

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 13

**8 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES
HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
ROLL20 MAPS**



THE BEST ADVENTURES FOR THE BEST GMS

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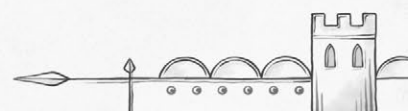
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About this Magazine

Dungeon Vault Magazine is all about providing interesting ideas and lore to DMs and storytellers. Within this issue, you will find varied adventure ideas.

These short modules do not stick to a unified template of sections. Instead, they are organically created and follow their own pace. The types of modules you can expect are city/town settings, regional settings, dungeons, outdoor locations, encounter maps, and one-page adventures.

The modules are written with 5th ed. OGL in mind but rules are often left to a minimum. Most adventures are appropriate for low to mid-level (Levels 1 to 10) adventuring parties. We include a note at the beginning of each adventure with a ballpark estimation of party level and playing time.

As the DM, you are free to change or modify any or all the information found here. NPC names and settlement names are the first you should consider changing to accommodate any homebrew-world lore. All material in this release is intended personal use.

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THE STONE COLLECTION

LORE

Deep in the mountains, near the village of Panshaw, an ancient throne lays buried and forgotten. Eons ago, when giants roamed the earth and their brutal wars ravaged the land, a whole civilization of fire giants was swept from the surface of the planet.

The obliteration of that clan was total. Remnants of their might and powerful people still are trapped under tons of dirt and stone. The throne room, which in the time of giants used to have rivers of magma flanking it, now only has polluted and corrupted waters.

This place remained forgotten for centuries until earthquakes and landslides revealed entrances and tunnels that reached it. Olanna the medusa had the fortune to pass by when these tunnels had just been revealed. A human hero recently murdered her lover and she was forced to flee her home or face the same fate. In the lonely mountains, a desire to kill and turn people to stone grew in her. The mythical creature fell in love with the caverns since the limestone statue on the giant throne looked like her deceased lover. However, a duergar colony was settled on the east section of the cave system.

Olanna's trips through the mountains brought her to an underground settlement of grimlocks. These blind underground people weren't affected by the medusa's gaze. Olanna offered the blind people a safe spot in the mountains and the right to keep a few of her prey as food if they helped her clear the cave. Together, they succeeded and the grimlocks occupied the duergar former buildings and settled down. The grimlocks agreed to be loyal to the medusa as long as she helped them drive the duergars away in case they returned.

Olanna managed to open the ancient door to the throne room but she can't remove the huge statue of the fire giant

lord sat upon the throne. Regardless, the medusa settled down and made this place her lair.

OLANNA'S COLLECTION

The small village of Panshaw is the closest human settlement to the mountain range. Olanna thought the small village was the perfect target to lure prey from. She started by attacking lonely peasants or farmers, carriages at night, and small children who strolled too far away from the safety of their parents' eyes.

Olanna's reputation in the area earned her the respect of a few monstrosities around. A group of gargoyles pledged their loyalty to the fearsome medusa, and a lonely gorgon found good company with her. The gargoyles content themselves with a chance to kill and harm humans. They thrive on the opportunity to attack someone unaware of their presence. The gorgon, on the other hand, is just a hungry beast. Olanna lets it eat whatever it wants so it stayed. Now Olanna's lair is more than dangerous. It has become a threat to all people nearby.

In just a couple of months, the evil medusa kidnapped and petrified more than thirty people. Their petrified bodies bear screaming and terrified faces.

THE MISSION

The village of Panshaw had more missing people in the past few months than in the last couple of years. The tithing-men in the village determined it could be the work of goblins or an orc tribe from the mountains.

However, their small scouting party never returned from their quest. They were tasked with exploring the mountains and find proof of goblin or orc activity. The medusa ambushed them and made sure the six men that left Panshaw were never seen again.

Adonnis, the townspeaker, offers a bounty of 700 gold pieces to find what

happened to all the missing people and bring the hammer of justice down on the culprit. Either by subduing it and arresting it or by killing it.

History Check

DC 14: *These mountains belonged to giants ages ago. Historians and researchers have found ancient oversized artifacts and bones as evidence.*

DC 16: *The history books describe that a clan of fire giants was annihilated around this area. Their great halls and throne rooms have remained buried for years.*

OLANNA'S LAIR AREAS

The adventurers take half a day to explore the mountains and find the entrance of the caverns. On their way to the medusa's lair, the heroes notice small remnants of the giant civilization such as fragments of urns or decorative objects, or even large sections of a wall that feature stone architecture.

The heroes have a 50% chance of entering the lair from either tunnel that leads to area 1 or 2.

1. MEDUSA'S COLLECTION

More than thirty stone statues stand in the way. A gruesome river of tar divides them into two groups. The statues' faces show agony, fear, and pain.

The tar river is 10 feet wide. To cross the river requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing by 5 or more causes the creature to fall into the tar.

The tar is poisoned. Contact with it requires a successful DC 13 Constitution saving throw or the target becomes poisoned for one hour.

There are six **gargoyles** hidden among the statues. They remain immobile until someone falls into the water or if an opportunity to surprise the heroes arises. They attack immediately if they are discovered.

2. GRIMLOCK VILLAGE

The heroes can also enter Olanna's lair through the south tunnel. The grimlocks now occupy the wooden structures that they took from the duergar. To the north, there is a stone temple. The structure seems to contain a sort of shrine.

There is a group of twenty **grimlocks** here. Only eight of them are combatants. The rests are women and younglings. They have orders to subdue and restrain intruders.

3. MEDUSA'S IDOL

The stone structure where the grimlocks improvised a stone idol of Olanna is ancient. The stone has rune carvings in giant but most of them are too deteriorated to be read.

The grimlocks did their best to make a statue of their queen medusa. Closer inspection of the idol reveals it is the statue of a fire giant lord. The blind people smashed it with their clubs and added sticks, dry leaves, and mud to recreate the medusa's head.

4. STONE TREE

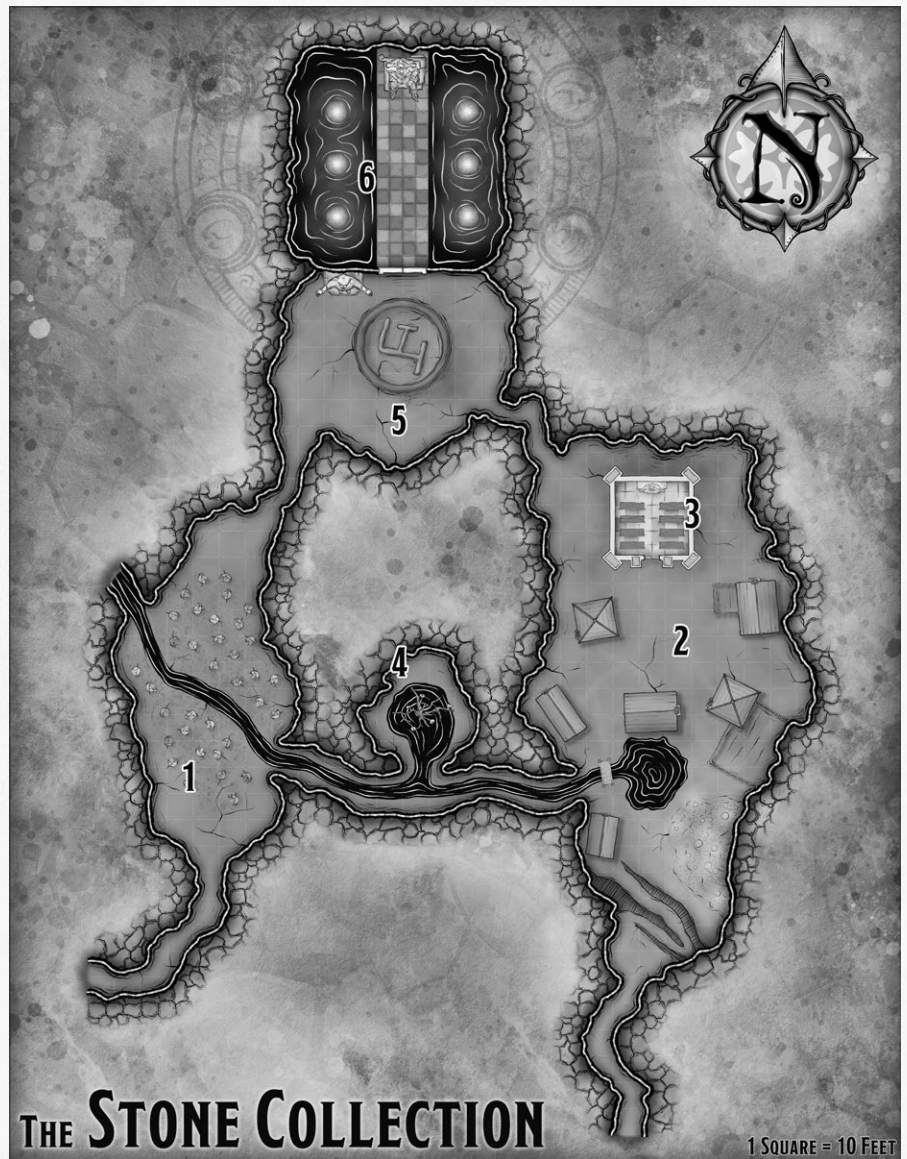
The dead, hard bark of this large tree is buried in a thick, black pool of tar. The dirt and dust accumulated on it over hundreds of years of humidity and darkness. The silence and sadness of the tree portray a kind of misplaced beauty.

There is no apparent explanation as to why this tree is here. However, after centuries underground, it is now dead. This particular detail of the cave pleased Olanna a lot when she discovered the place.

5. ANCIENT SYMBOL

The large glyph circle on the floor has an ancient symbol carved on it. It belonged to the fire giant clan that resided here in the past.

A sand and limestone statue of a fire lord with open arms stands next to the huge entrance of the throne room. The statue looks old and battered.



6. ANCIENT THRONE ROOM

This massive chamber used to have rivers of magma on each side. Tar takes its place today. There are three braziers to each side of the central pathway. These magical braziers shed faint light over the thick tar. A huge throne with the statue of a giant fire lord oversees the room.

Olanna (**medusa**) and her **gorgon** pet are ready to receive the unwelcomed visitors. The moment the heroes attempt to open the door, the gorgon attacks whoever opens it with a Trampling Charge.

Olanna remains standing on the throne shooting arrows with her bow. Four **grimlocks** that were grooming her also charge and attack.

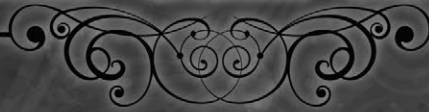
TREASURES

The heroes earn the agreed-upon reward when they return to Panshaw. Adonnis prepares a rescue operation to retrieve as many statues as possible. He means to give proper burial ceremonies to all those who perished.

The heroes find 200 gold pieces in Olanna's lair behind the throne. The medusa's bow is a *+1 longbow*.



ARGANA AND THE THISTLE PIES



We've heard it's an old woman. She's got gray hair and wrinkled skin. But her teeth are black as coal!

Concerned Villager

HOW TO USE

In this adventure, a group of heroes delves into the depths of a forest to find the lair of a witch during the winter. The adventurers may come across this scenario when visiting a town or small city during wintertime. A great way to get them involved is to have Argana kidnap an acquaintance of the PCs among other victims. Ultimately, the promise of gold and recognition is often the best incentive. The person in charge of the town offers a considerable amount of gold (500 gp) if a close relative was also taken.

BACKGROUND LORE

This is the story of Argana Farenski. She was born into money in the kingdom's capital. She never lacked for anything and had access to the best education in her youth. Argana became a scribe, then a scholar, and then a mage in her early thirties. By then, she realized that the thing that motivated her the most was the study and research of the arcane arts. She envied the elves for their long lifespans. They could, and often did, take their sweet time when it came to arcane studies. They had decades or even cen-

turies to study and master even the most diminutive details about their magical arts.

In a moment of sudden resolve and determination, Argana left her family's estate and became an adventurer. Increasing her lifespan became an absolute priority for her. She believed magic was the answer but the secret of immortality is a well-guarded treasure no one is willing to part with.

Argana traveled the world far and wide. She consulted and studied with experts in the arcane field. Humans, elves, dwarves, and even some fey creatures in the forests and the seas shared their secrets with her but even after all this, she felt farther from her goal than ever. Far away from home, Argana exhausted her savings and needed resources to continue her search. She met a group of fellow adventurers who welcomed her magical abilities. Together they took on contracts and bounties and became renowned in the region. They became somewhat wealthy but money was only a means to a larger end for Argana. Deep inside, she only wanted to further her investigation.

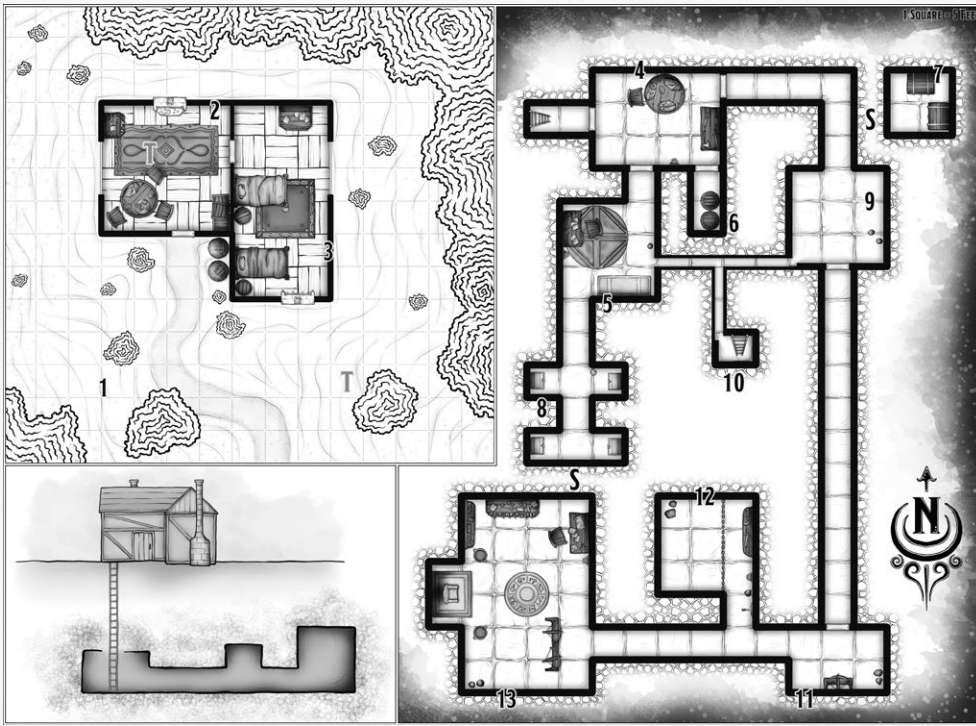
At one time, Argana and her fellow adventurers ventured deep underground to help a dwarf town get rid of a vicious necromancer and his undead horde.

