many-armed snake woman. Thirteen white stone pillars stand in a half circle in front of the blood- and skull-covered altar. A single priest chants arcane words as a silver glow envelops his body. Then all goes black.

The priest is **Asari**, the fallen high priest of Arden who long ago stole the *globe of Arden* and delivered it to the priests of Tsathogga. Tsathogga rewarded Asari's treachery with eternal life as a mummy lord, making him a consort to Dendorandra, the dark daughter.



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(Asari [Mummy Lord]: AC 17, 97 hp; Asari can attack with both its dreadful glare and rotting fist; +9 to hit, 3d6 + 4 bludgeoning damage plus 6d6 necrotic damage, and the target creature must make a successful DC 16 Con saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot [can't regain hps, hp maximum decreases by 3d6 every 24 hours—rotting fist]; one target within 60 ft. that can see the mummy must make a DC 16 Wis saving throw or become frightened until the end of the mummy's next turn [dreadful glare]; failure by 5 or more means the target is also paralyzed for the same duration; a target becomes immune to this effect once it makes a successful save against it; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic; spell attack +9, save DC 17; [at will] *sacred flame, thaumaturgy*; [1st level, x4] *command, guiding bolt, shield of faith*; [2nd level, x3] *hold person, silence, spiritual weapon*; [3rd level, x3] *animate dead, dispel magic*; [4th level, x3] *divination, guardian of faith*; [5th level, x2] *contagion, insect plague*; [6th level, x1] *harm*; can use 3 legendary actions/round [rotting fist, dreadful glare, blinding dust (each creature within 5 ft. must make a successful DC 16 Con saving throw or be blinded until the end of its next turn), blasphemous word (2 actions—every non-undead creature within 10 ft. must make a successful DC 16 Con saving throw or be stunned until the end of the mummy lord's next turn), channel negative energy (2 actions—creatures within 60 ft. can't regain hp until the end of the mummy lord's next turn), whirlwind of sand (2 actions—the mummy lord moves up to 60 ft. as a whirlwind of sand immune to all attack)];

Tactics: The *alarm* spell triggered by characters when they opened the *passwall* warned Asari of their arrival. This is his lair, so in addition to the abilities listed above, he can use any of a mummy lord's lair actions. Typically, he chooses to restrict the use of spells of 4th level and below by non-undead creatures.

The Altar:

If Asari is destroyed, the face on the altar (of a many-armed snake woman) animates, and a female voice intones:

“Little creatures, your powers are nothing to me. I would have destroyed all of you long before this, but I enjoy breaking such miserable creatures as you with my bare hands. Humans beg so wonderfully, shrieking and crying as I slowly pull them apart!” Looking at a spellcaster in the group, the female voice adds, “Perhaps I shall choose you as a replacement for my last companion—the one you so thoughtlessly destroyed.”

The statue then re-solidifies amid distant laughter.

4. The Maze

It should be obvious to characters standing at the entrance to this area that they are about to enter a maze. Navigating this maze ultimately leads to **Area 8**. The maze does not present much difficulty and can be navigated by normal means. Note, however, that to pass through the doors at 7, the secret door at **Room 5** must be discovered and opened.

The maze is divided into three sections, according to which of the three paths characters take at the entrance.

Section 4A leads eventually to the doors at 7. No monsters roam this section.

Section 4B leads nowhere; **2 ochre jellies** wander around this section. (There is a 1-in-6 chance per minute of to encounter one of the jellies.

Alternatively, you can simply pick two spots on the map where the jellies are located and let characters stumble onto them naturally.)

(Ochre Jelly: AC 8, 45 hp; +4 to hit, 2d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage plus 1d6 acid damage [*pseudopod*]; lightning or slashing damage cause the jelly to split in half)

Section 4C of the maze leads to the secret door into **Room 5**.

5. Traps and Keys

A secret stone door, locked and trapped, bars entrance to this small room. Opening the secret door without disabling the **trap** triggers it. The DC for all checks (finding the door, noticing the trap, disarming the trap, unlocking the door) is 12.

The trap launches three spears from the wall at the southern end of this corridor, straight up the corridor. They attack the first three targets at +8 to hit and do 1d8 + 4 piercing damage.

Behind the secret door, on the far wall of this area, are four hooks. Four keys—one each of silver, bronze, lead, and brass—hang from the hooks. These keys are needed to open the iron doors into **Area 8**.

6. The Second False Globe

A secret stone door, locked and trapped, bars entrance to this small room, which holds a second false *globe*. Opening the secret door without disabling the **trap** triggers it. The DC for all checks (finding the door, noticing the trap, disarming the trap, unlocking the door) is 14.

The trap launches three spears from the wall at the western end of this corridor, straight east along the corridor. They attack the first three targets at +8 to hit and do 1d8 + 4 piercing damage. Note that someone standing in front of the secret door isn't in danger; they're “around the corner” from the trap. Characters lined up in the “safe area” around the corner from the door, and particularly those at the back of the group, are in the most danger.

Opening the secret door reveals a small chamber. Its walls are barren and crudely worked, and the chamber's floor is packed earth. Rudely placed in a stone basin set in the east wall, shrouded by a black cloth covered with evil runes, sits what appears to be an orb. The vile black cloth cannot mask the light emanating from the orb beneath.

The writing on the cloth, in Abyssal, appears to be a curse of darkness. However, this is all a ruse (again), as the cloth is enhanced with *Nystul's magic aura* and another **glyph of warding** to detect as magic. The **glyph** can be detected with a successful DC 16 Int (Arcana) check. Touching the cloth triggers a *poison spray* spell; everyone in the chamber takes 3d12 poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 16 Con saving throw.

The orb beneath the cloth glows with a bright holy light, as if radiating a *daylight* spell. This globe, like its predecessor, is enhanced with *Nystul's magic aura*, a permanent *light* spell, and yet another **glyph of warding** trap that's triggered by moving the globe or by trying and failing to dispel the **glyph**. It unleashes a *chain lightning* spell that strikes the character who set off the trap and the three closest characters. Each of them takes 10d8 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 16 Dex saving throw.

If the orb is moved a second time, it sets off a second **glyph of warding** trap, this time triggering a *phantasmal killer* affecting the character who set off the **glyph**. The triggering character must make a successful DC 16 Wis saving throw or become frightened. While frightened, it repeats the saving throw at the start of each of its turns, taking 4d10 psychic damage if it fails or ending the effect if it succeeds.

At the north end of the chamber, a second secret door, this one unlocked and untrapped (except for the false orb), opens into a passage that leads to the iron portals at **Area 7**, below. The door can be found with a successful DC 13 Int (Investigation) check.

7. Riddles at the Gate

A set of great iron portals bars the way. The two doors, constructed of the finest iron, are engraved with arcane writings. In the center of each door is an elaborate, rune-etched lock with several keyholes.

Each door is built from 4-inch-thick magical iron with 1-inch-wide channels that run both horizontally and vertically, through which adamantine bars have been inserted. The bars can't be seen while the doors are closed and locked; characters can hear the bars retracting, and they can see the horizontal channels through the doors when the doors are open. The bars slide away when the locks are disengaged. The lock on the right-hand door causes the vertical bars to retract, and the lock on the left-hand door causes the horizontal bars to retract, thus unlocking the door as explained below. The locks can't be opened any other way besides correctly using the keys; any attempt to pick one of the locks triggers an electrical jolt that does 2d6 lightning damage, as does every attempt to use the keys incorrectly. The doors are impervious to magic such as *passwall* and *disintegrate*; nothing short of a *sphere of annihilation* can penetrate the doors' magical defenses.

Each door has four keyholes and a riddle that explains how to unlock it. Once both halves are opened, the doors can be swung wide into the cave at Area 8.

The Riddle on the Right-hand Door: Four colored metal plates in symbolic shapes comprise the lock in the door's center. The shaped plates, each with a keyhole at the center, are as follows: a brass table, a lead sword, a bronze coffin, and a silver diamond. Each lock appears designed to accept a normal-sized key. Surrounding the locks is the following inscription written in magical runes, readable with *comprehend languages* or a successful DC 12 Int (Arcana) check.

“One man makes me, does not need me.
One man buys me, does not use me.
One man uses me, does not see me.”

The answer to the riddle is “coffin.” When the bronze key is inserted into the coffin-shaped bronze lock and turned, the bronze panel slides back to reveal a second, coffin-shaped silver lock. If this is in turn opened with the silver key, it reveals a coffin-shaped lead lock, which when opened in turn reveals a coffin-shaped brass lock. Each lock must be opened with the key of the same metal. Using the keys in any other manner causes 2d6 lightning damage. Once all four locks are opened, the characters hear a grinding sound as the vertical adamantine bars within the doors slide away. PCs cannot yet open the doors unless the left-hand door has been unlocked.

The Riddle on the Left-hand Door:

Four square plates comprise the locks in the door's center—one each of silver, lead, bronze and brass. Surrounding the locks is the following inscription, written in magical runes, readable with *comprehend languages* or a successful DC 12 Int (Arcana) check.

“I fall first the heaviest, and then heaviest from a man's purse.”

The answers are “lead” (because it is the heaviest of the four metals) and “silver” (because coins are made of it). Only by inserting and turning the lead key in the lead lock and the silver key in the silver lock does this half of the door unlock. The bronze and brass keys aren't needed on this door. Using the keys in any other manner causes 2d6 electrical damage. Once both locks are opened, the characters hear a grinding sound as the horizontal interlocking adamantine bars within the doors slide away. The doors can't be opened unless both have been unlocked.

Once both doors are unlocked—both sets of adamantine bars have withdrawn—they swing open freely, all traps disabled.

8. The Gloomy Cavern

This cave contains large piles of bones, loose rocks, rusty swords, armor, and the rotten remains of packs and other soft goods. An eerie, howling wind blows through this place, and an otherworldly light emanates up from Room 9. There are no monsters here. The demon in Room 9 can create animated servants from these bones.

Treasure: In one of the piles of bones, a *detect magic* spell reveals a wooden +2 shield beneath a large pile of rusty metal.

9. The Guardian

A set of stairs, hewn from the red stone of the living rock of the cave itself, descends about 30 feet to a room of roughly worked stone. Strange crystals are set into its walls. A huge pile of silver and gold glitters and shines in the center of the room.

The monster in this room reveals herself and attacks once characters get close. Tsathogga commissioned **Dendorandra, the Dark Daughter** to guard the *globe of Arden*. She knows that she will suffer eternal torment should she fail in her task. Dendorandra is a marilith with slightly lower than normal hit points.

(Dendorandra [Marilith]: AC 18, 160 hp; Denrorandra makes six longsword attacks and one tail attack; +9 to hit x6, 2d8 + 4 slashing damage [longsword]; +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., 2d10 + 4 bludgeoning damage and a Medium or smaller target is grappled and restrained [tail]; a target grappled by the tail is hit automatically by the tail attack; as an action, can teleport up to 120 ft.; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic; 1/turn, can add 5 to AC against a melee attack)

Tactics: Dendorandra relishes combat. She fights with six longswords, but one is a *sword of wounding* named Xpatias (literally “frogsticker” in Abyssal; see the **Appendix**). If characters are still very strong when they reach this chamber, Dendorandra can be upped to normal hit points (189). If characters quickly gain the upper hand in the fight, allow her to summon additional demons (50 percent chance to summon 1d6 vrocks, 1d4 hezrouz, 1d3 glabrezus, 1d2 nalfeshnees, or one other marilith). She attacks lightly-armored individuals first and concentrates on one victim until that person is dead. If defeat seems certain, she can teleport into Room 8 and try to escape from there.

Treasure: Other than Dendorandra's magic sword, the pile of gold and silver consists of 4,000 gp and 20,000 sp. Under the pile of coins, a *secret hatch* opens into a passage—a 3-foot-diameter crawlspace of tiled stone—leading to Room 10. The hatch can be found with a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check or a DC 18 Wis (Perception) check.

10. The Treasure Room

A dim glow can be seen at the end of the tiny passage leading to this room. Characters emerge into a 5-foot-square room containing a chest and a silver coffer. Both vessels look to be thousands of years old and are covered with ancient and arcane runes and hieroglyphs beyond anyone's ability to translate; even the languages are unrecognizable. Fine locks of ancient construction on both items look untouched, as though undisturbed for centuries.

Both vessels are locked and trapped.

The chest, made of iron, is worth 1,000 gp intact. The coffer, made of mithral, is worth 4,000 gp intact. Their value drops to 1/5 the estimate if they are broken open.

The Iron Chest:

The DC to discover the trap, disable the trap, and pick the lock is 16. The trap goes off if it hasn't been disabled when the chest is opened. It

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releases a cloud of poison gas that fills this chamber and the narrow passage leading to it, doing 8d8 poison damage, or halve damage with a successful DC 16 Con saving throw.

The chest is worth 1,000 gp intact but only 200 gp if it's broken open. It contains 10 gems: an uncut corundum sphere (10,000 gp), a ruby (1,000 gp), a sapphire (3,000 gp), an emerald (6,000 gp), a garnet (2,000 gp), an opal (8,000 gp), a topaz (6,000 gp), an aquamarine (4,000 gp), a large chunk of jade (4,500 gp), and a black opal (2,500 gp).

The Silver Coffer:

The DC to discover the trap, disable the trap, and pick the lock is 18. The trap goes off if it hasn't been disabled when the coffer is opened. It unleashes a *lightning bolt* that hits the person who opened the coffer and everyone in the narrow corridor, if possible, doing 10d6 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dex saving throw. The coffer cannot be unlocked magically.

The coffer is made of mithral and is worth 4,000 gp if intact and undamaged, or 800 gp if broken open. The coffer holds what at first appears to be an unidentifiable, glowing gem about 12 inches in diameter, made of a milky, glasslike substance with a dark splotch the size of a human's palm on the side that's turned up. It is, in fact, the *globe of Arden*—a powerful relic! See the **Appendix** for more information on the *globe of Arden*.

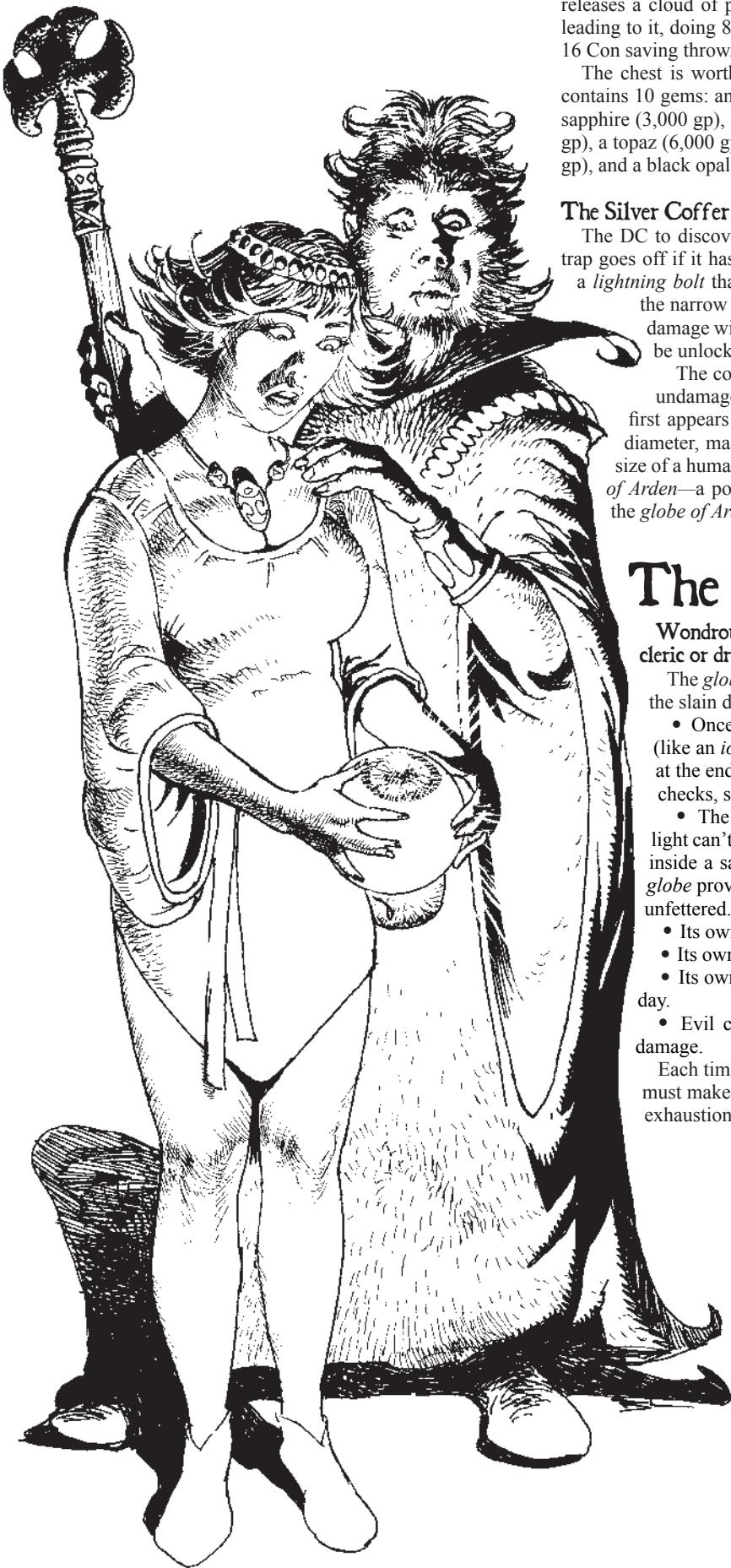
The Globe of Arden

Wondrous item, artifact (requires attunement to a Good-aligned cleric or druid)

The *globe of Arden* is a minor artifact, being an actual eyeball from the slain deity Arden. It has the following powers.

- Once attuned to an owner, the *globe* floats around that person (like an *ioun stone*). The *globe*'s owner gains 5 temporary hit points at the end of each long rest, and benefits from a +1 bonus on ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws.
- The *globe* continuously sheds light as a *daylight* spell. This light can't be switched off, but it can be shielded by placing the *globe* inside a sack, box, or other lightproof container. Unfortunately, the *globe* provides its other benefits only while floating around its owner unfettered.
 - Its owner can cast *guiding bolt* three times per day.
 - Its owner can *commune* with the dead god Arden once per month.
 - Its owner can cast *banishment* and *dispel evil and good* once per day.
 - Evil creatures that touch the *globe* willingly take 5d6 radiant damage.

Each time a spell is cast with the *globe*, however, the *globe*'s owner must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or gain one level of exhaustion.



Sorcerer's Citadel

By Bill Webb and Clark Peterson

Designed for a party of five characters of at least 9th level, this adventure will challenge players seeking a powerful magic item of the GM's choosing. A *sphere of annihilation* has been provided and is woven into several elements of the adventure, but any appropriately powerful item can be substituted if something else suits your campaign better. Though the adventure is designed to test every type of character class, a rogue who can deal with traps is essential, as is a wizard or sorcerer of at least 9th level. Larger groups will have an easier time; parties of four or fewer characters will be in for a very bad time unless you mitigate some of the tower's more lethal traps and encounters. This adventure culminates in an encounter with devils and a *sphere of annihilation*.

The *sphere of annihilation* is hidden deep within the tower-and-dungeon complex of Crane the Sorcerer. Originally set atop a high mountain in a secluded and wild part of the world, the tower and dungeon can be relocated to meet the situation in your campaign. Crane, an introvert, stayed as far away from civilization as possible, as is detailed below. The tower above the dungeon doesn't present many difficulties for a group of powerful characters or alert players. It might lull PCs into a false sense of security before they enter the areas where they'll really be put to the test.

The Legend of Crane the Sorcerer

Crane, a lawful-neutral sorcerer of great power was obsessed with all things lawful. He paid homage to the gods of law, whether evil or good. He was a great scientist and created numerous constructs, such as golems and homunculi. His other interests ran to the diabolic. Crane studied the use of extraplanar creatures as servants and messengers. He also developed a firm knowledge of trap building and alchemy. He acquired and learned to control a *sphere of annihilation*, with which he carved a dungeon beneath his mountaintop tower.

About 100 years ago, Crane set off to do battle with a group of Chaotic Evil sorcerers known as the Violet Brotherhood, whose black arts were linked to the foul demon frog-god Tsathoggga. Though mightier than any individual evil sorcerer, Crane could not prevail against all of them working in concert. Overcome by his foes, he cursed his own arrogance with his final breath. Yet he had taken a great precaution: fearing that, in magical combat, his foes might seize control of his *sphere* and turn it against him, Crane had decided not to use his magical globe of blackness against the Violet Brotherhood. Instead, he sealed his *sphere* within his tower and protected it with powerful magic. It awaits discovery there today, its former master now long dead.

Sages consulted by the PCs offer the following cryptic warning: "Far up in distant mountains lies the Tower of Crane—master of darkness, lord of nothingness. Long is the path, and dangerous. Beware, adventurer, for peril lies both inside and out, both in between and beyond."

Reaching the Tower

Crane the Sorcerer's tower rises above the mist-shrouded summit of a distant mountain embedded within a faraway mountain range. The surrounding area is wild, and finding the tower is an arduous undertaking;

just reaching this desolate part of the world should require a night or more of roleplaying. In the **Lost Lands** campaign setting by **Frog God Games**, Crane's Tower is located among the mysterious Lost Mountains, far across the Haunted Steppe and standing above thrice-cursed Lake Hali.

The Tower of Crane the Sorcerer

The Tower of Crane the Sorcerer stands shrouded in a chilling, damp mist. The cylindrical tower, made of a smooth, dark stone, tapers gradually from the base to its peak, where it is crowned with three sharp spires of uneven height. There are no openings of any kind in the dark walls of the tower.

Some 100 or more feet from the tower is a depression of worked stone, set into the surrounding earth and accessed by a downward-sloping ramp. Inside the depression is what appears to be an archway that leads to the tower's interior.

The black stone of the tower's exterior is not native to this plane, but was imported by Crane's infernal servants. The tower itself measures over 160 feet tall at the tip of its tallest spire. The walls are almost perfectly smooth and extraordinarily difficult to scale (requiring a successful DC 30 Str [Athletics] check). The walls of the tower and the floors between each level are 5 feet thick and have been enhanced with immunity to spells of any type, except those spells specifically cast by Crane himself. The stone also proves impervious to any physical weapon or tool with an enhancement bonus less than +5. Nonmagical weapons or tools striking the stone forcefully shatter on impact and the wielder suffers damage equal to a strike from that weapon. Magical weapons and tools of less than +5 enhancement suffer the same fate if the wielder fails a DC 15 Con saving throw; if the save succeeds, the magical weapon or tool does not shatter but the wielder still takes damage as noted above.

A unique magical ward prevents entering or exiting the tower by magic of any kind; that option is reserved for Crane and those to whom he gave permission (which, because of his death, can no longer be obtained). Anyone attempting magical entry into the tower is stricken as per a *maze* spell. When freed from the *maze*, the person reappears on this plane in the middle of the Poisoned Corridor (see below).

Five levels comprise the tower's interior—four above ground, the fifth below. The upper levels contain various living spaces appointed with the requisite creature comforts. Everything within the tower's interior lies shrouded beneath a thick layer of dust. All doors and trapdoors within the tower are locked and of average make and, unless otherwise noted, have the same surprisingly pedestrian characteristics detailed below.

Unless noted otherwise, all doors in the tower are made of wood, have AC 15, and 22 (5d8) hit points. Likewise, locked doors can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dex check or broken down with a successful DC 20 Str (Athletics) check. Whether picking the lock or forcing the door, a check determines whether a character is capable of the feat; if the check fails, the door is beyond the character's power to bash open or the lock is beyond his or her skill to pick; they can try again only after gaining a level.

When a secret, locked, or trapped door is followed by a DC in parentheses [for example, "there is a locked and trapped secret door in the north wall (DC 13)"], the DC applies to finding a secret of hidden door,

THE SORCERER'S CITADEL

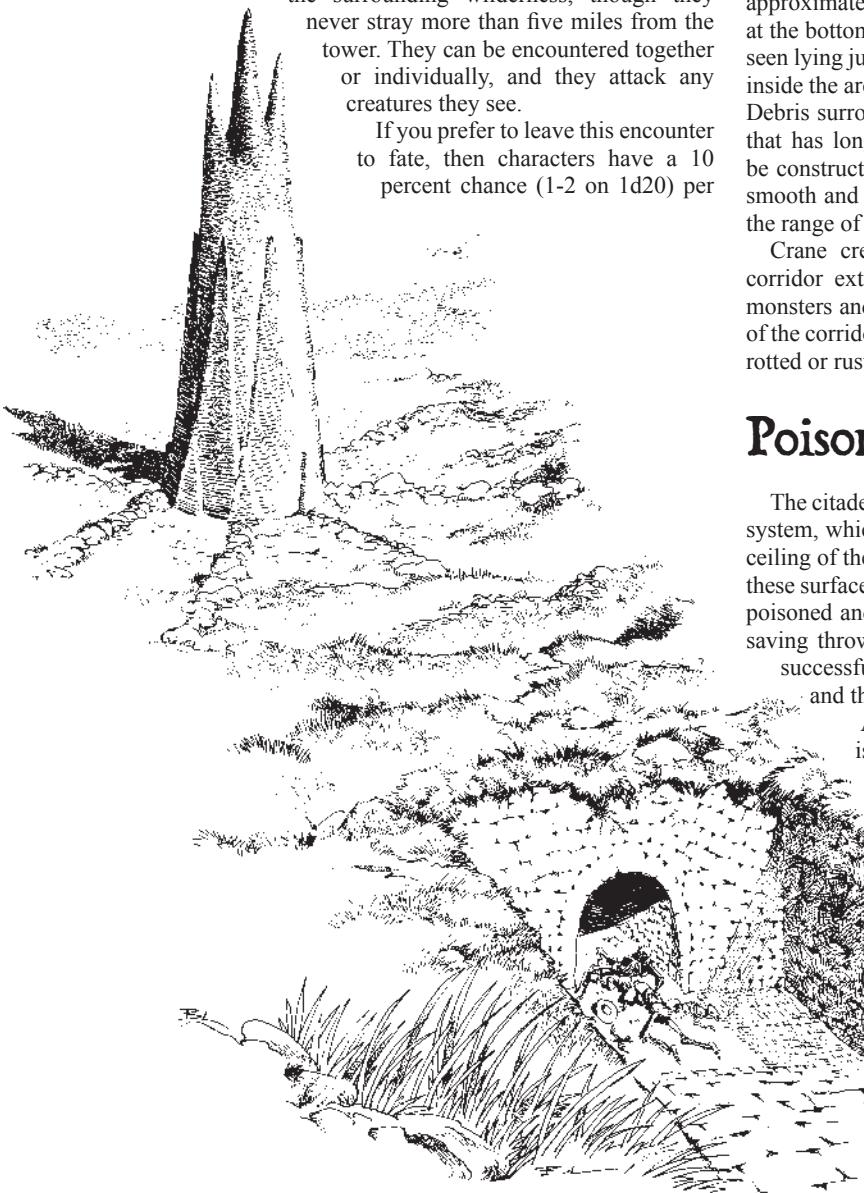
noticing the trap, disarming the trap, avoiding the trap, and unlocking the door. It doesn't apply to breaking down the door; that's covered by the preceding paragraph. If the text gives a different DC for a specific task, use the specific DC. A door is spotted at a glance by a character whose passive Perception equals or exceeds the door's DC. Otherwise, searching takes five to ten minutes and a successful Int (Investigation) check. Opening a lock always requires thief's tools; disarming a trap usually does, but sometimes it can be done just as easily with a sword, a pole, or a hammer and a few spikes. Inventiveness should always count for more than dice rolls in these cases.

Wandering Monsters

The tower contains no wandering monsters, because creatures that have tried to enter died in the poisoned corridor. Local monsters have learned of the poisoned corridor by hard experience and do not venture near the tower. Thus, the party can camp within 100 yards of the tower in relative safety. But don't tell the players that. Stress the darkness and lack of vision caused by the cold mists of the mountain top and the eerie shadow cast by the spires of the tower.

The only threats to a party camped outside the tower are **2 flesh golems**, created long ago by Crane to guard the archway leading to the poisonous corridor. With Crane's death, the golems went berserk. They now wander the surrounding wilderness, though they never stray more than five miles from the tower. They can be encountered together or individually, and they attack any creatures they see.

If you prefer to leave this encounter to fate, then characters have a 10 percent chance (1-2 on 1d20) per



three hours spent near the tower of encountering the golems, plus an additional 25 percent chance (3-7 on 1d20) of hearing the golems' distant (or not-so-distant) shrieks and howls through the mist.

Both golems have an amulet stitched into their flesh bearing the rune of Crane the Sorcerer. The amulets are not magical, but they prevent the invisible door's *cloudkill* trap from triggering (see below). The amulets can be seen easily, but they must be cut out of a golem's flesh after the creature has been killed.

(Flesh Golem: AC 9, 93 hp; +7 to hit x2, 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage [slam]; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic and is immune to any magic that would alter its form; has tactical disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks for 1 round after taking fire damage; is immune to lightning damage but instead heals hp equal to the lightning damage; when reduced to 40 or fewer hp, has a 1-in-6 chance of going berserk and attacking the nearest creature, checked at the start of its turn)

Entrance Passage

The stone-lined ramp descends 12 feet to a flat-bottomed depression. Set into the far wall of this depression is a simple, unadorned archway approximately 5 feet wide and 8 feet high. The cold, swirling mist collects at the bottom of this depression. From the top of the slope, shapes can be seen lying just inside the archway, on the floor of the corridor beyond. Just inside the archway lie several animal and humanoid skeletons of all sizes. Debris surrounds them, some of which is typical adventuring equipment that has long since rotted or rusted. The passageway beyond seems to be constructed entirely of seamless white stone. The walls are perfectly smooth and show no chips or tool marks. The corridor stretches beyond the range of normal vision, sloping downward slightly.

Crane created this corridor using his *sphere of annihilation*. The corridor extends 180 feet, but the skeletal remains of birds, animals, monsters and humans litter the first 60 feet: creatures slain by the poison of the corridor, as described below. All mundane equipment has long since rotted or rusted beyond usefulness.

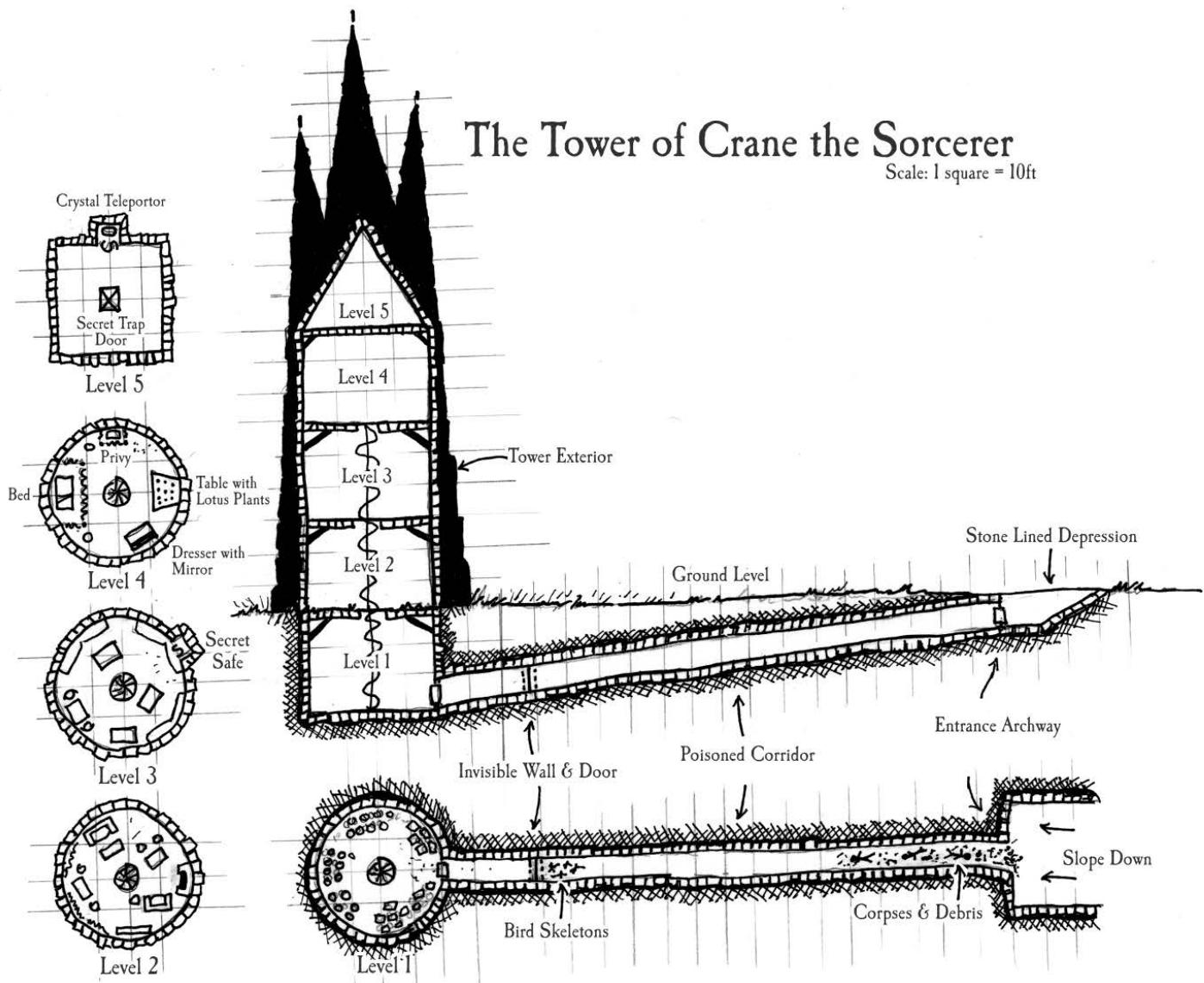
Poisoned Corridor

The citadel's entrance is the most deadly element of the fortress' defense system, which Crane set up to protect his treasures. The floor, walls, and ceiling of the corridor comprise a **magical poison trap**. Anyone touching these surfaces must make a successful DC 15 Con saving throw or become poisoned and take 2d12 poison damage. A poisoned creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns; the condition ends with a successful save, but a failed save causes another 2d12 poison damage and the poisoning continues.

Any contact with the walls, floor, or ceiling of the corridor is enough to cause poisoning, no matter how characters try to insulate themselves against it. The two most obvious ways to safely travel through the corridor are to fly or be carried by something that's immune to poison (when Crane lived here, he had flesh golems carry guests through the corridor). Characters might come up with other workable solutions—but if it involves contacting the corridor, even through heavy boots or multiple layers of wood, stone, or lead, then it's not a solution. Even flying, however, doesn't overcome the invisible wall at the end of the corridor.

A careful search of the debris near the entrance turns up a few interesting items of treasure. Touching the items, however, triggers the magical poison trap, even if they're just pulled with a pole or scooped with a net. They can be retrieved safely with *mage hand* and similar magic. The items include a *scroll of hold monster*, a *potion of heroism*, and a *potion of invulnerability*.

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Invisible Wall and Door

The bottom end of the passage ends at a stone wall (identical to the other walls of the corridor) with a mundane-looking wooden door with iron bindings. Placed 30 feet in front of this wall, however, is an invisible wall of stone pierced by a similarly invisible stone door. This wall and door are not part of the corridor's poison trap. The invisible wall and door can't be seen, but characters might notice the dust, stones, and other debris that have piled up along the wall's base over the years; this clue is spotted with a successful DC 18 Wis (Perception) check, assuming characters are watching for such things in the corridor and not fixated on the visible wall and door farther ahead.

Simply colliding with the invisible barrier isn't likely to cause any damage, unless characters were moving at very high speed (most characters can't move fast enough under their own power to come close to the speed of falling, for example). Slamming into the barrier at a full run or head-first while flying does, however, call for a DC 10 Con saving throw to avoid being stunned for one round and falling to the floor, which triggers the corridor's poison trap.

The door in the wall can be found automatically by anyone who feels across the wall with his or her hands. The door isn't locked but it is rigged with a *cloudkill* trap—a fact that can be ascertained with a successful DC 15 Investigation check, made with tactical disadvantage because of the door's invisibility. The trap is triggered if the invisible wall or door are damaged or when the door is opened by someone other than Crane.

who isn't wearing his amulet (an amulet can be obtained from either of the flesh golems). The *cloudkill* instantly fills the bottom 20 feet of the corridor in front of the invisible wall, then rolls up the corridor at 10 feet per round. It reaches the entrance archway in 13 rounds (78 seconds), clears the corridor four rounds after that, and clears the entire sunken entryway in another three rounds.

The trap on the invisible door is permanent, resets instantly, and can be triggered an unlimited number of times. Being magical, it can't be disabled mechanically, only dispelled.

Once they get past the invisible door, characters can safely travel the remaining 30 feet of the corridor to the visible door at the bottom—the entrance to **Level 1** of the tower. This last stretch of corridor is not part of the corridor's poison trap. The door is locked, but can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dex check.

Tower Level 1

The tower's basement is a large, circular room 40 feet in diameter. Set in the center of the room is a spiral, wooden staircase, which leads to a trapdoor in the ceiling. Barrels and boxes fill the room. A thick accumulation of dust has settled on the room's contents. This level contains various barrels, boxes and preserved foodstuffs stacked neatly along the walls of the room. A wooden staircase leads up to a locked trapdoor and **Level 2** of the tower. Nothing of value is present here.

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Tower Level 2

This level appears to be a sitting room. Several pieces of beautifully crafted furniture tastefully appoint the room, which is further accented by rich tapestries. Again, a layer of dust covers everything. The beautifully-made furniture can be removed by ambitious adventurers and sold in a city for $3d6 \times 100$ gp per piece. The magical fireplace, constructed of the same stone as the exterior walls, causes perfect combustion, so a fire produces no smoke. A wooden staircase leads up to a locked trapdoor and **Level 3** of the tower. Nothing else of great value is present here.

Tower Level 3

This level of the tower is Crane's alchemical workshop. Opened and stoppered vials, jugs and bottles; pots, bowls, mortars, pestles and crucibles; many rusted tools, like pliers, scoops and tongs; braziers, censers, candles, oil lamps and bits of coal; a scale with weights; parchment, quills and inkpots; and glass piping, brass fittings and support apparatus litter four tables. Six locked cabinets stand against the walls, lined with shelves. Materials present in this laboratory would require several wagons to transport. There are, however, a number of rare, valuable items here, and the total setup would fetch well over 25,000 gp if sold to a wizard or alchemist. Another wooden staircase leads up to a locked trapdoor and **Level 4** of the tower.

A secret, locked compartment (DC 12) behind one of the cabinets hides a locked, trapped safe (DC 15). This safe contains some of Crane's money as well as a few potions.

A single check unlocks the safe and disables its trap; if it fails, the safe remains locked and the poison trap goes off, spraying poison in a 15-foot cone that does $6d6$ acid damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Dex check.

Treasure: The safe contains 12,200 gp; six matched 100 gp gems (aquamarines); potions of *greater healing*, *resistance (cold)*, and

Alchemical Roulette

Randomly sampling alchemical materials can be very dangerous. If a PC does so, roll 1d100 with the following results.

1d100	Result
01-12	Deadly poison ($6d10$ poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Con saving throw).
13-25	Imbibers loses all body hair, and fingernails and toenails grow 100 times faster than normal for two weeks.
26-35	Imbibers becomes delusional (believing he is invisible, can fly, or some other delusion chosen by the GM) for $2d4$ hours.
36-50	Mild poison ($3d6$ poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 10 Con saving throw).
51-80	No effect.
81-95	Tastes great! Imbibers is immune to fear for 2 hours.
96-99	Imbibers gains $3d6$ temporary hit points until after their next long or short rest.
00	Imbibers permanently gains an increase of 1 in a randomly-chosen ability score

diminution; oil of slipperiness; and an unfamiliar black talisman with a delicate chain of pure adamantine.

This talisman, a ruby-eyed, silver-tongued dragon twined around a ball, weighs four ounces and is exquisitely crafted of stone similar to that of the tower's exterior. It could be sold for as much as 1,000 gp. It detects faintly as magical but does not reveal its true nature until the party reaches **Room N** of the dungeon. It is a *talisman of the sphere*, which characters will find very useful when trying to control the *sphere of annihilation*. In addition, this *talisman* is the key to freeing the *sphere* from the *forcecage* that contains it.

Tower Level 4

This room appears to be Crane's bedroom, and it is lavishly furnished with tapestries, silk curtains and incense burners. The curtains around the canopied bed have been drawn back, revealing a beautiful woman of about 25 years, clothed in a fine red, silken robe, nestled amid the bedclothes. Pots of strange plants rest on tables around the room, filling the space with strange and exotic fragrances. Well-tended pots of **blue lotus flowers** clutter every table surface. Pollen from these flowers permeates the room, and any sudden or violent movement or disturbance stirs up a pollen cloud.

The beautiful woman is in reality a *polymorphed* erinyes. She answers to Melissa (her real name is Vaa'rankariziaalia). Melissa, once Crane's consort, was summoned to this plane and bound to this room by Crane. She cannot leave the room. Her beauty is flawless, and she is friendly if approached.

Hearing the approach of the PCs, Melissa disturbed the blue lotus flowers, filling the entire room with their narcotic pollen (which she is immune to); all characters entering the room are subject to its effect. Melissa engages the party in a dialogue, biding time until the pollen takes effect. She rises from the bed and pretends to tend the potted plants as she speaks to the party, releasing more clouds of blue lotus pollen every round.

All characters entering the level must make a saving throw against the blue lotus poison. Since veteran players should be immediately suspicious of the "trapped maiden" gag, this can be a tricky encounter to run. It's unlikely that characters will have any means of detecting

Blue Lotus

Creatures exposed to blue lotus toxin must make successful DC 16 Con saving throws or suffer hallucinations lasting $2d6$ rounds. Roll 1d4 to determine the nature of the hallucination.

Roll	Hallucination
1	The character sees a party member as a devil who intends to kill them all.
2	The character is filled with lust for the person nearest to him or her. If the target of this desire spurns their sudden advances, the hallucinating character goes berserk and attacks.
3	The character is filled with despair and is stunned while under the influence of the lotus gas. They curl up in a ball on the floor, hug themselves, and cry.
4	The character goes into a tranquil trance lasting $1d4 + 1$ hours. The individual sits on the floor and sees incomprehensible visions of things going on in the tower as they did before Crane disappeared.

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real alignment, but if they do, Melissa reads as Lawful Neutral, thanks to Crane's magic. Second, players are much less likely to immediately attack and kill an NPC who is interesting. Don't fall back on the "helpless, seductive woman lying on a bed" stereotype. Though Melissa is beautiful, she is fully clothed and neither flirting nor vamping with the party. Instead, play her as pissed off when characters barge into her chamber. Think Princess Leia, not Mata Hari. She might voice her doubts about the party's power or competence: "Oh great. A group of adventurers finally gets past the poison corridor, and this is it. Dumb luck, judging by the looks of you. I think I'd rather spend the rest of my life trapped here than let you get me killed in a hare-brained escape." She may even aggressively grab one of the PCs, saying "I need you to free me from this place!"

She tells the party that she is Crane's consort and that he extended her life with magic, but she hasn't seen him for more years than she can count. She explains that she was a rival sorceress who lost a magical duel to Crane, and his prize was her servitude. Now that Crane is dead, her debt has been met, and she demands that the party free her from captivity.

Of course, Melissa is just biding her time until the hallucinations begin. After one minute of real time, the fun starts. Melissa, familiar with the onset of the pollen-caused hallucinations—having seen Crane's reaction many times—knows which PCs have been affected.

(Melissa [Erinyes]: AC 18, 153 hp; +8 to hit x3, 1d10 + 4 slashing damage plus 3d8 poison damage [longsword]; +8 to hit x3, range 150 ft./600 ft., 1d8 + 3 piercing damage plus 3d8 poison damage and the target must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or be poisoned [longbow]; poisoning can be ended only by magic; as a reaction, can increase AC by 4 against a melee attack; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic)

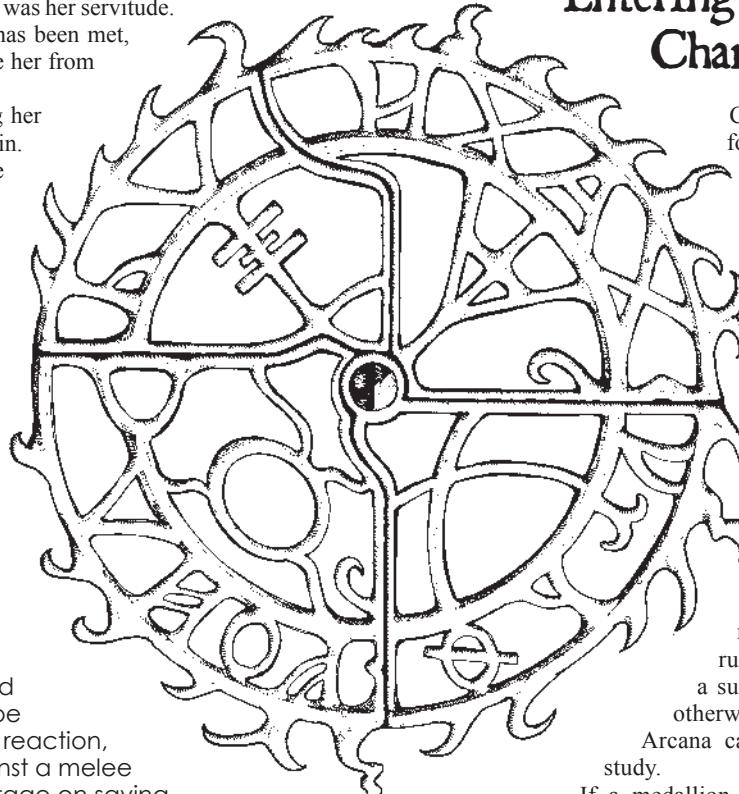
Treasure: Melissa wears a collar of finest gold and rubies worth 11,000 gp, but whoever possesses it will be visited by a barbazu in one month's time, at night, while asleep and helpless. Otherwise, the bedroom furnishings are worth over 3,000 gp if transported and sold.

This room contains no stairs. A **secret trapdoor** (DC 15) in the ceiling, 8 feet above the floor, leads to **Level 5** of the tower.

Tower Level 5

The walls of the tower's top level slope inward to meet at a pinnacle, creating a pyramid-shaped room. In the north wall, a **trapped secret door** (DC 14) opens into a 5-foot-by-5-foot room with a glowing crystal archway on the back wall. Opening the secret door without disabling the trap sucks all the air from Level 5, turning it into vacuum, and triggers an *arcane lock* (DC 25 to force open) on the trapdoor back to Level 4. Everyone in the chamber begins suffocating.

The crystal archway at the back of the secret compartment is a two-way portal that *teleports* anyone entering it to the dungeon of Crane. Those passing through this portal emerge through a similar portal in **Room A** of the dungeon.



The Dungeon of Crane the Sorcerer

To protect his *sphere of annihilation*, Crane hid it in a magically sealed chamber (**Room N**), to which he bound three devils as guards. Opening the seal to this chamber requires a fully assembled medallion, the four pieces of which Crane hid among the trapped and construct-populated corridors of his dungeon. No other way of opening the sealed chamber will succeed.

There are no wandering monsters in Crane's dungeon.

Entering the Central Chamber

Crane dispersed the medallion's four parts throughout the dungeon, thus securing the central chamber's integrity against intrusion—however unlikely the possibility. Fitting together tightly, the four pieces form a 10-inch-high flaming-sun-shaped medallion. Each magically sealed door to the central chamber bears an indentation into which the assembled medallion fits perfectly. Arcane runes on the medallion give a magical phrase that must be spoken aloud to activate the medallion, causing it to glow with a blue light. This glow lasts 90 seconds, during which time the medallion must be placed in the door. The runes can be deciphered quickly with a successful DC 20 Int (Arcana) check; otherwise, any character with training in Arcana can translate them with an hour of study.

If a medallion is placed in a door when it's not glowing (either the magical phrase wasn't spoken or the 90 seconds elapsed), the character holding the medallion takes 6d6 force damage.

Three doors leading to **Room N** are false doors (those from Rooms E, I, and J); placing the medallion into one of these doors also causes 6d6 force damage, even if characters observed the proper procedure. Only the door from **Room L** opens into the central chamber. If the medallion is used correctly on that door, the glowing blue light engulfs the entire door, and it opens. The medallion can be activated twice, but after the second activation, it doesn't respond to the magical phrase again until it has "rested" for 12 hours.

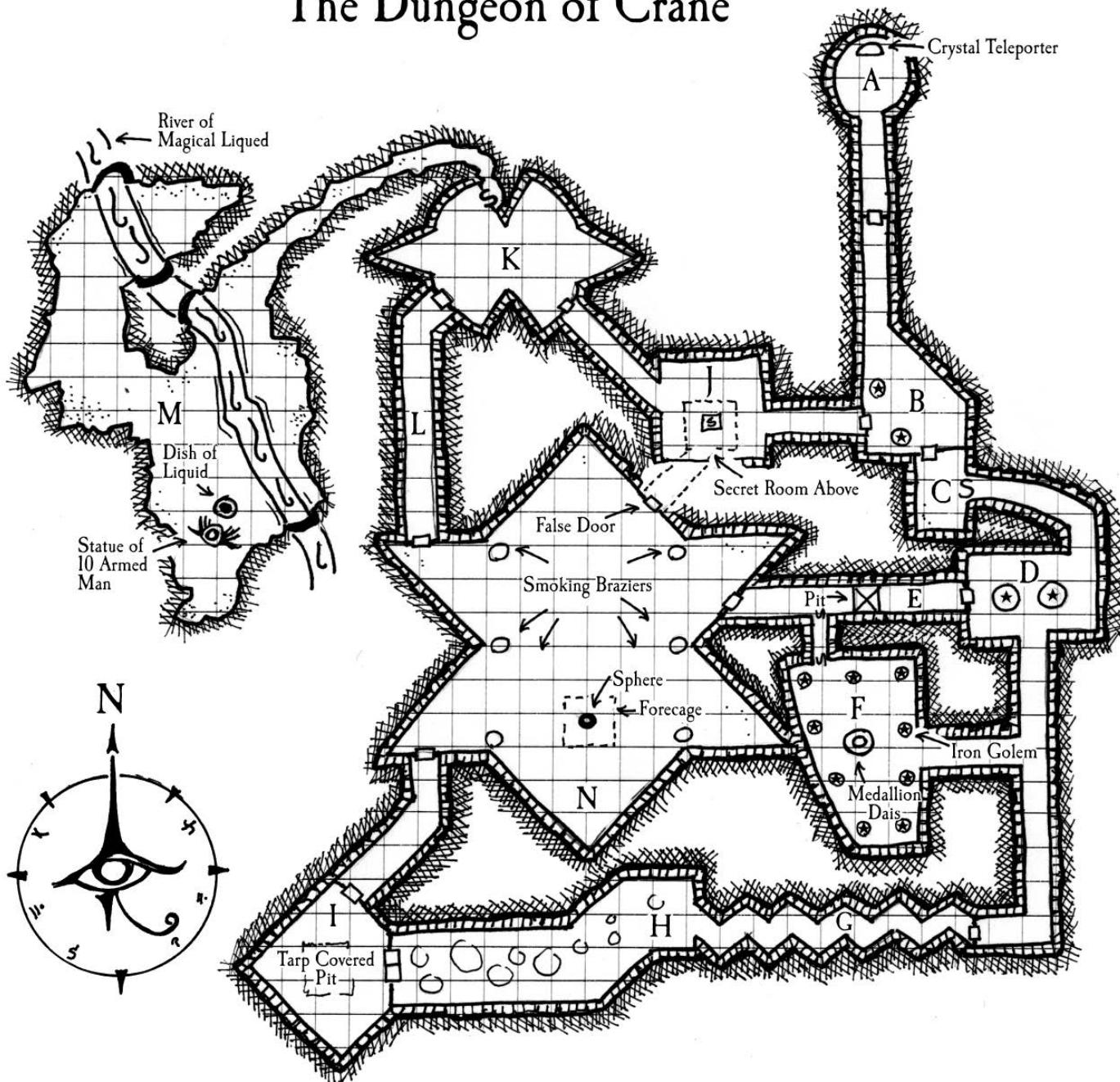
The central chamber's walls and associated doors, like those of the tower's exterior, are immune to spells and to weapons and tools of less than +5 enhancement. The only way to enter **Room N** is by placing the assembled medallion into the one, true door.

A. The Door Below

A magically sealed stone door, runes scratched across its surface, looms before the PCs. It is sealed with an *arcane lock* which can be defeated magically. Alternatively, tracing the runes on the door with a finger causes the runes to glow brightly, unlocking the door.

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The Dungeon of Crane



B. Guardians at the Gate

Beyond the locked door is a corridor leading into an irregularly-shaped room, its walls and floor constructed of red-veined, white marble. Dominating the room are two awe-inspiring statues of large cats, sculpted from black stone. The southern and southwestern walls feature doors. If either unlocked door is opened, the 2 statues come to life as **2 clay golems** and attack until slain, at which time they become statues again. The statues pursue the PCs if they run, though the statues cannot open doors.

(Clay Golem: AC 14, 133 hp; +8 to hit x2, 2d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage and the target creature must make a successful DC 15 Con saving throw or its maximum hp are reduced by the same amount [slam]; as an action, the golem can gain +2 AC, tactical advantage on Dex saves, and can attack as a bonus action until the end of its next turn [haste, recharge 5,

6]; gains temporary hp equal to acid damage; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic and is immune to any effect that would alter its form; when reduced to 60 or fewer hp, the golem attacks the nearest creature it can see)

C. The Sword Room

A brightly-glowing **animated flying sword of wounding** floats in midair in this room, which is carved entirely from black stone. The sword immediately attacks anyone entering the room. It can't leave the room while animated. This animated object is identical to a normal flying sword but for its wounding property. As with any flying weapon, by the time it's reduced to 0 hit points, it's destroyed.

A 10-foot-by-10-foot pressure plate at the room's center activates a **poison gas trap** (DC 13).

A secret door (DC 12) on the east wall leads to **Room D**.

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(**Flying Sword of Wounding:** AC 17, 17 hp; +3 to hit, 1d8 + 1 slashing damage [longsword]; damage from this weapon can be regained only by resting; the sword becomes unconscious for 1 minute if it fails a Con saving throw against *dispel magic*)

D. The Statue Room

Two minotaur statues, 10 feet apart, occupy this room. A 5-foot-diameter circle of red stones surrounds each statue. The south door features glowing runes. The west wall also contains a door. Both doors have intricate locks (DC 18). The minotaurs are just what they appear to be: statues. The glowing runes read “Hall of Pools,” if someone translates them with a successful DC 14 Int (Arcana) check.

E. Gone Forever

In the center of the corridor, an apparently **bottomless pit trap** plunges PCs down a chute linked to the astral plane. Magic has no effect after the 100-foot mark—meaning characters have only a few seconds to react. If a player takes more than about five seconds to decide what a falling character does, that character has already fallen too far and risks being lost forever on the Astral Plane. Rescuing people thusly trapped requires plane travel abilities. A secret door (DC 15) past the pit leads to **Room F**. The door at the corridor’s west end is a false door to **Room N**; the medallion won’t open it, and the person who puts the medallion into the depression takes 6d6 force damage.

F. The Big, Mean Golem

Large iron statues, fully 10 feet tall and shaped as warriors, line this room on all sides, surrounding a raised dais in the center. Upon the dais rests a rune-encrusted golden triangle, intricately carved, its center accented with a jewel. The golden triangle is the **first piece of Crane’s medallion**.

A single **flesh golem**, standing near the east entrance, guards against the piece’s theft. The amulet piece is trapped with a **lightning bolt trap**. Touching either the amulet or the dais triggers the trap, which does 5d6 lightning damage to everyone in the chamber, or half damage with a successful DC 14 Dex saving throw. The *lightning bolt* trap can be spotted with a successful DC 14 Int (Arcana) check, but it can’t be disabled, only dispelled.

(**Flesh Golem:** AC 9, 93 hp; +7 to hit x2, 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage [slam]; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic and is immune to any magic that would alter its form; has tactical disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks for 1 round after taking fire damage; is immune to lightning damage but instead heals hp equal to the lightning damage; when reduced to 40 or fewer hp, has a 1-in-6 chance of going berserk and attacking the nearest creature, checked at the start of its turn)

Tactics: When the golem has taken more than 20 damage, it touches the dais and triggers the *lightning bolt* trap to heal itself. The golem is facing the eastern hallway; characters sneaking into the chamber through the secret door from Room E might be able to grab the medallion (triggering the trap) and get out before the golem can attack. It won’t chase characters beyond this chamber.

G. Corridor of the Red Madness

When characters penetrate the paltry lock (DC 10) of the simple wooden door to this corridor, they enter a zigzagging hallway with walls and ceiling composed of a red, spongy material. Small holes in the red

matter emit curling wisps of pale red gas every time a surface is touched or subjected to vibration. The walls are so sensitive that even loud speech causes the material to pump out vision-obscuring quantities of this dreadful gas.

Inhaling the gas has a single, terrible consequence: insanity! Characters who breathe in this hallway must make a successful DC 16 Con saving throw or be driven insane. Those who are affected grasp their heads, fall to their knees, and begin screaming endlessly (characters are stunned for the duration of the madness). The victim’s skin takes on a red tinge. The madness lasts 1d10 hours, but if the result is 10, it’s permanent until cured by *greater restoration* or comparable magic.

H. Hall of Pools

This long chamber is dotted every few yards with pools of bubbling, blue-green liquid. A huge set of double doors at the hall’s far end seemingly bleeds this liquid; it drains into the various pools through a series of channels carved in the floor. Strange writing and a bas-relief carving of a scepter, covered in gold leaf with small ruby chips simulating dripping blood, ornament the door. A hollow sconce, next to the bas-relief scepter, appears large enough to receive an object of a size similar to the bas-relief scepter. The doors are sealed by a *wish*, making them effectively impossible to open unless characters can cast *dispel magic* as a 9th-level spell.

Writing in Celestial decorating the door states, “*None shall pass till the curse of the earth god is lifted.*”

While the liquid’s surface ripples only an inch or so below the level of the floor, the pools themselves measure over 8 feet deep. This strange liquid actually constitutes some odd form of Earthpower, welling up from the depths. Any mortal touching so much as drop of this potent fluid must make a DC 18 Con saving throw. If the saving throw fails, the character falls unconscious for 1d6 days. If the save succeeds, the character is poisoned and they find it difficult to walk (everywhere is treated as difficult terrain) for one hour.

A golden scepter lies at the bottom of the westernmost pool, 8 feet below the surface. It can be seen—barely—through the translucent liquid. If the scepter is fished out, placing it into the sconce beside the bas-relief carving opens the western doors. The scepter then vanishes, returning to its resting place at the bottom of the pool. The scepter has no other power or function.

I. The Pit

Centered in the room is a 15-foot-square pit surrounded by a stone lip that rises about 1 foot above floor level. The pit is covered by an immense, single sheet of leather that’s pulled taut and lashed down securely. Although the leather is astounding for its size, it’s nothing more than it appears. There are no traps, magical or otherwise. Characters can easily loosen the straps that hold the leather in place and uncover the 5-foot-deep pit. It’s apparently empty, but there’s a secret, locked trapdoor (DC 14) at the bottom; opening it reveals a 2-foot-long mahogany box with beautifully detailed carvings covering its entire surface. Within the small casket is hidden the **second piece of Crane’s medallion**.

The north wall’s unlocked door leads to one of the false doors to **Room N**. The medallion won’t open it, and the person who puts the medallion into the depression takes 6d6 force damage.

J. Seven Years’ Bad Luck

When characters open the door from **Room B**, they hear the tinkling and jangling of glass, as though the room beyond were full of wind chimes. Multiple shiny objects reflect light back to the PCs, like a room full of twinkling stars. Dangling from the ceiling by long strands of thread are thousands of shards of glass—as though a huge mirror had been broken and its remnants hung in this manner. From the ceiling 15 feet above, the shards

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dangle to every level of the room, to just about 2 feet above the floor.

If a shard is broken, it shatters violently, producing a tiny shockwave and a thin wisp of acrid smoke. The tiny shockwave causes nearby shards to explode, which sets off a chain reaction through the entire room. The explosions are too small to cause any damage to characters, but the smoke is dangerous. Everyone in the chamber when the shards detonate must make a DC 14 Con saving throw; those who fail are blinded for 2d4 days, while those who succeed are blinded for 2d4 minutes. The blindness can be removed by *greater restoration*.

The shards are very fragile and easily broken; just bumping into one can shatter it. Characters who walk through the room must make a successful DC 13 Dex (Acrobatics) check to avoid bumping into any shards with enough force to set them off. Small characters get tactical advantage on this check. The only safe way to move through the room is to drop to the floor and crawl.

There is a **secret door** in the ceiling. Spotting it takes a successful DC 20 Wis (Perception) check while the shards are present, but the DC drops to 15 if the shards have been detonated. The door opens up into a small chamber where a silver pedestal supports a red crystal staff. Characters can use the staff to form a crystal bridge in **Room M**. An image of a bridge spanning a river is inscribed on the staff.

A corridor behind the pedestal heads southwest. This corridor leads to one of Room N's false doors; the medallion won't open it, and the person who puts the medallion into the depression takes 6d6 force damage.

K. Final Guardians

Daggers, swords, and shards of metal lie piled in the room's center. PCs can feel a slight breeze blowing from Room K toward Room J. As they enter, the breeze stiffens and a whirlwind forms, lifting the metal shards and weapons from the pile and setting them spinning through the air. Two humanoid creatures draped in cruel, barbed chains advance through the wind.

Crane called forth these, his final guardians—**2 chain devils**—to protect the entrance to the strange Earthpower cavern (**Room M**). These creatures will not leave the room.

A secret door (DC 16) leads to the north. The southwestern door, made of iron, is locked and trapped with a **poison needle** (DC 14). The poison does 2d6 poison damage and causes paralysis for a number of minutes equal to the damage, or half damage and no paralysis with a successful DC 14 Con saving throw.

(Chain Devil: AC 16, 85 hp; *8 to hit x2, reach 10 ft., 2d6 + 4 slashing damage and the target is grappled and restrained[chain]; only one target can be grappled at a time; a grappled creature takes 2d6 piercing damage at the start of its turns; 1/day, can animate up to 4 chains with AC 20, 20 hp, to make additional chain attacks; as a reaction at the start of another creature's turn, the creature must make a successful DC 14 Wis saving throw or be frightened by an illusion of a loved one until the end of its turn [unnerving mask]; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic)

L. Central Chamber Entrance Hallway

Mirrors line the walls from floor to ceiling along the corridor, but the view they offer is strangely distorted. A large rune-etched door marks the hallway's far end. At the corridor's 30-foot mark, a *mirror of life trapping* is affixed to the ceiling. A successful DC 15 Con saving throw is needed to avoid the effects of the *mirror*. Shattering the mirror from the outside releases everything trapped inside. Crane imprisoned a **black pudding**, **2 wraiths**, a **wizard named Meldeth**, and a **poisoned and severely wounded wizard named Toth A'karon** in it before placing it here. No one knows how Crane ensnared the wraiths, as undead cannot normally be trapped by such an item. (If characters are in especially bad shape at this point, you might take pity on

them and consider leaving the 2nd wraith out of the encounter. Or not.)

The pudding, wraiths, and Meldeth attack immediately when they're released from the mirror. Toth A'karon is stunned from the poison in his veins and dies within a few minutes of being released. He survives just long enough to pass characters the **third piece of Crane's medallion** and whisper a fragmentary clue about its use.

The command word for the mirror is *Seriwog*.

(Black Pudding: AC 7, 85 hp; +5 to hit, 1d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage plus 4d8 acid damage and the AC of nonmagical armor is reduced by 1 [pseudopod]; attackers within 5 ft. take 1d8 acid damage when they hit the black pudding with a melee attack, and nonmagical weapons of metal or wood take a cumulative -1 penalty to damage; lightning or slashing damage cause the black pudding to split in half)

(Wraith: AC 13, 67 hp; +6 to hit, 4d8 + 3 necrotic damage and the target must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or its maximum hp are reduced by the same amount [life drain]; as an action, can reanimate a creature slain within 1 minute, within 10 ft. as a specter; can move through solid objects and other creatures as if they were difficult terrain but takes 5 force damage if it ends its turn in a solid object)

(Meldeth [Mage]: AC 12, 40 hp; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage; spell attack +6, save DC 14; prepares the following spells: [at will] *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*; [1st level, x4] *detect magic*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; [2nd level, x3] *misty step*, *suggestion*; [3rd level, x3] *counterspell*, *fireball*, *fly*; [4th level, x3] *greater invisibility*, *ice storm*; [5th level, x1] *cone of cold*)

Once the PCs assemble all the parts of Crane's medallion, they can open the door to **Room N**.

M. Earthpower Cavern

The secret door leads to a small cavern through which flows a stream of weird, shimmering blue-green liquid. Across the river towers a huge statue of a 20-armed man with a sword in each hand; inscribed on his chest is a rune symbolizing a long-forgotten Lawful Good earth deity of battle called Mocham. In front of the statue is a 20-foot-diameter pool of red liquid.

Crane discovered this natural cavern while carving out his dungeon. This cavern, linked to a now-unknown earth god, was once sacred to clerics of that sect. The river that winds through this cavern is 2 feet deep and can be crossed easily (though at great cost). It radiates a strange antimagic effect; no magic functions within 20 feet of either bank. Spellcasters innately notice this antimagic aura. The red crystal staff, found in the secret chamber above **Room J**, forms a crystal bridge fording the river if waved over the liquid. The staff is the only magic item immune to the liquid's antimagic power. The liquid loses this antimagic ability when removed from the stream. Characters crossing the river by any means other than the red crystal bridge have all ongoing magic effects ended, and all of their magic items fail to function while within 20 feet of the stream.

The giant statue—natural rock carved into the form of a 20-armed man—bears the weight of the ages upon his brow. Its expression inspires knee-bending humility, sadness, and awe. At the monolith's feet is a 2-foot-deep bowl of opaque, dark-red-brown liquid that is very poisonous; simply touching it causes 6d4 poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 18 Con saving throw. The poison loses its potency outside this sacred chamber.

Any characters moving to within 10 feet of the monolith notice that the statue's eyes quickly pulse with blue light. If the warning is not heeded (the character doesn't back away within three seconds), the statue fires two *eldritch blasts* at the floor between the transgressor's feet. Should the character persist, the statue fires directly at them (+8 to hit x2, 1d10 force damage) once every three rounds. Good-aligned clerics can approach the

QUESTS OF DOOM: DEMONS & DEVILS

statue without being attacked.

The **fourth piece of Crane's medallion** lies hidden in the pool of poison. Fishing the piece of the medallion out with a physical tool requires a successful DC 20 Dex check, making one attempt per round.

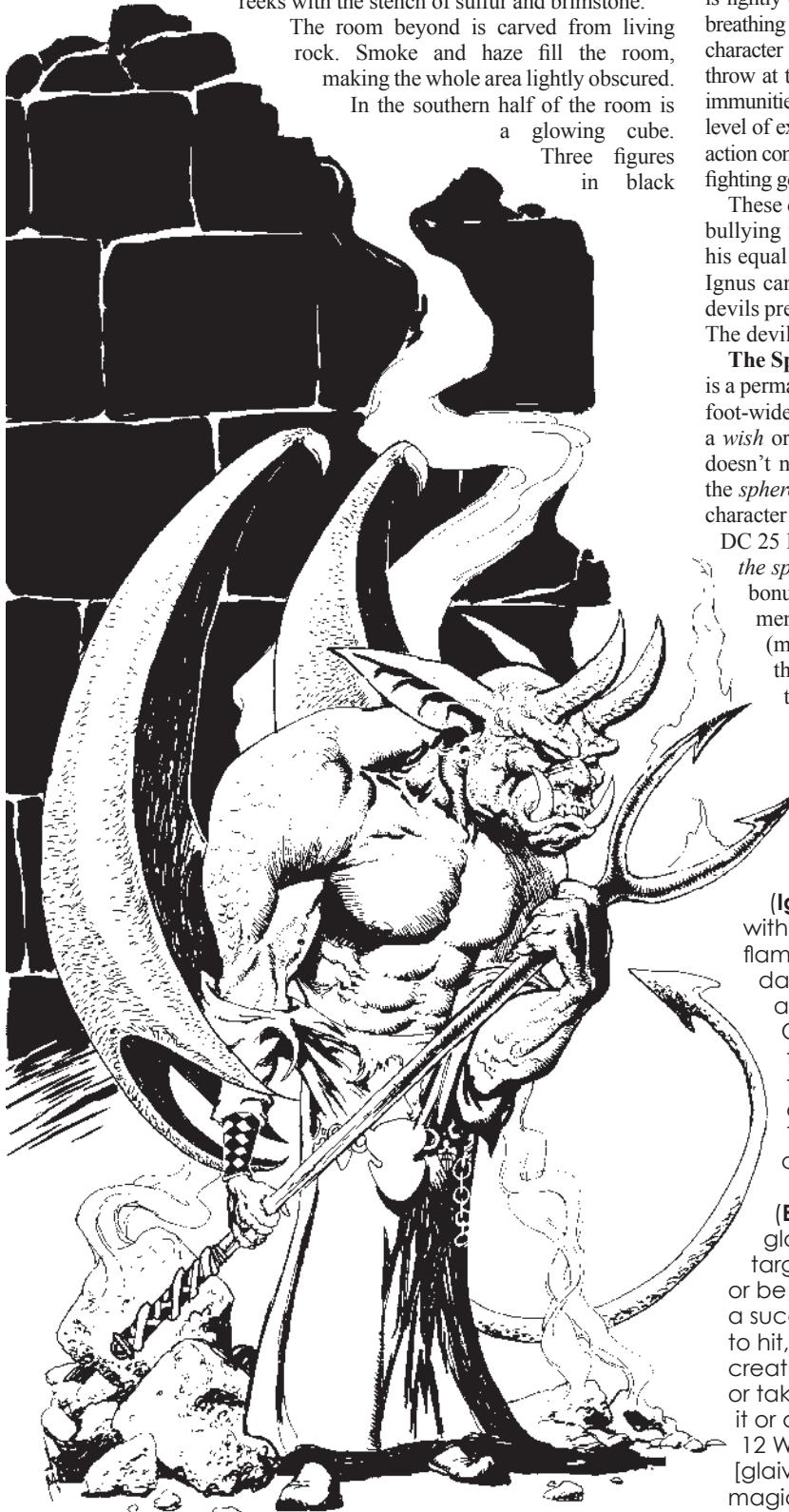
N. Central Chamber

When the medallion is properly inserted in the door, the door ignites with searing blue light; its shape alters, becoming a misty archway. The archway reeks with the stench of sulfur and brimstone.

The room beyond is carved from living rock. Smoke and haze fill the room, making the whole area lightly obscured.

In the southern half of the room is a glowing cube.

Three figures in black



robes stand near it: **2 bearded devils** and a Large **horned devil** called Ignus. When they see the PCs, one of the Medium figures approaches cautiously. When it gets within 20 feet, it shouts, "These are not our master!" All three then throw off their cloaks, revealing their true forms.

Crane bound these three devils to this room to guard his *sphere of annihilation*. Ordered to destroy all who enter the room but Crane, they neither negotiate nor bargain. A bearded devil targeted by a *banishment* spell or similar magic doesn't resist with a saving throw, and the spell's duration is permanent; they're happy to be freed from Crane's interminable service.

Because of the magically burning brimstone, everything in this chamber is lightly obscured. Furthermore, living characters can become fatigued from breathing the toxic, sulfurous fumes. During rounds of combat, every living character (the devils are immune) must make a successful DC 10 Con saving throw at the start of its turn or gain one level of exhaustion. Resistances and immunities to poison apply. Every die of magical healing received removes one level of exhaustion also, and a character can remove one level by spending an action controlling his or her breathing and clearing their lungs. When there's no fighting going on, characters need to make the saving throw once per minute.

These devils are smart and cruel, but like all horned devils, Ignus enjoys bullying weaker creatures more than fighting adventurers who might be his equal in combat. If characters manage to gain the upper hand quickly, Ignus can try to summon another horned devil (30% chance). All of the devils prefer to gang up on one enemy until that creature is out of the fight. The devils make no attempt to use the *sphere of annihilation*.

The Sphere: Hovering in the center of the room, 10 feet above the floor, is a permanent *forcecage* containing Crane's *sphere of annihilation*—a two-foot-wide ball of absolute nothingness. The *forcecage* can be destroyed with a *wish* or similar magic more powerful than *dispel magic*. The *forcecage* doesn't need to be destroyed, however, because it can't actually contain the *sphere*; the cage just keeps everything else away from the *sphere*. Any character within 60 feet of the *sphere* can try to command it by making a

DC 25 Int (Arcana) check (and if the character is holding the *talisman of the sphere* from **Tower Level 3**'s hidden safe, their Arcana proficiency bonus is doubled when making this check). Success lets the character mentally move the levitating *sphere* 5 feet x their Int modifier (minimum 5 feet). Failure causes the *sphere* to drift 10 feet toward the character. Being essentially nothing incarnate, the *sphere* passes through the matterless *forcecage* as if the cage wasn't there.

Obviously, the *sphere* can be a terrific weapon against the devils, who fear it greatly. Any creature that touches it or is touched by it must make a successful DC 13 Dex saving throw or take 4d10 force damage. Owning such a thing, on the other hand, can be problematic, but characters are sure to try.

The chamber contains no other treasure.

(Ignus [Horned Devil]): AC 18, 178 hp; attacks twice with fork and once with tail, and can substitute hurl flame for any one attack; +10 to hit x2, 2d8 + 6 piercing damage [fork]; +10 to hit, 1d8 + 6 piercing damage and target creature must make a successful DC 17 Con saving throw or take another 3d6 damage at the start of its turns until it or an ally spends an action to make a successful DC 12 Wis (Medicine) check or it receives magical healing [tail]; +7 to hit, range 150 ft., 4d6 fire damage [hurl flame]; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic

(Bearded Devil): AC 13, 52 hp; attacks with beard and glaive; +5 to hit, 1d8 + 2 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute [beard]; poisoning ends with a successful save at the end of the creature's turns; +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., 1d10 + 3 slashing damage and target creature must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or take another 1d10 damage at the start of its turns until it or an ally spends an action to make a successful DC 12 Wis (Medicine) check or it receives magical healing [glaive]; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic; can't be frightened while allies are within 30 ft.)

Giants & Dragons

The Dead from Above

By Michael Curtis

Dead from Above is intended for use with four to six player characters of levels 6 to 8. It will likely take two game sessions to complete. The adventure is set in (and above) a hilly region at the outskirts of civilization, presumably one near the base of a mountain chain. With a little work, the GM can place *Dead from Above* wherever he or she desires in the campaign world.

Background

For centuries the forbidding western mountains were the demesne of the Stormbreaker Clan, a family of evil cloud giants. These giants long ago turned their backs on the path of righteousness and embraced the worship of the evil god Drahluz, practicing dread arts and conducting foul rites in his honor. Despite their wicked ways, the Stormbreakers seldom troubled those dwelling outside the mountain region. They were content to remain in their high aeries and hold dominion over the lesser races that dwelled among the peaks.

In recent decades, however, the boundaries of mankind pushed closer to the mountains as civilization continued its march into the frontier. Many small villages arose in the foothills of the mountains, their growth spurred by discoveries of veins of precious ore and other resources. The Stormbreakers see this incursion into their ancient holdings as an infestation of lesser vermin that needs exterminating.

The cloud giants banded together to work an act of black magic and blasphemous ritual. First, they scoured the jagged mountains for the hidden burying grounds of their giant kin and great wyrmss, prying the yellowed bones of dead titans from the earth and carting them back to their high peaks. The Stormbreakers called upon a long-forgotten ritual to tear the top from a mountain, transforming it into a floating island adrift on the winds. The collected bones were then used to build a mighty citadel on the broken peak, formed into a gleaming structure the giant necromancers dubbed “the Ossuary.” This magical holdfast would serve as their engine of vengeance against the encroaching wave of mankind.

The Stormbreakers stocked the floating keep with the supplies their campaign required: rotting corpses of giants and dragons plundered from the secret cemeteries; reagents and concoctions of darkest magic; and as many of their blasphemous kin as the Ossuary would hold. They then departed from the mountains, drifting down over the lands of mankind with hatred in their eyes.

The first villages had no inkling of the doom that awaited them. As the residents went about their business, the sun was suddenly blocked out by the floating Ossuary. The villagers watched in horror as giant zombies, the animated remains of the bodies unearthed in the graveyards, were dropped down upon their settlement, where they destroyed buildings and murdered the inhabitants. The Stormbreakers’ chosen means of conveying their message that humanity was not welcome in the mountains was terrifyingly effective.

The giant necromancers are continuing their campaign of bombardment and destruction, intent on driving every last human out of the hills. Word of the attacks is spreading out of the hills and measures are being implemented to stop this terror before every town and village in the kingdom suffers from its predation. It is at this point that the adventurers become embroiled in the scheme to end the Stormbreakers’ war on humankind.

Starting the Adventure

The GM can introduce *Dead from Above* in one of two ways. The first is to have the party approached by local authorities to deal with the problem. This gives the characters a chance to prepare and plan their course of action. The second method is to thrust the adventure on them without warning, dropping the adventure—literally—onto the party! This section covers both possibilities.

Method 1: Hired Troubleshooters

This method works well if the characters are established adventurers in the region and have a reputation for thwarting evil. If they’ve done contract adventuring for local authority figures, so much the better.

The party is approached by a representative of the local ruler who informs them that a terrible evil is destroying the kingdom’s holdings in the mountains. The potentate is hiring brave adventurers to root out and destroy this evil before the death toll grows larger. In return, the ruler is offering a reward of 1,000 gp in gemstones (or other appropriate payment as the GM sees fit).

The agent knows the following information and freely presents it to the party:

1. A floating keep fashioned from bones and constructed in the shape of a rough humanoid skull has appeared over outlying villages in the past week. Wherever it appears, it brings destruction and terror.

2. The occupants of the bony fortress have never been seen, but their attacks are terrifying and effective. Animated undead in the form of giant zombies and skeletal dragons are launched from the aerial holdfast onto the settlements below. These animated undead cause wholesale destruction, both by landing atop buildings and by tearing apart the villages’ buildings and inhabitants.

3. Adding insult to injury, a flight of wyverns appears to be following the floating fortress like scavengers, feasting upon the dead and dying left in the wake of the attacks. It’s not known whether they’re allied with the fortresses’s inhabitants or just taking tactical advantage of an opportunity.

4. The fortress has never been seen to touch down on the ground, making it impossible to lay siege to. Daring adventurers are needed to infiltrate the keep, identify who is responsible for the attacks, and end the threat before more lives are lost and more villages are destroyed.

If the party has its own means of flying (spells, magical items, etc.), the characters should be able to begin the adventure without difficulty, traveling to the western foothills and seeking out the Ossuary. Proceed to “The Wyvern Attack” below.

If the characters lack the means to take to the air, the local ruler can assist them. The potentate possesses a small flight of griffons, complete with trained handlers. The ruler will loan the use of his flying mounts, along with their guides, to the party to aid their search and assault on the aerial fortress. He stresses that the mounts and their handlers will only help locate the holdfast and land the party on it, but will not engage in battle other than in self-defense. Once the characters are in place, the griffons are to retreat to a safe distance until the party calls them back with a prearranged signal. The flying mounts are too valuable to risk in battle and, should the party fail, they’ll be needed for subsequent attacks on the keep.

THE DEAD FROM ABOVE

Method 2: The Call to Adventure Comes from Above

This option plunges the party directly into the events of the adventure without warning, forcing them to think fast and respond to an unexpected threat. It also provides a way to get a party without the means of magical flight up to the Ossuary to complete the adventure. Although this method is the author's preferred means of starting *Dead from Above*, some gaming groups respond poorly to being dragged into an adventure this way. You must determine how your players would react to this sudden immersion in events and whether it's right for your group.

The adventure begins while the party is engaged in mundane business in a small village in a hilly region along the border of civilization. The adventurers might be resting overnight as part of a prolonged journey or have arrived at the village for other reasons (seeking out the services of a local weaponsmith, sage, wizard, etc., or they might be following up rumors of a lost dungeon in the hills). It's ideal if you can seed rumors about recent attacks on nearby villages into whatever adventure the characters were on just prior to this one, but that isn't strictly necessary to begin the adventure. At some point during the day while the characters are inside a building, the Ossuary drifts over the village, having chosen it as the next target in its campaign of evil. Read the following:

A tremendous crash echoes from outside, accompanied by an earth-shaking tremor and the sound of screams. A moment later, the foul scent of decomposition and death washes over you. You see villagers rush past the open doorway, obviously fleeing for their lives.

As you emerge outside, you are confronted by a startling vista. A building lies in ruins, a tangle of shattered timbers and scattered thatching. Rising from the ruin is the walking, rotted corpse of a dead giant. The massive zombie has many broken bones, and cracked rafters protrude from its putrefying flesh. The creature must have plummeted from above!

Looking skyward, you see other horrors overhead. The skeletal form of a dragon swoops about on tattered wings, its eyes burning like corpse candles. A network of glowing strands are interlaced throughout its bony form, twitching and vibrating as it soars above you. Floating directly above the village is what appears to be the top of a mountain, somehow sheared off its base and set adrift. A building fashioned from titanic bones rests atop the stony platform. As you watch, another immense figure steps from the edge of the drifting stone and plummets to earth, smashing a second building to flinders.

The village is in chaos as residents flee in terror. The shock and awe of undead giants dropping atop them breaks their morale, and even the few armed militia panic and run. The heroes find themselves alone, facing three undead threats.

The first stone giant zombie strides toward the party to attack while the skeletal dragon swoops down on them. The second stone giant zombie smashes into the ground, and it takes two rounds for the corpse to climb to its feet and extract itself from the wreckage of the building.

(Stone Giant Zombie: AC 8, 29 hps; +8 to hit, 2d8 + 6 bludgeoning damage)

(Skeletal Red Dragon: AC 12, 75 hps; +8 to hit, 3d10 + 6 piercing damage AND +6 to hit x2, 2d8 + 6 slashing damage)

The stone giants have only one-half their normal hit points because the damage suffered in their drop from the floating citadel. All three undead attack until destroyed. As the combat rages, the Ossuary slowly flies off,

its objective completed. When the skeletal dragon is reduced to zero hit points, it collapses, its bony body emitting a pulsating, greenish glow for several minutes.

Reaching the Ossuary

Once the battle is over, villagers return to the hamlet, praising the party for their valor. If the party is unaware of the recent attacks, the villagers inform them that this assault was just the latest in a series of similar abrupt bombardments of settlements in the area and that the local ruler is offering a 1,000 gp reward to whoever ends the attacks. The locals know all the details of the attacks as documented in Method 1 above. This should inspire the party to investigate the Ossuary and stop its menace, but if not, the villagers plead with the characters to take the fight to the strange keep and avenge the deaths of the locals who died in the attack.

If the adventurers lack a means of flying in pursuit of the Ossuary, one possibility lies nearby. If characters investigate the still-glowing form of the battered but still relatively intact dragon, they discover the web of control veins laced through its body. If characters avoid the dragon or simply ignore it, some of the village children climb onto it and their curiosity impels them to start yanking cords, making the dragon's form respond to their plucking.

Aloft on Dead Wings

An examination of the skeletal dragon reveals a network of long, veinlike cables running throughout the interior of the dragon. This web of cables extends from the skull to the wings, legs, and tail, forming a skein of thick cords. The veins glow softly with a corpselike green color. Pulling on one of the veins causes the great skeletal beast to shudder as it responds to the tugging. One cord causes its wing to unfurl, another tucks in a skeletal leg, etc. A successful DC 10 Wis (Medicine) roll identifies which veins connect to what portion of the dragon. A successful DC 10 Int (Arcana) check suggests that, if two heroes worked in concert, it'd be possible to make the skeletal dragon take flight once more—perhaps a useful way to pursue a certain drifting Ossuary!

With about an hour's worth of trial and error, two or more adventurers can get the dragon aloft, but it quickly becomes apparent that the magic holding the dragon together and empowering the vein network is slowly failing. A successful DC 15 Int (Arcana) check estimates the dragon has less than a day remaining in its useful life. If the party wishes to pursue the Ossuary, they need to go now.

So long as one or more characters succeeds in the Wis (Medicine) check and two heroes spend an hour practicing getting the dragon to fly, the skeletal craft takes to the air without problem, and can pursue the Ossuary.

The Wyvern Attack

Regardless of which method you use to introduce the adventure, the characters should ultimately close in on the Ossuary's location. If the heroes were hired by the local authority to seek out the fortress, a day or two of searching the skies above the hills (and surviving whatever random encounters you wish to add) locates the aerial keep flying through the sky in the distance. If the characters pursued the Ossuary after surviving the attack on the village, either via the skeletal dragon or through other flying measures, the party has little difficulty locating the fort, approaching it within an hour after beginning the pursuit.

As they approach the Ossuary but while it is still a few miles away, the party encounters a challenge that must be surmounted before they can begin their assault on the flying citadel. A pair of wyverns have taken to following the Ossuary as it travels, trailing it like sharks shadowing a ship seeking scraps. The small wyrms feed on the injured and dead the giants leave in their wake, and they soon spot the flying adventurers. They swoop down from out of the sun, requiring a DC 20 Wis (Perception) check to notice them.



Flying a Skeletal Dragon

The dragon can hold six Medium-sized creatures, with up to three inside the dragon and another three riding atop it. Two Small creatures count as one Medium-sized passenger. The two “pilots” (the characters tugging the skein to keep the dragon aloft) must be inside the dragon, nestled within its ribcage.

The dragon flies at a speed of 100 feet per round. It can move 20 feet per round on the ground, but it’s ungainly. Making the dragon fly in a relatively straight line is easy with some practice, but if the pilots try to perform more intricate maneuvers (banking to attack the wyverns in the next encounter, for example), a DC 10 Dex (Medicine) roll is required. The two adventurers piloting the dragon each make a roll with tactical advantage; if both succeed, the dragon moves as they desire. If one or both fail the check, the dragon continues on its present course.

The pilots can also cause the skeletal dragon to bite an opponent. Doing so requires an action by one of the two pilots and a Dex (Medicine) check. The result of the check is used as the bite attack roll. The bite inflicts 2d10 points of piercing damage on a successful hit. Note that the dragon cannot maneuver and attack in the same round, because both pilots are required to work in concert to move the dragon in anything other than a straight line.

Landing the dragon requires a DC 10 Dex (Medicine) check as if the pilots were maneuvering the skeleton. If one or both pilots fail the check, all aboard must make a successful DC 12 Dex saving throw or take 2d6 points of bludgeoning damage (half damage with a successful save) as the dragon lands hard.

(Wyvern: AC 13, 110 hps; +7 to hit, 2d6 + 4 piercing damage AND +7 to hit, 2d6 + 4 piercing damage plus 7d6 poison damage [half damage from poison with a successful DC 15 Con saving throw]; either of those attacks can be replaced with +7 to hit, 2d8 + 4 slashing damage)

Note that casting spells while engaged in aerial combat can be taxing on spellcasters. If the spellcaster is mounted on a diving griffon or a skeletal dragon engaged in combat with one of the wyverns, the GM may rule that a DC 10 Con saving throw is required to maintain concentration on spells. This is especially important if the spell being concentrated on is one holding the character or an ally aloft!

