

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 42



ELVEN
TOWER

HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
VTT - ROLL20 MAPS

Designed for use with
ShadowDark RPG



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Delve the Dungeon! Light your Torch!

The time has come
for you and your
wretched comrades to
show your worth.

Perhaps none of you
shall survive this
ordeal. But those who
do shall bask in riches
and glory. How long
will that feeling last?



Challenge Grim Death!

POND OF SPIRITS

In the depths of the Pond of Spirits, lies the echo of betrayals and whispers of the departed; a mirror to the soul's deepest desires and darkest fears.

Dungeon's Inscription

Within the depths of an ancient dungeon lies the fabled Pond of Spirits. This is the macabre masterpiece of a prodigal necromancer from a lineage of formidable sorcerers. The inception of this pond is steeped in tragedy and dark thoughts; it was birthed in an act of unspeakable betrayal when Erimon, the young necromancer, driven by insidious ambition, slew his kin in a single, moonless night. The spirits of his family, bound by potent necromantic rituals, were consigned to the depths of the pond's dungeon, their essence forever mingling with its spectral waters.

THE MAGICAL POND

EXPLORERS, HEROES, AND treasure hunters seek the magical Pond of Spirits because it offers visitors two harrowing boons, though each at a ruinous cost.

Connection. The pond has the power to find any soul that has departed from this world. Petitioners may converse with long-departed loved ones, their spectral voices rising from the pond's depths like whispers on the wind. However, such communion is not without its perils, as the spirits' words often carry the weight of unresolved pasts, forbidden secrets, or hidden truths.

Wish. Even more ominous still is the power to petition the Oracles of Death, ethereal entities that dwell within the pond's fathomless waters. These immortal souls grant wishes, empowered with the wisdom of ages and the foresight of the damned, but their gifts come at a dire price. Those who dare ask must forfeit something of immense spiritual value, a sacrifice that may leave an indelible scar upon the petitioner's soul, a reminder of the eternal balance between desire and consequence.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Guards. The heroes are hired by Lord Lillen. The man's wife was murdered a decade ago. He never had the chance to say goodbye. He believes the pond is the key to overcoming his grief. The heroes must escort Lord Lillen to the magical waters (1,500 gp, 7 XP).

Ambition. The heroes learn about the Pond of Spirits and want a taste of its power. They choose to step into the dungeon and seek to make a wish come true (0 XP).

Cleansing. This dungeon is not only a prison for Erimon's family, it is filled with ancient necromancy, dark magic, and foul spells. To top it all, countless adventurers and treasure hunters have lost their lives trying to unravel the secrets of this cursed place. The heroes' objective is to destroy the Pond of Spirits forever (0 XP).

ERIMON'S LEGACY

Erimon's dungeon is filled with gems, magical components, and treasure. But surrounding this eerie pond, the dungeon sprawls like a labyrinthine crypt, riddled with devious traps and patrolled by undying guardians - spectral remnants of the necromancer's slain family, eternally bound to protect their prison.

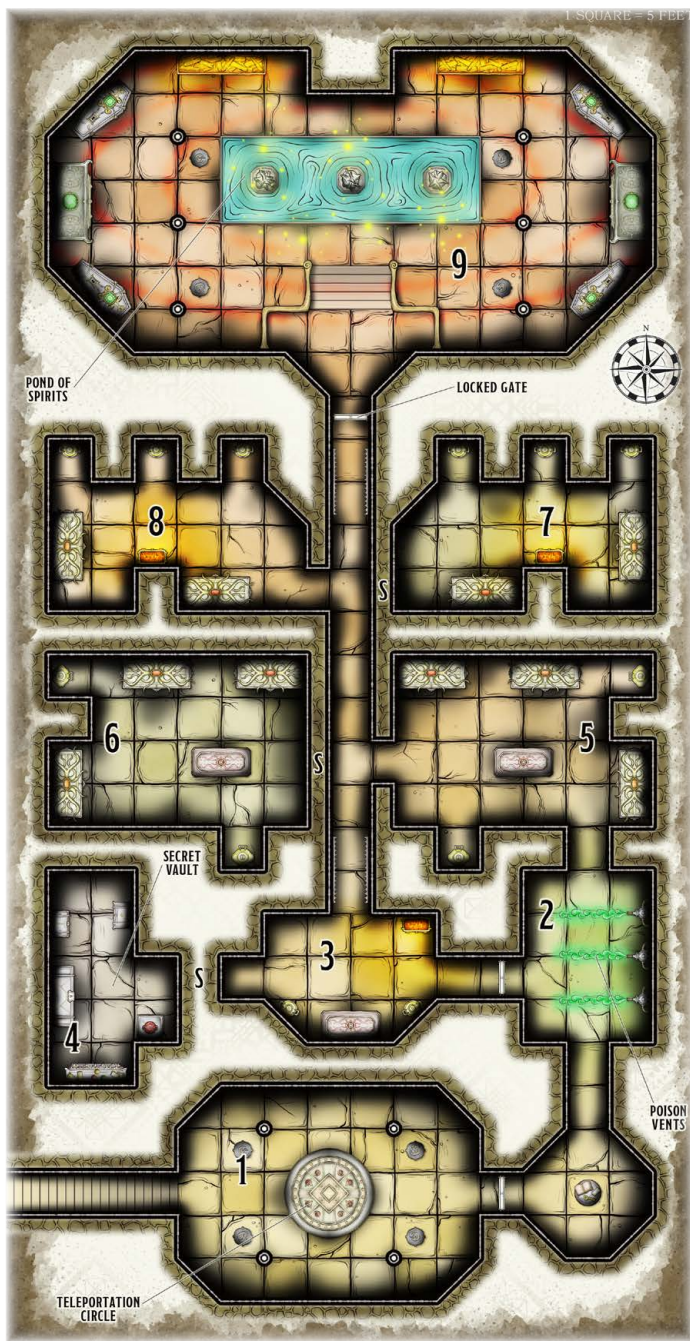
Level 6 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas feature magical braziers that stay ever-burning. Fairy-like fireflies illuminate The Pond of Spirits. The undead and guardians are **dark-adapted**.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A spectral hand emerges from a wall, offering a scroll bound in shadows (Cursed, Random Tier 1 spell scroll cast with disadv.).
2	The echoing clatter of bones leads to a skeleton in royal attire, pacing restlessly before a sealed tomb. The undead mage is deranged and consumed by rage. It believes one of the heroes is Erimon, who returned to mock his dead family.
3	Whispers fill the air, each telling a different tale of betrayal. The whispers finally lead the heroes to a hidden chamber (area 7).
4	An ancient trap springs, releasing a swarm of bats that screech and attack mercilessly. They flee when reduced to half HP.
5	A sudden chill pervades as ghostly lights dance across the dungeon, and a strong wind current consumes all light sources.
6	A mirror, framed in twisted metal, shows not the viewer's reflection, but a scene of the dungeon as it was centuries ago. Characters can only witness as Erimon, in the scene from the past, takes the life of the last living relative with a dark blade.



1. ENTRANCE AND TELEPORTATION CIRCLE

At the dungeon's entrance lies a teleportation circle, its runes glowing faintly on the stone floor, hinting at a dormant portal's power. Surrounding it are four dark stone pillars, etched with scenes of ancient sorcery, pulsating with subtle magical waves of energy.

The characters may have learned the rune pattern to teleport themselves here in a previous adventure. Otherwise, to find the entrance to Erimon's dungeon, the heroes must traverse dense woods, and journey through muddy hills and rocky mountains for two days. Surviving these perils and dangers on their way here shall depend solely upon their survival skills, bravery, and wit.

2. POISON VENTS

Dimly lit, the chamber's stone walls glisten with dampness. From the east wall, a malevolent green mist seeps from gas vents. An eerie silence hangs, punctuated by occasional hisses of toxic fumes.

The poison is released in random intervals. The characters take 1d10 damage unless they are fast enough to avoid the gas (DC 16 DEX). A skilled crawler may try to disarm the vents' mechanism as well (DC 18 DEX).

3. ANTECHAMBER

An unadorned door creaks to reveal this room. Stone walls enclose a dim antechamber. Faint echoes hint at distant corridors. A **wight** emerges from the sarcophagus if the characters interact with it in any way.

4. SECRET VAULT

To find this area, the characters must press the hidden button inside the sarcophagus in area 3 (DC 15 WIS). A section of the wall slides upward after it is pressed.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The characters find the following items within the coffers, containers, and the shelf: a serrated greatsword (12 gp), a white pearl (40 gp), a minotaur hoof with a gold horseshoe (50 gp), a green scarab encased in amber (75 gp), and a *ring of feather falling*.

5. FAMILY SARCOPHAGI

Dimly lit, the chamber houses three identical sarcophagi against moss-covered walls. Two golden urns reside in shadowed alcoves. A central, ornate sarcophagus stands distinct, exuding an aura of mystery.

Erimon's family members wake up from their slumber to guard this place against their souls' will. The three **wights** and one zombie **mage** fight until slain.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The characters may retrieve the following items from the enclosures. A rare incense that is repulsive to undead (50 gp), a half-complete suit of plate mail (65 gp), a crystal statuette of Memnon (50 gp), and a beautiful wooden case with three *potions of healing*.

6. HIDDEN SARCOPHAGI

The characters must press a brick to reveal this area (DC 15 WIS). Upon entrance, two **wraiths** coalesce from the urn's ashes and four **zombies** come out of the enclosures. Erimon's dead relatives fight until slain.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** After the fight, the characters may search the area and obtain the following: a dragonbone crossbow carved as a roaring dragon (60 gp), a random tier-2 spell scroll (140 gp), a +2 *magic armor* (300 gp) (GM's choice), and a beautiful limestone container with intricate Elvish runes (100 gp), it contains a pair of intricately crafted *immovable rods* (300 gp each).

CENTRAL CORRIDOR

A corridor stretches 120 feet. If the characters fail to spot the steel plates on each side of the corridor (DC 14 WIS), they must jump away when they cross either crushing wall trap (see map) to avoid getting crushed (DC 16 DEX). On a fail, victims take 2d8 damage. The key to the locked gate at the end of the corridor is located in area 7. If the heroes do not have it, they must either destroy the door or bypass its lock (DC 17 DEX). The former option alerts everyone in area 9 of the characters' presence, the latter requires thieves' tools.

7. SECRET RESTING CHAMBER

This area is concealed behind an illusory wall. A *detect magic* spell reveals the trick instantly. Two **wights** and three **shadows** protect this secret chamber.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The characters find a couple of leather bags with 1,386 sp and 27 gp. There is also a silver key. It opens the locked gate that takes to area 9.

8. LESSER GUARDS

Two **skeletons** and three **shadows** come out of this chamber and fight intruders crossing the corridor after the second crushing wall trap in the corridor triggers. Otherwise, they stay in their enclosures and fight only if the intruders interact with their resting places.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** An eye patch made of batwing leather (30 gp), a suit of dwarf-made chainmail (60 gp), an ironwood longbow engraved with silver leaves (35 gp), and a lantern made of intricate stained glass (80 gp).

9. POND OF SPIRITS

Towering above, the chamber's ceiling is lost in shadow, giving the space an air of infinite height. A series of magnificent sarcophagi rest on each side, their surfaces encrusted with large gems that glint like stars against the dark stone. These sarcophagi, each a masterpiece of craftsmanship, are the final resting places of Erimon's closest kin; their opulence is a dire, stark contrast to the despair of their inhabitants.

Three pedestals emerge from the Pond of Spirits, each holding a mass of liquid metal that shimmers like molten silver. This enigmatic substance is in constant flux, changing shape and form in an endless, metallic dance.

► **Lord Lillen.** The characters witness the liquid metal change shape and assume the shape of their employer's long-gone wife. They have a touching reunion where Lord Lillen finally says what he never could. The heroes may also have a word with a deceased loved one. However, if they wish to abuse the pond's magic, or ask to speak with someone who is not close to them, they anger the spirits, and the guardians appear (see below).

► **A Wish Come True.** The pond's magic can work like a *wish* spell. The cost is a living soul. The heroes may state what they want as long as they are willing to pay.

► **Agents of Good.** The characters cannot allow such a place to exist anymore. They have come to destroy the pond. The guardians, two dead **reavers**, and four **wights** emerge from the sarcophagi to protect their master's creation. After combat, a holy cleansing ritual, holy water, and burning the dungeon entirely is required.



WISPS IN THE OASIS

In a moment of great need, when death looms closer and closer, the weary shall find the Oasis of Sphinxes to finally soothe their aching bodies and minds.

Old Saying

Deep within the heart of the treacherous Arijj Expanse, a mystical sanctuary known as the Oasis of Sphinxes reveals itself only to those most desperate and in dire need. This elusive haven is a marvel, a tale often whispered among caravans but seldom believed to exist. The oasis defies the relentless heat and desolation of the Arijj Expanse. It appears as a mirage at first, a shimmering veil of hope on the horizon. Upon approaching, however, the ephemeral oasis is as real as the scorching dunes around it.

At the heart of this sanctuary lies a serene pond, its waters crystal clear and imbued with life-giving properties. The pond is said to not only quench the thirst but also rejuvenate the spirit and body of those who drink from it. By night, the surface reflects the starlit sky, creating a mesmerizing spectacle. Guarding the oasis are three ancient sphinx effigies, positioned in a triangular formation around the pond. These statues are crafted from sun-bleached stone, etched with forgotten runes and hieroglyphs. They are rumored to be the guardians of the oasis, protecting it from those with malevolent intent. Legends speak of the sphinxes coming to life to pose riddles to unworthy visitors, denying them access to the oasis' life-saving waters if they are deemed unworthy.

MAGIC WISPS OF LIGHT

COUNTLESS ETHEREAL WISPS dance through the air, emitting a soft, otherworldly glow. These luminous entities are believed to be the spirits of the desert. They have the power to pose a challenge of bravery and combat prowess to those who reach the oasis. Legend has it that those who fail this test perish; their souls become another wisp to eternally guard the Oasis of Sphinxes.

TRAVERSING THE DESERT

Discovering the Oasis of Sphinxes is the unpredicted consequence of getting lost in a desert. This short encounter/adventure is best used as an impromptu destination after the characters lose their way in an arid region. Desert journeys are perilous. If the characters lack the attire or appropriate equipment for the climate, things can escalate in a matter of hours. During such a situation, if all climate obstacles are overcome, a character or guide must guide the group through the area to reach their destination (DC 16 WIS check). Failure means they end up finding the Oasis of Sphinxes.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Lost in the Heat. While traversing the Arijj Expanse, the party loses track of their surroundings and must face reality: they are lost in the scorching heat. Things quickly turn dire as the relentless climate threatens to end their lives. It is when the group feels that all hope is lost that an ephemeral vision appears before them. The Oasis of Sphinxes has appeared but whether this apparition is an augur of weal or woe remains to be seen (0 XP).