They were successful and the dwarf clan rewarded them with numerous golden figurines that were worth a small fortune each. But Argana collected the most precious treasure of all when she saw the necromancer's spellbook. The dark, leather-bound, parchment-paged book included not only the necromancer's spells but also instruction to perform arcane rituals that she had never seen before.

The rituals in the book opened a new world of study to her. These were the lost or forbidden arcane subjects that no one had shared; erased from history out of fear or superstition. The necromancer's writing style and shorthand were difficult to translate to usable terms, however. Each mage codifies spells differently. It would take a fair amount of research; trial and error to decipher the ins and outs of the rituals and then focus on the immortality conundrum. But she felt it was worth the try.

Argana left the group of adventurers and retired to the privacy of the forest to start researching. It took her a few months to understand what she had to do to have access to the power of these rituals. Most





of them functioned with one kind of fuel: sentient lives. Argana tried to find a way to replace that wicked ingredient for months but it was useless. Lives had to be sacrificed for her to gain insight into the greatest secrets of the arcane. In a moment of irony, she understood that the necromancer probably undertook the same quest she had. She would have to become the villain to obtain her reward. She told herself that it would be only for a while and that she would respect the lives of all those she used to further her investigation. She convinced herself that she tried to. But in the end, the very nature of her experiments and failed rituals corrupted her soul and blackened her moral compass. She cried while casting the obscure ritual and felt something within her break when the eyes of the sacrifices glowed and then went blank. She worked alone and, thus, had to carry the dead bodies outside to dispose of them. After the tenth victim, Argana carried herself with calculated precision to do what she must. Never thinking, never feeling.

THE PRESENT

Argana lives alone in a forest shack, it is one day from the closest town at the forest's edge. Despite the short distance between Argana's shack and the closest village, the wizard has never shown them

her true form. She uses magic to change her appearance to that of a crone when she has dealt with the townsfolk.

Under her clever disguise, Argana visits the towns close to the forest twice a month. She pushes a small cart where she stores freshly made thistle pies. She uses a local plant known as the ruby-red thistle to prepare them. The pies are sweet and flowery and the locals love them.

Argana often includes an extra ingredient on some of the pies. It is a delicate and flavorless potion that causes the person who eats it to feel a sudden curiosity for the old woman. It is a watered-down charm potion that causes the people to become infatuated with her for a few hours. This is enough time for Argana to lure them back to her shack in the woods and put them in the cells under her home. She has lured one or two people a month to her home for the past year and a half.

Some people have pointed out that people often go missing when the old lady comes to visit. It is hard to believe because the crone looks frail and small but the fact remains true. The locals do not know that she is guilty of this but she is the prime suspect. Because of this, some locals now believe that the old woman in the forest is a witch of sorts. This is inaccurate, she is a wizard. But the su-

perstitions of the illiterate populace have taken hold and the tales of the witch in the woods have spread.

Local authorities are inclined to spend some of the town's savings to fund an expedition to the crone's home in the forest. The local assembly has decided that no more local lives can be spared for this effort. Calling on the crown to send reinforcements may take weeks, so a group of strong-looking foreign adventurers is the perfect choice for this but the bounty is open to everyone. 500 gold pieces ready for the taking.

ARGANA FARENSKI

Neutral evil human (age 44)

Argana is a middle-aged woman with graying hair, slim figure, and several battle scars from her adventuring days. The most prominent one is a deep scar in her torso that goes from her collarbone, up her neck and around to the middle of her back. Half the scar is visible when she wears a dress. She got this scar battling a green dragon a few years ago in her adventuring days.

Personality Trait. "There's little worth in establishing friendships that shall wither with time."

Ideal. "My ongoing research shall grant me immortality, after that, I can lead a quiet life of research."

Bond. "I shall return to my family when I have achieved my goals."

Flaw. "I am overconfident and trust that my plans are flawless."

THE WITCH'S SHACK

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 13 correspond to the forest shack map and the underground complex beneath it. Both the shack and the dungeon were built by Argana and her undead servants.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The snowy fields outside of the shack are so thick that they are considered difficult terrain. The flooring in the shack and dungeon are in good condition but signs of disrepair are present as well.

Doors. All doors are made from oak and feature simple locks. All of them are unlocked unless specified otherwise.

Light. The shack rooms are well lit from the hearths. Sconces on the walls and braziers in the dungeon provide bright light where available. Other areas are in complete darkness.

Smells and Sounds. The smells of the food on the stove and scented candles dominate the shack. Underground, there is a pungent, sanguine smell of burnt hair, blood, and cinnamon. It comes from area 13 and becomes stronger when approaching the area.

1. SHACK'S SURROUNDINGS

Several inches of snow cover the frozen grass and soil below. The wooden shack in the forest is in the center of a clearing. The narrow path that leads to the house was cleared recently. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals several skeleton footprints on the path. Argana has some of her skeleton thralls clear the path every few days so that the snow layer is not too thick whenever she chooses to visit the towns.

The wooden building features a single entrance, two window panes, and two fireplaces on opposite sides of the shack. There is nothing that can be associated with what the locals refer to as a witch. Thick gray curtains impede vision through the windows.

Secret Entrance. There is a wooden trapdoor under 10 inches of snow south-east of the shack (see the "T" marked on the map). It leads down to area 10. The only way to find it is if an adventurer specifically looks for things under the snow with a pole or a shovel. Otherwise, there are no tracks that lead to it or a way to determine that it is there. Argana has not used it in months.

2. LIVING ROOM

The room looks lived-in and recently used. It contains a wooden table with fresh food on it, a small bookcase, a hearth with an attached stove, and a fine rug of exquisite craftsmanship. There is a painted portrait on the north wall, beside the stove, that portrays an adult

woman carrying a heavy spellbook. The woman in the painting has a large scar on the shoulder. The bookcase contains literary classics of local folklore.

Six thistle pies are baking on the heat of the stove. They are almost done. Should a character have a bite of any of the pastries, they are subject to a magical effect similar to the *charm person* (DC 14) spell centered on Argana. The effect lasts for 2d6 hours.

Secret Door. There is a wooden trapdoor under the rug (see the "T" marked on the map). It leads down to area 4.

Treasure. The rug is worth 125 gold pieces.

3. BEDROOM

There are two beds, a wardrobe, and a hearth in the bedroom. One of the beds (north) is well made and appears to be unused. The wardrobe contains only female clothing. There is a metal safe box under the used bed where Argana keeps spare change and money to avoid opening her secret vault too often. It is guarded by four **shadows** that she created and bent to her will. The undead do their best to protect the box.

Treasure. The iron safebox is unlocked and contains 160 gp, 400 sp, and two diamonds worth 100 gp each.

4. BASEMENT LANDING

The trapdoor ladder leads down to a small chamber with a single wooden door. It leads to a 20 by 15 feet chamber that contains two wooden tables. There is food served on one of them and several iron weapons on the other. There are other doors in the room. There are three **ghouls** in this room, they attack the first adventurer to emerge from the ladder.

5. VIVISECTORY

Argana uses this room to dissect and inspect the insides of some of her experiment subjects. There is a steel table near the south wall where she performs her medical studies on (often) dead bodies. If an adventurer spends 20 minutes reviewing the written material on the desk by the northwest corner, it reveals that someone has dissected many people



from the local villages. She has strict records of her medical proceeding and pages full of arcane ramblings of what her supposed breakthroughs are.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) reveals that her findings are either flat out wrong, or there is an important piece of information missing.

Treasure. There is a wooden chest under the metal table. It contains the valuables that some of Argana's victims carried. There are 35 gp, 84 sp, and a single golden locket with the portrait of a young girl inside.

6. WINE CABINET

The room contains two rows of wine barrels. Some of the barrels are already empty and others have gone sour from improper care.

Treasure. Two of the wine barrels are in drinkable condition. They have a market value of 20 gp each.

7. SECRET VAULT

The room contains two wooden chests reinforced with iron bands. The chests are unlocked. Argana's remaining savings from her adventurer phase as well as some of the treasure collected from kidnapped townsfolk is here.

Treasure. The chests contain 1400 gp, 2600 sp, 2980 cp, a +1 spear, a +1 studded leather armor, and a wand of cure wounds.

8. BOOBY-TRAPPED CHESTS

Argana built this room as a decoy vault to lure intruders into an early death. There is one stone chest in each of the 5-foot alcoves. The chests are empty but an intruder would have no way to know that. A character using thieves' tools can bypass the lock on each chest automatically but doing so triggers a trap.

Poison Needle Traps. Attempting to manipulate the lock with tools triggers the trap. A fine needle emerges from a small orifice and injects a dose of poison to the target. They must make a successful DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 21 (6d6) poison damage.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the presence of a section of the wall that is made of a lighter material in the center of the south wall. A character using thieves' tools can force this door open with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check. This secret passage leads to Argana's arcane study (area 13) and provides the heroes with a possibility to surprise the mage.

9. EXPLOSIVE DOOR ROOM

The short hallway turns south and leads to a 15 by 15 room with a single wooden door on the south wall and a 2-foot-wide opening by the southwest corner. The narrow passage is too small for a medium-sized creature to cross but a halfling or similar creature can still squeeze through at half speed.

The door to the south is locked. A character using thieves' tools can bypass the lock automatically, however, doing so triggers the explosive runes (see below). A *detect magic* spell reveals the presence of an evocation aura on the door. A *dispel magic* spell deactivates the trap for 1d6 hours.

Explosive Runes Trap. Opening the door triggers the *glyph of warding* spell on the door. The explosive runes shine bright red for an instant and go off. Each creature within 10 feet of the door must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 17 or higher reveals the presence of a section of the wall that is made of a lighter material in the west wall of the hallway north of the room. A character using thieves' tools can force this door open with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check. It leads to area 7, Argana's hidden vault.

10. SECRET EXIT

This is Argana's secret exit. She has never used it in the past. The narrow passages that lead to this chamber can only be traversed by small creatures squeezing, or smaller. There is a travel bag hanging on the wall by the ladder. It contains rations for a few days, traveling gear, and a spare spellbook. The ladder leads up to the surface in area 1 (see the "T" marked on the map).

11. CROSSBOW TRAP

The large hallway to the south is part of an elaborate trap. The first three tiles of the hallway are a pressure-sensitive plate that triggers the trap with 250 pounds of weight (average of two people).

When any adventurer reaches the end of the room, where the mounted crossbow is, the skeleton archers in area 13 shoot their mounted crossbows at them and alert Argana of the intruders.

Repeating Crossbow Trap. When the trap is triggered, the door by the south end of the hallway opens to reveal a mounted crossbow that shoots 30 bolts, three per round. Up to three creatures as far as 120 feet from the crossbow must make a successful DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or take 6 (1d10) piercing damage. They must repeat the save as long as they remain in the corridor, or until the 30 bolts have been shot. Dropping to the floor for the duration of the trap's functioning prevents all damage after the first round..

12. CELLS

This room is divided in two by iron bars that lift when the lever in the hallway is moved to the "up" position. There are 1d4 peasant prisoners in the cell. They are happy to see the adventurers and eager to escape Argana's lair.

13. ARCANE STUDY

The largest chamber in the dungeon contains Argana's main research room. A stone magic circle in the center of the room is the focus of all her rituals, as per the necromancer's spellbook. It is stained with dried blood and other chemicals. A stone throne in an alcove by the west wall is also part of the ritual's foci. When Argana performs a sacrifice to power her arcane ceremonies, she sits on the stone throne. The throne is inscribed with endless arcane runes and spells. Whoever sits on it when the sacrifice takes place is the beneficiary of the ritual. So far, Argana has advanced her goals but the precise requirements of the ritual still elude her.

If the adventurers attempt to reach this room from area 11, two **skeletons** operate the mounted heavy crossbows that shoot into the hallway to area 11. Argana (**mage**) is aware of the intruders and soon comes to use her spells against them. On the other hand, if the adventurers find the secret door in area 8, they barge into the study and surprise Argana. There are three more skeletons and one **ghoul** standing by the south wall. Argana commands them to attack with a single word.

If the battle turns against Argana, she uses *gaseous form* to retreat to area 10 and attempts to escape.

Treasure. There are three *spell scrolls* of *fireball* on the bookcase and an enormous collection of books and treatises on arcane subjects. Argana's research documents might be a valuable addition to a wizard's library. The thistle pie recipe can be found in a recipe book from a faraway kingdom.

The necromancer's spellbook contains several advanced necromancy spells and the ritual grimoire that turned Argana to evil-doing. The specific content of the necromancer's spellbook and the reach of this magic is beyond the scope of this resource and left to the DM's discretion.

HEART OF THE FOREST

Descend to the deepest part of the ruins and destroy its tainted core. Only then, will the heart be free.

Niahra, leader of the Vel'Nyden

WHERE TO USE

The heart of the forest is tainted and needs to be cleansed. Use this dungeon as ancient ruins deep in the forest. The corruption disturbs the wildlife and people around it. It messes with the lives of all living things in the forest. The townspeaker of an elven tribe offers a hefty bounty to a group of valiant adventurers to take care of this. This adventure is intended for a group of four to six heroes of 5th level.

BACKGROUND LORE

In the Material Plane, the world of fey and the creatures of the forest are considered to be a symbol of good. Fairies and sprites have kindred spirits. Druids and rangers form strong bonds with beasts and wild animals from this foreign land. However, the spectrum of good and evil is found everywhere. And the fey hold some of the darkest creatures. Monsters so vile and vicious that they match the power of some fiends and demons.

The elven tribe of Vel'Nyden struggles with one of these corrupted entities.

The heart of the forest, as they call it, is the soul and life of the forest where they live. It is located hundreds of feet underground, deep inside ancient elven ruins. However, an evil fey spirit has tainted the heart. It is corrupted now and it prevents them from entering their millennia-old observatory. Besides, its growing influence summoned beasts and monstrosities in the ruins. The forest elves claim this observatory was built by their ancestors thousands of years ago. And though they live at the top of the trees in beautiful hand-crafted wooden houses, the elves love science and the study of the universe and the stars. They have used the observatory for generations and their understanding of the world surpasses any others'.

The elves haven't been able to enter the observatory for weeks and it pains them. The situation worsens each day since the corruption of the heart of the forest reaches the elves' souls and those of animals and beasts. Some of the tribe members have gone mad or fallen ill and lay unconscious in bed. Healers can't find a cure for these afflictions. After a couple of elves died trying to defend the village from rabid wolves, Niahra understood they needed the help of outsiders.

Niahra is the Vel'Nyden's leader. She is a tall and strong elf with brown hair and yellow eyes. She wears an armor fashioned from bear pelts. Her face seems to be coming out of the bear's mouth on her cowl. She sends scouts to the outskirts of the forest and nearby human settlements to find a group of heroes who can help them. The elves do not have much gold to offer but their weapons and masterwork armors can be worn by great warriors or sold for a good price.

