

THE TORCH CARRIER

By Elven Tower and Domille's Wondrous Works

Designed for use with

ShadowDark RPG



LEVEL-0 GAUNTLET

A SHADOWDARK FUNNEL ADVENTURE ABOUT FINDING A CHAMBER MADE OF PURE GOLD

ADVENTURE PRIMER

We are all adventurers, we can all be heroes. Perhaps, you only need to find a reason to abandon your current way of life and dream of greater things.

Old Saying



Some events mark someone's life so greatly that it changes them fundamentally. The death of a loved one, the destruction of one's town, or the loss of something cherished. The weak become strong, or the naive acquire wisdom. But sometimes, these events have nothing to do with one's surroundings. On some extraordinary occasions, people change their lives through their very actions.

The poor shall always dream of wealth and wish better lives for their offspring and their future generations. Hard work is honest and well-regarded, but the payoff is too slow for the most ambitious of hearts. Thus, the rumors of a room made of gold were big news to the village folk living their simple lives in Touchstone.

THE THREE MORTAL SPHINXES

IT WAS HUNDREDS of years ago when three sphinxes violated the code of their strict society. They shared forbidden secrets with humans, elves, and dwarves. The high authorities of the sphinxes branded them as traitors. And their punishment was to become mortal, like the people they shared their sacred secrets with.

The outcast sphinxes did not resent subduing some weaker minds and amassing followers. They plotted their revenge for years, but eventually, they could not defeat time. Despite their ridiculous wealth, they never got around the perfect vendetta. They became old, frail, and lost any will to fight. They perished after some decades in the world of mortals. Their followers' lives changed thanks to them. The sphinxes were buried like they wanted, just like they instructed. But of course, the magical creatures were prepared for mankind's betrayal.

THE CHAMBER OF GOLD

THE SPHINXES' TOMB has a room with a giant golden statue, gold-inlaid columns, and balconies with golden railings. Two golden braziers, red velvet curtains with golden thread decorations, and even gold inlays on the floor tiles. All this was amassed through the decades in the Material Plane. Some of the people that knew about this place tried to steal the gold. But the sphinxes placed traps and eternal guardians unbeknownst to anyone but them. To this day, the treasure remains untouched.

THE RUMORS AND CURIOSITY

IT WAS A few weeks ago when travelers from afar arrived at Touchstone with incredible news. There is a room made of pure gold! And it is located nearby. The magnitude of these claims caused the rumors to spread fast. And soon, mercenaries, travelers, and even historians came looking to be part of history, or at least be a witness of the following developments.

And so, a couple of groups of heroes went into the woods but never returned. Researchers waited for their hired investigators who were never heard of again. But perhaps another party shall be more fortunate.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Level 0 Gauntlet

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Right before the common folk started to feel fear and shun the place where everyone disappears, a large group of travelers passed through Touchstone. A group of farmers, merchants, and village folk hears about the room made of gold and cannot resist the urge to investigate. They pack what they can and delve into the forest. The naive folk believe they have what it takes to find that golden chamber. Or at least they hope that the mercenaries that went before them already did the hard work.

THE SPHINXES' LEGACY

A spectacle-wearing, finely-clothed man gathers a group of villagers. He asks them to retrieve an ancient tome filled with sphinx's lore and wisdom. He promises to pay 10 gp each, which is more than enough to change their luck if they spend this money wisely. Plus, he says they can keep anything else, including the golden room.

RUMORS

d4 Details

- 1 A tribe of elves in the woods venerate an ancient sphinx goddess. The woods features eroded statues as proof.
- 2 None of the people that delved into the forest came back.
- 3 The chamber of gold is an overstatement. The treasure is true but it comes in the shape of coins and jewels.
- 4 A hero named Tristan will most likely find the treasure.

THE TOUCHSTONE

It's like a checkpoint. Right in the middle of the road, between the capital and Sunny Hill. It's a touchstone! I will die before calling this place Drake's Pass

Random Local

The road zig-zags through the woods and traverses the entire forested area. At first, this spot would only be occupied by some travelers or the sporadic merchant cart. With time, more and more travelers opted to make camp here and take advantage of the tree-protected spot to rest a bit.

When the time came to give the location a name, a knight named Drake had just become a folk hero. Thus, Drake's Pass was the chosen title. But long before the knight's exploits, people would refer to this place as the Touchstone. And even though the formal name is Drake's Pass, "*The Touchstone*" is the name that stuck.

THE CHECKPOINT

ABOUT THREE DOZEN people work or live in this small arrangement of buildings next to the woods. Some of these people sleep for a few days here and then return to Sunny Hill, the nearest town, to their real homes.

Lots of faces come and go through the main road and not all of the travelers stay to say hello. But the nice folk from Drake's Pass try their best to be remembered. Because for their community to thrive, they need to grow their customer base. They attempt to increase the number of people that stay in town by giving gifts, providing good service, and brandishing a big smile at all times.

SET-UP

THE PLAYERS START the Gauntlet here. They are free to decide if their characters are locals, or if they are travelers passing by. Either way, the village folk gather to try their luck or are hired to enter the woods (see **Adventure Hooks**). Before they leave, they are free to ask around and meet some of the NPCs at The Touchstone.

Town Features

► **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** each time a new area is visited. There is a 4-in-6 chance for an event.

► **Activity.** Several sell-swords and adventurers are staying for a day or two. They prepare for their mission. They seek the chamber of gold everyone talks about.