The Ossuary

The flying citadel known as The Ossuary is a squat structure fashioned from a humungous mass of bones. These bones range from small human femurs to the massive rib bones plundered from dragons, all assembled into a shape reminiscent of a humanoid skull. A parapet roughly resembling an extended jaw bone encloses a rocky courtyard set in front of the bony building.

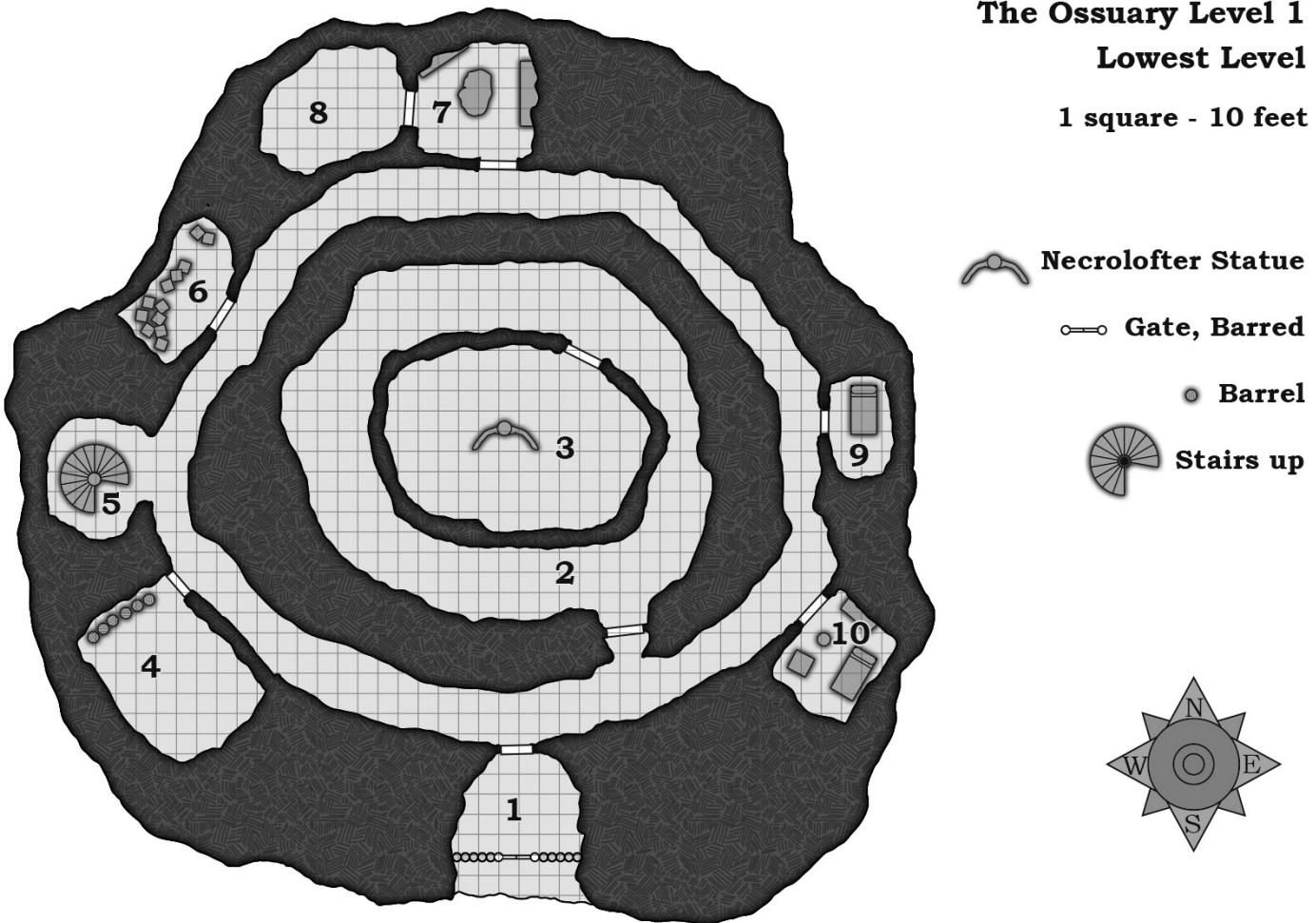
The building rests atop a mass of rock that bears a truncated and upside-down teardrop shape. The stone foundation tapers to a point at its bottom and is flat at its top (it’s the sheared-off top of a mountain, rotated upside-down), providing a firm and level base for the keep to rest upon. The Ossuary floats a constant 400 feet above the ground and moves at a speed of 0-80 feet per round.

The only obvious entrances to the Ossuary are via the great double doors visible in the courtyard and through the barred cavern mouth in the back of the fortress’ rocky base. There are no apparent windows into the Ossuary, but some sections of bone are slightly translucent to allow sunlight to illuminate the interior.

THE DEAD FROM ABOVE



QUESTS OF DOOM: GIANTS & DRAGONS



The Ossuary's pilot, Morgosun, the cloud giant seated in the navigator's chair (see Level Three, Area 3), has a mental view of the area directly in front of the Ossuary and up to 90 degrees to the left and right. The fortress is effectively blind to creatures approaching from the rear, so a sneaky party can easily reach the cavern's mouth (Level One, Area 1) undetected. Heroes deciding on a direct frontal assault are automatically seen, and the Ossuary's inhabitants immediately prepare to repel the attackers.

Ossuary General Features

The entire fortress is fabricated from bones that are magically strengthened to the same durability as stone. Floors, walls, and ceilings of the fortress are constructed from hundreds of intertwined bones that form a solid, if somewhat uneven, surface. Ceilings average 25 feet in height and most corridors are 20 feet wide. The lower level of the Ossuary consists of room and hallways carved out of solid rock intermixed with natural caves and tunnels. The ceilings are slightly lower here, averaging 20 feet in height.

Doors: Doors inside the Ossuary, on the lower and upper levels, are fashioned from wood reinforced with metal and bone. Locks, when present, are integral parts of the door and not separate padlocks. Because of the large size of the locks, picking them is easier for Medium or smaller size creatures, requiring only a DC 12 Dex check. The doors are very sturdy, however, so a DC 25 Str (Athletics) check is needed to bash them in. Even when unlocked, pushing open one of the great valves requires a DC 10 Str (Athletics) check.

Illumination: During daylight hours, sunlight shines through semitransparent sections of the walls to provide bright illumination on the upper levels. Huge torches set in sconces resembling the skeletal hand

and arm of a large humanoid are spaced throughout windowless inner chambers and lower levels of the fortress, and hill giant servants replace the brands as necessary.

Furnishings: All furnishings in the Ossuary are constructed for giants. The seat of a chair, for example, is 5 feet above the ground, and tabletops are located an average 9 feet in the air. Beds and similar accoutrements are also anywhere from 6 to 10 feet high. As such, man-sized and smaller creatures may not be able to see what lies atop certain furnishings and must make a successful DC 10 Str (Athletics) check to climb up onto tables, bunks, bookshelves, and similar objects.

Potions and Other Consumables: Any potion vials encountered inside the Ossuary or in the possession of one of the flying citadel's inhabitants are sized for giant consumption, making them three times larger than a standard vial. They effectively contain three doses each when used by Small or Medium creatures, two doses if consumed by a Large creature, and a single dose if drunk by a Huge or larger creature.

Alarm: The Stormbreakers are intelligent foes who react to invaders using the best tactics available to them. If an alarm is sounded, by the guards in Level Two, Area 2, Level Three, Area 1, or by an Ossuary crew member who encounters the party and flees for reinforcements, the following steps are taken by the Stormbreakers.

- The hill giants from Level One, Area 4 are summoned to reinforce specific areas. If the alarm gong sounds in Level Two, Area 2, four giants are sent to the hallway outside the kitchen and dining areas (Level Two, Area 6 and Level Two, Area 9). They engage intruders encountered in the halls of Level Two or lie in wait to ambush invaders coming down the north-south hallway leading past the lounge and the kitchen (Level Two, Area 4 and Level Two, Area 6).

- Xurgal (Level Two, Area 14), Jezsyl (Level Two, Area 16), Oblugrim (Level Three, Area 2), and the remaining two hill giants from Level One, Area 4 head directly to the last known location of the intruders.

THE DEAD FROM ABOVE

- The three young giants in the lounge (Level Two, Area 4) return to their quarters (Level Two, Area 10).
- Tathhylia and her serpent (Level Three, Area 2) move to reinforce the guards in the Bridge (Level Three, Area 3).
- Bregucar and Chandylbor continue their work, but they instruct the fire giant zombie in Level One, Area 7 to patrol the main corridor on Level One.

The GM's judgment has final say over how the Stormbreakers react. The above directions should be used as a guideline. Stormbreaker casualties might mean some of the indicated NPCs aren't available to act as specified, leaving the GM to determine how the survivors act in the face of invasion.

Wandering Monsters

A check should be made every 30 minute to see whether characters encounter a random occupant of the Ossuary. There is a 10% chance for an encounter on Level One and a 20% chance for a random encounter occurring on Levels Two and Three every half-hour. If one occurs, the creature encountered depends on the adventurers' current location. A random encounter on Level One is always 1d4 hill giant guards (see Level Two, Area 2 for details). Encounters on Levels Two and Three are determined with a roll on the following table. A named NPC encountered and defeated during a random encounter will not be met again at its keyed location or in subsequent random encounters. Defeating unnamed, randomly encountered monsters does not affect the number of giants aboard the Ossuary.

Ossuary Levels Two and Three Random Encounters

1d10	Encounter
1-5	1d4 hill giant guards (as Level Two, Area 2)
6-7	1d3 cloud giants (per Fifth Edition)
8	Xurgal (see Level Two, Area 14)
9	Jezsyl (see Level Two, Area 16)
10	Tathhylia and feathered snake (see Level Three, Area 2)

Level One—Lower Level

Formed from the stony top of a mountain, the lower level of the Ossuary houses chambers for the creation of the zombie "bombs" the Stormbreakers use against humanity, the holdfast's weird engine, and living quarters. Prudent intruders will begin their infiltration of the Ossuary by sneaking in through the barred cavern in the rocky base of the fortress rather than via a direct assault against the fortresses' front doors.

I. Bomb Bay

A large cavern pierces the side of the rocky mass that serves as the base of the floating bone citadel. A massive row of bars with a closed double gate seals the cavern mouth from intruders. Beyond the great steel barricade, you can see burning torches that illuminate an apparently empty area.

The giants lead their animated dead to this area when approaching a new target, then open the gates and command the giant zombies to step out and plunge to the ground. When not preparing to bomb a target, the gates are closed and locked to keep aerial pests and intruders out.

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The gate is locked by a tremendous padlock, but unfortunately for the giants, the size of the lock makes it easier to pick by man-sized or smaller creatures (a successful DC 12 Dex check springs the lock). Also, while the bars are spaced far enough apart to keep out human-sized or larger intruders, Small creatures can squeeze through with a successful DC 15 Dex (Acrobatics) check.

The bomb bay cavern is empty when not in use. It contains only six burning torches that light the large space and the faint smell of rotting flesh. A single door stands in the north wall.

2. Sanguine Terror

A heaving mass of partially coagulated flesh writhes in what appears to be a curved tunnel. The gelid heap struggles to rise, assuming a vaguely humanoid appearance. It slouches toward you.

The creature is the result of an experiment by Bregucar, who wanted to see if the coagulated blood of corpses could be chemically granted life and form, and thus utilized in the giants' campaign. The experiment was a success, giving birth to a unique monster, an abomination fashioned from blood: the sanguine terror. It is currently contained in this circular room to serve as a security measure protecting the Necrolofter (Area 3), but the giant necromancers plan to put it to evil use in the near future. Bregucar has a modicum of control over the sanguine terror and it responds to his commands, allowing the giants to access Area 3 when necessary.

The room surrounds the necrolofter chamber. This area contains nothing but the sanguine terror and a few discarded bones of hill giant servants fed to the creature to keep it appeased.

(Sanguine Terror: AC 8, 75 hps; +6 to hit, 1d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or take 2d6 poison damage)

3. The Necrolofter

The door to this room is locked. Bregucar (see Area 7) has the key.

This rough-hewn cavern is dominated by a sizeable piece of odd statuary. Fashioned from dark marble with striations of red throughout the stone, the statue depicts a figure that appears angelic at first glance. Large, feathered wings stretch from the robed figure's back. Its face is hidden by a shadowy cowl. The statue emerges from a large piece of rectangular stone, seemingly carved from the block. Haze hangs about the statue, making it difficult to pick out further details. What appear to be bones and clothing lie scattered about the area.

This statue is in truth a portion of a titan's gravestone plundered from an ancient cemetery. The headstone was magically altered to serve as a focus for necromantic power to be harnessed to levitate and drive the Ossuary. This mystical engine is known as the Necrolofter.

The Necrolofter draws its power from living souls fed to the hungry spirits surrounding the device. These indistinct souls are the haze encompassing the device. The Stormbreakers hurl a captured prisoner or poorly-performing servant in here once a week to keep the necromantic artifact energized. The inside of the door leading to this room bears numerous scratches and bloodstains as the "fuel" helplessly beat on it in an attempt to escape.

Creatures: Four hungry spirits are tied to the Necrolofter. They drain hit points from the victims forced into this room, channeling the siphoned

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life into the device. The power of the Necrolofter keeps them contained within the confines of this room, ever-hungry and angry. These hungry spirits are identical to wights, but they always make one claw attack (identical to the wight's longsword attack) and one life drain attack.

(Hungry Spirits/Wights: AC 14, 45 hps; +4 to hit, 1d8 + 2 slashing damage AND +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 necrotic damage and the target must make a successful DC 13 Con saving throw or its maximum number of hit points is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage)

If the spirits are destroyed, the Necrolofter cannot be refueled without removing the headstone and engaging in a new, prolonged ritual to repair the magical engine. Such a process takes at least two weeks to perform. Without the hungry spirits feeding the engine power, it slowly runs down. After seven days, the Ossuary drifts down from the sky, coming to rest wherever it is currently located. The descent is gradual (a safety measure inherent to the Necrolofter) so no damage is suffered by the Ossuary or its passengers.

Characters wishing to damage or destroy the device must first overcome the hungry spirits. Once the spirits are gone, the Necrolofter can be attacked directly. While the spirits exist, damage done to the Necrolofter is automatically repaired as the spirits shunt necrotic energy into the device. The engine has an AC of 6 and 400 hit points. It automatically fails saving throws. If reduced to 200 or fewer hit points, safety protocols kick in and the Ossuary begins descending at a rate of 40 feet per round, reaching the ground after 10 rounds. If the Necrolofter is reduced to zero hit points before the Ossuary reaches the ground, the entire structure crashes to the ground catastrophically. All aboard must make a DC 20 Con check or be killed in the crash as bones, rock, and rubble collapse atop them. Those that make the save suffer 10d10 points of bludgeoning damage instead.

Any direct attack on the Necrolofter (not the hungry spirits) is detected by the pilot, Morgosun, in Level Three, Area 3. He feels the disturbance in the Ossuary's energy field and alerts his fellow giants. Three cloud giants and six hill giants (assuming all the giants on the upper level haven't been slain) are immediately dispatched to investigate, arriving 1d4 + 4 rounds later. Unsurprisingly, they are displeased with intruders attempting to crash the Ossuary, and they counterattack with brutal force.

(Cloud Giant: AC 14, 200 hps; +12 to hit x2, 3d8 + 8 piercing damage [morningstar] or +12 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 8 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock] or innate spellcasting: *detect magic, fog cloud, light, feather fall, fly, misty step, telekinesis, control weather, gaseous form*)

(Hill Giant: AC 13, 105 hps; +8 to hit x2, 3d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock])

4. Hill Giant Servants' Quarters

Any hero with passive Perception 11 or better automatically hears the sound of physical scuffling and deep, bass laughter coming from behind this door.

Large beds and crude furnishings fill this room. Rugs of animal pelts line the floor and great hogshead barrels stand against one wall, a rack of tankards and drinking horns above it. The smell of body odor and stinky feet fills the air with a foul miasma.

The Stormbreakers subdued and conscripted a tribe of hill giants to serve as underlings and cannon fodder. The tribe is bunked on the lower level of the Ossuary, where they can pursue their rough entertainments without disturbing their masters.

Creatures: If the Ossuary isn't in a state of alarm, there are six hill giants present in this room, relaxing with dark ale drawn from the hogsheads and physical roughhousing.

(Hill Giant: AC 13, 105 hps; +8 to hit x2, 3d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock])

The giants respond poorly to being interrupted during their rest and relaxation, but quickly decide beating the characters to death with their greatclubs provides ample entertainment. Two of the hill giants, a little deeper in their cups than their friends, grab barrels from the row of six lining the wall and hurl them (as rocks) at the party.

The room contains a dozen beds, six footlockers, and six open wardrobes. The wardrobes contain spare boots and crude shoes, dirty tunics, and fur vests. The footlockers hold a variety of dirty clothes and other items. Treat each footlocker as a giant's bag, rolling randomly to determine the unusual contents of the container.

The six barrels hold a dark, rich ale of vastly superior quality than what the hill giants are used to (thus they don't mind their servitude so much). Each barrel holds 54 gallons of ale. The brew is worth 4 sp per gallon (21.6 gp per barrel). Thrown barrels break on impact and their contents are lost.

5. Stairwell

An open area beside the corridor form a broad, rocky alcove here. The alcove holds a large spiral staircase carved from the native stone and winding upward clockwise through a hole in the ceiling. A single torch burns in a sconce at the base of the stairs.

The stairs measure 15 feet wide and rise 40 feet to connect with the upper level of the Ossuary at Level Two, Area 8.

If combat occurs on the staircase, creatures battling from the upper position have tactical advantage on attacks against lower opponents.

6. Storage

This chamber is roughly-hewn from the surrounding rock and is densely packed with giant spools of rope and forged chain, crates and barrels, and other assorted containers. The smell of grease, oil, and other pungent scents mix together to tinge the air with a potpourri of mundane, household odors.

This chamber is an unassuming storage area holding various everyday supplies used in the operation and maintenance of the Ossuary. Among the goods here are 2,000 feet of hemp rope, 500 feet of chain, ten barrels of goose grease, assorted mops and brooms, bales of straw for bed ticking, 20 five-gallon kegs of lamp oil, sacks of lye, bags of sand, bolts of canvas, and other household goods. The contents of the room are flammable, but a set blaze will not spread beyond this room.

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7. Animatorium

Shelves bearing jars, retorts, beakers, and other oddly-shaped vessels of glass and ceramic line the walls of this room. A titanic stone slab occupies the center of the space, and the ghoulish corpse of an ice-blue giant sprawls on the tabletop. Crouched over him with long needles and thread are a pair of giants dressed in tattered black robes and high, pointed hoods. A second giant corpse, this one with rotting skin colored such a deep red that it's almost black, stands upright and unmoving in the corner.

The two robed giants are Bregucar and his apprentice, Chandylbör, cloud giant necromancers and scholars of the funeral arts. It is their duty to produce the giant zombie "bombs." They are preparing another specimen now.

The corpse on the slab is not yet animated, but the fire giant zombie in the corner is. The animated fire giant is a new prototype the necromancers designed to increase the destruction of their bombardment campaign. Before animation, the fire giant corpse was cut open and its body was stuffed with containers of alchemist's fire. The intent is to create a zombie that explodes into flames upon impact, spreading fire as it shambles through a settlement. By using a fire giant corpse, the necromancers hope to prolong its "lifespan" and increase the destruction it causes.

Bregucar is a standard cloud giant with the spellcasting ability of an 8th-level wizard. His arcane tradition is necromancy. His attack bonus with spells is +6, and saving throws against his spells are DC 14. Bregucar prepares the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): *light, chill touch, ray of frost, shocking grasp*
1st level (x4): *detect magic, cause fear, false life, magic missile*
2nd level (x3): *ray of enfeeblement, Melf's acid arrow*
3rd level (x3): *animate dead, protection from energy, sleet storm*
4th level (x2): *Evard's black tentacles, ice storm*

Bregucar carries a *potion of healing*; a dagger; a key ring with keys to the gate in Area 1, the doors to Areas 3 and 10, and the trunk in Area 10; and a pouch containing 76 gp, a moonstone (10 gp value), and a silver ring (25 gp).

Chandylbör is a standard cloud giant with the spellcasting ability of a 5th-level wizard. His arcane tradition is necromancy. His attack bonus with spells is +6, and saving throws against his spells are DC 14. Chandylbör prepares the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): *light, chill touch, ray of frost, shocking grasp*
1st level (x4): *cause fear, false life, magic missile*
2nd level (x3): *hold person, Melf's acid arrow, ray of enfeeblement*
3rd level (x2): *animate dead, slow*

Chandylbör carries a dagger; keys to the trunk and spellbook in Area 9; and a pouch containing 18 sp, 67 gp, and a well-worn and ancient gold coin (1 gp face value, but worth up to 100 gp to collectors because of its antiquity).

(Cloud Giant: AC 14, 200 hps; +12 to hit x2, 3d8 + 8 piercing damage [morningstar] or +12 to hit, range 60/240,
4d10 + 8 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock] or innate
spellcasting: detect magic, fog cloud, light, feather fall,
fly, misty step, telekinesis, control weather, gaseous form)

The fire giant zombie has stats identical to the stone giant zombie (in the New Monsters appendix) but with the addition of resistance to fire damage and the trait "Filled with Alchemist's Fire."

(Fire Giant Zombie: AC 8, 29 hps; +8 to hit, 2d8 + 6
bludgeoning damage)

Filled with Alchemist's Fire: An attack that causes slashing or piercing damage to the fire giant zombie also triggers a burst of flame from the

zombie as one of the alchemist's fire containers inside it spills its contents from the wound. If the damage came from a melee attack, the attacker must make a successful DC 14 Dex saving throw or take 1d4 fire damage at the start of each of its turns, until it uses an action to extinguish the flames with a successful DC 10 Dex (Acrobatics) check. If the damage came from a ranged attack, the alchemist's fire splashes onto one character who is adjacent to the fire giant zombie and on the same side of it as the ranged attacker; in this case, the saving throw to avoid the splash has a DC of 10 instead of 14.

The containers on the shelves hold various chemicals and reagents used to preserve dead flesh or retard its decay. They have no intrinsic value but can be treated as a spell components pouch for necromantic spells that don't require monetary components.

8. Morgue

The stink of rotting meat is overpowering in this large space. Piled in haphazard fashion are at least a dozen decaying corpses of giants. The dead creatures range in size, indicating that these corpses are of varying types and ages. Clouds of black flies fill the air, and swarms of maggots writhe on the exposed flesh.

The stench is so strong that each character who enters the chamber must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or become nauseated (poisoned condition) for as long as they remain in the room and for 10 minutes after leaving.

There are 15 giant corpses here in total: six hill giants, four stone giants, three fire giants, and two frost giants. All are in a state of great decay and dressed in rotting funeral garments or winding shrouds. One of the fire giants still bears a piece of funereal goods on its body, overlooked in the grave robbers' haste: a beaten gold bracelet bearing three fire opals (500 gp value). Finding this piece of jewelry requires a search of the bodies that stirs up the colony of rot grubs in the dead.

(Rot Grubs: A character digging through rot-grub infested material must make a successful DC 12 Int (Nature) check or become infected by 1d6 rot grubs. Each rot grub inflicts 1 piercing damage at the start of the infected character's turn, until the rot grubs are killed or removed. During the first two rounds of infection, rot grubs can be killed with fire or cut out of the flesh; a torch inflicts 1d6 fire damage to the infected character and kills 1d4 rot grubs, while cutting inflicts 1d2 slashing damage to the character and kills one rot grub. After the end of the second round of infection, the rot grubs have burrowed too deep for these simple measures to work, and they can only be killed with a lesser restoration spell.

9. Chandylbör's Quarters

A giant bed dominates this room, turning the otherwise spacious area into a cramped living quarters. A writing table and chest clutter one corner of the room, and a high shelf littered with jars, boxes, and other containers hangs high overhead on the north wall.

These are the quarters of Chandylbör, the apprentice cloud giant necromancer. His room is not nearly as spacious as his master's but, like Bregucar, he spends much of his time in the animation area preparing new undead.

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The shelf is affixed directly to the wall by bolts, hanging 15 feet above the floor. Characters wishing to inspect its contents must climb the rough wall with a successful DC 15 Str (Athletics) check or utilize magic to ascend.

The shelves contain:

- six jars of ashes, bone fragments, teeth, and fingernail pairings;
- a glass beaker holding a clear liquid (concentrated acid equal to four vials of the substance);
- a box containing weathered and sweat-stained giant-sized tarot cards (no special properties, but worth 100 gp as a curiosity);
- an ogre skull turned into a candle holder. Inside the wax-sealed cranium is a scroll of *invisibility* that Chandylbor keeps as an escape plan should things ever fare poorly for him.

The writing table holds several jars of ink, a dozen large quills stored in a cup, and a box with a dozen sheets of foolscap.

The trunk is locked and trapped. Chandylbor's key safely unlocks it, but picking the trunk triggers the trap: a spray of acid that strikes all targets in a 15-foot cone in front of the trunk. Those caught in the cone must make a successful DC 20 Dex saving throw or suffer 3d6 acid damage.

The trunk holds a spare pair of low, soft boots, three sets of black robes with peaked cowls, a jar of hair pomade, a chased silver flask (50 gp value) holding three doses (or one giant-sized dose) of *potion of flying*, a leather sack with 378 sp and 297 gp, and a dagger in a brass sheath. Everything is giant-sized. It also holds Chandylbor's spellbook. A lock keeps the book sealed and requires either a successful DC 20 Dex check to pick or the key from Chandylbor's pouch (see Area 7). The spellbook contains all of Chandylbor's prepared spells plus *identify*, *darkness*, and *protection from energy*.

10. Bregucar's Quarters

The door to this room is locked. Bregucar (see Area 7) has the key.

A simple bedchamber carved from the surrounding rock, this room contains a large bed, a gigantic table, solid wooden wardrobe, and a massive iron trunk. A carpet of ebon hue and decorated with a pattern of white skulls covers the stone floor.

This room is Bregucar's chamber, but his duties give him little time to rest. The wardrobe contains a half-dozen dark, tattered robes with high pointed cowls and two pairs of giant-sized, high, soft boots. The table holds an assortment of writing implements, a score of giant sheets of paper measuring 10 feet square, a mighty tome, and a trio of long scroll tubes. The tome is Bregucar's spell book, and it is sealed with an *arcane lock* spell. The spellbook contains all of Bregucar's prepared spells (see Area 7 above) as well as *alarm*, *arcane lock*, *web*, and *dispel magic*. The scroll tubes contain a blank scroll waiting to be inscribed, a scroll of *protection from undead*, and a scroll of *animate dead*.

The trunk's lid is inscribed with runes, but these are difficult to see unless a character climbs atop the large chest. The trunk is enchanted; a *detect magic* spell reveals both an aura of conjuration and necromancy about the box. It is locked and requires Bregucar's key to open. However, if the lock is picked or even if the key is used and the opener does not press down on a certain rune on the trunk's lid (noticing the rune can be depressed requires an inspection of the writing and a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check), a trap is sprung. Incorrectly opening the trunk causes a ghost to coalesce around the trunk and attack. The ghost prefers to possess a victim and cause it to walk off the ledge in Area 1 (if the gate is unlocked). The ghost relinquishes control as the victim steps off the ledge, laughing hideously as the again-conscious subject plunges to its doom. The ghost then moves on to possess another victim.

The trunk contains the following treasures:

- A satin pouch (10 gp value) containing three garnets (50 gp value each), five sapphires (100 gp value each), and a blue diamond (500 gp value);

value);

- A giant-sized ivory comb fashioned from a mammoth tusk (200 gp value);

- A leather sack containing 756 gp;

- A battered book. This text is a *manual of golem construction*.

The carpet is worn and dirty but still worth 50 gp, if characters can find a way to cart it away.

Level Two—Main Level

This “ground level” of the Ossuary contains living quarters, food preparation and dining areas, storage, and an evil chapel, all of which cater to the Stormbreakers’ day-to-day activities. Random encounters are more likely to occur on this level than on the lower one, and result in a more varied array of occupants moving about the fortress (see “Random Encounters,” above).

I. Courtyard

A rocky courtyard lies exposed to the sky before the great bone building. The courtyard is encircled by a 40-foot-high rampart of fused bone on three sides and by the building itself on the fourth side. A pair of skeletal dragons patrol the courtyard and scour the sky with glowing eyes. A set of huge, double doors leads out of the courtyard and into the bony structure.

The doors are locked and of great size. Even unlocked, a DC 12 Str check is required to push them open.

Creatures: Two skeletal dragons defend the courtyard from intruders. These specimens are improved versions of the cannon fodder set loose on the village. Each has been modified by the necromancer giant to possess a breath weapon of razor-sharp bone shards with which to decimate foes. Use the stat block in the New Monsters appendix but with the Bone Shard Breath trait added.

(Skeletal Red Dragon: AC 12, 75 hps; +6 to hit x2, 2d8 + 6 slashing damage AND +8 to hit, 3d10 + 6 piercing damage, or the skeletal dragon can use its bone shard breath)

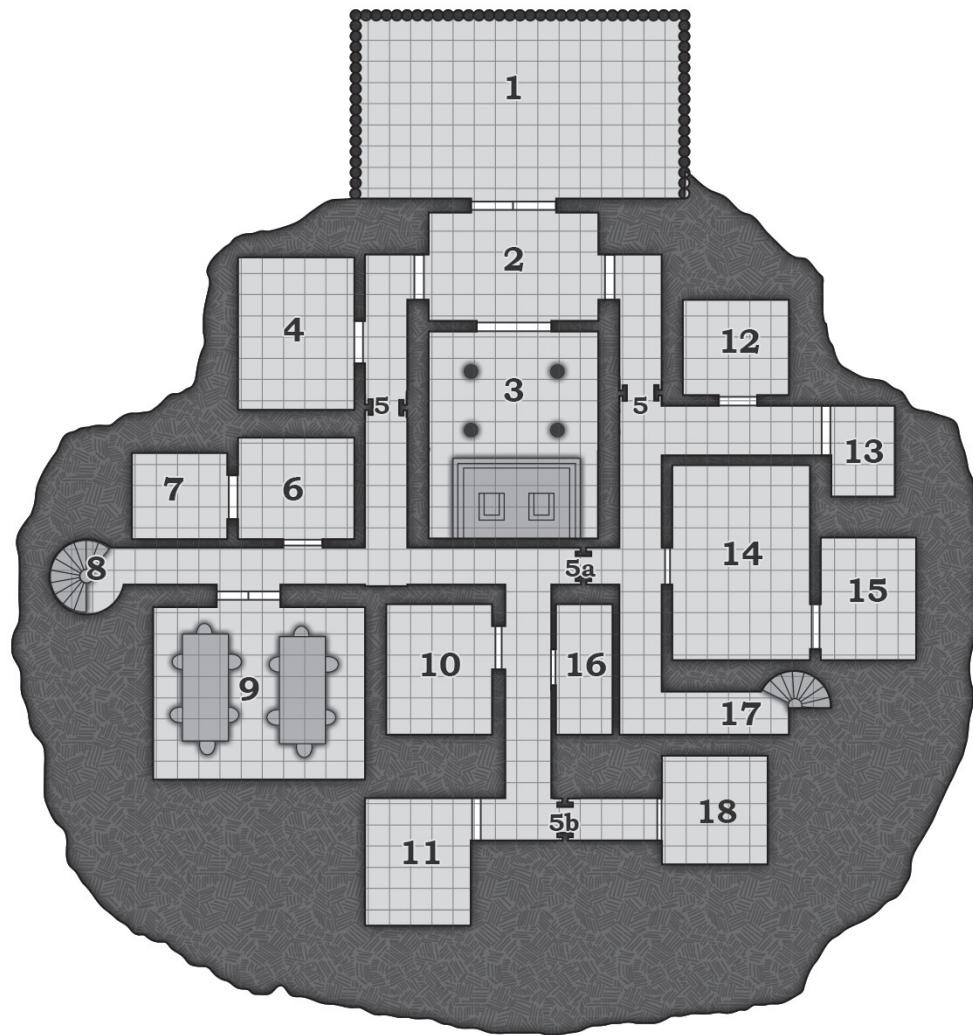
Bone Shard Breath (Recharge 5, 6): The dragon exhales jagged, splintered bones in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area takes 4d6 + 2 slashing damage, or half damage with a successful DC 13 Dex saving throw.

2. Foyer

Beyond the doors lies an entry hall fashioned from polished and interlaced bones of myriad sizes. Hanging from the east and west walls are unusual decorations. The west wall bears a massive plaque fashioned from bones and shaped into the semblance of a giant skull. A skeletal serpent is intertwined through the skull's eye sockets and nasal cavity. The east wall holds a gigantic shield decorated with the symbol of a fist grasping a turbulent storm cloud. There are three exits from this room: single doors in the east and west walls, and a pair of double doors in the south wall.

Creatures: There are three hill giant guards stationed here, charged

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The Ossuary Level 2

1 square - 10 feet



with defending the Ossuary and alerting its inhabitants in case of attack. If the heroes engage in battle with the skeletal dragons in the courtyard, these guards automatically hear the battle and sound an alarm. The alarm is sounded by one of the giants banging on the great shield hanging on the wall, putting the inhabitants on alert (see Alarm under "General Ossuary Features" above). They then prepare to resist invaders.

If the party avoids battle with the courtyard dragons or approaches this area from within the Ossuary, the giants may be surprised. If taken unaware, one of their number attempts to sound the alarm on the first round of combat that the guards are able to react. Each of these giants also carries a skull bombard. These weapons are the skulls of large creatures (ogres are preferred) filled with clay containers of alchemist fire and weighted with lead. These hill giants use their skull bombards as ammo in their ranged attacks. On a successful hit, the skull bombard does $3d10 + 5$ bludgeoning damage (a stronger giant could do more). In addition, the skull bursts open when it hits a solid object and splashes alchemist's fire in a 5-foot radius area around the point of impact. Targets caught in the area of effect are set afire and take $1d4$ fire damage at the start of each of their turns until they spend an action making a successful DC 10 Dex check to put out the flames.

The giants have no coinage, but the squad leader wears a gold chain with a polished bone medallion (100 gp value) as a mark of his position.

The skull-headed plaque is the symbol of Drahltuz, the giants' god of fear and death, and patron of the Stormbreaker Clan. The fist-and-cloud plaque is the clan heraldry of the Stormbreakers. Neither item has any special property or value.

Hill Giant: AC 13, 105 hps; +8 to hit x2, $3d8 + 5$ bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, $3d10 + 5$ bludgeoning damage plus alchemist's fire [skull bombard]

3. Audience Hall

Beyond the doors is a vast hall. Four skeletal column support a 40-foot-high cathedral ceiling. A raised dais stands against the far wall, a pair of bony thrones sized for giants resting atop it. Illumination comes from a half-dozen burning brands set in sconces made from skeletal hands. The hall is otherwise empty.

Creatures: The pillars are more than what they appear to be. Hidden in the skeletal patterns that decorate the columns are four necromantic constructs known as bone guardians. These constructs resemble oversized skeletons with three arms and two skull heads. The guardians respond to Oblugrim's commands, serving to defend him and his consort when court is in session and to protect the hall from intruders when Stormbreakers are not present. The bone guardians step from the columns to attack any unauthorized creature (e.g., the characters) entering this room.

Bone Guardian: AC 15, 45 hps; +6 to hit x2, $1d6 + 3$ piercing damage AND +6 to hit x2, $1d8 + 3$ slashing damage)

The bone thrones are used when Oblugrim and his consort, Tathhylia, hold court for the clan. Each contains a secret compartment in the left armrest. Locating the hidden cavity requires a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check. Each compartment holds two glossy black vials, one with a white stopper and the other with a green stopper. The vials with

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white stoppers are *potions of healing*, while those with green stoppers are *potions of mind reading*.

4. Lounge

A plush rug of vibrant, sky blue covers the bone floor of this brightly lit room. A large settee and three massive upholstered chairs are arranged around a low, dark-stained wooden table. Grand portraiture depicting picturesque landscapes and mountainscapes adorn the walls. Oversized candles mounted on mirror-backed holders hanging from the walls illuminate the room.

Creatures: Unless an alarm has been sounded, the lounge is occupied by the three cloud giant youths, Tanimyz, Wylkun, and Sylzak. They enjoy the freedom and space of the lounge compared to their own cramped quarters. Being young, they have stats identical to fire giants, but without fire immunity and with the cloud giant's fog cloud trait. Sylzak also has a giant-sized longbow and 40 arrows.

(Tanimyz, Wylkun, and Sylzak: AC 18, 162 hps; +11 to hit x2, 6d6 + 7 slashing damage [bastard sword] or +11 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 7 bludgeoning damage [thrown object])

Tanimyz has a gold earring (100 gp value), 57 gp, and a rough opal (250 gp value).

Wylkun has a gold-and-silver torc (250 gp value), 78 gp in coins, and a charm bracelet with pieces of polished and shaped petrified wood hanging from it (150 gp value).

Sylzak has a silver circlet (200 gp value), matching gold and sapphire earrings (500 gp value), and 48 gp.

There are 12 candles and candle holders on the walls between the pictures. Six pictures hang here, each done with accomplished skill. They are worth 250 gp each, but they measure 10 feet long, 5 feet high, and weigh 50 lbs. each.

5. Decorative Archway

A decorative archway bisects the corridor at this location. Like the rest of the fortress, the archway is constructed of bones and assembled to depict a humanoid skull with a greatly exaggerated mouth. The skull's open mouth serves as the archway, requiring walkers to enter through the mouth to continue down the corridor. The long skeleton of a great serpent has been threaded through the skull archway's eye sockets to hang pendulously down over the corridor.

There are four of these archways on the upper level of the Ossuary. Two are simply decorative, while the other two are traps intended to slay or impede invaders lacking knowledge of the proper passcode.

Archway 5A

Failing to speak the word "gulgrotha" (the Giant word for boneyard) before entering the archway causes a pair of humungous skeletal arms to emerge from the surrounding walls of the corridor and attack the intruder.

Skeletal Arm Trap: Can be detected with a successful DC 20 Int (Investigation) check, and disarmed with thief's tools and a successful DC 20 Dex check. If triggered, two Large skeletal arms emerge from the walls and attack each round. One arm grapples and the other arm pummels; the

pummeling arm always targets a creature that is grappled by the other arm, if possible. Both arms are AC 8, and they have 50 hit points each. They are immune to piercing damage but vulnerable to bludgeoning damage. They automatically fail saving throws.

Pummeling Arm: +5 to hit (reach 20 ft.; one creature). Hit: 2d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage. A creature grappled by the grappling arm is hit automatically by this attack.

Grappling Arm: +6 Str check vs. target's Str (Athletics) or Dex (Acrobatics) check (reach 20 ft.; one creature). Success: target is grappled.

Archway 5B

Failing to speak the word "tromuldah" (the Giant word for decay) before entering the archway causes the skeletal snake to animate and strike at intruders.

Skeletal Snake Trap: Can be detected with a successful DC 20 Int (Investigation) and disarmed with thief's tools a successful DC 20 Dex check. If triggered, a skeletal snake animates and attacks. The animated snake is AC 11 and has 60 hit points. It is vulnerable to bludgeoning damage and automatically fails saving throws.

Skeletal Snake Bite: +8 to hit (reach 20 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d10 + 8 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or take 2d6 poison damage.

6. Kitchen

The fixtures and furnishings of this sizeable kitchen were designed for the use of large beings. Bubbling pots of stew rest atop the hot oven. A great tabletop is covered with diced vegetables and sliced meat awaiting their turn on the stove.

Creatures: A pair of hill giant servants toil here preparing supper. They are present even if a state of alert is in progress, as they don't wish to anger their larger masters by delaying a meal. The stew is rich and tasty, and in sufficient quantity to feed up to eight giant appetites. The other prepared ingredients are normal and without interest or value.

(Hill Giants: AC 13, 105 hps; +8 to hit x2, 3d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage [thrown pot])

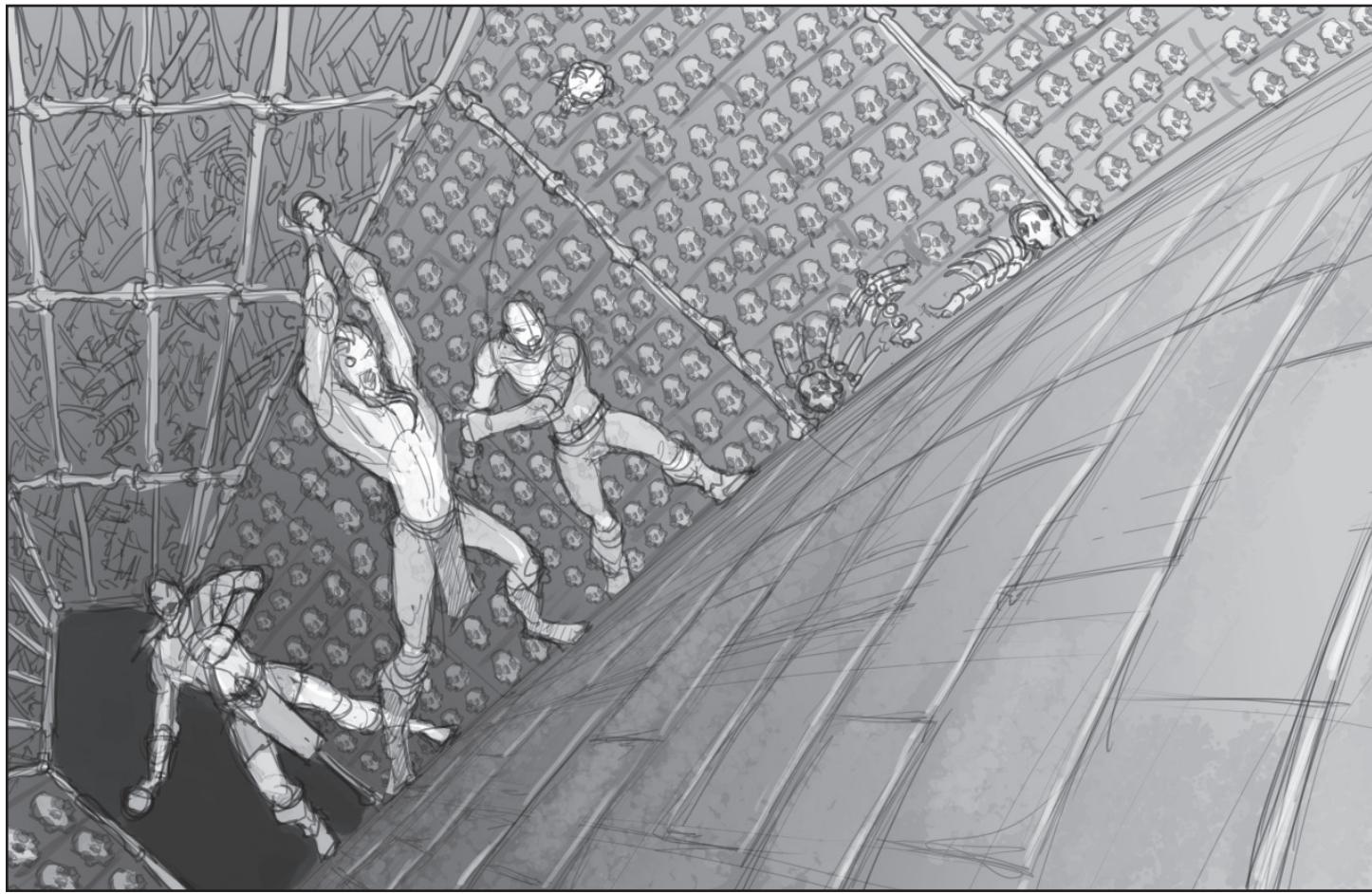
7. Pantry

Foodstuffs, both fresh and preserved, fill this cramped room. Smoked sausages of unusual size hang from hooks in the ceiling. Jars of pickled fruits and vegetables line the shelves. Crates of potatoes, cabbages, and turnips sit beside sacks of flour and meal. Clusters of garlic, onions, and dried peppers add their own aromas to the melody of smells that perfumes the room.

Most of the ingredients for the meals prepared in Area 6 come from here. Given the palettes of the diners, the array of viands is rather surprising and consists of quality goods. The pantry contains enough food to feed the equivalent of 50 men for one month.

Mixed in among the normal foodstuff is a small coffer containing

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ten vials of spices, including cinnamon, cloves, cardamom, vanilla, and saffron. The coffer's contents are worth 200 gp to gourmands or spice traders. Finding the coffer requires a specific search of the shelves and a DC 15 Wis (Perception) check because of its small size.

8. Stairwell

The floor of this chamber is rough stone as opposed to the intertwined bone that makes up the walls and ceiling. An open spiral staircase descends through the floor, vanishing as it curves out of sight into the gloom.

The stairs terminate at Level One, Area 5 on the lower level.

9. Giant Dining Hall

Two titanic tables and many chairs occupy this room, providing seating for up to twelve giant humanoids. Each of the tables is covered with a woven tablecloth the size of a tapestry. The tables and chairs are carved with great skill from honey-colored wood. Six marble statues of exquisite fabrication, depicting nude male and female giants, are placed about the room in ascetically pleasing locales. A pair of humongous, open cabinets rest against the southeastern wall, and a door stands in the northeast corner of the room.

The statues are 15 feet tall and weight 1,000 lbs. each, but they are worth 2,000 gp each for their artistic merit.

The cabinets hold a collection of giant-sized plates and eating ware, all of excellent fabrication. The eating ware is mostly pewter, but there are two silver spoons and three silver forks (50 gp value each) mixed in amongst the utensils. Each utensil weighs 10 lbs.

The tablecloths are linen trimmed with silver and gold thread and weigh 100 lbs. apiece. Their manufacture makes them semi-valuable (25 gp each).

10. Tranimyz's, Wylkun's, and Sylzak's Quarters

A trio of large beds occupies much of the floor space of this chamber. The massive divans are piled high with coarse woolen blankets of drab color. Two chests, one tremendous and the other merely huge, stand in opposite corners of the room. A table bearing a great silver decanter and washing bowls rests between two of the beds.

This room is the sleeping chamber of the three youngest members of the Stormbreaker clan. The relatively cramped confines of the room means the three are seldom encountered here, usually occupying the lounge or dining hall instead.

The chests hold clothing for the three. The largest trunk contains masculine garments for the brothers Tranimyz and Wylkun, while the smaller chest holds feminine clothing for their cousin Sylzak. In addition

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to clothing, the large chest has two random giant's bag items and the small trunk has a single random object from the same table.

The decanter is worth 100 gp and the washing bowl has a 50 gp value.

II. Xurgal's Quarters

The walls of this room are lined with finely made weapons suited for giants. Bearded axes, long spears, greatswords, and a flanged mace hang in X-shaped patterns across the bone walls. A simple bed with an iron frame sits beside a closed wardrobe. The wardrobe bears a shield-shaped plaque across its doors. The floor is covered with woolly hides taken from the backs of unknown beasts.

This is the chamber of Xurgal, the Stormbreakers' master-at-arms, but he is seldom here; Xurgal spends most of his time in the company of Vyjelmot the Grim (see Area 14) discussing matters of death. He is here only if not encountered in the chapel and there is no alert underway (see Area 14 for stats).

The weapons are all high-quality arms fashioned by cloud giant smiths of great skill. There are two greatswords, three great axes, four long spears (treat as halberds), and a large mace. Each weapon is sized for Huge creatures, but man-sized creatures can wield them two-handed at tactical disadvantage.

The shield-shaped plaque is a metal plate covered in dents and gouges. It hangs positioned over the wardrobe's handles so that it must be removed to open the door. The underside of the plaque is lined with needle-sharp barbs coated with deadly toxin (10d6 poison damage; DC 20 Con saving throw negates). The barbs are easily noticed if the plaque back is examined before grabbing it. Once the barbs are noticed, they can be avoided easily. Anyone who grabs the plaque without caution is automatically jabbed by the barbs.

The wardrobe contains tunics, breeches, and boots. In addition, a spare suit of giant-sized chainmail hangs from a T-shaped post, and a gargantuan, fur-lined, silk dressing robe (300 gp value) is draped over an iron box. The box is locked but not trapped; it holds two giant-sized *potions of healing* (three doses each), a suede bag containing 10 amethysts (50 gp value) and 2 sapphires (100 gp value), and a decorative helmet inlaid with gold wire and pearls (500 gp value).

The floor is covered by three rugs made from wooly mammoth hide worth 250 gp each.

12. Armory

The door to this room is locked. Both Xurgal and Oblugrim have keys.

Racks of weapons and stands bearing suits of armor fill this room. Several large, square crates are piled along the eastern wall. The air smells like leather, steel, and oil.

This room contains 20 halberds, 15 greatclubs, and 10 suits of chain mail sized for large creatures. There are also ten crates, each of which contains two skull bombs packed in straw and wool batting.

13. Lavatory

An oversized privy is located beyond the door. Comprised of a single-seater with a mahogany seat lid and a marble washing basin, this lavatory appears designed not only for functionality but with a touch of class. A gleaming silver spigot protrudes from the wall above the marble basin and a large cut-glass decanter rests beside the sink. Plush, sky blue towels hang from a rack on the wall.

This privy is positioned over an open shaft that exits the bottom of the Ossuary and allows waste to fall freely to the land below. The shaft is 3 feet in diameter and has a very nasty iron grate at the bottom to prevent animals (and intruders) from entering the ship via the latrine shaft. The spigot draws water from a rainwater-collecting cistern located at the top of the keep (not detailed).

Several of the items here have value. The silver spigot is worth 100 gp if extracted from the wall (which subsequently causes a torrent of water to pour into the basin). The decanter is worth 200 gp, and the four hand towels are worth 15 gp each. The mahogany toilet seat could fetch 50 gp as a curio.

14. Chapel

The bones that form the walls, ceiling, and floor of this room are colored a glossy ebony, turning the boundaries of the chamber into a reflective, starless night. At the opposite end of the room is a circular depression filled with roiling mist. Rising from the mist, like an island in a stormy sea, is a column of white bones. These pale bones form a statue depicting a leering skull with a skeletal snake intertwined through its eye sockets and nasal cavity. A bowl of cloudy liquid rests beneath the statue's eyeless gaze.

This sanctum is dedicated to the worship of Drahltuz, the Giant god of fear and death, and the personal deity of the Stormbreaker clan. The statue rises 30 feet tall to scrape the ceiling and measures 15 feet in diameter.

The statue is surrounded by a circular moat that is 15 feet wide and 5 feet deep. Acrid, gray smoke from seven lit braziers placed along the moat's bottom fills the depression. A minor enchantment keeps the braziers burning and the smoke contained within the moat.

The idol is enchanted to produce an unholy aura that defends the worshippers of Drahltuz from specific magic. Any spell that requires an attack roll to affect a target is at tactical disadvantage when targeting Vyjelmot or Xurgal while they are within 30 feet of the statue. The cloud giants also have tactical advantage on saving throws against spells or other magical effects while in that radius. Vyjelmot's summoned specters do not gain these benefits.

The dark bones have been treated both magically and with natural dyes to produce their coloration and veneer, but they have no special powers or properties. The cloudy water in the bowl is magical and radiates both divination and necromancy auras. Pouring 4 oz. of the liquid into the mouth of a creature that's been dead no more than one week allows the corpse to be questioned as if it was under the effect of a *speak with dead* spell. The font holds enough liquid to question five corpses.

Creatures: The priest, Vyjelmot the Grim, is always present here. There is a 75% chance that Xurgal, the master-of-arms, is also here engaged in discussion with the cleric.

Vyjelmot the Grim is a standard cloud giant but also an 8th-level cleric. His attack bonus with spells is +6; saving throws against his spells are DC 14. Vyjelmot prepares the spells listed below. If attacked, his first action is to use his *bracers* to summon a pair of specters in defense of the chapel.

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, resistance, sacred flame*

1st level (x4): *cause fear, healing word, inflict wound, shield of faith*

2nd level (x3): *hold person, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (x3): *animate dead, dispel magic*

4th level (x2): *death ward, guardian of faith*

Gear: *Bracers of Specters* (see the "New Magic Items" appendix), unholy water sprinkler with 4 vials of unholy water, ivory and pearl unholy symbol (250 gp value), polished bone prayer beads (50 gp value), keys to the door to Area 15 and the coffer in Area 2-X.

Vyjelmot uses his bracers to summon the specters to assist in the defense of the chapel. He casts spells on subsequent rounds.

(Specter: AC 12, 22 hps; +4 to hit, 3d6 necrotic damage

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and the target must make a successful DC 10 Con saving throw or its maximum hit points are reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage)

Xurgal, if present, hurls his bombards before closing into melee range with intruders. Besides standard cloud giant stats, Xurgal has one alternate attack (Shield Bash), one additional trait (Improved Critical), and special gear.

Shield Bash: +5 to hit (reach 15 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 2d8 + 8 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Str saving throw or be knocked prone and stunned until the start of Xurgal's next turn.

Bonebreaking Critical: Xurgal scores critical hits on rolls of natural 18, 19, or 20. Damage from Xurgal's critical hit can only be restored with magical healing; it cannot be healed by taking a short or long rest.

Gear: +1 maul, shield +1, two skull bombards, *potion of healing*, gold bracers with chased platinum storm cloud engravings (300 gp value), belt of tanned leather worked with polished bloodstones (200 gp value), keys to Area 12 and to box in Area 11.

(Cloud Giant: AC 14, 200 hps; +12 to hit x2, 3d8 + 8 piercing damage [morningstar] or +12 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 8 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock] or innate spellcasting: *detect magic, fog cloud, light, feather fall, fly, misty step, telekinesis, control weather, gaseous form*)

15. Rectory

The door to this room is locked. Vyjelmot the Grim has the key.

This secluded room is spartanly furnished and holds little ornamentation. A bed consisting of an iron plate resting atop four large, metal-plated skulls occupies much of the space. A ghastly-looking iron maiden, its features stained brown with old blood, rests in the corner. A lectern fashioned from yellowed bones holds crumbling pages of smeared and stained parchment.

An open spiral staircase ascends to the ceiling, vanishing into a shaft leading upward.

The iron maiden has been converted to a wardrobe. It holds spare sets of vestments, sandals, and other personal objects. A locked coffer rests atop a high shelf inside the maiden's head. Fashioned from rusted iron, the coffer contains a mummified finger nearly as large as a human forearm. This is an unholy relic—the ring finger of one Drahltuz's first apostates. If handled by a nonfollower of the evil god, the person touching it becomes *cursed*. The curse manifests as rapid bodily decay similar to a supernatural leprosy. The victim suffers 3d6 points of necrotic damage and loses 1 point of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution every 24 hours. If reduced to zero hit points or if an ability score drops to zero, the victim dies. A *greater restoration* spell removes the curse.

There are 10 pages on the lectern, comprising a religious treatise penned centuries ago by a high priest of Drahltuz. A DC 20 Int (Religion) check identifies the god and rites mentioned in the writings. Additionally, a DC 20 Int (Arcana) check discerns veiled passages relating to the construction of the Necroloft (see Level One, Area 3). Although not detailed enough to be used to actually create a device, they do provide hints as to where to begin researching the process, at the GM's discretion. The final page of the treatise is actually a scroll of *speak with dead*.

The bed is horribly uncomfortable and has no special value or properties.

16. Jezsyl's Quarters

The delicate scent of jasmine incense wafts over you, flowing from the room beyond the door. Woven hangings depicting storm-wrecked mountaintops and whirlwind-torn forests decorate the walls, and the floor is covered with a light cloth carpet. A small table holds smoking incense sticks and a dark idol. A simple sleeping pallet covered by a thin blanket rests in one corner.

Creatures: If not encountered elsewhere, Jezsyl, a cloud giant monk, is found here meditating before the small table shrine. She swiftly responds to intruders, leaping to her bare feet and using her monkish skills to incapacitate as many of the characters as possible while shouting for assistance. There is a 75% chance the occupants of the chapel come to her aid (if they are still able) and a 50% chance that a trio of hill giant guards respond to her cries in 1d4 + 2 rounds.

Jezsyl has the stats of a standard cloud giant plus the additional traits listed below.

Improved Flurry of Blows: Jezsyl makes two extra unarmed attacks per round. A creature struck by one of these unarmed attacks is pushed 20 feet, or 10 feet with a successful DC 14 Str saving throw.

Stunning Strike: If Jezsyl scores a critical hit with an unarmed attack, the target must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or be stunned until the end of the target's next turn.

Gear: 2 kris fighting knives, sarong.

(Cloud Giant: AC 14, 200 hps; +12 to hit x2, 3d8 + 8 piercing damage [morningstar] or +12 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 8 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock] or innate spellcasting: *detect magic, fog cloud, light, feather fall, fly, misty step, telekinesis, control weather, gaseous form*)

The idol is a representation of Drahltuz, the giant's god of fear and death. It is depicted as a squat, obese creature with a face resembling a serpent's skull. It is carved from rare black marble and weights 100 lbs. (50 gp value). The incense is pleasant-smelling but has no special properties.

Beneath the sleeping pallet is a long, low wooden box containing a number of giantess-sized kimonos of simple manufacture and a spare pair of large kris fighting knives.

The four woven tapestries measure 15 feet long by 8 feet wide, and each weighs 150 lbs. They are skillfully made and worth 150 gp each.

17. Stairs to Upper Level

An open spiral staircase ascends to the ceiling, vanishing into a shaft leading upward.

These stairs lead 40 feet upward to Level Three, Area 1. The occupants of the Ossuary know to announce themselves before ascending. See the description of Level Three, Area 1 for the consequences of failing to do so.

If combat occurs on the staircase, creatures battling from the upper position have tactical advantage on attack rolls against lower opponents.

18. Treasury

The door to this room is locked, trapped, and alarmed. Bypassing the lock requires either the proper key (possessed by Oblugrim Stormbreaker

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in Level Three, Area 2) or a successful DC 25 Dex check with thief's tools. A DC 20 Int (Investigation) check notices the trap: a spring lever that will break a pair of small vials, one containing a clear liquid and the other containing a green liquid. The trap is triggered by any attempt to open the lock without the proper key, unless the trap is first disarmed with thief's tools and a successful DC 20 Dex check. If the trap is sprung and the vials are broken, their contents mix to create a flesh-devouring gas that fills a 20-foot-square space in front of the door. All creatures in the gas area can attempt a DC 20 Dex saving throw. Success indicates the character quickly jumps clear of the gas cloud. Those who fail the saving throw get a lungful of gas; they take 3d8 + 3 acid damage at the start of each of their turns until they use an action to make a successful DC 20 Con saving throw against acid. A successful save stops further damage, as does any *cure* spell or other healing magic.

Large iron chests stand along the walls of this room besides statuary, rolled cloth, and raw timber. Despite the contents, the room is largely empty, holding but a small portion of what it could contain.

The Stormbreakers planned to fill this treasury with loot plundered during their campaign, but so far their targets have been small agricultural villages possessing little that the giants desire. The contents of this chamber were won from early conflicts with the hill giants and other opponents in the mountains during the Ossuary's shake-down flight.

There are six iron chests here, all unlocked. Four are empty; the other two each hold 100 lbs. of unrefined gold ore (1,000 gp value).

The rolled cloth is actually two woven wool tapestries worth 100 gp each. There are three carved stone statues depicting large and grotesque humanoid faces weighing 500 lbs. each. These idols are ancient and weathered, but they're worth 300 gp apiece to collectors, historians, or sages (they might hold clues to lost mysteries, at the GM's choosing). The piled timber is all rare hardwood. The lumber weighs 1,000 lbs. and is worth 500 gp.

Level Three—Upper Level

This small level contains two important rooms: the quarters of the Stormbreaker leader and his consort, and the Ossuary's bridge. Adventurers seeking to end the cloud giant threat to the region will likely find this level to be the site of the final battle.

I. Guard Post

At the top of the winding stairs is a simple space containing a table, three large chairs, and a hanging shield dangling from a cross brace on a wooden stand. A barrel stands near the staircase, and a large candle burns on the tabletop.

Creatures: A pair of hill giant guards are always stationed here, charged with defending this level. Standard protocol is for any occupant of the Ossuary to call out his or her name before climbing the staircase. If the guards detect creatures ascending that do not announce themselves, one of the guards pours the barrel of oil down the stairwell while the second stands by, preparing to hurl a skull bombard filled with alchemist's fire into the stairwell on the following round.

The barrel holds sufficient oil to coat the uppermost 30 feet of the stairwell, making the steps both slippery and flammable. A creature wishing to climb the slick stairs must make a successful DC 10 Dex check to avoid slipping and falling down the stairs (suffering 2d6 bludgeoning

damage in the fall). Any individual on the oil-coated stairs when they are set alight suffers 10 points of fire damage every time they begin their turn in the burning oil, for up to six rounds.

After setting the stairs alight, one of the guards pounds the shield alarm gong, alerting the giants in Area 2 and the guards in Area 3 that intruders are on their way.

(Hill Giant: AC 13, 105 hps; +8 to hit x2, 3d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage plus alchemist's fire [skull bombard])

2. Oblugrim's and Tathhylia's Quarters

This opulent chamber features a carved bedstead of rare wood situated on a plush carpet. Skillful portraiture and tapestries hang from the walls, and a large fireplace burns brightly in the bone wall. A table covered with jars and boxes stands before a large oval mirror on the north wall. A 15-foot-tall, serpentine-shaped post with a crossbar stands in the southwest corner of the room. The delicate scent of mountain flowers hangs in the air.

This chamber is home to the Stormbreaker patriarch, Oblugrim, and his consort Tathhylia, as well as their pet. All three are found here if not already encountered randomly elsewhere and there is no alarm underway. Their feathered snake pet usually rests on its post, entwined around the crossbar.

Oblugrim uses standard cloud giant stats but with an altered Multiattack trait and an additional Shield Bash attack.

Multiattack: Oblugrim attacks twice with his greatsword and once with his shield bash ability.

Shield Bash: +5 to hit (reach 15 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 2d8 + 8 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 15 Str saving throw or be knocked prone and stunned until the start of Oblugrim's next turn.

Gear: +1 frost brand greatsword, +2 shield, 2 skull bombs, 2 potions of healing, keys to armory (Level Two, Area 12) and treasury (Level Two, Area 18)

Tathhylia uses standard cloud giant stats but she is also a 9th-level wizard. Her attack bonus with spells is +8; saving throws against her spells are DC 16. Tathhylia prepares the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): *light, message, ray of frost, shocking grasp*
1st level (x4): *burning hands, gust of wind, mage armor, magic missile*
2nd level (x3): *scorching ray, sound burst, web*
3rd level (x3): *dispel magic, fly, lightning bolt*
4th level (x3): *confusion, ice storm*
5th level (x1): *cone of cold*

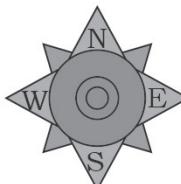
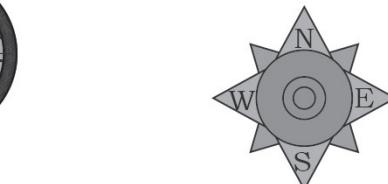
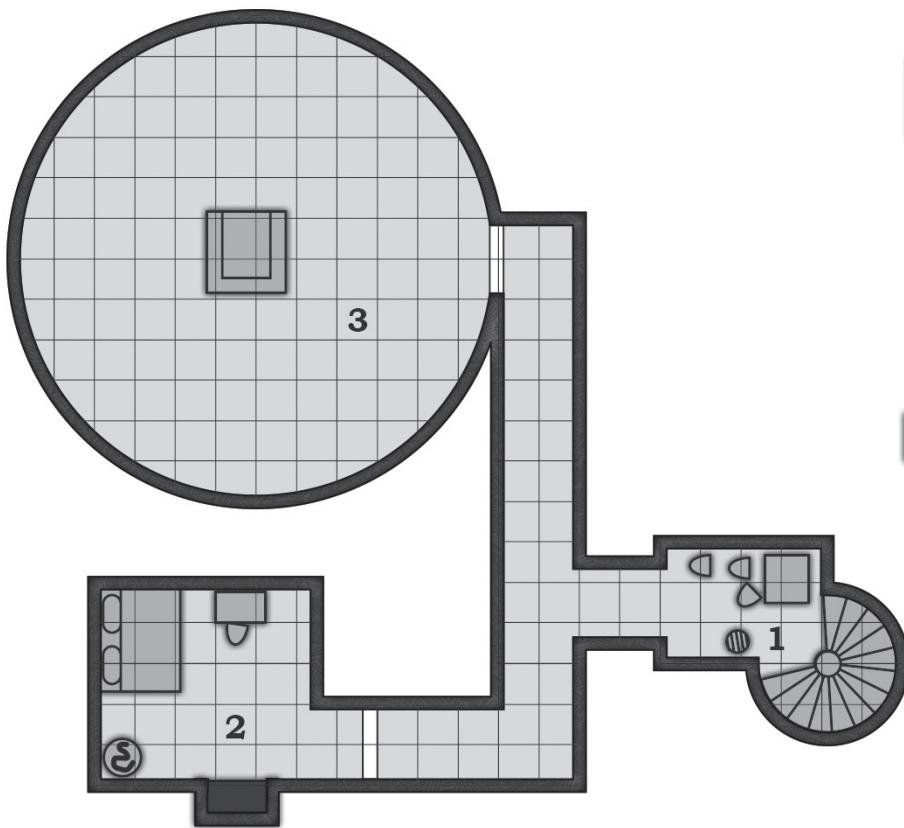
Gear: *wand of storms* (see New Magic Items appendix), *ring of protection* +1, gold circlet with diamond chips (500 gp value).

(Cloud Giant: AC 14, 200 hps; +12 to hit x2, 3d8 + 8 piercing damage [morningstar] or +12 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 8 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock] or innate spellcasting: detect magic, fog cloud, light, feather fall, fly, misty step, telekinesis, control weather, gaseous form)

(Feathered Mountain Snake: AC 13, 45 hps; +6 to hit, 1d8 + 3 piercing damage and the target must make a successful

THE DEAD FROM ABOVE

The Ossuary Level 3
1 square - 10 feet



DC 11 Con saving throw or take 2d6 poison damage)

The paintings are oil portraits of the Stormbreaker Clan's former patriarchs. Each of the four paintings is worth 250 gp. They are sizeable, however, measuring 10 feet long by 5 feet high and weighing 50 lbs. each. The tapestries are detailed landscapes of secluded mountain valleys surrounded by clouds and fog. Each of the three wall hangings is worth 150 gp.

The table contains personal grooming items and jars of makeup, perfume, and other hygiene products. One of the bottles is fashioned from a cut jasper (50 gp value) and contains a delicate perfume that seems to change its scent depending on the person sniffing it. This perfume bears a slight enchantment and, when worn, increases the wearer's Charisma score by 1 for one hour. There is enough perfume for three uses.

Beneath the bed is a large iron chest. It has no lock and appears to be opened by simply pulling the knurled steel handle protruding from the lid's top. The chest is trapped, however. Unless the opener touches the handle with a *shocking grasp* cantrip before pulling the lid, a blast of electricity leaps from the chest, catching all creatures in a 10-foot-radius around the box. Those in the blast take 8d6 + 8 electrical damage, or half as much with a successful DC 14 Dex saving throw. Closely inspecting the handle and making a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check reveals tiny runes etched along the handle's bottom, and anyone with training in Arcana can identify them as pertaining to electricity or lightning. There is no way to disarm the trap other than with the cantrip.

The chest contains Oblugrim and Tathhylia's personal wealth. Inside are 1,046 cp, 768 sp, 477 gp, a large harp with electrum inlay (350 gp value), a robe of winter wolf fur (200 gp value), Tathhylia's spellbook (contains all her prepared spells), and an oversized crown of gold and sapphires (1,000 gp value).

3. The Bridge

This area is a massive, conical-shaped chamber with a cathedral ceiling. Dominating the chamber is a titanic, thronelike chair bearing a giant occupant. The seated individual wears only a white loin cloth, leaving the majority of his sky-blue skin exposed. Many riblike bones and venous tubes protrude from the chair and are embedded in the flesh of the seated giant, effectively binding him to the seat. Five smaller giants dressed in mail armor and bearing large spears stand guard nearby.

Creatures: The chair is the Ossuary's helm, and the figure attached to it is Morgosun Stormbreaker, the pilot of the Ossuary. Morgosun was not the most gifted or liked of the Stormbreaker clan, and when it was decided that someone needed to make the sacrifice to merge with the fortress to serve as its eternal captain, Morgosun was forcibly "volunteered" by Oblugrim. The only thing that has kept him from crashing the Ossuary and dooming his clan to death is Oblugrim's promise that once the humans are driven out of the mountains, Morgosun will be freed from his duty and restored to a normal life (this is a lie; Oblugrim considers the flying citadel far too valuable to give up). Nevertheless, as a precaution, Oblugrim stationed four hill giant guards here, not only to protect the pilot but also to slay him should he ever try to crash the Ossuary.

(Gurgulash, Hill Giant Leader: AC 15, 130 hps; +9 to hit x2, 3d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage plus

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alchemist's fire [skull bombard])

Gear: Belt of bones (see New Magic Items appendix), +1 greataxe, chain shirt +2, two skull bombs, silver bracelet (100 gp value), gold bracelet (250 gp value), silver snake-shaped ring (100 gp value), and small sack containing 200 sp, 178 gp, and 54 pp.

(Hill Giant: AC 13, 105 hps; +8 to hit x2, 3d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage plus alchemist's fire [skull bombard])

Gear: Hill Giants wear chain shirts and carry halberds and one skull bombard apiece.

Morgosun Stormbreaker cannot physically attack the party; he is restrained by the Ossuary's helm. He can, however, defend himself with the necrotic energy field that powers the fortress under his command. He uses the standard cloud giant stat block, but his only means of attack is the Necrotic Blast.

Necrotic Blast (Recharge 5, 6): Morgosun calls down a blast of withering energy that strikes a single target inside the bridge. The victim hit by the blast takes 4d8 + 4 necrotic damage, or half damage with a successful DC 14 Con saving throw.

If Morgosun is slain, the Ossuary immediately ceases moving. It continues to hang in place 400 feet above the ground until it runs out of power or the Necrolofter is destroyed (see Level One, Area 3). If the helm is attacked directly, it has AC 8 and 200 hit points. It fails all saving throws. Destroying the chair kills Morgosun instantly in a blast of necrotic energy, and the Ossuary comes to a dead stop.

This room contains only the helm, which is a huge seat fashioned from bone and rising 20 feet above the floor. A dozen bone spurs and veinlike tubes protrude from the chair, each ending in a sharp, hollow barb that can be inserted into skin and muscle. A living creature connected to the chair gains the ability to fly the Ossuary as well as to view its surroundings with limited clairvoyance. For more information on the role of the pilot, see the section "The Ossuary in the PCs' Hands."

Concluding the Adventure

The characters succeed in stopping the cloud giant's campaign of evil if they either kill the tremendous occupants of the Ossuary or incapacitate the flying citadel. The local ruler accepts either circumstance as a victory and gratefully rewards the party the promised fee of 1,000 gp.

Should the adventure conclude with the Ossuary captured intact and operational, the potentate, seeing the military advantage of owning such a useful fort, offers to buy the flying citadel from the party. The exact amount he is willing to part with is left to the GM's discretion, but should not exceed 15,000 gp. Understandably, the party may wish to hold onto the keep for their own purposes. Refer to the section "The Ossuary in the PCs' Hands" in this case.

If the GM desires, the events of *Dead from Above* can lead to additional adventures. The Stormbreaker Clan may not be the only cloud giant clan wishing to see humanity driven out of the mountains. Other giants might be planning their own vendetta against mankind, requiring the heroes to venture into the high peaks to stop these other campaigns before they begin.

If the characters successfully identify the important passages in the ancient texts found in Level Two, Area 15, they might be interested in learning more about the creation of fortresses like the Ossuary. This quest could spur numerous new adventures as the party tracks down lost lore or seeks out reclusive sages and wizards who possess the power and skill needed to tear mountains apart and make them fly.

And, of course, if any of the Stormbreakers survive the attack on the Ossuary, the characters should find themselves the target of giant vengeance, a revenge that begins with hurled boulders and powerful spells when they least expect it!

The Ossuary in the PCs' Hands

It is likely that if the characters defeat the Stormbreaker giants, they'll end the adventure in possession of the Ossuary. Not all GMs may want their players to own such a formidable base of operations, but luckily, being the sole entities left standing inside the aerial holdfast does not automatically bestow command of the Ossuary on the party.

Firstly, the Ossuary requires a living creature in the role of the pilot. This is not so much an honor as a doom, because the pilot becomes permanently bonded with the magical helm in area 3-3. Not many beings are willing to give up their freedom and embrace such a ghastly existence to simply operate an artifact. NPCs will certainly refuse unless magically compelled. If *charm* spells are used to encourage an NPC to become the pilot, he will seek revenge once the enchantment wears off, likely crashing the Ossuary into the first convenient mountainside as suitable punishment for those who damned him!

If one of the characters volunteers to become the pilot, he (or others) need to first determine the proper way to connect a new pilot to the chair. This requires successful DC 20 Int (Arcana) and DC 20 Wis (Medicine) checks. Divination spells can also help determine the proper process. Once the process is deduced, the would-be pilot suffers 8d6 points of piercing damage as the various bone spurs and tubes are inserted into his flesh. This damage can be halved if the person connecting the pilot to the chair makes a successful DC 15 Wis (Medicine) check. Lastly, the adventurer must make a DC 20 Con saving throw to successfully integrate his mind and body with the Ossuary. If the save fails, the pilot dies, slain by necrotic energy feedback that tears his body apart. If the pilot survives the process, he gains full command of the Ossuary—including the ability to mentally see outside the Ossuary's confines and the power to summon the necrotic blast defense detailed in Area 3-3.

Even with a living pilot on the bridge, the Ossuary requires constant refueling with souls, and this step should not sit well with characters who are not evil-aligned. As noted in Area 1-3, the Necrolofter requires the stolen life of living beings to operate. At least 8 HD of intelligent, living beings must be fed to the hungry spirits connected to the Necrolofter each week or the citadel loses power, settling to the ground until refueled. No other power source will suffice.

While the characters might have moral issues with keeping the Ossuary running and under control, many NPCs suffer no such compulsions. If it becomes common knowledge that the party possesses the Ossuary, they can be certain that they'll find themselves targeted by all manner of bandit kings, evil wizards, foul priests, and other such ne'er do wells intent on claiming the Ossuary for themselves. The GM should make life very interesting for the characters for as long as they own the holdfast.

Appendix

New Magical Items

Belt of Bones

Very Rare Wondrous Item (requires attunement)

This object is a wide girdle fashioned from crudely-tanned leather of undetermined origin and decorated with aged, yellowing animal bones sewn to the leather backing. The belt rattles when worn, and the rattling increases in volume when the wearer calls upon the object's power. The *belt of bones* provides the benefits listed below only when worn by a barbarian; it is simply a decorative accessory in the possession of other classes.

- Up to three times per day, the bones can instantly expand to cover the wearer's body and create a protective shell that functions exactly as the *shield* spell.
- The wearer's Strength is increased by 1 while the belt is worn. This bonus cannot raise the wearer's Strength above 20.
- The owner gains one extra rage per day if the belt is worn the entire day.

Bracers of Specters

Very Rare Wondrous Item (requires attunement)

These ornamental brass bracers are covered with a patina of verdigris indicating their great age. Imagery depicting tombs, open graves, and plundered sarcophagi are inscribed on their surfaces. Leather straps hold them in place. Like many magical objects, the *bracers of specters* resize to fit their wearer.

The *bracers of specters* have a pair of undead spirits bound to them, forced to unerringly serve the bracers' owner when commanded. The owner can call upon either each specter to appear once per day, individually or together. When summoned, the specter(s) appear to leap from the bracers, manifesting before the wearer. The specter(s) follow any command spoken by the bracers' owner to the best of their ability for up to one hour. After that time, a spirit returns to the bracer until the following day.

A specter that suffers damage while manifested is fully healed by resting in the bracers for 24 hours. If summoned before the period elapses, the spirit manifests in its damaged state and does not regain lost hit points until at least 24 hours have passed without it called forth. If a specter is destroyed while manifested, it is permanently lost and the owner cannot replace the destroyed spirit. Should both specters ever be destroyed while manifested, the bracers lose their enchantment and become ordinary objects.

Wand of Storms

Very Rare Wondrous Item (requires attunement)

This is a 6-foot-long wooden rod tipped with a smoky white quartz that resembles a thunder cloud. Although technically a wand, the *wand of storms* was created by giants and is scaled for use by Huge creatures. Creatures of Medium size or smaller must use two hands when wielding the wand, as if it were a staff.

The wand has seven charges. As an action, you can expend up to three charges to cast *gust of wind*, *thunderwave*, or *lightning bolt*. Expending one charge casts the spell at its base level. Each additional charge adds one level to the base slot. For example, expending three charges when casting *thunderwave* gives the effect of *thunderwave* being cast with a level 3 spell slot.

The wand regains 1d6+1 expended charges each day at dawn. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll 1d20. On a 1, the wand cracks with a thunderous crash and falls to splinters, forever destroyed.

New Monsters

Bone Guardian

XP 1,100 (CR 4)

NE Large undead

Initiative +2

DEFENSE

AC 15 (natural armor)

hp: 45 (6d10 + 14)

Immunity: Piercing damage; charm, fright, poison, unconsciousness

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Multiaction: A bone guardian attacks twice with claws and bites twice.

Melee Attack—Bite: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). **Hit:** 1d6 + 3 piercing damage.

Melee Attack—Bite: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). **Hit:** 1d8 + 3 slashing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3), Dex 12 (+2), Con 15 (+2), Int 6 (-2), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 5 (-3)

Languages: understands Common and Giant but can't speak

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary or band (2-7)

Description: The bones encircling the pillar suddenly assemble themselves into the horrid form of a two-headed, three armed skeletal creature with eyes that burn with an unholy black-blue light.

Feathered Mountain Snake

XP 450 (CR 2)

Unaligned Large beast

Initiative +3

DEFENSE

AC 13

hp: 45 (6d10 + 12)

Saving Throws: Dex +6

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Poisonous Bite: +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). **Hit:** 1d8 + 3 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Con saving throw or take 2d6 poison damage.

STATISTICS

Str 15 (+2), Dex 16 (+3), Con 15 (+2),

Int 2 (-4), Wis 12 (+1), Cha 6 (-2)

Languages: None

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Lightning Blast (Recharge 5, 6): The feathered mountain snake discharges a blast of lightning at a single target up to 30 ft. away. The target takes 3d6 + 2 lightning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 12 Dex saving throw.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate or cold mountains

QUESTS OF DOOM: GIANTS & DRAGONS

Organization: Solitary or band

Description: A coat of colorful feathers covers this 10-foot-long serpent. It rustles, and the scent of ozone grows strong in the air. Moments later, the snake unleashes a blast of lightning at you!

claws and bites once.

Melee Attack—Bite: +10 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature).

Hit: 3d10 + 6 piercing damage.

Melee Attack—Claw: +10 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

Hit: 2d8 + 6 slashing damage.

Sanguine Terror

XP 450 (CR 2)

Unaligned Large ooze

Initiative -2

DEFENSE

AC 8

hp: 75 (10d10 + 20)

Saving Throws: Con +6

Immunity: Psychic damage; blindness, charm, fright, paralysis, poison, sleep, stun, unconsciousness

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee Attack—Pseudopod: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage, and the target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or take 2d6 poison damage.

STATISTICS

Str 16 (+3), Dex 6 (-2), Con 15 (+2),

Int 1 (-5), Wis 6 (-2), Cha 1 (-5)

Languages: None.

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft.

TRAITS

Amorphous: A sanguine terror can move through gaps as small as 1 square inch without penalty.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any

Organization: Solitary

Description: A huge mass of partially congealed blood rises up to assume humanoid form. It reeks of rotting plasma as it lurches toward you.

Skeletal Red Dragon

XP 2,300 (CR 6)

CE Huge undead

Initiative +0

DEFENSE

AC 12 (natural armor)

hp: 76 (9d12 + 20)

Immunity: Charm, fright, poison, unconsciousness

Vulnerability: Bludgeoning damage

OFFENSE

Speed: 60 ft., fly 150 ft.

Multiattack: A skeletal red dragon attacks once with its

STATISTICS

Str 25 (+7), Dex 10 (+0), Con 15 (+2),

Int 6 (-2), Wis 8 (-1), Cha 3 (-4)

Languages: understands Common and Draconic but can't speak

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate

Organization: Solitary or band (2-7)

Description: With the sound of clattering bones and creaking, withered wings, the great bony wyrm descends upon you, its eyes burning like the candles lit at a dead man's wake. A skein of corpse-green veins twine about the dragon's body, thrumming in time to the creature's movements.

Stone Giant Zombie

XP 450 (CR 2)

NE Huge undead

Initiative +0

DEFENSE

AC 8

hp: 57 (7d12 + 12)

Immunity: Charm, fright, poison, unconsciousness

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Fist: +8 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature). Hit: 2d8 + 6 bludgeoning damage.

STATISTICS

Str 22 (+6), Dex 6 (-2), Con 15 (+2),

Int 5 (-3), Wis 6 (-2), Cha 5 (-3)

Languages: understands Giant but can't speak.

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Zombie Fortitude: If the zombie suffers damage that reduces it to zero hit points, it makes a Con saving throw with a DC equal to 5 + the damage suffered. If the saving throw is successful, the zombie has 1 hit point left.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate

Organization: Solitary or band (2-7)

Description: The rotting corpse of a giant shambles slowly toward you, its flesh gray and bloated and its eyes milky white.

Emeralds of Highfang

By Ed Greenwood

Wise rogues join the government, where their larceny has the cover of “legality” and the cash comes in heaps and piles from deceitful receipts and pocketed procurements rather than in small, bloodstained purses from breaking windows, scaling walls, and risking traps and long-fanged guard dogs.

Wise rogues do *not*, by choice, go up against towering giants armed with clubs larger than the tallest rogue in the guild. Nor do they try to nick treasure from dragons without a group of powerful fellow adventurers behind them, who can hurl mighty spells, hack and hew toe to toe with an angry wyrm, heal the injured, and (when things go as they usually do), resurrect the dead.

There are wise rogues, and then there are player characters. *Emeralds of Highfang* awaits them with open arms, offering special challenges and rewards to rogue characters—but as always, the prospects are much better for a party of adventurers from a variety of classes, with wide skills and experience, and of high level. Some might find that a broad base of experience is not only helpful, but essential for survival.

Foreword

Emeralds of Highfang leads characters into the caldera of an extinct volcano that has become the lair of an ancient red dragon. The dragon, however, isn’t alone; it is allied with a clan of fire giants, who in turn have hill giants and ettins in their service. The volcano, therefore, is every bit as dangerous a place after its death as it was while it was actively spewing lava.

The potential reward for defeating an ancient red dragon and a clan of giants is immense, but so is the risk. This adventure should prove particularly rewarding for rogue player characters, both because the grandest treasure in the dragon’s hoard is especially valuable to a rogue, but also because there’s more opportunity—and more need—here for stealth, scouting, and sneakiness than in most adventures. All too often, rogues who’d like to be out front performing reconnaissance are forced to walk in the middle of the marching order while paladins and barbarians lead the way. In *Emeralds of Highfang*, brash warriors who barge into chambers relying on their armor and their hit points won’t survive long. After one or two encounters, they’ll be glad to let the rogues lead from the shadows.

A party of adventurers can be introduced to this adventure in several ways. The events take place in a remote mountainous area. The most natural manner to begin the adventure (i.e., the least suspicious) is for characters to innocently draw close to Highfang Peak, a long-dormant volcanic caldera that from below looks like a rounded mountain soaring to a high, narrow spike on one side (somewhat like a splinter jutting upward from one side of an immense, sawn-off tree stump). If viewed from the lip or from the air, Highfang is revealed to have a deep, verdant green crater at its heart, where wild cattle roam and cascading streams are plentiful.

Characters can be pulled into the area with the usual rumors of unplundered tombs or wealthy bandits, or they can be pushed in by severe weather. In winter, you can rely on a howling blizzard with bad visibility, slick footing under deep, wet snow, and the threat of severe frostbite or hypothermia if they spend the night exposed to the elements. In summer, a blinding, pelting rainstorm with lightning crashing all round, wind tearing trees from the ground, and hailstones the size of cockatrice eggs can do the trick. In either case, a pack of dire wolves or other hungry, desperate creatures shadowing the characters is a nice bit of added motivation for

the travelers to seek a safe refuge.

In short, the characters must find shelter or face dire peril—and they find area 1, the Cavern of the Club.

Alternatively, characters who begin the adventure in an urban setting or a rural town find, in some dark alley, shed, or vacant warehouse, one shattered end of a gigantic club—as thick as a tree trunk, battered into roundness, hardened by fire, and studded with iron spikes. It is lying abandoned, apparently discarded and forgotten, and pulsing with a faint, eerie, purple-white magical glow.

If the club is touched, moved, or even approached too closely, it triggers a *teleport* effect that relocates all of the characters and the club fragment to area 1 of the giants’ warren.

Giants’ Warren

1. The Cavern of the Club

Characters espy a dark opening in the mountainside, a tall, narrow crack in Highfang Peak. It leads into a huge, irregularly-shaped cavern that’s lit faintly by patches of phosphorescent fungus on the walls and ceiling—furry, amorphous, jellylike masses that emit a steady, pale, brownish-white glow.

Glowflow

These mindless, harmless fungi range in size from the span of a human hand to about as large as the top of a dining table; whatever their area, most are about as thick as a human adult’s wrist. They can join and divide at random or in response to attacks. They are ambulatory, creeping very slowly toward sources of warmth and movement. When no such sources are present, they flow slowly over stone, readily sticking to walls and ceilings, to reach the highest points in an area or the apex of a cavern ceiling.

If characters sleep in a glowflow-infested cavern without a sentinel, or if they try to remove the fungus (it can be scraped from the stone easily with a stick or a shield), they might awaken with the fungus on them. The fungus likes to cover the faces of living creatures because of the warm breath, but it won’t suffocate the sleeper.

Glowflow tastes rather like beef fat, and it does no harm at all if ingested. It does cause the skin of the ingester to glow softly with the same steady, faint, brownish-white luminosity of the glowflow for $1d6 + 2$ days. Glowflow avoids areas of rushing or open water but can be found just about everywhere else underground, throughout all subterranean areas in Highfang Peak and the surrounding mountain range.

