

# FOLLOW THE LIGHTS

AN ADVENTURE MODULE FROM THE GM'S SECRET STASH

Quickphix Presents

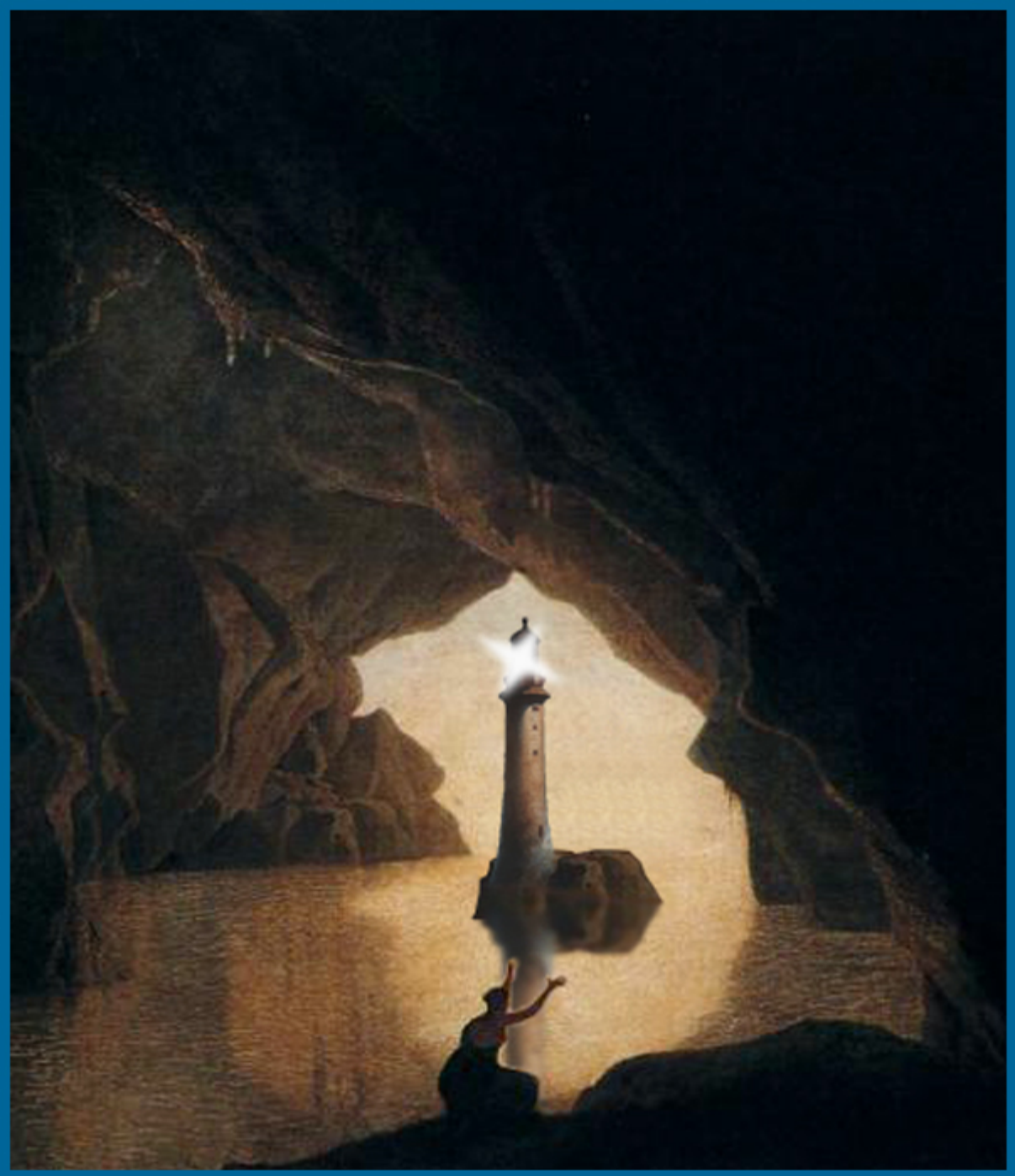
A Tier 1 to 2 one-shot adventure for  
the world's greatest roleplaying game