Niahra can guide the heroes to the entrance of the ruins, a 10-foot-diameter hole on the ground. The elves provide the heroes with plenty of ropes, spikes, and other handy climbing gear. However, Niahra explains to them the corruption becomes stronger the more the elves approach the heart of the forest; they cannot accompany the heroes inside. The elves stay and stand guard at the entrance from animals that have gone mad. Finally, the Niahra gives the adventurers an elven magic scroll. She explains they must find a way to place it on the surface of the heart of the forest. The scroll might heal and restore it to its former shape.



THE OBSERVATORY

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 9 correspond to the underground observatory where the Tree of Death is located.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The stone flooring of this place has seen better days. The heart of the forest's roots have grown all over the place, piercing walls and floors. Humidity has caused considerable erosion damage as well.

Doors. All doors are unlocked unless stated otherwise.

Light. There aren't any sources of light in this dungeon. The light of the day dies before reaching the end of the shaft that takes to area 1.

Smells and Sounds. The roots of the Tree of Death produce a smell of burnt charcoal. Now and then, the gears and wheels of the observatory's mechanism make a chirring sound that echoes all over.

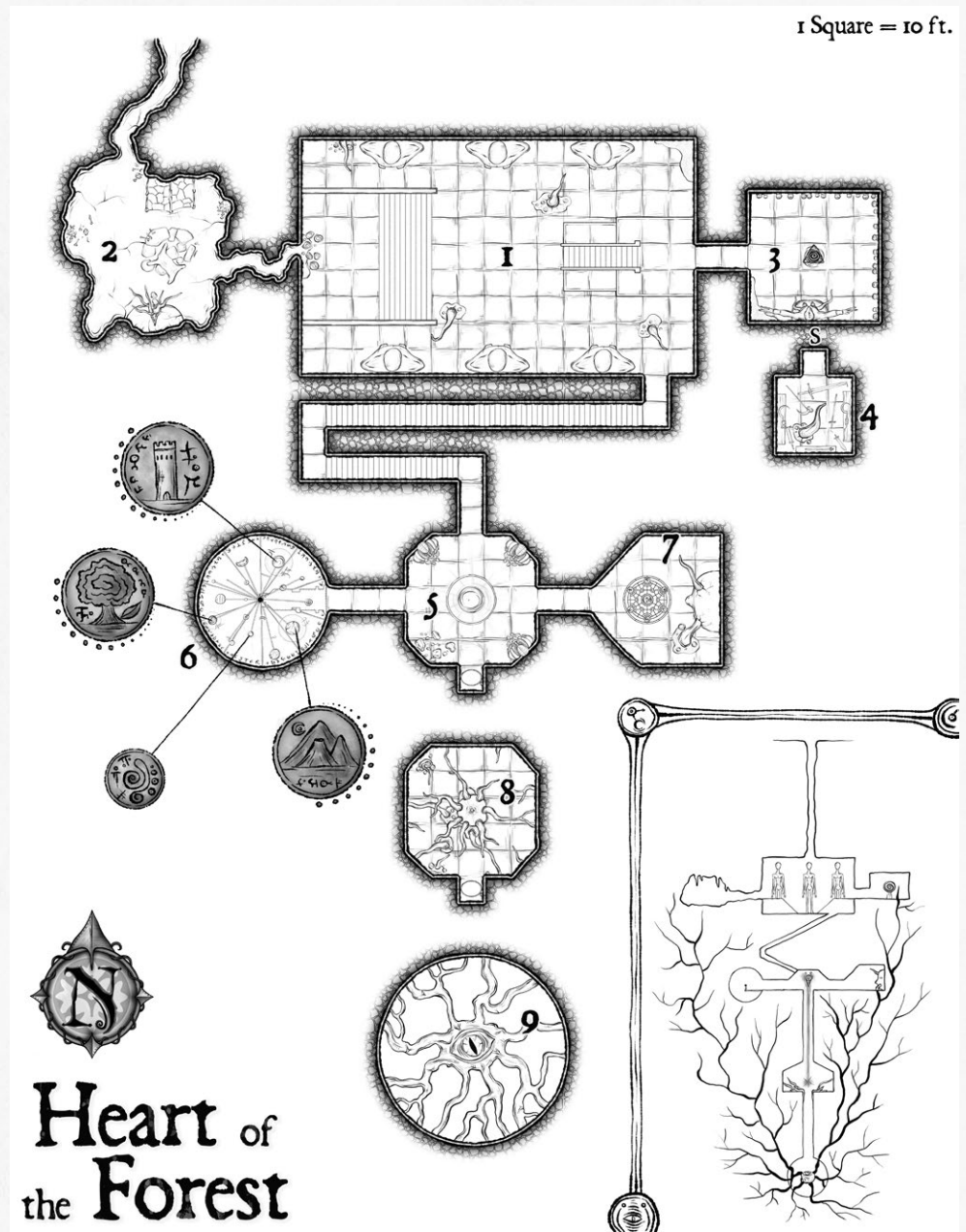
1. MAIN HALL

The adventurers must descend through the 10-foot-diameter hole for 100 feet. The elves' climbing gear makes the task a lot easier. The heroes arrive in a large rectangular chamber. The north and south walls of this place sustain enormous humanoid statues with slim bodies. Their ears and subtle details make them look like elves, though they wear no clothes and have no faces.

The heart of the forest has grown vile, thorny roots that grew upward and reached this area; tree-like spikes sprouted from ruptured sections of the floor. Two **gricks** and one **grell** lurk in this area. They attack any living creature that descends from the hole.

2. CAVERN

A small tribe of troglodytes lives here. Scores of animal pelts lie in the center of the room; piles of bones are scattered all around. A large badly-made tent with bones and animal pelts is placed by the north wall. The troglodytes dug the tunnel to the main hall (area 1). This place



Heart of the Forest

is unknown to the elves, who have not come here since the place is corrupted. Black roots from the heart of the forest sprouted from the south wall and form a sort of bush.

If the heroes barge into this area, eight **troglodytes** threaten them with their clubs and large claws. If the heroes do not stand back and return from where they came, the troglodytes attack. Ten more non-combatant troglodytes flee to the north tunnel if a battle starts. That tunnel leads to a network of underground tunnels. These caverns are beyond the scope of this module and are left to the DM's discretion.

3. WALL FUNGI

The statue placed on the south wall depicts an elf wearing long robes and tunics. An underwater current nearby flows beneath this area. The humidity on the soil has caused small fungi to grow around the north and east walls of this room. The elves consider this as a good omen. A passive Wisdom (Nature) check score of 14 reveals the fungi aren't edible. Any character that takes a bite of a mushroom must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for one hour. If the character fails the save by 5 or more, they also acquire one level of exhaustion.

The center of the room holds a crystal ball on a stone pedestal. The elves consult the crystal ball to read the future behavior of the winds and the skies. They use it to scry those who enter their home and forest. Only a few of the elves can use the ball's power. The crystal ball is attached to a stone dais though it can be removed with the right tools. Doing it by force breaks the ball.

Treasure. A character using thieves tools' can remove the crystal ball from its dais with a successful DC 16 Dexterity check. The elves do not consider the crystal ball suitable payment. Though they might be persuaded to let it go as long as the heroes forgo the weapons and elven items that were supposed to be the agreed-upon payment.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 15 or higher reveals there is a small lever on the wall behind the statue. Pulling the lever reveals a secret passage to area 4.

4. SECRET ARMORY

The elves store weapons and treasure here. They are, in general, a pacific people and their forest is rarely attacked. But the elves are well-prepared for these rare occasions. Some of the artifacts here are considered elven antiques and not even Niahra, their leader, feels comfortable using them.

Treasure. There are two masterwork longswords and two masterwork short swords. There is a *cloak of elvenkind* and two pairs of *boots of elvenkind*. An elven *+1 longsword*, and a *+1 longbow* are the rarest items. Niahra plans to give the magic weapons to the adventurers as payment for their help.

5. LIGHT OF ELVENKIND

This room used to have four identical statues on each corner but the one on the southwest corner of the room was destroyed by the black roots of the corrupted heart not so long ago. A floating crystal the size of a fist hovers in the

center of the room. The crystal projects a beam of purple light downward to yet another level 100 feet below (area 8). The light is a reflection of the heart of the forest's health. Its usual green and yellow colors are gone. The corruption has turned the light violet with pink hues. This light is usually harmless. But now it burns those who come close to it.

The light goes down through a hole on the floor that descends 100 feet. This vertical shaft leads to area 8. Any creature that desires to go down the shaft must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw the moment they start to climb down taking 20 (6d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The light ray is so hot and the space to go down so narrow that it is almost impossible to avoid getting burned.

6. OBSERVATORY

The stone flooring in the corridor stops and becomes a beautiful, 15-foot-long, sanded, ivory platform. The spherical chamber is in itself a mechanical wonder. From the center sphere, several ramifications of different lengths end in circular shapes. They all move or rotate in different directions, their colors represent the various Planes of Existence of our world. The elves use the observatory for scientific purposes and to answer questions about the universe. They do not have any interest in acquiring power or learning other people's secrets.

The Vel'Nyden elves don't know how this place came to be, in truth. They just believe their ancestors built it. They don't understand the mechanics of how the observatory works either, they just know how to consult it. A character that makes a successful DC 17 Intelligence check learns how to use the observatory. A character who uses the observatory can cast the spell *scrying* and ask anything about a place or someone. Unlike the limitations stated in the spell's description, using the observatory allows the caster to reach any plane of existence, instead of only the plane they are in.



7. MEDITATION CHAMBER

This chamber has a small wooden kiosk in the center. The elves use this place as a sweat lodge. They shut themselves inside the wooden structure and bathe themselves in vapor. A bonfire beneath the stone on the east wall heats it. It is a special kind of granite that turns hot easily. They then throw much water at it and the steam fills the whole place. One of the black roots of the heart of the forest pierced the floor of this room and grew through the heated stone.

8. ANTECHAMBER

This is a sacred place for the elves. It is a place for rituals and ceremonies to thank the heart of the forest for the blessings of life and nature. This is the closest most elves have ever been from the heart. Niahra is the only living elf who has gone down the last shaft. It descends a further 100 feet to the core of the forest, the heart. Several parts of the room are pierced and broken. The center of the room used to be a beautiful basin with clean water. The black roots of the heart destroyed it and created a horrible spikey bush.

Above the basin floats the counterpart of the crystal 100 feet above. The beam of purple light flows like a liquid in both directions. The crystal is suspended in mid-air and cannot be moved.

The corruption made a monster, a mix of thorns and roots. A **roper** was born. It attacks the heroes as soon as they descend.



9. HEART OF THE FOREST

The heart of the forest looks like a giant acorn with leaves and vines around it. It glows with a green soft light and its roots' bark is healthy and strong. The evil fey spirit corrupted and tainted the heart. A crimson eye that sees all those who come down grew on a side of the once healthy acorn. Its black corruption spread to all its roots and made them grow frenetically.

The heroes must come down the shaft and weaken the evil spirit so that they can place the elven magic scroll on it. The adventurers can stand on the roots of the heart and fight it from there. The **corrupted heart** attacks the minds of the heroes. Once the heart is weakened and reduce to 0 hit points, the elven scroll can do its magic and cleanse the core of the forest.

The heroes witness how the elven magic heals the core. The violet hot light becomes a soft green. The black roots reside and shorten. They become brown again and recover their healthy look. The atmosphere inside the ruins feels lighter and the heroes feel as if the whole forest sighed as if relieved.

DEVELOPMENT

Niahra and the elves in Vel'Nyden notice when the corruption is gone. The trees retake their former green and the animals of the forest find inner peace once more. When the heroes return, the elves have a traditional ceremony in their honor in the sweat lodge, near the healed heart of the forest. Niahra allows the heroes to keep the elven weaponry from the secret armory (area 4) in case they already found it. If not, she shows them the way to the room and gives them the items personally.



THROUGH THE ROYAL GARDENS

Encounter Level 5 (4,625 XP)

9 guards
3 knights
1 mage

THE ROYALS

What interest do the squabbles and conflicts of the royal court have to the peasantry and those who work the lands beyond the city walls?

To those who spend their short lives working long hours with no prospects of advancement, whoever sits on the throne is of little relevance. As long as they have enough food for their loved ones and a roof over their heads they will support the nobleman on the throne. The common man yearns for peace, food, work, and family.

The balance of power is about to shift though. The king was an old man who managed to lead the kingdom through several wars and conflicts. His long life is an achievement in and of itself. Something few kings can brag about.

But all blessings shall come to an end eventually. The king died four days ago from a cough the blood-letters could not stop. The lame physicians reported the monarch's death to the queen and the king's sons. The three of them are underage lads; still unfit for kingship. The king provided for this situation in his deathbed and signed a decree that gives total power to the kingdom's steward; to act as ruler until his firstborn comes of age at sixteen. The stewardship would last six years and it would mean a period of weakness for the kingdom.

The queen mother, however, plans otherwise. She is an ambitious woman who dreads loss of power and the privileges of her position. She ignores her late husband's royal decree and plans to have a crowning ceremony for herself. An old rivalry with the kingdom's steward prevents her from accepting that he would suddenly have a station above hers.

She has secluded herself with her younglings in the castle's keep. A regiment of guards and knights loyal to her protect the premises and the castle. The kingdom's steward abandoned the castle in fear of his life and moved to the barracks in the city.

The queen mother holds the king's heirs hostage until she can crown herself in a few days. Members of the royal court who live in the castle do not know what to do or who to support. Most of them have remained silent in hopes that the situation is resolved soon so that they can proclaim loyalty to whoever sits on the throne.

This plan is an affront to the current line of succession. Her stepping in and usurping the throne is likely to be seen as a hostile takeover that will earn her many enemies in and outside the court. Due to her age, it follows to reason that her rule wouldn't last long. Sooner or later, the king's firstborn would come to be king.

However, some people believe that the queen would abuse her position of power to name a different heir. Whether that accusation is founded or not, it has served as an excuse to act fast and relieve the queen mother and rescue the princes.

SETUP

The kingdom's steward is trying to keep the current events under a veil of secrecy. It is all for naught, however. Despite his discrete demeanor and handling of the recent events, the secret of the queen's intentions is the main object of gossip for the nobles, court members, and even the guards that escorted him out of the castle.

It won't be long before the peasantry and the general populace hear that the queen mother shall have herself crowned. Whether the people will agree with this or not is of no importance. The kingdom's steward intends to stop it. He summons a group of valiant warriors. Strong sellswords who have proved their

worth before. The heroes must have worked before for an important noble or even the crown.

When the kingdom's steward meets with the adventurers, he explains the situation and assigns them an important task. They must gain access to the castle, go through the royal gardens, defeat any opposition, enter the castle's keep, and arrest the queen. It is of utmost importance that the queen and the princes remain unharmed.

