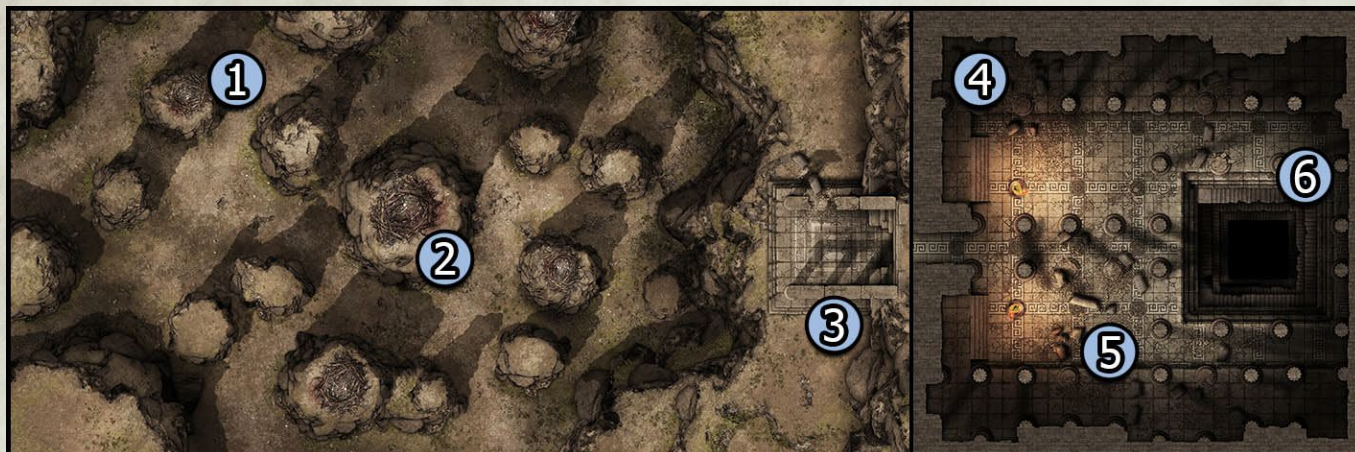


# CAVE OF THE HELL STAIR



## Setting description

*This setting is for the adjoining map pair shown above.*

Across the Sea of Wrecks to the Isle of Lypi, through the Swamp of Grief to the Wastes of the Ornio, this is the way to the Hell Stair. You will know you have found the entrance to the cave when around you rise the Pillars of the Strix on which nest the vampiric Stirges that plague this place. Inside, a hall constructed in the days before humans, stretches forward to the depthless blackness of the entrance to Hell. A stair wends down through the deafening, whistling scream of this pit of infinite silence. Yet you will do well to reach this Hell Stair, as one waits in the hall with a hound to block mortal intruders.

## NPCs

- 1 Stantina, a warrior in tarnished bronze armour, who has come to the Hell Stair to try and find the ghost of her sister, a warrior felled in a battle with a demon. She brings with her an enchanted meal in the hope that she can lure her sister from Hell to a more honourable resting place.
- 2 Eudon, an artist of considerable skill who wishes to travel down to the sixth level of Hell to be inspired by the corrupted gardens and architecture there.
- 3 Nomakhos, a being of uncertain race and form who is wrapped in a conglomeration of black rags. They sell bone relics said to provide a variety of protections in the places below the Stair. The relics' providence cannot be provided.

## Boss description

The Hell Stair is guarded by Zeradas, an undead hell warrior who holds a hell hound, Meaty, upon a leash. Not all are challenged by Zeradas, but those he deems unsuitable to pass to the Stair will be challenged to the death. Only besting Zeradas and Meaty in combat will prove one has the chthonic steel to descend the Stair.

## Around the cave (see numbered map)

- 1 Two stirges are fighting over this nest in a bloody battle. They dive-bomb each other and swoop with raised claw, a danger to anyone passing near.
- 2 This nest stinks of rotting meat. Moving the sticks reveals some of the construction is human bone.
- 3 Lying in the rubble by the door is a golden trinket in the shape of a wishbone. It has been broken.
- 4 A small bowl is set here in the shadows. It contains a blood offering designed to lure a devil up from the world below. It has been covered with a lead plate.
- 5 A loud noise near this crumbling pillar could tip it down on top of anyone standing nearby.
- 6 A cold wind blasts up from the stairwell. It carries a silence so deep and ominous that it hurts the ear.

## Reasons to visit the Cave of the Hell Stair

- 1 Via a medium, the party have been contacted by the soul of one in Hell. Possessing the clue that they have been waiting for in their quest, the dead one requests that they meet here in person at the boundary between worlds.
- 2 An Army of Hell will soon march upon the mortal world set on destroying all life. The Hell Stair is foretold to be the scene of a great last stand against Hell. The party must travel here and block the army from ascending.
- 3 A devil has broken a pact he made with a foolish pair of mortals. The twins request that the party take the written contract, rip it and throw it down the Hell Stair to show it is spent.