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Presented by Quickphix

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A 3-4 Hour Adventure for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> Level Characters

## CREDITS:

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*“As a flame, which oft, they say, some evil spirit attends, hovering and blazing with delusive light, misleads the amazed night-wanderer from his way. To bogs and mires, and oft through pond or pool; There swallowed up and lost, from succour far.” – Inscription in the Cave of Lights*

## Summary

While many know legends or stories about mythical artefacts granting immortality, the gnomish scholar and archaeologist Ardell Hoyt is certain he's found one. For many years, he's been studying dusty tomes and ancient inscriptions, which could lead him to the thing he desires the most: a way to cheat death. He believes there exists a lighthouse on the border between this life and what lies beyond, its light guiding the dead to their final rest. However, should a living soul ever manage to bathe in its divine light, eternal life and wisdom would be granted to it. After all this time, Ardell is certain to have found the path to the afterlife, located underground in the “Cave of Lights”. Together with your party of adventurers, he's ready to see his life's work fulfilled.

In this 3- to 4-hour one shot, a party of 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> level characters will venture through the Cave of Lights and discover if Ardell Hoyt's theories are correct. Will they survive the trip through the cave? Could immortality really be within their grasp? Is it safe, to “Follow the Lights”?

## The Quest of Ardell Hoyt

During this one-shot, it is the GM's job, to use the character of the driven Ardell Hoyt to help the party overcome riddles and flesh out the meaning behind the Cave of Lights. However, this does not mean, that Ardell Hoyt trusts or even likes his companions. He's solely focused on finding the source of immortality. Thus, it is up to the DM to decide how much he wants to reveal

about Ardell's true intentions. One thing is certain: if Ardell must choose between the life of his companions or a chance for immortality, he will always choose the latter. For this deception to work, it is important for the party to view Ardell as necessary for their quest. This can be achieved either through him healing the party or by knowing secrets and lore about the cave and its monsters.

### Ardell Hoyt (Male Gnome)

Friendly but sometimes forgetful gnomish scholar. He's been preparing for this expedition his entire life, and he couldn't be more excited to see it finally happening. While he doesn't necessarily trust his companions, he still knows that he can't cross the Cave of Lights alone.

#### Ability scores:

AC: 15 / HP: 38 / Speed 25 /

STR: 10 (+0) | DEX: 15 (+2) | CON: 10 (+0) |

INT: 13 (+1) | WIS: 19 (+4) | CHA: 13 (+1) |

#### Traits:

**Arcane Knowledge.** Ardell has advantage against spell saving throws and knows how to read the ancient language in the Cave of Lights.

**Healer.** Ardell knows the cantrip “Spare the Dying” and can cast “Cure Wounds” up to 6 times a day (1d8+4).

**One-armed.** Ardell has lost his non-dominant arm due to a cave-in during one of his previous expeditions.

#### In your Campaign:

Please be aware: if the characters in this party do not trust each other, there's a high chance that most of them will die during this adventure. Make sure the stakes and the consequences are clear to every player in the party.





**Afraid of dying.** In combat, Ardell gains the condition “frightened” and can only attack using the spell “Spiritual Weapon” instead of using melee attacks.

### Items:

**Potion of Speed.** Ardell keeps the potion around his neck, sort of like a talisman. He’s saving it for a special occasion. It grants him haste for 1 minute (+2 AC, advantage on DEX saving throws and an additional action each turn).

**Magic Eye.** A magic magnifying glass for reading ancient texts. It grants the user +2 on history or investigation checks that require examining something up close.

## Running this Module

This adventure is divided into several encounters across three sections of the cave (the entrance, the cave, the lighthouse). It’s up to the GM and the time left, as to how many of these encounters he or she will use. It should also be thought of as an endurance test. The point is to get the players to waste most of their resources before the final encounter – if the mood of the campaign allows it, the GM can even try to permanently cripple their characters. The players should be as desperate as Ardell to find the source of immortality. Something Ardell will assure them some ways into the dungeon, will restore their bodies to their former glory.