When the characters arrive at the royal gardens entrance, read:

Beyond the abstract stone monuments and the flower-shaped fountains with crystal-clear water lie the royal gardens that surround the castle's keep. An idyllic paradise of green and blue with fountains, water canals, wooden bridges, and apple trees. A multi-leveled pond surrounds a lily-flower sculpture just before the keep's entrance.

History Check

DC 14: *The queen mother's family is an ambitious house that has gained numerous privileges from her royal marriage.*

DC 16: *Many forget that the queen's father tried to usurp the throne twenty years ago but his efforts were thwarted by a valiant knight.*

Perception Check

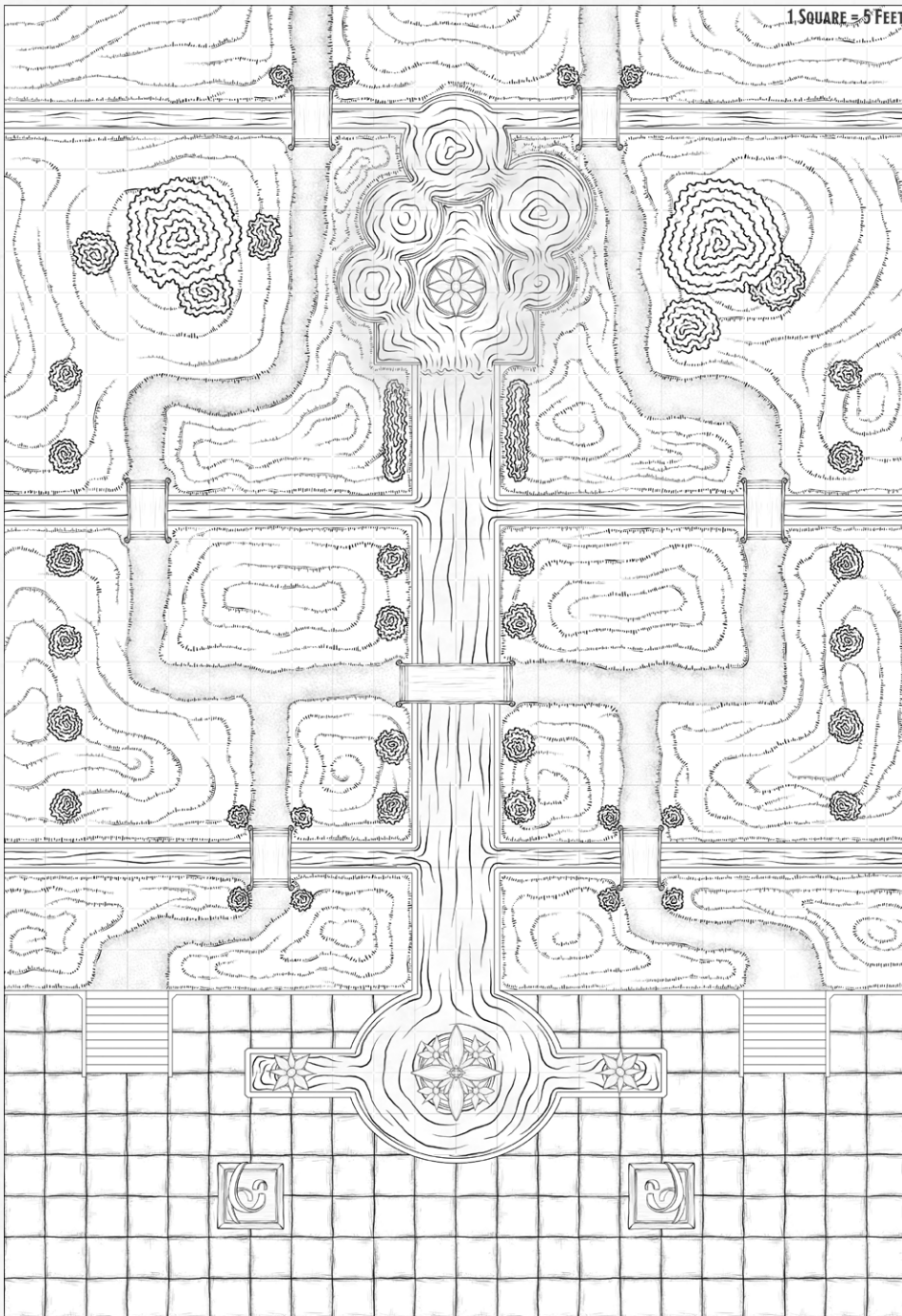
DC 14: *The court mage wields a crimson wand decorated with rubies and emeralds. It is said that this artifact was recovered in the last great war.*

DC 16: *The warriors in the gardens are not the only threat. Four guards aim their crossbows at the adventurers from the keep's lowest windows.*

TACTICS

The kingdom's steward has arranged for the guards stationed at the castle's gate to let the adventurer's through.

The adventurers must face the loyal knights and guards protecting the keep



in the royal gardens. And then the queen mother herself.

THE KNIGHTS

The three knights owe their status to the queen mother. They have been promised lordships for their service.

The knights attempt to hold the two middle bridges in the royal gardens. They use their Leadership ability to bolster the keep guards under their charge. They don't expect people trying to move through the canals but know that the court mage can handle that if it occurs.

THE GUARDS

There are five guards in the gardens and four more shooting their crossbows from the keep's windows (not shown in the map). All of them have been promised knighthoods should the queen mother get her way.

The guards obey the knights' orders obediently and help hold the middle bridges. The guards at the windows target spellcasters and clerics first.

THE MAGE

The court mage sided with the queen mother after she promised unlimited funding for his research and travels. The court mage targets the adventurers with a *fireball* spell when they first arrive at the royal gardens. He then casts *greater invisibility* on one of the knights. If the adventurers close on the knights and guards, the court mage tries to target as many of them as possible with a *cone of cold* spell. The mage wields a level 5 *magic missile wand* with 10 charges left.

THE QUEEN MOTHER

In the castle's keep, the defeated queen mother tries to avoid arrest at all costs. She even goes as far as to attempt suicide to save herself and her house from such humiliation.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Terrain. The stone flooring and grass fields do not hinder movement.

Smells and Sounds. The gardens feature many fruit trees, herbs, and flowers. The smell of greenery and decadent flowery fragrances are prevalent in the area. The sound of flowing water and shallow waterfalls has an oddly relaxing effect.

Water Canals. The average depth of the water canals and the ponds is 5 feet. Medium-sized characters can walk through the water but it is difficult terrain. Small-sized characters must swim.

Treasure. The reward for this adventure depends on the adventurer's actions. If they manage to arrest the queen mother and retrieve the princes unscathed, the kingdom's steward grants them a stipend of 1,200 gp each. In addition, the heroes are knighted and given the ability to buy land in the kingdom.

However, if the queen mother dies, the heroes receive the monetary reward but are otherwise disregarded after the fact.



THE LOST SHIP OF THE BLACK-TOOTH SEAFARERS



That bastard has it, it must be somewhere in there! A ship cannot disappear just like that.

Frailden Black-Tooth

HOW TO USE

This adventure is a good option when the heroes are in a maritime settlement or a city by the sea. An eccentric wizard stole a ship from a group of well-reputed seafarers and they want it back. The adventurers can help the seafarers for a hefty bounty, or perhaps they owe them a favor. This adventure is intended for a group of four to six players of 5th level.

BACKGROUND LORE

The vast Sea of a Thousand Winds is one of the most dangerous waters. Monsters and aquatic beasts lurk in the darkest parts of the sea and attack those who dare cross its. However, it's five times faster to cross the water than to go around it by land. Travelers and merchants who navigate through here often hire sellswords or mercenaries to protect their shipments.

The job of taking care of ship owners and other travelers is so popular that a group dedicated to that only purpose emerged. The Black-Tooth Seafarers, led by Frailden Black-Tooth. This group of sailors and fighters joined forces. Their goal is to monopolize bodyguard con-

tracts in the area. More and more people join their numbers every month. Now travelers don't have to hire outsiders and bring them with them to cross the sea protected, the Black-Tooth Seafarers are always there.

However, there is an individual who isn't very fond of the seafarers. His name is Ibarin, he is a wizard. He has inhabited the Sea of a Thousand Winds for decades. Since he was a child, Ibarin felt an unquenchable curiosity for the sea and all the creatures that live in it. He became obsessed with collecting shells and other rocks, he enjoyed dissecting animals and exploring their innards. Ibarin was always a smart boy, but his thirst for knowledge kept him buried in books and away from other people and society.

As an adult, Ibarin left the noise of the cities and towns and settled down on a small island in the middle of the Sea of a Thousand Winds. He considered himself very lucky when he stumbled upon an ancient structure built in one of the rocky formations of the small island. He found the place abandoned. He thought it probably belonged to an aquatic elven civilization of yore. There, he could continue his life-long studies of the sea in peace. He researched the wildlife and

learned about the deepest secrets of the sea. The presence of hostile creatures and other submarine beasts were welcome to him.

He has spent forty years of his life here. He has witnessed how transit through the sea increased. People used to shun the area because of its dangers but, little by little, the presence of mercenaries and hired muscle has diminished the feeling of threat. This eventually led to the creation of the seafarers. Their presence caused most of the sea life near the mage's home to leave. Plus, his kuo-toa goons, driven by their territorial nature, looked for trouble often. This drew unwanted attention to the island.

The aquatic creatures are loyal to him mostly out of fear. Nevertheless, this influence is enough to command them and to do his bidding. The seafarers are used to dealing with the usual threats of the sea, but Ibarin doesn't think like a fish. He and his goons managed to ambush one of the seafarers' ships and steal it. He plans to steal a ship every full moon. After stealing three or four, he thinks this might cause the seafarers to consider dismantling their organization.



Ibarin shrunk the stolen ship and made a scale model out of it to keep at home. He plans to steal a second ship in about two or three weeks. However, the wizard is unaware of the fact that the seafarers will retaliate. Frailden Black-Tooth, the seafarers' leader, was present in a nearby ship when their ship was stolen.

The attack surprised Frailden and his men. The monsters fought with unity and a shared purpose. That had never happened before. The aquatic beasts created a diversion to draw the leader's attention while the rest took over the other ship. A man commanded the attack. A skilled wizard shouted orders to the finned monsters and cast spells from under the water. The presence of this aquatic wizard startled the seafarers, who could not drive the monsters off and lost a ship. Frailden and his men never saw something like that in all their lives.

Frailden won't risk his men with the mage. The Black-Tooth Seafarers can handle the usual threats of the sea but a wizard casting spells underwater goes beyond their capabilities. Furthermore, he cannot spare any of his men; the amount of travelers requires all of them. This is why he offers 1,000 gold pieces to a group of adventures who can track the aquatic creatures back to their lair, find the mage, and recover their ship. He also provides a group of four skilled sailors with a small boat for eight to ten people.

If the heroes accept the job, they must travel the Sea of the Thousand Winds. Frailden and his men know these waters like the palm of their hands. They know every corner of it. This is why Frailden suspects of an island right in the center of the sea. He claims the largest concentration of monsters gathers there. And it is the only place they haven't explored in its entirety.

NPCs

FRAILDEN BLACK-TOOTH

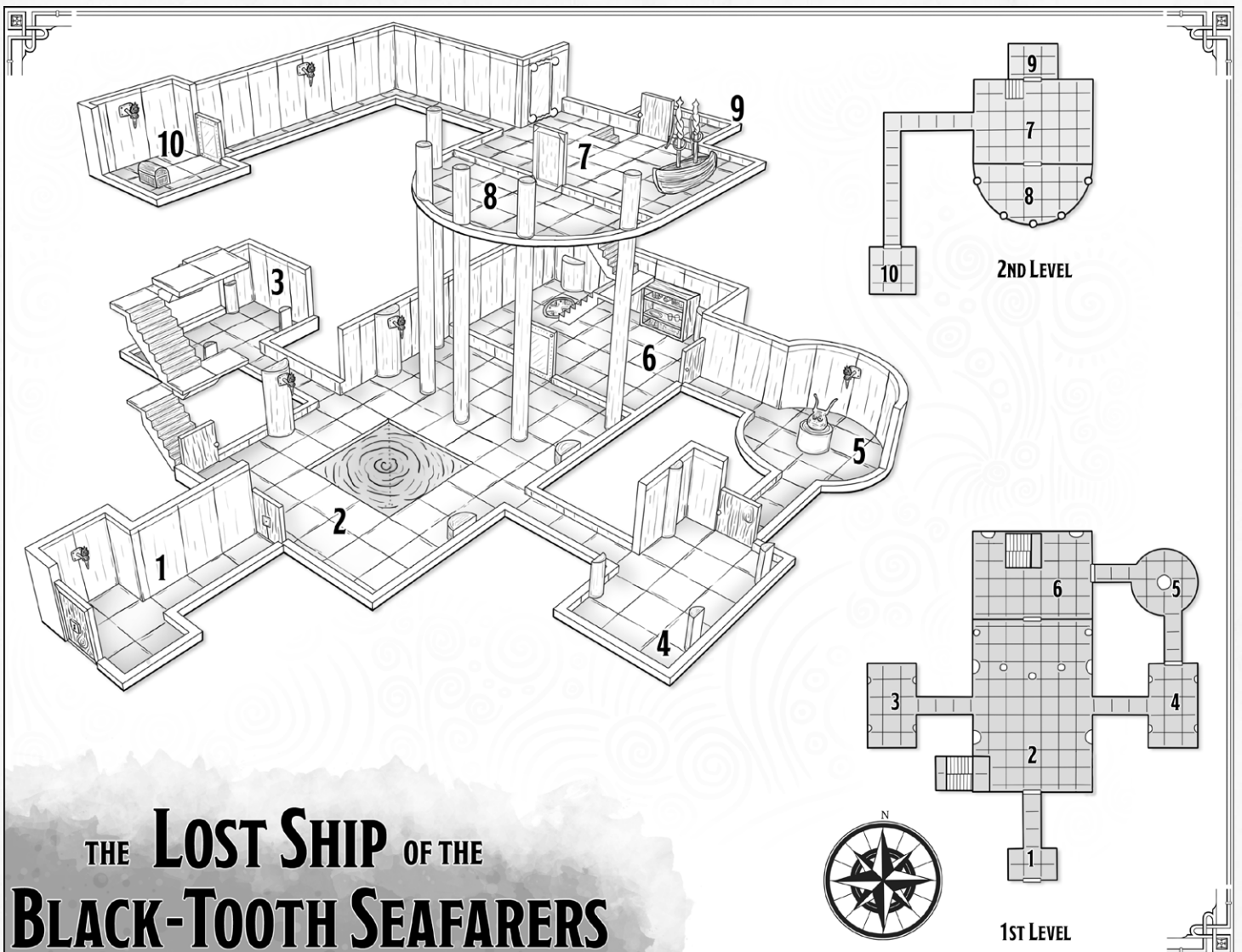
Chaotic neutral human (age 43)

The leader of the seafarers is a man of the sea. Frailden has spent all of his life on a boat, sailing and traveling the seas of the world. His years under the sun have turned his skin brown and with his diet based on fish and several instances of scurvy, his teeth are a mockery of a healthy set. One of his upper front teeth is black as coal, hence the nickname for himself and his seafarers.