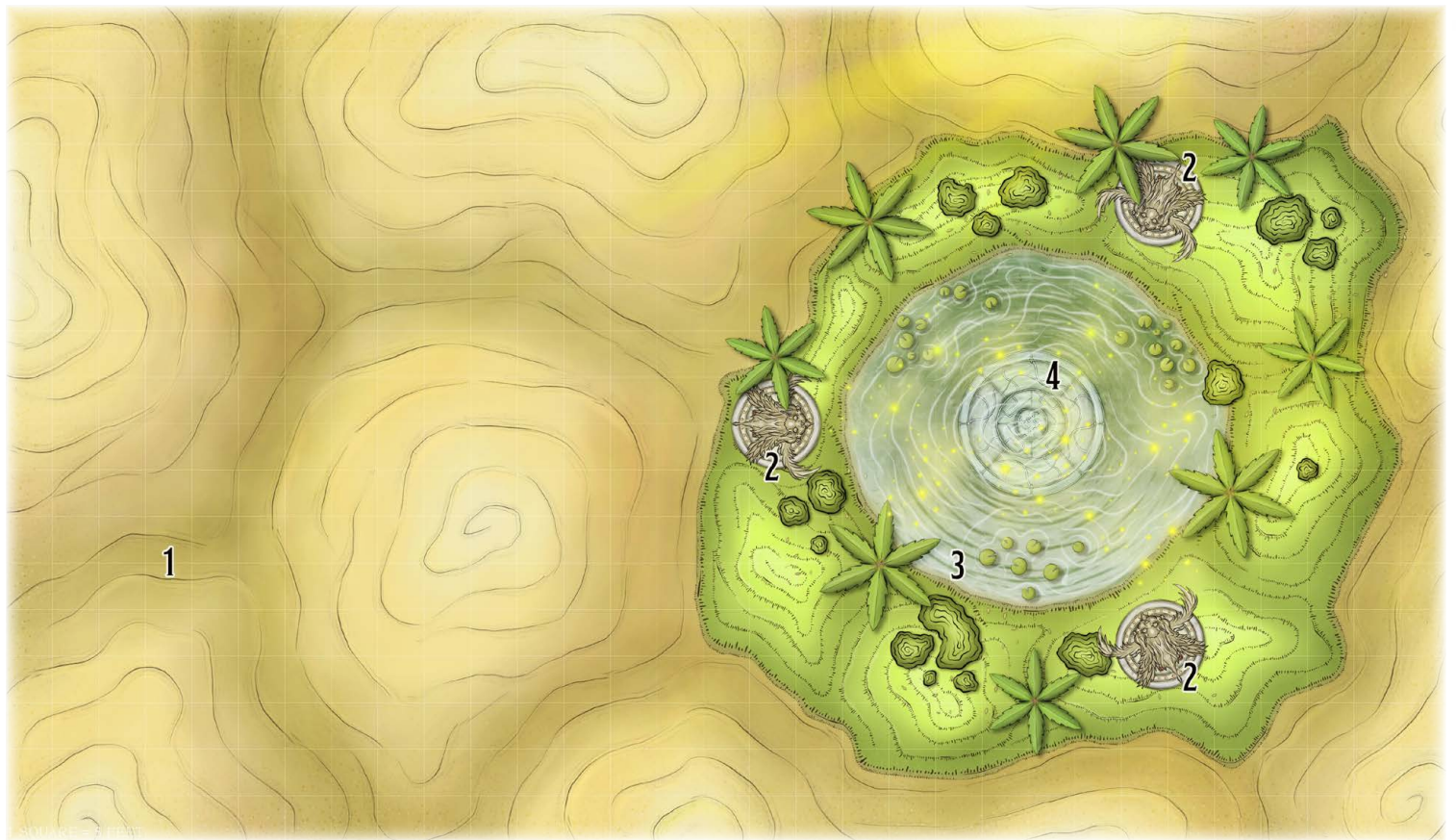
Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** right after arriving at the oasis and every 3 hours (4-in-6 chance).

► **Luminous Wisps.** The flying motes of light in the oasis are of magical nature. They illuminate the area with an otherworldly glow. A *detect magic* spell reveals they are a mixture of conjuration and necromancy magic. They are souls trapped in the oasis (DC 16 INT check).

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A lone nomad (thug), draped in sun-faded robes, approaches the oasis seeking water. He offers to trade ancient desert tales for a night's shelter by the party's fire. Later on, he offers his mercenary services to the characters on their upcoming quests.
2	A mysterious merchant (djinni) riding a camel, laden with exotic goods and artifacts, stops at the oasis, offering rare items for a hefty price. The mysterious individual does not appear to need the oasis; as a desert being, he can come and go as he pleases.
3	A lost caravan (ten peasants) stumbles upon the oasis, their camels weary and their supplies nearly exhausted.
4	As night falls, a ghost of a long-lost explorer appears, pacing the pond's edge, forever searching for a treasure he never found.
5	A mirage of a dilapidated ruin manifests a few hundred feet from the oasis. Creatures that leave for it cannot find their way back.
6	Unexpectedly, all of the arcane wisps vanish during the night and the Oasis of Sphinxes becomes dark and cold for 1 hour.



1. THE ARIJI EXPANSE

Desperation wanes and subsides as the mythical and elusive Oasis of Sphinxes appears. Palm trees, bushes, and the promise of fresh water await ahead.

The characters are fortunate, after a situation that spelled death and disaster, to find the Oasis of Sphinxes in the Ariji Expanse. Now, they can approach and rest before setting out once more into the merciless desert.

2. THE SPHINX EFFIGIES

Each limestone effigy portrays a heavy-built feline being with four feathered wings, long ears, and a penetrating gaze that follows the oasis's visitors.

There are myths about these sphinxes telling riddles and refusing access to the pond (DC 14 INT), but they seem to be unfounded. The arcane runes etched on their limestone surface, when studied by a spellcaster, reveal that there was a transmutation spell embedded in them. Alas, it has long stopped functioning. The magic is lost.

3. THE POND

Lichens float on the crystal-clear, fresh water's surface. The water is not only safe to drink, it heals all wounds and diseases if a person drinks from it for three consecutive days. The *detect magic* spell reveals a strong magical presence at the bottom of the pond (10 feet deep). A magic circle from whence the oasis magic emerges.

4. THE MAGIC CIRCLE

The fifteen-foot diameter magic circle at the pond's bottom is the source of the healing waters and what causes the Oasis of Sphinxes to appear and disappear in the desert. A spellcaster may dive to study its surface and transcribe the *teleport* spell (DC 16 INT check).

► **Disruption.** The circle is impervious to all physical damage but it can be deactivated with a *dispel magic* spell cast by a level-8 (or higher) spellcaster.

WISPS IN THE OASIS

THE WISPS THAT float over the magical pond are not dangerous when the characters arrive at the Oasis of Sphinxes. However, during their first night's stay, this changes. The wisps are trapped souls, their life-force empowers the magic circle but keeps them prisoner in the oasis. There are a hundred souls, the only way for them to leave is to be replaced by new souls.

► **Retribution.** This encounter occurs twice during the first day of the characters' stay in the oasis, at midnight and dawn. The floating lights coalesce into six **will-o'-wisps** that attack all humanoid present. They attempt to drain the lives of all present. Creatures that perish this way have their souls stripped and forever trapped in the Oasis of Sphinxes. At least until enough new souls are collected in subsequent encounters in the future.

HOUSE OF THE LIDLESS ABOMINATIONS

Let us practice our beliefs! Or else we shall require your gaze, lidless, to continue guarding this harbor of evil after the living have long departed.

Father Harmens



eneath the forlorn ruins of Eldergrove, where twisted trees whisper untold secrets, lies a forgotten tomb known as the House of the Lidless Abominations. This underground sepulcher, once the resting place of the noble House Valthrun, has become a place of dark legend. Rumors tell of a grand sarcophagus within its Main Hall, holding treasures beyond mortal comprehension. However, it is guarded by the twisted machinations of a nefarious cult.

THE CULT OF THE UNSEEING

THE TOMB HAS been desecrated by a small, insidious cult known as the Cult of the Unseeing. These fanatics, led by Father Harmens, worship the concept of eternal watchfulness, believing that true vision comes from beyond mortal eyes. They have performed vile rituals to reanimate those interred in the tomb below; the lidless abominations, undead monstrosities stripped of their eyelids, cursed to eternal vigilance. Whatever treasure is guarded in the Main Hall the cult has kept safe. Under their leader's teachings, they believe that guarding the sarcophagus shall grant them seeing into other worlds.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Swords for Hire. Lord Daven, a collector of ancient artifacts, hires the characters to follow a map to the crumbling tomb of House Valthrun to retrieve the contents of its patriarch's sarcophagus. Any other valuables found in the burial site are for the characters to do as they please. Lord Dave does warn the party that a petty cult is rumored to have taken over the tomb. He cares not for what happens to the cultists (800 gp, 6 XP).

Level 4 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 crawling rounds and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas feature magical braziers with *light* spells. The undead monsters are **dark-adapted**.

► **Heraldry.** The walls are etched with House Valthrun's seal (DC 14 INT), an old and powerful noble family.

1. ENTRANCE HALL

This chamber is empty except for a glowing rune on the floor and a magical brazier. The rune is a clever trap meant to attract the attention of trespassers and trigger the two crossbow traps hidden in the alcoves (see map).

► **The Walls.** North and south, the two 10-foot-deep alcoves are shrouded by illusory walls. Observant individuals notice their slight transparency (DC 17 WIS).

► **The Crossbows.** Standing on the glowing rune square triggers both devices to shoot. The target takes 2d8 damage from the bolts (DC 15 DEX check).

2. CULTISH QUARTERS

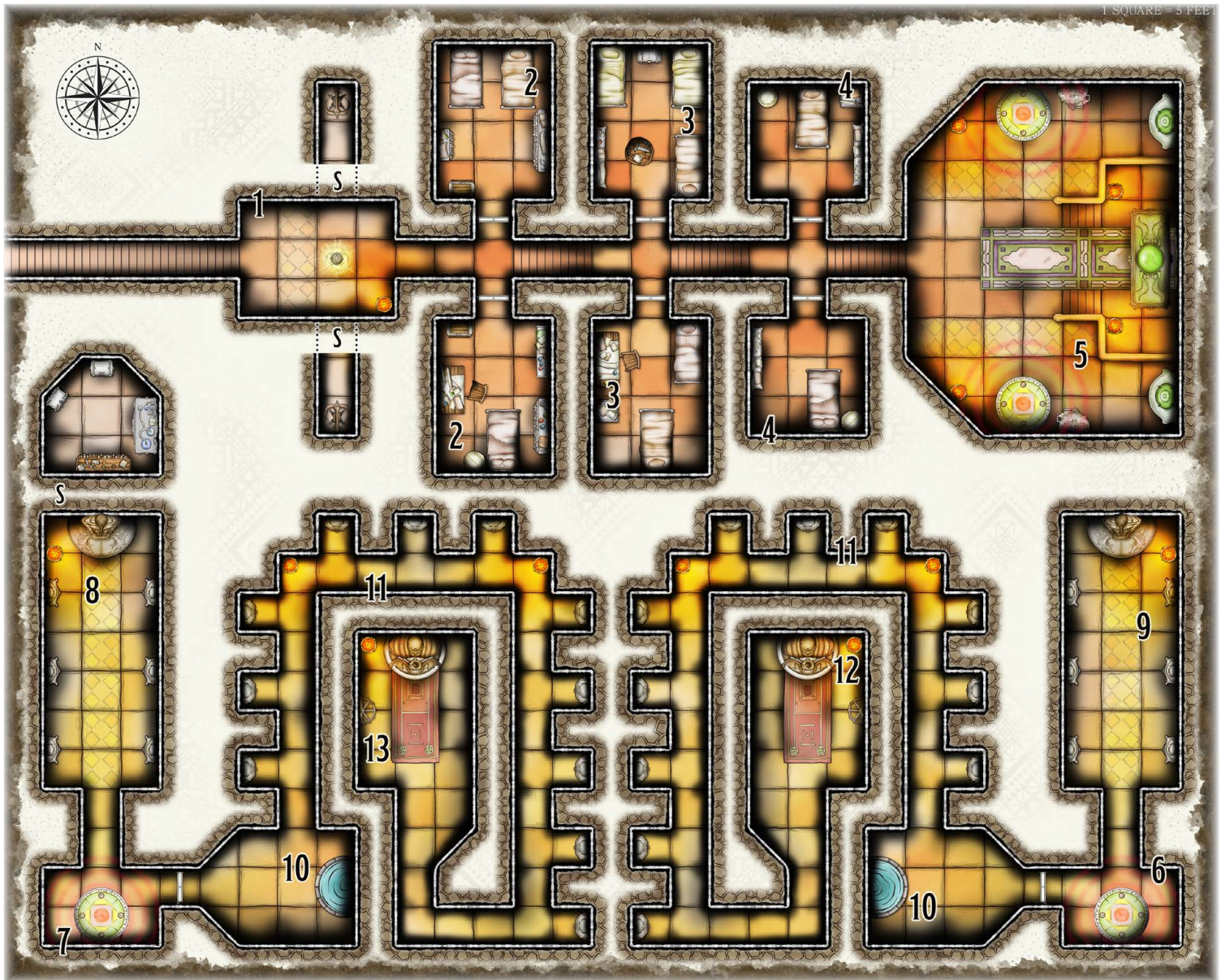
Each chamber contains sparse furnishings and attire for mid-level cult members. 2d3 **cultists** rest in each chamber at any given time. The cultists emerge to combat the trespassing characters if the trap is triggered in area 1.

► **Lore.** A journal on the north chamber reveals that the teleportation circles in the Main Hall (area 5) are the only means to reach the lower level. It is located 300 feet below and consists of two unconnected wings.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** Inspecting the south chamber for 1 crawling round yields 40 gp, one *potion of healing*, and two Wizard spell scrolls (*hold person* and *misty step*).

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	The party hears hushed, unintelligible whispers emanating from the shadows. They claim they still see, even with lidless eyes.
2	A spectral figure of a long-dead noble (shadow) drifts silently through a corridor, leading the way toward its tomb in area 5.
3	A wall effigy's eyes seem to follow the party. Those who meet its gaze feel a wave of deep nausea for 1 minute (DC 14 CON). Those affected by this effect have disadvantage on all checks against the undead guardians in the lower level until they rest.
4	Two undead warriors (ghasts), clad in rusted armor and lidless, approach to attack anyone who disturbs their eternal watch.
5	After an arcane wave, all light sources flicker simultaneously, plunging the dungeons into darkness for 1 crawling round.
6	A supernatural cold, brought forth by the cult leader, engulfs the party. It saps their life-force if they fail to resist its effects. Each character takes 1d6 CON damage (DC 16 CON check). Dying from this effect spawns an abominate, lidless ghoul .



3. CULTISH BARRACKS

Each chamber contains furnishings, double bunk-beds, and attire for low-level cult members. 2d4 **peasants** study in each chamber at any given moment.

► **Treasure (2 XP).** Inspecting the chambers for 1 **crawling round** yields 20 gp, and two flasks of oil.

4. PRIESTLY QUARTERS

Each chamber contains a single bed and a shelf. Father Harmens lives in the north one but is not currently there. The cult's second-in-command, Mother Dianora (**mage**) studies in the south one and emerges to fight when interrupted or if a battle in the barracks (area 3) breaks out.

► **Painting.** The oil painting over the bed-frame depicts a stern, old man, dressed in priestly robes.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** Inspecting Dianora's chamber for 1 **crawling round** yields 30 gp, a *potion of vitality*, a carved mithral ring (40 gp), and a scroll of *zone of truth*.

5. THE MAIN HALL

An ancient chamber adorned with cryptic Elvish runes up to the domed ceiling. A raised dais holds a grand sarcophagus. It is flanked by two pulsating magical circles. Mystery and magic fill the air.

► **The Circles.** Stepping on the circles instantly teleports up to six creatures to area 6 (south circle) or area 7 (north circle). They recharge after 1 **crawling round**.

► **The Congregation.** Father Harmens (**mage**) is here with two **cultists** and two lidless **ghouls**. The cult leader commands the characters to leave at once as their objective is only to peacefully guard the contents of this dungeon. If the characters refuse, the cultists fight to the death to impede them from accessing the lower tomb.

► **Treasure (8 XP).** The sarcophagus can only be opened by operating the valves in areas 12 and 13. It contains 3,500 gp, 2,800 sp, two *potions of healing*, a +1 *chainmail*, and a scroll of *protection from energy*.

6. EAST WING LANDING

The small chamber contains nothing but a teleportation circle. It connects to the south circle in area 5. When the characters teleport in here, they cannot return to area 5 until 1 **crawling round** has elapsed. During this time, the circle stops glowing and appears to be inert.

7. WEST WING LANDING

This chamber is identical to area 6 except that the magic circle in it connects to the north circle in area 5.

8. WEST GALLERY

A tall statue of a masked bloodletter stands impassive at the end of this gallery. Six standing sarcophagi, their covers well decorated, flank the strange statue.