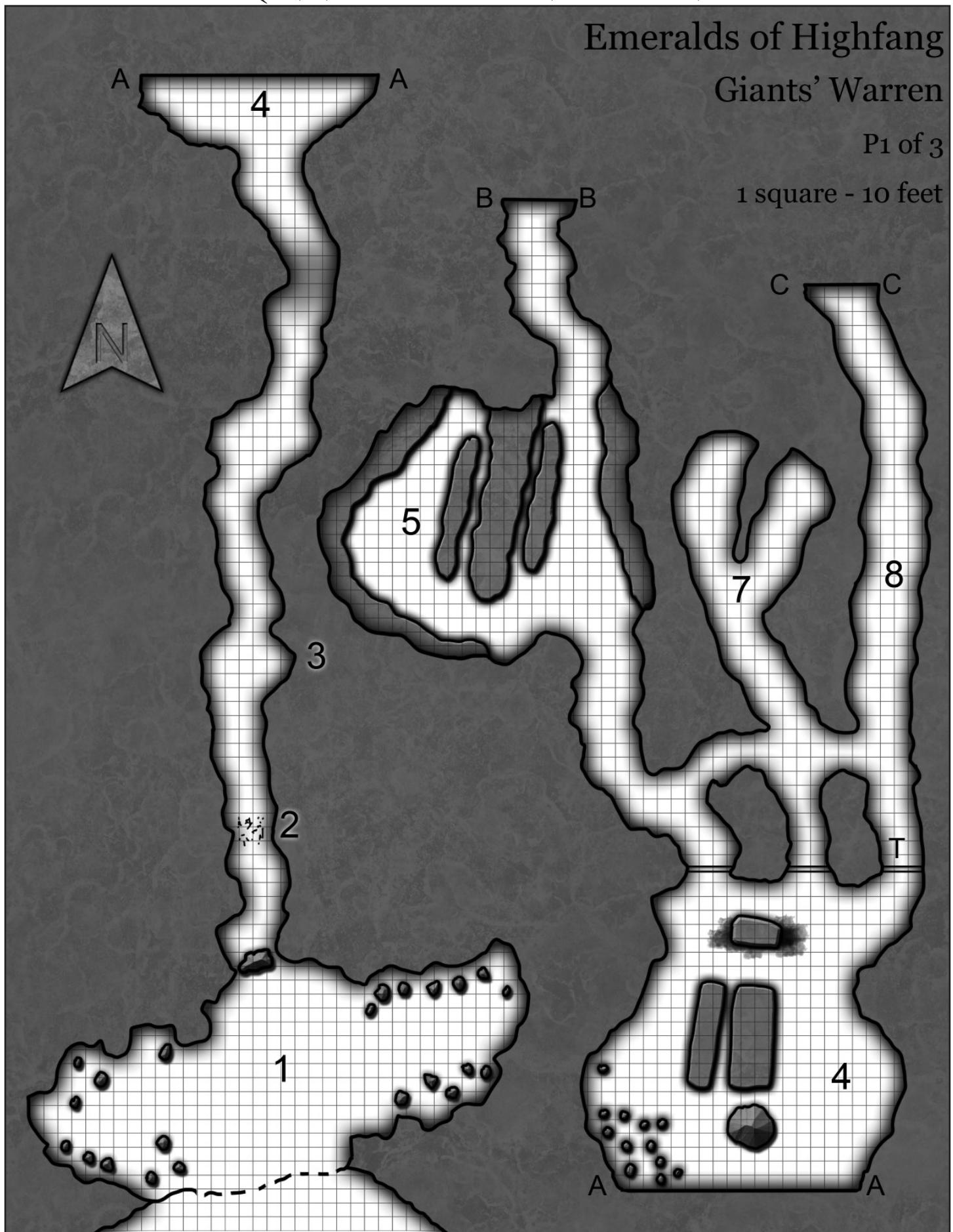
Strewn around the cavern lie the crushed and rotting bodies of six orcs who were felled by the blows of a huge, blunt weapon—perhaps a giant’s club. Amid them are the two halves of the broken giant’s club that slew them, dropped by the disgusted giant when it broke. (If the characters were brought here magically by a glowing, broken club, it is one of the halves.

Emeralds of Highfang

Giants' Warren

P1 of 3

1 square - 10 feet



EMERALDS OF HIGHFANG

It flashes brightly upon arrival, then goes dark, its magic exhausted.)

The dead orcs have a few weapons and some treasure.

- *Orc 1:* Lice-ridden, rotting hide armor, leather belt with crude, rusty dagger in sheath, and pouch containing 6 cp and an orc tooth (his) wrapped in a scrap of bloody cloth; greataxe with broken shaft.

- *Orc 2:* Hide armor in good condition, leather belt with good dagger in sheath (salvaged from past human victim), and pouch containing 1 sp and 4 cp; greataxe in good condition.

- *Orc 3:* Hide armor in good condition, leather belt with good dagger in sheath (salvaged from past human victim), and pouch containing 3 sp and 1 cp; intact javelin.

- *Orc 4:* No armor but has black metal shield, brittle and pounded flat by club (orc's arm, still strapped to shield, is shattered) and starting to rust, good leather belt with empty sheath (dagger missing, nowhere to be found in cavern), and pouch containing seven 2-foot-long leather thongs, an ornate leather garment button, and 2 cp; greataxe in good condition.

- *Orc 5:* Lice-ridden, rotting hide armor that was poorly made to begin with (many gaps spanned by knotted, crisscrossing leather thongs), rotting leather belt with crude but not rusty dagger in sheath, and pouch containing 2 cp and a fist-sized bundle of soft leather tied up with thongs (inside is a deep red, faceted gemstone about the size of a man's thumbnail, that looks valuable: it's a rose-cut ruby worth 3,000 gp); javelin in good condition.

- *Orc 6:* Hide armor in good condition, leather belt with good dagger in sheath (salvaged from past human victim), and pouch containing 6 sp and 1 cp; greataxe in good condition.

At the back of the cavern is a huge cleft, about 50 feet tall and 20 feet wide. It is blocked by a boulder that is wedged into the cleft and is a little more than 20 feet tall. The boulder was placed here by the giants to keep out wolves and casual intruders. The boulder can be climbed over easily, or it can be dislodged by characters if the combined Strength modifiers of everyone working on it totals 10 or higher. If the boulder tumbles into the cavern, it makes enough noise that every creature in the next two encounter areas is alerted to the presence of intruders. It also has the

potential to crush anyone foolishly standing in front of it when it breaks free. Everyone in its path must make a successful DC 20 Dex saving throw to avoid 20d6 bludgeoning damage. Characters who are trained in Acrobatics can add twice their proficiency bonus to the saving throw.

The first character who climbs to the top of the boulder comes face to face with a **giant wolf spider**. It pounces and attacks without hesitation.

(Giant Wolf Spider: AC 13, 11 hps; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 piercing damage plus 2d6 poison damage [bite]; DC 11 Con saving throw for half damage; creatures poisoned to 0 hp are paralyzed for 1 hour)

Beyond the boulder, the cleft becomes a passage with a rocky, uneven floor covered by fallen and wedged boulders. Moving along this floor is more akin to climbing than to walking; the entire stretch is difficult terrain.

The route is roomy enough for giants to traverse, though it's difficult terrain for them, too. The rough-walled, irregular passage bends to the right, then curves left again, for 70 feet.

2. Bats and the Drift

At this point, the rough, rocky floor becomes strewn with scattered human and demihuman bones, the remains of unfortunate earlier intruders.

Two giant bats roost here on the passage ceiling, above a ledge high up on the right side (relative to creatures moving inward along the passage, deeper into the mountain). They swoop to attack anything smaller than a giant that enters the passage.

(Giant Bat: AC 13, 22 hps; +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [bite])

The bats are jet black with blazing red eyes, large fangs, long tails, and



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wide black leathery wings that make them resemble manta rays, though they are simply a rare subspecies of bat. They will shriek as they attack, their wide and many-fanged maws gaping wide. These cries are so high-pitched that they are like needles in the ears of those nearby, but are almost inaudible more than 70 feet away.

The bats are hungry, so they attack intruders to slay and feed, but they flee to high ledges or out into area 1 to roost high up when down to 3 or fewer hit points or when one of the bats is killed. Surviving bats might attack again if characters pass through this area later on their way out.

The Drift

When characters enter the area of bones, they will disturb an ancient magical effect called “the Drift,” a gentle *reverse gravity*-like field that causes bones to ‘fall’ slowly but steadily upward to the roof of the passage, remain there for four or five minutes, and then gently descend again. Characters who struggle against the effect can remain grounded with a successful DC 10 Wis saving throw. Characters who relax and let the effect take hold of them can ride it as if they’re affected by a *levitate* spell. Going aloft makes them easier targets for the bats, which get tactical advantage when attacking “drifting” targets. By using ropes with grapnel hooks, 10-foot poles, or just by pulling themselves along the walls and ceiling with their hands, characters can reach various high ledges (varying from 7 feet wide to just over 2 feet) that run along the passage walls. From these ledges, they can fight giants in the passage and in the Fang Cavern, beyond at giant-head-level.

The Drift was established by magic long ago. Now it prevails only in a 40-foot-long stretch of the passage, as shown on the map. The boundaries are ‘soft’; characters who leave the Drift while aloft don’t plummet to the ground but float gently down.

3. Passage Sentinels

Some 80 feet beyond the Drift, the passage widens briefly, creating an alcove in both walls. A large, round brass gong hangs from the center of the ceiling on a massive chain that vanishes up between ceiling-boulders to an unknown anchoring. Under it sit **two male hill giants**. They are mean, nasty, smelly individuals clad in uncured and reeking hides of various mountain beasts, and they’re armed with great clubs like the broken one in area 1.

(Hill Giant: AC 13, 105 hps; +8 to hit x2, 3d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +8 to hit, range 60/240, 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock])

The hill giants have orders to kill any intruders. For every intelligent creature or large and dangerous monster (not the giant bats nor anything smaller) whose body they display to the fire giants who dwell deeper inside Highfang Peak, those giants reward this pair of brutes by letting them move “closer to Highfang,” which the hill giants have been led to believe is a paradise where they can gorge themselves on all they can eat, in the company of friendly female hill giants. They are under orders never to both sleep at the same time.

They have been at this wide spot in the passage for almost a year, and it reeks of their dung. (They trudge huge buckets of the stuff out of the caverns to dump, as seldom as possible; three huge buckets occupy one alcove, with massive slabs of stone laid across them to form a bench or table.) The fire giants bring them food (usually roasted bull carcasses), and they drink water from the natural spring that trickles down the wall behind the dung buckets and seeps away through the floor.

The giants are dim-witted but enthusiastic in a fight—so much so that they might comically injure each other or bump and stumble over each other, trying to move into positions from where they can better smear enemies over the rock walls, floor, and ceiling with their huge clubs. They

are also under orders to strike the gong hanging from the ceiling with their clubs whenever they see an intruder. This alerts the stone giants to (very unhurriedly) come and check the situation.

To keep the hill giants from bashing the gong into smithereens out of anger or boredom, the dragon long ago reached agreement with some wizards to enchant it, so the gong now emits a weak *lightning bolt* whenever struck, in a line straight toward whoever struck the gong. The hill giants know this and hate it, so they strike the gong only if they decide they’re losing this fight and could use some help. They’re smart enough to stand where the *lightning bolt* will hit a few enemies in addition to the giant who triggers it. (*Lightning Bolt Trap:* line, 5 ft. wide x 50 ft. long; 4d6 lightning damage; DC 14 Dex saving throw for half damage)

4. Fang Cavern

From the widening occupied by the hill giants, the passage runs another hundred feet to a similar widening that’s untenant, then descends gently for 80 feet to another widening of the passage, and then rises a further 90 feet beyond it to open out into this large cave.

This rough-walled natural cavern has a ceiling 90 feet up that’s dominated by many stalactites (none more than 12 feet long). Most have been crudely pierced so small oil-lamps can be hung from them. Over 40 such lamps are burning in the chamber, giving off smoke that has coated the stalactites with soot, making the room oppressively hot, and seeming to carpet the ceiling in flames. The cave’s many stalagmites have all been smoothly cut off to form seats or the supports for stone tabletops. The tables formed this way resemble large, flat-topped, stone mushrooms.

One huge central stalagmite has been left alone. It sweeps up from the floor in a thick, sharp, tapering curve that echoes the shape of the lower fang of a gigantic feline.

Here sit **six fire giant guards**. At any time, two are sleeping, two are cooking and cleaning, and two are on guard duty (which usually means they’re sitting with weapons ready and playing stoneguard, a simple dice game; three rolls against three rolls, highest total wins, difference between totals is how many spaces the winner can advance the Dead Giant marker along a straight track of twenty spaces; whenever the marker reaches one end of the track, the giant sitting at that end loses the game).

(Fire Giant: AC 18, 162 hps; +11 to hit x2, 6d6 + 7 slashing damage [greatsword] or +11 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 7 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock])

The two on-duty guards sit on cut-down stalagmites, with a stone table (also formed by a stalagmite) between them. The stoneguard board is carved into the top of the table. They’re playing for gold coins; an open sack containing 448 gp sits on the floor beside the table. The two stoneguard players might not notice someone pilfering coins at first (passive Perception 16), but a second trip to the sack by anyone *will* be noticed.

Behind the fang is a stone table (a socketed slab placed atop three lopped-off stalagmites), a bench (massive rectangular stone block laid beside the table), and in a slight depression in the cavern floor, a cooking hearth full of smoldering charcoal surrounded by a ring of ready firewood (short but, to humans, quite large and heavy logs). Above the hearth is a blackened metal frame of heavy roughcast iron on which rest three spits, each transfixing the carcass of a whole bull now partly roasted, sizzling and dripping fat into the fire. Each spit has six metal wedges that can be placed on the frame at either end to hold the spit and its meat in a particular position. To humans, these metal wedges are each about the size of a large chair, and are *very* heavy (requiring a combined Strength modifier of 9 or higher to lift). Near the hearth is a reeking bucket (about the size of a human bathtub) of eel oil, which the giants use as both a firestarter and a baste. Above the hearth, the cavern rises in a natural chimney, a shaft that rises for fully 240 feet beyond the 90-foot height of the cavern to emerge high atop one of the rising arms of Highfang Peak. The chimney is never less than 20 feet wide, and its walls are caked with soot and slippery grease, making it nearly impossible to climb. A successful DC 25 Str (Athletics) check is needed at the beginning, middle, and end of the climb to ascend the chimney.

EMERALDS OF HIGHFANG

Three arch-topped, lockless, giant-sized doors of fitted, sculpted stone are set into the back wall of this cavern, spaced well apart. The doors swing into this cavern when opened.

The door on the left leads to a huge hot cavern where the fire giants live, the one in the center to a privy, and the one on the right opens into a long passage that penetrates deeper into Highfang Peak. The tunnels behind these three doors are all linked, about 0 feet in, by a cross-passage.

The fire giants all have crimson beards and eyebrows and jet-black hair. They wear well-oiled black armor over hide jerkins and breeches, and have armored boots and black metal open-face helms. They are:

- *Horlond* (awake, on duty, winning at stoneguard, jovial): Paunchy and the possessor of a wide smile, large and merry eyes, and crooked teeth; over his armor, wears a baldric with three metal knives (to humans, greatswords) ranged down it in sheaths with pommel straps (loops of thick leather sewn to the baldric, that the pommels of the knives are confined within, to help keep them falling free of the sheaths), pouch sewn to baldric under chin that contains scrap muslin sacks of 17 gp, 33 sp, and 12 cp. Horlond's principal weapon is his greatsword, scabbarded at his hip.

- *Marl* (awake, on duty, losing at stoneguard, testy): Broad-shouldered and burly (even for a giant), with an ugly slab of a face and a flattened nose (looking rather like the stone faces of real-world Easter Island); garbed and equipped identically to Horlond, greatsword and all, except that Marl's pouch holds sacks containing 6 gp, 14 sp, and 27 cp (he loses at stoneguard a lot).

- *Haelath* (awake, cooking, slow and methodical): Handsome for a fire giant, with weathered features and a perpetually stern expression; garbed and equipped identically to Horlond, but his helm, sword, armor, baldric, and jerkin lie in a neat pile on the bench by the table. Haelath's pouch contains sacks of 22 gp, 4 sp, and 11 cp.

- *Gararl* (awake, cutting up vegetables and fetching spices from a row of jars along two neat ledges carved into the wall): Ugly and with snarled, curly, light-hued hair and a nose that was badly broken in the past; garbed and equipped identically to Haelath, his helm, sword, armor, baldric, and jerkin lie in a neat pile on the bench by the table beside Haelath's. Gararl's pouch contains sacks of 8 gp, 29 sp, and 15 cp.

- *Kalikh* (asleep on the floor to one side of the cavern, wrapped in a dusty blanket of many sewn-together overlapped hides, initially hidden from characters by stalagmites unless characters are up on a wall ledge): Hook-nosed, scar-faced (cut by at least two swords), and ugly to start with, Kalikh has a sour, sarcastic disposition to match his looks; garbed and equipped identically to Haelath (except that his boots are off, and standing beside his gently snoring head); his helm, sword, armor, baldric, and jerkin, wrapped in a second blanket, serve him as his pillow.

- *Loruth* (asleep on the floor to one side of the cavern, wrapped in a blanket, initially hidden from characters by stalagmites unless characters are up on a wall ledge): Youngest of the giants and with a handsome baby face and soft-hued brown hair and eyes; garbed and equipped identically to Kalikh; boots off and helm, sword, armor, baldric, and jerkin, wrapped in a second blanket, serving as his pillow.

(If the characters never learn the names and traits of these giants, you can use them to flesh out any other fire giants encountered later in their explorations. Feel free to adjust the giants' hit points up or down for variety.)

The giants are likely to catch sight of anyone walking along the wall ledges, which are near their typical eye level. It's also become a habit for them to frequently glance down the passage to area 3 (toward the hill giant sentinels). The slope of that passage, however, could enable a Medium or Small creature crawling on the floor to reach the lip without being seen. From there, any intruder will note the stony forest of lopped-off stalagmites that begins, on the intruder's left, right where the passage enters the large cavern. Quiet, stealthy characters who crawl up the passage and immediately slip into the field of stalagmites have a good chance to avoid being noticed by the stone giants (passive Perception 16).

All six fire giants, like most of their kind, are expert rock hurlers. Just because this cavern has been cleared of loose rocks doesn't mean they don't have things they can throw: on the floor behind the bench are stacks of stone platters (two piles of eight each) and plates (five stacks of twelve each). These platters and plates are thrown just like stones but cause less damage (2d10 + 7).

5. Hot Cavern

From the door, a 20-foot-wide irregular passage (a natural cleft, long ago chiseled wider) runs 60 feet into the solid rock of Highfang Peak before it is joined by a side passage to the right. Beyond that junction, the tunnel continues for 80 feet more until it opens out into this huge cavern, where the majority of the fire giants of Highfang dwell.

Mindful of the possible wrath of the dragon, the giants, who are all of the Narlohrind tribe, have brought no children or pregnant tribal members to Highfang. There are elders and wives, not just male fire giants in the prime of life. Counting the six guards in the Fang Cavern (area 4), there are **38 fire giants** in Highfang. When not working the quarry or forges, on guard duty, or cooking or dining, they dwell here.

(Fire Giant: AC 18, 162 hps; +11 to hit x2, 6d6 + 7 slashing damage [greatsword] or +11 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 7 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock])

At any given time, the typical job roster for the fire giants has four giants cooking, six working the quarry, six on guard duty, two at the forge, and six in the mill, leaving fourteen giants in this room. If weakened characters try to hide or take refuge here, you might decide that twelve of the fourteen have gone to dine.

Aside from sixteen young mothers and children dwelling in deep magma-warmed caves far from Highfang, these Narlohrind are the last remnants of a once numerous and powerful fire giant tribe that was almost wiped out in a terrible war with frost giants. Facing extermination and desperate, they agreed to serve the red dragon Haeraglondrar in return for the wyrm's protection. Thus far, they haven't regretted doing so.

The ranking tribal elder is Klarrouth, who stands a head taller than the other fire giants, has 200 hit points, and wears two greatswords, one scabbarded on a baldric down his back and one scabbarded at his hip. He wears the same armor and helm as his fellow Narlohrind. Klarrouth is a veteran tactician who is far less hot-tempered and more prudent and far-sighted than most fire giants, and he has little time for flattery, courtesy, or deference.

This cavern was named for its warmth, which fire giants find comfortably hot (and most other races consider uncomfortably so). The warmth comes from magma flows beneath the floor and behind the western wall of the cavern.

The northern, western, and southern walls of the room have been dug out to form stone bed-shelves for the giants. Rows of small cubbyholes at floor level are used for storage. In these the giants keep changes of clothing and footwear, dice and cards for idle time, walking sticks, vials of oil and sharpening stones for the maintenance of their weapons, tools, armor, sewing kits, and the rest of their belongings.

This cavern was once two smaller side-by-side caves, but the wall between them was carved down to form two immobile benches with backs, with a stone table (a continuous pedestal that supports a tabletop, all carved out of solid, unbroken stone) between them. These occupy the center of the cavern.

A dozen braziers of welded metal fashioned by the fire giants stand around the room. They each have a 5-foot-square metal base supporting a 15-foot-tall straight metal column about as thick around as an average adult human's thigh, topped by a stone bowl with a 1-foot-high lip that holds sardui (subterranean fish oil) about 8 inches deep, in which floats a flaming wick. These braziers give off more smoke than heat and more heat than light, but their massed effect in this cavern is bright and hot.

The air stinks of sardui, a smell like overheated copper, underlaid by fire giant sweat, which smells like overheated, impure iron. It is hot enough to make humans sweat after a few seconds of exposure. After two minutes or so, a typical human will be slick with sweat, which causes tactical disadvantage on Str and Dex checks related to climbing, gripping, and catching.

6. Fire Giant Kitchen

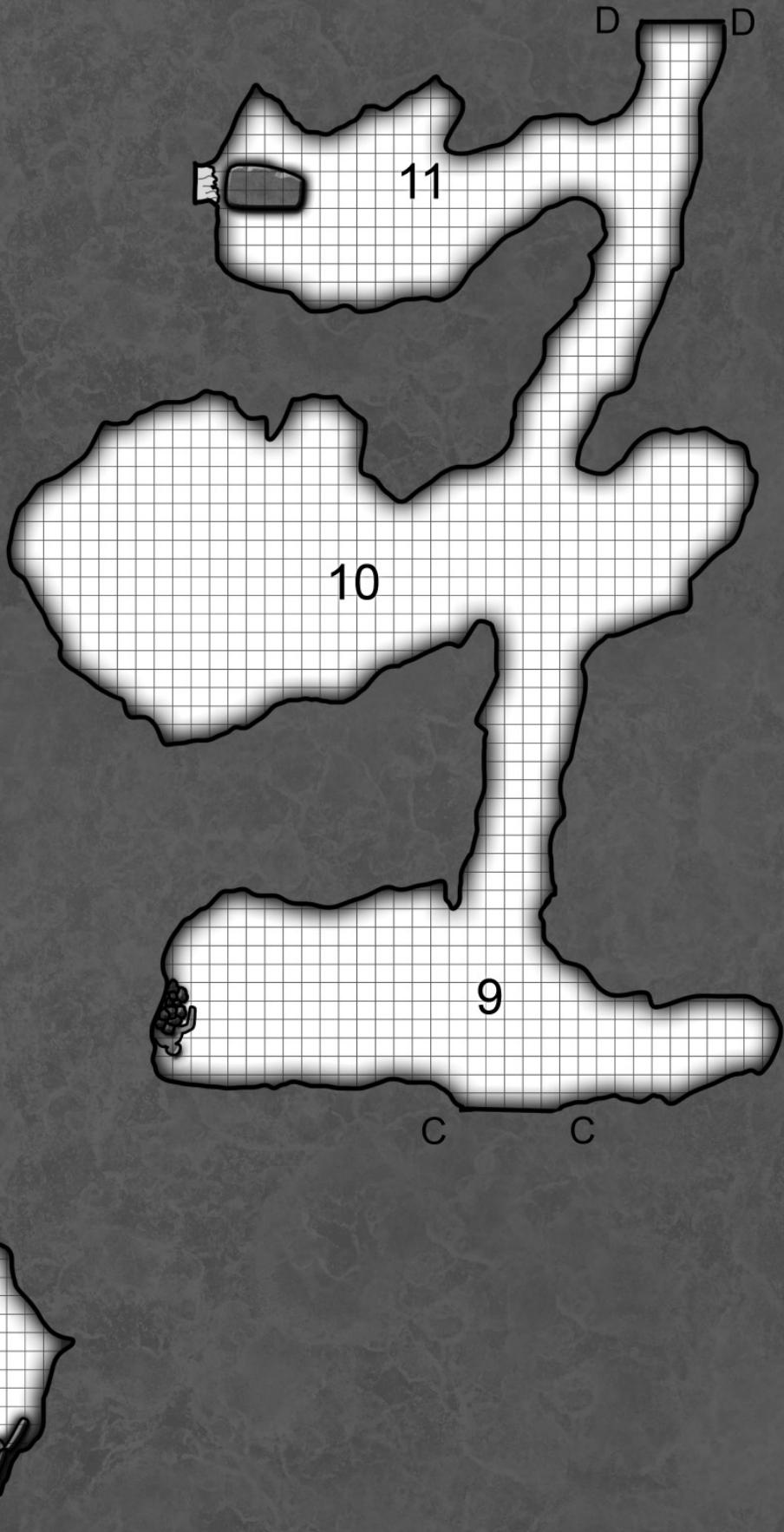
From area 5, a 20-foot wide passage bends and twists a further 120 feet back into the rocky heart of the mountain, then opens out into this

Emeralds of Highfang

Emerald Mind

P2 of 3

1 square - 10 feet



EMERALDS OF HIGHFANG

combined kitchen and larder.

The back of this cave is a huge roasting hearth containing three parallel, horizontal metal spits, each held up on its own pair of metal stands. The 30-foot-long spits rest in a "Y" at the top of a 15-foot-tall vertical column welded to a 10-foot-square base; each spit has a pointed end and a "T" end with crossbar handles. In a pinch, the spits can be used as improvised spears by the giants, doing $4d4 + 7$ piercing damage.

Above the hearth is a natural chimney extending up through Highfang Peak to the sky above. It rises 210 feet beyond the 60-foot height of the cavern, to emerge between two pinnacles of one of the rising arms of Highfang Peak. The chimney is 30 feet in diameter and the walls are caked with soot and slippery grease, making it nearly impossible to climb. A successful DC 25 Str (Athletics) check is needed at the beginning, middle, and end of the climb to ascend the chimney.

On the right side of the cavern is a larder consisting of twenty huge sacks of flour (each sack is three times the size of an average adult human and weighs close to a ton); eighteen barrels of sarduik (whole fish, orange and eyeless, naturally blind, and exuding their own oil; each barrel weighs well over a ton, and they have been sealed on the outside by being dipped in mortar that coats them with crumbling concrete that they constantly shed as deposits of grit). Thirty-five iron hooks are hammered into the rocky ceiling, where hang the smoked carcasses of everything from wolves to captured humans to horses to cattle. If any characters are captured, they are likely to be hung up by their ankles from these hooks, alive, until Klarrouth gets around to questioning them. When characters see first see this cavern, only five hooks are empty.

At the end of the larder, the cavern sidewall vanishes behind a ceiling-high stack of split firewood that covers much of the cavern walls.

The left-hand wall of the cavern is home to a stone shelf or counter where many large, soot-covered skillets sit, alongside blackened iron cooking racks for placing over the spits, above the hearth. The shelf ends before the hearth begins, and in the space between stand a sarduik oil press and two empty sarduik barrels used as trash cans. Characters might not immediately recognize the press for what it is. The device resembles an enormous metal hinge with drainholes in the bottom plate. It's welded to four legs that straddle a square catch-bucket with a pour spout. Oil is squeezed from fish into the bucket, then poured into the braziers. On close inspection, characters will see the orange fish scales and clotted blood coating the press.

In the center of the room is a stone dining table with stone benches on both sides. Unlike those in the Hot Cavern (area 5), these were carved elsewhere and brought into this room, not carved in place from the solid bedrock.

7. Giants' Privy

The reek from this open latrine isn't bad, because it drains into a magma flow far beneath that chars everything that goes down it. The privy consists of two adjacent caverns at the end of the passage, one for females and one for males. Flush is by buckets of water, a dozen of which line either side of the wall that divides the two caverns. The privy will likely be empty when characters investigate it.

8. Inner Passage

This natural crevice has been chiseled out to form a tunnel 40 feet wide and 70 feet high. The irregular walls are studded with small storage niches at waist to shoulder height for a giant. The giants keep things such as unlit oil lamps on them. None of the niches join with ledges or "go anywhere," so although a stealthy human could hide here, they are of little use for traversing the length of the passage by avoiding the floor. The passage descends slightly as it travels some 400 feet from the Fang Cavern (area 4) to the Emerald Mine (area 9).

Starting 10 feet beyond the door from the Fang Cavern, this passage

is trapped. A weight of 40 pounds or more on the floor causes a block to fall from the ceiling. The giants simply hold the block in place with their hands over their heads as they pass; once they step off the trigger plate, the block is again locked in place.

(Falling Block Trap: 4d6 bludgeoning damage; DC 10 Dex saving throw for 0 damage)

The trap can be spotted with a successful DC 10 Wis (Perception) check, or automatically if someone sees a giant walking through the passage. Both the floor plate and the ceiling block are rather obvious, as such things go, but they fill the full width of the passage and extend for 20 feet, making them difficult to avoid. When the trap is triggered, four 1-ton stone blocks drop from the ceiling on chains; the chains halt the blocks 6 inches above the floor. The rattling chains give plenty of warning that a trap has been triggered, and the long drop of the stone accounts for the relatively easy avoidance saving throw. If, however, characters are burdened in a way that prevents them from quickly exiting the 20-foot-long danger space—if they're carrying heavy sacks of dragon loot or the body of a fallen comrade, for example—they have tactical disadvantage on this saving throw.

9. Emerald Mine

Here the passage intersects with a dark gray vein rich in emeralds, which the giants have been digging out for the dragon for a year or so—until they encountered a problem they haven't yet summoned up the courage to tell the dragon about. Klarrouth is pondering starting a side tunnel from the upper reaches of this cavern to dig around the problem, but he fears the dragon will suspect the giants of stealing emeralds if they dig for any length of time without yielding up more gems. If the vein is as narrow as it looks to be, a side tunnel will traverse a long stretch of gem-free bedrock. So no giants will be found at work here.

The inner passage (area 8) crosses a huge, giant-dug cavern before vanishing into a tunnel mouth on the other side. The crossing is 120 feet long, with a ceiling 120 feet up, and the passage running on from the cavern is 45 feet wide by 70 feet tall. To the right of someone entering the mine cavern from the inner passage, the mine has a level floor that and extends only 100 feet, narrowing toward its end.

To the left of such a traveler, the mine cavern descends steeply and is almost 100 feet wide; it ends 80 feet below the floor level of the passage. Torches and lanterns won't illuminate the far end of the cavern from the passage, and even most creatures with darkvision can't see that far.

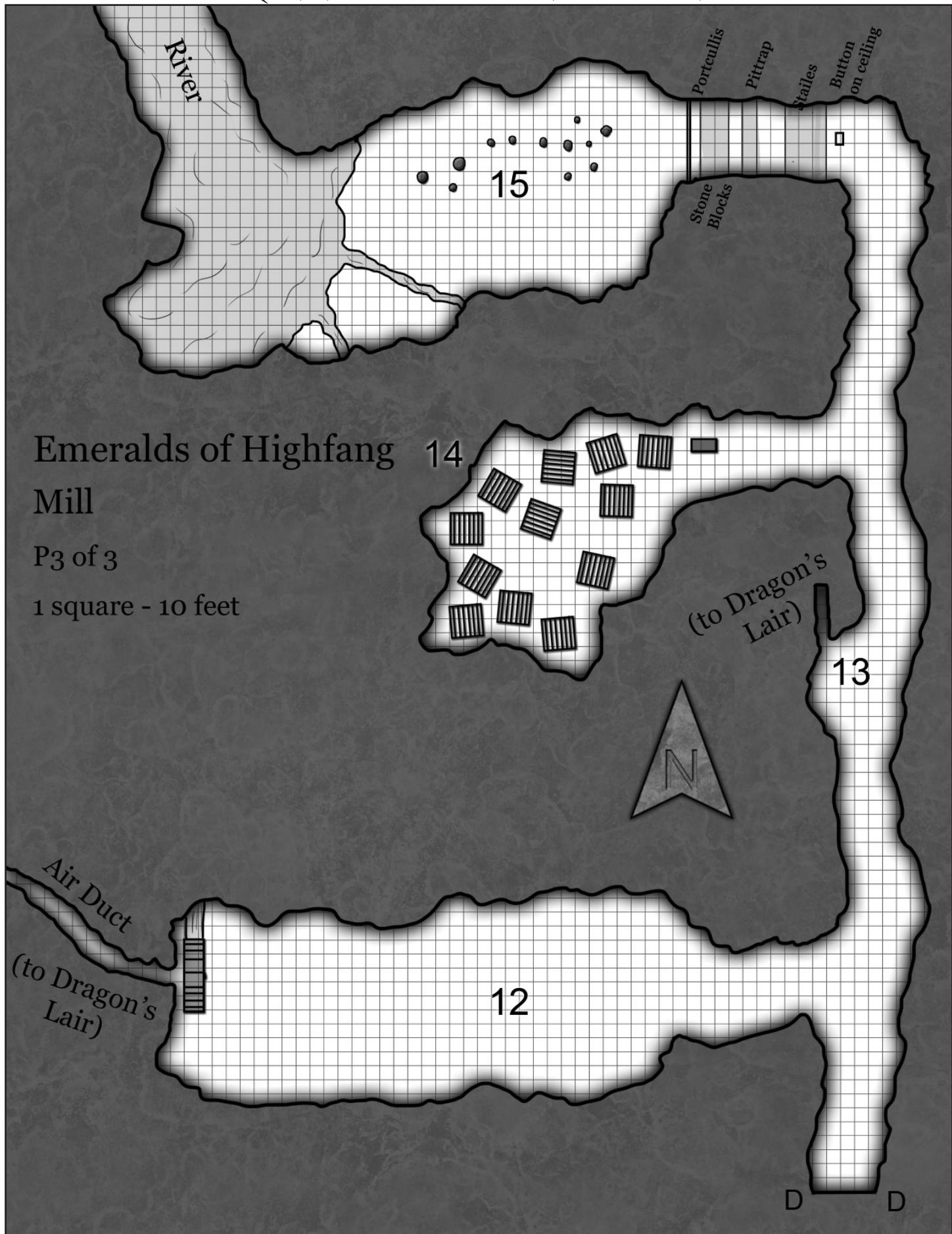
At the lower (left) end, the diggings broke through into an ancient cavern that suffered a ceiling collapse long ago, entombing an **Iron Golem** on its back under tons of boulders and stone rubble. The giants uncovered its head, chest, and one arm, and in doing so—as it perceives—"attacked" it with their prybars, picks, and hammers. Its ancient instructions, given to it by a long dead and forgotten mage, were to defend the cavern against intruders, and it still considers that its mission. It belched poison gas onto the giants trying to dig it loose and fought them with its free arm.

The giants retreated, leaving the golem lying there, trapped on its back beneath the rubble as it had been for ages. Since then, it is ever-so-slowly digging itself free by clawing with its one arm. Its head, chest, left shoulder, and left side down to its waist are now bare; its right shoulder and side, sword arm, and its lower body are still pinned.

Characters entering the mine won't at first see the golem, which will be lying still, in the dark, with its face turned toward the passage (facing the approaching characters). Its upper arm lies flat and motionless on the rubble, but bent 90 degrees at the elbow so the forearm points straight up, its hand balled into a fist. The iron golem looks like a full-body suit of black plate armor, with a full-face helm pierced only by two thin, dark "eye" slits above four vertical "breathing" slits.

The moment anyone gets within 15 feet of it, the golem exhales a cloud of poison gas. If any character gets closer, it lashes out with its arm in a sideways punch.

QUESTS OF DOOM: GIANTS & DRAGONS



EMERALDS OF HIGHFANG



(Iron Golem: AC 20, 210 hps; +10 to hit x2, 3d10 + 7 bludgeoning damage [fist]; poison breath in 15-foot cone, 10d8 poison damage, DC 19 Con saving throw for half damage, recharge 6)

No one who gets within 50 feet of the golem will fail to notice that a dozen raw, uncut emeralds as large as a dwarf's fist are heaped on its chest. They were gathered there by the golem as it lay in the darkness. ; its orders tell it not to damage emeralds). Uncut, each is worth about 200 gp; once expertly cut and polished, each would be worth 4d4 x 100 gp.

10. Quarry

Here the passage from the Emerald Mine crosses one end of a vast cavern where the fire giants are quarrying out large, rectangular blocks of stone for the Mill (area 12). The ceiling of this cavern is studded with the broken-off roots of stalactites, and the floor is entirely smooth where block after block has been removed. The fire giants are neat, methodical stonemasons.

At work in the quarry, as far away from the passage crossing as it's possible to get, are **six fire giants** without helms, armor, or swords, but armed with mattocks, hammers, picks, and huge prybars that they swing like greatswords.

(Fire Giant: AC 18, 162 hps; +11 to hit x2, 6d6 + 7 slashing damage [greatsword] or +11 to hit, range 60/240, 4d10 + 7 bludgeoning damage [thrown rock])

If the giants notice intruders, they rush to attack. One giant tries to thunder past the characters and on down the passage toward area 11 to warn the dragon. After past incidents, the dragon has issued firm "no

exceptions" orders to the giants that it is to be informed of the presence of any sentient intruders or large and dangerous creatures of any kind. Characters pursuing the giant see that it races past areas 11 and 12 to area 13, where it first stammers, hemms, and haws for several moments before finally blurting out a warning about "humans in our halls." The dragon is asleep, so the giant's first attempt at a message awakens it, but it doesn't hear the message properly; a fast-moving character who uses the side opening to get into the speaking tube can completely block the giant's second attempt, so all the dragon will hear is muffled rumblings. It will assume it's hearing the mumblings of a drunken giant rather than a warning and will go back to sleep, in a sour mood.

If characters don't stop the giant before it reaches area 13 or block its message, they'll likely reap the consequences in area 11.

Unbeknownst even to the giants, a **mimic** has crept into this cavern from the wilds of Highfang. It is posing as part of the rough stone around the edges of the cavern, near the passage crossing, where the giants haven't yet gone in their cutting. It will stalk characters if it gets the chance, drawing closer (as a stone) when it thinks it isn't being watched.

(Mimic: AC 12, 58 hps; +6 to hit, 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled or 1d8 + 3 piercing damage plus 1d8 acid damage [pseudopod]; anything that touches the mimic becomes grappled by it, and ability checks to escape from the mimic's grapple are made with tactical disadvantage)

If characters defeat or drive off the giants and then decide to sleep or rest here, the mimic becomes immobile and waits until the maximum number of characters are asleep, or when it can catch someone alone, before it attacks. If characters suddenly move to depart, it immediately attacks the rearmost character.

QUESTS OF DOOM: GIANTS & DRAGONS

II. Forge

A side-passage branches off the inner passage to the left. This tunnel is 45 feet wide by 70 feet high, and it runs 80 feet (descending slightly) before opening into a natural cavern 100 feet across and 140 feet long. The air in this chamber stinks of hot metal, and is hot enough to make humans sweat after only a few seconds of exposure. After two minutes or so, a typical humanoid will be slick with sweat and will have tactical disadvantage on Str and Dex checks related to climbing, gripping, and catching.

The heat in this cavern comes from a hole in its western wall, farthest from the passage, which opens into a magma flow. Magma slides slowly and endlessly past this cavern, from right to left as seen by someone standing facing the hole.

This "hot hole" serves the fire giants as a forge fire. They work here with tongs, hammers, and long iron bars that end in flat paddles, moving continually between the hole and a gigantic, scarred, flat-topped slab of nickel-iron ("starmetal," a fallen meteor) which serves them as an anvil. Here the fire giants forge, repair, and temper their weapons and mining tools (picks, hammers, mattocks, and prybars).

Two fire giants are working the forge when characters first peer into it, including Toroth, the fire giants' most talented smith.

This cavern has a small but almost straight natural chimney to the surface, a 170-foot vertical shaft that begins as a 10-foot-diameter hole in the center of the ceiling in the side passage that links the forge cavern with the inner passage (area 8).

If characters were spotted in the quarry (area 10) and a giant fled from there and alerted the dragon, then while characters are scouting or exploring this chamber, the dragon has left its bed and is sitting on a lesser pinnacle of Highfang right beside this chimney, listening intently. If it hears talking or whispering that isn't coming from a giant (the dragon can easily tell the difference, and the chimney acts like a megaphone for sounds from below), it breathes fire down the chimney. The chute confines and focuses the flames so they reach past the bottom of the shaft and flood out into a 30-foot stretch of the side-passage centered on the shaft. All creatures in this area take 25d6 fire damage, or half that with a successful DC 26 Dex save.

12. Mill

Here the Inner Passage branches to the left in another side passage 60 feet wide, 70 feet high, and 100 feet long, with a smooth, downward-sloping ramp for a floor that has been worn slippery-smooth by the endlessly repeated passage of something that created two parallel grooves or "slides" (which are sized more like troughs). The cavern descends and widens out into a long chamber. A deep, ceaseless, rumbling, groaning sound comes up from below, overlaid fairly often by high-pitched screechings.

A character who sets foot in either groove in the floor must make a DC 22 Dex saving throw; failure indicates the character slips, falls, and slides helplessly down the groove, the full length of the passage, alerting the giants in the mill space below.

A strong, steady breeze blows from the passage down into this cavern; the rumbling and screechings would be much louder throughout other areas inside Highfang if it didn't.

This cavern has denuded of stalactites and stalagmites. It houses the main coin-earning industry the fire giants are running for the dragon. Characters who look down into this cavern from the side passage see an underground spring gushing high out of the cavern wall on their right, at the end of the cavern. It plunges into the buckets of an undershot mill wheel made of welded iron, mounted sideways to the observer on a massive stone axle. The turning wheel is the source of the rumbling sound, as it turns endlessly under the goad of the constant fall of water.

A metal axle protrudes from the wheel to jut into the room, where it powers a spinning, tapered-point cutting drill. **Six fire giants** work in the chamber, manipulating one of the blocks from the quarry by brute strength as the cutter slowly grinds away at it. Five giants are holding and turning the stone, while

the sixth is using a huge stone paddle to deflect some of the falling water onto the stone at the spot where the cutter is at work, to cool the stone and wash away what would otherwise be blinding clouds of rock dust.

The giants are slowly transforming the rectangular blocks they quarried in area 10 into smooth, cylindrical stone columns. These are sold for cash to merchants, who market them as roof supports for massive palaces and public buildings.

Finished columns are loaded onto high-sided sledges and dragged up the slope out of this cavern and on to area 15 by teams of captive ettins. No ettins are in the mill cavern when characters first see it; ettin teams are brought here only when a sledge is filled with four columns securely lashed into wooden cradles. At the moment, one sledge sits off to the side of the milling area with just one finished column loaded. A glance at the sledge confirms that this is what wore the grooves into the floor.

Any character who examines the water wheel closely notices that the side of the turning wheel nearest the wall has something welded to it: metal fan blades that turn with the wheel, between it and the stone wall. These blades drag air down into this cavern from the passage above to push air through a tunnel behind the turning water wheel, in the cavern's end wall. This gently ascending tunnel is oval in cross-section, about 15 feet across and 30 high, and carries fresh air up into the dragon's lair (area 19). This air channel is the stealthiest way into the lair.

13. Speaking Tube

The passage widens here into a natural, rough-walled alcove, roughly 50 feet long and 20 feet wider than the rest of the passage, with the same 70-foot ceiling as the adjoining passage. Long ago, emerald delvers of much smaller stature than the giants (probably dwarves) bored a long shaft high up in one wall that ascends steadily into the Dragonslumber Cavern (area 19) of the dragon's lair.

It is currently used as a speaking tube; the pipe amplifies what the giants shout, speak, or whisper into it, so the dragon can hear them clearly in its lair. If a giant flees from the quarry to here, he will use the speaking tube to warn the dragon. The speaking tube's creators also cut a second hole into the wall below and to the left of the larger one the giants use. This secondary hole connects to the main sound passage after a climb of about 15 feet. A human can fit through either one.

The speaking shaft is not just a narrow crawlspace. It is 5 feet tall and 3 feet wide; an adult human can squeeze through it easily, but can also block it with their body, clothing, and gear sufficiently to muffle any sounds coming through. Blocking the tube this way won't stop all sounds, but it will utterly garble any speech through the tube that is more complex than single, short, simple words (such as "Help!") shouted by a giant.

14. Ettin Pens

This large, irregular, natural cavern contains a spare, empty sledge (a duplicate of the one in area 12) and a dozen massive cages made from welded iron bars. Slave teams of captive ettins are kept imprisoned here, three to a cage, permanently wearing welded iron harnesses. The room reeks of ettin dung, which is heaped knee deep (to a human) throughout the cages. Mixed in are the bones of the cattle carcasses thrown to the ettins by their fire giant captors.

The giants select ettins when needed and drag them out, one by one, clip their harnesses together by means of the rings that are part of each harness, beat any uncooperative ettins into near-senseless submission, then drag the assembled teams to area 12, hitch them to a loaded sledge, and force them to drag the tons of stone up the steep slope and to area 15.

15. Raft Sally Port

Here the Inner Passage turns left and descends, to end in this large cavern studded with the stumps of broken-off stalactites and stalagmites. From where the passage turns to where it enters the wider cavern is a

EMERALDS OF HIGHFANG

descent of 20 feet. The walls, floors, and ceiling are made of smooth stone blocks with large seams between them. The floor is paved with ten-foot-long paving stones, and the ceiling and walls are covered with 4-foot-square blocks.

Several small springs weep down the walls of this cavern and join together in a pool where a dozen rafts wait. Each raft is fitted with a trio of wooden cradles into which a single stone column can be lashed; the giants push loaded rafts out into the pool and let the current flowing from the pool carry the columns downriver to human merchants who work for the dragon.

Spare cradles, rope for lashing (as thick around as small barrels, to a human; a very short length of rope could serve as flotation for one person), a cleaver (treat as greatsword) for lopping off lengths of rope, and the chopping block that the cleaver rests in, all wait here for the giants' use.

The descending stretch of the Inner Passage into this cavern is fitted with traps and guarded by a portcullis, to keep intruders out and enslaved ettins in.

The first trap (from the viewpoint of someone entering the chamber, moving east to west) is located just where the Inner Passage completes its turn and starts to descend. An obvious button for deactivating the trap can be seen in the ceiling; it is easily reachable by a fire giant, but anyone else must climb the wall and somehow cross 30 feet of ceiling to reach it. If someone moves through this area without pressing the button, a row of iron stakes springs out from the walls and the ceiling 10 feet farther on. The stakes imperil a 30-foot-long stretch of passage and the trigger is in the final 10 feet, so many characters might be in the area when the trap goes off if they are sticking close together. The spikes spring out from the seams in the walls and ceiling to their full length. The ceiling spikes drop 65 feet, so someone less than 5 feet tall in the danger area will be safe from them. The wall spikes thrust out far enough so that they leave only a 1-foot-wide safe lane between their points. Pushing the button sets off audible whirring and ticking sounds (cogs spinning behind the stone). The sound continues for five minutes, during which time the trap is safe; then it resets with a loud click. (Impaling Stakes Trap: 2d20 piercing damage to everyone in the area; DC 20 Dex saving throw for half damage)

The second trap is a 30-foot-deep pit that fills the corridor from side to side, covered with a hinged lid that blends seamlessly with the real floor. Pushing a specific spot on the wall locks the lid closed for five minutes. The spot is discolored by grease and soot from the fire giants' hands, so it can be noticed with a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check. When a body strikes the floor of the pit, a puff of poison gas is released from the floor. (Pit Trap: 3d6 falling damage plus 3d6 poison damage and the affected character becomes poisoned for 1 hour; DC 20 Con saving throw halves poison damage and negates poisoned condition)

The third trap is similar to the trap in area 8. It consists of a pressure plate and ceiling sections concealing spike-studded stone blocks on chains. The stones plummet down, imperiling a 20-foot stretch of passage across its entire width. This trap is better hidden; it can be spotted with a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check. The rattling chains give plenty of warning that a trap has been triggered, and the long drop of the stone accounts for the relatively easy avoidance saving throw. If, however, characters are burdened in a way that prevents them from quickly exiting the 20-foot-long danger space—if they're carrying heavy sacks of dragon loot or the body of a fallen comrade, or if they're trying to move up the slope rather than down—they have tactical disadvantage on this saving throw. (Falling Block Trap: 7d6 bludgeoning damage; DC 10 Dex saving throw for 0 damage)

Finally, a portcullis can close off the passage at the bottom of the slope where it opens into the cavern. It is made of massive welded iron bars in a lattice with 1-foot-square openings. Heavy gouge marks can be seen readily on the floor where the portcullis slams when it drops, and the portcullis itself is not camouflaged against the ceiling. On both side walls, just east of where the portcullis drops, there are two identical, unmarked buttons, one above the other (two on the north wall and two on the south wall). The upper button on both walls causes the portcullis to winch itself back up into the ceiling (noisily, by clockwork). The lower button on the south wall causes the portcullis to crash down immediately, whereas the lower button on the north hand wall causes the portcullis to stay up for 15 minutes before dropping (a ticking sound can be heard if characters are

quiet). It can still be dropped instantly by pushing the button on the south wall. Jamming a normal weapon or tool into the wall below the portcullis won't accomplish anything other than destroying the tool if the portcullis drops; it is far too heavy to be held up by anything smaller than giant-sized implements, and large ones at that.

The Dragon's Lair

The red dragon Haeraglondrar (which is an "it" to the giants, not a he or she) is an adult red dragon, a "she" masquerading as a "he" in all dealings with nondragons. Although Haeraglondrar is every bit as arrogant and vain as others of her kind, her world-view is that accepting her superiority as a given means that she shouldn't waste her time preening and doing nothing, nor in assaulting lesser creatures (including other red dragons) to take what they have amassed, when she could be fulfilling her innate superiority by creating wealth for her hoard and at the same time steadily increasing her influence and dominance among nondragons by trading with them.

So she treats with the most sly, enterprising, and energetic human merchants, to sell emeralds (in tiny amounts, to discerning buyers, firmly controlling supply and therefore maintaining high prices) and stone building columns. She will pounce on, slay, and plunder the wealth of merchants who try to swindle or deceive her, of course.

Haeraglondrar won't hesitate to use violence when it seems the best tactic, but prefers to know what talents and expertise she's destroying, rather than slaying first and discovering what she's lost and wasted afterward.

She has a healthy respect for adventurers, and she will happily avoid direct battle with them when she can use the properties of her lair and the strengths of her underlings to reduce or even shatter such potentially dangerous foes for her.

At the center of Highfang Peak is the caldera or bowl-shaped heart of the slumbering volcano, where the giants keep a herd of cattle as food for themselves and for the dragon.

16. Dead Dragon Cave

This large natural cavern is a forest of stalactites and stalagmites, many of which have joined into stone columns that stretch unbroken from the irregular stone floor to the jagged stone ceiling.

The mouth of the cave is the lowest end of the cavern. Water that percolates through the stone and drips down the many stone "teeth" here drains out through the cave opening, into the central caldera of Highfang Peak, in a trickle that keeps the rockface perpetually wet and slick. The entrance is a huge, irregular opening large enough for Haeraglondrar to fly through with wings fully spread. Such openness means the front cavern is difficult to defend, so it's never a preferred spot for Haeraglondrar to rest or bide time, particularly in cold or wet weather.

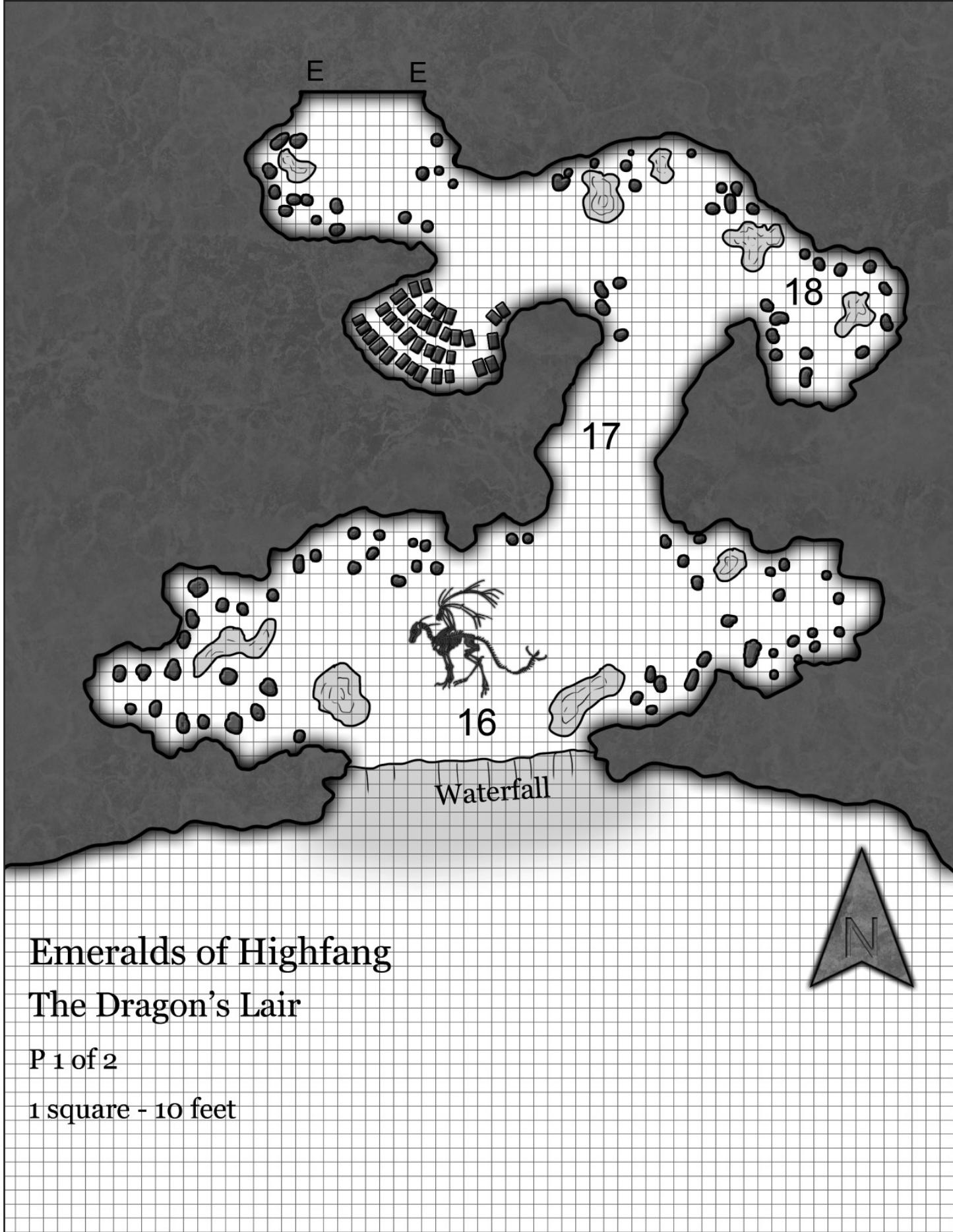
Intruders wanting to enter the dragon's lair from the caldera, or vice versa, need to climb about 80 feet of rockface. Despite the trickling water, it's an easy DC 10 Str (Athletics) climb thanks to plentiful ledges, handholds, and crevices—unless, of course, an angry dragon on the wing catches an intruder in mid-ascent.

The most striking feature in this area fills the smooth floor at the center of the cavern: the charred skeleton of a white dragon. Haeraglondrar defeated and slew this wrym long ago to claim this lair. She left the carcass here both as a trophy and to lure intruders into wondering whether the dragon that lived here has already perished. The skeleton is burned and strategically crushed to make it almost impossible to confirm what type of dragon it was; a successful DC 25 Int (Nature) check is needed to identify the bones as having been a white dragon rather than some other kind.

The skeleton lies twisted amid a deep drift of black ash. Visible in the depths of these ashes is a ruby-red glow. Upon closer examination it can be seen to be a faceted, clear gemstone as large as a human's head, and the glow is coming from within it! This gemstone is an illusion, and it's part of a *glyph of warding* trap that's triggered by touching, poking, lassoing,



EMERALDS OF HIGHFANG

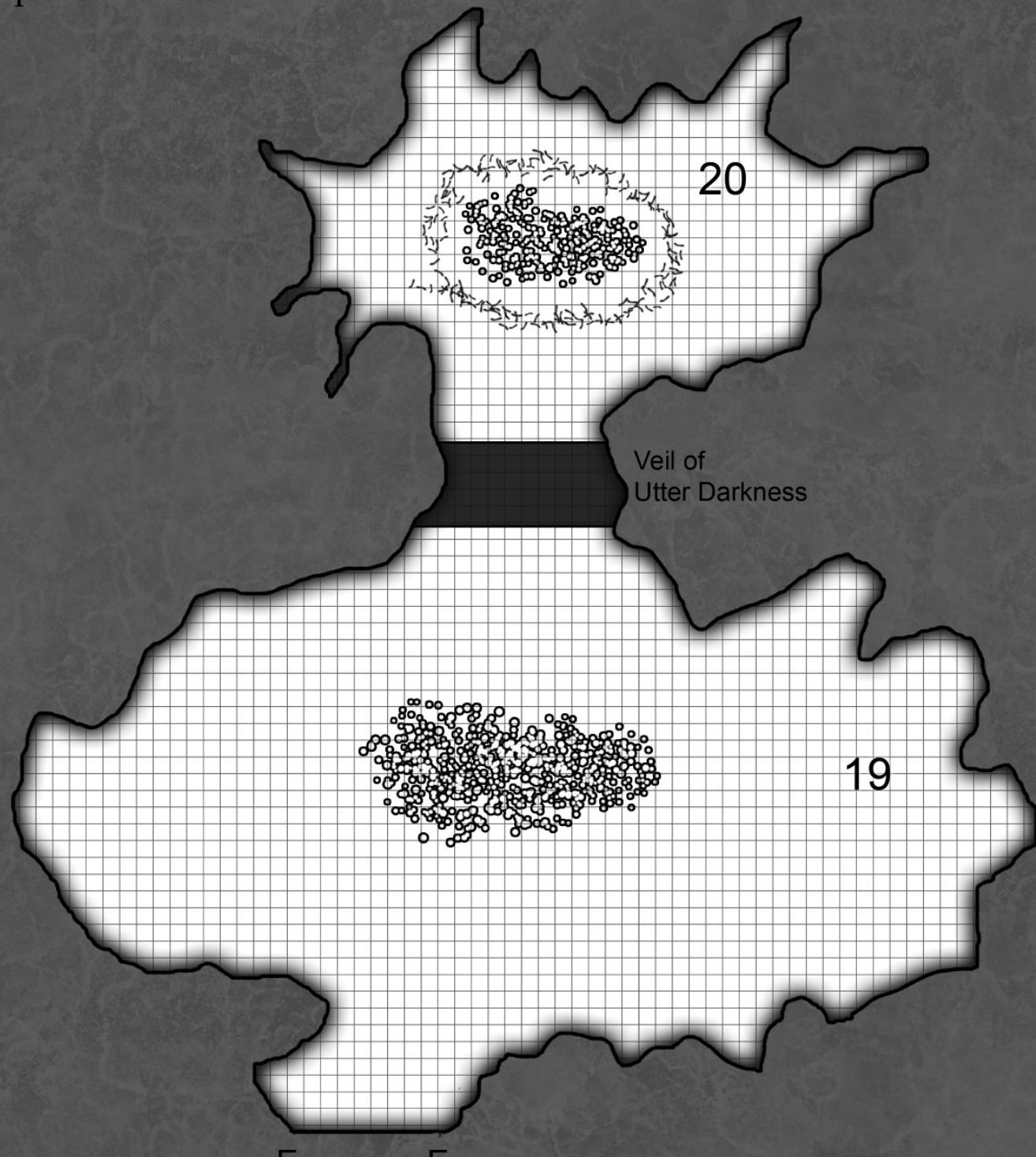


Emeralds of Highfang

Dragonslumber Cavern

P 2 of 2

1 square - 10 feet



EMERALDS OF HIGHFANG

or otherwise moving the gem through mundane or magical means. (*Glyph of Warding Trap*: 20-ft. radius; 8d8 fire damage; DC 16 Dex saving throw for half damage)

A family of **four giant bats** roost on high ledges near the cavern ceiling. They swoop to attack anything smaller than a giant that examines the dragon skeleton or that passes through the central area of the cavern floor. The bats are jet black with blazing red eyes, large fangs, long tails, and wide black leathery wings that make them resemble manta rays, though they are simply a rare subspecies of bat. They shriek as they attack, their wide and many-fanged maws gaping wide. These cries are so high-pitched that they are like needles in the ears of those nearby, but are almost inaudible more than 70 feet away.

(Giant Bat: AC 13, 22 hps; +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [bite])

The bats attack characters to slay and feed, but will flee to high ledges or out into the caldera if injured to 6 hit points or less. The death or retreat of one bat won't affect the others.

Warm, fouled water with a strong mineral aftertaste collects in several small, shallow pools scattered across the cavern. Intruders who drink this water will vomit it in minutes. The "air duct" tunnel from area 12 opens up in a corner of this cave, bringing a strong rush of air and the rumbling, screeching din of the mill with it.

The highest end of this cavern becomes a natural passage leading farther into Highfang. This "Wyrmcrawl" passage is roughly oval, being about 80 feet wide and about 100 feet high. Although it's a natural tunnel, it shows obvious claw gouges where the dragon enlarged it and smashed out stalagmites and stalactites over the years.

17. Wyrmcrawl

Whenever Haeraglondrar thinks there may be intruders in Highfang (thanks to a warning from the giants or from hearing the sounds of fighting or of intruders whispering through the air vent or speaking tube), the red dragon goes on the defensive at the north end of this tunnel. When intruders enter the passage, it retreats backward along the passage, watching the intruders and taking lair actions to trigger magma eruptions or tremors or spheres of poisonous volcanic gas in area 17. It can't cause the same effect in successive rounds. Its preferred defensive routine is to use tremors and gas clouds to immobilize or slow intruders, hit them with magma eruptions, then repeat the process, wearing them down as they advance.

18. The Spending Hoard

This cavern, minus the dragon skeleton and the resident bats, is similar in appearance and properties to the Dead Dragon Cave (area 16), right down to the shallow pools of water. Haeraglondrar retreats slowly through this cavern, using the plentiful stone columns and stalagmites for cover, and continue wearing intruders down with lair actions. Advancing characters can't help but notice a large alcove that opens to the left, where thirty sealed chests are clustered. These are large, hooped, brassbound, locked chests in the classic "pirate" style, all with end-handles and large enough that it would take two strong people to carry them.

These are one big trap. The chests are all locked and bolted (from the inside) to the floor. The locks are intricate and sturdy; one can be opened with a set of lock picks and a successful DC 20 Dex check or with a successful DC 25 Str check (allow tactical advantage if characters use a prybar). Only one attempt can be made per chest, but there are thirty to work on. A character who inspects just one chest needs a successful DC 25 Wis (Perception) check to notice the trap, but if characters inspect several chests beforehand, the DC drops to 15.

Raising the lid of just one chest releases the lids on all of them, allowing the starving stirges inside (eight per chest, or **240 stirges** in all!) to fly out. Slamming a lid back down has no effect on any other lids. There is no treasure here; aside from the stirges, the chests are empty.

(Stirge: AC 14, 2 hps; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 3 piercing damage and stirge attaches to victim [bite]; while attached, stirge automatically inflicts 1d4 + 3 damage per round; maximum damage from 1 stirge is 10 hps; victim can remove 1 stirge automatically per action)

At the far end of the cavern from the Wyrmcrawl, this cavern opens directly into another vast cave: the Dragonslumber Cavern. The natural archway between the two caverns has a floor of crushed and strewn stone rubble, and a ceiling of jagged stalactites.

It, too, is a trap, which Haeraglondrar can trigger at will, causing the stalactites to plunge to the floor. She triggers this trap when the characters she judges most formidable are passing through the archway. If the dragon thinks the intruding characters are powerful and largely unscathed, she uses her fire breath on them at the same time. The trap can be noticed with a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check under normal circumstances; if the check is made in the midst of a battle against the dragon, characters have tactical disadvantage on it. (Stalactite Trap: 10d6 bludgeoning damage; DC 20 Dex saving throw for 0 damage)

19. Dragonslumber Cavern

This large, irregular natural cavern has been cleared of stalagmites and stalactites. Even their broken-off stumps have been worn down and smoothed over the years. The **ancient red dragon Haeraglondrar** customarily slumbers here on a heap of gold and silver coins (39,667 gp in all).

The cavern floor has been graved with claw marks to divide it into more-or-less regular 10-foot squares. Some of these lines bisect the roots of shorn stalagmites. By counting lines, any intruder can see at a glance that this cavern is *big*—large enough for the dragon to move with ease, slap with its tail, spread its wings, and so on. Another huge, dark opening at the rear of the cavern suggests that there's another cave beyond this one.

The dragon naps lightly, awakening in an instant if voices come up the speaking tube from area 13 that opens in one corner of this cavern.

Atop her heap of coins, one of the dragon's hindclaws dangles down an open "well" amid the coins, where it rests on a final trap control. By means of it, Haeraglondrar can open any 10-foot square on the surrounding floor in a 20-foot-wide oval ring all around the heap of coins, plus a 30-foot-wide swath of floor leading from that ring to the mouth of the passage from area 18. Every one of these 10-foot sections covers a pit trap. The fact that the floor is trapped can be noticed with a careful inspection and a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check. (Pit Trap: 4d6 bludgeoning damage; DC 20 Dex saving throw avoids the fall)

Haeraglondrar loves her treasure but not to the point that she will die for it. If she judges the characters too formidable after she's worn them down on the way here, tried to catch them in these pit traps, and breathed fire on them a few times, she'll shift her effort to flying away. The intruders will need time to pack up all this treasure, after all, and she might be able to get it back soon by arranging a second battle more to her liking. Perched on a promontory on Highfang, she can swoop down on the characters at her leisure while they are climbing down the cliff at the entrance or rafting away on the river. Anyone who plunders her hoard must die, but she is patient. She is vain and greedy, but not stupid or suicidal.

20. Hoard Cavern

This small, innermost cavern is veiled by a curtain of *darkness*: a magical field of chill air that drinks all light, permitting no radiance to pass through and no light to function within it. The curtain also confines **two giant bats** inside its area of effect. They are ravenous, and will swoop at and viciously attack any creature other than the dragon that enters the 50-foot-thick *curtain*.

(Giant Bat: AC 13, 22 hps; +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [bite])

QUESTS OF DOOM: GIANTS & DRAGONS

The veil also magically foils all *teleport*, *dimension door*, and similar translocation magic through it and into or out of area 20.

Beyond the veil lies the dragon's real hoard: a huge heap of coins and gems (450 rubies, each worth 2,000 gp; 144,000 gp; 210,000 sp; and 1,600 cp that the dragon didn't bother to throw away while sorting out more valuable coins.

Around the entire heap is an ominous fence: a continuous ring of human bones, all jumbled together and including scraps of rusty armor, weapons, and adventuring gear (but no magic items).

Two items float above the heap: a ragged, dirty, moth-eaten purple cloak floats upright, obviously empty, and a smooth, ovoid stone nearly as large as a person's palm that gives off a soft, beige glow. The gem appears to be lighting the entire cavern with dim light: an illumination radius of more than 250 feet!

Neither of these floating items responds to the presence of intruders.

The stone is simply an ordinary, polished stone on which has been cast a modified *continual light* spell. It could be useful as a lantern or a signaling device, with the proper housing. Its light can't be dimmed or quenched by magical means, but it can be shrouded by metal, wood, or heavy cloth. It illuminates a radius of 300 feet with dim light, and it can be seen as a soft, beige speck in the darkness for many miles.

The cloak looks like cloth, but anyone who touches it immediately understands that it is actually a suit of armor. It is *glamered leather armor of the shadows*, highly useful to rogues or anyone else with stealthy intentions. The armor acts as *leather armor* +2, with the added benefit that the wearer can double his or her Proficiency bonus when making Stealth checks.

This precious hoard is not unguarded; the ring of bones animates if disturbed or crossed over, rising in a whirling cloud of bones that quickly resolves into **18 skeletons** wearing the scraps of armor and wielding the rusty weapons that were intermingled with the bones. These skeletons are *not undead*, so they can't be turned or destroyed by clerics. Rather, they are animated objects. Treat them in every way as animated armor, except for how you describe them to players.

(Skeleton/Animated Armor: AC 18, 33 hps; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage [slam])

A Last Gasp

If characters begin shifting or digging into the heap of coins and gems, something large suddenly stirs from beneath the pile, rising ominously and shedding coins and gems in all directions: another dragon!

Or rather, the skeleton of a dragon. It rears up, opens its jaws, spreads its wings, reaches with its claws for the characters—and then collapses into its component bones, puffing dust from every joint as it tumbles into ruin. This was a half-finished project of Haeraglondrar's, another animated object intended to someday be a last-ditch guardian of the hoard, not an undead dragon, but she never got around to perfecting it.

Eycanthropes & Elementals

Bad Moon Rising

By Steve Winter

This adventure is meant for characters of levels 4 to 6. The default setting is the Barony of Loup-Montagne, but any remote, heavily wooded principality with highly superstitious residents will do.

The Barony of Loup-Montagne is a remote region of densely forested hills cut by steep-banked streams, rocky outcrops, and darkly shadowed dales. Any similar area in your campaign world can fill in, with or without the French-sounding names used here.

The center of Loup-Montagne is the town of Roulune. It is home to about five hundred residents in roughly eighty households. Roulune is hardly a metropolis, but it is the biggest town for miles around, thanks largely to the remoteness of the region. Only a few roads of any consequence pass through the town: the main route is a trade road through the tangled, wooded hills that dominate this region. Baron Chaput exacts a toll on traders who use the road, in exchange for keeping it safe from bandits and monsters. The toll is not excessive and most traders pay it willingly, because the road is considered safe, by and large. Incidents of robbery and violence along the highway are rare within the barony.

What's Going On

As is normal in a gothic horror tale, the true situation in Roulune is different from what it seems. Figuring out the real story and the real connections between people will be key to the player characters' success in this adventure. For the GM's convenience, this section lays out the straight facts.

Key NPCs in Loup-Montagne

Grandfather Nicodeme

This evil old man is the ultimate source of all the trouble.

What's Told: Baron Nicodeme ruled the barony for more than 40 years, and they were good years. The Baron had a reputation for being strong-willed and pitiless, but not unnecessarily cruel. He was harsh toward those who broke his laws, but his laws were clear and generally considered fair. A year ago, while hunting, Nicodeme was attacked by wolves. The Baron's lieutenant (Paschal Moreau) managed to fight his way through the wolves. According to Moreau's account, the baron ordered him to ride out on the only surviving horse and bring help. By the time help arrived, Nicodeme and two other men-at-arms were already dead. With his legs torn apart so he couldn't walk, the Baron had put his back to a tree and fought heroically to the end. Only two bodies were recovered. A blood trail indicated that one of the men-at-arms was dragged away by the wolves, and his body was never found.

What's True: The baron and his three companions were attacked while hunting. The attackers were wolves led by a werewolf. The hunters fought off the attack, but both men-at-arms were killed and the Baron was badly wounded by the werewolf. Knowing what would happen to him, the Baron and Moreau switched the Baron's clothing and belongings

for those of one of the dead men who was mangled beyond recognition. As Paschal rode away with news of the Baron's "death," the bleeding Baron dragged himself into the woods. With his wounds healing rapidly, his blood trail soon petered out. He headed for the ruins of St. Ulrich Abbey, where Moreau was to meet him later. Nicodeme has been living in the vicinity of the abbey ever since, growing more evil and bloodthirsty with each passing month. Moreau visits him occasionally, when he thinks he can do so without being discovered.

Nicodeme raised Ghislain after Renard's death, but he never liked his grandson. He thinks Ghislain's rule will bring ruin to the Barony and stain the family name. He has decided to murder Ghislain, since that will clear the way for Jules Brisbois to claim the mantle.

Renard Chaput

The only son of Baron Nicodeme. Renard should have succeeded Nicodeme to be the Baron now, if he'd lived long enough.

What's Told: Renard was handsome, dashing, and lively. He would have made a good baron, if he'd outlived his father, but he died 12 years ago in a tragic incident. Renard, his wife Seraphine, and their son Ghislain were riding in the forest when they were attacked by wolves. Only seven-year-old Ghislain survived; he was found unconscious beneath the bloody bodies of his parents.

What's True: The common story is true, but it's only part of the story. Renard was a philanderer with one illegitimate son (Jules Brisbois) whose existence was publicly acknowledged, and probably others he didn't acknowledge. The existence of a bastard son is a problem because of the legend concerning the Barony of Loup-Montagne (see "The Legend" below). Renard was popular among the young men of the barony because he enjoyed popping into taverns, buying drinks for everyone, and turning the evening into a raucous party, but he was strongly resented by the many married men he cuckolded.

Renard and Seraphine really were killed by wolves, but if characters dig into this story, they hear persistent rumors that the wolf attack was a cover-up, and that Renard was assassinated by a conspiracy of jealous husbands who were fed up with his behavior; it was simply bad luck for Seraphine that she was riding along at the wrong time.

Ghislain Chaput

Ghislain is the current Baron Chaput.

What's Told: Ghislain is liked well enough by the citizenry, but he's very young (19 years old) and has been Baron for only a year. It's common knowledge that the former Baron (Ghislain's grandfather) didn't like Ghislain and was trying to arrange for Jules Brisboi to become his heir, but Nicodeme died before such an arrangement could be formalized. Hence, tradition had to be followed and Ghislain was anointed the new Baron.

Most citizens of Loup-Montagne like Ghislain well enough, but they also know the legend—that tragedy will follow if the Barony doesn't pass to the eldest surviving son. A heated debate erupts anytime this topic comes up in a tavern or public place. One side argues that Ghislain is the legitimate heir, so everything is fine. The other side argues that Jules Brisboi is Renard's eldest son, legitimate or not, so trouble will follow if he doesn't carry the title. This camp is already blaming the recent surge in

BAD MOON RISING

wolf attacks on flouting the legend.

Ghislain's right leg was severely mangled in the attack that killed his parents. No magical healers were on hand and Nicodeme refused to allow doctors to amputate it, but the boy surprised everyone by surviving the wound. He needs a crutch to walk, and walking or riding a horse are extremely painful. He is carried in a chair most of the time, walking or riding only when he goes out in public.

What's True: Ghislain is a decent young man who takes his position seriously. He trusts his half-brother Jules and places no credence in the legend. Even if he did, Ghislain's attitude is that he is Renard's eldest legitimate son, so whatever power the legend has (which he believes is none), it should be satisfied. Ghislain is greatly troubled by the wolf attacks, but he believes they are the work of hungry wolves and nothing more.

Ghislain vehemently denies the rumor that his father was murdered by angry husbands, if asked about the incident. He was only seven, but he clearly remembers being attacked by wolves, and he angrily strips off his stocking to show his withered, mangled right leg. Anyone with training in Nature can confirm that they are the bites of large canines. Anyone with training in Medicine will be amazed that a child survived such a wound without magical healing.

Jules Brisbois

Baron Ghislain's half-brother is an important officer in the barony. His position is informal, but he acts as an advisor and confidante to Ghislain and as a lieutenant to Moreau.

What's Told: Brisbois is something of an enigma in Roulune. He is boisterous and lusty like his father, and he's well-liked by the young men of the town for the same reasons Renard was liked. If characters press for more information than that, they are mostly met with stony silence; the people of Roulune are obviously reluctant to talk about Brisbois in too much detail, other than to say things like, "well, you know how men like him can be." Residents are more willing to talk about Brisbois's role in the legend than about any dark aspect of his personality. About a third of the town would prefer Brisbois as Baron over Ghislain. If the wolf attacks grow worse, that percentage is bound to grow.

What's True: The "secret" that townsfolk are reluctant to discuss is that Brisbois has a vicious temper, and when it gets out of control, he becomes dangerous. He has come close to killing people with his bare hands while in a fury, including a few of his friends. Because of his position in the barony, people who get hurt in his rampages are paid off in gold and the incidents aren't spoken of. The innkeeper at the Wolf's Pelt tavern is one of the few locals who will open up to characters about this, but only if he can't be overhead by other locals.

Brisbois's temper is a red herring, meant to mislead characters into suspecting that he is the werewolf. If characters raise that possibility around any townsfolk, even in jest, at least a few are bound to nod their heads in dark agreement.

Brisbois's real offense against the barony is that he's fallen in league with a group of poachers and occasional highwaymen. In exchange for a cut of the profit, he provides them with information about where the Baron's foresters plan to patrol for poachers each week and when particularly rich or vulnerable merchants are traveling through the barony. These bandits can be encountered at Travers Castle, and if handled properly, they might implicate Brisbois in their crimes.

Paschal Moreau

Moreau was the former Baron's right-hand man. Ghislain considers him a trusted family deputy and employs Moreau as head of the militia and as an advisor.

What's Told: Moreau is "the last of the old breed," a gentleman warrior who can be relied on to always do the right thing. A few people whisper accusations of cowardice over him leaving Baron Nicodeme when the wolves attacked, but most accept Moreau's account of what happened at

face value. A man like him never would have left the Baron willingly under those circumstances unless the Baron ordered it directly, and leaving the Baron to ride for help must have been the hardest thing Moreau ever did.

What's True: Moreau is every bit the rock of determination and strength that people believe him to be, but his account of what happened to the Baron is false. He is the only person in Loup-Montagne (who is not also a werewolf) to know that Nicodeme, in werewolf form, is behind the recent killings. Moreau is genuinely conflicted about the secret he's hiding, but his unwavering loyalty to Nicodeme blinds him to the great evil the old Baron is committing.

Absalon Dufort

Dufort serves as the barony's treasurer. He also manages the Baron's household and runs the manor as both superintendent and castellan. He is in his 60s, with wild hair, a wispy beard, and a slight but noticeable twist to the left caused by an injury to his spine when he was a young soldier. Everyone calls him simply Dufort. He is the only person besides Moreau to have a key to the treasury, where Moreau stores all the town's silver collected through taxes.

The treasurer has an incredible head for numbers, but his thinking about most other topics is muddled and confusing at best. Dufort has noticed the preponderance of silver in the treasury and has been meaning to ask Moreau about it for months, but he's a busy man with many things on his mind and Moreau is never around when Dufort is thinking about it.

The Legend

A legend has circulated through the Barony of Loup-Montagne for hundreds of years concerning the order of inheritance for the title of baron. The legend holds that if the title is passed to someone who is not the eldest heir, the spirits of the forest will lash out against the people of the barony. Citizens of Roulune can cite any number of historical incidents to "prove" this claim. All of them happened before any living person in Roulune was born, and most of them are highly dubious if not completely spurious.

The few citizens who aren't overwhelmingly superstitious see this legend as nothing more than a story meant to ensure that every baron sets up a clean transfer of power upon his death—an outcome greatly desired in a world where any doubt about the line of accession can lead to bloody murders between brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and grandchildren.

In this regard, Renard Chaput's philandering created a problem. Jules Brisbois is older than Ghislain, and Renard acknowledged Jules as his son. The custom of the barony is that a legitimate son has primacy over an illegitimate one, but this is only a custom, not an explicit law, and illegitimate offspring have ruled on other occasions.

Because the exact form of retribution the forest spirits will seek isn't specified, any unfortunate incident that happens in or near the woods can be blamed on the legend. Likewise, people who oppose or dislike a particular baron can point to any unusual death or injury and claim it as proof that a different person should hold the title. If fate doesn't cooperate by providing mysterious mishaps, it's easy enough for clever schemers to arrange a few and blame them on the legend.

Current events have stirred up plenty of talk about the legend and motivated Jules Brisbois's circle of friends to mumble about replacing Ghislain with Jules. A minority of citizens supports this idea, but most believe that Ghislain is the proper heir. Only a small group blames Brisbois for causing the trouble, and they do so quietly and mostly in private out of fear for his temper.

Silver

Paschal Moreau knows that silver is one of the few things that can harm Nicodeme. To protect the werewolf, Moreau has made it his mission to



keep silver out of the hands of the people of Loup-Montagne. This was done mostly through taxation. People who paid their taxes in silver rather than copper were given a small discount. Silver items such as jewelry and plate were accepted in lieu of coins at greater than their face value. Moreau doesn't care about a few silver coins or lockets; he was concerned about larger items such as silver plates, pitchers, picture frames, mugs, and other articles that contain enough silver to turn into knives, spear blades, or swords.

Roulune is a poor town, and taxes are collected door-to-door personally by Moreau (with a militia backup). The process involves a fair amount of haggling under any circumstance, so the slow disappearance of silver has gone unnoticed by most people. The jeweler (a dwarf named Beaumont) is curious why less silver jewelry is crossing his table for repair than in years past, and innkeepers and shopkeepers who are paid in silver will stare at the coins for a few moments before making offhand comments such as "don't see many of these anymore" or "you are new around here." If a character questions the scarcity of silver in a public place, it sets off the usual round of arguing and superstitious theorizing common in Roulune.

The silver is stored under lock and key in the treasury at Chaput Manor. Only Moreau (as chief tax collector) and Dufort (as treasurer) have keys to that chamber.

Roulune

Roulune is a medium-size town filled with typical homes and shops for bakers, cobblers, bowyers, candlemakers, potters, ropemakers, blacksmiths, tailors, and all the other businesses a Medieval town requires. Four locations stand out among the rest, being of special interest to traveling adventurers.

Wolf's Pelt Tavern

The Wolf's Pelt is not the only tavern in Roulune, but it is the only one with rooms for rent to travelers. It's also the biggest and most welcoming to outsiders, and it's where the locals come when they want to hear news from the outside world.

The proprietor is a friendly young man named Hugues who will do everything he can to make strangers feel welcome. His wife Lilou is almost twice his age and is seldom seen by customers. She is painfully shy, so she spends most of her time in the kitchen. If someone tries to talk to her, she becomes flustered and calls for Hugues.

Fewer travelers come through Roulune these days, thanks to news of the wolf attacks, so the inn will have plenty of room available if characters choose to stay here.

The Church of the Forest

This temple can serve whatever good-aligned deity is most appropriate in your campaign, or several at once. The cleric of the temple is Frere Emilé. He can cast *cure wounds* twice per day, but he expects strangers to make a donation to the church's coffers in return (at least half the cost of a *potion of healing* in your campaign). He keeps two scrolls of *lesser restoration* and one of *greater restoration* in a secret compartment beneath the altar in case of emergency. Again, he expects the church to be compensated if they must be used to benefit outsiders.

"Nicodeme's" body was brought to Frere Emilé after the attack. Everyone accepted it as the Baron's, based on the clothes and Moreau's testimony. But Emilé knew Nicodeme well, and in preparing the corpse

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for burial, he saw the body of a much younger man. That weighs on his mind, and he will talk to the characters about it if they establish a level of trust with him.

Gervaise the Astrologer

Gervaise the Astrologer is the most educated person in Roulune. The more she learns, the more she abandons the town's traditional superstitions. It's getting to the point where she even has doubts about astrology.

This dwarf is neither a spellcaster nor an alchemist. She doesn't sell magic items, potions, or magical services. What she has is an amazing store of knowledge on almost any subject the characters have questions about. You can use Gervaise as a reliable source of information, a skill bank, a rumor source, and as the characters' general sounding board in Roulune.

Gervaise can give accurate directions to any location in the barony, along with basic background information about it. Most importantly, she can direct the characters accurately to Travers Castle, St. Ulrich's Abbey, and the Witches' Den. Directions to the Witches' Den come with a warning that the site still has magical power. For further details, see "The Witches' Den," below.

Gervaise puts no stock in the legend about the eldest heir. She doesn't know what's behind the recent attacks, but based on the bodies she's seen and the reports she's heard, she's pretty sure a werewolf is involved. She hasn't shared that opinion with other townsfolk because, given how superstitious they are, talk of a werewolf would be sure to set off ridiculous behavior if not outright panic.

In light of that, Gervaise advises the characters to arm themselves with wolfsbane before venturing into the deep forest. The only spot she can be certain where wolfsbane grows is Duval's Meadow. The best time to harvest it is under the light of a full moon (which is, of course, tonight and the following two nights). She offers characters two pieces of advice regarding wolfsbane. First, Gervaise cautions them that they should wear gloves when handling it and avoid inhaling the flowers' scent; too much exposure causes fatigue (characters who ignore this precaution must make a successful DC 10 Con saving throw at the end of an hour's exposure or gain one level of exhaustion). Second, wolfsbane is also prized by hags, so characters should be on the lookout for those vile creatures when they visit Duval's Meadow.

Wolfsbane: Wolfsbane smeared onto a piercing or slashing weapon gives the weapon a +1 damage bonus against lycanthropes. Even a weapon that lycanthropes are otherwise immune to (nonmagical, nonsilver) causes 1 point of damage if coated with wolfsbane. Also, a lycanthrope with a Wis modifier of 0 or less must make a successful DC 10 Wis saving throw before attacking someone who prominently displays a bunch of wolfsbane (wearing it as a garland, tucked into a belt, waving it in the hand, etc.). Once the werewolf makes a successful save, it can ignore the wolfsbane for the rest of that encounter.

Yannick's Candle Shop

Yannick is a very rare breed: a mix of halfling and elf. He looks like most other halflings at a glance, but anyone who spends more than a few moments conversing with him notices the delicate features, slender grace, and musical speech of a half-elf.

Yannick's shop is famous for its "infused candles." These are mildly magical items that produce minor magical effects when lit, similar to a cantrip. A few types that adventurers might find useful are listed below; feel free to expand this list with any other types you like, at comparable prices.

Candle: Drifting Light

Length: 30 mins

Price: 10 gp

The person holding the candle can cause its light to drift away at a speed of 5 feet/turn, to a distance up to 60 feet from the candle. The drifting flame casts dim light in a 10-foot radius.

Candle: Friends

Length: 30 mins

Price: 20 gp

Everyone within 15 feet of the lit candle has generally positive feelings toward the person who lit it; that person gets tactical advantage on Cha skill checks (not Cha-based attacks) that target humanoids in the candle's radius. These candles are very popular among storytellers and romantic young men.

Candle: Light the Path

Length: 30 mins

Price: 5 gp

If the person holding the lit candle thinks about a place he or she has been to, the flame flickers toward the direction of that place. These are popular among folk who must travel at night and are anxious about losing their way back home. Hugues keeps a box of them at the Wolf's Pelt tavern for revelers who overindulge.

Candle: Mending

Length: 30 secs

Price: 15 gp

If the wax from this rapid-burning candle is dripped onto a broken object, the object repairs itself exactly as it would if a *mending* spell had been cast on it. One candle can repair one object.

Candle: Message

Length: 1 min

Price: 30 gp

A message is whispered to the candle while it is lit, then the candle is extinguished. The next time the candle is lit, it repeats the message verbatim. The total burning time of the candle is one minute, so a message that's more than 30 seconds long will be truncated on delivery. The candle works only once, regardless of how short the message is.

Candle: Restfulness

Length: 1 hr

Price: 30 gp

If a character lights this candle at the start of a short rest and spends an hour basking in its light, he or she recovers from one level of exhaustion. Only the character who lit the candle gets the benefit, and the benefit can be gained only once in a 24-hour period.

Candle: Witching Hour

Length: 8 hrs

Price: 10 gp

The flame of this candle turns blue for one minute precisely at sunset, midnight, and dawn. It is popular among witches, astrologers, and diviners. Yannick usually keeps these under the counter, because they upset some of the most superstitious residents of Roulune.

Candle: Wolfsbane

Length: 1 hr

Price: 40 gp

This candle fills a 30-foot radius with the scent of wolfsbane. The components harmful to people have been refined out; only those that irritate lycanthropes remain. All lycanthropes must withdraw from the candle's radius unless they make a successful DC 10 Con saving throw. This is an experimental item, not yet available for sale. Yannick offers it only if characters mention werewolves, wolfsbane, or that they plan to go hunting wolves.