Personality Trait. "Those who are stronger must protect the weak, and of course, charge for it."

Ideal. "The Sea of a Thousand Winds is my realm, and I must keep it safe."

Bond. "The seafarers are my life now, we must prevail."



THE LOST SHIP OF THE BLACK-TOOTH SEAFARERS

Flaw. “A good bottle of rum can make me forget my ideals.”

IBARIN'S HIDEOUT

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 10 correspond to the wizard's hideout.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. Ibarin's home is an ancient stone structure. Despite being in the middle of the sea, the humidity and salt of the breeze can't reach the inside of the building.

Doors. All the doors in the building are oak and locked unless stated otherwise. Ibarin has set up some magic doors to deal with intruders.

Light. There are magical sconces with *continual flame* spells on their torches. The flame dies in 1d6 minutes if the torch is removed from the sconce.

Smells and Sounds. The building smells of salt and seawater. The sound of the creatures swimming in the central pool in area 2 echoes all around.

1. ENTRANCE

When the heroes reach the island, they must walk a few hundred feet to find this door. It is encrusted on a side of a large rocky formation. Two **kuo-toa** and four **sahuagin** fight the heroes just outside this door. The main door is locked. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to force the door open. The door leads to a small lobby with a 15-foot-long corridor that ends with another wooden door.

2. CENTRAL POOL

This area is 35 feet wide and about 50 feet long. There is a square sea pool in its center. This pool connects to the open sea through an underwater tunnel at the bottom. The west door leads to a 30-foot-high balcony overlooking the area. By the north wall, five stone columns support a half-moon terrace. Under it, there is a door with a mirror on its front.

Two **sahuagin** and a **shark** swim in the pool when the heroes enter. The sahuagin attack the heroes and five **kuo-**

toa use their nets and shields to attempt to restrain the intruders and take away their weapons. From the balcony, two **sahuagin** throw spears to the heroes below. Ibarin (**mage**) overlooks everything from the terrace (area 8) 30 feet above. The wizard uses the spell *command* to make the adventurers walk into the pool. If that doesn't work, he casts *hold person* so the kuo-toa can them to the water instead.

If the heroes flee to either area 3 or 4, the sahuagin and the kuo-toa on the first floor chase them. The sahuagin on the balcony stand guard to attack them again if they come back. Ibarin stays on the terrace as long as he is safe. He retreats to area 7 if the heroes manage to reach him.

If the heroes defeat the sahuagin and the shark in the pool, another couple of sahuagin and a shark arrive from the tunnel 1d10 rounds later.

Mirror Door. Creatures within 15 feet of the door are affected by the mirror door's magic. Those affected must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma save or become charmed. Charmed creatures are immobile from looking at their reflection in complete awe. They see their reflection as a horrid version of themselves.

The reflections attack their real counterparts by harming themselves. The heroes can see the injuries in the mirror happening to their real bodies. Each turn, charmed creatures take 2d8 psychic damage. A charmed creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of its turn.

If an ally moves the target away from the mirror, the affected creatures have advantage on the next saving throw. If a creature's saving throw is successful, the creature is immune to the mirror door's magic for the next 24 hours. Ibarin and the aquatic creatures are immune to this magic.

Treasure. There is a silver key attached to one of the walls of the pool on a chain. This key opens the chest in area 10 without triggering the trap.

3. LABORATORY

Ibarin has a small laboratory here. There are several flasks with colorful liquids on a table. A small shelf displays other containers with strange organs and strange ingredients. A *detect magic* spell reveals that four of the colored potions are magical. If any of the heroes drink a potion, roll 1d4 on the next table to determine the result.

- 1 The creature grows fins and scales all over its body. It gains water breathing for the next 24 hours. However, it loses the ability to breathe air.
- 2 The creatures' eyes turn dark and become three times as large. The creature gains darkvision of 120 ft. However, it also suffers from sunlight sensitivity. The effects end until a *lesser restoration* spell or similar is cast on the target.
- 3 The creatures' hands and feet become webbed like a duck's. The creature gains swimming speed of 30 feet. However, it cannot wear regular shoes or gloves any longer; it is too painful. The effects end until a *lesser restoration* spell or similar is cast on the target.
- 4 The creatures' arms become tentacles. It cannot hold weapons but it can use its tentacles as a melee weapon and grapple its enemies with them. The effects end until a *lesser restoration* spell or similar is cast on the target.

A successful DC 16 Intelligence check allows a character to identify what things from the laboratory can be sold as treasure.

Treasure. Some of the crystal containers and chemical tools are rare and hard to find. The heroes can obtain 532 gold pieces by selling them.

4. KITCHENS

This area has a small cabinet with dried fruits and other long-term edibles. A small round table with two chairs leans to the south wall. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals there are some notes written in pieces of paper hidden under some plates on the table. One of the notes says “A key attached

to one of the walls of the pool... Ibarin, you're such a genius". It is evident the wizard wrote this himself; it is written in common. The other notes talk about his studies, the mutation potions in the laboratory, and his desire to know more about the kuo-toa's head.

5. DISSECTED HEAD

The head of a kuo-toa lies immobile on a circular stone pedestal in the center of this circular room. Ibarin has meddled with this head too much. In his obsession to learn more about the kuo-toa and their people, he casts spell after spell on the head to know more about it. Ibarin threw so much magic at it that the head has become a sort of artifact, the beginning of a sentient being. The moment the heroes enter, the kuo-toa head messes with their minds and torments them. The heroes must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become confused as if affected by the *confusion* spell.

6. LIBRARY

Ibarin keeps lots of books and ancient tomes about marine biology and the life of a sailor. There are three full shelves and a comfortable reading chair. A small rug lays at the feet of the stairs that take to area 7.

7. THE LOST SHIP

When the heroes come up the stairs, the first thing they see is their reflection in the elegant mirror on the west wall. It has a nice golden frame with copper and silver decorations. On the opposite side of the room, Ibarin placed the miniature

lost ship of the seafarers. Besides the fact that the ship is not its normal size, it looks intact. The south door's inner frame appears to be made of water. The water layer is translucent and it allows the heroes to see through to the other side. If the heroes cross the door through the layer of water to get to the other side, the door teleports them to the pool in area 2.

Ibarin avoids confrontation if the adventurers follow him here. He uses *misty step* to retreat to the terrace (area 8). He joins the sahuagin downstairs, if any, or waits for more to arrive.

Treasure. The large mirror on the wall can be sold for 350 gold pieces.

8. TERRACE

This half-moon terrace has an 18-foot-radius. If the heroes manage to climb up here from area 2, Ibarin retreats to area 7 with *misty step*. If the heroes cross the door and go through the layer of water to get to the other side, the door teleports them to the pool in area 2.

9. IBARIN'S CHAMBER

This room has a single bed, a wardrobe, and a small wooden chest. Ibarin only comes here to sleep. There aren't any signs of activity in here. However, a passive Perception score of 14 or higher reveals there is a small steel box under the bed. It contains some of Ibarin's most valued possessions.

Treasure. The box has a collection of shells that Ibarin has kept since he was a child, a letter from a woman, apparently

his mom, and a leather pouch with three beautiful pearls (135 gp each).

10. TREASURE ROOM

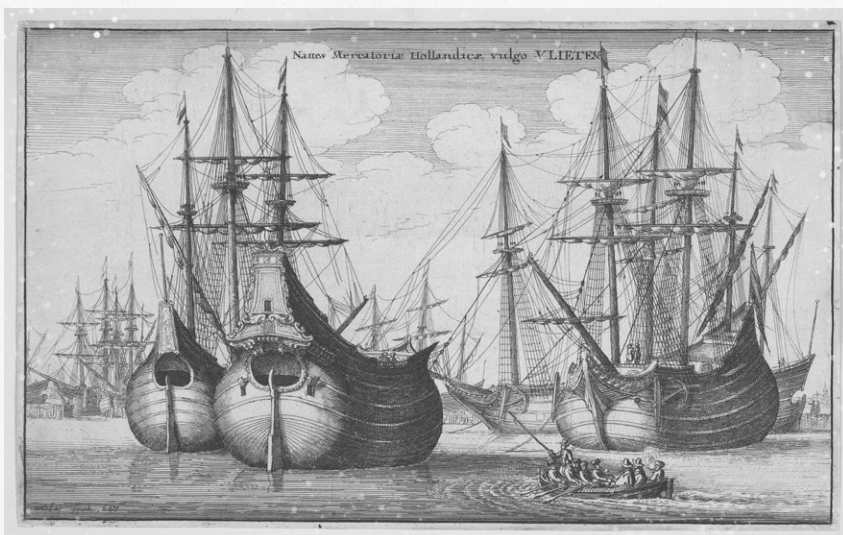
A mirror hangs from the door like the one in area 2. Heroes who were affected by the mirror door in area 2 aren't affected by this one. Otherwise, the mirror functions in the same way. Inside the room, there is a single wooden chest. If the heroes don't have the key to open it (retrieved from area 2), they might trigger the trap. A passive Perception score of 17 or higher reveals the chest has small holes on its lid. Casting light on the holes reveals a pointy sharp end.

Any creature that opens the chest by force or without the right key triggers the trap. Poison darts fly in a cone, affecting all creatures standing 10 feet from the chest. Affected creatures must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or take 14 (4d6) poison damage and become poisoned for one hour.

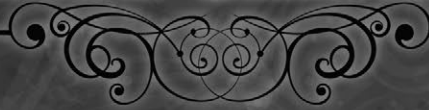
Treasure. The chest contains 243 gold pieces, 1,315 silver pieces, a beautiful fur cloak with pewter clasps (55gp), an antique granite circlet (50gp), and a *+1 dagger*.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the heroes beat Ibarin and his clever tricks, he surrenders and begs for mercy. He promises to take the ship back to the sea and return it to its original size. He tells the heroes they can keep everything they found if they let him live and escape. Ibarin keeps his word if the heroes accept, and the mage leaves the Sea of the Thousand Winds forever. The Black-Tooth Seafarers celebrate at night with a large bonfire at the coast if the heroes return with their ship. They pay them and tell them the seafarers are their allies whenever they need them. However, if the heroes kill Ibarin, they must find another way to bring the ship back. If they fail, Frailden and his men aren't happy at all when they see them return empty-handed. Frailden tells them he'll pay half what they agreed; the cost to rebuild a lost ship is on him after all.



TOMB OF THE CRIMSON CAPES



You must retrieve it; I know it's there, I could even go with you!

Pavlov

HOW TO USE

This adventure takes place in a desert. When the heroes arrive in town, they meet a young brave man who wants to hire them. He claims to be a descendant of some old folk heroes called the Crimson Capes. These heroes of yore angered the gods and eventually met their demise, but the ruins of their tomb hold great treasures, and a cherished family heirloom, or so the young man says. This adventure is intended for a group of four to six heroes of 3rd level.

BACKGROUND LORE

In Alambra, the town beside the desert, people lead peaceful lives, away from trouble. The townsfolk are wary and suspicious. They believe in local superstitions that seem odd to other settlements in the area. Most houses have a pickle nailed to their front door. People in general take a bunch of sand with their hands and blow it off before entering any building. And grown-ups and children say “*we are sand*”, while the reply always is “*sand we are*” when they greet each other.

If asked about any of these strange customs, Alambrians say they are so for several reasons. The promise of a long life, protection from evil spirits, signs of respect, etc. But one mysterious superstition is that of the term “*Crimson Capes*”. No one in town dares mention them, and even the words are shunned from their usual vocabulary. They’d rather say “cloak” or “red” than pronouncing the forbidden words. They are taboo.

The Crimson Capes were protectors of men and warriors of good two hundred years ago. They lived in Arenia, a large city deep in the desert; about two weeks by foot from Alambra. These crimson warriors were said to be invincible and fearsome. They dealt with desert monsters and criminals in town, no one could beat them. However, despite their heroic feats, a great portion of Arenia didn’t like them, the faithful.

Priests and clerics claimed the Crimson Capes obtained their power from evil. They said the color of their capes was the result of a blood ritual forbidden by the church. At first, it all sounded like a paranoid speech. It isn’t uncommon for the church to point at what they cannot comprehend and call it heresy. But the unquestionable and unmatched power of the Crimson Capes led to believe

that they were, indeed, dealing with unknown forces.

It was true, the Crimson Capes were tainted by years of blood magic indeed. Their strength came from pacts with demons from the Abyss. This caused unbalance in the universe; those mortals were never supposed to open the doors to hell and acquire that power. The gods smote the Crimson Capes with all their might and put an end to their blood magic. They protected and served their kin for about a decade.

A beautiful tomb became their resting place. The people of Arenia built it to honor their deaths and everything they did in life. After all, even if they did use forbidden magic, it was always used for Arenia’s welfare. In the end, it was too late when they realized their mistake. Not even the clerics and priests stopped for a second to think about how the gods would take the construction of the tomb. The stupid mortals were so interested in honoring the lives of other mortals that they forgot what the transgression was in the first place.



Indeed, the gods did not take it lightly that the Arenians built a shrine and gave a kings' resting place to a bunch of heretics. Gods seldom grant second chances. The city of Arenia was destroyed in its entirety. A brutal sandstorm with the strength of twenty blue dragons swept the land and erased the settlement from history. Only a hundred people survived the catastrophe. Five thousand people lost their lives because of the arrogance of a few men.

That storm was so strong, that it also took a toll on nearby towns like Alambra and many others. And so, Alambrians consider the Crimson Capes a taboo. They don't talk about them; they don't think of them. They pretend they never existed. Some even go to the extreme to say that Arenia didn't exist. They fear they might anger the gods just by naming them. They take it very seriously.

THE LOST HEIRLOOM

When the adventurers arrive at Alambra, they meet Pavlov in the inn or tavern they stay in. He approaches the heroes and buys them a drink. He does this as a welcoming gesture for the adventurers and because he wants to hire them. Pavlov tells them the story of the Crimson Capes, a former group of folk heroes. He explains that the subject is forbidden in town but that he has information that is more important than the stupid taboo.