► **NPCs.** Have Amanda and Sir Korry look for the characters if, for any reason, they do not visit areas 3 or 7.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	An armored man approaches from the north. The first person to come back from the woods! However, he crumbles to the ground when he arrives. His body is all burned. He used the last of his strength to return.
2	Two elf sages wearing tribal clothes and paint on their faces warn all mercenaries and travelers. They say that only death awaits those who seek the sphinxes' gold.
3	A young man wearing leather armor and wielding a sword comes asking for Tristan. He is told that the man has already delved into the woods. The young lad hurries into the forest hoping to find him. The characters are free to talk to him. His name is Harry (peasant), and he is happy to enter the forest accompanied by more people.
4	Two bad men (thugs) approach the characters and demand that they tell them all they know about the chamber of gold, or else... The men leave if told what they want to know. In case of a fight, the coward bandits plea for their lives if they are reduced to half their hit points.
5	A brown bear comes looking for food. The beast is neutral if 10 pounds of food are offered to it. Otherwise, it becomes hostile but flees when greatly injured.
6	One of the characters loses consciousness for a few seconds. During this time, they have a vision. They see a giant statue made of pure gold. Then, everything is covered in fiery flames. They wake up sweating.

1. WEST ROAD

Artennia City is situated to the west. From here, it takes travelers three days to reach the capital walls. The characters that are not locals may come from there.

► **Regret.** Kent and Shane (**peasants**) wait by the road. They had planned to go look for the chamber of gold but got cold feet in the end. They offer the gear they had bought for their mission for a reduced price. The characters may acquire two crawling kits for 5 gp each. They may be convinced to change their minds once more if the characters offer them to tag along instead of going alone.

2. THE CHECKPOINT'S INN AND TAVERN

A crew of half-a-dozen people works in this establishment. A tall, thin woman with short hair and muscled arms is the owner. Julia is happier than usual due to the high traffic in town. Even if the mercenaries do not stay the night, most of them stop for drinks. One or a couple of the characters could be Julia's employees.



3. AMANDA LAKE'S HOME

Amanda (**peasant**) is the town's treasurer, appointed by the Duke in the capital. She is ambitious and wants to witness the discovery of the chamber of gold herself.

► **Favor.** The woman approaches the characters. Seeing the large group of people planning to delve into the forests, she asks them to please take her with them. The characters are free to accept her company or not.

4. DRAKE'S WARES

The characters can purchase gear for their mission. They can obtain any item from the Basic Gear list but there is a 10% chance that the store does not have what they asked for at this moment. Roll once for each item.

► **Gift.** The store owner, Guillaume, gives the characters a random item from the Basic Gear list worth 1 gp or less for each 5 gp spent in his store, provided he has it.

5. THE TOUCHSTONE

This well was one of the first things to be built in Drake's Pass. Before this place got its name, people would call the well the Touchstone. The water supply became a point of reference to determine how far one was from the capital or Sunny Hill. To this day, people avoid using the knight's name when talking about this place.

► **Treasure.** If the characters spend enough time inspecting the well, they might spot a small hiding spot in the inside wall (DC 12 WIS). A stone brick can be removed to reveal a hole. Inside, there is a leather bag with 8 gp, a dagger, a crowbar, and a 60-foot hempen rope.

6. DRAKE'S STABLES

Horses and mules for rent. They are used to reach the capital or Sunny Hill faster. A man named Willy is in charge of these mounts. However, the service does not apply to the woods. The characters cannot make use of these mounts for their quest. But perhaps they can help Willy, the horse master, in another way.

► **Wild Horse.** A beautiful, strong black horse is upset and uncontrollable. Willy asks the characters for help in case they know their way with horses. One of the peasants may try to calm the horse (DC 11 WIS). If they fail by 5 or more, the horse kicks them and they take 1d6 damage. The DC to calm it down increases by 1 for each failed attempt. If they succeed, the grateful shop owner gives them a crawling kit to help them in their quest.

7. SIR KORRY'S HOME

A retired knight but he still works for the crown. He is the eyes and ears of the government in Drake's Pass.

► **Frail Bones.** Sir Korry wishes to be part of the mission and remember his prime days. He uses the stats of a **knight**. However, each time he succeeds in an attack or a check, the next one must be made with disadvantage. The characters are free to accept his company or not.

8. EAST ROAD

Sunny Hill is situated almost two days from here. Sitting on the floor and eating fruits are the two elf sages from **Random Event** two. They offer tea and fruits to the characters while making emphasis on their warning. There is only death within the ruins in the forest, they say.

THE HALL OF SPHINXES

There is only one elemental force that may represent a sphinx's wisdom and strength. Fire. Embrace the flames and be bathed in eternal, fiery warmth.

Inscription on the Wall

Nt was hundreds of years ago when the three sphinxes were punished and cast as mortals. They roamed the Material Plane for years. Thanks to their cunning and superior understanding, they gathered followers and persuaded them to build a tomb to keep their treasures when they died.

And this is how the Hall of Sphinxes came to be. Cave-ins and earthquakes destroyed the original entrance. But the place can be accessed through some cave tunnels.

THE JOURNEY

THE CHARACTERS DELVE into the forest. Depending on their interactions, they may be accompanied by some allies: Harry the soldier from the **Random Events**, plus Amanda and Sir Korry from areas 3 and 7. Their journey is uneventful and they find it easy to follow the many tracks left by others. They find the tunnels in half a day.