Superstition in Roulune

The people of Roulune are tremendously superstitious. They interpret every little occurrence as an omen of good or bad tidings based on centuries-old traditions that no outsider has much hope of understanding. Every conversation with villagers should be peppered liberally with superstitious declarations like the suggestions below. If two or more

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villagers are involved, it's common for arguments to break out about the meaning and interpretation of omens.

- “The last fort-moon was blood red, and I saw the shadow of a rabbit on it clear as a bell. Bad times are coming for sure.”
- “My Gran’ tripped on the lintel three times last week. Now I’m afraid to keep a fire burning in the hearth for fear that the house will burn down.”
- “I heard a raven call while I was milking the cow this morning. Had to dump the whole pail of milk. Can’t have it poisoning the baby.”
- “All the flowers on the ivy were facing north this morning. I’m keeping my doors and windows locked until after the harvest.”
- “The worst time to be confronted by wolves is at midnight. You can tell when that is because the flame from a candle turns blue at the witching hour.” (This bit of myth is true for the candles from Yannick’s shop, and it may be useful to characters during the adventure.)
- “A hare chased a cat across my path last week. There’s a witch prowling these woods, that’s now a proven fact.”
- “I heard hedgehogs whining at dusk. They were telling our secrets to witches. You can’t trust anybody these days.”
- “When I was hunting, I saw a wolf staring at me from the brush, and it was missing its left ear. There’s always something like that wrong with a werewolf, you know. Always.”
- “I stopped my brother-in-law from cutting down a thorn tree last week. He would’ve angered the faerie folk even more and brought bad luck on us all.”
- “If you’re concerned about ghosts or werewolves, bring a rooster with you, and be ready with a needle to make him crow. Ghosts and werewolves hate the crowing of roosters; it drives them away.” (This belief derives from the fact that ghosts and werewolves tend to cease their activity at dawn, which is coincidentally when roosters start crowing. A rooster crowing in the middle of the night has no supernatural effect.)
- “Johann ate three eggs for breakfast last week, and his horse died, just like I warned him it would. Eating an odd number of eggs is just inviting death into your home.”

Key Locations in the Barony of Loup-Montagne

The locations described below play important roles in the adventure, and characters are likely to visit most of them in the course of resolving events in Loup-Montagne. Everyone knows where the Baron’s manor is, of course, at the edge of town. Likewise, everyone knows that Travers Road on the south of town leads to the ruin of Travers Castle, but no one goes there anymore. Residents of Roulune give conflicting accounts about the location of St. Ulrich Abbey—those who hunt or travel are more likely to get it right than those who farm or run shops in town. The Witches’ Den is little more than a legend, and any group of three or more people won’t be able to agree on whether it even exists.

Moreau and Gervaise know all three hidden locations, but only Gervaise gives correct directions to all three. Moreau’s directions to the abbey and the Witches’ Den lead characters to a random point along the river, since he doesn’t want them to find those spots. Dufort claims to know all three locations if asked, but characters realize that his muddled directions are impossible to follow even as he’s giving them.

Baron’s Manor

The baronial manor is a grand home, but that’s “grand” on a Medieval scale. It is not a palace or a mansion. It’s a large, well-appointed half-timber construction. Important rooms (entrance hall, great hall) and family sleeping rooms have wood paneling for warmth and for appearance; other

rooms have plaster walls and exposed timber beams. The stable and the barracks are similar, but much plainer. The whole compound is enclosed inside an 8-foot-high stone wall.

Unless they reach some arrangement with the Baron to inspect his home, characters have no good reason to wander unescorted through the manor. If they do so, or if a guest disappears for an unusual length of time, it will rouse suspicion. Guests in an aristocrat’s home are expected to behave appropriately.

1. Main Entrance

The main entrance hall is a grand chamber designed to impress visitors. It’s two stories tall, paneled in oak, and paved with flagstones. Portraits of former barons and their families line the walls, along with close to a hundred weapons: mainly polearms but with a score of swords, maces, and morningstars mixed in. The most arresting of the portraits is one that shows a man in his thirties with piercing silver eyes and a halo of unruly, gray-streaked hair: Baron Nicodeme in his prime.

2. Great Hall

Most of the entertaining and business of the barony are conducted in this chamber. Tables are put up when needed from smooth planks laid across trestles, and taken down and stored along the walls with their benches when not needed; most of the time, the hall is empty. A low platform (one step up) lines one wall for the table of the Baron and honored guests.

3. Kitchen and Storage

During the day, two cooks and a half-dozen teenage helpers work in this chamber. At night, the helpers sleep here.

4. Treasury

Most of the Baron’s wealth is stored here: coins, jewelry, and plate are the most common, with silver predominating because of Moreau’s policy of collecting taxes in silver whenever possible. Only Moreau and Dufort have keys to the massive lock that seals the heavy door. The lock can be picked with a set of thief’s tools and a successful DC 20 Dex check. If the Dex check fails, a *magic mouth* appears above the lock and shouts “thieves at the treasury! Thieves at the treasury! Thieves at the treasury!” for 30 seconds, which is sure to bring Moreau, Brisbois, the Baron, and an armed escort to investigate.

If someone succeeds in breaking into the treasury chamber, it contains a total value of 20,000 gp: 1,800 gp (18 lbs), 80,000 sp (800 lbs), and 10,200 gp worth of silver plate, silver candlesticks, silver picture frames, silverware, jewelry, and other items with a total weight of 1,000 lbs (average of 1 pound per 10 gp value, but with considerable variance; jewelry has much higher value at low weight, while silver hair brushes and mirrors are heavy for their value).

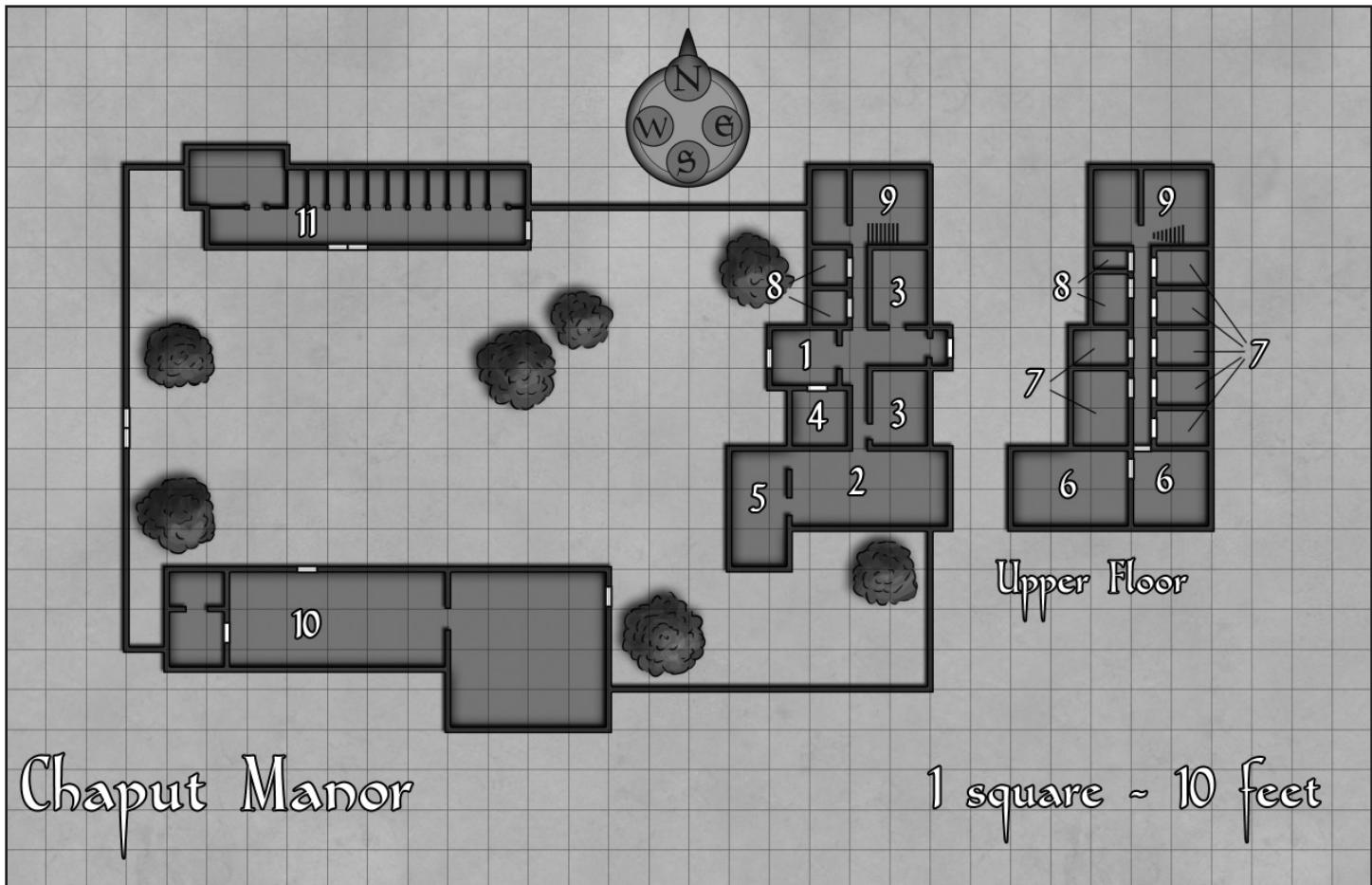
5. Trophy Room

This resembles a room in a hunting lodge, with dozens of trophy heads of wild boar, elk, bears, and many wolves (including a few dire wolves and worgs) mounted on the walls. Rugs of bear and wolf pelts are scattered on the floor.

6. Baron’s Chambers

A comfortable sleeping chamber adjoins a writing chamber (the Baron’s office).

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7. Family and Guest Chambers

Baron Ghislain has no wife or children, so most of these chambers are empty. Only Jules Brisbois has a permanent room here, and he uses it only about half the time. If characters are invited to stay at the manor, they'll be assigned rooms in this area.

8. Servant's Quarters

Dufort and the household staff (one butler, two maids, two cooks) reside in these rooms.

9. Day Rooms

These airy rooms are available for whatever purpose the family needs at the time. They've served as children's play rooms, sewing rooms, school rooms, work rooms, and many other functions. Because Ghislain is unmarried and has no family as yet, they're used chiefly as work rooms by the servants on the ground floor and as sitting rooms on the upper floor.

10. Barracks

Paschal Moreau and the twenty men and women who make up the full-time core of the Loup-Montagne militia live in this structure. It is divided into several dormitory-like sleeping and living chambers, an armory, and a private room for Moreau.

Most areas of the barracks are neat and tidy, but one stands out for its almost animal-like squalor: beds are unmade and covered with reeking animal skins instead of blankets, belongings and leftover food are strewn

around the floor. Three men and one woman of the militia share this chamber. All four are werewolves infected by Nicodeme and under his control. Moreau is aware of their state and tolerates it because of his loyalty to Nicodeme, but other members of the militia resent what they see as a handful of Moreau's favorites being given special privileges (they don't know the four are werewolves). They'll share their complaints with PCs if asked in private. They feel the situation is becoming intolerable, and they're beginning to question Moreau's leadership because of it. If characters search this room (not just examine it from the doorway) after Enzo's murder, they find a pair of blood-stained, embroidered gloves of the type Enzo was transporting.

II. Stables

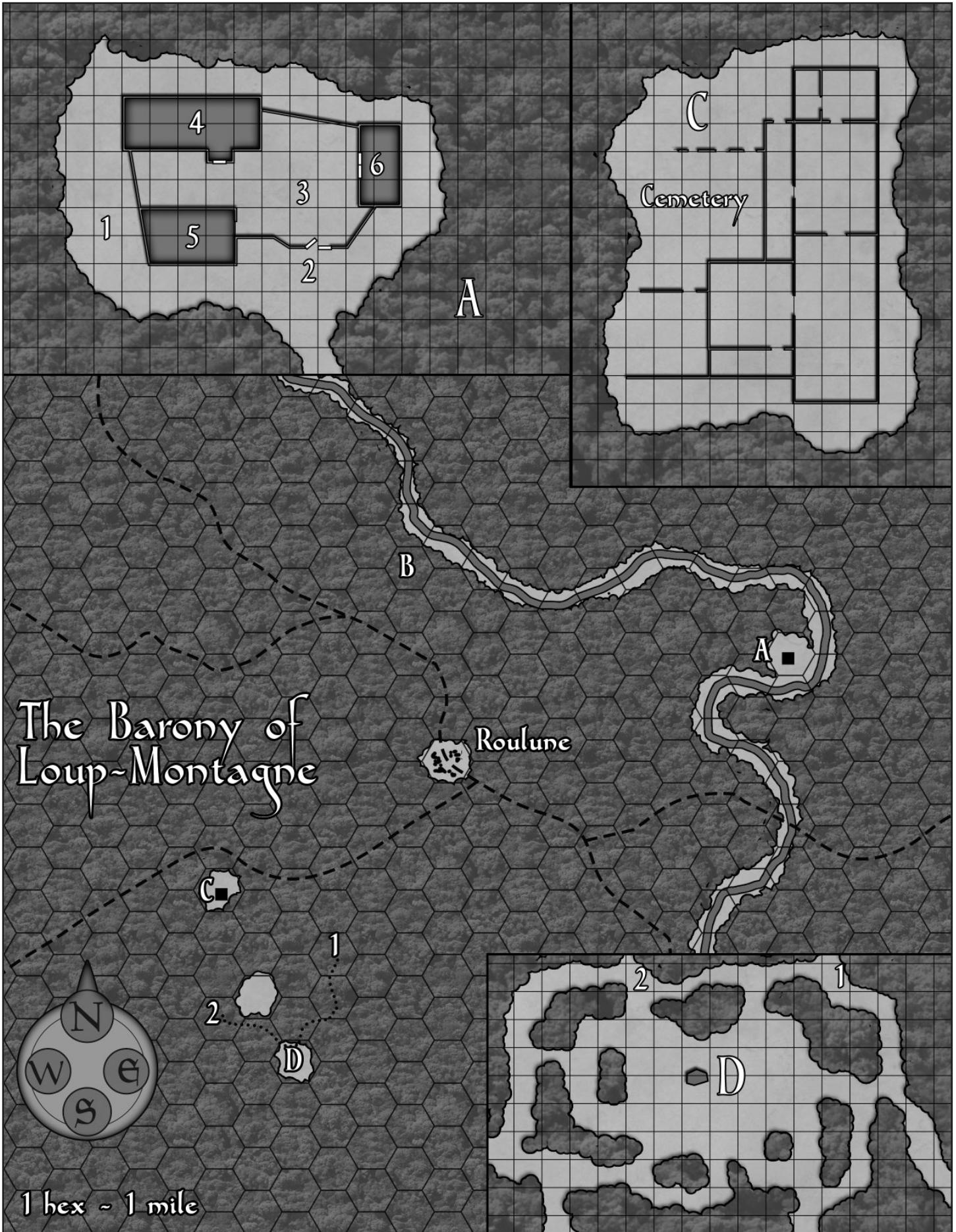
Twelve horses are stabled here, along with all their riding tack and a primitive coach that is seldom used. Four stablehands sleep in a cozy corner of the hay loft.

A. Travers Castle

Many generations ago, the original barons of Loup-Montagne ruled the barony from Travers Castle. The castle was sited to control an important river crossing, and the barons grew rich on the tolls they charged to use the bridge. When the bridge was washed out in a flood, wagon traffic diverted to a ferry crossing upstream. By then, the baronial families had relocated to the more comfortable manor in Roulune anyway, and the decision was made not to rebuild the bridge.

The castle has been abandoned for almost a hundred years. No one has much reason to make the trek there, so both the castle and the road to it are overgrown by the forest. The walls of the castle still stand, but the

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thatched roofs of the buildings have collapsed and the gates sag on their hinges.

The pile is not entirely forgotten, however; a group of poachers and sometime highwaymen use it as an occasional hideout. The gang consists of one bandit captain (Thibault Voclair), twelve bandits, three scouts, and two mastiffs. They are present when characters come to investigate. They post guards, but since they don't expect visitors, their sentries aren't especially alert.

(Thibault Voclair, Bandit Captain: AC 15, 65 hps; +5 to hit x2, 1d6 + 3 slashing damage [scimitar] AND +5 to hit, 1d4 + 3 piercing damage; Voclair can add 2 to his AC vs. one attack per round)

(Bandit x12: AC 12, 11 hps; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 slashing damage [scimitar] OR +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., 1d8 + 1 piercing damage [light crossbow])

(Scout x3: AC 13, 16 hps; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword] OR +4 to hit x2, range 150 ft./600 ft., 1d8 + 2 piercing damage [longbow])

(Mastiff: AC 12, 5 hps; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Str saving throw to avoid being knocked prone [bite]; has tactical advantage on Wis (Perception) checks relying on hearing or scent)

I. Overgrown Clearing

Long ago, this was a cleared space around the castle. Now it's heavily overgrown with brush and trees, although it's obviously not old-growth forest like the rest of the surroundings. The poachers take few pains to conceal their presence, so their tracks toward the castle are plain to see. Someone can discern their numbers to be between 12 and 18 with a successful DC 15 Int (Nature) check.

Two bandits are always on watch, both of them standing above the main gate and looking north. Characters sneaking through cover toward the castle go unseen if their Dex (Stealth) checks are better than the guards' passive Perception scores of 10.

2. Main Gate

The gate sags on its hinges and doesn't close all the way anymore. People at the gate can't be seen by the guards above because of the overhanging wall. A character trying to slip silently through the slightly ajar gate must make a successful DC 10 Dex (Stealth) check. A failed check indicates that the character brushed against the gate and caused it to squeak. The first time this happens, the guards assume it was the wind and don't bother to investigate. The second time it happens, they become suspicious; from their perch atop the wall, one starts scanning the courtyard carefully and the other scans the area before the wall. If it happens a third time, they raise a cry of alarm.

3. Courtyard

This area is mostly bare ground. Depending on the weather, it might be hard-packed dirt or churned mud. A disintegrating wagon with a broken wheel is tipped against one wall. Two tables and four benches have been thrown together by placing planks across barrels and stumps. A fire pit sits between the tables. During daytime, 2d4 bandits and one scout are in the courtyard, butchering a deer that they poached a few days before and preparing the evening meal, with the two mastiffs lying nearby, waiting for scraps. At night, the courtyard is empty except for the deer carcass hanging from a post.

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4. Great Hall

The great hall lost its roof decades ago, so it's now just four walls and a skeletal staircase to a mezzanine that rings the hall 10 feet above the floor. Weeds grow profusely between the old flagstones, and a great fire pit dominates the center of the floor. A few poachers sometimes sleep here under the stars in fine weather, but most prefer to sleep in the chapel.

The stairs up to the mezzanine are rotted from exposure. Anyone climbing them must make a successful DC 8 Dex (Acrobatics) check to reach the top safely. On a failed check, the staircase collapses, dropping the character 10 feet to the ground. Everyone in the castle hears the collapse.

5. Chapel

This is the poachers' chief residence when they stay in the castle. They repaired the roof by covering it with canvas looted from merchants' wagons. It leaks in heavy rain, but most of the time it stays warm and comfortable enough for their purposes.

During daytime, 2d4 bandits and Thibault Voclair are here, resting and planning their next robbery or poaching expedition. At night, the entire gang including the mastiffs is here asleep, except for the two guards on the wall and one scout who got up to relieve himself from atop the east wall. If fighting breaks out, he tries to ambush someone from behind if it might make a difference in the outcome; otherwise, he slips away into the forest. If this adventure is taking place during summer in your campaign, 1d4 bandits could be sleeping in the great hall instead.

6. Stables

The bandits' four riding horses, four draft horses, and two mules are stabled here. They pay no attention to anyone who enters.

B. Duval's Meadow

This is a small clearing in the forest, unremarkable in all ways except for the wolfsbane plants that flourish here. Their blooms stay open during the day, but they are at their fullest under the light of a full moon. See the entry "Gervaise the Astrologer" above for information on wolfsbane's effect against lycanthropes.

If characters come here during a night of the full moon, they encounter a green hag named Savine on the same mission as them (harvesting wolfsbane). Disguised as a human druid, she does her best to persuade the characters that she also intends to find and slay the werewolf. She offers to join the characters on their quest. If the characters fall for this ploy, Savine does indeed join them and help in their fight against the werewolves, but the moment it appears that the werewolves are beaten, she turns against the characters. Savine is accompanied by a swarm of poisonous snakes that should be treated as invisible until they attack.

(Savine, Green Hag: AC 17, 82 hps; +6 to hit, 2d8 + 4 slashing damage [claws]; spellcasting +4 to hit, save DC 12; Savine can turn invisible at will as an action)

(Swarm of Poisonous Snakes: AC 14, 36 hps; +6 to hit, 2d6 piercing damage plus 4d6 poison damage [bite]; poison damage is halved with a successful DC 10 Con saving throw; the swarm can enter and occupy the same space as another creature)

C. St. Ulrich Abbey

Nicodeme and his small coterie of werewolves use the abandoned abbey as a gathering place. They don't spend all their time there, but it's

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the one place they return to regularly between hunts.

A century ago, the area around the abbey might have been a larger clearing, but the encroaching forest has swallowed it and crept nearly to the ancient building's walls. An overgrown cemetery with headstones tilting at all angles stands outside the crumbling, roofless, fieldstone walls. The structure must have been impressive in its day, but now the leaning, moss- and vine-covered walls form a small maze in the forest.

All areas of the abbey are essentially the same: open, roofless spaces surrounded by crumbling walls with large, arched doorways. The doors are long since rotted away. Only the old chapel has a flagstone floor; all other areas have packed dirt floors spotted with patches of waist-high grass, weeds, and thin bushes. Only a few saplings have taken root inside the structure.

The remains of several of the werewolves' victims are strewn around. They consist mainly of gnawed bones, torn and blood-stained clothing, and a few meager possessions such as copper coins, rusted knives, tacky jewelry, and tarnished belt buckles. Little is left to identify the victims, but if everything is gathered up and brought back to Roulune, Frere Emilé at the Church of the Forest will do his best to figure out who the werewolves killed and devoured here. If characters search for bodies, each area contains the remains of 1d6 – 3 victims. If characters search this area after Enzo's murder, they find a pair of blood-stained, embroidered gloves of the type Enzo was transporting.

If characters come here at night, the abbey is abandoned (the werewolves are out hunting). During the day, characters encounter two or three ragged-looking humans. They are filthy, their clothing is tattered (if they wear anything at all), and their hair is matted with twigs and mud, creating an appearance of desperate poverty, and that's the story they tell; they are peasants who were kicked off their land, now trying to eke out a subsistence living in the forest by scrounging for roots and nuts. If asked about the bones, they claim that wolves sometimes bring their prey here. When that happens, these humans flee into the forest for a day or more before returning. A character who examines them closely and makes a successful DC 10 Wis (Medicine) check recognizes that despite their apparent destitution, beneath the filth and rags, these people appear very healthy, muscular, and well fed.

Scraped on one of the interior walls of the abbey is a crude representation of a six-sided stele in a forest clearing, with wolflike creatures prancing around it beneath a full moon. The rendering is almost life-size, judging from the figures. If the scene is described to Gervaise, Frere Emilé, or Moreau, they recognize it as the Witches' Den. Any other resident of the barony has a 50 percent chance to guess that it's the Witches' Den, based on stories they've heard. Otherwise, there's an even chance that they'll guess something else or admit that they don't know.

(Werewolf: AC 11, 58 hp; in humanoid or hybrid form, werewolf bites and uses either claws or spear; in wolf form, it only bites; +4 to hit, 1d8 + 2 piercing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [bite]; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 slashing damage [claws]; +4 to hit, range 20 ft./60 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [spear]; shapeshifter)

D. The Witches' Den

The Witches' Den is the site of an ancient, pagan altar where renegade witches and evil warlocks performed sacrifices. The warlocks and witches who used the altar were killed or driven out of Loup-Montagne long ago, but the altar hangs onto its evil power. Nicodeme uses it for much the same purpose—when he wants to bring someone new into his troop of werewolves, the recruit is brought here to be ritually “killed” and

reborn as a werewolf.

Physically, the Witches' Den is just a clearing in the woods about 80 feet in diameter and with a stone stele or column at its center. The stele is 12 feet tall and 3 feet across at the base, but it tapers to 2 feet across at the top. It has six roughly-cut sides. The druids and witches carved mystic runes into the stone, but now those are completely hidden by a few centuries' growth of moss and lichen. Not even Nicodeme is aware of the runes or their power, or of what's concealed inside the stele.

The clearing sits in a natural bowl surrounded by some of the most tangled forest the characters have ever plowed through. The clearing can be considered open ground, but the paths around it are treated as difficult terrain. The surrounding forest is nearly impassable; creatures of Huge and Medium size can move just 5 feet per turn off a path, Small creatures can move 10 feet per turn, and Tiny creatures are unimpeded.

Finding the Witches' Den

It would take months of searching to find the Witches' Den without directions. Aside from the werewolves, only Gervaise and Moreau know its location. Moreau, if asked, is likely to give false directions that lead to a random point along the river, then apologize later, saying he must have been mistaken about where it is. He gives accurate directions only if he's been able to arrange for Nicodeme to ambush the characters when they arrive.

Gervaise gives accurate directions to the player characters if asked, along with a brief history of the place and a warning that although it was abandoned long ago, it still has magical power. If characters ask her to explain what that means, Gervaise asks for 24 hours to conduct some research. Characters with training in Arcana, History, or Investigation can help Gervaise plow through her books and scrolls; each helper can make one DC 15 Int (Arcana, History, or Investigation) check, and each successful check cuts five hours off the research time. At the end of that time, Gervaise can tell the characters about the runes on the stele, what they do, and how to activate them. She suspects there may be more to the story, but that's all she could uncover from the available resources. She doesn't know about the *Fearsome Mask of Lo-Athard* inside the stele or how to release it.

The paths into the Witches' Den begin at forest landmarks that are largely forgotten (since no one comes here anymore) but are not difficult to find if the searcher knows what to look for. Gervaise tells characters how to find “the great oak on the bluff,” so characters enter the clearing along path 1 if they got directions from her. If Moreau gives accurate directions, they will be from “the boulder that resembles a skull” (path 2, where they'll more easily be spotted). The paths can be found easily from either of those landmarks.

The Runes On the Stele

Although they're completely overgrown by moss and lichens, the runes carved into the stele have lost none of their power. Because of the runes, anyone touching the stone column can cast the spells *banishment*, *bestow curse*, *enthral*, and *hypnotic pattern* as if he or she were using a scroll. Each spell can be cast once per week. If a casting attempt fails, the spell is still available in the stone and the casting can be attempted again, but the character who failed to cast the spell must make a successful DC 15 Con saving throw to avoid being stunned for one round by backlash from the stele.

As soon as one of the spells is cast, the stele begins vibrating softly but audibly in a toneless drone that sounds almost like many distant voices chanting in an unknown tongue. If two spells are cast in a 24-hour period, the droning grows louder and the words become more distinct (but remain unintelligible). If three or four spells are cast in a 24-hour period, the runes carved into the stone glow with an orange light that can be seen through the covering of moss. The droning and the glow become gradually weaker as the hours go by until both disappear after 24 hours.

The Treasure in the Stele

If the patterns of the glowing runes are traced with a finger across the stele while it is glowing and vibrating, the stone splits in half, then shatters into dozens of pieces that tumble to the ground. Hovering in the air where the stele stood is a mask of beaten silver and bronze, sculpted to resemble an ugly, scowling human face. This is the *Fearsome Mask of Lo-Athard*, a long-dead warlock who worshiped in this grove centuries ago and whose followers erected the stele. When a character dons the mask, it becomes almost invisible, but the wearer's face gains a more threatening aspect than it had before. The wearer's Charisma score increases by 2 while the mask is worn, and the wearer can use the warlock class ability Fey Presence as if he or she was a warlock. A character who already has the Fey Presence class ability gains one extra use of it between rests.

Key Events

Three incidents set off the events of *Bad Moon Rising*. Once the three lead-in events are over, characters have complete freedom to investigate the strange occurrences around Roulune however they choose. If characters turn down Ghislain's request for help, they could be approached afterward by Gervaise, by a committee of citizens or merchants concerned about the wolf attacks, by Frere Emilé from the Church of the Forest, or even by Jules Brisbois if they look like the sort of scoundrels who'd be good additions to his band of highwaymen. (Marauding wolves in the forest motivate merchants to rout their wagons around Loup-Montagne, and that's bad for the highway robbery business, too.)

Wolf Attack

The characters get their first taste of wolves while on the road to Roulune. Trigger this event when they are on the road through the forest.

Arching branches of ancient trees form a continuous roof over the narrow roadway you're on, locking it in eternal twilight. The surrounding forest is a tangle of closely spaced tree trunks with low branches, boulders, fallen trees, thorny brush, and twisting vines. The road twists like a serpent; you haven't seen a straight stretch longer than 50 yards since you entered this forest. The mood isn't improved by the cold, thin drizzle that's been misting down through the trees all day. Picking your way along the muddy, rutted surface is an exhausting way to travel.

Thoughts like those are interrupted by shouts of "Help! Help!" from beyond the next bend in the road, followed by animal snarls—quite a few snarling animals, from the sound of it.

About 100 yards ahead is a merchant's wagon with a broken wheel. Characters can't see it from their current location because of the dense trees and the winding of the road. They need to advance another 80 yards to bring the wagon into view. When they do, you can read the next description to players.

A wagon with a broken wheel blocks the road. Two terrified draft horses rear and buck in the traces while an old man and a young boy try to keep their balance atop the barrels and crates stacked in the wagon box. They are using spears to fend off a pack of wolves that's circling the wagon, but the wolves seem more interested in the horses than in the passengers.

The wolf pack contains one worg and two or three wolves per player character, depending on how tough you judge the characters to be. The worgs aren't actual worgs; they're just bigger, tougher wolves (with worg stats) that lead the pack. Surviving wolves flee into the woods when all the "worgs" are slain or when half the entire pack is down.

The merchant is Enzo Martel, and the boy Eric is his grandson. They are on their way to towns farther east with a load of nails, mirrors, embroidered gloves, and fine saddles to sell. They plan to spend the evening in the next town up the road, which is Roulune. Right now, they could use some help replacing their broken wheel with one of the spares. Enzo explains that the horses shied violently when the wolves appeared, twisting the wheel in a rut on the road and snapping it.

There's nothing nefarious about these two. They are grateful for whatever help the characters give them. As payment, they offer a ride on their wagon into Roulune, which is still several miles ahead. A ride would be a big improvement over walking in the mud.

(Worg: AC 13, 26 hps; +5 to hit, 2d6 + 3 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 13 Str saving throw or be knocked prone [bite])

(Wolf: AC 13, 11 hps; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Str saving throw or be knocked prone [bite]; a wolf has tactical advantage on attack rolls if at least one active ally is adjacent to the target)

Tax Collectors

Characters arrive in Roulune about 30 minutes before sunset. Read the description to players when they arrive.

Roulune looks much like other towns you've visited in this part of the world. The single road you've been traveling on branches out into a small network of roads that wind through a maze of homes and shops. On the outskirts, the houses stand apart and have fenced gardens and animal pens. Farther into town, the buildings lean against one another and overhang the street. But the streets are wide and the forest stops at the town's edge, so at least you can see the sky again.

"Ahead is where we're bound," says Enzo, pointing to a pleasant-looking inn with an enormous, shaggy wolf's pelt draped like a sign above the doorway. "I'll stand you each an ale if you join us later."

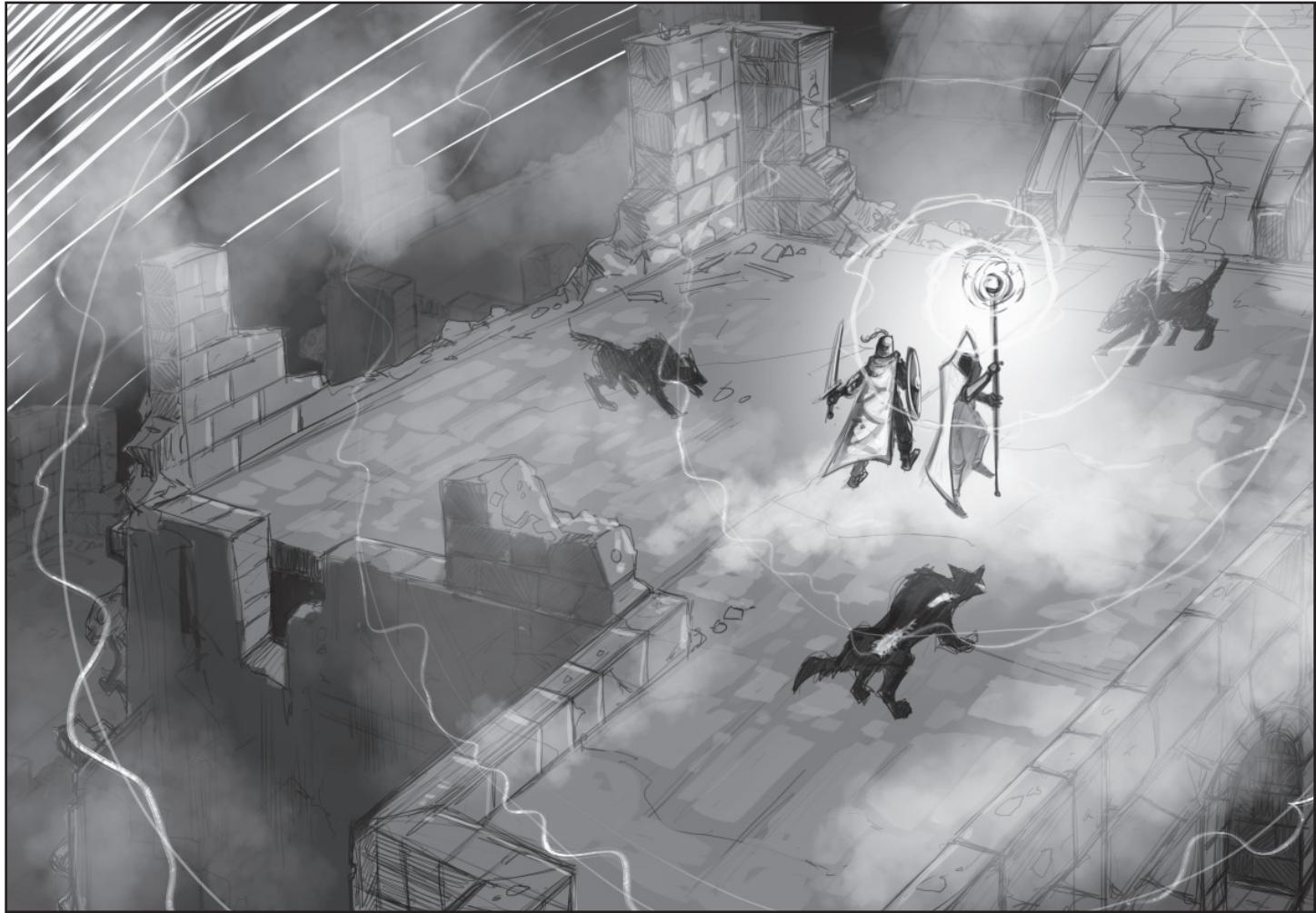
He drops his voice before adding, "There's a piece of misfortune." With a slight nod of his gray head, he indicates a knot of men-at-arms farther up the street. "I was hoping we might miss the tax collectors, but today has not been a lucky day—other than meeting you, of course."

The tax collectors are Paschal Moreau and four men-at-arms of the town militia (guards) on a routine patrol of Roulune. Moreau is fulfilling his role as a combination of tax-man and town sheriff: collecting tolls from merchants on their way through and taking the measure of strangers to decide whether they're peaceable travelers or troublemakers.

Before the characters can hop down and get their gear off Enzo's wagon, Moreau and his soldiers march up. They aren't threatening, but they are professionals with plenty of practice at this drill.

Moreau looks over Enzo's wagon and tells him that the toll on the load is 500 cp, with a 20 percent discount on any portion he pays in silver. Characters should know that this is a reasonable toll for use of private roads; Enzo isn't happy to pay it, but he doesn't complain that it's unfair. If characters try to make an issue out of this with Moreau, Enzo makes

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it clear that he'd prefer they not make trouble for him. If, however, they bring up the wolf attack on the road as a reason why the toll should be reduced or waived, Moreau drops the toll to 200 cp as recompense for Enzo's trouble, provided the merchant spends some of the savings getting the broken wheel repaired at the local wainwright's shop.

After that business is taken care of, Enzo bids the characters farewell while he tends to his horses and wagon, with a promise to meet them later in the inn. Moreau invites the characters inside the Wolf's Pelt for food and conversation.

None of this should seem suspicious, nefarious, or threatening. Moreau comes off as a reasonable man, going about his job in a professional way. He admires freelance adventurers. It's his job to know why they came to his town, but he isn't looking for trouble; there won't be a confrontation unless the characters start it.

Moreau answers most questions frankly, unless they're impertinent. Characters can learn quite a bit about the barony, the Baron, and the current problem with wolves simply by conversing with Moreau. As long as they aren't rude or antagonistic, Moreau invites them to come to the Baron's manor for dinner; the Baron is always interested in meeting educated travelers with stories to tell. If characters' behavior toward Moreau is not the sort that leads someone to invite strangers to dinner, then they receive an invitation to dinner direct from the Baron the following day, brought by a young page from the manor.

(Paschal Moreau, Knight: AC 18, 52 hps; +5 to hit x2, 2d6 + 3 slashing damage [greatsword]; once per round as a reaction, Moreau can increase his AC by 2 against a single melee attack)

(Guard x4: AC 16, 11 hps; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 piercing damage [spear])

Dinner with the Baron

Baron Ghislain hopes to find adventurers from outside his domain who he can trust. His household militia has proven itself incapable of stopping the wolf attacks that plague the barony, so it's time to bring in outside experts.

The dinner scene can be as extended or as abbreviated as you like, depending on whether your players enjoy roleplaying this type of social interaction. It will be a small gathering, not a large party: just Ghislain, the characters, Jules Brisbois, and a few servers wandering in and out of the Great Hall. Moreau is not present, since the Baron can't discuss the wolf problem without talking about Moreau's failure to solve it, and he sees no reason to embarrass his lieutenant that way.

Read the following when characters arrive at the baronial manor.

The Baron's manor is not palatial, but it's clearly the home of someone powerful and important. The two-story structure sits inside a walled enclosure—not a castle, but a well-tended, fortified estate. You're greeted by a servant and shown immediately to the great hall, which is mostly empty. Tables are disassembled and stacked along the walls. Only the head table is prepared, standing across the front of the room on a low platform. The servant asks you to seat yourselves. As he's filling your goblets with wine, two men of noble bearing—one barely more than a lad and walking with crutches—enter the hall and join you at the table.

The younger man welcomes the characters to his home, introduces

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himself as Baron Ghislain and the other man as “his brother, Jules Brisbois,” and joins them at the table without ceremony. During dinner, he reveals all of the following information, however you care to impart it. Jules allows the Baron to do most of the talking, but he answers direct questions and adds clarifications to the Baron’s statements as you see fit.

• “My father died when I was young, so I was raised by my grandfather, Baron Nicodeme. He was blessed with a long life, but when he died in a hunting mishap about a year ago, I inherited the barony.”

• “Jules is older than I—very astute of you to notice—but my father’s wife was not his mother. That leaves me as the most direct line of accession in the Chaput family, hence I hold the title. Jules is my brother and my right hand. I trust him completely.”

• “Yes, there is a legend about tragedy befalling the barony if the oldest heir doesn’t inherit the title. Like any legend, it’s mostly nonsense—a parable meant to keep the baron honest and ensure a smooth transfer of power. I’m told that a few people have pointed to recent trouble as evidence that Jules should have inherited before me, but our most learned scriveners agree that the legend must refer to the oldest legitimate heir. Otherwise, the laws of accession would be meaningless.”

• “For the last several months, the barony has been plagued by wolf attacks. There have always been wolves in the forest, and there have always been wolf attacks, but the current situation is worse than ever. These wolves don’t just take sheep and cattle; they attack people, too. They seem almost to prefer people over other prey. They’ve even broken into remote farms and slaughtered entire families. Some people are killed outright, others simply disappear. We can only assume that they, too, are victims of this pack.”

• “My huntsmen conclude this is the work of a single pack that has become uncharacteristically aggressive.”

• “My huntsmen and soldiers have conducted massive hunts and set numerous traps, to no avail. The attacks continue unabated. My citizens are becoming greatly upset, and tales leaving the barony are beginning to disrupt trade, on which we rely.”

• “I’ve concluded that for this job, I need people with . . . special skills. Adventurers such as yourself. I don’t imagine these creatures are any more supernatural than this table, but they’ve proven exceptionally wily. They don’t follow the predictable patterns wolves follow, and they don’t fall for the tricks wolves fall for. That’s why I believe hunters with experience battling unnatural foes might succeed where normal fieldcraft has failed.”

• “If you’re up for such a challenge, I offer you 10 pounds of gold apiece (500 gp). You can discuss it among yourselves, or sleep on it if you like and give me an answer in the morning.”

The characters are offered comfortable lodging in the Baron’s manor for the night. If they accept his offer, they can stay in the manor during their entire sojourn in Loup-Montagne.

The Situation Worsens

After their meeting with the Baron, characters are free to investigate the wolf attacks however they choose. Brisbois and Moreau are available to answer questions and to provide some material aid, such as guides to the forest and a militia escort if characters want more muscle backing them up. But the deeper characters dig, the more suspicion will be thrown on those two.

During their time in Loup-Montagne, any of the following events can occur, spurring on the characters’ investigation.

Murdered Merchant: As Enzo Martel and his grandson are leaving the barony, they are attacked on the road east of Roulune. Eric straggles back to town with an arrow in his arm. He claims that their wagon was set upon by bandits. His grandfather argued with the bandits, but the robbery was interrupted by the howling of wolves nearby. That seemed to frighten some of the bandits terribly, and the boy took advantage of their distraction to run away. One of the bandits loosed an arrow that caught him in the arm, but he kept running, hoping to bring help from town.

If characters head east along the road, they find the ambush spot about four miles from town. Enzo is dead, along with both horses and one bandit; all were apparently killed by wolves. The bandit is one of

Thibault Voclain’s band, from Travers Castle, but no one will be able to identify him. The killers were Nicodeme and a few of his werewolves. If characters subsequently search St. Ulrich Abbey or the barracks room used by members of the pack, they find a bloody pair of embroidered gloves that they recognize as similar to those Enzo was hauling. Gloves should be found in one location or the other, but not both.

Leader of the Pack: One of the Baron’s woodsmen brings the corpse of an immense wolf to town and displays it in the square. He claims that it must be the pack leader, and many townsfolk agree with him. It truly is a monstrous wolf, with a body six feet long. If someone thinks to cut it open and examine its stomach contents, it will be found to have eaten only rabbits and deer meat in the last 24 hours. That doesn’t prove it’s not the killer, of course, just that it hasn’t killed anyone in the last day or two.

Home Besieged: A teenaged boy comes to the Baron’s manor asking for help. He is the son of a hunter who lives in the forest four miles west of Roulune. Their home was besieged by wolves, or wolflike creatures, for two nights and a day. When his father tried to slip out to the stream to fetch more water, the creatures attacked him and dragged him away into the forest.

The cabin is four miles due west of town. The wolves’ trail away from the farm is easy to follow because they were dragging the bleeding body of the hunter. They dragged him about two miles west, then stopped and ate him. The grisly remains are easily found.

By examining the area around the cabin and around the hunter’s body, a character who also makes a successful DC 12 Int (Nature) check can determine that three creatures were involved, and they were larger than typical wolves. They split up when they finished with the body: one went south, one went southeast, and one went northeast. This behavior is highly uncharacteristic of wolves. Unfortunately, their trails become impossible to follow after a quarter mile.

Omens: If characters haven’t uncovered rumors and become curious about St. Ulrich Abbey or the Witches’ Den on their own after a few days, they are called to one of the day rooms in the Baron’s manor. There they find Ghislain, Moreau, and Brisbois awaiting them, along with Gervaise the Astrologer and Frere Emilé. Gervaise and Frere Emilé approached the Baron with startling news: omens in the sky and elsewhere make it clear that a werewolf is plaguing the barony, and the best place to catch it would be at the Witches’ Den during a full moon (which should occur this night or the next). Gervaise can provide all the pertinent astrological details, but this is pure smokescreen. Gervaise and Frere Emilé pieced the clues together on their own and decided that this story was the best way to frame their findings to the Baron.

The Baron is less superstitious than his subjects, but he understands the power of such beliefs in the barony. He also respects Gervaise and Frere Emilé as the town’s two most educated citizens; he concludes that they’re trying to tell him something important without revealing everything, and he wisely plays along.

The problem in the room is Paschal Moreau. The details of any plan that’s discussed in his presence finds its way to Nicodeme (probably through a message passed to one of the werewolves in the militia). Even if he’s excluded from planning, he alerts his master to be on his guard, because hunters are closing in.

Like the Baron, characters should have the opportunity to sense that Gervaise and Frere Emilé aren’t telling the whole truth in this meeting. One of the NPCs might surreptitiously pass a note to a character, or you could slyly convey something through your roleplaying. Alternatively, a character might make a DC 12 Int (Arcana) check to realize that Gervaise’s astrological reasoning is subtle nonsense, or a DC 12 Wis (Insight) check to realize that the pair’s statements are highly guarded.

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Ultimately, through their own investigation or someone’s advice, characters should wind up at the Witches’ Den. What happens there depends on when they come and whether Nicodeme is expecting them.

If characters are unexpected and arrive during the day, they find one or two werewolves plus 2d3 wolves sleeping around the column.

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Nicodeme is not among them.

If characters are expected and arrive during the day, the area is abandoned.

If characters are unexpected and arrive at night, they find Nicodeme, two or three other werewolves, and 2d3 wolves prancing and howling around the stele in the clearing.

If characters are expected and arrive at night, they find one werewolf and 1d3 wolves prancing and howling around the stele. Nicodeme, another werewolf, 1d3 wolves, and Paschal Moreau are hidden in the forest, waiting in ambush for characters to arrive.

(Werewolf: AC 11, 58 hp; in humanoid or hybrid form, werewolf bites and uses either claws or spear; in wolf form, it only bites; +4 to hit, 1d8 + 2 piercing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [bite]; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 slashing damage [claws]; +4 to hit, range 20 ft./60 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [spear]; shapechanger)

(Wolf: AC 13, 11 hp; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Str saving throw or be knocked prone [bite]; a wolf has tactical advantage on attack rolls if at least one active ally is

adjacent to the target)

(Paschal Moreau, Knight: AC 18, 52 hps; +5 to hit x2, 2d6 + 3 slashing damage [greatsword]; once per round as a reaction, Moreau can increase his AC by 2 against a single melee attack)

Resolution

If Nicodeme is killed, the barony's wolf problem ceases, even if other werewolves are still on the loose. Without Nicodeme to hold them together, surviving werewolves fall to bickering and fighting among themselves, and the pack disintegrates. If the pack is wiped out but Nicodeme survives, the problem appears to go away for a few months, but eventually it resurfaces—probably long after the player characters have moved on. In either case, having one or more of the vengeful werewolves cross the characters' path months later will make a memorable encounter.

As long as the problem seems resolved, the Baron gladly pays the promised gold. If Moreau's role in events was uncovered, it leaves a vacancy at the head of the barony's militia that Ghislain offers to one of the characters.

Death in Dyrgalas

By Skip Williams

In ancient times, the area now known as the Dyrgalas Fens was home to a flourishing civilization of nature worshippers who wrested a living from the forest around them, built open-air temples, and generally did well. Over the centuries, a series of natural disasters (some say a series of foolish magical experiments) led to a rising water table and turned the forest into a vast swamp.

As the water rose, most of the people left. Today, a few stalwart humans remain in the fens, living off the land through hunting, fishing, trapping, and even some agriculture. In addition to these honest folk, the Dyrgalas has some less savory residents, including both black and green dragons, trolls, hags, escaped criminals, and a host of lycanthropes. Most of these creatures prey on travelers foolish or unlucky enough to enter the fen, and sometimes raid both inside and outside the fen.

This adventure, intended for characters of levels 6 to 8, deals with one group of raiders who make their lair in the Dyrgalas. A weretiger called Gavriil has formed a group of assorted lycanthropes into a band of cunning brigands. The lycanthropes favorite caper involves infiltrating a merchant caravan while posing as travelers, merchants, or swords for hire, then attacking it from within. Gavriil and his servants also take on kidnappings, murder for hire, and any other unsavory tasks that come their way.

Adventure Hooks

An adventuring party might have any number of reasons for tangling with Gavriil and his minions.

- The party is traveling with a merchant caravan when Gavriil's lycanthropes attack. A group of lycanthropes posing as merchants or travelers attack the caravan one night. After dealing with the infiltrators, the group can track them back to the fens.
- A merchant or aristocrat hires the group to recover a stolen *robe of blending*. The medusa Theronia actually stole the robe, but Gavriil's brigands have captured her in turn.
- Someone hires the group to help recover a person Gavriil's group kidnapped. The PCs might be charged with delivering a ransom and recovering the victim, or simply with making a rescue. There's a very good chance that the lycanthropes will try to seize the ransom without releasing the captive.
- The local authorities find Gavriil's presence intolerable and hire the party to smoke him out.
- A sage, antiquarian, or spellcaster wishes to acquire a detailed map of the ruins where Gavriil has made his lair. This person might seek the knowledge for its own sake or might need the information for some ritual or experiment.

Ruined Pavilion

The ancients built the pavilion as a place where the faithful could rest and find serenity. It was once a stately edifice of butter-colored limestone, filled with tranquil pools and ringed with soaring spires. Much of the complex was open to the sky, but a series of partial roofs provided shade (and modest shelter from the weather) for meditating visitors. In times of peril, clerics used the pavilion as a site for summoning elementals, which they sent forth to meet any approaching threat.

Today, the low mound where the pavilion stands has become an island

in the Dyrgalas, and the once proud building has degenerated into a crumbled ruin, half flooded, and shrouded in moss, creepers, vines, and even a few trees. A handful of the ruin's trees have become truly immense.

The weretiger Gavriil finds the tumbledown pavilion a convivial place to live and work. He's made the place his personal stronghold and he's gathered a formidable collection of fierce animals, rogue elementals, and fellow lycanthropes to help him defend it.

Conditions and Features

Although above ground, the pavilion's crumbling walls, decaying roofs, leafy trees, and flowing water make the place as dark and damp as any dungeon. Whenever a condition or feature requires a save or check, pavilion residents have tactical advantage on that save or check thanks to long familiarity with the place and its quirks, even when the text specifies tactical disadvantage for a visitor.

Doors: The pavilion's original wooden doors rotted away long ago. Gavriil had them replaced with new doors made from rough planks. The unfinished wood warped and swelled in the humid atmosphere, and it takes a successful DC 15 Str check to shove one open. These doors are hung so that they tend to swing shut on their own. A door opened and not deliberately closed remains ajar for 1d4 + 1 rounds before closing itself again.

Foliage: Though vines and creepers cover almost every inch in the pavilion that is not flooded, in some places the growth is taller and thicker. Creatures or objects in these areas have heavy obscurement and three-quarters cover against most attacks. The cover value drops to half against attacks coming from above. Movement costs are doubled in foliage and the dash action is impossible.

Floors: When new, the pavilion's floors were smooth marble. Today, the marble floor slabs remain mostly undamaged, but the land subsiding under the stonework on the ground floor has played havoc with them. They now tilt crazily in random directions and creepers sprout from every crack. Running or dashing calls for a successful DC 15 Dex check. Visitors have tactical disadvantage on this save. If the save fails, the character can still move, but only at normal speed. Floors on the upper stories are flat.

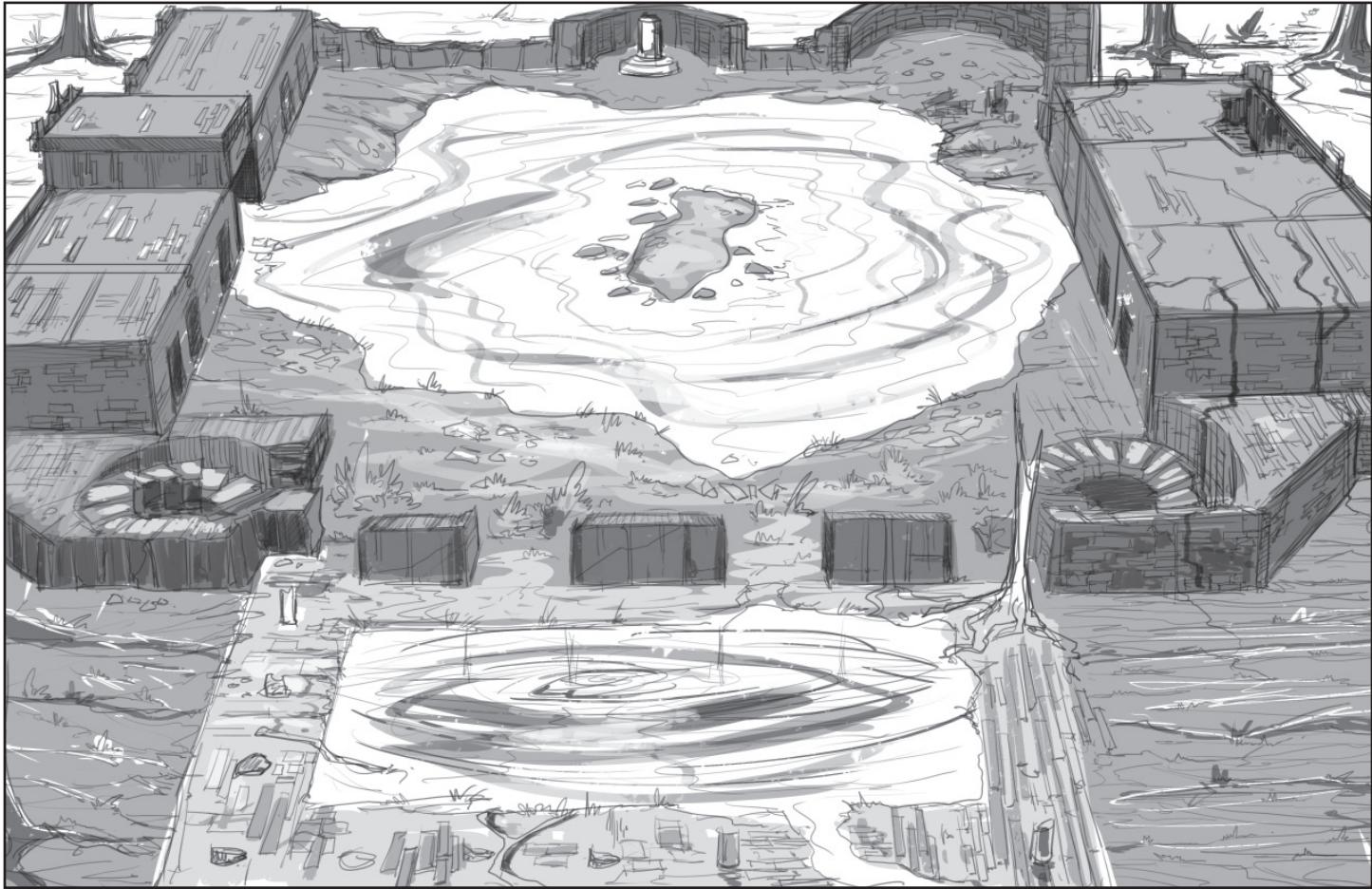
Light and Sight: There's plenty of shade inside the pavilion, thanks to the walls, trees, and partial roofs. Even on a bright day, the interior is dimly lit and lightly obscured unless otherwise noted in an area description (or if someone provides artificial light). When twilight falls outside, the pavilion's interior is completely dark.

Pools and Flooded Areas: Springs deep under the pavilion keep up a sluggish flow that keeps the water from becoming completely stagnant, though a thick layer of leaves, twigs, and other floating debris blankets most wet areas. Geothermal activity in the area keeps the water at about 82 degrees Fahrenheit year round (fairly warm to the touch for most warm-blooded creatures). Characters can easily wade in water that is less than waist deep (no loss of speed). Movement costs are doubled for wading in water more than waist deep, and characters must swim in water that's at least as deep as they are tall. Characters wading or swimming have tactical disadvantage on Stealth checks unless they have swim speeds.

Rubble: Heaps of loose rubble fill many areas within the pavilion. Movement costs are doubled in rubble, and running or dashing requires a successful DC 20 Dex check. Visitors have tactical disadvantage on this save. If the save fails, the character moves 5 feet, then falls prone, suffering 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

Walls: The pavilion's stonework has become heavily weathered. Here and there, a patch of the original, cheerful yellow remains, but on the

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whole the walls have darkened to a muddy brown streaked with black and gray. The weathering makes plenty of handholds, but the covering moss and vines make climbing tricky. Scaling the walls requires a successful DC 20 Str (Athletics) check. Those pesky vines and moss make the walls uncannily resistant to grappling hooks; they tend to either slide off the moss or get caught in the vines, where they tear loose at the slightest pull.

Approaching the Pavilion

A road of sorts winds through the fens, crossing many islands, causeways, and decaying bridges. Some of the locals can direct the party to the ruin. They don't visit the place, thanks to the elementals that still prowl the grounds, but they know where it lies. A reconnaissance from the air reveals the pavilion's towers rising from amid the trees from several miles away.

I. Main Entrance and Facade

The following text assumes the party approaches the area from outside the pavilion. Adjust accordingly if the group first sees this area upon leaving the ruin.

A weedy trail of crushed stone leads to a massive pile of mud-colored stone as large as any provincial temple. The facade looks to be at least 30 feet high and composed of crumbling, vine-covered blocks. Round towers, each at least twice as tall as the main structure, mark the facade's ends. Onion domes well punctured with irregular holes and gaping cracks cap the towers. Two banks of narrow, glassless windows are visible in each tower. The lower bank is perhaps 25 feet above ground, with the second bank an equal distance above that.

Off to the left stands a massive tree whose wide canopy presses hard against the nearest tower, a span of 20 feet or more.

A low portico of gleaming marble slabs fronts the place. It has its own freestanding roof that looks as tattered as the onion domes above it.

The portico's stonework might once have lain flat and smooth as a dining table. Now the paving stones look more like a deck of cards haphazardly spread in a single layer and left to subside randomly into the soggy ground. No two slabs seem to meet on the flat. Tangles of creepers grow in the spaces left between the slabs and snake their way over the stonework. Just a few paces from where the pavement begins lies a pool of water cloaked under a thick mantle of floating debris.

The ruin's stone facade rises behind the pool. Four archways pierce the facade, and an open space seems to lie beyond.

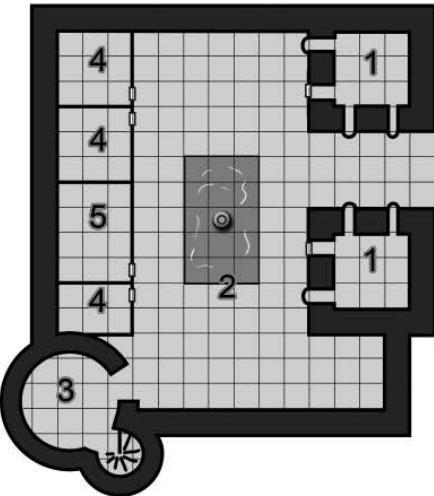
IA. The Pool

Very little open water remains visible in the pool. A layer of twigs, leaves, lily pads, and a few waterlogged branches obscures the surface. The whole pool smells of soggy leaves, with a hint of rotting meat. A weak current sets the lighter debris astir, and a thin, winding rivulet exits through a crack at the pool's near right-hand corner and meanders away toward the surrounding fens.

The pool is about 5 feet deep, with a bottom covered with waterlogged twigs, leaves, and branches (the weak current here isn't strong enough to

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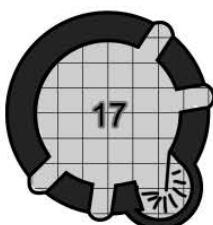
Key



One quarter mile
to the Pavilion

The Hostel

1 square - 10 feet



One quarter mile
to the Hostel



Door



Sinkhole



Idol



Stairs



Foliage



Trap



Fountain



Tree



Grate (ceiling)



Water



Grate (floor)



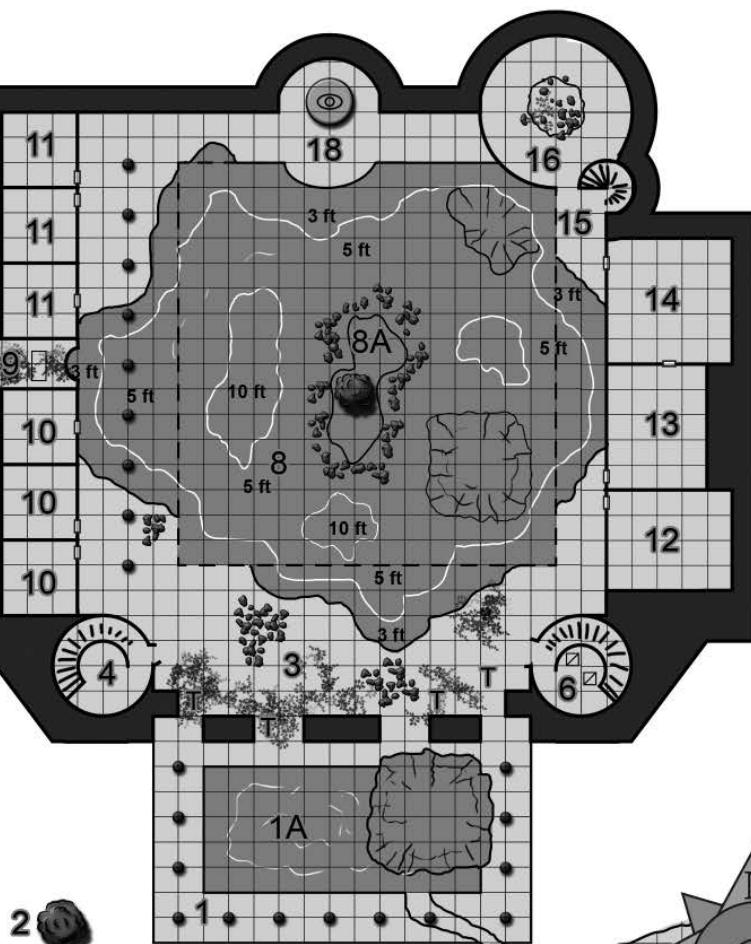
Water Depth



Rubble



Windows



The Pavilion

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carry away everything that falls in). At the pool's east end is a sinkhole 40 feet deep. At the sinkhole's bottom lies a 10-foot passage that connects to the south sinkhole in area 8.

Three crocodiles spend their days floating, mostly submerged, among the twigs and leaves covering the pool. Gavriil brought them here as part of a group of more than two dozen hatchlings taken from a distant nest. He released the youngsters into the pool and left them to fend for themselves. These three are the only survivors. They've vicious and always hungry. From time to time, Gavriil comes here to talk with them and feed them just enough to keep them healthy. The pavilion's other denizens know enough to toss the crocodiles a few morsels and hurry away if they need to pass by here.

(Crocodile: AC 12, 19 hp; +4 to hit, 1d10 + 2 piercing damage and the target is grappled [bite])

Tactics: Whether they're fed or not, the crocodiles lunge out of the pool and attack anyone who remains within their reach for more than a few seconds (except for Gavriil). They have tactical advantage on Stealth checks to remain unnoticed and attack with surprise if their foes don't see them coming.

When attacking, they try to grab the nearest creature and haul their prey to the bottom sinkhole, where the crocodiles can hold their breath for 15 minutes.

If badly wounded (fewer than half hit points) or if attacked from a distance, they retreat down the sinkhole and through the passage to area 8 and from there to Area 8A.

Afterward: The wererats in Area 5 and the medusa in Area 7 quickly notice a combat here, especially if the crocodiles are splashing in the pool or if their foes use any flashy spells. They make no attempt to intervene (the roof over the pool tends to make ranged combat against anyone fighting the crocodiles difficult), though the wererats might attempt to sneak out a window and into Area 2 to get a better look. See the appropriate area descriptions for other actions these creatures might take.

2. Sentinel Tree

The tree standing here looks like a true giant. It has a trunk wider than a hogshead and a crown that tops out at least a bowshot overhead. Many of its branches push hard against the ruined tower several yards away.

The tree is nothing special, just very large. It takes a successful DC 15 Str (Athletics) check to climb the trunk. A character could easily toss a grapple into the tree's lower branches and find a firm anchor point.

The lower branches reach all the way to a window in Area 5, and anyone who can climb up there can walk along a thick limb and step right into the chamber beyond. Gavriil and his allies know about the connection and have arranged an unpleasant surprise for anyone who tries to enter the pavilion by this route. They've stripped, sharpened, and bent several branches to act as a battery of maces. Someone entering through the window is assailed by four of these attacks.

(Bent Sapling Trap: +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 10 Dex saving throw or be knocked backward and fall 25 feet to the ground)

3. Entry Hall

This area resembles Area 1 and 1a. It sports a freestanding roof but has no pool. The text below assumes the party enters through one of the arches leading to Area 1.

Beyond the arch lies another expanse of pale, broken pavement. A decaying roof rests on a double row of slender pillars. Piles of rubble and thickets of young trees, vines, and brambles lie everywhere. Just north of the covered area lies a somewhat turbulent pool covered in a thin mist.

The rubble and foliage here has accumulated more or less naturally, though Gavriil and his crew have made a few additions. At each area marked with a "T" they have bent saplings that resemble the trap in Area 2, except that a creature struck must make a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw or be knocked 15 feet to the north and into the pool at Area 8.

Afterward: The wererat guard in Area 4 keeps an intermittent watch over this area (Gavriil has ordered the wererats to watch constantly, but their attention wavers if the weretiger isn't on hand to keep them focused). Still, the guard notices intruders here unless they're intentionally being stealthy (make Stealth checks and compare them to the wererat's passive Perception). If anyone triggers one of the traps here, the wererats in Areas 4 and 5 notice automatically, as does the medusa in Area 7. Any other loud or flashy activity, such as ranged combat, spellcasting, or an extended conversation among several characters also alerts the neighbors.

4. West Tower Ground Floor

The staircase rises 25 feet to Area 5. The text below assumes characters are viewing the chamber from Area 3.

A narrow arch pierces a curved section of wall here. A circular chamber lies beyond. A staircase spirals around the wall and vanishes into darkness overhead. An untidy mass of twigs, grass, fur, and who knows what else fills the chamber's whole floor and rises taller than a peasant cottage.

Above the arch, perhaps 25 feet above the floor, is a pair of barred windows, with a second pair about 25 feet above that.

The "untidy mass" is the resident wererats' nest. The whole construction is about 15 feet wide and 9 feet high. Eight **wererats** call this place home, but only **three** are present at any given time. Two of the current occupants rest while the third keeps a lazy eye on Area 3.

The windows above the chamber entrance lead into Area 5.

(Wererat: AC 12, 33 hp; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword] or +4 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [hand crossbow]; one attack can be replaced by +4 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 11 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [bite]; 1/turn, an attack deals an extra 1d6 damage if wererat has tactical advantage on the attack or has an active ally adjacent to the target; shapeshifter)

Tactics: When a wererat notices intruders in Area 3, he quickly rouses his companions and resumes his watch on Area 3. Unless the intruders trigger one of the traps in Area 3, one of the wererats quietly slips up the stairs to warn his companions in Area 5. The two remaining wererats hunker down in the nest, where they have light obscurement and tactical advantage on Stealth checks. The pair waits until foes enter the chamber, then pop out of the nest and attack. If intruders spot them and attack from outside the chamber (with spells or ranged attacks), the wererats fire their crossbows once each, then retreat up the stairs to Area 5.

If a party manages to catch all three wererats unawares, the trio fights as well as they are able. They'll maneuver to use their sneak attacks as best they can and try to hold out until help arrives from Area 5.

Afterward: If the party defeats the wererats, they can tear apart the

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nest and find the wererats' treasure (Gavriil has allowed the wererats to accumulate a few trinkets).

Any fighting here alerts the wererats in Area 5 after two rounds (or sooner if a wererat escapes up the stairs). Once alerted, the wererats in Area 5 join the fight here; see the Area 5 description for details.

If a fight starts in Area 5, the wererats here notice the ruckus after 2-3 rounds. Once alerted, all three wererats scramble upstairs to join the battle.

If the party captures and questions a wererat, the prisoner is reluctant to answer any questions and claims to be a mere slave. If the PCs win a Cha (Persuasion) or (Intimidation) contest opposed by the prisoner's Charisma, the prisoner reveals the following in response to the appropriate questions:

- A weretiger called Gavriil lords it over this place.
- Gavriil lives in the northeast tower, along with two companions, Inessa and Zhanna (they're weretigers, too).
- Gavriil can do some magic and spends a great deal of his time talking to animals and other beings. He even talks to the water in the central pool (Area 8).

Note: Gavriil has been talking to the water elemental in Area 8, but the wererats don't really understand what the weretiger has been doing. The wererats know that Gavriil uses magic, but they're not sure what kind.

• Gavriil keeps his mistress/personal assassin in the west tower (Area 7). If someone offends Gavriil, the poor fool visits the tower and is never seen again. Her name is Theronia, and she's probably some kind of demon.

Note: Theronia is a medusa Gavriil has conscripted. Theronia usually keeps herself masked, both to conceal her true nature and to keep from petrifying too many of Gavriil's servants. See Area 7 for more details.

• Gavriil has collected all manner of creatures to serve as raiders. The weretiger is making a fortune robbing caravans, kidnapping merchants, and all manner of other foul deeds. Of course, everyone here would be happy to be mere hunters, woodsmen, and even farmers.

• Note: The wererats and other lycanthropes here fear Gavriil, but serve him more or less willingly.

5. West Tower Upper Floor

The staircase here descends 25 feet to Area 4.

This area once was one of only two upper floors in the tower. Today, most of the tower interior has collapsed, leaving this chamber open all the way to the tower's decaying onion dome.

Mounds of rubble choke most of this wide, circular, dusty space, though the center seems clear. A crumbling staircase corkscrews around the outer wall. The steps leading down seem fairly intact, but the set leading up quickly dwindle away to mere shards. At about floor level are two sets of windows looking southwest and northeast. The northeast pair are barred, but the southwest pair gapes open. There are two pairs of windows, identical to the pairs at floor level, about 25 feet up the walls. Above that soars a great but ragged dome.

The chamber's clear space contains a rough table with few crudely woven wicker chairs, a few casks and barrels, and a brazier filled with dying coals.

The bars in the northeast windows are hinged and swing outward like doors. The wererats keep the bars padlocked shut. A key to the locks hangs from a hook under the table.

Five wererats are always on duty here. Gavriil has tasked them with keeping watch over Area 8. The wererats, however, treat this chamber as their place to indulge in some human vices, such as gambling and drinking. Usually, a single wererat hides in the rubble next to a window and keeps watch over Area 8 (this guard occasionally waves at the weretigers watching from Area 17). The other four sit at the table, playing knucklebones and sipping liquor from their supply of casks. They're careful not to become inebriated—they'd never survive Gavriil's wrath if

caught drunk—but they hardly keep a vigilant watch.

(Wererat: AC 12, 33 hp; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword] or +4 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [hand crossbow]; one attack can be replaced by +4 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 11 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [bite]; 1/turn, an attack deals an extra 1d6 damage if wererat has tactical advantage on the attack or has an active ally adjacent to the target; shapeshifter)

Tactics: If forewarned, the wererats hide; one or two duck under the table and the rest take to the rubble.

If a fight develops here, the wererats try to attack their foes from as many different directions as they can. They use melee or ranged weapons as necessary.

If they detect a threat outside their chamber, two wererats move to the windows and fire their crossbows. The barred windows overlooking Area 8 provide them three-quarters cover. The unbarred windows facing outside provide half cover. The remaining wererats rush down the stairs to Area 4 and on out to meet the threat. If the threat is in Area 4, two wererats use the stairs and the others open the windows and use ropes to rappel down to Area 3.

Afterward: The wererats here notice any traps triggered or combat in Areas 3, 8, or 9 the round after the action happens. They notice a fight in Area 4 after two rounds (or sooner if a wererat from there comes up here).

If a fight starts here, the wererats in Area 4 notice the ruckus after two or three rounds and scramble up the stairs to join the battle.

The wererats eventually notice fighting in Area 1a; however, they do little to intervene beyond going to Area 2 so that they can get a better look at intruders.

If any of these wererats are captured and questioned, they react as noted in the description for Area 4.

6. East Tower Ground Floor

The staircase rises 25 feet to Area 7. The text below assumes characters are viewing the chamber from Area 3.

A narrow arch pierces a curved section of wall here. A circular chamber lies beyond. A staircase spirals around the wall and vanishes overhead. A substantial mound of mossy rocks and dirt fills most of the chamber. Masses of brambles, vines, and saplings grow from the dirt. Here and there among the stones and leaves, a metallic gleam or crystalline sparkle is visible.

Above the arch, perhaps 25 feet above the floor is a pair of barred windows, with a second pair about another 25 feet above that.

The foliage growing here gets light from the open archway and also from two gratings in the ceiling 25 feet overhead.

The pile of stone and dirt here is home to an **earth elemental**. Gavriil recruited it to serve as a combination jailer and guardian for the medusa in Area 7.

The gleams and sparkles come from several bits of iron pyrite (essentially worthless) plus a scattering of coins (22 gp, 38 cp) and 8 bits of polished quartz (5 gp each). Gavriil scattered these odds and ends here both to please the elemental and to tempt and delay intruders.

(Earth Elemental: AC 17, 126 hp; +8 to hit x2, 2d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [slam]; can burrow through stone and earth without leaving a trace)

Tactics: The elemental spends its time blended into the mound. It can detect anyone setting foot inside the chamber, on the stairs, or trying to

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climb the walls. It rears up and slams away at any trespassers, gaining surprise. Thanks to its ability to glide through earth, it ignores the effects of the debris in here. It fights to the death. The elemental won't notice anyone flying through the chamber, unless the intruder touches something.

Afterward: Neighboring creatures don't pay much attention to what goes on in here, except for the medusa in Area 7. The medusa notices a battle here immediately. Once alerted, she quietly observes the action for one round by peering through the gratings or down the staircase. After that, she looses a few spells.

The elemental ignores everything going on outside its chamber except for Area 7. The elemental notices in one or two rounds when the medusa is involved in a fight or even if her usual pattern of movements changes. It charges upstairs and attacks as quickly as it can.

7. East Tower Upper Floor

The staircase descends 25 feet to Area 4.

This area is similar to Area 5. It's open all the way to the ruined dome 60 feet overhead. It also has windows overlooking the pavilion's exterior and interior as noted in the Area 5 description. The medusa Theronia calls the chamber home (at least for the moment), and her living arrangements are considerably different from what the wererats in the neighboring tower have.

Colorful rugs cover most of the floor in a wide, circular space. Metal grates lie in the stone floor at two places where there are no rugs. A crumbling staircase corkscrews around the outer wall. The steps leading down seem fairly intact, but the set leading up quickly dwindle away to mere shards. At about floor level, there are two sets of windows looking northwest and southeast. The northwest have bars. The southeast windows have no bars but are covered by thin curtains. There are two pairs of windows, identical to the pairs at floor level, about 25 feet farther up the walls. Above that soars a great but ragged dome.

The chamber's furnishings include a canopied bed, a desk of brightly polished wood, several shelves of books, a pair of divans, a loom draped with many skeins of yarn, and a massive bronze brazier flanked by two big amphorae. The crumbling steps leading up hold an assortment of art objects, including vases, delicate lamps, and realistic sculptures of birds and small animals.

The windows are just like the windows in Area 5, right down to the hinged bars. Theronia keeps the key to the windows in her desk.

The gratings in the floor pull out easily, allowing movement (for a Medium or smaller creature) or attacks into Area 6. The gratings are made of soft steel and actually somewhat flimsy. If someone weighing more than 50 pounds steps on one, roll 1d6. On a roll of 1, the grating gives way, dumping the character 25 feet into Area 6 (2d6 bludgeoning damage). A character can attempt a DC 20 Dex check to leap clear (even roll) or grab the opening (odd roll) and avoid the fall. If the grating does not give way, it groans and bends. Repeat the die roll each round a character steps on or remains atop the grate, increasing the chance it will give way by 1 each round, to a maximum of 1-5.

Theronia spends all her time here. Her only companion is a pet basilisk. She studies her books (including her spellbooks), works at her loom, and keeps watch over Areas 3 and 8. When awake, she usually goes masked. She sleeps during the darkest part of each night, leaving her pet basilisk to stand watch and taking off her mask when she takes to bed.

(Medusa: AC 15, 127 hp; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage plus 4d6 poison damage [snake hair], and +5 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword]; OR +5 to hit x2, range 150 ft./600 ft., 1d8 + 2 piercing damage plus 2d6 poison damage [longbow]; creatures that start their turn within 30 ft. of the medusa and able to see her must make a

DC 14 Con saving throw; if the save fails by 5 or more, the creature is instantly petrified; if the save fails by 4 or less, the creature is restrained and repeats the saving throw at the end of its next turn; if the second saving throw fails, the creature is petrified; if the second saving throw succeeds, the restraint effect ends; an unsurprised creature can avoid this effect by averting its eyes, but until the start of its next turn, it treats the medusa as an unseen target; spell attack +4, save DC 12; [at will] *fire bolt*, *friends*, *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*; [1st level, x4] *color spray*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *thunderwave*; [2nd level, x3] *cloud of daggers*, *hold person*, *misty step*; [3rd level, x2] *counterspell*, *lightning bolt*)

(Basilisk: AC 15, 52 hp; +5 to hit, 2d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 poison damage [bite]; creatures that start their turn within 30 ft. of the basilisk and able to see it must make a DC 14 Con saving throw [petrifying gaze]; if the save fails by 5 or more, the creature is instantly petrified; if the save fails by 4 or less, the creature is restrained and repeats the saving throw at the end of its next turn; if the second saving throw fails, the creature is petrified; if the second saving throw succeeds, the restraint effect ends; an unsurprised creature can avoid this effect by averting its eyes, but until the start of its next turn, it treats the basilisk as an unseen target)

Tactics: When possible, Theronia attacks from a distance, using her *magic missile*, *fire bolt*, or *lightning bolt* spells as she deems most appropriate. She uses her basilisk as a distant guard, watching the stairs or windows.

If foes manage to close to melee range, Theronia uses *misty step* and *thunderwave* to keep them at a distance. She also doffs her mask, unleashing her gaze attack. If necessary, she fights with her dagger and snakes.

If reduced to 10 hit points or less, Theronia surrenders, covering her face and begging her attackers to have mercy on a poor slave; see "Afterward" for more information.

Theronia mostly ignores disturbances outside her chamber, except in Areas 3 or 8, where she uses her spells to attack anyone fighting the elementals in those areas.

Afterward: The wererats in Areas 4 and 5 notice when Theronia begins slinging spells, but they don't intervene. The weretigers in Area 17 also notice any disturbances here, but they use the time to prepare their own defenses.

Likewise, Theronia notices any fighting in Areas 4 or 5 or if someone triggers a trap in Area 3, but she does nothing to intervene except ready her own defense. Theronia also notices any fighting in Area 8 and begins her ranged spell assault against any intruders there as soon as she can. She uses the barred windows in her chamber for three-quarters cover. Likewise, she notices if someone triggers the trap in Area 9 and attacks intruders with her spells as they emerge from the passage there.

If the party loots the chamber, they find Theronia's spellbooks on the bookshelves. The collection of art objects on the ruined staircase includes six rare vases worth 150 gp each and one gold lamp set with amber and rubies (750 gp). The small sculptures are real birds and little animals that Theronia petrified (she's fond of doing that). The petrified creatures might have some value as curiosities, at the GM's option. Eight of the rugs are valuable; each weighs 18 pounds and is worth 150 gp.

If the party captures Theronia or induces her to surrender, the medusa claims to be a mere slave. She has much the same information that the wererats in the West Tower do, plus additional tidbits as noted in the list that follows. She's careful about revealing what she knows and tries to bargain with the group. Theronia is mostly interested in escaping the confrontation alive, but she'd also like to get the magical robe Gavril took from her. Theronia might reveal the following to her captors in response to the right questions (if the party catches any of her omissions, Theronia claims to have simply forgotten to mention the missing details).

- Theronia came to serve here after being captured when a horde of



lycanthropes attacked the caravan in which she was traveling. The other captives were either ransomed or sold, but the lycanthrope leader decided to keep her here.

Note: This is partially true. In fact, the lycanthropes infiltrated the caravan and cut a deal with the medusa to attack the caravan from within. Theronia was to receive a cut of the spoils. Later, Gavriil double crossed the medusa by insisting that her property was part of the spoils. Theronia is now working to get her things back—in particular, a *robe of blending*. Theronia was returning to her lair after a quest to recover the *robe of blending* when Gavriil attacked her caravan.

- The weretiger Gavriil is the mastermind behind all the activity around here. He seems to be some kind of cleric, and favors spells involving the elements. He's friendly with all the elementals lurking around here and talks to animals.

Note: Theronia has it nearly right. Gavriil is a druid who speaks Primordial.

- Gavriil lives in the large tower at the ruin's northeast corner. He has a pair of weretiger bodyguards. A spiral staircase leads up to the weretigers' chamber to the south of their tower. Gavriil likes to watch the pool (Area 8), however, so it would be hard to sneak up on him.

Note: This is mostly true. Theronia knows about the guardian tigers in Area 14, but does not mention them to the party.

- Gavriil uses the idol at the north side of the pool (Area 8) to store his ill-gotten gains.

Note: This is true as far Theronia knows. She has neglected to mention the fire elemental that erupts from the idol.

8. Central Pool

Originally, the pool served as a place where the faithful could wade or simply lounge at the edges. Short roofs projected over the pavement surrounding the pool, with the pool itself open to the sky. The pool's edges

have mostly collapsed, transforming the original rectangular pool into an irregular shape (the dotted line on the map shows the pool's original shape, which matched the roof line). During the day, this area is well lit.

A pool that looks about as long and wide as a village square lies here, its water lapping against the weathered stonework surrounding it. In several places, the remains of pavement that must have once formed a sort of veranda round the pool remain, but the water reaches all the way to the walls in some places. The remains of short roofs with gentle slopes surround the pool on all four sides, and here and there the stumps of broken support pillars stick up like rotten teeth.

Many piles of rubble form tiny islands all over the pool, and one very large pile of debris near the center sprouts a massive tree that rises past the old roof line.

The original pool was about 3 feet deep. Today, the pool's bottom has broken up and subsided, leaving an uneven bottom of hard and jagged stones; an accumulation of debris and silt about a foot thick covers it all. The combination gives the pool a varying depth, as shown by the contour lines on the map.

In addition, there are two sinkholes in the southeast and northeast corners. The southeast sinkhole is about 40 feet deep, with a 10-foot passage at the bottom that leads to the sinkhole in Area 1A. The northeast sinkhole is about 20 feet deep.

Two water elementals reside in the pool. They spend most of their time resting at the bottom in the northern sinkhole, rising occasionally to speak with Gavriil.

(Water Elemental): AC 14, 114 hp; +7 to hit x2, 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage [slam]; elemental can enter and

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remain in another creature's space; a creature in the water elemental's space must make a successful DC 15 Str saving throw or take 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage and be grappled, restrained, and unable to breathe [vortex])

Tactics: Though out of sight and underwater, the elementals notice any activity near the pool (such as fighting in one of the adjacent areas) or when anyone does anything in or with the water in the pool (such as swimming, wading, tossing something in, or just checking the temperature). They prefer to attack foes touching water. If no such target is available, an elemental tries to knock someone into the water. Anyone standing on rubble and adjacent to water is vulnerable. The elemental moves within reach of the rubble and uses a slam attack to jostle the rubble. This attack automatically hits, and the target creature falls into the adjacent water unless it wins a Strength or Dexterity contest (with tactical disadvantage because of the bad footing) opposed by the elemental's Strength check. If there is more than one space where the target could fall into the water, the elemental decides where the target falls. After a fall, the target is prone in the water and must swim or wade during its next turn.

An elemental uses its slam attack against single opponents and its vortex attack when it faces multiple foes that have entered the pool.

The elementals fight to the death.

Afterward: The water elementals' treasure is hidden in the silt at the bottom of the north sinkhole (mostly things Gavriil tossed into the water for safekeeping; there are no magic items).

All the pavilion residents in Areas 5, 7, and 17 notice a fight with the elementals, and most make ranged attacks against foes they can see, as the terrain and the combatants' relative positions allow.

8A. Tree Island

A tree has taken root in a big pile of debris here and grown to massive size.

A substantial mound of rock and organic debris rises from the water here.

A massive tree with a trunk at least as wide as a human is tall grows from the mound. It has a crown wider than a village street and nearly as tall as the domed towers that ring it. A layer of moss makes the trunk look shaggy and green. Some of the tree's lower branches are thicker than a man's leg and a few of those droop low to hang just a few feet above the rocks or water.

The mound is the remains of a tower, now utterly collapsed. As shown on the map, the mound has a fringe of rubble that forms its shoreline. Near the center, the mound is soggy dirt, covered in creepers and ferns.

Three apes have made the tree home. Gavriil struck an uneasy truce with them. He tosses them food now and then, but generally leaves them alone.

(Ape: AC 12, 19 hp; +5 to hit x2, 1d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage [fist] or +5 to hit, 1d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage [thrown object])

Tactics: The apes lie in the tree's lower branches and stay hidden (they have heavy obscurement and three-quarters cover in the foliage). They emerge only if someone comes within reach or touches their island or tree. They immediately attack such trespassers, hanging down from the tree and flailing away with their claws.

The apes notice most of what goes on near the pool but do not break their cover or intervene at all.

Afterward: Wounded crocodiles from Area 1A retreat here (to the

mound's north side) if they escape a fight in their pool. The apes don't like that, but they do nothing.

If the crocodiles are here when characters approach the mound, they attack again. The apes watch the fight, waiting for a chance to catch someone unawares when they reach the mound.

A few trinkets lie beneath the water just off the mound (discarded gear from the apes' victims).

9. Side Entrance

Priests and pilgrims once used this doorway to enter the pavilion from their quarters. The priests' quarters have sunk into the fen, but the ruins of the pilgrims' hostel still stand. The remains of a path running from here to Area 1 at the hostel are faintly visible. It takes a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check to locate the path. If the PCs search for the path, they have tactical advantage on the check and can use Int (Survival) instead, if they prefer.

The text below assumes the party is viewing the area after opening the door from the west.

A passage, some 10 feet wide, with walls of cracked rock extends east from the door. The corridor has an arched ceiling of stone. Enough blocks are missing up there to show patches of sky.

Some 20 feet in from the door, a thicket of saplings and vines seems to grow from the very stones of the floor.

The foliage is natural; it grows from dirt-filled cracks in the floor.

Gavriil had his servants add a deadly trap in the corridor. Anyone passing through the foliage triggers the trap. The narrow rectangle on the map shows where the trigger lies. The trap has two effects. First, the rock falls into the four spaces that border the trigger, dealing 4d6 bludgeoning damage to anyone in those spaces. A successful DC 15 Dex saving throw reduces the damage by half. Second, the character triggering the trap is trapped in a net unless the character makes a successful DC 25 Dex saving throw. A netted character winds up wrapped in the net and suspended from the ceiling.

