

DUNGEON VAULT MAGAZINE

No. 28

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**10 ORIGINAL ADVENTURES
HIGH RESOLUTION MAPS
VTT - ROLL20 MAPS**

THE BEST CONTENT FOR THE BEST GMs



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CRACKED-SKULL ARCHIPELAGO

I know we can be different. I believe we can change our ways for good. The world outside these islands should not be feared, but welcomed!

Tarrak'kar

SETUP

THE FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENT describes the settlements, towns, and important locations within Cracked-Skull Archipelago. You may have an entire campaign arch occur here. Or you may use this regional map as a complement to your campaign. Alternatively, the characters might require to come here for one of their quests. What brings the characters to this place is up to you as the GM. Feel free to draw inspiration from the individual descriptions of the highlighted locations.

THE ARCHIPELAGO'S STORY

WHEN THESE ISLANDS were discovered by the Western Territories, the explorers and pioneers sent by King Tyrund found the jungles of this archipelago already inhabited. A large tribe of dragonborn lived on the islands. Temperamental, aggressive, and strong; women and youngling tribespeople were fierce warriors too.

Dragon Bay and Cracked-Skull Bay (see map) were the two dragonborn settlements (and the only colonies) in the archipelago. Their original names were in a form of draconic that only the dragonborn of the islands speak. To this day, researchers still look for clues or a logical explanation for how the dragonborn tribes first came to these islands. They had no ships or vessels, nor docks.

Perhaps, the secret is buried in one of the four volcanoes in the area. Glok'ilax, the leader of the dragonborn tribes, and the only one of them with wings may know the truth. But no foreigner has ever talked to him. He resides in an almost impenetrable fortress in Cracked-Skull Bay. The best warriors of his ilk protect him.

ADAPTATION

IT HAS BEEN three decades since the archipelago's discovery. The arrival of men, elves, and other races changed the ways of the dragonborn over time. Today, there are eight non-dragonborn settlements scattered around the islands, the language barrier was broken by translators; the tribes learned to trade, etc. But to get that far, there were several bloody battles and numerous deaths... Hence, Glok'ilax's followers still believe all foreigners should leave. The issue split the tribes.

THE TWO BAYS

THE DRAGONBORN TRIBE is divided into two. Those who believe the tribe should open to the new world and meet other cultures, and those who consider all non-dragonborn impure strangers should leave their lands. The dragonborn living in Dragon Bay want the exact opposite of their counterpart in Cracked-Skull Bay.

THE NEW ERA FOR DRAGONKIND

The dragonborn that wanted to leave their old ways behind stayed in Dragon Bay under Tarrak'kar's leadership. He is a visionary and a person of science. He learned the Common tongue quickly and has even picked up some Elvish and Dwarvish. For over ten years, he has been the main contact and the person-to-talk-to for any business that involves the cooperation of the dragonborn and outsiders. Tarrak'kar's influence has a great impact on his kin. But naturally, since he adopted new ways, he is considered a traitor by Glok'ilax and those loyal to him.

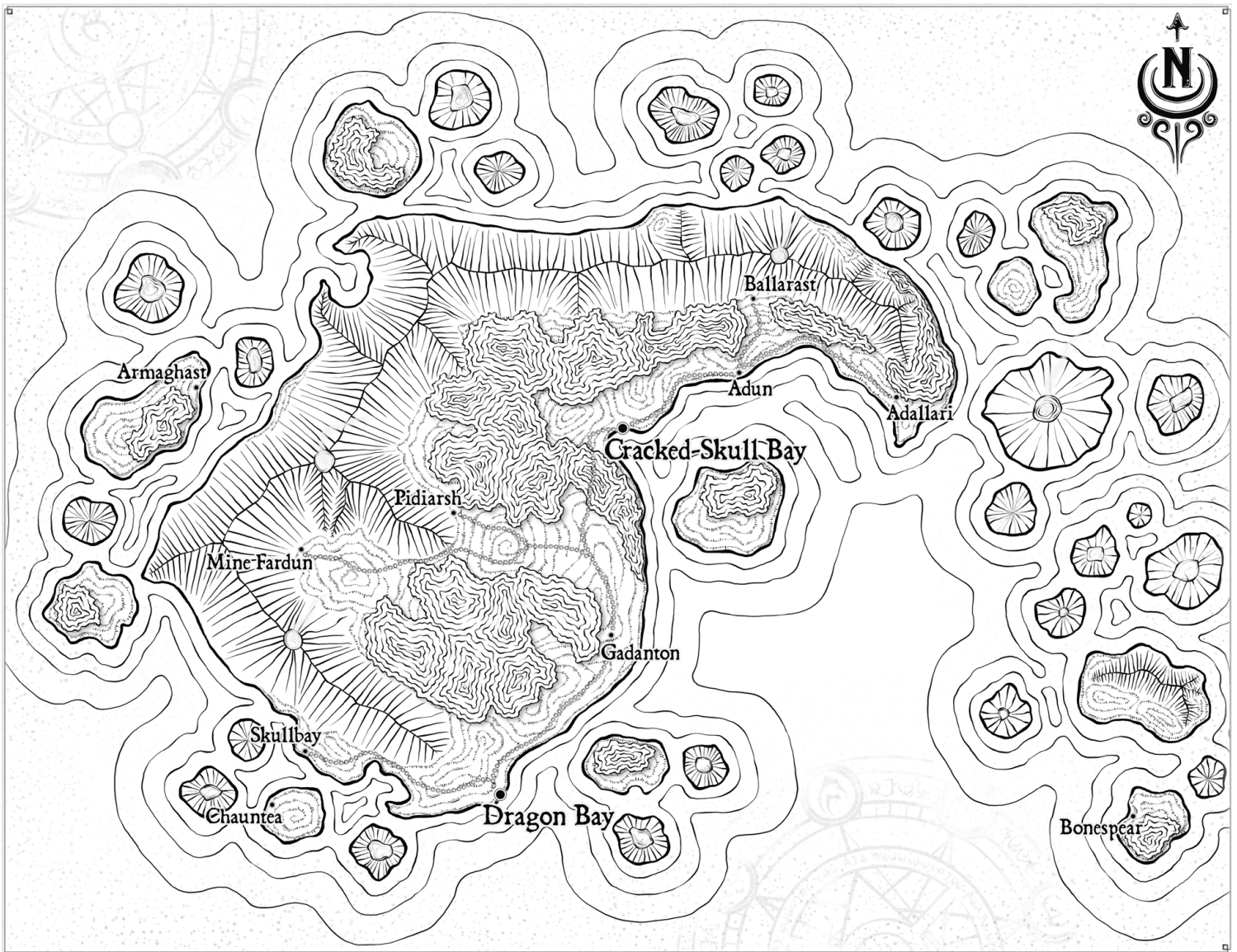
THE OLD WAYS MUST PREVAIL

A large dragonborn faction remains loyal to Glok'ilax. They dislike, do not trust, and even fear outsiders. They refuse to speak the Common tongue, even if they understand a little. They want outsiders gone and become aggressive and violent the moment they spot one. Squads of four or five tribesmen patrol the jungle at all times.

FEATURES OF THE ARCHIPELAGO

Climate. The islands are hot and humid. Characters wearing Medium or Heavy armor for an entire day gain one Level of Exhaustion. The sea is perfect for swimming, fishing, and even underwater rock hunting.

Atmosphere. The jungles are dense, deep, and dark at night. The rocky sides of the mountains and cliffs are dangerous and foster monsters too. The archipelago waters are rich with fish; a great food source, but vicious monsters reside in the depths as well. Dragonborn barbarians under Glok'ilax's orders might ambush outsiders at any moment. Traversing the jungle or going from one place to another is not an easy task. See the individual descriptions of each area for more information on how to challenge the characters and the threats in that zone.



POSSIBLE ADVENTURE HOOKS

You may use one or any combination of the adventure hooks to get the characters involved with this module:

AN ANCIENT RELIC

The characters are hired by a rich collector who is fascinated with the dragonborn tribes. He offers a fortune to the characters for retrieving a traditional barbarian war crest. These are carried by dragonborn war leaders in Cracked-Skull Bay, like Glok'ilax himself. This is not impossible, but it is meant to be a monumental task.

STOP THE CATASTROPHE!

Sent by the king, the characters come to help Tarrak'kar. Ballarast, one of the four volcanic islands, will erupt but Glok'ilax won't let anyone approach the area!

RESEARCHERS

The Guild of Researchers sends the characters to find out how the dragonborn arrived on this island in the past. They must obtain proof of their findings to get paid.

ARCHIPELAGO'S AREAS

DRAGON BAY

Friendly Dragonborn Settlement

Tarrak'kar and about a hundred dragonborn live in Dragon Bay, the second-largest settlement in the area. Travelers and newcomers are told to use this town as a landing spot for their vessels. Human-made piers and boats occupy the beach. It is dangerous to land in any other place or island; Glok'ilax's barbarians know the territory by heart and they roam the territories at all times.

The town's walls, shops, taverns, and buildings show the recent influence of humans, elves, and dwarves. The dragonborn here are eager to learn other languages, wear foreign clothing, and practice foreign traditions.

Quests. The dragonborn have no barbarian war crest. They lack any information regarding their ancestral history. They were all born here and ignore how their ancestors got to the islands in the past. Tarrak'kar is happy to see the characters if they come to help with the volcano.

CRACKED-SKULL BAY

Hostile Dragonborn Settlement

The largest settlement in the Archipelago earned its name three decades ago, when the islands were discovered, long before humans met Tarrak'kar and formed an alliance with some of the dragonborn. The scaled barbarians are known to lift their already-defeated enemies by the head and smash their skulls against rocks, the ground, or even their skulls. It caused such an impact on the Western Territories' pioneers that the entire archipelago was named after the foul practice.

Only Glok'ilax and his tribe call their town by its original draconic name. To the rest, this is Cracked-Skull Bay, a fortress built on a bog, surrounded by palisade walls, hidden traps, and camouflaged tribe warriors. Countless, endless rows of wooden spikes hold the cracked skulls of their enemies in a grim spectacle of cruelty.

Enemies. The tribe's weakest links are **scouts**, **thugs**, and **spies**. Their toughest warriors are **berserkers** and **gladiators**. Some of them have barbarian levels. Glok'ilax is not only one of the strongest, but he is also a shaman-barbarian of incredible power. He remains the only winged dragonborn in the entire region.

Quests. The characters must fight and make their way through Glok'ilax ranks if they wish to obtain the tribe leader's barbarian crest. Also, finding the truth about the dragonborn's history requires speaking face-to-face with Glok'ilax. But what could make the leader talk?

The characters may learn the tribe's history by investigating their paintings, possessions, and the land itself too. The GM is free to elaborate on these findings.

ADUN, BALLARAST, AND ADALLARI

Hostile Dragonborn Outposts

These three locations are occupied by Glok'ilax barbarians. The presence of outsiders forced them to expand, and take more territory. Outsiders are attacked on sight.

Quests. The volcano will erupt because Glok'ilax cultists are performing rituals to corrupt the magma. The characters must take over Ballarast to deal with this.

BONESPEAR AND ARMAGHAST

Human Outposts

Humans built Bonespear to facilitate the storage and transportation of all their goods. Armaghast is for the same purpose but it is mostly used to store valuables.

MINE FARDUN AND PIDIARSH

Dwarven Outposts, Mines

Dwarves wanted no quarrel with anyone and got to work the moment they stepped on the islands. All their goods pass through Dragon Bay before being shipped out.

GADANTON

Human/Elves Settlement

This settlement is often attacked because it works as an outpost for Dragon Bay. Elves and dwarves make business here and protect this location for their benefit.

SKULLBAY AND CHAUNTEA

Dragonborn/Human Outposts

Skullbay is an expansion to Dragon Bay. From there, dragonborn move toward Chauntea, where a hidden operation helps them travel to the Western Territories.



THE CHAPEL OF LOST LETTERS

The letters must be delivered. Farewells, wills, love letters, and more. I won't allow them to become lost. This valuable information must reach its destination.

Saint Saradgash

Delve Level 9 (16,200 XP)

3 bone nagas

1 spirit naga

4 wraiths

1 xorn

SETUP

ARCHIVISTS AND SCHOLARS spend their lives reading and curing collections in libraries and universities. Such repositories of knowledge are a priceless treasure that just a few can appreciate. For outsiders, those not versed in academic life, it is then difficult to understand the worst woe of those scholars: the fact that most written documents and knowledge have been lost through the ages. Countless letters that never reached their destinations. Libraries burnt to the ground by invading forces or censoring parties. Rune-marked relics destroyed after accusations of heresy. In the end, humankind's fear of the unknown has propelled the eradication of knowledge. All that knowledge is the real loss to civilization.

THE DUTIFUL KNIGHT

THERE WAS ONCE a determined knight named Sir Saradgash. He participated in countless battles in the name of his liege lord and upheld the banner of his land and the value of his ideals. Sir Saradgash was a brave, capable soldier. Many a life found its untimely end under the edge of Sir Saradgash's blade. He killed dozens of men, not for pleasure but because they came to his liege lord's lands to invade and destroy. Settlements were lost. Archives and libraries were up-heaved and destroyed.

After a terrible battle where Sir Saradgash's men failed to save Corma Town, they found a crashed stagecoach on the way to their regroup camp, all occupants dead. A sack of letters and documents from Corma Town was found. The undelivered contents struck Sir Saradgash as a terrible loss. Against his lord's orders, the knight traversed the land to deliver the missives. He made sure the mail was delivered. On this journey, he sustained deadly wounds as the region's enemies roamed the territories. The knight perished after delivering the last letter. He was later beatified. The saint of undelivered letters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

THE CHARACTERS SEARCH for an important piece of information that can only be found in a lost letter or a non-existent book. After some research, they learn of Saint Saradgash. The legends say that, in his chapel and burial place, any such information can be found. The characters can travel to the ancient mausoleum or teleport if they find out the circle's rune sequence (area 1).

FEATURES OF THE MAUSOLEUM

Light. The sconces in the mausoleum feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

Smells and Sounds. Those familiar with libraries notice the welcoming smell of old books and parchment throughout the dungeon. This is a *minor illusion* spell.

Magical Aura. A *detect magic* spell reveals a strong aura of conjuration from area 8. It can be perceived from any chamber within the *Chapel of Lost Letters*.

Eternal Guardians. The mausoleum guardians are bound to the compound as a test for would-be petitioners. Ancient spells guard their souls in place. If defeated in combat, they reform three days after, at dawn.

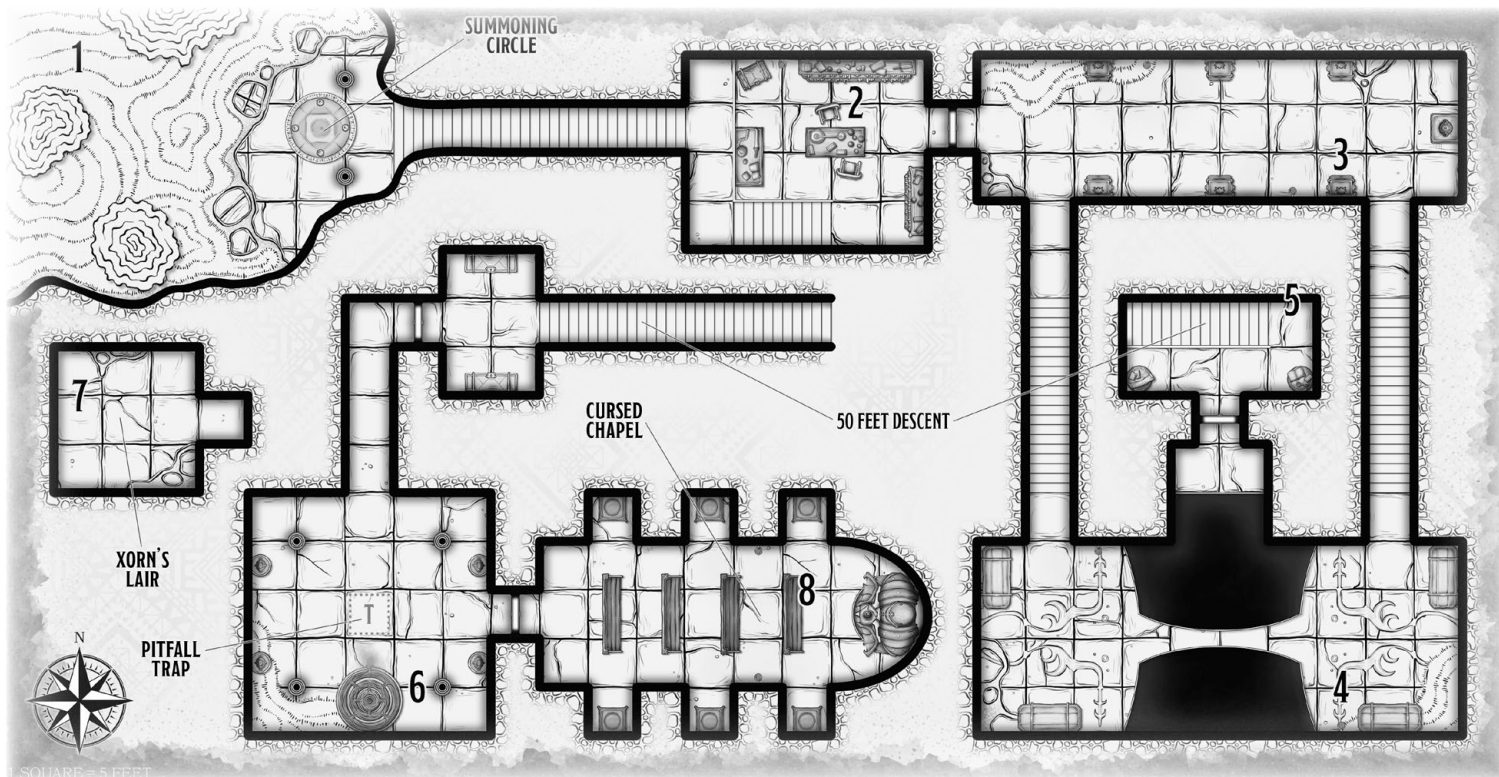
1. SUMMONING CIRCLE

The underground compound is close to a small farming settlement. The locals think the place is haunted; they ignore its purpose and nature. There was once a grandiose entrance with Saint Saradgash's statue but little of it remains. The sprawling forest has retaken most of it.

2. MAUSOLEUM'S ARCHIVE

After a 30 feet descent, the stairs open up to a small library with stone furniture. A thick layer of gray dust covers most books, scrolls, and reading surfaces.

The archive contains a detailed repository of past visitors. The log is kept by an *invisible servant* in the room. According to the registry, the last visit occurred 13 years ago. It says that three people came in and never returned. A careful inspection reveals that Saint Saradgash's resting place lies below. The documents also mention that a test of resolve and strength is necessary to gain access to the shrine. Few have managed to overcome this trial.



3. CURSED OSSUARY

Standing sarcophagi flank the way toward a beautifully-carved, scarlet vase on a stone plinth.

The clay vase is enchanted with a powerful *sympathy* spell. Humanoids within 60 feet of the vase feel a strong urge to approach and kneel (DC 17 Wisdom save). Several visitors have died of thirst and starvation from this foul trap. Their bodily remains are thrown into the sarcophagi by the *invisible servant* in area 2.

4. GUARDIANS ON THE BRIDGE

A narrow bridge overcomes a 20-foot-long gap in the stone floor of this chamber. The abyss below is eerie and unnatural. It appears to gaze back at observers.

The bottomless well leads to a semi-infinite pocket dimension where a creature that enters falls eternally. When a creature dies down there, their remains are spat back out and collected in one of the four stone enclosures in the room. Reaching the ledge to area 5 is the only means to reaching Saint Saradgash's shrine; a gap of 15 feet from the bridge's midsection. When the characters enter this room, four guardians materialize to impede their progress: a **spirit naga** on the chamber's west side of the bridge, and three **bone nagas** on the eastern side. Both monsters attempt to push the characters into the bottomless well with their abilities.

5. ACCESS TO THE LOWER LEVEL

A narrow, 50-foot-long stairway descends into the compound's lower level. The documents on the side tables are rotten and illegible. The two coffers below are empty.

6. TRIAL OF THE SPIRITS

A three-level fountain pours blood-like fluid on the floor. The fluid filters through the numerous floor cracks and disappears; its purpose eludes the mind.

The chamber contains four gold urns (150 gp each) on stone plinths. Each of them contains the spirit of a person that once opposed Saint Saradgash in life. Now, they are bound to protect his shrine by ancestral spells. Four **wraiths** emerge from the urns to attack trespassers. These angered spirits know no mercy. Creatures that step on the marked tile (see map) trigger a pitfall trap and are thrown into area 7 (DC 16 Dexterity).

7. THE XORN'S LAIR

A ravenous **xorn** is kept around by pouring the iron-laced water from the fountain in area 6. It is barely enough to keep it alive. The xorn attacks any creature that falls to consume any metals and precious stones on them.

8. SAINT SARADGASH'S SHRINE

The bronze effigy of a sword-wielding, armored knight stands proud on a large, funerary pedestal.

The small chapel is dedicated to Saint Saradgash. A few worthy individuals have had the privilege to stand here to petition the saint for a piece of lost information.

To obtain information, the characters must verbally state a formal request to Saint Saradgash. It works like a *contact other plane* spell but without the requirement for a saving throw. Saint Saradgash's scope of available information includes anything that has ever been put into written form, anywhere in the Material Plane.

THE WICKED ANTHILL

The ants must be stopped. If we lose the harvest thousands will die in the coming winter. The settlements in the region cannot sustain their hunger!

Constable Vardlen

SETUP

THE HIVE MIND is an abstract concept that attempts to explain the seemingly coordinated functions and activities of hive colonies such as those of ants, bees, and termites. Despite the lack of a developed language or brain, such simple insects can accomplish extraordinary feats of architecture and natural cooperation.

Judged individually, an ant is a simple insect, incapable of doing much. Removed from the colony, an ant is unable to survive in the wild. Nor does it have a purpose or a sense of self-preservation. But together in numbers, an ant colony behaves like a single organism with split activities and a strong sense of preservation of the colony.

When a colony is mature enough, a young queen ready to lay eggs travels far to an unoccupied territory to start a new colony. Such new anthills pose a terrible threat to human settlements due to their voracious consumption.

THE BANE OF GOLDEN VALE

THE PROSPEROUS REGION of Golden Vale is the home of numerous farming communities and small towns. The vale is fertile and produces enough to sustain the region and export the produce to the capital to the south. Some call Golden Vale, “*The Country’s Basket*” for this reason.

Alas, a formidable threat has risen out of the blue. A young queen of a giant ant species known as ‘razorbacks’ settled a few months ago in an arid region next to Varley Forest and the Golden Vale. Her presence was ignored at first while she cared for the first eggs, and worker ant larvae. Then, the worker ants started collecting forage from Varley Forest, and later on from the neighboring farms. The ants are not particularly strong but they keep coming despite the farmer’s valiant attempts to drive them off. A few of them have sustained terrible injuries fighting off the endless stream of razorback worker ants.

At this point, Constable Vardlen got involved and sent a squad of twelve armed men to track the ants back to their lair and destroy the anthill from the root. They thought it would be an easy task after dealing with the lowly worker ants. But less than half of them returned. The survivors claim that a larger, stronger breed of ants defends the anthill. They could not defeat a single one of them.

ADVENTURE HOOK

It has become clear that the ants’ threat to consume the season’s harvest shall brew a terrible problem for the coming winter. Due to the seriousness of this issue, Constable Vardlen has been approved to offer a bounty of 1,300 gp for any person or group capable of dealing with the growing ant colony. He believes it is still early enough to destroy the colony before it grows out of control.