## Entering the Cave of Lights

The entrance to the Cave of Lights is located at the base of a mountain, somewhere in a remote and isolated region. On the journey there Ardell will be tight-lipped on what he hopes to find in the cave. He’ll only allude to some magical source of healing, which will help him restore his lost arm (which is partially true).

### The Entrance Riddle

The entrance looks like a massive door, carved into the side of a mountain. It can’t be blown open or destroyed. The inscription reads:

*Turn around young stranger, aren't you someone's son?*

*You shouldn't have found this cave, it isn't where you belong.*

*This path will only be opened to the dead*

*So, step aside, let them in instead*

*If you are still living, still in your prime:*

*Don't worry, the cave will take you when its time*

The way to get through this door, is to either appear dead (e.g. stopping your heart beat and falling through the door) or to kill something (e.g. an animal from the nearby woods) while stepping through the door. Illusion magic or necromancy to summon a corpse won’t work. Ardell can give the players some hints if they struggle to find a solution. Should the players find some other solution that makes sense, just pretend like it’s the one true solution to the riddle.

## The Path of Shadows

For the first uneventful hour of walking, the adventurers are descending a natural-looking corridor. After a while the corridor widens, and the group stands in a huge cavern (see Appendix I). To their left they can see a weird torch hanging from the wall. It shines a pale light from a cold, illusory flame. They can also hear water dripping up ahead and a weird whisper coming from all around. This is because the room is filled with Shadows (MM p. 269). There are two more Shadows than party members (Ardell included). They won’t attack players standing in the light and won’t come after them, should they leave the room. The portable torch only protects one person (most likely Ardell). The torch will go out, if its bearer walks through the watery middle of the room. The way to the right has a mounted, fixed torch, but the way there is difficult terrain. The left has no light but is easier to walk through. The encounter ends if the players flee or all Shadows are dead.

If the DM wants to create an atmosphere of dread, have the players roll for initiative as soon as they enter the room (even before they pick up the torch) and attack all



players not standing in the torch light during a surprise round.

## The Waterfall

The water constantly dropping from the ceiling and out of the walls is starting to flow together into a noticeable stream. After an hour the players are wading knee-deep through freezing water. Roll 1d10 on the following table, to see what happens:

1 - 2	The water is getting colder. Everyone makes a DC 14 CON saving throw. Failure will result in 1d4 CON damage from the cold.
3	The player closest to the GM's left makes a DC 12 DEX saving throw. He slips and takes 1d6 falling damage, half as much if he succeeds in the throw. A critical failure will result in him tripping another player (same rules).
4	The player closest to the GM's right doesn't notice a sharp rock underwater and takes 1d6 piercing damage.
5	The water suddenly opens into an underground lake and the players must swim across. Make a DC 14 CON saving throw. Failure will result in one level of exhaustion.
6	Ardell suddenly falls over from exhaustion and disappears underwater. It takes a DC 14 Perception (DC 18 if there's no light or darkvision) check to find him in time. If the players don't find him, he'll only have half as many cure wounds spell for the rest of the journey.
7	The corridor widens into a cavern filled with huge stalactites. A DC 12 Survival check is necessary to find an optimal way through. On a failed save the party winds up in a dead end and needs to backtrack. Roll again.
8	The players must walk through a waterfall to continue. If they cannot dry their clothes on the other end, have them make DC 15

	CON saving throw. Failure will result in 1d4 CON damage.
9	A Shadow (MM p. 269) is following the players. He'll attack the one not carrying a torch.

After 1d4 hours of walking, they'll reach a huge waterfall plummeting 40ft straight down into a cavern. It is the only way down.

## The Gate of Sacrifice

This event is required, if the GM wants to sow distrust between party members. They happen upon a huge gate blocking the path. Ardell will murmur, that they're finally entering Cave of Lights proper.