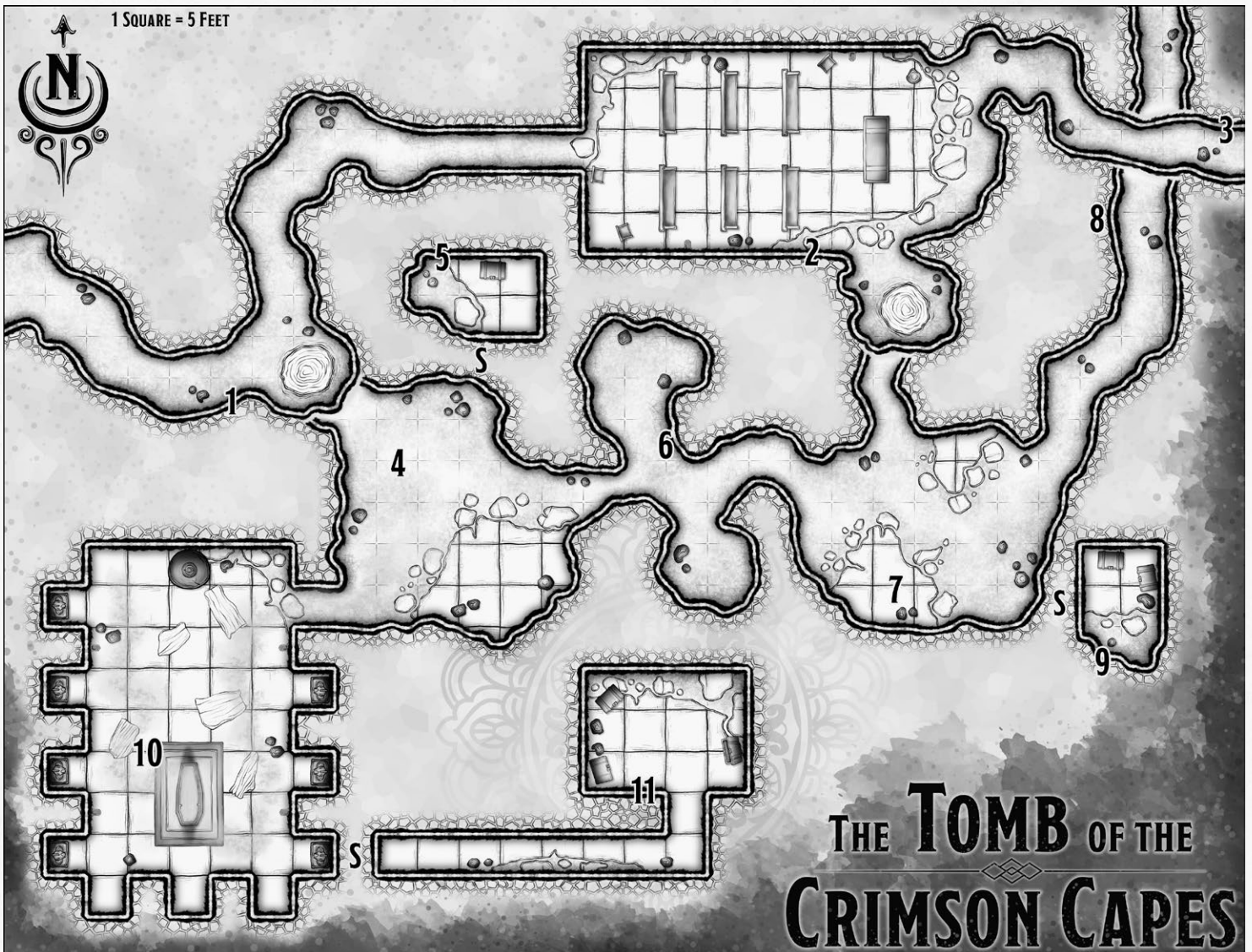
He tells the adventurers he is willing to share this information with them, as long as they accept to visit the ruins of the city of Arenia with him. He offers 250 gold pieces for the job, but he won't say anything else until they accept.

If the heroes agree, Pavlov pays them half upfront, and he buys another round

of drinks to tell them everything. He tells them the story of his great-great-great-grandfather Markov, who was a Crimson Cape. He was annihilated by the gods for messing with blood magic like the rest of his group. But his son Raznov was one of the few survivors of the attack on Arenia. Back then, aged twelve, the boy was adopted by a wealthy family in Alambra. Raznov never forgot who he was, and what happened to his father.

Five generations after, Pavlov was born. Raznov had many children but he chose one of them to be his successor. The real successor of the Crimson Capes, he said. One child per generation was entrusted with the secret of their blood, the only remaining descendants of the sinners.

The secret of their bloodline traveled generation through generation until Pavlov was trusted with it, back when



THE TOMB OF THE CRIMSON CAPES

he was fourteen. Knowing he was the successor of one of the Crimson Capes didn't shock him. He became interested in it. He researched all he could about predecessors. He traveled to other towns to read about the Crimson Capes and their deeds. He learned what he could from what he had in hand, which wasn't much. But even this was enough to learn that Markov kept a relic with him at all times, a kind of lucky charm. He decided that one day he would travel to the ruins of Arenia, look for the lost tomb of the Crimson Capes, and recover what was his by right.

NPCs

PAVLOV

Neutral good human (age 24)

This young man wears his brown hair in a pony-tail. His beard and mustache aren't fully developed and unshaven. He has a comely smile and a kind look. He looks strong and healthy. He has a sword sheathed on his back and he wears a chain shirt under his padded armor. (Use the stats of a **guard** for him).

Personality Trait. "One must always seek the truth."

Ideal. "One day I shall recover Markov's relic."

Bond. "I cannot ever leave Alambra until I accomplish my goal."

Flaw. "My excitement doesn't let me measure the danger of my quest."

THE TOMB

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 11 correspond to the tomb of the crimson capes.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. Constant seismic activity has taken its toll; The granite floor tiles show fissures, broken fragments lie on the floor all around. Sand has taken over the gaps.

Light. This place has been abandoned for years underground and sunlight can't reach it. Areas 2 and 10, however, still have magical sconces with *contin-*

ual flame spells to illuminate them. Removing the sconces from the wall causes the flames to die out in 1d6 minutes.

Smells and Sounds. The sound of sand falling accompanies the smell of dry rock and dirt.

1. ENTRANCE WEST TUNNEL

The heroes must travel 12 days in the desert on foot to reach the ruined city of Arenia. Hundreds of shattered buildings and blocks of stone form a graveyard that extends for hundreds of feet in each direction. Pavlov has an old map of the town with him, and he guides the heroes to the tomb.

Pavlov finds a hole that takes to an underground network of tunnels. He is certain this is the right way. The heroes eventually get here. The tunnel is roughly 7 feet wide. Before making a left turn, the tunnel features a large sinkhole. It is 20-feet-deep. The hole leads to area 4.

2. ANCIENT CHAPEL

Part of the beautiful tomb that the people of Arenia built for the Crimson Capes contained this chapel. Little remains of the magnificent architecture and decorations of this place. Six granite long benches still hold their position in front of the tabernacle. A whole section of the south wall is gone. There is a sinkhole on the floor similar to the one in area 1 that leads to area 7.

A group of **troglydtes** camps here. Six of them can fight the adventurers. The other six are non-combatant, and two of them are younglings. If the adventurers lower their weapons and return from where they came, the troglodytes ignore them and leave this place in 1d4 hours through the east tunnel (area 3). If a battle starts, all the non-combatant troglodytes flee. The other fight until two or more of them fall in battle, in which case, they attempt to escape as well.

3. EAST TUNNEL

If the heroes approach this tunnel, four **rust monsters** attack any of the heroes wearing metal armor or wielding metal weapons. This tunnel's destination is not shown on the map and it is left to the DM's discretion.

4. ANTECHAMBER

This area used to be a waiting room for prayers and ceremonies. Nothing remains of the furniture or walls here. The corruption that emanates from the Crimson Capes reaches this area. Four **skeletons** and two **zombies** attack any living creature that approaches.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals there is a door hidden by sand and dirt. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to force open the stuck door to area 5.



5. SECRET ROOM

This small room contains one stone chest. The west wall of the room is destroyed. It collapsed under tons of sand. A passive Investigation score of 16 or higher reveals more treasure buried under a layer of sand.

Treasure. There is a pile of 112 gold pieces and a durable silk hat (20gp) inside the chest. There are a pair of engraved fur gloves (20gp), and an ornate limestone jewelry box, of low quality (25gp) in the sand.

6. INTERSECTION

There are two small, roughly circular areas north and south of the tunnel. Three **skeletons** and three **zombies** ambush the heroes when they cross this intersection.

7. ANCIENT LIBRARY

There used to be several wooden shelves lining the now collapsed walls. Nothing but useless pieces of wood and decayed paper remain. There is one **ghost** in here. It looks like a priest; it wears ragged and tattered religious robes. When it sees the heroes, it chats a bit and tells them about the heroic deeds the Crimson Capes did in life. But the moment it sees Pavlov, it goes mad and says: "Why the hell is Markov alive? He was supposed to die like the rest of them! It's all their fault!" just before attacking.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals there is a door hidden by sand and dirt. A successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to force open the stuck door to area 9.

8. NORTH TUNNEL

There are small puddles of green goo near a huge hole in this tunnel. A passive Wisdom (Nature) score of 14 or higher reveals those are signs of purple worm activity. This tunnel's destination is not shown on the map and it is left to the DM's discretion.

9. FAKE VAULT

This small room was meant for would-be grave robbers. It contains a small treasure so the thieves would stay away from the real vault and leave.

Treasure. The stone chests contain an ornate belt with a bronze buckle (70gp), an alabaster framed oil painting of a warrior with a crimson cloak (165gp), a rough pewter amulet, inlaid with tin (60gp), and a collection of fancy silverware (220 gp).

10. CRIMSON CAPES TOMB

This is the resting place of the Crimson Capes. This chamber is 40 feet long. There are four small alcoves on the west wall and three more on the east wall. Each of them features a stone bust. The faces of seven men are carved on their surfaces. The names of each Crimson Cape can be read just below the bust, carved in beautiful calligraphy. A sarcophagus dominates the center of the room. 'Markus Stoikov' is engraved on its side. Five crimson cloaks lie immobile on the floor.

When the heroes enter this room, the atmosphere turns cold. The shadows of the busts dance before the adventurers. In slow fashion, three **specters** and two **shadows** materialize. The crimson cloaks on the floor float and adorn their shadowy backs. The sarcophagus opens and the former leader of the Crimson Capes shows itself. Markus (**mummy**) points at the adventurers with a rotten hand and yells. Pavlov's old relative



doesn't remember anything about his life. The undead attack all living creatures until they are slain.

The sarcophagus contains the relic which Markus kept with him all his life. It is a large piece of amber with a scorpion inside. The former leader of the Crimson Capes thought this rock brought him fortune and good luck. And even if it was a simple superstition, the people of Arenia buried him with it.

Secret Door. A passive Perception score of 16 or higher reveals the floor of the southeast alcove shows slide marks that match the stone bust's base. Sliding the bust sideways reveals a secret passage to area 11.

11. SECRET VAULT

The vault is at the end of a 40-foot-long corridor. The place has suffered the consequences of the many earthquakes but the stone chests and the treasure remain intact.

Treasure. The following items are found in the chests. A durable gold jewelry box, inlaid with beautiful platinum. It glows with soft violet light (900gp), a pair of ornamental wool gloves (30gp), a gilded jug of venerable dragonborn beer (30gp), an engraved alabaster tiara (110gp), an old brass pendant, inlaid with mahogany wood (300gp).

DEVELOPMENT

Pavlov pays the heroes the other half of the agreed-upon payment when they make it out of Arenia alive and with the relic with them. He tells them he really doesn't need any of the treasure. Since his old relative Raznov was adopted, they have never struggled for gold. He confesses he didn't know it would be that dangerous and insists on them keeping the treasures.

If Pavlov doesn't make it out of the ruins alive, the sad event marks the end of a bloodline. Pavlov doesn't have any children or siblings. He was the last of the crimson bloodline. And he was the last to know who they really were, who he really was.

THE JADED KING

Yes, I know it sounds impossible. But the corpses left the cemetery and walked into that old cave. It's the truth!

Worried Preacher

HOW TO ADD

In this adventure, the heroes try to solve the mystery of animated human remains that left their burial places and approached a known cave. They were summoned by a jaded undead king who was dormant for hundreds of years. This plotline is easily added to any small town or settlement that the adventurers visit. The adventure is set a week before the adventurers' arrival. This adventure is written for level 4 adventuring parties.

BACKGROUND LORE

Confusion and fear are commonplace these days at Harlington and other nearby settlements. At first, people thought it was a kind of sick joke when some townsfolk reported that corpses crawled out from their graves in the local cemetery. But soon enough, it became clear that it was true. Every few days, a corpse or a skeleton emerged from their tomb and began a journey north, toward the rocky hills. Two men tried to stop one such skeleton in one occasion. The skeleton ignored them at first, contented with continuing its pilgrimage. But then the skeleton turned back and attacked

one of the men. He was mauled to death. The other man went back to town to tell the grizzly tale. The undead appear to be uninterested in the town or its settlers unless bothered. They walk north for a few hours and then vanish under an archway that leads to a shunned tomb on the hills.

The people in the region know the location of the tomb but avoid it like the plague. It is said by matrons and elders that only evil spirits can be found therein. There is even a regional fable about a boy who disregarded his parents' advice and went exploring into the tomb. When he came back, his family would not take him in any longer. He had returned a heretic. Marked and shunned for life for disobeying the elders and the community.

No one in the area knows the origin of these superstitions but scholars believe that the fear of the jaded king's tomb dates back a few hundred years. There must have been a tragic incident then that sprung the fear that lasts to the present.

The ancient spirit of an undead king has awakened in its tomb after hundreds of years. The old king is in a state of confusion. It tries to assess its existence and how much time it has passed since

its demise. This process may still take a few months to complete but its necrotic influence has reanimated some of its followers from the tomb and the bodily remains of the nearby cemetery.

In time, the old king shall amass a large number of undead followers and may choose to turn its attention to any of the settlements close to the rocky hills.



TOMB OF THE JADED KING

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 12 correspond to the collapsed throne room complex map. The dungeon's entrance is located a few hours from town. A half-buried stone archway on the hillside is marked with recent tracks and the tattered fabric remains of the escaped undead.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The floor of the dungeon is fashioned from uncannily large jade blocks that have seen better days. The jade is cracked and eroded. A well-informed explorer may notice (DC 14 Intelligence) that the erosion suggests this place is at least 500 years old.

Tunnels. Constant seismic activity in the area has caused some areas to collapse and create new natural tunnels. The tunnels are 3 feet tall and feature several stalactites that impede movement. The tunnels are difficult terrain.

Doors. The stone doors feature bas-reliefs that portray a knightly order of warriors that protect a king with their lives. In the images, the knights fight dragons and other legendary creatures. Some doors are marked with a locked icon (see map). A dexterous individual may find a way to bypass the locking mechanism (DC 16 Thieves' Tools).

Light. A large portion of the underground complex is in complete darkness. Areas 1, 2, and 12 are furnished with magical sconces with torches on the walls. They have *continual flame* spells on them. Removing any torch dispels the magic on the sconce and causes the flame to die in 1d6 minutes.