Disclaimer. This is a level-3 adventure. However, giant ants or formian statblocks are not available in the MM or the 5e SRD. The statblocks are not provided herein but can easily be sourced from 3rd-party content online.

FEATURES OF THE ANTHILL

Light. The feeding ponds in areas 7, 9, and 11 provide dim-light. The ant queen glows enough to illuminate its chamber. The rest of the anthill is in darkness.

Smells and Sounds. The pungent stench of formic acid permeates the tunnels and irritates the lungs. The vibrations of worker ants coming and going can be perceived in most areas as a droning, constant sound.

1. ANTHILL ENTRANCE

Countless cat-sized ants come and go from the anthill’s entrance in a coordinated, tune-less dance. Some carry leaves and produce from nearby farms.

Worker ants are simple-minded and almost blind. They ignore the approaching characters unless they step on their walking paths; which cannot be avoided once the characters are within 10 feet of the entrance. Twenty **worker ants** attack the characters as soon as they notice them. Four larger, wolf-sized **soldier ants** emerge from the anthill and impede the characters’ progress.

2. REFUSE CHAMBER

The large chamber is littered with dead ants, rocks, and other solid materials brought to the anthill by mistake. The bones of the men sent by Constable Vardlen a few days ago litter the floor; the ants ate the rest. Ant-placed rocks hide two narrow passages to areas 6 and 11. There are twelve **worker ants** in the room sorting refuse and other trash. They attack the characters while one of them attempts to flee to raise the alarm in area 5.

3. LARVAE ROOMS

Writhing ant larvae stick to the rounded walls in rows while nursing ants feed them patiently.

The walls of these chambers are lined with semi-immobile larvae and hundreds of ants in pupae form. The contents of this room have the potential to double or triple the ant colony's size in the following weeks.

Two **soldier ants** and five **worker ants** defend the larvae rooms with their lives. The survival of these chambers spells the fate of their entire ant colony.

4. EGG HATCHERIES

Hundreds upon hundreds of soft white eggs are laid on the six shallow alcoves in this narrow area. Medium-sized characters must squeeze to reach the eggs while the five **worker ants** that tend to them move unimpeded. There are thousands of eggs in the ant hatcheries.

5. THE QUEEN ROOM

The largest ant resides here, the glowing ant queen. Dozens of small worker ants surround her, tend to her, and remove the eggs that she unstoppably lays.

The **young queen ant** is the most powerful being in the ant colony. It is her job to lay eggs and see to the colony's future. The queen is guarded by four **soldier ants** and eight **worker ants**. If the queen perishes, the colony continues to work for a few weeks but disbands after that and all ants die. The anthill cannot survive without the only egg-laying queen. However, the ant queen is capable to communicate with the characters via telepathy.

The young queen upholds the colony's survival over everything. If the characters are willing to negotiate, there might be some way to make a deal (see **Development**).

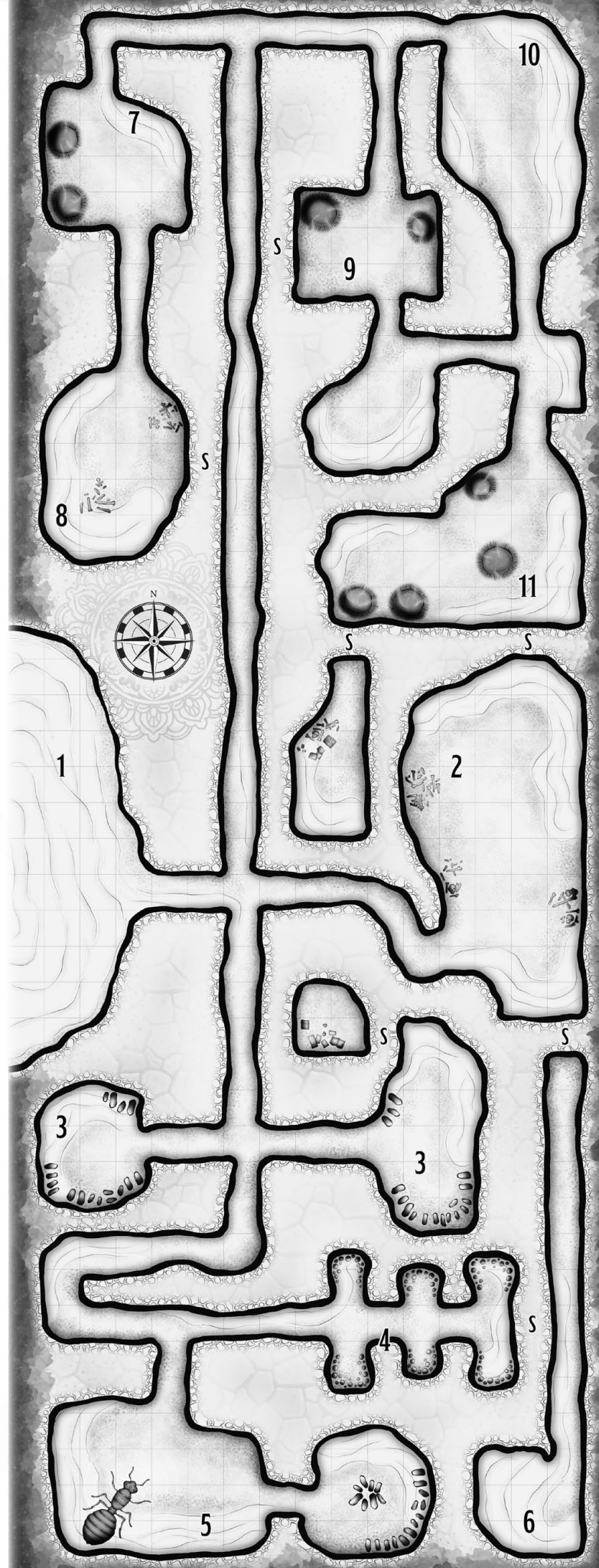
6. GROWING EXPANSION

A narrow, hidden path leads down to an uninhabited section of the anthill compound. Worker ants come from time to time to dig further and expand the chambers as the colony grows and requires more space. If the colony is left to grow, the tunnels shall slant down into the depths of the earth. Later on, even the queen's chamber is relocated to a deeper location in the colony.

7. WORKERS' FEEDING CHAMBER

Scores of worker ants surround two glowing ponds. The simple insects feed from the green fluid.

Razorback ants build these ponds where food and leaves are thrown and used to brew a fungal cocktail that serves as the colony's main food source. The fluid has psychedelic and medicinal properties and can be collected for future use (DC 16 Medicine). The group of twenty **worker ants** attacks trespassers as soon as they are detected.



8. APHIDS HATCHERY

Razorback ants have a mutualistic relationship with a breed of rat-sized aphids which are used as a secondary source of nourishment. Hundreds of green aphid eggs are embedded in the walls of this chamber. When they hatch, worker ants take them to Varley Forest where they are herded and moved around. The aphids produce a honey-like substance that the ants can consume.

9. SOLDIERS' FEEDING CHAMBER

Soldier ants consume the green-tinted gruel from two glowing ponds. The worker ants do not come here.

Soldier ants consume ten times more nourishment than small worker ants. Soldier ants come here twice a day to replenish their strength. There are five **soldier ants** in the chamber when the characters come. They are aware of them from their acute sense of chemical smell.

Contrary to the behavior in other areas, the soldier ants move threateningly and attempt to drive the characters off and toward the anthill's entrance.

10. FUNGAL FARM

The walls and ceiling of this chamber are littered with small, fist-sized holes that worker ants tend to. Clusters of gray and white material grow from them.

Razorback ants also partake in an ancestral ant activity of foraging for some fungal species, relocating them to the anthill, and then, farming them as a secondary source of food. The fungal fruiting bodies produce a sweet juice when squeezed that the ants can drink.

At any given time, the fungal farm chamber is guarded by two **soldier ants** and seven **worker ants**.

11. IMMATURE FEEDING PONDS

The chamber contains four feeding ponds but none of them are mature enough to be used for nourishment. Worker ants care for these ponds and drop eligible substances like plants, leaves, and the flesh of other insects and animals into the ponds to brew a fungal soup. These ponds are not ready yet. They appear almost identical to the ones in areas 7 and 9 except for a distinct smell (DC 17 Perception). In the same manner as area 6, this chamber is an expansion of the colony for the following weeks as pupae in area 3 mature and join the workforce.

DEVELOPMENT

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

If the characters agree to negotiate with the queen in area 5, she claims that the health of her colony is her priority. She can understand that the ravaging of the region's harvests is a danger to human populations, which she considers also a colony of sorts. If the characters are willing to work as couriers, the queen pledges to redirect the colony's foraging efforts northward to Varley Forest and beyond, where no farmlands exist. Humans must also stop killing worker ants. If they agree, the queen sprays them with a chemical agent that other ants recognize so other ants do not attack them afterward. This endeavor is not a simple task but Constable Vardlen is willing to give it a try. The reward is held for two weeks to see whether the new plan works or not.

If the characters destroy the ant queen, the ant colony becomes unorganized and quickly disbands. Constable Vardlen is satisfied and pays the promised reward.



SPHERE OF ECHOES

A GM supplement for an eerie magic artifact by David Hill

From the long forgotten past of the Age of Tyrants comes the artifact that scholars and researchers today call the *Sphere of Echoes*. Within this simple glass sphere, swirling gray clouds coalesce to reveal forgotten echoes of the past as well as to hold the cherished memories of Leucus, the powerful archmage who created the arcane device.

THE ARCHMAGE'S ORIGIN

THIS STORY BEGINS with Damos, also known as 'The Horned Fury' by his enemies. The fearless military strategist was a petty warlord of that era. Striding into battle with a majestic set of deer antlers atop his helmet, Damos carved himself a bloody path to the dominion over the lands now known as the Damos Highlands. These territories have been since then a cruel and unforgiving region. Much was expected of his first born, of course.

Damos's first son and heir to the Damos Highlands was Leucus. Damos expected Leucus to take up his legacy, the boy preferred to spend his days enthralled in the ways of the arcane. Their clash was inevitable. When they did, he made the boy forswear his inheritance, leaving his father's hearth to pursue the study of magic.

THE CREATION OF THE SPHERE

FOR A GREAT number of years, Leucus studied the mysteries of wizardry under the tutelage of Udina, the Pale Mistress of the secretive Order of the Unseen Stars. He became a powerful mage in little time. During his studies, however, Leucus began a forbidden relationship with a peasant girl. Breaking his vows to the order, Leucus and the peasant girl ran away together, hunted by assassins for the rest of their lives. But sadly, not even his magic could stop death from taking the life of her beloved.

When his soulmate died, Leucus only roused from his melancholy once he divined a way to transform a crystal ball into a device to relive moments from his past. His beloved would not return, but at least he could see her face again. Some years after, Leucus passed away, forgotten and alone. The mighty *Sphere of Echoes* got lost.

FINDING THE SPHERE

THE CHARACTERS MAY find the sphere as a reward in one of their missions. It could be the reward for completing a quest. Or perhaps a member of the Order of the Unseen Stars hires them to retrieve the elusive artifact to uncover the memories of the renegade mage.

SPHERE OF ECHOES

Wondrous item, requires attunement

You may peer into the sphere to see two minutes of your choosing from the past of your current location. The further back in time you look, the more distorted the image becomes. Recent events are clear whereas those from the very distant past appear as moving blobs of color.

Using this item requires a successful DC 10 Wisdom save. On a fail, the loss of some of your own memories is the cost of using the item (see table below). Each subsequent time you use the item on the same day increases the save DC by 5. The DC resets to 10 at dawn. The number of failures the character has suffered is cumulative over their lifetime rather than resetting each dawn as the save DC does. Memories lost to this item can only be recovered by a *greater restoration* or *wish* spells.

Failure	Memories lost
1st	One hour from yesterday.
2nd	One day from last week.
3rd	One important NPC in your life is completely forgotten.
4th	One year of your life.
5th	The last 5 years are lost.
6th	You lose all memories.

Once per day, you may access the memories stored within the *Sphere of Echoes*, roll a d20 and consult the table below to see which memory the sphere displays.

- 1 A boy in noble clothes repeatedly fumbles his sword drills, his disappointed father reprimands him for his failure.
- 2 As a conjurer performs tricks for the king's court, a small boy sits next to the throne wide-eyed, watching in awe.
- 3 Alone in a richly furnished bedroom a small boy completes a simple magical trick, then celebrates.
- 4 A young adolescent boy argues with the king in the throne room. He is struck by the king then banished.
- 5 Disheveled and splattered with mud, an adolescent boy entertains villagers with simple parlor tricks. A woman in pale robes watches from a distance. The woman talks about magic to him for a long while afterward.
- 6 Under the stern tutelage of a woman in pale robes an adolescent boy in blue robes conjures flames from his hands. He nearly collapses from exhaustion. But the boy does not look sad. His eyes are filled with determination.
- 7 On a wintry day, an adolescent boy in blue robes falls into an icy river and is saved by a peasant girl of his age.
- 8 A boy and a girl play in a meadow on a bright spring day, a stone tower looms ominously in the background.
- 9 A young man in blue robes kneels offering a ring to a young peasant woman with tears in her eyes.
- 10 A woman in pale robes strikes a young woman as a young boy watches; his body shaking and fists clenched.
- 11 At night, two cloaked figures holding hands flee a burning tower.
- 12 A young couple share a moment of happiness as they finish patching the roof of a small hut in the woods.
- 13 A young woman dances through the woods followed by a young man carrying firewood.
- 14 Dusk, a young couple look over their shoulders. They flee a hut holding just a few possessions.
- 15 A woman tends to a man with a gut wound, a chard figure in black robes lies dead nearby.
- 16 A man and woman tend to pigs, he falls into the mud and she doubles over in laughter.
- 17 A couple hides in a swamp, cold and shivering, as lights move in the distance searching for them.
- 18 A man holds the hand of a dying woman in bed as she takes a final breath, the helpless man sits there sobbing.
- 19 A blue-robed old man stands over the broken, old body of a woman in pale robes. A thick tome covered in glowing runes in his hand, anger burns in his eyes. The same determination of the young apprentice.
- 20 An old man in blue robes holds a glass sphere in his hand. Bound inside a pentagram before him is a devil who turns and grins at the person viewing the memory through the *Sphere of Echoes*.



EFFIGIES OF FORSAKEN DEPTHS

I have found a most nefarious source of energy under the goblinoid ruins of Darraghan City. It is the source of all the nightmares and the current mayhem.

Court Wizard

Delve Level 12 (18,600 XP)

1 aboleth
6 goblin ghasts
2 bone devils

SETUP

EXPLORING THE DREAMSCAPES is an ethereal pleasure that most mortals enjoy in some form or another during their lifetimes. Dreaming occurs each night but it is seldom remembered in the morning as anything more than a fleeting glimpse into the unknown. Alas, most mortals ignore that while they daily rest, their minds and souls are the most vulnerable to certain methods of influence and manipulation. Few creatures or mages are capable of such deeds, hence the high misinformation about the subject. But when the oneiroscape is under threat, civilizations fall, crowns change heads, and hundreds or even thousands perish or suffer at the behest of the few.

THE DREAMING FISH

THE GRAND METROPOLIS of Darraghan is almost a thousand years old. It is a sprawling settlement where thousands of people work hard to make a living and thrive in the growing city. It is now only a matter of scholarly show-off to know or claim that Darraghan was once built on the remnants of an even more ancient goblinoid capital. It is common knowledge that these goblins once had a grand kingdom, powerful magic, and technology; though little of that remains today. Their civilization fell abruptly from the seat of power when a powerful, magical fish took over the dreams of hundreds of them and influenced their actions. The arcane creature is known as an aboleth. Through careful manipulation of the goblins' dreams, it orchestrated tribal wars, disillusion with the monarchical government, and the collapse of their hegemony. In a few decades, the goblins were replaced by the growing humanoid populations. They would one day be the aboleth's next victims, but first, they had to thrive. So, the dreaming fish went into a thousand-year slumber. It has woken up to find the great city of Darraghan ripe for its dreamy escapades. The dreams of humans are easily manipulated, unlike those of halflings and elves. The evil aboleth seeks to get rid of those populations first.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The aboleth's dream onslaught started three months ago, or so claims the court's wizard. He has identified the dreaming fish from the psychic remnants after people experienced manipulated dreams. Two weeks ago, however, large factions of Darraghan have risen to attack and drive off elf and halfling populations. In the skirmishes, dozens of people on both sides have perished. Some perpetrating terrible crimes, others defending themselves.

Darraghan City offers a 10,000 gp reward for eradicating the aboleth threat. When the characters appear to help, they are given clear directions to an ancient, repurposed goblinoid compound. The court's wizard has confirmed that the aboleth's influence comes from there.

FEATURES OF THE DUNGEON

Light. The sconces in the mausoleum feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

Smells and Sounds. The stench of fish and saltwater permeates the dungeon. A low-pitch, indistinct chant vibrates off the stone walls, causing an unsettling mood.

1. ROOM OF PRAYER

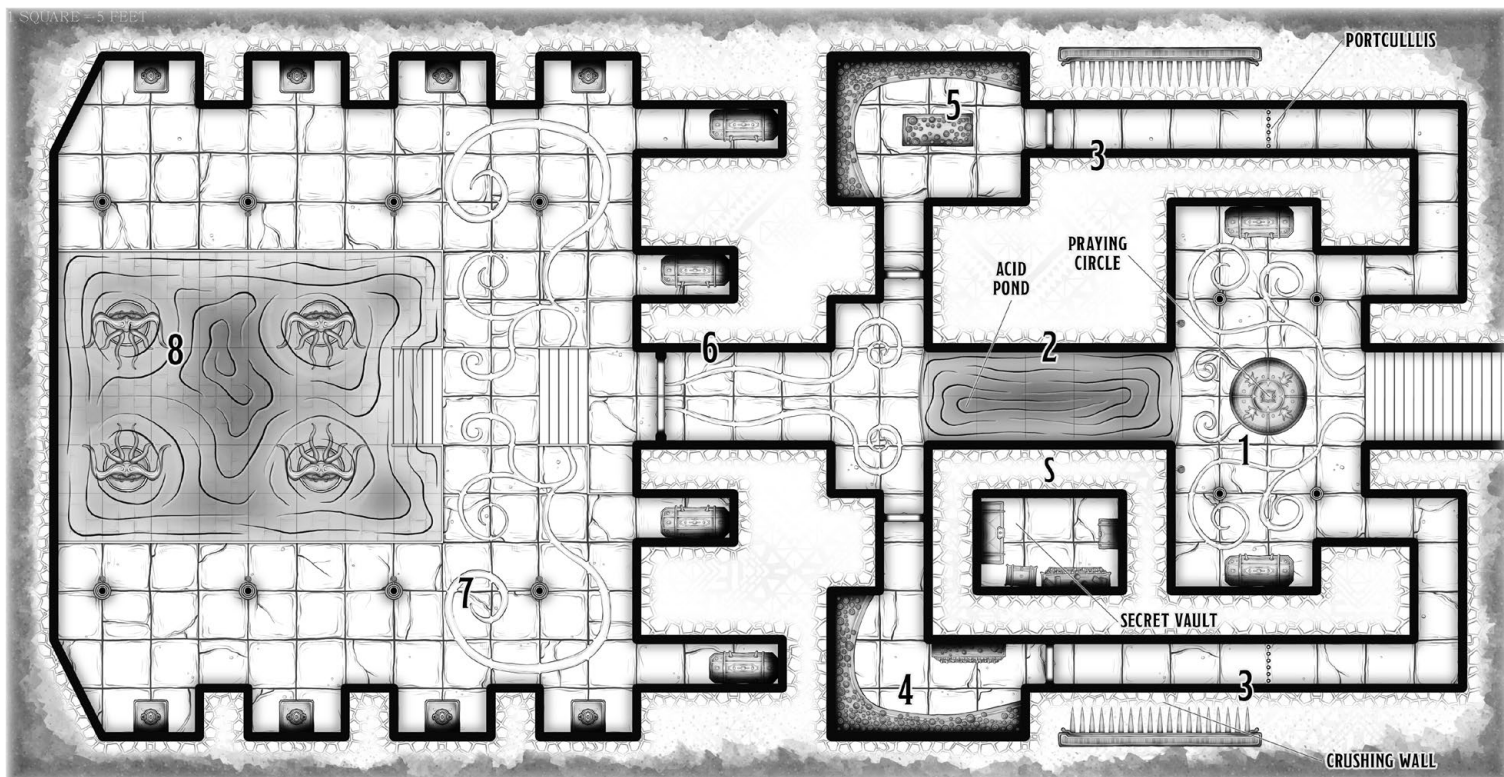
The dungeon is accessible from a dilapidated section of Darraghan City where the ancestral goblinoid ruins remain as a spectacle of sorts; an archaeological relic for tourists and scholars. A long flight of stairs descends 100 feet, to the depths of the city, into area 1.

The stone circle features a prayer inscription consistent with a non-existent, goblin faith that worships a fish god (DC 18 Religion). Two **bone devils** emerge from the sarcophagi and attack. The devils were summoned and bound by the aboleth's growing magical powers.

2. ACID POND

Creatures that fall into the 25-foot-long acid pond take 20d6 acid damage per round of submersion. Pushing a button 10 feet deep (DC 20 Perception) drains the acid and reveals a secret passage into the vault (see map). The vault door closes and the acid pond refills at dawn.

Treasure Vault. The vault contains 180 pp, 3,500 gp, 17,600 sp, a +2 *longsword*, a *necklace of fireballs*, a *chime of opening*, and three *potions of greater healing*.



3. CRUSHING WALL TRAPS

The two hallways labeled as area 3 feature a crushing wall trap and a falling portcullis to isolate the party and impede their escape. The deadly traps trigger when a creature comes within 10 feet of the west doors. The portcullis falls and blocks the way, potentially isolating one or more characters (see map). The crushing wall is fashioned with sharp spikes. It closes in 4 rounds. After that, any creature within takes 12d6 piercing damage.

The trap can be disarmed from outside of the portcullis by removing a hidden wall panel (DC 16 Perception) and using tinkering tools to stop or reverse the clockwork device (DC 22 Thieves' Tools). The trap resets after 1 minute and returns to its starting position.

4. CHAMBER OF OFFERINGS (SOUTH)

The narrow, irregularly-shaped chamber contains a stone bookcase packed to the brim with rotting, illegible tomes and scrolls and a curved surface where dozens of candles shine and dance to the tune of air currents.

Each of the candles is a potential message to the future. They are an ancestral, goblinoid way to preserve knowledge and information. Little is known about them. A character can meditate for a minute while holding a candle to learn its contents. Some are mementos or tributes to goblin heroes and priests. Others contain recounts of the dungeon's construction and its purpose of worshiping the new fish god. Most of them display scenes of massacres and genocides the goblins inflicted upon themselves at the whim of the homicidal dreamscapes that the foul aboleth put into their heads.

5. CHAMBER OF OFFERINGS (NORTH)

This chamber contains two stone surfaces where close to a hundred candles shine in the inscrutable darkness.

The candles function in the same manner described in area 4. The candles have similar contents as those described in area 4, with the exception of dozens of them which serve a purpose similar to a tombstone; personal acknowledgments of dead goblins and written messages from their loved ones. Most died during the tribal wars that the aboleth set upon their thriving world.

After inspecting a few candles, an ethereal apparition manifests in the middle of the room and coalesces into the shape of an armor-clad goblin. In Goblinoid, the ghost tells his story of murder and destruction during the wars of yore. He could not realize the gravity of his actions, and those of hundreds more, until an arrow pierced his chest and the aboleth's ruse was revealed. The goblin soldier claims the aboleth lies beyond the door in area 6. If the dreaming fish cannot be stopped, claims the phantom, the human population above shall suffer the same fate as the great goblinoid kingdoms of the past.