The gate itself is blocked by lots of huge metal spikes which can't all be realistically removed (see Appendix II). However, in the middle of the gate is a narrow passage, only wide enough for one person to squeeze through sideways. As soon as one of the players enters the passage, he'll be stabbed with a small metal spike and lose control of his body (1d6 piercing damage). At this point, the GM either takes that player aside or gives him a note, reading:

*You can't move. You can't speak. You feel your consciousness meld with the gate. It is not used to living souls passing through it. You instinctively know, that you can open the gate but also, that someone must pay a price in blood to pass through it. Choose one of the lives passing through this door or yourself to pay the price.*

The GM tells the player to covertly reveal the name to him. While the player stuck in the gate is reading the note, The GM describes to the other players that the spikes of the outer gate are driven inwards. Simultaneously allowing them to pass and hiding the person in the passageway from their sight. If they choose not to pass through the door, have Ardell do it. As soon as they pass through it, the character named by the player stuck in the middle passage is stabbed by a thin spike, lowering his HP permanently by 1d10 + 1. Afterwards

that player can pass, and the middle passage opens again, allowing that player to escape.

## The Cave of Lights

After walking through the Gate of Sacrifice, the party enters the largest underground cavern they've seen yet. Most of it is completely flooded. A massive waterfall is plummeting into abyssal darkness to the party's right. Far off in the distance, they can make out a tower with a brilliant light on top. However, the way there is blocked by the dark and cold water filling the cavern.

Some small islands connected through frail looking stone bridges lead over the underground lake and towards the tower. Though, there's also another feature of the cave which Ardell Hoyt points out to the party: Above them flicker thousands of moving lights. "Will o' Wisps" Ardell mumbles under his breath (MM p. 301).

While walking through the Cavern of Lights, each time a player faints, all the Will o's Wisps floating above them will converge on his location. They won't attack the living players – they just want to consume the life of the fainted player.

## The Invisible Labyrinth

The first Island the party sets foot upon immediately triggers the spell "Darkness" in a 60 ft. radius. The party can hear Shadows drawing nearer. The GM lets them roll for initiative. They can still see the light of the lighthouse, but nothing else. Ardell warns them "No wrong moves! If we step out of the towers ray of light, the shadows will be immediately upon us! Concentrate on the light and it will show you the right path!"

Have players start in different positions if possible. On their first turn, players can make a DC 10 perception check to concentrate on their surroundings. On a successful roll, give them the map in the Appendix III for 10 + wisdom modifier seconds. Afterwards, they can declare their movement one 5 ft square at a time. Each time they want to repeat the perception check, add +3 to the DC.

After every player has had their turn, the shadows collectively move 10 ft forward. Every player entering or starting his or her turn on field with a Shadow takes an opportunity attack of said Shadow.

## Surge of Wisps

On the second island the party can look down the giant waterfall which seems to drop into darkness forever. Some of the Will o' Wisp seem to try beckoning them to jump down. In fleeting voices, the wisps mock them, claiming they will die down here, that there is no source of immortality and that the shadows will feast on their carcasses.

Little do the players know, that the wisps are just distracting them – because two less wisp than the total party size are sneaking up on them. If none of the players are standing guard and the wisps succeed in a stealth check against their passive perception, give them a surprise round.

Have Ardell warn the players, that the Wisps can instantly kill any player who falls unconscious.

## The Frozen Shadow

The third island is empty, apart from three large stalagmites (AC 10, HP 40) on the upper edge of the island (see Appendix IV). The light from the tower is throwing three large shadows across the island. Hiding within is a massive shadow monster, which can only move along the shadows of the stalagmites. The divine light of the tower would immobilize it, give it disadvantage on attack rolls and cut its AC in half.

### Ability scores:

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AC: 14 / Hit points: 56 / Speed 50 / Challenge 4

STR: 10 (+0) | DEX: 18 (+4) | CON: 18 (+4) |

INT: 6 (-2) | WIS: 10 (+0) | CHA: 16 (+3) |

### Traits:

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**Shadowbound.** Extinguishes any non-magical light. Can only move within shadows. If caught in the tower's

light, it must use its action to attach itself to any shadow within a 10ft. radius, no matter how small.