Smells and Sounds. The reek of death and decay from area 12 is present throughout the tomb. The stench is stronger in area 12. It may even impair week adventurers (see area 12).

1. DUNGEON ENTRANCE

The entrance hallway is 100 feet long and slightly slanted down into the depths of the hill. It leads to a small antechamber with two lighted torches on sconces and a set of double doors. The stone doors are engraved with the image of two armored knights fighting a draconic figure to defend a king on a high tower.

2. CEREMONIAL CHAMBER

This long room contains a stone pedestal near the north wall and a foot-tall stone circle in its center. An old book bound in leather and several crystal vial containers rest on the pedestal. The stone circle is decorated with arcane runes and religious scripture from an old religion. A well-informed student of ecclesiastical history (DC 17 Religion) may remember that this religion is the predecessor of modern-day sun worshippers. This may imply that this construction is at least 500 years old. The northeast section of the chamber's wall is collapsed. Mounds of broken rocks and dust lead into a shallow cavern (area 8).

There are three **ghouls** in the room when the adventurers arrive. They kneel and pray before the altar but interrupt their prayers to attack the adventurers.

Treasure. The spellbook on the stone pedestal contains ten random wizard spells of up to level 5. One of the vials contains a *potion of giant strength*.

3. TRAPPED HALLWAY

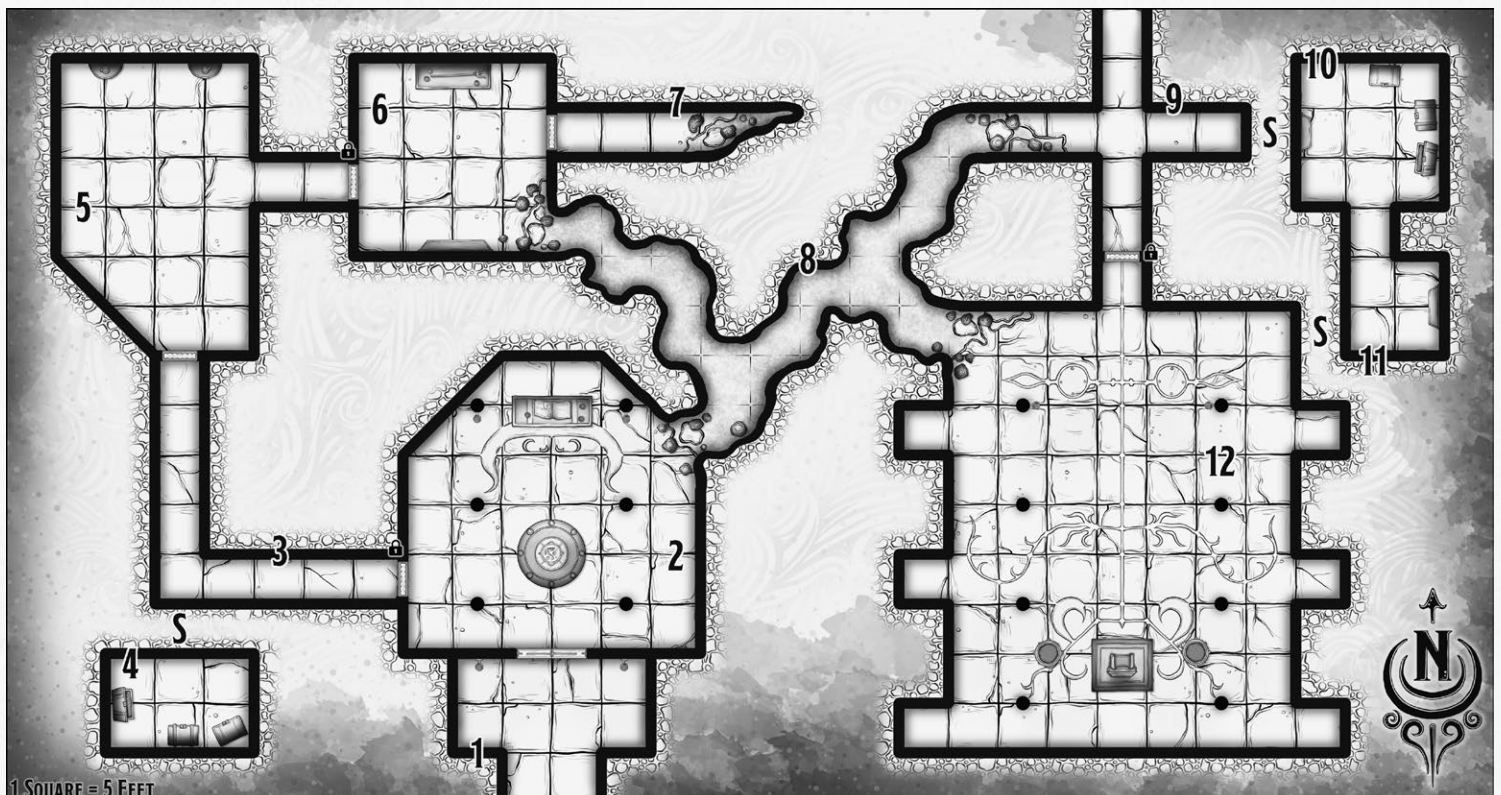
This long corridor appears to be unremarkable but there are a trap and a secret passage hidden by the southwest corner.

Erupting Spikes Trap. Stepping on the trigger plate by the corner of this hallway causes seven sharp spikes to erupt from the floor at high velocity. Any creature on the corner must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 12 (4d6) piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Secret Door. An observant creature (passive Perception 15) might notice that a section of the wall is made from a lighter material. The fake wall is mounted on cleverly hidden hinges that allow it to open outward. The secret passage leads to area 4.

4. A VAULT FOR FOOLS

This small dark chamber contains a small hoard of treasure. This is a fake vault meant to distract any would-be robbers and abandon the place after an



apparently worthwhile find. The spikes' trap outside is meant to give importance and seriousness to this room.

Treasure. The three stone chests contain the following treasure: 456 gp, 984 sp, two sets of chainmail armor, one set of *+1 studded leather* armor, and two *potions of healing*.

5. DOUBLE THE COST

There are two stone shelves on the north side of this irregularly shaped chamber. Each of the pedestals is a complex weight mechanism that reacts to the weight of the two crystal sipping cups on them. The sipping cups have serrated bottoms that match a depression on each of the shelves. The cups contain a brownish poisonous liquid (see below). This device controls and opens the stone door to area 6. Placing the two empty sipping cups back on the shelves causes the door to open. The only way to remove the poison from the cups is to suck it out.

Poisoned Cups Trap. Drinking from any of the sipping cups may prove lethal. The creature must make a successful DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 21(6d6) poison damage.

6. THE FORGOTTEN TRIDENT

This chamber contains a stone table with several objects on it, three **ghouls**, and one **ghast**. The undead abominations attack as soon as intruders enter this room from any other area. The southeast corner of the room has collapsed. The resulting passage connects to the shallow tunnels of area 8.

Treasure. The gilded trident on the dais is magical. It is a *+1 trident* with a special property. When it is used to impale a creature, it produces the sound of a dolphin.

7. INTERRUPTED HALLWAY

The 20-foot-long hallway ends abruptly as the ceiling caved in and closed off any chance at passage. This hallway originally reached area 9. A team of determined laborers may dig through the dirt and reopen the passage in 2d6 days with the appropriate tools.

8. A TIME FOR CRAWLING

The cave-ins in the area created this shallow tunnel network that connects four different areas of this dungeon. The shallow tunnels are home to an enormous spider colony. There are three **swarms of spiders** in the tunnels. They attack any living creatures that attempt to pass through but do not follow their prey outside of the tunnel in any direction.

9. THRONE ROOM ACCESS

The south end of this intersection features a stone door with an engraved landscape. It depicts a knightly order of 14 warriors that decided to give their lives to protect the royal family from certain death at the hands of a demon. A *detect magic* spell reveals a strong aura of necromancy on the door (see below).

The north end of the hallway continues for 50 feet and connects to a different part of the ancient underground complex. That area north of the throne room is beyond the scope of this module and left to the DM's discretion.

Soul Stealing Trap. Touching the stone surface of the throne room door causes a massive amount of necrotic energy to erupt from it and attempt to destroy the creature. The creature is subject to a *finger of death* spell (Con save DC 15). The door is safe to handle after the spell is cast but the trap resets after 24 hours.

Secret Door. An observant creature (passive Perception 15) might notice that the bottom wall of the east dead-end is made from a lighter material. The fake wall is mounted on cleverly hidden hinges that allow it to open outward. The secret passage leads to area 10.

10. KING'S VAULT

The room contains three stone chests and a stone shelf. The treasure is not unprotected, however. Four **shadows** cling to the dark ceiling and drop on the unwanted visitors as soon as they go through the treasure.

Treasure. The three stone chests and shelf contain the following treasure: 2500 gp, 4650 sp, 1d8 diamonds (300 gp each), and three gilded tiaras, set with rubies (250 gp each).

11. SAFE ACCESS

The area can be used to bypass the magical door to area 12. There is a lever on the west wall that causes the secret door to open. This passage can only be opened from this side of the door.

12. THE JADE THRONE

A strange congregation of creatures gathers in the throne room when the adventurers arrive. The jaded king (**mummy**) sits on the throne with both arms in the air. Around it, the animated dead remains from the town's cemetery sit as if in prayer. They are in different states of decomposition. There are four **zombies** (each with 15 HP) and seven **skeletons** (each with 4 HP). Two **ghouls** stand by the king's side. They wear tattered clothing with the symbol of the knightly order depicted on the stone doors.

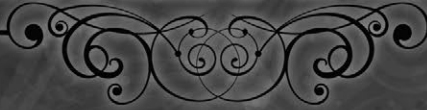
The jaded king orders its horde of undead to attack the intruders and fights until slain. Destroying the king causes the undead creatures to stop emerging from the cemetery. The remains from the cemetery can be handed safely after the undead have been destroyed.

The Stench. Any creature in the area must make a successful DC 14 Constitution saving throw to avoid becoming poisoned for 1d4 hours. On a success, the creature is immune to this effect for 24 hours. The dungeon is in silence; the undead creatures produce no sound.

Secret Door. An observant creature (passive Perception 15) might notice that a section of the northeast corner of the room is made from a lighter material. The fake wall is mounted on cleverly hidden hinges that open outward but there is no way to open this passage from area 12. The secret passage leads to area 11.

Treasure. There are eight jade stones embedded on the throne back. Each of the stones is engraved with a miniature landscape of exquisite craftsmanship. Prying them out without damaging them requires skill and precision (DC 16 Dexterity). Each successfully removed jade stone is worth 400 gp when sold to a collector of these kinds of trinkets. A failed attempt renders the stones worthless.

A DRACONIC DILEMMA



They aren't evil deep inside. What are good and evil anyways? It's all just a spectrum.

Moise Kein

HOW TO USE

This adventure is a great quest to test the heroes' moral compass. The adventurers are asked to help a village get rid of some kobold pests. The kobolds messed with the farmers only because they have a larger problem on their hands. Will the heroes intervene and try to help all parties? Or will they murder everything in their path as long as it earns them some gold? This is a 2nd level adventure.

BACKGROUND LORE



The village of Bloss is a farming settlement with a population of about three hundred people. For years, this village has provided neighboring towns and larger cities with great produce. Its people are hard-working and perseverant. Working the land gives the people of Bloss a meaning, and they do it gladly.

Life is calm and quiet in Bloss for the most part. The farming settlement is surrounded by larger towns and communities; problems usually stay there. However, wild beasts and monsters sometimes emerge from the forest to the south or the mountain path north. Even though these situations never pose a real threat, the village of Bloss doesn't have local heroes so they rely on outsiders.

The last time they hired a group of adventurers, it was to deal with a couple of owlbears who attacked farmers. This situation was sorted out when one of the heroes noticed some owlbear cub tracks. The tracks led to a barn where two young girls had kept the little owlbear. They had adopted it as a pet because they thought it was cute. When the cub was returned to its parents, the owlbears left the farmers alone.

THE CURRENT PROBLEM

This time, the village of Bloss is having trouble with a community of kobolds. The sneaky little lizards come at night and steal the villagers' food. At first, they only targeted dried fruits, bread, and jerries. But for the last two weeks, small calves, pigs, and hens have disappeared too. The villagers realized they needed help from outsiders after all this happened. The townspeaker is certain that killing the kobolds is the only way to get rid of them for good. They offer a bounty of 250 gold pieces.

However, Moise Kein thinks otherwise. He believes kobolds are interesting creatures. And that they aren't evil deep inside. He is aware of the situation and plans to join the hired adventurers. When the adventurers arrive in Bloss, they may stay in the Wiped Cream Inn. Moise is there and buys them a round of ale.

Moise believes this situation can be solved without harm like the last time the village hired outsiders. He tells the heroes about the time that two little girls kidnapped an owlbear cub. When the cub was reunited with its parents, the owlbears stopped harassing the farmers and returned to the woods. He is sure something must have startled a community of kobolds in the mountains, forcing them to look for food here.

Moise (**guard**) tells the adventurers he can fend for himself and that he wishes to go find the kobolds too. He claims he speaks the kobold tongue, Draconic, and can help to translate as well. He wants 15 gold pieces from their pay and a portion of any treasure they find. If the heroes refuse his help and company, he follows them in secret anyway.

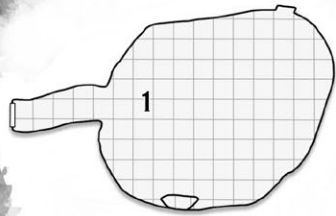
DRACONIC DILEMMA

Moise is somewhat right. The kobolds are indeed forced to steal from the village. A lamia came out from the depths of the caverns and found its way to the kobolds. The poor reptiles don't have a choice but to comply or be killed and eaten. However, it is not on Moise's hands to handle this situation. The heroes must decide if they accept his help and advice or deal with the kobolds themselves.

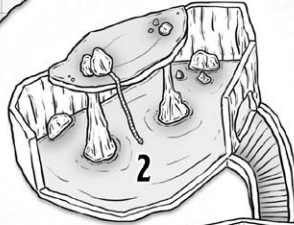


A DRACONIC DILEMMA

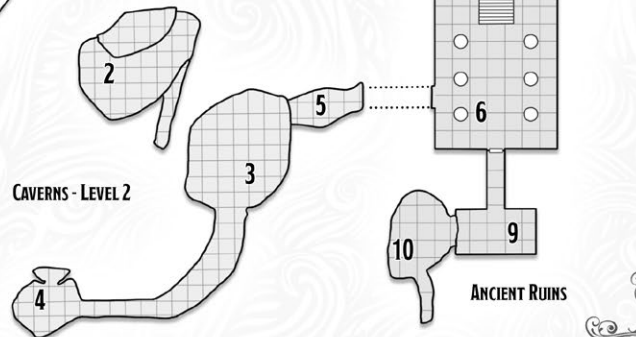
DEADLIER THAN KOBOLDS



CAVERNS - LEVEL 1



1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



CAVERNS - LEVEL 2

ANCIENT RUINS

NPCs

MOISE KEIN

Lawful neutral human (age 31)

Moise is a tall and corpulent man. His size grants him sufficient strength to lift a sword and fight, though he is not very apt. He has curly short hair and dark skin. His green eyes express wisdom and kindness. He studied the Draconic language when he was young; his mom was an intelligent scholar who taught him. Moise loves to think outside of the box. He always believes problems can be solved in ways that benefit all involved.