► **Lidless Monsters.** Six **ghouls** emerge from the enclosures when a living creature enters the chamber. Their implacable, lidless gazes disturb mortals' minds.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The secret vault (DC 16 Wis check to find the hidden button to open it) behind the far wall contains 300 gp, 2,100 sp, a *potion of invisibility*, a *ring of invisibility*, four flasks of oil, and a pound of lard.

9. EAST GALLERY

This chamber is identical to area 8 except that there are only four **ghouls**. Two of the enclosures are open and empty when the characters arrive. In addition, there is no secret chamber behind the north wall.

10. POND OF SOLACE

These chambers serve as the entrance to the Slithering Tombs (areas 11). They contain a single, 5-foot-deep pond filled with clean water. The stone railing is etched with Elvish runes. If translated, they read: "*Drink in honor of House Valthrun and ease the pain and weariness.*"

► **Water.** Visitors who drink from either pond and make a toast for House Valthrun are awarded a **luck token**. A toast made in jest or drinking from the pond without translating the runes causes the person ingesting the water to become poisoned. 2d6 damage (DC 12 CON).

11. SLITHERING TOMB

This serpentine burial site is dotted with eleven alcoves, each containing a single, standing enclosure. These burial containers are marked with the House Valthrun sigil and are labeled with a person's name. If the characters open these tombs, the contents are random (1d4):

1. A ravenous, lidless **ghast** emerges from within.
2. 200 gp are stored inside.
3. A random Wizard scroll and two lidless **zombies**.
4. An adamantine trinket (20 gp) lies within. It bears the heraldry mark of House Valthrun.

12. TOMB OF THE PATRIARCH (EAST)

The statue of an armor-clad knight oversees this chamber. The pedestal on which it stands is also a burial container that bears an ancient family sigil.

A phantom (**wraith**) emerges from the stone pedestal. Its lidless eyes are evident even in its incorporeal form. If at least half the party drank in honor of House Valthrun in the nearest area 10, the wraith deems them friends of his house and does not attack unless antagonized first. It even allows the use of the valve wheel.

► **The Device.** The wheel valve, in the closed position, has to be operated by a strong character (DC 14 STR check) to reach the open position. Both this and the one in area 13 must be opened for anything to happen.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** The pedestal features a drawer-like container where the patriarch's remains are interred. It contains 500 gp and a *+1 longsword*. Pillaging this treasure earns the characters the eternal enmity of House Valthrun. These ghosts shall forever haunt them.

13. TOMB OF THE PATRIARCH (WEST)

This chamber is a mirrored version of area 12. The valve wheels in both chambers must be operated for the grand sarcophagus in the Main Hall (area 5) to open.



LAIR OF THE BLOODY SPIRITS

Nestled in the verdant hills of Eldoria, there lies the unsuspecting hamlet of Vindale. This small place is renowned for its exquisite wines and is home to Eldoria's Crest Winery, the pride of the region. But unbeknownst to its merry inhabitants and the visiting connoisseurs, a dark secret slumbers beneath the famous winery's cellars.

THE AMARANTHINE SANCTUM

MANY CENTURIES AGO, before Vindale was even built, this land was a sacred site known as the 'Amaranthine Sanctum'. It was here that the Druids of the Scarlet Circle practiced their clandestine rites. However, their thirst for knowledge had them delve too deep into forbidden arts. They summoned the 'Blood Wraith', a vengeful spirit born from the very essence of violence and wrath.

The wraith was too powerful and out of control. The druids, realizing their folly, managed to seal it within the underground catacombs, sacrificing themselves to bind its force. However, its malignant presence lingered, saturating the grounds with an ethereal, crimson aura.

Centuries passed, and the memory of the Amaranthine Sanctum faded into legend. The land, fertile and lush from the residual magic, attracted settlers. Vindale was established, and the Eldoria's Crest Winery unknowingly built atop the sealed catacombs. The winery flourished unnaturally, fed by the latent energies below.

THE BLOODY SPIRITS

THE LAIR OF the Bloody Spirits remained undisturbed for ages. Yet, as time marches on, the druids' seal weakens. Whispers among the vines speak of shadows moving in the cellars, of ghostly apparitions in the wine vats, and of an unexplained, pervasive sense of despair that befalls those who linger too long in the cellars.

As the barrier between worlds thins, the legacy of the Druids of the Scarlet Circle threatens to emerge once more, bringing with it the vengeful Blood Wraith. The lair now awaits, a ticking time bomb beneath the feet of the oblivious, a hidden menace yearning to be released and wreak havoc once again upon the world of the living.

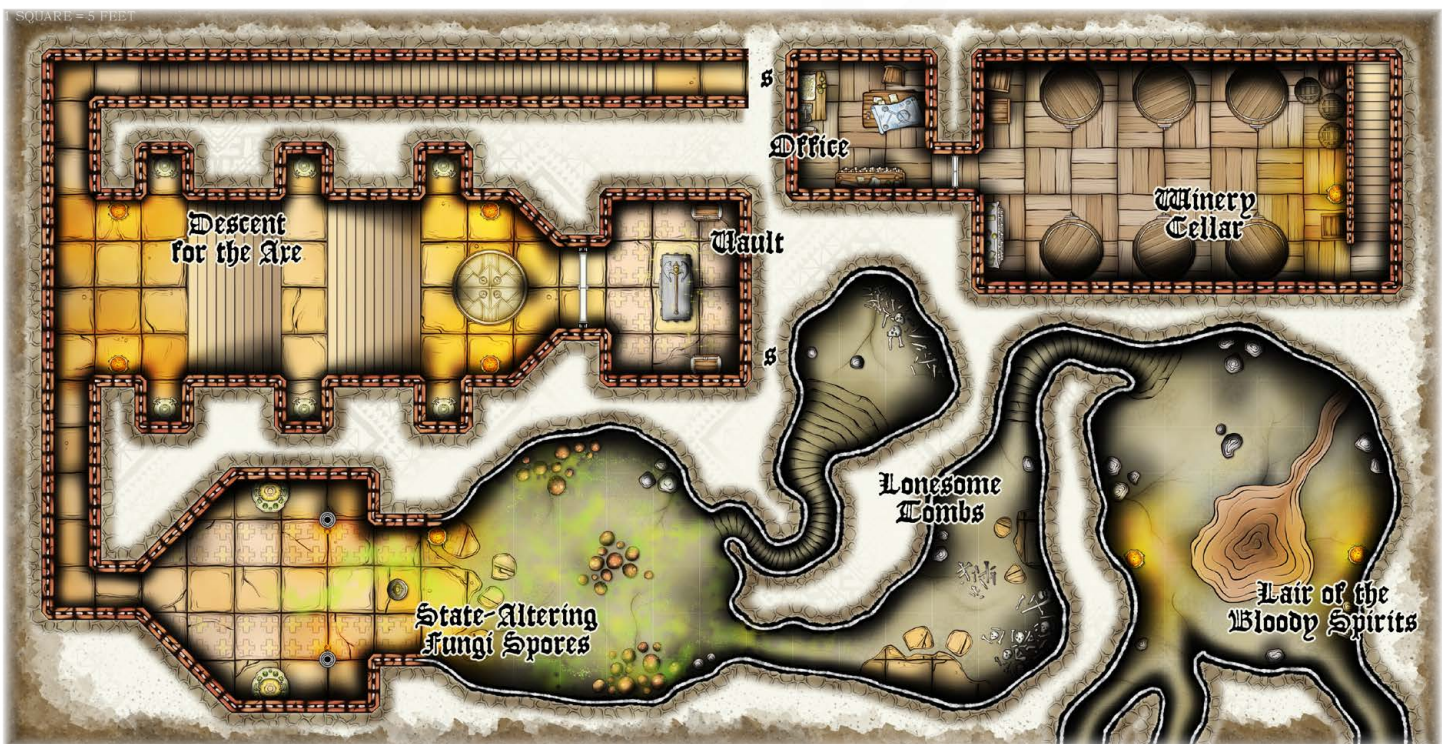
ADVENTURE HOOK

A Past Threat. No one knows why the folks at the winery are becoming jumpy and paranoid. But when two young men disappeared below Eldoria's Crest Winery it was clear something had to be done. Vindale's authorities offer a hefty reward for heroes (40 XP, 150 gp).

Level 5 Adventure

► **Danger.** Unsafe. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with permanent **light** spells. The undead denizens are **dark-adapted**.



RANDOM EVENTS

d6 Details

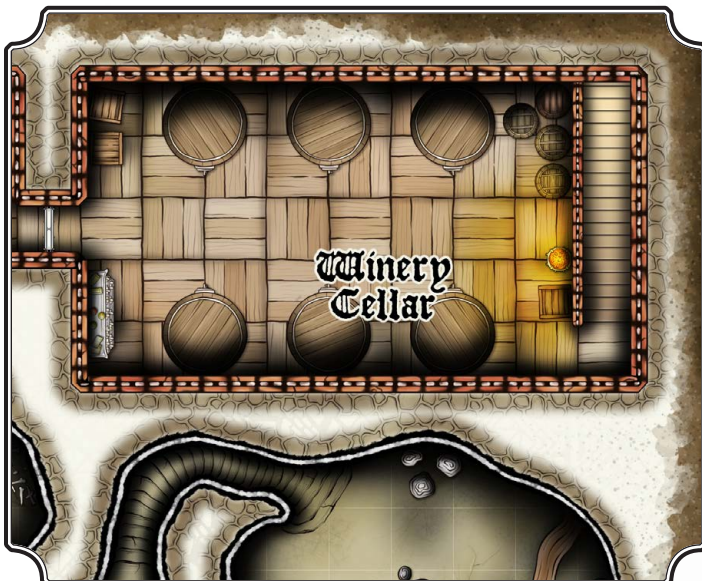
- 1 Without warning, a surge of malevolent energy pulses through the lair, causing torches to flare up with blue flames and shadows to twist unnaturally. This surge may weaken the party (DC 16 WIS or make the next check with disadv.), heralding the power of the Blood Wraith.
- 2 Spectral figures of nobles appear, engaged in a ghostly wine tasting. Interacting with them may reveal lost lore of the winery or make the four **shadows** belligerent.
- 3 Faint voices recite druidic rituals in a forgotten dialect. If the characters listen for 1 **crawling round** they may decipher the location of the vault's secret entrance (see map).
- 4 An illusionary vista of a sunlit vineyard appears in a dead-end corridor. Approaching the mirage triggers a poison dart trap. Whoever is closer to the illusion takes 1d10 damage (DC 16 CON check for half).
- 5 The party stumbles upon a group of eight **skeletons**. They belong to the Lonesome Tombs but find their way to the characters' location. The undead fight until slain.
- 6 A sudden current of air causes the toxic spores in the caves (see map) to permeate all the dungeon areas. See State-Altering Fungi Spores below to know more.

WINERY CELLAR

Beneath the bustling Eldoria's Crest Winery lies a seldom-visited dusty cellar. Ancient wine barrels, sealed and containing rare vintages, line the walls. The cellar also features a few wooden boxes, barrels, and a shelf.

OFFICE

A small, practical office serves as the administrative heart of Eldoria's Crest Winery. The room is anchored by a well-used working table, scattered with ledgers, maps, and the tools of the winery trade. Alongside, a shelf holds an array of dusty wine bottles and age-worn tomes about viticulture. The entrance to the Lair of the Bloody Spirits remains cleverly concealed behind a table. This is where the two men disappeared a few days back.



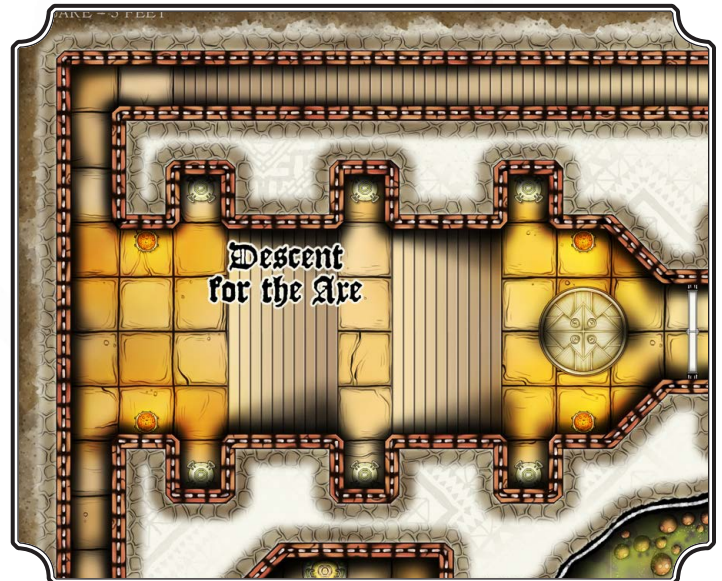
THE AXE OF THE DRUID BARBARIAN

This weapon was wielded by the chief druid who valiantly defeated the Blood Wraith. This powerful axe resonates with ancient magic. In a selfless act of heroism, the druid imbued the weapon with his soul, creating a mystical bond that sealed the wraith's fate.

DESCENT FOR THE AXE

A 20-foot-wide corridor adorned with alcoves descends 20 feet into the earth. Each alcove cradles golden urns containing the ashes of ancient warriors and druids, silent sentinels of the sacred passage.

A **shadow** comes out of each of the six urns. They attack intruders mercilessly. At the corridor's end, a seal summons a guardian (**reaver**) when anyone comes within 10 feet from it. This entity, bound to protect the legendary *Axe of the Druid Barbarian*, embodies the collective will and courage of those interred along the passage.

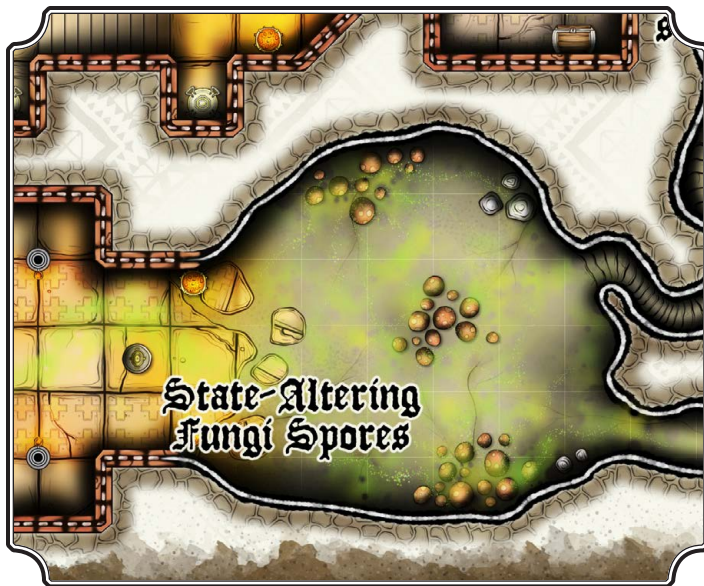


VAULT

The characters can open the vault's door after combat (DC 16 DEX). Thieves' tools are required for this. There are two wooden chests and a marvelous axe resting upon a stone pedestal inscribed with druidic runes.

► **Treasure (5 XP).** There are 286 gp, a mahogany pipe (25 gp), a set of polished bone dice (25 gp), a small oil painting of an elf woman (35 gp), a lute carved from ironwood with gold hardware (75 gp), and a **+1 dagger**.

► **The Axe.** Treat this weapon as a **+2 greataxe**. Additionally, once a day, the wielder may infuse the *Axe of the Druid Barbarian* with their vitality. The user takes 1d10 damage and in exchange, the next hit deals an additional 2d8 damage. The roar of a mighty lion is heard in a 60 feet radius when the weapon strikes its target.



STATE-ALTERING FUNGI SPORES

Beyond the confines of the dungeon, a network of caverns unfolds, once used by the druids to entrap the Blood Wraith. In one of the many caves, a peculiar and potent fungus thrives in the damp, shadowy environment. The air here is thick with spores that carry mind-altering properties, a remnant of ancient druidic experiments.

► **Spores.** Adventurers who inhale the spores experience disorienting and hallucinogenic effects, leading to impaired judgment or altered perceptions (DC 16 CON check). Treat fails as a *confusion* spell for 1d4 rounds.