**Resistances.** Piercing and bludgeoning from nonmagical weapons.

**Immunities.** Poison and necrotic damage

### **Attacks:**

**Claw** (+6 to hit), reach 5 ft., 1d12 + 4 slashing damage.

**Drag into the Shadows** (+6 to hit). Reach 10 ft., 1d8 + 4 piercing damage. The target must succeed on a DC 14 DEX saving throw or be dragged into the closest shadow and be knocked prone.

**Howl** (2x). The eerie howl of a thousand souls crying out in agony wreaks havoc on the morale of all living creatures within a 100 ft radius able to hear it. They must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1d4+1 rounds. Creatures that successfully save against this effect cannot be affected by the Frozen Shadow's howl for 24 hours.

## **Through a Door of Fire**

The final bridge leading to the island with the tower is blocked by a stone door, which looks a lot like the one that led the party into this mountain. The only difference is, that there's a small altar in front of it. The inscription reads:

*A warrior wondrously brought him into the world for the use of lords by using two dumb things brightly clashing. Strong though he is, a woman can bind him. He obeys them well, serves them quietly, if maids and men tend him duly, feed him fairly, he exalts them in comfort for their joy in life, yet grimly rewards one who lets him grow proud. You too must feed him dearly, if you wish to pass.*

The answer is fire or flame. Should the players struggle to come up with an answer, have Ardell mention that two dumb things could refer to swords or metal clashing. The door bursts into flame if the players light a fire on the altar. The fire can't be put out. Each player must "feed him dearly" to pass – meaning they must run

through the fire and take 2d10 fire damage. Should they not want to, have Ardell do it.

## **The Lighthouse**

As the party stumbles through the fire, they can finally see the lighthouse towering above them. "We are so close! My companions – onwards! Immortality awaits!" Ardell proclaims. Meanwhile, all around them the Will o' Wisps are getting dangerously close. There chance is now or never.

## **Fighting off wisps**

If the players aren't sufficiently weakened yet, have them fight off shadows or wisps on their way to the tower.

## **To Those Who Enter**

The passage into the tower appears to be open – but upon trying to enter it, the players feel an invisible force pushing them back. Next to the passage Ardell notices another small hollow altar with a hole in the middle – it looks a bit like a big vase. Ardell deciphers its short inscription:

*Eternal life isn't something you can choose*

*It is awarded to those with nothing left to lose*

Depending on how bad the health of the party is, this can either mean inflicting more damage (e.g. have Ardell cut out one of his eyes,) or leaving something behind (e.g. have Ardell strip naked). For the players this can mean anything – from leaving behind all weapons, all armour, destroying an important item or damaging them to 1 HP.

Afterwards they can pass through the door without any trouble.





## The Final Decision

At long last, the party climbs the tower to its very top. The chamber contains a huge flying orb giving off a cold light. Touching it causes 2d8 radiant damage. In front of it stands a small crystalline bottle which is filled with a transparent liquid. The liquid acts as a lens for the orb's light, spreading its light through the cave. The bottle itself is protected by a crystal box. Ardell pretends to be barely able to walk at this point and has asked one of the players to carry him up to the top. He'll warn the players not to touch anything, because there may be a large risk of death in doing so. Should one of the players approach the bottle before Ardell, have him stop the player in question verbally. Once Ardell has reached the top floor, he'll pretend to investigate the inscriptions around the room for a "save way to gain access to the source of immortality". He'll also instruct them to search the walls for a "hidden lever" However, this is all just distraction. He's really trying to sneakily drink his potion of speed. DC 18 Perception check for the players to see if they notice him do it.

The reason for this treachery is simple: Ardell noticed the moment he entered the bottle would only contain enough fluids to grant immortality to one person. So, in a panic, he made up his mind to kill the party before they figure it out for themselves.