THE SPHINXES' TREASURE

THE TREASURE IS true. The tomb is filled with valuable items, coins, and magical artifacts. However, the sphinxes knew that mortals would not resist the urge to steal all their treasure once they were gone. Thus, they placed magical traps, defensive measures, and protective spells. They could never get their revenge, but at least their treasure would be safe, even after their deaths.

THE TORCH BEARER

IT IS SAID that sphinxes' hearts are made of arcane fire. They were immune to their traps because the dungeon would sense their fire. But today, their spells have faded a little. Holding a torch makes the apparatus believe the sphinxes are present. The magic causes torch bearers to have advantage on all checks versus traps; the torch's fire is perceived as a sphinx's heart. The characters may discover this on their own or understand it (see area 6).

Area Features

► **Danger.** Risky. Check for a **Random Event** every 2 **crawling rounds** and after loud noises (3-in-6 chance).

► **Light.** Some areas feature braziers with magical fire; the rest are dark. All denizens are **dark-adapted**.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	A friendly ghost appears before the characters. The spirit speaks to the peasants: " <i>I am Hayden. Listen to me. Leave. Nothing but death awaits those who seek the sphinxes' wealth. No one will ever find it. No one...</i> "
2	A ghoul from area 5 is not satisfied and looks for more living creatures. The characters stumble upon the hungry undead. The abominate ghouls fight until slain.
3	A brick on the wall can be pushed because it moves inward. If the characters decide to push it all the way they trigger a trap. Poison darts hit two characters at random. They take 1d8 poison damage (DC 12 CON check).
4	The characters find a small book on the floor. The diary belonged to an explorer of another group. It contains a recapitulation of their mostly uneventful journey. However, on the last page, the author wrote that somehow, the dungeon has a strange interaction with fire. He claims that, for some reason, danger eludes the torch bearer.
5	Thick webbings stand before the characters. The webs are 20 feet wide; they may cover a corridor entirely. The characters can burn the webs carefully (DC 10 DEX). On a fail, they alarm the swarm of spiders . The insects flee if they are reduced to half their hit points.
6	The characters find two dead adventurers. Their bodies are half-eaten. But their leather armors and longswords are still salvageable. One of the deceased carries a backpack with half of the contents of a crawling kit.

1. CAVERN TUNNELS

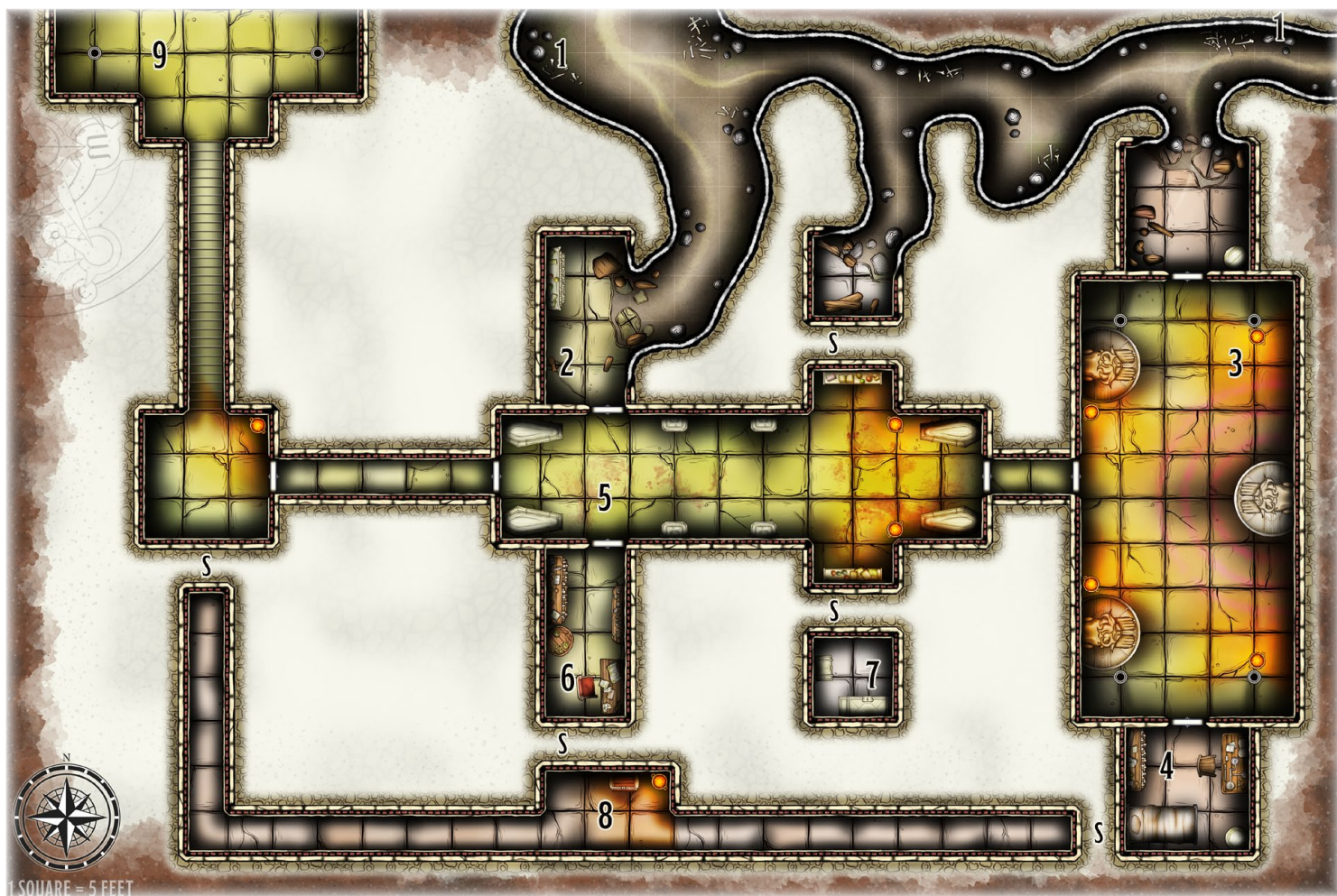
The travelers find many footprints that take them to these tunnels. The cavern network is long and dark. The characters have a 50% chance of arriving in the dungeon from one of the two labeled-1 areas (see map).