► **Fungi.** The smell of intruders draws the attention of four **mushroomfolk**. These mindless plant creatures fight until slain. They cannot be reasoned with and regular food does not appease their hunger for flesh.

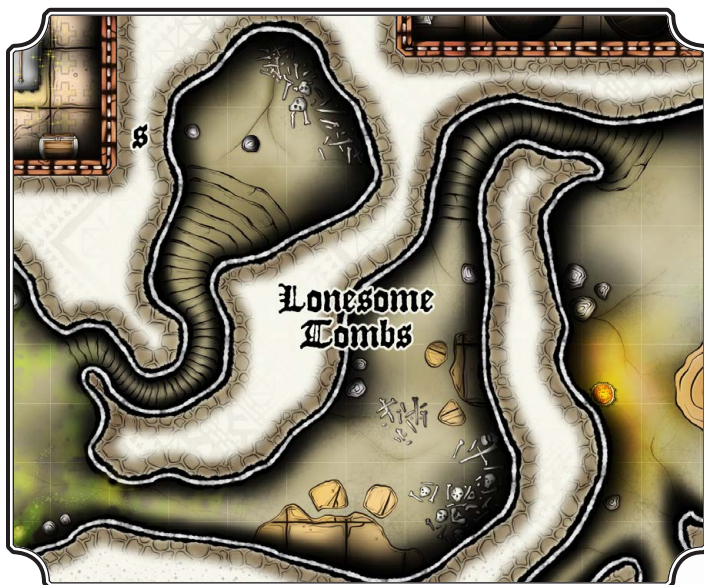
LONESOME TOMBS

A somber corner within the cavern network bears the scars of nature's fury. Ravaged by cave-ins and relentless rock-slides, this once hallowed resting place is now a desolate field of inert rubble and debris.

Amidst the dirt and rocks, hundreds of bones lie scattered, a silent testimony to the lives claimed by the Blood Wraith before it was stopped. The air is thick with the dust of ages, echoing the fragility and transience of life.

► **Skeletons.** Five **skeletons** attack intruders in each of the bone-filled caverns (see map). They are empowered by the Blood Wraith's evil and fight until slain.

► **Secret Passage.** A section of the wall is weak (DC 15 WIS check to spot). If the characters notice this, they may spend 1 **crawling round** removing the debris and creating a connection to the vault. This would bypass the guardians of the axe and the vault door.



LAIR OF THE BLOODY SPIRITS

This cavern harbors the pond where the druids sealed the Blood Wraith. Time has twisted this once-hallowed site; the sacred waters bear a crimson taint, mirroring the malevolence of the wraith.

The four druids who sacrificed themselves in the sealing ritual haunt the pond as tormented specters, corrupted by the entity they sought to imprison (**will o' wisps**). The Blood Wraith is a **wraith** with the following changes:

- **AC 15, HP 45**
- **Blood Drain.** 1d4 CON damage. The Blood Wraith regains this in Hit Points. Victims reduced to 0 HP turn into ally **will o' wisps**. (This replaces **Life Drain**).

Defeating the Blood Wraith only postpones its return. The druids' seal still works, but a priest must perform a hallowing ritual in the cavern to remove all traces of evil and prevent the sealing ritual from failing again.

THE VALUE OF BLOOD

They come at night. They thirst for blood is never quenched. First we hear their batting wings, then we hear the cattle being slaughtered in the fields...

Concerned Farmer



In the dense, emerald heart of the Veridian Jungle lies the forgotten ruins of Zhalara, once the flourishing temple of an enigmatic era. For centuries, these ruins slumbered in obscurity, shrouded by the relentless embrace of nature. However, a recent and mysterious phenomenon has awoken the curiosity and fear of nearby dwellers.

The ruins of Zhalara were once the pride of a long-lost culture. However, at the centerpiece of this archaeological wonder, a grand magic circle carved into the stone and adorned with unknown symbols has suddenly sprung to life, after eons of solemn dormancy.

THE SCARLET AURORA

EACH NIGHT, UNDER the gaze of the moon, the magic circle begins to glow with an ethereal light, casting a spectral, aurora-like display into the sky. This mesmerizing light show has a dark consequence; it attracts hordes of blood-sucking stingbats, vicious nocturnal predators known for their relentless attacks on animals and unwary travelers. The sudden activation of the arcane circle and the appearance of the stingbats in the region have given rise to numerous rumors among the local populace, ranging from the presence of a cursed treasure to the awakening of a dormant primordial being.

Rumors are rumors, but the immediate consequence of this development is the increased danger in the jungle trails due to stingbat attacks. People hide in their homesteads and block out their windows with planks and furniture. Many blood-drained bodies of people and cattle have been found in small hamlets and on the roads. People are desperate to find a way out of this situation.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Scholar's Request. Haldo Gonniese, a renowned historian, obsessed with the ancient civilization of Zhalara, hires the adventurers to investigate the ruins and uncover the true purpose of the magic circle. The characters must make a transcription of the runes and hieroglyphs on the ancient circle (300 gp, 3 XP).

The Village's Plea. A nearby village named Verida, plagued by the stingbats, seeks brave souls to venture into the ruins and find a way to stop the nightly terror. The commoners have collected a small reward to entice sellswords and mercenaries to help (200 gp, 2 XP).

The Merchant's Gamble. A daring merchant believes the light phenomenon is a clue to the value of the ancient circle. He offers a hefty reward for unearthing and transporting the magic circle back to him (1,200 gp, 6 XP).

Level 2 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

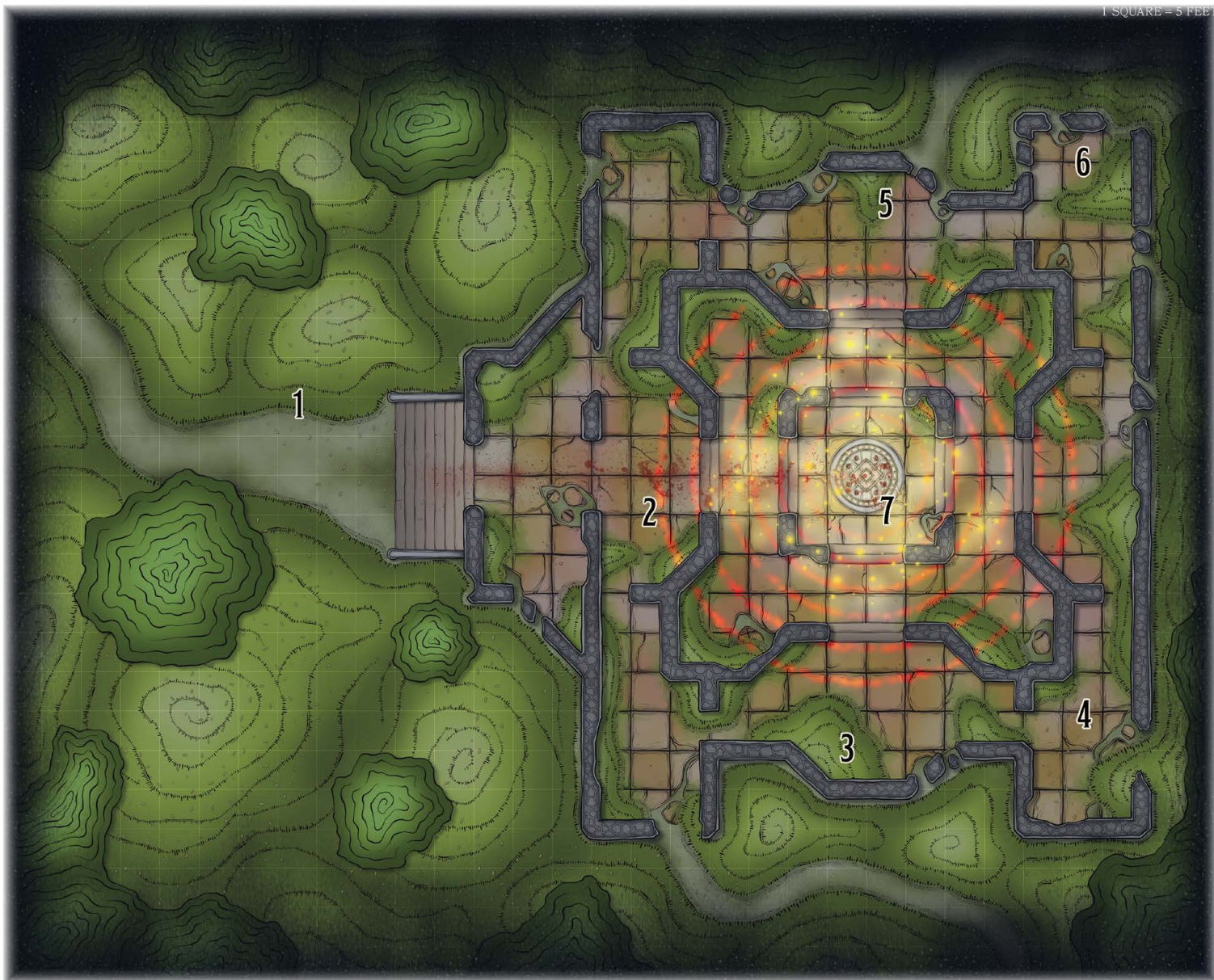
► **Light.** Moonlight provides dim light. Barely enough to discern nearby objects or people. The magic circle glows bright in a 20 feet radius. Monsters are **dark-adapted**.

► **Sound and Smells.** Birds of prey and stingbats flying can be heard sporadically throughout the Veridian Jungle. The humid air carries a stench of blood.

► **Magical Aura.** Casting *detect magic* causes the spellcaster to perceive the magic circle from a distance of up to a mile. It appears like a faraway star that increases in brilliance and becomes unbearable to look at under the effects of the spell when within 100 feet of the circle.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A cluster of bio-luminescent, inedible fungi suddenly blooms, casting eerie, dancing lights on the surrounding ruins.
2	A thick, unnatural mist rolls in, obscuring vision and disorienting the adventurers as they navigate the pathways for 1 crawling round . A <i>detect magic</i> spell reveals it is a magical effect crafted by the magic circle; its purpose remains a mystery.
3	A stone statue (gargoyle) embedded on the walls briefly comes to life, challenging trespassers with its menacing postures.
4	The characters' proximity causes a swarm of bats to fly and attack mercilessly. They flee when reduced to half their Hit Points.
5	A sudden arcane wave is emitted by the magic circle. In its wake, all light sources are consumed; leaving only moonlight.
6	Wings batting in the distance suddenly approach the characters in a whirlwind of dark wings and sharp proboscises. Six wild stingbats attempt to ambush the characters from above (DC 13 WIS to spot) and attempt to suck their blood for nourishment.



APPROACHING THE RUINS

WHEN THE CHARACTERS learn of the region's current predicament, they are in one of the many small settlements that dot the surroundings of the Veridian Jungle. The small village, named Verida, suffered a stingbat attack of two nights ago, before the characters arrived.

If the characters ask around, they receive general directions to the jungle's center. They learn that the ruins lie in the wilderness depths, far from any trails that traverse it. Normally, a guide would lead them there but there are none in Verida; the only one perished in the attack.

To reach the Ruins of Zhalara, a character must guide the party through the jungle (DC 16 WIS check); a great accomplishment for the region is overgrown and wild. The characters have advantage on this check if they purchase a map of the region in Verida (15 gp). On a failure, the characters stumble upon the territory of two territorial **panthers**. The felines flee if dropped to half HP.

1. APPROACHING THE RUINS

While the characters may approach the place during the day, all magical elements are only active at night. Encounters with the stingbats are also reserved for the night. A 10-foot-tall flight of stairs leads to the ancient ruins.

► **Bloodstains.** A faint blood trail begins here. It leads to the East as it becomes more evident and scandalous. The blood reaches the ruins' center chamber; the bloodstains cover part of the ancient magic circle.

2. DILAPIDATED ANTECHAMBER

Little remains of this roofless room. Erosion and nature have reclaimed all wall inscriptions and evidence. The glow of the magic circle is visible from here (at night).

► **Ancient Runes.** Careful explorers denote the Draconic runes on some walls. The runes vaguely speak of faraway entities in other worlds; and about opening communication channels with these otherworldly beings. A spell compels them to speak the truth when ordered to.

HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

Communing with extraplanar entities provides the characters a way of acquiring information that otherwise would be impossible for them to secure. To perform this spell, a spellcaster needs the tablets hidden in area 6. After nightfall, this is a special form of the *summon extraplanar* spell. The party can ask questions to this being and it is magically bound to speak truthfully.

3. SOUTH GALLERY

Crumbling reliefs carved into the very stone of this temple are barely legible after the passage of eons. The eroded carvings, in the few wall sections that appear to hold onto their outer layers, depict a cabal of priests of communicating with beings in cerulean skies.

► **Lore.** Scholars recognize the portrayals of these beings as extraplanar creatures from primordial dimensions or elemental-bound planes (DC 17 INT).

4. AMBUSH IN THE DARK

Hiding in the underbrush and crumbling wall sections, two **gray oozes** await in the darkness, with the appearance of gray mud. They are immobile but a half-dissolved sword next to one of them is a clue to their corrosive nature (DC 14 WIS to spot it). The mindless creatures know no fear and fight the characters without mercy.

5. NORTH GALLERY

This chamber was once an arcane library. Spells were etched onto the very stone walls, an uncommon yet beautiful way to record them. Sadly, most of them are not complete and only a few can be copied (see below).

► **Treasure (3 XP).** A spellcaster that analyses the wall carvings for 1 day may copy these wizard spells into their spellbook: *hold person*, *silence*, *fly*, and *fireball*.

6. FORGOTTEN KNOWLEDGE

This crumbling chamber is littered with all manner of small copper and iron pieces that once were part of a large apparatus. A scholar may recognize some of them and infer that there was a telescope here (DC 16 INT). Exploring the room's contents for 1 **crawling round** reveals the presence of several granite tablets, etched with Draconic markings, half buried under the grass.

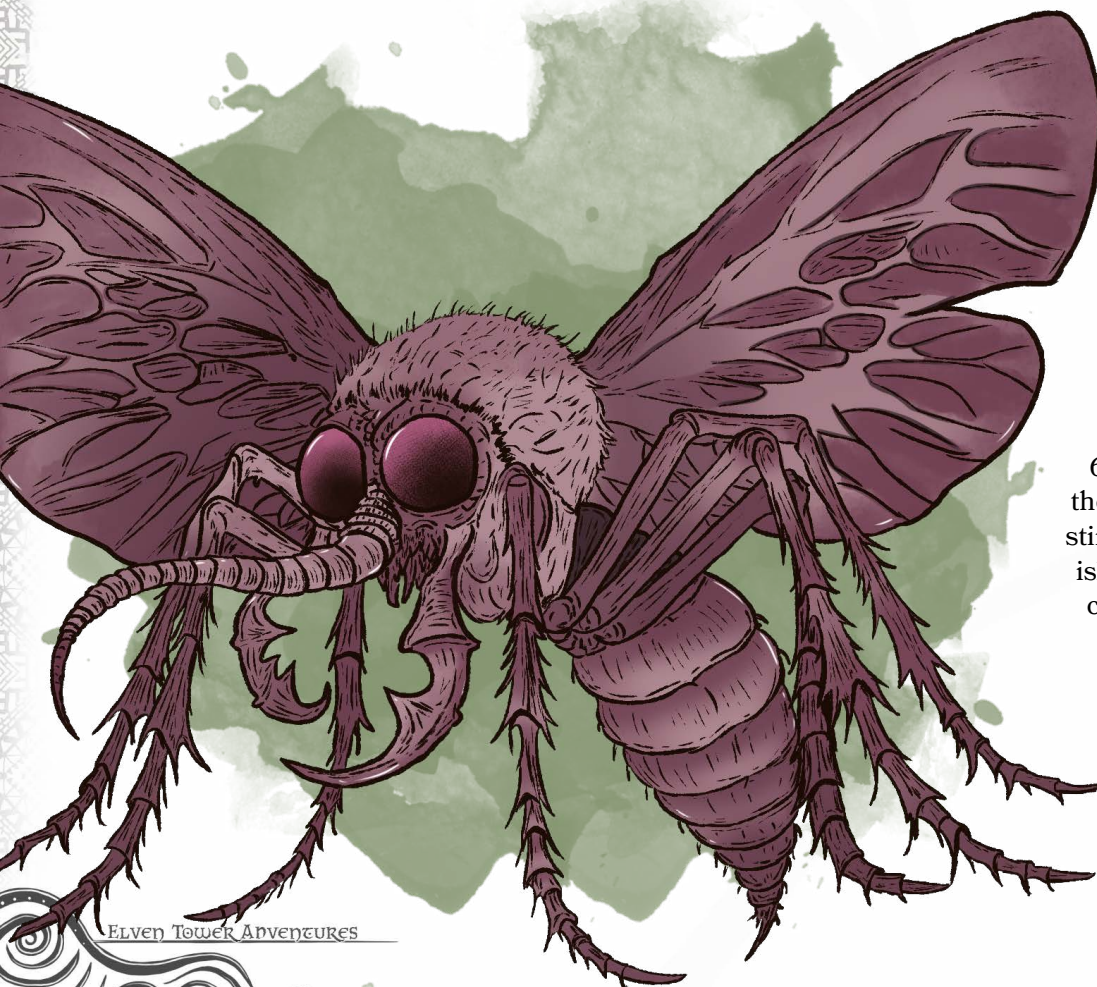
► **The Tablets.** The Draconic runes contain the magic circle's lore in area 7. They reveal an astral calendar: the magic circle becomes active once every thousand years, for 1 month. The current activation has one week left, after which the circle shall become dormant again. The tablets also explain the ritual that a spellcaster must conduct to contact otherworldly beings. It says that those entities are bound by the circle to respond truthfully.