Afterward: Triggering the trap alerts the residents in Areas 4, 7, and 17. These creatures watch the passage's east end. If nobody emerges after a round or two, two weretigers from Area 17 go to see if anyone has been caught in the net. If intruders emerge from the passage, the residents attack, as noted in their area descriptions.

10. Larders

Through some trick of nature (or perhaps an extraplanar connection), these chambers remain at about 40 degrees Fahrenheit around the clock. The pavilion's original staff opened the room's doors from time to time to provide a cool draft for anyone using the central pool's (Area 8) west side. Gavriil merely uses the chambers as larders.

A wave of shivery cold, laced with the stench of blood and sudden death, rolls over you as the door opens. A dozen or more skinned and dressed carcasses of large animals hang from the ceiling in the chamber beyond.

The carcasses are from animals Gavriil's servants killed in the fens: deer, swine, and large lizards. The smell comes from the carcasses, which are not very well cleaned, though they are mostly unspoiled.

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II. Storage

These areas, too, once were very cold, though now their temperature stays near 60 degrees. Gavriil uses them to store beverages and dry goods.

A cool, somewhat dry, puff of air washes over you as the door opens. The draft carries a faintly pleasant scent. The chamber beyond the door does not seem to contain anything except crates and barrels.

The crates and barrels contain supplies for Gavriil and his servants. There is salt, spices, and beverages, plus some preserved food (smoked meat and dry fruit and vegetables) and some butter, lard, and flour. A few crates contain trade goods stolen from caravans, including 100 square yards of very fine cotton cloth (worth 500 gp) and 200 square yards of silk (worth 2,000 gp).

12. Hall

The chamber here was once one of several small chapels provided for the faithful. An altar and idol once stood at the east end, but Gavriil had them removed. Today, the residents use the place as a dining area (when they have a taste for cooked food) and meeting hall. It usually stands empty.

The odor of stale smoke fills the air. A table of rough planks with wicker chairs lined up alongside it fills much of the space in this narrow chamber. Solid-looking chests are pushed against the north and south walls. At the back of the chamber is an uneven dais covered in ash and bits of half-burned wood. Firewood is stacked near the circle of ash.

The dais is where the altar and idol once stood. The residents use it as a crude fireplace now. The firewood is nothing special, and is somewhat green. The chests were taken from a caravan. They're not locked. Inside are several sets of pewter and silver plate. The whole lot weighs 55 pounds and is worth 500 gp. There also are a few bottles and casks of wine and liquor, all drinkable but of no particular value.

13. Kitchen

Like the hall (Area 12), this chamber was once a chapel. Now the residents use it as a kitchen.

A smoky fire atop a raised, open hearth at the eastern end of this small chamber fills the air with haze. A few covered pots and clay vessels lie in the smoldering coals. Closer at hand, there is a sturdy table that you see is actually an overturned cart or wagon. It holds an assortment of bloodstained wooden slabs, crusty knives, and scraps of food. A few slabs of meat, both cooked and raw, and several bunches of herbs hang from the smoke-stained ceiling. There's one other exit, a door to the north.

Three servants always stay in here, cleaning game or preparing food. Two of the servants are human women, kidnapped from one of the villages in the fens. The third servant is a male wereboar; he's nominally the head cook, but he's really here to keep an eye on the women.

The cooks are busy and tend not to notice any fighting elsewhere unless

it occurs right on their doorstep—in Area 14 or right outside the door connecting this room to Area 8.

The wereboar hustles the women out if he notices any disturbance in the pavilion. He herds them through Area 14 and into Area 16 unless the trouble seems to be in Area 14, in which case he ushers them through Area 3 and outside. If caught unaware, the wereboar pretends to be just another kidnapped servant. Add the following text if the cooks are still here when the party enters.

Three bedraggled looking humans stand between the fire and the table—two women and a man. They're all dressed in soiled smocks, and their faces and arms are smeared with grease. When the door opens, the trio freezes in place, to stare at you with wild eyes.

The kitchen holds nothing of interest or value, except the trio of cooks.

(Cook [Commoner]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning damage [club])

(Wereboar: AC 10 or 11, 78 hp; +5 to hit x2, 2d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage [maul]; one maul attack can be replaced by +5 to hit, 2d6 + 3 slashing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [tusks]; if the wereboar moves 15 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with tusks, the attack causes an extra 2d6 slashing damage and the creature must make a successful DC 13 Str saving throw or be knocked prone; 1/hour, an attack causing less than 15 damage drops the wereboar to 1 hp instead of to 0 hp; shapeshifter)

Tactics: The humans don't fight, and merely shriek and cower if attacked. The wereboar follows suit, initially. He tries to bluff the party into leaving him behind, along with his two charges. If that doesn't work, he looks for a chance to throw open the door to Area 14; thereafter, he changes form and attacks the closest foe. If characters pay particular attention to either of the women, someone who makes a successful DC 10 Wis (Insight) check notices one of them darting her eyes quickly toward the wereboar in a frightened manner, as if trying to signal something.

Afterward: Once the party deals with the wereboar, they can question the women (they won't talk in the wereboar's presence). They have the same information as the wererats in Area 4. The women are terrified of the tigers in Area 14.

14. Guardpost

Like Areas 12 and 13, this chamber was once a chapel.

This chamber reeks with an overpowering, musky smell. Soiled rushes cover the floor. There's a deeper mound of rushes at the chamber's east end, or perhaps that area is raised a bit. There's not much time to study the architecture, however; a veritable pride of striped, shaggy felines, each almost as big as a pony, regard you with hungry eyes.

Gavriil keeps **four tigers** here to guard Areas 15 and 16.

(Tiger: AC 12, 37 hp; +5 to hit, 1d8 + 3 slashing damage [claw] or +5 to hit, 1d10 + 3 piercing damage [bite]; if tiger moves 20 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with claw, the target must make a successful DC 13 Str saving throw or be knocked prone; if target is knocked prone, the

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tiger can immediately make a bonus attack with bite)

Tactics: The tigers attack anyone entering here except lycanthropes or visitors accompanied by lycanthropes. The tigers aren't much for thinking in combat. One or two tigers attack the nearest foe while the others try to circle around to the flanks.

Afterward: The tigers don't pay attention to what's going on elsewhere in the pavilion. Any disturbance alerts the wereboar in Area 13 and the weretigers in Area 16.

15. Spiral Stairs

These stairs rise 25 feet to Area 16, then a few more feet before they crumble away to broken shaft, with the top open to the elements.

16. Northeast Tower Ground Floor

This chamber once served as a bath; today Gavriil uses it as a prison.

Faint light filters down into this circular chamber through gratings in the ceiling. A round pit mostly filled with leaves, twigs, and masonry debris takes up most of the floor. A cage of blackened iron bars hangs from the ceiling over the pit.

The pit once served as a bath; it's about 4 feet deep and filled nearly to the top with leaves and other detritus. **Two giant poisonous snakes** have moved in. Gavriil keeps them here with regular offerings of live prey.

Gavriil added the iron cage to hold valuable prisoners; he keeps the key. The combination of locked cage and venomous snakes discourages escape attempts.

Giant Poisonous Snake: AC 14, 11 hp; +6 to hit, 1d4 + 4 piercing damage plus 3d6 poison damage, or half poison damage with successful DC 11 Con saving throw [bite])

Tactics: The snakes have heavy obscurement in the pit. They lie quietly unless someone disturbs their nest or the cage.

Afterward: The snakes pay no attention to what's going on outside their chamber. Any fighting alerts the weretigers in Area 16.

The wereboar in Area 13 might come here if flushed out. The wereboar knows about the snakes and gives them the widest possible berth when sheltering here.

17. Northeast Tower Upper Floor

This chamber looks much like Areas 5 and 7. It has windows in the same configuration as Area 5 (though the weretigers keep the lower set of bars unlocked) and a floor with gratings similar to Area 7. Gavriil uses the place as a living space for himself and his weretiger bodyguards, and as a guard post.

A quartet of metal grates lie in the circular chamber's stone floor. At about floor level, two sets of windows look southeast and northwest. The southeast windows have bars, but the northwest windows are open and bare. Two more pairs of windows, identical to the pairs at floor level, are set about 25 feet farther up the walls. Above that soars a great but ragged dome.

The chamber's furnishings include a very large canopied bed, a jumble of cushions, at least a half dozen low planters overflowing with flowering vines, and a few brightly colored rugs.

Gavriil and his two weretiger bodyguards, Inessa and Zhanna, spend nearly all their time here. Usually one keeps an eye on Area 8 (through the barred windows) and another watches the archway to the staircase outside (Area 15).

(Inessa and Zhanna [Weretigers]: AC 12, 120 hp; in humanoid form, attacks are either +5 to hit x2, 1d6 + 3 slashing damage [scimitar] or +4 to hit, range 150 ft./600 ft., 1d8 + 2 piercing damage [longbow]; in tiger form, attacks are +5 to hit, 1d8 + 3 slashing damage [claw] or +5 to hit, 1d10 + 3 piercing damage; in hybrid form, can attack with scimitar x2, longbow x2, or claw x2; if the weretiger moved 15 ft. straight toward a creature before hitting with a claw, the creature must make a DC 14 Str save or be knocked prone and bitten; shapechanger)

(Gavriil [Weretiger]: as above, but with additional druid abilities—can wild shape into a nonflying creature up to CR 2 as a bonus action; while transformed by wild shape, can expend a spell slot as a bonus action to recover 1d8 hp per level of the spell slot; spell attack +5, save DC 13; [at will] produce flame, resistance, thorn whip; [1st level, x4] cure wounds, entangle, jump, thunderwave; [2nd level, x3] heat metal, hold person, spike growth; [3rd level, x2] call lightning, conjure animals)

Tactics: When possible, Gavriil and his guards attack from a distance. Gavriil uses spells such as *produce flame*, *heat metal*, or *call lightning* as he deems most appropriate. The bodyguards stand at the windows firing their bows.

If foes manage to close to melee range, Gavriil uses *entangle* and *conjure animals* to slow up foes. Inessa and Zhanna do their best to protect Gavriil from melee. Gavriil supports them with *resistance* and even *cure wounds* spells. If forced to fight, Gavriil uses his natural weaponry.

Inessa and Zhanna fight to the death, at least as long as Gavriil is still alive and kicking. Gavriil fights as long as both bodyguards are still on their feet. If forced to fight alone, Gavriil fights for a round or two, then dives out a window and into the pool in Area 8 (the barred windows here are unlocked). Once in the water, Gavriil tries to escape by swimming through the south sinkhole and out the pool at Area 1A.

Afterward: Gavriil and his guards keep little here except personal gear, with one important exception. The *robe of blending* Gavriil took from Theronia the medusa (Area 7) is spread out atop the bed canopy. It's above eye level, so characters need to search the chamber thoroughly to find it. One of the cushions holds 18 red garnets worth 10 gp each (Gavriil "feeds" these to the idol at Area 18).

If captured, Inessa and Zhanna say nothing if they think Gavriil is still alive. If convinced Gavriil is dead, the pair will answer questions. They know the area fairly well, though they don't know where Gavriil keeps his loot.

If Gavriil fails to escape, he'll try to bargain for his life by revealing where he concealed his treasures. He insists that he cannot call off any of his guards. He offers to help the party with some of the combat, but only as a cover for another escape attempt.

If characters ask Gavriil about the idol in Area 18, Gavriil says he's hidden many coins and gems in a hollow space below the idol. In fact, Gavriil drops a gem in there from time to time to keep the gate open—see the Area 18 description. If he thinks he can get away with it, Gavriil offers to "open" the idol for the group. In reality, he plans to summon a fire elemental to attack the party.

In addition to his gear, Gavriil carries keys to all the locks in the pavilion and the hostel.

18. Idol

The hollow bronze shell of some forgotten, ancient deity stands here. The people who built the pavilion used it as a focus for summoning elementals.



Water laps against a low stone apron that's still mostly intact. A semicircular dais rises above the rippling water. A wide bronze shell, green with verdigris, sits atop the dais. The shell's outside resembles some kind of birdlike—or perhaps amphibious—creature. Apparently, the shell was once a hollow bronze statue.

When the pavilion was new, the idol served as a summoning device for elementals of all kinds. Today, with the idol broken, the idol can summon only a single **fire elemental** once a month. To stay active, the idol must receive a live coal each day and a red gem worth at least 10 gp each month. If these offerings stop for even a day, the idol becomes inactive for a year. If the elemental the idol summons is killed, the idol likewise falls inactive for a year. Once inactive, the idol must receive offerings each day and month to become active again.

If red gems worth at least 50 gp are placed in the idol, a fire elemental erupts from the hollow interior.

Gavriil has been keeping the idol active, and a look inside reveals a pile of gray ash and half-burned coals.

(Fire Elemental: AC 13, 102 hp; +6 to hit x2, 2d6 + 3 fire damage and a flammable object ignites, taking 1d10 fire damage at the start of its turn until an action is used to extinguish flames [touch]; enemies that hit the fire elemental with melee attacks from 5 feet away take 1d10 fire damage; can enter and remain in an enemy's space, causing 1d10 fire damage and igniting flammable objects as above)

Tactics: Gavriil has gotten to know the elemental from the idol, and the creature attacks anyone else it meets, regardless of who summoned it. In battle, the elemental tries to set as many foes afire as it can. The elemental

fights to the death, or until all its foes retreat into the water. In the latter case, the elemental waits one round, then returns to its home plane if no one exits the water to continue the fight.

Pilgrims' Hostel

The ancients built the hostel as a companion to the pavilion. Pilgrims who came from afar to visit the pavilion were housed here.

The hostel lies about a quarter mile west of the pavilion. The faint remains of a path that once connected the two can still be seen. The path connects Area 9 in the pavilion with Area 1 in the hostel.

Gavriil uses the hostel as a prison for captives and as a hiding place for some of his loot.

Conditions and Features

The hostel has architecture similar to the pavilion and is as decayed and overgrown as the pavilion. Conditions inside are identical to those within the pavilion.

Approaching the Hostel

The party can reach the hostel by hacking through the undergrowth on the island or by using the path leading from the pavilion. If they don't use the path, the island's guardian **earth elemental** attacks them. In either case, the trees on the island tend to screen the group from view if they're traveling overland. The guard in Area 6, however, might see them as they enter. Each character must make a Stealth check and compare it to the guard's passive Perception (14) as the group enters the hostel. See Area 6 for more details.

If the party tries to climb the hostel's walls or approach from the air, the **air elemental** in Area 6 notices them and attacks unless the group is

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invisible. The guard in Area 6 also sees visible aerial visitors.

(Earth Elemental: AC 17, 126 hp; +8 to hit x2, 2d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [slam]; can burrow through stone and earth without leaving a trace.)

Entrance

A weedy trail of crushed stone leads to a tumbledown pile of mud-colored stone as large as an aristocrat's villa. The place seems to have a walled compound with three towers: two of those are square and flank a narrow gateway that looks to be the only entrance. It's hard to tell how tall these entrance towers once were. All but the ground floors have fallen away. The third tower is round, and it rises from the compound's southwest corner. It seems to be two floors high, with a tattered roof over the upper floor.

IA. Entrance Towers

Priests and guards once used these chambers to keep an eye on the place. Gavriil's servants use them now for much the same thing. Visitors can get a look inside by opening the doors or peering through the windows.

The space here is a square chamber with windows facing the complex's gateway and courtyard. Inside is a crude wooden table with a couple of wicker chairs and a few crates and barrels. There seems to be a spiral stair leading upward, but it's blocked with rubble. Opposite the stair lies a big mass of leaves, twigs, and old rags.

it's now entirely gone.

A pair of wererats lives in each tower. The pair in one tower rests while the other pair keeps watch. It's possible to duck past the guards (Stealth check opposed by the wererat's passive Perception of 12); however, the guard in Area 6 also might see the intruder.

The piles of leaves and rags are wererats nests. When resting, the wererats hide themselves in their nests. When "on duty" the wererats sit at the tables, glancing out the windows and occasionally rising to take longer looks out the windows.

(Wererat: AC 12, 33 hp; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword] or +4 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [hand crossbow]; one attack can be replaced by +4 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 11 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [bite]; 1/turn, an attack deals an extra 1d6 damage if wererat has tactical advantage on the attack or has an active ally adjacent to the target; shapeshifter)

Tactics: The active wererats attack the moment they see intruders. They spread out as much as they can, trying to use their sneak attacks. The resting rats join the fray one round later.

Afterward: The guard in Area 6 notices any fighting here after two rounds (and might see intruders even before a fight; see "Approaching the Hostel"). If alerted, the guard does not intervene, but sees to his own defenses.

If captured and questioned, the wererats can reveal much the same information as the wererats in the pavilion do, plus the following:

- They know the hostel's layout and denizens but not about Gavriil's caches of treasure (Area 4). They'll reveal the location of the prison (Area

5) and the kennels (Area 4), but insist that they hold only mangy dogs.

- They know about the air elemental in Area 6, but not about the water elemental in Area 2.
- They tell the party that Areas 5 and 6 house human mercenaries. They know these people are werewolves, but conceal that information if they can.

2. Courtyard

Beyond the gates lies a smallish courtyard paved with muck-covered stones. Here and there, cattails and other water-loving plants grow in the pavement's gaps. At the courtyard's center stands a burbling fountain with a basin covered in lily pads.

The fountain is home to a **water elemental**.

(Water Elemental: AC 14, 114 hp; +7 to hit x2, 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage [slam]; elemental can enter and remain in another creature's space; a creature in the water elemental's space must make a successful DC 15 Str saving throw or take 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage and be grappled, restrained, and unable to breathe)

Tactics: The elemental lies concealed in the basin and attacks anyone except a hostel resident or someone in a resident's company. When the elemental attacks, the fountain spews water all over the courtyard (that's what has left the yard soggy and covered in muck). While the fountain sprays, everyone in the courtyard is considered touching water for purposes of combat with the elemental. The spray also gives anyone light concealment at a distance of 10 to 20 feet and heavy concealment at a distance of 25 feet or more. The elemental fights to the death; the fountain stops spewing one round after the elemental is killed or stops fighting.

Afterward: Everyone in the hostel notices when the fountain sprays. They avoid the blinding spray, but prepare for ranged combat against the invaders if they defeat the elemental.

3. Tower Ground Floor

This area was once a bath similar to Area 16 in the pavilion. Gavriil's servants have turned it into a barracks of sorts. Gavriil fitted the current door and fitted it with an arrow slit. The text below assumes the party is peering through the slit or through the opened door.

Faint light filters down into this circular chamber through gratings in the ceiling. A round pit in the floor's center looks mostly filled with rock. A dying fire smolders atop the rocks. Four crude bunks are arranged around the pit. Each bunk has a crude chest with a flat top at its foot. An open arch to the left reveals a spiral stair going up.

The stairs rise 25 feet to Area 6.

Four werewolves live here, but one is on guard duty in Area 6 at any given time. Two of the **three werewolves** snooze in their bunks or pass the time gambling, using a chest as a table.

(Werewolf: AC 11, 58 hp; in humanoid or hybrid form, werewolf bites and uses either claws or spear; in wolf form, it only bites; +4 to hit, 1d8 + 2 piercing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [bite]; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 slashing damage [claws]; +4 to hit, range 20 ft./60 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [spear]; shapeshifter)

QUESTS OF DOOM: LYCANTHROPS & ELEMENTALS

Tactics: If forewarned, one werewolf runs up the stairs to Area 6 to make ranged attacks at any intruders. The remaining two try to hold the door. They keep their door closed, and one uses the arrow slit. If foes manage to breach the door, they switch to melee attacks. After the werewolves fight for a round or two, the **dire wolves** from Area 4 break out of their kennels and join the fray. In battle, bloodlust quickly overcomes the werewolves and they fight to the death. If intruders break into Area 4 and attack the dire wolves there, the werewolves from here join the fight after a round.

Afterward: The guard in Area 6 notices a fight here immediately, and makes ranged attacks against any foes he can see.

If captured and questioned, the werewolves have the same information as the wererats in Area 1. If asked about the pavilion, they can reveal much the same information as Theronia the medusa has (see Area 7 in the pavilion), though they try to bargain for their lives and freedom before revealing it.

4. Kennels

These areas once served as dormitories for visiting pilgrims. Gavril's servants have converted them into kennels (none too clean) for three dire wolves.

Tiers of wooden bunks, sans mattresses, line the walls in this dank, stinky chamber. An uneven layer of twigs and soiled rushes covers the floor.

One **dire wolf** lies in each of the three kennels, snoozing until a disturbance elsewhere in the hostel awakens it.

(Dire Wolf: AC 14, 37 hp; +5 to hit, 2d6 + 3 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 13 Str saving throw or be knocked prone [bite]; has tactical advantage on attack rolls if an active ally is adjacent to the target)

Tactics: A dire wolf confronted in its kennel attacks the closest foe. As the battle continues, the wolf tries to knock down as many foes as it can, attacking foes still on their feet when possible. Any fighting in a kennel or in Areas 3 or 6 brings out all the dire wolves (they can easily burst the doors). When fighting in the open, the wolves try to surround a foe so they can get the benefit from having allies adjacent to their targets.

Afterward: The dire wolves and the werewolves in Areas 3 and 6 support each other as noted in the Area 3 description.

Gavril has buried one-third of his treasure under the floor in each kennel. Each cache is a standard treasure for a CR 4 creature.

5. Storage

This area once served as a meeting and dining hall for visiting pilgrims. Now it serves as a storage room similar to Area 11 in the pavilion. It's not cold as the pavilion's storage area but it has a similar collection of trade goods.

If the party has come to the area to rescue captives, any commoners who are not likely to bring ransom payments are imprisoned here. Gavril keeps them manacled and chained to rings set into the floor. He carries the keys with him.

6. Tower Upper Floor (Encounter Level 8)

The staircase descends 25 feet to Area 3.

The people who built the hostel used this area as a space for quiet reflection and meditating. Gavril's servants use it as a guard post.

This area is mostly open to the air. A circle of arches supports a badly damaged roof. There's a stone seat under each arch.

A **werewolf** stands guard here all the time. He keeps watch on Area 1 and the courtyard. An **air elemental** also hovers here, near the peak of the roof.

(Werewolf: AC 11, 58 hp; in humanoid or hybrid form, werewolf bites and uses either claws or shortbow; in wolf form, it only bites; +4 to hit, 1d8 + 2 piercing damage and humanoid target must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be affected by lycanthropy [bite]; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 slashing damage [claws]; +4 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortbow]; shapeshifter)

(Air Elemental: AC 15, 90 hp; +8 to hit x2, 2d8 + 5 bludgeoning damage [slam]; can enter and remain in an enemy's space, doing 3d8 + 2 bludgeoning damage, hurling enemy 20 ft. in a random direction, and doing an extra 1d6 bludgeoning damage per 10 ft. thrown if enemy hits a solid object [whirlwind]; enemy creature takes half damage and is not thrown if it makes a successful DC 13 Str saving throw)

Tactics: The werewolf uses his bow against foes he sees approaching the hostel. The elemental has orders to attack anyone approaching the hostel from the air or trying to scale the walls. The elemental stays out of any other fight unless someone takes to the air or climbs the walls, or if it is attacked itself.

Once in combat, the elemental fights to the death, as does the werewolf.

Afterward: If the party manages to capture the werewolf, he has the same information as his comrades in Area 3.

Men
&
Monstrosities

Deep in the Vale

By James M. Ward

This adventure is for beginning characters, with a bias toward fighters.

Player characters should start *Deep in the Vale* at 1st level with zero experience points. As they complete each encounter, give them the experience points they earned immediately instead of waiting until the adventure is over. Ideally, characters should gain a level or two (and the hit points and other benefits those levels add) before the characters wrap up the adventure.

All of the player characters should have been raised in the Vale. The pleasant valley is a peaceful place where few problems bother the inhabitants. Twenty to thirty years ago, there were wars against orcs and goblins; oldsters of the village still tell stories about those times. But now, life is easy for the people of the Vale—or it was. That is about to change.

This adventure is not about acquiring gold and magical treasure. *Deep in the Vale* presents many situations where fighting is the characters' best option, but there are many others where characters will be smart to do some roleplaying before resorting to their weapons. At all times, reinforce the idea that the characters' decisions are affecting the story and that what they do is affecting the lives of people in the Vale.

Events of *Deep in the Vale* should be spread across many days or even weeks. The villains of this adventure aren't launching an all-out offensive against the Vale; they are raiding, seizing opportunities, and acting on impulse rather than following some master plan.

Give players time to think about and discuss the situation between encounters and to make plans for how they should meet the threat. Since days may be passing between encounters, you don't need to put time pressure on players. Keep the game moving, but don't push players to make rapid decisions or rash judgments unless the immediate situation calls for it. Between encounters, let players enjoy the usually idyllic life of the Vale. The blacksmith is going to make horseshoes, shields, weapons, and tools. Hunters are going to track deer in the woods to the north. The rhythms of life should continue in the Vale, no matter what problems come to the villagers.

At the end of all of these encounters, the Baron over this territory could summon the characters to his castle (in the nearest large town, about 20 miles away) to receive a reward and to be offered a new quest dealing with a problem the Baron is having in another part of his barony.

Introduction

In any game for beginners, the Game Master needs to help new players learn how to roleplay and how to react to the descriptions the GM provides. *Deep in the Vale* includes many battle encounters, but characters shouldn't just be dropped into a situation and told to roll initiative. Arrange things so the players' and characters' decisions can lead them into situations where fighting is the best (or only) option. Nonplayer characters (the villagers of the Vale) are your best tools in this regard. Their advice, news, requests for help, or screams in the distance can motivate characters into doing all sorts of things.

If you're a new Game Master, you should know the Fifth Edition combat rules and experience rules. You don't need to be an expert, but if nothing else, you should be intimately familiar with the rulebook's table of contents and index so you can find answers quickly as questions come up during play.

The player characters are all 1st-level adventurers from the Vale,

and *Deep in the Vale* is their first adventure. The Vale is a humble place where military and adventuring gear is rare. There are no suits of armor or war horses for sale in the local area. If characters want that material, they must wait until they have a chance to visit a bigger city, which is many miles away. The equipment that can be purchased in the Vale must be what could be found in the farms, homes, and shops of simple folk. Things like daggers, pots and pans, unusual leather items, and other uncommon goods might be bought from Keuffel, the tinker who peddles his wares throughout the Vale in an oxcart. A handful of tradesmen in the village make backpacks, fur cloaks, lanterns, and similar goods. These can be bought at the market in the village square. The blacksmith player character can make shields and simple weapons, but martial weapons and metal armor are beyond his or her skill. The leather worker can make leather and hide armor, but nothing more complex. Those two characters working together could make studded leather armor.

It's reasonable for characters to already have the types of things that village blacksmiths make and that farmers or humble tradesmen use regularly. Each of the player characters should have a job in the village. Players can choose jobs or you can assign them however you like, but be logical. The character with the highest Strength score, for example, is a good candidate to be the blacksmith, while the character with the highest Intelligence might be the village's only scribe (or be apprenticed to a scribe). A cleric would tend the shrine to Thor at the entrance to the Vale.

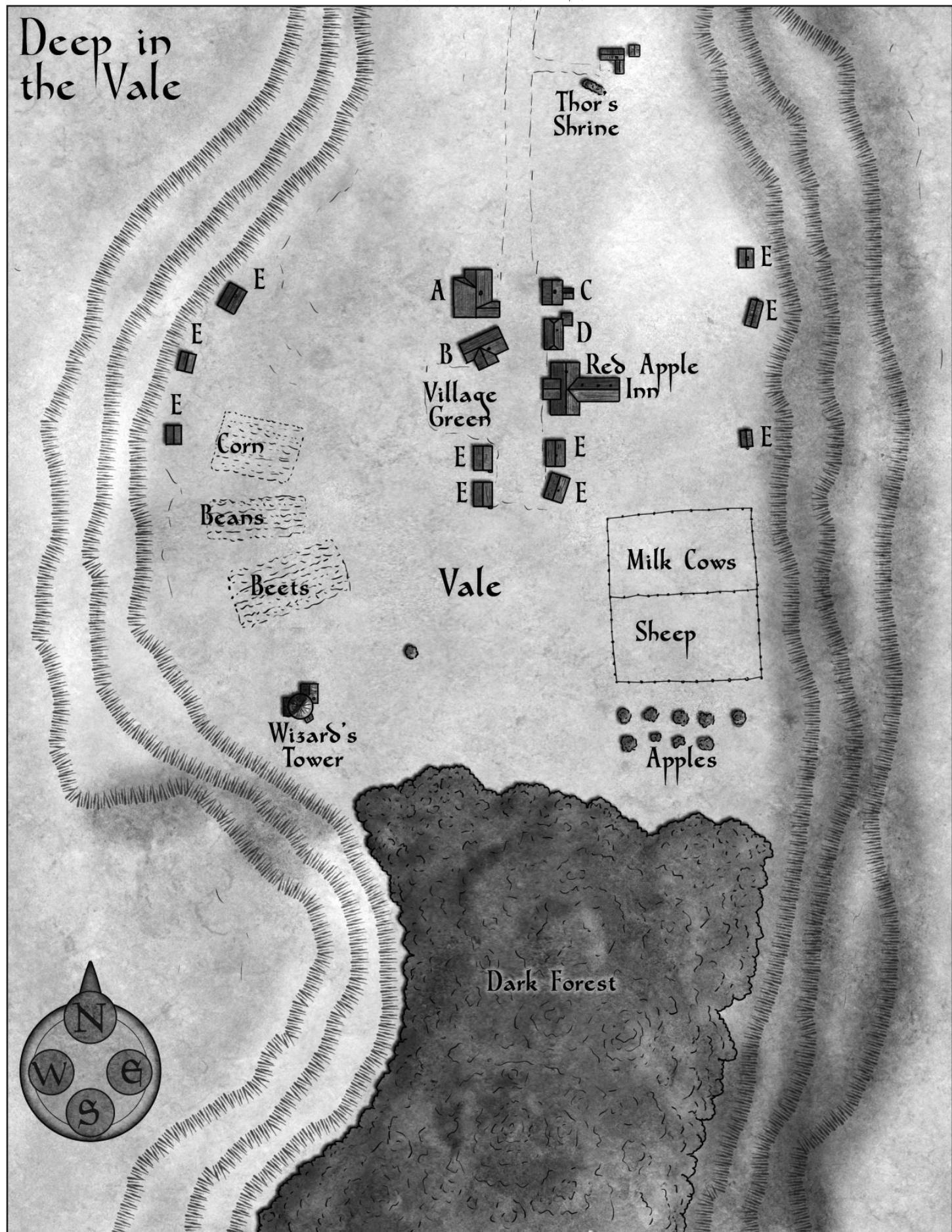
Be sure everyone has a job. Players and characters don't need to love their jobs (not everyone does!). Suggested jobs include dairy farmer, orchard farmer, shepherd, innkeeper, leatherworker, wood carver, hunter (or poacher), and healer's apprentice. A character's job doesn't need to be identical with or even related to the character's class; there's nothing wrong with someone playing a rope maker who aspires to become a great sorcerer or a farmer who tells tales, sings, and practices playing a hand-me-down lute in the evening. All characters should be in their late teens or the equivalent age for their race. All of them are successful at their jobs, even if it's not the job of their dreams.

The central figure in the adventure is the blacksmith. This character should be a fighter or a similar class. He or she has a greatclub that the character's father carved from a piece of oak that was struck by lightning. Every other character starts with a backpack and a quarterstaff or a club. An arcane spellcaster has a dagger and 2d4 darts. Anyone can have a sling. Their backpacks contain things like a mirror, flint and steel, a canteen, a small tin pot, a wooden plate and a gourd cup, an oiled tarp to serve as a ground cloth or small lean-to, a heavy cloak, a change of clothes, a few bandages, and a skin of wine.

As the Game Master, one of your tasks is to describe people, places, and things so well that they come alive in the minds of your players. If players enjoy themselves, they come back for more, and everyone around the table has more fun. One of the most important things you can do as a GM is maintaining a sense of excitement. Keep the action moving and don't punish characters unduly; try to always leave a means of escape for characters who get into trouble. We don't encourage babying players or letting characters survive when they do foolish things that ought to get them killed. With new players in their first few sessions, however, it's best to give their characters every opportunity to survive—if only because a player who's rolling up a new character isn't actively participating in the adventure. If your players have more experience with fantasy roleplaying games, then there's less reason to pull your punches.

DEEP IN THE VALE

Deep in the Vale



The Vale

The Vale is a prosperous place. Everyone works and enjoys life in the peaceful valley.

All the player characters know exactly what is useful in any given cabin and have no problems asking to borrow these items. As the GM, you might suggest they ask to borrow some of this equipment to fight the Vale's battles.

A. Amber's Cabin

Amber is eighteen years old and the true beauty of the Vale. She has always had a liking for the blacksmith of the Vale. Everyone figured she would marry him when she turned eighteen. Her log cabin is the largest in the Vale. This vintner's cabin has six large rooms and a loft above. She and her father live there. Her father grows grapes on the hillside at the eastern edge of the Vale. His red and white wines age in barrels in the root cellar of the cabin.

Amber can, of course, be changed to any race or gender that best suits the romantic interests of the blacksmith, who isn't necessarily human or male.

Amber spins wool from her sheep to make warm clothing and blankets. She is skilled with a sling, using iron sling bullets the blacksmith made for her. She is a useful nonplayer character (NPC). She is perfect for giving suggestions that move the adventure along. She is also going to be the focus of a quest during the adventure.

Her father, Hector, was in the King's army twenty years ago. He has a halberd and a dented breastplate that he wears when there's time to gear up for battle. He is an old man now, however, and wouldn't be much use in a real combat situation.

(Amber and Hector [Commoners]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning or slashing damage)

B. Farmer's Cabin

This farmer grows corn, beets, and beans in three large fields. He can be a player character or a nonplayer character run by the Game Master (GM). If he's an NPC, his name is Flinn. His home is a large, four-room log cabin. Behind it is a corral for a pair of plow horses. His root cellar is the largest in the Vale; he uses it to store crops he doesn't sell in the large town twenty miles away. The farmer has a big wagon for hauling produce to town. Above the mantle in his cabin are two shortswords. These were weapons used by the farmer's two grandfathers in the Great War thirty years ago. The weapons are a tad rusty but could be made battle-ready with a little cleaning and sharpening.

(Flinn [Commoner]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning or slashing damage)

C. Sheep Herder's Cabin

While Amber helps turn the sheep's wool into yarn, the sheep herder tends the sheep and moves them around the hillsides to munch on grass. He can be a player character or a nonplayer character run by the GM. If he's an NPC, his name is Samwel. His cabin has two large rooms and an adjoining shed where he stores the wool after the shearing. Samwel has four sheep-herding dogs that obey his commands and might actually be useful in a fight. There are 100 sheep that spend the nights in a large, fenced pasture east of the cabin. Every morning the sheep are taken to a different section of the gently sloping hills and allowed to crop the grasses in those areas.

(Samwel [Commoner]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning or slashing damage)

(Boxer, King, Malek, and Predo [Mastiffs]: AC 12, 5 hp; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Str saving throw to avoid being knocked prone [bite]; has tactical advantage on Wis (Perception) checks relying on hearing or scent)

D. Dairy Farmer's Cabin

The dairy farmer's cabin is large with two rooms and an adjoining milk barn. His name is Drixell, and other workers in the Vale help him milk thirty cows. He then gets more help making butter and cheese. Drixell keeps sixty cows in a large, penned pasture. A group of five teenagers take batches of cows out each day to let them graze around the north end of the Vale. All of these boys carry slings and river stones, with which they are quite accurate. In a battle in the Vale, they could stand along a ridge and hurl sling stones down at an enemy. They would never stand and fight in melee.

(Drixell [Commoner]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning or slashing damage)

(Herd Boys (Commoners): AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d4 bludgeoning damage)

E. Worker's Cabin

Each of these cabins has two rooms and a loft above. These are the workers of the Vale, who do whatever jobs are needed. Each family has two or three children of all ages. In times of danger, the children hide in the root cellars of the cabins while the mother and father stay above to protect the cabin. The common weapon of all workers is a quarterstaff. The people are adept at using these weapons, as there are village practices every Thor's Day on the village green.

All of these workers keep beehives. Honey from the Vale is famous for reported healthy properties. Besides its food value, the honey is cooked into mead and sold. When Flinn goes into town on his wagon, he always brings several bottles, jars, and small casks of honey and mead to sell for the workers.

(Workers [Commoners]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, 1d4 bludgeoning damage)

Red Apple Inn

The Red Apple Inn is a large, two-story building. The upper story has six bedrooms and a bath chamber. The lower floor has a large meeting room with a bar, a large kitchen with pantry, and a large bed chamber for the innkeeper and his wife. The inn is famous for apple ale as well as meat pies. The five children of the innkeeper and his wife help run the inn. There is a small stable at the side of the inn and a fenced paddock behind. At any given time, the innkeeper has four good horses for sale.

Lunchtime at the inn is when people get together and talk about the events of the day. Everyone in the Vale comes to eat there at lunch time.

It's a little-known fact that the innkeeper (Immett) and his wife (Kathla) are expert shots with light crossbows. They have also taught their sons and daughters this skill. The entire family is capable of sitting on the roof of the inn and launching bolts into an advancing enemy.

(Immett, Kathla, and five children [Commoners]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., 1d8 piercing damage)

Village Green

The village green is the social center of the Vale. Every Thor's Day is weapon's practice, where adults use quarterstaffs and children practice

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with slings. At the end of the week, if the weather is pleasant, music is played on the green. When there is danger in the area, everyone comes to the green to band together and plan how they will protect their homes, farms, and businesses.

Thor's Shrine and Blacksmithy

The shrine has stood at the entrance to the Vale for as long as anyone can remember. Maintaining the shrine has customarily been the job of the Vale's blacksmith. Once a day, the stones of the shrine are wiped down with raw wool. Mistletoe is spread evenly on the marble arch. If the hammer bell isn't ringing because there's no wind, the caretaker chimes the bell a few times a day.

The blacksmith shop with its anvil and furnace are in a large, one-room cabin behind the shrine. The smith should be a player character, preferably the strongest character in the group. In one of the encounters, the blacksmith will be gifted by the gods with the ability to make battle hammers quickly. He also can make stout shields.

Wizard's Tower

The tower is the home of Agamemnus St.-Cyr, a human wizard who's now over 300 years old and looks it. For most of those years, Agamemnus has secretly and not-so-secretly protected the land around his tower. He isn't as capable anymore as he was a hundred years ago. There's still plenty of power in the old spell tosser, but he relies more and more on magic items he's created.

Despite his great age, Agamemnus is still a little over 6 feet tall, but he looks much shorter because he's so bent by age. He uses a staff with an eagle's head atop it (pick one character and have the eagle head wink at him or her, but only when no one else is looking; even Agamemnus won't believe it). When the wizard gets angry, however, the eyes of the eagle glow with a pale blue light. The wizard dresses in black silk robes and wears two ruby rings. A faintly glowing medallion of a scarab beetle hangs on his chest, and a green glass dagger hangs at his hip.

This wizard and his tower can be very useful to you. Agamemnus will pay a good price for anything magical the characters acquire and want to sell, including any of the goblin shamans' totem staffs. He can also cast many spells that are beyond the power of the PCs. He can neutralize poison, restore characters who've been polymorphed or petrified, and he'll even sell a few useful potions, provided he likes the buyer. Whenever the characters encounter a magical or mystical problem that's beyond them, they can get help from Agamemnus—provided they offer him something in return (he's kind-hearted but not running a charity). The best way to pay him is to give the wizard his pick of the treasure and any magic items the characters acquire. This also helps to keep the game balanced.

If there is a spellcaster in the group, Agamemnus might find a way to reward the young mage with a magic item that's useful to protect the people of the Vale. His tower is a ramshackle construction of stone and timber that looks as if it's held together as much by ivy as by mortar and nails, and it might tip over at any moment. The appearance is misleading, of course, since that's the way of wizards; the tower is perfectly sound. Its inside layout is confusing, however; there are no straight walls, no main corridor or central staircase, and every room seems to be at a different level from every other room. If characters ever follow Agamemnus from room to room (that being the only way to navigate this maze without getting lost), they'll eventually find themselves back where they started, although they'd swear they went up a lot more steps than they went down.

(Agamemnus [6th-level wizard]): AC 12, 23 hp; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage [dagger]; +6 to hit with spell attacks, save DC 14; prepares the following spells: [at will] *fire bolt, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation*; [x4] *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; [x3] *misty step, suggestion*; [x3] *counterspell, fireball, fly*

A Run Around the Valley

The adventure begins with the player characters all gathering for their customary, once-a-week foot race around the valley. They've been doing this every Thor's Day morning since they became teenagers. This encounter provides a chance for the characters to prove their courage and to gain some valuable status—and armor.

Formatting Note: Wherever you encounter text framed the way the next passage is, it's meant to be read aloud to players.

You live and work in the Vale. Each of you has been on your own for several years; you have your own homes and make a good living. The Vale has been good to you, and you like the land and the people who live in this area. You have a group of friends that you like to tip a few ales with at the local inn. As teenagers, you all dreamed about being brave heroes like those in the legends the old folk tell at the inn.

Today is Thor's day, and you and your friends are up before dawn. Thor's day falls in the middle of every week. You're gathered with weapons in hand at the shrine of Thor, at the top of a hill near the village. You wait for the sun to peak over a ridge to the east. To the west, behind you, are the Vale and your homes.

As the blacksmith, you are the strongest person in the group. As the son [or daughter] of a blacksmith, you have been shaping metal for most of the seventeen years of your life. Among your friends you see farmers, herders, and simple tradesfolk. You get together for this run every Thor's Day. Your friends all want to beat you in this race, but none of them have been able to do that in the last five years.

As dawn's light comes over the hill, you shout "Go!" Heading north, you all enjoy the feel of your muscles working. The first part of the run is five miles to the ridges on the west side of the valley. Before the race is over, you'll have jogged around the valley three times as fast as you can. From the ridgetops, you can look down at all the farms and cabins in the Vale.

In minutes, you and your friends run past the corn, bean, and beet fields along the western side of the valley. One of your companions rushes past, and you laugh. Everyone can see that he has pushed ahead way too early.

As the group jogs past the black tower in the southwest end of the valley, every one gives that mass of magical stone a wide margin. A wizard lives in that tower. As children, you dared each other to slap the door of the tower and run away. That stopped when Devon slapped the door and turned to stone until the following sunrise.

The south end of the valley is filled by the dark forest. Even hunters avoid that place. Instead, you jog east past the huge apple orchard. The red apples are large and thick on the trees. Stomachs grumble at the thought of the apple pies that will soon be baking in cabins all across the Vale.

The reason for bringing weapons on this run becomes clear as the howls of wolves and bleats of sheep hit your ears. Everyone races forward to see four large wolves tearing apart several dead sheep. The beasts aren't paying any attention to your group.

The group is running for exercise when they have come across wolves that are feasting on sheep in a pasture. The wolves are hungry, so they won't be scared away easily. They ignore the player characters unless they're attacked; then the wolves fight to keep the carcasses of the sheep they're eating. Characters can get a surprise round if they rush straight into the fight without hesitating. There is one wolf per player character.

Wolf pelts are valued as cloaks in the Vale, because they're warm and they show that the wearer had the courage to fight a wolf. A leather worker can fashion any number of wolf pelts into heavy cloaks in two weeks.



Such a cloak is equivalent to leather armor. (Characters who can't wear leather armor can still wear the cloak as a status symbol, but they won't receive the +1 AC benefit from it.)

(Wolf: AC 13, 11 hp; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Str saving throw or be knocked prone [bite]; a wolf has tactical advantage on attack rolls if at least one active ally is adjacent to the target)

The Shrine's Warning

Clerics put the shrine to Thor at the top of the rise hundreds of years ago. The shrine is a white marble arch with mistletoe growing over the sides and top. There is a small bell in the shape of a hammer hanging from the top of the arch. A white marble bench is below the arch. People can rest on the bench and enjoy the view down into the Vale. The creators of the shrine hoped the gods would look favorably on the valley and give the people their blessing.

As the blacksmith, you've come to the shrine to look for the tinker and his cart. He's been expected for several days. On your own time, in the last week, you started making shields, and you wonder whether the tinker could try and sell some of them for you. As you neared the shrine, you sent up a prayer to Thor, the deity of combat and strength—and the shrine started glowing! On the shrine's bench appeared a large warhammer. You can't help but wonder what sort of message this is. You have never seen anything like this before.

This is an experience with no explanation. Thor knows that the Vale will soon be under attack by several different forces, so he's giving the blacksmith a high quality warhammer. The glow vanishes from the shrine when the hammer is picked up. The weapon glows dully when within 100 feet of any type of monster, but the character won't know this until a monster approaches. From now on, the blacksmith can make similar warhammers, but they won't glow.

As the GM, you need to create a sense of danger that wasn't present before in the Vale. As the characters work at their various jobs, they get a sense they are being watched. Every once in a while, the hackles on the backs of their necks rise for no apparent reason.

The villagers begin gossiping about crops being stolen in the night. Farm animals are killed and parts of them are carried away toward the Dark Forest. Fall comes a bit early, and all the crops are ready for picking.

Dark clouds come out of the south. The clouds blot out the sun and make things very dark in the Vale. Thunder and lightning fill the sky day and night. The goblin shaman has called the clouds, to make things easier for the light-hating goblins when they raid the Vale. If there is a cleric in the player group, that person knows the dark clouds are an evil sending.

Introduce the charming daughter, Amber, of the wine maker. Amber is romantically interested in the blacksmith. When she hears the blacksmith describe the warhammer and the glowing shrine, she insists on being taken there. When she urges the blacksmith to sit with her on the bench, she begins glowing, too. This scares the wits out of her and she rushes home. This is a foreshadowing of her being kidnapped in a later encounter.

Zombies Smashing in the Door

In the middle of the night, there is a pounding on the door of the blacksmith's cabin. If the blacksmith makes a successful DC 10 Wis (Perception) check,

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he notices that his warhammer is glowing before he hears the knocking at the door. Outside are two zombies bent on killing whoever is inside the cabin. Depending on how the blacksmith responds and the zombies' luck, the zombies might be easy to destroy, or they might prove very tough. If things are looking grim for the blacksmith, another character can arrive to help, having heard the sound of fighting from down in the Vale.

(Zombie: AC 8, 22 hp; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 bludgeoning damage [slam]; when an attack reduces a zombie to 0 hp, the zombie makes a Con saving throw with DC = 5 + damage from attack; if successful, zombie has 1 hp)

After the battle, tell the blacksmith that he can hear the sounds of more zombies attacking other houses in the night. There are six more zombies attacking other cabins. Thor's hammer glows in the darkness as the wielder of the hammer comes within 100 feet of the monsters, but it displays no other magical properties.

The zombies were sent by the goblin shaman. Creating the zombies was a lot of effort for the shaman, and he must rest for several weeks afterward. There will be no more attacks during that time.

The Tinker's Demise

On another Thor's day, you're all waiting at the top of the rise for the dawn to start your race. All anyone in the Vale can talk about is the zombie attack two nights ago. No one could find a trail, to learn where the zombies came from. As the sun rises, in the distance you can all see the wagon of Keuffel the tinker on the King's Road, but the wagon isn't moving. The horse is dead, and a body is sprawled on the ground.

Assuming characters go to investigate, continue reading.

The horse and the tinker were killed by dozens of orcish arrows. The tinker's head is stuck on a pole near the wagon. Unrecognizable runes are carved on the blood-drenched pole, and raven claws are tied to it with leather strings. Goods from the wagon are strewn all around the area.

Orc arrows are over three feet long and are painted in the colors of a specific orc tribe. They are fletched with raven feathers and tipped with obsidian arrow heads. There hasn't been an orc raid in this area for years. The people of the Vale must be warned.

There are many fun roleplaying situations around this discovery. Once characters begin spreading the word, the entire population of the Vale meets on the village green. Use the people of the Vale to present options for the player characters to consider.

Do the player characters pack up everything and take the wagon and the body down into the Vale? There are many useful items in the wagon; do they plunder the wagon, since Keuffel doesn't need any of his goods anymore? These materials include, but are not limited to: throwing daggers, axes, lanterns, oil for the lanterns, holy symbols, trail food, and kitchen items like cups, plates, and cutlery. There are enough items to supply all the player characters with useful equipment.

There is much debate over telling the wizard of the tower this news. Some believe he should be summoned immediately, others that he shouldn't be bothered yet in case this is an isolated incident. Is there a need to set up a night watch? Should someone travel 20 miles to the Baron's castle for help? What is the significance of that strange pole the orcs left behind? No one knows what the people should do, but after the PCs' successful fight against those wolves, they continually look to the player characters for advice.

No one can find any unusual tracks around the wagon, but none of the villagers are willing to search very far from the presumed safety of the Vale. If anyone is going to conduct a wider sweep for signs of the orcs, it will need to be the characters.

Danger at the Heart of the Forest

All the villagers talk about the murder of the tinker. Suddenly, everyone is convinced the Dark Forest is crawling with orcs, and someone must go in there to scout the area and find out what's happening. As the village folk talk and the innkeeper serves up apple cider, suddenly the door opens and a stranger walks in—an elf warrior in a tightly-wrapped cloak of dire wolf fur.

This is Saradus, an elf scout and a nonplayer character for you to control. He is useful to stir action in the adventure and help the player characters survive. You should think about how you want to roleplay this character. Think of a movie character you like who is aggressive and quick-witted, and make Saradus like that character. The elf's quest is to find a very special wolf. He's hunted this creature for years. When he describes the beast, Saradus gets a faraway look on his face. His description makes the wolf sound very dangerous: it's a huge wolf with white fur, icy blue eyes, and breath so cold it can freeze the blood in your veins (a winter wolf, though Saradus never calls it that). Sounding very sad, Saradus explains that the wolf killed his younger brother. When characters go into the forest, they see many wolves. Whether they glimpse this one is up to you, but it's not wise to let them catch it; a winter wolf is far too tough for beginning characters (or Saradus) to fight.

After hearing about recent troubles in the Vale, Saradus suggests setting traps all along the edge of the Dark Forest. He'll make suggestions, but the characters should be the ones driving the decisions about what type of traps would be best against orcs. The player characters should lead the way in any endeavor like this.

(Saradus [Elf Scout]: AC 13, 16 hp; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword] or +4 to hit, range 150 ft./600 ft., 1d8 + 2 piercing damage [longbow]; Saradus has tactical advantage on Wis [Perception] checks based on vision or hearing)

When characters near the Dark Forest, read the following text.

Chills go down your spine as you near the Dark Forest. This is a place of frightful legends for you. All your life, your family and friends have filled you with stories about the dangers of the forest. Even Saradus seems nervous, and no one is talking. Then everyone hears twigs snapping and brush being pushed aside. Not thirty yards inside the woods, you see the shapes of four goblins approaching. They don't seem to have noticed you yet, since you were standing still. They appear armored and geared for war. The elf signals the group with a question: attack the goblins, or duck out of sight and see what they do?

If characters attack immediately, they surprise the goblins. If characters try to hide, they must make Dex (Stealth) checks. Compare their results to the goblins' passive Perception scores of 9; anyone whose Stealth check is 8 or lower is seen by the goblins, and if these goblins see a potential victim, they attack. If no fight breaks out, the goblins proceed quietly up the valley and try to steal a pair of sheep.

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(Goblin: AC 15, 7 hp; +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 damage [scimitar] or +4 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., 1d2 + 2 piercing damage [shortbow]; can disengage or hide as a bonus action on its turn)

After the goblins are dealt with, Saradus is all for pushing into the Dark Forest to see where they came from. He suspects a raiding party, or possibly an entire tribe, has set up camp in the forest.

If Characters Trail the Goblins

Once in the forest, Saradus finds plenty of goblin tracks. He can lead the group to the goblin camp easily. The tracks lead to a well-hidden cave opening on the side of a hill. Characters can watch the cave from a dense thicket that gives excellent cover; there's no chance they'll be spotted if they keep quiet.

At any one time, you can count about twenty goblins outside the cave, maintaining a large fire with wood dragged from the forest. Goblins continually enter and exit the cave, too, and there's no way to tell how many are inside. Several goblin shamans are with the group, each of them holding a pole just like the one that was left near Keuffel's wagon (minus the tinker's head, of course). Keuffel and his horse were killed by orc arrows; does that pole mean the goblins and orcs are working together?

The shamans seem to be building some sort of altar of heaped stones. Prayers are spoken to each stone, and as it's added to the pile, it glows briefly with an ugly green light. When a goblin brings a live rabbit or squirrel out of the forest, one of the shamans splits it open and splashes its blood onto the stones. Once it's bled out, the carcass is thrown into the fire. The shamans seem especially pleased by the way the smoke from the fire is curling and drifting low over the forest.

It would be foolish for the characters to attack an organized group of over twenty goblins. If players don't realize that, Saradus absolutely refuses to take part. As long as they don't do anything foolish, characters can watch the cave for as long as they like before slipping away again.

If Characters Don't Trail the Goblins

If characters choose not to follow the goblins, Saradus leads them in another direction. Hours later, they discover a big orc tower under construction. They can find a safe, secure place to watch from.

At least twenty orcs are working around the tower, and they're being supervised by a pair of orcs that are even bigger, uglier, and crueler than the rest. The tower is built mostly of logs, but the base is stone, and it's clearly a powerful defense. Several goblin shamans are here, too, casting spells and splashing animal blood onto the walls of the tower.

The tower is near a low cliff with a waterfall plunging into a large pool. The orcs are quarrying stones from the cliff and cutting trees in the forest.

Back in the Village

Back at the village, everyone who hears this news is certain the goblins and/or orcs pose an immediate danger to the Vale. Saradus suspects the goblins are preparing to make an important sacrifice—probably the type they perform before launching a major raid. The orcs obviously are building a secure base from which to launch raids, hoping to lure people of the Vale into making suicidal attacks against the tower.

After this exploit, the people of the village look to the player characters as leaders. Talk continues long into the night about how best to defend the Vale if bands of monsters come. This is a perfect roleplaying opportunity. NPC villagers ask difficult questions of the player characters, such as:

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1. How many goblins can the village expect to beat in a fight?
2. What sorts of spells can a goblin shaman cast?
3. When will these creatures attack?
4. Should the village send someone to the Baron to ask for help?
5. What type of battle plan are the goblins or orcs likely to use?

If player characters can't answer these questions, that isn't a problem. It's best if they're honest with the townsfolk about what they don't know; being caught making things up will undermine their credibility.

In any event, the orcs and goblins aren't yet ready to launch their attack. Many days will go by before that happens.

A Spider in the Apples

In the morning there is a stirring of the villagers. A large section of the apple orchard is covered in thick webs. The webs are so dense that it's impossible to see past them into the webbed section of the orchard. A 3-foot-wide section of webs extends from the orchard to the sheep pens. A quick count of the sheep reveals five are missing.

The villagers are terrified and hysterical. Amber is especially upset about the missing sheep, and she hopes the characters can figure something out.

Saradus suggests the easiest thing to do would be to burn the webs and kill whatever comes out to escape the fire. Most of the townspeople object, however, since they depend on the apples for food and cider.

Saradus then makes another suggestion, if necessary. If everyone pokes at the sides of the webbing with long poles, it could distract whatever is

inside so that a group of villagers could get into the middle of the webs with a chance of achieving surprise. The elf knows that giant spiders (assuming that's what created these webs) track victims by sensing vibrations in their webs. If the webs are moving everywhere, the spiders won't know which way to look. After some debate, the villagers are willing to move ahead with this plan, if the characters agree to form the team that goes into the orchard.

There are three large spiders in the webbing. Characters see dead sheep as they make their way into the webbing, but the spiders are easy to surprise because of the shaking webs. The spiders are on the ground in shallow holes, with hundreds of webbing strands going into the holes.

(Giant Wolf Spider: AC 13, 11 hp; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 piercing damage plus 2d6 poison damage [bite]; DC 11 Con saving throw for half poison damage; creatures poisoned to 0 hp are paralyzed for 1 hour)

Talk to the Wizard

After the spider attack, most villagers think the wizard of the tower should be called on to help defend the Vale. The oldest villagers remember the wizard helping the last time orcs attacked from the Dark Forest, and they believe he'll help again.

Naturally, they want you to talk to the wizard and ask for his help. There is some danger in this, since the last time the wizard made his presence known, it was to turn a prank-playing child to stone for 24 hours.

Saradus wants nothing to do with a possibly crazy human wizard, so



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he refuses to go with the PCs to the tower. Instead, he says he'll wait for them at the inn.

Agamemnus is aware of the wolves, giant spiders, and goblins coming into the valley. He's not aware of Keuffel's death and will be saddened to hear that news; they sometimes played chess together. The wizard protests that he's too old to venture into the Dark Forest anymore, even with the characters for protection, but he does want to do his part for the defense of the Vale. Instead, he offers the group five potions, free of charge: 2 potions of healing, 1 potion of invisibility, 1 potion of frost giant strength, and 1 potion of neutralizing poison.

As the characters prepare to depart, Agamemnus tells them, "If you get your enemies to follow you to the Vale, I can still shoot fireballs at them," and he holds up a withered, scorched wand of ash. If there's a spellcaster in the group, the wizard gives that character a wand of sleep spells with five charges; when all five are used, the wand is depleted.

When the player characters report back to the inn, Saradus is amused at their account of the wizard. He suggests that if the wizard will fight only if the monsters come near his tower, maybe the villagers should erect a fence to force infiltrating monsters close to the tower. Surprisingly, quite a few townsfolk think this is a great idea, and they resolve to get to work building the fence in the morning. They should be able to finish it in about a week. Whether it will actually work as they hope, or if the orcs and goblins will just go over it, remains to be seen.

Wolves in the Night

In the middle of the night, when the full moon is at its highest, the night fills with the howls of wolves. Moments later, the cows and sheep begin moaning and shrieking in fear and pain. It sounds as if dozens of wolves are attacking the Vale!

Saradus leads one group of villagers to fight off the wolves attacking the cows and sheep. PCs can go with Saradus or strike out on their own; wolves are racing everywhere through the Vale and even attacking cabins in an effort to get at the families inside. During the course of the battle, characters notice that the fur on the backs of many of the wolves is singed; these wolves were driven into the Vale from the Dark Forest by goblins and orcs hitting them with lit torches. If none characters come to that conclusion on their own, Saradus suggests it after the battle. The wolves generally favor killing livestock over people, because it's safer and easier, but there's plenty of peril to go around.

The exact number of wolves in this attack doesn't matter. Characters should face several wolf attacks. The first can be easy, the second a bit harder, and the third should be desperate; you don't need to kill anyone, but if one or more characters drop to 0 hit points in the last battle and need to make a few death saving throws, they'll know they were in a fight for their lives.

During one of the fights, a winter wolf appears in the distance, almost as if it's surveying the damage being done by the other wolves. The beast watches for a short time, then turns and lopes away. It moves generally in the direction of Amber's home from wherever the characters saw it, but don't make that connection for them; just tell them it's moving north, or west, or whatever direction is appropriate. If Saradus sees it, he gives chase, but he'll lose the beast quickly when clouds cover the moon.

This is all a diversion. The real reason for the wolf attack is to create a distraction while a team of goblins kidnaps Amber. Her father (Hector) is killed in the attack, and a goblin totem is left at the door of their cabin. There's no sign of Amber.

(Wolf: AC 13, 11 hp; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Str saving throw or be knocked prone [bite]; a wolf has tactical advantage on attack rolls if at least one active ally is adjacent to the target)

Amber is Kidnapped

Many wolves were killed, and the surviving beasts have retreated from the Vale. Wounded cows, sheep, and people are bandaged. Dead livestock is butchered, and the smokehouses are filled with fresh meat.

Suddenly, a cry of anguish splits the night. Neighbors have discovered Hector slain in his home! The door is smashed in, and it looks like a desperate battle was fought inside. The old man is dressed in his dented breastplate and his halberd lies at his side; it looks like he gave as good as he got, but that wasn't enough. A goblin totem like the one left at Keuffel's wagon is driven into the ground next to the front door. Worst of all, Amber can't be found, dead or alive.

The kidnapping has the villagers in an uproar. The goblins who took Amber away hid their trail expertly by riding wolves; their paw prints blend in with the hundreds of others throughout the Vale.

Amber is clever, however; she dropped one of the large amber stones from her necklace at the forest edge to show where the goblins entered, and characters will spot it if they search along the treeline. She dropped nine more stones along the game trail the goblins followed back to their cave.

Goblins of the Dark Forest

Assuming characters follow the trail left by Amber, read the text below. You'll need to adjust a few words if they wait for daylight before entering the forest, or if the characters never visited the goblins' cave before now.

You follow quietly behind Saradus as the elf moves through the darkness. It quickly becomes clear that this trail leads to the goblin's cave. Saradus leads you to a dense thicket where you can see what's going on before making a plan of attack.

A large fire is burning outside the cave. The forest has been cut back and a large stockpile of wood is nearby; teams of young goblins are using it to continually feed the fire.

The cave is a strange sight. Above it, the goblins have heaped up a high mound of boulders. There may be goblin sentries on that mound; it's hard to tell in the darkness. Goblins are entering and exiting the cave constantly. Those coming out are carrying food to crude tables near the cave entrance, almost as if they're preparing for a banquet.

Flames from the fire illuminate a second mound of stones in the cleared space in front of the cave. These stones are splashed with dried blood and ringed with more of those goblin totems. Amber lies top the stones, tied with leather ropes. Four goblin shamans are chanting around the mound, and a sickening, green mist is gathering in the air above it. A hideous face is slowly taking form in the mist.

Having gotten a good look, Saradus motions for everyone to back away to a safe distance, where you can make a plan without danger of being heard.

The group needs a plan of action to save Amber. There is a need for haste, because the characters don't know when the magic of the goblin shamans will reach its peak. If players don't come up with these ideas, Saradus can suggest them. Possibilities include the following; use these as guidelines to react to whatever the players come up with.

1. Topple the Fire: The huge fire is tall enough that it could be toppled

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over, and flaming logs would roll everywhere through the clearing. In the confusion, someone could rescue Amber from atop the mound of stones. Characters with bows or spells can increase the chaos by firing into the goblins from the forest.

This is an excellent plan. The goblins will be thrown into complete confusion, giving the characters 1d4 + 3 rounds in which they can run through the area without meeting any resistance from the goblins. At least one shaman at the altar will keep his wits about him and fight back when someone tries to rescue Amber, but the plan should succeed if characters don't waste time.

Up to 40 howling goblins chase the characters through the forest, occasionally getting close enough to throw a javelin or shoot a shortbow. They'll chase characters right into the village, unless PCs think to run past Agamemnus's tower; the wizard easily drives the goblins off with *fireballs* from his wand.

With their plans completely foiled and their confidence in the shamans shaken, the goblins pack up and leave the Vale that night. If characters go back to the cave and destroy the altar, the Vale will have no trouble with goblins for many years. If they leave the altar intact, goblins will become a regular nuisance in the area, stealing livestock and occasionally burning crops.

2. Topple the Boulders Above the Cave: Two goblins are guarding the boulders above the cave. If they aren't killed silently, dozens of goblins come scrambling up the cliff, shrieking and howling for blood. Once the guards are dealt with, the stones can be toppled with a successful DC 15 Str (Athletics) check, or automatically by multiple characters whose Strength bonuses add up to 6 or more. The tumbling stones almost block off the cave entrance. This is a great diversion; many goblins are crushed by the rocks, and the rest assume that the rockfall was an accident, not an attack, since the sentries didn't sound an alarm. All of the goblins except the shamans outside the cave start digging furiously at the heap to clear the cave mouth. Sneaking into the camp is easy, because no one is paying attention to the forest. Two shamans are still standing guard over Amber, however, and they must be dealt with before she can be rescued.

As before, up to 40 goblins chase the characters through the forest all the way back to the village, unless they're stopped by Agamemnus.

With their plans completely foiled and their confidence in the shamans shaken, the goblins pack up and leave the Vale that night. If characters go back to the cave and destroy the altar, the Vale will have no trouble with goblins for many years. If they leave the altar intact, goblins will become a regular nuisance in the area, stealing livestock and occasionally burning crops.

3. Attract the Goblins' Attention and Lead Them to the Wizard's Tower: It doesn't take much to get the goblins to chase the characters. All someone needs to do is launch a spell from the treeline, or just stand up and holler an insult. Unless someone goes back ahead of the pack to warn Agamemnus about what's coming, however, 1d10 + 10 goblins get past the tower before the wizard can react; they chase the characters right into the village and attack whoever they meet. If Agamemnus is warned, his *fireballs* and the villagers' traps slaughter many goblins and force the rest to retreat quickly.

Most of the goblins at the cave join in this chase. One goblin shaman remains to watch Amber and keep the ritual going. Once the goblins have left their camp, it would be easy for one or two characters to rescue Amber.

The goblins pack up and leave within a day, and they stay away for many years if the altar is destroyed.

4. Charge the Goblin Shamans: This approach is unlikely to work. There are 60 adult goblins and four shamans in and around the cave, and they all join in if a fight breaks out. After a few rounds, it should be clear that a frontal attack was a bad idea. Saradus suggests retreating into the forest if no one else does. Dozens of goblins pursue. Amber probably will be killed while the characters are running away. Such is the price of failure. If you are feeling generous, you might let the failure of this plan naturally morph into plan 3, but 1d10 + 10 goblins will still get past the tower and into the village.

(Goblin: AC 15, 7 hp; +4 to hit, 1d6 + 2 damage [scimitar] or +4 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., 1d2 + 2 piercing damage [shortbow]; can disengage or hide as a bonus action on its turn)

(Goblin Shaman: AC 17, 21 hp; +4 to hit, 1d4 + 2 bludgeoning damage [totem staff]; spellcasting +4 to hit, save DC 12; prepares the following spells: [at will] acid splash, poison spray, shocking grasp; [x2] ray of sickness, witch bolt)

Orcs of the Dark Forest

Orc Scouts

A quiet week has passed since "the night of wolves and goblins." But this morning, two cattle herders found two dead orcs in a pit trap at the edge of the forest. They were killed by the sharpened stakes at the bottom of the pit. They were well-armed with shortbows, arrows, bronze shortswords of surprisingly good construction, and bronze breastplates and helmets. Each of them also had 11 silver coins. Common consensus in the village is that they were scouts for a bigger attack that's undoubtedly coming.

Orc Band

It's been nine days since the two orcs fell into the pit trap. Nine quiet days. But tonight, you're awakened by pounding on your door. The person pounding is one of the workers who's been standing night watch along the forest. He informs you that another orc is caught in one of the traps, and three others are trying to rescue it. The guards want to attack them, but they're afraid to do so without the characters in the lead. These orcs are much bigger than goblins!

There's a full moon, so treat this fight as if it's happening in dim light. The trapped orc is just being lifted out of the pit as characters arrive. After two orcs are killed, the other two try to run away. The forest is pitch dark; be sure players understand that before deciding whether to follow.

These orcs are well armed with greataxes and armored with hide armor. They definitely aren't hunters; they were ready for battle.

(Orc: AC 13, 15 hp; +5 to hit, 1d12 + 3 slashing damage [greataxe] or +5 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d6 + 3 piercing damage [javelin]; can use a bonus action to move 30 ft. toward an enemy in sight)

Unexpected Aid

A few days after your fight against the orcs, an unexpected visitor rides a wagon into the village. The Baron heard of the troubles in the Vale and sent Sergeant Rollins to investigate. Rollins arrives with a wagonload of weapons and armor. There are twelve halberds, twelve steel breast plates, ten crossbows, and two hundred crossbow bolts. This equipment is a gift from the Baron to the people of the Vale, to aid their defense. Sergeant Rollins was ordered to stay and train the people of the Vale how to use their new weapons and armor.

Rollins explains that the Baron is sorry he can't send more soldiers, but there's also trouble brewing with giants along the far border of the barony. The army is defending that territory.

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Player characters can use some of this equipment, if they need it. Between Saradus, Agamemnus, and Rollins, the characters have three valuable NPC allies. When roleplaying the crusty old sergeant, think of a no-nonsense, never-say-die person you know or that you've seen in a movie and use that person's mannerisms and accent. The sergeant is a veteran of many wars and an excellent leader, but he's not a patient man and he expects the people of the valley to work hard readying their defenses against the orcs.

(Sergeant Rollins [Knight]): AC 18, 30 hp; +5 to hit x2, 2d6 + 3 slashing damage [greatsword]; 1/round as a reaction, Rollins can increase his AC by 2 against a single melee attack; has tactical advantage on saving throws against fear; 1/round Rollins can grant an ally within 30 ft. a bonus of 1d4 on an attack roll or saving throw)

People of the Vale Must Choose

The people of the Vale are gathered at the inn. Their discussion deals with what to do about the orcs. Everyone is certain bands of orcs are massing to attack the Vale. The defenses along the edge of the Dark Forest are as strong as the people of the Vale can make them. Sergeant Rollins is explaining that this situation demands a decision, and only the people of the Vale can make it: they have limited resources, and they must concentrate them on either offense or defense. If they split their effort, they only increase the odds of failure.

Concentrating on defense protects the village and the Vale against damaging orc raids. It also lets the villagers fight from behind fortifications that will protect them and magnify their power. On the negative side, it lets the orcs pick the time and place to attack and guarantees that the village will wind up fighting the entire orc force all at once.

Concentrating on offense lets the villagers pick the time and place to attack and forces the orcs to react. If the attack is launched correctly, the villagers could catch a small portion of the orcs and destroy them, then catch another small portion and destroy them, and they'd never need to face a large force of orcs at one time. On the negative side, taking the offense leaves the Vale exposed to orc raids that will almost certainly cause significant damage and more than a few deaths. If the spoiling attack is launched at the wrong time or place, it could end with the whole attacking force being wiped out and the Vale left defenseless against the orcs.

Rollins ends his speech by saying, "I've only been in your Vale for a short time, but I see why you love this place. If I wasn't the Baron's lieutenant, I'd want to live in a place like this. I admire you folks."

"But I wasn't sent here to be your friend. I'm a warrior who's seen many battles, and I'm here to give you the best advice I can. If you were professional soldiers, I'd say 'take the fight to the orcs and stick it to 'em'. But you're farmers and herders with halberds you barely know how to use. Don't get me wrong—you've learned a lot about fighting over the past few days—but that doesn't make you soldiers. In this situation, I'd say build up your defenses and aim to crush the orcs in one big battle."

"But this is your home, and it's your decision. I'm just here to advise."

Sergeant Rollins's assessment of the situation is correct, but his assessment of the village militia is lower than they deserve. Rollins has served with professional warriors for so long that he has an ingrained pessimism about part-time militias. After Rollins's speech, many people in the inn look to the player characters to see their response. This is a perfect time to encourage someone to give a rousing speech to build up the people's spirit and help them make their decision.

The people of the Vale respect Sergeant Rollins, but ultimately they'll be swayed by the player characters' opinions. Don't allow the players to turn this decision over to an NPC. Whatever the PCs decide is best, the villagers back them up. If they decide to take the offense, see "Attacking the Tower." If they choose to go on the defensive, see "Defending the Vale."

Attacking the Tower

When the decision is made to attack the orcs, read the following aloud. Adjust the text appropriately if characters haven't seen the orc camp before.

The people of the Vale agree with you that, despite the risks, the best plan is to surprise the orcs by attacking. First, someone must scout the orcs' camp and see what preparations they've made. Your group is the obvious candidate for this mission.

At dawn the next day, you move out. As you travel through the Dark Forest, Saradus points out signs that small groups of orcs have been moving through these woods regularly, probably to spy on the Vale from the forest's edge.

By noon, you reach the southern edge of the forest, where you can see the orcs' camp. They are building a tower of stone and timber near a waterfall that plunges into a large pool. The lowest level of the tower is completed, with stone walls and one very large door, but the upper levels aren't finished. The orcs are quarrying stone from the cliff, and they've built a wooden crane atop the cliff to help move the stones. It appears that one wall of the tower might have suffered damage in an accident—maybe a stone fell from a crane—but it's hard to be sure, since orc construction is a bit sloppy to begin with.

This being mid-day, only a few orc sentries can be seen: one is atop the cliff, and one is atop the tower. The other orcs must be resting inside the partially-built tower, out of the sunlight that they hate so much.

If anyone wonders about the "very large door," explain that it's 10 feet high and 6 feet wide. Orcs are more massive than humans, but they don't need doors nearly that tall or wide.

Characters who try to examine the damaged stonework of the tower (from the safety of the treeline) can make DC 15 Int (Investigation) checks. Dwarfs add twice their proficiency bonus to the check because of their stonecunning ability. Characters who make successful checks realize that the damaged wall could be toppled into the tower if it was hit with a ram. The falling stones would kill or injure many of the orcs, and the rest could be cut down as they rush out through the tower's one door. If no one makes a successful check and no players come up with that idea on their own, Saradus can suggest it.

Another option is to wait until the orcs come out at nightfall and split into smaller work parties. Then characters could try to isolate those smaller parties and attack them individually.

Or, characters could go back to the village with the information they've gained and come back with reinforcements.

What the characters can't know unless they wait for nightfall, when the orcs come out of the tower, is that there are 20 orcs in the camp. Characters also don't know that the orcs are led by an ogre; that's why the door had to be made so large.

Toppling the Wall: A makeshift ram is easy to get from the forest. Any large, sturdy log will do. Every time the wall is rammed, let one of the players roll 1d20 and add the combined Strength modifiers and Athletics bonuses of all the characters wielding the ram. The wall collapses if the result is 16 or higher. Collapsing stones kill 1d6 + 4 orcs inside the tower. It takes the survivors 1d4 rounds to figure out what happened and get themselves sorted out in the tower. Then they come charging out the door at the rate of 2d4 orcs per round, angry and ready to fight. The ogre is the last one out. It took 3d6 damage from the falling stones.

For obvious reasons, it would be a good idea to kill the two sentries before attacking with the ram. The sentry atop the cliff can see the sentry

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on the tower, but the tower sentry hardly ever checks the cliff top.

Attacking Work Parties: When the orcs are working at night, they divide into four groups. The first group consists of six orcs cutting stone from the cliff face; the second group is eight orcs on the tower, doing construction; the third group is four orcs atop the cliff, operating the crane; and the fourth group is one sentry atop the cliff, one at the base of the tower, and the ogre, who paces around the camp aimlessly and occasionally bawls at the orcs to work harder.

Orcs on the tower can get down and reach the quarry area in eight rounds. Orcs in the quarry area can reach the tower in six rounds, or they can climb up to the cliff top and the crane in eight rounds. Orcs at the crane can climb down to the quarry area in four rounds. Characters who watch the orcs working for a while can estimate these times pretty closely by making a successful DC 12 Int check.

The tower would be difficult to attack directly; characters would need to get to the second level to fight the orcs, either by going inside and climbing the stairs or by climbing one of the two ladders.

The quarry area is a poor target for the first attack because reinforcements coming from the tower and the cliff top will arrive at about the same time, giving them a chance to overwhelm the characters.

Attacking the crane first is a better option; it has the smallest number of defenders, and reinforcements will be strung out, giving the characters a chance to defeat them piecemeal as they arrive. The weakness of this plan is that it doesn't take advantage of the orcs' morale rule (below) by killing the ogre first. The ogre will reach the cliff top the round after the orcs from the quarry get there.

Orcs' Morale: No matter how the fight begins, the orcs will be surprised and dismayed that the villagers are attacking them in their own base before their tower is finished. At the end of every round when at least one orc or the ogre is killed, count the number of surviving orcs. Add 5 if the ogre is still alive. Then roll 2d10; if the result is higher than the number of surviving orcs, they turn tail and run for their lives. If the result is equal to or less than the number of surviving orcs, they keep fighting. The ogre fights to the death regardless of what the orcs do. Once the orcs retreat, they aren't seen again at this base or in the Vale for many years.

(Orc: AC 13, 15 hp; +5 to hit, 1d12 + 3 slashing damage [greataxe] or +5 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d6 + 3 piercing damage [javelin]; can use a bonus action to move 30 ft. toward an enemy in sight)

(Ogre: AC 11, 59 hp; +6 to hit, 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage [greatclub] or +6 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 2d6 + 4 piercing damage [javelin])

Villagers in the Fight: If characters bring villagers along as reinforcements to help in this fight, you have two options. First, you can use the villagers' stats and conduct the fight with the full rules. In this case, it's best to divide the villagers into squads, put a PC in charge of each one, and let the player commanding that squad roll attacks and damage for those NPCs and keep track of their hit points as if they were his or her characters. Players might suggest this on their own, since it's fun to handle a big battle this way. It makes the fight take quite a bit longer, however. The villagers' stats are listed below, under "Defending the Vale."

A quicker option is to handle the villagers with a simplified system that relies only on attack rolls. Ignore the attacker's bonuses; this system is only concerned with the unmodified number showing on the die. A villager attacking an unwounded orc kills the orc if the attack roll is 16 or higher. If the orc is already wounded by a PC, it's killed with an attack roll of 10 or higher. An orc kills a halberdier with an attack roll of 13 or higher, and kills a crossbowman with an attack roll of 10 or higher.

In any case, villagers won't fight the ogre; it's too frightening.

Defending the Vale

By this time, there are deadly traps 50 yards thick at the edge of the Dark Forest: a long trench lined with sharpened stakes, tangles of tree branches and thorny vines to slow down the orcs where they can be picked off with crossbows and *fireballs*, and covered pits for them to fall into. A stout wall of stones and logs that defenders can fight behind runs from the east ridge to near Agamemnus's tower; the wizard insists he can take care of any monsters coming near his home. Ten yards into the forest is a thick line of leaves, twigs, and dry wood. When orcs approach, this can be set aflame with fire arrows.

Assuming the orcs attack at night (they usually do), the light should blind them temporarily, and when they cross the fire lane, their dark silhouettes against the flames will make them easy targets for crossbows.

Sergeant Rollins has drilled the people of the Vale to assemble quickly at the village green when a guard rings a gong there. According to his plan, defenders with slings move to the eastern ridge and the apple orchard; those with halberds and breastplates line the center of the wall, where the attack is expected to be heaviest; and those with crossbows line up behind the halberdiers, ready to launch bolts between them. Because of their experience, player characters and Saradus are free to roam the battle as a "flying column" to reinforce wherever there's trouble.

All that's left to do is for someone to go talk to Agamemnus and make sure he knows the plan. As usual, that task is given to the player characters.

(Slinger [Commoner]: AC 10, 4 hp; +2 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d4 bludgeoning damage [sling])

(Crossbow [Guard]: AC 13, 11 hp; +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., 1d8 + 1 piercing damage [light crossbow] or +3 to hit, 1d4 + 1 piercing damage [dagger])

(Halberdier [Guard]: AC 16, 11 hp; +3 to hit, reach 10 ft., 1d10 + 1 slashing damage [halberd])

Talk with the Wizard

The old wizard comes to his tower door looking extremely angry. Before you can even say hello, he starts shouting.

"I see no reason to help this Vale. No orcs can get into my tower. Why should I help the people of this valley? What have they done for me?"

The situation with the wizard is meant to be a roleplaying challenge. Players must use their best roleplaying skills to persuade Agamemnus to help in the coming fight.

Agamemnus isn't really mad at the villagers. He has a terrible toothache, and it's making him angry at the whole world. A character who makes a successful DC 12 Wis (Insight) or Wis (Medicine) check recognizes what the problem is. Otherwise, they'll need to rely on their wits.

It doesn't take much to win the wizard's help. If someone can ease his toothache, he changes his position immediately. One of the *healing* potions Agamemnus gave the characters earlier will do the trick, as will any curative or restorative spell of 1st level or higher. Otherwise, just some friendly conversation, a cup of lukewarm tea, a few reminders of how long the wizard has lived in the Vale and how much everyone here respects him, and how desperate the situation is, will bring him around.

Attack in the Night

The growls in the night testify to that the orcs are moving in. The clang of the warning gong brings everyone to their position along the wall well before the orcs reach the edge of the forest.

When he hears twigs snapping, Saradus launches a fire arrow into the line of tinder. Within moments, flames are leaping to the sky, and the howls of orcs signal their surprise. The flames don't stop, though; the hulking shapes of orcs lurch through the flames, and the sound of twanging crossbows indicates they're excellent targets. Traps and obstacles are taking a toll as well. To escape them, a handful of orcs shift their line of approach too far to the west, and they pay with their lives when the first *fireball* sizzles down from the tower and explodes among them.

The battle is on!

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In this battle, you're only concerned with what the player characters do.

Assume the villagers take care of themselves.

Let the characters fight a few orcs along the wall; orcs are pretty tough, so don't throw too many of them against the characters at once. Describe the shouts, growls, and clanging sounds coming from left and right in the battle.

When players have the feeling that they're winning, describe the massive shape of the ogre suddenly leaping through the flames and charging toward the wall. It crashes through the defenses, scattering halberdiers and crossbowmen left and right. The orcs redouble their attacks, and the villagers are wavering. Unless the ogre is stopped quickly, the villagers are likely to panic and run. Sergeant Rollins is somewhere else out of the characters' sight, and the ogre is too far from the tower for Agamemnus to attack it with a spell. Only the characters are capable of fighting this ogre.

The orcs' and ogre's stats are given above, under "Attacking the Tower."

When the ogre dies, a howl of alarm spreads up and down the line of battling orcs. With their champion dead, the rest aren't willing to press a losing battle. They flee back into the forest and quickly disappear in the darkness.

A cheer goes up from the people of the Vale. The player characters are hailed as heroes and treated to a great welcome at the inn. Agamemnus comes out of his tower for the first time in decades—a hush falls over the room when he hobbles unannounced into the common room of the inn, and then the people break into cheers all over again. He rewards each of the characters with 250 gp and a potion or scroll of your choice; pick things you know the characters can use.

A few days after Sergeant Rollins rides back to the Baron's castle, a messenger arrives from the Baron. He wants the characters to join him at his castle, to be honored again with a feast—and to be offered a new mission. It seems there's a village in another part of the barony that needs help fighting off monsters, and Sergeant Rollins assured the Baron these characters were the right people for the job.

Irtep's Dish

By Casey W. Christofferson

additional material by Scott Greene

Irtep's Dish is an adventure for characters from 6th to 8th level. This adventure requires the skills of a rogue or some other expert at traps, a cleric or character that can heal allies and offer beneficial bonuses to the team, a wizard or other master of the arcane arts, and a fighter to take care of “the heavy lifting.”

Background

Irtep is an eccentric wizard, recently as well known for his issues with wine, women, and gambling as for his skill at wizardry, which is substantial. His marker at the Fortune’s Fool gambling house in Bard’s Gate has been rescinded by Fat Julie, and he has even been banned from the tables at Blazing Bones. The bookies are now hot on Irtep’s heels. His tower appears to be guarded by unmanned arcane defenses. There is speculation (and wagering) that Irtep is no longer in the city at all but has pulled a disappearing act to a different city, country, or even dimension.

Despite his personal and moral failings, Irtep is an important wizard whose closely guarded research is sought after by high-ranking officials in the Dominion Arcane. It was widely believed (within narrow wizardly circles) that Irtep was on the verge of a huge breakthrough prior to his collapse into the dens of ill repute. Dominion and independent magic users are desperate to learn the spells Irtep was allegedly working on, and many are willing to pay any price to discover his secrets.

Even now assassins, bounty hunters, thieves, wizards, and creditors of every stripe are hot on Irtep’s trail, though none have managed to infiltrate his tower and recover their money or his secrets.

At the start of the adventure and at various points during it, player characters are contacted by any number of sources seeking to hire them to discover Irtep’s whereabouts. Their investigation eventually leads to Irtep’s tower, which they explore in search of the missing wizard or some clue to his whereabouts.

In the course of their exploration, the characters are transported to the Minzoa—a tiny world created by Irtep and hidden within “Irtep’s Dish,” where they must battle the elements, strange microscopic creatures, and other assassins and bounty hunters who are also striving to locate Irtep. Through their explorations, characters discover what truly happened to Irtep, for good or ill.

Part I: The Missing Wizard

A variety of methods can be used to involve characters in the quest to locate Irtep and his hidden magic. The most straightforward are rumors, or direct contact from Irtep’s friends, colleagues, or debt collectors. Use whatever method is most likely to hook your players’ interest to get the adventure started.

Rumors

Rumors are most useful for motivated parties of experienced players who enjoy pursuing leads on their own. When handing out initial rumors, have each character make a Cha check (players can use Int instead, if they make a good case for it) and consult the table below. Consider making

these die rolls yourself, behind your screen. That way, players won’t know whether they got an especially high or low roll, and they’ll need to use some judgment when deciding what to believe.

Another option is to have all characters make a Cha (or Int) check without telling them what the roll is for. Instead, use their rolls as a secret check, adding their proficiency bonuses where appropriate and relaying the information to the players afterward.

Either of these methods helps avoid the “I rolled a 20, so we know my rumor is true” effect.

Result	Rumor
10 or less	There’s nothing going on in town. If it were any more boring in Bard’s Gate right now, the place would be abandoned. (FALSE.)
11	An old friend of Irtep the Wizard hired killers to assassinate him over an old grievance (Osgood Flumph, Faisal Dhaken, or Michalena Goddeau are named as the hiring NPC). (FALSE, but assassins are actually claiming to have been hired by these people.)
12	“When the wind blows, we’re all going to die. I don’t know what it means but I heard some wizard rambling about it.” (NEUTRAL—This rumor is most effective when it’s uttered by a blind hobo who reappears at odd times to repeat the message.)
13	Tuvio at the Blazing Bones hired someone to kill Irtep over bad debts. (FALSE—Tuvio is owed money, but he’s leaning toward giving the thieves’ guild a finder’s fee to recover his money.)
14	The Dominion Arcane is actively hiring mercenaries. Inquire at the Wizard’s Familiar for more information. (FALSE—Asking about this attracts the Dominion’s attention, which is not necessarily a good thing. The Dominion typically summons its aid. The rumor is likely perpetrated by the Society of Arms to annoy the Dominion.)
15	Gamblers who show a little skill can get themselves a no-interest line of credit in most of the gaming houses in the city. (NEUTRAL—Credit is usually available, but there is always interest on it.)
16	Fat Julie is offering a reward for Irtep the Wizard’s head, over excessive gambling debts. (FALSE—Julie is looking for Irtep, but his own gang is doing the legwork. He offers no reward to outsiders.)
17	Irtep racked up massive gambling debts. Even his favorite good luck charm, Michalena Goddeau, refuses to speak to him. (TRUE.)
18	Several gangs have already tried to break into Irtep’s tower. Nobody has seen them since. (TRUE)

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Result	Rumor
19	"Irtep is a Minzoologist, whatever that means. I heard him brag about it once." (TRUE—A successful DC 15 Int (Arcana) check reveals that a Minzoologist studies tiny life forms.)
20	Irtep was romantically involved with Michalena Goddeau, but she hasn't been seen since his disappearance. The lowdown is that when he ran out of money, she ran off with a charming sell-sword. She used to frequent the Fortune's Fool. She spent a lot of time at his tower while they were together, so she might know some of its secrets. (TRUE.)
21	Irtep used to drink with Osgood Flumph at the Wizard's Familiar and the Blazing Bones till they had some sort of falling out. Some say it was over a woman, others that it was over Irtep's arcane studies. Either way, Osgood has spent plenty of time inside Irtep's tower. Since their friendship fell apart, Osgood's been holed up at the Wizard's Familiar. (TRUE.)
22	Sources within the Dominion and among several of the temples who have been asked to investigate Irtep's disappearance are reasonably sure that he has not fled the city. Attempts to locate him magically keep pointing toward his tower, though there's no sign that anyone is there. (TRUE.)
23	Irtep made enemies with a wizard named Faisal Dhaken by beating him at a game of cards, stealing his woman, and co-opting his research. (NEUTRAL—Itep might have beaten Faisal at cards at some point, but the other two items are incorrect. Faisal has a strong dislike for Irtep, however, arising from years of jealousy over Irtep's successes.)
24	All this drinking and gambling is a recent thing for Irtep. He used to be a stable, sober guy. Maybe his research put a curse on him or something. (TRUE—Itep was cursed by Osgood Flumph, who hoped that Irtep's downfall would gain him access to Irtep's secret laboratory.)