► **Path.** A seemingly empty room at the end of a tunnel features a hidden connection to area 5 (see map). But this secret passage is covered in rubble and debris. Clearing the blockade takes three **crawling rounds**.

2. DILAPIDATED ROOM

Only a stone shelf resisted the passing of time and cave-ins that destroyed the east wall. But its contents did not have such luck. Moths and other insects have eaten most of the books' pages. But there is one thing valuable here.

► **Treasure.** The characters may spend 1 **crawling round** searching the moth-eaten documents and find a long-forgotten *potion of healing* lying behind the shelf.



3. HALL OF SPHINXES

Four stone columns by each corner accompany the three sphinx statues leaning against the walls. An aura of uneasiness and dread fills the mortal minds.

These are the tombs of the three mortal sphinxes. The characters may learn their names by reading the steel plaques on their bases: Alela, Sahalini, and Sunvati.

► **Treasure.** The tombs have secret compartments underneath. The first two contain 147 gp, a silver dagger, a shortsword, a golden bowl (15 gp), a pearl (40 gp), a bag of rare spices (15 gp), and a gold pin (20 gp). If the characters feel lucky and open the third, they find it empty and a **zombie sphinx** comes out of the enclosure. The monster fights until slain but it does not leave this room.

4. HAYDEN'S STUDIO

Magic maintains this place clean and untouched by time. Reading the diary and documents in this room reveals it all belonged to Hayden, the sphinxes' right hand.

► **Protection.** If the characters spend a **crawling round** reading Hayden's documents, they may discover the dungeon's special property. The dungeon protects the hearts of fire. A clever character might infer how this can be used in their favor (DC 11 INT). See **The Torch Bearer**.

ZOMBIE SPHINX

A leonine mockery of a majestic creature. An empty carcass with broken wings and a cold, dead stare.

AC 12, HP 16, ATK 1 claw +4 (1d8) or 1 spell, MV near, S +3, D +0, C +1, I +0, W +1, Ch -1, AL C, LV 3

Arcane Burst (WIS spell). DC 11 WIS. All targets in near take 1d8 damage.

5. UNDEAD GUARDIANS

Eight corpses lie on the floor of this room. Two of them do not look human. A man on the ground speaks when he hears the noise of people coming.

The characters find Tristan, a local folk hero. He explains that the undead monsters were too strong; his men died before him but he somehow managed to kill the two. He is gravely injured and will die in the following minutes unless he receives magical healing soon.

Another sarcophagus opens after the brief introduction. A **ghost** emerges to finish the job. The undead attacks all injured creatures first and it fights until slain.

► **Harry.** If the young lad is present, he protects Tristan with his life. After combat, he asks to become Tristan's squire if he survives. Otherwise, he mourns his death.

6. LIBRARY

This room contains books, documents, and scrolls with lore about the sphinxes. The characters may spend one **crawling round** reading this to learn about the three mortal sphinxes from almost three hundred years ago.

The characters find the book they were hired to find here (see **Adventure Hooks**). They learn why the sphinxes were punished. But most importantly, they confirm the existence of the treasure, and they also find a book with a map of the dungeon. It does not reveal any traps or defense devices but the last room is close (see map).

► **Treasure.** The characters may spend one **crawling round** searching the place to find 18 gp, a scroll of *cure wounds*, and a scroll of *protection from energy*.

► **Trap.** There is a 25-foot-long corridor toward area 9 (see map). There are bones and ashes all over the floor. It smells of charcoal and putrefaction. Both the north and south walls feature small holes all over their surfaces. The last tile hides a pressure-sensitive plate (DC 12 WIS). If pressed, fire jets burn to death everyone within.

7. SECRET VAULT

The characters find this room if they notice a small concealed passage behind the desk in area 5 (DC 12 WIS). They must crawl inside and they must do so one by one.

► **Treasure.** The chest contains 291 gp, 7,329 sp, a mithral chainmail, and a spell scroll of *fireball*. After about a minute, two **ghouls** come out of their enclosures back in area 5.

8. SECRET HALLWAY

The characters find this hallway if they notice the hidden levers while exploring areas 4 and 6 (DC 12 WIS). Pulling either reveals a passage into the secret area. The far end connects to area 9 through another hidden passage.

► **Chest.** This wooden chest is locked but can be easily opened (DC 9 DEX). It contains five torches, a leather armor, a dagger, a spear, and a crossbow with 5 bolts.

