

ODE TO GREED

No, no, no. I won't allow any further intrusions. I can see through you. You're not here for me. You're here to rob me of my well-earned riches. Begone thieves!

Sir Daneel Vark

SETUP

GREED CARRIES SUCH force in the life of mortals that it defines their lives and their achievements. With such short lifespans, greed is a quality necessary for success. Individuals require it to push through adversity and see their goals accomplished. In moderate people, greed shall help them fulfill their lives. But when it is uncontrolled, it becomes an evil force that hinders those who harbor it and others around them as an overly greedy person cannot see another one succeed in their stead. Either they win, or no one should win and thrive.

Alas, a branch of arcana focuses on taking advantage of mortals' traits and abusing them for evil. These incantations cause the red flower of greed to flourish. Those affected become prey to their greedy instincts.

THE LOST PROSPECTORS

TWO WEEKS AGO, a team of human prospectors visited an abandoned cavern near the city to assess its profitability for mining operations. There are other copper and silver mines in the region; the possibility of this cavern being profitable was worthwhile. The miners ventured into the caves and found it promising. What appeared to be a copper vein in the northern caves ended up in a cave-in obstruction. They dug for days to clear it and were dumbfounded when they found a strange man-made construction on the other side. It was a place of worship with a 7-foot-wide runic circle in its center. A strange, haunting melody came from the runic circle, and with it, a powerful charm spell that caused the prospectors to become greedy guardians for the vault's treasure.

A week later, a renowned knight named Sir Daneel Vark, was sent to look for the missing prospectors. The knight ventured into the caverns and found the miners living like animals. The wild prospectors attacked Sir Daneel. The knight promptly disposed of them with his blade, he tried to spare them but they were savage. Later, the knight heard the eerie melody and approached the vault. He could sense it affecting his senses. Strong as Sir Daneel is, he endured the incantation for a few minutes. But in the end, he could not overcome its power. The knight too was assailed by feelings of greed. Against his better judgment, he became the vault's protector.

ADVENTURE HOOK

IT IS KNOWN that the knight now guards the caverns and threatens any who come close. Sir Daneel Vark's daughter, Ana Vark, offers a bounty to a team of mercenaries brave enough to confront her father in the caverns. She offers 400 sp for bringing her father back alive. In addition, she asks the characters to find out what caused the prospectors and her father to behave like that.

Ana offers the characters a map from the prospectors' company that shows the location of the cave, half day from the city, by a sparsely forested region.

FEATURES OF THE DUNGEON

Tier 1 Adventure

Light. The braziers in area 5 feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

Locks. Doors are made of cracked limestone slabs with mid-quality locks devices (**Burglary** check).

Secret Areas. Clearing cave-in obstructions with shovels and tools reveals narrow passages (**Search** check).

Cavern Ceilings. All areas have 20-foot-tall, vaulted ceilings with moist stalactites and deep cracks.

1. CAVERN ENTRANCE

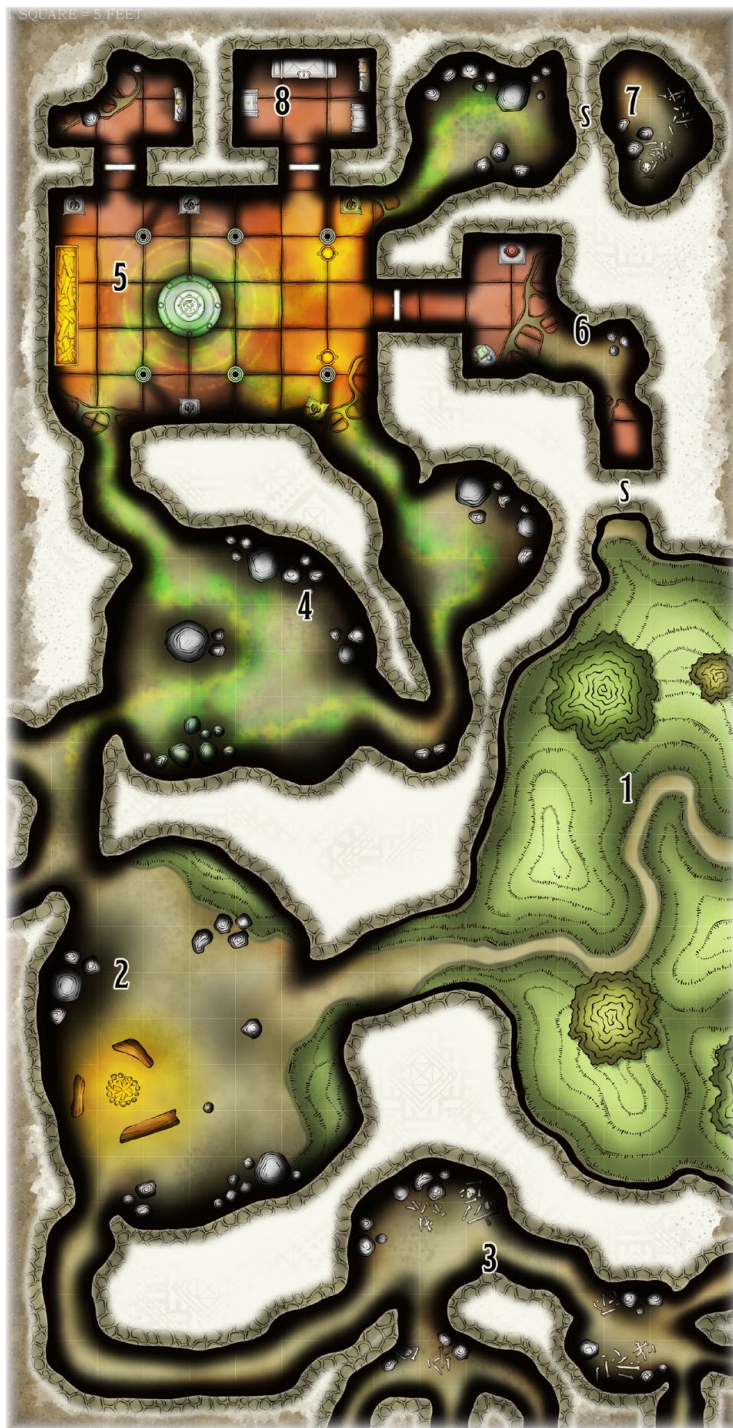
A narrow path circles around grassy hills and leads to what appears to be an abandoned mining site.