6. DOOR OF THE SACRED FISH

A beautiful carving of an eel-like figure chasing the moon decorates the double doors. A strong *antipathy* enchantment is inscribed on the door runes. Creatures within sight feel the urge to double back and jump into the acid pond in area 2 (DC 18 Wisdom save). On a successful save, or if the enchantment is dispelled, the characters can proceed onto area 7 where the aboleth awaits. The *antipathy* spell resets at dawn, even after dispelled.



7. HALL OF THE DREAM FISH

The grand hall was once the tomb of goblin heroes of war and generals. Four of those generals lie within the sarcophagi in the chamber's eastern alcoves. After the aboleth took over the goblin kingdoms with its nefarious influence, a large goblin faction started an impromptu religion to worship the strange fish that some of them remembered from their elusive dreams. After a momentary surprise, the aboleth was pleased and connected its underground watery lair to the burial hall.

The eight clay vases by the north and south walls contain the ashy remains of hundreds of goblins that once served the aboleth after being enslaved by its abilities. They perished away from water and turned to ash.

8. EFFIGIES OF FORSAKEN DEPTHS

The aboleth is aware of the characters' progress through the dungeon. It takes insult to their impertinent approach but remains curious as few have managed to reach this far, even in the old days of the goblinoid kingdoms.

The aberrant fish emerges from the depths below area 8 and awaits menacingly; flanked by the four stone effigies that vaguely resemble its fish anatomy. The aboleth communicates telepathically and gauges their physical prowess. It knows the characters are a serious threat to its plans. Hence, it chooses to negotiate. The aboleth claims the status quo shall change soon. If the characters agree to help the aboleth, they shall become the rulers of the new hegemony. If the characters refuse, the **aboleth** summons six mucous-coated, **goblin ghasts** to fight alongside it, in the 10-foot-deep pond.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

The characters reach the end of this adventure. They must face the consequences of their deeds.

FIGHTING THE DREAM FISH

The aboleth is a formidable opponent. It uses its Mucous Cloud and Tentacle abilities to inflict its disease on the characters and force them to be in the water where it and the water elementals have the upper hand. The aboleth targets physically strong warriors with its Enslave ability to charm them and destabilize the party's efforts.

When the aboleth drops to one-third of its hit points, it attempts to flee down the waterways under the dungeon. If allowed to do so, it is a difficult task to track it down there. The flooded tunnels span hundreds of miles in every direction. Still, the aboleth plots its revenge and shall not resurface for decades. Either way, the city representatives consider the job done and pay the agreed-upon reward. Darraghan City organizes a feast and a tournament to honor the characters' valorous deeds.

TAKING THE DEVIL'S BARGAIN

The characters accepting the aboleth's bargain is a dangerous proposition of uncertain results. It is up to the GM to determine the best outcome for this. The aboleth coats the characters in a mucous membrane that allows them to sleep for 10 years. After this period, they may wake up in mental shackles, under the aboleth's control. Just a few more of its minions. On the other hand, the aboleth may be sincere and allow the characters to rule over the new world in its stead. What challenges they find in either scenario are adventures for another day...

THE COST OF A LIFE

Honestly, I cannot figure my daughter out. I know she would be happier at the king's court. You must find a way to make Anna come to her senses...

Lord Alastor Bouldings

Delve Level 5 (5,350 XP)

3 ghosts
6 shadows
8 specters
1 wraith

SETUP

EACH INDIVIDUAL HAS their poison of preference. For some, alcohol and mind-numbing herbs are preferred. Others indulge in milder options like coffee and smoking leaves. Some are hooked on the thrill of adrenaline in challenging situations. They have in common the resilience that continued exposure incurs. Requiring ever-increasing quantities of it. When people cannot control their urges, they inevitably take part in a vicious cycle that often spells their doom and that of their close ones.

ANNA BOULDINGS, THE BRAVE

THE ONLY DAUGHTER of a wealthy, well-positioned family, Anna Bouldings always felt a void inside of her. In her teenage years, she found solace in swordplay, climbing, and acrobatics. In her youth, and to her parents' dismay, she became a daring infiltrator and tomb-robber. Her father, Lord Alastor Bouldings exhausted resources trying to bring her back into the family's fold. He agreed with her individuality but begged her not to risk her life.

For over a decade, Lord Bouldings's relationship with his daughter has been difficult at best. She always returns to the manor to research and rest and then sets back out into the wild. But now, for once, she has not returned. Against his father's wishes, Anna left to explore the Mausoleum of Stars, a well-known, ancient elvish tomb near the city's outskirts. It is known to be well guarded by traps and perilous guardians. None have managed to plunder the mausoleum's contents as of yet.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Lord Bouldings offers a 2,500 gp reward for finding her daughter and bringing her back home. He claims Anna went into the dangerous dungeon by herself. She had the nerve to boast about this to him and her mother before parting. The Lord's concern is strong and genuine.

FEATURES OF THE DUNGEON

Light. The sconces in the mausoleum feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

Locks. All doors are made of soapstone slabs with medium-quality locking devices (DC 16 Thieves' Tools). A master-key is located in the south chamber of area 7.

Chamber Ceilings. All areas have 25-foot-tall, domed ceilings decorated with intricate bas-reliefs and eroded frescoes depicting landscapes with fine, elvish artistry.

Secret Doors. An observant character finds hidden, fake-brick buttons (DC 17 Investigation). Upon closer inspection, narrow passages to hidden areas are revealed.

Arcane Negation. A weak anti-magic field negates the casting of spells within the mausoleum (DC 13 Wisdom save per spell). Successfully cast spells are cast as if one lever lower and have their ranges halved.

1. ENTRANCE CHAPEL

A 50-foot-long flight of stairs leads down to a humble chapel. It is customary for elvish tombs to have a chapel where visitors can pray for their loved ones and receive the blessing of the elvish god (DC 16 Religion).

2. ARCHIVE AND RECORDS

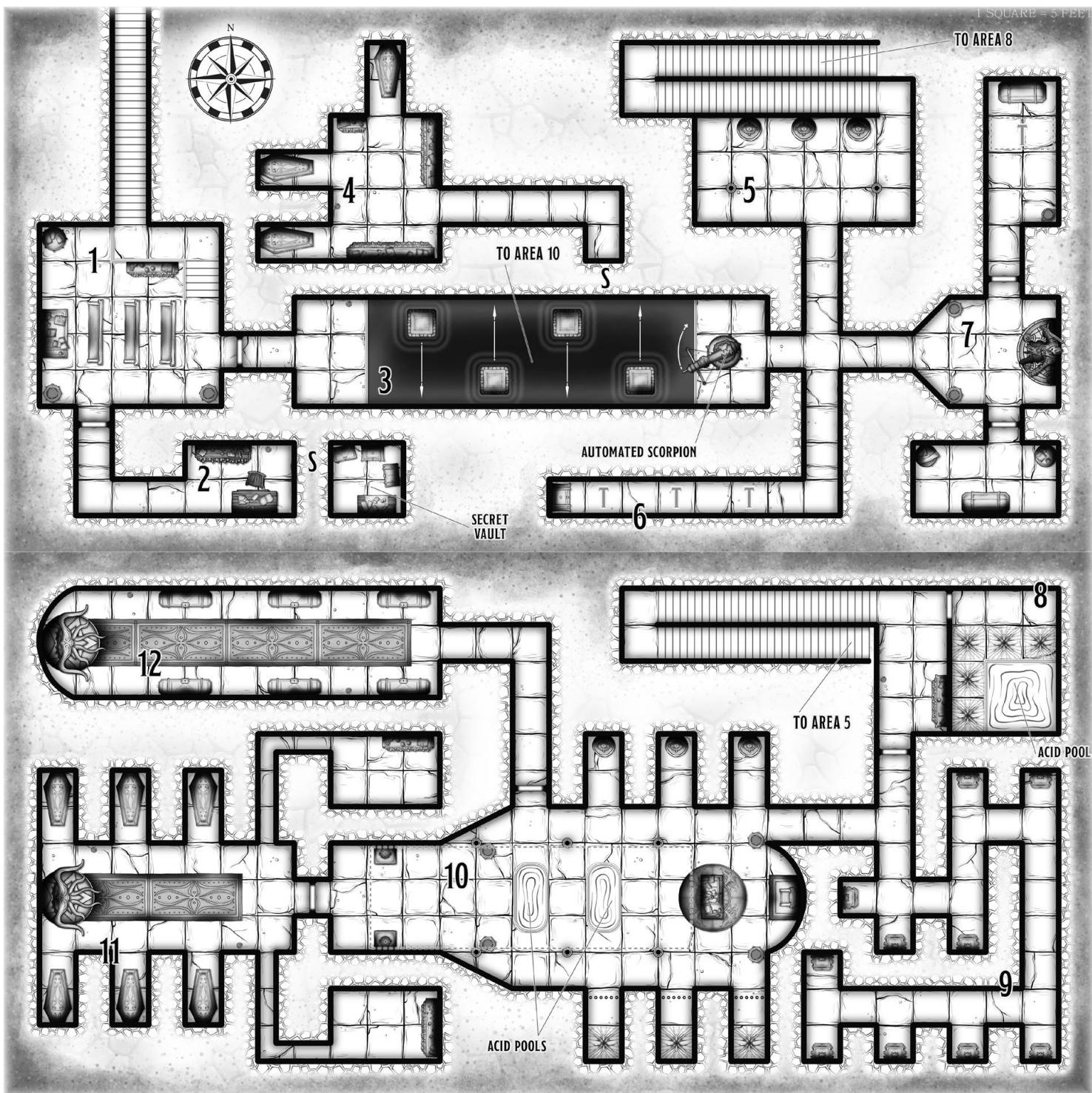
The room contains journals and logs of elves interred in the mausoleum as well as a visitor log. The latest entry reads: 'Anna Bouldings, archaeologist', dated a few days ago. The archive includes a dire warning: "*Delve not into our tomb lest you learn the cost of your life*".

Treasure. The vault contains 23 pp, 2,500 gp, 14,325 sp, a +1 dagger, and a *potion of superior healing*.

3. THE GREAT GAP

Floating platforms are the only way across a bottomless gap. The platforms move from side to side with a droning hum and an eerie, supernatural brilliance.

Creatures that fall into the gap drop 60 feet into area 10, potentially falling into one of the acid ponds. The automated scorpion on the east side is not visible from the entrance. It fires large bolts at creatures once they jump on the second platform (DC 15 Dexterity save, 2d6 damage and 3-in-6 chance of falling). The secret path to area 4 was left open by Anna. It is perceived automatically.



4. TOMB OF TRAITORS

Three elves who betrayed their motherland are interred here. According to their beliefs, traitors are buried in secret chambers with a body of literature that compiles their nefarious deeds and treacheries (DC 17 Religion).

Anna's footprints and handling of the tomes are easy to notice (DC 12 Perception). When the characters arrive, the sarcophagi lids move aside to release three elvish **ghasts**. One of them is marked with a recent longsword slash; Anna attacked it but later fled back to area 4 to avoid the undead altogether. In her rushed exit, she left a tricorne hat with golden flapping on the stone shelf.

5. SOUL-CONSUMING EWERS

Three golden vases await on stone plinths. A barely-audible whisper comes from them. A dead rat lies by the central vase; its eyes the color of emerald.

The vases are cursed with a soul-consuming charm. Non-elves that enter the chamber become charmed and feel the urge to peer into any of the vases (DC 12 Wisdom). Creatures that do this have their souls pried out from their bodies and die. Anna came here on her way to area 10 and almost lost her life. She had the wits to retrieve her pet rat Baggers from her purse and present it to the vase. She was free to go after the rat was dead...

6. A TRAP FOR THE GREEDY

A decorated, stone chest can barely be glimpsed by the end of an otherwise empty, dark hallway.

The chest is empty. This area is a trap for greedy, shameless tomb-robbers. There are three pressure plates along the hallway (see map). 80 pounds of weight cause them to trigger and open into a 60-foot-tall shaft that leads into area 10's south cells. Creatures that fall take 8d6 piercing damage (DC 13 Dexterity). Each pressure plate triggers individually. The pitfall traps reset at dawn.

7. SHRINE TO THE GOD OF BLADES

The statue of a mighty, armor-clad warrior dominates the room. Its plate brandishes a sun-shaped sigil.

Scholars identify the sigil and the effigy as a representation of Alloh, the God of Blades. The obscure, elvish deity is the saint of warriors and swordplay. From the records in area 2, many of those buried in this tomb were renowned warriors, hence the inclusion of this shrine.

There are two adjoining chambers, the south one contains a coffin and an assortment of worthless trinkets. The dungeon's master-key rests there on one table.

The north chamber contains an empty, stone coffin. The two stone tiles in front of it are part of a deadly pitfall trap (see map). 120 pounds of weight trigger it and drop any creatures into the acid in area 8 (DC 13 Dexterity).

8. CHAMBER OF SUFFERING

The small room contains a 10-foot-deep, acid pool surrounded by sharp iron spikes. Creatures that fall from the pitfall trap in area 7 take 4d6 poison damage per round submerged in the corrosive substance. The spikes around the pool can be bypassed by walking carefully through them (DC 16 Dexterity, 4d6 piercing damage).

9. CRYPTS OF THE FAITHFUL

A winding hallway riveted with 5-foot-deep alcoves twists back and forth. Intricate niche shelves hold the earthly remains of countless elf warriors of yore.

The crypt contains ten niche shelves. Each of them bears the remains of 3d6 elvish warriors who perished hundreds of years ago. The spirits of those interred here do not suffer the trespassing of non-elf creatures. They consider the characters' intrusion a terrible insult.

Eight **specters** awake from their slumber and attack the characters as they traverse the winding hallway. Anna Bouldings came here and defeated a specter. Her tracks can be discerned on the floor's thin dust layer (DC 14 Survival). She reached the furthestmost niches, prayed, and left an amulet as a sign of respect. She hoped to appease the beleaguered undead with her piousness but fled when more apparitions kept coming for her.

10. MAUSOLEUM'S NAVE

The dungeon's largest chamber is a multipurpose location. This area lacks a ceiling; it is directly above area 3. Creatures that miss the floating platforms or are hit by a scorpion bolt above may fall here. Creatures that fall into the stone floor take 6d6 bludgeoning damage. Creatures that fall into the acid pools take 4d6 poison damage per round submerged in the corrosive substance.

When a large gathering of elf pilgrims comes to pay their respect for the ancient warriors interred in the mausoleum, the acid pools are covered and the chamber is repurposed as a church of sorts. Rotting praying tomes and fable books are scattered over the tabernacle.

11. A CHALLENGE FROM THE GRAVE

An ephemeral, elvish warrior stands ready for battle. His mantle and armor are vaporous and evanescent.

The elvish warrior awaits a worthy challenger after numerous short skirmishes with Anna Bouldings. The warrior speaks with a spectral, raspy voice in Elvish:

Are you valiant and worthy to stand and fight us for your intrusions? Or are you cowardly like that rogue woman who so pesters our well-deserved rest?

The transient guardian (**wraith**) summons forth 6 **shadows** to this fight. Defeating these discarnate phantasms returns all other undead in the dungeon to their slumber.

12. THE DARING DAUGHTER

An impromptu camp lies at the end of this long hallway with six stone coffers. A young lass sits reading.

Anna Bouldings has slept here for a few nights. She tried to convince the elvish guardian in area 11 several times that she comes in peace and means no disrespect. The wraith, however, does not accept her logic. The daring adventurer reads a book stolen from area 2. She is not amused to see the characters when she learns that it was her father who sent them to her rescue.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

The characters reach the end of this adventure. They must face the consequences of their deeds.

Anna is a daring rogue and would-be adventurer (her stats are left to the GM's discretion), she is indifferent to being escorted back to her father's manor but does remark that she was in no need of saving and that her father only wants her home so he can marry her off. Lord Bouldings is glad to see her, though. He pays the bounty.

However, before reaching the manor, Anna offers to join the party. She claims she has the map of an ancient, treasure-filled, dwarven ruin. She could use some help exploring it. Alas, that is an adventure for another day...

TERROR BELOW SORLANG

By Elven Tower and
Daniel's Maps



LEVEL 5 ADVENTURE

A MID-TIER ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

TERROR BELOW SORLANG

“Spirits, ghosts from the war, monsters in the dark, or ghouls made of human wastes... I could care less. Get the job done, you get your gold. Now! Go!”

Constable Oggie

The gods and immortal beings have all the time in the universe to mend their mistakes and understand their blunders. Unfortunately for mortals, it is too late by the time they realize their endeavors shall fail. And humans often do not live to tell the tale or their deeds become an issue for a future generation. Either way, solving these problems is never easy and is almost always a deadly task.

SETUP

THIS ONE-SHOT MODULE brings the characters to Sorlang, a town located a few days from Ternace, Capital of the Eastern Territories. The mighty characters arrive after long days of traveling. Perhaps they look for a place to rest following a challenging mission. Either way, it is when they spend some time in town or visit important areas that they learn of Sorlang's problem. See **Adventure Hooks** for ideas on how to get them involved.

THE TOWN OF SORLANG

IT IS NOT common for farming communities to be surrounded by walls. Crops and harvests are usually kept beyond palisades or stone barriers. And that was the way the town was built about five decades ago. But the territories were struck by the orc wars, which lasted a couple of years. Sorlang stood in the middle of the conflict so the authorities from Ternace had the wooden wall built. Back then, the fortifications still left a considerable amount of free space to expand within their protection.

Today, almost every inch of the town is occupied by a farm. But for some reason, all talks of expansion or ideas regarding the farming of the outer terrain of the wall are stalled. The entire town is happy to remain within.

MILITARY PAST

SORLANG WAS USED as an outpost and a communication center during the war due to its location. Military leaders lived a few years in town and made strategic decisions. For instance, they ordered the construction of underground cells for prisoners and questioning. This occurred long before the implementation of the sewage system. No one knows where these cells are today.

SINS FROM THE PAST

IT HAS BEEN almost twenty years since the orc wars. The soldiers left for good and even though the palisade stayed, peace reigns over the region. But the things that happen at times of war often leave scars upon the land.

That is the case for the prisoners that were left to die when the war ended (see areas 8 to 10 in chapter 2). The conflict had ended. There was no use for the prisoners anymore. The heartless soldiers from Ternace covered the entrance and left two dozen people there. Orcs, half-orcs, and some human mercenaries who believed in the orcs' cause. All of them starved to death, took their lives, or killed each other in a fit of rage and panic.

SEEKING REVENGE

IT TOOK THEIR souls decades to gather the strength to take a physical form, but the spirits of the dozen people who experienced this horrible demise came back for revenge. They escaped their prison and found the town's sewer tunnels (see dungeon map). They surface and attack every two days or so... Many have died and the town guards are no match for them. The authorities look outward for help after two weeks of murderous horror.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Terror below Sorlang may begin with one or any combination of the following adventure hooks:

JUST A JOB

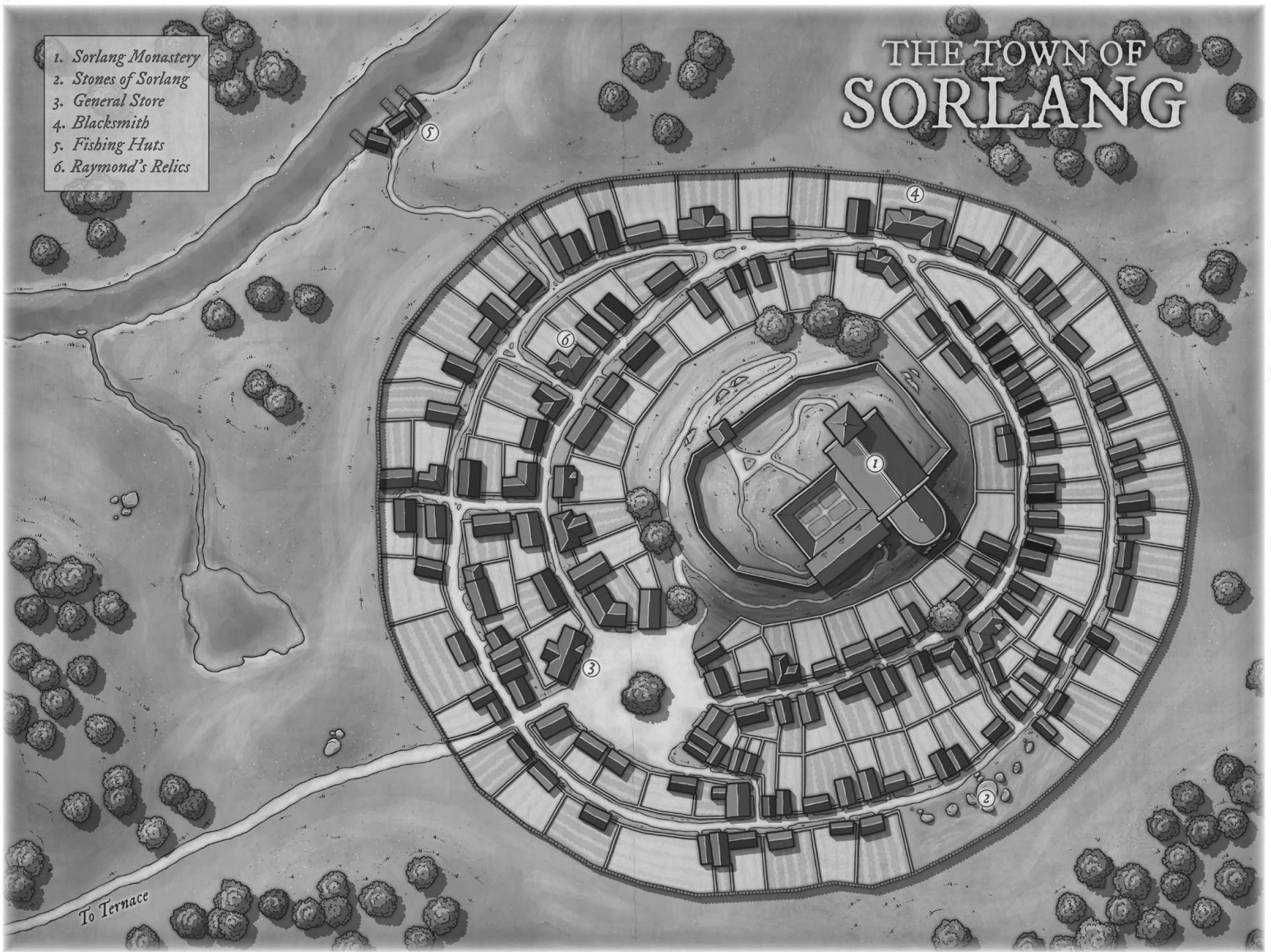
Constable Oggie is aware of the characters' presence. Their reputation precedes them. He cares little about that, though. He offers 3,500 gp if they can guarantee no more monsters shall emerge from the sewers.

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Father Tulip is considered the second-in-command after Constable Oggie. This is due to his religious standing. It grants him political favor and the love and respect of almost all people in Sorlang. He believes the monsters attacking the town are of an abyssal origin. He sends a messenger to summon the characters to the monastery, or he goes to meet them in person at the tavern or inn they are staying at. He has an important job for them.

THE TOWN OF SORLANG

1. Sorlang Monastery
2. Stones of Sorlang
3. General Store
4. Blacksmith
5. Fishing Huts
6. Raymond's Relics



1. SORLANG MONASTERY

The largest building at the hilltop is the town's monastery. It is protected by a 10-foot-tall wall. A beautiful, golden symbol of the Sun God on its facade. People go through the guarded outpost to pray.