► **Trap.** A human corpse cut in half lies on the floor 15 feet before the hallway's exit to area 9. A clean cut split the body, leaving a massive pool of blood. The walls feature narrow openings where something could move in a pendulum motion. An almost invisible tripwire triggers the trap (DC 13 WIS check). The blade moves so fast that whoever stands below is cleanly cut into two pieces.

9. ANTECHAMBER

This chamber's ceiling becomes higher and darker as the room opens up to give place to a large passage. The walls of this area feature washed-out paintings. One of them portrays a crowd of people beside mountains of coins and gold. A second one shows the same spelunkers transporting the goods. They carry wooden chests and large leather bags of treasure. The third depicts fire. The people's little outlines can barely be seen behind the flames. And the last picture only shows gold. In it, the sphinxes' treasure hoard is intact and complete.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters found it! The sphinxes' treasure room lies before them. They are close to discovering more gold than they could ever imagine. Regarding the possible NPCs that might be accompanying the peasants, consider the following:

- **Tristan and Harry.** The young boy loses all confidence if his hero is not present. Harry says that perhaps this was not such a good idea and decides to turn back. On the other hand, if Tristan is healed, Harry stays as his squire and the two see the adventure through. Tristan is thankful to the characters.
- **Sir Korry.** If the characters are not motivated or low in morale. The experienced soldier gives them a speech about honor, bravery, and glory. Sir Korry tells them to rally and push forward to glory!



THE CHAMBER OF GOLD

Knowing when to stop is one of the most difficult traits for a gambler. When luck is on your side, it usually makes you blind. Your gains will seem nothing..

Gamblers' Saying

The three mortal sphinxes died of old age but they still spent a few hundred years in the world of mortals. They amassed wealth and gold believing it would serve to fund their vengeance project. But in the end, their mortal lives drained them of motivation and their determination dwindled.

CARVED ONTO THE ROCK

HOWEVER, DURING THEIR time in the Material Plane, the sphinxes' followers had enough time to do their bidding. And one of their biggest projects was to build their treasure room. They would melt most of the gold they obtained and add it to this underground chamber. It was carved onto the hard rock below the woods.

The sphinxes died eventually. But they correctly predicted that the same men that built their treasure chamber would betray them once they were not present. Their magical wards and eternal guardians, to this day, have done their job at keeping the sphinxes' gold untouched. And the lavish treasure room is no exception.

To top it all, this treasure chamber has a still-not-triggered lava trap intended to kill intruders right when they believe they have succeeded (see **The Eternal Fire**).

RANDOM EVENTS

d6 Details

- The characters see a memory play out before them. Two men carrying sacks filled with treasure struggle to move back to the entrance. Halfway through, they are struck by endless falling flames and liquid fire. The smoke dissipates and the memory ends. It is all an illusion.
- The characters find a pre-cast spell scroll written in Common. Whoever reads it is affected by a *protection from energy* (fire) spell for 1 minute.
- Eight **peasants** arrive some minutes after the characters. Some are injured but they are happy to have reached the end of the dungeon. They start boldly exploring the gilded chamber as long as they do not meet any resistance.
- A **giant bat** looks for prey. The beast attacks the character standing farthest away from the rest of the group.
- The characters find a chunk of solid gold on the floor. It belongs to one of the columns. It is worth 250 gp.
- One of the columns features a lever on its back side. Four **zombies** come out from a closed alcove when the lever is pulled. The undead fight until slain.

TORCH BEARER REMINDER

The magic that protects those that hold fire also works within the treasure room. Whoever holds a torch while exploring this area has advantage on checks and saves. This applies too to the last trap (see **The Eternal Fire**).

Area Features

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

► **Light.** There are braziers with magical fire in area 1 and beside the king's statue (area 5), but they do not illuminate the whole chamber. Denizens are **dark-adapted**.

1. THE STEPS AND GATE

The large cave is cut by a 20 feet tall wall. Two golden statues flank the only gate going forward. They stand 20 feet above, beyond a set of stone steps.

The gates are closed. The characters must climb up the stairs and find a way to open them. The sphinxes left an inscription on the surface of the gates; to be read by intruders after their deaths. The old message says:

"Alela, Sahalani, and Sunvati's gold lies beyond. This shall fund our vengeance someday. May the flames destroy all those that rob us of our revenge!"

The characters must push the gates with all their strength to open them (DC 15 STR). The check succeeds automatically if four or more people push together.

► **Treasure.** The characters may spend two **crawling rounds** to chisel a few small pieces of gold from the statues or the braziers (150 gp). The statues are too heavy to be moved and it would take weeks to break them all into small enough pieces to be transported out.

2. MAIN HALL

The entire chamber is visible from this area. Fourteen columns with gold bases flank the central pool. And an obsidian three-step dais holds a massive golden statue.

► **Treasure.** There are many thin golden flower inlays on the main hall tiles (see map). It takes three **crawling rounds** to remove the sandstone around them to be removed. The gold found on each flower is worth 200 gp.

3. POOL OF PENITENCE

The water is clean and transparent. The walls beyond the columns, under the balconies, show vivid frescoes. One of them depicts leonine, winged creatures relaxing in the water. Another one shows the water polluted and green; with skeletons bathing in it.

The characters may infer the obvious by looking at the images. The magical pool shall not harm sphinxes. But any other living creature is perceived as an enemy.