A careful ranger notices the evidence of bootprints in the soft soil (**Search** check). Six different sets of prints enter the cavern but none have returned in days.

2. SIR DANEEL'S CAMP

A robed, armor-clad, greatsword-wielding man sits by a raging bonfire in the cavern. His eyes glow scarlet!

Sir Daneel Vark (**knight**) is under the effects of the *Ode to Greed*. He remembers everything but is consumed by an unexplainable desire to protect the cavern and the treasure hidden in area 8. Unless the characters obey his orders to leave at once, the knight moves to vanquish them in deadly combat. As he charges, two **shadows** emerge from the cracked walls and attack the characters. Upon defeat, if possible, the knight flees to area 5.



3. ABANDONED CAVERNS

A sprawling network of interconnected caverns lies beyond. The stone bears the marks of corrosive solutions; the floor is littered with recent bones.

A student of biology identifies that the marks on the walls were caused by burrowing, insect creatures that use their acidic saliva to dig tunnels. Exploring these tunnels incurs a 2-in-6 chance of encountering 1d6 **carri- on worms**. The bones belonged to the five prospectors. A healer determines that the bones are recent, less than a week old, but the remains have been cleaned by cave vermin such as beetles and rodents (**Healing** check).

4. VERMIN LAIRS

The characters first come into contact with the *Ode to Greed* in this area. The haunting melody can be discerned as a dissonant combination of flute and piano. It produces a wanting effect that pulls the characters toward area 5 but can easily be ignored here.

The cavern walls are dotted with dark holes; a network of lairs, home to countless rodents. A **swarm of rodents** emerges at the scent of the characters' trespassing. The rats and deaf creatures are immune to the music.

5. THE ODE'S ORIGIN

A glowing, runic circle pulses rhythmically as it produces disconcerting melodies. The atonal vibrations of the song take on a quasi-physical, vaporous form.

If Sir Daneel Vark escaped the encounter in area 2, he is found here, next to the magic circle. He engages in combat once again, trusting that the *Ode to Greed* may turn the battle in his favor. Otherwise, he fights to the death.

Ode to Greed. Unless the characters impede their hearing somehow, the strange song attempts to enchant them (**Will** save). Those affected consider protecting the treasure vault in area 8 their ultimate goal. An affected person may repeat this save once per round.

The Magic Circle. Damaging the rune circle with shovels or pikes disables its magic (**Fortitude** save).

6. BROKEN HALL

Little remains of this once-grandiose hall. There are broken, incomplete, elvish runes carved on the walls. A historian identifies the language as that of a splinter faction of elves that saw humans as a curse on the world; they sought to destroy humankind (**History Lore** check).

7. TOMB OF THE ANCIENTS

The bones of two human explorers have been here for decades. The bones reveal teeth and crushing wounds; they were attacked by cavern beasts (**Healing** check).

8. THE GRAND VAULT

The vault contains three stone coffers and a shelf. None has visited this vault since the compound was built.

Treasure. The chests contain 3,400 sp, 6,400 cp, a gilded mirror (50 sp), and a *potion of healing*.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

IF THE CHARACTERS return Sir Daneel to the city alive. Ana, his daughter, happily pays the bounty and thanks the characters. Alas, if the characters have slain Sir Daneel, Ana refuses to pay. In her grief, she contacts the city bailiff and accuses them of Sir Daneel's murder. If the characters escape justice, she hires assassins to track them down. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...