The majority of the population in Sorlang prays to the Sun God. The people have three weekly masses and monthly religious traditions. The town is known for its devotion and quirky celebrations throughout the year. The monastery is paramount to the regular activities of the villagers and farmers. Father Tulip and an army of servants, acolytes, guards, and general monastery staff give life to this edifice of faith, the heart of Sorlang.

Quest. Father Tulip begs the characters to perform a cleansing ritual at the monsters' lair. The church offers 1,500 gp for the job, and he provides a divine *spell scroll* for this specific task. Only a character with access to divine spells may do this. If no one can do this job, Father Tulip sends Gareth (**acolyte**) with them, provided the characters do their best to protect his best pupil.

2. STONES OF SORLANG

After the war, countless soldiers were missing in action. These stones were placed to mourn all of them. The people of Sorlang often stop to say a silent prayer.

Mini-Quest. The stones' cleaning is scheduled for today. But if the characters see them and have the initiative to clean them, a passer-by witnesses this and tells Father Tulip. Soon, the entire town knows of the kind strangers.

3. GENERAL STORE

The large wooden sign of this building reads: "*Jammie's*". Which is a combination of Jady and Tammy's names, the owners of the establishment. It stocks regular items and farming equipment. The two ladies ask the characters for help in exchange for a discount on their entire stock.

Mini-Quest. With the town's current situation, a **bandit captain** and three **thugs** come every other day to charge the poor ladies a "security and protection" fee. The characters may wait for their next attack (today) to get rid of them. Excessive violence scares the ladies, though.

4. BLACKSMITH

The smith is a man named Harrison. A large, bulky individual with hairy, muscled arms. He loves smithing competitions and the reward for beating him in a contest is a beautiful *+1 longsword* hanging on his back wall.

Mini-Quest. Forge an item! One or more characters compete against Harrison to forge the finest dagger. The GM is free to decide how to adjudicate this competition. A single skill roll by each competitor is suggested.

5. FISHING HUTS

A group of six strong men and women with bronze skin work here. They clean fishing boats, repair broken nets, cook fish by the river shore, etc.

The characters should know they can visit this area when they explore Sorlang. Uriel, the man in charge, waves at visitors when they approach; his bandaged foot resting on a tabouret. The man's family (wife, daughter, and son) work here along with two employees. However, they need the characters' help with a recent problem.

Mini-Quest. Sorlang is surrounded by large forested areas where small groups of druids or elves live. The magic employed to strengthen the woods often has unforeseen consequences on the fauna. For instance, the number of quippers has increased unnaturally. The fish caused Uriel's injury and they are the reason the stream is unbreachable. They beg the characters for their help with this. With the town's current problem, there is no one available to come to their aid but they can't fight the vicious, carnivorous fish (six **swarms of quippers**).

6. RAYMOND'S RELICS

Sorlang's relics store is famous for its many elvish items and artifacts. The owner of this establishment is Raymond, a seasoned explorer, and translator. He has contacts in faraway places and itinerant merchants from all corners of the land visit him to make business.

Mini-Quest. Criminals and bandits take advantage of the chaotic situation in Sorlang. Five **bandits** and three **thugs** attempt to rob the place while the characters talk to Raymond or browse the store's inventory. To add more chaos to the mix, consider making Raymond's Relics the location for the combat encounter portrayed below.

GETTING INVOLVED

THE CHARACTERS MEET constable Oggie while they rest at the inn, drink at the tavern, or visit one of the highlighted areas. Alternatively, the characters meet Father Tulip in area 1 (see **Adventure Hooks**). Both NPCs ask for the characters' help with the current problem.

Encounter. The following encounter is meant as an additional, deadly challenge to any of the areas described above. The objective is that the characters meet Sorlang's threat for the first time in a similar way to the villagers: ambushed, unaware, and taken by surprise. The abomination (see cover) emerges from the sewers and attacks the characters and whoever is with them. Use the **wraith** statblock but remove its **Incorporeal Movement** and **Sunlight Sensitivity**. When defeated, the abomination sublimates into smoldering black smoke. The heavy, ephemeral substance filters back into the dark sewers.



SORLANG'S SEWERS

“Your kindness has inspired me. It strengthens my faith! I must go with you and share this experience. The people of Sorlang deserve it, I must fight too!”

Father Tulip

THE AFTERMATH

The danger is not over even after defeating the abomination outside the town's sewers. After the battle, the characters witness how an obscure, thick smoke travels the air from the abomination they killed. It forms a path back into the sewers; a hint of more danger down below the town. Any of the NPCs present begs the characters to descend.

THE CHARACTERS' STANDING

Helping the people of Sorlang in each area improves the characters' reputation in town. Here are the consequences of the characters' deeds while in Sorland.

- The characters do not have to pay for food or lodging if they clean the stones in area 2. Most villagers offer their homes as a place to stay and fill the characters' bellies with fresh veggies, bread, and soup. Inns and taverns offer a 50 % discount.
- Jady and Tammy (area 3) offer a 50 % discount to the characters if they protect them and their store from the bandit leader and his thugs.
- Harrison, the town's forger, is a man of his word; whoever beats him in a contest shall be the new owner of the magic sword hanging on his wall (area 4). He cries a little when he hands it over.
- Uriel was saving a *potion of greater healing* in case a member of his family needed it. He gladly gives it to the characters if they help with the quippers.
- If the characters defend Raymond and his store, the businessman realizes times have changed. He hires a personal guard (**veteran**) but his first task is to help the characters finish their job in town.
- If the characters help at least two people in town, a young boy brings them a message from Constable Oggie. It reads: “*Your deeds in town have changed my mind. I hope with all my heart that you don't have to fight a monster made of human waste*”.
- If the characters help everyone, Father Tulip (**priest**) decides to go; he trusts them after all people in town speak well of the strangers; he does not risk Gareth anymore. Or, he goes even if one of the characters can perform the divine ritual.

THE SEWERS

THE SEWER NETWORK is recent. Its construction took place years after the war was over, but no one could have known of the monsters that would creep out of here decades after... The characters may descend from several areas in town. Down there, the marks and tracks lead them to the dungeon's entrance in area 1.

FEATURES OF THE DUNGEON

Dwellers. A group of almost two dozen people inhabits the caverns. They have lived here for years, but Sorlang's abomination attacked them too when it got free. The survivors hide in area 6. See **The Underground Society** for more details on their origin and current state.

Light. Luminescent fungi and torches placed by the cave dwellers illuminate most of the caverns. Areas without any of these two are in complete darkness.





1

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SECRET
PATH

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4

6

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SECRET
PATH

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10

THE UNDERGROUND SOCIETY

WHILE SORLANG BECAME a city, some of its homeless population joined forces and found a place to live in the sewers tunnels just months after their construction. One day, they found a weak stream had caused enough damage to a wall to attempt to push it down (area 1).

Beyond it, the caverns offered more food, water, and shelter than the town above their heads or the sewage tunnels. They settled down. They visit the surface to beg for money or food. But they return to their underground lair for rest and sleep. This is their home now.

The monster killed many of them. See area 6 for more information on the current state of these people.

1. SEWAGE TUNNELS

The characters take some time finding their way through the sewers but they eventually reach this area. The stench of death coming from the caves has attracted undesirable vermin. Four **swarms of rats** attack the characters when they enter the caves and approach area 2.

2. GREEN FUNGI

The east wall of this cave is cluttered with luminescent fungi. They shed a soft, green light. A water stream makes its way from the caves to the sewers.

The corpses of three people lay on the floor of this chamber. They have been dead for a week at least (DC 12 Medicine). Their half-eaten bodies bear horrible injuries.

Green Fungi. The characters might know something about the glowing mushrooms, or they may approach to study them (DC 16 Nature). Eating a green cap works like a *goodberry* spell. However, they are poisonous when two or more are ingested on the same day.

3. FORGOTTEN CHAPEL

A curious character spots the hole in the wall if they approach this area (DC 13 Investigation). Hitting the wall with a hammer or a similar tool reveals the chapel.

Six alcoves with intricate paintings accompany ten rune-inscribed columns, both symmetrically disposed of as a sign of respect for the main sarcophagus.

The characters discover a chapel that soldiers used in times of war. They encounter the following challenge:



This adventure belongs to a series of collaborative projects that involve other Patreon creators. This one-shot adventure features work by [Elven Tower](#) and cartographer [Daniel's Maps](#). Check out his [Patreon page](#) for great cartography pieces and inspiration!

The underground chapel's alcoves contain the ashes of many good men and soldiers. As such, they were cremated in a beautiful ceremony and interred with some of their valuable possessions. The remains of Sir Julius, an army captain, and war hero, rest in the sarcophagus along with his armor, weapons, and possessions.

If greed gets the best of the characters and they shamelessly rob the soldiers' resting places, four **specters**, four **shadows**, and a **ghast** attack them. They protect 4,921 gp in assorted coinage, a *+1 spear*, and a *+1 half-plate*. Father Tulip or Gareth, if present, advise against this and leave if the characters ignore their words and opinion.

4. PURPLE FUNGI

This cave is illuminated by soft purple light; a fungus of the same luminescent breed grows on the east wall. Four lifeless individuals lay rotting on the floor.

Purple Fungi. This is a rarer kind of mushroom (DC 17 Nature). Eating a purple cap gives a person advantage on any skill check for 1 hour. However, eaters gain one Level of Exhaustion after the effects have passed.

5. RED FUNGI

This side of the cavern smells less of death. The monster has not come this way. Another kind of fungi, this time soft red, illuminates the west side of the cavern.

Red Fungi. The rarest kind of luminescent fungus (DC 18 Nature). This one is poisonous when eaten. However, a druidic healing concoction can be crafted with it (DC 17 Survival). It works as a *lesser restoration* spell.

6. CENTRAL CAVERN

The characters find this place if they spot the hidden entrances (DC 14 Investigation). The remaining cave-dweller survivors are too afraid to come out. A little more than a dozen people hide in here. Half of them are too young to fight. They fear the characters at first but warm out if the characters show the will to help them.

The monster has killed a third of their group. They have hidden in this cave for days. Eating green caps. They refuse to be escorted out until the monsters are gone.

7. BLOCKED PASSAGE

The unleashed abominations dug a tunnel with their claws and teeth. They left rocks and rubble in the 20-foot-long tunnel. All of it is considered difficult terrain.

8. SMALL CELLS BLOCK

The dead coalesce when the characters approach. The bones on the ground form three **skeletons** and two corpses rise as **zombies**. Darkness itself attacks too, as a **shadow**. All undead enemies fight until slain. They attempt to push the intruders further inside the prison. As if to make them experience the same panic they did.

9. LARGE CELLS BLOCK

Three **ghouls** and one **ghast** hide in each of the cells. They pounce in canine fashion and attack the characters when they approach. The undead fight until slain.

10. THIRD CELL BLOCK

This is where the prison's entrance originally was. This is where most of the prisoners died. Sorlang's abomination (**wraith** with full hit points) waits at the end of the tunnel. It charges and attacks until slain.

If no one can do it, Father Tulip strikes the monster with divine energy (*sacred flame* spell) so it does not become dust to escape again. In the same manner, he performs the divine ritual to remove evil from this place.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

JUST A JOB

Constable Oggie is happy to hear the characters dealt with the threat and pays them the agreed-upon reward. They are named "Sorlang Ambassadors" which is just an honorable way to say they are welcome, good friends.

FATHER TULIP

The church pays the characters if they accepted to work for them too. Father Tulip is happy to see Gareth, in case the acolyte survives this dangerous quest. Alternatively, Father Tulip is grateful to the characters for protecting him and the entire town. He gives them a personal letter of recommendation and a medallion of the Sun God. Both shall grant the characters entry to any town or city where the Church of the Sun has influence.

MAKING FRIENDS

All the NPCs in Sorlang shall remember their deeds, the good and the bad. If all is positive, the characters are free to keep their contacts and call old friends if needed.

Jady, Uriel, Harrison, etc. could provide something they need at the right time. Raymond shall buy any old trinket they might consider useless. Father Tulip and constable Oggie are NPCs with higher influence and power, who can pull greater strings for a good friend in need.

BAD CONSEQUENCES

Father Tulip or Gareth may be present when the characters pillage the abandoned chapel (area 3). If they are not stopped before leaving, they inform constable Oggie and the rest of Sorlang's monastery staff. When they return, the characters are asked to surrender everything they took from the chapel, surrounded by a dozen guards. They may leave in peace for saving the city. But if they refuse to comply, the guards shall move to arrest them.



THE CHOICE OF TRANSFORMATION

A player options' supplement for shapeshifters by Jordan Blackman



In fantasy, transformations and the practice to change one's shape are often seen as evil or considered a horrible curse. These changes are regarded as a problem, as something to be overcome. But there is another side to the story. Those who use this part of themselves to become better.

These can be curses or boons given freely. The characters should come across these in the course of play, and be given the option to keep them if they wish. It is considerably better if they choose to keep the "curse".

After acquiring an **Alternate Form**, you are considered a Shape-changer in addition to whatever creature type you originally were, as well as what your form is.

You shift into your **Alternate Form** as an Action. This form lasts for 1 minute, or ends if you are reduced to zero hit points, after which you revert to your base form.

You may **Shift** once per Long Rest. Some things may force you to change, though (see **Vampiric Thrall**).

BANSHEE'S BLESSING

When a lost soul is helped to peacefully move on from one plane of existence to another, they may impart spiritual powers onto those that helped them. This usually occurs when the soul belonged to a kindhearted person.

While in Banshee form, you gain the following benefits:

- **Undead:** Although you are still alive when the **Shift** ends, you are considered Undead and can be a target of Channel Divinity.
- **Spiritual Resistance:** Your body is not entirely physical anymore. You are resistant to non-magical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- **Banshee's Wail:** This can be used to replace an Attack as an Action. It can only be used once per turn. You let out a blood-curdling shriek. All creatures within 10 feet of you take 2d8 psychic damage (DC 14 Constitution / half).
- **Detect Life:** You can detect living creatures within 100 feet of you. You can sense their distance from you, but not their actual location.

ICE DEVIL FORM

Through some kind of awkward crossroads deal, or perhaps by helping a powerful entity from the Abyss, you have gained the powers of an Ice Devil. While in Ice Devil Form, you gain the following benefits:

- **Devil:** You are considered a Devil.
- **Icy Carapace:** You become immune to cold damage. In addition, your Armor Class is raised by 1.
- **Aura of Frost:** Ice forms on the ground wherever you walk. Any spaces you walk through or pass within 5 feet of immediately become difficult terrain for 5 minutes. This effect does not hinder you.
- **Weapon of the Cold:** You may cast *flame blade* at will. When you use the spell in this form, it instead takes the form of a blade of sharp ice. And it deals cold damage instead of fire damage.



MEDUSA

You have befriended or assisted a Medusa. Maybe you stole this knowledge from the archives of a powerful mage. Or perhaps, you figured out a way to harness their power for yourself by using potions and laboratory equipment. Either way, you do not fear your new abilities.

While in Medusa form, you gain the following benefits:

- **Monster:** You are considered a Monstrosity.
- **Slithering Speed:** You become swift and fast. Capable of discerning your surroundings with ease. Your movement speed increases by 5 feet.
- **Medusa Biology:** Thanks to your new reptilian resilience, you gain advantage on any saving throws against being paralyzed or poisoned.
- **Paralyzing Sight:** As a Bonus Action on your turn, you may designate a creature as the focus of your Medusa sight. At the beginning of their turn, if they can see you, their limbs lock up (DC 14 Constitution save). On a fail, victims may only take either an Action or move on their turn, not both.

VAMPIRIC THRALL

The otherworldly powers of a vampire can either be gifted as a power, or given by a vampire lord to control you. A small portion of a Vampire's might lives within you. However, this raw power is not yours entirely. It might respond to its master in the least expected of times.

When you are within 100 feet of the vampire that turned you, they can force you to **Shift** immediately, even if you had already used this ability (DC 16 Charisma save). You are considered charmed by the vampire for the duration of this Shift, or until the vampire dies.

While in Vampire form, you gain the following benefits:

- **Undead:** Although you are still alive when the Shift ends, you are considered Undead and can be a target of Channel Divinity.
- **Will of the Vampire:** Your mind becomes more powerful. You gain advantage on Charisma saving throws or Charisma skill checks that you make.
- **Creature of the Night:** You may use an Action to transform into a bat. The duration of this is the same as in the *polymorph* spell.
- **Blood Drain:** You gain a Bite attack, which uses Dexterity or Strength to attack, whichever is higher. Your Bite deals 1d6 + (Dexterity or Strength modifier) piercing damage on a hit. When this attack hits a creature who was unaware of your presence, you may choose to drain their blood. This restores health to you equal to the damage dealt.



WEREFROG, POISON DART

In many places, there are strange creatures that exude toxins from their bodies. Prolonged exposure to these toxins has a low chance of survival, but those who come out the other side sometimes find themselves changed.

While in Werefrog form, you gain the following benefits:

- **Beast:** You are considered a Beast.
- **Toxic Fumes:** Any breathing creature who starts their turn within 5 feet of you takes 3d6 poison damage (DC 14 Constitution / half).
- **Frog Legs:** Your reptilian limbs allow you to triple the distance and height of your jumps.
- **Sticky Skin:** Your sticky fingers give you a climbing speed equal to your base movement speed.

Sepulcher of Regrets

Great is the power that lies in the bodily remains of powerful entities. The corpses of dragons, fae lords, demigods, and even powerful wizards are thus kept with substantial secrecy. There are countless stories of plundered graves and exhumed tombs but few know that the grave-diggers do not often look for valuable possessions. Instead, they seek the bodies. They can be used for nefarious rituals, afterlife interrogations, and even the forceful revivification of those who have left the mortal world.

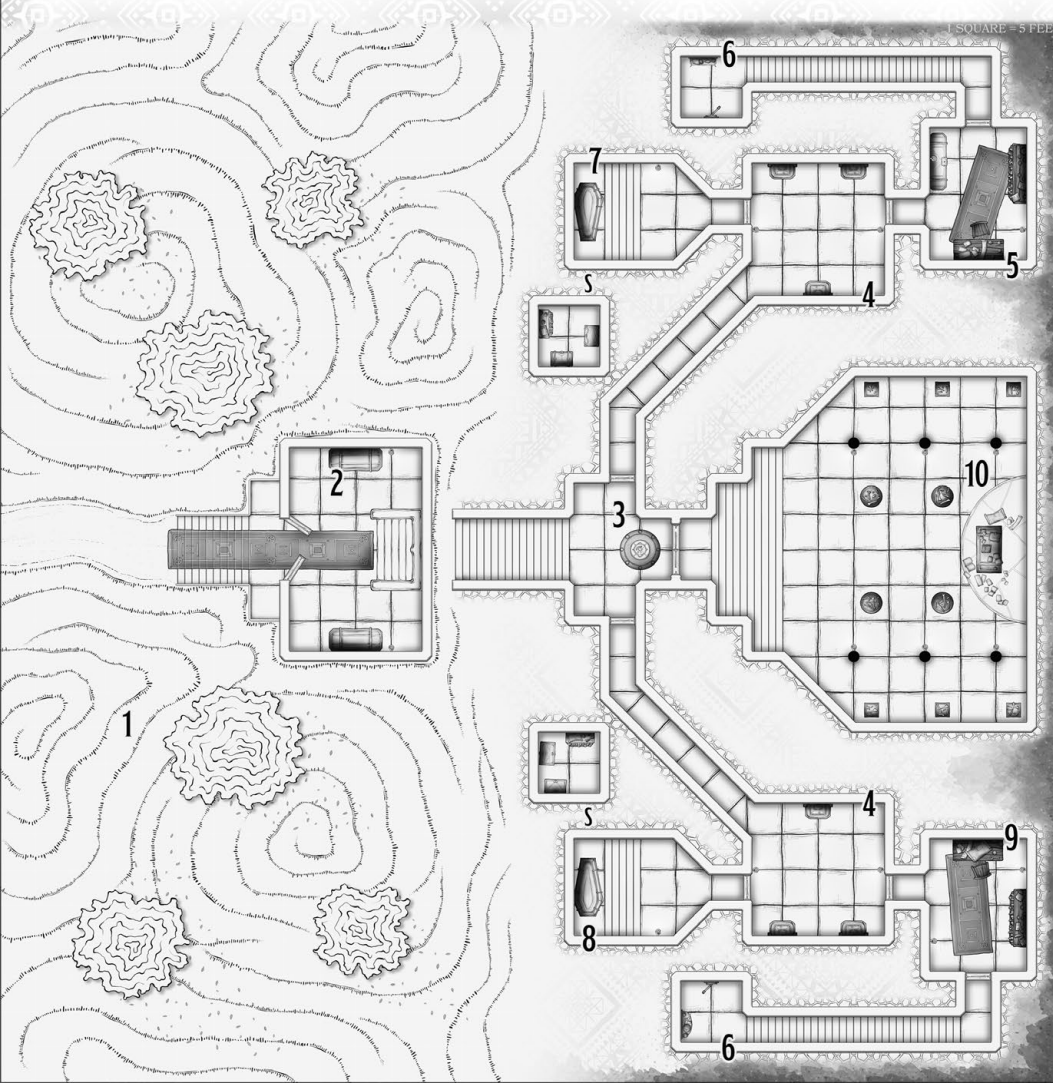
Miles away from the closest settlement lies the mausoleum of four valiant paladins who won a crucial battle but sadly perished in combat. Their brave sacrifice saved thousands of people who, otherwise, would have fell prey to the ravages of war. The four knights were interred in a place now commonly known as the Sepulcher of Regrets. It was given that name after many plunderers lost their lives trying to retrieve the mighty relics that the knights were interred with. Legend has it that each of them brandished a mighty magical weapon...

Area Descriptions

1. The mausoleum is noticeable in the wild countryside. The stone edifice is made of white marble. Its surface is now wind-eroded and stained.
2. The front chamber contains two stone coffins and a descending staircase. The remains of two of the paladins' bravest followers lie in the coffins. When trespassers approach, the two **revenants** emerge to defend the sepulcher.
3. The door to the Knights' Chambers is locked by a complex mechanism. An intricate carving of the four armor-clad knights decorates it. To open the gate, the levers in each area 6 must be operated. Disarming the device from here is nigh impossible. The invocation circle on the chamber's floor summons four **blood-thirsty shadows** when the door is interacted with.

4. Both chambers contain three standing sarcophagi engraved with the sigil of a forgotten dynasty. Each of the enclosures is marked with a bronze plaque that bears the name of a priest that was buried here. These priests were said to summon the might of the gods to empower the four knights in that fateful final battle. The three **undead priests** emerge from their coffins and issue a warning. They allow trespassers to turn back and abandon all attempts to plunder the Sepulcher of Regrets. Otherwise, they conjure the god's wrath and fight with the same resolve they had hundreds of years ago, in life.
5. The north archive contains a collection of literary classics from the time of the four knights, as well as biographies, historical recounts, and poetry by one of the famed knights. The stone coffer contains three tunic sets and a chain mail armor. When visitors come here, the ghost of one of the knights materializes from the shadows. The ghost beckons trespassers to reconsider and turn back. The knight's spirit claims that the benevolent warriors shall not suffer any greedy attempts to steal their legendary weapons. The apparition does not linger. It vanishes in a cloud of magenta vapor.
6. Both small chambers contain a stone shelf and an iron lever on the wall. The lever is connected to the locking mechanism of the door to area 10. Both levers must be operated to unlock the door. Pulling a lever without caution triggers a poison needle trap on the lever's hilt. Those pricked by the needle experience a raging fire running through their veins; the effects are consistent with *wyrm's poison*. Most creatures die from this toxin.
7. The funerary chamber contains one ornate, stone coffin. The remains of one of the paladins' bravest followers lie therein. When trespassers approach the opulent enclosure, a **revenant** emerges from the coffin to attack. Two **incorporeal spirits** filter through the wall cracks. Their strength-sapping attacks have killed many men. The secret vault contains 3,000 gp, 4,500 sp, and a set of rune-carved, mithral vambraces.