Irtep's Associates

It is always possible that no matter how deeply the Game Master attempts to set the hook of adventure in his players, they refuse to take the bait. In this event, introduce the player characters to associates of Irtep as a way of moving the plot along and engaging the characters in the story. Hearing rumors at the onset of the adventure about a bounty on Irtep can lead characters directly to associates of Irtep and a glorious quest for treasure. Players are typically skittish about unverified rumors, however. This can be especially true if they've played other **Necromancer Games** adventures! In this case, a more direct approach is sometimes needed to kick the adventure into high gear. If characters don't follow up on any rumors, have the characters be approached by hunters in search of Irtep or by associates of Irtep who are looking for a hand in solving the wizard's disappearance.

Michalena Goddeau

Goddeau is a girl who frequently works the Blazing Bones. Irtep considered her his lucky charm until his luck (and money) ran dry and she moved her affections to a mercenary flush with cash from a

campaign in the Stoneheart Mountains. Michalena has visited Irtep's tower on occasion, and it is suspected that she might know the password. Unfortunately, Michalena went missing within hours of Irtep's disappearance.

She might approach the characters through an intermediary. Her desire is to get the assassins and thieves off her back. Without much money of her own, she figures the only way of doing that is to get an item from Irtep's laboratory to pay the hunters off with, so that they leave her alone. She is agitated beyond belief, angry with Irtep, and annoyed that his problems are interfering with her life and livelihood.

Michalena is currently hiding out with her boyfriend at the Pride of Waymarch. This knowledge can be gained after questioning her associates at the Blazing Bones or Fortune's Fool and making a successful DC 12 Cha (Persuasion or Intimidation) check and/or some believable roleplaying.

If contacted, or if Michalena seeks out the characters, she asks that they bring her an enchanted bowl from Irtep's laboratory. She tells them they can keep and sell anything else that they find; she only wants the bowl. If characters agree, she gives them the password that gets them in the front door.

If characters take Michalena up on her offer but then don't deliver the bowl to her, she puts out a "harlots all-points bulletin" on the characters. Bounty hunters and assassins within 200 miles will make the characters' lives miserable until the characters are dead or Michalena has received 5,000 gp worth of compensation for her trouble. As they say in the business, "that's a lotta chedda." Fortunately for the player characters, most of the bounty hunters who respond to such a call are wannabes, has-beens, and other low-rent hoods.

Osgood Flumph

Osgood is a doughty, overweight wizard known to have shared similar lusts for wine, ladies, and rich food when Irtep was on his long winning streak, mostly as a hanger-on or toady. Since Irtep's fall from grace in the gambling community and his subsequent disappearance, Osgood has lost his main source of free food and drinks.

He is currently hiding out at the Wizard's Familiar, where he worries that assassins, kidnappers, or powerful members of the Dominion Arcane may seek him out and work him over for knowledge of Irtep's research and whereabouts.

Osgood could use magic to contact the characters and ask them to meet him at the Wizard's Familiar. Once there, he makes a case, begging the characters to help him avoid the assassins by retrieving the *Minzoa sextant* from Irtep's secret laboratory. Osgood helped Irtep craft the sextant and figures that he could trade it to the Dominion Arcane for their protection, or at least for a promise that they won't harm him. Osgood is unsure of the actual password to enter Irtep's tower, but he is familiar with the trap on the first floor.

If the characters take Osgood's deal, he expects to receive the *sextant*, and he insists on using a scroll inscribed with a special *geas* spell on it to make sure the characters remain on the up-and-up with him. He offers the characters the following magic items to help them in their task: a *potion of fly*, a *scroll of lightning bolt*, 1,000 gp apiece, a 500 gp diamond, a *wand of magic missiles* (10 charges), a *potion of invisibility*, and a +1 weapon of the group's choice. He also suggests that they help themselves to any of the antiquities Irtep may have collected, which he keeps crated on the sixth floor of his tower. (This is a lie; there are no treasures there, only a charmed troll.)

Osgood is particularly suspicious of Faisal Dhaken (an old associate of his and of Irtep), and he warns the characters against meeting with the wizard. He complains that Faisal is one of the reasons Osgood is hiding in the Wizards Familiar, since the inn offers protection against magical assault.

Folk who know Osgood from the bars and gaming halls might suggest that he is hiding at the Wizard's Familiar with a successful DC 13 Cha (Persuasion or Intimidation) check. As Osgood is aware he is being sought by bounty hunters, assassins, and guards, he might reach out to the characters on his own, desperate for protection.

Osgood's statistics are located in the appendix to this adventure.

IRTEP'S DISH

Osgood is not who he presents himself to be. In fact, Osgood is the one who placed the curse on Irtep, by blending a curse into the *sextant* that was specifically set to *geas* poor Irtep into destructive behavior. Faisal suspects that Irtep was cursed and he further suspects that Osgood is behind it, but he has no proof with which to trap the treacherous Osgood. If Irtep is brought to Faisal, the foreign wizard can break the curse.

Faisal Dhaken

Faisal is a foreign wizard with exotic features and a forked beard. He wears a brilliant black turban with a precious ruby affixed in its center and carries a twisted staff inlaid with silver magic symbols. Faisal has a reputation for dark deeds. Whether this reputation is warranted remains to be seen. He is caustic, haughty, and quick to anger. Faisal was an associate of Irtep in both gambling and magical research. He assisted Irtep in enchanting the *pipes of Minzoa* but was horrified by the demonstration of their use. He begged his friend to destroy the pipes. Irtep refused, and the two parted ways.

Some weeks passed before Faisal found Irtep gambling at the Fortune's Fool. He joined the table to play a hand, hoping time and their mutual love of gambling would allow him to broach the subject of the pipes once more. Irtep again refused to destroy them, and the two had a loud and vocal argument that everyone assumed was over gambling. Because of Faisal's dark reputation, many observers have assumed that Faisal hired assassins to slay his former friend over the incident. Faisal has quietly offered a substantial reward for finding Irtep, but he wants his friend brought back to safety, not murdered. Faisal may approach the characters and offer them 1,000 gp each, a *potion of invisibility*, a *potion of haste*, a *potion of strength*, and a *potion of spider climb*, as well as a *scroll of lightning bolt* and a *scroll of slow*. He asks that the characters find Irtep and bring him back alive and unmolested.

Faisal is not hiding. He can be found at his apartment in Turlin's Well.

Faisal's statistics are in the appendix to this adventure.

Gynnen Valzoe

Gynnen is a skilled musician and member of the Bard's College. Gynnen, probably more than any other associate or panderer of Irtep's favor besides Faisal, is honestly worried about Irtep and his well-being. Gynnen and Irtep became drinking buddies during Irtep's winning streak, when Gynnen performed regularly at the Fortune's Fool. Irtep insisted on taking lessons in pipe playing from Gynnen. Eventually Irtep persuaded Gynnen to craft a set of pipes for Irtep from mithral, silver, ivory, and rare hardwood. Gynnen understood that Irtep meant to enchant the pipes, but he knows nothing about the specific nature of the enchantment. The bard is afraid that the pipes were enchanted with a malevolent purpose. He would like to see them turned over to the authorities or destroyed.

Mostly, though, Gynnen just misses his drinking buddy and wants to make sure that Irtep is alive and safe. If the characters can bring Irtep to him alive, he intends to smuggle the wizard out of the city, to start over again in another city with a new identity.

Gynnen Valzoe's Statistics are in the appendix to this adventure.

Location Scouting and First Contacts

Somehow, characters must be set on the path of locating Irtep. Rumors and NPCs set the stage for locations that the characters should visit in the course of the adventure as well as suggestions of locations that the player characters might visit on their journey to Irtep's tower. Listed here are brief descriptions of the likely locations that the characters might visit in their search for Irtep and his associates. Each location also includes a potential first contact with an NPC that can get the characters access to Irtep's tower.

IRTEP'S DISH

The Blazing Bones

This establishment is a generic, rectangular gaming hall. No special map or floor plan is needed.

If the characters head off to the Blazing Bone,s they arrive at a darkened establishment. The harlots and streetwalkers normally found near its busy front door are absent. A sign on the door reads "Gone fishing, come back tomorrow. The Mgt." Attempting to peer through the place's filthy windows reveals that the inside is indeed dark and empty.

The door is locked with a stout lock, and careful inspection (or picking the lock) reveal that it's also barred from the inside. If the characters persist at trying to get through the door, a half-orc opens the door from inside and tells them to beat it. If asked about Irtep or Michalena, the half-orc grins and says. "Don't worry, the boss is out lookin for em!" He then slams the door in their faces, bars it again, and goes back to whatever he was doing before.

Fortune's Fool

Fortune's Fool is a massive casino and entertainment parlor in the Thieves Quarter of Bard's Gate. It features a renowned indoor theater and outdoor unarmed fighting arena. Further details on the exact floor plan of the Fortune's Fool can be found in *Bard's Gate* from Necromancer Games, but we provide enough information here for you to use the location.

Gathering Information

If characters wander through Fortune's Fool, talking to patrons and eavesdropping on conversations, you can use the rumors table from above to determine what additional tidbits they gather. Their efforts should lead eventually to a suggestion (friendly or otherwise) that Ayelyln the Barkeep is the best source of information in the place.

Assuming that the characters ask the barkeep about Irtep, Faisal, Michalena, or other characters they've encountered during their investigation, they are directed to a back room guarded by a pair of menacing half-orcs (Choli Bonesnapper and Colic) dressed in fine doublets and brandishing greataxes. If the characters don't seem interested in checking out the back room, a squad of four or more half-orcs surrounds them and insistently escorts them to the back room.

Public Brawling

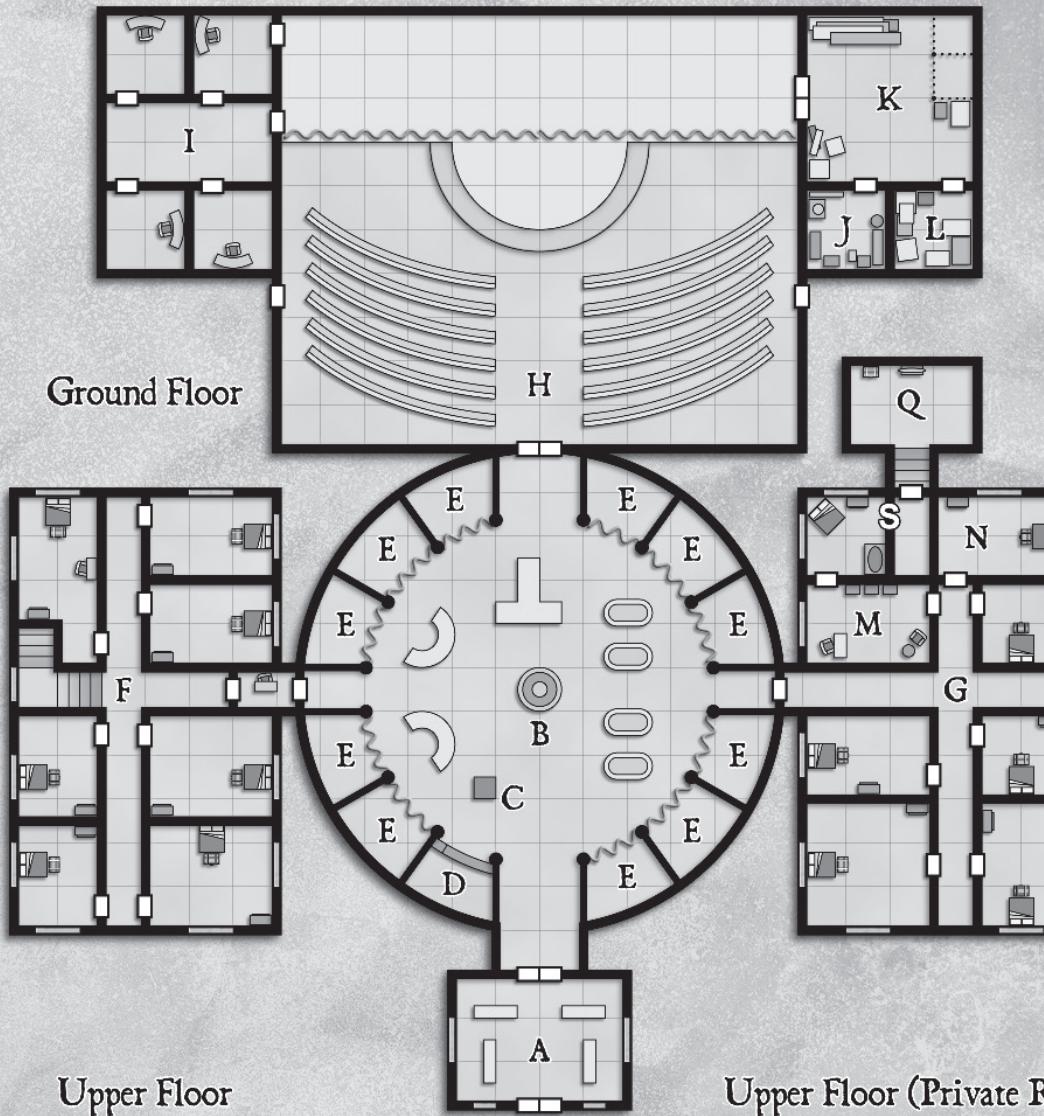
Starting a bloody battle in Bard's Gate's largest casino is a very rash idea. Fortune's Fool is a popular place, and its customers don't want to see it wrecked up. Such shenanigans attract the guard, sheriffs, and wandering adventurers of comparable level to the player characters, who harry and assault player characters foolish enough to do start trouble here. Characters won't be killed, but they'll be pummeled into unconsciousness and handed over to Fat Julie to deal with.

Fat Julie

If the player characters meet with Fat Julie, he greets them in a back room and offers to pay them to track down Irtep and relieve the wizard of at least 15,000 gp worth of property; that's what the halfling bookmaker is owed by the deadbeat spellcaster. Fat Julie is polite to characters (unless they started trouble in his place), but he's absolutely clear that Irtep owes him a debt and no one welches on Fat Julie. That's just good business.

Characters can take Julie's deal or leave it. Taking the deal may give the characters an added ally or contact in the city who the Game Master can use when setting up further adventures. Refusing Julie's offer won't necessarily earn the characters an enemy. Either way, Fat Julie sends his

Fortune's Fool Casino



IRTEP'S DISH



agents to tail the characters through the city to see which other contacts they end up making.

If characters take the deal, they are directed to track down Irtep's one-time girlfriend at the Pride of Waymarch, or his old buddy Osgood Flumph at the Wizard's Familiar. Julie's agents haven't been able to make much progress at either establishment because of the Pride's low tolerance of any being with "half" in their name, and the Wizard's Familiar's low tolerance of nonmagicians.

If the characters end up meeting more than one additional contact without accepting Fat Julie's deal, a second meeting with Julie's gang of half-orcs happens just after the characters leave Irtep's Tower. See the "Conclusions" section of this adventure for more details.

Leaving the Fortune's Fool

Upon leaving the Fortune's Fool, the characters are approached by a dark figure in a turban. He asks the characters to quickly follow him into a nearby alley across from the Fool, where he introduces himself as Faisal and tells the characters that they are in great danger. If they follow him into the alleyway, he directs their attention to the front door of the Fortune's Fool just as a pair of half-orcs leave the place. A successful DC 10 Int check allows the characters to recognize them as some of Julie's thugs that they encountered in the casino.

As the characters watch, the half-orcs begin sniffing at the air and turn almost immediately toward the alley where Faisal and the characters are hiding. Faisal quietly casts a spell, and the air around the characters

fills with the smell of roses and manure. Immediately the orcs lose the characters' scent.

Faisal's Offer

Faisal admits that he was an ally of Irtep, and that Irtep is being sought not only by Julie but also by members of the Dominion Arcane and by Red Blades Assassins. He begs the characters find a way into Irtep's Tower and to recover the *pipes of Minzoa* before they fall into someone else's hands and cause even more trouble. He offers to pay the characters 1,000 gp apiece, plus a few select magic items from Irtep's collection (but nothing outrageous).

If questioned about the rumor that he is the one who wants Irtep killed, he explains that he is Irtep's friend and that their falling out was his reaction to the evils that the pipes could have been used to commit.

If characters take Faisal up on his offer, he suggests that they visit the Pride of Waymarch to track down Michalena Goddeau. Faisal is certain that Irtep gave her a special password that reveals the door of his tower.

Faisal is unaware of the ground floor trap in Irtep's Tower, as the trap was devised by Osgood and Irtep. Osgood does not have the password to enter the tower, because this was given only to Irtep's concubines.

If Fat Julie learns that the characters accepted Faisal's offer after turning his down, he won't be interested in pursuing any further deals with them.

If the characters say no to Faisal, he is annoyed and refuses to offer them any help. He suggests that if they are unwilling to help, they should steer far clear of him and forget they knew the name of Irtep or Faisal Dhaken. See the section "Conclusions" for further details on Faisal's actions.

QUESTS OF DOOM: MEN & MONSTROSITIES

At The Wizard's Familiar

A map is provided of the ground floor for the Wizard's Familiar.

Rumors may have set the characters on the course of the Wizard's Familiar in search of Osgood Flumph. It is also possible that the characters have already encountered Faisal Dhaken, Fat Julie, or Michalena Goddeau, and one of them might have put the characters on the trail of Osgood.

The Wizard's Familiar is a grand Inn and landmark in the Turlin's Well District of Bard's Gate. The Familiar, as it is called, is an exclusive establishment, open to arcanists or by invitation only. The inn is covered in illusions to make it appear as nothing more or less than high class apartments common in the area.

Its front stair is guarded with enchantments that steer riff-raff away from the club. Luckily for the characters, the Wizard's Familiar is well known to most locals who are in the know. They typical laborer in the street won't know its location, but anyone who is more highly placed in society or who dabbles in the magical arts can direct them to the correct building, even if most people have never seen the inside of the place.

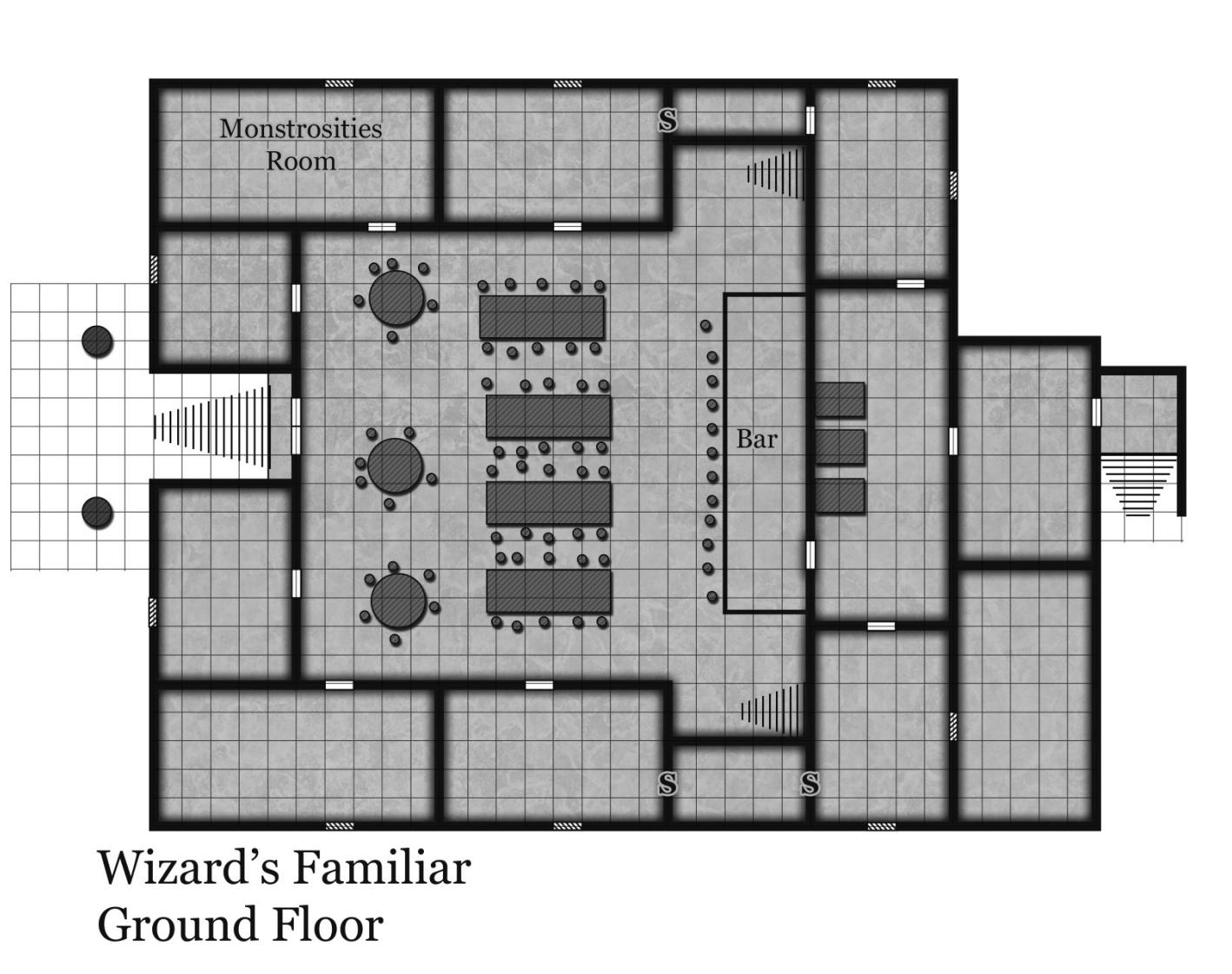
The stairs to the doorway are hidden by an illusion that appears to be a permanent wall; a successful DC 14 Wis (Perception) check is needed to spot the door. Beyond the illusory wall is a small courtyard leading to a set of stairs that end at a pair of massive, oaken double doors decorated with carvings of crows, cats, dogs, bats, fish, birds, small dragons, and other creatures that throughout the ages have served wizards as familiars.

The entrance is flanked by a pair of statues of grim-faced wizards whose features are hidden by the brims of their broad hats. The statues are enchanted to trigger a magical *fear* trap on any being who is not an arcane spellcaster. Those who step onto the stairs must make a DC 14 Wis saving throw or become frightened of the entire building for 24 hours. Those who succeed are allowed entry to the Grand Parlor of the Wizard's Familiar, though they are not allowed access to any chamber beyond save by permission of the proprietor, Folsum Judduk.

Gathering Information

The Grand Parlor of the Wizards Familiar is a combination taproom, meeting lounge, and general common chamber one would find in any upscale inn. Here, however, the patrons are all wizards who are sitting and chatting, puffing their pipes, stroking their beards, scratching behind their familiars' ears, or generally ruminating on the mysteries of the universe. If the characters engage them in conversation, you can pull additional rumors off the rumors table (above). Questions involving Irtep, Faisal, or Osgood attract the attention of a quartet of young but stern wizards in black silk and velvet attire with the design of the Wizard's Familiar embroidered on their tunics. The wizards are armed with wands and are quite humorless.

If characters approach the bar, they are met by Folsum Judduk, who introduces himself as the innkeeper of the Wizard's Familiar. He is aware of Irtep, and has thrown the wizard out for bringing trouble to his



Wizard's Familiar
Ground Floor

IRTEP'S DISH

establishment. He hopes that he will not also have to throw the characters out for similar reasons. If the characters are sincere and respectful in their investigation and questioning, Folsum directs them to the Monstrosities room, just off the main parlor, indicating they may find answers to their questions there. If characters get pushy or try intimidating the bartender or his patrons—well, they're trying to start something in a room filled with high-level magic-users. That ploy won't end well for the characters.

Monstrosities Room, Osgood's Offer

The private room is adorned with parts and pieces of various creatures such as manticores, perytons, and the stuffed heads of a chimera. It has a view of the street through crystal glass windows and fine velvet curtains. The walls are lined with bookcases on various supernatural beasts.

Sitting in one corner smoking a pipe is a portly wizard who introduces himself as Osgood Flumph. He apologizes for all the previous questioning and the subterfuge required to meet him at the Wizard's Familiar, but indicates that his life may be in danger because of his association with Irtep. Osgood claims to be a good friend of the wizard, though they recently had a falling out over Irtep's drinking and womanizing.

Osgood suspects that Faisal Dhaken had something to do with Irtep's disappearance, but the only evidence he offers is Faisal's reputation for being devious and a member of an "evil" sect of the Dominion Arcane. He thinks Faisal is trying to steal Irtep's secrets for himself, and that he needs Osgood to get him past a particularly nasty arcane trap located on the ground floor of Irtep's tower. Osgood claims he would go to Irtep's tower, overcome the trap, and gather the *sextant* himself, but he does not know the password to enter the tower. Each time he entered the tower in the past, he was accompanied by Irtep.

Osgood offers to pay the characters with a *potion of fly*, a *scroll of lightning bolt*, 1,000 gp apiece, a 500 gp diamond, a *wand of magic missiles*, a *potion of invisibility*, and a +1 weapon of the characters' choice if they recover an item called the *sextant of Minzoa* that he helped Irtep to enchant. He does not go into detail about the item, other than that it looks like a sailor's sextant, it is located somewhere in Irtep's laboratory, and that unless he can get it into the hands of his allies in the Dominion Arcane, he may be trapped in the Wizard's Familiar, a de facto prisoner of a wizards' power play for the rest of his days.

If the characters take his offer, Osgood suggests that Michalena Goddeau, a lady companion of Irtep has the password that would gain access to Irtep's tower; she was frequently seen entering the tower during her and Irtep's time together.

If the characters refuse Osgood's offer, he tells them that they are making a grave mistake and that he will not be able to protect them from rumors that they are on the trail of Irtep's treasures. He may allude that the Red Blades would not be as congenial as he, and that Faisal certainly would do "terrible things" should he find the *sextant* or Irtep's research notes. From that point on, Osgood is hostile to the characters and interferes with their attempts at gaining access to Irtep's Tower. See "Conclusions" for further details on Osgood's actions.

Leaving the Wizard's Familiar

Regardless of the outcomes or their experiences in the Wizard's Familiar, the characters are eventually approached by a handsome bard who begs their time to play a song for them. The bard is quite persistent to the point of annoyance. If the characters pay him off, he draws forth a set of pipes and begins performing a song for them.

Upon completion, he smiles and introduces himself as Gynnen Valzoe and indicates that he is aware that the characters are looking into Irtep's disappearance. He has heard good things about the characters and wants to offer them some advice. Gynnen suggests that none of the former friends of Irtep are as they seem. He distrusts Osgood Flumph and Faisal Dhaken equally. He claims he was Irtep's best friend, and that he fashioned a

set of fine pipes for the wizard just before Irtep fell head over heels in love with Michalena Goddeau. He begs the characters to do whatever they can to find his friend and to bring him secretly to the docks, where Gynnen intends to spirit the wizard safely out of town, perhaps to Reme or somewhere in the Grand Duchy where he can start over.

Recently, because of his suspicions, Gynnen followed Faisal and saw him entering and leaving known hangouts of "dark" members of the Dominion Arcane. Around the same time he came across Osgood as he was leaving the residence of a wizard named Manisool—a man of evil reputation—with a clutch of papers and scrolls in his hands. When he approached, Osgood grew agitated and took great pains to prevent Gynnen from seeing what was on any of the items, but the bard is certain that some of them were magical scrolls.

Gynnen is convinced that one or both of those characters have cursed his friend, and he has spent a goodly amount of the coin Irtep paid him for crafting the pipes to purchase a powerful scroll of his own to break what he assumes is a curse on his friend. This is a specialized scroll of *greater restoration*, bought with Irtep's money and associated to him through personal possession so that it can automatically break the *geas* on Irtep even if the caster is not normally able to cast that spell.

Gynnen can offer little in the way of payment, though he points out that aside from Irtep's notebook and his life, the wizard is unlikely to take any of his possessions with him when he assumes his new identity. Anything in his tower might as well go to the characters who saved his life as to the scavengers who will inevitably follow.

Gynnen knows that only Michalena Goddeau has the current password. He is also aware of a particularly nasty arcane trap allegedly built into the first floor of the tower, which Osgood Flumph had some knowledge of. Gynnen suggests that the characters avoid any of Irtep's other associates and "work it out on their own" as the safest policy. The fewer people who know about their mission, the better.

The Pride of Waymarch

The Pride of Waymarch is a simple, square tavern. No map is provided.

If rumors or NPC interactions lead the characters to the Pride of Waymarch, they find themselves at a tavern in the Market District of Bard's Gate catering to military, ex-military, and mercenaries of all stripes. The shield of Waymarch hangs above the lintel and a sign indicates "Private Club—Spellcasters and other undesirables unwelcome."

A pair of mercenaries wearing old campaign badges of the armies in which they served sit flanking the doorway with tall tankards of ale. They ask anyone who even resembles an arcane spellcaster to move along. Other newcomers are given the choice of dueling either of the two fighters for a chance at a membership.

Characters who agree are escorted to a courtyard set along the side of the inn where a series of racks of blunted and practice weapons sit. Characters can choose their weapon and proceed to battle. Use the statistics for the standard NPC Veteran for their opponent (or any other humanoid NPC in the Challenge 2-4 range, if you prefer). If the character wins the fight, or lasts at least three rounds against the opponent, the character is vouched for and can join the club for 2 gp.

(**Veteran:** AC 17, 58 hps; +5 to hit x2, 1d10 + 3 slashing damage [longsword])

Once inside the pride of Waymarch, the characters find themselves in the company of hard-bitten fighting men. Some are retired, others are young sell-swords looking for work. Most are drinking, sharing stories, and lying about their exploits to a coterie of attractive trollops.

If the characters start asking questions, use the rumors table (above) to see what the "word on the street" is. Should their line of questioning directly relate to Irtep, Faisal Dhaken, or Osgood Flumph, they are directed to the bar owner, Sergeant Vassale. The sergeant suggests that characters who are seeking wizards should go look in the types of pest-holes where wizards hang out; otherwise, they should shut their traps and enjoy their whiskey and ale. If characters ask for directions, Vassale tells them how

QUESTS OF DOOM: MEN & MONSTROSITIES

to find the Wizard's Familiar, the Tower of Irtep, and the apartment of Faisal Dhaken. If trouble develops, Sergeant Vassale is a standard human Veteran NPC.

If characters inquire about Michalena Goddeau, a burly young fighter stands up and demands to know who is asking and why. The fighter is Gustas, Michalena's new sugar daddy. He just returned from an expedition to the Stoneheart Mountain Dungeon with a nice sack of gold. Gustas gets mouthy with the character(s) asking questions about his girl. While Gustas keeps the characters occupied, his girl is slipping out the back exit from the taproom. Characters who make successful DC 10 Wis (Perception) checks notice a young brunette woman sidling toward the rear exit.

Gustas is hot-blooded and may want to go to blows over people making any disrespectful comments about his girl. This, of course, leads Sergeant Vassale to suggest they "take it outside" to the courtyard to settle their issue. Gustas is a standard human Berserker NPC.

(Gustas [Berserker]: AC 13, 67 hps; +5 to hit, 1d12 + 3 slashing damage [greataxe]; at the start of its turn, the berserker can opt to have tactical advantage on its attack, but then all attacks against it also have tactical advantage until the start of the berserker's next turn)

If a character ends up dueling Gustas and appears poised to win the fight, Michalena returns immediately and tries to stop the beating. She agrees to talk to the characters if they don't hurt Gustas any more. Gustas is humiliated, but he stops fighting for Michalena. He insists on being present for any questioning and continues to hold a chip on his shoulder against the characters. (See the section "Conclusions," below.)

Pursuing Michalena

Michalena is easy to track with a DC 10 Wis (Perception) check. She simply found a hiding spot in the alleyway and is waiting for the characters to leave the Pride so that she can return to her boyfriend. If cornered, she threatens to scream for the constables. She can be calmed down with a DC 10 Cha (Persuasion or Intimidation) check or a bribe of at least 50 gp.

Michalena is a gold digger who was only interested in Irtep's money. When she met the younger Gustas and his sack of gold, her heart and her avarice followed. She wants nothing more to do with Irtep or his crazy ways, and she's willing to sell the password to his tower for 1,000 gp and a crystal dish that Irtep owns. She figures that he spent more time with "the dish" than he spent with her, so it would be ironic justice if she gets the dish and he had nothing but his debts, the bounty hunters, and a broken heart. She finds Osgood "creepy" and feels that Faisal is definitely a villain. Her opinion of Gynnen is that he is "dreamy" but broke, and therefore not worth wasting her time on.

If the characters make a deal with her, she gives them the password and reminds them that if she doesn't get the dish, Gustas's mercenary friends will come looking for them. It should be noted that taking Michalena's deal means crossing Fat Julie, which becomes important in the "Conclusions" section of the adventure.

The password can also be gotten from Michalena through a successful DC 15 Cha (Persuasion or Intimidation) check, a 5,000 gp bribe, or through use of a spell such as *charm person*.

Should any character be heartless enough to get into a duel with Michalena, she uses the stats of a standard human Commoner NPC, but fights with a dagger instead of a club.

(**Michalena [Commoner]:** AC 10, hps 4; +2 to hit, 1d4 piercing damage [dagger])

Leaving the Pride of Waymarch

Upon leaving the Pride of Waymarch, the characters are stopped by a trio of half-orc ruffians led by a thin, shifty human male with dark hair and a wicked, fine-handled rapier in his belt. The man asks if he can buy the characters a drink from a local wine cart while they walk and talk. If the characters refuse, his half-orcs crowd around and try to look intimidating, but the man waves them back.

He introduces himself as Tuvio, proprietor of the Blazing Bones. He knows that the characters have managed to get an audience with Michalena and would like to know what they learned about Irtep and whether or not Michalena gave up the password.

Tuvio explains that Irtep owes him a cool 5,000 gp, and that if the characters are looking for Irtep, they are "de facto" looking for his money. Since the characters are hunting for Irtep anyway, there's no reason why they can't cooperate for mutual benefit. Tuvio isn't even angry at Irtep—he likes the wizard and understands that gamblers have up times and down. The 5,000 gp isn't even everything Irtep owes him; it's what Tuvio is willing to settle for.

Tuvio's kind feelings toward Irtep (which are at least partly genuine) don't extend to Michalena, Osgood, or Fiasal. He considers the first two to be worthless sponges and the last to be a dangerous meddler in dark arts.

Like everyone else, Tuvio wants the characters to get inside Irtep's tower, find out what became of the wizard, help him if they can, and retrieve Tuvio's debt. For payment, Tuvio will extend the characters 1,000 gp each in credit at the Blazing Bones and offers to introduce them to some of the best and most important folk of local society. He sweetens the deal by offering to fence anything they retrieve from Irtep's tower at top value, so long as he gets his 5,000 gp cut from the deal.

If the characters refuse Tuvio, he informs them that they are making a mistake and that he has friends that shouldn't be crossed. See "Conclusions" for possible attention from Tuvio and his associates at the end of this adventure.

Part 2: On To Irtep's Tower

Eventually the characters should have enough material and information to make a go at entering Irtep's Tower.

The use of the password is important in entering the tower but is by no means the only means of entry. A few enterprising thieves and members of the Red Blades have already found alternate entrances. What isn't widely known (because the Red Blades and the thieves' guild aren't talking) is that none of these experts have managed to leave the tower once they got in.

Tower Features

Doors: All doors are locked with *arcane lock* spells unless otherwise. Picking such a lock requires a set of thief's tools and a successful DC 25 Dex check (that includes the 10-point penalty for *arcane lock*), and breaking down such a door requires a DC 25 Str (Athletics) check, unless noted otherwise.

Windows: Windows line the sides of the tower on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th stories. The outdoor windows are locked with *arcane locks* and require the same rolls as doors to open, unless noted otherwise.

Electricity Trap: The windows are trapped. Anyone touching a window and everyone else within 15 feet takes 3d8 lightning damage, or half that much with a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw. This trap can be discovered with a DC 15 Wis (Perception) check and bypassed with a DC 20 Dex check, but failing the Dex check sets off the trap.

Light: The tower is brightly lit by sconces of magical flame placed at 10-20 foot intervals unless otherwise noted.

Outside the Tower

The tower sits in a decent area of the Old Temple District not far from the Kings Bridge.

It is an octagonal tower for the most part, with six stories, standing roughly 80 feet high. The roof tapers to a point. The tower is surrounded by a decorative moat with a bridge that leads to the doors of the ground floor.

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Patrolling the moat are a group of four Lyreguards with four guard dogs under the command of a no-nonsense veteran, Officer Gralme. The guardsmen steer folk away from the tower and are serious about pursuing any would-be thieves. The tower is currently considered something of a public hazard, and the guardsmen are here to safeguard the citizenry.

Because this is a unique situation, this guard detachment is accompanied by a specialist named Finly, a 9th-level wizard who often works with the Lyreguards on jobs that are likely to meet magical foes or to need magical backup. Finly obviously is not a soldier—he isn't wearing armor or carrying military weapons—but nothing immediately identifies him as a mage. He finds that going incognito often gives him an essential edge when dealing with troublemaking spellcasters. Characters who've lived in this town for several months might know who Finly is by reputation if not by sight. Newcomers will assume he's just a citizen chatting with the guardsmen.

If characters approach the tower without first attempting to scout it stealthily, they are stopped by Officer Gralme and his special squad. Officer Gralme asks what the characters' business is near the Tower of Irtep. If he doesn't care for their answer, he orders them to leave the area immediately, and he'll send a few soldiers to escort them away. Obviously, if the soldiers don't come back in a few minutes, Gralme knows that evil is afoot, and he's not a fool. Where adventurers are concerned, he always calls for backup first and then plans his attack.

Officer Gralme uses the stats of a standard human Knight NPC, his Lyreguards use the stats of standard Guard NPCs, their guard dogs use the stats of Mastiffs, and Finly uses the stats of a human Mage NPC (with altered spells).

(Officer Gralme [Mage]): AC 18, 52 hps; +5 to hit x2, 2d6 + 3 slashing damage [greatsword]; has tactical advantage on saving throws against fear

(Lyeguard [Guard]): AC 16, 11 hps; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 piercing damage [shortsword]

(Finly [Mage]): AC 12, 40 hps; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage [dagger]; +6 to hit with spell attacks, save DC 14; prepares the following spells: [at will] fire bolt, mage hand, shocking grasp; [x4] burning hands, fog cloud, mage armor, magic missile; [x3] hold person, suggestion, web; [x3] counterspell, fireball, fly; [x3] greater invisibility, ice storm; [x1] cone of cold

(Mastiff): AC 12, 5 hps; +3 to hit, 1d6 + 1 piercing damage and the target must make a successful DC 11 Str saving throw to avoid being knocked prone [bite]; has tactical advantage on Wis (Perception) checks relying on hearing or scent

Getting Into the Tower

Some form of subterfuge or magic is needed to get across the bridge to Irtep's Tower without being noticed by Gralme, Finly, and the soldiers and dogs. Possibilities include but are not limited to a *charm* effect, invisibility, stealth, or an especially clever distraction (tossing a rock into the bushes won't do it).

Talking Their Way Past Gralme: A Cha (Deception or Persuasion) check opposed by Gralme's Wis (Insight) check.

Stealth: A DC 20 Dex (Stealth) check coupled with a thorough description of how the characters are going to dodge the patrols to make it to the tower undetected.

Charm: A *charm person* spell might be used to persuade Gralme to let the characters past, though casting a spell is likely to start a fight with the Lyeguard patrol if it's noticed. This could land the characters in jail if it doesn't pan out.

Disguise: Characters could use a disguise to dress as a relieving

patrol, or to pass off one of their members as a town officer who has official clearance to access Irtep's property. This requires a successful Cha (Deception) check opposed by Officer Gralme's Wis (Insight) check.

Organized Distraction: Characters could come up with a plan to stage a distraction that pulls the guard patrol away from the doorway long enough for characters to slip inside. This could involve hiring a troupe of performers or beggars, an illusion of a rampaging monster, a fire that threatens a nearby building, or some other pressing event. Use your best judgment to determine whether Gralme falls for the trick, remembering that he's a seasoned officer of the law who used to be an adventurer himself.

Windows: Someone is bound to have *boots of flying*, a *ring of invisibility*, a *scroll of passwall*, and a willingness to leave all of his or her friends on the sidelines and go it alone inside the tower. Such characters create a welcome addition to the official Necromancer Games rolls of the dead. Characters can feasibly fly up to a window, overcome the trap, open lock, and get inside without being noticed by the guards. Surviving to fly back out the window again is another question entirely.

The Bridge: The bridge is a simple stone arch that crosses the decorative moat. It's not meant for defense. There are no railings or sidings to hide behind.

The Moat: The moat surrounding the tower is filled with koi fish and lily pads. The water is 10 feet deep and 10 feet wide around the entire circumference of the tower. A grate at the bottom of the pond on the north side of the tower could be forced opened with a successful DC 15 Str check. Characters could then swim through 50 feet of culvert and find themselves below the drain in the fountain in the center of the first floor of Irtep's Tower.

Drain: The drain is clogged with pieces of at least three bodies and some items of thief gear. The equipment includes a broken rapier, a +1 *shortsword*, a +1 *light crossbow*, 10 quarrels, two sets of thieves' tools, and three waterlogged black leather masks of the type commonly worn by members of the Shadowmasks. The bodies have been bitten and clawed savagely and also are singed.

A secret button slides the fountain to the side affording access to the first floor, and activating the first floor trap. The button requires a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check to notice.

Front Door

The front door to Irtep's estate is carved in an image that looks like a willow tree surrounded by leaves. On close examination or with a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check, the tree appears to be eating the leaves, and the leaves appear to be eating smaller leaves.

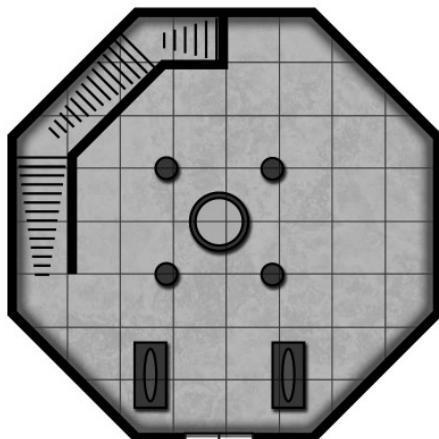
The door is reinforced with steel and locked with an *arcane lock* and a very complicated mechanical lock that requires a successful DC 25 Dex check to pick. Picking the lock requires several minutes, and unless the lockpicker is invisible, covered by an illusion, or some other distraction is keeping the guardsmen from doing their jobs, the lock picker is easily spotted. A DC 20 Str check can force the door in, but this ruins any chance for getting in unnoticed. A *knock* spell suppresses the *arcane lock* normally (lowering the DC for picking the lock by 10), but the sound from the spell is certain to attract the guards' attention.

The best and easiest way in is by using the password ("Irtep is a love machine"), known only to Irtep and Michalena.

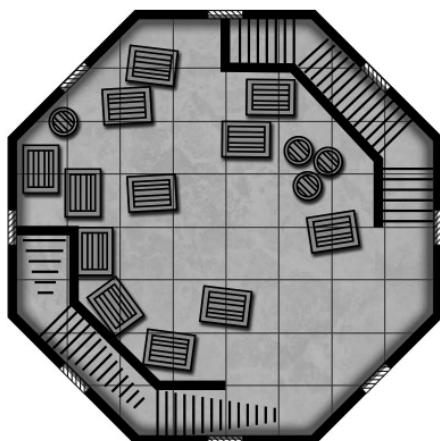
Additionally, the door is protected by a mechanical trap. It can be spotted with a successful DC 17 Wis (Perception) check. If the lock is picked or the door is forced or *knocked* without first disarming the trap with a successful DC 17 Dex (Sleight of Hand) check, a large, yellow, 500-pound iron ball attached to a gigantic chain drops from the top story of the tower onto anyone in the doorway. Each creature near the door takes 8d6 bludgeoning damage, or no damage with a successful DC 15 Dex (Acrobatics) saving throw. The ball also smashes the bridge and gets the attention of everyone within 300 feet. Afterward, an automatic winch drags the gore-smeared ball back up the side of the tower. Characters notice a cruel, smiling face painted on the ball.

Irtep's Tower

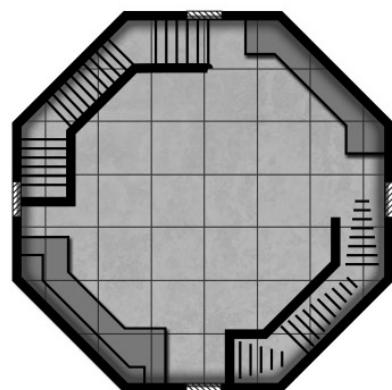
1st



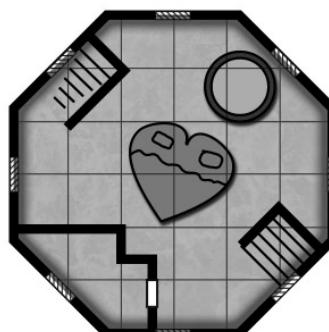
2nd



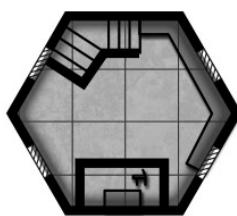
3rd



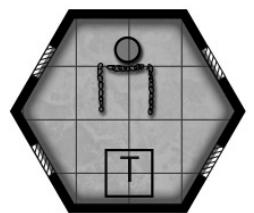
4th



5th



6th



Irtep's Tower: Ground Floor

This large chamber is octagonal and 40 feet in diameter. The doors are flanked by a pair of stone statues of coppery koi fish. A circular inscription is inlaid in silver in the polished marble floor. The circle of the inscription connects four pillars that surround a fountain. Each pillar is a different color and has a sconce affixed to it with a different colored candle. As the last character enters the dimly lit chamber, a voice calls down from high above.

*"If intruders to my home are thee, be dissuaded from my property.
If thou art friend then know the score—match the hue of yon stair-top door.
Pillar to candle, candle to wick, hurry now and make it quick,
For if water touches flame, your days are ended, down the drain."*

When the voice ends, the fountain begins bubbling, and a gurgling, flushing sound can be heard as water spills over the fountain's edge onto the floor.

The door at the top of the stairs is brown. To open it, characters must match its shade of brown by swapping candles around the pillars. Placing a candle on a pillar of a different color changes the color of the pillar or the candle. Creating two orange pillars and one green pillar solves the puzzle.

If characters took the deal from Osgood Flumph, he told them the correct matching of colored candles to colored pillars to produce brown, and they should be able to deactivate the trap easily. If they have not, their options are trial and error, magic, or death!

Water is filling the room quickly. When it reaches the top of the sconces on the pillars, none of the candles can be lit, and the characters are likely to drown.

When characters trigger the trap, the arrangement of candles and pillars is as follows:

Pillar	Pillar Color	Candle Color
1	Red	Red
2	Blue	Blue
3	Yellow	Yellow
4	Black	White

Moving candles to different pillars has the effect of blending those colors, as listed below.

Candle	on Pillar	Changes
Red	Blue	Pillar turns Purple
Red	Yellow	Pillar turns Orange
Blue	Red	Pillar turns Purple
Blue	Yellow	Pillar turns Green
Yellow	Blue	Pillar turns Green
Yellow	Red	Pillar turns Orange
White	Any	Candle matches Pillar
Any	Black	Candle turns White

No matter what color a pillar is at the moment, it always reacts to the presence of a new candle as if the pillar was its original color. For example, assume that a red candle was placed on the blue pillar, turning the pillar purple. Characters then experimentally replace the red candle with a yellow candle. The yellow candle turns the pillar green, the same way it would have if it had been placed there while the pillar was blue.

To produce brown and unlock the door, characters must make two

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pillars orange and one pillar green.

This puzzle will be much more enjoyable for everyone if you draw the four pillars on a sheet of paper or on your battle mat and label the colors or indicate them with colored markers. Use colored beads or dice to represent the candles, swapping them for different ones when their colors change. Without this visual aid, everyone (including the GM) is likely to become hopelessly confused.

The "correct" method is listed below.

1. Remove the candle from the blue pillar and hold it.
2. Move the yellow candle to the blue pillar, turning that pillar green
3. Replace the white candle on the black pillar with the blue candle, turning the blue candle into a second white candle.
4. Move the newly-made white candle to the yellow pillar, turning that candle yellow.
5. Replace the red candle on the red pillar with the newly made yellow candle, turning that pillar orange.
6. Replace the yellow candle on the yellow pillar with the red candle, turning that pillar orange. At that point, there are two orange pillars, one green pillar, and one black pillar, and someone should be holding a yellow candle.
7. Place the remaining yellow candle on the black pillar.

Placing the last candle on the black pillar causes the new colors in the chamber to mix in the air and create a dark brown color that matches the door at the top of the stair, at which point the door opens. When the door opens, the fountain slides to the side and the water quickly drains through a grate in the floor.

Moving the candles around should take a party of four no more than two rounds to accomplish. Obviously, players who remember what they learned about color in third grade will have an easier time of it than others. If players insist on applying skills to get a clue (or are floundering hopelessly and need all the help they can get), then with a successful DC 15 Int check, a character recalls learning that brown paint is made up of two parts orange pigment and one part green pigment.

The Flow of Water and Other Dangers

Water is being sucked out of the moat and into the ground floor quickly. Exactly how quickly is up to you. The decision should be based on how well your players deal with these types of puzzles. Rather than trying to adjudicate the situation with game rounds, we recommend real time. Even a slow, deliberative group should be able to find a solution in five minutes. Two minutes should be enough for most groups, and those that thrive on such puzzles might be done in less than one minute. If you're unsure how much time to give, you can play it by ear, describing the water rising faster or slower as you get a better grip on how quickly your players will find the solution. The key is to keep the situation exciting and to give the characters a near-death thrill without needlessly killing everyone because you misjudged their color-mixing capability.

For descriptive purposes, by the time the water is 1 foot deep, the floor is difficult terrain for Small or smaller creatures. When the water is 2 feet deep, it is difficult terrain for everyone.

When the water's depth reaches 4 feet, the copper koi statues animate. They dive into the water, crackling with electricity, and attack the characters from under the water.

When the water is 6 feet deep, everyone must begin swimming. Swimming with a lit candle and keeping the wick dry requires a successful DC 15 Dex check.

If the characters have not managed to fix the candles by the 8th round, there is no way that they can keep the candles lit as the water puts out the flame. In 18 rounds the water reaches the ceiling. Unless characters can breathe underwater, drowning and suffocating rules apply. Water stays at the top of the ceiling for five rounds at which point the fountain slides to the side and the water drains back into the moat outside the tower.

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Copper Koi Statue

XP 450 (CR 2)

N Medium construct

Initiative +2

DEFENSE

AC 16 (natural armor)

hp: 45 (6d8 + 18)

Resistance: Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons not made from adamantine

Immunity: Cold, lightning, poison, and psychic damage; charm, fright, paralysis, petrification, poison, prone, stun, unconsciousness

OFFENSE

Speed: Swim 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Bite: +4 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 2d6 + 2 piercing damage plus 1d6 lightning damage.

STATISTICS

Str 13 (+1), Dex 15 (+2), Con 16 (+3),

Int 2 (-4), Wis 8 (-1), Cha 2 (-4)

Languages: None

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Electrical Aura. The copper koi generates electricity in a 5-foot radius around its form. Creatures take 2d6 lightning damage each round they are within 5 feet of the copper koi. A successful DC 13 Con saving throw reduces the damage by half. A creature wearing metal armor has tactical disadvantage on its save.

Upstairs Door

The upstairs door is built like the entrance. It is a steel reinforced door that prevents any of Irtep's things in his storage area from getting wet. The door can only be opened by arranging candles in the proper sequence as described above, but powerful magic such as *passwall* can bypass the doorway.

2nd Floor: Storage

This dark, octagonal chamber is similar in size and shape to the floor below. It is filled from floor to 15-foot-ceiling with crates and boxes that must barely fit through the doorways or windows. A staircase opposite the 1st floor landing leads to a door and the floor above.

There are several leather-bound and wooden trunks and cases here, as detailed below.

Crate A: The largest crate in the chamber is about 8 feet long, 5 feet tall, and 5 feet wide. The lid is partially stove in and a pair of legs are sticking out of the broken section, with dried blood on the floor.

Within the case is a mummy, partially unwrapped from a ceramic urn, and the mummy's victim, an unfortunate member of the Red Blades assassin's guild who made the mistake of looking for a little loot. He broke the seal of protection keeping the mummy in suspended animation. If characters investigate the crate or the corpse sticking out of it, a mummy bursts free and attacks.

Mummy: AC 11, 58 hps; +5 to hit, 2d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage plus 3d6 necrotic damage, and the target must make a DC 12 Con saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot [can't regain hps, hp maximum decreases by 3d6 every 24 hours—rotting fist]; also, one target within



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60 ft. that can see the mummy must make a DC 11 Wis saving throw or become frightened until the end of the mummy's next turn [dreadful glare]; failure by 5 or more means the target is also paralyzed for the same duration; a target becomes immune to this effect once it makes a successful save against it)

Hidden within the desiccated wrappings of the mummy are various baubles and amulets that were precious to the mummy in life. Among them are 10 golden amulets of various Khemitian gods worth 25 gp each, a gold bracelet with inset agates worth 200 gp, and a turquoise inlaid pectoral of an ibis that is an *amulet of armor +2*.

The corpse belongs to Ralek Marn, a Red Blades assassin, which is obvious from the tattoo that can be found on the fellow's ankle. His neck is broken and his face is purple from the stranglehold the mummy placed upon him. He has a *scroll of dispel magic*, a *scroll of knock*, a *potion of protection from poison*, 2 vials of poison (target must make a DC 12 Con saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour), a poisoned *+1 saber*, a *potion of invisibility*, and a *potion of levitate* in his pack.

Crate B: This crate is marked "Inner Water Sample."

Within the crate is a ceramic cask, its lid sealed with thick tar. If the cask is opened, every character within a 10-foot radius must make a DC 15 Con saving throw against poison as foul liquid and gas splatter from the jar. Those that fail their save are nauseated for 1d2 days (they gain the poisoned condition). A *lesser restoration* or similar magic can end the effect.

Crate C: This crate is filled with a large amount of earth. It is labeled "Minzoa Experiment 2, Graveyard Dirt—Contagious." The crate is roughly 5 feet by 5 feet. Disturbing or digging in the dirt rouses a spirozoan buried in a cyst in the dirt. The cyst breaks open if the dirt is disturbed, and 1d4 tentacles lash out, seeking a target. Roll randomly to determine which nearby party members are attacked. Stats for the giant spirozoan are in the appendix to this adventure.

Characters recognize immediately that this creature is unlike anything they have encountered before. It has the aspects and characteristics of an ooze, but also the characteristics of other creatures with limbs or at very least tentacles.

Crate D: This crate is filled with several crystal bottles of water listed from various locations throughout the Lost Lands. One names Blood Creek, others the Stoneheart River, and even the Ice River in the distant Northlands. The water is of no special value, but the names of far-off, exotic places might stir the characters' curiosity.

Crate E: This crate is filled with pieces of mechanical equipment, including powders for grinding and polishing glass, plus various glass lenses about the size of a silver coin and metal tubes of varying lengths. The bits and sundries have a total value of 400 gp and a street value of 250 gp if fenced through the proper channels.

3rd Floor: Irtep's Laboratory

This laboratory holds the bulk of Irtep's scientific and arcane equipment. The walls are lined with test tubes, beakers, vials, potion bottles (empty), jars of unguents, reagents, other components, and many books on arcane theory.

A DC 10 Wis (Perception) check notes a breeze blowing in from the open southern window, carrying the smell of charred flesh. Lockpicks are scattered on the floor in a cone-shaped pattern expanding into the room from the windowsill. A careful search of the area or a DC 19 Int (Investigation) check locates the invisible corpse of a halfling woman hanging across the sill, head and shoulders inside the room and legs dangling outside. A ring on the halfling's left hand is the source of her *invisibility*. The body is Traedie Jane, who was an up-and-coming halfling burglar until she was electrocuted on her way through Irtep's window. Traedie inherited the ring and her career from her mother Gwennie Jane, who passed away a year

ago. Activating the ring has the effect of casting the *invisibility* spell, only concentration isn't required to maintain the effect for up to 12 hours. The ring has five charges remaining. Tradie's other gear includes a pair of *+1 daggers* and a hand crossbow with 20 bolts.

The cupboards and shelves contain enough ingredients to make any potion based on a level 1, 2, or 3 wizard spell, up to two times. Another cupboard contains 100 pages of vellum and ten pots of ink, enough to scribe a full spell book or write 100 scrolls containing spells of level 4 or below.

Three devices that look like sextants are lined up on one of the shelves. Several glass dishes sit beneath the sextants. The dishes are filled with a variety of filthy liquids that look and smell like sewer water, or water with something unpleasant growing in it. Peering into the sextant devices reveals nothing unless a light source is placed beneath them, as the objects are in fact microscopes. A DC 15 Int check reveals the purpose of the "sextants" and that a light source is helpful. None of the items tests as magical, but the microscopes are worth 300 gp each. Peering into them with a light beneath reveals a world invisible to the naked eye, including protozoan creatures swimming around in the filthy water. Characters who saw the spirozoan on the 2nd floor recognize its similarity to these creatures.

4th Floor: Irtep's Love Den

This room is plush and contains all of the creature comforts one could imagine. The ceiling is a polished silver mirror, there is a tub sunken into the floor filled with warm bubbling water, a private bathroom, and a huge, heart-shaped bed on a slowly revolving turntable in the center of the room. The walls are adorned with naughty paintings of cherubs, nymphs, elven maidens, and the like cavorting with centaurs, minotaurs, and middle-aged wizards. The paintings are incredibly tacky; all five together might fetch 100 gp from a collector with no taste and/or a ribald sense of humor.

Irtep's Commode

The restroom off the bed chamber is a complex affair of carved, polished marble. A foot pedal on the floor pumps water for the bidet, and a second pump flushes into the moat outside the tower.

A side table next to the commode holds a notebook titled *My Experiences in the Minzoa*, by Irtep. The notebook details the construction of the *Minzoa sextant* and its use to enter a vaguely defined "inner world" Irtep calls the Minzoa. Irtep's first explorations led to the death of some hired hands, and Irtep barely managed to escape the Minzoa with his life. The wizard next commissioned his friend Gynnen to fashion a set of pipes with which to charm the Minzoan creatures and later, to summon them to our world. The summoning terrified his friend Faisal, whom Irtep describes as weak-willed and lacking in understanding of the potential power that the Minzoa could unleash.

Most other entries in the notebook are love poems dedicated to various harlots, including lengthy opining for the love and attention of Michalena Goddeau. Other entries detail his collapse into drunkenness and gambling, with lists of his many debts and the threats made against him by Fat Julie and Tuvio. Irtep has spent his entire fortune on Michalena Goddeau, the *Minzoa sextant*, and the *pipes of Minzoa*. Like any gambling addict, Irtep's writing is filled with excuses on how just "one big win" will set him up for life, if only someone will advance him the necessary cash.

5th Floor: Irtep's Library

Irtep's library stands on the second-to-highest story of the tower. The walls are lined with books from floor to ceiling. Found here are

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many spellbooks, each containing 2d6 cantrips, 1st-, or 2nd-level spells. Other books contain 1d8 spells of 3rd and 4th level. A single book contains the remainder of Irtep's spell collection: 1d4 5th-level spells.

Each spellbook is trapped with a curse that blinds and deafens the reader unless the reader is Irtep, or the reader is studying from the books with Irtep's permission as an apprentice or other student. A DC 15 Wis saving throw negates the curse, and a *remove curse* spell cast on the target ends the curse.

Other books lining the walls of the chamber cover all manner of life, including a detailed, illustrated treatise written by Irtep himself on a hidden realm called "the Minzoa." Locating this book requires a successful DC 18 Wis (Perception) or Int (Investigation) check, or 30 minutes spent browsing the shelves. Illustrations in the book show nightmarish creatures that resemble oozes with tentacles and hooks, and dripping with slime. Most of the creatures are shown in water or some other liquid. The illustrations portray a broad, shallow sea with bits of land rising from the water. The sky appears very bright and the horizon is very flat. Few land masses larger than low hills can be seen anywhere. The plant life depicted is bizarre and alien, seeming to be mainly composed of vines or growths resembling seaweed snaking out of the water.

The Study

A locked chamber within the library faces the south wall. A wizard's mark written above the door reads, "It ain't the size of the boat..."

The door is trapped to deal 8d6 lightning damage to anyone who touches the door knob. A successful DC 16 Con saving throw reduces the damage by half. The trap can be discovered with a DC 16 Int (Investigation) or Wis (Perception) check, and disarmed with a DC 16 Dex (Sleight of Hand) check.

Beyond the door is a small chamber containing a desk, and on the desk is a "sextant" like those in the lab, but with several notable differences. This sextant is made from silver, platinum, and gold, and it is inlaid with arcane inscriptions. An enchanted disk of light glows from the sextant's base. Sitting in front of the disk is a fine crystal dish filled with fetid water. A chair has been knocked onto its side behind the desk.

The dish is etched with the family crest of Irtep and is emblazoned with a tree whose roots dig deep into the earth and whose leaves blow freely in the wind. The dish has special sentimental meaning to Irtep; it was his mother's favorite candy dish.

If any character looks through the sextant at the bowl of water, he and anyone within 10 feet of him are instantly teleported into the fungus forest of Irtep's Dish (See "Part 3. Irtep's Dish and the Minzoa") unless a successful DC 20 Wis saving throw is made.

The Sextant of Minzoa

When aimed at a dish of water, this sextant allows for the microscopic viewing of life forms smaller than the eye can see. Through arcane forces, the sextant can also serve as a conduit from the normal world into the tiny world viewed through the microscope. In effect, it allows travel into the Minzoa, the microscopic world of protozoan life forms. Use of the *sextant of Minzoa* offers a number of other startling possibilities. It could be used to shrink creatures to such a tiny degree that they could hide in a flask of water or carefully packed box of soil, allowing a thief or assassin (for example) to be smuggled into almost any location, then released with a word by the carrier of the sextant or the bearer of the *Amulet of Minzoa*. The sextant can also be set as a trap to capture unwitting creatures and teleport them into the Minzoa by leaving the lens open and its eye-cap uncovered—as is about to happen here.

6th Floor: Top Floor

The top floor of the tower is accessed by a trap door at the top of the stairs from Level 5. There is little here except the chain and winch system attached to the giant yellow iron ball trap. A trap door in the ceiling leads to the roof of the tower.

The iron ball trap is maintained by Beagle, a charmed troll kept by Irtep who dines on rats and thieves. As far as Beagle is concerned, anyone who enters this chamber (other than Irtep) is a thief, which equates to dinner.

(Troll: AC 15, 84 hps; +7 to hit, 1d6 + 4 piercing damage plus +7 to hit x2, 2d6 + 4 slashing damage [claws]; the troll regenerates 10 hps at the start of its turn unless it took fire or acid damage since its previous turn)

The remains of a pair of second-story men who thought to come through the roof are strewn about the room. Among their leavings are a set of lockpicks, a scroll of *dispel magic*, and a gold ring set with an imitation (but excellent quality) ruby worth 60 gp.

Beneath a loose floorboard is a locked treasure chest. The chest is trapped with a poison dart trap that requires a successful DC 12 Wis (Perception) check to notice and a successful DC 15 Dex check to disarm. If the trap is triggered, a hail of darts attacks every target within 5 ft. of the chest. (Dart Trap: +10 to hit, range 5 ft.; 1d4 piercing damage plus 2d8 poison damage, and struck targets must make a DC 14 Con saving throw or become poisoned)

The chest contains a pile of IOU's and gambling vouchers from the Fortune's Fool and the Blazing Bones.

Part 3: Irtep's Dish and the Minzoa

In this section, the characters find themselves within the Minzoa that is held inside Irtep's Mother's candy dish. The Minzoa is a miniature world where protozoan creatures loom huge in relation to the player characters. Within this forbidden world, the characters seek Irtep for good or ill and try to wrest from him the means to return to their own world.

Basic Features

Light: The Minzoa is lit as if by midday sun all the time, but the light provides little heat and seems to originate from every direction.

Wet: Everything in the Minzoa is moist. A vast lake occupies a broad expanse of the Minzoa, and living bodies of matter float on the lake. Nonmagical equipment of iron and steel rusts quickly if not oiled regularly. Most metal equipment will have a patina of rust after the first day in the Minzoa. Within two weeks, these items become pocked with rust. Within two months they become brittle, and within a year they are rusted through.

Minzoa Lake: The lake is 50 feet deep across its entirety. The bed of the lake is a clear, crystalline substance that is extremely hard and seemingly unbreakable.

Walls: Player characters traveling to the edge of the Minzoa find themselves facing a crystalline wall 100 feet high that is completely smooth. Normal climbing methods are useless against it; it can be scaled only with a *spider climb* spell or similar means, or it can be flown or levitated over. At the top, a climbing, flying, or levitating character must make a DC 14 Int saving throw to avoid being teleported back to the Fungal Forest. Those who make a successful saving throw escape from the Minzoa, but they remain at their microscopic Minzoa size!

Minzoa



1 = Fungus forest

1a = Abandoned campsite

2 = Island of carnivorous fungi

3 = Islands of floating algae

4 = The Rock

5 = Irtep's Island

QUESTS OF DOOM: MEN & MONSTROSITIES

Minzoa Lake Random Encounters

Roll for a random encounter for every 10 miles traveled on the lake.

1d12	Encounter
1	Giant Hydrazoa
2	Giant Nematode
3	Giant Tardigrade
4	Giant Protozoan Orb
5	Giant Sporozoan
6	Red Blades Assassin Squad
7	Giant Amoeba
8-12	No Encounter

Hydrazoa: This is an encounter with one giant hydrazoa. If the hydrazoa is over the lake, it languidly strikes out with its tentacles as it floats languidly past.

Giant Nematode: This encounter is with 1d4 giant nematodes. The creatures assume the player characters are food and attack mindlessly (the only way they can).

Giant Tardigrade: This encounter is with 1d4 giant tardigrades. These great swollen beasts might ignore the characters altogether unless approached too closely or annoyed. If surprised or frightened, they attack.

Giant Protozoan Orb: 1d4 of these ticklike creatures smell the player characters and attack.

Giant Sporozoan: If this encounter occurs on water, it is with 1d4 sluglike giant sporozoan swimming by. If this encounter occurs on land, it is with a single sporozoan cyst that bursts open as characters pass.

Red Blades Assassin Squad: These are 1d2 + 1 Red Blade assassins who found their way into the tower and through the *sextant*. They are floating haplessly on a fungus cap that they fashioned into a raft. The assassins have lost most of their companions to the creatures of the Minzoa, and they are terrified and desperate for a means of escape. They are willing to make a truce with the characters in exchange for the greater protection of a group and help in finding a way home. They will honor the truce until they find an exit back to the normal world; what they do after that is up to you.

Giant Amoeba: The amoeba floats through the Minzoa lake devouring anything in its path.

Stats for these creatures are in the appendix to this adventure.

I. Fungal Forest

This is the initial landing place of player characters who are teleported into the Minzoa. The “forest” is comprised of massive fungal structures that resemble giant mushroom trees. Most of the fungi is benign, with some exceptions.

The broad caps of the mushroom trees can be eaten raw (bland) or roasted (less bland). Large ones are big enough to hollow out and use as coracles. One large cap can be made into a boat in an hour, and it holds up to four passengers. Other mushroom stalks are easily carved into crude paddles.

A mushroom coracle can navigate the waters of the Minzoa at a rate of 1 to 4 miles per hour; the actual speed equals the number of rowers.



Fungal Forest Random Encounters

Roll for a random encounter once every 10 miles, or every eight hours if characters are stationary.

1d12	Encounter
1	Spore Cloud
2	Giant Tardigrade
3	Giant Sporozoan Cyst
4	Giant Hydraxoa
5	Shadowmasks Thieves Band
6	Giant Protozoan Orb
7	Carnivorous Fungi
8-12	No Encounter

Spore Cloud: Characters disturbed the nearby fungi into releasing a defensive cloud of choking spores. The cloud is 50 feet in radius. Characters within the spore cloud who fail a DC 15 Con saving throw are overcome with choking and wheezing, and unable to breathe. Such characters take 1d6 poison damage immediately and begin suffocating, and continue suffocating until they get out of the spore cloud.

Shadowmasks Thieves Band: This is a band of 1d4 + 1 shadowmask thieves who made their way this far in their search for Irtep. The band may attempt to separate and capture individual characters to use as hostages in an attempt to force the entire party into surrendering. Their goal is to find Irtep and get the hell out of the Minzoa, a world they find terrifying in the diversity of its life. Unlike the Red Blades assassins, these NPCs aren't interested in teaming up with the characters except to use them as porters, bait, or meat shields.

Carnivorous Fungi: This is an encounter with a large patch of carnivorous fungi. See the appendix to this adventure for details.

ia. The Ruined Campsite

The ruined campsite was set up by a small band of Shadowmasks who gained access to the Minzoa. Unfortunately for them, they were set upon by a pod of tardigrades and were torn to pieces and devoured. Nothing remains of their bodies except a few blood smears on the ground and on the trunks of mushroom trees. Among the wreckage of the camp, however, is a bounty poster image of Irtep. The image is an illusory likeness, so it is entirely accurate. The poster reveals a man with a thin moustache and goatee, and hair that might once have been stylish but has gone a little crazy. The image is complete with a black eye and blood dripping from the left nostril from a recent beating.

Also scattered on the ground are a +1 rapier, three potions of cure wounds, a potion of invisibility, and a torn pouch containing a clay pipe and good tobacco. A short distance from the camp is a site where the thieves worked mushroom caps into boats. Mushroom chips and cuttings are scattered around between the felled trunks of several capless mushroom trees.

2. Carnivorous Fungi Islands

Growing along the side of one wall of the dish is a massive colony of carnivorous fungi. These areas occupy the equivalent of 100 square miles each. The islands are full of carnivorous fungi; another group of 1d4 will be encountered every 100 yards or so, making them all but impassable. Characters who try to explore these areas will be attacked continually until they leave.

3. Algae Islands

These two islands are comprised of dense colonies of protozoan algae cells. In the Minzoa, the cells are the size of a rhinoceros and are slightly sticky, so that everywhere on the algae islands is considered difficult terrain. The islands are home to hydraxoa, giant tardigrades, and sporozoan cysts. The ground is reasonably solid, and the algae itself can be sliced up from the "ground" and eaten as a reasonably nutritious food, although the flavor leaves much to be desired.

The Algae Islands Random Encounters

Roll for random encounters once every hour.

1d12	Encounter
1	Giant Tardigrade
2	Giant Hydraxoa
3	Sporozoan Cyst
4	Dominion Arcane Enforcer
5	Giant Amoeba
6-12	No Encounter

Dominion Arcane Enforcer: This is an encounter with a 5th-level wizard who was sent to find and capture Irtep and return him to the Dominion for questioning. The enforcer is alone, as his allies were killed by creatures of the Minzoa. He is desperate to complete his mission and has no reservations about joining forces with the characters (unless they give him one). See this adventure's appendix for details.

4. The Rock

This towering, cliff-sided, stony island is no more than a bit of pebble that found its way into Irtep's Dish. It is contested territory in a three-way feud between Shadowmasks and Red Blades. The assassins and their rivals hide within fissures and cracks in the stone, defending themselves against beasts that crawl up the stone from the lake and from one another. Their fungus cap boats were eaten by amoebas and nematodes long ago, stranding them here.

Tully's Fort

Tully's Fort is a fissure in the Rock that Tully and his assassins have fortified for keeping watch on the Shadowmasks and for protection against the creatures of the Minzoa while the assassins search for a way to escape the Minzoa.

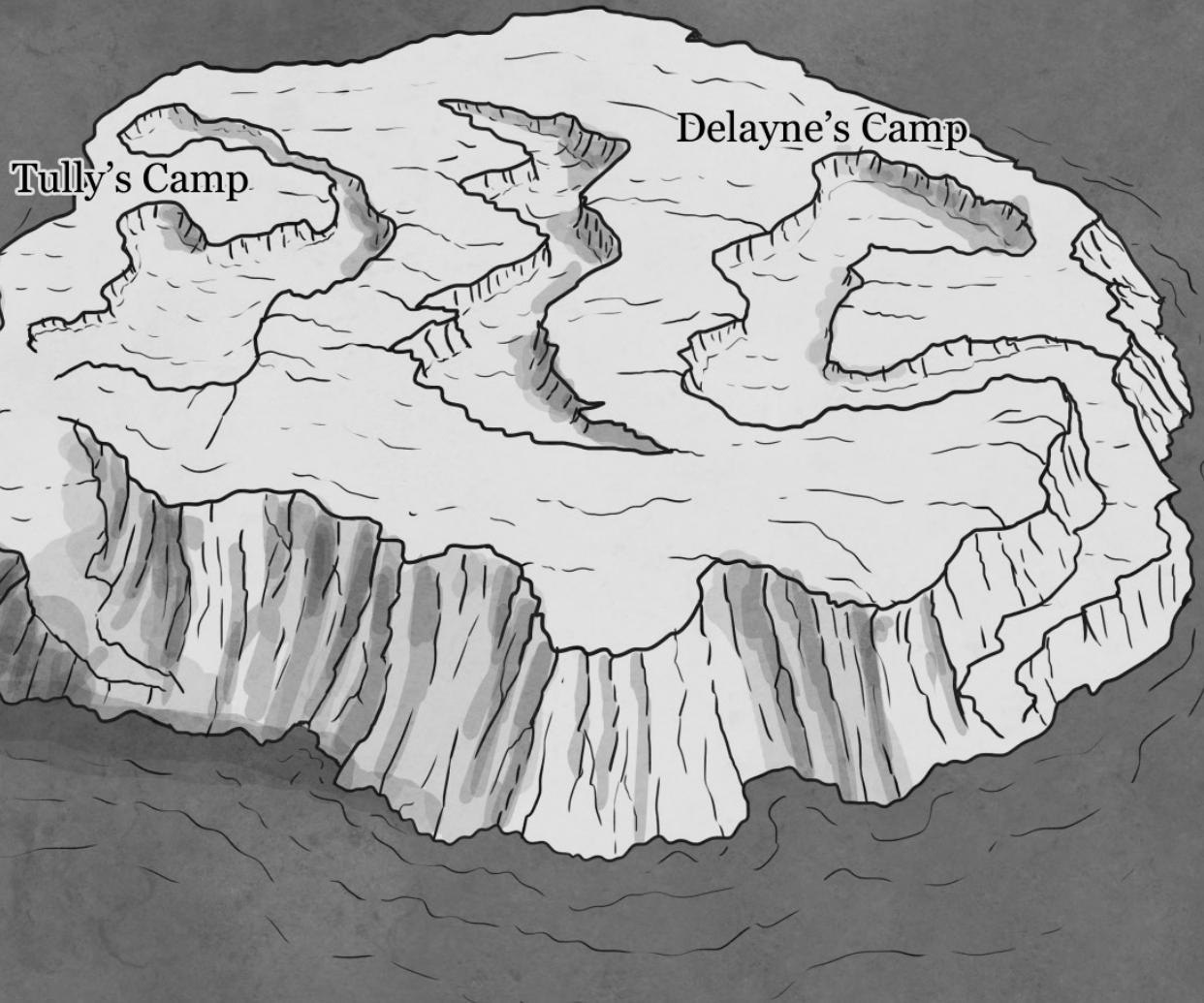
Tully Smooth

XP 700 (CR 3)
NE Medium humanoid
Initiative +3

DEFENSE
AC 16 (studded leather +1)
hp: 52 (7d8 + 14)
Saving Throws: Dex +5, Int +3

OFFENSE
Speed: 30 ft.

The Rock



IRTEP'S DISH

Melee Attack—Rapier +1: +6 to hit x2 (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d8 + 4 piercing damage.
Ranged Attack—Light Crossbow +1: +6 to hit (range 80 ft./320 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d8 + 4 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 12 (+1), Dex 16 (+3), Con 14 (+2), Int 13 (+1), Wis 11 (+0), Cha 15 (+2)

Languages: Common

Skills Deception +6, Intimidation +4, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +5

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, Tully deals an extra 3d6 damage to one creature he hits with an attack if he has tactical advantage on the attack roll. Tully can also sneak attack if an ally is not incapacitated and is within 5 feet of the target, and he doesn't have tactical disadvantage on the attack roll. Tully must use a finesse or ranged weapon to claim this bonus.

Gear: +1 rapier, +1 light crossbow, 30 bolts, +1 studded leather armor, boots of speed, potion of invisibility, 3 vials of poison (2d6 poison damage; DC 15 Con save for half).

See this adventure's appendix for details on Tully's four Red Blade assassins.

Tully is glad to see the player characters arrive, because the Shadowmasks have been assassinating his team slowly but surely; Tully is convinced one of the Shadowmasks must be a shapeshifter. He suggests joining sides to clear out the Shadowmasks and then to find a way out of this “tiny world or horrors” that they find themselves trapped in. If the characters side with Tully and his band they find Tully and his crew intent on killing Irtep and collecting the bounty which they themselves have falsely laid.

Delayne's Fort

Delayne, a doppelganger agent of the Dark Brotherhood and master of the Shadowmasks, is stuck in her makeshift fort with her squad. Delayne tried to infiltrate the enemy camp disguised as an assassin; the ruse worked until recently, but now she suspects that the Red Blades have caught on to the trick and gone on high alert.

Delayne and her band of three Shadowmask rogues now seek only to escape the Minzoa. They need a boat to get across the lake, and strong swords and powerful magic to survive the trip. Delayne offers to cut the characters in on a percentage of whatever they can steal from Irtep's tower. Even as she makes this offer, she knows perfectly well (as the characters probably do, too) that, outside of the laboratory, Irtep is broke.

At this point, Delayne could not care less about the Red Blades anymore, but her murderous nature still drives her to kill them off as a defensive measure. If the characters arrived with at least one mushroom boat, she may try to trick the characters into heading over to the Red Blade camp while she steals their boat.

Delayne

XP 700 (CR 3)

N Medium monstrosity (shapechanger)

Initiative +4

DEFENSE

AC 15 (*ring of protection +1*)

hp: 65 (10d8 + 20)

Immunity: Charm

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Multiaction: Delayne makes one attack with her longsword and one attack with her dagger.

Melee Attack—Longsword +1: +4 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d8 + 2 slashing damage.

Ranged Attack—Dagger +1: +7 to hit (range 20 ft./60 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d4 + 5 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 13 (+1), Dex 18 (+4), Con 14 (+2),

Int 12 (+1), Wis 13 (+1), Cha 15 (+2)

Languages: Common

Skills Deception +6, Insight +3, Stealth +6

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Ambusher. Delayne has tactical advantage on attack rolls against a surprised creature, and if she hits it, the target takes an extra 3d6 damage from the attack.

Read Thoughts. Delayne can read the thoughts of one living creature within 60 feet. The effect is blocked by any amount of lead shielding, by 2 inches of other metal, by 2 feet of stone, or by 3 feet of dirt or wood. While concentrating on reading the target's mind, Delayne has tactical advantage on Wis (Insight) and Cha (Deception, Intimidation, and Persuasion) checks against the target.

Shapechanger. Delayne can use an action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid she has seen, or back into her natural form. Her statistics, other than her size, are the same in each form. Her equipment is not transformed. If slain, she reverts to her natural form.

Gear: +1 longsword, ring of protection +1, thieves' tools, +1 dagger, scroll of knock.

See this adventure's appendix for details on Delayne's three Shadowmask henchmen.

Isle of Irtep

A clump of earth and sand smudged into the northern part of the dish serves as Irtep's Lair. Irtep has formed a defensive cavern where he hides in relative luxury, assuming that nobody will ever find him within the confines of his beloved Minzoa. The cavern atop the “island” affords Irtep a grand view of the area. He can see approaching figures from miles away and prepares any defenses he deems necessary to defend himself from approaching enemies or assassins sent after him. Characters might need to get clever to approach the Isle of Irtep safely, such as disguising themselves as creatures of the Minzoa, turning invisible, or some other ploy.

Encountering Irtep

If the characters simply press forward on a fungus raft, Irtep sends a magical message that reaches the approaching characters a mile from shore. He demands that they return at once to the “big world” or face the wrath of his minions of the Minzoa. If the characters exclaim that they do not know how to get free of the Minzoa, Irtep offers to send them, so long as they swear never to return. He is not above using a *geas* spell of his own to force this point home.

Irtep is reluctant to negotiate or talk to anyone. If necessary, he uses the *pipes of Minzoa* to summon creatures of the Minzoa to defend his position.

Irtep's Hill

Irtep defends himself from a cave and bungalow he has crafted at the top of an 80-foot high hill that affords him an excellent vantage point from which to rain down magic and to summon creatures to fight for him.

Irtep's Island



IRTEP'S DISH

The hill has a 40 degree slope, meaning it is steep enough that everywhere on the slope is difficult terrain. A successful DC 10 Dex (Acrobatics) check is necessary for characters to move and take a combat action on the same turn. Characters must make the roll before attacking if they've already moved, and vice versa. Failure on the roll ends their turn immediately.

Battle

It should be apparent at the onset of any conflict with Irtep that the wizard is not well. He looks gray, shaky, drawn, and emaciated. This is a far different Irtep from his wanted posters or the portraits in his home. The change came about from ignoring the compulsion of Osgood's *geas* upon him.

If Irtep's summoned creatures are defeated and the wizard appears to be losing the battle, he surrenders. He swears that he will not return to his creditors in Bard's Gate, because they mean to kill him. He begs the characters to become his agents and to act on his behalf in the outside world, offering them a way out of the Minzoa in exchange. He is oblivious to how ill he is or how terrible he looks, and he speaks frequently of the desire to see his beloved Michalena again. He would like her brought here, so they can start a new life in his "mountaintop bungalow." He admits he has no money, but he could craft scrolls, potions, and magic items for the characters if they bring him the raw materials.

Any attempt at negotiating with Irtep fails if any Red Blades assassins are in the mix. They intend to take Irtep's head and trade it to Big Julie or Tuvio, and to trade any of his magical belongings to the Dominion Arcane for whatever profit they may can make.

Avoiding Battle

Because of the *geas* placed on Irtep by Osgood Flumph, Irtep is unable to refuse an offer to engage in a game of chance. If challenged to a wager, he must accept, but he can and will negotiate the stakes. For example, if a burly fighter challenges Irtep to a stone-throwing contest, he will accept the contest but will argue that, because the fighter's obviously greater strength gives him or her an advantage, Irtep should win 5 gp from the characters for every 1 they would win from him, or something similar. He will conjure up a gaming table, a deck of cards, or a bag of dice on command. If the characters schmoozed with Michalena Goodeau or allied themselves with Gynnen Valzoe, they are aware of this quirk of Irtep's personality and might be prepared to use this to their advantage against Irtep.

As soon as Irtep plays a game of chance, he is immediately invigorated to his full health. This makes him more demanding about the characters' need to depart from his hidden domain. Characters need to talk themselves out of any dangerous situations they get into with Irtep, or figure out some way to break his *geas*.

Persuading Irtep to Leave

Either through gambling or battle, eventually the characters should bring Irtep to a point where he is willing to talk. Persuading Irtep to leave and return to the outer world is not an easy task. Characters might point out that invaders have already made their way into his home and it is only a matter of time before others such as themselves make contact with him and are less than friendly. Worse, intruders in his tower might inadvertently or intentionally destroy Minzoa in its entirety. It may be time for Irtep to face the consequences of his actions after all and figure out some way to pay back his creditors.

Irtep doesn't want to hear these things. He is quite ill, however, and is beginning to suspect that he needs help. Suggestions that his creditors might be willing to take one last double-or-nothing bet with him have the best shot at winning his confidence. Characters who can talk knowledgeably about Irtep's debts, the people he owes money to, and gambling in general will hold his attention. Speaking positively about his friendship with Faisal and Gynnen or about Tuvio's respect for him (a bit of exaggeration will be helpful here) will perk him up. Any mention of

Michalena, other than a proclamation that she regrets leaving Irtep and longs for him to take her back, will cast the wizard into a deep funk.

In short, Irtep needs to hear that he has a chance to recover his fortune, to reclaim his good reputation, and to win back his lover Michalena, whether or not such things are true. Intimidation won't get the characters anywhere unless they knock Irtep unconscious and take him away by force. Charming him makes him friendly but won't make him want to leave Minzoa. Removing the *geas* opens his eyes to the real situation and lets him remember that it was Osgood Flumph who enchanted him out of jealousy over Irtep's research and growing power. Irtep is horrified about the betrayal and determined to make amends to those who he owes. He immediately begins planning to file a censure with the Dominion Arcane against Osgood for his betrayal, or to take revenge after his own fashion.

However they persuade Irtep to leave Minzoa, he asks the characters to gather near as he withdraws the passkey: a pair of green dice that shakes in his hand while uttering the command phrase, "Get big, baby!" With that, characters find themselves back in Irtep's private study on the 5th floor of his tower.

Killing Irtep

If the characters kill Irtep, they can either leave his body behind in Minzoa or bring it back to the world, where they can deliver it to someone for a bounty or even have him raised. If Irtep stays dead, they need merely deliver the items of interest to his creditors and collect their pay. Or so they hope. See "Conclusions" to determine how to play this series of events. Only Irtep knows the passkey and its command phrase to escape from Minzoa. If characters kill the wizard without first discovering that information, and they don't have the means to extract it from the dead wizard, they could be trapped forever.

Pipes of Minzoa

These pipes of ivory, platinum, silver, and gold are as finely crafted as one could imagine. Three magical songs can be played on these enchanted pipes.

3/per day: Summon Minzoan Creature: The pipes can be played over a vial of plain water to summon a number of creatures from the Minzoa whose total HD equal 12 or less. These creatures obey the summoner's commands and remain for one minute, or until destroyed, or until dismissed by the summoner.

1/per day: Charm Minzoan Creature: The pipes can be played to charm a Minzoan creature for a number of days equal to the Cha bonus of the character playing the *pipes*. A charmed creature remains loyal to the character so long as the character or one of its allies doesn't attack the charmed creature. The creature affected can make a DC 15 Wis saving throw with tactical disadvantage to negate the effect. The *pipes* are effective on Minzoan creatures even though most are immune to charm effects.

1/per day: Invisibility to Minzoan Creature: This song causes all creatures of the Minzoa to ignore the character for up to one hour. This effect is broken if the character or one of its allies attacks an affected creature.

Special: A bard can use each power of the *pipes* one additional time per day.

Irtep's Passkey

Irtep's passkey for leaving the Minzoa is a set of six-sided dice given him by his aged master. When Osgood and Irtep crafted the *Minzoa sextant*, they tied the dice into the effect. The dice need only be rolled in the palm of the hand while the password ("Get big, baby!") is spoken to reverse the *sextant's* effect.

Part 4: Conclusions

At some point, characters must leave Irtep's Tower. How they leave and what conflicts follow are dependent on who the characters allied with and the care they take in leaving the tower.

Allies

Regardless of who the characters allied with prior to taking the quests of *Irtep's Dish*, their previous allies are lying in wait for their exit from the tower. Each of the allies has their own agenda. Amidst this conflict are the wild cards presented by the guard and the half-orc trackers employed by Big Julie and Tuvio.