If the players don't notice him drinking the potion of speed or if they don't question it, start combat with a surprise round for Ardell – with him getting advantage on his first attack. Once all players but one are unconscious or dead, the powers of his potion will run out and he'll be helpless. He'll explain that the potion can grant that last player immortality or heal the entire party from the damage they've sustained during this journey (even death can be cured). Running this last choice requires good timing from the GM – a lot depends on phrasing it correctly. It is worth it, to see this final decision play out: Will that last player claim immortality for himself or heal his friends?

## Rewards

Depending on the final decision, one of two things will play out: The player keeping the potion all for himself gains the two feats "durable" and "tough" (PHB p. 166 / p. 170), regains all his hit points and is fully healed from all his conditions. This only applies if he swallows the entire bottle. Any amount less than that results just in him being healed.

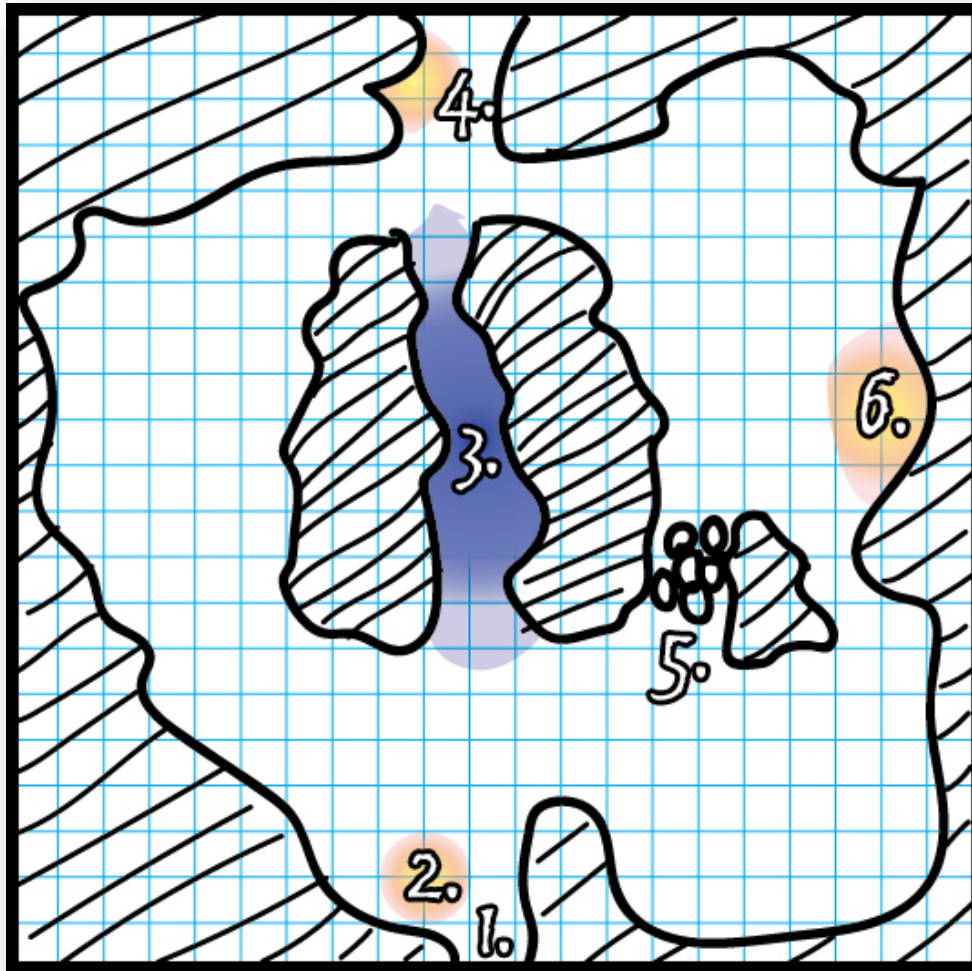
If each party member is only given a sip, then they'll be fully healed, regain any lost limbs and are healed from any condition they might suffer from.