► **Poison.** The crystal-clear water becomes dark, green, and poisonous whenever a non-sphinx being is submerged in it. Living creatures take 1d8 damage per round they spend within the body of water.

► **Treasure.** The peasants may use empty flasks to store some of this magical water. The liquid heals magical creatures but it is harmful to mortals. Each flask of water can be sold for 100 gp to the right buyer.

4. UPPER CORRIDORS

Standing at a height of 30 feet, the two hallways flank the central pool from above. Several steel beams hold the railings, which are made of gold.

The characters may climb to the balconies when they explore the treasure chamber. The curtains at the end of the room can be used to climb down (DC 11 STR). On a fail, the climber stays suspended in midair. Failure by 5 or more means they fall and take 1d6 damage.

► **Treasure.** The characters may spend two **crawling rounds** to break loose a half-foot section from the golden railings. Each chunk of railing is worth 100 gp.

5. KING PRESTON'S STATUE

The statue of a man holding a scepter-torch. He wears kingly robes and holds a royal posture. The obsidian dais supports its colossal weight.

A person well-versed in history may recognize King Preston's face and famous pose (DC 12 INT). The king of the southern territories a hundred years ago. The sphinxes played mind tricks on him. They would feed him ideas of debt and late payments. The king let go of his most valued possession thinking only this could pay his due. The sphinxes never got rid of the statue because it reminded them of their biggest success in the world of men.

THE DUNGEON PHASES

This dungeon chamber features a five-phase lethal fire trap. Once triggered, each phase lasts one combat round. This means the entire treasure chamber turns into a pool of lava in four rounds. Be mindful of the characters' positions the moment the trap is triggered. Only some of them might make it alive to the end.



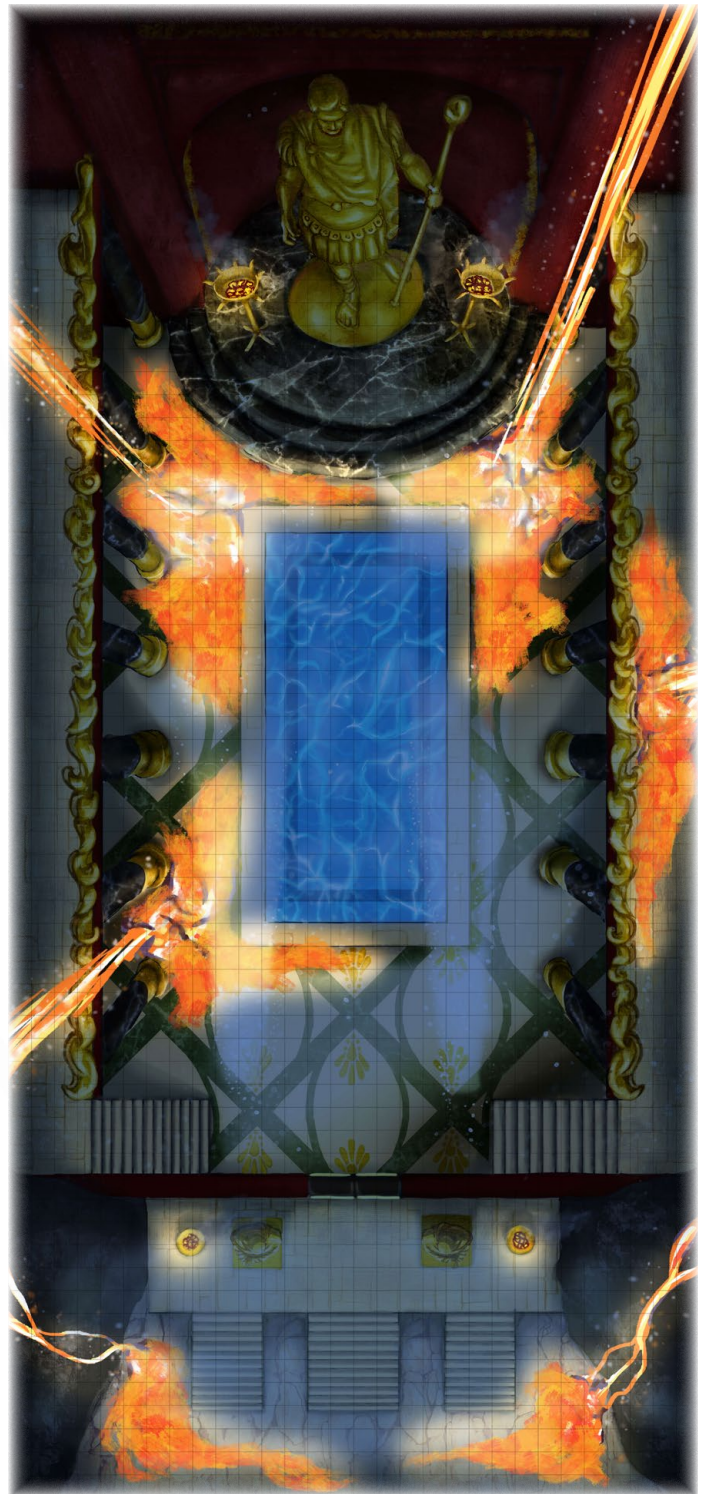
THE ETERNAL FIRE

The sphinxes feared their gold would be free for the taking when they were gone. They did not want anyone to take what they worked so hard to build. They would rather see it all destroyed than in the hands of thieves.