When the characters leave the tower, they are immediately confronted by Osgood, Faisal, and Gynnen Valzoe—or all three. The wizards each demand the items that the characters gathered from the tower. At first, they attempt to out-bid one another for the items. If that doesn't work, they try to persuade the characters why they deserve the items. Depending on the characters' actions or reactions, this can lead to a battle between the wizard they side with and the other parties who are angered at being cut out of the deal.

Leaving the Tower

If the characters leave the tower by flying, by swimming, invisibly, or by somehow just sneaking out, they notice that the guards that were so abundant and alert before all seem to be lying asleep at their posts. From there on, the situation develops according to the guidelines below. Use

these examples to adjudicate what happens in your specific situation. Feel free to add additional NPCs if appropriate, such as bartenders and wizard guards at the Wizard's Familiar.

Confrontation: The Trio

If the characters simply walk out the front door, they find the guards asleep. Once they cross the moat, they are confronted by Osgood, Faisal, and Gynnen. The trio approach at the same time but separately from different directions. Everyone's hands are on wands or weapons, and it's clear none of them trust each other or are happy to see each other.

If Irtep is Alive

If Irtep is alive but his *geas* has not been broken, he is leery of Osgood and Faisal and appears humiliated in the presence of Gynnen.

Osgood demands Irtep relinquish the magic items to him so that he can continue their research. He points out that it would be best if Irtep left town and never came back since his gambling problem has cost him so dearly.

Faisal demands that Irtep give the items to him so that he can turn them over to the Dominion to be destroyed.

Gynnen begs Irtep to leave the wizards to their toys and come with him to get help for his failing health and for his gambling problem. Gynnen accuses Osgood of placing a *geas* on Irtep and claims that he has evidence the scroll was bought from the wizard Manisool.

If the *geas* has not been broken, Irtep gains a new saving throw against it (Wis DC 14) as he realizes what Osgood has done to him. If he breaks the spell, an angry Irtep attacks Osgood, and Faisal joins in. If the saving throw fails and the characters never received the *scroll of remove curse* from Gynnen, then Gynnen unrolls the scroll to cast the spell now. During this attempt, he is attacked by Osgood!



IRTEP'S DISH

The wizards avoid using spells that would cause mass destruction to the neighborhood and further raise the ire of the city watch, who arrive 10 rounds after the first spell is cast. Gynnen pleads with the wizards to cease fighting; he joins in the melee only to defend himself or to protect Irtep. Irtep does everything in his power to defeat Osgood, with the assistance of Faisal, though Faisal does not allow Irtep to kill Osgood; he'd rather see Osgood turned over to the Dominion Arcane for a private trial.

The player characters can take any actions they wish during the wizards' and bard's duel, coming in on whichever side they favor or standing aside completely. They'll be ignored while the combatants have each other to worry about.

During the fight, the half-orcs hired by the casino operators also arrive. Two pairs of half-orcs work for Big Julie and Tuvio respectively. The half-orcs arrive in the midst of the fight. They use the battle as a distraction while they make a beeline for Irtep. These two teams of leg-breakers are not allied: one set works for Tuvio and the other for his rival, Big Julie! Their goal is capturing Irtep and bringing him back to their respective masters, so they fall to fighting one another as soon as all four close in on the wizard.

When the half-orcs make their grab for Irtep, Gynnen steps in to stop them. Player characters are free to take any actions they deem appropriate, including aiding or betraying whichever faction they signed on with at the beginning of the adventure, understanding any consequences that occur from their actions.

As if all this isn't bad enough, **Members of the City Guard** begin arriving within 10 rounds. The arriving guards also awaken the guards who were put to *sleep* by Osgood and Faisal, for a total of 14 guards, Officer Gralme, four guard dogs, and the wizard Finly on the scene. Killing Lyreguards is a serious crime, of course.

If Irtep Is Dead or Not with the Party

If Irtep is dead or absent from the party, his former associates still meet

the characters as they exit the tower. In this case, both Faisal and Osgood demand the *sextant*, the passkey, and the *pipes of Minzoa*. If the characters are contracted under one or the other of the wizards, he reminds them openly of their deal. If the players choose Faisal over Osgood, Osgood attacks Faisal, intending to kill him before he can take custody of Irtep's treasures.

Gynnen is only concerned about the fate of Irtep, not his creations. If the characters tell him that Irtep is dead, the bard is visibly sad and departs.

Shortly after Gynnen leaves, the half-orcs arrive and demand Irtep's treasures as payment to their bosses. It is up to the players and Game Master to determine how this plays out.

Tying Up Loose Ends

It is possible at the end of the adventure that the characters are outlaws in Bard's Gate. They may have made enemies or allies of the Red Blades, Shadowmasks, Dominion Arcane, Big Julie, Tuvio, Faisal, Osgood, or Irtep if he survived.

How the characters move forward after this adventure is something to be decided between the Game Master and players, based on their deeds and choices!

If characters rescue Irtep and bring him to a happy conclusion, he gives them his dish and the *pipes of Minzoa*, as his magic has grown enough to continue his explorations of other tiny worlds. Irtep goes out of his way to make amends with his debtors, paying them off with a cache of scrolls and other treasures he has hidden away in the Minzoa.

In this event also award the characters each an additional 1,000 XP for their hard work. Irtep remains an ally to the characters for the duration of their careers, offering what advice and help he can and thanking them always for saving him anytime their paths cross.

Appendix: NPCs and Monsters

Stat blocks for NPCs and monsters that can be encountered in multiple locations are listed here. Only new or unique creatures are included. Abbreviated stat blocks are included for monsters and NPCs that are covered in the core book of monster stats, but GMs are directed to that book for full details on those creatures.

Irtep and His Associates

Irtep

XP 2,900 (CR 7)
CN Medium humanoid
Initiative +1

DEFENSE

AC 14 (bracers of defense +2, ring of protection +1)
hp: 45 (10d8)

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Quarterstaff: +3 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 bludgeoning damage.

Ranged Attack—Light Crossbow: +4 to hit (range 80 ft./320 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 + 1 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 10 (+0), **Dex** 12 (+1), **Con** 11 (+0),
Int 18 (+4), **Wis** 15 (+2), **Cha** 14 (+2)

Languages: Abyssal, Common, Giant, Infernal
Skills Arcana +6, History +6, Investigation +6

TRAITS

Spellcasting. Irtep is a 10th-level arcane spellcaster who uses Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (attack +7, save DC 15). Irtep knows the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, fire bolt, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st Level (x4): *burning hands, detect magic, magic missile, sleep*

2nd Level (x3): *blur, hold person, suggestion, web*

3rd Level (x3): *dispel magic, fireball, protection from energy*

4th Level (x3): *ice storm, stoneskin*

5th Level (x2): *cone of cold*

Gear: +2 bracers of defense, ring of protection +1, pipes of Minzoa, sextant Passkey, wand of lightning bolt (14 charges), 3 scrolls of charm person, ring of swimming, broom of flying.

Faisal Dhaken

XP 700 (CR 3)
CN Medium humanoid (human)
Initiative +2

DEFENSE

AC 14 (bracers of armor +2)
hp: 34 (7d6 + 10)
Saving Throws: Int +6, Wis +4

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Staff of Fire: +2 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 – 1 bludgeoning damage plus 1d8 fire damage.

Ranged Attack—Light Crossbow: +4 to hit (range 80 ft./320 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 + 2 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 8 (-1), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 12 (+1),
Int 17 (+3), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 10 (+0)

Languages: Common, Giant, Sylvan

Skills: Arcana +6, History +6

TRAITS

Spellcasting. Faisal Dhaken is a 7th-level spellcaster who uses Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (attack +5, save DC 13). Faisal Dhaken knows the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, ray of frost, shocking grasp*

1st Level (x4): *fog cloud, sleep, thunderwave*

2nd Level (x3): *hold person, suggestion, web*

3rd Level (x3): *dispel magic, haste, lightning bolt*

4th Level (x1): *greater invisibility*

Gear: Wand of magic missiles (7 charges), bracers of armor +2, staff of fire (12 charges), 2 potions of cure wounds, 1 potion of haste; 300 gp in gems and jewelry in a pouch

Osgood Flumph

XP 2,300 (CR 6)
NE Medium humanoid (human)
Initiative +1

DEFENSE

AC 12 (ring of protection +1)
hp: 43 (9d6 + 12)
Saving Throws: Int +6, Wis +4

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Quarterstaff: +4 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 bludgeoning damage.

Melee Attack—Dagger +1: +6 to hit (reach 5 ft. or range 20

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ft./60 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d4 + 2 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 10 (+0), **Dex** 13 (+1), **Con** 12 (+1),

Int 17 (+3), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 14 (+2)

Languages: Common, Dwarvish, Giant

Skills: Arcana +7, History +7

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Spellcasting. Osgood Flumph is a 9th-level spellcaster who uses Intelligence as his spellcasting ability (+7 to hit with spell attacks; spell save DC 15). He knows the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, minor illusion*

1st Level (x4): *burning hands, mage armor, thunderwave*

2nd Level (x3): *flaming sphere, hold person, suggestion*

3rd Level (x3): *fireball, fly, lightning bolt*

4th Level (x3): *greater invisibility, stoneskin*

5th Level (x1): *cone of cold*

Gear: Wand of lightning (7 charges), boots of levitation, ring of protection +1, brooch of shielding, scroll of dispel magic, scroll of geas, +1 dagger, 3,500 gp worth of gems and coins in a small bag of holding

Gynnen Valzoe

XP 1,100 (CR 4)

CG Medium humanoid (human)

Initiative +3

DEFENSE

AC 17 (+1 chain shirt)

hp: 35 (6d8 + 8)

Saving Throws: Dex +6, Con +4

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Multiattack: Valzoe attacks twice with his rapier, or once with his rapier and once with his hand crossbow.

Melee Attack—Rapier +1: +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d8 + 4 piercing damage.

Ranged Attack—Hand Crossbow +1: +6 to hit (range 30 ft./120 ft.; one creature). Hit: 1d6 + 4 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 14 (+2), **Dex** 16 (+3), **Con** 12 (+1),

Int 14 (+2), **Wis** 12 (+1), **Cha** 17 (+3)

Languages: Common, Elvish, Dwarvish

Skills: Performance +7, Persuasion +7, Sleight of Hand +5

TRAITS

Countercharm: Through song and speech, Gynnen can grant allies within 30 feet of him tactical advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Gynnen must use his action to perform this ability, and the effect is broken if he does anything else until the start of his next turn. Allies must be able to hear Gynnen to gain the benefit.

Spellcasting. Gynnen Valzoe is a 6th-level spellcaster who uses Charisma as his spellcasting ability (attack +6, save DC 14). He knows the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, minor illusion*

1st Level (x4): *burning hands, mage armor, thunderwave*

2nd Level (x3): *flaming sphere, hold person, suggestion*

3rd Level (x3): *fireball, fly, lightning bolt*

Gear: Rapier +1, hand crossbow +1, +1 chain shirt, scroll of remove curse, 500 gp in coins and gems.

Irtep's Creditors

Fat Juliello Broad-Toe

Fat Julie uses the standard NPC Spy stat block.

(Fat Julie) [Spy]: AC 12, 27 hps; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword] OR +4 to hit, range 30 ft./120 ft., 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [hand crossbow]

Being a halfling, he has the following additional traits.

Lucky: When Fat Julie rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, he can reroll the die, but must keep the new result.

Nimble: Fat Julie can move through the space of an enemy creature that's larger than he is.

Advantageous. Fat Julie has tactical advantage on saving throws against poison and on saving throws against being frightened.

Gear: Shortsword, shortbow, 30 arrows, *ring of protection* +1, 2 potions of cure wounds, 2 potions of invisibility

Fat Julie's Brute Squad

Fat Julie has many half-orcs working for him as all-purpose leg-breakers. The toughest of them are Choli Bonesnapper, Colic, Pinkeye, and Blister. Use the standard NPC Berserker stat block for these four. Many other half-orcs work under these bruisers, all of which use the standard NPC Thug stat block.

Choli Bonesnapper, Colic, Pinkeye, and Blister [Berserkers]:

AC 13, 67 hps; +5 to hit, 1d12 + 3 slashing damage [greataxe]; at the start of their turns, these half-orcs can opt to have tactical advantage on their attack, but then all attacks against them also have tactical advantage until the start of the half-orc's next turn.

Half-Orc Thug: AC 11, 32 hps; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage [mace] OR +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., 1d10 piercing damage [heavy crossbow]; thugs have tactical advantage on attack rolls when at least one other active thug is within 5 feet of the target.

Tuvio

Tuvio uses the standard NPC Bandit Captain stat block.

Tuvio [Bandit Captain]: AC 15, 55 hps; +6 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [scimitar] AND +6 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage [dagger]; when Tuvio is hit by a melee attack from an attacker he can see, as a reaction he can roll 1d4 and add it to his AC

Tuvio's Torpedoes

Like Fat Julie, Tuvio has half-orcs working for him as musclemen and leg-breakers. The toughest of them are Fleaface and Hogbreath. Use the standard NPC Berserker stat block for them. Many other half-orcs work under these two, all of which use the standard NPC Thug stat block.

Fleaface and Hogbreath [Berserkers]: AC 13, 67 hps; +5 to hit, 1d12 + 3 slashing damage [greataxe]; at the start of their turns, these half-orcs can opt to have tactical advantage on their attack, but then all attacks against them also have tactical advantage until the start of the half-orc's next turn.

Half-Orc Thug: AC 11, 32 hps; +4 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage [mace] OR +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., 1d10 piercing damage [heavy crossbow]; thugs have tactical advantage on attack rolls when at least one other active thug is within 5 feet of the target.

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Giant Protozoans

The following are a class of creatures known to inhabit the hidden Minzoa which lies just beyond the sight of men and beasts. Alchemists, scientists, madmen, druids, and dabblers in the arcane arts have long suspected the existence of minute beings, pointing to creatures such as lice and ticks as evidence of a world much smaller than our own. The wizard Irtep found a way to enter this world, where he encountered and categorized the following creatures.

Amoeba, Giant

XP 700 (CR 3)

Unaligned Large ooze

Initiative -1

DEFENSE

AC 9

hp: 45 (6d10 + 12)

Immunity: Bludgeoning damage; blindness, charm, deafness, fright, prone

OFFENSE

Speed: 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Melee Attack—Slam: +2 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

Hit: 4d6 bludgeoning damage plus 1d6 acid damage, and the target must make a DC 12 Str saving throw or be engulfed. An engulfed creature is grappled and restrained and takes 3d6 acid damage at the start of each of the giant amoeba's turns. An engulfed creature can attempt a DC 12 Str (Athletics) check on its turn to escape. The giant amoeba can engulf up to one Large or four Medium or smaller creatures at a time.

STATISTICS

Str 10 (+0), Dex 8 (-1), Con 15 (+2),

Int 1 (-5), Wis 10 (+0), Cha 3 (-4)

Languages: None

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

TRAITS

Transparent: The giant amoeba is difficult to spot. A creature must make a successful DC 12 Wis (Perception) check to spot a giant amoeba. A creature that enters a giant amoeba's space is automatically engulfed.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Water (Minzoa)

Organization: Solitary

The Minzoan amoeba is a large creature which could easily fill a 10-foot cube if contained in that shape. The creature is semi-translucent and therefore difficult to see or distinguish from water save for its slightly sticky wet exterior.

Minzoan amoebas live in water and die if they are away from liquid water for more than one hour.

Amoebas are voracious eaters and may even try to devour smaller amoebas. They attack by slamming their body onto their prey.

Carnivorous Fungi, Giant

XP 1,100 (CR 4)

Unaligned Large plant

Initiative -2

DEFENSE

AC 11 (natural armor)

hp: 67 (9d10 + 18)

Immunity: Blindness, charm, deafness, fright, prone

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft., swim 10 ft.

Multiaattack: A carnivorous fungi attacks four times with tentacles.

Melee Attack—Tentacle: +4 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled and restrained. A grappled creature takes 2d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage at the start of each of its turns until it escapes. A grappled creature escapes by making a successful DC 14 Str (Athletics) check.

STATISTICS

Str 14 (+2), Dex 6 (-2), Con 14 (+2),

Int 2 (-4), Wis 8 (-1), Cha 3 (-4)

Languages: None

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

TRAITS

Pheromones: The giant carnivorous fungi emits pheromones in a 30-foot radius centered on itself. A living creature within or entering the area must make a successful DC 14 Wis saving throw or be charmed and forced to move within reach of the fungi's tentacles (10 feet) and stay there. The effect lasts until the charmed creature uses an action to make a successful DC 14 Wis saving throw, or for 1 minute.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate (Minzoa)

Organization: Forest

These plantlike beings thrive in the Minzoa, in areas with plenty of moisture and humidity. They resemble copes of clear, reedlike staves rising from a pool of primordial goop 15 to 30 feet in diameter. Carnivorous fungi feed on other living beings of the minzoa, trapping them in their sticky strands where they are slowly devoured.

Carnivorous fungi lie in wait for the nearly mindless creatures of the Minzoa to swim or crawl through their primordial goop in search of food. There the creatures become trapped in the fungi's gluey excretions as the reed staves wrap around their prey and squeeze it to death.

Hydrazoa, Giant

XP 2,300 (CR 6)

Unaligned Large beast

Initiative +0

DEFENSE

AC 13 (natural armor)

hp: 102 (12d10 + 36)

Resistance: Bludgeoning damage

Immunity: Blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, prone

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft., swim 20 ft.

Multiaattack: A giant hydrozoa attacks six times with tentacles and bites once.

Melee Attack—Tentacle: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage, and a Medium or smaller target is grappled and restrained. The target must make a DC 15 Con saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. A paralyzed creature can attempt a new save as an action on its turn to end the effect early. A grappled creature takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage at the start of each its turns until it escapes. A grappled (but not paralyzed) creature can escape by making a DC 15 Str

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(Athletics) or Dex (Acrobatics) check.

Melee Attack—Bite: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature grappled by the giant hydrazoa). Hit: 1d8 + 2 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 15 (+2), Dex 10 (+0), Con 16 (+3)

Int 1 (-5), Wis 8 (-1), Cha 3 (-4)

Languages: None

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate (Minzoa)

Organization: Solitary

Giant Hydrazoa are humongous protozoan creatures brought from the world in miniature by mad science and arcane magic. These horrid creatures appear as a slender tube 10 to 30 feet long. The creature fuses one end of the tube immovably to a floor or to the ground with pseudopods, typically in a watery area such as a lake, stream, river, or shallow sea. The creature uses its tentacles to snatch prey, injecting them with paralytic venom before drawing the meal whole into its maw, where it is digested by powerful acids.

Giant hydrazoa move either by drifting with the current or by propelling themselves with a looping, somersaulting-type motion.

Nematode, Giant

XP 700 (CR 3)

Unaligned Medium beast

Initiative +1

DEFENSE

AC 11

hp: 45 (7d8 + 14)

Resistance: Bludgeoning damage

Immunity: Blindness, charm, deafness, frightened, prone

OFFENSE

Speed: 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Bite: +3 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 3d6 + 1 piercing damage plus 2d6 acid damage.

STATISTICS

Str 10 (+0), Dex 12 (+1), Con 15 (+2)

Int 1 (-5), Wis 8 (-1), Cha 3 (-4)

Languages: None

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

TRAITS

Transparent: The giant nematode is difficult to spot. A creature must make a successful DC 12 Wis (Perception) check to spot a giant nematode.

Split. If a giant nematode or at least Medium size takes slashing damage, it splits into two identical giant nematodes, each one size smaller and each with half the original's current total hit points, rounded down. A giant nematode with 10 hit points or less cannot be further split.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate (Minzoa)

Organization: Solitary

Giant nematodes are man-sized flatworms that inhabit the world in miniature, thanks to arcane magic and the experimentations of mad scientists. These creatures are nearly transparent, making it difficult to spot them until it is too late.

Giant nematodes are always hungry; they are driven entirely by the desire to eat and reproduce. They attack by spearing their frontal portion

into their victims, injecting them with an acidic gastric substance, and sucking the creature's liquefied nutrients into their body.

Protozoan Orb, Giant

XP 450 (CR 2)

Unaligned Medium beast

Initiative +0

DEFENSE

AC 11 (natural armor)

hp: 39 (6d8 + 12)

Resistance: Bludgeoning damage

Immunity: Blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, prone

OFFENSE

Speed: 0 ft., swim 30 ft.

Melee Attack—Bite: +2 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). Hit: 2d6 piercing damage plus 1d6 acid damage, and the giant protozoan orb attaches itself to the target. While attached, the giant protozoan orb doesn't attack with its bite. Instead, at the start of each of its turns, the target loses 1d6 hit points from blood loss and takes 1d6 acid damage. The victim or another adjacent creature can use its action to make a DC 10 Str check to detach the giant protozoan orb. After a giant protozoan orb has drained 9 hit points from a target, it detaches and moves away to digest its meal.

STATISTICS

Str 11 (+0), Dex 10 (+0), Con 14 (+2)

Int 2 (-4), Wis 6 (-2), Cha 1 (-5)

Languages: None

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

ECOLOGY

Environment: Salt water (Minzoa)

Organization: Solitary

Protozoan orbs are common in brackish waters of the micro-verse. They typically resemble ticks with four to six limbs, but they are 3 to 6 feet across. They have hooked jaws just below the beginnings of their insectlike eye. Their carapace is clear, revealing the juices of their primitive cellular structure within.

Protozoan orbs feast on carrion and vegetable matter, though they are not above attempting to devour small, live prey that crosses their path. Their primary form of travel is by slurping water in through their mouth and jetting it out through their hind end, which gives them a jerky, flitting movement. They are common prey of hydrazoa and giant nematodes.

Sporozoan, Giant

XP 700 (CR 3)

Unaligned Medium beast

Initiative +0

DEFENSE

AC 10

hp: 48 (6d8 + 12)

Resistance: Bludgeoning damage

Immunity: Blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, prone

OFFENSE

Speed: 10 ft., swim 20 ft.

Multiaction: A sporozoan attacks four times with tentacles.

Melee Attack—Tentacle: +3 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

Hit: 1d6 + 1 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled and restrained. A grappled creature can make a DC 12 Str (Athletics) check to escape. A creature hit by a tentacle must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or contract

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a virulent, fast-acting disease. A diseased creature repeats the saving throw at the end of every long rest and recovers naturally when it makes its second successful save. If it doesn't recover at the end of a long rest, its maximum hit points are reduced by 5; reductions are cumulative. The disease can also be cured with a *lesser restoration* spell or comparable magic. The creature's hit points return to their normal maximum when the disease ends.

STATISTICS

Str 12 (+1), **Dex** 10 (+0), **Con** 15 (+2),
Int 2 (-4), **Wis** 6 (-2), **Cha** 1 (-5)

Languages: None

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate (Minzoa)

Organization: Solitary or cluster (2-5)

These foul creatures of the minzoa appear as man sized blobs of gelatinous matter, surrounded by four tentacles. The tentacles are used both for mobility and to attack. They are typically found near the corpses of creatures that have died recently from the sporozoans' disease or in filthy, dead matter, as such corpses are breeding grounds for sporozoans. The creatures hibernate in a hardened cyst until agitated or roused by proximity to other living organisms.

Tardigrade, Giant

XP 1,700 (CR 5)

Unaligned Large beast

Initiative +0

DEFENSE

AC 13 (natural armor)

hp: 75 (10d10 + 20)

Resistance: Cold and fire damage

Immunity: Blindness, charm, deafness, fright

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

Multiattack: A tardigrade attacks four times with claws and bites once.

Melee Attack—Claw: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

Hit: 1d6 + 2 slashing damage plus a possible rend (see below).

Melee Attack—Bite: +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature struck by a claw this turn). **Hit:** 1d8 + 2 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 15 (+2), **Dex** 10 (+0), **Con** 15 (+2),

Int 2 (-4), **Wis** 9 (-1), **Cha** 6 (-2)

Languages: None

Senses: Blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius)

TRAITS

Rend: If the giant tardigrade hits a Medium or smaller target with two or more claw attacks on the same turn, the target takes an extra 2d6 slashing damage.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any (Minzoa)

Organization: Solitary

Giant Tardigrades, also known as water bears look like a cross between a hairless bear and a caterpillar. The creatures stand 10 feet tall and weigh 1,400 lbs. The body of the giant tardigrade is a grayish pink, though some run to grey green. Their body is slightly segmented and has eight legs, four of which may be used to attack their prey. Their skin is thick and loose after the fashion of the rhinoceros and sloughs off damage easily, affording them an excellent armor class.

Commonly they are found in water, though they can be found in almost any extreme of climate. Giant tardigrades have been brought to the world through a mixture of alchemy, mad science, magic, and the occasional druid gone wrong. Tardigrades are some of the hardiest creatures on the planet. They seem to hardly notice extreme heat or extreme cold. They can lie dormant for years without food or water.

Tardigrades eat almost anything, though they are slow to provoke and hard to anger. When engaged, they attack with their four front claws and their circular maw filled with razor-sharp teeth.

Vampires & Fées

The Pyramid of Amra

By Easey W. Christofferson and Bill Webb

The Pyramid of Amra is a challenging adventure designed for characters of at least 12th level. Due to the nature and numbers of undead enemies (vampires), having a cleric on hand with the ability to cast *raise dead* and *greater restoration* is advisable. The PCs should be rounded out with a wizard or sorcerer and a pair of front-line fighters.

In this adventure, the PCs travel to the Pyramid of Amra and the ancient Monastery of Night, where they face one of the most dangerous of opponents they are likely to meet, C'nosretep the Champion of Set.

Legend of the Pyramid of Amra and the Monastery of Light

For several millennia the monks of the Monastery of Light trained in the deepest mysteries of meditation and unarmed combat. Their master, Ozykathalin, was said to have penned the sacred *tome of mind and body*, a tome containing many of the most cunning and devastating of all martial arts maneuvers. Their reign ended nearly a century ago, when C'nosretep, the Iron Fist of Set, deposed Ozykathalin and placed himself upon the Lotus Throne.

Now reigning supreme within the Step Pyramid of Amra, C'nosretep sits in sole possession of the *tome of mind and body*, much of which he has re-written or embellished. Surrounding himself with fell followers the Champion of Set now presides over pilgrimages of worshippers and slaves who trek across the desert wastes by the thousands. These foolish pilgrims come to witness the power of the Iron Fist of Set. Many hope to gain immortality, if first they can impress C'nosretep with their skills at unarmed combat.

Getting to the Step Pyramid of Amra

The Step Pyramid of Amra should be contained in a deep desert location with an “ancient world” flavor. In the **Lost Lands of Frog God Games**, the Pyramid of Amra is located at a remote oasis in the desert land of Khemit, although any desert location will do. The journey should be half of the challenge, fraught with dangers both natural and monstrous, with hints as to the actual location of the Pyramid and the hidden oasis of Amra sprinkled throughout.

Characters could possibly have heard tales of the pyramid and the *tome of mind and body*. The *tome* itself is treasured by monastic orders throughout the world for its ancient techniques. Through careful study of its venerable pages, students of the *tome* learn the secrets of a completely unique new martial arts move, usable only by the most experienced of masters.

Alternately, a monk’s sect may have sent him questing for the *tome of mind and body* to return to their cloister for further research by the Grandmasters. For whatever the reason, the PCs should be motivated to

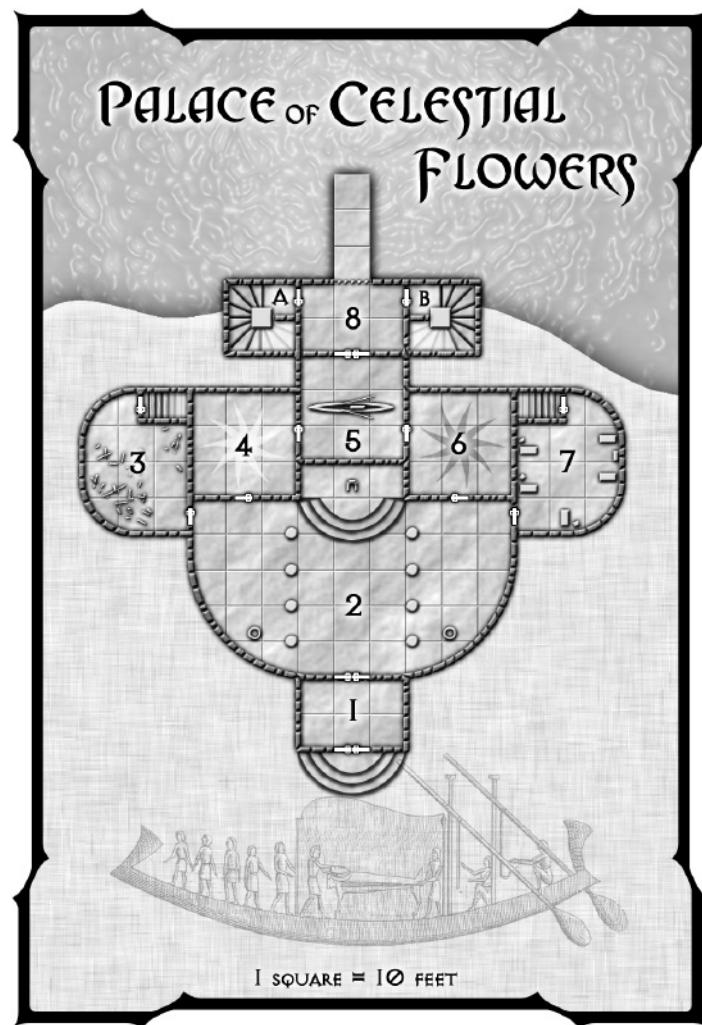
face any obstacle, although they should not be given the whole story. Best to keep secret some of the lore provided on these pages and let them plan and prepare for the worst on their own.

The Pyramid of Amra sits on a small island in the middle of a lake within a desert oasis. On the shore of the lake sits the Palace of Celestial Flowers.

Palace of Celestial Flowers and Monastery of Night

A large walled structure amid gently swaying palm trees sits exposed to the sands. Almost hidden beyond the tall date palms lies a silvery lake amidst the desert. The point of a pyramid rises above the greenery like a yellowed claw, its very top covered in red gold leaf.

The top of the pyramid is in fact the Pyramid of Amra. However, as



THE PYRAMID OF AMRA

mentioned above, it sits on an island in the middle of a lake. Before the characters, and on the shore of the lake, is the Palace of Celestial Flowers, which may be explored before the PCs access the Pyramid and in fact provides the means for the players to get to the island—a secret passage and a boat. Some PCs possessing magical means of transport may wish to simply bypass the Palace. See below.

Bypassing the Palace

PCs could, if they have the means, simply swim, fly, or use a boat to reach the island containing the Pyramid or use some other means to bypass the Palace. However, once in the Pyramid, there are several areas where the *amulet of the lotus master*—which can only be obtained within the Palace—benefits them. It is for your players to decide how they wish to proceed. The adventure can be completed even if the Palace is never entered.

1: Palace of Celestial Flowers

Fine bronze double doors cast with images of a great and mighty god surrounded with rays of sunlight and showering lotus blossoms upon a single child grace the front of this majestic edifice. Beyond the locked bronze double doors is an entrance chamber that must have once been an awesome sight but is now degraded with filth. Torn tapestries flutter in the wind ominously. The PCs' nostrils fill with the smell of old death and an uneasy decay. A second set of locked double doors beyond the first open into **Area 8, Great Hall of the Brotherhood of the Fallen Star**. The outer doors can be forced open with a successful DC 20 Str (Athletics) check, or they can be finessed open with a set of thief's tools and a successful DC 12 Dex check. The inner doors are heavy, but anyone can open them with determined pushing.

2: Great Hall of the Brotherhood of the Fallen Star

As the PCs enter from beyond the locked entrance portals, they can see a great amount of dust and darkness beyond. This was once a place of great majesty and serenity. Ornately carved wooden pillars featuring great battles between celestial and infernal forces stare ominously at the PCs as the breeze from the outside wafts into the room, creating a slight fog of dust. Braziers suddenly light from the corners of the room and the party see a figure sitting atop a throne before you, beckoning them to approach.

The Great Hall has a domed ceiling that rises about 40 feet above the floor, and is lined with eight massive carved pillars. There are doors in the northeastern and northwestern walls leading to **Areas 3, 4, 6 and 7**. There is a flaming brazier in the southeast and southwestern corners of the room that cast a strange and eerie light. Play up this spooky effect prior to the ambush of the PCs.

If Characters Enter During the Day

If characters enter the throne chamber during daylight hours, they are faced with **Relthren Surret** masked in the guise of C'nosretep, and a pack of **3 doppelganger monks** and **3 asswere monks** hiding atop the invisible bridge in **Area 14**, waiting to pounce upon the PCs. If the battle begins to go against the doppelgangers, they all change shape into C'nosretep. Relthren Surret enters the combat if he is threatened or if things are going badly for his allies. In the confusion, Relthren shape-changes into one of the weakest PCs and attacks that individual until Relthren has lost 30% of his total hit points, at which point he attempts to flee to safety. The asswere monks begin the fight in hybrid form.

Relthren Surret is a standard doppelganger, but with more hit points and more dangerous slam attacks. He is C'nosretep's chief lieutenant, and is in charge of guarding the vampires during daylight hours. He and his doppelgangers are skilled monks, bound in service to C'nosretep by their god Set. Surret carries *3 potions of greater healing, 2 potions of*

invisibility, and a mask of the monkey.

The doppelganger monks are identical to standard doppelgangers but with the addition of the monk's ability to deflect missiles and to inflict stunning strikes. The asswere monks are in hybrid form when characters enter.

(Relthren Surret [Doppelganger Monk]: AC 14, 78 hp; +8

to hit x2, 2d6 + 5 bludgeoning damage [slam]; as an action, can read the thoughts of a creature within 60 ft.; has tactical advantage on attack rolls against surprised creatures, and does an extra 3d6 bludgeoning damage with attacks that hit surprised creatures; as a reaction, can reduce damage from missiles that hit it by 1d10 + 12; 3/day, target of slam attack must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or be stunned for 1 round [stunning strike]; shapeshifter)

(Doppelganger Monk: AC 14, 52 hp; +6 to hit x2, 1d6 + 4

bludgeoning damage [slam]; as an action, can read the thoughts of a creature within 60 ft.; has tactical advantage on attack rolls against surprised creatures, and does an extra 3d6 bludgeoning damage with attacks that hit surprised creatures; as a reaction, can reduce damage from missiles that hit it by 1d10 + 9; 3/day, target of slam attack must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be stunned for 1 round [stunning strike]; shapeshifter)

(Asswere Monk: AC 15, 33 hp; in hybrid form, +5 to hit, 1d8

+ 3 bludgeoning damage [bite] plus +5 to hit, 1d8 + 3 piercing damage [spear]; in human form, attacks twice with spear; in donkey form, bites once; as an action, can force all creatures within 30 feet to make successful DC 12 Wis saving throws or be affected as by a confusion spell for 1d4 + 3 rounds [bray]; shapeshifter)

If Characters Enter During the Night

They instead face **C'nosretep** himself! He does not wish to fight with the characters at the moment, but converses with them instead to assess their intelligence and ability to resist his powerful charms. Secretly he has **6 vampire spawn** hiding atop the invisible bridge in **Area 14**, waiting to pounce upon the PCs. C'nosretep dominates the strongest warrior or rogue and instructs them to slay the weakest PCs while he parleys with a monk or paladin. He is arrogant and boastful of his powers and thanks them for coming to join the eternal army of undead that he is building here at the oasis. As soon as the trap is ready to be sprung, or as soon as anyone attempts to cast a spell or attack C'nosretep in any way, he attacks that individual mercilessly for one round before using his great speed and powers to turn to vapor and retreat to a random room within the Palace or Pyramid. Most likely C'nosretep's subsequent ambushes are sprung within a room or chamber the PCs have recently passed through and cleared of traps and monsters as they backtrack through the palace. C'nosretep only fights to the "death" when defending his sarcophagus or the *tome of mind and body*.

(C'nosretep [Vampire]: AC 16, 144 hp; attacks twice, with

only one bite; +9 to hit, 1d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage or the target is grappled [unarmed strike], and +9 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 4 piercing damage plus 3d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 20 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn; one humanoid within 30 ft. must make a successful DC 17 Wis saving throw or be charmed by the vampire; 3/day, can choose to succeed on a saving throw if just failed; 1/day, can call 2d4 swarms of bats or rats; can use 3 legendary actions/round [move, unarmed strike, bite (2

QUESTS OF DOOM: VAMPIRES & LICHES

actions)]; transforms to mist at 0 hp; shapechanger)

(Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

Searching the Throne

Anyone making a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check while examining the throne discovers that the sliding plate beneath the seat of the dragon-footed Throne of the Lotus Master has an inlay the exact size and shape of the *amulet of the lotus master*. Placing the completed *amulet* into the depression opens a secret staircase in the floor below the throne that leads to **Area P1** of the Pyramid of Amra.

3: Purification of Body

This chamber was once used to purify the body through massage, steam baths, plunge pools, and the like, though it is now fouled. There is some sign that horrible death once visited this room. The walls are chipped and cracked in places, and broken weapons lie in disarray around the room. The shattered remains of several urns, ewers, and basins crack and break under the PCs' feet. An unlocked door in the northwest corner of the room opens to reveal a staircase leading to **Area 9**.

Treasure: Anyone making a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check uncovers the skeleton of a slain monk, stuffed into a hole in the floor that once released natural steam. Upon his person are 200 pp and a +2 dagger.

4: Meditation Chamber

This is a simple room with pure black walls and no visible markings whatsoever. The door to the room, when closed, perfectly blends with the wall to make it appear as if there is no door at all. A white star-like shape dominates the center of the floor. An unlocked door in the eastern wall leads to **Area 5**.

Hiding in this chamber are **4 vampire spawn** of C'nosretep, hanging from the ceiling and walls and waiting to drop like spiders on unsuspecting PCs. The spawn strike at lightly armored individuals such as wizards and rogues first before moving on to the fighters.

(Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

A monk of Lawful Good alignment spending three full rounds contemplating the white star in the center of the chamber gains tactical advantage on his next attack or his next use of Acrobatics or Athletics skill.

5: Barge of the Darkstar

This chamber has a door in the center of the north, east, and west walls. A large funerary barge made of black wood and inlaid with silver celestial symbols and images dominates the room. The barge is 25 feet long and about 5 feet wide, with a paddle and a sarcophagus attached across its

center. If the sarcophagus were to be removed, it would make room to seat about seven individuals. There are two intact oars in oarlocks at the front and back of the barge. Anyone with a nautical background can discern that this barge is water-worthy and narrow enough to fit through the door at the end of the hall. The boat is very heavy and requires a total combined Strength modifier of +12 to move it out of the room.

The sarcophagus on the barge emanates a powerful *fear aura*. Every character who approaches within 10 feet of it must make a successful DC 14 Wis saving throw or be frightened of it and the barge permanently. This effect can be removed as a curse (by *greater restoration* or comparable magic).

Treasure: The funerary barge is very valuable; it would be worth 30,000 gp to a collector due to the ebony and mahogany hardwood in its construction. The boat, although extremely heavy, actually sails extremely well and is very easy to handle.

5: Meditation Chamber

This is a second meditation chamber, similar to **Area 10**, except this one is completely white and the star symbol on the floor is completely black.

Hiding within this chamber, blending completely with the white of the walls, are **4 doppelganger monks**. They wait for a moment while the PCs are examining the black star in the center of the floor, then they strike out from the shadows. All attack a lightly armored target at the same time, and all transform into this target on the following round to add chaos and confusion to their assault. If the doppelgangers are losing the fight, they prefer to flee rather than die.

A monk of Lawful Evil alignment that spends three full rounds contemplating the white star in the center of the chamber gains tactical advantage on his next attack or his next use of Acrobatics or Athletics skill.

(Doppelganger Monk: AC 14, 52 hp; +6 to hit x2, 1d6 + 4 bludgeoning damage [slam]; as an action, can read the thoughts of a creature within 60 ft.; has tactical advantage on attack rolls against surprised creatures, and does an extra 3d6 bludgeoning damage with attacks that hit surprised creatures; as a reaction, can reduce damage from missiles that hit it by 1d10 + 9; 3/day, target of slam attack must make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw or be stunned for 1 round [stunning strike]; shapechanger)

7: Massage Chamber

Several tables line the walls of this room, along with small-wheeled carts containing bottles of various oils, unguents, mud, and herbal wraps. Artwork inlaid in enamel upon the walls depicts monks practicing the art of massage upon one another to work out the soreness of intense physical and mental training. Waiting within the room are **2 invisible clay golems**. Each golem remains invisible until it is hit by a direct attack (not an area effect).

The golems don't attack; instead, they grab the first two characters who enter the room, slam them onto the table, and begin giving them a serious massage. These golems were specially created to be invisible masseurs. In the long years since their creation, the elemental spirits that animate them have gone quite mad. They spare no ounce of their strength when giving a massage, which usually reduces to putty the unfortunate person in their care. The character being "massaged" is considered grappled, and each round of massage inflicts 2d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage. If attacked, they respond in kind.

An unlocked door in the northeastern corner of the chamber opens to a staircase leading upward to **Area 13**.

(Clay Golem: AC 14, 133 hp; +8 to hit x2, 2d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage and the target creature must make a successful DC 15 Con saving throw or its

THE PYRAMID OF AMRA

maximum hp are reduced by the same amount [slam]; as an action, the golem can gain +2 AC, tactical advantage on Dex saves, and can attack as a bonus action until the end of its next turn [haste, recharge 5, 6]; gains temporary hp equal to acid damage; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic and is immune to any effect that would alter its form; when reduced to 60 or fewer hp, the golem attacks the nearest creature it can see)

Treasure: There are enough herbal wraps and oils to assemble three healer's kits.

8: Rear Gatehouse

The door from **Area 11** enters into gatehouse a with a 10-ft.-wide iron portcullis at the far end. Doorways to the left and right of the room lead up staircases to each of the guard towers. It is dark and cobwebbed in the gatehouse area and looks as if it has not seen a living soul in centuries. The closed iron portcullis leads to the stone quay, where rowboats were once taken by the faithful brothers to work the grounds of the renamed Monastery of Night. The portcullis can be lifted with a DC 20 Str (Athletics) check, or bent open with a DC 25 check.

A: Left Gatehouse

A lever on the second floor of the gatehouse must be switched to set the mechanism to lift the portcullis. It is guarded by **4 wraiths**—former monks killed by C'nosretep.

(Wraith: AC 13, 67 hp; +6 to hit, 4d8 + 3 necrotic damage and the target must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or its maximum hp are reduced by the same amount [life drain]; as an action, can reanimate a creature slain within 1 minute, within 10 ft. as a specter; can move through solid objects and other creatures as if they were difficult terrain but takes 5 force damage if it ends its turn in a solid object)

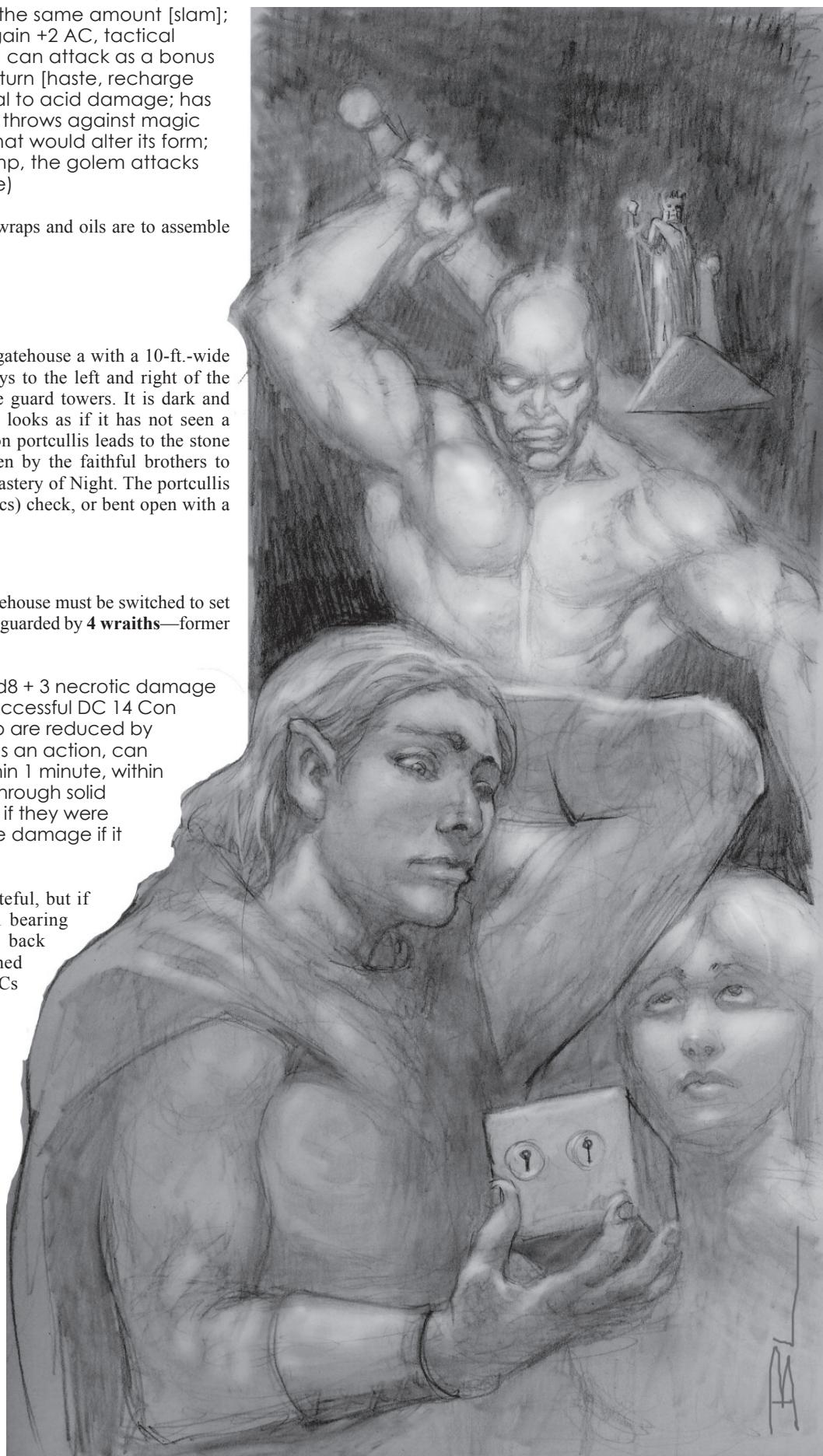
These wraiths are vengeful and spiteful, but if they are confronted by an individual bearing the *amulet of the lotus master*, they back away and allow the lever to be switched without a fight. They bow before the PCs and say:

"Slay the beast and free us in the name of the true master, so that we may become one with enlightenment and fade from view."

If attacked, they seek out paladins and clerics first, attempting to eliminate them before moving on to other targets. They use darkness and fade into walls and floors to maximize their effectiveness.

B: Right Gatehouse

This gatehouse is dust-filled and devoid of valuables, as if it has been stripped for other uses.



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9: Training Room

Padded walls and bamboo mats decorate this darkened room. Within the room are several wooden training dummies that stand in the four corners, motionless and covered with dust.

By night, **4 vampire spawn** take up residence within this chamber; during daylight hours it is occupied by **2 asswere monks** who spar with one another to keep boredom at bay. They attack intruders who enter the chamber.

(Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

(Asswere Monk: AC 15, 33 hp; in hybrid form, +5 to hit, 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage [bite] plus +5 to hit, 1d8 + 3 piercing damage [spear]; in human form, attacks twice with spear; in donkey form, bites once; as an action, can force all creatures within 30 feet to make successful DC 12 Wis saving throws or be affected as by a confusion spell for 1d4 + 3 rounds [bray]; shapeshifter)

10: Bed Chamber of the Light Master

An ornately carved door features the holy symbol of Arden carved into its paneling. The symbol is shining brightly, and the PCs must take a moment to let their eyes adjust to the light.

The door requires a set of thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dex check to open. Once unlocked, the door swings open to reveal a small room holding the dusty belongings of the former Master of the Lightstar. His belongings have been left undisturbed for centuries, as the holy symbol carved into his door has a permanent *daylight* spell worked into it. C'nosretep and his vampire minions keep away from this area, and C'nosretep sees no reason to send his doppelganger and asswere monks here to see what's in the room.

The interior is covered in a thick layer of dust. There is a small mat on the floor with a wooden neck-board, a sconce, brass incense burner on a brass chain, and a small strange-looking box about 6 inches by 6 inches. The sides of the box have numerals in a strange language, with 9 numerals and 10 spaces upon the top of the box arranged in a square of 3 by 3 with an additional location connected on one of the sides. Next to the 9 numerals and the empty space there is a button that does nothing if depressed while the numerals are in their original scrambled positions. Anyone who speaks Celestial or who is trained in Religion skill recognizes that the numerals are in Celestial script. The numerals on the top of the box, 1–9, are all scrambled, but the number 15 is repeated six times along two sides of the perimeter of the box.

The box number panels slide if they are oiled and reconfigured into any combination of numbers from 1 through 9.

When all of the numbers are slid so they equal 15 across the bottom, side, and each diagonal of the box and the button is pushed, the box opens to reveal an amulet with a large clear gemstone of unknown origin on a golden chain. If the numbers are arranged in any other combination and the button is depressed, keen adamantine blades stab outward and slice the holder's hands, causing 2d6 slashing damage, or half damage with a successful DC 20 Dex saving throw.

A possible solution to this puzzle looks like this:

8	1	6
3	5	7
4	9	2

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Treasure: The amulet within the box, the *amulet of the lightstar*, exudes a sense of power and glows with a bright light when held clasped in the hand. See "New Magic Items" for details.

11: Chamber of the Lotus

This is a cross-shaped chamber with a beautifully rendered lotus flower mosaic in the center of the floor. The flower appears to change colors depending on the angle at which it is viewed. This room was once the private meditation chamber of the Master of the Lotus.

A **trapped secret door** is in the center of the northern wall. It can be found with a search and a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check. Placing the *shimmering lotus flower* from the upper balcony into the center of the petals opens the door to **Area 16** automatically and safely. Opening it without the *shimmering lotus flower* triggers a gas trap; all creatures in the room must make successful DC 16 Con saving throws against poison or be affected by blue lotus insanity (see the sidebar for details on this toxin).

Blue Lotus

Creatures exposed to blue lotus toxin must make successful DC 16 Con saving throws or suffer hallucinations lasting 2d6 rounds. Roll 1d4 to determine the nature of the hallucination.

Roll	Hallucination
1	The character sees a party member as a specter who intends to kill them all.
2	The character is filled with lust for the person nearest to him or her. If the target of this desire spurns their sudden advances, the hallucinating character goes berserk and attacks.
3	The character is filled with despair and is stunned while under the influence of the lotus gas. They curl up in a ball on the floor, hug themselves, and cry.
4	The character goes into a tranquil trance lasting 1d4 + 1 hours. The individual sits on the floor and sees things going on in the monastery as they did before C'nosretep's conquest. This vision gives a glimpse of the master of the Lightstar and a hint as to how to reach his chamber.

12: Bed Chamber of the Dark Master

A stout locked door bearing signs of shadow and darkness requires a set of thief's tools and a successful DC 20 Dex check to open. This room has a strange sense of dread within it. Dusty and dark, the room seems to dim all light sources. A low growling can be heard from the corners.

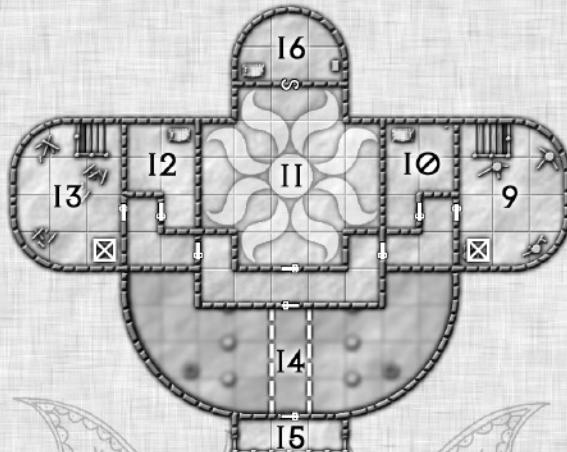
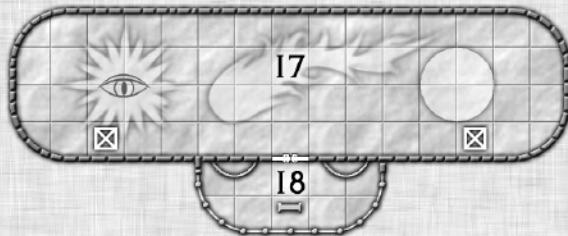
Guarding this room from intruders are **5 shadows**, which move to attack from the darkness. They instantly concentrate their attacks first on the party's cleric, followed by paladins.

(Shadow: AC 12, 16 hp; +4 to hit, 2d6 + 2 necrotic damage and the target loses 1d4 Strength.)

Any character who searches the room and makes a successful DC 14 Wis (Perception) check finds a small chest. It is **trapped** with a poisoned needle. The trap can be spotted if the chest is checked for traps and a successful DC 12 Int (Investigation) check is made. Once spotted, the trap is easy to avoid. If it's not avoided, the person opening the chest takes 4d8

PALACE OF CELESTIAL FLOWERS

UPPER LEVELS



1 SQUARE = 10 FEET

poison damage and is poisoned for 30 minutes, or takes half damage and is not poisoned with a successful DC 14 Con saving throw.

Inside the chest is a dark amulet that absorbs light; it is the *amulet of the darkstar* (see “New Magic Items”).

13: Smashed Training Room

Within this room are the remains of several practice dummies, all shattered and broken beyond repair. A set of stairs in the northwest of the room leads downward to the first floor.

Anyone who examines the ceiling or who makes a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check notices a **trapdoor** in the ceiling to the southwest of the room. The trapdoor can be hooked with a 10-foot pole. Pulling down the trapdoor opens a wooden ladder staircase that leads to the floor above and Area 17.

14: Locked Door and Invisible Bridge

The locked door is not trapped, but it requires a set of thief’s tools and a successful DC 15 Dex check to unlock and open. Behind the locked door is a walkway through the center of the palace. It leads to the lower balcony. The walkway is permanently *invisible*. Characters attempting to cross the invisible walkway must make a successful DC 12 Dex (Acrobatics) check to cross the walkway safely. Those failing the check fall 20 feet to the Great Hall, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

If the **6 vampire spawn** that were waiting to ambush the PCs earlier have not yet done so, they are waiting here to attack. The vampire spawn

hang from the walls in shadows or they use their *spider climb* ability to attack with surprise.

(Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target’s maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

15: Lower Balcony

A balcony juts out from the lower portion of the dome of the Palace of Celestial Flowers. It was once used by the Master of the Lotus to address the disciples as they went through exercises in the courtyard. Now it serves as a lookout spot during the nighttime hours for vampire spawn that serve C’nosretep.

16: Sanctuary of the Master of the Lotus

This chamber served as the private sanctum of the Master of the Lotus. It is a simple room devoid of most comfort items one would associate with a great leader. Instead it merely contains a dry rotted sleeping mat,

QUESTS OF DOOM: VAMPIRES & LICHES

meditation rug, neck board, several scroll cases, manuals of various sorts, dried writing inks, reed brushes and a small locked chest.

The chest has an intricate lock requiring a thief's tools and a successful DC 20 Dex check to open.

Within the chest is an amulet made in the shape of a lotus blossom with an odd piece of engraving upon the back. There is a diary within the chest as well, and diagrams showing an individual grasping the *amulet of the darkstar* in one hand and the *amulet of the lightstar* in the other, with the *medallion of the lotus* about their neck, all while under a curtain of stars. A perfect lotus flower is at his feet.

Treasure: The amulet is the *medallion of the lotus*, which is currently incomplete. It is missing the rose diamond that is the centerpiece of the item. The medallion does not function to open the secret passage beneath the Lotus Throne without this central diamond. One of the books is the *History of the Monastery of Light*, by Ozykathalin, worth 5,000 gp to a collector who understands its value.

17: Third Floor Dome and Chamber of Celestial Light and Darkness

Two features stand out as most impressive about this chamber, the first being the intricate mosaic patterns of a comet, moon, and a sun with an all-seeing eye in the center of it. The second impressive feature of this chamber is the domed ceiling that reflects the light with diamonds. The diamonds are set in the ceiling so as to appear as the sky and constellations of over 4,000 years ago. Characters who make successful DC 12 Int (Nature) checks recognize the difference in the stars.

Any character examining the mosaic and making a successful DC 14 Wis (Perception) check discovers ancient writing in a lost language upon the floor. The words can be read with *comprehend languages*. The word hidden within the sun and eye is "Solaris." Hidden within the moon is the word "Eclipsis." The word hidden within the comet is "Ozykathalin." A successful DC 15 Int (History) check lets a character recall that this last word is the traditional name of each Master of the Lotus that is born into the Order.

The center of each mosaic acts as a teleportation disk if the following requirements are met: Holding the *amulet of the darkstar* in one's hand while standing over the moon and reciting the word "Eclipsis" teleports the user and anyone within 10 ft. of her to **Area 20**. Holding the *amulet of the lightstar* in one's hand while standing upon the mosaic of the sun and repeating the word "Solaris" instantly teleports the individual and anyone within 10 ft. of her to **Area 29**.

Standing over the comet with the *amulet of the darkstar*, *amulet of the lightstar*, *medallion of the lotus*, and one of the *shimmering lotus blossoms* causes the room to be bathed in a golden light. Should the PCs complete these actions, uttering the name of Ozykathalin, the *shimmering lotus* rises up into the air above their heads and the room is bathed in a golden light. As the PCs watch, the *shimmering lotus* begins to spin and prismatic rays spray about the room. Spinning ever faster, the lotus blossom begins to transform until a beautiful rose diamond appears where the flower once was. The perfect diamond slowly drops from the ceiling and fuses with the medallion about the neck of the PC who completed the ritual with a brilliant flash of white light.

Treasure: The *medallion of the lotus master* (see "New Magic Items"). The *medallion* is also the key to triggering the secret trapdoor hidden beneath the seat of the Throne of Lotus Master in **Area 8**.

07: Upper Balcony

This upper balcony has two planters that are overgrown and filled with weeds. A stone bench overlooks the courtyard and gives a view of the

desert beyond the oasis when not blocked by clouds of sand. Growing amongst the weeds in a pool of disgusting looking water is a *shimmering lotus flower*. A character making a successful DC 10 Wis (Perception) check notices these strange flowers (see "New Magic Items"). Each planter contains one *shimmering lotus flower*.

19: Dome of the Lightstar

This chamber has no windows or doors and can only be accessed by using the *amulet of the lightstar*. The room has a beautiful golden dome lined with diamonds. There is a floor mosaic featuring a brilliant shining sun. As the adventurers enter the room the *amulet of the lightstar* glows brightly and the shimmering form of Master Seung appears. The apparition smiles to the adventurers and begins to speak.

"Master Seung, called Solaris I am and you have called me across the depths of time and space; long has the time been since I have had fortune to send my form into this place. Cursed is the One who betrayed the Order of Stars. Blessed be those that seek enlightenment that would heal his harms. Through the Halls of Night to walk where bloodless fiends do hide and stalk. Seek you there the candles' flames and light them in Lotus Masters Name. Place them at the points of the celestial eye and closer to the ground will be the sky."

After reciting his oracle, the spirit of the Master of the Lightstar dissipates into nothingness and the PCs is teleported back to the Chamber of Celestial Light and Darkness.

20: Dome of the Darkstar

Upon teleporting into this chamber the PCs are filled with a sense of dread. The room is terribly hot and it seems to drain the light from all light sources; lights illuminate only half their normal radius here, and vision distances are reduced by half (e.g., darkvision 60 ft. can see only 30 ft.). **Mi'Tang the Efreeti** dwells here, along with **12 shadows**. Mi'Tang arrogantly taunts the PCs as they arrive in his prison.

"At last fools have gathered the darkstar, and I, Mi'Tang, shall once again bring death to the land of mortals!"

He then attacks. Mi'Tang taunts and berates the PCs, directing his undead minions to attack clerics as he strikes at the character grasping the *amulet of the darkstar* and hoping to seize it for himself. The shadows take advantage of the dim lighting to flit in and out of vision.

Mi'Tang has been trapped within the Dome of the Darkstar for about 500 years and is thrilled that he may have the opportunity to escape this chamber with the stone.

(Mi'Tang [Efreeti]): AC 17, 200 hp; +10 to hit x2, 2d6 + 6 slashing damage plus 2d6 fire damage [scimitar]; +7 to hit x2, range 120 ft., 5d6 fire damage [hurl flame]; spell attack +7, save DC 15; [at will] detect magic; [3/day] enlarge/reduce, tongues; [1/day] conjure fire elemental, gaseous form, invisibility, major image, plane shift, wall of fire)

(Shadow: AC 12, 16 hp; +4 to hit, 2d6 + 2 necrotic damage and the target loses 1d4 Strength.)

THE PYRAMID OF AMRA

If defeated, Mi'Tang cries out before fading from existence:

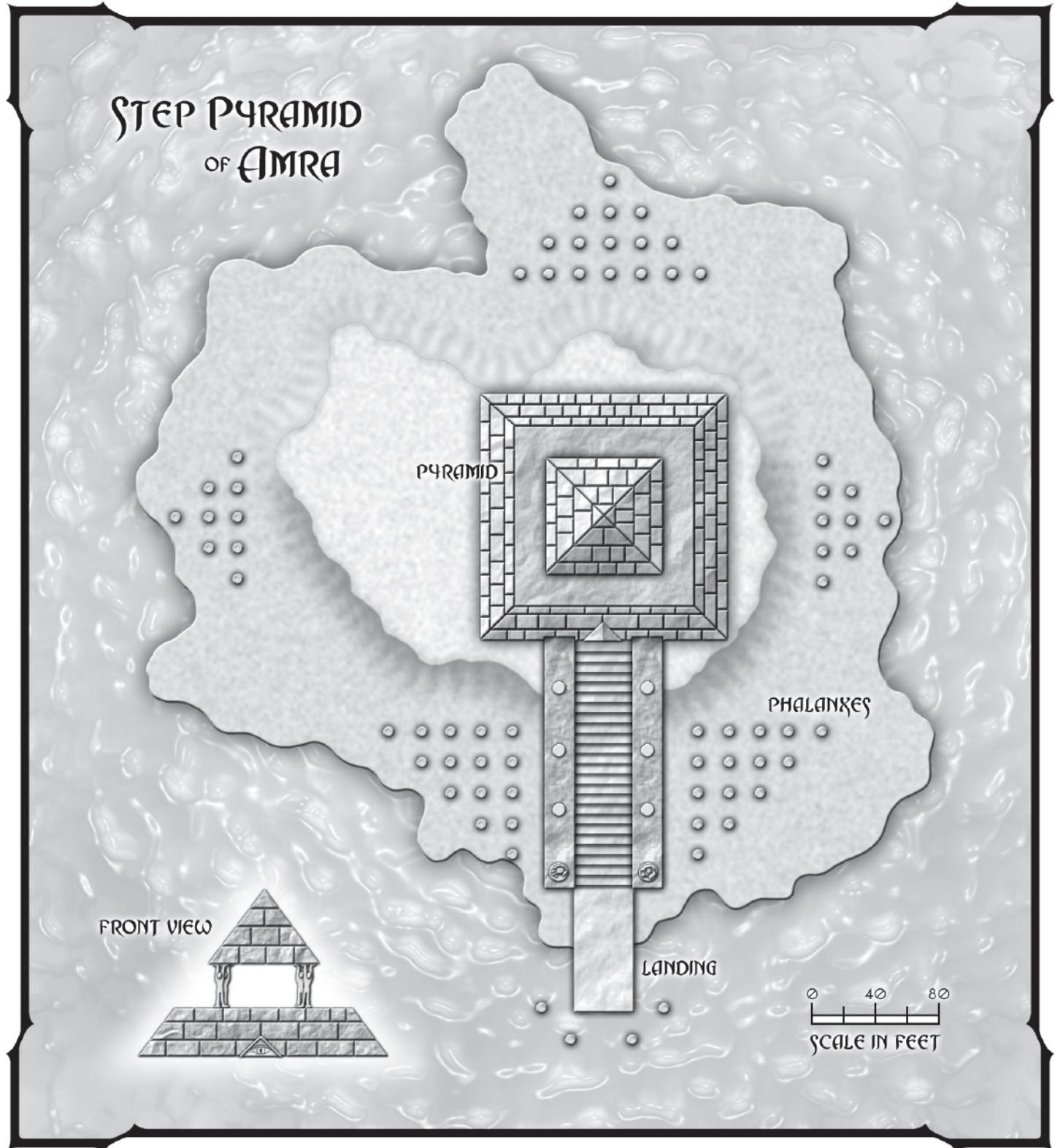
"I am Mi'Tang the mighty! How dare you slay... me?"

A character who makes a successful DC 18 Int (History) check can provide some insight into the life of Mi'Tang, prefect of the House of Dragon, and Master of the Darkstar.

Mi'Tang was once human, and he was a rival of C'nosretep in life.

Equal in nearly every way to C'nosretep, he was master of the darker sects of the Monastic order. When C'nosretep brought his armies to the Monastery of Light, Mi'Tang instructed his own personal minions to stand down and fight only if attacked. Mi'Tang figured that C'nosretep and his allies would grind themselves down fighting Master Seung and others faithful to Ozykathalin. Mi'Tang would then instruct his disciples to strike down the survivors of the battle and take his place as master of the oasis of Amra.

Failing in his scheme, Mi'Tang was slain by C'nosretep. Set returned Mi'Tang to this realm as an efreeti, imprisoned in the Dome of the



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Darkstar until such time as the *amulet of the darkstar* is returned to him. As a further insult, Set turned many of Mi'Tang's most loyal disciples into non-corporeal undead. They lurk now on the fringes of the Monastery and Pyramid, forever reminded of their failure, and inferiority to his chosen champion.

Mi'Tang loathes and despises C'nosretep with half of a millennium's worth of hatred. This may be to the PCs' advantage, for Mi'Tang has complete control of noncorporeal undead within the monastery and pyramid of Amra once he is freed from the Dome of the Darkstar. Mi'Tang can be bargained with, if his rage can be abated. Clever PCs could suggest that Mi'Tang and his minions take out the answeres and doppelgangers within the monastery and pyramid. This would leave the party to handle the vampires that he and his ilk are all but powerless to harm.

Treasure: If the players defeat Mi'Tang, they find some of his former belongings with a successful DC 16 Wis (Perception) check. An unlocked chest contains 4,000 gp and a *ring of mind shielding*.

The Isle of the Pyramid

The Pyramid of Amra rests upon an island in the center of the mountain's crater. A lake of pure blue water surrounds this island and strange mists cover its view most of the time. The Step Pyramid structure sits upon a plateau in the center of the island, the lower half made of cyclopean blocks, the upper half held suspended by four stone statues. The faces appear to have been re-carved and set with different stone to take the likenesses of a snake, an ass, an insect, and a crocodile. Below the plateau, shrouded in mist of the lower island, stand phalanxes of terracotta monks staring out from the cardinal points of the Pyramid.

The PCs may reach this island by the secret passage under the throne at **Area 2** in the Palace. If so, they begin at **Area P-1**. If the PCs reach the island by using the barge from **Area 5** or by other above-ground means, they encounter the island detailed in the map above and may proceed to the above-ground entrance to the Pyramid at **Area U-1**.

The PCs may have tried to bypass the Palace, as detailed above, and may simply fly or use other means of transport to the island. They will quickly discover, however, that they lack the *amulet of the lotus master*, and thus will need to investigate the Palace despite their intent to bypass it.

Pyramid of Amra: Lower Chambers

P-1: Entrance from the Throne of Lotus Master

A long subterranean pathway leads from the tunnel beneath the Throne of the Lotus Master onwards and up several flights of carved and little used stone stairs until finally you reaching the base of what must be the lower pyramid. Ancient hieroglyphics along the walls feature the great heroes of the Brotherhood, as they are interred respectfully for all time.

P-2: Trapped hallway

This small hallway is covered from floor to ceiling in gold leaf bas-relief of the ancients instructing their human subjects in the proper preparation of the dead for transportation into the afterlife. The images show mummification techniques and herbal knowledge.

A **trapped pressure plate** closes the secret door to **Area 1**, and ceramic nozzles in the ceiling spray the gold lined hallway with acid as soon as two Medium-size characters are in the corridor (for purposes of this trap, two Small characters equal one Medium character). The spray causes 2d6

acid damage per round for four rounds, with no saving throw. A disabling mechanism located on the bas-relief can disarm the trap and drain the acid through hidden holes in the floor to some unknown repository below the hallway. The trap can be noticed by a searcher with a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check. The disarming mechanism can be spotted quickly with a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check—but only by someone in the eastern half of the corridor. Once the disarming mechanism is spotted, the trap can be shut off easily by anyone.

P-3: Tomb of Skulls

Hundreds upon hundreds of skulls stare out at you from blank black sockets as you open the stone slab that seals this chamber. Behind each skull is a set of canopic jars containing the innards of the monk whose skull is displayed with care within the niche. Dark figures—**8 flameskulls**—suddenly flare up and fly from the corners into the air as the characters advance.

(Flameskull: AC 13, 40 hp; +5 to hit x2, range 30 ft., 3d6 fire damage; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic; spell attack +5, save DC 13; [at will] *mage hand*; [1st level, x3] *magic missile*, *shield*; [2nd level, x2] *blur*, *flaming sphere*; [3rd level, x1] *fireball*)

P-4. Mausoleum of the Thirsting Ones

This roughly rectangular room is lined with nine sarcophagi. If the PCs explore this area during daylight hours (if the GM is feeling particularly kind to the player characters) the **8 vampire spawn** that hide throughout the Palace and Mausoleum are found resting here. Vampire spawn encountered and destroyed in the palace should be taken from the numbers in this area of the dungeon. Hidden behind the eighth sarcophagus is the secret entrance to **Area 6**.

(Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

If characters enter this room during daylight hours, **1d4 vampire spawn** are already awakened in the chamber, as they need little sleep. The others are resting or regenerating in their sarcophagi. If the encounter occurs at night, subtract the number of vampire spawn already defeated from the number originally found within the room. These remaining vampires hide within the chamber as they hear the PCs approach, usually *spider climbing* along the ceiling or next to their sarcophagus waiting to spring a trap. They target priests and spellcasters first, rogues and bards second, saving up for the fighters last. They gang attack, seeking to overwhelm casters quickly. If Nestrij has been encountered and forced to flee, she organizes the spawn that are within this chamber.

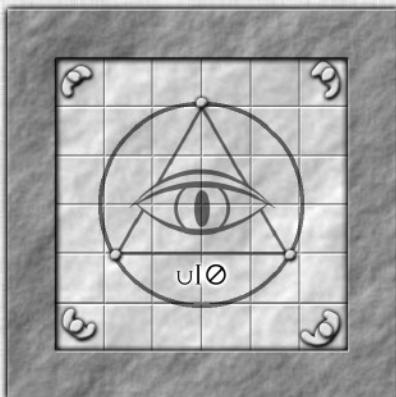
Treasure: Hidden in the crypts are 10,174 sp, 4948 gp, and a *wand of mirror image* (20 charges).

P-5: Chamber of the Hand

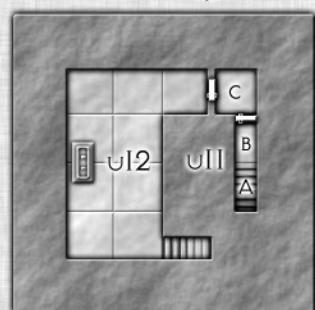
A mosaic of a large hand dominates this chamber within the heart of the Lower Pyramid.

Anyone making a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check

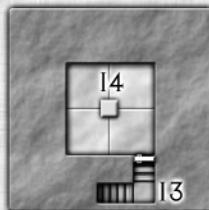
THE PYRAMID OF AMRA



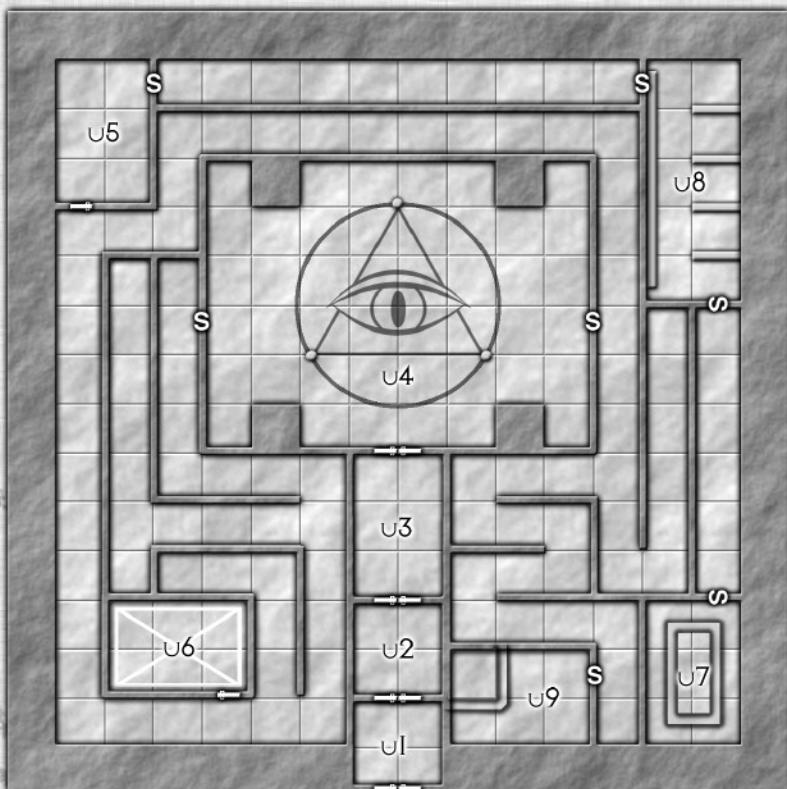
TOMB OF C'NOSRETEP



CHAMBER OF
THE BOOK

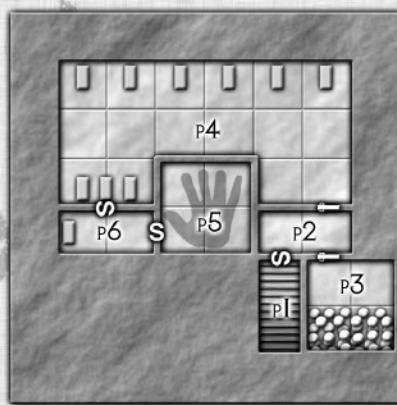


UPPER CHAMBERS



PYRAMID OF
AMRA

1 SQUARE = 10 FEET



LOWER CHAMBERS

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recognizes a depression in the palm of the hand that is the exact shape and size of an *amulet of lotus master*. Placing the sacred amulet into the palm depression causes a great rumbling and grinding sound to begin. The floor rises, moving the hand upward toward the ceiling. Players have two rounds to either get out of the room or get onto the palm and ride it up to **Area 4, the Upper Chambers**. Those remaining within the room but not standing upon the hand must make successful DC 15 Dex saving throws or be crushed against the ceiling for 6d6 bludgeoning damage.

If characters place the disk within the center of the palm, after much complex grinding and turning of gears that have not moved in centuries, the palm they stand upon turns in a spiral ever upward looking as if they will be crushed against the ceiling. Just at the last moment a circular opening twists above their heads; they are now in a new chamber. The mosaic below the party's feet is now of a different pattern, the hand has become a great celestial eye, and the *Amulet of Lotus Master* a strange glowing iris within its center.

P-6. False Crypt of C'nosretep

This chamber is filled with the dust of a millennium. Its dark diorite walls reflect little light. At one end of the chamber is a 9-foot-long sarcophagus, also of dark diorite stone. The top is carved in the likeness of C'nosretep, grasping a lotus within his hands and wearing a headband with a serpent upon his brow.

Touching the diorite sarcophagus sets off the *teleport trap*; the triggering character is teleported inside the sarcophagus unless he or she makes a successful DC 18 Wis saving throw. Inside the sarcophagus, a character is magically incapacitated. They are awake and aware of the passage of time, but unable to take any action other than to lie there and stare at the sealed lid above them. Unless released from outside, they will die of thirst in three days. When a character is teleported into the sarcophagus, anyone inside the sarcophagus is simultaneously teleported out; the two figures swap positions.

Unfortunately, sealed inside this sarcophagus is **Eshtartha, a lich** and former advisor and lover of C'nosretep. He wanted her to join him in eternity as a vampire, but she defied him and instead transformed herself into a lich to increase her power as a spellcaster. For her audacity, C'nosretep tricked her and caused her to set off the *teleport trap*, imprisoning her.

The sarcophagus is sealed with resin. It can be opened only if metal wedges are hammered into the crack between the lid and the case to break the seal. If characters don't have wedges in their gear, their only recourse is to smash the lid open. Smashing the lid takes 60 points of bludgeoning or force damage, but only attacks that do 15 or more damage at a blow have any effect; weaker attacks simply bounce off.

Eshtartha was imprisoned so quickly that she never had time to fully develop her power as a lich. Because of this, her spells top out at 6th level and she can't take legendary actions. These limitations drop her CR to 16—which is still high enough to be frightening to a party of level 12 or 13 characters.

Tactics: The only thought in the mind of Eshtartha is for revenge against C'nosretep. To this end, as she appears before the PCs, she raises her hands and begs them not to attack her. If they press the attack she has no choice but to defend herself, but her goal in combat is to escape. She uses the spells at her disposal to affect her escape. Should the PCs listen to her, she tells them the sad tale of a love betrayed and countless years of imprisonment. Then, much to the surprise of the PCs, she asks if she might join them as they venture further into the Pyramid so that she may help them defeat C'nosretep. Should they agree, they have gained a somewhat unusual ally, but an ally nonetheless. Although she is truly evil through and through, Eshtartha keeps her promise to help the PCs against C'nosretep and the other dangers in the remainder of the Pyramid. After the adventure, should Eshtartha survive, she parts company with the PCs, but promises to remain their ally should they desire such.

Treasure: Hidden within the diorite sarcophagus are a 1,000 gp ruby necklace and a *staff of the adder*.

(Eshtartha [Lich]): AC 17, 135 hp; +12 to hit, 3d6 cold damage and the target must make a successful DC 18 Con saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute or until they make a successful save at the end of their turn [paralyzing touch]; spell attack +12, save DC 20; prepares the following spells: [at will] mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost; [1st level, x4] detect magic, magic missile, shield, thunderwave; [2nd level, x3] detect thoughts, invisibility, Melf's acid arrow, mirror image; [3rd level, x3] animate dead, counterspell, dispel magic, fireball; [4th level, x3] blight, dimension door; [5th level, x3] cloudkill, scrying; [6th level, x1] disintegrate, globe of invulnerability; 3/day can succeed on a saving throw if just failed; has tactical advantage against being turned)

Pyramid of Amra: Upper Chambers

Secret doors in this part of the pyramid can be found with careful searching and a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check, or at a glance with successful DC 20 Wis (Perception) checks. They are not trapped or locked unless text indicates otherwise. Locked secret doors can be opened with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dex check.

U-1: Portal of the Eye and the Test of Hospitality

Dominating this room is a 10-foot-wide by 10-foot-tall arched doorway inlaid with an eye set into the center of a triangle. Inscribed upon the Portal of the Eye are words in a long forgotten script. They can be read with magic or by a character who makes a successful DC 15 Int (History) check.

"When come unbidden to our rest, politic and manners serve you best. In order to proceed thus shall be the first test. Where rings of metal doth fail the fist may do; thus shall this wisdom then guide you."

Opening the door requires a simple knock loud enough to cause an echo, which is easily done, as the door is hollow. Should there be more than one knock or a knock that is loud, i.e. pounding on the door or trying to break it down, the *glyph of warding* placed on the ceiling *bestows a curse* on the triggering character, who has tactical disadvantage on saving throws and ability checks made with their primary ability until the curse is removed. A successful DC 16 Wis saving throw prevents the curse from taking hold.

U-2: The Test of Friendship

The second chamber is lined with hieroglyphics depicting various aspects of hospitality and preparation for the afterlife to the recently deceased. Runes on the door, when deciphered, pose the basic question to those who would pass its lapis portal. Reading the hieroglyphs requires magic or a successful DC 15 Int (History) check.

"What is the greatest treasure that anyone could have?"

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Answering the word “friendship” automatically disables the *glyph of warding trap* and the great lapis slab slides open, revealing the third test. Uttering any other word triggers the *glyph*. The affected character must make a successful DC 16 Wis saving throw or be cursed with paranoia; until the curse is lifted, they don’t trust their companions. In game terms, they can’t receive benefits from or give benefits to other characters that rely on terms such as “allies” or “willing target.” This includes moving through the spaces of “allies.”

U-3. The Test of Bravery

The letters on this door bear a chilling threat. Characters must use magic or make a successful DC 15 Int (History) check to read them.

“No more riddles for you and I. Gather your courage and prepare to die.”

Upon reading these words, a *glyph of fear* is triggered. Every character in the corridor (Areas U1, U2, and U3) must make successful DC 16 Wis saving throw or be affected by a *fear* spell centered on the door to Area U4.

Opening the door requires only that someone press the palm of their hand against the door, and it swings open at the touch, revealing **Area U-4: The Chamber of the Eye**.

U-4: Chamber of the Eye

As the PCs enter this large chamber it seems to pulsate with some unknown power that bears down upon them like a stack of bricks. The feeling continues as they linger, as if someone were continually adding another brick and yet another brick to the stack. After a few moments this sensation subsides.

At the center of the room is a large mosaic image of an eye in the center of a pyramid. The pupils are slits like those of snakes and there is a golden sconce imbedded in each of the three corners of the triangle surrounding the eye.

If the PCs entered the chamber through the front portals, something appears to be missing from the center of the eye where the iris would normally be.

There are secret doors hidden in the center of the eastern and western walls. They are not trapped or locked.

The sconces at the points of the pyramid are the keys to lowering the upper pyramid and proceeding to the lair of C’nosretep and the Chamber of the Book. Close examination of each sconce at the points of the triangle reveals barely noticeable runes that can be read with magic or with a successful DC 15 Int (History) check.

“Gathered by the candle flame, bring down the sky but not for shame, as beyond the sky lie riches true, the master buried in his tomb, Faithfully guards forever in spirit form, the Tome of Mind and Body borne to us in the worlds fond spring, golden words of Arden ring the truth which all devout should know, For the Wise do see their powers grow. Seek its knowledge you who are Brave, to your weakness be not slaves.”

U-5: Chamber of the Monkey

Once the burial place of all members of the House of the Monkey, this chamber now houses the **Cie Tzu**, a former master now become a wraith. This room has been influenced by powerful evil forces, and Cie Tzu enjoys the benefits of a permanent *protection from good* spell.

(Wraith: AC 13, 85 hp; +6 to hit, 4d8 + 3 necrotic damage and the target must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or its maximum hp are reduced by the same amount [life drain]; as an action, can reanimate a creature slain within 1 minute, within 10 ft. as a specter; can move through solid objects and other creatures as if they were difficult terrain but takes 5 force damage if it ends its turn in a solid object)

Treasure: A careful search of Cie Tzu’s crypt combined with a successful DC 20 Int (Investigation) check uncovers a *staff of frost*.

U-6. Mausoleum of the Wind

Beyond the locked stone door is a square chamber with a 15-foot-high ceiling. Suspended in the air in the center of the room is a blue candle with a brilliant glowing flame.

The floor of the entire chamber is a *wall of stone trap*. The first character who steps into the chamber dispels the floor, exposing a pit 150 feet deep. A 6-inch ledge encircles the pit. When the floor disappears, the character can make a DC 15 Dex saving throw to grab the ledge and prevent a fall to the bottom.

Walking along the ledge without falling requires a successful DC 12 Dex (Acrobatics) check. A brave character can try grabbing the candle while jumping across the pit; they need a successful melee attack against AC 9 to grab the candle and a successful DC 17 Dex (Acrobatics) check to stick their landing on the narrow ledge. The candle can be lassoed with a successful attack roll against AC 9, but if the attack fails, the candle has a 1-in-3 chance of falling down the pit. The safest and surest way to get the candle is to use a net with a 15-foot handle, or magic such as *magic hand, levitation, or fly*.

Once the candle is moved, characters have 1 round to leave the chamber before the door slams shut and locks. Anyone standing in the doorway takes 4d6 bludgeoning damage, or half damage with a successful DC 12 Dex saving throw.

As the door slams shut, the ledge also retracts the wall and disappears. Anyone standing on the ledge falls into the pit, with no saving throw.

Treasure: The candle is a *candle of the wise*.

Quest Candles: Candle of the Wise, Candle of the Faithful, and Candle of Bravery

These three candles are the three marks of success at the challenges presented. They have no magical abilities, but they are necessary components to access the later stage of this adventure.

U-7: Chamber of the Dragon

Beyond the locked secret stone portal is a single white candle floating 6 feet above a raised dais in the center of the chamber. Coiled around the dais are **2 giant vampiric constrictor snakes**, their scales rasping dully against the stone as they turn their slitted eyes to face the PCs. These creatures have stats identical to a giant constrictor snake, but they are undead, they do necrotic damage, and they regain hit points equal to the necrotic damage.

(Giant Vampiric Constrictor Snake: AC 12, 60 hp; +6 to hit, 2d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled and restrained [constrict]; +6 to hit a grappled target, 2d6 + 4 piercing damage plus 1d8 necrotic damage [bite];

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the target's maximum hp are reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage and the snake heals the same number of hp)

This chamber is proofed against conjuration magic; conjuration spells fail automatically here, and the spell slot is expended. Crucially, this includes *mage hand*.

Treasure: The candle is a *candle of the faithful*

U-8: Library of the Ancients

This hidden chamber contains rack upon rack of scrolls and tomes from around the world gathered in times of peace by the Brotherhood of Light. Now the dusty library is administrated by the Brotherhood of Set, who fear that destroying the arcane knowledge held within these tomes may bring other powers into play.

A **strangely beautiful being with the head of an ass** turns toward the PCs as they enter and begins chanting in an arcane tongue. This is Rhylon, an asswe're mage. He has stats identical to an NPC mage but with the addition of the asswe're's bray attack and improved armor class and hit points.

(Rhylon [Mage]): AC 15, 50 hp; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage; spell attack +6, save DC 14; prepares the following spells: [at will] *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*; [1st level, x4] *detect magic*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*; [2nd level, x3] *misty step*, *suggestion*; [3rd level, x3] *counterspell*, *fireball*, *fly*; [4th level, x3] *greater invisibility*, *ice storm*; [5th level, x1] *cone of cold*; as an action, can force all creatures within 30 feet to make successful DC 14 Wis saving throws or be affected as by a *confusion* spell for 1d4 + 3 rounds [bray]; *shapechanger*)

Rhylon also has the following scrolls ready to use: *control water*, *dispel magic*, *fire shield*, *legend lore*, *prismatic spray*, *protection from energy*, and *stone shape*. He also keeps three vials of *universal solvent* in a pouch on his belt.

Rhylon is the only living being allowed in the Pyramid of Amra. He is keeper of the tomes and scrolls within this great repository, and spends many long hours here studying their wealth of knowledge.