Should they kill Ardell, they can loot his corpse. Apart from his "magic eye", he'll be wearing jewellery worth 80gp.

## What's next?

With the lens in the tower gone, the spirits in the region will be getting restless, because there's nothing left to guide them through the Cavern of Lights. Can the party escape the Cavern? Is there even a party left? Who built the Cavern and why? Only time will tell.

## Appendix I – The Path of Shadows Map



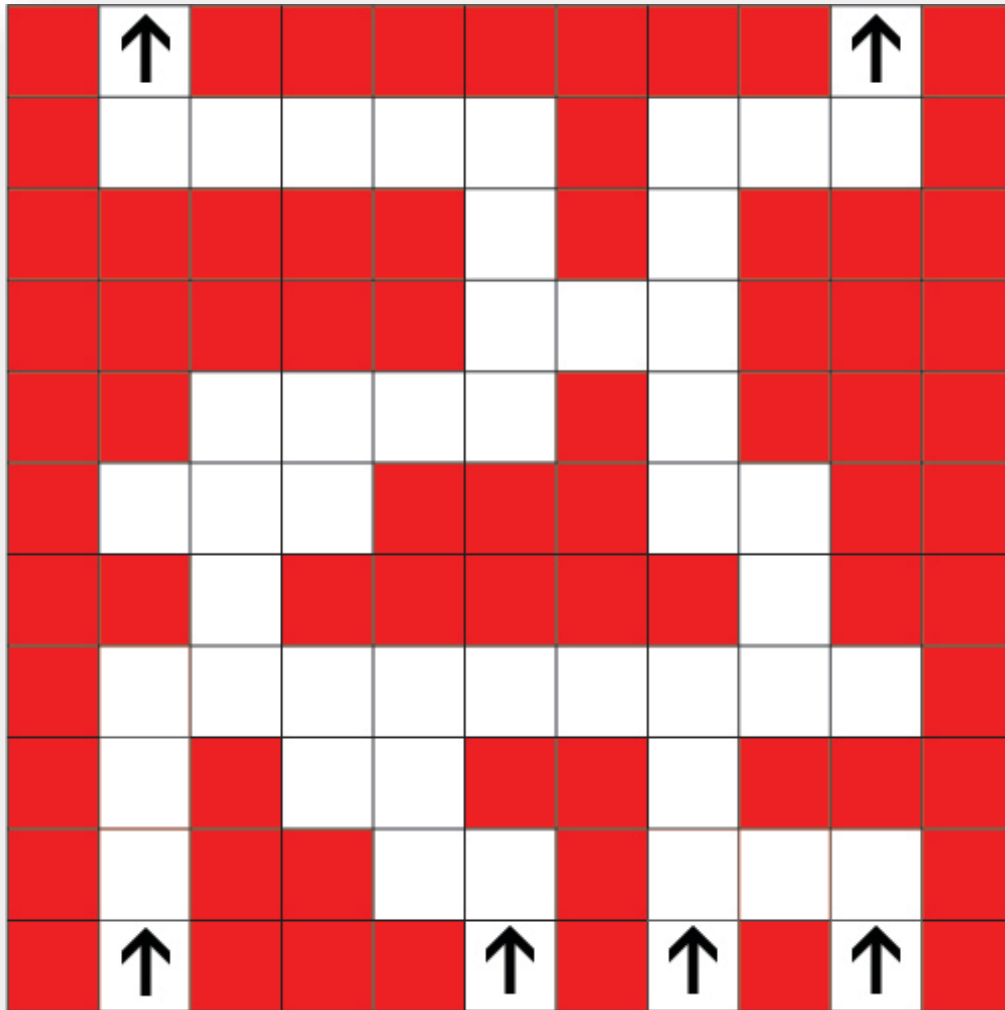
1. Entrance to the Path of Shadows
2. Portable torch
3. 5ft deep water puddle with dripping water (difficult terrain)
4. Exit
5. Cave in – can be climbed over with a DC 13 Acrobatics check
6. Wall-mounted torch, can't be removed