8. This chamber mirrors area 7. However, it contains no undead abominations. Instead, the coffin contains a poison gas trap. Opening the lid without caution triggers a 20-foot-radius cloud to violently emerge from the coffin. The gas irritates the lungs, causes violent coughing, and often causes creatures to choke to death. The secret vault contains 700 gp, one set of ceremonial daggers, and three healing potions.
9. The south archive's body of work contains theses, biographies, and a collection of religious ritual tomes. Such works are of inestimable value and might be sold to university libraries. Doing so would be an insult to the four knights.
10. The sepulcher's largest hall features two rows of carved pillars flanking an elevated dais with a stone altar. Four stone plinths before the altar bear the weight of old bones. A grandiose and intricate mural of four armor-clad figures raising their blades to the sun adorns the wall behind the tabernacle. This chamber has never been trespassed. Doing so causes the four **knightly ephemeral ghosts** to coalesce. Their legendary weapons materialize in their hands. The knights nod to each other and salute the trespassing challengers. They are brave warriors, even after death, and welcome a little respite from their eternal slumber. The four knights fight with fierce boldness, unseen since their times. Defeating them is a deed worthy of mighty heroes or despicable villains. After being destroyed, the knights dis sever into magenta vapor; their weaponry of legends is left behind for heroes or knaves to take.



SLAVE TO THE POWER OF DEATH

By Elven Tower and MikWewa Maps



LEVEL 9 ADVENTURE

A MID-TIER ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

SLAVE TO THE POWER OF DEATH

He is a man and a god but he will die too. The pharaoh's demise shall empower the birth and rise of the next one in line. Such is the raw power of death...

Annals of the Ancient Gods



Great rulers inspire their subjects with feelings of national identity, aspiration, and bravery. No leader is stronger than that whom the commonfolk envy and respect. Such an overlord is both loved and feared but the most important thing is that the figurehead causes the kingdom to thrive and prosper. Some of those leaders are chosen by the people, others inherit the position as it is believed that their royal blood incurs a birthright. In some cultures, their leaders are said to be unlike the common people...

The ancient pharaohs of the Styxian Kingdom were said to be incarnate manifestations of the gods. A flesh-and-blood eidolon of sacred creation. Born in the land of mortals to walk, eat, and bleed like one. But of godly ascendancy nevertheless. They possessed great magical powers. The *Annals of the Ancient Gods*, a large collection of treatises, biographies, and historical recounts that pertain to the old Styxian Kingdom, make such a claim. Alas, very few know the truth... That the dynasty of pharaohs were, in veracity, slaves to the power of death.

FALL OF THE STYXIAN KINGDOM

IN OLDEN TIMES, the pharaohs were regarded as the highest authority by the commonfolk. None could contradict their edicts nor evade their justice. A dynasty of 185 pharaohs ruled the Styxian Kingdom. When a pharaoh turned 40, the order of priests was charged with the preparation to transition to the next pharaoh. The pharaoh was then removed from his position and ritually sacrificed. The ritual allowed the godly spark within him to move to a new vessel. Always a 13-year-old pupil, specially prepared for becoming the next ruler.

When the last pharaoh, Rekh-Mara, turned 40, the customary change-of-ruler preparations began. Rekh-Mara was a philosopher who became convinced that the pharaohs' existence was a mockery as they were not allowed to live free. With envy for the peasantry's freedom, and consumed by the weight of his obligation to further the pharaonic line, Rekh-Mara rebelled against the priesthood and crafted an incantation to protect his soul and the godly spark that lived within. The priests ordered the pharaoh's capture and performed the ritual by force. Rekh-Mara lost his life but the divine spark remained. The line of godly, pharaonic, rulers was thus broken.

RISE OF THE ANCIENT TOMB

WITHOUT THE PHARAOHS, the Styxian Kingdom collapsed under its weight and moved on after a few generations. Rekh-Mara died 2,000 years ago, approximately. He was the last of a dynasty that lasted over 5,000 years.

Today, little remains of the Styxian Kingdom. Archaeologists study the few remnants of their culture that have survived to this day; mostly stone and clay tablets, trinkets, and tools. Of their grandiose stone architecture, there was nothing until recently. Found records speak of grand pyramids that the pharaohs used as burial and ceremonial sites but few of them have been located. A large pyramid suddenly appeared within Varlin Forest a week ago but the few scholars investigating the subject do not agree on the reason. Some claim it rose from below in a thunderous roar, others say it fell from the naked sky. None agree on anything. Some people have delved inside the gargantuan monument but none have returned. Others speak of the ineffable horrors that meander close to it. But most tomb-robbers salivate at the untold Styxian treasures that must be hidden therein.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Slave to the Power of Death may begin with one or any combination of the following adventure hooks:

CULTURAL EXPEDITION

The closest metropolis to the unearthed pyramid is of the sentiment that all artifacts and value in the pyramid belong to them, as it is within their territory. They offer a 5,000 gp bounty for clearing the place so that archaeologists and scholars can come and go safely.

THE IMPATIENT RESEARCHER

Donna Adari (**scout**) is a reputed student of Styxian Culture. She wants first-time access to the pyramid and its contents. Donna seeks bodyguards and offers her knowledge in exchange, claiming it may save the characters as Styxian ruins are said to be filled with deadly traps.

THE ROTTING AFFLICTION

People close to the pyramid have caught a strange lethal illness. Father Ider begs the characters to find the source and cure in the befouled pyramid in Varlin Forest.

THE HERMIT'S REFUGE

I meandered the great pyramid's halls. Its images and symbols are forever burned into my mind. Leave be me to my misery. I shall trouble you no more

Trothar, the Hermit

Tlonely man named Trothar lives close to Varlin Forest, a few hours away from the recently erected pyramid. Trothar is a quirky and impatient hermit that lives in a small cabin near the lake. His humble home is located next to the ruins of an old walled gate. The fortified structure saw its glory hundreds of years ago, in a way that few remember even happening. Now, fortifications such as these dot the countryside and serve as the hiding places of some highway criminals, gangs, and a few antisocial folks such as Trothar. He was once a proud family man and a farmer but tragedies took everything from him but his life. And so, he became a secluded outcast by choice.

Trothar sculpts stone and wooden trinkets and tools to sell in nearby towns when he musters the courage to abandon his cabin. It happens once a month, if at all. The hermit worked the farmland by his cabin when a loud thunder came from Varlin Forest. He is one of the few people who witnessed the pyramid emerge from below, tearing apart trees as if they were made of paper.

THE FIRST EXPLORER

TROTHAR, IGNORING THE danger that delving inside presented, grabbed his gear and marched to the pyramid in the morning. Thinking to retrieve something of value to keep or sell, Trothar became the first person to step into the Styxian pyramid in thousands of years.

Within the decrepit edifice, Trothar found the ancient halls and burial places of some of the most important pharaohs of the time. It was all lost to him as he was an illiterate man with no knowledge of the Styxian Kingdom or its rulers. His presence awoke the pharaohs of yore from their undead slumber. The soulless abominations loomed closer to Trothar, gazing from dark corners.

A chill up Trothar's spine rose and he attempted to flee but was closed off by three bandage-covered, scepter-wielding, eyeless creatures. The mummified pharaohs grasped for Trothar's clothing but he managed to escape their clumsy, clawed hands. Unfortunately, Trothar caught the terrible rotting disease from the, albeit short, contact with the mummies. Now he suffers in solitude as the rot consumes his organs and senses and he becomes an undead vessel for the pharaohs' powers.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

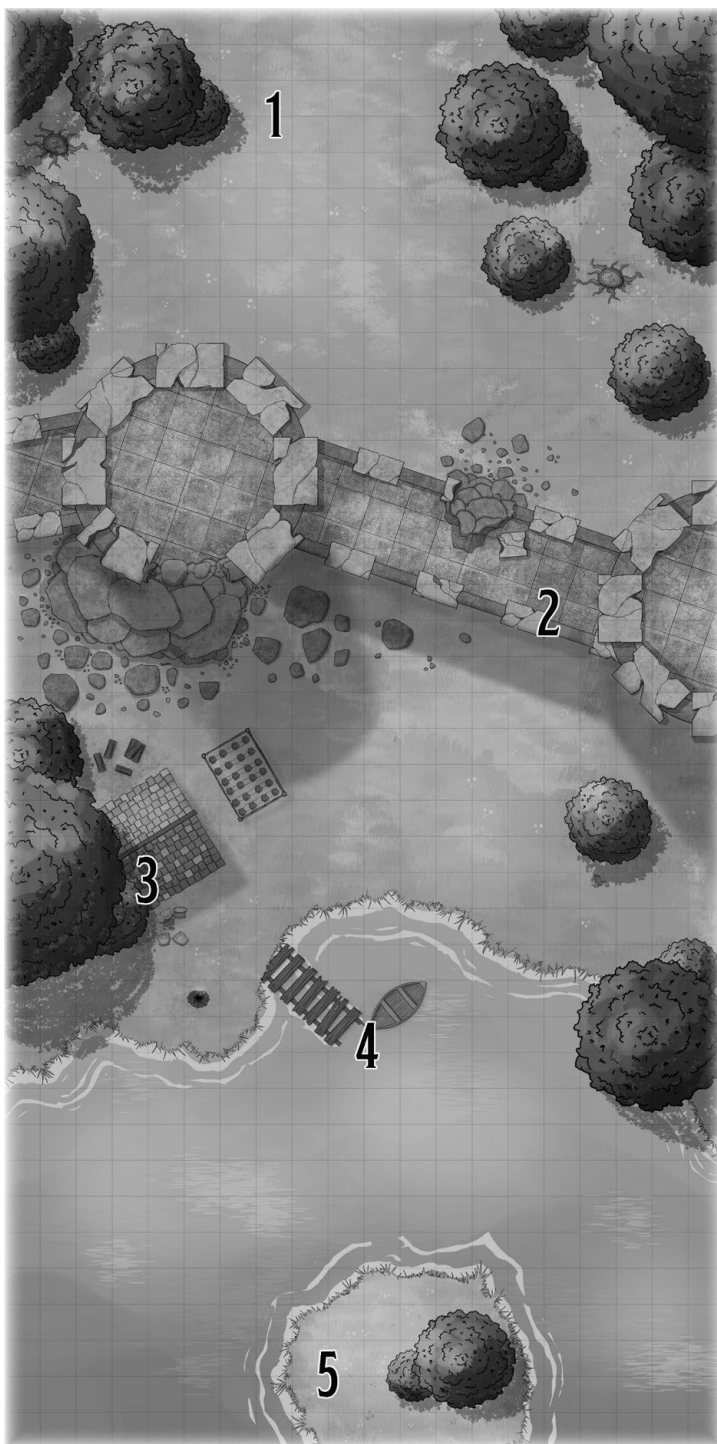
Landscape. The region enjoys a temperate climate this time of the year. However, plant life suffers as a strange layer of ash-like powder blows with the wind from Varlin Forest. Creatures in contact with it have a 10% chance of catching mummy rot per day of exposure.

Sounds and Smells. Trothar's raspy, out-of-tune voice mutters traditional songs as he sits by the hearth. The gut-wrenching stench of rot and death surrounds the cabin and can be detected from a distance of 40 feet.

MUMMY ROT

The Styxian pharaohs and the ashy dust that surrounds the pyramid can spread the disease (DC 11 Constitution save for the dust). Those afflicted cannot regain hit points, and their hit point maximum decreases 3d6 for every 24 hours that elapse. When the reduction reaches 0, the target transforms into a servitude-bound mummy.





1. THE SHORTEST ROAD TO VARLIN FOREST

The characters receive clear directions to the pyramid. The closest path to it requires them to travel south and cross a region that once featured a large wall. Little of it remains, the characters are told, since it marked the place of an old border that was later moved to the west.

If the characters ask around (DC 14 Persuasion), they learn that a hermit lives in the gate ruins. The road south is uneventful but the characters may notice the dire effects of the ash on the fauna and plant life (DC 14 Nature). It shall end all life in the region if not stopped.

2. WALL OF AGES PAST

The 20-foot wall and gate marked an ancient border. This wall is miles long, decrepit, and half ruined in many places. The gate has stood the passage of time a little better than the rest of the edification. A stone tablet above the gate bears an eroded sigil of an old royal family.

3. TROTHAR'S CABIN

The house is in disarray and the source of the putrid stench. Poor, dying Trothar sits by the burning hearth on a rocking chair. His skin has patches peeled off and the gloomy man is rotting alive where he sits. He is but moments away from perishing from the mummy rot. He cannot be cured. He is blind and somewhat mad. If approached with care, he speaks of his visit to the grand pyramid in Varlin Forest and the strange, bandage-covered creatures within. In a fleeting moment of dissociation, Trothar mistakes the characters for his dead wife and children and promises he shall do better so that they do not have to suffer the grim agony of life.

Trothar dies after this conversation. A few minutes after his demise, he awakens as a **mummy** and attacks the characters alongside six **shadows**. His journal sits on a nightstand; reading it for 10 minutes reveals that he lost his family many years ago, it confirms his small expedition into the pyramid, and it mentions that he hides a treasure with some valuables on the small island nearby.

4. ABANDONED PIER

A small oar boat is tied to the wooden pier. Trothar fished in the lake. This was his main source of food and he was good at it. The boat contains a bucket of rotten bait, an envelope with varied hooks, and an empty canteen.

5. TROTHAR'S TREASURE

The small isle is empty but for a pair of fig trees. Curious or perceptive individuals notice a patch of land that was disturbed or dug recently (DC 18 Perception). Trothar keeps his hoard in a buried chest. The enclosure is buried 4 feet down and requires 2 hours of work to dig out.

Treasure. The chest contains 750 sp, 6,542 cp, two *potions of healing*, and the deed to a house in the city.

REACHING THE PYRAMID

THE OUTSKIRTS OF Varlin Forest are a one-day ride from Trothar's cabin. After reviewing the effects of mummy rot on Trothar's body, Donna Adari remarks that the effects are consistent with an old curse that some tablets and tomes of Styxian origin refer to. She advises the characters to be careful as this condition is certainly lethal. The way to Varlin Forest is uneventful. When the characters approach the forest, they witness the towering structure of the Styxian pyramid from afar...

SEAT OF THE ANCIENT GODS

Each pharaoh shall empower the rise of the next. Their fate foretold and unavoidable. They are gods but bound to eternal servitude and obedience.

Annals of the Ancient Gods

The pharaohs' pyramid features a single entrance at its southern side's base. If the characters explore the ancient structure they find no other opening or access point. The pyramid was built this way to funnel trespassers through a series of traps and impede their sacking of the pharaoh's treasures. The godly remains of each pharaoh are the magic source for the magic traps and summoned guardians within the pyramid. The last pharaoh, Rekh-Mara, managed to retain the divine spark that was passed down from ruler to ruler. After thousands of years of regenerative slumber, Rekh-Mara has awoken at last. The undead pharaoh is consumed with greed and hate for the thousands of years that were robbed from him. He is ignorant of the brave new world that surrounds the pyramid but possesses the power to take over the region.

For a week, Rekh-Mara the undead pharaoh has infused the mummified bodies of his ancestors with necromancy. Thus reanimating them to serve once more. Rekh-Mara shall soon emerge from the pyramid with an ever-growing army of merciless, mummified undead.

1. ENTRANCE HALL

Soapstone statues of pouncing cats flank the entrance. Donna Adari explains that cats were regarded as the guardians of the afterlife, in Styxian culture.

2. HALL OF REMEMBRANCE

Two rows of pillars, inscribed with the names and visages of the old Styxian rulers, support the vaulted ceiling; a painting of the night-sky looms from above.

The names of the 185 pharaohs are carved on the eroded stone pillars. Upon inspection, the characters learn that Rekh-Mara was the last pharaoh. If asked, Donna Adari claims that no one knows why he was the last one. *"After his death, no other pharaoh ever came. No one knows why, but I have a suspicion that this may be his resting place. We are fortunate"* The two **mummies** in the alcoves between areas 1 and 2 attack the characters.

3. THE BROKEN OBELISK

A broken, carved obelisk lies on the floor, it collapsed under its weight after centuries of erosion. The carvings reveal that the mummy rot illness is meant to create obedient servants for the pharaohs (DC 18 Intelligence).

FEATURES OF THE PYRAMID

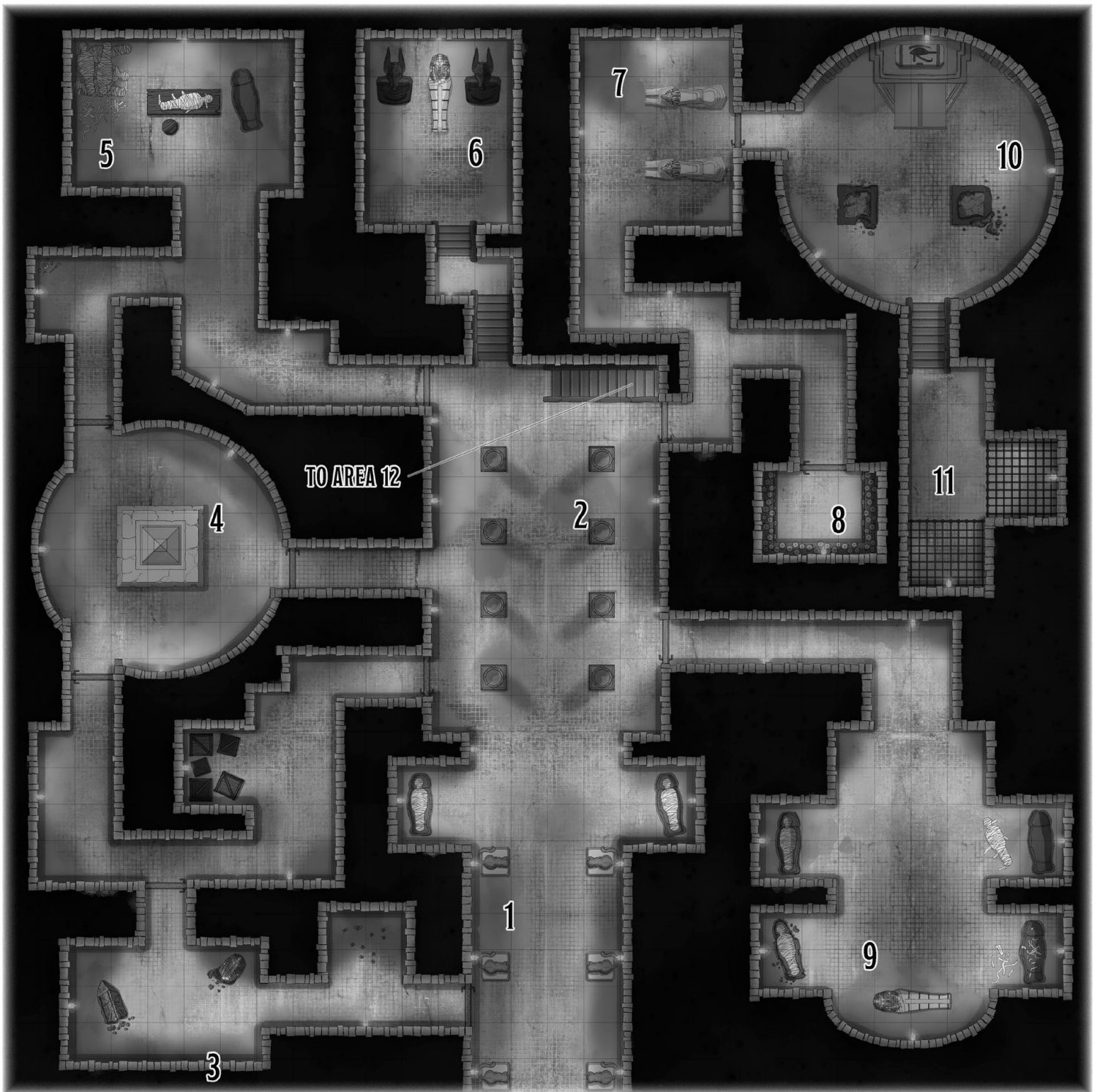
Light. The sconces in the mausoleum feature *continual flame* spells. The magic fades in 1 minute if removed.

Locks. All doors are made of soapstone slabs with eroded, low-quality locks (DC 15 Thieves' Tools). When a door is opened for the first time, there is a 2-in-6 chance that it features a hidden *glyph of warding* (DC 18 Perception). If triggered, thick, bubbling, salt-based acid is sprayed within 10 feet of the door, dealing 5d8 acid damage (DC 18 Dexterity). If dispelled or bypassed, each trapped door resets magically at dawn.

Chamber Ceilings. All areas have 15-foot-tall, domed ceilings decorated with intricate bas-reliefs and eroded runes with passages from the *Annals of the Ancient Gods*. The rite book speaks of pharaohs' deeds, their way of life, and the nature of their half-godly existence.

Arcane Chaos. A magic-disrupting field generated in area 26 shifts and transmutes spells cast within the pyramid (DC 14 Wisdom save per spell). On a fail, the spell cast is replaced by a different one on the caster's spell list at random. New targets may be chosen for it.





4. PYRAMID'S MODEL

A 12-foot-wide, accurate representation of the pharaoh's pyramid sits on an eroded soapstone dais.

The pyramid's scale model contains an accurate representation of the chambers and halls within. Unfortunately, it does not open or offer any windows into it. The characters can explore it if they have the means to enter the small 10-inch entrance. A small enough familiar may fit through it. A polymorphed or wild-shaped character can surveil the model too. In addition, spells such as *arcane eye* allow a spellcaster to explore the model.

5. EMBALMING ROOM

A desiccated, bandage-covered corpse lies on a rotting, wooden table. An empty sarcophagus lies by it.

In olden times, worthy individuals were brought here after their demise to be embalmed and mummified. A toolbox under the table contains several embalming implements and empty solution jars. Donna Adari may explain the purpose of each grim implement, if asked. Six pharaoh **mummies** of the Styxian Dynasty rise from the corner and table where they lay. They lounge at the trespassing characters with uncontrollable fury.

6. THE PHARAOH AND THE WOLVES

An ornate, gilded sarcophagus with an impression of a pharaoh stands in the room, flanked by the busts of two warriors with wolf heads and crossed scimitars.

As the characters arrive at this chamber, Donna Adari remarks that the person interred here must be of great renown. She suspects, incorrectly, that it may be the tomb of the last pharaoh. However, deciphering the runes and hieroglyphs reveals that Pharaoh Taragammon lies here (DC 18 Arcana). He preceded Rekh-Mara by two-thousand years. Opening the lid releases the old ruler, a **bo-dak**. Two **wraiths** emerge from the busts to fight too.

Treasure. The sarcophagus lid is embedded with pearl inlays and emeralds (1,400 gp), weighs 150 pounds.

7. THE SPHINXES QUANDARY

Two lions with human heads sit by a closed door. They possess a penetrating gaze and curious visages.

Two **gynosphinxes** protect the Chamber of Passing's entrance. They don't live here; their magical bond to the pyramid allows them to *plane shift* here when the need arises. They allow the characters into the room only if they can answer their eerie riddle: "*Some try to hide, some try to cheat; but time will show, we always will meet. Try as you might to guess my name.*" The answer is 'Death'.

8. ROOM OF PRAYER

Thousands of ever-burning candles are arranged on shelves from floor to ceiling. Each eternal candle is engraved with the name of a young boy who never got to become a pharaoh. Donna Adari explains that those trained for the position but that became older than 13 years old, were exiled from the kingdom and forgotten. New pharaohs could never be older than 13.

9. PHARAONIC CRYPT

Four open caskets await within dark, 10-foot alcoves. A gilded, immaculate sarcophagus hums loudly.