► **Trap.** No one shall ever leave with this gold. Interacting with or touching the king's statue triggers the trap. Molten lava and crimson-red liquid fire start to pour from above (see **Phase 2**). Count combat rounds to know when to switch phases (see **The Dungeon Phases**).

PHASE 2

THE TRAP HAS been triggered and that means at least one of the characters is near the statue. Whoever is inside the room must move fast or the lava will soon block any possible way out (see **Phase 4**). There is no need to jump or cross lava pools during this phase. But for those unfortunate to be exactly below the two first spots where lava starts pouring, they must succeed on a DC 11 DEX check or die. The rest of the characters can move freely and seek refuge from the lava or bolt to the entrance.

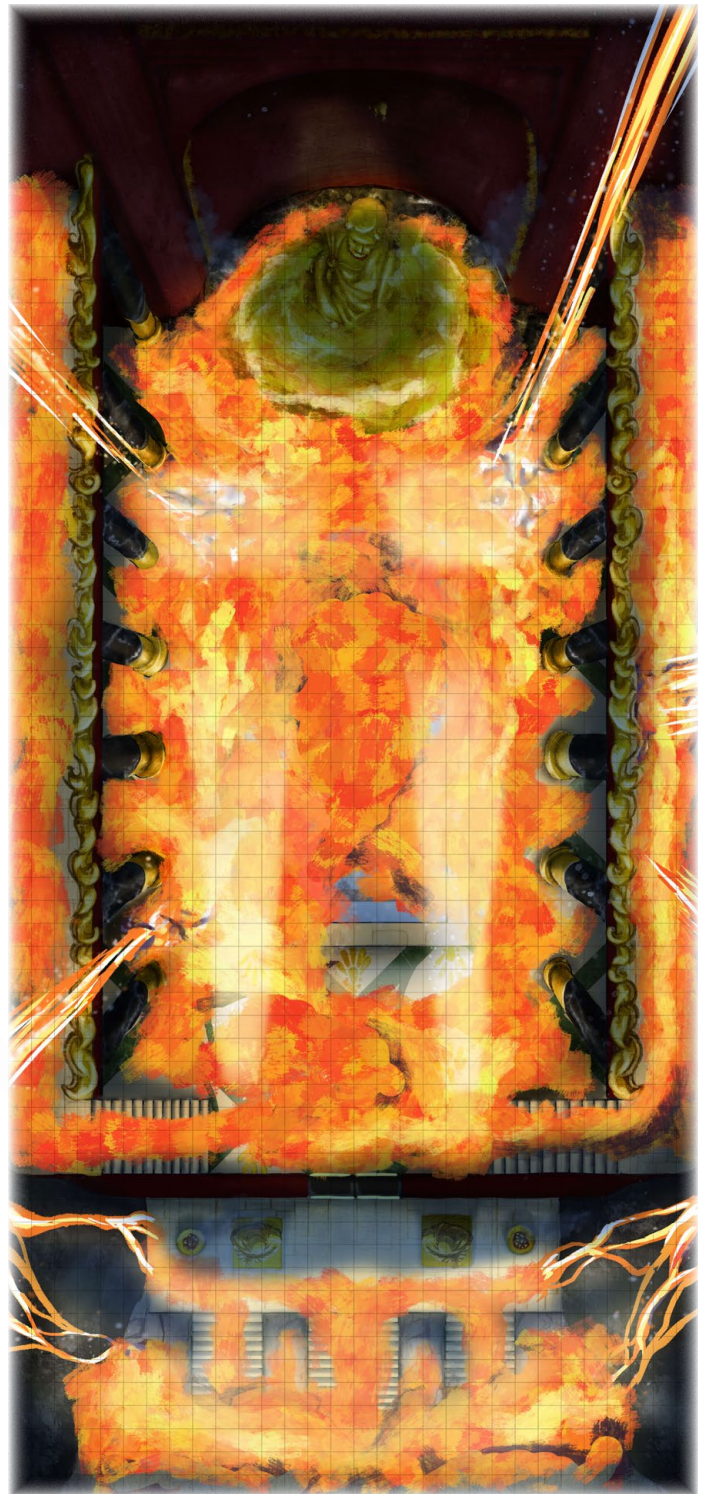
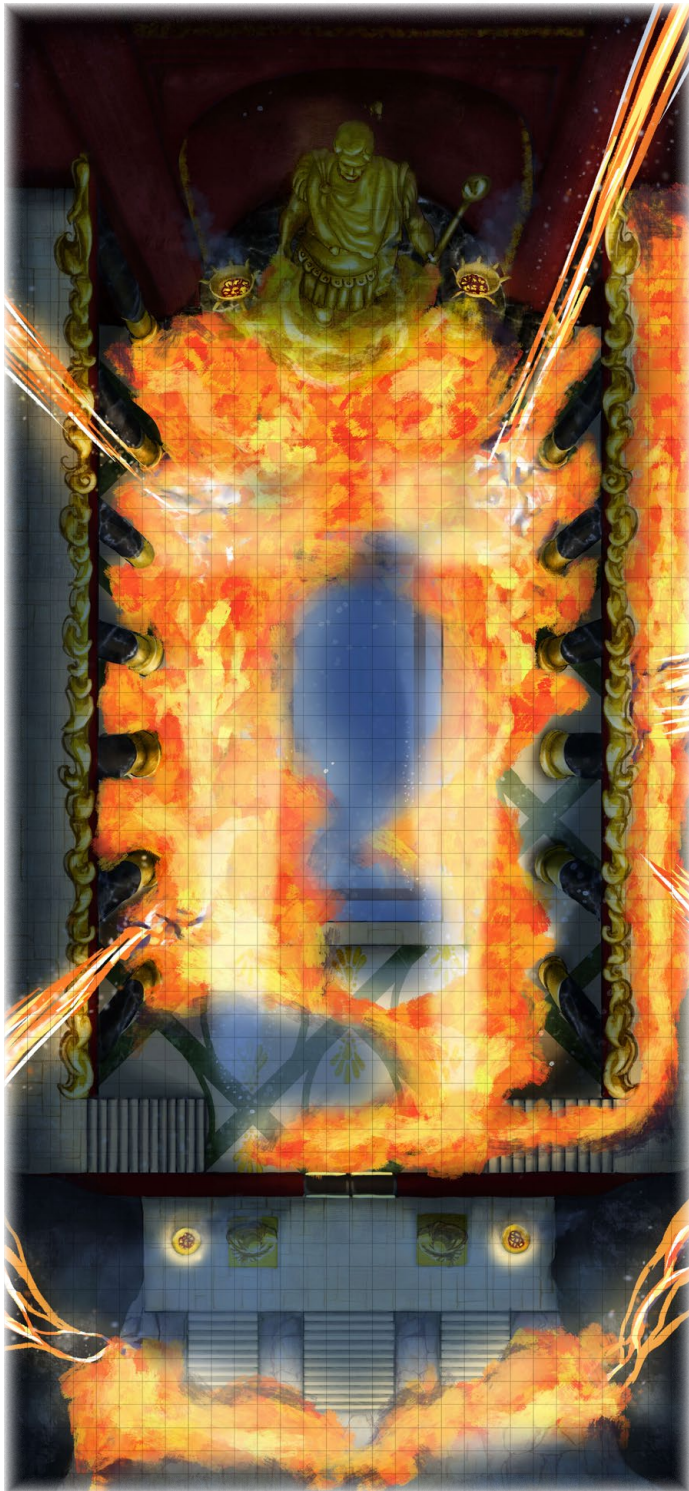