Personality Trait. “Compromises must be done to reach total tolerance.”

Ideal. “I won’t leave this world with my conscience dirty.”

Bond. “All conscious creatures deserve a fair trial and treatment.”

Flaw. “My point of view tends to be subjective regardless of the proof shown.”

CAVERNS

The following descriptions of areas 1 through 10 correspond to the kobold’s caves and some ancient ruins.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Terrain. The kobold’s cave is dark and humid. The forgotten throne room features stone flooring and walls.

Doors. There are two oak doors in the ruins. Each has a beautiful stone, arched frame made of square stone blocks. The door next to the throne has an illusion spell on it (see area 7).

Ropes. The kobolds set ropes to climb to area 3, area 5, and the platform in area 2. The ropes are held by heavy

rocks placed on them. The ropes can hold small creatures with no trouble. However, if a medium creature uses any of the ropes to climb up, there is a 50% probability that it breaks. Creatures that fall take 1d6 bludgeoning damage. If the heroes are hostile to the kobolds, the reptiles attempt to cut the ropes while they climb, if possible.

Light. Both caverns and ruins are completely dark. There aren’t any light sources here.

Smells and Sounds. The caverns smell of rotten meat and dead animals. Kobolds aren’t clean and their urine has a strong ammonia stench. The ruins have a smell of dust and stone. **Area 10** reeks of death due to all the animal carcasses that the lamia has left.

1. GETTING TO KNOW KOBOLDS

The mountain path is a couple of hours away from town. The heroes need to step off the path to find the kobold hideout. It is not difficult to see their three-pronged footprints on the ground and track them to the cave. The kobolds placed a piece of wood to cover the entrance of the cave. A 20-foot-long corridor leads to a large area. The dark cavern has several boulders scattered all around. To the south, there is a 15-foot-tall natural rock balcony. To the northeast of this area, a set of stairs leads up to area 2. A hole on the east wall, about 12 feet above the ground, leads to area 5.

There are two **kobolds** on the balcony. They throw rocks with their slings the moment they see the heroes. Four more **kobolds** engage in melee combat with their daggers, two of them hide behind large boulders. If two or more kobolds are reduced to 0 hit points, the rest retreat to area 3. These kobolds do not speak Common. They are afraid and driven by the heat of battle; it is not possible to reason with them.

If Moise accompanies the heroes, he begs them and tries to convince them to not harm the little reptiles. He agrees to use non-lethal force to knock them out of combat if necessary. Moise trusts his gut and believes the kobold chieftain might be willing to parley. If the heroes refuse to listen to Moise or kill a kobold in his presence, he turns against them. He (**guard**) cannot allow them to kill innocent sentient creatures like this.

If the heroes refused Moise help from the beginning, he steps in the third round of combat. Regardless of what the heroes did before he arrived, he attempts to convince them to not harm the kobolds furthermore. If he fails, he takes the kobold's side. The kobolds fight along Moise without question after he yells in Draconic that he'd die for them.

2. KOBOLD TREASURY

This area features two large stalagmites. Hard soil has solidified on them, creating a sort of platform 15 feet above the ground. The kobolds use this place as storage. A large quantity of food rests on

the platform. Dried fruits, jerkies, and other spoiled goods. Two **kobolds** are on the platform with their slings ready.

Moise notices the leader of the kobolds is not here and presses the heroes to leave and look for it. He stands between the heroes and the kobolds if they mean to harm them. The kobolds flee if an intimidating character scares them (DC 13 Intimidation). Otherwise, they throw rocks but flee if one of them is reduced to 0 hit points.

Treasure. The dried food here feeds a group of five medium creatures for a week. A box of expensive spices can be sold for 35 gp.

3. THE KOBOLD TRUTH

The kobolds gather in this area if the heroes force them to retreat. Thrak, the **kobold chieftain**, wears feathers and strings of bones attached to necklaces and bracelets. A group of six **kobolds** stands in front of him to protect him. Eight non-combatant kobolds eavesdrop from the edge of the corridor to the south.

Thrak can speak the common tongue and negotiate with the heroes if Moise isn't present. However, speaking in Draconic increases the chances of a diplomatic solution. Moise or a character with good diplomacy skills (DC 11 Persuasion) can explain to the kobolds that they are there to talk and understand why they are stealing from the village now. If the negotiation is had in Draconic this check is made with advantage.

If the kobolds are convinced, Thrak tells the heroes about the monster from the caves in area 10. It explains they discovered the ancient ruins not long ago. But their tunnel not only led to the ancient ruins, but it also connected their cave with a different cave system of unknown underground tunnels. This is how the lamia found their hideout. Now it asks for food and tribute, otherwise, it descends from its lair and attacks the kobolds instead.

The kobolds agree to stop harassing the village and its people as long as the heroes get rid of the monster. The heroes can convince Thrak to spare some of his soldiers for the cause if they're persua-

sive enough (DC 13 Persuasion). If they do, four **kobolds** follow the heroes in their quest to kill the monster.

If the heroes ask the kobolds about the monster, they say the following:

- It is a four-legged beast with huge paws.
- It has the torso of a woman.
- It has magical abilities that manipulate the mind.

4. KOBOLD REFUGE

The floor is littered with furs and pelts. Most of the kobolds sleep here. This is the last stand for the non-combatant

KOBOLD CHIEFTAIN

Small humanoid, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (splint)

HP 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the kobold has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Pack Tactics. The kobold has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the kobold's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Spellcasting. The kobold is a 4th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (save DC 12, +4 with spell attacks). The kobold has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft*, *produce flame*, *shillelagh*

1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds*, *fog cloud*, *healing word*

2nd level (3 slots): *flaming sphere*, *heat metal*

Actions

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 -1) bludgeoning damage.

kobolds if they are driven to retreat. They climb down the balcony and exit the cave if necessary.

A hole on the north wall leads to the small balcony that overlooks area 1. Two small piles of small rocks lay at each side of the balcony.

5. TUNNEL TO THE RUINS

This tunnel is 25-feet-long. It looks recently dug.

6. THRONE ROOM

Six tall columns adorn this large, two-leveled throne room. There is a wooden door with a stone frame to the south and a set of stairs to ascend to the throne area. The walls of this hall have old engraved murals. Only a few of them are in good enough condition to distinguish anything. The murals portray a short stout humanoid hitting a sword with a hammer on an anvil, some sort of old dwarven runes, and half the picture of a powerful individual sitting on the throne.

Kobolds came here in great numbers and scared a couple of **darkmantles**. The blind flying monsters stay away from the kobolds since. However, if the heroes enter this place without the company of the kobolds, two **darkmantles** attempt to ambush them unless one of the heroes is perceptive enough (DC 13 Perception).

7. FORGOTTEN THRONE

A beautiful throne with bronze and silver arms and decorations stands by the north wall, covered with dust in the darkness. The throne is on a three-step dais. The dais shows remnants of what once were beautiful carvings that drew dwarven traditional patterns toward the legs of the throne. A **spider swarm** lives under the throne. Any creature that sits on it, startles the swarm. It attacks. If the throne isn't manipulated in any way, the spiders remain hidden.

Secret Door. There is an illusion spell on this door that makes it look like the wall. The illusion stops working if the heroes touch it.

8. TREASURE ROOM

The walls of this small room feature engraved murals. These are in better condition. A dwarf covered by a pompous king-like cloak holds a chalice with both hands, covering his face with the ruby-encrusted golden container. The chests in the room are fixed to the floor.

Treasure. The room contains two stone chests with the following items: a durable soapstone goblet (50gp), a pair of ornamental fur gloves (30gp), an embroidered silk ribbon (25gp), a collection of silver utensils (30 gp), a silvered jug of exotic dwarven wine (20gp), and a *+1 shortsword*.

9. ANTECHAMBER

This area smells of death. The animal carcasses in area 10 reek and their stench reaches this area. The west wall of this area collapsed a long time ago to reveal another cave. Rocks and boulders are scattered all around. If the kobolds are present, they say this is where they leave the farm animals they steal. The monster takes them away and eats them in area 10.

10. DEADLIER THAN KOBOLDS

This cave is full of rubble and rocks. A small tunnel to the south leads to more underground tunnels. They aren't relevant to this adventure and their destination is left to the DM's discretion.

The monster (**lamia**) eats the leg of a goat when the heroes arrive. Lamias are clever creatures. It cast the spell *scrying* long before the heroes arrived and it is aware of anything that happened with the kobolds. If the reptiles betrayed her, the lamia uses its claws to reap apart the kobolds first. The lamia uses its Intoxicating Touch on Moise and casts *geas* on him if he is present. The lamia then orders Moise to kill the kobolds. If this happens, Moise fights against the impulse and battles his own mind, dying in the process. If Moise is not present, the lamia uses the spell on the toughest hero.

If the lamia is reduced to half its hit points, it flees through the south tunnel. It casts *major image* to create an illusory

landslide on the tunnel and cover its retreat. If the heroes manage to see through the illusion and pursue the lamia, it casts *disguise self* to become a weak, dying, wounded woman. She tells them a story of how she got lost and ended up here.

DEVELOPMENT

Here are some of the possible outcomes for this adventure.

If the heroes listened to Moise and accepted his help and advice, the kobolds fulfill their side of the bargain and stop harassing the village. The kobolds give the heroes food and the spices in area 2 as a reward. Back home, the heroes earn their pay, and Moise gifts them his books and notes with which he learned Draconic. Any creature that uses these documents to study and has access to practice with other speakers for a minimum of two years, can learn to speak Draconic.

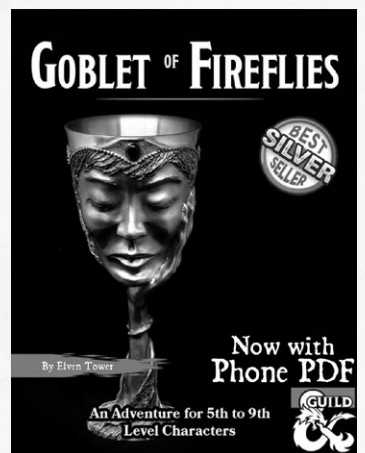
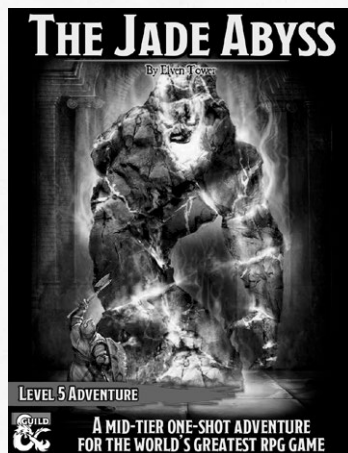
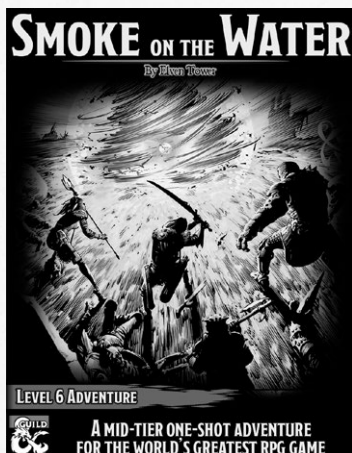
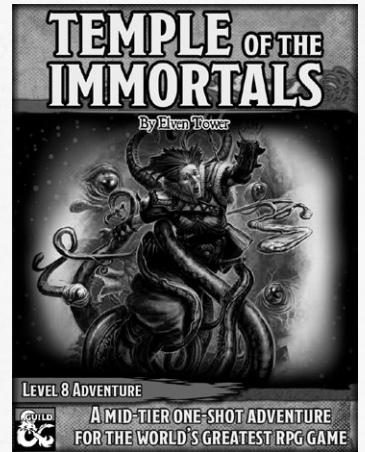
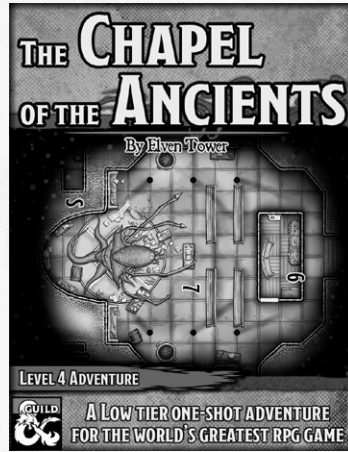
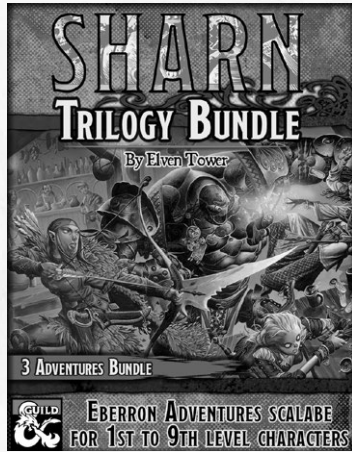
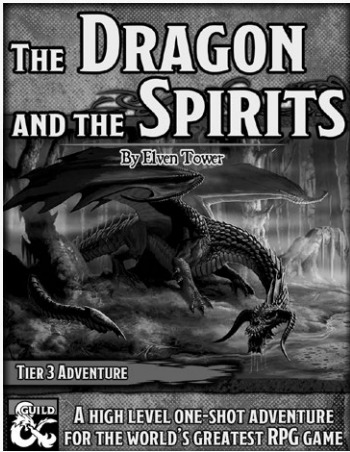
If the heroes didn't accept Moise's help, he ends up dead or arrested for going against the village's hired adventurers. This doesn't mean they can't parley with the kobolds but it makes it more difficult unless one of the heroes speaks Draconic. This also makes the confrontation with the lamia deadlier. If the heroes fight the lamia without help, it is a lethal encounter with low chances of success.

In case the heroes entered the cave with a kill-everything-that-moves attitude and kill all the kobolds and the lamia, they earn their gold and a bonus of 300 gold pieces if they bring the lamia's corpse as a trophy. They still have to deal with Moise's wish to protect the kobolds. Nevertheless, if the heroes only get rid of the kobolds but leave the lamia alone or alive, the four-legged monstrosity attacks Blos at night. How this confrontation is handled by the villagers and the heroes is left up to the DM's discretion.

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