7. CHAMBER OF LIGHT

The central chamber of the Ruins of Zhalara contains a one-foot-tall, magic circle that glows, exposed to the night sky. Its magic power is perceptible even to those uninitiated in the arcane arts.

► **Bloodsuckers.** When the characters approach the magic circle, their shadows draw the attention of eight **stingbats**. The perilous insects dive toward the ruins to attack the party. After the encounter, there is a 3-in-6 chance it occurs again every hour the characters remain in the area. All stingbat attacks in the region diminish after a week, when the circle becomes dormant. The same is true if the circle is destroyed or removed.

► **The Circle.** The limestone circle weighs 4 tons. Removing the circle dispels the ancient magic that powers it. See **Hidden Knowledge** for the extraplanar contacting ceremony.



THE JADE SCEPTER

Shrouded in mystery, the Jade Scepter remains the most sought-out artifact by mages and collectors. It was once wielded by Lyriana, whom all feared...

Adage of the Archmage

In ages past, the mythical Jade Scepter was forged by the enigmatic Archmage Lyriana, known for her mastery over nature and arcane secrets. This scepter, a magnificent artifact encrusted with jade and entwined with gold, was said to possess the power to control the very essence of life itself. It was lost to time after Lyriana's mysterious disappearance but rumored to rest in a tomb hidden deep within the heart of the Eldermoss Forest.

The crypt, once a sacred druid site, is now shrouded in dark legends and feared by the locals. It is told that the crypt was protected not only by intricate traps but also by timeless guardians; spirits and creatures bound to Archmage Lyriana's will. Many an adventurer has perished trying to retrieve the riches that lie in the tomb; few even learned that the Jade Scepter lay within reach.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Work for Hire. The adventurers are approached by an old sage, Orin, who researches the whereabouts of the Jade Scepter. He believes that he has finally found it but is too old to explore the tomb himself. Orin seeks brave souls to retrieve the artifact, promising his life-savings in return. The sage warns that the tomb's secrets are not to be taken lightly and that many have sought the fabled scepter but none have returned (1,600 gp, 7 XP).

Level 6 Adventure

- ▶ **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Encounter** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).
- ▶ **Light.** Some areas feature braziers with *light* spells. The undead and eternal guardians are **dark-adapted**.

1. HALL OF THE ANCIENTS

The characters must embark on a 5-day journey to the depths of Eldermoss Forest. The forested region crawls with untold natural dangers (GM's choice). Sage Orin's directions lead the characters to a dungeon entrance between the trunks of two colossal sequoia trees.

A vast hall, corners graced by towering 30-foot guardian effigies. An oddly-shaped pool of crimson liquid, shimmering eerily, dominates the chamber's heart.

▶ **The Effigies.** The statues depict armor-clad combatants with their arms raised as if in prayer. A scholar recognizes them as representations of Ord (DC 14 INT). Two of them (**stone golems**) step forward and attack the characters. They use their **Slow** ability on melee foes.

▶ **The Pond.** Filled with acid, the pond is 10 feet deep. The acid has lost some of its original potency. Creatures that fall in it take 1d4 damage per round of exposure.

▶ **Treasure (2 XP).** Scattered in the acid pond are seven mithral shards (20 gp each). The golems' obsidian eyes (four in total) can be removed with tools (10 gp each).

3. EAST COLUMBARIUM

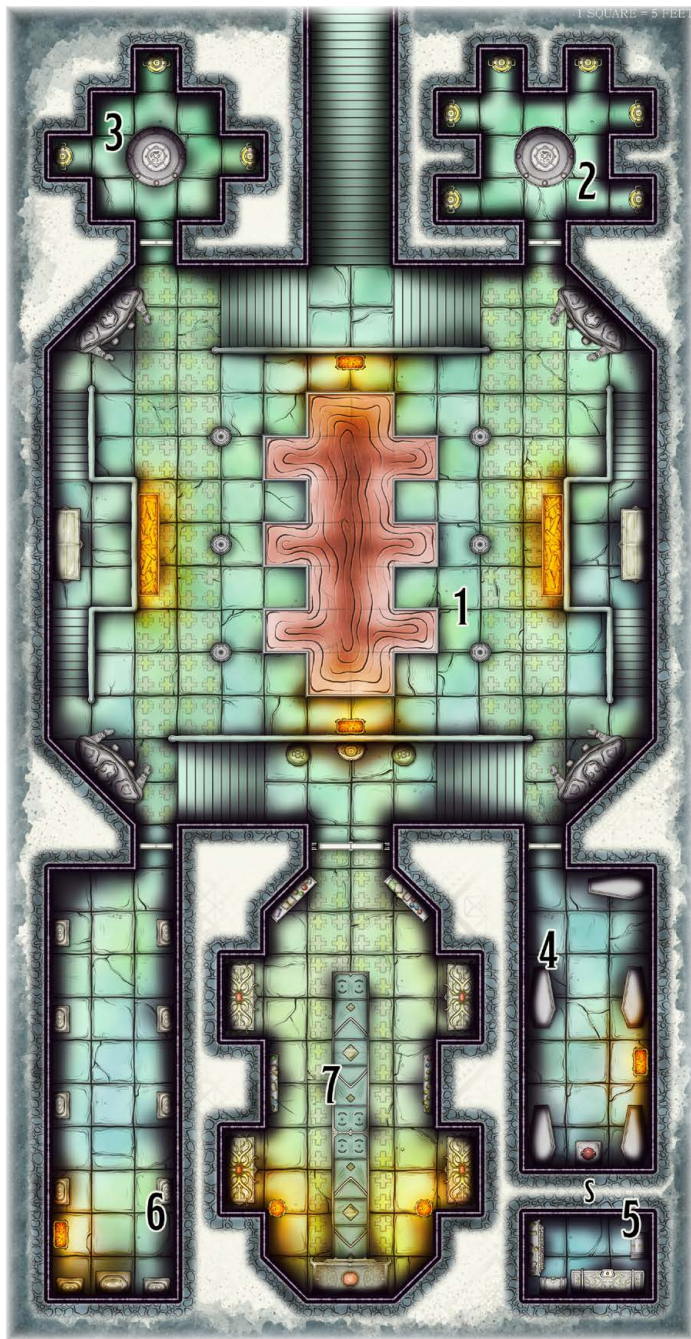
Dimly-lit chamber, compact yet solemn. Alcoves line the walls, each cradling ancient funerary niches. A silent homage to long-forgotten souls and bygone eras.

▶ **The Circle.** The rune-scribed, granite circle, is etched with spell runes meant to send souls off to their eternal rest. The rune magic is faint and almost extinguished.

▶ **The Niches.** Each urn-like niche contains the ashes of a dozen individuals. Tampering with any niche causes six **shadows** to materialize and attack the living.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

d6	Details
1	A spectral hand emerges from a wall, offering a scroll bound in shadows (Cursed, random Tier 1 spell scroll cast with disadv.).
2	Stone statues of six ancient warriors (skeletons) animate to challenge the intruders, testing their combat prowess and resolve.
3	A ghostly figure haunts the dungeon, offering knowledge of how to open the gate to area 7 in exchange for solving a mind-bending riddle (GM's choice). If three wrong answers are given, the ghost becomes irate and attacks the party.
4	A fine thread causes a barrage of poisoned needles to shoot from the wall when pulled. Targets take 2d6 damage (DC 16 DEX).
5	An arcane wave pulses from area 7. It extinguishes all active spell effects and neutralizes magic items for 1 crawling round .
6	A wraith materializes before the characters. It believes it is Archmage Lyriana; a consequence of arcane corruption. The wraith challenges adventurers to a deadly fight. The undead vows to slay those who seek to claim the Jade Scepter.



3. THE ARCHMAGE'S SHADE

This chamber is similar to area 2 but with fewer funerary niches. No shadows spawn from the gilded urns. In their place, an ethereal, ghastly manifestation emerges from the cracked floor and addresses the characters. The **ghost** introduces herself as Archmage Lyriana. She claims that, eons ago, an adversary cursed her into her wretched, undead shape. However, the strange apparition claims to know how to end her current predicament.

► **Lies.** The ghost asks the characters to bring the Jade Scepter to her so that she can return to life and recover her powers. She promises untold riches. But all she says are lies; she is not Lyriana. She only wants the artifact to defeat the party and break free from this dungeon.

4. EAST CRYPT

The chamber walls are lined with five unmarked, stone sarcophagi. A solitary clay vase, adorned with cryptic etchings, keeps a proud vigil by the far wall.

► **Enclosures.** Each of the sarcophagi contains the crumbling remains of a human. There is no way to identify those interred here as there are no markings.

► **Divine Flames.** When a living creature comes within 15 feet of the clay vase, the runes on its surface glow. It casts *flame strike* against a random character. The vase repeats this spell once per round. It can be stopped with a *dispel magic* spell or by destroying it (20 HP).

► **Secret Door.** A button hidden under the clay vase causes the secret passage to area 5 to be revealed.

5. SECRET VAULT

This treasure chamber contains three stone coffers and a stone bookshelf. A thick dust layer covers everything.

► **Treasure (7 XP).** Collectively, the room contains 300 gp, 28,400 sp, two *potions of healing*, one *potion of vitality*, a +2 *longsword*, and four random Wizard spell scrolls.

6. WEST CRYPT

Shadow-draped room, encircled by eleven upright sarcophagi hugging the tall walls. The lids are slightly ajar, ancient whispers can be heard from within.

► **Prayer.** An altar to Ord, the Secret-Keeper is embedded on the south wall. A spellcaster must make an offering to the deity to be allowed access to area 7. It is the only way to enter the Hall of the Jade Scepter.

► **Guardians.** When a character comes within 10 feet of the Altar of Ord, all enclosures open to release eleven **imp devils** bound to this dungeon. The sneaky, flying devils are treacherous and fight to the death.

7. HALL OF THE JADE SCEPTER

An opulent chamber dominated by an ornate coffer at its far side. It is flanked by four sarcophagi with intricately decorated lids, each bearing gold inlays.

The gate to this chamber is made of an adamantine alloy that cannot be destroyed. It can only be opened by praying to Ord, the Secret-Keeper (see Prayer in area 6).

► **The Last Trial.** Four undead **reavers**, tasked with protecting the scepter, emerge to fight. The guardians reform at dawn and are immune to morale checks.

► **The Scepter (10 XP).** The coffer contains the Jade Scepter (*Staff of Ord*), 1,300 gp, a *shield of the lion*, and a *ring of feather falling*. Sage Orin claims ownership of the scepter and pays the characters the promised reward. What happens with this powerful artifact and how it is used for good or evil is an adventure for another day...

NAVAJARA

Where the comet's arc kissed the sea, Navajara lies. In this tranquil gulf, the tales of old and the melody of the waves are the authors of the village's lore.

Local Saying



In the mystical realm of Linblum lies Navajara, a small, serene coastal village cradled in a sheltered gulf along the Sapphire Coast. Founded under the guiding light of a split comet, this village is less than two centuries old, and it is deeply rooted in maritime traditions and mysticism.

The village, with less than a hundred souls, is a mosaic of rustic thatched-roof buildings, each encircled by crop fields, yielding corn, potatoes, and sun-kissed fruits.

LOCAL TRADITIONS

► **Comet's Feast.** This feast is held on the night of the comet that led the village's ancestors to this land and is said to have first appeared. Villagers gather at the shore and as night falls, they light a bonfire, around which they share tales of their ancestors' voyages and the comet's mystical powers. Then they release floating lanterns into the gulf, symbolizing the comet's light, guiding spirits, and the villagers' hopes for continued prosperity.

► **The Gulf's Whisper.** This ritual is born from the local myth that sea waves sing ancient melodies. In solemn silence, the villagers listen to the sea, believing it imparts wisdom and guidance. This tradition reinforces the villagers' respect for the sea and its hidden mysteries.

► **The Sea-Bound Vessel Ceremony.** This ceremony is held whenever a new boat is to be launched. Before its maiden voyage, the vessel is adorned with symbols and motifs inspired by sea tales and lore. At the ceremony's climax, a bottle of seawater is broken against the hull, symbolizing the unity of boat, sea, and villager. This tradition underscores the deep bond between the villagers and the ocean that sustains their way of life.

SET-UP

Navajara is full of life, tradition, and colorful people. It is recommended that the characters come as visitors to witness one of their important events (see **Local Traditions**). This allows for some replayability, as the heroes may return in the future to see some old friends and be present in any other of the local traditions.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Tourists. The characters are curious and want to be present during one of Navajara's events (see **Local Traditions**). They decide to come after a difficult quest or mission to relax and spend some time off. However, their stay in Navajara may be busier than expected (0 XP).

Level 2 Adventure

► **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** (see below) every time the characters visit a new area (4-in-6 chance).

1. CAPTAIN ELARA WAVECREST

Elara is a seasoned, respected fisherwoman in her late forties, known for her deep knowledge of the sea and unyielding courage. Her hair is a tangle of salt and wind. And she is always seen wearing her trusty captain's hat.

► **Quest (2 XP).** She offers 40 gp to anyone who can help her track down the Moonlit Serpent, a mythical sea creature said to appear only during the full moon. She wishes to see it up close so she can draw it in her book. The next full moon is in two days, and only a great tracker may find the right spot (DC 15 WIS). On a fail, the heroes disturb three **merfolk** before finding the serpent.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	A sudden, fierce storm approaches Navajara, threatening the village and its fleet. The heroes are called upon to help secure the boats, protect the homes, and fight two merfolk that take advantage of the situation to attack innocents.
2	A band of six goblins from the Whispering Woods, emboldened by a dark enchantment, attack a random area of the village.
3	Four sahuagin raiders launch a surprise attack on the docks of Navajara (area 7) under the cover of fog.
4	Pirates arrive at the docks. The invaders are three peasants and two bandits , led by a thug with a peg leg and a steel hook.
5	An ancient elemental, bound to a relic discovered by fishermen, is accidentally released. The heroes must subdue this raging elemental force before it wreaks havoc on the village and its inhabitants. (The elemental is a lion made of water).
6	A five-day-long storm strikes Navajara. Vision and hearing are reduced. Related checks are made with disadvantage.