## Appendix II – The Gate of Sacrifices





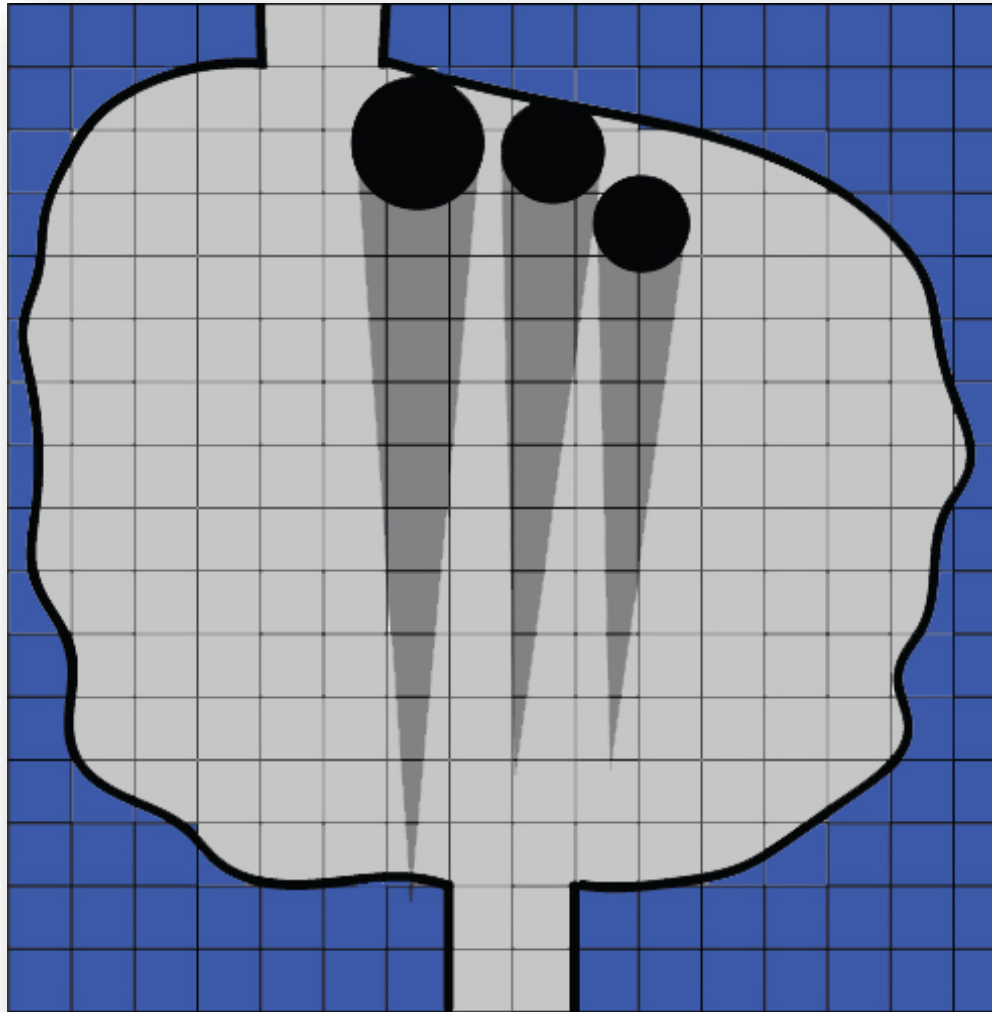
### Appendix III – The Invisible Labyrinth



The red squares are occupied by shadows. Each square corresponds to 5ft. The bottom marks the entrance – both exits on top work to escape the Darkness spell. Moving through a red field causes an attack of opportunity from a Shadow. More Shadows advance 10ft. upwards each turn, basically erasing two rows of squares each time.



## Appendix IV – The Frozen Shadow



The Frozen Shadow can only move within the stalagmite's shadow. Should a player stand between two shadows can his own shadow serve as a bridge or hiding place for the Frozen Shadow.