Tactics: Rhylon despises humans and humanoids, and never assumes his human form—he considers it weak and ugly compared to his hybrid form. He undoubtedly hears the characters coming, thanks to their destruction of doors and setting off traps throughout the Pyramid, and the loud grating noise of the Hand rising from the bowels of the structure. As characters try to open the door to this chamber, Rhylon casts *mage armor*, and also uses scrolls to cast *fire shield* and *protection from energy* (choose your energy wisely). He casts *grease* on the floor just inside the door and gets ready to use a scroll of *prismatic spray* on the first characters through the doorway. If hard pressed in combat, he prefers escape by any means over death. He's likely to rely on *greater invisibility*, *fly*, or *misty step* to make his escape.

Treasure: The shelves are lined with many books.

- 18 of the books contain historical and genealogical data that would be of value to loremasters and sages. These books are valued at 3d6 x 100 gp each.

- One of the books is a *vacuous grimoire*: It looks like any other book on a possibly interesting subject, but a character who reads even one word must make two DC 15 Wis saving throws. The first is to avoid losing 1 point of Intelligence and 1 point of Charisma; the second is to avoid losing 2 points of Wisdom. All losses are permanent unless restored by magic.

- One of the books is a *manual of bodily health*.

- One of the books is a treatise on demonology and summoning by the

noted summoner Yelseila Warcret. It includes the spells *banishment*, *contact other plane*, *plane shift*, *sanctuary*, and *gate*. Each of these spells has a 15% chance of failing the first time a character tries casting it, because Yelseila was quite mad and his spidery scrawl is suspect at best. If the spell fails, it is unusable forever (or until the character finds a correct version somewhere else). The tome includes the true names of six extradimensional entities that can be contacted with the formulae in this book. Each hour spent dabbling in the deep mysteries compiled in this tome incurs a 1% per hour cumulative chance of the reader going completely insane (permanently stunned), with no saving throw. The names and agendas of these entities are left up to you.

- One book contains a *headband of intellect* in a hollow space carved into the pages. This *headband* only grants its benefit to good-aligned spellcasters.

U-9: Chamber of the Hands

A secret door opens into this chamber. At the far end of the chamber is a 10-foot wide dais. Over the dais, 6 feet in the air, floats a single glowing candle.

Twenty feet beyond the entrance to this chamber is a **hidden pressure plate** which when triggered releases a thin layer of quick-setting (dries in 6 seconds) *sovereign glue* across the 40-foot section of floor that lies before the altar. Characters who are still in the affected area six seconds later are glued to the floor. At that point, a sprayer drops from the ceiling and sprays acid throughout the entire 40-foot area in front of the dais. The acid does 2d6 acid damage per round for five rounds.

Characters who are glued to the floor can make a DC 12 Dex saving throw to determine whether only their boots are glued down, or if the glue penetrated their footwear and glued their feet to the floor. Characters wearing sandals, slippers, or no footwear at all have tactical disadvantage on this saving throw. Even characters who get out of the affected area immediately are still coated with *sovereign glue*, which can be quite a problem; weapons may be glued into scabbards or hands, backpacks and pouches and scroll tubes glued shut, hats glued onto heads. Use your imagination to lay some interesting and amusing challenges in front of the characters who were sprayed with glue.

This chamber is proofed against conjuration magic; conjuration spells fail automatically here, and the spell slot is expended. Crucially, this includes *mage hand*.

Treasure: The candle floating above the dais is a *candle of the brave*.

U-10. Upper Chamber of the Eye

Characters need to place the three candles (of the wise, of the faithful, and of the brave) into the sconces at the points of the pyramid symbol in the center of **Chamber 4: Lower Chamber of the Eye** and light them. As candlelight fills the room, a grating of stone and metal starts its low rumbling within the deep recesses of the pyramid. The floor the PCs stand on feels as if it is rising to crush them against the dusty limestone ceiling. But then the ceiling vanishes before their eyes in a flash, as the top portion of the Step Pyramid of Amra descends to meet the lower portion, sealing off this chamber with a new roof of shimmering blue enameled stone, which replaces the one that stood before. Four stone statues now occupy the corners of the chamber, their megalithic hands against the roof as if their very eminence supports the starred sky above.

The new chamber is a perfect square with no apparent entrances or exits.

If characters placed the *amulet of the lotus master* within the depression in the center of the eye before placing or lighting the candles, the room is bathed with a shimmering light and an orb forms in the center of the room. The image of a gentle-looking man of great grace

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and indeterminate age gazes at the group with a pure benevolence and begins to speak:

“Know that I am Ozykathalin, first and last Master of the Lotus within this ancient and holy place. I am he who knew the voice of Arden; I am he who strides in the realms of light, purest of all energy forever alive beyond the Gates of Wisdom. Wise too are you who have discovered the secrets of this place, but one secret still you do seek. To gain it, you must defeat he who was the betrayer. Know you that C’nosretep’s worst betrayal was not to those who nurtured him, but to his own soul. Lost in his self-hatred, he did not realize the gifts that friendship and brotherhood offer. As allies, you have gained much and risked much in your journey thus far, and to those who risk all for one another and their faith are granted the greatest of treasures. I grant you one boon before I open the way to you. Ask of me what you will, and should it be within the power of light to grant this thing, it is yours. Ozykathalin has spoken.”

Ozykathalin grants the PCs one *limited wish* (that’s one total, not one apiece) before lifting his hands to reveal a shimmering staircase that leads to a hidden chamber among the “stars” **U-11 A.** The shimmering stairs are made of insubstantial light but are easily climbed.

If characters did not place the *amulet of the lotus master within the eye in the center of the eye* before placing or lighting the candles at each point of the triangle, the floor still rises and the ceiling descends as before. However, much to the dismay of the PCs, two of the statues that supported the upper portion of the Step Pyramid animate as **2 stone golems** and attack.

(Stone Golem: AC 17, 178 hp; +10 to hit x2, 3d8 + 6 bludgeoning damage [slam]; each target the golem can see must make a successful DC 17 Wis saving throw or be slowed for 1 minute; a slowed target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect with a successful save; the golem has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic and no magic or power can alter its shape)

After defeating the stone golems, allow the PCs to search the chamber. Searching along the ceiling, combined with a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check, discovers a secret panel about 20 feet above the floor of the chamber. Beyond the secret panel is **Area 11A: Stairway into Darkness.** The distance to the secret panel must be crossed by jumping, climbing, flying, or some other inventive means.

U-II: Three Final Tests

U-IIA: Stairway into Darkness

This 10-foot-long, 5-foot-wide stairway is shrouded in deepest blackness.

The stairway is bathed in a *darkness* spell. A *daylight* spell can negate the darkness, which in turn dispels the *daylight* spell as well, allowing other forms of illumination to work. *Dispel magic* has the same effect.

U-IIB: First Stone Door

At the top of the stairs is a stone door set along a 5-foot-wide stone platform. The door is 6 feet tall and is carved with the likeness of a youthful man of great physical build, kneeling before the dark god Set, who towers over the man with his arm outstretched. The man grasps Set’s wrist in both of his smaller hands and appears to be drinking blood from the wrist of the god. Anyone touching the door must make a successful DC 16 Con saving throw or be affected by a **flesh to stone trap**. At the same time, the staircase flattens into a ramp and the stone door begins

sliding downward, pushing everyone on the ramp down toward the trap door, where they will fall 20 feet to the floor of Area U-10. When the door reaches the bottom of the ramp, the whole mechanism resets so characters can try again. Unless characters can find a way to open the door without touching it, their only recourse is to keep trying until someone makes the save against the trap.

U-IIC: Second Door

This door features the carved image of Set, with C’nosretep sitting on his lap, rewriting the *tome of mind and body* with a raven quill feather in his hand. The door is sealed with an *arcane lock*; unless it’s opened magically, someone with thief’s tools needs to make a successful DC 25 Dex check to open it. The door is also guarded with a **glyph of warding trap** that triggers a *dispel magic* spell at 5th level, which affects everyone in Area U-11. The trap goes off when anyone tries to open the door without uttering the key word—which no one among the PCs has any means of knowing, but Eshtartha does! The *dispel magic* affects any protective or boosting spells characters have cast on themselves preparatory to their final showdown with C’nosretep.

U-I2: Tomb of C’nosretep

The second door opens into a chamber shrouded in magical darkness and filled with a great aura of evil. A quiet, reserved chuckle reverberates off the low ceiling.

The magical darkness in this chamber can’t be dispelled by any means; it’s baked into the stones and saturates every surface. Darkvision is useless; *light* spells are extinguished. A *daylight* spell casts dim illumination for 30 feet. The twilight gloom reveals a golden sarcophagus set against the middle of the western wall. The **unholy symbol of Set** carved into the sarcophagus gives C’nosretep tactical advantage on saving throws, reduces the cost of biting as a legendary action to 1 action, and gives characters who are not Lawful Good tactical disadvantage on saving throws against C’nosretep’s charm ability.

A narrow stone staircase in the southwestern corner of the chamber leads upward into the darkness beyond.

C’nosretep stands to greet the PCs, stripped to the waist. His lips are pulled back in a deadly smile to reveal his gleaming white fangs, his head is shaved but for a long braid down his back. His pale, bluish skin ripples with muscle and a deep inner strength. A cruel voice calls to the PCs as they enter the chamber.

“So champions, you seek to take the book from C’nosretep? Very well, let your screams reverberate from the Pyramid of Amra for all time. Know as your souls howl toward hell that it was the Champion of Set who sent you on your path. Just as I defeated Ozykathalin, so too shall your blood slake my undying thirst!” As he boasts, the dark seal of Set on his magnificent stone sarcophagus pulses with evil energy.

(C’nosretep [Vampire]: AC 19, 144 hp; attacks twice, with no more than one bite; +9 to hit, 1d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage or the target is grappled [unarmed strike]; +9 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 4 piercing damage plus 3d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target’s maximum hp by an equal amount, and C’nosretep gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 20 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn; one humanoid within 30 ft. must make a successful DC 17 Wis saving throw or be charmed by C’nosretep; 3/day, can choose to succeed on a saving throw if just failed; 1/day, can call 2d4 swarms of bats or rats; can use 3 legendary actions/round [move, unarmed strike, bite]; transforms to mist at 0 hp; shapeshifter)

QUESTS OF DOOM: VAMPIRES & LICHES

C'nosretep wears *bracers of defense* (+2 AC) and a *ring of protection* (+1 AC, +1 on saving throws).

Tactics: Because of his legendary resistance and the effect of the unholy symbol of Set, C'nosretep is more concerned about fighters and rogues than arcane spellcasters. The exception is anyone who can inflict radiant damage to shut down his regeneration; those characters are his first targets, followed by whoever does the most damage. He tends to use his charm ability on his turn, saving his unarmed strikes and bites for legendary actions. If C'nosretep is defeated, he howls in rage and throws his fists into the air before turning to vapor.

Sarcophagus of C'nosretep: The sarcophagus in this room is C'nosretep's chief resting place, but he has others. He can use any of the coffins in Area P-4, or even the trapped sarcophagus in Area P-6 (its enervating magic doesn't affect him, and he can slip in and out through tiny cracks while gaseous). Unless all of those coffins have been consecrated or destroyed, C'nosretep has a chance to heal and return. He won't use the sarcophagus in this chamber while it's surrounded by enemies unless he's truly desperate.

This stone sarcophagus, covered in semiprecious jewels and gold leaf, has the seal of Set placed upon its lid. The seal provides C'nosretep with the benefits listed above. Destroying the seal eliminates those advantages; if this happens C'nosretep becomes visibly weaker. The seal is destroyed by a single attack (against AC 8) that deals 25 or more points of bludgeoning or force damage from a spell or magic weapon; anything less has no effect. A successful use of *dispel magic* against 8th-level magic suppresses the seal's effect for 1d4 rounds.

The sarcophagus is very heavy and tough. Removing the lid requires a successful DC 30 Str (Athletics) check; the DC is reduced to 20 if characters use wedges, ropes and pulleys, or strong prybars (a sword or spear is not a prybar; weapons will break or bend before they shift this massive stone). Alternatively, the lid can be smashed open by 50 points of bludgeoning or force damage, but attacks that do less than 15 damage have no effect. Of course, if C'nosretep is inside the sarcophagus, he's not likely to stick around while characters smash it or pry it open. He can slip in and out effortlessly through tiny cracks while gaseous.

Treasure: The lid of the sarcophagus is encrusted with 2,000 gp worth of precious gems and gold inlay. If characters smash their way into the sarcophagus, this value is cut in half. Inside the box is a solid gold funeral mask of the first Master of the Lotus worth 5,000 gp.

13: Final Test of Wisdom

A plain stone door stands at the top of the staircase. Nearly invisible hieroglyphics carved on the door can be spotted with a successful DC 20 Wis (Perception) check, or automatically by someone who runs his hand over the surface. Magic or a successful DC 15 Int (History) check can translate them.

"The Words of Arden lie beyond this door, ancient tome of the wisdom bound in stone, to win it you must thwart this poem. A Monkey has it, and so does a Cat. The Merchant often has his finger on it; Judges and Monks seek to perfect the art of it."

The answer to the riddle is "**balance**." If answered correctly, the stone slab slides away revealing a chamber beyond. Answering the riddle incorrectly sets off a **crushing ceiling trap** unless it's been detected and disarmed. Someone searching the door for a trap finds it with a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check, and it can be disarmed with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dex check. Answering the riddle incorrectly or botching the attempt to disarm the trap triggers it. The ceiling descends in 1 round, doing 13d6 bludgeoning damage to everyone who didn't flee instantly from Area 13 (or who didn't make a successful DC 14 Dex saving throw, if you prefer).

QUESTS OF DOOM: VAMPIRES & LICHES

14: Chamber of the Book

Sitting atop a stone pedestal in the center of this tiny room is the *tome of mind and body*. See "New Magic Items" for details.

New Magic Items

Amulet of the Darkstar

Very Rare Wondrous item (requires attunement)

When grasped or worn, the *amulet*'s user can see in complete darkness as if they had darkvision 60 ft. If the wearer already has darkvision, the range of their darkvision increase by 60 ft. Once per day, the *amulet* can be used to cast *darkness* when the command word "Necrodarkanum" is spoken.

Amulet of the Lightstar

Very Rare Wondrous item (requires attunement)

Twice per day the *amulet of the lightstar* allows the bearer to cast *daylight*. Once per day, the bearer can cast *color spray*.

Mask of the Monkey

Rare Wondrous item (requires attunement)

A *masque of the monkey* is a wooden mask carved in the likeness of a shrieking spider monkey. An individual wearing the *mask* has tactical advantage on Dex (Acrobatics) checks and Dex saving throws.

Medallion of the Lotus Master

Very Rare Wondrous item (requires attunement)

This item grants a +2 bonus to armor class against melee attacks and a +3 bonus to armor class against ranged attacks.

Shimmering Lotus Flower

Rare Wondrous item (requires attunement)

Once per day, this item grants the wearer the effect of a *bless* spell (1d4 is added to attack rolls and saving throws). The effect lasts one minute.

Tome of Mind and Body

Very Rare Wondrous item (requires attunement)

The *tome of mind and body* is a powerful magical text usable only by monks. Studying its pages for one month grants the following special benefits to the user.

- Permanent increases of +2 to Wisdom and +1 to Dexterity.
- The student gains knowledge of the secret *Touch of Life and Death*. This is a ki power that can be used immediately after making an unarmed strike. The monk spends 1 ki, and the target of the attack must make a Con saving throw. If the saving throw succeeds, there is no further effect. If the saving throw fails, the target creature's maximum hit points are reduced by an amount equal to the damage from the attack, and the monk heals the same number of hit points.
- Due to C'nosretep's twisting of the words contained in the text, a monk reading the *tome* must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw or their alignment permanently changes to chaotic evil. No magic short of a *wish* can change the alignment back again.

The *tome of mind and body* can only be studied once in a monk's lifetime; further study grants no more special powers or ability increases. Once completed, the book loses its power to grant special benefits to any other monk for one full year. After that time, another monk may study its ancient lore.

New Monster

Therianthrope, Asswere Monk

XP 200 (CR 1)

LE Medium monstrosity (shapechanger)

Initiative +3

DEFENSE

AC 15

hp: 33 (6d8 + 6)

Resistance: Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical or nonadamantine weapons

OFFENSE

Speed: 30 ft.

Multiattack: In hybrid form, an asswere monk makes two melee attacks, one of which can be with its spear. In human form, it attacks twice with its spear. In donkey form, it bites once or can bray.

Melee Attack—Bite (donkey and hybrid form): +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 + 3 bludgeoning damage.

Melee Attack—Spear (human and hybrid form): +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d8 + 3 piercing damage.

Ranged Attack—Spear (human and hybrid form): +5 to hit (range 20 ft./60 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 1d6 + 3 piercing damage.

STATISTICS

Str 10 (+0), **Dex** 16 (+3), **Con** 12 (+1), **Int** 10 (+0), **Wis** 14 (+2),
Cha 11 (+0)

Languages: Common

Skills: Deception +2, Perception +2

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Bray: An asswere can utter a loud bray as an action. All creatures within 30 feet that hear it must make successful DC 12 Wis saving throws or be affected as by a confusion spell for 1d4 + 3 rounds. A creature that saves successfully can't be affected by the same asswere's bray for 24 hours.

Shapechanger: The asswere can change from its donkey form or human form to its hybrid form as a bonus action. Changing from donkey form directly to human form or vice versa takes an action. In donkey form, it is indistinguishable from a donkey.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Temperate and warm land

Organization: Solitary, gang (2–5), or herd (5–8)

Therianthropes (sometimes called anthromorphs or weretherions) are creatures whose natural form is of a normal animal, but they can also assume human form or a hybrid form that combines traits of both forms. Although they are shapechangers like lycanthropes, therianthropes are not cursed or diseased and they can't "infect" anyone else with their ability. In human form, therianthropes have slightly feral characteristics, such as slightly larger than normal canine teeth, extended fingernails, slightly pointed ears, or a barely noticeable covering of very fine hair on their entire bodies.

The asswere usually changes into its humanoid form when it detects the approach of living creatures. It disguises itself as a merchant, peasant, or similar humanoid in order to lure its prey in. When ready to attack, the asswere changes into its hybrid form. It almost always assumes this shape when engaged in combat, because it can use a weapon (they prefer spears) as well as biting.

Sewers of the Underguild

By Easey W. Christofferson and Bill Webb

Sewers of the Underguild is an adventure designed for characters of at least 11th level, and characters up to 15th level will find plenty of challenges. Hidden within these narrow passages and filth-filled channels is a guild of vampiric rogues, led by their master Sangre and his aide, a nycaloth called Ankoz. Deadly traps abound, so a skillful rogue will be a lifesaver. Because of the high likelihood of desperate combat with numerous vampiric and monstrous opponents, it is suggested that a cleric and at least two fighters be prepared to beat back the many watchdog monsters the guild employs. You can hide the locales in *Sewers of the Underguild* in any ruin or location that fits your campaign purposes. A thriving metropolis that just happens to have a large crime and vampire problem would fit the bill nicely.

In the **Lost Lands** campaign setting of **Frog God Games**, the Underguild is located in the sewers beneath the ruins of Curgantium, the ancient imperial capital of lost Hyperboria. Located at the edge of the modern Kingdom of Foere, the Underguild still finds itself located centrally enough to pull the strings of its weblike network running throughout the former lands of the Hyperborian Empire.

Legend of the Underguild

The site known as the Sewers of the Underguild is the stronghold of the infamous Underguild, an organized crime syndicate ruled by Sangre, the Hand of Death. From within its sewer stronghold, the Underguild has stretched out its clawed fingers into the highest offices of power in the lands. The Underguild traffics not only in stolen merchandise, but also in slaves and information. Their operators, being vampires, have the innate ability to gather documents both arcane and mundane without leaving the slightest trace. Few have attempted to withstand the full might of the Underguild. Their sewer stronghold, hidden in a remote location of the world, is so difficult to find as to create an epic in and of itself.

Legends tell of the exploits of the Hand of Death, and how he has acquired an ancient weapon of truly wondrous power. This thin, frail-looking shortsword, known as the *hollow blade*, is forged from equal parts of positive and negative energy, allowing the vampiric guildmaster the ability to walk amongst the living in broad daylight. The *hollow blade* itself is worth a king's ransom to those of the roguish profession, for though it grants the undead the ability to move about in daylight as the living, it also grants the ability to cleave the undead as if they were living flesh.

The *hollow blade* gives undead a taste of life, and in the hands of a rogue becomes a deadly tool for the destruction of the undead. This fierce shortsword is in the possession of Sangre himself. Sangre guards the sword jealously, even from members of his own guild who would wrest it from his hand. Taking this weapon from Sangre is no easy task.

Locating the Sewers

The ruined city where the Sewers of the Underguild are located should take the party some time to track down. The Underguild itself is a highly secretive organization with its fangs sunk deep into the pulse of nearly every

Dungeon Features

Doors: Bronze-bound hardwood, 2 in. thick. AC 8, 20 hp; DC 20 Str (Athletics) check to break open, DC 15 Dex check to open lock (if locked).

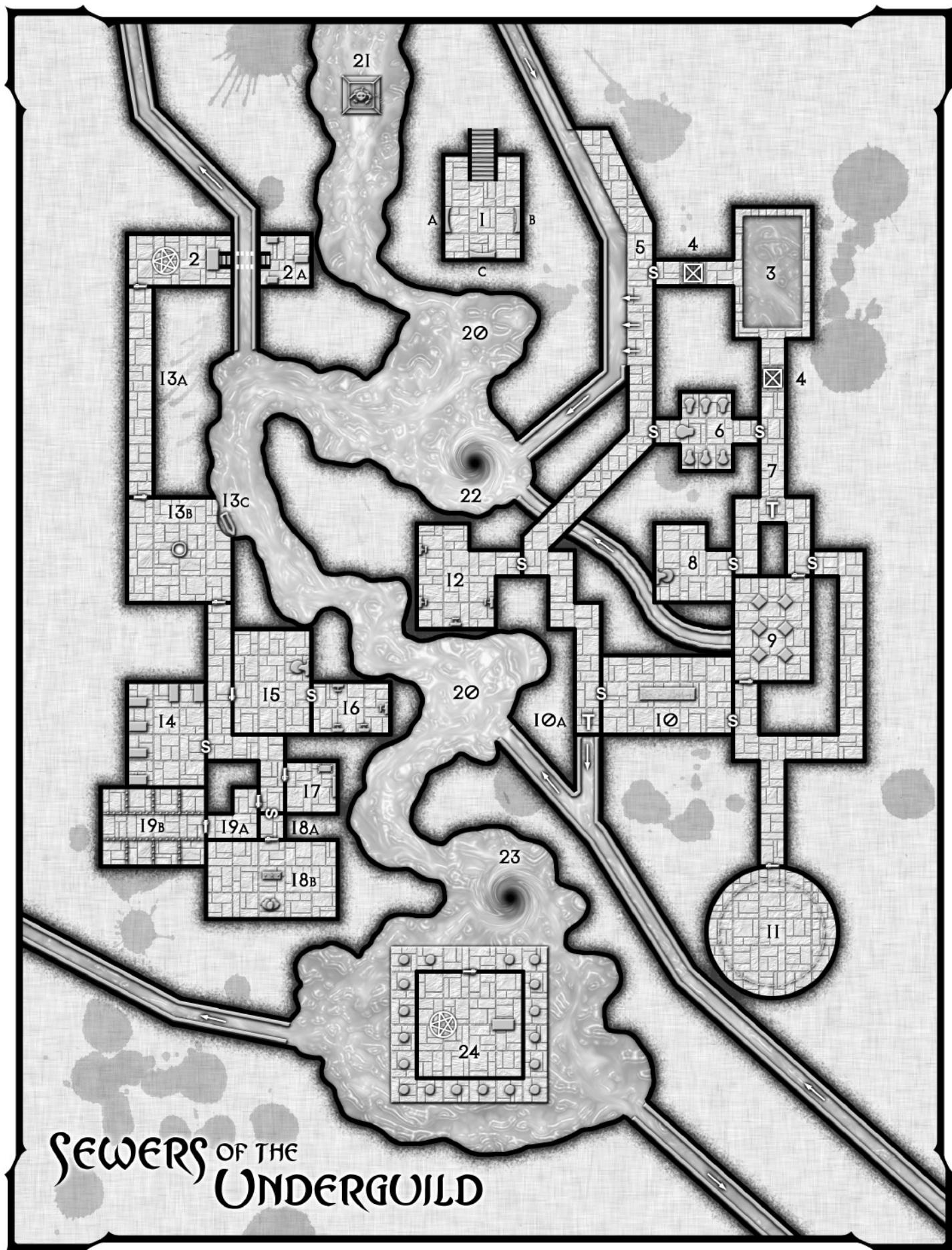
Secret Doors: All secret doors are delicately carved and unless otherwise noted, require a 10-minute search and a DC 15 Int (Investigation) check to locate, or a DC 20 Wis (Perception) check at a glance. A successful DC 12 Dex check is needed to open a secret door.

Sewer Pipes: All sewer pipes are slippery and filled with fast-moving water. The pipes are 5 feet in diameter and made of glazed ceramic. The sewer pipes rest at an average 3 to 4 degree downward slope and are 1/2 to 3/4 filled with raw sewage. Individuals falling into or purposefully leaping into one of the sewage pipes are whisked toward the central sewer drains at a rate of 20 feet per round. Swimming within the pipes requires a DC 10 Str (Athletics) check to tread water to keep from going farther down the pipe, and a DC 15 Str (Athletics) check to swim against the current. Furthermore, individuals falling into the river of filth must also make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw against poison or be poisoned while they are in the river and for 20 minutes after they get out.

Methane Gas: Spells involving fire, such as *burning hands*, *wall of fire*, and *fireball* have a 15% chance of igniting pooled methane gas within the sewers. A roll of 15% or less (or 1 on 1d6) indicates that the spell sets off the methane gas, which in the event of a *fireball* means instantaneous eruption at the point of origin of the spell, affording the caster no saving throw against the spell. In the case of *burning hands*, the spell acts normally for purposes of harming the target, but the caster takes damage equal to that taken by the target of the spell. Likewise, a successful use of any spell that evokes open flame has a 15% chance of dealing 2d6 points of additional damage as it ignites pooled gasses in that area of the dungeon. When PCs enter a new room or corridor while carrying a torch or other open flame, there is the same chance that a small pocket of gas ignites. This deals 2d6 fire damage in a 10-foot radius centered on the flame-bearer. An enclosed flame, such as a lantern, has only a 5% chance.

major city, yet few know of its existence. Perhaps rumors and a hidden map found within the crypt of a previously defeated vampire lead to the sewers. Quite possibly this vampire has ties to a major organized crime syndicate in the PCs' base city, thus setting the wheels of the plot in motion. However you choose to lead the PCs to the adventure's launching point, they are assumed to have uncovered the secret base of the Underguild and need but find the entrance and proceed either to glory or to doom.

SEWERS OF THE UNDERGUILD



Keyed Locations

Refer to the Sewers of the Underguild Map.

1: Entryway and the Silver Skull Seal of the Underguild

Hidden beneath the fountain is a stone staircase that leads down to this chamber, roughly 40 feet below the surface. Engraved in the center of the floor is the symbol of a silver inlaid skull, pierced crossways with two knives. The canine teeth of the skull are elongated and blackened.

Three archways filled with swirling orange, green, and yellow mist are found in the eastern, western, and southern walls, respectively.

Living beings that cross over or otherwise touch the silver skull emblem on the floor set off an *alarm* spell that immediately alerts all vampires within the sewers, unless the PCs pour a sacrifice of fresh blood upon the fangs of the skull within two rounds of entering the chamber. Anyone who examines the chamber from the doorway and makes a successful DC 10 Int (Investigation) or Wis (Medicine) check notices the dried blood that looks as if it was poured on the silvered skull. The *alarm* spell and the magical trap (below) can be noted with *detect magic*. The ceiling trap is also noticed if the Int (Investigation) check scores 15 or higher.

Sixty seconds after the first character steps into the room, two things happen. First, a *wall of stone* spell seals off the staircase leading to the surface. A few words of arcane nature are heard in whispered tones as the spell is activated. Anyone who hears the whispering realizes a magical trap is being triggered; a character who succeeds on a DC 15 Int (Arcana—trained characters only) check realizes that a *wall of stone* is in the making and has just enough time to attempt a counterspell. On the next round, the ceiling begins descending in a crushing trap. It reaches its lowest point at the end of two rounds, does 12d6 bludgeoning damage to creatures in the chamber, then resets. Once triggered, the ceiling mechanism can't be disabled from inside this chamber; the pumps must be turned off in areas **12: Eastern Pump Room** and **16: Western Pump Room**.

1A: Archway of Orange Swirling Mist

This archway is filled with glowing and swirling orange mist. Surrounding its doorframe are several silver skulls embedded in the wall, their eye sockets filled with pure amber. Attempts to detect and determine magical effects indicate that the door acts similarly to a *dimension door* spell, and that there is powerful abjuration magic tied to the mists. Individuals entering this swirling portal are teleported bodily and with all of their possessions to **Area 2**.

Attempting to dislodge the glowing petrified amber from the doorframe sets off the *glyph of warding lightning bolt trap*, resulting in a shocking blast that strikes the offender and anyone standing in a straight line behind him, doing 8d6 lightning damage or half damage with a successful DC 14 Dex saving throw.

1B: Archway of Yellow Swirling Mist

This archway of yellow swirling mist looks as unappealing as stepping into a cloud of mustard gas; sickly vapors of brimstone and offal increase as one takes each step closer to the archway. A series of cow skulls, cast in bronze, surrounds the doorframe of this archway. The skulls' eyes glow like pure sapphires. Stepping through the portal instantly teleports the individual and all of their belongings to **Area 11**. Touching the cow skulls triggers a *fireball trap* that does 8d6 fire damage to everyone in the chamber. The character who touched the skull gets no saving throw.

1C: Archway of Green Swirling Mist

Similar to the yellow and orange mists of the other two archways, this archway is filled with foul-looking, pea-green mist. The mist chokes the

air around it with a brackish stench of salt and brine. The edges of the archway are carved in the shape of large lizards, with eyes as black as jet yet seeming to have a strange aura about them.

Attempting to pry the jet eye stones from the lizards triggers a *fear trap* that affects everyone in the chamber and on the steps. The spell can be resisted with a successful DC 14 Wis saving throw.

PCs crossing into the foul green mist are teleported instantly to the bottom of the saltwater pool in **Area 3**.

2: Chamber of Ankoz

A large inlaid black onyx pentagram dominates the center of this chamber. An altar lays at the far end of the room, upon which stands the dark figure of **Ankоз the Nycaloth**.

Unless characters enter the lair of Ankoz through the door from **Area 13A** or by some means of teleportation other than coming through the orange swirling mist, he has cast *invisibility* on himself by the time the PCs enter the chamber. If he is reduced to 35 or fewer hit points, he uses his next action to smash through the wall behind the altar and fly away to the south over the river of sewage. He flies to **Area 24**, where he waits, healing (he takes a short rest, if he has an hour) and plotting revenge.

(Ankоз [Nycaloth]): AC 18, 123 hp; makes two melee attacks; +9 to hit, 2d6 + 5 slashing damage and a creature must make a successful DC 16 Con saving throw or take 2d4 slashing damage at the start of each of its turns until it spends an action to make a successful DC 13 Wis (Medicine) check [claw]; each additional attack increases the damage by 2d4 per turn; +9 to hit, 2d12 + 5 slashing damage [greataxe]; [at will] darkness, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *invisibility* (self only), *mirror image*; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic; can substitute teleporting up to 60 ft. for one attack)

Anyone searching the altar and making a successful DC 10 Int (Investigation) check discovers a trigger device within the carved hieroglyphics that causes the entire altar to split open, revealing a staircase leading down to a lower chamber. The trigger device is trapped; the trap is noticed if the Int (Investigation) check result is 15 or higher. The trap can be disarmed with thief's tools and a successful DC 15 Dex check. Pressing the trigger without disarming the *gas trap* ignites a pan of toxic incense that fills the room with lethal smoke, doing 4d8 poison damage, or half damage with a successful DC 15 Con saving throw.

2A: Lower Chamber

This chamber hidden below the false altar of Ankoz holds the yugoloth's true dark altar, completely covered in gold leaf and encrusted with gems and jewels. The altar weighs nearly 400 pounds, with a market value of nearly 4,000 gp in semiprecious gemstones and gold. Lining the walls of this chamber are shelves of captured spellbooks and tomes, as well as rows of scroll cases. Ankoz uses these books to transcribe spells onto scrolls. The books are in very bad shape because of the damp conditions; anyone handling a book must make a successful DC 10 Dex saving throw or it disintegrates in their hands. Scrolls kept in sealed tubes are fine.

There is also a coffin in the chamber; it is one of Sangre's spares.

Treasure: Ankoz's spellbooks, 2 flasks of alchemist's fire, 5 flasks of acid, 1 potion of jump, 1 potion of clairvoyance, an arcane scroll of 2 spells (*haste* and *cone of cold*). A workbench holds a set of jewelry making tools. Another table is covered with expensive beakers and jars, likely valued at over 1,200 gp in alchemical equipment.

Ankoz's spellbooks were all taken from slain adventurers. They are an excellent opportunity to introduce a few new choice spells; perhaps something long lost to all the active arcane archives in the land. You can make any spells you like available to PCs through the books in this chamber, or rule that they are so near falling apart that none would survive being hauled out of the dungeon.

SEWERS OF THE UNDERGUILD

3: Crocodiles in the Pool

The salty smell of briny yet foul water fills the air of this room. An archway to the south heads down a corridor as does a second archway to the west. A narrow walkway along the edge of this room surrounds a pool nearly as wide and long as the room itself, murky and at least 12 feet deep. Lurking in the depths of the pool are **3 vampiric crocodiles**. The vampires of the Underguild have groomed these sewer crocs to crave the blood of humanoids. Vampiric crocodiles reduced to 0 hit points become gaseous and flow toward their funeral jars in **Area 6**.

(Crocodile, Vampiric): AC 12, 19 hp; +4 to hit, 1d10 + 2 piercing damage and the target is grappled and restrained; if the target is already grappled by the crocodile, it takes an extra 1d6 necrotic damage, its maximum hit points are reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage, and the crocodile gains temporary hit points equal to the necrotic damage; CR 1, 200 XP

There is a chance that one or more of PCs might be teleported into the pool. Submerged PCs are allowed a DC 15 Dex saving throw to determine if they held their breath before appearing at the bottom of the pool. Make a Dex (Stealth) check with tactical advantage for the crocodiles and compare the result to the characters' passive Perception scores to determine whether the crocodiles have surprise. With or without surprise, the crocodiles attack immediately.

A ladder stands in the southern end of the pool. Because it's coated in slick concentrations of algae and filth, any character in heavy armor must make a successful DC 10 Dex check to climb out without slipping back into the pool.

4: Pudding in the Pits!

Approximately 20 feet down the western and southern corridors from **Area 3** are a pair of **covered pit traps**, each 40 feet deep by 10 feet across. Each pit contains a black pudding. The black pudding is covered in a permanent *minor illusion* that gives the appearance of each pit containing a pile of gold, coins, and fine-looking weapons among skeletal remains. The sight is recognized as an illusion with a successful DC 14 Int (Investigation) check.

(Black Pudding): AC 7, 85 hp; +5 to hit, 1d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage plus 4d8 acid damage and the AC of nonmagical armor is reduced by 1 [pseudopod]; attackers within 5 ft. take 1d8 acid damage when they hit the black pudding with a melee attack, and nonmagical weapons of metal or wood take a cumulative -1 penalty to damage; lightning or slashing damage cause the black pudding to split in half)

5: The Dumper

Beyond the secret door outside the western entrance to **Area 3** is a 10-foot-wide walkway that runs north and south along an open section of sewer pipe. The open section runs roughly north and south for about 90 feet, with a strong current pouring from some unknown source to the north before emptying into a circular tube to the south.

Weight of over 600 pounds on the 30-foot section of stone deck just to the south of the secret door to **Area 3** triggers a **tilting floor trap** that dumps all individuals standing on this section of platform into the open sewer. The tilting floor can be spotted with a successful DC 20 Wis (Perception) check. If it's triggered, a successful DC 20 Dex saving throw allows a character to jump to a safe section of floor. Individuals failing their saving throw are immediately sucked down one of the many sewer pipes and swept toward **Area 22**. The trap can't be disabled, but simply

hugging the east wall prevents it from being triggered (that's no protection if some fool steps toward the water and sets it off anyway).

6: Hidden Crypt of the Crocodiles

Within this chamber are seven crocodile-sized burial jars. Atop each of the jars is a golden crocodile head encrusted in semiprecious gems. One jar is nearly twice the size of the rest. The purpose for this jar is immediately apparent; a very large crocodile with glowing red eyes snaps its jaws at the PCs, inviting them to lunch. This creature is the great **Bloodtooth**!

Any vampiric crocodiles turned to gaseous form in **Area 3** return here to their burial jars to heal. If more than an hour has passed, those crocodiles will be encountered here along with the mighty Bloodtooth.

The head caps of the crocodile jars are coated in semi-precious gems, making each jar worth 1,000 gp as an ancient antiquity. They weigh nearly 80 lbs. apiece. The jeweled heads alone are worth 500 gp each and weigh approximately 15 lbs. each.

Bloodtooth

XP 450 (CR 2)

NE Large undead

Initiative +2

DEFENSE

AC 16 (natural armor)

hp: 39 (6d10 + 6)

Resistance: Bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons; cold and lightning damage

Immunity: Poison damage; exhaustion, fright, poison, unconsciousness

Vulnerability: Radiant damage

OFFENSE

Speed: 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Multiaction: Bloodtooth bites once and attacks once with its tail. While Bloodtooth has a creature grappled, it can bite only the grappled creature.

Melee Attack—Bite: +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). **Hit**: 2d10 + 4 piercing damage and the target is grappled and restrained. If the target is already grappled by Bloodtooth, it takes an extra 2d6 necrotic damage, its maximum hit points are reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage, and Bloodtooth gains temporary hit points equal to the necrotic damage.

Melee Attack—Tail: +7 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). **Hit**: 1d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage and the target must make a successful DC 14 Str saving throw or be knocked prone.

STATISTICS

Str 19 (+4), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 12 (+1),

Int 3 (-4), **Wis** 14 (+2), **Cha** 10 (+0)

Languages: None

Skills: Perception +4

Senses: Darkvision 60 ft.

TRAITS

Regeneration: Bloodtooth heals 5 hit points at the start of its turn, unless it took radiant damage or was splashed with holy water since its last turn.

Sunlight Sensitivity: Bloodtooth takes 10 radiant damage if it starts its turn in sunlight, and it has tactical disadvantage on attacks and saving throws while it is in sunlight.

ECOLOGY

Environment: Any warm or temperate

Organization: Solitary

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7: Forked Pathway

The corridor leading south has two branching pathways. A decorative mosaic of fine-cut glass and enamel forms diamond patterns along the floor, walls, and ceiling of this corridor. A deadly and extremely well hidden **impaling trap** awaits those who do not notice the switch (DC 15 Wis [Perception]) to turn it off. The cunningly hidden wooden stakes spring out at a length of 10 feet from the floor, ceiling, and the southern wall. Characters in the affected area (the square marked "T") who fail a DC 15 Dex saving throw are struck by 2d4 stakes; each stake causes 1d4 + 2 piercing damage. This trap is set here as a test for new recruits to the Underguild.

8: Fountains of Blood, Passage of Innocence

A large wolf's-head fountain dominates the western wall of this dank chamber. Thick red blood pours from its jaws into a man-sized stone bowl at its feet. As the characters enter the chamber of the fountain, **4 vampire spawn** leap from hiding, hissing and calling to the PCs to join them in un-life and bow to the master of the Underguild as they have done. Characters who scan the room carefully from the entrance can make Wis (Perception) checks to notice the vampires; their Stealth score is 16. Otherwise, only characters with passive Perception scores of 16 or higher aren't surprised when the vampires attack.

Each of these vampire spawn has its own agenda. Although they fight in concert against the PCs, each of them is aware of the *hollow blade* and would claim it for their own if they could defeat the Hand of Death.

(Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

Jandilar the Safe Cracker is sly and sneaky. He no longer uses weapons, preferring to kill his victims outright. Jandilar hates the Hand of Death and covets the *hollow blade* for its ability to allow vampires to walk amongst the living, almost unseen. If the PCs seem to be winning this fight, Jandilar may attempt to make a deal and clear the way for them in return for the sword. Of course, he has no intention of staying true to the deal, unless of the PCs are about to kill him.

Memze the Lame was a wizard's apprentice in life, but he was turned into a vampire before gaining significant power. Memze, known as the Lame because of the limp he bears from a spine twisted from birth, is jaded and decadent to the extreme. His perversity knows no limit. In addition to standard vampire spawn abilities, Memze can use the following spells (spell attack +5, save DC 13): (at will) *chill touch, ray of frost*; (1st level, x3) *fog cloud, magic missile, ray of sickness*; (2nd level, x2) *hold person, web*.

F'huge Kneebreaker is a vampiric ogre, a hulking brute who still relies on brawn and intimidation to defeat his enemies. He enjoys physical combat to such a degree that he prefers beating the blood out of his victims over drinking it. Instead of a normal claw attack, F'Huge fights with a weighted net to entangle foes, reverting to his claws only after the net is destroyed.

Hethel, the Acolyte of Thanatos, was once a tall, beautiful elf woman. Now she is a hate-filled servant of Ykthool, high Priest of Thanatos. She is the servant of the Fountains of Blood, guarding the passage from the eastern side of the sewer complex to the western areas by means of this special teleportation device. She is also a spellcaster, with the following spells (spell attack +6, save DC 14): (at will) *resistance, sacred flame*; (level 1, x3) *bane, inflict wounds, sanctuary*; (level 2, x2) *blindness/deafness, hold person, silence*; (level 3, x2) *animate dead, bestow curse, dispel magic*

The Fountain of Blood

This 6-foot-wide stone bowl filled with blood dominating the back wall of the chamber emanates a powerful magical aura. The bowl detects as evil and magical. If characters use *detect magic*, they learn that it radiates strong conjuration and necromancy magic. Searching the bowl reveals an ancient script. A DC 15 Int (History) check (or *comprehend languages*) translates the following words.

"Through the blood of ancients the passage revealed, darkened path of nightmares wield."

Entering the fountain instantly teleports individuals to **Area 15**. All individuals passing through the fountain must make a successful DC 14 Con saving throw or be transformed instantly into a vampire spawn!

Paladins or clerics of lawful good alignment who pass through the pool of blood without first casting *bless* on the fountain or on themselves suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks for the duration of their stay within the Sewers of the Underguild.

9: False Crypt Room

This room contains six stone crypts, their lids etched with writing in an ancient tongue. Characters that succeed on a DC 15 Int (History) check easily translate the writing on each crypt. The crypts bear strange descriptions of their supposed inhabitants, all of it bad poetry of the sort to make bards shudder and wince.

A. *Here lies Manco the Moneyed one, man he had a honey tongue, work he never labored long, in living death does he grow strong.*

B. *Before you rests Syther Cross, upon a job a hand he lost, but pimp he could with just one hand, now the blood he does drink all warm and neat, of restless harlots on the streets.*

C. *Here is the tomb of the malicious F'Huge, he is bold as he is huge, fear his might and beware his girth, this tomb filled with his charnel earth.*

D. *Jandilar is a sneaky sort, within his tomb is a fair retort, seek within and you may find, what is hidden a rogue's delight.*

E. *Hethel is an evil bitch, tortured slave a favorite dish, strange is her priestly mood, a vampire who often cooks her food.*

F. *Memze is a guild mage, drinks blood cold which is quite strange, buried here or not with wit, surprise! You're in a room of... (and the last word is obscured by some sort of brown substance...)*

Any character that makes a successful DC 15 Wis (Perception) check within the first two rounds of entering the chamber notes that the entire room is one huge and well-concealed **flooding trap**. After two minutes, the room begins to flood with sewage from **Area 20**, as stone blocks roll into place, sealing the exits. The room fills completely within 4 rounds. The flooding can be stopped with a successful DC 18 Dex check during the first 4 rounds. At the end of the 8th round, a drain opens and everything in the room is flushed down a sewer pipe into **Area 20**. If the flooding was stopped in the 1st round, characters can resist the pull of the drain and stay in this room if they choose. If the room flooded for 2 rounds, a DC 15 Str check is needed to resist the outflow. If the room flooded for 3 or more rounds, characters can't prevent being washed out of the room through the open drain.

Opening the crypts reveals that each is completely empty and has apparently never been used. Tampering with the crypts sets the trap off instantly.

10: The Board Room

Characters can reach the boardroom only through secret doors in the eastern and western walls. The secret doors are hidden behind life-sized portraits of wealthy, rakish individuals, surrounded by women and riches. The locked secret door in the western wall opens into **Area 10A**. Dominating the center of the room is a wide table with a polished top that appears to be carved from a single slab of marble. Paintings of exquisite quality line the walls, and the room is lit with a continuous yet dim light source.

Leaning back on a chair facing the group with a sneer on his cruel lips, revealing his gleaming white fangs as the PCs enter, is Syther

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Cross, a **vampire**. He has a wicked-looking scythe lying across his lap. Cross invites the PCs into the room with a gracious flourish of his silk-sleeved shirt and his wide brimmed and feathered hat. Hiding under the table is his chief toady, Manco Money-Tongue, Cross's halfling **vampire spawn**.

"Welcome, adventurers, we admit to being amazed that you have made it this far into the Underguild compound. Surely you are a dangerous band, and likely we could use you in our operations. If you would consider joining us in our enterprises, we can assure you that your conversion will be as painless as we can make it. I like your style, living ones, and I have a proposition to make..."

It's obvious that Syther Cross is a vampire. If characters don't attack immediately, he parleys with the characters, both trying to win their support in his power play and hoping more vampires and vampire spawn might show up. One minute (ten rounds) after characters reach the boardroom, **1d3 vampire spawn** do arrive. Use the spawns' Stealth (+6) and the characters' Perception scores to determine whether the spawn arrive unnoticed.

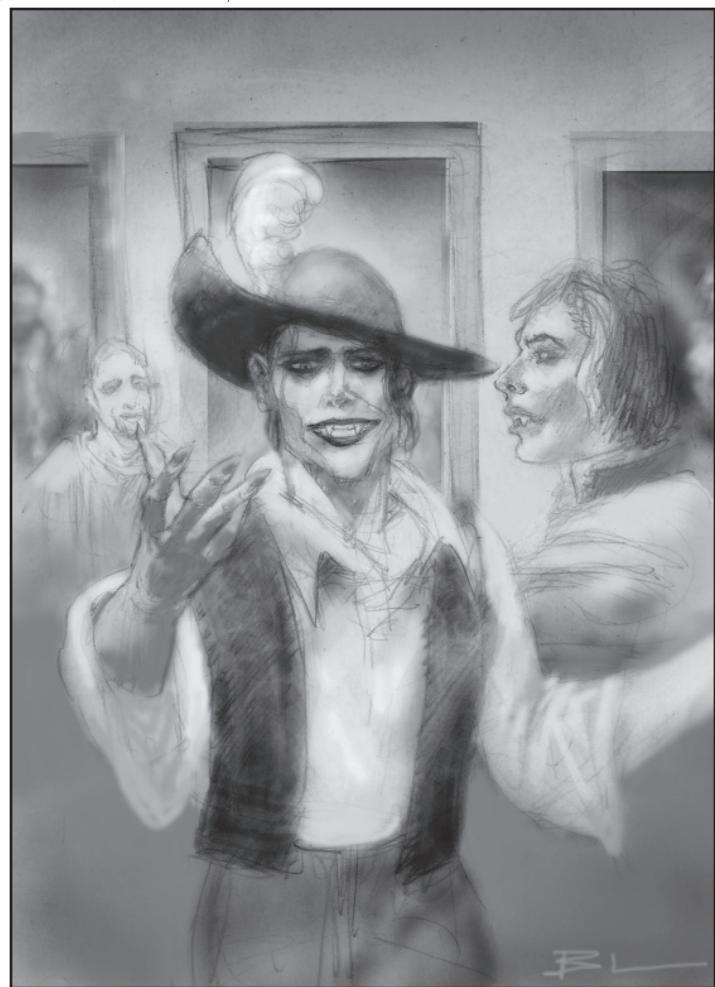
If characters are willing to talk even briefly, Cross offers directions to the lair of the Hand of Death and suggests that if the PCs take down the guildmaster and his lieutenant Ankox, he will see the party richly rewarded with 50,000 gold pieces worth of booty. All he wants is to take the *hollow blade* for himself and establish control of the Underguild, placing it under newer and younger management (Syther has only been a vampire for about 30 years). He grows impatient with what he considers the tired and cautious machinations of the Underguild.

If the parley disintegrates into combat, Cross tries to avoid melee if possible. He charms the hardest-hitting martial characters first and uses them for protection. He doesn't generally use his scythe in combat, preferring to grab and bite victims instead.

Manco is devious and diabolical; he sometimes lures victims by pretending to be a human child. He is almost—but not quite—a free-willed vampire on his own. He won't hesitate to flee if his master is reduced to 0 hit points or flees.

Even if the only foes here are Cross and Money-Tongue, this is a dangerous situation for characters, and a potentially deadly one if there are fewer than five characters. The only factor in the characters' favor is that both vampires have gone a long time without feeding, so their hit points are lower than normal, but even a weak vampire is nothing to sneer at. If more spawn arrive, bugging out might be the characters' only survival option—and even that is risky, because characters might not know a good way out of the dungeon yet! A sure-fire way to escape is to jump into the sewer and get "flushed" out of the complex, because no vampire will follow them into running water (or sewage). The vampires slow down and lose a turn of movement when they cross over the running sewer line that passes under the corridor between Areas 6 and 12, and under Area 9 and the corridor to its east. Characters might also buy some time by throwing garlic, holy water, or other holy objects in the vampires' path. Other than that, vampires will chase characters anywhere in their dungeon.

(Syther Cross [Vampire]): AC 16, 92 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +9 to hit, 1d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage or the target is grappled [unarmed strike], and +9 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 4 piercing damage plus 3d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 20 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn; one humanoid within 30 ft. must make a successful DC 17 Wis saving throw or be charmed by the vampire; 3/day, can choose to succeed on a saving throw if just failed; 1/day, can call 2d4 swarms of bats or rats; can use



3 legendary actions/round [move, unarmed strike, bite (2 actions)]; transforms to mist at 0 hp; shapeshifter

If the party is 13th level or higher, Cross's hit points should be increased proportionally.

(Manco Money-Tongue [Vampire Spawn]): AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

Additional Room Details: Amidst the fine paintings are wall maps detailing various cities and empires of the civilized lands, as well as the names of Underguild operators in these territories. You could use such maps to introduce new adventures. The paintings on the walls are of great value to collectors; three are considered lost treasures of the art world. Any characters that succeed on a DC 20 Int (History) check know something about one or more of the paintings.

Treasure: Three of the paintings are high art, detailed below.

- **Only by Sunrise** by Umberto, a famous painter who weaves illusions into his paintings. The painting shows the majestic sunrise over the jeweled cityscape of Bard's Gate. The command word "Cyrillia" is hidden in the painting amongst the crenellations of the keep. This painting is a particular favorite of Sangre, the Hand of Death, who views the illusion when holding the *hollow blade*, as if he were alive. Value: 10,000 gp.

- **Cult of Wights**, the artist unknown but attributed to T. F. Arcevol, a

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notorious necromancer. This cult piece has great value to a specialized group of collectors who enjoy gruesome art. The painting, horrific in its ultra-realism and delicate brush stroke, features a pack of wights feasting on chained sacrifices as cultists in the black robes of Orcus observe. The painting has been copied many times, but this piece is the original. Value: 1,000 gp, but to the proper collector the painting could net as much as 6,000 gp. Representatives of most Good-aligned churches would prefer it be destroyed.

- **Queen of Parnuble**, artist unknown. The painting features Tuiliar the Elven Queen of arboreal Parnuble. The theft of this painting is considered one of Sangre's first great heists. The painting eventually found its way to the Museo, in Reme, where it was stolen while on loan from the royal family of Parnuble. Its theft caused quite a scandal and the elves of Parnuble excised a great tax upon Reme to punish the port city for not protecting their property. Value: 6,000 gp.

- **Other paintings** are of excellent quality, but none are as famous as these three. They would fetch 1,200, 900, 750, and 500 gp respectively in a market.

- **Wall maps with notes** are of unlimited value to authorities, vampire hunters, and underworld groups seeking to eliminate spies in their midst.

10A. Tilting Floor Trap

The secret door in the western wall opens into a corridor that runs north and south. The southern section of corridor ends after 10 feet in a collapsed wall, crudely beamed and buttressed with planks of wood. Anyone succeeding on a DC 15 Wis (Perception) check notices flecks of gold glinting among the broken stones. The "gold" is only iron pyrite—fool's gold. A dwarf recognizes this instantly; others realize it with a successful DC 10 Int (Nature) check.

The entire 10-foot section is a **tilting floor trap**. Individuals standing on this section for one round are dropped down a chute and thrown into a sewer pipe draining into **Area 20**. The trap can be spotted with a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check, and a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw allows a character to leap clear before falling through.

II: Prison Chamber of Go'Loke

The door into this chamber opens easily for a character of Good alignment, but to all others, it is impenetrable.

A circular chamber 50 feet in diameter is inscribed with silver runes that glow with an unnatural green light. Sitting in the center of the circle is a large figure with two huge pincers and a pair of clawed hands sprouting from its chest. Sitting cross-legged before him is a muscular figure with a deathly pallor. The many-armed beast emanates an unholy aura as he turns his horned head to the party, shaking a set of dice in one of his clawed hands.

The demon is **Go'Loke**, a glabrezu. The guild summoned him here 200 years ago as further protection for its lair. At that time Ankoz crafted a permanent *magic circle* etched in silver to lock the demon within the chamber. Once the circle was in place, treasure seekers entering the archway of swirling yellow mist in **Area 1** would have an interesting welcome to the guild stronghold. Go'Loke has had little to entertain himself with all these years except for a set of dice left behind as some cruel joke by Ankoz. Go'Loke has spent the last 10 years throwing bones with **Jo'Mena, his ghoul**, whom he treats like a dog most of the time and never lets win at dice.

Jo'Mena was a spoiled chieftain's son of the Bu'ulamin tribe. His mother was a half-hag. Jo'Mena had a penchant for taking things that were not his. He thought fit to sneak into the ruin and find the secret entrance to the Underguild's infamous sewers. That was 10 years ago. Finding the fountain above the sewer entrance, he flipped the switch and descended the staircase, entering the room of swirling archways. Entering the swirling yellow archway, he found himself face to face with Go'Loke, who offered him a game of chance: the pile of treasure he had collected from 180 years of dead adventurers wagered against Jo'Mena's soul. Of course Jo'Mena bet his soul and lost, being transformed almost instantly into the pitiful ghoul that he is today.

Opening the door breaks the magic circle that has kept this room's occupant imprisoned for two centuries, however, and the glabrezu immediately tries to fight his way out. If he escapes, Go'Loke tracks down Ankoz to get his revenge. Should a PC enter from **Area 1C** into the chamber, Go'Loke immediately attacks the party.

Tactics: During the fight, Go'Loke rattles the dice in his hand while pointing to the party members and naming them off by number of the individual he is going to kill, calling out such things as "come on baby, come on seven, seven come eleven, daddy needs a new soul!" Jo'Mena chiefly cowers in the corner trying to avoid combat, fighting back only if attacked first. If the northern doorway is open, Go'Loke fights until he is nearly destroyed before escaping. He stays away long enough to heal up and come back to gain his revenge upon Ankoz for his centuries of imprisonment.

(Go'Loke [Glabrezu]: AC 17, 157 hp; +9 to hit x2, 2d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage and a Medium or smaller creature is grappled [pincer], and +9 to hit x2, 2d4 + 2 bludgeoning damage; spell save DC 16; prepares the following spells: [at will] darkness, detect magic, dispel magic; [1/day] confusion, fly, power word stun; has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic)

(Jo'Mena [Ghoul]: AC 12, 22 hp; +2 to hit, 2d6 + 2 piercing damage [bite]; +4 to hit, 2d4 + 2 slashing damage and the target must make a successful DC 10 Con saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute or until it makes a successful save at the end of its turn)

Treasure: An inventory of the chamber reveals the following items that Go'Loke has hoarded over the years of his imprisonment. 6,526 gp, 15 gems worth 600 gp (x2), 500 gp, 400 gp (x2), 200 gp (x3), 125 gp (x3), and 50 gp (x4), respectively, plus heaps of mundane adventuring gear.

12: Eastern Pump House

The secret door in the eastern wall of the pump house reveals a damp chamber filled with many leaking pipes, as well as highly advanced ancient technological marvels that are part of the nerve center for the sewer and aqueduct system of Curgantium and its massive hydraulics. Four large, bronze wheels are mounted in the walls: two in the west, one in the south, and one in the eastern wall.

Hidden amongst the maze of pipes along the ceiling are **5 vampire spawn** who have been assigned by Sangre to guard this pump room from intruders.

(Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

The Bronze Pump Wheels

The four bronze pump wheels control the flow of water and sewage to the sewers, as well as the hydraulic controls of several of the mechanical traps within the dungeon. If any of the pump wheels are turned clockwise, the sewage levels remain unchanged in **Area 20**; however the strength of the current drops by 1/8th relative to the number of pumps turned off.

Pump Wheel A

Turning this pump clockwise until it stops turning shuts off the hydraulic pressure to the covered pit traps in **Area 4**. A DC 14 Wis (Perception)

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check reveals that there is a sound of decreasing water pressure as the wheel is turned. Turning this pump counter-clockwise until it stops increases the sewage depth in **Area 20** by 2 feet.

Pump Wheel B

Turning the pump clockwise until it stops turning shuts off hydraulic pressure to the impaling trap in **Area 7**, automatically disarming the trap. A DC 12 Wis (Perception) check reveals that there is a sound of decreasing water pressure as the wheel is turned. Turning the pump counter-clockwise increases the sewage depth in **Area 20** by 4 feet and doubles the strength of the whirlpool in **Area 22**.

Pump Wheel C

Turning this pump wheel clockwise until it stops turning shuts off the hydraulic pressure to the trap in **Area 9**; as before, anyone succeeding on a DC 12 Wis (Perception) check notices a significant reduction in ambient water pressure noise. Turning the bronze wheel counter-clockwise results in an increased volume of sewage pumping into **Area 20**, raising its original depth by 8 feet and filling hallways outside **Areas 5, 12, and 13** to a depth of 3 feet. If the door to **Area 12** has not been closed by the party after entering the chamber, the foul water begins spilling into this room and other opened rooms at this time. The 3-foot-deep wave of sewage turns everything into difficult terrain and requires characters who move more than 10 feet to make a successful DC 10 Dex save to avoid falling and being dragged by the current into the whirlpools in **Area 22** and **Area 23**.

Pump Wheel D

Turning this pump clockwise turns off the tilting floor traps in **Areas 5 and 10B**; there is a resounding clank when the wheel reaches the end, as if something large is unlocking to the north. Turning the wheel counter-clockwise fills **Area 20** almost to the ceiling with sewage, filling the hallways and opened rooms with a 7-foot-high surge of raw waste, and quadrupling the strength of the whirlpool in **Area 22**.

Filling the sewers in this fashion releases Methalogot from her imprisonment in **Area 21**. Everyone hears her roar through the murky sewage that now fills the dungeon.

13A: The Never-Ending Corridor

The bronze-bound door in the northwestern corner of **Area 13A** is protected by an *arcane lock* spell (DC 14). Beyond the door is a dark corridor of polished black diorite, approximately 80 feet long, with a similar door at the far end of the corridor. Even with darkvision, most characters won't be able to see the opposite end of this long hallway from the doorway.

When characters feel that they've traveled 40 feet along the corridor, characters with darkvision can finally see the southern door—apparently 60 feet away! If someone turns back to look behind them, they find that they can't see the door they exited (it's 80 feet behind them). This space-distorting effect becomes worse the farther characters move along the corridor. Moving what they perceive as the full distance to the door gets them only halfway there; when the door looks 60 feet away, 60 feet of movement leaves them 30 feet from the door, then 30 feet of movement leaves them 15 feet from the door, and so on. Moving north has the same effect.

If characters simply keep pushing on, they eventually reach a point where as they continue walking, the floor and walls continue rolling past them normally but the door is perpetually about 4 feet away. No amount of walking brings it any closer. As soon as someone stretches out an arm and touches the door, the effect is broken and they can use the door normally.

This corridor is shielded against conjuration, however, to a dangerous and possibly deadly effect. Should anyone cast any conjuration spell in the corridor, roll 1d6 to let fate determine the result. Apply a -1 modifier to

the roll if the spell was *dimension door*, *teleport*, or *plane shift*.

Roll	Result
1	Caster is teleported to Area 21 to become a snack for Methalogot.
2	Teleported to Area 11 , to become the demon's new craps partner.
3	Teleported into the whirlpool in Area 23 .
4	Teleported to an empty, locked burial vault in Area 14 .
5–6	Teleported to the Fountain Entrance to the Underguild .

13B: Hotchka the Medusa

This chamber is missing a large chunk of wall in the northwestern corner of the room. It has locked, bronze-bound doors in the northwest and southeastern corners. A trio of humanoid figures sits near a flaming bronze brazier. As the tallest of the figures turns to face the party, her eyes glow a demonic blue as she reaches for an arrow from her quiver. A pair of statues reflects the dancing fire glow of the brazier as the woman draws her bow, her hair waving like a nest of snakes.

This area chamber is the lair of **Hotchka**, a medusa whom Sangre transformed to the unliving nearly a hundred years ago. **Cainbry**, a vampire spawn, and **Phryc** the Unloved, a half-orc guild enforcer, join Hotchka in her lair. Note that Hotchka has a vampiric bite along with her usual medusa abilities.

(Hotchka [Medusa]): AC 15, 127 hp; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage plus 4d6 poison damage [snake hair], and +5 to hit x2, 1d6 + 2 piercing damage [shortsword]; OR +5 to hit x2, range 150 ft./600 ft., 1d8 + 2 piercing damage plus 2d6 poison damage [longbow]; OR +5 to hit a restrained or grappled creature, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [vampiric bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and Hotchka gains the same number of temporary hp; creatures that start their turn within 30 ft. of the medusa and able to see her must make a DC 14 Con saving throw; if the save fails by 5 or more, the creature is instantly petrified; if the save fails by 4 or less, the creature is restrained and repeats the saving throw at the end of its next turn; if the second saving throw fails, the creature is petrified; if the second saving throw succeeds, the restraint effect ends; an unsurprised creature can avoid this effect by averting its eyes, but until the start of its next turn, it treats the medusa as an unseen target)

(Cainbry and Phryc [Vampire Spawn]): AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, 2d4 + 3 slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

Tactics: Hotchka immediately attempts to catch the gaze of the characters as they open the door, hoping to turn the intruders to stone. Phryc and Cainbry concentrate on keeping enemies away from Hotchka while she petrifies enemies and picks off lightly armored targets with arrows.

This battle is not quite as dangerous as the fight in Area 10 against

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Syther Cross, but it can be deadly against a weakened party—especially since the most likely escape route, corridor 13A, is so difficult to traverse.

13C: Sewer Skiff

The break in the northeastern wall opens into **Area 20**. The stench rising from this river of fouled water and ancient sewage causes all who smell it to make a DC 15 Con saving throw or be nauseated (identical to the poisoned condition but not a poison effect) for $2d4 \times 10$ minutes.

A fine copper chain is looped through a bronze ring set in the ancient stone and hangs down into the sewage. The chain is taut, as if it supports a weight in the sewage. The weight is so heavy that characters pulling on the slim chain will think that it's bound to break under so much strain, but it doesn't. If the chain is pulled by characters with a combined Strength modifier of +5 or more, or a pulling character makes a successful DC 22 Str (Athletics) check, they haul a skiff up from the sewage. The boat is finely crafted from some unknown metal. Once on the surface, it instantly becomes clean and free of any foulness. The boat has a pair of oars made of the same unknown material. The boat holds up to six passengers and their gear. It is of ancient craftsmanship and material that allows it to bear weight in excess of 2,400 pounds easily. The odd metal of which it is made acts as though it had a permanent *prestidigitation* spell cast on it that keeps it perpetually clean and shiny. The chain it's attached to has a similar *mending* spell cast on it, so it can support tremendous weight without breaking (a sudden jerk, however, can still snap it).

The skiff can be used to navigate the river of raw sewage (**Area 20**).

14: Crypts of the Underguild

A locked secret door leads into this hidden chamber, lined from floor to ceiling on the northern and western walls with bronze-plated burial vaults. Several pairs of glowing, blood-red eyes peer out of the darkness. Suddenly, **4 vampire spawn** slink out of the darkness, their blackened lips parting to reveal gleaming white canine teeth, razor sharp and longing for blood.

Guarding the crypt room are the vampire spawn along with any vampires previously encountered who have regenerated sufficiently to fight off intruders. These vampires do not include Ykthool. Previously defeated vampires who have not healed within their vault to at least 1 hit point are within their vault, helpless.

Vampire Spawn: AC 15, 82 hp; can claw twice, or claw and bite; +6 to hit, $2d4 + 3$ slashing damage or the target is grappled [claws]; +6 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 3 piercing damage plus $2d6$ necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire spawn gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 10 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn)

The vampires' vaults are closed and locked with a bronze plate scribed with the name and epitaph of each of the undead. The vaults are 2 feet tall and 4 feet wide, comprising six columns of bronze-plated vaults. Each column has five vaults, making a total of 30 vaults for vampires and their spawn. Personal possessions and treasure of each vampire are found within the vaults. Each vault has a spring-loaded bed with finely crafted wheels, its "slab" pulling out in a similar fashion to a modern morgue vault.

Three of the vaults are Sangre's spares. They are at the lowest levels of their respective columns, with no names on the outside, and their doors are welded shut. Close inspection (and a successful DC 15 Int [Investigation] check) reveals tiny "air holes" that allow Sangre to enter or exit a coffin while in gaseous form. It's up to characters to figure out how to open and sanctify these coffins to prevent Sangre from regenerating in them.

Treasure: 2,669 gp; potion of *disguise self*, a cursed potion of owl's

wisdom (reduces Wisdom by 4 points for three hours), a potion of *alter self*, and a limited cloak of arachnida (functions only under moonlight or starlight).

15: Western Blood Fountain and Vampiric Ooze

The eastern wall of the room is dominated by a large wolf's-headed fountain, dripping thick red blood from its jaws into a 6-foot-diameter stone bowl at its feet. Written in glowing Celestial runes but in the Abyssal language are the following words:

"Wield me on the nightmare's path through the innocence of blood."

Characters can translate this message with a successful DC 14 Int (History) check if they don't know the languages.

As the last party member steps into the chamber, the blood in the fountain gurgles and congeals into a gelatinous thickness, pours onto the floor with a sickly, slurping noise, and immediately attacks. This is vampiric ooze, an undead form of black pudding formed by evil rituals that involve pouring a vampire's blood poured into the creature. It has identical stats to a black pudding, but it causes necrotic damage instead of acid and regains hit points equal to the necrotic damage it causes. It isn't corrosive, and it doesn't corrode armor or weapons.

As the party faces the new horror, they see momentarily within the rippling of its syrupy surface a reflection of their own darkness.

(Vampiric Ooze: AC 7, 85 hp; +5 to hit, 1d6 + 3 bludgeoning damage plus $4d8$ necrotic damage and the pudding regains hp equal to the necrotic damage [pseudopod]; lightning or slashing damage cause the vampiric ooze to split in half)

After the vampiric ooze in the fountain is defeated, the blood pouring from the fountain transforms to pure clean water, completely potable and crystal clear. If characters step into the fountain now, it teleports them instantly to **Area 8** and vice versa with no difficulties.

Searching the room reveals a **secret door** to the right of the blood fountain, which leads to **Area 16**.

16: Western Pump Room

The secret door from **Area 15** leads to the second pump room of the ancient sewer system. Large pipes of bronze and ceramic run along the ceilings and up the walls, which are fitted with four bronze pump wheels. Unlike the pump wheels in **Area 8**, these bronze wheels can be turned only if the pumps in **Area 12** have been shut off and only if all of them are cranked simultaneously clockwise. Doing so does three things: it removes the stone block across the steps in **Area 1** to reopen the exit from the Sewers of the Underguild; it turns off the whirlpools in **Area 22** and **23**; and it lowers the sewer level to a depth of 4 feet.

17: Ykthool's Cloister

Behind the locked door is a richly appointed chamber with polished hardwood paneling and silk wall hangings. A canopied four-poster coffin rests elegantly in the northeastern corner of the chamber. An ornate mirror with a frame of gold faces the door. Holy symbols featuring a skull pierced with a bident (also made of gold) hang on the walls, along with unusually realistic paintings of men and women of all races just as death takes them, their pale, drawn faces holding the last vestiges of life.

Ykthool spends most of his time in the shrine of Thanatos, **Area 18B**. Ykthool has little fear of losing this coffin, since he doesn't believe any enemies can penetrate this far into the Underguild's lair.

The mirror facing the door is a foul and deadly trick given as gift from Thanatos to one who remembers the old ways. See the end of this

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adventure for details on the *mirror of abyssal damnation*.

The **locked and trapped coffin** in the northeastern corner of the chamber is the resting place of Ykthool, vampire priest of Thanatos. Touching the coffin in any way releases the *glyph of warding trap* unless a prayer to Thanatos is intoned immediately beforehand. The glyph can be noticed with a successful DC 15 Int (Investigation) check. The glyph triggers a *blade barrier* spell that fills the entire chamber and does 6d10 slashing damage, or half damage to creatures that make successful DC 15 Dex saving throws. The blade barrier lasts one minute, then dissipates.

Treasure: Fifty diamonds valued at 100 gp each are stitched into the silk lining of the coffin. A small *bag of holding* contains a *scroll of finger of death*. Under the silk lining is 20 lbs. of graveyard dirt, possibly valuable to necromancers and certain sects of priests. The four silk wall hangings are valued at 200 gp each, and the two paintings could garner 200 gp each from a collector. Last, but not least, is the *mirror of abyssal damnation*.

18A: Entrance to the Shrine of Thanatos

The secret door opens onto a corridor with an elaborately carved ebon wood door in the southern wall. A symbol of a silver skull with two daggers driven through it in an "X" pattern is inlaid upon the floor. The floor beyond the locked secret door that leads to the shrine of Thanatos is trapped with three *glyphs of warding* that cast *bestow curse* on the first three characters that cross the threshold. Those characters are cursed for one minute unless they make successful DC 15 Wis saving throws. A cursed character must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw at the start of each of his or her turns; if the saving throw fails, the character does nothing that turn. The effect lasts one minute.

18B: Shrine of Thanatos

Directly across from the door is a black altar engraved with skulls of silver, with a white silk cloth draped over it, bearing a bowl and candelabra of pure platinum and a skull of deepest black. Behind the altar stands an 11-foot-tall statue in dark gray marble of a beautiful and cruel woman, perhaps an elf. In the statue's right hand is a solid iron bident, its two forked prongs a foul black. An obsidian skull resting on the floor reflects a glinting and malevolent light within the dimly lit room. A large silver pentagram with a silver skull decorates the floor in the center of the room, and the low sound of chanting can be heard from somewhere in the chamber.

Unless characters have been exceptionally quiet in their battles and conversations, **Ykthool** knows they're coming before characters open the door. As soon as the threshold of the chamber is crossed by a character, the statue of Thanatos (a stone golem) animates and attacks. The statue is a gift to Ykthool from Orcus in his guise as Thanatos the Fallen, deliver of the dead. Orcus appreciates a high priest who remembers the old ways.

Ykthool is a standard vampire with spellcasting ability. He casts *greater invisibility* and *detect thoughts* before characters enter his chamber.

(Ykthool [Vampire]): AC 16, 92 hp; attacks twice, with only one bite; +9 to hit, 1d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage or the target is grappled [unarmed strike], and +9 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 4 piercing damage plus 3d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 20 hp at the start of its turn unless it took radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn; one humanoid within 30 ft. must make a successful DC 17 Wis saving throw or be charmed by the vampire; 3/day, can choose to succeed on a saving throw if just failed; 1/day, can call 2d4 swarms of bats or rats; can use 3 legendary actions/round [move,

unarmed strike, bite (2 actions)]; transforms to mist at 0 hp; shapechanger; spell attack +7, save DC 15; [at will] *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*; [1st level, x4] *comprehend languages*, *fog cloud*, *sleep*; [2nd level, x3] *detect thoughts*, *gust of wind*, *mirror image*; [3rd level, x3] *animate dead*, *bestow curse*, *nondetection*; [4th level, x3] *blight*, *greater invisibility*; [5th level, x1] *dominate person*)

(Statue of Thanatos [Stone Golem]: AC 17, 178 hp; +10 to hit x2, 3d8 + 6 bludgeoning damage [slam]; each target the golem can see must make a successful DC 17 Wis saving throw or be slowed for 1 minute; a slowed target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect with a successful save; the golem has tactical advantage on saving throws against magic and no magic or power can alter its shape)

Hidden carefully in Abyssal script within the silver pentagram on the floor are words. Characters who make a successful DC 20 Int (Investigation) check find these hidden words.

"Through the blood of mortal sacrifice is the invitation made, to the master of Underguild, in Death's fine name, let the living blood be paid."

If a character of Good alignment fills the platinum bowl atop the altar with blood, all living beings in the shrine of Thanatos teleport to **Area 24**.

Treasure: Sitting atop the altar is the platinum sacrificial bowl valued at 4,000 gp, four platinum candlesticks worth 100 gp each, and four black *chaotic evil blessing candles* (when burning, they have the effect of a *bless* spell on Chaotic Evil creatures within 30 feet). The obsidian skull on the floor is a *skull of protection*; 1/day, a creature who touches it gains the effect of a *protection from evil and good* spell for one minute.

19: Slave Chambers of the Underguild

Beyond this locked door lies the passage to the poor souls who serve as blood slaves of the Underguild.

19A: The Trapped Prison Entrance

An L-shaped corridor lined with torches lit with *continual flame* turns southwest to another locked door. The corridor is trapped with a **crushing wall trap** that triggers as travelers cross the turn in the corridor. Its disarming device is located in a wall sconce containing a torch that appears to be on the verge of burning out; rotating the torch 30 degrees disables the trap until the sconce is returned to its normal position. The torch is noticed with a successful DC 12 Wis (Perception) check. If triggered, the walls of the corridor close in two rounds, causing 10d6 bludgeoning damage to everyone in the corridor.

19B: The Slave Cages

Eight iron-barred cells contain the unfortunate blood slaves of the Underguild. All are charmed by at least one of the guild vampires, and they are pale and listless, their necks and arms and thighs covered in fang marks and bruises from their nightly bleeding and seduction. Each of the two elves and six humans were selected for their beauty and vitality to serve the Underguild. One of the prisoners, an elf sorcerer named Ayissa, is willing to join the party if rescued, healed, and outfitted for war against the Underguild. If her offer goes unheeded, she merely *teleports* to her home. If Manco Money-Tongue was defeated anywhere, he comes here and attempts to charm Ayissa into telling the party he is her servant and must also be "rescued" by the party. Ayissa is a standard mage NPC.

(Ayissa [Mage]): AC 12, 40 hp; +5 to hit, 1d4 + 2 piercing damage; spell attack +6, save DC 14; prepares the following spells: [at will] *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*; [1st level, x4] *detect magic*, *mage armor*,

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magic missile, shield; [2nd level, x3] misty step, suggestion; [3rd level, x3] counterspell, fireball, fly; [4th level, x3] greater invisibility, ice storm; [5th level, x1] cone of cold)

The Brotherhood of Skulls, a pirate band led by the notorious Captain Cho Sun, took Ayissa prisoner and sold her into slavery. Her beauty and strength have captivated both Ankoz and Sangre, causing a minor rift between the two. Ayissa alludes to wild blood orgies that take place within the master's chamber where the guild members gather for their feast. She tells the party that the slaves are gathered every other night from their prison and led to a Shrine of Thanatos, where one of their numbers' blood is used to fill a bowl of platinum, teleporting them all instantly to the chamber of the one known as the Hand of Death, whom she has overheard Ankoz refer to as Sangre.

20. The Sewer Cavern

This vast, twisting cavern is truly a river of raw filth. The cavern has a ceiling 40 feet high, with the river of filth averaging 20 feet in depth. Stretching nearly 400 feet from **Area 21**, the cavern averages 30 feet in width, until it reaches its widest part surrounding **Area 24** where the cavern is approximately 120 feet wide by 70 feet.

River of Filth

Individuals falling into the river of filth must make a successful DC 10 Str (Athletics) check to keep their head above the putrid water, or a DC 15 check to swim against this dangerous current. Anyone falling into the current near **Area 22** moves at a rate of 20 feet per round, accelerating by 10 feet per round the closer they get to the whirlpool. Furthermore, individuals falling into the river of filth must also make a successful DC 12 Con saving throw against poison or be poisoned while they are in the river and for 20 minutes after they get out. If they fall into the pool below **Area 13A**, characters must continue to make Strength checks each round as they are drawn toward **Area 23**. Anyone failing their check by more than 5 goes under water and begins drowning.

21: Altar of Filth

At the far northern end of the cavern, a cyclopean altar of pure foulness rises 10 foot above the putrid water. The carved visage of a froglike face stares out at all viewers, its wide mouth open with a great fountain of filth pouring from it. The filth bathes a large reptilian figure, bound with a collar and chains of pure adamantine; most of its great bulk is hidden beneath the foul water of the underground river.

This is the prison of **Methaloggot the Foul**, an adult black dragon.

Methaloggot has been chained here for 300 years. Lured to the Sewers of the Underguild with the scent of easy money in her nostrils, Methaloggot had no idea of the surprise the Underguild had in store for her. After falling for a sinister trap of treasure and glittering gemstones atop the ancient stone platform, the dragon realized her folly. Ankoz and Ykthool blasted the young dragon with magic as Sangre slipped the adamantine noose about her horned head. He then sliced her wings from her back with the *hollow blade*. Then, casting a great and powerful ritual, Ankoz consecrated the altar in the name of Tsathogga, and Ykthool blessed it in the name of Thanatos.

(Methaloggot [Adult Black Dragon]): AC 19, 195 hp;

Methaloggot uses frightful presence, then bites once and claws twice; creatures within 120 ft. must make successful DC 16 Wis saving throws or become frightened [frightful presence]; +11 to hit, 2d10 + 6 piercing damage plus 1d8 acid damage [bite]; +11 to hit x2, 2d6 + 6 slashing damage [claw]; 60-ft. line, 12d8 acid damage or half damage with a successful DC 18 Dex saving throw [acid breath, recharge 5, 6]; can use 3 legendary actions/round [make a Perception check, tail attack, or splash filth]; +11

to hit, 2d8 + 6 bludgeoning damage [tail]; target within 30 ft. must make a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw or be poisoned for 1d3 rounds [splash filth]; 3/day, Methaloggot can automatically succeed on a saving throw if it just failed).

Methaloggot can't fly or make wing attacks (she has no wings). She's likely to unleash her acid breath while characters are still trying to figure out whether the reptilian figure is a carving or a living creature. Her chain allows her to reach halfway across the northern cavern of Area 20 (not quite to the whirlpool at 22).

Altar of Filth

The Altar of Filth generates an aura of absolute evil. Even touching the altar with one's flesh requires the individual to succeed on a DC 14 Con saving throw or become infected with the disease slimy doom. The altar can only be destroyed by casting *aura of purity* directly onto it, followed immediately by *bless*, *remove curse*, and *dispel magic*. Once this is done, the face of Tsathogga shatters and breaks from the altar, and pure water begins pouring from the pipe where his mouth once was. Casting *aura of purity* onto an object can be done only with a modified version of the spell on a scroll, which can be obtained from a Good-aligned temple or by any other means of your choosing. Characters probably must consult high-level priests at such a temple just to discover what method is needed to purify the foul altar.

22. The Big Flush

The northern whirlpool pulls all who come within 30 feet of it into its crushing grasp. A DC 20 Str (Athletics) check is required to escape from its clutches; those failing are swallowed by the whirlpool on the following round, taking 6d6 points of bludgeoning damage per round as they are sucked under the foul water to be spewed out four rounds later in **Area 2**. Individuals thus trapped must make a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw or they also have no breath and are drowning throughout the ordeal.

23. The Southern Whirlpool

Individuals sucked through **Area 22** are vomited forth from the whirlpool into this swirling morass of foul water. This whirlpool pushes all things in the vicinity of it toward the walls of the chamber or sends them hurtling toward the stone platform where Sangre's Tomb lies, causing an additional 3d6 bludgeoning damage in either case. This is repeated every three rounds until a character either swims out to the channel back to Area 20 (DC 20 Str [Athletics] check), catches hold of the stone platform of Area 24 (DC 15 Str [Athletics] check), or is sucked down one of two submerged pipes (1-in-6 chance per round spent in the water without making a successful Strength check) to be eventually swept from the Sewers of the Underguild and deposited 5 miles from the dungeon along an aboveground waterway.

24. Tomb of Sangre

The exterior of the Tomb of Sangre looks much like a 60-foot-by-60-foot Greek temple with a solid bronze door set in the center of the northern face of the tomb. The tomb is surrounded by columns carved in the shape of robed and hooded figures, each with a shortsword held across its chest. The solid bronze door is cast in bas-relief with demonic images that stand astride carven heaps of treasure.

The door is sealed with an *arcane lock* spell (DC 15) and guarded by a **glyph of warding** (DC 15 to spot) that triggers on any character who touches the door or who casts a spell on it. The glyph unleashes a *disintegrate* spell against the character who triggered it. The character must make a successful DC 15 Dex saving throw or take 10d6 + 40 force damage; if that's enough to reduce the character to 0 hit points,

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the character is disintegrated, along with everything it carries except for magic items.

The interior of the Tomb of Sangre is richly appointed with large pillows, expensive woven rugs, tapestries, and urns full of jewels. A silver pentagram occupies a 10-foot section of the western end of the chamber, and an ornate coffin sits in the eastern side of the chamber. Carved from ivory and gold, the coffin looks valuable beyond reckoning. The room is dimly lit with torches of *continual flame*, casting shadows throughout the chamber.

If Ankoz survives, he has placed a *major image* of himself (cast from a scroll) between the entrance and the coffin, while he hides invisibly at the southern end of the room, preparing whatever magic he has remaining. If he had an hour to rest since fighting characters in his chamber, he is back to full hit points. He attacks as soon as characters are fully in the chamber, or as soon as someone attacks his image.

Ankoz expects Sangre to join in this fight, but Sangre is happy to see Ankoz slain. He has come to suspect his loyal lieutenant of the same treachery that all his other subordinates harbor against him. Instead, he lets Ankoz soften up the intruders, hoping that they will assume the nycaloth is the only foe in the chamber. Once they've slain the fiend and begin exploring the chamber at their leisure, that's when Sangre strikes.

(Sangre [Vampire]): AC 16, 162 hp; attacks twice, with only one bite; +9 to hit, 1d8 + 4 bludgeoning damage or the target is grappled [unarmed strike], and +9 to hit a grappled creature, 1d6 + 4 piercing damage plus 3d6 necrotic damage [bite]; necrotic damage reduces the target's maximum hp by an equal amount, and the vampire gains the same number of temporary hp; regenerates 20 hp at the start of its turn unless it took

radiant damage or damage from holy water since its last turn; one humanoid within 30 ft. must make a successful DC 17 Wis saving throw or be charmed by the vampire; 3/day, can choose to succeed on a saving throw if just failed; 1/day, can call 2d4 swarms of bats or rats; can use 3 legendary actions/round [move, unarmed strike, bite (2 actions)]; transforms to mist at 0 hp; shapeshifter

In addition to all the normal abilities of a vampire, Sangre has a *ring of spell storing* that holds *inflict wounds* x2, a *potion of haste*, and the *hollow blade*.

Tactics: Sangre is well aware that if the characters have delved this far into his lair, the core of the Underguild has been vanquished. With this in mind, he uses the *hollow blade* to wreak as much havoc on his foes as he can. If given the opportunity, Sangre seeks to spawn the entire party into new servants and members of the Underguild; failing that, he merely destroys them. When reduced to 0 hit points Sangre transforms into *gaseous form* and flees. He knows better than to lay up in the coffin in this chamber while victorious adventurers are present. Instead, he heads for the coffin in **Area 2A**; if it's not available, he heads to one of the three sealed coffins in **Area 14**.

Lying about the room are the riches of the Underguild. Hidden amongst the items is a scroll that, when read aloud, teleports the party back to **Area 1**. The *wall of stone* still blocks the escape route unless the trap has been disarmed in the pump rooms.

Treasure: 26,742 gp, 5 diamonds (1,000 gp each), 7 rubies (750 gp each), 12 sapphires (500 gp each), 10 emeralds (250 gp each), potion of *mage armor*, *headband of vast intelligence* (increases Int by 2 while worn), +1 rapier, +1 composite longbow, scroll of *mass healing word*, +2 shield, *gloves of swimming* (tactical advantage on Str [Athletics] checks



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to swim), a fur cloak worth 350 gp, gold death mask (250 gp), fire opal pendant (1,759 gp), gold efreeti comb with emerald eyes (375 gp), silver harp inlaid with rubies crafted by Fathilir (3,450 gp), ivory statuette of a woman covered in butterflies (320 gp), gold ring (220 gp), silver-plated longsword with jet jewel in hilt (402 gp), and a jewelry box made of ivory with a platinum frame (678 gp).

New Magic Items

The Hollow Blade

Very Rare Weapon (requires attunement)

The *hollow blade* is a +3 intelligent undead bane shortsword with the following qualities.

- The *hollow blade* has Int 14, Wis 14, and Cha 14; hearing and vision to 60 ft.; Neutral alignment; and it communicates telepathically with its bearer.
- In the hands of any character other than a rogue, it acts as a +1 shortsword. It seeks to be owned by a rogue, either through telepathic contact or force of will. Any non-rogue who possesses the *hollow blade* must make a successful DC 12 Wis saving throw every day when the sword is used or be inadvertently careless with it—leaving it lying about or displaying it in such a way that it can easily be noticed by thieves.
- The *hollow blade* causes its wielder to feel charged with life energy. In the hands of an undead creature, the undead becomes immune to all channel divinity effects. Just as importantly, it renders vampires and other undead immune to the debilitating effects of sunlight for up to four hours per day.

The Mirror of Abyssal Damnation

Very Rare Wondrous Item

Individuals gazing into a *mirror of abyssal damnation* must make a successful DC 15 Wis saving throw or their souls are sucked into the Abyss, where they become lost and wander among hordes of demons. These individuals are instantly replaced with Chaotic Evil clones of themselves, bearing arms and equipment that exactly duplicate that which their other form bore. Individuals who are already of Chaotic Evil alignment are immune to the mirror's effect. Characters who observe the switch can make a DC 15 Wis saving throw to notice the momentary shimmer that betrays the exchange; they don't know what happened, but they know *something* happened.

Destroying the mirror traps exchanged characters in the Abyss forever. Nothing short of a *wish* spell can bring them back. Killing the clone of the switched character allows the trapped individual a second DC 15 Wis saving throw, this time with tactical advantage; if it succeeds, the character trapped in the Abyss sees the outline of the mirror hanging in front them and can step through and escape. If it fails, the character is trapped forever. Characters who escape might, or might not, return with all their gear; that decision is up to the GM.

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ISBN 978-1-62283-222-4

\$19.99