Navajara



2. THE SEAFARER'S SHRINE

Perched solemnly at the edge of Navajara, this place is representative of the ocean's majesty. Intricate carvings of maritime deities and legendary sea creatures adorn its entrance, inviting those who seek solace and guidance from the sea's eternal embrace.

A small, tranquil shrine located at the village's edge, overlooking the sea. It's dedicated to maritime deities and the spirits of the sea. Villagers and travelers visit to offer prayers for safe voyages and bountiful catches.

3. THE LOOM OF TIDES INN

A charming inn known for its comfortable lodgings and exceptional views of the gulf. The innkeeper, a retired sailor, often shares tales of sea adventures and local myths. Inside, the air is rich with the aroma of fresh bread and sea spice, and the walls are adorned with tapestries depicting sea voyages. A group of four **thugs** raid the inn during the characters' stay. If they are driven off, the characters become local heroes and friends.

4. THE CELESTIAL OBSERVATORY

Perched atop a small hill, this observatory is operated by an elderly Mira, the Seer. It houses a large telescope through which visitors can observe the stars. The astronomer is knowledgeable about celestial events and their significance in local folklore.

Mira is a mysterious and revered oracle in Navajara. She is blind, with pale, almost translucent skin and long white hair. She is always accompanied by her loyal raven, Whisper. Her cottage is filled with the aroma of incense and the sound of whispering winds.

► **Quest (3 XP).** Mira has foreseen a looming threat - a corrupting darkness that seeks to engulf Navajara. She asks the heroes to cleanse an ancient shrine located in the heart of the Whispering Woods. Mira reassures the heroes that they may wait until after the local celebrations to leave. The spot to be cleansed is a two-day ride from the village. She gives the characters a special scroll. Its magic shall remove all evil from the unhalloved shrine. She offers a *staff of healing* as a reward.

5. THE STARLIT ANCHOR TAVERN

A cozy, nautical-themed tavern known for its hearty seafood stews and ale brewed with a hint of sea salt. The walls show maritime relics and the ceiling mimics a starry night sky, a tribute to the founding comet.

Inside the tavern, the air is filled with the raucous laughter of sailors and the sweet melody of a lute. The tavern's specialty, a spiced rum known as 'Comet's Brew', is a long-time favorite of all. It is famed for warming the soul like the village's story of the night sky comet.

► **The Bard.** Garret is a middle-aged bard with a voice as deep and vast as the ocean. His hair is a wild mane of salt and pepper, often tied back with a strip of cloth bearing nautical symbols. His eyes sparkle with the mirth of a thousand tales. Garret is often seen with his well-worn lute, adorned with carvings of waves and sea creatures.

► **Quest.** Garret searches for the 'Melody of the Deep', a song that allows the user to soothe storms and speak to sea creatures. This melody is rumored to be inscribed on an ancient scroll, lost in the Sunken Caverns, a treacherous underwater cave system not far from Navajara. Garret seeks brave souls to retrieve this scroll, stating that whoever accompanies him can keep all the gold, treasure, and other artifacts they find on their way.

6. THE HALL OF TIDES

The second-largest edifice in Navajara stands majestically at the village's heart. Magistrate Caius lives here. The facade is adorned with intricate carvings depicting the history of the village and its celestial protector, the fabled comet. Its spacious halls carry the scent of brine.

MAGISTRATE STORMWATCHER

The leader of Navajara is a man in his late fifties. His hair and beard are streaked with gray, and his eyes, are a piercing blue. Caius is a former sea captain, revered for his navigational skills and understanding of the sea.

Caius is not only a political leader but also a spiritual guide, often seen consulting ancient texts and star charts to decipher the will of the sea and the skies. Under his leadership, Navajara has flourished, maintaining a delicate balance between honoring its rich traditions and navigating the challenges of present times.

7. THE WHISPERING DOCKS

These bustling docks are where fishermen and traders gather. The characters can find various goods for sale, hire boats for sea expeditions, or gather information from sailors who have voyaged beyond the gulf.

8. NAVAJARA'S BLACKSMITH

Borin is a dwarf of great skill and strength, known for his fiery beard and even fierier forge. The latter is a hub of clanging metal and flying sparks, filled with weapons and armor of his creation. The characters can acquire simple steel items, weapons, or armor.

► **Quest.** Borin requires a rare ore, known as Starsteel, found only in the depths of the Sunken Caverns (the same place that Garret the Bard mentions). He promises to craft a weapon or piece of armor with a magical dwarvish rune for the heroes in exchange for this ore. The caves are rumored to be inhabited by dangerous underwater creatures and treacherous, dark paths.



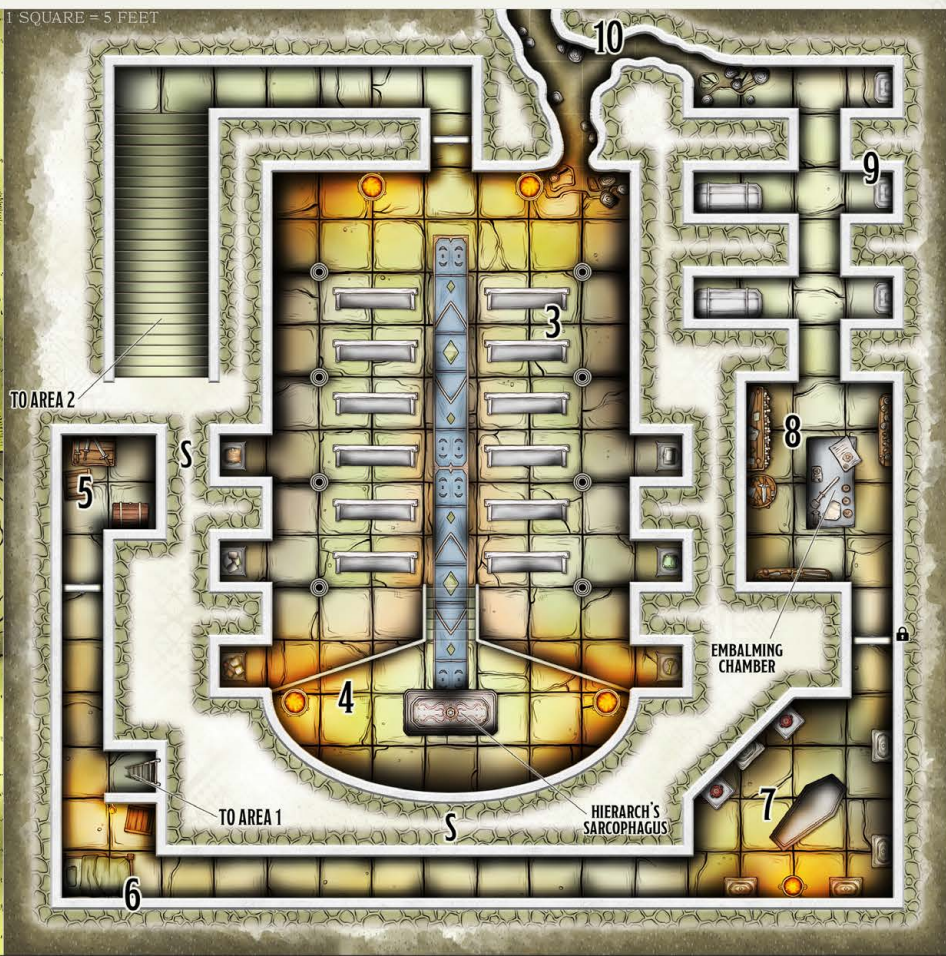
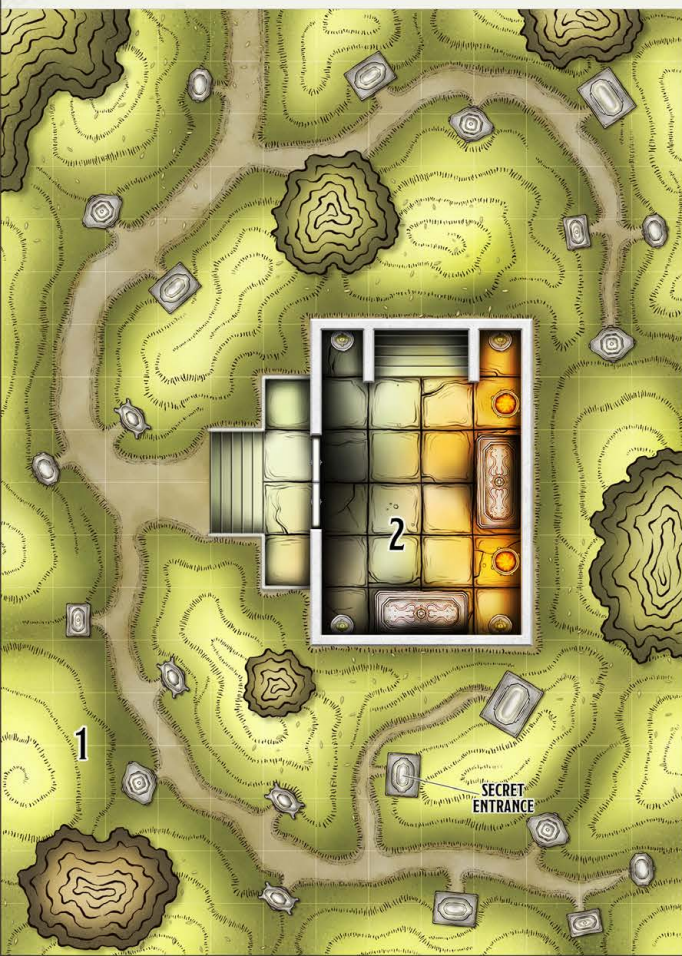
The Hierarch's Sepulcher

Within the township of Glimmerden, the townsfolk speak of the Hierarch's Sepulcher, a cryptic underground chapel concealed beneath an unassuming mausoleum in the local graveyard. Legends speak of Hierarch Eldanar, a revered figure whose wisdom guided the land centuries ago. Upon his passing, he was entombed with his most cherished artifacts and tomes, rumored to hold ancient knowledge and potent magics. Alas, dark energies now stir beneath the graveyard, and the local clergy beseeches brave souls to investigate the disturbance.

The characters are approached by Priestess Elara, a cleric of Gede. She speaks of unsettling omens and eerie lights emanating from the graveyard at night. Elara fears that the sanctity of the Hierarch's Sepulcher has been violated, and she seeks courageous adventurers to explore the crypt and ensure that Eldanar's resting place remains undisturbed. She speaks of unsettling omens and eerie lights emanating from the graveyard at night. They must seek the weathered mausoleum in the graveyard, the only such structure.

1. Following the cleric's directions, the characters find the graveyard outside of Glimmerden. The solemn resting place of countless loved ones carries an aura of foreboding and stern peace. A trail leads to the mausoleum. Observant characters see the false tomb that covers a trapdoor to area 6
2. The granite structure stands solitary amidst the sprawling graveyard, its entrance sealed by an ancient stone door. Runes etched into the doorway suggest a hidden mechanism to enter. A roguish character can bypass this gate with fine tools. Within lie two empty tombs and the stairs to area 3.
3. This is a grandiose underground chapel; two rows of stone piers lead to a raised dais by the far end of the wall. Ephemeral, indistinct, and nonreactive apparitions sit as if in prayer. They do not acknowledge the characters. They whisper prayers to keep the hierarch's soul in peace.
4. Hierarch Eldanar's sarcophagus is decorated with quartz inlays and embedded gemstones. The first time the heroes come nothing occurs, but the second time the characters visit this place, the enclosure opens and an **abominate manifestation** of the hierarch emerges to fight the living.

5. A secret passage in area 3 leads to this hidden chamber. Observant characters notice the false wall that can be pushed in an alcove. This room contains three blades, a crate of spices, and a chest with 85 gp, 460 sp, a *potion of healing*, and a shield that attracts all incoming ranged attacks.
6. A recently used bed and a wooden crate lie in this chamber. The wooden crate contains preserved food and a jug of water. A drawer under the bed contains two clothing changes of a Gede's seminarian. A journal tucked under a pillow, signed by a man named Ardent, claims he found the arcane power to create an army of countless corpses to take over the town.
7. The chamber contains a stone coffin, several granite effigies of obscure deities, and two clay vases that contain funerary ashes. A spellcaster knows that this room is meant for practicing necromancy spells. The coffin contains the magically-preserved remains of a farmer that perished weeks ago. The corpse features a head wound and has not yet decomposed. The north door is locked. The characters can bypass it with fine tools. Otherwise, they must use shovels to hack the threshold down.
8. This chamber, normally used as an embalming chamber, has been repurposed recently as a necromancy laboratory. The scrolls and tomes spread upon the metal table spell the incantations necessary to bring a corpse back to the world of the living in the form of undead servitors. The **necromancer apprentice**, Ardent, who masquerades as a seminarian in Glimmerden, is here. Ardent's goal of reanimating the graveyard's corpses is not yet complete. He has a limited understanding of the spells he wields; and a small force of undead servants. With a word command, three **zombies** stored in area 9 come to his aid when confronted here. When first confronted, Ardent appeals to the characters' greed for wealth and power; he offers to share whatever riches he acquires with them. As long as the characters recognize Ardent's authority and superiority.
9. The stone enclosures in this chamber contain five **zombies** under Ardent's control. Two of them fail to exit their coffins when called upon. Alas, if the characters release them, the zombies fight without mercy.
10. Seismic activity and the passage of time caused sections of the walls in areas 3 and 9 to collapse and become connected to a vast network of natural tunnels. Pieces of half-rusted metal lie scattered across the irregular cave floor. Three **rust monsters** inhabit these dark tunnels.



CHURCH OF DISSOLUTION

By Elven Tower

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG

LEVEL-5 ADVENTURE

A SHADOWDARK ADVENTURE ABOUT THWARTING THE PLANS OF A MURDEROUS CULT



ADVENTURE PRIMER

Shed away your bodily needs. Shed away your skin and your muscles. There is no need for any of them. You shall be content and obedient without them...

The Crow



In the veils of unsavory society, there exists an organization as perilous as it is seductive: The Church of Dissolution. It stands at the crossroads of heresy and salvation, promising its acolytes a transcendent form of eternal life. Its foundations are built upon the eerie belief that true immortality can be achieved through the dissolution of all earthly bonds – flesh, desire, and even one's aspirations.

CULTISH GENESIS

BORN FROM THE twisted vision of a renegade mage whose name has been lost to time, the Church of Dissolution grows in secret, spreading its tendrils through the underbelly of society. Its teachings are a paradoxical blend of necromantic lore and a perverse interpretation of spiritual asceticism. This enigmatic sect attracts the desperate, the outcast, and those without meaning.

The cult's most defining ritual is the *Rite of Dissolution*. In a sanctum hidden from the eyes of the world, there lies a ghastly pond of caustic, alchemical solution. As part of their initiation, aspirants are submerged in this fluid. The solution, imbued with necromancy, dissolves their skin and muscle, stripping them of their humanity. Through necromancy spells imbued in the substance, they do not perish. Instead, they emerge as grotesque amalgams of death and life – their bodies mostly gone.

The enigmatic figure at the heart of this macabre congregation is known only as 'The Crow'. He dons a pointed crow-shaped leather mask that hides his true form: a skeletal visage with a crown of bones. His voice, when he chooses to speak, is both hypnotic and chilling. He commands the utmost loyalty of all his followers.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

SHADOW OVER BREYERVILLE

Breyerville is plagued by mysterious disappearances. Local superstition blames the Church of Dissolution, rumored to lurk in the nearby Grieving Woods. The characters are called to investigate a trail that may lead them to confront the horrors of the accursed organization and its enigmatic leader, the Crow (400 gp, 3 XP).

THE MISSING LAD

Lady Elara enlists the characters to find her son Aric. Rumor has it that Aric has become involved with the Church of Dissolution. Following Aric's trail leads the characters to the Grieving Woods, where the cult's sinister stronghold lies hidden (700 gp, 5 XP).

ECHOES OF THE LOST KNOWLEDGE

Mard, a scholar obsessed with forbidden knowledge has gone missing. His colleagues reveal that their missing friend was studying documents about the Church of Dissolution. His notes suggest he found their secret sanctuary. The characters are asked to track Mard on his path to the Grieving Woods to save him from his folly (0 XP).