PHASE 3

ALMOST HALF OF the chamber and some of the entrance flood with lava. The eastern balcony is not safe ground anymore. Lava falls from above in more sections of the chamber. Again, creatures that stand below the pouring lava must succeed on a DC 11 DEX check or be burned to death. Creatures in area 1 can still make it out before the two lava rivers join into one. Staying within the chamber does not look like a viable option anymore. Jumping into the cursed water is also lethal (see area 3).

PHASE 4

MORE LAVA POURS from above. The flames roar sound as if the entire ceiling were to give in at any second. King Preston's statue shrinks. It becomes shorter as it melts from its base up. It is too late for any creature within the chamber to make it out alive. They shall be consumed by fire sooner or later; the only entrance is blocked by hot crimson liquid. For the characters still in area 1, they must jump across 10 feet of lava to return to the Hall of Sphinxes (DC 11 STR). They die burned on a fail.



PHASE 5

THE DESTRUCTION OF the treasure chamber is what follows the final phase of the trap. The balconies give in when the columns burn. The massive kingly statue becomes a viscous pool of gold. The characters that survive notice that the lava soon finds its way to them. The living flame advances slowly but firmly. The survivors must keep running toward the exit. The lava jeopardizes the structural integrity of the compound. This means the peasants must run until they find the exit or die crushed.

ESCAPE

Once the characters come out of the treasure chamber, they must keep running to have a chance at staying alive. All runners must succeed on a DC 10 DEX check. This check is made with disadvantage if the peasants have both hands occupied. Torchbearers are immune to this. On a fail, they trip, fall, and are crushed by the crumbling dungeon or consumed by flames. Otherwise, they reach the woods safe and sound after running for dear life for a few minutes. They barely escape, with the dungeon's entrance getting destroyed and blocked behind them. Smoke and ash follow suit after them.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

SURVIVORS!

Not all of them live to tell the tale. But some of the peasants ran for their lives and escaped the fire. They may possess some of the sphinxes' treasure, which is more than enough to fund any adventuring operation.

NEW FRIENDS

The characters may come out of the dungeon with new friends, depending on their actions and decisions. Tristan and Harry, if present during the treasure chamber's exploration, bolt to the entrance immediately and they make it out of the dungeon on time. They remain friends with the characters after this great experience but the duo seek new adventures on their own.

Sir Korry on the other hand, finds it hard to move with his armor and trips toward the dungeon's exit during the escape. If none of the characters stop to help him, he dies. But whoever turns back to help him up must repeat their save (see **Escape** above). If they succeed, Sir Korry is forever in their debt. The veteran sheds a couple of tears, stating that he wants to be a hero again. The loyal knight quits his job in Daniel's Pass and begs his savior to allow him to be their sworn lifetime protector.

In case the characters were hired, the man in spectacles is true to his word and pays them if they have retrieved the book he wanted. Their feat will not go unnoticed; the powerful individual shall be interested in hiring these resourceful explorers for a future project.

THE REST OF THE TREASURE

The characters found the famous chamber of gold but most of the treasure was destroyed by the lava. Maybe they managed to retrieve some of it, but the rest of the fortune is buried in the woods. Would it be wise to dig it up? That is certainly an adventure for another day...