The strange hum from the sarcophagus is caused by thousands of flesh-eating scarabs that have been magically summoned within. Two pharaonic **mummies** and eight **swarms of insects** attack when the lid is lifted.

Treasure. The gilded casket contains 15pp, 800 gp, two *potions of poison*, and a *+1 breastplate armor*.



This adventure belongs to a series of collaborative projects that involve other Patreon creators. This one-shot adventure features work by [Elven Tower](#) and cartographer [MikWewa Maps](#). Check out their [Patreon page](#) for great cartography and inspiration!

10. CHAMBER OF PASSING

A decorated, clay sarcophagus stands on a pristine dais. The Eye of Styxia is engraved on the lid. Two broken pillars lay in shambles across from the dais.

The purpose of this chamber and its importance due to it being guarded by the sphinxes in area 7 defies explanation. The clay sarcophagus is empty. The broken pillars bear ancient runes and glyphs that reveal what the chamber was used for but their study requires 1 hour of work (DC 18 Arcana). When the pharaoh turned forty, the Ceremony of Passing took place. The pharaoh was placed in the clay enclosure and drugged with lotus powder. Then a priest slayed him with a gilded blade. The next in line, a boy of 13 would stand between the pillars. He would receive the divine spark and be branded pharaoh. If the characters study the chamber, Donna claims this is the greatest breakthrough in Styxian archaeology.

The ghost of a young lad appears in between the pillars. He claims that the Ceremony of Passing for Pharaoh Rekh-Mara failed. He refused to give up the spark of divinity that would make the young boy the next pharaoh. Both the man-god and the young lad perished from the failed ritual. After that, the pharaonic dynasty ended.

11. PREPARING QUARTERS

Two quarters with spare accommodations lie open. A tablet by the cells lists hundreds of Styxian names. The characters notice that the names on the tablet are the same as those on the candles in area 8, if they have visited that area (DC 17 Intelligence). The boys prepared for pharaonic duties lived in these chambers with considerable privilege so they would be ready in case the pharaoh suffered a premature death. After turning 13, they would be exiled only to be remembered by a lonesome candle.

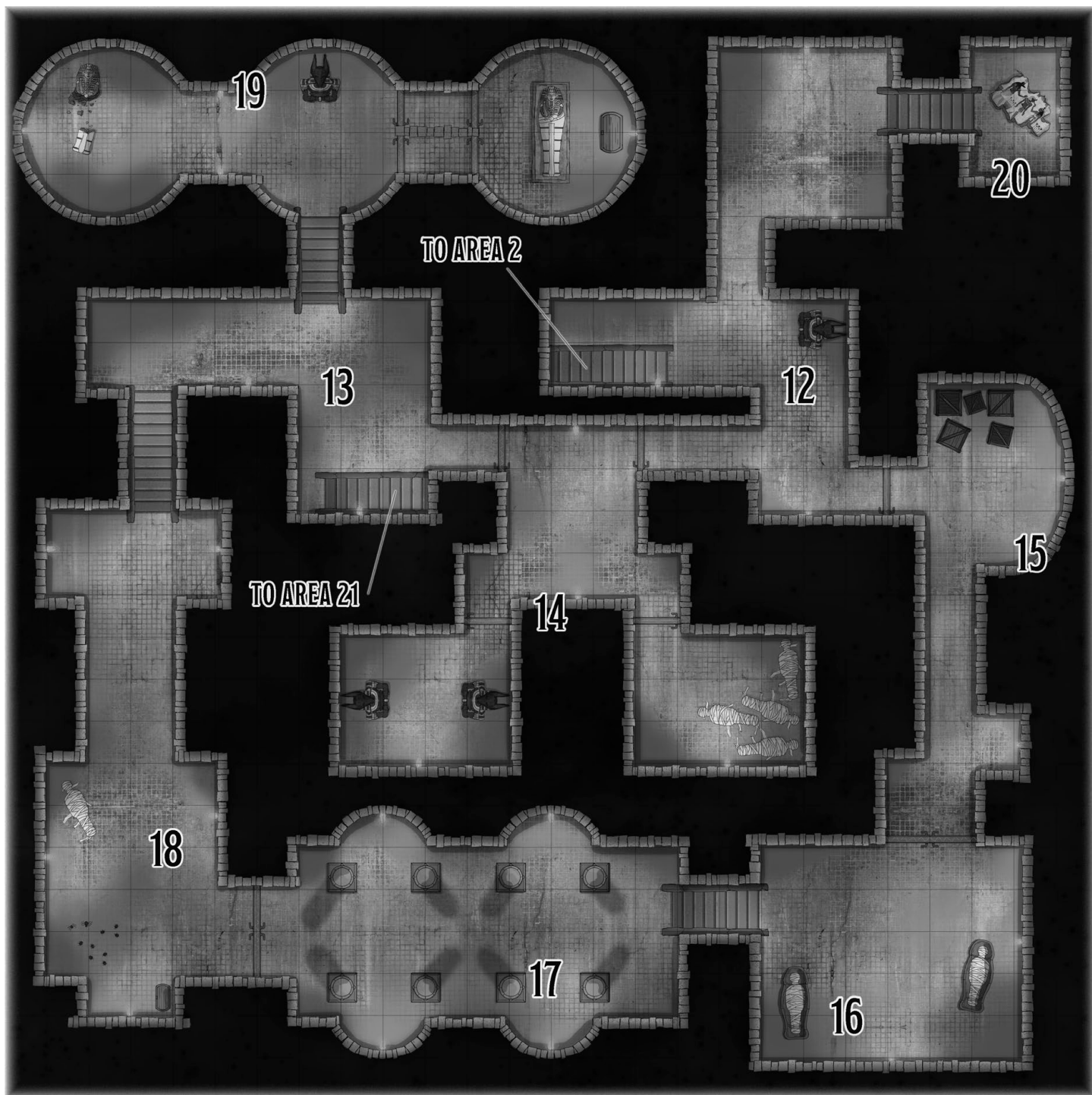
12. SECOND-LEVEL LANDING

A single, obsidian bust of a wolf-headed warrior stands by the corner of this landing. The effigy's eyes return the characters' gaze as they approach. It is enchanted with a strong divination charm and can be used once per hour to cast either *divination* or *locate creature*.

13. HALL OF PRIESTS

15-foot-tall frescoes and mosaics on the walls portray the lavish opulence of the order of priests that oversaw the pharaohs and their closely-controlled lives.

The imagery displays the priests of the Styxian era as the true controllers of the kingdom. They controlled the pharaohs, they raised the boys who would be next in line, and they stood immune to the whims of rebel rulers. Donna Adari claims that the end of the Styxian dynasty also spelled the erasure of the order of priests that selfishly moved the divine spark from vessel to vessel.



14. VOICE OF THE PHARAOH

Two adjoining chambers stand south of the second-level landing. The east one is the resting place of four pharaohs who, in life, underperformed and became a shame to the dynasty. The mummified corpses lie on the floor without honor or name; the embalming procedure for the corpses was botched on purpose too. They were of such irrelevance to the dynasty that Rekh-Mara summoned them back as four mindless **ghouls**, instead of sentient, yet compliant mummies. Hunger awakens them from their deep slumber. They stumble about in confusion before charging at the trespassing characters.

The west chamber contains two wolf-headed busts. They are identical to the ones found in area 12. They face each other as if in conversation. Through these busts, the last pharaoh, Rekh-Mara, can communicate with the characters in the ancient Styxian language: *“You dare roam my tomb uninvited. Foreign explorers, be ready to abandon all sentience and become decerebrate pawns of my grand plan. With my return, a new world order shall begin and you shall become my loyal instruments”*.

The characters may converse with Rekh-Mara but the immortal ruler shall not suffer fools or insults. Such slights cause an *insect plague* spell cast from the busts.

15. STORAGE ROOM

Scattered across several steel-reinforced, wooden crates are an assortment of carving tools, painting implements, and spare frames and beads for mosaics. Artisans of yore store their tools here for future renovations and artistic representations that never came to be during their lives.

16. THE FAILED MUMMIES

Two open caskets lie in this chamber. The embalmed corpses within desiccated and decayed beyond use.

The mummies in this chamber suffered a botched embalming attempt thousands of years ago (DC 19 Medicine). The bodies are halfway preserved; little more than bones remain. Pharaoh Rekh-Mara brought these wretched bodies back from death as **zombies**.

17. HALL OF STYXIA

Two rows of carved pillars display great craftsmanship. They portray landscapes and images of the greatest cities and monuments of ancient Styxia.

An accurate map of Styxia and the night-sky of that period is scattered across the eight pillars. Donna Adari claims that such cartography is a great resource that may be sold to universities and scholars. Making sense of the pillars and creating a rendition of the map requires 6 hours of work and drawing skills (DC 17 Dexterity).

18. THE CRAWLING VERMIN

Dozens of scarabs run away from approaching steps and squeeze through cracks in the walls to hide.

A single, embalmed pharaoh lies on the floor of this chamber. The mummy was originally in area 14 but was moved away by thousands of scarabs that tried to move it into their lair in the walls without success. When the characters come within 10 feet of the corpse, seven **swarms of insects** emerge from the cracks and attack.

19. FAKE TOMB

A wolf-headed bust and a broken sarcophagus lie in this chamber. The script on the lid spells nonsense and hints that it may be a fake casket (DC 17 Intelligence). A fake wall (DC 18 Perception) may be brought down to reveal the real burial chamber of Pharaoh Gor'vaddom. Donna Adari claims he ruled almost four thousand years ago. The corpse somehow resisted Rekh-Mara's necromancy.

Treasure. The chest contains a golden scepter (1,200 gp, a +1 *dagger*, and seven *arrows of slaying*).

20. THE RELIC OF EONS

A broken wall section lies in the middle of this room. An inspection reveals that it is not Styxian but rather from an older civilization (DC 17 History). It was added here as a collectible piece, its meaning unknown.



21. THIRD-LEVEL LANDING

An intricate mural on the landing's south wall portrays three armor-clad, spear-wielding, Styxian warriors.

This landing features two sets of stairs that connect to the second and fourth levels of the pyramid. The imagery on the walls is a tribute to the Styxian Guard, an order of mighty bodyguards that protected the pharaohs and the order of priests. Deciphering the hieroglyphs under the mural reveals the names of the three warriors. They were considered valiant heroes in their times.

22. CRYPT OF GUARDIANS

Three caskets contain mummified remnants. Above them, countless funerary niches dot the stone walls.

The bodily remains of the three warriors portrayed in area 21's murals are here. The rest of the order of bodyguards were cremated and placed in the niches.

Opening the niches or inspecting the contents of the caskets causes the three guards (**ghasts**) and four **specters** to emerge from their timeless containers and attack. Even in death, they are loyal to the pharaohs and protect them.

23. SIGIL OF STYXIA

A sigil painted in crimson red of a winged scarab with feathery wings, cryptic runes, and intricate patterns is etched on the floor of this circular chamber.

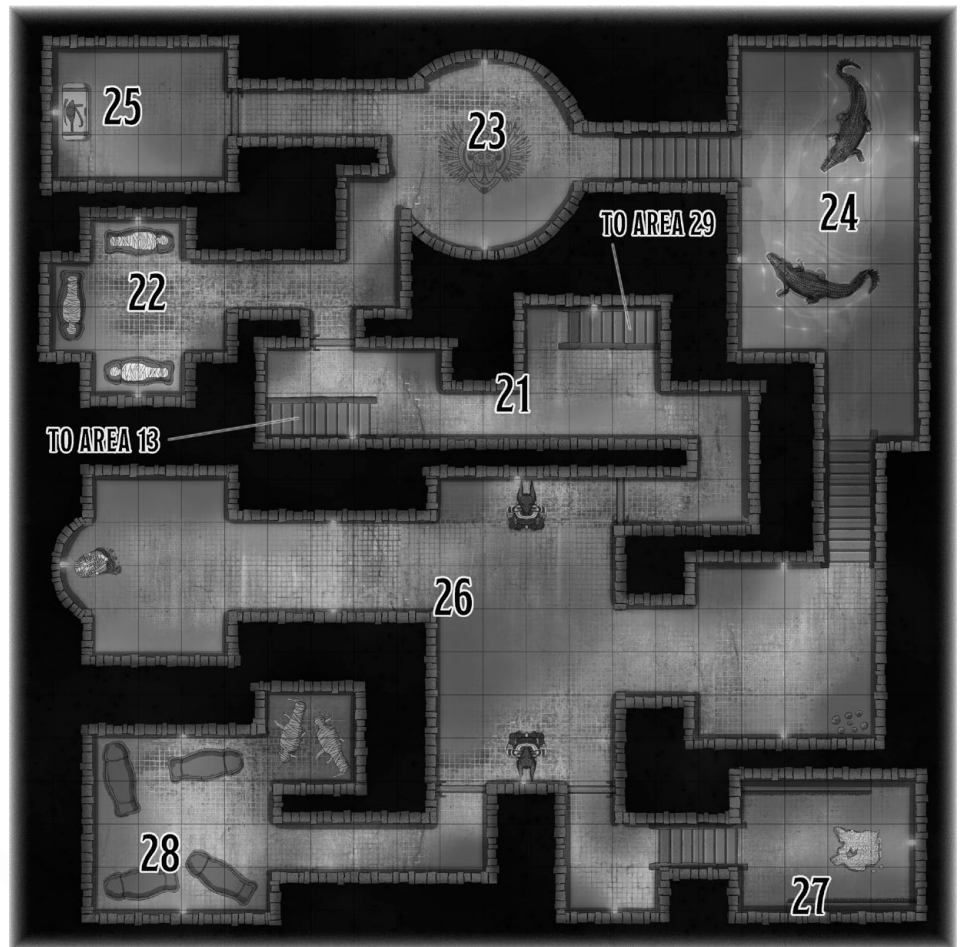
Hidden in the runes and symbols is a sequence that can be used with a *circle of teleportation* spell (DC 18 Arcana). A translation of the scripts on the walls reveals that the order of priests and the Styxian pharaohs used this circle to come and go unannounced. Donna Adari asks for 20 minutes to copy the intricate emblem.

24. PERIL FROM BELOW

A flight of stairs descends into this flooded chamber. Dark shapes move to and fro underneath the surface. The pond's bottom is not visible beyond the depths.

Two **giant zombie crocodiles** swim in the 30-foot-deep pond. Their bite spreads mummy rot like the mummies' Rotting Fist ability. In Styxian culture, reptilian sages are the wardens of death and are paid for the trip to the afterlife (DC 20 History). If a jewel worth at least 1,000 gp is dropped, the crocodiles allow passage.

Treasure. A collection of gems lies at the pond's bottom. There are 32 gems worth a total of 9,600 gp.



25. FAKE VAULT

A clay coffer with the Eye of Styxia engraved on the lid in bright paint stands by the far, stone wall.

The chest is empty. This area is a trap for greedy, shameless tomb-robbers. There is a pressure plate in the square in front of the coffer. 80 pounds of weight cause it to trigger and release a barrage of poisoned darts from dozens of holes in the walls (DC 19 Perception). Creatures in the chamber take 10d6 poison damage (DC 14 Constitution / half). The nefarious traps reset at dawn.

26. CHAMBER OF DISINTEGRATION

Two wolf-headed busts stand in the room opposite to each other. Their heads swing from left to right as if looking for something. Their eyes glow deep green.

Each of the busts is capable of casting *disintegrate* once per round when it sees a moving target. They can be deactivated by operating the strange device in area 37.

When any creature enters the busts' field of view, either of the effigies tracks the target and shoots a disintegrating ray. The target takes 8d6 + 20 force damage (DC 16 Dexterity). A *dispel magic* spell can nullify one of the busts for 1 minute (DC 16). A daring or rather foolish character may attempt to direct one bust's disintegrating ray against the other bust to destroy it permanently.

27. ANNALS OF THE ANCIENT GODS

Two scroll racks cover the walls from floor to ceiling. A broken section of a wall lies on the floor, embedded with runic symbols and ancient, Styxian hieroglyphs.

The left side of a stone tablet on the floor contains a translation of hieroglyphs into numerous dialects. It can be used to translate texts from the time if cross-referenced with the one in area 31. The scroll collection contains the *Annals of the Ancient Gods*, a fragmented document that contains dozens of biographies of pharaohs and priests, historical recounts of the time, and works of poetry and philosophy by some of the pharaohs. This body of work is quoted in countless documents but it has never been found. Donna Adari is ecstatic about this discovery. She claims that if the other half is found, it shall revolutionize the study of Styxian archaeology.

28. DISPOSED OF CASSETS AND FAILED MUMMIES

The room contains four empty, unmarked caskets and two embalmed bodies. As in area 16, the mummies in this chamber suffered a botched embalming procedure (DC 19 Medicine) and have been raised as **zombies**.

29. FOURTH-LEVEL LANDING

An otherworldly vision assails the characters when they arrive at this, otherwise empty, landing:

A dagger-wielding priest opens a man by the chest and retrieves a glowing ember from within. A young lad, bound in chains, is forced to swallow the ember.

The vision is caused by a magical effect akin to a *major illusion* spell. If the characters revisit this chamber, the vision reappears but all characters are different. A different priest, murdered pharaoh, and young boy. Each illusion portrays the Ceremony of Passing of a different pharaoh. The grim ritual always occurs in an illusion of area 10.

30. ARCANE OBSERVATORY

The domed ceiling of this large chamber is enchanted. It glows with a detailed representation of the night-sky. A spellcaster can will it shift so it portrays the stars of a different time (DC 16 Wisdom). Once a week, a spellcaster can meditate below the stars to recover a spell slot of any level.

31. THE ROSETTA STONE

The stone tablet in this chamber is the right side of the one found in area 27. Together, they can be used to translate all content from Styxian origin. In addition, a treasure map hides in plain sight when reading both tablets (DC 18 Intelligence). It leads to the hiding place of the *Scepter of the Mind*. Legends speak of the might of this Styxian artifact. Retrieving it is an adventure for another day...

32. POISON GAS TRAPS

This area encompasses a shifting hallway limited by three doors. Each door features an automatic locking mechanism that activates when the trap is triggered (DC 19 Perception). Inspecting any of the two open caskets in the room triggers the deadly trap. Three things occur:

- The three doors close and lock (DC 21 Thieves' Tools). They are reinforced (DC 19 Athletics).
- Poison gas pours into the chamber. Creatures in contact with it take 5d6 poison damage per round of exposure (DC 16 Constitution / half).
- The two **mummies** rise and attack. The mummies are immune to the poison gas.

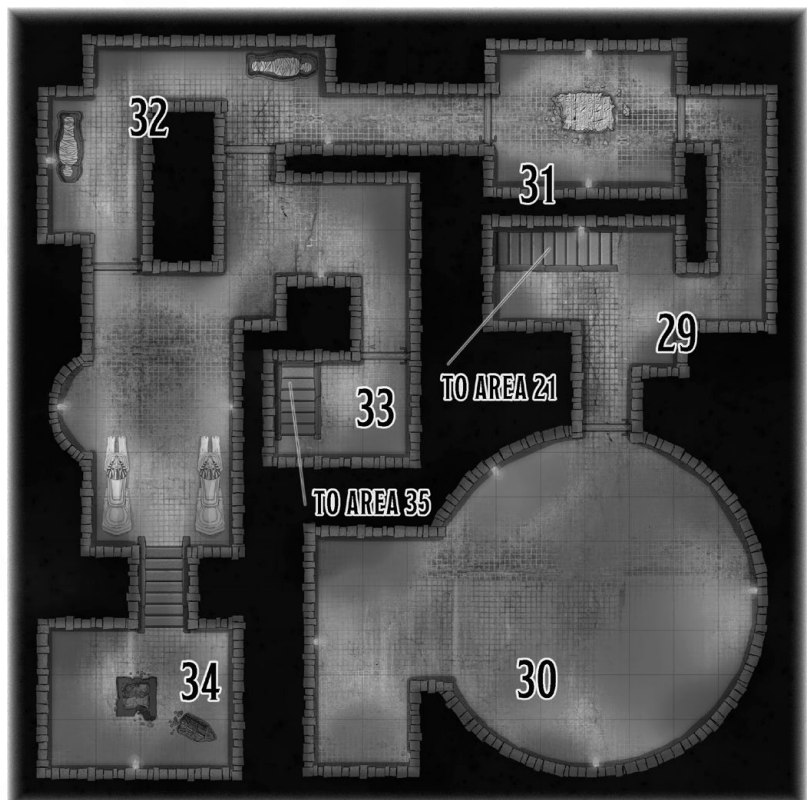
33. FIFTH-LEVEL ACCESS

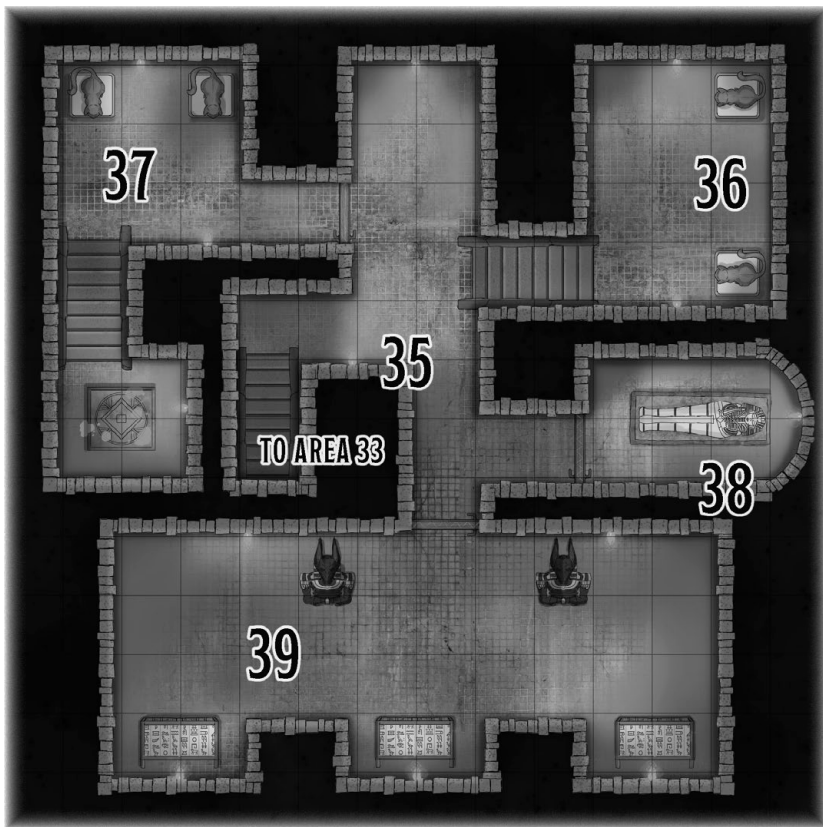
The small chamber is the only means for climbing to the pyramid's fifth level. The humming chant from area 39 can be perceived from here. Donna Adari recognizes the lyrics as an ancient Styxian chant to honor the pharaohs.

34. BROKEN OBELISK

A broken obelisk inscribed with Styxian hieroglyphs lies on the floor in shambles. Eddies of magical auras are visible to the naked eye around the eroded stone.

A *detect magic* spell reveals a strong abjuration aura in the obelisk. The symbols on the broken stone speak of mighty guardians meant to keep the pharaohs in check. Rekh-Mara destroyed it. The nature of the guardians is not revealed. The stone cannot be restored to function.





35. FIFTH LEVEL LANDING

A loud, humming chant comes from the south. Its melody a haunting procession of forgotten notes.

The door to area 39 is ajar and inviting. The characters can proceed to confront the last pharaoh at once. However, visiting some of the other areas may prove useful in the confrontation with Pharaoh Rekh-Mara.

36. THE PRIEST

A floating, ghostly, humanoid figure hovers by the far wall, flanked by two feline busts with emerald eyes.