Level 5 Adventure

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (4-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas have braziers with permanent **light** spells. Undead denizens are **dark-adapted**.

► **Secret Features.** Hidden doors that connect to secret areas can be discerned by observant individuals. They all open by pushing a brick button (DC 13 WIS).

RUMORS

d6

Details

- 1 A farmer claims he saw ghastly figures dancing in the Grieving Woods. Their skin was missing and their eyes were hollow.
- 2 An old barkeep in Breyerville whispers that the Crow, the cult's leader, was once a noble who sought immortality after losing his family to plague. Decades of study yielded the magic necessary to become immune to a peasant's death.
- 3 Children in Breyerville speak of nightmares where the trees in the Grieving Woods turn into twisted, skinless, screaming faces.
- 4 A rumor among thieves says a priceless relic or knowledge lies within the church's vault, protected by unspeakable horrors.
- 5 A grizzled bard sings of a love-lorn ghost wandering the Grieving Woods. Longing for her lover lost to the Church of Dissolution's rituals. The ballad recalls that the ghost cannot find her lover because, among all the ghosts, none have faces.
- 6 A drunk soldier boasts he saw the Crow unmasked once; revealing not a man, but a creature of shadow and malice. The drunkard claims that behind the mask, there is only a skull with flaming eyes. A bone crown rests upon its white head.

TEMPLE UPPER LEVEL

It has been recorded that the immortality that the cult promises is a false promise. Only the cult leader has truly endured the passage of the eons.

Excerpt from The Book of Dissolution

FINDING THE TEMPLE

THE PATH TO the Temple of Dissolution points to the Grieving Woods near Breyerville. An accomplished tracker can discern the footprints of cultists and those who have undergone the caustic transformation and find the entrance to the dungeon (DC 16 WIS check). On a fail, the characters are detected by a patrol of two **cultists** and three dissolved abominations (**ghouls**).

1. THE GRAND HALL

The stairs lead to a grand chamber with two rectangular openings in its midst. Fleshy visages flank them, carved on the stone flooring. A limestone throne rests on a dais at the far end of the chamber.

The Crow (**mage**), four **cultists**, and two dissolved abominations (**ghouls**) are here when the characters arrive. The Crow casts Arcane Armor and then uses Blast to attack the characters from his throne. If any break through his allies or come within 15 feet of him, the Crow flees down the stairs to area 12 to lure the characters into the trap there. The Crow makes his way to area 14 where he intends to make a last stand against the characters.

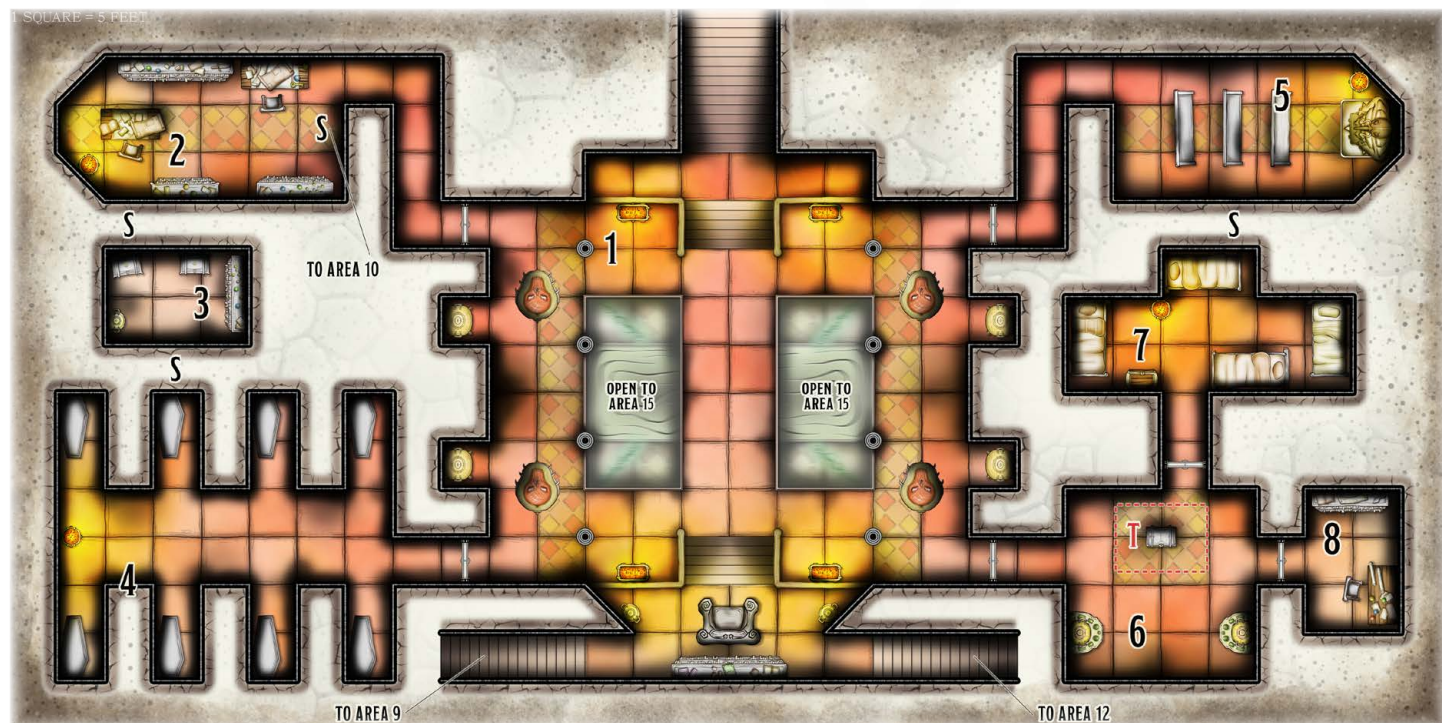
► **The Openings.** Creatures who fall have a 4-in-6 chance of ending up in the caustic pond, 60 feet below (see area 14). Characters looking down see the green-tinted caustic pond and the gas-venting devices.

► **Dissolved Bodies.** After the battle, inspecting the dissolved abominations reveals that they were once human. An alkaline solution was used to melt the skin and half the musculature from the bodies; consistent with the few rumors about the cult. The stench that comes from the pond below is the source of their state (DC 13 INT).

► **Visage Carvings.** The ancient runes etched on the visage borders spell the name of Memnon (DC 14 INT). They reveal the cult is at least two thousand years old.

► **Gilded Urns.** The four containers in the alcoves are sealed with wax and shaded paper. Each contains the essence of a **shadow**. Upon freeing it, there is a 3-in-6 chance it aids the party for 1 day. Otherwise, it attacks.

► **Treasure (6 XP).** The bookshelf behind the throne contains the *Book of Dissolution* (30 gp), a *potion of legendary deeds*, a *scarab of protection*, and a spellbook with the following spells: *animate dead*, *dispel magic*, *magic circle*, *cloudkill*, *passwall*, and *wall of force*.



RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A wall turns into a silvery mirror but reflections show the party in various stages of decay; a haunting vision of what could be.
2	A young cult member (peasant), disillusioned and terrified, begs the party for help to escape. He offers secrets about the Church in exchange for safe passage. If allowed to tag along, he reveals the location of a trap or a secret door, whichever is the nearest.
3	Sir Damos (knight) arrives at the dungeon, hired by his lord to investigate the recent disappearances (Reaction check).
4	Five grotesque dissolved abominations (ghouls) now twisted by dark magic, attack the characters and fight without mercy.
5	Three cultists stumble upon the characters. They carry a cauldron filled with the pond's caustic solution. In a desperate attempt to stop the intruders, they throw the liquid at them (3d6 damage, DC 16 DEX). Victims killed by this become dissolved ghouls .
6	The faceless ghost of Diana, a cultist who repented after her death, appears before the characters. She beckons them to retrieve her bones from the caustic pond's bottom for proper burial. If the characters refuse, Diana loses her temper and attacks.

2. LIBRARY OF REBIRTH

This library contains books, journals, and other records allegedly written by those who have undergone a transformation in the caustic pond. The documents speak of the eternal life after the transformation and how the cultists must prove, through obedience and submission, their worthiness before they achieve eternal salvation.

► **The Fraud.** A character who inspects the library's contents for 1 hour discovers that it is all a fraud. All documents are falsified and there is no real proof that after the transformation people retain any form of freedom.

► **Aric.** Lady Elara's son (see **Adventure Hooks**) is here researching and getting ready for his transformation in a few weeks. Aric (**peasant**) is accompanied by three **cultists**. He is convinced of the cult's legitimacy and cannot be reasoned with. Aric, in his fanatic state of zealotry, must be carried back to his mother against his will.

3. SECRET VAULT

Two stone chests, a vase, and a bookshelf stand in the moldy darkness of this hidden treasure vault.

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The room contains 400 gp, 740 sp, a *potion of healing*, and a map of the dungeon. It reveals the secret passages to area 15 and how the apparatuses there can be used to drain the caustic pool.

4. TOMB OF THE ANCIENTS

According to the etchings on this chamber, old cult leaders, predecessors of the Crow are interred here.

► **The Enclosures.** Inspecting the coffins reveals that the mummified remains within are forgeries made of shaded paper and mud. It suggests that the Crow has had no predecessors and that he has led the cult for millennia; lengthening his life through necromancy.

5. CURSED CHAPEL

A limestone statue of the Crow oversees this chamber. Cult members come here to meditate and ponder about their future transformation in the caustic pond. The chamber is empty when the characters come but 1d6 **cultists** may show up each **crawling round**.

6. A TRAP FOR FOOLS

The stone chest at the chamber's center sits on a pitfall trap that activates when the chest lid is touched. Creatures within 5 feet of the chest fall to area 11 when the trap is sprung (DC 16 DEX check). See area 11 for the effects of the fall and the crossbow trap there.

7. SLEEPING QUARTERS

There are 2d4 cult members (**peasants**) resting here at any given time. The characters can fool them into believing they are new cult members (**Reaction** check).

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The wooden chest contains 32 gp, two flasks of oil, one rope (60 feet), and a crowbar.

8. PRIVATE STUDY

This room is used by cultists with arcane talents to study spells and hone their rare magic abilities.

► **Treasure (1 XP).** The chamber contains a leather pouch with 20 gp, 184 sp, one *potion of healing*, and the following Wizard spell scrolls: *burning hands*, *feather fall*, *hold portal*, *light*, *magic missile*, and *sleep*.



TEMPLE LOWER LEVEL

Abandon all aspirations of thwarting our plans. You have no authority nor power. You'd better consider joining the eternal ranks of our foot soldiers!

The Crow

9. ACCURSED LABORATORY

Complex laboratory equipment bubbles and whistles as untold substances are brewed with care. Four barrels with strange clockwork machinery flank it.

► **The Alchemist.** Working tirelessly to provide the Crow with the best formulae for the caustic solution, the alchemist (**cultist**) is surprised by the characters' presence. The alchemist gives his life for the cult's cause and throws one of the barrels into the nearest brazier, causing all of them to explode. All creatures, even the alchemist, take 4d6 damage (DC 15 DEX for half).

► **The Barrels.** Each barrel has a fuse that burns when exposed to fire. After one round of ignition, the barrel explodes. Creatures within 20 feet take 1d6 damage (DC 15 DEX for half). The characters may carry the barrels elsewhere if the cultist did not make them explode.

10. ARMORY

This chamber contains several wooden tables laden with run-of-the-mill daggers and shortswords, two sets of leather armor, and blank scrolls. The wooden ladder leads up a 60-foot-tall shaft to a trap door in area 2.

11. THE PITFALL TRAP

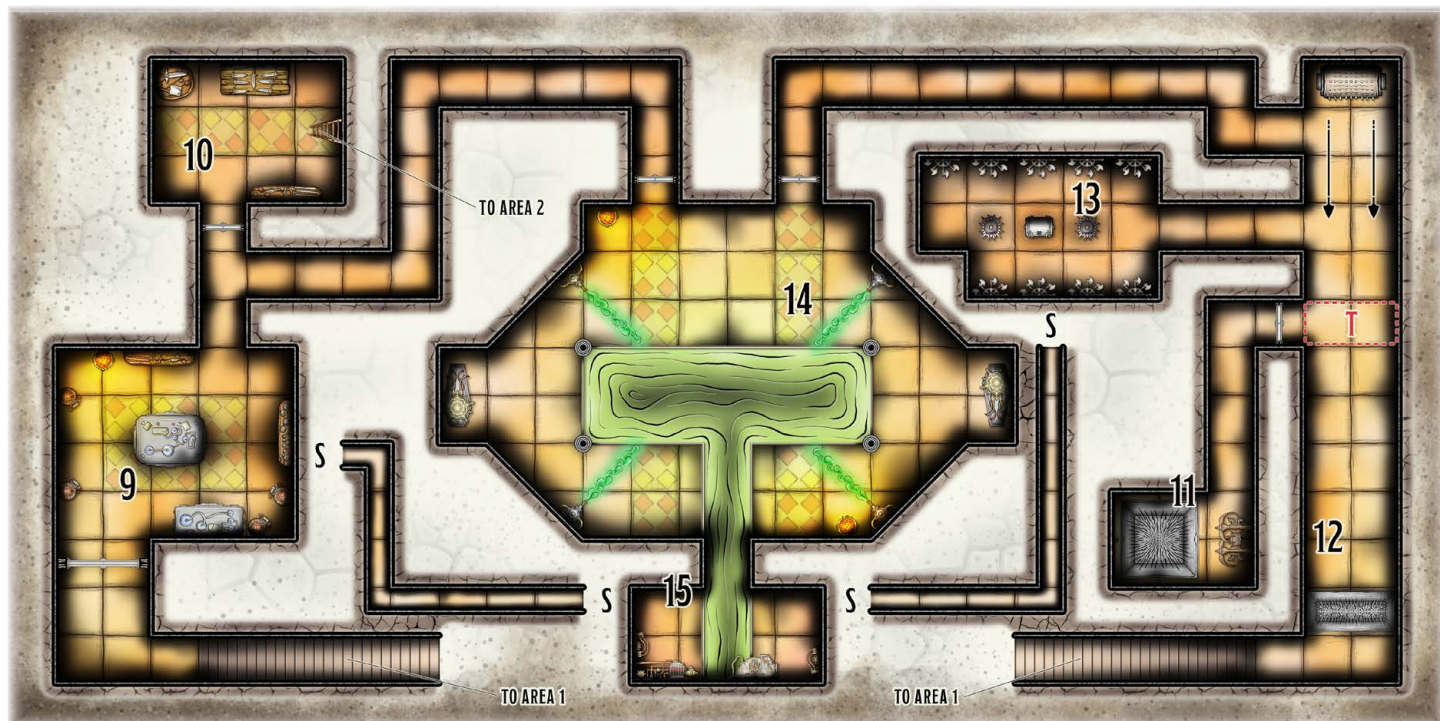
Creatures that trigger the trap in area 6 and fall 60 feet into a pit filled with rusty iron spikes.

► **Deadly Spikes.** Those who fall take 3d6 damage as they become impaled in the spikes (DC 13 STR to pull free). Two automated crossbows activate when creatures fall, they shoot two bolts at random targets (1d8 damage, DC 12 DEX with disadvantage).

► **Hapless Mard.** The scholar (see **Adventure Hooks**) infiltrated the cult and died here. His mangled body is impaled in the iron spikes. He has been here for a week.

12. GYRATING DEATH

Stepping on the trigger plates (see map) causes a 10-foot-wide spiked cylinder to drop by the north wall and roll southward. Creatures caught by it take 3d6 damage (DC 15 DEX). The cylinder comes to a stop when it falls into a 5-foot-deep pitfall near the southern wall. If a creature is there when the cylinder falls, the creature is crushed against the spikes, experiencing a horrible death. The Crow crosses this area after the first encounter with the characters in an attempt to lure them into the trap.



13. ROOM OF BLADES

This chamber contains several bladed devices that gyrate with fierce intensity. A stone chest sits in the middle. Reaching it requires walking carefully around the moving blades (DC 12 DEX or 1d6 damage).

► **Treasure (4 XP).** The chest contains 200 gp, 150 sp, a wand of detect magic, and a potion of invisibility.

14. THE CAUSTIC POND

Noxious fumes vented over the caustic pond by machines attached to the walls make breathing difficult. The Crow, cruel and impassive awaits by the edge.

The Crow (**mage**) removes its mask to reveal a skeletal visage with a crown of bones. Two **ghasts**, his most perfected creations emerge from the sarcophagi. Before the battle begins, the Crow parleys (see **The Offer**).

► **The Pond.** Creatures that fall into the pond take 1d6 damage per round of exposure. Creatures that die to this acid become **ghouls** under the Crow's commands.

► **The Gas.** Creatures in direct contact with the gas vent take 1d4 damage. The undead are immune to it.

15. MACHINERY ROOM

The clockwork machinery in this room can be operated to drain the caustic pond in area 14 (DC 12 INT). If done before the battle, it may help the characters succeed in that encounter. The pond drains in 1 **crawling round**.

THE OFFER

In area 14, before battle breaks, the Crow makes a daring claim: "Yes! You are worthy combatants. Just what the Church of Dissolution is looking for. Ponder for a moment the possibility of the passage of eons. You shall crumble to dust in all but a few decades. With my aid, you can become eternal such as myself and my followers. Plunge into the pond and welcome eternity."

Those foolish enough to heed his words perish in excruciating pain; their bodies spawn as cursed **ghouls**.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

THE CHARACTERS REACH the end of this adventure and face the consequences of their valiant deeds.

THE CROW DEFEATED

The characters overcome their second encounter with the Crow and best him in bloody battle. His skeletal body crumbles to dust, leaving nothing behind but his leather cloak and the bone crown. Without a leader, any surviving cultists lose direction and scatter in a panic. Upon returning to Breverville, the characters are congratulated for their valiant deeds and paid the promised reward. Surviving cultists are soon caught and brought to justice. However, many claim to have been mentally coerced to do evil while others have a fundamental breakdown; unable to process reality after the Crow's demise.

THE DELUDED SON

Aric, Lady Elara's son, can only be brought back and delivered to his mother like a prisoner. Sadly the damage to Aric's psyche after weeks with the cultist is irreparable. Still, Lady Elara pays the characters for their noble deed and promises to aid his son recover from this. Alas, Aric soon becomes obsessed with retrieving the Crow's bone crown, if he manages to acquire it, he shall become the new leader of the Church of Dissolution (see below).

THE CROWN

The Crow's essence is imbued to the bone crown, which soon proves to be indestructible by any means available to mortals. The cursed artifact bids its time and seeks a suitable master. A person who wears it can hear the deranged whispers of the Crow. If worn for 10 days, the Crow's spirit possesses the person completely (DC 20 CHA). When this happens, the Crow returns to the dungeon to plunge into the caustic pond and recover its skeletal form. Aric is the first to try but he will not be the only one. As long as it exists, the crown shall seek a master and, sooner rather than later, the Crow shall return with a more immediate goal. The Crow shall seek revenge against the characters, whom he remembers clearly. How this comes to pass is an adventure for another day...



THE CRIMSON KNIGHT

In crimson armor, our legendary Crimson Knight stood against darkness, his valor a beacon in the night of our despair. May the gods rest his soul.

Dungeon's Inscription



In the annals of the Kingdom of Flangorn, few figures are as revered as Sir Alaric, known to history as the Crimson Knight. His tale begins hundreds of years ago, when Flangorn was besieged by the sorcerer, Vallick the Malevolent.

Alaric was not a man of noble birth but of extraordinary valor and strength. His armor, stained in the blood of a dragon he had slain single-handedly, gave him the moniker of the Crimson Knight. He led the charge into Vallick's fortress, breaking the sorcerer's hold over Flangorn and restoring peace to the land. He turned the tide of the war, and his legend grew with each retelling.

OUTLIVING THE LEGEND

SIR ALARIC BECAME a symbol of hope and resilience. Hence, when he fell in battle, defending Flangorn from a horde of abyssal demons, the kingdom mourned deeply. In his honor, the people erected a grand dungeon, the Crimson Keep, a place where his armor and his most treasured possessions were kept. This dungeon, adorned with reliefs depicting his many victories and acts of heroism, became a sacred site, where citizens left offerings and tributes to their beloved, fallen hero for decades.

Alas, as centuries passed, the memory of Sir Alaric began to fade, and with it, the sanctity of the Crimson Keep. A ruthless band of brigands, led by Kev the Twisted, discovered the abandoned dungeon and claimed it as their lair. They defiled the hallowed halls with their presence, looting the offerings and hoarding treasures from across the land. The desecration of the Crimson Keep has not gone unnoticed. The spirit of Sir Alaric stirs restlessly, unable to find peace while his legacy is tarnished.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Heroes.** Flangorn calls for heroes! The mission is simple: enter the Crimson Keep, vanquish the brigands led by Kev, and restore the honor of the Crimson Knight. It is a quest of great peril, for the brigands are many and they have tampered with the traps within the dungeon to work for them. Flangorn's authorities offer the heroes to keep one item of their choosing from within the dungeon; they shall earn the eternal gratitude of a kingdom and the blessing of a legendary hero (1,500 gp, 7 XP).

Level 3 Adventure

► **Danger.** Deadly. Check for a **Random Event** every **crawling round** or after loud noises (3-in-6 chance). In case of repetition, the heroes stumble upon a group of brigands: two **peasants**, a **bandit**, and one **thug**.

► **Light.** Some areas feature magical braziers that stay ever-burning with permanent *light* spells.

1. MAIN LANDING

Beneath the towering archway of the Crimson Keep, ancient runes flicker faintly, casting eerie shadows over the worn stone steps that descend into the dark.

Two **bandits** and four **peasants** are about to leave when the characters stumble upon them at the bottom of the stairs. Kev's men do not recognize the heroes' faces so they adopt a defensive stance. One of the peasants does not stay to fight but rather flees to inform the others.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** The heroes can retrieve 28 gp from the enemies. The brigands also have a leather bag with 100 gp worth of silverware taken from the dungeon.

RANDOM EVENT

d6	Details
1	A hidden alcove unexpectedly opens, revealing a golden urn worth 150 gp (2 XP). But a swarm of centipedes attacks as well.
2	As the adventurers approach a grand mural, the painted figures come to life, reenacting a legendary battle between the Crimson Knight and Vallick. The heroes see how the knight's weapon and shield glow with mesmerizing colors in this vision.
3	The ground trembles and a section of the wall crumbles. A random character is hit by rubble (1d8 damage, DC 14 DEX for half).
4	A strong current of air traverses the entire dungeon. All light sources, including the dungeon's braziers, are extinguished.
5	Six bandits attempt to ambush the characters (DC 13 WIS to hear them). If detected, the heroes may ambush them in return.
6	The party of heroes stumbles upon a group of shiny sets of red armor. The vengeful spirits of warriors past are immortal guardians of this place. Their only objective is to test the party's combat prowess. The four animated armors fight until slain.

The Crimson Knight



2. CRIMSON CRYPTS

Half the alcoves cradle a plinth adorned with the bones and rusting armaments of a loyal ally of the Crimson Knight, the rest show golden jars, keeping the ashes of the valiant. This hallowed space, cloaked in the heavy air of history and sacrifice, echoes with the unspoken tales of bravery and knightly honor.

Two corpses lie near the locked door at the end of the corridor (area 3). The pool of blood underneath is recent and still reflects the light. A **shadow** with half its Hit Points hears the noise and approaches from the dark.

► **Disturbing the Dead.** If the characters interact in any way with a plinth, a **skeleton** materializes to defend it. In the case of the ash-filled jars, a **shadow** does. Each plinth holds 15 gp worth of silver and offerings (1 XP), while each golden jar is worth 20 gp (1 XP). One of the jars is free for the taking: the two dead people died trying to take it but released an angry spirit (DC 12 INT). However, pilfering this sacred place is deemed a horrid insult to the Crimson Knight's heritage (see area 9).

3. LOCKED VAULT

The brigands were not capable of bypassing this lock. A skillful Thief might do the trick, although they require Thieves' Tools for this task (DC 16 DEX check).

► **Treasure (5 XP).** Leather bags with 546 gp, 5,289 sp, and 32,986 cp. A matched trio of warhammers (10 gp each), a fine suit of chainmail (60 gp), a goblin-made clockwork dragon doll (45 gp), two lustrous pearls (40 gp each), and a *potion of invisibility* (80 gp). Taking this treasure awakens all the undead described in area 2.

► **Trap.** If the heroes fail to notice the pitfall trap, the first of them that enters may fall to area 7 (DC 13 DEX).

4. CROSSBOW TRAP

The two automated crossbows shoot anything that approaches (ATK 1 bolt +3, 1d8) They reload magically every minute. Heroes must jump to reach the other side (DC 12 STR check). The crossbows can be destroyed (10 HP each). The chest at the end of the corridor is an illusion, though. A *detect magic* spell reveals this fact.

5. TEACHINGS OF THE CRIMSON KNIGHT

Four **bandits**, one **thug**, and three **peasants** are prepared and aiming at the door with slings and bows if they are warned about the intruders (see area 1). Kev's men have already found the ladder that descends to area 6.

► **Battle.** The enemies stand in between the two chasms (see map), and use ranged weapons to stop the heroes. They draw swords or clubs when forced to do so.

► **Falling.** Creatures thrown into the openings take 1d10 damage as they fall 55 feet into the pool in area 9.

6. COSTLY TREASURE

Only one of the four chests contains treasure (GM's choice). One of them is an illusion. Another one explodes (3d6 damage, DC 13 DEX for half), while the last one throws poison darts (1d10 damage, 13 CON). One of the statues, a wingless **gargoyle**, awakens when the real treasure chest is revealed. It fights until slain.

► **Treasure (3 XP).** An ivory tusk carved with a knight battling demons (80 gp), a large, green scarab encased in amber (75 gp), and a leather bag with 257 gp.

7. RESTING CHAMBER

The characters may spend one **crawling round** reading the documents in this area peacefully. They learn the Crimson Knight's story and exploits. And this grants them a **luck token** too. Two **wights** emerge from the sarcophagi if the characters disturb their tombs. Pressing a hidden button (DC 13 WIS) opens a path to area 8.

► **Spiked Pit.** This room is concealed by an illusory wall. Creatures that fall from area 4 take 4d6 damage.

8. CRIMSON CAVERNS

Creatures that fail the jump in area 4 end up here. They take 2d6 damage from the fall (DC 12 DEX for half). This area is filled with gnawed bones and skulls. These are the feeding grounds of four **giant centipedes**. The mindless insects flee if reduced to half their HP.

9. THE CRIMSON KNIGHT'S TOMB

The legendary knight's tomb is a vast hall dominated by a colossal, limestone statue of Sir Alaric, gallantly wielding a spear and shield as if standing an eternal guard. An altar stands solemnly, surrounded by a pool of shimmering crimson waters, said to be sanctified by the knight's indomitable spirit.

Two **bandits**, one **thug**, and two **peasants** are what remains of the group of brigands. Their leader Kev (**thief**) is here. It is a long shot, but the characters may attempt to negotiate with them or persuade them to yield (**Reaction** check with disadvantage). Once the battle starts, the enemies surrender if they witness Kev drop to 0 HP.

DEVELOPMENT

WORTHY SUCCESSORS

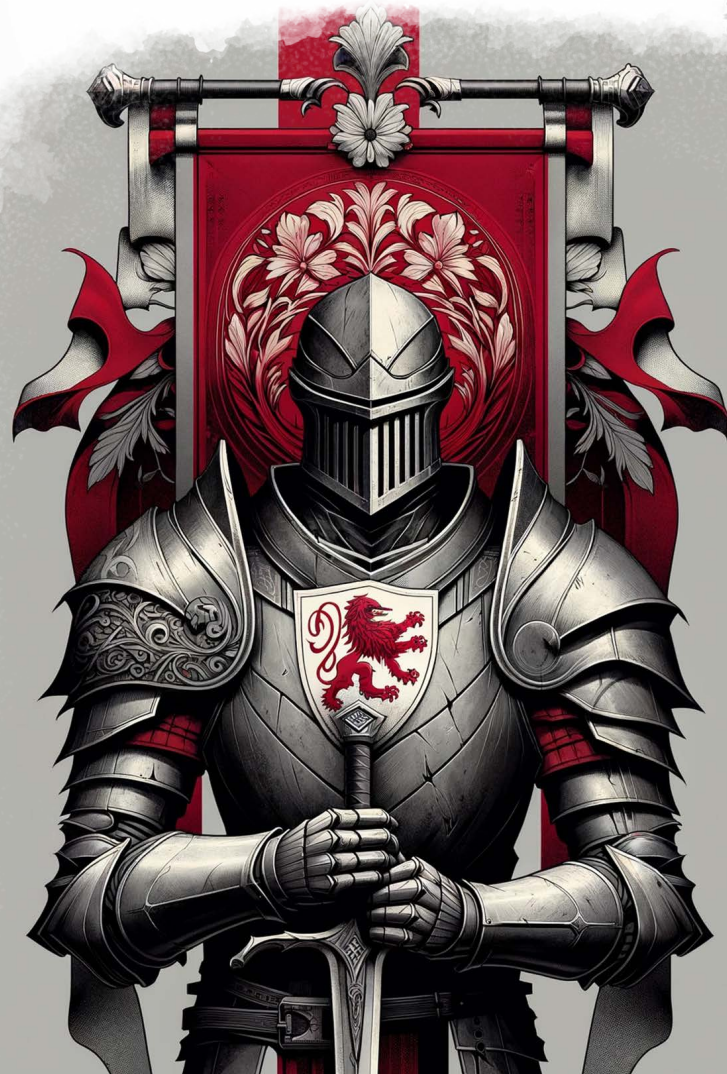
The characters take care of all brigands without touching the treasure. They came to protect the knight's honor. If so, the knight's ghost praises their good hearts and reveals his tomb under the statue. The heroes may take one of the following: *shield of the crusader*, *boomerang spear* (+1 spear, it flies back to its owner when thrown), *crimson armor* (+1 plate mail, 1/day, undead, demons, and devils attack with disadvantage for 5 rounds). If the heroes take more than one, they summon the anger of the Crimson Knight and must fight (see below).

NEUTRAL OUTCOME

The heroes do their job but they also pilfer some of the sacred chambers of the dungeon. Flangorn's authorities pay the agreed-upon reward but the heroes become enemies of all Crimson Knight's followers and believers. This may have unforeseen consequences (GM's choice).

BAD HEARTS

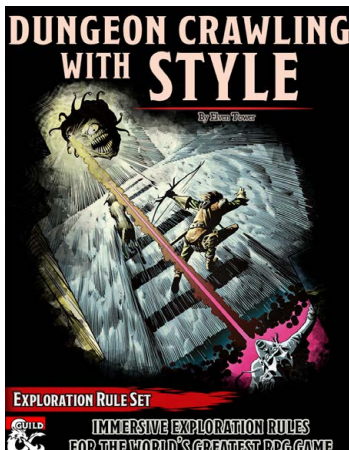
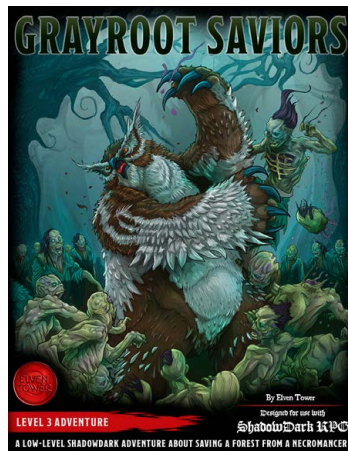
The heroes are just thieves with different faces. The Crimson Knight's spirit (**wraith**) does not reveal the tomb with the magical treasure, and it shall do everything it can to stop these poor excuses for heroes.



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