A Styxian **ghost** has managed to infiltrate the pyramid. The ghost claims in the old tongue that the divine spark in Rekh-Mara's power is a threat to the world. The priest claims that their ways solved this by passing the spark from pharaoh to pharaoh before they grew too powerful. Alas, they failed. The ghost priest wants to aid the characters in the final fight against the man/god, Pharaoh Rekh-Mara. He also offers a weapon (see below).

Treasure. The *Priests' Scepter* (+2 mace with advantage on attacks against pharaonic creatures).

37. PYRAMID'S CONTROL STONE

A spellcaster can spend a level 3 spell slot to operate the rotating device in the room. Doing so deactivates the busts in area 26 and all traps; it also unlocks all doors.

Treasure. Each of the cat busts is worth 600 gp due to their craftsmanship and the emerald's fine cutting.

38. REKH-MARA'S SARCOPHAGUS

The largest and most opulent sarcophagus awaits in a chamber of honor. The walls decorated with murals of the last Styxian pharaoh.

The casket is empty; Rekh-Mara is located in area 39. Within the enclosure, the characters find a false bottom compartment (DC 18 Investigation).

Treasure. The casket contains 800 pp, 2 *potions of superior healing*, and 2 *potions of resistance*.

39. CONFRONTING THE MAN/GOD

A figure in pharaonic attire stands proud, surrounded by prostrate, chanting figures. Currents of floating sand and necromancy circle around Rekh-Mara, the last Styxian pharaoh.

Rekh-Mara (**mummy lord**) is surrounded by a court of worshipers, two **zombies**, three **ghouls**, and three **mummies**. The pharaoh utters the following in a deep, rasping, deep voice:

I am a man and a God! You vermin shall not interfere with my plans. You have no use other than to populate my endlessly growing army of obedient vassals. Surrender or learn the hard way the true suffering I can bring upon this sorry excuse of a world that betrayed me!

Rekh-Mara begins this encounter with *insect plague* and then targets any cleric or divine caster with *harm*. After that, he and the other mummies target any creatures already afflicted with mummy rot. The pharaoh uses its Dreadful Glare ability to keep strong combatants at bay.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

Defeating the last pharaoh causes him to turn to desert sand. Its glowing beating heart teleports out of harm's way. The pharaoh is defeated but not completely destroyed. He returns at a later time to exact his revenge.

Upon returning to town, the characters receive the promised 5,000 gp reward and a feast of heroes is thrown the following night. People are sad to know that Trothar has perished but few people knew him.

Soon, archaeologists travel to the pyramid to explore it. If Donna Adari survives, she becomes the leading researcher on the subject, rises to academic prominence, and becomes a wealthy patron in a few years.

Those afflicted with mummy rot heal naturally after a couple of days. Father Ider thanks the characters for their hard work and promises to keep them in mind for future quests and missions related to the church.

PERMISSION TO ROLE-PLAY

A GM supplement for role-playing by Joshua Lovett

PERMISSION TO ROLE-PLAY?

D&D is, at its core, a cooperative role-playing game. For the most part, your character is in a group of heroes that shares goals, adventures, and treasure. But what differentiates your character from the party? What makes them unique? What makes them yours?

If you are a player, you have probably wanted to play an “interesting” character: one who is overly suspicious, or has a secret vendetta, or with some other significant character trait. I have created some guidelines for GMs and players taking this step into stronger role-playing.

GAME MASTERS

First, let's get something clear. Players want to individuate their characters from the party with unique personality traits, goals, flaws, etc. This can be a lot to manage. If handled well, it can make for a complex and engaging game. If not, it can leave players feeling like their characters' quirks don't matter, or it can stymie the adventure as a character decides to “go their own way. Consider the following sample from one of my sessions:

The party is about to speak with the king:

Royal Guard: The king will see you now. *opens door*

Player 1: I want to wait outside.

GM: Why?

Player 1: My character doesn't care for royalty and doesn't want to meet with him.

GM: Okay...uh...so the rest of the party enters the room and the king greets you warmly...

The king begins negotiating with the party while Player 1 waits outside. The conversation takes a while, and the GM is anxious that Player 1 is not participating. Eventually, the characters reach an agreement: they will fight off the bandits and the king will pay them a handsome reward.

GM: You rejoin Player 1 and share with him the agreement you came to with the king.

Player 1: I'm not fighting bandits. I hate the king.

The party discusses, bickers, and hits an impasse. The GM looks on helplessly...



What just happened in this scenario? Two things:

1. The character has a strong character trait: They hate royalty and won't work for them.
2. The GM wrote an encounter with a benevolent king, and no reasonable person could find a reason to hate him. But traits are not reasonable...

And that is the crux of the problem: *no reasonable person would do it*. By *allowing* the player to make an anti-monarchist character, and then providing only encounters with benevolent monarchies or leaders, the player has been forced to have their character act *irrationally hateful* to stay true or faithful to their traits.

Options? Either the character folds—their hatred fades into the background, they accept the mission, and suddenly they have lost their defining flaw; or they stubbornly refuse to do the mission and the adventure grinds to a halt. None of these sound like an ideal situation, right?

If players want more-complex role-playing, it is the GM's responsibility to provide the opportunity. Problems occur when GMs fail to provide opportunities for players to role-play, or when they place the characters in a situation where they are expected to act against their character's interests. To this end, here are two solutions to address the unfortunate situation in the sample encounter:

- In the hallway, a guard tells Player 1 that the bandits stole an enormous amount of money from the king. Player 1 decides to fight off the bandits but for selfish reasons. He wants to steal the king's money and put it to better uses.
- Player 1 overhears a guard talking about how corrupt the king is—the king heavily taxes the poor and props up the rich. Player 1 convinces the party to accept the mission so they can create an alliance with the bandits. This is the opportunity to start a revolution against the king's tyranny!

In the first solution, the story stays intact: the king stays benevolent, and the character is happy ripping him off. In the second, the campaign inverts, enemies become allies! In both solutions, the player stays true to their character because the GM provided the right opportunities.

PLAYERS

There are also things that players should consider. When a player wants their character to stand out from the party, the easiest way is to give them a different goal, or dissent from the rest of the party. Sometimes players try to make interesting characters but end up with ones that are simply stubborn and difficult to work with.

Here are three guiding principles for role-playing and/or handling out situations of a complex character.

1. REASONABILITY

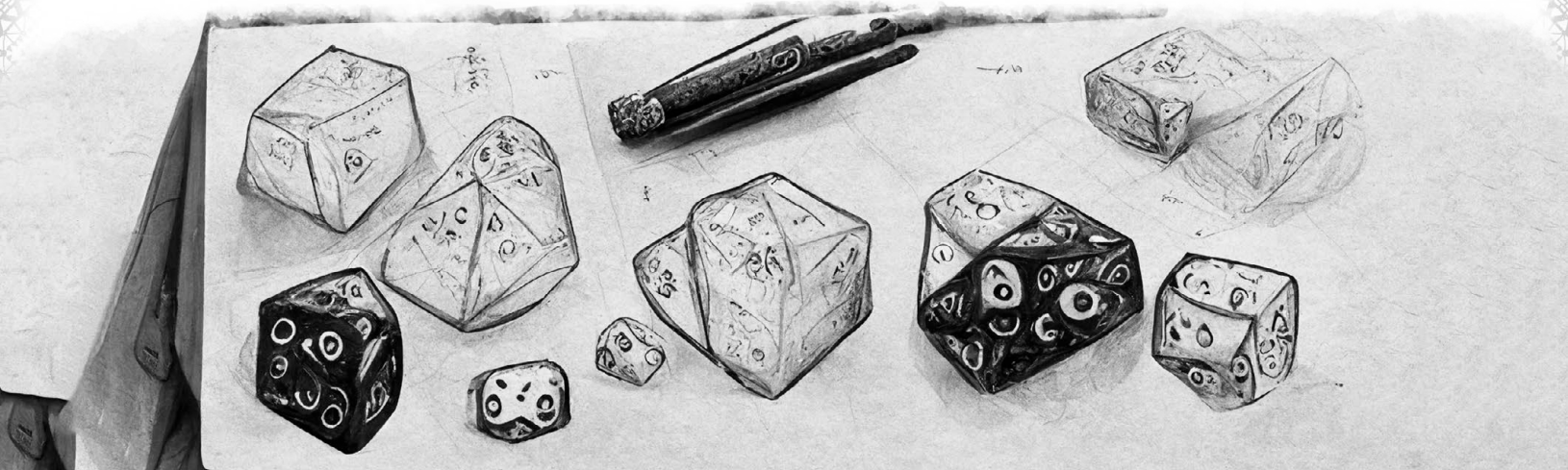
You are working together on making the campaign work: you, the GM, and your fellow players. When creating a character trait, make sure it is a reasonable one, and not just a source of frustration for the party (e.g., making a character whose primary trait is being argumentative will turn every session into an argument). Remember, if your character is a perpetual party-pooper, they would likely have been kicked out of the party long ago.

2. FLEXIBILITY

Nobody like the guy who comes to the party and spends the whole time lurking in a corner. Similarly, nobody likes the character who dislikes the current encounter, refuses to participate, and drags the flow of the session down around them. A pacifist character may eventually have to fight, a suspicious thief will eventually have to trust somebody. Role-play your character, but not to a fault. People exist in scales of gray and they also change and make exceptions all the time. Same with PCs.

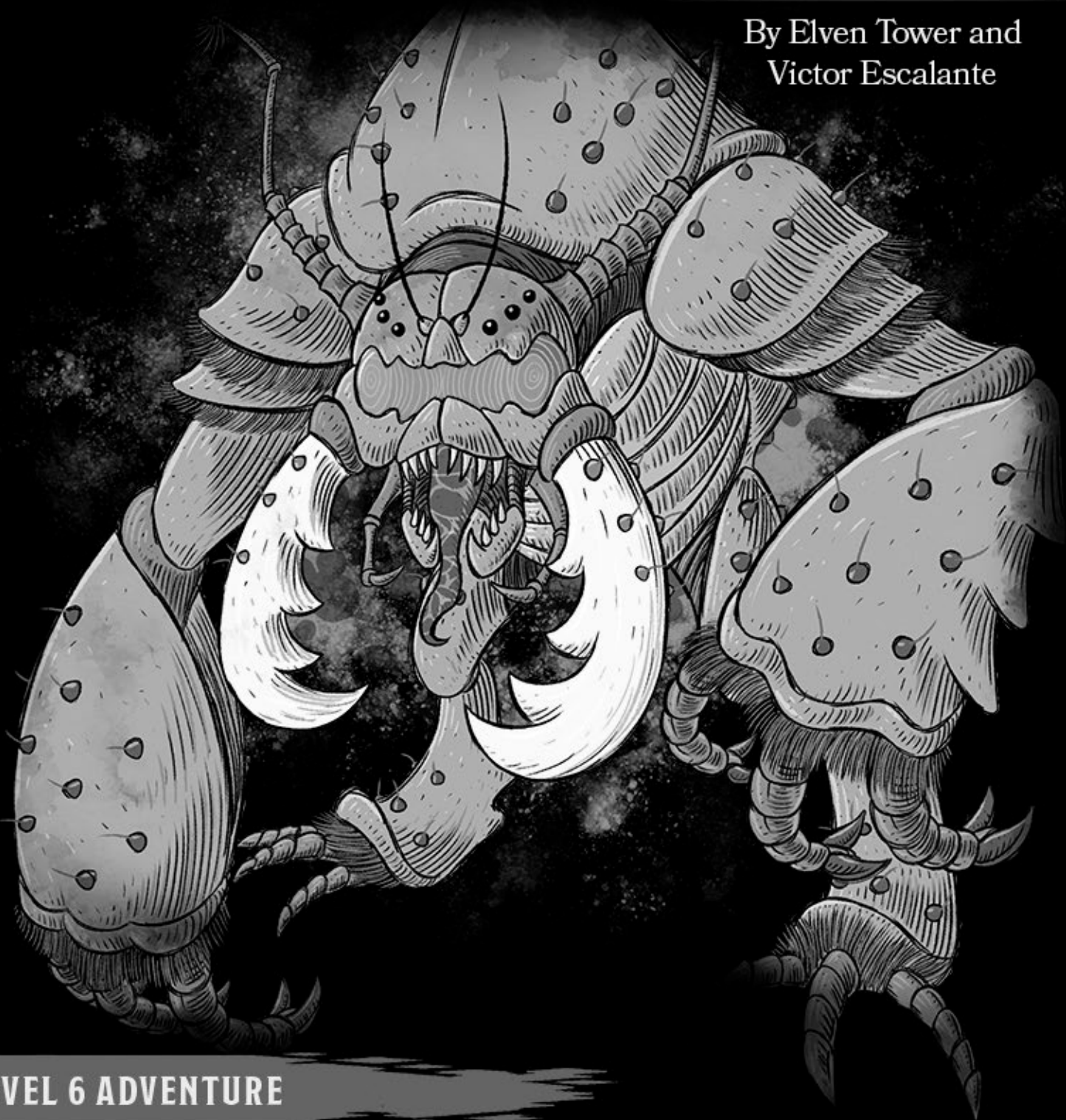
3. PROACTIVITY

Whatever quirk your character has, you want it to be the reason your character says "Yes", not the reason they flatly say "No" to whatever happens in the game. And, if push comes to shove and your character really disagrees with the party's decision, look to the GM to give you an opportunity to role-play your character without halting the adventure, or betraying the personality traits that you and others have worked on for a while.



THE HULKING ABOMINATION

By Elven Tower and
Victor Escalante



LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE

A MID-TIER ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

THE HULKING ABOMINATION

The archaeological site is important but we are so worried for the lives of our researchers and their guards. Their families miss them dearly. Find them, please!

Townspeaker Jameson



Relics from the past, forgotten tomes, and the legends that pass down through generations are the heritage of our ancestors. It is difficult to obtain precise information the longer back we seek to retrace it. The work of archaeologists, thus, is invaluable in understanding our past so that we can be better prepared for what the future holds. This adventure is about a lost archaeology expedition that encounters a terrible, trickster creature near their digging site.

EVIDENCE OF THE PAST

GREENTOWER IS A growing town surrounded by shallow rivers and soft lakebeds. Their people welcome the booming industry of mining the profitable soil for precious metals like silver and gold, as well as the retrieval of archaeological artifacts from the area's ancient past.

Most people in the mining town dedicate their lives to mining and prospecting, or to several activities related to these practices like the crafting of gear, equipment, metal tools, and the research and cataloging of the relics that the archaeologists unearth. The person in charge is Matthew Arden, a renowned scholar. He is responsible for keeping his field of study relevant when others would pursue more short-term economic activities rather than the slow work of historians and long-term projects.

THE LAST EXPEDITION

TWO WEEKS AGO, a team of mining prospectors found the remnants of an ancient construction after blowing up a new tunnel in a nearby mining site. Matthew Arden was informed of it at once. He convinced Townspeaker Jameson to commandeer the expedition and gathered a group of colleagues to set out at once. Within the caverns, Arden and company started analyzing the ancient ruins. They were truly a wondrous place to dredge up. After a couple of days, some of the scholars started to experience strange headaches and a vision of two red, multi-faceted eyes. They felt observed and grew paranoid enough to hire guards. Unbeknownst to them, an insectoid abomination with mind-influencing abilities played tricks on their tired minds. They started getting lost in the caverns, even though there were clear signs along the tunnels. One by one they got lost in the maze.

THE AFTERMATH

AFTER THREE DAYS, none of the researchers returned to Greentower. The expedition consisted of seven archaeologists, five bodyguards, and four young assistants. The families of the sixteen missing people pressed Townspeaker Jameson to act at once but the absent-minded leader convinced them to wait a day or two since it was not out of the ordinary for Arden and his team of researchers to stay on site after a worthwhile discovery.

They did not return. Two days ago, three renowned hunters, Valli, Dumai, and Gurko, offered to delve into the caverns to learn something about the situation. Only Valli came back, confused and disoriented. He told a grim tale of a scarab-like monster with hypnotic eyes that can cause a man to lose himself and become lost in the cavern. They tried to fight it but its gaze got to them:

It was misty and confusing there. I remember a pair of red, multi-faceted eyes that assailed us. I couldn't breathe nor concentrate. We fought the thing. I pierced its hide with my hatchet. Though now, it all seems like a half-forgotten dream to me...

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Hulking Abomination may begin with one or any combination of the following adventure hooks:

HEROES SUMMONED

Townspeaker Jameson is eager to hire traveling adventurers. He offers a 1,000 gp reward for dealing with the mining site monster and saving as many of Greentower's townsfolk as possible. He begs them to hurry.

A COLLEAGUE IN DANGER

Matthew Arden is a dear friend of the characters. In the past, Matthew helped the adventurers procure a treasure map or translate an obscure tome. They learn of his grim fate in the cavern and go to his rescue.

IN SEARCH OF THE GREAT SCARAB

The characters require the hard carapace of an umber hulk to craft a mighty weapon or armor. They learn of the plight of Greentower and the tales of the monster that assails the mine. It is consistent with what they seek...

FEATURES OF THE CAVERNS

Light. Most of the cavern is in complete darkness. The inexplicable eddies of arcane energy in area 7 provide dim-light. Ancient torch sconces enchanted with *continual flame* spells provide bright light in area 5.

Smells and Sounds. A pungent stench of sulfur and guano permeates the underground compound. It grows stronger in proximity to its source in area 7. A sudden, pulse-like clasp of chitin mandibles can be heard echoing throughout the tunnels every 1d10 minutes.

Confusing Gaze. The umber hulk can burrow its way to most areas to berate the characters with its gaze ability. It surfaces in a place just outside the range of light sources and focuses its gaze on a random target. The umber hulk does this every 2d10 minutes.

Secret Paths. Perceptive individuals notice hidden pathways behind structurally-weak walls or through mounds of fallen rocks and debris (DC 17 Perception).

Narrow Passages. The cavern features several 5-foot-wide passages that were dug through by the archaeological team. Deep, silver veins run through them. Due to a natural aversion to silver, these areas are safe from the monster as it refrains from burrowing through them.

1. CAVERN ENTRANCE

The short road from Greentower leads to a rock formation with an opening at its base. A terrible stench fills the air.

Resourceful trackers notice the evidence of footprints coming into the caverns; few return (DC 16 Survival). The most recent is a single set of prints emerging from the cave. The prints stumble about as if by a drunk person. Valli left these prints.

2. THE LARGE CAVERN

The tunnel opens to a large chamber with long stalactites, massive boulders, and foul-smelling, insect droppings.

Several soil patches have been recently dug through by a large-clawed creature. The reeking droppings are too large for common insects. A student of zoology recognizes them as umber hulk droppings (DC 16 Nature). The characters have their first encounter with the umber hulk's Confusing Gaze in this area. If able, the monster ventures further for a savage Claw and Mandible attack before burrowing away through the soft soil patches.

Inspecting the soil patches reveals a set of archaeologist tools. A label reads: 'Matthew Arden'.

3. HIDDEN CAVERN

The narrow tunnel leads to a grim, dead-end scene. The bones of three people lay scattered in the cave.

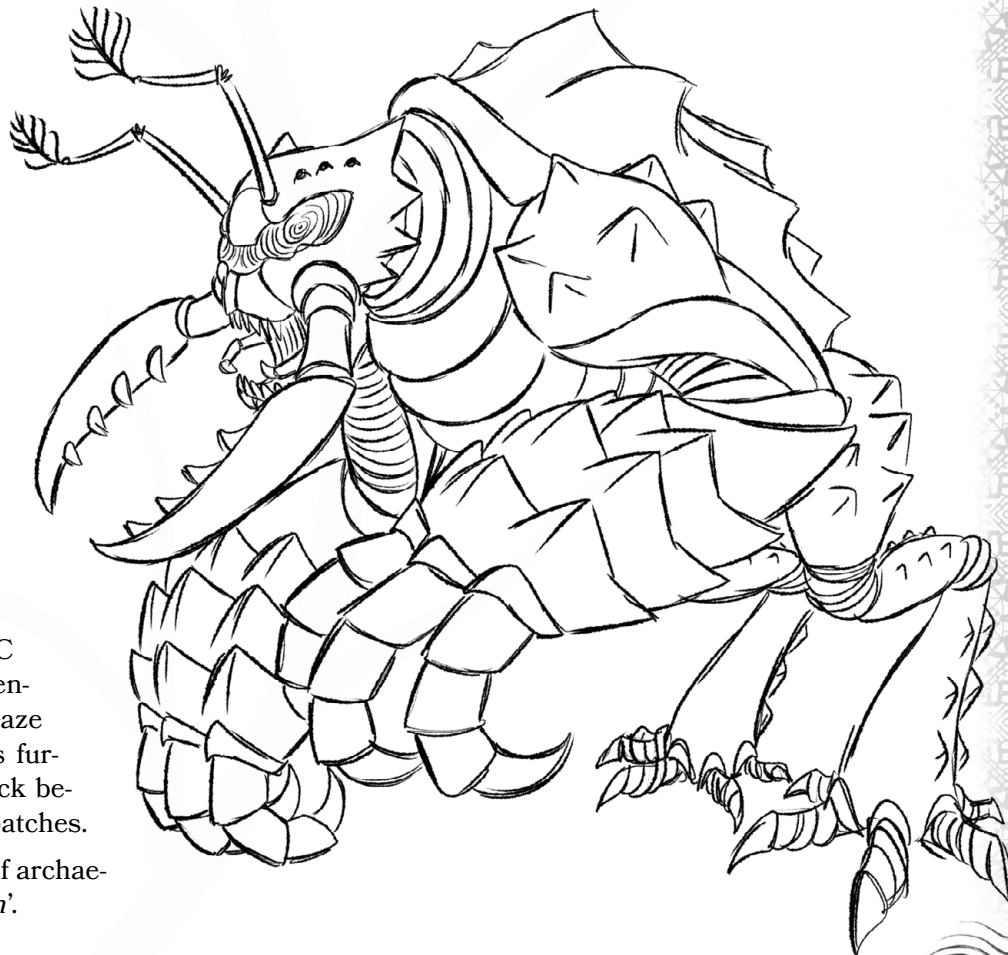
In their attempt to escape from the umber hulk, a scholar and two assistants hid here while the monster loomed outside. From the bones, a person can attest that these people were recently attacked by hundreds of carnivorous insects. Three **swarms of insects** (flesh-eating scarabs) emerge from cracks in the walls and attack!

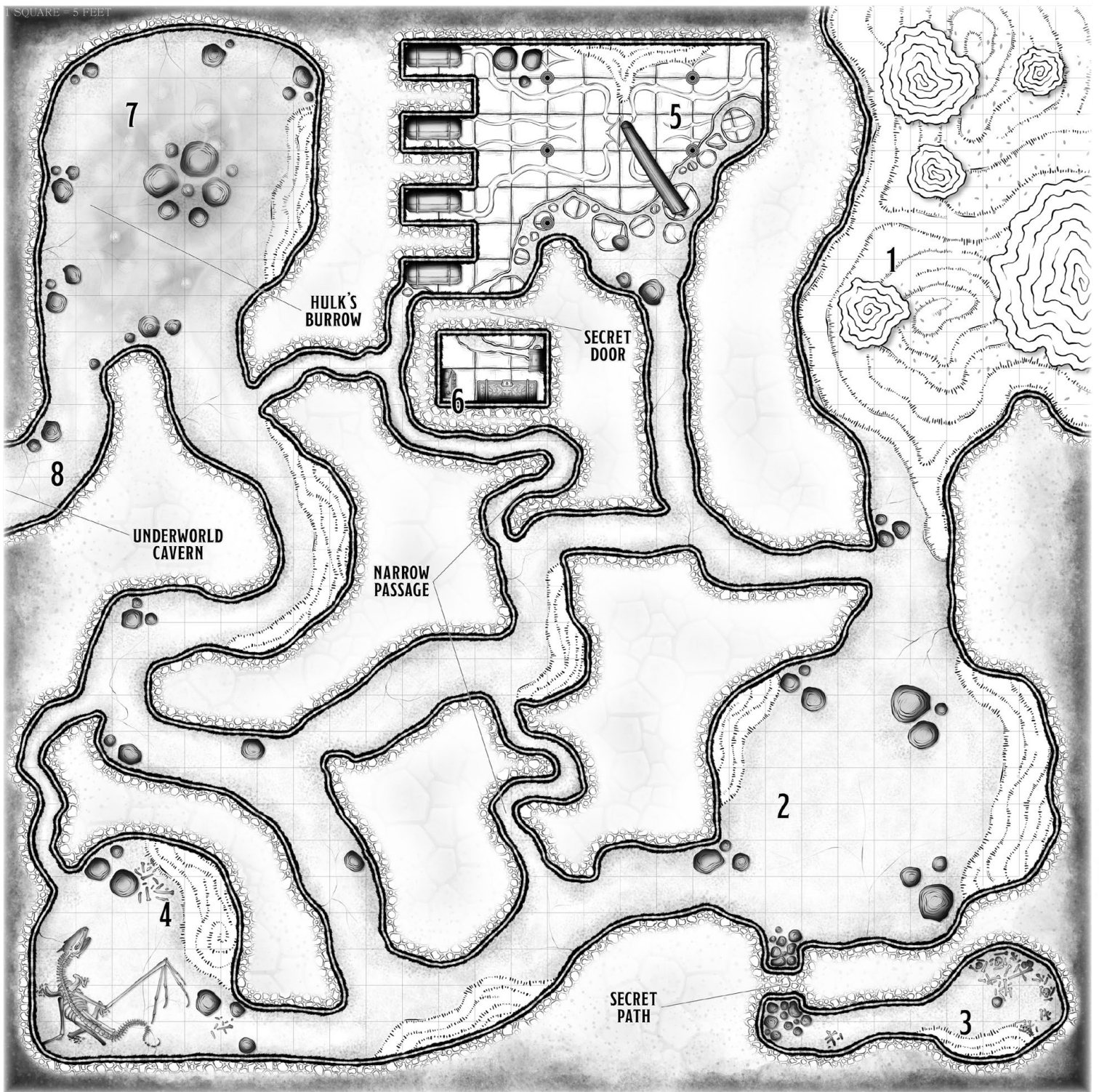
4. DRACONIC REMAINS

Amid this cavern chamber, lie the remains of a most magnificent, winged creature. The bones of what appears to be a dragon rest here, oblivious to the world.

From the state of the bones, a naturalist knows they have been here for decades. The shape of the skull and mandibles reveal this was once a green dragon (DC 18 Nature). Two ribs are broken; a shallow mark on them reveals that a spear pierced the dragon's thorax; a lethal wound (DC 16 Medicine). It must have survived long enough to crawl into this cave and die alone. The umber hulk instinctively keeps away from the dragon's remains.

Treasure. Dragon bones are strong and resilient. From these remains, the characters can have a master artisan fashion a set of armor, or two ornate, bladed weapons.





5. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Natural caverns give way to an ancient, dilapidated construction of human origin. Tall, carved pillars and four unmarked, stone coffins await in the shadows.

Archaeologist Matthew Arden barely began exploring this place. His methods as a scholar are methodical and extremely slow when compared with an adventurer's approach. None of the coffins has been opened and the secret vault remains undetected. Small picks, brushes, and rakes; the tools of the trade, lie scattered around the floor. A dirty journal sits on one of the stone coffins.

The journal belongs to Sara Hill, one of the researchers. It has daily entries of their short expedition and a recount of the strange symptoms that they experienced.

Each of the coffins contains the mummified corpse of a knight. The bodies are so fragile that touching them without proper equipment destroys them. The mummies and their ragged attire are valuable only as relics of the past to museums and historical scholars.

A spider colony lives in the caverns, they aid the umber hulk when it hunts. Four **giant wolf spiders** drop from the dark ceiling and attack the characters.

6. THE SECRET VAULT

The narrow chamber contains a stone chest, a packed bookshelf, and a stone coffer with green malachite inlays in the form of growing, shifting vines.

Inspecting the written material on the bookshelf reveals that the construction was part of an old mausoleum from a kingdom four centuries ago and reveals the identities of the four mummified knights in area 5. The small chest contains twenty-five scented candles and incenses.

Treasure. The large coffer contains a masterwork *+1 greatsword* with a glowing ruby on the hilt and gold inlays along the blade. It belonged to one of the knights.



This adventure belongs to a series of collaborative projects that involve other Patreon creators. This one-shot adventure features work by [Elven Tower](#) and illustrator [Victor Escalante](#). Check out his [Patreon page](#) for awesome concept art and inspiration!



7. THE UMBER HULK'S LAIR

Ephemeral energy currents move through the air creating strange light patterns and indiscernible mirages. The monster's influence is strongest here. Recognizably human whimpers can be heard too.

Ten people are in this room, all of them curled up together by the north wall in a perpetual state of confusion and never-ending delirium. Matthew Arden and the hunters, Gurko and Dumai, are present. The people absent were eaten by the umber hulk or the insect swarms in area 3.

Visibility in this chamber is reduced to no further than 15 feet from the strange lights and fog. Creatures here have disadvantage against the umber hulk's Confusing Gaze ability. The devious monstrosity awaits until one or more characters have fallen prey to its gaze ability. Then, the **umber hulk** lounges from the mist and attacks. Once it attacks, four **giant wolf spiders** drop from the ceiling and attack. The spiders have developed a natural resistance against the hulk's gaze ability. A perceptive warrior notices Valli's hatchet embedded in the hulk's breast carapace. Removing it by pulling down deals a critical hit to the insectoid monster (DC 18 Strength).

8. PASSAGE TO UNCHARTED LANDS

The tunnel continues into uncharted depths. It slants downward and continues for miles in the darkness.

There exist few entrances to the hidden realms in the world's mantle. The place is known as the Underworld. This cavern tunnel continues for 20 miles and reaches the endless network of uncharted tunnels below.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

The umber hulk utters a terrible cry when a character deals the killing blow. The magical, mind-numbing effects in area 7 recede in a matter of seconds to reveal the ten survivors from the archaeological expedition. Due to their long exposure, they require at least a week of recovery before the effects of the umber hulk's gaze subside.

Upon returning to Greentower, the characters are greeted with smiles and hugs. Most of the expedition members made it through the ordeal. Townspeaker Jameson agrees with the rest that the characters' deeds are worthy of heroes. He pays the 1,000 gp reward.

A week later, when the survivors have recovered, Matthew Arden thanks the characters. He offers, as a reward, a map he uncovered at the archaeological site. The map leads to an ancient crypt that, according to Arden, has never been explored before. Then again, the exploration of that crypt is an adventure for another day...

DESIRÉ'S LABYRINTH

"Oh, yes! Desiré, the wizard. Most people say she failed and left out of shame. But I believe she succeeded. She must be laughing at us at this moment."

Goldcrest Historian

Delve Level 8 (18,700 XP)

1 revenant	10 ghosts
4 flame skulls	1 black pudding
6 shadows	2 flesh golems
2 mimics	1 wraith

SETUP

TO DESIRÉ'S LABYRINTH, the characters may come of their own accord, looking for treasures. Or maybe they search for ancient lore, the answer to a problem they cannot solve. Or they might need to save someone, perhaps even one of their own (see **Adventure Hooks**). Regardless of the reason that brings them here, this labyrinth is a great challenge, and a place they shall remember...

DESIRÉ'S STORY

ABOUT FIFTY YEARS ago, within the walls of Goldcrest, an ambitious woman named Desiré, an incredible scientist and wizard, defied the laws of physics and religion. The talented woman sought the secret to eternal life, the potion for immortality. She spent her whole life and resources looking for the answer. Goldcrest sages and the wisest artificers told her that necromancy and forbidden arts were the only means to achieve that. They insisted on saying that it is the will of the gods that all mortals die. But Desiré's ambition was greater than that.

THE MYTH, THE LEGEND

TODAY, DESIRÉ HAS been gone a couple of decades. Most say she left the city to further her research. Others believe she failed and left out of shame. A few say the opposite and claim she succeeded. What is true is that one day, Desiré disappeared and she was not seen again.

Treasure seekers, researchers, and even faithful people who believed in her work went after her. Looking for clues to her whereabouts. Some hit dead-ends and stopped their search for lack of motivation. But a few obtained enough information to understand the truth: Desiré did become immortal and left. Using her power, she created a demiplane with a labyrinth, only accessible by magic. She hid the secret to her success there...

A QUEST FOR THE FITTEST

TO DISCOVER THE existence of the labyrinth is already a risky and foolish task. What Desiré accomplished is coveted by powerful factions and people. The rune sequence that allows teleportation to Desiré's artificial demiplane should be the reward of a previous quest or adventure. Perhaps the characters stole this information from the hands of an evil organization. Other options or ways in which the characters could have acquired the arcane circle runes are up to the GM's discretion.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

THE CHARACTERS REACH the labyrinth by following one or any combination of the next adventure hooks:

THE SEARCH FOR EVERYTHING

The characters seek the secret of eternal life as well. They want the power of immortality but prefer the easy way out. They shall steal Desiré's knowledge from the labyrinth. However, they must overcome its obstacles.

DESIRÉ'S KNOWLEDGE

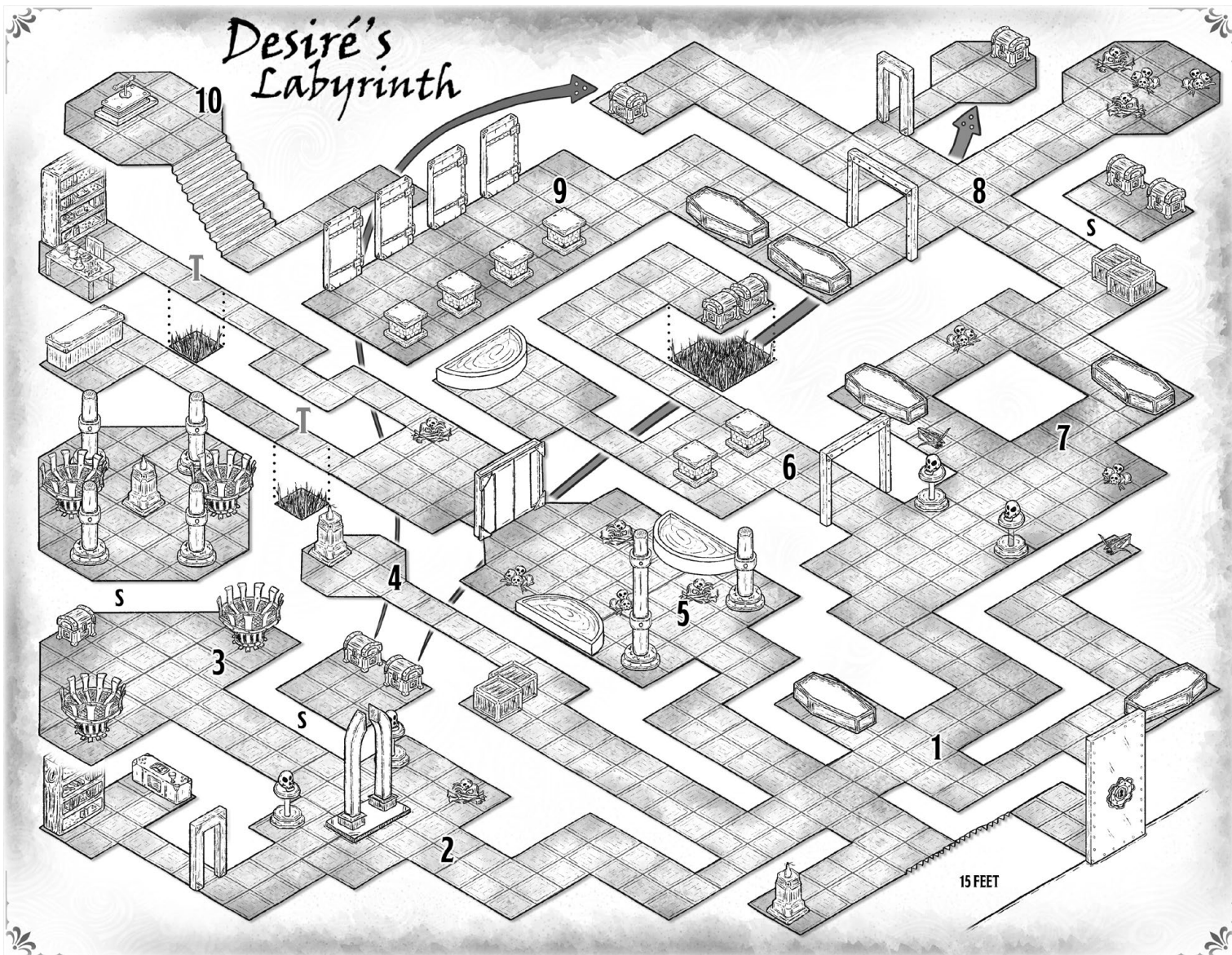
The characters know about Desiré's story. They do not seek eternal life, but they cannot deny that the so-called immortal woman had incredible magical abilities. The mere creation of the labyrinth is proof of this. It must contain more than her coveted secret. A mage character could be interested in her planar manipulation abilities.

DESIRÉ'S HOSTAGE

The characters look for ways to enter the labyrinth and Desiré becomes aware of their intentions. Upset about this, she hexes someone they love (NPC) or one of the characters (of a player who will miss the next session, perhaps) and traps them within the labyrinth (area 10). The characters must swiftly come to the rescue!

THE LABYRINTH

THIS ARTIFICIAL PLANE is filled with monsters, undead, and traps. Some of the defense devices appear more than once in various areas of the dungeon. Monsters and enemies regenerate and the traps reset every 24 hours. See **Features of the Labyrinth** for more information.



FEATURES OF THE LABYRINTH

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING when the characters explore each of the areas of Desiré's labyrinth:

- The labyrinth punishes the characters for loitering around for too long. Holes on the walls release poisonous gas every 10 minutes (DC 13 Con). Victims are poisoned until healed by magical means.
- The traps in the dungeon are of different natures. Curious characters might spot them before they spring (DC 17 Perception). A skilled rogue may try to cautiously disarm them (DC 18 Thieves' Tools).
- None of the areas in the dungeon are illuminated. Area 3 is the only location with lit braziers.
- Characters must find hidden levers or pushable bricks to reveal secret areas (DC 18 Perception).
- Desiré's monsters and traps reset every 24 hours. This effect cannot be undone except by her. It is part of the artificial demiplane world she created.

The characters teleport with Desiré's unique rune pattern and appear before a large door that features a large keyhole. The door disappears as if their presence were a wondrous feat. Trespassers may enter unharmed.

1. MANY WAYS TO GO

The characters descend 15 feet and find a pedestal with a *potion of poison* to the west. The automated crossbow in the west corridor shoots a level 5 *acid arrow* at the first living creature in sight (+8 to attack).

Sarcophagi. Each of the enclosures holds a **revenant**. The merciless undead guardians fight until slain.

2. ALTAR TO EVIL

This stone idol is one of the many shapes of The Trickery, an evil deity (DC 18 Religion). Two **flame skulls** and four **shadows** attack the characters when they arrive.

Studio. After dealing with the enemies, the characters may read the documents here to learn of Desiré's story and how she created the artificial, demiplane labyrinth.

3. TREASURE FOR THE FOOLISH

Two braziers burn eternally with *continual flame* spells. A wooden chest rests by the end of the room. Alas, creatures that interact with it trigger the *glyph of warding* hidden on the lid. Creatures standing 15 feet from the chest takes 6d6 fire damage (DC 15 Dexterity / half).

Fake Vault. A pushable brick reveals a square room with two chests. Both are teleporting traps. Opening either of the chests magically transports the person in front of it to the marked chests in area 8 (DC 14 Cha). The teleporting trap in either chest resets in one hour.

Potion Vault. A glistening vial on a pedestal contains an *eternal potion of heroism*. The viscous, green, lustrous liquid within the vial replenishes every 2d4 days.

4. FAKE ELIXIR

The two wooden crates in the hall are mutated **mimics** (they have maxed HP and a +2 bonus to attacks and damage). This corridor is a dead end. At the end of this otherwise useless corridor is a *potion of poison* on a plinth.

5. POOLS OF DEADLY REFLECTION

This chamber features two half-moon-shaped ponds. Their crystalline water is clear and clean. However, strong magic compels living creatures to stare at their reflections in the water (DC 16 Wisdom). Enemies materialize when a character becomes charmed by the ponds.

The bones on the floor move and take the form of four (**ghasts**) while four **shadows** coalesce from the darkness in the ceiling and attack. The locked gate (DC 20 Thieves' Tools) opens when all enemies are defeated.

There are pressure-sensitive plates in the middle of both corridors beyond the gate. If the characters fail to spot them, they fall 30 feet onto spikes and take 8d6 piercing damage (DC 17 Dex / half). The archive and coffer at the end contain 2,836 gp worth of coins, expensive incense, and foreign spices. A leather cylinder contains four random level 3 and 4 arcane spell scrolls.

6. TWO DEAD-ENDS

The two stone niches do nothing. They are just there to mess with the minds of stressed explorers and make them paranoid. The crystalline font liquid is a clever illusion (DC18 Wis). A **black pudding** attacks anyone who approaches. The same goes for the chests. Characters fall 30 feet onto spikes and take 8d6 piercing damage (DC 17 Dex / half) if they approach the chest illusions.

7. UNDEAD CHALLENGE

Two **flame skulls**, two **ghasts**, and two **shadows** impede the characters' advances here. The crossbow works in the same as the one in area 1. The crates are illusions that hide a second crossbow. All enemies fight until slain.

8. ARCHIVE ROOM

Approaching the bones on the floor causes them to reanimate. Four skeletons (**ghasts**) fight or chase until slain. A +2 *ring of protection* lies lost among the bones and debris in the chamber (DC 18 Investigation).

Teleporting Chests. If the characters trigger any of the teleporting traps in area 3, they are teleported to any of the marked chests in this area (see map).

Vault. The chests contain 3,851 gp worth of coins and fabrics, a *potion of resistance*, three *potions of greater healing*, a *ring of the ram*, and a *scimitar of speed*.

9. A GAME OF DOORS

The sarcophagi open and two **flesh golems** emerge to stop trespassers from advancing any further. Beyond the sarcophagi, unwanted visitors find themselves before four identical doors; four stone plinths lie before them.

When a creature opens the incorrect door (see map), the stone plinth in front of that door bears a terrible explosion (4d6 bludgeoning damage, DC 14 Dex / half), and a **wraith** with maxed HP coalesces from the dust.

10. THE END OF THE LABYRINTH

The characters succeed and the reward stands before them. Desiré's magic scroll with the revealing truths of her lifetime research shows the characters the long-sought secret to immortality. A magical door appears before them, a gate to any place in the multiverse.

If one of the characters' friends was captured by Desiré, they are here. The prisoner is unconscious but they are safe and unharmed (see **Adventure Hooks**).

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

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

Knowledge. The characters do not seek eternal life. They spend hours searching the archives in areas 2 and 5 to retrieve Desiré's tomes and notes of importance and leave after that. This grant the characters a magical reward (a level, an ability, advantage on a skill, or any other appropriate boon(s) as per the GM's discretion).

Failure. The characters perish while crossing the dungeon or cannot continue and turn back. They are allowed to exit the same way they entered. Once they leave, however, the teleportation rune pattern changes and they won't be able to return using this circle of runes again.

Victory. The characters succeed and get what they came for. What will they do with this power? Will they draw unwanted attention? Make enemies while becoming immortal? Their immortality could be challenged by the gods! Those are surely adventures for another day...



DAVID HILL

David, known online as QED42, is an aspiring game designer and nonsense maker from England.

You can find more content from David either on the [DMs-Guild](#) or at his [official blog](#) which focuses on adventure reviews, OSR classes, and the occasional D100 table.



JORDAN BLACKMAN

Jordan Blackman is a young indie TTRPG creator centering on 5e 3rd party content and little indie games with very specific themes. You can find his content at [Itch.io](#)

His current project, Tella: The Weird World is a rules-lite, low fantasy, folklore inspired game.



JOSHUA LOVETT

Joshua Lovett (he/him) first played Dungeons and Dragons when he was seven and wrote his first dungeon at nine. It was terrible. During a long hiatus from roleplaying games, he began writing YA fantasy and adult realistic fiction. He has been published in his college newspaper, a local newsletter, and most recently Glint Literary Journal.

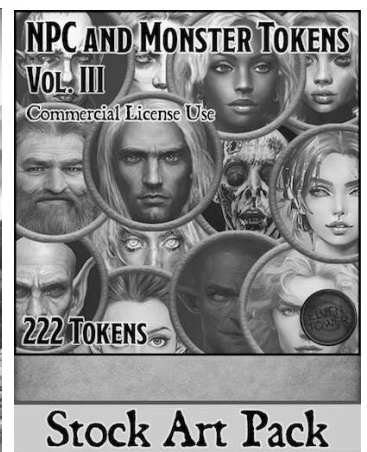
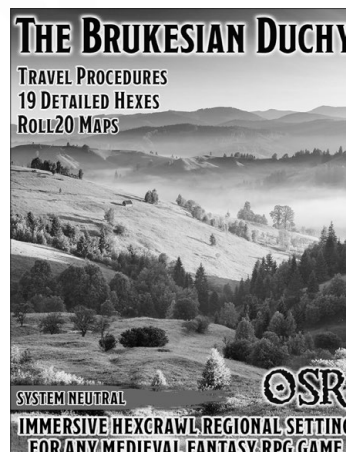
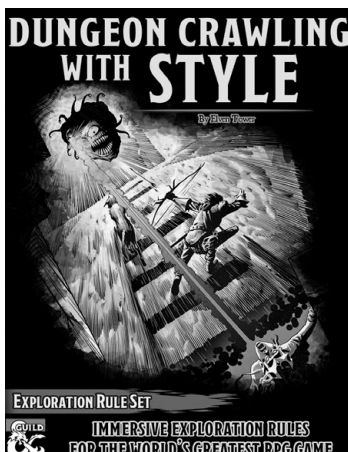
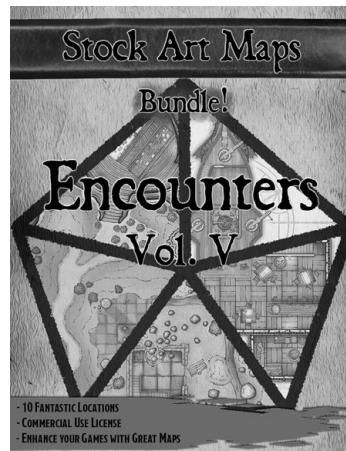
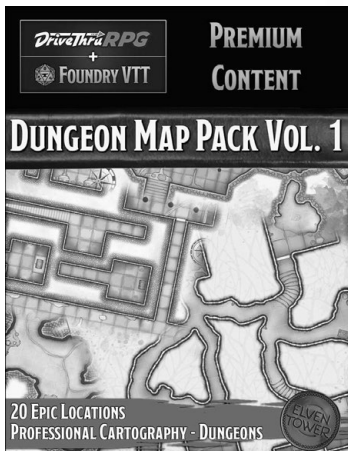
Running TTRPG games during the pandemic gave him new ideas for roleplaying, some of which are included in this article. During his sessions, he enjoys social deduction games with endlessly complicated political dungeons. They often cause headaches and mildly strain friendships.

You can find more information at his [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), or [Website](#).

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